

“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” (Exod 22:18) and Contemporary Akan Christian Belief and Practice: A Translational and Hermeneutical Problem¹

YAW ADU-GYAMFI (UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE/GHANA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY COLLEGE)

ABSTRACT

*The King James Version (KJV) of Exod 22:18, “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,” has been used by some contemporary ordinary Akan Christians in Ghana to justify praying for the death and destruction of witches and wizards. Instructions such as “Pray for the death of any witch in your family or business; pray that Holy Ghost fire will consume any witch holding your destiny,” have become a common statement at some Akan Christian prayer meetings in Ghana. This article seeks to show this belief and practice is a translational and hermeneutical problem because the Hebrew word *מְכַשְׁפָּה* which the KJV translates as “witch” and subsequently translated in early Asante Bible as *obayifo*² is a representational term used by the redactor of Exod 22:18 to reflect the semantic range of idolatrous practices condemned by YHWH among the Israelites. The article also purports to show that the phrase *לֹא תַחַיֶּה* does not necessarily mean to kill the offender, and that the prohibition can be understood as being essentially religious rather than merely legal.*

KEYWORDS: witch, hermeneutical and translational problem, KJV, *מְכַשְׁפָּה*, “*obaa ntafowayifo*,” “*obaa-ayen*”

A INTRODUCTION

Among many Ghanaian Akan Christians living in Ghana today, much attention has been given to witches and wizards. Among the Akan of Ghana, Johannes

* Article submitted: 27/01/2016; article accepted: 9/03/2016. Yaw Adu-Gyamfi, ““Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” (Exod 22:18) and Contemporary Akan Christian Belief and Practice: A Translational and Hermeneutical Problem,” *OTE* 29 no. 1 (2016): 11-32. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2016/v29n1a3>

¹ In this article, Scripture references are to the KJV English Bible versifications. Exodus 22:17 in the HB (BHS) is 22:18 in the English Bible, and thus English Bible references in Exod 22 are numbered one unit higher than HB references to that chapter.

² See the meaning in the introductory section (A).

Christaller defines *bayi* as “witchcraft, sorcery.”³ He further defines *obayifo*, the practitioner of *bayi*, as “witch, hag, wizard, sorcerer.”⁴ Explaining the identity of *obayifo*, from the point of view of the Akan people, he asserts:

The natives describe a wizard or witch as a man or woman who stands in some agreement with the devil. At night, when all are asleep, he (or she) rises or rather leaves his (her) body, as a snake casts its slough, and goes out emitting flames from his eyes, nose, mouth, ears, armpits; he may walk with his head on the ground and his feet up; he catches and eats animals, or kills men either by drinking their blood or by catching their soul, which he boils and eats, whereupon the person dies; or he bites them that they become full of sores. Some change themselves into leopards, snakes, antelopes; some apply their witchcraft also to trade when selling things.⁵

I attend prayer meetings regularly, and I have noticed that at least half of the time devoted to prayer is given to the death and destruction of these persons who are seen as the most wicked in the society. Many ordinary Ghanaian Christians I have spoken to quote the traditional translation of Exod 22:18, “Thou shalt not suffer a *witch* to live” (Exod 22:18 KJV; italics mine) to justify their prayer against the witch. It is important to mention quite a number of ordinary Ghanaian Akan Christians think the KJV is the oldest among English Bible versions and so base their beliefs and practices on the renderings of the KJV.

This problem stems from the KJV rendering of the meaning of the *מְכַשְׁפָּה* as “witch” which many ordinary Ghanaian Christians interpret as *obayifo*. So in this article, I address the meaning of *מְכַשְׁפָּה* against the general traditional interpretation of the term by many ordinary Ghanaian Akan Christians to mean “social destruction to life and property of people through mysterious powers inherent in the subject.”

This article argues that the term *מְכַשְׁפָּה* is a representational term used by the redactor of Exod 22:18 to reflect the semantic range of idolatrous practices condemned by YHWH among the Israelites. This understanding is made clear when the term is understood as synonymous⁶ with other OT related terms used

³ Johannes Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language* (Basel: The Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, 1933), 11.

⁴ Christaller, *Dictionary*, 11.

⁵ Christaller, *Dictionary*, 11.

⁶ Silva Moises calls this “contiguous relations” or “improper synonyms.” See Silva Moises, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983); see also Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter Varsity Press, 1991), 85.

within their context. The article also seeks to show that the "מְכַשְׁפָּה" in Exod 22:18 does not connote what many ordinary Ghanaian Akan Christians mean by *obayifo* and so the text cannot be used to justify praying for the death of *obayifo*. The article also purposes to show that the phrase לֹא תַחַיֶּה does not necessarily mean to kill the offender. Finally, the article aims to show that Exod 22:18 should be interpreted within its immediate context, vv. 18-20.

The article begins with the literary context of Exod 22:18. I then examine the concept behind the use of the Hebrew word מְכַשְׁפָּה within the literary context under consideration and generally in the OT to show that the MT and the LXX included among others, the practitioners of sorcery, magic, divination and enchanters.

I will then show that the problem emerges from the Vulgate translation of מְכַשְׁפָּה. This is followed by an analysis of Exod 22:18 within the context of Exod 22:18-20. The theoretical framework governing this article is a comparative and analytical approach using literary critical methodology⁷ and finally I will make some recommendations.

B THE LITERARY CONTEXT OF EXODUS 22:18

The narrative may be easily divided into two sections: chs. 1-18, which relate the story of the escape from Egypt and the journey to Sinai, and chs. 19-40, which relate the giving of the covenant at Mount Sinai/Horeb. In the larger context, Exod 22:18 belongs to the second section. It also belongs to the part of the Pentateuch known as the Book of the Covenant or the Covenant Code (20:22-23:33). The Covenant Code is generally divided into two major groups as follows: (a) 21:2-22:20, civil and criminal laws; (b) 20:23-26; 22:21-23:19, miscellaneous admonitions concerning social morality, and religious and cultic regulations. The first division is generally well unified and systematically arranged. The second is quite varied in its contents, and is not arranged systematically.⁸ Many scholars are of the view that the Book of the Covenant is a collection of varied materials put together and only unified under the assigned title without any specific unit.⁹ For his part, Durham asserts that

the collection expanded with the passage of time and with the emergence of new contexts of need is suggested by the range of applica-

⁷ Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (vol. 3 of *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*; Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1987).

⁸ Philip Hyatt notes that it can be divided into several subdivisions. See Philip Hyatt, *Exodus* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 219.

⁹ John Durham, *Exodus* (WBC; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 315; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (OTL; Philadelphia: The Westminster, 1974), 458; Noel D. Osborn and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1999), 531.

tion of the laws contained in it, as also by its somewhat layered and often arbitrary organization. The many attempts to find unifying motifs in it or a logical or a theological sequence, have been generally unconvincing.¹⁰

Childs posits that the fusion of the two halves of the Book of the Covenant occurred at the literary stage. He explains that “the *mishpatim* were joined to the cultic laws which already had received a place within the Sinai narrative.”¹¹ Childs intimates that it is highly likely that the same redactor rearranged his material and gave the altar law its present leading position.¹²

Most scholars agree that the unifying factor lies in its theology and present redaction form which is not the work of one author or source as traditionally believed.¹³ Durham clearly explains this point when he notes:

The “Covenant Code” is held together not by a consistent literary form or style, not by the organization of a single compiler or a single historical setting, but by the theological assertions that these laws, as different as they are in form and application and origin, are all Yahweh’s, and so are all expected of the people who reckon themselves to be his.¹⁴

The first major division (Exod 21:1-22:16) is concerned with the casuistic laws. The second major division (Exod 22:17-23:19) contains a miscellaneous group of admonitions concerning social morality, and regulations concerning religion and the cult. Within the second division, form critics recognize an apodictic literary form.

Jepson isolates a small group of religious and ethical prohibitions within the second major division. He thinks these prohibitions are native Israelite and very old, but he accepts that their precise date cannot be determined.¹⁵ Each of these has a definite form: object of the verb + the negative לֹא + a single verb. Just like our text under investigation, מְכַשְׁפָּה לֹא תַחֲיֶה, each has only three words in Hebrew (though a little variation on this point can be observed).¹⁶

¹⁰ Durham, *Exodus*, 315.

¹¹ Childs, *Exodus*, 458.

¹² Childs, however, indicates that without sufficient evidence it is idle to speculate on the shape of this material prior to its combination. See Childs, *Exodus*, 458.

¹³ Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 18; Childs, *Exodus*, 440-96; Durham, *Exodus*, 327; Donald E. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in Form of a Commentary* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994), see esp. p. x-xi; 178-183.

¹⁴ Durham, *Exodus*, 318.

¹⁵ Alfred Jepsen, *Untersuchungen zum Bundesbuch* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1927), cited by Hyatt, *Exodus*, 221.

¹⁶ Cited by Hyatt, *Exodus*, 221.

Given that *מְכַשְׁפָּה* is used in the apodictic literary genre, it is possible that it may be Semitic, but typically used in ancient Israel to express outlawed practices.¹⁷ Gunnel André notes that the list of terms used in Deut 18:9-14 clearly reflects the situation of the late monarchy.¹⁸ It is therefore not out of place to conclude that there is a mixture of practices from the pre-monarchical and monarchical periods incorporated into this section of the Book of the Covenant, given the continuous activities of scribal work during and after the period of the Monarchy, particularly on the section of the Torah.¹⁹ The redactor might have reflected the prohibition of practices that were outlawed in Israel by using the word *מְכַשְׁפָּה* to represent the whole range of magical practices.

The subject matter of Exod 22:18 within its own genre and context, nevertheless gives it a consideration wider than the Pentateuch but into other OT books which include the Historical Books as well as the Prophetic Books. By this, I mean that the issue of divination, sorcery, necromancy, magic, fortune-telling, soothsaying, spiritism, and the like are clear recurrent issues that the prophets rebuked and are found in the three sections of the Hebrew Scriptures: תורה נביאים וכתובים.²⁰ Thus, it is likely that the term *מְכַשְׁפָּה* as at the time of redaction had a wider semantic meaning than its denotative meaning.

C TRANSLATION OF THE TERM *מְכַשְׁפָּה*

1 Hebrew – The Masoretic Text (MT)

The word *מְכַשְׁפָּה* comes from the root *כָּשַׁף* which means “to mutter magical words or incantations,” “to practice sorcery,”²¹ “to practice magic.”²² Unger

¹⁷ Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1972).

¹⁸ Gunnel André, “*כָּשַׁף* *kashaph*,” *TDOT* 7:364.

¹⁹ Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* (trans. E. F. Rhodes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979); Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, The Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster, 1999); Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); Albrecht Alt, *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (trans. R. A. Wilson; Sheffield: JOST Press, 1989); Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (vol. 1; OTL; trans. J. A. Baker; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961).

²⁰ See Osborn and Hatton, *Exodus*, 531; Osborn and Hatton note that there are a number of places where the different literary traditions have been joined together in an uneven manner so that a literary “seam” has been formed. Osborn and Hatton, *Exodus*, 2.

²¹ Terry A. Armstrong, Douglas L. Busby, and Cyril F. Carr, *RHELOT*: 41. The fact that this form and the entire context in which the verse appears is a matter of serious textual difficulty can be deduced from the comments of biblical scholars on this verse. See Martin Noth, *The Laws of the Pentateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 39; Ronald E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge

explains that this Hebrew word denotes “one who practices magic by using occult formulas, incantations, and mystic mutterings.”²³ Some lexicons note the word is “probably herbs shredded into a magic brew.”²⁴ Kenneth Kitchen points out that this root verb “probably means ‘to cut,’ and could refer to herbs cut for charms and spells.”²⁵ So the root verbal term could signify “to mutter,” and consequently “to mutter charms” whilst cutting up herbs or drugs in order to produce a magic brew,²⁶ a process which may as well refer to healing potions as well as to harmful concoctions.²⁷

מְכַשְׁפָּה is a participial feminine singular in the *pi’el* stem which suggests the idea of a feminine practitioner. This feminine form occurs only here in Exod 22:18.²⁸ Brevard Childs notes that the feminine form “sorceress” would indicate the frequency with which the practice was identified with women.²⁹ It has been strongly contended that the Hebrew feminine term used in the full text of Exod 22:18 and usually translated “sorceress,” means either a mixer of drugs or someone who cuts up herbs for poison.³⁰ In terms of the participial form, it can also quite simply and effectively be translated “a woman practicing magic.”

Masculine forms of the root כָּשַׁף also occur, which have been variously translated as “magician, sorcerer, incantation, sorcery”³¹ enchanter, witchcraft, wizard, soothsayer, diviner, wonder worker, fortune teller, or spell caster.³² In 2 Chr 33:6 כָּשַׁף (practised sorcery) was among the sins of king Manasseh. This *pi’el* demonstrative form expresses the king’s deep involvement in the practice

University Press, 1972), 145; Alan McNeile, *The Book of Exodus* (WC; London: Methuen, 1917), 135; Alan Cole, *Exodus* (TOTC; London: Tyndale Press, 1973), 173.

²² Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith, *Old Testament Parsing Guide* (rev. and updated ed.; Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Academic, 2000), 68.

²³ Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1952), 153.

²⁴ See *BDB*:506; cf. Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 431, 649.

²⁵ Kenneth A. Kitchen, “Magic and Sorcery,” *NBD*²:723.

²⁶ *BDB*:506.

²⁷ Donald J. Bretherton, “An Invitation to Murder? A Re-Interpretation of Exodus 22:18 ‘You Shall Not Suffer a Witch to Live,’” *ExpTim* 116/5 (2005): 147.

²⁸ Beall, Banks and Smit, *Old Testament*, 68; *BDB*:506; Armstrong, et al., *RHELOT*:41.

²⁹ Childs, *Exodus*, 478.

³⁰ Bretherton, “An Invitation to Murder?” 145-152.

³¹ *CHALOT*:166.

³² Robert Alden, “כָּשַׁף,” *TWOT* 1:458.

of various forms of magic.³³ In Jer 27:9 כַּשְׁפִּים the plural of כַּשֵׁף which occurs only here is used to refer to “sorcerers” and similar practitioners in the court of the corrupt monarchy on the eve of the Babylonian invasion of the kingdom.³⁴ כַּשֵׁף a masculine noun form occurs six times in the OT, and always in the plural form כַּשְׁפִּים “sorceries” or “incantations” (2 Kgs 9:22; Isa 47:9, 12; Mic 5:11; Nah 3:4 twice).³⁵ It is used in two ways: In Mic 5:11 it is used literally of Israel - והכרתו כַּשְׁפִּים מִיָּדְךָ - “I will cut off sorceries from your hands.” And in Isa 47:9 and 12 it is used with a suffix that refers to Babylon מֵאֵד חֲבֵרֶיךָ מֵאֵד, “In spite of your many sorceries; in spite of the great power of your spells” (v. 9); עֲמִדְיָבָא בְּחֲבֵרֶיךָ וּבִרְבַּב כַּשְׁפֶּיךָ - “Stand fast now in your spells; and in your many sorceries” (v. 12).³⁶ In addition, it is used figuratively of seductive and corrupting influences of Jezebel in 2 Kgs 9:22 (כַּשְׁפֵּיהָ, “her sorceries” and זְנוּנֵיהָ her “harlotries”); also in Nah 3:4 the word is used in the plural כַּשְׁפֵּיהָ “her sorceries” along with the word זְנוּיָהּ “her harlotries” of Nineveh personified as harlot.

According to Exod 7:11, the Egyptian Pharaoh of the exodus had מְכַשְׁפִּים in his entourage of advisers. They are grouped with the חֲכָמִים “wise men” and הַרְטָמִים “magicians.”³⁷ In Deut 18:10 the term is used once only in the participle as substantive masculine singular מְכַשֵּׁף. Here, along with other proscribed practices, Israel is forbidden to practice magic. Another occurrence of the participle is in Dan 2:2, where King Nebuchadnezzar commanded his מְכַשְׁפִּים along with his הַרְטָמִים “magicians,” אֲשָׁפִים “enchanters” and כַּשְׁדִּים “Chaldeans” to tell and interpret his dream. Malachi saw these מְכַשְׁפִּים being judged in the end along with adulterers, liars, and oppressors of widows, orphans, and foreigners (Mal 3:5).

In sum, in all the variant forms of the word כַּשֵׁף in the OT, the reference is always to the use of magic for the manipulation of situations or circumstances. Its practice in Israel was prohibited because it was against YHWH and his divine will and purpose among his covenant people. As Sprinkle notes, YHWH does not even tolerate quasi-religious practices such as sorcery.³⁸

³³ *Pi'el* pf. 3rd per. m. sg.; scholars have noted כַּשֵׁף was a form of mantic practice identified with foreign paganism (Deut 18:10; 2 Kgs 9:22), and it was a recurrent threat to Israel’s worship of Yahweh. It appears from the earliest to the latest period (Exod 7:11; Jer 27:9; 2 Chr 33:6; cf. קַסְמִים in Ezek 13:9).

³⁴ Stephen Renn, “kashaph,” *EDBW*:617.

³⁵ Alden, *TWOT* 1:458.

³⁶ *New American Standard Bible* - Updated Edition, (NASU); it is important to note the context here, especially, relating to influence by the use of the words “spells, astrologers, prophesy by star gazing, predictions by new moon” – Isa 47:9,12-13.

³⁷ I consider these terms as having the same semantic range and synonymous with מְכַשְׁפִּים.

³⁸ Joe M. Sprinkle, “Law and Narrative in Exodus 19-24” in *JETS* 47/2 (2004): 239.

2 Greek - The Septuagint (LXX)

The Septuagint (LXX) was translated during the 3rd century B.C.E.. The Septuagint translation of the feminine מְכַשְׁפּוֹת is *φαρμακους* masculine plural (from *φαρμακευς* or *φαρμακος*). It refers to those who use drugs either for sorcery or magic practices. Hence, it has been translated as “sorcerers, sorceries.”³⁹ In all the references in the MT to the root form of מְכַשְׁפּוֹת the LXX translates with the root *φαρμακος*. The Greek word *φαρμακος*, shares the same meaning with the Hebrew כַּשָּׁף in the sense of divination or magical incantation involving the use of herbs for medicinal purposes or for the control of nature and situations.⁴⁰ The Greek translation seems to understand the apparent gender bias in the Hebrew and gives its translation a masculine plural rendering.⁴¹

It is interesting to notice that the Septuagint translation of the word חַטְרָמִי in Exod 7:11 is *φαρμακειαίς* and in some other verses (cf. Exod 7:22; 8:3, 14).⁴² חַטְרָמִי is a term used consistently to refer to both Egyptian and Babylonian magicians (cf. Exod 7:11, 12, 22; 8:3, 14; Dan 1:20; 2:2). The word חַטְרָמִי comes from חָרַט “stylus” and literally means “scribe” or “engravers.” They were

men of the priestly caste, who occupied themselves with the sacred arts and sciences of the Egyptians, the hieroglyphic writings, astrology, the interpretation of dreams, the foretelling of events, magic, and conjuring, and who were regarded as the possessors of secret arts . . .⁴³

Derek Kidner suggests these magicians were “expert in handling the ritual books of priesthood and magic.”⁴⁴ This implies that חַטְרָמִי shares the same

³⁹ Rogers, Jr. and Rogers, III, *New Linguistic*, 431, 649.

⁴⁰ William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, “*φαρμακος*,” BAGD:854; James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1952); James Strong, *The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Word* (Nashville: Nelson, 1996), 720; Colin Brown and John Stafford Wright, “Magic, Sorcery, Magi,” *NIDNTT* 2:552-562; Paul-Gerhard Müller, “*φαρμακεια*,” *EDNT* 3:417-418.

⁴¹ This translation appears to use the word *φαρμακος* as a generic term like *ἄνθρωπος* to refer to both the male and female practitioners since it does not seem to have the feminine form for practitioners of such craft. Douay-Rheims Bible translates “wizards” likely following the LXX translation.

⁴² It is obvious that the LXX follows the MT as the references here are the same in both the LXX and MT while the Vulgate and English Versions do not have these references in the same place as the LXX and the MT.

⁴³ Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch* (vol. 1 of *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*; trans. J. Martin; London: T & T Clark, 1866), 349.

⁴⁴ Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1967), 195.

semantic range as מכשפים.⁴⁵

3 Latin – The Vulgate

The Latin (Vulgate) was based on the Hebrew, Greek and Old Latin translations available in the time of Jerome.⁴⁶ It translates מכשפה as *maleficos*. The translation of the Bible into Latin have had a decisive influence on the eventual interpretation of Exod 22:18. This, in particular, centres on the insertion of the word *maleficos* and its associated terms into the text which, by the time of the Reformation, came to imply all kinds of depraved and abominable practices.⁴⁷

A *maleficus* was simply an "evil-doer" and the verb meant "to harm," "to practise mischief," unlike the Greek translation that rendered a more appropriate meaning by the word φαρμακους "one who uses drugs either for sorcery or magic practices."⁴⁸ Bretherton warns that the term *maleficos* used in the Latin text, should not be translated "sorcerer" or "witch," unless remotely by implication, as it is not generally part of classical usage.⁴⁹ It would seem, therefore, that the term was usurped, or extended in biblical Latin to cover the worst forms of wickedness related to magic and sorcery. Likewise, *maleficium*, which formerly had meant any kind of crime now came, in ecclesiastical circles, to denote witchcraft in particular.⁵⁰

Thus *maleficos*, with the further Latin injunction, *non patieris vivere*, "not suffer to live" most inevitably led to the assumption that it meant all convicted witches should be destroyed. As a consequence, "all over Europe ordinary people were eager to denounce their female neighbours as witches in the sincere belief that they caused *maleficium* (harm)."⁵¹ In Ghana, the female sex is the most accused of this practice.

⁴⁵ The NT uses the word φάρμακος in the same way as the LXX in all its references (cf. Gal 5:20; Rev 9:21; 22:15) to refer to medicine or drugs used for magical purposes or sorcery. In Rev 9:21 it is suggested that the word has the special sense of magic spells inciting illicit lust. See William Robertson Nicol, ed., *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 164.

⁴⁶ This was the version made by Jerome between 383 and 405 C.E. and was the official version used in Britain and Ireland. See Würthwein, *Text of the Old Testament*, 91-95; Frederick F. Bruce, *The English Bible: A History of Translations from the earliest English Versions to the New English Bible* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961), 1.

⁴⁷ Bretherton, "An Invitation to Murder?" 147.

⁴⁸ Rogers, Jr. and Rogers, III, *New Linguistic*, 431, 649.

⁴⁹ Bretherton, "An Invitation to Murder?" 147.

⁵⁰ Bretherton, "An Invitation to Murder?" 147.

⁵¹ Frank Cross and Elizabeth Livingstone, eds., *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 1757.

4 English – King James Version (KJV)

The KJV was translated in the 17th century in the time of King James of Britain and is so called because he approved and authorized the translation; hence it is also known as “Authorized Version.”

The preface to the KJV says, “The text of Ben Chayyim was adopted in most subsequent Hebrew Bibles, including those used by the King James translators.” However, Bruce has demonstrated that the translators of the KJV used the MT, LXX, Vulgate and some earlier English translations as their source texts.⁵² These English translations were The Tyndale New Testament, The Coverdale Bible, The Matthews Bible, The Great Bible, The Geneva Bible, and even the Rheims New Testament.⁵³ It is important to mention the work of the king’s translators had its basic weakness: “there was no standard edition of the Hebrew Masoretic text of the Old Testament.”⁵⁴

One of the fifteen guidelines given for the translation of the KJV was, “These translations to be used when they agree better with the Text than the Bishops Bible: Tyndale’s, Matthew’s, Coverdale’s, Whitchurch’s, Geneva.” Laurence Vance asserts the translators acknowledged they had multitude of sources from which to draw from: “Neither did we think much to consult the Translators or Commentators, Chaldee, Hebrew, Syrian, Greek, or Latin, no nor the Spanish, French, Italian, or Dutch.” The Greek editions of Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza were all accessible, as were the Complutensian and Antwerp Polyglots, and the Latin translations of Pagninus, Termellius, and Beza.⁵⁵

As a result, without any direct evidence, we might conjecture the KJV followed the Vulgate and so translated *מְכַשְׁפָּה* as “witch.” If this was the case, then, as Jeffrey Burton Russell asserts, “Malevolent magic was subsumed under the term maleficium. It represented the damage achieved by the witch, through occult means, in the service of Satan.”⁵⁶ Consequently, the translators of the KJV had to hand, a set of associated terms which already carried malevolent undertones; and which the Latin had come to identify with the vilest kinds of sorcery. It was consequently effortless to link witchcraft, in popular thought,

⁵² Bruce, *English Bible*, 1-112.

⁵³ For a complete history of the KJV see “English Bible History,” n.p. [cited 8 March 2016]. Online: <http://www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/>. It is recorded about fifty scholars who translated the KJV took into consideration these earlier English translations.

⁵⁴ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2001), 77.

⁵⁵ Laurence M. Vance, *A Brief History of English Bible Translations* (Pensacola: Vance Publication, 1993).

⁵⁶ Jeffrey B. Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (London: Cornell University Press, 1972), 13.

with the worship of the Devil. Thus, English translations that render מְכַשֶּׁפֶת as "witch," following the Latin, and the receptor translations that follow this understanding, fail to take into consideration the sense in which the OT constantly uses the various forms of its root. James Barr refers to this as "illegitimate totality transfer," which he means, "over emphasis upon words to the detriment of context."⁵⁷

5 The Asante Twi Bible

Britain colonized Ghana (formerly Gold Coast) and so the use of Latin and the King James Version were used in the worship services.⁵⁸ It is likely, though without any documented evidence, that early translations of the Bible into the native languages were based on the Vulgate via the King James Version. Early versions of the Asante Twi Bible, for instance, has the word מְכַשֶּׁפֶת translated as "obaa-ayen"⁵⁹ (lit. "a female witch"). "Witch" is *obayifo*, a practitioner of witchcraft, "obayie." *Bayi* is perceived by the Akan peoples as a destructive force projected either consciously or unconsciously from the mind of the *obayifo* that would consume the inner essence or "soul" of the victim, ultimately leading to the latter's death. In normative terms, it is regarded as distinct from the magical manipulation of physical "poison" (*aduto* or *aduru bone*) or evil charms (*suman bone*), although in reality, these actions were often subsumed under the concept of *bayi*. So among Ghanaian Akan Christians, מְכַשֶּׁפֶת does not connote incantation, enchanter, soothsayer, diviner, wonder worker, fortuneteller, stargazer or spell caster. Thus, following their colonial masters, the Ghanaian Akan Christian translation of מְכַשֶּׁפֶת does not conform to the Hebrew meaning of the word. We can argue that the term "witch" is not the equivalent of *obayifo*. Either the colonial masters erroneously translated *obayifo* as "witch" and subsequently *bayi* as "witchcraft" or the Akan erroneously translated "witch" as *obayifo*.

However, the latest Asante translation of the Bible translates מְכַשֶּׁפֶת as "*obaa ntafowayifo*"⁶⁰ (lit. female (*obaa*) sorcerer (*ntafowayifo*) or sorceress).

⁵⁷ James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 218.

⁵⁸ In contemporary Ghanaian community, many ordinary Christians think that the King James Version is the earliest translation of the Bible and so strictly use it in church and in private.

⁵⁹ *Twere Kronkron Asante* (Accra: United Bible Societies, 1964), 72. Another word for *ayen* is *bayi*. In this article the latter word will be used since it is more familiar to contemporary Asante people of Ghana. The etymology is unclear, but a possible derivation is *oba* (child) + *yi* (to remove), the literal notion "to take away a child" underscoring the close association of witchcraft with issues of fertility, reproduction and infant mortality. See Thomas C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-colonial Asante* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 274.

⁶⁰ *Twere Kronkron* (Accra: The Bible Society of Ghana, 2012), 86.

According to Christaller, *ntafowayifo* is a “magician, sorcerer, charmer, juggler, conjurer.”⁶¹ He explains it derives from *ntafowa*, “a magic production, performance by magic or sorcery, trick by legerdemain, sleight of hand, juggle, jugglery.”⁶²

To conclude this section, we can say that the problem was the unqualified nature of the statute, as interpreted, which later enabled it to be so distorted as to become a powerful weapon in the pursuit of those who were unfortunately accused of witchcraft. The implication here becomes a sociological one as the understanding of the word *נְכַשְׁפָּה* shifts from one who engages in a craft of divining to know the future through the aid of magic to working of evil against one’s neighbour or family members.

D ANALYSIS OF EXODUS 22:18 WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF EXODUS 22:18-20

James Hoffmeier places Exod 22:18 within the context of 22:16-31 which he indicates are primarily related to social responsibilities. In the midst of this section of social laws, is a segment that is concerned with pagan practices, all of which are capital offenses. Hoffmeier posits that sorcery is an offense not to be tolerated and he refers to Deuteronomy of 18:9-14 as containing an expanded list of such offenses.⁶³

The immediate context of Exod 22:18 is vv. 18-20. Proper understanding and interpretation of v. 18 should take into account vv. 18-10. Many scholars such as Childs recognize the second part of the Book of the Covenant begins at Exod 22:18 and that the stipulations undergo a change in content to match what is clearly a change in form. Whereas the first half (Exod 20:22-22:17) is mainly casuistic, the second half is not.⁶⁴ Thus, in the second half, the stipulations are expressed as prescriptions or prohibitions with little or no reference to the penalty attached to violation in each case.⁶⁵

1 The Three Offences – vv. 18-20

In vv. 18-20, three offences are listed together. The three are in participial form. In addition, the three offences have penalties which threaten the “life” of the offender. Moreover, all the offences involved idolatry. Durham opines that the three offences are listed together perhaps because of their seriousness.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Christaller, *Dictionary*, 490.

⁶² Christaller, *Dictionary*, 490.

⁶³ James Hoffmeier, “Exodus,” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (ed. Walter A. Elwell; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 56.

⁶⁴ Childs, *Exodus*, 477.

⁶⁵ Eugene Merrill, “A Theology of the Pentateuch,” in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (ed. Roy B. Zuck; Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 44.

⁶⁶ Durham, *Exodus*, 327.

The togetherness of these offences informs the need to take vv. 19 and 20 into account in any effort to interpret and apply v. 18.

1a Practiced Sorcery – v. 18a

Verse 18 marks the beginning of quite a long sequence of apodictic law which is often interrupted by explanations made in another form. Verse 18 has a characteristic form, which then recurs frequently, with the object placed first and the formulation of the commandment following.

The previous section has shown the identity of the *קִשְׁפָּה*. A full catalogue of different forms of *קִשְׁפָּה* is offered in Deut 18:9-13. However, as Childs intimates, it remains unclear how precisely the distinctions between these forms were understood in Israel. All we can say is that from the beginning, all of these practices were outlawed as an "abomination" which violated the holiness of the people of God.⁶⁷ For Childs, witchcraft was a form of mantic practice identified with foreign paganism as shown in Deut 18:9-13 and 2 Kgs 9:22, and that it was a recurrent threat to Israel's worship of YHWH from the earliest to the latest period (Jer 27:9; Ezek 13:9).⁶⁸ The *קִשְׁפָּה* laid claim to a power (Isa 47:9) both of interpreting and controlling the future which opposed the authority of God (Isa 47:12-13)⁶⁹ and an attempt to override God's will.⁷⁰

A textual critical note of the MT on *קִשְׁפָּה* in Exod 22:18 indicates that there are thirteen occurrences of the forms of the word in the entire OT: Exod 7:11; 22:18; Deut 18:10; 2 Kgs 9:22; Isa 47:9,12 (twice); Jer 27:9; Mic 5:11; Nah 3:4 (twice); Mal 3:5; Dan 2:2; and 2 Chr 33:6.

As indicated in the previous section (C), *קִשְׁפָּה* is a feminine participle. The feminine form here indicates the frequency with which the practice was identified with women (cf., e.g., 1 Sam 28:7-25; Ezek 13:18-23). Some scholars argue that the feminine gender is used because there were more female than male practitioners. Kretzmann, for instance, asserts that "the sorceress is merely named because women were more addicted to the practice than men."⁷¹ For his part, Zuck posits that only the sorceress is mentioned because women were particularly active in the practice of magic. Probably the law would have dealt with a sorcerer the same way.⁷²

⁶⁷ Childs, *Exodus*, 478.

⁶⁸ Childs, *Exodus*, 478.

⁶⁹ Childs, *Exodus*, 478.

⁷⁰ See Roy B. Zuck, "The Practice of Witchcraft in the Scriptures," *BSac* 128 (1971): 352-60.

⁷¹ Paul E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible: Old Testament* (vol. 1; St Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1923), 152.

⁷² Zuck, "Practice of Witchcraft," 352-60.

מְכַשְׁפָּה was a form of mantic practice identified with foreign paganism (Deut 18:9-13; 2 Kgs 9:22)⁷³ and a recurrent threat to Israel’s worship of YHWH. It appears from the earliest to the latest period (Jer 27:9; Ezek 13:9).⁷⁴ Interestingly, in Deuteronomy, the office of true prophet is set over against divination and sorcery (Deut 18:9-15). The sorcerer laid claim to a power (Isa 47:9) both of interpreting and controlling the future which opposed the authority of God (Isa 47:12-13). The sorcerer and mantic were under constant attack and ridicule by the prophets (Isa 8:18-20; Mic 5:12).

The negative formulation as a prohibition is characteristic, and is preferred even when, as in the present instance, as positive formulation would have been more appropriate.⁷⁵ Israel is forbidden to peer into the future, since God has given her other means of finding out his will (Deut 18:14-15). At a deeper level, we might say that to desire to know the future shows lack of faith, while to desire to control the future is even worse.⁷⁶

1b Bestiality – v. 19a

Verse 19 is a prohibition on bestiality which was always regarded in Israel as a shameful perversion (Lev 18:23; 20:15-16; Deut 27:21). Cole asserts that bestiality was not only an obvious perversion: it figured so often in the Canaanite cycle of “Tales of Baal” that it probably had a religious significance for the Canaanites.⁷⁷ Cassuto points out the magical background of the practice, both in Ugarit and Babylon.⁷⁸ Hittite law only forbade the practice with certain animals.⁷⁹ According to the Hittite laws (187-88, 199), copulation with a sheep, a cow, or a pig, must be brought to the king’s court; the king may order him to be put to death or pardoned.⁸⁰ Hyatt, quoting the Hittite law (II, 200), notes the same law does not apply to bestiality with a horse or mule.⁸¹

⁷³ In Deuteronomy the list of terms for practitioners of various forms of magic is an attempt to secure information from the beyond or to bring supernatural influence to bear on situations or persons by means other than God.

⁷⁴ Childs, *Exodus*, 478.

⁷⁵ Noth, *Exodus*, 185-86.

⁷⁶ Cole, *Exodus*, 175.

⁷⁷ Cole, *Exodus*, 175.

⁷⁸ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (trans. I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 187, 188, 199, 200.

⁷⁹ Childs, *Exodus*, 478.

⁸⁰ Hyatt, *Exodus*, 241.

⁸¹ Hyatt, *Exodus*, 241.

1c Sacrificing to Other Gods – v. 20a

Verse 20 involves the violation of the first commandment, and is therefore like the two offenses that precede it, an attack upon YHWH himself. It has the Hebrew participial form, but it diverges considerably from the others noted in the preceding verse. The fact that sacrifice to other gods often involved child sacrifice (Deut 12:31) would further indicate the close connection of this verse in content with the preceding two.⁸²

2 The Three Penalties

2a לא תחיה – v. 18b

According to the text, the *מְכַשְפָּה* is not to be permitted to live “because her craft was an attempt to escape or to alter the will and the work of YHWH.”⁸³ According to Childs, the term *לא תחיה* “not allow to live” is a technical term for the ban (Num 31:15; Deut 20:16; 1 Sam 27:9-11). He stresses that it does not seem to be identical with the usual formula of *מוֹת יוֹמָת* (surely die). He explains that the scope of the former appears wider and includes extermination out of the land.⁸⁴ Keil and Delitzsch show that *לא תחיה* is chosen instead of *מוֹת יוֹמָת* not because the law giver intended the Hebrew witch should be put to death in any case, but because every Hebrew witch was not to be put to death; witchcraft was jugglery, and only those witches who would not give up their witchcraft when it was forbidden that were to be put to death.⁸⁵ Hyatt notes that sorcery was widely condemned in Israel and the ancient world. It was forbidden as one of several “abominable practices” introduced by the nations whom the Israelites conquered in Canaan (Deut 18:9-12). He also indicates that in the Code of Hammurabi (section 2) sorcery was punished by drowning in a river through an ordeal, and that the Middle Assyrian Law (A, 47) prescribed death for one who made magical preparations. He further asserts that in the Hittite laws (9-10), one who bewitched another must make a money payment to him, the amount depending upon his status, and pay the physician if he is made ill.⁸⁶

For his part, Weingreen takes *מְכַשְפָּה לא תחיה* to mean “an identified active witch was to be denied all means of sustaining life – she was to be thrust out of society away from all human contact.”⁸⁷ In this case, as Sprinkle notes, *לא תחיה* would mean “do not allow to live” in the sense of “live well” or “pros-

⁸² Childs, *Exodus*, 478.

⁸³ Durham, *Exodus*, 327.

⁸⁴ Childs, *Exodus*, 477-78.

⁸⁵ Carl Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (vol. 1; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 413.

⁸⁶ Hyatt, *Exodus*, 241.

⁸⁷ Jacob Weingreen, “The PI‘EL in Biblical Hebrew: A Suggested New Concept,” *Henoch* 5 (1983): 28.

per/thrive” rather than specifically being an equivalent of a death penalty.⁸⁸ Weingreen supports his view with reference to Saul’s practice in which he “removed from the land” and “cut off . . . from the land” those who practiced divination arts (1 Sam 28:3, 9). Whilst the former action seems obvious, the latter may be interpreted as banishment rather than execution. However, in Lev 20:27, spiritualists are explicitly executed by stoning.

2b מוֹת יִקָּח – v. 19b

In v. 19, the penalty prescribed for bestiality is death, מוֹת יִקָּח. Durham indicates that the death penalty is not only because it was a sexual deviation, “but even more because of its associations with animal cults and fertility worship among Israel’s neighbours.”⁸⁹ Leviticus 20:15-16 prescribes death for the animal as well as the man or woman. For Cole, bestiality was a capital crime in Israel, as was homosexuality (Lev 20:13). He continues to assert that our attitude to perversions of God’s natural order can hardly vary from those of the law, while our treatment of offenders will be very different today.⁹⁰

2c יִהָרֵם – v. 20b

The penalty to be meted out to a person who sacrifices to other gods is יִהָרֵם. Alt argues that יִהָרֵם is a misreading of אַחֲרִים (“other [gods]”).⁹¹ Bāntsch suggests יִהָרֵם fell out through haplography, requiring therefore an additional clause.⁹² This is partly supported by some manuscripts of LXX and the Samaritan text,⁹³ which apparently read אַחֲרִים “other” instead of יִהָרֵם “shall be utterly destroyed.” Thus the “other” takes the place of “utterly destroyed.” As a result, Alt indicates that the original predicate מוֹת יִקָּח was then regarded as superfluous and was removed.⁹⁴ Schulz supports that מוֹת יִקָּח was the original verb.⁹⁵ However, one could argue in the reverse direction that the Samaritan reading has replaced the unique text with a more common parallel.⁹⁶ For Cole, as it stands,

⁸⁸ Joe Sprinkle, *The Book of the Covenant: A Literary Approach* (JSOTSup 174; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 162.

⁸⁹ Durham, *Exodus*, 328.

⁹⁰ Cole, *Exodus*, 175.

⁹¹ Alt, *Essays*, 112, n. 73.

⁹² For example, Bruno Bāntsch, *Exodus-Leviticus-Numeri* (HAT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1903).

⁹³ The Samaritan Pentateuch adds a modifier, אַחֲרִים, “strange, other,” and is missing the additional phrase; LXX^A has both.

⁹⁴ Alt, *Essays*, 112, n. 73.

⁹⁵ Hermann Schulz, *Das Todesrecht in Alten Testament* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1969), 59.

⁹⁶ Childs, *Exodus*, 449.

the strong wording is only explaining Exodus 20:3 in terms of sacrificial worship. The person guilty of this sin comes under the sacred "ban": he must be destroyed, as the Canaanites were to be destroyed before Israel.⁹⁷

יִהְיֶה is *hoph'al* of a verb which means to place under the ban (חָרַם). As Durham notes, the verb חָרַם means to devote to sacred use, or if that is impossible, as here, to destroy under the ban of what is to be used for YHWH's purpose alone.⁹⁸

In sum, the three penalties together, there seems to be a logical progression from least to most severe: he sorceress is not "allowed to live," the animal sodomite merits "to be put to death," and the one sacrificing to other gods deserves "to be put under the ban," that is, utterly destroyed. That there is such a progression undermines the attempt of Alt and others to emend יִהְיֶה to יִקָּח מוֹתָא.

3 Law or Religion?

Although each of the three injunctions is expressed in legal-like formulation, they lack the precision of clear law. So, what motivated these injunctions, law or religion? Sprinkle shows the motivation in each case was essentially religious.⁹⁹

3a Sorcery

In the first offence, Deuteronomy condemns sorcery and all forms of divination but permits prophets who speak the word of YHWH to serve as a substitute for divination (cf., e.g., Deut 18:9-15). Divination operated out of the assumptions of a polytheistic worldview in which the diviner sought the purpose or will of the gods or of impersonal fates which sometimes even had control over the gods. The writer of Deuteronomy saw this worldview as incompatible with the religion of YHWH and a hindrance to listening to YHWH's word proclaimed by the prophets. Most likely a similar rationale operates in Exod 22:18.

3b Bestiality

As regards the condemnation of bestiality, the motive probably lies in the idea that bestiality is contrary to God's hierarchy that separates humankind made in the image of God from other creatures (Gen 1:26-31). Other possible motives are to provide a polemic against pagan mythology where the gods sometimes indulge in bestiality. For example, at Ugarit Baal mates with a heifer;¹⁰⁰ simi-

⁹⁷ Cole, *Exodus*, 175.

⁹⁸ Durham, *Exodus*, 328.

⁹⁹ Sprinkle, *Book of the Covenant*, 163-65.

¹⁰⁰ *UT*, 67, v, 17-25.

larly, in the Gilgamesh Epic, Ishtar is depicted as the wanton lover of a bird, a lion and a stallion.¹⁰¹ It could also be a polemic against non-Israelite fertility cults presumably related to practices of cohabitation with animals. Copulation with an animal brings defilement which according to the rules of purity would result in the expulsion from the land (Lev 18:23-25). This helps to explain the severity of the penalty. Therefore the ideology behind this prohibition is religious, not merely legal.

3c Sacrificing to other gods

Finally, the prohibition of sacrificing to other gods was religious rather than ordinary jurisprudence. It was contrary to the exclusive claims that YHWH made on Israel for worship in the Sinaitic covenant. It was a direct violation of the essence of that covenant and so demanded the strongest condemnation formulae.

E CONCLUSION

It is doubtful that the author of Exod 22:18 used the word *מְכַשְׁפָּה* in the same sense in which the translators of the Vulgate and the KJV (including all the versions that follow them) understood and translated the word *מְכַשְׁפָּה*, whether they based their translations on the MT or the Septuagint or any other ancient texts. The presentation demonstrates that wherever the various forms of *כְּשָׁפָה* appear in the scriptures, the concept is that of magic involving divination and incantation. The purpose is to manipulate nature in order to influence life generally for personal benefits and never social mischiefs against one’s neighbours or relatives.

It is imperative, moreover, to mention that many modern translations have desisted from translating *מְכַשְׁפָּה* as “witch” and have translated it “sorceress” (e.g., ESV, RSV, NIV, NASB, NLT, CJB, NCV, LB) or “secret arts” (e.g., BBE) or “magic” (e.g., GNT, TEV). Even the New King James Version (NKJV) translates *מְכַשְׁפָּה* as “sorceress” indicating a shift in the understanding and meaning of the word from the KJV “witch.”¹⁰² The latest Asante translation of the Bible translates *מְכַשְׁפָּה* as “*obaa ntafowayifo*.”¹⁰³ All this indicates a shift in the understanding and interpretation of the Hebrew word, *מְכַשְׁפָּה*.

In addition, the participial form *מְכַשְׁפָּה* expresses the idea that the practitioner does the practice as a profession or occupation probably for survival or

¹⁰¹ *ANET*, 84, lines 48-56.

¹⁰² The New King James version uses the Stuttgart edition of the *Biblia Hebraica*, the Septuagint, along with a variety of ancient versions of the Hebrew manuscript, including manuscripts found in the Dead Sea Caves. See “What is the History of the King James Bible?” n.p. [cited 4 March 2016]. Online: <http://www.bibleinfo.com/en/questions/history-kjv>.

¹⁰³ *Twere Kronkron*, 86.

means of livelihood, which is not the case of *obayifo* of the Akan of Ghana. Practitioners of *מְשַׁפָּה* or *φάρμακος* were found in the palaces of kings and consulted during national crises to bring about solution (cf. Exod 7:11; Dan 2:2).¹⁰⁴ This shows that to interpret *מְשַׁפָּה* as negative and notorious is an error. It also indicates that the notion that the practitioner is just one who is out to practice mischief on others as suggested by the term *maleficos* and the Ghanaian Akan term *obayifo* is incorrect.

Moreover, it is clear from the various forms of the root of *מְשַׁפָּה* and *φάρμακος* that the sense of drugs used for divining or incantation to practice “magic” or “sorcery,” more accurately represents the meaning of *מְשַׁפָּה* than *maleficos* and “witch,” which apparently imply all kinds of evil and mischievous activities in compact with the Devil. The study has also shown that the penalty for practicing sorcery is *לֹא תִהְיֶה מוֹת יוֹמָת*. Thus the penalty does not necessarily connote death, the killing of the practitioner as commonly believed by many ordinary Ghanaian Akan Christians. Furthermore, the discussion has shown that any interpretation and application of Exod 22:18, should also take into account its immediate context, Exod 22:18-20. One cannot take one of the prohibited acts and apply it without considering the others.

Finally, the discussion has clearly revealed that many Akan Christians’ belief and practice of praying for the death of *מְשַׁפָּה* is as a result of a translational and hermeneutical problem. Thus, using Exod 22:18 to justify praying for the death of *abayifo* is a misunderstanding of the text based on a misconceived translation and hermeneutic. So the Ghanaian Akan Christian community should note that:

- (i) It is a translational error to take *מְשַׁפָּה* to mean *obayifo*. The proper translation should be *ntafowayifo* which should include practitioners such as magicians, sorcerers, incantation, enchanters, soothsayers, diviners, wonder workers, fortune tellers, or spell casters. Thus the earlier translations of the Asante Bible were not done by experts who knew Hebrew and Greek and who were versed with linguistic skills to help in the proper understanding and translation of the OT from its original Hebrew text. In addition, the earlier translators did not know much about the import of the Akan’s beliefs and practices. The latest translation has corrected the error of the earlier translations.
- (ii) Hermeneutically, it is wrong to pray for the destruction of *abayifo* without doing same to those who copulate with animals and those who worship other gods, other than the Christian God, because contextually the

¹⁰⁴ In both Mesopotamia and Egypt skilled practitioners of magic were highly regarded. See Gen 41; Exod 7-10; Isaiah; Ezekiel; Dan 1-7; see also James M. Freeman, *The New Manners and Customs of the Bible* (rewritten and updated by Harold Chadwick; Alachua, Fla.: Bridge-Logos, 1998), 174-76.

three offences have penalties which threatens the “life” of the offenders.

- (iii) Care should be taken in applying these three laws because, as Sprinkle notes, the exact meanings of *מִכְשָׁפָה*, *לֹא תַחֲיֶהּ* and *יָהָרֵם* are not clearly spelt out. In addition, the details of how and by whom the sentences are to be carried out are not specified. Furthermore, the question of exceptions or ransoming is not addressed.¹⁰⁵

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alt, Albrecht. *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*. Translated by R. A. Wilson. Sheffield: JOST Press, 1989.
- Armstrong, Terry A., Douglas L. Busby and Cyril F. Carr. *A Reader's Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989.
- Balz, Horst and Gerhard Schneider, eds. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990-1993.
- Barr, James. *The Semantics of Biblical Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Bäntsch, Bruno. *Exodus-Leviticus-Numeri*. Handkommentar zum Alten Testament. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1903.
- Beall, Todd S., William A. Banks and Colin Smith. *Old Testament Parsing Guide*. Rev. and updated ed. Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman and Holman, 2000.
- Botterweck, Gerhard J., Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. 15 vols. Translated by D. E. Green. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.
- Bretherton, Donald J. “An Invitation to Murder? A Re-interpretation of Exodus 22:18 ‘You Shall Not Suffer a Witch to Live.’” *Expository Times* 116/5 (2005): 145-152.
- Brotzman, Ellis R. *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.
- Brown, Colin, ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975-1985.
- Brown, Francis, Samuel R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1979.
- Bruce, Frederick F. *The English Bible: A History of Translations from the Earliest English Versions to the New English Bible*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1961.
- Cassuto, Umberto. *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*. Translated by I. Abrahams. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967.
- Childs, Brevard S. *The Book of Exodus*. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974.
- Chrastaller, Johannes. *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language*. Basel: The Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, 1933.
- Clements, Ronald E. *Exodus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.
- Cole, Alan. *Exodus*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. London: Tyndale Press, 1973.

¹⁰⁵ Sprinkle, *Book of the Covenant*, 1994.

- Cross, Frank L., and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds. *Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007.
- Durham, John. *Exodus*. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987.
- "English Bible History." No Pages. Cited 8 March 2016. Online: <http://www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/>.
- Eichrodt, Walther. *Theology of the Old Testament*. Volume 1. Old Testament Library. Translated by J. A. Baker. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961.
- Freeman, James M. *The New Manners and Customs of the Bible*. Rewritten and updated by Harold Chadwick. Alachua, Fla.: Bridge-Logos, 1998.
- Gordon, Cyrus H. *Ugaritic Textbook*. *Analecta orientalia* 38. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965.
- Gowan, Donald E. *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in Form of a Commentary*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994.
- Harris, Laird R., Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. 2 vols. Chicago: Moody Press, 2003.
- Hoffmeier, James. "Exodus." Pages 36-63 in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*. Edited by Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.
- Holladay, William L., ed. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Hyatt, Philip J. *Exodus*. The New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971.
- Jepsen, Alfred. *Untersuchungen zum Bundesbuch*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1927.
- Keil, Carl and Franz Delitzsch. *The Pentateuch*. Volume 1 of *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*. Translated by J. Martin. London: T & T Clark, 1866.
- _____. *Commentary on the Old Testament*. 10 vols. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006.
- Kidner, Derek, *Genesis*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1967.
- Kitchen, Kenneth A. "Magic and Sorcery." Pages 723-26 in *New Bible Dictionary*. Second Edition. Edited by N. Hillyer. Leicester: IVP, 1962.
- Kretzmann, Paul E. *Popular Commentary of the Bible: Old Testament*. 4 volumes. St Louis, Mo: Concordia, 1923.
- Levenson, Jon D. *The Hebrew Bible, The Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies*. Louisville: Westminster, 1999.
- Longman III, Tremper. *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*. Volume 3 of *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.
- McCaskie, Thomas C. *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- McNeile, Alan. *The Book of Exodus*. Westminster Commentaries. London: Methuen, 1917.
- Merrill, Eugene. "A Theology of the Pentateuch." Pages 7-88 in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*. Edited by Roy B. Zuck. Chicago: Moody Press, 1991.
- Metzger, Bruce M. *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2001),
- Moises, Silva. *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.
- Moulton, James Hope and George Milligan. *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1952.

- Nicol, William Robertson, ed. *The Expositor's Greek Testament*. New York: Macmillan, 1941.
- Noth, Martin. *Exodus*. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962.
- _____. *The Laws of the Pentateuch and Other Essays*. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966.
- Osborn, Noel D. and Howard A. Hatton. *A Handbook on Exodus*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1999.
- Osborne, Grant. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter Varsity Press, 1991.
- Pritchard, James B., ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- Renn, Stephen D., ed. *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2010.
- Rogers, Cleon L. Jr., and Cleon L. Rogers III. *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- Russell, Jeffrey B. *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*. London: Cornell University Press, 1972.
- Schulz, Hermann. *Das Todesrecht in Alten Testament*. Berlin: Töpelmann, 1969.
- Sprinkle, Joe M. *The Book of the Covenant: A Literary Approach*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 174. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994.
- _____. “Law and Narrative in Exodus 19-24.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47/2 (2004): 235-52.
- Strong, James. *The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Word*. Nashville: Nelson, 1996.
- Twere Kronkron Asante*. Accra, Ghana: United Bible Societies, 1964.
- Twere Kronkron*. Accra, Ghana: The Bible Society of Ghana, 2012.
- Unger, Merrill F. *Biblical Demonology*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1952.
- Vance, Laurence M. *A Brief History of English Bible Translations*. Pensacola: Vance Publication, 1993.
- Weinfeld, Moshe. *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*. Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1972.
- Weingreen, J. “The PI'EL in Biblical Hebrew: A Suggested New Concept.” *Henoah* 5 (1983): 21-29.
- “What is the History of the King James Bible?” No Pages. Cited 4 March 2016. Online: <http://www.bibleinfo.com/en/questions/history-kjv>.
- Würthwein, Ernst. *The Text of the Old Testament*. Translated by E. F. Rhodes. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.
- Zuck, Roy B. “The Practice of Witchcraft in the Scriptures.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 128/5 (1971): 352-60.

Rev. Dr. Yaw Adu-Gyamfi, Research fellow, University of the Western-Cape. Dean, School of Theology and Ministry, Ghana Baptist University College, Kumasi. P.O. Box 1, Abuakwa, Kumasi, Ghana. Email: yawag156@gmail.com.