A BRIEF OUTLINE REGARDING
THE BIBLICAL LEXICAL SEMANTICS

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Abstract: The biblical text has a very rich history in the context of lexical semantics. This important aspect comes from his millenary tradition, being the most translated text from all times. The Bible or the Holy Scripture contain expressions with symbolical meaning, allegorical constructions used in a spiritual context, etymologically interpretations which give us the possibility to understood the history of terms and their evolution. In our study, we will try to describe in a brief outline the lexical semantics characteristics of the biblical text. In this concern, we will refer to the next points of view: etymology, semantic changes, basic concepts and sense relations. Our research will have as support the official Romanian and English Versions of Bible.

Keywords: Biblical semantics, historical and cultural interpretation

1. Introduction

If we must give a definition of the biblical semantic domain, the most appropriate will be: "a branch in that modern linguistic that focuses on the meaning of the individual words". The topic of this discipline has an interactive perspective. Therefore, we can interpret the biblical text in an interdisciplinary context, with knowledge of: philosophy, literary studies, anthropology, sociology, psychology and even mathematics. "Any of these disciplines may be regarded as a valid starting point for the analysis of biblical semantics" (Silva, 1983, p. 11).

Biblical Lexical Semantics can be appreciated as an "*etymological science*" with the purpose to determine some particular words and their semantic developments. Firstly, through lexical semantics, we can observe some particularities in the analysis process of the words: original provenance, lexical family, semantical composition. In this concern, it is important to know that:

> "Etymology is the traditional term for several kinds of study, working upon words as the basis units and interested in the explication of them in relation to similar elements which are historically earlier, which are taken within the scope of the study as original, which appear to be basis as units of meaning, or which appear to have a prior place in some generative process" (Brill, 1974, p. 1-28).

Next, the etymological approach in the Bible "involve determining specifically the earliest attested meaning". We have also a great interest in "*the prehistorical stages*" of the words. Last but not least, can guarantee a complex procedure of reconstruction "*of the form and meaning of the word in the parent language by a careful examination of the cognate languages*" (Silva, 1983, p. 40).

Reporting to the Holly Scripture, the lexical semantics of the words has a dynamic process. In this context we can understand the semantic evolution having in the best example in use of the biblical words. For example, the Latin word "causa" (in

English: cause) is used in "a wide variety of contexts. Another example can be the Greek word "*artos*", in English "bread", is in fact a Semitic word, coming from the Hebrew word "*lahma*". A second dimension will be for sure the meaning of the biblical words. For example:

> "the English word *undertaker,* which once could be used instead of *shepherd* in Psalm 23, 1, has been greatly specialized. Of the numerous examples to be found in the New Testament, we may note *evanghelion, good news*, specialized to *the good news*, that is the Gospel. We must understand that once the semantic rage of a term has been narrowed, we are less dependent on the context when we wish to grasp the meaning of the word. That is, the words become more precise: a more or less definite reference (what the word stands for) is automatically associated with itself. These are the terms that become technically changed at times, so that they serve as shorthand for considerable theological reflection" (Silva, 1983, p. 77).

2. Some methodological aspects in the biblical interpretation

Regarding an old theory, developed by the Romanian scholar **Eugenio Coseriu**, there are three fundamental types of linguistic terms: designation, signification and sense. The first stage, *the designation*, "is the universal dimension of the linguistic sign" having in attention things or acts. The *signification* or the linguistic *meaning* is the permanent act of the semantic reality. At last, the *sense* can be defined as the "particular content of a text or of a textual unity". Therefore, this theory can have a serious contribution in the research work of comparing the texts from different languages. Moreover, "the object of translation, linguistically speaking, is to reproduce not the same meaning, but the same sense" (Coresiu, 1994, p. 222). In this context, an academic approach regarding the comparative linguistic and intertextual Romanian – English issues on the biblical text they will obviously start with the identification of the modalities in which the translators accomplish to identify the lexical semantic compatibility structure. Therefore, starting from the Greek original text or from the Slavonic version, we have the possibility to develop a linguistic-comparative approach through the semantical resources of the Romanian language. It will be also necessary to follow the historical and cultural background, starting with the 17th century. Thus, we will need the so called "lexical creativity", which can be defined as:

> "*the individual liberty of the translator to use his linguistic competence (in one or more languages) in the act of creation, with the help of some old significations and some sense unities".* Therefore, "*the lexical creativity is the principal cause of the linguistic changes at the lexical-semantic level and is, in the same time, easiest noticeable, because it acts almost exclusively at the level of the texts*" (Munteanu, 2008, p. 8).

Returning to the methodological approach, we can understand the use of comparison of the biblical text in English and Romanian translation as follows:

- *the possibility of control of semantic innovations with the possibility of consulting the original Greek and Slavonic text;*
- *the possibility to follow the evolution of semantic innovation in the successive variants of the biblical text;*
- *the possibility of identify the limits between popular language and academic language in the biblical text;*

- *the observation of the sensible changes at the level of lexicography and grammar.*

To resolve these important issues, we must also have a cultural an interdisciplinary perspective. The translation can be very difficult when we don't have the propriety of terms. Regarding a non-original textual parallel in translation, as Romanian and English, for instance, we must know very well the literary meanings of the words, because some words can be equated to one single term since others can have a lot of meanings. In this case, as showed above, it is necessary to consult the original text to see and to understand "the semantic innovation" from the new translation. Beside the semantic approach, when we are in front of the text we can discover some cultural specificities, which will be also transferred to the terminological and lexical biblical background. Starting with the Christian believers from the first period of the Church, the process of translations and interpretation of the Holly Bible has an intercultural perspective. Therefore, "God, doesn't address a single demand to His Church, but it is an important one because is the one to understand His word". In this case, the necessity of understanding the cultural background must be very important all the time. Therefore, we must explain what had in mind the writers when they preach the Gospel: "*cultural diversity*" (Keener, 2020, p. 32-34) and *historical background.*

From this point of view, the biblical text has a permanent and timeless value. Therefore, the interpretation of the Bible can be understood as a process of intercultural teaching and understanding the sacred words. In this case "the literal sense (on the primitive meaning) of words is the sense in which the word is, or was ordinarily used at the time of writing. That sense is what we must look for. In other words, what did Moses, David, Matthew, or Paul mean to say to the original audience that they addressed?". This can be also an important problem in the explanation of our approach: "Because many words change their meanings over the period of years, this original sense may or may not be known to the hearer or reader. Readers of English today may or may not know, for example, that *precise* meant *cut off at the end*; or that *wrong* meant *twisted.* This awareness will caution us against reading back more recent meanings into the biblical text. For example, Paul described the gospel or the *power* of God (Rom. 1, 16). The Greek word *power* here is *dynamis.* It meant force, might, strength, or ability. From this word we get our English term *dynamite,* referring to a substance containing the explosive nitro-glycerine. Occasionally one hears the expression: *The gospel of God's dynamite.* But the sense here is quite different from the earlier one, as it reads back a physical concept into a conceptual one. It is not a safe procedure "to describe earlier concepts in terms of later meanings ascribed to the same set of symbols (words)" (Dunnett, 1984, p. 3-4).

In this case, the most appropriate exegetical method is to follow the next criteria: "*to search for the initial meaning of the biblical terms*" (1), "*to follow the evolution of semantic innovation*" (2), "*to identify the limits between popular language and academic language*" (3) and "*the observation of the sensible changes at the level of lexicography and grammar*" (4). Thus, starting from the original version, each translation can be the result of the historical and cultural background. Starting from the knowledge stage of the original language of the biblical text, the translator adds the cultural horizon, his native linguistic tradition together with the grammar rules and with the comparative interlinguistic and semantical investigation. In this case, we can speak about a linguistic transfer from the original language to the translation language. "The result of this process

of linguistic transfer materializes in the construction of a linguistic method open to the written communication of a complex notional contents" (Munteanu, 1995, p. 13).

3. Historical and cultural interpretation as a lexical-semantic background

The Bible isn't just a single and a simple book, which we can easy read, interpret and understand. Moreover, the Bible or the Holy Scripture is "*a library of books*", written by many authors in diverse historical and cultural periods, over 2000 years old. Beyond that, his message and his popularity are well known all over the world. In this case, as an introduction to the lexical-semantic interpretation, it is necessary to explain the historical and cultural context of the biblical text.

In their literary form, the books of the Bible cannot be read in the same way. With the belief that the Bible is indeed the revealed Word of God, it is understandable that the literary style is also very important each author having his personal mark writing. Therefore, in the Bible we can find: history, poetry, sapiential writings, parables, prophecies, letters. On the other hand, the sacred text of the Bible has his own history because God had accomplished His work in the history. This direction includes by default the cultural context. Beyond all, from the Christian perspective, both directions are contained in the revealed character of the text:

> "the Bible is ,however, more than literature and history: it is the Word of God, the truth of God, the revelation of His purposes, met in Jesus Christ, who said that: « *Your word is the truth»* (John 17, 17). Although these days, the idea of universal *truth* can be a little strange, the Bible claims that it brings and it is the truth of God and invites us to test it" (Beaumont, 2013, p. 12).

Generally speaking, from the historical point of view "the Old Testament is the story of Israel; the New Testament is the story of Jesus Christ and his earliest followers". Thus, theoretically speaking, when we are referring to the historical interpretation of the sacred text, first we have in mind a series of events and facts with social significance. In the Old Testament the historical background has a very large spectre of social events. All these "offer the reader an opportunity to deal with history as narrated from a dual perspective. There the events of human life are told and interpreted from the standpoint of divine promise and intervention". Therefore, the Old Testament can be defined as a historical preparation for the great event of salvation in Jesus Christ. The moment of His birth was expected by thousands of years of history and was foretold by the prophets. In the New Testament the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles describe the historical period from Christ's birth to the Roman imprisonment of Saint Paul the Apostle (cca. 6/5 B.C. – 62 A.D). In contrast with the messianic specific of the Old Testament history, in the New Testament we have a theological interpretation of the historical background.

The cultural context comes in connection with the historical background of the Bible. Both directions are interconnected because each historical period comes with his cultural heritage. In fact, in the Bible we have two great period of interferences: *Jewish period*, starting with the Old Testament, and the *Greek period*, especially in the New Testament. For instance, the Greek term πεδαγογος – *pedagogos* is equivalent in Jewish tradition with "schoolmaster" (kjv) or with a "custodian" (rsv). Literary speaking, it defines "one who leads a child". In Greek tradition, *pedagogos* had a supervision and moral direction in the education of the children, being equivalent with a slave, often an older

man, who had the responsibility of a moral supervision in education. In the biblical background, the pedagogue was "*a fit emblem of the Mosaic law*", and the word was used in an interesting rabbinic paraphrase of Num. 11, 12 as "a nursing father": "*Did I conceive all the people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me: Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a* **nursing child**, *to the land which You swore to their fathers?*". On the other hand, in the New Testament, Saint Paul the Apostle uses the term with the meaning of "*spiritual father*": "*For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus* **I have begotten you through the gospel**" (I Corinthians 4, 15). Moreover, the Apostle names the Old Testament "*pedagogos pros Hristou*" – "pedagogue to Christ": "*But before the faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore, the law was our* **tutor (pedagogue) to bring us to Christ**, *that we might be justified by faith*" (Galatians 3, 23-24).

All things considered, we can underline some important aspects regarding the historically and encultured background of the biblical text:

- some important differences between biblical text and modern culture;
- the importance of the relationship between the historical and cultural background and the biblical context, in the general context of Hebrew and Greek social and cultural heritage;
- the specific of cultural expressions in the process of recognition and identify the historical events, persons, institutions, traditions etc.
- a biblical overview regarding the interconnection between Old and New Testaments: historical books of the prophets, the historical problematic from Acts and epistles;
- the transculturally and meta-historically characteristic of the biblical text and his revealed character.

In this regard, these important elements of background "will be useful in facing up to our own prejudice and preconceiving interpretations. We can get new insights into both historical and contemporary aspects and values of the Bible" (Dunnett, p. 139-140).

4. A lexical semantics context: images, symbols, metaphors, comparison, archetypes

In this concern, as a clear example of historical-cultural interconnection, we can remember some very important elements from the linguistic point of view, such as: *images, symbols, metaphors, comparisons* and ,last but not least, *archetypes*.

In the biblical lexical semantics, we can consider *image* a word which can define a concrete thing (as book of house) or an action (as reading or building). Regarding the biblical sense, the image has a different point of view, concentrated a new direction of understanding: *a literary approach with a sensible connotation*. For instance, the image of bread has a practical sense, related to the feeding process, and also has a spiritual dimension, when is referring to the source of spiritual life.

The *symbol* is an image which represents something added to the proper meaning. It has a bigger semantical connotation than image and commands a cultural justification. In the biblical approach, the symbol has usually a single use. In this case, the image has the purpose to lead us to the symbol. Therefore, in the first stage we have in mind the image of the bread as fleshly food (Cf. Mattew 6, 11; Luke 11, 3) and, passing

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to the second stage, we have the image of bread as a spiritual food in the symbol of Heavenly Bread, which is Jesus Christ Eucharistic Body (Cf. John 6, 35, 48).

The ***metaphor*** and ***comparison*** have a functional role of a symbol. In other words, "the metaphor is an implied comparison". For instance, when Saint Paul says that: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (I Corinthians 3, 6) he does not refer to an ordinary plant. His metaphorical construction has a spiritual understanding, referring to the spreading of the Christian belief. On the other hand, we have a very interesting comparison in the well-known 50 Psalm: "*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow*" (Psalm 50, 7).

Representing a universal language and having also lexical-semantic values, the ***archetypes*** can define the elementary image of human life with many theological valences. Moreover, the archetype can be metaphorical define as "the image or the recurrent type in literature and life". As a concrete specific, it can be considered as an image or symbol (the city on the mountain), literary motif (blessing, healing, punishment or mission) or the personal type of human (the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the poor Lazarus, the poor job, the ruthless rich).

5. A brief biblical lexicon regarding the human primordial constitution: Adam, basar, nephesh, ruah

A very popular biblical term, especially in the Old Testament is the name of the first man: **Adam (אדם)**. Starting from Aramaic, the original form of the Old Testament text, *adam* means: man, "earthly", taken from the dust. First of all, Adam is a biblical personage. Literary speaking, he was indeed the first human being, created by God from the dust of the earth. Therefore, his first place is in the act of the creation, having as support the first biblical book of Genesis: "*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being*" (Genesis 2, 7). This is the personal interpretation. On the other hand, we have also a general interpretation, more symbolic, with the mention that Adam represents the entire human race as it was at his beginning: with the primordial innocence and then with his original and sinful fall. These two literary forms of interpretations aren't opposite, because both of them express the divine act of creation. The difference consists in the act of personal belief.

Regarding the biblical usage, it is necessary to know that the Hebrew etymology of *adam* can be translated by "***man***". As we mentioned above, it is a generic term which appears in five hundred mentions in the Old Testament, *being used as proper name only in eleven verses* (nine of them are in the book of Genesis). Even in these proper situations, the term can have a general perspective of translation, defining generally "*the man*". His derivation is Hebrew "*adama*", which means "earth". In this concern, the first biblical quotation is a generally one of man as "male": "*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God created him; **male** and female created them*" (Genesis 1, 27)*.

Literary speaking, Adam isn't complete without Eve. Regarding the constitution, "male and female", we have the first mention at Genesis 1, 27, mentioned above. The second one is in Genesis 2, 21-24:

> "*And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall of Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, ad closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: This*

is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore, a man shall eve his father and his mother and be joined with his wife, and they shall become one flesh".

Following the literary interpretation, we will find a very interesting story related by these two texts. An oral tradition said that, in fact, God created two women. The first one, from the first chapter of Genesis, was created at the same time with Adam, and she was named Lilit. After a short time of her appearance, she began to quarrel with Adam and left him alone. Adam asked God to bring her back, but she refused and became a demon. Thereby, the second woman was created, with the name Eve, from the "*rib of Adam*". This aspect has also a very interesting allegorical and theological interpretation. First of all, we have here the old principle of subordination, which was often presented in the Hebrew social tradition. The other concept defines the relationship between husband and wife: "*Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined with his wife, and they shall become one flesh*". This concept is available till today in the Christian and Hebrew social tradition (Losch, 2019, p. 23-24).

In a general literary interpretation, we can find the term *adam* with other important significations. One is the association with the Akkadian term *enos* – which means t*o be weak, mortal.* We can find this kind of association at the prophet Isaiah: "*I will make a mortal rarer than fine gold, a **man** more than the golden wedge of Ophir*" (Isaiah, 13, 12). In this case we have a metaphorical association of *adam*, which refers more to the somatic and freshly understanding. Another literary sense is *adamah*, which means *farmer* or *agriculture* (Kutler; Brain, 1980, p. 14-15). Here we have again a text from Genesis: "*Then the Lord God took the **man** and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it*" (Genesis 2, 15). On the other hand, the material meaning of the word comes again in the Leviticus: "*When a **man** has on the skin of his body a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes on the skin of his body like a leprous sore, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests*" (Leviticus, 13, 2).

Regarding the theological sense, it is important to know that in the creation act God created man as a dichotomous living being, consisting of body and soul. We must return here to our first biblical mention from the book of Genesis: "*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being"* (Genesis 2, 7). In the context of a biblical anthropological importance, starting from *Adam* we must see the lexical and etymologic interpretation of other two important terms: body and soul, translation in the original Hebrew through: **basar, nephesh, ruah.**

The Hebrew term **basar (בשׂר)** is often used to define *the human somatic nature.* As a noun it can be translated through "*flesh*" or "*living body*", which can symbolise the physical weakness and the ephemeral character of the human beings. According to the Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament, the root of **basar** can be found in the Akkadian word "*bišru*", which can be translated by: *infant, child or offspring*. Regarding the verb, *bśr*, the general meaning is: "to report, bring a message". In the Old Testament, **basar** appears over 270 times (Genesis 33; Exodus 14; Leviticus 61; 2 Kings 6; Isaiah 17; Jeremiah 10; Psalms 16; Proverbs 4 etc.).

In the following, we will try to expose some ***literary*** and ***theological*** meanings of the term. In the first case, we have several directions of literary understanding. Therefore, also in the biblical context, **basar** indicates: "the body, the visible flesh of the person or, as an exception, the animal (Cf. Job 41, 15), the corporal in its totality with

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emphasis upon the visual and the graphic. This usage always concerns the living body; **basar** is never used of the corpse, not in Ezekiel 32, 5. Therefore, **basar** is deeply tied to the material and is never used in the sense of appearance, figure; **basar** is *corpus*, not *figura.* Significantly, the word is used in contrast to various terms for the spiritual life: **ruah –** spirit (cf. Genesis 6, 3; Numbers 16, 22; 27, 16; Isaiah 31, 3: Joel 3, 1), **nephesh – *soul*** (Genesis 9, 4; Deuteronomy 12, 23; Job 14, 22), leb – *heart* (Ezekiel 44, 7; Psalms 84, 3).

Theologically speaking, **basar** has a cosmological interpretation because, according to the Hebrew tradition, when he created the human body, God took clay from the four corners of the earth. Moreover, it can have a general meaning, summing up the entire human kind. This idea we can also find in the book of Genesis: "*And behold, I myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die*" (Genesis 6, 17). After the original sin, human body (basar) is dressed up in the "mortal skins" (Nellas, 2009, p. 78-79). Regarding the Christian conception of salvation, we must mention that the body (basar) is very important because of his entire participation. This can explain the numerous rituals of cleaning and purification of the body, where the Circumcision, for instance, is the old symbol of the human convent with God (Rus, 1978, p. 760-761).

Besides basar, which defines the somatic part of the human constitution, in the Hebrew Old Testament Bible, there are two terms which confirm the spiritual part. They translated the word "soul" and are represented in the Hebrew lexicology by **nephesh/nepeš** (נפש) and **ruah** (רוח). The first one, **nepeš**, is translated in English by "soul". As a noun is a feminine being also used in all the Semitic languages. Therefore, in Akkadian it means "throat", "life", "breath", "*living being*". In the Ugaritic dialectic can also be translated by "throat, appetite, soul, living being" etc. The verb **npš** has the meaning "to exhale" and is related to the noun "throat". In the Bible we have over 754 of nouns (Genesis 43; Exodus 17; Leviticus 60; Numbers 50; Deuteronomy 35; Joshua 16; Psalms 144 etc.). According to the Hebrew lexicon, **nepeš** is one of the most studied terms from the Old Testament. In this concern, we must underline that its concrete meanings are in general "breath" and "throat/gullet". In the book of Genesis **nepeš** defines the centre of human physical existence. He is eternal and at the earthly end of the body, it goes forward in the eternal life. In this concern **nepeš** has the meaning of "spirit": "*And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years*" (Genesis 6, 3). Theologically speaking, the term expresses the ontological attachment to God, as we can find in the book of Psalms: "*Man is like a breath (**nepeš); His days are like a passing shadow. Bow down Your heavens, o Lord, and come down*" (Psalm 144, 4-5).

In the same direction we find the terminological use of **ruah** (רוח), which can be translated in English by "wind, spirit". Therefore, the noun **ruah** is also feminine and may belong to "the category of onomastic words and would then imitate the sound of the whistling wind and excited breathing. In contrast, the verb **ruh** (*to smell*) and the substantive **reah** – *smell* already indicate a specialization: smelling by sniffing". Regarding his biblical usage, we can find the term at Job: "*I have heard the rebuke that reproaches me, and the spirit of my understanding caused me to answer*" (Job. 20, 3). Isaiah also mentions the term: "*The also who erred in spirit (ruah) will come to understanding and those who complained will learn doctrine*" (Isaiah 29, 24). Theologically speaking, the Hebrew term becomes an alter-ego of the entire creation and is superior to the death, just because he comes from God.

The last term of the Hebrew spiritual life and also, the most important one, is **leb (לב) –** classical translated by *heart.* The root of the word, *libb* (in Akkadian *libbu – interior*) has also the meaning of *heart.* In the Old Testament, **leb** occurs from the Aramaic term *lebab* and is 853 times present in the biblical text (Psalms 102, 35; Proverbs 97, 3; Jeremiah 58, 8; Deuteronomy 4, 47; Isaiah 31, 18; Exodus 46, 1; Ezekiel 41, 6; Chronic 16, 28 and Ecclesiasticus 41, 1). In a proper and literary sense, leb signifies the body organ. Beyond the physical explanation, the heartbeat was also a sign of emotions: "*My heart pants, my strength fails me; as for the sighing is not hidden from You*" (Psalm 38, 10). In the figurative meaning, *leb* can have also physical and intellectual meaning. Therefore, it can define: the **personality** - "*My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my potion forever*" (Psalm 73, 26); human **memory** – "*I call to remembrance my soul in the night; I meditate within my heart*" (Psalm 77, 6); **emotions** – "*Dealing yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart*" (Psalm 37, 4); **willingness** – "*Therefore, give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge You people, that I may discern between good and evil*" (I Kings 3, 9).

The most interesting expression in relation with the term "**leb**" is "*the heart of God*". The meaning is a metaphorical one. This usage is frequent in the book of Genesis, where we can find the next quotations:

"*And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He grieved in His heart*" (Genesis 6, 6) and: "*And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart: I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living things as I have done*" (Genesis 8, 21).

These two images repeat the idea which is present in the context of human creation: "*Then God said: Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness*" (Genesis 1, 26). In other words, we understand that "the heart of God" can be also "the image" of God which we have inside from the creation. The conclusion is that God is a personal and eternal living being, which can think, feel, desire and choose. We can find this meaning at the prophet Hosea: "… *My heart churns within Me; my sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness on My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man*" (Hosea 11, 8-9).

Regarding the theological sense, we must underline the fact that in the relation with God, man must clean his heart. Therefore, **leb** becomes the centre of the spiritual life. His presence in the human life and also in the human heart supposes an anterior purification, which in the Jewish tradition was equivalent with the *circumcision*. Regarding this idea, we have the text from Jeremiah: "*Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Israel, Let My fury come forth like fire, and burn so that no one can quench it, because of the evil of your doings" (*Jeremiah 4, 4*).*

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