

## Jolanta Szarlej

Akademia Techniczno-Humanistyczna  
jszarlej@ath.bielsko.pl  
ORCID: 0000-0002-1529-0886

# The linguistic picture of the woman and the man in the prophetic books of the Old Testament

## Introduction

The prophetic books of *The Old Testament*, just like other biblical books, do not reflect scientific knowledge of the world. Created in antiquity, they represent the way of thinking characteristic of the people of that period, constituting a record of their vision of the world, reflecting their knowledge of reality. Very often, they contain an image of the world that is fundamentally different from ours, and not infrequently contradicting it. This may be read from the lexical properties of the text: the words and phrases, proverbs, symbols, as well as grammatical forms. The analysis of those is made possible by cognitive methodology, not used until recently in extensive studies on the text of the *Bible*. Employing a new methodology opens a possibility of looking at the *Old Testament* in a revelatory way, offering a hope of disclosing new secrets of this extraordinary work, with its enormous potential for creating culture and affecting human attitudes and emotions to the extent unparalleled in literature.

### Aim – methodology – sources

The aim of my article is to analyse and to describe the biblical vision of the human person,<sup>1</sup> rooted in the religious system of values, such as the covenant with God, salvation, sanctity; and revealed in language forms: morphemes, lexemes, phrases. My analysis of Hebrew lexemes referring to the woman and the man, enabling a reconstruction of popular thinking about the human being in the Semitic culture, is intended to reveal the biblical vision of the human as a living being (נֶפֶשׁ *nēpēš*), expressing him- or herself in בָּשָׂר *bāšār* (the bodily element) and in רִיחַ *rūḥ* (the spiritual element), a creature functioning among other beings, belonging to their world, but at the same time occupying a special place in this world.

Describing the biblical vision of the human being captured in language, I use the notion of the linguistic picture of the world in Jerzy Bartmiński's understanding.<sup>2</sup>

The linguistic material that serves as the basis for my considerations comes mainly from the prophetic books, which means the part of the *Hebrew Bible* called *Nəḥî'im*.<sup>3</sup> In the present publication, I have left out the collection of writings by the first prophets (The Book of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings).<sup>4</sup> This means that in my research I have used material coming from the so-called Book of “the Twelve,” that is to

<sup>1</sup> I have presented the biblical conception of the human being in several publications: *W poszukiwaniu biblijnej prawdy o wartości ludzkiego życia* [In Search of the Biblical Truth on the Value of the Human Life], in: *Człowiek w tradycji judeo-chrześcijańskiej. Wybrane zagadnienia* [The Human Being In the Judeo-Christian Tradition], ed. J. Szarlej, Bielsko-Biała 2011, p. 81–100; *Językowy obraz człowieka w księgach proroków „mniejszych”* [The Language Image of the Human Being In the Books of the ‘Minor’ Prophets], in: “Świat i Słowo”, no 16, Bielsko-Biała 2011, p. 25–39; *Na ścieżkach biblijnej prawdy o człowieku. Biblia o wartości ludzkiego życia* [On the Paths of the Biblical Truth about the Human Being. The Bible on the Value of the Human Life], in: *Istina, mistifikaciá, l’ža v slavánskite ezici, literaturi i kulturi : sbornik s dokladi ot Desetite nacionalni slavistični četenia, posveteni na 90-godišinata ot roždenieto na prof. Svetomir Ivančev, 22–24 april 2010* [Truth, Mystification, Lie in the Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the Slavs], Sophia 2011, p. 737–745.

<sup>2</sup> For Jerzy Bartmiński, the linguistic picture of the world is “an interpretation of reality contained in a language, verbalised in various manners, possible to express in the form of a set of judgements about the world. These may be judgements “contained” in grammar, vocabulary, in formulaic texts, e.g. proverbs, but also presupposed judgements, i.e. implied by the language forms preserved at the level of social knowledge, convictions, myths, rituals” [J. Bartmiński, *Językowe podstawy obrazu świata* [Linguistic Foundations of the Picture of the World], Lublin 2006, p. 12].

<sup>3</sup> This division follows G. Ignatowski, *Kościół i synagoga. O dialogu chrześcijańsko-żydowskim z nadzieją* [The Church and the Synagogue. On Christian-Jewish Dialogue with Hope], Warsaw 2000, p. 104.

<sup>4</sup> Broad biblical material taken from all prophet books was used in my research on the biblical conception of the human being in my *Językowy obraz człowieka w profetycznych księgach Starego Testamentu* [The Linguistic Picture of the Human Being in the Prophetic Books of the Old Testament] (Bielsko-Biała, 2013).

say the writings of prophets Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and the writings of later prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.<sup>5</sup>

In the collection of texts I have chosen to analyse, there are no great female figures, like the ones we encounter in other biblical books, such as: Esther,<sup>6</sup> Judith,<sup>7</sup> Ruth Moabite,<sup>8</sup> Abigail<sup>9</sup> or Debora,<sup>10</sup> listed among the judges of Israel; or prophetesses such as Miriam<sup>11</sup> or Huldah.<sup>12</sup> None of the outstanding women of Israel authored a prophet book, which makes it impossible to evaluate differences in terms of lexical or stylistic choices of authors of different genders.

The collection of prophetic texts is quite comprehensive, making up to 30% of the entire *Old Testament*.<sup>13</sup> The books are very diverse in terms of language, literary forms, and topics they address. They come from the period between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries before Christ.<sup>14</sup> The limits imposed by the length of the present article only allow me to make limited use of this wealth of texts – to refer to a mere handful of examples, which I find most pertinent or interesting. Biblical texts from outside this selection (from *The Torah* or *The Wisdom Books*) appear only sporadically in my

<sup>5</sup> These are the so-called classical period prophets. Conf. “By ‘classical prophecy’ we mean the prophecy of those whom the OT has taught us to regard as exemplifying what is distinctive about Israelite prophets – all that separates them from the Near Eastern patterns. These prophets are those whose teaching has been preserved in the OT and especially those whose names appear at the heads of the prophetic books” [B. Vawter CM, *Introduction to Prophetic Literature*, in: *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. R.E. Brown, J.A. Fitzmyer, R.E. Murphy, Englewood Cliffs 1968, p. 226].

<sup>6</sup> A Persian queen, wife of Artaxerxes, who saved her nation from perdition (Est).

<sup>7</sup> Killed Holofernes (Jdt).

<sup>8</sup> Noemi’s daughter in law – the biblical model of a daughter in law (Rt).

<sup>9</sup> Nabal’s wife – stopped David from shedding blood for the offence committed by her husband.

<sup>10</sup> “Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time” (Jdg 4, 4).

<sup>11</sup> “Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing” (Ex 15, 20).

<sup>12</sup> “Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophet Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the New Quarter” (2 Kings 22, 14).

<sup>13</sup> H.W. House, R. Price, *Tablice biblijnego prorocstwa*, [Charts of Bible Prophecy, entry], in: J.H. Walton, H.W. House, R.L. Thomas, R. Price, *Tablice biblijne. Chrześcijańskie tablice encyklopedyczne* [Biblical Charts. Christian Encyclopedic Charts], v. 1, transl. Z. Kościuk, Warsaw 2007, p. 381.

<sup>14</sup> I give the dates of creation of the books based on: J.H. Walton, *Składniki kanonu Starego Testamentu* [Elements of the Canon of The Old Testament], [entry], in: J.H. Walton, H.W. House, R.L. Thomas, R. Price, *Tablice biblijne...*, p. 3, and in reference to Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah – based on: G. von Rad, *Teologia Starego Testamentu* [Theologie des Alten Testament], transl. B. Widła, Warsaw 1986, p. 545 as well as T. Brzegowy, *Procy Izraela* [Prophecy of Israel], pt. 1, Tarnów 1999, pp. 116, 167.

analysis, but constitute its significant element – they are a relevant point of reference for my reflection on the picture of the human being in the prophetic books. According to Hans Georg Gadamer’s conception of the hermeneutic circle, reading the sense of a given work requires a look into its constitutive parts, and these may only be properly interpreted when the context of the whole is taken into consideration.<sup>15</sup> In other words: I adopt – to use the words of Kamilla Termińska – “the type of scholarly cognition in which taking into consideration any of the elements implies the necessity of focusing on the whole.”<sup>16</sup>

My selection was made by seeking out in Gerhard Lisowsky’s concordance the Hebrew roots describing the human being. I used the third edition of *Konkordanz zum hebräischen Alten Testament*, published in 1993.<sup>17</sup> The biblical texts are quoted from: [www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0.htm](http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0.htm). The Polish text comes from the fifth edition of *Millenium Bible*.<sup>18</sup>

### Lexemes referring to the human being in Polish and in classical Hebrew

The basic lexeme referring to the human being in Polish is the noun ‘człowiek’ – a general Slavic word, derived – according to scholars – from the Proto-Slavic \**čelověkъ* – a compound noun in which two lexical morphemes may be distinguished: ‘*čelo-*’ close in meaning to the lexical morpheme in the word ‘czeladź’ [‘servant, retainer’] and ‘*-věkъ*’ corresponding to the meaning of the lexical morpheme in the Lithuanian noun ‘*vaikas*’, which means ‘child, young man’.<sup>19</sup> The noun ‘człowiek’ has a variety of meanings in Polish: ‘human individual, ‘human nature’, ‘man’, ‘servant, labourer, hired man’, fig. ‘opinion, surrounding, world’.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Conf. H.G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, transl. ed. G. Bowden and J. Cumming, New York 1975.

<sup>16</sup> K. Termińska, *Metaopis przeżycia metafizycznego. (Na przykładzie prozy Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza) [Metadescription of the Metaphysical Experience. (Based on the Prose of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz]*, in: “Język a Kultura” [“Language and Culture”], v. 3: *Wartości w języku i tekście [Values in Language and Text]*, Wrocław 1991, p. 133.

<sup>17</sup> *Konkordanz zum hebräischen Alten Testament*, ed. H.P. Rüger, Stuttgart 1993.

<sup>18</sup> Biblical texts quoted from: English text – <http://biblehub.com/niv/>; Hebrew text – [www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0.htm](http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0.htm). I use the rules of transliteration for Hebrew texts based on: *Transliterated BAS Hebrew Old Testament 2001* in: *The BibleWorks Program*, version 5.0. All underlined fragments in biblical quotations are underlined by the author of the article.

<sup>19</sup> Conf. A. Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego [Etymological Dictionary of Polish]*, Warsaw 1989, p. 79; K. Długosz-Kurczabowa, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego [Etymological Dictionary of Polish]*, Warsaw 2009, p. 91.

<sup>20</sup> K. Długosz-Kurczabowa, *Słownik etymologiczny...*, p. 91.

In turn, in the biblical Hebrew, the basic word referring to the human being is the noun אָדָם whose meaning is ‘being red’, ‘human’, ‘male’; as *collectivum* it is sometimes used in contexts referring to people in general, to humanity.<sup>21</sup>

A separate Hebrew lexeme describes male living beings. It is worth emphasizing that the Hebrew noun זָכָר refers both to humans and to animals. The noun זָכָר derived from the same root, זָכַר, corresponds to the Polish lexemes ‘mężczyzna’, ‘chłopiec’, ‘samiec’ [‘man’, ‘boy’, ‘male’ PSHP, p. 101; WSHP, v. 1, p. 258]. On the other hand, another noun in the semantic field of man in Hebrew – אִישׁ – is used almost exclusively to talk about humans. Its range of meaning encompasses the Polish words ‘mężczyzna’, ‘mąż’, ‘człowiek’; ‘samiec’, ‘ktoś’, ‘jeden’ [‘man’, ‘husband’, ‘male’, ‘somebody’, ‘one’ PSHP, p. 31; WSHP, v. 1, p. 42–43]. The noun אִשָּׁה whose meaning includes: ‘kobieta’, ‘żona’, ‘każda’, ‘samica’ [‘woman’, ‘wife’, ‘everyone’, ‘female’ PSHP, p. 46; WSHP, v. 1, p. 90] is derived from the same root. Apart from this one, biblical Hebrew also includes the noun נִקְבָּה ‘kobieta’; ‘dziewczynka’; ‘samica’ [‘woman’, ‘girl’, ‘female’ PSHP, p. 234; WSHP, v. 1, p. 675], defining the woman as a sexual being.

### Semantics of lexemes naming the human being in The Hebrew Bible

It seems appropriate to begin the analysis of selected lexemes naming the human being as well as a description of the linguistic picture of the man and the woman in the prophetic books of *The Old Testament* with *The Book of Genesis*, which – although it is not a prophetic book – constitutes the foundation of the biblical anthropology.

*The Bible* begins with the well known description of the creation of the world (Gen 1), which might be considered the first dialogue between the Maker and the creation, as well as the expression of the creational power of the Word of God. In the following lines of the first chapter of

<sup>21</sup> P. Briks, *Podręczny słownik hebrajsko-polski i aramejsko-polski Starego Testamentu* [Concise Hebrew-Polish and Aramaic-Polish Dictionary of the Old Testament], Warsaw 1999, p. 22 [henceforth referred to as PSHP]; L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, J.J. Stamm, *Wielki słownik hebrajsko-polski i aramejsko-polski* [Great Hebrew-Polish and Aramaic-Polish Dictionary], Warsaw 2008, v. 1, p. 14–15 [henceforth referred to as WSHP].

*The Book of Genesis* (1, 3.6.9.14.20.24.26.28.29) the Hebrew formula is repeated וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים wayyōmer ʔēlōhîm (*God said*).

In reply to this “creational word of God, full of might,”<sup>22</sup> successive beings appear, and the crowning one is the human being. The first significant features of the new creature are revealed by the pericope from *The Book of Genesis*:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ; וַיְרִדוּ בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם,  
וּבְבְהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ, וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ, הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ.

wayyōmer ʔēlōhîm naʕʕāše<sup>h</sup> ʔādām bəṣalmēnū kiḏmūtēnū wayirdū *bidgāt hayyām ūbʕōp haššamayim ūbabbəhēmā<sup>h</sup> ūbəkol-hāʕāreš ūbəkol-hāremes hārōmēs ʕal-hāʕāreš*

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground” [Gen 1, 26]<sup>23</sup>.

The new creation is referred to by means of the Hebrew noun that has already been mentioned אָדָם (ʔādām – ‘człowiek’, ‘mężczyzna’ [‘human’, ‘man’]; as *collectivum* – ‘ludzkość’, ‘ludzie’ [‘humanity’, ‘people’]; also used as *adjectivum* – ‘ludzki, człowieczy’ [‘human’ PSHP, p. 22]). Its etymology is not certain, but it is usually associated with the root אָדָם, which in its various conjugations reveals various aspects of meaning: *qal* – ‘być czerwonym’ [‘being red’]; *puʕal* – ‘na czerwono ufarbowany’ [‘dyed red’]; *hiphʕil* – ‘być czerwonym’, ‘czerwienić się’ [‘being red’, ‘to redden’]; *hithpaʕel* – ‘czerwienić się’, ‘mienić się’ [‘to redden’, ‘to glimmer’ PSHP, p. 21].

We owe one of the oldest attempts at explaining the etymology of the word to Titus Flavius Josephus. The author concludes that red was the colour of the earth of which the first man was formed:<sup>24</sup> ʔādām means – in his opinion – a creature whose skin has a reddish tint or one formed from a reddish clay. Louis Pirot notes a link to the Hebrew noun ʔādāmā<sup>h</sup>, which siġni ies earth and pōints to the bibliṣal imāge o the human being as ormed

<sup>22</sup> T.M. Dąbek, *Mowa w Piśmie Świętym* [Speech in the Holy Bible], Kraków 2004, p. 32.

<sup>23</sup> All emphases in biblical quotations come from the author of the article.

<sup>24</sup> Conf. S. Łach, *Księga Rodzaju. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz – kursy. Pismo Święte Starego Testamentu* (Komentarz KUL-owski) [The Book of Genesis. Introduction – Translation from the Original – Commentary – Digressions. The Holy Bible: The Old Testament (KUL commentary)], Poznań 1962, p. 192. Commentaries from this volume are henceforth marked as PŚST.

rom the dust o the earth.<sup>25</sup> The famous adage demonstrating the vanity and transience of human existence: “dust you are and to dust you will return” (Gen 3, 19) is in the Polish language perceived as metaphorical. In Hebrew, it is a semantic component of the lexeme *ʔādām* – ‘człowiek’ [‘human’]. The human being is therefore conceptualized as a frail, weak creature, unable to exist on its own. The portent of destroying the creation, including humans, from the prophecy of Zephaniah (Zeph 1, 3): “When I destroy all mankind on the face of the earth” means a reunification with the soil, a return to the state from before the creation, a total erasure of any trace of the human being.

אָסַף אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה, אָסַף עוֹף־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְדָגֵי הַיָּם, וְהִמְכַלְוֹת, אֶת־הָרֶשָׁעִים;  
וְהִכְרַתִּי אֶת־הָאָדָם, מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה--נְאֻם־יְהוָה

*ʔāsēp ʔādām ūbəhēmāh ʔāsēp ʿōp-haššāmáyim ūdōgē hayyām wəhammaḵšēlōt ʔeṭ-hārəšāʿim wəhikrattī ʔeṭ-hāʔādām mēʿal pənē hāʔādāmāh nəʿum-yhwh(ʔādōnāy)*

“I will sweep away both man and beast; I will sweep away the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea – and the idols that cause the wicked to stumble. When I destroy all mankind on the face of the earth,” declares the Lord [Zeph 1, 3].

It is worth observing that the Polish noun ‘człowiek’ [‘human’] does not have in its semantic structure an analogous component, placing emphasis on the collectivity of the human being instead. Aleksander Brückner conveys the meaning of the lexeme as ‘siła czeladna’ [‘journeymen, workforce’].<sup>26</sup>

In the pericope in question Gen 1, 26, crucially important information is contained in the phrase: אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ *ʔādām bəšalmēnū kiḏmūtēnū*, which means that the human being was created in the image and the likeness of God. In the context of my earlier considerations about the vanity of the human being, it appears astonishing. The expression is made of two synonymous Hebrew nouns: Heb. צֶלֶם *šelem* – ‘obraz, podobizna’ [‘image, likeness’ PSHP, p. 298], as well as ‘cień nietrwały’ [‘ethereal shadow’] and ‘obraz materialny jakiegoś przedmiotu’ [‘the material image of an object’]<sup>27</sup> as well as Heb. דְּמוּת *dəmut* – ‘podobizna’; ‘podobieństwo’; ‘postać’; ‘wygląd’, ‘coś podobnego’ [‘representation’;

<sup>25</sup> Conf. ibidem.

<sup>26</sup> Conf. A. Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny*..., p. 79; K. Długosz-Kurczabowa, *Słownik etymologiczny*..., p. 91.

<sup>27</sup> Conf. S. Łach, *Księga Rodzaju*..., PŚST I, 1..., p. 192.

‘likeness’; ‘form’; ‘appearance’; ‘something similar’ PSHP, p. 87] – both in a concrete and in an abstract sense.<sup>28</sup>

The former of the words has the preposition *bə* added to it, which indicates that “the relation of the picture to the person represented in it is internal, inherent, and not just external, circumstantial.”<sup>29</sup> The latter of the words has been linked with the particle *kə*, containing also the idea of similarity, which means that the structure *kidmūtēnū* as a whole signifies “an object similar to us.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, the human being is a creature similar to God, since “following the example of his Maker, he is capable of thinking, speaking, acting and judging his works, in other words: the human being, just like God, is a personal being.”<sup>31</sup>

Kamilla Termińska observes the connection between Adam and the myth of androgyny:

Androgyny – the feature of a personified deity, is a mythical depersonifying formula, expressing a whole, a completeness, a perfection born from overcoming opposites [...]. Androgyny means possessing both genders, and thus absence of any specific gender.<sup>32</sup>

Collective use of the **אָדָם** lexeme is very frequent in the books of minor prophets. One of many examples comes from *The Book of Zechariah*:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹ-הֵי אֶל-הַנְּעָר הַלֵּז, לֵאמֹר: פְּרֻזוֹת תִּשָּׁב וְרוּשָׁלַם, מֵרַב אָדָם  
וּבְהִמָּה בְּתוֹכָהּ.

wayyōmer ʿelāw rūš dabbēr ʿel-hannáʿar hallāz lēʿmōr pərāzōt tēšēb  
yərūšālāim mērōb ʿāḏām ūbəhēmā<sup>h</sup> bəṭōkāh

... and said to him: «Run, tell that young man, ‘Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of people and animals in it.» [Zech 2, 4].

The other, Yahwist description of the creation of the human being (Gen 2, 7.21–23) is interpreted by many scholars as an image of separating

<sup>28</sup> Conf. ibidem.

<sup>29</sup> Conf. ibidem, p. 193.

<sup>30</sup> Conf. ibidem.

<sup>31</sup> Conf. ibidem.

<sup>32</sup> K. Termińska, *Androgynia we współczesnej polszczyźnie* [*Androgyny in Contemporary Polish*], in: “Język a Kultura” [“Language and Culture”], v. 9: *Płeć w języku i kulturze* [*Gender in Language and Culture*], Wrocław 1994, p. 31. All quotations from this and other sources translated by Sławomir Konkol unless otherwise indicated.



Eve from the androgynous, perfect Adam.<sup>33</sup> The function of the new human being is determined by the name given to her by Adam (Gen 3, 20):

וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ, חַוָּה׃ כִּי הוּא הִיְתָה, אֵם כָּל-חַי׃

*wayyiqrāʾ hāʾādām šēm ʾištō ḥawwāʰ kī hiwʾ hāyṯāʰ ʿēm kol-ḥāy*

Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living [Gen 3, 20].

The proper name of the first woman: Heb. חַוָּה *ḥawwāʰ* ‘Eve’ comes from the root חִיָּה whose meaning is: ‘żyć’, ‘przeżyć’, ‘zachować życie’, ‘ożywić się’ [‘to live’, ‘to survive’, ‘to preserve life’, ‘to be enlivened’ PSHP, p. 113; WSHP, v. 1, p. 282, 293–294]. The Hebrew proper name therefore stresses the role of the woman in the passing on of life. A similar meaning is built into the semantic structure of the noun ‘wife’ in many European languages (PIE. \**gwenā* – ‘rodząca’, ‘przedłużająca ród’ [‘the one who bears children’, ‘the one who maintains the family line’]). ‘Żona’ is the oldest word for the woman in the Polish language, known already in the Proto-Slavic language (PS. \**žena* – ‘kobieta’ [‘woman’]), conceptualised as the image of a creature bringing new life to the world, continuing the family line.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the biological function of bearing children, the passing on of life, is inscribed in the linguistic picture of the woman both in biblical Hebrew and in the Polish language.

### The biological dimension of humanity encoded in Hebrew lexemes

Verse 26 of the first chapter of *The Book of Genesis*, discussed above, pointed to a peculiar similarity between the human being and God. It also revealed the exceptional position of the human being among other creatures, over which the human was supposed to – according to God’s plan – reign. The following verse – Gen 1, 27 – appears to modify quite clearly this image of the human being as the “crown of creation.”

<sup>33</sup> *ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup> Conf. K. Długosz-Kurczabowa, *Słownik etymologiczny...*, p. 559–561. It is worth stressing here the etymological relations of many Polish words with the Greek root *gyn-* *gen-* (Conf. Gr. *gyné* – ‘kobieta’ [‘woman’], *génos* – ‘ród, pochodzenie’ [‘family, descent’]) as well as the Latin: *gen-* (Lat. *genus* – ‘rodzaj’, ‘ród’ [‘kind’, ‘kin’]).

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ, בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ: זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה, בָּרָא אֹתָם.

wayyibrāʾ ʿēlōhīm ʿet-hāʿādām bašalmō bašēlem ʿēlōhīm bārāʾ ʾōtō zākār  
ūnaqēbā<sup>h</sup> bārāʾ ʾōtām

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. [Gen 1, 27].

The pericope of Gen 1, 27 clearly points to the connections between the human being and the world of animals. In terms of flesh, humans are divided into two kinds: *zākār* – the male and *naqēbā<sup>h</sup>* – the female. The Hebrew lexemes already mentioned above, זָכָר and זָכֹר describe a male living being, with no distinction between animals and humans [WSHP, v. 1, p. 256]. It is telling that these nouns are used to refer to men in the oldest texts of *The Torah*, but they do not appear in the books of the so-called minor prophets. In the books of the later prophets, they are employed in reference to the human being when the text concerns the birth of a male child (Isa 66, 7; Jer 20, 1). Ezekiel uses the noun זָכָר in the context of the unfaithfulness of Israel – the adulterous wife of Jehovah – (Ezek 16, 17), and Jeremiah in his ironic question: “Can a man bear children?” (Jer 30, 6). One may therefore assume that nouns derived from the root זָכָר point to the biological aspect of being a man. The significance of the root is illustrated by the pericope from *Deuteronomy*:

לֹא תִירָא, מֵהֶם: זָכָר תִּזְכֹּר, אֶת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, לְפָרְעָה, וּלְכָל-מִצְרָיִם.

lōʾ tīrāʾ mēhem zākōr tizkōr ʿet ʾāšer-ʿāsāʾ yhw<sup>h</sup>(ʿādōnāy) ʿēlōhēykā ləpār-ō<sup>h</sup>  
ūlakōl-miṣrāyīm

But do not be afraid of them; remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt [Deut 7, 18].

The root זָכָר, from which the Hebr. זָכָר, i.e. ‘samiec’ [‘male’], is derived, is connected to ‘pamięć’, ‘przypominanie’, ‘branie sobie czegoś do serca’, ‘przekazywanie ważnych informacji’ [‘memory’, ‘recalling’, ‘taking something to heart’, ‘passing on important information’]; it also names mental operations, such as ‘myśleć’, ‘rozmyślać’ [‘to think’, ‘to ponder’ PSHP, p. 101]. Thus, in the Hebrew tradition, the man is the one who consolidates memory and is responsible for the passing on of tradition.

A certain semantic similarity between the Polish and the Hebrew linguistic picture of the man might be postulated if one considers the research done by Aleksander Brückner on the etymology of the Polish noun ‘mąż’ [‘husband, man’]. The famous philologist derived this general Slavic noun from the PS noun \**mąžb*, and the noun itself – from the SKT. ‘*manu-*’ – ‘człowiek, mąż’ [‘man, husband’], and linked it (not without some doubt) to the root ‘*men*’ meaning ‘myśleć’ [‘to think’]<sup>35</sup>.

In the pericope in question, Gen 1, 27, beside the male creature, we find the female, described by the Hebrew noun נִקְבָּהּ. In the Hebrew language, it names both ‘kobieta, dziewczynka’ [‘woman, girl’], and ‘samica zwierząt’ [‘female of an animal’ PSHP, p. 234]. It comes from the root נִקַּב ‘(prze-)wiercić; przedziurawić; oznaczyć’ [‘bore (through’, ‘pierce’, ‘mark’]; *participium passivi* ‘naznaczeni, znamienici; książęta’ [‘marked, distinguished, princes’]. The meaning of the root is illustrated by the pericope from *The Book of Isaiah* 36, 6:

הִנֵּה בְטַחְתָּ עַל-מִשְׁעֶנֶת הַקֶּנֶה הַרְצוּץ הַזֶּה, עַל-מִצְרַיִם, אִישׁ יִסְמְךָ אִישׁ עָלָיו,  
וְבָא בְכַפּוֹ וְנִקְבָּהּ: כִּן פָּרְעָה מֶלֶךְ-מִצְרַיִם, לְכָל-הַבְּטָחִים עָלָיו.

*hinnē<sup>h</sup> bāṭāḥtā* ‘*al-miš<sup>c</sup>enēṯ haqqāne<sup>h</sup> hārāšûš hazze<sup>h</sup>* ‘*al-mišrāyim* ʾāšer yis-  
sāmēḵ ʾiš ‘*ālāyw ūbā*’ *bəḵappō ūnəqābāh kēn par<sup>c</sup>ōh meḵleḵ-mišrāyim ləḵḳol-*  
*-habbōṭḥim* ‘*ālāyw*

Behold, you are trusting in Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. [Isa 36, 6].

The root נִקַּב expresses the idea of hollowing, boring, piercing, etc. This means that the Hebrew word for the woman as a sexual creature points to her anatomy.

A somatic allusion of this type resonates powerfully in the work for which Doris Lessing received a Nobel prize in literature, her 2007 *The Cleft*, which stands for – if we demetaphorise – *the original woman*.

It is worth noting that none of the Polish lexemes used to refer to the woman emphasizes her somatic features.<sup>36</sup> The noun ‘żona’ [‘wife’] stresses the function of passing on life, which is one of the biological aspects

<sup>35</sup> Conf. A. Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny...*, p. 327. Conf. also: K. Długosz-Kurczabowa, *Słownik etymologiczny...*, p. 336.

<sup>36</sup> This claim is true when applied to the standard language; in jargon one finds terms such as ‘dziurawa’, ‘dziurawka’ [‘holey’] – which are considered derogatory, indecent.

of being a woman. The other Polish root lexemes: ‘niewiasta’, ‘białogłowa’, ‘kobieta’ [‘petticoat’, ‘white-headed’, ‘woman’] point to the social functions of the woman<sup>37</sup>: ‘niewiasta’ was originally the daughter in law, a person who is a stranger to the family, of whom one knows little, subjugated to the mother in law, whose family status is low; ‘kobieta’ – a noun etymologically linked with the meaning of the word ‘chlew’ [‘pigsty’] (OP. *kob-* today identifiable in the word ‘kobyła’ [‘mare’]), which indicates the servile role of the woman in the household (until the 16<sup>th</sup> century the word was considered offensive); ‘białogłowa’ – this is a term for a married woman (from the white caul worn by married women). The picture of the woman preserved by the Polish language is aptly summed up by Ewa Jędrzejko:

[...]the oldest names indeed preserve traces – today almost unintelligible – of the ancient, primeval perception of women, dominated above all by her “natural” role and “servile” function in the family.<sup>38</sup>

The description in the pericope in Gen 1, 27 not only does not depreciate the woman, although it might seem this way from the perspective of the Polish language, but indeed demonstrates that: “The dignity of the human being, created in the image and the likeness of God, applies as much to the man and the woman – humans are created as the man and the woman.”<sup>39</sup> The copula ‘waw’, here transformed into a long ‘û’: זָכָר וְנִקְבָּה *zākār ûnəqēbā<sup>h</sup>*, includes among its numerous functions the meaning of linking or excess, and allows us to translate this syntactic unit as “man and woman at the same time” or “man, and besides that even woman.”<sup>40</sup>

The originality of the thinking contained in the Bible, born at a time and in an environment that despised women, certainly deserves attention.

The carnality of the man and the woman, blessed by the Maker and subject to the injunction to multiply – addressed also to animals – is perceived as positive in *The Old Testament*. The difference between *zākār* and *nəqēbā<sup>h</sup>* is a foundation of fecundity, and fecundity, in its turn, testifies

<sup>37</sup> Conf. E. Jędrzejko, *Kobieta w przysłowiach, aforyzmach i anegdotach polskich. Konotacje i stereotypy* [*The Woman in Polish Proverbs, Aphorisms and Anecdotes. Connotations and Stereotypes*], in: “Język a Kultura” [“Language and Culture”], v. 9: *Płeć w języku i kulturze* [*Gender in Language and Culture*], Wrocław 1994, p. 160.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 161.

<sup>39</sup> T. Węclawski, *Abba wobec Boga Ojca* [*Abba to God the Father*], Kraków 1999, p. 188.

<sup>40</sup> K. Termińska, *Śmiech Sary. Kobiecość – męskość w hebrajszczyźnie biblijnej* [*Sarah's Laughter. Femininity – Masculinity in the Biblical Hebrew*], in: *Płeć języka – język płci* [*Gender of Language – Language of Gender*], ed. J. Arabski, M. Kita, Katowice 2010, p. 185–195.

to the creative participation of the power of God himself – it is *creatio continua* – the continued creation.

Characteristically, in the books of minor prophets – like in the case of the noun ‘zākār’ – one practically never encounters the word for the woman ‘nəqēbā<sup>h</sup>’. This lexeme is used to refer to a woman only once – in *The Book of Jeremiah* (Jer 31, 21).

The juxtaposition of the woman and the man is most often achieved in the prophetic books through another pair of lexemes: אִישׁ ‘mężczyzna, mąż, człowiek; samiec, ktoś, jeden’ [‘man, husband, human; male, someone, one’ PSHP, p. 31] and אִשָּׁה ‘kobieta, żona, każda, samica’ [‘woman, wife, everyone, female’ PSHP, p. 46]. אִישׁ – אִשָּׁה – grammatically *masculinum* and *femininum* of the same root – are usually rendered in translation as ‘mężczyzna’ – ‘kobieta’ [‘man’ – ‘woman’], although Jakub Wujek has decided to use a neologism: ‘mąż’ – ‘mężyna’ [‘husband’ – ‘husband’s woman’].<sup>41</sup> The morphological and semantic structure of both words indicates that the notions of masculinity and femininity in Hebrew are not in opposition to one another, but function in a relation of complementarity.

### Human as a relational being

The words of *The Book of Genesis* “it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Gen 2, 18), which precede the creation of the woman, “express the duality and the communality (openness) of the human nature.”<sup>42</sup> Both in the former and in the latter description of the creation of the human being, one may find – according to Tomasz Węclawski – “the primary, fundamental orientation to one’s other and mutual affiliation of the man and the woman, expressed in their nudity and freedom from shame ...”<sup>43</sup> It is worth stressing the dialogic nature of the human being. Human, born of a dialogue initiated by God, is made for dialogue – with the Maker, with other humans, with all of creation. The human being is created to live in a space where a host of voices resonate constantly: the dialogue of the universe with its Lord, God’s dialogue with

<sup>41</sup> Contemporary feminists might, perhaps, demand that the forms be derived from the word ‘woman’ (‘kobiet’ – ‘kobieta’), but the order of creation settles this doubt: the noun ‘mężyna’ is derived from the noun ‘mąż’.

<sup>42</sup> T. Węclawski, *Abba wobec Boga...*, p. 188.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*.

the human being in history and the human being's dialogue with God in prayer. The essence of this dialogue is not simple communication, but rather building a personal relationship between the subjects participating in it:

The calling subject does not treat the object of his calling as a recipient of information, argument, or a subject of its own various operations [...]. In calling, one subject searches for the presence of another, to establish contact with it, to renew broken ties or to strengthen those that still exist.<sup>44</sup>

### Human in relation to the world of animals

A significant truth about the human being is expressed in the so-called second description of the creation of the human being from *The Book of Genesis* 2, 7:

וַיִּצַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם, עָפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה, וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו, נֶשֶׁמַת חַיִּים;  
וַיְהִי הָאָדָם, לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה.

wayyiṣer yhw(ʔāḏōnāy) ʔēlōhīm ʔet-hāʔādām ʕāpār min-hāʔādāmā<sup>h</sup> wayyip-pah bəʔappāyw nišmaṭ ḥayyīm wayəhī hāʔādām lənēpeš ḥayyā<sup>h</sup>

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being [Gen 2, 7].

“Through the mediation of God’s breath, man receives life and becomes *nefeš hajjāh* i.e. a living being,”<sup>45</sup> just like animals. In the biblical image, the human being and animals are therefore “dust that breathes through its nostrils.”<sup>46</sup> The noun *nēpeš* often appears in *The Old Testament* to express the idea of ‘istnienie, życie’ [‘existence, life’] – as, for example, in the pericope from *The Book of Jonah* 1, 14:

וַיִּקְרָאוּ אֶל-יְהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ, אָנֹכָהּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, כִּי-אֲנִי חֹפֵץ עֲשֵׂיתָ.  
וַיִּקְרָאוּ אֶל-יְהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ, אָנֹכָהּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, כִּי-אֲנִי חֹפֵץ עֲשֵׂיתָ.

wayyiqrəʔū ʔel-yhw(ʔāḏōnāy) wayyōʔmərū ʔānnā<sup>h</sup> yhw(ʔāḏōnāy) ʔal-nāʔ nōʔbəḏā<sup>h</sup> bənēpeš hāʔiš hazze<sup>h</sup> wəʔal-tittēn ʕālēnū dām nāqiʔ kī-ʔattā<sup>h</sup> yhw(ʔāḏōnāy) kaʔāšer ḥāpāštā ʕāšīṭā

<sup>44</sup> H. Witczyk, “*Pokorny wolał, i Pan go wysłuchał*” (Ps 34, 7a). *Model komunikacji diafonicznej w Psalmach* [“*This Poor Man Called, And the Lord Heard Him* (Ps 34, 7a). *The Model of Diaphonic Communication in the Psalms*], Lublin 1997, p. 57.

<sup>45</sup> S. Łach, *Księga Rodzaju...*, PŚST I, 1..., p. 199 [I use the transcription given in this source].

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*.

Then they cried out to the Lord, "Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased" [Jonah 1, 14].

Taking into consideration the research of Polish linguists,<sup>47</sup> one might state that a very strong opposition between the human being and animals (the *homo – animal* opposition, to invoke the title of a well known work published in the Wrocław series "Język a Kultura" ["Language and Culture"]<sup>48</sup>) is encoded in the Polish culture and language. Ryszard Tokarski, doing his research in Lublin, notes clearly the existence of the opposition of the human being – animal, considered to be synonymous with the good – evil opposition in the Polish linguistic picture of the world:

The opposition of *the human being* 'good creature' – *animal* 'evil creature' is also confirmed by phrases such as *zezwierzęcenie*, *postępować jak zwierzę*, *niehumanizacja* (*postępek*), *być człowiekiem* 'postępować moralnie dobrze' [*bestialisation*, *to act like an animal*, *inhuman (deed)*, *to be human* 'to act morally']<sup>49</sup>.

The division between the world of humans and the world of animals runs along entirely different lines in *The Bible*. It is not difficult to find evidence that people and animals share a common fate. God's words: "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." (Gen 1, 20) as well as "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind" (Gen 1, 24) call into being endless hosts of animals, blessed by their Maker with the words: "Be fruitful and increase in number" (Gen 1, 22). It is symptomatic that exactly the same formula is pronounced as a blessing for the human being, although only the human being receives the invitation to rule over all kinds of earthly creatures.

<sup>47</sup> Conf. R. Tokarski, *Językowy obraz świata w metaforach potocznych* [*Linguistic Picture of the World in Common Metaphors*], in: *Językowy obraz świata* [*Linguistic Picture of the World*], ed. J. Bartmiński, Lublin 1999, p. 65–81 and "Język a Kultura" ["Language and Culture"], v. 15: *Opozycja homo – animal w języku i kulturze* [*The homo – animal Opposition in Language and Culture*], ed. A. Dąbrowska, Wrocław 2003.

<sup>48</sup> There is also evidence of overcoming this opposition in texts of cultures from our civilisation. In the volume mentioned above, they are provided by Kamilla Terminińska. Conf. K. Terminińska, *Przekraczanie opozycji zwierzę – człowiek w cywilizacjach Morza Śródziemnego* [*Overcoming the Animal – Human Opposition in Civilisation of the Mediterranean*], in: "Język a Kultura", v. 15: *Opozycja homo – animal...*, p. 17–25.

<sup>49</sup> R. Tokarski, *Językowy obraz świata...*, p. 74.

The common fate of humans and animals is also visible in the biblical tale of the original sin. Human transgression brings a curse on the whole of earth, including animals, which will henceforth fight with one another. Enmity will also ensue between humans and animals: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen 3, 15). The dissonance born of sin is only possible to overcome through God’s intervention, as evidenced in *The Bible*, for example by the story of Elias and the ravens (1 Kings 17, 2–4),<sup>50</sup> Israelites and the snakes (Num 21, 6–8),<sup>51</sup> Jonah and the whale (Jonah 2, 1–11).<sup>52</sup> God – in spite of human sin – remains the Father of all creation, including in his plans of salvation not only human beings but all living creatures, among which He can reintroduce love and unity.<sup>53</sup> Jehovah, in making the covenant with Noah, does not forget animals, which must be provided with space in the Ark, just like the members of Noah’s family. (Gen 6, 17–21; 8, 1.14–17; 9, 1–3.9–13).

In *The Bible*, the human – animal opposition is not synonymous with the good – evil opposition. The border between good and evil is not established between humans and animals but among people and among animals. The relevant distinction in the Semitic culture is the one into good and evil creatures, high and low, pure and impure ones (Lev 11; Deut 14). This division is only abolished by the New Covenant, made through Christ’s sacrifice (Acts 10). Evil is always wherever the divine order of the world has been disturbed, good – rising above the laws of nature, above human and animal limitations and flaws – is wherever the divine order remains the foundation for the functioning of the world.

<sup>50</sup> “[...] and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there.”

<sup>51</sup> “Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The Lord said to Moses, ‘Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live’” (Num 21, 6–8).

<sup>52</sup> “Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah. [...] And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.”

<sup>53</sup> In *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2416) it is stated that “*Animals* are God’s creatures. He surrounds them with his providential care. [...] Thus men owe them kindness”. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a7.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a7.htm)). An extremely interesting view on the issue of the relations between the human being and the created world is offered by C. S. Lewis in his *Problem of Pain*. In the chapter *Animal Pain*, the author concludes that God is “the centre of the universe”, and the human being “the subordinate centre of terrestrial nature: the beasts are not co-ordinate with man, but subordinate to him, and their destiny is through and through related to his” (C.S. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, [http://www.samizdat.qc.ca/cosmos/philo/PDFs/ProblemofPain\\_CSL.pdf](http://www.samizdat.qc.ca/cosmos/philo/PDFs/ProblemofPain_CSL.pdf)).



### Human as “the crown of creation”

Mieczysław Krąpiec in his work entitled *Człowiek jako osoba* [*Human as a Person*] clearly states that

[...] while humans are animals, they transcend the animal world; only humans are endowed with reason capable of grasping wholes (in general) and their elements in necessary arrangements, and through this of overcoming the course of material transformations.<sup>54</sup>

The exceptional position of the human being is determined by another element apart from reason, or perhaps by another dimension of the human essence – רִיחַ *rū<sup>a</sup>ḥ*, that is spirit.<sup>55</sup> Its role in human existence is emphasised by prophet Zechariah:

מִשָּׂא דְבַר-יְהוָה, עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל: נִאֲמַר-יְהוָה, נִטָּה שְׁמַיִם וַיִּסַּד אָרֶץ, וַיֵּצֵר  
רוּחַ-אָדָם, בְּקִרְבוֹ.

*maśśā<sup>3</sup> dōbar-yhwh(ʔāḏōnāy) ʿal-yiśrāʔēl nəʔum-yhwh(ʔāḏōnāy) nōṭe<sup>h</sup> šāmāyim  
wəyōsēd ʔāres wəyōšēr rū<sup>a</sup>ḥ-ʔāḏām baqirbō*

A prophecy: The word of the Lord concerning Israel. The Lord, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the human spirit within a person, [Zech 12, 1].

The creative power of this spirit is very graphically represented in *The Book of Ezekiel* (Ezek 37, 5–10). A moving image of bones returning to the bodily unity in verse 8 of the pericope in question is crowned with the words: “but there was no breath in them.” What breathes life into this somatic structure is God’s spirit. Described with the noun ‘*rū<sup>a</sup>ḥ*’, it is the same creational power of God which hovers over the chaos of the world before God creates and orders it with His Word. It is the power of judges (Judg 3, 10; 6, 34; 11, 29) and the wisdom of kings (2 Kings 2, 9; Mic 3, 8; Isa 48, 16; Isa 61, 1; Zech 7, 12).<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> M.A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek jako osoba* [*Human as a Person*], Lublin 2009, p. 10.

<sup>55</sup> Does *rū<sup>a</sup>ḥ* belong exclusively to the human being? In the light of Ecclesiastes’ words (3, 18–21), this commonly accepted truth may appear debatable. The radical words on the equality of humans and animals are usually interpreted as the expression of the preacher’s extreme pessimism as well as an effect of the text’s peculiar structure, described as the lack of doctrinal coherence. Conf. footnote to Eccles 3, 18 and 3, 21 as well as *Wstęp do Księgi Koheleeta* [*Introduction to the Book of Ecclesiastes*] in: *Biblia Jerozolimska* [*The Jerusalem Bible*], Poznań 2006, p. 873, 878.

<sup>56</sup> Conf. footnote to Isa 11, 2 in: *Biblia Jerozolimska*..., p. 1046.

In the biblical anthropology, the human being is classified as one of the creatures described by the Hebrew word of many meanings: נִפְּשׁ *nēpēš* – ‘tchnienie, oddech, zapach, dusza, duch, życie, żywe stworzenie, osoba, człowiek, uczucia, wola, dusza zmarłego’ [‘sigh, breath, smell, soul, spirit, life, living creature, person, human being, feelings, will, sould of a dead person’ PSHP, p. 232; WSHP, v. 1, p. 668–670]. The lexeme is derived from the root נָפַח *nāpāḥ* ‘wzdychać, oddychać’ [‘to sigh, to breathe’], in *niph‘al* – ‘odetchnąć’ [‘to exhale’ WSHP, v. 1, p. 668; PSHP, p. 232] and names any creature which reveals its life through breathing. It may thus be referred both to humans and animals, but not to plants (one of the meanings of the noun refers to ‘gardło lub gardziel’ [‘throat or gullet’], a feature that plants are not endowed with [conf. WSHP, v. 1, p. 669]).

The human creature is a unity which is not so much composed of a body and a soul, but which rather *is* a body and a soul. These two elements, treated as inseparable, express the human being. *Nēpēš* is a creature whose life “is located as much in the blood as in the breath.”<sup>57</sup> The bodily component of this unity is captured by the Hebrew word בָּשָׂר *bāšār*, while the spiritual one by רוּחַ *rūḥ*, meaning literally ‘tchnienie’, ‘wiatr’ [‘breath, whisper’, ‘wind’]. The human being is expressed through *bāšār* and *rūḥ* at the same time. Under the influence of the Hellenistic tradition, Greek concepts appear in *The Bible* and it is those concepts that determine our, European, conception of the human person as marked by a peculiar split into the bodily (*sarx, sōma*) and the spiritual element (*psyché, pneuma*). Spirit is a fruit of God’s breath, which entered into the human being at the moment of creation<sup>58</sup> – henceforth, “the human spirit and God spirit are closely bound to one another.”<sup>59</sup> Spirit makes the human beings capable of living in contact with God, of recognising their calling and their place in God’s plan of salvation and of carrying out God’s will. It is thanks to spirit that the human being may grow to the dignity of God’s child, following Christ, and become “God’s masterpiece,”<sup>60</sup> “become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Ef 2, 22).

The Hebrew lexemes ‘*bāšār*’ and ‘*nēpēš*’ refer to the whole of the human being. This is emphasised strongly by Tomasz Węćławski:

<sup>57</sup> S.A. White, *Osoba ludzka*, [Human Person, entry], in: *Słownik wiedzy biblijnej* [Dictionary of Biblical Knowledge], ed. B.M. Metzger, M.D. Coogan, transl. A. Karpowicz et al., Warsaw 1997, p. 578.

<sup>58</sup> Conf. *ibidem*.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>60</sup> The phrase is borrowed from the title of a book by Edward Staniek *Człowiek arcydziełem Boga*, Kraków 2009.

[...] *nepeš* (Gr. *psyché*) is often translated as “soul,” which does not mean that it necessarily implies the existence within the human of a “spiritual being” separate from the body (substantial soul). Likewise *ruach* (spirit) means not so much a separate, partial being making up (at least in part) the human being, as a breath of life, a spirit of life permeating the human being...<sup>61</sup>.

At the same time, the use of the noun ‘ne<sup>o</sup>peš’ activates all that is linked with human carnality. Since the Hellenistic times biblical theology has never spoken of the human being without referring to flesh.<sup>62</sup>

To be able to read the biblical truth of the human being, one must be free from the concepts of contemporary anthropology, from the image of the human being created by the mass media, from the system of values in which the central place is reserved for success, strength, youth, health and beauty – obtained or maintained at any price. These are traces of mythological foundations of the European culture.

The biblical conception of the human being makes us rediscover the truth that humans are the fruit of a dialogue initiated by God and are created to transcend themselves through building relations with the Maker, with one another and with all of the creation. Humans are harmonious beings created to spread harmony within and around themselves. Our role among God’s creatures is captured well in the words of Romano Guardini:

All things are words of God addressed to the human being, who – by his nature – is destined to remain in a “you” relation with God. The human being has been formed so as to listen to the world which is a word, but should at the same time be someone who replies. Through the human being, all things should return to God in the form of an answer.<sup>63</sup>

#### **Tłumaczenie:**

Sławomir Konkol

Akademia Techniczno-Humanistyczna

<sup>61</sup> T. Węclawski, *Abba wobec Boga...*, p. 186 [I use the transcription given in this source].

<sup>62</sup> Conf. *ibidem*, p. 187.

<sup>63</sup> R. Guardini, *The World and the Person. An Inquiry into the Christian Teaching on Human Existence*; quoted in: R. Łukaszyk, *Osobowy charakter wiary religijnej. Ewolucja interpretacji od Vaticanum I do Vaticanum II [The Personal Character of Religious Belief. The Evolution of Interpretation from Vaticanum I to Vaticanum II]*, in: *W kierunku człowieka [Towards Man]*, ed. B. Bejze, Warsaw 1971, p. 191.

**Jolanta Szarlej**

### **The Linguistic Picture of the Man and the Woman in the Old Testament Prophetic Books**

The paper is an attempt at a cognitive analysis and description of biblical images of the human being, deeply rooted in the religious system of values, such as the covenant with God, redemption or sanctity, found in various morphemes, lexemes and other expressions of the biblical Hebrew language. The analysis of the Hebrew lexemes used to define the man and the woman, helpful in the reconstruction of the informal ways of thinking of the human being, observed in the Semitic culture, is expected to present a biblical picture of the human being as a living creature (*nepeš*), revealing itself in *bāšār* (a physical component) as well as *rūḥ* (a spiritual component), a creature functioning among other creatures, belonging to their world, but also occupying a particular place in it.

**Keywords:** Bible, language image of the world, woman, man, prophetic books, biblical anthropology

**Słowa kluczowe:** Biblia, językowy obraz świata, kobieta, mężczyzna, księgi profetyczne, antropologia biblijna