**PILLARS OF WISDOM. 5TH MAY 2019.**

**METAPHORS IN THE BIBLE.**

**What is a Metaphor? It is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. It can also be called an Analogy, Allegory or Symbol.**

**Metaphors are rife in the Bible and they are so many that it is a subject matter worth studying. We need to appreciate that in the Pentateuch and the Historical books of the Old Testament we do not have many Metaphors but when we get to the Poetic, wisdom and Prophets Writings, there are many Metaphors to such an Extent that reading the Bible with Little Knowledge of the subject matter can be very frustrating.**

**One other factor or critical significance as regards the Metaphoric approach towards spiritual matters is that of The Prophetic Dimension. By Prophetic I mean both the Office of a Prophet and the Gift of a Prophet. Numbers 12:1-8. The prophetic Dimensions involve a Big Chunk of what we call the Similitudes (Likeness), which in essence are again Metaphors. Now, in the Prophetic Element and Dimension, Dreams are a key area, together with Trances and Open day visions. But to be able to see is One thing and to be able to Interpret is another. This is where th knowledge of the Similitudes come in.**

**Diving in.**

**LIONS**

**The Lion may be either the Emblem of Irresistible hostility or of proud and fearless confidence. Thus Israel’s enemies are compared to a Lion and a war shout to its roaring. Thus regarding the Assyrians, the Nation from the North that would take the Northern Kingdom captive, it is written in a metaphor in Isaiah 5:29 “A Roar has he like that of the Lioness; He roareth like the Young Lions growling and catching the Prey, and carrying it away safe, so that none can rescue.”**

**One metaphor alludes to the family life of the Royal Beast, Nahum 2:11-12.**

**Conflicts between the shepherds and the Lions were clearly frequent. And this Metaphor is particularly important for Leaders whom the Lord will endow the gift of a shepherd that one area of your battle will be of Prey being taken and ransacked by the Lions. Thus in the book of Amos, a Prophet of Judah sent North to go and Prophesy to the wicked nation of elite merchants, there is coming a Lion from the North and will take captive the whole nation with the remnant to be saved from the Judgement compared to the issue of a Fight when “the shepherd taketh out of the Mouth of a Lion, two legs or a piece of an ear” Amos 3:12**

**BEAR, LEOPARD, WOLF, JACKALS, FOXES, ANTELOPE, WILD ASS AND WILD OX.**

**The she Bear deprived of her young ones is a familiar Image of Terror, yet a fool in his folly is even a worse thing to meet than a bear denied of its cub. Proverbs 17:12. Enemies are compared to these creatures. Their peculiar cry supplies the motive of the comparison in the case of the Bear and the Jackals (Micah 1:8. Isaiah 59:11).**

**To the Fox who burrows and digs holes in ruins in vain, Ezekiel Compares the false Prophets who widen their Social breach (Ez 13:4).**

**The Sons of Jerusalem who lie exhausted and fainting at the corners of the street are likened to the Antelope, who after vain struggles lies exhausted and motionless within the Hunters’ net ( Isaiah 51:20 ).**

**The Bull, which is always a sign of the Impending threat, which after a long enjoyment of free grazing in the forests or plains often became wild. Psalms 22:13.**

**So again Israel is the Bull. Thus in the song of Moses “Jerushun waxed fat and Kicked.” Deuteronomy 32:15. Balak in Numbers 22:4 fears that Israel may lick up all which is round about as the Ox licks up the grass of the field. The Rejoicing of those who are saved after the Judgement is compared by Malachi to the gambolling of the calves who have been kept in their stalls through the winter and are let out into the fields in the spring – Malachi 3:20.**

**BIRDS**

**If the Joyous songs of the birds are always alluded to, their mournful notes are often used to symbolize human lamentations. So with the ostrich, the crane and the dove (Micah 1:8; Isaiah 37:14). Israel is called a turtledove in one of the favourite allusion to God’s people, as opposed to birds of prey which are alluded as his enemies. Hosea however, compares Israel to a dove in a less flattering manner. Israel is like a silly dove without understanding; they avoid the Hawk by falling into the net of the fowler. Hosea 7:11,12 Elsewhere, reference is made to the wild rock pigeons’ precipitous dwelling places. “ Oh ye that dwell in Moab; leave the cities and dwell in the rocks, and be like the Dove that makes her nest across the precipice on the Rock’s mouth” Jeremiah 48:28.**

**A most familiar metaphor of the Bird is in Jeremiah 17:11 “As a partridge gathers her young which she has not brought forth, so is he that gets riches unjustly.”**

**SERPENTS**

**Serpents are naturally the Emblem of the wicked, and their poison is a type of Sinfulness. Thus the psalmist enemies have poison as the poison of a serpent; yea as that of a deaf adder which stops her ear; which will not harken to the voice of Charmers, nay of the most cunning binder of spells. Psalms 58:5-6.**

**INSECTS**

**Locusts were only too familiar objects for supplying a metaphor of an enemy’s speed, Number of voracity. The figure is most effectively employed in Nahum, though one or two of the most details are obscure and disputed: “ The fire shall devour thee and the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the Locust, though thou make thyself many as the locust and the grasshopper. The locust is here used for the enemy then later for the Ninevites. Thou has multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven; nut yet the Locust has spread out its wings and has flown away. (Here the merchants are the Locusts). Nahum 3:15-17.**

**Besides the locusts, we have the Moth, the emblem of Mutability and rottenness. Thus God will be to Ephraim as a Moth. Hosea 5:12, the worm, the Emblem of lowliness and contempt, as well as the Fly, the slug and bees. The Preacher says in Ecclesiastes 10:1. “Poisonous Flies make the Perfumer’s oil to stink and Ferment; even so is a little folly (Lack of Good sense and foresight) weightier than wisdom and Honor. Of which the meaning is that a small amount of Evil outweighs and stultifies a large amount of Good.**

**The metaphor and simile of a slug of very odd. Apparently, the popular motion was that a slug gradually melted away into a slime; and so the Psalmist amiably prays that His enemy may disappear as a slug which melts as it moves along. Psalms 58:8.**

**The Bee forms a fine figure in Isaiah 7:18,19. Egypt is symbolised by a Fly and Assyria by a Bee, both images appropriately to the Particular countries. The predicted Joint invasion of the Egyptian and Assyrian armies, is not mere likened to a swarm of bees and flies; Assyria is the Bee and Egypt is the Fly, while the Invasion is described in terms suitable to, not to the Human armies, but the Hosts of Insects.**

**Important addendum to Metaphoric Modes.**

**Ordinary discourse consists of words which are used directly as the signs of Things. In allegorical discourses, words are used to represent supposed objects and events. In this sense, it is key to note that there are two groups of wordings.**

**There are words in the bible which form a discourse in which words are used as the signs of real or supposed objects and events.**

**Then there are words which we have to dig out their meaning, a task which is by no means a walk in the Park.**

**Now all language is symbolic. In this sense then words are carriers of Symbols for which then it demands that the speakers and the Hearers be well versed with the Cultural demands that a language bears and carries.**

**One other chief characteristics of words is that they have to bear tangible results. Which means that words and sentences for that matter must have Verbs; Doing word which then carries and is pregnant with the action intended by the author of the word. If words do not reach their chief end of action and fruition with full tangible results, then those words are void and vapour and it is thus said that they were Futile.**

**Note that scripture talks of idle words – Mathew 12:34-36.**

**The Other chief Characteristics of words is what we have just alluded to above, which in all due respect is but a tip in the iceberg of what the Bible covers as a Metaphoric language. Language will also point to Objects both living creatures and Inanimate in nature. This then demands that language students and bible learners be well acquainted with God’s creation and his goings about in Man’s life.**

**Finally, on this short treatise, we must also peg in the Art of Interpretation. We see this Gift Given to Joseph and Daniel in the Bible.**

**The Art of Interpretation is the Art of Teaching what is the Meaning of Another’s language; or that faculty which enables us to attach to another’s Language the same meaning that the author Himself attached to it. In the biblical dimension, Joseph and Daniel were able to Understand the language of God and thus dispensed the dreams that Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar had with ease.**

**The pre-requisite for a good Interpreter implied two things.**

* **A right perception of the meaning of words**
* **A proper explanation of that meaning.**

**A good interpreter must possess Sound Understanding and a good command of language. These are gifts that God endows upon men and thus dispensed freely upon request.**

**Lets rest at that for tonight.**

**The Old Testament exposition is coming up soon. Thus Preparations are critical at this Juncutre.**

**Blessings**

**By Teacher Sammy Nyanjom.**