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The Application of Speech-Act Theory to Prayer in the Old Testament

Introduction

One concept that occurs in many different guises in prayer in the OT is that of *remembering*. Remembering is a means of praising God: the Hiphil of *zkr* makes this connection explicit. Remembering is highly relational in a full understanding of *zkr*: it is about remembering persons, and consequently also remembering relationships. Remembering is an actualising event: *zkr* conveys the sense of the remembered person or event being present before the face of the one who is remembering. Remembering is also an effective act: *zkr* connotes that to remember involves action as well as thought: and this action often seems to consist in its being spoken as well as future consequent deeds.[1]

Applying these understandings of memory to prayer gives a rich theological understanding of how remembering works between man and God in the context of Biblical prayer. God's remembering and Israel's remembering are closely intertwined. Consequently, the notions of remembering and reminding are seen to be rather harder to separate than we might initially think. Thus we are drawn to consider the interweaving of the voiced petitionary and motivational clauses throughout OT prayers, as reflected in the time-honoured notion that praise and lament necessarily go hand-in-hand.[2]

As we therefore examine how the language of remembering functions in the context of Biblical prayer, one method that responds both to the spoken nature of the texts, as well as the performative nature of *zkr*, is that offered by speech-act theory. Austin's seminal work[3] in this area focuses on how our speech functions, and what a speaker may achieve by speaking. Analysing the different things that utterances do, he distinguished firstly between locutions which are speech acts which have a meaning, illocutions which are speech acts

[1] (Childs 1962) (Kessler 1956) (Schottroff 1964) (de Boer 1962)
[2] (Westermann 1981)
[3] (Austin 1969)

which have a certain force, and perlocutions which are speech acts which achieve certain effects by saying something. He offered a fivefold taxonomy of illocutions, and this categorization provides a helpful tool to approach a spoken text by considering how different aspects of it function. While there is much complexity concerning the detailed employment of speech-act theory, here it will suffice simply to apply the five classifications of performative utterances as developed by Searle[4].

Of Searle's classifications, first he names Representatives, as illocutionary speech acts representing some state of affairs, such as assertions, claims, or descriptions. Second, Commissives, commit the speaker to some future action, like promises, threats, or vows. Third, Directives, are those illocutions employed to get the addressee to carry out some action, such as commands, requests, dares, and entreaties. Fourth, Searle offers Declarations, as those speech acts that themselves bring about a state of affairs, for instance marrying, naming, or blessing. Finally, Expressives are speech acts that indicate the speaker's psychological state or mental attitude, like greeting, thanking, and apologising.

The appropriateness of the application of speech-act theory to the language of prayer is clear: prayer, albeit recorded in written form, is an expression of an oral text and thus constitutes what might be termed a 'strong' speech act[5].

However, particular challenges appear when we seek to categorize a psalm as a whole, or verses, or parts of verses, according to this schema. A number of questions arise. How small are the units we should break a text into? And is it possible that one illocution could be categorized a number of different ways? Some utterances, such as leading questions, involve two types of utterances at once, as in this case, a statement as well as a question. Speech act theory then helps to highlight whether more than one thing is going on in a single statement at once. Yet if this is so, is it possible to offer a hierarchy of speech acts as an analysis of a speech event made up of a number of illocutions? And if so, how would one go about doing it?

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[4] (J. R. Searle 1980). See also (Grundy 2000) (Hillers 1995) (Sadock 1974) (Vanderveken 1990) (Verschueren 1980) (Wunderlich 1980) for instance on speech-act theory *per se*; and (Hillers 1995) (Macky 1987) (Neufeld 1994) (Thiselton 1992) (Ward 2002) amongst others cited elsewhere in this paper on the application of speech-act theory to Biblical texts.

[5] (Briggs 2001, 63ff). Contrast (Upton 2006) who makes a case for the narrative of St. Mark's Gospel as an oral text and thereby seeks to apply speech-act theory.

My approach to my texts will be based on the work of Wagner[6], who begins to answer these questions by analysing smaller text segments as illocutions which together constitute a 'Makro-Illokution'. His application of speech-act theory to OT texts leads him to note the differences between explicit illocutions as those which use a performative verb, and implicit illocutions as those which do not use a performative verb but which are still clearly performative in function. He also distinguishes between homogeneous illocutions as those where a sequence of illocutions is the same in form, and more complex illocutions where there are two classifications of illocution that are either hierarchical in organisation or form a 'Mischtext' of two classifications side-by-side.

My choice of three Psalms to which to apply speech-act theory arises from the occurrence of the Hebrew *zkr*, along with other roots related as members of a similar semantic domain[7]. Psalm 137 involves both an imperative petitionary clause to God to remember and indicatives referring to the Psalmist's own remembering. Psalm 77, while not overtly petitionary, employs the language of the Psalmist remembering, as well as that of God forgetting. Psalm 143 likewise refers to the Psalmist's own remembering, alongside the fear of God hiding his face, an image of God's not remembering[8]. Does the language of remembering function in a similar way in each text? What can speech-act theory tell us about these psalms?

Psalm 137

The scene-setting illocution of vv.1-3 is a Representative, describing the state of the exiles, their thoughts, and their interaction with their captors. Secondarily, however, we can clearly discern an Expressive force: the verses communicate emotion through the content of the narrative and vocabulary, such as the action of weeping. The Babylonian reported speech of v. 3 is clearly Directive, for they 'demand' with imperative syntax that the Israelites sing a song of Zion.

[6] (Wagner 2007)
[7] For an exploration of semantic domains compare the work of Louw and Nida on the Greek of the NT (Louw, Johannes P.; Nida, Eugene A. (Eds) 1988)
[8] (Balentine 1983)

The pithiness of v.1 leaves out significant background detail. Through the Expressive, we are invited to fill in the psychological gaps: that their weeping indicates their wish that Zion was not just a memory, but a present reality for them. We are drawn into a complex use of *zkr* whereby the *distance* between the mental memory image and the actualisation of that memory image is the most painful part of the experience.[9]

The effect of the illocution is to arouse sympathy for the exiles. 'We shall not be able to contemplate here, without being ourselves deeply affected, how the poet plunges into the abyss of human passion.'[10] If *we* are affected by the lines, which bring us into a relationship with the exiles through our recognition of them as victims of both their captors and their memories, how much more would the primary addressee, God, be affected? This Representative functions as a persuasive motivational clause, with the intention of strengthening the petition which is at present delayed.

Yet the Babylonians' reported Directive is what Austin would call 'infelicitous' - the exiles are unable to do as they are commanded. On a deeper level, the Babylonians' intended effect is twofold: first to remind themselves of their own victory, and give them cause for rejoicing or flaunting it; second to remind the exiles of their defeat, losses, and consequently how powerful their captors are. While the palpable anger of the exiles throughout indicates that the first is achieved, the second goes badly wrong. The exiles sing not one of the songs of Zion but rather a bitter lament. Instead of entertaining the Babylonians, they offer their experience to God, with potentially broader consequences. Their unfolding lament could serve as a reminder to God of their suffering, and a motivation to God to punish their captors. Moreover, the very act of offering this memory to God could gladden and bring comfort. Although the language of memory is not used *per se* here, it is integral to the utterance. Doubtless such a function would have been far from the intention of the Babylonians' Directive.

The Expressive lament of vv. 4-6 chimes with vv. 1-3. The desperate language continues to bring home their passion and suffering. The illocution brings the intercessors, their petition, and their persuasive powers, before God, through the act of remembrance. By referring to

[9] C.f. note on *zkr* in Introduction
[10] (Weiser 1959, 797)

the songs of the Lord, there is an implicit reminder to God that they are his people, that they are the ones who sing his songs.[11] Consequently there is the understanding that he is responsible for them, and that his glory resides also in their salvation. The relationality of the act of remembering is clear: all parties are fully involved, and the interests of man and God are so intertwined that they cannot be separated. If we take vv.4-6 as motivation preparing for the v.7 petition, we perceive the argument that what will glorify God is what will bring God's people salvation, and *vice versa*.

The elliptical verse 5 has been described as an 'etymological crux'[12]. Possible interpretations include the passive 'may my right hand be forgotten', or 'may my right hand forget its strength' with כח lost by haplography. Perhaps there is a wordplay or metathesis, with תִּכְחַשׁ or תְּכַחֵשׁ as 'grow lean' or 'wither'. Whatever the solution, the closeness of the verbs that allow either for such wordplay emphasises the strong, physical sense of שכח and consequently also of the opposed זכר. The speech-act tool of implicature[13] offers another answer, by seeking to make clear what is lacking, thus leading us to read 'may my right hand also forget *itself*', which fits with the parallelism offered in the following verse. The implied 'itself' then comes across as even stronger: the physicality of the Hebrew language, and its use of synecdoche, indicates that this is about a loss of skill, and indeed a total loss of identity. Such loss of identity is closely related to the loss of a collective memory of a city, homeland, and existence: a fate equal to that of losing one's capacity to speak (v.6), a fearful outcome as expressed within a speech act. This reading also fits with theology behind the posited haplographic emendation. Forgetting is akin to total loss, withering, and weakness; remembering is expressed as the key to salvation, strength, a means to happiness, right

[11] 'Meir Gruber aptly observes that from the Babylonian perspective, what their captives sing are national songs, "Zion's songs", whereas the Judaeans themselves view them as sacred music, "a song of the Lord".' (Alter 2007, 474). The Babylonians focus on relationship to a place, while the exiles focus on relationship to God, albeit expressed through their relationship to the holy city, and the relationship of that city to God. 'Just as in the songs of Zion, praise of Zion represents praise of God, so here [the psalmist's] expression of loyalty to Jerusalem is a measure of loyalty to Yahweh since the city, the very "city of God"... symbolizes divine presence.' (D. C. Searle 2009). Thus the difference between the Babylonian and the Israelite appellation of the songs strengthens the illocutionary effect of emphasising the relationship of God with his people.

[12] (Allen 2002, 302)

[13] The four principles of implicature developed by Grice. The maxim of Quantity could be summarised with the imperative 'be economical' and demands that a contribution to an exchange should be as informative as required, not more, and not less. The Maxim of Quality, 'be sincere', states that a contribution should be true. The Maxim of Relation, 'be relevant', indicates that a contribution should have some relation to the rest of the exchange. The Maxim of Manner, 'be perspicuous', demands that a contribution should be clear.

relationship with self, other, and God.[14] Moreover, the psalmist, in the repetition of his acts of swearing, Declarations, risks his own fluency[15] and in doing so effects a strengthening of his case. The memory of Jerusalem must always be, for the Psalmist, his 'highest joy'.

By the petition of v.7, we may wonder whether it is already being answered. The remembrance so far throughout the prayer has the function also of giving the exiles confidence.[16] This is the first step to the answering of their petition, which is up to here implied (remember us) but which now becomes explicit (remember our enemies): their very presence before God, and ability to call upon him, indicates that, even before the petition is expressed, their intention (of getting God to answer their prayer) is in some way achieved. The effectiveness of their reminding God necessarily means that God does indeed remember them, and that they are aware of that.

However, vv.7-9 have earned Psalm 137 a reputation: 'Most psalms are cherished by Christians; this one is not.'[17] Yet the move from v.6 to v.7 is almost seamless, it is the act of remembering which makes the deep-seated connection. The Psalmist remembers; surely God must do, too?[18] The psalmist has prepared the ground for this petition: the implied intention is not simply to persuade, but rather to do so by doing all within one's means to remain in the memory of God. In these final verses the wrath of the psalmist can no longer be restrained.[19] It has been building up throughout[20], and now the backhanded blessing[21] is a

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[14] A second possible reading from implicature is 'if I forget you, o Jerusalem, may my right hand also forget *you*', given that Zion/ Jerusalem is otherwise always the subject of the remembering and forgetting. The consequence of this, the 'right hand' forgetting Jerusalem, might mean the exiles praying for acceptance that they can no longer achieve a return to their former lives. However in comparison to the strength of the above suggestion this alternative seems less likely.

[15] (Terrien 2003, 866)

[16] 'Through the confidence gained by remembrance, the people pour out their petitions and prayers, calling upon Yahweh and pleading with him to intervene once again for his defeated and scattered people.' (Kraus, Hans-Joachim; transl. Crim, Keith 1979, 67).

[17] (Broyles 1999, 479)

[18] 'The human memories of vv. 1, 5 must surely have a divine counterpart – not leaving such an outrage in the limbo of unpunished sin but remembering and acting in retaliation on the Edomite collaborators... The movement from vv. 5-6 to v. 7 has a persuasive, even bargaining intention: if the psalmist is determined to remember, won't Yahweh?' (Allen 2002, 307) (Hartberger 1986, 223)

[19] (Weiser 1959, 794)

[20] 'deeply moved by the recollection of the dreadful day of Jerusalem's destruction, the psalmist prays to Yahweh to requite the Edomites for what they did... And the thought of all that his people have had to suffer from Babylon, the 'devastator', now causes the passion which the psalmist has struggled hard to repress to break out openly.' (Weiser 1959, 796)

[21] 'In psalmody, the curse wish appears in its original manner only in Psalm 137, a relatively late poem that arises from the time of the loosening and the mixing of fixed genres. The psalm begins like a communal complaint song. The poem then turns to hymnic tones so that it may finally speak of wild vengeance for

highly emotive Declaration hinting at the connection between blessing/cursing language and the theology of memory[22]. With multiple functions, it blesses those who wreak revenge on their enemies, shares the passionate feelings, develops the argument that God should act in the favour of the exiles, and incites the same wrath that is breaking out in the psalmist. Surely God should remember, and respond to this remembering, in the same ways as the Psalmist? Thus the utterance seeks to replicate in God both the memory and the wrath of the psalmist, and the cursing/blessing Declarations are closely related yet subordinated to the complex speech event of remembering and reminding.

As remembering and reminding clearly go hand-in-hand in Psalm 137, so we see that God's memory of the Israelites and their persecution is central to their survival[23], and indeed memory underpins the psalm. Does a speech-act analysis of Psalm 77 yield comparable results?

Psalm 77

The strength of this text as a speech act is illustrated immediately by the repetition of the phrase 'with my voice to God' in its emphatic positioning, and the noun 'with my voice' later occurs twice in quick succession in verses 18 and 19. Moreover, in verse 7 it is 'music' that the Psalmist is remembering, an evocation of the singer actually singing aloud. Verses 1-7 are Representative in force, describing the actions of the Psalmist. Alongside such language of the spoken or sung goes the language of complaint and reflection, Expressive illocutions within the wider Representative. The voice is a powerful vehicle to convey both outward and inward realities. We have a rich description not only of the actions of the Psalmist but also his inner landscape.

Jerusalem's enemies. Curses are expressed (137:4-6) in the form of self-curse... At the end one finds a blessing saying in a terrible reversal of the original meaning.' (Gunkel, Hermann; completed by Begrich, Joachim; translated by Nogalski, James D. 1998, 234)

[22] The illocutionary effect of blessing and cursing goes hand in hand with that of remembrance. This connection, moreover, would resonate with both the rich meaning of *zkr* and a synchronic study of the language of Babylonian *kudurrus*. A man is literally obliterated if forgotten. (Slanski 2003, 265f)

[23] On Ps. 137: 'Considering the heritage God had granted his people, their memory of it was critical for their survival as a people. Further, considering the enemies' persecution, God's memory of their destructive actions was also critical for the people's survival and for his maintenance of justice.' (Terrien 2003, 480). God's memory is vital in establishing the existence and identity of his people, those whom he remembers.

Yet simply to classify these verses as Representative, consisting of a sequence of Expressive illocutions, does not yet do them justice, for at the same time they are also Declarations. The use of the voice makes this clear. As the Psalmist sings, so he is 'crying aloud to God', 'seeking the Lord', 'thinking of God', 'moaning', etc. Here are illocutions which actually bring about a state of affairs: the Psalmist is truly 'crying aloud' for instance by virtue of the fact that he is voicing his lament, his musings.

Reading the questions about the nature of God in verses 8-10 in context, they seem to offer a direct outworking of the speech acts described in the Representatives of vv.1-7. However, taken singly, they cannot be categorized simply as Representatives or Declarations. They are Expressive in the sense that they convey something of the Psalmist's frame of mind. Yet implicitly they have the force of Directives: the rhetorical style is persuasive, and these questions seem to be spoken aloud with the intention of getting someone to carry out some action. While God is not the second person addressee, he has been so in recent verses; he would appear to be the intended hearer here even though referred to in the third person, thus indicating that there is the power of persuasion at work (*pace* Broyles[24]).

Verse 11 returns to the Representative, describing the thoughts of the Psalmist in direct speech, which is made up of Expressive illocutions. Yet again the Expressive seems to have another function - cajoling God into proving that in fact he has not changed, that he does not change - and thus the sequence of Expressives points to an implicit Directive. The motivational clauses offered throughout disclose the implied petition to God to re-enact his salvation of old.

Verses 12 and 13 are not simply Representatives, giving description, but are Commissives, given the future sense of the imperfect. Moreover, we see the Psalmist's commitment acted out fully in the following verses. Addressing God in the second person, the Psalmist offers words of praise. Yet perhaps the most interesting crux is to be found in the choice of Kethibh and Qere in the forms of *zkr* in the introductory verse 12. Should we read the Qal or the Hiphil?

[24] (Broyles 1999, 316)

We are invited to make the most of the deliberately retained ambiguity: that there is a valid sense in which the Psalmist is both committing to remember, and to cause to remember. Remembering and reminding go hand-in-hand with considerable force. As the Psalmist then praises God, he is thus remembering God and his greatness, *and at the same time causing God to remember himself and his own greatness.* Furthermore, as the Psalmist has used the Commissive force in v. 12, he is committing himself as much to remembering as he is to reminding God; and if God is indeed the unchanging God of redemption whom the Psalmist is remembering, *he will thereby be reminded*[25]. Indeed, if we took the traditional interpretation of the priority of Kethibh, and preferred the textual reading rather than the marginal reading, we should choose the sense of the Psalmist reminding rather than simply remembering. Yet there is little clarity as to whether Kethibh or Qere was the earlier, so this cannot be pushed.[26] What we can say, however, is that on the varying levels of Psalmist and reader, the written text reminds, and the read text remembers.

Verse12 is thus theologically central. In support of the view that Psalm 77 is not composite, but rather a whole, is the argument that the transitional verses 12 and 13 bind the psalm together. Beyond this, we might say that v.12, particularly with the Kethibh and Qere, expresses the psalm *in nuce*. The Psalm is both setting out to remind as well as to remember, and the two cannot be separated, as indeed we cannot brush out either Kethibh or Qere, and neither did the Masoretic editors.

If Kethibh is the earlier, perhaps the editors considered it more appropriate for the Psalmist simply to remember throughout, rather than have this interesting and crucial Hiphil in v. 12. If, however, the text was shaped due to the oral tradition being earlier, the editors kept the Kethibh Hiphil in the text to confirm that it was correct. Thus whether we prefer Kethibh or Qere[27], the existence of the two side-by-side emphasises the inherent ambiguity communicating the intertwining of remembering and reminding.

Indeed, arguments for the unity of the psalm's composition have often focussed on the occurrences of *zkr*[28]. As Tate argues this point, he also notes the recurrence of *kol* and *yad*.

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[25] In support of this reading see also Calvin on vv.11-12 (D. C. Searle 2009, 367)
[26] For a discussion of the K/Q problem c.f. (Barr 1981)
[27] Contrast (Tate 1990, 270) and (Hossfeld, Zenger, Baltzer, Maloney 2005, 274)
[28] (Tate 1990, 271); and, citing (Weber 1995), (Hossfeld, Zenger, Baltzer, Maloney 2005, 275)

This combination of unifying vocabulary is particularly powerful. As remembering and reminding are inextricably linked, so perhaps there is a relationship between remembering, the voice, and the power of the right hand. Since *zkr* clearly has a stronger effective sense that the English 'remember' overlooks, *zkr* would naturally be connected with something that expressed power and effective outcome. Moreover, this relationship is also closely tied with that of the voice in the Hebrew Bible: the voice too is effective, the word is also the deed. Psalm 77 seems to be telling us that remembering had an integral role in the effectiveness of the spoken act.

We can further understand the whole of Psalm 77 as an act of remembering, reminding, and even an enacting of remembering and reminding. The Representative clauses of vv.1-7 almost without exception are either qatal or wayyiqtol, and thus it is possible that this is both a present act of remembering the past, and a re-enacted past remembering. The re-enactment through the speaking aloud of the memories would be understood as an effective act of remembering: remembering both the crying, the praying, the meditating; and remembering also the very remembering itself.

The only verbs in the Representatives that do not fit this category are telling. In v. 4 the final word is the negated piel yiqtol 'I cannot speak'. It is striking that an exception to the rest of the grammar in the context is an ongoing inability to do that effective act which is so closely related to the voice, a self-contradictory utterance. The remembering of past goodness at this particular juncture does not function as the psalmist is used to it functioning: rather than heartening him, it makes him grieve more[29]. Moreover, the other exceptions both occur in v.7, with the cohortatives of *zkr* and *siach* in parallelism. It is as if the Psalmist's aim is precisely to do this remembering and musing as he speaks aloud this Psalm. The Psalmist is remembering his distress, his prayers to God, and reminding God of all this, both in the past and we might assume also the present, in a complex speech act, with a potentially rich time frame.

The remembering itself could be either past or present. 'Though the speaker may be remembering some earlier point in his life when, in contrast to his present condition, he sang joyously in the night, it is also possible that "song" (*neginah*, unlike its synonym *rinah*,

[29] C.f. e.g. (Broyles 1999, 316), (Gaebelein, Frank E. et al (eds) 1991, 500)

which is almost always joyous) refers to a heartfelt chanted prayer and so is linked with his present fate of restless nights of anguish.'[30] Moreover, the qatal form has a special place as a performative[31] and if we apply a temporal present/future interpretation of qatal performatives to Psalm 77, we might recognize a still stronger argument that the memory act is performative, and one which is both past and present, as well as in some respect looking to the future. It is the future that will be affected by this very act of remembering; and the Psalm even seems to go so far as to commit future readers and pray-ers of the Psalm to future acts of remembering and reminding. The act of remembering is very closely suited to prayer.

The intertwined remembering/ reminding is thus clearly a speech act in itself, and arguably, following Wagner's methods, the highest level speech act of the whole psalm. If we look at how the remembering functions here as reminding, and *vice versa*, we will see that the overall effect is that of beseeching God to remember, not to forget[32], and therefore to display his redemptive power, and not to reject his people. Yet simultaneously we also recognize the undercurrent of future commitment: that God's people in the future will continue to remember God, and therefore that God in some way is also committed to remembering his people. We recognize that the Psalm is made up largely of 'Segmentillokutionen' which are Commissives, Representatives, Expressives, and Declarations, revealing the implied Directive. *Zkr* once again is seen to draw the whole psalm together, going beyond the form critics inclined to view the psalm as two separate prayers, and it is through the power of *zkr* as a Declaration that the individual illocutions work so closely together.

As in Ps. 77, speech-act analysis highlights the interplay of petition (albeit implied) and motivation, and that the sequences of illocutions could be classified together following Wagner most persuasively as a high-level Directive, or arguably as a Directive-Commissive

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[30] (Alter 2007, 269)

[31] 'quite a number of the traditionally unexplained (and puzzling) instances of the qatal form used in the future sphere belong to this particular group [of performatives]... These special qatal sentences, different from other event qatal sentences... which have the temporal function of anteriority, trigger a present/ future interpretation due to the performative nature of the utterance. We can perhaps conclude that at least some of the commonest occurrences of qatal 'in the future' which have traditionally puzzled grammarians may be accounted by recognizing a systematic correlation between performative sentences and a specific temporal interpretation of the qatal form'. (Goldfajn 1993, 94)

[32] Note also the connection between forgetting and shrivelling up in Hebrew, and thus God's power as ineffectual (Dahood S. J. 1968, 226, 229)

'Mischtext'. Indeed the intertwining of remembering and reminding is thereby emphasised and we particularly notice the Commissive force as implied by the ambiguities of the performative verb forms. As the Psalmist commits himself to remember, so he is also seeking to commit God to remember. Are similar observations to be made in consideration of Psalm 143?

Psalm 143

The opening two verses of this Psalm, full of imperatives, indicate that the illocutionary force here is explicitly Directive. The first word after the superscription, the name of God, makes it perfectly clear that this is aimed at God. The content of the language deepens our understanding of what the speaker wants to get God to do. Beginning with 'Hear', the parallelism of the verbs, to 'give ear', and 'answer', show how God's hearing goes hand in hand with his answering. God does not simply hear, but when he hears, it is as if he is committed to answering. Moreover, verse 2 shows how this plays out, with the words 'do not enter into judgement': the answering of prayer is made concrete in the hope of God's positive restraint from judging his servant.

The Directive force of the imperatives, however, is closely connected with the phrases that fill out these verses. Making the Directive force clearer to discern are the interweaved motivational clauses: God is called upon to do this because of his faithfulness, because of his righteousness, and because of the unrighteousness (and implied frailty) of his people. Underpinning such motivations is the assumption of the fundamental relationship between God and his people, offering further reason why God should do as the Psalmist asks, and consequently strengthening God's commitment to do so.

Verses 3 and 4 are Representatives: they describe how things are with the Psalmist. However, they also have implied Expressive force: they convey the Psalmist's emotions. Effectively, further reasons are cited why God should answer the prayer, namely because of the poor situation of his servant, and because of the overbearing hostility of his enemy. The implication is that any enemy of a servant of God is an enemy of God himself, thus providing more motivation to act.

Verses 5 and 6 are also Representatives, as they depict the Psalmist at prayer: 'I remember', 'I utter', 'I meditate', 'I stretch out my hands', and finally, most pictorially, 'my soul is like a land thirsty for you'. Yet these Representatives again offer reasons to God to answer the prayer: the prayer is borne out of the relationship of the Psalmist and God, and the faithfulness of the Psalmist actively echoes the assumed faithfulness of God. Furthermore, while the verbs of these verses might suggest private, silent, intellectual activities, in fact the Hebrew conveys something more vocal, particularly with the verb *hgh*. The prayer, the remembering, is all utterance: it is all a performative speech act. Thus these Representatives could also be described as Declarations: the Psalmist is effectively saying 'I hereby utter', 'I hereby remember'. Further, they function as motivational clauses backing up the surrounding imperative Directives.

The following verses again demonstrate the close oscillation between imperative and motivational clauses, and such sequences of petitions and motivations together offer a Directive in a hierarchical illocutionary analysis. 'Answer me quickly' is balanced by 'my spirit fails'. 'Do not hide your face from me' is balanced by 'otherwise I shall be like those who go down to the Pit'. The implication here is that of the actualising caused by remembering: God's hiding his face from someone is closely connected with his forgetting of someone[33]; those who go down to the Pit, i.e. out of God's presence, are like those who are out of God's mind[34]; and as we hear elsewhere, those who go down to the Pit, are consequently unable to praise God[35]. All these themes are tied together in the Hebrew *zkr*, with its actualising power along with the Hiphil meaning of 'praise'.

We continue: 'Let me hear of your steadfast love' is balanced by 'for in you I put my trust'. The Hiphil imperative is followed by the reasoning clause, signposted with *ki*. The motivation here is again relational: the Psalmist is faithful and trusting, and it is God to whom that faithfulness is committed. The combination of Directive in 'let me hear' with the Declaration 'for in you I put my trust' indicates commitment on both sides: the Psalmist is not only saying that he *has* trusted in God, but that he will continue to do so. God is himself committed to be faithful to his faithful one, and therefore his faithful servant is committed to continuing in his own faithfulness to God. The parallelism is clear with another pairing of

[33] (Balentine 1983)
[34] Contrast Ps. 17
[35] Eg. Ps. 88

Hiphil imperative and *ki-* clause: 'cause me to know your ways', then 'for to you I lift up my soul'. The two go side by side: God's 'steadfast love' is the outworking of 'his ways' and so the two point to the same thing. Likewise the Psalmist's putting his trust in God is equivalent to lifting up his soul to God. All the phrases of v. 8 lead us towards the same point: that here we have Directives backed up by Representative or Declarative motivational clauses focussing on the relationship between God and man.

Verse 9 follows a similar train of thought. The first half of the verse, with another Hiphil imperative, has a more developed relational theology behind it: this is about not only the positive relationship between God and his servant, but also the negative relationship between God's servant and his enemies. Together both offer a cogent argument for God saving his servant. As Neubauer points out, "be gracious" is associated with the obligation of the relationship between a master and his servant.[36] As God's servant commits himself to God, so he also in some sense commits God to commit himself to his servant.[37]

The first half of v.10a has yet another comparable pairing, and this time the motivational *ki-* clause heavily emphasises the relational aspect: 'because you are my God'. The Psalmist offers both himself and God as reasons why God should heed his prayer, and give him the desired response. Moreover, looking back through these parallel constructions, the directive imperatives themselves offer motivations: the requests show something about the personality and devotion of the Psalmist to God. Petition and motivation are so closely interwoven that in function they can only be distinguished with some difficulty: the motives 'draw attention to the speaker's plight and to what God has at stake'.[38] The iussive that follows in v.10b continues to bring the two together: for God's good spirit to lead the Psalmist on a level path is both in the interests of God and of his servant. It is almost as if we are uncovering the intention of God as well as the Psalmist in this illocution.

The Directive of v.11 crescendos in a petition for the preservation of life, and the motivation is climactic: for the sake of the name of God. The synecdoche of God's name

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[36] (Allen 2002, 355) (Neubauer 1964, 95)

[37] Or, to put it differently in the words of Calvin on verse 8, 'We lay, as it were, God under an obligation when we say *in you I trust*, for in freely offering himself to us as Father, God gives us a pledge, that is, puts himself under a kind of obligation. This is far from any merit on our part, rather the *trust* we exercise proves our helplessness.'(D. C. Searle 2009, 640)

[38] (Broyles 1999, 500)

conveys something of the essence and identity of God, that which enables him to have relationship with his creatures. Moreover, that relationship is one whereby God is able to be praised, and we are reminded of the Hiphil of *zkr* in the sense of 'call upon the name of'. The Psalmist remembers God's essence, literally enacting the call upon God to remember it also. Although Yahweh is read aloud as 'Adonai', nevertheless in the written text 'your name' is followed immediately with the very name of God. The argument could not be stronger.

The following petitions to some extent repeat earlier pleas and motivations, offering another sequence of Directives connected with Representatives or Declarations. The pithiness brings home the interchanging of the pronominal suffixes: it is all about the relationship between 'I' and 'you'. The final words emphasise this in a closing *ki*-clause: 'for I am your servant'. 'The relationship is still true, even in adversity and despair.'[39] The relationship between God and his servant is a theme throughout that the reader cannot overlook, and this forms the backbone for the argument that God really must answer the prayers the Psalmist makes.

Following Wagner in discerning an illocutionary hierarchy, these petitions and motivations throughout form a Directive sequence which hinges on v.5, the servant remembering his relationship with God and reminding God of that relationship. Contrary to some views that this remembering leads to despair[40], in fact this remembering can be classified as a Declaration that the Psalmist is employing to achieve his ends, and is thus something which gives him hope and endurance in his petitioning. By his remembering he calls God to remember, and that, coupled with the performative essence of the prayer, shows that the Psalmist is doing all he can to effect the outcome he hopes for. While memory is important in this psalm in the cultic context[41], yet if we take the Declarative reading of vv.5-6 along with the ambiguity of aspect in the verbs, it is even more widely relevant: namely that the Psalmist is implicitly committing himself, and future pray-ers of the Psalm, and even God, to continual remembering and re-enacting of the relationship they enjoy. Thus this text, by

[39] (Gaebelein, Frank E. et al (eds) 1991, 856)
[40] (Gaebelein, Frank E. et al (eds) 1991, 852), contra Calvin (D. C. Searle 2009, 639-40)
[41] Broyles too recognizes the importance of memory throughout, focussing on vv.3-6: 'Ps. 143 directs worshippers to engage their memory as a means for cultivating personal encouragement in the priest and for establishing precedents for Yahweh to act now – even "quickly," as the following petition pleads.'(Broyles 1999, 499)

means of a sequence of Declarations and Commissives, is seen to cohere in a Directive force of the complex speech event.

Conclusion

Speech act theory makes an important offering to the analysis of Biblical prayer. It both supports previous academic study on the Psalms, by arriving at some shared conclusions, but by a different method, such as acknowledging the hope behind the lament in Ps. 143; and it also allows for fresh interpretations of familiar texts which may, as in the case of Ps. 137, be more sympathetic to the speaker.

Following Wagner's arguments for a hierarchy of illocutions working together within a 'Makro-Illokution', we have begun to discern various sequences of illocutions – Directives, implicit or explicit, interweaved with Commissives, Declarations, Representatives, and Expressives - that work together in a rhetorical structure aimed at achieving the ends of the Psalmist or pray-er. In so far as this can be summed up in an understanding of 'I pray' which is about persuading God, the act of persuasion is best described as a Directive. There has not been space here to analyse further the different levels of Psalmist/ pray-er/ addressee or speaker/ reader on which these texts have been functioning; neither has there been adequate space to examine in detail the particular sequences of illocutions that have been employed. Nevertheless here is a pointer that consideration of such illocutionary sequences in OT prayer could well be a fruitful application of speech-act theory.

Moreover, regarding the place of memory in OT prayer, as we discern the richness of the function of the language of remembering, we may wish to suggest that as speech acts or illocutions combine to form a complex speech event or 'Makro-Illokution', so we have evidence here of memory acts, as it were, combining to form a memory event. In Ps. 137, the memory event is made up of the memory acts of the Israelites recording this very moment before God in prayer, recalling the past glory of Jerusalem, and committing that to memory, then further asking God to remember them and their captors, that their enemies might thereby receive their comeuppance. In both Pss. 77 and 143, the memory events consist of the memory acts of the Psalmist implicitly praying that God would remember both him and his enemies, alongside the repeated assertions that the Psalmist himself is

remembering God and his past mercies. Ps. 77 expresses the pain of remembering good times when the present is bad, and Ps. 143 also makes the connection between God's memory of man and man's existence.

Furthermore, we have noticed by means of speech act analysis that a pray-er's remembering goes hand-in-hand with the intention of reminding God, and that these cannot be separated. We might therefore go so far as to say that man's remembering God is central to his mortal existence. Petition, whether implicit or explicit, and motivation are closely bound together in a theology of remembering, and, developing the effective relational sense of *zkr*, we recognise that petition and motivation naturally become aligned also with the outcome of the prayer. Once again we are led to look on to a deeper analysis of the sequences of illocutions that cohere in the combination of petition and motivation, discerning that the clauses are connected more closely than many form critics would allow[42].

Therefore all three texts are functioning, despite their different forms, in very similar ways. Both appeal to memory explicitly; yet more importantly also acts of remembrance form a backdrop to the prayers as a whole. All three are laments, and the language of remembering is integral to all that all three psalms express. The memories of the intercessors are offered to God in prayer, as both petition and motivation. The crux of all three laments is the hope that God remembers his people for good, and acts accordingly. This is communicated not simply by means of the vocabulary of remembering, but by the whole function of the prayers as we are able to perceive it through a simple speech-act analysis.

Beyond this, a more developed appeal to speech-act theory would allow for exploration of the outcome of the illocutions, and perlocutionary effect. This would cover such aspects as the comparison between intention and success of the illocution, insofar as it may be discerned.

This speech-act analysis has hinted at an examination of tense and aspect of performative qatal verbs, as the grammatical background behind the intertwining of Directives and Commissives. The examination of the K/Q forms of *zkr* in Ps. 77 has also led us to consider

[42] (Aejmelaeus 1986) (Gerstenberger 1977) (Gunkel 1926)

to what extent speech-act theory might shed light on the meanings and derivations of the two forms here.

Speech-act analysis of these three psalms then leads us to two general reflections. First, it gives us some recognition of how Biblical prayers function as memory events. Second, it provides material indicating the potential of speech-act analysis in strong speech-acts such as prayer in the Bible. Thus we might conclude that speech-act theory offers a very fruitful tool for the study of Biblical prayer.

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