'Killing Them Softly with this Song …'
The Literary Structure of Psalm 3 and Its Psalmic and Davidic Contexts[1]
Part II: A Contextual and Intertextual Interpretation of Psalm 3

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the second in a series of two on Ps 3, the contribution which its immediate literary context and its heading makes to the interpretation of Ps 3 is discussed. It seems that Ps 3 is connected to its immediate neighbours, Pss 1-2 on the one hand, and Pss 4-14 on the other, with the help of key-words and shared motifs. The heading draws attention to intertextual connections it has with the narrative of Absalom's revolt in 2 Sam 15-19 and with David's song of triumph in 2 Sam 22, and through this last mentioned text also with the rest of the Psalter. Ps 3 can consequently be viewed as part of the 'overture' of the Psalter consisting of Pss 1-3, but simultaneously as the first exemplaric prayer of David which he formulated under difficult circumstances. The connections with 2 Sam 22 also suggest that the psalm can only be properly understood from the perspective of David's victory over 'all' his enemies.

A   INTRODUCTION, TEXT AND TRANSLATION

Hans-Joachim Kraus (1978:160) wrote with reference to the heading of Ps 3: 'Diese Ansetzung wird von dem Inhalt des Ps als irrig erwiesen und dient nicht zur Klärung des Textes. Denn der Sänger unseres Ps fliegt nicht wie David und lässt keine Spur von Trauer (um Absalom) erkennen. Die Divergenz im einzelnen ist offenkundig'. Peter Craigie (1983:73), in contrast, reaches a different verdict: 'In summary, the parallels indicate a close link between the psalm and David's flight from Absalom'. The two scholars' understanding and interpretation of the heading obviously diverge greatly and call for an explanation.

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[1]   This article and a preceding one by the same authors have grown out of investigations and discussions between them during 2005 and again during 2008 at the Department of Ancient Languages, University of Pretoria, South Africa. Phil J. Botha is professor of Semitic Languages at this institution and Dr. Beat Weber is associated with this department as research associate and has spent time there as part of his Sabbatical Leave.

But the prescript deserves careful scrutiny on other grounds as well. Since this is the *first* heading in the book of Psalms altogether, it should be investigated and expounded as thoroughly as possible. As the first heading, it defines the genre of these additions in the sense that a reader could expect to encounter in the Psalter other, similar, headings which might refer to David, which might contain biographical notes about David, and which might contain notes about the (musical) performance of the psalm. The reference to 'David' in this psalm therefore does not only serve to introduce the first Davidic collection (Pss 3-41,[2] which is also the largest group of psalms in the Psalter),[3] but it also qualifies the psalm to be a member of the twelve special Davidic Psalms in the first two books of Psalms[4] which are biographically contextualised within the life of David.[5] Inspection of these biographical notes shows that especially situations of distress in the life of David are used in such contextualisations. In the majority of cases, the contextualisation also relates to experiences of David *before* the advent of his kingship (especially encounters with Saul). In the case of Ps 3, however, the distress occurred *during* his period of kingship (similar to the situation in Pss 51; 60; 63 and perhaps 7). Psalm 3 also has a link with Ps 63, since these two are the first and last psalms with a biographical contextualisation in Books I (Pss 1-41) and II (Pss 42-72) respectively and both (perhaps also Ps 7) refer to the flight from Absalom (cf. Kleer 1996:90f, 106-108).[6] A note about the classification מזמור, 'a Psalm', in the heading: This indicates that the prayer was seen as being sung with accompaniment of a stringed instrument. This note and the final verse of the psalm point towards a context of (public) worship.

This article is the second of a two-part series. In the previous article, the syntax of the verbs and its implications for the understanding of the psalm and its segmentation were investigated. The psalm was analysed intra-textually and it was decided that it is perhaps prudent to read it as two parts of one prayer (stanzas I and III, vv.2-4, 8-9) voiced during a crisis in the life of the suppliant,

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[2]   Identical with the first book of Psalms (Ps 1-41) in the Masoretic tradition, with the exception of the first two psalms.

[3]   Apart from the two opening psalms, only Pss 10 and 33 lack a 'David-allocation'. In the Hebrew Psalter there are altogether 73 psalms which contain לדוד ('belonging to/with regard to David') in its superscript.

[4]   These are Pss 3; 7; 18; 34; 51; 52; 54; 56; 57; 59; 60; and 63. The thirteenth one is in Book V, namely Ps 142.

[5]   Kleer (1996:87-118) discusses each of these headings in terms of the narrative context to which it refers.

[6]   Ps 63:1 is sometimes interpreted as referring to David's flight from Saul (e.g. Van der Ploeg 1973:369). It has been shown convincingly, however, that lexical and thematic similarities point towards 2 Sam 15:13-17:23 – David's flight from Absalom – as the context to which the heading refers (מדבר, עיף, ראה, and חרב occur in both contexts in a remarkable similarity of sense). Cf. in more detail Kleer (1996:108) and also Hossfeld & Zenger (2000:195).

with a flashback to a previous prayer and YHWH's clear answer to the call of the psalmist on that occasion, which was inserted between the two halves of the prayer (stanza II, vv.5-7). The three stanzas were then described as all being parallel to a certain extent, since all three contain a supplication and a declaration of confidence.

We then proposed to investigate also the intertextual connections of Ps 3 with the rest of the Hebrew canon. It stands in a close relationship to Pss 1-2 and can consequently be read as part of the introduction to the Psalter, since it is the first psalm with a heading, and one at that which connects it to David; it is also the first real prayer in the book of Psalms. The connection with David given to it in its heading also establishes links with the history of David in the books of Samuel, while it should also be discussed how Ps 3 would be understood from the perspective of a reader who has progressed to Ps 4.

To establish a connection to the previous article, the segmentation of Ps 3 and a literal translation are repeated below:

			Hebrew	Translation
		1	מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי׀ אַבְשָׁלוֹם בְּנוֹ:	A Psalm, concerning David, when he fled before Absalom, his son.
I	A	2	יְהוָה מָה־רַבּוּ צָרָי	YHWH, how have they increased, my adversaries,
			רַבִּים קָמִים עָלָי:	many are rising up against me!
		3	רַבִּים אֹמְרִים לְנַפְשִׁי	Many are saying concerning my person:
			אֵין יְשׁוּעָתָה לּוֹ בֵאלֹהִים סֶלָה:	'There is no deliverance for him through God!' – *Selah.*
	B	4	וְאַתָּה יְהוָה מָגֵן בַּעֲדִי	But you, YHWH, [are] a shield round about me,
			כְּבוֹדִי וּמֵרִים רֹאשִׁי:	my honour and the one lifting up my head.
II	C	5	קוֹלִי אֶל־יְהוָה אֶקְרָא	Aloud I cried to YHWH repetitively,
			וַיַּעֲנֵנִי מֵהַר קָדְשׁוֹ סֶלָה:	then he answered me from his holy mountain. – *Selah.*
		6	אֲנִי שָׁכַבְתִּי וָאִישָׁנָה	I, I laid myself down and slept;
			הֱקִיצוֹתִי כִּי יְהוָה יִסְמְכֵנִי:	I woke up – because YHWH sustains me.
	D	7	לֹא־אִירָא מֵרִבְבוֹת עָם	I am not afraid of ten/many thousands of [military] people,
			אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שָׁתוּ עָלָי:	who have set themselves up round about against me.
II I	E	8	קוּמָה יְהוָה׀ הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי אֱלֹהַי	Please rise, YHWH! Deliver me, my God
			כִּי־הִכִּיתָ אֶת־כָּל־אֹיְבַי לֶחִי	since you have struck (down) all my enemies [with regard to the] jaw,
			שִׁנֵּי רְשָׁעִים שִׁבַּרְתָּ:	[the] teeth of the wicked you have shattered!
	F	9	לַיהוָה הַיְשׁוּעָה	To YHWH [is/belongs] the deliverance!
			עַל־עַמְּךָ בִרְכָתֶךָ סֶּלָה:	On your people [is/comes/may come/will come] your blessing! – *Selah.*

B   PSALM 3 IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PSALTER, ESPECIALLY OF ITS OVERTURE (PSALMS 1-3)

1   Psalm 3 as part of the overture to the Psalter, Pss 1-3

Psalm 1 has often been described as an introduction to the Psalter. This role was later extended to Ps 2, so that the editorially linked unit of Psalms 1-2 has become known as the 'overture' of the Psalter.[7] The editorial connection between Pss 1 and 2 is manifest in the shared themes and words[8] and the inclusion formed by the macarisms in Pss 1:1 and 2:12. The combination of Pss 1-2 has been described in this regard as a 'double portal' leading into the Psalter. But Ps 2 originally probably had closer connections with Pss 3-89 – it had probably already served as the opening of the so-called 'Messianic Psalter (Pss 2-89*, cf. Rösel 1999), which resulted from a combination of Davidic and Levitic collections, before Ps 1 was added and Ps 1 and Ps 2 were editorially interlocked. The role of the first two psalms as the 'overture to the Psalter' is not contested. But Ps 3 also deserves some credit as part of the opening of the Psalter: It is the first prayer in a book of (mostly) prayers (with the first call to YHWH);[9] it is the first psalm connected to music (being called a מזמור); it is the first psalm with a heading; it is the first psalm attributed to David; and it is the first of thirteen psalms which are editorially linked to specific circumstances in the life of David. At the same time, Ps 3 has close connections with the following individual psalms of the cluster Pss 3-7,[10] with the small

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[7]   So, for instance, Zenger (1998:36) who speaks of a 'Konsens der Forschung' in this regard.

[8]   Zenger (Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:45) refers to the repetition of הנה (1:2; 2:1); the connections both psalms have with Deut 6:4-19, Josh 1 and Mal 3; and the theme of the road which perishes (1:6 and 2:12).

[9]   With its cry for deliverance Ps 3 serves as an introduction to many of the psalms that will follow in Book I. As Wilson (2002:90) remarks, Book I begins with high hopes for kingship in Psalm 2, but then moves into a block of pleas for deliverance (3-7) which corresponds with a block of psalms at the end of Book I, giving advice about continuing evil in the world (35-37). Book I is concluded by four additional pleas for deliverance (38-41). Wilson (2002:139) sees in this a reflection of the time of the editing of the Psalter: Pss 1-89 perhaps reflect 'most clearly the initial painful response of Israel to the devastation of the Exile', as some of them display an explicit awareness of the exilic experience.

[10]   Pss 3 and 7 can be viewed as the introduction and conclusion of this small composition of laments (there is a change in Gattung between 2/3 and again between 7/8). Both contain references to David's troubles, and in both cases they are contextualised within the rebellion of Absalom (in the case of Ps 7 this is not completely certain because of the obscurity of the heading). YHWH's protection is twice described in this group with the help of the image of a shield, and the two occurrences are in these two corresponding members of the group (Pss 3:4 and 7:11). Both also describe the opponents as 'wicked people' (3:8; 7:10). Within this group, Ps 3 shares the theme of going to sleep or waking up in the morning with three others (cf. Pss 3:6, 4:5 and 9;

Davidic collection Pss 3-14,[11] as well as Book I of the Psalter (Ps 1-41) (see in this regard Barbiero 1999; about the connection between Pss 3 and 4, see Barbiero 1999:69-71). There are also parallels with other, more distant, psalms.

Subsequently we will focus first on the connections of Ps 3 with Pss 1 and 2 so as to prove that it also shares in the function of forming an overture for the Psalms (on this, see in greater detail Weber 2007a:239-251). Connected to this there is a second consideration: Whoever wants to take the instruction of Ps 1:2 as reader or listener seriously, namely to internalise the 'instruction of YHWH' (תורת יהוה) through semi-audible recitation (הגה), is not only directed backwards to the early parts of the canon, namely the 'Torah' and 'Nebi'im' (cf. Weber 2007b), but also encouraged to proceed on the way of the Psalter as a book and to meditate on it also as part of the instruction of God, in order to meet God in it and to find success through it (Ps 1:3). Ps 1 – in its function of introducing the Psalter – seems to suggest that this book should be studied through memorisation and meditation from the front to the back (a *lectio continua*), and then to begin once more at the beginning (a *lectio repetitiva*).[12] Such a reading which follows the order of the book and the canon contextualises the individual psalms first and foremost according to the sequence in which they are arranged. In other words: Ps 3 is not considered in isolation, but in light of its predecessors, Pss 1 and 2, which were read immediately before that. Ps 4 would be interpreted inter alia from the perspective of its predecessor, Ps 3, and so forth. We subsequently engage in such a meditative reading of the small section of Pss 1-3 to reflect for a moment what connections and enrichments of meaning we can find in Ps 3.

When reaching Ps 3 after reading Pss 1 and 2, the reader encounters for the first time a psalm which is 'typical' of the Psalter (in terms of the frequency with which its Gattung recurs, something the first-time reader of the Psalter does not know yet): a petitionary prayer.[13] The first word of the psalm is indeed an *invocatio Dei* (3:2). It is also something new that praying is done in the form of a song (with instrumental accompaniment, a מזמור). In any case, this is the description given to it in the heading (3:1). But before the Psalter-meditating believer begins with the poetic part of Ps 3, he (or she) stumbles over its heading. After so many verses in poetic form have been recited (Pss 1-2), one suddenly finds non-poetic remarks about matters 'outside' the text. This constitutes a clear break in the poetic flow of the text and requires from the

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5:4; and 6:7).

[11]   Psalms 3-14 form a larger unit which is 'bracketed' editorially through a reference to the 'salvation' of YHWH's people/Israel in 3:9b and 14:7 respectively (cf. Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:56; Zenger 1998:19; Hartenstein 2009).

[12]   On the theological and communicative facets of the Psalter as book and as part of the canon, see Weber 2009 (forthcoming).

[13]   The relevant description of תפלה 'prayer (as a plea)' first appears in the neighbouring psalm (4:2) and after that again in Ps 6:10.

recipient an increased level of understanding to absorb these meta-textual data. If the meditating reader or listener is familiar with the biblical data, especially the already 'canonised' books of Samuel – and this seems to be accepted – then the context of 2 Sam 22:1 would come to mind when Ps 3:1 is read.[14] That verse also serves as an introduction to a royal Davidic psalm and the two introductory verses have similarities. The parallels that exist between Ps 3 and 2 Sam 22 as a whole prove that this connection would be made by an initiate who reads Ps 3.[15] 2 Sam 22 in any case appears again later in the book of Psalms as Ps 18. But what may be even more important for our investigation, is that the connection between Ps 3 and the thanksgiving song of David in 2 Sam 22 would immediately also suggest a connection backwards from Ps 3 to Ps 2, or would strengthen the existing bond between them, since the introductory confession of 2 Sam 22:2-3 (especially that 'God' is his rock in whom he 'seeks refuge') reads like the actualisation of the macarism made by 'David' at the end of Ps 2 ('blessed are all who seek refuge in him', 2:12).

In the sequence of Ps 2 to Ps 3 one finds a reversal of the direction of speaking: In Ps 2:7-9 the reader is told what God has promised to 'David',[16] even though his name is not mentioned there. This constitutes a *prophecy*. In Ps 3, in contrast, it is David (his name is mentioned for the first time in the super-script) who speaks to God. This constitutes a *prayer*. The psalm pictures him in an embattled, precarious situation. This creates a polarity in the mind of the listener, since Ps 2 has promised the assistance of God to the messianic king so that he would not need to fear any earthly king; but in Ps 3 he is in great distress because of the rebellion of his own offspring. The mighty, divinely protected king *in Jerusalem* who is announced to be the *son* of YHWH (Ps 2, cf. 2 Sam 7:14) is put to flight *from Jerusalem* by his own *son* (3:1)! Majesty (Ps 2) and modesty (Ps 3) are connected with one another.

But the two psalms are not only linked through opposites, they are linked also through parallels. In both psalms the royal figure is confronted with enemies who have superior numbers, and in both there is a more powerful God who intervenes on behalf of the one whom he protects. The process of reading consequently also establishes an association between the groups of enemies: a coalition of nations from *outside* who rebels against God and his anointed (Ps 2), and an *internal* uprising of rebels (Ps 3) all appear as enemies of God. In Ps 2, the messiah is anointed on the holy mountain by YHWH and established in his position (על־ציון הר־קדשי, 2:6); in Ps 3 YHWH comes answering and saving

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[14]   The horizon of the connection of the Psalter with the Nebi'im or parts of it is already drawn in Ps 1(-2) because of the connections between the beginning of the Psalter (Ps 1:1-2) and the beginning of the Nebi'im (Josua 1:6-7).

[15]   The psalm in 2 Sam 22 is also referred to as part of that which David wants to 'sing' (זמר) for YHWH (2 Sam 22:50), possibly forming a link with the first word in Ps 3:1, a 'psalm' (מזמור).

[16]   Cf. the connections to 2 Sam 7.

from his holy mountain to help his servant (מהר קדשׁו, 3:5). The final macarism of Ps 2:12 stands like a promise also above Ps 3, over the troubled David who puts his trust in God (his 'shield', 3:4) and over the people of God who follows in his footsteps and prays the psalm after him: 'Blessed are those who take refuge in him!'[17]

What about links from Ps 3 over Ps 2 back to Ps 1? Such connections appear weaker than those between Pss 1 and 2 (see in this regard Weber 2001:54) and between Ps 2 and Ps 3 (Ps 2 therefore forms a 'hinge' between Pss 1 and 3). But in Ps 1 there is also a constellation of conflict and enmity (a triangle between God, the enemy/wicked, and the righteous person) and suggestions of the temple (1:3, see in this regard Creach 1999, Botha 1991 and 2007).

This short tour through the first three psalms has shown how a *lectio continua* of biblical literature establishes lines of meaning and enriches the understanding of texts in a continuous process of weaving meaning. The subsequent consideration of the effect of inner-biblical intertextuality will deepen this aspect even more. At the same time, the introductory quality of Ps 3 for a Davidic or Messianic reading of the Psalter has been highlighted, so that we think it is right to allocate a place to Ps 3 in the overture to the Psalter together with Pss 1 and 2. In terms of the composition of the Psalter it may be true that only Pss 1-2 were devised for the purpose of introducing the whole collection, but from the point of view of reception criticism, one has to reckon with a triple opening to the Psalter. Each of the first three psalms introduces a new theme: 'Torah-Wisdom' (Ps 1), 'Prophecy-Kingdom' (of God and his anointed) (Ps 2), and 'Prayer/Salvation History' (Ps 3). Ps 4 and those that follow do not introduce a completely new theme, but carry on with prayer in the same vein as Ps 3. The heading which was inserted above Ps 3 was probably intended to have effect upon the mind of the reader also for the subsequent psalms. The three great themes introduced by the first three psalms also play a significant role in the book as a whole and draw the Psalter into the canonical discussion with the rest of the Hebrew Bible.

Psalm 3 probably served for some time as the first psalm (and thus introduction) of the first book of the Psalter (an as yet uncompleted collection of Pss

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[17] What Wilson has said about the depiction of 'David' in the psalm headings and in the royal psalms within the Psalter applies to Ps 3 as well: he serves as a model for every believer under duress (cf. Wilson 2002:124-126). Such a person should turn to YHWH in confession, trust, confidence, and praise. Ps 3 can therefore be described as a fitting 'introduction' to all the Davidic psalms in Book I, since it sets the tone by presenting David as the righteous king who is under attack from wicked enemies who do not recognise his special relationship with YHWH, but who triumphs in this situation of distress through his trust in YHWH and by remembering YHWH's help in the past.

3-41), and later possibly of the Davidic Psalter consisting of Books I-III (a pre-liminary phase of Pss 3-88) before Ps 2 was added to serve as frame (together with Ps 89) for Pss 2-89*, and before Ps 1 was finally added to serve as heading for the whole Psalter. In its original form (before the editorial addition of v.1 and v.9b), Ps 3 probably was a pre-exilic prayer which was collected in late exilic or early post-exilic times together with other prayers (supplications, laments, and prayers of thanksgiving) into a collection consisting of Pss 3-7, 11-14, 17-18, 20-22, 26-28, 30-31, 35, 38, and 41 (Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:14). The editors added a number of psalms of various types, some of which they possibly composed themselves (Pss 8, 15, 24, 29, 32, and 36) to create clusters of psalms: Pss 3-14* (initially without 9-10), 15-24* (as yet without 16, 19, and 23), 26-32, and 35-41* (as yet without 37, 39, and 40) (Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:14).

2   Psalm 3 as part of the compositions Pss 3-7 and Pss 3-14

Psalm 3 can thus be expected to show affinity with its immediate neighbours, Pss 4-7 (a series of laments of a persecuted),[18] and with the cluster of Pss 3-14. Such connections could then be attributed partially to the similarity of themes (especially in 3-7), but could also be due to the activity of these late exilic or early post-exilic editors who would 'chain together' or 'interlock' such a cluster (especially in Pss 3-14). Such connections that have been noted are the 'brackets' around 3-14 formed by the prayers for Israel in 3:9b and 14:7[19] and the only[20] designations of the enemy as 'wicked persons' in 3:8 and 7:10 (Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:56). Hartenstein (forthcoming, 2009) also points out the importance of repetition of ישוע(ת)ה in Pss 3:3 and 14:7 and the theme of the presence or absence of YHWH (cf. 3:3 and 14:1).[21] Shared themes in Pss 3-7 are the honour of the suppliant (cf. 3:4, 4:3, and 7:6); the 'morning motif' of salvation by YHWH (3:5-6, 4:9, 5:4, 6:7, and 7:12); and the role of the temple (cf. 3:5, 4:6, and 5:8).[22]

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[18]   Zenger (1998:20) regards the psalms of this group as referring to different kinds of distress: Ps 3 suggests a situation of persecution, Ps 4 poverty, Ps 5 an innocent person who is accused, Ps 6 an infirm person, and Ps 7 an innocently persecuted person.
[19]   Hartenstein (forthcoming, 2009) remarks that this inclusio of עם expands the perspective from that of an individual suppliant in the individual psalms to that of a collective historical salvation for Israel in the cluster.
[20]   The stem רשע also occurs in 5:5, but it is there in the form of a noun.
[21]   Both have citations of opponents about the reality of YHWH's intervention, and both citations are contradicted by experiences of YHWH's power to intervene.
[22]   Cf. Hossfeld & Zenger (1993:56). The 'morning motif' is there described as YHWH's taking over the role of the triumphant sun in the morning. See also the discussion in Zenger 1998:20.

Apart from words that are perhaps too common to be of any particular significance, Ps 3 shares with the rest of the group of Psalms 1-14, the following keywords:

Psalm	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Sum
אֹיֵב			8			11	6	3	4, 7				3, 5		8
אמר		7	3												2
אני		6, 7	6												3
אתה		7	4												2
בן		7	1	3			1	5			4	2, 9		2	9
הר		6	5								1				3
ישועה			3, 9						15				6	7	5
ישן			6	9									4		3
ישע			8		5		2, 11					2, 6			6
כבוד			4	3		6		6							4
מגן			4				11								2
נפש			3			4, 5	3, 6			3	1, 5		3		9
סביב			7									9			2
עם			7, 9				9		12					4, 7	6
ענה			5	2									4		3
צר			2	2									5		3
קדש		6	5		8						4				4
קול			5		3, 4	9									4
קום	5		2, 8				7		20	12		6			7
קרא			5	2, 4										4	4
ראש			4				17								2
רב			2, 3	7	8, 11										5
רבב			2	8											2
רום			4						14			9	3		4
רשע	1, 4, 5, 6		8		5		10		6, 17, 18	2, 3, 4, 13, 15	2, 5, 6	9			19
שבר			8							15					2
שית			7					7	21			6	3		5
שכב			6	9											2
Total (words)	2	6		9	4	4	10	4	7	4	5	7	8	4	

Table 1: Keywords in Pss 1-14

From this table it would seem that the closest correspondence is between Ps 3 and Ps 7, and then between Ps 3 and Ps 4. There is also quite a number of shared keywords with Pss 9, 12, and 13. The connections between Ps 3 and Ps 4 are incontestable: the motif of *lying down* and *going to sleep*, the concern for personal *honour*, the *calling* to YHWH and his *answering* of the suppliant, and the opposition of '*many*' are conspicuous parallels. With Ps 7, Ps 3 shares the motifs of the *request for salvation*, the concern for *honour*, the comparison of YHWH's protection with a *shield*, the request that YHWH should '*rise*', and the description of the enemy as '*wicked people*'. Conspicuous similarities between Ps 3 and Pss 9-10 are the request for YHWH to '*rise*' and the description of the enemy as '*wicked people*'. With Ps 12, Ps 3 shares the urgent request that YHWH should '*save*' the suppliant and the description of the enemy as '*wicked people*'. Finally, there are parallels between Ps 3 and Ps 13 in the mentioning of the '*enemy*', the use of '*salvation*' as a description of YHWH's intervention, the motif of '*sleep*' (real sleep in Ps 3, but a metaphor for death in Ps 13), and the description of YHWH's response as '*answer*' in Ps 3 and the request that he would '*answer*' in Ps 13.

Hartenstein (forthcoming, 2009) expresses the opinion that the principal theme of the group of psalms, Pss 3-14, is YHWH as the God of justice and loyalty to the community (צדק, ישע, שפט). All of them deal with the enemy in an ethical-religious qualification as the 'wicked'. The group is characterised by quotations from the enemy and almost all of them either begin with or end with a pronouncement of trust. According to Hartenstein, the objective of the composition was to help its readers confront the issue of denial that YHWH has a role to play in human affairs and to help them to develop strategies to cope with this, based on their trust in YHWH's willingness to intervene.

The reader who has finished reading Ps 3 and who comes to Ps 4 can interpret it as a second prayer of David in the same context as that which is referred to in Ps 3:1. He is still calling to YHWH (קרא, 3:5; 4:2, directed at the 'God' who provides justice), and he still has to contend with the opinion of 'many' (רבים אמרים, 3:3; 4:7), although in Ps 4 the criticism seems to come from the members of the in-group (cf. the 'us' in 4:7), and not the enemy. In both psalms, and also in the context in 2 Samuel to which is referred, there is concern for the honour of the suppliant (כְּבוֹדִי, 3:4 and 4:3).[23] In both psalms, 'David' is also confident that YHWH will listen to his plea (he 'answered' from his holy mountain in 3:5; he 'will listen' according to 4:4). The 'David' of Ps 3 confidently states that he will not fear the huge enemy force that surrounds him since he could 'lie down and sleep (שכב and ישן)' and wake up again (Ps 3:6). Accordingly, he can announce his intention to 'lie down and sleep' (שכב and ישן) in Ps 4:9, since YHWH alone causes him to stay safe. This knowledge

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[23]   Cf. the self-deprecation of David in 2 Sam 15:30 and the shaming by Shimei in 2 Sam 16:5-8.

causes him to rejoice (4:8). Many of the themes of Ps 3 are thus continued in Ps 4 and the confidence expressed in Ps 4 naturally flows from the experience described in Ps 3, that YHWH has (symbolically) struck the suppliant's enemies on the chin, so that the he is confident that YHWH has characterised him as a חסיד (4:4).

C   PSALM 3 IN THE LIGHT OF ITS HEADING AND ITS INTERTEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

1   Tabular Overview[24]

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[24]   The more important links are printed in **bold type**.

Psalm 3		2 Sam 15-19 (Absalom)	2 Sam 22 (= Ps 18)	Further Davidic connections	Other connections
Pre-sent	Past				
1		**15:14** ('flight' from 'Absa-lom')		1 Sam 19:12ff (earlier 'flight' of David from Saul)	
2-3		**15:12** ('people' described as 'numerous') **18:31f** (who 'rose up against' David)	7 ('distress') **39f, 49** ('who rose against' David)		
4		15:30 (covered 'head' of David) 18:9 (Absalom's 'head' caught in a tree)	28, 47, **49** ('be high', 'be exalted', 'lift up high')		
			3f, 31, **36** ('shield', 'save/salvations')		
	5		4, **7** ('call/my voice', answer from temple)		
	6	17:1, 16 (threat to David during the night)		1 Sam 26:12 (David spares Saul's life during the night)	Job 14:12f, 15; **11QPs**[a] **XXIV:16-18** (Gen 41; Is 29:7f; Jer 31:23-25; Dan 2?)
7		**15:12** ('people' become 'nu-merous') 18:3, 7 (David is like 'ten/many thousands')		**1 Sam 18:7f; 21:12; 29:5** (David has 'struck down ten thousand')	
8a			**3f, 28**, 36, 42, 47 ('save')		
	8bc	18:15 (Absalom is 'struck') 18:19 (justice given from violence of 'his enemies')	1, 4, 18, 38, 41, **49** ('enemies' of David)	**1 Sam 18:7f** (David has 'struck down ten thousand'). Various places 'struck down' in Philistine wars	**Judges 15:15f** (Samson 'struck down' 'one, two heaps of' Philistines with a 'cheek/jawbone') Job 29:17
9			**51** (great 'deliverance' for king David)	2 Sam 7:29 ('blessing' for the house of David)	

Table 2: Intertextual connections between Psalm 3 and other parts of the Hebrew Bible

2   Psalm 3 and 2 Sam 15-19 (Absalom's rebellion)

The heading (Ps 3:1) coaches the reader to understand Ps 3 as a prayer of King David which he prayed to YHWH during the flight from his son Absalom. In this context the psalm is thus understood as a royal prayer that originated against the background of an internal military upheaval, something that we would call a civil war. The issue at stake is that of the honour of the king, whether that of David or that of Absalom, something which makes sense especially in Ps 3 when viewed against the background of Ps 2. Through this remark at the beginning of Ps 3 the context of 2 Sam 15-19 becomes involved intertextually as donor text and this perception remains in place at least until Ps 7 is reached.[25] The psalm is understood in a new light, but it in turn also illuminates the narrative text, since the narrative of David's flight from Saul is given a deeper spiritual dimension through the 'portrayal' of David as a faithful, praying seeker of refuge in God.[26] When Ps 3 is read together with 2 Sam 15-19, David appears more confident and trusting in God. In the narrative text, the outcome of the confrontation is much less certain.[27] The success achieved through cunningness in the narrative text (2 Sam 15:31-37 and 16:15-17:23) is also put into perspective: David's short prayer (the only one in the narrative about Absalom's rebellion) in 2 Sam 15:31 ('O YHWH, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness') is shown to have been a persistent prayer of David and the success of the endeavour is now portrayed as an answer by YHWH from Zion (YHWH's intervention in the matter is described in 2 Samuel 17:14 as doing what David asked, namely turning the 'counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness'). The contrast of wisdom and foolishness makes even better sense when it is interpreted against the background of Ps 1, since

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[25]   In Ps 7:1, another (cryptic) note about the context of origin is made: 'A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to YHWH concerning Cush, a Benjamite'. The reference is probably to the messenger who informed David of Absalom's death, so that Ps 3 is located at the beginning of David's flight and Ps 7 at the tragic end of the rebellion. Hossfeld (Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:75) notes: 'Die formative exilische Redaktion akzentuiert die Eckpsalmen 3 und 7 und weist sie in eine analoge Lebenssituation ein (vgl. Ps 18:1)'.

[26]   Ps 3 only states that David referred to YHWH as his 'shield' (מגן) and that YHWH 'supported' him (סמך), but the closeness of Ps 2:12 to Ps 3 would suggest that this was what he was doing (taking refuge in YHWH – חסה). 2 Sam 22:31 rephrases Ps 2:12 by using both these terms ('YHWH is a shield (מגן) to all who take refuge (חסה) in him'), so that the triumph of David over Absalom's rebellion is also described as the result of his 'taking refuge' in YHWH, his 'shield' (cf. 2 Sam 22:3, where David's confession also contains both מגן and חסה).

[27]   Cf. the conditional formulation and general conduct of David in 2 Sam 15:25-26, 30; 16:5-12. When he gives instructions that the ark be returned to Jerusalem, David considers it possible that YHWH does not delight in him any more (2 Sam 15:25); he similarly considers the curses of Shimei to be inspired by YHWH (2 Sam 16:10-12), cf. Kleer (1996:91).

there the righteous person is also the wise.

Some more specific links between the narrative text and the psalm can be isolated: The 'fleeing' (ברח) from Absalom mentioned in the heading of the psalm (v.1) is found at the beginning of the narrative about the rebellion (2 Sam 15:14, cf. 19:10). The flight of David suggests that he is politically and militarily isolated to such an extent that the majority of the 'men of Israel' have thrown in their weight behind Absalom. In both texts it is described how the agitators have (wrongly) 'risen against me/David' (קמים עלי 2b and 2 Sam 18:31f)[28] and they are called 'enemies' (איבים, 8c and 2 Sam 18:19, 32). Real pointers to a 'flight' are not recognizable in Ps 3,[29] but the circumstances of having to cope with enemies that far outnumber the suppliant are definitely there. This aspect is stronger in the psalm and explicated in greater detail: the narrative reports in 2 Sam 15:12 (cf. also 15:6; 17:11), that the conspiracy was strong and the people (עם) with Absalom continually 'increased' (הולך ורב). The root (רב(ב 'be numerous' is the dominant keyword in Ps 3: Through its five-fold occurrence, a link is formed with the Absalom-conspiracy of agitators in their marching up (2a), in their rebellious uprising against the anointed of God (2b), and in their 'theological' significance, considering the king to be isolated from God and from deliverance (3a).[30] The emphasis, however, is in 7ab where the root appears as a nominal numeral, expressing in its plural form the biggest multitude possible in the Hebrew numeral system: רבבות עם 'ten/many thousands of [military] people' who have banded together to surround the speaker. But this number is not used in an expression of lament as in the earlier occurrences of the stem, but rather in an expression of trust, namely that the praying king – against the background of what is said in 4-6 – does not fear them.[31] The last indication of 'number' in the psalm is the totality denotation כל־, 'all', in the retrospective pronouncement that God has struck/slain[32] '*all* my enemies' (8c). This should be compared also to 2 Sam 22:1 'from the hand of all his enemies' (see below).

Through these links between narrative text and psalm two things are achieved:

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[28] One should also take note of the juridical concepts in both texts: In Ps 3 the only indication of this is the two instances of the same stem, 'those who stood up against me' (2b) and especially 'Please stand up, YHWH!' (8a). In the narrative about Absalom's revolt, juridical expressions are found (inter alia) in 2 Sam 15:1-12; 18:19, and 31f. As the opposite of the description of opponents, we have in 2b (in the confession of God's help) the phrase 'who lifts up my head' (4b).

[29] It is possible to detect elements of this in the night scene (6ab, cf. 2 Sam 17:1, 16).

[30] Cf. in this regard 2 Sam 15:25f; 16:7-14; 19:9-16.

[31] Note also 2 Sam 18:3, 7, where David – in remembering 1 Sam 18:7 (see below) – is ascribed the fighting ability of ten thousand by his own army. In the end, twenty thousand of the enemy fell.

[32] With the same verb (נכה) both David's possible (cf. 2 Sam 15:14; 17:2) and Absalom's effective deaths are described (cf. 2 Sam 18:11, 15).

YHWH is depicted as the God who stands with his anointed and who stays victorious against any (possible) superior number of the enemy; while David is depicted as the person after the heart of God whose prayer and trust become exemplary.[33] Since Ps 2 is still fresh in the memory of the reader/listener, Absalom's revolt would be interpreted against the background of the rebellion of the nations against YHWH and his anointed (Ps 2:1-3), and the trust of 'David' in Ps 3 would be seen to be based on YHWH's promise to act on behalf of his anointed (Ps 2:4-9). The answer from YHWH's 'holy mountain' (Ps 3:5) would be interpreted as a confirmation of YHWH's consecration of his Messiah (Ps 2:6), but those who follow in the footsteps of David and who are far removed from Jerusalem in a situation of despair could also take courage that YHWH listens and helps, no matter how far the suppliant is from Jerusalem.

The suppliant of Ps 3 is encouraged by (as we have argued in the previous article) a previous nocturnal answer from YHWH. In the description of David's flight before Absalom, mention is also made of the night. The narrative explains that David escaped precisely because he did *not sleep* during the night on which he left Jerusalem (2 Sam 17:16 – אל־תלן הלילה). This creates a tension between Ps 3 and the Absalom narrative: David and his followers take the whole night to cross the Jordan (2 Sam 17:23) and the following day Absalom is killed. But it is the message from Ahimaaz and Jonathan telling David *not* to spend the night at the crossing that saves him and his followers. But both texts use the motif of YHWH helping in the morning (Kleer 1996:90). With the first light of daybreak, each and every member of the party of David had crossed the Jordan (2 Sam 17:22) and thus they were saved. The message of Ahimaaz and Jonathan could thus be understood as YHWH's specific answer to David's prayer (3:5), enabling him the privilege of other nights of peaceful sleep.

In 2 Sam 18:15 the audience hears that Absalom was killed by ten young men who surrounded him (סבב) and struck him down (נכה). This would probably call to mind the words of 'David' in Ps 3:7 that he is not afraid of an army of ten thousand (soldiers) that surrounds (סבב) him, because God has struck (נכה) all his enemies on the chin/jaw. In the story about the rebellion of Absalom, David is in fact spared the threat of such a siege, since he moves out of Jerusalem before Absalom's army arrives there. David is also not permitted by his own army to accompany them to the front, since he is, in their words, worth ten thousand (עשרה אלפים) of them (2 Sam 18:3). It may be argued that this statement of David's soldiers is based on the song of the women early in the history of David, when Saul was taunted that he struck down (נכה) his thousands (באלפיו), but David his ten thousands (ברבבתיו) (1 Sam 18:7). This good reputation of David ironically posed a threat to him on two occasions

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[33]   Cf. on this also Kleer (1996:91).

when he flew from Saul and was recognised by the Philistines as one who slew the equivalent of ten thousand of them (1 Sam 21:12; 29:5). YHWH had delivered him on those occasions when he was surrounded by a multitude of Philistines. As was argued above, the word for 'ten thousands' is also very important in Ps 3, since it is the superlative form used to describe the complete trust of the supplicant king, even when surrounded by innumerable soldiers of the enemy (3:7).

3   Psalm 3 and 2 Sam 22 (the 'Davidic liberation song')

The heading of the psalm which concludes the Davidic narratives (2 Sam 22, cf. Ps 18) describes it as a song (שירה) which David sang before YHWH on the day when he (YHWH) delivered him 'from the hand of all his enemies (איביו־כל) and from the hand of Saul' (2 Sam 22:1). Included among 'all his enemies' (כל־איביו) (cf. besides the superscript's denotation also 2 Sam 22:4, 18, 38, 41, 49), are also the perpetrators of the Absalom-uprising.[34] This liberation- and thanksgiving song is consequently also to be connected to the narrative about Absalom's uprising and thus indirectly also to Ps 3, since the psalm also mentions the triumphant initiative of YHWH against 'all my enemies' (כל־איבי 8c). To be sure, there are substantial points of agreement between the two songs associated with David in this manner. For the reader who is familiar with the books of Samuel, who knows how the poetic pieces found in 1 Sam 2 (the Song of Hannah) and 2 Sam 22 (the Song of David) frame the history of David and his family, the heading of Ps 3 would bring to mind David's history and especially the difficult time during Absalom's rebellion. While reading or hearing the text of Ps 3 in this context, certain connections to both 1 Sam 2 and 2 Sam 22 will be made. Ps 3 will consequently be read against the background of David's thanksgiving after all his enemies were conquered, explaining how it is possible to commemorate this incident by singing.

With the verbs קום 'to stand up (against)' and רום 'to elevate', the rebellion of the enemies against David (and indirectly against God himself) (קמים, 2b), or the restoration of David's honour by YHWH (מרים, 4b) is formulated in Ps 3. With these words, the 'rising' of the enemies against David (קמי, 2 Sam 22:40 and 49) and against YHWH himself (רמים, 28) are also described in 2 Sam 22. Simultaneously, there are pronouncements about the triumph of David over these enemies, so that they could not 'stand up' any more (יקומון, 39), and also of David's 'uplifting' by YHWH (תרוממני, 49).[35] These moments are connected to one another exceptionally clear in 2 Sam 22:47-49:

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[34]   In 2 Sam 22:18 mention is also made of an enemy or a number of enemies who are stronger than the psalmist.

[35]   Cf. the connection with 1 Sam 2:7 and 8 where YHWH is described as מְרוֹמֵם and מֵקִים respectively.

> YHWH [is] alive and blessed be my rock,
> yes, exalted (וירם) [be] the God, the rock of my salvation!
> The God who gives me revenge
> and brings down people under me
> and brings me forth from my enemies.
> Yes, you continuously lift me up (תרוממני) from them that stand up
> (ומקמי) [against] me,
> from the person of violence you have delivered me time and again.

The call to God in prayer in Ps 3:5 (קולי אל־יהוה אקרא 'loud ['my voice'], to YHWH I called repeatedly) and the answer of God from the holy mountain are also mirrored in the deliverance and thanksgiving song of David. This happens in 2 Sam 22:4 and then especially also in 2 Sam 22:7:

> In my distress I continuously call to YHWH (אקרא יהוה),
> yes, to my God I call time and again (ואל־אלהי אקרא).
> He heard from his sanctuary my voice (קולי),
> and my cry for help [came to] his ears.

Finally, the experience of being protected and delivered, represented in Ps 3 through the concepts of מגן 'shield (around me)' (4a) and ישע/ישוע 'delive-rance/save ' (8b, 9a, cf. 3b), is also clearly visible in 2 Sam 22 (cf. verses 3f, 28, 31, 36, 42, 47).[36] By way of example, we can cite 2 Sam 22:3:

> God, my rock, time and again I take refuge (אחסה) in you,
> my shield (מגני), and the horn of my salvation (ישועי),
> my stronghold and my refuge,
> the one who saves me (משעי), from violence you have
> continually saved me (תשעני).

If one reads Ps 3 as a prayer of David (with 2 Sam 15-19 as the background) and together with 2 Sam 22 (= Ps 18) in a 'synoptic' way, the first is gradually absorbed in the second. The song of victory and thanksgiving of David (2 Sam 22) confirms and attests to the fact that the lament and supplication of David from a situation of distress (Ps 3) were eventually answered. One might say that the poetic piece (2 Sam 22) at the end of the books of Samuel is evoked at the beginning of the (Davidic) book of Psalms. The mutual connection of Ps 2 and Ps 3 with 2 Sam 22 (and with 1 Sam 2) strengthens the links between Pss 2 and 3, so that the function of Ps 3 as part of the preamble of the Psalter is further emphasised. But the connections with David's song of victory in 2 Sam 22 – therefore reading the Psalter (Ketubim) within the horizon of the Nebi'im – primarily contextualises Ps 3 as a prayer which is known to have been answered. The parallels between Ps 3:2-3 and Ps 2:1-2 are emphasised in this

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[36]   The same is also true of the song of Hannah – cf. יְשׁוּעָה in 2 Sam 2:1.

way: the question/interjection about the uprising of many enemies ('why…?'; 'how…?'), and the use of a quotation of the enemies ('Let us…'; 'There is no help…'). The implication is that the uprising against 'David' in Ps 3 is also an uprising against YHWH, and that YHWH will therefore help his anointed.

4   Psalm 3 and further connections to the *Nebi'im*

If one takes both the superscript and the dimensions of time in Ps 3 seriously, then 5-6 and 8cd seem to speak of experiences that *precede* the uprising of Absalom chronologically. This forces one to enquire about moments in the David-narrative that occurred before the unhappy incident with Absalom. In this regard one can think of the distress of David under persecution by the superior force of Saul's army, which also tells about encounters in the night (cf. 1 Sam 26). But also the many skirmishes that David had, especially with the Philistines, provide a background for a possible experience of prayer in distress and deliverance.[37] The verb נכה 'strike/slay', used in Ps 3:8c, occurs very often in connection with skirmishes between Israel and the Philistines (cf., inter alia, 1 Sam 4:2, 8; 5:6, 9, 12; 14:14, 31; 17:9, 25-27, 35f, 46, 49f, 57; 18:27; 19:5, 8; 23:2, 5; 2 Sam 5:20, 24f). One specific scene deserves note because of the light it throws on Ps 3, since it also mentions a 'song', the popularity and impact of which is explicitly mentioned (cf. 1 Sam 18:6-8; 21:12; 29:5): After the victory of David over Goliath or, for that matter, the victory of Israel over the Philistines, the women came out of all the towns of Israel, singing and dancing with joy and repeating the victory slogan:

> Saul has struck down (נכה) his thousands,
> but David his many thousands/ten thousands (רבבתיו)!

This victory refrain of the women which became a 'winged word' after the decisive defeat of the Philistines (1 Sam 18:7b) possibly also has an echo in the Absalom history (cf. 2 Sam 18:3, 7) and throws new light on Ps 3 in the way in which it suggests that verse 7ab ('many thousands/ten thousands') and 8cd ('struck/slain') should be related: David's trust in the face of a huge enemy majority (7ab) has its foundation in the experience of victory brought about by God (8cd). YHWH did not only help David to overcome Goliath, but also saved him a little later when he, precisely because of his reputation as one who metaphorically 'struck down (נכה)' 'ten thousands (רבבת)' of the Philistines, landed in trouble. He was on that occasion fleeing from Saul, carrying the sword of Goliath, and was (possibly because of the sword)[38] recognised by the

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[37]   To be sure, the reported answer of God to his prayer 'from his holy mountain' mentioned in Ps 3:5b would have preceded the transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem (cf. 2 Sam 6).

[38]   Cf. David's own remark in 1 Sam 21:9 that there is no other sword like that of Goliath.

Philistines as their enemy number one. The Philistines then quote the song of the women in an accusing way (1 Sam 21:11), which causes David to become very afraid (ירא מאד). He uses his ingenuity and humiliates himself by pretending to be mad, and this saves him. If Ps 3 is read in conjunction with this episode, it turns out to be one of the occasions where YHWH in fact silenced the accusers and thus removed his fear (ירא, Ps 3:7 and 8).

Verse 8cd and especially the rare singular form (in the Psalms) לחי 'cheek/jaw' lead us on one last journey. Colon 8c plays (in the way it is formulated) with the image of 'hitting the enemy on the cheek' and the 'striking down of the enemy with a jawbone'. In the context of Ps 3, the first meaning seems to be active: Hitting someone on the chin (and thus in the face) means to shame that person severely (cf. 1 Kgs 22:24 = 2 Chr 18:23; Isa 50:6; Hos 11:4; Micah 4:14; Job 16:10; Lam 3:30). This is directed against the self-elevation of the enemies and their shaming of the suppliant (cf. 2f). The action of hitting on the jaw and breaking the teeth (cf. Ps 58:7; Job 29:17) is, however, also meant to make the enemies 'dead in the mouth',[39] which refers back to the haughty pronouncement of 3b.[40] Now, however, in the Davidic horizon of reading the psalm (1), in which God's ability to provide a victory against the Philistines is hinted at in 8cd, the option of interpreting the expression as 'striking/slaying the enemy with the jawbone' is also viable. It is true that David did not kill the Philistine hero with a jawbone, but with another, similarly simple and modest weapon, namely a sling (cf. 1 Sam 17:40, 49f). With this he killed Goliath in the name of YHWH of hosts (cf. 1 Sam 17:45f). But David had a 'forerunner' who, as judge in Israel, had similarly won a victory over a superior force of Philistines – and this he did with a donkey's jawbone (cf. Judges 15:15f):

> And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey (לחי־חמור), put his hand out and took it, and with it he struck (ויך) a thousand men. And Samson said:
> With the jawbone of a donkey (בלחי־המור) [I struck down] one, two heaps!
> With the jawbone of a donkey (בלחי־המור) I have struck down (הכיתי) a thousand men!

The poetic form (with wordplay) of this saying reminds one of the songs of victory of the women after the routing of the Philistines and it has the same potential of becoming a winged pronouncement. That this pronouncement of Samson played a role in the formulation of Ps 3:8bc seems possible. The following reasons can be listed: (1.) The mentioning of the 'chin/jawbone' in the context of the Psalm is exceptional and calls for an explanation. In Judges 15:9-19 the lex-

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[39]   Cf. in this regard not only the confessions of trust of the suppliant in Ps 3, but also the (prophetic) reprimanding through the laughing and mocking words of God in Ps 2.
[40]   Cf. Culley (1991:31), Hossfeld & Zenger (1993:58) and Lindström (1994:399).

eme appears altogether eight times, more than in any other context in the Bible; (2.) In 8c as in Judges 15, the 'jawbone (of a donkey)' is used in conjunction with the verb נכה 'strike/slay' and it is used in an affirmation of victory over enemies; (3.) In Ps 3 as in Judges 15, the superior number of the enemy is mentioned. This is strengthened further when one draws in – via the heading of the psalm – the background of David's victory over Goliath as a 'bridge' – especially since there is a conspicuous analogy between the Samson history and the David history (heroic deed against a superior force of Philistines). It is so that the concept of 'ten/many thousands' does not appear in Judges 15:16 – in contrast to Ps 3 and 1 Sam 18:7b – but the great number is nevertheless expressed conspicuously.[41] In our view, thus, in the face of a threat by a superior number, Ps 3 reminds the reader of the mighty deeds of YHWH which he performed through Samson and David in a similar situation. Through this, the suppliant is assured that God can and will intervene as judge and saviour also in his or her situation.

D   CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF THE PSALM

Through the insertion of its heading, Ps 3 was embedded in a Davidic context. The question that now arises is what is the historical connection between the heading of the psalm and its origin? Related to that is the question whether Ps 3 became a royal psalm after the heading was added, or whether it was considered royal from the beginning. Put differently, the question is: Can a military confrontation be detected as part of the background of the psalm, or is this a typical lament of an individual, someone who experienced social-juristic conflict and expressed this in military metaphors?[42] The psalm is a short one and the questions difficult to answer, especially in the case of a psalm with a (as is often the case) conventional-formulaic diction.

No indications which would clearly decide whether the psalm is an 'individual' song or a 'royal' psalm are present in Ps 3. All things considered, however, we would tend to think that the indications for a military conflict are stronger than those for personal juridical distress. The superior number of the

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[41]   It should also be noted that the description of a 'thousand' (אלף) occurs in 1 Sam 18:7b as it does in Judg 15:16.

[42]   Culley (1991:31-33) discusses various contexts that have been suggested as the background for Ps 3: the conflict between David and Absalom (the explanation provided by the heading), the prayer of an individual who has experienced some or other misfortune (Gunkel), an individual who uses 'democratized' royal language (Kraus), a cultic context describing conflict between good and evil at a cosmic level (Engnell), and holy war imagery (Kim). Culley himself suggests that one should not attempt to remove the ambiguities in terms of time differences and clashing metaphors in Ps 3, but should leave the text intact because speakers in complaint psalms rarely speak explicitly of real troubles suffered by real persons, but merely associate themselves with a larger, multi-layered pattern of suffering and rescue (Culley 1991:38).

enemy, the action of surrounding, the note about a shield, especially 8cd (with the background as has been proposed), but also the final wish which connects the speaker and the people, strongly suggest that the psalm is to be read as a re-quest for help in a military situation (cf. Croft 1987:114). It seems to be the prayer of a king in military difficulty who bases his trust on YHWH on the foundation of having been given a dream during the night that conveyed a promise of help by YHWH, and that is interpreted as an answer to earlier inces-sant calling to God.[43]

Recently, William Holladay has suggested that several biblical passages confirm the findings of modern research that people in pre-industrial society had two periods of sleep during the night (Holladay 2007). The suppliant of Ps 3 possibly woke up after having dreamt during the first period of such 'segmented sleep', and understood the dream to be an answer from YHWH that he will save him.

Peter Craigie accepts the possibility that David could have written the psalm, and that the heading could have historical worth.[44] It is impossible to be sure who wrote the psalm, but it seems possible that its kernel originated in the time of the monarchy.[45] Although there is enough reason to seriously doubt Da-vidic authorship, the many contacts between the David-narrative and the psalm as described in this article do leave the impression that the (secondary) connec-tion which was made by the editors of the Psalter between Ps 3 and David is not completely spurious and absurd. But while the psalm is probably pre-exilic, the heading must be dated in the exilic or post-exilic period. Since Pss 3-7 are bound together inter alia through their respective headings which establish connections to the beginning and end (respectively) of the flight from Absalom, it is possible to link the insertion of these headings to the activity of the editors who arranged Pss 3-7 into a group. From a literary-critical perspective,[46] it seems that Ps 18 was the first psalm in the first Davidic Psalter (Pss 3-41) to

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[43] Hossfeld (Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:56) lists similarities with pre-exilic royal prayers such as Pss 18 and 35: the dominant theme of the help of YHWH (vv.3, 8, 9a) is also found in royal prayers such as Pss 18:3, 36, 42, 47; 20:3, 6a, 10; and 35:3-4; the metaphor of YHWH as a shield is also found in Pss 18:3, 36 and 35:2; the image of 'thousands of soldiers' has connections with David and Saul and also occurs in Ps 18:44; the expectation of help from the temple as domain of the state and palace seems authentic in comparison to Pss 18:7 and 20:2-3; the image of a siege correlates with Ps 18:19; and the hand-to-hand combat suggested by v.8 fits the description found in Ps 18:33-50.

[44] Craigie 1983:72f. At the other end of the spectrum is the view of Oeming 2000:63, who dates Ps 3 in the Hellenistic period and who does not find a real war in the background of the psalm, but 'eine Schlacht auf geistigem Gebiet'.

[45] One could possibly argue for a background in the time of Hezekiah (during the Assyrian siege and rescue in 701 B.C.), where Ps 3:3 would show correspondence with the propaganda of the Rabshakeh.

[46] Cf. the discussion of Kleer (1996) and his summary on p.89.

receive a heading, and that this was based on the heading given to its parallel in 2 Sam 22. Psalm 7 then received a heading which was formed in turn on the basis of the heading of Ps 18 (both are constructed with the help of the relative pronoun אשר). When the first Davidic Psalter (3-41) was combined with the Elohistic Psalter (42-83, into which the Korachite psalms 84-85 and 87-88 were integrated), biographical headings constructed with the help of בְּ plus infinitive were inserted before Pss 3 and 34 to interlock the two large collections, since all the biographical headings in the second Davidic Psalter were already constructed in this way. This points to a time of origin of the heading of Ps 3 at about 300 B.C. (Kleer 1996:89), so that it was added possibly three to four centuries after the origin of the psalm itself, should this argumentation be accepted.

E   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Ps 3 is significant on account of its being the first prayer in a book of prayers. It also is the first real Davidic psalm, the first psalm with a heading, and the first psalm with a biographical connection to the life of David. We have come to the conclusion that it might have been written during the time of the monarchy. It probably constitutes the prayer of a military leader or king who was threatened by an internal uprising. Part of the assault of the enemy, possibly constituted from fellow Israelites, was their verbal attack on the relationship between this leader and his God. The prayer is interrupted by a flashback to an earlier experience of a vision or dream in which YHWH had promised to sustain the suppliant. Because of this experience, he has the confidence that YHWH will save him from the multitude of enemies surrounding him and will prove their propaganda wrong. Through the answer given to the suppliant, YHWH had *de facto* struck the enemy on the chin, silencing their verbal assault on his relationship with God.

The heading, which was much later attached to Ps 3, enhances the hermeneutical possibilities of the prayer. It strengthens the connections of Ps 3 to Pss 1-2 (especially through mutual connections with 2 Sam 22), qualifying Ps 3 more clearly as part of the overture of the Psalter. Through the clear echoes of 2 Sam 22 which resound in Ps 3 (and which also connects Ps 3 forward to Ps 18), the way which the Psalter follows from *tephilla* to *tehilla* (manifest in the conclusion of the Psalter and its later designation as *Tehillim*) is already demarcated. The heading of Ps 3 establishes a firm link to Ps 2 with its Davidic overtones, and thus serves to unite the first three psalms since there are already strong editorial connections between Pss 1-2. It further also serves to establish a connection between Pss 1-2 and the Davidic Psalter consisting of Pss 3-88. As the first heading in this larger collection, it helps to characterise David as a persecuted messianic figure, but one who still prays and sings to YHWH in difficult circumstances (Kleer 1996:91). The heading also serves to connect this psalm and (together with other similar headings, notably those of

Pss 7 and 18) the Psalter as a literary corpus to the Deuteronomistic History. There are strong connections established between Ps 3 and 2 Sam 22 (as well as 1 Sam 2) which suggests that, although the psalm is connected specifically to the time of distress when David was fleeing from Absalom, it should also be read from the perspective of David's final triumph over 'all' his enemies.

There is no doubt that the hermeneutical effect of the addition of the heading to Ps 3 was that it simplified the process of identification of believers with David.[47] Kleer (1996:116-117) stresses the fact that the biographical superscripts predominantly portray David as a persecuted, betrayed, captive, mourning, and guilt-laden person who could serve as representative of the common believer in Israel. But it also served to challenge the impression of David's character that one might get from the books of Samuel. Through the connection with Ps 3, David is shown to be more confident about the help of YHWH. He is depicted as someone who prayed with great fervour and who was sure of the answer of YHWH. He is depicted as someone who could draw from his earlier experiences of triumph and consequently put his trust in YHWH. While it seems to be David's loyal soldiers who overcome the uprising in 2 Samuel, the psalm portrays David as requesting *YHWH* to save him and trusting YHWH to do that (cf. Wallace 2007:272-274).

With the words of this song, the 'David' mentioned in the heading would eventually conquer all his enemies, also those coming from within his own people and his own family, even his own son whose life he so desperately wanted to save. In the name of YHWH, he was telling the story of his life, 'softly' killing the enemy with this song.[48] But this heading also defines David as a believer who would serve as an example for countless believers following in his footsteps. In that sense, many generations of believers could also feel that the 'David' of the heading of Ps 3 was telling the story of their lives through the words of this song.[49]

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[47] Other factors in Ps 3 have also contributed to its applicability as an exemplary or liturgical prayer. Wallace (2007:267-277) points out the effect of v.9, a statement of confidence and a request for blessing on the people of YHWH which introduce a liturgical tone and broadens the effect of the prayer beyond David and Absalom.

[48] The title we chose for these articles is a play on the hit-song 'Killing me softly with his song' by Roberta Flack. This is a song that was composed by Charles Fox and Norman Gimbel. It was inspired by a poem by Lori Lieberman, 'Killing Me Softly with His Blues,' which she wrote after seeing a then-unknown Don McLean perform the song 'Empty Chairs' live. Lieberman was the first to record Fox and Gimbel's song, in 1971, but it became a bigger hit when covered by Roberta Flack in 1973 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ accessed 28 March 2006).

[49] The line 'killing me softly with his song' from the poem of Lori Lieberman refers to the effect the song of the singer Don McLean had on her since she felt that he was telling her own story as if he had read her private letters. She was so embarrassed by this, she felt she could die, and yet it was obvious that he did not know her and was

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unaware of the effect it had on her. Through its heading, which portrays David as the exemplary suppliant, the words of Ps 3 have also become the life story of countless believers.

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