

Chapter 4

Comparative assessment

4.1 Introduction

The relationship between the biblical psalms and *Pedi* psalm-like texts is a difficult and detailed issue. This is due to historical cultural distance between the two traditions. African societies may not have undergone similar developmental processes as ancient Israel. The purpose of this chapter is to compare the biblical and *Pedi* psalm-like texts: to provide a genre comparison, in order to point out some of the similarities and differences between the two cultures' poetry and religio-cultural texts. Common functions and structural elements of these songs are as follows.

4.2 Genre evaluation

In chapters 4 and 5 genre evaluation is made in terms of its function in the applicable culture/tradition. Therefore descriptions of headings in these chapters will differ from genre descriptions in chapters 2-3. Moreover, in chapters 4-5 the headings are designed to find common denominator(s) in the function of the songs from both traditions. Importantly, similarities and differences occur between the traditions. Thus, it will explain the reason for different category headings in these chapters, which deviate from the previous chapters 2-3.

4.2.1 Praise

4.2.1.1 Form

In the Psalms praise is a central element of hymns. Generally the motivation to praise is premised by God's character and acts in the past. Thematically, hymns focus on celebrating God as creator, sustainer and controller of history. The imperative to praise is heightened by calls to shout, clap hands and bless God. Praise is offered against a backdrop of certainty in God's creative genius, his ordering of and provision for the world. This matter is supported by the structural movement from call to praise through motivation and concluding statement of praise.

African praise songs on the other hand are focused on concrete situations of success. Praise is recited to God, ancestors, victorious warriors, chiefs, newly-borns, clans and mountains. However, *Pedi* people are more inclined to praising their ancestors as against God. This is evident in the examined Psalm-like texts. Generally, when faced with difficulties *Pedi* people may approach God through their ancestors. Subsequent to the answers they compose songs which are primarily addressed to the ancestors. Songs are a medium for celebrating every aspect of African life (Mbiti 1992:142; Kekana 2005:63). Among the *Pedi* it is equally common for an individual to praise himself/herself. Since *Pedi* people are predisposed to rhythm it is not uncommon for songs to be accompanied by hocketing, ululating and dancing. Besides focusing on valorous acts, songs and other oral discussions serve the purpose of conveying indigenous theory (Nzewi 2005:vii).

The above analysis confirms the presence of praise in both biblical and *Pedi* traditions. Praise highlights positive and hilarious situations in life. *Pedi* people and ancient Israelites alike materialise praise in ululations and dance. For example Old Testament recounts the practice through Merriam's performance in the song of victory at the Sea of Reeds (Exod 15). Equally recounting historical phenomena is a form of retaining traditions orally. However, there are marked distinctions. While biblical psalms recollect God's acts in history *Pedi* psalm-like songs celebrate occurrences in life, responses from God and ancestors and people of worth in society. This matter reaches its limit when individuals sometimes sing their own praises.

4.2.1.2 Language (structural elements and characteristics)

The structure of hymns of praise in biblical texts is comprised of three elements: a) the introductory exhortation or call to praise; b) the main body of the hymn which praises God for his attributes and deeds; c) a concluding section expressing some wish, prayer, or blessing.

Pedi Songs of Praise (e.g. *Mogale wa marumo*) consist of the following elements: a) praise, thanksgiving and request; b) commentary on the request; c) extended narrative; d) confession of what happened as the consequence of hunger; e) memory of ancestor (*Mogale wa marumo*, new born son symbolically represents the clan's anticipation of a hero like his grandfather) and hope; f) advanced praise; g) plea for a hearing; and h) praise and self-confidence.

In the Psalms there is an acknowledgement of God's magnificence and the greatness of his works and deeds, whereas in the *Pedi* Psalm-like

texts (e.g. *Mogale wa marumo*), the *Pedi* people acknowledge the good work or service of those members of the community noteworthy for their accomplishments.

Mogale wa marumo indirectly includes ancestral invocation as hope is placed in figurative hero. *Mogale's* birth is evocative of his ancestor grandfather. Besides its celebrative elements the song has petitions.

4.2.1.3 Content and context

In the Psalms hymns furnish believers with glimpses at the God of Israel. A theology emerges from the explication of these devotional proclamations. God stands in a relationship with humanity and creation. Themes of God's benevolent acts depict his compassion to the needy. Theological representations are further conveyed through adoration of God's magnificence. Thus, through praise assertions of God's rule are confirmed during calamities (Pss 64:9-10; 140:12-13).

Pedi praise songs objectify the place and function of significant personalities and inanimate entities such as mountains. Exemplarily '*Mogale wa marumo*' (hero of the battle) is a song in praise of the birth of a male child. Metaphorical allusions are mystically worked into his praise. The hero provides rain for both clan and plants. He provides for cattle and is a recipient of clan requests. Figurative language serves the purpose of orienting the clan towards futuristic expectations attached to the birth of a boy. Selected *Pedi* songs are devoid of focus on the Supreme Being. Instead praise is addressed to heroes and personalities of worth in society. The exemplar '*Mogale wa marumo*' (hero of the battle) induces futuristic hope, hence he is inundated with praise. This object of praise orients the community around their

expectations. Since the concept of the divinity is unattested to in many *Pedi* Psalm-like songs praise is rarely expressed to God but rather to victorious individuals such as a warrior who returns from his exploits.

4.2.1.4 Function

In praise, the worshipping individual or community offers adoration to the deity and proclaims his magnificence and the greatness of his works and deeds. In singing hymns of praise, (e.g. Pss 8; 29; 47; 93; 95-100; 104; 113-115; 117; 135-136; 146-150), the congregation feels itself in the glorious and holy presence of God. They extol what God is and does for the community.

The *Pedi* sing praise songs to acknowledge the good work or service of those members of the community noteworthy of their accomplishments: for example, *matona* (headmen), *dikgoshi* (chiefs), *ditlogolo* (descendants) and other political figures. They praise and please the ancestors after every achievement, for example, after good harvest, a patient's full recovery, etc.

4.2.1.5 Conclusion

In both biblical and *Pedi* traditions songs of praise are employed for religious purposes. Variations are noted in the area of functionality. Whereas the psalmists proclaim the greatness of God *Pedi* people on the other hand acknowledge the good work of distinguished members of the community. Ultimately *Pedi* people draw their abilities from their

ancestors and deity. For that reason *Pedi* people praise their ancestors directly or indirectly for achievements such as good crop.

4.2.2 Thanksgiving

4.2.2.1 Form

Psalms of Thanksgiving are broadly divisible into two groups, namely individual and communal thanksgiving. They are responses to laments which are now answered. Thanksgiving Psalms are closely connected to hymns. The latter, in most cases, represent community responses to previous needs. However, there are few communal thanksgiving psalms. Members of the community express their gratitude to God in Psalms of Thanksgiving in response to his gracious interventions.

Pedi Thanksgiving Songs are essentially a group affair. To be sure individuals also offer thanksgiving primarily in their private lives. Thanksgiving Songs express *Pedi* people's interpretation of their society. It is common for the *Pedi* to sing antiphonally and in a responsorial style. To that end songs are led by an individual while the group responds or groups respond to each other.

In both biblical psalms and *Pedi* Psalm-like songs the divisions of individual and communal thanksgiving are found. However, Old Testament psalms emphasize the individuals' response to God's acts. *Pedi* songs on the other hand pronounce communal aspects. Responsorial devices are detectable in selected psalms as well as in *Pedi* Psalm-like songs. Among *Pedi* people, particularly, during communal rites singing is often done in a responsorial manner.

4.2.2.2 Language (structural elements and characteristics)

Thanksgiving Psalms (e.g Pss 67; 103; 105-107; 111; 124) mostly consist of the following elements: a) invitation to give thanks or praise to Yahweh; b) account of trouble and salvation; c) praises of Yahweh; d) acknowledgement of his saving work; e) blessings over participants in the ceremony and exhortation; and f) promise of thanksgiving offerings. They are directed to God and community.

Pedi Thanksgiving Songs (e.g. *Kgoparara*)⁶² consist of the following elements: a) thanksgiving and praise, b) appreciation and confidence in the ancestors. The petitioners' attitude consist of respect and humility.

4.2.2.3 Content and context

In view of the above information, it is clear that in most cases, Thanksgiving Songs in the Old Testament (e.g Pss 65; 66; 124 and 129) are public attestations to the salvific acts of rescuing his people from trouble. They reflect on their life in light of the majesty of God as a community forgiven and provided for. Therefore they are ready to begin afresh Brueggemann (2002:51), whereas in the *Pedi* Thanksgiving praises are recited in honour of God, ancestors and chiefs for provision. Praise is also done for possession such as cattle for one's clan, and inanimate objects like mountains. For instance in memory of a victory achieved at a specific site from the mountain, praise may be composed.

⁶² *Kgoparara* is the *Pedi* Thanksgiving Song. It is normally composed as reactions or responses to the realities of life (e.g inauguration of the chief, expressions of appreciation and thanksgiving to the ancestors).

The *Pedi* Song of Thanksgiving (e.g. *Kgoparara*) may arise out of an event that transforms the life of the individual from birth to childhood. Not only do *Pedi* Thanksgiving Songs initiate a new member into the clan, but in the case of a first child, they confer on the mother the status of parenthood, which for the *Pedi*, is synonymous with attaining the full status of a woman.

4.2.2.4 Function

The purposes of biblical Thanksgiving Songs are: a) to affirm that God hears and forgives the sinners; and that God heals and gives nourishment to the faithful. The *Psalter's* concern for healing challenges believers on the individual level, asking them to rejoice when individuals find care, comfort, provision and healing; b) to confront believers with worship that is wide-ranging and relevant to the lives of individuals and to entire communities. c) to employ a praise language that is concretely rooted in the experience of human suffering and other experiences. This is praise that is tied to life lived in a world of pain, affliction, and social injustice; c) to encourage the individual worshipper to share specific misfortunes and joys with the larger worshipping community and address God with a grateful attitude. Likewise, these psalms permit the larger community to wrestle with the sorrows of the individual and to give thanks for the worshipper's triumphs and successes.

A comparison of Thanksgiving Songs in both Old Testament psalms and *Pedi* psalm-like songs yielded a significant difference: Old Testament worshippers acknowledge God's redeeming work while the

Pedi people show appreciation and confidence in ancestors, as mediators to the Supreme Being/God.

4.2.2.5 Conclusion

Thanksgiving Songs are a testimony about God's saving work in the Old Testament. They affirm God's concern for his people. Songs of Thanksgiving demonstrate that God listens and hears their petitions.

In the *Pedi* culture Thanksgiving Songs are commonly addressed to ancestors. Ancestors are thanked for their assistance for instance in agricultural production after harvest. Such occasions are accompanied by rituals and feasting. Thanksgiving Songs play critical role in terms of identifying the source of gifts and good things in both traditions. In both they mediate religious experience of God or the transcendental.

4.2.3 Lamenting

4.2.3.1 Form

The similarity between Old Testament lament psalms and *Pedi* lament songs is intriguing. Both traditions have elements of complaint. Old Testament laments are directed towards God about whatever personal or communal crisis occasions their prayer. *Pedi* laments however are directed to ancestors about misfortunes as well as towards enemies, and sometimes towards the lamenter himself (see p.131 for example *Pedi* funeral song *Madi a manaba*: blood of the adversaries/enemies). Old Testament laments are characterized by honesty, pain and vindictiveness, while *Pedi* laments are characterized by despair and helplessness.

4.2.3.2 Language (structural elements and characteristics)

Old Testament laments (e.g. Ps 88; Job 3; 6; 10 and II Sam 1:18-27) are characterized by several structural elements. In a lament to God there are often: a) an address to God; b) complaint; c) confession of trust; d) petition; e) words of assurance; and f) vow of praise. In the laments the psalmists unrestrainedly complain to God about whatever personal or communal crisis.

Even when complaints are directed towards God petitioners persistently trust and supplicate him. Structurally there is a close affinity between communal and individual laments. Victims appeal to God's close relationship with them in the past. Due to the prevalence of mythical ideology and poetic vagueness the identity of the enemies in the psalms is problematic. Three situations of complaint are identified as one's own acts, human enemies and God's actions against the petitioner.

Lament is encapsulated vividly during funeral rites among *Pedi* people. A funeral ceremony may last up to two days. During this process mourners express their despair by crying and singing. Singing has a soothing function. These songs employ metaphors and euphemisms. In *Pedi* culture suffering arises from diverse causes. It is commonly blamed on ancestors, witches and God. Witchcraft is a reality largely contributing to all manner of unprecedented calamities on both human victims and property. Therefore aversion of witches through music is common. Such songs are aimed at invoking ancestors against one's enemies. This function is illustrated by '*Madi a manaba*' ('blood of the adversaries/enemies').

4.2.3.3 Content and context

Old Testament lament songs (e.g. Pss 3; 5; 7; 13; 17; 22; 25; 26; 27; 28; 35; 38; 39; 41; 42; 43; 51; 54; 55; 56; 57; 59; 63; 64; 69; 71; 79; 80; 83; 86; 88; 90; 102; 109; 123; 129; 130; 137; 140; 141) are prayers of complaint. They are prayers in a time of tribulation. Laments express distressful situations of believers in the promise that they will praise him for deliverance and sovereignty. Laments contain both inspiring and shocking poetic expressions of individual and communal concerns, perceptions, and exchanges with God. Numerically the dominant psalm type in the Old Testament is the lament, which reflects experiences in the depths of loneliness, frustration and fearfulness.

Pedi laments (e.g. *madi a manaba*) are songs with a focus on a distinct, special range of topics, which include inter alia: a) extolling the sex-specific subsistence skills of those who have passed on; b) death by drowning, accident or ill-health; and c) a notable event and incidents in the *Pedi* community. Such significant events in a person's life may be woven into a memorial song. *Pedi* laments are characterized by both hope and despair.

Despair and helplessness are the underpinnings of *Pedi* funeral songs. Most of the *Pedi* lament songs (e.g. *madi a manaba*) deal with some sort of trouble like adversity, experiences of enmity, oppression, and wickedness.

4.2.3.4 Function

Suffering is universal. Thus people devise ways of coping with their difficulties. In the Psalms laments are expressions arising from situations of sorrow and disorder. They represent experiences of life for both individuals and community. Through laments the psalmists direct their complaints to God interrogating his actions towards Israel. Yet their confidence in God's power and help in the past are noticeable even when he is held responsible for the distress. Laments allow the community to reflect on tragedy without elucidating the final answer. It appears that laments played a role in healing ceremonies at family level. A ritual expert may have officiated employing both words and actions. Similarly *Pedi* people blame God or other people for their problems. Among *Pedi* people failure to honour ancestors spells out trouble. Erring members of society are struck by tragedies as punishment from ancestors.

Therefore victims bemoan such occurrences calling on ancestors to relent. Suffering may also result from witchcraft. Witches and sorcerers attack their unsuspecting victims at night. Thus laments are used to warn the community about witchcraft danger. Lament songs also focus on mourning the loss of loved ones and creating a relationship between the living and their ancestors. In view of the above functions it is evident that there are differences due to a strong belief in witchcraft and ancestors among *Pedi* people. If Miller (1986:6) is right about the therapeutical function of music then there is resonance between ancient Israelite funeral musical rites and *Pedi* experience. But the presence of a ritual expert is unattested to among

Pedi people. However, both the psalmists and *Pedi* people utilise music for reorientation from situations of despair.

4.2.3.5 Conclusion

Suffering is universal to people of different societies and historical periods. Through lament therefore ancient Israelites as well as *Pedi* people approach the supernatural in pursuit of redress. Laments reach their peak as victims complain against God in the psalms or towards ancestors among the *Pedi*. Nevertheless, just as the psalmists have trust in the ability of God to intervene so do the *Pedi* in their ancestors, who mediate deliverance and upliftment of distress with God/Supreme Being. On the other hand the presence of ancestors and witches in *Pedi* religious experience marks a clear distinction from biblical psalms.

4.2.4 Royal celebration

4.2.4.1 Form

Royal psalms in the Old Testament (e.g. Pss 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132) celebrated occasions in the earthly king's life like weddings, coronations, preparation for battle, ritual enactments, and so forth. In addition there is a category of royal psalms distinguished by its focus on Yahweh the king. After the collapse of the monarch Israel reoriented herself by considering the kingship of God. This kingship knows no end.

Yahweh-is-king Psalms (Pss 93; 96-99) have as a central theme praise of God's reign. Psalms of Yahweh's kingship may have originated in

the post-exilic period. They arose out of a backdrop of monarchical failure and Israel's subsequent dispersal into exile. Thus disoriented by this historical calamity, the believing community placed their confidence in Yahweh's reign.

Historically, the performance of royal inauguration songs in the *Pedi* tradition has served to reinforce knowledge about the community, its owners, and protocol for its usage. When *Pedi* people sing inauguration songs, they are making a statement about who they are. They thus establish the otherness of the famous historical figures such as chiefs invoke the might of ancestors and impart knowledge thereby reaffirming *Pedi* cultural identity.

4.2.4.2 Language (structural elements and characteristics)

Old Testament Royal psalms consist of the following elements: they are openly raising questions about the community's understanding of a) security; b) peace; c) justice; and d) solidarity. These elements are raised as prayer for the earthly king. In this way Israel hoped for community well-being. Through God the king is able to maintain peace and justice. Psalms 47 and 93-100 depict God's assumption of royal power, in imitation of the ceremony of an earthly king. These psalms (96:13; 98:9) proclaim God as judge of the world. The expression "Yahweh is king" is shared by them all.

Pedi royal (inauguration) songs (e.g. *Kgoshi*) contain four defined elements: a) praise and testimony-music and singing are interspersed by telling of legends and histories; b) circles of integrity-simultaneous activity of singing and storytelling enhances conveying of moral

information; c) inauguration songs, whereby the chief is inundated in praised; and d) confession of integrity-through the aid of call and response the community participates in affirming morals embedded in song. Repetition is clearly the key style figure to the structure of such songs. *Pedi* inauguration celebrations are characterized by joy, self-confidence, and imagination accentuated through song and dance.

4.2.4.3 Content and context

Royal psalms emphasize the relationship between king and people and between king and God. Authority to rule is derived from God. Contextually royal psalms are associated with Jerusalem, the royal capital. In the Old Testament enthronement ceremonies were occasioned by declarations, prayer and song exhibited by royal psalms. It appears that these declarations were products of court prophets. Such pronouncements were commonly shared by other nations in the ancient Near East. Other contexts which are graced by royal music are kingly weddings and pre-battle rituals.

Among *Pedi* people royal music features prominently through-out the life of a chief. However, royal music reaches its height at inauguration and funeral rituals of *Pedi* chiefs. Its elements include praise and descriptive narrative of the earthly chief. In *Pedi* culture royalty is hereditary. A matter of fact rehearsed in song. *Pedi* songs are repetitive and powerful communication media.

4.2.4.4 Function

Royal psalms in the Old Testament celebrated occasions in the earthly king's life like weddings, coronations, preparation for battle, ritual

enactments, and so forth, whereas performance of royal inauguration songs in the *Pedi* tradition has served to reinforce knowledge about the community, composers, and royal protocol. Yahweh is king psalms serve as praise of God's historical acts, project an ideal king after the failure of the earthly monarch, they emphasize individual guilt and salvation as well as communal perseverance and hope for restoration. Furthermore, Yahweh is king psalms declare the kingdom of God which is untouched by distressful circumstances thereby depicting its futuristic aspects when life in God will transcend calamity.

Old Testament royal psalms are raising questions about the community's understanding of security, peace, justice, solidarity and that the king's rule may bring prosperity to the nation. This is the opposite to what *Pedi* people are doing. When *Pedi* people e.g. sing royal inauguration songs, they are making a statement about who they are. They thus establish the otherness of historical figures who achieved great fits in their lifetime and are hence commonly accepted as poets. Consequently, through song *Pedi* people reaffirm their own cultural identity.

Both Royal Psalms and *Pedi* inauguration songs have elements of lament and petition (for example, pleading for security, peace, justice and solidarity). *Pedi* royal inauguration songs have elements of praise and testimony (for example, they are characterized by joy, self-confidence and imagination).

An attempt has been made by Anderson (1972:32), to show that the principal function of this psalm type is to declare Yahweh's greatness, which he has manifested both in nature and in the history of Israel;

thus the main theme is his praise. It is important to note that through psalms of Yahweh's kingship, God's unchanging love, and his persistent and continuing compassion and affection for man are extolled.

The peculiar Yahweh-is-king Psalms principally function as praise to the greatness of God. Yahweh's kingship is distinguished from the earthly failed monarch. As a result the distressed Israelites were reassured by the firmness of God's reign. These psalms depict Israel's desire for Yahweh's universal victorious rule. In addition they proclaim God's kingdom which remains untouched by the appearance of disaster. In this manner future success over tragedy by inhabitants of God's kingdom is emphasized.

4.2.4.5 Conclusion

In both *Pedi* and Old Testament Royal Psalms celebrating the life of the king is a central theme. Occasions that elicit royal songs include weddings and pre-battle rituals in Israel while royal funerals are distinct among the *Pedi*. Resemblances occur in coronation usages. A subgroup of Yahweh is king psalms is particular to Israel and is unattested to in *Pedi* society.

Royal Psalms have structural elements that are characterized by requests for security, peace and justice offered to God on behalf of the king in order to have a successful reign and prosperous kingdom. On the other hand *Pedi* inauguration songs exemplify praises of king, historical leaders and conveying of morals through story lines. In

addition there is a distinction in the repetition device frequently used in *Pedi* songs.

Old Testament Royal Psalms grew out of a cultic context of the pre-exilic era. These psalms emphasize the relationship between king and God as they depict that the authority to rule derives from the Deity. Their central motif is the praise of Yahweh. To the contrary *Pedi* royalty is hereditary. Hence instead of stressing on the divinity *Pedi* people celebrate legendary heroes rehearsing their historical achievements, invoking and communicating tribal religious-culture. *Pedi* enthronement rituals are joyous occasions typified by elation, self-confidence and imagination in inauguration songs.

4.2.5 Zion and the urge for liberation, trust and peace

4.2.5.1 Form

Songs of Zion glorify Jerusalem and praise Yahweh. Zion is the dwelling of God. It is a place of refuge for God's people (Ps 46:1). Form-critically songs of Zion are classified as hymns of praise (Crenshaw 2001:7; Gerstenberger 2001:539). Historically, these songs reflect early Jewish setting in the dispersion (Anderson 1972:35). Ancient pre-Israelite traditions have influenced Zion songs (Gerstenberger 2001:539; Kraus 1988:65). Against the backdrop of Jebusite beliefs the choice of Zion, the mountain of God is rehearsed in Psalm 48:3 (Westermann 1989:283).

Pedi liberation songs belong to the larger South African and African political and cultural contexts. They are protestations against poor working and living conditions and racial discrimination in the previous

South African society (Gray 1998:75). Therefore these songs are aimed at social solidarity and working towards the solution of political problems. Through music a powerful liberation message is communicated.

A common liberation thread runs through the songs of Zion and *Pedi* liberation songs. Affected by exile the psalmists yearned for their return to Jerusalem. In this way Zion is idealized as a place of safety and refuge (Smith 1984:15; Kraus 1988:58). *Pedi* people, like many South Africans, longed and are still longing for an exploitation free country during and after the Apartheid era. Moreover they desire better living conditions.

4.2.5.2 Language (structural elements and characteristics)

Old Testament Zion Songs (e.g Ps 46; 48; 76; 84; 87; 122) liberate listeners to express emotions without a need to disclose, whether interpretations of experiences and lyrical content could be used to explore common themes or not (MacLeod and Harvey 2000:30). In most cases these songs are used as a medium for seeking equality, trust and peace as interlocking aims.

Pedi liberation songs (e.g *Ga e boe Afrika*) are used as a vehicle through which people learn about life and, amongst other things, recount current and historical events. Through a liberation song like *Ga e boe Afrika* and dance people are able to share their burdens, triumphs, sadness and gladness of heart. Songs are also sung by people to bind them together or to unite them for one common aim. These *Pedi* liberation songs are antiphonal, repetitive and cyclical in

nature. Their improvisational character and their rhythmic patterns invite the body to move. The music is inspiring, unifying, arousing and unlocks an exhilaration in one's soul. Kaemmer (1993:157) has observed that traditions of improvising music and lyrics enable performers to make personal comments on events as they are occurring.

When we compare Zion Songs and *Pedi* liberation songs the results have shown that both Zion and liberation songs begin with a) despair and plea for a hearing; b) negative conditions; and c) petition and anticipation. Both are arousing and unlocking exhilaration in the reader's/performer's life. These songs reflect life with its depths and heights, life lived in the context of the vastness of history. Comparisons have further shown that both perspectives reflect individual's or the nation's joys and sorrows between birth and death, toil and celebration, sleeping and waking, sickness and recovery, losses, anxieties, confidences and temptations to despair.

Songs of Zion convey thematic ideas which focus on God's power demonstrated in creation, deliverance from exile and rulership (Miller 1986:12). Structural elements and characteristics of these psalms are confession-like static expressions descriptive of God as resident and protector of Zion. These static statements are motivated by Yahweh's aversion of enemy assault. Subsequently imperatives urging the audience to acknowledge Yahweh, join in the festal procession and perform their vows are provided.

4.2.5.3 Content and context

Israel's relation to God and the choice of Zion as God's dwelling place are key motifs in Songs of Zion. Jerusalem is the earthly centre for God's presence. Worshippers long to visit the temple on mount Zion. It is a place of refuge, symbolically sheltering even the sparrows (Ps 84:1-4). Jerusalem was renowned for her invincibility drawn from ancient deities. Later it was a centre for rituals and festivals in honour of Yahweh. Hence Israel's greatness is based on God who dwells among his people at the temple.

The *Pedi* song *Ga e boe Afrika* is illustrative of a *Pedi* liberation song. It consists of requests, instructions and a demand. Singers petition the restoration of Africa to indigenous owners. Petitions precede protestation against pass and other unbearable laws. Subsequently, there is a demand for a pound per day wage. Composed for contestation against exploitation in South Africa the song addresses unbearable pass laws and biased remuneration conditions. Segregation contributed to feelings of estrangement, disorientation and a lack of belonging for people in despair. Hence the song expresses a demand for self rule by indigenous South Africans.

In both traditions land is idealized as a sanctuary and place of freedom. The psalmists portray an image of mount Zion as Gods' dwelling place and consequently a place of refuge. *Pedi* and South African liberation songs convey a futuristic land of freedom and well being.

4.2.5.4 Function

Songs of Zion are composed primarily for the *temple and praise* of God. In a dialectical style these texts mention *peace and war* (Pss 84:1-4; 122). Zion is God's home from where he symbolically extinguishes the flaming arrow (Pss 46:7; 87:2). A universal manifestation of God's peace is raised. Zion does not only survive attacks but radiates security to the whole world (Pss 47:7-11; 48:13; 87:5). Foundational to the state of peace is the *presence* of the heavenly and not an earthly king. Songs of Zion *reveal the desire* of Jewish people to make pilgrimage to the holy city.

Pedi songs of liberation are a *recollection of the struggle for emancipation* in South Africa. Political leaders are hailed and descriptions of fight for transformation narrated. But *Pedi* songs are not restricted to the past. Themes aimed at accelerating contemporary change at societal and national levels are raised. *Equality and peace*, are subjects of note in these songs. *Catharsis is achieved* through songs as burdens, sadness and gladness are brought out in song.

Liberation songs *disseminate themes of nationhood, security and well being*. In war time songs *rally people in pursuit of refuge*. Under exploitative governmental systems the oppressed employ music to *raise their hope* about a glorious future. However, the centrality of God's presence in the Songs of Zion distinguishes them from the exemplar *Pedi* song *Ga e boe Afrika*.

4.2.5.5 Conclusion

Liberation songs are common to many people of the world. Oppressive regimes breed resistance. *Pedi* people like the ancient Israelites utilized songs for orientation during periods of distress like occupation and political exploitation. The psalmists praise Zion, a figurative representation of trust, peace and deliverance. At the centre of these songs is the indwelling presence of Yahweh. For that reason Zion cannot be moved and her citizens are safe and secure. *Pedi* people raise their voices in song for mobilisation and solidarity against tribal and national sufferings. In spite of the resemblances there is a variation regarding the role of God as protector and ally in trouble. *Gae boe Afrika* however does not represent a stereotype by virtue of not depicting a direct petition to the Supreme Being. *Pedi* people like many Africans seek God for the resolution of their difficulties.

4.2.6 Promoting wise behaviour

4.2.6.1 Form

Old Testament wisdom psalms are identified by motifs like retribution, counsel, fear of Yahweh, juxtaposition of wicked and righteous people and the two 'ways'. An important feature of wisdom psalms is their didactic character. Wisdom psalms contain vocabulary of turning from evil and a connectedness between wealth and uprightness.

Pedi wisdom-like songs are educational. They focus on adult responsibilities. For that reason they are taught at *Pedi* initiation schools. At such schools neophytes are taught the aged customs of

Pedi people. In this way individuals are equipped with skills to participate in the larger community and in adult life.

Few differences exist between Old Testament wisdom psalms and *Pedi* wisdom-like texts. In wisdom psalms prohibition against foolish conduct is very often mentioned whereas in *Pedi* wisdom songs the use of irony is evident. However, both Old Testament wisdom psalms and *Pedi* wisdom songs share a general characteristic of wisdom poetry and language.

4.2.6.2 Language (structural elements and characteristics)

Old Testament wisdom psalms offer advice about life. They promote righteousness over wickedness through contrast. The fear of the Lord as principle for everyday behaviour is promoted. Other poetic devices that are used in wisdom psalms are the acrostic structure, rhetorical elements, formulaic language and repetition. This genre is cast in a father-son setting. Language in wisdom psalms is didactic and meditative.

Since most *Pedi* wisdom songs are prominent in initiation rites they are characterized by taboos and traditional beliefs. Structurally these songs have short solo-response forms. Proverbial language is generic. Equally *Pedi* music is reiterative which signifies its didactic nature. *Pedi* initiation songs are artistic-aesthetic communication which integrate dance and other visual and verbal arts.

In both traditions practical life is central. Psalms focus on righteousness and wickedness and the resultant success or failure from such lifestyles respectively. *Pedi* songs on the other hand

promote an adjusted lifestyle through taboos and customs. Exemplarily *Kgogedi* a *Pedi* initiation song for girls addresses issues of loneliness and estrangement through words of encouragement. Further, the girls are motivated to enjoy their work and ease their minds. The expressiveness of *Pedi* music is either subdued or accounted for in wisdom psalms where a sombre meditative approach is preferred. There is a distinction in the structure of the song texts from the two traditions. This is demonstrated by the occurrence of variant elements in the songs. Old Testament wisdom songs include the following elements: proverbs, sayings, admonitions and prohibitions while *Pedi* wisdom songs include a plea for God to hear, a general character of wisdom poetry, despair and irony.

Pedi songs are marked by the presence of short solo-response phrases. Their reiterative characteristic enhances wisdom sayings. Another common feature of *Pedi* songs is its artistic-aesthetic aspect conveyed by dance, visual and verbal arts. Paramusical features such as whistling, yelling and ululating are common too.

In view of the above discussion similarities are found in use of proverbs. To the contrary artistic-aesthetic practices, paramusical features and reiterative aspects are uncommon in Israelite wisdom psalms.

4.2.6.3 Content and context

Old Testament wisdom psalms (e.g. Pss 1; 9; 10; 25; 34; 49; 73, etc) could be interpreted as an expression of Israel's worship, but their

purpose is to offer believers wisdom views. They convince of righteous behavior.

Pedi wisdom songs like *Mokgoronyane* and *Kgogedi* are teaching songs. The songs are educational focused on how one should become a responsible adult. Wisdom texts are meant to convince the hearer of wise conduct. They are not initiation texts, have no attempt to speak to the ancestors, no concern with the problems of modern Western living challenges. *Pedi* initiation texts show a directness in language; they address to ancestors and of ancestors. Thus these songs have kept or retained their popularity in oral tradition down through the centuries.

4.2.6.4 Function

There is a strong emphasis on the didactic character in psalms of wisdom. This corpus is an expression of Israel's behavioural guidelines. By promoting the fear of the Lord the psalmists intend to raise practical lifestyles conforming to the admonition. Hence the community is urged to shun wickedness.

Pedi wisdom songs are aimed at promoting community well-being. Cultural heritage is preserved through retentive memory. These songs assist in the preservation and transmission of religion and custom. It appears that the presence of initiation schools and a strong value system in *Pedi* society have contributed to the reduction of social delinquency, crime and divorce rate. Conversely respect, politeness, authority courage and endurance are pronounced due to cultural education forms.

Wisdom songs feature prominently in the Psalms and in the *Pedi* society. Emphasis is placed on didactic aspects. Through teaching and warning the communities are urged to live exemplarily. However in the Psalms the origin of wisdom is the fear of the Lord while among *Pedi* people it is drawn from the community. In any case results from both religious experiences impact on the respective communities.

Pedi wisdom songs like other African songs embody an African philosophy of life. They assist in the training and preparing of individuals to be better citizens and contribute to society positively. Laziness is eschewed while hard work is encouraged (e.g. *Mokgoronyane*). Equally the value of time management, decency, hygiene, spousal honour and family care are inculcated in girls at the initiation school through song. Wisdom psalms are didactic; believers are urged to live wisely through the fear of the Lord. They are advised to reject folly and refrain from wicked behaviour. To that end wisdom songs in both traditions encourage right living. The emphasis on the fear of the God obtaining in biblical psalms is however lacking from *Pedi* songs.

4.2.6.5 Conclusion

Wisdom psalms belong to the larger biblical corpus of wisdom. Psalmists locate meaning in life in the fear of God. Ideally, those who follow God's ways are successful. Wisdom psalms are therefore instructional and aimed at promoting a godly life. Poetic devices of rhetorical speech, contrast, acrostic style, repetition and formulaic language are employed. Similarly, *Pedi* people employ wisdom songs to promote well-being and success in life. Its domain is the cultural educational system centred on initiation schools for boys and girls. It is

hoped that through teaching Pedi society will comprise well adjusted adults.

4.2.7 Expressing trust

4.2.7.1 Form

Psalms of Trust are broadly classified into individual and community psalms. Although the motif of trust occurs in numerous psalms its tone is pronounced in the Psalms of Trust. The psalmists place their trust in God. Trust is expressed metaphorically such as 'resting', 'sleeping' and finding 'safety' in God's presence (Pss 4:8; 23:2,5). Similarly, God is figuratively portrayed as 'rock', 'fortress' and 'refuge' (Pss 16:1; 27:1, 11; 62:2, 6, 8). Through symbolic language the psalmists convey their trust in God and his acts.

Among *Pedi* people prayers of trust are commonly associated with healing sessions. At such occasions traditional healers attend to the sick through singing and expressing petitions directed to ancestors. Both men and women may offer prayers for the sick but the majority of *Pedi* traditional healers are female. Healing rituals include singing, clapping, drumming and dancing. Traditional healers sing about their ancestors and the *Pedi* social history.

Prayers of Trust express people's confidence against debilitating situations. Metaphoric language pervades Psalms of Trust. God's attributes are represented symbolically. In this way the petitioners depict the dependability of God during periods of crises. *Pedi* people, however, use songs to elicit the ancestors' assistance. God is indirectly petitioned through ancestors.

In the Old Testament Psalms are focused on the worshipping community and on God, whereas in the *Pedi* society the focus is on the spirits, diviners, trance as well as the healing situation.

4.2.7.2 Language (structural elements and characteristics)

Structural elements of the Psalms of Trust in the Old Testament are as follows: declaration of trust exemplified by “The Lord will hear when I call to him” (Ps 4:3). Communal psalms of trust commonly have an invitation to trust addressed to the community (Pss 27:14; 62:8; 115:9-11). Generally God is the basis of trust in these psalms. Occasionally, psalmists draw their trust from historical experiences eliciting faith and imagery of nature such as mountains that surround Jerusalem (Ps 125:2). Since psalms of trust are prayers of faith petition is embedded at their core (Ps 123:2-3). They may also contain a remnant of lament (Ps 48:7-8) and vow to praise the Lord (Pss 16:7; 27:66; 115:17-18).

Pedi Prayers of Trust (e.g. *Salane*) reflect elements like a) a declaration which aptly sums up and introduces what is to follow; b) confidence in ancestors’ goodness; c) a plea for ancestor veneration; d) confidence in the ancestors’ goodness; e) confession; f) prayer and expressions of the singer’s confidence in the ancestors; and g) trust in God.

In view of the above comparison, it is evident that in both Psalms of Trust and *Pedi* Prayers of Trust, there are elements of petition embellished by trust. Similarly supplicants express their trust in the Supreme Being. To the contrary in *Pedi* Prayers of trust vows to praise

God, lament and communal invitations to Trust in God are lacking. In psalm texts there is an absence of ancestors this feature is pronounced in Pedi prayers. This practice is prohibited in the Old Testament.

4.2.7.3 Content and context

Psalms of Trust convey deep confidence in God and his goodness. As a dominant motif *trust* pales situations of peril experienced by the petitioners. For example, shepherd imagery in Psalm 23 depicts the psalmist's trust in God's protection and guidance amidst danger. Motivated by physical and psychological exhaustion petitioners seek God for intervention.

Salane, the *Pedi* Song of Trust, is employed in ancestor veneration. It contains prayer, confession and confidence in ancestors. *Salane* is part of the repertoire of rituals surrounding invocation of ancestors. *Pedi* ritual context includes libations, offerings and propitiations. In the main rituals are performed at ancestral graves. Through rituals and song trust in ancestors and God is expressed. Ancestors therefore are requested to mediate on the people's behalf with God for protection and resolutions.

Similarities regarding reliance on powers outside their own is noted in both above mentioned traditions. However, there is a variation regarding the place of ancestral veneration in *Pedi* culture. Contextual distance is depicted by the rituals and place of worship. Psalms are predominantly temple songs unlike the grave and other designated places among *Pedi* people. Functionally though trust serves a similar

purpose of relying on a higher transcendental power in the two traditions.

4.2.7.4 Function

Psalms of Trust (e.g. Pss 16; 23) are designed not only to *strengthen*, *comfort* and *encourage* the worshipping community, but more importantly, to *awaken* in the worshipper a sense of a longing, i.e. a quest that is like thirsting for water in a “dry and weary land” (Ps 63:2).

Pedi Songs of Trust (e.g. *Salane*) function as a means of *connecting* people with the spirits and sets the mood for the activities of the diviners⁶³. In some instances, it enables the transformation of the diviner into a state of a trance in order to *communicate* with the spirits on behalf of the client. It also serves *aesthetic purposes* in traditional healing by soothing the *psyche* of the patient when he or she is undergoing painful treatment.

4.2.7.5 Conclusion

God is the object of trust in the Psalms of Trust. When overwhelmed by physical and psychological distress victims rely on God’s goodness for reprieve. *Pedi* people hold healing rituals for the sick. Powerful ancestors are summoned through gifts and requests to effect healing. Although God is not addressed directly among the *Pedi* ancestors have a mediatory role of conveying requests to the Deity. This feature distinguishes *Pedi* religious experience from the psalmists. Further,

⁶³ Diviners are traditional doctors who are inspired by the ancestors’ spirits.

traditional healers are not attested to in Psalms. Consulting such functionaries is prohibited in the Old Testament.

4.2.8 Wrath given to God

4.2.8.1 Form

Imprecatory psalms in the Old Testament invoke God to avenge the victim. Through prayer the psalmists request God to destroy or harm the adversary. Thus they are called Psalms of violence, Psalms of vengeance, Psalms of hate and Psalms of disorientation (Murphy 2000:46).

In *Pedi* culture imprecation is employed for the censure of drunkenness, abuse and prostitution. These songs are developed thematically. Generally they are antiphonal. Other poetic devices which are commonly utilised in these kind of songs include irony. In this way sanctions are advanced on erring members of society. Confidence in human intermediaries and ancestors is also expressed. To that end *Pedi* cultural and religious traditions are rehearsed and inculcated in the community.

The presence of imprecatory prayers in both religious experiences is affirmed. Yet there are variations concerning the subject of negative expressions. While the psalmists aim at the destruction of their enemies *Pedi* people, exemplified in *Leepo*, are censuring errant members of the community. Disregard for *Pedi* traditions and custodians of customs is disastrous as it may invoke ancestral punishment. The role of God as executor of vengeance is pronounced in the Psalms unlike in the above *Pedi* song.

4.2.8.2 Language (structural elements and characteristics)

Psalms of imprecation use a language that is negative and harsh. The psalmists convey their bitterness and vindictiveness. Simultaneously they vow to praise God upon effecting their deliverance. These words of destruction must be conceived within the context of petitioning God for protection from enemies or life endangering situations.

Leepo, the exemplar *Pedi* imprecation, exhibits elements of irony, pun, confidence, lament and despair. This song is aimed at people who disregard traditional healers and ancestors. Through irony negative words are uttered against them. For that reason irony is employed as a corrective device in *Pedi* imprecatory songs.

While the psalmists' enemies aim at causing harm on them, the song *Leepo* reflects how errant community members are targeted for punishment. In any case such community members are enemies as they are defiant of *Pedi* traditions. Their deviant behaviour breaks them from solidarity.

4.2.8.3 Content and context

Imprecatory psalms (e.g. Pss 5:10; 6:10; 7:6,9; 15-16; 9:19-20; 10:15; 17:13; 28:4; 31:17-18; 40:14-15; etc) express the desire for God's vengeance on the individual or Israel's enemies. These psalms teach how important prayer is, and that all life experiences could be brought before God. If not lectionary, they teach the believer to tell the whole of his/her story to God. *Pedi* imprecatory songs are deliberately sung to advise, to insult, to mock and to provoke. They

emphasize the corrective role of judgments and the need to abide by communal values in order to experience well being.

Imprecatory psalms arise from historical contexts of danger, threat and unjust treatment. For that reason the victims place their destiny in God's abilities. God is understood as the one who holds the power of vengeance. Through prayer victims relinquish their anger to God. Ultimately God holds the right of execution. To that end God's righteousness and justice are experienced while saying or meditating these kinds of psalms.

The *Pedi* imprecation song *Leepo* arises from a situation of disregard for tradition. It appears that the offender(s) has ignored *Pedi* religious traditions and traditional healers by joining missionary and indigenous churches. The offender has neglected important *Pedi* cultural rites like ancestral veneration, circumcision and polygamy. Erring members of the community face punishment from ancestors for their misbehaviour. Although protective, ancestors are capable of vindictiveness. Thus, those who rebel against aged customs such as Christians who refuse to venerate their ancestors are in danger of death. Disobeying traditional healers may also elicit punishment. Other traditions which must be obeyed include circumcision and polygamy. In order to resolve the situation the poet seeks the assistance of the traditional healer.

Specific life situations cause danger to befall the individual and the community. In the Psalms the enemy attacks the innocent. On the other hand *Pedi* songs ridicule those who defy traditional customs. The

psalmist requests God to avenge. Similarly *Pedi* people warn erring members of community of pending ancestral malevolent acts.

4.2.8.4 Function

In the Old Testament imprecation psalms serve varying purposes. They are *therapeutic* as they accord the petitioners an opportunity to offer their experiences of hurt to God. By so doing God assumes the responsibility of retribution. Anger is not allowed to build up but it is rather vented to God. Equally they portray a *desire for justice*.

Pedi imprecations are aimed at *providing advice*. They function to *insult, mock, and provoke* the defiant members of the society. In this way morals are promoted and maintained. Vices such as adultery, drunkenness, use of wild hemp and dishonouring of ancestors and traditional healers are censured.

Functionally therefore imprecatory songs serve divergent purposes in the two religious-cultural experiences. Yet in both cases the power of vengeance lies beyond human poets. In the Psalms this power is vested in God, but among the *Pedi* it is centred in traditional healers and ancestors. Another difference involves the fact that *Pedi* imprecations are supposed to incite transformation while vengeance is the chief objective in the Psalms.

4.2.8.5 Conclusion

Imprecatory songs are common among both *Pedi* people and Israelites. These retributive songs serve various functions such as education, upholding and promoting morals and customs through

advice, insults and mockery in Pedi culture. Biblical imprecation acts in the expression and request for vengeance. By imprecation psalmists seek God's intervention, rescue, redress and destruction of their adversaries. God is the executor of retribution in the psalms but among the Pedi traditional healers and ancestors perform this function. The role of ancestors and traditional healers is premised by their position as custodians of custom. In most cases the psalmists' foes are condemned to a fate fitting their crimes. Erring Pedi people on the other hand are in danger of destruction since they have broken faith with their community by disregarding traditions. Therefore imprecatory songs are employed in the two traditions; they denounce, warn and invoke the power of God or ancestors and traditional healers in the Psalms and Pedi cultures respectively.

4.2.9 Structuring relationship with God/the divine

4.2.9.1 Form

Certain psalms focus on the Mosaic law, hence they are called Torah psalms. Three psalms deal entirely with the Torah motif (Pss 1; 19; 119) Yet allusions to the Torah are found in many more psalms particularly wisdom psalms (Pss 18; 25; 33; 68; 78; 81; 89; 93; 94; 99; 103; 105; 111; 112; 147; 148). Ethical matters such as justice, righteousness and truth are central issues in these texts.

Pedi so-called law songs feature among the intermediary offices of diviners, traditional healers, priests and chiefs. These functionaries relay messages from God and ancestors to the community. The exemplar *Bana ba Modimo* is addressed to the community by urging

members to heed God's laws. It elaborates the reason for drought and warns against disregard of godly instructions.

Functionally, law songs admonish members of the communities to uphold the commandments and/or instructions of God. Warnings are pronounced on errant members. By so doing the welfare of the individual and the society is promoted. Nevertheless, the added dimension of ancestors in *Pedi* religious experience has no approximation in Israel. Similarly the mediatory functionaries, diviners, traditional healers and chiefs are not attested to in the Psalms.

4.2.9.2 Language (structural elements and characteristics)

At least ten different terms for the Torah are used in the law psalms: eight major terms are employed, namely: a) commandment; b) statute; c) word; d) judgement; e) testimony; f) precept; g) law or instruction; and h) way (Day 1990:56-57).

Pedi law songs (e.g. *Bana ba Modimo, thaetsang melao ya Modimo ka badimo*) can inter alia be divided into several parts: *Bana ba Modimo* sets off by pleading with the community to heed God's law. It is followed by a declaration of confidence in God's encompassing presence. His presence is complemented by an attribute of all-powerfulness. Thereafter the singer then admonishes his community to follow God's instructions by desisting from evil acts. A rationale for suffering in view of a prevailing drought is provided as the presence of violence in society. To that end mediated sayings of God's assurance concerning the provision of rain are stated however they are hinged on

the cessation of the community's wickedness. Subsequently, the audience is encouraged to trust in God and his love.

Petitions for rain are addressed to the Deity embellished by affirmations of God's ability to answer prayer. Requests and confessions precede instructions to the congregation to remain faithful and fervent at prayer. In conclusion the poet pronounces blessings of peace in benediction and disperses the gathering.

It seems that teachings about God and his instructions are found in both Old Testament Torah psalms and *Pedi* law songs. When comparing Old Testament law psalms and *Pedi* law songs results have shown that the primary function of both is to command the believer about his/her relationship with God (or the divine). Psalm 1 for example admonishes the righteous one to follow the way of the Lord. Similarly *Bana ba Modimo* urges the community into a relationship with God through obedience to his instructions. In the Old Testament God employs prophets and priests as His intermediaries to the believers, but in the *Pedi* society diviners, traditional healers, chiefs and ancestors are intermediaries between the *Pedi* people and God.

4.2.9.3 Content and context

Torah psalms are instructional. Individual Israelites have experienced teaching through meditative private devotions as well as in liturgical public worship. Worshippers are taught that meditating on the Torah results in blessings (Ps 1:6). In contrast the way of the wicked leads to destruction. God is faithful and extends his justice and good acts to those who keep his precepts. Consequently the psalmists are filled with joy and knowledge from God.

Bana ba modimo is a *Pedi* law song which comprises instructions to take heed of God's laws, warning about waywardness, and express wishes and benediction. The poet, a diviner, is a mouth piece of the gods and intends to transmit the message to his community. God's omnipotence is also communicated by the song. In sum, the *Pedi* song teaches that obeying God's instructions which are mediated by the ancestors result in blessings.

Both biblical and *Pedi* traditions encourage obedience to the law of God. There is strong emphasis on the role of the community in *Pedi* culture while a proviso for individual piety is embedded in Torah psalms. Psalmists promote the Torah in public worship. Distinctions arise from the aspects of petition and role of diviners and ancestors in the *Pedi* song. Similarities are noticeable from the concreteness of the consequences of obedience and disobedience. Exemplarily the Old Testament teaches that God provides justice and blessings for obedience and punishment to the wicked. Similarly in *Pedi* culture wayward members of society experience calamities while the obedient enjoy success in their endeavours.

4.2.9.4 Function

The Torah (law) psalms were not treasured merely as examples of beautiful poetry. Rather, these psalms have been preserved and treasured because they teach about God, his relationship with believers and about the guidelines of faith. Psalms (e.g. Pss 1; 19; 119) have instructed the people of God as they have read and mediated upon them in private devotion; above all, Israelites and

believers have been instructed as they have read, heard and sung the Psalms in public worship.

The primary function of *Pedi* law songs is to command the community and the individual. The purpose of this command is two-fold, namely: a) to instruct the people to carry out the instructions (laws) as instructed by God through the ancestors; b) and to admonish the people to comply with God's laws for their survival. Consequently, obedience leads to improved and revived religious life.

Pedi law songs (e.g. *Bana ba Modimo, thaetsang melao ya Modimo ka badimo*) serve as teaching songs in which God gives instruction to mankind as a guide for life. They prompt a prayer expressing man's continuous need of God's care.

4.2.9.5 Conclusion

Law songs are aimed at admonishing members of the community to follow God. Obedience to God's law precedes realising a blessed life. Individuals and the community are secure in God when laws are followed. On the other hand *Pedi* people follow oral religious traditions, revere ancestors and are directives from diviners. Furthermore while the religious community is involved in both traditions it appears that private devotion is less pronounced in the *Pedi* religious experience. In both traditions religious experts are involved. Priests and prophets mediate the precepts of God to Israel.

4.2.10 Festive celebrations

4.2.10.1 Form

Certain psalms are associated with the major religious festivals of Israel. They include Unleavened Bread and Passover, Harvest, Tabernacles and New Year. These festivals correlate with the agricultural seasons. It appears that Psalms 120 - 134 were sung at the water-pouring rites on the great day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Enthronement psalms were sung at this occasion too (Pss 47; 93; 96-99). Equally, Yahweh's kingship and enthronement psalms were probably recited at the New Year festival. Festival psalms are principally hymns of praise. Thematically these psalms highlight exhortations to praise, mention Yahweh's presence and his excellent acts.

Pedi festive songs relate to entertainment. Such occasions include bridal payments and wedding ceremonies. Drumming, clapping, rattles and whistles accompany singing and dancing at these festivals. Generally, festival songs are low on melody. A song leader improvises by adding new words as the song proceeds. During bridal negotiations performances comprise recitations, singing, dancing and playing of instruments. Such songs may be high on advice, such as *Hela mmatswale, tlogela dipotwana* (Hi! Mother-in-law, please abandon the cooking pots). This wedding song admonishes a *Pedi* bride to attend to household duties.

Religious festivals are found in both *Pedi* and the Old Testament. These occasions are characterized by singing. While psalms became a

common feature of the centralized religious festivals *Pedi* festive songs on the other hand are biased to entertainment and *rites of passage*.

4.2.10.2 Language (structural elements and characteristics)

Festival psalms that are sung during religious feasts like Passover, Booths and Weeks are principally hymns of praise with the usual character and structure of such hymns. Free variations occasioned by their special theme. The main emphases of these psalms are for example, the exhortations to praise; the mention of Yahweh's glorious presence; and the excellent deeds God has just performed or is about to perform. Most festival psalms share characteristic features and a common structural pattern. The structure is comprised of three elements namely, the introductory exhortation or call to praise, the main body of the hymn, which praises God for his attributes and deeds and a concluding section expressing some wish, prayer or blessing.

Pedi festival songs (e.g. *Ngwana malome nnyale* and *Hela mmatswale*) are characterized by several structural elements. This includes a singer's plea for a hearing and marriage to her cousin; motivation for the active participation of both performers and spectators; an announcement of what the festival is all about; and some humble requests by the singers on behalf of the host for everybody to be free and joyous.

Happiness and joy are two prominent characteristics of both Old Testament and *Pedi* festival songs. This confirms that there is no entertainment which can take place without musical accompaniment and/or singing.

4.2.10.3 Content and context

Old Testament major religious festivals form the cultic context of the festive psalms. Mowinckel (1962:106-192) has argued that the New Year festival was important in the reconstruction of a cultic setting. He proposes that at this festival Yahweh was enthroned. Weiser (1962:23-52) has postulated an autumn Covenant Festival. At this occasion the primary focus was on the renewal of the Sinaitic Covenant. Yet another suggestion by Kraus (1966:179-222) points to a Royal Zion Festival. This festival re-enacts the appointment of the Davidic kingship and Jerusalem the city of the king. Several other feasts like Booths, Weeks and Tabernacles as well as family feasts like weddings (see Ps 45) set the context for festival Psalms.

Of the many feasts in *Pedi* culture marriage illustrates an occasion of celebration. Marriage comprises two stages namely bride-price negotiations and payments, as well as wedding ceremonies. The former signifies the transfer of animal or monetary gifts to the bride's family. It is a joyous occasion graced with songs and ululations. A wedding is an equally festive event. Music, dance and feasting are typical activities at such celebrations. Although wedding songs appear to be devoid of religious connotations at the core of these festivities, is a deep sense of African religiosity. Marriage brings together the couple, their families and ancestors. The underlying involvement of ancestors is clear at every stage of the process.

The role of music in both cultures is underlined although the nature of music and musical instruments of biblical times is unknown to us. Songs are normally utilized to convey particular ideas. Functionally

songs and festivities relieve stress, convey important messages aimed at teaching the participants. But the centrality of God or religious experience in festival psalms is not a common feature among *Pedi* people.

4.2.10.4 Function

A particularly important function is how these psalms, performed at annual festivals or celebrations, were used for the celebration of the historical deeds of God: e.g. the election of God's people, the deliverance from Egypt, and the making of the covenant. The purpose of *Pedi* festival songs (e.g. *Ngwana malome nnyale and Hela Mmatswale*) includes entertainment, which broadly implicates forms of socialization and companionship.

The main festivals of early Israel required attendance at the sanctuary. These festivals were closely associated with the agricultural season. Hence, they served a double function, in celebration of the harvest, but importantly also as a reflection on God's redemptive activities of the Exodus. Thus these festivities assisted to actualize the past and to anticipate the future. Through song God is thanked in the cult for his great deeds of provision and redemption.

Central to *Pedi* festival songs is the aspect of entertainment. Traditional *lobola* songs encourage companionship and intermarriage. This is done in an atmosphere of enjoyment as participants and guests celebrate the joyous occasion. Friendships are cemented through marriage and stress is relieved by festivity. Further, marriage within a clan is encouraged in order to keep wealth within family circles.

Wedding songs serve the purposes of welcoming the bride and making her feel cherished.

While the major festivals and songs of Israel surround religious celebrations among *Pedi* people the deity is inconspicuous. Although the gathering of an African community invokes the presence of the living and dead the Deity is hardly mentioned in *Pedi* culture and song texts.

10.2.10.5 Conclusion

Festive psalms are associated with the major religious festivals of Israel namely Unleavened Bread, Passover, Harvest, Tabernacles and New Year. Although originally linked to the agricultural seasons in time they came to be highly religious festivals. Thus festival psalms thematically focus on praising Yahweh. *Pedi* festive songs on the other hand relate to entertainment. They occasion bridal negotiations and payments as well as wedding ceremonies.

Structurally, many festive psalms exhibit the following elements: introductory exhortation, praises of God's attributes and acts, wish and blessing. *Pedi* festival songs are characterized by a plea to be heard, motivation and requests for communal participation in the festivity. Although *Pedi* festival songs do not normally mention the deity rituals surrounding weddings for example are steeped in religious rites. At such rituals ancestors are invoked, spouses are introduced to their "ancestors-in law" and requests for blessings and protection are made.

Festive psalms such as Yahweh is king psalms have a theological focus on the kingship of Yahweh. His rule and its results of blessings are mentioned and anticipated. Since this feature is missing in *Pedi* festival songs they in turn primarily promote celebration. *Pedi* songs regularly convey culturally educative messages. In addition they are therapeutic particularly when considered from their celebrative function. They assist to relieve stress and promote joy and relaxation.

4.2.11 Poetic features

4.2.11.1 Introduction

Both biblical psalms and *Pedi* songs show definite structural patterns to which they conform. Both contain repetition and parallelism, both are songs in the form of poetry. Music and words complement each other in both traditions.

4.2.11.2 Musical application

Psalms feature almost completely in textual form while *Pedi* songs are still very much oral. Old Testament songs are in Hebrew while *Pedi* songs are in the *Pedi* language (Northern Sotho). Different musical accompaniment⁶⁴ with wind, stringed and percussion instruments were utilized in the Old Testament. For example, psalms were used with instruments⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ Sendrey (1969:264) states that the Bible mentions sixteen musical instruments as having been used in Ancient Israel. He further mentions that the book of Daniel refers furthermore to six instruments, which were played at King Nebuchadrezzar's court, their names, however, characterize them as non-Jewish instruments.

⁶⁵ Stringed instruments: a) *kinnor*; b) *nebel*; c) *'asor*; d) *gittit*; e) *sabbeka*; f) *pesanterin*; g) *kathros*; h) *neginot*; i) *shushan*; j) *kleshir*. Wind instruments: a) *'ugab*; b) *halil*; c) *nekeb*; d) *nehilot*; e) *'alamot*; f) *mahol*; g) *mashrokita*; h) *sumponyah*; i) *hazzerah*; j) *keren*; k) *yobel*; and l) flutes. Percussion, shaking and

A notable observation on the similarities between instruments in the Old Testament and *Pedi* society should be mentioned. For both traditions wind and percussion instruments are used.

It is noteworthy that the *moropa* (drum) was also part of the musical instruments which were employed to accompany the Old Testament psalms, as it is found in the *Pedi* tradition.

In conclusion, one may observe that traditionally *Pedi* people do not use stringed instruments to accompany their cultural songs as it is experienced in the Old Testament psalms.

4.3 Life setting (*Sitz im Leben*)

4.3.1 Historical setting

Different socio-political events gave rise to the two traditions, namely Old Testament and *Pedi* songs, i.e. different political settings, different cultural challenges, different underlying religious assumptions and frames of reference. For example Israel developed over a period of time from an egalitarian society to monarchy. *Pedi* society is tribal composed of connected clans and families under a chief. Israel's chequered history has ensured borrowing of ideas and practices to form a religious cultural system exemplified by biblical accounts. Similarly *Pedi* culture although unique in certain aspects broadly

rattling instruments: a) *tof*; b) *meziltayim*; c) *zelzelim*; d) *shalishim*; e) *menacan'im*; f) *pa'amonim*; and g) *mezillot* (Sendrey 1969:264), while *Pedi* songs are sung with instruments like a) *meropa* (drums); b) *dinaka* (reed pipes); c) *phalafala* (horn); d) *mekuduetane* (flutes); e) *dithlwathlwadi* (rattles) and f) *dipela* (mbiras). The latter finding is confirmed by (Stone 1998:7) when he observes that singing, playing instruments, dancing, masquerading and dramatizing are part of the conceptual package that many Africans think of as one and the same.

resembles other African cultures. Central to Old Testament beliefs is a strong monotheism. Yahweh worship developed by overthrowing and assimilating ideas from neighbouring cultures. Pedi people also share a common religious belief system with other African people. At the core of Pedi religiosity is belief in a Supreme being and ancestors. In view of the above underlying historical religious structural influences it is tentatively possible to postulate religious differences between the two traditions.

Many of the *Pedi* songs originated in the twentieth century while the Psalms were composed 2-3 millenia ago (Coggins 1990:84). Headings in Psalms provide pseudo-identification of historical life settings but *Pedi* songs lack such identification.

The comparison generally shows that on the one hand, the addressee in biblical psalms is most often God himself (Pss 4:3,8; 81:1; 90:1-2) and sometimes it is people. On the other hand in the *Pedi* songs it is almost exclusively the ancestors and people whom are the addressees.

4.3.2 Cultic setting

Psalms were mostly recited or meditated by believers of the Yahweh faith but *Pedi* texts by people not necessarily attached to temples and sung by many different types of people in the *Pedi* community. In the *Pedi* tribe, music making is generally organized as a social event. Public performances take place on social occasions when members of a clan or a community come together for enjoyment of leisure, or for recreational activities. In the *Pedi* tradition, social occasions and music

are inseparable. This is also the case with the psalms, although the contexts are different.

Both cultures' songs deal with themes, which are universally human. These include life, death, wisdom, veneration of divine being(s), etc. Both Psalms and *Pedi* songs feature in the context of specific significant situations in life, politics, social events, religion and religious ritual.

4.4 Ritual revival of a divine experience

Generally, on the one hand, various types of Old Testament psalms express worship in one way or the other; whether it is praise or lament, or anything in between these two poles. On the other hand, *Pedi* Psalm-like Songs are used to express success (joy/praise), happy times (thanksgiving), times of sorrow (laments), protesting (liberation), the inauguration and funeral of the chief (royal), telling stories (wisdom), *malopo* cult, cohesion (penitence), emotional expression (rituals), ancestor veneration, pouring of libation and communication (security and survival), therapy (possession), irony (imprecation), instructions (law), as well as prayers of trust.

Furthermore, a close look at both Old Testament Psalms and *Pedi* Psalm-like Songs reveals that the *Pedi* tribe freely uses their songs for various functions: to instruct, ridicule, support, educate, clarify, warn, and comment on events or persons, etc. As a form of oral communication, both narratives and songs play an important role in the *Pedi* society. Through them people express their views of all aspects of life. Because of their nature, *Pedi* songs have more

authority than stories. One song can be used at many different occasions, and can also carry several applications and interpretations. Psalms in the Old Testament were originally more restricted to specific themes or contexts. For example, in the *Pedi* tribe imprecatory songs (e.g. *Leepo*) can be used to insult, mock, provoke and to submit a petition to the ancestors. In the *Pedi* culture imprecatory songs such as *Leepo* are employed as an expression of confidence in the ancestors and declaration of loyalty, whereas the focus in the Old Testament imprecatory psalms (e.g. Pss 59; 109; etc) is on the precise prayer for what the worshippers want.

Community Psalms of Thanksgiving (e.g. Ps 65) place a special emphasis on God's provision of food, good health and security for the world (Pleins, 1993:63). *Pedi* Songs of Thanksgiving place a special emphasis on ancestors' provision of food for either the clan or community.

Psalms and *Pedi* songs function to create religious significance for the local cultural community. In addition to expressing praise and joy, both are associated with such varied moods as consolation and thanksgiving. The basis for music making is usually dependent on the members of the clan or group who share the common habitat, and who have common local traditions, common beliefs and values. This is not to say that members should know one another, but they may be bound by the network of social relations.

In view of the above descriptions, we may conclude that both traditions mediate and revive religious experience of believers in and outside the cult and enhance their worship of the divine.

4.5 Final synthesis

When Psalms of the Old Testament are compared to the *Pedi* psalm-like texts there appear to be many general similarities between the songs of the two cultures with regard to a variety of issues. A closer look at the songs themselves reveals many significant differences on a variety of levels.

The different historical and cultural contexts of the two textual traditions suggest that each must be appropriated in their own context. Only thereafter can commonalities of the human condition and oral affinity be established. *Both traditions mediate religious experience of believers and enhance their worship of the divine.*