

## Editorial

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As the curtain closes in on the year 2020, one thing we know for certain is that the global pandemic COVID-19 continues with us into 2021 and beyond. However, we draw some comfort and hope on the progress made in the efforts to produce vaccines and the beginning of rolling out the vaccines with the goal of saving lives. We, therefore, call for equitable distribution of the vaccines to save human lives including lives on the African continent. The global pandemic has significantly impacted our lives and livelihoods and changing the way we do things. We have a duty to rise to the challenges and address the suffering resultant from the global pandemic.

This issue comprises of two sections—the general section which caters for our contributors as usual and the special section which is focused on “Psalmody and Suffering.”

The general section contains eleven articles. Adamo’s article focuses on women, particularly the silenced and unnamed women in the Old Testament. In line with his special attention on Africa and Africans in Old Testament, Adamo’s lens zooms into the silent and unnamed Egyptian wife of Jeroboam and considers her an important role player even in her silence. He also points out that while not named in the MT, the wife of Jeroboam is known from the LXX as Ano, a daughter of an Egyptian king. In their article, Antwi et al. discuss what they refer to as “linkages and disconnections” between the Old Testament and the Akan understanding of wisdom. They warn that while there is merit in drawing linkages between Israelite wisdom and those of other cultures, the interpreters should also pay attention to the disconnections between the cultures. Odo et al. also focus on wisdom, however, their discussion is focused on parallel wisdom sayings between Proverbs 22:1 “good name is better than wealth” and Igbo saying “ezi afa ka ego” (integrity surpasses wealth). Their concern in reading the two wisdom sayings together is to address challenges within the Igbo society today.

In his article, Snyman reads the Jacob and Esau cycle from the perspective of justice considering the unfolding of story in the relationship between Rebekah, Jakob, Isaac, and Esau. However, Snyman does not simply read the text for its own sake; he also reflects on it in terms of life experiences of moral injury and rhetoric of disgust. Krisel, in his article, discusses the text-critical issues in

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Judges 19:2. For Krisel the MT represents the last stage in the attempt in the attempt to resolve why the Levite's concubine left him in the first place.

Wells and Hays probe the issue of hierarchy in terms degradations arguing that Ezekiel's underworld should also be understood as an unholy temple. In so doing, Wells and Hays draws attention to the neglected area considering scholars' attention on graded holiness. Vang article explores the intertextual linkages between 1 Sam 15:2 and Deut 25:17–19. Vang argues for the necessity to make a distinction between, on the one hand, inner biblical quotations, and on the other, expression used to express certain theological outlook. Wünc article focuses on the New Testament's use of the Old Testament with a focus on Paul's use of Deut 25:4 in 1 Cor 9:9, which is human centred. For Wünc, Paul's usage of the text does not have to detract the readers from the concern for animals within the Old Testament law texts. In his article, Wikander focuses on the Jewish tradition which projects Abraham as an astrologer. Wikander is particularly interested Rashi's commentary on Gen 15:5 considering the way he referenced the earlier Sages.

Gosse explores various intertextual linkages between Psalm 18 and texts such as Prov 3:1–14, 1–2 Sam and other texts from prophets such as Jonah, Zephaniah and Habakkuk. He views Ps 18 as a Messianic reaffirmation of David and his descendants in the post-exilic period with its concern for the poor. Sanon reads Psalm 137 in light of the song two Ivorian reggae songs, thus using the lived experience to read the text, while at the same time allowing the biblical text as a text of faith that carries authority to address issues of injustice in the modern context.

The special section on "Psalmody and Suffering" contains six articles. The theme is especially relevant in the time of a global pandemic when COVID-19 has had disastrous effects on people and especially on the poor in Africa. Poetical and psalm-like texts serve as basis for the academic reflection on this age-old human experience of distress, agony and pain. Our contributors have addressed the theme from various angles and based on different approaches. In his article "Suffering and Vengeance in the Psalms" Herrie van Rooy examines the issue of suffering and vengeance in the Psalter, giving attention to suffering at the hand of enemies. He deals with individual and collective suffering, and vengeance. Cas Vos exposes Psalm 23 under the title, "The Lord is my Shepherd in Suffering." The purpose of this psalm of trust is to impart comfort in concrete life, but in times of sorrow and crisis this psalm has struck home. The article starts by reading Psalm 23 as composition, then turns to the reception history, and finally shows the resonance of this psalm in two contemporary poems.

Simone Paganini contributes with "The righteous suffering servant: Observations about a theological problem in four Individual Complaint Psalms." He examines the theological problem of a righteous but suffering person (Pss 22;

27; 69; 109) the psalmist shows a coherent image: the supplicant who refers to God feels himself like a righteous servant, is aware of his innocence, and pleads for relief. Ultimately, sufferer also realizes that he/she does not need to be healed from suffering but has rather to recognize the importance of God's role in one's life. Christina Landman in "Healing the wounded: The Psalms and therapy" explored the dialogical spaces between the historicity of the written Psalms and present experiences of suffering and loss. She shows that the insights of Narrative Therapy resonate with the ways in which the psalmist(s) deal both with suffering and deliverance. Landman explains how Psalm 22 is used in training ministry students in the tenets of Narrative Therapy, and how Psalm 46 functions in group therapy with women.

Dominik Markl (SJ) unravels the Song of Moses in "Blaming Jacob for his pain: New Observations on the Structure, Pragmatics and Function of The Song of Moses (Deut 32)." The rhetorical features of the Song show that blaming Israel is the major pragmatic thread of the poem and that the contextual relationship of the Song with Deuteronomy 29–30 allows for conclusions regarding its theological function within the final form of Deuteronomy. The theological climax of the Song attributes power over life and death to God alone (Deut 32:39).

In her contribution, Gerda de Villiers reflects on "Suffering in the Epic of Gilgamesh". Her article discloses several moments of suffering in this epic by its main character Gilgamesh. The article concludes with some suggestions of appropriating Elizabeth Kubler Ross' five stages of grief to the Epic of Gilgamesh.

These contributions on 'Psalmody and Suffering' in poetical texts illustrate how this universal human experience of suffering can be contemplated to find meaning and healing over ages. In the next volume of *OTE* further six contributions will continue this journey.

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