

A FEW METAPHORICAL SOURCE DOMAINS FOR EMOTIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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Abstract

Emotions are an essential part of human existence and the communication (verbal as well as non-verbal) thereof is fundamental to everyday interaction. Furthermore, the way in which emotions are expressed and interpreted is crucial to interpersonal relations. This paper contends that our biblical counterparts employed different verbal (literal as well as figurative) strategies to express an infinite number of emotional states. One such strategy is conceptual metaphor. It is argued that there is a link between the metaphorical conceptualization and articulation of emotions. Moreover, the investigation shows that different metaphorical source domains are used to express specific emotions. By taking recourse to cognitive linguistics, this contribution examines the relevant linguistic evidence from the Old Testament as a means of illuminating the aforementioned notions.

Keywords: Emotions, Source Domains, Cognitive Linguistics

Introduction

Writing on emotions, Matsumoto et al (2003:91) remarks as follows “Emotions are arguably some of the most important aspects of our lives... They give meaning to life, serve as important motivators for our behaviors, and color our thoughts and cognitions... They are, indeed, the basic psychological fuel for growth, development, and action”. Despite the pervasiveness of emotions in the Old Testament, a survey of the literature dealing with emotions reveals a reluctance of biblical scholars to investigate this issue. According to Kruger (2005:187) this state of affairs can be attributed to the fact that in “this discipline, as in psychology, anthropology, and philosophy, emotions were for a long time regarded as part of the irrational, uncontrollable, and subjective aspects of humankind that do not justify serious study” (cf. also Solomon 1981:34).¹ It should, however, be noted that there has been a renewed interest in emotions and emotional expressions in the Old Testament in recent years,² which in itself could be seen as a remarkable occurrence. Although the subject of emotions has received attention in various scholarly disciplines, a lot still needs to be done as far as this central facet of human nature is concerned. Striking is the lack of research conducted on the role of conceptual metaphor in the articulation of

¹ This is echoed by Zhu & Thagard (2002:20) “Emotion is conventionally considered as opposed to the nest human ability, reason. Emotion is primitive, bestial, destructive, unpredictable and dependable, and thus needs to be controlled by reason”. With regard to the place of emotions in the subject field of linguistic, Apresjan (2000:203) remarks “until recently the inner world of human beings was the province of psychiatrists, philosophers, and poets, but of little interest to linguist”.

² As far as the general upsurge in the study of emotions is concerned, Ekman (1993:385) writes as follows “Dormant for many years, research on emotion now is one the most rapidly growing areas, with activity in clinical, developmental, personality, physiological and social psychology”. Since Kruger (2004:213-228) already provided us with a good overview of the different approaches to this integral aspect of human nature, I will not discuss these methodologies here (cf. also Kruger 2005:187-192).

emotions in the subject field of the Old Testament.³ It would not be far-fetched to assume that all languages provide speakers with an array of verbal strategies (literal as well as figurative) for expressing a theoretically infinite number of emotional states (cf. Russel 2002:1). The importance of conceptual metaphor as a tool for conveying emotions should therefore not be ignored nor underestimated. As Kövecses observes: (2002:111) “Metaphor has the power to create reality for us; it is the major way in which the human cognitive system produces nonphysical reality, that is, the social, political, psychological, emotional, etc. worlds”. Compare also Gulz (2006:5) “When human beings *describe* and *talk* about emotional situations and reactions, they commonly *use metaphorical language*⁴ (conventionalized and not conventionalized)”. In the light of the aforementioned, this contribution attempts to illustrate that the conceptualization of emotions in the Old Testament⁵ can be enunciated via conceptual metaphors. This in turn bears evidence to the cognitive status of metaphors. Furthermore, the aim is to identify a few source domains with their metaphorical entailments for the expression of emotions attested in the Old Testament. The exploration will indicate that most of the source domains can be applied to most of the emotions being highlighted in this paper, whereas some emotions can only be expressed in terms of certain specific metaphorical source domains. To reach the abovementioned objectives, the investigation will be conducted within a cognitive linguistic framework.

Cognitive Linguistics and Emotions

Cognitive linguists claim that human emotions are largely conceptualized and expressed through metaphor grounded in embodied experience.⁶ People employ metaphor intuitively to understand the mind, emotions and all other abstract concepts (Eynon 2002:400). According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980:29), “Most of our nonphysical reality is structured, understood and created by metaphors”. Metaphors provide us with a means of comprehending experiential domains that do not have a preconceptual structure of their own (cf. Pérez 2001:180). Conceptual metaphor is viewed as a cognitive structure in terms of which an abstract entity is made comprehensible. Information and thought structures from the source domain are transferred to the target domain. Given the involvement of conceptual metaphors in the cognitive processes such as perception, planning, reasoning, the formation of standpoints, attitude formation, it should come as no surprise as to why they are so often employed in the expression of emotions (cf. Gulz 2006:2).

In cognitive linguistics, it is suggested that there is thus a “link between the specific ways people metaphorically conceptualize their emotions and the language they use to express emotions” (Gibbs et al 2002:132). Particular expressions for emotions are seen as “reflecting deeper conceptual structures, which are in themselves metaphorical in nature and represent a folk theory of emotion” (Russel 2002:6). The significance of metaphor in the conceptualization of emotions has to do with the important role of language in the study

³ The contributions of Kruger (2000; 2001) on the cognitive interpretation of the emotions of anger and fear in the Hebrew Bible are worth mentioning in this regard. A detailed cognitive analysis of the emotion of anger in the Hebrew Bible is offered by Kotze (2004).

⁴ Emphasis in original.

⁵ This paper is limited in its scope in that it only covers the following emotions, viz. anger, fear, shame, pride, love and happiness.

⁶ According to Emanatian (1995:164) “Recent work in metaphorical analysis makes it clear that many of our most basic concepts (and our reasoning via those concepts) are embodied: Lived experience in our bodies inspires and constrains the way we conceive and articulate many other experiences”. Compare also Eynon (2002:406) “Basic bodily experiences, such as moving in space, seeing people and handling objects, provide the foundations of language”.

of the nature of emotion concepts (Kövecses 2002:109). Emotions are largely, though not completely constituted by metaphors. Moreover, conceptual metaphor has the power to produce a certain conception of emotions (Kövecses 2002:114). Compare the observation of Solomon (1981:31) in this regard “The way we talk about emotions is itself so pervaded by metaphors”. Figurative language is especially useful for expressing the nuances of emotions because it tightly reflects people’s figurative conceptualization of their emotional experiences (Gibbs et al 2002:125). Levorato & Cacciari (2002:131) remarks “One of the domains where figurative language, and particular metaphor, served its function best is that of giving a detailed picture of our subjective experiences, in particular for describing the quality of emotional states”. Metaphor not only pervades everyday language about emotions, but also is essential to the understanding of most aspects of the conceptualization of emotions and emotional experiences (Kövecses 2000:20). “The cognitive linguistic view of emotions is capable of integrating a methodologically sound analysis of the linguistic richness and complexity of emotion language in a particular culture with social-cultural variation, as well as with universality that arises from the physiology of the human body” (Kövecses 2002:122).

Source Domains for Emotions

Drawing on the work of Kövecses (2000), this section highlights the various source domains and their metaphorical entailments in terms of the aforementioned insights from cognitive linguistics. Based on the Old Testament evidence, the following representative categories of source domains and their linguistic manifestations can be identified.⁷

Emotion is the fluid in a container

1. *Anger is a hot fluid in a container*

David *burned* (חרה) with *anger* (אף) against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die (2 Sam. 12:5).

But when he (Haman) saw Mordecai at the king’s gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was *filled* (מלא; nif.) with *rage* (חמה) against Mordecai (Est. 5:9).

This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘As my *anger* (אף) and *wrath* (חמה) have been *poured out* (נתך; nif) on those who lived in Jerusalem, so will my *wrath* (חמה) be *poured out* (נתך) on you when you go to Egypt (Jer. 42:18).

You bring new witnesses against me and *increase* (רבה; hif.) your *anger* (כעש) toward me (Job 10:17).

Pour out (שפך) your *wrath* (חמה) on the nations that do not acknowledge you (Ps. 79:6).

2. *Fear is a fluid in a container*

But when I was silent and still, not even saying anything good, my *anguish* (כאב) *increased* (עבר; nif.) (Ps. 39:2).

3. *Sadness is a fluid in a container*

They were *filled* with *grief* (עב; hitp) ... because Shechem had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter – a thing that should not be done (Gen. 34:7).

⁷ It should be noted that the examples offered here are not exhaustive of the available metaphorical conceptualizations of emotions in the Old Testament.

You said, “Woe to me! The LORD *has added* (יָסַף) *sorrow* (יָגוֹן) to my *pain* (מַכְאוֹב)...” (Jer. 45:3).

4. *Shame is a fluid in a container*

Even if I am innocent, I cannot lift my head, for I am *full* (שָׂבַע) of *shame* (קָלִיִן) (Job 10:15).⁸

5. *Happiness is a fluid in a container.*⁹

You have enlarged the nation and *increased* (גָּדַל; hif.) their *joy* (שִׂמְחָה) (Isa. 9:2).

You anoint my head with oil; my cup *overflows* (רָוַיְחָה) (Ps. 23:5).¹⁰

Our mouths were *filled* (מָלֵא; nif.) with laughter (שְׂחֹק), our tongues with *songs of joy* (רִנָּה) (Ps. 126:2).¹¹

He will yet *fill* (מָלֵא; piel) your mouth with *laughter* (שְׂחֹק) and your lips with *shouts of joy* (הִרְעוּהָ) (Job 8:21).

Emotion is fire

1. *Fear is fire*

My life is *consumed* (כָּלָה) by *anguish* (יָגוֹן) (Ps. 31:11).

2. *Love is fire*

Many waters cannot *quench* (כָּבַהַּ; piel) *love* (אַהֲבָה) (Song of Songs 8:7).

Emotion is an opponent

1. *Anger is an opponent*

God’s *anger* (אַף) *rose* (עָלָה) against them (Ps. 78:31).

2. *Fear as an opponent*

The nations will hear and tremble; *anguish* (חִיל) will *grip* (אַדָּהַּ) the people of Philistia (Exod. 15:14).

⁸ Literally: surfeited (שָׂבַע) with shame (Brown et al 1974:960) (cf. also Hb. 2:16; Job 14:1). Clines (1989:215) offers an almost similar translation “I am filled with shame ...”. For other renditions, cf. Dhorme (1967 [1962]:151) and Horst (1968:139). Noteworthy is the occurrence of a similar metaphor in the Baal Epic. After being humiliated in the divine council, Baal replies as follows in CAT 1.4: III: 12-16 “they stood up and abase me, they arose and spat upon me amid the assembly of the gods [] was set on my table, *disgrace in the cup from which I drank* (my emphasis)” (As translated by Gibson 1977:58; cf. also Dietrich & Loretz 1997:1156; Smith 1997:124).

⁹ Kövecses (1991:34-35) draws attention to the difference between the *anger is hot fluid in a container* and the *happiness is fluid in a container* metaphors. Whereas in one, emotion (anger) is conceived of as the heat of a fluid inside a closed container, the other (happiness) provides an image of a container with fluid inside. In the *happiness is fluid in a container* metaphor, the temperature of the fluid is not specified; there is no indication that it is hot. This might explain why people would use the word *burst* (cf. he was *bursting* with joy) with regard to happiness/joy and *explode* (cf. she *exploded* in anger) with reference to anger. In the case of anger, the metaphorical event of explosion is harmful to the container (the person) and the people and things around the container. The bursting of joy, however, is only damaging to the container in the sense of a person becoming dysfunctional in the case of extreme joy and there is no indication that this might be harmful to others.

¹⁰ This expression indicates a large amount of happiness; cf. also the utterance “*My cup is full to the brim*” (Kövecses 1991:34).

¹¹ Compare also the following example from the Baal Epic where Anat’s post-battle feast is described as follows in CAT 1.3: II: 25-27 “Her liver swells with laughter, *her heart is filled with joy* (my emphasis), Anat’s liver with success” (As translated by Pardee 2003:250) (cf. also Smith 1997:108).

She ... said to them, "I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great *fear* (אימה) of you has *fallen* (נפל) on us (Jos. 2:9).

And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king's administrators helped the Jews, because *fear* (פחד) of Mordecai has *fallen* (נפל) on them (Est. 9:3).

3. *Pride is an opponent*

A man's *pride* (נארה) *brings him low* (שפל; hif.) ... (Prov. 29:23).

Emotion is a physical object

1. *Shame is a garment*

May all who exalt themselves over me be *clothed* (לבש) with *shame* (בשה) and *disgrace* (כלמה) (Ps. 35:26).

The *shame* (בשה) of my face *covers* (כסה; piel) me (Ps. 44:16b).¹²

For I endure scorn for your sake, and *shame* (כלמה) *covers* (כסה) my face (Ps. 69:8).

My accusers will be *clothed* (לבש) with *disgrace* (כלמה) and *wrapped* (עטה) in *shame* (בשה) as in a cloak (Ps. 109:9).

2. *Shame is in front*

My *disgrace* (כלמה) is *before* (נגד) me everyday (Ps. 44:16a).

3. *Shame is physical damage*

Moab is *disgraced* (בוש; hif.), for she is *shattered* (חתה)... (Jer. 48:20).

4. *Pride is an object*

I will *break down* (שבר) your stubborn *pride* (נאון) and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze (Lev. 26:19).

This is what the LORD says: "In the same way I will *ruin* (שחח; hif.) the *pride* (נאון) of Judah and the great *pride* (נאון) of Jerusalem" (Jer. 13:9).

Therefore, *pride* (נארה) is their *necklace* (ענק) (Ps. 73:6).

5. *Happiness is a valuable object*¹³

You *gave* (נתן) *joy* (שמחה) to my heart ... (Ps. 4:8).

6. *Happiness is a garment*

You removed my sackcloth and *clothed* (אור; piel) me with *joy* (שמחה) (Ps. 30:12).

7. *Love is a commodity*

Let us go early to the vineyards ... there I will *give* (נתן) you my *love* (דוד) (Song of Songs 7:13).¹⁴

¹² Certain scholars (cf. Van der Ploeg 1973:268; Seebass 1975:58; Craigie 1983:331; Seybold 1996:179; Melancton 2001:119; Kraus 2003 [1961]:479) emendate כסתה to כסתני without a suffix ("and shame covers my face). Since shame first becomes visible on someone's face, (ובשה פני כסתני; "and the shame of my face covers me") the MT can be retained.

¹³ This concurs with the notion of Averill (1990:113) that "...emotions are often treated as though they were physical objects that can be lost, found, offered, relinquished, abandoned, and the like".

¹⁴ Whereas the MT reads דדי ("my love"), the LXX offers the reading μαστοί which is the equivalent of דדים ("breast"; cf. also 1:2). Sanmartin-Ascaso (1978:153) contends that even though the LXX detects the erotic undertones, it translates the word incorrectly. Since in Canticles דדים always means "loves", there is no reason to deviate from the MT (cf. also Gerleman 1965:205; Pope 1977:594; Murphy 1990:180). A plausible

If one were to *give* (נתן) all the wealth of his house for *love* (אהבה), it would be utterly scorned (Song of Songs 8:7).

Emotion is a person

1. *Happiness is a physical being*

Gladness (ששון) and *joy* (שמחה) will *overtake* (נשג; hif) them ... (Isa. 35:10).

Then it (i.e. merriment) will *join* (לדה) him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun (Eccles. 8:15).

2. *Love is a physical being*

Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you: Do not *arouse* (עור; hif) or *awaken* (עור; pol.) *love* (אהבה), until it so *desires* (חפץ) (Song of Songs 2:7).

3. *Pride is a person*

The *arrogance* (גבהות) of man will be *brought low* (שחה) and the *haughtiness* (רום) of men *humbled* (שפל) (Isa. 2:17).

Conclusion

This investigation presented a few metaphorical source domains for emotions in the Old Testament. The emotion metaphors and their entailments analysed in this paper illustrate how our biblical counterparts employed conceptual metaphors to express subtle nuances of emotional states. In terms of the metaphorical instantiations occurring in the Old Testament, it became clear that while certain source domains only apply to some emotions, other source domains have a scope of application that extends beyond the domain of just one or two emotions. Furthermore, the exploration illustrated the conceptual mapping between certain emotional states and certain physical conditions of objects and substances familiar to everyday life (cf. Emantian 1995:165). Emotion metaphors thus have an experiential basis. Conceptual metaphors allow mental imagery from sensorymotor domains to be employed for the domain of subjective experience (cf. Pérez 2001:191). One can concur with Yu (1995:89) that metaphor is pervasive and irreducible in the expression of abstract emotions concepts that it appears to play an essential role in our everyday understanding and speaking (cf. also Ortony & Fainsilber 1987:183). It is indeed is one of the “chief cognitive structures by which we are able to have coherent, ordered experiences that we can reason about and make sense of” (Johnson 1987:XIV-XV).

explanation for the LXX rendition might be the fact that the words דודים “love” and דדים “breasts” appeared the same in the ancient consonantal orthography, דדם (cf. Pope 1977:298).

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