

## The 'Enthronement Psalms': A claim to the world-wide honour of Yahweh

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### ABSTRACT

*The so-called Enthronement Psalms, that is Psalms 47, 93, 96, 97, 98 and 99, are described in this investigation as a distinctive group of psalms which constitute a similar illocutionary act. This act is defined against the background of the role that honour and shame played in ancient Mediterranean societies as that of making a claim to the world-wide honour of Yahweh. The perlocutionary intent of this claim is described as an attempt to resolve the tension between the belief of the religious community in Yahweh's creative power and superiority above heathen gods and the lack of honour experienced by Israel as a nation.*

### A INTRODUCTION

The peculiar and homogeneous characteristics of Psalms 47, 93, and 96 through to 99 have been recognised for a long time. The most conspicuous of these shared characteristics is the use of the phrases 'God is King' or 'God reigns',<sup>1</sup> a pronouncement that has given birth to the idea that they once were members of a Gattung<sup>2</sup> which originated in some kind of enthronement or New Year's festival of Yahweh.<sup>3</sup> Others, most notably Gunkel himself, have tried to show that the psalms were reflections of a prophetic, eschatological hope (Jeremias 1987:8). Especially the Canaanite and Ugaritic background of these psalms has been studied in depth and our understanding of these texts owes much to the historical-critical research undertaken in this field.<sup>4</sup>

And yet, the appearance of newer methods of research into Biblical texts seems to suggest that all has not yet been said about these psalms. With 'newer methods of research', I especially refer to investigations into the social background of Biblical texts and to the identification of speech acts in the Psalms. A close reading and a stichometric analysis of each separate member of the group of 'Enthronement Psalms' seem to indicate that it is possible to detect the same or a similar

illocutionary act<sup>5</sup> in these psalms. In this presentation, the so-called Enthronement Psalms will be discussed as a group of psalms which, through the use of various textual strategies,<sup>6</sup> all make a claim to the world-wide honour of God as a polemical statement against rival nations and ideologies. But before this claim and its perlocutionary intent can be discussed, something must be said about the group as a whole and also about each individual member of the group.

### B THE ENTHRONEMENT PSALMS AS A GROUP

The Enthronement Psalms as a group share quite a number of characteristics. These include the use of the same or similar terminology, common themes, a shared imagery and the same ideological point of view. The affinity between some members of the group is quite strong, as is the case between Psalm 96 and Psalm 98; while between others it is weaker (as is the case between Ps 93 and Ps 99). To give an indication of the shared terminology, the most important recurrent terms and the psalms in which they occur, are listed below. The English translations of the RSV are given between brackets:

מֶלֶךְ	47,93,96,97,98,99	('He is King'; 'God, Yahweh reigns') <sup>7</sup>
קֶדֶשׁ	47,93,96,97,98,99	('holy throne, splendour, name, arm, mountain'; 'holiness')
עַמִּים	47,-,96,97,98,99	('nations'; עַמִּים and עַמִּים also occur in 47, 96 and 98)
אָרֶץ	47,-,96,97,98,-	('earth')
תֵּבֵל	--,93,96,97,98,-	('world')
נֹרָא	47,-,96,-,-,99	('awesome'; 'to be feared')
גִּדּוּל	47,-,96,-,-,99	('great King', 'great is Yahweh')
כִּסֵּא	47,93,-,97,-,-	('throne')
עֶז	--,93,96,-,-,99	('majesty'; 'strength'; 'mighty')
יָם	--,93,96,-,98,-	('sea')
הַשְׁתַּחֲוֹו	--,-,96,97,-,99	('worship')
מִשְׁעָרִים	--,-,96,-,98,99	('equity')
רֹעַ	47,-,-,-,98,-	('shout')
זָמַר	47,-,-,-,98,-	('sing'; 'make music')
יָשַׁב	47,-,-,-,-,99	('God is seated'; 'Yahweh sits')
נִעְלַם	47,-,-,97,-,-	('he is exalted', 'you are exalted')

כֹּוֹן	--,93,--97,--	(‘your throne was established’; ‘the foundation of his throne’)
שִׁיר	--,--96,--98,--	(‘sing to Yahweh a new song’)
יְשׁוּעָה	--,--96,--98,--	(‘his salvation’)
כְּבוֹד	--,--96,97,--	(‘the glory due his name’, ‘his glory’)
נִפְלְאוֹת	--,--96,--98,--	(‘his marvellous deeds’; ‘he has done marvellous things’)
חִיל	--,--96,97,--	(‘tremble before him!’, ‘the earth trembles’)
רִנָּן	--,--96,--98,--	(‘all the trees will sing for joy’, ‘let the mountains sing’)
בֹּא	--,--96,--98,--	(‘for he comes to judge the earth’)
שֹׁפֵט	--,--96,--98,--	(‘to judge’; ‘he will judge’)
צַדִּיק	--,--96,--98,--	(‘he will judge in righteousness’)
הַרִים	--,--97,98,--	(‘the mountains melt’, ‘let the mountains sing’)
מִשְׁפָּט	--,--97,--99	(‘your judgements’; ‘what is just’)
גַּהֲרֵן	--,93,--98,--	(‘the seas have lifted up’; ‘let the rivers clap’)

In this table, Psalm 47 features eleven times, Psalm 93 eight times, Psalm 96 seventeen times, Psalm 97 thirteen times, Psalm 98 eighteen times and Psalm 99 ten times. It would thus seem that Psalm 96 and Psalm 98 could be regarded as the two best representatives of the group. But it should be remembered that seven words in the list occur only in these two psalms. They thus have a lot in common, but do not necessarily share many characteristics with the other members of the group.

If a definition of the content of these psalms as a group must be given, the following elements should be included: These psalms proclaim the reign of Yahweh over all nations, over the whole earth and over all creation. Yahweh’s holiness, majesty, exaltedness, judgement and saving power are used to motivate the call to rejoice in his praise.

It should be kept in mind that, despite the above-mentioned similarities, each and every psalm in this group is a distinct unity with a unique combination of these elements and that each has its own agenda, stichometric structure and syntax.<sup>8</sup> Psalm 47 proclaims the glory of Yahweh who has subdued nations under Israel and who reigns as king of the whole world. In it, imperatives are alternated by statements. In contrast, Psalm 93 uses only statements about Yahweh’s reign and creative power over the seas; no imperatives are used. Psalm 96 proclaims Yahweh’s creative and saving power and his glory above that of other gods and calls all nations to worship him.<sup>9</sup> It also calls all creation to rejoice in the knowledge that God is

coming to judge. Psalm 97 describes an epiphany which displays Yahweh’s power over creation and idols to all nations. His power to save those who love him is named as a reason for the righteous to rejoice and to praise him. In Psalm 98, which is quite similar to Psalm 96, Yahweh’s salvation of Israel and his coming to judge is proclaimed as a reason for all creation to praise him.<sup>10</sup> Finally, Psalm 99 enumerates Yahweh’s exaltedness and love of justice and also his fellowship with Israel’s past heroes to demonstrate his reign and to motivate the call to his praise.

From the comparison between the psalms in this group, another common denominator emerges. Each one of them in its own right, and all of them as a group, seem to proclaim the world-wide honour of God. They all perform the same illocutionary act, namely to claim a stake for Yahweh as the only true God who should be worshipped. An offshoot of this demand for honouring Yahweh is of course that an honourable position is also claimed for Israel among the family of nations.

### C THE CLAIM TO WORLD-WIDE HONOUR FOR YAHWEH

There has been a growing interest in recent years as to the light that can be shed on the exegesis of Biblical texts by the importance attached to honour and shame as pivotal social values in all societies that bordered on the Mediterranean Sea in ancient times.<sup>11</sup> These societies were of an agonistic character in which honour was viewed as a commodity which could be bartered and traded. Honour, a person’s claim to worth and the society’s acknowledgment of that claim, could be acquired in two ways: It could be accorded by someone else to a person, but it could also be earned through one’s own achievements. Honour was in limited supply within society and could therefore be gained only at the loss of someone else’s honour. Honour was publicly claimed, often by challenging someone of the same social standing. If the claim was recognised and acknowledged by society, honour was accorded. If not, dishonour and shame would result. Honour was also strongly linked to power.<sup>12</sup> Power over people and the possession of material things were certain signs of honour. Lack of power and powerlessness were sure signs of shame.

As others have illustrated, honour and shame also played a marked role in religion and in international relations.<sup>13</sup> A national catastrophe could mean the powerlessness of one’s god, and therefore shame for the nation.<sup>14</sup> Recognition of the

power of one's god would bring honour to the nation. The Enthronement Psalms as a group are all about the honour of Yahweh. Yahweh is proclaimed king of all creation, all peoples and all gods. A king is someone who has been accorded great honour or who has earned great honour through his actions. He is someone with great power who is exalted above all his subjects and who should be treated with great respect. Kingship is therefore primarily a metaphor<sup>15</sup> for honour in these psalms. Yahweh's honour is publicly proclaimed through singing them as hymns. In doing so, his honour is recognised and thus validated by the community of believers (the illocutionary act). This in turn leads to the restoration of a feeling of self-esteem of Israel as a nation (the perlocutionary effect).

There is a number of ways in which the honour of a king was acclaimed and acknowledged.<sup>16</sup> The same rules apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the kingship of Yahweh.<sup>17</sup> When the Enthronement Psalms are compared with the coronation rites of an Israelite king (e.g. that of Solomon in 1 Ki 1:32-48), it becomes clear that these psalms are not primarily concerned with the enthronement of Yahweh properly, but with the acclamation and homage that is due to him as a sovereign. The epitheton **מֶלֶךְ** is used to describe Yahweh's reign over all gods (96:4; 97:7, 9) and over the whole world (47:3, 8; 97:7, 9) (Kraus 1979:28). As king he is also **אֲדֹנָי**, Lord of the whole earth (97:5). This term indicates his undiminished sovereignty and freedom (Kraus 1979:35). In addition, many adjectives and descriptive nouns in these psalms clearly reflect the importance of *honour* as a mutual cultural script and as part of their textual strategy. Yahweh is described as 'awesome' (47:3); 'to be feared' (96:4); 'great' (47:3; 96:4); 'exalted' (47:10); 'exalted above all gods' (97:9); 'exalted over all the nations' (99:2); 'mighty' (93:4; 99:4); 'most worthy of praise' (96:4); 'the Most High (**עֲלִיּוֹן**)<sup>18</sup> over all the earth' (47:3; 97:9); and 'holy' (99:3, 5, 9).<sup>19</sup> 'Holy' is also used as a description of his 'name' (97:12), his 'arm' (98:1), his 'mountain' (99:9) and his 'throne' (47:9). It is claimed that Yahweh's 'throne is firmly established' (93:2); that he is 'armed with strength' (93:1); that he possesses 'glory' (96:3; 97:6) and 'holy splendour' (96:9); that 'splendour and majesty are before him' (96:6) and 'strength and glory' in his sanctuary (96:6); and that 'glory' is due to his name (96:8) which is also 'great and awesome' (99:3). All these words can be defined in terms of a high degree of honour on a value scale that ranges between shame and honour. Honour is, for instance, often symbolised by one's name. A 'good' name means honour.<sup>20</sup> Psalm 96:7 and 8 illustrate the issue at stake very clearly:

Ascribe to Yahweh, O families of nations,  
ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength.  
Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due to his name;  
bring an offering and come into his courts.  
Worship Yahweh in his holy splendour;  
tremble before him, all the earth.

There are differences between the Enthronement Psalms regarding *the ways in which the demand for honouring Yahweh is formulated*. The most obvious way would be to *proclaim his honour* (**כְּבֹרָה**), his holiness, exaltedness, majesty, might, strength or splendour. These 'honour words' have been listed above. But everywhere that the *metaphor of kingship* is used, the effect is the same: A statement about Yahweh's ascension to the throne (47:6) or his sitting enthroned between the cherubim (99:1) and on his holy throne (47:9), a statement about his being King or reigning (47:3, 7, 8; 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 98:6 and 99:1, 4) and a description of his being 'robed in majesty' (93:1) all function as a claim to the highest position of honour possible. The same effect is achieved by the description of the *epiphany* in Psalm 97:2-5:

Clouds and thick darkness surround him;  
righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.  
Fire goes before him  
and consumes his foes on every side.  
His lightning lights up the world;  
the earth sees and trembles.  
The mountains melt like wax before Yahweh.

These statements and descriptions are interspersed by *commands* to honour Yahweh. They are strongly reminiscent of the acclamation that was part of the enthronement of an earthly king:<sup>21</sup> 'Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy' (47:2), 'Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises' (47:7), 'sing' (96:1, 2; 98:1), 'proclaim' (96:2), 'declare' (96:3), 'ascribe' (96:7, 8), 'worship' (96:9; 97:7; 99:5, 9), 'tremble' (96:9), 'rejoice in Yahweh' (97:12), 'shout for joy' (98:4, 6), 'burst into jubilant song' (98:4), 'make music' (98:5), 'exalt Yahweh' (99:5, 9). Commands to the third person in the form of *jussives* are also found. The object often is creation itself: 'Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them' (96:12), 'let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice' (97:1), 'Let the

sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy' (98:7, 8). The jussive could also be directed at the nations: 'let the nations tremble' (99:1), 'let them (the nations) praise your name' (99:3). But beside statements and imperatives, there is also the occasional exclamation: 'How awesome is Yahweh Most High!' (47:3).

*Reasons* are also provided why Yahweh should be honoured. The first and foremost reason is of course that he is worthy of honour and praise (the accorded, inherent status of Yahweh as God). Once again, all those expressions and statements about his being honourable come to mind. But Yahweh has also achieved honour for himself. What he has done, has illustrated his power and therefore his praiseworthiness. First and foremost is the illustration of Yahweh's power in creation. The world, and therefore also Yahweh's throne, is firmly established (93:1, 2; 96:10). He has overcome the powers of chaos, the seas who have lifted up their pounding waves, and has proven himself mightier than them (93:3, 4). The heavens were made by Yahweh (96:5), therefore they proclaim his righteousness for all peoples to see (97:6). The call to all creation to rejoice also illustrates the conviction that his creative power over the world entitles him to honour.

Yahweh's treatment of Israel is also mentioned a number of times as a reason for honouring him. He has subjugated nations and peoples under Israel. His choosing of an inheritance for Jacob makes him praiseworthy (47:4, 5), since it has illustrated his power over the nations (47:9). Yahweh's marvellous deeds (96:3; 98:1) of saving Israel (98:1, 2, 3) and of displaying righteousness and justice (97:8; 98:2; 99:4) entitle him to recognition by all nations. His revealing of himself to Israel also provides a reason for honouring him: He has given his statutes (93:5) to his people and has spoken to them through Moses, Aaron and Samuel (99:6-8). These acts of saving, protection and communication are continued into the present for the faithful (97:10). And in the future, soon, Yahweh will come to judge the nations. This is one of the most important reasons why he should be honoured: He will judge the peoples with equity (96:10), he comes to judge the earth, the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth (96:13; 98:9).

This claim to the honour of God is a world-wide and an all-encompassing claim: It concerns all nations, the whole earth, all of creation and all gods. One of the words which is repeated oftenest in these psalms is the substantive כָּל 'all'. But other expressions are also used to emphasise the idea: He is the great King over 'all

the earth' (47:3, 8), 'Yahweh of all the earth' (97:5) and is exalted 'over all the nations' (99:2) and also 'far above all gods' (97:9). 'All the peoples see his glory' (97:6) and 'all the ends of the earth' have seen his salvation (98:3). Because of his position as the supreme ruler of 'all nations', they are called upon to show joy in his reign (47:2). 'All the earth' should sing to Yahweh (96:1, cf 96:9 and 98:7) or should shout for joy (98:4) and should tremble before him (96:9). His glory should be proclaimed among 'all peoples' (96:3). He, more than any of the gods, should be honoured: 'he is to be feared above all gods' (96:4) since 'all' the gods of the nations are idols, but Yahweh made the heavens (96:5). In fact, 'all who worship images are put to shame' (97:7) and 'all' gods should worship him (97:7). Everything in creation should also show respect to him: the sea and 'all' that is in it (מְלֵאכָה, cf also 98:7), the fields and 'everything' in them (96:12). Even 'all the trees of the forest' will sing for joy before Yahweh (96:12). He is indeed 'the Most High over all the earth' (97:9). Yahweh's reign is all-inclusive not only in terms of space, but also in terms of time: His throne was established 'long ago' and he himself is from 'all eternity' (93:2), while holiness will adorn his house 'for endless days' (93:5).

#### D HONOUR AND SHAME AND THE THEOLOGY OF THE ENTHRONEMENT PSALMS

If I am correct in assuming that the Enthronement Psalms are all about the honour of God, what is the theological function of honour and shame in these poems? Why is it so important for Israel to proclaim the reign of Yahweh over all peoples and over all the earth? And if the message encoded in the imagery of kingship is about the honour of Yahweh, who are the recipients of this message: the nations, or the believing community itself? How was it supposed to have had effect, that is, what was its illocutionary and perlocutionary intent? The answers to these questions, I should like to propose, will teach us a great deal about the theology of the psalms as a group.

Israel was convinced that their God, Yahweh, was the creator of heaven and earth (96:5, 11-12; 97:1-5). As creator, but also as their saviour, he was the all-mighty, eternal and living God. They were convinced that it was he who once subdued the powers of chaos (93:3-4; 96:10), who chose them to be his people (47:5; 98:3) and decreed Canaan to be their inheritance (47:5). It was he who subdued the

nations of Canaan under them (47:4) and he thus had power over all peoples of the earth (47:10). It was he who revealed himself to Moses, Aaron and Samuel, who answered them (99:6-8), who gave his decrees to them (93:5; 99:7) and who saved them time and again from dangers (96:2; 98:1-3). It was also Yahweh who still guarded the lives of his faithful ones (97:10) and who would come to judge the earth and all its inhabitants (96:10, 13; 98:9).

But there was a problem. The all-powerful God was not honoured by all. He, who rightly was the King, was not recognised and honoured as such by all peoples. And as the people of Yahweh, the almighty God, Israel was not honoured among the family of nations. There was a tension<sup>22</sup> between God as the supreme god and Israel as a powerless nation. Yahweh, and with him also Israel, was shamed. Therefore there was a need for his honour and fame to be proclaimed.<sup>23</sup>

As has been noted, the claim to the honour of God was directed to the nations. They were called upon to pay homage to him, to clap their hands and to shout to Yahweh with cries of joy (47:2), to ascribe glory and strength to him (96:7), to bring an offering and come into his courts (96:8), to worship him and to tremble before him (96:9). But in a number of cases, the believing community itself is called upon to proclaim the honour of Yahweh to the nations (96:2b, 3, 10) while the imperatives for praising him are either directed at the people of Israel itself (47:7 'our King'; 96:1; 98:1; 99:5 'Yahweh our God') or via them to creation (96:11, 12; 97:1; 98:7, 8). It thus seems that the claim to Yahweh's honour is made not only as a challenge to other nations and their gods, but also (and perhaps especially) as a challenge to the convictions of the believing community about the honour of God. To put it in another way: The claim is to the world-wide honour of Yahweh, and not primarily a world-wide claim to the honour of Yahweh. The implied readers-hearers of these psalms are the members of the religious community in Jerusalem, not the nations.

It is important to note the social situation as described or implied in these texts.<sup>24</sup> On the one hand, certain members of this group seem to imply that Israel enjoys a position of dominance and power (47:4, 5; 98:1). On the other hand, the expectation of a coming judgement of the peoples (96:10, 13; 98:9) and the joy it generates among the people of Israel (97:8) contradicts this. The reader hears of the need for the faithful ones to be guarded and delivered from the hand of the wicked (97:10) and their longing for light and joy (97:11). One hears of the punish-

ment of the misdeeds of Israel and of the expectation that Yahweh is still a forgiving God (99:8). And one hears the prayer that those who love Yahweh, will hate evil (97:10). All these references hint at a situation which is not altogether satisfactory.

The intent of these hymns can therefore be described as (primarily) an attempt to convince the people of Israel of the power and glory (read 'honour') of Yahweh in the face of adverse condition, rival nations, and foreign ideologies and gods. The statements, imperatives and jussive forms are aimed at being polemical<sup>25</sup> statements which will confirm the honour of Yahweh at the expense of rival gods who will be dishonoured (read 'shamed') in the process. The same goes for Israel, whose national pride will be revitalised at the expense of rival ideologies which will be shamed.<sup>26</sup> Note for instance the honour/shame terminology in Psalm 97:7:

All who worship images are put to *shame*,  
those who *boast* in idols.

It is obvious from these psalms themselves that the honour of Israel is at stake. Psalm 47 uses honour words when it speaks about the land Israel as 'our inheritance', 'the *pride* of Jacob' (47:5). Similarly, when those who worship images are 'put to *shame*' (97:7), Judah as a nation will, in contrast, be 'glad' (equals 'honoured'):<sup>27</sup> 'Zion hears and rejoices and the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgements, O Yahweh' (97:8). The joy is the result of their national pride being restored. In Psalm 98 joy is again the result of Yahweh's making his salvation known before the nations, of revealing his righteousness (98:1-6). This is a sign of his remembering his love and faithfulness 'to the house of Israel' (98:3). When all the earth sees 'the salvation of our God', that is, our salvation by God (98:3), it is an occasion to sing a new song (98:1) and to call upon all the earth to shout for joy (98:4) since Israel's claim to honour will be validated.

Yahweh's reign is closely connected to his temple in Jerusalem and the recognition of his exaltedness by the nations automatically means that Jerusalem, and the people of Judah, will share in the honour ascribed to Yahweh. It is from Zion that Yahweh reigns, for he is 'seated on his holy throne' (47:9). When the 'nobles' (= honoured people) of the nations assemble as the people of the God of Abraham' (to pay homage to the king, 47:10), they will have to come to Jerusalem, honouring also the city of God with their presence.<sup>28</sup> When the holiness or splendour of

Yahweh's throne is acclaimed, the temple in Jerusalem is meant and it is obvious that the honour of the city is implicated in this. Yahweh's throne being 'established long ago' (93:2) reminds one of the stability of the world which is described in the same psalm as being 'firmly established' so that it 'cannot be moved' (93:1). In Psalm 96 the 'families of nations' (96:7) are called upon to 'bring an offering and come into (Yahweh's) courts' (96:8). There they must 'worship Yahweh in his holy splendour' (96:9), thereby recognising also the honour of the people of Yahweh. 'Zion' also reminds one of the national pride in Psalm 99: Yahweh's sitting enthroned between the cherubim (99:1) causes the nations to tremble. It is because he is great in Zion that he 'is exalted over all the nations' (99:2).

The numerous references to the other nations in the Enthronement Psalms should therefore be taken as an indication of its polemical intent against rival nations and ideologies.<sup>29</sup> The words עַמִּים, גֵּרִים and לְאֻמִּים occur no less than seventeen times in these psalms. The nations are called upon to honour God by clapping their hands and shouting with joy, a typical way of paying homage to a king (47:2). But the reason for this joy is that Yahweh is 'awesome' (47:3) and that he has subdued 'nations' and 'peoples' under Israel (47:4). The clapping of hands (= honouring) is therefore in commemoration of their own subjection (= being shamed) and of Israel's being honoured. The only honour left for the nations is to join the 'people of the God of Abraham' (47:10), to become part of them and hence to share in their honour. In Psalm 96 the command to the nations to honour Yahweh similarly results in their own honour diminishing. It means that they will have to recognise that Yahweh is above their own gods (96:4) who are nothing but idols (96:5). (To acknowledge this would have meant great shame for them.) It is because of the coming judgement of Yahweh (in which the guilty will be shamed) that they must now turn towards Yahweh and ascribe to him the glory (= honour) due to his name (96:8, 10, 13). The theological function of the nations in the Enthronement Psalms is to honour Yahweh by recognising his power, glory, acts of salvation towards Israel and thus his reign over them. They must either hear about his glory and marvellous deeds (96:3; 98:2) or they must see it (97:6). But the result is always the same, namely that they will realise that Yahweh is exalted far above all gods (96:4; 97:9).

## B CONCLUSION

It has become clear that the Enthronement Psalms in their present form and arrangement are not psalms about the enthronement of Yahweh,<sup>30</sup> but psalms about his kingship, power and world-wide honour, and consequently about the honour of Israel among the family of nations.<sup>31</sup> The objective of this claim to his world-wide honour is directed primarily at the believing community and is meant to remind them of Yahweh's creative power, of his saving acts in the past, of his special relationship with Israel, of his superiority above the gods, and of his ability to guard the faithful even at present. By knowing this, they should realise how privileged they are to be the people of the supreme God and the imbalance between their belief in his glory and their own lack of honour, or possibly even their present national dishonour,<sup>32</sup> should be put to rest by the knowledge that the *de iure* reign of Yahweh will become the *de facto* reign of Yahweh when he comes to judge the world.<sup>33</sup> It was a way in which a rationale could be provided for the integration of their belief in Yahweh's power as the creator and the saviour of his people on the one hand, and the aspiration for and hope of a future restoration on the other.

## NOTES

- 1 Mowinckel's translating of this last phrase as 'God has become King' rests solely on the presupposition that there was indeed a feast of enthronement. This idea of his originated through Duhm's interpretation of 'ascended' in Psalm 47:6 as the return of Yahweh to his throne after having accepted the sacrifice of the priests. Cf Duhm (1922:194); Mowinckel (1962:227) and Loretz (1988:43). For a discussion by Mowinckel on the question of translating this phrase of Yahweh's reigning or becoming king, cf Mowinckel (1962:222-224, note VI). Michel (1956:51) has argued that this phrase 'berichtet . . . keine neue Handlung, sondern einen Aspekt des Subjektes, ja fast schon eine Eigenschaft'. Cf also Prinsloo (1993:622, 629) for a discussion of the meaning of this phrase in Psalm 99.
- 2 The names most closely associated with the development of the idea of such a Gattung, are (in chronological order): H Gunkel, P Volz, H Gressmann, B Duhm and S Mowinckel. Cf Loretz (1988:20-40) for the history of this research.
- 3 The psalms supposedly were connected with the harvest and new year festival. Cf Mowinckel (1962:106). Weiser (1979:62) argues that Mowinckel's hypothesis of a separate Enthronement Festival should be modified in the sense that the enthronement of Yahweh did not form the subject of a separate festival but was a portion of the liturgy of the feast of the renewal of the Covenant of Yahweh. It was 'a single scene within the whole drama of the cult'.

- 4 Cf Jeremias (1987) and Loretz (1988). The in-depth discussion of Jeremias' research by Bernd Janowski (1989:389-454) should not be overlooked.
- 5 As described by Austin (1990:101-102). A locutionary act is performed by saying something in a coherent and grammatically acceptable way. An illocutionary act is the act of producing an utterance with a certain illocutionary force, such as the force of a greeting, a warning, an order, a plea, et cetera. A perlocutionary act in turn is the act by which certain consequential effects are produced upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, the speaker or other persons. Cf also Botha (1991a:280-281).
- 6 The strategy of a text is evident in its genre, content (stressed ideas, dominant terms and semantic fields, comparison and contrasts, traditions employed and modified, semantic relations), and organisation (syntax and arrangement, line of thought and argumentation, integrating themes, root metaphors, and ideological point of view. Cf Elliott (1993:73).
- 7 Michel (1956:65) has argued that מלך יהוה יהוה מלך should be understood as two different kinds of sentence and thus investigated separately.
- 8 According to Jeremias (1987:11), they are almost invariably ascribed to widely divergent dates by modern scholars. Jeremias himself ascribes dates ranging from the early monarchical period (Ps 93, 1987:26) through the pre-exilic period (Ps 47, 1987:68), the time of the Deuteronomist (Ps 95 and Ps 99, 1987:107), and the time of Deutero-Isaiah (Ps 96 and Ps 98, 1987:121) to the Hellenistic period (Ps 97, 1987:136).
- 9 The psalm has strong universalistic overtones. It shows a relationship with a number of other texts (notably Ps 29:1-3, Is 44:23 and 55:12 and 1 Chr 16:23-33). Cf further Prinsloo (1997).
- 10 The call to praise forms a crescendo: Singing becomes jubilation, stringed instruments are joined by wind instruments, the people of Yahweh are joined by all countries and finally the whole of creation (Prinsloo 1997).
- 11 Cf Malina (1981:25-50) and the whole Volume 68 (1994) of *Semeia*.
- 12 Cf Pilch (1993:140).
- 13 Israel's claim to honour was its special relationship to Yahweh, the evidence that God was on the side of Israel. This claim depended on evidence for God's continued interest in his chosen people. National defeat would prove God's abandonment of his people, with resultant shame for Israel. Cf Plevnik (1993:97).
- 14 Social groups, e.g. a family or a nation, possessed a collective honour like an individual. Cf Malina (1981:38), Plevnik (1993:97), Simkins (1994:50). Ezekiel 36:22-23 can be cited as proof that a national catastrophe was regarded as a shaming of the name of the god of that nation.
- 15 O Eissfeldt (1928:101-102) has suggested already in 1928 that the ascension of Yahweh in Psalm 47 should be understood figuratively and not as a cultic drama. Gunkel has stated in his introduction to the Psalms (1933:95) that these poems utilise not only the *Königsruf*, but also other motifs from poems on human kingship to describe Yahweh's spiritual kingship. According to Kraus (1979:26) the psalms generally speak about Yahweh in a metaphorical way: 'In den Psalmen ist die Rede von Gott metaphorisch; sie bedient sich der Nomina und Epitheta der religiösen Umwelt, um in der Auseinandersetzung mit den Göttern und Mächten polemisch und konfessorisch die Herrschaft *Jahwes* kundzutun, um Israel in der Sprache der Umwelt hymnisch und proskynetisch neue Tiefen in Jahwe zu erschliessen.'
- 16 Gunkel has summarised the procedure of proclaiming an earthly king in ancient Israel in his introduction to the Psalms (Gunkel-Begrich [1933] 1985:96). De Vaux (1974:102-107) has

- provided a similar description. The main elements were: the investiture with the insignia, the anointing, the acclamation, the enthronement and the homage.
- 17 It is precisely the similarities between human kingship and Yahweh's kingship that invalidate the idea of a feast of enthronement of Yahweh: Certain aspects of enthronement, such as anointing and investiture, are not conceivable in the case of Yahweh's becoming king. This leads Michel (1956:47) to the conclusion 'dass die Annahme eines Thronbesteigungsfestes Jahwes nach Analogie des Thronbesteigungsfestes eines menschlichen Königs sehr zweifelhaft, wenn nicht gar unmöglich ist'.
- 18 According to Kraus (1979:27) this epitheton claims 'absolute Herrschafts- und Hoheitsrechte gegenüber allen Göttern und Mächten, über die ganze Welt'.
- 19 The fact that Yahweh's being holy is stated three times in this psalm, draws the attention to a similarity with the Trishagion of Isaiah 6:3. Cf Kraus (1979:30). 'Die Heiligkeit Jahwes ist des Königs Jahwe anbetungswürdige Vollkommenheit (Ps 99,5,9).' Kraus (1979:50).
- 20 Cf the connection between a good name and honour in the case of a city in Proverbs 11:11, of a woman in Proverbs 11:16, of a man in Proverbs 22:1 and of Yahweh in Proverbs 30:9. Cf also Malina (1981:47). In Ezekiel 36:20-21 it is described how God was concerned for his holy name, since the dispersion of the Israelites among the nations 'brought disgrace' on his 'holy name'.
- 21 Compare the following phrases with texts such as 1 Kings 1:34, 39; 2 Kings 11:12, 14. Cf also De Vaux (1974:106).
- 22 Preuss speaks of the tension between the coming and the present reality of Yahweh's reign (Preuss 1991:182).
- 23 Gunkel has attempted to resolve this tension, which he calls 'der Widerspruch zwischen dem Glauben und dem Schauen', by interpreting these psalms as eschatological hymns: 'Man versteht also diese Psalmen, wenn man in ihnen die Form der Thronbesteigungslieder und den Inhalt der Eschatologie erkennt' (Gunkel-Begrich [1933] 1985:98). But as Michel (1956:66) has argued, Yahweh's act of judging can also be understood as one aspect of his kingship: 'Als König, der Macht zu beanspruchen hat, kann Jahwe nicht zulassen, dass man einem anderen "die Ehre zollt" ... weil er der König ist, muss er auch der Richter sein.'
- 24 For its importance, compare the methodology as described by Elliott (1993:73).
- 25 Not only occasional ('gelegentlich') as Eissfeldt (1928:104-105) asserted, but predominantly. Lohfink (1987:39) used descriptions such as 'affirmativ-legitimierende' and 'kritisch-offensive' in his attempt to define the meaning of the kingship of God for the religious community. Both these descriptions seem to me to be applicable.
- 26 Prinsloo (1997) speaks of the function of Psalm 97 as a 'consolation text' (Afrikaans 'troostekst'). He came to the same conclusion with regard to Psalm 99 (Prinsloo 1993:630).
- 27 The result of shame being removed and honour accorded is often described as a rejoicing. Cf for instance Isaiah 61:7: 'Instead of your shame you shall have a double portion, instead of dishonour you shall rejoice in your lot'.
- 28 The close links between Psalms 46, 47 and 48 - and the importance of Zion in Psalm 48 - are also relevant in this regard. Psalm 48 seems to combine the themes of the two previous psalms, bringing it to a climax with regard to Zion, the city of Yahweh. This was brought to my attention by W S Prinsloo through an (as yet) unpublished article of his on Psalms 96-99 (Prinsloo 1997).
- 29 The fact that these hymns themselves were adaptations of Canaanite or Ugaritic *Vorlagen* contributed in no small way to their being polemic texts. Kraus (1979:48-49) states in this regard:

- 'Denn in der jeweiligen Konfrontation schattet sich eine grundsätzliche Auseinandersetzung mit den Religionen und Göttern der Völker ab, bzw. die mannigfaltigen Konfrontationen haben den antagonistisch-polemischen Grundcharakter des Alten Testaments, und so auch der Psalmen, geprägt'. The concept of Yahweh as king was itself taken over from the Canaanite-Syriac traditions. Cf Kraus (1979:49).
- 30 Eissfeldt's (1928:97) conclusion, after investigating the kingship of Yahweh in the Old Testament as a whole, was that there is no sign anywhere of a feast during which the enthronement of Yahweh was celebrated cultically.
- 31 Perhaps the cultic act was not nearly as important as the perlocutionary act. Or, to put it in another way, the *actio Dei ad salutem* was perceived as having taken place outside the cult, in history, and as going to be repeated in future, in the eschatology, while the cult itself consisted of the proclaiming of these truths as a *reactio hominum*. The terminology is that of Weiser (1979:29).
- 32 Depending on the date of origin, adaptation or re-use of each individual psalm. According to Eissfeldt (1928:104), the oldest datable text containing the idea of Yahweh as king, is Isaiah 6:5. According to him, all references to this idea in the Psalms are from the same or a later date. It does indeed seem very probable that the majority of these psalms are of a post-exilic date.
- 33 It is also for that reason that the people of God are reminded that he loves justice, equity and what is right (99:4). 'Die Gerechtigkeit Jahwes ist die Vollkommenheit seines Durchschauens, Beurteilens, Richtens, und Rettens; sie ist die Vollkommenheit des gemeinschaftstreuen Rechtshelfers, der sich allen Unterdrückten, fälschlich Angeklagten, Verfolgten und Leidenden als Retter erzeigt' (Kraus 1979:52).

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