

# Deuteronomistic theology in Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89: Examined through the lens of trauma

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Biblical scholars are divided regarding the presence of Deuteronomistic theology in Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89. This article re-examines this issue through the lens of trauma and argues for two points. Firstly, Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89 do not reject Deuteronomistic theology because the accusations of God in these psalms do not indicate attribution of responsibility but demonstrate trauma victims' negative cognition and emotion associated with the traumatic event. Secondly, the concept of post-traumatic growth (PTG) helps to clarify two crucial elements of Deuteronomistic theology concerning divine retribution and divine promise. Psalms 44 and 74 assume the first element; Psalms 80 and 89 presuppose the second.

**Contribution:** This article provides a fresh angle from trauma studies to approach biblical texts in the Hebrew Bible, clarifying the connection between Deuteronomistic theology and communal laments.

**Keywords:** Deuteronomistic theology; communal laments; trauma studies; post-traumatic growth (PTG); Psalm 44; Psalm 74; Psalm 80; Psalm 89.

## Introduction

In the past two decades, it has been controversial whether communal laments of Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89 reject or embrace Deuteronomistic theology. For instance, according to Ramond (2015), who is inspired by Rom-Shiloni's (2008) study of Psalm 44, the speakers in Psalms 74, 80 and 89 accuse God as the cause of suffering and, thus, reject the Deuteronomistic theology that Israelites' sin led to God's punishment. Marttila (2012) also argues, based on Emmendorffer's (1998) discussion of Psalm 89, that Psalm 44 is anti-Deuteronomistic. However, unlike Ramond, Marttila (2012) claims that Psalms 74 and 89 are Deuteronomistic. It is striking that scholars do not take the traumatic background of Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89 seriously, ignoring the negative and positive impacts of a traumatic event on its victims, which can further our understanding of the speaker's emotions in Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89. For instance, scholars miss the possibility that blaming others as the cause of suffering, is one of the victims' natural reactions to a traumatic event, not indicating an attribution of responsibility.

This article attempts to clarify the connection between Deuteronomistic theology and Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89 through the lens of trauma. It first discusses the scholarship on the formation of the Hebrew Psalter to explain why it reads these four communal psalms together. Next, it explores two elements of Deuteronomistic theology, the divine punishment of Israel and divine promise to David, from the perspective of positive reactions to a traumatic event. Then, it argues that Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89 do not reject Deuteronomistic theology because the accusation against God does not amount to an attribution of responsibility to God but a typical distressful mood after trauma. Lastly, it demonstrates the presence of Deuteronomistic theology in Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89: Psalms 44 and 74 assume an acceptance of divine retribution, and Psalms 80 and 89 embrace the divine promise to David.

## Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89 and the Hebrew Psalter

Because the Hebrew Psalter constitutes a 'book', it deserves a brief discussion of why the current article picks up four psalms to read.

Since the appearance of Gerald Henry Wilson's work on the compilation of the five books of the Hebrew Psalter (Wilson 1985), it has become almost a consensus that the editorial purpose and message shape the macro-structure of the Hebrew Psalter as a whole. The book of Psalms,

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according to Wilson, is not a loose-knit whole that joins together the remnants of ancient collections of Psalms, but a coherent whole with an editorial plan and purpose behind it, typically shown in the 'seams' of the Psalter. One vital aspect of such a purpose or message is pertinent to this research; that is, Books One–Three of the Hebrew Psalter are primarily concerned with 'the problem posed in Psalm 89 as to the failure of the Davidic covenant', a problem answered by Book IV, 'the editorial center of the final form of the Hebrew Psalter', which emphasises YHWH as king and refuge for the Israelites during the period when the monarchy was gone (Wilson 1985:215). In this reading, Psalms 44 of Book II, 74, 80 and 89 of Book III are linked to each other by a similar theme concerning the failure of the Davidic covenant.

Wilson's theory on the 'shape and shaping' of the Hebrew Psalter has produced two types of reactions. On the one hand, some scholars have challenged Wilson's essential points. For instance, David Willgren (2016, 2018) proposes reading the Hebrew Psalter as an 'anthology' representing multiple works instead of a 'book' with a unified theme. Tremper Longman III (2014:34) points out briefly that it is doubtful that the last two books of the Hebrew Psalter abandon interest in the human king but focus totally on the divine king; he also doubts that Psalm 89 should be read as an account of the end of the Davidic dynasty. Like Longman, Ian J. Vailancourt (2020) challenges Wilson's view that the final editor of the Hebrew Psalter shifted the focus from the human king to the divine king, and he gives sophisticated evidence by arguing for a multifaceted figure of salvation in Psalms 110 and 118, two key psalms of Book V.

On the other hand, some scholars tend to develop rather than challenge Wilson's theory. Three trends in this direction are noteworthy for this study. Firstly, despite the agreement on the big 'story' of the Psalter, scholars are spending more time on the smaller units of the shape and are informed by Gunkel's form criticism of the Psalter as much as by the study of the Psalter's shape and shaping (ed. DeClaisse-Walford 2014:9). Secondly, according to Jaco Gericke (2014), the editorial unity of the Psalter does not do away with the presence of various theological subjects in different psalms, which involves mutually exclusive conceptual content. Thirdly, Rolf A. Jacobson (2014) imagines an interdisciplinary picture of Psalms research, borrowing insights from other approaches to Psalms and other disciplines.

The given that two directions of scholarship are consistent. Willgren's idea of 'anthology' does not reject reading the Psalter as a whole, and Longman (2014:35) agrees 'that there are some intentional placements of certain Psalms'. More importantly, both directions point to diversity involving the contents and approaches to the Hebrew Psalter. Against such a context of scholarship, this study reads Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89 together, as united not by the theme of the failure of the Davidic covenant, which the author will argue against, but by their genre and theology. They are all communal laments that deal with Deuteronomistic theology, although belonging to

different sections of the Hebrew Psalter. Because communal laments have national trauma as their background, it is appropriate to examine the relevant debate through the lens of trauma, given that reacting to traumatic events is a common human phenomenon. This approach is interdisciplinary, as Gericke imagined, and requires clarifying how trauma relates to Deuteronomistic theology, which is the topic of the next section.

## Two elements of Deuteronomistic theology: What ancient Israelites learnt from surviving trauma

Deuteronomistic theology is crucial evidence for Martin Noth (1981) to argue that the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuels and Kings were originally a coherent whole that constituted the Deuteronomistic history (DH) edited by a Deuteronomistic author (Dtr). An essential element of this theology involves the motivation for Dtr to compose DH. According to Noth (1981):

He [Dtr] expressed no hope for the future, not even in the very modest and simple form of an expectation that the deported and dispersed people would be gathered together. (p. 97)

In Noth, it is sufficient for Dtr to point out that deportation is the final divine punishment for Israel's disobedience. Nevertheless, numerous scholars disagree with Noth's understanding of a pessimistic Dtr (e.g. Veijola 1994; Wolff 1961). As Cross (1997:277) concisely concludes Wolff's comment:

He [Wolff] cannot conceive of the Deuteronomist taking up the tedious task of composing a great theology of history as a labor devised and designed to teach only the message that the disaster of Israel is final. (p. 277)

Dividing DH into two layers, Cross (1997:279–289) discerns a positive theology throughout DH: the eternal promise to David in DH1 and the idea that repentance leads to hope in DH2. The debate remains, so the main features of Deuteronomistic theology must be ascertained before discussing its presence in Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89. In this regard, it is helpful to point out that exile is undoubtedly behind DH. In Noth, DH was composed during the exile; according to Cross, DH's second edition is exilic; for the Göttingen school, the first redaction of DH is exilic, whereas the later redactions (DtrN, DtrP) are post-exilic (Römer 2007:21–43). Because the exile and its cause, the fall of Jerusalem, are both traumatic, it is reasonable to approach Deuteronomistic theology from the lens of trauma.

A traumatic event often harms the victims' mental health, causing problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Sometimes, a traumatic event positively impacts its victims, leading to their growth or maturity. The idea that suffering may lead to self-improvement has a long history, but psychologists developed different concepts to describe it only in the past two decades (eds. Calhoun & Tedeschi 2006:6). One of these famous concepts is post-traumatic growth (PTG), coined by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) to

define the positive psychological changes resulting from the struggle with a major life crisis.

Corresponding to PTG, Tedeschi and Calhoun designed the post-traumatic growth inventory (PTGI) to measure the degree of the victims' positive changes after the traumatic event (Tedeschi & Calhoun 1996). This inventory describes five domains of growth: Relating to Others, New Possibilities, Personal Strength, Spiritual Change and Appreciation of Life. While PTGI on Dtr or other Deuteronomistic redactors cannot be measured quantitatively, PTGI helps us to identify some features of their PTG. According to Noth (1981:89), Dtr perceives a just divine retribution in the history of Israel. For the two reasons detailed here, it seems that Dtr's awareness of divine justice indicates Spiritual Change in PTG.

Firstly, seeing the fall of Jerusalem as divine judgement means seeing this fall as irrelevant to God's fault (von Rad 1973:342–344; Römer 2007:24). Viewed from the perspective of faith, such an understanding of history is better than seeing the disaster as God's fault. It indicates 'a better understanding of spiritual matters', an item of PTGI in Spiritual Change (Tedeschi & Calhoun 1996:460). Secondly, emphasising divine justice implies a denial that God was defeated when Jerusalem fell. Compared with those Judeans who thought YAWH was defeated and decided to be a Babylonian (Salters 2010:27; Carr 2014:8), Dtr showed a 'stronger religious faith', another item of PTGI in Spiritual Change (Tedeschi & Calhoun 1996:460), because such faith has been tested by a national catastrophe.

Thus, Dtr did not appear as pessimistic as Noth understood. Dtr seemed not to be merely inspired 'with curiosity about the meaning of what had happened' (Noth 1981:99). What inspired Dtr to write may include a spiritual change, a dimension of mental growth after the traumatic fall of Jerusalem.

A clarification of Dtr's emotion leads to a re-examination of Nathan's prophecy in 2 Samuel 7:1–14, which expresses the divine promise of an everlasting dynasty to David and is typically Deuteronomistic (Römer 2007:27). Noth is silent on the prophecy but focuses on the issue of temple-building, arguing that Dtr 'inserted v. 13a, making the prohibition of temple-building apply to a particular time' (1981:55). Noth's silence is likely because of his understanding of a pessimistic Dtr. In Römer's (2007:27) insight, Noth did not pay enough attention to the texts that contradict the pessimism of Dtr. However, as discussed here, Noth's understanding of a pessimistic Deuteronomistic theology is inappropriate because this theology contains a domain of Spiritual Change in PTG. Viewed through the lens of trauma, the divine promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:1–14, not conflicting with the divine punishment on Israel, also belongs to Deuteronomistic theology.

Thus, two crucial elements of Deuteronomistic theology are identified that involve positive reactions to a traumatic event. Firstly, the divine retribution of Israel, which Noth emphasizes; secondly the divine promise to David in 2

Samuel 7:1–14, which von Rad and Cross remind us to consider. While there are other elements of Deuteronomistic theology, these two will suffice to help us discuss Deuteronomistic theology in Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89. But before identifying Deuteronomistic theology in these psalms, the author needs to respond to the opinions that they reject Deuteronomistic theology.

## Protest against God in Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89

Rom-Shiloni's (2008) article on the powers of protest against God in Psalm 44 is an excellent starting point for this discussion. It not only elaborates an earlier view that Psalm 44 'presents a theological strand different from the dominant Dtr line of thinking' (Gerstenberger 1988:186) but also inspires Ramond's (2015) position that Psalms 74, 80 and 89 reject Deuteronomistic theology. In this article, Rom-Shiloni (2008:684) distinguishes the mainstream 'orthodox' thinking, which justifies the actions of God and thus places the blame on the Israelites for their distressing circumstances, and the 'nonorthodox' view. As the above section's interpretation indicates, the first element of Deuteronomistic theology falls into the 'orthodox' category. For Rom-Shiloni (2008:691), Psalm 44 expresses the 'nonorthodox' voice because it rejects the Deuteronomistic idea that human forgetting brings about divine judgement.

Rom-Shiloni's (2008:692–693) argument relies on three points from a comparative reading of Psalm 44:18–23 and Jeremiah 18:13–17. Firstly, the statement in Psalm 44:18 that 'yet we have not forgotten you'<sup>1</sup> negates the accusation of Jeremiah 18:15 that the people forgot God and violated the covenant. Secondly, the claim of Psalm 44:19 that 'our hearts have not gone astray' contravenes the image of transgression as straying off the road in Jeremiah 18:15. Thirdly, as the prophet prophesies that God's active judgement will cause military defeat (Jr 18:17) and destruction (Jr 18:16), Psalm 44 expresses the same idea in its protest in vv. 10–17. Hence, Rom-Shiloni (2008) concludes:

Psalm 44 stands explicitly against these and other similar Deuteronomic and prophetic conventions, opposing the more usual explanation that places all blame for the current situation on the people's violation of the covenant. (p. 693)

The first two points of Rom-Shiloni resemble each other because both emphasise the innocence of the Israelites. This idea is also what Marttila (2012) has in mind when arguing for the anti-Deuteronomistic position of Psalm 44. According to Marttila (2012):

In v. 18 the psalmist complains that all this misery has come upon the people though the people have neither forgotten Yahweh nor been false to his covenant. (p. 76)

As a result, Marttila (2012:76) concludes that Psalm 44 employs Deuteronomistic phraseology for a purpose against the Deuteronomistic proclamation.

<sup>1</sup>All the translations of the Hebrew text in this article are by the author, and verse numbers of biblical texts are according to the MT.

However, it is unclear whether the protest in Psalm 44:18–19 refers to Israel's innocence before the exile, the assumed divine punishment for Israel's sin. In this regard, Berlin's (2008) insight is helpful, according to which the syntax of Psalm 44:18 indicates alternative interpretations: the fact that 'we have not forgotten you' either preceded what came upon the people or followed it. This distinction is crucial because if 'not forgetting of God' happened before the exile, this reading makes it sound like the speaker is denying all guilt and rejecting the Deuteronomic idea that exile is the result of sin. Berlin (2008) argues in favour of the alternative reading of the clause of 'forgetting', stating:

It is not that the people have been exiled in spite of the fact that they had not forgotten God, but rather that they have not forgotten and still do not forget God in spite of the fact that they have been exiled. (p. 73)

Berlin's reason for reading v. 18 in this way comes from an observation that forgetting the name of God and worshiping a strange god are the temptations faced by the exiled community in a foreign country (Berlin 2008:73).

Berlin's view that 'not forgetting' happened during the exile makes sense if we consider the expression of v. 23b: 'Arise! Do not reject [us] forever [לְנִצָּח]'. The term 'forever' indicates that in verses following Psalm 44:18, the speaker is not complaining about God's punishment through the fall of Jerusalem and exile, but the endless suffering. In other words, what the speaker feels uncomfortable with is not that exile happened even if his people did not forget God, but that exile did not end, although his people still remembered God amid a life of suffering. Thus, the first two points of Rom-Shiloni on the innocence of the speaker's people regarding exile are misplaced.

The term 'לְנִצָּח' also appears in Psalm 74:1: 'God, why have you rejected us forever [לְנִצָּח]?' Similarly, the complaint here is not about the occurrence of suffering as God's punishment but the endless suffering, made clear in the interrogation in Psalm 74:10, 'How long [מתי עד], God, would the adversary reproach?' While 'לְנִצָּח' does not occur in Psalm 80, the idea of endless suffering is expressed when the speaker interrogates, 'Lord God of hosts, how long [מתי עד] will you be angry with the prayer of your people?' (Ps 80:4). In Psalm 89, both 'לְנִצָּח' and 'עד מתי' are used: 'Lord, how long [מתי עד] will you hide yourself forever [לְנִצָּח]' (Ps 89:46). Psalms 80 and 89 do not seem to emphasise the innocent suffering of the Israelites but the absence of God when they suffer.

Rom-Shiloni's third point involves the speaker's protest against God in Psalm 44:10–17. In these verses, the speaker complains that God rejected Israelites (v. 10), sold them for a trifle (v. 13), and made them like sheep of slaughter (v. 12), the taunt of neighbours (v. 14), and a byword among the nations (v. 15). In Rom-Shiloni (2008:693), such kind of complaint indicates an attitude against the Deuteronomistic theology that places Israelites as responsible for the fall of Jerusalem.

At this point of discussion, it is helpful to emphasise that victims of a traumatic event usually and typically are anxious

to know why suffering fell upon them. Psychologist Ronnie Janoff-Bulman (2004:32) helpfully states:

In years of research with trauma survivors, the most common phrase I heard was 'I never thought it could happen to me.' (p. 32)

It may also happen that victims develop irrational attribution of responsibility, such as 'persistent negative cognitions about the cause or consequences of the traumatic event(s)', which is a symptom of PTSD (American Psychiatric Association [APA] 2013:272).

For the present discussion, it is important to point out that the protest against God in Psalm 44:10–17 sounds like persistent negative cognitions about the cause of the traumatic event, although this protest does not necessarily indicate PTSD. In other words, given the national disaster behind Psalm 44, it is misleading to have the speaker's protest against God as an attribution of responsibility to God. Instead, the protest sounds more likely to indicate 'negative alternations in cognitions and mood associated with the traumatic event(s)' (APA 2013:271).

A brief comparison with the book of Lamentations, the background of which is also likely to be the fall of Jerusalem (Berlin 2002:33–35; Hillers 1972:xviii–xix; Salters 2010:7–9), helps to clarify the point. In the book of Lamentations, especially its second chapter, there are several protests that God caused suffering (Lm 2:1, 2, 3). These requests have led scholars such as Elizabeth Boase (2016:61) to argue that the book of Lamentations tries to attribute the responsibility for national disaster 'through complaints, protests, and confessions, which spread the blame around'. Nevertheless, connecting protests against God to identifying God as the person who actually injured the victims sounds strange. As Frevel (2017) helpfully points out, these requests are more likely to be:

[L]egitimate dealing with suffering as long as the suffering remains incomprehensible to humans and God's intervention does not take place. (p. 175).<sup>2</sup>

Returning to communal Psalms of lament, we see similar protests. In Psalms 74, 80 and 89, just as in Psalm 44 and Lamentations, the speakers frequently claim that, out of anger, God had caused the traumatic events that happened to his people (Ps 74:1; 80:5–7; 89:39–46). Ramond (2015:61) claims that the most notable feature of Psalms 74, 80 and 89 is that none of them denounces the behaviour of the people who reject YHWH or worship other gods. In these Psalms, according to Ramond (2015):

Divine power is denounced because it turns against Israel to lead to exile, to the devastation of the people (Ps 80), to the sacking and desecration of the temple (Ps 74), to the disappearance of the Davidic dynasty (Ps 80; 89). (p. 61)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> 'Klage und Anklage Gottes sind solange legitimer Umgang mit Leid wie das Leid für den Menschen unbegreiflich bleibt und das Eingreifen Gottes ausbleibt.'

<sup>3</sup> 'Toutefois la puissance divine est dénoncée parce qu'elle se retourne contre d'Israël pour conduire à l'exil, à la dévastation du peuple (Psaume 80), au saccage et à la profanation du temple (Psaume 74), à la disparition de la dynastie davidique (Psaumes 80, 89).'

Thus, Ramond (2015:65) argues that these three Psalms refuse to bear the weight of underserved guilt and express an opinion opposing the Deuteronomistic ideology.

Ramond's identification of the anti-Deuteronomistic theology in Psalms 74, 80 and 89 is as misleading as Boaze's view on Lamentations mentioned here. When the speakers in these Psalms maintain that God caused suffering, they complain out of distressful mood caused by trauma instead of tracing the actual cause of traumatic events. It is noteworthy that when referring to God's wrath, the speaker usually asks the apprehensive question, 'Why?' (Ps 44:23–24; 74:1; 80:12). In Gunkel (1998:89), such a question, which characterises the complaint songs, shows the people's belief that their misfortune reveals the Lord's wrath, and this belief increased the natural pain of the people. The speaker is not claiming that God caused the suffering and should be responsible for it but expressing the pain. As the given quotation of Janoff-Bulman has shown, asking 'why' is typical among victims of traumatic events because they are anxious to understand why suffering happened to them.

The fact that the speakers in Psalms 44, 74 and 89 show negative moods as trauma victims does not exclude the possibility that they are accusing God. However, even if they are accusing, such an accusation is 'distorted cognitions about the cause or consequences of the traumatic event' (APA 2013:272), which does not indicate an attribution of responsibility to God. Being traumatized, the speakers do not *really* think that God should be responsible for their suffering and that the Israelites are innocent; instead, they cry out through accusation. As early as three decades ago, trauma psychologists proposed that investigators attend more carefully to conceptual distinctions between causality, responsibility, and blame (Shaver & Drown 1985). In a most recent study of PTSD among the survivors of the 2016–2017 Central Italy earthquakes (Massazza, Joffe & Brewin 2019), the researchers further define this distinction:

While causal attributions consist of beliefs about what logically led to a specific outcome, blame attributions are concerned with whether this happened in an immoral way or not. (pp. 2–3)

This study concludes that the attributions to God in the survivors of earthquakes reflect a broader shattering of world-view assumptions as indicated by the theory of Janoff-Bulman (Massazza et al. 2019:8); no connection between these attributions and the claim of responsibility to God is observed. Likely, the speakers in Psalms 44, 74 and 89 are not claiming God to be the cause of suffering, despite their accusations of God.

It is helpful to point out that communal psalms are not the only biblical texts where claiming God to be the cause of an event does not mean attributing responsibility to God. In the event of exodus, the narrator repeatedly states that the Lord has hardened the Pharaoh's heart (Ex 7:3; 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:8). Stating so does not mean to hold the Lord responsible for what the Pharaoh did to the Israelites. As argued elsewhere (Li, 2021), this kind of statement betrays an

idea of determinism that the Lord is in control, which is compatible with human free will. Today's philosophical discussion about free will helps us discern the connotation of the statement that the Lord has hardened the Pharaoh's heart. Similarly, today's trauma studies help us clarify the real emotion behind the protest that God has caused human suffering.

In conclusion, the typical arguments for identifying anti-Deuteronomistic theology in Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89 fail. In Psalm 44, the speaker's claim that his people did not forget God is not motivated by an awareness of innocent suffering. In Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89, the protest that God caused suffering does not convey the thought that God should be responsible for the suffering but indicates the trauma victims' negative mood.

## Deuteronomistic theology in Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89

The given discussion demonstrates that Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89 do not reject Deuteronomistic theology. However, the absence of anti-Deuteronomistic theology in these psalms does not necessarily mean the presence of Deuteronomistic theology. Thus, with the help of clarifying two crucial elements of Deuteronomistic theology in section Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89 and the Hebrew Psalter, this section argues that Deuteronomistic theology is present in Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89 to different degrees.

In Psalm 44, the first element of Deuteronomistic theology is present. As aforementioned, the fact that 'we have not forgotten you' (Ps 44:18) occurred during instead of before exile. Accordingly, the speaker's request in Psalm 44:23 means that given the Israelites' loyalty to God (not forgetting him) despite God's punishment on them, God should stop the endless suffering of exile, not casting off the Israelites *forever* (לנצח). The logic behind this request seems to be an acknowledgement that sins lead to punishment of suffering, a logic that entails the end of punishment if the Israelites did not commit sins anymore. Berlin (2008) reveals such logic when she argues:

It [Ps 44] declares that during the exile the people desisted from this sin; and that *therefore the exile should end, because the reasons for it no longer exist*. (p. 73, the italics are original)

Thus, the speaker's request in Psalm 44:23 presupposes the first element of Deuteronomistic theology. Or we may accept Berlin's (2008) conclusion:

Far from rejecting the Deuteronomistic view that the sin of idolatry leads to the punishment of exile, Psalm 44 embraces it and builds on it. (p. 73)

In Psalm 74, there is no direct reference to Deuteronomistic theology, but we can turn to indirect evidence for identifying it. In this regard, Marttila (2012:79) observes:

Psalm 74 has also some connections with Dtr terminology and theology. Most striking are the similarities between it and Psalm 89, which is probably the most Dtr of all psalms. (p. 79)

While Marttila's observation, which is based on that of Veijola (1982:55–57), is insightful, it is unclear whether all the similarities may help. For instance, Marttila (2012:79) mentions the occurrence of the verb *זָרַח* [reject] in Psalm 74:1 and Psalm 89:39. However, this verb also occurs in Psalm 44:10, 24. Marttila (2012:79) claims that 'mockery of the enemies [*הַרְפָּה*] is a common theme in Ps 74:22 and Ps 89:42', but the term *הַרְפָּה* also occurs in Psalm 44:14. Because Marttila (2012:75–76) argues for anti-Deuteronomistic nature of Psalm 44, it turns out that the similarities on terminology are not sufficient for identifying Deuteronomistic theology. How the terminology is used, or the theology behind the terminology, is more important.

A terminology closely related to theology has to do with the term covenant [*בְּרִית*], which occurs in Psalm 44:18; 74:20a; 89:4, 29, 35, and 40. In Psalm 44:18, the speaker claims that the Israelites did not forget God or did falsely with God's covenant. Because the speaker parallels 'not doing falsely' with 'not forgetting', which involves the commitment of sin as discussed in section 'Protest against God in Psalms 44, 74, 80, and 89', the 'covenant' here refers to the first element of Deuteronomistic theology, namely sin leads to God's punishment. As clarified here, the covenant in Psalm 89 refers to the second element of Deuteronomistic theology, God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:1–14. Given the different usages of 'covenant' in Psalm 44 and Psalm 89, when pleading with God to regard his covenant in Psalm 74:20a, the speaker may mean that God should not punish the Israelites anymore, that God should remember his promise to David, or probably something else (Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:250).

The context seems to support the first reading of the term 'covenant' in Psalm 74:20a. After complaining of God in vv. 1–11, the speaker turns to praise God's salvific power (vv. 12–17) and requests God to remember the plight of the Israelites (v. 18), not forgetting the life of his poor people forever (v. 19). Psalm 74:20b mentions the reason for God to regard his covenant: 'for the dark places of the earth are full of habitations of violence', which portrays the poor situation of the Israelites. Thus, the speaker's mention of the covenant is likely to be motivated by a wish to end the present suffering. If we see this suffering as God's punishment for Israel's wickedness (Cole 2000:29), then requesting God to regard the covenant and end the suffering means asking God not to punish anymore. For this reason, the 'covenant' in Psalm 74:20a likely indicates the first element of Deuteronomistic theology, as does the 'covenant' in Psalm 44.

Psalm 80 has no direct reference to Deuteronomistic theology either. However, similarities between Psalm 80 and Psalm 89 will help to identify the second element of this theology in Psalm 80. In Ramond (2015:51–52), as well as in Veijola (1982:56), these similarities include the use of the term *אֲמַץ* [strengthen] to describe God's power working on Israel (Ps 89:22; 80:16, 18), the occurrence of *דָּרַךְ עֲבָרֵי כָל* [all who passed

by the road] (Ps 89:42; 80:13), and the image of God breaking the city wall (Ps 89:41; 80:13), a wall that might be the rank of a military force implied in 2 Samuel 5:20 (Kraus 1989:4; Tate 1990:101).

For this discussion, the most crucial similarity involves the use of the term *אֲמַץ* [strengthen]. In Psalm 80:15, the speaker requests God to look down from heaven to 'see and visit this vine'. Psalm 80:16 continues this request by adding the objects of 'see and visit', namely 'the vineyard, which your right hand has planted and the branch [*בֵּן*] you strengthened [*אֲמַצְתָּהּ*] for yourself'. The image of 'the branch you strengthened for yourself' also occurs in v. 18, where the speaker requests, 'let your hand be upon the man on your right hand, upon the son [*בֵּן*] of man you strengthened [*אֲמַצְתָּהּ*] for yourself'. More importantly, a similar image is seen in Psalm 89, a long pericope of describing what God spoke to the faithful one in a vision (Ps 89:20–38). Two verses are relevant:

I have found David my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him. My hand should be fixed on him; also, my arm should strengthen him [*וַיִּצְמַחְתָּ*]. (Ps 89:21–22)

Given these similarities, it is likely that 'the branch' and 'the son of man' that God strengthens for himself in Psalm 80:16, 18 refers to David, whom God promises to strengthen in a vision in Psalm 89:21–22. Furthermore, in the same vision, God promises: 'Forever, I will keep my kindness for him, and my covenant with him shall stand firm' (Ps 89:29); 'I will not break my covenant, and not alter the words of my lips' (Ps 89:35). As clarified here, this covenant explicitly refers to God's covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7:1–14. If so, it seems that Psalm 80 embraces the same covenant, although it does not use this term. Or as Cole (2000) argues:

A further petition in 80.16, 18 for the son whom God strengthens (*וַיִּצְמַחְתָּ*), refers to the Davidic promise, as 89.22 (*וַיִּצְמַחְתָּ*) will confirm. (p. 89)

Thus, the author concludes that the second element of Deuteronomistic theology is implicitly present in Psalm 80.

Unlike Psalms 74 and 80, Psalm 89 explicitly refers to God's covenant with David. In addition to the vision mentioned here, in which God promises that his covenant with David will stand firm (v. 29) and not be violated (v. 35), the speaker emphasises God's promise that 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David' (v. 4). While almost all scholars agree that the covenant here refers to God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:1–14, a crucial element of Deuteronomistic theology, it is controversial whether such reference means an acceptance or rejection of this promise and Deuteronomistic theology. For instance, Emmendorffer (1998:229) argues, which is cited by Marttila (2012:76) as a case for the anti-Deuteronomistic nature of Psalm 44, that the point of Psalm 89 is the failure of God's promise to David, which is no longer the language of the Deuteronomist.

Other scholars emphasise the failure of God's promise in Psalm 89, although they do not focus on the implication that Psalm 89 is anti-Deuteronomistic. For instance, Tate (1990) argues that in Psalm 89:

The promises of Yahweh and his praise have been called into serious question by the trouble and pain of disasters and unfulfilled expectations which are expressed in the last part of the psalm. (p. 416)

Similarly, while Wilson agrees that the concern with the Davidic covenant in Psalm 89 is made explicit, he states that this covenant is viewed as broken and failed, as demonstrated by vv. 38–39, 44, and Psalm 89 poses a problem regarding the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant (Wilson 1985:212–215).

What leads the scholars to argue for the failure of God's promise to David in Psalm 89 must be the speaker's complaint of God (vv. 39–46). In v. 39, the speaker complains that God has cast off, rejected, and been furious with the anointed. Verse 40 claims that God has renounced the covenant with his servant and profaned his crown to the ground. However, as clarified in section 'Protest against God in Psalms 44, 74, 80, and 89', the complaint or protest here indicates persistent negative cognition about the cause of a traumatic event instead of an accusation of God as the actual cause. Such a reaction is typical among victims of traumatic events because they are anxious to understand why suffering happened to them.

Thus, it is misleading to argue that the complaint in Psalm 89 indicates a belief in the failure of God's covenant. By contrast, in the last verses, when asking God to 'remember, how short my life is' (v. 48) and 'remember, how your servants are taunted' (v. 51),<sup>4</sup> the speaker must have faith that God's covenant still works, a faith echoing the hymn (vv. 6–19) and oracle (vv. 20–38) before the complaint. Without such faith, it makes no sense to return to God for help after an intense complaint of him (vv. 39–46). There is a solid reason to accept Pohl's (2015) comment:

Rather than a lament over the failure of the Davidic covenant, the hymn and oracle sections encourage a messianic hope and anticipation of restoration in light of God's character. To describe the message of Psalm 89 as a 'failure' is to miss the messianic hope that dominates the psalm. (p. 509; cf. Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:415).

Based on this section's discussion, the author concludes that Psalm 44 assumes the first element of Deuteronomistic theology, the divine retribution of punishment on Israel; Psalm 74 implies an acceptance of the same element. Psalm 89 accepts the second element of Deuteronomistic theology, the divine promise to David; Psalm 80 embraces the same element because of its similarities to Psalm 89.

4. There is a debate on whether the plural form of 'servants' here indicates a collective messiah. This debate does not change the conclusion that Psalm 89 expresses a messianic hope fitting Deuteronomistic theology. For a good summary of this debate and the view that Psalm 89 does not employ a collective messiah, see Krusche (2020).

## Conclusion

This article demonstrates that the lens of trauma provides a fresh vantage to investigate the highly controversial presence of Deuteronomistic theology in Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89. On the one hand, a normal and typical reaction to the traumatic event, an anxiety to comprehend why suffering happened, helps to explain that the protest against God in Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89 does not indicate attribution of responsibility to God for the trauma. On the other hand, the fact that people may learn from the traumatic event and mature, contributes to identifying two elements of Deuteronomistic theology, which are present in Psalms 44, 74, 80 and 89 to different degrees.

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