Blood Revenge in Light of the Imago Dei in Genesis 9:6. Its Semantics and Pragmatics[1]

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Abstract: In recent years, some scholars have claimed that God's creation of humanity in the divine image (Gen 1:26-28) presents both a royal-functional reading and also the model of nonviolence that counters recurrent violence throughout the Hebrew Bible. This nonviolent reading of humanity created in God's image disregards the mention of this concept at the end of the Flood Narrative in Gen 9:6. This article firstly takes into consideration the proximate context and semantics of Gen 9:6 expressed through its structural, linguistic and syntactic aspects. Moreover, the pragmatics of this saying will be analyzed through the investigative criteria of discursive analysis to better identify how semantic meaning and other contextual features underpin what is communicated by this challenging utterance.

Keywords: Book of Genesis, image of God, creation, flood narrative, blood, vengeance

The account that human beings are made in God´s 'image' (צֶלֶם) appears in Genesis 1:26-27 and became the *locus classicus* of the doctrine of *imago Dei*. The motif of human beings created in the image and likeness of God finds its exegetical basis in the first book of the Old Testament (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1 and 9:6).[2] The idea that humanity is made in the image of God and somehow bears that divine image is a to a certain extent bold doctrine. In his commentary on Genesis, Claus Westermann has listed six different lines of opinion regarding the image of God in the history of interpretation of the Genesis creation story. First group of exegetes are those who distinguish between a natural and supernatural similarity to God. Second are those who define the image as spiritual capacities and abilities. The third group consists of those who interpret the image as external form and corporeality. The fourth group of exegetes is made up of those who are in sharp opposition to the theologians in the third group. The fifth group includes

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2   Its echo sounds in the deuterocanonical and apocryphal references in Wis 2:23; Eccl 17:1-4 and 2 Esd 8:44. The idea that people are made in God´s image again resounds in the New Testament in Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 11:7; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4; Eph 4:24; Col 1:15 and Jas 3:9.

those who understand the image as primarily indicating that a human being is God's counterpart, someone who corresponds to God. Finally, in the sixth group are those who interpret 'image' as man's ability to represent God on earth.[3] This last interpretative position is known as the functional interpretation of the image of God and is based on a democratisation of the royal representation of God/gods.[4] It has gained almost universal acceptance in the last century among OT scholars, and sees humans holding a royal office as representatives of God in the world, a functional view of the image of God in mankind. Other clarifications of *imago Dei* mentioned above fall more or less under a substantialist, relational, material interpretation with their own proponents.[5] Hence, the question of what 'human being created on the image of God' means is not resolved. In my view, to understand this motif it is crucial to see the comprehensive use of both words 'image' (צֶלֶם) and 'likeness' (דְּמוּת) in all instances of Gen 1–11 (1:26, 27bis; 5:1, 3 and 9:6). As Catherine McDowel recently explained, both terms and their uses in specific contexts have to do with the correspondence, similarity, and kinship between God and humans. She suggests that the phrase *imago Dei* may have been intended as a double entendre, referring to the human being both as a "living statue" of God and also his "son."[6]

Recently some scholars have claimed that God's creation of humanity in the divine image presents both the royal-functional reading interpretation and also the model of nonviolence that counters recurrent violence throughout the Hebrew Bible. They therefore read Gen 9:6 as a prohibition of murder and an affirmation of the worth of human life.[7] They interpret Gen 9:6 in the sense that human life should not be taken, because human beings are made in God's image. In my view, this nonviolent reading of Gen 9:6 disregards the pragmatics of this axiom and

3   C. Westermann, *Genesis* (London – New York: Clark 1987) 148-158 quoted in J. Jančovič, "Imago Dei: An Exegetical and Theological Reappraisal", *ET-Studies* 10/2 (2019) 195.

4   The pioneer of this interpretation was J. Hehn, "Zum Terminus 'Bild Gottes'," *Festschrift Eduard Sachau zum siebzigsten Geburtstage* (Berlin: Reimer 1915) 36-52; its current key proponent is J.R. Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos 2005).

5   The terminology of substantialist, relational, and functional interpretation of image of God was introduced by J.H. Douglas, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1986) 89. Overview works in this direction were presented by R.S. Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity: A Theological Interpretation* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 2016) 37-42; Jančovič, "Imago Dei," 199-200.

6   C. McDowel, "In the Image of God He Created Them: How Genesis 1:26-27 Defines the Divine-Human Relationship and Why It Matters," *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology* (eds. B.F. Jones – J.W. Barbeau) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 2016) 42-43.

7   D.W. Cotter, *Genesis* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press 2003) 60; J.R. Middleton, "Created in the Image of a Violent God? The Ethical Problem of the Conquest of Chaos in Biblical Creation Texts," *Int* 58/4 (2004) 341-355; J.F.D. Creach, *Violence in Scripture. Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 2013) 26.

the precise meaning of the concept 'image of God' in the context of retributive violence at the end of the Flood Narrative (Gen 6:9-9:17). The goal of the study is to identify the precise meaning, motivation and effectiveness of blood vengeance. Therefore this paper consists of three main parts: after the introduction, the first part reviews the proximate context of Gen 9:6; the second part examines structural, linguistic and syntactic aspects of the verse and the third one identifies the pragmatic factors of the saying through the rules of discursive analysis. The reason for the two steps of exegetical analysis of Gen 9:6 (first structural, linguistic and syntactic and secondly pragmatic) consists in the fact that though this biblical saying usually is realized on the semantic, truth-conditioned level, it is rather implied by discourse-conditioned and pragmatic factors.[8]

1. Proximate Context of Gen 9:6

The narrative context of the utterance in Gen 9:6 is the conclusion of the story of the great flood according to the priestly tradition (P; 9:1-17).[9] This closure is made in two parts (vv. 1-7 and 8-17). This priestly layer follows the first closure at Gen 8:20-22.[10] Between the twin conclusions of the Flood Narrative, there are similarities: Gen 8:21 agrees in content with Gen 9:8-17 that 'never again will there be a flood' and Gen 8:22 agrees with Gen 9:1-7 in 'the rhythm of life will not be halted by multiplying and lordship over the world'.[11] God first blesses humanity, represented by Noah and his sons, and establishes a covenant with them never again to destroy the earth by flood. The blessing of Noah and his sons has the function of regeneration. The chief focus of Gen 9:1-7 is on the sovereignty of God over all life. The Flood Narrative as a whole is a testimony to God´s supreme authority in the created order and this is further emphasized in the solemn charges in Gen 9:1-7.[12] The blessing given twice to Noah in Gen 9:1,7 repeats the original blessing in Gen 1:28 *verbatim* and Gen 9:6 reaffirms without qualification the human being as an image of God (Gen 1:26-27). God again makes

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8   Semantics is the study of how sentences of a language – or some suitable level of representation, such as logical forms – compositionally determine truth conditions, while pragmatics is the study of inferences that hearers draw on the basis of interpreting truth-conditional meaning. The semantics is sometimes referred to as „what is said," the pragmatics as „what is meant or what is implied." Therefore, unlike semantics, pragmatics concerns the context of particular words and how that context impacts their meaning.

9   Westermann, *Genesis*, 63.

10   P.J. Harland, *The Value of Human Life: A Study of the Story of the Flood (Genesis 6–9)* (Leiden: Brill 1996) 141.

11   J. Krašovec,"Punishment and Mercy in the Primeval History (Gen 1–11)," *ETL* 70 (1994) 20.

12   Harland, *The Value of Human Life*, 145.

a significant concession: while humans were created ideally to be vegetarians (Gen 1:29-30), in the postdiluvian world they are permitted to eat meat, although consuming blood is prohibited (Gen 9:4). The narrator sees a connection between the pouring out of animal blood and the pouring out of human blood (Gen 9:5). God first promises to require a reckoning for any human blood spilled by other humans or by animals, which is expressed in v. 5 by the tripled *Qal* imperfect אֶדְרֹשׁ 'I will require'. The interdiction in Gen 9:5-6 concerning human blood acquires even greater significance. Consumption of blood here is not a problem. In contrast to animals, man's life as such is inviolable, and therefore impunity to shed human blood is totally excluded. The causation for this is not biological but theological. The causal clause (v. 6b) of the saying serves as a hint to Gen 1:26-26. The main clause about pouring out of human blood in Gen 9:5-6 makes indirect reference both to the violence of Cain and Lamech in Gen 4 and 'violence' (חָמָס) on the earth (Gen 6:11,13), which was God's motivation for wiping out mankind with the flood.[13]

2. Semantics of Blood Revenge in Gen 9:6

After the description of proximate context of Gen 9:6, I next offer a close structural and linguistic analysis of this maxim about blood revenge. This chiastic maxim with its causal clause and distinctive vocabulary seems to be an editorial splice inserted as the apex into the benediction of Gen 9:1-7. The sentence in Gen 9:6 is the most difficult verse in the divine speech for several reasons, which I detail below.

2.1. Structural Analysis of Gen 9:6

Gen 9:6 is the tricolon (v. 6aα.aβ.b). Its structure is very similar to the tricolon of Gen 1:27. The following layout of the Hebrew text and its translation makes visible a chiasmus of two lines of Gen 9:6, which forms a main clause (v. 6aαβ) that is connected to a causal clause (v. 6b):

6aα   שֹׁפֵךְ דַּם הָאָדָם   *Whoever sheds the blood of a human,*
6aβ   בָּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשָּׁפֵךְ   *by a human shall his blood be shed;*
6b   כִּי בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם   *for in (his) image God made mankind.*

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13   Harland, *The Value of Human Life*, 160.

The poetic character of the verse is achieved by a number of syllables in tri-colon (6 : 8 : 13), but the rhythm makes the verse more balanced by the dis-position of accents in the three sentences (3 : 3 : 4). The causal clause (v. 6b) counts six words just like the whole main clause (v. 6a). The textual disposition of Gen 9:6 makes evident: a) the triple intensive presence of the Hebrew term אָדָם in the whole sentence and its central position in the mirror chiasmus of v. 6aαβ, and also its parallel final position in v. 6aα and v. 6b; b) the double presence of the verb שֹׁפֵךְ 'to shed' in the borderline position of chiasmus. Krašovec af-firms that the maxim about blood vengeance in Gen 9:6 has poetic features just like Gen 1:27.[14] The poetic character of Gen 9:6 is underlined by a segmented position of Hebrew words in the critical *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS). Krašovec discerns that the symmetry of v. 6aαβ between cause and consequence, i.e. crime and punishment, is based on concentric form of this poetic proverb.[15]

The phrase בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים in 9:6b contains a "double-duty" divine name אֱלֹהִים.[16] The name God is associated both with the phrase בְּצֶלֶם 'in the image' and with the verb עָשָׂה 'made'. The two functions of the divine name here achieve brevity and rhythm in this causal sentence. The causal clause parallels in content with similar constructions in Gen 1:27b ('in the image of God he created them') and in Gen 5:1c ('he made them in the likeness of God').

2.2. Linguistic and Syntactic Analysis of Gen 9:6

The verb שֹׁפֵךְ 'to shed, pour out' used in v. 6 is very rare in the Book of Genesis (only Gen 9:6bis; 37:22). On the contrary, the verb is very often used in the leg-islative texts of the Book of Leviticus (10x) and Ezekiel (33x) within the con-text of violence and vengeance. This context is in Gen 9 also supported by the Hebrew verb דרשׁ 'to require, search' in first person singular, which is used three times in the previous verse in Gen 9:5. This tripled usage of דרשׁ empha-sizes God´s sovereignty over human life. The verb is used in the semantic field of blood vengeance (e.g. Eze 33:6; Psa 9:13; 2 Ch 24:22). Its use at the conclu-sion of the Flood Narrative provides the decisive semantic lens through which we must interpret Gen 9:6.[17] The first person speech of Gen 9:5 can lead a reader

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14   Krašovec, "Punishment and Mercy", 22.

15   Krašovec, "Punishment and Mercy", 22.

16   For example the translation of Gen 9:6b in NIV: ... *for in the image of God has God made man-kind*; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150* (AB 17A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 429-444 coined the adjective 'double-duty' to describe the item that is retained. Under the heading 'ellipsis', all kinds of 'double-duty' can be classified.

17   S.M. Wilson, "Blood Vengeance and the *Imago Dei* in the Flood Narrative (Genesis 9:6)," *Int* 71/3 (2017) 269.

to believe that humans are to cede this power to God alone, in line with Deuteronomy's dictum that vengeance belongs to YHWH (Deut 32:35).[18] But the divine speech about vengeance in v. 6 continues impersonally with a description of human activity in the third person.

After the main sentence in v. 6ab with the unusual verbal order of Hebrew verbs in the *qotel* pattern שֹׁפֵךְ (=*Qal* active participle) and *yiqtol* יִשָּׁפֵךְ (=*Nifal* imperfect), the typical causative sentence with *x-qatal* אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה in v. 6b explains the first sentence. Alviero Niccacci has emphasized the syntactic flexibility of verbs caused by parallelism. Due to the segmental nature of poetry, Gen 9:6 switches from one verbal form to another, differently than in prose.[19]

The initial *Qal* participle שֹׁפֵךְ 'shedding/one who sheds' in the independent relative clause of the legal axiom of Gen 9:6 occupies a position of *casus pendens*, meaning "as for him who sheds."[20] It can denote the legal case of human blood-shedding.[21] The initial participle in the phrase is a common element of poetic texts (see Psa 91:1; 136:4; Pro 7:8; Isa 5:8; 14:17) and usually expresses a shared experience.[22] When the plain imperfect follows the initial participle, which is the case of Gen 9:6b with the *Niphal* verb יִשָּׁפֵךְ 'it shall be shed', the so-called *modus rei repetitae* is expressed in the present time.[23] The verse is abruptly formulated in the third person which is typical for a maxim formulation or an apodictic, legislative norm (Exod 21:12, 15, 16; 22:18, 19). All these remarks confirm that Gen 9:6 is the legislative norm of adequate revenge.[24]

Another textual problem lies in the expression בָּאָדָם in which the meaning of the preposition בְּ is questionable. In my view it is crucial that this expression lies in the passive sentence (v. 6aβ). Two interpretations of the preposition are commonly given. The first one explains it as *bet instrumentale* with the term אָדָם representing the new subject of the second sentence in v. 6aβ.[25] In this interpretation the clause can be translated: 'by a human his blood shall be shed' and the vast majority of translations reflect this possibility. In this completely pas-

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18 G.W. Coats, *Genesis: With an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1983) 78.

19 A. Niccacci, "The Biblical Hebrew Verbal System in Poetry," *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting* (eds. S. E. Fassberg – A. Hurvitz) (Winona Lakes, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006) 248.

20 B.K. Waltke – M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 1990) 621.

21 P. Dubovský (ed.), *Genezis* (KSZ 1; Trnava: Dobrá kniha 2008) 248.

22 B. Hroboň (ed.), *Žalmy 76-100* (KSZ 9; Trnava: Dobrá kniha 2018) 464.

23 W. Gesenius – F. Kautzsch, *Hebräische Grammatik* (Leipzig: Vogel 1902) 365.

24 Wilson, "Blood Vengeance," 270-271.

25 The universal aspect of term אָדָם is clear in Gen 1:26-27, the Flood Narrative, and the Noachic commandments of 9:5-6. The use of the word in the Hebrew Bible presents one of the strongest evidences for ancient Israelite universalism. This universalistic meaning is expressed by the definite article in the term אָדָם in Gen 9:5-6.

sive reading of the sentence, the expression בָּאָדָם indicates an agent.[26] The second interpretation of the preposition בְּ explains it as *bet pretii*. This understanding reflects the shorter Greek text of the Septuagint (LXX): ἀντὶ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ ἐκχυθήσεται 'instead of that blood shall his own be shed' or 'in return for his blood shall it be shed'. A similar translation of v. 6b is in the Vulgate: *fundetur pro sanguine illius.* Absent in both ancient translations is any reference to the Hebrew בָּאָדָם 'by a human', thereby leaving the executor of vengeance unstated. The probable reason for that was social context: the Hellenistic Jewish translator lived in a world in which the monopoly of deadly force in Second Temple Jewish culture was no longer in the hands of the community itself. Therefore, because neither the community nor its leaders had the power to enforce capital punishment, and because the translator did not wish to draw the wrath of the powers that governed the Jewish community by claiming authority that belonged exclusively to them, the translator may have decided to ignore בָּאָדָם in his Hebrew *Vorlage*.[27] The Hebrew text of Gen 9:6 admits both possibilities of the preposition בְּ, although the vast majority of translations are in favour of *bet instrumentale*.[28]

The reason for requiring the life of the murderer is given in the causal clause (v. 6b) of the saying. The conjunction כִּי at the beginning of the causal sentence is habitually interpreted as a causal conjunction ('for'), but Ulrich Wöller on the base of Gen 8:21 is in favor of a concessive conjunction in the sense of 'although' or 'even though'.[29] Such a sense of the preposition would admit the possibility of human bloodshed. Consequently, the phrase in Gen 9:6b introduces the obligation for people to be more conformed to the image of God. Such a concessive meaning of the conjunction כִּי would favor a nonviolent reading of Gen 9:6, analogous to the thesis of Middleton and Creach mentioned above.[30] But from structural, morphological and syntactic analyses, it seems more apparent to me that through the chiastic maxim in Gen 9:6, God allowed humans to serve as God's instrument for achieving the reckoning for any human blood spilled by other humans (at least with regard to human murderers): 'Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall his blood be shed' (9:6a). Humanity's responsibility to avenge blood by punishing murder proportionately is then theologically justified by human creation in the divine image (9:6b). This causal clause with *x-qatal* word composition (בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם 'in his

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26   Waltke – O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 197, 385.

27   J. Lust, "'For Man Shall His Blood Be Shed:' Gen 9:6 in Hebrew and in Greek," *Tradition of the Text: Studies Offered to Dominique Berthélemy in Celebration of his 70th Birthday* (eds. G. I. Norton – S. Pisano) (OBO 109; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1991) 91-102.

28   There are authors in favour of *bet pretii*, e.g. Lust, "For Man Shall His Blood Be Shed," 91-102; Dubovský, *Genezis*, 248.

29   U. Wöller, "*Übersetzung von k*î in Gen. 8:21 und 9:6," *ZAW* 94 (1982) 637-638.

30   Middleton, "Created in the Image of a Violent God?" 341-355; Creach, *Violence in Scripture*, 26.

own image God made humankind') has the same syntax as the second clause in Gen 1:27aβ (בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ 'in the image of God he created him'), which explains the first sentence Gen 1:27aα ('God created mankind in his image'). But Niccacci translates Gen 1:27aβ differently: 'it was in the image of God that he created him'. He called this type of clause a complex (or compound) nominal clause to distinguish it from the simple nominal (or non-verbal) clause, i.e., one without a finite verb.[31] I see a similar situation in the case of the *x-qatal* sentence in Gen 9:6b, which can be translated as follows to highlight the syntax: 'for it was in the image of God that he made mankind'. Only the context helps determine that the 'x' element in the verse carries emphasis, i.e. 'the image of God'.

3. Pragmatics of Blood Revenge in Gen 9:6

The pragmatics of the utterance of Gen 9:6 is explained both by context and by the inferred meanings of the sentence, because pragmatics generally concerns the context of particular words and how that context impacts their meaning.

As the priestly pericope of Gen 1:1–2:3 and the priestly rewriting of Gen 6–9 indicates, to be created in the image of God is not to be God. The human beings are like God in some way, yet they are not God. Arguably this is the point with respect both to power and to blood shedding. What is wrong with shedding human blood in Gen 9:6 is that the one who claims mastery over human blood, hence over human life and death, usurps the place of God, a place that cannot properly be occupied by one who is only created in the image of God, but is not God. However, people are in a very close relation of kinship with God and there is a correspondence between God and human beings. It is not the simple phrase צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים but the complete idea that 'mankind was created in the image of God', that contributes to the understanding of the phrase צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים in the causal clause (v. 6b).

The poetic fragment of Gen 9:5-6 about the shedding of blood explicitly refers to Gen 1:26-27 and implicitly refers as well to the shedding of blood in Gen 4:8-11, 23-24.[32] The utterance of Gen 9:5 establishes the Israel-

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31   A. Niccacci, "An Integrated Verb System for Biblical Hebrew Prose and Poetry," *Congress IOSOT Volume Ljubljana 2007* (2010) 107.

32   Gordon Wenham observes that Gen 9:5 "is the first time אָח 'brother' has been used since Gen 4, where the term is harped on to highlight the incongruity of Cain's action." He concludes, "אָח in Gen 9:5 is an allusion to Cain's murder of Abel" (G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* [Dallas, TX: Word 1998] 193). Kenneth Mathews also concludes that אָח in Gen 9:5 alludes to Cain's murder of Abel, and the reason he gives for the allusion is compelling: to demonstrate that "murder is fratricide by virtue of the inherent covenant all people have with God as created in his 'image.' We are to that fundamental

ite kinship-based institution of the 'blood avenger' (גֹּאֵל הַדָּם, literally the 're-deemer of blood' in Deut 19:6, 12; cf. Num 35:19, 21, 24, 27; Jos 20:3, 5, 9; 2 Sam 14:11). The sentence of Gen 9:6 refers also to the violence (חָמָס) that was the reason for the flood (Gen 6:11-13) in the introduction to the Flood Narrative; three times in these three verses is mentioned the corruption of the earth, and therefore God decides to destroy it. Peter Harland suggests that the flood may be God's effort to avenge the blood of the victims of the violence so rampant on the earth.[33] The poetic fragment of Gen 9:6 embedded into the benediction speech of God after the flood articulates that God has dominion over all life and that violence must be as limited as possible. I defined shedding blood as an expression of violence, which is related to the violence that was a reason for the flood (Gen 6:11-13), related to the ferocity that motivates Lamech´s saying in Gen 4:24. Tikva Frymer-Kensky persuasively argues that Gen 9:6 is better understood with that meaning of the Flood Narrative. God's primary concern immediately after the flood was to establish capital punishment for murderers (Gen 9:5-6), a law that did not exist before the flood.[34] In addition, Cain´s fratricide in Gen 4:8-11 and Lamech´s song in Gen 4:23-24 are proof of this absence. This thematic relation of the first plain poetry in Gen 4:23-24 with the similarly poetic text in 9:6 indicates that violence was not only the cause of the flood but as the permanent problem had been solved in the *lex talionis* (נֶפֶשׁ תַּחַת נָפֶשׁ 'life for life' in Exod 21:23-25; cf. Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21; Matt 5:38).

3.1. Discoursive Analysis of Gen 9:6

In the semantic analysis (2) the chiastic axiom of Gen 9:6 revealed its poetic shape and configuration.[35] By taking into account its poetic disposition and verbal patterns, I contend that the analysis of this poetic verse is not to be limited only to the structural, linguistic and syntactic principles, but also should take into account the pragmatics of its poetic style. In recent decades, the communicative and pragmatic characteristics of texts have become very important also in the consideration of biblical Hebrew poetry. Biblical poetry is a very specific type of communication: the participants in it and its content are by no means similar to those of most prose texts; biblical poetic texts entail noteworthy pragmatic inferences

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degree all brothers and sisters in that we are all human" (K.A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26* [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996] 404).

33   Harland, *The Value of Human Life*, 160.

34   T. Frymer-Kensky, "The Atrahasis Epic and its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1-9," *BA* 40/4 (1977) 153.

35   Krašovec,"Punishment and Mercy," 22 takes a similar perspective.

and demonstrate unique temporal characteristics expressed through the verbs.[36] Also Niccacci has emphasized the syntactic flexibility of verbs caused by parallelism in poetry, which is also evident in Gen 9:6a. He has claimed that a poetry is able to switch from one temporal axis to another even more freely than direct speech. This results in a greater variety of, and more abrupt transition from, one verbal form to another."[37] This switch of temporal axes is most commonly postulated for cases of so-called 'tense shifting' in parallel half-verses, due to parallelism. As a result of the semantic analysis of tense[38] and the aspect of verbs and of some elements of discourse representation theory, discursive analysis (abbreviated as DA) of poetic texts is used especially among English-speaking scholars. This analysis evaluates mainly communicative and pragmatic characteristics of texts and includes five principle criteria.[39]

Following these criteria of DA, it is first necessary to outline the communicative situation of the poetic saying we know as Gen 9:6. The communicative situation in poetry includes participants in communication (addresser and addressee), the level of their involvement in communication, and the source of subjectivity in the text.[40] Gen 9:6 occurs in the conversational framework of Gen 9. God directly is speaking in the unit Gen 9:1-7.[41] The whole speech of God in Gen 9:1-7 is similar to the predictive or prophetic speech to the human collective with some proverbial characteristics, as I pointed out above in the structural

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36   Recently, many in biblical studies have adopted John Searle´s Speech Act Theory (SAT), in which he classifies direct speech acts as assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives (J. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1969] 7-9; *idem*, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* [Cambridge - London - New York: Cambridge University Press 1979]).

37   Niccacci, "The Biblical Hebrew", 248.

38   Time is a chronological category with three temporal axes – present, past, and future; tense is a linguistic category regarding the different verb forms and non-verbal constructions that a given language uses to indicate each of the three temporal axes in both historical narrative and direct speech (Niccacci, "Integrated Verb System," 99-127).

39   The first two criteria are concerned with participants in the text; the last three criteria deal with time in the text (T. Notarius, *The Verb in Archaic Biblical Poetry: A Discursive, Typological, and Historical Investigation of the Tense System* [SSLL 68; Leiden: Brill 2013] 31-39).

40   A communicative situation usually occurs in two main branches of speech: (a) the *conversational framework,* which also embraces quoted speech. The main subtypes of poetic speech are: *hymnal* speech in which the human individual addresses the divine; *prophetic* speech in which the divine addresses the human collective or the human individual; *proverbial* speech in which the individual addresses the human collective (rarely another individual)and is represented in many varieties; (b) the *monologue-blocks* that develop out of the conversational framework including the *narrative* as a kind of monologue, along with other monologue-like discourse modes. In monologue-blocks arising out of narrative discourse, the modes of speaker and listener are commonly not marked explicitly and are covert (e.g. Deut 32:8, 20; 2 Sam 22:5-20); in other types of monologue-blocks, such as *report, description*, *information*, and *argument*, the expressions of the addresser and addressee are more explicit (Notarius, *The Verb in Archaic Biblical Poetry*, 31-39).

41   God here gives to Noah´s family some new rules, which are known as Noachide laws in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 56a).

analysis of v. 6. In Gen 9:1, 7 there are two benedictions; v. 5 contains God′s initial statement of 'blood avenger' and v. 6a holds a preliminary norm of *lex talionis* ('life for life, eye for eye' Exod 21:23-24). In a manner strikingly similar to Gen 1, God indirectly delegates humanity with the power to punish human blood-shedding, and just as in the creation story, this delegation of power by God is justified by the creation of humanity in God's image (Gen 9:6b).

In the second step DA determines the main pragmatic intentions of poetic speech, such as direct and indirect speech-acts produced by the speaker, as well as illocutionary intentions on the part of the speaker. Thus, hymnal speech gives expression to the speech acts of praise, thanksgiving, and request/prayer. Prophetic speech is concerned with warning, threat, and promise. Proverbial speech is marked for two main illocutionary intentions: blessing or curse and indoctrination or instruction. The main pragmatic intention produced by the divine speaker of Gen 9:1-7 is both a blessing and in the case of vv. 4-6 an instructive warning for the future. All the verses of God′s speech except verse 6 register at the level of I-you relationship. Whereas v. 5 is a direct speech act with the triple *Qal* imperfect אֶדְרֹשׁ 'I will require', v. 6 is paradoxically composed as an indirect speech act speaking about God only in the third person. Such an act is implied by the constituents of the communicative situation. This kind of impersonal saying in v. 6 highlights on the communication level the fact that blood revenge in response to human blood-shedding is a human activity authorized by God. In the case of the fratricide of Abel, God acted directly against Cain, the killer of his brother. Now God supplies in Gen 9:6 for the first time in the Torah the legislation by which man's desire for revenge against the shedder of blood is recognized and granted.[42] The role of agent is expressed by the phrase בָּאָדָם 'by a human' in v. 6aβ. In the context of Gen 9:1-7 the pragmatic function of the proverbial chiasm is to elucidate that the speaker is particularly interested in emphasizing that the shedding of human blood must be punished.

The third step of DA consists in defining the temporal patterns in texts and the temporal locations of events and situations.[43] The temporal pattern in v. 6aαβ could be defined as anaphoric time with a tense shifting from participle (v. 6aα *qotel* pattern: שֹׁפֵךְ 'whoever sheds') to active verb (v. 6aβ *yiqtol* pattern: יִשָּׁפֵךְ 'it shall be shed'). The anaphoric time here refers to a contextually established

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42 Cf. J.E. Priest, "Gen 9:6: A Comparative Study of Bloodshed in Bible and Talmud, *JETS* 31 (1988) 145-151.

43 Tense in language involves a linkage between three times, namely Event Time (ET), Reference Time (RT), and Speech Time (ST), and is controlled by three possible relations (anteriority, coincidence and posteriority). There are three patterns of temporal interpretation in discourse: *deictic*, *anaphoric*, and *sequential*. Deictic time establishes reference to ST; anaphoric time refers to a contextually established RT other than ST, and sequential time builds an autonomous temporal succession of ETs, usually in chronological order (C. Smith, "Tense and Temporal Interpretation," *Lingua* 117/2 [2007] 421-22).

reference time of the case of the blood-shedding. The participle form in v. 6aα is used in generalizing sentences to express the habitual present and general truths. The function of the *yiqtol* form in v. 6aβ is due to the impersonal character of speech; it is interpreted in terms of habitual aspect or future without volitive meaning. The temporal pattern of the causal sentence of v. 6b is sequential time (*qatal* pattern עָשָׂה 'made'). Its reading partly depends on the interpretation of כִּי: if כִּי is the explicative 'since', the passage gets a backgrounded position and can be characterized as a short report. The semantic interpretation of this causal clause does not allow a present habitual interpretation, but suggests a bounded event of creation that is better interpreted in the past. This is the creation also known as *creatio prima* (Gen 1:26-28), which here provides reasons for the specifically moral action.

The penultimate step of DA concerns the aspectual arrangement of texts, namely, the prevailing situation types and the chosen aspectual viewpoints.[44] From the point of aspectual entities, the legal axiom in Gen 9:6ab contains a generalizing sentence of an iterative action which is articulated by a participle. In addition, the specific creative event is described in the causal clause of v. 6b.

The fifth and last step of DA defines the principles of text-progression that characterize different poetic texts.[45] The text-progression in the unit of Gen 9:1-7 is temporal, which is accomplished in v. 6 because of the temporal location of the iterative pattern and the previous creation of humans, which consequences persist.

All these observations of DA underline the specific nature of the sentence and show how the flexibility of verbs in quite a small piece of poetry introduces a legal limit of violence in which human blood-shedding and its corresponding blood revenge are in balance, while the theological and causal clause of the sentence authorizes and delegates human beings to fulfil a new role, due to their creation in the image of God. What readers find in Gen 9:6 and what also a pragmatic viewpoint confirms is an acknowledgement of the continuing existence of bloodshed and violence after the flood, alongside an impassioned demand for

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44   Carlota Smith ("Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory," *Aspectual Inqieries* [ed. P. Kempchinsky – R. Slabakova] [Berlin: Springer 2005] 225-228) has distinguished between three main groups of aspectual entities: (1) eventualities, which include specific events (achievements, accomplishments, and activities) and states; (2) general statives, which are subdivided into generics (kind generalizations) and generalizing sentences (situational pattern generalizations, also called iteratives and habituals); (3) abstract entities, which include facts as objects of knowledge and propositions as objects of belief.

45   Text-progression is indicated by the movement of a text along the line of its foregrounded elements. Text-progression can be: (1) temporal, through the temporal locations of eventualities; (2) spatial, through the spatial locations of objects and states; (3) metaphorical, through the metaphorical location of statements within the "semantic domain of discourse" (C. Smith, *Modes of Discourse: The Local Structure of Texts* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003] 25-31).

justice that is enacted only against the offender, to prevent vengeance from spiralling out of control.[46]

4. Conclusion

This article offers a sustained, contextual reading of Gen 9:6 with a focus on the pragmatics of the saying in response to a recent interpretation that human life should not be taken at all, because humans are made in God's image. After having explored the semantics and pragmatics of the pronouncement in Gen 9:6, its context suggests that rather than prohibiting murder, Gen 9:6 sanctions blood vengeance. According to this interpretation, whole clusters of ethical and judicial principles with respect to this kind of punishment were developed in the Bible and Talmud.[47]

I contend that the causation and goal of the flood is the crucial interpretative frame in which God operates on the calculus of blood-for-blood and thereby removes the pollution and corruption from the earth. Therefore, the meaning of Gen 9:6 is that humans punish bloodshed with bloodshed, because they are made in the image of God. This interpretation of Gen 9:6 is especially commended by its closer adherence to the principles enumerated above that scholars apply to elucidate the meaning of the *imago Dei* in Gen 1. However, when one considers Gen 9 in the larger context of the primordial history in Gen 1–11, it is likely that the characterization of the *imago Dei* there is even more descriptive and prescriptive of the human condition for P than the creation story's depiction of the concept. In a manner strikingly similar to Gen 1, God here delegates humanity with the power to punish human blood-shedding, and just as in the creation story, this delegation of power by God is justified by the creation of humanity in God's image (Gen 9:6b). Moreover, God has provided a model for how to enact this responsibility in the preceding flood, in which God punishes the violence filling the earth with a massive act of blood vengeance. Human beings, therefore, are to enact their role as God's image by imitating God and punishing murderers by taking the murderers' lives. To be sure, the violence advocated in this text is not to be equated with bloodlust, and in many ways, the initial sentence that is analogous to *lex talionis* (blood-for-blood) in Gen 9:6 functions to prevent the escalation of aggression that could expand to target a murderer's relatives.[48]

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46   Wilson, "Blood Vengeance," 273.
47   For detailed descriptions of these clusters, see Priest, J.E., "Gen 9:6: A Comparative Study of Bloodshed in Bible and Talmud," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31 (1988) 145-151.
48   Wilson, "Blood Vengeance," 269.

The reference to the divine image follows the concession poetically expressed through the sentence that is both legal in nature and proverbial in style. James Watts said that biblical writers or editors intended poetry to be recognized and appreciated on its own terms, but also to influence the reading of its surrounding narrative.[49] In my view, the poetry-like-text in Gen 9:6 employs the literary potential of poetry first of all for stimulating rational thinking and an emotional reaction. The violence limit is set in the Flood Narrative through the poetic chiasm in Gen 9:6. Its structure, morphology, syntax (2) verbal shifting and context (3) described in the discourse analysis of Gen 9:6 are well-suited to prompt the mind into active consideration of new ideas about human life and through its hortatory tone to motivate Noah and his sons to reduce human violence in the new world.

In a manner strikingly similar to Genesis 1, here in the discourse with the surviving humans, God appropriately delegates to them the power to punish humans in special cases through the praxis later known as *lex talionis*. And just as in the creation story of Gen 1, this delegation of power by God is justified by the creation of humanity in God's image. It is very difficult to negate the human's active role in God's pursuit of retributive justice, as the saying in v. 6aβ affirms that a murderer's blood will be shed בָּאָדָם 'by a human'. Human beings are to imitate the actions of a God who brings deadly retribution in the flood and also immediately his continued expectation for it in the future-oriented saying of Gen 9:5. Therefore God delegates this power to humans, because they are made in the divine image, in much the same way and for the same reasons that God delegates them with a functional power of stewardship in Gen 1:26-28.[50] Moreover, the closeness of man to God, expressed through the image of God, plays a role here, and therefore it is the man to whom he transmits the role of the redeemer of blood (i.e. Ps 9:11-12; 2 Chr 24:22-25). In the postdiluvian world, therefore, the *imago Dei* consists primarily in the responsibility humans have to avenge blood, in imitation of the God whose actions in the flood provide the model. Therefore, is it possible to see in Gen 9:6b also a confirmation that humans are of so high rank that in case their blood is shed, it is allowed in the ancient world to revenge it by shedding the blood of the murder. What readers will find in the *imago Dei* is an acknowledgement of the continuing existence of bloodshed and violence after the flood, alongside an impassioned demand for justice. Later in Bible also the blood vengeance will be stopped. Jesus – the "image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) – prayed not for vengeance against those who unjustly shed his blood, but that they should be forgiven (Luke 23:34). Therefore

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49   W. Watts, "'This Song:' Conspicuous Poetry in Hebrew Prose," *Verse in Ancient Near Eastern Prose* (eds. J.C. de Moor – W.G.E. Watson) (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker – Kevelaer: Neukirchener 1993) 358.

50   Harland, *The Value of Human Life*, 208; Jančovič, "Imago Dei," 199-200.

the execution of the death penalty, which was allowed on the basis of a direct reading of Gen 9:6, should today never be easily accepted nor customarily allowed, but rather carefully explored.[51]

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51 Pope Francis recently in the light of the Gospel stated that capital punishment is an offence "against the inviolability of life and the dignity of the human person, which contradicts God's plan for man and society" and "does not render justice to the victims, but rather fosters vengeance" (Letter to the Bishops regarding the new revision of number 2267 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the death penalty, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 02.08. 2018, *Summary of Bulletin 8* (2018), http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2018/08/02/180802b.html [accessed on: 22.12. 2019]. Additional moral arguments against the death penalty are brought also by V. Thurzo, "Je potrebné prehodnotiť aktuálny postoj Katolíckej cirkvi k trestu smrti?", *AFTUCB* 15/2 (2018) 83-98.

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