

## **“A FOOTSTOOL OF WAR, HONOUR AND SHAME?” PERSPECTIVES INDUCED BY PSALM 110:1**

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**Lodewyk Sutton**

Post-doctoral researcher, Department of Old Testament Studies

University of Pretoria

Hatfield, Pretoria, 0002

E-mail: lodewyksutton@gmail.com

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### **ABSTRACT**

One of the key concepts and metaphors in Psalm 110:1 is the concept of “the enemy made a footstool”. The war language is especially illustrated by the imagery of the footstool, where the warfare function or purpose can be expressed through the concepts of honour and shame. To gain a better perspective on the meaning and use of this imagery it is first indicated why the imagery of the footstool can be considered as part of war language and imagery (part of warfare). Secondly, the role of honour and shame as an expression of the function and purpose of the war language and imagery is made through a social-scientific analysis of the footstool. Thirdly, iconography of different ancient Near Eastern (and Mediterranean) contexts is used as an extratextual source to elucidate the concept of the footstool in its use of war language and imagery as further expressed through the concepts of honour and shame. Lastly, the use of footstool in Psalm 110:1 is examined and applied. This identifies the footstool in Psalm 110:1 as “a footstool of war, honour and shame”.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the Old Testament one finds different forms of military or war metaphors (language and imagery), for example, military protection imagery and imprisonment imagery.<sup>1</sup> In the Old Testament military protection imagery can be seen in the ancient Near Eastern ideas of refuge and also refuge in the metaphor of the royal king protecting his country; or God as the king protecting his people; or God the protector as a stronghold or fortress for his people; or God as cover or shelter for his people (Brueggemann 2008:525-526). In this process of military protection, honour is established and

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on my PhD thesis (Sutton 2015).

displayed through the imagery (or metaphor) for the king (usually as the representative of his people) or God. Imprisonment imagery in the Old Testament is used to evoke different responses, from sympathy for those who are prisoners, to awareness that incarceration may be an appropriate state for some. This imagery can be used to explain the injustice of being falsely accused or the need to be freed from your enemy (Meier 2008:320–323). Whereas military protection imagery conveys concepts of refuge and honour, imprisonment imagery conveys notions of dishonour, shame, superiority and humiliation that are established and displayed through the imagery (or metaphor) used for the king, victim or enemy (Seevers 2013:75). This war language and imagery becomes an important part of warfare and is also seen in Psalm 110.

One of the key concepts and metaphors in Psalm 110:1 is the concept of “the enemy made a footstool”. This article aims to use a social-scientific analysis of this text and the imagery of the footstool in order to provide the socio-critical grounds that indicate how the psalm communicates warfare.<sup>2</sup>

The war language is especially illustrated by the imagery of the footstool, where the warfare function or purpose can be expressed through the concepts of honour and shame.<sup>3</sup> To gain a better perspective on the meaning and use of this imagery it is important to examine why the imagery of the footstool can be considered as part of war language and imagery (part of warfare). Secondly, the role of honour and shame

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<sup>2</sup> Elliott (1993:72–74) provides a list of questions that can help study this process of understanding the social aspects in a text. These questions can be used to study any biblical text (Old and New Testament) and can be applied to a specific time period or culture. Each one of them can be used as a starting point for more/other exegetical questions. Cf. the remarks of Gottwald (1987:26–31) and Elliott (1993:7, 70) on the aim of social-scientific criticism and the conditioning factors and intended consequences of the communication process.

<sup>3</sup> Although honour and shame are popular terms among New Testament scholars one must not ignore their importance for Old Testament studies. According to Elliott (1993:43; see also Esler [2006] on this topic): “Social models are ‘maps’ that organize selected prominent features of social terrain such as patterns of typical social behaviour (...), social groupings (...), processes of social interaction (...), and the like. Such models alert the social traveller to typical and recurrent patterns of everyday social life in given times and places.” In comparing the intertextual and extratextual analysis of footstool (also as an implement of warfare) in this article the recurrent pattern of honour and shame as part of social life in the ancient Near East (and in the Old Testament) becomes evident, especially for Ps. 110 in the context of war.

as an expression of the function and purpose of the war language and imagery will be made through a social-scientific analysis of footstool (part of an intertextual analysis). In this section the question can be formulated as follows: “How is the social situation of war (expressed in the concepts of honour and shame) described in Psalm 110:1 through the use of the imagery of the footstool?” To answer this question one needs to formulate an understanding of footstool, and then through an intertextual analysis determine whether the imagery of the footstool that was also used as an implement of war, expressed the function or purpose of bringing honour or shame. Thirdly, iconography<sup>4</sup> of different ancient Near Eastern (and Mediterranean) contexts will be used as an extratextual source to elucidate the concept of the footstool in its use of war language and imagery as further expressed through the concepts of honour and shame. Lastly, the use of footstool in Psalm 110:1 is examined and applied. This helps to identify the footstool in Psalm 110:1 as “a footstool of war, honour and shame”.

## **UNDERSTANDING WAR LANGUAGE AND IMAGERY AND THE ROLE OF HONOUR AND SHAME**

According to Hobbs (1995:263), scholars do not always take into account the nature and importance of war language and imagery (warfare or military metaphors) and the way in which this language and imagery (metaphors) relates to the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean society that is based on the core values<sup>5</sup> of honour and

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<sup>4</sup> See also Kruger (1989:54-55) on the importance of non-verbal communication. In iconography special attention must be given to a “specific area and historical time” according to Keel and Uehlinger (1998:395-396), but one must grasp that the “visual world is more-cross-cultural than the verbal world” (Keel and Uehlinger 1998:395; see also Wyatt 2001:29). According to Evans (2015:21), when “any ancient Near Eastern text is considered within its corresponding historical-political context and compared with others, even if the time period differs considerably, it becomes apparent that no text is a discrete entity on its own”.

<sup>5</sup> A general quality and direction of life that men and women are expected to show in their behaviour is called a value. A value thus refers to the quality, goal or purpose of human behaviour in general, or any aspect of human behaviour. Every culture displays certain general boundaries and within such boundaries certain qualities and directions of living (human behaviour) must take place. Thus a value receives its definition from the institutions created by man that is bounded by human culture in specific contexts. There are

shame.<sup>6</sup> Kelle (2008:829) comes to the conclusion that in the wisdom, poetry and writings of the Old Testament, warfare imagery makes use of both practical elements of ancient warfare and ideological aspects of warfare.

### Practical elements of ancient warfare

The practical elements of warfare consist of implements such as weaponry and armour. The ideological aspects of warfare are the conceptions of enemies, victory and defeat (Kelle 2008:829). These metaphors and symbols, as images, can be put together in three basic groups or clusters (three groups of war language and imagery): warriors and enemies (human or divine); experiences of warfare (individual or communal, progress from start to finish); and implements of warfare. If one or more of these are present in a specific text it helps to show that war language is present, whether it is on a practical or ideological level. Each specific text presents of course its own context

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primary (core) and secondary (peripheral) values. The primary values are those values that are expected in all human interactions, for example, honour and shame. Secondary values are values that are specific to given interactions. One of the purposes of the secondary value is to preserve the primary value, in other words if the secondary value is not done it can bring harm to the primary value (Pilch and Malina 2000:XV-XXI). The hands, head, and feet are part of the secondary values. The head, hands and feet play an enormous role in the primary (core) value of honour and shame (Pilch and Malina 2000:98).

<sup>6</sup> Honour and shame played an important role as a primary value (probably the most important value) of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean worlds. The four social institutions of politics, economy, religion and culture (*familia*) were greatly influenced by honour and shame. In ancient times especially the family (culture) played an important role. The reason for this was because the people of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean were group orientated. The group had the final say in most matters of social living, therefore honour and shame played an important role as it determined whether one brought honour or shame (in a negative context) to the family or group (Van Eck 1995:165-168). Honour was seen as a claim to worth that needed to be confirmed by the public. Shame was seen as a public denouncement of someone's claim to honour. It meant that your claim to honour was not successful and could even mean that one was pushed out of (or ignored by) the group. To be shamed was always seen as negative, but to have shame was seen as something positive because it showed that you were concerned about your honour (Pilch and Malina 2000:106-107). Bringing shame over yourself meant to bring shame over your group. If the leader of a group (the king representing the group or nation) was shamed the entire group was shamed (Van Eck 1995:166). Israel's claim to honour was their special relationship with YHWH. A national defeat was seen as God leaving the nation, bringing shame over Israel (Pilch and Malina 2000:106-112; cf. Malina 2001:27-57; DeSilva 2008:287-300; Crook 2009:591-611).

(Kelle 2008:829). Hobbs (1995:260) describes it as war activities and divides it into the three activities: warfare, personnel and weaponry. Hobbs argues that in an honour-based society the war language and imagery is a specific metaphor that emphasises “outward symbols of honour (armour), aggressive weapons, obedience to one’s commander and suffering for a noble cause, has special significance in a society ...”<sup>7</sup>

### **Ideological aspects of warfare and the status of the defeated people**

When one takes the language and imagery of war on an ideological level seriously as indicators of the social value of honour and shame one needs to look closer at the concepts of defeat and domination. Defeat must be understood in the context of honour and shame in the ancient Near East and Mediterranean worlds as a secondary value. If one defeats another in battle or war, one gains or enhances one’s honour, relative to the person or nation that has been defeated. To be defeated means to be shamed (negative). Defeat can happen when one has failed (literally or even an emotion of failure) or is conquered by another (Ford 2000:45). Thus according to Ford (2000:45): “to be defeated is to be dishonoured, to be reduced to shame, to become a nonentity ...” Graphically, defeat is also depicted by certain actions that were done by the conqueror to the one that had been defeated. By these actions the defeated individual, group or nation is shamed further and their status reduced to below that of a human. What the conqueror attempted to do was to create a reversal in status, from honour to shame for the defeated and more honour for the conqueror. There were a number of ways in which this was achieved; mostly it was an action done to the physical body and all that it symbolised. This varied from nation to nation in antiquity, but there were strong resemblances between the different nation’s approach to doing this, especially between the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians and their

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<sup>7</sup> Hobbs (1995:266-267) understands the military or war metaphor (war language and imagery) in connection with a society that is based on the social value of honour and shame. Therefore the war language and imagery can be identified by an emphasis on language and imagery that places a person’s behaviour and demeanour in a public and outer context. Outsiders would be described as enemies. Fixed boundary control would play an important part as well as heroic suffering (male characteristics).

influence on the Hebrews.

The social, cultural and religious status of the defeated was destroyed. In this process, and even more so when they were sent into exile or deported, the familial and kingship boundaries and spaces of a nation were destroyed (Ford 2000:45-46). The result of this was the annihilation of all sacred spaces for that individual, group or nation. To restrict social space the victim in certain circumstances was imprisoned, fettered or placed in stocks. In this process the victim's life was put in a state of ritual impurity. As a further insult prisoners in certain circumstances would be put in the dark, as darkness was associated with malicious powers (Ford 2000:45-46). Even further shame was brought to a victim by removing their clothing (or by putting them in clothing of a lower status). Clothing was seen as part of a person's personality, as are possessions; thus by taking it away, the honour of that person decreases. The head of a person was seen as the symbol of authority; by shaving the head, stepping on the head or the decapitation of a person's head is an absolute symbol of shaming and removing that person's honour and publicly disgracing him or her (Ford 2000:46; cf. Finney 2010:31-58). Even a person's diet was used to shame a person further, when the dietary laws of a person were not observed as they would have been in a free state. Some cultures put their victims through even more physical abuse and violence, such as scourging or a ring in the nose. Although physical shame was the most prominent way to shame a person, the conqueror often tormented the victim even further with mockery, gloating, and malicious glee. This verbal abuse was important to the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean person because "a word is dynamic, creating what it names" (Ford 2000:46). The defeated were often cursed by the victor. The curse was seen as a withdrawal of divine vitality and strength (Ford 2000:46; cf. Wright 2009:433-473).

Domination orientation and power are secondary values that impose sanctions of power in order to gain the primary value of honour. As in the previous section of defeat, these sanctions include physical force, pain, violent expulsion, and death. The sole purpose of domination and power is to gain honour. The way in which these values are realised is by subjecting others (Pilch and Malina 2000:48-49). This is seen

especially in the use of the body where one person is dominated by another through the use of their body, for example to put one’s feet on another’s head. To have power over an individual, group or nation is to control their behaviour (Pilch and Malina 2000:158).

## THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE FOOTSTOOL

In Psalm 110:1 the Hebrew word used for footstool is הָרָם (*hdm*).<sup>8</sup> Rienecker (1967:424; cf. Bromiley 1982:333) understands footstool (*Fußschemel*) to have four basic meanings in the Bible:

The first is *Im eigentlichen sinn*, a piece of furniture<sup>9</sup> as seen in 2 Chronicles 9:18. The second is a *Bild für die Bundeslade* (Ark of the Covenant), to express God’s presence and revelation in this place as seen in 1 Chronicles 28:2. In the third place it is used when the earth is called God’s footstool (on an anthropomorphic level the earth serves as the footstool for the feet of God, Isa 66:1),<sup>10</sup> the comparison is meant to

<sup>8</sup> According to Fabry (1978:325), the word for ‘footstool,’ “namely *hdm* only appear in the Old Testament as part of the construct *hdm raghlajim*, the ‘footstool of the feet.’ In the Ugaritic only the absolute form is found. The root *hdm* is only found in Hebrew, Ugaritic and Egyptian (*hadmu*). In the Egyptian (and Ugaritic) literature it was found in the eighteenth dynasty (1580-1350 B.C.E.). It is uncertain whether the Egyptians borrowed it from the Northwest Semitic dialects or whether they borrowed it from Egypt. It would seem that from the earliest times the root shows a meaning of ‘rest,’ thus the ‘feet’ resting is appropriate.” According to Lust, Eynikel and Hauspie (2003:electronic edition) ὑποπόδιον can be translated in the Septuagint (LXX) as ‘footstool.’ It is used as a noun in its neuter form, and the same word is also one of the words used for ‘footstool’ in the New Testament. It occurs only four times (cf. Hatch and Redpath 1975:1416). It occurs one time in the Later Prophets, three times in the Writings (excluding 1 and 2 Chron) and there are no references in the books which are not included in the Hebrew Bible. The LXX prefers the expression *hypopódion tōn podōn*, “footstool of the feet.” When the Septuagint translates “standing” or “placing” the ‘feet’ in 1 Chron 28:2 and in Ps 132:7, it makes the ‘footstool’ a metaphor for the incomprehensible power of God, shifting its meaning from a literal piece of furniture (Fabry 1978:331).

<sup>9</sup> The stools of the Egyptians and Assyrians (also the Hebrews) were made from a square frame or after the shape of our camp stools (modern). They had a straight or rounded back; if it was a chair then it would have had a back and arms (Hastings 1963:405).

<sup>10</sup> Keel and Uehlinger (1998:231) remark that the footstool is seen with the throne; in

contrast the complete dependence of the created things and the all-fulfilling majesty of God (Matt 5:35; Acts 7:49).

In the fourth place, Rienecker (1967:424) formulates a definition of footstool by using an Egyptian context of the word. In Egyptian representations one can see that the pharaoh, as a sign of his victory, actually used captive enemies as footstool. On the other hand he had their image attached or put onto his feet (according to Rienecker [1967:424] it is to this usage that Ps 110:1 refers).

It is clear that footstool is mostly used as a metaphor. In the ancient Near East the footstool was seen as a symbol of the king's power (Cornelius 1997:1011). The root word for footstool that derives from the Hebrew expresses "dominion" (Davies 1962:309). It explains the strong metaphorical use of this word as it helps to illustrate power and dominance. It is therefore not strange to see footstool used in the context of war. Yet it has a strong religious connotation as it is also used to describe the "Ark of the Covenant" (1 Chron 28:2), serves as a metaphor with Zion for the temple (Pss 99:5; 132:7; Lam 2:1)<sup>11</sup> and as a metaphor of worship to God. The ark, temple and earth become the footstool of God, where he places his feet (Fabry 1978:333-334). The footstool becomes an extension of the power, domination and strength shown by the feet. To understand the social background use of footstool it is important to understand it against the background of a value in the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean social contexts (worlds). The hands and feet are part of the secondary values. They play an enormous role in the primary (core) value of honour and shame (Pilch and Malina 2000:98).<sup>12</sup> The area of hands-feet refers to human capability and

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accordance with Ps 132 it can be seen as part of a shrine or a holy place and that it then can indicate a medium for blessing.

<sup>11</sup> There are however scholars (see for example Stendebach 2004:321-322) that indicate that footstool is not meant to be used as metaphor for the temple and that if it was the case, it would be a later development.

<sup>12</sup> There are three distinct human behaviours connected with the human body: hands-feet (purposeful activity); eyes-heart (emotion fused thought) and mouth-ears (self-expressive speech) (Pilch and Malina 2000:98-99). The hands and feet are correlative terms for humans that illustrate the "capability of doing, making, building, constructing, having



specifically purposeful activity.<sup>13</sup> The hands and feet refer to activities relating to power. To be put “under the feet of” someone means to be subject to that person, or to be under that person’s control (2 Sam 22:39; 1 Kgs 5:3; Pss 8:6, 18:38, 47:3, 110:1; Mal 4:3; Matt 22:44; Mark 12:36; Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 15:25, 27; Eph 1:22; Heb 2:8; Rev 12:1). To put one’s foot on the neck of a person is to indicate total defeat and control (Josh 10:24). The neck holds up a person’s honour which is associated with the head-face (Isa 3:16), and it is a channel of life because one’s breath passes through the neck (Pilch and Malina 2000:100-101). To be trampled on or beheaded is to be dishonoured or shamed (negative). In this process it becomes clear that the footstool becomes an implement of war that can be used to give honour to the one placing their feet on the stool or to take honour from the one becoming the footstool (literally or metaphorically, as seen in Ps 110:1). The head (and by extension the body) also becomes a metaphorical footstool giving honour to the one placing their feet on the head and shaming or taking honour from the one becoming the footstool (as seen in Pss 108:14, 110:5-6).

## **THE FOOTSTOOL IN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN AND MEDITERRANEAN CONTEXTS**

In this section the iconography of different ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean contexts<sup>14</sup> is used as an extratextual source to elucidate the concept of the footstool in

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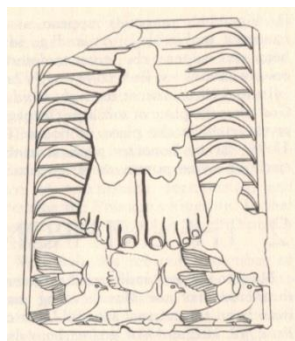
physical effect on others and on one’s environment” (Pilch and Malina 2000:98).

<sup>13</sup> Anything that falls under the outcome of hands and feet will thus be part of this purposeful activity. Examples for using hands would be planting, forming, taking, putting and closing. When it comes to the feet, as with the hands, the removal of footwear (for example the sandals, Exod 3:5; 12:11) and the washing of feet (2 Sam 11:8; Exod 30:19; Luke 7:44; see also Wolff 1974:67) became a natural symbol of “removal of a person’s normal social status (bare feet) of a person’s past deeds and their effects (symbolic foot washing)” (Pilch and Malina 2000:100). General behaviour is shown through the feet: God protects his people’s honour by keeping their feet from slipping (2 Sam 22:37; Job 12:5; Pss 17:5; 18:36; 66:9) or stumbling (Ps 73:2); the wicked set nets or snares to trip their neighbours to shame them (Jer 18:22; Prov 29:5) (Pilch and Malina 2000:100-101).

<sup>14</sup> According to Seevers (2013:76), the “Israelite practice of warfare resembled that of neighbouring nations. Israelites generally used the weaponry and tactics of other ancient Near Eastern nations, so studying the military of these other nations helps to shed light on

its use of war language and imagery as further expressed through the concepts of honour and shame. Kruger (1989:54-55) explains that non-verbal communication (as with iconography) is “concerned with the communicational function of bodily activity, posture and other types of gesture language which operate in consonance with verbal language. The relation between these two modes of expression, viz. verbal and non-verbal, can be one of (i) accompaniment, (ii) intensification, or (iii) substitution.” One of the key aspects of understanding the footstool is to understand it not only as a stool for feet, but in terms of its social use and context where the ancient Near East and Mediterranean use of the stool as an implement of war can be observed and compared to Psalm 110. In this processes the comparison helps to identify how the non-verbal language (the imagery) accompanies and intensifies the imagery of the footstool.

### **The footstool in the context of ancient Egypt**



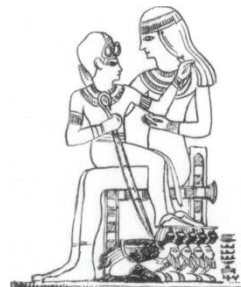
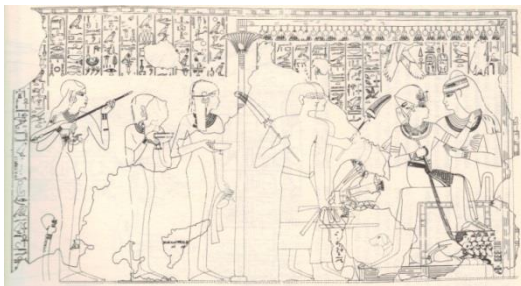
Nine bows under the feet of the king (Keel 1978:255)

In the Egyptian culture and context the use of the footstool and the imagery of trampling in their iconography is not a strange phenomenon and aid accordingly to formulate a better understanding of how this imagery was used and understood in Egyptian culture. In the Egyptian culture domination orientation and power through trampling on the defeated enemy's head or body was a frequent sight in their iconography. The above image shows the importance of this practice in the

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Israelite practices, and *visa versa* [sic].” Especially the sources and iconography of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia are helpful in this regard.

demonstration of domination and power. Nine was the symbolic number of totality in Egypt, thus the nine bows symbolise a total defeat or domination of all enemies. In this image there are nine bows showing the military capability of the enemies. Later on the nine bows became a symbol of countries (Keel 1978:255) and the rule over the entire world (Fabry 1978:329). The feet on the bows show the king’s victory and dominance over his enemies. The same meaning of total dominance over one’s enemies was shown with three lapwings, which the Egyptian name *rhyt* meant the “subject of nations”. The nine bows – or, as shown in the image of Amenophiss II, the nine bodies of the enemies – lie helpless at the feet of the pharaoh. This shows the permanent domination and subduement of all enemies (Stendebach 2004:310-311). Sometimes in Egyptian culture the defeated enemies were engraved on the sandals of the king, showing that the king tramples on his enemies and that they are subjected to him. The images below shows the Nubians and Asiatics (with their full beards) already placed beneath the future pharaoh’s feet as a footstool. The pharaoh is already represented in advance as the mighty king whose footstool (literally the enemies) shows conquered and defeated enemies (Keel 1978:253).



“The later Pharaoh Amenophis II on the lap of his (wet) nurse” (Rienercker 1967:423; Keel 1978:254)

In the image below the pharaoh is sitting on the right hand side (on the lap) of the Egyptian god. His feet are resting upon a footstool. In his footstool<sup>15</sup> are the bodies of

<sup>15</sup> The footstool was associated as well with the throne of the goddess Isis. To confirm that the pharaoh is ruling even in the afterlife, the footstool was placed with him in his tomb as a symbol of his position as ruler (Fabry 1978:329). On the footstool of Tutankhamen (or hassock) there are “representations of foreign captives, prostrate, with their hands behind their backs” (Dahood 1970:114). See also Weiss (2013) on the tomb, treasures and

nine enemies, showing a total victory and dominance over all defeated enemies (Hossfeld and Zenger 2011:148).<sup>16</sup>



This a plating from a tomb in Abd el Qurna, around 1400 B.C.E. (Hossfeld and Zenger 2011:148; also Keel 1978:255)

### **The footstool in the context of Persia**

In the context of Persia the relief of king Darius on his throne helps to show the role of the footstool. It shows king Darius who sits on a throne with his feet on a footstool; behind him is crown prince Xerxes. In this relief he firmly grasps the royal sceptre in his right hand that shows his power and rule, the footstool also shows his authority and rule. In the left, he is holding a lotus blossom with two buds, the symbol of royalty (Lay 1982:333). From this relief it can be seen that the footstool show the king's rule and authority in his kingdom, but also outwards in a military context toward other kings and enemies.

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furniture of Tutankhamen.

<sup>16</sup> There are multiple examples of trampling on the enemies head in Egyptian iconography. In most of the depictions it is the pharaoh who is performing the action of trampling on the enemies' heads (Keel 1978:297). In the relief of Abu Simbel (Ramses II, circa 1301–1234 B.C.E.) a Egyptian warrior is seen performing the action of trampling on the enemy's head, bringing shame and dishonour onto his enemy (Keel 1978:297).



King Darius (521-486 B.C.E.) sits on throne with his feet on a footstool; royal sceptre in his right hand. Behind him is Crown prince Xerxes. Limestone relief from Persepolis (Lay 1982:333)

### **The footstool in the context of Babylonia**

In the Babylonian context a fragment of a stele from Babylon (First Dynasty, circa 1800-1500 B.C.E.) shows victory with enemy underfoot (Lay 1982:332). The king or his men in battle would place their feet on the heads or bodies of the enemies. This was a sign of victory and domination. It was part of war and was seen as a way to put fear in the enemy armies (Lay 1982:332). The emotional and social experiences (one of the groups of war language) of; domination, power and fear by the soldiers in war forms part of war language. By standing on the head, neck or bodies of the enemies their bodies literally became a footstool for the one doing the trampling.

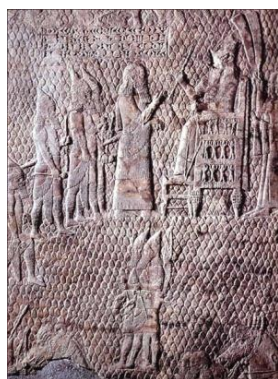
### **The footstool in the context of Mesopotamia**

In Mesopotamia there are examples of footstools (shown as physical furniture) as old as 3000 B.C.E. On the Cappadocian cylinder seals there are a lot of evidence for footstools, especially for the gods. If an animal was seen with the footstool it was usually to show the subjugation of the animals to the king.<sup>17</sup> Neo-Assyrian cylinder

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<sup>17</sup> Some of the earlier footstools were made out of reeds and later out of wood; usually it was box or block like. The legs (feet) of the stool usually reflect the religion of the culture, for example in Mesopotamia it was shaped to look like the legs of a bull and in Egypt it was a lion. The use of animal legs (carvings, not real animal parts) in the furniture showed power and strength and it also showed that it was strong enough to support the gods. The footstools were covered most of the time in gold and thus became a valuable item that in addition was used as part of the bridal price. Because of its value it was one of the objects that were taken by kings and soldiers as part of the booty of war (Fabry 1978:326-327).

seals depict the king kicking lions away with his feet, showing that with sovereignty comes responsibility. It also shows that the king is capable of defending his people against powerful enemies. The feet become a symbol of sovereignty and a motive of subjugation where the feet are placed on the lord's neck (as the resting place of the head) as a footstool. This was done not only to show military victory over the enemies, but to show the conquering of the land. In this context the foot also became an instrument of ownership (Fabry 1978:328; Stendebach 2004:312).



Sennacherib, king of Assyria, sits on a nemedu throne while the booty of Lachish passes before him (Wilson 2012)

The relief shown above, which was discovered in the palace of Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.E.) in Nineveh, shows the Assyrian king sitting on his throne, with his feet on a footstool. Before him is the spoil from the city of Lachish near Jerusalem in Palestine. On the side of the throne (as part of the throne) that is visible, there are twelve captives (the pointed beards and clothing, show that these prisoners Sennacherib is sitting on his Judeans that have been captured during the battle of Lachish, around 700 B.C.E.) that are carved in three registers. Two of these registers support the throne seat and one supports the arm rest (Dahood 1970:114). In this practice of sitting on the bodies (the head was seen as the whole body) the dominance of the king over his enemies is shown.

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Mostly the footstool is associated with the throne, but it was used as well to help someone climb into bed.

## The footstool in Ugaritic and Canaan contexts

In Ugarit the god's feet were seen as symbols of divine sovereignty. Many of the gods are also depicted with a footstool at the throne where subjects would bow. In one of the stories, *Attar* can go and sit on the throne with the Aliyan *Baal*, but his feet were too short to reach the footstool of the throne; because he was too short he could not rule with *Baal*. From Minet el-Beda the goddess enthronement is shown where she sits with her feet on a mountain that symbolises a footstool. The animal's feet were given to the one that performed a ritual. Also associated with the gods are the animals that attack at the feet (the attack on *Baal*), trembling of feet (*Anat* who is scared), speed and the trampling of the poor as a symbol of oppression and a sign of hostility. In this context the trampling as a symbol of dominance and power in a context of honour and shame is important to take into account. In an inscription of *Karatepe* it is written that the gangs (their bodies) were placed beneath the feet of *Azitawada*, showing victory and dominance (Fabry 1978:330-331; Stendebach 2004:312-313).

## The footstool in the Greek and Roman contexts

In the Greek context there is archaeological evidence that confirms the use of the footstool in Greece from the thirteenth century B.C.E.<sup>18</sup> Mostly it appears as part of furniture, especially with the throne and the couch. There are examples (according to Fabry 1978:331) where it was used as a missile. The same use of the footstool as part of furniture can be seen in the Roman context as in the Greek context.<sup>19</sup>

The iconography of the different contexts indicated that the footstool must not only be understood as a piece of furniture for leisure but that it carries with it the accompanied meaning of an implement of war as a footstool of war. This imagery is intensified with the bodies of enemies that are used as the footstool and the action of placing the feet on top of the enemies or trampling on them and shaming them. In this process honour is given to the one placing the feet on the enemy or doing the trampling and bringing shame to the victim.

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<sup>18</sup> The footstool of Nestor is an example.

<sup>19</sup> See also Keel and Uehlinger (1998:62–65) for examples of footstools from regions closer than Megiddo.

## FOOTSTOOL IN PSALM 110:1

Psalm 110 is on an exegetical level one of the most difficult psalms in the Old Testament. This is mostly due to its text critical problems, especially in verse 3. Taking this into consideration it is clear that this psalm has been interpreted and reinterpreted through the ages, making this psalm in all probability one of the oldest psalms in the Old Testament. It is therefore according to some scholars even probable that, in this process of reinterpretation, some of the verses went missing or were changed and that would explain why this psalm is so complicated to be understood or to be seen as one complete textual entity (Anderson 1981:767). In this article a post-exilic dating (as a final dating) with a strong pre-exilic influence (that part of the psalm already existed) is preferred. Psalm 110 is a “Royal Psalm” (Pss 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132) therefore it would be logical to associate Psalm 110 with the religious cultic practises of Jerusalem, and thus become part of the Judean Zions-theology.<sup>20</sup> One of the main characters in this psalm is an earthly Judean king; therefore it is easy to understand why this psalm has been regarded as a messianic psalm since the Judean kings have always been seen as the anointed of YHWH, a messiah (de Bruyn 2009:68-79, 217). The psalm is also classified by many as a victory song, specifically a Jewish-Hellenistic victory song (Hossfeld and Zenger 2011:144-145; Gunkel 1998:237-240). Zenger (Hossfeld and Zenger 2011:145) sees the psalm as two divine speeches. Psalm 110 must be seen as part of the Davidic trilogy (Psalms 108-110). The themes of war and enemies are prominent in the trilogy. In Psalm 108 and 110 the enemies are on “state level” while in Psalm 109 is about internal adversaries, personal foes of the individual (Ballhorn 2004:164).

Hossfeld and Zenger (2008:195-215) explains that in the first part of verse 1 in Psalm 110,<sup>21</sup> the introduction formula of this psalm, David must not be seen as this ideal king as proclaimed in Psalm 3-41 and Psalms 51-72. It is also important to note

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<sup>20</sup> For a further discussion on the royal psalms and their development, see Gunkel (1998:99-120).

<sup>21</sup> The following translation (a free translation) of Psalm 110:1 will be used as reference for this article: “For David. A psalm. Saying of YHWH to my lord: Sit at my right (hand), while I lay down your enemies as a footstool for your feet.”



that David must not be understood in this psalm as the historical David and king as in Psalms 101-103 (and possibly also Pss 104-106). David must rather be understood as a new David or as a “David *redivivus*”<sup>22</sup> that has been given by God to his people to rebuild his people and also to come and sit on God’s throne. In this context it would be better to translate this verse as “for David”. Verse 1 begins with a direct quotation of divine speech by YHWH. יהוה YHWH is almost exclusively used as a prophetic formula, usually at the end of a divine speech, sometimes in the middle. In verse 1 it is used as part of the entitling process before the divine speech (also in Zech 12:1). The speaker is probably a court or cultic prophet who points the divine speech in verse 1 towards his lord (his king) and explains the divine speech in verses 2 and 3. The quotation becomes functional and shows resemblance to the new-Assyrian prophetic tradition. In the quotation the order is given by YHWH to the lord (king) to come and sit on his right side or his right hand. The sitting on the throne and the mentioning of the feet and the enemies explains this sitting as a sitting on the throne of YHWH with him. This motive is seen and used in Psalm 8:7. This implies a great honour to the lord or king by sitting on the throne with YHWH.<sup>23</sup>

The cosmic reign of YHWH is now shared with the king and can take part in this universal reign. This motive is seen in 1 Chron 28:2; Pss 47:4; 99:5; 132:7; Isa 66:1 and Lam 2:1. In Ps 110 the enemy can also be portrayed as the powers of chaos, those at war with YHWH. The gesture of putting the feet on the enemies<sup>24</sup> implies the enthronement of the king and the victory and rule over the enemies by YHWH and

<sup>22</sup> A revived David or a “*herleefde Dawid*”.

<sup>23</sup> This was seen in the Egyptian context where the pharaoh was sitting on the lap of the Egyptian god.

<sup>24</sup> In the context of the imprecatory psalms Zenger (1996:9-11) asks what the daily life of a person in the psalms would look like. He answers that the people (the individual and the group) in the psalm, it would seem, were in a daily struggle or battle with enemies. Throughout the psalm the emotions of people are describe with feelings of people (experiences of warfare — one of the groups in war language) who feel surrounded, threatened, trapped or shot by a gigantic army. It is therefore not strange to see emotions of hate, irritation or resistance in the psalms, and is it not strange to see a God who shows violent, destructive and vengeful acts, “once we are sensitized to the ‘omnipresence’ of enemies, enemy imagery, and fear of foes, we are no longer surprised the ‘reign of God’ Ps 145:20” (Zenger 1996:11; see also Slabbert [2001] on the concept of enemies in the psalms).

now the king. The preposition עַר should probably be translated with “while” or “because” (Hossfeld and Zenger 2008:195-215). The footstool in Psalm 110:1 becomes an integral part of the metaphor used in this verse to describe the humiliation and dishonour of the enemies in this psalm. By using footstool in this context, together with right hand and feet it becomes a lethal combination in this metaphor, and therefore it turns out to be a footstool of war. Furthermore it helps to qualify this footstool not only as part of a metaphor that is used as war language, but also to identify it as an object and in this context qualifies to become a weapon or implement of war. Fretz (1992:893) uses the example of a butcher’s knife to explain that a simple butcher knife can become a soldier’s dagger; it all depends on the context to which the use of the implement applies. Most implements were created for some or other practical purpose, therefore an implement that is used as a weapon or as part of warfare cannot be understood outside of its context of warfare within which it is used. Fretz (1992:893) states that the “context of warfare, though, is virtually unrestricted because it encompasses military, civilian, domestic, political, religious, technological, economic and other realms of human existence, as well as factors such as geographical location, terrain, climate, and natural resources”.

It is important to note here that, due to the fact that warfare is closely related to the way humans live and that it forms part of human understanding, it should be seen as an essential part of anthropology. The practical use of a footstool is to put one’s feet upon it, therefore the name footstool. In Psalm 110:1 it is used to store the bodies of the king’s enemies, bringing shame, humiliation and dishonour to the enemies and making sure that they are obedient to him. Due to the context of Psalm 110:1, it is clear that the footstool in this text can be described as an implement of war or warfare, even maybe as a psychological weapon to bestow fear onto the kings current and future enemies. This is the same principle that can be seen in Psalm 108:9 and 14, when the enemies are made a footstool (Ps 110:1),<sup>25</sup> by putting one’s feet on them,

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<sup>25</sup> In Ps 108:9, 14 and Ps 110:6 the enemies are being trampled on. In a context of honour and shame, stepping on the enemies shows dominance and defeat. The one doing the trampling receives honour and the one being trampled on loses honour. In battle the king places his feet on top of defeated enemies making them a metaphorical footstool. By placing one’s feet on the enemy, one’s dominance and power over the enemy is illustrated, bringing one

they are dishonoured and shame is brought to them. The same footstool brings honour to the one sitting on the throne.

## CONCLUSION

This article showed the importance of studying a text in its original context and to take into account other influential contexts. The social dimensions of Psalm 110:1 indicated how the psalm communicates warfare as one of the key concepts described in the war language and imagery (metaphors) in the concept of “the enemy becoming a footstool”. This was illustrated by the notion of the footstool that becomes an expression of honour and shame (in a time of war). This was especially illustrated in the iconography of different ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean contexts. First, the footstool can be understood as a physical piece of furniture. As a piece of furniture it elevated the status of the king by becoming a further demonstration of his power and rule, bringing him additional honour. Secondly, this power and rule was further demonstrated metaphorically, by placing images of defeated enemies on this furniture, bringing honour to the king and shame to the defeated enemies (Ps 110:1). By placing one’s feet on the enemy, one’s dominance and power over the enemy is illustrated, bringing one honour and shaming the defeated enemy. The footstool and the defeated bodies of enemies becomes a symbol of honour for the victor and at the same time a symbol of shame for the defeated. In this process the footstool in Psalm 110:1 becomes a footstool of war, honour and shame.

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