

# Psalms and Prayers

*Bob Becking*

*Eric Peels*

*Eds.*

BRILL

oudtestamentische studiën  
old testament studies

## Psalms and Prayers

# Oudtestamentische Studiën

Old Testament Studies  
published on behalf of the Societies for  
Old Testament Studies in the Netherlands and  
Belgium, South Africa, the United Kingdom  
and Ireland

*Editor*

B. Becking  
Utrecht

*Editorial Board*

H.G.M. Williamson  
Oxford

H.F. Van Rooy  
Potchefstroom

M. Vervenne  
Leuven

VOLUME 55

# Psalms and Prayers

Papers Read at the Joint Meeting of  
the Society of Old Testament Study and  
Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in  
Nederland en België, Apeldoorn August 2006

*Edited by*

Bob Becking and Eric Peels



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON  
2007

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISSN 0169-7226

ISBN 978 90 04 16032 3

Copyright 2007 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.  
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Hotei Publishing,  
IDC Publishers, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and VSP.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Brill provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to  
The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive,  
Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA.  
Fees are subject to change.

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
ERIC PEELS	
Psalms and Prayers in the Book of Chronicles .....	9
PANCRATIUS C. BEENTJES	
“Our Father...”: An Inherited Title and its Presence (or Absence) in the Psalms? .....	45
ADRIAN H.W. CURTIS	
The Ark and the Cherubim in the Psalms .....	65
JOHN DAY	
The Hodayot’s Use of the Psalter: Text-critical Contributions (Book 1) .....	79
JOHN ELWOLDE	
Psalm 103: Design, Boundaries, and Mergers .....	109
JAN FOKKELMAN	
Are Idols Hiding in Psalm 139:20? .....	119
JAN HOLMAN	
Inside Outside Psalm 55: How Jonah Grew out of a Psalmist’s Conceit .....	129
ALASTAIR G. HUNTER	
The Demarcation of Hymns and Prayers in the Prophets (2) ...	141
MARJO C.A. KORPEL	
Psalm 69: The Petitioner’s Understanding of Himself, His God, and His Enemies .....	159
CHRISTIANE DE VOS AND GERT KWAKKEL	
<i>Argumenta ad Deum</i> in the Plague Prayers of Mursili II and in the Book of Psalms .....	181
PAUL SANDERS	
The Discourse of Praying: Reading Nehemiah 1 .....	219
EEP TALSTRA	

Sing to the LORD a New Song .....	237
ROGER TOMES	
The Prayer of Isaiah and the Sundial of Ahaz (2 Kgs 20:11) .....	253
JAAP VAN DORP	
King and Community: Joining with David in Prayer .....	267
HOWARD N. WALLACE	
Prayer and Practice in the Psalms .....	279
GORDON WENHAM	
Index of Textual References .....	297
Index of Authors .....	304

## INTRODUCTION

Eric Peels

*Universiteit der Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken,  
Apeldoorn—The Netherlands*

The papers collected in this volume were all read at the Joint Meeting of The Society for Old Testament Study (SOTS) and the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België (OTW), in Apeldoorn, 21–24 August 2006.<sup>1</sup> The Dutch and British Old Testament Societies foster a long tradition of Joint Meetings, of which this was the 13th since the start in 1970, now hosted by the Theological University of Apeldoorn, the Netherlands. The themes of two previous Joint Meetings concerned the historical literature of the Old Testament (1999, OTW together with the Oud-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap van Suid-Afrika), and the prophetic literature of the Old Testament (2000, SOTS and OTW). This time the choice fell on the poetic literature of the Old Testament and was given the overarching theme ‘Psalms and Prayers’.

If the Old Testament’s narrative materials relate to what God has done, and the prophetic literature reports what God has said, the Psalms present the response of the people to the acts and words of God, and not seldom also to God’s inaction and God’s silence. The whole breadth and depth of human life comes to the surface in the biblical psalms. That makes them so useful for public worship, family worship and private devotion among Jews and Christians. The Psalter is a very particular collection of תהלות and תהלים, two terms for the two fundamental forms of this literature, texts of praise and prayer, hymns and laments. They reflect the polar experiences of human life, are reactions to good times and bad, words of despair and hope, joy and sorrow, admiration and utter distress. In this way they offer guidance and a reflection on the opportunities and problems of life. Renewed

---

<sup>1</sup> Only one paper that was read during the 2006 Joint Meeting is not included in this volume, since it was intended for publication in the Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies: S. Gillingham, ‘Psalm 8 through the Centuries’, in: J.S. Burnett, W.H. Bellinger and W.D. Tucker (eds), *Reading the Psalms in a New Century* (T & T Clark International, London).

study of psalms and prayers as forms of religious expression can be helpful to our multi-cultural and secularized Western societies.

In the daily practice of piety and devotion, the Old Testament psalms have played an important role throughout the ages. It may be no exaggeration to say that to an average bible reader the book of psalms is best known, more than any other Old Testament book. It is telling that the Dead Sea scrolls contain relatively so many texts with psalms and prayers, that there are many more Greek manuscripts of the Psalter available than of any other Old Testament book, and also that the apocrypha and pseudepigraphic literature are replete with psalms and prayers.

The Psalter contains many of the main theological themes that run throughout Scripture: law and covenant, Zion and kingship, righteousness and wickedness, the incomparability of YHWH and the foolishness of idolatry, etc. Hence, Luther in his second introduction to the German Psalter wrote: '[The Psalter] might well be called a little Bible. It comprises most beautifully and briefly everything that is in the entire Bible. It is truly a fine enchiridion or handbook. In fact, I have a notion that the Holy Spirit wanted to take the trouble himself to compile a short Bible and book of examples of all Christendom or all saints so that anyone who could not read the whole Bible would anyway have almost an entire summary of it, comprised in one little book' (*Luther's Works*, 35:254).

It is precisely this 'one little book' that provides the Old Testament scholar with many questions and problems concerning linguistic, exegetical, hermeneutical, and theological issues. Starting with the pioneering work of Herman Gunkel and Sigmund Mowinckel, the last century showed an increasing and vivid interest in the Psalter. The research of psalms and prayers in the Old Testament and related areas has been particularly broadened and deepened during the last decades. Traditional diachronic approaches are of enduring importance with their inquiry of the *genres* of the psalms and their possible *Sitz im Leben* and with the investigation of the traditions embodied in these psalms. The relation between poetry and ritual remains a vexing problem, especially with regard to royal psalms or the YHWH *mālak*-psalms. Other questions of interest relate to the different collections of psalms, the extra canonical psalms in the Qumran Psalter or in the Peshitta, and to the titles of the Psalms, as well as ongoing comparative research.

At the same time there has been a gradual shift of interest to the area of the study of Hebrew poetry, with a great variety of linguistic,

literary and structural approaches. The syntax, structure, vocabulary and imagery of the psalms are being scrutinized. In addition, the question of how to read the Psalter holistically as a book has come to the fore, although this approach is sometimes severely criticized. The Psalter might not just be an arbitrary anthology, but a deliberate composition, an editorial unity. That poses the problem as to how individual psalms and collections fit together. This pertains to smaller groupings of psalms, especially adjacent psalms, and to the overall structure of the Psalter. Alongside these lines of research there are many studies that pay intensive attention to questions concerning the theology of psalms and prayers, and the hermeneutical issues regarding their explanation and appropriation, e.g. their reception history.

The contributions to this volume cover a broad spectrum of subjects. Together they mirror most of the current issues and concerns that belong generally to the study of psalms and prayers in our days. The fifteen papers can be divided into five 'units'. The first and largest group is that which studies exegetical and thematic questions relating to the Psalter itself (Holman, De Vos/Kwakkel, Curtis, Day, Tomes, Hunter). The second group consists of papers concerning prayers outside the Psalter (Beentjes, Van Dorp, Talstra). The third group questions the practical use and appropriation of the psalms by those utilizing them (Wallace, Wenham). The fourth group investigates issues of structure and textual demarcation (Fokkelman, Korpel). The fifth and final group is concerned with comparative research (Elwolde, Sanders).

Following upon his earlier studies on Psalm 139, Holman researches this psalm for possible traces of rivalling deities. Ancient Israel's religion never consisted of the monolatry of  $\text{YHWH}$  to the exclusion of all other godheads. A later monopolizing Yahwistic tendency has retouched the psalm texts in this respect, which has resulted in many a *crux interpretum*. Many Bible translations provide in this respect a moralizing interpretation, such as in the case of Ps. 139:20. However, a careful reading of this verse, fully respecting the integrity of the Masoretic text, shows that it concerns a misuse of  $\text{YHWH}$ 's name by enemies of the poet for their own idolatrous purposes. The protest of the poet against the charges of idolatry which have been brought against him (vv. 23–24) receive in this way extra attention.

In a combined article De Vos and Kwakkel, who have both written a dissertation in the area of psalms-research, take a careful look at the complicated Psalm 69. This psalm contains a number of apparent contradictions. Although he confesses his own guilt, the petitioner

prays that the guilt of his enemies be increased and that they be blotted out of 'the book of the living'. Despite the fact that the poet is in danger of his life, the main problem seems to be one of disgrace and shame. In spite of these contradictions, a further analysis makes a unified reading of the text possible. The petitioner offers a coherent understanding of himself, his God, and his enemies. It is his conviction that the only reason that he is persecuted by his adversaries is his zeal for his God. His own shortcomings do not justify the malicious actions of his enemies. With his imprecations he prays that God punish his adversaries and come to his aid. He confesses YHWH as the God upon whom he is totally dependant and in whom he fully trusts.

In the paper of Curtis we are presented with a comparison between the portrayal of El as father in the Ugaritic texts and YHWH as father in the Hebrew Bible. The starting point is Eissfeldt's suggestion that YHWH took over the status of father and the characteristics of fatherliness from El. The presentation of El's fatherliness in texts from Ugarit is first investigated. It appears that El was considered to be father not only of the gods, but also of human beings, and that the kings of Ugarit may have been thought to stand in a special son/father relationship with El. The presence of similar motifs in the Hebrew Bible is noted and attention is paid in particular to the expression 'sons of God', the position of the king as YHWH's son and YHWH as father of the people of Israel. In the Psalter, however, allusions to YHWH as father of humankind, or of his own people, are virtually absent. The reason for this, according to Curtis, could be the preference for the notion of the covenant God whose constant love (חסד) endures for ever.

Although the Psalter has only one explicit reference to the ark, there are, according to Day, other implicit allusions. In several psalms a ritual procession with the ark to the sanctuary (Ps. 132) is implied, for example in Psalms 24, 47 and 68. Some scholars wrongly defend the view that in these texts YHWH was represented by an image. Further, the association of the ark with YHWH's עון, הפארת, and כבוד can be taken for certain in a text like Psalm 78, and possibly in Psalms 63 and 96 as well. In Psalms 96 and 132 the ark is regarded as YHWH's 'footstool'. However, the suggestion that the metaphor of sheltering under YHWH's wings refers to the cherubim-throne above the ark cannot be accepted, since in this case the image is of YHWH as a protective bird.

The question of the historical and/or the cultural context of the psalms plays an important role in the research of Tomes on the phrase 'a new song', which is found in six psalms. In what sense are these

psalms ‘new’? This qualification cannot be justified by reference to a distinctive form, innovative instrumental accompaniment or new tunes. One is therefore led to think of the ‘newness’ in terms of content: the psalm is a response to what is imagined as a new event in a cultic festival (e.g. Pss. 96, 98), or responses to a new historical experience (e.g. Ps. 149, originating from Maccabean times?). The reception history of this motif of ‘a new song’ is therefore further investigated: the psalm of Judith (Jdt 16:1–17) reflects the influence of the ‘new songs’ of the Psalter as a group, as is the case with the book of Revelation.

Intertextuality is central to Hunter’s exploration of the priority of psalm-narratives in the emergence of certain Hebrew story types. For several reasons the historicity of the figure of Jonah can be questioned, while at the same time Psalm 55 might be seen as the original source for this book. Various links are found between Psalm 55 and the book of Jonah, such as several linguistic peculiarities. More important is the fact that Psalm 55 and the book of Jonah are structurally related in a kind of inside-out relationship. The dramatic potential of the ‘story’ of Psalm 55 was recognized by the author of Jonah who put it to good use in the construction of his parable.

Three papers deal with the phenomenon of (psalms and) prayers outside the Psalter. The book of Chronicles contains a striking number of prayers and references to prayers and has in addition incorporated a number of psalms into the book. In his review of the evidence Beentjes provides a clear analysis of all the prayers and psalms in Chronicles. According to an older view (Otto Plöger) the importance of the Chronicler’s prayers is not so much demonstrated by their content as by their presence. Beentjes convincingly shows the incorrectness of this interpretation. Both in the passages which the Chronicler has adopted from his parent Hebrew texts and in the texts he created himself (‘Sondergut’), the prayers are best understood as a condensation of the Chronicler’s most important theological themes (temple and cult). Prayers or psalms have nowhere been reproduced verbatim, but are always adapted in some way by the Chronicler in order to emphasize his specific theological point of view.

In the book of Kings, prayers of prophets are always associated with miraculous events. But what about Isaiah’s prayer (2 Kgs 20:11) with regard to the sign that is meant to assure king Hezekiah the promised recovery from his deadly illness? Van Dorp argues that the words *מעלית מדרה* do not refer to some building (an upper chamber or a stairway), but to a sundial as it was rendered in the New Dutch Bible Translation

(published in 2004). The description of the procedure presented in 2 Kgs 20:9–11 reminds one of the shadow of a gnomon which reverses its direction of rotation under certain circumstances. This retrograde motion is not a miraculous but a natural phenomenon. However, since this phenomenon is also very complex and difficult to understand, something mysterious remains and this mysterious aspect was given a divine dimension in Isaiah's prayer. In fact, 2 Kgs 20:8–11 seems to offer a kind of theological aetiology for an astronomic instrument.

The prayer of Nehemiah (Neh. 1) forms a sophisticated textual unity, echoing not only the words but also the composition of Solomon's prayer (1 Kgs 8). In his paper, Talstra makes a contribution to the discussion on how to balance textual reconstruction and biblical theology. On the one hand, questions relating to the text as an original part of the so-called *Memoirs of Nehemiah*, and also the specific genre of this prayer, are indispensable. On the other hand, the question as to what makes this prayer a special discourse needs further elaboration, especially by analysing the line of argument and the way in which it is in dialogue with existing literary traditions. Nehemiah 1 is a unique text with its own position in the corpus of biblical traditions of praying, and assigns Nehemiah to a tradition of leadership that was crucial with regard to Israel's identity among the nations. Rather than being a direct religious expression, Nehemiah 1 is a discourse with a clear line of argument, aiming at communication and direct address. This art of praying stands in a tradition of reusing textual material for actual prayers.

The contribution of Talstra has already touched upon the relevance of Biblical texts as a means for (contemporary) religious expression. Two papers are specifically dedicated to this question.

Wallace ponders the question as to how one can explain the fact that the psalms have been the core of prayer life for both Jews and Christians throughout ages past. Was it simply a matter of association generated by later readers of the Psalter or are there factors internal to the Psalter that encourage this process of later appropriation and use? A first aspect towards a possible answer lies in the attribution of psalms to David, mainly through the superscriptions, a second aspect is the shift in emphasis within the Psalter itself from a focus on individual to communal concerns, and a third one the deliberate juxtaposition of certain psalms. The final shape of the Psalter is the product of a complex compositional process which encourages later hearers/readers to take these psalms as their own. The Psalter stands as David's collection of prayers, which actively invites both the ongoing community

of faith as a whole and individuals within it to join in *his* prayers as a vehicle to finding identity, hope and new life.

Noting that hymns and other songs have displaced the psalms as the mainspring of Christian worship only relatively recently, Wenham states that the Psalter must have had the most profound effect on Christian theology and ethics. However, the unique features of its ethics have been rarely examined. What distinguishes the rhetorical force of Psalmic ethics from other ethical instruction in the Old Testament? Upon close reading of the Psalter, according to Wenham, it appears that the person praying the psalms is not simply *presented* with an ethic, which is the case with law, wisdom and narrative, but compelled to *commit* himself to the ethic of the Psalms whole-heartedly and sincerely. Most helpful for his analysis are the ideas of P.J. Griffiths about the use religious people make of their sacred texts (e.g., the role of memorisation), the insights of D. Erbele-Küster about the textual devices that aim to influence the reader's perspective, and the application of speech-act theory.

Issues of structure and textual demarcation are broached by two competent scholars. Fokkelman offers a reconsideration of the design of Psalm 103, an entity with 23 (not 22) verses grouped in 8 strophes. Until now the fact that the composition of this psalm has its central unit in the fifth strophe (vv. 11–13), the 'heart strophe', remained undetected. This section of the psalm focuses on the main theme, God's loyalty and compassion, and is preceded and followed by ten verses. The remaining strophes are grouped in pairs around the heart strophe, forming an envelope provided by בָּרַךְ (in strophes 1 and 8). The three stanzas of the poem have much in common, as is proved by several important parallels. The meaning and message of the psalm is determined by this structure.

Dealing with the presence of hymns and prayers in the Prophets, Korpel's research aims at identifying these texts and establishing their redactional function in the prophetic compositions in which they are embedded. In her paper she deals with the demarcation and analysis of Isa. 12:1–6 and Jer. 10:23–25. In the former case, the modern conviction that this pericope was a carefully composed redactional insertion is corroborated. Particularly in the latter case, the correct delimitation of the passage turns out to be of prime importance to its exegesis. Korpel argues that it is imperative to pay attention to the context and the paragraphing handed down by scribes in antiquity for a proper understanding of the hymns and prayers in the Prophets, although we shouldn't expect miracles from the exercise of unit delimitation.

Comparative research is undertaken by Elwolde with his paper on the Hodayot's use of the Psalter. Taking as his starting point the 118 references to the Psalter noted by Jean Carmignac, Elwolde endeavours to collect evidence concerning the form of the biblical source texts employed by the Hodayot author(s), whether consciously or unconsciously, on the basis of the verbal similarities that exist between various Hodayot sequences and biblical ones. A next step is to establish the possible text-critical value of these sequences as compared with particular passages in the Hebrew Psalter. Of special interest, of course, is any apparent use of the Psalter that occurs in the Hodayot in a slightly different form from that attested in the Masoretic Text, a form that might, however, correspond in some way to one of the non-Masoretic traditions (or, alternatively, occurs identically in the Hodayot and the Masoretic Text, where other ancient traditions indicate a different reading).

The final paper, by Sanders, is dedicated to a comparison of the arguments in the prayers of the Hittite king Mursili II (c. 1321–1285) and similar arguments in the Psalter. The suffering supplicant constructed so-called *argumenta ad deum*, thought to be able to convince the deity, because this kind of arguing and reasoning took into account the supposed character and interests of the god. This kind of argument reveals part of the supplicant's theology, especially how he saw his god(s). It appears to be obvious that none of the *argumenta ad deum* in the Psalter is without a counterpart in the prayers of Mursili II, except for the argument that God will miss the sacrifices of the deceased. A distinction between the righteous deity and the capricious deity, usual in the Hittite prayers, is totally absent in the Psalter. The gods of the Hittite prayers and of the Psalter are thought to be—partially—knowable, human-like and open to human arguments.

# PSALMS AND PRAYERS IN THE BOOK OF CHRONICLES

Pancratius C. Beentjes

*Faculteit Katholieke Theologie, Utrecht—The Netherlands*

## 1. *Introduction*

Reading the Book of Chronicles, one is struck by the huge amount of prayers and references to prayers that has been included in this document. The author, which we will henceforth refer to as ‘the Chronicler’, has also a penchant for some particular psalms that he has incorporated in his book. First, we will pay attention to prayers in the Book of Chronicles and subsequently to the Chronicler’s use of those psalms. Special attention will be paid to the proportion between the passages which the Chronicler has adopted from his parent Hebrew texts and the passages that he created himself (‘Sondergut’). Time and again it will appear that Psalms and prayers are best understood as a condensing of the Chronicler’s most important theological notions.

## 2. *Some Statistics*

### 2.1 *Prayers*

Twenty one times the Book of Chronicles reports that people are praying. In respect of prayers in the Book of Chronicles, one should distinguish between the mere mention of a prayer, i.e. without its wording being recorded, and prayers of which the content is handed down.<sup>1</sup>

Nine times the Chronicler has adopted the text of the prayers from his parent text(s) in 2 Samuel and 1 Kings. In *all* cases, however, in one way or another he has adapted these parallel texts for his own purpose(s). The majority of the adopted texts is found in the sections on David (1 Chronicles 11–29) and Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29–32). In the following chart all references to prayers in the Book of Chronicles have been put together.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Non-recorded prayers are found nine times (43%) as against twelve times (57%) for recorded prayers.

<sup>2</sup> S.E. Balentine, “‘You Can’t Pray a Lie’: Truth *and* Fiction in the Prayers of

<i>Nr.</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Agent of prayer</i>	<i>Category</i> <sup>3</sup>	<i>Source</i>
1.	1 Chron. 4:10	Jabez	PT	Sondergut
2.	1 Chron. 5:20	Reuben, Gad and half Manasseh	PWT	Sondergut
3.	1 Chron. 14:10	David	PT	2 Sam. 5:19*
4.	1 Chron. 17:16–27	David	PT	2 Sam. 7:18–29*
5.	1 Chron. 21:8	David	PT	2 Sam. 24:10*
6.	1 Chron. 21:17	David	PT	2 Sam. 24:17*
7.	1 Chron. 21:26	David	PWT	2 Sam. 24:25*
8.	1 Chron. 29:10–20	David	PT	Sondergut
9.	2 Chron. 1:8–10	Solomon	PT	1 Kgs 3:6–9*
10.	2 Chron. 6:3–11	Solomon	PT	1 Kgs 8:14–21*
11.	2 Chron. 6:14–42	Solomon	PT	1 Kgs 8:22–53*
12.	2 Chron. 13:14	Judeans	PWT	Sondergut
13.	2 Chron. 14:10	Asa	PT	Sondergut
14.	2 Chron. 18:31	Jehoshaphat	PWT	1 Kgs 22:32*
15.	2 Chron. 20:6–13	Jehoshaphat	PT	Sondergut
16.	2 Chron. 20:26	Jehoshaphat and his people	PWT	Sondergut
17.	2 Chron. 30:18–19	Hezekiah	PT	Sondergut
18.	2 Chron. 31:8	Hezekiah and his officers	PWT	Sondergut
19.	2 Chron. 32:20	Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet	PWT	Sondergut
20.	2 Chron. 32:24	Hezekiah	PWT	Sondergut
21.	2 Chron. 33:12–13	Manasseh	PWT	Sondergut

Out of a total amount of twenty one references to prayers in the Book of Chronicles, no less than twelve (57%) have been created by the Chronicler himself ('Sondergut'). As a consequence, the reader of the Book of Chronicles should be aware that precisely in those occurrences which are the author's own invention specific features of his theology are to be found.

Chronicles', in: M.P. Graham, K.G. Hoglund (eds), *The Chronicler as Historian* (JSOT. S, 238), Sheffield 1997, 246–67, has only charted the distribution of the *recorded prayers* (252). Moreover, unfortunately some data in his essay are incorrect; he refers to 1 Chron. 17:17–29 in stead of 1 Chron. 17:16–27 and to 29:10–29 in stead of 29:10–19 ('You Can't Pray', 251). The reference '32.20, 4' ('You Can't Pray', 251, n. 16) should be: 32:20, 24, whereas the reference to Ps. 138:8 ('You Can't Pray', 254, n. 22) makes no sense.

<sup>3</sup> 'PT' = Prayer of which the text is recorded. 'PWT' = Prayer without text; the Chronicler mentions only the fact that people are praying; the wording of the prayer, however, is not given. \* = The source text has in some way been adapted by the Chronicler.

A remarkable feature undoubtedly is that no less than sixteen occurrences (76%) have been related to only four kings: David (nrs 3–8), Solomon (nrs 9–11), Jehoshaphat (nrs 14–16), and Hezekiah (nrs 17–20). And it is not by chance, of course, that precisely these four are the kings that play a prominent role in the Chronicler's composition.

## 2.2 *Psalms*

Seven times the Chronicler notices that a psalm or part of it is sung. One should notice that, with the exception of 2 Chron. 6:40–42—which in fact serves as the conclusion of Solomon's prayer (2 Chron. 6:14–42)—, psalm texts in the Book of Chronicles have nowhere been assigned to a king, but are always performed by cultic personnel or by 'all Israel' in a cultic situation.

<i>Nr.</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Agent of psalm singing</i>	<i>Category</i> <sup>4</sup>	<i>Source</i>
1.	1 Chron. 16:8–36	Asaph and his kinsmen	PS	Pss. 96; 105; 106*
2.	1 Chron. 16:41	Heman, Jeduthun, a.o.	PS#	Sondergut
3.	2 Chron. 5:13	All the levitical singers	PS#	Sondergut
4.	2 Chron. 6:40–42	Solomon	PS	Ps. 132:8–10*
5.	2 Chron. 7:3	All the Israelites	PS#	Sondergut
6.	2 Chron. 7:6	The Levites	PS#	Sondergut
7.	2 Chron. 20:21	Men appointed to sing	PS#	Sondergut

All these data justify a further investigation into the way the Chronicler is handling psalms and prayers in his book. With respect of the latter category, only prayers of which the text is recorded will be given further consideration.

## 3. *Prayers in the Genealogical Section*

One should regard it a significant feature that even in the genealogical section of the book the Chronicler has incorporated two passages in which prayers occur, viz. 1 Chron. 4:9–10 and 5:20. These texts are met in what most people consider one of the most boring parts of the entire

<sup>4</sup> PS = Psalm (or part of a psalm). PS# refers to the phrase 'Give thanks to יהוה, for He is good, for his loyalty endures forever' (Pss. 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1), or a variant of it. \* = The source text has in some way been adapted by the Chronicler.

Hebrew Bible: the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1–9.<sup>5</sup> A close reading of these nine chapters, however, brings to light that they in fact contain the blueprint of all the Chronicler's concepts and conceptions.

Relating to Jabez's prayer (1 Chron. 4:9–10), there are several points that catch the eye. The prayer is found in a *narrative context* amidst mere genealogical listings. Upon closer look, however, it appears that such short narrative passages are found more often in the genealogical section of the Book of Chronicles: 1 Chron. 4:38–43 (Simeon); 1 Chron. 5:18–22, 25–26 (Reuben); 1 Chron. 6:33–34 (Levi); 1 Chron. 7:22–23 (Ephraim); 1 Chron. 8:6–8 (Benjamin). It can be no accident that all these occurrences relate to the most important tribes of Israel.

Such 'narrative islands' within the genealogical section of the book more than once hint at specific points the Chronicler wants to emphasize. In respect of Jabez's prayer, it is of great importance that it is *for the first time* in the Book of Chronicles we have to do with prayer. Already in this very first passage dealing with prayer the author likes to make his theological point. This has been done with the help of some sort of pun. The meaning of the name יַעֲבֵז, Jabez, is uncertain. By transposing two consonants the Chronicler etymologically connects this name to the noun עֲצָב, 'hardship', 'pain', 'distress'. Quite a few prominent scholars assert that the words of Jabez's mother are to be considered an allusion to Gen. 3:16.<sup>6</sup> In that case we would even have an 'inverted quotation'.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that the 'explanation' of Jabez's name does not fit—see e.g. Gen. 11:9 (בלל and בבבל)—is of minor importance. The Chronicler aims at a theological-didactical message. A man whose name has a *negative* impact nevertheless prospered: 'Jabez ranked higher than his brothers...Jabez called to the God of Israel...and God granted his petition'.<sup>8</sup> More than a person's name, it is a person's *attitude towards God* that counts.

<sup>5</sup> The most extensive study dealing with 1 Chronicles 1–9 is: M. Oeming, *Das wahre Israel: Die »genealogische Vorhalle« 1 Chronik 1–9* (BWANT, 128), Stuttgart 1990.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. S. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles* (OTL), London 1993, 109; T. Willi, *Chronik* (BK, 24/2), Neukirchen 1999, 126; S.L. McKenzie, *1–2 Chronicles* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries), Nashville 2004, 81.

<sup>7</sup> See P.C. Beentjes, 'Inverted Quotations in the Bible: A Neglected Stylistic Pattern', *Bib.* 63 (1982), 506–23; id, 'Discovering a New Path of Intertextuality: Inverted Quotations and Their Dynamics', in: L.J. de Regt, J. de Waard (eds), *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible*, Assen 1996, 34–49.

<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise stated, biblical quotations are from the *Revised English Bible with Apocrypha*, Oxford/Cambridge 1989.

At first glance, the opening of Jabez' prayer (אם-ברך תברכני) suggests we have to do with a vow. Since there is no *apodosis*, however, אִם functions as the introduction to a supplication: 'I pray you, bless me and grant me wide territories'.<sup>9</sup> The fourth element of Jabez' prayer (ברעה ועשה) presents Hebrew idiom that is difficult, if not impossible. Quite a few scholars hold the view that as a result of *haplography* the practically identical noun ישועתי has been omitted. It is advisable, however, to take in consideration the Septuagint's rendering—γνῶσις, 'knowledge'—that would match מערה, probably being a resh/dalet h transposition. The Septuagint's rendering is the more interesting, because in 1 Chron. 2:55 Jabez is the town where the families of the scribes live. That there may be some link indeed seems to be confirmed by the Targum of 1 Chron. 4:10, in which Jabez is said to be 'more versed in the Torah than his brothers' and where his prayer is related to his wish that the number of disciples be increased.<sup>10</sup>

With respect of Jabez' prayer, there are some specific features to be mentioned. For the first time in the Book of Chronicles the noun 'God' occurs<sup>11</sup> and in a special collocation too: 'the God of Israel', which is found in the book only two more times (1 Chron. 5:26; 2 Chron. 29:7).<sup>12</sup> Maybe in 1 Chron. 4:10 the expression 'the God of Israel' is also used as a reaction to the homonymous noun עצב which not only means 'pain' (Isa. 14:3), but also 'idol' (Isa. 48:5). Moreover, the infinitive + suffix עֲצַבִּי (1 Chron. 4:10a) has exactly the same morphology as the noun + suffix עֲצַבִּי (Isa. 48:5). And one should notice that in the latter context the collocation 'the God of Israel' is used indeed (Isa. 48:1, 2).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Similar use is found in Pss. 81:9; 139:19; Prov. 24:11; see GKC § 151e.

<sup>10</sup> 'Yaabès—c'est Othniël—était plus honoré et plus versé dans la Loi que ses frères. Sa mère l'avait appelé du nom de Yaabès, en disant: «Certes je l'ai enfanté dans l'affliction». Yaabès adressa cette prière au Dieu d'Israël, en disant: «Si vraiment tu me bénis par des fils et si tu accrois mon territoire par des disciples, si ta main est avec moi dans le négoce, si tu me donnes des compagnons qui soient tels que moi pour que le mauvais penchant ne me mette point en colère...». R. Le Déaut, J. Robert, *Targum des Chroniques* (AnBib, 51/1), Rome 1971, 48. Jabez's prayer is also commented in *Mek. Exod. 18:27* and *Tem. 16a*.

<sup>11</sup> The first occurrence of 'YHWH' is found in 1 Chron. 2:3.

<sup>12</sup> The collocation 'YHWH, the God of Israel' is found thirty times in the Book of Chronicles; see S. Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (BEAT, 9), Frankfurt a. M. 1989, 19–20.

<sup>13</sup> The motif of 'God's hand' that occurs in the third sentence of Jabez's prayer ('May your hand be with me') will be used two more times in the book: 1 Chron. 21:17; 2 Chron. 30:12.

With respect of the conclusion of Jabez's prayer, no doubt the verb *שאל*, 'to ask', sets the tone. For it can hardly be a coincidence that the Chronicler further on in his book will use this verb at very specific moments and in respect of specific persons in their relation to God. Each time it applies to highly explosive theological passages: on Saul (1 Chron. 10:13), on David (1 Chron. 14:10, 14), and on Solomon (2 Chron. 1:7, 11).<sup>14</sup>

It is absolutely not far-fetched to claim that the passage on Jabez's prayer sets the tone for the rest of the prayers in the Book of Chronicles. It always is a person's attitude towards God that is the major criterion.

#### 4. *David's Prayers*

On six occasions during David's reign, the Book of Chronicles refers to prayers which are related to this king. Five passages have been adopted by the Chronicler from 2 Samuel, being reworked and adapted for his own purpose(s). The last one (1 Chron. 29:10–20), however, is completely a creation of his own. With respect of the six passages in question, we will especially pay attention to 1 Chron. 17:16–27 and 1 Chron. 29:10–20, being both the most extensive and the most theological ones; the former as a reworked text, the latter as a creation by the Chronicler.

##### 4.1 *1 Chron. 17:16–27*

The promise addressed to David by the intermediary of Nathan as reflected in 2 Sam. 7:1–16 almost exclusively deals with the Davidic dynasty. As a result of a number of textual interventions, this promise in 1 Chron. 17:1–14 has been transformed into a new kind of text referring basically just to Solomon, since, after all, it is he who is predestined to build the Temple.<sup>15</sup> For the Chronicler, the Davidic dynasty

<sup>14</sup> When related to human beings, the verb *שאל* is used in 1 Chron. 18:10; 2 Chron. 9:12; 11:23.

<sup>15</sup> This view has been elaborated in detail by P.C. Beentjes, 'Transformations of Space and Time: Nathan's Oracle and David's Prayer in 1 Chronicles 17', in: A. Houtman, M.J.H.M. Poorthuis (eds), *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and Modernity* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series, vol. 1), Leiden 1988, 27–44.

is important in as far as it has a positive bearing upon the Temple. It is also within this new concept that David's prayer (1 Chron. 17:16–27) is presented in a different way.

As opposed to 2 Sam. 7:1–16, in 1 Chron. 17:1–15 there is no question of an unconditional promise of a Davidic dynasty, but rather of a conditional promise which is almost exclusively concentrated in Solomon as the Temple builder.<sup>16</sup> The prayer of David as reflected in 1 Chron. 17:16–27 therefore needs to be carefully studied and compared with its parallel text (2 Sam. 7:18–29). Such an investigation is not so much needed because of the textual differences—they have expertly been listed by Braun<sup>17</sup>—, but because of the *function* that David's prayer is now performing in light of the oracle in which Solomon has been designated to build the Temple.

As should be clear, nowhere in David's prayer (1 Chron. 17:16–27) is there to be found a single reference to Solomon, as was the case in the first part of 1 Chronicles 17. In this way the Chronicler is able to emphasize his 'David-programme' in the second part of 1 Chronicles 17.<sup>18</sup> That a 'David-programme' has actually been woven into the Chronicler's version of David's prayer is proved by the application of the verb  $\text{קָנַח}$ , 'to establish'. While this verb in 2 Sam. 7:16a plays an important role with respect to the *Davidic dynasty*, in 1 Chron. 17:14—where only Solomon is explicitly meant—this verb is absent and its place taken by the *hiph'el* of  $\text{עָמַד}$ . It is remarkable then, and it can hardly be coincidence, that the verb  $\text{קָנַח}$ , 'to establish', suddenly appears in 1 Chron. 17:23 and 17:24, resulting in wordings with a completely new theological bent with regard to the parallel texts of 2 Samuel 7:

<sup>16</sup> The most recent comparison between 2 Samuel 7:1–16 and 1 Chronicles 17:1–15 has been published by A. Schenker, 'Die Verheissung Natans in 2 Sam 7 in der Septuaginta', in: M.A. Knibb (ed.), *The Septuagint and Messianism* (BETL, 195), Louvain 2006, 177–92.

<sup>17</sup> R. Braun, *1 Chronicles* (WBC), Waco 1986, 196–7.

<sup>18</sup> I therefore am very surprised that Williamson, who explicitly wants to emphasize that 1 Chronicles 17 preserves God's promise with respect of the Davidic dynasty, nowhere refers to David's prayer as such in his important article on this subject. His only reference to this is a footnote: 'It should be noted that David's prayer is apparently adopted by the Chronicler *without any significant or tendentious alteration*'. See H.G.M. Williamson, 'The Dynastic Oracle in the Books of Chronicles', in: A. Rofé (ed.), *Essays on the Bible and the Ancient World*, Vol. III Non-Hebrew Section, Jerusalem 1983, 305–18 (quotation on 310, n. 14; italics mine).

2 Sam. 7:25      הדבר אשר דברת על-עבד ועל-ביתו הקם עד-עולם  
 ‘Perform for all time what you have promised for your servant and his house’

1 Chron. 17:23      הדבר אשר דברת על-עבד ועל-ביתו יאמן עד-עולם  
 ‘Let what you have promised for your servant and his house stand fast for all time’

2 Sam. 7:26      ויגדל שמך עד-עולם  
 ‘May your name be great for ever’

1 Chron. 17:24      ויאמן ויגדל שמך עד-עולם  
 Let it stand fast, that you name may be great for ever.

The verb אמן, ‘to establish’, has been removed by the Chronicler from its parent text (2 Sam. 7:16a), in which it refers to the Davidic dynasty. The verb has been transferred to *other* motifs from the same parent text that *exclusively* deals with YHWH. In this new context, the verb אמן, ‘to establish’, relates to God’s word and name. It is no longer David and his dynasty which are in the centre of the Chronicler’s attention, but YHWH Himself. This pattern is also seen in 2 Chron. 1:9 and 6:17, where the Chronicler diverts from its parent texts with the help of the verb אמן, ‘to establish’.<sup>19</sup> For more than one reason, the *final* line of David’s prayer is particularly fascinating:

2 Sam. 7:29a      ועתה הואל וברך את-בית עבדך להיות לעולם לפניך  
 ‘Be pleased now to bless your servant’s house so that it may continue before you for ever’

1 Chron. 17:27a      ועתה הואלת בלרך את-בית עבדך להיות לעולם לפניך  
 ‘Now it has pleased you to bless your servant’s house so that it may continue before you for ever’

2 Sam 7:29b      אדני יהוה דברת ומברכתך יברך בית-עבדך לעולם  
 כִּי-אָתָּה

‘for you, Lord YHWH, have spoken, and may your blessing rest on your servant’s house for ever’

1 Chron. 17:27b      כִּי-אָתָּה יהוה דברת ומברך לעולם  
 ‘for you, YHWH, have blessed and will be blessed for ever’

<sup>19</sup> The only text within the entire Book of Chronicles where YHWH is *not* the subject or agent of אמן (‘to establish’) is to be found in 2 Chron. 20:20, which is a transformation of a *quotation* from Isa. 7:9. Cf. P.C. Beentjes, ‘Tradition and Transformation: Aspects of Innerbiblical Interpretation in 2 Chronicles 20’, *Bib.* 74 (1993), 258–68, esp. 266–68.

1 Chron. 17:27 brings to light a much more permanent situation than is the case in 2 Sam. 7:29. While the latter has been modelled as a *supplication* for blessing in the future, 1 Chron. 17:27 should be characterized as a *panegyric* establishing that God's blessing on the House of David has already been realized. As a result, the second half of 1 Chron. 17:27 is significantly different than its parent text. Whereas the final line of 2 Sam. 7:29b refers to the *Davidic dynasty*, the wording of 1 Chron. 17:27b can only bear upon YHWH *Himself*.

Almost all authoritative Bible translations have added here an object: 'it', viz. the Davidic dynasty.<sup>20</sup> Such an object, however, is completely absent in the Hebrew text. To my mind, such a rendering is a misconception for theological reasons. For it is *God* who is exalted here by the Chronicler: 'For you, YHWH, have blessed and will be blessed for ever'.

#### 4.2 1 Chron. 29:10–20

For several reasons, special attention should be paid to David's prayer in 1 Chron. 29:10–20. First and foremost, this prayer is the Chronicler's own creation ('Sondergut') which offers him ample opportunity to emphasize particular themes.<sup>21</sup> Second, within the Chronicler's composition the prayer in fact is the last direct speech by David. Third, the delimitation of the prayer deserves some further attention.

According to Plöger, the Chronicler has deliberately chosen to shape David's final speech as a prayer in order to create an *overall inclusio* with the prayer in 1 Chron. 17:16–27. So doing, David's activities relating to the construction of the Temple should begin and end with a prayer.<sup>22</sup> Plöger's most decisive argument is that the wording 'But who am I, and who are my people, that...' (1 Chron. 29:14) immediately reminds of

<sup>20</sup> NEB: 'Thou it is who has blessed *it*, and *it* shall be blessed for ever'; REB: 'You it is who have blessed *it*, and *it* shall be blessed for ever' (italics by me). The same kind of rendering is found in, for example, Bible de Jérusalem; Die Bibel, Einheitsübersetzung; Dutch Bibel Translation (NBG, 1951); Dutch Statenvertaling (1637).

<sup>21</sup> A text must be studied as it has been handed down. I therefore disagree with Mosis, who holds the entire complex of 1 Chron. 29:1–19 to be secondary, and with Throntveit as well, who considers 1 Chron. 29:14b, 16–17, 19 as secondary material; R. Mosis, *Untersuchungen zur Theologie des chronistischen Geschichtswerkes* (FTS, 92), Freiburg 1973, 105–7; M. Throntveit, *When Kings Speak: Royal Speech and Royal prayer in Chronicles* (SBLDS, 93), Atlanta 1987, 72–3, 94.

<sup>22</sup> O. Plöger, 'Reden und Gebete im deuteronomistischen und chronistischen Geschichtswerk', in: Idem, *Aus der Spätzeit des Alten Testaments*, Göttingen 1977, 50–66 (57).

1 Chron. 17:16 ('Who am I, ... and what is my family, that...'). Since, however, there is hardly any other parallel to be found between these two prayers, Plöger's view can not be substantiated anyhow.<sup>23</sup>

Both in form and content David's final speech deviates quite a bit from other parting addresses or last words by great leaders to be found in the Hebrew Bible, such as the valedictory speeches by Jacob (Gen. 49), Moses (Deut. 33), Joshua (Josh. 23–24), and Samuel (1 Sam. 12). First, the addressees of 1 Chron. 29:10–20 are not the leader's sons or the people of Israel, but the one addressed is YHWH. Second, the very fact that a parting address has nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible been shaped as a prayer not only underlines the importance of this passage, but also the Chronicler's creativity.

In respect of the pericope's *delimitation*, it is beyond doubt that the prayer should also include verse 20.<sup>24</sup> First, this verse contains an explicit summons by David which can only be understood well, if it is firmly linked with the preceding lines. And indeed, there is an undeniable *inclusio*, in a twofold way, between v. 20 and v. 10:

- the verb בָּרַךְ, 'to bless', two times each in v. 10 and v. 20;
- the collocation כָּל־הַקְּהָל, 'the whole assembly', once in v. 10, twice in v. 20.

In this way, David's prayer not only at the beginning, but also at the end has been given a marked narrative framework.

A second argument for the inclusion of v. 20 is adduced by the way God is addressed: 'YHWH, your God' (v. 20a); 'YHWH, the God of their forefathers' (v. 20b). These collocations form part of a series of seven (!) divine names and epithets which are accompanied by a possessive suffix: 'You, YHWH, God of our father Israel' (v. 10b); 'Our God' (v. 13a); 'YHWH, our God' (v. 16a); 'My God' (v. 17a); 'YHWH, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our forefathers' (v. 18a); 'YHWH, your God' (v. 20a); 'YHWH, the God of their forefathers' (v. 20b).<sup>25</sup> After v. 20,

<sup>23</sup> One could only mention the noun גְּדֻלָּה ('greatness') which is found in 1 Chron. 17:19<sup>2</sup>, 21 and 29:11 (and nowhere else in the Book of Chronicles).

<sup>24</sup> There are only a few commentators who indeed consider 1 Chron. 29:10–20 as a unit, but do not explain their choice more fully in respect of v. 20: McKenzie, *Chronicles*, 220; Myers, *I Chronicles* (AncB, 12), Garden City 1965, 195–7; J. Becker, *I Chronik* (NEB, 18), Würzburg 1986, 113–4; Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 503–5.

<sup>25</sup> Moreover, in 1 Chron. 29:11, two times the wording 'Yours, YHWH, is ...' is found.

the Tetragrammaton is not any more accompanied by an epithet or a possessive suffix. A final argument to link v. 20 with the *preceding* lines (vv. 10–19) is the time adjunct in v. 21 ('the next day') which introduces a caesura in the narrative and is reinforced in v. 22 ('that day').

So the overall structure of the pericope would be:

- |    |                    |                 |
|----|--------------------|-----------------|
| A) | 1 Chron. 29:10a    | Narrative frame |
| X) | 1 Chron. 29:10b–19 | David's prayer  |
| A) | 1 Chron. 29:20     | Narrative frame |

Within David's prayer, three different parts or genres can be distinguished:

- |            |                           |              |
|------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| vv. 10b–12 | Hymn of praise            | ('you')      |
| vv. 13–17  | Thanksgiving / Confession | ('we' / 'I') |
| vv. 18–19  | Supplication              | ('you')      |

Some scholars, however, consider *verse 13* to be part of the hymn of praise too.<sup>26</sup> To my mind, however, there are at least two arguments against this view. First, vv. 13–17 is marked by a consequent use of 'we' and 'I' as against the sections 'You' (vv. 10b–12; 18–19). Second, וַיִּיָּאָה (v. 14) can hardly be understood as an exclamation, but should have an adversative sense, which requires that it must depend on v. 13, which therefore must be the opening of the second part of David's prayer.

Each part of David's prayer has its own characteristics.<sup>27</sup> The hymn of praise (vv. 10b–12) underlines God's greatness and power, his glory, splendour, and majesty. The thanksgiving (vv. 13–17), at the same time being a confession, emphasizes that all benefactions come from God, whereas in the supplication (vv. 18–19) God is asked to direct both the heart of the people and the heart of Solomon towards Him.

At the same time, however, the different parts of David's prayer are joined together by all kinds of *repetitions*, of which a tenfold כָּל and a sevenfold לֵךְ immediately strike the eye. Other important links to be listed are:

<sup>26</sup> Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 504; S.J. de Vries, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (FOTL, 11), Grand Rapids, MI 1989, 221–2.

<sup>27</sup> They have been described in detail in: P.C. Beentjes, *1 Kronieken* (Verklaring van de Hebreeuwse Bijbel), Kampen 2002, 267–9; Especially the vocabulary of the middle part of David's prayer (vv. 13–17) has strong links to 29:1–9, e.g. כִּנּוּן, בָּרַב, שְׂמֵחָה, רָצָה, הִפְחֵן.

<i>Hymn of praise (vv. 10b–12)</i>		<i>Thanksgiving (vv. 13–17)</i>	
כח	v. 12	כח	v. 14a
בידך	v. 12b	מידך	vv. 14b, 16b
תפארת	v. 11a	תפארת	v. 13b

<i>Thanksgiving (vv. 13–17)</i>		<i>Supplication (vv. 18–19)</i>	
לבב	vv. 17a, 17b	לבב	vv. 18a, 18b, 19a
כֹּן hiph.	v. 16a	כֹּן hiph.	vv. 18b, 19b
בנה	v. 16a	בנה	v. 19b
עם	vv. 14a, 17b	עם	v. 18

There are some details in David's prayer which deserve particular notice.

- A hymn of praise is usually phrased in the third person singular: 'Blessed be God Most High who...' (Gen. 14:20); 'Blessed be YHWH your God who...' (2 Sam. 18:28); 'Blessed is God who...' (Ps. 66:20); 'Blessed be YHWH the God of Israel' (2 Chron. 2:11); 'Blessed be YHWH, for He...' (Pss. 28:6; 31:22). The speaker addresses himself to an audience and lists the benefactions God has conferred. The phrasing 'Blessed are you, YHWH...' (1 Chron. 29:10), being found in the *second* person singular, occurs only one more time in the Hebrew Bible (Ps. 119:12),<sup>28</sup> but circulates quite often in deuterocanonical literature (Tob. 3:11; 8:5, 15–17; 11:14; Dan. 3:26 (Gr.); 3:52 (Gr.) and in the Dead Sea Scrolls as well (1 QS 11:15; 1QH 5:20; 10:14; 11:27–33; 16:8).<sup>29</sup>
- Subsequent to David's praise (vv. 10b–12) and thanksgiving (v. 13), the prayer has two salient verse lines (vv. 14–15) which are introduced by a rhetorical question that will appear to be a structural feature of royal prayers in the Book of Chronicles. 1 Chron. 29:14–15 which

<sup>28</sup> Some scholars favour a reconstruction of the Masoretic text of Neh. 9:5 to the extent that an identical phrase occurs; see BHS, and J.H. Newman, *Praying by the Book. The Scripturalization of Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature, 14), Atlanta, GA 1999, 59–63.

<sup>29</sup> By the way, the text of 1 Chron. 29:10b–13 is an integral part of the *Shemone Esre* that is daily recited a number of times. This passage has also been included in the *Breviarium Romanum*, being read during the Lauds. In a number of young Greek manuscripts, a text similar to 1 Chron. 29:11 is found as a doxology following *Our Father* (Mt. 6:9–13).

are mostly typified as ‘lament’ or ‘complaint’ function as emphasizing ‘the contrast between the power and might of YHWH and the weakness and dependence of his people’.<sup>30</sup>

- The first part of v. 15 (כי נרים אנהנו לפניך ותושבים ככל-אבותינו) is a straight echo of Ps. 39:13 (כי נר אנכי עמך תושב ככל-אבותי) being only adjusted to the plural now. That it is a deliberate quotation indeed is highly probable, as Psalm 39 is unmistakably to be typified as a lament. Since David not only is praying as an individual (‘I’), but also as the representative of his people, the Chronicler has reworked the quotation from Ps. 39:13 to a nation wide application (‘we’).
- The final verse line of David’s prayer (v. 19) is solid proof that the Chronicler’s focus first and foremost is on the *Temple*. God is asked to prepare Solomon’s religious attitude in such an optimal way that he might construct the בִּירָה (v. 19b), which already in 29:1 has explicitly been introduced as ‘the habitation for YHWH’.
- David’s summons to bless YHWH (v. 20) is taken up by the whole assembly. The *content* of their blessing, however, is not recorded, only their pose is mentioned: ‘bowing low and prostrating themselves...’. The Chronicler uses a fixed pair of verbs (שָׁחָה + קָדַד hitp.), which in the Hebrew Bible is used both in the presence of YHWH (Gen. 24:26, 48; Neh. 8:6) and before the king (1 Kgs 1:16, 31). The special nature of 1 Chron. 29:20, however, is that the assembly bows low and prostrates themselves before YHWH *and* the king *at once*, which is a unique image in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>31</sup>

### 5. *Solomon’s Prayers*

Three times the Book of Chronicles reports a prayer by King Solomon (2 Chron. 1:8–10; 6:3–11; 6:12–42), and all three are found at strategic moments in the Chronicler’s narrative.

As to 2 Chron. 1:1–13, which is the context of the first prayer, the Chronicler explicitly wants to emphasize that Gibeon in the days of Solomon is the legitimate sanctuary. As compared to the parallel

<sup>30</sup> Throntveit, *When Kings Speak*, 75.

<sup>31</sup> There is difference of opinion which king is meant here. Having regard to v. 22, the most obvious inference would be that in v. 20 the author has King David in mind. Whereas by far the most commentators cloak themselves in silence, only two of them are explicit. Becker, *1 Chronik*, 114, identifies ‘the king’ of v. 20 being ‘King David’; Braun, *1 Chronicles*, 288, on the other hand, explicitly refers to ‘King Solomon’.

account of 1 Kgs 3:4, the Chronicler has added quite a few elements to the narrative's introduction (2 Chron. 1:2–5). First, the king is accompanied by 'the whole assembly' (כָּל קְהָלָא, v. 3), a collocation that in the Book of Chronicles almost exclusively points at an important cultic event. Second, the formulation 'the Tent of Meeting' (v. 3) has been expanded by the words 'of God' and has explicitly been connected to 'Moses, the servant of YHWH' in order to safeguard that Gibeon is indeed the only legitimate cultic place. Third, the mention of the 'bronze altar which Bezalel...had made' (v. 5)—a direct reference to Exod. 27:1–2; 38:1–2—is needed to make absolutely clear that the offerings by King Solomon were conform the regulations. Fourth, Gibeon is the legitimate sanctuary, since in Jerusalem at the time there was only a tent for the ark (v. 4).

It is a matter of major concern that the Chronicler wants to present the *very first activity* of King Solomon as a cultic one. It sets the tone for the entire narrative about this king (2 Chronicles 1–9). On the holy place of Gibeon which is presented by the Chronicler as the central sanctuary of the kingdom, 'Solomon and the assembly sought/consulted Him'.<sup>32</sup> As a result of both this action and the offering of a thousand whole-offerings, 'YHWH appeared to Solomon that night'. One should notice that the Chronicler has left out the adverbial adjunct 'in a dream' as is reported two times in the parent text (1 Kgs 3:5, 15). In the Chronicler's presentation, a *direct* contact between YHWH and King Solomon is needed.

Skipping a good few differences between both narratives, let us concentrate on Solomon's answer to God's question 'What shall I give to you? Tell me' (2 Chron. 1:7). As compared to its source, the Chronicler has not only shortened the king's answer, but has for a greater part also altered it from the third to the first person. The king's answer (vv. 8–10) has been styled as a prayer. It opens (v. 8) with giving thanks to God for two different favours. First, that God has shown great and constant love to David. Second, that God has made Solomon king in David's place.

<sup>32</sup> The translation 'resorted to it' (NEB; REB) not only pushes aside the central notion of the verb שָׁרַח ('to seek', 'to consult') that from 1 Chron. 10:13–14 onwards is dominating the Book of Chronicles, it also relates the verbal suffix to 'the Tabernacle' in stead of referring to 'YHWH'. As to the collocation 'to seek YHWH', see C. Begg, "Seeking Yahweh" and the Purpose of Chronicles', *LowSt* 9 (1982), 128–41. The dissertation of G.E. Schaeffer, *The Significance of Seeking God in the Purpose of the Chronicler* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1972) was not available to me.

Then, subsequent to the characteristic opening עתה ('Now', v. 9), Solomon addresses a plea to God which, just as in v. 8, has two beneficiaries: David, and Solomon.

(1) Compared to 1 Kgs 3:7, the Chronicler has added a phrase: 'And now, YHWH God, let thy word to David, my father, be confirmed'. Using the verb אָמַן ('to confirm', 'to establish'), the author explicitly refers back to 1 Chron. 17:23–24, where the same verb played such a prominent role in David's prayer, as we have seen earlier. And it can hardly be a coincidence that the same phrase will reappear in 2 Chron. 6:17, which belongs to the other prayer by King Solomon!

(2) King Solomon repeats a phrase from v. 8 ('You have made me king over a people') that is followed by the expression 'as numerous as the dust on the earth'. This collocation has been adopted from those particular biblical passages in which God's covenant with the Patriarchs is reported (Gen. 13:16; 28:14). This reference functions as an introduction to a much more specific request at God's address, which opens with עתה too: 'Now, grant me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people'. When Solomon expounds this request in the second part of this verse, it is not devoid of importance that (1) the term 'this people' is given a highly specific characterization: 'this *great* people *of yours*'; and (2) that this second half of v. 10 has been shaped as a *rhetorical question*, which is to be considered a literary feature of royal prayer in the Book of Chronicles.

In God's answer to Solomon, the Chronicler by rhetorical means makes suspense increase, since the outcome of Solomon's request is postponed as long as possible:

v. 11—'Because you have not asked for A, B, and C, but have asked for D, and E,

v. 12—D and E are granted to you; I shall also give you A, B, and C'.<sup>33</sup>

In the second half of God's answer (v. 11), the crucial elements from Solomon's request ('wisdom and knowledge/to govern my people'; v. 10) are explicitly repeated, whereas at the same time the formulation 'the people over whom I have made you king' (v. 11) is a direct and literal echo from v. 8 ('you have made me king') and v. 9 ('you have made me king over a people...').

<sup>33</sup> The collocation 'wealth and glory' (v. 11a) is also found in 1 Chron. 29:28 as part of David's description at the moment of his death.

A remarkable aspect of God's answer to Solomon, moreover, is that God mentions two elements—'the life of your enemies/even long life for yourself'; v. 11—which have no counterpart in God's final promise (v. 12). That the enemies play no part in the final promise might be explained from the Chronicler's presentation of King Solomon earlier in his book as 'a man of peace' (1 Chron. 22:9). The omission of promising a long life to Solomon strengthens my conviction that the Chronicler's emphasis on 'wealth, possession and glory' (v. 12) is intended to focus on Solomon's most important activities to come: constructing the Temple.

The second prayer by King Solomon is found in 2 Chron. 6:3–11. It should be considered an autonomous literary unit, set apart from the prayer of 6:12–42, as both the location and the position of the King in 6:3 are explicitly different from the position and location as reported in 6:12. Both passages should also be distinguished from each other with respect to their focus. Solomon's prayer in 2 Chron. 6:3–11 is *about God*, whereas in 2 Chron. 6:12–42 the King addresses himself directly *to God*.

We will not discuss Solomon's second prayer in detail here, as the text of 2 Chron. 6:3–11 to a high degree coincides with the text of 1 Kgs 8:14–21. The only exception regards *the end* of the prayer, since the Chronicler to some extent has changed his parent text. Whereas in 1 Kgs 8:21 Solomon reports that he has assigned a *place for the Ark* in the Temple, 2 Chron. 6:11a makes him say that he has installed *the Ark* there. So doing, the King's presentation shifts from merely offering the infrastructure into being a kind of official liturgical act.

In respect of 2 Chron. 6:11b, two aspects should be mentioned. First, the Chronicler has changed the wording of 1 Kgs 8:21 ('...the covenant of YHWH, which he made *with our forefathers*...') into: '...the covenant of YHWH, which he made *with Israel*'. This change might serve as a piece of evidence that the Chronicler is seriously engaged with the concept of 'Israel' as a united people.<sup>34</sup> Second, the Chronicler left out the passage dealing with the historical setting as reported in 1 Kgs 8:21b ('when He brought them out of Egypt'). In my view he is not doing this in order to minimize the Exodus tradition, let alone to ignore it; would that be the case, he should never have adopted from

---

<sup>34</sup> The important study by H.G.M. Williamson, *Israel in the Book of Chronicles*, Cambridge 1977, however, does not discuss this passage.

his source the text as found in 2 Chron. 5:10.<sup>35</sup> That the Exodus tradition is not mentioned in 2 Chron. 6:11 is aimed at emphasizing as much as possible that the covenant with YHWH is still very much alive and is everyone's concern.

The third prayer by King Solomon (2 Chron. 6:12–42) is by far the most extensive prayer of the entire book. It is no wonder that it is found precisely here, since it is the book's climax: the dedication of the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>36</sup> Quite a few commentators take the view that Solomon's prayer here is almost identical to the one in 1 Kgs 8:22–53. On further consideration, this assertion is hardly tenable. The Chronicler has left out passages from his source (e.g. 1 Kgs 8:50b–53), has altered his parent text more than a dozen times and inserted texts of his own (e.g. 2 Chron. 6:13; 6:40–42) to the effect that he has created a new text.

In this prayer, the same topics that were in the centre of attention in Solomon's previous prayer (6:3–11)—viz. David and the Temple—play a prominent part too. In a classic posture of prayer—kneeling down (Gen. 24:26; Exod. 34:8) and spreading out his hands towards heaven (Exod. 9:29; Ps. 28:2; Job 11:3)—Solomon addresses God.<sup>37</sup> His prayer consists of a praise (vv. 14–15), a supplication that the Davidic dynasty may not fail (vv. 16–17), and a substantial passage (vv. 18–39) that describes seven sorts of disaster in which people may pray to God and ask for deliverance.

Because of time and space, just a few comments upon this extensive prayer as recorded by the Chronicler are in order now.<sup>38</sup> At a glance the reader will notice that the Chronicler has created a *special introduction* to Solomon's prayer. Whereas 1 Kgs 8:22 says that 'he spread out his hands towards heaven', the Chronicler in 2 Chron. 6:12 has dropped

<sup>35</sup> It is a widespread misconception that the Chronicler in his work should have skipped the Exodus tradition. See P.C. Beentjes, 'Israel's Earlier History as Presented in the Book of Chronicles', in: N. Calduch-Benages, Jan Liesen (eds), *History and Identity: How Israel's Later Authors Viewed Its Earlier History*. International Conference of the International Society for the Study of Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature at Barcelona, Spain 2–7 July 2005 (Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2006), Berlin 2007, 57–75.

<sup>36</sup> See the contribution by E. Talstra in this volume.

<sup>37</sup> The collocation *על-ברכיו ברך* (to kneel down on his knees') is unique to the Hebrew Bible, whereas the verb *ברך* ('to kneel down') is used only two more times in it: Gen. 24:11 (*hiph.*), Ps. 95:6 (*qal*).

<sup>38</sup> An analysis of its parent text is offered by E. Talstra, *Solomon's prayer: Synchrony and Diachrony in the Composition of 1 Kings 8,14–61* (CBET, 3), Kampen 1993.

the words ‘towards heaven’, as he wants to use this phrase at the end of v. 13, which is a creation of his own.<sup>39</sup>

The Chronicler has created a marked location for Solomon too, since he stands on ‘a bronze כִּיֹּר’. The noun כִּיֹּר usually means ‘basin’ (Exod. 30:18, 28; 31:9; Lev. 8:11; 2 Chron. 4:6, 14) or ‘kettle’ (2 Sam. 2:14; Zech. 12:6), but in view of the size mentioned here, it must refer to a sort of platform—just as in 2 Chron. 6:13—unless one assumes Solomon is situated upon a bronze basin turned upside down.<sup>40</sup> The position of the bronze platform—‘in the centre of the precinct’—suggests the Chronicler intends to create more distance between Solomon and the altar. This seems also to be confirmed by the noun עֹרֶה, ‘precinct’, which in 2 Chron. 4:9 is the designation of ‘the great precinct’ as distinguished from ‘the court of the priests’.<sup>41</sup> That in 2 Chron. 6:13 the great precinct is meant indeed might also be inferred from ‘the presence of the whole assembly of Israel’ (v. 12).

In v. 16, Solomon calls on God to continue his promises to David. For that purpose the King quotes words that God has spoken to David and which will be repeated in 2 Chron. 7:18. However, nowhere in the previous chapters of the Book of Chronicles there is a passage to be found in which God has actually addressed these words to David. And what’s more, the scene in which David on his dying day quotes these words (1 Kgs 2:4) has been skipped by the Chronicler! So doing, the ‘heavenly quotation’ of 2 Chron. 6:16 has even got a more explosive impact than in its original context, since the quotation is now brought up *for the first time* in Chronicles, and, moreover, is uttered on a very special moment, as well as on a special place—the dedication of the Temple.

A marked detail in the Chronicler’s text is the formulation ‘to walk in my תֹּוֹרָה’ (v. 16), whereas 1 Kgs 8:25 reads: ‘to walk before me’. The Chronicler has deliberately changed the identical parallelism of his parent text—a twofold ‘to walk before me’—into a synonymous

<sup>39</sup> The hypothesis that this verse was originally also found in the version of 1 Kgs 8:22 has definitely been refuted by R. Mosis, *Untersuchungen zur Theologie des chronistischen Geschichtswerkes* (FTS, 92), Freiburg 1973, 144–146.

<sup>40</sup> As regards the size of the bronze platform, it is quite remarkable that its measure completely coincides with that of the bronze altar as described in Exod. 27:1–2; 38:1–2 and mentioned in 2 Chron. 1:5.

<sup>41</sup> In biblical literature, the noun עֹרֶה, ‘precinct’, is found only once more, viz. in Sir. 50:11d.

parallelism ('to walk in my הַחֵדָּה / to walk before me'). There is a difference of opinion as to the exact tenor of the noun הַחֵדָּה here. Does the Chronicler refer to the codified Law, the Books of Moses, or to designate a way of life oriented towards God? An analysis of the Chronicler's use of the noun הַחֵדָּה brings to light that the latter meaning should be considered the most obvious one.<sup>42</sup>

A striking alteration to the parent text is found in 2 Chron. 6:20. Whereas 1 Kgs 8:29 reads '...this place of which you said, "My name will be there"', the Chronicler's version runs as '...this place where you said to put your name'. The Chronicler has not only replaced a direct quotation of God's words by reported speech, he has also conspicuously altered the wording itself from וַיֵּיָּהִי שְׁמִי שָׁם לְשׁוֹם שְׁמִי. So doing he introduced an explicit reference to Deut. 12:5, 21, the chapter that is unanimously observed as the *locus classicus* referring to the Jerusalem Temple as the place of sacrifice. In the Chronicler's presentation, however, this reference has been used for quite another purpose, viz. to lay stress upon the Jerusalem Temple being the place of *prayer*.<sup>43</sup>

In Solomon's prayer, there is another passage to be mentioned, since it exposes a particular aspect of the Chronicler's theology. A comparison between 1 Kgs 8:34 and 2 Chron. 6:25 might elucidate this point. The source text reads: '...forgive the sin of your people Israel and restore them to the land which you gave to their forefathers'. Adding one single word to it, the Chronicler can make his point: '...and restore them to the land which you gave *to them and* to their forefathers'. This small addition reflects the author's view 'that the giving of the land is not considered one specific act that occurred in the past, but a process that constantly renews itself: the land is being given in the present "to them", to the people who now inhabit it'.<sup>44</sup>

By far the most drastic changes in the Chronicler's version of Solomon's prayer are found at the end (2 Chron. 6:39–42). Whereas 2 Chron. 6:39 is identical to the opening of 1 Kgs 8:50, the remainder of the Chronicler's text (6:40–42) has only two words in common with

<sup>42</sup> See U. Kellermann, 'Anmerkungen zum Verständnis der Tora in den chronistischen Schriften', *BV* 42 (1988), 49–92; Th. Willi, 'Thora in den biblischen Chronikbüchern', *Judaica* 36 (1980), 102–5; 148–51; P.C. Beentjes, *2 Kronieken*, Kampen 2006, 102–3 ('Excurs: Het begrip *tōrā* in het boek Kronieken').

<sup>43</sup> See Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 593–4.

<sup>44</sup> Japhet, *Ideology*, 388.

his parent text: ‘your eyes opened’, thus forming an *inclusion* with 6:20. The author skipped the text of 1 Kgs 8:51–53 and in stead adopted the text of Ps. 132:8–10, which he for his part, however, has changed on several points.<sup>45</sup>

From now on, all prayers in the Book of Chronicles and mention of prayers as well, are the Chronicler’s own creation. The only exception is 2 Chron. 18:3, which on the one hand echoes 1 Kgs 22:32, but has substantially been expanded by the Chronicler on the other hand.

### 6. *Jehoshaphat’s Prayers*

Three times the Chronicler reports King Jehoshaphat praying: 2 Chron. 18:31; 20:6–13; 20:26. The most important passage is the one found in 2 Chron. 20:6–12, since the other two are prayers without text.

In a situation of acute distress, Jehoshaphat asks God for help. The proclamation of a fast, a feature which can be found in Chronicles in one more passage (1 Chron. 10:12b), and the tenor of this royal prayer (20:6–13), strengthen this aspect. There is no doubt that the whole of 20:3–5 contains all the literary and theological ingredients needed to characterize the subsequent prayer of King Jehoshaphat as a national lament.<sup>46</sup> From here on, the narrative has a *liturgical* setting which will pervade the rest of the narrative.

Having determined that the king’s prayer is a national lament, this does not mean that the interpretation of this prayer does not raise important questions. Serious problems arise with both the syntax as well as the structure; and also with the function of its various parts as well. Examining the translation of the Hebrew text of 20:6 in a number of current Bible editions, its rendering displays a remarkable variety. The main reason for this is constituted by the word שֶׁלִּי which in Hebrew introduces a rhetorical question.<sup>47</sup> This particle, which is found no less

<sup>45</sup> We will comment on this quotation from Ps. 132:8–10 later on in the section ‘Psalms in the Book of Chronicles’.

<sup>46</sup> A detailed analysis of this ‘Gattung’ is given by H. Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen*, Göttingen <sup>3</sup>1975, 117–39. A concise summary in H.-J. Kraus, *Psalmen* (BK, 15/1), Neukirchen <sup>4</sup>1972, LI–LII. S.J. de Vries, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (FOTL, 11), Grand Rapids 1989, is opposing the opinio communis that 2 Chron. 20:6–12 is a national lament: ‘...this is wrong because its genre is PRAYER with a number of subordinate elements...’ (*Chronicles*, 325). Describing those elements, however, he in fact is enumerating all characteristics of the national lament (*Chronicles*, 326)!

<sup>47</sup> P. Joüon, T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Subsidia Biblica 14), Roma 1991, §161c; §164d.

than eighteen times in 1–2 Chronicles,<sup>48</sup> in regard to 2 Chronicles 20 deserves special attention because of its threefold occurrence within the context of the national lament (20:6, 7, 12). This triple presence of **הלל** together with **ועתה** (v. 10), to a high degree modifies the structure of the entire prayer: v. 6/vv. 7–9/vv. 10–11/vv. 12–13.

In spite of this very plain structure, the reader is confronted with a number of rather significant questions. Does **הלל** only determine the words **אתה הווי אלהים בשמים** or does the rhetorical particle have a longer range? And if so, where can we find the end of its influence? The answers to this question, as reflected by the Bible translations of 2 Chron. 20:6, are widely divergent. In addition to Bible editions in which *one* rhetorical question is found, one comes across translations in which the opening of the royal prayer includes no less than *four* such questions; while some other biblical translations render two or none.<sup>49</sup>

The whole problem is complicated by another question. Two middle cola of v. 6 are almost identical to a couple of lines from David's blessing in 1 Chronicles 29:

2 Chron. 20:6	ואתה מושל בכל ממלכות הנגים ובידך כח ונבורה
1 Chron. 29:12	ואתה מושל בכל ובידך כח ונבורה

Does this striking parallel to 1 Chron. 29:12 force us to keep together these two hymnic lines in 2 Chron. 20:6 too, or is there good reason to consider their setting in 2 Chron. 20:6 differently? When we compare both pericopes with each other, however, it immediately strikes the eye that the wording of 2 Chron. 20:6 has undergone a slight extension; the words **ממלכות הנגים** have been added here. In this way, within Jehoshaphat's prayer, a *parallelismus mebrorum* has been created in which the formula 'the kingdoms of the nations' functions as an antonym of the preceding notion 'heaven'.

This, however, is certainly not the only function of the extension. The two words **ממלכות הנגים** are very essential at another level. It has everything to do with the setting of the narrative itself. The wording 'kingdoms of the nations' is closely tied up with the actual story; for

<sup>48</sup> 1 Chron. 19:3; 21:3, 17; 22:18; 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:5, 9; 16:8; 18:17; 20:6, 7, 12; 25:26; 28:10; 32:11, 12, 13.

<sup>49</sup> One rhetorical question: Septuaginta (?), Revised English Bible, Dutch Statenvertaling-1637. Two rhetorical questions: Luther's Bible, Revised Standard Version, Bible de Jérusalem, Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible, Dutch NBG 1951 and Willibrordvertaling. Four rhetorical questions: King James Version. No rhetorical question: Vulgata, Dutch Groot Nieuws Bijbel.

precisely the threat of advancing armies is the immediate cause of the royal prayer! In my opinion we find here the reason why in 2 Chron. 20:6 the author did not use the expression *ממלכות הארצות*, ‘kingdoms of the world’, which can be considered a typical feature of the Book of Chronicles.<sup>50</sup> The Chronicler needs the word *הנורים* in order to create the maximum opposition to the community on behalf of which King Jehoshaphat is addressing God: ‘your people Israel’. And, within that framework, the rhetorical function of *הלל* joined with a twofold *אתה*, ‘You’, is a matter of great importance. The author, personified by the praying king, with the help of those two rhetorical questions, is manoeuvring God into a position which is as favourable as possible towards the Chronicler’s case. It seems no accident to me that the Masoretic *atnach* is found precisely underneath *נהורים*.<sup>51</sup> This *atnach* is not only the guideline for the parallelism of the first verse half, it also marks the end of the range of the particle *הלל*. I therefore differ from Petersen that, with his utterances concerning God’s power, it would be the Chronicler’s intention to hurry his audience through v. 6 as soon as possible, in order to concentrate all attention of his readers towards the rhetorical question of v. 7.<sup>52</sup>

Apart from the epithet *אלהי אבותינו*, 2 Chron. 20:6 is made up of two couplets with two parallel statements each, the first in synonymous, the second in antithetic parallelism.<sup>53</sup> The elements which have been adopted from David’s prayer, or at least allude to it, for the use of the current narrative are transformed into a new configuration. They not only belong no longer to the same parallelism; they are also found in a new setting. The first one now forms part of a rhetorical question; the second one has been put up in a hymn-like address centred on the notion *כח*, by which a literary frame is constructed with v. 12: an *inclusio* (‘in your hand is strength...’/‘we do not have strength...’) which actually embodies the entire essence of the prayer.

<sup>50</sup> 1 Chron. 29:30; 2 Chron. 12:8; 17:10; 20:29.

<sup>51</sup> One Hebrew manuscript (New York, Library of Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2118, fol. 39) renders *האֵרֶץ* instead of *הנורים*. See P. Kahle, ‘Die hebräische Bibelhandschriften aus Babylonien’, *ZAW* 46 (1928), 113–37, esp. 132.

<sup>52</sup> D.L. Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy. Studies in Deutero-Prophetic Literature and in Chronicles* (SBLMS, 23), Missoula 1977, 73.

<sup>53</sup> ‘The epithet “God of the Fathers” in a variety of forms appears twenty-seven times in Chronicles. None of these instances is taken from the parallel source in Samuel-Kings...’ (Japhet, *Ideology*, 14).

The second time the particle **הֲלֹא** is used in Jehoshaphat's prayer (20:7) poses a problem too. It concerns the syntactical function of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**. In a number of Bible translations<sup>54</sup> this noun is obviously considered to be the predicate to **אִתָּהּ** 'Are You not our God, who...?' (or in a positive form: 'For You are our God, who...'). A translation of this kind, however, requires **אִתָּהּ הוּא**, as was the case in the preceding v. 6.<sup>55</sup> The rhetorical question of v. 7, however, does not deal with the problem of whether God is the God of the praying community: this is presupposed, for in what way should one pray to Him anyhow? The opening words of v. 7, on the contrary, function unmistakably to remind God of the mighty deeds He performed in the past in favour of his people Israel. Therefore, **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** in v. 7 obviously functions as a vocative: 'Didst thou not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants...?'.<sup>56</sup>

Having determined the precise syntactical function of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, its role within the prayer must be faced. Considering the structure of the entire royal prayer, the vocative **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** is on a par with both the opening address of v. 6 (**יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ**) and the final vocative **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** of v. 12. The difference between the vocatives of v. 6 and v. 7 at the same time exposes an important aspect. Although v. 7 obviously opens with a reference to God's acts of liberation to Israel *in the past*—and therefore in fact is still a manifestation of 'the God of our fathers'—, it is a *contemporary* address ('our God') which precedes that description. In that way, past and present in and through Him are linked together. In the second half of v. 7, this intertwinement takes shape very subtly in the formula **לְזֶרַע אַבְרָהָם אֶהְיֶיךָ**.<sup>57</sup> Precisely the wording 'the descendants of your friend Abraham' holds the point of identification. For in that formula both the generation of the Conquest and the present community

<sup>54</sup> Septuagint, Bible de Jérusalem, and a number of Dutch Bible translations (NBG 1951, Petrus Canisiusvertaling, Willibrordvertaling, Groot Nieuws Bijbel).

<sup>55</sup> See Ps. 44:5 (with a vocative!); Neh. 9:6, 7; 1 Chron. 17:26; Isa. 37:16 (= 2 Kgs 19:15); Jer. 14:22.

<sup>56</sup> A rendering like this is found in: Vulgate; Einheitsübersetzung; Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible; Revised English Bible; Dutch Statenvertaling-1637; Dutch Leidse Vertaling. In the New English Bible this vocative has rather circumstantially been translated as: 'O God our God'. In Throntveit's analysis of 2 Chron. 20:6–12, one becomes aware of a striking discrepancy between his translation of v. 7 ('Surely you are our God. You drove out...') and the subsequent analysis of this verse, which makes reference to a 'vocative', which undoubtedly alludes to **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** (*When Kings Speak*, 67–71).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Isa. 41:8.

of 2 Chronicles 20 feels itself typified. The temporal description לעולם is strengthening that process of identification.

The descendants of Abraham take over the position of the inhabitants of the land. At the text's level, this happens very literally with the help of an identical root: יָשָׁב (v. 7) / וַיִּשְׁבוּ (v. 8). The way in which v. 8 has given concrete form to that וַיִּשְׁבוּ creates to a significant degree the impression that relating to the offspring of Abraham dwelling in the land has merely consisted of building the sanctuary.<sup>58</sup> Precisely that kind of presentation is typical chronistic theology; for the purpose of the Conquest is the Temple.<sup>59</sup> Note here also that the Chronicler is stating very emphatically that the *descendants of Abraham*, viz. the people of Israel, built the Temple; whereas everywhere else it is described as an activity exclusively attributed to King Solomon.

Petersen is surprised that v. 8 has been worded in the third person. 'It implies that the present generation had not and was not saying these sorts of things, that is, saying them on their own'.<sup>60</sup> I do not share his view that there is something unusual here. It must be considered, on the contrary, as a literary change by the author to direct Jehoshaphat's prayer towards a clearly recognizable moment. And it is not strange at all that the generation which built the Temple, in v. 9 is presented with the help of a quotation which—although it cannot be found in exactly the same wording elsewhere—undeniably refers to Solomon's prayer in 2 Chron. 6:24–39 (especially v. 28).<sup>61</sup> This reference to that 'proto-liturgical' Solomonic event functions as a necessary preamble to Jehoshaphat's pleading at God's address to listen in order to get Israel out of this untenable situation. King Jehoshaphat is doing no less than applying Solomon's conditional sayings to the present situation of the community that has gathered in the Temple in prayer.

Subsequent to the Solomon reference, the reader of v. 10 would expect an urgent cry for help. Strangely enough, this will not be put into words until we read the root שָׁפַט in v. 12. In vv. 10–11 Jehoshaphat,

<sup>58</sup> The position of the *atnach* underneath וַיִּשְׁבוּ־בָהּ strengthens that impression.

<sup>59</sup> P. Welten, 'Lade—Tempel—Jerusalem: Zur Theologie der Chronikbücher', in: A.H.J. Gunneweg, O. Kaiser (eds), *Textgemäß: Aufsätze und Beiträge zur Hermeneutik des Alten Testaments* (Fs E. Würthwein), Göttingen 1979, 169–83; H.G.M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (NCB), London 1982, 28–31.

<sup>60</sup> Petersen, *Israelite Prophecy*, 72.

<sup>61</sup> The comment by Petersen relating to 2 Chron. 20:9 is rather odd: 'Perhaps we have . . . in this Chronicler's piece—the use of an earlier prayer, vs. 9'; Petersen, *Israelite Prophecy*, 72.

or if you would prefer: the author, is manipulating God into a theological situation of a very accusatory kind. God, he states, has explicitly *forbidden* Israel during its exodus from Egypt to attack the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, and Seir. YHWH himself, therefore, has created our present situation of distress.

The biblical texts on which the Chronicler seems to have based his argument, however, present a completely different course of things. The Chronicler, in fact, has manipulated two existing traditions in such a way that his new concept brings about a very aggravating effect at God's address. For in Deut. 2:1–22, Israel is given permission by God to cross the territories of Seir, Moab and Ammon, with an explicit interdiction to provoke these peoples to combat. In Num. 20:14–21 and Judg. 11:14–18, however, Edom and Moab categorically refuse right of passage, which forced Israel to an enveloping movement. The Chronicler, out of these two divergent traditions, has created one completely new textual complex in which God's order to spare these three peoples has been linked with the motif to avoid their territories.<sup>62</sup>

The order in which the names of the attacking armies appear in 2 Chron. 20:10 is exactly inverted to the series of names as reflected in Deuteronomy 2. In itself, I would not have noticed it, would not 2 Chron. 20:11 have used the notion ירשה—not without reason provided with the possessive 'your' at God's address—to describe the situation of acute danger. The word ירשה must be noted, because it uncovers an aspect of the Chronicler's text which, as far as I am aware, has never been discussed so far.

In the Old Testament, the word ירשה is found fourteen times; which in itself is certainly not a spectacular communication. Ascertaining, however, that ירשה is used six times in one and the same context, viz. Deuteronomy 2, makes a difference. Of course, one might call it an accident; but these six occurrences also refer precisely to those verses in which God is explicitly allotting a territory to these three peoples. And, as the Chronicler in other passages of his book is copying נהלה from his source,<sup>63</sup> the appearance of ירשה in 2 Chron. 20:11 is strong evidence that the author is performing here as the 'executor of the

<sup>62</sup> Cf. G. von Rad, *Das Geschichtsbild des Chronistischen Werkes* (BWANT, 4/3) Stuttgart 1930, 77–8. S. Japhet, 'Conquest and Settlement in Chronicles', *JBL* 98 (1979), 205–18 has strikingly enough not commented upon 2 Chron. 20:10–11.

<sup>63</sup> 1 Chron. 16:18; 2 Chron. 6:27; 10:16.

Deuteronomist's will', although from time to time he does not hesitate to accentuate favourite items of his own.<sup>64</sup>

Starting from Old Testament traditions, the Chronicler has created his own perspective which—reinforced by its retrospective character—functions as a direct accusation against God: You are to blame for our present situation of distress. Subsequent to that, the stronger can be the appeal at God's address to take action in favour of his people.<sup>65</sup>

In the appeal to God for help (v. 12), which both in its opening (אלהינו) and in its literary form (rhetorical question) immediately reminds of the opening lines of the prayer (vv. 6, 7), King Jehoshaphat makes his final supplication to God. On the one hand, this is done with the help of the verb שפֹּט,<sup>66</sup> a subtle pun to his own name, while on the other hand with the help of a contrasting *inclusio* on כָּח (v. 6b) the people's impotence is emphasized. In that way the royal prayer is also continued with a characteristic theological feature of the Chronicler: the awareness of man's inability as opposed to faith in God's power.<sup>67</sup>

If Bible translations and commentaries could prevail, King Jehoshaphat's third rhetorical question (v. 12) would have concluded the prayer. V. 13 is therefore generally considered the opening of the subsequent scene and is attributed the status of an introductory (or circumstantial) sentence: 'As all the men of Judah stood before the LORD..., the spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel...' (R.E.B.).<sup>68</sup> In my opinion, however, v. 13 is absolutely needed to set the preceding prayer in its proper context. I therefore not only appeal to the masoretic delimitation by the *p'tucha* after v. 13, but also, primarily, to the literary urgency of v. 13 in the process of making clear who are the 'we' and 'us' so dominantly present in the prayer of vv. 6–12. The community, whose presence so far was only reported indirectly, viz. through Jehoshaphat (v. 5), in v. 13 steps from behind the king and

<sup>64</sup> Th. Willi, *Die Chronik als Auslegung* (FRLANT, 106), Göttingen 1972, 224 ('Testamentsvollstrecker der Deuteronomisten').

<sup>65</sup> I therefore absolutely disagree with Plöger, who contends that the particular aspect of the Chronicler's prayers is not to be shown from their *content* in the first place, but rather by their presence; contra Plöger, 'Reden und Gebete', 63.

<sup>66</sup> As far as I am aware, we have here the only example of a construction in which the object of שפֹּט is preceded by כָּח.

<sup>67</sup> Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 297; Throntveit, *When Kings Speak*, 71.

<sup>68</sup> An exception must be made for Luther's Bible translation, King James Version, and for two commentaries: W. Rudolph, *Chronikbücher* (HAT, 21), Tübingen 1955, 260; E.L. Curtis, A.A. Madson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Chronicles* (ICC), Edinburgh 1910, 407.

shows its full dimension: ‘all men of Judah...with their dependants, their wives, and their children...’ (R.E.B.). The narrative arch which in v. 5 opens with the statement: ‘Jehoshaphat stood...in the house of the LORD...’, gets its necessary climax in the phrase ‘all the men of Judah stood before the LORD’ (v. 13). Apart from that, the rather marked syntactical structure of v. 14 makes it very plausible that here a new paragraph in the narrative commences.<sup>69</sup>

### 7. *Hezekiah's Prayer*

In the Book of Kings, very little attention is paid to the religious reforms King Hezekiah has implemented. All the reader's eyes are on the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian army (2 Kgs 18:9–19:37), Hezekiah's illness (2 Kgs 20:1–11), and the Babylonian embassy (2 Kgs 20:12–19).

The Chronicler presents quite another pattern. No less than three out of four chapters that he has devoted to Hezekiah deal with the King's religious and cultic reforms (2 Chronicles 29–31). Just the two opening lines of the Chronicler's narrative on Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29:1–2) are more or less identical to its parent text (2 Kgs 18:1b–3), whereas the remainder of 2 Chronicles 29–31 are completely his own creation. These data are solid proof that the author of the Book of Chronicles had special plans with his narrative on King Hezekiah. This view is strengthened by the observation that only the sections dealing with David and Solomon are more extensive than the one on Hezekiah.

In respect of Hezekiah, the Chronicler reports the King praying four times (2 Chron. 30:18–19; 31:8; 32:20, 24), only the first of which is a prayer with text. Leaving a lot of difficult questions aside, a brief sketch of the context is in order here. Subsequent to the cleansing and rededication of the Temple (2 Chron. 29), King Hezekiah invited all the people of Israel to gather in Jerusalem in order to keep the pilgrim-feast of Unleavened Bread (2 Chron. 30:13). The large assembly began by removing the altars and incense-altars from Jerusalem.<sup>70</sup> As there is no

<sup>69</sup> Schmitt points moreover to the fact that, as a rule, nominal circumstantial clauses by the way of *waw copulativum* follow after the verbal sentence belonging to them; he enumerates nine examples, see A. Schmitt, ‘Das prophetische Sondergut in 2 Chr 20,14–17’, in: L. Ruppert, P. Weimar (eds), *Kinder des Wortes* (Fs J. Schreiner), Würzburg 1982, 273–85 (274).

<sup>70</sup> This action refers directly to the raising of these altars by King Ahaz in 2 Chron. 28:24.

change of subject between v. 13 and v. 15, one may assume that ‘killing the Passover lamb’ (v. 15) is executed by the people.<sup>71</sup> The verbal forms in the second half of v. 15 should be interpreted as *plusquamperfecta*, viz. being an answer to v. 3. In case one assumes that the priests and the Levites had already performed the three actions mentioned in v. 15b (‘to be ashamed’, ‘to hallow oneself’, to bring offerings’), they are available from the very moment the people start to kill the Passover lamb and is everything ‘according to the Law of Moses’ (v. 16). V. 17, then, explains why the Levites are killing the animals: they take the place of all who were unclean to perform this ritual act. No wonder that these lines are dominated by the specific roots קָרַשׁ (vv. 15b, 17a, 17b, 19b), and טָהַר (vv. 17b, 18a, 19b).

A striking detail in this passage is the statement that a lot of people who were not allowed to kill the Passover lamb themselves, because of being not ritually clean, nevertheless ate the lamb ‘contrary to what was written’ (v. 18a). To my view, this anomaly can only meaningfully be explained, if the entire unit of vv. 18b–20 is considered the underlying principle of why people nevertheless ate the Passover lamb. To that end a number of verbal forms need to be rendered as *plusquamperfecta*: ‘For Hezekiah had offered prayers for them . . . and ὙΗΩΗ had answered and had cured the people’ (v. 20).

Let us now concentrate on the *content* of Hezekiah’s prayer itself, since there are some striking details to be mentioned. First, the formulation יהוה הטוב (v. 18b) is unique to the Hebrew Bible. Exactly the same combination occurs in Sir. 45:25e:

ועתה ברכו נא את יי הטוב  
 ‘And now, bless the LORD, the Good One’.<sup>72</sup>

A formulation of a similar kind is found in the penultimate supplication of the *Shemone Esre*: ברוך אתה יי הטוב שמך, ‘Blessed be you, ὙΗΩΗ, the Good one is your name’.

Second, the Chronicler makes Hezekiah utter a very special plea. The King advocates that God should attach more importance to the religious intention of the pilgrims than to their ritual requirements. It

<sup>71</sup> The collocation שְׁחַט הַפֶּסַח is remarkable. Apart from Exod. 12:21 and Esra 6:20, it is only found in the Book of Chronicles (2 Chron. 30:15, 17; 35:1, 6, 11).

<sup>72</sup> I fully disagree with Di Lella, who contends that יהוה הטוב is ‘an expansion that destroys the balance of the poetic line’. See P.W. Skehan, A.A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AncB, 39), New York 1987, 510.

can absolutely be no coincidence that such a religious attitude is characterized with the help of the collocation *דרש יהוה* ('to seek YHWH'), being one of the most central themes of the entire Book of Chronicles.

Third, ritual purity is designated here (v. 19b) with the help of the collocation *טהרת הקדש*, a hapax legomenon in the Hebrew Bible. It literally means: 'the purity of what is holy', but is frequently rendered as 'the purity of the sanctuary', a translation, however, that is open to discussion. For the collocation *טהרת הקדש* is found a number of times in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in view of its context it must be translated 'holy food'.<sup>73</sup> Since in 2 Chron. 30:18 just the dimension of eating is under discussion, the meaning 'holy food' would fit very well. Not the purity of the sanctuary, but the purity of the food is a matter of concern here. In that case, there would be a complete antithesis between the obligation of ritual pure food and the religious attitude which in the Book of Chronicles is frequently typified as 'to seek the LORD'. It is just this vital religious attitude that Hezekiah on a crucial moment is bringing forward in order to affect God to grant pardon to every pilgrim who in this specific situation did not keep the regulations.

In theory the phrase 'YHWH heard Hezekiah' would have been enough to report the outcome of the King's prayer. Therefore at first sight the sequel phrase 'and He cured the people' (v. 20b) looks rather strange. No doubt the verb *ספא* is used here in a metaphorical sense: 'pardoning their disobedience and cultic uncleanness'.<sup>74</sup> God's relation with his people has been restored. And it can hardly be a coincidence that precisely this meaning of the verb *ספא* has also been used in 2 Chron. 7:14, which is part of a prayer too, namely Solomon's prayer! The Chronicler's use of the verb *ספא* in these two passages is one element in his effort to present Hezekiah as a second Solomon. The most explicit piece of evidence, of course, is 2 Chron. 30:26—'There was a great rejoicing in Jerusalem, the like of which had not been known there since the days of Solomon son of David king of Israel'.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>73</sup> It is found in 4QOrd<sup>b</sup> [4Q513] 2.2.1 and three times in the *Halakhic Letter* (MMT B 23, 65, 68).

<sup>74</sup> M.L. Brown, *ספא* in: *TDOT* 13, 598.

<sup>75</sup> One can also refer to the duration of the feast (seven days, plus seven days) in 2 Chron. 30:21 and 2 Chron. 7:8–10, and to the huge amount of cattle set aside by the king (2 Chron. 30:24; 2 Chron. 7:4–5). Detailed catalogues of parallels between Hezekiah and Solomon have been listed by Williamson, *Israel in the Book of Chronicles*, 119–25; Throntveit, *When Kings Speak*, 121–5; M. Patrick Graham, 'Setting the Heart to Seek God: Worship in 2 Chronicles 30:1–31:1', in: Idem (ed.), *Worship and the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honour of John T. Willis* (JSOT.S, 284), Sheffield 1999, 124–41, esp. 132–3.

8. *Psalms in the Book of Chronicles*<sup>76</sup>

To some extent, Psalms can be understood as fixed prayers. At the other hand, when a psalm is incorporated into a new context, one should investigate whether the original meaning of that psalm is still valid in its new scene.

It is beyond any doubt that at least two times the Chronicler with the help of Psalms has created a totally new context of his own. The first time is in 1 Chron. 16:8–36, a text that concludes the report about the successful transport of the Ark by King David; the second time is in 2 Chron. 6:40–42, being the final lines of Solomon’s prayer of Dedication.

8.1 *1 Chron. 16:8–36*

The text of 1 Chron. 16:8–36 has been made up of three different canonical psalms (Pss. 105:1–15; 96:1–13; 106:1, 47–48) out of which the Chronicler has created a new literary unit and has integrated it into a new literary and theological context. Since there is a huge amount of publications on this specific text, I therefore will refrain from discussing it here in detail again.<sup>77</sup> A few comments, however, are in order here.

Quite a few commentators on the Book of Chronicles confine themselves to refer just to commentaries on the Book of Psalms. This point of view, however, in fact does wrong to the Chronicler. First, by adopting three poems into a prose narrative, he has created a completely

<sup>76</sup> See the extensive essay by H.N. Wallace, ‘What Chronicles Has To Say About Psalms’, in: M.P. Graham, S.L. McKenzie (eds), *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture* (JSOT.S, 263), Sheffield 1999, 267–91.

<sup>77</sup> See e.g. T.C. Butler, ‘A Forgotten Passage from a Forgotten Era (1 Chr. XVI 8–36)’, *VT* 28 (1978), 142–50; J. Hausmann, ‘Gottesdienst als Gottes Lob: Erwägungen zu 1 Chr 16,8–36’, in: H. Wagner (ed.), *Spiritualität: Theologische Beiträge*, Stuttgart 1987, 83–92; A.E. Hill, ‘Patchwork Poetry or Reasoned Verse? Connective Structure in 1 Chronicles XVI’, *VT* 33 (1983), 97–101; J.W. Kleinig, *The LORD’s Song: The Basis, Function and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles* (JSOT.S, 156), Sheffield 1993, 133–48; J.A. Loader, ‘Redaction and Function of the Chronicist “Psalm of David”’, in: W.C. van Wyk (ed.), *Studies in the Chronicler* (OTWSA, 19), Pretoria 1976, 69–75; K. Nielsen, ‘Whose Song of Praise? Reflections on the Purpose of the Psalm in 1 Chronicles 16’, in: Graham, McKenzie (eds), *The Chronicler as Author*, 327–36; R.M. Shipp, ‘“Remember His Covenant Forever”: A Study of the Chronicler’s Use of the Psalms’, *RestQ* 35 (1993), 29–39; M. Throntveit, *When Kings Speak*; Wallace, ‘What Chronicles Has To Say’, 267–91; J.W. Watt, *Psalm and Story. Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative* (JSOT.S, 139), Sheffield 1992, 155–68.

new text and context as well, to the effect that the poetic composition will illuminate the prose narrative or push it into a specific direction. Moreover, one should not lose sight of 1 Chron. 16:8–36 being the only *extensive* poetic passage in the Book of Chronicles. Other poetic texts in the Book of Chronicles cover only one or two single lines (1 Chron. 12:19; 2 Chron. 6:40–42; 10:16; 20:21).

At a first glance, 1 Chron. 16:8–36 seems to summon David's contemporaries to give thanks to YHWH. But at the same time, we should not forget that these in fact are the Chronicler's readers and, moreover, 'it should be emphasized that the poetry can make us, the readers, contemporary with the text. This happens through the direct requests to praise and thank Yahweh'.<sup>78</sup> With its thirty imperatives and jussives this poetic text appeals to the present reader too, so that he or she actually witnesses the arrival of the Ark in the City of David. It is incomprehensible, therefore, that a lot of Bible translations have completely pushed away this fundamental and current event by not meticulously translating the Hebrew text of 1 Chron. 16:19 ('When *you* were few in number'), but instead offer a translation of the Hebrew text of Ps. 105:12 ('When *they* were a few in number').

A striking difference to the parent text is to be found in 1 Chron. 16:15. Whereas Ps. 105:8 runs as: 'He is ever mindful of his covenant...'—thus referring to *God*—, the Chronicler's text has an imperative mood: 'Be ever mindful of his covenant...', to the effect that the *readers* are summoned to fulfil their commitments to the Covenant. Here, a lot of Bible translations, too, have rendered the Hebrew text according to Ps. 105:8.

Finally, I like to comment upon Williamson's view that 1 Chron. 16:8–36 has much in common with 1 Chron. 29:10–19, 'and appropriately provide a framework to the whole section of chs 17–29, which has been totally dominated by David's preparation for building the temple'.<sup>79</sup> If this would be the case indeed, the Chronicler undoubtedly would have incorporated much more concordance between these two passages, both relating to their vocabulary, their collocations, and their motifs. It is quite curious that Williamson failed to mention the most

---

<sup>78</sup> K. Nielsen, 'Whose Song of Praise? Reflections on the Purpose of the Psalm in 1 Chronicles 16', in: Graham, McKenzie (eds), *The Chronicler as Author*, 327–36 (quotation 334).

<sup>79</sup> Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 186.

striking parallel: ‘Blessed be (you) YHWH, the God of Israel (our father) from of old and for ever’ (1 Chron. 16:36; 29:10).

### 8.2 2 Chron. 6:40–42

Whereas Solomon’s prayer in 2 Chron. 6:12–42 has comparatively much in common with its parent text (1 Kgs 8:22–53), the final lines of his prayer (6:40–42) have only two words that are also found in his source: ‘Let your eyes be opened’ (2 Chron. 6:40a; 1 Kgs 8:52a), thus forming an inclusion to 2 Chron. 6:20/1 Kgs 8:29.

The remainder of 2 Chron. 6:40–42 has been adopted from Ps. 132:8–10, be it that the Chronicler has introduced some remarkable changes in it. Just as the transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem under David’s command was accompanied by a psalm (1 Chron. 16:8–36) which is to be considered an own composition by the Chronicler, at the very moment that the Ark is given its definite resting-place the author again makes use of a psalm, viz. some lines of Psalm 132.<sup>80</sup> At the same time, however, the Chronicler makes some changes to his parent text as outlined in the following chart.

<i>2 Chron. 6:40–42</i>	<i>Ps. 132:8–10</i>
Arise now, YHWH God, and come to your resting <sup>81</sup> you and your powerful Ark. Let your priests, YHWH God, be clothed with salvation and your loyal servants rejoice in prosperity. YHWH God, do not reject your anointed ones; remember the loyal service of David your servant.	Arise, YHWH, and come to your resting-place, you and your powerful Ark. Let your priests be clothed in righteousness and your loyal servants shout for joy.  Do not reject your anointed one for your servant David’s sake.

<sup>80</sup> See the contribution by J. Day in this volume.

<sup>81</sup> Most probably an infinitive, though the rare noun  $\text{נָּוַן}$  is possible too (cf. Est. 9:17–19).

Whereas Ps. 132:8–10 addresses God only once (‘YHWH’), the Chronicler’s text not only has a threefold address, but has also a different title (‘YHWH God’), which occurs no less than twelve times in the Book of Chronicles and might therefore be considered a favourite feature of this document.<sup>82</sup> At first glance, this modified address seems to be the only difference from Ps. 132:8. Upon a closer look, however, another change, a very subtle one, can be observed. For the Chronicler did not adopt the noun *בְּנוּחָה*, ‘resting-place’,—which, by the way, is one of his favourite words (1 Chron. 6:16; 22:9; 28:2)—but instead has in 2 Chron. 6:41 the form *נוּחֶךָ*, ‘your resting’. This change requires a word of explanation. To my mind, the clue to it is the poetic passage of Num. 10:35–36. Each time the people of Israel broke camp, the Ark of the Covenant of YHWH kept ahead to find them a place to rest. Whenever the Ark set out, Moses said: ‘Arise YHWH’, which is exactly the same phrase as is found in 2 Chron. 6:41, but occurs in several other passages of the Hebrew Bible too (Pss. 3:8; 7:7; 9:20; 10:12; 17:13; 132:8). Why do I believe that Num. 10:35–36 was in the Chronicler’s mind here? Because of the form *לְנוּחֶךָ*, ‘to your resting’, that undoubtedly reminds of *בְּנוּחָה*, ‘in his resting’, in Num. 10:36. To that effect, the Chronicler has ‘sacrificed’ one of his favourite notions (*בְּנוּחָה*, ‘resting-place’) in order to realise an unambiguous reference to this old poetic passage, in which the Ark ‘is the visible form in or by which YHWH manifests His presence, and may therefore... be addressed as YHWH’.<sup>83</sup>

The change from *יְרַנְּנוּ וְהִסְדִּידוּ*, ‘and your loyal servants shout’ (Ps. 132:9), to *יְשִׂמְחוּ בְטוֹב וְהִסְדִּידוּ*, ‘and your loyal servants rejoice in prosperity’ (2 Chron. 6:41), fully suits the thematic thread of ‘joy’ and ‘to rejoice’ which is so typical to the Book of Chronicles. I like to emphasize that this theme is almost exclusively found in so-called ‘Sondergut’ passages when specific cultic events are reported.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>82</sup> 1 Chron. 17:16,17; 22:1, 19; 28:20; 29:1; 2 Chron. 1:9; 6:41<sup>2</sup>, 42; 26:18; 32:16. Apart from Gen. 2:4–3:24, in which ‘YHWH God’ is found twenty times, in the remainder of the Hebrew Bible this title occurs only nine times (Exod. 9:30; 2 Sam. 7:25; Jon. 4:6; Pss. 59:6; 72:18; 80:5, 20; 84:9, 12).

<sup>83</sup> G. Gray, *Numbers* (ICC), Edinburgh 1912, 96. It is rather curious that he mentions only Ps. 132:8 as a parallel and does not refer to 2 Chron. 6:41.

<sup>84</sup> E.g. 1 Chron. 12:40; 29:9<sup>3</sup>, 22; 2 Chron. 7:8–10; 20:27–28; 23:16–18; 30:21–26.

The final line of Solomon's prayer (2 Chron. 6:42) requires some further explanation. First, compared to Ps. 132:10, the two cola of this line have changed place. So doing the Chronicler makes Solomon end his prayer mentioning David, who earlier in this section (2 Chron. 6:4–11), and certainly at the opening of the prayer (2 Chron. 6:15–17) has so prominently been pushed forward.

Second, a marked contrast between both lines has been generated by Solomon's statement of 'David's loyal actions'. At any rate that's how I interpret the final words of 2 Chron. 6:42—as a *subjective genitive*. There is a vivid scholarly debate whether the collocation *הסדֵי דוד*—which is only to be found in Isa. 55:3 and is there considered an *objective genitive* ('my steadfast love for David')—should have this meaning in 2 Chron. 6:42 too.<sup>85</sup> In itself, such a translation would be possible, but for some reasons does not fit here. For the noun *הסדֵי* is also found in 2 Chron. 32:32 and 35:26, where the Chronicler refers to the 'loyal actions' of King Hezekiah and King Josiah. The fact that in respect of these two kings exactly the same notion has been used is solid proof enough that in 2 Chron. 6:42 it should be interpreted in the same manner. For precisely these three kings (David, Hezekiah, Josiah) are evaluated in the Book of Chronicles in a remarkable positive way. And it is not by chance, of course, that these three kings have made supreme efforts relating to the Temple! It hardly can be coincidence that Psalm 132 put emphasis on David's efforts to find a sanctuary for the LORD!

Finally, there is a difference between 'your anointed one' (Ps. 132:10) and 'your anointed ones' (2 Chron. 6:42). Quite a few Bible translations and commentators—feeling supported by a lot of Hebrew manuscripts, the Septuagint and the Vulgate—opt for a *singular* in 2 Chron. 6:42 too. That being the case, we have to do with a *synonymous parallelism* in which 'the anointed one' is put on a par with 'David'. However, there are good arguments to uphold the plural 'anointed ones'. The *context* would be the most important argument. First, one should make a great deal of the fact that the Chronicler has *reversed* the order of the cola from Ps. 132:10. Since he has added the invocation 'YHWH God', the phrase explicitly functions as the *conclusion* of his extensive prayer. Second, the plural 'anointed ones' makes good sense. Solomon, being an anointed one himself, urges on God not to reject his prayer. And

<sup>85</sup> H. Williamson, 'The Sure Mercies of David: Subjective or Objective Genitive?', *JSS* 23 (1978), 31–49. See also W.A.M. Beuken, 'Isa. 55.3–5: The Reinterpretation of David', *Bijdr.* 35 (1974), 49–64; A. Caquot, 'Les "grâces de David": à propos d'Isaïe 55:3b', *Sem.* 15 (1965), 45–59.

in order to strengthen his petition, he refers to what David, being an anointed one too, has accomplished. The mention of David's loyal actions has a double duty. In the first place it serves as an additional argument to hear Solomon's prayer. On the other hand it harks back to the opening of his address (2 Chron. 6:15–17), in which he so prominently refers to his father David.

### 9. *A Psalm Verse with Variations*

Within the Book of Chronicles a specific refrain from the Psalter is found six times. The first occurrence is in 1 Chron. 16:34, which is part of a poetic passage composed of three different psalms (Pss. 95; 105; 106). Its text runs as: *הודרו ליהוה כי טוב כי לעולם הסדו*, 'Give thanks to YHWH. Truly he is good! Truly his loyalty is forever!'.<sup>86</sup> It is direct a quotation from Ps. 106:1, be it that the opening word of this verse (*הלל*) has been skipped by the Chronicler.<sup>87</sup>

With some variations this phrase has been used by the Chronicler five more times, all of which belong to the so-called 'Sondergut':

1 Chron. 16:41	<i>כי לעולם הסדו</i>			<i>להודות ליהוה</i>
2 Chron. 5:13	<i>כי לעולם הסדו</i>	<i>כי טוב</i>	<i>ליהוה</i>	<i>ובהלל</i>
2 Chron. 7:3	<i>כי לעולם הסדו</i>	<i>כי טוב</i>	<i>ליהוה</i>	<i>וישתחו והודות</i>
2 Chron. 7:6	<i>כי לעולם הסדו</i>			<i>להודות ליהוה</i>
2 Chron. 20:21	<i>כי לעולם הסדו</i>			<i>הודו ליהוה</i>

Examining these five passages, one finds that only 2 Chron. 20:21 in its entirety is used as an exclamation. In the other occurrences, however, the exclamation just starts with the *כי*-clauses. For the words preceding the *כי*-clauses have been adapted by the Chronicler in order to serve as a *narrative introduction* to the stereotyped refrain.

Special attention should be paid to the occurrences in 2 Chron. 5:13 and 7:3, since they are part of a beautiful *inclusion* between 2 Chron. 5:13–14 and 7:1–3 which creates a special pattern between these two texts.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *כי* is considered here 'as an emphatic deictic particle'; see J.W. Kleinig, *The LORD's Song. The Basis, Function and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles* (JSOT.S, 156), Sheffield 1993, 117, n. 3.

<sup>87</sup> Most probably since this will be the conclusion of the entire passage some lines later (1 Chron. 16:36b), which is a quotation from Ps. 106:48.

<sup>88</sup> A detailed analysis is offered in: P.C. Beentjes, *2 Kronieken*, Kampen 2006, 64–73.

Unfortunately one cannot establish with certainty which Psalm is to be considered the parent text of the Chronicler's favourite refrain. Since there is no doubt whatsoever that the first occurrence (1 Chron. 16:34) has been adopted from Ps. 106:1, the most obvious inference would be that the other five reach back to the same passage too. Since the refrain, however, is also found in some more passages of the Hebrew Bible (Pss. 107:1; 118:1, 29), this question will be unsolved.

### 10. *Conclusions*

- Prayers which the Chronicler adopted from his parent texts have nowhere been reproduced verbatim, as is quite often suggested by commentators. Time and again it appears that the text of those prayers has been changed in order to serve the Chronicler's own theological purposes: temple and cult.
- More than fifty percent of the prayers in the Book of Chronicles have been created by the Chronicler himself. Precisely in these texts one can find out the peculiarities of his theology.
- The majority of prayers in the Book of Chronicles are said by only four kings: David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah, who are also the leading characters of this document.
- It is a matter of deep significance that in the Book of Chronicles both the last verbal act of David and the first verbal act of Solomon have been made up of prayers.
- By adding only one or two words the Chronicler several times includes the actual generation into traditional formulae referring to the forefathers.
- Quotations from the Psalter that have been inserted into the Book of Chronicles have always in some way been adapted by the author, in order to emphasize his specific theological point of view. They are always found in highly liturgical contexts.

“OUR FATHER...”:  
AN INHERITED TITLE AND ITS PRESENCE  
(OR ABSENCE) IN THE PSALMS?

Adrian H.W. Curtis  
*University of Manchester—Great Britain*

1. *Introduction*

In the very first edition of the *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Otto Eissfeldt<sup>1</sup> suggested that Yahweh took over various traits of character from El, and that one of these was fatherliness. He quoted approvingly some words of F. Løkkegaard:

El is the special contribution of Canaan to the world. He is fused with the stern God Yahve, and thus has become the expression of all fatherliness, being mild and stern at the same time.<sup>2</sup>

Needless to say, the quotation begs a number of questions, not least whether ‘fusion’ is the most appropriate way of thinking of the relationship between El and Yahweh. It may be preferable to think that they were in fact one and the same. But the quotation does invite a comparison between the portrayal of El as father in the Ugaritic texts and Yahweh as father in the Hebrew Bible.

2. *ilib*

Before considering in what sense El was envisaged as a father in the texts from Ugarit, it is appropriate to note that, in the Ugaritic versions of the so-called ‘Pantheon List’ (KTU 1.118, 1.47, 1.148) the list of deities is probably<sup>3</sup> headed by a deity *ilib*. D. Pardee<sup>4</sup> translates

---

<sup>1</sup> O. Eissfeldt, ‘El and Yahweh’, *JSS* 1 (1956), 25–37.

<sup>2</sup> F. Løkkegaard, ‘A Plea for El, the Bull, and Other Ugaritic Miscellanies’, in: F.F. Hvidberg (ed), *Studia Orientalia Ioanni Pedersen Septuagenario A.D. VII Id. Nov. Anno MCMLIII a Collegis Discipulis Amicis Dicata*, Copenhagen 1953, 232.

<sup>3</sup> This assumes that, in KTU 1.118, *il spn* in the first line means ‘gods of Saphon’ and is a heading to the list which follows.

<sup>4</sup> D. Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit* (Writings from the Ancient World), Atlanta 2002, 15.

the term as ‘The-God-of-the-Father’, while G. del Olmo Lete suggests ‘god-Father’, and suggests that it is

...an epithet in which, possibly, there is an evolution or syncretism...: from the “father of the god” or the “father-god” of family/personal/nomadic religion with its divinized ancestors, there is a shift to the “god/*Ilu*-father,” i.e., to the confession of the supreme god *Ilu* under the title of “universal father” (“father of gods and men,” as he is known in myth and epic).<sup>5</sup>

The connection, between this deity and El (*Ilu*) remains uncertain and cannot be discussed in detail here. What does seem clear is that it is in the subsequent line that El himself is mentioned. But the possibility that the idea of a deity as ‘father’ developed from ancestor worship or the concept of ancestral gods is raised by the presence of this name.

### 3. *El as Father of the Gods*

On the basis of the Ugaritic texts, there are certainly grounds for believing that El was thought to have been father of the gods. The gods are referred to as ‘generation<sup>6</sup> /family<sup>7</sup> of El’ (*dr il*) in the Keret story where the parallel term is ‘gods’ (*ilm*).<sup>8</sup> The phrase *pl̄r bn ilm* is used in the Baal texts,<sup>9</sup> but here it is not absolutely clear whether it means ‘assembly of the sons of El’ (so Wyatt)<sup>10</sup> or ‘assembly of the sons of the gods’ (so Gibson),<sup>11</sup> or simply ‘assembly of the gods’ (compare the Akkadian phrase *puhur ilani*).<sup>12</sup> It is possible that here, as in Hebrew, (as will be mentioned later,) *bn* could convey the sense ‘one possessing the characteristics of’, ‘one who is’, ‘one who is numbered among’. Aistleitner<sup>13</sup> gives, as the second meaning of Ugaritic *bn*, ‘zu etwas

<sup>5</sup> G. del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit*, Winona Lake IN 2004, 73–74.

<sup>6</sup> Gibson prefers ‘race’ in his translation—J. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (hereafter *CML*), Edinburgh 1977, 92—but gives ‘generation’ as an alternative in the glossary (145).

<sup>7</sup> N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 2nd edition (hereafter *RTU*), London, New York 2002, 212.

<sup>8</sup> KTU 1.15 iii 18–19.

<sup>9</sup> KTU 1.4 iii 14.

<sup>10</sup> Wyatt, *RTU* 96.

<sup>11</sup> Gibson, *CML*, 58; the alternative ‘of El’ is given in a footnote.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Gilgamesh XI 7.

<sup>13</sup> J. Aistleitner, *Wörterbuch der Ugaritischen Sprache*, Berlin 1967, 53. See also G.J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren (eds) *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament II*, Grand Rapids MI English translation 1975, 148.

Gehöriger’, and includes as examples phrases meaning ‘humans’ (*bn nšm*) and ‘servants’ (*bn amt*). However, El is presented as addressing the gods directly as ‘my sons’—‘Sit, my sons, in your seats’ (or possibly ‘Return, my sons, to your seats/places’ (*šb bny lmtbtkm*)).<sup>14</sup> Here it is quite likely that ‘sons’ is to be taken literally. A pointer to the possibility that such terms are to be understood as referring to physical ‘sonship’ arises from the fact that in text KTU 1.23 (a tablet apparently containing ritual instructions and a myth, and entitled by Wyatt ‘The Gracious Gods: A Sacred Marriage Liturgy’),<sup>15</sup> El is depicted as having intercourse with Athirat and Rahmay who give birth to the gods Shahar and Shalem.

In fact, it is perhaps in references to Athirat, El’s consort, as mother of the gods that the situation becomes even clearer (assuming, of course, that El was the father of all her children!). The phrase ‘sons of Athirat’ (*bn ašrt*) is probably found as a parallel to ‘gods’ (*ilm*)<sup>16</sup> and, just previously, ‘Athirat and her sons’ (*ašrt wbnh*), is apparently in apposition to ‘Elat (or “the goddess”’) and the company of her kinsfolk’ (*ilt wšbrt arhh*).<sup>17</sup> Mention of the ‘seventy sons of Athirat’ (*šb m bn ašrt*) is probably a reference to the gods.<sup>18</sup> Athirat is given an epithet (*qnyš ilm*), which may mean ‘creatress of the gods’,<sup>19</sup> but in view of the phrases already noted, may well refer to her motherhood.<sup>20</sup>

J.C.L. Gibson, in the glossary to his *Canaanite Myths and Legends*<sup>21</sup> suggests that the phrase *bn qdš*<sup>22</sup> could be understood as meaning ‘holy ones’ or else as ‘sons of Athirat’. The latter possibility seems to depend, in part at least, on the understanding of the pairing *lšpn wqdš* as containing epithets of both El and Athirat. The view that there was a goddess Qudshu, with whom Athirat was identified, has been described by Wyatt as a ‘modern invention’.<sup>23</sup> But Qudshu has not been entirely abandoned! For example, William Dever has recently accepted her existence in his book *Did God Have a Wife?*<sup>24</sup> However, the phrase *šph*

<sup>14</sup> KTU 1.16 v 24.

<sup>15</sup> Wyatt, *RTU*, 324–35

<sup>16</sup> KTU 1.3 v 38–39.

<sup>17</sup> KTU 1.3 v 36–37.

<sup>18</sup> KTU 1.4 vi 46.

<sup>19</sup> E.g., KTU 1.4 i 22.

<sup>20</sup> Wyatt gives ‘Mother of the gods’ in his translation (*RTU* 91).

<sup>21</sup> *CML* 156.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., KTU 1.2 i 21.

<sup>23</sup> Wyatt, *RTU*, 54 fn 78.

<sup>24</sup> W.G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*, Grand Rapids MI, Cambridge 2005, 177.

*ltpn wqdš* ('family of *ltpn* and *qdš*') parallels *ap krt bnm il* ('Is Keret then a son of El?')<sup>25</sup> which might suggest that *ltpn* and *qdš* are two epithets of El, the 'kindly and holy one'. This might be true, even if *bnm il* is understood with the more general sense '...a god', rather than as a reference to El specifically.

#### 4. *El as Father of Mortals and Kings*

This last point has introduced the fact that Keret is probably referred to as a son of El. Indeed, El is described as the father of both Keret and Danel.<sup>26</sup> This raises the question whether Keret and Danel are to be understood as earthly beings or as divine. In both stories, perhaps particularly that of Danel, there is frequent involvement of the protagonists with deities. The description of Danel's daughter, Pughat, seems to use terminology, which might be thought to suggest that she was more than an ordinary human being:

*šm' pgt tkmt my*  
*hspt lš'r tl yd't*  
*hik kbkbm*<sup>27</sup>

The sense of the first and third phrases seem reasonably clear: 'Listen, Pughat, you who carry water on your shoulder' and 'you who know the courses of the stars', but the second has occasioned more discussion. The main possibilities are represented by Gibson: 'who skim the dew from the barley',<sup>28</sup> and Wyatt: '(who) wring the dew from the fleece'.<sup>29</sup> But in any case it is not impossible that human activities and knowledge are being described.

Danel is frequently given the epithets *mt rpi* and *mt hrnmy*.<sup>30</sup> This is not the place to discuss the meanings of the second terms in these phrases,<sup>31</sup> but that the first term means 'man' and implies that he is human seems reasonably clear. Despite their dealings with deities, neither Danel nor Keret really gives the impression of being a god

<sup>25</sup> KTU 1.16 i 9–11.

<sup>26</sup> See e.g. KTU 1.14 i 41; 1.17 i 23.

<sup>27</sup> KTU 1.19 ii 1–3.

<sup>28</sup> *CML* 115.

<sup>29</sup> *RTU* 297.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., KTU 1.17 i 1–2(?), 17–18, 35–36(?), ii 28–29.

<sup>31</sup> For a detailed discussion of the possibilities which have been proposed, see Wyatt, *RTU* 250–1, fn 5.

himself, and this type of interplay between divine and human is often a feature of legends or epics.

Several times in the story of Keret, El is given the epithet ‘father of humankind’ (*ab adm*),<sup>32</sup> so was he the father of Keret in the same way that he was the father of all people? There is reason to believe that El was thought to be the creator god, despite the fact that no creation story as such has yet been found at Ugarit, not least because of some of the epithets used to describe him, including that already noted, *ab adm*, ‘father of humankind’. El is also described with an epithet (*bny bnwt*) usually understood as meaning ‘creator of creatures’. And it may be relevant to note that parallelism appears to equate El’s fatherhood of Keret and Danel with his role as father of humankind and creator of created things:

<i>mlk tr abh</i>	the kingship of the bull his father
<i>yarš hm drk[t]</i>	does he (i.e. Keret) seek, or dominion
<i>kab adm</i>	as (of) the father of humankind? <sup>33</sup>

and

<i>lbrknn ltr il aby</i>	Indeed bless him, O bull El my (i.e. Danel’s) father,
<i>tmrnn lbny bnwt</i>	strengthen him, O creator of creatures. <sup>34</sup>

These passages might suggest that El *was* father of Keret and Danel in the same way as he was father and progenitor of all human beings. Nevertheless the texts also give the impression that these characters had a special status vis à vis the gods which marked them out from the generality of other mortals.

Can the difference between Keret and Danel on the one hand and other mortals on the other be explained by the fact that they were kings? The texts make it clear that Keret was a king,<sup>35</sup> but this is not explicitly stated of Danel. However, there is mention of a king uttering a curse where it is likely that the reference is to Danel.<sup>36</sup> There is also a reference to Danel going to his house (*bth*) which is paralleled by mention of *hklh*, probably to be translated ‘his palace’ rather than ‘his temple’.<sup>37</sup> It is therefore possible that their special status derived

<sup>32</sup> KTU 1.14 i 37, 43; iii 32, 47; vi 32.

<sup>33</sup> KTU 1.14 i 41–3.

<sup>34</sup> KTU 1.17 i 23–4.

<sup>35</sup> KTU 1.16 i 39–40, 56; cf. KTU 1.16 vi 37.

<sup>36</sup> KTU 1.19 iii 46.

<sup>37</sup> KTU 1.17 ii 24–5; cf. also KTU 1.17 i 25–6.

from their kingship, rather than that they were thought to be in any sense divine. But mention should be made of the text which contains a list of the kings of Ugarit in which each king's name is preceded by the word 'god'.<sup>38</sup> It is widely accepted that this list may imply that the kings were regarded as gods after their deaths, but probably does not suggest that they were regarded as divine while living. There is certainly no clear evidence for a belief that the kings were believed to be literally or physically sons of El, but that they stood in a special relationship which could be described in terms of father and son.

### 5. *Ugaritic Personal Names*

It is appropriate to note that, among the corpus of Ugaritic personal names, there are several which include the elements *ab* and *il*.<sup>39</sup> It is often not clear to whom such elements refer, and in fact both are compounded with the names of various deities. But noteworthy in this context is the name *ilabn*, which Gröndahl translates 'El ist unser Vater'.<sup>40</sup>

There are, then, grounds for suggesting, on the basis of the Ugaritic texts, that El was considered to be father not only of the gods but also of human beings, and that the kings of Ugarit may have been thought so stand in a special son/father relationship with El. Since our starting point was a suggestion that Yahweh took over the status of father and the characteristic of fatherliness from El, it is necessary to consider the extent to which El's fatherhood and fatherliness are reflected with reference to Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible.

### 6. *Yahweh as father of the gods*

It may be appropriate to begin with what may seem the least likely of the concepts to be found within the Hebrew Bible, i.e. that Yahweh might have been envisaged as father of the gods. This possibility is, however, raised by the small number of references to בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים,<sup>41</sup> and

<sup>38</sup> KTU 1.113 reverse. See K.A. Kitchen, 'The King List of Ugarit', *UF* 9, 1977, 131–42.

<sup>39</sup> See F. Gröndahl, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit* (Studia Pohl, 1), Roma 1967, 86–9, 94–6.

<sup>40</sup> F. Gröndahl, *Personennamen*, 94.

<sup>41</sup> Pss. 29:1; 89:6 (MT 7).

בני (ה)אלהים<sup>42</sup> both of which NRSV renders ‘heavenly beings’ in their occurrences in Psalms and Job, and the latter of which it renders ‘sons of God’ in Genesis. How are these phrases to be understood?

The usual explanation is one which has already been noted in the context of the similar Ugaritic phrases, i.e. that the Hebrew word בן can have some such sense as ‘belonging to the company of’ or ‘partaking of the nature of’.<sup>43</sup> But it might be tempting in the present context to suggest that, in these particular instances, underlying such developed senses there might have been something more literal. This is not the place to look in detail at the possibility that Yahweh was envisaged as having a consort, and that they might have been thought of as the parents of other deities, whether in an early phase of the development of Yahwism or else perhaps in popular forms of religion. It could be countered that such a literal interpretation of the phrases might be difficult to square with other similar usages. It is just possible that בן נביא<sup>44</sup> and בני הנביאים<sup>45</sup> might have originated literally, but it is less easy to see how this could be the case where abstract nouns are involved, e.g., בן נכר, ‘foreigner’ (literally ‘son of foreignness’)<sup>46</sup> and בן חיל, ‘warrior’ (literally ‘son of strength’).<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, it could be argued that it is likely that the more figurative or idiomatic usages developed from the literal meaning.

It is perhaps relevant to consider the nature of the material in which references to the ‘sons of God’ appear. Psalm 29 has been widely regarded as ancient, and even as originally a Baal hymn adapted for use in the context of Yahwism.<sup>48</sup> Although the references to the Davidic covenant ideology in Psalm 89 mean that it cannot have dated from before the monarchy, it does contain a certain amount of archaic material, especially verses 5–18 which Dahood finds ‘reminiscent of ancient poems such as Exod. XV’.<sup>49</sup> The tradition of the sons of God taking as

<sup>42</sup> Gen. 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7.

<sup>43</sup> *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* 2, 186; see also D.J.A. Clines, *Job 1–20* (WBC, 17), Dallas 1989, 19.

<sup>44</sup> Amos 7:14.

<sup>45</sup> E.g., 1 Kgs 20:35.

<sup>46</sup> E.g., Gen. 17:12.

<sup>47</sup> E.g., 1 Sam. 14:52.

<sup>48</sup> See H.L. Ginsberg, ‘A Phoenician Hymn in the Psalter’, *Atti del XIX Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti*, Roma 1935, 472–76; F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, Cambridge Mass 1973, 151–52.

<sup>49</sup> M. Dahood, *Psalms II*, New York, 1968, 311.

wives the daughters of humans in Genesis 6:1–4 may be a reminiscence of an ancient story or myth. Claus Westermann comments:

...the passage 6:1–4 shows incontestably that ancient Israel became familiar with the myths of the surrounding world in the course of its development and took notice of them.<sup>50</sup>

Gordon Wenham notes that the motif of the marriage between humans and gods is a well known feature of various ancient mythologies.<sup>51</sup>

It is possible that all these passages contain reminiscences of archaic material which has been reworked to bring them into line with what came to be acceptable theologically. It can be concluded that those who edited the material found nothing offensive in references to ‘sons of God’ or ‘sons of gods’. This might suggest that, even if there ever was any literal sense of kinship underlying the terms, it had long since been forgotten. It is possible to agree with von Rad’s comment on the Genesis passage:

The *bēn* (“son”) describes them, however, as sons of God, not in the physical, genealogical sense, i.e. mythologically, but generally as belonging to the world of the Elohim (cf. *b’nē hann’bī’im*, *disciples of the prophets...*)<sup>52</sup>

Wenham, having considered the three main lines of interpretation of the phrase, opts for that which he labels the ‘angelic’, noting that

...(m)uch of the objection to this view would be eliminated if the term “angel” were avoided and a more ambivalent term such as “spirit” were used instead.<sup>53</sup>

He notes similarities to the pictures presented in Psalm 82, to be mentioned later, and in the Prologue to the Book of Job, to which we must now turn.

The three other clear references to the ‘sons of God’ are found in the Book of Job. Although the book is almost certainly to be dated in the post exilic period,<sup>54</sup> the opening scene (where two of the usages are to be found) wherein Yahweh is found presiding over a gathering

<sup>50</sup> C. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, London 1984, 369.

<sup>51</sup> G. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC, 1), Waco Texas, 1987, 138.

<sup>52</sup> G. von Rad, *Genesis* (revised edition), London, English translation 1972, 114. On the history of interpretation, see C. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, 371–3.

<sup>53</sup> G. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 140.

<sup>54</sup> See e.g. H.H. Rowley, *Job* (New Century Bible), London, revised edition 1976, 21–2.

of the ‘sons of God’ seems to rely on imagery which may have been archaic. Clines suggests ‘. . . the probability that a prose folktale of a pious sufferer existed long before the poetic book itself was written.’<sup>55</sup> Later he notes similarities in other ancient Near Eastern literatures, especially Ugaritic.<sup>56</sup> The picture of the heavenly beings gathering to discuss what is going on on earth is reminiscent of, for example, the episode in the Epic of Gilgamesh in which the gods debate the fate of Gilgamesh and Enkidu.<sup>57</sup> Another example might be seen in Homer’s Iliad, wherein the gods on Olympus are seen discussing the fortunes of the protagonists in the Trojan War and actively intervening on behalf of their favourites and to the detriment of others. This type of scene may well have been familiar in a variety of cultural traditions in the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern world. It is therefore possible that the phrase ‘sons of God’ is used deliberately as having archaic overtones. The third occurrence in Job will be mentioned shortly.

But one further passage which must, of course, be noted, is Deut. 32:8–9 which, according to MT, says:

When the Most High apportioned the nations,  
when he divided humankind,  
he fixed the boundaries of the peoples  
according to the number of the sons of Israel;  
the LORD’s own portion was his people,  
Jacob his allotted share.

The suggestion of some of the versions that, for ‘sons of Israel’, בני ישראל, ‘sons of El/God’, should be read is confirmed by evidence from Qumran.<sup>58</sup> Some time ago, Albright<sup>59</sup> suggested that this passage should be interpreted in the light of the third usage of the phrase ‘sons of God’ in the Book of Job, Job 38:7, which NRSV translates:

when the morning stars sang together  
and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy

The Deuteronomy passage could then be understood as implying that the boundaries of the peoples were fixed according to the number of

---

<sup>55</sup> D.J.A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, lvii.

<sup>56</sup> D.J.A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, 18–9.

<sup>57</sup> Gilgamesh VI vi–VII i. (See S. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others* (Oxford World’s Classics), Oxford, revised edition 2000, 83–4.)

<sup>58</sup> See footnote in, e.g., BHS.

<sup>59</sup> W.F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, Baltimore 1957, 296–97.

the stars. It is possible that the reference is to there being many nations, so many that their number could be likened to that of the stars, particularly if one was to allow for a good deal of hyperbole. But it is far more likely that the underlying notion is that of each people or nation having their own deity. In that context, Yahweh became God of 'his people', i.e. 'Jacob' or Israel. If this is correct, the implication might be that it is more likely that Yahweh was originally thought to be one of the gods rather than father of the gods. A further implication might be that the passage reflects a belief that Yahweh originally belonged to the family of El Elyon. But if Yahweh and El were fundamentally the same deity, the passage could be read as indicating that, in allocating the various nations to the gods, El/Yahweh retained Israel for himself as his own special choice.

The scene is similar to that envisaged in Psalm 82 where God presides over a meeting of the divine council. The other gods are found inadequate because they are unable to ensure justice. The actual phrase 'sons of God(s)' does not occur in this psalm, but the *'lōhîm* are described as 'sons of Elyon'. God is perhaps depicted as judging those once thought to have been his sons, but any such idea has receded in favour of an expression of the belief that other gods are not worthy of divine status.

### 7. *Yahweh as Father of the King*

There is clearer evidence that the king was thought to be in some sense a son of Yahweh. Over half a century ago, John Gray<sup>60</sup> suggested that this concept emerged from a belief which reflected the primitive tribal society from which the Canaanites sprang, where the god was seen as the highest authority in the tribe. He was, in fact, envisaged as a kinsman. The divine name *קָרֵבָן יִצְחָק*,<sup>61</sup> perhaps 'Kinsman of Isaac', has been understood as pointing in that direction. However, this raises the question why, even if a feature of so-called tribal religion was the notion of the god as being in a kinship relationship with his worshippers, this should give rise to the idea of a god as father of the king rather than a father to all worshippers. A possible explanation would be that there

<sup>60</sup> J. Gray, 'Canaanite Kingship in Theory and Practice', *VT* 2 (1952), 200.

<sup>61</sup> Gen. 31:42, 53.

was an attempt to distance the god from the ordinary worshippers. Mention will be made later of the possibility that the title ‘father’ was only appropriate for use by the king.

The clearest declaration of the father/son relationship in connection with the Israelite monarchy comes in words of Yahweh addressed to David by the prophet Nathan:

I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.<sup>62</sup>

It might, at first sight, seem most likely that these phrases are to be understood as similes, even though not explicitly expressed as such. But there are grounds for thinking that there is more to the phraseology than that. A similar concept is to be found in Psalm 89 which, as has already been noted, contains allusions to the Davidic covenant ideology:

He (i.e. the king) shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father,  
my God, and the Rock of my salvation!’

I will make him the firstborn,  
the highest of the kings of the earth.

Forever I will keep my steadfast love for him.

And my covenant with him will stand firm.<sup>63</sup>

In the phrase ‘I will make him the firstborn’ there is a hint at something which is made clear in Psalm 2, i.e. that this sonship was not thought to be physical but was something more than a simile:

I will tell of the decree of the LORD:

He said to me, “You are my son;  
today I have begotten you . . .”<sup>64</sup>

That the statement is figurative is suggested by the fact that the verb לִדְרֹתִי, ‘I have begotten you’, is usually understood to be *qal*, which more frequently means ‘bear, bring forth’—i.e. as a mother—than ‘beget’, though there are a number of instances of the latter sense.<sup>65</sup> The use of the word ‘today’ shows that there was a particular day on which the king was thought to become Yahweh’s son. It is just possible that the reference could be to the day of his birth, and that the crown-prince was envisaged as being adopted as Yahweh’s son from the moment

<sup>62</sup> 2 Sam. 7:14a.

<sup>63</sup> Ps. 89:26–8 (MT 27–9).

<sup>64</sup> Ps. 2:7.

<sup>65</sup> In Jer. 30:6, the *qal* participle is used in a context which makes it clear that males are not normally the subject of the verb in the *qal*.

he was born. Possible support for such a view might be sought in Isa. 9:6 where the new royal child is hailed with honorific titles apparently from birth. But the title 'son' is not included among them. It is widely accepted as more likely that the day was the king's coronation and that after his anointing he became Yahweh's adopted son. It is not necessary to enter into detailed discussion of these points here. What matters in the present context is that the king was in some sense thought to be Yahweh's son, and Yahweh to be the king's father.

#### 8. *Yahweh as Father of Humans/Israel*

A number of passages in the Hebrew Bible can be pointed to as evidence for a belief that in some sense Yahweh was the father of the people of Israel and that Israel was his 'son'. Others suggest that the people of Israel were Yahweh's children but without specifically using the term 'father'. However, although Yahweh's attributes are sometimes likened to those more usually associated with the female, it is difficult to avoid the belief that it is more likely that he was envisaged as male and that the notion of fatherhood lies behind such passages. Even if it were possible to present the material diachronically, a task fraught with difficulties, it is not relevant to do so here. What is significant is that several are in passages commonly thought to be relatively late; and there is no reason to doubt the currency of the image of Yahweh as a father to his people at times when the psalms were being composed and, more importantly, the Psalter was being compiled.

Yahweh is presented as saying to Moses:

Then you shall say to Pharaoh: 'Thus says the LORD: Israel is my firstborn son. I said to you, "Let my son go that he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; now I will kill your firstborn son.'<sup>66</sup>

The Book of Deuteronomy links the idea of being God's children with election:

You are children of the LORD your God. You must not lacerate yourselves or shave your forelocks for the dead. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; it is you the LORD has chosen out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Exod. 4:22–23.

<sup>67</sup> Deut. 14:1–2.

In prophetic thought, Hosea represents Yahweh as referring to Israel as his son:

When Israel was a child, I loved him,  
and out of Egypt I called my son.<sup>68</sup>

The pathos of Israel’s rejection of Yahweh is heightened because it can be described as the rejection of a parent by his children. The Book of Isaiah opens, after the title, with the following words:

Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth;  
for the LORD has spoken:  
I reared children and brought them up,  
but they have rebelled against me.<sup>69</sup>

Similarly, we read in Jeremiah:

I thought  
how I would set you among my children,  
and give you a pleasant land,  
the most beautiful heritage of all the nations.  
And I thought you would call me, My Father,  
and would not turn from following me.<sup>70</sup>

Here the term father is used explicitly, as is the case earlier in the same chapter:

Have you not just now called to me,  
“My Father, you are the friend of my youth—  
will he be angry for ever,  
will he be indignant to the end?”  
This is how you have spoken,  
but you have done all the evil that you could.<sup>71</sup>

Rather different is the striking statement in the book of Isaiah that it is Yahweh, rather than the ‘Patriarchs’, who is the real father of the people:

For you are our father,  
though Abraham does not know us  
and Israel does not acknowledge us;  
you, O LORD, are our father;  
our Redeemer from of old is your name.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Hos. 11:1.

<sup>69</sup> Isa. 1:2.

<sup>70</sup> Jer. 3:19.

<sup>71</sup> Jer. 3:4–5.

<sup>72</sup> Isa. 63:16.

In the Book of Malachi there are three instances where the relationship between father and son is mentioned in a context where God may be envisaged as like a father:

A son honours his father, and servants their master. If then I am a father, where is the honour due me? And if I am a master, where is the respect due me? says the LORD of Hosts to you, O priests...<sup>73</sup>

Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors?<sup>74</sup>

They shall be mine, says the LORD of Hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who serve them.<sup>75</sup>

The first and third of the quotations from Malachi are virtually similes. The second links fatherhood with creation. This link is made elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, for example in the 'Song of Moses':

Do you thus repay the LORD.  
O foolish and senseless people?  
Is not he your father, who created you,  
who made you and established you?<sup>76</sup>

Similar ideas are expressed in the Book of Isaiah:

...bring my sons from far away  
and my daughters from the end of the earth—  
everyone who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory,  
whom I formed and made.<sup>77</sup>

and:

Thus says the LORD,  
the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker.  
Will you question me about my children,  
or command me concerning the work of my hands?<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Mal. 1:6.

<sup>74</sup> Mal. 2:10.

<sup>75</sup> Mal. 3:17; so NRSV; literally: '...as a man spares his son who serves him'.

<sup>76</sup> Deut. 32:6.

<sup>77</sup> Isa. 43:6b-7.

<sup>78</sup> Isa. 45:11. (So NRSV, following the widely accepted emendation.)

and even more clearly, in a passage which uses the word ‘father’:

Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;  
 we are the clay, and you are our potter;  
 we are all the work of your hand.<sup>79</sup>

On the basis of these last few examples, it might be argued that Yahweh was envisaged as father in the sense that he was the creator of his people. However, this would not really do justice to the whole range of passages which use the father/son image to describe the relationship between Yahweh and his people.<sup>80</sup>

Mention should also be made of one other possible reference to god as father. In the ‘Blessing of Jacob’ in Gen. 49:24–5, there is an impressive list of divine titles—Mighty One of Jacob, Shepherd, Rock of Israel, Shaddai, and what MT suggests is ‘the God of your father’—אל אביך. The phrase parallels MT אלה שדי for which there is justification from the Versions for reading אל שדי. It is therefore possible that, in the former phrase, אל is to be understood as absolute rather than construct and that the text originally contained two divine titles, each comprising the name El and an appositional element, שדי and ‘your father’.

Before proceeding any further, it is important to recall that one of the pieces of evidence for the notion of Yahweh as father in the Hebrew Bible may be the presence of personal names which include the elements אב or אבי. It is of course not always absolutely clear to whom the elements refer, even in Israel, and whether it is theophoric. Nor is it clear whether such names, along with those containing the elements אה, אהי, and עמי reflect a notion of kinship relationship between clan-god and clan-member, as used to be suggested. It has also been argued as a corollary that such Hebrew kinship names tend to be early, and therefore to point to an early phase in the development of the religion of Israel. But the dating of personal names on the basis of where or in what type of material they occur in the Hebrew Bible is fraught with difficulties, though their presence in inscriptions can sometimes give a clearer indication of their currency if not their antiquity.<sup>81</sup> However, at

<sup>79</sup> Isa. 64:8.

<sup>80</sup> A difference between the Hebrew Bible and the Ugaritic material might be the use of the image in relationship to a particular people rather than all people.

<sup>81</sup> See G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance* 1 and 2, Cambridge 1991–2004; where possible, a date is suggested for each inscription.

the very least, the name Abijah points to an understanding of Yahweh as father—except, of course, for the fact that the king of Judah of that name according to Chronicles is referred to as Abijam in Kings!<sup>82</sup> But there are a number of other instances in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>83</sup> *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* lists several occurrences on seals and ostraca and notes the possibility that it was the name of the scribe of the Gezer Calendar—although the final *hē* is not visible, and some read the word with a final *bē*, i.e. as *'byb*.<sup>84</sup> But there are grounds for believing that the name Abijah was widely used.

### 9. *Yahweh as Father in the Psalms*

It is now time to consider the book of Psalms in this context. Attention has already been drawn to allusions in the psalms to the ‘sons of God’ and to the idea of the king as Yahweh’s son. But what of references to God as a father to his people, or indeed of all people? Surely it might be expected that in a collection of material in which God is praised for his various attributes, not least his care for, concern for, and protection of his people, the notion of God as father would be prominent. But in fact it is noticeable by its near absence. In Ps. 68:5 (MT 6) the following description occurs:

Father of orphans and protector of widows  
is God in his holy habitation.

This is not so much a direct reference to God as father, as a statement that he fulfils the role of a father to orphans just as he fulfils the role of protector to widows. God protects those members of society who are unable to protect themselves. In fact this could be seen as depicting God as like a king.

In Ps. 103:13, in what Jan Fokkelman argued in his paper to this conference is the very heart of the psalm, and in what is clearly a simile, God is likened to a father:

<sup>82</sup> Compare e.g. 1 Kgs 14:31 with 1 Chron. 3:10.

<sup>83</sup> E.g., 1 Sam. 8:2; 1 Kgs 14:1; 1 Chron. 24:10; 29:1; Neh. 10:7; 12:4, 17.

<sup>84</sup> *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* 1, 103.

<sup>85</sup> Fokkelman’s argument that the structure of the psalm emphasises Yahweh’s אב, implying that fatherhood is only mentioned in passing, can be adduced in support of what is suggested later in this paper.

As a father has compassion for his children,  
So the LORD has compassion for his children.<sup>85</sup>

The two passages just noted exhaust the descriptions of God as father in the Psalter. So why should it be that God is nowhere addressed directly as, and rarely described as, father in the Psalms, particularly in view of the evidence from elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible that he was so conceived? The absence is also surprising in the context of frequent suggestions that the Hebrew Bible presents God in terms of the patriarchal society that ancient Israel is claimed to have been. Why the absence of the most patriarchal of all titles? It is clear that the title came to be used in later Jewish and Christian prayers. Examples can be seen in Sirach, where God is addressed as:

O Lord, Father and Master of my life . . .<sup>86</sup>

and

O Lord, Father and God of my life . . .<sup>87</sup>

The most familiar of Christian prayers, the Lord’s Prayer, enshrines the addressing of God as father in the teaching of Jesus.<sup>88</sup>

Was it simply that other images predominated? Perhaps that of the king was more important. It could be argued that since many of the psalms seem to have arisen from situations of distress or threat, what the people wanted was a warrior leader who could intervene on their behalf. Such an understanding would perhaps be more appropriate to national or communal laments. God is often depicted as a rock or tower or fortress or shield—images which may fit better in an individual context but which again provide assurance of God’s strength and protection. A possibility is that it was believed that the king, as adopted son, was the only person who could appropriately address God as ‘father’. But after the fall of the monarchy this would presumably not be an issue, and in any case this need not prevent the *likening* of God to a father. Another suggestion might be that there was an attempt to distance Yahweh from such stories as that preserved in KTU 1.23, mentioned earlier, where El is depicted as engaging in sexual activity prior to the birth of the ‘The Gracious Gods’. But the very fact that the image *was* used in other

---

<sup>86</sup> Sir. 23:1.

<sup>87</sup> Sir. 23:4.

<sup>88</sup> Mt. 6:9; Lk. 11:2.

types of literature, and continued to be used, implies that this cannot have been a major problem. The possibility that there was an attempt to distance the worshipper from Yahweh seems unlikely in view of the fact that another image of some intimacy was widely used.<sup>89</sup>

Producing a commentary on the Psalms,<sup>90</sup> with a request from the series editor to avoid repetition by dealing with recurring themes in the Introduction, with a cross-reference from the psalm under discussion, made me realise just how frequently the term  $\text{אָב}$  occurs, with its allusion to the covenant relationship and God's attitude to his people. And although the adjective  $\text{אָבִיב}$  is rarely used of God—in the Psalter only in Ps. 145:17—it is used of humans who remain loyal to the covenant a number of times in the Psalms. Could it be that this notion of God as a 'husband' or 'constant lover', and perhaps particularly the latter, came to predominate as a way of envisaging the relationship?<sup>91</sup> It might also be possible that, after the end of the monarchy, the emphasis on the father/son relationship between God and king—expressed in the Davidic covenant—gave way to a concept with more resonance with all the people. Those who, or the descendants of those who, had undergone judgement and punishment came to long for and to rely on God's constant love. That God continued to be likened to a father in the post-exilic period is clear, but perhaps—to return to the quotation with which this paper began—the psalmists wished to recall or to call for God's mildness *rather than* God's sternness. The language is still of course patriarchal, even if less overtly so than the most patriarchal of all the epithets, 'father'.<sup>92</sup> It must be acknowledged that the notion of God as 'husband' can be just as problematic as that of God as 'father', as has been pointed out notably by Cheryl Exum.<sup>93</sup> Mary Mills, in

---

<sup>89</sup> I am grateful to Prof. John Day for drawing my attention to A. Böckler, *Gott als Vater im Alten Testament: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Entstehung und Entwicklung eines Gottesbildes*, Gütersloh 2002, and to an essay by the same author entitled 'Unser Vater', in: P. Van Hecke (ed.), *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (BETHL, 187), Leuven, 2005, 249–61. Unfortunately these have not been available to me prior to submitting the revised version of this paper. A notice of the first edition of the former work, by D.J. Reimer (in G.J. Brooke [ed.], *Society for Old Testament Study Book List 2001*, Sheffield 2001, 117), suggests that Böckler sees the idea of God as father as having its roots in Canaanite royal ideology and, in Israel, initially applying to kings and only subsequently coming to be applied to the people.

<sup>90</sup> A. Curtis, *Psalms* (Epworth Commentaries), Peterborough 2004.

<sup>91</sup> Reference may again be made to J. Fokkelman's treatment of Ps. 103.

<sup>92</sup> In Sir. 4:10, the addressee is encouraged to be 'a father to orphans' and 'like a husband to their mother', in order to 'be like a son of the Most High'.

<sup>93</sup> J.C. Exum, *Plotted, Shot and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women*, Sheffield 1996.

her study of *Images of God in the Old Testament*, notes some of the issues concerning the images of God as father and husband, particularly as used in prophecy.<sup>94</sup> But there is no reason to doubt that it was possible for people to hold an ideal view of what a husband or lover should be like, even if the actuality often fell far short. A similar situation can be noted with kingship, where an idealised view of what a king could and should be like could be held, even though their actual experience of kings might be very different.

For the psalmists, God’s אב was something for which they longed and prayed, or on which they felt able to rely, stressing the quality of constant love. And, after all, the Ugaritic texts present El as the ‘kindly, compassionate god’ (*ltpn il dpid*), though it should be noted that John Healey has placed a slight question mark beside this translation of the epithet. He notes that both parts have clear Arabic counterparts, the former relating to an adjective meaning ‘benign, kind, friendly’, and the latter to a verb ‘act well, kindly’ or a noun ‘heart, mind, acuteness (of mind)’. He suggests that Latipan is a name, and that it ‘might even be *the* proper name of Ilu’, but notes that the second phrase may have ‘more to do with mental acuity than kindness’. He does, however, agree that ‘there is a benevolent and kindly aspect to Ilu’.<sup>95</sup> Perhaps the special contribution of Canaan to the world, through El, was the notion of the kindly, compassionate god, paving the way for the notion of the covenant God whose constant love endures for ever.

---

<sup>94</sup> M. Mills, *Images of God in the Old Testament*, London 1998.

<sup>95</sup> J. Healey, ‘The Kindly and Merciful God: On Some Semitic Divine Epithets’, in M. Dietrich and I. Kottsieper, *Und Moses schrieb dieses Lied auf . . . ? Festschrift O. Loretz* (AOAT 250), Münster, 1998, 349–351.



## THE ARK AND THE CHERUBIM IN THE PSALMS

John Day

*Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford—Great Britain*

### 1. *Introduction*

There is only one explicit reference to the Ark in the Psalms, namely Ps. 132:8, 'Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the Ark of your strength'. The question arises whether there are also other implicit allusions to the Ark in the Psalter. According to H. Spieckermann<sup>1</sup> the Ark had already disappeared from the Jerusalem Temple soon after the time of Solomon, and on such a view one would not expect to find much in the way of references to the Ark in the Psalms. However, the majority of scholars accept that the Ark was in the Temple till about the time of the exile, a view which has the unanimous support of later Jewish tradition. Indeed, I myself have recently written an article reaffirming the view that the Ark was in the Temple till the destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE.<sup>2</sup> Without repeating all my arguments here I would draw attention to the following points, which Spieckermann strangely fails to discuss. First, Jer. 3:16 declares, '...they shall no more say, "The Ark of the covenant of the Lord." It shall not come to mind, or be remembered, or missed; it shall not be made again.' These words suggesting the recent disappearance of the Ark are difficult to fathom if the Ark had already disappeared hundreds of years earlier. Secondly, 1 Kgs 8:8 states that the poles of the Ark may be seen in the Temple 'to this day'. Whenever exactly these words were written, they clearly imply that the Ark was still in existence a considerable time after Solomon. Moreover, the fact that the Ark had poles attached to it naturally leads one to suppose that it did not remain permanently in the Holy of Holies but was taken out

---

<sup>1</sup> H. Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart: Eine Theologie der Psalmen* (FRLANT, 148), Göttingen 1989, 93.

<sup>2</sup> J. Day, 'Whatever happened to the Ark of the Covenant?', in: J. Day (ed.), *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, London 2005, 250–70.

from time to time to be carried in processions. That there were such processions is further suggested by the evidence of certain Psalms, as we shall see shortly, and I will argue that there are also other psalmic allusions to the Ark.

## 2. *Psalm 132*

It is perhaps best if we start from the one explicit reference to the Ark in Ps. 132. Although the only actual occurrence of the word for Ark is in v. 8, it is clear that the whole of the first half of the Psalm recollects the finding of the Ark and its taking up to Jerusalem in the time of David, the event described in 2 Sam. 6, just as the second half of the Psalm recalls 2 Sam. 7's promise of an eternal dynasty for David.

Verse 6 declares, 'Lo, we heard of it in Ephrathah, we found it in the fields of Jaar.' It is generally accepted that 'the fields of Jaar' refers to Kiriath-jearim, the place where the Ark was kept after its Philistine adventures and from which it was brought up to Jerusalem by David (1 Sam. 7:1–2; 1 Chron. 13:5–6; cf. 2 Sam. 6:2). But where was Ephrathah? Here there have been three main views. The first equates it with Bethlehem,<sup>3</sup> which is sometimes called Ephrathah or Ephrath in the Old Testament (Gen. 35:16, 19, 48:7; Ruth 4:11; cf. Micah 5:2; 1 Sam. 17:12). However, since the Ark is never said to have been at Bethlehem, those who take this view tend to assume that the verse is saying that those speaking heard of the Ark while they were at Bethlehem. But poetic parallelism would more naturally lead us to expect that Ephrathah serves here as an equivalent for the fields of Jaar (Kiriath-jearim). The second view supposes that Ephrathah means Ephraim (cf. 'Ephrathite' meaning 'Ephraimite' in 1 Sam. 1:1),<sup>4</sup> and holds that the reference is to the Ark's being at Shiloh. However, by the time of David the Ark had long ceased being associated with Shiloh. Moreover, the poetic parallelism of v. 6 leads us to expect a name that provides an equivalent to Kiriath-jearim, which was not in Ephraim. The third and most acceptable view, therefore, is that which

<sup>3</sup> E.g. H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, 2/2), Göttingen 1926, 566; K. Seybold, *Die Psalmen* (HAT, 1/15), Tübingen 1996, 498.

<sup>4</sup> A. Weiser, *The Psalms* (OTL), London 1962, 6; cf. S. Terrien, *The Psalms*, Grand Rapids 2003, 848, who likewise sees the reference as being to Ephraim, though he does not specify Shiloh in particular.

was first proposed by Franz Delitzsch (and followed by A.F. Kirkpatrick, O. Eissfeldt, F.M. Cross, etc.),<sup>5</sup> who noted that in 1 Chron. 2:50 Kiriath-jearim is the great-grandson of Ephrathah, just as Bethlehem is in the following verse. Ephrathah thus represents a clan name to which not only Bethlehem but also Kiriath-jearim, belongs, and it is to this latter which Ps. 132:6 refers. It is from there that the Ark procession proceeds.

Attempts to deny that Ps. 132 implies an actual cultic procession with the Ark have sometimes been made. Thus, it has been argued (e.g. by J. Maier)<sup>6</sup> that the Psalm merely recollects the bringing up of the Ark as opposed to re-enacting it. However, against this it may be noted that v. 8 declares, 'Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the Ark of your strength'. The fact that this is in the imperative form suggests that the psalmist is not merely recollecting the past but also alluding to a cult ceremony. Similarly the Song of the Ark in Num. 10:35 declares, 'Arise, O Lord, let your enemies be scattered...'

Another way some scholars have sought to deny that Ps. 132 presupposes a cultic procession with the Ark is to date the Psalm after the exile when there was no Ark (e.g. E. Gerstenberger).<sup>7</sup> However, there are strong arguments in favour of the majority view that Ps. 132 is pre-exilic. In addition to the fact just noted that v. 8 seems to presuppose a procession with the Ark, vv. 10 and 17 speak of 'your anointed one' and 'my anointed one', and as elsewhere in the Psalter these terms indicate a currently reigning Davidic monarch.

Finally, it should be noted that D.R. Hillers<sup>8</sup> has sought to reject the view that Ps. 132 presupposes a procession with the Ark to the Jerusalem sanctuary by rendering the preposition ל in v. 8 unusually as 'from' rather than 'to', as can be the case in Ugaritic. He thus translates: 'Arise, O Yahweh *from* your resting-place, you and your mighty ark', instead of the usual 'Arise, O Lord, and go *to* your resting place, you and the Ark of your strength'. Rather than referring to a procession with the Ark Hillers supposes that the words are a call for God to intervene on

<sup>5</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *Biblischer Kommentar über die Psalmen*, Leipzig 1894, 764–5; A.F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*, Cambridge 1902, 765–6; O. Eissfeldt, 'Psalm 132', *Kleine Schriften*, Bd. 3, ed. R. Sellhiem, F. Maass, Tübingen 1966, 484; F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, Cambridge, MA 1973, 94, n. 16.

<sup>6</sup> J. Maier, *Das altisraelitische Ladeheiligtum* (BZAW, 93), Berlin 1965, 76–80.

<sup>7</sup> E. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations* (FOTL, 15), Grand Rapids 2001, 368–9.

<sup>8</sup> D.R. Hillers, 'Ritual Procession of the Ark and Ps 132', *CBQ* 30 (1968), 48–55.

behalf of the king. This view appears to have found little following<sup>9</sup> and is surely to be rejected. V. 13 states that Yahweh has chosen Zion for his habitation, but in v. 6 the Ark is in the fields of Jaar (Kiriath-jearim). Somehow the Ark needs to get from there to Zion, and this is readily accomplished if we translate v. 8 as, 'Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place...' Hillers is able to ignore the logic of this only by leaving v. 6 out of consideration. Whilst accepting that vv. 1–5, 7 refer to David's transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem, he claims that the feminine suffixes on the verbs and the place names Ephrathah and fields of Jaar in v. 6 have not been satisfactorily explained.<sup>10</sup> But the suffixes clearly refer back to the Ark which has been in mind in the previous verses and which is sometimes feminine. Wherever one locates the fields of Jaar and Ephrathah, therefore, the Ark needs to progress from there to Jerusalem for the Psalm to make satisfactory sense.

### 3. *Other Evidence in the Psalms for a Cultic Procession with the Ark*

In addition to Ps. 132, three other Psalms provide evidence that there was a ritual procession with the Ark to the Temple, and interestingly all three Psalms associate this with the celebration of Yahweh's kingship. The first, one of the Enthronement Psalms, is Ps. 47, which declares in v. 6 (ET 5), 'God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a horn'. Interestingly, the identical language is attested in 2 Sam. 6:15 in connection with the bringing up of the Ark to Jerusalem by king David, the precise event that is being commemorated in Ps. 132: 'So David and all the house of Israel brought up the Ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the horn'. This suggests that the ascent of Yahweh in Ps. 47:6 (ET 5) was represented by the Ark of the Covenant. The second Psalm is Ps. 68, which interestingly is the only other Psalm in the Psalter that speaks of Yahweh ascending Mt Zion (v. 19, ET 18, 'You ascended the high mount'). It is therefore noteworthy that the opening words of the Psalm (v. 2, ET 1) are the words of the song of the Ark found in Num. 10:35, 'Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered; let those who hate him flee before him'. This again suggests that Yahweh was represented by the Ark. The Psalm makes explicit

<sup>9</sup> But cf. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 95, nn. 19, 20.

<sup>10</sup> Hillers, 'Ritual Procession of the Ark and Ps 132', 52, n. 15.

reference to a procession into the Temple (v. 25, ET 24, ‘The solemn processions are seen, O God, the processions of my God, my King, into the sanctuary’). Finally, there is Ps. 24:7–10, where we read of the following antiphonal interchange at the Temple gates:

‘Lift up your heads, O gates!  
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!  
that the King of glory may come in.’  
‘Who is the King of glory?’  
‘The Lord, strong and mighty,  
The Lord mighty in battle!’  
‘Lift up your heads, O gates!  
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!  
that the King of glory may come in.’  
‘Who is the King of glory?’  
‘The Lord of hosts,  
he is the King of glory!’

Yahweh is here represented as about to enter the Temple gates<sup>11</sup> and several pieces of evidence suggest this was by means of the Ark. First there is the battle imagery (‘The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle!’), which admirably fits the Ark, which we know was sometimes employed as a war palladium. Secondly, the expression ‘the Lord of hosts’ found here is specifically connected with the Ark elsewhere, e.g. 1 Sam. 4:4, ‘the Ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim’, and 2 Sam. 6:2, ‘the Ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim’. Thirdly, we repeatedly find Yahweh referred to here as ‘the King of glory’, and the word כבוד, ‘glory’, is specifically used of the divine presence associated with the Ark in 1 Sam. 4:21–22: when the Ark is captured, we read ‘The glory (כבוד) has departed from Israel’.

<sup>11</sup> The gates are told to lift up their heads, the meaning of which is disputed, but it is most natural to suppose that this is because of Yahweh’s vast size. The subject of Yahweh’s vast size has been discussed by J.C. Greenfield, ‘Ba’al’s Throne and Isa 6:1’, in: A. Caquot, S. Légasse and M. Tardieu (eds), *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l’honneur de M. Mathias Delcor* (AOAT, 215), Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn 1985, 193–8, and M.S. Smith, ‘Divine Form and Size in Ugaritic and Pre-exilic Israelite Religion’, *ZAW* 100 (1988), 424–7, but without referring to Ps. 24. There were no portcullises in ancient Israel, so the address to the gates to lift up their heads must be metaphorical. The view of Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 98 and others that the meaning is rather that the gates are to rejoice (by analogy with KTU 1.2.I.27, where the gods are told to lift up their heads), seems less likely.

The evidence that Yahweh was symbolized by the Ark in Pss. 24, 47 and 68 is thus overwhelming. It is therefore strange that Herbert Niehr<sup>12</sup> has recently suggested that Yahweh was rather represented by an anthropomorphic image in these passages. He completely fails to note any of the above points which are suggestive of the Ark but merely states that the Ark did not have sufficient significance to denote Yahweh's presence. This curiously ignores the evidence of passages like the song of the Ark in Num. 10:35–6, where the Ark is addressed as if it is Yahweh himself.

Another scholar who seeks to deny a procession with the Ark is A. Cooper,<sup>13</sup> who advocates a curious reading of Ps. 24 according to which it is the gates of the netherworld (as he translates פתחי עולם in vss. 7, 9) through which God either descends or ascends, whether prior to or following his battle with the forces of darkness there. However, the words of v. 3, 'Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?' make it natural to conclude that it is the gates of the Jerusalem temple which are in mind.

The notion that Pss. 24, 47 and 68 imply a procession with the Ark is not simply a modern scholarly idea, for we already find it in pre-critical works (e.g. in Calvin's Psalms commentary on these particular passages). What was new in modern scholarship was the view that these Psalms—as also Ps. 132—reflect a procession with the Ark specifically at the feast of Tabernacles. So far as I am aware this was first argued by S. Mowinckel in 1921 in the second volume of his *Psalmstudien*,<sup>14</sup> and it has been followed by many since then. H.-J. Kraus<sup>15</sup> modified the theory in that he envisaged the autumn festival as being simply a 'Royal Zion' festival along the lines of Ps. 132, i.e. as a re-enactment of David's bringing the Ark up to Jerusalem and reaffirmation of the Davidic covenant, but he disassociated the Ark procession from the theme of Yahweh's enthronement. However, Mowinckel's idea linking the two seems more natural. The words already noted about Yahweh

<sup>12</sup> H. Niehr, 'In Search of YHWH's Cult Statue in the First Temple', in: K. van der Toorn (ed.), *The Image and the Book*, Leuven 1997, 86–87. This is not the place to discuss the larger question whether Yahweh was ever represented by an anthropomorphic image in the Jerusalem cult, as Niehr and some of the other contributors to the volume just referred to maintain. I am simply concerned here with Pss. 24, 47 and 68.

<sup>13</sup> A. Cooper, 'Ps 24:7–10: Mythology and Exegesis', *JBL* 102 (1983), 37–60.

<sup>14</sup> S. Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien*, Bd. 2, Kristiana 1921, 107–20. Cf. his later work *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, vol. 1, Oxford 1962, 169–77.

<sup>15</sup> H.-J. Kraus, *Worship in Israel*, Oxford 1966, 183–8, 205–14.

going up with a shout and with the sound of a horn are found in both 2 Sam. 6, the narrative about the Ark procession paralleling Ps. 132, and also in Ps. 47 relating to Yahweh's enthronement. That it was specifically at the feast of Tabernacles that this Ark procession took place is supported by various factors, e.g. according to 1 Kgs 8:2 it was at the feast of Tabernacles that Solomon took up the Ark to Jerusalem; interestingly, the parallel chapter in 2 Chron. 6:39–41 quotes Ps. 132 at this very point. Also, as has often been noted, various pieces of evidence support the view that it was at the feast of Tabernacles that Yahweh's kingship was celebrated (e.g. Zech. 14:16–17).

#### 4. *The Association of the Ark with Yahweh's Strength, Splendour and Glory*

In Ps. 132:8 the Ark is referred to as אֲרֹן עֹז, 'the Ark of your strength'. This has led some scholars, especially G. Henton Davies,<sup>16</sup> to explore whether there are other places in the Psalms where the Ark is alluded to as God's might or strength (עֹז). There is one verse where there is general agreement that this is so, namely Ps. 78:61, where we read that God 'delivered his strength (עֹז) to captivity, his splendour (תְּפִאֲרוֹתָיו) to the hand of the foe'. From the context there can be no doubt that this is referring to the loss of the Ark at the battle of Aphek recounted in 1 Sam. 4, since the previous verse states that 'He forsook his dwelling at Shiloh, the tent where he dwelt among men' (cf. 1 Sam. 4:2–3, where the Ark is brought to the battle from Shiloh). The singling out for mention of the death of priests in Ps. 78:64 also coheres with the death of Hophni and Phineas in 1 Sam. 4:11. Most unnaturally, Spieckermann<sup>17</sup> claims that God's 'strength' and 'splendour' here refer to the people and that it is rather the exile of both Northern and Southern Kingdoms which is in mind. However, the specific singling out of the Shiloh sanctuary at this point makes this impossible, for Shiloh had by then long ceased to play a central role.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> G.H. Davies, 'The Ark in the Psalms', in: F.F. Bruce (ed.), *Promise and Fulfilment: Essays Presented to Professor S.H. Hooke*, Edinburgh 1963, 51–61.

<sup>17</sup> Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart*, 146, together with n. 30. Spieckermann compares Ps. 89:18 (ET 17), where God is spoken of as 'the splendour of their [Israel's] strength'. But even there, it is God who is the splendour, not Israel.

<sup>18</sup> At the oral presentation of this paper in Apeldoorn someone wondered about the references to Shiloh in Jer. 7. However, as I have earlier pointed out in 'The Destruction of the Shiloh Sanctuary and Jeremiah vii 12, 14', in: J.A. Emerton (ed.), *Studies*

It is clear from Ps. 78:61 that not only עֵן but also תְּפִאֲרוֹת, ‘splendour’, was a term for the divine presence associated with the Ark. Are there any other allusions to the Ark in the Psalms as Yahweh’s עֵן or תְּפִאֲרוֹת? One probable passage is Ps. 96:6, where we read, ‘strength (עֵן) and splendour (תְּפִאֲרוֹת) are in his sanctuary’. Since the same two expressions are found in parallelism as are used of the Ark in Ps. 78:61, and since they are said to be in the sanctuary (מִקְדָּשׁ), it is plausible to suppose that the Ark is again being referred to. Although Ps. 96 has sometimes been seen as post-exilic (when there was no Ark), dependent on Deutero-Isaiah, I do not find this view persuasive. The opening words ‘O sing to the Lord a new song’, which we find in both Ps. 96:1 (cf. v. 11) and Isa. 42:10, are characteristic of psalmody, not prophecy, and therefore originate in the former. A second probable reference to the Ark is in Ps. 63:3 (ET 2), ‘So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power (עֵן) and glory (כְּבוֹד)’. Since the psalmist is here referring to seeing God in the sanctuary and uses parallel terms which are both employed elsewhere of the Ark (cf. 1 Sam. 4:21–22 for כְּבוֹד), it seems entirely natural to envisage that the Ark is here in mind. The fact that the final verse (v. 12, ET 11) refers to the king (‘But the king shall rejoice in God...’) supports a pre-exilic date, when the Ark was in existence. Even if one were to suppose these words are a later addition, they would need to have been added when the monarchy was still in existence.

The language found in Psalms like these about seeing God in the sanctuary tends to support the thesis of H.G.M. Williamson<sup>19</sup> that in the pre-exilic period lay worshippers had access to the heart of the Jerusalem Temple in a way which was not the case after the exile.

---

in *the Historical Books of the Old Testament* (V.T.S., 39), Leiden 1979, 87–94, the analogy in this deuteronomistically-edited passage between the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple as the place where Yahweh’s name dwelt and the destruction of the Shiloh sanctuary as the place where Yahweh’s name dwelt at first (Jer. 7:12, 14) requires that the destruction of the Shiloh sanctuary took place before the bringing up of the Ark to Jerusalem and the construction of the Jerusalem Temple, after which Shiloh was certainly no longer the place of Yahweh’s name in deuteronomistic understanding. This most naturally alludes to the Philistine destruction of c. 1050 BCE, to which Ps. 78:61 also refers. For the archaeological evidence that Shiloh was indeed destroyed during Iron Age I and that it was merely an insignificant site during Iron Age II, when it was apparently gradually abandoned rather than destroyed, see I. Finkelstein (ed.), *Shiloh: The Archaeology of a Biblical Site*, Tel Aviv 1993, in particular Finkelstein’s summary statement on 388–9.

<sup>19</sup> H.G.M. Williamson, ‘Temple and Worship in Isaiah 6’, in: J. Day (ed.), *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, London 2005, 136–7; Idem, *Isaiah 1–5* (ICC), London 2006, 90–91.

A number of passages where G. Henton Davies suggested that  $\aleph$  refers to the Ark are, however, unlikely. Thus, Ps. 105:4 reads, 'Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his presence continually!' However, this Psalm is widely agreed to be post-exilic, as it shows knowledge of the Priestly source of the Pentateuch in its recounting of the plagues in Egypt (contrast Ps. 78, which knows only the seven J plagues). Moreover, Ps. 105 seems closely related to Ps. 106, the post-exilic dating of which is indicated by its concluding wish for restoration from exile (v. 47). Since there was no Ark after the exile there can therefore be no reference to the Ark here. Other questionable Ark allusions that Davies proposes on the basis of  $\aleph$  include Ps. 21:2 (ET 1), 'In your strength the king rejoices, O Lord', Ps. 21.14 (ET 13), 'Be exalted, O Lord, in your strength', Ps. 68:29 (ET 28), 'Summon your might, O God, show your strength, O God, as you have done for us before', Ps. 77:14, 'you have displayed your strength among the peoples', and Ps. 81:2 (ET 1), 'Sing aloud to God our strength'. However, I do not have space to discuss these texts in detail here.

### 5. *The Ark as Yahweh's Footstool*

It was once customary for some scholars to think of the Ark as Yahweh's throne.<sup>20</sup> However, it is clear that it was rather the cherubim above the Ark which constituted Yahweh's throne in the strict sense, as is explicitly stated in Pss. 80:2 (ET 1), 99:1, 1 Sam. 4:4 and 2 Sam. 6:2. It is therefore natural for the Ark underneath to have been seen as Yahweh's footstool, which thus constituted an appendage to the throne.<sup>21</sup> Such an understanding can claim support from representations of cherubim thrones with footstools underneath for earthly monarchs on a Megiddo plaque and on the Ahiram sarcophagus.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, it is clearly presupposed in 1 Chron. 28:2, where David speaks of his plan 'to build a house of rest for the Ark of the covenant of the Lord, even for the footstool of our God' (explicative *waw*). Within the Psalms we

<sup>20</sup> This was particularly emphasized by M. Dibelius, *Die Lade Jahwes: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Göttingen 1906.

<sup>21</sup> It is because the Ark was an appendage to Yahweh's throne that Jer. 3:16–17 can declare, 'they shall no longer say, "The Ark of the covenant of the Lord." It shall not come to mind, or be remembered, or missed; nor shall another one be made. At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord...'

<sup>22</sup> For depictions see, e.g., T.N.D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (CBOT, 18), Lund 1982, 21–2, figs. 1–2.

also read of God's footstool in Pss. 99:5 and 132:7. Opinion is divided about whether either or both of these references allude to the Ark or whether they are rather a way of speaking of the sanctuary. Ps. 99:5 proclaims, 'Extol the Lord our God; worship at his footstool'. Here a strong case can be made that the reference is to the Ark, since v. 1 refers to Yahweh's cherubim-throne, 'The Lord is king; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!' If the cherubim are the throne, then the footstool must refer to the Ark underneath. The same phrase about the footstool occurs also in Ps. 132:7, 'Let us go to his dwelling-place; let us worship at this footstool'. *Prima facie* one would therefore expect this likewise to refer to the Ark. Such a supposition is further suggested by the fact that both the preceding and following verses clearly refer to the Ark. Although the parallel term 'dwelling place' must mean the sanctuary (it is the same word as in v. 5, where a dwelling-place for the Ark is sought), this is perfectly compatible with the footstool being the more immediate location of Yahweh's dwelling, the Ark. However, if the term 'footstool' does refer here to the sanctuary, the context shows this can only be because it is envisaged as the container for the Ark, God's footstool proper. In passing, I would note that in addition to the passages just referred to I also see an allusion to the Ark, indeed the loss of the Ark, in the reference to God's forsaking of his footstool in Lam. 2:1, but I must refer the reader to my discussion of this elsewhere.<sup>23</sup>

#### 6. *The Cherubim in the Psalter*

As already noted, it was not the Ark itself but the cherubim above it that constituted Yahweh's throne. Within the Psalter Yahweh's enthronement on the cherubim is explicitly mentioned in Pss. 80:2 (ET 1) and 99:1. (There is also a reference to a cherub in Ps. 18:9 (ET 10), where Yahweh 'rode on a cherub, and flew; he came swiftly on the wings of the wind'. But this is clearly a heavenly cherub, probably symbolizing a cloud. The Temple cherubim will have been seen as the earthly equivalent of such heavenly cherubim.) The Psalms refer to Yahweh's 'throne' in Pss. 9:5 (ET 4), 47:9 (ET 8), 93:2 and 97:2 and O. Keel states that 'It is difficult to imagine the throne having been set in any

<sup>23</sup> See Day, 'Whatever happened to the Ark of the Covenant?', 264.

place other than the *d'bir* of the Jerusalem temple.<sup>24</sup> I fully agree that Ps. 47:9 (ET 8) must refer to the cherubim in the Jerusalem Temple, since the context is Yahweh's ascent with the Ark, as was noted above. However, Ps. 93:2's statement, 'your throne is established from of old' in the context of Yahweh's creation of the world (v. 1) makes it natural to think of Yahweh's heavenly throne, since the cherubim in the sanctuary came into existence much later than the creation. Again, Ps. 97:2, just before the mention of the throne, says, 'Clouds and thick darkness are all around him' and immediately after the throne reference, in v. 3, we read 'Fire goes before him'. This storm theophany language is more likely to have been used of Yahweh's heavenly throne. As for Ps. 9:5 (ET 4), 'you have sat on the throne giving righteous judgment', it is not clear whether the psalmist has God's heavenly or earthly throne particularly in mind.

Several scholars have thought there are also implicit references to the cherubim when the psalmist speaks of seeking shelter in the shadow of Yahweh's wings (Pss. 17:8; 36:8, ET 7; 57:2, ET 1; 61:5, ET 4; 63:8, ET 7; 91:4). Just to cite one example, in Ps. 17:8 the psalmist declares to God, 'Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings'. That the references to Yahweh's wings allude to the winged cherubim constituting Yahweh's throne in the Holy of Holies of the Temple has been argued by scholars such as A. Weiser, H.-J. Kraus and most recently C.C. Broyles.<sup>25</sup> However, it is more likely that these passages are depicting Yahweh under the image of a bird protecting its young.<sup>26</sup> First, the cherubim constituted Yahweh's throne and nowhere are they ever confused or equated with Yahweh himself; they are always envisaged as separate entities. The wings of the cherubim were precisely that; they were not the wings of Yahweh. Secondly, in Ruth 2:12 Boaz commends Ruth for having taken refuge under Yahweh's wings. No mention is made anywhere in the book of Ruth of any sanctuary

<sup>24</sup> O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, New York 1978, 168.

<sup>25</sup> Weiser, *Psalms*, 41, 443–4, etc.; H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 1–59* (Minneapolis 1988), 248–9, 399, etc.; C.C. Broyles. 'The Psalms and Cult Symbolism: The Case of the Cherubim-Ark', in: P.S. Johnston, D.G. Firth (eds), *Interpreting the Psalms*, Leicester 2005, 152–5.

<sup>26</sup> Those accepting that Yahweh is metaphorically spoken of as a bird include Gunkel, *Psalmen*, 57–8; G. Kwakkel, *According to My Righteousness?: Upright Behaviour as Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 16, and 44* (OTS, 46), Leiden 2002, 90–92; R. Tomes, *I have Written to the King, My Lord?: Secular Analogies for the Psalms* (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 1), Sheffield 2005, 100–01.

(the Jerusalem Temple, of course, having not yet been built) and the language is clearly metaphorical. Thirdly, the image of Yahweh as a bird protecting its young with its wings is attested elsewhere in the Old Testament. Thus, Deut. 32:11 refers to Yahweh's love for Israel as being 'Like an eagle that guards<sup>27</sup> its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, he took them, bearing them on his pinions'.<sup>28</sup> A similar image to the former part of the verse also underlies Isa. 31:5, where we read, 'Like birds hovering, so the Lord of hosts will protect Jerusalem...' Again in the New Testament in Mt. 23:37 and Lk. 13:34 Jesus says, 'How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!' That it is specifically this bird imagery which is in mind in the Psalms is further supported by certain contextual considerations. Thus, in Ps. 17:8, prior to the request, 'hide me in the shadow of your wings', we have the words 'Keep me as the apple of the eye'. This is a remarkable parallel to Deut. 32:11, where the words explicitly comparing Yahweh to a protective bird are likewise preceded in v. 10 by the statement that God 'kept him as the apple of his eye'. Further, the verse in Ps. 91:4 declaring that Yahweh 'will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge' is preceded by v. 3 which promises that Yahweh 'will deliver you from the snare of the fowler', i.e. bird catcher. If the psalmist is being metaphorically compared to a bird which is in danger of being trapped by the net of the bird catcher, it makes sense that the psalmist should counter this by speaking of Yahweh as a protective bird successfully sheltering its young.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Following the suggestion of H.G.L. Peels, 'On the Wings of the Eagle (Dtn 32,11)—An Old Misunderstanding', *ZAW* 106 (1994), 300–03, that we translate 'guards' rather than 'stirs up' for Hebrew עָרַב with the support of the LXX. However, I cannot accept Peels' denial that the last part of Deut. 32:11 (and Exod. 19:4) refers to eagles carrying their young on their wings. Though, as Peels notes, this is not ornithologically attested, it does seem to be the only natural interpretation of the text here.

<sup>28</sup> The image of the eagle bearing its young on (i.e. above) its pinions is also applied to Yahweh in Exod. 19:4, and this is clearly a different image from that found in the Psalms, where those protected are depicted as being in the bird's shadow, i.e. below it. However, unlike Kwakkkel, 'According to My Righteousness', 91, who does not deny that bird imagery is found here, I believe that the image of the bird protecting its young by hovering over them, found in the first part of Deut. 32:11 as well as in Isa. 31:5, does correspond with the image found in the Psalms.

<sup>29</sup> Occasionally it has been supposed that the image is rather that of the winged sun disk, as when Mal. 3:20 (ET 4:2) declares, 'But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings'. So L.A.F. Le Mat, *Textual Criticism and Exegesis of Psalm XXXVI: A Contribution to the Study of the Hebrew Book of*

### 7. *Conclusion*

I have argued that there are a number of implicit references to the Ark in the Psalms, in addition to the one explicit reference in Psalm 132:8. Amongst other things, these allusions support the view that there was indeed a ritual procession with the Ark in the pre-exilic Jerusalem cult at the feast of Tabernacles, as some scholars have previously argued but which others have questioned. The divine presence associated with the Ark is sometimes spoken of as Yahweh's 'strength', 'splendour' or 'glory', and the Ark is also referred to as Yahweh's 'footstool'. It was the cherubim above the Ark which constituted Yahweh's throne proper, but references in the Psalms to the psalmist seeking shelter in the shadow of Yahweh's wings do not allude to the cherubim but rather envisage the deity metaphorically as a protective bird.<sup>30</sup>

---

*Psalms* (Studia Theologica Rhena-Traiectina, 3), Utrecht 1957, 23. However, nothing in any of the Psalm passages referring to Yahweh's wings suggests that specifically solar imagery is being used.

<sup>30</sup> After I completed this article G. Kwakkel kindly sent me a copy of his forthcoming article, 'Under YHWH's Wings', to be published in a volume on metaphors in the Psalms, edited by A. Labahn and P. Van Hecke in the ETL Supplement Series (Leuven: Peeters). Kwakkel likewise rejects the equation of the wings of Yahweh with the cherubim.



THE HODAYOT'S USE OF THE PSALTER:  
TEXT-CRITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS (BOOK 1)

John Elwolde  
*United Bible Societies—Spain*

1. *Introduction, Rationale, and Purpose*

The bulk of this article (section 2) consists of a set of short studies on implications for the textual criticism of Book 1 of the Psalter (Pss. 1–41) derivable from the possible use of texts from these Psalms in the Qumran Hodayot.<sup>1</sup> The studies are arranged according to the order of the Psalms. Out of a total of fifty passages from Pss. 1–41 where it is possible to see some reasonably close verbal correspondence with Hodayot texts, the following seventeen passages are discussed in section 2:<sup>2</sup>

Pss. 4:8; 5:11; 7:3; 12:7; 18:5; 22:23–24; 24:7, 9; 26:12; 31:6, 10, 13, 19, 20–21; 33:11; 37:14, 23; 41:10.

Each study consists of a summary of the text-critical findings, if any, usually followed by a set of notes relating to the texts presented.

That the Hodayot make extensive use of the biblical texts, and of the Psalms in particular, hardly needs to be stated. Of the 102 ‘Scriptural allusions’ discussed by Wernberg Møller, 32, or almost a third, are from the Psalms,<sup>3</sup> and Carmignac, after attempting an exhaustive

---

<sup>1</sup> Apart from the main Hodayot scroll from Cave 1, 1QH (strictly 1QH<sup>a</sup>), seven other much less complete editions are preserved, one from Cave 1 (1QH<sup>b</sup> [1Q35]) and six from Cave 4 (1QH<sup>c–f</sup> [1Q4Q427–32]). Although 1QH itself is written in a Herodian hand, one of the Cave 4 editions dates from 100–80 BCE, and the actual date of composition of the work is assumed to be early in the second half of the second century BCE. The original document comprised 28 columns of forty-one to forty-two lengthy lines.

<sup>2</sup> It is hoped that all fifty passages from Book 1, along with those from the rest of the Psalter, will eventually be presented in a monograph.

<sup>3</sup> P. Wernberg-Møller [sic], ‘The Contribution of the *Hodayot* to Biblical Textual Criticism’, in: Shemaryahu Talmon (ed.), *Textus, Annual of the Hebrew University Bible Project, Vol. IV*, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 4 (1964), 133–75 (173, 174).

listing of biblical ‘citations’, concludes that ‘l’auteur est surtout nourri d’*Isaïe* et des *Psaumes*’.<sup>4</sup>

There is no evidence to suggest that the author(s) of the Hodayot consulted biblical mss. during the composition process.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the lack of citation formulae (or other indicators) in the Hodayot<sup>6</sup> means that usages derived from the Bible are always embedded or woven into the text as a whole and their identification is always a matter of speculation. However, the conceptual world of the sectaries, who perhaps felt that ‘biblical times’ persisted in their own day, or that they were living out the biblical end-time, was totally infused by that of the biblical writings, and their compositions were inevitably informed pervasively by that material.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, this envelopment of sectarian life and thought by ‘the world of the Bible’ means that dependence on biblical sources is, typically, more unconscious than considered (and also concerned more with the biblical message than with its precise wording), especially in compositions of an evocative and poetic character, such as the Hodayot.

Often we find that the Hodayot can be, at any given point, dependent on one biblical text or another and yet, frustratingly, hardly ever accurately represent the specific biblical texts being drawn on. This situation is perhaps understandable if we assume that the author or authors of the Hodayot did not, so much think about ‘the Bible’ and quote it (or misquote it) as feel themselves to be *living in the same world* that the figures of the Bible lived in, to be, as it were, still living in the biblical period, and, therefore, open to divine revelation and inspired

---

<sup>4</sup> J. Carmignac, ‘Les citations de l’Ancien Testament, et spécialement des Poèmes du Serviteur dans les Hymnes de Qumran’, *RdQ* 2 (7) (1959–60), 357–94 (391). Carmignac notes (p. 392) that the most ‘cited’ Psalms in the Hodayot are 31, 51 (each of which is used up to eight times) and 107 (seven times), although the significance of this finding is uncertain.

<sup>5</sup> However, this seems to be implied by Wernberg-Møller, ‘Contribution of the Hodayot’, 137–38, when he speaks of ‘the author’s or the copyist’s employment of the orthography common in their day, rather than their intentional reproduction of the spelling actually found in the Biblical texts before them’.

<sup>6</sup> See M. Delcor, *Les Hymnes de Qumran (Hodayot): Texte hébreu—Introduction—Traduction—Commentaire* (Autour de la Bible) Paris 1962, 152.

<sup>7</sup> Note the observation by M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, Oxford 1985, 9, quoted by J. Hughes, *Scriptural Allusions and Exegesis in the Hodayot* (STDJ, 59), Leiden 2006, 50–51: ‘Since we have a large register of explicit biblical citations in mss. from Qumran, there is a strong presumptive likelihood that what appear to be biblical allusions or phrases in the Hodayot-Psalms, for example, are in fact anthologised reuses of the vast biblical thesaurus, and not just terms picked from the spoken environment.’

interpretation. This is not merely a matter of their creative literary imagination; rather, the sectaries' lives and conceptual worlds were completely infused by the Bible; they did not so much 'know' the Bible as 'live' it. The divine plan of salvation, together with the Scriptures that would announce and record this, was taking shape through the life and work of the sectaries; through them, the biblical period and the Bible itself, was being extended into the present and future.

It is easy to understand in this case that the way in which the sectaries felt, thought, and expressed themselves would be shaped less by the *exact words* of the Bible (although these doubtless were very important to them) than by the *ideas* expressed by those words—an emotive rather than a formalistic reception of the biblical message. A corollary of this relationship of the Qumran group to the biblical message is that there will be rather few exact correspondences between expressions in the Hodayot and their ultimate biblical sources. Like the great hymnists of more recent times, the composers of the Hodayot consciously or unconsciously tended to *recast* biblical language in order to express the meaning of a passage in a way that fitted the linguistic and literary structure of the composition and contributed to its aesthetic and emotive impact.

It is, therefore, doubtful that the Hodayot writers were usually consciously or intentionally making use of specific biblical texts, and I prefer to leave that matter largely to one side.<sup>8</sup> But even when a specific source text is not consciously quoted by a Hodayot author, who is attempting to convey, rather, an idea expressed by, or associated with, that source text, the wording of the source text is still likely to be reflected to some degree in the new composition. The aim of the present study, then, is to identify and to analyse evidence about the form of the biblical source texts employed by the Hodayot author(s) (whether consciously or unconsciously), on the basis of the verbal similarities that exist between various Hodayot sequences and biblical ones.

---

<sup>8</sup> The question of authorial intention or consciousness that always surrounds the use of such terms as 'quotation', 'citation', 'allusion', etc. is discussed at some length by Hughes, *Scriptural Allusions and Exegesis in the Hodayot*, especially 41–58. Among the points raised by Hughes is the possibility 'that intended allusions go unnoticed and that phrases not intended as allusions may be so interpreted by a reader... In effect the critic constructs an ideal reader who "catches" every possible meaning and nuance which can be ascribed to the text within its cultural context' (Hughes, *Scriptural Allusions and Exegesis in the Hodayot*, 49, 50).

Potentially significant text-critical evidence emerges when, for example, a biblical sequence that varies from the Masoretic tradition (or that agrees with the Masoretic tradition when other ancient traditions diverge) appears in contexts where there are no obvious stylistic or exegetical signals for the deliberate manipulation of a biblical text. In a different context, but one that still has some parallels with that of the Hodayot, Mirsky pointed out, in reference to mediaeval Hebrew poetry, that 'A variant reading which appears in a [mediaeval Masoretic] MS may have had little or no currency, while for a variant [reading] woven into a poem we must assume that it was the reading current in the community to which the poet and his immediate public belonged'.<sup>9</sup> Although Mirsky is speaking of explicit references to biblical texts, similar comments apply to the Hodayot in its less conscious use of Scripture. In the case of the Hodayot, we probably may assume that when a reading found in one tradition and not in another is employed, the use of such a reading does not reflect a deliberate textual choice on the part of the Hodayot writer nor would the textual divergence have been noticed (or regarded as controversial) by the intended users.

The primary resource for the Hodayot/Psalms parallels discussed in this article is the extensive listing by Jean Carmignac, which includes some 118 Psalms passages.<sup>10</sup> Although Carmignac does not precisely define the object of his enquiry, a casual inspection of the items he lists (at least in the Psalter) indicates that for him a 'citation' is represented by any sequence of two or more words in the Hodayot that appear in more or less the same form in at least one biblical passage. The two conditions—formal similarity and consisting of at least two words—effectively exclude numerous other items in the Hodayot that might also be said to refer in some way to biblical source texts.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> A. Mirsky, 'Biblical Variants in Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry', *Textus* 3 (1963), 159–62 (159). He continues: 'since otherwise the allusion would have failed in its purpose.' Mirsky, 'Biblical Variants in Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry', 160, presents the case of Isa. 56:1, which has an introductory כִּי בַה אֲמַר יְהוָה (כִּי בַה אֲמַר יְהוָה) both in a *qerobah* of Yannai and in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> (כִּי אֲמַר יְהוָה).

<sup>10</sup> Carmignac, 'Les citations de l'Ancien Testament', 372–78 (for the Psalms as a whole; 372–74 for Pss. 1–41). Note that the Psalms passages considered in the present article include a few that do not occur in Carmignac's list, but are discussed by Wernberg-Møller, 'Contribution of the *Hodayot*'.

<sup>11</sup> See Carmignac, 'Les citations de l'Ancien Testament', 357: '[j'ai] dû me restreindre aux citations manifestes, sans mentionner les adaptations, les utilisations ou les allusions de toutes sortes, qui sont extrêmement nombreuses'. With regard to allusions, Hughes, *Scriptural Allusions and Exegesis in the Hodayot*, 46, points out that 'some degree of verbal

For each item in Carmignac's list, I have tried to assess the likelihood that the Hodayot text actually reflects, or in some way depends on, the specific biblical passage that Carmignac indicates. For example, if the relevant sequence (or a closely related variant) occurs in more than one biblical passage, how can we tell from which passage it was actually cited and, therefore, to which passage any text-critical observations might be relevant (see, e.g., on Ps. 4:8)? This question becomes even more difficult to answer when the Hodayot sequence does not correspond exactly with a biblical one and perhaps there are also several candidates for a biblical source (see, e.g., on Ps. 12:7). If, on the other hand (or additionally), the relevant sequence occurs in more than one DSS (Dead Sea Scrolls) passage, it could simply reflect the use of an established literary or linguistic formula (albeit one that might well ultimately derive from familiarity with an identical or similar sequence (or sequences) in the Bible; see, e.g., on Pss. 24:7, 9; 31:6, 20–21; 37:14, 23).

Among the features that make it difficult to identify dependence between a Hodayot sequence and a biblical one are the shortness of the 'quoted' sequences that usually present themselves to us; their frequent adaptation, for linguistic or literary reasons, from the exact form in which they are known in MT;<sup>12</sup> and the almost universal lack of a clear shared context between an assumed 'quotation' and its purported biblical source. Determining where a 'quoted' text starts (and finishes) can also be problematic, once exact reproduction of MT is not assumed to be the yardstick (see, e.g., on Pss. 31:13, 19; 37:23).

Where the use of a specific biblical text does seem plausible, this study focuses on the possible contribution of the Hodayot sequence to text-critical matters, if, for example, the Hodayot sequence appears to reflect a reading already attested in a non-Masoretic tradition. However, it will probably be of little surprise that for only a limited number of Hodayot sequences can a relationship with a biblical passage be established with some plausibility, and that of those items very few also prove to be of text-critical interest. This is despite the fact that contributing to our knowledge of 'l'état du texte biblique' is the first

---

parallel is [usually] implied. However, it is theoretically possible to allude to a text by using a similar structure, narrative sequence, or combination of ideas, without using the same vocabulary.'

<sup>12</sup> An especially clear example of purely morpho-syntactic adaptation is found outside the Psalms studied in the present work. At 1QH 4[12]:11, the Hodayot author writes וְלִצְמֵי יִשְׁקֹנֵי הַמַּיִם אֶשְׁקֶם דּוֹמֵם, as against הַמַּיִם אֶשְׁקֶם דּוֹמֵם at Ps. 69:22.

in Carmignac's list of potential benefits to emerge from his study of biblical 'citations'.<sup>13</sup>

Around the same time that Carmignac published his study, Preben Wernberg-Møller delivered a paper<sup>14</sup> that remains, to the best of my knowledge, the only published attempt at a systematic analysis of the relevance of the Hodayot to the study of the formation of the biblical text. Along with Carmignac's listing, Wernberg-Møller's article forms the basis for the primary data studied in the present work, and the present contribution in some ways represents an attempt to follow in the footsteps of Wernberg-Møller.<sup>15</sup>

Although there is no explicit mention of the Hodayot anywhere in *BHS*, Hans Bardtke, the editor of the *BHS* Psalter, and a distinguished early student and translator of the Scrolls,<sup>16</sup> included in at least two

<sup>13</sup> Carmignac, 'Les citations de l'Ancien Testament', 357: 'elle nous fournit de précieux renseignements sur l'état du texte biblique'.

<sup>14</sup> Wernberg-Møller, 'Contribution of the *Hodayot*'. The published article derives from a paper read at the 25th International Congress of Orientalists in Moscow, 11 August 1960; see Wernberg-Møller, 'Contribution of the *Hodayot*', 132 n. 1.

<sup>15</sup> There are, however, some significant differences. In his study, Wernberg-Møller, 'Contribution of the *Hodayot*', 140, covered just the first three columns of the Hodayot (according to Sukenik's edition, that is columns 9–11 in recent editions). On the other hand, Wernberg-Møller discussed the relationship of these columns to every book of the Bible (and did not restrict himself, as I have done, to just Book 1 of the Psalter). Although Wernberg-Møller expressed the hope of covering the remaining material in two further articles ('Contribution of the *Hodayot*', 143–4), I have found no trace of a subsequent publication. Another significant difference between Wernberg-Møller's work and my one relates to the versional and ms. evidence compared. Unlike Wernberg-Møller, I have not examined in any systematic way the Old Latin evidence or the Greek traditions of the Three, but have so far restricted myself to the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft editions of the Vulgata and the Septuagint, as well as the Göttingen Septuagint Psalter. In the case of the Targum (TgPss) and Peshitta, I have made regular use of the online database of the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon (<http://call.cn.huc.edu/index.html>), which includes the text (without apparatus) of the Leiden Peshitta. For TgPss, I have also benefited from the translation and apparatus in D.M. Stec, *The Targum of Psalms, Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes* (The Aramaic Bible, 16), Collegeville MN 2004. A useful translation of Peshitta is *Holy Bible from the Ancient Eastern Text: George M. Lamsa's Translation from the Aramaic of the Peshitta*, San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1933. Other helpful aids have been the Psalms commentaries by C.A. Briggs, E.G. Briggs, *Psalms* (ICC; Edinburgh 1987) and by W.O.E. Oesterley, *The Psalms, Translated with Text-Critical and Exegetical Notes* (London 1959). My main access to mss. of MT has been through the apparatus to *BHS*. For the wealth of DSS (Dead Sea Scrolls) biblical mss. (some forty in the case of the Psalter), unavailable to Wernberg-Møller, see DJD 5 and 16 as well as P.W. Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* (STDJ, 17), Leiden 1997, and M.P. Horgan, *Pesharim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books* (CBQMS, 8), Washington 1979. However, so far I have not found any correspondence between a Hodayot 'variant' and one attested in a DSS biblical ms.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., H. Bardtke, *Die Handschriftenfunde am Toten Meer: Die Sekte von Qumran*, Berlin 1958.

places evidence from the Hodayot for readings different from MT. The two passages are Pss. 4:8 and 5:11 (the first texts discussed below), although in neither one do I find the use of the Hodayot evidence convincing.

The goal of this paper, then, is to identify passages in the Hodayot that might be of significance to the development of the ancient Hebrew text of the Psalter, that is, to isolate and to examine any apparent uses of the Psalter that occur in the Hodayot in a slightly different form from that attested in MT, a form that might, however, correspond in some way to one of the non-Masoretic traditions (or, alternatively, occur identically in the Hodayot and MT, where other ancient traditions indicate a different reading).

It requires little reflection to realize that this kind of work is nearly always of only a rather marginal relevance. (This is true even of the passages selected for the present article.) In many, if not most cases, there will be no evidence from the versions, Masoretic mss., etc. for any significant textual instability, and the Hodayot evidence will simply add to this record of textual stability (see, e.g., on Ps. 31:13, 19); in other cases, the Hodayot evidence will, as it were, 'support' MT (or even specifically *Leningradensis*) against variations in the versions (or mss.) (see, e.g., on Pss. 18:5; 31:6; 37:14); in other cases, the Hodayot will have a 'reading' that is not attested in either Masoretic or (other) non-Masoretic traditions, leading to doubt as to whether there is dependence of any sort on the Bible, or, at least, on a specific biblical text (see, e.g., on Pss. 26:12; 37:23); finally, in rather few cases, it may be argued (whether or not convincingly) that the Hodayot evidence appears to line up with that of one or more non-Masoretic traditions (see, e.g. on Pss. 5:11; 24:7, 9; 41:10), including, in principle, DSS biblical mss. and *pesharim* (see, e.g., on Ps. 37:23). In addition, there is also sometimes evidence for probable paraphrase, reformulation, or merger, of biblical passages (rather than dependence on a non-Masoretic tradition; see, e.g., on Pss. 7:3; 22:23–24; 31:10, 20–21; 33:11; 41:10).

Moreover, when words or phrases found in both Bible and Hodayot are rather common, it is often uncertain as to whether a sequence in the Hodayot that appears to have some relationship, perhaps even a very close one, with a biblical text, in fact represents any kind of dependence on that biblical text or has, rather, a merely *coincidental* similarity to it (see, e.g., on Ps. 37:14).

Instances where a Hodayot text might make a real, albeit small, contribution to Hebrew Bible text-critical issues are, therefore, few. However, I hope that in drawing attention to this material, a modest

start might be made to its more profitable application in the study of the textual development of the Hebrew Bible.

## 2. *Presentation and Analysis of Texts*

See n. 14, above for sources used in connection with the biblical and versional evidence. Biblical references always follow the Hebrew Bible. The Hodayot (and other DSS) texts are taken from Martin Abegg's electronic edition of the DSS, as accessed through the Accordance software package.<sup>17</sup> Apart from rather many instances where Abegg fills small lacunae in the editio princeps of Sukenik, in general Abegg's text agrees with Sukenik's. Hodayot texts are referred to by Sukenik's column number, followed by that of Abegg (and other recent editors) in square brackets. The line numbers in Abegg's edition generally do not disagree with those of Sukenik.<sup>18</sup> Abegg's edition also includes the text of the 4Q Hodayot mss., 4QH<sup>a-f</sup> (4Q427–33), as they appear in DJD 29 (edited by Eileen Schuller), and these documents are cited when they represent variant or supplementary material with regard to the main Hodayot ms., 1QH (more accurately: 1QH<sup>a</sup>).

Typically the study of each text will include a reference to commentaries (including annotated translations) or detailed studies on the Hodayot. The main purpose in consulting these works has been to see to what extent they agree with Carmignac's (or Wernberg-Møller's) interpretation of a Hodayot passage as dependent on a particular biblical text. To this end, I have regularly used the works of Licht, Mansoor, Dupont-Sommer (hereafter, DS), and Holm-Nielsen (hereafter, HN),<sup>19</sup> and, to a lesser extent, those of Wallenstein, Knibb, Kittel, Gazov-Ginsberg, Elizarova, and Starkova (hereafter, GG), Dec, and

<sup>17</sup> The same text is used in one of the most recent bilingual editions of the Hodayot: D.W. Parry, E. Tov (eds), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader, 5: Poetic and Liturgical Texts*, Leiden 2005; see *ibid.*, xii n. 11. In this article I have retained square brackets (for restored text) but have generally removed superscripted points and circles (indicating readings that are uncertain or only partly preserved).

<sup>18</sup> See the useful 'Excursus on Numbering Systems' in Hughes, *Scriptural Allusions and Exegesis in the Hodayot*, 7–8.

<sup>19</sup> J. Licht, *The Thanksgiving Scroll: A Scroll from the Wilderness of Judaea, Text Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, Jerusalem 1957; M. Mansoor, *The Thanksgiving Hymns Translated and Annotated with an Introduction* (STDJ, 3), Leiden, Grand Rapids 1961; A. Dupont-Sommer, *Le livre des hymnes découvert près de la mer morte (1QH): Traduction intégrale avec introduction et notes* (Semitica, 7), Paris 1957; S. Holm-Nielsen, *Hodayot: Psalms from Qumran* (Acta Theologica Danica, 2), Aarhus 1960.

Williams,<sup>20</sup> as well as the works of Carmignac (see n. 4), Wernberg-Møller (hereafter, WM; see n. 2), Delcor (see n. 6), Hughes (see n. 7), and Bardtke (see n. 16), already mentioned in section 1. All these works, as well as those cited in n. 15, above, are referred to in the following studies by author or editor name and page number only.

### 2.1 *Ps. 4:8 = 1QH 10[18]:24*

Ps. 4:8:	מעת דגן ותירושם רבו
1QH 10[18]:24	[רב]רוב דגן תירוש ויצהר
LXX:	ἀπὸ καιροῦ σίτου καὶ οἴνου καὶ ἐλαίου αὐτῶν ἐπληθύνθησαν

The combination 'grain, oil, and new wine', in that order, occurs nineteen times in the Hebrew Bible and is also common in the DSS. Leaving aside the tenuous link between the verb רבו and the Hodayot form [רב]רוב, there is no clear evidence that the Psalms passage (albeit in a non-Masoretic form) in particular lies behind the Hodayot usage here, and indeed no commentator consulted (apart from Carmignac, 373, 391) refers to it.

### NOTES

Examination of Hosea 2:10–11, 24 (EVV 7–8, 22),

...אנכי נתתי לה והדגן והתירוש והיצהר...  
...ולקחתי חנני בעתו ותירושי במועדו...  
...והארץ תענה את־הדגן ואת־התירוש ואת־היצהר...

suggests, in conjunction with the evidence of Ps. 4:8, that a shorter, two-part, collocation, without יצהר, might have existed alongside the usual, three-part, one. The same conclusion is indicated by Num. 18:12:

כל חלב יצהר וכל־חלב תירוש ודגן

The three-term collocation is found in the DSS at 4Q251 9:1; 4Q285 8:6–7; 4Q286 5:6; 4Q409 1 i 2; 4Q508 13:3; 4Q524 6:6, 10; 11Q14 1 ii 10; 11QT 38:4; 43:3; 60:6. At 4QpHos<sup>a</sup> (4Q166), the three- and two-term usages of Hosea 2:10–11 are, apparently, reflected in 2:1 and 2:8.

<sup>20</sup> M. Wallenstein, 'A Striking Hymn from the Dead Sea Scrolls', *BjRL* 38 (1956), 241–65; M.A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community* (Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, 2), Cambridge 1987, 157–82; B.P. Kittel, *The Hymns of Qumran: Translation and Commentary* (SBLDS, 50), Missoula 1981; A.M. Gazov-Ginsberg, M.M. Elizarova, K.B. Starkova, *Teksti Kumrana* (Pamyatniki Kulturi Vostoka, 7), St. Petersburg 1996, 181–258; P. Dec, 'Zwoje Hymnów Dziekczynnych znad Morza Martwego [*Megillôt hāHōdajôt*] 1QH<sup>a</sup> [1QH<sup>b</sup>/4Q427–4Q440]', doctoral diss. (Papal Theological Academy, Krakow), 2004; G.R. Williams, 'Parallelism in the Hodayot from Qumran', doctoral diss. (Annenberg Research Institute), 1991.

In the versions, Peshitta follows LXX, whereas TgPss follows MT, which Keil<sup>21</sup> renders as: ‘More than in the time when their corn and wine abound’. The Göttingen edition also indicates a Hexaplaric variant without the third element of LXX. According to Briggs & Briggs, 1.36, the LXX and Peshitta readings represent ‘a gloss to make [the] statement of [the] harvest more complete’, which, however, ‘makes the line too long’.

The *BHS* note, ‘ $\text{Q}\text{S} + \text{וְיִצְדָּרֵם}$ ’, is misleading, as it suggests that the Hodayot text includes a possessive suffix.

HN, 180, 182, relates the Hodayot text here to Hos. 2:10 (and not to Ps. 4:8), although he accepts that ‘there are innumerable other places in the O.T. which could also have been the source.’ Licht, 157, simply cites in the margin: ‘Gen. 27, 28 and elsewhere’; Delcor cites various other passages (with no mention of Psalms); similarly, Dec, 272 (who includes Hos. 2:10). GG, 254 n. 353, comments: ‘customary biblical list of the most important earthly rewards: Num. 18:12, etc.’

In short, there seems to be no clear justification for Bardtke’s inclusion of the Hodayot passage as evidence in the *BHS* apparatus at Ps. 4:8, or for including it as evidence in support of the witness of the ancient versions (as Carmignac, 391).

## 2.2 Ps. 5:11 = 1QH 4[12]:18–19

Ps 5:11: האשמים אלהים יפלו ממעוזותיהם ברכ פשעיהם הדיחמו  
 1QH 4[12]:18–19: לשפטם בנבורתהם [ב]נלוליהם וכרוב פשעיהם

This is another example of a Hodayot text employed by *BHS* in support of an existing minor textual variant. As at Ps. 4:8, the reference in *BHS*, ‘ $\text{Q}$  וכרוב cf  $\text{S}$ ’, can only be to the Hodayot, here providing the primary evidence, with the LXX reading ( $\kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha}$  τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἄσεβειῶν αὐτῶν) merely supporting it. Despite the formal equivalence of the construct chain here רבפשעיהם / רוב פשעיהם, there is no other indication that the Hodayot passage depends on the Psalter. Not only are there various related constructions in the Bible, but each of the lexical elements is widely attested in the Bible, the Hodayot, and the DSS more generally, increasing the possibility of a merely fortuitous collocation, unrelated to the Psalms passage.

## NOTES

All the elements in רבפשעיהם and וכרוב פשעיהם are very common in the Hodayot and in the DSS more generally: The root פשע occurs some 27 times and the noun רוב some 36 times in Hodayot mss. The figures for the DSS as a whole are 104 and 146. כרב occurs seven times in MT (four times in the Psalter), three times in 1QH and nine times in other DSS (and כרב 15 and 22 times; MT: 40 [nine in the Psalter]). The suffixed form of the noun found here is also attested at 1QH 7[15]:30 (לטהרם מפשעיהם) and occurs nine times in MT.

<sup>21</sup> Electronic version (via Accordance) of the ten-volume English edition of C.F. Keil, F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Peabody MA 1966 (originally published, Edinburgh, 1866–91).

Related expressions in the Bible include the following:

Isa. 59:12:	כִּירְבוּ פִשְׁעֵינוּ נִגְדָךְ
Jer. 5:6:	כִּי רַבּוּ פִשְׁעֵיהֶם
Amos 5:12:	כִּי יִדְעֹתִי רַבִּים פִּשְׁעֵיכֶם
Job 35:6:	וְרַבּוּ פִשְׁעֵיךְ
Prov. 29:22:	וּבִעַל חֲמָה רַב־פִּשְׁעֵךְ
Lam. 1:5:	עַל רַב־פִּשְׁעֵיהֶּ

The combination רוב פשעים is found at 4Q184 1:4 (רוב פשעים בכנפיה), and it is possible that it is this collocation, without possessive suffix or preposition that became part of the Qumran literary idiom, presumably derived ultimately from the various biblical usages listed above (including that of Ps. 5:11). In that case, the use of פשעיהם and וכרוב פשעיהם in the Hodayot passage would simply reflect Qumran literary usage, rather than conscious or unconscious use of any biblical passage, and, correspondingly, would have no bearing on text-critical matters.

The LXX reading, with *κατά/-כ*, is not reflected in TgPss, but some Peshitta mss. have *ʿk* (and also, like those mss. that reflect the כ of MT, prefixes a *wāw*, as in the Hodayot). Briggs & Briggs, 44, suggest that LXX has a different sentence structure, with ברב פשעים / כ modifying the preceding יפלו rather than the following הדיחמו, but this is not reflected in the translations of Brenton or Pietersma.<sup>22</sup> Note that Pietersma translates LXX's *κατά* as 'because of', which equally well renders the כ of MT.

At least two Hodayot commentators do see a connection of some kind between the two passages. Bardtke's note in *BHS* is in line not only with the analysis of Carmignac, 373, but also with the claim of Delcor, 152, that this is 'une citation de Ps., v, 11', and with the brief instruction in HN, 83: 'Cf. Ps. 5:11'. However, other commentators, such as DS and Mansoor, make no comment at all, and Licht, 94, sees in [כ] כנוליהם וכרוב פשעיהם an allusion to Ezek. 14:5, noting that Ezek. 14:3–4 lies behind l. 15.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.3 Ps. 7:3 = 1QH 5[13]:14

Ps. 7:3:	פְּנֵי־יִטְרֵף כְּאֵרִיחַ נִפְשִׁי
1QH 5[13]14:	פֶּן יִטְרְפוּ נִפְשִׁי עֲנִי וְרֵשׁ

Here, the Hodayot text might be based on the Psalms one. The pluralization of the subject (יטרפו) could be explained as a harmonization to מכל־רדפי of v. 2b (or possibly a superior reading, although there is no versional evidence for this), while the omission of MT's adverbial phrase (כאריח) is explicable in the light of the preceding simile (l. 13): ותצל נפש עני במעון אריות אשר שגנו כהרב לשונם.

The same preceding sequence probably explains the addition in the Hodayot of עני ורש in appositional identification of the 'I' of נפשי. This

<sup>22</sup> L.L. Brenton, *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament with an English Translation... and with Various Readings, Critical Notes and Appendices*, London [1851]; A. Pietersma, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under that Title: The Psalms*, Oxford 2000.

<sup>23</sup> But although Ezek. 14:4 ends with the words נלוליו ברב, there is nothing in in the Ezekiel passage that clearly corresponds to the sequence וכרוב פשעיהם.

is one of very few cases where there is a reasonable degree of similarity of context between a Hodayot passage and a potential source in the Psalms.

#### NOTES

Kittel, 84, comments that the text originally read נפש but the *yod* was ‘erased by [a] corrector’. On the interpretation given in the treatment above, the ‘corrector’ presumably did not understand the intended apposition, ‘the soul of me, the humble and poor one’ but misinterpreted נפש as a simple nomen regens (‘the soul of a humble and poor one’) in harmony with 1. 13 (והצל נפש עני) and with 2[10]:34 (ואהה אלי) (עורתה נפש עני ורש). For the identification of ‘the humble and poor’ with the ‘I’ of the text unit, see Mansoor, 134, citing Mowinckel. Licht’s treatment of the deleted *yod* is different from that of Kittel. Licht, 101, says: ‘after ש is a dot: apparently he [the author/initial scribe] began to write *yod* (נפשי) and paused’. If Licht’s reasoning is correct, it might be that the author/scribe was influenced by the wording of Ps. 7:3, but then corrected his ‘mistake’.

Licht, 101 (margin), notes both Pss. 7:3 and 82:3 (שפטודל ויתום עני ורש הצדיקן). The latter verse is the only place in the Bible in which עני ורש occurs (in the DSS the collocation occurs only at 1QH 2[10]:34 and 5[13]:14, both times preceded by נפש, and the Hodayot usage might reflect a merger of the two verses (cf. Mansoor, 134). A more satisfactory explanation could be that the Hodayot author is here merging reproduction of Ps. 7:3 with a favoured collocation of his own, נפש עני (ורש) (itself, perhaps, ultimately derived from biblical sources). HN, 94, simply compares Ps. 7:3.

There is no versional evidence at Ps. 7:3 for a reading with a plural verb (corresponding to יטרפו in the Hodayot). In contrast, Bardtke (*BHS*) follows (inter alios) Briggs & Briggs, p. 56, in proposing that in v. 2 מכל־רדפי developed out of an original מרדפי.

#### 2.4 Ps. 12:7 = 1QH 5[13]:16

Ps. 12:7:

אמרות יהוה אמרות שחרות  
כסף צרוף בעליל לארץ מוּקָם שבעתים  
ותביאֵהוּ במצר[ן] כוה]ב במעשי אש  
וככסף מוּקָם בכור נופחים לשהר שבעתים

1QH 5[13]:16:

It is possible that the second line of the Hodayot text, as presented here, ‘and as silver refined in a smiths’ furnace, to be purified/for refining sevenfold’, reflects a less garbled version of the difficult text that appears in MT: ‘silver melted down in the furnace, to the earth, purified seven times’ (Keil). However, most commentators do not see a significant relationship between the Hodayot text and Ps.12:7, despite the similarity of לשהר שבעתים and מוּקָם שבעתים.

#### NOTES

4QH<sup>c</sup> (4Q429) 1 ii 1–3 reads (or restores) here the same text as 1QH, but with למוהר for לשהר. Schuller, DJD 29.184, notes that לשהר ‘is probably to be taken as a *Qutl* noun rather than as an unusual form like a *Pu’al* infinitive. 1QH<sup>a</sup> has לשהר which could be a defective spelling of the same, or a *Pi’el* infinitive.’

*BHS* proposes emendation of *לֶאֱרֶץ* to *מַעֲלֵלֵי חַרְוֶן*: '...refined silver are his actions; gold purified sevenfold'. Flint, 87, notes that 11QP<sup>s</sup> reads *לֶאֱרֶץ* [ ], concerning which Abegg, Flint, and Ulrich,<sup>24</sup> comment: 'Meaning unclear' (although this reading, as LXX, does appear to support MT's *לֶאֱרֶץ*). Commenting that 'The usual interpretation, referring [*בַּעֲלִיל לֶאֱרֶץ מוֹקֵק שִׁבְעִים*] to the silver [of the preceding clause] is difficult in every respect', Briggs & Briggs, 96, 98–99, take *כֶּסֶף צָרוּף* as a gloss on *מַחֲרִית מַחֲרִית* to the earth he shall be purified seven times' (*ibid.*, 94, presumably reading *זֶקֶק* for MT's *מוֹקֵק*). The resulting sequence 'would then refer to the afflicted of v.<sup>6</sup> ... The intervening six words would then be a gnomic gloss' (*ibid.*, 99). An alternative approach is represented by Oesterley, 150, who omits *לֶאֱרֶץ*, 'in a furnace on the earth', which overloads the line; probably a marg. gloss.'

LXX's ἀργύριον πεπυρωμένον δοκίμιον τῆ γῆ καθαρισμένον ἑπταπλασίως is rendered by Pietersma, 9, as '...silver refined by fire, tested for soil, purified seven times'. The Göttingen edition provides ms. evidence for an additional ἐν (ἐν τῆ γῆ). TgPss appears to be closely in line with MT (Stec, 43: 'silver refined in a furnace on the ground [*עַל אֶרֶץ*] purified seven times'); the *עַל* of the Targum might simply reflect interpretation of MT's *לֶאֱרֶץ* as equivalent to *אֶל*. For TgPss's *בְּכוּרָא*, cf. the Hodayot's *בְּכוּר נוֹפְחִים*. Peshitta has *s'm' ghy' dbhyr*, 'choice silver, which is tested in the earth' (Lamas, 593a: 'as silver tried in a furnace on earth').

According to HN, 96, 'The inspiration for the whole of this line is Mal. 3:3',

וַיִּשָׁב מִצָּרַף וּמִטְהַר כֶּסֶף וְטָהַר אֶת־בְּנֵי־לֵוִי וְזָקַק אֹתָם כְּזָהָב וּכְכֶסֶף

even though 'individual expressions may be found elsewhere, as Ps. 12:7 ...'. Mansoor, 134, compares *בְּכוּר נוֹפְחִים*, 'in the furnace of the smelters' with Sir. 43:4 (B), *כּוּר נֹפֵחַ*, 'Like a blazing furnace' (Skehan & DiLella);<sup>25</sup> LXX: κάμινον φυσῶν, 'one blowing [into] a furnace'). Licht, 102, simply refers to the *נֹפֵשׁ בְּאֵשׁ פָּחַם* of Isa. 54:16. Dec, 241 n. 669, compares Job 41:12 (*יֵצֵא עֵשֶׂן כְּדוֹר נֹפֵחַ*) and Ezek. 22:20 (*אֶל־תֵּיךְ כּוּר לַפְחַת־עֲלִיּוֹן*) and Ezek. 22:20 (*יֵצֵא עֵשֶׂן כְּדוֹר נֹפֵחַ*) and Ezek. 22:20 (*אֶל־תֵּיךְ כּוּר לַפְחַת־עֲלִיּוֹן*). Williams, 1.341, compares Prov. 17:3 = 27:21 (*מִצָּרַף כֶּסֶף וְכּוּר לִזְהָב*), as does GG, 244 n. 206, as well as Mal. 3:3. For *שִׁבְעִים*, DS, 48, notes Ps. 12:7.

## 2.5 Ps. 18:5 = 1QH 3[11]:28–29

Ps. 18:5: אֲפַנּוּנֵי חֲבַל־יְמוֹת וְנַחֲלֵי בַלְיַעַל יִבְעַתּוּנִי  
1QH 3[11]:28–29: וְחַבְלֵי מוֹת אֲפַפּוּ לְאֵין פֶּלֶשׁ  
וַיִּלְכוּ נַחֲלֵי בַלְיַעַל כּוֹל אֲנַפֵי רוּם

As Hughes, 220, indicates, *נַחֲלֵי בַלְיַעַל* and *וְחַבְלֵי מוֹת אֲפַפּוּ* in the Hodayot passage are 'unmistakable markers' to Ps. 18:5. Not only does this combination of phrases indicate a rather direct relationship between the Hodayot and the biblical texts (in the Bible *נַחֲלֵי בַלְיַעַל* only occurs at Ps. 18:5 = 2 Sam. 18:5) but also, in my view, quite clearly supports MT of the Psalms passage as it stands, *וְחַבְלֵי־מוֹת*, against the proposal of *BHS* to read *מִשְׁבְּרֵי־מוֹת* with the parallel passage in 2 Sam. 22:5.

<sup>24</sup> M. Abegg, P. Flint, E. Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible: the Oldest Known Bible, Translated and with Commentary*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1999, 515 n. 14.

<sup>25</sup> P.W. Skehan, A.A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes... Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 39), New York: Doubleday 1987, 485.

## NOTES

The Hodayot text is also found in fragmentary form at 4QH<sup>b</sup> (4Q428) 5:3–4 and 4QH<sup>f</sup> (4Q432) 6:3–4 (see DJD 29.136, 220–21). There is no significant variant reading, although the 4Q texts indicate that the word immediately following the passage quoted above at 1QH 3:29 should be read as כֶּאֱשׁ (see DJD 29.137) rather than כֶּאֱשׁ (Sukenik).

At Ps. 18:5, LXX with ὀδίνες θανάτου (cf. Psalterium juxta Septuaginta, *dolores mortis*) and Psalterium juxta Hebraeos with *funes mortis*, represent renderings of, respectively, Hebrew הבל IV ‘labour pain’ and II ‘cord’ (*HALOT*).<sup>26</sup> The same Greek and Latin nouns are used at the beginning of v. 6 (MT: שֶׁאוֹל), 2 Sam. 22:6, and Ps. 116:3. At 2 Sam. 22:5,

כִּי אֶפְפְּנִי מִשְׁבְּרֵי־מוֹת נְחָלִי בְּלִיעַל יִבְעֵהֲנִי

LXX has συντριμμὸὶ θανάτου, ‘troubles of death’ (cf. Vulgate, *contritiones mortis*). Peshitta has the cognate form *hbl’ d*, ‘pangs of’, in all five verses.

Although *BHS* supports emendation of הַבְּלִי to מִשְׁבְּרֵי at Ps. 18:5, at 2 Sam. 22:5 it notes that some mss. read הַבְּלִי, for מִשְׁבְּרֵי. In the Psalms passage, *BHS* represents a long-standing proposal for emendation due to the repetition of הַבְּלִי in שֶׁאוֹל at the beginning of the next verse (see, for example, Smith;<sup>27</sup> Briggs & Briggs, 152; Oesterley, 164). According to Stec, 49, 207, TgPss only reflects הַבְּלִי in an obvious way at Ps. 18:5 (but not 18:6 or 116:3). Similar comments apply to Targum Jonathan at 2 Sam. 22:5–6.

All Hodayot commentators consulted note Ps. 18:5 (Delcor, 131, also mentions the 2 Samuel parallel). In addition, GG, 241 n. 144, observes that the Hodayot author has removed the first person reference in the Psalter (אֶפְפְּנִי/אֶפְפֵּן); and Williams, 1.208, notes that in the Hodayot the perfect verb has a future reference (‘perhaps due to the use of the same form in Ps. 18:5’). In this case, then, it seems that the evocation of the biblical source text has overridden factors of a more strictly linguistic nature.

נְחָלִי בְּלִיעַל, which, as noted above, occurs in MT only at Ps 18:5 = 2 Sam. 22:5, is attested in the Hodayot not only in the passage discussed above (3[11]:28–29), but also a few lines later at 3[11]:32,

וַיִּבְקְעוּ לְאַבְדֹּן נְחָלִי בְּלִיעַל

It has also been reconstructed at 5[13]:38–39,

[ נְחָלִי ] [ב]לִיעַל אֶפְפֵּן נִפְשִׁי

in evident allusion to the same biblical passage (and to the Hodayot text at 3[11]:32).

The sequence שֶׁאוֹל, הַבְּלִי, found in the Bible only at Ps. 18:6 = 2 Sam. 22:6, occurs at 1QH 3[11]:9 (as noted by Dec, 502).

Hughes, 229, emphasises ‘the importance of Ps 18:2–19 (= 2 Sam 22:1–20) in the [Qumran] community’ (see also *ibid.*, 229–30, 233). As she points out (*ibid.*, 212), ‘an allusion to Ps 18:[5] both ends [one] sub-section [אֶפְפֵּן מוֹת אֶפְפֵּן]... and begins [another] [נְחָלִי בְּלִיעַל]’ (cf., *ibid.*, 210, 218). It is striking that the expression מִשְׁבְּרֵי־מוֹת of 2. Sam. 22:5 is found twice earlier in the same text (1QH 3[11]:8, 9), as well as at 9[17]:4, suggesting familiarity with both forms in which the Psalm has been transmitted (cf. Hughes, 195, 200–1).

<sup>26</sup> L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Vols. 1–5 (trans. and ed. by M.E.J. Richardson), Leiden 1994–2000.

<sup>27</sup> H.P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (ICC), Edinburgh 1912, 379.

## 2.6 Ps. 22:23–24 = 1QH 12[20]:3

Ps. 22:23–24: אספרה שמך לאחי בתוך קהל אהללך יראי יהוה  
 1QH 12[20]:3: ואהללה שמכה בתוך יראכה

Here a Hodayot passage might represent either a contraction of a biblical text that extends over two verses in MT, or a shorter (and perhaps more original) form of this text, which was expanded in the tradition represented by MT. However, there is no versional evidence for the latter supposition.

## NOTES

The 1QH sequence is also found, without significant variation, in 4QH<sup>a</sup> (4Q427) 3:3 (DJD 29.91) and 4QH<sup>b</sup> (4Q428) 12 ii 1–2 (DJD 29.146).

HN, 208, claims that at 1QH 12[20]:3 ‘the form of expression may well be determined by [Ps. 22:23–24]’, although HN, 201 n. 17, appears to regard the sequence as simply representing the author’s ‘use of a popular liturgical terminology’. Licht, 172, compares the Hodayot sequence with Ps. 22:23–24, but in the margin to the text cites Ps. 145:2:

בכל־יום אברכך ואהללה שמך לעולם ועד

As HN, 201 n. 17, points out, there is no clear parallel to the author’s use of יראכה in the rest of the Hodayot, and בתוך יראכה is not found elsewhere in the DSS; both factors tend to support some reliance on the biblical text. However, the combination that precedes it, הלל שמכה (cf. Pss. 69:31; 74:21; 105:3; 113:1; 135:1; 145:2; 148:5, 13; 149:3) is found elsewhere in the Hodayot (as indicated by Dec, 279 n. 1515), at 1[9]:30, 11[19]:24–25 = 4QH<sup>a</sup> (4Q427) 1:6, and, especially 3[11]:23,

הלל שמכה ביהר רנה ולספר נפלאותיכה לנגד כול מעשיכה

which might be rather close to our passage if we assume that ביהר רנה expresses בתוך יראכה from a different perspective.

הלל שמכה is also well-represented in other DSS: 1QM 12:1; 14:12; 4Q88 9:4–5; 4Q286 7 i 6–7; 4Q414 2 ii 10; 4Q416 2 iii 11; 3:5; 4Q418 9:11; 126 ii 10; 4Q491 8 i 10; 4Q502 6:3; 4Q503 7:3; 29:9; 40 ii 6; 4Q511 2 i 1; 4Q512 39 ii 1; 11Q5 19:8; 11Q6 4:10.

If, then, the Hodayot text was influenced by the Psalm, the relationship seems to have been an indirect one, perhaps under the influence of the common expression הלל שמכה (לספר שמכה) is not attested in the DSS; contrast Exod. 9:16; Pss. 22:23; 75:2; 102:22). Thus, in place of אהללך שמך... אספרה שמך, the Hodayot author has אהללה שמכה, and in place of יראי יהוה... יראי יהוה, he has בתוך יראכה. In any case, if there is a relationship between the two texts, the main point of interest is not in the wording as such but in the combining of terms and concepts from two sides of a verse boundary in all other traditions.

## 2.7 Ps. 24:7, 9 = 1QH 6[14]:31

Ps. 24:7 שאו שערים ראשיכם והנשאו פתחי עולם  
 Ps. 24:9 שאו שערים ראשיכם ונשאו פתחי עולם  
 1QH 6[14]:31 ושערי עולם להוציא כלי מלחמה

The combination שַׁעֲרֵי עוֹלָם is not found in the Hebrew Bible, so if Psalm 24 in a proto-Masoretic tradition was the source of the Hodayot author's usage, he employed this source rather creatively rather than citing it directly. However, in Peshitta the same noun, *tr<sup>c</sup>*, is used in each of the four stiches (a point that goes unnoticed in *BHS* and by Lamsa, 598b), leaving open the possibility that the Hodayot author shared the same tradition that underlies the Peshitta reading (and, indeed, LXX, which has *πύλαι* throughout).

## NOTES

Of commentators consulted, only HN, 120, and Licht, 118, refer to the Psalms passage. Licht discusses at some length the function of the שַׁעֲרֵי עוֹלָם are they the gates of the sectaries' earthly fortress or of the abode of their angelic allies in the final battle against evil?

The sequence שַׁעֲרֵי עוֹלָם is also reconstructed at 4QH<sup>f</sup> (4Q432) 5:5–6,

[ו]יִפְחַחְוּ שַׁעֲרֵי עוֹלָם תְּחַתְּ מַעְשֵׁי אִפְעָה]

(DJD 29.219), which fills out 1QH 3[11]:17. For the reading עוֹלָם, as against שְׂאוֹל, which Abegg restores in the 1QH passage, see Schuller's comments in DJD 29.220, where it is also argued that וַיִּפְחַחוּ in 1QH is a scribal error for the verb פָּחַחְוּ ni. 'be breached, cave in' (cf., as Schuller, M. Jastrow's *Dictionary*, 1153b), found in 4QH<sup>f</sup>. No other instance of שַׁעַר followed by עוֹלָם is found in MT or DSS.

## 2.8 Ps. 26:12 = 1QH 2[10]:29–30

Ps. 26:12:

1QH 2[10]:29–30:

רַגְלֵי עַמְדָּה בְּמִישׁוֹר בְּמַקְהָלִים אֲבָרַךְ יְהוָה  
וּרְגְלֵי עַמְדָּה בְּמִישׁוֹר מַקְהָלִם אֲבָרַכָּה שְׂמִכָּה

This is a cautionary example of a Hodayot text that appears to quote a relatively long sequence of biblical text, with some interesting differences from MT. However, closer examination of the Hodayot text indicates that similarity with the biblical text results from the work of a later hand.

## NOTES

A related text is found at Ps. 68:27:

בְּמַקְהָלוֹת בָּרַכּוּ אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה מִסְּקוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל

At first glance, the Hodayot text appears to have some significant parallels with the ancient versions as against MT at Ps. 26:12.

WM, 150–51, suggests that LXX's *γάρ* (*ὁ γὰρ πούς μου*) might reflect a source text with initial *wāw*, as in the Hodayot passage. (Contrast the Vulgate's *pes meus* and other sources that coincide with MT, as noted in the Göttingen edition.) A singular for plural noun (מַקְהָלִים for קְהָלִים) is also found in Peshitta *wb'dt*; and in TgPss (צְדִיקִין כִּינְשָׁה).

For the object שְׂמִכָּה instead of the tetragrammaton of MT, WM compares LXX's *εὐλογῆσω σε κύριε*. However, various commentators (Licht, 72 [cf. 15–16]; Delcor, 106; Knibb, 170 [cf. 134]) claim that here a change is made from the biblical text simply in order to avoid use of the tetragrammaton (or, indeed, of אֱלֹהִים; see Licht, 15).

Unless we accept the claim of Delcor, 106, that the *bēt* in the MT of Ps. 26:12 (במקדלים) has been intentionally omitted (to give מקדלים), the Hodayot text would appear to reflect a significantly different recension of Ps. 26:12 from the one represented by MT. This position is accepted even by Licht, 72, in respect of אלהים: 'here perhaps there is a genuine difference of [base-] text'.

Nonetheless, despite the versal evidence for textual variation in this passage, there is no specific support for the *particular* readings of the Hodayot psalmist. Moreover, '[i]n no Version [or MT]... was the noun [מקדלים (MT) / מקהל (1QH)] taken as referring to the wicked which seems to be the meaning in our passage...' (WM, 150; cf. DS, 34 n. 7).

However, this is not an insuperable objection to the hypothesis that the Hodayot writer is here quoting the Psalm (albeit in a different tradition from that represented by MT). The association of a textual variant with a negative interpretation (in this case the 'congregation' being that of the Hodayot psalmist's enemies rather than that of the biblical psalmist's co-religionists) has a parallel in the 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> (4Q171) version of Ps. 37:20, where we read not, as in MT, the 'enemies [אויבי] of Y. but rather 'those who love' Him (אהבי):

MT Ps. 37:20: ואיבי יהוה כיקר כרים

*NRSV*: 'and the enemies of the LORD are like the glory of the pastures';

4QpPs<sup>a</sup> Ps. 37:20: ואוהבי יהוה כיקר כורים

Cook:<sup>28</sup> 'Those who love the Lord are as magnificent as rams'.

Although a graphic or phonetic corruption might lie behind the variation in this text, it is clear that the *pesher*'s form of the text suits the context of the *pesher* just as well as MT's form suits the biblical context.

It appears then that here we have a significant quotation of a biblical text in the Hodayot in a form that differs in important respects from MT. However, appearances can be deceptive, and none of the foregoing analysis takes into account the fact that the last two words of l. 29 in the Hodayot text were later added to the line (and run into the margin), as noted by Licht, 71; Kittel, 34, and Williams, 1.146 (who, like Mansoor, 110, cites Martin);<sup>29</sup> Mansoor comments: 'The handwriting of the latter is clearly different'.

That means that the text originally must have read:

ופחים טמנו לנפשי נפלו בם ורגלי מקדלים

and the traps they buried for my soul, they fell into them and the feet of their congregation,

which apparently signifies that they, together with the members of their congregation, fell into the trap they had set for me, with the final אברכה שמכה perhaps an interjection of joy and relief.

The claim of HN, 44, that 'the context cannot make any sense without these two words [עמדה במישור] is in my view incorrect. עמדה במישור was, instead, added by someone who mistakenly saw in the words of l. 30, במקדלים אברכה שמכה, a reference to Ps. 26:12 (במקדלים אברך יהוה), a misperception strengthened by the presence of ורגלי at the end of l. 30, which led the would-be corrector to expand the Hodayot text to give it the veneer of an even closer relationship with the presumed biblical source text: רגלי עמדה במישור (cf. Kittel, 36, 44, 55).

<sup>28</sup> M. Wise, M. Abegg, E. Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation, Translated and with Commentary*, New York 1996, 222.

<sup>29</sup> M. Martin, *The Scribal Character of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Bibliothèque du Museon, 44), Louvain 1958, 477.

It was, presumably, this veneer that led HN, 46, into claiming, mistakenly, that this is ‘the most complete and literal quotation . . . in the Hodayot’, a false impression confirmed by HN’s rendering of the passage as ‘In their congregation, I will bless Thy name’ (HN, 40; cf. p. 44). Not only does HN give no explanation of why he renders  $\text{מִקְהָלָם}$  as ‘in their congregation’; he also claims that “‘their’” must refer to the members of the covenant’ (p. 44).

The fact that the concept of the psalmist’s foot stepping on (or being established on) level ground is found in other places in the Hodayot and elsewhere—

1QH 7[15]:25: כי אתה לי למאור [ען]לם וחקן רגלי ב[מישור לנצח]  
 (cf. 3[11]:20: והעליתיני לרום עולם ואתהלכה במישור לאין תקר)  
 11Q5 21:13 = Sir 51:15b: עמדה רגלי במישור כי מנעורי ידעתי

is a further indication that the supposed quotation of a specific biblical text at 2[10]:29–30 is illusory.

Note that the most recent translation of the Hodayot with commentary, by Dec (2004), makes no mention of Ps. 26:12 in the notes to lines 29–30 (p. 226 nn. 420–22). In Parry and Tov (2005),<sup>30</sup> 20–21, the words are italicized and Ps. 26:12 is stated to be the source of the quotation, although the editors also make it clear that *עמדה במישור* is marginal.

Hughes, 45 n. 42, observes that the Hodayot passage represents ‘[t]he only instance . . . [in] the Hodayot of a possible quotation’, having previously (ibid., 44) defined ‘quotation’ as ‘a phrase which is marked, explicitly or implicitly, as referring to the words of a speaker who is not the implied speaker of the composition.’

## 2.9 Ps. 31:6 = 1QH 15[7]:24–25

Ps. 31:6 יהוה אל אמת  
 1QH 15[7]:24–25: כי אל אמת אתה וכול עולה ת[תעב]

The biblical collocation *אל אמת*, ‘God of fidelity/truth’, is not found elsewhere in MT, although it is attested in one other DSS source, 4QInstruction<sup>b</sup> (4Q416) 1:14 = 4QInstruction<sup>d</sup> (4Q418) 2:6: *כי (א) אל הוא אמת הוא*.

The shortness of the sequence, the lack of a clear shared context between the Hodayot and biblical passages, and the fact that both nouns occur roughly twice as often in the DSS as in the Bible, suggest that the combination might have arisen by chance in the Hodayot (although its presence in 4QInstruction tends to go against this hypothesis, as might the fact that in the Hodayot passage *אל* is written in palaeo-Hebrew script). In any case, it is striking that not a single commentary (or annotated translation) consulted, apart from Carmignac, 374, mentions the possible relationship with Ps. 31:6.

<sup>30</sup> See n. 17, above.

## NOTES

The relevant lines of the other text in which אֱלֹהֵי אֱמֶת occurs—4QInstruction<sup>b</sup> (4Q416) 1:14 = 4QInstruction<sup>d</sup> (4Q418) 2:6—can be found in DJD 34.81, 225. At *ibid.*, 87, the editors (John Strugnell, Daniel Harrington, and Torleif Elgvin) comment on אֱלֹהֵי אֱמֶת that it is ‘too rare a phrase to be considered a frequent divine title or one characteristic of Qumranic theology’. Although they compare 1QH 15[7]:25 and 4[12]:40 (see below), no mention is made of a biblical source.

Carmignac, 374, compares another passage from the Hodayot, 1QH 4[12]:40, כִּי אֱמֶת אֱלֹהֵי אֱמֶת וְצַדִּיק כֹּל אֱמֶת אֱמֶת וְצַדִּיק (ואש[ענה] וואשמ[חה] באמתכה אלִי). Dec, 214 n. 221, also draws attention to 6[14]:25: (ואש[ענה] וואשמ[חה] באמתכה אלִי).

Other parallels of a similar kind are found at:

1QH 14[6]:15  
1QS 11:5  
1QM 4:6

כִּי אֱמֶת צַדִּיק וְאֱמֶת כֹּל בְּחֹרֶיךָ  
כִּי אֱמֶת אֱלֹהֵי אֱמֶת כֹּל פְּעָמֵי  
יִכְתֹּבוּ עַל אֲחֻזְתָּם אֱמֶת אֱלֹהֵי צַדִּיק אֱלֹהֵי

and 4Q289 1:3 (לאמת אל).

According to *DCH* 1.253b, 328b, אֱלֹהֵי is found 240 times in the Hebrew Bible and 501 times in DSS, and אֱמֶת, 127 and 204 times. If our Hodayot passage is (ultimately) dependent on the Masoretic Psalm, it might reflect a text closer to that found in MT than to אֱלֹהֵי אֱמֶת of TgPss (Stec, 70: ‘O Lord, the true God’).

## 2.10 Ps. 31:10 = 1QH 5[13]:34

Ps. 31:10:

הֲנִי יְהוָה כִּי־צָר לִי  
עֲשֵׂהָ בַכֶּסֶס עֵינֵי וּנְפֹשֵׁי בִטְנִי  
כִּי עֲשֵׂוּ מַכְעָס עֵינֵי וּנְפֹשֵׁי בִמְרוּרֵי יוֹם

1QH 5[13]:34:

This could be an example of a Hodayot text that has some relevance to text-critical problems, although has not been recognized as such. As the Hodayot text uses wording that occurs in just two biblical passages, some degree of dependence is possible. According to HN, 110 n. 65, ‘[t]he description of misery in Ps. 31:8b–14 is probably the principle basis for this whole psalm’, and Williams, 1.378, says that ‘Ps. 31:10... almost certainly influenced the composition of the present couplet’. In that case, the use of מִן (מַכְעָס עֵינֵי) in the Hodayot instead of בִּ- in MT (בַּכֶּסֶס עֵינֵי) could be added to the versional and ms. evidence for מִן (as well as that of Ps. 6:8), already cited by *BHS*. The presence of וּנְפֹשֵׁי in the Hodayot text would tend to go against *BHS*’s suggestion (‘frit dl’) that נְפֹשֵׁי בִטְנִי be deleted from MT, and the plural verb of the Hodayot (עֲשֵׂוּ) fits the syntax better than the singular (עֲשֵׂהָ) of MT (and LXX: ἐταράχθη). Although specific proposals concerning a more original text are difficult to make, the Hodayot passage would seem to provide additional evidence for the textual instability of Pss. 31:10–12 and 6:8, and should be taken into account in discussion of this issue.

## NOTES

The Hodayot text is also found at 4QH<sup>c</sup> (4Q429) 3:7–8 (DJD 29.187) and 4QH<sup>f</sup> (4Q432) 11:2 (DJD 29.225).

Although it is possible that בכעס עיני in Ps. 31:10 is in origin a gloss from Ps. 6:8 (thus Briggs & Briggs, 267, 274), the Hodayot sequence seems to have a closer relationship to Ps. 31:10 than to Ps. 6:8 (*pace* Carmignac, 373)

עששה מכעס עיני עתקה בכל צוררי

(see also HN, 110 n. 65, quoted above, and *ibid.*, 125). These are the only two places in the Bible where the verb עשש occurs. However, Licht, 107, has for מכעס כי עששו בעוני כחי ועצמי אששו a marginal citation of Ps. 6:8, but no mention of Ps. 31:10; similarly, Wallenstein, 256; Delcor states that the sequence mentioned is ‘une citation à peu près littérale du Ps. vi, 8’. DS, 51, and Mansoor, 140, sensibly cite both Psalms.

In MT, Ps. 31:11–12 reads as follows:

כי כלו בינון חיי ושנותי באנחה  
כשל בעוני כחי ועצמי אששו  
מכל צוררי הייתי הרפה

Peshitta uses a different verb at 6:8 (*k'b*) from the one found twice at 31:10–11 (*'tdlh*). TgPss has השך at 6:8 and this and other verbs in the different traditions at Ps. 31:10–11 (see Stec, 70).

It is perhaps tempting to see a relationship between כמרירי יום in the Hodayot passage and מכל צוררי in v. 12. However, Licht, 107, sees כמרורי יום as based on Job 3:5, כמרורי יום, in an interpretation (found also in the Vulgate, Aquila, and the Targum) that derives the biblical form from מרר, ‘bitter’, rather than מר, ‘black’, (cf. Wallenstein, 256: ‘daily bitternesses’, as against ‘the gloom of the day’). Mansoor, 140, compares Sir. 11:4 (A, B) (ואל תקלס במרירי יום). GG, 245 n. 225, also understands that the expression comes from Job, albeit in a corrupted form.

### 2.11 Ps. 31:13 = 1QH 4[12]:9

Ps. 31:13:

1QH 4[12]:9:

נשכחתי כמת מלב הייתי ככלי אבד  
וכול רעי ומודעי נדחו ממני ויהשבוני לכלי אובד

Although the Hodayot sequence almost certainly derives from Ps. 31:13b, does the introductory ויהשבוני ל- represent part of the quotation? If so, the text the Hodayot quotes would differ from MT, with its הייתי כ-. However, I have found no versional evidence for such a reading, and the possibility that the Hodayot has drawn on a tradition slightly different from MT is greatly diminished once we examine the literary structure of the unit in lines 8–9 in which ויהשבוני לכלי ואבד occurs:

ולא יהשבוני בהנבירכה בי  
כיא ידיחני מארצי כצפור מקנה  
וכול רעי ומודעי נדחו ממני  
ויהשבוני לכלי אובד

(see Williams 1.231). This strongly suggests that the use of the verb ויהשבוני relates to the *inclusio* form of the stanza and is not a ‘paraphrase’ of the biblical passage from a proto-MT text or a reflection of a text tradition different from that represented by MT. But even if the

difference between ל- ויהשבוני and הייתי כ- is not a matter of textual variation, there is no other place in the Bible (or the DSS) in which כלי אבד occurs. This is a strong indication of the Hodayot author's dependence on the Psalm for the usage here, although in this case it is of little text-critical significance.

## NOTES

Although most commentators consulted refer to the Psalm passage none suggests the presence of a textual variant. As there is no other place in the Bible in which כלי אבד occurs, it is curious that neither Williams, 1.231–34, nor Dec, 233, mentions the Psalms passage. GG, 197, omits an explicit rendering of כלי: 'and regard me as lost'.

Hughes, 108–109, argues that '[it] is... tempting to see an allusion to Ps. 31:... [12–13]', because of the similarity of ל- ויהשבוני לכלי אבד and הייתי ככלי אבד, and also of הייתי הרפה ולשכני מאד ופחד למידעי ראי בהויץ: and (in v. 12): וכול רעי ומודעי נדחו ממני נדר ומסני.

## 2.12 Ps. 31:19 = 1QH 7[15]:11–12

Ps. 31:19:

1QH 7[15]:11–12:

האלמנה שפתי שקר

כי תאלמנה שפתי / שפתי / שקר

Although the construct chain שפתי שפר appears elsewhere in MT (Prov. 10:18; 12:22; cf. שפת-שפר at Ps. 120:2; Prov. 17:7), the verb תאלמנה is attested in this form only at Ps. 31:19, which is also the only biblical passage in which שפה occurs as the subject of נאלם. Thus, this appears to be a rare case of the exact representation of a text as it appears in MT; cf. HN, 136: 'The end of line 11 and beginning of line 12 looks like a direct quotation from Ps. 31:19'. However, the formal identity of the two passages implies that no text-critical inference may be drawn from the Hodayot citation here, apart from, in general, that of supporting MT.

## NOTES

Neither שפתי שפר / שפת-שפר nor תאלמנה שפה is found elsewhere in the DSS. On the grounds of number and gender agreement, it is difficult to sustain the suggestion of HN 136, 159, that the sequence at 1QH 8:[16]:36, ולעות לעאף דבר נאלם כול שפתי, has a relationship with Ps. 31:19.

The repetition of שפתי at 1QH 7[15]:11–12, although generally assumed to reflect a scribal error, has also facilitated interpretations that would yield no clear relationship with the biblical passage (in contrast to DS, 58; Delcor, 190; Licht, 124; and GG, 248 n. 261, all of whom draw attention to Ps. 31:19 here). HN, 132, rejects two such attempts to interpret the repetition not as dittography but as deliberate: 'Ja stumm sind meine Lippen als Lügenlippen' (Bardtke, 244) and 'For my lips silence the lips of falsehood' (Ringgren).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> H. Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran: Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Trans. Emilie

There is possible evidence of some divergence from MT in the Aramaic tradition. Peshitta has *špwthwn d'wl'* and one tradition of TgPss has אדם שקרא שפיון דמללן שקרא (see Stec, 71).

2.13 Ps. 31:20–21 = 1QH 5[13]:11

Ps. 31:20–21: פעלת לחסים בך נגד בני אדם חסתיים בסתר פניך  
1QH 5[13]:11: כי אתח אלי סתרתני נגד בני אדם וחורתכה הכתה ב[ ]

The combination נגד בני אדם is only attested in MT at Ps. 31:20. In this Hodayot passage it is accompanied by a form of the verb הסתיר, the same verb that is found immediately after נגד בני אדם in the Psalms text, albeit in the following verse (21). Accordingly, it would be difficult not to here see some dependence of the Hodayot on the Psalter text as (eventually) reflected in MT. The two occurrences of (ל)נגד בני אדם (with הנביר elsewhere in the Hodayot do not greatly weaken this assumption. There are, however, no obvious text-critical repercussions in the Hodayot's use of the verb הסתיר as compared to that of the Psalter, and no ancient version examined indicates an ordering or a division of the text different from that of MT.

NOTES

Carmignac, 374, also cites for the same Psalms passage the following two Hodayot texts:

2[10]24–25: והנבירכה בי נגד בני אדם  
5[13]:15: ולמען הנבירכה לנגד בני אדם

Note as well 1[9]:34: [הנבירכה ב] לנגד בני אדם, reconstructed on the basis of 4QH<sup>f</sup> (4Q492 2:1–2) (DJD 29.214).

The only commentator consulted (other than Carmignac) who refers to both verses (20 and 21) is Delcor, 158, who, however, makes no further observation. DS, 46, prefers to compare 'tu m'avais caché' (only) with Isa. 49:2 (at the end): באשפתו הסתירני.

Note that סתיר occurs nine times in 1QH, and that at 5[13]:11 סתרתני is parallel to הכתה (see Williams, 1.327). בני אדם / בן / בני is also found (or reconstructed) nine times in 1QH (cf. Dec, 240 n. 647), on three occasions preceded by בתוך (6[14]:11; 11[19]:6; frag. 10:9). Such data tend to weaken any claim of dependence of the Hodayot passage on the biblical one, reflected in the various commentators who make no mention of the Psalm here.

At Ps. 31:20, Peshitta lacks an equivalent of פעלת (cf. BHS), but is otherwise as MT (despite Lamsa, 601b); TgPss follows MT, but adds a clause between בך and נגד (cf. Stec, 71). In v. 21, Peshitta is as MT apart from *ths' 'nwn bstrh d* for בסתר; as Stec, 71, points out, TgPss has בעידן רונגך for MT's פניך.

T. Sander; expanded ed., with a new introduction by J.H. Charlesworth; Christian Origins Library), New York: Crossroad 1995 (orig. English ed. pub. Fortress Press, 1963), 187.

Briggs & Briggs, 264, 275, argue that the Hebrew text of v. 20b originally read **אשר** בסתר יהוה לעולם תעמד מחשבות לבו לדר ודר, **פעלת נדר בני אדם לחסים בך**, and that in v. 21 **פניך** was originally placed not after **אשר**, but after **בסוכה** (i.e. **בסוכת פניך**) in the second half of the verse.

#### 2.14 Ps. 33:11 = 1QH 4[12]:13

Ps. 33:11: **עצת יהוה לעולם תעמד מחשבות לבו לדר ודר**  
 1QH 4[12]:13: **ועצתכה היא תקום ומחשבת לבכה תכון לנצח**

HN, 88, is less than encouraging about a relationship between our two texts: ‘The two parallel expressions... of God’s counsel and plan are of such a general meaning that there is no need to assume use of Scripture [at all].’ However, on the one hand, we see all the semantic elements of Ps. 33:11 apparently reflected in some form in the Hodayot text, making the latter a kind of synonymous parallel of the biblical stich, with one eternity adverbial instead of two and two verbs of being established instead of one. On the other hand, the Psalms passage is the only biblical text in which the sequence **מחשבות לב** occurs with reference to the divine mind. This combination of evidence does suggest to me a relationship, although we might never know whether the Hodayot author loosely recalled (as it were), or paraphrased, a biblical text that was close to what MT has, or whether he accurately quoted a variant edition of this text.

#### NOTES

In the Bible, **מחשבות לבו** only occurs elsewhere in the well-known text of Gen. 6:5, where it applies to the mind of humankind: **וּכְלִי-יִצַר מַחְשְׁבוֹת לְבוֹ רָק רֵעַ**. (In the DSS, variants of this expression are found at 4QShir<sup>b</sup> [4Q511] 22:4–5 and 63 ii 3–4, as well as in our Hodayot passage.) The **מחשבה** and **עצה** of YHWH in Ps. 33:11 (see also Jer. 49:20; 50:45; Mic. 4:12) contrast with the **מחשבה** and **עצה** of humankind in the preceding verse (see also Jer. 49:30; Prov. 19:21). Hughes, 111 n. 186, points out that of the seven biblical passages in which **עצה** and **מחשבה** are found in parallel, only Ps. 33:11 and Prov. 19:21 have a ‘context and meaning similar’ to that found in the Hodayot passage, but fails to observe that of these two passages it is only in Ps. 33:11 that both **עצה** and **מחשבה** pertain to God alone. In the words immediately preceding our Hodayot text (1QH 4[12]:12–13), **כִּי אִתָּה אֵל תִּנְאִץ כָּל מַחְשַׁבַת בְּלִיעַל**, there is contrastive reference to the thoughts of others (see Williams, 1.243, where this line forms the first line in a three-line stanza), a further indication that the Hodayot text (regardless of exact form) rests ultimately on Ps. 33:10–11.

The statement of HN, 88, given above, continues: ‘it is not impossible that the author combined passages such as Is. 46:10, Ps. 33:11, Prov. 16:3, 19:21, where all the words of this context appear.’ Delcor, 141, on **מחשבות לבכה**, gives no Psalms text, although he cites Syriac Odes of Solomon 9:2 (Greek 9:3); 12:4 for the thought (*mišbt*) of God. In contrast, Delcor, 154, says that there is an allusion to Ps. 33:11 here. Similarly, Hughes, 111, claims that **מחשבת לבכה** ‘is a probable marker to Ps 33:11’. Mansoor, 125, on **ועצתכה היא תקום**, compares Prov. 19:21, **ועצת יהוה היא תקום**, as does Licht, 93, and GG, 242 n. 164.

There is only sparse versional evidence in support of the notion that a variant edition of Ps. 33:11 lies behind the Hodayot passage. The fact that Peshitta uses *gym*' (cf. Targum: קיימא) for MT's תעמד should almost certainly not be used as a parallel to the הוֹיֵא הַקוֹם of the Hodayot), although the apparent use of the non-pluralized *mhšbt*' (rather than the plural *mhšbt*'; cf. Targum: מוּחַשְׁבַּת; MT מוּחַשְׁבוֹת) could have a bearing on the Hodayot's singular construction; ומוחשבת לבכה חכון. Note that some Greek and Latin traditions have εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος or *in saecula saeculorum* where MT has לדר ודר (see the Göttingen edition). Although this indicates some textual instability, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that those witnesses reflect a Hebrew text in לצח (but see, e.g., Pss. 49:10, 20).

### 2.15 Ps. 37:14 = 1QH 2[10]:10

Ps. 37:14: 1QH 2[10]:10: LXX:	להפיל עני ואביון לשבוה ישרי־דרך וקלס לבוגדים סוד אמת ובינה לישרי דרך καταβαλεῖν πτωχὸν καὶ πένητα τοῦ σφάξαι τοὺς εὐθεῖς τῆ καρδία
-------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Here, the form in the Hodayot, ישרי־דרך, might appear to support the reading of *Leningradensis* (and other major mss.) at Ps. 37:14. There, *Leningradensis* reads ישרי־דרך against some other mediaeval mss. that have ישרי־לב, a reading that is also reflected in the LXX (τοὺς εὐθεῖς τῆ καρδία). The *Leningradensis* reading is also found in a *peshet* on Ps. 37:14 (4QpPs<sup>a</sup> [4Q171] 1 ii 17). Together, then, the Hodayot and *peshet* texts might be argued to provide rather strong support for the Masoretic reading at Ps. 37:14 as represented by *Leningradensis*, and the evidence might even be considered sufficiently important to merit the ultimate prize: a reference in the apparatus to *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*.

However, such optimism might be premature, as there is nothing in the wider context of the Hodayot passage or in the nature of the words themselves to suggest that the relationship with the biblical text is anything other than coincidental. The fact that an analogous *verbal* phrase, ישר דרך, occurs twice in the Hodayot (6:[14]:24; 12[20]:34) tends to support this view. The fact that a singular form of ישרי־דרך is found in another biblical passage (Prov. 29:27: ותועבת רשע ישרי־דרך) also casts doubt on the notion that our Hodayot passage is specifically influenced by the Psalms passage.

If the Hodayot text here is assumed to be more than coincidental it provides additional evidence in confirmation of the originality of the MT reading as specifically preserved in the ms. tradition represented by *Leningradensis*.

## NOTES

'According to de Rossi nineteen Biblical MSS read לב instead of 'דרך' (WM, 145). The same reading is reflected in LXX (the Göttingen edition gives no evidence of a Greek reading consonant with דרך), but not in other versions. According to WM, 'Although the reading לב is thus quite strongly represented, there can be little doubt that דרך is the more original, because the expression 'ישר' (י) is found only twice [i.e. at Ps. 37:14 and Prov. 29:27: 'ישר דרך'] whereas לב 'ישרי' is a common phrase.' 'ישרי' is also attested in the DSS at 4QD<sup>a</sup> [4Q266] 5 i 2.) Briggs & Briggs, 327, note the apparent conflation of 'heart' and 'way' readings in major mss. of the Psalterium juxta Hebraeos: *et interficiant rectos corde in via*.

The two Hodayot passages in which a form of the combination occurs with the verb 'ישר' (rather than the cognate noun) are as follows:

6:[14]:23–24: ואין נתיבת לישר דרך על פני מים  
12[20]:34: ואיכה אישר דרך כיא אם הכני[תהצעדי]

This construction is based on biblical usage; cf. 1 Sam. 6:12; Isa. 45:13; Prov 11:5: זדקת תמים תישר דרכו (see Dec, 223; the last passage is perhaps especially relevant to the nominal and verbal constructions found in the Scrolls). Note also, at Ps. 37:14, Peshitta's *wl'ylyn ddyšn 'ersthwn*, which might reflect interpretation of the Hebrew *Vorlage* as participial: [מ]ישרי 'those who make straight'.

Licht, 67, makes a marginal reference to Ps. 37:14 at 1QH 2[10]:10, and Mansoor, 106, notes both this passage and Prov. 29:27, as does Delcor, 96. HN, 38 (cf. *ibid.*, 35) allows for the possibility that Ps. 37:14 was 'the model' for the Hodayot usage here, while accepting that 'ישרי דרך' might simply represent 'daily language' in the community. He points out that 'ישרי דרך' is matched as a term for the sectaries by תמימי דרך in 1[9]:36 (cf. Knibb, 164; 166, who notes that 'the upright' 'occurs as a term for members of the community' in 1QS 3:1 and 4:22 and in CD 20:2).

## 2.16 Ps. 37:23 = 1QH 2[10]:23, 33

Ps. 37:23: מיהוה מצעדיינבר כוננו ודרכו יתפץ  
1QH 2[10]:23: ובחסדיכה תושיע נפשי כיא מאתכה מצעדי  
1QH 2[10]:33: אפס כי [לא יד]עו כי מאתך מצעדי וישימוני לבו

It is possible that at least the first Hodayot sequence depends on the biblical text, with מיהוה replacing מאתכה of MT, although there are also reasons for thinking that any relationship is either fortuitous or too general/paraphrastic to be of text-critical significance. The כיא in the Hodayot sequence is also found in 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> (4Q171) but again it is uncertain that this has text-critical significance.

## NOTES

DS, 33, points out that the form מאתכה occurs three times in 2[10]:22–24, emphasizing 'la notion de la causalité divine' (cf. Licht, 70; Mansoor, 108):

והמה סוד שוא לעדת בליעל  
לא ידעו כיא מאתכה מעמדי  
ובחסדיכה תושיע נפשי  
כיא מאתכה מצעדי

והמה מאחכה נרו על נפשי  
בעבור הכבדכה במשפט רשעים

(Note that lines 1, 2–4, and 5–6 in this arrangement are distributed by Williams, 1.127–31, across three different stanzas. Williams, 1.131, and Kittel, 39, point out that the last four letters of the third מאחכה were filled in by a second scribe, perhaps under the influence of the double מאחכה in the preceding sequence.)

In principle, then, *כיא מאחכה מצעדי* in l. 23 might be no more than a parallelistic reiteration of *כיא מאחכה מעמד* in the preceding line (thus Williams, 1.130). However, the fact that *כיא מאחכה מצעדי* recurs at l. 33, in a different *hodayah*, strengthens somewhat the possibility that this sequence (with *מצעדי*) was of particular significance, being a set expression, perhaps borrowed from the Bible or another literary source. However, it is also possible, as Licht, 74, appears to claim, that the usage at l. 33 is dependent on (i.e. alludes to) that of l. 23 (and its immediate context), in which case l. 33 could not be regarded as having a direct relationship with the biblical text (contrast HN, 50).

HN, 42, 44; Licht, 70; Mansoor, 108; and GG, 237 n. 94, accept that the Hodayat sequence at l. 23 has a relationship with the one at Ps. 37:23 (most commentators make no mention of Prov. 20:24), which, according to Licht, ‘was understood as a formulation of the law of predestination’. (Licht points out that the same Psalms text is understood differently in the *pesher* text, discussed below.)

However, DS, 33, and Delcor, 104, do not mention Ps. 37:23 in their discussion, and the following data all suggest that that the locution in the Hodayat passages has only a fortuitous connection with that biblical text.

- (1) The noun *מצעד* is, relative to its attestation in the Bible, very common in the DSS (nine times as against three; see *DCH* 5.452a), especially in the Hodayat, where it occurs in at least five other passages: 3[11]:16, 25; 8[16]:34; 9[17]:33; 4QH<sup>a</sup> (4Q427) 7 ii 11, usually preceded by *עם* ‘with’.
- (2) Neither *כוננו ידפץ* nor *דרכו ידפץ* in the Psalter’s parallel is reflected in either Hodayat passage.
- (3) The verse from the Psalms is largely duplicated at Prov. 20:24. (HN, 44, gives no reasons for his claim that the Psalms text is the more likely source.)
- (4) The Hodayat texts both use a longer form of the preposition, *באח*, for the simple *ב* of MT.

In respect of the last point, it could be significant that Peshitta and Targum have ‘from before’ (*בין קדם*), raising the possibility that different forms of Hebrew text, with a preposition other than the *-me* of MT, existed, and that the Hodayat author drew on, or was influenced by, one of these divergent texts.

The Psalms *pesher*, 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> (4Q171) 1 iii 14, insofar as the text has remained intact, is, according to Horgan’s transcription (and restoration), largely identical with MT of Ps. 37:23–24 (but see Horgan, 218; Flint, 89). In particular, it does not have the *באח* of the Hodayat: *כיא מידו[ה] מצעדי נבר כוננו*.

However, it is curious that the *pesher* text and both the Hodayat texts are preceded by the conjunction *כי* (with and without final *’alef*), which might suggest that the biblical text of the Psalter underlying the usage in all three passages also had an introductory *כי*. Horgan, 218, raises this possibility, although she concludes that: ‘It is impossible to tell whether this word is to be understood as part of the citation, or whether it is an introductory word’. In view of the fact that Psalm 37 is arranged alphabetically, the presence of *כי* before *מידוה מצעדי* would be unusual but not impossible: note the *ayin* and *taw* verses, 28 and 39, and the presence of *כי* at the beginning of vv. 22 and 24. The evidence of the Hodayat passages, not cited by Horgan, might swing the balance of evidence in favour of a *Vorlage* with *כי*, although I have not found any (other) ms. or versional evidence for this. WM, 158, claims that MT ‘is attested by all VSS’.

## 2.17 Ps. 41:10 = 1QH 5[13]:23–24

Ps. 41:10	נִסְדָּאִישׁ שְׁלוֹמִי אֲשֶׁר־בִּשְׁחַתִּי בּוֹ אֹכֵל לַחְמִי הַנְּדִיל עָלַי עֶקֶב
1QH 5[13]:23–24:	נ[א] כְּלִי לַחְמִי עָלַי הַנְּדִילוּ עִקֵּב
LXX:	καὶ γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς εἰρήνης μου ἐφ' ὃν ἠλίπισα ὁ ἐσθίων ἄρτους μου ἐμεγάλυνεν ἐπ' ἐμὲ περνησιμόν

Here we have an example of the difficulty in assessing the text-critical value of a Hodayot text, even when it seems quite clear (1) that the Hodayot text is drawing on a biblical passage and (2) that this biblical passage appears in the Hodayot in a form different from the one found in MT.

The main point of interest is the Hodayot's placement of the word *עלי* before, rather than after, *הנדילו*. The Hodayot text thus appears to reflect a degree of textual instability in the biblical passage, despite the fact that the meaning expressed in the Hodayot version is probably identical to that expressed by MT.

It is possible that the word order found in the Hodayot is also reflected in the Three, which have *κατεμεγαλύνθη μου* here (as against *ἐμεγάλυνεν ἐπ' ἐμε* of LXX). However, Symmachus (at least) also uses *κατεμεγαλύνομαι* at Ps. 35:26,<sup>32</sup> where MT has the preposition following the verb (*המנדילים עלי*) and at Ps. 38:17, where the order in MT is reversed (*עלי המנדילי*), so it is difficult to argue that the lexico-syntactic choice of the Three here represents a different word-order in their Hebrew *Vorlagen*.

An alternative approach is to see in the Hodayot text a citation of Ps. 41:10 under the influence of the wording of Ps. 38:17b: *במופ רנלי עלי הנדילו*. In *עלי הנדילו* we have not only a sequence that matches the word order of the Hodayot passage but also one that, like the Hodayot text, employs the plural form of the verb. The phenomenon of quoting one text under the influence of another, whether consciously or by accident, is attested elsewhere in the Hodayot, and would seem to be the most likely solution here.

## NOTES

As Mansoor, 136, points out, the particle *נ* restored at the beginning of the Hodayot sequence appears to reflect the *נ* at the beginning of the verse in MT. The Hodayot text thus appears to reflect a shorter, or contracted, version of that found in MT,

<sup>32</sup> See J. Lust, 'A Lexicon of Symmachus' Special Vocabulary in His Translation of the Psalms' (<http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/vol05/Lust2000.html>).

without the sequence *איש שלומי אשר־בטחתי בו*. In addition, for reasons of literary and conceptual coherence, the Hodayot text has the verbs in the plural (אִכְלָה for אִכְלְתֶּם / הַגְדִּילָה for הַגְדִּילוּ).

In principle, the word order in the Hodayot passage allows *עלי* to be taken with the preceding *אִכְלָה לְהַמִּי* / *אִכְלָה לְהַמִּי* rather than with the following *הַגְדִּילָה* / *הַגְדִּילוּ*. In the position in which the preposition *עלי* is found in the Hodayot passage, it has been associated not only with *κατεμεγαλύνθη μου* in the Three but also with *μετ' ἐμοῦ* in the quotation of the Psalms passage in John 13:18: 'ο τρώγων μετ' ἐμοῦ τὸν ἄρτον ἐπῆρεν ἐπ' ἐμὲ τὴν πετρῶν αὐτοῦ (according to most ms. evidence).<sup>33</sup> However, the gospel text's inclusion of *ἐπ' ἐμὲ* (corresponding to *עלי*) and its correspondence with the word order of MT (*ἐπῆρεν ἐπ' ἐμὲ τὴν πετρῶν αὐτοῦ* = *עַקְבוּ / עַקְבֵּי עַלִי*) suggests that *μετ' ἐμοῦ* simply reflects an additional sequence earlier in the biblical verse (perhaps אַחֲרַי, variously interpreted as an accusative, אַחֲרַי, or a preposition, אַחֲרַי, in the Greek traditions), in a Hebrew Vorlage different from the one underlying MT. Moreover, there is, to the best of my knowledge, no (other) instance of LXX *μεθ' ἡμῶν* or *μετ' ἐμοῦ* rendering MT *עלינו* or *עלי*.

On the other hand, there is some evidence of instability in the placement of *עלי* in the LXX ms. tradition. The Göttingen edition indicates that whereas one ms. (2013) omits *ἐπ' ἐμὲ*, another (2050) places it at the end of the verse, after *πετρῶν μου*.

While TgPss agrees with the word order of MT and LXX (Stec, 87: 'who eats my food, *acts mightily to outwit me*' (אִתְרַבֵּב עַלִי לְהַכְמִי)), the text of the Peshitta, to be rendered with 'Yea, even the man who visits me, in whom I trust, who eats my bread and whom I trust, betrays me' (Lamsa, 607b) not only apparently repeats *אשר־בטחתי בו*, but might also reflect a different word order at the end of the verse: *הַגְדִּילָה עַלִי עַקְבֵּי* (?). However, *BHS* suggests that the last two words of Peshitta derive from Hebrew *עַלִי עַקְבֵּי* 'against me he cheated' (cf. also *κατεμεγαλύνθη μου ἀκολουθῶν* in Symmachus).

Whereas Licht, 105 (reading *אִכְלָה לְהַמִּי*), and GG, 245 n. 214 (reading *אִכְלָה לְהַמִּי*), do no more than refer to Ps. 41:10 in their observations, other Hodayot commentators are more explicit: Delcor, 163 (reading *אִכְלָה לְהַמִּי*), 'une citation du ps. XLI, 10. Ce texte est aussi par Joa., XIII, 18'; DS, 49 (reading *אִכְלָה לְהַמִּי*), 'Cf. Ps. XLI 10 (verset cité dans *Jean XIII 18*; voir aussi *Marc XIV 18*)'; Mansoor, 136 (reading *אִכְלָה לְהַמִּי*), 'We must... restore Mg as found at the beginning of Ps xli 10, from which the following phrase was clearly borrowed'; HN, 106 (reading *אִכְלָה לְהַמִּי*), 124, '...an almost direct quotation from Ps. 41:10', 124 n. 2, 'John 13:18 also uses this text in the same meaning as here, but with a more literal connection, inasmuch as it is referred to during a meal.'

<sup>33</sup> The example is drawn from J. de Waard, *A Comparative Study of the Old Testament Text in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the New Testament* (STDJ, 4), Leiden: E.J. Brill 1965, 62–7, 82–3. See also B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (Fourth Revised Edition) ... on Behalf of and in Cooperation with the Editorial Committee of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament*, (Second ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies <sup>2</sup>1994, 204–5. The conclusion of de Waard, *Comparative Study of the Old Testament Text*, 82–83, about the relationship of the gospel and Hodayot texts is more positive than mine: 'As far as the Gospel of John is concerned, it is striking that the similarities with the Qumran texts occur exactly in those formula quotations (Jn 12, 40 and 13, 18) which show the greatest deviations from the LXX in John... [and] we must conclude that Qumran texts did form a part of these written Old Testament texts.'

### 3. *Conclusions*

The nature of the material examined and its limited quantity makes any conclusion extremely tentative, the more so at this stage when data relating only to Book 1 of the Psalter have been presented.

The references to Hodayot texts in the *BHS* apparatus to Pss. 4:8 and 5:11 exemplify how easy it is to see a possible connection between the wording of a passage in the Hodayot and another in the Psalter, but how difficult it is to establish that such a relationship actually existed. Typically, in such cases there is no sufficiently distinctive element (in words, word combinations, syntax, or morphology) that would clearly support a relationship between the two passages. This is also true in connection with Ps. 24:7, 9, where, although the Hodayot might be argued to support a reading found in Peshitta, it is far from clear that this, or any other biblical passage, actually underlies the Hodayot usage here. Similar remarks apply in connection with Pss. 31:6 and 37:14, where, in both cases, the Hodayot texts would support MT.

On the other hand, when the wording of a Hodayot passage is distinctive enough to suggest a dependency of some sort on a specific biblical text, there is usually no versional evidence to support any variation from MT found in the Hodayot passage, and so we are left wondering as to whether the Hodayot author has actually been influenced by a biblical text that was different from MT; or has manipulated, for literary or ideological reasons, the same text as the one that appears in MT; or has simply produced a text for which he has not consciously relied on a biblical passage. Such doubts are associated with the Hodayot's apparent use of Pss. 7:3, 31:10, 31:13, and 33:11, and with the possible use of Pss. 12:7 and 37:23. In connection with Ps. 31:10 (and Ps. 6:8), the Hodayot evidence might more justifiably be argued to have some text-critical relevance. In the case of Ps. 41:10, it is possible that the Hodayot writer's recollection of the biblical text was influenced by another biblical passage (and not by an alternative version of Ps. 41:10).

In the case of the Hodayot's use of Ps. 31:19, there is no variation from MT, and so the Hodayot text simply supports MT (possibly against Peshitta).

In two instances, the Hodayot might bear witness to a different text division from that found in MT (at Pss. 22:23–24; 31:20–21), but, again, there is no supporting versional or manuscript evidence. In one case, the Hodayot's apparent use of a biblical text (Ps. 26:12) in a version distinct from that found in MT turns out to be a scribal illusion.

On rare occasions, evidence from the Hodayot has a more compelling bearing on a known text-critical issue, as in the case of the apparent use of Ps. 18:5, although here the Hodayot evidence would simply support MT.

## PSALM 103: DESIGN, BOUNDARIES, AND MERGERS

Jan Fokkelman

*Emeritus University Leiden—the Netherlands*

### 1. *The Design of Psalm 103*

The Hebrew text of this composition, which will be the subject of our attention, can be found on the next page (Fig. 1). It is a copy from a book that is called *The Psalms in Form*.<sup>1</sup> This book from 2002 intends to show the poems in their correct colometrical and strophic contours. I wrote an earlier analysis of Psalm 103 which dealt with its structure and prosody in the third volume of my series *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible*,<sup>2</sup> but it is appropriate to have a closer look for certain reasons. This time I want to develop what is happening to the characters of the lyrical world, and also to elaborate on some details. What I want especially to focus on, however, is the heart of the matter. I have checked fifty authors on their strophic divisions of the Psalms and came to the sad conclusion that 48 of them missed the point. Therefore the design of the song needs to be reconsidered.

The handout shows what I think are the right proportions of the song: 23 rather than 22 verses, which are grouped in eight strophes, and the horizontal lines I have added indicate that there are three stanzas on the next higher text level. Nobody will be able to overlook the unity of the poem. A strong form of inclusion connects the outer ends. The identity of v. 22c with the A-cola of the first strophe is complete. The imperatives of the verb בָּרַךְ, ‘to bless; praise’, show a good balance between the singular feminines, three times *bār<sup>a</sup>kî*, and the masculine plurals, three times *bār<sup>a</sup>kû*.

So much for the periphery. But do these edges presuppose a centre? I think they do. The central unit of the composition is the long strophe 5. It focuses on the main theme, God’s loyalty and compassion, and I

---

<sup>1</sup> J.P. Fokkelman, *The Psalms in Form: The Hebrew Psalter in its Poetic Shape*, Leiden 2002.

<sup>2</sup> J.P. Fokkelman, *Major Poems of The Hebrew Bible at the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis: Volume III: the remaining 65 Psalms*, Assen 2003.

## Psalm 103

	לְהַדָּר		1	
	וְכָל־תְּרַבֵּי אֱתֶנְשֶׁם קָדְשׁוֹ:	בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשֵׁי אֱתִיְהוּהָ	2	I
	וְאַל־תִּשְׁכַּחַי כָּל־נַמְוָלָיו:	בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשֵׁי אֱתִיְהוּהָ		
	הֲרַפָּא לְכָל־תַּחֲלֵאֵיכִי:	הִסְלַח לְכָל־עֲוֹנוֹכִי	3	II
	הַמַּעֲטָרְכִי הַסֵּד וְרַחֲמִים:	הַנּוֹאֵל מִשְׁתַּחֲתֵי תַיִיכִי	4	
	הַתַּחֲדֵשׁ כְּנֶשֶׁר נַעֲרֹרְכִי:	הַמַּשְׁבִּיעַ כַּטּוֹב עֲרֹדְךָ	5	
	וּמִשְׁפָּטִים לְכָל־עֲשׂוֹקִים:	עֲשֵׂה צְדָקוֹת יְהוָה	6	III
	לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲלִילוֹתָיו:	יִוְדִיעַ דְּרָכָיו לַמַּשֶּׁה	7	
	אֲדָךְ אִפְּיָם וְרַב־הַסֵּד:	רַחוּם וְרַחֲמֵי יְהוָה	8	
	וְלֹא לַעֲוֹלָם יִפְסֹד:	לֹא־לְנֶצַח יָרִיב	9	VI
	וְלֹא כַעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ נִמְלַעַלְנוּ:	לֹא כַהֲטָאִינוּ עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ	10	
	גִּבֹר תַּסְדֹּף עַל־יְרֵאָיו:	כִּי כִנְבֵה שָׁמַיִם עַל־הָאָרֶץ	11	V
	הַרְחִיק מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת־פְּשָׁעֵינוּ:	כִּרְחֹק מִזְרַח מִמַּעַרְב	12	
	רַחֵם יְהוָה עַל־יְרֵאָיו:	כִּרְחֵם אֵב עַל־בָּנָיִם	13	
	זְכוֹר כִּי־עָפַר אֲנִיְהוּ:	כִּי־הוּא יָדַע יִצְרָנוּ	14	VI
	כַּצִּיץ הַשֶּׁדֶה בֶּן־צִיץ:	אֲנֹשׁ כַּחֲצִיד יָמָיו	15	
	וְלֹא־יִפְרָנוּ עוֹד מִקּוֹמוֹ:	כִּי רוּחַ עֲבָרָה־בּוֹ וְאֵינֶנּוּ	16	
	וְעַד־עוֹלָם עַל־יְרֵאָיו	וְחֶסֶד יְהוָה מֵעוֹלָם	17	VII
וְיִזְכְּרֵי פִקְדוֹתָיו לַעֲשׂוֹתָם:	18 לְשִׁמְרֵי בְרִיתוֹ	וְצְדָקָתוֹ לִבְנֵי בָנָיִם:		
	וּמַלְכוּתוֹ בְּכָל־מַשְׁלָה:	יְהוָה בְּשָׁמַיִם הִכִּין כִּסְאוֹ	19	
	לְשִׁמְעַ בְּקוֹל דְּבָרוֹ:	בְּרַכּוּ יְהוָה מִלְּאֲכָיו	20	VIII
	גִּבְרֵי כַח עֲשֵׂי דְבָרוֹ	בְּרַכּוּ יְהוָה כָּל־צַבְאָיו	21	
	מִשְׁרָתָיו עֲשֵׂי רְצוֹנוֹ:	בְּרַכּוּ יְהוָה כָּל־מַעֲשָׂיו	22	
	בְּכָל־מְקוֹמוֹת מְמַשְׁלָתוֹ	בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשֵׁי אֱתִיְהוּהָ:		

Fig. 1: Psalm 103 according to the design of J.P. Fokkelman, *The Psalms in Form: The Hebrew Psalter in its Poetic Shape*, Leiden 2002, 109; courtesy Deo-Publishing, Leiden

propose to call it the heart strophe. It is flanked by ten verses before it and ten verses after it. Do these three verses really hang together, in the face of the 48 authors who arrived at a different delimitation? To my mind it is very easy to point out why vv. 11–13 are a solid case of strophic unity. The syntax alone provides sufficient and necessary proof.

In the majority of cases the Hebrew poets base their colon building on an effective equation: one colon covers one clause. One may call this the default situation. It is a pleasant point of departure for the syntactic analysis of biblical verse, and our Psalm is just one more example of this rule. Strophe 5 is unique because it extends the clause

so that it covers the entire verse. This happens in all the three verses. Moreover, the construction is special. After the start of the unit, the strophe marker *kī* in v. 11a, we find an A-colon that each time is filled with a comparison; the preposition *kē* plus an infinitive and its subject. As a consequence the sentence core is delayed each time to the second half-verse. The infinitive of the A-colon is matched in the B-colon by the finite form of the verb, with the exception of one radical in v. 11. So the three lines run strictly parallel. Their syntax starts with a long, colon-filling complement and slowly rises to the finite predicate; it has an ascending profile. The pivot v. 12 is flanked by two verses that end on a broad equal rhyme, *ʿal-yēreʿāw*, and in this way add to the closure of the strophe. It is quite an achievement of the 48 authors that they failed to see this.

The heart strophe has units 4 and 6 on its sides. As soon as we have detected the right contours of these strophes, we will be impressed by the compelling logic that connects them. Strophe 4 contains four clauses that coincide perfectly with its four cola. These half-verses form a tight quartet, for two reasons. Each colon starts by saying ‘no’ and this negation is applied in a special way. Placed up front in each of the four clauses, it does not cancel any of the verbal predicates, but only the initial complement. It is not God’s wrath which is denied, but only its duration, and whenever his creatures commit a sin, his retribution is short rather than accordant. The fourfold application of anaphora is strong enough to warrant the unity of the short strophe.

The strophes 4 and 6 are the only units of this Psalm that have the negations. After the four forms of *loʿ* in strophe 4, the negation governs the final line of strophe 6, verse 16. But now the force of the negative assumes semantic force to permeate the entire unit. The unity of strophe 6 lies in its contents, because each and every one of its six cola speaks of our mortality. The human creature is ephemeral. The strophic unit is rounded off by the cola of vv. 14 and 16, which constitute a chiasm. The first and the last colon (14a and 16b) offer a contrast of knowing versus not recognizing, and the adjacent half-verses (14b and 16a) are attuned to one another by phonetic means; for example, *kī* is being repeated, *ʿāfār* and *ʿābʿrāh* are a near-anagram denoting transitoriness, and the rhyming words *ʾanāḥnū* and *ʾēnennū* have the same syllabic and accentual pattern.

The commentator who fails to delimit the strophes 4 and 6 correctly has no chance of detecting the compelling logic that connects these units. Current commentaries also failed to see it, because the particle

*ki* is a pitfall for their authors. They are tempted to reduce its function to the causal meaning ‘for’ and think that it connects one single line with one preceding verse. However, the *ki* that starts the strophes 5 and 6 of our Psalm is much more potent. We should recognize it as a strophe marker first, and secondly take it as an important signpost at text levels beyond the single verse. As a kind of discourse, a poem is a rhetorical sequence and the strophe is the main building block of the argument as it is being developed.

The particle *ki* has at least two functions here. It is causal indeed, but it has also kept its original, asseverative meaning. The powerful logic that characterizes the central stanza and connects its three strophes runs like this. God’s anger does not last long, fine. Why? Because (*ki*) and truly (*ki*), God’s loyalty and compassion are boundless; fine. How come? Because (*ki*) and truly (*ki*), He is profoundly aware of how short-lived our existence is.

The connection between strophes 4 and 6 can be explained even more concisely. These two strophes form a ring around the centre. Structure becomes theology; it points out: God’s anger is short-lived because man is short-lived. The logic which is inherent in the ring leads us to the conclusion that God is a good sport. On a more serious note, God decides it is below his dignity to stay angry at this ephemeral creature. He sees that lasting wrath would simply be disproportional. The negative or punitive approach is denied and meets its opposite in God’s positive properties in the heart strophe.

By now it has become clear that anaphora is a prominent device of style and structure in this song. Governing the first and the last strophes, anaphora provides the poem as a whole with inclusion. In determining the fourth and fifth strophe, it leads us to the centre. We can add one more example, the long strophe 2. Why should ‘my soul bless Yahweh’? Because He takes care of healing and restoring life, the second unit says, starting no less than five cola with the article plus a participle. This strophe is a hymnic enumeration with a special word pair on its axis. Verse 4b presents the two words to us that easily are the most important key words of the poem: loyalty and compassion, *hesed w<sup>e</sup>rahēmim*. Further on they occur three more times, mostly as a couple, and each time in a chiasmic reversal. Looking at the edges of verse 8, we see how they function as an inclusion of the full poetic line. Next, they dominate the positive verses of the heart strophe, vv. 11 and 13. Between them, verse 12 is the pivot which negates the negative by speaking of the removal of sins. The second *rahēm* of v. 13 is followed by the last occurrence of *hesed* in v. 17.

Loyalty is the start of strophe 7, but also of the third stanza. When we combine this observation with the end of v. 8, we discover that *hesed* is of great structural importance. It is the last word of the first stanza and the first word of the last stanza. In this way it supports and confirms the boundaries of the central stanza. At the same time, however, the fourth occurrence of the word *hesed* takes part in one more repetition which is of structural importance. Before studying that figure we need to reconstruct the verses 17 and 18. The Masoretes saw a tricolon plus a bicolon, but in reality the order of the verses is the other way round. Verse 17ab is one nominal sentence with the subject up front, and 17c18ab is another nominal sentence with the subject in the same position. After this *šidqātô* the whole tricolon refers to a group of beneficiaries, who are mentioned three times. These three labels coincide with three cola and are each time introduced by the preposition *l̄*. Circling back we find the same preposition at work in strophe 3, where it is once more in the service of three indirect objects.

We can now understand how all the characters are linked. The original generations of the chosen people, contemporaries of Moses, cannot get lost anymore, as they merge into their heirs, the many generations that follow and particularly the contemporaries of the speaker. These recent generations continue the covenant of which God has made them partners. The ‘sons of Israel’ from v. 7 are now called ‘the sons of sons’ in v. 17c. Both groups are at an equal distance of three cola from the central stanza; moreover, they have a turning point in the heart strophe, where we find ‘the sons’ who are the object of God’s compassion, v. 13. In terms of reference, they even coincide with them: the Israelites of yore and the Israelites of the present are all under the protection of the heavenly father.

Strophes 3 and 7, then, correspond to each other, but there is more. The two substantive forms that opened the bi- plus tricolonic combination in strophe 7 are the chiasmic sequel to the two that envelop strophe 3 with another case of inclusion—see the *šidqôt* of v. 6a and the highly strategic *hesed* of v. 8b.

Much of this goes to prove that verse 8 may be called the punchline of the first stanza. It is so for several reasons: it contains the major key words, it celebrates the deity with a fullness of nominal excellencies, and it is first and foremost a quotation from one of the most precious texts of the Hebrew Bible, the self-revelation of God to Moses in Ex. 34. Strophes 3 and 7 are the second ring around the heart strophe and prove that the content of God’s revelation is the opposite of being transitory. The past flows into the present and the circular composition

guarantees how the covenantal behaviour by the deity is the foundation for all the generations to come.

## 2. *Mergers within Psalm 103*

The 148 poems of the Psalter have 1192 strophes. More than 96% of these units either contain two full poetic lines or have three verses. I have found no more than four strophes which have a size of four lines, and the eighth unit of Ps. 103 is one of them. Verse 19 does not belong to strophe 8, although many commentators think so. An elementary grasp of poetics should have prevented them from putting v. 19 in the final strophe. Several good reasons plead against such a decision. Most of them are negative, in the sense that they exclude v. 19 from the last unit. Here they are. Strophe 8 is an uninterrupted chain of imperatives and a perfect chain of anaphorae. After v. 19 there is a dramatic change in the direction of speech. An entire string of calls for blessing comes about, and this brings a change of genre with it. At the same time, the position of Yahweh changes dramatically. In the seventh strophe He is a proud subject, but in the last unit He is the object of grateful blessings. Finally, we should honour the rhyming technique of the poet. The A-cola of the three *bār<sup>a</sup>kū*-verses end on nouns in the plural with the suffix *-āw*, all of them. Their companions, the three B-cola plus the one C-colon, end on singular nouns with the rhyming suffix *-ō*, again all of them. As a consequence, v. 19 is thrown backward; because it does not partake in all these systematic features of the final unit, it is expelled from it.

These observations of a tight structure help us to deal correctly with one more case of repetition. We see how the word *kōl* and the verb *רָשַׁל* from v. 19b come back in v. 22b. If v. 19 had been part of the final unit, this form of repetition would have been a case of inclusion. But now that we have drawn the line of strophe separation differently, this repetition of God's all-encompassing dominion has to be assessed as a form of parallelism on the level of strophes; it is a case of epistrophe. This also reshapes the contours of the last stanza, with its two extra long strophes. Unit 7 starts with the temporal and scans God's loyalty at work on earth, until v. 19 speaks of heaven and God's all-encompassing rule. This final line of the strophe has turned to the spatial and prepares us for the last unit. Strophe 8 is completely spatial, as it fills the universe with countless voices.

In v. 22c God's proper name is the object of the verb בָּרַךְ, for the fourth time in the strophe. But the transition from the innumerable masses of singers to the highly personal, inward contact with the soul is so dramatic that the colon 22c deserves to have its own position. The strophe finishes the poem with a descent, in terms of verse-length: three-two-two-one cola. A second reason why 22c deserves to be taken as a verse is the fact that this monocolon is the only clause of blessing which is really and completely identical with the two A-cola of the poem's beginning. It makes the perfect inclusion of the poem.

Let us follow the circular design of the composition and return to strophe 1, the call to 'my soul'. Are the verses 1–5 one strophe or two? If arguments could be measured rather than weighed, I would say that 40% of the data recommend us to keep all five verses in one unit, whereas 60% favour a distribution over two strophes. The level of syntax says: keep the five verses together. The clauses of vv. 1–2 are not yet finished after the two initial bicola, and from the syntactical point of view the subsequent cola of vv. 3–5 are no more than appositions to the object of blessing, the deity. The 2nd person singular in the feminine is continued too, with these spectacular rhymes on *-ékí* and *-áykí*. The speaker wants to bless his God and the verses 3–5 explain why. But how personal are the referents of these actions of rescue and healing really?

It may be silly to count the data, and what is needed is to weigh them. Several important factors come together in the interlinear white below v. 2 and convince me there should be a strophic division between the first and second units of the handout. Tone, genre, anaphora, subject matter and the constraints on strophe length indicate that we have one short and one long strophe in vv. 1–5. The poet looks inside for a while so that his first lines have the tone of a highly personal appeal and suggest the genre of the thanksgiving song. The verses after v. 2, however, have their own form of anaphora and their own subject matter (God's positive actions). Their nature is descriptive and the wave of participles is known as a hymnic style. Are God's healing and the speaker's recovery really singulative events, moments that we would like to pinpoint in history? I don't believe so. Rather, the hymnic participles intend to present qualities of the deity. His actions transcend the temporal and usher in the transtemporal, the eternal. They actually denote properties that can be activated by God any time and any place. This means that the poet has left the suggestion of thanksgiving behind

and from now on turns his poem into a song of praise. At the same time, this transition is an invitation to his listeners to identify with him and to understand that God's loyalty is permanently available, always present in the background, ready to support the believer who needs help. Strophe 3 proves this in a paradoxical way. It refers explicitly to history, but it exploits this era of Moses and the Sinai covenant to prove that each generation has the attention of the Lord. Reading on, we saw how the sons of v. 13 and the 'sons of sons' of v. 17c are the witnesses of this unceasing care and loyalty.

Let me scan the level of stanzas now. The first ring round the heart strophe and its logic of short-lived anger at the short-lived human being are strong arguments for us to see the strophes 4–6 as the central stanza. The negative forces of anger and death surround loyalty and compassion, but they cannot gain the upper hand; why not? The quality of being short-lived in strophes 4 & 6 is easily surpassed by the dimensions in vv. 11–12. These spatial measurements demonstrate the infinite. God's loyalty and compassion are beyond compare and cannot be confined. We remember how the boundaries of the stanza are reinforced by a double and adjacent *hesed* (in vv. 8b and 17a). Does this mean that the rest of the text consists of stanzas I and III? We can say yes, but only on the strict condition that these two flanks behave as stanzas, i.e. have the features and distinctions of such units. I proceed to check this.

As parts of a circular design, the stanzas I and III are attuned to each other. Strophe 3 constitutes a second ring together with strophe 7, and I take strophe 8 with its many cola as the answer to the syntactic complex of the strophes 1–2, as its obvious use of anaphora brings closure by inclusion. But the three parts of the poem have more in common and the distribution of these features shows that there are important parallelisms on stanza level.

First, we can find a *parallelism* governing the stanzas I and II. Both units have a prosodical order of 2 + 3 + 3 verses, and this goes hand in hand with forms of semantic correspondence. The root *נמל* occurs two times. In v. 2b it is a noun, and when it recurs in v. 10b it is a verb. This recurrence is strategically placed, so that the final B-cola of the strophes 1 and 4 are parallel. The meaning of God's actions is complementary, as his *gml*-action of v. 2 is positive, whereas the retribution in v. 10 is negative. This *gml*-action of v. 10b, though, occurs under the sign of the negation, so that the punitive side is prevented from striking 'us'.

The parallelism of stanzas I and II reaches deeper. Strophes 2 and 5 correspond by repeating the key words loyalty and compassion: in verse 4 they act in tandem on the axis of the strophe, in the heart strophe they spread out and take care of the sentence core in vv. 11 and 13, i.e. the lines flanking the pivotal verse. The element ‘youth’ of v. 5b corresponds with the sons in v. 13a.

Secondly, there are also forms of parallelism that connect the stanzas II and III. The start of II and the start of III speak both about God’s commitment to the people who fear Him. In strophe 4 the poet says no to eternity (i.e. to lasting wrath), but in strophe 7 he says yes to eternity (i.e. to God’s lasting loyalty). In v. 9ab *lāneṣaḥ* and *l’ólām* are denied, in v. 17ab the term ‘forever’ is asserted two times.

Thirdly, the ends of stanzas II and III are parallel too. Verse 16 ends on *m’qômô* and the final B-colon of stanza III has *m’qômôt*. The two strophes of stanza III refer to forms of infinity: in 7 it is temporal, in str. 8, with its myriads of hosts, it is spatial. The spatial form of boundlessness was already there in vv. 11–12, the temporal infinity of vv. 17–18 is the answer and counterpart of the ephemeral in strophe 6.

### 3. *The Boundaries within Psalm 103*

I want to end this paper with a short section on boundaries and the merging of characters. The first person singular, the lyrical I, is present in the call to ‘my soul’ only. By saying this *napsî*, however, the speaker rightaway starts a process of splitting so that a second person comes about. Compare what happens when we stand in front of a mirror: we get a fresh look of ourselves, from a specific point of view. The rhetorical act of splitting creates an opening where the listeners can step in. This is also due to the atemporal nature of the praising participles in the second strophe. The reader is invited to identify with the speaker and to feel grateful for God’s loyalty and compassion. These key words form a bridge leading to the unit of Moses and the spiritual origins of the chosen people, and they also take us to the heart strophe.

Crossing this double bridge, we land in the central stanza. This part of the text has one more defining feature, which I have kept in store for you. It is the only passage which contains the first person plural, the morpheme ‘us’, and this suffix *-nû* appears in each one of the three strophic units. Once the syllable even expands so that it becomes the full independent pronoun <sup>a</sup>*nāḥnû*, in the ominous clause *’āfār* <sup>a</sup>*nāḥnû*.

So the lyrical I is not alone any more, the boundaries of the ego are punctuated, and the poet is now part of the community of the faithful. The sign 'us' occurs  $4 + 2 + 2$  times in the strophic units, in a quite regular distribution over the verses 10–12–14. But there is a surprise, adding up  $4 + 2 + 2$  will result in ten rather than eight. How come? This unique computation is caused by a remarkable pun. When we look into verse 16, we find the syllable *-nû* two more times, in the rhyme of *'énennû...yakkîrennû*. Here the suffix means 'him', there is no doubt from the grammatical point of view. But what has happened to the singer, in the meantime? In v.14 he still refers to 'us'. Immediately after this *'anāhnû*, however, verse 15 opens with a double alliteration and says the word *'noš*. We now understand: our group is just part of all mankind. In other words, the sixth strophe turns to generalizing in the vv. 15–16, so that 'us' is subsumed and integrated in 'him', i.e. man. The three units of the middle passage have the morpheme *-nû* ten times, in a perfect balance of  $4 + 2 + 4$ . And the process of opening out is now completed: this widening of the main character came about in two steps and shows three phases: the recipient of God's loyalty and compassion, the lyrical I, appears to be the mouthpiece of the community of believers, and this group is finally integrated in the family of man. God's care does not stop at the boundary of the chosen people. From strophe 6 on, the potential of the song is universal. No wonder that the whole universe is summoned to bless Yahweh in the massive final strophe.

## ARE IDOLS HIDING IN PSALM 139:20?

Jan Holman

*Universiteit van Tilburg—The Netherlands*

### 1. *Introduction*

In his recent valedictory lecture professor Cees Houtman—Kampen, June 9, 2006—emphasized that ‘the religion of Old Israel’ with one God, excluding all other godheads, never existed. It has grown gradually and never has been *the* religion of Israel. Houtman pointed out that the polytheistic character of texts in the Old Testament has been translated away in quite a few versions. In a recent Dutch Bible translation (*De Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling*, 2004) a greater sensitivity for polytheism is manifest, as Houtman has shown.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover Houtman has made us anew aware of an important distinction to be made in Bible translations. There are versions, which take as their point of departure the theology of the final editors of the Old Testament (*Statenvertaling*, 1637 and *De Nieuwe Vertaling*, 1951). They are the ones used in public worship and for private devotion. Alongside there are translations, which reach behind that theology of the editors of Tenak in order to detect the original meaning of texts before they were edited in the Old Testament. The awareness of this distinction may make us less hesitant in discussing new interpretations of *cruces interpretum* that deviate from traditional readings of the Bible, for fear we may have to say farewell to familiar texts in Holy Scripture.<sup>2</sup>

Especially classic *cruces interpretum* may be a field where idols are hiding. A later monopolizing Yahwistic tendency of the final editors could be a source of texts resisting a satisfactory explanation. The change of climate in the study of the Old Testament mentioned above, stimulates to revisit the long standing *crux interpretum* in Psalm 139:20.

---

<sup>1</sup> See the recent introduction to the Old Testament hermeneutics by C. Houtman, *De Schrift wordt geschreven: Op zoek naar een christelijke hermeneutiek van het Oude Testament*, Zoetermeer 2006, 40–66.

<sup>2</sup> Houtman, *De Schrift wordt geschreven*, 40–66.

## 2. *Psalm 139:20 in Context*

Thirty-five years ago, I suggested—while stressing the literary coherence of Psalm 139—that the psalmist under suspicion of idolatry appeals to Yahweh as the Sun of Justice.<sup>3</sup> The psalmist, perhaps suspected of idolatry (verses 19–24), places himself before the only true God, the real Sun of Justice (verses 1–18). The psalm would be an extremely capable *apologia pro vita sua*, if the poet was questioned about idolatrous sun worship. (See verses 23–24: ‘Search me, El, and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. And see if the way of *an idol* is in me and lead me into the way of the Eternal’.)<sup>4</sup>

In as much as it attributes to Yahweh, the supreme judge, all the possibilities and powers that often are ascribed to the sun in the pagan world, it is the best affirmation of the psalmist’s orthodoxy and orthopraxis. It would explain why the author has chosen as principle of unity for his psalm: Yahweh, the Sun of Justice.<sup>5</sup>

### 2.1 *Different Descriptions of Idols*

According to Otto Eissfeldt (1931) the Old Testament is well stocked with names of idols. He classifies these names in five groups:

<sup>3</sup> J. Holman, ‘The Structure of Psalm cxxxix’, *VT* 21 (1971), 298–310.

<sup>4</sup> See *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, editio quinta emendata opera Adrian Schenker (1997), 1219, apparatus criticus *ad* Ps. 139:24. It opposes five ‘moralizing’ interpretations of עֲצַב by the Versiones (LXX: ‘lawlessness’, Syriac: ‘lie’, Targum: ‘error’, Hieronymus: ‘trick, ruse’) against עֲצַב, ‘idol’ of the Masoretic Text, which is preferred by the editor of BHS: ‘*legendum* M cf Jes 48,5’: ‘Lest you should say, my idol did them (*sc.* the former things), my graven image and my molten image commanded them’ (RSV).

On דרך: see E. Dhorme, in: *Bible de la Pléiade* 2, 1203: ‘voic au sens de conduite’; K. Koch, in: *ThWAT* 2, 303: ‘Lebensführung des einzelnen’; A. Graupner, in: *ThWAT* 6, 305: ‘Der Psalmist bittet, Gott möge ausfindig machen, ob Götzendienst “in ihm” sei...’; see also H. Ringgren, *The Faith of the Psalmists*, Philadelphia 1963, 56. As for עֲצַב דרך, literally ‘the way of an idol’, we may render ‘idolatrous behaviour’, עֲצַב being a *nomen qualitatis*, functioning as an adjective; see P. Joüon, T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Subsidia Biblica 14/2), Roma 1991, 466, § 129, f, C) 1) ‘the genitive of the quality’. The opposite term *derek ’ôlām* in the parallel second half of verse 24, I understand as ‘the way of the Eternal’ *i.e.* a conduct conform the commandments of יְהוָה, in contrast with עֲצַב דרך, ‘the way of an idol’, ‘idolatrous behaviour’.

<sup>5</sup> The Egyptian hymn to the sun-god Aton (*ANET*, 369) shows a similar sequence of ideas as Psalm 139; see Holman, ‘Structure of Psalm cxxxix’, 309.

In his contribution on the sun, E. Lipiński, ‘Shemesh שֶׁמֶשׁ’, in: K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, P.W. van der Horst (eds), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, Leiden 1995, 1449 writes—in reference to the Hodayat from Qumran—: ‘...the author of IQH 7:25 addresses God as follows, “Thou art for me an eternal luminary” (*li mē’ôr ’ôlām*). Similar accents can be heard in the *Odes Sol.*, whose author declares that the Lord “is my sun” (15:1–2) and that He is “like the sun upon the earth”.

- 1) nick-names: ‘Shame’, ‘Monster’, ‘Horror’, ‘Sin’, ‘Terror’;
- 2) names which deny the existence of idols: ‘Wind’; ‘Lie’;<sup>6</sup> ‘Emptiness’;<sup>7</sup> ‘Nothing’; ‘No-god’; ‘No-elohim’;
- 3) names which deny their divine dignity and arrange them under the evil spirits: ‘Spirits living in the fields’; ‘Demons’; ‘Evil Powers’;
- 4) names which question the origin of idols in combination with ‘god’ and ‘gods’: ‘Alien’, ‘Foreign’, ‘New’ gods;
- 5) names which join the previous group 4 but stress the identification of those images with the material from which they have been made or their function: ‘Cast Image’, ‘Hewn Image’, ‘Carved Image’, ‘Tooled Stone’, ‘Image’, ‘Showpiece’, ‘Processional Image’.<sup>8</sup>

Present-day versions of the Bible more than once render this terminological wealth by the general term ‘idol’, concealing the specific feature of the idol mentioned in a particular text. The New Version 1951 (*Nieuwe Vertaling* 1951) of the Dutch Bible Society (NBG) is a case in point. The moral connotation of some descriptions of an idol (‘Sin’, ‘Abomination’, ‘Lie’) sometimes causes the translators to overlook the main thing (idolatry) and to restrict themselves to a purely ‘moralizing’ rendering. For them ‘a lie’ is just ‘speaking untruth’ and ‘a sin’ stands for every a ‘trespass of the law of God’, whereas in actual fact these terms may refer to idolatry. I feel that ‘moralizing’ versions of similar texts are efforts to purge away references to idols as thoroughly as possible, so as to avoid even the thought that the God of Israel could have any competitors.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.2 A Case in Point May be Psalm 139:20

This verse is a classic *crux interpretum*. The Hebrew reads:

אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַרְךָ לְמוֹמָה נִשְׂוֵא לְשׂוֹא עֲרִיד

<sup>6</sup> See, however, my remarks on שָׁקֵר, below.

<sup>7</sup> See, however, my remarks in שׂוֹא, below.

<sup>8</sup> O. Eissfeldt, ‘Gott und Götzen im Alten Testament’ in: *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 103 (1931), 151–160, now also in: O. Eissfeldt, *Kleine Schriften I*, Tübingen 1962. More recently the essays in: A. Lange, H. Lichtenberger, K.F.D. Römhald (eds), *Die Dämonen-Demons*, Tübingen 2003.

<sup>9</sup> The term ‘moralizing’, is used for lack of something better. Of course, idolatry belongs to the domain of moral behaviour. But the confession of the uniqueness of YHWH over against the existence of other gods, is basically a different matter from *e.g.* telling a lie.

The *Revised Standard Version* translates:

men who maliciously defy thee, who lift themselves up against thee for evil.

The Dutch New Version 1951 (*Nieuwe Vertaling* 1951) renders:

Those who talk to you with deceit and use your name for a lie, your adversaries.

Note the addition of ‘your name’ in this Dutch translation.<sup>10</sup> In modern versions we sometimes read the comment ‘Hebrew uncertain’ (e.g. *RSV*). In my opinion these versions of Psalm 139:20 may be typical examples of a ‘moralizing’ translation, which avoids to mention that the God of Israel could have any rivals. They seem to censure the text by ignoring the existence of idols alongside YHWH.

### 2.3 *An Alternative Reading of Psalm 139:20*

I will try to present an alternative to the usual reading of Ps. 139:20. My procedure is the following. First I concentrate on the terms *מוֹמָה* and *לְשׁוֹן* with special attention for the combination *לְשׁוֹן מוֹמָה*, then I will focus on the two verbal forms *אִמְרוּךְ* and *נִשְׂאוּ*. Finally, I will present a discussion of *עֲרִיךְ*. A tentative new translation of Ps. 139:20 will round off my exposé.

#### 2.3.1 *מוֹמָה* ‘Shame’?

I provisionally translate *מוֹמָה* in Psalm 139:20 with ‘the shame’. According to S. Gevirtz prefixes like *m* have a deictic, demonstrative, defining or specifying function with substantives.<sup>11</sup> *מוֹמָה* then may be an alternative reading of *זָמָה*. If Gevirtz is right, it would be justified to add a definite article to the translation of *לְמוֹמָה*, ‘to *the* Shame’, balancing the definite article in *לְשׁוֹן*.

Hebrew dictionaries wrestle with this term, derived from the verb *זָמַם*, *מוֹמָה*, ‘plan’, occurs 19 times in a positive or negative sense, depending on the context. Psalm 139:20 is given by dictionaries as a reference for ‘cunning plan’. The use of *זָמָה*, ‘outrage’, ‘lechery’, ‘lust’, as a metaphor for idolatry is especially found in the Book of Ezekiel. Compare Ezekiel 23:49 (*RSV*):

<sup>10</sup> *Nieuwe Vertaling* 1951: ‘Die arglistig tegen U spreken en uw naam tot leugen gebruiken, uw tegenstanders’.

<sup>11</sup> I owe this insight to B. Waltke, M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1990, 90 who agree with Gevirtz’ idea of prefixes as *m*.

Your lewdness<sup>12</sup> shall be requited upon you,  
and you shall bear the penalty for your sinful idolatry.<sup>13</sup>

The abstract term ‘lewdness’ is paralleled by the concrete word ‘your woodblocks’. There is no doubt that *מוֹמָה* can mean something negative, pejorative in connection with idolatry. The phenomenon of the use of an abstract for a concrete noun leaves open whether we should understand *מוֹמָה* as ‘idolatry’ or ‘idol’.<sup>14</sup> Even if we are not able to choose here with certainty between ‘craftiness’ and ‘shame’, it does not affect the main line of my argument. My proposed rendering does not stand or fall with the exact meaning of *מוֹמָה*.

### 2.3.2 What does *לְשׂוֹא* Mean?

This substantive, which means ‘nothingness’, ‘emptiness’, ‘lie’, or according to Franz Delitzsch, ‘that which is contrary to God’ (‘das Widergöttliche’), occurs 53 times in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>15</sup> Martin Klopfenstein claims there are five texts which mention *לְשׂוֹא* in connection with magic and idolatry: Jer. 18:15; Jona 2:9; Ps. 31:7; Isa. 1:13; Hos. 12:12; Ez. 21:28.<sup>16</sup> From Eissfeldt’s survey it appears that *לְשׂוֹא* as a term for an ‘idol’, considered from a specific angle—its emptiness—, does not stand alone in the world of deities. It may be just one of the many biblical pejoratives for ‘idol’.

Literally *לְשׂוֹא* is a combination of the preposition *לְ*, ‘for’, the definite article *הָ*, ‘the’, and the substantive *שׂוֹא*, ‘emptiness’, in sum: ‘for the emptiness’. The expression occurs nine times in the Hebrew Bible. According to common opinion it means ‘in vain’ four times (Jer. 2:30; 4:30; 6:29; 46:1). Less clear is the meaning of the other five occurrences of *לְשׂוֹא* (Ex. 20:7; Dt. 5:11; Jer. 18:15; Ps. 24:4; Ps. 139:20). Two of these occurrences concern the Third Commandment (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). The variety of translations of Exodus 20:7 and Deuteronomy 5:11 alongside the well known traditional ‘in vain’ shows the uncertainty of biblical scholars.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *מוֹמָה*.

<sup>13</sup> Literally *גַּלְלִיכִים*, ‘your woodblocks’.

<sup>14</sup> See W.G.E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques* (JSOT Sup, 26), Sheffield 1984, 314–16.

<sup>15</sup> F. Delitzsch, *Biblischer Commentar über die Psalmen*, Leipzig 1873<sup>3</sup>, 236: ‘*šāw*’ ist das Wüste, Eitle, und, da das Göttliche das wahrhaft Seiende ist, das Widergöttliche...’.

<sup>16</sup> M. Klopfenstein, *Die Lüge nach dem Alten Testament: Ihr Begriff, ihre Bedeutung und ihre Beurteilung*, Zürich, Frankfurt am Main 1964, 316.

<sup>17</sup> We mention a couple of well-known renditions such as Buber/Rosenzweig, (1930): ‘Trage nicht SEINEN Deines Gottes Namen auf den Wahn’. Compare their translation with Tur Sinai (H. Torczyner) (1954): ‘zur Unwahrheit’, NEB (1970): ‘wrong use’.

After these introductory remarks we focus on the problem whether the two remaining instances of לְשֵׁוֹא (Jer. 18:15; Ps. 24:4) can contribute effectively towards a new proposal for the translation of Psalm 139:20.

### 2.3.2.1 Jeremiah 18:15

A clear case of *laššāw* referring to an idol we find in Jeremiah 18:15. The *Revised Standard Version* (1952) translates: ‘they burn incense to false gods’. Compare the *New English Bible* (1970): ‘They burn sacrifices to a mere idol’. Many translations support this rendering of *laššāw* in Jeremiah 18:15. The meaning ‘idol’ appears well established.<sup>18</sup> Still, the question remains: is the term ‘idol’ sufficient and adequate enough as a rendering of לְשֵׁוֹא in Jeremiah 18:15? Should we not catch a specific aspect of an idol in the term לְשֵׁוֹא, namely its emptiness?

### 2.3.2.2 Psalm 24:4

To the question ‘Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?’, Psalm 24:4 answers according to many versions: ‘...who does not lift up *his* (my italics *JH*) soul to what is false, and does not swear to a lie’.<sup>19</sup> The crux lies here in the interpretation of the suffix in the word group ‘his soul’ since MT reads נַפְשִׁי, ‘my soul’. My translation runs: ‘who does not lift up *my soul* (i.e. יְהוָה’s) towards “the Emptiness” and does not swear an oath to “Lie”’.<sup>20</sup> The following observations may underpin

---

C. Houtman, *Exodus 3* (HCOT), Kampen 1996, 44, translates ‘You are not allowed to mention the name of יְהוָה in order to mislead by it’. Obviously all these translators consider ‘in vain’ too vague and give a concrete meaning to *laššāw* which goes somewhat further than ‘in vain’, in the strict sense of ‘meaningless’. W.E. Staples, ‘The Third Commandment’, *JBL* 58 (1939), 325–329 reads: ‘Thou must not give the name of Yahweh, thy God, to an idol’. See also J.E. Shepherd, “*šāw*”, in: *NIDOTTE*, nr. 8736: ‘... what is being forbidden may be syncretistic worship, i.e., the Lord’s name being lifted up along with that of idol gods, or even in some way being attached to idols’.

<sup>18</sup> The Dutch-Flemish *Willibrord Vertaling* (1995) translates: ‘to gods of nothing they bring sacrifices’. *De Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling* (2004): ‘mijn volk... brandt wierook voor nietswaardige goden (worthless gods)’. Compare also ‘Au Néant ils offrent l’encens’ (*Bible de Jérusalem* 1998<sup>3</sup>). Translators, except for the *Bible de Jérusalem*, seem to overlook the definite article in *laššāw*. See also: W.L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1–25* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1986, 519, 524, who renders with ‘Nullity’, and understands the the noun as an expression for Baal; J.R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20* (AncB, 20A), New York 1999, 822.

<sup>19</sup> *De Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling* (2004) renders: ‘Wie... zich niet inlaat met leugens en niet bedrieglijk zweert’ (Who does not associate with lies and does not swear deceitfully).

<sup>20</sup> J. van der Ploeg, *Psalmen 1* (De Boeken van het Oude Testament, 7B), Roermond 1971, 167, quoting L. Alonso Schökel’s translation ‘*idolos*’, is inclined to consider *šāw*

this rendering. נַפְשִׁי, ‘My soul’, is well attested in MT. Delitzsch has paid ample attention to this question (1867). He voices the perplexity of many commentators concisely: “Critically it is just as intangible, as it is exegetically incomprehensible . . . But that the poet did actual write thus, is incredible”.<sup>21</sup> Delitzsch’s absolute honesty graces him.

Many commentaries prefer a correction of the MT of Ps. 24:4b and change נַפְשִׁי, ‘my soul’, into נַפְשׁוֹ, ‘his soul’.<sup>22</sup> Some manuscripts support this emendation. They are the Targum with many Hebrew manuscripts from the Middle Ages and some of the *Versionses* with the important restriction that the Septuagint’s Codex Alexandrinus reads ‘my soul’.

Against these witnesses stands the authority of MT and the maxim *potior est lectio difficilior* (The more difficult reading is the stronger one). The reading ‘his soul’ (*napšō*) is obviously the easy way out. In my opinion the נַפְשׁוֹ, ‘soul’, of YHWH does occur as a personal pronoun in Tenak. See Amos 6:8: וַשִּׁבַע אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה בְּנַפְשׁוֹ, ‘The Lord God has sworn by himself’.

I consider מַרְמָה, ‘lie’, in Psalm 24:4 to be a description of an idol. Eissfeldt has made this reading possible by interpreting the synonym שֶׁקֶר, ‘lie’, as a pejorative name for an idol in Isaiah 44:20: ‘Is there not a lie in my right hand?’. I add here the generally recognized case of Amos 2:4, where כִּיב, ‘lie’, stands for an idol: ‘. . . but their lies have led them astray, after which their fathers walked’.<sup>23</sup>

---

(‘Emptiness’), as an idol, with a reference to Jer. 18:15. *The New International Version* (1978) renders: ‘who does not lift up his soul to an idol (*laššāw*) or swear by what is false’. The interpretation ‘idol’ may have a repercussion on the meaning of the parallel term ‘lie’ in Ps. 24:4.

<sup>21</sup> Delitzsch, *Biblischer Commentar über die Psalmen*, 236: ‘Es ist kritisch ebenso unantastbar, als exegetisch unbegreifbar . . . Wir lassen dieses *K’rī* in seinem unerschütterlichen kritischen Rechte. Dass aber der Dichter so geschrieben hat, ist ungläublich’. (In the English edition: 336).

<sup>22</sup> H.-J. Kraus, *Psalmen I* (BKAT, XV/2), Neukirchen Vluyn 1972<sup>4</sup>, 193: ‘Hier ist mit einer Reihe von Handschriften gewiss *napšō* zu lesen. Diese Korrektur ist im Sinnzusammenhang zu fordern’. Very peremptory is M. Girard, *Les Psaumes Redécouverts*, Québec 1996, 443, on ‘my soul’ (*napšī*): ‘Leçon absurde’.—*Quod est demonstrandum* in my humble opinion (JH). Compare however: K. Seybold, *Die Psalmen* (HAT, I/15), Tübingen 1996), 103, who translates ‘My soul’ (*napšī*) and mentions the possibility of a ‘*Gottesrede*’ (speech of God).

<sup>23</sup> F.I. Anderson, D.N. Freedman, *Amos* (AncBi, 24A), New York 1989, 301, as well as M.I. Gruber, ‘Lies כִּיבִים’, in: *DDD*<sup>2</sup>, 517–18, remark that the ‘lies’ in Am. 2:4, are generally construed as a dysphemism referring to gods.

### 2.3.3 אָמַר, 'to Call'

In order to unravel the enigma of the verbal form אָמַר attested in the first colon of Psa. 139:20: אֲשֶׁר יִאמְרוּךְ לְמוֹמָהּ, a number of factors are brought together here. First, it is possible to recognize the expression אָמַר, 'to say/call' + accusative of object + dative (= *ℓ*). A good example of this may be Hosea 14:4: 'And we will say (נֹאמְרֵנוּ) no more "our God" (אֱלֹהֵינוּ; object) to the work (לַמַּעֲשֵׂה) of our hands'. From this text, I learn that some of the Israelites address their idols as 'our God' by saying (אָמַר) 'our God' (אֱלֹהֵינוּ) to the work (לַמַּעֲשֵׂה) of their hands.

Second, F. Reiterer translates Psalm 139:20: 'They call/characterize You as "craftiness" ("Tücke")'. From Reiterer, I adopt the idea that this may be a case of 'perversion of addressing God' or as he puts it: 'Wie die Böartigen die Gotteszuwendung pervertieren'. Nevertheless, I feel I have to add a critical note. I doubt whether Israelites ever used such a nickname as 'craftiness' in dealing with YHWH. But the main point is that Reiterer shows that *perversion* in dealing with YHWH exists.<sup>24</sup>

Third, I accept the translation 'to mention' from David Clines' *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, which refers explicitly under אָמַר to Psalm 139:20: 'speak of, mention, declare e.g. . . . perhaps *who mention you as a device* Ps 139<sub>20</sub>'.<sup>25</sup>

These considerations bring me to the tentative interpretation of Psalm 139:20a: 'they mention you, (*i.e.* they use your Name) for idolatrous purposes, which are presented here by the metaphor for idolatry זָמָה (זָמָה), 'the lewdness, lust'. As a fringe benefit I point out that in my translation the preposition *ℓ* has its common meaning of direction, of purpose. There is no need to search for a supposed specific meaning of אָמַר לְ.

### 2.3.4 נָשָׂא

In Psalm 139:20 the second half seems to be a parallel of the first half of the verse. According to Franz Zorell we may have to add here the noun קוֹל, 'voice', as a *subintellige* to נָשָׂא, *i.e.* literally 'they raise their voice'.<sup>26</sup> So the meaning of נָשָׂא may be 'they speak of, they pronounce' (Zorell). This matches אָמַר, 'they mention [You]', in the first half of the verse nicely.

<sup>24</sup> F. Reiterer, in: *ThWAT* 7, 1114: 'Wie die Böartigen die Gotteszuwendung pervertieren, beschreibt v. 20: 'sie nennen/bezeichnen dich (JHWH) als Tücke'.

<sup>25</sup> *DCH* 1, Sheffield 1993, 323 under 4.

<sup>26</sup> F. Zorell, *Lexicon Hebraicum et Aramaicum Vetus Testamenti*, Romae 1962, 534.

Delitzsch suspected the grammatical phenomenon of a ‘double duty suffix’ here in Psalm 139:20, already in 1867.<sup>27</sup> A ‘double duty suffix’ is attached to one verb and has to be added to another verb by the reader. It is a kind of elliptic construction. In the present case it means that the Hebrew suffix *-kā* in אָמַרְךָ, ‘they mention You’, in the first half holds good for the subsequent verb ‘they pronounce You’ in the second half of the verse. Therefore, my tentative translation runs ‘they pronounce You for “the Emptiness”’, i.e. they use your name for idolatry. As stated before in the case of אָמַרְךָ לְ, there is no need to search for a special meaning of a supposed specific expression אָמַרְךָ לְ. The preposition לְ has here its common meaning of direction, of purpose.

### 2.3.5 עֲרִיךְ

This is the most discussed term in Psalm 139:20. The reading ‘your cities’ has been rejected by Aquila, Symmachus, *Juxta Hebraeos*, Targum and modern commentaries. The expression גִּשָׁא שֵׁם לְשׂוֹא, ‘to lift up a name לְשׂוֹא’ in the Third Commandment (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11) prompted Franz Buhl, editor of Psalms in Kittel’s *Biblia Hebraica (editio tertia 1937)*, to read in Psalm 139:20 שְׁמֶךָ, ‘your name’, for עֲרִיךְ, ‘your adversaries’. This emendation is supported by some commentaries of his time. However, as we have seen,<sup>28</sup> we don’t need Buhl’s emendation of עֲרִיךְ in order to make sense of this *crux interpretum*. Hans Bardtke (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 1969) proposes to read עֲלִיךְ instead of MT עֲרִיךְ. Recently, Thijs Booij suggested to read עֲדִיךְ, ‘against You’. According to Booij the Nif’al of the verb גִּשָׁא may be understood as ‘to rise up’ with the pronoun עַד indicating the degree of ambition.<sup>29</sup> This, however, overlooks an important word-play in Psalm 139. One way or another עֲרִיךְ in vs. 20 winks to רֵעֶיךָ, ‘your friends’, in verse 17. With Delitzsch, I consider עֲרִיךְ, ‘your enemies’, as an added explanation of the subject of גִּשָׁא, ‘they raise’.<sup>30</sup> Emendations seem to be superfluous here. The Masoretic Text of Psalm 139:20, as it is presented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (editio quinta, 1997)*, the vocalization included, makes good sense without any speculative corrections.

<sup>27</sup> Delitzsch, *Biblischer Commentar über die Psalmen*, 317: ‘Indes auch der vorliegende Text lässt sich begreifen: das Objekt zu *nšw* ergibt sich aus *ymrək* und das folgende *āreykā* ist eine nachgebrachte Erklärung des in *nšw* gemeinten Subjekt’.

<sup>28</sup> See above section 2.3.4. on אָמַרְךָ [קִיל] and a ‘double duty suffix’ as a forgotten phenomenon.

<sup>29</sup> Th. Booij, ‘Psalm CXXXIX: Text, Syntax, Meaning’, *VT* 55 (2005), 13.

<sup>30</sup> Delitzsch, *Biblischer Commentar über die Psalmen*, 317.

4. *Conclusion*

In the wider context of a growing awareness of polytheistic texts in Tenak (Houtman) and accepting the specific meaning of Psalm 139 as a protest against charges of idolatry (Holman), in combination with grammatical niceties such as ‘double duty suffix’, ‘an abstract for a concrete noun’, ellipses (Delitzsch, Watson *et alii*), and, last but not least, fully respecting the integrity of the Masoretic Text, I will present the following tentative translation of Psalm 139:20:

Those who mention You<sup>31</sup> for “the lewdness”,<sup>32</sup>  
they pronounce You for “the emptiness”,<sup>33</sup> your enemies’.

---

<sup>31</sup> *I.e.* use your Name.

<sup>32</sup> *I.e.* for idolatrous purposes, considered under the aspect of its concomitant sexual debauchery.

<sup>33</sup> *I.e.* for idolatrous worship regarded as emptiness.

INSIDE OUTSIDE PSALM 55:  
HOW JONAH GREW OUT OF A PSALMIST'S CONCEIT

Alastair G. Hunter  
*University of Glasgow—Scotland*

1. *Introduction*

This paper takes up, and takes further, an idea I first proposed in an unpublished paper<sup>1</sup> more than ten years ago in an almost off-hand way, but which has in the intervening years grown on me steadily. I referred to it in a limited way in a previously published paper,<sup>2</sup> and more recently Hugh Pyper has endorsed my general proposition that the psalm in Jonah has a narrative structure which gives it a certain coherence and integrity, comparable in this respect to Pss. 55, 73, 82 and 132.<sup>3</sup> Pyper has gone so far as to suggest something like a paradigm shift in this aspect of Jonah studies—a perspective which presents something of a challenge. This essay on Psalm 55, then, represents a modest attempt to explore further the priority of psalms narratives in the emergence of certain Hebrew story types.

2. *Preliminary Notes of a Historical Nature*

Let me begin with three simple observations. First, even allowing the most generous meaning to the term 'historicity', it is difficult to find much of that quality in the figure of Jonah. He is found only twice in the Old Testament: in 2 Kgs 14:23–27, and in the eponymous book. The word which constitutes his name is, of course, more widely distributed, and it might be of interest—since it constitutes a rather unusual

---

<sup>1</sup> Presented at a meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study in Exeter in July, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> A.G. Hunter, 'Jonah from the Whale: Exodus Motifs in Jonah 2', in: J.C. de Moor (ed.), *The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character & Anonymous Artist* (OTS, 45), Leiden 2001, 142–158 (157–8).

<sup>3</sup> H.S. Pyper, 'Swallowed By a Song: Jonah and the Jonah-Psalm Through the Looking-Glass', in: R. Rezetko et al. (eds), *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld* (VT.S, 113), Leiden 2006, 337–358 (339–40).

personal name—to give a brief analysis of its usage.<sup>4</sup> There are three distinct categories:

- a. The dove (יִנְיָה) sent out by Noah in Gen. 8:8–12 to ‘test the water’. I have elsewhere drawn attention to the links between Jonah and aspects of the creation narratives, including the significance of the Hebrew root יָבַשׁ (‘to become dry’) in reference both to the dry land of creation and that which the sailors aspire to reach.<sup>5</sup> It may be further significant to see a link between its use in Gen. 8:7, 14, where it refers to first the hoped for and then the actual drying up of the land after the flood, and Jon. 1.
- b. The יִנְיָה is also one of the preferred sacrifices in Leviticus (1:14; 5:7, 11 etc; cf. Num. 6:10). This can be linked with the theme of Jonah as victim or sacrifice. The idea occurs metaphorically in Isa. 38:14; 59:11, Ezek. 7:16 and Nah. 2:8. Other instances (in Isa. 60:8, Jer. 48:28, Hos. 7:11; 11:11 etc.) seem relatively insignificant, being incidental rather than constructive uses of ‘dove’ as a metaphor.
- c. The word יִנְיָה occurs three times in the Psalms: in the passage under consideration, Ps. 55:6[7];<sup>6</sup> in the title to Ps. 56, where it is simply part of the name of (presumably) a tune; and in Ps. 68:13[14], which seems to refer to an elaborate object covered in silver and gold which forms part of the spoils of a famous victory.<sup>7</sup> Neither of the latter two bears any relevance to our present investigation.

Secondly, ‘Jonah’ is slightly odd as a personal name. It belongs to a small group of proper names whose meaning seems to relate to the

<sup>4</sup> There is a useful discussion in A.J. Hauser, ‘Jonah: in Pursuit of the Dove’, *JBL* 105 (1985), 21–37.

<sup>5</sup> A.G. Hunter, ‘Creating Waves: Why the Fictionality of Jonah Matters’, in: A.G. Hunter, Ph.R. Davies (eds), *Sense and Sensitivity. Essays on Reading the Bible in Memory of Robert Carroll* (JSOT.S, 348), Sheffield 2002, 101–116 (105–6).

<sup>6</sup> Throughout I have used the convention, where English and Hebrew verse numbering differs, of putting the Hebrew verse number in square brackets after the English.

<sup>7</sup> See the reading in F.-L. Hossfeld, E. Zenger, *Psalms 2* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 2005, 165: ‘Verses 13–14 cite the news of victory. The kings of the armies flee. A woman of the house is present for the division of the spoils’. Oddly, they interpret the dove as a living creature: ‘Bejeweled doves fly up and symbolically spread the news of victory.’ This seems counter-intuitive, but the interpretation of this verse has proved to be problematic for many scholars, with the opinions of commentators varying widely. Some take the doves to be literal, perhaps messengers; several take them to be ornate objects included in the booty; still others find cult objects of Astarte or the Sun God; and several associate them with Israel at peace after war, or dreaming of peace, or indeed as a symbol of the vanity of women, referred to in the preceding verse, preening themselves.

narrative in which they are placed rather than to the usual range of theophoric possibilities. Similar examples are to be found in a number of places. The names of Adam and Eve, of course, representing 'earth' and 'life' are pointedly functions of the creation narratives; similarly Cain ('begotten?') and Abel ('emptiness') can be understood within the narrative structure of Gen. 4. Moses—often taken to be Egyptian in etymology—is interpreted by the tradition itself in terms of the legend of the basket. David may in origin have been a military title, if not related to the root 'beloved' (which is interestingly also the root behind Solomon's alternative name, Jedidiah, reported in 2 Sam. 12:25); and Samson—it has been speculated—might hint at a sun-god tradition.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the closest in spirit to Jonah is the female judge Deborah ('wasp' or 'bee'): the same insect is used to refer to the military threat of Assyria in Isa. 7:18. Other examples are Caleb, the 'dogged' spy<sup>9</sup> who insists on the viability of the 'promised land' (Num. 13:1–14:38), and the priest and prophetess involved in the discovery of the book during Josiah's reign—Shaphan and Huldah. Their names can be related respectively to Hebrew words for the rock badger and the mole.<sup>10</sup> It is hard to see the precise relevance of these last two, unless they represent a kind of deconstructive *undermining* of the legend reported in 2 Kgs 22–23. Certainly the names Deborah and Jonah have a curious appropriateness to their characters' actions. Where Deborah ('the bee') implies a militarily successful woman, Jonah indicates the timid creature of flight so well portrayed in Ps. 55:6[7]. When we add the equally significant name of Jonah's father, Amittai, which might mean something like 'my truth' or 'truthful', the result seems so apt to the ironic aspect of the book of Jonah as to set one's sceptical alarm bells ringing.<sup>11</sup>

The third point is related to the second. If the notice in 2 Kgs 14:23–27 is prior to the book of Jonah, the problems of the two names are exacerbated, in that it is harder to explain how these seemingly satirical forms came to appear in a historical notice. But if we entertain the possibility that it was the book of Jonah that was deployed in

<sup>8</sup> It is plausible to associate the Hebrew שמשן with the name of the Sun God. A concise summary of the thesis is to be found in J.A. Soggin, *Judges* (OTL), London 1981, 231–2.

<sup>9</sup> His name could be derived from the Hebrew כלב, 'dog'.

<sup>10</sup> שפן and חלד. Other examples are Rachel (רהל = ewe; her sister Leah's name means 'weary' [לאיה]), and Jael (על = mountain goat).

<sup>11</sup> The place from which Jonah is supposed to hail is called Gath-hepher, which seems to mean 'winepress of shame'—another cryptic reference perhaps?

order to add an authentic note of drama to the account of the reign of Jeroboam, this difficulty is reduced. For what we would then have would be a later attempt to confer on Jeroboam's reign a far wider international remit than it in fact possessed. How late is hard to tell; but more than one scholar has in recent years proposed that significant parts of both Torah and Prophets did not find their definitive shape until at least the Persian period.<sup>12</sup> Jonah itself, with its speculative interest in the ancient realm of Assyria, would fit well into the Persian period; if it had proved quickly to be popular, it could well have prompted a consequent 'improvement' of Kings. A fascinating consequence of this hypothesis would be the emergence of Psalm 55 as the earliest 'historical' reference to our quixotic hero, and a candidate, therefore, to be seen as the originating source for the book of Jonah.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. *A Few Linguistic Markers*

### 2.1 *Links between Psalm 55 and Jonah*

The mere coincidence of the occurrence of the name Jonah in both Psalm 55 and the book is, of course, not enough to justify any more far-reaching thesis. At least some indication of more specific linguistic links would be desirable. They do exist, but in a somewhat scattered and impressionistic manner. I note for the record the following groupings:

1. The tempest (סער) and the wind (רוח)—Jon. 1:4, 11–13 and Ps. 55:8[9]
2. Wickedness (רע), the city (עיר), its lawlessness (חמס) and its size (גדל)—Jon. 1:2; 3:2, 8; 4:1, 10, 11 and Ps. 55:9[10], 12[13], 15[16]
3. The plea to be heard (פלל, קרא, שמע, ענה, קול) and for salvation to be granted (ישע)—Jon. 2:1–2[2–3], 9[10] and Ps. 55:1–2[2–3], 16–19[17–20]

<sup>12</sup> Ph.R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (JSOT.S, 148), Sheffield 1992, 94–133; Idem, *Scribes and Schools*, Louisville, KY 1998. The latter provides a comprehensive and persuasive overview of the nature and dating of canonization in Judah.

<sup>13</sup> This is not unparalleled. More than thirty years ago M. Dahood proposed that the 'historical' Melchizedek resulted from a misreading of Ps. 110:4, referring in turn to still earlier speculations (*Psalms III: 101–150* (AB, 17A), New York 1970, 117–8). It is noteworthy that the NRSV includes a footnote translation of this verse in keeping with Dahood's suggestion.

4. The threat to life (יָד) associated with being cast down (שָׁלַךְ, יָרַד) to Sheol or the pit (שְׁאוֹל, שְׁהוֹת)—Jon. 2:2–3[3–4], 6[7] and Ps. 55:15[16], 22–23[23–24]

One preliminary observation is worth making at this point: the examples found in (1) and (2) correlate most closely with those in Ps. 55:6–15[7–16], while (3) and (4) relate more closely to Ps. 55:1–5[2–6], and 16–23[17–24]. The significance of this distinction will become apparent shortly, when we look more closely at the structure of Psalm 55 itself; for purposes of reference, let us label these three sections of the Psalm as A (1–5[2–6]), B (6–15[7–16]) and C (16–23[17–24]).

## 2.2 *Linguistic Singularities*

Some of the interesting linguistic features of the two texts are best described as singularities; a brief description of these follows.

1. The theme of ‘the word’ is an important one in Jonah, representing both Yahweh’s command to Jonah which he seeks to escape, and Jonah’s ‘I told you so’ to God in 4:2. In Ps. 55:21[22] we read that the faithless friend’s speech was ‘softer than oil’, but like ‘drawn swords’. I shall propose in due course that the faithless friend in Psalm 55 is analogous to the God of Jonah, whose words were undoubtedly dangerous to the prophet. There is a coda to this theme, in that the ‘dove’ in the psalm flees ‘to the wilderness’ (בְּמִדְבָּר) (7[8]); we might, at a stretch, recognize a punning usage here.
2. Ps. 55:19[20] employs the verb עָנָה in its second meaning of ‘to oppress, to humble’, in parallel with the verb שָׁמַע. The same pairing is found in Jon. 2:2[3], which prompts the thought that there might be an alternative reading the latter along the lines of: ‘I cried in my distress to the Lord, but he humiliated me; from the belly of Sheol I roared: he heard my voice’, to be followed by the not inappropriate account of Jonah’s misfortunes in the water.<sup>14</sup>
3. The verb ‘to cover’ (כִּסָּה) refers in Jon. 3:6, 8 to the mourning garments worn by the king of Nineveh and all his subjects and animals, and in Ps. 55:6 to the horror which covers the psalmist in his fear.

<sup>14</sup> I can find no support for this speculation in the commentaries, though it does have a certain attraction as a further extension of the ironic reading of Jonah’s use of traditional material.

4. The repeated use of קדם (beforehand/eastward) in Jon. 4:2, 5, 8 could be understood ironically in relation to its use in Ps. 55:19[20]: ‘God, who is enthroned *from of old*, will hear and humble them—because they do not change, and do not fear God’. The transformation is ironic because it is precisely Jonah’s point that God has refused to humble the Ninevites on the basis of what he (Jonah) deems to be a spurious conversion, thus revealing God’s fickleness. It is *God* who has changed, thus denying God’s unchanging character ‘from of old’. From this derives Jonah’s protest that he had to flee ‘beforehand’ to Tarshish, his deliberate decision to sit ‘east’ of the city, and the significance of the ‘east wind’ that causes him to faint.

### 2.3 *Linguistic Links Internal to Psalm 55*

It is suggestive for the discussion of structure in Psalm 55 that there are a number of interesting linguistic connections between sections A and C, and very few between either of these and section B. The exceptions, which I shall discuss below, are, first, echoes of 12–14[13–15] in 20–21[21–22], and second, of 16[17] in 23[24]. In detail I note the following:

1. The unusual phrase ‘complaining (שׁיח) and moaning (הוים)’ in v. 2[3] is repeated in v. 17[18] ‘I complain and moan’.<sup>15</sup>
2. The verb בּוֹט, ‘to stumble’ is used in its normal sense in v. 22[23] (compare, for example, Ps. 121:3), and in a unique hiphil form in v. 3[4], where it must mean something like ‘they bring evil tumbling upon me’.
3. Another rare hiphil form—of the root עלם (‘to conceal oneself’)—is found in v. 1[2], and is balanced by a contrasting instance of the derived form עולם in v. 22[23], where God’s hiddenness is transformed into God’s eternal reliability:

Give ear to my prayer, O God; do not <i>hide yourself</i> from my supplication (v. 1[2])	He will <i>never</i> permit the righteous to be moved (v. 22[23])
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------

Note that the pairing for the hiphil of בּוֹט, discussed in (2), is also in v. 22[23].

<sup>15</sup> These translations are from the *New JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*.

4. Though the root ענה ('to answer') is common in the Psalms (about 35 instances), its homonym, with the meaning 'to afflict, be humbled' is rarer, occurring some fifteen times. Only in one other instance (Ps. 102:2[3], 23[24]) do the two uses come approximately together<sup>16</sup>— and in 102:23[24] the interpretation depends on a doubtful reading. In the light of (2) and (3) above, it is also of interest that Ps. 55:19[20] is the only example of a hiphil use of this verb in the Psalms.
5. I note lastly a common word which gains some consequence from the context. In vv. 2–3[3–4] the psalmist is 'complaining and moaning at the *clamour* of the enemy'; in v. 17[18] we read: 'I complain and moan, and he hears my *voice*.' The same word, קול, is used in both verses; what is interesting is the contrast between the enemy's racket and the psalmist's voice.

### 3. *Structure in Psalm 55 in Relation to Jonah*

One of the fascinating features of Psalm 55 vis-à-vis Jonah is that they are, in a sense, the inside-out of each other. The matter which in Jonah occupies chapters one, three and four, is found in Ps. 55:6–15[7–16], which we have designated B, while the hymn in Jonah 2 has its clearest parallels in 55:1–5[2–6], 16–23[17–24], referred to as A and C. This is the force of my comment above about the relative positioning of the significant language which is shared between Jonah and Psalm 55, where we found that linguistic features characteristic of Jonah 2 mapped to A and C, while features characteristic of the rest of Jonah [groups (1) and (2)] mapped to B. In the remainder of this essay I shall expand upon, clarify and defend both this mirror structure within the Psalm, and the more daring claim that it was the author of Psalm 55 who unwittingly initiated the whole Jonah enterprise, prompting the fantasy which is the book of Jonah, which in turn gave birth to the (wholly spurious) historical note in 2 Kgs 14:23–27. A progression, as it were, from prayer to parable to presumptive history, in direct opposition to the conventional assumption.

---

<sup>16</sup> I discount Ps. 119. Though both occur there, the instances of the second meaning are widely separated from those of the first.

The three divisions of Psalm 55<sup>17</sup> begin with a conventional supplication which, though intense, has no unusual features: it bemoans the strife caused by ‘enemies’—a ubiquitous grievance in the psalms—and gives vivid expression to the writer’s mental torture. It hints at a God who is prone to keep hidden (v. 1[2]), and therefore multiplies verbs and nouns of address: ‘give ear’, ‘my prayer’, ‘my supplication’, ‘attend to me’, ‘my complaint’. No response is forthcoming, and so the poet moves on to a flight (*sic*) of fantasy which takes the theme beyond that of the standard set of clichés into a new realm.<sup>18</sup>

Part B commences with a dove fleeing to the wilderness for safety; the scene then changes to the city, locus of incessant violence and oppression, a veritable no-go area; finally the psalmist takes up the theme of enemies once more, but with a significant twist: they are not (as we might have assumed) the pagan hordes or the apostate within Israel; rather they turn out to be our closest friends, with whom we regularly visited the sanctuary. For them, indeed, only the worst kind of punishment will suffice (v. 15[16]):

Let death come upon them;  
let them go down alive to Sheol;  
for evil is in their homes and in their hearts.

The final section, C, resumes the mode of prayer, though this time reported rather than directly addressed to God. A positive note of hope now emerges: ‘the Lord will save me’ (the only instance of the tetragrammaton in the psalm), ‘he will hear my voice’, ‘he will redeem me unharmed’. As is to be expected in such psalms, the problems identified in the middle section are now disposed of, with the faithless companion consigned to ‘the lowest pit’.

There is a reprise of the theme of the betrayer in vv. 21–22, and this could perhaps be used to define a refinement of the simple threefold structure, turning it into a fivefold pattern:

A*	supplication to God	1–5[2–6]
B*	account of the reasons for despair	6–15[7–16]

<sup>17</sup> It is a pity that these do not correlate with the two occurrences of *selah* at the end of v. 7[8] and in the middle of v. 19[20]—but it is a familiar problem that *selah* seems to be on the whole randomly placed in the psalms.

<sup>18</sup> The division I have opted for represents, of course, only one possible structure. My choice is determined by the linguistic points I have noted above concerning the internal links in Ps. 55 and the connections with Jonah.

C*	prayer to God	16–19[17–20]
D*	repeat of the theme of the betrayer	20–21[21–22]
E*	final prayer and resolution	22–23[23–24]

I prefer the simpler analysis on the grounds that the longer one is more fragmentary, and that the overlaps between B\* (12–14[13–15]) and D\* are best explained as a necessary echo at the point where God's punishment is to be brought to bear. One other interlinked feature should be noted: the reaffirmation in v. 23[24] of the prayer for damnation of the enemy in v. 15[16]. The detailed parallels are striking:

v. 15[16]	v. 23[24]
<i>Let death come upon them (a);</i>	But you, O God, will cast <i>them down (b)</i>
let them <i>go down (b)</i> alive to <i>Sheol (c)</i> ;	into the <i>lowest pit (c)</i> ;
<i>for evil is in their homes and in their hearts (d)</i>	<i>the bloodthirsty and treacherous (d)</i> <i>shall not live out half their days (a)</i>

While the only exact linguistic parallel is in (b), the pairings of 'pit' and 'Sheol', of 'Let death come upon them' with 'shall not live out half their days', and the immoral nature of the betrayers (d) are thematically exact.

Summing up the position with regard to the psalm itself, we find a tight structure in which a supplication and prayer, bound together both thematically and by specific linguistic features, brackets an unusual 'short story', a putative drama in which the oppressed writer wishes to flee 'like a dove' from the lawlessness of the city, only to discover that the enemy he fears is not some stranger or marginalized apostate, but his closest friend and companion. This story clearly has considerable dramatic potential, a potential, I claim, that was recognized by the author of Jonah who put it to good use in the construction of his best-selling (if I may be permitted a little academic licence) parable. The integrity of the Psalm is clear from the two links between B and C which we noted in the preceding paragraph.

#### 4. Conclusions

I believe that I have shown that in Psalm 55 there is a cleverly constructed dramatic poem which is both unique in important respects and of sufficient power to be a potential catalyst. We know of—or can guess at—other poetic catalysts of this kind: Exodus 15 (which I have

previously shown to be an important influence on Jonah)<sup>19</sup> and Judges 5 being the most impressive, but in its own quiet way rivalled by the Psalm 110/Melchizedek nexus. The last of these has arguably had the most wide-ranging consequences, some of which I have spelled out elsewhere.<sup>20</sup> I have, finally, shown some important verbal connections between Jonah 1; 3 and 4 and Ps. 55:6–15[7–16] on the one hand and Jonah 2 and Ps. 55:1–5[2–6], 16–23[17–24] on the other. On the basis of these findings, I suggest that we have established a good case for reconstructing, as a plausible sequence of events, a process by means of which Psalm 55 sparked a literary response in the form of Jonah, which was in turn taken up by a later contributor to Kings. In other words, what began in 1993 as a speculative proposal may now be regarded as a viable hypothesis. I quote from that unpublished paper:

One tantalising possibility is that the dove in Psalm 55 forms the basis of the character of Jonah in the satire. The psalmist longs (v. 6[7]) to have wings like a dove ('Jonah'), to fly away and to rest (Jonah flees from Yahweh and sleeps in the boat). The psalmist seeks a shelter (v. 8[9])—i.e., a place for a fugitive to hide!—where he will be safe from the tempest. Likewise the fugitive Jonah seeks shelter, and is endangered by the same tempest. The next section (vv. 9–11[10–12]) describes the wickedness rampant in the city (compare Nineveh); and immediately afterwards we have a passage (vv. 12–14[13–15]) where the psalmist complains that he could bear the insults of an enemy, but it is his close companion who has deserted him. We remember how Jonah accuses God of betraying him. In two places (vv. 15[16] and 23[24]) we read of the fate of the wicked who will go down to the pit; and Jonah himself speaks of that dreadful experience. And of course, when the psalmist calls to God (vv. 16–19[17–20]) he is heard and saved.

### *Postscript*

In the mediaeval town of Elburg (in the Dutch province of Gelderland) the now abandoned synagogue bears a superscription taken from Ps. 55:14[15]: בבית אלהים נהלך ברנש which means something like 'We walked in the house of God with the throng (*or*: congregation)'. An appropriate sentiment for a place of worship, no doubt; but sadly ironic

<sup>19</sup> See Hunter, 'Jonah from the Whale'.

<sup>20</sup> A.G. Hunter, 'The Missing/Mystical Messiah: Melchizedek Among the Specters of Genesis 14', in: Y. Sherwood (ed.), *Derrida's Bible*, Palgrave, NY 2004, 81–97.

when we recall that in its context it refers to the friend who became a betrayer, and that the congregation of Elburg was itself betrayed in the Nazi-inspired Holocaust by the failure of Christian Europe to support its Jewish brothers and sisters. There was nowhere for Jonah to flee to in safety from *those* enemies.



## THE DEMARCATION OF HYMNS AND PRAYERS IN THE PROPHETS (2)<sup>1</sup>

Marjo C.A. Korpel  
*Utrecht University—The Netherlands*

### 1. *Introduction*

In the first instalment of this series of articles on the demarcation of hymns and prayers in the Prophets,<sup>2</sup> I stated as my goal to identify hymns and prayers in the prophetic literature and to try to establish their function in their wider literary context. The article started with a definition of the genres we are looking for. Although the commonest forms of hymns and prayers address the deity directly in the second person, sometimes the third person may have seemed more appropriate. As a result, the identification of certain passages in the prophetic books as hymns or prayers will often remain debatable, even if a scholarly consensus seems to have been reached.

Next I gave some examples of combinations of hymns and prayers with prophecy attested elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Subsequently I discussed first a number of very short hymns and prayers that are usually regarded as integral parts of the compositions in which they occur. Finally, making use of the unit delimitation found in ancient manuscripts, I discussed two examples of somewhat longer poems: the penitential prayer in Hos. 6:1–3 and the hymn in Isa. 42:10–12. In both cases the poems appeared to be firmly embedded in the context. I concluded that if these songs were later redactional additions, they must have been composed with an eye on the context. For the interpretation of hymns and prayers in the Prophets it is therefore useful

---

<sup>1</sup> This is the second instalment of a series of articles on the subject. Part of this article was read as a paper at the Joint Meeting of Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België and the Society for Old Testament Study, held at Apeldoorn, The Netherlands, 21–24 August 2006.

<sup>2</sup> The first instalment is scheduled to appear in *Pericope* 6 (2007).

to pay attention to this context, taking into account the paragraphing handed down by the scribes in antiquity.

## 2. *Longer Hymns and Prayers in the Prophets (2)*

### 2.1 *Isaiah 12:1–6*

- 12:1 *And on that day you will say:*  
*‘I will give thanks to you, Lord, because you were angry with me,*  
*(but) your anger turned away<sup>3</sup> and you comforted me.*
- 12:2 *Behold, God is my salvation,*  
*I will trust and not be afraid,*  
*for the Lord-LORD is my strength and protection,<sup>4</sup>*  
*he has been my salvation.’*
- 12:3 *And you will draw water with joy*  
*from the wells of salvation.*
- 12:4 *And on that day you will say,*  
*‘Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name,*  
*make known his acts among the nations.*  
*Proclaim that his name is exalted.*
- 12:5 *Sing to the Lord, for he has done mightily,*  
*let this be known to the whole world.*
- 12:6 *Roar with laughter and rejoice, O inhabitant of Zion,*  
*for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.’*

<sup>3</sup> The Masoretes wanted us to translate ‘May your anger turn away’. But this is unlikely. Why would the singer praise the Lord if he has still to pray for delivery? All modern translations opt for the past tense. This is also the case in the ancient versions but in contrast to the critical apparatus of the BHS it is by no means necessary to assume a different Hebrew ‘Vorlage’ because the short imperfect can at times be interpreted in such a way, cf. B.K. Waltke, M. O’Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Winona Lake 1990, 570.

<sup>4</sup> In accordance with several other passages where this very old formula occurs (Exodus 15:2; Psalm 118:14) we should not follow the BHS which proposes to add the suffix 1st person singular. The more difficult reading is usually the best. The reason why the suffix is missing may be explained by the fact that sometimes a suffix was deemed superfluous if it was already attached to a preceding word (a so-called ‘double duty suffix’). See on the origin of the archaic expression יְהוָה וְיִמְרֵהּ יְהוָה: J.C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism* (BETHL, 91A), Leuven <sup>2</sup>1997, 336–37, who demonstrates that it is impossible to derive the noun וְיִמְרֵהּ from √ יָמַר, ‘to sing’. It does not mean ‘song’ or ‘psalm’ therefore, as v. 5 וְיִמְרֵהּ seems to suppose and many modern translations still assume (among them KJV, RSV, NIV, NJB, NASB and the Dutch translations SV, NBG), but ‘protection’, a rendering found in e.g. the new Dutch NBV.



Fig. 1. CL marks the end, but not the beginning of Isa. 12.

Isa. 12:1–6 is a typical example of a somewhat longer hymn of thanksgiving. Most modern commentaries and translations treat it as an independent unit which was inserted by the final editors of the book of Isaiah. However, none of the major Masoretic codices demarcates the beginning of the hymn by a Petuḥah or Setumah, so the Masoretes seem to have regarded 12:1–6 as the continuation of the preceding oracle of salvation (Fig. 1).

If something new would start with 12:1, the introduction וַאֲמַרְתָּ בְּיוֹם הַהוּא, ‘And you will say in that day:...’ is rather abrupt and this alone indicates that the Masoretic division merits serious consideration. However, the copula of a *w<sup>o</sup>qatal*-form at the beginning of a new passage need not be translated and traditions that separate Ch. 12 from the preceding chapter do exist. The great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>), for example, does have a Petuḥah and a paragraphos here (Fig. 2).<sup>5</sup> It would seem that this difference is of some relevance to the

<sup>5</sup> J.M. Oesch, *Petucha und Setuma: Untersuchungen zu einer überlieferten Gliederung im hebräischen Text des Alten Testaments* (OBO, 27), Freiburg, Göttingen 1979, T 8\*; D.W. Parry, E. Qimron, *The Great Isaiah Scroll: A New Edition*, Leiden 1999, 22–23.

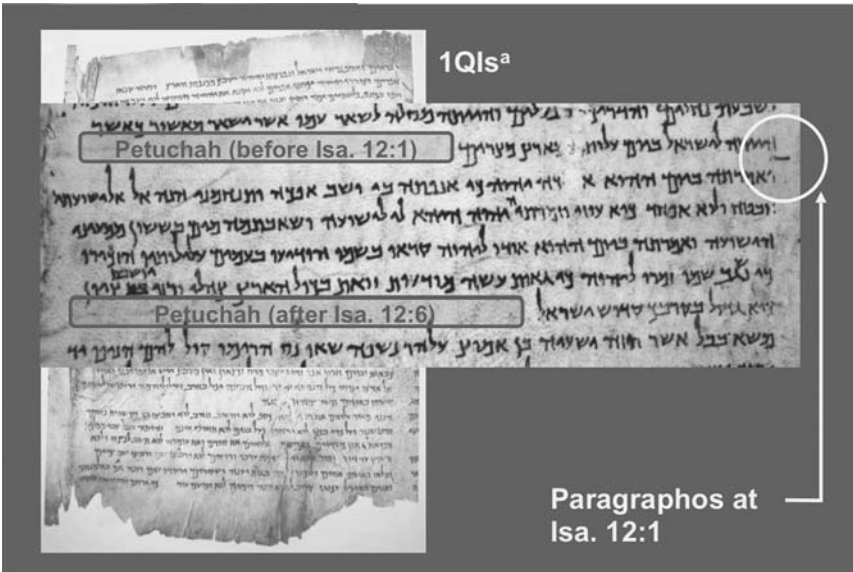


Fig. 2. Pericope markings in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> at beginning and end of Isa. 12.

modern discussion about the compositional function of this hymn of thanksgiving. Does it mark the end of the preceding chapter(s), does it introduce the following chapters, or is it ‘a patchwork of biblical citations and allusions’ intended as ‘a fitting linkage between chs. 1–11 and the anti-Babylonian poems that follow’?<sup>6</sup>

In view of these differences of opinion it seems worthwhile to survey the testimony of the ancient witnesses somewhat closer.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> So J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39* (AncB, 19), New York 2000, 269–70, who discerns two subunits (12:1–2, 4–6) with a ‘link verse’ (12:3) in between. Similarly already F. Crüsemann, *Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel* (WMANT, 32), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1969, 55–56, 227–28.

<sup>7</sup> Because the traditional designations Petuḥah and Setumah are imprecise they are avoided in the table. In this study I indicate the verse BEFORE which a unit division marking occurs. For the various ways of delimiting sense units see E. Tov, *Scriptural Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (TDJ, 54), Leiden 2004, 143–63. Unusual abbreviations in the table are explained at the end of this article.

HYMN: Isa 12:1–6 CONTEXT: Isa. 11:10–131

MS	11:10	11:11	11:12	11:14	11:14b	11:15	12:1	12:3	12:4b	12:5	12:6	13:1
1Q <sup>a</sup> Isa <sup>a</sup>	LS	WS	–	–	–	NS	LS, §	–	–	–	–	LS
4Q <sup>a</sup> Isa <sup>a</sup>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	–	WS
4Q <sup>c</sup> Isa <sup>c</sup>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	LS	0
AC	RS	LB	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	LR
LC	1B	LS	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	LS
PB	WS	LR	–	–	LS <sup>8</sup>	–	–	–	–	–	–	RS
CC	RS	LS	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	WS
CR	LS	WS	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	WS
CB	RS	LS	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1BS
BN	WS	LS	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	WS
P1	LS	RS	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	RS
P2	WS	WS	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	WS
Ⓞ <sup>5</sup>	RS, E, §	E <sup>9</sup> –	–	–	–	–	RS, E	–	RS, E	RS	–	LS <sup>10</sup>
Ⓞ <sup>B</sup>	–	RS,	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	LS <sup>11</sup>
Ⓞ <sup>A</sup>	RS, E,C	E,C NS	RS, E,C	–	–	–	RS,E, C,§	E,C	–	–	RS, E,C	E,§ <sup>12</sup>
Ⓞ <sup>Q</sup>	–	–	–	E,C,§	–	–	–	E,C	–	–	–	LS <sup>13</sup>
Ⓞ <sup>V</sup>	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	;,LS, E,C <sup>14</sup>
7a1	–	◆	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	:
Ⓞ	9mss	1ms	–	–	–	–	2mss <sup>15</sup>	–	–	–	–	20mss

A few comments are in order. ‘Ekthesis’ may be an unfamiliar term. In Greek codices paragraphing is often indicated by lines protruding into the left margin. Ideally, this was the first word of the new paragraph, but if this would entail sacrificing a lot of blank space, a scribe might use a word further on in the line.

<sup>8</sup> Before מוֹאֵב מִדְּבָר.

<sup>9</sup> With Ο ΑΝ ΚΑΤΑΛΙΦΘΗ.

<sup>10</sup> All five lines indented.

<sup>11</sup> All three lines indented.

<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the first verse of chapter 13 has been written in red. This practice has ancient roots, cf. Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 54, 148–49.

<sup>13</sup> Both lines indented.

<sup>14</sup> Special lettering of the whole verse.

<sup>15</sup> Also 11 mss with *confitebor*. This has to do with the wish to make a new start after the introduction of the direct speech.

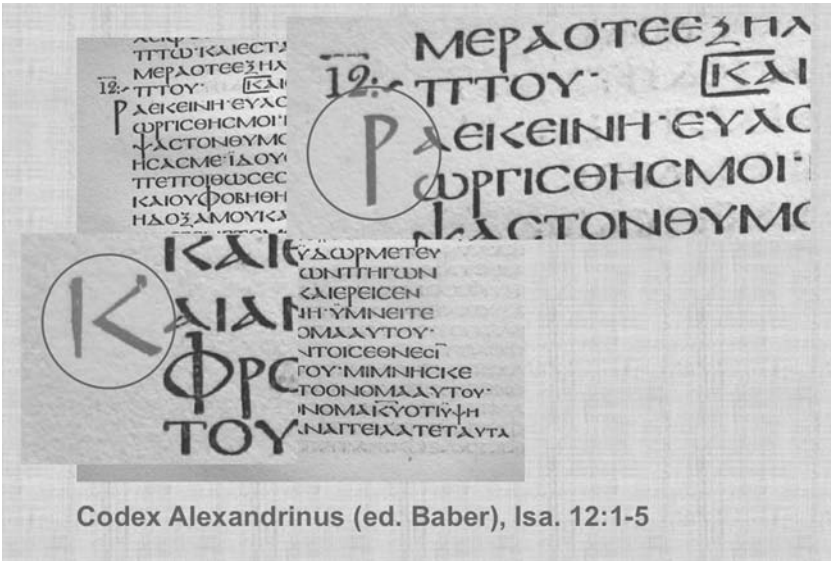


Fig. 3. Ekthesis and Capitalisation in the Codex Alexandrinus.

Moreover, the table proves that there is no fixed, uniform Masoretic tradition with regard to the choice of Petuḥah or Setumah. These modes of paragraphing were often mixed indiscriminately, even after Maimonides had fixed the rules, to make optimal use of the available space, or simply by mistake. The final column shows that even the medieval codices do not always agree among themselves with regard to the delimitation of textual units.<sup>16</sup> In the column for verse 11:14b there is one isolated Masoretic manuscript, the so-called Parma Bible,

<sup>16</sup> For a brilliant overview of the use of sense divisions in various traditions of the bible text see E. Tov, 'The Background of the Sense Divisions in the Biblical Texts', in: M.C.A. Korpel, J.M. Oesch (eds), *Delimitation Criticism: A New Tool in Biblical Scholarship* (Pericope, 1), Assen 2000, 312–50. For a survey of the Hebrew material for the book of Amos see M. Dijkstra, 'Unit Delimitation and Interpretation in the Book of Amos', in: M.C.A. Korpel, J.M. Oesch (eds), *Layout Markers in Biblical Manuscripts and Ugaritic Tablets* (Pericope, 5), Assen 2005, 114–40. Even in Torah scrolls for liturgical use confusion with regard to the correct placing of separation markers can be observed, cf. J.M. Oesch, 'Skizze einer formalen Gliederungshermeneutik der Sifre Tora', in: M.C.A. Korpel, J.M. Oesch (eds), *Unit Delimitation in Biblical Hebrew and Northwest Semitic Literature* (Pericope, 4), Assen 2003, 162–203.

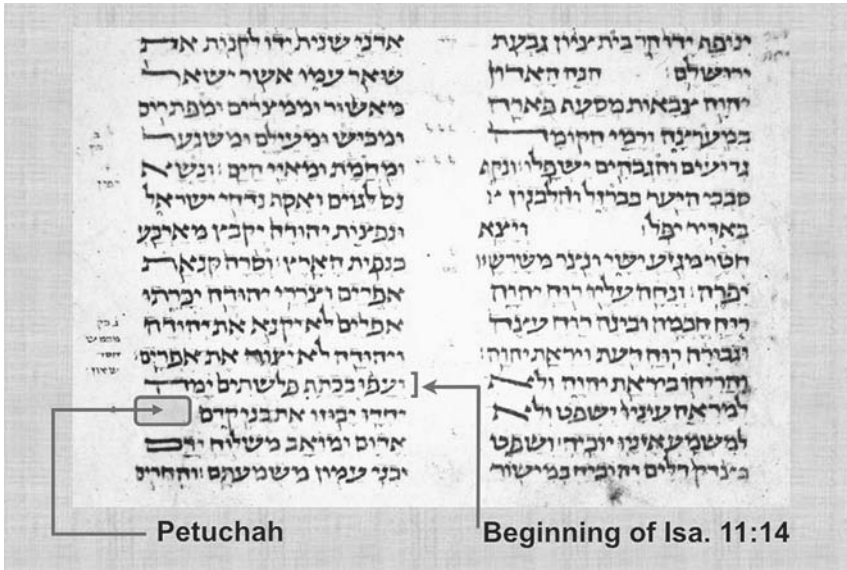


Fig. 4. Erroneous insertion of a Petuḥah in the Parma Bible.

which has a space stretching to the left margin, what is traditionally called a Petuḥah, as Fig. 4 shows.

There is no reasonable explanation for this extra space, it must be an error. But obviously later copyists would try to make sense of such a space, for example by transferring it to the beginning of the verse. Or the next verse. Thus creating further confusion. A process like this might be at the base of the exceptional division found in the Codex Marchalianus at the beginning of v. 14. An example like this shows that unit delimitation in ancient manuscripts should never be used uncritically, just as we are accustomed to handle textual variants according to the rules of textual criticism.

The end of the hymn Isa. 12:1–6 is firmly established in the tradition, but with regard to the beginning of the pericope traditions differ. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, supported by  $\mathfrak{G}^S$  and  $\mathfrak{G}^A$  and some manuscripts of  $\mathfrak{V}$  have a major division point before 12:1, but all other Hebrew witnesses have the preceding division before 11:11 and this too is supported by a few manuscripts of the versions. If the latter division is correct, it is an argument against separating the hymn from its immediate context.

In a case like this, the data on unit demarcation in the ancient manuscripts is contradictory and at first sight does not seem to help in modern exegetical discussions. But it surely is significant that the Masoretic division is no longer the only witness from antiquity. The oldest manuscripts we now have show that the common modern consent on the unity of Isa. 12:1–6 does have a basis in the history of the text. Indeed the vocabulary of Isa. 12:1–6 has hardly any significant points of verbal contact with either Isa. 11 or Isa. 13. Surely points of contact may be *constructed*, for example between the Exodus motifs of Ch. 11 and Ch. 12, but this remains highly speculative and does not transcend what McKane has called a ‘superficial form of association’.<sup>17</sup> To some extent therefore it seems justified to prefer the division of the Qumran witness and some manuscripts of  $\mathfrak{G}$  and  $\mathfrak{D}$  over the Masoretic division.

Yet this is not the only observation to be made. Several authors<sup>18</sup> have argued for a pivotal role of Isa. 12 in the final editing of the book of Isaiah as a whole. The well-balanced structure of the mini-chapter<sup>19</sup> suggests that it is a carefully composed unit. The author must have known the Song of the Sea (Exod. 15:2), the Book of Psalms and Second Isaiah. Even 12:3 which has no verbal parallel anywhere in Scripture, thus testifying to the originality of the composition, shares its general imagery with texts like Isa. 35:10; 41:17–20; 44:2–4; 48:21; 49:10; 51:11 and 55:1.

<sup>17</sup> W. McKane, *Jeremiah 1* (ICC), Edinburgh 1986, lxxxiv.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., W.A.M. Beuken, ‘Jesaja 33 als Spiegeltext im Jesajabuch’, *ETHL* 67 (1991), 13–15; W.A.M. Beuken, ‘The Prophet Leads the Readers into Praise: Isaiah 25:1–10 in Connection with Isaiah 24:14–23 Seen against the Background of Isaiah 12’, in: H.J. Bosman, H. van Grol (eds), *Studies in Isaiah 24–27: The Isaiah Workshop—De Jesaja Werkplaats* (OTS, 43), Leiden 2000, 121–56; W.A.M. Beuken, ‘A Prayer for the Readers of the Book of Isaiah: A Meditation on Isaiah 12’, *CTJ* 39 (2004), 381–85; O.H. Steck, *Studien zu Tritojesaja* (BZAW, 203), Berlin, New York 1991, 229; H.-P. Mathys, *Dichter und Beter: Theologen aus spätalttestamentlicher Zeit* (OBO, 132), Freiburg 1994, 188–201; H.G.M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah’s Role in Composition and Redaction*, Oxford 1994, 118–25; U. Berges, *Das Buch Jesaja: Komposition und Endgestalt* (Herders Biblische Studien, 16), Freiburg 1998, 133–38.

<sup>19</sup> Note the responsions between Isa. 12:1 and 12:4, 12:2 and 12:5, 12:2bB and 12:3b, 12:3 and 12:6 (the rhyming words  $\text{יְשַׁע}$  and  $\text{יְצַע}$  are also collocated in Isa. 35:10; 51:3, 11; 61:3), 12:4aC and 12:5b. Cf. W.S. Prinsloo, ‘Isaiah 12: One, Two or Three Songs?’, in: K.-D. Schunk, M. Augustin (eds), *Goldene Äpfel in silbernen Schalen*, Frankfurt a.M. 1992, 25–33; A.L.H.M. van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6–12* (Biblical Interpretation Series, 34), Leiden 1998, 213–41.

So the view that the hymn is an independent later reaction to the glorious future predicted for the remnant of Israel in 11:1–10+11:11–16 certainly deserves credit. As such the hymn lends closure to the preceding chapter(s)<sup>20</sup> and this may well have been the reason why the Masoretes omitted a major division marking between Ch. 11 and Ch. 12. At the same time the verbal links with other parts of the book of Isaiah justify the hypothesis that the hymn was indeed meant to lend coherence to the book as a whole. Also the subtle play on the name of Isaiah himself in vv. 2–3 lends support to this view.<sup>21</sup>

In sum, we may conclude that in this case our findings concerning the delimitations in antiquity support the opinion held by most modern scholars, namely that on the one hand the hymn Isa. 12:1–6 is a late redactional insert which as such stands on its own,<sup>22</sup> but that on the other hand the hymn is a clever poem meant to lend coherence to the whole book of Isaiah which for that reason cannot be detached from its context.

For the exegesis of the poem and its immediate context this means that the singular addressed in 12:1a and 12:2 cannot be an individual, for example the prophet, but has to be a corporate personality,<sup>23</sup> probably the ‘rest of his people’ or ‘Israel’ mentioned in Isa. 11:16 which from 12:3 onwards is addressed in the plural and becomes the female singular ‘inhabitant of Zion’ in v. 6.

---

<sup>20</sup> And even to Ch. 1–12 as a whole, as has been observed by many scholars, see, e.g., Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 171–74, 268–70; B.S. Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL), Louisville 2001, 9–10, 108–09.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. M. Garsiel, ‘Puns upon Names: Subtle Colophons in the Bible’, *JBQ* 23 (1995), 182–87.

<sup>22</sup> Other cases where part of the tradition seems to have preserved a delimitation of a later addition are found in M.C.A. Korpel, J.C. de Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40–55* (OTS, 41), Leiden 1998, 210, 256–57; 402, 446; M.C.A. Korpel, *The Structure of the Book of Ruth* (Pericope, 2), Assen 2001, 177–78, 216–17; J.C. de Moor, ‘The Structure of Micah 2:1–13: The Contribution of the Ancient Witnesses’, in: M.C.A. Korpel, J.M. Oesch (eds), *Studies in Scriptural Unit Division* (Pericope, 3), Assen 2002, 90–120, 100–01, 105. Actually Isa. 11:10 which—as we have seen in the table—is kept apart in many ancient manuscripts is yet another example of the preservation of the delimitation of an editorial comment.

<sup>23</sup> On this concept, see H. Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*, rev. ed., Edinburgh 1981; J. de Fraine, *Adam et son lignage*, Bruges 1959.

2.2 *Jer. 10:23–25*

- 10:23 *I know, O Lord, that determining one's way is not a human's right,  
not a man's right to determine his steps while going.*
- 10:24 *Correct me, O Lord, but only with justice,  
not in your anger, lest you make me small.*
- 10:25 *Pour out your wrath on the nations who do not know you,  
and on the clans who do not call on your name,  
for they have devoured Jacob,  
devoured and consumed him,  
and have laid waste his pasture.*

Who is praying here? Most scholars say: the prophet who is identifying himself with his community. He prays in the first person to be punished not beyond measure.<sup>24</sup> Rather the nations who destroyed Israel should not be spared God's wrath (v. 25). However, it has to be admitted that the identification is not complete since the speaker describes Jacob's fate in the third person in v. 25. Those who see v. 25 as a later appendix taken from the communal lament Ps. 79<sup>25</sup> are not bothered by this objection because in their opinion the quotation

<sup>24</sup> Thus, e.g., J. Calvin, *Johannes Calvins Auslegung des Propheten Jeremia* (E. Kochs editor; *Johannes Calvins Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift*, N.R. 8), Neukirchen 1937, 194; G. Hölscher, *Die Profeten: Untersuchungen zur Religionsgeschichte Israels*, Leipzig 1914, 396; J. Bright, *Jeremiah* (AncB, 21), Garden City, NY 1965, 73; A. van Selms, *Jeremia I* (POT), Nijkerk 1972, 169; F. Keil, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, tr. D. Patrick, Grand Rapids 1978, 207; J.A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (NICOT), Grand Rapids 1980, 334; A. Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia* (ATD, 20/21), Göttingen <sup>1</sup>1981, 91; R.P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (OTL), London 1986, 263; W.L. Holladay, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah 1* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1986, 339; W. McKane, *Jeremiah 1* (ICC), Edinburgh 1986, 234; B.J. Oosterhoff, *Jeremia: Deel 1: Jeremia 1–10* (COT), Kampen 1990, 332, 334; J.R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20* (AncB, 20A), New York 1999, 609.; P.D. Miller, 'The Book of Jeremiah', in: *The New Interpreter's Bible* 6, Nashville 2001, 664; J.L. MacKay, *Jeremiah 1* (Mentor Commentary), Fearn 2004, 388; G. Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25: Übersetzt und ausgelegt* (HThK.AT), Freiburg 2005, 393. A strong argument in favour of this interpretation is the use of חָיַל Hi., 'to make small, reduce in number' in v. 24.

<sup>25</sup> So e.g. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 74; Thompson, *Book of Jeremiah*, 334; Weiser, *Buch Jeremia*, 92; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 263; P.H. Kelley, in: P.C. Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25* (WBC, 26), Dallas 1991, 163; G. Wanke, *Jeremia. Teilband 1: Jeremia 1,1–25,14* (Zürcher Bibelkommentare), Zürich 1995, 116; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 608–09, 611–12. Others are convinced that the whole passage Jer. 10:23–25 is a later addition, so e.g. B. Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (Kurzer Handcommentar zum Alten Testament, 11), Tübingen 1901; Hölscher, *Profeten*, 396; P. Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia* (KAT, 10), Leipzig <sup>2</sup>1922, 105; B.N. Wambacq, *Jeremias, Klaagliederen/Baruch, Brief van Jeremias* (BOT), Roermond 1957, 92; W. Rudolph, *Jeremia* (HAT, 12), Tübingen <sup>3</sup>1968, 65–7; J. Vermeylen, 'Essai de

from Ps. 79:6–7 served the express purpose to identify the first person singular of vv. 23–24 with ‘Jacob’.<sup>26</sup> This is not a particularly strong argument because the borrowing could just as well have taken place in reverse direction,<sup>27</sup> or Jeremiah may have been responsible for both compositions,<sup>28</sup> or both Jeremiah and the Psalmist drew from a third, unknown source. In general, it is often difficult to decide matters of literary dependency.

However, even if we disregard v. 25 for a moment and confine ourselves to vv. 23–24, assuming that it is the community speaking there in the first person singular, it is rather strange that in v. 24 the people acknowledge to have deserved punishment, but in v. 23 seem to lay the ultimate responsibility for man’s behaviour with God, seemingly invoking the pessimistic wisdom literature (Prov. 16:9; 20:24). This creates the impression that it is a real individual who is speaking.

Is there a way to resolve this problem in a satisfactory way? If the preceding verses 17–22 may also be taken into account, it can be observed that in Jer. 10:19–20 we also have a lament of the people in the first person singular.<sup>29</sup> This is a strong argument in support of the collective interpretation of the ‘I’ and of course it has been used as such in the past.<sup>30</sup>

According to others we should even look further. According to Mark Biddle and others Jer. 10:23–25 was devised by the redactors of the book of Jeremiah as a bridge between the preceding and following chapters.<sup>31</sup> So we have a case here where the correct delimitation of a passage is of prime importance to its exegesis. Would it help to look at the testimony of the ancient witnesses with regard to paraphrasing?

---

Redaktionsgeschichte des “Confessions de Jérémie”, in: P.-M. Bogaert, *Le Livre de Jérémie: Le Prophète et son milieu: les oracles et leur transmission* (BETHL, 54), Leuven 1981, 238–90, 247.

<sup>26</sup> So, e.g., Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 263.

<sup>27</sup> Van Selms, *Jeremia* 1, 171; Keil, *Jeremiah*, 208; Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 395.

<sup>28</sup> Calvin, *Auslegung des Propheten Jeremia*, 196.

<sup>29</sup> This can hardly be denied, cf. שָׁבֵרִי with Jer. 4:6, 20(!); 6:1, 14; 8:11, 21, etc., מִכְחֵי נִהְלֵה with Jer. 14:17; 30:12.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., by McKay, *Jeremiah* 1, 234–5; see also Weiser, *Buch Jeremia* 1, 91. If the ‘I’ is a collective in 10:19–20, this also counsels against following Ⓞ in reading plural suffixes in v. 24—*pace* i.a. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 71; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 333.

<sup>31</sup> M.E. Biddle, *Polyphony and Symphony in Prophetic Literature: Rereading Jeremiah 7–20* (SOTI, 2), Macon 1996, 87–8, 92, 94, 124; see also Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 394, 399.

## PRAYER: Jer. 10:23–25    CONTEXT: Jer. 10:17–25

MS	10:17	10:18	10:19	10:20	10:21	10:22	10:23	10:24	11:1
4QJer <sup>a</sup>	0	0	0	0	0	0	WS	0	0
AC	LR	RS	WS	–	–	1B	LR	–	1B
LC	LR	LR	WS	–	–	LR	LR	–	LS
PB	LS	–	WS	–	–	–	–	–	LS
CC	WS	WS	LR	–	–	WS	WS	–	LS <sup>32</sup>
CR	WS	–	RS	–	–	LR	–	–	WS
CB	WS	–	WS	–	–	LS	LR	–	LS
BN	WS	WS	WS	–	–	–	LS	–	WS
P1	–	–	–	–	–	LS	–	–	LS
P2	WS	–	LS	–	–	–	–	–	WS
Ⓞ <sup>S</sup>	–	RS, E,§	WS,E	RS,E	–	E	E	–	RS E,§
Ⓞ <sup>B</sup>	–	NS	–	–	–	WS,§	WS,§	–	LS,§ <sup>33</sup>
Ⓞ <sup>A</sup>	–	RS,E	–	WS,E	–	RS,E	–	RS,E	LS <sup>33</sup>
Ⓞ <sup>Q</sup>	–	C,§	–	–	–	NS,§	§	–	LS <sup>33</sup>
Ⓞ <sup>V</sup>	–	–	–	–	WS,E, C,§	–	–	–	LS <sup>33</sup>
7a1	◆	••	◆	–	–	◆◆	◆	–	◆
Ⓞ	2 mss	5mss	–	5 mss	1 ms	–	6 mss	–	18 mss

First some remarks of a general nature. All witnesses testify to the fact that a new major section (chapter) starts at Jer. 11:1. Although to some extent the sectioning was left to the imagination of the individual scribes, especially the borderlines between major sections are usually well-attested in the tradition<sup>34</sup> and prove that sectioning was certainly not an entirely impressionistic affair.

Different paragraphing was not always intentional. Errors did occur. This likely in the case of Jer. 10:24 where the Codex Alexandrinus is the sole witness having a demarcation marking. The same codex omitted the delimitation marking before v. 23 which is attested in almost all other manuscripts.

<sup>32</sup> The scribe succeeded in putting Jer. 11:1 at the head of the column.

<sup>33</sup> Ⓞ<sup>B</sup>, Ⓞ<sup>A</sup>, Ⓞ<sup>Q</sup> and Ⓞ<sup>V</sup> treat Jer. 11:1 as a header of the next pericope.

<sup>34</sup> Korpel, De Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 658–65. Many more examples from other biblical poetic compositions are to be found in the series *Pericope: Scripture as Written and Read in Antiquity* (Assen: Van Gorcum, since 2000). See <http://www.pericope.net/>.

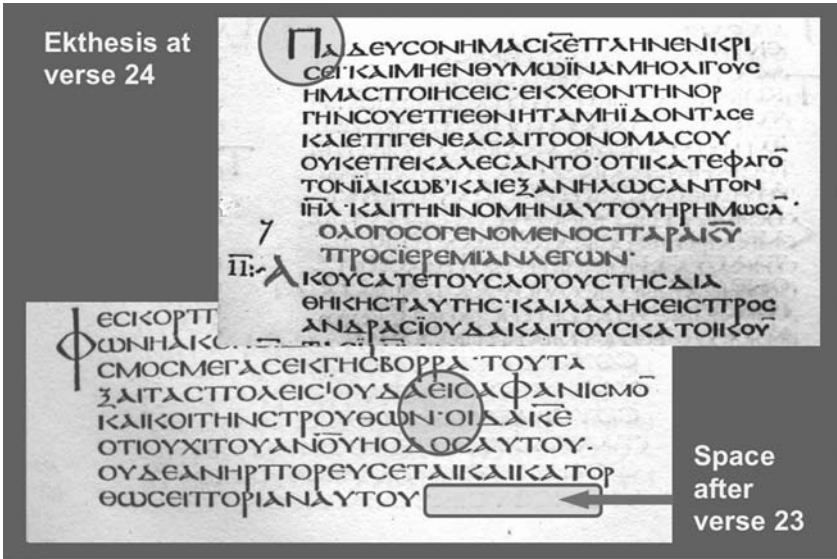


Fig. 5. Erroneous paragraphing in the Codex Alexandrinus.

Both verses have the abbreviated form  $\overline{\text{KE}}$  close to their beginning. This renders the hypothesis of an *aberratio oculi* likely. The table also shows that even the Masoretic sectioning was not always uniform. This can further be illustrated by the Parma manuscript No. 2700 which I designate by the siglum P1 (see Fig. 6).

In the fifth line from the top of the right column the scribe should have entered a Petuḥah or Setumah after  $\text{וַיִּשָׁא}$ , but he forgot. He realized his error belatedly and hastily entered a Setumah on the next line, in the middle of v. 17. Apparently this second error disturbed him so much that he promptly forgot the next major dividers before v. 18 and v. 19. Again this example shows that unit delimitation in ancient manuscripts should never be trusted automatically, not even in Masoretic codices.

The circumstance that several Hebrew, Greek, Latin and one Syriac manuscript (also) indicate a major break before Jer. 10:18 has everything to do with the inclination of scribes to start a new paragraph with the introduction of the direct oration. This tendency has been observed by several scholars.<sup>35</sup> It is significant, therefore, that five out of the nine

<sup>35</sup> E.g. J.W. Olley, ‘Trajectories in Paragraphing of the Book of Ezekiel’, in: M.C.A. Korpel, J.M. Oesch (eds), *Unit Delimitation in Biblical Hebrew and Northwest Semitic Literature*

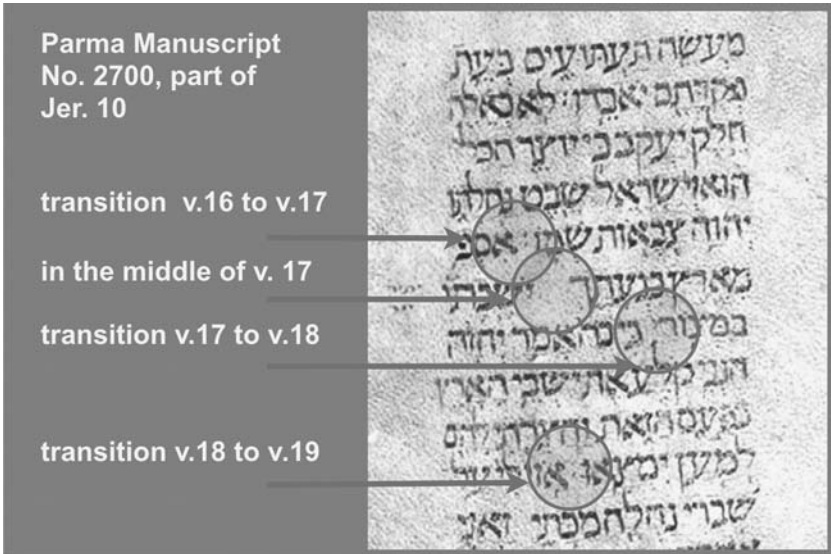


Fig. 6. Erroneous paragraphing in Parma 2700, fol. 70\*.

Hebrew manuscripts I collated omit the major divider before v. 18. This would seem to indicate that the Tiberian tradition represented by AC, LC and CC was not regarded as authoritative in every respect. Since the Syriac manuscript 7a1 and two manuscripts of  $\mathfrak{U}$  support the division before v. 17 whereas the absence of Greek witnesses may be explained by their preference for sections starting with the introduction of direct speech, the unanimous Hebrew tradition with regard to the major division before v. 17 deserves confidence.

The dividers before 10:19, 22, 23 are also attested in several channels of tradition which means that any attempt at understanding the structure of the passage 10:17–25 should take them seriously.<sup>36</sup> Though the rest of the extra paragraph markings before 10:20, 21, 24 in the

(Pericope, 4), Assen 2003, 210–16; B. Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom: Essays on the Interpretation of Jeremiah 30–31* (OTS, 51), Leiden 2004, 69–72; D.J. Clark, ‘Delimitation Markers in the Book of Numbers,’ in: M.C.A. Korpel, J.M. Oesch (eds), *Layout Markers in Biblical Manuscripts and Ugaritic Tablets* (Pericope, 5), Assen 2005, 10–11, but note the scepticism of Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 156.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. the second criterion applied by J.C. de Moor, ‘Micah 7:1–13: The Lament of a Disillusioned Prophet,’ in: M.C.A. Korpel, J.M. Oesch (eds), *Delimitation Criticism: A New Tool in Biblical Scholarship* (Pericope, 1), Assen 2000, 159.

Greek manuscripts need not be dismissed as entirely irrelevant, their isolated nature suggests that they were introduced as a result of errors or exegetical whims of the scribes.

So it is warranted to conclude that the delimitation of the prayer Jer. 10:23–25 is confirmed by tradition. Nothing in the tradition contradicts the modern preference to include the prayer in the wider context of Jer. 10:17–25<sup>37</sup> or even Jer. 7–10 as a whole.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, however, such matters, cannot be decided on the basis of unit delimitation criticism alone. Ancient manuscripts hardly ever contain indications of their macrostructural preference.

Yet here too it may pay off to devote at least some attention to unit delimitation. It may be helpful, for example, to observe that the ancient scribes, especially the Greek ones, were convinced that with Chapter 11 a major new division of the book of Jeremiah began. This might be seen as an incentive to seek for literary dependence more in the preceding than in the following chapters. Moreover, both the communal prayers in 10:19–21 and 10:23–25 are seen as self-contained units by the great majority of ancient witnesses. Thus the former should not be confined to vv. 19–20, because apparently v. 21 was seen as belonging to Zion's prayer. So both prayers counted three strophes, with the last one specifying the reason for the present desolation. Obviously all this has some relevance for the exegesis of Jer. 10.

### 3. *Some Final Observations*

Of course these examples are not sufficient to draw firm general conclusions and I certainly intend to pursue the research on the subject of hymns and prayers in the Prophets. Yet there is no reason to refrain from formulating a few observations I made while studying Isa. 12:1–6; 42:10–12; Jer. 10:23 (and 10:19–21); Hos. 6:1–3.

1. In modern translations and commentaries we find an enormous variety of division schemes of the text surrounding the songs. More

---

<sup>37</sup> So, e.g., Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*; B.M. Newman, P.C. Stine, *A Handbook on Jeremiah* (USB Handbook Series), New York 2003; MacKay *Jeremiah 1*; *ad vss.*

<sup>38</sup> So e.g. Carroll, *Jeremiah*; Biddle, *Polyphony and Symphony*; Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*.

transparency with regard to the arguments used in unit delimitation is desirable and the paragraphing in ancient manuscripts should play a role in such discussions.

2. No miracles, however, should be expected from such an exercise because confusion with regard to paragraphing has always existed. Less so in the well-controlled Masoretic tradition, as we saw, but in this contribution it has been demonstrated once again that even there it did occur occasionally.
3. If various traditions that can hardly have influenced each other converge, as was the case in all four examples, such evidence should be taken very seriously.
4. Hymns and prayers in the Prophets appear to be firmly embedded in the context. If these songs were later redactional additions, they must have been composed with an eye on the context.
5. For the proper understanding of hymns and prayers in the Prophets it is therefore imperative to pay attention to their context, taking into account the paragraphing handed down by the scribes in antiquity.

In the case of the hymn Isa. 12:1–6 it is very likely that it was a redactional insertion lending coherence to the whole book of Isaiah, as has been recognized in modern research. It is a carefully composed hymn for which its author consulted many other passages in the book of Isaiah and other parts of Scripture without sacrificing its unique poetic identity. The oldest manuscripts we now have show that the modern consent on the unity of Isa. 12:1–6 does indeed have a basis in the history of the text, but the Masoretic division which omits a major divider before 12:1 may well reflect the observation that the hymn is also a fitting close to the preceding chapters.

In the case of Jer. 10:23–25 the delimitation of the prayer is confirmed by many ancient manuscripts. However, nothing in the tradition contradicts the modern preference to include the prayer in the wider context of Jer. 10:17–25 or even Jer. 7–10 as a whole. Such matters can be decided hardly on the basis of unit delimitation criticism alone. Yet it was interesting to observe that the ancient scribes, especially the Greek ones, were convinced that with Chapter 11 a major new division of the book of Jeremiah started.

*Unusual Abbreviations Applied in this Paper*

–	= The manuscript has no major divider here.	◆	= rosette
0	= The manuscript has a lacuna or is unreadable at this point.	E	= Ekthesis.
§	= Paragraphos.	LB	= Combination of LS+1B.
1B	= 1 blank line.	LC	= Leningrad Codex.
2B	= 2 blank lines.	LR	= Combination of LS and RS.
AC	= Aleppo Codex	LS	= Open space to the left.
BN	= Bibl. Nat. Paris Hébreu 80.	NS	= Narrow inline space.
C	= Capitalization.	P1	= Bibl. Palatina Parma 2700.
CB	= Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus.	P2	= Bibl. Palatina Parma 3106.
CC	= Cairo Codex.	PB	= Parma Bible, Bibl. Palatina Parma 2808.
CR	= Codex Reuchlinianus.	RS	= Open space to the right.
		WS	= Wide inline space.
		XB	= More blank lines.



# PSALM 69: THE PETITIONER'S UNDERSTANDING OF HIMSELF, HIS GOD, AND HIS ENEMIES

Christiane de Vos

*Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster—Germany*

Gert Kwakkel

*Theologische Universiteit GKV, Kampen—The Netherlands*

## 1. *Introduction*

In Psalm 69 the petitioner<sup>1</sup> complains that many people hate him without cause (v. 5). The reason why he is dealt with in that way is his zeal for the house of his God (v. 10). Yet he admits that God knows about his guilts (אֲשָׁמָה; v. 6). Nevertheless, this does not keep him from requesting God to add guilt to his enemies' guilt (עָוֹן; v. 28). He even asks God to blot them out of the book of the living (v. 29).

How does this person understand himself? That question is central to this study. However, the way in which people understand themselves is always connected to how they relate to others. Accordingly, an analysis of the petitioner's understanding of himself must also take into consideration how he understands his God and his enemies. That is the further topic of this study.

In what follows, sections 2 and 3 provide necessary background information with respect to the psalm as a whole. In addition, section 3 explains why it is possible to limit the discussion to the final form of the text, which is the approach preferred here. The elements which relate exclusively to the petitioner's understanding of himself are dealt with in section 4. In section 5 the scope of the analysis is enlarged so as to include the elements relating to the petitioner's understanding of his God and his enemies. Section 6 offers provisional conclusions.

---

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this study, the person meant by the first person singular in Ps. 69 will be referred to as 'the petitioner'.

## 2. *Basic Structure and Main Themes*

Psalms 69 is a long and complicated psalm. For that reason, it is helpful first to describe, in brief, its basic structure (§2.1) and main themes (§2.2). At the same time, this description will indicate a number of the issues involved in the interpretation of the psalm, which also bear upon the questions discussed in this study.

### 2.1 *Basic Structure*

In Hossfeld and Zenger's commentary on Psalms 51–100 published in 2000, Zenger argues that Psalm 69 can be divided into three parts; that is, vv. 2–14a, 14b–30, and 31–37.<sup>2</sup> Part One, according to this division, is dominated by complaints, but there are also some petitions in it (vv. 2a and 7). Part Two mainly consists of petitions, but it also has some complaints (see esp. vv. 20–22 and 27). Part Three is dominated by the praise of God who listens to the prayers of his people and saves them. It also has a wider scope in that it addresses the whole of creation and testifies to God's saving intervention on behalf of all his people.

Other authors split up both Part One and Part Two into two sections; accordingly, the psalm consists of five stanzas, viz. vv. 2–5, 6–13/14a, 14/14b–19, 20–30, and 31–37.<sup>3</sup>

Some parallels can be found in Part One and Part Two (or in the first and third stanza on the one hand, and in the second and fourth stanza on the other), namely:

- several nouns and verbs found in vv. 2–3 recur in vv. 15–16 (e.g. *מעמקי־מים*, 'deep waters', *שִׁבְלֵהָ*, 'flood', *טָבַע*, 'to sink', and *שָׁטַף*, 'to overflow' or 'to sweep over');
- vv. 17–19 parallel to some extent vv. 4–5 in that both refer to the enemies of the petitioner (*אֹיְבֵי* in vv. 5 and 19) and to the urgency of God's intervention so as to rescue the petitioner (see esp. v. 4 and *מִדָּוָד* in v. 18);

<sup>2</sup> E. Zenger, in: F.-L. Hossfeld, E. Zenger, *Psalmen 51–100* (HThAK), Freiburg etc. 2000, 262. Similarly F. Lindström, *Suffering and Sin: Interpretations of Illness in the Individual Complaint Psalms* (CB.OT, 37), Stockholm 1994, 329–32.

<sup>3</sup> K. Seybold, *Die Psalmen* (HAT, 1/15), Tübingen 1996, 267; A. Groenewald, *Psalm 69: Its Structure, Redaction and Composition* (Altes Testament und Moderne, 18), Münster 2003, 39. J.P. Fokkelman, *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible: at the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis* (SSN), vol. 3, Assen 2003, 128, also has five stanzas, but he delimits them differently, viz. vv. 2–7, 8–14, 15–21, 22–29, and 30–37.

- the motifs of reproach (הרפה), scorn or shame (בלבוז), and social estrangement in vv. 8–13 recur in vv. 20–21.

## 2.2 *Main Themes*

In section 2.1, a number of themes which are characteristic of Psalm 69 have been mentioned, that is, the metaphors of water and sinking which describe the petitioner's distress, the enemies who are attacking him, his disgrace and the scorn he must endure. In addition, the following notable elements can be listed:

- the petitioner's conviction that he is suffering for the sake of God; in this connection, he refers, among others, to his zeal for his God's house (vv. 8 and 10; cf. also v. 5);
- the maledictions which the petitioner pronounces to the detriment of his enemies in vv. 23–26;
- the request of vv. 28–29, which seems quite extreme in that God is asked to add to the enemies' guilt and to blot them out of the book of the living; besides, the petitioner also urges God not to allow them to come into his righteousness (ואל־יבאו בצדקתך), which is a remarkable expression;
- the petitioner's relationship to his fellow men, who are also devoted to the God of Israel (vv. 7, 27, 33–34);
- the salvation of Zion, the rebuilding of the cities of Judah and the permanent settlement of God's servants in that territory (vv. 36–37).

## 3. *Apparent Contradictions in Psalm 69*

The interpreter of Psalm 69 is faced by a number of apparent contradictions, which might preclude its being read as an original unity. Some clarification must be given as to this issue before the petitioner's understanding of himself, his God, and his enemies can be analysed on the basis of the final text. That is the topic of this section. First, the apparent contradictions and a recent redaction critical theory accounting for them are described (§3.1). Second, this theory is evaluated insofar as it bears upon the central question of this study (§3.2).

### 3.1 *Description*

In Ps. 69:5 the petitioner refers to numerous enemies who are oppressing him *without cause*. He complains that they treat him as if he were a thief, for they require him to restore things which he has not stolen. After this, v. 6 comes as something of a surprise, as the petitioner is speaking about his folly and his guilts, which are known by God. This sounds like a confession of sin. As such it contrasts with v. 5, which sounds rather like a declaration of innocence.

This apparent contradiction was taken by Tillmann as an indication to the effect that v. 6 cannot be considered the original continuation of v. 5. In his view, vv. 6–14a were not part of the original composition, but were added in a later phase of the editorial process.<sup>4</sup> The theory that vv. 6–14a are a later addition has also been defended by E. Zenger and A. Groenewald,<sup>5</sup> whereas F. Lindström has presented a slightly different view in that he confined the addition to vv. 6–13.<sup>6</sup> In support of this theory with respect to the secondary nature of vv. 6–14a or 6–13, the scholars involved have pointed to several other differences with respect to content,<sup>7</sup> as well as to formal aspects of the psalm, such as the alternation of bicola and tricola<sup>8</sup> and syntactical features.<sup>9</sup> Within the scope of this study, which focuses on questions regarding the content of the psalm, only those arguments specifically bearing on content will be considered.

The most interesting of these are, first, the description of the petitioner's distress in vv. 2–5 and 7–13 respectively. In vv. 2–3, he says that he is about to drown in deep waters and mire; these metaphors refer to a real threat to his life. In vv. 7–13, however, he is the object of reproach and scorn. Second, in vv. 7–13 the description of the petitioner's distress is much more concrete than in vv. 2–5 (which are more traditional), in that vv. 7–13 refer to the petitioner's relatives, people sitting in the town gate *et cetera*. The same differences as regards content can be observed

<sup>4</sup> N. Tillmann, *Das Wasser bis zum Hals: Gestalt, Geschichte und Theologie des 69. Psalms* (MThA, 20), Altenberge 1993, 120, 131–4.

<sup>5</sup> E. Zenger, *Psalmen 51–100*, 268; A. Groenewald, *Psalm 69*, 194.

<sup>6</sup> F. Lindström, *Suffering and Sin*, 329–30.

<sup>7</sup> Note that A. Groenewald, *Psalm 69*, 206, shares the view that v. 6 is part of another textual layer than v. 5, but does not agree with the idea that v. 6 contradicts v. 5.

<sup>8</sup> F. Lindström, *Suffering and Sin*, 327–9.

<sup>9</sup> N. Tillmann, *Wasser*, 121–2, 128.

in vv. 14b–19 versus vv. 20–30; that is, in the first and second section of Part Two or in the third and fourth stanza respectively.<sup>10</sup>

Accordingly, these scholars hold that the original psalm was made up of vv. 2–5, 14–18 or 14b–19 and one or more of the vv. 31–34. These parts of the psalm are an individual lament, which was used by somebody who was falsely accused. In the other parts of the psalm, the petitioner is the object of mockery because of his faithfulness to God. Apart from that, other new themes turn up, such as universal praise of God and the deliverance of Zion.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.2 *Evaluation*

This study does not focus on a discussion of the genesis of Psalm 69 in terms of traditional literary criticism or redaction criticism. It does not present hypotheses as to the original historical context or the *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm, either. Instead, it concentrates upon an analysis of what the petitioner says about himself, his God, and his enemies in the text as it stands now.

However, if the redaction critical theory just described is convincing, the psalm may not present a coherent view of the petitioner's identity and his relationship to other people and God. Elements which were very significant and relevant in the original shape of the psalm may have adopted other meanings or may even have lost all relevance in the final shape of the text. For that reason, the aim of this study requires an evaluation of the redaction critical theory in question. That evaluation will be presented forthwith. It involves a discussion of the apparent contradictions in the description of the petitioner's distress; more specifically: the metaphors of water, mire, and drowning versus the complaints about disgrace and scorn.

The metaphors of water, mire and drowning can be found in several psalms, for instance, Pss. 18:17; 40:3; 88:7, 18; 124:4–5. In these psalms, the context shows that the metaphors refer to a situation in

<sup>10</sup> Cf. N. Tillmann, *Wasser*, 120, 124–7, 134; F. Lindström, *Suffering and Sin*, 325–6, 340–1; E. Zenger, *Psalmen 51–100*, 263–4, 267–8; A. Groenewald, *Psalm 69*, 192.

<sup>11</sup> N. Tillmann, *Wasser*, 118, 133–5; F. Lindström, *Suffering and Sin*, 329–41, 343–5; E. Zenger, *Psalmen 51–100*, 268–9; A. Groenewald, *Psalm 69*, 194–276. The original psalm is, mostly, dated to the pre-exilic period and the other parts to the postexilic period.

which the life of the psalmist (or the people of Israel, as in Ps. 124) is really in danger.<sup>12</sup>

As to the motif of disgrace and scorn, some psalms refer to this kind of distress alongside other threats (see, e.g., Pss. 37:19 and 79:4, 12). In many psalms, however, disgrace and scorn are not just one element next to others, but occupy a very prominent place. They are referred to in two different ways: first, as a kind of distress which should not be there in the lives of God's people; and second, as a kind of distress which should be the lot of the enemies who are opposing the psalmist, the people of Israel or God. These observations hold good for both individual and collective psalms; that is, 'I' and 'we' psalms (see, e.g., Pss. 22:7–9; 25:2–3, 20b; 35:4, 26; 40:15–16; 42:11; 44:8b, 10, 14–17; 71:1b, 13, 24b; 89:42b, 46b, 51–52; 129:5; 132:8).<sup>13</sup> This clearly shows that the psalms do not treat disgrace and scorn lightly, but take them as very serious affairs. Moreover, in Psalm 119:116, 'not being put to shame' (בִּוּשׁ Hi.) and 'living' (חַיִּי) are mentioned side by side in synonymous parallelism. In Psalm 31:18, the psalmist's request that the wicked be put to shame (בִּוּשׁ Qal) is immediately followed by the wish that they may go dumbfounded (דָּמָה Qal) to Sheol (NRSV).

The prominent place of disgrace and scorn in the psalms and the parallelisms in Pss. 31:18 and 119:116 in particular make it clear that disgrace and scorn are considered very serious threats to somebody's life, no less than being the target of attacks by means of arrows or the sword.<sup>14</sup> One can even say that life is not worth living any more, or that is not a real life, if one continues to suffer from them. This applies all the more when disgrace and scorn are accompanied by social alienation and sadism, as is suggested in Psalm 69:9, 21–22. Consequently, the petitioner's suffering as described in Psalm 69:8–13 and 20–22 (i.e. the vv. in which he is complaining about disgrace and scorn) is so serious and life threatening that it fits the metaphors of water and drowning

<sup>12</sup> See Pss. 18:4b–6, 18–19; 40:15a; 88:4–6, 11–13; 124:3. Cf. also Jon. 2:4–6; Lam. 3:52–54.

<sup>13</sup> Ps. 55:13 is somewhat exceptional in that it says that the psalmist could bear the taunt of an enemy (i.e. in contrast with the taunt of a friend). Note that in Ps. 119 petitions with respect to protection against shame, scorn, and disgrace occupy the third place, after petitions concerning obedience to God's commandments and petitions with respect to the preservation of the psalmist's life (see Ps. 119:6, 22, 31, 39, 42, 46, 80, 116).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. also Ch. de Vos, *Klage als Gotteslob aus der Tiefe* (FAT, II/11), Tübingen 2005, 135 (with n. 35), 176–7.

in vv. 2–3 and 15–16 very well.<sup>15</sup> No additional distress is needed to account for the use of these metaphors, which suggest that the petitioner considers himself as somebody who is about to die.

Of course, these considerations cannot be taken as proof—let alone: as firm proof—that Part One and Two or the first four stanzas of the psalm were all written at the same time, as parts of an original unity. Nevertheless, they suffice to show that in spite of the assumed contradictions in the description of distress it makes sense to expect that the petitioner presents a coherent understanding of himself and his own nature. This applies all the more because Psalm 69 is not the only psalm in which the description of the petitioner's distress is made up of a wide variety of metaphors and other elements. In this respect, it corresponds to many other prayers in the Book of Psalms.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4. *The Petitioner's Understanding of Himself*

In this section the petitioner's statements as to his own behaviour will be analysed. The discussion starts with the positive side, which can be found in vv. 5, 8 and 10 in particular (§4.1). After that, v. 6, in which the petitioner refers to his folly and guilt, will be analysed (§4.2). Next, the results of both analyses will be compared with each other (§4.3). Finally, some conclusions will be drawn (§4.4).

##### 4.1 *Statements Concerning Upright Behaviour*

In v. 5a the petitioner denies having done anything which could justify his enemies' hatred and attacks (note esp. הַנֶּחַם and שָׁקַר). In v. 5b he suggests more particularly that they force him to restore goods, but have no right to do so, as he has not taken anything from them illegally.

In v. 8 he reveals the real grounds for the animosity: he is bearing reproach for God's sake (עַל־יְד). As can be inferred from v. 10b ('the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me'), this means that the enemies

<sup>15</sup> Against F. Lindström, *Suffering and Sin*, 326, 338, 340, 346–7. Lindström incorrectly suggests that shame, disgrace, scorn, and derision are much less harmful than a real life-threatening situation.

<sup>16</sup> Both motifs (metaphors of water and drowning referring to a life-threatening situation on the one hand and disgrace etc. on the other) can also be found side by side in Ps. 42:8 and 11. Apart from that, both can be found in Pss. 40:3, 15–16 and 55:13, 24, but unlike Ps. 69, these psalms do not use both motifs in their descriptions of the psalmist's distress.

are bothering him because of his relationship to God. V. 10a says, more specifically, that he is bothered because of his attitude towards God's house: 'it is zeal for your house that has consumed me'. In the Psalter, God's house (בית) mostly stands for the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, this is also the most obvious interpretation of the idiom in Ps. 69:10a. The petitioner, then, says that his efforts for the sanctuary have been to his own detriment. Obviously, his harm was brought about by the animosity of his enemies, because v. 10b refers to insults, which are a typical element of the misconduct attributed to the enemies.

Psalm 69, however, does not present any clear reference to the temple in Jerusalem. Apart from v. 23b, where several scholars read שלמיהם, 'their offerings of well-being' or 'their fellowship offerings' instead of the enigmatic לשלומים (?),<sup>18</sup> the only element which could be mentioned in this connection is v. 36a, which says that God will save Zion. But in this verse, Zion is paralleled by 'the cities of Judah' (ערי יהודה). This suggests that Zion may simply stand for the city of Jerusalem, since Zion and Jerusalem are used in synonymous parallelism in several psalms (see Pss. 51:20; 102:22; 128:5; 135:21; 147:12).<sup>19</sup>

In view of this, it could be that ביתך, 'your house' in Ps. 69:10a does not specifically refer to the temple. Instead, it could also have the wider sense of God's dwelling place or household. A case in point is Hos. 8:1, where the house of YHWH (בית יהוה) most probably refers to the people of Israel.<sup>20</sup> Be this as it may, in Ps. 69:10a the petitioner says that he has laboured as hard as he could for God's dwelling place or household. Accordingly, God's presence on earth or among his people means very much to him. But his fellow men do not appreciate this attitude and its corresponding behaviour. Quite the reverse: because of his zeal, they mock him so severely that he is about to succumb to their attacks.<sup>21</sup>

So far, the psalm presents a clear picture of the petitioner's understanding of his own behaviour. The only reason why his enemies are

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Pss. 5:8; 27:4; 42:5; 65:5; 66:13; 84:11; 116:19; 122:1; 135:2; cf. also John 2:17.

<sup>18</sup> Cf., e.g., BHS; H.-J. Kraus, *Psalmen*, Bd. 2 (BK, 15/2), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978, 641; E. Zenger, *Psalmen 51–100*, 262. For 'the allies' as a tentative interpretation of לשלומים, cf. Ps. 55:21.

<sup>19</sup> Of course, Zion or Jerusalem is the city God has chosen so as to have his temple there. However, this does not necessarily imply that the temple figures predominantly in all texts in which Zion is used.

<sup>20</sup> בית (referring to God's house) could also have a similar wider sense in Pss. 23:6; 36:9; 52:10; 93:5; however, in all these texts it may also refer to the temple.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. M.E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100* (WBC, 20), Dallas, TX 1990, 197, who paraphrases 'consumed' (אכל) in v. 10 as 'brought to a point of near extinction'.

bothering him is that he is a zealous adherent of his God. But how does this relate to v. 5b, which seems to suggest that the enemies falsely accuse him of being a thief or a robber? In form-critical research, v. 5b has been taken as a clue to the actual situation behind the psalm: the petitioner was falsely accused of theft.<sup>22</sup> This is quite comprehensible, because v. 5b looks concrete. But this concreteness may be misleading. It is also conceivable that v. 5b is just another metaphor or figurative expression. Some authors have even detected a proverb or saying in it<sup>23</sup> (a saying for which, however, there is no parallel in the Hebrew Bible). If this view is followed, v. 5b does not refer to a real charge of theft, but only says that the petitioner is suffering from a treatment for which he has not given cause at all. In that case, v. 5b nicely fits the point made in vv. 8 en 10, namely, that the petitioner is suffering for God's sake only.

#### 4.2 *Statements about Folly and Guilt (Ps. 69:6)*

In v. 6 two nouns attract the attention of the reader: אִילָה, 'folly', and אֲשַׁמֶּה, 'my guilts'. The only other text in the Psalter which has אִילָה is Ps. 38:6. The noun cannot be found in any other book of the Old Testament except for Proverbs.<sup>24</sup> In Proverbs, however, it occurs very frequently and it refers to various types of behaviour.<sup>25</sup> Among these types of behaviour, two figure more frequently than others, namely folly demonstrated in speaking<sup>26</sup> and folly demonstrated in not having control over one's emotions (e.g. anger).<sup>27</sup>

אֲשַׁמֶּה is a hapax legomenon in the Psalter. The only other books in which the noun can be found are Leviticus, Amos (only once, viz. in Amos 8:14),<sup>28</sup> Ezra, and Chronicles. אֲשַׁמֶּה refers to the state of guiltiness,

<sup>22</sup> See H. Schmidt, *Die Psalmen* (HAT, 1/15), Tübingen 1934, 132; H.-J. Kraus, *Psalmen*, Bd. 2, 642.

<sup>23</sup> J. Ridderbos, *De Psalmen*, dl. 2 (COT), Kampen 1958, 208; F. Lindström, *Suffering and Sin*, 342. If v. 5b is indeed a proverb, this might also explain the occurrence of the somewhat enigmatic אִ in this context.

<sup>24</sup> אִילָה also occurs four times in Sir., viz. in 8:15; 20:22; 41:15, and 47:23.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. also J. Hausmann, *Studien zum Menschenbild der älteren Weisheit (Spr 10ff)* (FAT, 7), Tübingen 1995, 9–36, esp. 34.

<sup>26</sup> See Prov. 12:23; 13:16; 15:2, 14.

<sup>27</sup> See Prov. 12:16; 14:17, 29; 29:11.

<sup>28</sup> Note that in Amos 8:14, אֲשַׁרְתֵּי שַׁמְרוֹן, 'the Asherah of Samaria', or אֲשַׁמֶּת שַׁמְרוֹן, 'Ashimah of Samaria', is often read instead of שַׁמְרוֹן אֲשַׁמֶּת, 'the guilt of Samaria'. Cf. W. Gesenius *et al.*, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, Lfg. 1, Berlin etc. 181987, 109a.

the liability or a debt obligation that results from wrongdoing.<sup>29</sup> In other words, it does not refer to subjective feelings of being guilty but to objective guilt.<sup>30</sup> In Lev. 5:24, 26, אָשַׁמָּה is used in connection with several cases of violation of another man's property, which also involve a false oath.<sup>31</sup> According to Lev. 22:16, אָשַׁמָּה עוֹן is brought upon people when they illicitly eat holy food. In Ezra and Chronicles, three offences resulting in אָשַׁמָּה are explicitly referred to, namely idolatry, mixed marriages and David's taking the census of Israel.<sup>32</sup>

In Ps. 69:6, then, the petitioner obviously is referring to weaknesses and shortcomings towards God or men, which have made him guilty before God. Yet, the psalm does not present any clue as to what exactly the petitioner is alluding to. Besides, the reason why this particular phrase has been included in the psalm cannot be inferred right away from the text, either.

In this connection, the possibility of linking v. 6 with v. 27 may be taken into consideration. In this verse, the petitioner speaks about people wounded by God. Apparently, he counts himself as of them. In v. 6, then, he might explain why God has dealt with him in that way.<sup>33</sup>

Although this interpretation based on a link with v. 27 is worth considering, it makes more sense first to try and link v. 6 to an adjacent verse; that is, verse 7. This verse shows that the petitioner fears that other people who are faithful to the God of Israel may be put to shame 'because of me' (בִּי). Apparently, the idea is that this shame will materialize if he, as a zealous adherent of God, will not be saved from his distress, but will continue to be brought to ruin by his adversaries (cf. vv. 2–4,

<sup>29</sup> Cf. R. Knierim in *THAT*, Bd. 1, 256; E. Carpenter and M.A. Grisanti in W.A. VanGemeren (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, vol. 1, Carlisle 1997, 554.

<sup>30</sup> Pace J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (AncB, 3), New York etc. 1991, 338–9, 342–5. According to Milgrom, אָשַׁמָּה in Lev 5:24, 26 is the infinitive construct of the verb אָשַׁם Qal, which means 'to feel guilt' when it is used without an object in cultic texts. For critical comments on Milgrom's view on the meaning of אָשַׁם, see J.E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC, 4), Dallas, TX 1992, 77; R.E. Averbeck in W.A. Van Gemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, vol. 1, Carlisle 1997, 560–2.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. n. 30, as for the view that in Lev. 5:24, 26, אָשַׁמָּה may be parsed as the infinitive construct of אָשַׁם Qal. The same may be argued for Lev. 4:3; cf. D. Kellermann, in *ThWAT*, Bd. 1, 472; J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 231. Unlike Lev. 5:24, 26 and 22:16, Lev. 4:3 does not refer to any specific offence which leads to אָשַׁמָּה.

<sup>32</sup> See Ezra 9:6, 15; 10:10, 19; 1 Chron. 21:3; 2 Chron. 24:18; 33:23.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. C.C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms* (JSOT.S, 52), Sheffield 1989, 40.

15–19, 30). In support of this interpretation, one can point to Pss. 35:27; 64:11; 107:42a. These texts can be taken as counterparts of Ps. 69:7, as they all give evidence of the idea that the joy and glory of the righteous depend on the salvation of the petitioner. If, then, the righteous' joy and glory are interconnected with the petitioner's fate, the same applies to their shame, as shame is the very opposite of joy and glory.

If v. 6 may thus be linked with v. 7, the most obvious interpretation of v. 6 is that the petitioner realizes that there has been something wrong in his behaviour which might induce God not to intervene on his behalf. But how does this relate to v. 5, which says that the petitioner's adversaries hate him without cause, and to vv. 8 and 10, which point out that he is suffering because of his loyalty to God?

#### 4.3 *The Relationship between Both Groups of Statements*

The beginning of v. 6 clearly shows that this verse does not detract anything from what has been said in v. 5. By addressing God by means of אלהים and by using the pronoun אתה before ידעת, 'you know', the petitioner emphatically appeals to God's knowledge and contrasts this knowledge with the claims of his adversaries. In other words, in v. 6 the petitioner confesses that there is some folly or guilt on his side,<sup>34</sup> but he emphasizes at the same time that his folly or guilt is not identical to the substance of the accusations of the adversaries. It is something else, that is known by God. The reader of the psalm does not get a plain idea of what it is. Nevertheless, it is clear that it must be something that cannot be considered an issue in the petitioner's relationship to his enemies but that may be an issue in his relationship to God.

Such a combination of weaknesses and sin on the one hand and a claim to loyalty to God or a denial of accusations on the other is not unique in the Psalter. A similar state of affairs can be found in Psalms 31, 38, 40, and 41.<sup>35</sup> Apparently, the conviction of the psalmists was that

<sup>34</sup> Consequently, it makes sense to classify v. 6 as a confession of sin. *Pace* F. Lindström, *Suffering and Sin*, 342–3, and A. Groenewald, *Psalms 69*, 52–3, who define v. 6 as an assurance of innocence *coram hominibus* (cf. also M.E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 196). The right element in this view is that v. 6 indeed pursues what has been said in v. 5, i.e. the petitioner is innocent vis-à-vis the charges of his adversaries. But this does not alter the fact that the main point in v. 6 is that God knows all about the petitioner's folly and guilt and that these are a real aspect of his life (cf. J. Ridderbos, *Psalmen*, dl. 2, 208).

<sup>35</sup> See Pss. 31:7, 11, 15; 38:4–6, 19–21; 40:9–11, 13; 41:5, 13; cf. also Pss. 25:2, 5, 7, 11, 18, 21; 86:2, 5. As for Ps. 41:5, 13, cf. G. Kwakkel, 'According to My Righteousness':

they could claim to be on God's side and to serve him with zeal and yet admit shortcomings and weaknesses.

This accords with what can be found in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26 and 44. In these psalms, God's attention is drawn to the upright behaviour of the psalmist or the people of Israel as grounds for God's saving intervention on their behalf. In that connection, wide-ranging statements are made such as, for example, Ps. 18:22–24:

For I have kept the ways of the LORD,  
and have not wickedly departed from my God.  
For all his ordinances were before me,  
and his statutes I did not put away from me.  
I was blameless before him,  
and I kept myself from guilt. (NRSV)

Confessions of sin or other statements comparable to what can be found in Ps. 69:6 do not occur in these psalms. Yet the people speaking in them do not claim that they are completely free from sin. In these texts, the issue at stake is whether people have been faithful to God or have defected from him. In that context, they assert a claim to faithfulness. Of course, such faithfulness to God would shape their lives, but it does not necessarily imply moral perfection or the like.<sup>36</sup>

However, what Psalm 69 says about the upright behaviour of the petitioner is not as comprehensive as, for example, Ps. 18:22–24. Psalm 69 merely says that the adversaries cannot justify their actions by referring to any wrong the petitioner might have done to them and that the grounds for their animosity are the petitioner's zeal for his God and his 'house'. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that in this psalm in particular, the petitioner points to his folly and guilt and yet maintains that the adversaries attack him without cause and that he is suffering for God's sake.

#### 4.4 *Conclusions*

In Psalm 69, the petitioner states that his enemies, for their part, cannot point to anything which might justify their animosity. Instead, the reason behind their behaviour is that they detest the petitioner's zeal for his God and his God's 'house'. Yet the petitioner admits that there are

---

*Upright Behaviour as Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26 and 44* (OTS, 47), Leiden 2002, 119–20.

<sup>36</sup> See G. Kwakkel, 'According to My Righteousness', 295–7.

shortcomings on his side. The enemies cannot take these as a pretext that would justify their actions, but these shortcomings might, so the petitioner fears, induce God not to intervene on his behalf. He then urges God still to save him. In support of this, he points out that he is suffering because of his zeal for his God; moreover, he appeals to God's steadfast love (חסד) and his mercy (רחמים, vv. 14 and 17).

### 5. *God's Righteousness: A Rescuing Space—but not for Everybody*

In this section the relationship between the petitioner and God will be analysed. In this relationship other people also play a part. The analysis will focus on the function of the three parties—God, the petitioner and the adversaries—within the text. First, the imprecations of vv. 23–26 will be examined (§5.1). Second, the meaning of סֵפֶר חַיִּים and the “book of the living” will be discussed (§5.2). Third, the imprecations will be investigated with a view to the information they yield as regards the attitude of the petitioner (§5.3). The section will conclude with comments on the change of mood which can be observed in the last verses of the psalm (§5.4).

#### 5.1 *The Imprecations of Vv. 23–26 and the Motivation of V. 27*

The petitioner himself is not the only person placed in relation to suffering in this psalm. He suffers under persons who hate him without any reason, reproach him wrongly, and disparage him. But he wants his adversaries to be struck by suffering as well.

Imprecations against adversaries occur in vv. 23–29. They are extremely harsh—something shown in a sentence such as ‘May their camp be a desolation; let no one live in their tents.’ (v. 26). Why does the petitioner say this? In the immediate context there is only one sentence which could serve as a motivation: ‘For they persecute those whom you have struck down, and those whom you have wounded, they attack still more’ (v. 27). The petitioner is persecuted by the adversaries. In itself this is a serious affliction, but it is even more serious because of God's active role in it: it is he who has already hurt the petitioner. The others continue harming the already wounded and God seems to be on the side of the foes.

This is a remarkable contrast to v. 10: ‘It is zeal for your house that has consumed me; the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.’ Herewith the petitioner underlines that he belongs to God and

sides with God. In v. 10 both the petitioner and God are opposed to the adversaries. In v. 27, however, God and the adversaries seem to join forces against the already struck, to which the individual petitioner seems to belong.<sup>37</sup> In spite of this he addresses his complaints to God.

The first noticeable point is that the imprecations are far more tangible than any information given about the petitioner himself.<sup>38</sup> His maledictions do not seem to be in due proportion to his sufferings. He apparently exaggerates: he suffers, but wishes his adversaries to be annihilated. This is a typical phenomenon of the individual complaints, even though this psalm is outstanding, as there is only one other prayer in which the maledictions are just as horrible as in this psalm.<sup>39</sup> This phenomenon of seeking for revenge embarrasses a lot of exegetes. Nevertheless, the appeal to God's anger is extant in this psalm and, therefore, cannot be ignored.

It can be observed that all imprecations are about the basics of life, such as food, sensory perception, and a dwelling place:

23	Let their table be a trap for them, A snare for their allies.	food
24	Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually.	sensory perception physical mobility
25	Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them.	God's anger
26	May their camp be a desolation; let no one live in their tents.	dwelling place
27	For they persecute those whom you have struck down, and those whom you have wounded, they attack still more.	reason/motivation

<sup>37</sup> See above, § 4.2.

<sup>38</sup> The psalm reveals hardly any tangible hints as to the concrete situation of the petitioner. Speculations about the *Sitz im Leben* of this prayer yield little. Achenbach on the other hand pleads for an ongoing research of the *Sitz im Leben*, because the analysis of the ritual and institutional context of the texts is essential to their interpretation (R. Achenbach, 'Zum Sitz im Leben mesopotamischer und altisraelitischer Klagebete. Teil II: Klagebete des Einzelnen im Psalter', *ZAW* 116 (2004), 581–94). However, answers to the questions with respect to a *Sitz im Leben* remain utmost hypothetical.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Ps. 109 and the remarkable analysis of F. van der Velden, *Psalm 109 und die Aussagen zur Feindschädigung in den Psalmen* (SBB, 37), Stuttgart 1997.

All these essentials are to be destroyed by God through his anger.<sup>40</sup>

### 5.2 *Vv. 28–29*

As far as the imprecations are concerned, the most substantial statements can be found in vv. 28–29:

- 28           תנהעון על־עונם   Add guilt to their guilt,  
              וְאֵל־יְבֹאוּ בְצַדִּיקְךָ   so they cannot come into your righteousness.<sup>41</sup>
- 29           יִמְחוּ מִסֵּפֶר חַיִּים   Let them be blotted out of the book of the living;  
              וְעַם צְדִיקִים אֵל־יִכְתְּבוּ   let them not be enrolled among the righteous.

The combination of נתן imperative Qal ‘give’ addressed to God with עון is singular in the Hebrew Bible. God is regularly identified as a remover of the people’s guilt, not as the one who gives them guilt.<sup>42</sup> So it is rather drastic when the petitioner calls upon God to give iniquity to his adversaries. Even within the literary form of the complaint psalms this is remarkable. In Ps. 28:4, not quite a meek text, the proportions are nevertheless upheld: ‘Repay them according to their work, and according to the evil of their deeds; repay them according to the work of their hands; render them their due reward’.

Returning to the imprecation of Ps. 69:28, the aim of the plea is clear. The petitioner wants the others to experience the same thing that he himself is suffering at the moment,<sup>43</sup> that is, to be separated from God, for guilt separates man from God. Accordingly he demands that God withdraw from the adversaries.

The climax in the parallelism supports this conclusion. ‘...so they cannot come into your righteousness’. The road to the righteousness of God is blocked by the people’s guilt.

Particularly interesting is the manner in which צדקה is introduced. It is preceded by the particle כ—and that attracts attention. As is well-known, כ can have many different meanings. It is usually translated instrumentally as ‘through, with’. In this context, however, it also has

<sup>40</sup> Cf. W. Groß, ‘Zorn Gottes—ein biblisches Theologumenon’, in: Idem, *Studien zur Priesterschrift und zu alttestamentlichen Gottesbildern* (SBAB 30), Stuttgart 1999, 199–238; Ch. de Vos, *Klage*, 140–1.

<sup>41</sup> NRSV translates by ‘may they have no acquittal from you’. In this context, a more literal translation of the term צדקה is to be preferred.

<sup>42</sup> E.g. Zech. 3:9.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Do not hide your face from your servant, for I am in distress—make haste to answer me’ (Ps. 69:18; NRSV).

a spatial connotation,<sup>44</sup> because ב is combined with בוא, and the verb בוא inherently describes motion: the enemies cannot come (בוא) into<sup>45</sup> (ב) righteousness.<sup>46</sup> צדקה, yet, is not commonly connected with space. How, then, is the phrase בצדקתך to be understood?

However, there is more evidence for a spatial connotation of צדקה in the Psalter,<sup>47</sup> for example, in Ps. 71:2a, where the petitioner entreats God as follows:

בצדקתך הצילני ותפלטי 'Into your righteousness deliver me and rescue me'.

NRSV translates the preposition ב in בצדקתך by 'in', but in view of the context 'into' may also be taken into consideration. After all, the context is marked by verbs and substantives with spatial connotation, such as 'I take refuge' (v. 1), 'rock of refuge' (v. 3), 'a strong fortress to save me' (v. 3).

1	בך־יהוה חסיתי אל־אבושה לעולם	In you, O LORD, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame.
2	בצדקתך הצילני ותפלטי הטה־אלי אונך והושיעני	In/to your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me.
3	היה לי לצור מען לבוא תמיד צוית להושיעני כיסלעי ומצודתי אתה	Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. [LXX Reading]

Moreover, thinking in terms of spheres or spaces is one of the characteristics of the individual complaint psalms: far away from God are the people who are under the control of sin, close to God are those who live according to his righteousness. So righteousness is the name of the sphere, the space where people abide near to God. Recalling the phrase

<sup>44</sup> Cf. E. Jenni, *Die hebräischen Präpositionen*, Bd. 1: Die Präposition Beth, Stuttgart 1992. Jenni subsumes Ps. 69:28 under the category of texts in which the preposition ב, 'in' has a local meaning and comments that 'auch die Person Gottes zu einem Schutzraum im übertragenen Sinne und damit gewissermaßen zu einem "Raum zweiten Grades" wird' (E. Jenni, *Beth*, 195); צדקה is in this case a positive abstract noun (212).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. HALAT, 100, sub 9: 'nach Verben der Bewegung in ... hinein'.

<sup>46</sup> B. Johnson characterises צדקה as nearly a sphere; see [H. Ringgren]/B. Johnson in *ThWAT*, Bd. 6, 898–924, esp. 915.

<sup>47</sup> 5:9 נחה; 31:2 פלט; 71:2 נצל and פלט. Cf. Ch. de Vos, *Klage*, 189–90. For a connection of בוא and a theological term, cf. 79:1 (with בנהלהך, 'into your inheritance') and 95:11 (with אל־מנוחת, 'enter my rest').

‘Into your righteousness deliver me’ of Psalm 71 allows one to suggest a close association of *צדקה* with God in this context.<sup>48</sup>

In v. 29 the petitioner resumes the gist of all the imprecations against the adversaries by introducing another motif, that is, *ספר היים*, the ‘book of the living’. This is a singular phrase in the Hebrew Bible, although similar expressions occur such as the one in Exodus 32:32. Here Moses pleads to God to blot him out of God’s book. Not to be written on God’s list is tantamount to being dead.<sup>49</sup> This book of the living, by the way, pertains to earthly life, not to the eternal.<sup>50</sup> The concept of a book of eternal life does not appear in the Hebrew Bible at all.

If the enemies of the petitioner have to be withdrawn from the *ספר היים*, this means, first, that they are not yet registered on God’s list, and second, that God is begged to actively wipe them out of life.

The second half of the synonymous parallel ‘let them not be enrolled among the righteous’ makes it clear that in this book of the living the *צדיקים* are recorded. Who are these *צדיקים* within the context of Psalm 69? Foremost, it may be assumed that this designation is related to God’s *צדקה* in the preceding verse. The *צדיקים* are those who live according to God’s *צדקה*, his righteousness. Since God and his *צדקה* are closely associated, the *צדיקים* are likely to be characterised as intimates of God. Thus, the others are not to ‘be enrolled among the righteous’, to whom the petitioner clearly assigns himself. The petitioner does not want to have common ground with these people. Since he begs God to turn towards him, God must, as a consequence, turn away from the others.

### 5.3 *Conclusions with Respect to the Imprecations*

The request implied in all these imprecations can—in a sloppy manner—be summarised as ‘tit for tat’, with the only exception being that it is not the victim himself who tries to take revenge; he leaves it all to God. God has to avenge the petitioner’s suffering.

As for the fact that the imprecations do not seem to be in due proportion to the suffering experienced, this may appear strange, but the two

<sup>48</sup> K. Seybold, *Die Psalmen* (HAT, 1/15), Tübingen 1996, 270, takes *צדקה* as ‘kultisches Heil’, which is too limited.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. C. Houtman, *Exodus*, Vol. 3 (HCOT), Leuven 2000, 672–3: ‘In sum, the record of Exod. 32 is the record of people who dwell on earth; not the recording of those who are predestined to eternal life.’

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 17:8; 20:12, 15. In these New Testament books ‘book of the living’ alludes to eternal life.

scales are balanced, as they are on the same substantial level. Both are life-threatening: social death for the petitioner and the desired annihilation of the adversaries. However, the stylistic instruments differ: the suffering remains in the metaphoric realm, whereas the imprecations give God more precise assignments of how to deal with the adversaries.

It is, indeed, remarkable that the petitioner leaves all the vengeance to God. Just this point seems to comfort some commentators.<sup>51</sup> It seems to alleviate the harshness of the imprecations. However, the reason for leaving the revenge to God apparently is not devotional humility, but rather a lack of strength.<sup>52</sup> One should recall the expressions of misery at the beginning of the psalm. The petitioner wants God to do what he himself is not able to do.<sup>53</sup> He does not have enough power to destroy the tents of the adversaries and he is not in the position to hold them off from God's righteousness. Since the suffering petitioner himself wants to experience God's *הַקָּדוֹשׁ* again, the people who are a threat to this relationship to God have to be annihilated.

Now some conclusions can be drawn regarding the imprecations, focussing on the function of the three parties involved: 'God—the adversaries—the petitioner'. First, the petitioner complains before God about his own existential misery, whereas other persons appear comparatively late on the scene (v. 5). The complaint about the adversaries intensifies during the prayer. In the beginning the petitioner regards himself as standing on God's side, while the others offend the interests of the petitioner and God. In the course of the text, God seems to change sides. He and the enemies stand on one side, the petitioner on the other. In spite of this experience, the petitioner keeps on clinging to God and expects him to change sides again. With his, mostly indirect,

<sup>51</sup> E.g. P. Maiberg, 'Zur Problematik und Herkunft der sogenannten Fluchpsalmen', *TTZ* 97 (1988), 183–216, who maintains that the petitioner forgoes revenge (189). Cf. F. van der Velden, *Feindschädigung*, 50–1: 'Darüber hinaus ist zum immer wieder auftauchenden Hinweis, der Psalmist habe seine Rachegeleüste... "gemäßigt" ..., zu fragen, ob dies vom Beter tatsächlich so beabsichtigt wurde oder ob dies nicht ein theologisch sehr "modernes" Gottesbild undiskutiert voraussetzt. Immerhin ist nicht ausgeschlossen, daß der Beter gerade deswegen die Vergeltung Jahwe überläßt, weil dieser, sein persönlicher Gott, als einziger in der Lage ist, die Vergeltung zu vollziehen— und zwar schneller, sicherer und vollständiger, als der Beter es selber kann.' Cf. E.S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations* (FOTL, 15), Grand Rapids, MI 2001, 50: 'The suppliant is certainly incapable of executing any of his imprecations.'

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Ch. de Vos, *Klage*, 180–1.

<sup>53</sup> Possibly these imprecations must be seen in the light of curses someone could express to repay aggression, e.g. Lev. 5:1; Judg. 17:2; Prov. 29:24 and to this O. Plöger, *Sprüche Salomos. Proverbia* (BK, 17), Neukirchen-Vluyn <sup>2</sup>2003, 287–8.

maledictions, he summons God to intervene and to avert the threat. The petitioner equates the imminent danger with his adversaries and that is why they have to be defeated. If there is a somewhat comforting aspect to these nasty sounding imprecations, then it is the fact that it is all about the function of the other people as adversaries and not about the concrete persons. They only matter in so far as they are against the petitioner. As soon as the distress vanishes, which happens at the end of the psalm, the others disappear. Not only in this psalm, but among the psalms in general, the adversaries are hardly ever mentioned in the positive endings of the complaints.

#### 5.4 *The Change of Mood*

In the last section of Psalm 69, with its collective ending and its positive climax, the petitioner praises God (vv. 31–32) as his situation has apparently changed. Subsequently, the perspective of the prayer is widened:

##### *Individual praise:*

- 31 I will praise the name of God with a song;  
I will magnify him with thanksgiving.
- 32 This will please the LORD more than an ox  
or a bull with horns and hoofs.

##### *First broadened perspective: the distressed Godseekers will rejoice*

- 33 Let the oppressed see it and be glad;  
you who seek God, let your hearts revive.
- 34 For the LORD hears the needy,  
And does not despise his own that are in bonds.

In vv. 33–34, the petitioner, first of all, includes other persons suffering some form of misery (i.e. the oppressed, those who seek God, the poor and those of his in bondage) in his requests.

##### *Second broadened perspective: the whole cosmos may rejoice*

- 35 Let heaven and earth praise him,  
the seas and everything that moves in them.

Next, he extends the praise to the whole cosmos and all living creatures, in v. 35.

*Third broadened perspective: the people of God will live in the land provided by God*

- 36 For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah;  
and his servants shall live there and possess it;
- 37 the children of his servants shall inherit it,  
and those who love his name shall live in it.

With the last verses of Psalm 69 (36–37) a different topic pops up. They are characterised by a theology of the land. God saves Zion and allows the people to build up places of residence. In this way God makes life possible, and, again, space plays a dominant role. While in an abstract manner the  $\text{הָאָרֶץ}$  was the saving space, here we have the tangible land.

Vv. 33–37 open different perspectives, but these are all related to a community. On the one hand, this is strange in an individual prayer which remained individual up to this point, on the other hand, this phenomenon can be observed more often. Within the diachronic approach it is explained by the so-called collectivisation of the individual psalms. It is generally assumed that the collective parts in the individual psalms are added as a result of a rereading of these psalms, that is, the ‘I’ of the prayers was read as ‘we’, implying the whole people of God.

Moreover, in the context of the question about the function of the expressions, the collective ending of an individual complaint might not only imply the positive reversal of the misery, but also include the reintegration of the initially isolated petitioner into the community. The affliction of social isolation and hostility is over, and the collective praise of God is an expression of this. The detection that the collective parts of the individual complaints are never found in ‘negatively’ tuned sections, supports this assumption.<sup>54</sup>

## 6. *Conclusions*

The results of the analysis of the petitioner’s understanding of himself, his God, and his enemies can be summarised as follows.

The petitioner is convinced that the only reason why he is persecuted by his adversaries is his zeal for his God and for, as he calls it, his God’s ‘house’. Nevertheless, he is likewise convinced that there are shortcomings on his side. These shortcomings cannot justify the actions of his

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Ch. de Vos, *Klage*, 222.

adversaries, but they might induce God not to intervene on his behalf. Such an intervention, however, is indispensable, as he is totally dependent on his God's help so as to save his life.

Vv. 28 and 29 in particular show that he knows for sure that his life totally depends on God. God is the only one who can give or forgive guilt. Life is only possible if God admits people to the domain of his righteousness and if he allows them to live in his land. Even the imprecations against the adversaries fit this context, as they are motivated by the idea that God must no longer take the adversaries' side, but, instead, support the petitioner.

However, the petitioner is not only totally dependent on God, he also fully trusts in him. He accuses God of hurting him and he experiences him as a distant God. Yet he cries to this same God and looks forward to his intervention as the only way in which he can be saved.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> The authors wish to thank Dr C.B. McCully (Free University, Amsterdam) for his comments on the English text of this paper. All remaining errors are the authors' responsibility.



# ARGUMENTA AD DEUM IN THE PLAGUE PRAYERS OF MURSILI II AND IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS<sup>1</sup>

Paul Sanders  
*Stanislas College Delft—the Netherlands*

## 1. *Introduction*

In times of severe distress, people may ask themselves whether there is a God who can help them. Even in our postmodern age, people who are suddenly confronted with a serious illness, or other kinds of suffering, sometimes appear to be remarkably open to the idea that their fate is in the hands of God, even if this God did not play a significant role in their lives before their suffering started.

In the ancient Near East, the power of the gods was taken for granted. Both human fortune and human misfortune were thought to depend on the decisions made by the gods. People in distress asked themselves why the gods inflicted suffering on them and they addressed these gods in their prayers. If the distress continued for a long time, the sufferers would draw together arguments to convince the gods to stop the heavy suffering.

In this article, I compare the arguments of sufferers from two different religious and cultural backgrounds: the arguments in the prayers of the Hittite king Mursili II and the arguments in the biblical Book of Psalms. In both cases, the supplicants constructed so-called *argumenta ad deum*, arguments that they believed would be able to convince the gods, because they were in agreement with the way the gods were thought to be or thought to think. An *argumentum ad hominem* takes the identity and interests of the person whom you want to convince into account. In the same way, an *argumentum ad deum* takes the supposed character and interests of the deity into account. *Argumenta ad deum* were believed to be very strong and quite convincing. As they aimed to do

---

<sup>1</sup> I dedicate this article to Prof. dr. Johannes C. de Moor, who opened the eyes of both myself and many others to the importance of the ancient Near Eastern texts for the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. Thanks are due to Matthew Shaw, University of Manchester, for his valuable suggestions to improve my English.

justice to the identity of the god, they also reveal part of the theology of the sufferer.

The Hittite prayers contain many *argumenta ad deum*, more than any other extra-biblical text from the ancient Near East discovered until now. They occur especially in the prayers of Mursili II, but similar arguments can be found in older as well as more recent Hittite prayers. Within the Hebrew Bible *argumenta ad deum* are found in many Psalms, especially the lament psalms, both the individual and the communal laments. However, during my quest for parallels in the Psalms to the *argumenta ad deum* of Mursili, I scrutinized the whole Book of Psalms. In section 2, I compare the arguments in the prayers of Mursili II with the arguments in the Psalms and ask the following questions: Are the arguments similar or not? What do they reveal about the theology of Mursili? Is the theology of the psalms where the arguments appear different or not? Section 3 refers to some extra-biblical ancient Near Eastern parallels to the *argumenta ad deum* of Mursili, and the conclusions are found in section 4.

I am not the first to compare the Hittite prayers with the biblical Psalms. Moshe Greenberg already compared them in a systematic fashion.<sup>2</sup> In this article, however, I describe and analyse only the *argumenta ad deum* in Mursili's prayers and the parallels in the Psalms. A new translation of the Hittite prayers as well as an excellent introduction can be found in a recent book by the Hittitologist Itamar Singer. The quotations from these prayers, used in this article, are taken from Singer's translation.<sup>3</sup>

Mursili II reigned during the last decades of the fourteenth century BCE.<sup>4</sup> His impressive prayers have been found in the archives of Hattusa,<sup>5</sup> the ancient capital of the Hittite kingdom of Hatti, and they express the official state religion. Mursili was not only the king but also the head of the cultic hierarchy, the highest priest of the land of Hatti.

---

<sup>2</sup> M. Greenberg, 'Hittite Royal Prayers and Biblical Petitionary Psalms', in: K. Seybold, E. Zenger (eds), *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung, Fs. Walter Beyerlin*, Freiburg 1994, 15–27.

<sup>3</sup> I. Singer, *Hittite Prayers* (Writings from the Ancient World, 11), Atlanta GA 2002. Translations of some of these prayers can also be found in: *ANET*, 394–97; R. Lebrun, *Hymnes et prières hittites* (HoRe, 4), Louvain-la-neuve 1980, 155–247; *TUAT* 2, 803–11; W.W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture* 1, Leiden 1997, 156–60.

<sup>4</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 14, dates the reign of Mursili II to roughly 1321–1285 BCE. The dating of the end of his reign, in particular, is dubious.

<sup>5</sup> Close to present-day Boğazköy, roughly 150 kilometres east of the Turkish capital Ankara.

The prayers were written on behalf of Mursili, or were possibly even dictated by him. However, although Mursili is the speaker, they have a more or less communal character. Mursili is the representative of his people and at the end of some of the prayers, the congregation that is present during the religious ceremony is asked to express approval by saying: 'so be it'.<sup>6</sup>

*Argumenta ad deum* are especially found in Mursili's prayers concerning a virulent plague. The 'plague prayers' include both prayers to individual gods and prayers to groups of gods:

- prayers to the mighty Sun-goddess of Arinna,<sup>7</sup>
- a prayer to Telipinu, the god of rain, vegetation, and agriculture,<sup>8</sup>
- a prayer to the Storm-god of Hatti,<sup>9</sup>
- prayers to the assembly of gods and goddesses.<sup>10</sup>

In some of these 'plague prayers', Mursili mentions not only the disastrous effects of the epidemic disease, but also the distress caused by attacks of enemies and the loss of territories that previously were part of Hatti.

It is clear that Mursili holds his gods directly responsible for the distress. This is also the reason why he calls them to account. Only the gods are able to change his dreadful situation. Right at the beginning of his prayer to the Storm-god, Mursili describes his worries and the worries of his people. He addresses the Storm-god as well as the other gods as follows:

What is this that you have done? You have allowed a plague into Hatti, so that Hatti has been very badly oppressed by the plague. People kept dying in the time of my father, in the time of my brother, and since I have become priest of the gods, they keep on dying in my time. For twenty years now people have been dying in Hatti. Will the plague never be removed from Hatti? I cannot control the worry of my heart, I can no longer control the anguish of my soul.<sup>11</sup>

How can Mursili persuade the gods to end the plague? What reasons does Mursili adduce to convince the gods? Several clusters of *argumenta*

<sup>6</sup> See Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 53, 56. See also the discussion in Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 7, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Prayers No. 8 and 10 in Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 49–54, 56–57. Arinna is a city where the Sun-goddess had an important temple. Its location is unknown.

<sup>8</sup> Prayer No. 9 in Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 54–56.

<sup>9</sup> Prayer No. 11 in Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 57–61.

<sup>10</sup> Prayers No. 12, 13, and 14 in Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 61–69.

<sup>11</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 57 (no. 11 §1).

*ad deum* occur in Mursili's prayers. All arguments can be classified under one of the following categories:

- 2.1 The consequences of the plague
- 2.2 The consequences of the wickedness of the enemies
- 2.3 The righteousness or the capriciousness of the gods
- 2.4 The innocence of the supplicant
- 2.5 The relationship of the supplicant with the gods

For each of these categories, I first describe the arguments as drawn together by Mursili and then show whether or not they have counterparts in the Book of Psalms.

## 2. *Analysis*

### 2.1 *The Consequences of the Plague*

#### 2.1.1 *The Prayers of Mursili II*

Mursili II tries to persuade the gods to listen more attentively to his complaint. In the first part of a prayer to the Sun-goddess of Arinna and the first part of the prayer addressed to Telipinu, Mursili stresses that only the Hittites worship these gods. Only the people of Hatti perform rituals for them and offer them precious gifts:

You, O Sun-goddess of Arinna / Telipinu, are an honoured goddess / god. To you, my goddess / god, there are revered temples in Hatti, but in no other land are there any such for you. Only in Hatti they provide for pure and holy festivals and rituals for you, but in no other land do they provide any such for you.<sup>12</sup>

In the following lines, Mursili points also to the other gifts and rituals that the Sun-goddess and Telipinu enjoy only in Hatti: lofty temples adorned with silver and gold, cups and rhyta of silver, gold, and precious stones, festivals of the month, festivals throughout the course of

---

<sup>12</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 51, 54–55 (No. 8 §2; No. 9 §5). See also Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 73 (No. 16). Remarkably, Mursili also says about the Sun-goddess: 'Throughout the lands you are a favoured deity, and you are father and mother to all the lands' (Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 51; No. 8 §4). In her prayer to the Sun-goddess, Puduhepa, the wife of Mursili's son Hattusili III, suggests that the Sun-goddess is worshipped also outside Hatti: 'O Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady, queen of all the lands! In Hatti you gave yourself the name Sun-goddess of Arinna, but the land which you made, that of the cedar, there you gave yourself the name Hebat' (Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 102; No. 22 §2).

the year, festivals of the sacrificial rituals, honour for the divinity of this deity, respect from the king,<sup>13</sup> substitute rites, rituals, and festivals. All of these gifts are claimed to be holy and pure, and the temple treasures are said to be treated with reverence.

The part of the prayers where this ‘only in Hatti’ motif occurs is commonly called the ‘hymn’. It is certainly true that the Sun-goddess and Telipinu are praised there,<sup>14</sup> but in the present context it must be emphasized that this part of the prayers anticipates the most conspicuous *argumentum ad deum* in Mursili’s prayers. This argument relates to what the loyal people of Hatti does for its gods in the context of the cult and to what the gods will no longer receive if the gods continue to slaughter the population. No one else will provide them with gifts or perform rituals for them instead of the people of Hatti.<sup>15</sup>

As Mursili’s prayer to the Sun-goddess of Arinna progresses, we find the following passage:

O gods, what is this that you have done? You have allowed a plague into Hatti, and the whole of Hatti is dying. No one prepares for you the offering bread and the libation anymore. The plowmen who used to work the fallow fields of the gods have died, so they do not work or reap the fields of the gods. The grinding women who used to make the offering bread for the gods have died, so they do not [make] the god’s offering bread any longer. The cowherds and shepherds of the corrals and sheepfolds from which they used to select sacrificial cattle and sheep are dead, so that the corrals and sheepfolds are neglected. So it has come to pass that the offering bread, the libations, and the offering of animals have stopped.<sup>16</sup>

Here Mursili uses a beautiful example of an *argumentum ad deum*. If the gods will not stop the plague, they will deprive themselves of the sacrificial food, because there will be no people left who are willing to offer them anything. Thus, it is in the gods’ own interest to stop the plague.

---

<sup>13</sup> The prayer to Telipinu, which was pronounced also on behalf of the queen, adds that the queen and the princes respect Telipinu.

<sup>14</sup> See below, section 2.3.1.

<sup>15</sup> In the older prayer of King Arnuwanda and Queen Asmunikal to the Sun-goddess (prayer No. 5 in Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 40–43), the ‘only in Hatti’ motif anticipates a similar *argumentum ad deum*: the gods are no longer worshipped and they enjoy no longer any sacrifices or other gifts in the areas conquered by the Kaska tribes. For this prayer, see also section 2.2.1 below.

<sup>16</sup> See Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 52 (No. 8 §§6–7). In this and the following quotations from Singer’s translation, the square brackets enclose restorations of the Hittite text.

This argument is used in most of the plague prayers of Mursili and within many of them it occurs even more than once. It would have been possible to mention a range of consequences of the plague,<sup>17</sup> but Mursili refers consistently to the death of the makers of offering bread and the libation pourers.<sup>18</sup> Apparently, Mursili and the high priests regarded the argument as very strong. They must have assumed that for the gods the sacrificial gifts were the most important thing that the Hittites offered them. It is small wonder that Mursili promises to reward the gods with sacrificial food as soon as the plague is over:

And to you, O gods, your offering bread and your libations will be presented.<sup>19</sup>

Also, he promises to restore all objects that are necessary for the cult:

For whatever [god] there is [a temple], but he has no [objects], I will restore [them for him]. And for whatever god [there is no temple], I will build a temple for him. And whichever [gods] have been destroyed, I will restore for them a statue [...].<sup>20</sup>

There is a Hittite prayer for the recovery of a woman called Gassuliyawiya, which is often ascribed to Mursili II.<sup>21</sup> This prayer is addressed to Lelwani, the god of the Underworld, and it describes the sacrifices that Gassuliyawiya failed to offer in the past, but that she brings him now. The prayer clearly expresses the idea that such sacrifices are the food of the gods and that the gods consume them, especially in the following passage:

And you, O god, eat the fat of that [fatted cow and fatted ewe] and satisfy your hunger! [Drink] the blood [and quench your thirst]!<sup>22</sup>

At the end of this prayer, we find also the promise that Gassuliyawiya will praise and invoke Lelwani if he saves her:

<sup>17</sup> See the older prayer of King Arnuwanda and Queen Asmunikal (prayer No. 5 in Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 40–43), which will be discussed in section 2.2.1 below.

<sup>18</sup> See Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 57 (No. 10 §3'), 58 (No. 11 §3), 60 (No. 11 §8, §10), 63 (No. 12 §8, §9), 65 (No. 13 §3). In the very fragmentary prayer No. 14 (Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 66–8), the *argumentum ad deum* is missing, but that prayer may also originally have contained it.

<sup>19</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 53 (No. 8 §11).

<sup>20</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 65 (No. 13 §8).

<sup>21</sup> Prayer No. 15 in Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 71–73.

<sup>22</sup> See Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 72 (No. 15 §1; cf. §4).

Save her from this sickness! Take it away from her and let her recover! Then it will come to pass that in the future Gassuliyawiya will constantly praise you, O god, and she will constantly invoke [only] your name, O god.<sup>23</sup>

The view that the gods eat and drink the sacrifices is found in many second millennium texts from the ancient Near East<sup>24</sup> and some of them clearly express the idea that the gods cannot do without these sacrifices. The latter idea is also found in the Song of Hedammu, a Hurrian text that was found in Hattusa, the Hittite capital where the prayers of Mursili have been found:

[Ea], King of Wisdom, spoke among the gods. [The god Ea] began to say: “Why are you [*plural*] destroying [mankind]? They will not give sacrifices to the gods. They will not burn cedar as incense to you. If you [*plural*] destroy mankind, they will no longer worship the gods. No one will offer [bread] or libations to you [*plural*] any longer. Even Tessub, Kummiya’s heroic king, will himself grasp the plow. Even Sauska and Hebat will themselves grind at the millstones.”

[Ea], King of Wisdom, said to Kumarbi: “Why are you, O Kumarbi, seeking to harm mankind? Does [not] the mortal take a grain heap and do they not promptly offer (it) to you, Kumarbi? Does he make offering to you alone, Kumarbi, Father of the Gods, joyfully in the midst of the temple? Do they not (also) offer to Tessub, the Canal Inspector of Mankind? And don’t they call me, Ea, by name as King? [...] you (Kumarbi) are putting wisdom behind [the...] of all [...]. [...] the blood and tears of mankind [...] Kumarbi [...].” [*Breaks off.*]<sup>25</sup>

This small fragment shows how dependent even mighty gods such as Tessub and Kumarbi were thought to be on the sacrifices that human beings offered them. As soon as the sacrificial cult stops, even the higher gods would have to plough and grind. In the Babylonian Epic of Atrahasis, the human beings are created to relieve the younger gods of their hard work. From that moment on, the human beings have to supply the gods with food and drink. During the flood, when the human beings die, the gods get hungry. Only when Atrahasis brings a sacrifice after the flood can the gods eat again to alleviate their hunger.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 72–3 (No. 15 §5; cf. §2).

<sup>24</sup> For the Ugaritic evidence, see M.C.A. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (UBL, 9), Münster 1990, 404–5, 414–8.

<sup>25</sup> Translation of CTH 348 as found in H.A. Hoffner, *Hittite Myths* (Writings from the Ancient World, 2), Atlanta GA 1990, 49; 2nd ed. Atlanta GA 1998, 52. See also V. Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion*, Leiden 1994, 36, 176–77, 640.

<sup>26</sup> See W.G. Lambert, A.R. Millard, *Atra-ḥašīs: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*, Oxford

If Mursili shared this concept, his argument against the gods is extremely strong, but even if he did not share it he assumed that the Hittite gods severely harmed themselves by decimating his people. Mursili wants to achieve what we would call a win-win situation: If the gods stop the plague, not only the Hittites but also the gods will prosper because they will again receive the sacrificial gifts.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.1.2 *The Book of Psalms*

The Book of Psalms is much more heterogeneous than the prayers of Mursili. The Psalms date from different periods and come from deviating theological circles. Also, we have to distinguish different text groups or genres in the Book of Psalms. We would expect to find *argumenta ad deum* most frequently in lament psalms, or parts of other Psalms that can be labelled supplications or pleadings. However, I have scrutinized all the Psalms in search of traces of *argumenta ad deum*.

Do the Psalms contain parallels to the belief that the gods miss the food offerings and libations when their devoted servants have died? What will God miss when his servants die, according to the Psalms? The closest parallel can be found in a number of individual lament psalms: Psalm 6:6, Psalm 30:10, and Psalm 88:11–13.<sup>28</sup> All of these psalms relate to a situation of imminent death<sup>29</sup> and they all express the idea that God will harm himself if he allows his servant to die. Psalm 88 is an individual lament with an extensive description of the distress and a pleading to God to save. However, salvation is not yet in sight. What God will miss when the sufferer will die is described in 88:11–13:

Can you do something extraordinary for the dead,	הַלְמַתִּים תַּעֲשֶׂה פֶלֶא
or can the rephaim <sup>30</sup> stand up, praise you?	אִם רִפְאִים יִקְמוּ יוֹדוּךָ
Can your loyalty be proclaimed in the grave,	הִיִּסְפֵּר בְּקִבְרֵי הַסֶּדֶךְ
your faithfulness in the place of destruction?	אִמוּנֹתֶךָ בְּאִבְדוֹן

1969, 95, 97, 99 (iii 30–31; iv 21–22; v 34–37). For Mesopotamian myths expressing the idea that the gods created human beings to relieve gods of their hard work, see G. Komoróczy, ‘Work and Strike of Gods (New Light on the Divine Society in the Sumero-Akkadian Mythology)’, *Oikumene* 1 (1976), 9–37.

<sup>27</sup> The idea that the gods will enjoy more sacrificial gifts if they make the royal family or the land of Hatti prosper is also found in older Hittite prayers; see Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 23 (No. 1 §4), 27 (No. 3 §11), 37 (No. 4c §5).

<sup>28</sup> Greenberg, ‘Hittite Royal Prayers and Biblical Petitionary Psalms’, 19, mentions the same Psalms in connection with the *argumentum ad deum* as it occurs in the older prayer of Arnuwanda and Asmunikal (No. 5 in Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 40–43).

<sup>29</sup> See also Isa. 38:18–19, where the distress is caused by a disease.

<sup>30</sup> A name for the dead with disputed meaning; cf. J.C. de Moor, ‘Rāpi’ūma—

Can your extraordinary power be known in the darkness, **הַיּוֹדֵעַ בַּחֹשֶׁךְ פְּלֹאֵךְ**,  
and your righteousness in the land of forgetting? **וְצַדִּיקְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ נִשְׁיָהּ**

What will God miss according to the psalms mentioned above? None of these psalms says that God will miss the food offerings or the libations. What God will miss is:

- the praising of God: **יְדָה** (hif),<sup>31</sup> **הִלֵּל** (pi);<sup>32</sup>
- the remembering of God: **זָכַרְךָ**;<sup>33</sup>
- the proclamation of his loyalty and righteousness: **אִמְנֶתְךָ**,<sup>34</sup> **הַסֶּדֶךְ**,<sup>35</sup> **אִמְנֶתְךָ**,<sup>36</sup>  
**צַדִּיקְךָ**;<sup>37</sup>
- the proclamation of his wonderful acts: **פְּלֵא**.<sup>38</sup>

If God allows his servants to die he will harm himself, because he will no longer be praised, and nobody will remember him and talk about his benevolence. This is an excellent example of an *argumentum ad deum*.

If we compare these psalms with the plague prayers of Mursili, there appears to be a remarkable difference. Mursili points consistently to one threatening effect of the decimation of his people: the presentation of the offering bread and the libations will stop. The Psalms, however, do not mention any sacrificial gifts in this specific context. Is this a coincidence or do the Psalms regard the sacrifices as unimportant?

In the Hebrew Bible, the sacrifices are a means to honour God. They please him and God is very sensitive to them. People can also try to

---

Rephaim', *ZAW* 88 (1976), 323–45; K. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (AOAT, 219), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1986, 272; M.E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100* (WBC, 20), Dallas 1990, 397–8; B.B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition* (FAT, 11), Tübingen 1994, esp. 267–73; P.J. Williams, 'Are the Biblical Rephaim and the Ugaritic *RPUM* Healers?', in: R.P. Gordon, J.C. de Moor (eds), *The Old Testament in Its World. Papers read at the Winter Meeting January 2003 The Society for Old Testament Study and at the Joint Meeting, July 2003 The Society for Old Testament Study and Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België* (OTS, 52), Leiden 2005, 266–75.

<sup>31</sup> Ps. 6:6; 30:10; 88:11; cf. Isa. 38:18–19.

<sup>32</sup> Ps. 115:17; cf. Isa. 38:18.

<sup>33</sup> Ps. 6:6.

<sup>34</sup> Ps. 30:10; cf. Isa. 38:18.

<sup>35</sup> Ps. 88:12.

<sup>36</sup> Ps. 88:12.

<sup>37</sup> Ps. 88:13.

<sup>38</sup> Ps. 88:11, 13. See also Ps. 137:4: 'How shall we sing a song of YHWH in a foreign land?'

influence God with the sacrifices. Also in the Psalms this idea can be found, for instance in 20:2–4:

YHWH may answer you in the day of trouble!	יענך יהוה ביום צרה
The name of the God of Jacob may protect you!	ישנכך שם אלהי יעקב
He may send you help from the sanctuary	ישלח עזרך מקדש
and may give you support from Zion!	ומציון יסעדך
He may remember all your offerings	יזכר כל מנחתך
and your burnt sacrifice he may regard with favour!	ועולתך ידשנה

In these verses, the sacrifices are believed to be pleasing to God and to influence him, provided he remembers them.<sup>39</sup> At the end of Psalm 54, an individual lament psalm, the supplicant also holds out the prospect that he will offer a sacrifice to God if he will deliver him.<sup>40</sup> Again, this suggests that the sacrifices were thought to be valuable in the eyes of God. Verse 8 reads:

With a free gift will I sacrifice to you,	בנדבה אזבחה לך
I will praise your name, O YHWH, for it is good.	אודה שמך יהוה כי טוב

In this psalm the promise to offer a sacrifice and the promise to praise God occur side by side. We have seen that in the Hittite prayers there are parallels for both the promise to praise the deity and the promise to offer sacrifices after the deliverance.

Many Psalms, however, only hold out the prospect to praise God. Psalm 79 is a communal lament psalm that presupposes that only Israel and no other people worships God.<sup>41</sup> After a request to God to take vengeance on the enemies, the psalm concludes as follows (v. 13):

But we are your people and the flock of your pasture;	ואנחנו עמך וצאן מרעיתך
we will praise you forever,	נודה לך לעולם
from generation to generation will	לדר ודר נספר תהלתך
we recount your praise	

This promise to praise God after the desired salvation occurs frequently in the Psalms.<sup>42</sup> Psalm 69:31–32 even says explicitly that praising pleases God more than an animal sacrifice:<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> See also Gen. 8:21–22; 1 Sam. 7:9; 13:12; 2 Sam. 24:18–25; Sir. 35:1–10.

<sup>40</sup> See also Ps. 107:20–22; 116:17–19.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Ps. 74:1–2 and the ‘only in Hatti’ motif of the Hittite prayers.

<sup>42</sup> See, for instance, Ps. 9:14–15; 13:6; 18:50; 22:23–32; 30:13; 35:18; 40:3–4; 71:20–24; 118:17.

<sup>43</sup> Psalm 69 is commonly regarded as an individual lament psalm. See for this psalm

I will praise the name of God with a song,	אהללה שם אלהים בשיר
I will magnify him with thanksgiving.	ואגדלנו בתודה
And it will please YHWH more than an ox,	והיטיב ליהוה משור
a calf with horns, that parts the hoof.	פר מקרן מפריס

As I have shown, in the ancient Near East the idea that the gods eat and drink the sacrifices was widespread. There can be no doubt that the idea was still known in Israel,<sup>44</sup> although the Hebrew Bible no longer supports it. The idea is rejected explicitly in Psalm 50:12–13:

If I were hungry, I would not tell you,	אם ארעב לא אומר לך
for mine are the world and what fills it.	כי לי תבל ומלאה
Do I eat the flesh of bulls,	האוכל בשר אבירים
and the blood of he-goats, do I drink it?	ודם עתודים אשתה

It is remarkable that both this passage and passages suggesting that the sacrifices are important in the eyes of God occur in the Book of Psalms.

### 2.1.3 Evaluation

It is time to return to the question of why the Psalms do not contain a direct parallel to Mursili's belief that the gods will miss the sacrificial food when their servants die. The view that this absence of a close parallel is just a coincidence could seem attractive. The promises to offer God sacrifices after the expected salvation show that the sacrifices were assumed to be important in the eyes of God. Also, the fact that only three psalms (6:6; 30:10; 88:11–13) describe what God will miss suggests that it might be a coincidence that the loss of the sacrificial food is not mentioned as an *argumentum ad deum*.

However, nowhere in the rest of the Hebrew Bible do we find the idea that God will miss the sacrifices of people who are about to die. Even the passages that reflect upon the destruction of the First Temple of Jerusalem never express the idea that God misses the sacrificial

---

G. Kwakkel, Ch. de Vos, 'Psalm 69: The Petitioner's Understanding of Himself, His God, and His Enemies', in this volume.

<sup>44</sup> See for instance, Deut. 32:37–38: 'Where are their gods, the Rock in whom they took refuge, who ate the fat of their sacrifices, drank the wine of their libation?' It is unclear whether the composer of these verses shared the idea that God or gods ate and drank sacrifices. It is possible that he used an *argumentum ad hominem* and that he feigned acceptance of the conception of his opponents in order to demonstrate the indefensibility of their ideas. However, even if he did not share the idea, it was still familiar to him. For this passage and other biblical evidence, see P. Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32* (OTS, 37), Leiden 1996, 233–37, 413–18.

cult. On the contrary, it is the human beings that will suffer when the sacrificial cult ends, because this will put an end to their communication with God.<sup>45</sup> In the Hebrew Bible, the idea that God misses the sacrifices was probably avoided deliberately because it could create the impression that God—like the gods described in the texts of other peoples—cannot do without the food offered by human beings.<sup>46</sup>

However, the fact that, according to three psalms, God will harm himself if he lets his servants die is significant in itself.<sup>47</sup> God will miss the things that people do as a reaction to what God himself did: praise him, remember him, or proclaim his loyalty and his wonderful acts. This might be due to a specific idea about the relationship between the divine and the human beings: what human beings do for God is definitely important, but they can only do it thanks to what God did for them. The idea of a mutual dependence between God and human beings is avoided. When it comes to the crunch, God is inviolable and the human beings depend on him.

## 2.2 *The Consequences of the Wickedness of the Enemies*

### 2.2.1 *The Prayers of Mursili II*

Almost forty years ago, Bertil Albrektson demonstrated that both in Israel and in other parts of the ancient Near East, the gods were not only the gods of nature, but that they manifested themselves also in historical events. This also holds true for the religion of the Hittites.<sup>48</sup> In the plague prayers of Mursili II this is also very clear. Mursili refers to the rebellion of protectorates and the raids of enemies, and he calls upon the gods to act. In his prayer to the Sun-goddess of Arinna, he says:

The protectorates which are round about, Mittanni and [Arzawa], are all in conflict, and they do not respect [the gods]. They have transgressed

<sup>45</sup> See Hos. 3:4; 9:4; Lam. 2:7. See further C. Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer im Alten Testament: Die Signifikanz von Blut- und Verbrennungsriten im kultischen Rahmen* (WMANT, 94), Neukirchen-Vluyn 2002, 110–1, 368–9. Also, several passages suggest that the sacrifices are not very important to God and do not influence him; cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Jer. 14:12; Mic. 6:6–8.

<sup>46</sup> Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 409, shows that YHWH, contrary to the Ugaritic gods, is never said to be hungry.

<sup>47</sup> See also Ps. 22:4, where God is called יושב תהלוה ישראל, ‘the one who sits on the praises of Israel’.

<sup>48</sup> B. Albrektson, *History and the Gods: An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and Israel* (CB.OT, 1), Lund 1967.

the oath of the gods, and they wish to despoil the temples of the gods. May this become an additional (reason) for the gods' vengeance. Turn the plague, the hostility, the famine, and the severe fever towards Mitanni and Arzawa.<sup>49</sup>

In Mursili's prayers, the request to turn the plague as well as other calamities on to the enemies occurs several times.<sup>50</sup> Later in Mursili's prayer to the Sun-goddess, we find a similar call for revenge, which clearly presupposes that historical events can be due to interventions by the gods:

In the past, Hatti, with the help of the Sun-goddess of Arinna, used to maul the surrounding lands like a lion. Moreover, Aleppo and Babylon which they destroyed, they took their goods—silver, gold, and gods—of all the lands, and they deposited it before the Sun-goddess of Arinna. But now, all the surrounding lands have begun to attack Hatti. Let this become a further reason for vengeance for the Sun-goddess of Arinna. Goddess, do not degrade your own name!<sup>51</sup>

References to the times when the gods protected Hatti and helped the kingdom to conquer the territory of neighbours also occur in other prayers of Mursili.<sup>52</sup> However, the most remarkable phrase would seem to be the last one, which suggests that the reputation of the Sun-goddess is at stake, possibly in the eyes of the people of Hatti, or in the eyes of the enemies, or in the eyes of both. A bit later in the same prayer, Mursili expresses a similar idea: only if the Sun-goddess takes vengeance on the enemies and turns to the land of Hatti with favour will she be invoked:

[Some] wish [to burn down your temples]; others wish to take away your rhyta, [cups], and objects of [silver and gold]; others wish to lay waste your fields, your gardens, and your groves; others wish to capture your plowmen, gardeners, and grinding-women. To those enemy lands give severe fever, plague, and famine, O Sun-goddess of Arinna, my lady! And you yourself, O Sun-goddess of Arinna, let yourself be invoked! [...let] the oppressed become fit [again]. To Mursili, the king, and to the land of Hatti turn [with favour]!<sup>53</sup>

In the latter passage, the use of the second person is also noteworthy. The raids of the enemies are deliberately presented as directed against

<sup>49</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 52 (No. 8 §7).

<sup>50</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 55–56 (No. 9 §13), 63 (No. 12 §9).

<sup>51</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 53 (No. 8 §§8–9).

<sup>52</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 62 (No. 12 §4), 65 (No. 13 §§3–4).

<sup>53</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 53 (No. 8 §11).

the Sun-goddess herself, not against the Hittites. The enemies are said to lay waste to ‘your fields’, not ‘our fields’, and they capture ‘your plowmen’, not ‘our plowmen’, etc. Trying to construct a convincing *argumentum ad deum*, Mursili presents the Sun-goddess as the victim of the assaults of the enemies. Also in this case, it would seem to be less relevant whether it will be the Hittites or the enemies that invoke the Sun-goddess after her benevolent intervention. The fact that her intervention will make people invoke her, whoever these people may be, is regarded as a sufficient reason for her to act.

Again, in a prayer to the Sun-goddess quoted in Mursili’s so-called Ten Year Annals, we find the idea that the attacks of the enemies harm the goddess. The king pronounced the prayer at the beginning of his reign and the Sun-goddess decided to help him, apparently because she considered his *argumentum ad deum* convincing:

I held up my hand to the Sungoddess of Arinna, my lady, and said as follows: “O Sungoddess of Arinna, my lady! The enemy foreign lands who have called me a child and belittled me, have begun seeking to take away the borders of the Sungoddess of Arinna, my lady. Stand by me, O Sungoddess of Arinna, my lady. Destroy those enemy foreign lands before me.” The Sungoddess of Arinna heard my words and stood by me. After I sat down on my father’s throne, in ten years I vanquished these enemy foreign lands and destroyed them.<sup>54</sup>

The *argumentum ad deum* that Mursili II uses in connection with the ravages inflicted by the enemies is not new. In an older Hittite prayer, King Arnuwanda and Queen Asmunikal also lay the emphasis on the harm that the enemies cause to the gods, not to the people or to the king or queen themselves. The king and queen first tell that only in Hatti are the gods worshipped and honoured with precious gifts, pure rituals, and exceptional care for their temples and images.<sup>55</sup> Next, they refer to the ravages that the hostile Kaska tribes inflicted upon the northern territories. Arnuwanda and Asmunikal emphasize that in those areas the gods do not receive any offering bread, libations, and sacrificial

<sup>54</sup> Translation by R.H. Beal, in: W.W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture* 2, Leiden 2000, 82–90, esp. 84. Translations of the passage can also be found in Albrektson, *History and the Gods*, 39–40; H.M. Kümmel in: *TUAT* 1, 471–81, esp. 472. See also Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 6.

<sup>55</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 41 (No. 5 §§2–10). See also the discussion in section 2.1.1 above.

animals anymore,<sup>56</sup> but there is a much wider range of consequences that affect the gods directly:

...the temples which you, O gods, had in these lands, the Kaska-men have destroyed and they have smashed your images, O gods. They plundered silver and gold, rhyta and cups of silver, gold and copper, your objects of bronze, and your garments, and they divided them up among themselves. They divided up the priests, the holy priests, the priestesses, the anointed ones, the musicians, the singers, the cooks, the bakers, the plowmen, and the gardeners, and they made them their servants. They divided up your cattle and your sheep; they shared out your fallow lands, the source of the offering bread, and the vineyards, the source of the libations, and the Kaska-men took them for themselves. No one in those lands invokes your names anymore, O gods. No one presents to you the daily, the monthly, and the annual seasonal rituals. No one celebrates your festivals and ceremonies.<sup>57</sup>

As in Mursili's prayer, the use of the second person is conspicuous: 'your cattle', 'your fallow lands', etc. Also, the fact that in the lost areas no one invokes the names of the gods anymore is seen as a circumstance that damages the interests of the gods. By suggesting that the ravages harm the gods severely, Arnuwanda and Asmunikal try to induce the gods to give them back the lost areas. Only then will the gods again enjoy the care that the Hittites used to give them in the past.

Mursili's *argumentum ad deum* used in connection with the wicked acts of enemies appears to be quite similar to his *argumentum* in connection with the plague. In both cases, Mursili suggests that the care of the Hittites for the gods is indispensable. In the case of the plague he refers consistently to the death of the makers of offering bread and the libation pourers. However, in his prayer to the Sun-goddess, he mentions a wider range of destructive effects in connection with the acts of the enemies, including the bad consequences for the reputation of this goddess.

### 2.2.2 *The Book of Psalms*

Within the Book of Psalms, the parallels to Mursili's idea that the care of the Hittites for their gods suffers under the wickedness of the enemies are predominantly found in the communal lament psalms, such

<sup>56</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 41–42 (No. 5 §12, §14, §22).

<sup>57</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 42 (No. 5 §§16–20).



Psalm 79:12. By the use of the second person, this verse also suggests that the enemies intended to harm God:

Return to our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom	והשב לשכנינו שבעתים אל חיקם
the taunts with which they have taunted you, O Lord!	הרפתם אשר הרפוך אדני

Like Psalm 74, Psalm 83 says to God that the adversaries are ‘your enemies’ (83:3: *אויביך // משנאיך*). These enemies are said to make a covenant against God: *עליך*, ‘against you’ (83:6). The second half of this communal lament psalm consists of an extensive call for vengeance on the enemies and it includes references to God’s interventions in the past (83:10–19). The psalm concludes as follows:

Make their faces full of shame; then they will seek your name, O YHWH.	מלא פניהם קלון ויבקשו שמך יהוה
They will be ashamed and terrified forever; they will feel shame and perish.	יבשו ויבהלו עדי עד ויחפרו ויאבדו
And they will know that only your name is YHWH,	וידעו כי אתה שמך יהוה לבדך
the Most High over all the earth.	עליון על כל הארץ

These verses clearly say that the enemies will respect the name of the deity after the desired intervention,<sup>61</sup> not Israelites, as is the case in Ps. 74:21. In Mursili’s prayer to the Sun-goddess, it is not clear whom her intervention will cause to respect and invoke her, the Hittites or the enemies.

### 2.2.3 Evaluation

Both Mursili’s prayer to the Sun-goddess and Psalms 74, 79, and 83 refer to the consequences of the hostile attacks for the deity. The reasons to refer to these consequences are very similar. Mursili’s prayers as well as the three psalms ask the deity to take revenge on the enemies. Also, there are references to the deity’s help in the past. The *argumenta ad deum* are also very similar: 1) the enemies appropriate the deity’s property, for instance the temple,<sup>62</sup> 2) if the deity intervenes, he or she will be invoked and respected more than now.<sup>63</sup> The correspondences

<sup>61</sup> Cf. also Ps. 115:2.

<sup>62</sup> Remarkably, other biblical passages suggest that God himself decided to deliver the temple to enemies; cf. Lam. 2:1, 6, 7; Jer. 7:14; 26:6.

<sup>63</sup> Greenberg, ‘Hittite Royal Prayers and Biblical Petitionary Psalms’, 21, refers also to Ezek. 36:22: ‘Not for your sake, but for the sake of my holy name that has been profaned among the nations...’

are conspicuous and there does not seem to be any reason to see a fundamental, theological difference between the arguments as used by Mursili and the arguments in the Psalms.

### 2.3 *The Righteousness or the Capriciousness of the Gods*

#### 2.3.1 *The Prayers of Mursili II*

The *argumenta ad deum* in this cluster relate to the nature or character of the gods, to their righteousness or to their capriciousness. Mursili is confused. For him, there is a gap between the dire straits of his people and the favours that he expects from the gods. In the past the gods acted benevolently, but now they damage the interests of the Hittite people. In a prayer to the assembly of gods he says:

O gods, my lords! Since ages past you have been inclined towards [men] and have [not] abandoned mankind. And mankind [became] populous and your divine servants [were] numerous. They always set up for the gods, [my] lords, offering bread and libation. O gods, my lords, you have turned your back on mankind. All of a sudden, in the time of my grandfather Hatti was oppressed, [and it] became [devastated] by the enemy. Mankind was [reduced in number] by plague, and your [servants] were reduced in number.<sup>64</sup>

For Mursili, it is absolutely clear that the plague is undeserved. Maybe there were sins that had to be punished, but the plague is excessive. In a prayer to the Storm-god of Hatti, he argues:

...Hatti has made restitution through the plague, it [has made restitution] for it twenty-fold. Indeed, it has already become that much. And yet the soul of the Storm-god of Hatti, my lord, and of all the gods, my lords, is not at all appeased.<sup>65</sup>

Mursili holds the gods directly responsible for the excessive plague. They seemed to be benevolent and just, but apparently they are not. This is why Mursili takes issue with the gods and addresses them in his prayers. Despite his bitterness, however, Mursili does not give up all hope. If he had given up all hope, it would be useless to address his prayers to the gods, but he continues to call them to account.

<sup>64</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 65 (No. 13 §3).

<sup>65</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 60 (No. 11 §9). The number 20 refers to the 20 years in which the plague struck the country. Cf. also Isa. 40:2.

There is, however, one deity in particular whom Mursili still describes as righteous and reliable. In the flattering ‘hymn’ at the beginning of the prayer to the Sun-goddess of Arinna, we find a section that praises the Sun-goddess and refers to her benevolent character:

You, O Sun-goddess of Arinna, are an honored goddess. Your name is honored among names, and your divinity is honored among gods. Furthermore, among the gods you are the most honored and the greatest. There is no other god more honored or greater than you. You are the lord (*sic*) of just judgment. You control the kingship of heaven and earth. You set the borders of the lands. You listen to prayers. You, O Sun-goddess of Arinna, are a merciful goddess and you have pity. The divinely guided person is dear to you, O Sun-goddess of Arinna, and you, O Sun-goddess of Arinna, exalt him. Within the circumference of heaven and earth you, O Sun-goddess of Arinna, are the source of light. Throughout the lands you are a favored deity, and you are father and mother to all the lands. You are the divinely guided lord (*sic*) of judgment, and in the place of judgment there is no tiring of you.<sup>66</sup>

Like many other peoples in the ancient Near East, the Hittites saw their deity of the sun as a god who watched justice. As Singer expresses it: ‘the all-seeing and impartial Sun is universally considered as the supreme deity of justice, who in his circular daily journey meets all the gods of heaven and earth and convenes them to the divine assembly.’<sup>67</sup>

Mursili’s description of the Sun-goddess is traditional. Very similar characterizations occur also in older Hittite prayers to the male Sun-god Istanu, on which the prayer to the Sun-goddess would seem to be partially based.<sup>68</sup> The reason why the ‘hymn’ refers extensively to the deity’s righteousness and benevolence is obvious. The ‘hymn’ should not be separated from the pleading that immediately follows it. Mursili wants the Sun-goddess to keep her benevolent character in mind, and to understand that she must stop the plague in view of her character.

The ‘hymn’ at the beginning of the prayer to Telipinu must have contained similar praises, but unfortunately the text is broken off. Only the first lines of the section can still be read:

<sup>66</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 51 (No. 8 §4).

<sup>67</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 8.

<sup>68</sup> See Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 30–40 (prayers No. 4a, 4b, 4c). According to Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 49–50, Mursili’s prayer occasionally addresses the Sun-goddess as ‘my lord’ because the scribe failed to emend ‘my lord’ when adapting the prayer to the male Sun-god Istanu.

[You,] Telipinu, are an honored god. [Your] name is honored among names, [and your divinity] is honored among gods.<sup>69</sup>

The following lines probably referred to Telipinu's benevolent character, possibly to his qualities of bringing the rain and reviving the vegetation.

Of course, the prayers to the Sun-goddess and Telipinu were pronounced in a polytheistic context. Mursili regards the Sun-goddess as good and righteous, and in the hymn to Telipinu he describes the character of this god in a favourable way. However, the passage from the prayer to the assembly of gods quoted above shows that his impression of the other gods is different. In his prayer to the Sun-goddess, Mursili says explicitly that other gods may be less righteous and that he hopes that the Sun-goddess will annul the effects of their excessive anger:

The person at whom the gods are angry and whom they reject, you, O Sun-goddess of Arinna, have pity on him.<sup>70</sup>

This observation shows that Mursili was fully aware of the possibility that there are benevolent and malicious gods. Of course, Mursili describes the Sun-goddess in this flattering way because he wants to persuade her to act in agreement with her favourable character. Possibly, he characterizes her as benevolent and righteous, whilst doubting that these designations really apply to her. However, the fact that he makes a distinction within the Hittite pantheon is significant. According to Mursili, there are unjust, capricious or short-sighted gods who sent a plague that his people do not deserve. And there seem to be other gods and goddesses, especially the Sun-goddess, who are just and possibly willing to annul the injustice caused by the malicious gods.

### 2.3.2 *The Book of Psalms*

For this cluster of *argumenta ad deum* used by Mursili, it is not difficult to find parallels in the Psalms.<sup>71</sup> In the communal lament psalms mentioned in section 2.2.2, we can find *argumenta ad deum* belonging to this cluster. References to God's benevolent acts in the past occur in 74:2, 74:12–17, and 83:9–12. However, here I briefly discuss another example, Psalm

<sup>69</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 55 (No. 9 §9).

<sup>70</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 52 (No. 8 §5).

<sup>71</sup> See also Ch. de Vos, *Klage als Gotteslob aus der Tiefe: Der Mensch vor Gott in den individuellen Klagepsalmen* (FAT, II/11), Tübingen 2005, 188–92.

44, a communal lament psalm.<sup>72</sup> Right at the beginning, the psalm refers to the traditions about God's benevolence in the past (44:2):

O God, we have heard with our ears,	אלהים באזנינו שמענו
our parents have told us,	אבותינו ספרו לנו
the work that you did in their days,	פעל פעלת בימיהם
in the days of old.	בימי קדם

After this, the psalm describes some of the mighty works that God did for Israel, but later it tells that God has surrendered the people to enemies. Just like Mursili in his prayer, the psalm asks how a deity who acted favourably in the past can now inflict the people with heavy suffering. God appears to be a capricious God.

The gap between what the people experience and what they have heard from their ancestors becomes very clear in the last part of the psalm. On the one hand, God is accused of not paying attention (44:24–26):

Stir yourself up! Why do you sleep, O Lord?	עורה למה תישן אדני
Wake up! Do not reject forever!	תקיצה אל תונח לנצח
Why do you hide your face,	למה פניך תסתיר
forget our affliction and oppression?	תשכח ענינו ולחצנו
Yes, our soul lies down in the dust,	כי שחה לעפר נפשנו
our belly cleaves to the ground.	דבקה לארץ בטננו

However, right after that, the psalm refers again to God's benevolence as it was experienced in the past (44:27):

Rise up to help us	קומה עזרתה לנו
and deliver us for the sake of your loyalty!	ופדנו למען הסדך

Reference is made to God's *חסד*, 'loyalty' and this reference constitutes an *argumentum ad deum*. Exactly the same argument occurs in Psalm 6:5b:<sup>73</sup> *הושיעני למען הסדך*, 'save me for the sake of your loyalty'. In other cases, the expression can be *בחסדך*, 'according to your loyalty',<sup>74</sup> or *בצדקתך*, 'in your righteousness'.<sup>75</sup> The expression *למען שמך*, 'for the

<sup>72</sup> For this psalm, see also G. Kwakkel, *According to My Righteousness: Upright Behaviour as Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26 and 44* (OTS, 46), Leiden 2002, esp. 185–235.

<sup>73</sup> Psalm 6 is an individual lament psalm. Psalm 6:6 is discussed in section 2.1.2.

<sup>74</sup> See 25:7 (// *למען טובך*); 51:3 (// *כרב רחמיך*); 109:26; 119:88, 124, 149, 159. See further 31:17; 69:14, 17; 85:8; 89:50; 106:45; 109:21; 143:12.

<sup>75</sup> See 31:2; 71:2; 119:40; 143:1, 11.

sake of your name' can have a similar function.<sup>76</sup> The words *הסד* and *צדקה* describe how God is thought to be. They express his nature. God is reminded of this nature and provoked to act in accordance with his nature. If God still wants to be a God of *הסד* and *צדקה*, he must show his benevolence and help the supplicants.

### 2.3.3 *Evaluation*

Both in the plague prayers of Mursili II and the biblical lament psalms, divine loyalty and righteousness are at stake. Are the gods or is God righteous? On the one hand, the supplicants assert this, but on the other hand their experiences cast doubt on this belief. Mursili's prayers as well as the lament psalms confront the gods with their capricious conduct by pointing at their generosity as experienced in the past and as expressed in tradition.

However, there is an important difference between Mursili's prayers and the lament psalms: in the case of the lament psalms it is not possible to leave the righteousness of God unaffected by attributing the suffering to other gods.<sup>77</sup> In the Psalms, the problem for the supplicants is that the God whom the tradition sees as righteous is also held responsible for the undeserved distress. This is different in Mursili's prayers.

## 2.4 *The Innocence of the Supplicant*

### 2.4.1 *The Prayers of Mursili II*

In his prayers, Mursili says that he is innocent and extremely faithful to the gods. Therefore, it is his conviction that the plague is undeserved. His father, Suppiluliuma I, committed several severe sins, especially against the Storm-god. This was confirmed by some oracles. Mursili, however, claims to be completely innocent:

O Storm-god of Hatti, my lord! O gods, my lords! So it happens that people always sin. My father sinned as well and he transgressed the

<sup>76</sup> See 23:3; 25:11; 31:4; 109:21 (also: *הסדך*); 143:11 (// *בצדקתך*). In 79:9 (see section 2.2.2) and 106:8, the expression would seem to relate primarily to God's reputation in human eyes (see F.V. Reiterer, in: *ThWAT* 8, 173).

<sup>77</sup> De Vos, *Klage als Gotteslob aus der Tiefe*, 208, has demonstrated this for the individual lament psalms: 'Die Gegenüberstellung von JHWH und anderen Göttern, wie sie in vielen alttestamentlichen Texten zu finden ist, fehlt in den Klagen des Einzelnen. Der Mensch richtet sich mit seiner Klage an den einen Gott, alle anderen sind aus dem Blickfeld verschwunden.' However, the same conclusion can be drawn in the case of the communal lament psalms.

word of the Storm-god of Hatti, my lord. But I did not sin in any way. Nevertheless, it so happens that the father's sin comes upon his son, and so the sin of my father came upon me too.<sup>78</sup>

In one of the prayers to the assembly of gods and goddesses, Mursili says he is willing to annul the sins of his father and to make restitution, although he is innocent:

I have [not] done any evil. Of those who sinned and did the evil, no one of that day is still here. They have already died off. But because the affair of my father has come upon me, I am giving you, O gods, my lords, a propitiatory gift on account of the plague of the land, and I am making restitution. I am making restitution to you with a propitiatory gift and reparation. May you gods, my lords, again [have] mercy on me, and let me elicit your pity.<sup>79</sup>

Why does Mursili's claim to be innocent constitute an *argumentum ad deum*? Because implicitly Mursili accuses the gods of not seeing, of not noticing, and of not checking who caused their anger. Mursili asks how they can be gods, if they cannot even see who is a sinner and who is not. How can gods, who are supposed to be all eyes and ears, not see and listen?<sup>80</sup> In his prayer to the Sun-goddess, Mursili calls on the gods to be more observant and to treat people fairly:

Whoever is a cause of rage and anger to the gods, and whoever is not respectful to the gods, let not the good ones perish with the evil ones. Whether it is a single town, a single house, or a single person, O gods, destroy only that one!<sup>81</sup>

Remarkably, when Mursili's son Hattusili III has become king, he also claims to be innocent and he suggests that his father was a sinner. Hattusili mentions many examples of what he regards as Mursili's sins. In his prayer to the Sun-goddess of Arinna he says:

Hattusili, your servant, and Puduhepa, your maid, have made this plea as follows: Whenever my father, Mursili, while still alive, offended the gods, my lords, by some deed, I was in no way involved in the deed of my father; I was still a child.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 59 (No. 11 §8).

<sup>79</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 63 (No. 12 §8).

<sup>80</sup> In his prayer relating to the wickedness of his stepmother Queen Tawannanna, Mursili claims to have treated her very well and he asks the gods why they do not restrain her. With reference to her malicious conduct, he asks them twice: 'Do you, O gods, not see?' See Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 75 (No. 17 §3).

<sup>81</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 53 (No. 8 §10).

<sup>82</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 97–8 (No. 21 §2).

Was Mursili honest when he claimed to be innocent? In his own eyes he was, but according to his son he was not. Not only in our time but also in the time of Mursili and Hattusili, it is easier to discover the defects of others than one's own mistakes, but in his prayers Mursili makes the impression of being quite honest and self-critical.

#### 2.4.2 *The Book of Psalms*

Declarations of innocence can be found also in the Psalms, both in individual and in communal laments. In the present context, it is not useful to discuss them at length. Gert Kwakkel devoted his dissertation to some of them, and among the Psalms that he discussed is Psalm 44,<sup>83</sup> a communal lament which I have mentioned in section 2.3.2. Psalm 44:18 is the first verse of a longer declaration of innocence:

All this came upon us, but we did not forget you      כל זאת באתנו ולא שכחנוך  
and we were not false to your covenant.      ולא שקרנו בכריתך

Mursili's claim that the distress during his own kingship is due to his father's sins seems to have a parallel in Psalm 79:8:

Do not remember against us the iniquities      אל תזכר לנו עונת ראשנים  
of the ancestors;  
may your compassion reach us quickly,      מהר יקדמונו רחמיך  
because our situation is very bad.      כי דלנו מאד

Remarkably, the following verse refers to *הטאתינו*, 'our sins', which suggests that the tormented people accept responsibility for the transgressions of the previous generations.<sup>84</sup> However, not only Psalm 44 but also Psalm 79 argues that God punishes his people too severely.

#### 2.4.3 *Evaluation*

Both Mursili's prayers and Psalm 44 suggest that the distress of the people is undeserved and excessive. Mursili and the supplicants of Psalm 44 see themselves as innocent victims of the divine wrath. However,

<sup>83</sup> Kwakkel, *According to My Righteousness*, esp. 185–235. For declarations of innocence in the Book of Psalms, see also De Vos, *Klage als Gotteslob aus der Tiefe*, 63–6; F. Lindström, 'Theodicy in the Psalms', in: A. Laato, J.C. de Moor (eds), *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, Leiden 2003, 256–303, esp. 271–77.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. also Lam. 5:7, 16. Greenberg, 'Hittite Royal Prayers and Biblical Petitionary Psalms', 22, also notes the similarity of Mursili's declaration of innocence to Ps. 79:8 and Lam. 5:7.

Mursili admits that the punishment is due to sins of his father. He accepts responsibility for these sins and is willing to make restitution. Like Mursili, the supplicants of Psalm 44 attempt to put themselves in a positive light. They stress their loyalty to God despite his capricious behaviour. Similar to Mursili, Psalm 79 suggests that the punishment was caused by the sins of ancestors. However, the psalm does not explicitly say that the present generation is innocent. For this cluster of *argumenta ad deum*, there does not seem to be any reason to see a fundamental, theological difference between Mursili's prayers and the Psalms.

## 2.5 *The Relationship of the Supplicant with the Gods*

### 2.5.1 *The Prayers of Mursili II*

In all of his prayers, Mursili indicates that there is a close relationship between him and the gods. He shows this especially by the frequent use of the metaphors 'servant' and 'lord'. In numerous cases, Mursili refers to himself as 'your servant', to a god as 'my lord',<sup>85</sup> and to a group of gods as 'my lords'.<sup>86</sup> In rarer cases, he stresses that he is the priest of the gods.<sup>87</sup> A nice example is found in one of his prayers to the assembly of gods and goddesses:

I, Mursili, [great king(?)], your priest, your servant, herewith plead with you. [Listen] to me, O gods, my lords, in the matter in which I am making a plea to you!<sup>88</sup>

The prayer to Telipinu was pronounced on behalf of the whole royal family, including the queen and the princes, who are called 'your maid-servant' and 'your servants':

<sup>85</sup> For the designation of the Sun-goddess as 'my lord' (No. 8 §4), see Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 49–50. However, in the same prayer she is also addressed as 'my lady' (No. 8 §11; cf. No. 10 §1).

<sup>86</sup> The same imagery occurs already in older prayers; see Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 36–8 (No. 4c §1, §5, §9), etc. For the Hittite words, the sumerograms IR, 'servant' and EN, 'lord' are used.

<sup>87</sup> See the following quotation as well as Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 64 (No. 12 §9; No. 13 §2).

<sup>88</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 61 (No. 12 §1). Singer (p. 5) points out that the Hittite word *arkuwar*, 'prayer' is used when a servant justifies himself before his master. Ph.H.J. Houwink ten Cate, 'Hittite Royal Prayers', *Numen* 16 (1969), 81–98, and H.C. Melchert, 'Hittite *arku-* "chant, intone" vs. *arkuwā(i)*—"make a plea"', *JCS* 50 (1998), 45–51, both assume the meaning 'to make a plea, to present one's case' for the verb *arkuwā(i)*.

It is in the land of Hatti that Mursili, the king, your servant, the queen, your maid-servant, and the princes, your servants, are respectful to you.<sup>89</sup>

Even in prayers to gods whom he seems to mistrust, Mursili calls himself ‘your servant’ and the gods ‘my lords’.<sup>90</sup> However, a designation for a deity in whom he places his hope can also be ‘my personal god’ or ‘my personal goddess’.<sup>91</sup>

All such metaphorical language constitutes an *argumentum ad deum*. Mursili deliberately reminds the gods of their relationship with him and his family, because the gods act as though that relationship were not there. The gods do not take the interests of Mursili, his family, and his people into account, while Mursili and his family do take the interests of the gods into account.

In the following beautiful passage from the prayer to the Storm-god, the metaphors ‘servant’ and ‘lord’ are elaborated. Mursili confronts the Storm-god with the way human lords treat their servants:

Or if something bothers some servant and he makes a plea to his lord, his lord listens to him, [has pity] on him, and he sets right what was bothering him. Or if some servant has committed a sin, but he confesses the sin before his lord, his lord may do with him whatever he wishes; but since he has confessed his sin before his lord, his lord’s soul is appeased, and the lord will not call that servant to account. I have confessed the sin of my father.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, Mursili explains to the Storm-god how the mentality of a lord is supposed to be. If human lords know that they have to show compassion to remorseful servants, a divine lord should not act differently.

In some cases, not only members of the royal family but also others are designated as the ‘servants’ of the gods. In the passage from a prayer to the assembly of the gods, to which I referred at the beginning of 2.3.1, we find the expression ‘your divine servants’ (literally ‘the servants of the god’).<sup>93</sup> The expression would seem to refer to the cultic personnel.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 55 (No. 9 §8). For ‘maid-servant’, the sumerogram GEME is used.

<sup>90</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 57 (No. 10 §3; 11 §1), 65 (No. 13 §§3–4), etc.

<sup>91</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 50 (No. 8 §1), 54 (No. 9 §2).

<sup>92</sup> Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 60 (No. 11 §9).

<sup>93</sup> See Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 65 (No. 13 §3); cf. Lebrun, *Hymnes et prières hittites*, 221, 225.

<sup>94</sup> Compare also the following passages from the prayer of Arnuwanda and Asmunikal

2.5.2 *The Book of Psalms*

Very close parallels can be found in the Book of Psalms. In the pleadings of individual lament psalms, the supplicant sometimes intentionally calls himself עבדך, ‘your servant’.<sup>95</sup> In the individual lament psalms, God is often called אדני, ‘my lord’,<sup>96</sup> and אלהי or אלי, ‘my god’.<sup>97</sup> One example may suffice, the pleading at the beginning of Psalm 86:

Incline your ear, O YHWH, answer me, for I am poor and needy.	הטה יהוה אוזן ענני כי עני ואביון אני
Preserve my soul, for I am faithful. Save your servant—you are my god—who trusts in you. <sup>98</sup>	שמרה נפשי כי חסיד אני הושע עבדך אתה אלהי הבוטח אליך
Be gracious to me, my lord, for to you do I cry all day.	הנני אדני כי אליך אקרא כל היום
Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, my god, I lift up my soul.	שמח נפש עבדך כי אליך אדני נפשי אשא

In Psalm 79, the supplicants designate themselves as עבדיך, ‘your servants’ (79:2, 10). The word would seem to stand for all the faithful, not only for the royal family or the cultic personnel, as in the Hittite prayers.<sup>99</sup> The expression points out to God that the supplicants deserve a preferential treatment, in contrast to the enemies, who do not even know God (cf. 79:6).

Just like the Hittite prayer to the Storm-god, Psalm 123 elaborates the metaphors ‘servant’ and ‘lord’ in order to persuade the deity to show compassion (123:2–3):

Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hands of her mistress,	הנה כעיני עבדים אל יד אדניהם כעיני שפחה אל יד גברתה
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------

to the Sun-goddess, where they describe the misconduct of the enemies: ‘they would take your divine servants and maids and turn them into their own servants and maids’; and: ‘they divided up the priests, the holy priests, the priestesses, the anointed ones, the musicians, the singers, the cooks, the bakers, the plowmen, and the gardeners, and they made them their servants’; see Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 41–42 (No. 5 §7, §18).

<sup>95</sup> See Ps. 27:9; 31:17; 69:18; 86:2, 4, 16; 109:28; 143:2, 12.

<sup>96</sup> See Ps. 35:22, 23; 38:10, 16, 23; 86:3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 15, etc. Cf. also 44:24; 79:12 (communal laments).

<sup>97</sup> See Ps. 3:8; 22:1; 35:23; 38:16; 40:18; 86:2, etc. See also De Vos, *Klage als Gotteslob aus der Tiefe*, 196–200.

<sup>98</sup> The text is possibly in disorder.

<sup>99</sup> See Ps. 79:2, where עבדיך occurs in parallelism with חסידריך, ‘your faithful ones’. The expression עבדיך occurs also in 90:13, 16.

so our eyes look to YHWH our God,	כן עינינו אל יהוה אלהינו
until he have mercy upon us.	עד שיהנונו
Have mercy upon us, O YHWH, have mercy upon us,	חנונו יהוה חנונו
for we have had more than enough of contempt.	כי רב שבענו בו

The beautiful elaboration of the metaphors ‘servant’, ‘maid’, ‘lord’, and ‘mistress’, was clearly intended to make the pleading more convincing.

### 2.5.3 *Evaluation*

Both in Mursili’s prayers and in pleadings in the Psalms, the supplicant stresses his loyalty to the deity as well as his relationship with the deity by designating himself as ‘your servant’ (or ‘your maid-servant’) and by addressing the deity as ‘my lord’ (or ‘my lady’). In Mursili’s prayer to the Storm-god, and also in Psalm 123, there is a passage which clearly shows that the metaphors were used to persuade the deity to act like human lords and to show compassion. Again, the correspondences between the Hittite prayers and the biblical Psalms are conspicuous. For this *argumentum ad deum*, there is no reason to assume a fundamental, theological difference between Mursili’s prayers and the Psalms.

## 3. *Other Ancient Near Eastern Parallels*

The correspondences between Mursili’s *argumenta ad deum* and the *argumenta ad deum* found in the Psalms are especially conspicuous in the case of clusters 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5. However, Mursili’s arguments categorized under cluster 2.1 also have a counterpart in the Psalms, despite a remarkable difference.

If we want to find a convincing explanation for the similarity, we need to find out whether there are also parallels in other ancient Near Eastern texts. So far, scholars have suggested that the extent of correspondence between the Hittite prayers and the Psalms is exceptionally high and that this fact calls for an explanation. However, for several *argumenta ad deum* used by Mursili, parallels can be found also in texts from ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt.

In a recent monograph, Roger Tomes presents a beautiful collection of *argumenta ad deum* occurring in ancient Near Eastern texts.<sup>100</sup> Some

<sup>100</sup> R. Tomes, *I Have Written to the King, My Lord: Secular Analogies for the Psalms* (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 1), Sheffield 2005, 52–55.

other scholars have also found nice examples. I am indebted to their research for the following overview of Mesopotamian and Egyptian parallels. This adopts the same order as the clusters in the analysis above.

### 3.1 *The Consequences of the Plague*

I have not found any direct parallels to the idea that the gods will miss the sacrifices or the worship of their servants when these servants have died. The Mesopotamian and Egyptian texts do not warn that the gods will have to do without the sacrifices nor that they will miss the praises of the faithful. However, it is still possible that this *argumentum ad deum* was used outside Hatti and Israel. There is textual evidence suggesting this. For instance, King Aššurbanipal (Assyria, 669–627 BCE) records: ‘Their angry gods and wrathful goddesses I appeased with intercessory rites and laments to quieten the heart.’<sup>101</sup> The passage shows how important the rites and laments were thought to be.

Traces of the use of this *argumentum ad deum* can possibly be found also in the Babylonian composition *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, often designated as ‘the poem of the righteous sufferer’ (12th century BCE?<sup>102</sup>). The suppliant does not understand why the gods do not stop his distress and even the diviners and dream interpreters cannot reveal this to him. In the following passage the sufferer describes how he is treated:

Like one who had not made libations to his god,  
 Nor invoked his goddess with a food offering,  
 Who was not wont to prostrate, nor seen to bow down,  
 From whose mouth supplication and prayer were wanting,  
 Who skipped holy days, despised festivals,  
 Who was neglectful, omitted the gods’ rites,  
 Who had not taught his people reverence and worship,  
 Who did not invoke his god, but ate his food offering,  
 Who snubbed his goddess, brought (her) no flour offering,  
 Like one possessed(?), who forgot his lord,  
 Who casually swore a solemn oath by his god:  
 I, indeed, seemed (such a one)!  
 I, for my part, was mindful of supplication and prayer,  
 Prayer to me was the natural recourse, sacrifice my rule.  
 The day for reverencing the gods was a source of satisfaction to me,  
 The goddess’s procession day was my profit and return.

<sup>101</sup> See Tomes, *I Have Written to the King, My Lord*, 38.

<sup>102</sup> For the date of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, see W. von Soden, in: *TUAT* 3, 111–12.

In the past, the supplicant apparently never expected the gods to inflict as much suffering on a faithful worshipper as he experiences now. Possibly, he once assumed that it was possible to refer to his loyal fulfilment of the religious obligations and his cultic activities as an *argumentum ad deum*. In any case, now there can be no more room for such *argumenta ad deum*. Only a few lines later, this is indicated in clear terms:

I wish I knew that these things were pleasing to a god!  
 What seems good to one's self could be an offence to a god,  
 What in one's own heart seems abominable could be good to one's  
 god!  
 Who could learn the reasoning of the gods in heaven?  
 Who could grasp the intentions of the gods of the depths?  
 Where might human beings have learned the way of a god?<sup>103</sup>

The Babylonian Epic of Atrahasis suggests that the sacrifices are the indispensable food of the gods.<sup>104</sup> However, the resistance to the idea that the gods consume the sacrifices was not restricted to Israel. Jeffrey Tigay has demonstrated this with regard to the Akkadian Gilgameš Epic. The passages in the Epic of Atrahasis which suggest that the gods were hungry during the flood have been omitted in the more recent Epic of Gilgameš, or they have been adapted in order to avoid the impression that the gods were hungry when they could not consume sacrifices.<sup>105</sup>

The following formula, which concludes many Akkadian prayers, can be classified under the same cluster of *argumenta ad deum*:

so that he may praise your divinity,  
 in all habitations continually glorify your great deeds.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>103</sup> See Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture* 1, 486–92, esp. 488; cf. the text and translation in W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, Oxford 1975, 38–41. Albrektson, *History and the Gods*, 34, quotes a similar passage from a lamentation included in an inscription by the Assyrian king Aššurbanipal. Having described the trouble in his country, the king says: 'How long, O God, will you do this to me? I am treated like one who does not fear god and goddess.' For a German translation of the entire text and of an equally relevant lamentation by King Aššurnasipal I (end 11th century BCE), see A. Falkenstein, W. von Soden, *Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete*, Zürich 1953, 264–68, 269–70. See also the discussion in: K. van der Toorn, 'Theodicy in Akkadian Literature', in: Laato, De Moor (eds), *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, 57–89.

<sup>104</sup> See above, section 2.1.1.

<sup>105</sup> J.H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*, Philadelphia 1982, 214–40.

<sup>106</sup> See Tomes, *I Have Written to the King, My Lord*, 54. See also the conclusion of the prayer of King Aššurnasipal I, translated by Falkenstein, von Soden, *Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete*, 268.

We have seen that the prospect that the supplicants will praise the name of the deity after the salvation is also held out in Mursili's prayers and in many psalms.

### 3.2 *The Consequences of the Wickedness of the Enemies*

Both Mursili's prayers and several pleadings in the Psalms argue that the attacks of the enemies harm the property of the deity whom the supplicant addresses. Also, the reputation of the deity is said to be at stake. In the case of this second cluster of *argumenta ad deum*, it is not difficult to find close parallels in the Mesopotamian texts. In an Akkadian prayer we find the following extract, where the use of the second person corresponds to its use in some of the Hittite and Israelites passages quoted for cluster 2.2. In this Akkadian prayer, the supplicant points out that the assaults of the enemies damage the property of the deity:

Eulmaš, your sanctuary, the foe has assailed,  
Your pure chamber he has defiled.  
In your pure place he set his foot,  
Your far-famed dwelling he destroyed.<sup>107</sup>

The correspondence with the Hittite and Israelite arguments of cluster 2.2 is obvious.

### 3.3 *The Righteousness or the Capriciousness of the Gods*

Both Mursili and several supplicants in the Psalms ask the deity why he or she does not act in accordance with the righteous and benevolent nature which he or she has, according to tradition. There may be parallels in ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian literature, but the passages I have found are less explicit than the prayers of Mursili and the examples from the Book of Psalms. However, the idea that the gods do not act in accordance with the expectations of the supplicant is certainly found. The sufferer of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* recounts:

My god rejected me, and went far away.  
My goddess left me, and kept at a distance.  
My good genius, always at my side, was filled [with rage],  
My guardian angel panicked, and looked for someone else.<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> See Tomes, *I Have Written to the King, My Lord*, 54, where more Mesopotamian examples can be found.

<sup>108</sup> Translation: Van der Toorn, 'Theodicy in Akkadian literature', 77.

In his prayer to Amun, before the battle with the Hittites at Qadeš, Ramesses II asks: ‘Indeed, what’s up with you, my father Amun? Has a father (ever) ignored his son?’<sup>109</sup> These words show that Ramesses expects Amun to behave like a father and to stand by him during the battle. In a passage from the admonitions of Ipuwer, it is possibly the god Re who is accused of not fulfilling the role of a shepherd, a task that he is apparently expected to carry out:

Man sagt, “er ist ein Hirte für jedermann,  
nichts Schlechtes ist in seinem Herzen.”  
Doch dürftig ist seine Herde, wenn (/obwohl) er  
den Tag verbracht hat, sie zu hüten,  
(gemäß?) dem Feuer ihrer Herzen.<sup>110</sup>

I have not found any closer Mesopotamian or Egyptian parallels for the Hittite and Israelite *argumenta ad deum* of this cluster.

#### 3.4 *The Innocence of the Suppliant*

Beautiful declarations of innocence can be found in ancient Mesopotamian as well as ancient Egyptian texts. Several examples are mentioned by Gert Kwakkel and Roger Tomes.<sup>111</sup> It may suffice to quote one of them, again an example from the prayer of Ramesses II to Amun before the battle of Qadeš:

I have not transgressed a plan that you have decreed!...  
Have I not built for you a great many monuments?  
Have I not filled your temple with my captives?...  
I have given to you all my possessions by testament,  
I have dedicated all lands together to you in order to endow your offerings.  
I have caused tens of thousands of cattle to be presented to you, and all aromatic herbs.  
I have not left out (any) good deed, so as not to do them in your court.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>109</sup> See Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture* 2, 34; Tomes, *I Have Written to the King, My Lord*, 53.

<sup>110</sup> German translation: D. Sitzler, *Vorwurf gegen Gott: Ein religiöses Motiv im Alten Orient (Ägypten und Mesopotamien)* (Studies in Oriental Religions, 32), Wiesbaden 1995, 44. However, see also the deviant translation by N. Shupak in: Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture* 1, 97, with doubts whether the passage relates to the god Re or to the king.

<sup>111</sup> Kwakkel, *According to My Righteousness*, 293–94; Tomes, *I Have Written to the King, My Lord*, 33–34.

<sup>112</sup> See Tomes, *I Have Written to the King, My Lord*, 33.

Ramesses not only claims to be innocent, but also suggests that he deserves Amun's support in view of all the favours that he has granted him.

### 3.5 *The Relationship of the Supplicant with the Gods*

Not only in Hittite and Israelite but also in ancient Sumerian and Akkadian pleadings, the supplicant designates the deity whom he addresses as 'my lord' or 'my lady' while he refers to himself as 'your servant'.<sup>113</sup> Roger Tomes quotes a passage from an Egyptian prayer in which the supplicant tries to induce Thoth to care for him: 'Come to me and care for me. I am a servant for your house.'<sup>114</sup>

### 3.6 *Evaluation*

It would be very useful to scrutinize all ancient Near Eastern prayers and pleadings in search of *argumenta ad deum*. In particular for clusters 2.1 and 2.3, it would be interesting to find out whether there are clearer Mesopotamian and Egyptian parallels to Mursili's arguments. However, we can state with certainty that the striking similarities between the *argumenta ad deum* in Mursili's prayers and the arguments in the Psalms are not necessarily due to direct links between Hatti and Israel.<sup>115</sup> There are close parallels also in Mesopotamian and Egyptian texts.

For most of the clusters, it is impossible to maintain that the *argumenta ad deum* were only used in Hatti and Israel. Moshe Greenberg claims that the *argumenta ad deum* which Mursili uses in connection with the wickedness of the enemies (here: cluster 2.2) have clear parallels only in the Hebrew Bible and not in any other ancient Near Eastern text. He argues that this must be due to the similarity between the Hittite idea that the gods of the Hittites are only worshipped in Hatti, and the Israelite idea that Israel's relationship with YHWH is unique.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>113</sup> See Falkenstein, von Soden, *Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete*, 264–68; Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture* 1, 416, 485, 533, 534.

<sup>114</sup> See Tomes, *I Have Written to the King, My Lord*, 53.

<sup>115</sup> Similarly: Greenberg, 'Hittite Royal Prayers and Biblical Petitionary Psalms', 15, n. 5.

<sup>116</sup> Greenberg, 'Hittite Royal Prayers and Biblical Petitionary Psalms', 20–2.

However, Roger Tomes's quotation from an Akkadian prayer suggests that Greenberg's argument was incorrect. Also *argumenta ad deum* may have been widespread for which Mesopotamian and Egyptian parallels have not been found. More extensive research or new textual evidence may lead to that conclusion.

Why were certain *argumenta ad deum* so widespread? For some of them, this may be because they are quite human and express universal human considerations. However, for the similarities shown above it would seem more logical to assume that they are due to the diffusion of ancient literary and religious traditions over the whole Near East. It is absolutely clear that both the religion of the Hittites and the religion of the Israelites were influenced by the older religious traditions of the Babylonians.<sup>117</sup> Many correspondences can probably be explained on the basis of this mutual ancient Near Eastern background.

#### 4. Conclusions

At the end of this article, four conclusions can be drawn. I will elucidate each of them.

##### *Conclusion 1:*

None of the *argumenta ad deum* in the Book of Psalms is without a counterpart in the prayers of Mursili II.

During my quest for parallels in the Psalms to the *argumenta ad deum* of Mursili, I scrutinized the whole Book of Psalms. None of the *argumenta ad deum* in the Book of Psalms appeared to be without a counterpart in the prayers of Mursili. All the *argumenta ad deum* in the Psalms can be categorized under one of the five clusters that occur also in Mursili's prayers. They relate either to the things that human beings can do for the deity and to the pleasures that the deity will miss when they are dead (2.1), or to the damage enemies inflicted on his property and to the disputable reputation of the deity (2.2), or to the traditional belief in

---

<sup>117</sup> See Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 2: 'A serious comparison of Hittite and biblical prayers (...) can only be accomplished by the inclusion of the *tertium comparationis*, i.e., the Babylonian prayers, which exerted a considerable influence on all other Near Eastern cultures (...).' Mursili's prayer to the Sun-goddess of Arinna (No. 8) indirectly goes back to a Babylonian example; see Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 14, 30–31, 49–50. For an explanation of the numerous parallels, see also Tomes, 'I Have Written to the King, My Lord', 5–8.

the righteousness of the deity and his factual capriciousness (2.3), or to the innocence of the supplicant (2.4), or to the long-lasting relationship between the deity and the supplicant (2.5). This is an important result. In some cases the parallelism with Mursili's prayers is remarkably close. In other cases, the similarity may be a bit less specific. However, none of the *argumenta ad deum* in the Psalms is really unique.

There were Israelite supplicants who, just like Mursili, collected *argumenta ad deum* to induce the deity to help them. For instance, in Psalm 6 we can find arguments belonging to clusters 2.1 and 2.3, in Psalm 44 arguments from clusters 2.3 and 2.4, in Psalms 74 and 83 there are arguments belonging to clusters 2.2 and 2.3, and Psalm 79 appears to express arguments from three different clusters: 2.2, 2.4, and 2.5.

Most of the *argumenta ad deum* used by Mursili also occur in older Hittite prayers. In the case of the Psalms, there is every reason to believe that the *argumenta ad deum* were not invented by the composers of the psalms where they occur. Most of them also occur in other psalms or in other parts of the Hebrew Bible. Apparently, many supplicants sought solace in arguments that they knew from tradition. They selected the arguments which they considered convincing and incorporated them into their poems.

In some cases, the supplicants might seem to be somewhat opportunistic, especially when they use theological arguments that are one-sided. An example is Mursili's claim that the Sun-goddess is worshipped only in Hatti, while other Hittite texts suggest that this specific goddess is worshipped also outside the country.<sup>118</sup> An example from the Psalms might be the suggestion that God is shocked by the damage the enemies inflicted on the temple. Other parts of the Hebrew Bible suppose that God himself decided to surrender the temple to the enemies.<sup>119</sup> However, this mild form of opportunism is fully understandable in view of the dreadful situation of the supplicants.

#### *Conclusion 2:*

Only one *argumentum ad deum* in the prayers of Mursili II is without a counterpart in the Book of Psalms. The absence of the idea that God will miss the sacrifices of the deceased is in agreement with the different theology of the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. n. 12 above.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. n. 62 above.

If we start the comparison on the other side, with the prayers of Mursili, only one *argumentum ad deum* in these prayers appears to be without a close parallel in the Psalms. In Mursili's prayers, the argument that the gods will miss the sacrifices of their deceased servants is extremely important. The absence of this idea in the Psalms is in agreement with the different theology of the Hebrew Bible; see the analysis of cluster 2.1. As not only Mursili but also some Israelite supplicants tried to collect as many *argumenta ad deum* as possible, it can hardly be a coincidence that the Hebrew Bible never mentions the sacrificial cult as an *argumentum ad deum*. Apparently, it was deemed unacceptable to refer to the sacrifices when trying to construct an *argumentum ad deum*.

*Conclusion 3:*

In contrast with Mursili's prayers, the Psalms exclude every distinction between the deity who is expected to be righteous and the capricious deity who inflicts suffering contrary to all expectations.

Like conclusion 2, the third conclusion relates to an important difference between Mursili's prayers and the Psalms. In none of the Psalms is the righteousness of God left unaffected by attributing the suffering to other gods. The problem for the supplicant in the Psalms is that the tradition stresses God's righteousness and benevolence, while the experiences of the supplicant suggest that God is unreliable and inattentive. Mursili assumes that certain deities are more reliable and benevolent than the others. For Mursili, the righteousness of the Sun-goddess is not necessarily at stake. His suffering seems to be due to the capriciousness of other deities. See further the analysis of cluster 2.3.

*Conclusion 4:*

Both the gods of Mursili's prayers and the God of the Psalms are thought to be at least partially knowable, human-like and open to human arguments.

The prayers of Mursili, as well as the psalms where *argumenta ad deum* occur, take it for granted that the deity whom they address is at least partially knowable, human-like and open to human arguments. In both cases the sufferers believe that they have at least partial knowledge of the interests and characters of the gods. As *argumenta ad deum* take the interests and the character of the deity into account, such knowledge is a prerequisite for the construction of an *argumentum ad deum*.

This conclusion is important, because it differs from what we find in other texts from the ancient Near East. Contrary to others, Mursili and

the supplicants of the Psalms in which *argumenta ad deum* occur believe that it is useful to take issue with the gods. On the one hand, they are disappointed, because the gods seem to disregard the needs of their faithful servants. The gods do not seem to see the sorrow that befalls the supplicants. On the other hand, the supplicants do not despair. They still think it is possible to convince the gods and to persuade them to show compassion. For the Babylonian sufferer of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, the gods are not human-like. As he no longer believes that he can convince the gods or induce them to show mercy, he does not collect any arguments against the gods. This is different in the Psalms and in the prayers of Mursili.



## THE DISCOURSE OF PRAYING: READING NEHEMIAH 1

Eep Talstra

*Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam—The Netherlands*

### 1. *The Art of Praying: Religious Shock and Literary Skills*

How does one pray in a state of shock? Nehemiah, after having been informed about the walls of Jerusalem being ruined and its gates being burnt, sits down, weeps and mourns for days, as the text of Neh. 1:4 says. After that he expresses a prayer that demonstrates a high level of mastering the idiom of prayer as we know it from Solomon's prayer in the books of Kings and Chronicles. It is a prayer also with a clear and well-composed structure. Whose language is this? Most commentators find it difficult to relate the well-composed prayer of vv. 5–11 directly to the state of shock Nehemiah appears to be in. So, can this really be his language? Can it be his text?

If one begins ones reading of Nehemiah 1 with questions like these, one actually also raises a question of method. What should exegesis aim at, find an explanation for what is observed in the text as *difficulties*? Such as the difficulty that the professional reader finds it hard to believe that a state of shock and grief might lead to a literary well designed prayer? This is the main point in Klaus Baltzer's evaluation of the tradition of scholarly research of this prayer: 'The prayer of Nehemiah in Neh. 1 has not received a particularly warm reception among exegetes. Its authenticity has been the main issue in the discussion.'<sup>1</sup> And indeed research seems to continue just into this direction. For example, if one reads the *Biblischer Kommentar* on Nehemiah, one can see how K.-D. Schunck<sup>2</sup> plunges directly into the 'difficulties' of the text by the statement: 'In der jetzt vorliegenden Form gibt der Abschnitt mehrere Probleme auf.' ('In its actual form this section presents a number of problems'). Triggered by the tensions observed in Nehemiah 1 between vv. 2–4 and 5–11 exegetes tend to try to overcome the difficulties by

---

<sup>1</sup> Klaus Baltzer, Moses Servant of God and the Servants: Text and Tradition in the Prayer of Nehemiah (Neh 1:5–11), in: B.A. Pearson (ed.), *The Future of Early Christianity. Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester*, Minneapolis, 1991, 121–30.

<sup>2</sup> K.-D. Schunck, *Nehemia* (BK, 23/2), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1998, 11.

asking questions about *reconstruction*: what process produced the ‘difficulties’? Where does this text come from?

Working along this line of research one in fact asks two types of questions about the prayer in Nehemiah 1:

1. Is the text of the prayer in Neh. 1:5–11 an *original* part of the composition, called the Memoir of Nehemiah (i.e., the narrative sections in first person singular in the book, presumably originating from Nehemiah’s report on his work in Jerusalem, or his letter of defence about his policies)?
2. What is the *genre* of this prayer? Is it a complaint, a confession? A prayer of penitence and intercession? Could it be an existing text of a penitential prayer, inserted into Nehemiah 1? Or is this prayer of a mixed genre, a text composed from the phraseology of liturgical tradition, and slightly adapted to fit the context of Nehemiah 1?

These questions belong to a research type that wants to know more about the author: Is it Nehemiah himself or is it someone else? In addition one tries to assign the text to a *general category*, a type of prayer, a particular religious idiom. That is, can we locate this prayer somewhere in the history of the religion of Israel? In fact these are questions of the type: who owns this text?

These are fair questions for biblical research, they need to be asked and in the final section of this paper I want to contribute to the research into the reconstruction of the text by defending the option that an existing liturgical prayer has been reworked and inserted into the Nehemiah Memoir. However, in this conference on Psalms and Prayers we are also invited to consider different research questions, *i.e.*: can we as its readers understand the prayer’s design? The programme of today’s Joint Meeting phrases a statement that goes far beyond the area of reconstruction. It says: ‘a renewed study of prayer as a form of religious expression could be helpful to our multicultural and secularized Western societies’. Which implies, could the study of a text such as Nehemiah 1 help us to understand more of the art of praying? This clearly is a question not from the domain of *literary reconstruction*, but from the domain of *biblical theology*.

Put this way the textual analysis faces a new challenge. For, the outcome of textual reconstruction in several commentaries does not reveal much about praying as such. Rather one reaches the conclusion that the prayer in Nehemiah 1 is just piling up pious phrases from deuteronomistic stock about the sins of Israel, which results in

a prayer that hardly seems fit for Nehemiah's actual situation. So the question remains, do we learn something about the art of praying once we have found that most of the lexical material used in Nehemiah 1 comes from Deuteronomy, from Kings and a few other words from Chronicles? Therefore, on the level of method we find two different questions to deal with:

- *First*, how successful can one be if one attempts to reconstruct the authorship and the genre of the prayer of Nehemiah?
- *Second*, assume we would be able to determine the author or the text type, would we then understand more of the art of praying itself in the postexilic community or in the Old Testament?

So if one tries, in accordance with the theme of the conference, to combine both questions, the task is to find whether there is any *interaction* possible between an analysis of the text in terms of its *reconstruction* and an analysis in terms of the text's *discourse*, its line of argumentation. In general practice actual biblical research concentrates on matters of reconstruction first and only after that, occasionally, one tries to draw some conclusions in terms of biblical theology. This unbalance may be understandable, since, if we begin the analysis of Nehemiah 1 according to this classical order of the research, we will find that reconstruction is a complicated task, because it is not so easy to characterize the text in terms of genre and linguistic background. Some remarks on these topics may serve as an introduction to a discussion of the challenge how to balance textual reconstruction and biblical theology.

### 1.1 *The Literary Genre*

By a substantial number of scholars Nehemiah 1 is referred to as an example of the *penitential prayer* that is to be regarded as a new genre that has been developed in the setting of exilic and postexilic cult and worship.<sup>3</sup> However, in this research Nehemiah 1 is often mentioned just in passing, alongside with the more important examples of the genre of the penitential prayer (Neh. 9; Ezra 9; Dan. 9; Ps. 106). An example is the short remark 'cf. Neh. 1:7–8' by Smith-Christopher.<sup>4</sup> The reason why one finds difficulties in assigning Nehemiah 1 to the

---

<sup>3</sup> See the list composed by M.J. Boda, *Praying the Tradition: The Origin and Use of Tradition in Nehemiah 9* (BZAW 140), Berlin 1999, 198–200.

<sup>4</sup> D.L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Overtures to Biblical Theology), Minneapolis, 2002, 119.

penitential prayers becomes clear in Boda's study of the much longer prayer of Nehemiah 9.<sup>5</sup> First he sets his task: 'The first step in discovering the roots of the prayer in Neh. 9 is a formcritical analysis which accurately describes the main elements in the prayer.' He continues by drawing a distinction between two types of penitential prayer. One type is in prose: (Neh. 1 and 9; Dan. 9) and it refers to *law* for reason of explaining the judgment, the second one is in poetry (Ps. 106), which after mentioning judgement also expresses reasons for *restoration*. The problem with Nehemiah 1, also addressed by Boda, is that by vv. 8–9 Nehemiah 1 is part of group 1, but in giving the reason for restoration it also is part of group 2. The chapter does not fit the categories. The difficulty in assigning Nehemiah 1 to a particular genre is mentioned also by H.G.M. Williamson, '... the prayer does not fit easily into any formal category known to us', which, I think, we may have to read as an understatement for: 'it does not fit at all'.<sup>6</sup> Williamson speaks of 'a special and individual composition' but he also adds the observation that cult-historically it is understandable that the earlier communal prayer of lament is taken over by the prayer of penitence. So one still wonders how one has to evaluate the relationship of formcritical and literary analysis of Nehemiah 1.

## 1.2 *The Language of the Chapter*

Is the analysis of vocabulary helpful in our attempts to reconstruct the text's background? Does language mirror a particular viewpoint? Exegetes usually make the observation that the writer of the prayer thoroughly knew the deuteronomistic language and composed a prayer using that idiom. From there the question is addressed: what is the influence of dttr theological thinking in the book of Nehemiah? In current research the tendency is to take linguistic material not as an expression of some author's theological thinking, rather it is taken to be an expression of the viewpoints of particular religious groups. R. Albertz, for example, debates with O.H. Steck the topic of interpreting the language of Nehemiah.<sup>7</sup> Against Steck, who sees in Nehemiah's texts the theocratic tradition of P, he holds that Steck is unable to explain why the prayer of Nehemiah 1 adopts the deuteronomistic

<sup>5</sup> M.J. Boda, *Praying the Tradition*, 21, 31.

<sup>6</sup> H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (WBC, 16), Waco 1985, 167–8.

<sup>7</sup> R. Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit* (ATD Ergänzungsreihe 8/1–2), Göttingen 1992, 463–4.

point of view. The reason according to Albertz is that Steck analyses too much in terms of theological concepts rather than in sociological terms of particular groups whose views are expressed in particular texts. The research of M.J. Boda proceeds along these lines.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, however, the sociological clarity found in Albertz's work starts to fade away again. Based on the idiom found Boda analyses Nehemiah 9, and also Nehemiah 1, as texts of a mixed origin, coming from a group that combines deuteronomistic traditions, P and Ezekelian traditions. Is that still 'a group'? So the question remains how to analyse the text of the prayer as a discourse: how does it argue when making use of this mixed idiom and what it is the reader should be convinced of in reading it?

### 1.3 *The Order of the Research*

Could one by a hypothesis on the reconstruction of the text also address the question of biblical theology as phrased in the introduction of this conference ('a renewed study of prayer as a form of religious expression')? When starting from the study of reconstruction, the actual effect is that in the end one hardly finds room for questions of biblical theology. The attempts for reconstruction lead into a concentration on someone's religion. In the works of Albertz and Boda just mentioned, the emphasis is on *sociology* of religion: can we identify from the study of language and text particular religious groups of a deuteronomistic or a priestly background? In this way biblical theology becomes a discipline describing the religious interests of these groups rather than an analysis of the texts themselves. Commentaries on the book of Nehemiah tend to concentrate more on the person of Nehemiah, rather than on particular groups. According to Schunck, Nehemiah 1 shows the importance of free prayer, as do other short lines of prayer by Nehemiah, e.g., in 2:4.<sup>9</sup> Williamson analyses Nehemiah 1 as the story of Nehemiah's calling, emphasizing his acting as a model leader.<sup>10</sup> But also in this way the prayer as a religious discourse in itself hardly seems to be addressed.

---

<sup>8</sup> M.J. Boda, *Praying the Tradition*; see also Idem, 'Zechariah: Master Mason or Penitential Prophet?', in: R. Albertz, B. Becking (eds), *Yahwism after the Exile. Perspectives in Israelite Religion in the Persian Era*, Assen 2003, 49–69.

<sup>9</sup> K.-D. Schunck, *Nehemia*, 50.

<sup>10</sup> H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemia*, 175.

So, if from the perspective of reconstruction it appears difficult to address questions of biblical theology and praying, it may be helpful to start from the other end, starting with emphasis on the text as a discourse, its line of argumentation and the way in which it is in dialogue with existing literary traditions. How does it debate with God? How does it reuse existing language of prayer? These questions imply an analysis in terms of *intertextuality*: how are existing traditions of praying being used and interpreted?

Which means, what is it we want to understand: religious groups of postexilic early Judaism? Or understand something of their art of praying? Can one try to do both? It is important to stress that the proposal is just to reverse the order of research questions, not to eliminate some. Research in composition and discourse first,<sup>11</sup> questions of literary origin next. Can we first understand somehow the process of literary design and composition? Is the prayer only piling up pious phrases from deuteronomistic stock? Or is it doing something else, i.e. mirroring the creativity needed in times of crisis? If that is a correct assumption, the question in line with biblical theology would be: how did the authors reactivate vital elements of their tradition? What about the prayer as a unique composition? How does it use the language of praying? What makes this prayer a special discourse, granted that it seems to be composed only from traditional phrases found in psalms and deuteronomistic prayers?

## 2. *Composition and Discourse*

When we study the structure of the prayer, it is important to ask: what is the main line of communication presented to the reader by the discourse structure? Is that an expression of penitence or of something else? The claim to be made here is that Nehemiah 1 is much more than a compilation of prayer statements mainly taken from deuteronomistic stock. In structure and design the text is a discourse leading its reader through a particular line of argumentation, exploring and expanding lines of argumentation known from traditions as in Deuteronomy 9–10, 1 Kings 8, 2 Chronicles 6–7 and Psalm 106. In order to provide a foundation for this claim, the task is to analyse the text in terms of:

---

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Chr. Hardmeier, *Text Welten der Bibel entdecken. Grundlagen und Verfahren einer textpragmatischen Literaturwissenschaft der Bibel* (Textpragmatische Studien zur Hebräischen Bibel 1/1–2), Gütersloh 2003/2004.

1. design: i.e. describe its unique line of argumentation and composition (2.1.)
2. intertextuality: i.e. describe the interaction of the structure of this prayer with that of other prayers in Old Testament tradition (2.2.)

## 2.1 *Design*

Narrative in 1st person singular

1. Now I was בְּשׁוֹשׁן הַבִּירָה וְאֲנִי הָיִיתִי בְּשׁוֹשׁן הַבִּירָה
  2. Reported dialogue: Jews, left (or escaped) from captivity; living in Jerusalem
  3. Shame: walls in ruins, gates burnt
  4. I sat down, I wept, I mourned for days;  
I was fasting and praying to the God of Heaven
  5. Ah YHWH, God of Heaven,  
אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל וְהַגִּבּוֹר  
keeping covenant and loyalty to those loving him and keeping his commandments (Deut 7:9; 1 Kgs 8:23)  
שָׁמַר הַבְּרִית וְהַסֵּד לְאַהֲבָיו וּלְשִׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו
  6. Let your ear be attentive, your eyes be opened (1 Kgs 8:29; 2 Chron. 6:40)  
תְּהִי נָא אָזְנוֹךָ־קֹשֶׁבֶת וְעֵינֶיךָ פְּתוּחוֹת (Ps. 10:17; 61:2; 66:19; 142:7)  
to listen to the prayer of your servant  
לְשִׁמְעַ אֱלֹהֵי־פֶלֶת עַבְדְּךָ  
that I am praying today,  
אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מִתְפַּלֵּל לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם  
day and night, upon/on behalf of your servants  
יּוֹמָם וּלְיָלֵיל עַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדֶּיךָ  
confessing the sins of Israel—we (1 Kgs 8:33)  
I and my family we have sinned, offended you לָךְ הִבַּלְנוּ וְלֹא־שָׁמְרֵנוּ  
7. we have not kept וְלֹא־שָׁמְרֵנוּ the commandments (1 Kgs 8:58)  
that you commanded to Moses, your servant  
אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָ אֶת־מֹשֶׁה עַבְדְּךָ
  8. Remember the word  
זְכֹר־נָא אֶת־הַדְּבָר  
that you commanded to Moses, your servant (Deut. 30; 1 Kgs 8:56–59)  
אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָ אֶת־מֹשֶׁה עַבְדְּךָ  
in case you are unfaithful תִּמְעַלְוּ, I will scatter you (1Chron. 5:25; 10:13)
  9. But if you return and keep my commandments—I will gather ...  
and bring them to the place, chosen to establish my Name
  10. since they are your servants, your people (1 Kgs 8:51)  
וְהֵם עַבְדֶּיךָ וְעַמְּךָ
  11. Ah Lord,  
אֲנִי אֲדֹנָי  
let your ear be attentive,  
תְּהִי נָא אָזְנוֹךָ־קֹשֶׁבֶת  
to the prayer of your servant and the prayer of your servants  
אֱלֹהֵי־פֶלֶת עַבְדְּךָ וְאֱלֹהֵי־פֶלֶת עַבְדֶּיךָ  
delight in the fear of your Name לִירְאָה אֶת־שִׁמְךָ (Ps. 61:6; 86:11)  
Make successful your servant today,  
וְהַצְלִיחֵנִי לְעִבְרֶיךָ הַיּוֹם  
grant him mercy in front of this man (1 Kgs 8: 50)  
וְתַנְחֵנוּ לְלִדְחָמִים לְפָנֵי הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה
- Narrative in 1st person singular
11. Now I was בְּשׁוֹשׁן הַבִּירָה וְאֲנִי הָיִיתִי בְּשׁוֹשׁן הַבִּירָה

The composition of Nehemiah 1 exhibits a particular ordering of the text produced by a number of inclusions starting from the chapter's narrative beginning and continuing until its narrative ending. These inclusions are signalled both by syntactic features and by lexical patterns.

## 2.2 *Syntactic Markers*

In vv. 1 and 11 we read a first person singular *qatal* + personal pronoun: וְאֲנִי הָיִיתִי. The prayer itself is framed by the address יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יְהוּדָה in v. 5 and אֱלֹהֵי אֲדָרְיָה in v. 11, followed by a call for attention: *yiqtol* + subject + adjective: 'let your ear be attentive'. In v. 6 this call has *yiqtol* continued by infinitive and attributive clause לְשָׁמֹעַ + תְּהִי נָא, and in v. 11 it has *yiqtol*, continued by w<sup>e</sup>-imp. נָא תְהִי נָא וְהַצְלִיחֵנָּה.

In v. 8 the central request of the prayer is expressed by the asyndetic imperative נָא זְכֹר 'please, remember'. The absence of a conjunction is important, since it underlines the independence of the request. It is not a conclusion or a consequence related to statements read earlier in the text. The imperative 'remember' refers to 'the word' given to Moses with respect to the plural 'you', i.e. Israel. YHWH is now asked to remember this word, based on the argument: 'they are your servants and your people', an argument that is expressed by a nominal clause + ׀, in v. 10. This ordering of the text around the central request in v. 8: 'remember' stresses the contrast between the commandments given through Moses (7) and the word given to Moses (8). The commandments belong to the section of the confession: we have not kept them. The word however, belongs to the central demand: remember. For this reason it may be better not to read the prayer as a sequence of confession, appeal and supplication for the people and for Nehemiah personally, as H.G.M. Williamson suggests.<sup>12</sup> He sees a first request (remember, v. 8) and a second one (make successful, v. 11), but that interpretation overlooks the central position of 'remember', in the structure marked by the repetition of the call for attention of v. 5 in v. 11. The central position of 'remember' is also marked by the argument added to it in the nominal clause + ׀: 'They are your servants'. God's relationship with the people is fundamentally connected to the prayer for remembering. The demand to be successful can be read as a personal application of

<sup>12</sup> H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemia*, 173.

the action asked from God: remember the word commanded to Moses. It sets a larger framework for Nehemiah's short prayer statements: remember me! Neh. 5:19; 6:14; 13:14, 22, 29, 31.

This ordering of the text gives good reason to claim that it is not appropriate to label Nehemiah 1 as a prayer of penitence, since it focuses on the central request: please remember your promise.

### 2.3 *Lexical Markers*

Within the syntactically balanced composition a number of shifts can be observed in the function of some words, particularly with the use of the noun עֶבֶד 'servant' and the verb שָׁמַר 'to observe'. Both words are relatively frequent in this chapter. The noun עֶבֶד is used 22× in the book of Nehemiah, 8 of them in the first chapter. The verb שָׁמַר is used 12× in the book of Nehemiah, 4 of them in the first chapter. So, in comparison to the complete book of Nehemiah, the text of the prayer in chapter one is characterized by a frequent use of the word 'servant', be it in various functions. In the first part of the prayer the emphasis is on the prayer by Nehemiah, the servant, on behalf of the children of Israel, the servants. After that Moses is introduced as the servant and the people are explicitly mentioned as the servants. At the end the prayer again speaks of Nehemiah as the servant, so that the two can be combined: the prayer comes from both the servant Nehemiah and the servants Israel (v. 11).

This is language as we find it in 1 Kgs 8: David, Solomon and Moses are 'servant' (e.g. vv. 23–29; 52–56). That is quite different from other cases in Nehemiah, such as in Neh. 9:36–7, where 'servants' has a negative meaning: 'we are slaves', which has to be read in contrast to promises as in Lev. 25:42, 55: 'The children of Israel are my servants', i.e., not to be someone else's slaves.

Another, but related shift is present in the role of Moses, the servant. In v. 7 the confession is stated about 'us', we are the ones who did not observe the commandments given through Moses. The central request, remember, however, refers to 'the word' given through Moses. Both statements are expanded by the same attributive clause: צוֹיֵת אֶת־מִשְׁנֵה עֲבָדֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר. Both to 'the commandments' and to 'the word' the definitive article is attached, which implies: both are *known* at textual level. To the reader they apparently do not need further introduction or explanation. Since Moses is present only in the version of Solomon's prayer in Kings, not in the version of Chronicles, we may have to look into in Kings and

in related texts in Deuteronomy to find why ‘the word’ is treated here as known to the reader. (1 Kgs 8:56; Deut. 30:3f.) This concurs with the shift from the use of the verb שָׁמַר ‘to keep the commandments’ (vv. 5, 7, 9) to ‘have delight in fearing your Name’ (v. 11). It marks a transition from the language of the Torah to the language of worship that we also know from the Psalms (61:6; 86:11).

From the syntactically and lexically marked textual structure, one may conclude that the centre of the prayer refers to the main issue of the prayer: remember the word, i.e. the promise of renewal commanded to Moses. One also can observe that by this turning point in the prayer the roles of the main participants in the text change:<sup>13</sup>

- *Moses*: a move from law to promise.
- *Israel*: a move from servants Nehemiah is praying for to servants that are praying themselves.
- *Commandments*: a move from those observing the commandments to those fearing the *Name*.
- *Nehemiah*: a move from confession of sins to hope and a prayer for mercy in a new situation.

So what does this composition demonstrate about the art of praying? That this biblical prayer is a discourse much more than it is religious expression. Indeed the text uses traditional deuteronomic language including some additions from the language known from the book of Chronicles, but it structures this material into a skilfully composed text. The prayer does not concentrate on a cry for help in the actual situation, but on the role of the new leader in a new situation. His leadership exhibits an analogy to the leadership that was expected from kings like Solomon and it points back to the praying by the first leader of the people, Moses (Deut. 9:27 ‘remember’). But the prayer does not only emphasise the role of the new leader, leading his people in renewal and in prayer. As just mentioned, it also focuses on a change in the roles of the other participants, the most important one being Israel taking the position of servants of יהוה, just like Moses and Nehemiah. In comparison to 1 Kgs 8: 30, 52, that is something new.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> For comparable shifts in the set of participants in 1Kgs 8, see E. Talstra, *Solomon's Prayer. Synchrony and Diachrony in the Composition of 1Kings 8, 14–61*, Kampen 1993, 167–8.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. E. Talstra, *Solomon's Prayer*, 154, 159 on the ‘servant’ in 1 Kgs 8:23, 36.

Therefore, a phenomenon like this is a good start for a next step: intertextual research.

## 2.4 *Structural Elements and Intertextual Relations*

1 Kgs 8:28–61

2 Chron. 6:19–42

Neh. 1:6–11

(a) Turn to the prayer of your servant to listen to the supplication that your servant is praying to your presence today	Turn to the prayer of your servant to listen to the supplication that your servant is praying to your presence [ ]	(a) May your ear be attentive and your eyes be opened  to listen to the prayer of your servant  that I am praying to your presence today, <i>daily and night</i> , concerning the children of Israel, your servants [confession]
in that your eyes are open over this house <i>night and day</i> to listen to the prayer... that your servant prays to this house	in that your eyes are open over this house <i>daily and night</i> to listen to the prayer... that your servant prays to this house	(b) 8. Remember the word you commanded to Moses, your servant
[seven petitions]	[seven petitions]	(c) They are your servants and your people.
– – 50 <i>Forgive</i> the sins	– –	(a) [...] May your ear be attentive to
(e) Grant them mercy		(d) the prayer of your servant and the prayer of your servants
(c) 51 Your people and your heritage they are		(e) And grant him mercy in front this man
(a) In that your eyes are open to	May your eyes be opened and your ears be attentive to	
(d) to the prayer of your servant and of your people Israel to listen to them.	the prayer of this place.	
53. You made them your heritage		
(b) as spoken by Moses, your servant		
	[ark]	
(b) 56. No word has failed of all He spoke by Moses, his servant.		
59. May these words be near to YHWH <i>daily and night</i> ...		

Can the text of the prayer in Nehemiah 1 be located on a continuous line of religious tradition by identifying the various traditions of praying this composition is in dialogue with, in view of the new situation the Jews (Neh. 1:2) are facing in the Persian period? Formulating this as a goal means that the first task of exegetical work is not to identify particular religious groups with whom this text may have originated. The first task is to find out more about the balance of traditions and their reshaping for readers in a new context. That is, in the case of Nehemiah 1, what can we learn about its art of praying? Clearly the words of Nehemiah 1 do not represent 'free prayer' as such, as Schunck terms it (n. 9). It certainly is a unique text<sup>15</sup> and, indeed, it may not be possible to definitively assign it to a particular genre, but that is a problem for our discipline, not for the text. Our problem of classification does not make this text a 'free prayer'. The prayer is being formulated in dialogue with existing discourses of prayer, adjusting and reordering them. It continues a tradition of praying. That can be observed from the intertextual comparison presented above.

As a discourse the text of Nehemiah 1 is in dialogue with the final redaction of the prayer in 1 Kings 8,<sup>16</sup> i.e., it redesigns and updates parts of the text known from 1 Kings 8, adjusting it to the actual situation of early Judaism as described in the book of Nehemiah. Just as 2 Chron. 6–7 is a redesign of material taken from Kings, so is Nehemiah 1, but it is a different one. The introduction of Moses, as the lawgiver first, and secondly also as the one to whom the word of renewal and return was given, shows that the text in Nehemiah, via the role of Moses in 1 Kgs 8, also is in dialogue with the last redaction of the book of Deuteronomy. In its framework around the commandments one finds the words of return from exile, Deut. 4 and 30.

One can observe that the prayer of Nehemiah does not interact with the full text of Solomon's prayer. It does not refer to the text of the seven petitions that are in the centre of 1 Kgs 8. That is an additional argument against categorizing the text as a penitential prayer. Rather it uses important elements from the framework around the seven petitions. These elements, in the order of their presentation in Nehemiah 1, are:

<sup>15</sup> H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemia*, 167: 'a special and individual composition'.

<sup>16</sup> E. Talstra, *Solomon's Prayer*, 255 ('a post-dtr redaction with emphasis on the prayer for forgiveness and the role of Moses').

- a. The ear, the eyes, the prayer of today
- b. Moses: commandment and word
- c. The position of the people: for they are ‘your people’
- d. The prayer of the servant and the prayer of the people
- e. Mercy in front of this man

The elements b,c,d,e being present in 1 Kgs 8, have not been used in the parallel text of Solomon’s prayer in Chronicles. Probably some elements in 1Kgs 8 (cf. the verses mentioning Moses) were not part of the text that was used by the Chronicler, or some parts deliberately have been replaced by elements more suited to the themes of the book of Chronicles (cf. 2 Chron 6:40 ‘the prayer of this place’ and 1Kgs 8:52, Neh. 1:11). In either case it means that the writer of Nehemiah’s prayer orientated his text to the structure of king Solomon’s prayer in Kings, not to the one in Chronicles, even when in some case one can observe that in terms of grammar and lexicon the language used in Nehemiah is closer to the language of Chronicles (e.g., *ולילה* in v. 6 and *אתם תמעלו* in v. 8).

- a. an attentive ear and open eyes

Neh. 1:6	תהי נא אוֹנֶךָ קִשְׁבַת וְעֵינֶיךָ פְּתוּחוֹת לִשְׁמֹעַ אֶל־תְּפִלַּת עַבְדְּךָ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מִתְפַּלֵּל לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם יוֹמָם וּלְיַלָּה עַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדֶּיךָ
Neh. 1:11	תהי נא אוֹנֶךָ קִשְׁבַת אֶל־תְּפִלַּת עַבְדְּךָ וְאֶל־תְּפִלַּת עַבְדֶּיךָ
1 Kgs 8: 52	לְהִיּוֹת עֵינֶיךָ פְּתוּחוֹת אֶל־תְּחִנַּת עַבְדְּךָ וְאֶל־תְּחִנַּת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל
2 Chron. 6:40	יְהִי־נָא עֵינֶיךָ פְּתוּחוֹת וְאוֹנֶיךָ קִשְׁבוֹת לְתַפִּילַת הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה

The way in which Nehemiah 1 reuses the idiom of 1Kgs 8:28–30 and 49–52 is complex. The main grammatical difference is that in Nehemiah’s prayer the infinitives: ‘in that your eyes may be opened’<sup>17</sup> have been replaced by a direct demand: ‘may your ear be attentive and your eyes be opened.’ That is also the case in 2 Chron. 6:40. In other elements, however, the text of Nehemiah is closer to the text of Kings, e.g. the expression in 1 Kgs 8:28: ‘...that your servant prays in front of you today’ is also used in Neh. 1:6. The idiom *ולילה* fits the idiom of Chronicles, but the awkward combination of ‘today, day and night’ only can be understood from a process of re-reading the text of Kings. Syntactically one could make sense of the construction

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of the syntactic structure cf. E. Talstra, *Solomon’s Prayer*, 90–1, 127–132.



The words about the attentive ear are related to the prayer of the servant (Solomon and Nehemiah) and to the prayer of ‘the people’ (1 Kgs 8) or ‘your servants’ (Neh. 1). That is an application of the status of the people mentioned in v. 10. The text in 2 Chron. 6 argues differently: most important there is the prayer of ‘this place’, i.e. the temple. Clearly Nehemiah 1 reuses and updates the language of prayer as it has been transmitted in the book of Kings.

e. prayer for mercy

Neh. 1:11

Gen. 43:14

1Kgs 8:50

Jer. 42:12

ותנהו לרחמים לפני האיש הזה  
ואל שדי יתן לכם רחמים לפני האיש  
ונתחם לרחמים לפני שביהם  
ואתן לכם רחמים ורחם אהכם

The prayer for mercy to be obtained from a foreign ruler is found in a number of texts<sup>18</sup> not only in prayers (Ps. 106:46; 1 Kgs 8:50, cf. Deut. 13:18), but in narratives related to prayers too (Gen. 43:14; Jer. 42:12; Dan. 1:9; 2Chron. 30:9). The formula used in Nehemiah 1 is parallel to the one in 1 Kgs 8, but it adds an element that is seen only in the text of Gen. 43: ‘in front of the/this man’. The unexpected phrase ‘this man’ is sometimes interpreted in terms of form criticism as a word taken from the tradition of lawsuit and indicating the opponent in the case.<sup>19</sup> The commentators of Nehemiah, to my knowledge, do not refer to the idiom of Genesis, probably since it would not fit the idea of deuteronomistic language in Nehemiah. But if one argues in terms of intertextuality one could allow for the parallel with Genesis and see the comparable situation of the narratives. ‘This man’ is not the enemy who brought Israel into exile (1 Kgs 8:50), but he is the Persian king, a foreign ruler, comparable to the role of Joseph, representative of the Pharaoh in Genesis 43. A number of times he is referred to as ‘the man, the ruler of the country’ הארץ האדני (Gen. 42 passim). This parallel may clarify why only at the end of the prayer, in v. 11, we find the application of all that has been said before to the actual situation. Based on the discourse of the entire prayer Nehemiah utters two coordinated imperatives, asking for God’s help in the task he is

<sup>18</sup> See E. Talstra, *Solomon’s Prayer*, 126, 223–4.

<sup>19</sup> K.-D. Schunck, *Nehemiah*, 29.

about to take upon him: since you promised to us a future, make me successful and grant me mercy.

The fact that only these last lines explicitly refer to the actual situation of Nehemiah and his mourning and praying about Jerusalem made exegetes think that the prayer itself has to be evaluated as a text that is fully external to the composition of Nehemiah 1 and 2. It is supposed to be a later redactional addition. A more moderate view takes it to be an existing liturgical prayer slightly updated to be used in Nehemiah's Memoir at the moment of its composition. This second option fits the analysis in this paper. The language and the structure of the prayer may be external to the Nehemiah Memoir indeed, but one can still defend that the prayer as a carefully composed discourse fits its context and has been added for a good reason. In this way Nehemiah's demands to God concerning his immediate task are integrated in a much broader tradition of praying. Moreover, even when it can be demonstrated, how much of the prayer echoes the structure of Solomon's prayer especially in the version of Kings, clearly 'more than Solomon is here'. Nehemiah is integrated into a longer series of leaders, Solomon, Moses, even Joseph, who have been crucial for Israel's identity. For that reason the text of Nehemiah 1 is not a penitential prayer, but prayer about 'remember and renewal'.

### 3. *Conclusions*

#### 3.1 *Text type*

A general typology of the prayer, claiming: its idiom is deuteronomistic language, its genre is a penitential prayer, does not explain much of the prayer of Nehemiah 1. H.G.M. Williamson, in his discussion of the Nehemiah Memoir<sup>19</sup> criticizes common methodology that usually puts form critical analysis before establishing literary unity. That remark also applies to the study of Nehemiah 1. It is a unique text that takes its own position in the flow of biblical traditions of praying. Its central petition: 'Please remember', the frequent usage of the noun עֶבֶד 'servant' and the shift from confession to hope in the position of the main participants in the text emphasise its uniqueness, but also make the prayer contribute

<sup>19</sup> H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemia*, see the Introduction, xxv.

to the larger context of the book of Nehemiah. This is a basic text for a new community, with the status of 'servants'. The prayer is part of a developing tradition of prayers in early Judaism.

### 3.2 *Language and Text*

As a literary composition the prayer is located between the early exilic version of Solomon's prayer in Kings and the post exilic version in Chronicles. The prayer for mercy is found in the version in Kings, not Chronicles. The same is true of the role of Moses. Its chiasmic structure is also close to the composition of Solomon's prayer in the version in Kings. The intertextual relationship with existing traditions of praying demonstrates that this chapter is not concentrating on the installation of Nehemiah as such. Not being a prophet, neither a king, nor a priest, he is assigned to a tradition of leadership that was crucial with regard to Israel's identity among the nations (Joseph, Moses, Solomon).

### 3.3 *Biblical Prayer*

Can the study of Nehemiah 1 contribute to 'the study of prayer as a form of religious expression', as it was stated in the agenda of this conference on Psalms and Prayers? The linguistic and the intertextual analysis has changed that goal somewhat. Nehemiah 1 is a discourse with a clear line of argumentation rather than religious expression. The prayer of Neh. 1 demonstrates the *freedom* of addressing God. One may claim that biblical prayers in general are marked by direct address as their most characteristic feature. This implies two further characteristics as is also clear from the text of Nehemiah 1.

1. This art of praying is neither something ritual, nor an individual meditation. Rather it is *communication*, based on a long tradition of texts about God, his people and their common history. Communication allows for room for many genres: complaint, confession and even exclamations such as: 'please remember'. From this basic feature of communication, one may conclude that biblical prayer as in Nehemiah does not attempt to make God change reality; rather it wants the common history to continue. With its emphasis on communication, using all possible genres to address God, biblical prayer is located between two extremes to be found in human religion. It avoids communal ritual, techniques of charming or attempts to manipulate and it avoids the techniques of evoking spiritual experiences or individual meditation. Rather it is debate, direct address.

2. Biblical prayer with its emphasis on common history, using all existing genres of communication is *intertextual* by definition. This art of praying is impossible without traditional textual material to be reused for actual praying. Nehemiah's prayer exhibits knowledge of tradition, it is in interaction with existing discourses of praying. Based on that long tradition it finds freedom to compose a new discourse to add again a chapter to the continuing dialogue of God and his people.

## SING TO THE LORD A NEW SONG

Roger Tomes

*University of Manchester—Great Britain*

In six psalms the psalmist either claims to be singing a new song (40:3; 144:9) or exhorts others to do so (33:3; 96:1; 98:1; 149:1). The same exhortation is found also in Isa. 42:10 and a similar one at the beginning of the psalm of praise in Judith: 'Raise to him a new psalm' (16:1). The question I wish to try and answer in this paper is: In what sense are these psalms new?

I take it for granted that the psalms in which the summons or the promise to sing a new song comes are to be understood as the new songs themselves. Commentators have occasionally suggested that this is not so,<sup>1</sup> but it seems to be a reasonable assumption to make. So: What is new about them?

One possibility is of course that they are new only in the sense that every psalm is new, even if it only recycles familiar ideas and expressions. Gunkel treated the expression as one which has lost its original force:

The original meaning of the formula was that, while old songs might do for ordinary use, for a wholly new occasion the poet would write a new one; but later it was used in all kinds of different ways.<sup>2</sup>

Robert Culley regards it as one of more than a hundred formulaic expressions available to the 'professional' poets who composed psalms for other people to use, 'pleasing versions of revered and respected traditional forms.' Thus they would not produce 'an original text according to our standards.'<sup>3</sup> However, before we acquiesce in this verdict, we should consider some other possibilities.

---

<sup>1</sup> E.g. J.J.S. Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, London <sup>5</sup>1882, vol. 1, 196 (on Ps. 96); A. MacLaren, *The Book of Psalms* (Expositor's Bible), London <sup>9</sup>1908, vol. 1, 314 (on Ps. 33); W.O.E. Oesterley, *The Psalms*, London 1939, 571 (on Ps. 144). Ps. 144:9 is sometimes regarded as a vow to sing a new song: J.H. Eaton, *The Psalms* (Torch Commentary), London 1967, 308; A.B. Rhodes, *Psalms* (Layman's Bible Commentaries), London, 1961, 186; L.C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150* (WBC, 21), Waco TX 1983.

<sup>2</sup> H. Gunkel, *Psalmen* (HKAT), Göttingen, <sup>4</sup>1926, 140; cf. H. Gunkel, J. Begrich, *Einleitung in den Psalmen*, Göttingen 1933, 33.

<sup>3</sup> R.C. Culley, *Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms*, Toronto 1967, 113.

There is nothing distinctive about the form of the psalms under consideration which either links them with each other or distinguishes them from other psalms. It has been noted that Psalm 33, although not an acrostic, has twenty-two verses, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, a feature it shares with Psalms 38 and 103 and Lamentations 5. This may be coincidence;<sup>4</sup> but some commentators think it may be a deliberate experiment in form, and claim to find ‘considerable regularity of the internal structure and balance,’ noting that ‘the repeated use of the same words, or word forms derived from the same root, throughout the psalm adds further to the overall sense of unity.’<sup>5</sup> The argument would be more convincing if the psalm were a true acrostic like its neighbour, Psalm 34, and of course it would only supply a reason for calling this particular psalm a ‘new song’. The other psalms under consideration have no outstanding features which might indicate an innovation in form; indeed there are doubts about the unity of Psalms 40 and 144.

Another possibility is that the psalms were composed to be sung to new tunes. Some of the terms used in the psalm titles in the first three books of the Psalter are probably best interpreted as the names of tunes.<sup>6</sup> It may be that the psalms with these headings were composed to be sung to existing, familiar tunes, while for those without such headings new tunes were composed. The latter would be ‘new songs’ in the sense that they would sound new and fresh. The trouble is that there are many more psalms without the supposed names of tunes attached than there are psalms described as ‘new songs’, and therefore this must remain one of the more unlikely explanations.

The newness might lie in the accompaniment. Psalm 33 certainly claims newness in this context.

<sup>4</sup> A.A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (New Century Bible), Grand Rapids/London 1972, vol. 1, 260.

<sup>5</sup> P.C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50* (WBC, 19), Waco TX, 1983), 271; cf. C.S. Rodd, ‘Psalms’, in: J. Barton, J. Muddiman (eds), *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford, 2001, 377; N.H. Ridderbos, *Die Psalmen. Stilistische Verfahren und Aufbau mit besondere Berücksichtigung von Ps 1–41* (BZAW, 117), Berlin 1972, 69, 236–245.

<sup>6</sup> Viz., ‘according to the Sheminith’ (על־השמינית, Pss. 6; 12), ‘according to the Gittith’ (על־הגיטית, Pss. 8; 81; 84), ‘according to Muth-Labben’ (על־מוֹת לִבָּן, Ps. 9), ‘according to the Deer of the Dawn’ (על־אֵילַת הַשָּׁהַר, Ps. 22), ‘according to Lilies’ (על־שִׁשְׁבִּימִים, Pss. 45; 69), ‘according to Alamoth’ (על־עֲלֻמוֹת, Ps. 46), ‘according to the Dove on Far-Off Terebinths’ (על־שוֹשַׁן, Ps. 56); ‘according to the Lily of the Covenant’ (על־דוֹבָה, Ps. 60), ‘according to Mahalath Leannoth’ (על־מַהֲלַת לְעֻנָּת, Ps. 88).

Praise the LORD with the lyre;  
 make melody to him with the harp of ten strings.  
 Sing to him a new song;  
 play skilfully on the strings, with loud shouts.<sup>7</sup>

Psalm 98 again says:

Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,  
 with the lyre and the sound of melody.  
 With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
 make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD.<sup>8</sup>

Then we have Psalm 144:9:

I will sing a new song to you, O God;  
 upon a ten-stringed harp I will play to you.

And Psalm 149:3:

Let them praise his name with dancing,  
 making melody to him with tambourine and lyre.

At the very least it can be said that the authors of these psalms paid attention to the question of accompaniment, and had particular instruments in mind. Of course, other psalms mention the use of harp (כנור Pss. 43:4; 57:8; 71:22; 81:2; 92:3; 108:2; 137:2; 150:3), trumpet or horn (שופר Pss. 47:5; 81:3; 150:4), lyre (נבל Pss. 57:8; 81:2; 92:3; 108:2; 147:7; 150:3), tambourine (תוף Pss. 68:25; 81:2; 150:4), lute (עשרר Ps. 92:3), strings (מניח Ps. 150:4), pipe (עונה Ps. 150:4), and cymbals (צלצלים Ps. 150:5), and there are seven psalms which have the rubric 'with stringed instruments', נגינות, in the title (Pss. 4; 6; 54; 55; 61; 67; 76). However, it is striking that four out of the six psalms which claim to be 'new songs' mention instrumental accompaniment, whereas the proportion of psalms in the Psalter as a whole is much lower: only twenty-one out of 150.

The mere fact of newness may have had significance in itself, quite apart from any originality of form or presentation. There are in the Hebrew Bible a number of incidents and rituals where it was thought to be important that something new was used. When the Philistines decided to return the ark to Israel, they loaded it on to a new cart drawn by two cows that had never borne a yoke (1 Sam 6:7–8). When

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 33:2–3.

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 98:5–6.

David brought the ark to Jerusalem, it was again carried on a new cart (2 Sam. 6:3). When the elders of a town had to clear themselves of responsibility for an unsolved murder in the vicinity, they had to break the neck of a heifer that had never been worked, in a wadi which had been neither ploughed or sown (Deut. 21:3–4). The water of purification was obtained by mixing in the ashes of a red heifer which had no blemish and on which no yoke had been laid (Num. 19:1–13). Samson told Delilah that, if the Philistines tied him up with seven fresh bowstrings that had not dried out (Judg. 15:7) or with new ropes that had not been used (Judg. 15:11), he would become as weak as anyone else. Ahijah the prophet tore his coat into twelve pieces and told Jeroboam to take ten, to symbolise his coming rule over Israel: he had put on a new garment for the purpose (1 Kgs 11:29). Elisha purified the water of the spring at Jericho by throwing salt from a new bowl into it (2 Kgs 2:19–22).<sup>9</sup> The effectiveness of the actions is at least enhanced or perhaps only made possible by using animals and materials which had not been used for any other purpose. Could it be that some at least of the psalms were freshly composed because it was believed that ‘new songs’ would have a better chance of reaching the ears of God? It might be objected that the psalms which are designated ‘new songs’ are wholly or in part praises or thanksgivings for what God has already done rather than appeals for help. But it may have been felt that reminding God that the composition was new would at least help to ensure that his blessings continued. And to the further objection that only a small minority of the psalms are so designated we may reply that the motive need not have weighed with all of the psalmists; it would be sufficient for the thought to be entertained by some.

Explanations of the designation ‘new song’ have however usually been concerned with the content or occasion of the psalms rather than their form. Sometimes commentators are doubtful whether the content justifies the claim. Bernhard Duhm, for example, said of the exhortation in Psalm 33: ‘Unfortunately the poet does not obey his own instructions, for what he sings is anything but new... (The psalm is) a harmless, undistinguished compilation of all kinds of phrases from earlier and later writings.’<sup>10</sup> Psalm 40 is ‘no more new than Psalm

---

<sup>9</sup> In the New Testament, Jesus chose to ride into Jerusalem on a colt that had never been ridden (Mk. 11:2; Lk. 19:30).

<sup>10</sup> B. Duhm, *Die Psalmen erklärt* (KHC 14), Freiburg i. B. 1899, 96–97.

33,' and the author of Psalm 96 'should not have used the expression "new song", for the whole poem is a collection of quotations, and even the term itself is a quotation (from Isa. 42:10).'<sup>11</sup> Others are content to assume that some unspecified fresh experience of God's help has prompted the new song. 'Fresh mercies demand a fresh expression of gratitude,' is Kirkpatrick's comment on Ps. 33:3, and his comment on Ps. 96:1 is almost identical.<sup>12</sup> Or perhaps there is no need to invoke a new experience: Arnold Anderson has suggested that the opening line of Psalm 96 might be translated, 'Sing to the LORD the ever-new song,' on the ground that 'just as God's care is never ceasing and new every morning (e.g. Lam. 3:22–23), so also the song of his praise must be ever new.'<sup>13</sup> However, the possibility of more specific reasons for calling the psalms new should be considered.

Were any of the psalmists introducing a new theology? Psalm 96 in particular would seem to have an apologetic intent:

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;  
 he is to be revered above all gods.  
 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,  
 but the LORD made the heavens.<sup>14</sup>

This is to be acknowledged by 'all the earth' (vv. 1, 9), all nations and peoples (vv. 3, 7, 10, 13). The similarity with the apologetic of Deutero-Isaiah can hardly be missed.<sup>15</sup> The conviction that Yahweh is not only the God of Israel but also the Creator and therefore the God of the whole earth and all peoples is being expressed with a new confidence, thanks to events in the exile which show that Babylon and its gods are not all-powerful. It does not really matter which way the dependence lies, whether Deutero-Isaiah is echoing the psalm or the psalm echoing

---

<sup>11</sup> Duhm, *Psalmen*, 117, 232.

<sup>12</sup> A.F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges), Cambridge, 1902, 166, 576. Cf. C.A. Briggs, E.G. Briggs, *The Book of Psalms* (ICC), Edinburgh 1906–07, vol. 1, 286; vol. 2, 303; W.T. Davison, *Psalms 1–72* (Century Bible), Edinburgh n.d., 212; T.W. Davies, *Psalms 73–150* (Century Bible), Edinburgh 1906, 149, 364.

<sup>13</sup> A.A. Anderson, *Psalms*, vol. 2, 682.

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 96: 4–5.

<sup>15</sup> Deutero-Isaiah speaks of the 'new thing(s)' Yahweh is about to do (Isa. 42:9; 43; 19; 48:6); asserts the impotence of Babylon's gods (41:21–24; 45:20–21; 46:1–2, 6–7; cf. Ps. 96:5); declares that Yahweh 'stretched out the heavens' (40:22; 44:24; 45:12, 18; 48:13; cf. Ps. 96:5); envisages nature breaking into song (44:23; 49:13; cf. Pss. 96:12; 98:8).

Deutero-Isaiah. The psalm is giving liturgical expression to the same theology, which was only fitfully or tentatively held before the closing years of the exile in Babylon, and perhaps never again held with the same passion in the post-exilic period, when it became clear that domination by world empires was not going to come to an end and that Yahweh was not going to be acknowledged by the nations.

Psalm 98 expresses the same hopes in much the same terms, but is less polemical. The emphasis here is on the fact that God 'has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel' (v. 3). The return from exile is a victory God himself has won on behalf of Israel with 'his right hand and his holy arm,'<sup>16</sup> that is, without any uprising by the exiles themselves. His existence, power and care for Israel have been proved to the nations, and the hope is that this will be acknowledged throughout the world. One can imagine Deutero-Isaiah as the author of both of these psalms.

Psalm 33 again can plausibly be understood as the product of the same currents of thought and hope. The conviction that Yahweh is the Creator is there (vv. 6–9), and also the hope that 'all the earth,' 'all the inhabitants of the world' will recognise this (v. 8). The latter half of the psalm could be a reflection on the fall of Babylon:

The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;  
 he frustrates the plans of the peoples....  
 A king is not saved by his great army;  
 a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.  
 The war horse is a vain hope for victory,  
 and by its great might it cannot save.<sup>17</sup>

This is not Deutero-Isaiah's style, but it is not inconceivable that the same events gave rise to the convictions of this psalmist too.

It is hardly possible to identify a particular historical background for Psalm 40, but there is one line of thought in it which the author may well have considered new. It is that God does not require sacrifice but does require obedience either to the written law or to the voice of conscience:

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Isa. 40:10; 48:14; 51:9; 52:10.

<sup>17</sup> Ps. 33:10, 16–17.

Sacrifice and offering you do not desire,  
 but you have given me an open ear.  
 Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.  
 Then I said, 'Here I am:  
 in the scroll of the book it is written of me.  
 I delight to do your will, O my God:  
 your law is within my heart.<sup>18</sup>

The thought is of course not unique in the Hebrew Bible. It is expressed by the eighth century prophets in a very forthright way (Amos 5:22; Hos. 6:6; Isa. 1:11–13a) and in Ps. 51:16–17 in terms very similar to those used in Psalm 40. In Ps. 50:8–13 a rational argument for not offering sacrifice is developed: God does not need what is already his to be offered to him and he is not dependent on sacrifices for food. But to think in this way in a culture where the obligation to offer sacrifices was taken for granted must have called for a certain degree of courage and independence of mind, and those who declared it publicly 'in the great congregation' (40:9,10) may well have felt that they were singing a new song. To Jeremiah having the law within you, written on your heart, was part of the new covenant.

The lack of unity in Psalm 144 and the varied reminiscences of other psalms make it difficult to suggest what made the psalm new to the writer, who seems to be a king of the Davidic house (v. 10). He seems to be beset by foreign enemies (vv. 7, 11). But he also has a vision of the peace and prosperity he longs for his people to enjoy, which has no parallel elsewhere in the Psalter or indeed in the Hebrew Bible. He may well have felt that this was a new song.

In contrast it is not at all difficult to suggest what makes Psalm 149 a new song. It is its militant character. The thought of God taking vengeance on his enemies—whether Israel's enemies or the wicked in Israel—is common enough in the Hebrew Bible, for example, in the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:35, 41, 43), in the prophecy of Nahum (Nah. 1:2–3a), in the portraits of the Divine warrior in Trito-Isaiah (Isa. 59:15b–20; 63:1–6) and in certain psalms (Pss. 79:10–12; 94:1). The thought of Israel executing God's vengeance, on the other hand, is less common. A distinction should be drawn between the devoting of conquered enemies to destruction (הָרַם) and vengeance (נָקַם). Those devoted to destruction could be people against whom Israel had no particular

<sup>18</sup> Ps. 40:6–8.

grudge, whose gods they might have learnt to respect, with whom they would have often preferred to intermarry, and from whom they were forbidden to take spoil. It was a matter of avoiding contamination more than anything else. Vengeance on the other hand was always a response to hostile actions. In Psalm 149:7, 9 God's faithful ones are:

to execute vengeance on the nations  
and punishment on the peoples...  
to execute on them the judgment decreed

There were not many periods when such a role could be realistically entertained, and from at least the fifth century CE commentators have thought that the psalm must have been written in the Maccabean period. And although the vogue for dating large numbers of the psalms in that period did not survive the work of Gunkel and Mowinckel, and rightly, there are good reasons for making an exception of Psalm 149. The term 'assembly of the faithful' (קהל הַסְּדִיִּים) does not appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, but an equivalent Greek phrase συναγωγή ἁσιδαιῶν occurs in 1 Maccabees, describing the Jewish resistance: 'Then there united with them a company of Hasidaeans, mighty warriors of Israel, all who offered themselves willingly for the law... They rescued the law out of the hands of the Gentiles and the kings' (2:42). Psalm 149 also speaks of 'nations' and 'peoples' and 'their kings' as the adversaries. The 'faithful' are described in the psalm as having 'the high praises of God' in their throats and 'two-edged swords' in their hands (v. 6), and in 2 Macc. 15:26–27 Judas and his troops are said to have 'met the enemy in battle with invocations to God and prayers.' They were similarly doubly equipped for the engagement, 'fighting with their hands and praying to God in their hearts.' The victories of Judas were certainly occasions for new songs to be composed and sung. The victors would naturally use the time-honoured formula, 'For he is good, for his mercy endures for ever' (1 Macc. 4:24), but for the occasion of the rededication of the altar, when the flute and the harp which had ceased to play (1 Macc. 3:45) were heard again (1 Macc. 4:54; cf. the tambourine and lyre of Ps. 149:3), it is likely that the songs sung included new ones which more directly matched the mood of the time.

A number of commentators have described the descriptions of God's universal rule in Psalms 96 and 98, the hopes for prosperity and peace in Psalm 144 and the programme of vengeance on the nations in Psalm 149 as eschatological, and no doubt they were, in the sense that

they were not going to be realised in the immediate future.<sup>19</sup> But that is not to say that the psalmists thought they were unrealisable in the world as it is, and it is legitimate to ask at what periods they seemed a possibility.

These suggestions have to meet a formidable objection, however. Throughout the twentieth century students of the psalms largely abandoned the attempt to identify the historical situations out of which the psalms originated. This was in part a recognition that allusions to particular historical events were lacking, and in part a realisation that the study of the use of the psalms in the cultus was more interesting and profitable. Mowinckel and others attempted to show that many psalms were best explained as texts accompanying the ritual of a putative New Year festival. Psalms 96 and 98 were shown to belong to a group of 'enthronement psalms'. Every year God was as it were enthroned anew at the festival, and so 'the poet's vision is of something new and important which has just taken place.'<sup>20</sup> Hence the psalm does not have to be newly composed: it is simply a response to what is imagined as a new event. God's defeat of evil and universal rule is a myth enacted rather than historically achieved or eschatologically hoped for, but none the less real for that.<sup>21</sup> There are only hints at the symbols and rites that were involved, such as the sounding of the horn and the cry of homage alluded to in Ps. 98:6.<sup>22</sup> The festival had a dramatic character. There was certainly a procession, possibly preceded by a sword dance celebrating God's victory. That would be the explanation of the 'two-edged swords' in Ps. 149:6.<sup>23</sup> John Eaton finds a place also for Psalms 40 and 144. In Psalm 40 the king, in between giving thanks for a recent deliverance, symbolic or actual, (vv. 1–5) and praying for help in an impending crisis (vv. 11–17), asserts his obedience to the obligations laid upon him at his installation (vv. 7–9).<sup>24</sup> Psalm 144 is the king's prayer for deliverance from ritual humiliation, and an expression of the hope

<sup>19</sup> E.g. R. Kittel, *Die Psalmen* (KAT 13), Leipzig <sup>3,4</sup>1922), 315 (on Ps. 96), 429 (on Ps. 144), 437 (on Ps. 149); Gunkel, *Psalmen*, 421 (on Ps. 96), 620 (on Ps. 149); H.J. Kraus, *Die Psalmen* 1 (BK, XV/1), Neukirchen Vluyn 1980, 262 (on Ps. 33).

<sup>20</sup> S. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, Oxford 1962, vol. 1, 107.

<sup>21</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 110–111.

<sup>22</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 116.

<sup>23</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 181.

<sup>24</sup> J.H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (The Biblical Seminar), Sheffield <sup>2</sup>1986, 42–44; J.H. Eaton, *Psalms* (Torch Bible Commentaries); London 1967, 113–116.

that this will mean health and prosperity for the nation, possibly sung by a 'prophetic choir.' The king vows to sing a new song 'appropriate to his renewed life.'<sup>25</sup>

This approach to the psalms is not to be lightly dismissed. It is evident that the background to many of the psalms is a festival, and very likely that many of the individual psalms were composed for the use of the king on public occasions.<sup>26</sup> However, the reconstruction of a New Year festival in which the same rituals were repeated and the same psalms sung at fixed points remains entirely hypothetical, and the possibility of other interpretations should be kept open. It is difficult to think that psalms which claim to be new songs were not originally responses to genuinely new experiences.<sup>27</sup> The nation and its kings faced enough real crises to prompt appeals for help and thanksgivings for deliverance to make ritual dramas unnecessary. Many of those who have used the psalms as vehicles for their own anxiety and reassurance would have felt cheated if it were shown that their authors were only writing speeches or lyrics for a drama.

Michael Goulder distances himself from those who place the thought of Psalm 149 in the 'fantasy world of the cult,' preferring 'a more realistic setting as Israel regained self-respect in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah,' a setting which had been advocated by some older scholars.<sup>28</sup> His choice, however, is influenced by his general thesis, that whole sequences of psalms are to be regarded as deposits from particular periods in Israel's history. Thus he associates all of Psalms 135–150 with the return under Ezra, and therefore does not consider alternative historical settings for Psalm 149. There is little evidence in

<sup>25</sup> Eaton, *Kingship*, 127–29; Eaton, *Psalms*, 308–09.

<sup>26</sup> R. Tomes, in: S. Bigger (ed.) *Creating the Old Testament*, Oxford 1989, 259–60.

<sup>27</sup> Pss. 47; 93; 95–99 are generally regarded as the enthronement psalms, on the ground that they contain the declaration יהוה בָּרַךְ, 'Yahweh has become king'. Jonathan Magonet has suggested in an unpublished paper that Pss. 96–99, linked together in the Jewish Friday evening liturgy, formed an antiphonal liturgy, with hymnic exhortations to praise God (Pss. 96 and 98) followed by descriptions of God's power as king (Pss. 97 and 99). However, these differences between Pss. 96 and 98 and Pss. 97 and 99, already noted by Gunkel (Gunkel, Begrich, *Einleitung in den Psalmen*, 94), could have arisen if they were composed at different times: Pss. 97 and 99 (with Ps. 93) do not seem to reflect a particular historical situation and could have been composed for a recurring (enthronement?) festival, whereas Pss. 96 and 98 express the conviction of Yahweh's universal rule created by the return from exile.

<sup>28</sup> M.D. Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return (Book V, Psalms 107–150): Studies in the Psalter IV* (JSOT Sup, 258), Sheffield 1998, 298.

what we know of Ezra's time from other sources to suggest that it was seen as 'an opportunity for revenge on the nations who had humbled Israel so long.'<sup>29</sup> If we allow the evidence of the individual psalm to suggest its own setting in life, rather than that of the psalm groups, as Goulder insists,<sup>30</sup> then the period of the Maccabean victories is much more likely.

We have seen a variety of reasons why the psalmists may have been convinced that they were composing or singing 'a new song'. Psalms 96 and 98, like Deutero-Isaiah in Isa. 42:10, were expressing the hope of God's universal rule, briefly engendered by the fall of Babylon and the return from exile. Psalm 33 shares some of the same themes. Psalm 40 expresses a new understanding of the relative importance of sacrifice and morality. Psalm 144 has a daring vision of a people enjoying prosperity and peace. Psalm 149 stands out as the product of the ideology of the Maccabees.

It is interesting that the post-Maccabean story of Judith seems to show knowledge of the psalms we have been considering as a group. Judith's psalm (Jdt. 16:1–17) is a celebration of her assassination of Holofernes and the defeat of the Assyrians. God is praised for foiling the plans of the enemy 'by the hand of a woman' (v. 5), and this leads on to a narrative passage reminiscent of the song of Deborah (vv. 6–12; Judg. 5:24–27). The psalm opens with a summons to Israel to 'raise a new psalm' (v. 1), and towards the end Judith says that she will 'sing to my God a new song' (v. 13), and then touches on themes which we have encountered in the other psalms we have discussed: creation:

Let all your creatures serve you,  
for you spoke and they were made (v. 14; cf. Ps. 33:6–9);

nature in its violent aspects as manifestations of God's power:

For the mountains shall be shaken to their foundations with the waters;  
before your glance the rocks shall melt like wax (v. 13; cf. Pss. 98:2–5;  
144:5–6);

the reward for fearing God:

To those who fear you  
you show mercy...  
whoever fears the Lord is great for ever (vv. 15–16; cf. Ps. 33:18);

---

<sup>29</sup> Goulder, *Return*, 300.

<sup>30</sup> Goulder, *Return*, 212.

the relative unimportance of sacrifice:

For every sacrifice as a fragrant offering is a small thing,  
and the fat of all whole burnt offerings to you is a very little thing  
(v. 16; cf. Ps. 40:6–8);

and vengeance on the nations which rise up against Israel:

The Lord Almighty will take vengeance on them in the day of judgment;  
he will send fire and worms into their flesh;  
they shall weep in pain for ever (v. 17; cf. Ps. 149:6–9).

This would appear to be clear evidence that the writer has studied the ‘new songs’ of the Psalter as a group and absorbed their confident spirit.

This confident spirit could hardly survive the fall of Jerusalem, and in rabbinic exegesis these new songs are the ones to be sung in the Messianic age. The *Mekilta* records nine songs that in the course of their history Israel sang to their God. The new song will be the tenth and last song, ‘that grand and mighty song, when Israel will raise their voice in triumph at their future deliverance, for that will be the final release of Israel for all time.’<sup>31</sup> It is noted that all the songs of the past are designated by a feminine noun, שִׁירָה, appropriate to times when Israel was subjected to the nations as a woman is subjected to male domination. But the new song is designated by a masculine noun, שִׁיר, and therefore will be sung at a time when Israel will no longer be a subject people.<sup>32</sup>

In the Book of Revelation 5:9, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders are said to sing ‘a new song’; and again in 14:3 the one hundred and forty-four thousand sing a new song before the four living creatures and the elders. The question suggests itself: Do the allusions in the Book of Revelation draw on anything more than the mere formula? Have any or all of the earlier passages contributed to the significance of the new songs in Revelation? Have they contributed more widely to the content or the outlook of the book?

In the book of Revelation several things are new. Jesus himself has a new name (3:12) and those who conquer receive a new name (2:17). There is a new Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2), a new heaven and a new earth

<sup>31</sup> *Mek.*, Shirah I, 34a–34b; L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* 3, Philadelphia 1968, 31–32.

<sup>32</sup> J.Z. Lauterbach, *Mekilta de R. Ishmael* 2, Philadelphia 1933, 6, lines 73–81.

(21:1). The one who is seated on the throne says, 'See, I am making all things new' (21:5). It is not surprising that there should be new songs. One of these is sung by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders in praise of the Lamb who was slaughtered (5:9–10); and it is followed by two more songs on the same theme, one sung by myriads of angels (5:11–12) and the other by every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea (5:13). The latter two are not specifically designated as 'new songs' but it can be assumed that they are covered by the same rubric as the first one. Obviously the theme is new, but the idea of a universal offering of praise could well be derived from the exhortations to 'all the earth', 'all the peoples', 'the heavens', 'the earth', 'the sea, and all that fills it', 'the field and everything in it', and 'the world and those who live in it' in Psalms 96 and 98. The other 'new song' is sung by the 144,000 who 'have been redeemed from humankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb' and now stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion. They sing a new song before the throne, the four living creatures and the elders (14:1–5). It is possible that this scenario owes something to 'the great congregation' of Ps. 40:9–10, before whom God's deliverance, his steadfast love and faithfulness are proclaimed, and to 'the assembly of the faithful' who are called upon to sing God's praise in Psalm 149. In 17:14 those who are with the Lamb when he conquers the ten kings are described as 'called and chosen and faithful.'

Of course the book of Revelation is full of allusions to the earlier scriptures, and any one passage in the book will draw on a number of widely separated passages in the Old Testament. There is no passage which mirrors a single prophecy or a single psalm or group of psalms as Judith's psalm seems to do. However, it is also possible that the 'new songs' in the Psalter may have influenced the book of Revelation in contexts other than those of chapters 5 and 14. The twenty-four elders praise God as the creator (4:10–11) before they sing their new song in praise of the Lamb; this is not a new song, because it is the theme of Psalm 33 among others. The description of the rider on the white horse in 19:11–16 is clearly drawn partly from Ps. 2:9 ('he will rule them with a rod of iron') and Isa. 63:3 ('he will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty'), but the 'sharp sword with which to strike down the nations,' which was introduced in 1:16 as 'a sharp two-edged sword', may owe something to the two-edged sword of Ps. 149:6. It is highly likely that the author of Revelation understood God's righteous judgment in Psalms 96 and 98 as in Ps. 149:9

in terms of vengeance for Rome's persecution of Christians. The martyrs cry out, 'Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth' (6:10); and after the fall of 'Babylon' a great multitude in heaven cry out, 'Salvation and glory and power to our God, for his judgements are true and just; he has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants' (19:1-2). Even the idea that God's faithful ones will share in executing his judgment on the nations (Ps. 149:6-9) is not entirely absent, although expressed in the language of Psalm 2: in the letter to the church at Thyatira those who conquer and continue to the end will be given authority over the nations to rule them with an iron rod, as when clay pots are shattered' (2:16-17).

The content of the second 'new song' in Revelation (14:3) is not given. 'No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who have been redeemed from the earth.' John Sweet comments: 'In ancient religion hymns, especially new and secret ones, were thought to have power to rescue man from his earthly prison (Jonah 2; Acts 16:25-26) and open the gates of heaven.'<sup>33</sup> There may be an echo here of the stress on using something new for important ritual actions to which we drew attention earlier. The new song is only for the assembly of the faithful to sing, and they have to be in a state of ritual purity: 'It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins' (14:4).

Thus a case can be made that the allusions in the book of Revelation do more than draw on the mere formula 'Sing to the Lord a new song.' All of the six psalms have contributed to the content and significance of the new songs in Revelation, and have contributed more widely to the content or the outlook of the book.

The only passage in the six psalms which was used as a testimony to Jesus in the New Testament is Ps. 40:6-8, cited in Heb. 10:5-7 as describing the way in which Jesus abolished the sacrificial system of the Torah and made himself the once-for-all sacrifice for sins. It is interesting however to note that Muslim apologists read Ps. 149 as an announcement of the coming of Muhammad. The ninth century writer Ibn Qutayba quotes the psalm and says this:

---

<sup>33</sup> J.P. Sweet, *Revelation* (SCM Pelican Commentary), London 1979, 129.

Now, which is that nation whose swords are two-edged, if not the Arabs, and who is the one to wreak vengeance on the nations that do not worship him, and who among the prophets is the one that was sent with the sword if not his Prophet?<sup>34</sup>

Later Christian exegesis has not surprisingly tended to appropriate the new songs of the Psalter as vehicles of Christian praise. Neale and Littledale describe their use in this way:

A new song, looked at historically, is a glorious and especial chant, which is sung in honour of some prosperous success and victory, but in the allegorical sense it is a canticle of the New Testament. For then all things were made new—a new creation, a new man, a new life, new commandments, new grace, new promises, new sacraments, new precepts. And the New Testament is called by that name not merely because of its date, but also because of the nature of the things which happened under it, seeing that all things have been made new, and above all, man, for whose sake all the others existed.<sup>35</sup>

The description of the faithful in Ps. 149 with ‘the high praises of God in their throats’ and ‘a two-edged sword in their hands’ is generally taken allegorically rather than literally. The sword is the Word of God: the Old Testament, which severed Jews from Gentiles, and the New Testament, which cuts Christians away from the allurements of the world. The vengeance and punishment visited on the nations has been bloodless: pagans have deserted their idols and become Christians; they have become fettered by the moral precepts of the word of God.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, there have been occasions when Ps. 149 has been regarded as providing justification for violence. Calvin warned that ‘God’s children may not execute vengeance but when called to it, there being an end of all moderation when men yield themselves up to the impulse of their own spirits,’ but allowed that there have been occasions when Israelites took vengeance, ‘not under the influence of private resentment, but by commandment of God.’<sup>37</sup> But the words of Franz Delitzsch used frequently to be quoted by commentators:

---

<sup>34</sup> C. Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible* (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science: Texts and Studies, 22). Leiden 1996, 271.

<sup>35</sup> J.M. Neale, R.F. Littledale, *A Commentary on the Psalms from Primitive and Mediaeval Writers* 4, London 1871–74, 433.

<sup>36</sup> Neale, Littledale, *Commentary* 4, 436–37; Augustine, *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, on Ps. 149.

<sup>37</sup> J. Calvin, *Psalms* (Calvin Translation Society; transl. J. Anderson), Edinburgh 1845–49, vol. 5, on Ps. 149.

Under the delusion that its language might still be used as a prayer without any spiritual transmutation, it has been made the watchword of the most horrible errors. It was by means of this psalm that Caspar Scioppius in his 'Clarion of the Sacred War' (*Classicum belli sacri*), written, as Bakius says, not with ink but with blood, fired the Roman Catholic princes to undertake the Thirty Years' War. And within the Protestant Church Thomas Münzer employed it to stir up the flames of the Peasants' War. It is obvious that the Christian cannot make direct use of such a psalm without ignoring the apostolic warning that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (2 Cor. 10:4).<sup>38</sup>

The warning might well be repeated in the commentaries of the twenty-first century.

---

<sup>38</sup> C.F. Keil, F.J. Delitzsch, eds, *Biblischer Commentar über das Alte Testament*, Leipzig 1861–75, on Ps. 149.

THE PRAYER OF ISAIAH  
AND THE SUNDIAL OF AHAZ (2 KGS 20:11)

Jaap van Dorp  
*Netherlands Bible Society, Haarlem—The Netherlands*

1. *Preamble*

The prayer of a prophet is a significant literary motif in the books of Kings, in particular in those narratives that bring up a miraculous event.<sup>1</sup> References to prayers of prophets are found in seven stories: 1 Kgs 13:6 (the man of God from Judah), 17:20–21 (Elijah, with the text of a short prayer), 18:36–37 (Elijah), 2 Kgs 4:33 (Elisha), 6:17–18,20 (Elisha) and 20:11 (Isaiah). The man of God from Judah, Elijah and Elisha are initiators of a miraculous event or an effect which deviates from the laws of nature or transcending our knowledge of these laws. The actual wonder is ascribed to God when he is appealed to in the prophet's prayer. According to many commentators Isaiah is portrayed in 2 Kgs as a prophet like Elijah and Elisha.<sup>2</sup>

My first question is: in what way the image of those prophets as miracle maker applies to Isaiah in 2 Kgs 20:8–11, the narrative about the sign of the retreating shadow on the *מעלות*?

My second question deals with the way this short narrative about Isaiah may be interpreted. In the New Dutch Bible Version, which was published in October 2004, the Hebrew words *מעלות* אהז in 2 Kgs 20:11 are translated with reference to a sundial. In the history of biblical interpretation the miracle of the retreating shadow on the *מעלות* (variously translated with 'stairway', 'sundial') is explained as the effect of an eclipse, a refraction of light, a sun dog (*παρηλιον*) or an earthquake.<sup>3</sup>

---

\* For their help and advice I am grateful to Mathieu Ossendrijver (Altorientalisches Seminar Universität Tübingen, Germany) and Robert van Gent (Institute for History and Foundations of Mathematics and the Natural Sciences, Universiteit Utrecht, the Netherlands).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for the motif in 1 and 2 Chronicles the contribution of P.C. Beentjes in this volume.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. R. Kasher, 'The *Sitz im Buch* of Hezekiah's Illness and Cure', *ZAW* 113 (2001), 41–55, esp. 48–50; M. Cogan, H. Tadmor, *II Kings. A new Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AncB, 11), New York 1988, 255.

<sup>3</sup> See for several opinions, e.g., O. Thenius, *Die Bücher der Könige* (Kurzgefasstes

I choose an other perspective and ask: what does the knowledge about astronomy and time measuring in the Ancient Near East contribute to the understanding of 2 Kgs 20:8–11, and what could it mean for bible translation?

## 2. *Various Types of Sundials*

In the Ancient Near East the sun as a natural time-keeper played an important part in thinking about measurement of time, especially with regards to the length of a day and its several divisions in watches and hours. Various types of sundials were known to the Egyptians, Assyrians and Babylonians. They had two methods of measuring time based on the position of the sun. First, they measured the length of the shadow, using a gnomon, an instrument that consisted of a stick or style of a certain length, standing in some open space exposed to the sun. In this way one could obtain a rough notion of the altitude of the sun and thence of the time of the day. At sunrise the shadow would be at its longest. At noon, when the sun is on the meridian at the highest point, the sun would cast the shortest shadow. Until sunset, the shadow would then lengthen again. So the intermediate time could thus be measured. Second, the ancients used a *polos* or sundial. This instrument had nothing to do with the length, but with the direction of the shadow upon a dial with lines marked upon it.

Sloley describes a simple type of an Egyptian shadow clock consisted of a rod of wood or ivory provided with an end-block (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> The rod is marked with several points, indicating hours. It was set horizontally by means of a plumb line suspended against a line scored on the end-block at right angles to the long arm. In the morning, the rod was placed so as to point eastwards. The shadow of the upper part of the end-block was intercepted on the rod. At midday, the rod was moved in the opposite direction so as to point westwards.

Another time measuring instrument of Egyptian origin was discovered during excavations of Gezer by Macalister (1902–1909; Fig. 2).<sup>5</sup>

---

exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament, Bd. 9), Leipzig <sup>2</sup>1873, 417–20; J.A. Montgomery, H.S. Gehman, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings* (ICC), Edinburgh 1951, 509, and literature referred to there.

<sup>4</sup> R.W. Sloley, 'Primitive Methods of Measuring Time with Special Reference to Egypt', *JEA* 17 (1931), 166–78, esp. 171.

<sup>5</sup> See R.A.S. Macalister, *The Excavation of Gezer*, vol. 1, London 1912, 15; idem, vol. 2, 331.

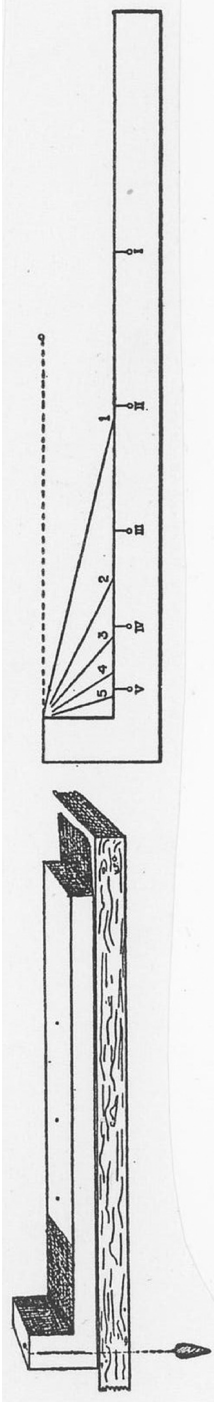


Fig. 1. Simple type of an Egyptian shadow clock

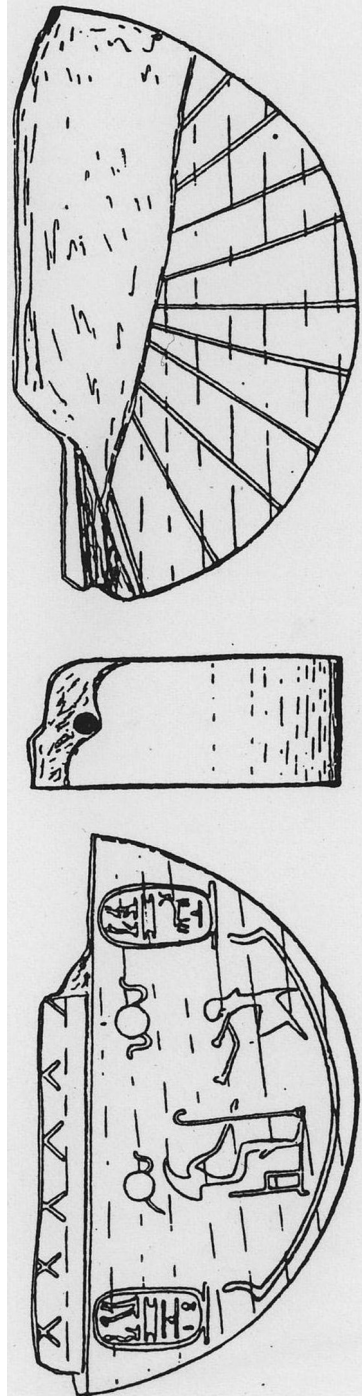


Fig. 2. Gezer: Measuring Instrument of Egyptian origin.

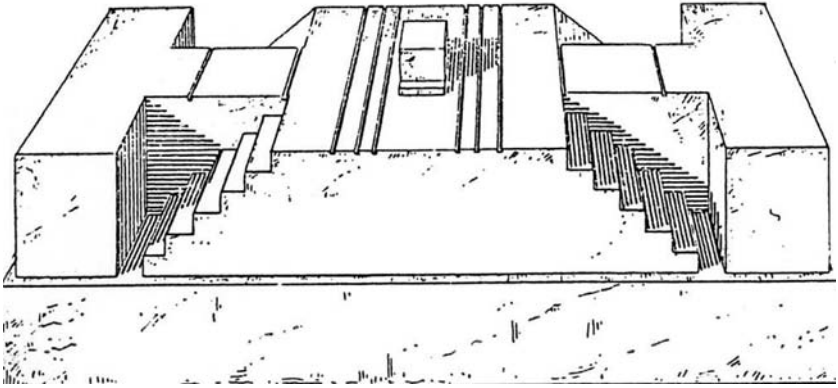


Fig. 3. Portable sundial; Old Egyptian Period.

The object is a piece of carved ivory, only 5,5 cm long and 1.25 cm thick. On the back a series of radiating strokes (time lines) is visible. On the front you see the Egyptian king Mer-en-Ptah, the pharaoh who ruled at the end of the thirteenth century BCE. This object is identified by Möller as a portable sundial.<sup>6</sup> The dial must be held in a horizontal position with a small style perpendicular in the hole.

The Egyptian National Museum in Cairo keeps several other portable sundials from the old Egyptian period, such like catalogue Number 33401 (Fig. 3).<sup>7</sup> This one is important with regards to the discussion about the sundial of Ahaz. The object is a block soft white limestone, partly carved. The length of the object is 35 centimeter, its height is approximately 10 centimeter. The object has two steps on one side, and two plain ramps in the corresponding places on the other side. There are two times six = 12 steps, a number that is equal to the twelve hours of a day. In order to use the sundial, the block is put horizontally with the long sides to the North and the South, the short sides in East-West direction.

This model of a sundial combines three methods of time measuring. There are three receptive areas: a horizontal, a stepped and an inclined

<sup>6</sup> G. Möller, 'Eine Sonnenuhr aus der Zeit Merneptahs', *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Alterthumskunde* 56 (1920), 101; L. Borchardt, *Die altägyptische Zeitmessung*, Berlin, Leipzig 1920, 48; E.J. Pilcher, 'Portable Sundial from Gezer', *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* 55 (1923), 85–9.

<sup>7</sup> See Sloley, 'Primitive Methods', 172–3, Plate XVIII (4); Borchardt, *Altägyptische Zeitmessung*, 37–8.

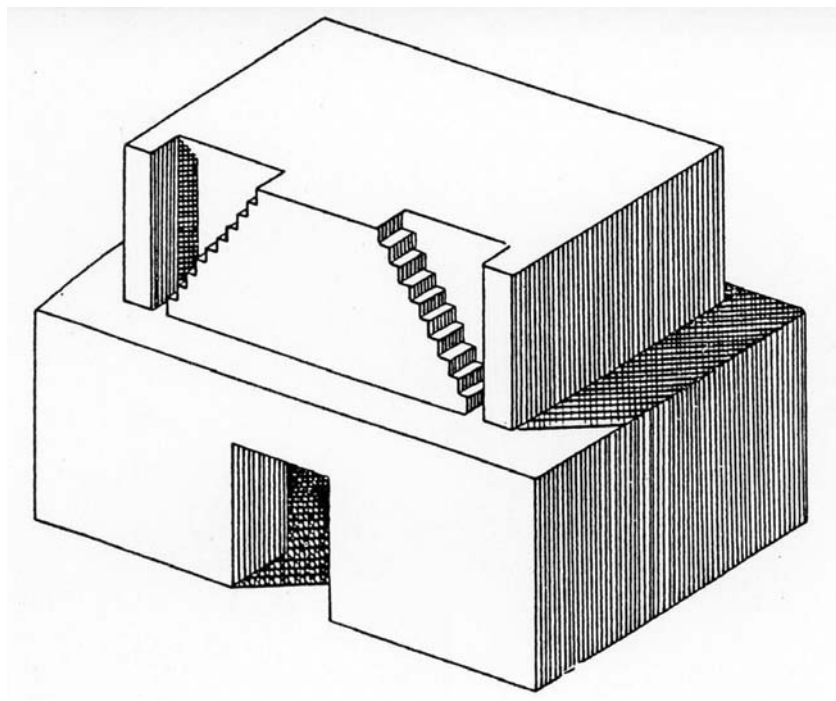


Fig. 4. Model of Ahaz's Sundial by Yigal Yadin.

receptive plane. With regards to the use of the steps on the dial, the horizontal edges of the outer blocks serve as styles. At sunrise in the morning, the shadow of the eastern block edge falls onto the leading edge of the topmost step of the stairs, which rises from the east. When the sun climbs, the shadow of the edge moves down the stairs from step to step. At noon, the shadow arrives at the bottom. Then, the western block edge takes over the shadow throwing function, and the shadow climbs up the western steps.

Yadin has chosen this model in the Cairo Museum as a fine example of what the dial of Ahaz could have looked like (Fig. 4).<sup>8</sup> He suggested that it was a model of a house. The dial was incorporated within the structural features of a roof chamber. There is a striking similarity between the Egyptian model and the reconstruction of the dial by Yadin. But according to Borchardt the *מעלות אהז* is not to be understood as

<sup>8</sup> Y. Yadin, 'The Dial of Ahaz', *ErIs* 5 (1958), 91–6.

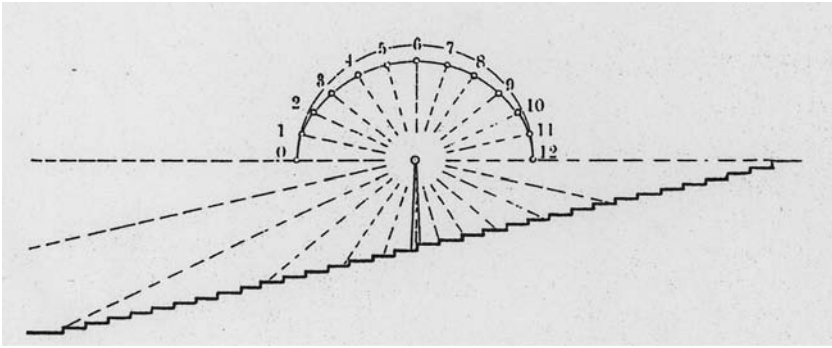


Fig 5. Design of a Stepped Sundial.

a sundial with a stepped receptive plane like the model in the Cairo Museum (Fig. 5).<sup>9</sup>

For his statement he had valid arguments. In 2 Kgs 20 the shadow should move backwards ten steps. The number of ten steps is remarkable. In fact, sundials in antiquity were marked with lines for an indication of six full hours of the day: six steps for the six morning hours at one side and six steps for the hours after noon at the other side. A sundial with more or less steps will not function precisely, it is even impossible to show certain full hours. The proposal that the *מעלות אהז* can refer to a dial designed to indicate half-hours, seems to be attractive. But the problem is that it requires a technical construction in which fifteen steps are needed in order to indicate ten half-hours, counting seven or eight steps for the first full hour of the day, three or four steps for the second hour, and so on. In a dial like that the coordination of time units and steps is not logical. There is no analogy with it in the history of time measurement in the Ancient Near East.

### 3. *Dial or Stairway*

In 1957 Iwry tried to make an end to the dial of Ahaz.<sup>10</sup> He asked attention for a variant reading of Isa. 38:8 in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. According to Iwry 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> offers an alternative text for 'the sun dial of Ahaz', *מעלות אהז*, it reads *מעלות עליה אהז*, and Iwry interpreted those words as: 'on the steps

<sup>9</sup> Borchardt, *Altägyptische Zeitmessung*, 41 n. 1.

<sup>10</sup> S. Iwry, 'The Qumran Isaiah and the end of the dial of Ahaz', *BASOR* 147 (1957), 27–33.

to the upper chamber of Ahaz'. The variant in the Isaiah-scroll brought him to the conclusion that the *מעלות* did not refer to a dial, but simply to a flight of steps, to the stairs leading to or connecting with an upper chamber associated with the name of Ahaz. So the sun's rays could have moved upon a structure of steps, but that construction was not in use as a receptive plane of a dial.

The conclusion drawn by Iwry had some influence upon bible translation studies. The *Hebrew Old Testament Text Project* by the United Bible Societies and *Critique Textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*, edited by Dominique Barthélemy, adopted his view and promoted the stairway of Ahaz. Nevertheless the idea of a sundial was maintained. Baez-Camargo mentioned the reading of the parallel passage in the great Isaiah scroll from Qumran.<sup>11</sup> According to him *מעלות* in 2 Kgs 20:11 is not a real crux for the bible translator, but it has always been difficult to visualize what the basic meaning of *מעלות*, 'steps, stairs' has to do with a sun-clock. The Today's English Version reads verse 11: 'Isaiah prayed to the Lord, and the Lord made the shadow go back ten steps on the stairway set up by King Ahaz.' In a footnote the relation with a sundial is explained: 'Archaeological evidence suggests that the stairway referred to in this passage was one specially constructed to tell time.' The reader wonders what kind of stairway it could be, but the footnote seems to refer to the reconstruction of the sundial proposed by Yadin. At the same time Baez-Camargo suggested that 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> by inserting *עליה* after *מעלות* gives the location of the sun-clock, namely the penthouse or roof of the royal palace.

However, the sundial of Ahaz survived the critical remarks of Iwry, not only in bible translations but also in the modern Hebrew dictionaries. A reading in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> does not necessarily have consequences for the interpretation of the Hebrew text of the second book of Kings.

And why should the insertion of *עליה* imply that the *מעלות* in Isa. 38 and 2 Kgs 20 was a flight of steps leading to a specific part of a building? In order to make out a case for his statement Iwry referred in his article to the translation of *מעלות* in the Septuagint, *ἀναβαθμός* in Isaiah (*βαθμός* in the book of Kings). He presumed that the Greek translator of the second book of Kings understood the Hebrew text as referring to a flight of stairs as a building structure, contrary to the translation of

<sup>11</sup> G. Baez-Camargo, 'Biblical archaeology helps the translator', *The Bible Translator* 31 (1980), 318–22, esp. 320–1.

Symmachus, Vulgate and Targum. In the Greek literature, however, words like βαθμός and ἀναβαθμός have had besides their constructional meaning also an astronomical meaning. In the astrological texts of Vettius Valens βαθμός could mean ‘degree’ in relation to the moving or position of celestial bodies.<sup>12</sup> According to Jones βαθμός is used in the same way in the astronomical papyri from Oxyrhynchus.<sup>13</sup> In his view βαθμός is a unity of 15 degrees. Thus, in the Septuagint translation of 2 Kgs 20:8–11 βαθμός could be explained in an astronomical sense referring to the degrees marked for example on a sun-dial. With the same meaning we find the word βαθμός also in the *Jewish Antiquities* of Flavius Josephus.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. *An Astronomical Approach*

In 1885 the French astronomer Flammarion published an article in the periodical *L’Astronomie* about a special sundial in the Observatory of Juvisy, about 30 km in the south of Paris.<sup>15</sup> Flammarion had designed and built with the assistance of Molteni, a constructor of optical instruments, a sundial with the possibility to incline the plane in order to show the retrogradation of the shadow (Fig. 6). Pedro Nunes (Petrus Nonius), a Portuguese mathematician born in 1502, died in 1578, was the first scientist who described this phenomenon of retrogradation and related it to the story of Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 20.<sup>16</sup> From the seventeenth until the nineteenth century the story of the recovery of Hezekiah has been much discussed, and sometimes the observations of Nonius were mentioned, for example by Cornelius à Lape in the seventeenth century.<sup>17</sup> At the

<sup>12</sup> H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford 1990, 300b–1a.

<sup>13</sup> See A. Jones, *Astronomical Papyri from Oxyrhynchus: P. Oxy. 4133–4300a*, Philadelphia 1999, 382–3 (no. 4245), 420–6 (no. 4277).

<sup>14</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* X 29, translated in R. Marcus, *Josephus VI* (Loeb Classical Library), London, Cambridge MA 1951, 172.

<sup>15</sup> C. Flammarion, ‘Le cadran solaire à rétrogradation de l’Observatoire de Juvisy, et le miracle d’Isaïe’, *L’Astronomie* 4 (1885), 321–9. See also E. Guillemin, ‘Théorie, formules et épreuves de la rétrogradation de l’ombre’, *L’Astronomie* 4 (1885), 329–40; L. Chomard, ‘Le cadran analemmatique et la rétrogradation de l’ombre’, *L’Astronomie* 20 (1906), 433–49; G. Delmotte, ‘Cadran solaire Flammarion à rétrogradation’, *L’Astronomie* 37 (1923), 408–9.

<sup>16</sup> See *Petri Nonii Salaciensis Opera*, Liber II, Basel 1567, 101–3.

<sup>17</sup> Corn. à Lape, *Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram* (Editio Nova, Tomus undecimus): *Commentaria in Isaiam Prophetam*, Paris 1877, 473–7.

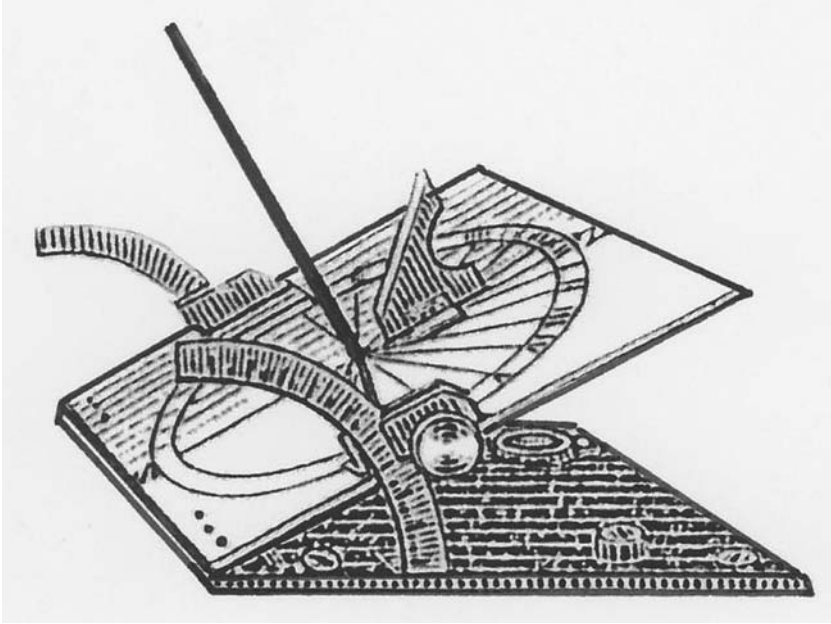


Fig. 6. Sundial built by Flammarion.

beginning of the twentieth century the director of the Brera-observatorium in Milano, Schiaparelli, asked attention for the retrogradation of the shadow. He suggested how easy it is to solve the problem of retrogradation and to reproduce the miracle on an sundial, but he failed to give more details about the experiment.<sup>18</sup>

Flammarion fixed a gnomon or style of 20 centimeter perpendicular to a horizontal board. When used as a sundial and placed in north-south direction, the shadow of the style is visible on the northern part of the plane and moves from the left (west) to the right (east). During his experiment Flammarion, however, inclined the board with the style until the style was in such a position that its shadow was cast on the southern part of the plane. The result was that its zenith fell between the tropic and equator, with the consequence that the sundial with such an unusual (in fact a wrong) inclination for Juvisy showed at solstice in June a retrogradation of the shadow. At 12.00 o'clock a very short shadow

<sup>18</sup> G. Schiaparelli, *Die Astronomie im Alten Testament*, Giessen 1904, 87–9, esp. 89 n. 1.

was cast exactly on the north-south meridian. The shadow regularly moved in the direction of the east, going up, and became longer and longer. Between 1.50 pm and 2.34 pm the shadow remained stationary. Then, it started to move again, but in the opposite direction, going down, until sunset. The angle of the shadow line at 2.12 pm with the point where the shadow disappeared from the dial plane was 11 degrees. Flammarion also calculated the exact inclination of the style to get a retrogradation of 10 degrees according to 2 Kgs 20:11, namely 18 degrees north latitude. For a sundial in Jerusalem at 31 degrees north latitude, the dial must be inclined 13 degrees.<sup>19</sup> But in my opinion, we miss the point of the story about the sundial of Ahaz when we emphasize too much the exact number of מעלות. Crucial is the opposition in motion. The number of ten means here a certain distance or an indication of a certain number of time units in the ecliptic.

When we compare the data of the experiment by Flammarion with the details in 2 Kgs 20:9–11, we see some striking similarities.

- First, the shadow on Flammarion’s dial moves in two directions. In 2 Kgs 20:9 the motions are described by the verb הלך, ‘to go (forward)’, and שוב, ‘to go backwards, to return’, verbs with an opposite meaning.
- Secondly, in the afternoon the moving shadow on Flammarion’s dial stretched out. Increasing length is a natural property of a shadow between noon and sunset. Meanwhile there is also a progression in motion in a specific direction. In 2 Kgs 20:10 the verb נטה is used to indicate this progression combined with the lengthening. The verb נטה perfectly presents what is visible on the dial.
- Thirdly, during the experiment by Flammarion the length of the shadow starts to increase after noon. At the same time it climbed up in the east part of the inclined plane. After a relatively long period of being stationary the shadow chose the opposite direction and started to come down on the inclined plane. That is what is called retrogradation. In 2 Kgs 20:11 this crucial moment is marked with two verbs. The first verb is שוב, ‘to return’, in the causative form שוב אתהצל, ‘he (the LORD) let the shadow return on the מעלות’. The second verb is the verb ירד in the clause אשר ירדה במעלות אהז.<sup>20</sup> The

<sup>19</sup> Flammarion, ‘Le cadran solaire’, 328.

<sup>20</sup> The word הצל, ‘the shadow’, must be construed as the subject of the verb ירד. It is the most logical antecedent as the text stands. See C.F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew*

verbs *יָרַד* and *שָׁב* present exactly what happens on the dial. I propose to explain the clause *אֲשֶׁר יָרְדָה* not as a relative clause, but as a final or result clause. The conjunction *אֲשֶׁר* is common in a variety of final and result clause.<sup>21</sup> In positive and negative clauses *אֲשֶׁר* can introduce such a clause. The new interpretation of verse 11 is as follows: ‘(...) he made the shadow return on the *מַעְלֹת*, so that it went down/descended on the *מַעְלֹת* of Ahaz.’ The last words of 2 Kgs 20:11, *אָהַרְנִית, אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּעְלֹת* can perfectly be understood as an addition to the result clause.

- Fourthly, Flammarion suggested that a manipulated, inclined plane is necessary to show the retrogradation of the shadow outside the tropics, so also in Jerusalem. In 2 Kgs 20:11 twice the word *מַעְלֹת* is used, without the Hebrew cardinal *עֶשְׂרִים*, ‘ten’. In those cases *מַעְלֹת* denotes to my opinion the ‘inclined plane’.
- Fifthly, Flammarion calculated a retrogradation of 10 degrees. In his view the similarity to the biblical story depends on the supposition that the people in the ancient Near East were familiar with the same division of a circle in degrees as we have.<sup>22</sup> One hundred years after Flammarion wrote his article we may say that that is just the case in the first millenium BCE. At the beginning of the first millenium Babylonian astronomers thought of a systematic recording of celestial phenomena.<sup>23</sup> They transferred the length-measure *beru* to celestial distances. In their calculations the circumference of the sky became twelve *beru*, each of which was subdivided in 30 parts (*uš*).

---

*Text of the Books of Kings*, Oxford 1903, 349. *צַל* is the only entity mentioned in 2 Kgs 20:9–11 with regards to any motion on the *מַעְלֹת*. The Hebrew reading *יָרְדָה* might be due to damage of the text because of haplography. The ending of *יָרְדָה* can be interpreted as the article of the lost word *צַל*. If we assume the sun as subject of *יָרְדָה* (according to Isa. 38:8), it is difficult to imagine how we can observe the motion of the sun on a flight of stairs or a sundial, leaving the shadow out of consideration. It cannot also be ruled out that gender agreement is lost: a verb form may be masculine and the subject may be feminine. See B.K. Waltke, M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Winona Lake 1990, 109–10 (§6.6.c); W. Gesenius, E. Kautzsch, *Hebräische Grammatik*, Leipzig<sup>28</sup> 1909, 487 (§145o).

<sup>21</sup> Waltke, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 638 (par. 38.3b); D.J.A. Clines (ed.), *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* 1, Sheffield 1993, 432b; see for more examples Fr. E. König, *Historisch-comparative Syntax der Hebräischen Sprache: Schlusssteil des historisch-kritischen Lehrgebäudes des Hebräischen*, Leipzig 1897, §395a, 396a,o; R.J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, Toronto 1970, §473.

<sup>22</sup> C. Flammarion, ‘Le cadran solaire’, 327.

<sup>23</sup> O. Neugebauer, *Astronomy and History: Selected Essays*, New York, Berlin, Heidelberg, Tokyo 1983, 8.

So the Babylonians divided the main circle of the sky into 360 *uš*. Examples of those calculations in the eighth century BCE can be found in the Babylonian Planetary Omens.<sup>24</sup> An *uš* equals our time and arc degree.<sup>25</sup> In 2 Kgs 20:9–11 the word מעלה, plural מעלות, may be used as an Hebrew equivalent of the Babylonian *uš*, ‘degree’, a meaning which we find in all the modern biblical Hebrew dictionaries.

With regards to the construction of a sundial, there are two late Babylonian texts about the subject ‘How to build a sundial’. They are only published as cuneiform text by Pinches and Sachs.<sup>26</sup> Rochberg-Halton commented parts of the very difficult texts.<sup>27</sup> The construction of the sundial is simple. It consists of the basic elements, a gnomon or style (*gan tuppi*), and a stone slab (*agurru*). The stone slab lay in a horizontal plane, the style is perpendicular placed on it.

There is no reason to assume that sundials (as well as water and sand clocks), the way how to build them, its use and functioning were not known to astronomers in ancient Israel. Due to the influence of neighbouring civilizations the upper class at the court and the temple in Jerusalem could have a highly developed method of time measurement—although ancient sundials may have shown many mistakes.<sup>28</sup> In 2 Kgs 20:9–11 the details about the properties of a style’s shadow are so specific that we must conclude that the writer of this story had a certain knowledge about astronomy and time measurement.

### 5. Conclusion

Finally, I have to answer my questions. My first question was: in what way the image of the prophets as miracle maker in Kings applies to Isaiah in 2 Kgs 20:8–11?

<sup>24</sup> See E. Reiner, D. Pingree, *Babylonian Planetary Omens, Part Three* (Cuneiform Monographs II), Groningen 1998, 216, 218, 223.

<sup>25</sup> F. Rochberg-Halton, ‘Babylonian Seasonal Hours’, *Centaurus* 32 (1989), 146–70, esp. 147–50; H. Hunger, D. Pingree, *Astral Sciences in Mesopotamia* (Handbuch der Orientalistik, Erste Abteilung, Bd. 44), Leiden, Boston, Köln 1999, 41; L. Brack-Bernsen, ‘The Path of the Moon, the Rising Points of the Sun, and the Oblique Great Circle on the Celestial Sphere’, *Centaurus* 45 (2003), 16–31.

<sup>26</sup> T.G. Pinches, A. Sachs, *Late Babylonian Astronomical and Related Texts*, Providence 1955, 232 (Nos. 1494, 1495).

<sup>27</sup> Rochberg-Halton, ‘Babylonian Seasonal Hours’, 162–5.

<sup>28</sup> Borchardt, *Allägyptische Zeitmessung*, 38; Sloley, ‘Primitive Methods’, 171, fig. 6 and fig. 7 with corrections.

Miracles are events or effects which deviate from laws of nature or transcend our knowledge of these laws. Prayers of prophets in the book of Kings are always associated with miraculous events. Retrogradation of shadow on the sundial of Ahaz however can be described according to the laws of nature we are familiar with. That aspect in our passage about Isaiah is not known from the portraits of the other prophets in Kings. Retrogradation is a natural phenomenon that occurs and can be repeated under certain circumstances everywhere in the world. It is not a unic event. To Hezekiah it is a lasting sign of God's promise, every time it occurs.

In practice, it is very easy to cause retrogradation. Nevertheless, the phenomenon is very complex and difficult to understand and to explain, even for an experienced astronomer. Now the miracle is over, but the mystery remains, and it is just that mysterious aspect that the author gives a divine dimension in the prayer of Isaiah.

My second question was: What does the knowledge about astronomy contribute to the understanding of 2 Kgs 20:8–11, and what could it mean for the translation of this text? The narrative seems to offer a kind of theological etiology of an astronomic instrument that somehow or another has to do with Ahaz, the king of Judah in the second half of the eight century BCE. The translation team of the New Dutch Bible Version made a sensible choice to incorporate the sundial perspective in the text. The choice can be well motivated and defended by referring to the ancient and modern astronomical insights concerning retrogradation. The stairway-model had to disappear, because the phenomenon of retrogradation is certainly not visible on a construction with steps.

It were a good idea to elaborate the consequences of this choice with regards to verse 11. In the New Dutch Version the words אֲשֶׁר יִרְדָּה are translated more or less implicit. As a result clause it would have supported the astronomical meaning. It would give to the reader a more precise idea of what the storyteller in 2 Kgs 20 tried to communicate.

### Illustrations

Fig. 1 R.W. Sloley, 'Primitive Methods of Measuring Time with Special Reference to Egypt', *JEA* 17 (1931), 171; Fig. 6.

Fig. 2 G. Möller, 'Eine Sonnenuhr aus der Zeit Merneptahs', *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Alterthumskunde* 56 (1920), 102.

Fig. 3 Egyptian National Museum, Cairo; cat. Nb. 33401; L. Borchardt, *Die altägyptische Zeitmessung*, Berlin, Leipzig 1920, 38; Abb. 13.

Fig. 4 Y. Yadin, 'The Dial of Ahaz', *Erets Israel* 5 (1958), 91–6.

Fig. 5 Borchardt, *Altägyptische Zeitmessung*, 41, n. 1; Abb. 15.

Fig. 6 C. Flammarion, 'Le cadran solaire a rétrogradation de l'Observatoire de Juvisy, et le miracle d'Isaïe', *L'Astronomie* 4 (1885), 321; Fig. 103.



KING AND COMMUNITY:  
JOINING WITH DAVID IN PRAYER

Howard N. Wallace  
*United Faculty of Theology, Melbourne—Australia*

1. *Introduction*

The psalms have been the core of the prayer life of the Church over its entire history, and one could say the same for the Synagogue in different but not unrelated ways. How these ancient prayers have commended themselves, and been commended by others, to countless faithful people seeking to speak to God in moments of either desperation or elation is an intriguing question. In the case of the psalms of praise, the fact that in many of these the voice of the psalmist speaks directly to the community or congregation aids in the appropriation of these words by a later and larger community. But what about the private world of the laments where more often than not we hear only the psalmist's voice speaking to a mostly silent deity? Is it simply a matter of association generated by later hearers/readers/prayerers that allows a wider appropriation of these psalms? My present question is: are there factors internal to the Psalter that encourage this process of later appropriation and use? What are some of the aspects of this collection of psalms that allow it to get under the skin of faith communities and take pride of place in their prayer life?

2. *Significance of the Superscriptions*

One aspect of the collection important for addressing my question is the matter of the association of David with the psalms. A few scholars have examined this traditional association and discussed the significance of it for psalms' interpretation. Some have argued for a significant place for David the king and royal theology in the shaping and interpretation of the whole Psalter.<sup>1</sup> They have suggested that David should be seen

---

<sup>1</sup> E.g. G.H. Wilson, "The Use of the Royal Psalms at the "Seams" of the Hebrew

as the archetypal pray-er in the psalms, a model of prayer and piety for the larger faith community which follows him. Their arguments are often based on the evidence of the superscriptions referring to David or evidence from the few psalms which refer to him in the body of the text.<sup>2</sup> Brevard Childs's work has been influential here.<sup>3</sup> In his essay on psalm titles, he sees them as 'an early reflection on how the Psalms as a collection of sacred literature were understood.'<sup>4</sup> The titles provide 'general parallels between the situation described in the Psalm and some incident in the life of David.'<sup>5</sup> Added late in the post-exilic

---

Psalter', *JOT* 35 (1986), 85–94; M.S. Smith, 'The Theology of the Redaction of the Psalter: Some Observations', *ZAW* 104 (1992), 408–12; N.L. de Claisse-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: the Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter*, Macon, GA 1997; J.A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms*, Atlanta 2004; R. Rendtorff, 'The Psalms of David: David in the Psalms', in: P.W. Flint and P.D. Miller (eds), *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, Leiden 2005, 53–64. Others see the association with David as independent of his royal status, e.g. A.M. Cooper, 'The Life and Times of King David according to the Book of Psalms', in: R.E. Friedman (ed.), *The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism* (HSS, 26), Chico, CA 1983, 117–31; B.S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, Philadelphia 1979, 521. L.C. Allen, *Psalms* (Biblical Word Themes), Waco, TX 1987, 123, has supported Childs's argument. Still others see a mixed situation, e.g. J.L. Mays, 'The David of the Psalms', *Interpretation* 40 (1986), 143–155. Some have also associated this with a messianic interpretation of David's office, e.g. see the references in J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel: From its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah*, New York 1955, 332 n. 4; and J. Brierre-Narbonne, *Les prophéties messianiques de l'Ancien Testament dans la littérature juive en accord avec le Nouveau Testament: avec une introduction sur la littérature messianique juive apocryphe, targoumique, talmudique, midrachique, zoharique et rabbinique*, Paris 1933, 12–30.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mays, 'David of the Psalms', and Rendtorff, 'Psalms of David'. Also note J. Luyten, 'David and the Psalms', in: L. Leijssen (ed.), *Les psaumes: prières de l'humanité, d'Israël, de l'Église. Hommage à Jos Luyten*, Leuven 1990, 57–76. The MT attributes 73 psalms to David by means of the superscriptions while the LXX attributes a total of 84 psalms to him. The Qumran scroll 11QPs<sup>a</sup> credits David, in a summary statement, with the composition of 4050 psalms. Even as early as the 2nd century BCE, Eccl. 47:8–10 possibly credits David with all the psalms. In the New Testament Psalms 2 and 95 are both attributed to David even though neither is directly associated with David in the MT (see Acts 4:25–26 and Heb. 4:7 respectively). In some of the Qumran scrolls other non-canonical psalms are attributed to him. In the Babylonian Talmud in the first half of 2nd century CE, Rabbi Meir considers that David uttered 'All the praises which are expressed in the book of Psalms' (b. Pes. 117a), quoted in Cooper, 'The Life and Times of King David', 117. Cooper cites many other traditions along this line (*ibid.*, 117–8). The psalms which mention David in the body of the psalm are: Pss. 18, 78, 89, 132, and 144.

<sup>3</sup> B.S. Childs, 'Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis', *JSS* 16 (1971), 137–50.

<sup>4</sup> 'Psalm Titles', 137.

<sup>5</sup> 'Psalm Titles', 147.

period, Childs sees them as analogous to later ‘full-blown midrash’,<sup>6</sup> and a source of formerly unknown information for the reader who now has an insight into David’s inner life. Childs puts this work down to a ‘pietistic circle of Jews whose interest was particularly focused on the nurture of the spiritual life.’<sup>7</sup> In the final shape of the Psalter, Childs suggests the psalms have been taken out of their earlier cultic setting and become a source of spiritual guidance amidst the troubles and joys of life.<sup>8</sup> The superscriptions in the psalms have not always received the attention they might deserve, but is it just their presence that affects the place of the psalms in tradition or are they part of a more complex situation regarding the reception of the Psalter?

### 3. *Individual and community*

A second aspect of the Psalter relevant to my question is the relation of individual and communal foci in the psalms. In his 1992 article entitled ‘The Shape of the Book of Psalms’, Gerald Wilson suggested some interpretive implications derived from what he called the ‘indicators of shaping’ in the Psalter.<sup>9</sup> Among them was the suggestion that ‘the shift from lament to praise within the Psalter is accompanied by a related shift in which the focus moves from the individual to the community.’<sup>10</sup> Wilson based his suggestion on the distribution of psalm types, noting that a ‘communal voice’ is more pronounced in the second half of the Psalter. While one could take issue with the detail of Wilson’s argument, his general point is correct. There is within the Psalter a shift in emphasis from a focus on the individual to communal concerns. But it is not solely the result of the distribution of psalm types in the sequencing of psalms. Some psalms have been reworked to include collective features.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> ‘Psalm Titles’, 148. See also E. Slomovic, ‘Towards an Understanding of the Formation of Historical Titles in the Book of Psalms’, *ZAW* 91 (1979), 350–80.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Psalm Titles’, 149.

<sup>8</sup> Childs, *Introduction*, 521.

<sup>9</sup> G.H. Wilson, ‘The Shape of the Book of Psalms’, *Interpretation* 46 (1992), 129–142.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Shape of the Book’, 139.

<sup>11</sup> M. Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation in the Psalms*, Tübingen 2006. Other scholars have examined related issues. See U. Nömmik, ‘Die Gerechtigkeitsbearbeitungen in den Psalmen. Eine Hypothese von Christoph Levin formgeschichtlich und kolometrisch überprüft’, *UF* 31 (2000), 443–535; and E. Zenger, ‘Was wird anders bei kanonischer Psalmenauslegung?’, in: F.V. Reiterer (ed.), *Ein Gott, eine Offenbarung. Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese, Theologie und Spiritualität*, Würzburg 1991, 397–413.

Marko Marttila argues for a 'collective redaction' of the Psalter based on single psalms scattered throughout the whole.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. *A Complex Process*

I want to build on these two aspects in addressing my question. I would suggest that in the final shape of the Psalter we see the product of a complex and long process which encourages later hearers/readers to take these psalms as their own. This process has a number of parts.

One involves the gradual reshaping of the Psalter towards the realms of corporate prayer, although the strong individual tone of many psalms remains. This has in part been achieved through short editorial additions to older psalms, wider supplementation of others, and the use of psalms composed from the beginning from a national viewpoint.<sup>13</sup> Another part of this process involves the attribution of psalms to David, mainly through the superscriptions added to some psalms relating to situations in the life of David. A third part involves the juxtaposition of certain psalms within the final collection focused around verbal or thematic connections.<sup>14</sup> What results in the final form is a collection of prayers that clearly stands as David's collection but which actively invites both the ongoing community of faith as a whole and individuals within it to join in *his* prayers, and to take them as exemplars for prayer in the common experiences of life. The process that gave this shape to the Psalter, stretches from the penning of some psalms to the final stages of collection and its interpretation. Moreover, the results of this process are evident from the very beginning of the Psalter, and

---

<sup>12</sup> *Collective Reinterpretation*, 36. The main psalms he deals with are Pss 22, 69, 89, and 102, with attention to a few isolated passages in other individual psalms. While many psalms were undoubtedly used for music in worship in both the first and second temple periods, in his view the Psalter contains 'many psalms that have more likely belonged to private meditation rather than to the established cult' (*ibid.*, 34). See his n. 102 for a list of those with similar views.

<sup>13</sup> See also Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation*, 26–7.

<sup>14</sup> J.P. Brennan, 'Psalms 1–8: Some Hidden Harmonies', *BTB* 10/1 (1980), 25–9, sees verbal connections between early psalms suggesting 'an attempt to impose some sort of logical order upon the various collections which make up our present Psalter' (28). See also P.D. Miller, 'Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer: The Theology of Psalms 15–24', in: K. Seybold, E. Zenger (eds), *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung: für Walter Beyerslin*, Freiburg 1994, 127–42; L.C. Allen, 'David as Exemplar of Spirituality: The Redactional Function of Psalm 19', *Bib.* 67 (1986), 544–6.

pervade its every twist and turn as it unfolds before the hearer/reader and pray-er.

In what follows I wish to illustrate ways in which the hearer/reader is drawn into the psalms to make them their own prayers and songs. I will focus on the beginning of the Psalter to show that this process is evident, contrary to Wilson's argument, right from the start of the collection.

### 5. *Psalm 1 and Psalm 2*

The close connection of Psalms 1 and 2 and their possible editorial function in the Psalter has long been recognised.<sup>15</sup> As well as introducing the Psalter and some major themes Psalms 1 and 2 also help direct the reader in terms of whose prayers these are and whose they can become.

Psalms 1 and 2 each present a case of contrast: between the blessed man and the wicked in Psalm 1, and between YHWH's anointed king and the rulers of the nations in Psalm 2. In each case, the latter party takes counsel against or seeks to ensnare the one favoured by YHWH. In the end, however, the wicked and the nations either perish or face that possibility. In the midst of this contrast there is also comparison. The blessed man in Psalm 1 meditates on the *torah*, while the few words we hear from the king in Psalm 2 are a quotation of the divine statute. Moreover, the unspecified  $\psi^{\text{א}}\text{א}^{\text{א}}$  ('the man') in Psalm 1, could be understood in a royal context given connections between Ps. 1:2 especially and the law of the king in Deut. 17:18–20 and the injunction on Joshua in Josh. 1:7–8.<sup>16</sup> This strengthens the already close association with Psalm 2. However, the identification of 'the man' is not conclusive. While Psalm 1 allows a royal interpretation, it does not demand it and this uncertainty leaves the psalm open to further questioning and interpretation.

<sup>15</sup> See especially P.D. Miller, 'The Beginning of the Psalter', in J.C. McCann, *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, Sheffield 1993, 83–92. Psalms 1 and 2 are linked not only through the framework of the blessing formula in Pss 1:1 and 2:12, but also through several verbal correspondences. For further detailed discussion see, e.g., J. Høgenhaven, 'The Opening of the Psalter: A Study in Jewish Theology', *SJOT* 15 (2001), 169–80; R. Cole, 'An Integrated Reading of Psalms 1 and 2', *JST* 98 (2002), 75–88.

<sup>16</sup> See especially Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 41–70.

Another point of comparison between the psalms reinforces this openness. Both psalms end with the individual (human) subject being included in the larger company of the faithful. The anonymous blessed man in Psalm 1 clearly becomes one of the righteous whose way is known by YHWH (v. 6). The path is open for him to become a model for that group, and for his present experience of 'blessedness' to embody the future hope of the 'company of the righteous' (v. 5). Likewise the king, whose earthly authority and power are established in Psalm 2, is, in the end, drawn into the company of 'all' who take refuge in YHWH by the completion of the *inclusio* between Ps. 2:12c and Ps. 1:1a. The king becomes part of a larger company, which could even include the nations and their rulers if they accept the invitation to choose the way of YHWH extended to them in 2:10–12b. Moreover, the description of the king so far in this psalm shows that he too finds his refuge in YHWH, the one who grants him authority, power and sonship. The effect of the *inclusio* in 1:1 and 2:12c, therefore, is to say that the king is not only vice-regent to YHWH, but is a model for those who take refuge in YHWH. The Davidic kingship is drawn back into the circle of those who neither partake of the conversations of conspiracy nor are covered by them. YHWH is their refuge and his *torah* their constant delight. The ideal king is also the ideal Israelite, a faithful servant of YHWH. Through contrast and comparison in these introductory psalms, the parallel roles of king and the unnamed, individual Israelite are brought together.

Thus, the possibility for the prayers of the Psalter to have application for the hearer/reader beyond the context of the psalmist has been built into the introductory psalms of the final collection. This took place most likely in the very last stages of compilation of the Psalter, and by means of both placement of psalms and the employment of an *inclusio*. However, the process of application of these prayers to later faithful hearers/readers is not limited to this.

### 6. *Psalm 3*

In the case of Psalm 3 the insertion of a lengthy superscription, possible editorial additions to the psalm and the employment of ambiguity of meaning of verbal forms all play a part in the application of the psalm to the community beyond the psalmist. In Psalm 3 we are introduced both to the collection of laments that dominates the first book of Psalms and the association of the psalms with David in particular.

The superscription in Ps. 3:1 relates the psalm to David's flight from his son Absalom (2 Samuel 15). This provides a specific context for reading the first person singular pronouns throughout the first eight verses. The psalm draws near to a close in v. 8 with a plea for deliverance, for YHWH has smitten the cheek of 'my enemies' and shattered the teeth of the wicked.<sup>17</sup> The use of the perfect form of the verbs in v. 8b can suggest a past action consistent with looking back in the psalm to the past words of David. But the perfect verb form is used elsewhere of a hoped for action by God (e.g. Ps. 31:5–6). This ambiguity softens the distinction between past and present/future allowing a later reader, who knows how David eventually overcomes Absalom, to make the psalm his own. The psalm concludes (v. 9) with a statement of confidence in YHWH's deliverance and a request for YHWH's blessing upon 'your people'. This verse, which some see as a late editorial addition,<sup>18</sup> is doubly important. It provides the vow of praise so familiar at the end of laments and broadens the effect of the prayer. The blessing is invoked not on the psalmist, David, but on YHWH's people. The psalm, therefore, is developed specifically so that it has significance beyond David and Absalom. The liturgical tone of this final verse allows the psalm in its entirety to become part of the community's prayer (cf. 2 Sam. 6:18).

The differences between the psalm and the narrative account of David's flight from Absalom<sup>19</sup> also suggest more than a simple historical connection between Psalm 3 and the story in 2 Samuel. Through these the hearer/reader is drawn into a conversation around the context for such a prayer and encouraged to see connections with other situations. The interpretation of David in this psalm as the forerunner

---

<sup>17</sup> These expressions could both be traced to legal contexts in the Ancient Near East, although here they are used figuratively. See N.M. Sarna, 'Legal Terminology in Psalm 3:8', in: M. Fishbane and E. Tov (eds), *'Sha'arei Talmon': Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon*, Winona Lake, IN 1992, 175–81.

<sup>18</sup> See also Marttila on Ps. 3:9, *Collective Reinterpretation*, 144–6.

<sup>19</sup> These include the fact that while the psalmist calls for YHWH to act, in 2 Samuel 18 David himself overcomes Absalom. In 2 Samuel, David shows mercy for his enemies (see 2 Sam. 19:18b–30), but in the psalm he seeks their humiliation (cf. 2 Sam. 18:5 etc. and Ps. 3:8). The term 'holy mountain' (Ps. 3:5) is not used of Jerusalem or the temple mount in or before David's time (cf. 2 Sam. 15:25). David's 'enemies' in 2 Samuel include trusted companions and family, not just the political opponents of the psalm. David undertakes a humiliating retreat from Absalom in 2 Samuel, which is not suggested in the psalm. Finally, in 2 Samuel David's flight is connected to his sinful acts (2 Samuel 11). Sinfulness is not hinted at in the psalm.

of Christ in his sufferings and death by early Christian interpreters is an example of such a connection. The route taken by David in his flight from Absalom, through the Wadi Kidron (2 Sam. 15:23) and up the mount of Olives (2 Sam. 15:30), supports the later comparison to Christ in his agony.

Finally, additional connections between Psalm 3 and Psalms 1–2 tie the beginning of the Psalter together.<sup>20</sup> The psalmist in Psalm 3 is the king of Psalm 2 who now takes refuge in YHWH as Ps. 2:12 urges. Psalm 3 gives an example of what taking refuge can mean, in terms of both situation and trust required. The king (as the psalmist) becomes the exemplar of those who take refuge. He also becomes the intercessor for all others who would take refuge in YHWH, as we see shortly in Ps. 5:12.

### 7. *Psalm 7 and Psalm 8*

The link between David and other faithful individuals as those who take refuge in YHWH is made more explicit in Psalm 7. Up to this psalm references to those who take refuge in YHWH have only been made in a general way (Pss. 2:12; 5:12). Now in Psalm 7 David is brought into focus by the second superscription which ties the psalm to a specific event in the king's life, albeit a little obscure in this case.<sup>21</sup> David explicitly, as the psalmist, includes himself in that group who take refuge and as such becomes a model for them (7:2). David builds this prayer on a two-fold righteousness—his own and God's. In the end, however, it is the righteousness of YHWH that sustains him (v. 18). In the course of the psalm the language changes slightly from very personal language about David's own situation in vv. 2–8, to language in which David pleads for vindication from God who judges all with righteousness (vv. 9–18). His personal plea for deliverance is gradually seen in the context of all who are righteous or repent.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. references to the 'wicked' (Ps. 3:7; cf. Ps. 1:1, 5 and 6); the counsel of the wicked in Psalm 1, an example of which is given in Psalm 3, namely that there is no deliverance in YHWH; and the reference to the 'holy mountain' in Pss. 2:6 and 3:5.

<sup>21</sup> A number of elements in Psalm 7 relate it to Psalm 2 and support a royal context: alignment of 'the peoples' (עַמִּים) against YHWH and his king (Pss. 2:1; 7:8); the futility of the endeavour (2:4; 7:15–16); the defeat of the enemies (2:9; 7:12–13); YHWH as sovereign of all the earth (2:7; 7:8–9); YHWH protects the king (2:8; 7:7); the offer of mercy to enemies (2:11–12; 7:13); and YHWH as refuge for king and people (2:12; 7:2).

The vow of thanksgiving at the end of Psalm 7 (v. 18), especially with the promise of the praise of YHWH's name, is taken up in the first psalm of praise in the Psalter, Psalm 8, which opens and closes with the psalmist addressing YHWH as 'our sovereign', thereby drawing the community into his praise of the divine name, majestic in all the earth. At the heart of the psalm the psalmist contemplates the place of humankind collectively, using the words אָנוּשׁ and בֶּן־אָדָם, in the great scheme of things (v. 5). His interest is not focused so much on the insignificance of humans, but, rather, on the attention and concern YHWH gives to them and on their high status from YHWH's perspective in spite of their lowliness (v. 6): they are a little lower than divine—*yet crowned with glory and honour* (כְּבוֹד וְהוֹדָר)—*given dominion over all*—all things are under their feet.<sup>22</sup> The symbols of God's dominion in creation may seem to belittle humankind, but the divine gift of dominion raises those insignificant creatures to royal status. The democratization of kingship language in this passage again draws others to share the wonder expressed by David, the king whose name stands again at the head of the psalm.

The use of the word כְּבוֹד in Psalm 8 is also instructive. In the preceding laments כְּבוֹד has been variously used. In Ps. 3:4, YHWH was David's כְּבוֹד, but in Pss. 4:3 and 7:6 David's own כְּבוֹד (English versions: 'soul', 'body', 'honour') was threatened. David, like other human beings, suffered and was in both mortal and spiritual danger. Now in Psalm 8 we see that humankind's 'glory' (כְּבוֹד) comes not from position in the world, but from God. It is human standing before God that is important. What was proclaimed in Psalm 7 is reiterated here in stronger, more general terms. Depending on how we translate Ps. 8:3, even the weakest and most defenceless of humans, babes and infants, not only praise YHWH above the heavens, but can be strength against YHWH's enemies. The same is true for the king, who, in the lament psalms became weak and vulnerable, but who now praises YHWH's majestic name. YHWH as creator is seen as true refuge for the weak. As psalmist, David stands again in a representative role. The answer to David's plight, and to that of humans in general, is found in the praise of God.

<sup>22</sup> 'Glory and honour' are attributes usually associated with God (e.g. Pss. 19:2; 29:1–2, 9; 96:3–6; 104:1, 31 etc.) while 'glory' is also used for the king (Ps. 21:6). The language of 'dominion' is used in relation to both God and human monarch (cf. Pss. 22:29; 72:8; and 145:3). Cf. the royal language in vv. 1 and 9.

8. *Psalms 9–10 and 14*

In the case of the broken acrostic that is Psalms 9–10 it is the internal shaping of the psalm that opens it up to community use. The initial individual thanksgiving in Psalm 9 comes to completion in vv. 12–13 where David invites the whole congregation (pl. imperative) ‘to give praise’. As thanksgiving turns to lament in 9:14–19, the language speaks generally of the ‘poor’ and ‘afflicted’ etc.<sup>23</sup> In this David, as the psalmist, now speaks as one of the ‘poor’ in general, not from a position of privilege. David, thus, models for all one who asks YHWH to raise him up from ‘the gates of death’ so that he might praise YHWH in ‘the gates of daughter Zion’, the gates of life and the place of vindication.

The same end is achieved in Ps. 9:18–19 where the parallel use of ‘wicked’ and ‘nations’ in these verses allows the plea to operate at both the individual level and the national. David is seen in both personal and royal roles and the psalm is free, therefore, to operate at either level. Overall in these two psalms, when treated as a unity, there is movement from the prayers and petitions of an individual to that one’s prayers and petitions on behalf of the poor and oppressed. Thus, Psalms 9–10 lead from David’s prayers for his own deliverance, to his prayers on behalf of the oppressed and poor. His confidence is in the eternal sovereignty of YHWH (Pss. 9:10–11; 10:16). As he exercises his own trust in YHWH and intercedes for others (10:12, 15, 17–18), he invites them to participate in his prayer (9:14–15). His prayer for himself and others becomes a model for the faithful.

Psalm 14 concludes an initial sub-section of Book 1 of the Psalter. While defining the genre of the psalm is difficult, there are clear community and nationalising concepts at the end of the psalm with reference to the ‘company of the righteous’ in v. 5 and a prayer for deliverance for the whole nation in v. 7.<sup>24</sup>

9. *Grouping of Psalms*

The close associations of adjacent psalms or small groups early in the Psalter could be developed. Several scholars have already drawn

<sup>23</sup> According to J. Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation*, London 2003, 85, these verses could echo a scene from a royal installation.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. also Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation*, 146–7.

attention to the associations of the group Psalms 15–24.<sup>25</sup> There is a clear association in this cycle between the themes of true obedience and piety and human kingship with Psalm 19's emphasis on *torah* surrounded by royal psalms (Psalms 18, 20, 21). At the core of the cycle is the message that it is YHWH who is the king of glory for Israel (Ps 24:8, 10), a theme repeated later in Book IV (Psalms 93–99) and in the concluding praise in Psalms 145–146. P.D. Miller refers in passing fashion to the king in Psalms 15–24 as 'Yahweh's trusted servant and model Israelite'.<sup>26</sup> One could, I believe, develop this comment further. I would argue that there is in this collection too clear evidence for the king being held up as a 'model' for piety and faithfulness before the community and of the psalms being shaped in such a way that the community is encouraged to take his prayers as their own.

#### 10. *Conclusion*

I hope this is sufficient to suggest that the tradition of the psalms as being both David's prayers and those of the community is fostered deliberately within the collection itself. It is the result of a multi-faceted process building on aspects of composition of some psalms and developed through editing and the shaping of the collection. The prayers of David, prayed later again as the prayers of the community of faith, became the vehicle whereby that community found identity, hope and new life.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> P.D. Miller, 'Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer: The Theology of Psalms 15–24', in: K. Seybold, E. Zenger (eds), *Neue Wege*, 127–42.

<sup>26</sup> 'Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer', 139.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. also De Claisse-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 7–8, 29.



## PRAYER AND PRACTICE IN THE PSALMS

Gordon Wenham

*Trinity College, Bristol—Great Britain*

### 1. *Introduction*

Traditional Anglicans who used the Book of Common Prayer imbibed its theology as they prayed. For example most of the collects for the Sundays after Trinity are derived from the fifth-century Gelasian Sacramentary, which were prayers composed in the wake of the Pelagian controversy. It does not take much skill to hear echoes of that debate. One collect says: ‘because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without thee, grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping of thy commandments we may please thee both in will and deed.’<sup>1</sup> Clearly this collect teaches both theology and ethics: the moral inability of the natural man and also the importance of obeying the God-given commandments. Another collect composed by Cranmer begins ‘O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth; Send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity.’<sup>2</sup> Hearing these prayers at least once a year Anglicans picked up, without realising it, not a little theology and ethical principle.

Hymns and worship songs continue to indoctrinate the modern worshipper. One of the most popular hymns in Britain includes the line ‘Drop thy still dews of quietness till all our strivings cease.’ Another, the prayer of St Francis, begins: ‘Make me an instrument of thy peace’. On the other hand clergy intent on encouraging their people to stand up for the faith might choose such old favourites as ‘Fight the good fight with all thy might’ or ‘He who would true valour see, let him come hither.’! The ideology implied by some traditional hymns of course makes some people uneasy, hence the rewording or even omission of some classics in more modern collections.

---

<sup>1</sup> Collect for 1st Sunday after Trinity.

<sup>2</sup> Collect for Quinquagesima.

For example in the introduction to *Hymns Old and New* there is this statement:

We were also concerned that the book should use positive and appropriate images, and decided that militarism and triumphalism were, therefore, not appropriate. We recognise that military imagery is used in the Bible, but history, including current events, shows only too clearly the misuse to which those images are open. All too often in the Christian and other religions, texts advocating spiritual warfare are used to justify the self-serving ambitions behind temporal conflicts.<sup>3</sup>

Now though one may query the compilers' principles of selection, I do think they are right to notice the teaching function of hymns and indeed of liturgy in general. It finds expression in the old tag *lex orandi, lex credendi*, that the worshipper's central beliefs are expressed in his prayers. Horton Davies has put it well: 'The entire personality in community is educated in the prayers of adoration, confession, petition, intercession, and consecration, so that we are elevated, abased, judged and driven forth in sacrificial service of the world.'<sup>4</sup> Thus the words hymn-writers and liturgists put on our lips in worship affect us profoundly: they teach us what to think and feel, the more effectively when they are put to music, so we can hum them to ourselves whenever we are inclined.

Particularly influential in this regard are the psalms, which have been at the heart of Jewish and Christian worship for the best part of three millennia.<sup>5</sup> Sung first in the temple, then in the apostolic churches, the psalms constituted the core diet of the monastic tradition on the one hand and the reformed tradition on the other. It is only relatively recently that hymns and other songs have displaced the psalms as the mainspring of Christian worship. If the *lex orandi, lex credendi* principle is correct, the psalms must have had the most profound effect on Christian theology and ethics, as well as Jewish ethics of course.

But though the theology of the psalms has often been discussed,<sup>6</sup> I have noted very little work devoted to their ethics, apart from the occasional article on the entrance liturgies and the imprecatory psalms.

<sup>3</sup> *Hymns Old and New* Stowmarket: 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Horton Davies (no source) quoted by P. Ramsey, 'Liturgy and Ethics', *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 7.2, (1979), 146. K.J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, Louisville 2005, 410, acknowledges the principle: '*Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex agendi*. The way we pray affects what we believe and *what we do*.' However, Vanhoozer does not exploit this observation.

<sup>5</sup> See W.L. Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years*, Minneapolis 1993.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., H.-J. Kraus, *The Theology of the Psalms*, Minneapolis 1992.

Three recent wide-ranging studies of OT ethics more or less overlook the Psalms.<sup>7</sup> Yet in psalm after psalm we are presented with aspects of God's character, or descriptions of the righteous, whom God loves, or the wicked, whom he does not. Anyone singing or praying the psalms will find him or herself being given a very strong ethical steer.

But it is not just Old Testament scholarship that has overlooked the Psalms; Christian ethicists do it too. In Hauerwas and Wells' monumental *Companion to Christian Ethics*,<sup>8</sup> whose main thrust is that Christian ethics flows out of the liturgy, I have looked in vain for any discussion of the contribution that the Psalms make to Christian ethical thought.

Elsewhere<sup>9</sup> I have made an initial attempt to remedy this neglect of the ethics of the psalms. I noted the claim of the Psalter to teach ethics, and how it does this by constantly contrasting the righteous, people whom God likes, with the wicked, those whom he hates. I asked how far the Psalms picture of the righteous corresponds to the principles of behaviour enunciated in the Ten Commandments: which commands are emphasized and which are omitted? I discussed the characterisation of the righteous and the wicked and looked at the idea of the imitation of God as a guiding principle for ethical behaviour in the Psalms.

## 2. *Paul Griffiths on Religious Reading*

But in this paper I want to tackle a different question: What is different about the way ethics is taught in the Psalms from the approach elsewhere in the Old Testament? What distinguishes the rhetorical force of ethical teaching embedded in prayers or songs from ethics taught through law, story or wisdom? This is the central question that I wish to pursue in this paper.

---

<sup>7</sup> E. Otto, *Theologische Ethik des Alten Testaments*, Stuttgart 1994, has just 13 references to the Psalms compared with 40 to Proverbs and 78 to Deuteronomy, although the book of the Psalms is about three times as long as Proverbs or Deuteronomy. A similar disproportion is noticeable in C.S. Rodd, *Glimpses of a Strange Land: Studies in OT Ethics*, Edinburgh 2001. C.J.H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, Leicester 2004, has 50% more references to Deuteronomy than to the Psalms. Given the relative length of the two books, comments in Deuteronomy outweigh those on the Psalms 4 to 1.

<sup>8</sup> S. Hauerwas, S. Wells (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, Malden MA 2004.

<sup>9</sup> 'The Ethics of the Psalms' in: P.S. Johnston, D.G. Firth (eds), *Interpreting the Psalms*, Leicester 2005, 175–94.

However, before focussing on the Psalms, I want to look at an important study that discusses the use that religious people make of their sacred texts. Paul Griffiths in *Religious Reading: the Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion*<sup>10</sup> offers an illuminating analysis of what he calls religious reading, the way followers of a religion use their texts as opposed to the way modern scholars would read them.

He argues that this approach to sacred texts is common to all religions with sacred books, but to illustrate his contention he takes two bodies of sacred literature, Buddhist texts from the 5th century BCE onwards and Christian literature from North Africa in the 3rd to 5th centuries AD. Griffiths holds that until recent times religious reading has characterised Jewish and Christian approaches to all parts of the OT, and in the case of Christians to the NT as well. However to anticipate my conclusion a little, it seems to me that his description of a religious anthology fits the Psalms more closely than any other part of the Scriptures.

So what is religious reading? According to Griffiths accounts must meet three criteria to be regarded as religious: in the view of the believer they must be comprehensive, unsurpassable and central. First, they must be regarded by their adherents as comprehensive: 'it must seem to those who offer it that it takes account of everything.'<sup>11</sup> Second, the account must be regarded as unsurpassable, or non-negotiable. To say that an account is unsurpassable is 'to say that you take what seem to you to be the account's essential features to be incapable of abandonment.'<sup>12</sup> Third, the account must seem central to the believer: 'For an account to seem central to you it must seem to be directly relevant to what you take to be the central questions of your life, the questions around which your life is orientated.'<sup>13</sup>

This understanding of what makes a text religious inevitably has a huge impact on the way believers read it. Most modern readers approach texts quite differently, in what Griffith's terms a consumerist fashion. You read what you like, when you like, and accept what you like in what you read. Then you discard it and move on to read something else. In Griffiths' opinion this characterises our approach to reading everything, from newspaper articles to academic monographs.

---

<sup>10</sup> P.J. Griffiths, *Religious Reading: the Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion*, New York 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 10.

The approach of religious readers is quite different. They see the work read as an infinite resource. 'It is a treasure-house, an ocean, a mine; the deeper religious readers dig... the greater will be their reward.'<sup>14</sup> The work read is treated with great reverence. Griffiths writes: 'For the religious reader, the work read is an object of overpowering delight and great beauty. It can never be discarded because it can never be exhausted. It can only be reread, with reverence and ecstasy.'<sup>15</sup> Ps. 119:97 gives expression to this outlook:

Oh how I love your law!  
It is my meditation all the day.<sup>16</sup>

Buddhists say the same sort of thing about their texts.<sup>17</sup>

Works that are read over and over again tend to be committed to memory. Indeed Griffiths argues that memorisation is highly valued by religious readers. He goes further, maintaining that religious texts are often constructed in a way that aids memorisation. For religious 'readers the ideally read work is the memorized work, and the ideal mode of rereading is by memorial recall.' And as a reader memorises a text, he becomes textualised, that is he embodies the work he has committed to memory. 'Ezekiel's eating of the prophetic scroll... is a representation of the kind of incorporation and internalization involved in religious reading: the work is ingested, used for nourishment, incorporated: it becomes the basis for rumination and for action.'<sup>18</sup>

'A memorized work (like a lover, a friend, a spouse, a child) has entered into the fabric of its possessor's intellectual and emotional life in a way that makes deep claims upon that life, claims that can only be ignored with effort and deliberation.'<sup>19</sup>

It has been estimated that in the early Christian era perhaps 15% of believers were literate,<sup>20</sup> but this did not mean non-readers did not know the text of the Bible. Ancient sermons show that preachers presupposed their hearers knew it by heart: part of the catechetical

---

<sup>14</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 41.

<sup>15</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 42.

<sup>16</sup> Biblical quotations from the English Standard Version.

<sup>17</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 43.

<sup>18</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 46.

<sup>19</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 47.

<sup>20</sup> H. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, New Haven, 1995, 1-41, quoted in Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 52.

programme involved learning texts of Scripture. A study of Buddhist texts shows that a similar situation prevailed in Indian monasteries. There exposition of the texts by senior monks assumed that the novices had already learned the texts by heart. This situation, whereby the ordinary believer relied on memory for knowledge of the sacred text, continued until the widespread use of printing in the 16th century. Only when books became relatively cheap and plentiful did the modern consumerist-style of reading become the norm.

Mnemonic technique has been well developed to aid memorisation of long texts. Griffiths names three essential features. First, the creation of imaginative storage system, 'a set of loci each of which is identified and tagged by an image; second, the division of the matter to be memorized into small units of an ideal size for quick storage in memory and rapid recall therefrom; and third, repetitive reading, usually vocalized or subvocalized, and accompanied by rhythmic bodily movement, of the units tagged for memorization.'<sup>21</sup> He suggests that the small units work best with 5 to 9 elements, that is words, syllables or phrases.

It is clear that the Psalms in particular, and Hebrew poetry in general, meet these criteria. Acrostic compositions, e.g. Ps. 119, use the alphabet as framework for composition, and this has often been seen as a mnemonic aid.<sup>22</sup> Other features that may have helped memorising large groups of material include grouping the psalms, in pairs,<sup>23</sup> larger collections,<sup>24</sup> chiasmic patterns<sup>25</sup> and concatenation,<sup>26</sup> that is linking one psalm to the next by the use of keywords or phrases. But other features of Hebrew verse that could have aided memorisation include assonance, alliteration, word play and metre.<sup>27</sup> Parallelism also helps the memory by dividing up poems into memory-sized gobbets.<sup>28</sup>

That the psalms were intended to be read aloud, is indicated by Ps. 1:2 where the righteous is said to meditate on the law of the LORD

<sup>21</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 48.

<sup>22</sup> W.G.E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*, London: 2005, 198.

<sup>23</sup> E.g., Pss. 103–104, 111–112.

<sup>24</sup> E.g., Pss. 3–6 alternating morning and evening psalms.

<sup>25</sup> E.g., 15–24.

<sup>26</sup> E.g., 'name of the LORD', Ps. 7:18; 8:2, 10; 9:3.

<sup>27</sup> Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 224, 227–28, 246, 113.

<sup>28</sup> See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 140, 147 where he notes that parallelism creates cohesion and unity. Whereas simple parallelism links two lines, staircase and climactic parallelism link longer units and make them easier to memorise.

day and night.<sup>29</sup> The word traditionally translated meditate, מָדַבֵּר, is used of pigeons cooing (Isa. 38:14) and lions growling (Isa. 31:4), and in the very next psalm of people plotting (Ps. 2:1), so *HALOT* (237) renders this word ‘read in an undertone’, ‘mutter while meditating.’ Whether the righteous actually had a text in front of him is irrelevant: what is clear is that he is saying the psalms aloud. It therefore seems highly probable to me that the psalms like other sacred ancient texts were composed with a view to dissemination on a wider scale by memorisation.

But can one say anything more specific about the nature of the book of the psalms? Does the Psalter look like a book designed for memorisation? Griffiths lists a variety of genres of memory-orientated religious works. Types of book composed for religious reading include apologies, hagiographies, commentaries, anthologies, poems and hymns. Griffiths focuses on the commentary and anthology genre, examining two examples of each from Buddhist India and Christian North Africa. Though some of the Psalms may be read as commentaries on parts of the Pentateuch, the closest parallel to the Psalter is the anthology.

Anthology is literally ‘a collection of flowers’, i.e. choice excerpts from earlier works put together by a compiler because he thinks these excerpts are still relevant for the present. Formally there is quite a variation between one anthology and another, but Griffiths draws out a number of characteristic features.

Formally speaking, an anthology is a work all (or almost all) of whose words are taken from another work or works; it contains a number (typically quite a large number) of extracts or excerpts, each of which has been taken verbatim (or almost so) from some other work; and it uses some device to mark the boundaries of these excerpts.<sup>30</sup>

It takes little reflection to see that the Psalter fits this definition quite easily. The Psalms are discrete units, and the variety of titles has long suggested to commentators that they are drawn from a variety of earlier collections, e.g. a Davidic Psalter, an Asaphite collection and so on. The length of the Psalter is comparable to the Buddhist and Christian anthologies that Griffiths cites. The *Sutrasamuccaya*, composed about AD 100 in South India, contains 167 excerpts from 68 named sources. Most excerpts are between 8 and 40 lines long, but there are some

<sup>29</sup> The law here is not just the law of Moses, but the Psalter itself which is likewise divided into five books.

<sup>30</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 97.

very short ones of three lines or less, and three very long excerpts of about 200 lines. In the original Sanskrit, Griffiths estimates, the whole work would have come to 2,200 verses and would have taken four hours to recite.<sup>31</sup>

Cyprian's *Three Books of Testimonies for Quirinus* was composed in about AD 248. It is about 33,000 words long and would have taken about three and half hours to read aloud. It draws on 57 of the biblical books, his favourites being the gospels, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Romans and I Corinthians. The source of each excerpt is mentioned at the beginning of each unit, usually just the name of the book, but in the case of the Psalms its number is given too. The length of each excerpt varies from less than 10 words to about 300 words.<sup>32</sup> The other Buddhist anthology, the *Siksamuccaya* (around AD 700) runs to 6,000 verses and would take about 11 hours to recite. It contains 312 excerpts, ranging in length from 172 verses to one line.<sup>33</sup> Augustine's *Mirror of Sacred Scripture* (c. AD 410) contains 60,000 words and would take six hours to read aloud. It contains 800 extracts, the longest being the Sermon on the Mount, (Matthew 5–7), others very short e.g. Amos 2:8. Whereas Cyprian arranged his excerpts topically, Augustine arranges them book by book: each chapter of his *Mirror* is devoted to a different biblical book. He gives the name of the source at the beginning of each chapter, and indicates roughly how much of the source has been omitted between each excerpt. His favourite sources are the Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus.<sup>34</sup>

The Psalter seems to match these parameters quite closely. It contains 2,527 verses, which read at 9 verses to the minute,<sup>35</sup> would take about 4.5 hours to recite. The variation in length of individual psalms is comparable to other anthologies. The number of sources cited is rather less, but there are quite a number of anonymous psalms, which could point to a wider variety of sources than is apparent at first. It is also often surmised that the way in which the Davidic psalms are distributed in the Psalter could point to them being drawn from more

<sup>31</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 130.

<sup>32</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 165–66.

<sup>33</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 133–34.

<sup>34</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 169–71.

<sup>35</sup> This is the speed at which Griffiths reckons the Buddhist texts would have been recited. This is quite slow for reading the psalms. Kol Israel read them unhurriedly at 10 verses per minute.

than one Davidic collection.<sup>36</sup> This evidence leads me to think it is quite likely that the Psalter is an anthology of sacred texts designed to be memorised. What are the implications of such a view of the Psalms for the ethics that they enshrine?

According to Griffiths all composition of religious literature is done ‘for the purpose of altering the course of the readers’ cognitive, affective, and active lives by the ingestion, digestion, rumination, and restatement of what has been read.’<sup>37</sup> Or to put it more simply: to teach readers what to think and how to behave. This goal is particularly apparent in an anthology. ‘Quotation has most fundamentally the purpose of superimposing the past upon the present.’<sup>38</sup> In particular a religious anthology shows how the wisdom of the past should be applied in the present. The *Siksamuccaya* ‘is the work of a religious reader and is designed for other religious readers; its fundamental goal is to make good Buddhists better.’<sup>39</sup>

Augustine is quite explicit about his motives for compiling his *Mirror of Sacred Scripture*. ‘The work is, he says, addressed to those ignorant of the content of Scripture, in order that they might understand and have faith in what’s said there, and more specifically so that they might come to know what they ought do and not do: what is required of Christians, what forbidden them, and what permitted them... This explains, in large part, why such a large proportion of the work is devoted to the Old Testament’s moral precepts as found in the wisdom literature.’<sup>40</sup> ‘A proper reading of the *Speculum* is supposed to move the hearts of readers in such a way that not only do they give assent to the claim that Christians are supposed (for example) to love their enemies, but also that they are able (or that they begin to be able) to act as if they did.’<sup>41</sup>

It is Griffiths’ claim that every book of the Bible is intended to be read religiously, that is used, as Saint Paul put it, ‘for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness,’ (2 Tim. 3:16).

---

<sup>36</sup> Seven different authors are cited in the Psalms. Other titles like ‘Songs of Ascent’, ‘a Psalm for the Sabbath’ or ‘for the Thank Offering’ may be pointers to yet other collections.

<sup>37</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 54.

<sup>38</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 101.

<sup>39</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 139.

<sup>40</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 171.

<sup>41</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 172.

And this should make us take seriously the implications for ethics of every book of the OT. As an anthology, it seems to me that of all the OT writings the Psalter makes this claim most convincingly. But Griffiths' classification of the biblical material as religious literature does not differentiate between the way in which the Psalter inculcates ethics and the approach of the other books. It is what sets the Psalter apart from other biblical texts as an ethical resource that I want to explore in the rest of this paper.

### 3. *Dorothea Erbele-Küster on Reception-Aesthetics*

One promising line of approach is that of Dorothea Erbele-Küster in her work *Lesen als Akt des Betens: Eine Rezeptionsästhetik der Psalmen*.<sup>42</sup> In this book, she uses a moderate form of reader-response criticism<sup>43</sup> to explore what happens when the Psalms are used as prayers, as she supposes they were intended. She asks: how does the person praying the psalms become involved and experience their significance? She sees this way of using the Psalms as a kind of religious reading akin to Griffiths' understanding of religious reading, a way of reading that needs to be distinguished from the critical distance often adopted by biblical scholarship. But she argues that these two approaches are not mutually exclusive: they can shed light on each other.<sup>44</sup>

She starts her discussion by endorsing the insights of canonical critics who have seen the sequencing of the psalms as significant.<sup>45</sup> Psalm 2 proclaims the triumph of the Davidic house, but this is immediately followed by a collection of Psalms headed 'by David' many of which relate the trials that dogged his life. Erbele-Küster thinks these Davidic titles give the psalms a paradigmatic quality and encourage the later reader to identify with their sentiments.<sup>46</sup>

Erbele-Küster draws attention to other devices in the text that clearly aim to influence the reader's perspective. There are general blessings

<sup>42</sup> D. Erbele-Küster, *Lesen als Akt des Betens: Eine Rezeptionsästhetik der Psalmen* (WMANT, 87), Neukirchen 2001.

<sup>43</sup> The critics she cites are Iser, Jauss and Fish.

<sup>44</sup> Erbele-Küster, *Lesen als Akt des Betens*, 51.

<sup>45</sup> For an example of the canonical method see H.N. Wallace, 'King and Community: Joining with David in Prayer' elsewhere in this volume. For a review of the method see G.J. Wenham, 'Towards a Canonical Reading of the Psalms', in: C.G. Bartholomew *et al.* (ed.), *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, Grand Rapids, 2006, 333–51.

<sup>46</sup> D. Erbele-Küster, *Lesen als Akt des Betens*, 68, 109.

pronounced: ‘Blessed is the man who/blessed are all who/blessed is the one who’ (Ps. 1:1; 2:12; 84:13). The prospect of blessing should encourage all to adopt the way of life that will bring it. Commenting on the alternation between the first and third person in psalms such as 34 and 35, Erbele-Küster notes that the righteous are always spoken of in the third person, which she suggests encourages imitation by the reciter of the psalm.<sup>47</sup> Identification with the psalmist’s outlook is also encouraged by the use of the first-person in the psalms: whoever prays the psalm subsequently will tend to identify with the ‘I’ of the psalm. ‘The experience of the I of the psalm embodies a religious ideal, whose reality is open to the reader to experience.’<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand the depiction of the wicked is designed to deter the prayer of the psalms from identifying with them. The wicked are the enemy, whose current prosperity may tempt others to follow them, but a psalm like 73 shows the ultimate folly of such a move:

Truly you set them in slippery places;  
you make them fall to ruin. (Ps. 73:18).

The general statement in verse 1:

Truly God is good to Israel,  
to those who are pure in heart,

is tested by the psalmist’s confession of his doubts so that eventually the reciter can make the psalm his own confession and autobiography.

A characteristic feature of the lament psalms is the quotation of the words of the wicked e.g.

He says in his heart, “God has forgotten,  
he has hidden his face, he will never see it.” (Ps. 10:11; Cf. vv. 4, 6)

This quotation of the enemies’ words has several functions. It brings his impiety into the public domain. It thereby becomes a public and pressing prayer for God to act to confound the impious. And finally it serves to break the power of the words.<sup>49</sup> Once again this technique encourages the prayer of the psalms to identify with God’s point of view and reject that of the wicked.

<sup>47</sup> Erbele-Küster, *Lesen als Akt des Betens*, 111–12.

<sup>48</sup> Erbele-Küster, *Lesen als Akt des Betens*, 112.

<sup>49</sup> Erbele-Küster, *Lesen als Akt des Betens*, 117–24.

Another feature of the poetry of the psalms to which Erbele-Küster draws attention is the use of gaps. Gaps in narrative or poetry are points glided over by the author which the reader has to fill in from his own imagination to make sense of the passage. The terseness of poetry means that there are many gaps, which thereby force the reader to puzzle over the connection between one line and the next. The frequent mood swings in the psalms have long perplexed commentators, and require every reciter of them at least to think of a connection between apparently contradictory statements. But more positively the absence of many details within the psalms gives them a general validity that allows their sentiments to be appropriated by readers in a variety of circumstances. Erbele-Küster thinks form critics were misguided to worry too much about the precise *Sitz im Leben* of each psalm. It does not matter whether the psalmist was facing literal persecution or an illness, and was using images of one situation to describe another. The absence of precision opens up the psalms to a broad range of situations and invites the reader to make its sentiments his own.<sup>50</sup>

Erbele-Küster's monograph is a very useful examination of how the psalms work as prayers. She illuminates many of the devices whereby those who pray the psalms are led to identify with the righteous psalmist and make his prayers theirs, to identify with his outlook, and make his aspirations their own. Erbele-Küster does not directly apply her conclusions to the issue of the ethics of the psalms, but it is clearer as a result of her work how the later user of the psalms is encouraged to identify with the stance of the psalmist.

#### 4. *Unique Features of Some Psalms*

But before we turn to examine particular texts of the Psalms, we need to note a peculiarity of the Psalms that sets them apart from all other ethical texts in the OT. The psalms are meant to be recited or sung as prayers. That is they are public address to God. The psalm puts powerful words into the worshipper's mouth:

For there is no truth in their mouth;  
 their inmost self is destruction;  
 their throat is an open grave;  
 they flatter with their tongue.

---

<sup>50</sup> Erbele-Küster, *Lesen als Akt des Betens*, 141–80.

Make them bear their guilt, O God;  
 let them fall by their own counsels;  
 because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out,  
 for they have rebelled against you. (Ps. 5:10–11)

Here the psalmist is accusing the wicked and summoning God to intervene against them. We have a similar scenario in Ps. 52. Dorothea Erbele-Küster has aptly described the scenario. These psalms ‘distribute the roles of the actors so that the ‘I’ (the worshipper), those standing around (the righteous and wicked) and God stand simultaneously opposite each other.’<sup>51</sup> This involvement of the worshipper in expressing his assent to these sentiments makes the Psalms quite different from the other modes of teaching ethics in the OT. The OT narratives were presumably recited by storytellers within the family or in the tribes, but they rarely make explicit their judgments on the actions that are recited, so the moral of the story might be missed and certainly did not have to be endorsed by the listeners. They could just ignore the point, as I suspect many listening to worthy sermons often do.

The same is true of the laws. We do not know how they were passed on in Bible times. Few people would have had written copies of the law: some texts suggest the Levites were involved in teaching the law. But once again for the listener the reception of the law was essentially passive. You listened to the law and maybe an explanation of it by a preacher, and then it was up to you to keep it or reject it as you saw fit. (Neh. 8:1–10) As long as you did not publicly reject or break the law you would be accepted, socially at least. Thus receiving the ethical teaching of the law or the history books of the OT was basically a silent passive affair.

But reciting the psalms is quite different. The prayer of the Psalms is taking these words on his lips and saying them to God in a personal and solemn way. An example is Psalm 7:9–10.

The Lord judges the peoples;  
 judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness  
 and according to the integrity that is in me.  
 Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end,  
 and may you establish the righteous—  
 you who test the minds and hearts,  
 O righteous God!

---

<sup>51</sup> Erbele-Küster, *Lesen als Akt des Betens*, 140.

The psalmist affirms that God will judge all the peoples: but then invites God to judge him, despite affirming that God tests the minds and hearts. It is a quite challenging and disturbing prayer: would we really want God to test our innermost motives? But time and again in the Psalms we meet this sort of prayer. The reciter or singer of the psalms is thus involved in giving very active assent to the standards of life implied in the Psalms.

The closest analogy in Scripture to this affirmation of standards I think is found in Deuteronomy 27. There in a ceremony to be performed shortly after entry into the promised land, all the tribes stand before the Levites who then pronounce curses on certain types of, mostly secret, sins.

- ‘Cursed be the man who makes a carved or cast metal image . . . and sets it up in secret.’
- ‘Cursed be anyone who dishonours his father or his mother.’
- ‘Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind man on the road.’

After each curse ‘all the people shall answer and say, ‘Amen.’ (Deut. 27:15–16, 18)

But even saying ‘Amen’ to a curse seems to me semi-passive, when compared with reciting the psalm. When you pray a psalm, you are describing the actions you will take and what you will avoid. It is more like taking an oath or making a vow. Could this be what Ps. 119:106 is hinting at: ‘I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules’?<sup>52</sup>

Speech-act theorists often comment on the peculiar status of marriage vows. The key words in a marriage ceremony are spoken publicly and to God. ‘I, A, take you, B, to my wedded wife to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part.’ Then later on there are words as rings are exchanged: ‘With this ring, I thee wed, with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I

---

<sup>52</sup> Some commentators, e.g. Kraus and Anderson, refer to J. Horst’s suggestion (*EvTh* 17 [1957], 371, that the reference is to a cultic oath sworn when one enters the temple. But this seems unlikely without further evidence of such an oath being used. Ravasi’s more general comment seems adequate: ‘The psalmist solemnly affirms that he has dedicated his whole self to the observance of the judgements of thy righteousness.’ G. Ravasi, *Il libro dei Salmi* III, Bologna 1985, 483.

thee endow, in the name of the Father, and of the Sons, and of the Holy Ghost.’

One trusts that brides and grooms pronounce these words after careful thought beforehand and with complete sincerity on the big day. But it is the words themselves that transform their status: they become man and wife. Thus the words are performative.<sup>53</sup> They change the situation.

The speech-act philosopher Searle has refined our understanding of illocutionary acts. According to Searle<sup>54</sup> some utterances are directives: that is they ask someone to do something. For example:

Save me, O God!  
For the waters have come up to my neck. (Ps. 69:2)

Or:

Trust in him at all times, O people;  
pour out your heart before him;  
God is a refuge for us. (Ps. 62:9)

Other speech acts are commissive: that is the speaker promises to do something.

I said, “I will guard my ways,  
that I may not sin with my tongue;  
I will guard my mouth with a muzzle,  
so long as the wicked are in my presence.” (Ps. 39:2)

Yet others are expressive: that is they express the emotion the speaker feels.

O Lord, all my longing is before you;  
my sighing is not hidden from you. (Ps. 38:10)

Other speech acts are declarative: that is their very utterance effects a change.

---

<sup>53</sup> On the nature of performatives see J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford 1975. P. Ramsey, ‘Liturgy and Ethics’, *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7.2 (1979), 139–71, argued that many liturgical remarks are performative, see Ramsey, ‘Liturgy and Ethics’, 145–46.

<sup>54</sup> J.R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*, Cambridge 1979, 1–29. See also his earlier work *Speech Acts: an Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge 1969, and R.S. Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation*, Edinburgh 2001.

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth your possession. (Ps. 2:8)

Finally some acts are assertive declaratives: that is assertions with the force of a declarative.

The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice;  
let the many coastlands be glad! (Ps. 97:1)

Searle, whose classification I have just used, points out that ‘Often we do more than one of these things in the same utterance.’<sup>55</sup> Using this categorisation of speech acts, I suspect that one could say that praying the Psalms involves the worshipper in many commissive speech acts: the psalms as prayers are really a series of vows. This is what sets them apart from other biblical texts with an ethical dimension.

But one could stick with Austin’s older view of some speech acts being performatives.<sup>56</sup> It seems to me that praying the psalms is also a performative action: saying these solemn words to God alters one’s relationship in a way that mere listening does not. St Paul aptly sums up the effect of such confession:

if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Rom. 10:9–10)

Throughout the Psalms one is confessing that the LORD is God. And, as the Psalms often insist, this is supposed to be a confession that comes from a pure and sincere heart. It is certainly salvation that the Psalmist seeks: time and again he pleads to God to save him, to deliver him, to hear his prayer and so on. Whether this always occurs or not is not my purpose to discuss now. I simply want to draw out some of the similarities between taking an oath, making a vow, confessing faith, and praying the Psalms. I think these parallels may help us to see how powerful the commitment is that the Psalms demand of their user. In praying the Psalms one is actively committing oneself to following the God-approved life. This is different from just listening to laws or edifying stories. It is an action akin to reciting the creed or singing a hymn.

<sup>55</sup> Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 29.

<sup>56</sup> Many performatives Searle classifies as declaratives, *Expression and Meaning*, 16–20.

It involves strong commitment. This is why I think the Psalms have been so influential in moulding Jewish and Christian ethics in the past and why as scholars we should again study them for their ethical content.





<i>2 Kings</i>		10:19–21	155
2:19–22	240	10:23–25	7, <b>150–55</b> , 156
4:33	253	14:12	192
6:17–18, 20	253	18:15	123–124
14:23–27	129, 131, 135	26:6	197
20:8–11	253–54, 260, 262–63, 265	30:6	55
20:11	5, <b>253–65</b>	<i>Ezekiel</i>	
22–23	131	7:26	130
<i>Isaiah</i>		21:28	123
		23:49	121–22
		<i>Hoshea</i>	
1:2	57		
1:11–13a	243	3:4	192
1:13	123	6:1–3	141
11:1–10	149	6:6	243
11:11–16	149	9:4	192
12:1–6	7, <b>142–49</b> , 156	11:1	57
31:5	76	12:2	123
31:14	285	14:4	126
35:10	148	<i>Amos</i>	
38:8	258, 262	2:4	125
38:14	130, 285	5:22	243
38:18–19	188–89	6:8	125
40:2	198	8:14	166
41:17–20	148	<i>Micah</i>	
42:10	72, 237, 241, 247	5:2	66
42:10–12	141	6:6–8	192
43:6b–7	58	<i>Jonah</i>	
44:2–4	148		<b>129–39</b>
44:20	125	2	250
45:11	58	2:9	123
48:21	148	<i>Nahum</i>	
49:10	148		
51:11	148	1:2–3a	243
55:1	148	2:8	130
55:3	42	<i>Zechariah</i>	
59:15b–20	243		
63:1–6	243	14:16–17	71
63:3	249	<i>Malachi</i>	
63:16	57		
64:8	59	1:6	58
<i>Jeremiah</i>		2:10	58
3:4–5	57		
3:16	65		
3:19	57		
7:12	72		
7:14	72, 197		
10:17–25	154–56		
10:18	153		
10:19–20	151		

3:17	58	33:3	237, 241
3:20	76	33:6-9	247
<i>Psalms</i>		33:18	247
1	271-72	34	238
1:2	284-85	35:4	164
2	250, 271-72	35:18	190
2:1	285	35:26	164
2:7	55	35:27	169
2:8	294	36:8	75
2:9	249	37:19	164
3	272-74	38	238
5:10-11	290-91	38:6	166
6	215	38:10	293
6:5b	201	39:2	293
6:6	188-89, 191	40	238, 240, 242-43, 245, 247
7	170, 274-75	40:3	163, 165, 237
7:9-10	291	40:3-4	190
8	274-75	40:6-8	248
9-10	276	40:9-10	249
9:5	74-75	40:15-16	164-65
9:14-15	190	42:8	165
10:11	289	42:11	164
13:6	190	44	164, 170, 200-01, 204-05, 215
15-24	277	47	70-71, 246
17	170	47:6	68
17:8	75-76	47:9	74-75
18	170	50:8-13	243
18:9	74	50:12-13	191
18:17	163	51:3	201
18:22-24	170	51:16-17	243
18:50	190	51:20	166
20:2-4	190	54:8	190
21:2	73	55	<b>5, 129-39</b>
21:14	73	55:13	165
22:4	192	55:14	165
22:7-9	164	57:2	75
22:23-32	190	61:5	75
24	70	62:9	293
24:4	123-25	63:3	72
24:7	70	63:8	75
24:9	70	63:12	72
24:7-10	69	64:11	169
25:2-3	164	68	70
25:7	201	68:5	60
25:20b	164	68:13	130
26	170	68:19	68
29	51	68:25	69
30:10	188-89, 191	68:29	73
30:13	190	69	<b>3, 159-79</b>
31:7	123	69:2	293
31:18	164	69:31-32	190-91
33	238, 240-42, 247, 249	71	164

71:1-3	174	99:1	73-74
71:20-24	190	99:5	74
73:1	289	102:2	135
73:18	289	102:22	166
74	196-97, 215	102:23	166
74:1-2	190	103	7, 62, <b>109-118</b> , 238,
74:2	200		284
74:12-17	200	103:13	60
77:14	73	104	284
78	73	105	73
78:61	71-72	105:4	73
78:64	71	105:8	39
79	196-97, 204-05, 215	105:12	39
79:2	207	106	73, 221
79:4	164	106:47	73
79:6-7	151	107:20-22	190
79:8	204	107:42a	169
79:10-12	243	111-112	284
79:12	164	115:2	197
79:13	190	115:17	189
80:2	73-74	116:17-19	190
81:2	73	118:14	142
82	52	118:17	190
83	196-97, 215	119	284
83:9-12	200	119:16	164
86:1-3	207	119:97	283
88:7	163	119:106	292
88:11	188-89	123	208
88:11-13	191	123:2-3	207-08
88:12	189	124:4-5	163
88:13	189	128:5	166
88:18	163	129:5	164
89	51, 54, 164	132	66-68, 70-71
89:26-28	55	132:7	74
91:3	76	132:8	65, 71, 77, 164
91:4	75-76	132:18-20	40
93	246	135-150	246
93:2	74-75	135:21	166
94:1	243	139	3, 120
95-99	246	139:1-18	120
96	72, 241, 244-47,	139:19-24	120
	249	139:20	<b>119-28</b>
96:1	72, 237, 241	144	238, 243-45, 247
96:6	72	144:5-6	247
96:11	72	144:9	237, 239
97	246	145:17	62
97:1	294	147:12	166
97:2	74-75	149	243-44, 246-47,
97:3	75		249-50
98	239, 242, 244-47, 249	149:1	237
98:2-5	247	149:3	239, 244
98:6	245	149:6	245, 249
99	246	149:6-9	248, 250

149:7	244	19:10–20	17–21
149:9	244, 249	28:2	73
<i>Job</i>		<i>2 Chronicles</i>	
38:7	53	1:1–13	21
<i>Lamentations</i>		5:13	43
2:1	74, 197	6:3–11	24
2:6	197	6:19–42	229
2:7	192, 197	6:39–41	71
3:22–23	241	6:40–42	40–43
5	238	6:41	41
5:7	204	7:3	43
5:16	204	20:6–12	28–30
<i>Ruth</i>		20:10	33
2:12	75	30:18–19	35
4:11	66	32:32	42
<i>1 Chronicles</i>		35:26	42
4:9–10	12–14	<i>Ezra</i>	
13:5–6	66	9	221
16:8–36	38–40	<i>Nehemiah</i>	
16:15	39	1	6, 219–36
16:19	39	2:4	223
16:34	43	8:1–10	291
17:16–27	14–17	9	221
		9:36–37	227

## PSEUDEPIGRAPHA AND DEUTEROCANONICAL LITERATURE

<i>Judith</i>		<i>Sira</i>	
16:1	237	4:10	62
16:1–17	247	23:1	61
<i>1 Maccabees</i>		23:4	61
2:42	244	35:1–10	190
3:45	244	45:25 <sup>e</sup>	61
4:24	244	50:11d	26
4:54	244	<i>Odes Sol.</i>	
<i>2 Maccabees</i>		15:1–2	120
15:26–27	244		

## QUMRAN

1QHod	<b>79–108</b>	4QO <sup>o</sup> rd <sup>b</sup> 2.2.1	37
1QHod 7:25	120	4Q <sup>o</sup> MMT B	23, 37, 65, 68
1QISa <sup>a</sup> 38:8	258		

## NEW TESTAMENT

<i>Matthew</i>		<i>Revelation</i>	
6:9	61	1:16	249
23:37	76	2:16–17	250
		2:17	248
<i>Luke</i>		3:12	248
11:2	61	4:10–11	249
13:34	76	5:9–10	249
		5:11–12	249
<i>Acts</i>		5:13	249
16:25–26	250	6:10	250
		14:1–5	249
<i>Romans</i>		14:13	250
10:9–10	294	17:14	249
		19:1–2	250
<i>Hebrews</i>		19:11–16	249
10:5–7	250	21:1	248–49
		21:2	248
		21:5	249

## JEWISH SOURCES

<i>Flavius Josephus</i>		<i>Mek. Shirah</i>	
Ant. Jud. X 29	260	I, 34a–34b	248

## ARABIC SOURCES

Ibn Qutayba	250–51
-------------	--------

## AKKADIAN TEXTS

<i>Atrachasis</i>		<i>Ludlul bēl nēmeqi</i>	
iii 30–31	187, 210	111–12	209–10
iv 21–22	187, 210		
v 34–37	187, 210	MUL.APIN	263
<i>Gilgamesh Epic</i>		VAB 7	
VI vi–VII i	53	2 Rev. 14ff.	210

UGARITIC TEXTS

KTU		1.23	47, 61
		1.113	50
1.14 i 41-3	49	47.47	45
1.17 i 23-24	49	118.118	45
1.19 ii 1-3	48	148.148	45

HITTITE TEXTS

<i>CTH</i>		9 § 8	206
		9 § 9	200
348	187	9 § 13	193
		10	183
<i>Hittite Prayers</i>		10 § 1	205
		10 § 3'	186, 206
1 § 4	188	11	183
3 § 11	188	11 § 1	183, 206
4c § 5	188, 205	11 § 8	186, 202-03
5	185-86, 188	11 § 9	198, 206
5 § 2-10	194	11 § 10	186, 198
5 § 7	207	12	183
5 § 12	195	12 § 1	205
5 § 14	195	12 § 4	193
5 § 16-20	195	12 § 8	186, 203
5 § 18	207	12 § 9	186, 193, 205
5 § 22	195	13	183
8	183, 214	13 § 2	205
8 § 1	206	13 § 3	186, 198, 206
8 § 2	184	13 § 3-4	193, 206
8 § 4	199	13 § 8	186
8 § 5	200	14	183, 186
8 § 6-7	185	15	186
8 § 7	192-93	15 § 1, 4	186
8 § 8-9	193	15 § 5	187
8 § 10	203	17 § 3	203
8 § 11	186, 193-94, 205	21 § 2	203
9	183		
9 § 2	206	<i>Mursili II Ten Years Annals</i>	
9 § 5	184		

## INDEX OF AUTHORS

- Abegg, M. 79–108  
Achenbach, R. 172  
Adang, C. 251  
Aistleitner, J. 46–47  
Albertz, R. 222–23  
Albrektson, B. 192, 194, 210  
Anderson, A.A. 241  
Austin, J.L. 293–94
- Báez-Camargo, G. 259  
Balentine, S.E. 9  
Baltzer, K. 219  
Bardtke, H. 79–108, 127  
Barthélemy, D. 259  
Baumgartner, W. 79–108  
Beal, R.H. 194  
Becking, B. 154  
Beentjes, P.C. 5, 9–44  
Begg, C.T. 22  
Berges, U. 148  
Beuken, W.A.M. 42, 148  
Biddle, M.E. 151, 155  
Blenkinsopp, J. 144, 149  
Boda, M.J. 221–23  
Böckler, A. 62  
Booij, Th. 127  
Borchardt, L. 256–58, 264  
Brack-Bernsen, L. 264  
Brenton, L.L. 79–108  
Briggs, C.A. & E.G. 79–108  
Briggs, R.S. 293  
Bright, J. 150–51  
Broyles, C.C. 75  
Buber, M. 123  
Buhl, F. 127  
Burney, C.F. 263
- Calvin, J. 70, 150, 251  
Caquot, A. 42  
Carmignac, J. 79–108  
Carroll, R.P. 150–51, 155  
Childs, B.S. 149, 268  
Chomard, L. 260  
Clines, D.J.A. 51, 53, 126  
Cook, E.M. 79–108  
Cooper, A. 70  
Cross, F.M. 67–68  
Crüsemann, F. 144
- Culley, R. 237  
Curtis, A.H.W. 4, 45–63  
Cyprianus 286
- Dahood, M.J. 51, 132  
Dalley, S. 53  
Davies, G.H. 71, 73  
Davies, G.I. 59  
Davies, H. 280  
Davies, Ph.R. 132  
Day, J. 4; 65–77  
Dec, P. 79–108  
Delcor, M. 79–108  
Delitzsch, Fr. 67, 79–108, 123, 125,  
127–28, 251–52  
Delmotte, G. 260  
Dever, W.G. 47  
Dhorme, E. 120  
Dibelius, M. 73  
Dijkstra, M. 145  
Dilella, A.A. 79–108  
Dorp, J. van 5, 253–65  
Duhm, B. 150, 240  
Dupont-Sommer, A. 79–108
- Eaton, J. 245  
Eberhart, C. 192  
Eissfeldt, O. 45, 67, 121, 123  
Elwolde, J. 8, 79–108  
Erbele-Küster, D. 288–91  
Exum, J.C. 62
- Falkenstein, A. 209, 213  
Finkelstein, I. 72  
Fischer, G. 150–51, 155  
Fishbane, M. 79–108  
Flammarion, G. 260–63  
Flint, P. 79–108  
Fokkelman, J.P. 7, 60, 62, 109–118  
Fraire, J. de 149
- Gamble, H. 283  
Garsiel, M. 149  
Gazov-Ginsburg, A.M. 79–108  
Gerstenberger, E.S. 76  
Gervitz, S. 121  
Gibson, J.C.L. 46–48  
Ginsburg, H.L. 51

- Girard, M. 125  
 Gouldre, M. 246  
 Graham, M.P. 37  
 Graupner, A. 120  
 Gray, J. 54  
 Greenburg, M. 182, 188, 195–97, 204,  
 213–14  
 Greenfield, J.C. 69  
 Griffiths, P. 281–88  
 Gröndahl, F. 50  
 Groenewald, A. 162, 168  
 Gruber, M. 125  
 Guillemin, E. 260  
 Gunkel, H. 66, 237, 246  
  
 Haas, V. 187  
 Hallo, W.W. 182, 209, 212  
 Hardmeier, Chr. 224  
 Hauser, A.J. 130  
 Hauerwas, S. 281  
 Hillers, D.R. 67–68  
 Hölscher, G. 150  
 Hoffner, H.A. 187  
 Holladay, W.L. 124, 150, 155, 280  
 Holm-Nielsen, S. 79–108  
 Holman, J. 3, 119–28  
 Horgan, M. 79–108  
 Horst, J. 292  
 Houtman, C. 119, 123–24, 128, 175  
 Houwink ten Cate, Ph.H.J. 205  
 Hughes, J.A. 79–108  
 Hunter, A.G. 5, 129–39  
  
 Iwry, S. 258–59  
  
 Japheth, S. 13, 33  
 Jenni, E. 174  
 Johnson, B. 174  
 Jones, A. 260  
  
 Kasher, R. 253  
 Keel, O. 74–75  
 Keil, C.F. 79–108, 150–51  
 Kellermann, U. 27  
 Kelley, P.H. 150  
 Kirkpatrick, A.F. 67, 241  
 Kitchen, K.A. 50  
 Kittel, B.P. 79–108  
 Kleinig, J.W. 43  
 Klopfenstein, M. 123  
 Knibb, M.A. 79–108  
 Koch, K. 120  
 Koehler, L. 79–108  
 Komoroóczy, G. 188  
  
 Korpel, M.C.A. 7, 141–57, 187, 192  
 Kraus, H.J. 70, 75, 125, 280  
 Kümmel, H.M. 194  
 Kwakkel, G. 3, 75–77, 159–79, 190–91,  
 201, 204, 212  
  
 Lambert, W.G. 187, 210  
 Lamsa, G.M. 79–108  
 Lapide, C. à 260  
 Lebrun, R. 182, 206  
 Licht, J. 79–108  
 Lindström, F. 162, 165, 168, 204  
 Lipiński, E. 120  
 Littledale, R.F. 251  
 Lundbom, J.R. 124, 150, 155  
 Lust, J. 79–108  
 Løkkegaard, F. 45  
  
 MacKay, J.L. 150–51  
 Magonet, J. 246  
 Maiberger, P. 176  
 Maier, J. 67  
 Mansoor, M. 79–108  
 Martin, M. 79–108  
 Marttila, M. 270  
 Mat, L.A.F. le 76  
 Matthys, H.-P. 148  
 McKane, W. 148, 150  
 Mechert, H.C. 205  
 Mettinger, T.N.D. 73  
 Milgrom, J. 168  
 Miljard, A.R. 187  
 Miller, P.D. 150; 277  
 Mills, M. 62–63  
 Mirsky, A. 79–108  
 Möller, G. 256  
 Moor, J.C. de 142, 149, 152, 154, 181,  
 188–89  
 Mosis, R. 17  
 Mowinckel, S. 70, 79–108, 245  
 Müntzer, Th. 252  
  
 Neale, J.M. 251  
 Newman, B.M. 155  
 Newman, J.H. 17  
 Niehr, H. 70  
 Nielsen, K. 39  
 Nonius, P. 260  
  
 O'Connor, M. 142  
 Oesch, J. 143, 145  
 Oesterley, W.O.E. 79–108  
 Olley, J.W. 153  
 Olmo Lete, G. del 46

- Oosterhoff, B.J. 150  
 Otto, E. 281
- Pardee, D. 45  
 Parry, D.W. 79–108, 143  
 Peels, H.G.L. 76  
 Pietersma, A. 79–108  
 Pilcher, E.J. 256  
 Pinches, T.G. 264  
 Ploeg, J.P.M. van der 125  
 Plöger, O. 17  
 Prinsloo, W.S. 148  
 Pyper, H.S. 129
- Qimron, E. 143
- Rad, G. von 33, 52  
 Ramsey, P. 280, 293  
 Ravasi, G. 292  
 Reimer, D.J. 62  
 Reiterer, F.V. 126, 202  
 Ringgren, H. 79–108, 120  
 Rochberg-Halton, F. 264  
 Rodd, C.S. 281  
 Rowley, H.H. 52  
 Rudolph, W. 150
- Sachs, A. 264  
 Sanders, P. 8, 181–217  
 Schaeffer, G.E. 22  
 Schenker, A. 15, 120  
 Schiaparelli, G. 261  
 Schmidt, B.B. 189  
 Schmitt, A. 35  
 Schunck, K.-D. 219, 223, 233  
 Scioppius, C. 252  
 Searle, J.R. 293–94  
 Selms, A. van 150–51  
 Seybold, K. 66, 125  
 Shepherd, J.E. 124  
 Shupak, N. 212  
 Singer, I. 182–88, 192–95, 198–200, 203, 205–07, 214  
 Sitzler, D. 212  
 Skehan, P.W. 79–108  
 Sloley, R.W. 254, 264  
 Smith, H.P. 79–108  
 Smith, M.S. 69  
 Smith-Christopher, D.L. 221  
 Soden, W. von 210, 213  
 Soggin, J.A. 130  
 Spieckermann, H. 65, 71  
 Spronk, K. 189  
 Staples, W.E. 124
- Stec, D.M. 79–108  
 Steck, O.H. 148  
 Stine, P.C. 155
- Talstra, E. 6, 25, 219–36  
 Tate, M.A. 189  
 Terrien, S. 66  
 Thompson, J.A. 150  
 Throntveit, M. 17  
 Tigay, J.H. 209  
 Tillmann, N. 162  
 Tomes, R. 4, 75, 208–14, 237–52  
 Toorn, K. van der 210–11  
 Torczyner, H. 123  
 Tov, E. 79–108, 144–46, 154
- Ulrich, E. 79–108
- Vanhoozer, K.J. 280  
 Velden, F. van der 172, 176  
 Vermeylen, J. 150–51  
 Vettius Valens 260  
 Volz, P. 150  
 Vos, Chr. de 3, 159–79, 190–91, 200, 202, 204, 207
- Waard, J. de 79–108  
 Wallace, H.N. 6, 38, 40, 267–77, 288  
 Wallenstein, M. 79–108  
 Waltke, B.K. 142  
 Wambaq, B.N. 150  
 Wanke, G. 150  
 Watson, W.G.E. 123, 128, 284  
 Weiser, A. 66, 75, 150–51  
 Wells, S. 281  
 Welten, P. 32  
 Wenham, G. 7, 52, 279–95  
 Wernberg-Møller, P. 79–108  
 Westermann, C. 52  
 Wheeler Robinson, H. 149  
 Wieringen, A.L.H.M. van 148  
 Willi, Th. 34  
 Williams, G.R. 79–108  
 Williams, P.J. 189  
 Williamson, H.G.M. 15, 24, 72, 148, 222, 226, 230, 234  
 Wilson, G. 269  
 Wright, C.J.H. 281  
 Wyatt, N. 46–48
- Yadin, Y. 257
- Zenger, E. 160, 162  
 Zorell, F. 126