

‘Off with their heads!’ The imagery of the head in the trilogy of Psalms 108–110 (Part 2)

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Abstract

A social-scientific analysis of the word ‘head’ in Psalms 108–110 indicates from another theme (war) and perspective (honour) how the imagery of the head is used to communicate warfare, and to develop and establish the connections between Psalms 108 to 110. This two-part article indicates (in the first article) that the imagery of the head can be considered as part of the imagery of warfare. The value system of honour and shame as expressions of the function and purpose of the warfare imagery is made through a social-scientific analysis of the imagery of the head. The iconography of different ancient Near Eastern contexts is used as extra-textual sources to elucidate the concept of the head as an aspect of warfare imagery, expressing honour and shame. The second article examines and applies the use of the imagery of the head in Psalms 108–110 by integrating the deductions made in this first part. This helps to indicate the development and connections between Psalms 108–110 through utilisation of the imagery of the head.

Key words

War; head; honour; Psalms 108–110

1. Introduction

‘Off with their heads!’ This is the famous command of the Queen of Hearts in the fantasy novel by Lewis Carroll (1993:54). The first part of this two-part article explained that, as with the Queen of Hearts displaying her power by cutting off heads, so the concept of mutilating a person’s head to gain honour was not a strange phenomenon in the ancient Near East and

Mediterranean worlds. In Psalms 108–110 the imagery of the head is used in a similar way to convey fear, power, shame and honour. This second part of the article examines further the development of the imagery of the head from the perspective of the value system of honour and shame as expressions of the function and purpose of the warfare imagery, to indicate why Psalms 108, 109 and 110 can be read as a trilogy on the notions of war and honour. A social-scientific analysis¹ of these texts relating to the imagery of the head will provide the socio-critical grounds to indicate how these psalms communicate aspects of warfare and will indicate how this imagery develops and establishes the connections between Psalms 108 to 110.

2. Methodological considerations and deductions

Aspects of warfare are communicated through the imagery of the head as war language within Psalms 108–110. This imagery conveys especially themes related to the concepts of honour and shame. The imagery of the head to address the theme of war from the perspective of honour is examined through a social-scientific analysis of Psalms 108–110 to indicate how the imagery communicates dimensions of warfare, and develops and establishes connections between Psalms 108–110. The first article indicated that the imagery of the head can be considered as part of warfare imagery (war language and imagery). Secondly a social-scientific analysis of head imagery was undertaken from the perspective of honour and shame as part of an intertextual analysis. Thirdly, the iconography of different ancient Near Eastern contexts was used as an extra-textual source to elucidate the concept of the head in its use as war imagery.

The following deductions can be made from the first article in this regard.

- In the Old Testament one finds different forms of military or war imagery, for example, military protection imagery and imprisonment imagery (Brueggemann 2008:525–526).
- In the process of providing military protection, honour is established and displayed through the imagery for the individual (or group),

1 Cf. the remarks of Gottwald (1987:26–31) and Elliott (1993:7, 70) on the aim of social-scientific criticism and the conditioning factors and intended consequences of the communication process.

the king (usually as the representative of his people) or God (Brueggemann 2008:525–526).

- Where the imagery of military protection convey ideas of refuge and honour, imprisonment imagery conveys the language of dishonour, shame, inferiority and humiliation that are established and displayed through the imagery used for the king, victim or enemy (SeEVERS 2013:75).
- War language and imagery (warfare or military metaphors) relate to the core value of honour and shame that is found in ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean societies (Hobbs 1995:263).
- Kelle (2008:829) comes to the conclusion that in the wisdom, poetry and writings of the Old Testament, warfare imagery draws on both the practical elements (weaponry and armour) of ancient warfare as well as its ideological aspects (conceptions of the enemy, victory and defeat).
- The language and imagery of war on an ideological level act as indicators of the social value of honour and shame, especially in the concepts of defeat and domination (Ford 2000:45–46).
- In warfare to be defeated is to be shamed and if one defeats another, one (including the group or nation) gains honour. The amount of honour gained is relative to the nation that has been defeated (Ford 2000:45). To be defeated is to become an entity that no longer exists (Ford, 2000:45). Symbolically to be defeated (physically or metaphorically) becomes evident when the victor carries out specific actions towards the defeated to indicate their shame and dishonouring. This is done in war to indicate the newly reduced status of the person, group or nation that has been defeated. In this process the victor gains honour and the defeated is shamed. Physical actions on the bodies of the defeated were a frequent way to demonstrate this; although these actions varied from nation to nation, there were similarities between the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians. The influence of these nations on Israel's approach towards their defeated enemies must not be ignored (Ford, 2000:46; cf. Finney, 2010:31–58).
- Domination was seen as a way to force the sanction of power onto the defeated to gain the core value of honour. Domination has only one

purpose and that is to gain and demonstrate power and honour. This is done primarily by subjecting others (Pilch & Malina 2000:48–49).

- The head was seen as the most important physical part of a person and the seat of all human intelligence (Walvoord 1960:261). The head was generally thought to be the seat of intelligence, while the heart, or the body parts near it, were the sites of affection. The word ‘head’ was used to represent the total person; the head was seen as the whole body, hence if the head is shamed the whole body is shamed. The head represented life itself and was strongly associated with honour and shame (Unger 1957:461; Pop 1958:222). Metaphorically, blessings or calamity, honour or dishonour, joy or sorrow are often depicted as fallen upon the head (Walvoord 1960:261). The heads of criminals and enemies slain in war were often cut off or trampled on to bring dishonour and shame to them, their group and their nation (Unger 1957:461).
- In the iconography of different ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean contexts the head used as war language and imagery to express concepts of honour and shame is also evident in the Egyptian, Babylonian and Mesopotamian (including the Assyrian context) contexts as part of the imagery of protection and domination, where the enemy is beheaded or trampled on as a way to be shamed (negative) or dishonoured and to give honour to the victor.

In this article the use of the head in Psalms 108–110 is examined and applied by integrating the deductions made from the first article. This helps to indicate the development of and the connections between Psalms 108 to 110 through the imagery of the head.

3. An analysis of Psalms 108–110

This section undertakes a literary analysis of Psalms 108, 109 and 110 from an intra-textual perspective. The purpose of this section is to investigate the way that the imagery of the head developed as an aspect of the theme of war in these psalms.

3.1 Psalm 108

As a newly composed psalm for a specific historical situation, function or religious situation that is constructed out of a prayer of petition (Ps 57:8–12) and a community lament (Ps 60:7–14), Psalm 108 presents a difficulty in attempting to establish its specific genre (*Gattung*) and *Sitz im Leben* (Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:69–71, 94; cf. Terrien 2003:437). The genre of Psalm 108 is mostly taken to be a lament, but also a psalm of thanksgiving. This is because it was composed out of Psalm 57:8–12 and Psalm 60:7–14 (Anderson 1981:758). Although this would probably be a correct interpretation of the genre, it can also be understood as a ‘divine oracle.’ Psalm 108 has an altered dramaturgy that must be understood and associated with the function of this psalm as the opening song of the trilogy: Psalm 108 (petition for military saving-intervention), Psalm 109 (assaults on and by the enemies) and Psalm 110 (fulfilment of the petition). In this psalm the hymn as a petition to YHWH’s universal love and fidelity (vv. 2–5 and vv. 6–7) and the reaction to a divine oracle (v. 7) plays a dominant part in determining the genre. This petition helps Israel to see that God will help and tread down the enemies. This provides a new perspective on the future that gives assurance and peace to Israel (Anderson 1981:758; cf. Schmutzer & Howard 2013:213).

Israel and its neighbours are announced as YHWH territory in verses 8–10. The purpose of this announcement is to indicate that YHWH will rescue his people. The imagery that is used is related to warfare. The declaration of victory is for the king before the battle begins. The image of the division of territory is an indication of the victorious divine soldier, YHWH, who is allocating different functions and positions to these territories of Israel’s defeated neighbours. The imagery invokes the post-exilic concept of YHWH as the new king or new David that rules over his newly unified kingdom, Israel. The imagery in verses 8–10 has a directional progress from the northern neighbours of Israel to the southern ones to the rivals Moab, Edom and the Philistines. Sukkoth and Shechem are associated with Jacob (Gen 33:17), the connotation being Jacob (Israel) and Esau (Edom). The royal clothing imagery or kingship imagery (a display of power) is exhibited as Ephraim and Judah. Both Moab (the washbasin) and Edom

(as a compartment for shoes)² as Israel's long-time enemies are displayed as places of dishonour and inferiority (Botha 2010:582). The seat of kingship is ruled from Ephraim and Judah, where the former becomes a metaphor for the seat from where enemies will be destroyed ('the helmet of his head'), while the latter is the royal sceptre that will be used to hammer down the enemies. Verses 8–10 become a display of the future or new political rule by the divine king YHWH and the way that this is going to be achieved is explained in verses 11–14 (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:120).

In verses 11–14 the present political scenario is contrasted to the theology of triumph contained in the oracle. The Davidic king and his people, who received the oracle, would like to contribute to the transformation of the *status quo* to utopia. A king can only win a war when God supports him and fights with him. This is clear from Psalms 18, 20, 21, 110 and 144. The long rivalry of Israel and Edom is clear from these verses. Edom became the eponym of the enemies of Israel. Bosra (the capital of Edom) was demolished by Nabonidus in 552 B.C.E., but the animosity remained and is mentioned in many of the prophetic books. The realisation of the hut of David (Isa 11:1–6) and the advent of the messianic kingdom of peace would begin with the subjection of Edom (to bring them in dishonour). The two rhetorical questions in verse 11 refer to this submission of Edom and the breaking of their power. The reason why Judah was defeated with the help of the Edomites could only be because it was the punishment of YHWH who abandoned them. This is what verse 12 suggests: a transformation of this situation can only be effected by the God who brought his people down in this way. The prayer intensifies in verse 13, giving as reason that all covenants with humans are only deceit. Verse 14 contains an emphatic confession of trust in YHWH: with the help of God they will bring about military feats. YHWH, stepping (in the sense of making them his footstool) on the enemies is the only hope (the stepping on the enemies becomes an

2 Metaphorically the divine warrior throws down his war shoes on Edom (Ps 60:10) (Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:100). The imagery of domination and humiliation as ideological language of war becomes apparent (cf. Isa 9:4) when the victor subjugates the defeated within the imagery (Tate, 1990:102). Dahood (1968:80–81) uses the verb $\gamma\lambda\psi$ in v. 10 and translates it as 'plant.' He understands the imagery as part of the imagery of Pss 108:14 and 110:1, where the neck of the enemy is put under the feet of the victor.

implement of warfare); only YHWH can help them to be victorious (Botha, 2010:589; Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:121–122).

3.2 Psalm 109

Generally known as one of the ‘imprecatory psalms’ due to its ‘curses’ (Blaiklock 1977:77; Eybers 1978:28; Kidner 1979:388; Adams 1991:34), Psalm 109 is also understood as being a judicial redress in a religious court (Anderson 1981:758; Weiser 1982:690; Allen 2002:100; Harman 2011:785). Gerstenberger (2001:261; see also Weiser, 1982:690) explains Psalm 109 as a psalm that reflects the struggle of an individual that needs to defend himself against the onslaught of an accusing horde that wants to kill him based on a charge of black magic. According to Gerstenberger (2001:261), the genre of Psalm 109 should then be understood as a ‘complaint of the individual’ with a subgenre of a ‘counter-curse.’ Many interpret the genre of the psalm as an ‘appeal to God for help against (his) enemies’ (Kidner 1979:388–389; Wilcock, 2010:156). Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:138) add the plea to the poor and YHWH as the protector of the poor and the deprived as an additional theme in the psalm. The *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 109 must be understood within the trilogy of Psalms 18–110, where the ‘individual’ must be understood as a representative of the group. The military action of the new king or new David to establish ‘social justice’ with the help and protection of YHWH as the keeper of justice against ‘foreign policies’ is established in Psalms 108 (the start) and 109 (the battle) (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:136). In Psalm 108 the ‘domestic policy of the king and his duty as the protector of the poor and needy as well as his duty as ‘defender of justice (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:138). This context presents a particular image of the king as it presents a royal theology that provides future hope for Israel in difficult times. The king who is the rescuer becomes the victim of violence and injustice and must be rescued from his enemies and accusers, hence the petition to YHWH.³ Psalm 109 in the trilogy of Psalms 108–110 must not only be understood as for a particular individual or with a particular individual historical event, but as an expression of the future hope of post-exilic Israel, which is drenched with the royal theology of a

3 The prayer now becomes a prayer against enemies who go to war against the king (Eaton 1986:81).

new David (similar to Ps 108 and Ps 110). This expression of the future hope becomes the *Sitz im Leben* of this psalm.⁴

Verses 21–25 develop into the central plea for YHWH's intervention on behalf of the petitioner. Verse 21 is the beginning of a new section. This can be seen with the change of speaker. It is now the petitioner who talks. The speech is now directed towards YHWH, who is the only hope for intervention for the petitioner. By addressing YHWH as 'my Lord' the petitioner calls on YHWH to protect his 'servant' and also to deliver him from his enemies (Ex 3:8; Pss 7:2; 22:21; 59:2–3; 86:2–4; 130:1–2). Stating that he must be delivered implies that he himself cannot do it, only YHWH can rescue him (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:134). YHWH is the protector of the poor and needy, therefore the petitioner in verse 22 calls attention to these facts to gain the protection and assistance of YHWH. He knows that YHWH has an obligation towards the poor and therefore he trusts in YHWH's nature that he will not abandon him. These accusations have taken their toll on him (petitioner); he is a wounded person and in verses 23–24 he comes and provides a description of this physical toll it has taken. His body and soul are being destroyed and hence the expression of grief in the two comparisons made in verses 23 and 24 (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:134–135). Verse 25 becomes a summary of his lament, his total expression of grief. The psalmist stresses his oppression and neediness in language that is significant of other prayers, to shake their heads (Ps 22:6–8) (Keck 1996:1126). The accusations against the petitioner grieve him so much that he becomes a shadow of the man he was, and so when they (v. 25) see him they shake their heads (Allen 2002:105). They are shaming him, by shaking their heads. Dahood (2011:108) is of the opinion that the persons talked about in this verse does not imply the accusers, but could simply be the people the petitioner have met or even neighbours.

3.3 Psalm 110

Psalm 110 is part of the royal psalms⁵ with an earthly Judean king as the main figure in the psalm. It would be logical to associate Psalm 110 with

4 Brueggemann (2007:66) is convinced that one of the purposes of this psalm is to be cathartic; the psalm serves as a therapeutic method to unload emotional distress.

5 Gunkel (1998:99–120) and De Bruyn (2009:68–79) can be consulted for a further discussion on the development of the royal psalms.

the religious cultic practices at Jerusalem and thus make it part of the Judean Zion theology (De Bruyn 2009:217). Many scholars classify Psalm 110 as a victory song or more specifically a Jewish-Hellenistic victory song (Dahood 1970:112; Gunkel 1998:237–240; Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:144–145). Primarily two themes arise from the psalm: that of YHWH defeating the king's enemies, and YHWH establishing the new king as his 'throne companion,' according to Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:145).⁶

Within Psalms 3–41 and 51–72 David is portrayed as the ideal king. In Psalm 110:1 David must not be understood as the ideal king nor as a historical figure as expressed in Psalms 101–103 and probably Psalms 104–106, according to Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:147). Psalm 110:1 indicates a temporal shift and David may be interpreted as the new David⁷ or as a 'David *redivivus*' (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:147). This new David will sit with YHWH on his throne and is given by God to the people as the one who will rebuild the nation. Verse 1 is as a divine speech towards the king of the psalm's speaker (probably a court or cultic prophet) and entitles the king

6 When it comes to the *Sitz im Leben* of Ps 110, there is more than one possibility: the first is that this psalm was part of the enthronement rituals of a new Judean king (Anderson, 1981:767); the second possibility is that this psalm was used as part of the great Autumnal Festival (as part of the new year festivals) (Anderson 1981:767); a third possibility is that this psalm was composed for a specific occurrence 'when David was recognized as master of Jerusalem.' This would be part of the enthronement of David and the confirmation of Zadok's priesthood (Anderson 1981:767); a fourth possibility is that this psalm was used as part of a ritual before a military battle, where victory is already assigned to the king because of his close connection to YHWH. Ps 2:9 would support this theory and this was also seen in Egypt where the enemies' names would be written on pieces of pottery as part of the ritual. These pieces of pottery would be smashed before the battle to symbolise the upcoming victory; Israel could have had this ritual in mind and used it as part of the enthronement in the monarchy (De Bruyn 2009:218). A fifth possibility is that in the trilogy of Pss 108–110 the third psalm becomes the fulfilment of the petition that has been made in Ps 108 for military saving intervention (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:116). The final redactor of the Book of Psalms placed Pss 108–110 then together for this purpose. Although the fourth possibility seems likely, especially in context of the strong use of Egyptian imagery in Ps 110 (and the strong use of war language), there is not sufficient evidence to support this possibility. When this psalm was originally composed, the more traditional understanding of the first possibility of an enthronement was the likely reason for its composition, but in the final redaction of this psalm in the context of the trilogy (in the Book of Psalms) the fifth possibility is the preferred option. In the context of this article the first possibility for composition and the fifth possibility in its final redaction are the chosen *Sitz im Leben* of Ps 110.

7 For Childs (1989:119–120) this verse indicates the ideal new king of Israel and how he would look like.

and his kingship with YHWH (also Zech 12:1). This speech becomes an explanation for the divine speech in verses 2 and 3. According to Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:147), verse 1 indicates purpose and show resemblance ‘to the new-Assyrian prophetic tradition.’ As with Psalm 8:7 the imagery (right hand, footstool filled with enemies) in Psalm 110:1 indicates that the king is now sitting with YHWH as a companion. This is now a universal cosmological reign that is shared between the king and YHWH (see also 1 Chron 28:2; Pss 47:4; 99:5; 132:7; Isa 66:1 and Lam 2:1). The traditional imagery of the powers of chaos in war with YHWH can be depicted in Psalm 110 as the enemies who are at war with the king (and YHWH). The enthronement and victory of the king as ideological language of war are depicted in the imagery of the defeated enemies who become a footstool for the new king (Hossfeld & Zenger 2008:195–215). The trampled heads and bodies of the defeated enemies are now as a footstool for the king; this is a sign of honour for the king but shame, humiliation and dishonour for the enemies. The purpose of the imagery is firstly to indicate the reign of the new king with YHWH and, secondly, creating fear in his enemies. The feet turn into implements of warfare, a psychological weapon that demonstrates the power of the king and what will happen to the heads of his enemies.

As already stated, Psalm 110 went through a period of reinterpretation; it would therefore seem that in the original form of Psalm 110 verses 5–7 probably served as an explication of the sharing of the throne by the king of Zion and of YHWH’s promise in verses 1–3. This ‘static’ picture was actualised as activity in verses 5–7. The world order is mentioned in verse 6. At the top is YHWH who judges among the people and he takes away the power of leaders who misuse their power to oppress and exploit their people. The powerful war metaphor of heaping the bodies and ‘crushing’ a head over a big land is used.⁸ Since these leaders represent the forces of chaos, not only Israel but all peoples are redeemed in this way to introduce the kingdom of peace (Hossfeld & Zenger 2008:195–215). Allen (2002:117) states that this oracle in verses 5 and 6 has strong military implications, especially in the context of gaining honour.

8 In v. 6 the LXX makes the singular $\psi\alpha\lambda\gamma$, head, a plural heads. Making it plural indicates that the divine judgment of God now falls on many.

According to Hossfeld and Zenger (2008:195–215), YHWH is still the subject of the verbs in verse 7,⁹ even though it is true that this image of YHWH drinking from a stream is found nowhere else in the Bible.¹⁰ The imagery completes the metaphorical representation of YHWH as a soldier found elsewhere in the psalm. The drinking at the end of the war symbolises that YHWH, as a soldier, does not become tired and is ready for the next battle. In terms of vitality, he resembles the heroes of Gideon (Judg 7:4–6), who did not take the time to kneel for drinking,¹¹ but scooped up water from the stream while running. The drinking from a stream and the ‘way’ are both images associated with battle in the Old Testament. As part of war language and imagery the end of the battle is described by the metaphor. The drinking is a provocative act symbolising the dominion over the enemy, the ‘way’ is the campaign, and the lifting of the head is the concluding triumph. This verse therefore describes the definitive and universal triumph of YHWH over the enemy kings and the establishment of the universal rule of YHWH and the king of Zion (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:150–152). In the end Psalm 110 is not only a demonstration of YHWH’s power and rule, but also signifies a time of restoration. In this Psalm the enemies are stripped of their honour and YHWH is shown as the true divine king who has the power and the honour. In this process the king’s (and his people) honour is also restored and he receives a status of renewed honour.

4. The development of head imagery in Psalms 108–110

In Psalm 108 the king, as a new David, is the representative of his group or nation against the presence of an enemy or opponent (vv. 8–10, 14). In

9 It would seem that the LXX also makes YHWH (or κύριος) the subject of vv. 5–7, as in the Hebrew text. These changes in the text do not change the meaning and use of v. 1, although it does seem that the structure of Ps 110 (109) in the LXX changes (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:152–153). In the Hebrew text there are two divine speeches in the structure; in the LXX there are three, and v. 3 forms the central divine speech.

10 Kaiser (1980:162) makes David the subject of the verb and states that this verse would make David think about the victory of Abraham against the four kings of Mesopotamia (Gen 14). After this victory Abraham felt refreshed on his way home, as if he had a drink from a cool river. Kraus (1993:352) makes the king the subject of this verse. The king in this verse must be understood as the new David, the imagery of the new king and YHWH becomes merged in this psalm.

11 The drinking from the spring recalls an anointing, 1 Kgs 1:3 (Gerstenberger 2002:181).

Psalm 108 we find armies, enemies, and the hope of victory and the fear of defeat (Wilcock, 2001:154). Psalm 108 must not only be understood as part of a trilogy, but also as a petition for YHWH's military saving-intervention. Psalm 108 has an altered dramaturgy that must be understood and associated with the function of this psalm as the opening of the trilogy: Psalm 108 (appeal for YHWH's military rescue), Psalm 109 (assaults of and by the enemies) and Psalm 110 (fulfilment of the appeal). Stanza I of Psalm 108 becomes a declaration of confidence that in war God will help and therefore the poet praises YHWH (Botha 2010:585). This declaration is not only a declaration of confidence, but it also becomes a declaration of war, as Israel is now confident that they will be victorious in war; this is confirmed in stanzas II and III, when YHWH comes to announce a military victory over the enemies of Israel and this forms the core of Psalm 108. Psalm 108 must thus be understood as a petition as well as a declaration of war. The head in verses 9 and 14 (the allusion to the head represents the whole body or rather the body that is being trampled on) has a strong purpose of showing a purposeful act that is taking place. It shows YHWH, who will defeat the enemy (cf. Pilch & Malina 2000:98–99; Botha, 2010:580–581).

Psalm 109 represents a juridical process (originally). There are a petitioner (the accused or defender) and the opponents (the accusers). In its final redaction as part of the trilogy of Psalms 108, 109 and 110, the king (representing the group or nation) can be identified as the petitioner or accused and the enemies of the king become the accusers in this psalm. The judicial process becomes a representation of the war between the king (and his people) and his enemies. In its final redaction this psalm now represents the actual or metaphorical assaults on the enemies. In the experiences of warfare this is now the actual or metaphorical battle. In Psalm 109 curses are one of the predominant forms of attack. Although inflicting physical harm was the most prominent way to shame a person, to torment the victim even further with mockery, gloating and malicious glee was common. This verbal abuse is important to the ancient near Eastern and Mediterranean person because 'a word is dynamic, creating what it names' (Ford 2000:46). The defeated were sometimes also cursed by the victor. The curse was seen as a withdrawal of divine vitality and strength (Ford 2000:46; cf. Wright 2009:433–473). The petitioner wants to make clear that the accusations have no ground and that they are purely made to

bring him in dishonour and to annihilate him (defeat – honour and shame). The imagery in these verses indicates a strong emotional experience by the petitioner. The head as the most important physical part of a person and the seat of all human intelligence, representing the whole body as well as humankind itself. Therefore if the head was shamed, the whole body was shamed. In verse 25 the accusations against the petitioner grieve him so much that he becomes a shadow of the man he was; therefore when they see him they shake their heads. The king is in trouble, the battle situation is dire. His (the nation's) honour is at stake. The metaphor of the 'shaking heads' shows that if the king does not receive help and assistance, he is going to lose his honour; therefore the central plea is for YHWH's help and assistance in war. Only YHWH can restore honour to the king and win the battle. From verse 29 the imagery indicates that the battle has turned in favour of the king (petitioner). The king who faced dishonour now observes how his honour is being restored. This restored honour is seen in the final imagery of Psalm 110.

At the end of the war one party is victorious and the other defeated (Kelle 2008:831). Psalm 110 uses war imagery to show the enthronement of the new king as the 'throne companion' and priest of YHWH and also sitting with YHWH (Hossfeld and Zenger 2011:147–148). The strong use of the head imagery as a way to show and bring honour to the victorious king and to bring shame to one's enemies illustrates this group of war language as an experience of warfare. The experience of humiliation of one's enemies through the trampling or setting of one's feet on their necks and heads in war illustrates the total dominance, power and rule of the victorious king (in Ps 110, also of YHWH). As with Psalm 108 the trampling on the heads and bodies becomes one of the instruments of war (implement of war). As with the imagery in Psalm 110:1, which showed the rule and dominance of the king with his feet on the footstool that contains the bodies of the enemies verse 6 also shows YHWH's rule and dominance over the defeated enemies' heads. The enemies are shamed and YHWH (and the king) are honoured (receive honour). The world order is mentioned. At the top is YHWH who judges among the people and he takes away the power of leaders who misuse their power to oppress and exploit their people. The powerful war metaphor of heaping the bodies and crushing a head over a big land is used. Since these leaders represent the forces of chaos, not only

Israel but all people are redeemed in this way to introduce the kingdom of peace (Hossfeld & Zenger 2008:195–215). In verse 7 the imagery of the head is used again, but this time instead of shame, defeat and dominance inflicted on the enemies, the imagery shows the dominance, rule, power and honour for YHWH (and his king). In verse 7 YHWH is drinking from a stream. The imagery completes the metaphorical representation of YHWH as a soldier found elsewhere in the psalm. The drinking at the end of the war symbolises that YHWH, as a soldier, does not become tired and is ready for the next battle.¹² The drinking is a provocative act symbolising dominion over the enemy, the ‘way’ is the campaign, and the lifting of the head is the concluding triumph. This verse therefore describes the definitive and universal triumph of YHWH over the enemy kings and the establishment of the universal rule of YHWH and the king of Zion (Hossfeld & Zenger 2008:195–215). In this process YHWH’s honour is shown and the restored or renewed honour of the king and his people is demonstrated.

5. Conclusion

Psalms 108–110 become a victory celebration after war and the fulfilment of the petition made in Psalm 108. The promised metaphorical display of heads being trampled and crushed in Psalm 108 comes to a metaphorical fulfilment in Psalm 110, when the heads of the enemy soldiers are made a footstool (Ps 110:1) and the enemy kings are trampled on (Ps 110:6). In Psalm 109:25 the head is lowered in shame, but in Psalm 110:7 the head is uplifted again in honour. As with the Queen of Hearts shouting ‘Off with their heads!’ demonstrating her power and dominance, so the heads in Psalms 108–110 become a metaphor of power and dominance. The iconography of other ancient Near Eastern contexts also illustrate this theme. On the one side, the heads generate honour for the one doing the trampling, but shame for the one being trampled. In the end the head becomes a powerful war metaphor that fuse Psalms 108–110 into a coherent trilogy.

12 In terms of vitality, he resembles the heroes of Gideon (Judg 7:4–6) who did not take the time to kneel for drinking, but scooped up water from the stream while running. Drinking from a stream and the ‘way’ are both images associated with battle in the Old Testament, as part of war language and imagery the end of the battle is described by the metaphor.

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