

Editorial

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Over the years, *Old Testament Essays* (*OTE*) did not charge page fees to international authors. To cover our publication costs, we relied mostly on South African authors or those affiliated with South African universities to cover the production costs. However, this model is no longer viable and all contributors are now expected to pay page fees. We have kept the cost fees as low as possible as the journal does not aim to make profit but rather to disseminate scholars’ research across the globe. Therefore, we are thankful to all the authors who have taken *OTE* as the preferred journal for disseminating their research and look forward to receiving their articles even in the future.

Like *OTE* 33 (3) 2020, this issue comprises two sections—the general section, which is reserved for our contributors and the special section focused on “Psalmody and Suffering.”

Part I of this issue contains nine articles. In the first, Bartosz Adamczewski draws correlations between Abraham, as characterised in the book of Genesis, and Sanballat in the book of Nehemiah. For Adamczewski, the correlations between the two provide hints for the dating of the book of Genesis, which he assumes to be in the late fifth century. Nissim Amzallag, in his reading of Ps 124, identifies the identities of the two opposing groups in the psalms—the *us* group, which he regards as the Edomites, and the *them*-group, which he regards as the wicked Edomites. In Amzallag’s view, the group that is responsible for authoring Ps 124 is the *us*-group, foreign Edomites who joined the Israelite community during the late Babylonian/early, whereas the *them*-group did not join the Israelite community nor adopted Yahwism. Katherine Gwyther considers the feasting versus fasting theme in the book of Esther as an indication of hybridity in Persian and Jewish activity. She argues that the text projects primarily the Persians as engaging in feasting, whereas the Jews engage in fasting. However, with the institution of the Purim, the boundary between the two becomes blurred. From a postcolonial perspective, Gwyther points out that the dominant and subaltern cultures influence each other. Cephas Tushima, reads the Lot story in Gen 19:1–29 as an indication of marginality that comes as a result of Lot’s dissociation from the covenantal promises through Abraham and his association with the Sodomites. Lot ultimately ended up as a homeless cave dweller. Tushima regards, in a theological sense, people’s sense of displacement as mainly a result of their disassociation with YHWH. In his article, Gesila Uzukwu interrogates the manner in which woman are used in the patriarchal

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narratives with special attention to Abraham and Isaac. For Uzukwu the patriarchal narratives project a culture of objectification and commodification of women, which fosters violence against women. Modern interpreters, for Uzukwu, need to critically appropriate biblical texts to avoid the perpetuation of a culture of abuse, oppression, and violence against women using the Bible.

Albert Coetsee reads Deut 3:24 in contributing to the key theme of the uniqueness of YHWH, which he regards as permeating the rest of the book. In his view, the intersecting motifs of YHWH's greatness, mighty hand, deeds, and might acts support the key theme. The next article by Michael A. Lyons engages the scholarly view that certain texts are "unreadable" due to the incoherence inherent in the text due to redactional activity. Lyons focuses mainly on "allusions" as the cause of "incoherence" in the biblical texts. For Lyons, incoherence should be viewed as a deliberate compositional or editorial strategy, which composers of biblical texts utilised to produce readable texts for them. Michael K. Mensah engages in a reading of Ps 119 in light of African proverbs and, therefore, points to parallels between Israelite and African wisdom, particularly the Akan and Ewe proverbs. Jakob Böckle, utilising Conceptual Metaphor Theory, reads Ps 23 in light of the ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties. Böckle argues that Ps 23 projects the divine-human relationship in covenant terms through the imageries of the shepherd (king) and the human (sheep).

Part II (the special section) continues with a series of contributions on the theme of Psalmody and Suffering. Six articles articulate the theme, beginning with Danie Veldsman's article entitled "Suffering as Expressed in the Psalter and Beyond: An Unfinished Systematic-Theological Perspective on Evolutionary Theodicy," which touches on suffering and creation. He argues, with specific reference to expressions of suffering in the Psalter, from an evolutionary perspective. The essay opens up a broadened and deeper but gracious understanding of human suffering within a kind God's good creation. From the diverse voices as responses to diverse kinds of suffering, which if hermeneutically embedded in a post-Darwinian evolutionary framework, the analysis prompts and revisits different existential and theological horizons of interpretation. These same horizons that interpretively open up direct us as embodied persons of flesh and blood on the one hand to new and other dimensions of our being vulnerable creatures before God and, on the other hand, direct us to different glimpses of a kind creator God in a world of dynamic relationships and forces, at the same time. Ultimately, embedded in a post-Darwinian evolutionary framework, the Psalter eventuates here and now, and in contexts of suffering for embodied persons, a gracious cognitive-affective re-appraisal of their faith.

Eckart Otto investigates the idea of "The Suffering Moses in Pentateuch and Psalms." He presents the prophetic profile of Moses in the context of the "final text" of Deuteronomy, especially Deut 4 and Deut 29–30. In Deut 30:1–

10, Moses announces the idea of the circumcision of hearts and his song in Deut 32 confirms his message of doom and final salvation for the people of Israel. It solves the problem of the collective salvation of the people by a kind of canonical theology that quotes as a subtext from the Prophets, Psalms and Wisdom literature. Nevertheless, Deuteronomy has no answer to Moses' fate of suffering death. He has to die so that in his place, the written Torah could accompany the people into the Promised Land. In the end, Moses' fate of suffering death is not at all overlooked because Pss 90–92 also function as a subtext for Moses' fate, developing a perspective of salvation for him as a kind of subtext for Moses narrative in Deuteronomy.

In his article entitled, "Reading Ps 13 as a Strategy for the Cathartic Release of Negative Emotion," Sampson Ndogo demonstrates that Ps 13 moves from debilitating circumstances registered therein into resolution in six short verses. He explores the Psalmist's strategies to engage with the reality of victims of war rape in managing their feelings of abandonment. The article draws on African hermeneutics which primarily interested in meaning derived from the text beyond the critical issues in interacting with existential challenges. Due to the psychological nature of the experiences of victims of war, rape atrocities and post-traumatic disorders, the cathartic release is envisioned in recognition that healing may remain unattainable for some. The article ends with some considerations for deriving meaning from the Psalm as the methodological premise seeks to do.

A second article on Ps 13 is Dirk Human's "Human Suffering in Need of God's 'Face' and 'Eyes': Perspectives on Psalm 13." The COVID-19 global pandemic and its consequent outcomes have caused immense suffering and distress in all levels of life worldwide. Theological and religious communities raise the question of God's involvement in the causes of and healing from this horrendous misery and grief. These questions become paradigmatic of how God is involved in suffering and how the supplicant could experience deliverance through interaction with God whilst situated in such a crisis. Exegetical contemplation of Ps 13, a well-known lament song, provides an exemplary experience of a psalmist in a severe life-endangering context. An exposition of the text, its historical, cultic and literary contexts and the genre of 'lament' offers insight into the Yahweh-believer's interaction. Without pretending to provide answers to enigmatic forms of suffering, this article intends to portray how Yahweh-believers in ancient Israel understood and reacted to suffering. Human suffering indeed needs the 'face' and 'eyes' of Yahweh to experience healing and redemption.

Frances Klopper enriches the special section with an article entitled, "'Oh, that I Had Wings Like a Dove...' Psalm 55 and Breaking the Silence about Violence against Women." Klopper examines the notion of suffering in Ps 55 in relation to women as victims of sexual violence. She explores redactional and

compositional issues underlying the text as they speak to the world of the text as the setting of lament. The discussion takes its inspiration from a reading of Ulrike Bail and argues that the speaker of Ps 55 appears to be resorting to forms and contents of expression associated with the trauma of rape. In supplementary relation to this, a reader-response approach is adopted to show how a female persona as the projected narrator and her language of distress relate to conceptions of sexual assault. Thus, the study offers confirmatory findings from Ps 55 of how women use words and lament to break the silence and cope with the devastating physical and psychological effects of rape.

Jaco Gericke contributes an article entitled "Ps 89 and the Logical Problem of Evil: A Comparative-Philosophical Perspective." He takes as its starting point the relationship between divine attributes and suffering in Ps 89, showing that some of the beliefs expressed in verses 39-52 contradict those in verse 1-38 (53). Gericke provides a comparative-philosophical perspective on the reasoning operative within the Psalm's associated religious language. He also identifies the so-called "Logical Problem of Evil" (LPE) in the analytic philosophy of religion in the Psalm. Conceptual and correlation-relations in Ps 89 are clarified by drawing correlations and contrasts to argue that the logical status of the beliefs involved as a contradiction makes more sense when interpreted as part of a protocol in which prayer and poetry satisfy the conditions of a possible theodicy. Thus, restating the Psalm's associated content in its own terms contributes to our understanding of why certain states of affairs in the world of the text are the way they are or why they are at all.

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