Shadows of Trauma, New Songs of Resilience: A Reading of Psalm 96

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Trauma scholars and practitioners are increasingly exploring the potential of theater, poetry, music, and creative writing for trauma healing; biblical Hebrew poetry might function in a similar way.[1] This article explores how the book of Psalms facilitates the work of healing and resilience building through the communal singing of prayers.

As a case study, I have selected Ps 96, a joyful hymn celebrating God's role as creator and judge. On the surface, trauma and the need for resilience may seem alien to the poetry of this particular psalm, but the traumatic shadows of oppression, injustice, and divine absence hover just below the exuberant calls to worship. The psalm is not about trauma, nor does it seem to be responsive to an acute traumatic situation. Nevertheless, the psalm is the product of a people who have survived trauma and are learning to sing a new song. Careful attention to this psalm, its reception within the Hebrew Bible (1 Chr 16:23–33), and its ancient versions (LXX Ps 95:1) serves as a strong case study for how the book of Psalms might equip its audiences to process community memories of past trauma and build resilience to survive future adversity.

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The content and context of Psalm 96

Psalm 96 is one of the "Yhwh mlk" songs (Ps 93–100) that celebrate the kingship of YHWH and its implications for YHWH's people.[2] Volitional language that invites and demands an active, positive response from audiences dominates Ps 96. Over the course of thirteen verses, the psalmist calls creation—all nature, including all humanity—to sing, to bless, to worship, to celebrate, and to tell the story about who YHWH is and what YHWH has done. Both thematically and linguistically, the psalm centers around the affirmation in v. 10a that "YHWH is king."[3] The psalm's structure, language, and theme clearly locate it within the generic category of hymn. This hymn does, however, contain shadows of trauma that texture the psalm's joyful tapestry. The way these shadows manifest within the hymn reflects, among other things, the creative work of storytelling that is a necessary part of survival and resilience in a world filled with challenges.

Shadows of trauma

As William Faulkner famously observed out of his own experience, "The past is never dead. It's not even past."[4] On a more technical level, psychoanalyst Jeffrey Prager describes the lingering (even generational) impacts of traumatic realities:

1. E.g., Rob Smith, "Music, Singing, and Emotions: Exploring the Connections," *Them* 37 (2012): 465–479; Susan Hadley and George Yancy, eds., *Therapeutic Uses of Rap and Hip-Hop* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Polly Walker, "Acting Together to Disrupt Cycles of Violence: Performance and Social Healing," in *Breaking Intergenerational Cycles of Repetition: A Global Dialogue on Historical Trauma and Memory*, ed. Gobodo-Madikizela (Toronto: Barbara Budrich, 2016), 325–342; Juliet Hess, "Moving beyond Resilience Education: Musical Counterstorytelling," *Music Education Research* 21.5 (2019): 488–502; Elly Scrine, "The Limits of Resilience and the Need for Resistance: Articulating the Role of Music Therapy with Young People Within a Shifting Trauma Paradigm," *Frontiers in Psychology* 21 (2021): 1–12.

2. Cf. David M. Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93–100* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997); Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 494–495.

3. W. Dennis Jr. Tucker, "Hortatory Discourse and Psalm 96," *VT* 61 (2011): 119–132.

4. William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Random House, 1951), 92.

The shadow of generations of ancestors and foreign communities looms around and alongside the psalmist's consciousness, thus connecting the psalmist to the memories and lingering realities of past traumas.

> Traumatic experiences live beyond those who are the direct recipients. We know how unwittingly new generations, in fact, can *inhabit* a past that preceded them, can be *carriers* of it, can continue to live in it, reproduce it, pass it on and, at the same time, imagine or think themselves free from their history.[5]

Several aspects of Ps 96 reflect the shadows of trauma that appear to loom large in the memory of the psalmist. Careful attention to the language and themes of Ps 96 helps pull on the threads of this tapestry of joy and contentment to identify some of the sociological-theological challenges with which the psalmist was wrestling—and implicitly invites those who use this song-prayer-poem to wrestle with these challenges alongside the psalmist.

First, the shadow of generations of ancestors and foreign communities looms around and alongside the psalmist's consciousness, thus connecting the psalmist to the memories and lingering realities of past traumas. For example, "the nations" and "the peoples" are prominent within the hymn, which provides the backdrop for the psalm's celebration of YHWH's justice as the nations and their gods become a foil for YHWH. Five out of thirteen verses include a specific reference to foreign nations (vv. 3, 5, 7, 10, 13), with seven explicit appearances of the term "nations" or "peoples." The count expands if one includes more implicit references such as the implied subjects of the imperatives to "Ascribe to YHWH the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts." (v. 8) and the assumed inclusion of the nations who inhabit the earth in the phrase "all the earth" (vv. 1, 9). The psalm opens with a call for "all the earth" to join in worship of YHWH, an addressee broadly inclusive of both the human and non-human parts of creation (v. 1b). The psalmist proceeds to specify that this worship should include proclamation to the nations about YHWH and YHWH's superiority over their own gods (vv. 3–5):[6]

> Recount (pl.) among the nations his glory,
> among all the peoples his wonderful acts!
> For great is YHWH and greatly to be praised—
> he is to be feared above all gods.
> For all the gods of the peoples are worthless,
> but YHWH *the heavens* made!

As the psalm progresses, the psalmist calls up on the nations themselves to join in this worship and proclamation of YHWH's superiority to even more nations (v. 7, 10):

> Ascribe (pl.) to YHWH, families of peoples!
> ascribe (pl.) to YHWH glory and strength!
> Say among the nations: "YHWH is king!"
> Also, "The world is firmly established,
> it will never be moved;
> he will judge peoples with equity!"

The recurring mention of the (foreign) nations and peoples of the earth suggests that these powers loom large in the psalmist's awareness. Such would be the case at almost any point in Israel's turbulent history, but particularly after Assyrian and Babylonian incursion into the Levant and Judah's complete loss of political autonomy (eighth-sixth centuries B.C.E.). Though some biblical texts suggest the Judean people enjoyed a relatively comfortable relationship with their Persian overlords (e.g., Isa 44:24–45:8, Ezra 7), others indicate an economically distressed context in which many still felt the social-political-theological tension of living as God's chosen people under foreign rule (e.g., Neh 5, Est, Dan 6).[7]

Second, the shadows of trauma-inducing injustice underlie the psalmist's highlighting of the promise that YHWH will enforce justice since such a promise lacks much meaning for worshippers who have not experienced the pain of inequity, discrimination, oppression, or exploitation. Verse 10c, as the third line in a verse, marks a rhetorically jarring and thus significant break from the psalm's otherwise regular bicolon or two-line structure:

> Say among the nations: "YHWH is king!"
> Also, "The world is firmly established,
> it will never be moved;
> he will judge peoples with equity!"

While the structural disruption could simply be the result of a redactor who, as Frank-Lothar Hossfeld concluded, "left traces behind," the effect of the poetic disruption within the final form of the psalm is to emphasize and draw attention to this juridical aspect of YHWH's reign.[8] This divine characteristic is the occasion for praise again at the conclusion of the psalm using different language (v. 13):

> Before YHWH—for he comes!
> For he comes to judge the earth!

5. Jeffrey Prager, "Disrupting the Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma: Recovering Humanity, Repairing Generations," in *Breaking Intergenerational Cycles of Repetition: A Global Dialogue on Historical Trauma and Memory*, ed. Gobodo-Madikizela (Toronto: Barbara Budrich, 2016), 18.

6. All translations mine.

7. See, for example, Christopher M. Jones, "Embedded Written Documents as Colonial Mimicry in Ezra-Nehemiah," *BibInt* 26 (2018): 158–181.

8. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 464.

He will judge the world with righteousness
and peoples with his truth.

This repeated focus on divine justice—on judgments that are equitable, righteous, and trustworthy—suggests a context in which such justice is lacking.

Injustice is not, unfortunately, an unusual phenomenon in human history, and the postexilic community that most likely produced Ps 96 dealt with periods of economic depression, exploitation of the situation by the wealthy of society, and the challenges of being a relatively powerless community—all situations and experiences that would inspire the psalmist's cry for righteous judgment of the earth.[9] I would comfortably hazard that a society has never existed *free* from the challenges of social class, income inequality, abuse of power, and in-group/out-group-based discrimination. Trauma scholarship has been giving increasing attention to the ways that sustained encounters with persistent challenges such as poverty or colonializing injustice can be traumatizing and/or produce trauma symptoms in individuals and communities.[10] Elly Scrine observes that "while many principles of trauma-informed practice indicate noble intentions, they also elude to the failure of the Western trauma paradigm to account for the pervasiveness and persistence of harm embedded within our existing systems."[11] Following the insights of Africana studies scholar Shawn Ginwright and decolonial trauma theorists, Scrine proposes a music therapy approach in which group songwriting provides a means of naming systemic challenges, identifying healthy resistance strategies, and reassigning agency to the songwriters.[12] While care should be taken in applying twenty-first century insights and patterns onto the ancient Near Eastern (ANE) audiences of Ps 96, attention to how decades (and even centuries) of economic depression, socioeconomic disparity, forced migration, and imperialism could cast long shadows over the psalmist's own songwriting is warranted, and the repeated references to justice might very well reflect these shadows.

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Finally, the good news the psalmist exhorts audiences to tell among the nations is encapsulated by the word "salvation" in v. 2, which implies memory of a situation—or situations—in which salvation was necessary. The exuberance of the praise resulting from this salvation throughout the entirety of the psalm suggests that the salvation YHWH accomplished was significant. By extension, the situation(s) requiring salvation must also have been significant.

Together, these allusive textual elements indicate that the psalmist of Ps 96 who sings with joy does so from a context of traumatic memory and experience—or at least from a context of significant adversity that has taken a toll. The psalm is not *about* this trauma, however, but rather reflects the work of trauma *healing* and *resilience* building as it reframes the narratives that provide the larger context of this song of praise.

Stories of Healing

In Ps 96, the psalmist does not allow the shadows of trauma to dominate the song. The crises that required salvation, the injustice that demanded justice, and the nations from which the psalmist's community desired liberation all recede into the background as the psalmist celebrates the memory and/or hope of salvation, justice, and liberation. In these stories of healing we can see patterns of reframing, reclaiming narratives, and reestablishing confidence that resonate with modern strategies of trauma healing.[13]

9. The dating of individual psalms is notoriously difficult. While Howard dates Ps 96 (as part of the larger Ps 93–100 collection) to monarchic times (*The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 190–191), most scholars have located the composition of this psalm in the postexilic period (for a survey cf. Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51—100*, WBC 20 [Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1990], 505–507). As a "backstop" in dating, the use of Ps 96 in 1 Chr 16 indicates that the psalm was well-known at least by the writing of Chronicles (ca. 300–250 B.C.E.). W.H. Bellinger Jr. has insightfully argued, however, that the difficulty in assigning precise dates or contexts to individual psalms is actually one of the rhetorical-pastoral strengths of the literature in that these song-prayer-poems are easily adaptable to a wide range of situations (*Psalms: A Guide to Studying the Psalter*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012], 32). Such is the case with Ps 96, which is most likely a postexilic composition: however close chronologically to the trauma of exile the psalmist was, the psalmist's words have relevance to the situations of subsequent generations of worshippers who use them.

10. Social worker Michal Shamai, for example, concludes from his study of impoverished women in Israel that "the reality of people living in poverty involves ongoing exposure to traumatic situations, even without experiencing a specific individual trauma. One of the most severe outcomes of poverty is the development of life narratives, which, as in other cases of collective trauma, become an inter-generational keystone of the collective set of beliefs and identity" ("Is Poverty a Collective Trauma? A Joint Learning Process with Women Living in Poverty in the City of Haifa in Israel," *British Journal of Social Work* 48 [2018]: 1731). See also Sara H. Bollens and Robert A. Fox, "Assessment of Trauma Symptoms in Toddlers and Preschoolers Living in Poverty," *Child Maltreatment* 24.3 (2019): 275–285.

11. Scrine, "The Limits of Resilience," 2.

12. Scrine, "The Limits of Resilience," 1–12.

13. See, for example, Judith Herman's assertion that trauma recovery necessarily involves the empowerment of survivors—which can include empowering them to confront stressors, threats, and dangers willingly (*Trauma and Recovery* [New York: BasicBooks, 1997], 197). Along these lines, Edward Rynearson's "restorative retelling" approach to trauma healing is predicated upon the way that reclaiming the narrative of a traumatic experience can help survivors reclaim control of traumatic memories that dominate their lives (e.g., "The Narrative

First, the psalm highlights the impotence of the powers behind the enemy nations. The polytheistic world of the ANE believed a people's wealth and military might reflected the strength of the god(s) that people worshipped. The city of Babylon's rise to political prominence over the cities of Nippur and Uruk, for example, was perceived as evidence that Babylon's patron god, Marduk, was stronger than the patron gods of those other cities.[14] Within this context, the psalmist polemically declares in Ps 96:4b–5:

> [YHWH] is to be feared above all gods.
> For all the gods of the peoples are worthless,
> but YHWH *the heavens* made!

The wordplay between "gods" (*elohim*) and the adjective "worthless" or "insufficient" (*elilim*) draws attention rhetorically to the ideological point the psalmist is making. The psalmist is "de-clawing" the enemy nations by taking away any belief in the power of the gods that patronized them, exposing the emperor's lack of clothes.

Second, the nations themselves are depicted as subservient to YHWH—the God of the psalmist who possesses all the strength (v. 6) the nations' gods lack. In a poetic scene that echoes countless ancient Near Eastern images of conquered or weaker peoples bringing tribute to the reigning power (such as on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III or the Apadana Reliefs in Persepolis), plural imperatives in vv. 8–10a call for the "families of peoples" to bring tribute and offerings to the royal court of YHWH:

> Ascribe to YHWH the glory of his name!
> Lift up an offering and come into his courts!
> Worship YHWH in the splendor of holiness!
> Tremble before him all the earth!
> Say among the nations: "YHWH is king!"

The specific addressee of the plural imperative "say" in v. 10a is ambiguous. The psalm uses plural imperatives throughout and clearly imagines a cosmic, universal call to worship. At the same time, the vocative mention of "families of peoples" (v. 7a) that begins the series of imperatives in this subsection of the psalm (vv. 7–10) suggests that the command to declare YHWH's kingship is part of the nations' act of surrender and homage.[15] The line thus takes on the tone of an oath of allegiance: I, an enemy nation, swear fealty to the true king YHWH. By narrating the nations' relationship to YHWH in this way, the psalmist invites the worshippers who voice this psalm to see themselves already sitting securely on the side of power (i.e., YHWH) rather than in a position of powerlessness. This kind of reframing of reality can help worshippers move toward healing.

Resilience is neither the absence of adversity nor its avoidance. Instead, resilience involves the deployment of emotional, behavioral, social, and spiritual factors that allow for coping and even flourishing in the midst of life's challenges. Those who are resilient are able to adapt through changing circumstances, and crafting something "new" out of a turbulent history and complex current reality is a form of adaptation.

Finally, the psalmist of Ps 96 envisions righteous judgments taking place to correct the injustices of the (implied) present reality. As noted previously, the repeated references to YHWH's justice imply a context in which such justice was lacking. Notably, these references are largely verbal, not simply adjectival—active and not merely descriptive. The emphasis is on YHWH not just *being* just but actually *judging*. The promise of decisive action and the change that it brings is a point of hope for those languishing in the seemingly endless status quo.

Though Ps 96 is by no means a narrative psalm, therefore, the negative space its praises create tells a story of healing from adversity. The psalmist is celebrating because the crises that had a beginning also have an end—whether realized or anticipated.

A song of resilience

The psalmist of Ps 96 explicitly describes the song she sings as a "new song." Both the "new" and the "song" halves of this description are significant for the building of resilience this psalm facilitates.

First, the "newness" of the song reflects a reappraisal of circumstances and a recommitment to the work of living. Resilience is neither the absence of adversity nor its avoidance. Instead, resilience involves the deployment of emotional, behavioral, social, and spiritual factors that allow for coping and even flourishing in the midst of life's challenges.[16] Those who are resilient are able to

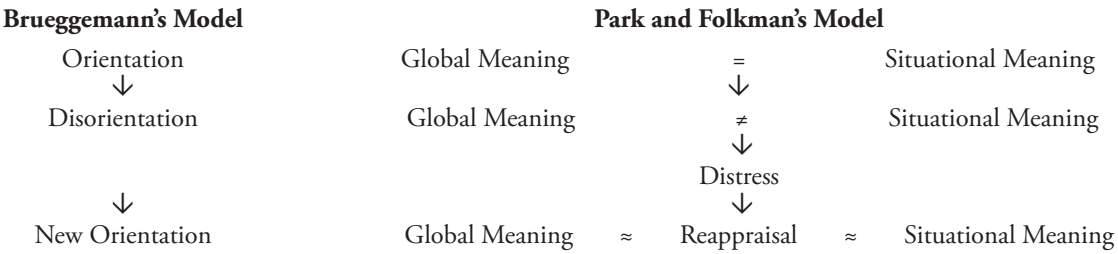
Labyrinth of Violent Dying," *Death Studies* 29.4 [2005]: 351–360).

14. W. G. Lambert, "The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I: A Turning Point in the History of Ancient Mesopotamian Religion," in *The Seed of Wisdom; Essays in Honour of T. J. Meek*, eds. W. Stewart McCullough, Theophile James Meek, and Oriental Club of Toronto (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 6–7.

15. Scholars do not agree on how to divide this psalm, and how exactly v. 10 relates to its surrounding material is a crux of the problem (cf. Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014], 719). I think v. 10 does serve as a general call to name YHWH as king, but on the heels of calls for the nations specifically to offer worship, I believe reading the verse as primarily part of the nations' act of submission makes sense.

16. E.g., Erica Frydenberg, *Adolescent Coping: Advances in Theory, Research and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2008), 175–197.

Figure 1



adapt through changing circumstances, and crafting something "new" out of a turbulent history and complex current reality is a form of adaptation. Walter Brueggemann describes the psalms as reflecting diverse stages in "the flow of human life": times of orientation in which life makes sense and truths seem stable; times of disorientation in which certainties and expectations fall apart; and times of new orientation in which a new, more complex coherence is embraced in light of challenges and changes.[17] These psalms of new orientation

> bear witness to the surprising gift of new life just when none had been expected. That new orientation is not a return to the old stable orientation, for there is no going back. The psalmists know that we can never go home again…. [S]uch statements of new orientation always have in their background statements of trouble. Israelite praise characteristically comes out of the depths, out of the Pit from which we are surprised to come, because the situation seemed unresolvable.[18]

In line with Brueggemann's model of the Psalms, a study by Crystal Park and Susan Folkman maps the way that resilient individuals and communities undergo a process of reappraisal in which they find ways to reconcile "global" and "situational meaning," or general beliefs with lived experiences.[19] (Figure 1.)

This process of adaptive meaning-making allows those experiencing trauma and adversity to see their experiences in new ways and therefore to move forward in new ways.

In Ps 96, the psalmist reframes the immediate realities of injustice and imperial power into a larger story of YHWH's triumphant reign. The application of the modifier "new" to the noun "song"

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in the Hebrew Bible (and extending into the New Testament) frequently—if not exclusively—occurs within the context of holy war and the defeat of enemies, whether literal, spiritualized, immediate, or remembered (Ps 33:3, 40:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9, 149:1; Isa 42:10; Rev 5:9, 14:3).[20] The word *basar*, "to tell the good news," likewise connotes battle imagery (96:2b).[21] Furthermore, the psalmist's relationship to YHWH within the psalm as loyal subject and chief herald firmly locates the psalmist on the side of victory. Shadows of trauma linger in the background, but the "new song" of the psalm reappraises reality in order to celebrate and anticipate future goodness.[22] As Walter Brueggemann describes, "Such a psalm is always an act of profound hope, for such a realm has clearly not been established simply by the use of the psalm.… It is making the future momentarily present now through word, gesture, practice."[23]

Second, the act of "singing" itself can be a powerful factor in promoting resilience. Psychologists and therapists are giving increasing attention to how trauma and adversity impacts the body itself and not just the mind. The work of Peter Levine and Bessel van der Kolk, among others, has popularized awareness of how attention to the body and not just the mind must therefore be part of the work of healing and growth.[24] Singing is not simply

17. Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 19.

18. Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 123–124.

19. Crystal L. Park and Susan Folkman, "Meaning in the Context of Stress and Coping," *Review of General Psychology* 1.2 (1997): 115–144. Global meaning is "a person's enduring beliefs and valued goals" (116) related to the world, the self, and the self in the world (118–119). Park and Folkman identify religion as an example of global meaning since it provides meaning, purpose, motivation for acting, and a way to frame traumatic events (121). Situational meaning is "the interaction of a person's global beliefs and goals and the circumstances of a particular person-environment transaction" (121). It involves an initial appraisal of an event/situation's relevance, the search for meaning, and the meaning constructed in the event/situation's aftermath (121–122).

20. Cf. Tremper Longman III, "Psalm 98," *JETS* 27 (1984): 269; Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51—100*, WBC 20 (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1990), 513.

21. Cf. James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 308.

22. Tate, *Psalms 51—100*, 514.

23. Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 145.

24. Peter A. Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness* (Berkeley, Calif.: North Atlantic Books, 2010); Bessel A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin, 2014).

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an activity of the mind, but also of the body. Levine notes that the use of religious singing and chanting to "lighten the load of earthly existence" is an almost universal human phenomenon. He goes on to explain, "When you open up to chant or sing in deep, resonant lower belly tones, you also open up your chest (heart and lungs), mouth and throat, pleasurably stimulating the many serpentine branches of the vagus nerve."[25] When this type of vocalizing or singing is done in community—as the plural verbs of Ps 96 suggest—the positive impact of the exercise is compounded through social engagement.[26] While the psalmist of Ps 96 could not have described the biological-neurological reasons that singing and inviting others to sing with her made her feel better, therefore, she may have recognized that it did.

Psalm 96 therefore invites worshippers—ancient and modern—into the critical work of resilience building. It calls for acknowledgment of the need for justice in an unjust world filled with traumas of various kinds, and it calls for confident envisioning of a future in which such justice becomes reality. It calls for communities to join together in singing, thus reinforcing social support as well as stimulating physical processes that promote health and healing. Psalm 96 invites the singing of new songs each time worshippers return to its text.

The content and context of Psalm 96's reception

Efforts to impose modern trauma theory and its assumptions about how human beings prepare for, respond to, and heal from traumatic events on the biblical text necessarily involve some level of (responsible, informed) speculation. Would an ancient Near Eastern woman have considered traumatizing an event that I would as a twenty-first century Western white woman? Were the same patterns of processing and recovery operative in Persian-period Yehud as they are in 2022 North America or even 2022 Israel? We cannot properly diagnose from afar, and we cannot ever know with certainty how accurate our speculations may be.

At the same time, careful attention to the earliest receptions of Ps 96 can give us some degree of confirmation that this text did in fact serve a community function as offering narratives of healing and resiliency amid ongoing traumatic impact. I will briefly point to three of the earliest examples of this reception to illustrate this point.

First, the placement of Ps 96 in the MT Psalter immediately following Ps 95 is significant. Psalm 95 begins with joy but concludes in vv. 8–11 with a stark reminder of Israel's past failures in relationship to YHWH:

> Do not harden your heart like at Meribah
> on the day at Massah in the wilderness
> when your fathers tested me—
> they tried me, even having seen my work.
> For forty years I loathed the generation, and I said:
> "A people—they are wanderers of heart,
> and they do not know my ways."
> Concerning whom I swore in my anger:
> (they would not) enter into my rest!

As Beth LaNeel Tanner observes, "if the context of following Psalm 95 is taken seriously, this *new song* is one that comes after the history lesson of the last song. The new song is praise after great contemplation on the sinful nature of humanity and the often fickle nature of our songs."[27] The canonical context of Ps 96 therefore locates it immediately following a psalm that relives the traumatic experience of wilderness rebellion (cf. Exod 17:1–7, Num 20:1–13).

Second, almost the entirety of Ps 96 appears in 1 Chr 16 as David's song of thanksgiving upon bringing the ark to Jerusalem, often called the "Levitical Medley." The Chronicler sandwiches Ps 96 between large segments of Ps 105 and 106:

Levitical Medley	**MT Psalter**
1 Chr 16:8–22	Ps 105:1–15
1 Chr 16:23–33	Ps 96:1b–13
1 Chr 16:34–36	Ps 106:1, 47–48

The Chronicler's use of these psalms indicates that they were well-known—and likely well-used—by the time of Chronicles' composition (ca. 300–250 B.C.E.). The Chronicler's use of these psalms reflects their association with a past "Golden Age," which was important for grounding the postexilic community as it sought to establish its new identity in Persian-period Yehud.[28] Significantly, the psalm in 1 Chr 16 does not shy away from the negative aspects

25. Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice*, 125. He notes that the vagus nerve or enteric nervous system produces 95 percent of the body's serotonin, "and thus is a primary natural medicine factory and warehouse for feel-good hormones" (121).

26. Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice*, 127.

27. Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 719.

28. David Willgren, *The Formation of the "Book" of Psalms: Reconsidering the Transmission and Canonization of Psalmody in Light of Material Culture and the Poetics of Anthologies*, FAT 2 88 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 215.

This pattern of acknowledging negative experiences and integrating them into a narrative of survival and success is a key aspect of "grit," or the resiliency necessary to push through adversity to accomplish one's goals.

of this past Golden Age (e.g., battles with Philistines, the death of Uzzah, the conflict with Michal). Deirdre Fulton rightly identifies this pattern of acknowledging negative experiences and integrating them into a narrative of survival and success is a key aspect of "grit," or the resiliency necessary to push through adversity to accomplish one's goals.[29] Just as shadows of trauma linger in the praise of Ps 96, shadows from Israel's past—including the (from the Chronicler's perspective) recent Babylonian exile—linger in the structuring of the Chronicles narrative and its use of the Ps 96 material.[30]

Third, the superscription that becomes attached to the Greek translation of Ps 96 reinforces the Chronicler's reception of the psalm by associating it with the reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple after the Babylonian exile: "when the house was being rebuilt after the captivity; an ode of David" (LXX Ps 95:1). The ascription of the psalm to the Davidic collection also perhaps reflects awareness of the Chronicles material. The linking of Ps 96 with the experience of reconstruction after exile suggests its material was helpful to the community during this challenging period.

Careful attention to the text and reception of Ps 96 and, by extension, the function this psalm may have played within the ancient Israelite faith community reveals that in the arrangement of the MT Psalter, in the Levitical Medley of 1 Chr 16, and in the LXX translation, Ps 96's celebratory call to sing a "new song" is always located in the wake of traumatic associations:

	MT Psalter	**Chronicles**	**LXX**
Traumatic material	Ps 95	the ark narrative Ps 105	"the captivity"
Healing/ resilience material	↓ Ps 96	↓ Ps 96	↓ Ps 95 [MT Ps 96]

This reception therefore supports my reading of Ps 96 as a song useful—and long recognized as useful—for processing and healing from communal, remembered trauma and for building resilience for life moving forward.

Conclusion

Life in the world is never free from the shadows of trauma, both individual and collective. One important aspect of trauma healing involves survivors building the resources—mental, social, spiritual—to accept and mourn these traumas but then find ways to live full, integrated lives. Ideally, the worship of faith communities should reflect awareness of the need for this work and offer some of these resources for healing and resilience. The book of Psalms exemplifies this type of integrated worship. Even the most joyful of hymns do not deny the reality of traumatic experience and its effects on worshippers; at the same time, these sung communal prayers facilitate the process of healing from past traumas and building the resilience to survive future ones.

29. Cf. Deirdre N. Fulton, "'Gather and Rescue Us from Among the Nations': A Reading of 1 Chronicles 16 in Light of the Ark Narrative (1 Chr 13–15)" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Region of the Society of Biblical Literature, Irving, Texas, 5 March 2022); cf. Angela Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* (New York: Scribner, 2016).

30. Cf. Louis Jonker, "The Chronicler Singing Psalms: Revisiting the Chronicler's Psalm in 1 Chronicles 16," in *"My Spirit at Rest in the North Country" (Zechariah 6.8): Collected Communications to the XXth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Helsinki 2010*, eds. Hermann Michael Niemann and Matthias Augustin, BEATAJ 57 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 130.