

## “How long will my Glory be Reproach?” Honour and Shame in Old Testament Lament Traditions

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### ABSTRACT

*Old Testament scholarship increasingly recognizes that honor and shame were ubiquitous cultural values in ancient Israel. While this development has led to several full-length studies on honor and shame in OT prosaic books, OT poetic books in which honor-shame terminology features even more prominently have yet to be studied in detail, especially the lament psalms and the related penitential prayers of the post-exilic era. This article therefore explores the semantic fields of honor and shame in the various kinds of OT lament – individual laments and communal laments in poetry, as well as penitential prayers in prose. Though distinctive in their own way, each lament tradition closely links the suffering supplicant’s shame to the honor of YHWH. This entwining of divine and human identities empowers the supplicant to lean into shaming experiences – a cultural uniqueness of OT lament traditions when considered in the light of psychology and anthropology.*

KEYWORDS: Lament; Psalms; Ezra; Nehemiah; honor; shame.

### A INTRODUCTION

Carl Gustav Jung, the Swiss pioneer of psychoanalysis, offered the following meditation on the problem of evil in the aftermath of World War II:

We have experienced things so unheard of and so staggering that the question of whether such things are in any way reconcilable with the idea of a good God has become burningly topical. *It is no longer a problem for experts in theological seminaries, but a universal religious nightmare...*<sup>1</sup>

Though Jung was speaking of the horrors of the last century, his observations about the struggle of the layperson between evil’s prevalence and God’s goodness already ring true in the present one. In the East Asian context where I teach, the 21st century has witnessed the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 in which

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<sup>1</sup> Carl G. Jung, *Answer to Job* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), 119, emphasis added.

over 100,000 died, while the tsunami that struck Japan's Pacific coast in 2011 killed 16,000 people and led to the irradiation of hundreds of thousands more when the Fukushima nuclear plant melted down. Likewise, central Asia is often the source of refugees who embark on journeys toward western Asia and across the Mediterranean Sea, which statistics indicate will end in death by drowning for an untold many. As tsunami victims and war refugees cry out for deliverance that seems never to come, the not-quite two decades of this century point to the ubiquity of suffering as the *mal du siècle* yet again.

The problem of evil assumes special urgency for those who believe that a single God rules over all things.<sup>2</sup> In this respect the three great monotheistic religions of the world have given birth to two rather different ways of approaching the issue of theodicy. On the one side there is the fatalism of Islam which holds that Allah's control of destiny cannot be altered, much less questioned;<sup>3</sup> on the other stand Judaism and Christianity with their belief that YHWH is sovereign but invites laments against not only evil, but even himself, while still reserving the right to rebuke the lamenter. As Miroslav Volf describes this paradox in biblical faith, "[I]t is God against whom we protest. God is both the ground of the protest and its target. How can I believe in God when tsunamis strike? I protest, and therefore I believe."<sup>4</sup>

Believing protest of this sort is generally considered shameful in both Eastern and Western faith communities, however. From Eastern cultures comes a reluctance to lament that owes its origins to Confucian notions of emotional reserve and "saving face," while in the West the influence of Stoic philosophy has culminated in a sort of "Christian bashfulness"<sup>5</sup> that seeks to maintain a pious persona through emotional detachment. The result for people of faith everywhere is the need to suppress negative feelings instead of objecting to evil's pervasiveness as a "universal religious nightmare." This inclination toward polite fatalism rather than protesting faith results in paralysis before God in times of misery, a phenomenon that Walter Brueggemann has influentially called "The Costly Loss of Lament."<sup>6</sup> So how can hurting believers in the God of the Bible recover a holism of faith in which lament takes its deserved place alongside praise?

<sup>2</sup> Angelika Berlejung, "Sin and Punishment: The Ethics of Divine Justice and Retribution in Ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament Texts," *Int* 69 (2015): 286-87.

<sup>3</sup> Helmer Ringgren, "Islamic Fatalism," in *Fatalistic Beliefs in Religion, Folklore, and Literature: Papers Read at the Symposium on Fatalistic Beliefs Held at Abo on the 7th-9th of September, 1964*, ed. Helmer Ringgren (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967), 52-62.

<sup>4</sup> Miroslav Volf, "I Protest, Therefore I Believe," *ChrCent* 8 February (2005): 39.

<sup>5</sup> Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "Enemies and Evildoers in the Psalms," *HBT* 4 (1982): 77; see also Claus Westermann, "The Role of the Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament," *Int* 28 (1974): 25.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Brueggemann, "The Costly Loss of Lament," *JSOT* 36 (1986): 57-71.

Jung concluded in *Answer to Job*, the work cited above, that the problem of evil made it impossible to continue believing in God's goodness. It is ironic, then, that the psychoanalytic tradition he represents also supplies some of the concepts that enable a recovery of biblical lament. In this regard, the prominence of honor-shame concepts in psychoanalytic theory (as well as cultural anthropology, one hastens to add) mirrors the growing awareness in OT scholarship that honor and shame were indelible parts of ancient Israel's social fabric. These cultural values feature prominently in the supplicant's struggles with God in the lament psalms and the related prayers of the post-exilic era. To date, however, the prosaic books of the OT have received more attention from an honor-shame perspective.<sup>7</sup> Among the poetic books it is mainly the individual psalms of lament that have been examined for their honor-shame concepts using psychological and anthropological lenses.<sup>8</sup>

I will therefore explore the role of honor and shame in the three kinds of OT lament – individual laments (e.g., Pss 4; 22) and communal/national laments (e.g., Pss 44; 80) in poetry, as well as penitential prayers in prose (e.g., Dan 9:4-19; Ezra 9:6-15). These lament traditions display considerable variety over their many centuries of development, but they share the feature of entwining the suffering supplicant's honor and shame to those of YHWH. Indeed, paying closer attention to these cultural values will blur the distinctions between lament traditions which are often classified as separate – individual vs. communal laments, for instance. Following a brief introduction to the OT's semantics of honor and shame and their analogous concepts in psychology and anthropology, I will trace how the lament traditions of the OT link the supplicant's honor and shame with YHWH's in order to strengthen the covenantal bond between these two parties. It is this interrelationship of identities which fuels the supplicant's stridency of complaint in the manner of faith rather than fatalism.

## **B TERMINOLOGY FOR HONOR AND SHAME IN OT LAMENTS**

The semantic fields of honor and shame are broader and more complex than the usual binary contrast between these cultural values might imply.<sup>9</sup> To begin with, Hebrew terms for *shame* far outnumber their counterparts for *honor*. Alongside the frequently occurring בִּשְׁתָּבוֹשׁ ("to be ashamed"/"shame[fulness]") are found four synonyms: הָרַף II/הָרַפָּה II ("to [suffer] insult"/"disgrace"), הָלַץ/הָלַץ ("to humiliate"/"humiliation"), הָפַר II ("to be abashed"), and קָלוֹן ("dishonor"). From

<sup>7</sup> E.g., Timothy S. Laniak, *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther*, SBLDS 165 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998); Ken Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power in the Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 234 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> E.g., Amy C. Cottrill, *Language, Power, and Identity in the Lament Psalms of the Individual*, LHBOTS 493 (New York: T&T Clark, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Unni Wikan, "Shame and Honour: A Contestable Pair," *Man* 19 (1984): 635-52.

a survey of their literary contexts, three general observations can be made concerning the semantics of shame in OT lament traditions.

The first is that shame has a *public* dimension in that the supplicant typically describes shaming experiences with recourse to the perception of onlookers. This audience may already be present (e.g., enemies who speak insults; Pss 40:15; 41:5-6; 42:10) or merely anticipated (e.g., the supplicant's fear of ridicule; Ps 31:1, 17; Jer 17:18).<sup>10</sup> Whether the impetus for shame is real or potential, the opinion of the so-called "Public Court of Reputation"<sup>11</sup> matters deeply to the supplicant, even in those psalms typically classified as individual laments (e.g., Pss 22; 71).

The second dimension is that shame is *relational* for springing from an experience of disappointed expectations.<sup>12</sup> Both directions of disappointment in the God-suppliant relationship are possible. On the one hand, the supplicant may express the shame of contrition for having sinned and thereby failing God, as in penitential prayers (e.g., Lamentations) and psalms (e.g., Ps 25). On the other, the supplicant may voice the shame of suffering the divine patron's forgetfulness about his promises, as in the individual laments of the innocent sufferer (e.g., Pss 4:2-3; 13:1-4) as well as communal laments of the penitent nation (e.g., Ps 44:24; 74:1-4). The possibility that reproach can be felt by the supplicant, both when they have and have not sinned, indicates that shame and guilt are related but distinct concepts. In Pss 38-39, to cite an example, part of the supplicant's request for pardon from guilt (38:1-10; 39:8a) involves seeking YHWH's protection from the additional reproach of those who are taking advantage of the situation (38:11-12; 39:8b). Since guilt brings shame of various kinds, but not all shame comes from guilt that needs to be confessed (against the karmic views of Job's "friends," to cite a common distortion of the retribution principle),<sup>13</sup> it is best to categorize penitential prayers in the OT as a subcategory of lament.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> English versification is used throughout the essay for ease of reference.

<sup>11</sup> See the recent discussion of the "Public Court of Reputation" (PCR) by Zeba Crook, "Honor, Shame, and Social Status Revisited," *JBL* 128 (2009): 591-611.

<sup>12</sup> Yael Avrahami, "בושׁ in the Psalms – Shame or Disappointment?" *JSOT* 34 (2010): 295-313; Margaret S. Odell, "An Exploratory Study of Shame and Dependence in the Bible and Selected Near Eastern Parallels," in *The Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective*, ed. K. Lawson Younger, William W. Hallo, and Bernard F. Batto, ScrCon 4 (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 217-29.

<sup>13</sup> Odell, "Shame and Dependence," 226.

<sup>14</sup> Compare the similar approach of Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, "The Doubtful Gain of Penitence: The Fine Line between Lament and Penitential Prayer," in *Spiritual Complaint: The Theology and Practice of Lament*, ed. Miriam J. Bier and Tim Bulkeley (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 102-21. Cf. Mark J. Boda, "The Priceless Gain of Penitence: From Communal Lament to Penitential Prayer in the 'Exilic' Liturgy of Israel," *HBT* 25 (2003): 51-75.

Third and related to shame’s public and relational dimensions, OT lament traditions portray restoration of the supplicant’s honor in terms of *reversing social and personal shame*. When honor is thus understood as “the positive value of a person in his or her own eyes plus the positive appreciation of that person in the eyes of his or her social group,”<sup>15</sup> it is evident that honor is a complex phenomenon whose social and exterior dimensions are better captured by anthropological studies of how honor and shame work in community, while its personal and interior dimensions are more informed by psychological studies of the individual’s well-being.<sup>16</sup> These complementary aspects often occur together, as when Pss 35 and 109 record an unjustly shamed supplicant (e.g., 35:11-12; 109:2-5) asking that enemies be “ashamed and dishonored” (35:4, 26; 109:28-29). Honor will then return to the supplicant through renewing intimacy with YHWH (35:9-10; 109:30a), as well as regaining his former position of respect in the Israelite community (35:27-28; 109:30b).

While psychological and anthropological approaches are helpful in highlighting the literary features of OT lament, the missing link in recent studies is the theological observation that the supplicant’s honor and shame stand in several kinds of cause-and-effect relationships to YHWH’s honor and shame. In this regard, the Hebrew lexeme כְּבוֹד can serve both as a metonym for YHWH himself as “Glory” (Ps 3:3; cf. 1 Sam 4:21-22; 15:29) or his splendor (Pss 19:1; 21:5; 24:10), as well as a designation for the supplicant’s dignity before enemies (e.g., Ps 7:5) or inner well-being (e.g., Ps 16:9). The entwining of divine and human statuses can even serve as the pivot upon which turns the supplicant’s ambiguous cry that כְּבוֹד (“glory/Glory”) has become קְלָמָה (“reproach”), as quoted in the title of this essay: “How long is *my Glorious One* for reproach?” vs. “How long is *my glory/dignity* for reproach?” (i.e., two possible renditions of Ps 4:2).<sup>17</sup>

Similarly and even more common than כְּבוֹד, the Hebrew term עֹשׂ possesses both a subjective sense (“reputation”) and an objective sense (“power, personality”). This versatility provides a bridge between important theological ideas – YHWH’s intervention will vindicate the “reputation” of himself and his shamed people (e.g., Dan 9:18-19; Ps 74:7, 10, 18), while also humbling their shared enemies to recognize the unrivalled power of his “name” (e.g., Pss 83:16; 86:9-12). And when these enemies are explicitly identified as the nations around

<sup>15</sup> Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, “Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Cultural Values of the Mediterranean World,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 25.

<sup>16</sup> On the necessity and complementarity of these social-scientific disciplines, see Daniel Wu, *Honor, Shame, and Guilt: Social-Scientific Approaches to the Book of Ezekiel*, BBRSup 14 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. John Goldingay, “Psalm 4: Ambiguity and Resolution,” *TynBul* 57 (2006): 161-72, who shows how this ambiguity remains until the Psalm’s end makes clear that YHWH is “my glorious one” who stands in contrast to Baal.

Israel, it is clear that upholding the honor of YHWH's אִשׁוּ ultimately involves converting them and not merely shaming them (e.g., Pss 83:18; 102:12-15). The turn from shame to honor in the OT lament traditions thus plays a significant role in a biblical theology of mission.

The fact that the God of Israel must receive his due in the eyes of all is the theological axiom that emboldens the supplicant in OT laments. What is more, the ability of a vulnerable supplicant to lean into shaming experiences diverges from the typical responses to shame as predicted by the "Compass of Shame" model introduced by Donald Nathanson: 1) Attack Other; 2) Attack Self; 3) Withdrawal; and 4) Avoidance.<sup>18</sup> Lament therefore involves more than a desire for respite or courage to challenge God, but also the determination on the supplicant's part to cast their honor with God's despite pain and suffering.<sup>19</sup> This cultural uniqueness of biblical protest literature – in seeking YHWH's benefit rather than just one's own relief – will be traced in what follows through a study of honor and shame in selected individual and communal laments in poetry, and penitential prayers in prose.

### C HONOR AND SHAME IN INDIVIDUAL LAMENTS

Hermann Gunkel observed that individual laments are a flexible literary form which includes some combination of the following elements: 1) address and introductory petition; 2) the complaint proper about self, God, and enemies; 3) confession of trust; 4) petition for YHWH's help; 5) assurance of a hearing; and 6) vow to praise or song of confidence.<sup>20</sup> The pioneering influence of Gunkel's exposition notwithstanding, his view that the individual lament's goal is "to obtain something from YHWH"<sup>21</sup> tends to individualize the supplicant's motivations to such an extent that the communality of honor and shame in the pleas is overlooked.

For this reason it is instructive to examine the concepts of honor and shame in Pss 25, 69, and 86. Each of these psalms is representative of different kinds of individual laments. Psalm 25 is the first alphabetic acrostic psalm, while also containing some elements of penitential psalms and Deuteronomic theology of cause and effect. Psalm 69 is an extended lament which refers to the Davidic dynasty and Zion traditions, leading to its NT usage as a Messianic psalm which

<sup>18</sup> The seminal discussion is Donald L. Nathanson, *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self* (New York: Norton, 1992), 305-77.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Samuel E. Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: The Drama of Divine-Human Dialogue*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 149; Brueggemann, "Costly Loss," 61-62.

<sup>20</sup> Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, MLBS (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 152-94.

<sup>21</sup> Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction*, 169, emphasis original.

foreshadows Jesus Christ. Psalm 86 is surprising as a Davidic psalm in the middle of a group of Korahite psalms (Pss 84-85; 87-88).<sup>22</sup> Its strategic position in anticipating Ps 89, the important Davidic psalm that concludes Book III, and thematic expansiveness in citing the famous credo of Exod 34:6-7, have occasioned the view that this psalm's numerous intertextual connections may even place it at the theological center of the Psalter.<sup>23</sup>

## 1 Honor and shame in Psalm 25

Psalm 25 stands out for its clusters of shame language at the beginning and end (בוש 3x in vv. 2, 3, 20). The context surrounding each reference to shame is notable for how the supplicant chooses none of the poles of Nathanson's "Compass of Shame." By addressing YHWH intimately in imperatives or second-person forms as "you" (vv. 1, 2a, 20a, 20c), the psalmist engages YHWH and refuses the "Withdraw" and "Avoid" reactions to shame. Instead, the desire to avoid being shamed is voiced to YHWH, either as a first-person volitive ("do not let me be ashamed"; vv. 2b, 20b) or third-person gnomic forms ("none of those who wait for you will be ashamed/those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed"; vv. 3a, 3b). The indirectness of action connoted by these verbs indicates that the supplicant also forswears the "Attack Other" approach toward YHWH and enemies.

What, however, of the references to the supplicant's desire for instruction (vv. 4-5, 8) and confession of sin (vv. 7, 11b, 18)? These features are typical of penitential psalms (e.g., Pss 32; 51) and might initially suggest the "Attack Self" pole from the "Compass of Shame." Despite such self-abasement in Ps 25, it is significant that the supplicant's shame before enemies is portrayed differently than as the result of guilt before YHWH. Repentance and confession in this psalm are less about the supplicant's attempt to reverse the causal nexus of sin and suffering (cf. Deut 30:1-5; Hos 14:1-7), and more a theologically driven appeal for YHWH to forgive "for the sake of your name" (v. 11a). Along these lines, Brian Doyle and David Noel Freedman have demonstrated that this acrostic psalm is also shaped as a concentric pattern of sorts that focuses on v. 11.<sup>24</sup> The literary structure that unfolds makes penitence (v. 11) both the result of

<sup>22</sup> On the implications of this center position, see James A. Loader, "Levels of Contextual Synergy in the Korah Psalms: The Example of Psalm 86," *OTE* 23 (2010): 666-80.

<sup>23</sup> Hendrik Koorevaar, "The Psalter as a Structured Theological Story with the Aid of Subscripts and Superscripts," in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms*, ed. Erich Zenger, BETL 238 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 589-92.

<sup>24</sup> Brian Doyle, "Just You, and I, Waiting – The Poetry of Psalm 25," *OTE* 14 (2001): 199-213; David N. Freedman, "Patterns in Psalms 25 and 34," in *Priests, Prophets, and Scribes: Essays on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honour of Joseph Blenkinsopp*, ed. Eugene C. Ulrich, JSOTSup 149 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 125-35.

knowing YHWH's covenantal attributes (vv. 8-10) as well as the enabler of knowing him in the first place (vv. 12-15). Furthermore, those who shame the supplicant (vv. 2-3) are eventually identified as the sinners who oppose him and refuse to learn YHWH's ways, as he has (vv. 19-21; cf. vv. 4-5).<sup>25</sup> The benefit that accrues to YHWH's "name" (נִשְׁבָּח) by reversing the effects of sin, firstly for the supplicant's shamefulness and secondly for his enemies' shaming actions, becomes the overarching motivation for requesting forgiveness (v. 11).<sup>26</sup> This move beyond the human desire for relief to the higher ground of seeking God's honor and anticipates Pss 69 and 86, two individual laments which also mention the sin of the supplicant but lack the penitential component found in Ps 25.

## 2 Honor and shame in Psalm 69

Not unlike Ps 25, Ps 69 exhibits the dynamic of petitioning for deliverance by appealing to YHWH's standing among the gods. The supplicant begins with a cry for help (vv. 1-3) which culminates in a description of numerous enemies who hate him without reason (v. 4). This profession of righteousness shows that the ensuing acknowledgment of guilt (v. 5) is not to be understood as the God-given punishment of being shamed before enemies (vv. 6-8).<sup>27</sup> Or as also stated positively in these verses, the supplicant suffers reproach "for your sake" (v. 7) and because "zeal for your house has consumed me" (v. 9a). His sense of solidarity with YHWH's honor is so complete, in fact, that "the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me" (v. 9b), thereby vindicating the psalmist as one for whom "[s]hame is a consequence not of unethical actions committed but of attitudes taken over against a person of Yahweh's confidence."<sup>28</sup> The role of penitence in Ps 69 is hereby relegated to a minor position, in favor of protesting shame to a sovereign God who has every right to hold sinners guilty. As in Ps 25, the supplicant's boldness departs from the reactions expected by Nathanson's "Compass of Shame," especially since the supplicant is not himself sinless and thereby completely undeserving of shame in one form or another. The strategy of a shamed person revealing themselves with confidence to one in power, instead of the reactions of lashing out or hiding to avoid further shaming,

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Andrew T. Abernethy, "God as Teacher in Psalm 25," *VT* 65 (2015): 339-51, who does not integrate the references to shame (vv. 2, 3, 20) into his analysis of divine pedagogy (vv. 4-5, 8-9) in the psalm.

<sup>26</sup> Danie F. O'Kennedy, "Vergifnis ter wille van JHWH se Naam (Ps 25:11)," *HTS* 64 (2008): 921-34.

<sup>27</sup> Christiane de Vos and Gert Kwakkel, "Psalm 69: The Petitioner's Understanding of Himself, His God, and His Enemies," in *Psalms and Prayers: Papers Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society of Old Testament Study and Het Oudtestamentische Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België, Apeldoorn August 2006*, ed. Bob Becking and Eric Peels, *OtSt* 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 169.

<sup>28</sup> Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "Psalm 69: Complaint and Confession," *CovQ* 55 (1997): 6.

is only comprehensible from within a theocentric framework which grounds the supplicant's reputation in YHWH's own.

It therefore becomes immaterial whether the subsequent mentions of weeping (v. 10) and sackcloth (v. 11) refer to confession of sin or some other cultic ritual. The supplicant appeals instead for YHWH to deliver him from dishonor (vv. 16-21). The same God who "knows my folly" (v. 5) is, more importantly, he who "knows my reproach [הָרָפָה] and my shame [בִּשְׁתָּ] and my dishonor [כְּלָמָה]; all my adversaries are before you" (v. 19). The fact that the psalmist redirects his ridicule "before you" (בְּפָנֶיךָ), a phrase communicating visible proximity and emotional transparency (e.g., Gen 47:15; Pss 38:10; 119:68), epitomizes Dietrich Bonhoeffer's observation that

... even in the deepest hopelessness God alone remains the one addressed. Neither is help expected from men, nor does the distressed one in self-pity lose sight of the origin and the goal of all distress, namely God.<sup>29</sup>

Reproach and shame being the primary complaints in Ps 69, the concept of guilt appears mainly to request that YHWH add guilt to the supplicant's enemies (vv. 22-28) and set him in a secure place away from them (v. 29).<sup>30</sup>

Following these imprecations that vindicate the supplicant (and his God, by extension), the psalm proceeds by broadening circles of praise, first for individual deliverance (vv. 30-31), then for every lowly person to recognize the One who saves (vv. 32-33), and finally for heaven and earth to praise YHWH as God who dwells in Zion (vv. 34-36). The supplicant who is delivered to praise YHWH's "name" (שֵׁם; v. 29) becomes the forerunner of every Israelite who returns to Zion from exile and loves the "name" that dwells there (שֵׁם; v. 36).<sup>31</sup> Though an individual lament, the reversal of the supplicant's shame in Ps 69 results in the greatness of YHWH's שֵׁם, both in its objective sense of "power" and subjective sense of "reputation," being recognized throughout the earth (cf. Pss 48:10; 102:15).

### 3 Honor and shame in Psalm 86

Psalm 86 is another individual lament that sets deliverance in the broader context of reverence for YHWH's "name" (שֵׁם; vv. 9, 11, 12). Leading up to this accent on divine honor in vv. 8-12, the psalm's first section in vv. 1-7 progresses from the plea for YHWH to "answer me [יַעֲנֵנִי]" (v. 1b) to the assurance that "you will

<sup>29</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Eberhard Bethge, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1970), 47-48.

<sup>30</sup> De Vos and Kwakkel, "Psalm 69," 170.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Leslie C. Allen, "The Value of Rhetorical Criticism in Psalm 69," *JBL* 105 (1986): 580-81.

answer me [תַּעֲנֵנִי]” (v. 7b).<sup>32</sup> The middle verses of this section are also characterized by the “Lord/master” (אֲדֹנָי; vv. 3, 4, 5) of the supplicant answering his determination to “cry out” (קָרָא; vv. 3, 5). The convergence of these motifs in v. 7’s declaration of faith (“in the day of my trouble I shall cry out [קָרָא] to you, since you will answer me [תַּעֲנֵנִי]”) is reinforced in the following declaration that the nations will also come to honor YHWH as “Lord” (אֲדֹנָי): “There is no one like you among the gods, O Lord [אֲדֹנָי], nor are there any works like yours; all nations whom you have made will come and bow low before you, O Lord [אֲדֹנָי], and they shall honor [יִכְבְּדוּ] your name [שִׁמְךָ]” (vv. 8-9). The flow of these verses indicates that YHWH’s deliverance of the supplicant serves as an occasion for the nations to honor the unrivaled power of his master’s “name.”

Unlike Ps 69, however, the theological progression from individual to worldwide homage to the “name” is presented as bidirectional in Ps 86. Imperative verbs reappear in vv. 11-12, not to implore YHWH to answer as earlier in the psalm (vv. 2-4, 6), but now expressing the supplicant’s wish that YHWH would “teach me your way” (v. 11a) and “unite my heart to fear your name” (v. 11c). It is notable that these second-person commands (vv. 11a, 11c) are interleaved with the first-person statements, “I will walk in your truth” (v. 11b) and “I will give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with all my heart [לְכָבֵד], and I will honor your name [שִׁמְךָ] forever” (v. 12). The Hebrew parallelism of these bicola indicates that reverence for YHWH’s “name” (שִׁמְךָ) is dependent on YHWH granting the desire to overcome the supplicant’s divided “heart” (לְכָבֵד; cf. Jer 32:39).<sup>33</sup>

Only following such an inner transformation will the supplicant reflect the life of obedience which says to YHWH, “I will honor your name” (וְאֶכְבְּדֶהָ שִׁמְךָ; v. 12), just as the world will: “They [the nations, v. 9a] will honor your name” (וְיִכְבְּדוּ לְשִׁמְךָ; v. 9b). Or to retrace this section’s logic in reverse, it will be the supplicant’s desire to “honor” (יִכְבְּדוּ; v. 12) YHWH through obedience (vv. 11–12) which serves as the enabling model for the nations to “honor” (יִכְבְּדוּ; v. 9) his God (vv. 8–10). The incomparability of YHWH (cf. also v. 13) serves in turn as both the motivation for and response to his deliverance (v. 7). In effect, the supplicant’s determination to honor the reputation of YHWH’s “name” becomes the answer to his own prayer for deliverance (vv. 1-6).<sup>34</sup>

Psalm 86 describes this deliverance as yet being in the future since the supplicant is still oppressed by the arrogant and the violent (v. 14) and appealing

<sup>32</sup> John Goldingay, *Psalms 42-89*, vol. 2 of *Psalms*, ed. John Goldingay, BCOTWP (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 623.

<sup>33</sup> Phillip M. Lasater, “Law for what Ails the Heart: Moral Frailty in Psalm 86,” *ZAW* 127 (2015): 655.

<sup>34</sup> Pierre Auffret, “Essai sur la structure littéraire du psaume lxxxvi,” *VT* 29 (1979): 396-97.

again for help from his “Lord/master” (יְיָ; vv. 15-16; cf. vv. 3-5). The relationship between these opponents who are responsible for “the day of my trouble” (v. 7) and the nations who revere YHWH (v. 9) remain unspecified. This psalm instead emphasizes how opponents expose the reality of the psalmist’s inability to keep God’s commands rather than being a penitential psalm *per se*.<sup>35</sup> While the communal laments and penitential prayers to be treated below tend to identify the supplicant’s opponents as those whom YHWH has sent to discipline his people, Ps 86 places the supplicant and YHWH on the same side due to their shared interest in vindicating the faithfulness of Israel’s God.

In this respect, YHWH’s self-revelation in Exod 34:6-7 plays a prominent role in Ps 86, both when the supplicant confesses that YHWH has been “merciful and gracious [חַנּוּן]” (v. 15; cf. Exod 34:6) as well as imploring this same God of Sinai to “be gracious to me [חַנּוּן]” (Ps 86:16b; cf. Exod 33:19). By contrasting the present with Israel’s salvation history in the past, this psalm sets forth how “[t]he psalmists seek to paint the picture of their distresses in such a way as to show that their dilemmas are not their own – they threaten the integrity of God’s own character.”<sup>36</sup> The mockery that is directed at the supplicant concerns the deeper question of when and how YHWH will show himself to be gracious in the sight of the nations, much as Moses does in applying YHWH’s self-revelation from Exod 34:6-7 in his intercessory prayer of Numbers 14.<sup>37</sup> The connection between the supplicant’s fate and YHWH’s reputation as a prayer-answering God thus furnishes the motivation behind the concluding request of Ps 86 for a visible “sign” (אֵימָתָה; cf. Exod 3:12; 4:8) which exonerates both when their common enemies are “shamed/ashamed” (בוֹשָׁה; v. 17), that is, publicly shown their error in attacking the supplicant’s connection to his God.

#### **D HONOR AND SHAME IN COMMUNAL LAMENTS (PSS 44; 79; 83)**

Communal laments include most of the same elements already noted in individual laments. The main change is that the voice of “we/us” typically expresses a national catastrophe brought on by, or as, YHWH’s punishment.<sup>38</sup> What may be unexpected about communal laments about exile, however, is that the theme of protesting the agents and methods of YHWH’s punishment receives greater emphasis than the theme of penitence.<sup>39</sup> The national sins leading to exile can go

<sup>35</sup> Lasater, “Psalm 86.”

<sup>36</sup> Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study*, JSOTSup 52 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 224.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Widmer, *Standing in the Breach: An Old Testament Theology and Spirituality of Intercessory Prayer*, Siph 13 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 82-84.

<sup>38</sup> Paul W. Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, SBLDS 127 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992), 91-100.

<sup>39</sup> Murray J. Haar, “The God-Israel Relationship in the Community Lament Psalms” (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1985), 112-16. Cf. Gunkel and Begrich,

unmentioned (e.g., Ps 44; cf. Pss 78-79; 2 Kgs 17; 24-25) or be downplayed relative to the psalmist's major charge that the indignities of exile outweigh Israel's crimes (e.g. Pss 80; 83; cf. Habakkuk).<sup>40</sup> Linking these two kinds of communal laments together is their assertion that irreparable damage will soon ensue to YHWH's subjective "name" (i.e., his reputation) unless He delivers his suffering people decisively by his objective "name" (i.e., his saving power).<sup>41</sup> The most representative passages are Ps 44, the first communal lament in the Psalter, and Pss 79 and 83, two of the hinges which lend structure to Pss 73-83, the Asaphite cluster which opens Book III.<sup>42</sup>

## 1 Honor and shame in Psalm 44

Psalm 44 contains perhaps the densest cluster of honor-shame ideas in the entirety of the Psalter.<sup>43</sup> As described in the first half of the psalm (vv. 1-8), it was by the power of YHWH's "name" (שֵׁם; v. 6) that Israel conquered its enemies and "put [them] to shame" (בושׁ *hiphil*; v. 7). The power of this "name" also enabled the people to "boast" (הלל; v. 8a) in their God and give thanks to his "name" (שֵׁם; v. 8b).<sup>44</sup> But turning suddenly in vv. 9-16 to the present circumstance of exile, the psalmist accuses YHWH of "humiliating [כלם] us" (v. 9) and "making us a reproach [הִרְפָּה] to our neighbors, a scoffing and a derision to those around us" (v. 13). The reputation of YHWH's people thereby suffers as "a byword among the nations, a laughingstock among the peoples" (v. 14).

The communal plight of the nation then modulates to the individual protest of the psalmist, "All day long my humiliation [כְּלִמָּה] is before me, and shame [בְּשֹׁת] has covered my face at the words of those who reproach [הִרְרָה] and revile [גִּדְרָה], at the sight of the enemy and the avenger" (vv. 15-16). Even as the semantic field of shame in individual lament sometimes denotes the psychological dimension of disappointment in a relationship (e.g., Ps 31:1, 17), the mention of mocking onlookers in Ps 44 (vv. 13-14, 16) tilts the scales toward understanding

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*Introduction*, 93, which rightly notes the lack of penitence in communal laments, but proceeds to make the anti-Semitic suggestion that this lack may be "a sign of Jewish self-righteousness from the age of law."

<sup>40</sup> Anson Laytner, *Arguing with God: A Jewish Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 28-29.

<sup>41</sup> David A. Glatt-Gilad, "Yahweh's Honor at Stake: A Divine Conundrum," *JSOT* 98 (2002): 64-66.

<sup>42</sup> Regarding the structure of the Asaphite Psalter (Pss 73-83), Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalmen 51-100*, HThKAT (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 28, observe that Pss 79-80 and 83 are the laments which form bookends around God's final answer to the community in Pss 81-82.

<sup>43</sup> For a full discussion, see Leonard P. Maré, "Honour and Shame in Psalm 44," *Scriptura* 113 (2014): 1-12.

<sup>44</sup> Glatt-Gilad, "Yahweh's Honor," 65.

these references to shame in anthropological terms. In this case the shame refers to the diminishing of Israel before the nations.

Despite the confession that Israel's shaming is not entirely undeserved, the psalmist nonetheless goes on in vv. 17-22 to protest that YHWH's punishment has become unfair to his people. The key theological tension in the psalm is captured by the different verbal subjects used for the Hebrew root שכח ("to forget"). On the human side, exile persists even though "we have not forgotten [שכח] you" (v. 17b), and despite the counterfactual condition, "if we could ever forget [שכח] the name of our God" (v. 20a). The psalmist's assertion of innocence is therefore not an overturning of the Deuteronomic principle of retribution,<sup>45</sup> but rather a request for the exile to end since Israel has become penitent but continues to suffer.<sup>46</sup> שכח is then reused with God as subject in the searing questions, "Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget [שכח] our affliction and oppression?" (v. 24). In summary, this psalm does not deny Israel's guilt but offers the weightier objection that the people of YHWH no longer suffer for their own sins but "for your sake/because of you" (עֲלֵיךָ; v. 22), that is, as a nation mocked by other nations (cf. vv. 13-16).<sup>47</sup> The psalm thus concludes with an appeal to YHWH's self-interest to be known as a gracious God who acts on behalf of his people: "Redeem us for the sake of [לְמַעַן] your steadfast love" (v. 26; cf. vv. 1-8).<sup>48</sup> As will be shown below, the appeal for YHWH to act for his own sake is prominent in penitential prose prayers such as Dan 9:4-19.

## 2 Honor and shame in Psalm 79

Psalm 79 is another communal lament which protests the brutal arm of YHWH's justice. This psalm contains several similar elements to Ps 44, such as the nations invading Israel (79:1-3; cf. 44:10-11), Israel's resultant shaming on the world stage (79:4; cf. 44:13-16), and insistent questions about how long YHWH's anger will last (79:5; cf. 44:23-24). Most notably among its protests, Ps 79 sends the issue of YHWH's reputation in a new direction by repeatedly invoking the

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "Psalm 44: The Powers of Protest," *CBQ* 70 (2008): 683-98.

<sup>46</sup> Adele Berlin, "Psalms and the Literature of Exile: Psalms 137, 44, 69, and 78," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller, VTSup 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 73-74.

<sup>47</sup> Taking the לְ to be a preposition of cause (*IBHS* §11.2.13e), as also Nancy L. de Claissé-Walford, "Psalm 44: O God, Why Do You Hide Your Face?" *RevExp* 104 (2007): 750, 757.

<sup>48</sup> BDB (s.v., לְמַעַן, 775) notes that this occurrence of לְמַעַן is to be grouped with other uses denoting that YHWH's reputation and character are at stake (e.g., Pss 6:5; 23:3; 25:7, 11).

honor of YHWH's "name" (שֵׁם) as the exile carries on. Somber notes of penitence are quickly transposed in this psalm to shrill notes of imprecation.<sup>49</sup> No longer are the nations presented as YHWH's instruments, as in Ps 44, but only as irreverent enemies of YHWH's "name": "Pour out your anger on the nations that do not know you, on the kingdoms that do not call on your name [שֵׁם]" (v. 6). This psalm mentions the remorse of the exiles in passing, but this theme takes a back seat to challenging YHWH to vindicate his "name" due to the theological paradox of sending more evil nations to punish a less evil nation: "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory [כְּבוֹד] of your name [שֵׁם]; deliver us, and forgive our sins, for the sake of your name [שֵׁם]" (v. 9). The sins of YHWH's own nation are of much less concern than the sins committed by other nations that are mentioned later in the psalm.<sup>50</sup>

As if to clinch the argument from the angle of divine honor, Ps 79 concludes by redirecting the common psalmic motif of facing insults from enemies in a God-ward direction.<sup>51</sup> In place of describing the psalmist's own shame (cf. 44:9-16) is found the even stronger protest that the nations are mocking YHWH himself by means of wanton violence against his people: "Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?' Before our eyes, make known among the nations that you avenge the outpoured blood of your servants." (v. 10). The plea to "make known among the nations" indicates that it is not only the future of divine honor in question, but the nations are already impugning YHWH's honor for his apparent deafness to his suffering people. This is a distinctive feature of Ps 79, as compared to other communal laments which concede that divine justice was served by publicly shaming Israel as a "reproach" (תְּרִפָּה; 44:16).

Psalm 79 then goes further by asserting that the enemies who did this must also be held guilty for "their reproach [תְּרִפָּה] with which they reproached you [חַרְיָ *piel*]" (79:12).<sup>52</sup> The international reputation of YHWH's justice is at stake, so his anger must now reverse its course and come to Israel's aid rather than harm. As William Schniedewind notes, Ps 79's closing plea for Israel to be known as "your people and the sheep of your pasture" (v. 13) quotes Ps 100:3 as a summons for YHWH to offer a satisfactory theodicy for the dilemma of using wicked nations to accomplish his purposes:

<sup>49</sup> Shirley S. Ho, "Leviticus 26 in Psalm 79: The Defilement of the Sacred, Nations and Lament," *Jian Dao* 44 (2015): 19.

<sup>50</sup> Haar, "God-Israel Relationship," 40-41.

<sup>51</sup> Patrick D. Miller, "Prayer as Persuasion: The Rhetoric and Intention of Prayer," *WW* 13 (1993): 358.

<sup>52</sup> Repetition of the root חרַי intensifies the verbal idea, the form of emphasis in Hebrew known as the internal or cognate accusative (*IBHS* §10.2f-g; Joüon §125q-r).

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The psalmist challenges Yahweh to restore his own name and to deliver his servants, and thereby prove that Yahweh is God and that Israel is indeed his people and the sheep of his pasture.<sup>53</sup>

### 3 Honor and shame in Psalm 83

The final communal lament under discussion heightens the stakes from Ps 79 by placing still more reproachful speech on the lips of Israel's enemies. Following its opening request for help (v. 1) and describing the actions of enemies (vv. 2-3), the psalm goes further than other laments by quoting their sinister words at length: "They have said, 'Come, and let us wipe them out as a nation, so that the name of Israel will no longer be remembered'" (v. 4). Here the "name" (שם) of Israel is so thoroughly intertwined with YHWH's that the next verse describes the conspiracy of Israel's enemies as a Babel-like plot against YHWH himself: "For they have conspired together with one mind; against you they make a covenant" (v. 5). Indeed, the identity of v. 5's "they" is specified in terms that transcend the present moment of exile, not merely as the Assyrian empire and its threat to the Israelite kingdoms (v. 8), but as numerous ancient foes of YHWH's people: Edom/Esau, Ishmael, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, Amalek and Sisera, among others (vv. 6-7, 9-11).<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, the second half of the psalm quotes Israel's foes saying brazenly, "Let us possess for ourselves the pastures of God" (v. 12). After praying that creation will repay them for seeking Israel's pastures (vv. 13-15), the psalmist pleads with a flurry of honor-shame language that the enemies should experience the kind of shame that leads to knowing YHWH's "name" (שם). Verses 16-18 use the term שם in its objective sense of "essence" and subjective sense of "reputation" to show that nations must come to know YHWH as the only source of true honor:

Fill their faces with dishonor [קלון], that they make seek your name [שם], O YHWH! Let them be ashamed [בוש] and dismayed forever, and let them suffer reproach [הפר] and perish, that they may know that you alone, whose name [שם] is YHWH, are the Most High over all the earth (vv. 16-18).

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<sup>53</sup> William M. Schniedewind, "'Are We His People Or Not?': Biblical Interpretation during Crisis," *Bib* 77 (1995): 546.

<sup>54</sup> On the geographical progression and literary shaping of this list of nations, see Pierre Auffret, "'Qu'ils sachent que toi, ton nom est YHWH': Étude structurelle du Psaume 83," *ScEs* 45 (1993): 41-59.

The destruction of the nations is not the final goal, for their judgment by YHWH in Ps 83 is a prelude to their ultimate salvation when Ps 87 presents a restored Zion as the mother of the same nations that first came to attack her.<sup>55</sup>

### **E HONOR AND SHAME IN PENITENTIAL PRAYERS (EZRA 9:6-15; DAN 9:4-19)**

Penitential prayers in post-exilic books (Ezra 9:6-15; Neh 9:5-37; Dan 9:4-19) contain some of the OT's most poignant theological reflections on exile. The link between penitence and the legal concept of guilt is often noted in these prayers,<sup>56</sup> but usually overlooked is that Ezra 9:6-15 and Dan 9:4-19 both complain that YHWH's exiled people suffer from "open shame" (בִּשְׁתָּה [הַ] פְּנִיָּם; Ezra 9:7; Dan 9:7-8). This phrase in Ezra's prayer appears in the opening confession that "I am too ashamed [בוֹשׁ] and embarrassed [כָּלֵם] to lift up my face to you, my God" (Ezra 9:6), while in Daniel's prayer it emphasizes the publicness of exile so that the plea for YHWH's forgiveness may find its climax in an appeal to divine honor, "since your city and your people are called by your name [שְׁמֶךָ]" (Dan 9:19).

To be sure, Ezra 9 and Dan 9 both mention the concept of guilt, as in the explanation of exile's rationale in terms of Deuteronomy's laws prohibiting intermarriage (Ezra 9:10-12; cf. Deut 7:3-4) or the characteristic Deuteronomic language of failing to "obey the voice of YHWH, to walk in his ways" (Dan 9:10; cf. Deut 10:12; 26:17). But as will be shown below, the prevalence of honor-shame language in framing Israel's troubled history suggests that these prayers also conceive the relationship between YHWH and Israel as a public matter which is being worked out on the cosmic stage of how patron deities deal with their client nations. To a greater degree than individual and communal psalms of lament, penitential prose prayers intertwine the reputation of YHWH with the status of his people among other peoples, first in shaming them through exile to demonstrate his righteousness, but then in delivering them in order to vindicate the honor of his "name" that exercises compassion after judgment. Though Dan 9 is chronologically earlier than Ezra 9, the latter passage will be treated first due to its greater emphasis on exile as the culmination of Israel's past shame. Daniel

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Erich Zenger, "Zion as Mother of the Nations in Psalm 87," in *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms*, ed. Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger, trans. Everett R. Kalin (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 147-56, who reads these psalms as a strict contrast rather a salvation-historical progression.

<sup>56</sup> E.g., Rodney A. Werline, "Prayer, Politics, and Power in the Hebrew Bible," *Int* 68 (2014): 14; Karl William Weyde, "Ezra's Penitential Prayer: Priestly Vocabulary and Concepts in Ezra 9," in *Houses Full of All Good Things: Essays in Memory of Timo Veijola*, ed. Juha Pakkala, PFES 95 (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2008), 238-50.

9 offers a complementary perspective on deliverance from exile as a matter of YHWH’s future honor.

### 1 Honor and shame in Ezra 9:6-15

The penitential prayer of Ezra 9 is situated in a context where the post-exilic community in Jerusalem has failed again in its covenantal obligations to YHWH. After a narrative description of the people’s guilt in intermarriage and Ezra’s response of ritual mourning (Ezra 9:1-5), the prayer proper opens strikingly in Ezra 9:6 with the eponymous scribe enacting YHWH’s ironic command through the prophet Ezekiel for Israel to “be ashamed and humiliated” (בִּישׁוֹ וְהִקְלַמוּ; Ezek 36:32).<sup>57</sup> Dating from an earlier period of the exile than Ezra, that exhortation is found in the context of Israel’s shamelessness even after desecrating YHWH’s unique standing, described in the context of Ezek 36 as “my holy name [שְׁמִי]” (Ezek 36:20, 22) and “my great name [שְׁמִי] which has been profaned among the nations” (Ezek 36:23). This allusion to Ezekiel suggests that Ezra’s ritual self-abasement intends to offer a counterpoint to the shamelessness that the people of YHWH had exhibited in defiling their God’s reputation in the world.<sup>58</sup>

The penitent words that follow continue in the line of Ezra the scribe embodying the shame that Israel refused to feel. Whereas the entirety of vv. 6-7 has typically been summarized as a confession of guilt,<sup>59</sup> the Hebrew syntax of these verses suggests that guilt is a subordinate category to shame (or lack thereof). Rather than being the main clause, guilt is mentioned as the reason (כִּי; v. 6b) for the shame felt by Ezra (v. 6a). This adverbial clause describes Israel’s accumulation of guilt from past to present (vv. 6d-7b), that is, a persistent disregard for YHWH’s reputation which eventuates in the need for exile as a public spectacle of “open shame” (בִּישׁוֹת פְּנִיָּם; v. 7c). Taking the framing references to shame together with the canonical background of Ezek 36, the logic of these verses indicates that the nations before whom Israel shamed YHWH (9:6) have become the instruments of YHWH shaming Israel (9:7).<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Harm W. M. van Grol, “Exegesis of the Exile – Exegesis of Scripture?,” in *Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel*, ed. Johannes C. de Moor, *OtSt* 40 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 38-48.

<sup>58</sup> On YHWH’s goal of being recognized as the incomparable God of Israel, see Elmer A. Martens, “Ezekiel’s Contribution to a Biblical Theology of Mission,” *Dir* 28 (1999): 79.

<sup>59</sup> Michael W. Duggan, “Ezra 9:6-15 within Its Literary Setting,” in *Seeking the Favor of God: The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney A. Werline (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 169.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Martin A. Klopfenstein, *Scham und Schande nach dem Alten Testament: Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu den hebräischen Wurzeln bôš, klm und hpr*,

## 2 Honor and shame in Daniel 9:4-19

Compared to the allusiveness of Ezra 9:7-8, Dan 9:8-9 is more explicit in explaining that Israel's shame in exile comes from being ridiculed by other nations. The phrase "open shame" (בְּשֹׁמֵת הַפְּנִיּוֹת) is mentioned twice in these verses, first in general terms as Israel's scattering "to all the lands where you have driven them" (9:7) and then the specific act of public exposure of "our kings, our princes, and our ancestors because we have sinned against you" (9:8).<sup>61</sup> Daniel goes on to contrast the mighty God of the exodus who "made a name [שֵׁם] for yourself" (9:15) with his people whose sins necessitated being punished as "a reproach [חֲרִיפָה] to all those around us" (9:16). The causal relationship between YHWH's honor and Israel's shame in these verses shows that it was to preserve his reputation as a righteous God that YHWH severed his shamed reputation from his shaming people. It is thus not for the sake of the "Attack Self" pole in Nathanson's model that this penitential prayer voices the shame of the Jewish community.<sup>62</sup>

As Daniel turns from lament to petition, however, he emphasizes the shared honor of YHWH and Israel. The sorry spectacle of Israel has made it necessary for YHWH to restore his people and thereby act "for the sake of the Lord" (9:17).<sup>63</sup> Whereas YHWH's "name" (שֵׁם) was threatened by Israel's sin (9:15) but vindicated in exile (9:16), the ongoing desolation of Jerusalem threatens to impugn his reputation as the God who is publicly attached to the "city called by your name" (9:18), or more emphatically and personally, "your city and your people called by your name" (9:19). For Daniel to broach the possibility that YHWH might suffer disrepute through Israel's ongoing exile is a parade example of shame's positive function as "an important tie between YHWH and his people, a tie that strengthened rather than weakened the relationship."<sup>64</sup> In the final analysis, complaint and confession in penitential prose prayers occupy

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ATANT 62 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1972), 105, who sees the two instances of בִּישׁ as completely contrasting.

<sup>61</sup> Klopfenstein, *Scham und Schande*, 105.

<sup>62</sup> Compare Amy C. Merrill Willis, *Dissonance and the Drama of Divine Sovereignty in the Book of Daniel*, LHBOTS 520 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2010), who speaks in reductionist terms of Daniel 9's "self-blaming theology" (139).

<sup>63</sup> In the middle of addressing YHWH as "you," Daniel's prayer shifts suddenly back to third-person address, "for the sake of the Lord" (לְמַעַן אֲדֹנָי). Though this change is smoothed over to second-person address in the EVV ("for your sake") and LXX (ἐνεκεν τῶν δούλων σου δέσποτα, "for the sake of your servants, O Lord"), it should be noted that Dan 9 uses the title אֲדֹנָי both in the third person (e.g., v. 4) and as a vocative to be identified with "you" (e.g., vv. 15-16).

<sup>64</sup> Lyn M. Bechtel, "The Perception of Shame within the Divine-Human Relationship in Biblical Israel," in *Uncovering Ancient Stones: Essays in Memory of H. Neil Richardson*, ed. H. Neil Richardson and Lewis M. Hopfe (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 92.

a secondary position compared to the intercessor's primary strategy of throwing the question back upon YHWH and his self-interest to avoid shaming.

## F CONCLUSION

The HB does not offer a unitary and comprehensive theodicy for the kinds of suffering noted in the introduction. Whatever the various reasons for declining to do so,<sup>65</sup> it is more significant that OT lament traditions militate in two ways against any indifference that might result from this reluctance to offer easy answers. First, questions about the presence of evil and the goodness of God are emphatically worth asking, even when satisfying answers may not be forthcoming. In this regard the practice of lament relativizes the differences between innocent suffering and deserved punishment, since engaging YHWH in protesting faith is truer to the biblical pattern than being theologically correct but fatalistic toward the inner workings of the divine will. To fail to retrace the footsteps of God's justice leads inevitably to numbness to injustice in the world, or the even worse error of blaming the victim as if all human suffering stemmed from divine retribution.

Second and more urgently, the posture of challenging God is demanded, and not merely permitted, by the theological reality that the supplicant's honor and shame are closely tied to YHWH's in the sight of the nations and their gods. In OT lament traditions, this truth leads neither to passive disappointment nor overt hostility toward God, as predicted by Donald Nathanson's "Compass of Shame," but an urgent appeal to the kinship ties in YHWH's household which momentarily appear to be in jeopardy. In other words, OT lament traditions move the Israelite God to answer through the confession that the problem of evil is his alone to solve, since ultimately it is his reputation at stake. Precisely here is found the cultural uniqueness of biblical protest literature—that peculiar combination of ego-strength and self-denial, to use more Western and psychological terms; or similarly using more Eastern and anthropological categories, a counterintuitive willingness to "lose face" before YHWH in order to "gain face," as part of the larger narrative of YHWH regaining his "face."<sup>66</sup> It is this God-centeredness of biblical lament, in seeking his honor more than the supplicant's own, which has sometimes been misunderstood as an apathy toward honor in Judaism and Christianity.<sup>67</sup> Yet by grasping the theological paradox of embracing shame as a

<sup>65</sup> James L. Crenshaw, *Defending God: Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), opines that the multiplicity of the Bible's theodicies means that none of them can claim primacy over the others.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Victor H. Matthews, "Avoiding Shame in Ancient Israel," in *The Shame Factor: How Shame Shapes Society*, ed. Robert Jewett (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 117-42, whose otherwise helpful study is marred by the assumption that shame was always to be avoided in Israel rather than embraced.

<sup>67</sup> E.g., James Bowman, *Honor: A History* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006), 49, who speaks of "honor-skepticism" as foundational to Judaism and Christianity.

means to regaining honor, the believer is empowered to view shame not only as a "soul-eating emotion" (a proverb often attributed to Carl Jung), but also as a life-nourishing step in a journey of faith which leads to vindication by God. Because the supplicant's honor is enmeshed with YHWH's own, the answer to the pressing question – "How long will my glory/Glory be reproach?" (Ps 4:2) – must inevitably be, "Not much longer."

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