

CHAPTER 4

PSALM 83

4.1 Introduction

The third promising candidate for the study of imprecatory psalms is Psalm 83. In this psalm, the nation of Israel is in a time of distress. A coalition of nations is threatening to invade their land and destroy them. Therefore, the psalmist prays on behalf of Israel for deliverance from their enemies. He asks God to save them from their enemies. The psalm begins with a petition for help (verse 2), then describes the devastating characteristics of the enemies (verses 3-6) and lists the ten nations which plotted to obliterate Israel (verses 7-9). The psalm ends with a prayer asking God to defeat the nations (verses 10-18) and to demonstrate his universal sovereignty (verse 19).

This chapter is organized in the same way as the previous chapters (2-3).

4.2 Text and Translation²¹

		שִׁיר מְזֻמֹּר לְאַסָּף:	1 ²²		A song. A psalm of Asaph.
2 ²³	A	אֱלֹהִים אַל-דְּמִילֶךְ	2	a	God, do not remain silent;
		אַל-תִּחַרֶשׁ		b	do not be quiet
		וְאַל-תִּשְׁקֹט אֵל:		c	and, God, do not be still!
II	B	כִּי-תִהְיֶה אוֹיְבֶיךָ יְהַמְיִין	3	a	For behold, your enemies are in uproar
		וּמְשִׁנְאֶיךָ נִשְׂאוּ רֹאשׁ:		b	and those who hate you have lifted their head.
		עַל-עַמֶּךָ יַעֲרִימוּ סֹד	4	a	They make shrewd plans against your people
		וַיִּתְעֲצוּ עַל-צְפוּנֶיךָ:		b	and conspire against your treasured ones.

²¹ This is my own translation. All quotations from Psalm 83 in this study are taken from this translation unless stated otherwise.

²² When citing the Psalms and other scriptural passages, the numbering and versification of the BHS text is used throughout the present study rather than the numbering and versification of the LXX, Vulgate, or modern translations.

²³ This subdivision of Psalm 83 into **stanzas** (Roman numerals) and **strophes** (uppercase letters) is discussed in 4.4.

		אָמְרוּ לָכֵן וְנִכְחָדֵם מִגּוֹי	5	a	They say, "Come and let us annihilate them as a nation
		וְלֹא־יִזְכָּר שְׁמֵיִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד:		b	and the name of Israel will not be remembered again."
		כִּי נֹעְצוּ לֵב יַחְדָּו	6	a	Indeed, they conspire together [with] one heart;
		עָלֶיךָ בְּרִית יִכְרְתוּ:		b	against you they make a covenant.
	C	אֹהֲלֵי אַדּוֹם וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֲלִים	7	a	The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites,
		מוֹאָב וְהַגְרִיטִים:		b	Moab and the Hagrites,
		גִּבְלֵי עַמּוֹן וְעַמְלֵק	8	a	Gebal and Ammon and Amelek,
		פְּלִשְׁתִּים עִם־יֹשְׁבֵי צוֹר:		b	Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre.
		גַּם־אַשּׁוּר גִּלְוָה עִמָּם	9	a	Even Assyria has joined with them.
		הֵיוּ זְרוּעַ לְבְנֵי־לוֹט סֵלָה		b	They have become an arm to the sons of Lot. Selah.
III	D	עֲשֵׂה־לָהֶם כְּמִדְיָן כְּסִיסְרָא כְּיָבִין	10	a	Do to them as with Midian – as with Sisera and Jabin -
		בְּנַחַל קִישׁוֹן:		b	at the river Kishon,
		נִשְׁמְדוּ בְּעֵין־הָדָר	11	a	who were destroyed at Endor,
		הָיוּ דָמָן לְאֲדָמָה:		b	who became dung for the ground.
		שִׁיתְמוּ נְדִיבֵמוֹ כְּעֹרֵב וְכִזָּאב	12	a	Make their chieftains like Oreb and Zeeb,
		וְכִזְבַּח וְכִצְלֻמְנָע כָּל־נְסִיכְמוֹ:		b	and all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,
		אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ נִרְשָׁה לָנוּ אֵת נְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים:	13	a	who said, "let us possess for ourselves the pastures of God."
	E	אֱלֹהֵי שִׁיתְמוּ כְּגִלְגָּל	14	a	My God, make them like the whirling dust,
		כְּקֶשֶׁת לְפְנֵי־רוּחַ:		b	as chaff before the wind,
		כְּאֵשׁ תִּבְעַר־יַעַר	15	a	as fire consumes the forest,
		וְכִלְהֶבֶת תִּלְהַט הָרִים:		b	and as a flame sets mountains ablaze!
		כֵּן תִּרְדָּפֵם בְּסַעֲרֶךָ	16	a	So may you pursue them with your tempest

		וּבְסוּפְתָד תִּבְהַלֵּם:		b	and terrify them with your storm.
		מִלֵּא פְנֵיהֶם קָלֹן	17	a	Fill their faces with dishonour,
		וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה:		b	that they may seek your name, YHWH.
		יִבְשׁוּ וַיִּבְהָלוּ עַד־עַד	18	a	Let them be put to shame and terrified forever
		וַיִּחְפְּרוּ וַיִּאֲבֹדוּ:		b	and let them be ashamed and perish;
		וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־אַתָּה שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה לְבַדָּךְ עֲלִיּוֹן עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:	19	a	let them know that You, whose name is YHWH, alone, are the Most High over all the earth.

3.3 Text Critical and Translation Notes

Verse 4b. צְפוּנֶיךָ – “your treasured ones”

The Targum of Psalms reads the Masoretic Text צְפוּנֶיךָ as “things hidden in your treasuries” (Stec, 2004:160). The LXX has ἁγίων σου (“your holy people or saints”). Jerome’s Vulgate and other Greek translations (e.g. Aquilla, Symmachus & Hieronymous) suggest that the emended צְפוּנֶיךָ (“your treasure”) (cf. Ezek 7:22) be read which parallels עַמֶּךָ (“your people”) at the beginning of the verse. Dahood (1968:274) follows this approach and translates צְפוּנֶיךָ as “your treasure.”. Dahood views צְפוּנֶיךָ as perhaps a reference to the temple. The NRSV translates צְפוּנֶיךָ as “those you protect.” The NIV and NJB translate צְפוּנֶיךָ as “those you cherish.” Kraus (1989:160) retains the Masoretic Text, but understands צְפוּנֶיךָ as “your protégés” – “those entrusted to your care.” Brown *et al* (1979:860) and Hill (1997b:840) argue that צְפוּנֶיךָ is a *qal* passive participle of the verb צָפַן (“to treasure”) so they translate צְפוּנֶיךָ as “your treasured ones, your saints.” This translation follows the approach of Brown *et al* and Hill, so it retains the Masoretic Text צְפוּנֶיךָ. A number of translations consulted in this study (e.g. NASB, RSV, ESV, JPS and KJV) follow this interpretation.

Verse 5a. אָמְרוּ - “they say”

This translation treats אָמְרוּ (“they say”) as an anacrusis outside the colons which follow (see Tate, 1990:343; Kraus, 1989:160). The ESV, NASB, NIV, and NJB have followed this approach, but not the TEV.

Verse 6a. לֵב יַחְדָּו - “with one heart”

The expression לֵב יַחְדָּו is very difficult to translate. BHS suggests that יַחְדָּו should be emended to יַחַד (“united” or “together”). The verb יַחַד appears in a number of passages and is without לֵב (“heart”, see Ps 71:10; Isa 45:21; Neh 6:7). Briggs and Briggs (1907:223) suggest a conflation of the two readings: נוֹעְצוּ יַחְדָּו (“they conspired together”) and נוֹעְצוּ לֵב אֶחָד (“they conspired with one heart”) which may be correct. Gunkel (1968:366) emends לֵב יַחְדָּו to read לֵב אֶחָד, “one heart.” This translation follows Gunkel’s emendation of the text in resolving the translation problem and therefore translates the expression לֵב יַחְדָּו as “one heart.” A number of translations consulted in this study (e.g. ASV, ESV, KJV, NASB, NJB and NKJV) follow this approach.

Verse 8a. גְּבַל וְעַמּוֹן - “Gebal and Ammon”

The Syriac interpreted the unvocalised Hebrew as גְּבַל עַמּוֹן (“border of Ammon”) instead of גְּבַל וְעַמּוֹן (“Gebal and Ammon”) in the Masoretic Text. Kissane (1954:63) follows the approach of the Syriac, arguing that Gebal was identified with a district in the region of Petra, not with the Gebal (Byblos) of Phoenicia. Briggs and Briggs (1907:217, 220) also eliminate the possibility of a place name by translating “lords of Ammon” emending the Masoretic Text וְעַמּוֹן גְּבַל to גְּבוּלֵי (“borders of”), which they suggest may be a garbled form of בְּעַלֵּי, “lords/masters of” (Briggs & Briggs, 1907:223). The present translation stays with the Masoretic Text by translating גְּבַל וְעַמּוֹן as “Gebal and Ammon.” Most of the translations consulted in this study (e.g. LXX, ASV, BBE, NAB, NJB, NIV, NASB, KJV, ESV, JPS, TEV, NKJV and RSV) follow this approach. As for the identity of גְּבַל, this is discussed in the intra-textual analysis.

Verse 12a. שִׁיתְמוּ – “make”

The construction שִׁיתְמוּ נְדִיבֵמוֹ (“make them, their princes”) seems redundant. Perhaps the verb should be reduced to the non-suffixed imperative as in the LXX. The LXX translates שִׁיתְמוּ as θου (“make”) which suggests that the LXX reads שִׁיתָה or שִׁית (“make”) instead of the Masoretic Text שִׁיתְמוּ (“make them”). If the Masoretic Text שִׁיתְמוּ is retained then the construction שִׁיתְמוּ נְדִיבֵמוֹ is probably emphatic. Delitzsch (1980b:410) says “that the heaped up suffixes *ēmo* (*êmo*) give to the imprecation a rhythm and sound as a rolling thunder.” The

present translation follows the approach of the LXX; it translates שִׁתְּמוּ as “make.” Most of the translations consulted in this study (e.g. ASV, BBE, NAB, NJB, NIV, NASB, KJV, ESV, JPS, TEV, NKJV and RSV) follow this approach.

Verse 14a. גִּלְגֵּל - “whirlwind dust”

There is some uncertainty amongst scholars over the precise meaning of גִּלְגֵּל. Some scholars (e.g. Anderson, 1972b:600; Tate, 1990:348) suggest that גִּלְגֵּל is derived from the root גָּלַל (“to roll”) and it can mean a “wheel” or “a rolling thing.” Others (e.g. Holladay, 1998:60; VanGemeren, 1991:541; Harman, 1995:287) suggest that גִּלְגֵּל alludes to the wheel-shaped calyx of the artichoke (*Gundelia Tournefortii*) which can be driven by the wind, or to the thistledown. The NIV and NET follow this interpretation. The NIV translates גִּלְגֵּל as “tumbleweed,” the NET has “dead thistles” and the NJB has “thistledown.” Brown *et al* (1979:165-166) suggest that גִּלְגֵּל refers to a whirl of dust. It is most plausible to assume that גִּלְגֵּל refers to rolling thistles and dry leaves, mixed with dust and driven by the wind (Tate, 1990:348). This translation translates גִּלְגֵּל as “whirlwind dust.”

Verse 17b. וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ שְׁמֶךָ - “that they may seek your name”

The expression וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ שְׁמֶךָ is problematic because of its seeming incoherence within the psalm. Gunkel (1968:367) suggests reading שְׁלוֹמְךָ instead of שְׁמֶךָ, thus translating the word as “that they may seek peace with you [your peace].” Kraus (1989:164) rejects Gunkel’s idea of the nations “looking for peace” with YHWH and he points to the expectation that the nations are to acknowledge the sovereignty of God over the world. Dahood (1968:277) emends by placing the final *waw* of בִּקְשׁוּ on שְׁמֶךָ and reading בִּקְשׁוּ as “avenge” or “exact a penalty” (see Gen 31:39; Isa 1:12; Josh 22:23): “Let your name, YHWH, avenge itself.” Tate (1990:344) sees Dahood’s reading as highly questionable since the verb with this meaning is normally accompanied by an explicit direct object. The difficulty of the statement וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ שְׁמֶךָ seems to have been overstated. For example Dahood (1968:277) says that the statement “is hardly amendable to coherent exegesis within the immediate context and does not accord with the pervading spirit of this psalm.” This translation stays with the Masoretic Text rather than emending the text and translates the statement וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ שְׁמֶךָ as “that they may seek your

name.” The majority of translations consulted in this study (e.g. KJV, NASB, NIV, NJB, ASV, ESV, JPS, NKJV, NRSV and RSV) follow this approach.

4.4 The Structure of Psalm 83

The basic literary structure of Psalm 83 is not complex. Verse 2 is an urgent plea to God to act on behalf of his people. This is followed by the complaint in verses 3-9, which describes the devastating characteristics of the enemies and goes on to list them. The complaint is then followed by a series of imprecations in verses 10-19. YHWH is called upon to deal severely with Israel’s present enemies (i.e. the confederation of nations) in the same way he did with Israel’s ancient enemies (i.e. the Midianites) (verses 10-13). The psalmist calls down imprecations on Israel’s enemies (verses 14-17a, 18) so that they would seek God and recognize his sovereignty (verses 17b, 19). Therefore, Psalm 83 can be divided into three stanzas: verse 2, verses 3-9 and verses 10-19. This three-fold division of the psalm is supported by Tate (1990:346), Harman (1995:286-287), Bratcher and Reyburn (1991:731), Anderson (1972b:596), Davidson (1998:274-275), Kraus (1989:160-161) and Eaton (2003:300). The three stanzas of Psalm 83 may be sub-divided into the following strophes (Tate, 1990:346-349²⁴):

Stanza I (2) Petition

Strophe A (verse 2): Invocation and petition for urgent action

Stanza II (3-9) Complaint

Strophe B (3-6): Devastating characteristics of the enemies

Strophe C (7-9): List of the enemies

Stanza III (10-19) Imprecations and result

Strophe D (10-13): Historical comparisons

Strophe E (14-19): Imprecations and result

The above structure of Psalm 83 is discussed in detail in the subsequent analysis.

²⁴ Tate’s sub-division of Ps 83 is close to Gerstenberger’s sub-division; the only difference is that Gerstenberger (2001:117) would make verse 19 as a separate stanza.

4.5 Intra-textual Analysis of Psalm 83

4.5.1 Stanza I (verse 2): Petition: Invocation and Petition for action

Stanza I consists of a single strophe A (verse 2).

4.5.1.1 Strophe A (verse 2)

Strophe A (verse 2) consists of a tricolon.

In **the tricolonic verse (verse 2)**, **2a** begins with the invocation אֱלֹהִים (“God”). The appellative אֱלֹהִים is followed by the vetitive אֲלֹהֵי-לֹא (“do not remain silent”). The silence of God is a metaphor for inaction (see Oswald, 1997a:971). The suppliant wants God to do something about Israel’s situation and not remain inactive.

2b consists of the vetitive אֲלֹהֵי-תַחַרֵּשׁ (“do not be quiet”) which functions as a jussive. The quietness of God is a metaphor for inaction (Oswald, 1997b:297).

2c consists of the vetitive וְאֲלֹהֵי-תִשְׁקַט אֵל (“and God do not be still”) which also functions like a jussive. The stillness of God is a metaphor for inaction. The suppliant “implores God not to rest while his enemies are raging and threatening his people” (Austel, 1980:953). Like the previous cola (2a & 2b), the suppliant in 2c wants God to act on behalf of his people and not be passive.

There is a synonymous parallelism, BASE-RESTATEMENT in 2a, 2b and 2c. The idea that God is to act and not to remain inactive in 2a is repeated in 2b and 2c. The three vetitives, אֲלֹהֵי-לֹא (“do not remain silent”) (2a), אֲלֹהֵי-תַחַרֵּשׁ (“do not be quiet”) (2b) and וְאֲלֹהֵי-תִשְׁקַט אֵל (“and do not be still”) (2c) are synonymous. This triple invocation (2a-c) is rhetorical underlining, marking the opening stanza of this psalm as a very strong plea for God to intervene. It is also striking that the psalm opens with the appellative אֱלֹהִים and only later uses the more specific covenant name, יְהוָה.

The noun אֵל in 2b forms an inclusion with אֱלֹהִים in 2a (see Tate, 1990:343; Dahood, 1968:273) which shows that verse 2 forms a single unit – the first stanza of the psalm.

In short, the suppliant in Strophe A (verse 2) wants God to change from his apparent silence and inactivity in order to intervene on Israel’s behalf.

4.5.2 Stanza II (verses 3-9): Complaint

Stanza II (verses 3-9) consists of two strophes, *B* (verses 3-6) and *C* (verses 7-9). Strophe *B* (verses 3-6) gives a lengthy reason for the psalmist's appeal in verse 2 which lies in the actions of YHWH's enemies, who are also Israel's enemies. Strophe *C* (verses 7-9) gives a list of Israel's enemies, the peoples who surround God's people on the east, south, west and northwest.

4.5.2.1 Strophe *B* (verses 3-6)

Strophe *B* (verses 3-6) consists of four bicola.

In the **first bicolon (verse 3)**, **3a** commences with the conjunction כִּי ("for") which gives the reason or justification for the preceding appeal for God to listen or initiate action in verse 2. The phrase כִּי־הִנֵּה is also a cry of indignation, meaning: "don't you see all this" - it is a plea for action. The conjunction כִּי is attached to the focus particle הִנֵּה ("behold!") which calls God's attention to what the psalmist is about to say. The evidence lies before God's eyes. God has only to look down to see the reason for the psalmist's appeal in verse 2 (see Goldingay, 2007b:575). The initial כִּי־הִנֵּה ("for behold!") applies to both cola (3a and 3b). The focus particle הִנֵּה is followed by the participle אוֹיְבֶיךָ ("your enemies") which refers to God's enemies. The participle אוֹיְבֶיךָ is followed by the verb יִהְיֶימוּ ("they are in uproar") which refers to the activity of God's enemies who are raging. The verb הִמָּה "expresses the noise of a crowd, such as the hostile roar of the enemy" (Domeris, 1997a:1043). The verb יִהְיֶימוּ shows that the enemies are in a roaring rage and are gathering to attack Israel. The enemies are like the angry waves of the sea, roaring and foaming (see VanGemeren, 1991:538; Anderson, 1972b:596).

3b is syndetically linked to 3a by means of the conjunction וְ. 3b begins with the participle מִשְׂנֵאִיךָ ("those who hate you") which refers to those who hate God. God is the object of the enemies' hatred. The participle מִשְׂנֵאִיךָ shows that the enemies hate God. The participle מִשְׂנֵאִיךָ is followed by נִשְׂאוּ ("they have lifted") which describes the activity of the enemies. The verb נִשְׂאוּ is followed by ראש ("their head") which functions as the object of the verb נִשְׂאוּ. The phrase נִשְׂאוּ ראש depicts "a proud show of autonomy and independence" (Hamilton, 1997b:162). The phrase נִשְׂאוּ ראש is also an expression of overt hostility, defiance, arrogance and confidence (Anderson, 1972b:597). The enemies were "arrogantly lifting their heads,

perhaps already sure of victory, and united in mind and purpose as they make their shrewd plans to attack and exterminate” (Tate, 1990:346).

There is a synonymous parallelism, BASE–RESTATEMENT in 3a and 3b, the idea that the enemies are hostile in 3a is repeated in 3b. The expression **נִשְׂאוּ רֵאשׁוֹ** (“they have lifted their heads”) is parallel with **יְהִי כִמְיוֹן** (“they are in uproar/tumult”) which means that the enemies are stirring themselves up. There is also a grammatical parallelism with the pattern (a b c b’ c’) in 3a and 3b (see Goldingay, 2007b:575).

a	For behold!
b	your enemies (<i>participle</i>)
c	are in uproar (<i>verbal expression</i>)
b’	those who hate you (<i>participle</i>)
c’	have lifted their heads (<i>verbal expression</i>)

The purpose of the extended parallelism is to highlight or emphasize the point that the enemies are characterised by hostility and hatred, and are also gathering for their attack in an arrogant and confident way.

To summarize verse 3, the enemies of God are hostile. They are consumed with hatred and arrogance and are preparing themselves for an attack. The psalmist makes a cry of indignation. He wants God to only look down, see the enemies’ hatred for himself and act on behalf of his people. While God is silent instead of giving voice and raging, the enemies are raging and giving voice instead of being submissive to God (cf. 46:4, 7, 11; Isa 17:12).

In the **second bicolon (verse 4)**, **4a** begins with **עַל-עַמֶּךָ** (“against your people”) which refers to God’s people, the nation of Israel. The phrase **עַל-עַמֶּךָ** is followed by **יַעֲרִימוּ סֹד** (“they make shrewd plans”) which shows that the enemies are laying crafty plans against God’s people (Brown *et al*, 1979:791; Allen, 1980b:697). The enemies are plotting the destruction of Israel (verse 5).

4b is syndetically linked to 4a by means of the conjunction **וְ**. **4b** commences with the verb **יִתְעַצְּוּ** which means “they conspire” (Brown *et al*, 1979:791). The verb **יִתְעַצְּוּ** refers to the activity of the enemies. The enemies are plotting against God’s people. The verb **יִתְעַצְּוּ** is followed by **עַל-צְפוּנֶיךָ** (“against your treasured ones”) which refers to God’s saints (see section 4.3.- the text critical and translation notes for more details). In light of the context of the psalm,

the phrase **צְפוּנֵיךָ** refers to God's people, the nation of Israel (cf. Exod 19:5) (see Hartley, 1980c:774).

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a synonymous parallelism, BASE–RESTATEMENT in 4a and 4b. The idea that the enemies are plotting the destruction of Israel in 4a is repeated in 4b. **עַל-עֲמֵךְ** in verse 4a corresponds to **עַל-צְפוּנֵיךָ** in verse 4b. The verbal expression **יַעֲרִימוּ סֹד** in 4a is synonymous to the verb **יִתְעַצְּוּ** in 4b. There is also parallelism with a chiasmic pattern (a b b' a') in 4a and 4b (see Goldingay, 2007b:575).

a	<i>Against your people</i>
b	<i>they make shrewd plans</i>
b'	<i>they conspire</i>
a'	<i>Against your treasured ones</i>

The purpose of the extended parallelism is to highlight or emphasize the point that the object of the enemies' schemes or plot of destruction is God's people, the nation of Israel. Reference to God's people is right at the beginning of verse 4. God's people, his treasured ones (verse 4), are the reason for the restless and haughty behaviour of the enemies (verse 3). The enemies are portrayed as dangerous people - they make plans but they are determined to execute their plans through a conspiracy. To sum up verse 4, the enemies are plotting the destruction of Israel.

The **third bicolon (verse 5)** is a quotation of the enemies; it gives the content of the enemies' plans against Israel. Direct speech adds a special effect, underlying how serious the threat to the nation is. **5a** begins with **אָמְרוּ** ("they say") which refers to the activity of the enemies. The verb **אָמְרוּ** is followed by the exact words that the enemies have said, **לָכֹּוּ וְנִכְחִידֵם מִגּוֹי** ("come and let us annihilate them as a nation"). **לָכֹּוּ** ("come") is an imperative, often used in conjunction with other imperatives to express an intention. The general meaning of the verb **כָּחַד** is "to hide, conceal" but here in 5a, the verb means "to cut off, annihilate, destroy, obliterate" (Oswalt, 1980c:436; Brown *et al*, 1979:470; Hill, 1997a:632). The verb **נִכְחִידֵם** functions as a cohortative or voluntative ("let us annihilate them"). Israel is the object of the annihilation of the enemies. The phrase **מִגּוֹי** ("as a nation") shows that the enemies want to destroy Israel in such a way that the nation would be utterly reduced from being a nation.

The terms “come...let us” in verse 5a also recall the events of Genesis 11. The terms “come...let us” express the spirit of humanity that rebelled against YHWH at Babel (see Gen 11:1-8). In Genesis 11, mankind conspired to make a “name” for themselves and from then onwards the nations have striven for autonomy and “name” recognition. They aim at sovereignty and freedom, as if they are God, thus usurping the exclusive divine prerogatives. The connection of the terms “come...let us” in verse 5a to Genesis 11 shows that the nations’ conspiracy against Israel is an act of rebellion against God and this spirit cannot tolerate God or his people (verse 5) (see VanGemeren, 1991:538). The nations’ plot to wipe Israel away from the face of the earth is a desire to usurp the exclusive divine prerogatives.

5b is syndetically linked to 5a by the conjunction ׀. 5b commences with וְלֹא־יִזְכָּר (‘‘will not be remembered’’) which refers to שֵׁם־יִשְׂרָאֵל (‘‘the name of Israel’’). The phrase שֵׁם־יִשְׂרָאֵל functions as a synecdoche; it refers to Israel as a nation. After the enemies annihilate Israel, Israel will cease to exist as a nation - her name will no longer be mentioned.

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a synonymous parallelism, BASE–AMPLIFICATION in 5a and 5b. The annihilation of Israel in 5a would mean that Israel would cease to exist as a nation (verse 5b). 5b amplifies or shows the ramification of Israel’s annihilation by the enemies in 5a.

Verse 5 is also ironic, ‘‘we will annihilate them’’ (נִכְחִידֵם) is expressed by means of another verb that commonly means ‘‘hide’’ (cf. Pss 69:6; 78:4) like צִפּוּנֵיךָ (‘‘your treasured ones’’) in verse 4. God is supposed to hide his people because they are his treasured ones; the enemies want to hide them so that no one can ever find them. They want them to cease to exist as a nation, in their entirety. The result of this action would mean that Israel would be forgotten to the extent that her name would not be mentioned at all (Goldingay, 2007b:576). To sum up verse 5, the enemies conspire to rob God of his people (Schaefer, 2001:203).

Verses 3-5 seem to indicate a climactic pattern: verse 3 describes a condition and attitude of the enemies; verse 4 mentions their intent against God’s people; finally verse 5 explicitly mentions their evil plans to utterly annihilate God’s people and even the remembrance of God’s people.

In the **fourth bicolon (verse 6)**, **6a** commences with the conjunction כִּי (‘‘for’’) which is more of a conclusion, re-affirming the preceding statement that the enemies conspired together

against Israel (c. verse 4), rather than introducing new justification: “Indeed, they conspire, they make a covenant.” The conjunction **כִּי** is followed by **נוֹעְצוּ** (“they conspire”) which refers to the activity of the enemies. The verb **נוֹעְצוּ** is followed by **לֵב יַחְדָּו** (“together [with one] heart”) which shows that the enemies are united in their conspiracy.

6b begins with **עָלֶיךָ** (“against you”) which refers to God. The prepositional phrase **עָלֶיךָ** is followed by **בְּרִית** (“covenant”). The noun **בְּרִית** is followed by **יִכְרְתוּ** (“they make”) which shows that the enemies have made a treaty/alliance among themselves to act together against Israel. The covenant of the enemies against Israel is an alliance against God himself (Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:733). This is emphasised by placing the object of their plotting right at the beginning of the sentence: **עָלֶיךָ** (“[it is] against you”).

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a synonymous parallelism, BASE–RESTATEMENT in 6a and 6b. The two cola (6a & 6b) are not totally synonymous because 6a does not state the object of the enemies’ plotting (i.e. YHWH). The idea that the enemies conspired together in 6a is restated in 6b. The phrase **נוֹעְצוּ לֵב יַחְדָּו** (“for they conspire together [with one] heart”) in 6a is synonymous to **יִכְרְתוּ בְּרִית** (“they make a covenant”) in 6b because making a covenant implies that you are one in heart. The making of the treaty or alliance among the enemies shows the determination of the enemies to annihilate Israel and this heightens the threat to destroy Israel.

To sum up verse 6, the enemies conspire together, agree to conquer Israel and form a political alliance among themselves to act together against Israel. In so doing, they set themselves against God – their covenant is an alliance against God.

In a nutshell, Strophe *B* (verse 3-6) gives the basis for the suppliant’s appeal for God to act on behalf of Israel. The enemies of God, who are also the enemies of Israel, are driven by hatred and arrogance towards God. They plot the destruction of Israel. They want to totally annihilate Israel, so they conspire together and form a political alliance among themselves against Israel and in so doing they set themselves against God.

4.5.2.2 Strophe C (verses 7-9)

Strophe C (verses 7-9) lists the enemies, who threaten to extinguish Israel. These are the nations who surrounded God's people on the east, south, west and northwest. The strophe can be divided into three bicola.²⁵

In the **first bicolon (verse 7)**, **7a** begins with אֶדְוֹם אֶהְלִי אָדוֹם ("tents of Edom", verse 7a) which is a poetic phrase for the entire nation of Edom (Lewis, 1980a:15; Brown *et al*, 1979:14). The Edomites were the descendants of Esau (Gen 25:24-25), who lived southeast of Judah across the Jordan River. יִשְׁמַעֲלִים in verse 7a refers to the Ishmaelites who were the descendants of Ishmael, son of Abraham by Hagar (Gen 25:12-18). The Ishmaelites were nomadic and literally tent-dwellers. They lived in the regions east and southeast of Edom. In verse 7a, the Ishmaelites and Edomites, are a pair of references to the tradition of sons whose brothers were chosen over them (Isaac and Jacob) as patriarchs.

7b commences with מוֹאָב ("Moab"). In ancient times, Moab referred to the region north of Edom, east of the Dead Sea and also the people who occupied that region (see Miller, 1992:882). The Moabites were the descendants of Lot (Gen 19:36ff). The noun מוֹאָב is followed by וְהַגְרִיטִים ("and Hagrites"). The identity of הַגְרִיטִים is uncertain (Brown *et al*, 1979:212). They are associated with the territory in Northern Arabia in 1 Chronicles 5:10; 19-20. Their mention with the Ishmaelites probably suggests that there could be some connection with Hagar and Abraham (cf. 16:1, 15). This first part of the list (verse 7ab) probably represents nations who were the most closely related to Israel. The Hagrites are also mentioned in 1 Chronicles 11:38; 27:30.

In the **second bicolon (verse 8)**, **8a** commences with גְּבַל ("Geba"), which the majority of scholars (e.g. Leupold, 1959:599; Durham, 1971:342; Anderson, 1972b:598; Terrein, 2003:594) identify as Geba the region south of the Dead Sea. Other scholars (e.g. Roth, 1992:922; Dahood, 1968:274; Harman, 1995:286; Goldingay, 2007b:578) think that Geba refers to the Phoenician city Byblos and this reference would pair well with the later reference to Tyre, forming an inclusion. Most probably גְּבַל ("Geba") refers to the location south of the Dead Sea near Petra in Edom (Matties, 1997:802; Brown *et al*, 1979:148) since it is listed with Ammon (Tate, 1990:344). עַמּוֹן ("Ammon") refers to the Ammonites who were on the east side of the Jordan (Judg 3:13; 2 Kgs 24:2), north of the territory of Moab (Van Groningen, 1980:678; Brown

²⁵ The division into cola of this list is not very fixed, due to its nature as a list, as well as the uneven use of the *waw*.

et al, 1979: 769-770). The Ammonites were the descendants of Lot (Gen 19:36ff). עַמְלֵק (“Amelek”) was a nomadic tribe living in the Negeb, south of Judah (Judg 3:13) (Brown *et al*, 1979: 766). The list in 8a represents neighbours of Judah to the east and south towards the desert.

8b begins with פְּלִשְׁתִּים (“Philistia”) which refers to the territory along the Mediterranean coast, west of the territory occupied by the Israelites (see Oliver, 1997:631). The noun פְּלִשְׁתִּים is followed by יֹשְׁבֵי צוֹר (“inhabitants of Tyre”) which refers to the Phoenicians, who lived in Tyre on the Mediterranean (2 Sam 5:11; Isa 23:1-18; see Hartley, 1980d:776; Bratcher & Reybun, 1991:733). This colon mentions the nations living on the Mediterranean coast. Tyre was in the first place the neighbour of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, but still exerted some influence well into the era of the Second Temple.

In the **third bicolon (verse 9)**, **9a** consists of גַּם־אַשּׁוּר נִלְוָה עִמָּם (“even Assyria has joined with them”) which shows that even Assyria, the Mesopotamian power which was nearly always lurking as a threat to the Israelite and Judean kingdoms, joined the surrounding nations. From this reference it is difficult to date the psalm. Historically, Assyria did enter into an allegiance with Judah against Israel and Damascus (cf. 2 Kgs 16:1-9), but reference to the Syrians of Damascus is notably absent from this list. 9a points out the astonishing fact that even a major (Assyria) power joined Israel's neighbours in their campaign against God;

9b typifies the nature of the Ammonites and Moabites joining the coalition. 9b consists of הֵיוּ זְרוּעַ לְבְנֵי־לוֹט (“they have become an arm to the sons of Lot”) which shows that the Assyrians were a strong ally of the descendants of Lot, the Ammonites (Deut 2:19) and Moabites (Deut 2:9; cf verses 7-8). In this context, the noun זְרוּעַ refers to military strength or resources (Brown *et al*, 1979: 284). Assyria gave the Ammonites and Moabites the military edge over Israel, which they themselves did not have. As relatively insignificant nations, the Ammonites and Moabites committed the same sort of fraternal treachery as Edom would do when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem (see the prophecy of Obadiah).

The psalmist seems to broaden the concept of nations who are related to Israel to include nations who are direct neighbours of Israel. In a sense also the Ishmaelites and perhaps the Hagrites were related to Israel. In this sense the reference is *pars pro toto* (a part for the whole).

In summary, Strophe C (verses 7-9) lists the enemies who want to totally destroy God's people. These enemies are nations who were very closely related to Israel or were their immediate neighbours and also found an ally in the Assyrian empire.

4.5.3 Stanza III (verses 10-19): Imprecations and result

In Stanza III (verses 10-19), the psalmist prays for God's judgment on the coalition arrayed against Israel. The stanza consists of two strophes, *D* (verses 10-13) and *E* (verses 14-19). In Strophe *D* (verses 10-13) the psalmist calls down on Israel's enemies the same defeats suffered by their enemies in the past. Strophe *E* (verses 14-19) is a series of imprecations.

4.5.3.1 Strophe D (verses 10-13)

Strophe D (verses 10-13) consists of a tetracolon (verses 10-11), bicolon (verse 12) and single colon (verse 13).

In the **tetracolic verse (verses 10-11)**, **10a** commences with the imperative עֲשֵׂה-לָהֶם ("do to them") which is an appeal directed towards God. The prepositional object לָהֶם refers to Israel's present enemies, the nations who are planning to attack Israel. The prepositional object לָהֶם is followed by כַּמִּדְיָן כַּסִּסְרָא כַּיַּבִּין ("as Midian, as with Sisera and Jabin") which shows that the suppliant wants God to treat Israel's enemies as he did the Midianites, Sisera and Jabin. The reference to Midian alludes to the story in Judges 6-8, where the Midianites were defeated by Gideon. Judges 6:3 also mentions a coalition. The reference to Sisera and Jabin alludes to the events of Judges 4-5. Sisera was the commander of the army of Jabin, king of Hazor. This reference to Sisera is parenthetical: God's action against Midian is briefly compared to his action against Sisera and Jabin, before the next cola expands on his action against Midian. Therefore in verse 10a, the psalmist is asking God to treat the coalition of nations who are preparing to attack Israel as he did the Midianites.

Verses 10b-11b expand the main sentence in 10a. **10b** consists of the phrase בְּנַחַל קִישׁוֹן ("at the river Kishon") which indicates the location where Sisera and Jabin were defeated. The preposition בְּ in בְּנַחַל is a *beth locale* (Williams, 1967:44). Incidentally, the river Kishon was in the same vicinity as Gideon's battle against the Midianites.

Jabin's army was defeated by Barak and Deborah at the river Kishon, while Sisera was killed by Jael, as he hid in Jael's tent (see Judg 4:1-24).

Like 10b, verse 11 expands on 10a, giving more details on the place where Israel's enemies were killed and what became of them. **11a** begins with נִשְׁמְדוּ (‘‘who were destroyed’’) which refers to the enemies of Israel during the time of Gideon, Deborah and Barak. The verb נִשְׁמְדוּ is followed by בְּעֵין־דָּאָר (‘‘at Endor’’) which indicates the location: the preposition בְּ in בְּעֵין־דָּאָר is a *beth locale* (Williams, 1967:44). Endor is not mentioned in the account in the defeat of the Midianites in Judges 4-5 or the Hazorites in Judges 6-8, but it was situated in the same area where the Israelites gathered before the battle against Sisera (Judg 4:12) (Anderson, 1972b:596; Harman, 1995:286; Goldingay, 2007b:580).

11b commences with הָיוּ (‘‘who became’’) which refers to the enemies of Israel. The verb הָיוּ is followed by לְאֶדְמָה (‘‘dung to the ground’’) which shows what became of the enemies. The word אֶדְמָה refers to ‘‘corpses lying on the ground in the form of dung or refuse’’ (Hayden, 1997:974). The expression הָיוּ לְאֶדְמָה is a vivid way of saying that the corpses were not buried but left to rot where they fell, which was both a disgrace and punishment (cf. 79:2-3; Jer 8:2; 9:22). This fits well into the account of the haphazard flight of the Midianites in the Gideon account (Judges 7:22).

In the **bicollic verse (verse 12)**, **12a** begins with the imperative שִׁיתָמוּ (‘‘make’’) which is directed towards God. The imperative שִׁיתָמוּ is followed by the adjective, used as a noun, נְדִיבָמוּ (‘‘their chieftains’’) which refers to the leaders of Israel's present enemies. The adjective נְדִיבָמוּ is followed by כְּעֹרֵב וְכִזְאָב (‘‘like Oreb and Zeeb’’) which shows that the psalmist wants God to treat the princes of nations threatening Israel as he did Oreb and Zeeb, the two Midianite princes killed by the Ephraimites in Judges 7:24-25. Reference to Oreb and Zeeb confirms that verses 10-11 refer primarily to Gideon and the Midianites, while reference to Sisera and Jabin is intended as secondary. The terms used to describe the present chieftains (נְדִיבָיִם) and the Midianite princes (שָׂרִים) are in the same semantic domain.

12b is syndetically linked to 12a by the conjunction וְ. The imperative שִׁיתָמוּ in 12a also applies in 12b. The phrase כְּצִלְמֻנָּע כָּל־נְסִיכָמוּ (‘‘all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna’’) shows that the psalmist wants God to treat the princes of the nations presently threatening Israel as he did Zebah and Zalmunna, the two Midianite kings whom Gideon killed in Judges

8:5-21. The terms used to describe the present princes (נְסִיכִים) and the Midianite kings (מְלָכִים) are in the same semantic domain.

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a synonymous parallelism, BASE–RESTATEMENT in 12a and 12b. The idea that God should punish the princes of the nations threatening Israel in 12a is repeated in 12b. The adjective נְדִיבֵמוֹ (“their princes”) in 12a is synonymous with the noun נְסִיכֵמוֹ (“their princes”) in 12b.

Therefore in the third bicolon (verse 12), the psalmist prays that God would give Israel spectacular and decisive victory over the nations that are threatening Israel as he did in the past with the Midianites.

The **last single colon (verse 13)** commences with אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ (“who said”) which refers to the activity of Israel’s ancient enemies, the Midianites, such as Zebah and Zalmunna in verse 12b. The relative phrase אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ is then followed by the exact words of Zebah and Zalmunna, נִירְשָׁה לָנוּ אֶת נְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים (“let us possess for ourselves the pastures of God”). This verse (verse 13) is parallel to verse 5 because both verses are the arrogant speeches of Israel’s foes. Verse 13 recalls the arrogant speech of Israel’s foes in the past (verses 10-12), who sought to take possession for themselves of the very “pasturelands” of God. There is no reference to the statement נִירְשָׁה לָנוּ אֶת נְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים (“let us possess for ourselves the pastures of God”) by the Midianites in Judges 6-8, but such expectation of an exact quotation is not required (Durham, 1971:343). The verb נִירְשָׁה (“let us possess”) is a cohortative which shows that there was unity of purpose and action among Israel’s ancient enemies and this is also the case with Israel’s present enemies (cf. verse 5). The preposition לָנוּ (“for ourselves”) emphasizes their selfish appropriation, since the verb normally does not take the preposition לְ. The expression נְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים (“pastures of God”) refers to the land of Canaan which Israel possessed (Brown *et al*, 1979:627; Coppes, 1980b:561). In verse 13, Israel’s ancient enemies, the Midianites, wanted to attack and dispossess Israel of her land, which was also YHWH’s land. The enemies’ wrongdoing relates more to YHWH than to Israel because the land of Canaan was YHWH’s land or “pastures” on which he fed his flock, his sheep, Israel.

To sum up Strophe *D* (verses 10-13), the psalmist calls down on Israel’s enemies the same defeats suffered by their enemies in the past. He asks God to defeat the enemies who are threatening to destroy Israel as he did the Midianites at Endor (Judg 4:1-24) where the whole army of the Midianites were killed (Judg 4:14-16) and their corpses were not buried but

left to rot where they fell. The psalmist prays for Israel's attackers to suffer the same fate as the Midianite princes (verse 12 cf. Judg 7:1-25; 8:1-21). The Midianites wanted to attack Israel, dispossess and seize their land, which was also YHWH's land. In so doing the Midianites set themselves against God because the land of Canaan was YHWH's land or pastures on which he fed his sheep, Israel.

4.5.3.2 Strophe E (verses 14-19)

Strophe E (verses 14-19) is a series of imprecations and their intended result. The strophe consists of five bicola and a single colon.

In the **first bicolon (verse 14)**, **14a** commences with the invocation אֱלֹהֵי (“my God”). The vocative אֱלֹהֵי marks the beginning of a new section, a new strophe (Gerstenberger, 2001:120), but at the same time takes up the last word of the last strophe. The enemies set themselves against God, the God whom the psalmist calls upon as “my God” (אֱלֹהֵי). The invocation אֱלֹהֵי (“my God”) in 14a also applies to 14b, 15a and 15b. The vocative אֱלֹהֵי is followed by שִׁיתָמוּ (“make them”). The imperative שִׁיתָמוּ is directed to God and also applies to 14b, 15a and 15b. The imperative שִׁיתָמוּ is followed by כַּנְּלִיָּגָל (“like the whirlwind dust”) which indicates that the psalmist wants God to make Israel's enemies (who are also God's enemies) like whirling dust which is at the mercy of the wind. The suppliant wants Israel's enemies to be helpless and worthless before YHWH's judgment just like whirling dust before the wind.

14b consists of the expression כֶּקֶשׁ לְפָנֵי־רוּחַ (“as chaff before the wind”) which shows that the psalmist wants God to make Israel's enemies as chaff before the wind. Before the wind, chaff is helpless and worthless. It is of no value and it is tossed to and fro by the wind. The same is to be the case with Israel's enemies before God's judgment – they are to be helpless and worthless like chaff before the wind.

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a synonymous parallelism, BASE–RESTATEMENT in 14a and 14b; in both cola Israel's enemies are depicted as helpless and worthless before YHWH's judgment. נְלִיָּגָל (“whirling dust”) in 14a and כֶּקֶשׁ לְפָנֵי־רוּחַ (“as chaff before the wind”) in 14b are synonymous. The imagery of the enemies being likened to chaff also recalls Psalm 1:4: “Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away,” which implies that Israel's enemies were wicked people.

Therefore in verse 14, the psalmist prays that Israel's enemies, the confederation of nations, would be driven away and scattered like the rolling thistles and dry leaves, mixed with dust and chaff before the wind. Israel's enemies would be helpless and worthless before YHWH's judgment.

In the **second bicolon (verse 15)**, **15a** consists of **כַּאֲשֶׁר תִּבְעַר יַעַר** ("as fire consumes the forest"). The vocative and imperative of 14a still apply: "My God, make them" (**אֱלֹהֵי שִׁיתָמוּ**), but the imagery changes from wind to fire. The psalmist wants God to bring destruction on Israel's enemies as fire consumes the forest.

15b is syndetically linked to 15a by the conjunction **וְ**. **15b** consists of **כְּלֶהְבֶּה תִּלְהֹט הַרִים** ("as a flame sets mountains ablaze") which shows that the psalmist wants God to bring destruction on Israel's enemies as a flame sets mountains ablaze.

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a synonymous parallelism, BASE–RESTATEMENT in 15a and 15b. The idea that Israel's enemies should be destroyed in 15a is repeated in 15b. The two expressions **כַּאֲשֶׁר** ("as fire") and **כְּלֶהְבֶּה** ("as a flame"), the two verbs **תִּבְעַר** ("consumes") and **תִּלְהֹט** ("sets ablaze") and the two nouns **יַעַר** ("the forest") and **הַרִים** ("mountains") are parallel with each other. There is also an extended parallelism with the pattern (a b c a' b' c') in this verse 15 (see Goldingay, 2007b:581).

a	as fire (<i>simile or subject</i>)
	b consumes (<i>verb</i>)
	c the forest (<i>object</i>)
a'	as a flame (<i>simile or subject</i>)
	b' sets ablaze (<i>verb</i>)
	c' mountains (<i>object</i>)

The purpose of the extended parallelism is to highlight or emphasize the point that Israel's enemies should be destroyed just as fire burns a forest and the sides of mountains, to set the mountains themselves ablaze. The imagery used in verse 15 is life-threatening. Therefore in verse 15, the psalmist prays to God for the annihilation of Israel's enemies as fire and flames bring about the destruction of vegetation.

In the **third bicolon (verse 16)**, **16a** commences with the adverb **כֵּן** ("so") which connects verse 16 to the preceding verses (verses 14-15). The adverb **כֵּן** ("so") is followed by the imperfect **תִּרְדָּפֵם** ("may you pursue them"), used in this context of imprecations as a plea

directed to God. Israel's enemies are the object of YHWH's pursuit. The verb תִּרְדָּפֵם is followed by בְּסַעֲרֶךָ ("with your tempest") which refers to God's storm-wind. The imagery of the storm-wind is a development of the imagery of the wind in verse 14, but a storming tempest is a much more fearful reality than the wind that blows away chaff. The psalmist asks God to pursue Israel's enemies with a storm-wind.

16b is syndetically linked to 16a by the conjunction וְ. 16b begins with בְּסוּפָתֶךָ ("with your storm") which refers to God's storm. The phrase בְּסוּפָתֶךָ is followed by the imperfect, תִּבְהַלֵּם ("may you dismay/terrify them") (see Brown *et al*, 1979:96) used as in 16a as a plea directed to God. Israel's enemies are the object of YHWH's terror. The psalmist asks God to terrify Israel's enemies with a storm.

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a synonymous parallelism, BASE–RESTATEMENT in 16a and 16b. The idea that God should judge Israel's enemies by a storming wind in 16a is restated in 16b. The phrase בְּסַעֲרֶךָ in 16a is synonymous to בְּסוּפָתֶךָ in 16b. The verb תִּרְדָּפֵם in 16a corresponds to תִּבְהַלֵּם in 16b. There is also a simple parallelism with a chiasmic pattern (a b c c' b') in this verse 16 (see Goldingay, 2007b:582).

a	so (<i>adverb</i>)
b	pursue them
c	with your tempest
c'	with your storm
b'	terrify them

The purpose of the extended parallelism is to highlight or emphasize the point that God's pursuit will be a terrifying reality for Israel's enemies. Terror or panic will be involved when the enemies will have to flee from God's pursuit. This may be an allusion to another incident during the early history of Israel when God threw hailstones during Joshua's battle against the five kings at the battle of Gibeon (Joshua 10:11). To sum up verse 16, the psalmist is asking God to judge Israel's enemies by relentlessly pursuing and terrifying them by a storming wind, an agent for God's wrath. The suppliant asks God to scatter and destroy Israel's enemies (see Dreytza, 1997:1264).

In the **fourth bicolon (verse 17)**, **17a** begins with the imperative מִלֵּא ("fill") which is directed to God. The imperative מִלֵּא is followed by פְּנֵיהֶם קָלֹון ("their faces with dishonour") which refers to the faces of Israel's enemies. God is called upon to fill the enemies' faces with dishonour (17a).

17b is syndetically linked to 17a by the conjunction ׀. 17b commences with וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ. The context requires the vocalisation in the BHS which does not indicate a *waw* consecutive, but a copulative *waw* with an imperfect, which can signify a final sentence ("so that"). Israel's enemies are the subject of the verb וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ. They are to seek שְׁמֶךָ ("your name), which refers to YHWH, as is confirmed by the vocative which follows, namely YHWH. The psalmist's desire is that Israel's enemies would seek YHWH's name in their humiliation. This is somehow ironic and constitutes a plea for reversal, because Israel's enemies, the coalition of nations, are filled with arrogance and they have plotted to destroy Israel's "name" (verses 3-5). Now the psalmist asks YHWH to change their pride and boasting into shame or dishonour so that they may seek him (YHWH) (VanGemeren, 1991:541).

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a causal correlation parallelism, REQUEST-PURPOSE between 17a and 17b. 17b gives the purpose of the request in 17a (why YHWH should disgrace Israel's enemies). The request to disgrace Israel's enemies in 17a is made to achieve the event in 17b. In verse 17, the psalmist wants YHWH to bring disgrace to Israel's enemies so that they may seek him for themselves. The purpose of the disgrace is to bring the enemies to an acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God over the world (see Harman, 1995:288). Verse 17 is probably not a prayer for their conversion, because the suppliant continues asking YHWH in verse 18 that the enemies may be put to shame. They are to acknowledge the existence and power of God when it is already too late.

The psalmist's request that his enemies be disgraced or dishonoured in verse 17a is repeated and expanded in the fifth bicolon (verse 18). In the **fifth bicolon (verse 18)**, **18a** commences with וַיִּבְשׁוּ ("put to shame"), an imperfect verb, functioning like the imperfect verbs in verse 16, as an imperative (a plea) directed to God. The verb תַּבְהִילֵם ("may you dismay/terrify them") (see Brown *et al*, 1979:96), used in verse 16 is repeated as a second imperfect, וַיִּבְהַלּוּ ("be disturbed/dismayed") (Brown *et al*, 1979:96; Van Pelt & Kaiser, 1997a:610). The subject of the pair of verbs, וַיִּבְשׁוּ וַיִּבְהַלּוּ, is only implied in the Hebrew. The subject is the present enemies of the suppliant, who are also God's enemies. The double negative wishes directed at Israel's enemies are followed by עַד־יָעַד ("forever"). This is a fixed expression used in poetic texts of the Old Testament (e.g. Isa 26:4 and Ps 132:12 and 14), denoting a long-lasting or continuous time frame which may be without end (Jenni, 1997:837; Schultz, 1980a:645). In 18a, the psalmist prays for Israel's enemies to be ashamed and terrified continuously.

18b is syndetically linked to 18a by the conjunction ׀. Like 18a, 18b again takes up the double theme of shaming and terrifying with the double imperfects (with a jussive function) ׀אָבְרוּ ׀יִחַפְּרוּ (“let them be ashamed and perish”). Again this double negative is directed to God and is expressed toward Israel’s enemies.

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a synonymous parallelism, BASE–RESTATEMENT in 18a and 18b. The idea that Israel’s enemies should be ashamed in 18a is repeated in 18b. The verb ׀בְּשׂוּ in 18a is synonymous with ׀יִחַפְּרוּ in 18b.

In verse 18, the psalmist concludes two themes in his imprecations: that of terror (expressed in verses 14-16) and that of shame (expressed in verse 17). He prays for the complete and shameful extermination of Israel’s enemies. He wants his enemies to perish in shame by simply being defeated which is “the final and deepest stage of their disgrace” (Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:736).

The **final colon (verse 19)** returns to the idea of 17b, which marked a third theme in the imprecations, namely that the enemies' downfall should result in their knowing God.

Verse 19 expresses the ultimate result of the imprecations (verses 10-17a; 18) on Israel’s enemies. **19a** begins with ׀יִדְעוּ (“let them know”). As with the initial verb in 17b a copulative *waw* plus an imperfect mark a final sentence. Israel’s enemies are included in the verb ׀יִדְעוּ as the subject. The particle כִּי marks the object of the speech act (a word of knowing or perception ׀דַע). They are to know that אַתָּה (“you”), a reference to God, “are the Most High over all the earth” (עֲלִיוֹן עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ). The latter phrase is the predicate stating that God alone is exalted over the whole earth.

God, the Most High, is identified in a relative sentence which is asyndetically positioned within this final colon: שְׁמִךָ יְהוָה לְבַדְּךָ, whose name is YHWH, alone." This echoes 17b, the only other instance in this psalm where God is identified as YHWH. The knowledge of God which the enemies must gain, must supersede knowledge of gods or a deity (אֱלֹהִים). Specifically, they must know the One and Only God of Israel, the Covenant God, YHWH.

The noun עֲלִיוֹן (“the Most High”) in verse 19 forms an inclusion with אֱלֹהִים in verse 2 (VanGemeren, 1991:541). The psalmist prays for Israel’s enemies, the confederation of nations, to come through God’s judgment to the acknowledgement that YHWH rules as the Most High over the earth. By implication, the nations thought that they and their gods were masters of the

earth (cf. Isa 10:12), but the subsequent events (verses 10-17a; 18) would show that the real and only God is YHWH. He is in authority above the whole world (Anderson, 1972b:601). Instead of eliminating Israel's name (verse 5), the nations would acknowledge YHWH's name (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2005:339). Knowing YHWH is recognising his name and submitting to his will – albeit under duress, in panic and shame, while experiencing their own destruction.

In a nutshell, the psalmist in Strophe *E* (verses 14-19) calls down imprecations on Israel's enemies. He prays for the confederation of nations to be helpless and worthless before YHWH's judgment. He prays for the annihilation of Israel's enemies. He asks God to pursue Israel's enemies with a terrifying storm. God is called upon to bring about disgrace to Israel's enemies so that they acknowledge the sovereignty of God over the world. The psalmist also prays for the shameful extermination of Israel's enemies. Finally, verse 19 shows that the ultimate purpose of the imprecations (verses 10-17a; 18) on Israel's enemies is for them to recognise the universal lordship of YHWH.

4.5.4 Summary of intra-textual analysis

Psalm 83 commences with the suppliant's plea for God to intervene on Israel's behalf (verse 2) because the enemies, full of hatred and arrogance towards God (verse 3), have gathered together to attack Israel (verse 4). They have formed a political alliance and are plotting the complete destruction of Israel and in so doing they have set themselves against God (verses 5-6). The suppliant lists the nations who are involved in the conspiracy against Israel and these are the Edomites, Ishmaelites, Moabites, Hagrites, Gebal, Ammonites, Amelekites, Philistines, Phoenicians and the Assyrians (verses 7-9). The psalmist then calls down on Israel's enemies the same defeats suffered by their enemies in the past and he concludes the psalm with imprecations on Israel's enemies (verses 10-19). He prays for the confederation of nations to be helpless before YHWH's judgment and to be annihilated (verses 14-15). He asks God to punish the enemies by relentlessly pursuing and terrifying them by a storming wind (verse 16). The climax of the psalm is seen in verses 17b and 19, where the psalmist asks God to bring about disgrace and humiliation to Israel's enemies so that they acknowledge God's sovereignty and lordship over the world. This is somehow ironic and constitutes a plea for inversion: the enemies were filled with arrogance as they plotted to destroy Israel (verses 3-5), but now the psalmist asks YHWH to change the enemies' pride and

boasting into shame and humiliation (verses 17 & 19). The nations have rebelled against YHWH (verses 3-4), but now the suppliant prays for his enemies to seek YHWH and to acknowledge his lordship (verses 17 & 19). In verse 5, the enemies want to eliminate Israel's name, but now the suppliant prays that the nations would acknowledge YHWH's name.

4.6 Literary Genre, Historical and Life Setting of Psalm 83

Psalm 83 is generally regarded as a national or community lament (Weiser, 1962:562; Dahood, 1968:273; Anderson, 1972b:595; Kraus, 1989:160; Tate, 1990:345; VanGemeren, 1991:536; McCann, 1996:1009; Davidson, 1998:274; Gestenberger, 2001:121), manifesting several characteristics of this form. The nation of Israel is in a time of distress and are being threatened by a coalition of nations. The psalmist prays on behalf of Israel for deliverance from the surrounding enemies who threaten to invade their land and destroy them. The psalmist enumerates the nations that have formed a conspiracy against God's people in verses 7-9. These are the Edomites, Ishmaelites, Moabites, Hagrites, Ammonites, Philistines, Amelekites, Gebal, Tyre and Assyria. In the history of Israel there has been no record of the national crisis where the nations enumerated in verses 7-9 formed a league to wipe out Israel. Therefore, the identification of any particular or specific historical situation is difficult (Dahood, 1968:273; Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:731).

The question that has been raised by scholars is "can one deduce the specific historical setting of Psalm 83 from verses 7-9?" Scholars and commentators hold various views and opinions with regards to this issue:

- Weiser (1962:563) argues that if "Assyria" in verse 8 is taken to mean the Assyrian Empire, then Psalm 83 was composed between the ninth and the seventh centuries.
- Leupold (1959:597) and Delitzsch (1980b:407) argue that we cannot be absolutely certain about the historical situation of the psalm, but there is a large measure of probability that the situation described in 2 Chronicles 20 is the historical context of Psalm 83. In 2 Chronicles 20, king Jehoshaphat encounters a military threat from the Moabites, Ammonites, Meunites and Edom. So the king prays to God for deliverance. The king also receives some guidance from the utterances of Jahaziel, "a Levite of the son of Asaph," who, for that matter, could have authored Psalm 83. Leupold (1959:597) argues that Psalm 83 mentions ten nations

that had allied against God's people, while 2 Chronicles 20 mentions the prominent among them.

- Briggs and Briggs (1907:217) argue that Psalm 83 was composed in the time of Nehemiah. The psalmist prays for deliverance from the neighbouring nations who have conspired together to exterminate Israel (verses 3-6) and enumerates them to show the extremity of the threat (7-9). Briggs and Briggs (1907:218-219) observe that the difficulty with the passage is that Assyria is called upon to help the sons of Lot. Historically, the Assyrian army was never at the disposal of the allies as a weapon against Judah. Probably "Assyria" in verse 10 is a symbol of a great world power or supreme enemy at any later period. Therefore, the insertion of "Assyria" could have been a mistake for some other power of importance. Most likely "Assyria" is a reference to the Samaritans, the army of Samaria that Sanballat chiefly relied upon as his arm against the Jews (Neh 4:2). Therefore, the whole situation suits the time of Nehemiah, when he was rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem.
- VanGemeren (1991:536-537) argues that Psalm 83 may have arisen in a particular historical context (cf. 2 Chron 20:1-30), but it is more likely that the list of nations in verse 7-9 is symbolic of the enemies of God's people. The variety of enemies suggests that the psalmist has in view the "troublers" (i.e., nations that caused afflictions on Israel; Edom, Ishmael, Moab, Hagrites, Ammon, Philistia, Amalek), the "seducers" (i.e., the nations that enticed Israel toward acculturation; Gebal, Tyre) and the "oppressors" (i.e., the nations that overran Israel and Judah and exiled her population; Assyria).
- Kraus (1989:161) and Tate (1990:345) argue that the list of nations is freely composed. The psalmist is viewing an "assault of nations" in a vision and authenticates the same with an array of specific names (Ps 46:6). He hears the menacing "whisperings" of the conspirators who want to rise up against the people of God (cf. Ps 2:1ff). Kraus says that "the fact that (with the exception for Tyre) there is mention pre-eminently of peoples and alliances of the Southern reaches of Palestine prompts us to conclude that we have to reckon with a Judean perspective in Psalm 83. Indeed, we could think of cultic traditions of Jerusalem, in which the "assault of nations" represented a distinct element of conception. But the mention of Assyria in any case points to the fact that the psalm is to be dated in pre-exilic times"(1989:161-162).
- Mays (1994:272) says that the nations (verses 7-9) are mentioned for liturgical purposes rather than for historical data. This is poetic rhetoric. The portrayal of enemies in tumult

(verse 3) and plotting together against God's people (verses 3-6) is quite similar to the description of general hostility in Psalm 2 (see Ps 2:1-3).

With regards to the life setting of Psalm 83, since Israel lived under persistent threat, the psalm would have been "a timely prayer at many critical points, but especially during the exile and beyond" (McCann, 1996:1009).

In conclusion, Psalm 83 is a communal or national lament. It is a difficult task to establish the historical setting of the psalm. The list of nations in verses 7-9 could be symbolic of the enemies of God's people throughout the ages. With regards to the life setting of the psalm, the psalm could have been used as "a timely prayer" at many critical points when Israel was under military threat from the foreign nations before, during and after the exile.

4.7 Canonical Context

Psalm 83 belongs to the third book of Psalms (73-89). Book III (Psalms 73-89) may be subdivided into the following divisions (see Wilcock, 2001b:3):

The Asaph Collection: Psalms 73-83

The second Korah Collection: Psalms 84-89

From the above subdivision of Book III (73-89), it is clear that Psalm 83 may be read together with the psalms in the first group, Asaph's collection (Psalms 73-83), since Psalm 83 has אֲסָפִי (of Asaph) as its superscription. In the whole Psalter there are twelve psalms that specify Asaph in their headings. The first psalm is Psalm 50 found in Book II and the other eleven psalms are found in Book III. According to 1 Chronicles 6:33-47, Asaph was a descendant of Levi's son Gershom. In 1 Chronicles 15:16-22 and 16:4-6, Asaph is described as a Levite musician who played a leading cultic role during David's time. Asaph's descendants served as musicians and singers in worship services (Ezra 2:41; Neh 7:44) (see Farmer, 1998:825). The identity of this specific Asaph, responsible for (the collection of) the Asaph psalms, cannot be established with certainty.

The significant patterns, topic or themes in Psalms 73-83 may indicate that the canonical context does shed light on Psalm 83. One of the most important themes in Psalms 73-83 is God's Sovereign rule over his people and the nations (73:25-28; 74:12-17; 75:7-9; 76:1-12;

77:11-20; 78:4-6, 12-39, 45-55, 62-72; 79:6; 80:4, 7-18; 81:10-12; 82:1, 8; 83:9-18). The message of God's sovereign rule may be seen as the basis of Israel's hope in the face of anxiety and uncertainty (McGrath, 1984:157).

The first psalm in Asaph's collection, Psalm 73, deals with the theme of the apparent prosperity of the wicked. The ease and wealth of the life of the wicked (73:4-12) causes the psalmist to despair (73:2, 16). The psalmist only regains a sense of proportion by returning to the sanctuary of God where he realises the importance of his relationship with God (73:17-28). Psalms 74, 79, 80 and 83 share a number of themes, including expressions of hope that YHWH would deliver his people from oppression by foreign powers (74:10-23; 79:5-13; 80:1-19 and 83:9-18). Psalms 75 and 76 acknowledge that YHWH is the God and saviour of Israel (75:4-10; 76:1-12). Psalms 77 and 78 are a recollection of the great deeds by which YHWH delivered his people in the past (77:5-20; 78:4-6, 12-39, 45-55, 62-72). Finally, Psalms 81 and 82 have the theme of the judgment of God upon his people and the nations (81:7-16; 82:1-5, 7-8) (see McGrath, 1984:157).

Psalm 83 shares common words, phrases and themes with Psalms 74, 79 and 80.

Common vocabulary shared by Psalms 74 and 83

אלהים	God	74:1, 8, 10, 12, 22	83:2, 13, 14
זכר	to remember	74:2, 18, 22	83:5
יהוה	YHWH	74:18	83:17, 19
יחד	unitedness/together	74:6, 8	83:6
אש	fire	74:7	83:15
ארץ	earth	74:7, 8, 12, 17, 20	83:19
שמך	your name	74:7, 10, 18, 21	83:17
אמר	to say	74:8	83:5
לב	heart	74:8	83:6
עוד	again	74:9	83:5
ידע	to know	74:9	83:19
עד	forever	74:1, 10	83:18
אתה	you	74:13, 14, 15, 16, 17	83:19
ראש	heads	74:13, 14	83:3
ברית	covenant	74:20	83:6
איב	enemy	74:3	83:3

Common vocabulary shared by Psalms 79 and 83

אלהים	God	79:1, 9, 10	83:2, 13, 14
גוי	nation	79:1, 6, 11	83:5
יהוה	YHWH	79:4	83:17, 19
בער	to burn	79:5	83:15
אש	fire	79:5	83:15
ארץ	earth	79:2	83:19
שמך	your name	79:6, 9	83:17
אמר	to say	79:10	83:5
זכר	to remember	79:8	83:5
זרוע	arm/shoulder	79:11	83:9
ידע	to know	79:6, 10	83:19
בן	son(s)	79:11	83:9
עמך	your people	79:13	83:49

Common vocabulary shared by Psalms 74 and 79

אלהים	God	74:1, 8, 10, 12, 22	79:1, 9, 10
בנחלתך	your inheritance	74:2	79:1
יהוה	YHWH	74:18	79:4
חרף	to reproach	74:10, 18	79:4, 12
אש	fire	74:4	79:5
ארץ	earth	74:7, 8, 12, 17, 20	79:2
שמך	your name	74:7, 10, 18, 21	79:6,9
צאן מרעייתך	sheep of your pasture	74:1	79:13
זכר	to remember	74:2, 18, 22	79:8
שוב	to return	74:21	79:12
ידע	to know	74:9	79:6, 10

Common vocabulary shared by Psalms 80 and 83

אלהים	God	80:4, 5, 8, 14	83:2, 13, 14
ישב	to sit/dwell	80:2	83:8
יהוה	YHWH	80:5	83:17, 19
הלך	to come	80:3	83:5
אש	fire	80:17	83:15

אֶרֶץ	earth	80:10	83:19
שִׁמְךָ	your name	80:19	83:17
עַמְּךָ	your people	80:5	83:4
אֵיב	enemy/enemies	80:7	83:3
גּוֹי	nation(s)	80:9	83:5
יָדַע	to know	74:9	79:6, 10
הַרִים	mountains	80:11	83:15
יַעַר	forest	80:14	83: 15
בֵּן	son(s)	80:16, 18	83:9
אָבַד	to perish	80:17	83:18

Psalms 74, 79, 80 and 83 share a number of themes. The theme of “remembering” (זָכַר) is seen in these psalms. In Psalm 74:2, the psalmist’s plea is for God to remember Israel, the people he purchased long ago at the time of the exodus. The two verbs “purchase” (קָנָה) and “redeem” (גָּאָל) which appear in Psalm 74:2 are also used together in Exodus 15:13, 16 (Harman, 1998:259). In Psalm 74:18 and 22, the psalmist asks God to remember how his holy name has been blasphemed. In Psalm 79:8, the psalmist is aware that the sins of their forefathers had brought about the exile (cf. 2 Kgs 24:1-4), so he asks God to show divine compassion to his afflicted people. He asks God not to remember the sins of the previous generation. In Psalm 83:5, the enemies of Israel who are driven by hatred and arrogance towards God, gather together to attack Israel. They want to totally destroy Israel so that they are remembered no more.

The idea of “burning” is also seen in Psalms 74, 79, 80 and 83. In Psalm 74:7, Israel’s enemies, the Babylonians, have burned the temple to the ground (see 2 Kgs 25:9; 2 Chron 36:19) and this was an act of defilement of the place where God’s name was established. In Psalm 79:5, the psalmist appeals for an end of God’s anger and God’s jealousy is compared to burning fire. In Psalm 80:17, the psalmist asks God to destroy the enemies who have burned the vine with fire. In Psalm 83:15, God is called upon to annihilate Israel’s enemies as fire and flames bring the destruction of vegetation.

The theme of “YHWH’s name” is also seen in Psalms 74, 79, 80 and 83. In Psalm 74:10, the enemies have defiled the temple, the dwelling place of YHWH’s name because they have burned the temple. In verse 18, the enemies have blasphemed YHWH’s holy name. In verses 20-21, the psalmist wants God to look with favour upon the land and ensure that injustices stop so that when this happened the afflicted and needy would praise YHWH’s name. In Psalm 79:6,

YHWH is called upon to pour out his wrath on nations that do not know him, those that do not call upon his name. In verse 9, the psalmist makes a request for deliverance and forgiveness of sins on the basis of God's honour and for his name's sake (cf. Dan 9:19). In Psalm 80:19, the psalmist makes a pledge on behalf of Israel that they would never again turn away from God and if God revived them then they would call upon his name. In Psalm 83:17-19, God is called upon to dishonour and humiliate his enemies, who are Israel's, so that they may seek his name.

The theme of the "covenant" is seen in Psalms 74 and 83. In Psalm 74:20, YHWH is called upon to consider the covenant with Israel and deliver his people, whereas in Psalm 83:6, the nations conspire together and they make a covenant against YHWH by conspiring against Israel.

In Psalms 74 and 83, the psalmist recalls YHWH's great acts of power and deliverance. In Psalm 74:12-17, God delivers Israel from the Egyptian slavery, by dividing the waters of the Red Sea and crushing the power of the Egyptian forces, which are figuratively referred to as the "the monster" and "Leviathan" (cf. Isa 51:9-11; Ezek 32:1-2). The crushed Leviathan (i.e. the corpses of the Egyptian army) was not buried but became food to the creatures of the wilderness. God broke open springs and torrents (cf. Exod 17:6) and dried up ever-flowing streams (i.e. the Jordan River, Josh 4:23; 5:1). God had done greater things when he created the world. He continues to control the day and the night, the heavenly bodies, the earth and the seasons of the year (cf. Gen 1; Ps 104). In Psalm 83:10-13, the psalmist recalls YHWH's past victories/ deliverance over Israel's enemies and he calls down on Israel's enemies the same defeats suffered by their enemies in the past. God through his power enabled Israel to defeat the Midianites at Endor and their corpses were not buried but left to rot, thus becoming dung (or manure) for the ground (cf. Judg 4:1-24). Psalm 79:2 is a contrast to Psalms 74 and 83 because Israel's enemies have victory over Israel and they give the corpses of the Israelites as food for the birds of the heavens and beasts of the earth.

The main theme of Psalms 74, 79, 80 and 83 is that God is sovereign. He is the God and saviour of Israel. When God's people experience suffering, they call upon God for deliverance. Their hope is derived from their trust in God's sovereignty (McCann, 1996:1009). This explains why the psalmist recalls YHWH's great saving acts of the past in which God's power had been demonstrated. God is portrayed as the shepherd of Israel (Ps 80:2) and Israel is portrayed as his flock (Ps 74:1; 79:13). God is portrayed as the gardener or vine dresser and Israel is

portrayed as a grapevine that God once planted and cultivated (Ps 80:9-12 cf. Isa 5:1-7). He is enthroned above the cherubim (Ps 80:2). He is a warrior, YHWH of Hosts (Ps 80:5, 8, 15 and 20). As a warrior, he fights for his people Israel. He defeated the Egyptian army (Ps 74: 13-14) and the Midianites (Ps 83:10-13) who wanted to destroy his people, Israel. In the same way God is able to defeat present enemies who are threatening to destroy them, and he is able to provide deliverance to his people. God is the creator of the universe and he controls the waters, the day and the night, the heavenly bodies and the seasons of the year (Ps 74:16-17). As sovereign God, he controls history. He removed Israel from Egypt and he brings about victory for Israel over the nations (Ps 74:13-14; 83:10-13).

Therefore, Psalms 74, 79, 80 and 83 have philological and thematic links. As seen from these psalms, the main themes are God's sovereignty, deliverance and name. **God's sovereignty:** God is the creator of the whole universe. He controls history. **God's deliverance:** He is a warrior, YHWH of Hosts. He fights for his people and delivers them from their enemies. In Psalm 83 God's people are in a serious crisis. The enemies have gathered together and are determined to destroy Israel so that they would be wiped out as a nation. The psalmist calls down on Israel's enemies the same defeats suffered by their enemies in the past, not because he has a vindictive spirit toward his enemies, but the purpose is for the enemies (i.e. nations who have conspired against God's people) to recognize YHWH's universal sovereignty and lordship over the earth (verse 19). **God's name:** God's name should be held high, called upon, honoured and praised. The psalmist's plea for deliverance and forgiveness of sins is based on God's honour and his name. When God does not deliver his people his honour and name are at stake. The context of Psalm 83 confirms the suppliant's zeal for God's name. The suppliant is not praying for the reversal of the dire situation (i.e. imprecation) for his own good and not even for the good of his people, but so that God's reputation as sovereign Lord would be confirmed. The psalm encourages the reader/listener to trust in God for his/her deliverance and salvation because God is sovereign. He will deliver his people from oppression by foreign powers.

4.8 Imprecatory Implications in Psalm 83

Psalm 83 is a reaction to "aggression against God" (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2005:339) by the nations, just as in Psalm 2 the nations are gathering together against God. The nations' hatred

and hostility towards God propels them to plot the destruction of Israel and in so doing they set themselves against God because the Israelites are God's covenant people (verse 4). In response to Israel's predicament, the psalmist, on behalf of Israel, calls upon God to do something (Zenger, 2000b:150). The psalmist lists the enemies who are threatening to extinguish Israel (verses 7-9) and he prays for God's judgment on the coalition arrayed against Israel. The psalmist calls down on Israel's enemies the same defeats suffered by their enemies in the past (verses 10-13). The psalmist calls down imprecations on Israel's enemies. He wants the enemies to be annihilated (verses 14-16) and humiliated (17a, 18) and to turn to YHWH (17b, 19).

There appears to be some tension in the imprecations of verses 14-19, for how can the enemies turn to God if they have been destroyed? Are the people who turn to YHWH the same people who are destroyed and shamed? McCann (1996:1011) argues that verses 17a and 18 suggest that the violent imagery (verses 14-16) is hyperbolic. It is best to concur with Goldingay (2007b:585) who suggests that "it is best to leave the tension and recognize here that the psalm presupposes that all three aims are desirable, even though they are in tension with each other." Death of the enemies is desirable because it constitutes proper punishment for the attackers' affront to YHWH and also ensures secure deliverance for their victims. Complete humiliation is desirable because it implies a public demonstration of the wrongness of their conspiracy. The positive acknowledgement of YHWH by Israel's enemies is desirable as the right response for conduct (Goldingay, 2007b:585). It may be that the acknowledgement of YHWH should take place in their humiliation and in the process of annihilation.

The basis for the imprecations in this psalm is God's reign of righteousness and justice. Probably, the purpose of the imprecations in this psalm is to make the nations recognise the lordship of YHWH and pray homage to him (cf. Ps 2:10ff) (see Kraus, 1989:164). The nations are to recognise that YHWH is the "Most High".

Psalms 83 is eschatological and its purpose is to pray for and express trust in the fulfilment of God's reign over all the earth (verse 19) in the midst of opposition (see McCann, 1996:1011; Weiser, 1962:563). This psalm reminds followers of YHWH that God's reign and will for justice and righteousness have never gone and never go unopposed. The basis of imprecation in Psalm 83 is God's will for justice and righteousness. The message of Psalm 83 is that whenever the very existence of God's people or YHWH followers is under threat, there is no need to panic.

God's people should humble themselves to God's ways of justice and righteousness and pray for deliverance from their enemies and trust in God for their deliverance rather than fighting with their enemies.

The focus of this psalm is not on personal revenge, but on YHWH's sovereignty. In that sense verse 19 is the climax and the point of the whole psalm. YHWH is sovereign. The canonical context of Psalm 83, Psalms 74, 79 and 80, also confirms this as the main theme. God is sovereign over his people (Israel) and the nations. He controls history; he fights for his people Israel and grants victory (Ps 74:13-14; 83:10-13). In his sovereignty, God will bring disgrace and shame on Israel's enemies so that they come to acknowledge his sovereignty and lordship over the world. God's sovereign rule is also the basis of Israel's hope in the face of anxiety and uncertainty.

Another theme seen in Psalm 83 is that YHWH will deliver his people from oppression by foreign powers. The canonical context of Psalm 83, Psalms 75-78 and 81-82, confirms this as one of the main themes. In Psalm 83 (also Psalms 75-76), God is the deliverer of Israel. In Psalm 83, the suppliant emphasizes the point that YHWH will deliver his people, Israel, from the hostile nations as he did in the past. So the suppliant recalls the great deeds by which YHWH delivered his people in the past (verses 10-13; also Pss 77 and 78).

The imprecations in Psalm 83 may also be viewed as pleas for inversion and are somehow ironic. The enemies are filled with arrogance as they plot to destroy Israel (verses 3-5), but now the psalmist asks YHWH to change the enemies' pride and boasting into shame and humiliation (verses 17 & 19). The nations have rebelled against YHWH (verses 3-4), but now the suppliant prays for Israel's enemies to seek YHWH and to acknowledge his lordship (verses 17 & 19). The enemies want to eliminate Israel's name (verse 5), but now the suppliant prays that the nations would acknowledge YHWH's name.

The enemies in Psalm 83 are clearly depicted as God's enemies (verse 3-4), not the personal enemies of the suppliant or the nation of Israel. This already gives the tenor for the imprecations which follow. The suppliant does not want personal vindication but he wants God to deal with his enemies severely for his honour and reputation are at stake.

In Psalm 83, the psalmist is zealous for God's name. This theme is also confirmed by the canonical context of Psalm 83. The psalmist in Psalm 83 is praying imprecations on the

enemies not for his own good and not even for the good of his people, but so that God's reputation as Sovereign Lord would be confirmed. The purpose of the imprecations is for the nations/enemies to recognize YHWH's universal sovereignty and lordship over the earth (verse 19) - this is the crescendo of the whole psalm.

Psalm 83 also teaches the readers/listeners that the annihilation, the utter destruction of the enemies, is the ultimate goal of God's judgment. However, the psalm opens up the way that the knowledge of the true God might be extended to the nations without shame and destruction. This is eschatological in the sense that the psalmist foresees the future for the nations as connected to Israel and Israel's God (see Psalm 67; 96 cf. Genesis 12:2-3). This theme is fully revealed and developed in the New Testament. Psalm 83 also teaches the follower of YHWH that it is biblically acceptable to maintain the tension of praying both for the destruction and the salvation of their enemies, who are also the enemies of YHWH.