



**Prayer for protection: A comparative perspective on
Psalms in relation to Lozi Prayer traditions**

by

LISWANISO KAMUWANGA

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DEDICATION

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- To colleagues and companions in the work of God;

I dedicate this work.



DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work. It has not been previously submitted for any examination or any degree in any other university.

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ABSTRACT

Thematically, this research interrogates prayer for protection. Its title embodies two distinct religious traditions namely the biblical Psalms in the Old Testament and Lozi prayers grounded in a broad African religious cultural experience. The concept of prayer precipitates questions regarding functionality, structural and theological aspects. Further, this investigation problematizes a theoretical trajectory of closeness between biblical and African cultural experience proposed by some scholars.

This study makes a contribution towards a comparative approach in Biblical Studies. An integrated hermeneutical reading is applied to Psalms scholarship. The argumentation is based on a construct of cultic, literary, historical contexts and theological analyses of Psalms 28; 64; 77; 91 and 140. A contemporary reading of similar prayer traditions arising from Lozi people is then conducted.

From a perspective of both Psalm studies and African religious experience prayer for protection is seen as a petitioner's response to the Supreme Being during periods of danger and adversarial encounters. Such danger is imminent at the time of prayer. A victim places his/ her confidence in the salvific intervention of God or the gods. Through this standpoint selected psalms are considered not as songs of praise, but rather as prayers of protection from danger and enemy attacks.

A parallel is drawn to the Lozi suppliants' response to various cultural foes like tribal enemies, malicious neighbours and witchcraft. Other situations of danger are identified as mythological and natural calamities such as drought and crop failure. A comparative analysis of concepts like God, enemies, petitioners, elements of prayer, cultic and other related aspects has yielded similarities and differences. The results of this research contribute to a data bank on indigenous Lozi knowledge systems, hermeneutical and dialogical points of departure between the two traditions within the context of Biblical and Religious Studies.

ORTHOGRAPHICAL REMARKS

The adjusted Harvard reference system is followed in this research. In the same vein, abbreviations of books of the Bible will be listed according to rules in Kritzinger's¹ outline on research methodology.

Unless otherwise indicated the Bible translation of choice is the New International Version (NIV). For purposes of comparison, the Revised Standard Version (RSV), the New Amplified Version (NAV) and the Masoretic Text (MT) have been utilised.

Titles of source material in the bibliography conform to the way they actually appear on originals copies.

¹ See Kritzinger (2001:20).

TERMINOLOGIES

Certain terms have been used in the content of this work to describe personalities, institutions and approaches such as:

African Independent Churches- these are churches originating in Africa by Africans and primarily for Africans (Phiri 2000:3).

African Traditional Religion- is the sum total of beliefs, wisdom ritual practices and institutions of predominantly black Africans south of the Sahara (Magesa 2000:4).

African Hermeneutics- is a contextual approach that foregrounds African culture as a point of departure for conducting hermeneutics.

God- in this study I have elected to address the Supreme Being in the male gender in congruity with biblical and Lozi traditions.

Living-dead-a term coined by Mbiti to define ancestors. It includes the aspects of continued existence and being part of the living family.

Mission churches- these are churches planted by missionaries originating from abroad and to an extent still maintaining links with the mother church.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been utilized in this research:

ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
AFR	The African Ecclesial Review
AS	African Studies
BTB	Biblical Theology Bulletin
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
DDD	Dictionary of Deities and Demons
ECB	Eerdmans Commentary of the Bible
ER	The Encyclopedia of Religion
ERTA	Evangelical Review of Theology
HLELOT	Hebrew Lexicon and English Lexicon of the Old Testament
HR	History of Religions
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JTSA	Journal of Theology for Southern Africa
MT	Masoretic Text
NAV	New American Version
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis
NIV	New International Version
OTE	Old Testament Essays
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TD	Theology in Dialogue
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TWOT	Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament
VG	Van Gorcum
VT	Vetus Testamentum