

Prose Prayers of Disorientation in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis to Esther)

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Abstract

Walter Brueggemann maintains that the only subcategory to be accommodated within the general category of disorientation prayers (the other two broad categories being orientation and new orientation) is that of lament. Challenging Brueggemann's proposition, however, Mark J. Boda argues in favor of two subcategories: lament and confidence/penitence (to which he attaches the vow form). Yet even Boda's proposal seems incomplete. By challenging the prevailing consensus, this article demonstrates that within the prose prayers of disorientation in the Hebrew Bible (i.e., within the borders of Genesis and Esther), rather than only two, accommodation should be afforded the following six subcategories: lament, imprecation, vow, penitence, confidence, and thanksgiving praise.

Introduction

Commensurate with the lived reality of human beings, Walter Brueggemann characterizes the prayers of the covenant people of Yahweh God in the Hebrew Bible (HB) into three general forms or categories.

1. Prayers of Orientation—these prayers arise within life situations of well-being that evoke a sense of peace for the constancy of divine blessing. They articulate the confidence, joy, delight, goodness, coherence, and reliability of God, God's creation, and God's governing law. Here, primary accommodation is afforded the subcategory of praise.
2. Prayers of Disorientation—these prayers arise within life situations of hurt, alienation, pain, suffering, and death, which evoke grief, rage, resentment, self-pity, and even hatred. They articulate the raggedness and painful disarray of life to God and permit the extravagance,

hyperbole, and abrasiveness needed for the experience of despair. Here, primary accommodation is afforded the subcategory of lament.

3. Prayers of New Orientation—these prayers arise within life situations of surprised joy when God breaks through despair with a fresh intrusion of felicity as he makes all things new. They articulate the overwhelming happiness that arises when despondency turns into delight on account of the inbreaking of God’s new creation. Here, primary accommodation is afforded the subcategory of thanksgiving.¹

As mentioned above, Brueggemann only affords accommodation to the subcategory of *lament* within the general category of prayers of disorientation.

Appreciative of his proposal, Mark J. Boda remarks, “The basic categories advanced by Walter Brueggemann are helpful because they root the forms of prayer more firmly in human experience.”² Boda also observes that each of these three general categories find justification in 1 Chr 16:4–6 as “the Chronicler presents David’s commission to the Asaphites to ‘minister before the ark of the LORD, to make petition [prayers of disorientation], to give thanks [prayers of new/reorientation], and to praise [prayers of orientation] the LORD God of Israel.’”³ Despite this, Boda nevertheless takes exception particularly to Brueggemann’s subcategorization of prayers of disorientation, which allows accommodation only to the lament form. Consequently, in view of what he perceives to be an *Ausblick aufs Lebens* or “the outlook/perspective on life,”⁴ Boda develops a two-tier taxonomy of prose prayers of disorientation based on the level of protest in the HB.

- i. Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers (i.e., those prayers that arise within a context of distress, expressing despair and longing for salvation; the tone of

1 See Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2007), 2–4; Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1984), 19–21; Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, ed. Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 8–15. *This article will also be contained in a chapter of my *Compassionate Pastoral Care Practices for Coping with Grief* (Cumbria, UK: Langham Monographs, forthcoming).

2 Mark J. Boda, “Prayer,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*, eds. Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 806.

3 Boda, “Prayer,” 807.

4 See Boda, “Prayer,” 806–11; Boda, “Form Criticism in Transition: Penitential Prayer and Lament, *Sitz im Leben* and Form,” in *Seeking the Favor of God: The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism*, eds. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney A. Werline, Early Judaism and Its Literature 21 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 1:181–92; Boda, “Varied and Resplendent Riches: Exploring the Breadth and Depth of Worship in the Psalter,” in *Rediscovering Worship: Past, Present, Future*, ed. Wendy J. Porter (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), 61–82.

this type of prayer is noted by the stinging lament questions to God of “why?” and “how long?”).⁵

- ii. Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers (i.e., those prayers that arise within a context of distress, but with a different tone: on the one hand, they express confidence in God’s salvific work,⁶ and on the other hand, they express contrition before God’s discipline and do not question God’s action or inaction, thus, they possess a sense of penitence that God will forgive).⁷ Corresponding to Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers is the *vow* form, which according to Boda, “requests something from God and provides a motivation in a human response following the divine intervention (Judg 11:30; 1 Sam 1:11).”⁸

But even with this taxonomy, a lacuna in scholarship still nevertheless persists in relation to the subcategories of the prosaic prayers of disorientation in the HB (i.e., within the borders of Genesis and Esther)⁹ and their attention to ancient human experience. This article is thus motivated by a threefold impetus: (i) A plethora of work in recent years has been completed within the poetic prayers of the HB to the virtual neglect of the prosaic prayers, (ii) In comparison to the poetic prayers, the prosaic prayers of the HB yield a greater variety of prayer subcategories, especially those uttered within a generic context of disorientation, and (iii) With the actual generic context of disorientation furnished by the *text* itself, *conjecturing* the life setting of the prayer subcategory no longer becomes a necessity, as is usually the case with the employment of Form Criticism to prayers in the HB (especially the Psalms).

Methodology: Renewed Form Criticism

Generating a robust taxonomy of disorientation subcategories from within the ancient yet timeless context of the prosaic prayers of disorientation in the HB

5 E.g., Josh 7:6–9; Judg 21:2–4; 1 Kgs 17:20–21; described in Judg 2:4; 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6; 1 Sam 1:10–18, 27; 8:18; 9:16; Esth 4:1–3. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the NASB 2020.

6 E.g., Josh 10:12; Judg 13:8; 2 Sam 15:30–31; 1 Kgs 3:6–9 // 2 Chr 1:8–10; 1 Kgs 8:22–53 // 2 Chr 6:14–22; 1 Kgs 8:55–61; 18:36–38; 2 Kgs 6:17–20; 19:14–19; 20:2–3; 1 Chr 4:10; 29:10–19; 2 Chr 14:9–11; 20:4–19; Ezra 8:21–23; Neh 5:19; 6:9, 14; 13:14, 22, 29, 30; described in 1 Sam 6:8; 2 Kgs 19:4; 1 Chr 5:20; 2 Chr 15:4; Ezra 6:10; Neh 2:4; 4:9.

7 E.g., Judg 10:10, 15; 1 Sam 6:6; 12:10, 19; 2 Sam 24:10 // 1 Chr 21:8; 2 Sam 24:17 // 1 Chr 21:16–17; 2 Chr 30:19; Ezra 9:1–10:1; Neh 1:4–11; 9:5–37; described in Neh 9:1–5; Ezra 10:6; 2 Chr 33:12–13.

8 Boda, “Form Criticism in Transition,” 187–90; Boda, “Prayer,” 806–11; Boda, “Varied and Resplendent Riches,” 61–82.

9 It is worth acknowledging here that there are prose sections in the prophetic books of the HB, and also that prayers can be identified in those sections as well (e.g., Isa 38). Additionally, though many prosaic prayers are largely poetic, the key here in my decision-making process is that of the context as prosaic, rather than independent or poetic. Noted here also is the fact that while Esther is part of the prosaic section of the HB, no prayer category is yielded therein.

subsequently necessitates the application of what I would like to call *Renewed Form Criticism*. By way of a general description, and in a manner analogous to Old Form Criticism (OFC) and New Form Criticism (NFC), Renewed Form Criticism (RFC) adheres to four fundamental steps in its analysis of the biblical text/unit. But whereas OFC identifies the genre *prior to* seeking out the comparative life setting, in RFC, a generic life setting of orientation, disorientation, or new orientation is established *in advance of* pursuing the subcategory of the text/unit. By reversing steps two and three, this hermeneutical approach will once again undergo another modification, i.e., from OFC to NFC to RFC.¹⁰ The four essential steps of RFC are as follows:

1. Determine the unit—nothing more or nothing less than the entire unit wherein the prayer of orientation, disorientation, or new orientation is positioned is required for the correct identification of the literary stage or subcategory.¹¹ With regards to this article, the determinative unit will be one wherein the prayer of disorientation is positioned.
2. Describe its setting in life (*Sitz im Leben*)—the original oral social context is assumed to be either the generic life setting of orientation, disorientation, or new orientation. The original social context assumed in this article, however, is that of the generic life setting of *disorientation*. Moreover, the answer to the question regarding the kind of thinking that gave rise to such an expression, as well as the possibility of knowing something about the people from the way they spoke and/or acted, is sought after.¹²

10 See Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi, eds., *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Gratitude to Boda for assisting me in formulating a name for this new biblical criticism.

11 Tucker, however, prefers “Analysis of the structure,” where structure refers to “the outline, the pattern or schema of a given piece of literature or a given genre.” Gene M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*, GBS (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 11–12.

12 Tucker prefers “Definition of the setting or settings.” Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*, 11. It is worth mentioning here that NFC prefers to emphasize an intended literary reception/readership rather than an intended oral original context. See e.g., Erhard Blum, “*Formgeschichte*—A Misleading Category? Some Critical Remarks,” in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-first Century*, eds. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 45. However, in as much as we currently have in our possession the literary texts, it seems inconceivable to think that such literary texts were devoid of an oral lifeform, especially since ancient Israel lived within both an oral and simultaneously literary society. Textual evidence lending its aid to this contention appears in Ps 44:1, “God, we have heard with our ears, / *Our fathers have told us*” (emphasis mine; see also Exod 12:26–27; Deut 6:20; Judg 6:13; Ps 78:3). This, in conjunction with my challenge to OFC that argues for a rigid correspondence between genre and life setting, has encouraged the formation of the research methodology I am here espousing as *Renewed Form Criticism*. Also, in choosing to speak of a generic life setting of disorientation rather than “hard, fixed realities,” I concur with Sparks that “comparative taxonomies [are] created by readers.” Kenton L. Sparks, “Form Criticism,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (New York: Routledge, 2007), 113.

3. Decipher the literary genre (*Gattung*)—in this step, a robust taxonomy of the literary stages or subcategories (*Gattungen*) of prayers of orientation, disorientation, or new orientation will be generated. In reference to this article, however, the robust taxonomy of the literary stages or subcategories will only be related to the prosaic prayers of disorientation in the HB.¹³
4. Discern its purpose—this final step seeks to address the function or purpose of the prosaic prayer of orientation, disorientation, or new orientation. But in the case of this article, it refers to the prosaic prayer of disorientation in the HB in the original oral stage, and also to the purpose it now serves within the larger literary work of which it is part. Accordingly, it seeks to trace what changes took place in the saints of the HB by knowing how these two uses (i.e., oral and written) differ.¹⁴

Prose Prayers of Disorientation in the HB: From Lament to Thanksgiving Praise

With this in mind, a robust taxonomy of the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB (i.e., within the borders of Genesis and Esther) can now be developed and expanded to include other subcategories that have passed undetected beneath the radar of genre categorization. As we make our way through our genre recategorization, we will continue by looking more closely at the verbal expressions that leaders from within the ancient Israelite community of faith of the HB communicated to/before God amidst a generic life setting of disorientation. Here we will address what I would like to refer to by nomenclature as follows:

- Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers: DS1 Lament
- Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers: DS2 Imprecation
- Disorientation Stage 3 Prayers: DS3 Vow

13 Tucker prefers “Describing the genre.” Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*, 11. To prevent any further nebulosity regarding ‘form’ (shape/structure) and ‘genre’ (type), I have sought to rename this step “Decipher the literary genre (*Gattung*).” In doing so particularly with regards to this article, Boda’s two-tier taxonomy (i.e., Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers and Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers) will move to another level. In seeking after a robust taxonomy of prosaic prayers of disorientation stages in the HB, however, it is not my intention to pursue an ideal genre/stage/subcategory, but rather a ‘diagnostic tool’ that will enable Bible students to correctly divide and analyze the Word of God through a careful distinction of the assortment and mixture of the prosaic prayers of disorientation in the HB. At the same time, by moving from the generic life situation of disorientation *prior to* deciphering the genre, rather than vice versa, it is hoped that Bible students will avoid further literary nomenclature squabbles over identifying the genre of the prayer as either prayers of lament, complaint, protest, petitions, or even prayer, etc. In other words, the names given to the variety of disorientation prayers in this article will simply be as follows: *Disorientation Stage 1 through 6 Prayers*.

14 Tucker prefers “Statement of the intent, purpose, or function of the text.” Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*, 11.

- Disorientation Stage 4 Prayers: DS4 Penitential
- Disorientation Stage 5 Prayers: DS5 Confidence
- Disorientation Stage 6 Prayers: DS6 Thanksgiving Praise¹⁵

Each of these stages or subcategories of prose prayers uttered to Yahweh within a generic life situation of disorientation will be developed below.

Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers: DS1 Lament

The first and the majority subcategory accommodated within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB is Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers: DS1 Lament. Strangely, however, the first recorded lament is heard *metaphorically* from a deceased person: “The voice of your brother’s [Abel] blood is crying out to Me [Yahweh] from the ground” (Gen 4:10). And as Sanballat and Geshem conspire to terrify Nehemiah and all those working to rebuild the city wall of Jerusalem, the final recorded lament comes from Nehemiah: “But now, *God*, strengthen my hands” (Neh 6:9).

Sandwiched in between are the laments of the patriarchs and matriarchs. Abraham prays to Yahweh for an heir amidst Sarah’s barrenness (Gen 15:2); Hagar intercedes for the life of her son Ishmael (Gen 21:16b); Ishmael cries out to God amidst malnutrition (Gen 21:17); Isaac intercedes on behalf of his barren wife Rebekah (Gen 25:21); Rebekah inquires of Yahweh concerning the conflict between her twin sons within her stomach (v. 22); Leah prays to God for another child (Gen 30:17); and Jacob entreats God for deliverance from his twin brother Esau (Gen 32:9–12).

Additionally, the children of Israel groan under the weight of their oppression (Exod 2:23–24; 3:7–9); Moses laments his inability to lead the children of Israel out of bondage under Pharaoh (Exod 3:11; 4:1); and Joshua questions God concerning the serious blow he and the army of Israel experience at the hands of the men of Ai (Josh 7:7–10). And during the days of the judges, not only do the children of Israel repeatedly cry out to God for deliverance (Judg 10:10, 15), but even one of the judges, Gideon, adjures the angel of Yahweh to determine whether or not Yahweh is really with his people (Judg 6:13).

Similarly, the prophets pour out their laments to Yahweh. Samuel cries out to Yahweh for the people of Israel as the elders demand a king like that of the

15 Rather than by the presence of the precise words in the text, such as lament, imprecation, vow, etc., the nomenclature of each of these subcategories of prose prayers of disorientation in the HB (e.g., DS1 Lament, DS2 Imprecation, DS3 Vow, etc.) arises from their intrinsic characteristics (e.g., DS3 Vow prayers include the words “If . . . then . . .”). Also, as noted earlier, in his two-tier taxonomy, Boda divides prayers uttered amidst disorientation into Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers (lament) and Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers (confidence/penitence-vow). But for the purpose of this article, Boda’s Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers are recategorized as follows: Vow prayers are recategorized as *Disorientation Stage 3 Prayers: DS3 Vow*, penitential prayers are recategorized as *Disorientation Stage 4 Prayers: DS4 Penitential*, and confidence prayers are recategorized as *Disorientation Stage 5 Prayers: DS5 Confidence*. For additional details, see below.

surrounding nations (1 Sam 8:6); Elijah intercedes for the life of the deceased son of the widow at Zarephath to be restored to him (1 Kgs 17:21); Elisha intercedes for the life of the deceased son of the Shunammite woman to be restored to him (2 Kgs 4:33); Isaiah mediates on behalf of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:11); Ezra seeks God for both his personal protection as well as for all those returning to Jerusalem (Ezra 8:21, 23); and Nehemiah prays to God for help as he stands in front of King Artaxerxes requesting his favor to return and rebuild the city of Jerusalem (Neh 2:4).

Furthermore, the kings also cry to Yahweh for help. Saul inquires of God concerning his battle against the Philistines (1 Sam 28:6); David inquires of God concerning the life of the child to be born through his clandestine intercourse with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam 12:16); Hezekiah petitions God for healing from his illness (2 Kgs 20:3); through the prophetess Huldah, Josiah inquires of God for himself, the people, and all Judah concerning the words of the book of the law (2 Kgs 22:13–14); and Manasseh entreats God while in captivity (2 Chr 33:12).

Here, only a sample of the plethora of the lament prayers, both individual and communal, have been furnished. Claus Westermann points out that, “The texts in the O.T. show that throughout its history (that is, both in the Psalms and its earlier and later development) lamentation is a phenomenon characterized by three dominant elements: the one who laments, God, and the others, i.e., that circle of people among whom or against whom the one who laments stands with a complaint.”¹⁶ In his description of lament prayers, Allen P. Ross proffers that

Laments are cries to God in times of need, whether sickness, affliction, slander, war, or some other crisis. In ancient Israel, the worshiper could cry out to God anytime, anywhere; but if possible, he would normally go to the sanctuary to offer the petition, and in many cases the officiating priest might offer the prayer on his behalf. Laments form the starting point of the prayer and praise cycle.¹⁷

Accordingly, prayers begin with lament and end with thanksgiving praise, though not always *after* or outside a crisis situation, but even *amidst* a life setting of disorientation, as will be demonstrated later.

Although not the norm, there are times when the brunt of the anguish of the lament prayer is directed towards *Yahweh*. As June F. Dickie remarks, “The essence of lament is the relationship with God, the lamenter’s refusal to give up the relationship, even as he/she grapples with God about *God’s part* in the

16 Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 53–54, 66–69, 169.

17 Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 1:111.

difficulty being experienced.”¹⁸ But even when God himself is responsible for the problem at hand, there is still no one else that the supplicant would rather turn to for deliverance than the covenant-keeping God of Israel whose name is Yahweh.¹⁹ And even “When Yahweh is not to be blamed, he is nonetheless regarded as the only one who can intervene in a decisive and helpful way.”²⁰

DS1 lament prayers can therefore be described as those prayers that arise out of a situation of disorientation,²¹ the anguished plea or passionate cry for help of the supplicant indicative of the fact that the supplicant is helpless, in grief and despair, and thus in desperate need of Yahweh’s salvific intervention.²² Even on occasion when Yahweh appears to be the enemy, Yahweh is nonetheless the only deliverer whom the supplicant clings mightily to. While it is not atypical for DS1 lament prayers to ask the stinging protest question of “Why?”, when words are difficult to come by, *groans*,²³ which are deep, inarticulate, and mournful sounds, are evoked from the heart of the supplicant, consequently activating Yahweh’s compassionate response in effecting his salvific rescue mission in favor of the helpless supplicant. At the same time, it should be noted that even beyond Yahweh’s salvific intervention on behalf of the supplicant, or even the “recovery of communion with God,”²⁴ is that of the ultimate goal of lament prayers, which is nothing short of thanksgiving praise prayers to Yahweh, the God who saves.²⁵ It

18 June F. Dickie, “Practising Healthy Theology in the Local Church: Lamenting with Those in Pain and Restoring Hope,” *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 7.1 (2021) np. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17570/stj.2021.v7n1.a3>; emphasis mine. See for example, Exod 5:22–23; cf. 32:11–13; Num 11:11–15, 21–22; 16:22; Josh 7:7–9; Judg 6:13.

19 See also Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms*, 27.

20 Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 89.

21 Balentine states that, “lament has its origin in the existential experience of suffering.” Samuel E. Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: The Drama of Divine-Human Dialogue*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 168.

22 See also my “Recovering the Language of Lament for the Western Evangelical Church: A Survey of the Psalms of Lament and their Appropriation within Pastoral Theology,” *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 16 (2014–2015): 102–103, 120.

23 See also Exod 6:5; Judg 2:18; cf. Job 3:24; 23:3; 24:12; Pss 12:5; 22:1; 38:8; 79:11; 102:5, 20; Acts 7:34; Rom 8:22–23, 26; 2 Cor 5:2, 4.

24 William M. Soll, “The Israelite Lament: Faith Seeking Understanding,” *QR* 8 (1988): 79. This of course assumes that there is a disruption in the divine-human dialogue of which Ellington observes, “Biblical lament at its core is about the threat of the breakdown of relationship between the one praying and his or her covenant partner.” Scott A. Ellington, *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 98 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), 10.

25 See also Craig C. Broyles, “Lament, Psalms of,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, eds. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 396; and my “Recovering the Language of Lament for the Western Evangelical Church,” 120. See below for a more detailed discussion of thanksgiving praise prayers to Yahweh albeit amidst a generic life setting of disorientation rather than orientation or new orientation. For examples of thanksgiving praise prayers amidst a generic life setting of new orientation, see Gen 29:35; 2 Chr 5:13; 29:30; Ezra 3:10–11; Neh 12:27–43. For examples of thanksgiving praise prayers uttered amidst a generic life setting of orientation, see 1 Chr 16:4; 23:5; 29:10–20; 2 Chr 7:3, 6; 23:12.

thus seems reasonable to aver that thanksgiving praise prayers ring hollow where DS1 lament prayers to Yahweh are not first articulated.

Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers: DS2 Imprecation

The second subcategory accommodated within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB is Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers: DS2 Imprecation. As the children of Israel proceed from the mountain of Yahweh to a resting place of Yahweh's choosing, Moses adjures Yahweh to "Rise up, LORD! And may Your enemies be scattered, and those who hate You flee from Your presence" (Num 10:35). Then, in the context of a wrangle between him and Dathan and Abiram (the sons of Eliab), an exasperated Moses petitions God to "Pay no attention to their offering!" (Num 16:15a).

Subsequent to his capture at the hands of the Philistines, Samson approaches Yahweh with this imprecation: "Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes" (Judg 16:28).

In 2 Sam 3:28–29, David brings the following imprecation to Yahweh: "I and my kingdom are innocent before the LORD forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner. May it turn upon the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and may there not be eliminated from the house of Joab someone who suffers a discharge, or has leprosy, or holds the spindle, or falls by the sword, or lacks bread." Additionally, in 2 Sam 3:39, David petitions Yahweh, "May the LORD repay the evil-doer in proportion to his evil." Then upon learning of Ahithophel's machination with Absalom to usurp his throne in Jerusalem (see vv. 12, 31a), David implores Yahweh, "LORD, please make the advice of Ahithophel foolish" (2 Sam 15:31b).

As the Aramean army plots to capture him, the prophet Elisha importunes Yahweh, "Please strike this people with blindness" (2 Kgs 6:18). When the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir attempt an incursion on the southern kingdom of Judah, King Jehoshaphat enters the house of Yahweh, and as he stands in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, he prays:

LORD, God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You. Did You not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land from Your people Israel, and give it to the descendants of Your friend Abraham forever? They have lived in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name, saying, 'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, *or* judgment, or plague, or famine, we will stand before this house and before You (for Your name is in this house) and cry out to You in our distress, and You will

hear and save *us*’. Now behold, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, whom You did not allow Israel to invade when they came out of the land of Egypt (for they turned aside from them and did not destroy them), see *how* they are rewarding us by coming to drive us out from Your possession which You have given us as an inheritance. *Our God, will You not judge them?* For we are powerless before this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You.’ (2 Chr 20:5–12; emphasis mine)

Then as Sanballat and Tobiah stir up trouble and mock the Jews engaged in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, Nehemiah entreats Yahweh, “Hear, O our God, how we are *an object of contempt*. Return their taunting on their own heads, and turn them into plunder in a land of captivity. Do not forgive their guilt and do not let their sin be wiped out before You, for they have demoralized the builders” (Neh 4:4–5).²⁶ Two chapters later, Nehemiah prays, “Remember, my God, Tobiah and Sanballat in accordance with these works of theirs, and also Noadiah the prophetess and the rest of the prophets who were *trying* to frighten me” (Neh 6:14).²⁷ Finally, Nehemiah beseeches Yahweh against some of the Jews guilty of engaging in intermarriage, “Remember them, my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites” (Neh 13:29; Lev 11:44–45). While Nehemiah’s cries for divine remembrance in the latter two prayers do not explicitly state a curse against his opponents, the tone or mood appears to be one of divine judgment. The fact that he also chases one of his own Jewish counterparts away from him (Neh 13:28) gives the impression of something unpleasant in Nehemiah’s supplication for Yahweh to remember those who have defiled the priesthood.²⁸

From the examples furnished above, it is noted that the supplicant’s imprecation can be directed against one internally (Num 16:15; Neh 13:29), or externally related to the covenant community of Yahweh (2 Kgs 6:18; Neh 4:4–5; 6:14). By submitting their imprecation to Yahweh, the supplicants—Moses, Samson, David,

26 Note the contrast in Neh 13:14 where the prophet asks Yahweh not to blot out his loyal deeds performed for the house of God and its services.

27 Whenever Nehemiah petitions Yahweh to remember him, it is always for his good (Neh 13:14, 22, 31). Contrast this with Nehemiah’s adjuration of Yahweh to remember his opponents such as Sanballat, Tobiah, and Noadiah, and even those who defiled the priesthood, it is (6:14; 13:29).

28 Nehemiah’s cry for divine remembrance with an implicit cry for divine imprecation in Neh 6:14, appears to bear a modicum of semblance to that of Ps 137, wherein the psalmist cries out to God: “Remember, LORD, against the sons of Edom” (v. 7; cf. 83:6), even while sitting by the rivers of Babylon, weeping, and remembering Zion (v. 1). See also McCann’s comments on Ps 137 and the importance of remembrance/memory by the psalmist’s in relation to Zion/Jerusalem. McCann further notes that while not explicit, “this submission of anger to God obviates the need for actual revenge on the enemy.” J. Clinton McCann, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 118–19.

Elisha, Jehoshaphat, and Nehemiah—thus avert the fatal error of vengeance (Lev 19:18), the sole prerogative of Yahweh the just Judge of all the earth (Deut 32:35; Ps 94:1; Isa 35:4; Nah 1:2; cf. Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30). Imprecatory prayers, however, are not simply complaints about the experiences of injustice at the hands of the unrighteous, but rather complaints submitted to Yahweh for the express purpose of “*moving God to be just*. These are prayers offered in the certain conviction that God must stay in the world as a God of justice,”²⁹ as Samuel E. Balentine avers.

What is therefore being emphasised here is that imprecatory prayers calling for the administration of Yahweh’s justice are indeed prayed within a prosaic context of disorientation.³⁰ Patrick D. Miller maintains that, “The corollary of blessing is curse. . . . While such curse prayers, or imprecation, as they are sometimes called, do not seem to be as numerous as the blessings, they are present, most noticeably within the Psalms.”³¹ Miller further affirms that, “In form they are similar to the blessings. That is, the curses are a prayer-wish, usually jussive in form, ‘May the Lord do’ The content, however, is a prayer for disaster of some sort to fall upon another individual or group. . . . As with the blessings, the Lord is not always mentioned in the curse, but the divine agency is to be assumed and frequently made explicit.”³² By inference, DS2 imprecatory prayers acknowledge before Yahweh that the predicament at hand from which the supplicant seeks divine deliverance has been instigated by the supplicant’s opponent(s) who is believed to be deserving of divine punishment. From the aforementioned data, it is further observed that DS2 imprecatory prayers even periodically venture boldly to explicate the manner in which Yahweh should administer his judgment or curse upon the supplicant’s opponent(s).

This is not to say that Yahweh responds in conformity with the supplicant’s entreaty, but it nevertheless allows for Yahweh’s human covenant and righteous prayer partners to adjure him with such detailed intensity without ever being censured by him. In this way, Yahweh implicitly sanctions their supplications for divine imprecation to be inflicted upon their enemy, be it that of a person who is internal or external to the covenant community. In DS2 imprecatory prayers, with

29 Balentine, *Prayers in the Hebrew Bible*, 286; emphasis original. Alternatively stated, should Yahweh forget it, evil will have free rein to perpetuate its unimaginable and ineffable horrors. When Yahweh remembers it, however, evil is brought to justice by God the righteous Judge, thus allowing for the perpetuity of justice rather than evil on God’s good earth.

30 Prior to this article, neither Brueggemann nor Boda considered imprecation as a subcategory within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB.

31 Patrick D. Miller Jr., *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), 299–300. While the majority of imprecatory invocations are positioned within the Psalter (e.g., Pss 5, 6, 11, 12, 35, 40, 52, 54, 56, 58, 69, 79, 83, 89, 109, 137, 139, and 143), a minimal amount is observed within the prophetic corpus (e.g., Hos 10:14–15; Mic 7:16–17; Jer 8:21–22).

32 Miller, *They Cried to the Lord*, 300.

a verdict of guilty having been reached by the righteous supplicant, albeit in light of Yahweh's righteous law, justice must be meted out in vengeance against the one(s) who has acted unjustly toward Yahweh's righteous servant, and that by the righteous Judge of all the earth. For Yahweh's righteous supplicant then, the underlying supposition is thus: "Since God is a righteous God, God will protect those who seek to live in a righteous way and punish the evildoers."³³ Otherwise stated, "The appeal is not to the enemy that the enemy should desist, for that is a hopeless plea. The appeal is that Yahweh should intervene to right the situation and punish the destabiliser."³⁴

DS2 imprecatory prayers can therefore be described as those prayers that arise out of a situation of disorientation whose contents are that of either an implicit or explicit cry for divine judgment or curse to be administered to one's opponent(s). In DS2 imprecatory prayers, the source of the emergency at hand is the opponent(s) whose identity can be either one that is internal or external to the covenant community of Yahweh. DS2 imprecatory prayers call on Yahweh to right the wrong that has been committed, and in his perfect justice, execute his righteous judgment upon the unscrupulous offender(s), with the objective of reversing instability, and resuming peaceful (*shalom*) relations within a human-to-human dynamic.

Disorientation Stage 3 Prayers: DS3 Vow

The third subcategory accommodated within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB is Disorientation Stage 3 Prayers: DS3 Vow. In Num 21:2, as the Canaanites take up arms against them, Israel entreats Yahweh, "If You will indeed hand over this people to me, then I will utterly destroy their cities." Then in Judg 11:30–31, as the sons of Ammon wage war against the children of Israel, Jephthah implores Yahweh, "If You will indeed hand over to me the sons of Ammon, then whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return safely from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering." Regrettably, the text says that "At the end of two months she [Jephthah's daughter] returned to her father, who did to her what he had vowed" (11:39a). And struggling with infertility, Hannah beseeches Yahweh, "LORD of armies, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your bond-servant and remember me, and not forget Your bond-servant, but will give Your bond-servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head"

33 José E. A. Chiu, *The Psalms: An Introduction* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2014), 51.

34 Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 88.

(1 Sam 1:10–11). Finally, Absalom *apparently* prays to Yahweh, “If the LORD will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD” (2 Sam 15:7–8).³⁵

In the four examples listed above, it is observed that the *vow* subcategory stands *alone*; it neither accompanies prayers of penitence, nor prayers of confidence, as suggested by Boda.³⁶ As a matter of fact, the presence of the word “if” within vow prayers appear to indicate an *absence*, rather than a presence of confidence. There is thus no assurance on the part of the supplicant that Yahweh will answer favorably. Nevertheless, the supplicant brings their vow before Yahweh in hopes that Yahweh’s response will be in their favor.

What is also worth mentioning here is that while Westermann refers to the vow as “a vow of praise,”³⁷ as evidenced in our four examples, there is *no* vow of praise to Yahweh inherently connected to the vow prayer. In each of these situations, thanksgiving praise does not accompany the vow, but rather occurs sometime *after* Yahweh responds favorably (e.g., Hannah’s praise comes at least nine months later; see 1 Sam 2:1–10).

DS3 vow prayers can thus be described as those prayers that arise from within a context of disorientation, wherein the supplicant presents a conditional petition to Yahweh (If . . .), which is accompanied by a promise to do something in favor of Yahweh which the supplicant deems approving to Yahweh should Yahweh deliver the supplicant (Then . . .). It is this *promise* that thus appears to function as the motivating factor for the divine favorable answer. In response to obtaining Yahweh’s deliverance, the supplicant then proceeds to honor their part of the vow to Yahweh. Punctuated here, however, is the fact that the supplicant’s vow prayers are made amidst a life context of disorientation, yet without any connection to penitence or confidence or even thanksgiving praise.

Disorientation Stage 4 Prayers: DS4 Penitential

The fourth subcategory accommodated within the prose prayers of disorientation is Disorientation Stage 4 Prayers: DS4 Penitential. In Exod 32:31–32, Moses petitions Yahweh, “Oh, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves! But now, if You will forgive their sin, *very well*; but if not, please wipe me out from Your book which You have written.” Nehemiah 9:5–38 appears to be the final penitential prose prayer of disorientation in the HB. Here, the following penitent words shine through:

35 The word *apparently* is employed here because it is uncertain whether Absalom actually made this vow to Yahweh. In light of the succeeding verses, it would appear that he told his father David about this supposed vow with the intention of gaining his father’s approval so that he could go to Hebron and conspire with his followers *against* his father for the purpose of usurping David’s throne. Nevertheless, the vow is included here as it is a vow found within a prosaic context of disorientation.

36 Boda, “Transition,” 187–90; Boda, “Prayer,” 806–11; Boda, “Varied,” 61–82.

37 Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 77.

Now then, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps *His* covenant and faithfulness, do not let the hardship seem insignificant before You, which has happened to us, our kings, our leaders, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and to all Your people, from the day of the kings of Assyria to this day. However, You are righteous in everything that has happened to us; for You have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly (Neh 9:32–33).

Sandwiched between these two Scripture references, one finds the prophet Moses constantly mediating on behalf of the children of Israel who make it a habit of offending Yahweh, and thus kindling his anger. So, for example, when the children of Israel grumble against Moses and Aaron, even desiring to return to Egypt, thus igniting Yahweh's anger, Moses steps in and importunes Yahweh for their forgiveness (Num 14:13–19). And when Yahweh directs fiery serpents to infuse their venom into their bodies, killing some of them, Moses intervenes as he acknowledges their sin and implores Yahweh to pardon them (Num 21:7).

In Num 22:34, Balaam confesses his sin to the angel of Yahweh, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the way against me." According to Judg 10:10, the sons of Israel cry out to Yahweh, "We have sinned against You, for indeed, we have abandoned our God and served the Baals." Upon realizing their sin in demanding a king like that of the nations around them, Samuel and all Israel pray to Yahweh, "We have sinned against the LORD" (1 Sam 7:6). Approaching the prophet Samuel after failing to utterly destroy everything belonging to the Amalekites, Saul confesses, "I have sinned, for I have violated the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice. Now then, please pardon my sin and return with me, so that I may worship the LORD" (1 Sam 15:24–25; cf. v. 30). Rebuking him for his adultery with Bathsheba, and the murder of Uriah, David confesses his sin to the prophet Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Sam 12:13). David also confesses his sin to Yahweh for taking the census of Israel and Judah, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, LORD, please overlook the guilt of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly" (2 Sam 24:10; cf. vv. 14, 17; see also 1 Chr 21:8). Recognizing the danger of partaking in the Passover meal without being purified, Hezekiah entreats Yahweh in support of the unholy multitude of people, "May the good LORD pardon everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though not according to the purification *rules* of the sanctuary" (2 Chr 30:18–19). And in Ezra 9:1–10:1 the penultimate penitential prayer is heard from Ezra the priest and scribe as he confesses to Yahweh that His people, Israel, have engaged in unlawful intermarriage with the peoples of the land—the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites.

Ezra 9:15 reads, “LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as *it is* this day; behold, we are before You in our guilt, for no one can stand before You because of this.”

From the few examples submitted here, DS4 penitential prayers embrace a confession of sin and a plea for forgiveness, either directly from Yahweh, or through the mediation of one of Yahweh’s prophets. Whereas in most disorientation prayers “blame for a lamentable condition is attached to enemies or to sickness” (e.g., DS1, DS2, DS3), Craig C. Broyles maintains that penitential prayers tend to be “introspective before God.”³⁸ As such, the awareness of sin appears to be prompted either “by circumstances or the inner conscience instructed by God.”³⁹ Resting on the foundation of Yahweh’s grace, compassion, slow anger, abundant faithfulness, and forgiving nature (see Exod 34:6–7), however, the penitent pray-er appeals to Yahweh for forgiveness, and with it, the restoration of the ruptured relationship. It is worth underscoring here that the basis for the forgiveness of sin and simultaneous restoration of the divine-human relationship is not primarily contingent upon the repentance of the penitent pray-er,⁴⁰ but rather on account of *Yahweh’s* forgiving character. By virtue of his intrinsic character to pardon the authentically penitent pray-er, Yahweh does not despise a heart that comes broken and contrite before him (see Pss 34:18; 51:17; Isa 66:2).

DS4 penitential prayers can thus be described as those prayers that arise amidst a situation of disorientation wherein the pray-er, through introspection, comes to the realization that they have sinned against Yahweh, which has resulted in a rupture within the divine-human relationship (cf. Isa 59:2). Accordingly, for restoration to occur, the penitent pray-er sincerely repents of their sin(s) and/or that of the covenant community, and receives Yahweh’s merciful forgiveness, which is entirely predicated upon Yahweh, whose inherent nature it is to forgive all who are humble and contrite of spirit, and who tremble at his word.

Disorientation Stage 5 Prayers: DS5 Confidence

The fifth subcategory accommodated within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB is Disorientation Stage 5 Prayers: DS5 Confidence. In Gen 20:17, Abraham intercedes for Yahweh’s healing upon Abimelech, and especially his wife and maids whose wombs Yahweh has closed in view of the fact that Abimelech takes Sarah as his wife, even while she remains Abraham’s wife, and not his sister. In Exod 8:12, Moses cries to Yahweh concerning the removal of the frogs. Then

38 Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 226.

39 Broyles, *Psalms*, 226.

40 See also Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 15–16 (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 219.

in Exod 9:30, Moses supplicates Yahweh concerning the removal of the thunder and hail.

Confidence is the category assigned to each of these three cries to Yahweh in view of the fact that in each case, the supplicant is certain or confident that Yahweh will hear and answer favorably (see Gen 20:7; Exod 8:10–11; 9:29). Confidence prayers, specifies Mark D. Futato, “lack the anguish and the structural elements that characterize the laments.”⁴¹ They express a sense of confidence in “God’s power to save,”⁴² even while Yahweh’s salvation is yet to be realized. This confidence is possible, however, not only because the supplicant firmly believes that Yahweh is ever-present to hear and to help (cf. Ps 23:4), but also because Yahweh’s ability to help the supplicant has already (in)directly been hinted at or disclosed *even prior to* the supplicant’s petition.

Thus, in the case of Abimelech acquiring Sarah the wife of Abraham as his wife or concubine, Yahweh appears to Abimelech in a dream, and says to him, “Now then, *return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live*. But if you do not return her, know that you will certainly die, you and all who are yours” (Gen 20:7; emphasis mine). Then in v. 17 we read, “And Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his female slaves, so that they gave birth *to children*.”

In Moses’ first example, Pharaoh implores Moses to plead with Yahweh to remove the frogs (Exod 8:8). Moses then replies, “The honor is yours to tell me: when shall I plead for you and your servants and your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, *that they be left only in the Nile*” (Exod 8:9)? After Pharaoh replies “Tomorrow,” Moses then says to him, “*May it be according to your word, so that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God. The frogs will depart from you and your houses, and from your servants and your people; they will be left only in the Nile*” (v. 10; emphasis mine). At this, Moses petitions Yahweh concerning the frogs, and Yahweh does exactly according to the word of Moses: the frogs die outside of the houses, the courtyards, and the fields (vv. 12–13). Then in Moses’ second example, Pharaoh implores Moses and Aaron to plead with Yahweh to remove the thunder and hail (9:28). Moses subsequently responds, “As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; *the thunder will cease and there will no longer be hail*, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD’s” (v. 29; emphasis mine). Four verses later, we read, “So Moses left the city from *his meeting* with Pharaoh, and spread out

41 Mark D. Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*, Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 160.

42 Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms*, 161.

his hands to the LORD; and the thunder and the hail stopped, and rain no longer poured on the earth” (v. 33).⁴³

DS5 confidence prayers can therefore be described as those prayers that arise out of a context of disorientation, the pray-er confident of Yahweh’s ever-abiding and comforting presence as well as his forthcoming favorable answer. This favorable answer, however, comes as a revelation to the supplicant, disclosed (in)directly by Yahweh even prior to the supplicant’s petition. Owing to this prior knowledge, DS5 confidence prayers therefore lack the discomfort and uncertainty of lament, imprecation, penitence, or even a vow, yet they occur in the life context of disorientation. However, the confidence of a favorable answer is awakened for the very reason that there is a guaranteed assurance that Yahweh’s mighty deliverance will prevail.

Disorientation Stage 6 Prayers: DS6 Thanksgiving Praise

The final subcategory accommodated within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB is Disorientation Stage 6 Prayers: DS6 Thanksgiving Praise. In 2 Chr 20, the sons of Moab, the sons of Ammon, and some of the Meunites band together to make war against Jehoshaphat king of Judah. Following his DS2 imprecatory prayer to Yahweh (vv. 6–12), and Jahaziel’s priestly word of victory, we read in vv. 18–19, “Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. The Levites, from the sons of the Kohathites and from the sons of the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel, with a loud voice.” Furthermore, on the day of the battle, we read in vv. 21–22 that,

When he [Jehoshaphat] had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the LORD and those who praised *Him* in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, ‘Give thanks to the LORD, for His faithfulness is everlasting’. When they began singing and praising, the LORD set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come up against Judah; so they were struck down.

Accordingly, on both days, even within the life context of disorientation (since the battle is yet to be fought and the victory won), there is a joyful outburst of thanksgiving praise prayers to Yahweh.

Jacob M. Myers suggests, “Apparently the writer viewed the whole expedition as a holy war, since the cultic personnel accompanied the army and played a

43 Perhaps, in consideration of his speech impediment (Exod 4:10), this was Moses’ sign language to Yahweh.

major role in the campaign.”⁴⁴ At the same time, John A. Thompson avers, “Whereas in most battles a battle cry is heard, here it is replaced by singing and praise.”⁴⁵ In contradistinction to Thompson, however, Louis C. Jonker posits “The Chronicler conducts this battle with the liturgy of a holy war: the vanguard is to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness. *Their battle cry is*, Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever (20:21).”⁴⁶ In this regard, Raymond B. Dillard’s remark seems apt: “One must not forget the role of music in warfare. . . . Particularly within Israel’s tradition of holy war, music has been assigned an important function (13:11–12; Josh 6:4–20; Judg 7:18–20; Job 39:24–25); music accompanies the appearance of the divine warrior to execute judgment.”⁴⁷ And this is precisely what is in view in 2 Chr 20:21–22.

As noted earlier, Brueggemann maintains that prayers of thanksgiving praise surface only within a context of new orientation, on the other side of disorientation. For him, the occasion for such thanksgiving praise prayer is that “the speaker has complained to God and God has acted in response to the lament. The result of God’s intervention is that the old issue has been overcome. The speech concerns a rescue, intervention, or inversion of a quite concrete situation of distress which is still fresh in the mind of the speaker.”⁴⁸ On a similar note, Boda contends, “The condition of disorientation does not endure forever, and when it is resolved and the supplicant experiences salvation, a new form of prayer is employed: the prayer of reorientation—that is, the prayer thanking God for salvation from distress.”⁴⁹

Far from being the case, however, it is observed that the context of the situation at hand in 2 Chr 20:21–22a is *not* new/reorientation but rather *disorientation*, for God is *yet* to act favorably on behalf of the supplicant(s) effecting divine

44 Jacob M. Myers, *II Chronicles: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 13 (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 116.

45 John A. Thompson, *I, 2 Chronicles: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC 9 (Nashville: B&H, 1994), 295.

46 Louis C. Jonker, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 231; emphasis mine. Here it is also worth mentioning the words of Holladay who observes that, “the same word that has been translated ‘beauty’ or ‘array’ (Hebrew *hadrat*) turns up in a Ugaritic text in parallelism with the word meaning ‘dream’ or ‘vision’ That is to say, the word in Ugaritic does not mean ‘beauty’ or ‘ornament’ but ‘(splendor of) divine visitation’ or ‘revelation’. It refers to a theophany, an appearance of the god. . . . The word does not refer to the vestments of the worshipers but to the glory of God.” William L. Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 20. On this note, it seems more plausible to say that the Levitical musicians and singers in 2 Chr 20:21 did not necessarily (or only) worship Yahweh in their holy attire, but rather (or also) amidst Yahweh’s holy visitation or revelation.

47 Raymond B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, WBC 15 (Dallas: Word, 1987), 158.

48 Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 126. See also Pemberton who argues that “Laments [lead] to thanksgiving, to a New Orientation.” Glen Pemberton, *After Lament: Psalms for Learning to Trust Again* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2014), 89.

49 Boda, “Prayer,” 807.

victory.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, the supplicant, explodes in doxological thanksgiving praise to Yahweh. Which is to say that the situation is still one of distress wherein Yahweh's salvific intervention is yet forthcoming. Contrary to Brueggemann, it is not on the other side of, but rather *inside* of disorientation that such jubilant thanksgiving praise surges. Even if there is an oracle of salvation from, for example, a priestly voice such as Jahaziel (vv. 14–17)⁵¹ that foreshadows divine deliverance, Yahweh has not yet fully and favorably answered the supplicant(s) in DS6 thanksgiving praise prayers; the prayer is yet to be answered completely on the battlefield when Yahweh effects victory on behalf of His covenant supplicant(s) for the sake of His great Name. Through a priestly voice, Yahweh evidently commits Himself to acting favorably on behalf of the supplicant(s) who eagerly anticipate Yahweh making good on His promise of victory on their behalf. Yahweh thus becomes the object of the supplicant(s) vivacious thanksgiving praise even amidst disorientation because the supplicant(s) is fully assured that Yahweh will be faithful to His promise (see also Josh 21:45; 23:14; Jer 1:12).

DS6 thanksgiving praise prayers can thus be described as those prayers that arise out of a situation of disorientation, the content of which is thanksgiving praise, even in anticipation of the actualization of Yahweh's deliverance in favor of His covenant people. Located not within a context of new/reorientation, as is typically the case, but rather amidst a context of disorientation, DS6 thanksgiving praise prayers might be accompanied by a priestly word of divine deliverance, yet it nevertheless awaits a visibly manifested favorable answer from Yahweh. Owing therefore to a promise of imminent salvation through Yahweh's priestly messenger (which might then contribute to a positive outlook/perspective on life, as noted by Boda),⁵² DS6 thanksgiving praise prayers go a step further than DS5 vow prayers, and thus lift an extolling voice of thanksgiving praise to Yahweh, even in the intermission of an oracle of salvation and its subsequent fulfillment, which is still nonetheless, a context of disorientation.

50 Interestingly, prior to this article, thanksgiving praise was not afforded accommodation within the prose prayers of disorientation in the HB.

51 See also 1 Sam 1:17 where Eli offers a priestly word of salvation to Hannah, which in effect assures Hannah that God has heard her vow and has already begun the process of answering her favorably, that is, he will make good on his promise to bless her with the child of her vowing (v. 11). However, the reason that Eli's priestly word of salvation from infertility to Hannah is excluded in this section of DS6 Thanksgiving Praise is because Hannah's thanksgiving praise to Yahweh God only erupts *after* the boy Samuel has been weaned and presented to God in the house of Yahweh at Shiloh (see 1 Sam 2:1–10). Which is to say that since Hannah's thanksgiving praise to God did not surge in the very context of her still *not* being with child while eagerly anticipating Yahweh's faithfulness to his promise to her on account of Eli's priestly word of salvation from infecundity, it cannot be considered as DS6 Thanksgiving Praise. Hannah's praise thus occurs in a situation of new orientation. Nevertheless, 1 Sam 1:17 does offer an example of a priestly word of salvation through the mouth of God's servant, Eli.

52 See n. 4 above.

Conclusion

By way of recapitulation, a lacuna in prose prayers of disorientation in the HB (i.e., within the borders of Genesis and Esther) is addressed herein. Whereas in previous scholarship on such prayers only two stages were said to be extant, this section demonstrates the possibility of six stages altogether, namely:

- Disorientation Stage 1 Prayers: DS1 Lament
- Disorientation Stage 2 Prayers: DS2 Imprecation
- Disorientation Stage 3 Prayers: DS3 Vow
- Disorientation Stage 4 Prayers: DS4 Penitential
- Disorientation Stage 5 Prayers: DS5 Confidence
- Disorientation Stage 6 Prayers: DS6 Thanksgiving Praise

These six stages or subcategories of disorientation prayers range from *lament* (consisting of either words, or at times, groans) to *thanksgiving praise*. Whereas *thanksgiving praise* was said to be located *only* within a context of new/reorientation, that is, *after* God's intervention and deliverance, here it is observed *also* within a context of disorientation. Interestingly, *imprecation* was never considered before as a stage of disorientation prayers. At the same time, whereas the *vow* was associated with *penitence* and even *confidence*, here, no such relation exists.

DS1	DS2	DS3	DS4	DS5	DS6
Negative / Sorrowful					Positive / Joyful

Considered along a continuum, prose prayers of disorientation move from a negative language (sorrowful) to a positive language (joyful). This movement appears to be contingent upon a priestly or prophetic word of salvation from Yahweh when it comes to disorientation language located to the right of the continuum. It is worth mentioning here, however, that this continuum is *not* constructed to prove that the order of the prayers of disorientation *always* moves from DS1 lament prayer to DS6 thanksgiving praise prayer. At the same time, the order of the prayers of disorientation from DS1 lament prayer to DS6 thanksgiving praise prayer in no way accentuates any on the continuum as being less or more important. Rather, this continuum simply serves to demonstrate that there are at the very least *six* stages or subcategories of prayers of disorientation in lieu of two as was previously proposed. Even further to this, room is left for the likelihood of any of these six stages or subcategories of prayers of disorientation to occur *coevally*. Any attempt therefore to constrict these six stages or subcategories of prayers of disorientation into a *rigid* movement from DS1 lament prayer to DS6 thanksgiving praise prayer without leaving room for other movements, should therefore be avoided.