Literary Lions with Real Bite: Re-examining the Intertextual Rhetoric in Daniel 6[1]

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ABSTRACT

The story of Daniel in the lion's pit (Dan 6) is still one of the most well-known stories in the HB. The way the story has been captured in visual form by the "Old Masters" as well as contemporary depictions thereof in children's Bibles are indicative of its ability to captivate the imagination. In scholarly circles the story has also received considerable attention, most of which relates to issues of historical and/or literary nature. Thus, it has been proposed that the story in the HB may be the result of a mistaken "literalization" of a Babylonian literary motif. The present paper seeks to address the issue of such a symbolic understanding of the lions in the story. However, instead of looking to the Babylonian context for a literary antecedent, it is proposed that Israel's own literary tradition may shed light into this dark pit. The study of the metaphor of "teeth" in the Psalter points to a literary connection between the malicious accusations of the "presidents and satraps" (in Dan 6) and Daniel's eventual fate among the lions.

KEYWORDS: Daniel 6, Psalms, lions in the Bible, literary history, intertextuality.

A INTRODUCTION

The truism related to people's fondness of stories often results in academic monographs and articles dealing with any aspect related to the writing or reading of our textual heritage. Invariably the academic angles used to enlighten our understanding and appreciation of the narratives in these texts are not always as gripping as the stories themselves. However, it is through such academic inquiry that we are able to uncover further layers in understanding these narratives. This article sets out to briefly consider where stories come from and what they are meant to achieve. It also addresses the issue of understanding the "lion character" in Dan 6 by referring to its possible literary and historical origins.

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1 This article is a reworking of a paper presented at the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature held in Buenos Aires, 20-24 July 2015. The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) through incentive funding to rated researchers is hereby acknowledged. The ideas expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of the NRF.

Lastly, the contribution attempts to link these lions to what I (and others) believe are their literary lineages in the Psalter.

B WHENCE AND WHY STORIES?

In order to set a broader context for this inquiry into the textual tradition for the lions in Dan 6, I first consider what the nature of narrative entails. Stories may be viewed as time capsules that hand down human experiences and ideas from one generation to the next. Around the middle of the twentieth century, the creation of narratology as a field of study which stemmed from the formalist movement alerted our attention to the fact that stories often share a similar structure in conveying ideas and experiences.[2] This insight gave literary (and biblical) critics the tools to study these products of human experience and imagination as self-contained wholes, without delving too deeply into the historical or literary baggage that these creations, unavoidably, carry.

Human beings are, however, always preoccupied with origins. Many of the modern-day scientific achievements we marvel at are in fact focused on the "big questions" of our story as the human race. This is why this contribution aligns itself with Collins in affirming the continuing importance of a historical understanding of the text.[3] Thus, although I may refer to issues of plot, character and scene, the present aim is to illustrate a possible literary cradle for the story in Dan 6. Before doing that, it is necessary to note what a story is.

In his search for archetypes in literature, which he equates with "a kind of literary anthropology," Northrop Frye notes that literature is informed by a number of pre-literary categories, and explicitly refers to ritual, myth and folk tale.[4] These categories need not be seen as separate strands of different later literary products, but, as in the case of the Book of Daniel, these categories in combination may be viewed as informing the final product.[5] In this contribu-

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2 Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory*: *An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 103-106; Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooker, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (4th ed.; London: Prentice Hall, 1997), 71-78.

3 John J. Collins, *The Bible after Babel*: *Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 131.

4 Northrop Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature," *KRev* 13/1 (1951): 99-100.

5 This statement does not rule out a long development of the separate stories and visions before their final combination in what later became the canonical form. In fact, such a development is underscored and evident in commentators' discussions of 1) the mythic imagery in the visions (e.g. Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel*: *A Commentary* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965], 98-99); 2) the legendary figure(s) of the hero(es) presented in folkloristic style (e.g. John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 42-45; and 3) ritual linked to a "liturgical prayer" in the book (e.g. James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* [ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1927], 362-363).

tion, the emphasis falls on the first of these, namely a ritual context related to the Psalter where the underlying rituals were first captured in a literary form.

Scholes *et al.*[6] state that in order for pre-literary forms to become a story, at least two characteristics should be present: a story and a story teller.[7] Although this may seem rather simplistic, the assertion seeks to differentiate narrative from lyric and drama. In their further examination of the nature of narrative, they suggest a definite development from oral to written literature. This development is largely traced through the growth of Greek literature and, although "we may perhaps imagine a gradual, centuries-long transition from oral to written narrative among the ancient Hebrews analogous to the one we posit for the Greeks,"[8] this is not the immediate focus of the present study. What should be noted is the distinction between "motif" and "theme" in the pre-literate stage of a narrative.[9] A "motif" refers to the external world (for example, a man thrown into a lion's pit, as in the case of Dan 6); while "theme" relates to the world of "ideas and concepts" (such as the divine protection from grave danger in Dan 6). When, eventually, the literary form takes the place of the oral, the "illustrative aspect of myth is developed [further] in allegory" and the representational aspect is developed in "history and other forms of empirical narrative."[10]

This paper suggests that there is evidence in the HB of both these forms (motif and theme) stemming from a common *topos* and illustrated in a number of Psalms and Dan 6. It is to the story in Dan 6 that the focus now shifts.

C WHAT TO MAKE OF THE LIONS IN DANIEL 6?

Lions are ferocious animals, and despite the brave comments made by some commentators who have most likely never seen wild lions roaming under African skies, they are animals no one wants to mess with. The lion instils a sense of primal fear in man, woman and beast, and it is for this reason that the lion is often associated with leadership in the ancient world. Not only were kings (and even gods)[11] often compared to or depicted as lions, but the mastery of these

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6 Robert Scholes, James Phelan and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (40th anniversary ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4.

7 The diachronic discussion in this classic work on narrative is important for this discussion. There are more recent studies in this field, such as that of Rick Altman, *A Theory of Narrative* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). Altman works out a more comprehensive (and complex) model, but pays little attention to the historical aspect related to the development of narratives that is crucial for my argument.

8 Scholes, Phelan and Kellogg, *Nature*, 32.

9 Scholes, Phelan and Kellogg, *Nature*, 27.

10 Scholes, Phelan and Kellogg, *Nature*, 28.

11 Note Amos 3:8 and Hos 5:14.

animals also symbolised leadership qualities.[12] In Egypt[13] and Mesopotamia, emperors used images of lions to proclaim their strength, while murals from royal palaces depicted kings hunting (canned) lions as a way of attesting to the king's strength and attributing to his glorification by his subjects. Strawn notes that the lion is rarely used as metaphor for positive traits in the HB.[14] Yet, the depiction of the lion to portray a negative projection on the foe "abounds, especially in the Psalms, where it generally stands for one's personal enemies and for the wicked."[15]

In the study of Dan 6, the lions (אַרְיָוָתָא [pl. + def. art.] in Aramaic) receive the attention they deserve with most discussions focusing on the literary history of these animals. Broadly speaking, there are two suggestions in this regard: on the one hand, a possible Babylonian background is contemplated while, on the other, scholars suggest Jewish poetry as a possible context of origin. This paper will focus on the latter which has not received the same in-depth treatment as the former.

In their discussions, most commentators make reference to the historicity of this account in Dan 6, in which the protagonist is thrown into a lions' pit after failing to adhere to an edict prohibiting requests to any god or human save the king alone. Montgomery rejects the historicity of the narrative by viewing it as on par with the "evidently apocryphal character" of the other stories in the book.[16] Interestingly, his suspicion in this regard is not aroused by the protagonist's miraculous escape from the jaws of death, but rather by the improbable edict attributed to Darius.[17] Montgomery makes the following brave statement with regard to the lion scene: "[t]here is no inherent impossibility in the escape of a victim thrown to the lions."[18] Ultimately, the story centres on foreign kings incarnating all forces arrayed against God.[19] Montgomery emphasises the

[12] Donald G. Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 32-33.

[13] Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 86.

[14] Brent A. Strawn, *What is Stronger Than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 47, also mentions that compared to the rich tradition of this positive image in the ANE, it is striking that it appears infrequently in the HB.

[15] Strawn, *What is Stronger*, 50.

[16] Montgomery, *Daniel*, 268. In fact, "the writer may never have seen a lions' den," 276.

[17] Louis E. Hartman and Alexander Dilella, *The Book of Daniel* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1978), 198, state that such a decree "has no parallel in history" especially in Persian, and also, in Hellenistic times.

[18] Montgomery, *Daniel*, 268.

[19] Montgomery, *Daniel*, 269.

story-like character of the tale and follows the narrative but does not link the lions to any specific historical or literary context.

Bentzen also mentions on the uncharacteristic edict forbidding religious practice when he categorises this narrative as a mythic or as a martyr's tale.[20] He views the edict as irreconcilable (*unvereinbar*) with everything we know about old Achaemenid policies. He goes on to refer to Ps 57:4–6 and Ps 91:13 and states that the lions' pit scene in Dan 6 can be viewed as an "embodiment of figurative speech" (*Verkörperung von Sentenzen*) found in these Psalms.[21] Another possible *Vorlage* to be found in the cistern-like shape of the lions' pit in the ground, is that of the netherworld *topos*. This scene, he argues, reflects the descent of the hero to the netherworld from which he (in this case) triumphantly returns.

In trying to determine the date of the story in Dan 6, Porteous notes both possibilities raised by Bentzen.[22] However, he goes on to state that the words in Ps 57:5, 7[23] "almost . . . suggested the story of chapter 6 to an inventive storyteller."[24] It is this suggestion that the present article explores. Below it is argued that the author of the Daniel story was not particularly influenced by older Mesopotamian traditions, but rather by traditions extant in Jewish poetry.

Goldingay deals with various possible backgrounds related to the form of this chapter (*inter alia* wisdom, royal decree and confessional praise). As part of his discussion of the story exhibiting midrashic aspects he notes: "[a]s a story about descent into a pit and about being threatened by lions, it illustrates experiences described in these symbolic terms in Pss 22:14, 22 [13, 21]; 57:5-7 [4-6]; 91:10-13 (cf. later 1QH 5.1-19)."[25] Collins also puts forth this interpretation and makes the following comments on Dan 6:8: "The idea of casting someone to the lions may have been inspired by metaphorical usage such as Pss 57:5 . . . 22:14; 91:13; 1QH 5:6-7."[26]; or the Babylonian *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*

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[20] Aage Bentzen, *Daniel* (HAT; Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1952), 55.

[21] Bentzen, *Daniel*, 55.

[22] Porteous, *Daniel*, 87-88.

[23] Cf. "I lie down among lions that greedily devour human prey; . . . They dug a pit in my path, but they have fallen into it themselves" (Ps 57:5a [4a], 7b [6b] – NRSV).

[24] Porteous, *Daniel*, 87.

[25] John Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 123.

[26] Collins cites Otto Plöger, *Das Buch Daniel* (KAT; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1965), 98 and Bentzen, *Daniel*, 55, with regard to the canonical psalms, and (following Goldingay) adds the Qumran evidence (QH 5:6-7) referring to being "put [. . .] right among lions." However, Collins does not list the more appropriate QH 5:9c, 13b that Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 337-8, translates as follows: "You closed the mouth of the lion cubs" (9c), "and saved the soul of the poor man in the lair of lions" (13b).

specifically citing the lines "It was Marduk who put a muzzle on the mouth of the lion who was eating me."[27]

A more detailed discussion of a possible Babylonian background for this tale was noted above.[28] However, it is necessary to discuss this in the present context, before focusing on the Psalms. In his article, Van der Toorn (1996)[29] discusses the finer details related to the proposal of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* as possible literary background for Dan 6. His focus is the lions in Dan 6 (and Dan 13 – Old Greek). Taking his cue from the well-known Babylonian text, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, he argues that the lines cited above[30] may have informed a tradition that, in the Jewish reception thereof, lies behind the story of Dan 6. In fact, Van der Toorn sees a closer link between the story of Daniel and the plot of *Ludlul* than between this Babylonian text and the book of Job, to which it is usually compared.[31] Using Assyrian letters written by a certain Urad-Gula (and his father), he demonstrates how Urad-Gula's career at the royal court displayed the classic comedic pattern[32] of a courtier who had fallen out of favour but was later reinstated by the king. Van der Toorn claims that the letters of Urad-Gula may have had the classic story of *Ludlul* as prototype.[33]

Similarly, the author of Dan 6 had the *Ludlul* plot in mind, but since he was unaware of Mesopotamian authors' use of expressing competition among courtiers as life in a pit of lions, he "mistook a metaphor for a literal description."[34] To be sure, Van der Toorn refers to the metaphorical use of lions in the Psalter (citing only Pss 7:2-4, 22:14, 22a and 58:7) but insists that the author of Dan 6 mistook the metaphor for a literal description. However, it remains

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27 Collins, *Daniel*, 267.

28 The contribution by Shalom M. Paul, "The Mesopotamian Background of Daniel 1–6," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (vol. 1; ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint; Boston: Brill, 2002), 55-68, deals with the same theme, but focuses on linguistic analogies between specific Aramaic and Akkadian words in Dan 1-6 and is not relevant for the present argument that is more historically inclined.

29 Karel van der Toorn, "In the Lions' Den: The Babylonian Background of a Biblical Motif," *CBQ* 60 (1998): 626-640. See also Karel van der Toorn, "Scholars at the Oriental Court: The Figure of Daniel against its Mesopotamian Background," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (vol. 1; ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint; Boston: Brill, 2002), 37-54, where the same argument is restated. Here, reference is made only to the earlier contribution (1998) where Van der Toorn notes a few instances of "lions" in the Psalter, but does not present an argument linking these to his proposal in any detail. The present contribution wishes to fill in this gap.

30 "It was Marduk who put a muzzle on the mouth of the lion who was eating me," see Van der Toorn, "In the Lions' Den," 636.

31 Van der Toorn, "In the Lions' Den," 637.

32 See Edwin M. Good, "Apocalyptic as Comedy: The Book of Daniel," *Semeia* 32 (1984): 41-70, for a detailed discussion of the comedic pattern in the Book of Daniel.

33 Van der Toorn, "In the Lions' Den," 633.

34 Van der Toorn, "In the Lions' Den," 638.

strange that an ancient author, who otherwise seemed to possess a fair knowledge of language and literature, would make such a mistake. A thorough analysis of the Jewish poetry available to the ancient author may provide a sounder literary antecedent for the lions in Dan 6.

D LIONS' AND OTHER "TEETH" IN THE PSALTER[35]

It was noted above that the story of Daniel in the lions' pit can be seen as an imaginative extension of metaphors used in Ps 57:5, 7.[36] Other Psalms mentioned in commentaries dealing with Dan 6 include Pss 22:14, 22 and 91:13. I shall first discuss the specific references to lions in these Psalms noted by commentators on Dan 6. Other references to lions in the Psalter will then be considered briefly for their contribution to the present topic, before turning to more general references to teeth in the Psalter that may be related to this issue.

In Ps 22 there are two explicit references to a lion, both occurring in the first (lament) section of the Psalm (vv. 1-22): אֲרִיֵה (v. 14 and v. 22). In the thanksgiving section (vv. 23-31) reference is made to "deliverance" in general, and no link is made between this deliverance and a specific metaphor (e.g. wild animals) from the first section. Commenting on what he refers to as the "fundamental theme" of the Psalm, Weiser states: "It is precisely because the demonstration of the *divine granting of salvation* is at stake that the community of the godly ones . . . are [*sic*] interested in the personal experience of the psalmist."[37] The image of the lion tries to capture and explain the "helpless fear" that overcomes the supplicant when seeing his unspecified enemies.[38] Weiser does not comment on the use of the metaphor towards the end of the lament (v. 22) and it remains doubtful whether the true character of the fear can be sensed in this poetic form.

Brueggemann and Bellinger see in the animal metaphors used in v. 14 the idea of "aggressive, rapacious agents of destructiveness" illustrating a "condition of misery and helplessness."[39] Although mention is made of the divine abandonment in the sixth century B.C.E., no concrete context can be offered in which to understand the psalm. Still, they see in this prayer no "playacting, but . . . life-or-death engagement with YHWH, who is thereby sum-

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[35] The interest in investigating this issue stems from Markus Peschel, "'Teeth' as a Metaphor in Understanding Psalm 3 and the Psalter" (paper presented at a seminar for final year students in Biblical Languages at the University of Pretoria, 5-6 November 2014). I wish to thank the candidate for opening my mind to this research possibility.

[36] Porteous, *Daniel*, 87.

[37] Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 220, emphasis added.

[38] Weiser, *Psalms*, 223.

[39] Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, *Psalms* (NCBC; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 115, 116.

moned . . ., from absence to presence." In their commentary, Brueggemann and Bellinger succeed in highlighting the existential danger experienced by the supplicant through the use of *inter alia* the lion metaphor.

Goldingay agrees that the image of a lion is indicative of a threat and "regularly a figure for people who are aggressive and dangerous" portraying "inhuman cruelty."[40] He notes, though, that deliverance does not arrive in the second part of the psalm. He views the speaker as remaining convinced that such deliverance will come eventually.[41] For Kraus, Ps 22 is an outstanding example of the OT's way of speaking about sickness and death.[42] Thus, he moves away from the general opinion that people are referred to by means of the lion metaphor, and using Mesopotamian examples, he maintains that demonic forces of sickness are portrayed as animals in this psalm.

Regarding the reference to a lion in Ps 22, it seems fair to deduce that the author did not intend a literal meaning whereby real animals are attacking the supplicant. This image, along with others, is used to indicate in graphic detail the existential distress experienced by the speaker at the hands of very human enemies. Thus, commentators agree on the metaphorical nature of the reference to the lion.

Psalm 57 exhibits the same two-part structure as Ps 22. Verses 5-7 (MT) are of particular, distinct interest for a discussion on Dan 6. In v. 5 the supplicant laments the fact that his "soul is in the midst of lions" (לְבָאִם pl). Commenting on the context of this Psalm, Brueggemann and Bellinger note that either a falsely accused individual seeking acquittal in the sanctuary of the temple, or a king facing enemies can be imagined to speak these words.[43] They suggest further that this may be a case of hateful gossip and that the supplicant seeks divine vindication in the life of prayer, rather than in a legal context. Concentrating on vv. 5-7 they point out the reversal of fortune that is envisaged by the psalmist when his "hunters" (or, opponents, those referred to as lions in v. 4a) fall into the pit that they had dug for him. This (ironic) theme of experiencing the very calamity that one has planned for another is a familiar one in the Wisdom literature (see Prov 26:27; 28:10; Eccl 10:8) that also surfaces in the Psalter (see Pss 7:15; 9:15).

Weiser notes the "customary narrative" of deliverance of the worshipper attested in this psalm.[44] Although he sees the external personal circumstances of the worshipper as hidden, he notes in connection with the lion imagery the

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40 John Goldingay, *Psalms* (vol. 1; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 331.

41 Goldingay, *Psalms 1*, 323.

42 Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 294.

43 Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 256.

44 Weiser, *Psalms*, 426.

"offensive *word* which is continually stigmatized in the Psalms as the most dangerous weapon in human conflict."[45] It is clear that the danger posed by the opponents is related to what they say against the supplicant.

Noting the powerful image of trust displayed by the Psalmist in "lying down" amidst his attackers, Goldingay distinguishes between what he claims to be the literal weapon of their tongues, which is used like a sword, and their teeth, which (figuratively) are like weapons in the hands of humans.[46] It is not clear why such a distinction should be made. The figure of speech clearly connects the adversaries and the lions. The way in which the supplicant is tried is through what they say against him. Hence, in this case both teeth and tongue should be seen as instruments of speech, making the attack an all-out verbal one[47] without implying a mixing of metaphors.

Kraus draws attention to an earlier proposal by Beyerlin that this Psalm is among "those prayers in which falsely accused and persecuted individuals had to stay in the sanctuary overnight with their accusers" to await divine judgement.[48] This remark provides further connections with the story in Dan 6, especially regarding the following: 1) the characters (Daniel, the falsely accused, and his accusers, or the lions); 2) the time or setting (one night is spent among the lions); and 3) the result (divine vindication for the falsely accused). The reference to lions in the narrative world in Dan 6 invokes an intertextual[49] link with the Psalms and has a pleasing "I-get-it" effect on the reader.

Hossfeld and Zenger do not agree with the asylum theory.[50] They focus on the mixing of metaphors that, according to them, include both animal and military contexts. However, they describe the attack primarily as "a verbal war against their victim."[51] The hunting imagery that follows "emphasises even more than vv. 4-5 the cunning and strategy with which the enemies act."[52] This is seen in combining the use of a net, which is spread on the ground, and the use of a pit, which is dug into the ground. Any non-alert person passing by is

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45 Weiser, *Psalms*, 427 (emphasis added).

46 John Goldingay, *Psalms* (vol. 2; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 196.

47 Richard J. Clifford, *Psalms 1-72* (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 271, notes that "[t]he tongue-sword defames others."

48 Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 530.

49 The theoretical basis of intertextuality as it has developed since the 1970s is not discussed (again) in this article. For a discussion on intertextuality in the context of the book of Daniel, see Pieter M. Venter, "Intertekstualiteit, Kontekstualiteit en Daniël 9," *IDS* 31/4 (1997): 328-333, and H. J. M. (Hans) van Deventer, "Suffering, Psalms and Allusion in Daniel 9," *OTE* 25/1 (2012): 215-217.

50 Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100* (vol. 2 of *Psalms*; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 69.

51 Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 74.

52 Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 74.

sure to be caught in these traps, clearly illustrating the inescapable nature of the attack by the adversaries.

Turning to Ps 91,[53] it is noteworthy that Kraus sees a connection between Ps 91 and Ps 34; both are described as representing "a didactic address that vividly describes the salvation of God."[54] In this case, Kraus (as he often does) narrows down this "salvation" to the restoration of health, suggesting that Ps 91 belongs to the "psalms of sickness and healing." However, dealing with the "purpose and thrust" of the psalm, the scope is broadened to include "a certainty of salvation that overcomes *all* dangers."[55] These dangers are seen as embodied in the "lions, adders and dragons" mentioned in v. 13.

Hossfeld and Zenger view this psalm as part of the temple liturgy, but they stress the personal piety that is evident here.[56] Amidst what is referred to as a "classic crisis situation" the petitioner prays himself into the certainty that Yahweh is protecting him. In the end (vv. 14-16), the divine discourse underscores that this hope will not be in vain. The dangerous animals listed are no longer a threat, but are subdued. Following the examples from the ANE noted above, Hossfeld and Zenger interpret the theme of defeating wild animals as indicative of the presence of royal and even divine power.[57]

Weiser notes the metaphorical sense of the reference to "lions" (v. 13).[58] He goes on to explain that the image does contain undertones of a cultic myth whereby the deity slays a monster and puts his foot on the animal's neck as a sign of victory. Weiser contrasts the subsequent use of Egyptian amulets depicting this scene as talisman to what we find in the OT: "faith itself . . . supplies man with super-human, divine strength to overcome every kind of danger."[59]

From the discussion on Pss 22, 57 and 91 it is clear that references to wild animals in general and lions in particular are meant to illustrate the supplicant's anguish at the hands of *human* enemies. For the most part, these enemies are not depicted as foreigners, and may represent fellow Israelites of a similar or higher social standing. Consideration will now be given to instances where lions appear in the Psalter, but which are not mentioned by commentators on Dan 6. To conclude, the metaphor of teeth in the Psalter is investigated to

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[53] The pairing of the animals in v. 13 (MT) has provided difficulties for interpreters. For a discussion, see Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 427.

[54] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 221.

[55] Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 225 – emphasis added.

[56] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 428.

[57] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 431.

[58] Weiser, *Psalms*, 611.

[59] Weiser, *Psalms*, 612.

determine the extent to which this discussion has a bearing on these texts as well.

Ps 7:3 (MT) presents a straightforward simile when a persecutor is likened to a lion (כְּאַרְיֵה). It is similar to the use of this metaphor in the psalms already discussed. What is of special interest here is the mention of what Eaton refers to as "rebounding" evil in v. 16.[60] Of course, the "pit" is not related to the lion metaphor mentioned at the beginning of the psalm. However, Weiser comments on the eventual outcome of the story in Dan 6, and sees the author as making use of "a legal maxim that was well known in the whole of the ANE, the principle that the same punishment shall be inflicted upon the slanderous accuser which he had intended for the accused."[61]

The same outcome is also wished upon those whose "mouths are filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under their tongues are mischief and iniquity" (Ps 10:7 – NRSV). The supplicant specifically petitions that they "be caught in the schemes they have devised" (Ps 10:2). The reference to a lion in this psalm (vv. 8-9) is related to the sly *modus operandi* of the wicked. In the context of this psalm, their actions are linked to inflicting (further) damage on specifically the poor.[62] Hence, the lion metaphor does not appear here in the context of verbal accusations, but rather in the context of "deceit and oppression."

Likewise, the image of a lion in Ps 17:12 refers to the shrewd conduct of the evil-doers against the supplicant. Although Brueggemann and Bellinger find a "setting in which the speaker has been falsely accused and seeks protection of the temple precincts,"[63] there is no specific description of what the malicious actions of the enemy entail, only that the "danger is imminent and deadly."[64]

Finally, the relation between lions and teeth in the Psalter is considered for the light it may shed on the topic. This is done in order to reflect on a broader category of hostile metaphors specifically related to predators. In Ps 3:7 YHWH is called upon to intervene in the plight of the supplicant and become physically active and strike the opponents. From this it is clear that what the psalmist envisages is removed from what was discussed above. In the present context, the reference to teeth implies a form of punishment that the supplicant demands for his adversaries. Even if the shattering of teeth refers to

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60 John Eaton, *The Psalms* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 79. The NRSV translates: "They make a pit, digging it out, and fall into the hole that they have made."

61 Weiser, *Psalms*, 138-139.

62 Clifford, *Psalms 1-72*, 74.

63 Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 90.

64 Clifford, *Psalms 1-72*, 103.

legal disempowerment,[65] it is not related to the previous metaphors where teeth refer to (verbal) attacks against the supplicant. Although Kraus notes in his comments on this psalm that mention is often made of "the mouth, throat, tongue, lip or teeth of the adversaries,"[66] here teeth cannot refer to speech from these people, as is the case in Ps 57 where it is used with "mouth" to convey such a meaning.

A more hostile image of teeth is found in Pss 35:16 [see v. 7] and 37:12. In the first text the supplicant complains about suffering due to persecution and false charges.[67] Not only is the resemblance to Dan 6 striking, but this psalm also has a definite link with Ps 57 (discussed above). The enemies set a trap for the psalmist (v. 7) without cause. The supplicant now wishes for these enemies to be trapped by their own device (v. 8). In Ps 57 this wish is fulfilled. More importantly, though, is the link between the gnashing teeth of the accusers mentioned in v. 16 and the (young) lions in v. 17.[68] Through their deceitful actions, these lions (i.e. the devious enemies) are a threat to the life of the psalmist. Psalm 37 describes a similar scene, but in more general terms and relates to the familiar wish in Wisdom literature for the prosperity of the wicked to be short-lived. Instead of an intense first person supplication as in Ps 35, we encounter a third person narrator. Psalm 37 has a different (wisdom-like) theme, but still the reference to the teeth of the wicked conjures up an image of "a beast of prey"[69] and "suggests a concrete threatening action."[70]

In Ps 58:6 [7 – MT] teeth are more directly linked to (young) lions (כְּפִירִֽים).[71] Again, unlike cases where such a link is indicative of an attack by enemies, here YHWH is called upon to break the teeth of these wicked entities. The same theme occurs in Ps 3 where God is called into action to violently intervene in the plight of the supplicant. As is the case in Ps 3, the focus is on the destruction of the enemies and not primarily on the threat they hold for the petitioner. Note however, that Hossfeld and Zenger comment that the destruction hits at the organ the enemies used to commit sin.[72]

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[65] See Goldingay, *Psalms 1*, 114. Jo Ann Hacket and John Huehnergard, "On Breaking Teeth," *HTR* 77 (1984): 259-275, also suggest an ANE legal background for this expression.

[66] Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 141.

[67] Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 392.

[68] Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 394, makes this link when in commenting on "teeth" (v. 16) and refers to "threatening beasts of prey," implying the lions (כְּפִירִֽים) in v. 17.

[69] Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 406.

[70] Goldingay, *Psalms 1*, 524.

[71] Another reference to "young lions" in Ps 34:11 (MT) does not have direct bearing on the present topic, but rather serves an ironic purpose to teach that "God will protect the loyal, though mighty lions go hungry," Clifford, *Psalms 1-72*, 175.

[72] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 81.

The only other mention made of teeth in the Psalter occurs in Pss 112:10 and 124:6,[73] although these references do not have a direct bearing on the present topic. In the first instance, it is clear from the context that the gnashing of the teeth is not a threat to the psalmist, but rather "a sign of uncontrollable fury"[74] on the part of the wicked. It is only after witnessing the life of the righteous that these wicked ones simply perish and the poem ends (v. 10). Similarly, the teeth metaphor in Ps 124:6 is used in the context of the favour that Israel, as a collective, finds with God. Here the image is used in a more general manner to indicate the possible dangers from which God has protected them.

In most instances, references to "teeth" in the Psalter relate directly or indirectly to abusive and/or offensive language or false accusations made against the supplicant. There is a clear link between the lion metaphors and the teeth in the Psalter on the one hand, and the malicious accusations brought against the psalmist by his enemies on the other.

E CONCLUSION

In light of this argument, the following conclusions can be made. The nature of narratives suggests that a common *topos* may lie behind different textual forms. In the book of Psalms we find evidence that the story in Dan 6 may be a narrative of a theme present in the Psalms. This theme is prominent in the cluster of individual prayers and laments found in Pss 51-64[75] and specifically in the petitions in Pss 57 and 58, which deal with support sought from God in the face of verbal attacks by enemies.

In addition to this, Porteous[76] makes the following observation of Ps 55 (in which a supplicant seeks divine vindication from an attack by a close companion[77]): "Evening and morning and at noon / I utter my complaint and moan / and he will hear my voice." The correlation of themes of prayer three times a day and an accusation by fellow counsellors against Daniel in ch. 6 are probably more than coincidental.

Given our still expanding knowledge of the ANE, very few literary forms or themes can be said to belong exclusively to any particular community. However, the suggested Babylonian background for the lion's pit scene in Dan 6

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[73] Other imagery linking the wicked to lions in more subtle ways, e.g. digging a pit for them (as lions) to be caught in (Ps 94:13), or those who like animals of prey "lay wait for my soul" (וְשֹׁמְרֵי נַפְשִׁי – Ps 71:10) and "Your foes have roared (שָׁאֲגוּ) within your holy place" (Ps 74:4 – NRSV) were not discussed in this article.

[74] Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 365.

[75] See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 28, for this demarcation and a suggested thematic sequence in Book II of the Psalter.

[76] Porteous, *Daniel*, 91.

[77] See especially Ps 55:13-15.

seems to downplay the rich literary context of this text which is found in the Psalter and which has been demonstrated in this article.

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