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PREFACE

It is sad to think that in the time of social media, Internet, and an overload of information, there are still voices that are not heard, nor given the opportunity to be heard. This situation of not being heard is a challenge that has faced societies throughout time and it is no different in the context of the Bible and ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean societies. This unfortunate fact provided the inspiration for the theme of this edition, “Unheard voices in the Bible”.

What can we understand by “unheard voices” in the Bible and in the world in which we live today? The “unheard voices” belong to those whom society ignores, oppresses, neglects, discriminates against or throws away. The voices may also include related issues such as the social contexts within which this happens, God images, the survival of generations, poverty and access to food and medical care, children’s rights, matters pertaining to aging, child and spousal abuse, various forms of political oppression, victimisation, and so forth. Such issues, and more, are addressed in this supplementum edition of *Acta Theologica*.

The majority of articles in this edition were presented at a conference held at the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of the Free State, on 11 April 2018. It was the purpose of the conference and this publication to incorporate not only papers from the different fields of study in Theology, but also Religion and other disciplines. Part of the focus was to address the theme in current contexts. It is for this reason that this publication also incorporates the voices not only of scholars in academic papers, but also, as part of the preface, the unheard voices of students in the form of laments.

The first four articles in this publication are presented from the perspective of the Old Testament. Steve van der Walt focuses on poverty in South Africa from the perspective of the Book of Exodus. Nancy deClaisse-Walford addresses unheard voices in the Book of Psalms, and Lodewyk Sutton looks at violence in the context of the #FeesMustFall movement. The question of debt slaves in the Book of Jeremiah is addressed by Marius Terblanche. The second perspective is that of the New Testament which is considered in the next two articles. Johannine women as paradigms, in the context of India, are addressed by Johnson Thomaskutty. Francois Tolmie asks how Onesimus was heard in the Letter to Philemon, or rather, *eventually* heard.

The third group of articles focuses on a practical and missional approach to the theme. Mudimeli and Van der Westhuizen address the unheard voices of women in the Bible and in society today. Kelebogile Resane highlights the employment crisis in South African society, emphasising how unemployment affects the economy of the church in a tangible manner, making it important that this should be addressed. The next article falls under the discipline of Religion, where Steve deClaisse-Walford addresses the question of Ishmael, the Qur'ān, and the Bible. The last contribution is an inter-disciplinary article by Susan Dry who considers current art-making processes, relating concept development in fine arts to the concept of story-telling, as applied in narrative therapy.

The “laments” (poems) collected in this preface were written as part of a fourth year module at the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of the Free State, called “Wisdom Literature and the Psalms in the Old Testament,” where an assignment was given to the students to present their own voices in the form of a lament (a typical genre found in the Book of Psalms).

We hope and trust that the contributions in this publication will be well received by the scholarly community and that they will stimulate further research so as to enable more voices to be heard.



“Deafening silence of the ...” by Susan Dry

A note of special thanks goes to artist Susan Dry for creating the artwork titled *“Deafening silence of the ...”* for the cover page of this supplementum edition of *Acta Theologica*. Her inspiration for the artwork was the theme of the publication, where she incorporated in a collage all of the titles of the different articles.

UNHEARD VOICES OF STUDENTS IN THE FORM OF LAMENTS:

I feel alone - Charl van Lingen

My Lord, my God, I feel alone,
I call upon your name, and yet no answer.
My heart has turned to stone,
The pain is severe, like cancer.

My wounds cry out for your healing,
Through everything, I keep on seeing.
O Lord, please hear my cries,
where I am broken, here where I lay.

O Lord, You have always been my rock,
Even through the times I placed You in the dock.
My enemies make of me a mock,
but you, O Lord, are my rock.

Like a ship at sea,
I long for peace, I plea,
like the winds searching for a place to rest,
I will make it my quest.

Hoor U my nie? - Dylan Allen

O Here, hoor U my nie?
My stem roep uit soos voeltjies in die môre.
O Here, hoekom hoor ek U nie?
My hart is leeg, want ek hoor U nie.

O Here, hoor tog my aanroeping!
Bring vir my vrede vanuit die stilte
dat ek U kan hoor.
Sonder U sal ek verlore wees.
Die vrees om sonder U te wees,
sal die vyand laat jubel oor my eensaamheid.

Maar in my eensaamheid,
bly ek uitroep na U, o Here,
Die Een wat was, en wat is en wat altyd sal wees.

Ek sal lof bring deur gesange,
aan my Here, die Getroue.
Amen!

Voor die klaagmuur - Danie de Jongh

O Here, ek staan voor die klaagmuur.

My hart is seer en my gemoed is swaar.

Die lewe is net een te veel vir my.
Ek voel nietig en bang, maar die wete oorweldig my,
want U laat my nie alleen nie.

O Here, bring tog my dwarrelende gedagtes tot rus.
Help my om na U te kom,
sonder om skuldig en oorweldig te voel,
sonder om by U te pleit,
sonder om enige iets te vra.
Gee my die geloof soos 'n mosterdsaadjie
om my laste by U te kom neerlê.

O Here, ek is bekommerd oor my studies,
ek is gespanne oor my punte,
ek vrees my toekoms.

O Here, my lewe is in u hande.
U is my toevlug en my skuilplek.
Neem my bekommernis en twyfel, O Heer,
in ruil vir U vrede, wat alles tot rus bring.

Is dit moontlik? - Ingrid Kassier

Is dit moontlik
om van myself af te ontsnap?
Kan ek weghardloop
van my eie menswees af?

Ek wil nie soos die mense om my lyk nie.
O Heer, ek word bang
as ek sien wat hulle as “reg” beskou.
Ek word angstig oor my eie lewe.

Het hierdie wêreld enige iets oor
wat nog eg is?
Aan watter standaard moet ek nog voldoen
voordat ek u stem kan hoor?

Wat die wêreld aan my verkoop
 is net tydelik, O Here.
 Maar wat U vir my gee
 is konstant.

Ek is oorlaai met verwagtinge,
 maar U sê vir my:
 "Word stil - en wag op My."
 Wat meer kan ek doen?

Net U, O Heer, kan my kop laat bedaar.
 Dit is net U
 wat die lastigheid vanuit myself kan ruk
 en my na U toe kan terug keer.

Al wat ek van U kan vra, is om my te
 genees van my verlede.
 Berei my voor vir U toekoms.
 En rig my hede op U.

Oh Lord - Lunette Visser

Oh Lord, why is your gift to me uncertainty?
 Not hope?
 Nor trust in even myself?

I want to find myself
 but who am I in You?
 Who am I for others?

I hoped You, oh Lord, could help me.
 Yet, I dwell in my mind without You,
 I dwell in my life without You!

Have pity on me, oh Lord,
 don't leave me alone
 to fend for myself any longer.

Or should I rather ask why I miss the actual gifts You gave me?
 Forgive me, oh Lord.
 I no longer want to dwell in uncertainty.

Your name - David Dhlamini

Yes, day and night your people praise your name,
 oh, yes, they say, You do marvellous works,

together they come to bless your name.

But, Oh God, great is my misery;
 far from You, that is my reality,
 Your presence is not in my house,
 how can I be the light without your oil?
 Without You, everything is in vain;
 oh, please, reconsider your servant, oh God;
 bring meaning in your servant's house.

Into the dark - Domonic Basson

Into the dark realm I have gone; the Lord my God has abandoned me.
 Here there is no hope; all who enter this place become lost.
 The darkness grows colder; the water keeps rising.
 Tiamat's wrath encompasses me; where is my GOD? Where is my Lord?
 Lotan teases my demise as it encircles my being.
 Where are thee, o God, why have thee forsaken me?
 The cold rises more and more; the waters rising up under my chin.
 Here there is darkness; here there is cold.
 The warm light of Eloah is absent.
 My God, my king, what have I done to endure such suffering?
 Into the dark realm I have come.
 Deep within the belly of Sheol I lay, paralysed and cold.
 The waters keep rising and the serpent continues with its teasing dance.
 Where is my God, where is my Lord?
 Where shall I find the warmth of your life giving grace again?

U sorg altyd - René Wessels

U sorg altyd vir my, U is altyd daar vir my

U sorg altyd vir my, Here
 deur al die moeilike tye,
 deur al die moeilike keuses.
 U sorg altyd vir my, Here.
 U laat my wêreld tuimel.
 Ek voel soms alleen, Here.

U help my om weer myself te wees, Here.
 Here, sorg weer vir my, ontferm U oor my, Here.
 Wees weer my vesting, Here.
 U red my van alle aanvalle, Here.

Here, ek weet U sorg vir alles en vir my, want U is getrou, Here.
 U sorg altyd, want U ontferm U altyd, Here.
 Here, ek het swak geword en afgedwaal, Here.

Here, U help my. U hoor my as ek roep na U.
 U is my toevlug en veilige vesting wat my altyd beskerm.
 U, Here, is altyd getrou aan my.

Brokenness – Willie Beets

Too many times you kept me away.
 You stuck me in some places where I didn't want to stay.
 I felt lost in my mind.
 There was nothing to find.
 Every time you just come running back.
 And turn my world black.
 Your actions, like a bleeding blade, cut deep.
 So deep, I cannot stand on my feet.
 Defeated by your deadly glance I stood in fear.
 Realizing no one was near.
 Overwhelmed and silent you made me.
 I turned into a person I don't want to be.
 My heart stopped and split in two.
 Broken by the presence of you.
 You took my crown.
 And I fell down.
 I fought hard to still be alive;
 But the doctor's words were, "Sorry we did try".
 Heartless on the ground.
 With the peeping heart monitor sound.
 Death overcame.
 Now I'll never be the same.

Poverty, the Tears of Christ – Lodewyk Sutton

I am subject to suppression, no food;
 I am a victim of social injustice, no home;
 I am being accused of laziness, no job;
 Jesus Christ, who is Sovereign over all, cries for me.

We are subject to economic suppression, no wealth;
 We are a victim of political injustice, no equality;
 We are accused of absence of recognition, no dignity;
 Jesus Christ, who is Sovereign over all, cries for us.

Nature is subject to human suppression, no resources;
Nature is victim of human greed, no growth;
Nature is accused of global warming, no life;
Jesus Christ, who is Sovereign over all, cries for nature.

God is subject to the pain of his children, no joy;
God is victim of the hate of humans for each other, no love;
God is accused of being not there, no truth;
Jesus Christ, who is Sovereign over all, loves all.

Jesus Christ, who is Sovereign over all, cries for me;
Jesus Christ, who is Sovereign over all, cries for us;
Jesus Christ, who is Sovereign over all, cries for nature;
Jesus Christ, who is Sovereign over all, loves me, us and nature.