

**Lexemes designating emotions
of surprise in biblical text
(based on the fourth edition
of the Polish Millennium Bible)**

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Abstract

The article examines the contexts in which lexemes from the lexical-semantic field of surprise are used in the Polish Millennium Bible. The subject of interest is lexical means of naming surprise-related emotions, lexical labels applied to phenomena regarded as unexpected, and metaphorical terms expressing conventionalised symptoms of surprise. The analysis has shown that lexemes naming emotions from the group related to surprise are widely represented in the biblical texts, and can refer to a variety of situational stimuli, including those of a metaphysical nature and others concerning people's everyday lives. As a result of the analysis of attestations of the use of this vocabulary, thematic constraints on the causes of the feelings of surprise denoted by particular lexemes may be identified. The observations also lead to the conclusion that the use of the analysed vocabulary is subject to limitations related to the literary genres to which particular biblical texts belong.

Keywords

surprise, emotions, lexical-semantic field, Polish, Bible

Leksemy nazywające emocje z grupy zdziwienia w tekście biblijnym (na materiale czwartego wydania Biblii Tysiąclecia)

Abstrakt

W artykule przeanalizowano konteksty użycia leksemów z leksykalno-semantycznego pola zdziwienia w Biblii Tysiąclecia. Przedmiotem zainteresowania są środki leksykalne nazywające emocje związane ze zdziwieniem, etykiety leksykalne odnoszone do zjawisk uznanych za nieoczekiwane oraz słownictwo metaforyczne opisujące skonwencjonalizowane objawy zaskoczenia. Analiza wykazała, że leksemy nazywające emocje z grupy zdziwienia są szeroko reprezentowane w tekstach biblijnych i mogą odnosić się do różnych bodźców sytuacyjnych, zarówno tych o charakterze metafizycznym, jak i dotyczących codziennego życia ludzi. W wyniku analizy poświadczeń użycia analizowanego słownictwa można zidentyfikować ograniczenia tematyczne dotyczące przyczyn odczuwania emocji nazywanych przez poszczególne leksemy. Obserwacje prowadzą również do wniosku, że użycie analizowanego słownictwa podlega ograniczeniom związanym z gatunkami literackimi, do których należą poszczególne teksty biblijne.

Słowa kluczowe

zdziwienie, emocje, pole leksykalno-semantyczne, język polski, Biblia

1. Introduction

Surprise was a topic of interest even to ancient philosophers: Plato and Aristotle were among those who regarded that emotional state as a catalyst for philosophical reflection (e.g. Aristotle 1988, Witwicki 1995: 253–254). The biological mechanisms of the feeling of surprise were studied by Charles Darwin (1872), who analysed the evolutionary functions of the expression of emotions (see Onians 1994: 12). There is wide interest in psychological research concerning surprise. According to psychologists, it is triggered by an unexpected stimulus, and entails

a disturbance to the experiencer's prior mental activity (see e.g. Reisenzein 2000: 270–271). However, there is no agreement as to what surprise is in essence. Some regard it as an experience based on belief, while others consider it an emotion. Still other researchers claim that surprise is a kind of link between cognition and emotions, since particular beliefs affect the experience of surprise, while surprise itself triggers other emotions (Mellers, Fincher, Drummond, Bigony 2013: 3). In spite of the many interpretations of surprise existing within the field of psychology, it is often identified as one of the basic emotions – for example, in the theories of Robert Plutchik and Paul Ekman (after: Doliński 2007: 364, Mikołajczuk 2011: 69, Wiatrowski 2010: 50). Some researchers point out, however, that it is an intellectual emotion which in itself lacks positive or negative valence, taking on such an attribute only through other emotions that are triggered in a specific situation¹ (Kutkovej 2013: 48, Witwicki 1995: 248). Rainer Reisenzein considers surprise to be a metacognitive emotion, since its function is to supply information about the experiencer's belief system and cognitive processes (Reisenzein 2000: 272–273).

There is a relatively large number of works in linguistics devoted to surprise and related emotions. Topics considered thus far include the conceptualisation of surprise in the Polish language (Nowakowska-Kempna 1995: 24–53), the semantics of the verbs *zdziwić się*, *zdumieć się*, *zaskoczyć*, *zadziwić* (Wierzbicka 1971: 54–55, Wołk 2017), the valence of emotions from the group related to surprise (Nowakowska-Kempna 1986: 144, Wiatrowski 2010: 85–86), questions expressing surprise (e.g. Grzesiuk 1995: 82, 170, 172, Wąsik 1979: 3), interjections

¹ A similar view is expressed by Izard (1980: 245, 249). However, Ortony et al. (1988: 127) regard surprise as a cognitive state relating to unexpectedness, independent of valence. Others question this view; for example, Miceli and Castelfranchi (2015: 49) claim that surprise is not hedonically neutral, describing it as a negative feeling of unease, disturbance or disorientation. They further suggest that the negative connotations of surprise are a result of a lack of correspondence between expectations and the surprising event (Celle, Pélissier 2022: 290).

of surprise (Krzempek 2019, Orwińska-Ruziczka 1992: 41, 2021, Sworowska 2019: 190), and responses expressing surprise in dialogues found in novels (Dzienisiewicz 2024a, 2024b, 2024c). There have also been, among others, works on ways of expressing surprise in Russian (e.g. Bočkarev 2018, Kovšova 2014, Mihajlova 2010) as well as interlingual comparisons of ways of conceptualising surprise (e.g. Dorofeeva 2002, Gluš-kova, Gorbunov 2022). In Anglo-American linguistics, research has been carried out into mirativity, a semantic-pragmatic category encompassing linguistic means of marking information as new and/or unexpected or surprising (e.g. DeLancey 2001, Rett, Sturman 2021).

In the context of the subject of the present article, note should also be taken of works devoted to the lexis of surprise found in religious texts. Nataliâ V. Dorofeyeva (2002) studied the concept of surprise in Russian religious discourse (among others, in New Testament texts, the writings of the Church Fathers, prayers, and psalms), and as a result distinguished several types of surprise characteristic of that type of literature:

- surprise-honour (Russian: *удивление-благоговение* [*udivlenie-blagogovenie*]), which is a source of faith and of the knowing of God;
- surprise-doubt (*удивление-сомнение* [*udivlenie-somnenie*]), which is a feature of sinful lack of faith;
- surprise-indignation (*удивление-возмущение* [*udivlenie-voztuŝenie*]), which provokes condemnation due to a lack of humility;
- surprise-temptation (*удивление-обольщение* [*udivlenie-obol'shenie*]), which may cause a person to commit a fatal error leading to eternal sorrow.

In turn, Agnieszka Sieradzka-Mruk (2016: 211–217) studied the lexemes used to name emotions from the group related to surprise in Polish texts on the Stations of the Cross. She found that surprise – and other emotions named using lexemes from that lexical-semantic field – have neither positive nor negative

valence (Sieradzka-Mruk 2016: 211), and concluded that while *zdumienie* and *zaskoczenie* are names of a highly intensive nature, *zaskoczenie* additionally expresses the suddenness of the feeling's onset. The most powerful lexemes from the group under consideration were *szok* and *szokować* (Sieradzka-Mruk 2016: 213). She regards *podziw* and *rozczarowanie* as boundary lexemes for the lexical-semantic field of surprise, because *podziw* denotes a positive feeling and *rozczarowanie* a negative one, while the other lexemes belonging to the field do not exhibit such a dichotomy² (Sieradzka-Mruk 2016: 214). We note in this context that the lexeme *zadziwienie* also lies on the field's periphery, since as Mariola Wołk (2017: 54–56) notes, the cause of *zadziwienie* may be evaluated either positively or negatively (compare her examples: *Zadziwiła mnie twoja erudycja* vs. *Mnie zadziwiła tutaj pewna niespójność w zachowaniu naszych kolegów z PSL*), while *zdziwienie* “does not imply a definitively positive evaluation, but is also based on the expression of some evaluation, maybe due to the indeterminacy that is characteristic of that feature – in order to be able to subject something to evaluation, one must know what kind of thing it is”³ (Wołk 2017: 56).

² A similar view on the valence of surprise is expressed by Iwona Nowakowska-Kempna (1986: 55).

³ As is the case among psychologists, not all linguists accept the claim that surprise cannot be ascribed a valence. Przemysław Wiatrowski argues that emotions from the surprise group (surprise, astonishment, shock) are ambivalent and are entirely dependent on the experiencer's attitude to the event triggering the emotion: whether or not they find it desirable and beneficial (Wiatrowski 2010: 85). He supports his view with examples such as the following: *Nie sądziłem, że jesteś taki inteligentny. Zaskoczyłeś mnie moją odpowiedzią; Aleksy zdziwił Mariannę niesprawiedliwym postępowaniem wobec jej byłej przyjaciółki*. We note that we do not agree with this viewpoint, because it is contradicted by previous findings concerning the expression of surprise in dialogues, which lead to the conclusion that this emotion cannot be unambiguously assigned a valence (Dzienisiewicz 2024a, 2024b, 2024c). It should also be remarked that Wiatrowski's examples feature a lexis of surprise which – as has been demonstrated in existing work (e.g. Celle et al. 2017) – serves to relate the prior experience of that emotion or constitutes a conversational strategy that has the aim of softening strong negative feelings such

For the purposes of this article, we define surprise as an intellectual emotion carrying metacognitive information about the experiencer's state of knowledge and beliefs, which may combine with other emotions to create complex emotions (on this subject see e.g. Bočkarev 2018). It is a reaction to incomprehensible, unexpected, atypical, peculiar events and is characterised by a kind of "cognitive disappointment" on the experiencer's part, arising from a lack of correspondence between that person's knowledge about the world and a specific occurrence (Wołk 2017: 50–52).

The present work examines the contexts in which lexemes naming emotions from the group related to surprise, that is, units from the lexical-semantic field of surprise, are used in a Polish translation of the Bible. We shall focus in particular on the causes of such emotions as indicated in the biblical descriptions. We are interested in lexical means of naming surprise-related emotions (e.g. *zaskoczyć*, *zdziwienie*, *zdumieć się*), lexical labels applied to phenomena regarded as unexpected (e.g. *nieoczekiwany*, *nagle*, *niezwykły*), and metaphorical terms expressing "conventionalised symptoms of surprise on the metonymic principle of *partem pro toto*" (e.g. *osłupieć*, *skołowacieć*) (for this classification of ways of naming surprise see Nowakowska-Kempna 1995: 24–25).

For the purposes of this research, we used the fourth edition of the Polish Millennium Bible (*Biblia Tysiąclecia*) published by Pallottinum (text available at <https://wbiblii.pl/>, accessed 28.12.2024). Reasons for choosing this edition included the fact that its text is accessible online, and offers a full-text search function that can be used to locate any desired words and word combinations occurring in the translation of the full set of books of the Old and New Testaments. While we acknowledge that the scope of the study is restricted to a single biblical translation, we would point out that our aim is merely to obtain an initial

as anger or disappointment, rather than expressing the emotion of surprise. For these reasons, we consider Wiatrowski's conclusions to be erroneous.

picture of the issue at hand, which it will subsequently be possible to explore on the basis of different Polish translations of the Bible, as well as interlingually. It should be noted that biblical discourse is a particularly interesting area for the study of the lexical-semantic field of surprise, since it confronts the experiencer with the sacred and manifestations of divine action.

The analysis includes words appearing in the biblical text such as *zadziwienie*, *zadziwić*, *zadziwiać*, *zdziwienie*, *zdziwić*, *zdziwić się*, *dziwić*, *dziwić się*, *dziw*, *dziwny*, *przedziwny*, *zaskoczenie*, *zaskoczyć*, *zaskakiwać*, *zdumienie*, *zdumieć*, *zdumieć się*, *zdumiewać*, *zdumiewać się*, *ośłupienie*, *ośłupieć*, *onie mieć*, *oszołomienie*, *oszołomić*, *podziw*, *podziwiać*, *struchlenie*, *struchleć*, *zdrętwieć*, *niespodziewany*, *niespodziewanie*, *nagle*, *nagły*, *nieoczekiwany*, *nieoczekiwanie*, *niezwykły*, *niezwykle*. It will be noted that the lexemes *podziw* and *zadziwienie* are included in the analysis, in spite of the above-mentioned remarks that these are located on the periphery of the analysed lexical-semantic field. The analysed vocabulary is thus heterogeneous, since apart from direct designations of affective states (*zdziwienie*, *zdumieć*, *zaskoczyć*) it also includes labels of unexpected phenomena (*dziw*), indicators of the surprising nature of objects and events (*niespodziewany*, *niezwykły*, *nagły*), indicators of ways in which surprising actions are performed (*niespodziewanie*, *niezwykle*, *nagle*), and metaphorical lexemes (such as *ośłupienie*, *zdrętwienie*). The following analysis is qualitative and context-based, and does not focus on frequency of use. Rather than documenting every occurrence, it aims to identify semantic patterns in the distribution of the lexemes under consideration.

2. Lexemes from the lexical-semantic field of surprise in the fourth edition of the Polish Millennium Bible – an analysis

2.1. *Zdziwienie*

The word *zdziwienie* stands at the core of the lexical-semantic field of surprise. Dictionary definitions of this lexeme include, among others: “stan psychiczny osoby, która widzi, że ktoś lub coś jest inne, niż się spodziewała albo że wydarzyło się coś, czego się nie spodziewała” ‘the psychological state of a person who sees that someone or something is different than they expected or that something has happened that they did not expect’ (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/38665/zdziwienie>, accessed 25.02.2026). Other words formed from the same root generally replicate this meaning, for example: *dziwić się* “odczuwać to, co człowiek zwykle czuje, kiedy widzi, że ktoś lub coś jest inne, niż się spodziewał albo wydarzyło się coś, czego się nie spodziewał” ‘to feel what a person usually feels when they see that someone or something is different than they expected or that something has happened that they did not expect’ (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/38900/dziwic-sie>, accessed 25.02.2026); *zdziwić się* “znaleźć się w stanie, w jakim zwykle znajduje się człowiek, kiedy widzi, że ktoś lub coś jest inne, niż się spodziewał albo gdy wydarzyło się coś, czego się nie spodziewał” ‘to enter the state that a person is usually in when they see that someone or something is different than they expected or that something has happened that they did not expect’ (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/39477/zdziwic-sie>, accessed 25.02.2026). In the analysed biblical translation, words from this family are used in contexts where the indicated cause of surprise may be, for example:

– failure to wash hands before a meal:

- (1) Gdy jeszcze mówił, zaprosił Go pewien faryzeusz do siebie na obiad. Poszedł więc i zajął miejsce za stołem. Lecz faryzeusz, widząc to, wyraził **zdziwienie**, że nie obmył wpierw rąk przed posiłkiem ‘When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal’ (Luke 11:37–38⁴);

– Jesus’ rapid death on the cross:

- (2) Pod wieczór już, ponieważ było Przygotowanie, czyli dzień przed szabatem, przyszedł Józef z Arymatei, poważny członek Rady, który również wyczekiwał królestwa Bożego. Śmiało udał się do Pilata i poprosił o ciało Jezusa. Pilat **zdziwił się**, że już skonał. Kazał przywołać setnika i pytał go, czy już dawno umarł ‘Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died’ (Mark 15:43–44);

– the fate of a sinner faced with eternal misery:

- (3) Mieszkańcy Zachodu **zdziwieni**, grozą przejęty lud Wschodu: Więc takie mieszkanie grzesznika tu miejsce tego, kto Boga znać nie chce? ‘People of the west are appalled at his fate; those of the east are seized with horror. Surely such is the dwelling of an evil man; such is the place of one who does not know God’ (Job 18:20–21);

⁴ Most English biblical quotations come from the *New International Version* (NIV, 2011); in a few cases, where indicated, they are taken from the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV).

– Jesus' healing a man on the Sabbath:⁵

- (4) W odpowiedzi Jezus rzekł do nich: “Dokonałem tylko jednego czynu, a wszyscy jesteście **zdziwieni**. Oto Mojżesz dał wam obrzezanie – ale nie pochodzi ono od Mojżesza, lecz od przodków – i wy w szabat obrzezujecie człowieka ‘Jesus said to them, “I did one miracle, and you are all amazed. Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath”’ (John 7:21–22);

– the great faith of the centurion of Capernaum:

- (5) Gdy Jezus to usłyszał, **zdziwił się** i rzekł do tych, którzy szli za Nim: “Zaprawdę powiadam wam: U nikogo w Izraelu nie znalazłem tak wielkiej wiary” ‘When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith’ (Matthew 8:10).

The analysed attestations suggest that *zdziwienie* functions as an evaluatively neutral marker of violated expectations. It occurs both in everyday social situations and in descriptions of divine action, without consistently indicating whether the stimulus is evaluated positively or negatively.

2.2. *Dziwny*

Polish dictionaries record two meanings of the adjective *dziwny*: (1) “taki, który wygląda lub zachowuje się w sposób niezwykły lub niezrozumiały” ‘such as looks or behaves in an unusual or incomprehensible manner’; and (2) “taki, którego w danej sytuacji nie można było się spodziewać i dlatego zwracający uwagę” ‘such as could not have been expected in a given situation and therefore attracts attention’ (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/>

⁵ The Jews were surprised by this because their law forbade working on the Sabbath.

hasło/podgląd/6308/dziwny, accessed 25.02.2026). Both of these allude to the unusual and unexpected, these being characteristics found in the definitions of words formed from the same root as *zdziwienie*.

In the Bible, *dziwny* is a description often applied to the works of God. It is used to underline the extraordinary and incomprehensible nature of divine acts (miracles), e.g.

- (6) On dał ludziom wiedzę, aby się wsławili dzięki Jego **dziwnym** dziełom ‘And he gave skill to men that he might be glorified in his marvelous works’ (Sirach 38:6).

The adjective is also applied to knowledge of God, which is perceived as extraordinary and mysterious:

- (7) Zbyt **dziwna** jest dla mnie Twa wiedza, zbyt wzniosła: nie mogę jej pojąć ‘Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain’ (Psalm 139:6).

On the other hand, God is described as an omniscient figure for whom nothing is *dziwny*:

- (8) On wzrokiem sięga od wieku do wieku i nic nie jest dla Niego **dziwne** ‘From everlasting to everlasting he beholds them, and nothing is marvelous to him.’ (RSV) (Sirach 39:20).

2.3. *Przedziwny*

The adjective *przedziwny* has two meanings, qualified in dictionaries as “literary”: (1) “wyjątkowo inny niż się zna lub niż można było się spodziewać i dlatego zwracający uwagę” ‘exceptionally different from what is known or what could have been expected, and therefore attracting attention’; and (2) “taki, który za sprawą wyższego lub innego niż znane natężenia budzi zachwyt mówiącego” ‘such as causes the speaker’s admiration due to an intensity that is greater or different than what is known’ (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/38648/prze>

dziwny, accessed 25.02.2026). Analysis of biblical quotations shows that the word is most often used in the first of these meanings. Like *dziwny*, it points to the feature of unexpectedness, which is characteristic of surprise.

The word *przedziwny* (unexpected, incomprehensible or awe-inspiring to a person) is applied in the biblical texts above all to actions of God, such as advice or instructions, as well as divine miracles and signs:

- (9) To również pochodzi od Pana Zastępów, który **przedziwny** okazał się w radzie, niezmierzony w mądrości 'All this also comes from the Lord Almighty, whose plan is wonderful, whose wisdom is magnificent' (Isaiah 28:29);
- (10) Bóg zaś uwierzytelił je cudami, znakami **przedziwnymi**, różnorakimi mocami i udzielaniem Ducha Świętego według swej woli 'God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will' (Hebrews 2:4).

The same adjective is applied to miracles performed by Jesus:

- (11) Wtedy zdumienie ogarnęło wszystkich; wielbili Boga i pełni bojaźni mówili: "**Przedziwne** rzeczy widzieliśmy dzisiaj" 'Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today"' (Luke 5:26).

It is also used in laudations to describe God's power and strength:

- (12) Bogu memu chcę zaśpiewać pieśń nową: Panie, jesteś wielki i przesławny, **przedziwny** w sile swojej i niezwyciężony 'I will sing to my God a new song: O Lord, thou are great and glorious, wonderful in strength, invincible' (RSV) (Judith 16:13).

In the Psalms, the adjective is applied to God's name to express admiration of his greatness:

- (13) O Panie, nasz Panie, jak **przedziwne** Twe imię po wszystkich ziemi! 'Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!' (Psalm 8:9).

2.4. *Dziw*

The noun *dziw* denotes "zjawisko nierealne, niespotykane i zdumiewające" 'an unreal, unprecedented and astonishing phenomenon' (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/38044/dziw>, accessed 25.02.2026), that is to say, it labels a phenomenon that provokes surprise. In the analysed textual material, it is most often used to designate miracles, often for laudatory purposes, emphasising God's power, e.g.

- (14) On czyni niezmiernie **dziwy**, a cudów Jego bez liku 'He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted' (Job 5:9).

2.5. *Zaskoczenie*

A dictionary definition for the noun *zaskoczenie* is "stan psychiczny kogoś, kto doświadczył czegoś, czego się nie spodziewał" 'the psychological state of someone who has experienced something that they did not expect' (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/38803/zaskoczenie/4480566/stan-psychiczny>, accessed 25.02.2026), while the verb *zaskoczyć* has the meaning "wystąpić w czasie innym niż ktoś się spodziewał" 'to occur at a time other than someone expected' or "zdziwić byciem innym niż ktoś się spodziewał" 'to cause surprise [zdziwić] by being different than someone expected' (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/18942/zaskoczyc>, accessed 25.02.2026). As was noted above, *zaskoczenie* differs from *zdziwienie* in that it contains the semantic component of the suddenness of the experiencing of such a state.

Zaskoczenie is presented in the biblical texts as an unambiguously negative phenomenon, denoting surprise at some-

thing bad and unfavourable: a thief, death, a son's disobedience, fear, or rain, e.g.

- (15) Ale wy, bracia, nie jesteście w ciemnościach, aby ów dzień miał was **zaskoczyć** jak złodziej. Wszyscy wy bowiem jesteście synami światłości i synami dnia 'But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness' (1 Thessalonians 5:4–5).

An analysis of the collected attestations confirms the previously cited finding of Agnieszka Sieradzka-Mruk that *zaskoczenie* entails the sudden appearance of the stimulus, as opposed to *zdziwienie*, whose semantic structure does not contain the component "suddenness".

2.6. *Zdumienie*

The word *zdumienie* denotes "stan psychiczny osoby, która widzi, że ktoś lub coś jest inne, niż się spodziewała albo że wydarzyło się coś, czego się nie spodziewała" 'the psychological state of a person who sees that someone or something is different than they expected or that something has occurred that they did not expect' (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/38689/zdumienie>, accessed 25.02.2026). Words formed from the same root include the verbs *zdumieć* "wywołać w kimś stan zaskoczenia, będąc innym, niż ktoś się spodziewał" 'arouse in someone a state of surprise [*zaskoczenie*] by being different than someone expected' (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/38692/zdumiec>, accessed 25.02.2026) and *zdumieć się* "poczuć się zaskoczonym, ponieważ ktoś lub coś jest inne, niż spodziewaliśmy się, albo coś wydarzyło się wbrew naszym przypuszczeniom" 'feel surprised [*zaskoczony*] because someone or something is different than we expected or something occurred contrary to our assumptions' (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/>

haslo/podglad/72858/zdumiec-sie, accessed 25.02.2026). Although these definitions do not adequately distinguish the semantic range of the lexeme *zdumienie* from those of *zaskoczenie* and *zdziwienie*, the examples of usage given below support the view of Anna Wierzbicka (1970) that *zdumienie* is an affective state of greater intensity than *zdziwienie*.

Zdumienie and words formed from the same root are well represented in the biblical texts. They are used most commonly to name the reaction associated with miracles performed by Jesus. These include, for example, the calming of the storm on the lake:

- (16) A ludzie pytali **zdumieni**: “Kimże On jest, że nawet wichry i jezioro są Mu posłuszne?” ‘The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”’ (Matthew 8:27);

and the healing of a girl believed to be dead:

- (17) Dziewczynka natychmiast wstała i chodziła, miała bowiem dwanaście lat. I osłupieli wprost ze **zdumienia** ‘Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished’ (Mark 5:42).

Some of the attestations also refer to reactions to miracles performed by Jesus’ disciples, such as the healing of a lame man:

- (18) I rozpoznawali w nim tego człowieka, który siadał przy Pięknej Bramie świątyni, aby żebrnąć, i ogarnęło ich **zdumienie** i zachwyt z powodu tego, co go spotkało ‘They recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him’ (Acts 3:10).

In another interesting group of texts, words from the *zdumienie* family are used to describe reactions to the fall of Israel. Sometimes they are an element of threats addressed to the Israelites, e.g.

- (19) Dlatego spadł gniew Pana na Judę i na Jerozolimę. I uczynił On z nich przedmiot lęku, **zdumienia** i drwin, jakeście sami widzieli swoimi oczyma ‘Therefore, the anger of the Lord has fallen on Judah and Jerusalem; he has made them an object of dread and horror and scorn, as you can see with your own eyes’ (2 Chronicles 29:8).

The feeling of *zdumienie* is also presented as a reaction to the visions of a woman drunk on the blood of Christians and of the Beast, elements of the Apocalypse described by St. John:

- (20) I ujrzałem Niewiastę pijaną krwią świętych i krwią świadków Jezusa, a widząc ją bardzo **się zdumiałem** ‘I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished’ (Revelation 17:6).

2.7. *Ostupienie*

In Polish dictionaries the noun *ostupienie* is defined as “trwający kilka chwil bardzo silny stan psychiczny osoby, która widzi, że ktoś lub coś jest zupełnie inne, niż się spodziewała albo że wydarzyło się coś, czego się nie spodziewała” ‘a very powerful psychological state, lasting a few moments, of a person who sees that someone or something is completely different from they expected or that something has happened which they did not expect’ (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/112780/oslupienie>, accessed 25.02.2026), while the verb *ostupieć* has the definition “znieruchomieć pod wpływem dużego zdziwienia lub przerażenia” ‘immobilise under the influence of great surprise [zdziwienie] or terror’ (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/47604/oslupiec>, accessed 25.02.2026). These lexemes refer

metonymically to the conventional symptoms of surprise, alluding to a state of immobilisation under the influence of strong emotions. In the Bible, *osłupienie* is found in the books of the prophets and usually accompanies the fall of various states and cities, including Israel, Babylon, Edom, and Jerusalem. The prophet Jeremiah announces that the priests will undergo *osłupienie* when God punishes Israel:

- (21) W owych dniach – wyrocznia Pana – zabraknie królowi odwagi, zabraknie i dostojnikom, kapłanów ogarnie **osłupienie**, a prorocy oniemieją “In that day,” declares the Lord, “the king and the officials will lose heart, the priests will be horrified, and the prophets will be appalled” (Jeremiah 4:9).

In the judgment against Babylon heard by Isaiah, it is stated that the people of that city would look at each other with *osłupienie* during its fall:

- (22) [Oni] truchleją ... ogarniają ich męki i boleści, wiją się z bólu jak ta, która rodzi; jeden na drugiego patrzy z **osłupieniem**, oblicza ich są w płomieniach ‘Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame’ (Isaiah 13:8).

Oslupienie is also given as a reaction to miracles performed by Jesus, such as the healing of Jairus’ daughter:

- (23) Dziewczynka natychmiast wstała i chodziła, miała bowiem dwanaście lat. I **osłupieli** wprost ze zdumienia ‘Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished’ (Mark 5:42).

2.8. Oszołomienie

The verb *oszołomić* (“wywrzeć na kimś bardzo silne wrażenie” ‘to make a very strong impression on someone’ – WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/17775/oszolomic/4300965/przepych>, accessed 25.02.2026) is found only in the Book of Daniel. Like the lexemes *oniemieć* and *zdrętwieć*, it has a metaphorical meaning and refers to the experiencing of strong emotions, not necessarily limited to the group related to surprise. Daniel is rendered *oszołomiony* by the dream of Nebuchadnezzar:

- (24) Wówczas Daniel, który nosił imię Belteszassar, popadł na chwilę w **oszołomienie**, a jego myśli zaniepokoiły go ‘Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshaz’zar, was dismayed for a moment, and his thoughts alarmed him’ (Daniel 4:16).

2.9. Oniemienie

Like the lexemes *osłupieć*, *oszołomić* and *zdrętwieć*, the word *oniemieć* is metaphorical in character, describing surprise by means of a conventional metonymy referring to a way of showing strong emotions; it has the dictionary definition “przestać móc mówić na pewien czas pod wpływem silnych emocji” ‘to lose the ability to speak for a certain time under the influence of strong emotions’ (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/78555/oniemiec>, accessed 25.02.2026). The prophet Daniel experienced *oniemienie* when he had a vision in which a man dressed in linen came to him:

- (25) Gdy on jeszcze mówił do mnie te słowa, padłem twarzą ku ziemi i **oniemiałem**. A oto jakby postać ludzka dotknęła moich warg ‘While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless. Then one who looked like a man touched my lips’ (Daniel 10:15–16).

A guest who was not wearing wedding clothes felt *oniemienie* at the sight of the king, who then ordered him to leave:

- (26) Rzekł do niego: 'Przyjacielu, jakże tu wszedłeś nie mając stroju weselnego?' Lecz on **oniemiał** 'He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' The man was speechless' (Matthew 22:12).

The same happened to the companions of Saul when they suddenly heard Jesus' voice:

- (27) Ludzie, którzy mu towarzyszyli w drodze, **oniemieli** ze zdumienia, słyszeli bowiem głos, lecz nie widzieli nikogo 'The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone' (Acts 9:7).

2.10. *Zdrętwienie*

The verb *zdrętwieć* also refers figuratively to symptoms of strong emotions. Analysis of its semantic structure reveals strong semantic links both to surprise and to fear; dictionary definitions include "stać się pozbawionym czucia na skutek negatywnych doznań zmysłowych lub działania siły fizycznej" 'to become devoid of feeling as a result of negative sensory experiences or the action of physical force' and "doznać nagle uczucia strachu" 'to suddenly experience a feeling of fear' (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/56121/zdretwiec>, accessed 25.02.2026). In the biblical descriptions, *zdrętwienie* (surprise, fear) is experienced by the kings at the sight of God defending Jerusalem:

- (28) Zaledwie ujrzeli, **zdrętwieli**, zmieszali się i uciekli 'Trembling seized them there, pain like that of a woman in labor' (Psalm 48:6);

and by horses affected by God's warning:

- (29) Od Twojej groźby, Boże Jakuba, **zdrętwiały** rydwany i konie 'It is you alone who are to be feared. Who can stand before you when you are angry?' (Psalm 76:7).

The metaphorical lexemes discussed above present surprise through stereotypical bodily reactions such as immobility or loss of speech. In the analysed material, such reactions occur particularly in prophetic and apocalyptic passages.

2.11. *Zadziwienie*

The verb *zadziwić* has the dictionary definition “wywołać zdumienie” ‘to provoke astonishment [*zdumienie*]’ (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/38746/zadziwic>, accessed 25.02.2026). This is not an exhaustive definition, however, as it does not specify that the object of *zadziwienie* may be either a positive or negative stimulus (compare the analyses cited earlier). Although the lexeme *zadziwienie* is located on the periphery of the lexical-semantic field under consideration, we include it in the analyses because of its semantic connection with other words pertaining to the field of surprise. Attestations indicate that lexemes denoting a state of *zadziwienie* are used in the context of reactions to the victory of God (Judith) over Holofernes:

- (30) I **zadziwił się** bardzo cały naród i upadł na ziemię, oddając pokłon Bogu, i wołał jednogłośnie: “Bądź uwielbiony, Boże nasz, który w dniu dzisiejszym rozgromiłeś nieprzyjaciela swego ludu” ‘All the people were greatly astonished, and bowed down and worshiped God, and said with one accord, “Blessed art thou, our God, who hast brought into contempt this day the enemies of thy people”’ (RSV) (Judith 13:17);

and the faith of the centurion of Capernaum:

- (31) Gdy Jezus to usłyszał, **zadziwił się** i zwracając się do tłumu, który szedł za Nim, rzekł: “Powiadam wam: Tak wielkiej wiary nie znalazłem nawet w Izraelu” ‘When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel”’ (Luke 7:9).

2.12. *Podziw*

The noun *podziw* denotes “przyjemny stan psychiczny występujący, gdy patrzymy na coś, co nam się niezwykle podoba, lub mamy kontakt z kimś wyjątkowym” ‘a pleasant psychological state occurring when we look at something that especially pleases us or when we have contact with someone exceptional’ (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/37529/podziw>, accessed 25.02.2026); it is related to the verb *podziwiać*, defined as (1) “odczuwać szacunek i uznanie wobec jakiejś osoby, jej umiejętności, cech charakteru lub sposobu zachowania” ‘to feel respect and admiration towards a person, their abilities, features of character or way of behaving’, (2) “patrzeć na coś z przyjemnością, myśląc, jak bardzo jest to piękne, wspaniałe lub wyjątkowe” ‘to look at something with pleasure, thinking how beautiful, magnificent or exceptional it is’ (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/37546/podziwiac>, accessed 25.02.2026). These definitions confirm the earlier observations concerning the unambiguously positive connotations of this word. For this reason, it is located – like *zadziwienie* – on the boundary of the lexical-semantic field of surprise.

Many uses of the word *podziw* specify this emotion as a reaction to miracles performed by God or Jesus, for example, the healing of a possessed man:

- (32) A wszystkie tłumy pełne były **podziwu** i mówiły: “Czyż nie jest to Syn Dawida?” ‘All the people were astonished and said, “Could this be the Son of David?”’ (Matthew 12:23);

and Jesus’ command of the elements:

- (33) A do nich rzekł: “Gdzie jest wasza wiara?” Oni zaś przestraszeni i pełni **podziwu** mówili nawzajem do siebie: “Kim właściwie On jest, że nawet wichrom i wodzie rozkazuje, a są Mu posłuszne” “Where is your faith?” he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, “Who is

this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him” (Luke 8:25).

The word *podziw* also appears in laudations referring to the works of God:

- (34) Dziękuję Ci, że mnie stworzyłeś tak cudownie, godne **podziwu** są Twoje dzieła I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well’ (Psalm 139:14).

In the second epistle to the Thessalonians, St. Paul writes that the Lord will be regarded with *podziw* when he comes:

- (35) W owym dniu, kiedy przyjdzie, aby być uwielbionym w świętych swoich i okazać się godnym **podziwu** dla wszystkich, którzy uwierzyli, bo wyście dali wiarę świadectwu naszemu ‘on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you’ (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

Podziw is also provoked by signs mentioned in St. John’s account of the Apocalypse:

- (36) I ujrzałem jedną z jej głów jakby śmiertelnie zranioną, a rana jej śmiertelna została uleczone. A cała ziemia w **podziwie** powiodła wzrokiem za Bestią ‘One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast’ (Revelation 13:3).

The lexemes *zadziwienie* and *podziw* suggest that, in some biblical passages, surprise may be accompanied by admiration and reverence, especially in response to divine action.

2.13. *Niezwyczajny*

The adjective *niezwyczajny* – like the lexemes *niespodziewany* and *nagły* (see below) – is applied to phenomena that awaken surprise, while the adverb *niezwyczajnie* describes a quality of processes, features and states. A dictionary definition of *niezwyczajny* is “taki, który różni się od innych obiektów tego samego rodzaju, z którymi ludzie najczęściej się stykają, i dlatego zwraca uwagę” ‘such as differs from other objects of the same kind which people most usually encounter, and therefore attracts attention’ (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/19663/niezwyczajny>, accessed 25.02.2026). It is applied to miracles performed by God through St. Paul:

- (37) Bóg czynił też **niezwyczajnie** cuda przez ręce Pawła ‘God did extraordinary miracles through Paul’ (Acts 19:11).

The same adjective appears in Isaiah’s prophecy, when God declares that he will again perform wondrous miracles:

- (38) Dlatego właśnie Ja ponowię **niezwyczajnie** działanie cudów i dziwów z tym ludem: zginie mądrość jego myślicieli, a rozum jego mędrców zaniknie ‘Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish’ (Isaiah 29:14).

It is also used of the bush that does not burn up:

- (39) Wtedy Mojżesz powiedział do siebie: “Podejdę, żeby się przyjrzeć temu **niezwyczajnemu** zjawisku. Dlaczego krzew się nie spala?” ‘So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up”’ (Exodus 3:3).

The adjective is also applied to scourges inflicted on the ungodly as punishment:

- (40) Bezbożni, którzy znać Ciebie nie chcieli, doznali chłosty od Twego mocnego ramienia, trapieni **niezwykłymi** deszczami, gradami, okrutnymi nawałnicami, i niszczeni ogniem 'For the ungodly, refusing to know thee, were scourged by the strength of thy arm, pursued by unusual rains and hail and relentless storms, and utterly consumed by fire' (RSV) (Wisdom 16:16).

2.14. *Niespodziewany/niespodziewanie*

The adjective *niespodziewany* has the definition "taki, którego ktoś się nie spodziewał i który go zaskoczył" 'such as was not expected by someone and surprised [zaskoczył] them', while the adverb *niespodziewanie* is defined as "tak, że ktoś się tego nie spodziewał i jest zaskoczony" 'such that someone did not expect that thing and is surprised [zaskoczony]' (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/4252/niespodziewany>; <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/33861/niespodziewanie>, accessed 25.02.2026). In the biblical texts the description is applied to punishments inflicted on people by God, as when he flooded the Nile to punish Israel's enemies, the Egyptians:

- (41) W odwet za nakaz dzieciobójczy, dałeś im **niespodziewanie** wodę obfitą 'In rebuke for the decree to slay the infants, thou gavest them abundant water unexpectedly' (RSV) (Wisdom 11:7);

and to the fall of Babylon:

- (42) **Niespodziewanie** upadł i załamał się Babilon: podnieście nad nim lament! Weźcie balsam na jego ranę, może odzyska zdrowie 'Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken. Wail over her! Get balm for her pain; perhaps she can be healed' (Jeremiah 51:8).

The same word is used to describe military actions conducted with an element of surprise, as when Joshua launched an unexpected attack on his enemies:

- (43) I natarł na nich Jozue **niespodziewanie** po całonocnym marszu z Gilgal ‘After an all-night march from Gilgal, Joshua took them by surprise’ (Joshua 10:9).

The words *niespodziewany* and *niespodziewanie* relate to the temporal and pragmatic aspects of surprise, as they emphasise unpredictability rather than the intensity of the emotional response.

2.15. *Nagle*

The adverb *nagle* carries the meaning “szybko, niespodziewanie i w sposób zaskakujący” ‘quickly, unexpectedly and in a surprising [zaskakujący] manner’ (WSJP, <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/25149/nagle>, accessed 25.02.2026). Like the word *niespodziewany*, it is found as an element of warnings referring to the sudden fall of sinners. Thus, the mighty die instantly by the power of God:

- (44) Wszak giną **nagle** wśród nocy, burzy się naród – mijają, ciemniejąc bez trudu się strąca ‘They die in an instant, in the middle of the night; the people are shaken and they pass away; the mighty are removed without human hand’ (Job 34:20).

A reminder is given that God’s anger may be sudden, and therefore one should not delay one’s conversion:

- (45) Nie zwlekaj z nawróceniem do Pana ani nie odkładaj tego z dnia na dzień: **nagle** bowiem gniew Jego przyjdzie i zginiesz w dniu wymiaru sprawiedliwości ‘Do not delay to turn to the Lord, nor postpone it from day to day; for suddenly the wrath

of the Lord will go forth, and at the time of punishment you will perish' (RSV) (Sirach 5:7).

This word is also sometimes used when relating unexpected events. When Jesus boarded a boat with his disciples, the storm broke out suddenly:

- (46) **Nagle** zerwała się gwałtowna burza na jeziorze, tak że fale zalewały łódź; On zaś spał 'Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping' (Matthew 8:24).

A sound came unexpectedly from heaven on the day of Pentecost:

- (47) **Nagle** dał się słyszeć z nieba szum, jakby uderzenie gwałtownego wiatru, i nappełnił cały dom, w którym przebywali 'Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting' (Acts 2:2).

Unlike lexemes that directly denote emotional states, *nagle* is a narrative marker that primarily signals suddenness and strengthens the dramatic effect of the described events.

3. Conclusion

The analysis shows that lexemes naming emotions from the group related to surprise are widely represented in the biblical texts, and can refer to a variety of situational stimuli, including those of a metaphysical nature (related to God and his miracles, for instance) and others concerning people's everyday lives.

Some of the words directly denote the considered affective states: *zdziwić się*, *zdumiewać się*, *zaskoczony*, *zdumiony*, *zdziwiony*, etc. It is worth noting, however, that the identified lexemes do not include all words from this field, since the analysis revealed that words indicating the strongest emotions from

the group of surprise, such as *szok* and *wstrząs*, do not occur in the biblical text. On the other hand, the text does contain lexemes from the periphery of the analysed lexical-semantic field, namely *zadziwienie* and *podziw*, which – in contrast to the words located at the field's core – express an assignment of a value to the objects in question. The research material also includes lexical labels of phenomena, such as situations and objects provoking surprise (*dziw*), as well as adjectives and adverbs that denote the surprising nature of objects and events (*niespodziewany*, *niezwykły*, *nagły*, *niespodziewanie*, *niezwykłe*, *nagle*). The study also takes into account metaphorical lexemes that express conventional symptoms of surprise using the metonymic mechanism of *partem pro toto* (*oniemieć*, *osłupieć*, *zdrętwieć*, *oszołomić*).

The analysis also points to thematic differences in the contexts in which individual lexemes occur. In the analysed material, the word *zdziwienie* appears in contexts ranging from everyday social situations to descriptions of divine action and is not consistently associated with either positive or negative evaluation. *Zaskoczenie* occurs in examples involving sudden and negative stimuli, such as danger, punishment, or death, whereas *zdumienie* denotes a more intense emotional state in passages concerning miracles or apocalyptic visions. The three lexemes therefore cannot be treated as simple synonyms since their uses differ with respect to intensity, suddenness, and valence.

As mentioned above, the analysed material also includes positively evaluated emotions from the periphery of the field. The use of *podziw* and *zadziwienie* in passages concerning divine action indicates that surprise may be accompanied by admiration or reverence. In the analysed translation, the field therefore extends beyond lexemes denoting a neutral violation of expectations.

The distribution of the analysed vocabulary also appears to be related to the literary genres of the biblical texts. The examples from prophetic and apocalyptic passages include lexemes denoting strong or paralysing reactions, whereas the narrative

passages discussed in the article contain more neutral terms. This contrast may reflect genre-specific stylistic conventions present in the Polish translation.

One limitation of the study is that it is based on a single Polish translation of the Bible. Some of the observed lexical differentiation may therefore result from choices made in the Polish translation rather than directly from the distinctions present in the original Hebrew and Greek texts. In the future, the results of this analysis may serve as a starting point for comparative studies of different Polish translations of the Bible. Another interesting line of research would be the comparison of translation equivalents for the lexis of surprise in different language versions of the scriptures.

In sum, the analysed uses show that, in the examined Polish translation, words from the lexical-semantic field of surprise occur not only in descriptions of unexpected events, but also in passages concerning divine action and its emotional evaluation.

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