

THE TORAH / LAW IS A JOURNEY

USING COGNITIVE
AND CULTURALLY
ORIENTED LINGUISTICS
TO INTERPRET AND
TRANSLATE METAPHORS
IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

IVANA PROCHÁZKOVÁ

KAROLINUM

The Torah / Law Is a Journey

Using Cognitive and Culturally Oriented Linguistics to Interpret
and Translate Metaphors in the Hebrew Bible

KAROLINUM PRESS

Karolinum Press is a publishing department of the Charles University
www.karolinum.cz

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First edition

Designed by Jan Šerých

Set in the Czech Republic by Karolinum Press

Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the National Library
of the Czech Republic

This publication is part of the research held at the Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University in 2017–2019 within the grant project Metaphorical conceptualization of the conceptual area of the law, justice, judgement and righteousness in the poetic texts of the Old Testament canon, no. 17-17435S supported by the Czech Science Foundation. It is published with the financial support of the Progres Q01—Theology as a way of interpreting history, traditions and contemporary society.

The book was peer reviewed by Iva Nebeská (Faculty of Arts, Charles University) and Martin Prudký (Protestant Theological Faculty, Charles University).

ISBN 978-80-246-4842-2

ISBN 978-80-246-4877-4 (pdf)

ISBN 978-80-246-4878-1 (epub)

ISBN 978-80-246-4879-8 (mobi)



Charles University
Karolinum Press

www.karolinum.cz
ebooks@karolinum.cz

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INTRODUCTION

*Metaphor is the application of an alien name
by transference either from genus to species,
or from species to genus, or from species to species,
or by analogy, that is, proportion.
(Aristotle, Poetics)*

Since Aristotle offered this definition of metaphor, possibly the oldest on record, metaphor theory has undergone a long evolution. Metaphors are no longer understood primarily as instruments of poetic language, as linguistic adornment. Today, we are more likely to read that we “think” and “get to know things” through metaphors; that we “evaluate” and “experience” the world around us and even perhaps “live” through the linguistic tool of the metaphor.

Scholars of linguistics, literary theorists, philosophers and others have offered a range of theories to suggest how metaphors work and how to identify, classify and interpret them. This present contribution to the scholarly debate is anchored in the methodology of cognitive and culturally oriented linguistics, a field that has been developing since the 1980s. Although cognitive linguistics has developed largely in the direction of language exploration, it is now far from being a single discipline and includes a wide range of approaches and theories.

Chapter one is theoretical and offers a basic overview of the theories on which our analysis of metaphorical expressions concerning the law, righteousness and justice in the Old Testament will be based. The theory of the conceptual metaphor, the theory of incarnation, the theory of mental images, and the theory of conceptual blending are all briefly introduced.

The principal focus, however, is on Hebrew metaphorical expressions concerning one of the key Old Testament concepts, namely, תורה *the Torah / Law* and related Hebrew concepts from the semantic area of *Law, Righteousness, and Justice*. The aim is to identify the Hebrew conceptual metaphors used in the chosen semantic area and to explain the meaning of the respective metaphorical expressions. Metaphorical vehicles (expressions whose use in the text signals the presence of a metaphor) and gener-

ic narrative structures (bundles of metaphorical vehicles connected by function) as sub-positions of conceptual metaphors of a narrative nature will provide the primary methodological tool for the exploration of conceptual metaphors in the Hebrew text and in language in general.

The language of laws in the general sense, and especially the language of “the Law” in the Hebrew biblical canon, is highly formalised. Legal texts are subject to stringent requirements of factual and formal clarity and accuracy. Metaphorical meaning, however, is intentionally ambiguous, dynamic and multi-layered, and envisages a wide range of connotations regarding the concepts and phrases used in metaphorical expressions. Our focus will be on the types of legal text used in the Old Testament Hebrew canon and how they function.

Chapter two presents an overview of the metaphors involved in the conceptualisation of the Hebrew expression תורה *the Torah / Law* and related terms in the Hebrew Old Testament. Each conceptualisation is described through metaphorical vehicles, and in some cases through generic narrative structures as partial positions of a single conceptual metaphor. The metaphorical expressions selected from the Old Testament canon include not only those which represent conventional uses of the conceptual metaphor but also innovations that are unique to the respective author.

Regarding the metaphorical conceptualisation of the key term תורה *the Torah / Law*, the book will explore whether there is any hierarchy or factual connection between the metaphors with respect to how often they are used and whether there are any mutual internal relations: we believe there may be a “centre” and a “peripheries.” Metaphors for the Torah such as honey, gold, sun and light are well known, especially in the Psalms, and are further developed by Jewish and Christian oral and written traditions. We will explore whether a potential centre of metaphorical conceptualisation is formed by these or other conceptual metaphors and will investigate whether this centre somehow corresponds to the etymology of the Hebrew expression תורה *the Torah / Law*. The first step towards describing and interpreting the meaning of each metaphorical expression is to identify the conceptual metaphor.

Where a metaphor occurs in an exegetically controversial place, the analysis could contribute to the interpretation of these passages of text, and chapter three is devoted to this aspect of the application of cognitive-linguistic analysis. Selected metaphorical statements related to תורה *the Torah / Law* in Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Proverbs will be subjected to more detailed analysis, which will then be used to interpret these passages.

The use of cognitive-linguistic analysis and the interpretation of metaphorical expressions has proved highly effective in the field of translation. Chapter three will also, therefore, look at translations of selected metaphorical expressions in Jeremiah and Zephaniah into modern Czech and English.

Just as Europe witnessed the cultivation of Christian, Renaissance and Baroque cultures, we now live in a “culture” of human rights. The liberal secular-humanist notion of human rights often claims to be a central shared value, a moral value, the highest good for Europe or even the whole world. The French Catholic theologian René

Cassin compared human dignity, freedom, equality and brotherhood to the pillars of a temple: the “temple” of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, in whose formulation he had a significant hand.¹ The case study in the final chapter is devoted to an analysis of the conceptual metaphors that contribute to the concept of human rights in the contemporary English-language teaching manual *Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People*. Here we will use the same methods as those used in the analysis and interpretation of metaphorical expressions in the Hebrew Old Testament. The analysis of the metaphors in *Compass* will contribute to the debate on the possible biblical (Jewish and Christian) origins of the whole idea, nature and culture of human rights. As we shall see, metaphors and other concepts and patterns of thought used in *Compass* bear undeniable signs of having been inspired by passages from the Bible and various aspects of Christian teaching.

1 Micheline Ishay, *The History of Human Rights. From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 5.

CHAPTER 1

**THE IDENTIFICATION,
ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
OF METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS
IN THE HEBREW TEXT
OF THE OLD TESTAMENT:
STARTING POINTS
AND METHODS**

Scholars have used a broad range of methods and approaches to analyse and interpret metaphorical expressions in the Hebrew text of the Bible. One rapidly developing field of study in this regard, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, is cognitive linguistics. This book will build on the development of cognitive and culturally oriented linguistics over the past four decades. Polish anthropological and culturally based linguistics, or ethnolinguistics (Jerzy Bartmiński, Ryszard Tokarski, Alicja Pajdzińska, etc.),² works with the notion of *the linguistic image of the world* (in Polish *językowy obraz świata*) and has been developing since the 1980s, initially independently of Anglo-American cognitive linguistics. Our preferred term of cognitive and culturally oriented linguistics covers a variety of approaches often associated with particular researchers or themes.

In 1980 Lakoff and Johnson caused a considerable stir, not only in the academic world, with their book *Metaphors We Live By*.³ The work was published at a time when scholars in the field of metaphor theory were re-evaluating existing research in light of Max Black's *interaction theory*,⁴ which revised the long-accepted *substitution theory* of metaphor. Around since the time of Aristotle, substitution theory states that a metaphor is a substitute that represents the transfer of the meaning of a word or phrase to one that is non-original; it is applied primarily in artistic or poetic language. Black's interaction theory states that *focus* and *frame* interact within metaphorical statements: metaphor is a process during which a word (*focus*) that is being used metaphorically is incorporated into a new *frame*, thereby providing insight into the metaphor; the metaphor organises our understanding of the subject of the metaphor (*focus*). Lakoff and Johnson and others speak of the *source domain* organising the information within the *target domain*. According to Black, we view the framework of metaphorical testimony through a focal point. In cognitive linguistics, a metaphor's ability to organise our view of the framework and to structure the *frame* (the target domain) through a *focus* (the source domain) is later called *mapping* or conceptualis-

2 See, for example: Janusz Anusiewicz, *Lingwistyka kulturowa. Zarys problematyki* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1995); Jerzy Bartmiński, *Językowe podstawy obrazu świata* (Lublin: Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2007); Jerzy Bartmiński, *Język w kontekście kultury* (Prague: Karolinum, 2016).

3 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

4 Max Black, *Models and Metaphors. Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962).

ation. This in turn led to the *conceptual metaphor theory*, the key concept of Lakoff-oriented cognitive linguistics.⁵

Lakoff and Johnson insisted that the metaphor reaches far beyond the field of poetic and literary language, and provided a convincing array of examples to demonstrate that metaphors are used widely in everyday communication. There is no sharp line between poetic metaphors, conventional metaphors used in everyday language, and lexicalised metaphors: in whatever sphere, the principle remains the same. Above all, a conceptual metaphor is the way in which we view and structure (conceptualise) one mental area on the basis of another. For Lakoff and Johnson, however, the conceptual metaphor is much more than a single metaphorical expression: it is the way in which we conceptualise individual concepts or even whole conceptual areas. The conceptual metaphor is realised through individual metaphorical expressions, conventional or innovative, in everyday language or in literature, and was later shown even to be active in areas such as non-verbal communication and iconography. Lakoff and Johnson showed that abstract terms for phenomena not commonly available to us through physical—sensory—contact are understood, experienced and spoken about through metaphors.

Cognitive and culturally oriented linguistics emphasises, therefore, that a metaphor is not a single concept but the realisation of the process of thinking and evoking similarity and the acceptance of analogy. A metaphor structures or organises the *target domain* on the basis of the *source domain*. According to Lakoff this takes place through the *image schema* of the source domain. *Image schemas* are models or mental patterns that enable conceptualisation of the target domain. Some such *image schemas* were described in *Metaphors We Live By*, such as schemas based on our corporeality (our bodily experience in relation to objects, our orientation in space, etc.), schemas that are *experiential gestalts*.⁶

In *The Body in the Mind* (1987), Johnson described image schemas such as CONTAINER, PART-WHOLE, CENTRE-PERIPHERY, CONNECTION, JOURNEY, START-FINISH.⁷ In *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (1987), Lakoff described four types of cognitive model through which conceptualisation takes place; metaphor is one of these models.⁸ In the world of literary texts, where several conceptual metaphors can be involved in the construction of metaphorical meaning, Fauconnier and Turner developed the *conceptual blending theory* (elsewhere the *conceptual integration theory*), which describes

5 George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things. What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

6 “Experiential gestalts are multidimensional structured wholes. Their dimensions, in turn, are defined in terms of directly emergent concepts. That is, the various dimensions (participants, parts, stages, etc.) are categories that emerge naturally from our experience.” Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 60.

7 Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind. The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

8 “In the conceptual system, there are four types of cognitive models: propositional, image-schematic, metaphoric, and metonymic. Propositional and image-schematic models characterize structure; metaphoric and metonymic models characterize mappings that make use of structural models.” Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 153–154.

the blending of the elements and inter-relationships of two or more mental spaces.⁹ The authors went on to develop the mental spaces theory, originally set out by Turner in *The Literary Mind* (1996).¹⁰ Turner uses the term *parable* rather than metaphor and unlike Lakoff and Johnson emphasises the narrative character of a metaphor.

In the wake of Lakoff and Johnson's seminal work, numerous researchers explored conceptual metaphors in both literary and everyday language. Metaphors generally fell into one of two broad categories: those which have a universal physical and spatial-experiential basis and can be found in various historical, linguistic and cultural contexts; and those linked to a specific socio-cultural, religious and, occasionally, geographical context (*socio-cultural metaphor*).

Zoltán Kövecses is one of the leading linguists dedicated to the study of the conceptual metaphor.¹¹ Other scholars explore metaphorical conceptualisations and their motivation and function in a particular area of social or cultural life, especially in the fields of politics and law.¹² Another interesting area of research is the comparison of metaphorical conceptualisations in different languages. The relevance of new concepts of the metaphor has also been demonstrated by the exploration of metaphors in visual communication and sign language for the deaf. The very same metaphors that occur in language have been documented in children's drawings, the fine arts, films, cartoons and comics, and in non-verbal communication (gestures, facial expressions, etc.).¹³ Cognitive and culturally oriented concepts of the metaphor are also considered in psycholinguistics, where metaphor is seen as an important tool of human perception and a means of organising experience (physical, mental, social, spiritual), memorising, and understanding and experiencing reality.¹⁴

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- 9 Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).
- 10 Mark Turner, *The Literary Mind. The Origins of Thought and Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- 11 Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphors of Anger, Pride, and Love: A Lexical Approach to the Structure of Concepts* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1986); Zoltán Kövecses, *Emotion Concepts* (New York: Springer, 1990); Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor and Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture. Universality and Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Zoltán Kövecses, *Where Metaphors Come From. Reconsidering Context in Metaphor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Zoltán Kövecses and Peter Szabo, "Idioms: A View from Cognitive Semantics," *Applied Linguistics* 17, no. 3 (1996): 326–355.
- 12 One of the more recent monographs is Michael Hanne and Robert Weisberg, eds., *Narrative and Metaphor in the Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
- 13 Alan Cienki, "Metaphoric Gestures and Some of Their Relations to Verbal Metaphorical Expressions," in *Discourse and Cognition: Bridging the Gap*, ed. Jean-Pierre Koenig (Stanford: CSLI, 1998), 198–204; Charles J. Forceville, "The Identification of Target and Source in Pictorial Metaphors," *Journal of Pragmatics* 34, no. 1 (2002): 1–14; Alice Deignan, *Metaphor and Corpus Linguistics* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005); Karen Sullivan, "Frame-Based Constraints on Lexical Choice in Metaphor," *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* 32, no. 1 (2006): 387–399; Karen Sullivan, "Grammar in Metaphor: A Construction Grammar Account of Metaphoric Language," doctoral dissertation, University of California, 2006; Karen Sullivan, *Mixed Metaphors: Their Use and Abuse* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Alan Cienki and Cornelia Müller, *Metaphor and Gesture* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008).
- 14 See, for example: René Dirven and Wolf Paprotté, eds., *The Ubiquity of Metaphor. Metaphor in Language and Thought* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1985); Sam Glucksberg, "The Psycholinguistics of Metaphor," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 7, no. 2 (2003): 92–96; Markus Tendhall, *A Hybrid Theory of Metaphor: Relevance Theory and Cognitive Linguistics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

The role of the *conceptual metaphor* is a subject of much scholarly discussion. Cognitive and culturally oriented linguistics foregrounds its cognitive function, whereby the metaphor captures and passes on the results of human cognitive activity, that is, results which remain within natural cognitive processes but which are not caught within the existing form of the language system. The metaphor represents a new semantic quality that cannot be achieved by other linguistic means. Another important function of the metaphor is the expression of meaning in a compressed form.¹⁵

The literature on cognitive and cultural linguistics is extensive. The first significant review was *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics* by Ungerer and Schmidt (1996). This was followed by *Cognitive Linguistics* by Croft and Cruse (2004), *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction* by Evans and Green (2005), and *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* edited by Geeraerts and Cuyckens (2007).¹⁶ In its forty-nine chapters, the *Oxford Handbook* outlines basic concepts such as embodiment, experimentalism, the prototype theory, the radial categories theory, mental spaces, conceptual metaphors, and the conceptual integration theory. It also includes several sections on cognitive grammar and identifies places where the subject matter overlaps with psychology, philosophy, political science and sociology. It provides a comprehensive bibliography.

The most recent large-scale project is *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (2017),¹⁷ which includes contributions from significant scholars in the field such as Laura Janda, Nick Enfield, Kurt Feyaertes, Karen Sullivan, Mark Turner, and Ronald Langacker. The compendium covers matters such as cognitive-linguistic methodology, written language and gestures, and the relationship between language, cognition and culture, and has chapters devoted to the embodiment theory, inter-subjectivism, various aspects of linguistic analysis (phonological, semantic, grammatical, pragmatic, structural grammar), overlaps between cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology, sociology and neuroscience, and of course metaphors. Part IV on Conceptual Mappings includes contributions from Eve Sweetser (conceptual mappings), Karen Sullivan (conceptual metaphors), Jeannette Littlemore (metonymy), Todd Oakley and Esther Pascual (the conceptual blending theory), Raymond Gibbs Jr. (embodiment), Elena Semino (corpus linguistics and metaphor), and Teenie Matlock (metaphor, simulation and fictive motion). Like its Oxford counterpart, the publication offers a rich bibliography.

15 See, for example: Jens Allwood and Peter Gärdenfors, eds., *Cognitive Semantics: Meaning and Cognition* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999); Alan Cienki, "An Image Schema and Its Metaphorical Extensions—Straight," *Cognitive Linguistics* 9 (1998): 107–149; Annalisa Baicchi, "The Relevance of Conceptual Metaphor in Semantic Interpretation," *Rivisteweb. The Italian Platform for the Humanities and Social Sciences* 1 (2017): 155–170.

16 Friedrich Ungerer and Hans-Jörg Schmid, *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics* (New York: Longman, 2006); William Croft and Alan Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Vyvyan Evans and Melanie Green, *Cognitive Linguistics. An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 188–213.

17 Barbara Dancygier, ed., *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Prominent cognitivist-oriented linguists in the sphere of Czech language include Irena Vaňková,¹⁸ Lucie Saicová Římalová,¹⁹ Iva Nebeská, Jasňa Šlédrová, and Lucie Šťastná;²⁰ Zbyněk Fišer applies cognitivist approaches in translation studies.²¹

Theologians employ cognitive-linguistic approaches in biblical studies, dogmatics, pastoral theology and religious studies. Research in biblical theology has been carried out along the lines of the conceptual metaphor theory since the 1980s, first by Sallie McFague,²² and more recently by Bonnie Howe,²³ Claudia Bergmann,²⁴ Regine Hunziger-Rodewald,²⁵ Brent Strawn,²⁶ Pierre van Hecke,²⁷ and others. In the context of the New Testament parables of the kingdom of God, Crossan pointed out that metaphors can introduce new and previously unknown meanings, concepts and insights, and are capable of conveying new realities and new religious, social and cultural experiences.²⁸

Comparative studies have revealed similar metaphorical approaches to key concepts in various archaic cultures and religious systems. This also applies to the Hebrew terms that will be the subject of our examination of the Old Testament, and of the expression תורה *the Torah / Law* and other terms related to it. These are consensuses that can be explained only through linguistics.²⁹

The universal dimension of some conceptual metaphors, such as the metaphor of the *journey*, which we will address here in relation to the Torah, probably stems from the anchoring of such concepts in the universal physical human experience of the existence of the human body in time and space, and in the physical nature of the structure of our pre-conceptual and conceptual experience. This aspect is noted by

18 Irena Vaňková, *Nádoba plná řeči. Člověk, řeč a přirozený svět* (Prague: Karolinum, 2007).

19 Lucie Saicová Římalová, "Představová schémata a popis jazyka. Schéma cesty v češtině," *Bohemistika* 9 (2009): 161-176; Saicová Římalová, Lucie, *Vybraná slovesa pohybu v češtině. Studie z kognitivní lingvistiky* (Prague: Karolinum, 2010); Irena Vaňková et al., *Co na srdci, to na jazyku. Kapitoly z kognitivní lingvistiky* (Prague: Karolinum, 2005).

20 Irena Vaňková, Jasňa Pacovská, and Jan Wiendel, eds., *Obraz člověka v jazyce a v literatuře* (Prague: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2010); Irena Vaňková and Lucie Šťastná, eds., *Horizonty kognitivně-kulturní lingvistiky*, vol. 2, *Metafory, stereotypy a kulturní rozrůzněnost jazyků jako obrazů světa* (Prague: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2018); Irena Vaňková, Veronika Vodrážková, and Radka Zbořilová, eds., *Horizonty kognitivně-kulturní lingvistiky*, vol. 1, *Schémata, stereotypy v mluvených a znakových jazycích* (Prague: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2017); Irena Vaňková and Jan Wiedl, eds., *Tělo, smysly, emoce v jazyce a v literatuře* (Prague: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2012); Jan Wiedl, ed., *Lidský život a každodennost v literatuře* (Prague: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2016).

21 Zbyněk Fišer, *Překlad jako kreativní proces. Teorie a praxe funkcionalistického překládání* (Brno: Host, 2009).

22 Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

23 Peter Bonnie Howe, *Because You Bear This Name. Conceptual Metaphor and the Moral Meaning of 1 Peter* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

24 Claudia D. Bergmann, *Childbirth as a Metaphor for Crisis. Evidence from the Ancient Near East, the Hebrew Bible, and IQH XI, 1-18* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008).

25 Regine Hunziger-Rodewald, *Hirt und Herde. Ein Beitrag zum alttestamentlichen Gottesverständnis* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2001).

26 Brent Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2005).

27 Pierre van Hecke, ed., *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005).

28 John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables. The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985).

29 See Jiří Starý and Tomáš Vitek, "Zákon, právo a spravedlnost v archaickém myšlení," in *Zákon a právo v archaických kulturách*, ed. Dalibor Antalík, Jiří Starý, and Tomáš Vitek (Prague: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2010), 13-54.

cognitive and cultural linguistics. The *embodiment theory* states that our conceptual structures arise from and depend upon our pre-conceptual experience.³⁰ Lakoff further states that, “The core of our conceptual systems is directly grounded in perception, body movement and experience of a physical and social character.”³¹

Modern cognitive linguistics offers methodological tools for the exegesis of metaphorical expressions in biblical studies. It enables scholars to study the processes involved in the construction of the meaning of metaphorical expressions and whole conceptual metaphors, to discern their function in the text, and to observe the semantic development of various terms, as well as semantic changes and their motivation. Cognitive-linguistic exploration in theology works with both universal metaphors and those that are closely tied to particular socio-cultural, religious or geographical contexts, and also with metaphors that are specific to a particular literary form of the Bible, a genre, an author, or a literary collection.

1.1 METHODS USED IN THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF HEBREW METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS RELATING TO THE TERM תורה THE TORAH / LAW, AND IN THE EXPLANATION OF MEANING

Our focus will be conceptual metaphors and their realisation in metaphorical expressions in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament which relate to one of the key biblical concepts, namely the term תורה (*the Torah / Law*). We will describe approaches to explaining the meaning of metaphorical expressions in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament using the methods of cognitive and culturally oriented linguistics. We will identify metaphorical expressions in the text and the conceptual metaphors that lie behind them. One possible application of this analysis is the detection of those elements in a passage of text which have significance for translation into modern languages, that is, the identification of the core meaning that must be preserved as precisely as possible in the target language.

The various theories and specifics of meaning are the concern of semiotics, semantics and pragmatics, but they are also relevant in the areas of anthropology, psychology and philosophy; meaning is also dealt with in art, literature and other cultural disciplines. Linguistic semantics uses the terms *meaning* and *meaning levels*.³² The study of

30 “Experience is thus not taken in the narrow sense of the things that have ‘happened to happen’ to a single individual. Experience is instead construed in the broad sense: the totality of human experience and everything that plays a role in it—the nature of our bodies, our genetically inherited capacities, our modes of physical functioning in the world, our social organization, etc.” Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 266.

31 *Ibid.*, 14.

32 Meaning can be lexical, grammatical, or pragmatic. The meaning of a word can be broken down into several components, such as conceptual (denotational; cognitive), collocative, connotational, social, emotive (affect-

meaning is also at the heart of cognitive and culturally oriented linguistics, which together with cognitive and culturally oriented semantics, pragmatics and poetics, offers a number of ways to describe the meaning of a word or utterance or even a complete literary work. What is key is the perceived connection with the human mind and the anthropological, ethnological and cultural constants. Cognitive and culturally oriented linguistics, and the semantic theories that go with it, have strongly criticised linguistic objectivism and structural theories of language.³³ In place of linguistic objectivism, Lakoff, Johnson and others talk about the *theory of the intersubjective system of meaning-making* or the *experiential realism theory*.³⁴ “Experiential realism” assumes that all our thinking, all our conceptual systems, are anthropocentric and conditioned by our physicality (human physical and sensory capabilities) and our social and cultural experiences.³⁵

The Czech cognitive linguist Irena Vaňková suggests that cognitive linguistics emphasises the close interconnection of language processes with cognitive and emotional processes, as well as with the sensory and physical experience of the world, with all human experience: “with ‘the whole person in us.’ Furthermore, meaning—not only lexical, but also grammatical and pragmatic—has a physical, experiential and subjective, or rather inter-subjective basis in the cognitive conception.”³⁶ Criticism of linguistic objectivism and objectivist semantic theories rests mostly on the study of colour categorisation, human biological categories, and the study of the categorisation of emotions and prototype phenomena in language.

As we have already noted, Polish anthropological and culturally based linguistics (Bartmiński, Tokarski, Pajdzińska, and others) is rooted in ethnology and ethnolinguistics and uses the umbrella term *the linguistic image of the world*. According to the Lublin linguist Bartmiński, the cognitive definition of meaning is a *story of an object*,³⁷ which indicates the characteristics of a subject that the linguistic and cultural community considers essential. By contrast, cognitive linguistics of predominantly American origin (for example, Croft, Fauconnier, Janda, Johnson, Kóvecses, Lakoff, Langacker, Turner) has its roots in the theory of artificial intelligence, psychology, neurology and psycholinguistics, and explores cognitive structures and the organisation of consciousness assisted by the kind of analysis of cognitive strategies that people use in language manifestations and to preserve information and think, learn and understand.

tive; emotional), reflected, and thematic-rhematic. For more detail, see Svatova Machová and Milena Švehlová, *Sémantika & pragmatická lingvistika* (Prague: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2001), 17.

33 See, for example, Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, part II.

34 See Vaňková et al., *Co na srdci*, 59–66; Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 261–268; Vaňková, *Nádoba plná řeči*, 56–57.

35 For more on this, see Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 14–16; Vaňková et al., *Co na srdci*, 24–26, 37–66, 195; Vaňková, *Nádoba plná řeči*, 56–57.

36 Vaňková et al., *Co na srdci*, 79–80.

37 Jerzy Bartmiński, “Definicja kognitywna jako narzędzie opisu konotacji,” in *Konotacja*, ed. Jerzy Bartmiński (Lublin: Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1988), 169–183.

Language is perceived primarily in its relation to the human ability to acquire knowledge and to think. The explanation of meaning is therefore de facto a description of the process of conceptualising. Meaning is therefore identical to the mental representation of a concept in the human mind.³⁸

Anna Wierzbicka, a Polish linguist living in Australia, developed a distinctive approach to describing meaning, which she defines as what people think of when they encounter a word, how they understand it, and what they mean when they use the word. Wierzbicka maintains that all languages contain a relatively small number (approximately 60–100) of universal semantic primes. These primary semantic units are then used to explain the meaning of other passages of text.³⁹ Vaňková talks about the cognitive definition of meaning, which concerns, “how an average subject (characteristic, activity, etc.) is perceived by an average native speaker of a given language, what it means, which aspects of its appearance and function, characteristics, activities and states associated with it are characteristic and significant.”⁴⁰ All the available information provided by language (transferred meanings, phraseology, typical collocations) and the texts of this language are taken into account. Describing the meaning of a word is a complex business. It involves, among other things: (i) taking into account its etymology, its motivation, the inner form of the word, the secondary and transferred meanings, the meanings of word derivatives, used phrases, and connotations (including connotations in texts of a given linguistic and cultural sphere); (ii) naming the meaning stereotype; and (iii) formulating prototypical scenarios. The explanation of meaning is then a complete picture of knowledge of the subject and its characteristics and activities in a given linguistic and cultural sphere.⁴¹

Offering even the most basic overview of the literature on meaning, even one limited to linguistic and cognitively oriented disciplines, is well beyond the scope of this book. However, the connection with the human mind and with anthropological, ethnological and cultural constants will all be taken as essential components of any explanation of the meaning of metaphorical expressions related to the term תורה *the Torah / Law*. We present here only those theories and methods from cognitive and culturally oriented linguistics that have been used to identify metaphorical expressions related to תורה *the Torah / Law* in Old Testament texts, that is, theories and methods that have been used to describe the meaning of these metaphorical expressions and to describe the conceptual metaphors which lie behind them. These include:

38 Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 12.

39 A definition of the phrase *to feel afraid* can be described as follows: • I felt afraid. = • I felt something because I thought something » sometimes a person thinks: » “something bad can happen to me now » I do not want this to happen » because of this I want something » I do not know what I can do” » because this person thinks this, this person feels something bad • I felt (something) like this because I thought something like this. See Anna Wierzbicka, *Emotions across Languages and Cultures. Diversity and Universals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 14.

40 Vaňková et al., *Co na srdci*, 82.

41 In the Czech context, several authors, including Vaňková, Nebeská, Saicová-Římalová, and Šlédrová, have developed this concept of language and meaning, largely along the lines of Bartmiński and other Lublin linguists.

- the conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff, Johnson, Kövecses)⁴²
- embodiment theory⁴³
- the mental spaces theory (Fauconnier) and the conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier, Turner)⁴⁴

These theories are being developed and modified by numerous scholars but have their fair share of critics and opponents. Space does not permit a full discussion; the relevant discourse has been reflected on in the Oxford and Cambridge *Handbooks*, and elsewhere.

EMBODIMENT THEORY

We will assume that not only the general meaning but also the metaphorical meaning is anchored physically, socially and culturally. We will see in concrete conceptual metaphors used in Hebrew Old Testament texts that physical, social and cultural experience is an important basis of metaphorical conceptualisations. Hebrew terms such as תורה (*the Torah / Law*), צדקה / צדק (*justice*), and משפט (*judgment*), and even some highly abstract concepts, are often structured by the metaphorical mapping of terms and domains that reflect people's immediate physical, social and cultural experience. In order to explore the meaning of many conceptual metaphors in the Hebrew Old Testament, it is essential to know the cultural, religious and social environment not only of ancient Israel but of the entire Middle East. Metaphorical concepts that are the same as or similar to those used in the biblical text also appear in cults, social structures, and materialist and spiritual cultures.

THE MENTAL SPACES THEORY

This theory was suggested by Fauconnier in the mid-1980s to explain the construction of meaning in natural languages. Fauconnier understood mental spaces as partial complexes constructed during the process of thinking and speaking for the purpose of understanding and action.⁴⁵ Unlike the semantic area, the mental space is a matter of mind and language and its primary function is understanding.⁴⁶

42 See Geeraerts and Cuyckens, *Oxford Handbook*, 188–213; Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*.

43 See Geeraerts and Cuyckens, *Oxford Handbook*, 25–47; Dancygier, *Cambridge Handbook*, 449–462.

44 See Geeraerts and Cuyckens, *Oxford Handbook*, 170–187, 351–393; Dancygier, *Cambridge Handbook*, 379–384, 423–448.

45 “Mental spaces are very partial assemblies constructed as we think and talk for purposes of local understanding and action. They contain elements and are structured by frames and cognitive models.” Geeraerts and Cuyckens, *Oxford Handbook*, 351.

46 According to Fauconnier, mental spaces contain elements that are structured by both frameworks and cognitive models. Fauconnier's mental spaces theory follows Fillmore's semantic conception of scenes and frames (see Geeraerts and Cuyckens, *Oxford Handbook*, 171–177). Cognitive models are structures that organise the content