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WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS OF BIBLICAL ORIGIN IN HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE

An important source for expressions in hungarian language is the Bible. In this, the hungarian language looks like other european languages because on our continent, which has a culture on the basis of Christianity, the translation of biblical texts has attributed to the formation of a literary language everywhere. The influence of the Bible on the grammar, on the vocabulary and on the orthography left aside, people wouldn't have been able to write down the history of these languages. Regarding to phraseology, especially methaphorization, people don't have a clear view on the influence of the Bible on hungarian language.

Until today, the specialist literature has not contributed a systematical compilation of the words and expressions of biblical origin in hungarian language. Approximately at the turn of the century, Ede Margalits has collected the hungarian idioms and proverbs, which regarding to form and contents correspond with latin. (Margalits, 1899) In this work, he also mentions numerous idioms and proverbs of biblical origin, but without analysing the contents and structure. Later appeared sporadically studies in linguistical periodicals, which had as a theme the explanation of one expression of biblical origin. In this respect, the most important studies were those of Gábor O. Nagy. (O. Nagy, 1988) More systematical, but only from historical perspective, László Hadrovics dealt with this theme in his recently published book *Történeti frazeológia (Historical Phraseology)*. He devoted a special chapter to this theme. (Hadrovics, 1995)

The influence of the Bible on the hungarian phraseology should be handled in a monography. In this article, I only have the possibility, to deal with some aspects of this subject.

In recent years, people have widened the scope of research of phraseology in linguistical specialist literature. This means, that phraseological research is not further restricted to proverbs only, but is also widened to shorter phraseological entities, the idiomatic expressions were drawn into the studies. Under idiomatic expressions people understand an expression which is composed of at least two parts and which is used more or less methaphorically. The meaning of this expression can not simply be deducted from the meaning of the parts. The semantical transparency is different in different expressions, depending on which methaphorical or metonymical processes form the basis of the new meaning.

Analysing these processes, the researcher can use the results in the domains

of historiography, language history, folklore and culture history, but the theoretical basis of this research must be linguistical, basing on the latest semantical or syntactical theories. In many phraseological studies, people choose for either a culture historical or linguistical approach. The theory of the cognitive semantics offers the opportunity, to combine these two methods of approach. In this article, I will investigate a specific group of idiomatic entities, namely hungarian idiomatic entities of biblical origin, on the basis of the theory of cognitive semantics.

I. Historical changes of meaning and the methaphors of the religious imaginative background

Since ancient times, man built the language, like in the well-known hungarian ballad Kelemen Kőműves built in a person in the walls of the fortress of Déva: people built in the own body and parts of the body in the expressions. The somatisms or the idiomatic expressions basing on methaphorical use of a human (or sometimes animal) part of the body, form an integral part of our language.

On a higher grade of abstraction, the accent shifts in these expressions from the concrete physiological meaning to the nomination of one or another psychical situation or emotional situation (e.g.: *fáj a szíve*, "his heart hurts" > *fáj a szíve vmiért. vkiért*, "he hankers after something or someone"). In the hungarian linguistical literature, Zoltán Gombocz was the one who draw the attention to the regularity of the language on the basis of which each psychical situation or each emotional situation is expressed with such a word, that originally had a concrete physiological meaning. (Gombocz, 1926) In the course of his study to the early vocabulary in hungarian language regarding to psychical aspects, Béla Büky affirmed the findings of Gombocz. (Büky, 1986) Their observation is also true for a big part of idiomatic entities. But on the other hand, the idioms which express a psychical situation cohere with the religious conceptions of man. Our ideas about the immaterial atmosphere, regarding to the human psyche or the transcendental world, we try to describe with methaphorical expressions, because the thinking in methaphors even on the borders of observation and knowledge is the most strong way of understanding.

The words and idiomatic expressions which reflected the heathen religion of the hungarians, are not vanished without leaving a trace from the language during christianization, although the influence of the Bible from the moment of taking cognizance with Christianity has been strongly present. The first foreign missionaries and later the hungarian priests have used each form of the language, that expressed heathen expressions first, that they thought to be appropriate to fill in with new christian contents.

In this way we can explain that many terms that express fundamental conceptions of christian religion have a heathen origin. Look for example to the etymology of the word *Isten* (God), or the monophraseme *istennyila* ("arrow of God",

flash of lightning) which holds old prechristian concepts. According to the TESz. (the historical etymological dictionary of hungarian language), the meaning of the originally Finno-Ugrian verb *áld* (to sacrifice something to a good ghost) has become a christian meaning in the course of time: 1. "to offer something to God"; 2. "to wish something good to someone". (Nyr. 1989. 351-352) In the idiomatic expression *áldozati bárány* (sacrificial lamb), which is one of the most important metaphors of Christianity before Christ, we find again yet the word *áld*. We can see the merge of heathen and christian concepts in the hungarian name of a christian feast-day: the fortieth day after Easter, the christian church celebrates the Ascension of Christ. The name of this feast-day is, different from other european languages, not "Ascension day", but *Áldozócsütörtök* (sacrifice thursday).

II. Biblical elements in the hungarian vocabulary

In the analysis of biblical elements in hungarian vocabulary, the following schematical overview can serve as an starting-point:

- 1) Words with a direct biblical origin, e.g. *apostol* (apostle), *manna* (manna).
- 2) Personal names of biblical origin, e.g. *Erzsébet* (Elisabeth), *János* (John).
- 3) Words which originate from a biblical personal name, e.g. *galád* (mean) {Góliát (Goliath)}, *óriás* (giant) {Uriah}.
János Balázs has elaborated the biblical origin of these earlier yet unexplained words. (MNY. 1992. 441-445)
- 4) Some names of religious feast-days, e.g. *Háromkirályok* (Epiphany), *Mindenszentek* (All Saints).
- 5) Joint substantives, which indeed do not appear in this form in the Bible, but still owe their meaning to a biblical context: e.g. *mózeskosár* (bassinet, literally: Moses basket), *ádámcsutka* (Adam's apple), *pálfordulás* (sudden conversion, literally: conversion of Paul).
- 6) Monophrasemes or such isolated expressions which are strongly expressive. These owe their metaphorical meaning to a biblical context, e.g. *angyal* (angel), *Júdás* (Judas), *Matuzsálem* (Methuselah), *kígyó* (snake), *paradicsom* (paradise).
- 7) Collocations or such of two parts consisting idiomatic expressions with an attributive adjunct which have a metaphorical meaning and a biblical context, e.g. *hitetlen Tamás* (doubting Thomas), *bábeli nyelvezavar* (babel of tongues), *fekete bárány* (scapegoat).
- 8) Idiomatical expressions which are literal translations of original hebrew idioms, e.g. *tüske a szemében vmi vkinek* (it is a thorn in my side), *a veséjébe lát vki vkinek* (have a clear insight in somebody's character, literally: in somebody's kidney).
- 9) Proverbs which are derived from biblical quotations and have become

independent, but that originally were not idioms, e.g. *vak vezet világtalant* (the blind is leading the blind), *senki sem lehet proféta a saját házájában* (a prophet has no honour in his own country), *nincs új a nap alatt* (there is nothing new under the sun).

- 10) Idiomatic expressions and spreekwoorden which are not direct quotations, but which regarding to their content and metaphorical language have a close relation to a biblical text, e.g. *utánam az özönvíz* (after me the deluge), *ítéletnapig is eltart vmi* (it takes ages, literally: it lasts eternally), *sovány, mint a hét szük esztendő* (lean like the seven lean years), *jól sáfárkodik vmivel* (act as a manager, literally: use the talents), *mossa kezeit* (to wash one's hands of something), *elad vmit egy tál lencséért* (to give something for a mess of pottage, literally: to give something away for a dish of lentils).

In this article, I just deal with the expressions mentioned under item 6) to 10).

III. The meaning structures of the idiomatic expressions of biblical origin

The under item 6) mentioned monophraseme expressions form a borderland of phraseological analysis, because they do not fulfil the formal criterion of duality of idiomatic expressions. I understand under monophrasemes (I am following Gyula Somhegyi in this respect) such isolated lexemes, which because of their expressiveness are used like idiomatic expressions. (Nyr. 1988) Under the lexical elements of biblical origin we find numerous words and proper names which are used as a semantic entity, e.g. *ez a lány egy angyal!* (this girl is an angel!); this means that this girl is very good-natured/gentle/innocent/charming etc. And everyone in Hungary knows *a sárga angyal* (literally: the yellow angel) in the meaning of "A.A.-patrol", where the meaning element "helping, saving" of the word "angyal" forms the basis of the expression. Most monophrasemes of biblical origin are substantives, e.g.

angyal (angel), *ördög* (devil), *örangyal* (guardian angel), *védangyal* (guardian angel), *arkangyal* (archangel), *isten* (god), *szent* (holy), *szentírás* (Holy Scripture), *biblia* (Bible), *apostol* (apostle), *bünbak* (scapegoat), *oldalborda* (rib), *paradicsom* (paradise), *pokol* (hell), *kígyó* (snake), *sátán* (satan), *mennyország* (heaven).

Some lexemes are originated from the toponymy or the antroponymy, e.g.:

Kánaán (Canaan), *Golgota* (Golgotha), *Júdás* (Judas), *júdáspénz* (blood money, literally: Judas money), *jeremiád* (jeremiad), *pálfordulás* (sudden conversion, literally: conversion of Paul), *tamaskodik (!)* (doubt, literally: act like Thomas).

The last example, where a change from a substantive into a verb has taken place, shows very clearly that regarding to these monophrasemes the concretizing individualising function of the proper name has disappeared and that other semantic characteristics have come to the front.

From the literal, concrete meaning originates through transfer an abstract meaning. This transfer bases on one or another likeness, i.e. on metaphorical usage. For the right interpretation of the metaphor helps our encyclopedical knowledge of the world. The linguistic information is complemented by non-linguistic information.

The idiomatic entities which are summed up from item 7) to item 10) have different meaning structures. Under item 7), the collocations are named, where one of the elements of the two parts keeps its original meaning for the greater part or entirely, e.g.

bábeli nyelvzavar (babel (confusion) of tongues), *egy egész sáska-had* (a whole army of grasshoppers), *az ígéret földje* (the promised land), *hétpecsétetes titok* (great secret, literally: a secret sealed with seven seals), *égbekiáltó bűn* (an atrocious crime, literally: a crime, crying to heaven), *matuzsálemi kor* (as old as Methuselah), *salamoni bölcsesség* (Wisdom of Solomon), *irgalmas szamaritánus* (good Samaritan).

Here also, there are often toponymical and antroponymical elements and structurally these expressions are attributive adjuncts or possessive adjuncts.

The idiomatic expressions named under item 8) have a meaning structure that is different from those of the other items. These expressions are namely literal translations from the original hebrew idioms, so these brought, strange, unusual images into hungarian language.

Analysing biblical expressions, it is striking that the semantical transparent entities are predominantly. These expressions are semantically motivated, but only for those people that know the text of the Bible.

Under item 9) and 10), expressions are listed that semantically are less transparent, but here also helps the knowledge of the biblical texts regarding to the explanation of the meaning.

The monophrasemes, the collocations, the semantical transparent and less transparent idiomatical expressions have absorbed the contents of whole biblical texts and point to likenesses and stories from the Old and the New Testament.

IV. Biblical expressive language

The lexical elements of a language picture the non-language reality. The conditions of life and the habits of the people, their daily experiences in life are an important source for the imaging material of a language. Divergent geographical, historical, economical and cultural backgrounds are represented in language with

different images. On the other side, comparable conditions of life and experiences in life of different peoples and the equality of human nature provide similar images in the different languages. In some cases, it is difficult to say, in how far original biblical texts inspired the translators to figurative language and in how far, doing their work, they have made use of imagery which originated independently in hungarian language, e.g.

úgy nő, mint a fü (something grows very fast, literally: something grows like grass), *földhöz ragadt* (primitive, literally: sticking on the earth), *mintha a föld nyelte volna el* (he disappeared, literally: as if the earth would have swallowed him), *összecsapnak vki feje fölött a hullámok* (he submerged in ..., literally: the waves come together above his head), *égnék áll a haja az ijedtségtől* (his hair stands because of fright).

The metaphor and the metaphoric relationships or the name transfer basing on a likeness plays a dominant role in our way of thinking. (Lakoff, 1980)

Metaphoric relationships form part of the conceptual system by means of which we talk about a certain phenomenon. Not the particularity of an image is interesting, but the structural usage of it, because on this way a conceptual system helps to structure our experiences of the world, e.g. images adopted from jewish shepherd life express the relationship between the community and its leader: the community of believers is called a *nyáj* (the flock), its leader *pásztor* (the Shepherd, God), > *lelkipásztor* (the pastor); the benevolent believer is the *ártatlan bárány* (the innocent lamb), *ma született bárány* (the newborn lamb), they all fall under the protection of the *jó pásztor* (the good Shepherd, God). He protects the flock from the *báránybőrbe bújt farkas* (a wolf in sheep's cloathing) or from the prophets who are not telling the truth. It is him, who helps the *eltévedt bárány* (lost sheep), the *fekete bárány* (scapegoat) that doesn't know the right path anymore. It can be, that he calls the lost sheep with a *pusztába kiáltó szóval* (a voice crying in the wilderness), i.e. in vain. A *jó pásztor* does not look for a *bünbak* (scapegoat) in the flock, he takes responsibility himself for all those who follow him, he merges with his flock and evolves himself to the *áldozati bárány* (sacrificial lamb > Jesus). (Hadrovics, 1995)

In the time of the Bible translations, expressions in which "power" and "might" that were symbolized by the metaphor *szarv* (horn) were presumably strange and unusual to hungarian language. In the time of the Old Testament, the horn of the ram, the goat, the bull were a symbol of power en might for the jewish pastoral people. (Ruzsiczky, 1991) In the Hebrew language originated idiomatic expressions on the basis of this, e.g. the expression *a vki szarvát letöri-lévágja* (to cut someone the horn) refers to taking away the power of someone.

The metaphor *kő* (stone) goes together with an image of hardness, firmness, inflexibility and resoluteness, e.g. *kősziklára építi házát* (he builds his house on a rock), *a kősziklából is vizet fakaszt* (to gain water from a rock), the power of destruction is totally, when even the stone cannot resist, e.g. *kő kövön nem marad*

(everything was razed to the ground, literally: not one stone was left on another). This beautiful alliterating, word repeating expression appeared already several times in the Codex from Munich:

“...jönnek az napok kikben nem hagyatik kő kövön ki meg nem töretessék.” (Lukács, Kapitulum XXI,6) (“...the time will come when not one stone will be left on another, every one of them will be thrown down”).

“Bizony mondom tüneknek, nem marad itt kő kövön, ki nem megtöretik.”(Máté, Kapitulum XXIV,2) (“I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down”).

The metaphor *kenyér* (bread) however, represents softness, forgiveness and life, e.g. *mindennapi kenyérünk* (our daily bread) (from the Lord’s Prayer).

The expression *ha megdobnak kővel, dobd vissza kenyérral* (when they throw with stones, throw bread back) formulates the christian ideal of neighbourly love and avoiding of violence. This expression does not appear in the text of the Bible. We don’t even find an image to which the motive of “to throw with bread” could be deducted. For this reason after some linguists the origin of this expression is uncertain. I cannot share the view, that the expression would contain traces of one or another ancient motive or heathen ritual. Edit Vértes has made an attempt, to examine from the tradition of the Ugrian peoples living near the river Ob, if in the rituals of our ancestors the throwing of bread occurred or if they met their enemies with friendship and even love. But she did neither find traces of the motive, nor traces of a friendly attitude towards enemies in the Ugrian culture near the river Ob. (Vértes, 1992) It wasn’t even possible to find this, because this proverb appears in the collection of Margalits with its latin equivalent:

“Ki téged kővel dob, dobd vissza kenyérral.

“Qui te percutiet lapide, tu percutias cum pane.” (Margalits, 1899. 234)

True, we do not deal here with a direct appropriate biblical quotation, but the metaphor “bread” as an image for peacefulness and neighbourly love fits very well into the christian culture. The motive of the throwing of bread stands as an opposite to the throwing with stones or stoning. Jesus says, when the Pharisees ask him to justice over the lecherous woman: *Az dobjá rá az első követ, aki büntelen* (If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her).

With the help of the examples above, I would like to demonstrate that the conceptual metaphors of a language have their roots in the culture, in which the speakers of that language live, in the case of the biblical metaphors therefore in the jewish shepherd culture. The analysis of conceptual metaphors shows, on the basis of what experiences and in which way the users think about the phenomena of the world. At the same time, the appearance of new metaphors in a language point to the adoption of new cultural values. This was also the case in the hungarian language, in the time of christianising.

For centuries, biblical texts formed the basis of the culture. The illiterates, simple people, also had a fair knowledge of the Bible, because in the sermons, in psalms and in prayers the words of the Holy Scripture were often repeated. Together with the christian mentality, people also adopted the images. In many cases, even some longer quotations are taken over into the collective consciousness and after some time, the speakers of this community did not know anymore that they use texts of biblical origin, and felt these as original hungarian proverbs, that often also were used in folk-tales, e.g.

Aki másnak vermet ás, maga esik bele (he who digs a pit for others may fall into it himself), *a halál fia* (the son of death), *hetvenhétyszer megmondtam* (I told this seventy seven times), *hétördög* (bad child, literally: seven devils).

For some time, people probably knew about the biblical origin, later this was less clear and the speakers started, to use these expressions more and more as a semantical entity. This change of meaning will end in our days, when the biblical texts are known to ever-decreasing numbers of people.

The metaphorical usage of many words of biblical origin, the quotation of many biblical texts has become conventional during the course of the centuries. Our language is full of darkened biblical or religious references. In the volume 1995/96 of the hungarian newspaper "Magyar Nemzet", I read the following titles and sentences among others: "Az Interneten az információ nyilvánossága szentség" (On the Internet, the publicity of information is holy), "Égbekiáltó reálbércsökkenés" (decreasing of real income cries to heaven"), "A vízilabdázók mennybemenetele" (the ascension of the waterpolo players), "Tudják-e vajon a polgárok, hogy nemcsak ez az egyedül üdvözítő út a stabilizációra?" (Do the civilians know, that this isn't the only holy making way to stabilization?) etc.

The individual metaphors used in the poetic language represent the most creative use of language. Behind these metaphors, there is a hidden striving for subtle nuanced expressions. But if they want to or not, even the artists cannot loose themselves from the reminiscences of the Bible. As an example, I quote here the poem of László Nagy, *Ki viszi át a szerelmet?* (Carrying Love)

“Létem ha végleg lemerült
ki imád tücsök hegedűt?
Lángot ki lehel deres ágra?
Ki feszül föl a szivárványra?
Lágy hantú mezőkké a szikla-
csípőket ki öleli sírva?
Ki becéz falban megeredt
hajakat, verőereket?
S dúlt hiteknek kicsoda állít
káromkodásból katedrális?
Létem ha végleg lemerült,

ki rettent a keselyűt!
 S ki viszi át fogában tartva
 a Szerelmet a túlsó partra!"

"When my life has sunk beneath me
 who will admire the cricket's cadenza?
 Who will kindle the frosty bough?
 Who will hang crucified from a rainbow?
 Who will transform hips that are rocks
 into a flowering field among hillocks?
 Who will stroke the hairs in stones,
 the pebbles' blood, the wall's veins?
 Who will build an immense cathedral
 where tongues cursed and faith fell?
 When my life has sunk for good
 who will battle that deadly bird?
 Whose mouth will be strong enough to beat
 foundering Love to the farther shore?"

V. Metaphorical language and culture

The numerous number of biblical metaphors in our modern linguistic usage that often have a relationship to our moral norms and values permit the conclusion, that our culture notwithstanding the secularization still rests on a christian basis. The often used biblical metaphors that are blended with the moral system of values are: *Júdás* (Judas), *bűnbak* (scapegoat), *ártatlan bérány* (innocent lamb). Some other areas of modern life such as sport, the economical order and most recently information technology have started up new processes of metaphorisation in language that transfer new values, but such an immense system like christian religion has created for the transfer of the biblical texts is not originated and probably will not come into existence in the future because of the differentialising of the society.

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