

## Psalm 104: A Bodily Interpretation of 'Yahweh's History'

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Psalm 104 is one of the finest pieces of lyric poetry in the Old Testament, expressing the poet's emotions regarding 'Yahweh's history.' According to Israelite belief, creation was Yahweh's first act in history, the first fundamental deed setting the stage for Yahweh's involvement with his people. The praise of Yahweh's works and wonders in the creation is often mentioned in the same breath as his acts in the history of his people. In this paper 'Yahweh's history,' as expressed in Psalm 104, is examined from a bodily perspective. Our involvement in and contemplation of this 'history' can only be via the body. It is shown how God-constructs, animal behaviour, and descriptions of nature, as depictions within 'Yahweh's history,' all refer back to and are metaphorised from human bodily experiences. Human involvement in the 'history of Yahweh' appears to be on the same level as the rest of creation in this psalm. This has important ethical implications on all levels of our involvement in that 'history.'*

### **A INTRODUCTION**

When one investigates the biblical texts relating to creation, it is evident that there is no clear demarcation line between God's 'works' in nature<sup>1</sup> and his 'works' in history (Barclay 2006:55). The psalms often combine in their praise of Yahweh his acts in the history of his people and his works and wonders in creation (e.g. Ps 136 – Kraus 1986:36). By remembering Yahweh's involvement in the history of his people and in creation by means of the psalms, present reality of his involvement is created on a continuous basis. Israel's existence and faith are based on 'God's history.'<sup>2</sup> 'This is...not a concern for 'his-

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<sup>1</sup> I distinguish between the term 'nature' and the term 'creation'. Both are accounts of the intermediary term 'world' in the way Gadamer uses the term in order first to distinguish between nature and creation, but also to relate the two. Creation is a theological, doctrinal concept, whereas nature refers to a natural phenomenon (cf. Hall 2005:782, 787).

<sup>2</sup> The term 'history' in this context not only refers to the past but also to present involvement—'history in the making.'

tory' as such, but for the history of God, for Yahweh in the history of his acts' (Kraus 1986:60). One can assume that for Israel God's history commences with the creation myth, the theme that we encounter not only in the Genesis presentations but right through the Old Testament. For Israel it is not only through direct involvement in the lives of his people that God revealed himself but also through his involvement in his creation. These two spheres are not to be separated, although they may be distinguished in biblical theology.

When we ponder the works of Yahweh in his history and in his creation one should keep in mind that Israel was not familiar with our concepts of "nature" and "cosmos," because for them the world was much more event than being (Kraus 1986:36). For Israel their existence as a nation within and as part of God's creation is inseparable—one body reflecting wholeness. However, in modern days it often happens that biblical and theological scholars tend to describe the human as not being part of nature. Humans are more frequently mentioned in relation to morality and the movement of history toward an ultimate purpose (Hiebert 1996:36) than as being part of nature. And in addition, Israel's religion is almost exclusively treated within the context of a history-nature dichotomy when it is compared with the religions of its neighbours. Theirs is a religion of history in which God is involved in human experience, while their neighbours are said to be practising religions of nature.

With reference to God and his involvement in history, Christian theology is dominated by strict transcendent models of creation, showing God beyond and outside his creation (Montejiore 1977:202). However, biblical texts on creation also reflect other models, which suggest a very close relationship between God and his creation and between humans and nature. One such model is found in Psalm 104.

Psalm 104, a hymn of descriptive praise (Miller 2000:88), is one of the finest pieces of lyric poetry in the Old Testament, disclosing 'the continuity between creation and providence, between the making of creatures and provision for their existence' (Mays 2000:85). The psalm reflects the tight interrelationship between God and his entire creation, and between created beings and things. This is primarily what 'Yahweh's history' is about—his involvement in and being part of the entire, interrelated creation. Each and every creature is unique but still interrelated with the rest of creation—be it physically or biologically—and with God, according to biblical thinking.<sup>3</sup>

In this paper the embodied 'history of Yahweh,' as expressed in Psalm 104, will be examined from a human bodily perspective as hermeneutical vehicle. I want to expose some aspects of the body-based language reflections of the poet. Perceptions of reality can only take place via bodily experience and translation of any perceptions into language takes place via metaphorical ex-

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<sup>3</sup> The discussion between science and religion is not at issue in this paper.

pressions. As Leder (1990:1) puts it, '[h]uman experience is incarnated. I receive the surrounding world through my eyes, my ears, my hands. The structure of my perceptual organs shapes that which I apprehend. And it is via bodily means that I am capable of responding.' Experiencing the world is experiencing the self and experiencing the self is experiencing the world.

This investigation might enable us to understand, through his embodied language, something about the poet's own bodily experiences and deepest relationship with his co-creatures and with God. It might enable us to grasp a little bit about the poet's understanding and experience of 'Yahweh's history' and his bodily involvement in that 'history.'

My intention is not to put on table a detailed exposition of the structure and contents of the psalm but rather to highlight bodily issues pertaining to the psalm. I shall restrict myself primarily to the psalm itself and not rely on its intertexture during the process of interpretation.

## **B THE HUMAN BODY AND THE BODY OF GOD—SOME THEORETICAL ISSUES**

Various aspects of the human body feature in the psalm, which do not relate to humans only but also to God and his creation. According to Malina (1993:77) 'statements about God...derive from analogies based on human behavior.' That means that statements about God are metaphors of the human body itself. Malina's three zones model of *emotion-fused thought*, of *self-expressive speech*, and of *purposeful action*, describes 'the nonintrospective make-up of the dyadic person's behavior' throughout the Bible (:74). This model will help us identify and interpret body issues as depicted in the psalm. The zone of *emotion-fused thought* comprises the body parts such as eyes, heart, eyelid, and the activities of these organs: to see, know, understand, think, remember, choose, feel, consider, and look at as well as nouns related to these. The zone of *self-expressive speech* includes mouth, ears, tongue, lips, throat, teeth, jaws, and the activities of these organs. (:75). The zone of *purposeful action* includes hands, feet, arms, fingers, legs, and the activities of these organs. (:75). It is of importance to note that 'the conceptions of God in the Bible in general are...rooted in the three-zone model of humankind's makeup' (:81).

The human body is the orientational centre in relation to everything else that exists or takes place outside the body (Leder 1990:22). The body experiences itself as always situated *here*. However, the body can project away from itself by means of its senses or by means of thoughts. That is why thoughts or projections of God, for instance, can occur throughout existence. The body's capacity of reaching outwards forms the basis of seeing something as reachable and usable (:23).

The human body, through conception and birth, originates from another body. It is composed of the same matter as the surrounding world, and lives only by ceaseless metabolic exchanges with it. In this sense 'we form one body with the universe we inhabit' (:157-158). Our embodied relation or interconnection with nature implies that we can have *compassion* (moral experience) for others. It also implies that we can become aesthetically *absorbed* in nature and nature in us (aesthetic experience). It lastly implies that we can, especially by implementing spiritual practices, experience spiritual *communion* with the ground of all being, with God or gods (:160-161). The close interconnection between body and world, therefore, implies an ontology and ethics of interconnection (:160).

A key experience of one-bodiedness with the environment in the psalm is that of *absorption*. This is a deeply embodied process of being aesthetically sensitive to the world around us (:164). The fact that the poet of Psalm 104 describes in ecstatic emotion nature as God's creative works results from his absorption by nature, be it during the process of composing this psalm or through life experiences in nature in the past. He experiences his oneness with nature. He is swallowed up in, deeply absorbed by the natural landscape around him. At the same time, the landscape is swallowed into his embodiment, transforming it from within (:165). He becomes part of the streams babbling down the mountains, part of the singing birds, part of the roaring lion asking God for food. The world comes alive empathically within his body, while he experiences himself as part of the all inclusive body of the world (:166). He experiences moments of ecstatic quality, bringing a feeling of joyful release. Such aesthetic experiences help him to realize that he is an expansive being. He experiences 'the leaping beyond constriction, the spaciousness of the extended body' (Leder 1990:166). In this sense the psalmist's orientation is geocentric (earth-centred) and not anthropocentric (Limburg 1994:345). This, however, does not exclude the fact that the author's body remains the centre of his experiences of the world around him.

In his bodily experience of reaching out to the world around him, he develops the desire to become one-bodied with all things. His prayer of praise, his meditation, facilitates his sense of involvement or *communion* with Yahweh, the ground of his being. His body, therefore, is central to his spiritual experience and metaphorical expression.

In addition to this, Israel's ideal body is the whole body, which is, of course, a socially constructed category (Berquist 2002:19). Israel successfully integrated cosmology (their view of the universe) with ontology (what is real and what truly exists), and they saw a parallel relationship between the functioning of the body and the functioning of the world (:11). That is why animal and plant life are often used as foundational metaphors to reflect upon human life and social experience among people such as ancient Israel who live close to nature (Eilberg-

Schwartz 1990:117). Such metaphors are bodily and socially embedded. Nature itself serves as a root metaphor for ancient Israelite thought (:119).

Human desires and emotions directly relate to visceral and ecstatic features. The visceral depths are always involved in *ekstasis* (Leder 1990:56). The external body, which Leder calls the 'ecstatic flesh,' mirrors the world around me. Similarly, the inside body, which cannot be seen, forms part of a wider context of natural powers of which I am only a partial expression. Each breath that is inhaled makes the body dependent upon the environment. According to Leder (:68) 'the universal or the "spiritual" need not be conceived as something opposed to the flesh and blood. The body itself proclaims spirit in our lives, that is, transcendence, mystery, and interconnectedness.' This does not imply, in my view, any ontological judgment about the existence of God.<sup>4</sup> It is part and parcel of bodiliness, of being human, at least, to experience transcendence, mystery, and interconnectedness. This trait of the human body enables us to construct metaphors for God or gods.

## C IDENTIFICATION OF BODILY EXPERIENCES IN THE PSALM

In this section I shall draw attention to the most prominent references in the psalm to aesthetic, spiritual, and moral experiences reflected upon by the poet. Aspects of the three-zone model of the make-up of the dyadic person will help us identify these experiences.

### 1 Work related experiences

Human action is concentrated in the hands, and action means doing (Schroer & Staubli 2001:161). The fact that a man goes out to his work (פַּעֲלֵי) in the morning and returns from his labour (עֲבֹדָתוֹ) in the evening (v. 23) implies making a living with his hands. In verse 14 to labour (לְעִבְדָּתָהּ) is linked to the cultivation of plants to produce food, wine, and facial oil in order to uplift the human spirit. Human labour is directly related to bodily needs—not only physical needs but also emotional and aesthetic needs. The inner and outer body lives by human labour, which is made possible by God according to this psalm. Work ethics and related issues are implied in this and are, therefore, also bodily based. In verse 23 the interrelatedness of the 'work' of humans (v. 23) and God's many 'works' (מַעֲשֵׂיָהּ) (v. 24) is stressed by linking the two directly. The human hand is metaphorised onto the domain of the divine as God's creating and sustaining hand. God's hands are the source of all living things as well as the sustenance of all living things. It is because of the human hand, a human body part that is associated with work, that the poet can metaphorise

<sup>4</sup> On page 125 Leder remarks that he would not deny 'the possibility of modes of consciousness that transcend those inherent in the human brain. In fact, my personal conviction is that such modes exist.'

God at work (vv. 13, 24, 31 – **בְּעֵשֶׂיךָ**) (Fretheim 2005:2). In the application of the zone of purposeful action to God, the hands of God invariably allude to the spirit of God (Malina 1993:80). All creatures live as a result of the creating and ever renewing *spirit of God* (v. 30). Although the sea creatures are discussed in verses 25-30, it is evident from verse 30 that both earth and sea are involved in the work of God's spirit.

The word **רוּחַ** 'creates room, puts in motion, leads out of narrowness into broad space, and gives life' (Schroer & Staubli 2001:214).<sup>5</sup> In relation to God it describes life force, creative force (wind – vv. 3-4), and divine power. In verse 29 the hiding of the face of God (v. 29) metaphorises exactly the opposite to his creating and renewing spirit. The hiding of God's face means the taking away of the **רוּחַ** of a living being (v. 29). The creating and renewing work of God's spirit (**רוּחַ** – v. 30) and the direction of God's face are directly related to the breath (life) of all living beings, be it on land, in the air, or in the sea. Breathing is life. A body without breath is a dead body. The poet ascribes the fact that he and all other animals can breathe, to the creating work of the spirit of God. Through his bodily experience of working and of breathing he finds interrelatedness with creation and with God.

The acts of Yahweh's open, giving hand (v. 28) and the sending of his spirit (v. 30),<sup>6</sup> are work-related metaphors for compassion and sustenance. These metaphors based on the human bodily desire for *communion* with people in need, a reaching out of the inner and outer body (the whole body) to others, are foundational to ethical conduct amongst humans.

## 2 Joy related experiences

The embodied theme of joy plays a prominent role in the psalm. It is related to both the poet and to God, and even to the creation at large.

### a Joy relating to humans

Human praise, both in the singular and the plural (**בְּרַכִּי** - vv. 1, 35; **הִלְלוּ** - v. 35), which embraces the entire psalm, reflects human joy. In verse 1 the praise is directly linked to the sky and to light, related to the first creation deed of God, and which enables the eyes to see. What the psalmist's eyes perceive in the sky, while experiencing the firm ground below him (the earth is set on firm foundations – v. 5), evokes an awesome awareness of a huge God high up in the sky. The two poles of the vertical axis of the body, 'high' and 'low,' are strongly charged words in most cultures (Tuan 1977:37). What is superior is elevated, therefore God dwells in heaven. Both the upright posture of his body

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ez 42:16-20.

<sup>6</sup> The metaphors of sending his spirit and turning his face toward creation are synonymous.

and the wondrous sky stimulate the experience of joy and awe, which results in a metaphoric God-construct and in praise for this God.

The word שִׂמְחָה (vv. 15, 31, 34) (‘joy’ and its variants) often occurs in the psalm. The enjoyment of drinking wine has a cheerful effect on the human heart (v. 15) (שִׂמְחָה pi). The poet not only rejoices in creation and its products but also in Yahweh (v. 34), the creator thereof. He experiences the goal of creation, in its details and in its whole, as to provide pleasure and delight (Miller 2000:98)—a bodily experience *par excellence*.

### **b Joy relating to God**

In verse 26b God is described as the one who created (יָצַר) the leviathan in order to play with<sup>7</sup>, implying reciprocal enjoyment! Kimberley Patton (2000:402) relates this metaphor with the sensing of a playful sea creature such as the humpback whale or dolphins accompanying a boat for long distances. However, the age old bodily experience of pleasure in playing with a toy is the root of this metaphor. Theologically spoken the metaphor wants to express ‘the distinctive and intimate relationship between the Creator and His creatures—both the “natural” and the “fantastic” ones...to enter into the realm of ecstatic symbiosis’ (Patton 2000:402).<sup>8</sup>

In verse 31b the poet expresses the wish that God may rejoice (שִׂמְחָה) in his works of creation. And in verse 34 he expresses the wish that God may take pleasure in (יִעֲרֹב) his (the poet’s) meditation. That God should rejoice in his works is quite unusual because usually it is the created beings that rejoice before God (Pss 9:2; 32:11; 96:11-13; 104:34) and not God who rejoices. To rejoice is an extremely pleasant bodily experience, which is here metaphorised onto the domain of the divine. Via the aesthetic openness of his body to the world around him, the psalmist becomes *absorbed* by the reality around him. He does not only metaphorise his own experience of joy but he extends the metaphor of joy to what he envisages God to experience with his creation (v. 31b) (Brown 2006:15). According to Brown, verse 31b spells out the aim of the psalm as a whole. With this joyous poem the psalmist wants

to help sustain God’s delight in creation, to provide sufficient support for God’s engagement in the world. The remarkable implication is that God’s engagement with creation is more aesthetically than morally driven. The God portrayed in Psalm 104 runs on artistic and altruistic joy, and so does the world.

Brown (2006:16)

<sup>7</sup> The preposition בּוֹ in לְשִׂמְחָתוֹ בּוֹ can either refer to ‘sea’ or to ‘leviathan’. The latter option is preferred in this context (cf. Job 40:25-29 – Spieckermann 1989:24 n.14).

<sup>8</sup> For the purpose of this paper it is not necessary to explicate the mythological background of this metaphor.

**c Joy relating to earth**

While God is clothed (לְבָשָׁתָּהּ – v. 1) with splendour and majesty, the earth is clothed with תְּהוֹמוֹ (mythological flood waters) as with a garment (כְּלָבוֹשׁ – v. 6). Both these metaphors, which share the root לָבַשׁ, can be traced back to the experience of a clothed human body. In the case of the clothed body of the earth, the garment has to be partially removed in order for God to start his creation work on earth. Undertones of a sexual metaphor may be sensed in this, which is complemented by the description of the 'joyful' babbling water running between the mountains in the ravines (v. 11-12, 16-17), 'fertilizing' the earth, while the earth brings forth food for humans and animals (v. 14). The earth is satisfied (תִּשְׂבַע) with the fruit of Yahweh's hands (מִפְּרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיָיָהּ) (v. 13b). The term פָּרִי often carries the connotation of fertility of the land/soil/earth and of people (Ps 132:11; Nm 13:26; Dt 7:13, etc.). The joyfulness of fertility and production and reproduction, as experienced by the human body within its social context, is metaphorised onto earth. The lush of the plants, the satiation of the soil, the satisfaction of the animal life as described in the psalm all voice joy springing up from the body of the earth and relate to the satisfied human body—complete wholeness.

**d Joy relating to animals**

The frolicking of the mythical leviathan (v. 26b) in the ocean and God's playing with his rival of old, implies, as stated above, reciprocal enjoyment. One can imagine, as the author does, that the voice-giving or singing of the birds in the foliage of the trees (v. 12) also relates to contentment. And if one stretches the argument, the pasturing of the cattle and the satisfaction of the hunger lions after their meal (with their playful cubs) after Yahweh has heard their prayers for food (v. 21), recall bodily satisfaction (שָׂבַע – v. 28) and pleasure.

**e Joy relating to plants**

The lushness of trees and plants that serve as food (vv. 14-17) and which decorate the landscape (vv. 12, 14, 16-17) echoes goodness (v. 28) and the renovation of the face of the earth (v. 30) and the satisfaction and joy of humankind (v. 15) and all animal life. The fact that the soil (v. 13b) and the plants (v. 16) are satiated (שָׂבַע) not only has reference in the human body in need of an equilibrium of water, but also echoes pleasant satisfaction. When it comes to bodily pleasure the Hebrews knew how to grow vineyards and olive trees (Rolston 1996:16). They knew what wine can do to the human heart (emotion) and what oil can do to the face to let it shine and look good so that one can feel good (v. 15)—pure pleasure! What a beautiful metaphor to describe the work of Yahweh's spirit that renovates the 'face of the earth!' Pure pleasure!



An aspect, which is important in metaphorising the entire nature in such a close relationship with God, is that it tempers a hierarchical anthropocentricity in our talk about God (Fretheim 2005:257) and creation. It is because of his bodily experience of complete oneness with the world and with God, which Leder (1990:161) calls *communion*, that the poet can put himself (and therefore humanity) on the very same level as the rest of creation. The joy of animals and of the earth (soil) bring joy to humanity and *vice versa*. Embodied joy is metaphorised onto the entire created reality and onto the transcendental realm. The placing of humans on the same level as the rest of God's creation and the reciprocal joy of humans and the rest of creation, have ethical implications for human conduct within 'Yahweh's history.' As mentioned above, the close interconnection between body and world implies an ontology and ethics of interconnection (:160).

### 3 Aggression related experiences

#### a Divine aggression

The prominent role that water plays in the psalm is conspicuous. In verse 7 God rebukes (נִעְרַתָּהּ) the chaotic mythical waters that cover the earth. In verse 29 the hiding of God's face from the sea animals (and all living creatures for that matter), brings death, also referring to aggression as a trait of God. These are clear examples of human self-expressive speech (Malina 1993:75) used to describe God's aggressive conduct against personal enemies or humans. The former alludes to the creation myth, while the latter implies God's wrath against the wicked. However, there is movement away from God's aggression in the psalm. After Yahweh has tamed the chaotic waters, the tamed waters bring satisfaction on earth (vv. 10-13), and the contained sea becomes God's big dam in which he plays with his toy (leviathan – v. 26). The turning away of his face from living creatures turns into his spirit's renewal of the face of the earth (vv. 29-30).

According to Leder, in our experience of communion with the world around us,

for most of us, the extent to which we can open feelingly to the world depends upon the world in which we find ourselves. We seek to shut down cognitively, emotionally, perceptually, to alienated environments. Thus, to stimulate the realization of one-bodied relation, we need to cultivate a world that encourages our involvement....The ideal is to become one-bodied with *all things*.

(Leder 1990:167)

This is exactly what the psalmist is depicting by transforming aggression into joy. And again he metaphorises these bodily experiences onto the divine realm. By alluding to the mythical conflict between the divine and the chaotic waters

(v. 7) resulting in divine victory, human response of aggression toward an alienated environment is metaphorised. God's taming of the waters and his sending out of the waters to satiate earth in order to bring forth plants for food, wine, and oil, is a metaphor for creating an acceptable environment to live in. God's compassionate turning of his face toward his creation and the renewal of the face of the earth (vv. 29-30) confirm this bodily based desire of working toward one-bodiedness with all things.

The depiction of this bodily experience reaches its climax in the final glorification of God (vv. 31-35), which forms a chiasmic pattern. There is a clear relationship between God depicted as possessing a bad-tempered eye and hand (v. 32) and the curse that sinners should be removed from the earth (v. 35).

<sup>31</sup> May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works--

<sup>32</sup> **he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.**

<sup>33</sup> I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

<sup>34</sup> May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD.

<sup>35</sup> **But may sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more.**

Praise the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD.

The curse involves the removal of the wicked from the earth and its inherent goodness obtained from God. They may not share in the goodness of God's creation. There are evildoers in the world with whom the normal body cannot relate. Harrelson argues,

By mentioning the wicked the psalmist expresses his moral concerns....He knows the foulness of earth, the misery of poor and oppressed folk, the brutality of treatment beasts suffered, the cruelty with which people disposed of life, giving not a thought to slaughter and carnage. He also knew very well that the world filled with harmony, with water, with food, with oil and wine, was a world that ought to be, was intended to be, and in God's time would be.

(Harrelson 1975:22)

To the poet wickedness instigates aggression, maybe also fear, because the wicked are his enemies. Wickedness 'distorts the great system of life from its purpose of reflecting on the wisdom of God' (Mays 2000:85). Therefore, in the case of the wicked mentioned in verse 35a, the proper integration of social and cosmic order is disturbed. Those who refuse to praise God and rejoice in the divine greatness, wisdom, and glory are judged to have no rightful place in the world (Howard 1992:179). The deeply bodily based experience of joy and praise offered to God, which aims at promoting Yahweh's 'history,' has its opposite in human wickedness and tragedy instigated by people who counteract Yahweh's 'history.'

**b Animal aggression**

In verse 21 the roaring of the lion is depicted as a prayer to God for food. As Miller (2000:98) puts it: The psalmist 'understands the "preying" of the lion as a kind of "praying" (v. 21)...The lion's kill is an answer to prayer in this portrayal of God's created order.' This animal metaphor depicting dependence, also mirrors human bodily dependence on (sustenance) and devotion to God. The metaphor, however, also implies animal aggression. Nature is also red in tooth and claw. However, this aspect is viewed in a positive light as part of the ordinary in the psalm. The poet is, therefore, also aware of the rhythm of life and death, death and life (vv. 29-30), which 'together witness that creation continues in the world' (Mays 2000:85) as part of 'Yahweh's history.' In verses 29-30 death is an ever present reality in God's creation, as is life and renewal. From a body point of view, death is the final dysfunctioning or dys-appearing of the body (Leder 1990:84).

**E CONCLUSION**

The function of models of belief has a great influence on the interpretation of our world (Marietta 1977:156-158). Models of belief influence the meaning and value, also the ethical value, which consciousness will place on a thing. This is true of any model of belief, be it a fundamentalist model or an atheist model. What I propose in this paper is the human body oriented model of interpretation feeding our belief and our ethos. In Psalm 104 the author's bodily experience of and involvement in the 'history of Yahweh' teaches that humans should see and experience themselves as completely part of God's creation and of his 'history' and not as elevated, exclusive, anthropocentric beings. This, to my mind, is exactly what this psalm teaches us and what being human is about. This bears ethical implications for humankind on all levels of our involvement with the entire created reality in the process of Yahweh's 'history.' Like all other creatures, humans participate in the processes of nature. Our bodily experiences give birth to metaphorically contemplating nature, and it is only humans that have this attribute (Marietta 1977:164). We live in terms of histories which include past, present, and future. That is why we can share in the understanding of such a 'history' as constructed by the poet of Psalm 104—a 'history of Yahweh' in which the entire creation is involved. Our involvement in and contemplation of this 'history' can only be via the body.

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