

## ABSTRACT

Psalms 146-150: The Final Hallelujah Psalms  
as a Fivefold Doxology to the Hebrew Psalter

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This dissertation is an attempt to interpret Psalms 146-150 in the context of the Hebrew Psalter, employing a canonical methodology. Chapter 1 introduces a brief history of Psalms studies with a particular emphasis to the recent paradigm shift in the field. The new paradigm discusses the Psalter to be more than a mere anthology of praises and prayers, lacking any purposeful editorial activity. Instead, it considers the Psalter as a book, a literary entity with coherence. Thus this study considers Psalms 146-150 as part of the Hebrew Psalter with a specific function of being fivefold doxology.

Chapter 2 analyzes each of Psalms 146-150 as a separate entity, employing largely the traditional form-critical and cult-functional approaches. This analysis provides information concerning their intertextual relationship which Chapter 3 discusses. The result of the analysis reveals that these psalms share numerous key-word and thematic links, such as Yahweh's sovereignty as the Maker of heaven and earth.

Chapter 4 examines proposals on the Fifth Book of the Hebrew Psalter as a literary whole and proposes Psalms 146-150 to be non-integral to the Fifth Book based on

the following reasons: 1) Psalm 145:21 is the missing doxology to the Fifth Book, and Psalms 146-150 respond to that invitation; 2) Psalms 146-150 form a self-contained unit, nicely enveloped by the initial  $\text{הַלְלֵהוּ יְיָ}$  in Psalms 146 and the final  $\text{הַלְלֵהוּ יְיָ}$  in Psalm 150 which stay inside the psalm proper; 3) Psalms 1-2 are a twofold introduction and Psalms 146-150 a fivefold conclusion to the Psalter, leaving the same number of psalms in Book I (Pss. 3-41) and Book V (Pss. 107-145); and the five doxologies at the end of each book parallel Psalms 146-150 as the fivefold grand doxologies to the entire Psalter.

Chapter 5 examines intertextual relationship between Psalms 1-2 and Psalms 146-150 and concludes that the former invites readers to consider the psalms to be the instruction from God whose reign must be acknowledged in spite of valleys in life, and the latter to lead a life of praise.

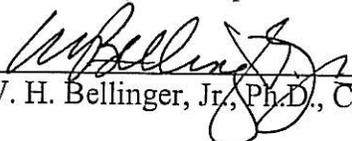
Psalms 146-150: The Final Hallelujah Psalms  
as a Fivefold Doxology to the Hebrew Psalter

by

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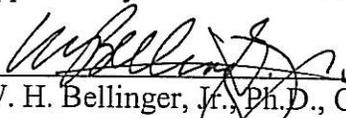
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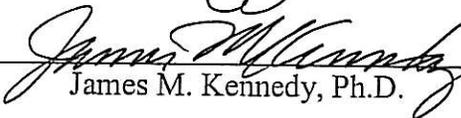
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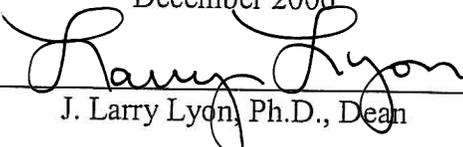
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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

The Psalter has held a unique place in the hearts of believers, both ancient and modern alike. It has been a source of new inspiration for more than two millennia; it has been sung, meditated upon, read, and studied. For this reason, Psalms studies with its shifting trends has been a fascinating and rich area of biblical studies. One trend in recent years has been to focus attention on understanding the shape of the Hebrew Psalter as a literary whole and on the compositional purpose that led to its final form and message. In the past three decades, in particular, scholars have begun to consider the question of reading the Psalter as a book, rather than as a mere anthology of praises and prayers of lamentation lacking any purposeful editorial activity. When one considers the entire history of critical interpretation of the Psalter with its treatment of individual psalms separately against a reconstructed historical background, such a trend is nothing less than a paradigm shift in Psalms studies. Indeed, some scholars perceive that the discipline of Psalms studies has undergone a paradigm shift in the last quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the past trend was to search for genres and the historical and cultic *Sitz im Leben* that gave rise to those genres, the present trend is to investigate the

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<sup>1</sup>Recent surveys on Psalms interpretation suggest a shifting trend in Psalms studies. E.g., James L. Mays, "Past, Present, and Prospect in Psalms Study," in *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future* (ed. J. L. Mays, D. L. Petersen, and K. H. Richards; Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 147-56; J. Clinton McCann, "The Psalms as Instruction," *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 117-28; David M. Howard, Jr., "Recent Trends in Psalms Study," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies*, ed. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999), 329-68; idem., "Editorial Activity in the Psalter: A State-of-the-Field Survey," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOTSup 159; ed. J. Clinton McCann; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 52-70; Erich Zenger, "New Approaches to the Study of the Psalter," *PIBA* 17 (1994): 37-54; and Kenneth Kuntz, "Engaging the Psalms: Gains and Trends in Recent Research," *CR:BS* 2 (1994): 77-106. See also Kenneth Share, "The Pivot Point in the Psalter: An Exegetical Contribution to the Current Canonical Debate" (Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 2002), 1.

canonical form and relationships between individual psalms and collections of psalms. Certainly, the traditional form-critical and cult-functional approaches to the Psalter have not become obsolete, but the present trend is to address issues beyond the traditional form-critical and cult-functional interests toward a holistic reading of the Psalter. Thus the first step in this study is to discuss briefly the history and present state of the discipline. In so doing, this study will employ Thomas S. Kuhn's concept of "paradigm shift."

### *The Kuhnian Notion of Paradigm Shift*

In his landmark book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* published in 1962, Thomas Samuel Kuhn coined, defined, and popularized the concept of "paradigm" and "paradigm shift."<sup>2</sup> Kuhn argued that scientific communities tend to work under a set of common rules and standards known as a "paradigm" for scientific practice. The "paradigm," Kuhn defined, is "the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community," or "one element in that constellation."<sup>3</sup> The paradigm, according to Kuhn, determines the kinds of experiments scientists conduct, the types of questions they ask, the problems they consider important, as well as the legitimate methods they use to solve the problems.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the paradigm determines the basic direction for seeking solutions to scientific problems, but at the same time it also restricts scientists' views and precludes asking certain other

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<sup>2</sup>Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (IEUS 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). It was published originally as part of *Foundations of the Unity of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). Although the phrase "paradigm shift" is more commonly known than "paradigm change," Kuhn himself most frequently uses the phrase "paradigm change."

<sup>3</sup>Kuhn is often criticized for using as many as twenty-six different meanings of paradigm in the first edition of his book. In the postscript of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (p.175) he defines it in these two primary senses.

<sup>4</sup>Kuhn, 6, 10, 27, 37.

questions. This awareness implies that if the paradigm changes, scientists may ask new questions and see familiar objects in a different light.<sup>5</sup> The scientific community, however, is so strongly committed to its paradigm that it is not easily changed. It does change from time to time, resulting in the so-called “paradigm shift” which requires nothing less than a revolution.

Kuhn questioned the traditional assumption of scientific progress as a gradual, cumulative acquisition of knowledge based solely on rationally chosen experimental frameworks. Scientific advancement, Kuhn argued, is not evolutionary, but rather is a series of peaceful interludes punctuated by intellectually violent revolutions, and in those revolutions one conceptual world view, i.e., paradigm, is replaced by another.<sup>6</sup> He characterized these paradigm shifts as “revolutions” because of the incompatibility of rivaling paradigms competing for dominance.<sup>7</sup> A crisis takes place, he explained, when “anomalies” which cannot be explained by the current paradigm occur too frequently, and proliferation of differing versions of a theory follows.<sup>8</sup> Then, suddenly, a new paradigm appears, usually proposed by a rather young or new member of the community who is less committed to and less restricted by the current paradigm, thus bringing new insight to explaining anomalies in a fundamentally different way.<sup>9</sup> Then, for a brief time, two competing paradigms co-exist. Some support the new paradigm while others defend the old paradigm. As time passes – usually a generation or so – the defenders of the old

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 111.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>7</sup>For example, the Ptolemaic theory and the Copernican theory are so incompatible that scientists cannot hold both theories.

<sup>8</sup>Kuhn, 70-71.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 90.

paradigm disappear, and the new theory becomes an established paradigm, under which research is conducted. With the new paradigm, scientists then begin to look in new places and ask new questions.

Drawing on the aforementioned Kuhnian notion of “paradigm” and “paradigm shift,” we will trace in this introductory chapter a brief history of Psalms interpretation in the recent decades in order to see how trends in the scholarly discussion of the Psalms have changed.<sup>10</sup> By and large, the primary focus in this section of the chapter will be on a general history of the contextual interpretation of the Psalter. I will also identify factors leading to the rise of and major contributions of this approach to the task of interpreting the Psalter. Then, in the last part of this chapter I will discuss methodological considerations that will guide the rest of this study.

*A History of Contextual Interpretation of the Psalter: A Paradigm Shift*

In his dissertation “Circles of Context: An Interpretation of Psalms 107-118,” John Crutchfield reviews Psalms studies in the twentieth century and identifies five major turning points: The historical approach, Gunkel and form criticism, Mowinckel and the cult, Dahood and Northwest Semitics, and Childs and the canonical context.<sup>11</sup>

Crutchfield’s brief survey provides a useful review of the history of Psalms studies in the

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<sup>10</sup>Ever since Kuhn’s publication, the Kuhnian notion of “paradigm shift” has become a source of scholarly fascination in academic communities of many different types. The discipline of biblical studies has not escaped this scholarly fascination. The Kuhnian notion of paradigm shift, however, may not be applicable to biblical studies in the same way it has worked in the disciplines, primarily, of physics and chemistry. Due to the incomparability of competing paradigms, according to Kuhn, typically a single paradigm dominates any scientific discipline (Kuhn, 94). In biblical studies, however, multiple paradigms (methodologies) may concurrently dominate the discipline. In science a paradigm shift is not a cumulative process (Kuhn, 84-5), but in biblical studies methodological changes are often cumulative in that a new methodology characteristically does not necessitate a dismissal of the previous one(s): E.g., redaction criticism is built on top of textual and form criticisms. With these differences in mind, we will cautiously apply the Kuhnian notion of paradigm shift to Psalms studies.

<sup>11</sup>John Charles Crutchfield, “Circles of Context: An Interpretation of Psalms 107-118” (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 2000), 1-7.

twentieth century. Among the five major turning points he identifies, however, only Gunkel's form-critical and Childs's canonical approaches are noteworthy as a paradigm shift befitting the Kuhnian notion. The other three approaches Crutchfield identifies as major turning points did not quite revolutionize Psalms studies to the extent the other two achieved. The historical approach, for example, was merely a continuation of the nineteenth-century trend which disappeared almost as soon as Gunkel's form-critical approach to the Psalter appeared.<sup>12</sup> Mowinckel's cult-functional approach was based on refinements of and a continuation of Gunkel's method. Although Gunkel's form-critical approach to the Psalter replaced the old paradigm, the personal/historical approach, Mowinckel's cult-functional approach did not replace Gunkel's method. Mowinckel's approach was rather an extension of the form-critical method, inseparable from it. Besides, the impact of the cult-functional approach was neither as lasting nor as extensive as that of the form-critical method. Dahood's approach, on the other hand, lacks methodological control and simply was not a major influence befitting a paradigm shift in Psalms studies. Thus, as important as these three approaches to the study of the Psalter were, they did not initiate in the discipline of Psalms studies a paradigm shift.

Thus when speaking of the so-called paradigm shift in Psalms studies in the twentieth century, we can speak of only two paradigm shifts, Gunkel's form-critical approach and Childs's canonical approach, respectively. This introductory chapter will outline a brief history of Psalms interpretation in the twentieth century with a primary focus on the second paradigm shift. Since many surveys of Psalms studies in general are

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<sup>12</sup>A notable exception would be that of Moses Butenweiser, *The Psalms: Chronologically Treated with a New Translation* (New York: Ktav, 1969). More recently Michael Goulder espouses this personal/historical method. For more details, see J. Clinton McCann, "The Book of Psalms," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. IV (ed. Leander E. Keck, et. al.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 643-44.

readily available, we need not repeat here in detail the history of Psalms studies preceding the second paradigm shift.<sup>13</sup> Our discussion will briefly introduce Gunkel's form-critical approach to Psalms studies only for the purpose of recounting the characteristics of the dominating paradigm in Psalms studies in the first three quarters of the twentieth century. Then we will move on to the more recent period, our primary focus in this study, to note the differences between the characteristics of the old and new paradigms.

The current approach to the Psalter prior to Gunkel's revolutionary form-critical approach was the personal/historical approach which sought to determine authors of the psalms and the historical circumstances of their composition and date the psalms as specifically as possible. The language of the psalms, however, is so historically nonspecific that it is hardly possible to determine the exact historical locus of the psalms except for some rare cases (e.g., Ps. 137). In fact, most psalms could be applicable to multiple persons or historical events. Thus the end result of this approach was so arbitrary that it is often regarded as pre-critical.

The discipline of Psalms studies took a new turn as Gunkel began to seek the historical settings of the psalms not in specific personal/historical events but in ancient Israel's cultic life. He observed many references of cultic activities (such as singing, dancing, sacrifice, and prayer) in the Psalter and discerned that the cult provided much of the *Sitz im Leben*. He classified the psalms as various types or genres (*Gattungen*), analyzed them, and identified each type's *Sitz im Leben* because for him form and content

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<sup>13</sup>General surveys on Psalms studies are abundant. For example, Thorne Wittstruck, *The Book of Psalms: An Annotated Bibliography*, vol. 1 (New York: Garland, 1994), 1-10, lists 70 surveys on the studies on the Psalms. For most recent surveys, see Mays, "Past, Present, and Prospect in Psalm Study," 147-56; Kuntz, "Engaging the Psalms: Gains and Trends in Recent Research," 77-106; and Howard, "Recent Trends in Psalms Study," 329-68.

were inseparable. As such, his ultimate quest was to establish each type's original life-setting in the cult. The importance of Gunkel's contribution to Psalms studies cannot be overemphasized because "[w]ith one stroke Gunkel appeared to have rendered all pre-critical exegesis of the Psalter invalid."<sup>14</sup> To use the Kuhnian concept, Gunkel's form-critical approach initiated a paradigm shift, and it became the dominating paradigm under which research in Psalms studies was conducted for many decades to come. What followed in the subsequent period were primarily refinements and modifications of Gunkel's method by generations of scholars.

Although Gunkel's form-critical approach to the Psalter has forever changed the field of Psalms studies, his quest for the original life-setting reveals that he too operated well within the general historical approach, asking essentially the same question, "What is the original *Sitz im Leben*?" With such an emphasis in discovering the original *Sitz im Leben*, by and large, the form-critical approach is a diachronic method that treats each individual psalm separately against its own historical background and use in the ancient Israelite cult. As such, Gunkel's approach and the trend in Psalms studies based on it predetermined the basic direction of the discipline, just as Kuhn suggests. His approach was attentive to the original historical and cultic context only. Such an emphasis necessitates an interpretive assumption - or paradigm - that meaning resides in origin, and that later forms and uses distort the meaning, and that the Psalter with its composite and so-called anthological nature deserves little or no consideration in the process of interpreting individual psalms. Most studies on the Psalter since Gunkel have reflected the same interpretive assumption, and they have seldom considered the context of the

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<sup>14</sup>Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 510.

canonical Psalter. Therefore, Psalms studies needed a new paradigm in order to see the Psalter in a new light and ask new questions regarding the function of the Psalter as a whole and the relationship of individual psalms to each other and to the whole.

### *A Call for a Paradigm Shift in Psalms Studies*

A contextual or canonical interpretation of the Psalter focuses its attention on the final form of the Hebrew Psalter.<sup>15</sup> By and large, two factors gave an impetus to the emergence of this approach. The growing interest in a literary approach to biblical studies in the 1970s and 1980s was one factor that contributed to the development of the contextual interpretation of the Psalter.<sup>16</sup> The literary approach with its emphasis on the autonomy of text is concerned with the whole text rather than with disjointed parts. Emerging canonical criticism that emphasizes the canon as normative was the other contributing factor. These two factors, however, are not unrelated due to their common emphasis on the final form of the text.<sup>17</sup> The former was well represented by a New Yale

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<sup>15</sup>“Contextual” here refers to the literary context of the book of Psalms rather than a historical/cultic setting.

<sup>16</sup>There is some tendency in biblical studies to follow trends in literature. For example, Herman Gunkel may be regarded as the archenemy to a literary approach, but Gunkel’s concepts of *Gattung* and *Sitz im Leben* were heavily influenced by literary and sociological theories of his day. Even the traditional historical-critical method in general is a type of (pre-New Criticism) literary approach that seeks meaning of a text in light of knowledge of the author and the author’s background. Literary criticism of the Old Testament is a diverse phenomenon with many external factors leading to its rise. For more details on the rise and current status of literary criticism of the Old Testament see Paul R. House, ed., *Beyond Form Criticism: Essays in Old Testament Literary Criticism* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992).

<sup>17</sup>For this reason, John Barton argues that Brevard Childs’s canonical approach displays “many affinities with literary criticism outside biblical criticism.” For more detail, see John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 77-88, especially 81 where the quotation can be found. In his later article, “Canon and Old Testament Interpretation,” in *In Search of True Wisdom: Essays in Old Testament Interpretation in Honour of Ronald E. Clements* (ed. Edward Ball; JSOTSup 300; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 37, he qualifies his statement by saying that the affinities are “superficial.” Childs himself acknowledges affinities between his and various forms of literary approaches, but he argues that the canonical approach is different in its concern with understanding the theological shape of the text. For more details, see Childs, *Introduction*, 74.

Theology<sup>18</sup> whose approach Brevard S. Childs synthesized with his concern for the canonical context as theologically normative.<sup>19</sup> The end result was Childs's "canonical approach"<sup>20</sup> which called for and heralded a paradigm shift in Psalms studies.

Childs, whether or not one agrees with his methodology, may be considered one of the most influential biblical scholars of the twentieth century. He has made original contributions to Psalms studies in particular and biblical studies in general by inducing major shifts in biblical hermeneutics. According to Kuhn, it is often difficult to pin point exactly when the moment of a paradigm shift takes place because it is "seldom completed by a single man and never over night."<sup>21</sup> The same is true in Psalms studies. To credit anyone for single-handedly bringing a paradigm shift in the discipline may be implausible. The trend shift in Psalms studies did not happen overnight either. Instead, a basic shift from a modern mechanical (critical) to a holistic (post-critical) paradigm was

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<sup>18</sup>Childs acknowledges the existence of a "New Yale Theology." He writes, "there is a distinct family resemblance" among the theology faculty at the university and the divinity school. These theologians include Hans Frei, George Lindbeck, and David Kelsey. Childs also acknowledges some similarities between his canonical approach and the "New Yale Theology," in particular George Lindbeck's theological categories. He often states that he attended many of his Yale colleagues' lectures. For more detail, see his excursus "The Canonical Approach and the 'New Yale Theology'" in Brevard Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 540-46.

<sup>19</sup>Childs expresses great reservations toward pure literary approaches to biblical texts when not practiced within certain dogmatic and philosophical traditions. Citing George Steiner's unfavorable review of *The Literary Guide to the Bible* edited by Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, Childs argues that "exegesis done in conscious opposition to dogmatics" is "stifling and superficial." For more details see Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1993), 12.

<sup>20</sup>Brevard S. Childs avoids using the term "canonical criticism," and he does not want other scholars to identify his method as such. For him the term implies that his approach is yet another historical-critical method which he vehemently criticizes for its lack of theological dimension. Thus, when referring to his method of interpretation, Childs prefers to use "canonical approach." James A. Sanders, on the other hand, acknowledged that his method of biblical interpretation is an extension of the historical-critical method and prefers to use the term "canonical criticism." In terms of Psalms studies, Childs's approach with its emphasis on the canonical shape represents the "shape" camp, and Sanders's approach with its emphasis on the canonical process the "shaping" camp. For more details on Sanders's view, see James S. Sanders, *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), especially chapters 4 and 8.

<sup>21</sup>Kuhn, 7.

already taking place not only in biblical studies in general but also in many fields of science, such as physics, biology and cosmology.<sup>22</sup> In other words, the mood for a paradigm shift in general was already thick in the air by the 1970s and 1980s. It was indeed a time of shifting paradigms because, to use Kuhn's terminology, scholars had already recognized the crisis. James Muilenburg, for example, in his presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1968 had already pointed out the limitations of the form-critical approach and called for new directions in biblical studies.<sup>23</sup> Specifically in Psalms studies, Joseph P. Brennan had experimented with a synchronic approach to the Psalter about the same time as Childs's call.<sup>24</sup> Claus Westermann had exhibited similar interest in the redactional history of the Psalter almost two decades earlier than Childs by suggesting that the Psalter, at least in part, was organized by content.<sup>25</sup> Westermann's insight certainly anticipated the present scholarly trend in Psalms studies. Yet much credit is due to Childs for bringing an impetus to the paradigm shift in Psalms studies in

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<sup>22</sup>James P. Martin, "Toward a Post-Critical Paradigm," *NTS* 33 (1987): 370-85. He explores some relations between dominant scientific paradigms and hermeneutical schemas currently used in biblical studies and argues that a basic paradigm shift from a mechanical (critical) to a holistic paradigm (post-critical) has taken place in fields of science as well as biblical studies. In terms of biblical studies, the mechanical or critical paradigm here can be identified with the modern historical-critical paradigm. Many fields of science, he argues, are now less concerned with isolated particularities but more interested in processes and relations. He argues that postmodernity thirsts for holistic thinking, a renewed sense of the whole over against the alleged fragmentation characteristic of the modern mind since René Descartes.

<sup>23</sup>James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 1-18. Muilenburg's call, however, was not specifically directed to Psalms studies.

<sup>24</sup>Joseph P. Brennan, "Some Hidden Harmonies of the Fifth Book of Psalms," in *Essays in Honor of Joseph P. Brennan* (ed. R. F. McNamara; Rochester: St. Bernard's Seminary, 1976), 126-58; idem., "Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies," *BTB* 10 (1980): 25-29. His works will be discussed in detail below.

<sup>25</sup>Claus Westermann, "Zur Sammlung des Psalters," *Theologia Viatorum* 8 (1961): 278-84.

the last quarter of the twentieth century for several reasons.<sup>26</sup> First, Childs had already recognized the crisis - or “anomalies” to use Kuhn’s terminology - present in the discipline of biblical studies at large.<sup>27</sup> Second, he responded to the crisis by calling for a paradigm shift in Psalms studies in particular<sup>28</sup> and biblical studies in general.<sup>29</sup> Third, using Kuhn’s categories, Childs’s call received support from many of those scholars who were aware of “anomalies” in the discipline as well as fierce resistance from those who defended the old paradigm.<sup>30</sup> Fourth, although Childs himself has not carried out his call in the field of Psalms studies in detail, it was his pupil Gerald Wilson who has carried out his call for a paradigm shift and established the trend change in Psalms studies.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>See Walter Brueggemann, “Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon,” *JSOT* 50 (1991): 63. Although Brueggemann does not specifically use the term “paradigm shift,” he does indeed credit Childs for legitimating the present quest to investigate the canonical shape and theological intentionality of the Psalter as a whole. See also Kenneth Share, “The Pivot Point in the Psalter,” 4, who credits Childs for the shifting trend in Psalms studies.

<sup>27</sup>In his article “Interpretation in Faith: The Theological Responsibility of an Old Testament Commentary,” *Interpretation* 18 (1964): 432-49, Childs had already stated his disappointment with the methodology of most Old Testament commentaries. He argued that the supposed objectivity of the descriptive method (best represented by K. Stendahl’s article on “Biblical Theology, Contemporary” in *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*) was insufficient to discuss theological issues present in the canon. A few years later in *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), Childs pronounced the death of the “Biblical Theology movement” and proposed instead that Biblical Theology now be done in the context of the canon.

<sup>28</sup>Brevard S. Childs, “Reflections on the Modern Study of the Psalms,” in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God. Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright* (ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller; Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), 377-88.

<sup>29</sup>Childs, *Introduction*, 513-18.

<sup>30</sup>Childs’s call has generated extensive scholarly responses, both positive and negative. For example, ATLA IBRR Online search resulted in 45 reviews with several journals (*JSOT* 16 (1980), *WW* 1(1981), and *HBT* 2(1980) devoting a whole issue to various responses to Childs’s *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*.

<sup>31</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS 76; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985). With his concentration on the editorial process of the Hebrew Psalter and his view on a gradual fixation of the canonical Psalter, Wilson leans heavily on the “shaping” camp best represented by James A. Sanders. Nevertheless, Wilson is indebted to Childs in many ways.

In his 1976 article, “Reflections on the Modern Study of the Psalms,” Childs called for a paradigm shift in Psalms studies by focusing on the present shape of the Psalter as a coherent literary whole. He claims that “the direction of psalm research needs to shift from those questions which have tended to dominate the study of the Psalter.”<sup>32</sup> He acknowledges the importance of Gunkel’s contributions to Psalms studies because with its focus on literary genres and their sociological function (*Sitz im Leben*), Gunkel’s approach added much to the understanding of the Psalter. Such a focus of the form-critical approach, however, had also set its own limits. The fragile and hypothetical nature of the *Sitz im Leben* is one limitation which it shares with other historical-critical methods, Childs points out, but its neglect of the function of a secondary setting that may be more important for exegesis is a more serious deficiency. Some psalms are even used and re-used in a manner quite different from the original significance within the Psalter.

Childs remarks that understanding the present shape of the Psalter is a “more pressing problem than the reconstructed original form of the text.”<sup>33</sup> For Childs the form-critical and cult-functional questions are to be subordinated to the canonical ones because the canonical shape of the Psalter reflects the final redactor(s)’s attempt to “transform traditional poetry into Sacred Scripture for later generations of the faithful.”<sup>34</sup> As such the final form of the Psalter is a theological entity, and it “alone bears witness to the full history of revelation.”<sup>35</sup> Thus Childs suggests four issues to be explored: the present shape of the Psalter, the issue of canon, inner biblical exegesis, and superscriptions to the

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<sup>32</sup>Childs, “Reflections,” 377.

<sup>33</sup>Childs, “Reflections,” 378-79.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 385.

<sup>35</sup>Childs, *Introduction*, 75-76. For Childs the emphasis on the final form is not limited to the Psalter alone but applicable to all biblical books. See also idem., *The New Testament as Canon*, 41.

psalms. For Gunkel's form-critical and Mowinckel's cult-functional approaches the present shape of the Psalter bears little importance; current standard commentaries virtually ignored the issue of how the psalms were finally collected and given the present shape. Although sporadic attempts were made to discuss the present order of psalms, no consensus was reached. For example, Westermann stressed the function of the present shape of the Psalter as sacred Scripture, but Childs suggests that one needs to go further to pay attention to "signs of reinterpretation by means of . . . positioning" of individual psalms within the Psalter.<sup>36</sup> For Childs even the order of psalms is important because it performs a crucial hermeneutical function by highlighting certain elements and subordinating others.<sup>37</sup>

Closely related to the issue of the present shape of the Psalter is the issue of canon which Childs argues is at the center of Psalms studies. Ever since the discoveries at Qumran, particularly the Psalms from Cave 11 (11QPs<sup>a</sup>) with its surprising order and content, the issue of the development of the Psalter as canonical scripture has been raised. At the center of the issue is whether the Qumran Psalter does in fact represent a variant form which is distinct from that of the "canonical" tradition<sup>38</sup> or a "liturgical

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<sup>36</sup>Childs, "Reflections," 381.

<sup>37</sup>Childs, *Introduction*, 76-77.

<sup>38</sup>James A. Sanders, in particular, has continued to raise the issue by claiming that the Qumran Psalms Scroll represents an earlier form of the canonical Hebrew Psalter prior to fixation of its content and order. In other words, there was a considerable flexibility among Books IV and V of the Psalter in that the Psalter of Qumran was still open-ended in the first century A.D. His claim implies then the scholarly consensus that the Psalter was fixed and canonized by the second century B.C. cannot be held anymore. For more details see, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (11QPs<sup>a</sup>)* (DJD IV; Oxford: Clarendon, 1965) and "Cave 11 Surprises and the Question of Canon" in *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology* (ed. David N. Freedman and Jonas C. Greenfield; Garden City: Anchor Books, 1971), 113-30.

collection.”<sup>39</sup> This issue of canon is a complex one, but suffice it to say that central to the notion of canon is the question of whether a list of books can be expanded.

Childs identifies the issue of inner biblical exegesis as yet another area to be explored in Psalms studies. Numbers of Israel’s sacred psalms were subjected to exegesis within the Psalter by means of compilation of multiple psalms or a process of revising and updating known as “rereading.” Such a practice of reinterpretation for a new context may reveal valuable insights as to how Israel’s sacred texts began to function normatively, but the traditional form-critical and cult-functional approaches, Childs points out, denigrated it as a “sign of the breakdown of spontaneous piety.”<sup>40</sup> Thus he suggests that one must pay close attention to the nature of the canonical Psalter in which “the psalms have been loosened from their original cultic context and the words assigned a new significance as Sacred Scripture for a new and different function.”<sup>41</sup>

The final issue Childs identifies is the superscriptions to the psalms.<sup>42</sup> Scholars in general regard the psalm superscriptions as secondary and consequently pay little attention to these titles. Childs agrees with the general consensus regarding the secondary nature of the superscriptions, but in view of the issues of the final form, canon, and inner biblical exegesis, he argues, the superscriptions may provide valuable insight as to how the psalms as a collection of sacred literature functioned and how the secondary

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<sup>39</sup>M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, “The Psalms Scroll (11QPs<sup>a</sup>) A Problem of Canon and Text,” *Text* 5 (1960): 22-33, and Patrick W. Skehan, “A Liturgical Complex in 11QPs<sup>a</sup>,” *CBQ* 34 (1973): 199-205, on the other hand, argue that the Qumran Psalms Scroll is a late, nonauthoritative lectionary arrangement of canonical and apocryphal psalms collected after the fixation of the canonical Hebrew Psalter.

<sup>40</sup>Childs, “Reflections,” 382.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 383.

<sup>42</sup>Several years earlier Childs wrote a separate article on the issue of the Psalm titles, suggesting that the superscriptions “represent an early reflection of how the Psalms as a collection of sacred literature were understood.” For more details, see “Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis,” *JSS* 16 (1971): 137-150.

*Sitz im Leben* became normative for the canonical tradition. Indeed, Childs suggests, the superscriptions serve to contemporize and individualize the psalms for every generation of Israel.<sup>43</sup>

The four issues Childs identified above are interrelated to the present shape of the Psalter and the locus of meaning and authority for it. The traditional form-critical and cult-functional approaches assume that the key to a text's meaning lies in the original historical form and context.<sup>44</sup> This assumption implies that the key to meaning lies outside of the text rather than within the text itself. For a form critic, then, the text becomes a means by which s/he reconstructs the original form and its *Sitz im Leben*, the world behind the text. In other words, this assumption functions like a paradigm in Psalms studies that predetermines the types of questions scholars ask and solutions to those questions. Childs does not deny the significance of this original historical context,<sup>45</sup> but he argues that the authoritative meaning must be located in the canonical context and form, i.e., in the shape produced by the contextual relationship of the psalms. In other words, Childs's canonical approach proposes autonomy of the Scriptures in that the key to meaning and authority lies in the biblical texts themselves in their final canonical form. That is, the canonical context is *the* hermeneutical key to understanding the Psalter in that the canonical Psalter is the proper interpretive context for

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<sup>43</sup>Childs, "Reflections," 384.

<sup>44</sup>Historical-critical methods in general share the same assumption. In his book *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction*, 35-6, Childs suggests that such an assumption is precisely the reason why a new approach to the discipline of New Testament Introduction is needed.

<sup>45</sup>In "Reflections," 379, Childs suggests that when properly executed diachronic and synchronic approaches are not antithetical.

understanding individual psalms.<sup>46</sup> With his emphasis on the locus of meaning in the final form of the text, Childs's call requires nothing less than a paradigm shift in perspective on the locus of meaning. With this perspective in mind, scholars have begun to see the Psalter in a quite different light and ask a completely new set of questions. In other words, the basic direction for Psalms interpretation has been shifted.

In 1979 Childs heeded his own call for a paradigm shift in Psalms studies by publishing *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, calling for yet another paradigm shift now in Old Testament studies in general. In his *Introduction* Childs's attention on the final form remains the same as ever. His emphasis on a new eschatological interpretation as the governing feature of the canonical Psalter is notable.<sup>47</sup> Closely related to the new eschatological interpretation is the function of strategically scattered placement of the royal psalms as the frame of the Psalter that emphasizes the coming of YHWH's reign by means of reinterpretation.<sup>48</sup> This eschatological reinterpretation applies not only to the royal psalms but also to the entire Psalter, including the lament psalms. Childs notes, for example, Psalms 1 and 2 form an introduction to the whole canonical Psalter. He argues that the redactional position of Psalm 1, which blesses those who delight in YHWH's torah, assigns this torah/wisdom psalm now to function "as the divine word itself," not as mere human wisdom or prayer

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<sup>46</sup>One of many criticisms Childs receives is that his canonical approach values only one historical level, i.e., the canonical level, in spite of the multi-layered state of the canonical text. Many argue that earlier levels of the canonical text should also be regarded as having theological value. James Barr, in particular, questions why the theological beliefs of one particular period in Jewish history – that of the canonization of the Old Testament – should be the only worthy object of Old Testament study. He identifies Childs's approach as that of the fundamentalist. For more details, see Barr's assessment of Childs's methodology in "Childs' Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture," *JSOT* 16 (1980): 12-23.

<sup>47</sup>Childs, *Introduction*, 518.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 517.

as often understood.<sup>49</sup> This reassignment of the function of Psalm 1 is closely tied to the five book division of the Psalter which may indicate that the final editors of the Hebrew Psalter perceived that it, just like the five books of Moses, contained the revelation of God's dynamic will. Although Childs earlier claimed that his concern is a modest one, it is anything but modest. In fact, it is a very ambitious one when one considers the then common view of the Hebrew Psalter merely as human responses to divine revelation or human prayers and songs.<sup>50</sup> Thus his proposal requires nothing less than a paradigm shift, so to speak, in one's understanding of what the Psalter or what a psalm is.<sup>51</sup>

Childs was not alone in his quest for a method that enables Psalms studies to go beyond the limits of Gunkel's form-critical program. The same year Childs called for a shift in the focus of psalm research, Joseph P. Brennan also made a similar attempt to treat the Psalter synchronically. He does not suggest abandoning the traditional form-critical and cult-functional approaches to the Psalter altogether, but like Childs he calls for a method that may carry the discipline of Psalms studies beyond the boundaries of the traditional methods. In his 1976 article "Some Hidden Harmonies of the Fifth Book of Psalms," Brennan argued that a proper understanding of the Psalter requires that

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 513.

<sup>50</sup>On the one hand, Gerhard von Rad in his treatment of the Psalter, "Erwägungen zu den Königpsalmen," ZAW 58 (1940/1): 216-22, and in his subtitle of the section of his *Old Testament Theology* on the Psalms and wisdom literature, characterized the Psalter as "Israel's answer," a response to her encounter with God. In his commentary on the Psalter, *Psalms, Part I with an Introduction to Cultic Poetry* (FOTL XIV; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 33, Erhard Gerstenberger characterized the Psalter as a mere "treasury of experiences accumulated by generations of people." Childs, on the other hand, argues that the Psalter is much more than the human expression/response. For more details, see Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 193-94.

<sup>51</sup>In his recent survey of Psalms interpretation "Past, Present, and Prospect in Psalm Study," 147-56, James L. Mays remarked that the history of Psalms interpretation has revealed thus far that defining "psalm" is a complex matter.

individual psalms be studied in relation to each other. He perceives the governing principle of the final collection of Book V to be literary, rather than liturgical. Looked at from this perspective “previously independent psalms now comment upon and or respond to one another” by means of their strategic placement so that “[t]hey must all be studied in relationship to each other, since all of them together convey more than they do if looked at separately.”<sup>52</sup> He goes on to suggest that an exegete must read individual psalms at two levels at least and sometimes more, i.e., that of the original composition and the final canonical edition.<sup>53</sup> In this regard, Brennan’s proposal is not as radical as that of Childs whose sole emphasis is to read psalms on a single level, the final canonical form. In a subsequent article “Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies,” Brennan argues for an inner coherence for the first eight psalms and also for the entire Hebrew Psalter.<sup>54</sup> Like Childs, Brennan also underscores the eschatological reinterpretation, adapting and applying much earlier material to later conditions, and the present sequence of the Psalms reflects such an attempt.<sup>55</sup>

The end result of Childs’s call has been a paradigm shift in Psalms studies. Creative energies are now devoted to issues beyond the traditional form-critical and cult-functional concerns in the direction of a holistic reading of the Psalter. A contextual

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<sup>52</sup>Brennan, “Some Hidden Harmonies in the Fifth Book of Psalms,” 126-28.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>54</sup>Brennan, “Psalms 1-8,” 25. Many centuries earlier rabbinic and patristic writers emphasized continuity between adjacent psalms by means of linguistic and thematic linkages. Brennan’s literary approach, Childs’s canonical approach, and others’ structuralist approaches to the Psalter, however, do not advocate a return to the precritical interpretation. Instead, as Walter Brueggemann identifies his theological approach to the Psalter, they advocate a postcritical interpretation of the Psalter in which “devotional and scholarly traditions support, inform, and correct each other.” For more details, see Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 15-19.

<sup>55</sup>Brennan, “Psalms 1-8,” 28-29.

interpretation of the Psalter by the SBL Book of Psalms Group launched in 1989 is perhaps the best example that reflects such a hermeneutical shift. This group discussed “the Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation,” resulting in a monograph entitled *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*.<sup>56</sup> Certainly, as Roland E. Murphy puts it, a contextual interpretation of the Psalter is not the *only* or the only *authoritative* method of interpreting the Psalter at the present moment,<sup>57</sup> and just as with historical-critical methods, contextual interpretation holds an inherent danger of being hypothetical and may also become arbitrary when uncontrolled.<sup>58</sup>

The form-critical and cult-functional approaches to Psalms studies, on the one hand, still produce valuable works with many refinements to Gunkel and Mowinckel’s methods.<sup>59</sup> Some scholars, on the other hand, are skeptical about any attempt to read the Psalter holistically. Erhard Gerstenberger cautions that the Psalter is not a book in the modern sense, and its present shape is not due to literary considerations but a liturgical

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<sup>56</sup>J. Clinton McCann, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*. Important contributions of this monograph will be discussed below.

<sup>57</sup>Roland E. Murphy, *The Gift of the Psalms* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000; rev. ed. of *The Psalms Are Yours*, New York: Paulist, 1993), 21. His reference was to Childs’s canonical approach to Psalm 1 as a deliberate editorial positioning to show how the Psalter is to be read. Murphy argues that the Psalter has levels of meaning, namely “the original one to which the historical-critical method aspires and the canonical one that existed in the context of the entire Psalter,” and “[o]ne is not more authoritative than the other.” Due to its “relecture” or reinterpretation of individual psalms in the Psalter, the presence of at least the two levels of meaning of the Psalter must be acknowledged. For this reason, Murphy cautions not to abandon the traditional form-critical and cult-functional approaches to the Psalter. On this matter, some of the scholars who practice a contextual interpretation of the Psalter agree with Murphy, e.g., James L. Mays and Walter Brueggemann. Generally, I also agree with Murphy, except that I value the canonical context more than the original context because individual psalms may often mean something different when they are placed in the canonical context. To neglect this shift of meaning is to make a serious mistake.

<sup>58</sup>Roland E. Murphy, “Reflections on Contextual Interpretation of the Psalms,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clinton McCann, Jr.; JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993): 21-28.

<sup>59</sup>E.g., Erhard Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 1 with an Introduction to Cultic Poetry and Psalms & Part 2, and Lamentations* (FOTL XIV & XV; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988, 2001).

one.<sup>60</sup> John Day is also skeptical of the attempt to read the Psalter holistically, arguing that “any attempt to find one grandiose scheme to account for ordering of the psalms is bound to end in failure.”<sup>61</sup> After surveying the history of contextual interpretations of the Psalter, R. Norman Whybray also argues along the same line that neither wisdom, kingship, nor ritual sacrifices serves as an organizing principle for the present shape of the Psalter, and the evident complexity of the process of the Psalter’s formation impedes “the notion of an all embracing structure for the book as a whole.”<sup>62</sup> R. Dean Anderson also expresses skepticism about the holistic reading of the Psalter by arguing that “[w]hilst there are indications of internal ordering here and there, there appears to be no systematic attempt to structure the Psalter internally.”<sup>63</sup> Wilson too warns of possible pitfalls of a contextual understanding of the Psalter if it does not begin with a detailed and careful analysis of linguistic, literary, and thematic linkage among the psalms.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, along with the traditional form-critical and cult-functional methods, the contextual interpretation of the Psalter established itself during the 1990s as one of three viable methods of understanding the Psalter, and it has presently become the arena in which the most creative energies in Psalms studies are being devoted.

The present trend in Psalms studies, however, does not subserviently follow Childs’s lead. With his emphasis on the final form/shape of the Psalter, Childs represents

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<sup>60</sup>Erhard Gerstenberger, “Der Psalter als Buch und als Sammlung” in *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung* (HBS 1; ed. Klaus Seybold and Erich Zanger; Freiburg: Herder, 1994), 3-13.

<sup>61</sup>John Day, *Psalms* (OTG; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 111.

<sup>62</sup>R. Norman Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book* (JSOT Sup 222; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 35. For more details on Whybray’s evaluation on the trend of reading the Psalter as a book, see especially 18-35.

<sup>63</sup>R. Dean Anderson, “The Division and Order of the Psalms,” *WTJ* 56 (1994): 219-41.

<sup>64</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, “Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, 50.

the “shape” camp, while many participants in the current trend belong to the “shaping” camp. For Childs the present Psalter’s long and complex process of growth remains obscure and the intention of the editor(s) is impossible to determine with certainty.<sup>65</sup> What follows in the field of Psalms studies, however, has been a trend to discern traces of editorial intentionality in the Psalter because it may be impossible to understand the shape without first understanding the “shaping” process of the canonical Psalter.<sup>66</sup> Hence the “shaping” camp once again concerns itself with historical questions in order to discern how the Hebrew Psalter came to be. A case in point is that of Gerald H. Wilson.

Gerald Wilson may rightly be credited as the most prominent figure who has legitimated and popularized the contextual interpretation of the Psalter. His 1981 Yale dissertation, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, is the most comprehensive treatment of the editing of the Psalter to appear. In this work, he specifically applied Childs’s call for a paradigm shift in Psalms studies. Like Childs, Wilson also focused on the final shape of the Psalter whose message is “distinct from and which intends to supersede that of the earlier pss-collections on which it is partially based.”<sup>67</sup> But unlike Childs, he sets out to determine the intention of the editor(s) of the Psalter with certainty.

Wilson’s twofold purpose for the dissertation was to demonstrate that purposeful editorial activity lies behind the canonical Psalter and to identify the editorial motivation that shaped the canonical form.<sup>68</sup> His treatment of the structure of the Psalter is based on a comparative study of other ancient Near Eastern psalms collections and the Qumran

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<sup>65</sup>Childs, *Introduction*, 512.

<sup>66</sup>Walter Brueggemann, “Response to James L. Mays, ‘The Question of Context,’” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, 30.

<sup>67</sup>Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 11.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 4, 9-11.

Psalms manuscripts. This comparative study enabled him to identify some explicit and tacit editorial techniques in the final form of the Psalter. The most common explicit editorial technique is the use of superscriptions and postscripts that are commonly recognized as secondary. The tacit indications of purposeful editorial activity include, for example, editorial arrangements such as grouping of the psalms with doxologies at the end of Books I-IV and grouping of the hallelujah psalms in Book V. These editorial elements are tacit because their function becomes apparent only when one views the entire Psalter, or at least groupings of psalms. The presence of such explicit and tacit indications of purposeful editorial activity has led Wilson to argue that the fivefold division of the Psalter is also intentional in that the first three books narrate the failure of the history of ancient Israel, and Books IV and V proclaim YHWH as Israel's king who has been her refuge in the past, long before the monarchy even existed. In other words, the Psalter in its final shape moves from reliance on human kings in Books I-III to reliance on YHWH as king in Books IV-V, and Book IV functions as "the editorial center of the final form of the Hebrew Psalter" because it stands as the answer to the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant with which Books I-III are primarily concerned.<sup>69</sup>

Ever since the completion of his dissertation, Wilson has reiterated and refined his thesis in numerous articles.<sup>70</sup> In a 1984 article "Evidence of Editorial Divisions in the Hebrew Psalter," he argued once again that the present shape of the Psalter is the result of

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<sup>69</sup>Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 199-228, esp., 215.

<sup>70</sup>Wilson's articles on the editing of the Psalter that are not discussed in detail below include the following: "Qumran Psalms Scroll Reconsidered: Analysis of the Debate," *CBQ* 47 (1985): 624-42; "A First Century CE Date for the Closing of the Psalter?" in *Haim M. I. Memorial Volume* (ed. Joshua Adler; Jerusalem: World Jewish Bible Center, 1993), 136-43; "Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise," and "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of the Psalms," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, 42-51 and 72-82, respectively; and "Psalms and Psalter: Paradigm for Biblical Theology," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann; Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 100-110.

a conscious, purposeful editorial attempt to bring meaning to the shape of the whole Psalter. He suggests three methods of purposeful editorial activity in grouping psalms and indicating division between groups that are visible in the Psalter: The use of author designations in the psalm titles in which author changes serve to mark strong disjunctions within the first three books of the Psalter; the function of genre categories that binds together and softens the transition between larger groups of psalms; and the use of *hllwyh* and *hwdw* Psalms in Books IV and V to conclude and introduce segments, respectively.<sup>71</sup>

Wilson's 1985 article "The Use of 'Untitled' Psalms in the Hebrew Psalter" carries on his earlier argument on the superscriptions, the most common explicit editorial technique. In his discussion of untitled psalms in Books I-III of the Psalter (Pss. 1, 2, 10, 33, 43, and 71), Wilson suggests that one reason they remain untitled by the Psalms editor(s) is an attempt to relate these psalms to those which immediately precede them.<sup>72</sup> That is not to imply that the absence of a superscript always functions as an editorial technique of combining the untitled psalm to its immediate predecessor. For example, the presence of large groups of consecutive untitled psalms in Books IV and V demonstrate a different editorial concern.<sup>73</sup> In any case, he suggests, Books I-III consist of four rather clear examples of this editorial technique of combining psalms, reflecting the editor(s)'s awareness of alternate traditions and the desire to preserve both traditions.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, "Evidence of Editorial Divisions in the Hebrew Psalter," *VT* 34 (1984): 337-52.

<sup>72</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, "The Use of 'Untitled' Psalms in the Hebrew Psalter," *ZAW* 97 (1985): 404.

<sup>73</sup>Wilson, however, cautiously suggests that the same editorial technique may be at work in Books IV and V. See his conclusion in "The Use of 'Untitled' Psalms," 413.

<sup>74</sup>Pss. 9 and 10, Pss. 32 and 33, Pss. 42 and 43, and Pss. 71 and 72.

In 1986 Wilson followed with yet another article recapitulating the basic argument of his dissertation.<sup>75</sup> Books I-III, he argues, reflect exilic or post-exilic evaluation of the hopes of the Davidic monarchy based on the covenant of David. With the strategic placement of the royal psalms at the seams of the Psalter (Pss. 2, 72, 89), Books I-III question the demise of monarchy in the exile (Ps. 89). Being the later addition, Books IV and V reflect on the dismay over the failure of the Davidic covenant/human kingship and instead express faith in Yahweh's kingship, his direct protection without royal mediation. The strategic placement of the YHWH *malak* psalms in Book IV is a clear indication of such a transition. The Psalter as a whole, then, portrays ancient Israel's attempt to move beyond her exilic experience to future grounding for faith in Yahweh.

In a 1992 article "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," Wilson once again investigates placement of specific psalms, such as royal and wisdom psalms.<sup>76</sup> The shape of the Psalter as a whole, he argues, provides the reader with interpretive clues for reading the whole and its parts. One major implication of this shape of the Psalter is a movement from lament to praise and from performance to meditation.

With the aforementioned publications, Wilson has laid a methodological foundation for a holistic reading of the Hebrew Psalter. His basic thesis that emphasizes the literary unity of the Psalter has been followed and supplemented by many other prominent scholars. In his article "The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation," for instance, James L. Mays endorses contextual/canonical interpretation of the Psalter as a

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<sup>75</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, "The Use of the Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter," *JSOT* 35 (1986): 85-94.

<sup>76</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 129-42.

useful third way of understanding the Psalter along with the form-critical and cult-functional approaches.<sup>77</sup> With such a view in mind, he produced a commentary on the Psalter that demonstrates a clear departure from the traditional form-critical and cult-functional approaches.<sup>78</sup> In this innovative commentary he sees each psalm as part of a broader theological and canonical entity, the Psalter as a whole, in which form-critical and cult-functional questions are subordinated to the canonical ones. Like Wilson, Mays considers how individual psalms function within the Psalter as a whole and suggests what clues they offer in understanding adjacent psalms because he is convinced that an understanding of psalm types and their original *Sitz im Leben* alone cannot determine the context in which a particular psalm should be interpreted.

Mays has also produced over the years a series of articles addressing various issues in Psalms studies, and these articles were collected and published in book form *The Lord Reigns*.<sup>79</sup> Due to the nature of this book, Mays's focus is most often on the microstructural level, not the overall structure of the whole Psalter. Of particular interest to our discussion is his Presidential Address to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1986 entitled "The Place of Torah-Psalms in the Psalter."<sup>80</sup> In this article Mays shares a similar conviction to that of Wilson by arguing for a strategic placement of the torah

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<sup>77</sup>James L. Mays, "The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, 14-20.

<sup>78</sup>James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1994).

<sup>79</sup>James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994). This book is a companion volume to his commentary on the Psalter.

<sup>80</sup>James L. Mays, "The Place of Torah-Psalms in the Psalter," *JBL* 106 (1987): 3-12. Also reprinted in *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms*, 128-35. All references to this article will follow the pagination of *The Lord Reigns*.

psalms as well as the relation of these psalms to other psalms<sup>81</sup> in that these torah psalms contain an important clue as to how the Psalter in its final form is intended to be viewed and read. He suggests that each of the three torah psalms (Pss. 1, 19, and 119) sharing the instruction of the Lord as the common, central organizing topic is juxtaposed to a royal psalm (Pss. 2, 18, 118), whose characteristic is eschatological.<sup>82</sup> This juxtaposition places the torah psalms in the eschatological context in which the psalmist<sup>83</sup> longs for Yahweh's reign, a thesis he proposed elsewhere in "The Center of the Psalms: 'The Lord Reigns' as Root Metaphor."<sup>84</sup> This juxtaposition of the torah psalms with the royal psalms then creates a more comprehensive theological scheme in which meditation on torah and submission to Yahweh's reign become an interpretive key with which one should read and understand the Psalter.

J. Clinton McCann, Jr. is another scholar who unapologetically approaches the Psalter with a canonical perspective. In 1993 he edited *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, a volume dedicated to the contextual study of the Psalter by the SBL Book of Psalms Group. In the same year, taking the canonical shape seriously, he published a handbook on the Psalter,<sup>85</sup> and more recently a commentary in *The New Interpreter's*

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<sup>81</sup>Mays identifies 14 other psalms (Pss. 18, 25, 33, 78, 89, 93, 94, 99, 103, 105, 111, 112, 147, 148) that convey the same message as that of the torah psalms.

<sup>82</sup>Cf., Mays, *Psalms*, 11.

<sup>83</sup>In this case the identity of the psalmist is not historical but literary, much like an implied author in literary criticism.

<sup>84</sup>James L. Mays, "The Center of the Psalms: 'The Lord Reigns' as Root Metaphor," in *Language, Theology and the Bible* (eds. S. E. Balentine and J. Barton; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 231-46. Reprinted in *The Lord Reigns*, 12-22. In this article Mays argues for the kingship of the Lord as a central thought of the Psalter.

<sup>85</sup>J. Clinton McCann, Jr. *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).

*Bible* series.<sup>86</sup> Reminiscent of Childs and Mays's view in McCann's handbook is his view of Psalms 1 and 2 as a paired introduction with which one must approach the whole Psalter. Like Mays, McCann also suggests the dual themes of psalms as instruction (i.e., torah) and psalms presenting Yahweh's reign. He remarks, "Psalms 1 and 2 together form an introduction to the Psalms. While Psalm 1 informs the reader that the whole collection is to be approached and appropriated as instruction, Psalm 2 introduces the essential content of that instruction – the Lord reigns!"<sup>87</sup> His article in 1991 "The Psalms as Instruction" had already reflected such an emphasis on the Psalter as a book of divine instruction.<sup>88</sup> Although most of the psalms originally played a liturgical function, he argues, they were reapplied as divine instruction in the canonical shape.

McCann's emphasis on the Psalter as a book of divine instruction is also evident in his commentary. With an explicit Christian and theological approach in mind, he expresses his intention to interpret the Psalter with what he calls an "incarnational view of Scripture." In other words, McCann regards the Psalter "both as humanity's words to God and as God's word to humanity."<sup>89</sup> Such an approach, he states, requires a multiplicity of methods, i.e., historical, literary, and canonical.

McCann's interest in the canonical perspective, however, was established long before in his dissertation in which he attempted to move beyond the form-critical

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<sup>86</sup>J. Clinton McCann, Jr., "The Book of Psalms," 641-1280.

<sup>87</sup>McCann, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 41.

<sup>88</sup>J. Clinton McCann, "Psalms as Instruction," *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 117-28.

<sup>89</sup>McCann, "The Book of Psalms," 642.

approach in the interpretation of a particular psalm.<sup>90</sup> The primary methods he employs here are again rhetorical and canonical criticism. After a rhetorical critical analysis of Psalm 73, he examines it in its canonical context. His investigation of the canonical shape of Book III and the whole Psalter led him to conclude that the Psalter in its final form contributed to the survival of the exilic and postexilic community, and Psalm 73 assisted the community by offering the unconventional solution that purity of heart, not prosperity, is its reward. McCann reaffirms the same point in his 1987 article “Psalm 73: A Microcosm of Old Testament Theology,” in which he suggests that Psalm 73 stands at the center point both theologically and positionally, and as such Psalm 73 with its tension between the legitimation of structure and the embrace of pain is a microcosm of Old Testament theology.<sup>91</sup>

As early as 1984, Walter Brueggemann had advocated a theological approach to the Psalter in *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*. In this book he employed Paul Ricoeur’s work on the role of language as orientation, disorientation, and new orientation to classify psalms and unapologetically identifies his theological approach as a “postcritical” one that emphasizes the needed interaction between devotional and scholarly readings to “support, inform, and correct each other.”<sup>92</sup>

*Theology of the Old Testament* reflects his interpretive stance well. He claims, “I intend to deny the long-standing distinction between ‘meant’ and ‘means,’ as though there is a

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<sup>90</sup>J. Clinton McCann, Jr., “Psalm 73: An Interpretation Emphasizing Rhetorical and Canonical Criticism” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1985).

<sup>91</sup>J. Clinton McCann, Jr., “Psalm 73: A Microcosm of Old Testament Theology,” in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in Honor of Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm* (ed. K. G. Hoglund, et. al.; JSOTSup 58; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 247-57.

<sup>92</sup>Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalter*, 16.

recoverable ‘meant’ prior to all interpretive, imaginative ‘means.’”<sup>93</sup> With his emphasis on the Old Testament’s polyphonic character, Brueggemann’s close reading of the text is what he characterizes as “expansive, imaginative interpretation.”<sup>94</sup>

Brueggemann has also participated in the current discussion of shape and shaping of the Psalter and endorsed the new trend in “Response to James L. Mays, ‘Question of Context.’”<sup>95</sup> Like Childs, he is primarily interested in the shape and intention of the Psalter and suggested six elements in seeing the Psalter as a whole. These elements include intentional placement of Psalm 1 as an introduction, Psalm 150 as a conclusion to the whole Psalter, the canonical Psalter’s literary progression from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150, a strategic placement of Psalm 72, a pivotal placement of Psalm 73, and the general sequence of Psalms revealing a daring act of appropriation by the exilic and postexilic community. Of particular interest to our discussion here is his view of the Psalter’s literary progression, from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150 via Psalm 73. After a close examination of the Psalter’s beginning and ending that are like bookends to see how they relate to each other and thereby identify the Psalter’s theological movement, he suggests, “[t]he canonical shape of the Psalter has its problem movement from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150, from a beginning in obedience to an ending in praise,” and that “Psalm 73 is a pivotal and

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<sup>93</sup>Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 731. His remark is reminiscent of Childs who expressed in his article, “Interpretation in Faith: The Theological Responsibility of an Old Testament Commentary,” his disappointment with the supposed objectivity of the descriptive method best represented by Krister Stendahl’s article on “Biblical Theology, Contemporary” in *IDB*. Like Childs, Brueggemann is fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of historical criticism. Like his teacher James Muilenburg, Brueggemann thus attempts to move beyond the boundaries of the historical-critical approaches to focus on literary-canonical dimensions of biblical texts. Although Brueggemann often tips his hat to Childs’s focus on the final form, the emphasis on the psalms as “world-making” shows that Brueggemann’s approach is much different from Childs’s.

<sup>94</sup>Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 88-89, 731.

<sup>95</sup>Brueggemann, “Response to James L. Mays,” 29-41.

probably distinct point in the move from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150.”<sup>96</sup> This movement from obedience to praise, he suggests, is problematic because ancient Israel’s experience was contrary to the confident affirmation of Psalm 1. As such the move from the torah’s pious obedience to praise in the canonical shape of the Psalter is troubled and complex. And pivotally placed Psalm 73 encompasses both suffering and hope and provides a transition for faith to begin again. Psalm 73 relates to the confident affirmation of Psalm 1, but it also departs from the theological assertion of Psalm 1 and moves beyond it. Then Psalm 150 shows life is to be lived in praise of Yahweh.

He discusses the same issue in greater detail in “Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon,” in which he seeks to “probe the question of theological intentionality by asking how one gets from one end of the Psalter to the other.”<sup>97</sup> For him this literary progression of the canonical Psalter is significant<sup>98</sup> and intentional because the literary shape of the Psalter articulates ancient Israel’s life and faith in that “the obedience of Psalm 1 and the praise of Psalm 150 are not simply literary boundaries, but the boundaries for Israel’s life and faith,” reflecting her “struggle with, for and against God’s fidelity.”<sup>99</sup> In other words, the literary shape of the Psalter provides the framework with which one can understand ancient Israel’s faithful struggle with her God.

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 37-41.

<sup>97</sup>Brueggemann, “Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon,” 63-92.

<sup>98</sup>The literary progression of the Psalter is significant for the contextual interpretation of the Psalter. Brueggemann, on the one hand, proposes Psalm 73 as pivotal in the canonical shape of the Psalter that moves from obedience to praise. Wilson, on the other hand, proposes that the Psalter moves from reliance on human kings to reliance on Yahweh as king, and Psalm 89 is pivotal in that movement. Thus a debate is currently being waged. For details, see Kenneth Share, “The Pivot Point in the Psalter: An Exegetical Contribution to the Current Canonical Debate.”

<sup>99</sup>Brueggemann, “Bounded by Obedience and Praise: Psalms as Canon,” 91-92.

In his more recent article written along with Patrick D. Miller, “Psalm 73 as a Canonical Marker,” Brueggemann expands his discussion to examine the position and role of Psalm 73 in the canonical shape of the Psalter.<sup>100</sup> After considering how the theme of torah piety may be juxtaposed to the theme of kingship in the psalm, they come to a similar conclusion to Brueggemann’s earlier observation. By means of its placement, they suggest, Psalm 73 provides an alternative understanding for a monarchy. Based on Miller’s earlier work that articulates the torah piety of a Davidic king,<sup>101</sup> they view the speaker of Psalm 73 to be the king, and the psalm functions as a canonical marker in Book III that “begins the Psalter again,” shows covenant responsibility was always present before kingship, and “imagines” that Israel in the future may choose rightly.<sup>102</sup>

Recent publications in the field of Psalms studies by other scholars also exhibit growing scholarly interest in macrostructural analysis of the Psalter, focusing on the large contours and overall theme(s) of the Psalter. Most works of this type respond to Wilson’s works in one way or another. Mark Smith’s article “The Theology of the Redaction of the Psalter: Some Observations,” for instance, bases its theology on the superscriptions and the placement of the royal Psalms and in essence recapitulates Wilson’s basic thrust by suggesting that Books I-III center around David’s reign, and Books IV-V focus on Yahweh’s kingly reign over Israel.<sup>103</sup> In his earlier article “The Levitical Compilation of

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<sup>100</sup>Walter Brueggemann and Patrick D. Miller, “Psalm 73 as a Canonical Marker,” *JSOT* 72 (1996): 45-56.

<sup>101</sup>P. D. Miller, “Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer: The Theology of Psalms 15-24,” in *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung*, 127-42.

<sup>102</sup>Brueggemann and Miller, “Psalm 73 as a Canonical Marker,” 50, 56.

<sup>103</sup>Mark S. Smith, “The Theology of the Redaction of the Psalter: Some Observations,” *ZAW* 104 (1992): 408-12.

the Psalter,” Smith attributes the final shape of the Psalter to the levitical priesthood,<sup>104</sup> and in “The Psalms as a Book for Pilgrims” he suggests that the overarching theology of the canonical Psalter is eschatological.<sup>105</sup> Kenneth Kuntz emphasizes the importance of wisdom in the final shaping of the Psalter as a collection of sacred texts by the postexilic Israelite community.<sup>106</sup> In “Psalms: A Cantata about the Davidic Covenant,” John Walton suggests that the Psalter is organized by content as a cantata around the theme of the Davidic covenant.<sup>107</sup> Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford’s *Reading From the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* focuses on the beginning (and ending) of each of the Psalter’s five books that gives readers clues about the hermeneutics of the shaping community and suggests Yahweh’s torah and kingship as the overarching dual themes of the Psalter that reflect the postexilic Israelite community’s own story of survival and a hermeneutical rationale for that survival.<sup>108</sup>

David Mitchell’s recent book also belongs to the macrostructural analysis of the Psalter.<sup>109</sup> His treatment of intentional editorial activity in the Psalter, however, is unique in its eschatological orientation. After reviewing Psalms studies interpreting the Psalter

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<sup>104</sup>Mark S. Smith, “The Levitical Compilation of the Psalter,” *ZAW* 103 (1991): 258-63.

<sup>105</sup>Mark S. Smith, “The Psalms as a Book for Pilgrims,” *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 156-66.

<sup>106</sup>Kenneth Kuntz, “Wisdom Psalms and the Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter,” in *For a Later Generation: The Transformation of Tradition in Israel, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (eds. R. A. Argall, B. A. Bow, and R. A. Werline; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 144-60.

<sup>107</sup>John Walton, “Psalms: A Cantata about the Davidic Covenant,” *JETS* 34 (1991): 21-31.

<sup>108</sup>Nancy deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997). This book is a revision of her dissertation under the same title (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1995) written under the supervision of William H. Bellinger, Jr. As the title suggests, her work belongs to Sanders’s “shaping” camp.

<sup>109</sup>David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of the Psalms* (JSOTSup 252; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

as a coherent whole with purpose and message, he expresses his disagreement with the current theories on the editorial agenda that are historical in orientation. For Mitchell the agenda is eschatological. The Hebrew Psalter, he proposes, “was designed by its redactors as a purposefully ordered arrangement of lyrics with an eschatological message.”<sup>110</sup> His proposal is not unprecedented. Childs and Brennan had already noted this highly eschatological nature of the Psalter. Mitchell, however, examines the issue in greater details and seeks bases for the eschatological nature of the Psalter in the “eschatologically conscious milieu” of the Psalter’s final editing, the traditional view of David as a prophet, and the presence of the royal psalms in spite of the fact that the demise of the Israelite monarchy had already occurred.<sup>111</sup> While Wilson viewed the Psalter with a historical perspective and argued the Psalter is a call to trust Yahweh alone after the apparent failure of the Davidic monarchy (Ps. 89), Mitchell argues that the concerns of the final redactors of the Psalter were not so much historical, explaining how and why the Davidic covenant failed. In fact, the Psalter does not portray the failure of Davidic kingship *per se*. On the contrary, the Psalter, in particular Books IV and V, still suggests interest in Davidic kingship which forms the basis for the eschatological hope in a messianic figure who in the future would rule over Zion and the nations.

Matthias Millard’s monograph *Die Komposition des Psalter: Ein formgeschichtlicher Ansatz* is one of the most comprehensive studies of the composition of the Psalter.<sup>112</sup> He begins with the form-critical study of individual psalms in the first

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<sup>110</sup>Mitchell, 15.

<sup>111</sup>Mitchell, 82-85.

<sup>112</sup>Matthias Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalter: Ein formgeschichtlicher Ansatz* (FAT 9; Tübingen: Mohr, 1994).

part but does not remain there because he shares the same view of McCann and Wilson in paying attention to genres, themes, and superscriptions.<sup>113</sup> Millard is convinced that the Psalter contains an ample amount of internal evidence to trace the formation of the entire Psalter in detail. Thus his interest lies on both the shape and shaping of the Psalter. With this interest in mind, he investigates the *Formgeschichte* of the psalm groups in the second part of the book and the growth of the Psalter in the third part. In conclusion he sees the Psalter as an exilic collection of pre-exilic prayers to address the crisis of the exile and to orient Jews of the Diaspora to center on Jerusalem in the time of the rebuilding of the temple.<sup>114</sup> As such, the Psalter in its final form is post-cultic and originated in a private (family) context as a family book of prayers.

Erich Zenger also actively participates in the current trend in Psalms studies. In his article on new and old ways of interpreting the psalms, he explicitly asserts that one must use a combination of both diachronic and synchronic methods of analysis.<sup>115</sup> Given the typical characteristics of German scholarship, his interest in diachronic concerns is expected, but for him it provides only a secondary function. A few years earlier, he reviewed new approaches to Psalms studies and employed them in his investigation of the composition and theology of Psalms 25-34,<sup>116</sup> and jointly with Frank-Lothar Hossfeld he produced a commentary on the Psalter, reflecting canonical concerns because he is convinced that the compositional structure of the Hebrew Psalter provides an additional

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid., iii.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 248.

<sup>115</sup>Erich Zenger and Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, "Neue und alte Wege der Psalmenexegesis: Antworten auf die Fragen von M. Millard und R. Rendtorff," *BibInt* 4 (1996): 332-43.

<sup>116</sup>Erich Zenger, "New Approaches to the Study of Psalms," 37-54.

dimension of meaning to each individual psalm.<sup>117</sup> More recently, he dealt with the composition and theology of Book V of the Psalter.<sup>118</sup> His commentary in the Hermeneia series jointly authored with Hossfeld pays attention to how each psalm is related to the psalms around it, particularly the immediately adjacent ones or those that may comprise smaller collections (e.g., Psalms 65-68, 90-92, and 93-100).<sup>119</sup>

David Howard is another active participant in the current trend of Psalms studies. In 1989 he reviewed the recent development of interest in editorial activity in the Psalter and noted that two distinct approaches to contextual interpretation of the Psalter exist: microstructural analysis investigating linguistic and thematic links between adjacent psalms and the macrostructural analysis focusing on larger contours and organizing principles in the Psalter.<sup>120</sup> He reviewed the trend in Psalms studies again with a follow-up essay “Recent Trends in Psalms Study” in 1999.<sup>121</sup>

Howard’s specific interest and contribution to the contextual interpretation of the Psalter lies in the microstructural analysis of adjacent psalms. His dissertation “The Structure of Psalms 93-100” demonstrates that there are intentional lexical and thematic links among Psalms 93-100, and the corpus as a whole exhibits a coherent and unified

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<sup>117</sup>Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen I: Psalms 1-50* (NEchtB; Wurzburg/Stuttgart: Echter, 1993).

<sup>118</sup>Erich Zenger, “The Composition and Theology of the Fifth Book of Psalms, Psalms 107-145” *JSOT* 80 (1998): 77-102. This article will be discussed in detail in chapters three and four.

<sup>119</sup>Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005).

<sup>120</sup>David M. Howard, “Editorial Activity in the Psalter: A State-of-the-Field Survey.” The earlier version of this article appeared in *WW* 9 (1989): 274-85.

<sup>121</sup>Howard, “Recent Trends in Psalms Study,” in *The Face of the Old Testament Studies*, 329-68.

structure.<sup>122</sup> He is convinced that if such an analysis of adjacent psalms continues to be carried out, soon “every pair of adjacent psalms will be shown to have some significant - or logical - links between them.”<sup>123</sup> Such a strong conviction becomes apparent in two recent doctoral dissertations written under his supervision, Barry Davis’s “A Contextual Analysis of Psalms 107-118”<sup>124</sup> and Francis Kimmitt’s “The Shape of Psalms 42-49.”<sup>125</sup> Kimmitt credits Howard for pioneering this method of microstructural analysis of a collection of psalms within the Psalter,<sup>126</sup> but this method is not necessarily new. Just as Howard is aware of, the rabbis and early Christian commentators traditionally were interested in catch-word links among adjacent psalms,<sup>127</sup> and during the period of the Church Fathers a purposeful ordering to the contents of the Psalter was acknowledged to the point of a debate being waged over the issue.<sup>128</sup> The renewed interest and the significance of this method lies in the fact that it can confirm the premises and results of the macrostructural analysis of the Psalter. As Howard puts it, the macrostructural analysis “alone cannot definitely answer all of the questions about the Psalter’s

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<sup>122</sup>David M. Howard, “The Structure of Psalms 93-100” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1986). A revision of this dissertation was published under the same title as *Biblical and Judaic Studies Series 5* by Eisenbrauns in 1997.

<sup>123</sup>Howard, “Editorial Activity in the Psalter,” 68. Contrast Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book*, 33, who argues that Howard’s conviction is too optimistic.

<sup>124</sup>Barry C. Davis, “A Contextual Analysis of Psalms 107-118” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Theological Society, 1996).

<sup>125</sup>Francis X. Kimmitt, “The Shape of Psalms 42-49” (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000).

<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>127</sup>Howard, “Editorial Activity in the Psalter,” 54.

<sup>128</sup>For more details, see Davis, 16-18.

composition and message.”<sup>129</sup> In fact, without the support of the microstructural analysis, the macrostructural analysis of the Hebrew Psalter partakes of the danger of being hypothetical, just as Murphy warned. Thus microstructural and macrostructural analyses complement each other.

In the past decade a number of microstructural analyses of collections of psalms within the Psalter appeared as Howard hoped. Robert Cole’s work *The Shape and Message of Book III (Psalms 73-89)* examines phonological, semantic, grammatical, and thematic links among this corpus of psalms.<sup>130</sup> In his dissertation “An Investigation into the Contextual, Structural, and Poetic Implications of Psalms 49, 50, and 51,” James E. Craft investigates whether these psalms exhibit evidence of intentional arrangement and notes Psalm 50 acts as a hinge between Psalms 49 and 51.<sup>131</sup> Hyung J. Kim in his dissertation entitled “The Structure and Coherence of Psalms 89-106” also investigates the structure and coherence of Book IV of the Psalter in order to understand better the present shape of the book.<sup>132</sup> Although with a somewhat different emphasis, Crutchfield’s aforementioned dissertation “Circles of Context: An Interpretation of Psalms 107-118” also continues to carry out the microstructural analysis of a collection of psalms within the Psalter. After finding significant lexical and thematic connections between adjacent psalms, he proposes that the task of interpreting a given psalm involves its immediate context, its context in the Book of Psalms, and its canonical context, all of

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<sup>129</sup>Howard, “Recent Trends in Psalms Study,” 367.

<sup>130</sup>Robert L. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III (Psalms 73-89)* (JSOTSup 307; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

<sup>131</sup>James E. Craft, “An Investigation into the Contextual, Structural, and Poetic Implications of Psalms 49, 50, and 51,” (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002).

<sup>132</sup>Hyung J. Kim, “The Structure and Coherence of Psalms 89-106” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pretoria, 1999).

which work like concentric circles moving ever outward from the psalm itself.<sup>133</sup> This renewed scholarly interest in the microstructural analysis is also reflected in some recent commentaries on the Psalter. In their commentaries Mays and McCann consider how individual psalms function within the Psalter as a whole and suggest what clues they offer in understanding adjacent psalms. Marvin Tate's commentary also shares the same concern as to show how each psalm offers clues to interpreting neighboring psalms.<sup>134</sup>

From our survey of the present state of the discipline of Psalms studies we can make several concluding remarks. First, the current trend in Psalms studies does indeed manifest a paradigm shift. When compared to the Gunkel era, the present state of the discipline radically differs in its focus and hermeneutical assumptions. The current trend clearly is to address attention to the Psalter as a book, as a coherent whole. As such, the governing principle for the final form of the Psalter is literary, not liturgical.<sup>135</sup> In other words, the individual psalms are reinterpreted to speak in and for different situations, and the Psalter as a coherent whole places the individual psalms in a new literary/canonical context in which they should be interpreted. The Psalter with its use and re-use of individual psalms to speak in and for different generations is an intriguing biblical phenomenon that invites our scholarly attention. In fact, our present attempt to interpret the psalms as Old Testament texts also belongs to this category of listening to the Psalms in a different context.<sup>136</sup> Second, Childs has provided a groundbreaking work as to the rationale for the shifted concern of the discipline, but the success of his call is largely due

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<sup>133</sup>Crutchfield, see especially 17-18.

<sup>134</sup>Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (WBC 20; Dallas: Word, 1990).

<sup>135</sup>Brueggemann, however, warns that to say the Psalter is post-cultic is a misnomer. For more details, see his article "Response to Mays, 'The Question of Context,'" 31-32.

<sup>136</sup>Mays, *Psalms*, 11.

to the common scholarly recognition of the crisis caused by the fact that traditional form-critical and cult-functional approaches could not answer all the “anomalies” in the field. Third, it is yet to be seen whether the traditional approaches will disappear. Most likely, they will remain both as a necessary first but subordinate stage to the canonical, contextual concerns for many practitioners in the field and as the only viable method for others who would continue to refine them. Nevertheless, they will never be the same. The present trend of contextual interpretation of the Psalter appears that it will be the dominating paradigm until a new paradigm shift takes place. Meanwhile, this study continues the present trend of contextual interpretation.

#### *Methodological Considerations*

The purpose of this study is to investigate the structure and function of Psalms 146-150 in the context of the canonical Hebrew Psalter. This investigation approaches these psalms on both a historical-critical and canonical level for the following reason. The Psalter, on the one hand, presents itself as a collection of 150 individual psalms, with each psalm as a separate entity with a distinct form and *Sitz im Leben*. The Psalter, on the other hand, contains many indications that these 150 psalms stand in smaller or larger collections (such as the Songs of Ascents, the Hallelujah Psalms, the fivefold book divisions, etc.), suggesting purposeful arrangement(s). Such a complex nature of the shape of the canonical Psalter necessitates that the Psalter be analyzed by a combination of both diachronic and synchronic methods in order to seek a holistic understanding. On the historical-critical level, this study will discuss these psalms first as a separate entity, employing the traditional form-critical and cult-functional approaches. Then it will discuss the psalms contextually, seeking a holistic, canonical understanding. This latter

discussion involves both microstructural and macrostructural analysis, and this study will examine the Psalter, the final Hallelujah Psalms in particular, at both levels. On the microstructural level, it will investigate to see if any link exists, relating the final Hallelujah Psalms to each other. This investigation involves identifying key-word links, thematic word links, and repetitions in the final Hallelujah Psalms. The result of this investigation will strengthen the premises of this study. On the macrostructural level, it will pay attention to the large contours and overall theme(s) of the Psalter. It will focus on the structure and function of Psalms 146-150 in Book V and relate them to the introduction of the Psalter, Psalms 1 and 2. The assumption is that if indeed Psalms 1 and 2 are an introduction and Psalms 146-150 a fivefold conclusion to the whole canonical Psalter, there should be some profound relationships between these groups of psalms. Although Psalms 146-150 are usually regarded as the conclusion to the whole Psalter, no specific account exists to show how these psalms are interrelated and link them to the dual introduction to the Psalter, Psalms 1 and 2. Thus this study will examine these groups of psalms to see if there are indeed any thematic and linguistic links between them. It will include a detailed and careful analysis of the linguistic, literary, and thematic linkages among Psalms 146-150 and Psalms 1 and 2. Based on some crucial elements of the shaping of the Psalter established in the studies surveyed above, this study will focus more on the canonical shape of the Psalter, while not neglecting valuable insights that may be gained by historical-critical approaches to the Psalter.

This investigation begins with a few critical premises that have mutual relationship and reflect the notable characteristics of the current canonical interpretation

of the Psalter.<sup>137</sup> First, this study accepts the current canonical approach that views the Psalter as divine instruction.<sup>138</sup> Second, this study assumes that the final form of the Hebrew Psalter exhibits purposeful editorial techniques, and such editorial activities function as a hermeneutical key to meaning in that authority lies in the final form.<sup>139</sup> Third, it assumes that Psalms 146-150, motivated by Psalm 145:21,<sup>140</sup> are a five-fold doxology to the entire Psalter. As such, these psalms are a fitting conclusion to the fivefold division of the Psalter. These psalms are purposefully positioned at the end of the Psalter to complete the movement from lament to praise, from a focus on humans to the divine. Just as Psalms 1 and 2 introduce the Psalter as a way to view individual psalms in the canonical context, Psalms 146-150 conclude the Psalter with the fivefold extravagant doxology focusing solely on YHWH, thus completing the movement of the Psalter. This investigation will attempt to reveal some linguistic and thematic interconnections within this corpus that function as explicit and tacit editorial techniques demonstrating a purposeful placement of these psalms at the end of the Psalter. With these premises in mind, the rest of this study will investigate the structure and function of the final Hallelujah Psalms in the context of the Hebrew Psalter.

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<sup>137</sup>In his recent article W. H. Bellinger, Jr., offers an ethics of interpretation in which he argues that interpreters must state their hermeneutical assumptions/perspectives. For more details, see “Enabling Silent Lips to speak: Literary Criticism in the Service of Old Testament Interpretation,” in *In Search of True Wisdom: Essays in Old Testament Interpretation in Honour of Ronald E. Clements*, 67-68, including his notes 65 and 66.

<sup>138</sup>Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 513; McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 642; James L. Kugel, “Topics in the History of the Spirituality of the Psalms,” in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages* (ed. Arthur Green; New York: Crossroad, 1986), 136; and Gerald H. Wilson, “Psalms and Psalter: Paradigm for Biblical Theology,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect*, 103.

<sup>139</sup>Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 75-76.

<sup>140</sup>Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 189-94, 226-27.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Psalms 146-150

#### *Introduction*

Five hymns, each beginning and ending with הַלְלֵהוּ-יְהוָה, bring the Hebrew Psalter to a close. Typically known as the “Final Hallel” or “Little Hallel,” they each are joyous songs of praise. As such, these psalms are often regarded as a fitting conclusion to the entire Hebrew Psalter for two reasons: The Hebrew Psalter moves from lament to praise,<sup>1</sup> and praise is “the last word of faith.”<sup>2</sup> Gerald H. Wilson suggests that these psalms are liturgically motivated by 145:21<sup>3</sup> and strategically positioned to conclude Book V as well as the whole Psalter.<sup>4</sup> The exact nature of their relationship to each other, except for the commonalities in genre, superscription and postscripture, is less than clear, however.

In this chapter of the dissertation, the texts of Psalms 146-150 will be examined with the purpose of gathering information concerning their relationship. The chapter consists of discussions of each of these psalms separately. Each psalm discussion consists of four sections. The first two sections present the Hebrew text of each psalm in its poetic shape, followed by my own translation. The third section contains exegetical notes which highlight significant lexical and thematic connections between adjacent

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<sup>1</sup>Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen; Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 257.

<sup>2</sup>Patrick D. Miller, “In Praise and Thanksgiving,” *Theology Today* 45 (1988): 188.

<sup>3</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS 76; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 189.

<sup>4</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, “The Use of Royal Psalms at the ‘Seams’ of the Hebrew Psalter” *JSOT* 35 (1986): 87.

psalms. This third section thus focuses the reader's attention to strategic markers within these psalms. The last section discusses the form, structure, and setting of each of these psalms as a separate entity, following for the most part the traditional form-critical and cult-functional approaches to the Psalter.

The purpose of this chapter's discussion of Psalms 146-150 is twofold. First, since it is likely that these psalms do not share the same provenance, a historical-critical reading is necessary to do justice to texts that have many contexts, at least two, i.e., the historical compositional context and the canonical context.<sup>5</sup> This historical-critical discussion of Psalms 146-150 will provide us with continuity with the canonical understanding that follows this chapter.<sup>6</sup> Otherwise, as Roland E. Murphy warns, a canonical understanding of the psalms may become reader-response. Wilson also warns of possible pitfalls of a contextual understanding of the Psalter if it does not begin with a detailed and careful analysis of linguistic, literary, and thematic linkage among the psalms.<sup>7</sup> Second, the result of this chapter will help us identify some key-word links, thematic links, and repetitions that are crucial for identifying intertextual relationships in these psalms at the microstructural level. The result will be a firm foundation for the following chapters.

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<sup>5</sup>John Charles Crutchfield, "Circles of Context: An Interpretation of Psalms 107-118" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 2000), 1-7.

<sup>6</sup>Roland E. Murphy, "Reflections on Contextual Interpretation of the Psalms," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clinton McCann; JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 27.

<sup>7</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, "Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of the Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, 50.

Psalm 146<sup>8</sup>

	הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה	<sup>1</sup> I
	אֲזַמְרָה לֵאלֹהֵי בְעוֹרֵי:	<sup>2</sup>
	בְּכֹן־אָדָם שְׂאִין לוֹ תְשׁוּעָה:	<sup>3</sup> II
	בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אָבְרוּ עֲשָׂתֵנְתִּיו:	<sup>4</sup>
	שִׁבְרוּ עַל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיו:	<sup>5</sup> III
הַשְׁמֵר אֲמַת לְעוֹלָם:	אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם	<sup>6</sup>
	נָתַן לָחֵם לְרַעֲבִים	<sup>7</sup> IV
	יְהוָה פָּקַח עֵינָיו	<sup>8</sup>
יְהוָה שֹׁמֵר אֶת־גֵּרִים <sup>9</sup>	יְהוָה אֲהַב צַדִּיקִים:	
	וַיְדַכֵּךְ רָשָׁעִים יַעֲוֶה:	
	אֱלֹהֵינוּ צִיּוֹן לְדֹר וָדֹר	<sup>10</sup> V
	הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה:	

*Translation of Psalm 146*

- <sup>1</sup> Praise Yah! Praise YHWH, O my soul!  
<sup>2</sup> I will praise YHWH all my life; I will sing to my God as long as I live.  
<sup>3</sup> Do not put your trust in princes, in the mortal humans, in whom there is no salvation.  
<sup>4</sup> Their breath departs; They return to dust; On that day their plans come to nothing.  
<sup>5</sup> Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in YHWH his God!  
<sup>6</sup> the Maker of heaven, earth, sea and everything in them; He remains faithful forever,  
<sup>7</sup> He secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry.  
 YHWH sets the prisoners free;  
<sup>8</sup> YHWH gives sight to the blind; YHWH lifts up those who are bowed down;  
 YHWH loves the righteous.  
<sup>9</sup> YHWH watches over the sojourners;  
 He comes to the aid of the orphan and widow, but frustrates the path of the wicked.  
<sup>10</sup> YHWH will reign forever. Your God, O Zion, for all generations.  
 Praise Yah.

*Translation Notes*

146:1a הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה, Praise Yah (Hallelujah)

This summons to praise is the most frequently appearing form of hymnic introduction. Condensed to one terse Hebrew sentence, this liturgical cry in itself is a

<sup>8</sup>I adopted the poetic shape of Psalms 146-150 suggested by J. P. Fokkelman in his recent publication, *The Psalms in Form: The Hebrew Psalter in Its Poetic Shape* (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2002), 151-54. He sets out to demonstrate the importance of the correct division of cola and strophes for a mature interpretation.

hymn, composed of a piel plural imperative summons to praise הַלְלוּ and the short form of the name of the Lord יהוה.<sup>9</sup> Abbreviated from יהוה which means “faithful presence,” יהוה became an independent form of the divine name, used primarily in poetry and in the exclamation הַלְלוּ-יְהוה.<sup>10</sup> When we consider this meaning of the divine name YHWH, then the exclamation הַלְלוּ-יְהוה is an invitation to praise YHWH’s redemptive acts.

The phrase הַלְלוּ-יְהוה exemplifies the basic pattern of hymns of praise because the summons to praise is almost always in the plural, addressed to the community, and YHWH is the object of praise. This terse Hebrew phrase also functions as a distinctive framework, i.e., introduction and conclusion, for what Claus Westermann calls the descriptive psalms of praise.<sup>11</sup> All the Final Hallelujah Psalms begin and end with the phrase, and ten other Hallelujah Psalms (Pss. 104-106; 111-113; 115-117; and 135) either begin or end with the same phrase הַלְלוּ-יְהוה.

146:1b הַלְלוּ יְהוה אֱתֵי-יְהוה, Praise YHWH, O my soul

This summons to praise belongs to perhaps the category of the only exception because it is addressed to the psalmist him/herself. Typically, the summons of praise is addressed to a congregation, as noted above. Psalms 103:1 and 104:1 employ a similar

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<sup>9</sup>James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 26.

<sup>10</sup>R. L. Harris, “יהוה, Yahweh,” *TWOT* 1:210-11. Various attempts have been advanced concerning an etymology of the divine name YHWH. They range from William F. Albright’s well-known causative rendering, “I cause to be, create,” to the more common rendering, “I will be.” Harris argues that our understanding of the meaning of the divine name should depend on the character of God from His works and the descriptions of Him in the Old Testament, rather than on a questionable etymology of the divine name. G. Vos in his monograph, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 134, does exactly that to suggest the meaning of the divine name, “faithful presence,” based on the character of God from His faithful redemptive works.

<sup>11</sup>Claus Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content & Message* (trans. Ralph D. Gehrke; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 81-83.

form of the summons to praise where the psalmist's self-exhortation "Bless YHWH, O my soul" appears. This sort of self-exhortation to praise could be that of a liturgist leading the congregational worship.<sup>12</sup>

146:2 אֶהְלֵלָה יְהוָה בְּחַיִּי אֲזַמְרָה לֵאלֹהֵי בְעוֹדֵי, I will praise YHWH all my life; I will sing to my God as long as I live

When the summons to praise is in the singular as above, the voluntative form "I will praise" follows.<sup>13</sup> Since praise is congregational, one may assume that the psalmist expresses his/her intention before the congregation. It is similar to the vow of praise at the end of individual lament psalms. Indeed, with the following parallel phrase "I will sing to my God as long as I live," the psalmist vows to praise YHWH all the days of his/her life.<sup>14</sup> Along with the phrase "Praise YHWH, O my soul" the total impact of this verse is that nothing is withheld because praise is the offering of the whole self to God. All of the psalmist is completely ceded over to YHWH as an "act of glad abandonment."<sup>15</sup>

הָלַל and זָמַר belong to the same semantic field. Both appear exclusively in the piel form, and most of their occurrences are in the Psalter. זָמַר often appears in the "self-summons to praise" אֲזַמְרָה, "I will sing," as here.<sup>16</sup> Other main occurrences of this term also involve the "summons of praise" addressed to the assembly.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms* (NIBC 11; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 509.

<sup>13</sup>Westermann, "הָלַל to praise," *TLOT* 1: 373.

<sup>14</sup>Mays, *Psalms*, 440.

<sup>15</sup>Walter Brueggemann, "Psalm for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost," *No Other Foundation* 8 (1987), 26.

<sup>16</sup>Pss. 59:18; 61:9; 71:22-23; 79:10; 101:1; 104:33; 108:2, 4; 144:9.

<sup>17</sup>Pss. 9:12; 30:5; 33:2; 47:7-8; 66:2; 68:5, 33; 98:4-5; 105:2; 147:7.

146:3a אַל־תִּבְטְחוּ בַנְדִיבִים, Do not put your trust in princes

The psalm is didactic and begins with a negative instruction against trusting mortal human beings. Such a sentiment may reflect “the exilic disillusionment with the Davidic monarchy and the postexilic hopes of its revival.”<sup>18</sup> It does not, however, suggest that the leaders are superfluous. Rather, it warns against trusting in them as a source of salvation.

בִּטְחָה, to trust, expresses a sense of well-being and security, resulting from placing confidence in someone or something. As such, to trust God is not, at least primarily, an intellectual assent to certain ideas about God. Rather, it is to rely on God whose חֶסֶד is everlasting. Such a quality is lacking in mortal human beings. From dust they come, and to the dust they return. They are but humans who have no control over their breath. And their plans also die with them.

The psalmist warns the congregation not to trust נְדִיבִים, princes. According to its root meanings, נְדִיבִים refers to those people who are decision makers.<sup>19</sup> As powerful as they may be, however, they are only frail human beings in whom there is no salvation. They have the mark of death on them because they will eventually return to the dust whence they came.<sup>20</sup> The usages of this term in other psalms reveal that it may refer to both Israelite and non-Israelite rulers.<sup>21</sup> While Israel had never trusted Pharaoh, Cyrus had proved to be trustworthy. Could the psalmist be referring to the Gentile king or

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<sup>18</sup>Broyles, 509.

<sup>19</sup>Leonard J. Coppes, “נְדִיבִים,” *TWOT* 2: 555.

<sup>20</sup>Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150* (CC; trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 552.

<sup>21</sup>Pss. 47:9; 107:40; 113:8; 118:9.

Israelite rulers in general? The ahistorical nature of the psalm forbids a specific identification of the rulers in question. Suffice it to say that the psalmist's language reflects ancient Israel's general experience of their leaders' failure to save the nation from its historical and human predicaments. Unlike God whose chief characteristic is faithfulness and trustworthiness, they were neither faithful nor trustworthy. According to the psalmist, the opposite of praise is to trust in human beings.<sup>22</sup> For this reason, the psalmist urges the congregation not to trust mortal, human beings. Instead, the congregation is to praise YHWH and to trust in Him alone.

146:3b בְּבֶן־אָדָם שְׁאֵין לוֹ תְּשׁוּעָה, In the mortal humans in whom there is no salvation

There is no תְּשׁוּעָה (salvation) in the mortal humans. בֶּן־אָדָם (lit., a son of man) functions to define נְדִיבִים.<sup>23</sup> That is, the princes are transitory just as any other human beings, and they will one day return to dust, their origin. The word play on אָדָם (man) and אֶדְמָה (dust) is often lost in translation, but it affirms the unavoidable fate of humankind.

The term salvation is full of theological overtones. Salvation comes from YHWH. Although YHWH generally used human agents to bring salvation, it ultimately belongs to YHWH, who is known as “God of our salvation” (Ps. 68:20). The focal point of YHWH's salvific deeds in the Old Testament was the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. The fact that salvation comes from YHWH reveals His universal reign. Salvation involves safety and security necessary to maintain life that is unafraid of numerous dangers. As such, it becomes a dynamic force bringing emotional and physical well-being.

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<sup>22</sup>J. Clinton McCann, Jr., “The Book of Psalms” in *New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. IV (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 1263.

<sup>23</sup>Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (WBC 21; Waco: Word, 1983), 300.

146:5a אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁאֵל יַעֲקֹב בְּעֶזְרוֹ, Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob

With the אֲשֶׁר־י formula comes a positive side of instruction that forms the last beatitude of the Psalter. The formula occurs often in the Psalter and exhibits wisdom elements whose primary characteristic is to exhort hearers to right action.<sup>24</sup> The formula refers to human beings only and conveys the notion of happiness that flows from a sense of well-being and rightness.<sup>25</sup> To be blessed, Henri Cazelles argues, one has to do something positive.<sup>26</sup> It depends on his/her choice. Here the blessed one seeks help from and hopes in YHWH from whom comes salvation that brings the sense of well-being because He executes justice especially for the downtrodden who should have been protected by human kings.

אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, God of Jacob, is singled out for some reason. All three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are mentioned in the Psalter, but Jacob receives more attention than the others. Much of it is due to the fact that his name “Israel” is used for the nation Israel,<sup>27</sup> but also because more than the other patriarchs Jacob experienced immutable faithfulness on God’s part in spite of the fact that he did not deserve it.<sup>28</sup> The

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<sup>24</sup>The formula appears in wisdom psalms, such as Pss. 1, 32, 34, 106, 112, 127, and 128.

<sup>25</sup>Unlike בָּרַךְ אֲשֶׁר־י never refers to God.

<sup>26</sup>Henri Cazelles, “אֲשֶׁר־י,” *TDOT* 1:446; Victor P. Hamilton, “אֲשֶׁר־י,” *TWOT* 1: 80.

<sup>27</sup>C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 101.

<sup>28</sup>Martin S. Rozenberg and Bernard M. Zlotowitz, *The Book of Psalms: A New Translation and Commentary* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1999), 921, suggest that Jacob is singled out because he needed God’s protective intervention more than the other patriarchs.

phrase “God of Jacob” is typically associated with a refuge for His people.<sup>29</sup> The “God of Jacob” is the Protector of His people.

146:6ab עֲשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, sea and everything in them

The phrase “the Maker of heaven and earth” appears five times in the Psalter.<sup>30</sup> It is a traditional phrase that belongs to ancient “Israel’s core testimony,” i.e., faith in YHWH, the God who creates.<sup>31</sup> The psalmist exploits the traditional terminology to encourage ancient Israel to give praises to YHWH.<sup>32</sup> The use of this phrase in other psalms portrays YHWH, “the Maker of Heaven and Earth,” as the ultimate source of blessing because Israel’s creation affirmations are always linked to more concrete matters. The phrase is a “meristic pair” that typically represents the totality, i.e., the universe.<sup>33</sup> More elements, namely אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם, appear here because a merismus sometimes includes more than two elements.<sup>34</sup> All the elements in heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them are the works of YHWH. His dominion extends over all parts of the natural world, including the sea. YHWH the Creator is also the Sustainer, the ultimate source of blessing. Blessing is a continuing daily activity of YHWH, and psalms

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<sup>29</sup>Cf. Ps. 46:8, 12.

<sup>30</sup>All five occurrences are in Book V, i.e., Pss. 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 146:6.

<sup>31</sup>For more details, see Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 145-64.

<sup>32</sup>William Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990), 95.

<sup>33</sup>Luis Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (Subsidia Biblica 11; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 83.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

of descriptive praise are given to God as ancient Israel's response to His blessing.<sup>35</sup> In Psalm 146, a psalm of descriptive praise, the phrase is also used in the context of blessing and is developed into a "dual acclamation of blessedness" for the one whose help and hope are in YHWH.<sup>36</sup> In contrast to the false help available from mere human beings (vv. 3-4), YHWH as the maker of heaven and earth is the legitimate help to turn to because his reliability is eternal.<sup>37</sup> As such the phrase in Psalm 146 explores God's attribute of justice, specifically catalogued in verses 7-9.<sup>38</sup> That is, YHWH the Creator and Sustainer is a God of justice who stands on the side of the marginalized. His faithful care for the poor and needy demonstrates YHWH's primary attribute.

146:6c הַשְׁמֵר אֱמֶת לְעוֹלָם, He remains faithful forever

The term אֱמֶת carries the underlying sense of dependability, and as a characteristic of YHWH it is often coupled with another attribute of God חֶסֶד (steadfast love).<sup>39</sup> His salvific deeds on behalf of Israel were an exercise of His אֱמֶת and חֶסֶד.<sup>40</sup> YHWH's covenant commitment remains forever unchangeable.

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<sup>35</sup>Claus Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church* (trans. K. Crim; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 4, 14.

<sup>36</sup>Norman C. Habel, "Yahweh, Maker of Heaven and Earth": A Study in Tradition Criticism," *JBL* 91 (1972), 330.

<sup>37</sup>Jonathan Magonet, "Convention and Creativity: The Phrase 'Maker of Heaven and Earth' in the Psalms," in *Open Thou Mine Eyes . . . : Essays on Aggadah and Judaica Presented to William G. Braude on His Eightieth Birthday and Dedicated to His Memory* (eds. H. Blumberg, et. al.: Hoboken: Ktav, 1992), 149.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 152.

<sup>39</sup>Pss. 61:8; 85:11; 115:1.

<sup>40</sup>Cf. Ps. 98:3.

146:9 יְהוָה שֹׁמֵר אֶת-גְּרִימִים יְתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה יְעוֹדֵד וְדַרְךְ רָשָׁעִים יַעֲזוֹת  
 YHWH watches over the alien; He comes to the aid of the orphan and widow, but  
 frustrates the path of the wicked

This verse presents three classes of people in ancient Israelite society who needed special care and protection, namely גְּרִימִים (alien), יְתוֹם (orphan), and אַלְמָנָה (widow). Mentioned together in Psalm 94:6, they are helpless people needing protection. They lacked means to defend themselves. They have no one to protect them. The society in general, therefore, has the responsibility to care for and protect them as described in the Mosaic laws.<sup>41</sup> Such an action of caring and protecting for the weak reflects the character of YHWH who is the champion of the powerless.

The wicked, רָשָׁעִים, are often identified as those who prey on the alien, orphan, and widow.<sup>42</sup> YHWH, who avenges, frustrates the path of the wicked, דַּרְךְ רָשָׁעִים, דַּרְךְ refers to a path well worn by constant walking. In the Psalter the term appears frequently, but rarely with its literal meaning. Reminiscent of Psalm 1:6, דַּרְךְ רָשָׁעִים, metaphorically refers to the life and conduct of the wicked. YHWH is familiar with all human ways,<sup>43</sup> and divine interventions take place. On the one hand, YHWH leads individuals to the way everlasting, guarding them on the way.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, He diverts or frustrates the way of the wicked.

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<sup>41</sup>Cf. Ex. 20:10; 22:22; 23:9.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. Ps. 94:3-6.

<sup>43</sup>Cf. Ps. 139:3.

<sup>44</sup>Cf. Pss. 139:3; 91:11.

146:10a יְמֹלֵךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם, YHWH will reign forever

One of the main functions of the king in ancient Israel was to maintain justice and welfare. The office of kingship was to defend, protect, and rescue the weak from the strong and to secure justice for those who were wronged. Unfortunately, mortal rulers in general failed to do so. In contrast, the character of YHWH's reign is His providential care for humanity, especially the powerless and needy in society.<sup>45</sup> YHWH's activities in behalf of the oppressed, hungry, prisoners, blind, bowed down, righteous, strangers, orphans, and widows demonstrate the rule of YHWH. Craig Broyles's title for Psalm 146 "The Helper of Those Who Cannot Help Themselves" captures YHWH's just reign well. As such, the phrase, "YHWH will reign forever," reflects a "vision of reality," what James L. Mays identifies as the "center of the Psalter" that holds together many theologies of the Psalter.<sup>46</sup> This phrase then is the psalmist's articulation of hope for Israel.<sup>47</sup> With this phrase the psalmist invites Zion to trust in YHWH. It is quite conceivable that such a hope was articulated especially when ancient Israel lost its monarchy. In fact, this root

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<sup>45</sup>Broyles, 511.

<sup>46</sup>James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 12-22.

<sup>47</sup>Some versions (NIV, NJB) and commentators (Craig Broyles, H-J Kraus) have made an interpretive decision to render the phrase as "the Lord reigns forever." Such a translation, however, does not reflect the psalmist's hope for the coming of the Lord's eternal reign. Those versions and commentators who have chosen to render the phrase literally include NAS, RSV, NRSV, KJV, REB, LXX – just to name several – A. A. Anderson, Samuel Terrein, Leslie C. Allen, Carroll Stuhlmueller, etc.

metaphor of YHWH's eternal reign is prominent in many psalms.<sup>48</sup> Thus the psalms may be identified as the poetry of YHWH's eternal, just reign.<sup>49</sup>

### *Form, Structure and Setting of Psalm 146*

Psalm 146 appears to be a hymn sung by a single individual. For this reason, Hermann Gunkel, Hans-Joachim Kraus, and Leslie C. Allen all categorize it as an individual hymn.<sup>50</sup> Erhard Gerstenberger, however, calls it a "communal hymn" in spite of the apparent fact that the psalmist exhorts himself/herself in the first person singular.<sup>51</sup> A. A. Anderson also claims along the same line that it is a "congregational hymn."<sup>52</sup> Gerstenberger and Anderson's categorization is based on awareness of the communal character of the hymnic genre. It is not that an individual cannot praise God alone. Rather the point is that a hymn or praise by its nature is "fundamentally a social or communal experience" in that "doxology is rendered in community."<sup>53</sup> This communal character of praise becomes evident in the psalm's movement from subjectivity to communality by the psalmist's use of personal pronouns that change from "my God" (2b)

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<sup>48</sup>Psalms with explicit mention of YHWH's reign include Pss. 10, 145. The wording of Ps. 145:1 "My God and King" proclaims YHWH's reign. Likewise, in Pss. 5:3 and 44:5 the vocative "My God and my King" is used to refer to YHWH. The so-called "enthronement psalms" (Pss. 93, 96-99) also articulate YHWH's kingship. They speak of YHWH's reign extending over the gods, nations, and the world and all of its constituent elements such as nature. The Psalter is indeed full of YHWH's kingship imagery along with imageries of judge, warrior, benefactor, and shepherd, all of which are related to the kingship imagery.

<sup>49</sup>Mays, *Psalms*, 30.

<sup>50</sup>Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, (trans. James D. Nogalski; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 46; Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 551; and Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-50, revised* (WBC; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 375.

<sup>51</sup>Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2 and Lamentations* (FOTL XV; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 440.

<sup>52</sup>A. A. Anderson, *Psalms (73-150)* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 940.

<sup>53</sup>Miller, "In Praise and Thanksgiving," 185. Also cf. Ps. 149:1.

to “his God” (5b) and end in “your God” (10b).<sup>54</sup> The superscription and subscription הַלְלֵי־ה' whose form is plural imperative also supports the fact that praise is congregational.

Psalm 146 consists of five strophes and twenty-four cola, framed between the initial and final הַלְלֵי־ה'. The initial הַלְלֵי־ה' fits well in the beginning parallelism and strophe whereas the final Hallelujah does not.<sup>55</sup> Verse 6 is a tricolon, due probably to the addition of “the sea and everything in them” to the more common expression “the Maker of heaven and earth.”<sup>56</sup> Verse 8bc forms the other tricolon with verse 9a. In strophe IV, the first five cola all begin with the proper divine name יהוה.

Psalm 146 shares the common threefold structure of the hymnic genre: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.<sup>57</sup> The introduction and the conclusion are often identical, and this psalm is not an exception in that it begins and ends with “Hallelujah” although the introduction and conclusion are extended: Introduction (vv.1-2); Body (vv. 3-9); and conclusion (v. 10). The introduction is extravagant with a twofold summons to praise and two self-exhortations. The body of the psalm offers a contrast. The psalmist instructs his/her audience not to trust mortal princes who are powerless to save (vv. 3-4). Instead, they are to trust in YHWH who as the cosmic Creator is faithful to His creation. He is the cosmic King, and His faithful reign is characterized by His everlasting care for the poor and needy. This characteristic of YHWH makes Him reliable. Thus the psalm is

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<sup>54</sup>Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Eerdmans Critical Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 911.

<sup>55</sup>Fokkelman, *The Psalms in Form: The Hebrew Psalter in Its Poetic Shape*, 172.

<sup>56</sup>Cf. Pss. 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3.

<sup>57</sup>Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, 22-41.

didactic, and its didactic element probably derives from wisdom elements whose presence become more evident by the  $\text{ׁוְיִשְׂרָאֵל}$  formula (v.5). The transition from the introduction to the wisdom elements in the body, however, is unusual.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, the primary concern of the psalm becomes evident in its contrast: Whom will Zion trust, the mortal human princes (vv. 3-4) or the God of Jacob (vv. 5-9), the Creator and Sustainer? The answer for the psalmist is crystal clear. It is YHWH.

The language of Psalm 146 is historically nonspecific; it is hardly possible to determine its exact historical locus with any degree of certainty. Yet a scholarly consensus based on the content of the psalm assigns a postexilic date to the psalm. It lacks any mention of specific cultic reality or legality.<sup>59</sup> Its late Hebrew and Aramaic usages such as the shortened form of the relative pronoun “-ׁוְ” and  $\text{ׁוְקָרַב}$  are evidence of a late composition date.<sup>60</sup> Its “anthological style” that quotes and echoes other psalms also supports the scholarly consensus because such a technique indicates a late date of composition.<sup>61</sup> With its emphasis on trusting YHWH, not the mortal human rulers, and YHWH’s concern for the poor and needy, the psalm is also reminiscent of the gloomy postexilic period when ancient Israel lost its autonomy and confidence in monarchy.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Konrad Shaefer, *Psalms* (Berit Olam; Collegeville: Minnesota, 2001), 340.

<sup>59</sup>Terrien, 910.

<sup>60</sup>Michael D. Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return (Book V, Psalms 107-150): Studies in the Psalter, IV* (JSOTSup 258; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 287; See also E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 366.

<sup>61</sup>For more details on the anthological aspects of this psalm see John S. Kselman, “Psalm 146 in Its Context,” *CBQ* 50 (1988): 589.

<sup>62</sup>Bruce V. Malchow, “God or King in Psalm 146,” *The Bible Today* 90 (1977): 1166-70. See also Nancy L. deClaisse-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 100.

Taking all the aforementioned evidences together, a scholarly consensus forms, assigning a postexilic date to the psalm.

*Psalm 147*

	הַלְלוּ יְיָ <sup>1</sup>
כִּי־טוֹב זְמִרָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ <sup>I</sup>	כִּי־טוֹב זְמִרָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַם יְהוָה <sup>2</sup>	בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַם יְהוָה
הַרְפֵּא לְשִׁבוּרֵי לֵב <sup>3</sup>	הַרְפֵּא לְשִׁבוּרֵי לֵב
מּוֹנֵה מִסְפֵּר לְכוֹכְבֵים <sup>4 II</sup>	מּוֹנֵה מִסְפֵּר לְכוֹכְבֵים
גָּדוֹל אֲדוֹנֵינוּ וְרַב־כֹּחַ <sup>5</sup>	גָּדוֹל אֲדוֹנֵינוּ וְרַב־כֹּחַ
מְעוֹדֵד עֲנוּיִם יְהוָה <sup>6</sup>	מְעוֹדֵד עֲנוּיִם יְהוָה
עֲנֵנוּ לִיהוָה בְּתוֹדָה <sup>7 III</sup>	עֲנֵנוּ לִיהוָה בְּתוֹדָה
הַמְכַסֶּה שָׁמַיִם בְּעָבִים <sup>8</sup>	הַמְכַסֶּה שָׁמַיִם בְּעָבִים
נוֹתֵן לְבַהֲמָה לַחֲמָה <sup>9 IV</sup>	נוֹתֵן לְבַהֲמָה לַחֲמָה
לֹא בַגְבוּרַת הַסּוּס וַחֲפֵץ <sup>10</sup>	לֹא בַגְבוּרַת הַסּוּס וַחֲפֵץ
רוֹצֵה יְהוָה אֶת־יְרֵאָיו <sup>11</sup>	רוֹצֵה יְהוָה אֶת־יְרֵאָיו
שִׁבְחֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶת־יְהוָה <sup>12 V</sup>	שִׁבְחֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶת־יְהוָה
כִּי־חֲזַק בְּרִיחֵי שַׁעֲרֵיךָ <sup>13</sup>	כִּי־חֲזַק בְּרִיחֵי שַׁעֲרֵיךָ
הַשֵּׁם־גְּבוּלְךָ שְׁלוֹם <sup>14</sup>	הַשֵּׁם־גְּבוּלְךָ שְׁלוֹם
הַשֵּׁלַח אֲמַרְתּוּ אֶרֶץ <sup>15 VI</sup>	הַשֵּׁלַח אֲמַרְתּוּ אֶרֶץ
הַנֹּתֵן שֶׁלֵג כְּצֶמֶר <sup>16</sup>	הַנֹּתֵן שֶׁלֵג כְּצֶמֶר
מִשְׁלֵיךָ קָרְחוּ כַפְתִים <sup>17</sup>	מִשְׁלֵיךָ קָרְחוּ כַפְתִים
יִשְׁלַח דְּבָרוֹ וַיִּמָּסֵם <sup>18 VII</sup>	יִשְׁלַח דְּבָרוֹ וַיִּמָּסֵם
מִגִּיד דְּבָרָיו לִיעֲקֹב <sup>19</sup>	מִגִּיד דְּבָרָיו לִיעֲקֹב
לֹא עָשָׂה כֵן לְכָל־גּוֹי <sup>20</sup>	לֹא עָשָׂה כֵן לְכָל־גּוֹי
	הַלְלוּ־יְיָ:

הַמְצַמִּיחַ הַרִים חֲצִיר:

*Translation of Psalm 147*

<sup>1</sup> Praise Yah.

For it is good to sing to our God. For it is pleasant, and praise is fitting.

<sup>2</sup> YHWH, the Builder of Jerusalem! He gathers the exiles of Israel.

<sup>3</sup> He heals the brokenhearted, and He binds their wounds.

<sup>4</sup> He counts the number of stars; He gives names to all of them.

<sup>5</sup> Great is our God and full of power; His understanding has no limit.

<sup>6</sup> YHWH comes to the aid of the poor but casts the wicked to the ground.

<sup>7</sup> Sing to YHWH with thanksgiving; make music with the harp to our God,

<sup>8</sup> who covers the heavens with the clouds, provides rain for the earth, makes grass grow on the mountains;

<sup>9</sup> Who provides food for animals, young ravens what they cry for.

- <sup>10</sup>He does not delight in the strength of horses or value fleetness of the human;  
<sup>11</sup>YHWH delights in those who fear Him, those who put their hope in His faithful care.  
<sup>12</sup>Glorify YHWH O Jerusalem; praise your God O Zion!  
<sup>13</sup>For He strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your sons within you.  
<sup>14</sup>He who grants peace to your borders satisfies you with the finest wheat.  
<sup>15</sup>Sending His commands to the earth, His word runs swiftly.  
<sup>16</sup>He who sends snow like wool and scatters frost like ashes,  
<sup>17</sup>Tossing down his hail like pebbles, who can withstand His icy cold?  
<sup>18</sup>He sends His word, and it melts them; He stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow.  
<sup>19</sup>Revealing His word to Jacob, His decrees and laws to Israel,  
<sup>20</sup>He has not done so for any other nation; of such laws they know nothing.  
Praise Yah.

### *Translation Notes*

147:1a כִּי־טוֹב זָמְרָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, For it is good to sing to our God

Given the scholarly consensus that the superscription יה־הלֵלֵךְ may not be original, the construction of this phrase is unusual. James Kugel identifies this verse as an example of “strangeifying.”<sup>63</sup> That is, the difficult rendering makes it appear a bit strange, and thereby imparts a special quality, inviting the reader to pay special attention to it. The phrase begins with a particle כִּי. Typically, כִּי forms a grammatically subordinate clause. The following clause (1b) also has the same construction, leaving both clauses incomplete. This particle, however, has an exceptionally wide range of usage. The particle כִּי, the most frequent clause connector after the paratactic ו, exhibits a remarkable versatility.<sup>64</sup> Due to its rich range of meanings and functions, ancient Hebrew poets loved to use כִּי in many different contexts. Here it is possible to translate כִּי as an

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<sup>63</sup>James Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 92.

<sup>64</sup>For more details see Anneli Aejmelaeus, “Function and Interpretation of כִּי in Biblical Hebrew,” *JBL* 105 (1986): 193-209.

emphatic particle.<sup>65</sup> If so, one may translate the phrase as “Indeed/surely, it is good to sing to our God.” Or one could render it as exclamatory: “How good it is to sing to our God.”<sup>66</sup>

But I take the particle כִּי as a causal conjunction that indicates causal relations of all kind, antecedent or consequent.<sup>67</sup> Typically, a poem cannot possibly begin with כִּי. The construction then links הַלְלֵה יְהוָה poetically to the rest of verse 1 (Cf. Ps. 135:3).<sup>68</sup> That is, הַלְלֵה יְהוָה functions as summons to praise, addressed to the assembly as indicated by the first person plural possessive pronoun in אֲנִי הַיְיָ. Thus the causal phrase, “For it is good to praise God,” gives a basis for praise. For it is indeed good to sing praise to God.

זַמְּרָה is the piel infinitive construct with the feminine ending.<sup>69</sup> Hebrew terms parallel to זַמְּרָה (to sing, sing praise) include הַלֵּל and שִׁיר.<sup>70</sup>

147:1b תְּהַלֵּה, praise

תְּהַלֵּה whose root word is הַלֵּל is parallel to כְּבוֹד (glory) or שֵׁם (name).<sup>71</sup> It appears thirty times in the Psalter.<sup>72</sup> Typically, it is rendered “praise,” but sometimes

<sup>65</sup>Cf. Kraus, 554 and Anderson, 944.

<sup>66</sup>Thus Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150* (AB 17A: Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), 344 and various versions like NRSV, NEB, NIV, etc.

<sup>67</sup>Rifat Sonsino, *Motive Clauses in Hebrew Law* (SBLDS 45; Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 118.

<sup>68</sup>J. W. McKay, *Psalms 101-150* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 181. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 556, also links כִּי with הַלְלֵה יְהוָה because the former is dependent on the latter. See also Fokkelman, *The Psalms in Form*, 172.

<sup>69</sup>E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 143.

<sup>70</sup>Herbert Wolf, “זַמְּרָה, sing, sing praise, make music,” *TWOT* 1: 245.

<sup>71</sup>Westermann, “הַלֵּל to praise,” 374.

<sup>72</sup>E.g. 100:4; 148:14; 149:1.

“glory” or “fame.” Often coupled with שִׁיר,<sup>73</sup> the term implies that the praise of God is to be expressed.<sup>74</sup> Praise is fitting to God because He alone is the object of praise, and His deeds are the reason for it. For the psalmist praise is fitting to God because He gathers the exiles and rebuilds Jerusalem.

147:2a בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַם יְהוָה נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִכְנָס, YHWH, the Builder of Jerusalem! He gathers the exiles of Israel

It is good and fitting to sing praises to God because He is the בּוֹנֵה (Builder) of Jerusalem. Leslie C. Allen argues that this nominal participle בּוֹנֵה is unexpected in light of the use of participles elsewhere in the Psalter, and it should be read “He builds.”<sup>75</sup> He also points to the fact that most modern translations, except NJB, adopt the same rendering. Erhard S. Gerstenberger, however, disagrees with Allen by arguing that “Builder of Jerusalem” is the correct translation.<sup>76</sup> Mitchell Dahood,<sup>77</sup> Franz Delitzsch,<sup>78</sup> and C. A. Briggs and E. G. Briggs<sup>79</sup> also adopt the same rendering as Gerstenberger’s. No one explains, however, why בּוֹנֵה is a substantive.

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<sup>73</sup>Cf. Ps. 149:1.

<sup>74</sup>Helmer Ringgren, “הִלֵּל,” *TDOT* III: 410.

<sup>75</sup>Allen, *Psalms 101-50*, Revised, 382.

<sup>76</sup>Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, 442.

<sup>77</sup>Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150*, 345.

<sup>78</sup>Franz Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, vol. 3 (trans. Francis Bolton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 405.

<sup>79</sup>Charles A. Briggs and Emilie G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. II (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), 534.

בִּנְיָה is in the construct state of the participle בּוֹנֵה.<sup>80</sup> Participles have three principle functions in Hebrew: as adjectives, as verbs, or as nouns. Participial nouns typically describe “vocationally identifying activity.”<sup>81</sup> With its lengthened ending from segol to sere בִּנְיָה is a participial noun in construct state that describes YHWH’s building activity, and as such “builder” is its correct translation. The use of participial nouns elsewhere in the Psalter also affirms such a rendering of the participle.<sup>82</sup> Verbal uses of בִּנְיָה in the Psalter also indirectly support rendering בּוֹנֵה as a participial noun.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, according to Bruce K. Waltke, the general use of the verb בּוֹנֵה with God as its subject reveals YHWH as the Master Builder of both the created and historical order.<sup>84</sup>

The Builder of the universe is also the Builder of Jerusalem who gathers the exiles of Israel. He cares for the exiles. Although the reference is to the postexilic period, it probably is a general expression for divine help. Like a physician YHWH heals the brokenhearted and binds their wounds (v. 3). Synonyms of בִּנְיָה (to build) include כִּוֵּן (to raise, establish) and עָשָׂה (to make).<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>William L. Holladay, ed., “בִּנְיָה,” in *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 42.

<sup>81</sup>For more details, see Page H. Kelly, *Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 201.

<sup>82</sup>For example, עָשָׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ (Ps. 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 146:6) is often rendered “the Maker of Heaven and Earth” (Ps. 146:6), and עָשָׂה “its Maker,” i.e., the Maker of Israel (Ps. 149:2).

<sup>83</sup>See, for example, a verbal use of בִּנְיָה in Ps. 102:17 (כִּי־בִנְיָה יְהוָה צִיּוֹן, For YHWH has built Zion). See also Pss. 51:36; 89:3; 127:1.

<sup>84</sup>Bruce K. Waltke, “בִּנְיָה build, rebuild,” *TWOT* 1: 254-55.

<sup>85</sup>S. Wagner, “בִּנְיָה,” *TDOT* II: 167.

147:4 מוֹנֵה מִסְפָּר לְכוֹכְבֵימ לְכֹלֵם שְׁמוֹת יִקְרָא, He counts the number of stars; He gives names to all of them

מנה (to count) appears in parallel with ספר (to number). Counting the number of stars is a divine activity.<sup>86</sup> God's naming the stars also implies His dominion over the stars.<sup>87</sup> These divine activities are indeed a basis for the psalmist's proclamation of the greatness and power of YHWH (v.5).

Allusion is a poetic technique psalmists often use. Allusion, however, is not always easy to identify because the reference usually is not explicit. Yet when both poet and audience share the same tradition, the audience would readily identify an allusion intended by the poet. The expression of God's counting and naming of the stars here may be an allusion to the Babylonian practice of divination. If so, it is a polemic against the Babylonian astral deities. The psalmist proclaims that the Builder of Israel is the Creator of the universe, and thereby "de-divinize" the Babylonian astral deities.<sup>88</sup> For the psalmist YHWH alone is divine.

147:6 מֵעוֹרֵד עֲנִיִּים יְהוָה מִשְׁפִּיל רְשָׁעִים עַד־אָרֶץ, YHWH comes to the aid of the poor but casts the wicked to the ground

The psalmist praises YHWH for His sustaining providence. He is sovereign, numbering and naming the stars. YHWH is the great cosmic God. He is transcendent. Yet He also interposes on behalf of His afflicted people. In other words, He is both transcendent and immanent. He cares for His people by upholding justice for the poor.

עֲנִיִּים, typically rendered "poor," "lowly," or "afflicted," refers primarily to a group of people suffering some kind of distress. In the ancient world the poor were

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<sup>86</sup>Cf. Gen. 13:16.

<sup>87</sup>Cf. Gen. 2:19.

<sup>88</sup>Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 74.

socially defenseless and subject to oppression. God's people are often identified as afflicted.<sup>89</sup> God does not forget the afflicted.<sup>90</sup> He listens to their cry and saves them from those who rob them.<sup>91</sup> Sometimes, the exiles are identified as the afflicted.<sup>92</sup>

רָשָׁעִים, wicked, were guilty of violation of the social rights of others, especially that of the poor. Thus the wicked may be identified with those who rob the poor. As a just God, YHWH is against the wicked, cutting off their seeds.<sup>93</sup> Although the present reality may exhibit prosperity for the wicked, YHWH who judges uprightly chooses the appointed time to judge the wicked, casting them to the ground.<sup>94</sup>

147:7a עֲנֵנוּ לַיהוָה בְּתוֹדָה, Sing to YHWH with thanksgiving

With עֲנֵנוּ, Qal imperative masculine plural of עָנָה (to sing), the second section of the psalm begins. This term shares the same consonants with the root of the term “poor” (v. 6). Perhaps, the psalmist's choice of the term is intentional to make a word play. Repetition is a means of emphasis the psalmists often resort to, but the repetitions within the Psalter indicate that the psalmists often employed variation. For example, זָמַר, עָנָה, הִלֵּל, and שִׁיר all belong to the same semantic field whose meanings range from “sing” to “praise.” While not repeating the same term, the psalmists use the terms belonging to the

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<sup>89</sup>Cf. Ps. 68:11.

<sup>90</sup>Cf. Ps. 74:19.

<sup>91</sup>Cf. Pss. 34:7; 35:10.

<sup>92</sup>Cf. Isa. 51:21.

<sup>93</sup>Cf. Ps. 37:28.

<sup>94</sup>Cf. Ps. 75:2.

same semantic field, thereby giving themselves more flexibility to exhort people to respond.<sup>95</sup> ענה also means “answer” or “respond.”

147:7b זָמְרוּ לֵאלֹהֵינוּ בְּכִנּוֹר, Sing praise to our God with the harp

Employing yet another imperative, the psalmist continues to invite the people to sing praise to their God. Singing praises to God is right and good, but the psalmist needs to provide reason(s) for praising God. The reasons will follow immediately.

147:8a הַמְכַסֶּה שָׁמַיִם בְּעָבָיִם, Who covers the heavens with clouds

Customarily, a motive clause follows the invitation to praise. The motive clause refers to YHWH’s great deeds such as creation, redemption, and blessing. Or it refers to YHWH’s attributes like power, wisdom, faithfulness, mercy, and so on. Typically, the motive clause is introduced by either relative or participial clauses. In this case, the participial form הַמְכַסֶּה (who covers) introduces the motive clause.<sup>96</sup> That is, the psalmist finds a ground for praise in YHWH’s power over nature. YHWH, the Maker of heaven and earth (Ps. 146:6) and the Builder of Jerusalem (147:2), clothes the heavens with clouds. The psalmist provides further grounds for praise in the following clauses. The God who merits a thankful song of praise “provides rain for the earth,” “makes grass grow on the mountains,” and “provides food for animals,” all of which begin with a participle to enrich the motivation initiated by הַמְכַסֶּה (who covers). With such use of the participles

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<sup>95</sup>Schökel, 65, terms such a poetic technique as “semantic repetition.”

<sup>96</sup>Frank Crüsemann, *Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel* (WMANT 32; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 132. See also Bellingier, *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises*, 83.

indicating continuous action on YHWH's part,<sup>97</sup> the psalmist describes YHWH's deeds of "continuous creation."<sup>98</sup>

147:11 רֹצֵה יְהוָה אֶת־יִרְאָיו אֶת־הַמְּיַחֲלִים לְחַסְדּוֹ, YHWH delights in those who fear Him, those who put their hope in His faithful care

רָצָה, to be pleased with or delight, is frequently used to describe YHWH's pleasure with His servants.<sup>99</sup> He does not delight in the strength of animals or humans (v. 10).

What delights Him particularly are those who fear Him and depend on His faithful care.

When humans encounter the divine, the effect is fear. Religious fear in such a case is bi-polar, comprised of both "anxiety and trust."<sup>100</sup> In this verse, however, יָרָא (to fear) does not refer to the emotion of fear or anxiety but to reverence or piety. As such, "fear of God" is a central theological concept in the Hebrew Bible, and it is virtually synonymous with obedience to God's command, and thus with righteous living.<sup>101</sup> In the Psalter, likewise, those who fear YHWH are those who are faithful to the law<sup>102</sup> because fear of God finds expression in obedience and loyalty. Whoever fears YHWH delights in His commandments (Ps. 112:1) and walks in His paths (Ps. 128:1) which He shows to those who fear Him (Ps. 25:12). "Fearers of YHWH" in the Psalter refers to the

<sup>97</sup>The psalmist uses 17 participles in this psalm.

<sup>98</sup>Roland E. Murphy, *The Gift of the Psalms* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 172.

<sup>99</sup>The term occurs 13 times in the Psalter, for example, Pss. 44:4; 149:4.

<sup>100</sup>Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. II (trans., J. A. Baker; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 269. See also H. F. Fuhs, "יָרָא," *TDOT VI*: 297-314.

<sup>101</sup>In the Pentateuch several passages, such as Lev. 19:14; 25:17; Deut. 17:19; 2 Kgs. 17:34, closely relate fear of God with righteous conduct to the point of virtually making them synonymous. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 237, argues that the phrase "fear of God" may be rendered "simply as a term for obedience to divine commands." Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. II, 273, also suggests that there is a very close connection between fear of God and "walking in his ways."

<sup>102</sup>See H.-P. Stähli, "יָרָא," *TLOT* 2:569-70. His statistical overview of the term "fear of Yahweh" shows a concentration of occurrence in three books, namely, the Psalter, Proverbs, and Deuteronomy.

community that worships YHWH,<sup>103</sup> and in fact “sons of Jacob” are identified as those who fear God (Ps. 22:24). Quite naturally, YHWH delights in those who fear Him, and they experience God’s favor and blessing (Ps. 149:4).

Those who fear YHWH do not rely on their power. Instead, they put their hope in His faithful care (לְחֶסֶד־וָרָחֶם). חֶסֶד, often translated as “steadfast love” or “kindness,” is a very significant term in the Psalter and in the whole Old Testament. Yet its etymology is uncertain and its precise meaning is difficult to render, especially in a single term. Mitchell Dahood argues that it should be rendered as “power” in this context.<sup>104</sup> But I maintain a more traditional rendering proposed by Nelson Glueck who defines it in terms of loyalty and mutual obligation within the context of relationships, especially relationships involving a covenant because YHWH’s חֶסֶד is the result of His covenant.<sup>105</sup> As such, YHWH’s חֶסֶד is a characteristic of God, rooted in the divine nature. In other words, it is based upon the grace and mercy of God.

For the righteous the term הִמַּיְתָּ לְיָ, piel participial form of יָחַל which means “to hope or wait,” is also closely related to the concept of “faith and trust.”<sup>106</sup> The fearers of YHWH trust and depend on YHWH rather than on their own power. To hope does not mean doing nothing. It is not fatalistic resignation. Rather, it means to focus patiently on

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<sup>103</sup>H. F. Fuhs, “יָרָא,” *TDOT VI*: 308-9.

<sup>104</sup>Dahood, *Psalms III 101-150*, 347.

<sup>105</sup>Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible* (ed. Ellias L. Epstein; trans. Alfred Gottschalk; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967), 102.

<sup>106</sup>Paul R. Gilchrist, “יָחַל,” *TWOT I*: 859-6.

one's assigned task with confident expectation that YHWH will provide the meaning and conclusions.

Here the psalmist equates the fear of God with dependence on God.<sup>107</sup> Elsewhere the righteous are identified with those who fear YHWH (Ps. 52:8).

147:12 שְׁבַחֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם אֲתֵיָהוָה הַלְלֵי אֱלֹהֵיךָ צִיּוֹן, Laud YHWH O Jerusalem; praise your God O Zion

The third section of the psalm begins with yet another pair of piel imperatives שְׁבַחֵי and הַלְלֵי, two different verbs but with the same primary meaning “to praise.” שְׁבַח occurs once again in a summons to praise (Ps. 117:1). A few other occurrences in different forms are also used to praise God for His mighty deeds.<sup>108</sup> The difference in the translation of the two terms here is only to reflect the psalmist's variation of vocabulary. The psalmist invites Jerusalem/Zion, here personified, to praise her Maker YHWH for what He has been doing for His holy city. The verse is another case of synonymous parallelism.

147:13 כִּי־חִזַּק בְּרִיחֵי שַׁעְרֶיךָ בְּכֹחַ בְּנֵיךָ בְּקִרְבֶּךָ, For He strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your sons within you

Once again a motive clause with כִּי follows the summons to praise in order to give Jerusalem/Zion a ground for praise. Ancient Israel's faith always finds its basis in concrete examples of YHWH's deeds. Here the psalmist lists how YHWH blesses His chosen people in Jerusalem with peace and prosperity. He provides for the defenses of the city by strengthening the bars of the gates. He also blesses (בְּרַךְ) the postexilic community of Zion by increasing the size of population because blessing is linked very

<sup>107</sup>Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 557. Kraus views 11a and 11b as a case of synonymous parallelism.

<sup>108</sup>Pss. 63:4; 89:10; 145:4.

specifically to reproductive powers. Indeed, the primary meaning of the term “blessing” in the Hebrew Bible is “having many descendents,”<sup>109</sup> and the term speaks of God’s power for life.<sup>110</sup> YHWH, the protector of Zion, is the sole source of the blessing who increases the inhabitants of Zion so that they might better be able to defend the city. Blessing is also closely linked to שָׁלוֹם, often translated as “peace,” “wholeness,” or “well-being,” because blessing includes שָׁלוֹם.<sup>111</sup> Thus the psalmist proclaims that the same God YHWH is also the benefactor of the city, endowing its border with שָׁלוֹם and satisfying the inhabitants with food (v. 14).

147:15 הַשְּׁלַח אֱמַרְתּוֹ אֶרֶץ עַד-מְהֵרָה יִרְוַח דְּבָרוֹ  
His Word runs swiftly

This verse sums up what follows in the rest of the psalm where YHWH’s Word controls the courses of nature (vv. 16-18), and makes the divine will known to Israel (vv. 19-20).<sup>112</sup> Verses 16 through 18 are reminiscent of YHWH’s work of creation. The Word of YHWH has creative power. It never returns empty but accomplishes His will. YHWH speaks to nature, and it obeys. Just as He spoke “Let there be light” and “There was light,” YHWH’s Word acts as His faithful, expeditious agent upon the earth, effecting concrete results like sending snow (v. 16) and tossing hail down (v. 17). For the psalmist even the meteorological phenomena are a theological matter.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church*, 18.

<sup>110</sup>Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 168.

<sup>111</sup>Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, vol. II (trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas: New York & Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 44.

<sup>112</sup>J. W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay, *Psalms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 182.

<sup>113</sup>McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 1268.

Dahood suggests that דְּבָרָיו (literally “his word”) here “probably refers to the thunder that accompanies the rain.”<sup>114</sup> Some Jewish commentators like Kimhi concur with him.<sup>115</sup> Considering the immediate context in which the psalmist speaks of God’s granting of the finest wheat (v. 14) and sending of snow and frost (v. 16) and the fact that the psalmist’s language is metaphoric, such a suggestion bears an examination. Ancient Israelites as well as their ancient Near Eastern neighbors, however, suggested that word, both divine and human, has to do not only with a spoken statement but also with an activity.<sup>116</sup> This viewpoint suggests that the psalmist’s choice of language here is intentional, and the literal translation conveys ancient Israel’s viewpoint better. That דָּבָר means both “word” and also “thing, act, event” supports the view.

In reference to the Word of YHWH the psalmist employs various synonyms like אִמְרָתוֹ (his commands), דְּבָרָיו (his word), and חֻקֵּי וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו (his decrees and laws). These terms in their verbal form characterize ancient Israel’s witness about YHWH as a God who commands.<sup>117</sup> This witness also signifies ancient Israel’s concern with the action of God as it is reflected in ancient Israel’s use of “strong verbs of

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<sup>114</sup>Dahood, *Psalms III*, 348.

<sup>115</sup>Joshua Baker and Ernest W. Nicholson, ed. and trans., *The Commentary of Rabbi David Kimhi on Psalms CXX-CL* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 153.

<sup>116</sup>See for example, Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. II, 69-78.

<sup>117</sup>Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 181-82.

transformation.”<sup>118</sup> As such, the Word of YHWH is at work in the life of individuals<sup>119</sup> and in the history of the people,<sup>120</sup> as well as in nature.<sup>121</sup>

147:19 מִנִּיד דְּבַרְיוֹ לְיַעֲקֹב חֲקָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, He has revealed His Word to Jacob, His decrees and laws to Israel

The transition from the preceding verses to this verse is striking. The Word of YHWH is still the subject, but instead of the creative Word that controls nature the psalmist now focuses on the Word revealed to Israel. That is, the divine Word has another dimension. The same God who commands nature to do His will also commands His people. In other words, the Word YHWH revealed to ancient Israel is the cosmic power of the Creator God as well as a “clear declaration of the will of the divine sovereign.”<sup>122</sup> The divine Word, to use Horst D. Preuss’s words, is “‘communication’ and ‘actualization’ of both the divine will and power.”<sup>123</sup> As such, the divine Word is YHWH’s gift, a special privilege, and ancient Israel as its recipient experienced a great blessing.<sup>124</sup> In fact, in ancient Israel’s history an absence of the divine Word is often regarded as a divine punishment or a curse.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 145.

<sup>119</sup>Pss. 56:5, 11; 130:5.

<sup>120</sup>Pss. 105:8, 42; 106:12, 24.

<sup>121</sup>Pss. 33:6; 147:18; 148:8.

<sup>122</sup>Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. II, 71.

<sup>123</sup>Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (OTL: trans. Leo. G. Perdue; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 197.

<sup>124</sup>Cf. Psalm 119 is a meditation on the Word of God as YHWH’s wonderful gift.

<sup>125</sup>Ps. 74:9; 1 Sam. 3:1; Amos 8:11.

147:20 וּמִשְׁפָּטִים בְּלִי-יָדָעוּם לֹא עָשָׂה כֵן לְכָל-גּוֹי, He has not done so for any other nation; Of such laws they know nothing

The psalmist reasons that God is to be praised because He blesses His chosen people in ways that He has not blessed any other nation. To ancient Israel alone YHWH has entrusted His Word. YHWH, the God who speaks, has clearly spoken His will to His people. In fact, from the beginning ancient Israel's special relationship with YHWH rests on the Word, the expression of God's saving will and universal design. It is this divine Word through which YHWH draws Himself near to His own people. As such, His laws are not burdensome but blessing. They are emancipatory, promoting life and justice.<sup>126</sup>

The fact that ancient Israel is a recipient of the divine laws requires a proper response from her. YHWH expects Israel's faith and obedience. Israel is to establish a just society. That מִשְׁפָּטִים (laws) also means "justice" is telling on this matter. Yet for the psalmist the most proper response to the divine Word is to praise YHWH.<sup>127</sup> Thus the psalmist begins the section with an invitation for Jerusalem to praise YHWH, the Giver of the good laws (v. 12) and ends with הַלְלוּ יְהוָה, a fitting postscript.

### *Form, Structure and Setting of Psalm 147*

Psalm 147 is the second hymn in the quintuplet of Hallelujah Psalms with which the Psalter ends. The psalm consists of seven strophes and forty-one cola. It is mostly bicolic, except for the only tricolon (v. 8) in which each colon begins with a causative

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<sup>126</sup>Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 181-86, points out that ancient Israel's Exodus experience was the exchange of one command, i.e., the command of pharaoh, for another, the command of YHWH. Whereas the command of pharaoh was burdensome and unbearable, the command of YHWH was not. In fact, it is "emancipatory." It prevents a return to pre-Exodus conditions of exploitation and brutality in the society. Instead, it establishes a just society contrasted with that of pharaoh.

<sup>127</sup>Bernhard W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 256.

participle with a definite article. The seven strophes show the pattern of AB/ A'B'/ A''B''B'''.<sup>128</sup> The strophe A always deals with the invitation to praise YHWH, the Builder of Jerusalem (strophe 1), the Maker of heaven and earth (strophe 3), and the Caretaker of Jerusalem (strophe 5). The strophe B elaborates further the works of the providential care of the Creator YHWH.

Thus the structure of Psalm 147 revolves around three invitations to praise YHWH in verses 1, 7, and 12 with which each stanza begins. The psalm consists of three main units or stanzas that praise God as Israel's Restorer and the Caretaker of both humankind and the stars (vv. 1-6), the Provider of necessities to the living, both animal- and humankind (vv. 7-11), and the God of Zion who blesses His chosen people in Jerusalem with peace and prosperity (vv. 12-20). The tripartite structure becomes more apparent by the use of the causal conjunction ׀ in verse 13, as well as in verse 1.<sup>129</sup>

Each unit begins with an explicit invitation to praise YHWH (vv. 1, 7, and 12),<sup>130</sup> and a motive clause follows each invitation. As such, each unit could well be an independent hymn.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, its unity became an issue; some scholars argue that it is a compilation of three separate psalms. Considering the fact that the LXX divides it into two different psalms, verses 1-11 and 12-20, the argument has its merit. Yet some elements in the psalm do point to its unity. The repetition of "Israel" in verses 2 and 19,

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<sup>128</sup>J. P. Fokkeman, *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible at the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis. Volume II: 85 Psalms and Job 4-14* (SSN 41; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2000), 319.

<sup>129</sup>This last division is so apparent that LXX treats verses 12-20 as a separate psalm.

<sup>130</sup>Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-50, Revised*, 383, points out the fact that the summons to praise in the first part (v. 1) is implicit. His view is due to his perception of ׀ as an emphatic particle.

<sup>131</sup>Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Psalms 2* (OTM 22; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983), 214, argues that all three units are "quasi-independent hymns."

for example, frames the psalm, forming an overall inclusion.<sup>132</sup> The Hallelujah framing also supports the unity.

The motive clause gives a reason for the praise, and it customarily begins with the causal conjunction **כִּי**.<sup>133</sup> That is the case with the motive clauses in the first and the last units, but the participial clause **הַמְכַסֶּה** (who covers) introduces the motive clause for the second unit. For this reason, the three units of the psalm at first glimpse do not seem to display any pattern. Yet they display a discernable pattern. Each unit touches both natural and human orders.<sup>134</sup> In other words, each unit speaks of God's power in creation and redemption/blessing. God's works of creation and redemption are never mutually exclusive. Put another way yet, each unit consists of God's deeds for both Israel and the world at large.<sup>135</sup> That is, the God of Israel is also a cosmic God.

The psalmist praises YHWH's power in creation and providential care for His people. YHWH is the One and only great cosmic God whose care and concern for His creatures are immanent. Each of the three parts deals with the theme of YHWH's power to control natural forces (vv. 4, 8, 16-18), and this theme is directly related to the theme of God's providential care for humankind.

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<sup>132</sup>Schaefer, 341.

<sup>133</sup>For more details see J. Kenneth Kuntz, "Grounds for Praise: The Nature and Function of the Motive Clause in the Hymns of the Hebrew Psalter," in *Worship and the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honour of John T. Willis* (ed. M. Patrick Graham, Rick R. Marrs, and Steven L. McKenzie; JSOTSup 284; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999): 148-183, especially 163. Frank Crüsemann, however, argues that the particle **כִּי** is not to be understood as introducing motives for praise but rather the contents of praise itself. For more details see Crüsemann, *Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel*, 32-35.

<sup>134</sup>Schaefer, 341.

<sup>135</sup>Mays, *Psalms*, 442.

Like the previous psalm, Psalm 147 also comes from a relatively late date. Its anthological style again is evidence of a late composition.<sup>136</sup> Since the psalm speaks of “building up Jerusalem,” “gathering the exiles of Israel” (v. 2), “strengthening the bars of its gate” (v. 13), and “granting peace in its borders” (v. 14), many argue that its composition date is most likely the time of Nehemiah (445 B.C.).<sup>137</sup> Although such a conjecture is quite possible, it is not certain. It may not be prudent to assign an exact date to this psalm based on those references because they simply refer to those events that have already taken place and become a tradition, continually actualized in the temple worship.<sup>138</sup> At any rate, suffice it to say that this psalm’s date of composition seems to be late in the postexilic period although it may not be possible to assign an exact date.

*Ps 148*

	הַלְלוּ יְהוָה	<sup>1</sup>
	הַלְלוּ אֶת־יְהוָה מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם	<sup>1</sup>
	הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־מַלְאָכָיו	<sup>2</sup>
	הַלְלוּהוּ שֶׁמֶשׁ וַיְרַח	<sup>3</sup> II
	וְהַלְלוּהוּ שְׁמֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם	<sup>4</sup>
	יְהַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה	<sup>5</sup> III
	וַיַּעֲמִידֵם לְעֵד לְעוֹלָם	<sup>6</sup>
	הַלְלוּ אֶת־יְהוָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ	<sup>7</sup> IV
	אֵשׁ וּבָרָד שֶׁלֵּג וְקִיטוֹר	<sup>8</sup>
	הַהַרִים וְכָל־גְּבוּעוֹת	<sup>9</sup> V
	הַחֲמֵה וְכָל־בְּהֵמָה	<sup>10</sup>
	מַלְכֵי־אָרֶץ וְכָל־לְאֻמִּים	<sup>11</sup> VI
	בַּחֲוָרִים וּגְּמֵ־בַתּוּלוֹת	<sup>12</sup>
	יְהַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה	<sup>13</sup> VII
	וַיְרַם קֶרֶן לְעַמּוֹ	<sup>14</sup>
	הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה:	
הוֹדוּ עַל־אָרֶץ וּשְׁמַיִם	הַלְלוּהוּ בַמְרוֹמִים:	
לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עִם־קָרְבוֹ	הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־צְבָאָיו:	
	הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־כּוֹכְבֵי אֹרֶשׁ:	
	וְהַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל הַשָּׁמַיִם:	
	כִּי הוּא צִוָּה וַיְבָרֵךְ אֹי:	
	תִּקְנֶתֶן וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר:	
	תַּנְיִינִים וְכָל־תְּהוֹמוֹת:	
	רוּחַ סַעֲרָה עֹשֶׂה דְבָרוֹ:	
	עֵץ פָּרִי וְכָל־אֲרָזִים:	
	רֶמֶשׂ וְצַפּוֹר כְּנָף:	
	שָׂרִים וְכָל־שֹׁפְטֵי אָרֶץ:	
	זְקֵנִים עִם־נְעָרִים:	
	כִּי־נִשְׁבַּח שְׁמוֹ לְבָדוֹ	
	תְּהַלֵּה לְכָל־חַסְדֵי־וֹ	

<sup>136</sup>Psalm 147 makes use of Psalms 33 and 104.

<sup>137</sup>See for example Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning* (New York: Alba House, 1974).

<sup>138</sup>Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* (OTL; trans. Hebert Hartwell; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 834.

*Translation of Psalm 148*

<sup>1</sup> Hallelujah.

Praise YHWH from the heavens; praise Him on high.

<sup>2</sup> Praise Him all His angels, praise Him all His heavenly hosts.

<sup>3</sup> Praise Him, sun and moon, praise Him all bright stars.

<sup>4</sup> Praise Him, highest heavens and waters that are above the heavens.

<sup>5</sup> Let them praise His name, for He commanded and they were created.

<sup>6</sup> And He set them in place for ever and ever; He made a decree that shall never change.

<sup>7</sup> Praise YHWH from the earth, all sea monsters and ocean depths,

<sup>8</sup> fire and hail, snow and clouds, storm wind that executes His command,

<sup>9</sup> all mountains and hills, all fruit trees and cedars,

<sup>10</sup> wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds,

<sup>11</sup> kings of the earth and all the nations, princes and all rulers on earth,

<sup>12</sup> young men and maidens, old and young together.

<sup>13</sup> Let them praise the name of YHWH, for His name alone is exalted.

His splendor is above the earth and heavens.

<sup>14</sup> He has raised up a horn for His people, praise of all His faithful ones,  
of the children of Israel, the people close to His heart.

Hallelujah.

*Translation Notes*

148:1 הללו את יהוה מן השמים הללוהו במקומים, Praise YHWH from the heavens;  
praise Him on high

Psalm 148, like other Hallelujah Psalms, begins with the initial הללוהו. A series of typical imperative calls to praise following the superscription as the psalmist summons all inhabitants of heaven to praise YHWH. מן השמים (from the heavens), set in contrast to מן הארץ (from the earth) in verse 7, is a general expression referring to all beings that have their origin in the heavens. The Hebrew term מָרום means “an elevated place,” “mountain top,” or “on high.” Its adverbial meaning “on high” refers to God’s dwelling place, thus equivalent to heaven.<sup>139</sup> Thus במקומים (on high) is synonymous with מן השמים.

<sup>139</sup>Cf. Pss. 7:8; 68:19; 144:7.

148:2 הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־מַלְאָכָיו הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־צְבָאָיו, Praise Him all His angels, praise Him all His heavenly hosts

The psalmist now names the beings summoned to praise YHWH in the previous verse. מַלְאָכָיו (his angels) refers to the heavenly beings who praise YHWH and work as His messengers to do His biddings, such as guarding the righteous and punishing the wicked, and blessing YHWH.<sup>140</sup> They compose YHWH's council, but created by YHWH's command (v.5) they are not independent divine beings.<sup>141</sup>

צְבָאָיו (His heavenly hosts) refers to the heavenly beings who do YHWH's will.<sup>142</sup> Created by YHWH's breath,<sup>143</sup> the heavenly hosts are synonymous with the angels. Yet צְבָאָיו is not a mere lexical repetition of מַלְאָכָיו. Typically, a parallel line sharpens, specifies, intensifies, and even explains the idea expressed in the first line, and synonymous parallelism is also a matter of syntax.<sup>144</sup> צְבָאָ (army, hosts), for example, is synonymous with מַלְאָךְ (angel), but it also refers to the heavenly bodies, such as sun, moon and stars.<sup>145</sup> Thus the synonymous parallelism here not only intensifies מַלְאָכָיו but

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<sup>140</sup>Cf. Pss. 34:8; 78:49; 91:11; 103:20.

<sup>141</sup>Cf. Ps. 82:1-5. Ancient Israelites did not from the beginning hold on to a complete theoretical monotheism as we now understand it. Instead, their belief system was close to what we now call "henotheism," the worship of one God without denying the existence of other gods. Monotheism came into view only at later periods of ancient Israel's history.

<sup>142</sup>Cf. Ps. 103:21.

<sup>143</sup>Cf. Ps. 33:6.

<sup>144</sup>For more details, see Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 1-58.

<sup>145</sup>Cf. Gen. 2:1; Job 38:7; Isa. 40:26.

also functions as a natural transition to the next verse where sun, moon, and stars are called to praise YHWH.<sup>146</sup>

148:3 הַלְלוּהוּ שֶׁמֶשׁ וְיָרֵחַ הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל-כּוֹכָבֵי אֹרֶךְ, Praise Him sun and moon; Praise Him all bright stars

In the ancient Near East the sun, moon, and stars represented deities. Certainly, ancient Israelites would have known such a common belief of their neighbors. In fact, some of the ancient Israelites actively participated in the worship of these astral deities.<sup>147</sup> The psalm, however, presents these heavenly bodies as YHWH's handiwork and summons them to participate in the praise of YHWH. They are not gods but elements of the natural order in praise of YHWH. As such, the psalm subordinates them to YHWH and de-divinizes them. They are no longer objects of worship. In other words, the psalm utilizes the common ancient Near Eastern mythical belief as a poetic ornament in order to depict YHWH's creative power in the most dazzling way possible.

148:5 יְהַלְלוּ אֶת-שֵׁם יְהוָה כִּי הוּא צִוָּה וְנִבְרָאוּ, Let them praise the name of YHWH, for He commanded and they were created

After the repeated calls of הַלְלוּהוּ (praise Him) in the beginning verses, the psalmist states why the name of YHWH is to be praised.<sup>148</sup> The reason given by the psalmist is because YHWH is the Creator of all the heavenly bodies, from the angels to the sun, moon, and stars: YHWH commanded (צִוָּה), and they were created (וְנִבְרָאוּ).<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup>Joseph A. Alexander, *The Psalms: Translated and Explained* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot and James Thin, 1864; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1955), 559.

<sup>147</sup>Cf. 2 Kgs. 23:5, 11; Ezk. 8:16-17; Amos 5:26.

<sup>148</sup>The summons to praise occurs six times in verses 4-6.

<sup>149</sup>The Hebrew term בָּרָא along with צִוָּה recalls Gen. 1:1-2:4.

He alone is divine whereas all others are created by His command. And all creation is to respond to YHWH's acts of creation by praising the Creator.

It is interesting to notice that the psalmist summons all the heavenly bodies to praise **יְהוָה יְשׁוּם** (the name of YHWH), instead of **יְהוָה יְהוָה**. In ancient Israel **שׁוּם** (name) represents the character and reputation of its owner, thus the person himself/herself. Likewise, **יְהוָה יְשׁוּם** is intricately bound up with the being of YHWH and interchangeable with YHWH. Although the name of YHWH occurs only four times in the entire psalm, it always occurs at a strategic point (vv. 1, 5, 7, 13).<sup>150</sup>

148:6 **וַיַּעֲמִידֵם לְעֵד לְעוֹלָם חֶק־נֶתַן וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר**, And He set them in place for ever and ever; He made a decree that shall never change

The psalmist continues the motivational clause for the praise of YHWH. YHWH not only created the heavens, sun, moon, and stars, but He also placed them where they will remain for eternity. That is, He laid down certain rules for the heavenly bodies to follow. As such, His dominion over the heavenly beings and bodies is unmistakable. YHWH commands, and they obey. That is, YHWH created them, and He now sustains them.

Usually rendered “statute” or “decree,” **חֶק** also means “boundary” or “regulation.” Here it probably refers to an unalterable law or boundary the created world

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<sup>150</sup>W. S. Prinsloo, “Structure and Cohesion of Psalm 148,” *OTE* 5 (1992): 48. The abbreviated form of YHWH, **יְהוָה**, that occurs in the superscript and postscript is excluded from this count.

cannot transgress.<sup>151</sup> Modern people may call it “natural law,”<sup>152</sup> but the psalmist proclaims it to be a divine law.

148:7 הַלְלוּ אֶת־יְהוָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ תְּנִינִים וְכָל־תְּהוֹמוֹת, Praise YHWH from the earth, all sea creatures and ocean depths

This verse begins the second stanza that follows the same pattern as the first one. The first stanza deals with a celebration of YHWH as the Creator of all the heavenly bodies. Now the earth with all that is in it is summoned to praise. In contrast to the first stanza in which the verbs of imperative dominated, a series of nouns will dominate in the second. This second stanza has only one imperative הַלְלוּ, but it is implied in the rest of the stanza.<sup>153</sup> The psalmist summons all the inhabitants of the earth, from sea monsters to flying birds and small creatures (or creeping things), and names those invited to give praise, and the merismic list fills most of the space hereafter (vv. 7-12).<sup>154</sup> All creatures on earth are not specifically mentioned, but the merismic list functions as a selection that represents the totality. All creatures on earth, therefore, are to pay homage due to their Creator.

תְּנִינִים וְכָל־תְּהוֹמוֹת (sea monsters and ocean depths) here probably refers to ancient Near Eastern mythological beings. תְּנִינִים recalls “Leviathan,”<sup>155</sup> and תְּהוֹמוֹת chaos.<sup>156</sup> Though still terrible and frightening, they are not YHWH’s adversaries in the Hebrew

<sup>151</sup>A. A. Anderson, *Psalms (73-150)*, 950.

<sup>152</sup>Briggs and Briggs, 539, suggest that this expression is the “nearest approach to immutable laws of nature that is known to Heb. Literature.”

<sup>153</sup>Prinsloo, “Structure and Cohesion of Psalm 148,” 50.

<sup>154</sup>Schökel, 186, points out that everything on earth is organized with the number twenty-two, the number of letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

<sup>155</sup>Pss. 74:14; 104:26.

<sup>156</sup>Cf. Gen. 1:2. Although it is debatable, etymologically תְּהוֹמוֹת may be related to Tiamat.

Bible, but they are His creatures summoned to praise Him. As such, they are thoroughly demythologized and de-divinized in such a way as to highlight the omnipotence and majesty of YHWH.<sup>157</sup> YHWH brings order out of the chaos and ensures the continuity of the whole of creation, all of which is under His control.

148:8 אֵשׁ וּבָרָד שֶׁלֵּג וְקִיטוֹר רֵיחַ סְעָרָה עֹשֶׂה דְבָרוֹ, Fire and hail, snow and clouds, storm winds that execute His command

Now weather phenomena are also summoned to join the chorus of praise. אֵשׁ (fire) probably refers to fire of lightning in this context. רֵיחַ סְעָרָה literally refers to a storm but also to theophany.<sup>158</sup> Fire, hail, snow, clouds, and storm winds are inanimate agents of nature, but there is again a hidden allusion to ancient Near Eastern myths in which nature plays divine roles. These weather phenomena are least likely to be under control. Yet the psalm points out that they are under YHWH's control. These phenomena do not occur by mere accident. They execute YHWH's דְבָר which plays many creative roles.

148:13 יִהְיֶה לָלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה כִּי־נִשְׁגָּב שְׁמוֹ לְבָדוֹ הוֹדוּ עַל־אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם, Let them praise the name of YHWH, for His name alone is exalted; His splendor is above the earth and heavens

Like the first stanza, the second stanza ends its summons to praise YHWH with a jussive call to praise, "Let them praise the name of YHWH." The second stanza, however, ends with a different ground for the praise than creation. The ground is that YHWH's name alone is exalted, and His majesty is above the earth and heavens. YHWH also means "He who causes to be." His name represents Himself. The Hebrew term נִשְׁגָּב

<sup>157</sup>Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I (1-50)* (AB 16; New York: Doubleday, 1966), XXXV.

<sup>158</sup>Cf. Job 38:1; 40:6.

(exalted) occurs elsewhere in the context of the proclamation of YHWH's kingship<sup>159</sup> and salvation.<sup>160</sup> As such, the term implies YHWH's sovereignty over all creation. In other words, He alone is divine, worthy of praise. As such, the verse is polemical against ancient Near Eastern polytheism.

הָרֹד, usually rendered “splendor,” “majesty,” or “glory,” is used to express God's magnificence revealed in creation, as well as in history.<sup>161</sup> So quite naturally, the term occurs in ancient Israel's praise of YHWH as the Creator of the universe.<sup>162</sup> In short, the verse affirms that YHWH is supreme over all creation, both heavenly and earthly.

148:14a וַיִּרְם־קַרְן־לְעַמּוֹ, He has raised up a horn for His people

Verse 14 continues the motivational clause for praise, but it now shifts attention to a particular people, i.e., Israel. LXX takes וַיִּרְם־ as future, and Delbert Hillers amends it as a jussive.<sup>163</sup> The vav consecutive, however, shows just as in verse 6a that the colon refers to an unknown redemptive act of YHWH in the past.<sup>164</sup>

The Hebrew term קַרְן (horn) is often used as a symbol of strength and power. Consequently, it became a symbol for men, kings in particular, endowed with such might

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<sup>159</sup>Cf. Isa. 33:5. As McCann, “Psalms,” 1271, points out the Hebrew term נִשְׁבַּח appears in the context of the proclamation of YHWH's kingship in Isa. 33:17-22.

<sup>160</sup>Cf. Isa. 12:4.

<sup>161</sup>D. Vetter, “הָרֹד,” *TLOT II*: 355.

<sup>162</sup>Pss. 8:2; 96:6; 104:1; 145:5.

<sup>163</sup>Delbert Hillers, “A Study of Psalm 148,” *CBQ* 40 (1978): 327. He argues that the verb form, whether past (MT) or future (LXX), is awkward in a hymn of praise. He goes on to argue that a wish or petition would be normal at the conclusion of a hymn. Thus he prefers a jussive.

<sup>164</sup>Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 450.

and therefore honor and dignity. The Psalter makes clear that it is YHWH who exalts or brings down the horn.<sup>165</sup> It is in His power to raise up a horn for His people.

What “raising up of a horn” here refers to, however, is less than clear. Many regard this reference as an allusion to ancient Israel’s return from the Babylonian exile.<sup>166</sup> It could well be referring to that restoration. But due to the Psalter’s characteristic ahistorical nature, the specificity is left untold. Thus the phrase can simply mean that YHWH has given strength to His people. At any rate, the psalmist exhorts the fellow Israelites that they have yet another reason to participate in the cosmic praise of YHWH: Redemption.<sup>167</sup>

148:14bc וְהַלְלָה לְכָל־חַסִּידָיו לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַם־קָרְבוֹ, the praise of all His faithful ones, of the children of Israel, the people close to His heart

The syntax and interpretation of this bi-colon are exceptionally difficult. For one thing, it is a verbless clause which makes its translation difficult. On the textual side, it has become a source of a debate whether or not it is integral to the psalm at all. Some scholars take it as a postscript.<sup>168</sup> Such a postscript preserves biographical and liturgical data or summarizes the psalm in a form of the title, and such a practice is not unusual in Hebrew poetry.<sup>169</sup> R. A. F. MacKenzie, on the other hand, argues that it is a title for

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<sup>165</sup>Cf. Pss. 75:8, 11; 89:17, 24.

<sup>166</sup>E.g. Kimhi, *The Commentary of Rabbi David Kimhi on Psalms CXX-CL* (ed. and trans. Joshua Baker and Ernest W. Nicholson: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 165; A. Cohen, *The Psalms: Hebrew Text & English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary* (rev. by Rabbie Oratz: London: Soncino Press, 1992), 476; Moses Bottenweiser, *The Psalms: Chronologically Treated with a New Translation* (New York: Ktav, 1949), 361; Allen (1983), 317; and Goulder, 205.

<sup>167</sup>Prinsloo, “Structure and Cohesion of Psalm 148,” 59.

<sup>168</sup>E.g. A. A. Anderson, *Psalms 73-150*, 949.

<sup>169</sup>Cf. Hab. 3:19.

Psalm 149.<sup>170</sup> At any rate, the majority of scholars do not regard 14b as integral to Psalm 148. Indeed, the shifted attention on Israel seems to be an afterthought.

Given the difficulties in its syntax and textual matters, several interpretations are possible. One is to take *תְּהַלֵּלֵהּ* as the second object of *וַיִּרְםֵם* in verse 14a.<sup>171</sup> If so, YHWH has raised the horn as well as praise. In this case, YHWH's faithful receive glory or honor since *תְּהַלֵּלֵהּ* can be rendered so.<sup>172</sup> But it is also possible to take 14b as a consequence of 14a. If so, YHWH restored their strength; therefore they offer Him praise.<sup>173</sup> Another possible interpretation is to associate *לְכָל־חַסְדֵי־יְיָ* as a parallel line with 14a. If so, ancient Israel's praise is the source of strength. Thus Craig Broyles argues that this hymn exhorts ancient Israel to "exercise power not in a political or militaristic fashion but by means of praise."<sup>174</sup> Given the context of this psalm and the first verse of Psalm 149, "His praises in the congregation of the faithful," here "praise" is likely the consequence of YHWH's raising up a horn for His people.<sup>175</sup> That is, YHWH's faithful offer praises to Him in response to His strengthening them. Yet ambiguity remains.

The summons to humankind to praise YHWH is not limited to His chosen people. All the people on earth, kings of the earth and all the nations, both male and female,

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<sup>170</sup>R. A. F. MacKenzie, "Ps 148,14bc: Conclusion or Title?," *Biblica* 51 (1970): 222. The basis of his argument is the fact that the clause in question contains seven words, but only one of them appears in Psalm 148 whereas Psalms 149 contains six out of the seven.

<sup>171</sup>R. Kittle, *Psalmen* 4 (KAT; Leipzig: Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), 436.

<sup>172</sup>Richard J. Clifford, *Psalms 73-150* (AOT; Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 313, argues that restored Israel shares some of the glory YHWH receives for restoring Israel. Some translations such as NJV, REB, and New JPS share this interpretation.

<sup>173</sup>Cf. TEV. Also Rosenberg and Zlotowitz, 934.

<sup>174</sup>Broyles, 516.

<sup>175</sup>Rosenberg and Zlotowitz, 934.

young and old are all summoned to praise Him (vv. 11-12). Of all the peoples, however, YHWH's faithful ones should be the first to praise Him because they are the people close to His heart and He is their Redeemer. As YHWH's faithful (יִרְדֵּי־סֶדֶק), they are obligated to praise Him because דִּקְדֻקָּה is mutual in that as the recipients of YHWH's דִּקְדֻקָּה they are to reciprocate.<sup>176</sup> The act of praise is an appropriate response of the faithful to YHWH, the Creator and Redeemer.

### *Form, Structure, and Setting of Psalm 148*

Psalm 148 is the third hymn of the fivefold final Hallelujah Psalms that conclude the Psalter. Just as the others, it opens and closes with הַלְלֵי־יְהוָה. The psalm consists of six short strophes (vv. 1-12) and one long strophe (vv. 13-14).<sup>177</sup> It amounts to thirty cola, all of which are bicolic, except verses 13 and 14.<sup>178</sup>

Psalm 148 displays a clearly discernible bipartite structure whose two parts consist of parallel features. It revolves around two summons of praise in verses 1 and 7 with which each stanza begins. The psalmist summons the inhabitants of heaven in the first (vv. 1-6) and the inhabitants of earth in the second unit (vv. 7-14) to praise YHWH as the Creator and Ruler of the whole universe. The summons to praise completely dominates in both units: vv. 1b through 5a in the first unit and 7 through 13a in the second. Thus the psalm is unique in its extended summons to praise and its inclusivity of

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<sup>176</sup>Robin Ruteledge, "HESED as Obligation: A Re-Examination," *TB* 46 (1995), 195.

<sup>177</sup>As Fokkelman, *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible*, vol. II, 321, points out, the strophic structure of Psalm 148 reverses that of Psalm 147 (six long strophes and one short strophe).

<sup>178</sup>Fokkelman, *The Psalms in Form*, 172, argues that all thirty cola are bicolic and points out that even BHS's typography suggests them to be all bicolic. Terrien, 919, and Hillers, 325, however, present verses 13-14 as tricollic. I concur with Terrien and Hillers for exegetical reasons discussed above.

those summoned.<sup>179</sup> Both units conclude the summons with the same refrain “Let them praise His name,” *יְהַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה*, (vv. 5a, 13a). Then both units introduce a motive clause by the same conjunction *כִּי* (v. 5b and 13b) that introduces the “main themes”<sup>180</sup> indicating why all creation is to praise YHWH: All the heavenly and earthly bodies, both animate and inanimate, owe their existence to YHWH’s creative action, and thus His name alone is to be exalted. With the whole of creation as its scope, the psalm is magnificently structured to proclaim that the praise of YHWH is the meaning and the aim of creation.

With its repeated calls of *הַלְלוּהוּ* (praise Him) in the beginning verses, the psalm is a universal summons to praise YHWH. Its inclusivity knows no limit. A noticeable repetition of the particle *כֹּל* throughout the psalm functions to emphasize the all-embracing nature of the praise.<sup>181</sup> Everything, from angels to inanimate things, is to participate in the universal praise of YHWH.<sup>182</sup> But how the psalm accomplishes it is interesting. It begins far away from Israel in its address to heavenly bodies (vv. 1-6), moves closer to humankind by its appeal to inanimate earthly creatures and things (vv. 7-10), and concludes by calling upon people to praise YHWH (vv. 11-13). This movement of the summons implies that the praise of YHWH is to start from on high and to be continued on earth.

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<sup>179</sup>Psalms 117 and 150 are two other psalms with such an extended summons to praise.

<sup>180</sup>Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 561-2, points out that the *כִּי* conjunction introduces the main theme of the psalm.

<sup>181</sup>Prinsloo, “Structure and Cohesion of Psalm 148,” 48. The particle occurs nine times, twice in verses 2 and 9 and once each in verses 3, 7, 10, 11, and 14.

<sup>182</sup>Cf. Ps. 150:6 where only breathing, living beings are summoned to praise YHWH.

An interesting aspect of the summons to praise YHWH in the second unit is its ultimate focus upon Israel, YHWH's faithful ones (v.14).<sup>183</sup> He delights in them, the people near to His heart. Structurally, it appears as if it is an "addendum to the psalm" or a "footnote."<sup>184</sup> For this reason, some scholars regard it as a separate section.<sup>185</sup> But it is an integral part of the psalm, in particular the second unit, because no textual evidence exists to prove that it is an addendum, and such an ultimate focus on Israel to the extent of abruptly shifting the attention of the psalm at the end is not unusual in the Psalter.<sup>186</sup> In fact, given the biblical authors' practice, it is a "climactic development" of the psalm.<sup>187</sup>

Another interesting aspect of the call to praise in Psalm 148 is that it is not issued solely to people. Angels, mountains and hills, sun, moon and stars, ocean depths, and all living creatures as well as natural phenomena such as hail, snow, clouds, and wind are called to praise YHWH. The psalm addresses the whole world, all that is in it, to praise YHWH. In other words, praise of YHWH can involve the whole creation, both living and non-living. This observation implies that praise of God comes about not through reason but beyond reason.<sup>188</sup> As such, divine praise is the "goal" or "end" of all creation.

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<sup>183</sup>Cf. Ps. 147:19-20.

<sup>184</sup>Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 165.

<sup>185</sup>E.g. James Limburg, *Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 501.

<sup>186</sup>Psalm 146 focuses on Israel at the end, and Psalm 147 shifts its attention to Israel at the end of the psalm. Other biblical authors employ the similar technique of concluding their writings. The best example would be that of the last chapters of the Book of Judges (chs. 17-21) which are not a common conclusion by our modern standard.

<sup>187</sup>Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms" in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 874-75.

<sup>188</sup>Claus Westermann, "ללל to praise," 371.

The fact that the inanimate things along with beasts and cattle are summoned to praise God begs a question as to how they are to praise YHWH. A typical explanation would be that such a summons is a mere poetic technique of personification in that the animals and inanimate objects cannot actually participate in the praise of YHWH. Terrence Fretheim, however, warns against such an anthropocentrism on our part. First of all, he argues that ancients, both Israelites and non-Israelites, perceived animals and inanimate objects to have a “psychic affinity” with human beings.<sup>189</sup> As such, they are quite capable of participating in the cosmic praise of YHWH. One must also keep in mind that praise need not necessarily be verbal. One can certainly praise YHWH in dancing (Ps. 149:3). The inanimate objects may be verbally silent, but the very existence of these beings in their own place constitutes praise of YHWH because praise occurs when all creatures, both animate and inanimate, fulfill the task for which they were created.<sup>190</sup> In fact, nature’s praise of YHWH has been more constant than that of humankind for it does not transgress the boundary YHWH has set for it.<sup>191</sup> Thus one can ultimately say that all creation has its own language, whether verbal or non-verbal, that enables each and every creature to participate in the great cosmic praise of the Creator’s glory.

A majority of scholars date Psalm 148 to the postexilic period. Some simply assume the date without stating any rationale.<sup>192</sup> Others find a hint of the date in v. 14 in

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<sup>189</sup>Terrence E. Fretheim, “Nature’s Praise of God in the Psalms,” *Ex Auditu* 3 (1987): 20. Using Martin Buber’s terminology, Fretheim points out that the ancients regarded nature as a “Thou,” but unfortunately moderns treat nature primarily as an “it.”

<sup>190</sup>A. A. Anderson, *Psalms (73-150)*, 950. He argues that it is implied in verse 8.

<sup>191</sup>Fretheim, 27-28.

<sup>192</sup>E.g., A. A. Anderson, *Psalms (73-150)*, 949; Broyles, 516; Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 561.

that the return from the Exile prompted its outburst of joy.<sup>193</sup> An exact date is always elusive. Suffice it to say that it was used liturgically in the Second Temple period.

*Psalm 149*

	הַלְלוּ יְהוָה <sup>1</sup> I
הִתְהַלְּלוּ בְּקִהְלֵי חַסִּידִים:	שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ
בְּנֵי־צִיּוֹן יִגִּילוּ בְּמִלְכָם:	יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֲשׂוֹי <sup>2</sup>
בְּתֹף וּכְנֹר יִזְמְרוּ־לוֹ:	יְהַלְלוּ שְׁמוֹ בְּמַחֲוֹל <sup>3</sup> II
יִפְאֵר עַנּוּיִם בִּישׁוּעָה:	כִּי־רוּצָה יְהוָה בְּעַמּוֹ <sup>4</sup>
יִרְנְנוּ עַל־מִשְׁכְּבוֹתָם:	יַעֲלוּ חַסִּידִים בְּכָבוֹד <sup>5</sup> III
וַחֲרַב פִּיפְיוֹת בְּיָדָם:	רוֹמְמוֹת אֵל בְּגִרוֹנָם <sup>6</sup>
תּוֹכַחַת בְּל־אַמִּים:	לַעֲשׂוֹת נִקְמָה בַּגּוֹיִם <sup>7</sup> IV
וּנְכַבְּדֵיהֶם בְּכַבְלֵי בְרוֹזַל:	לְאַסֹּר מְלָכֵיהֶם בְּזַקִּים <sup>8</sup>
הַדָּר הוּא לְכָל־חַסִּידָיו	לַעֲשׂוֹת בָּהֶם מִשְׁפָּט כְּתוֹב <sup>9</sup>
	הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה:

*Translation of Psalm 149*

<sup>1</sup> Hallelujah.

Sing to YHWH a new song, His praises in the congregation of the faithful.

<sup>2</sup> Let Israel rejoice in its Maker; let the children of Zion be glad in their King.

<sup>3</sup> Let them praise His name in dancing and sing to Him with tambourine and harp.

<sup>4</sup> For YHWH delights in His people; He crowns the lowly with salvation.

<sup>5</sup> Let the faithful exult in glory and sing for joy in their beds.

<sup>6</sup> May the praise of God be in their mouth and a double-edged sword in their hands,

<sup>7</sup> to execute vengeance upon the nations, punishment on the peoples,

<sup>8</sup> to bind their kings with shackles, their nobles with iron chains,

<sup>9</sup> to execute the sentence against them. This is the glory of all His faithful.

Hallelujah.

*Translation Notes*

149:1 הִתְהַלְּלוּ בְּקִהְלֵי חַסִּידִים שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ, Sing to YHWH a new song, His praises in the congregation of the faithful

The psalm opens with a customary summons to people to praise YHWH: “Sing to YHWH a new song.” They are to sing a new song (שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ) in the assembly of the

<sup>193</sup>E.g., Kimhi, 165; Rozenberg and Zlotowitz, 930; Terrien, 922.

faithful because YHWH's **חֶסֶד** continually renews them. That is to say, each new deliverance or saving act of YHWH becomes an occasion for His faithful to compose and celebrate that faithful deed of YHWH with a new song.<sup>194</sup> In other words, praise proceeds from real life experiences, and as such praise is an appropriate response of the **חֲסִידִים** (the faithful) to YHWH's deliverance. **חֲסִידִים** forms an inclusion in verses 1 and 9. It occurs once again in verse 5. Thus it always occurs at a strategic point.

**שִׁיר** (song) is synonymous with **מְזִמֹּר** (psalm). Although a clear distinction between these two Hebrew terms may not be possible, the former is limited to a religious song whereas the latter may also occasionally refer to a secular song.<sup>195</sup> Their verbal forms **שָׁר** (to sing) and **זָמַר** (to praise) are also synonymous.

The psalm typifies a communal character as a hymn. Most of all, one is to express gratitude to God by praising Him, but it must be done in the presence of others, the faithful in particular. Thus praise consists of two central facets, giving honor to God and testimony to other human beings. Praise then is both language to God and about God.<sup>196</sup> When one praises God, in return it evokes praises in others.

149:2 **יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֹשֶׂיךָ בְּנֵי-צִיּוֹן יִגִּילוּ בְּמֶלְכֶם**, Let Israel rejoice in its Maker; let the children of Zion be glad in their King

This bicolon calls for a celebration of YHWH's sovereignty. Israel is to rejoice in its "Maker," **עֹשֶׂיךָ**. The epithet probably refers to YHWH's formation of Israel as a nation,

<sup>194</sup>Cf. Pss. 33:3; 40:1-3; 96:1-2; 98:1-3; 144:9-10.

<sup>195</sup>Victor P. Hamilton, "שִׁיר," *TWOT* II:920.

<sup>196</sup>Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms*, 64, 69.

and the idea that YHWH is the “Maker” of His covenant people is fairly common.<sup>197</sup>

YHWH created His covenant people through the exodus and allotment of the land.

One peculiar aspect of the first colon is that the term *לְעֹשֵׂי* (its Maker) is in the plural. Thus its literal translation is “its makers.” Two interpretations are possible. One may think of the term referring to human mortal makers, not a divine Maker. Thus Louis Rabinowitz argues that it refers to kings and warriors who built Israel and identifies them with *מְסִיִּדִים* in verse 1.<sup>198</sup> He does not, however, substantiate his argument. A more common interpretation is to view the plural as an expression of majesty, i.e., the so-called plural of majesty.<sup>199</sup> Such an expression is not unusual.<sup>200</sup>

*בְּמֶלֶכָם* (their King) forms an inclusio with *מְלִכֵיהֶם* (their kings) in verse 8. The effect is to contrast YHWH and the kings of nations. YHWH is both the Maker and King of Israel. The enthronement motif was already present in the summons to sing a “new song.”<sup>201</sup> As such, He is praiseworthy whereas the kings of nations are to be bound by YHWH’s faithful.

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<sup>197</sup>Cf. Gen. 12:2; Exod. 32:10; Deut. 32:6; Isa. 44:2; 46:4; Pss. 95:6; 100:3.

<sup>198</sup>Louis Rabinowitz, “The Makers of Israel: A Note on Psalm 149 *בְּעֹשֵׂי יִשְׂרָאֵל*,” *Dor le dor* 10 (1981/82): 122.

<sup>199</sup>A. A. Anderson, *Psalms (73-150)*, 952; Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (SubBi 14/2; trans. and rev., T. Muraoka; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 2000), 502; Kimhi, 165.

<sup>200</sup>The plural of majesty is used throughout the Hebrew Bible. Job 35:10, for example, reads, “where is my God, my Maker (*עֹשֵׂי*.)” Isa. 54:4 also reads “He who made you (*עֹשֵׂיךָ*.)” In both cases the plural is used to refer to the Maker of Israel. A number of scholars have noted apparent similarities between Psalm 149 and Isaiah 40-66. See for example, Dahood, *Psalms III*, 357, Stuhlmüller, *Psalms* 2, 219, and Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 319-20.

<sup>201</sup>Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 166.

149:3 יְהַלְלוּ שְׁמוֹ בְּמַחֲוֹל בְּתֹף וְכִנּוֹר יִזְמְרוּ-לוֹ, Let them praise His name in dancing and sing to Him with tambourine and harp

As discussed above, praise may be verbal and non-verbal. Certainly, the psalm invites the faithful to praise YHWH in dance. Apparently, dancing was one feature of ancient Israel's religious rejoicing. Upon YHWH's deliverance from Egypt, for example, ancient Israelites had expressed their religious fervor in dancing and singing with musical instruments such as tambourine and harp.<sup>202</sup> תֹּף וְכִנּוֹר (tambourine and harp) are typical instruments they used to magnify their praise.

149:4 כִּי-רִצָּה יְהוָה בְּעַמּוֹ יִפְאֵר עֲנֻיִם בִּישׁוּעָה, For YHWH delights in His people; He glorifies the lowly with salvation

The psalmist addresses YHWH's people by various names. They are called קַטְוִיִּם (vv. 1, 5, 9), בְּנֵי-צִיּוֹן (v. 2) and now עֲנֻיִם (the lowly). YHWH's people are often identified as עֲנֻיִם, and YHWH does not forsake them.<sup>203</sup> In fact, YHWH is the refuge for the lowly.<sup>204</sup> The lowly or poor know how to hope and open their hearts to the salvation that comes from YHWH. Accordingly, the psalmist proclaims that YHWH delights (רִצָּה) in His people, the lowly, and He grants them יְשׁוּעָה (salvation). Thus the lowly are to praise YHWH, and the basis for praise is clearly יְשׁוּעָה (salvation or liberation).

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<sup>202</sup>Cf., Exod. 15:20; Judg. 11:34; 2 Sam. 6:14.

<sup>203</sup>Cf., Ps. 68:11; 74:19; 147:6. Sometimes, עֲנֻיִם has been identified as a party within ancient Israel that is opposed to those who oppress the "poor" or "humble." Sigmund Mowinckel, however, rightly argues that עֲנֻיִם is neither party nor class but Israel or her representatives in times of emergency. For more details, see Simund Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 229.

<sup>204</sup>Ps. 14:6. See also Ps. 34:6.

149:5 יִרְנְנוּ עַל־מִשְׁכְּבוֹתָם יַעֲלִזוּ חַסִּידִים בְּכָבוֹד, Let the faithful exult in glory and sing for joy in their beds

חַסִּידִים (faithful) appears again in this strategic point of the psalm that begins a new stanza.<sup>205</sup> In fact, this verse is a pivot point that connects both stanzas.<sup>206</sup> The vocabulary, structure, and content of this verse correspond to verses 2-3, and verbs of rejoicing יַעֲלִזוּ and יִרְנְנוּ echo יִשְׂמַח and יִגִּילוּ in verse 2.<sup>207</sup> עֲלִז (to exult or rejoice) appears only in poetic contexts, and it describes the emotion of joy that finds expression in singing, shouting, and even dancing.<sup>208</sup>

חַסִּידִים (faithful) appears again later at the end of the psalm (v. 9). The faithful are often contrasted with the wicked (רָשָׁעִים).<sup>209</sup> The faithful are the upright individuals who carry out their obligation to the community.<sup>210</sup> Rightfully, they are parallel with the righteous (צַדִּיקִים).<sup>211</sup> It is fitting for the upright or faithful to praise YHWH.<sup>212</sup> In this

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<sup>205</sup>In 1 Maccabees 2:42 the Hebrew term “Hasidim” appears. While derived from the Hebrew term חַסִּידִים, the “Hasidim” here refers to a Jewish military group in the 160s B.C.E. By this time the Hebrew term חַסִּידִים had become a proper noun specifically referring to those who fought along with Judas Maccabees in their war against the Seleucids. חַסִּידִים in the Psalter should not be identified with this later Jewish military group.

<sup>206</sup>Anthony R. Ceresko, “Psalm 149: Poetry, Themes (Exodus and Conquest), and Social Function,” *Biblica* 67 (1986): 185. He also points out that the syllable count reveals that כָּבוֹד in this verse stands at the very center of the psalm.

<sup>207</sup>Gerstenberger, *Psalms* 2, 454.

<sup>208</sup>G. Vanoni, “עֲלִז,” *TDOT* XI:115-20.

<sup>209</sup>Cf. Ps. 96:10.

<sup>210</sup>Helmer Ringgren, *The Faith of the Psalmist* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 76.

<sup>211</sup>Ringgren, *The Faith of the Psalmist*, 37.

<sup>212</sup>Cf. Ps. 33:1.

cultic context **חֲסִידִים** refers to the worshipping community or people of Israel in general.<sup>213</sup>

The faithful are to exult in glory (**בְּכְבוֹד**), but it is unclear to whose glory the term refers. Syntactically, it could refer to the glory the faithful will experience as a result of their victory (vv. 6-9). The fact that YHWH glorifies (**יְפָאֵר**) the faithful (v. 4), and the last colon “This is the glory (**הַרְרָה**) of His faithful” seems to support this view. When we consider the contexts of the Hebrew term **עָלִז**, however, it is likely that it refers to YHWH’s glory. For one thing, God’s **כְּבוֹד** demands an appropriate response or acknowledgement.

The meaning of **עַל-מִשְׁכְּבוֹתָם** (in their beds) remains unclear in spite of numerous suggestions by commentators. Some suggest a textual emendation in order to make the phrase a better fit in the context, but no manuscript evidence exists for it. The phrase probably means “in private” as opposed to “in public” as “in the congregation of the faithful” means.<sup>214</sup> The faithful then are to praise YHWH both in public and in private. In other words, the faithful are to praise YHWH at all times.<sup>215</sup>

149:6 **רוֹמְמוֹת אֱלֹהִים בְּגֵרוֹנָם וְחֶרֶב פִּיפִיּוֹת בְּיָדָם**, May the praise of God be in their mouth and a double-edged sword in their hands

Verses 6-9 lack a subject because **חֲסִידִים** in verse 5 is the sole subject of this stanza, and a series of jussives continues to function as summons. Here the faithful

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<sup>213</sup>In Ps. 148:14 **חֲסִידִים** appears to be identical with “the people of Israel” and YHWH’s people. See also Ps. 149:2.

<sup>214</sup>Ceresko, “Psalm 149,” 186-87. He points out that the meristic pair “in the congregation of the faithful” (i.e., in public) and “in their beds” (i.e., in private) appears in Mic. 2:1 and 5.

<sup>215</sup>Clifford, 316.

(דִּבְרֵי־חַיִּים) are called to a dual duty, the praise of God in their mouth and a double-edged sword (literally, “a sword of mouths”) in their hands. This coupling of praise with battle readiness is unique in the Psalter. Yet close parallels can be found in other parts of the Hebrew Bible, as well as in Judith, a deuterocanonical book.<sup>216</sup> Consequently, scholars have attempted to associate this coupling of praise with battle readiness with a particular historical event to which these parallel accounts refer. For example, some suggest the time of Nehemiah as most conceivable.<sup>217</sup> Others suggest the Maccabean period as the most probable setting since the coupling of praise with battle readiness also betrays a Maccabean tone.<sup>218</sup> Ceresko also argues that the psalm celebrates a victory that had already been accomplished. He points out that the psalm as a whole alludes to the language of the Exodus and possession of Canaan. For example, he suggests that verses 6-9 allude to the narratives of Israel’s possession of Canaan.<sup>219</sup> When one takes into the consideration the possibility that the first stanza also alludes to the narratives of the Exodus, Ceresko’s suggestion becomes more convincing than other suggestions.<sup>220</sup>

The fact that this psalm betrays a holy war motif which is problematic to modern minds is unavoidable.<sup>221</sup> For this reason, Bureggemann comments on the military

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<sup>216</sup>Cf. Neh. 4:10ff; Jdt. 15:13.

<sup>217</sup>Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 567; VanGemeren, 877.

<sup>218</sup>Schökel, 146; Briggs and Briggs, 542.

<sup>219</sup>Ceresko, “Psalm 149,” 180.

<sup>220</sup>See the footnote 199.

<sup>221</sup>If taken literally, the martial language in verses 6-9 is problematic. Such military imagery is unpleasant for modern people. It is also well known that this psalm was taken literally in the past as a call to arms: Caspar Scloppius used this psalm to provoke the Roman Catholic princes to the Thirty Years’ religious war, and Thomas Müntzer to rouse the War of Peasants. These wars certainly give a clear account of the responsibility interpreters of this psalm face. The concept of the holy war is theologically important but greatly misunderstood.

imagery saying, “I do not know what to make of this, for it is quite unexpected in the hymns.”<sup>222</sup> A typical solution to this enigmatic sword is to interpret the verse in terms of parallelism. That is, the parallel structure in the verse suggests that the praise of God in the faithful’s mouths becomes the weapon of their choice to bring the nations to their knees.<sup>223</sup>

Others regard it as an eschatological vision and thereby tone down its belligerent intent.<sup>224</sup> Yet, as Murphy points out, such an attempt seems merely to “postpone the discovery of its meaning by hiding it in a mist of allegory.”<sup>225</sup> Given the view that the whole psalm alludes to the language of the Exodus and conquest of Canaan, this verse likely refers to the concept of holy war, and as Davidson points out, one thing is clear: It is YHWH’s doing in spite of the fact that the main characters who carry out the judgment are YHWH’s חֲסִידָיִם.<sup>226</sup> In other words, it is YHWH’s righteousness which is at stake here. That is, the holy war motif may not be masked even though it is enigmatic to modern minds, even to the point of being barbaric.

149:7 לַעֲשׂוֹת נִקְמָה בַּגּוֹיִם תּוֹכַחַת בְּלִ-אֲמִים, to execute vengeance upon the nations, punishment on the peoples

Here the unusual elements in the hymnic genre continue to appear. The elements in this verse and the following verses belong better to psalms of imprecation than hymns. In the Psalter the nations (גּוֹיִם) and their rulers typically refer to the opposition to the

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<sup>222</sup>Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 166.

<sup>223</sup>Broyles, 517-18; Clifford, 315.

<sup>224</sup>Gunkel, “Psalm 149,” 364; Cohen, 149.

<sup>225</sup>Murphy, *The Gift of the Psalms*, 173.

<sup>226</sup>Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 478.

reign of YHWH.<sup>227</sup> נִקְמָה, vengeance, occurs several times in the Psalter, and typically these occurrences reveal that vengeance belongs to YHWH.<sup>228</sup> That is, God is the source of vengeance.

לְעֵשׂוֹת (to execute) here repeats the root עִשָּׂה contrastively. The psalm depicts YHWH as עֹשֶׂה (Maker) of Israel in verse 2, the same root is now used to describe actions of Israel, the faithful of YHWH. They are to execute (לְעֵשׂוֹת) vengeance (נִקְמָה) against the nations. Human beings are not to take vengeance into their own hands. Yet they may become a secondary cause while God remains the source of vengeance. Verse 9 makes this fact apparent for they are to execute the written sentence.

149:8 לְאַסֵּר מַלְכֵיהֶם בְּזַקִּים וְנִכְבְּדֵיהֶם בְּכַבְלֵי בַרְזֶל, to bind their kings with shackles and their nobles with iron chains

Here the psalm contrastively repeats the Hebrew roots מֶלֶךְ and כָּבֵד.<sup>229</sup> This repetition then compares YHWH with מַלְכֵיהֶם (their kings, i.e., kings of nations) and נִכְבְּדֵיהֶם (their nobles) in a manner that recalls Psalm 2. YHWH is the King of the faithful (v. 2) who crowns the lowly with salvation (v. 4). But ironically, the kings of the nations are to be bound with shackles. The nobles of the nations, נִכְבְּדֵיהֶם, (literally, “their heavy ones”) are not adorned with glory (כָּבֵד). Instead, they are bound in iron chains. Thus by the repetition of the same roots מֶלֶךְ and כָּבֵד the psalm creatively contrasts YHWH with the kings and nobles of the nations, and their fate vividly portrays YHWH’s sovereignty.

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<sup>227</sup>Mays, *Psalms*, 447.

<sup>228</sup>Pss. 18:48; 79:10; 94:1.

<sup>229</sup>Ceresko, “Psalm 149,” 190.

149:9 לְעֵשׂוֹת בְּהֵם מִשְׁפָּט כְּחֹבֵב הַדָּר הוּא לְכָל-חֲסִידָיו to execute the written sentence against them. This is the glory of all His faithful

לְעֵשׂוֹת (to execute) here again repeats the root עִשָּׂה contrastively. The psalm depicts YHWH as עֹשֶׂה (Maker) of Israel in verse 2; the same root which was used in verse 7 is now used again to describe actions of Israel, the faithful of YHWH. The faithful are at the center of the psalm, identified at the beginning (v. 1), the middle (v. 5), and now here at the end, and they are to execute the written sentence against the kings and nobles of the nations.

The precise meaning of מִשְׁפָּט כְּחֹבֵב (written sentence), however, is difficult to substantiate, and it has become a much-debated phrase. It may be possible that the phrase is an allusion to the oracles against nations contained in the prophetic books.<sup>230</sup> If so, it is eschatological. Or the phrase may be a reference to ancient Israel's religious duty to destroy the pagan nations of Canaan.<sup>231</sup> If so, it is a reference to the Holy War traditions. Whichever the case may be, the phrase reveals the most fundamental characteristics of the hymnic genre that emphasize the triumphant, universal rule of YHWH, in which His judgment against the wicked always comes forth.

הַדָּר, glory, occurs thirteen times in the Psalter, and the term is often paired with כְּבוֹד to describe royal dignity.<sup>232</sup> Here the two terms are separated by several verses (cf. v. 5). The term הַדָּר is typically applied to either human kings or God, but their glory is derivative. That is, glory is a divine attribute. When applied to God's people, glory is a

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<sup>230</sup>Briggs and Briggs, for example, suggest that the phrase refers to what is recorded in the Old Testament, such as Isa. 41:15, Mi. 4:13, Ezk. 38, 39, etc.

<sup>231</sup>E.g. Weiser, 840, Dahood, *Psalms 101-150*, 356-57.

<sup>232</sup>In Pss. 8:5, 21:6, and 145:5, 12 the Hebrew words appear side by side in the same verse. In Pss. 29:3-4 and 96:6-7, however, the terms occur in adjacent verses.

divine gift. They do not possess glory inherent in themselves. Thus a human being's glory only reflects that of God. Likewise, the military imagery of victory here also reflects a divine victory. That is, the faithful's glory that comes from the victory is derived glory just as the victory is derived from God. Thus true glory belongs to YHWH.

J. P. Fokkelman points out an “element of reciprocity” here that functions as a part of the powerful inclusion.<sup>233</sup> In verse 1 YHWH is the recipient of the praise (תְּהִלָּה) of the faithful (חַסִּידִים), who are called to sing a new song to YHWH. In verse 9, however, it is the faithful who become the recipient of the glory (הִדְרָה). While the two Hebrew terms תְּהִלָּה and הִדְרָה are not the same words, the psalm creatively forms the element of the reciprocity by repeating two terms with similar meaning. The fact that the Hebrew term תְּהִלָּה can also be rendered “glory” enhances Fokkelman's suggestion. This reciprocal element reveals how YHWH shows חֶסֶד to His חַסִּידִים.<sup>234</sup>

חַסִּידִים here closes a double inclusion formed by the strategic placement of the same term in verses 1 and 9. Thus along with the postscription הַלְלֵהּ יְהוָה, it marks the limit of the psalm. Just as with other final Hallelujah Psalms, Psalm 149 also ends with the same postscription הַלְלֵהּ יְהוָה. This hallelujah frame stays outside of the psalm proper.

### *Form, Structure, and Setting of Psalm 149*

Psalm 149 is the fourth hymn of the quintuplet Hallelujah Psalms that conclude the Psalter. The communal character of the psalm is evident in its call (v.1). As usual, the now familiar call to praise הַלְלֵהּ יְהוָה frames the psalm. This Hallelujah frame forms a

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<sup>233</sup>J. P. Fokkelman, *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible at the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis. Volume III: The Remaining 65 Psalms* (SSN 43; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2003), 322.

<sup>234</sup>Cf. Ps. 18:26.

threefold inclusion along with two other inclusions, namely **הַסִּיְדִים** (v. 1) with **הַסִּיְדִים** (v. 9), and **מִלְכָּם** (v.2) with **מִלְכֵיהֶם** (v. 8). This threefold inclusion then gives a strong unity to the psalm as a whole. The psalm consists of four strophes and eighteen cola, all of which are bicolic. All strophes but the last are short. The **הַלְלֵהּ** frame here stays outside the psalm proper.

There is scholarly consensus on the *Gattung* of Psalm 149 because it bears all the conventional marks of a hymn: A customary summons to praise (vv. 1-3), a reason for the praise introduced by **כִּי** (v. 4), and a renewed call to praise (vv. 5-9). Thus a majority of scholars simply refer to it as a hymn.<sup>235</sup> Some clarify it even further to categorize it as an imperative hymn. Yet different nuances still exist. Others define the psalm as an eschatological hymn. The psalm evidently exhibits eschatological characteristics. Thus Gunkel categorizes it as a “prophetic hymn.”<sup>236</sup>

There is no scholarly consensus concerning the structure of Psalm 149. Basically, two views come into play. Some suggest a threefold structure: verses 1-3, verses 4-6, and verses 7-9.<sup>237</sup> A majority of scholars, however, prefers a twofold structure, though with different divisions. Some suggest as divisions verses 1-4 and verses 5-9. Some proponents of this twofold structure view the first stanza as reflecting the Exodus and the second the conquest of Canaan.<sup>238</sup> I suggest the twofold structure based on the following

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<sup>235</sup>E.g. A. A. Anderson, *Psalms (73-150)*, 951, confidently states that “This psalm is clearly a Hymn.”

<sup>236</sup>Hermann Gunkel, “Psalm 149: An Interpretation,” *Biblical World* 22 (1903), 363.

<sup>237</sup>E.g. Weiser, 838-41; E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Psalms 2* (Dublin: Richview Press, 1954), 333-35.

<sup>238</sup>Ceresko, “Psalm 149,” 177-94.

reasons. First, two sets of summons to praise (vv. 1-3 and 5-6) and two aspects of praise (public praise in v. 1 and private praise in v. 5) support the twofold literary structure of the psalm. Second, with the strategic placement of  $\text{אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$  in the beginning, middle, and ending of the psalm, verse 5 functions as a pivot point. Third,  $\text{אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$  in verse 5 is the only grammatical subject for the entire second stanza (vv. 5-9), implying that verse 5 fits better with the subsequent verses than the preceding ones.<sup>239</sup> Fourth, the role of the preposition  $\text{בְּ}$  throughout the psalm also supports the twofold structure. As Allen points out, its occurrence in the nine verses reveals a definite pattern (1/2/2/2/1/2/2/2/1), which does not support the threefold pattern.<sup>240</sup> Thus when we take these four elements into consideration, the twofold structure explains the psalm better.

The psalm then consists of two stanzas, vv. 1-4 and 5-9. The first stanza begins with a typical summons to praise, and it calls for praise of YHWH, the Maker and King of Israel, in public. The call is extended to verse 3. Then as usual, a motive clause follows in verse 4. The second stanza renews the summons to praise now in private (v. 5). A motive clause, however, is lacking in the second stanza. Since verse 5 functions as a pivot or hinge, the second stanza shares the motive clause of the first.<sup>241</sup>

The uniqueness of Psalm 149 has given rise to various proposals for its *Sitz im Leben*. The psalm seems to refer to some specific historical event in ancient Israel. Perhaps, a war against Israel's enemies (vv. 6-9) may have been its original setting in life. Quite naturally, many scholars assign this psalm to a particular historical event like the

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<sup>239</sup>Gerstenberger, *Psalms 2*, 454.

<sup>240</sup>Allen, *Psalms 101-50*, rev., 398.

<sup>241</sup>Clifford, *Psalms 73-150*, 315.

Maccabean war<sup>242</sup> or Nehemiah's triumph over hostile neighbors.<sup>243</sup> Anthony Ceresko goes even further back to argue that the psalm in its entirety clearly alludes to the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan.<sup>244</sup> Gerstenberger also acknowledges that allusions to the exodus experience are subconsciously present.<sup>245</sup> Yet there is no consensus as to what event it refers to because the psalm as usual has been disassociated from its original historical setting. As a result, the psalm's allusions may fit into almost any age, including that of the Maccabees and Nehemiah. That the language of the psalm undoubtedly betrays the preexilic and perhaps even pre-monarchic period is apparent, but as Brueggemann points out the language does not help date the psalm or to propose its possible *Sitz im Leben*.<sup>246</sup> Others view this psalm to be eschatological in that it refers to the final redemption of Israel or the final judgment of YHWH.<sup>247</sup>

*Psalm 150*

	הַלְלוּ יְהוָה	<sup>1</sup>
הַלְלוּהוּ בְּרִקְיעַ עֲזָו:	הַלְלוּ-יְהוָה אֵל בְּקֹדֶשׁוֹ	I
הַלְלוּהוּ כְּרֹב גְּדָלוֹ:	הַלְלוּהוּ בְּגִבּוֹרֹתָיו	<sup>2</sup>
הַלְלוּהוּ בְּגִבּוֹל וְכִנּוֹר:	הַלְלוּהוּ בְּתִקְעַ שׁוֹפָר	<sup>3</sup> II
הַלְלוּהוּ בְּמִנִּים וְעוּגָב:	הַלְלוּהוּ בְּתֹף וּמְחֹל	<sup>4</sup>
הַלְלוּהוּ בְּצִלְצְלֵי תְרוּעָה:	הַלְלוּהוּ בְּצִלְצְלֵי-שִׁמְעַ	<sup>5</sup>
הַלְלוּ-יְהוָה:	כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהַלֵּל יְהוָה	<sup>6</sup>

<sup>242</sup>Briggs and Briggs, 542.

<sup>243</sup>Willem A. VanGemeren, 877; Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 567.

<sup>244</sup>Ceresko, "Psalm 149," 177-194.

<sup>245</sup>Gerstenberger, *Psalms 2*, 454.

<sup>246</sup>Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 166.

<sup>247</sup>Gunkel, "Psalm 149: An Interpretation," 303 ; Cohen, 477; Allan Harman, *Psalms* (Ross-shire: Mentor, 1998), 452.

*Translation of Psalm 150*

<sup>1</sup> Hallelujah.

Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty heavens.

<sup>2</sup> Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him for His surpassing greatness.

<sup>3</sup> Praise Him with blasts of the horn; praise Him with harp and lyre.

<sup>4</sup> Praise Him with tambourine and dance; praise Him with string instruments and flute.

<sup>5</sup> Praise Him with resounding cymbals; praise Him with loud-clashing cymbals.

<sup>6</sup> Let all that breathes praise YHWH. Hallelujah.

*Translation Notes*

150:1 הַלְלוּהוּ בְּקִדְשׁוֹ הַלְלוּהוּ בְּרָקִיעַ עִזּוֹ הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵי-אֲלֹהֵי הַלְלוּ, Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty heavens

Apparently, Psalm 150 also begins with the familiar summons to praise הַלְלוּ הַלְלוּ that stands outside of the psalm proper. What follows this superscription immediately is yet another call to praise הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵי-אֱלֹהֵי הַלְלוּ. Since the entire Psalter is a cry to God, the use of divine names occupies an important place in the psalms because they reveal who God is. Compared to the more personal divine name הַלְלוּ used in the superscription, אֱלֹהֵי here is a more generic divine name, used by both ancient Israelites and their neighbors. In fact, it is quite probable that the ancient Israelites borrowed this divine name from their neighbors. The fact that the term almost never occurs in the historical books, such as Kings and Chronicles, but plays an important role in the ancestral narratives also implicates its generic nature. Perhaps, the reason the psalmist chose to use this more generic divine name over the more personal divine name YHWH in its shortened form הַלְלוּ is to emphasize the universality of the God of Israel.<sup>248</sup> One must also note the fact that Psalm 150, unlike the other Final Hallelujah Psalms, lacks any reference to ancient Israel,

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<sup>248</sup>Rozenberg and Zlotowitz, 940.

Zion, Jerusalem, the faithful, etc. The absence of such a reference especially at the end of the Psalter bolsters the emphasis on the universality of God.

The meaning of קִדְשׁוֹ, His sanctuary, is difficult to ascertain with certainty. If the parallelism here is antithetic, on the one hand, then it must refer to the earthly sanctuary, the Jerusalem temple in particular. The term could also be a reference to some other temple or even the earth in contrast to the “mighty heavens” (1b). If so, the psalmist is calling on all the inhabitants of heaven and earth to praise God.<sup>249</sup> Considering the fact that “all that breathes” is invited to praise God (v. 6) with the use of virtually all the instruments in the Psalter, this interpretation is quite likely.

If the parallelism is synonymous, on the other hand, then it must mean God’s heavenly sanctuaries. Another possibility is that קִדְשׁוֹ may refer to both earthly and heavenly sanctuary since the former is regarded as a reflection of the latter, the throne of the transcendent God.<sup>250</sup> A. A. Anderson suggests an understanding of the phrase that is alternative to the above interpretations. He suggests that it seems to describe the “place” where God dwells, not the place where God is to be praised.<sup>251</sup>

The phrase בְּרִקְיעַ עֶזְרָא, in His mighty heavens, occurs only here in the Hebrew Bible. רִקְיעַ identifies God’s heavenly expanse, a witness to God’s infinite power. One must note that the title of God and the location of the praise of God here identify YHWH as the supreme sovereign who rules the universe.<sup>252</sup> He alone is worthy to be praised.

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<sup>249</sup>This summons then would correspond to the pleas in Ps. 148:1, “Praise YHWH from the heavens” and 148:7, “Praise YHWH from the earth.”

<sup>250</sup>Davidson, 479.

<sup>251</sup>A. A. Anderson, *Psalms (73-150)*, 955.

<sup>252</sup>Mays, *Psalms*, 450.

150:2 הַלְלוּהוּ בְּגִבּוֹרָתוֹ הַלְלוּהוּ כְּרַב גְּדֻלוֹ, Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him for His surpassing greatness

The psalm repeats הַלְלוּהוּ, praise him, nine times. The imperative הַלְלוּ, praise, occurs twelve times in the psalm. Such a repetition in a short psalm totaling only six verses sounds rather monotonous. Undoubtedly, however, the repetition emphasizes the need to praise God. He certainly is worthy to be praised. The psalm repeats the lexeme again in verse 6, providing more flexibility and more complex combination, bringing the psalm to its climax with “Let all that breathes praise Yah.”

Brueggemann suggests that “Psalm 150 is remarkable because it contains no reason or motivation at all.”<sup>253</sup> Certainly, the normal motive clause with its characteristic particle כִּי is absent here. Nevertheless, this verse provides the reason for the praise.

God is to be praised because of His mighty acts and surpassing greatness. In other words, God is to be praised for who He is and what He has done. His greatness is incomparable, and His works are far beyond those of humans. One must note, however, that the psalm does not specify God’s acts in detail. Thus the psalm belongs to what Westermann has categorized as the psalm of descriptive praise.

150:3 הַלְלוּהוּ בְּתִקְעַ שׁוֹפָר הַלְלוּהוּ בְּנִבְל וְכִנּוֹר, Praise Him with blasts of the horn; praise Him with harp and lyre

The psalm now mentions how God is to be praised. It suggests that the praise of God be accompanied by musical instruments, such as the horn, harp, and lyre. שׁוֹפָר,

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<sup>253</sup>Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, 192.

horn, is made of the horn of a ram, and its function is that of a signaling instrument.<sup>254</sup> In ancient Israel's worship it was the responsibility of the priests to blow the horn. Thus the call here may be addressed to the priests. Here the blast of the horn may be a reference to an initiatory signal for the praise of God.

Harp and lyre, **נְבֵל וְכַנּוּר**, were played by the Levites, implying that the call here may be addressed to the Levites.<sup>255</sup> **נְבֵל** was the second most important musical instrument in temple worship, and used by David **כַּנּוּר** was perhaps the noblest temple instrument.

150:4 **הִלְלוּהוּ בְתוֹף וּמְחוֹל הִלְלוּהוּ בְמִנִּים וְעוּגָב**, Praise Him with tambourine and dance; praise Him with string instruments and flute

The psalm continues to list various types of musical instruments ancient Israelites used in liturgical celebration. **תוֹף**, tambourine, is a percussion instrument used by women only.<sup>256</sup> It is always connected with singing and dancing, in particular a victory celebration.<sup>257</sup>

**מִנִּים**, string instruments, is a rare term that occurs only once more elsewhere.<sup>258</sup> **עוּגָב**, flute, is some sort of wind instrument. The string instruments and flute are not found among the temple instruments. Instead, they were used in joyful family

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<sup>254</sup>Most often the blast of the horn was used as a signal in war. But its first occurrence in the Bible is related to the theophany on Sinai (Exod. 19:16). The horn was also used to proclaim the Day of Atonement and the Jubilee Year and the proclamation of freedom throughout the land (Cf. Lev. 25:9-10).

<sup>255</sup>Cf. 1 Chron. 25:1. Harps and lyres are accompanied with cymbals here.

<sup>256</sup>The only possible exception may be found in 1 Sam. 10:5.

<sup>257</sup>Cf. Exod. 15:20; Jdg. 11:34; 1 Sam. 18:6. See also Ps. 68:25.

<sup>258</sup>Ps. 45:9.

celebrations. In other words, they are the instruments of entertainment, extending the range of the praise sung by human voices and amplifying the human emotion of joy.<sup>259</sup>

Praise is worthy not only to God but also to those who sing. C. S. Lewis aptly describes such a reciprocal worthiness of praise when he says “praise not merely expresses but completes enjoyment.”<sup>260</sup> To praise is to turn oneself toward God, the Lord of the Universe. As such, praise is “offering up of the whole self to God,” as McCann suggests.<sup>261</sup> Yet when we offer ourselves to God in praise, it in return completes us. Then to praise God is to live, and to live is to praise.

150:5 הַלְלוּהוּ בְצִלְצְלֵי־שָׁמַע הַלְלוּהוּ בְצִלְצְלֵי תְרוּעָה, Praise Him with resounding cymbals, praise Him with loud-clashing cymbals

The implication of the variety of instruments being mentioned in the psalm testifies to the calling upon the entire population to praise God. The priests, Levites, and laity including women with all kinds of musical instruments are called to participate in the extravagant praise of God.

150:6 כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהַלֵּל יְהוָה, Let all that breathes praise Yah

Finally, the psalm identifies the agent of the praise of God. כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה, all that breathes, is to praise God. Here the transition from imperative to jussive תְהַלֵּל, let them praise, marks a special emphasis.<sup>262</sup> The precise meaning of the phrase כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה, all that breathes, is once again uncertain. Here it may refer to the entire human race who has the intelligence to comprehend God. The mention of musical instruments of all types in

<sup>259</sup>Cf. Gen. 4:21; Job 21:12; 30:31; Ps. 45:9.

<sup>260</sup>C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1986), 95.

<sup>261</sup>McCann, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 53.

<sup>262</sup>Mays, *Psalms*, 449-50; McCann, “Psalms,” 1279.

previous verses may suggest that the phrase is more likely to be a reference to human beings, at least primarily, as A. A. Anderson suggests.<sup>263</sup>

The phrase, however, could also be a reference to all living creatures. For example, Psalm 148, verses 1 and 7 in particular, shows that inanimate things are also summoned to praise God, implying that “all that breathes” need not be restricted to human beings. At any rate, the summons here is a universal call to praise of YHWH. It extends beyond Israel, the chosen people of God, for unlike other Final Hallelujah psalms, Psalm 150 does not mention Israel. Instead, everyone who has breath is urged to praise Yah, the God of Israel and of the universe, for He is the Creator and the Giver of “breath” to all.

Praise is the goal toward which the Psalter moves. For the psalmists the majesty of YHWH calls forth the praise of all creatures. That is why the psalmists close the entire Psalter with this summons to praise: “Let all that breathes praise Yah.” They seemed unable to keep the majesty of YHWH to themselves, for human beings spontaneously praise whatever they value and in so doing invite others to participate in the praise.<sup>264</sup> As such, the final verse, “Let all that breathes praise Yah,” is the fitting climax of the psalm as well as the entire Psalter. Hallelujah!

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<sup>263</sup>A. A. Anderson, *Psalms (73-150)*, 955.

<sup>264</sup>Lewis, 94-95.

*Form, Structure and Setting of Psalm 150*

Psalm 150 is the last of the quintuplet of Hallelujah Psalms with which the Psalter concludes. With its tenfold hallelujah,<sup>265</sup> the psalm is a fitting conclusion to the Psalter: The last word of the Psalter is praise, and Psalm 150 is a crescendo of praise. The psalm consists of two strophes and twelve cola, all of which are bicolic. Like other final Hallelujah Psalms the call to praise הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה frames the psalm. The initial הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה stays outside the psalm proper, but the final one is included in the psalm.

One of the most striking characteristics of Psalm 150 may be its genre. Herman Gunkel, for example, categorized it as a hymn.<sup>266</sup> Characteristically, hymns are the most easily recognizable genre. Psalm 150 begins with a clearly pronounced hymnic introduction “Hallelujah,”<sup>267</sup> prompting others to follow Gunkel’s categorization.<sup>268</sup> One may ask, however, whether it is genuinely a hymn because it lacks other hymnic elements, such as a motivational clause. In other words, Psalm 150 in its entirety is a summons to praise, and it does not explain why YHWH is to be praised. It only consists of a tenfold summons to praise. For this reason, Erhard Gerstenberger, on the one hand, categorizes Psalm 150 as a “hymnic overture” and suggests that it “may have served as a general

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<sup>265</sup>The lexeme actually occurs thirteen times in the psalm. הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה occurs nine times in verses 1-5. הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה occurs once (v. 1a) as does a jussive הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה (v. 6). Finally, הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה frames the psalm, totaling the lexeme count to thirteen. Jewish interpreters, such as Kimhi, argued that the number thirteen represents the thirteen attributes with which YHWH governs the world. More recently, H. P. Mathys has also argued along the same line. For more details see his article, “Psalm CL” *VT* 50 (2000): 329-344.

<sup>266</sup>Gunkel and Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, 19.

<sup>267</sup>Gunkel, *An Introduction*, 23.

<sup>268</sup>E.g. A. A. Anderson, *Psalms (73-150)*, 954, and Klaus Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms* (trans. R. Graeme Dunphy; T&T Clark: Edinburgh, 1990), 114.

response or introit to the recitation of other hymns or thanksgiving.”<sup>269</sup> Claus Westermann, on the other hand, classifies it as a “descriptive hymn.”<sup>270</sup> Compared to a declarative hymn, a descriptive hymn does not have a clear-cut structure.<sup>271</sup> It begins with a call to praise that consists of only one sentence with one word (הַלְלֵי-יְהוָה), and given in the imperative this call is a unique characteristic of this genre.<sup>272</sup> A descriptive hymn praises God for who He is. In other words, it describes who God is. In the case of Psalm 150, it describes who God is. He is great, and His greatness prompts the psalmist to praise YHWH (v. 2). This call to praise grew to become eventually an independent psalm dominated entirely by imperatives (e.g., Pss. 145, 148, 150). Aside from the opening (1a) and closing (6b) הַלְלֵי-יְהוָה, which is often regarded as a later liturgical addition, the entirety of Psalm 150 consists of the tenfold call to praise YHWH, and it ends with a jussive (6a), summarizing the whole. Thus Brueggemann describes it as “the most extreme and unqualified statement of unfettered praise in the Old Testament.”<sup>273</sup>

With its seemingly simple structure, Psalm 150 answers five fundamental questions about the character of human praise to God: 1) Who is to be praised, i.e., the object of praise; 2) Where is God to be praised (v. 1), i.e., the location of praise; 3) Why is God to be praised (v. 2), i.e., the reason for praise ; 4) How is God to be praised (vv. 3-

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<sup>269</sup>Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2 and Lamentations*, 458, 460.

<sup>270</sup>Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content & Message* (trans. Ralph D. Gehrke: Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 81.

<sup>271</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>272</sup>Ibid., 88-89, suggests that this call to praise grew more and more to eventually become an independent psalm dominated entirely by the imperative and includes Psalms 148 and 150 in such a category.

<sup>273</sup>Brueggemann, “Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon,” 67.

5), i.e., method of praise; and 5) By whom God is to be praised (v. 6), i.e., agent of praise. Obviously, the psalm answers that God is to be praised.

The date of Psalm 150 is unclear from the text itself. Yet a scholarly consensus dates it to the postexilic period. Carroll Stuhlmueller, for example, boldly states that the psalm was composed around 300 B.C.<sup>274</sup> The psalm, however, contains no internal evidence to warrant such a claim. The only clue that comes from the text regarding the date may be the term “sanctuary” (v. 1), possibly relating the psalm to the second Temple period. Yet even this term cannot be used to date the psalm since the meaning of the term “sanctuary” is difficult to ascertain, whether that refers to the earthly temple or not.

Psalm 150 is often regarded as a fitting doxology to the entire Psalter. Since each of the first four books also concludes with a doxology, it is reasonable to expect a grand doxology at the end of the Psalter. It is not clear, however, that Psalm 150 was composed with that purpose in mind.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has gone about the work of establishing the exegetical data for the following chapters. Of particular interest to our discussion in this chapter has been the fact that the initial הַלְלֵהוּ in Psalm 146 fits well in the beginning parallelism, and the final הַלְלֵהוּ in Psalm 150 is included in the psalm. Chapter 4 will discuss in detail the importance of this enveloping effect of the initial and final הַלְלֵהוּ frames. Our examination reveals that Psalms 146-150 share a number of key-word and thematic links and repetitions that are important. This raw data is provided in Table 1 in the following chapter where we will discuss their importance in understanding the intertextual

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<sup>274</sup>Stuhlmueller, *Psalms* 2, 221.

relationship of Psalms 146-150. The result of our examination of these psalms as a separate entity will show later the continuity between this historical-critical understanding and the canonical understanding and will reveal how the new paradigm within psalms studies affects the understanding of these psalms.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Psalms 146-150: The Final Hallelujah Psalms in the Hebrew Psalter

In the previous chapter, we examined each of Psalms 146-150 as a separate entity, employing the traditional form-critical, cult-functional approach. In this chapter, we will utilize the results of the previous chapter to analyze Psalms 146-150 at a microstructural level with a hope of establishing a rationale for the placement of these psalms at the end of the Hebrew Psalter. This analysis is necessary to interpret these final Hallelujah Psalms in the context of the Hebrew Psalter because psalms as we find them in the canonical context are now in a new context. With this purpose in mind we will begin with the task of a detailed and careful analysis of keyword links, thematic links, and incidental repetitions in these psalms that are crucial for identifying their intertextual relationships. This task begins with an interpretive assumption that the strategic placement of these psalms at the end of the Hebrew Psalter is the result of intentional editorial activity. A purposeful ending to the Hebrew Psalter or any literary work for that matter is a vital component and these keyword and thematic links in particular are the keys to an understanding of the interconnections of each psalm to the other psalms in this collection and the rationale for their placement at the end of the Hebrew Psalter.

The keyword links here are defined as the significant Hebrew terms that are repeated in the final Hallelujah Psalms. “The main function of keywords,” according to Wilfred G. E. Watson, is “*to express the principle theme* of a poem.”<sup>1</sup> Or as Martin

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<sup>1</sup>Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Technique* (JSOTSup 26; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 288. Italics are Watson’s.

Buber aptly put it, a psalm “provides its own interpretation, by repetition of what is essential to its understanding.”<sup>2</sup> This interpretive function is why certain keywords are repeated in a given psalm. These keywords also function to mark a structure of a psalm and link separate verses or stanzas as catchwords.<sup>3</sup> Even though both Watson and Buber speak of the function of the keywords as catchwords within a psalm, the same function is also applicable to interrelationships of psalms.

Even during medieval times, various rabbis proposed the existence of interconnections between various psalms, especially between adjacent psalms. Regarding the principle underlying the arrangement of individual psalms, for example, Saadiah Gaon already in the tenth century noticed that biographical-historical information contained in psalm titles was not chronologically ordered. Thus he attempted to find a topical connection between psalms and argued that, at least, some smaller collections in the Psalter were topically arranged. Although he cautioned his readers of the danger of applying this principle to the entire Psalter, he nonetheless suggested that the order of psalms was didactic in that the Psalter functioned as a “book of guidance.”<sup>4</sup> As such, the Psalter for him was a second Pentateuch.<sup>5</sup>

Interconnections between psalms are primarily at the thematic level, but catchword connections also played a significant role in connecting adjacent psalms. More recently, David M. Howard has demonstrated the presence of intentional lexical

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<sup>2</sup>Martin Buber, *Right and Wrong: An Interpretation of Some Psalms* (London: SCM Press, 1952), 54.

<sup>3</sup>Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 288.

<sup>4</sup>Uriel Simon, *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms: From Saadiah Gaon to Abraham Ibn Ezra* (trans. Lenn. J. Schramm; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 28, 30-31.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 1, 12, 30.

and thematic links among Psalms 93-100, and a number of his students have produced dissertations with the same method of microstructural analysis on a group of consecutive psalms.<sup>6</sup>

Keywords are frequently used in the Psalter, as well as in both the Old and New Testaments, to link adjacent psalms. Within a collection of psalms, in particular, keywords function to link the psalms together semantically and thematically. Evidently, these keyword links are the most important for our purposes because they demonstrate the shape of this final hallelujah collection within the Hebrew Psalter by its final editor(s).

Thematic links are repetitions of dominant ideas, motifs, or phrases in the same semantic domain.<sup>7</sup> For our purposes we will divide the thematic links into two types as Howard categorized: Thematic word links and thematic similarities.<sup>8</sup> Frequently repeated thematic words elaborate themes of a psalm, and we will tabulate frequencies of these words. These words or phrases sometimes are general vocabularies of praise and thus they may not be as important as the keyword links. A second type of thematic links deals with similar ideas even though the vocabulary may not be identical. While both types of thematic links may not be as apparent as the keyword links in some cases, the thematic links are equally, if not more, important as the keyword links for our purposes because the thematic links are commonly acknowledged methods the editor(s) of the

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<sup>6</sup>David M. Howard, Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93-100* (Biblical and Judaic Studies 5; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997). For more details about methodologies of his and his students' see above in Chapter One, pp. 35-36.

<sup>7</sup>Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 288.

<sup>8</sup>In his analysis of Psalms 93-100 David Howard utilized these two types of thematic links which we adopt here with a different emphasis. Howard argues that the thematic links are not as significant as the keyword links, but I argue that some of the thematic links may be as important, if not more, as the keyword links. For more details see Howard, Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 100-101.

Hebrew Psalter employed to group psalms together.<sup>9</sup> Thus we will discuss occurrences of the words in the same semantic domain. For example, both הלל and זמר belong to the same semantic domain.

The incidental repetitions by definition are those Hebrew terms repeated in Psalms 146-150 that are neither the keyword nor thematic links. By definition, these incidental repetitions are not nearly as important as the keyword or thematic links, but these repetitions also add weight to the connections present within the final hallelujah collection.

In the first part of this analysis, we will present “objective data” that is crucial for identifying intertextual relationships of the final Hallelujah Psalms.<sup>10</sup> Based on the result of the previous chapter, we will tabulate all the repeated Hebrew terms and ideas in Psalms 146-150. Watson points out that not only nouns and verbs but also prepositions, particles, conjunctions, and the like are relevant in tabulating.<sup>11</sup> For example, the frequency and positions of the ׀ particle are important.<sup>12</sup> In our analysis, however, we will tabulate only nouns and verbs that will show the development and coherence of the thought in these psalms. This analysis will enable us to draw a profile of Psalms 146-150.

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<sup>9</sup>J. A. Alexander, for example, already in the latter half of the nineteenth century noted thematic connections between psalms. For details see, *The Psalms*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1865), vii-xiv. More recently, Joseph P. Brennan, Walter Bureggemann, James L. Mays, J. Clinton McCann, Jr., and Gerald H. Wilson also have published works on the thematic link level.

<sup>10</sup>Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 288. He states that tabulating all the repeated terms in a poem to establish their frequency and relative position is an objective task.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 288.

<sup>12</sup>Due to the characteristics of the hymnic genre, the ׀ particle occurs frequently in Psalms 146-150. Just as James Mulenburg pointed out decades ago in his article, “The Linguistic and Rhetorical Usage of the Particle ׀ in the Old Testament” *HUCA* 32 (1961): 135-160, the use of the ׀ particle is particularly important in understanding these hymns. The position of the particle is especially important in identifying the structure of these psalms as we have already discussed in the previous chapter.

Then in the latter part of the chapter we will follow with the implications of that analysis. In other words, based on the results of the analysis in the first part we can begin with judicious speculation in regard to the purpose or effects of the strategic placement of these psalms at the end of the Psalter. Below is the chart that shows how frequently keywords, thematic words, and incidental repetitions occur in these psalms. Frequent occurrences of these words betray the development and coherence of the thought in these psalms, and we will analyze this raw data in details in the rest of the chapter.

Table 1. Keyword, Thematic and Incidental Repetition Links in Psalms 146-150<sup>13</sup>

Keywords	Psalms 146	Psalms 147	Psalms 148	Psalms 149	Psalms 150
הַלְלוּ-יְהוָה	1, 10	1, 20	1, 14	1, 9	1, 6
הַלְלִי	1	12			
הַלְלוּהוּ			1b, 2(2x), 3(2x), 4a		1, 2(2x), 3(2x) 4(2x), 5(2x)
הַלְלוּ			1a		1
אֲהַלֵּלָהּ	2				
יְהַלְלוּ			5, 13		
תְּהַלֵּל					6
זָמַר	2	1, 7		3	
שִׁיר				1	
עָנָה		7			
שָׁבַח		12			
שִׁמְחָה				2	
יִרְנְנוּ				5	
יִגִּילוּ				2	
יְהַדְּדוּ	1, 2, 5, 7, 8(3x), 9, 10	2, 6, 7, 11, 12	1, 7	1, 4	
שֵׁם		4	5, 13	3	
לֵאלֹהֵי	2				
אֱלֹהֵינוּ	5				
אֱלֹהֵינוּ צִיּוֹן	10	12			
אֱלֹהֵינוּ		1, 7			
אֵל				6	1

<sup>13</sup> Arabic numbers indicate the verse number, and the Arabic number in parenthesis indicates a number of occurrences of the lexeme in the particular verse.

Table 1. Continued

Keywords	Psalms 146	Psalms 147	Psalms 148	Psalms 149	Psalms 150
יַעֲקֹב	5	19			
חֲסִידִים		11	14	1, 5, 9	
צַדִּיקִים	8				
עֲוֹרִים		6			
רְשָׁעִים	9	6			
אֱמֶת	6				
תְּשׁוּעָה	3				
בִּישׁוּעָה				4	
תְּהִלָּה		1	14	1	
מִשְׁפָּט	7	19, 20		9	
בֶּן־אָדָם	3				
אִישׁ		10			
אֲדָמָה	4				
אֶרֶץ	6	6, 8, 15	7, 11(2x), 13		
שָׁמַיִם	6	8	1, 4(3x), 13		
עָשָׂה	6, 7	20	8	2, 7, 9	
בָּרָא			5		
צָוָה		15	5		
דָּבַר		15, 18, 19	8		
אָמַר		15			
חָק		19	6		
עוֹד	9	6			
לָחֵם	7	9			
נָתַן	7	9, 16	6		
רוּחַ	4	18	8		
עִם			14	4	
מִלֶּדֶד	10		11	2, 8	
יִשְׂרָאֵל		2	14	2	
מִחֹל				3	4
חָרַף				3	4

*Elements Common to All of the Final Hallelujah Psalms*

Apparently, the most obvious keyword common to all of Psalms 146-150 is the הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה frame. These psalms all begin and end with הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה. Typically, scholars in the past regarded these hallelujah frames as editorial and of secondary importance. Indeed,

there exist some external evidences that suggest the הַלְלֵי־יְהוָה frame is editorial. LXX, for example, uses it as a superscription but not as a subscription. In 11QPs<sup>a</sup> הַלְלֵי־יְהוָה does not appear as a superscription.<sup>14</sup> These evidences indicate the fluidity of the function of הַלְלֵי־יְהוָה as a superscription or subscription and suggest that the hallelujah frames are editorial elements. Naturally, such an understanding has commonly resulted in a lack of scholarly interest regarding the function of the hallelujah frames. Commentators from previous generations commonly disregarded the hallelujah frames as secondary to the text and treated these psalms separately.<sup>15</sup> The scholarly consensus regarding the hallelujah frames as editorial, however, actually reinforces the thesis that Psalms 146-150 are purposefully placed together at this strategic place in the Hebrew Psalter to bring closure to it.

Indeed, the hallelujah frames as editorial elements function as a hermeneutical key to the meaning of Psalms 146-150 because the locus of meaning and authority lies in the final canonical context, not in the original, historical context. These ever recurring frames, as Buber points out, provide their own interpretation by means of repetition.<sup>16</sup> Their function in the shape of the Hebrew Psalter is important because they connect these five psalms together and as such reveal the intentional editorial activity of the final editor(s) of the Hebrew Psalter. As such, these hallelujah frames express the principle theme of Psalms 146-150 as Watson calls attention to the main function of keywords. An

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<sup>14</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, "The Qumran Psalm Scroll (11QPs<sup>a</sup>) and the Canonical Psalter" *CBQ* 59 (1997): 450-51; See also Peter Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* (STDJ XVII; Leiden, New York and Köln: Brill, 1997), 133-34.

<sup>15</sup>Franz Delitzsch who emphasized the catchword connection to the adjacent psalms was an exception to such a common practice.

<sup>16</sup>Buber, *Right and Wrong*, 54.

interesting additional point to the function of these hallelujah frames is that only the initial הַלְלִי-יְהוָה in Psalm 146 and the final הַלְלִי-יְהוָה in Psalm 150 stay in the psalm proper while others stay outside the psalm proper. In other words, out of the ten הַלְלִי-יְהוָה frames only the initial and the final frames belong to the balanced poetical structure of the psalm proper. The effect of this phenomenon is that Psalms 146-150 as a whole are neatly enveloped by the hallelujah frame, thus solidifying their interconnection as a separate literary unit.<sup>17</sup>

The commonly shared keyword הַלְלִי-יְהוָה, actually a complete sentence in Hebrew, is fitting at the end of the Hebrew Psalter as it moves from lament to praise. Books I-III consist of more laments than praises, but Books IV and V have more praises. In fact, the Hallelujah Psalms occur only in the last two books of the Hebrew Psalter. What else is noticeable is that the הַלֵּל lexeme is repeated in various forms throughout Psalms 146-150: Twice in Psalm 146 (vv. 1, 2); twice in Psalm 147 (vv. 1, 12); eleven times in Psalm 148 (twice each in vv. 1-3, once each in vv. 4, 5, 7, 13, and 14); twice in Psalm 149 (vv. 1, 3); and eleven times in Psalm 150 (twice each in vv. 1-5 and once in v. 6). Thus the הַלֵּל lexeme in various forms occurs more than ten times in Psalms 148 and 150, and none of the synonyms to the הַלֵּל lexeme occurs in Psalms 148 and 150. Psalms 146, 147, and 149, on the other hand, do not employ the הַלֵּל lexeme as much, but various synonyms to the הַלֵּל lexeme occur in these psalms: זָמַר (v.2) in Psalm 146; זָמַר (vv. 1, 7), עָנַן (v. 7) and שָׁבַח (v. 12) in Psalm 147; and שָׁמַיִן (v. 2), גִּיל (v. 2), and רָנַן (v. 5) in Psalm 149.

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<sup>17</sup>For example, see J. P. Fokkelman's poetic shape of Psalms 146-150 in J. P. Fokkelman, *The Psalms in Form: The Hebrew Psalter in Its Poetic Shape* (Tools for Biblical Study 4; Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2002), 151-54. Chapter Four will include the enveloping effect of the hallelujah frames in details.

Repetition does not always have to be the same lexeme. Indeed, use of synonyms can effectively intensify the principal theme. Thus this rather frequent repetition of the הלל lexeme as well as its synonyms solidifies the interconnectedness of Psalms 146-150. These repetitions also point to the apparent fact that the principal theme of the final Hallelujah Psalms is unmistakably that of extended praise, and that the interconnectedness of these psalms is not limited to the editorial activity commonly identified by scholars as secondary, i.e., the הלל־לִיהוָה frames.

Psalms 146-150 share only one other link that is common to all of them. This important repetition is the occurrence of the divine name יהוה. Frequent mention of the personal name of God is, of course, one of the most noticeable characteristics of the hymnic genre. As such, the fact that God's personal name יהוה frequently occurs in all of the final Hallelujah Psalms that are all a joyous hymn may not seem to be that significant in connecting these psalms together. Thus it is possible to regard the use of the term as incidental repetition. Nevertheless, we need to pay attention to the way in which this divine personal name occurs. It occurs nine times in Psalm 146 (once in vv. 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 3 times in v. 8), five times in Psalm 147 (vv. 2, 6, 7, 11, 12), four times in Psalms 148 (vv. 1, 5, 7, 13), twice in Psalm 149 (vv. 1, 4), and none in Psalm 150, except its shortened form יה (v. 6). Thus the frequency of the occurrence of the divine name decreases as the final Hallelujah collection reaches to the end. This decrease is quite suggestive especially when we consider the fact that the psalmist could have used the phrase יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ as in 148:1. Interestingly, another noticeable shift related to this decreasing movement takes place in Psalm 150 in that instead of the personal divine name יהוה, a more general, universal name אֱלֹהִים occurs (v. 1). The effect of this shift, I

suggest, is to call attention to Yahweh as God of the universe as the psalmist summons all that breathes to praise God. The more general divine name אֱלֹהִים occurs in Psalm 146:5 in a construct form אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, but this occurrence here is not to emphasize the universality of Yahweh. Thus we can observe that the final Hallelujah Psalms begin with highlighting Yahweh as God of Israel or God of Jacob, but end with a proclamation of Yahweh as אֱלֹהֵי, God of the universe. When considered together with the progression of praise from particularism toward universalism, therefore, the decreasing tendency of the use of the personal name of God is significant in highlighting the structure and the progression of praise in the final Hallelujah Psalms.

Another noticeable overall aspect of the keywords and thematic links on the chart is that adjacent psalms tend to share more keywords and thematic links than do the psalms that are farther apart. Barry Davis whose dissertation deals with a contextual analysis of Psalms 107-118 makes the same observation concerning Psalms 107-118.<sup>18</sup> Psalms 146 and 147, for example, share the זָמַר lexeme. Although the same lexeme occurs in Psalm 149, it does not in Psalms 148 and 150. Another example is the phrase אֱלֹהֵי הַיָּם commonly shared by Psalms 146 and 147, but not by Psalms 148-150. Psalms 149 and 150, on the other hand, share אֱלֹהֵי. Although Psalm 146 contains the Hebrew term, Psalms 147 and 148 do not. This tendency of sharing a greater number of keyword and thematic links between psalms that are close to each other than in psalms that are farther apart will become more apparent as we analyze more keyword and thematic links in the rest of this chapter.

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<sup>18</sup>Barry C. Davis, "A Contextual Analysis of Psalms 107-118" (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1996), iv.

When read casually, Psalms 146-150 do not seem to share many keyword and thematic links besides the fact that they all are a joyous hymn. When examined closely, however, the final Hallelujah Psalms betray a very close parallel to each other. Thus one must continue to interpret these psalms in the Psalter in relation to each other after interpreting them separately. For example, the same lexeme הלל occurs so frequently in all the psalms: Twice in Psalm 146 (vv. 1, 2), once in Psalm 147 (v. 12), six times in Psalm 148, and eleven times in Psalm 150 (twice in every verse except once in verse 6). Psalm 149 is the only exception to this frequent use of the lexeme. Yet Psalm 149 contains other Hebrew verbs that are semantically parallel to הלל. Those verbs of “semantic repetition” include שיר (v. 1), שמח (v. 2), גיל (v. 2), זמר (v. 3), and רנן (v. 5).<sup>19</sup>

Repetition, perhaps, is the most fundamental technique the psalmists used to intensify the effect of poetic language. The psalmists, however, did not always repeat the same lexeme. They often manifested variations rather than complete identity.<sup>20</sup> Even within the same lexeme, they employed various forms of the lexeme, as in the case of הלל. They also added to the effect of intensification by means of employing various terms that are semantically parallel. Considering this aspect of semantic repetition, the final Hallelujah Psalms share more common features than they first appear to share, pointing to the purposeful arrangement of these psalms.

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<sup>19</sup>L. Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (SB 11; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 65. He terms such a poetic technique as “semantic repetition.”

<sup>20</sup>John Goldingay, “Repetition and Variation in the Psalms,” *JQR* 68 (1977): 150.

*Elements Common to Adjacent Psalms*

While Psalms 146-150 as a whole do not share any keyword links other than the hallelujah frames, the divine name יהוה, and thematic similarities, psalms adjacent to each other tend to share a greater number of keyword and thematic links.<sup>21</sup> This tendency with its decreasing number of the keyword and the thematic links as this final collection of the Hebrew Psalter reaches the end is suggestive and supports the view of the deliberate placement of these psalms at the end of the Hebrew Psalter by the means of lexical, as well as thematic, links.

*Psalm 146 and Psalm 147*

Psalm 146 shares more keyword and thematic-lexeme links with Psalm 147 than with any other psalm in the group. They have a total of sixteen lexical links. Two are keyword links, and twelve are thematic-lexeme links.

Keyword links: הלל (146:1a, 1b, 2, 10; 147: 1, 12, 20)  
זמר (146:2; 147:1, 7)

Thematic-lexeme links: שבח/ענה/זמר (147:7, 12)  
יהוה (146:1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10; 147:2, 6, 7, 11, 12)  
אלהם (146:2, 5, 10; 147:1, 7, 12)  
ציון (146:10; 147:12)  
עשה (146:6, 7; 147:20)  
נתן (146:7; 147:9, 16)  
עוד (146:9; 147:6)  
להם (146:7; 147:9)  
רשעים (146:9; 147:6)  
משפט (146:7; 147:19, 20)  
ארץ (146:6; 147:6, 8, 15)  
שמם (146:6; 147:8)

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<sup>21</sup>Chart 1 does not include the thematic similarities present in all of the final Hallelujah Psalms. We will provide a chart and discuss them near the end of this chapter.

Incidental Repetitions: יַעֲקֹב (146:5; 147:19)  
 רָוַח (146:4; 147:18)

Besides the pair of hallelujah frames, these two psalms also share the same lexeme in exactly the same form הִלְלִי, piel imperative feminine singular of הלל (146:1; 147:12). Each psalm uses the same lexeme once more, אֶהְלֵל in 146:2 and הִתְהַלֵּה in 147:1. Yet a number of other Hebrew verbs that are semantically parallel to the הלל lexeme occurs in both psalms. These verbs of semantic repetition include זָמַר (146:2; 147:1, 7), עָנָה (147:7), and שָׁבַח (147:12). Thus while not resorting to the repetition of the same הלל lexeme, these two psalms intensify the theme of praise of YHWH by employing various terms that are semantically parallel.

Both Psalms 146 and 147 also share another identical phrase אֱלֹהֵי צִיּוֹן, your God O Zion (146:10; 147:12). Psalm 146 begins with the psalmist addressing himself/herself “Praise YHWH, O my soul” (v.1) because YHWH is his/her King (v.2). Then Psalm 146 ends with addressing Zion, “YHWH reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations” (v.10). Likewise, in Psalm 147 the psalmist invites Zion to join in the praise “praise your God, O Zion” (v. 12). In both psalms the psalmists point their audience Zion to the fact that their God is none other than יהוה, a fitting reason for their praise. Thus this identical phrase אֱלֹהֵי צִיּוֹן functions as an important keyword linking Psalms 146 and 147.

Closely related with the emphasis on Zion is an emphasis on the name Jacob in both psalms. יַעֲקֹב occurs once in both psalms (146:5; 147:19). The phrase אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב in

Psalms 146 and 147 occur often elsewhere in the Psalter,<sup>22</sup> and it is typically associated with a refuge for God's people.<sup>23</sup> Jacob is often singled out because more so than the other patriarchs Jacob experienced immutable faithfulness on God's part in spite of the fact that he did not deserve it.<sup>24</sup> As such, the phrase "God of Jacob" represents YHWH as the Protector of His people. This "God of Jacob" has also revealed His word to Jacob (147:19). YHWH has not done so to any other nation (147:20). In both psalms a clear emphasis on particularism is apparent.

Also the fact that the divine name אֱלֹהֵי ה' occurs three times in both psalms is suggestive (vv. 2, 5, 10 in Ps. 146 and 1, 7, 12 in Ps. 147). Interestingly, אֱלֹהֵי ה' does not occur in other Hallelujah psalms. Psalms 149 and 150 share another divine name, but it is אֱלֹהִים not אֱלֹהֵי ה'. This tendency suggests that the adjacent psalms tend to share the same keywords links more than psalms that are farther apart. The fact that these psalms repeatedly employ אֱלֹהֵי ה' alone may not be that significant, but when combined with their use of possessive pronouns at the end of אֱלֹהֵי ה' the text betrays a progression of the scope of praise from an individual, the psalmist, (146:2) to the people of Zion (147:1). The scope of praise proceeds from לֵאלֹהֵי ה', "my God," (146:2) to אֱלֹהֵי ה', "his God," (146:5), then widens to include אֱלֹהֵי ה' צִיּוֹן, "your God O Zion," and finally ends with the all-inclusive אֱלֹהֵינוּ, "our God" (147:1).

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<sup>22</sup>Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 127, points out a surprising discovery as to how little reference is made to Jacob and other patriarchs for that matter, in the pre-exilic literature.

<sup>23</sup>Cf., Ps. 46:8, 12.

<sup>24</sup>Martin S. Rozenberg and Bernard M. Zlotowitz, *The Book of Psalms: A New Translation and Commentary* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1999), 921, suggest that Jacob is singled out because he needed God's protective intervention more than the other patriarchs.

One can find further lexical and thematic connections between Psalms 146 and 147. In fact, Psalm 147 follows upon Psalm 146 in several ways. For example, 147:1 seems to function as an “evaluation” of the preceding Psalm 146 as well as an “introduction” of the rest of Psalm 147.<sup>25</sup> Apparently, it is good and pleasant for Zion to sing praises to her God, the God of Jacob and the Builder of Jerusalem, another name for Zion. Also Ps. 147:6 evidently is reminiscent of Ps. 146:9. In these two verses a number of the same terms are repeated as well as an emphasis on YHWH’s reign as a just King. Psalm 147:6 reads, “YHWH defends the poor and needy but brings the wicked down to the ground.” In so doing, two terms, namely עוֹרֵד and רָשָׁעִים, lexically link the verse to 146:9 where the same terms occur: “YHWH watches over the sojourners; He comes to the aid of the orphan and widow, but frustrates the path of the wicked.” עוֹרֵד occurs as יְעוֹרֵד, polel imperfect third masculine singular in 146:9 and as מְעוֹרֵד, polel participle masculine singular, in 147:6. As such, both occurrences signify YHWH’s role as the “Defender” of the poor over against the wicked. Furthermore, while עֲנָוִים (the poor) does not occur in Psalm 146, it has other terms, such as alien, orphan, and widow, to parallel the thought (v. 9). Thus 147:6 creatively repeats the thought of 146:9 by means of the two lexical links as well as variation in the repetition.

This idea of YHWH as the “Defender” of the poor and needy or His reign as a just King actually begins with 146:7, which describes Him as God who secures justice (מִשְׁפָּט) for the oppressed and gives food (לֶחֶם) to the hungry. מִשְׁפָּט occurs twice in Psalm 147 (vv. 19, 20), and לֶחֶם also appears in Psalm 147, describing YHWH as a merciful God

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<sup>25</sup>J. Clinton McCann, Jr., “The Book of Psalms,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. IV (ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 1267.

who provides food for animals (v. 9). Thus both Psalms 146 and 147 describe YHWH's reign as that of a just King, and the repeated use of various Hebrew terms along with their semantic parallel terms intensify the theme and thereby intertextually connecting the two psalms.

Furthermore, similarities between Psalms 146 and 147 are not only limited to the shared vocabularies and their semantic parallels but also extend to the style and mood.<sup>26</sup> For example, participial titles given to YHWH frequently occur in both psalms: He is עֹשֶׂה the “Maker” of heaven and earth (146:6a), עֹשֶׂה the “Maker” of justice (146:7a), נָתַן the “Giver” of food (146:7b; 147:9a), מַחְיֶה the “Liberator” of prisoners (146:7c), בּוֹנֵה the “(Re)Builder” of Jerusalem (147:2a) and הַרְפִּיֵא the “Healer” of the brokenhearted (147:3a).<sup>27</sup> These participial nouns describe what Page H. Kelly identifies as “vocationally identifying activity.”<sup>28</sup> In other words, these participial titles given to YHWH describe His “vocation,” which includes various gracious tasks on behalf of His people. Participial forms occur so frequently in Psalm 147 that almost every verse has one even though not always rendered as a substantive in English translations.

Closely related to these vocationally identifying activities of YHWH is the concept of YHWH as the ideal king who performs all the requisite kingly duties. Both Psalms 146 and 147 characterize YHWH's reign as just. Nancy deClaissé-Walford, for example, suggests that “Psalm 146 reads as a summary of duties people in the ancient Near East

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<sup>26</sup>Joseph P. Brennan, “Some Hidden Harmonies in the Fifth Book of Psalms,” in *Essays in Honor of Joseph P. Brennan* (ed. Robert F. McNamara; Rochester: St. Bernard's Seminary, 1976), 149.

<sup>27</sup>This style of giving participial titles to YHWH also occurs in Pss. 145:14-20 and 149:2.

<sup>28</sup>Page H. Kelly, *Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 201.

expected their kings to perform,” and Psalm 147 continues to employ the very kingly language, with YHWH faithfully caring for His subjects.<sup>29</sup> YHWH, of course, is not a mere human king, and His cosmic reign and power are praised in Psalm 148, thus continuing the theme of YHWH’s universal reign. This theme of YHWH’s reign also continues in Psalm 149 where the confession of YHWH as the Maker of Israel appears once again in the form of the participial noun, and it parallels the understanding of YHWH as the King of Zion.

Apparently, the mood of Psalms 146 and 147 is closely tied to their themes and thus functions as thematic link. Although we cannot date these psalms with any degree of certainty, both psalms seem to reflect the mood of the post-exilic period.<sup>30</sup> Both psalms espouse the God of Zion as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. YHWH is the Maker of heaven and earth and everything in them. Yet He does not remain aloof. Instead, He remains faithful, אָמֵן (146:6). He reigns forever (146:10). His reign is just and it is characterized by his care (רָחֵם) of the faithful (147:11).<sup>31</sup> Yet his faithful care is not limited only to the faithful. As noted above, YHWH is the “Giver” of food. Apparently, he gives food to the hungry (146:7), but he also gives food to animals (147:9). His faithful care is specific as well as universal. In fact, when the theme of

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<sup>29</sup>Nancy deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 100.

<sup>30</sup>LXX titles Psalms 146 and 147 as “Of Haggai and Zechariah,” suggesting their relationship to the return from exile.

<sup>31</sup>Although רָחֵם and אָמֵן are not identical, they are semantically parallel.

YHWH as Creator appears in the Psalter, it is always a mixture of particularism and universalism, for YHWH is the God of Jacob as well as the God of the universe.<sup>32</sup>

There is yet another term Psalms 146 and 147 share in common. The Hebrew term ריח occurs in both psalms. It is rendered “breath” in 146:4 and “breezes” in 147:18. Neither occurrence of the term plays a significant role in the respective psalm. Thus the occurrences of this term belong to the category of incidental repetitions that are not as important as other links.

### *Psalm 147 and Psalm 148*

Psalms 147 and 148 share a total of fifteen lexical links. Two are keyword links, and eleven are thematic-lexeme links.

Keyword links: הלל (147:1, 12, 20; 148:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 13, 14)  
תהלה (147:1; 148:14)

Thematic-lexeme links: שבח/ענה/זמר (147:1, 7/7/12)  
יהוה (147:2, 6, 7, 11, 12; 148:1, 5, 7, 13)  
שמ (147:4; 148:5, 13)  
ישךאל (147:2; 148:14)  
צנה (147:15; 148:5)  
דבר (147:15, 18, 19; 148:8)  
חק (147:19; 148:6)  
נתן (147:9, 16; 148:6)  
חסד (147:11; 148:14)  
ארץ (147:6, 8, 15; 148:7, 11a, 11b, 13)  
שמים (147:8; 148:1, 4a, 4b, 13)

Incidental Repetitions: ריח (147:18; 148:8)  
עשה (147:20; 148:8)

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<sup>32</sup>Jacob Chinitz, “Particularism and Universalism in Psalms” *JBQ* 29 (2001): 13-17, points out that Psalms 146-150 and the doxologies which conclude the five books of the psalms (Pss. 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106-48; 150) reveal a mixture of particularism and universalism.

Based on the keyword and thematic links as well as the style and mood shared by both Psalms 146 and 147, we can say that Psalm 147 recalls Psalm 146. Yet besides recalling Psalm 146, Psalm 147 also anticipates Psalms 148 and 149.<sup>33</sup> The common connection between Psalms 146-148 is also recognized by the editor(s)/ translator(s) of the Septuagint who titled these psalms “Of Haggai and Zechariah.”<sup>34</sup> Apparently, they related these psalms to the return from exile. The progression of praise also links Psalms 146-148 together. Psalm 146 begins with the self-summons of the psalmist, and the people of Zion are also summoned at the end of the psalm. As discussed above, the psalmist’s use of personal pronouns in Psalm 146 progresses from “my God” (146:2) to “his/her God” (146:5) and ends in “your God” (146:10). Psalm 147 continues this progression of the possessive pronouns by employing the phrase “our God” (147:1). Although this progression of the possessive pronoun is not continued in Psalm 148, Psalm 147 still functions to bridge Psalms 146 and 148 by the succession of the summons: The individual summons in Psalm 146, the communal/national summons in Psalm 147 and the universal or cosmic summons in Psalm 148. First the psalmist, then the people of Zion, and finally all of creation are summoned to praise YHWH.<sup>35</sup> Thus we can assume from this succession that Psalms 146, 147, and 148 are purposefully arranged by the editor(s) of the Hebrew Psalter to “widen the scope” of praise, from an individual to all the creatures, both animate and inanimate, in the universe.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 1267.

<sup>34</sup>Psalms 146-148 are divided into four psalms, 145-148, in the Septuagint.

<sup>35</sup>DeClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 101.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

Thus Psalms 147 and 148, as anticipated, share a number of keywords besides the aforementioned ones common to all final Hallelujah Psalms. The most apparent and frequent link perhaps is a pair of Hebrew terms שָׁמַיִם and אֲרֶץ. שָׁמַיִם occurs only once in Psalm 147 (v. 8) but five times in Psalm 148 (once in vv. 1, 13, and three times in v. 4). אֲרֶץ also occurs as often, three times in Psalm 147 (vv. 6, 8, 15) and four times in Psalm 148 (once in vv. 7, 13, and twice in v. 11). Psalm 148 is a creation hymn.<sup>37</sup> As such, the occurrence of this pair of Hebrew terms is expected in Psalm 148. As James L. Mays puts it, the theme of “heaven and earth” is foundational in this psalm.<sup>38</sup> But this creation language is introduced already in Psalm 147 and is only fully developed in Psalm 148.<sup>39</sup> In the first section of Psalm 148, the psalmist summons all inhabitants and beings, both animate and inanimate, of heaven to praise YHWH (vv. 1-6), and in the second section the psalmist invites earthly beings, objects, and elements to praise YHWH (vv. 7-13). Thus both Psalms 147 and 148 espouse the sovereignty of God as God the Creator, and as such the repeated occurrences of the Hebrew terms שָׁמַיִם and אֲרֶץ can be appropriately expected. Psalms 146 and 149 also explicitly proclaim the sovereignty of God (Pss. 146:10; 149:2), thus extending their intertextual connections.

There is the possibility that Psalms 147 and 148 were originally joined together as a pair. Joseph P. Brennan argues that 147:1, “it is pleasant and praise is fitting” (תְּהִלָּה) (כִּי־נֶעִים וְנִאֲנָה) and 148:14, “praise of all his faithful ones” (תְּהִלָּה לְכָל־חַסִּידָיו), form an

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<sup>37</sup>W. H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990), 81.

<sup>38</sup>James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Interpretation series; Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 444.

<sup>39</sup>DeClaisé-Walford, 101.

inclusion.<sup>40</sup> Both psalms share **הַהֲלִיחַ**, and its semantic parallel **הִוֵּר** also occurs in 148:13. Adding another keyword link, **חִסָּד** occurs again in 147:11. He goes on to say that this possibility is strengthened by the strong resemblance between 147:16, 18 and 148:8:<sup>41</sup>

147:16, 18 – “He who sends *snow* like wool ... He sends *his word* and melts them, he makes his blow, and the waters flow”

148:8 – “fire and hail, *snow* and clouds, storm *wind* that executes *his word*”

Closely related to the possibility described above is the fact that Psalms 147 and 148 share a number of Hebrew terms that are semantically parallel in reference to YHWH’s word. These terms include **דִּבֶּר** (147:15, 18, 19; 148:8) and **קָהַ** (147:19; 148:6). Although not shared by both psalms, other terms that are semantically parallel to **דִּבֶּר** occur frequently in one of these psalms: **אָמַר** (147:15), **צִוָּה** (148:5), **קָרָא** (147:4), and **מִשְׁפָּט** (147:19, 20). These strong verbs of transformation characterize ancient Israel’s faith in YHWH as a God who commands.<sup>42</sup> As such, Psalms 147 and 148 commonly portray the Word of YHWH as powerfully at work in the life of individuals, in the nation of Israel, and even in nature, adding another dimension to the intertextual connections between the two psalms.

The Hebrew term **עָשָׂה** occurs in both psalms (147:20; 148:8), having YHWH and wind as the subject respectively. Neither plays a significant role in developing the main theme of the respective psalm. Thus this term belongs to the category of the incidental repetitions and is not as important as other links for our purposes.

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<sup>40</sup>Brennan, “Some Hidden Harmonies in the Fifth Book of Psalms,” 151.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 145, 181-82.

*Psalm 148 and Psalm 149*

Psalms 148 and 149 share fewer lexical links than the previous psalm pairs.

Psalm pair 148 and 149 has a total of ten lexical links. Three are keyword links, and five are thematic-lexeme links.

Keyword links: הלל (148:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 13, 14; 149:1, 3, 9)  
 תהלה (148:14; 149:1)  
 חסידים (148:14; 149:1, 5, 9)

Thematic-lexeme links: גיל/רנן/שמח/שיר/זמר (148:3/1/2/5/2)  
 יהוה (148:1, 5, 7, 13; 149: 1, 4)  
 שם (148:13; 149:3)  
 ישראל (148:14; 149:2)  
 עם (148:14; 149:4)

Incidental Repetitions: עשה (148:8; 149:7, 9)  
 מלך (148:11; 149:2, 8)

Psalm 148 anticipates Psalms 149 and 150. As mentioned above in chapter two, Psalm 148 consists of the extended invitation to praise, thus anticipating Psalm 150.<sup>43</sup> Also as mentioned above in this chapter, Psalms 146-148 are linked together by widening the scope of praise from an individual level to the cosmic level. But this widened scope of praise is momentarily narrowed to YHWH's faithful ones in 148:14 and in Psalm 149, only to be widened again in Psalm 150.<sup>44</sup> Thus Psalms 148 and 150, both being a psalm of universalism, intercalated Psalm 149, a psalm of particularism.

After the cosmic summons of Psalm 148 involving both heavenly and earthly beings, Psalm 149 focuses once again on Israel's praise of YHWH. Due to this shift of focus, perhaps, Psalms 148 and 149 share very few keyword and thematic links. Perhaps

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<sup>43</sup>McCann, "The Book of Psalms," 1271.

<sup>44</sup>DeClaissé-Walford, 101.

the greater number of keyword and thematic links between Psalms 148 and 149 is most well-known due to the scholarly debate on the last verse of Psalm 148, as we discussed in Chapter Two. Whether Psalm 149 is a composition generated by Ps. 148:14 or this verse is just an editorial insertion to link the two psalms, Psalm 149 does indeed skillfully take up the theme of the last verse of Psalm 148. Psalm 148 ends with “the praise of all His faithful, of Israel, the people close to His heart.” Psalm 149 takes up the keyword “faithful” occurring at strategic places, i.e., at the beginning (v. 1), the middle (v. 5), and the end (v. 9), thereby creatively and firmly linking the psalm to Psalm 148. Furthermore, Psalm 149 as a whole is the praise of Israel.

#### *Psalm 149 and Psalm 150*

When compared to other adjacent psalms in this last collection of the Hebrew Psalter, Psalms 149 and 150 share the least number of keyword and thematic links between them. Thus the number of the keyword and thematic links between the adjacent psalms decreases as the final Hallelujah collection comes to the end. Psalms 149 and 150 have a total of five lexical links. One is a keyword link, and four are thematic-lexeme links.

Keyword links: הלל (149:1, 3, 9; 150:1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b, 6)

Thematic-lexeme links: גיל/רננ/שמח/שיר/זמר (148:3/1/2/5/2)

אל (149:6; 150:1)

תך (149:3; 150:4)

מחול (149:3; 150:4)

Psalms 149 and 150 share the הלל-יה frames which occur in the beginning and at the end. Psalm 149 employs the הלל lexeme only once more (v. 3). Yet its semantic

parallels frequently occur in this psalm. They include שִׁיר (v. 1), שֹׁמַח (v. 2), זֶמֶר (v. 3), and רִנָּן (v. 5).

Psalm 150 is unique in its tenfold repetition of the imperative plural הַלְלוּ (twice each in verses 1-5). Of these ten occurrences, nine times are exactly identical even down to the pronominal suffix הֵם. The only exception is the first occurrence where אֵל appears instead of the pronominal suffix (150:1). One last occurrence of the same הַלְלוּ lexeme appears in the last verse in the form of the jussive, הַלְלוּ, “let them praise,” marking a special emphasis. Thus unlike Psalm 149, variation in the repetition is kept at a minimal in Psalm 150. Nevertheless, this jussive use of the הַלְלוּ lexeme links this psalm to Psalm 149, where the only other jussive use of the הַלְלוּ lexeme in the final Hallelujah Psalms occurs (v. 3). When we consider the fact that Psalm 149 is the only psalm in the final Hallelujah collection that employs the jussive repeatedly (vv. 2-3, 5-6), this link is suggestive.

In addition to the multiple use of the הַלְלוּ lexeme and its semantically parallel terms, Psalms 149 and 150 are also linked by the same mode of praise. In Psalm 149 the psalmist summons the sons of Zion to praise their Maker with תִּנְחָל, tambourine, and מְחֹל, dance (v. 3). In Psalm 150 the psalmist invites all that breathes to praise God with תִּנְחָל, tambourine, and מְחֹל, dance (v. 4), linking this psalm to Psalm 149. Besides sharing these two terms, Psalm 150 employs more terms of musical instruments, adding more weight to the intertextual connections between these two psalms.

The only other term Psalms 149 and 150 share in common is אֵל (149:6; 150:1). Perhaps this link may be transitional, but it is not significant in the development of the

thought or theme shared by both psalms although the use of this Hebrew term, לל, in Psalm 150 is important in its emphasis on universalism.

Chart 2 below shows frequencies of lexical links between psalm pairs in the final Hallelujah Psalms. As indicated above, the number of keyword and thematic links between the adjacent psalms decreases as the final Hallelujah collection reaches to the end. Psalm pair 146 and 147 presents the highest number of lexical links (a total of sixteen), while the last psalm pair, Psalms 149 and 150, has the smallest number of lexical links, a total of only five. The decrease of the number of keyword and thematic-lexeme links between the adjacent psalm pairs as the final Hallelujah Psalms come to an end is, perhaps, partly due to the decreasing number of verses in the psalms.

Table 2. Lexeme Frequencies among Psalm Pairs

Psalm Pair	Key-lexeme Links	Thematic-lexeme Links	Subtotal Key- and Thematic Lexeme Links	Incidental Repetitions	Total Number of Lexeme Repetitions
146/147	2	12	14	2	16
147/148	2	11	13	3	15
148/149	3	5	8	2	10
149/150	1	4	5	0	5

*Thematic Similarities Common to All the Final Hallelujah Psalms*

Theme is subject-matter or a group of ideas regularly used in a psalm.<sup>45</sup> Theme can be portrayed by means of repeated use of keywords, thematic words, and thematic similarities. Chart one tabulates the frequency of the first two, but not the thematic similarities in Psalms 146-150 since the thematic similarities are not necessarily

<sup>45</sup>Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 75, 81.

portrayed by the use of the same keywords or thematic-lexeme links. Thus we include thematic similarities in our discussion of thematic links.

The thematic links common to Psalms 146-150 are sometimes not as apparent as the keyword links. Nonetheless, common dominant themes and motifs are present in all of these psalms to link them. Apparently, most common to all of these psalms is that they all praise Yahweh. Yet, the most apparent thematic links in these psalms, besides the apparent summons to praise Yahweh, can be found in their emphasis in Yahweh's mighty works in creation and his sustaining power, in particular, his incomparable mercy or care for his creatures, especially the humble and needy, as the chart below reveals.

Psalms 146-150 all affirm YHWH's mighty works in creation, as this creation motif is prevalent in the Hebrew Psalter. He is the "Maker of heaven and earth" (עֹשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ), and sea and everything in them (אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם), as expressed in 146:6. Psalm 147 continues to speak of his greatness and creative power as YHWH counts the number of stars (מוֹנֶה מִסְפָּר לְכוֹכָבִים) and names them (לְכֹלֵם שְׁמוֹת יִקְרָא), implying his dominion over them (147:4-5). Psalm 148 summons all creation to praise YHWH, for everything was created by his command (כִּי הוּא צִוָּה וַיִּבְרָא), as it is portrayed in verse 5. The following verse (148:6) also speaks of YHWH's works of creation: He set the Sun, Moon, and stars in place forever (יַעֲמִידֵם לְעַד לְעוֹלָם) and made a decree that shall never change (חֻק־נֶתַן וְלֹא יִעָבֹר). In the second verse of Psalm 149 YHWH's creative power focuses on the nation of Israel as "his Maker" (עֹשֵׂיוֹ), which is reminiscent of "the Maker of heaven" (146:6). Psalm 150, like Psalm 148, emphatically summons all creation to praise YHWH (150:6). "All that breathes" (כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה) is clearly reminiscent of the creation of the world and of human

life (Gen. 2:7). Every living creature exists because of YHWH's creative and sustaining power.

Thus Psalms 146-150 all speak of the work of YHWH as Creator and Sustainer of life by espousing his works of helping and caring for his creatures. He is "the Maker of the heaven and earth," and he "remains faithful forever" (146:6). His reign is just, and his covenant commitment remains forever unchangeable. With this underlying sense of dependability, he "secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry," and "sets the prisoners free" (146:7). He "gives sight to the blind," "lifts up those who are bowed down," and "loves the righteous" (146:8). He "watches over the sojourners," "comes to the aid of the orphan and widow," but "frustrates the path of the wicked" (146:9).

As the (Re)Builder of Jerusalem, YHWH "gathers the exiles of Israel" (147:2). His vocation is to care for his people as he "heals the brokenhearted, and he binds their wounds" (147:3). He strengthens the bars of Israel's gates and blesses their sons within them (147:13). He grants peace to their borders and satisfies them with the finest wheat (147:14). YHWH, the Maker of Israel, "crowns the lowly with salvation" (149:4) and strengthens Israel, the people close to his heart, by raising a horn for them (148:14). Though unspecified, YHWH's "mighty acts" give a reason for praise (150:2a). Thus far, YHWH's caring for the creatures is primarily confined to his people Israel, the faithful, but his faithful care also extends to animals by making grass grow on the mountains and providing food for them (147:8-9). The proper response of every living creature to such a caring Creator and Sustainer of life whose reign is just and unchanging forever is to praise YHWH. As McCann aptly put it, "To praise God is to live, and to live is to praise

God.”<sup>46</sup> And that is how the Hebrew Psalter comes to an end: “Let all that breathes praise YHWH” (150:6).

Closely related to the theme of YHWH as Creator and Sustainer of life is the theme of his cosmic rule. Psalms 146-150 all commonly acknowledge YHWH’s universal or cosmic reign. In his comment on Psalm 150, McCann points out that “God’s sovereignty is the fundamental affirmation that pervades the Psalter,” and “it is especially prominent in Psalms 145-149.”<sup>47</sup> James L. Mays also proposed that an “organizing center for the theology of the psalms can be found in the sentence *Yhwh malak*.”<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the theme of God’s sovereign reign pervades this final collection of the Hallelujah Psalms. Psalm 146, for example, unequivocally claims YHWH’s reign. Reminiscent of Exodus 15:18, Psalm 146:10 reads, “YHWH will reign forever. Your God, O Zion, for all generations.” An interesting aspect of this concept of God’s reign is these psalms’ proclamation of the God of Israel’s reign over the universe.<sup>49</sup> Although YHWH as God of Zion is emphasized, his cosmic reign is also clearly declared in the expression of YHWH as “the Maker of heaven, earth, seas, and everything in them” (v. 6). Even though the same expression “the Maker of heaven and earth” does not occur, the same idea is expounded in Psalm 147. Instead, it again emphasizes YHWH as the “Builder of Jerusalem” (147:2), and the phrase “God of Zion” occurs again in this psalm, indicating

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<sup>46</sup>McCann, 1279.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 1278-1279.

<sup>48</sup>James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 13.

<sup>49</sup>Erich Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),” in Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger, *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms* (trans. Everett R. Kalin; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 161-190. Zenger pointed out that Psalms 90-106 sketch the universal royal reign of YHWH, God of Israel.

YHWH's special love for Israel, his covenant partner (147:12). Yet YHWH is not a patron god like other ancient Near East deities. He is not only the God of Israel, but also of the whole world. This emphasis on YHWH's universal reign is apparent in phrases like "He counts the number of stars; He gives names to all of them" (147:4), and "who covers the heavens with clouds, provides rain for earth, makes grass grow on the mountains" (147:8). These phrases are descriptive of YHWH's great power (147:5) and thus YHWH's reign. YHWH's universal reign is also evident in his judgment over the nations' kings (149:7-8) as well as in the whole of Psalm 148, a creation hymn in which YHWH's creation, all the heavenly and earthly bodies, both animate and inanimate, participates in praising his majesty. In spite of the fact that the Hebrew term מֶלֶךְ does not occur in Psalm 150, vocabularies used in this psalm affirm God's rule.<sup>50</sup> For example, Psalm 150 employs שְׁדָךְ, sanctuary (v. 1), which refers to a place where God dwells as King (Ps. 68:25). Also the fact that all that breathes, which recalls the creation of the universe and everything in it, are summoned to praise God (Ps. 150:6) also affirms God's cosmic rule.

Closely related to the theme of YHWH's cosmic reign is the use of kingly language in these psalms. Although Psalm 149 is the only psalm that unequivocally declares YHWH as Zion's King (v. 2), other psalms in the collection also employ similar language, describing "the ideal king who performs all the requisite kingly duties."<sup>51</sup>

A discussion YHWH's sovereign reign in Psalms 146-150 also needs to pay attention to the blending of particularism and universalism. YHWH the cosmic ruler is also the "(Re)Builder of Jerusalem/Israel" (147:2). In other words, "the Maker of the

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<sup>50</sup>McCann, 1279.

<sup>51</sup>DeClaissé-Walford, 100.

heaven and earth” (146:6) is also the “Maker of Israel” (149:2) who is faithful to his people by setting prisoners free (147:2). Rightfully, Psalm 149 as a whole invites all Israel to Praise YHWH, the Maker of Israel, because the God of the universe is also the God of Israel who is mindful of her and cares for her. Indeed, people of Zion should be glad, for YHWH is their King (149:2). He delights in those who fear him by putting their hope in his faithful care (147:11). In other words, YHWH is loyal to Israel because their relationship is characterized by mutual obligation within the covenant context.

Also what we must not overlook is the fact that the thematic similarities in Psalms 146-150 mentioned above are closely interrelated. That is, YHWH’s sovereign reign, mighty works in creation, and works of caring for his creatures, Israel in particular, cannot be espoused separately. James L. Mays, for example, aptly put the interrelatedness of these themes in the Hebrew Psalter:

The Lord’s rule is first of all the double work of creation and salvation. The divine king is a warrior who has overcome the unruly chaos to establish the world and has subdued the hostile powers of the world to gain a place and a people in the world. The marvelous deeds of creation and salvation make the Lord the judge of gods, nations, his people, and every life in the world. In these marvelous deeds, the holiness, power, justice and righteousness, and steadfast love and faithfulness of the Lord’s kingship are made known. Israel is the people in whom the Lord’s dominion takes shape in the world. The place that represents the Lord’s kingship in the world is Zion, the city of God.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 31.

Table 3. The Thematic Similarities in Psalms 146-150

Overall Theme: Praise YHWH, God of Israel and of the Universe, Who Is Faithful		
YHWH's mighty works in creation	YHWH's faithful works of caring for His creatures	YHWH's kingship and sovereign reign
The Maker of heaven and earth and everything in them (146:6)	He secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry. YHWH sets the prisoners free; YHWH gives sight to the blind; YHWH lifts up those who are bowed down; YHWH loves the righteous; YHWH watches over the sojourners. He comes to the aid of the orphan and widow, but frustrates the path of the wicked. (146:7-9)	YHWH will reign forever. Your God, O Zion, for all generations (146:10)
He counts the number of stars; He gives names to all of them. (147:4)	YHWH, the Builder of Jerusalem! He gathers the exiles of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted, and He binds their wounds ... provides Food for animals, young ravens what they cry for. He strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your sons within you. He who grants peace to your borders satisfies you with the finest wheat. (147:2-3, 8-9, 13-14)	He counts the number of Stars; He gives names to all of them. Great is our God and full power; His understanding has no limit. (147:4-5)
He commanded, and they (heavenly hosts, the Sun, Moon, and stars) were created; He set them in place for ever and ever; He made a decree that will never change. (148:5-6)	He has raised up a horn for His people. (148:14a)	Praise YHWH from the heavens; praise Him on high. Praise Him all His angels, praise Him all his heavenly hosts. Praise Him, Sun and Moon, praise Him all bright stars. (148:1-3)
Its (Israel's) Maker (149:2)	He crowns the lowly with Salvation. (149:4b)	Let the children of Zion be glad in their King. (149:2b)
All that breathes (150:6)	His [unspecified] mighty acts (150:2)	God is in His sanctuary (150:1a)

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter we set out to examine Psalms 146-150 at a microstructural level in order to discern their interconnectedness. The result of this examination reveals that these psalms have more notable verbal and thematic links to each other than they appear to have at first sight. First, we have observed that Psalms 146-150 betray purposeful movement in several different ways. As is commonly known, the Hebrew Psalter moves from plea to praise; the final collection in the Hebrew Psalter rightfully ends with five consecutive psalms of praise to punctuate the Psalter with a dramatic close. In so doing, Psalms 146-150 widen the scope of praise by summoning an individual, the nation of Israel, and all that breathes. Understandably, the use of the personal name of God יהוה decreases as the collection reaches to the end, thus employing the more universal reference to God as אל. Interestingly, as the use of the personal divine name decreases, concluding with the universal reference to God, the number of keyword and the thematic links between the adjacent psalms also decreases. When we consider these different aspects of movement at the end of the Hebrew Psalter, it is very difficult to think that these psalms are haphazardly placed at the end.

Second, Psalms 146-150 betray the tendency of sharing a greater number of keyword and thematic links between psalms that are close to each other than between psalms that are farther apart, adding weight to the theory of the purposeful placement of the psalms. This result undoubtedly points to the fact that these psalms are not randomly placed at the end of the Psalter. Instead, they are strategically placed at the end to bring the whole Psalter to a dramatic close, as it is evident in the final verse of the Psalter “Let all that breathes praise Yah.” As such, these psalms form a crescendo of praise, for

praise is the goal toward which the Psalter moves. In other words, the Hebrew Psalter is structured theologically, and the strategic placement of these psalms at the end of the Hebrew Psalter accentuates the effect of praise. As such, praise is an act of faith and a radical act of hope. In Chapter Five I will discuss in depth the concept of praise as an act of faith and a radical act of hope.

Third, each of the psalm pairs in the final Hallelujah collection manifests significant lexical interconnections, with a decreasing number of lexical links as the collection reaches to the end. The significant lexeme links occur in the following content areas: Summons to praise YHWH and the content of the praise which includes his mighty works in creation, his faithful works of caring for his creatures, and his kingship and sovereign reign.

In summary, Psalms 146-150 depict the community of Israelites celebrating YHWH as their King who is the Creator and Sustainer. The presence of significant lexical interconnections, with the decreasing number of lexical links as the collection reaches the end which is coupled with their progression of thought that moves from an individual to a universal unqualified, unencumbered praise, suggests that Psalms 146-150 are not a haphazard or miscellaneous collection of hymns. These psalms form a purposeful collection to conclude the Hebrew Psalter. In the following chapter I will discuss in detail my proposal of these psalms as a purposeful collection to conclude the Hebrew Psalter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Psalms 146-150 and Their Relationship to the Fifth Book of the Hebrew Psalter

In the previous chapter, we examined the intertextual relationships of Psalms 146-150, and this examination revealed that these psalms have close interconnections at the keyword and thematic link levels. The presence of these numerous links coupled with their progression of thought that moves from an individual to a universal unqualified, unencumbered praise is sufficient to show that Psalms 146-150 are not haphazardly placed at the end of the Hebrew Psalter. In this chapter, we will examine the relationship between these psalms and the fifth book of the Hebrew Psalter. Our examination necessitates a review of scholarly proposals on the fifth book as a literary whole, and it will help us to explore the placement of Psalms 146-150 in the Hebrew Psalter.

#### *Scholarly Proposals on the Fifth Book of the Hebrew Psalter as a Literary Whole*

Scholarly proposals on the fifth book of the Hebrew Psalter as a literary whole are sparse since canonical and literary approaches to the Psalter, as discussed in the first chapter, are a recent development. In 1998 Erich Zenger, for example, surveyed the proposals concerning the structure of the fifth book; however, he could find only three proposals by G. H. Wilson, K. Koch, and R. G. Kratz.<sup>1</sup> The latter two come from the 1990s, while Wilson's appears in the early 1980s.

Yet, perhaps, the earliest thorough treatment of the fifth book of the Psalter as a literary whole can be attributed to Joseph P. Brennan. In his 1976 article "Some Hidden

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<sup>1</sup>Erich Zenger, "The Composition and Theology of the Fifth Book of Psalms, Psalms 107-145," *JSOT* 80 (1998): 77-102.

Harmonies in the Fifth Book of the Psalms,” Brennan suggests a synchronic reading of the Psalter, in particular the fifth book, in an attempt to go beyond the limits of the current dominant form-critical and cult-functional approach to the Psalter. He perceived the governing principle of the final collection of the fifth book to be literary, not cultic. What this perception meant for him is that the previously independent psalms now comment upon and respond to one another in the canonical context by means of their strategic placement, aided by similarity of phrasing and themes. Consequently, he proposed that the psalms must be studied in relationship to each other since they collectively convey more than they do if studied separately.<sup>2</sup> His proposal is based on the fact that the individual psalms betray at least two contexts, i.e., the original compositional context and the final canonical context. For him both contexts are important in interpretation although the original compositional context is subordinated to the final literary or canonical context.

Following his own proposal, Brennan analyzed the fifth book of the Psalter as a literary unit and offered a threefold division of the book. According to his analysis, three great cycles of psalms emerge in the fifth book: First cycle (Pss. 107-119), the Exodus and the covenant renewed; second cycle (Pss. 120-136), the Pilgrimage to Zion; and third cycle (Pss. 137-150), the final victorious combat.<sup>3</sup> Each cycle reveals a similar “ascending movement,” “beginning with a retrospective reference to life in exile,” and “moving gradually upward into the realms of praise and thanksgiving.”<sup>4</sup> He suggests that

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<sup>2</sup>Joseph P. Brennan, “Some Hidden Harmonies in the Fifth Book of the Psalms,” in *Essays in Honor of Joseph P. Brennan* (ed. Robert F. McNamara; Rochester: St. Bernard’s Seminary, 1976), 126-28.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 129-50.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 128.

links exist between the three cycles. In most cases, links are similarities of phrasing and development of thoughts that appear from psalm to psalm. His proposal can be charted as following:

Table 4. Joseph P. Brennan's Division of the Fifth Book

Cycle	Psalms	Theme
Cycle 1	Pss. 107-119	The Exodus and the covenant renewed
Cycle 2	Pss. 120-136	The pilgrimage to Zion
Cycle 3	Pss. 137-150	The final victorious combat

The final form of the fifth book, according to Brennan, is a post-exilic product. The first cycle, Brennan argues, looks back to the events of the Exodus and to the gift of the Law. Yet this cycle does not remain in the past but looks forward to the renewal of these events in the return from Babylon. The second cycle then stresses the various stages of pilgrimage to the restored Jerusalem. With its moments of desperation and exaltation, Brennan suggests, the last cycle “anticipates the final great confrontation in which all creation will ultimately join Yahweh’s covenant-people in acknowledging him as God and King.”<sup>5</sup> Evidently, he considered Psalms 146-150 to be an element in the fifth book. In fact, he suggests that Psalm 145’s title “A Song of Praise,” which forms an inclusion in the final verse (21), and the use of the verb הלל in 145:2-3 set the mood for Psalms 146-150.<sup>6</sup> Thus his suggestion anticipates Gerald H. Wilson’s treatment of Psalms 146-150 as the conclusion of the Hebrew Psalter, drawing their impetus from 145:21.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

Initially, Brennan's proposal failed to produce substantial scholarly attention. It was only much later that his proposal finally began to receive some scholarly appreciation. David M. Howard, for example, credits Brennan's proposal as one of the earliest attempts to a contextual (i.e., literary) interpretation of the fifth book.<sup>7</sup> Brennan's contribution lies in his attempt to read the fifth book as a literary whole that has its own coherent themes, not in the fact that he attracted a great following. He clearly saw the value of the editorial work of the Psalter, which was often regarded at the time of his writing as of secondary importance, if it received any attention at all.

Several years later Gerald H. Wilson also espoused a similar approach to the fifth book. His earliest treatment of the fifth book as a literary whole can be found in his seminal monograph *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*. Based on his careful analysis of the editorial activity, both tacit and implicit, in the Hebrew Psalter, he suggested that Book IV functions as the "editorial center" of the final form of the Hebrew Psalter and answers the question posed in Psalm 89 regarding the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant with which Books I-III are concerned, and Book V continues the theme of Book IV, i.e., Yahweh's kingship.<sup>8</sup> Due to the presence of several sub-groupings of psalms which implies previous collections, he acknowledges a difficulty in analyzing the structure and arrangement of the fifth book. He does, however, make a number of observations. He points out that the book begins with a הַלְלוּ (thanksgiving) psalm (Ps. 107) which introduces the fifth book as it responds to the plea of the exiles expressed in

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<sup>7</sup>David M. Howard, Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93-100* (Biblical and Judaic Studies 5; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 2.

<sup>8</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS 76; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 215-228.

Ps. 106:47.<sup>9</sup> Two groups of Davidic psalms (Pss. 108-110 and Pss. 138-145) are strategically placed to set David up as a model in response to the concerns of the preceding psalms, and Psalm 119 occupies a central position in the book.<sup>10</sup> Psalm 145, for Wilson, stands as the “climax” of the fifth book of the Psalter, and the final Hallel (Pss. 146-150) draws its impetus from 145:21.<sup>11</sup>

In his later work, “Shaping the Psalter,” Wilson finds two distinctive parallel frames in the fifth book: A Davidic frame and a wisdom frame. He charts his proposal as following:

Davidic Frame						
Torah						
107	117	118	135	136		
Wisdom Frame						

Fig. 1. Gerald H. Wilson’s Division of the Fifth Book<sup>12</sup>

The role of wisdom in shaping the fifth book, for that matter the whole Psalter, is almost common knowledge. As early as 1951 Sigmund Mowinckel argued that the wisdom circle collected the final form of the Hebrew Psalter.<sup>13</sup> More recently, Anthony

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 220.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 221-23.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 225.

<sup>12</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, “Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOTSup 159; ed. J. Clinton McCann; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 79.

<sup>13</sup>Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, vol. 2, trans. D.R. Ap-Thomas (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 204.

Ceresko<sup>14</sup> and David Howard<sup>15</sup> have also emphasized the role of the sages in the shaping of the Hebrew Psalter. Thus Wilson's suggestion of the wisdom frame is not innovative and stands on solid ground. His unique contribution comes with his suggestion of the details of the Davidic frame. It consists of three major segments marked by הַדָּוִדִּים introductions and הַלְלֵה ה' conclusions: Psalms 107-117 (a first Davidic group), Psalms 118-135 (which frame Psalm 119 and Psalms 120-134), and Psalms 136-145 (a second Davidic group). Thus the fifth book, according to Wilson, is characterized by the positioning of the Davidic Psalms as frames of the book.<sup>16</sup> He found the other frame, i.e., the wisdom frame in Ps. 107:42-43 and Psalm 145. Thus the fifth book of the Psalter according to Wilson's arrangement practically ends with Psalm 145. This position is contrary to his previous position because in his dissertation he included Psalms 146-150 as one of the psalm groupings in the fifth book that demonstrates the presence of previous collections.<sup>17</sup> Although not explicitly stated in his dissertation, it is apparent that he regards Psalms 146-150 as part of the fifth book.

That Wilson regards Psalms 146-150 as the great doxologies, drawing their impetus from 145:21, to the Hebrew Psalter is of no question. The heart of the matter is where these psalms belong, whether they are part of the fifth book or whether they stand all by themselves. In several places he specifically states that Psalms 146-150 serve to conclude Book V and the whole Psalter. In "The Use of Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of

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<sup>14</sup>Anthony R. Ceresko, "The Sage in the Psalms," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient East* (ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 219-20.

<sup>15</sup>Howard, "Editorial Activity in the Psalter: A State-of-the Field Survey," 68.

<sup>16</sup>Wilson is not entirely satisfied with his suggestion of the arrangement of these psalms. For one thing, not all of the psalms he designated as Davidic are necessarily designated as Davidic by their superscriptions.

<sup>17</sup>Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 220.

the Hebrew Psalter,” for example, he considers Psalms 146-150 as a conclusion to the fifth book as well as to the whole Psalter. He wrote: “[T]he final Hallel (Pss 146-150) serves to conclude the final book and the whole Psalter.”<sup>18</sup> He reiterated the same position in his later article “Shaping the Psalter.” Although not stated clearly, he leaned toward seeing Psalms 146-150 as a concluding doxology to the fifth book as well as the whole Hebrew Psalter, for he wrote in regard to the matter, “considering Psalms 146-150 as a conclusion to the fifth book and the whole Psalter.”<sup>19</sup> His view was based on his examination of the strategic placement of Hallelujah psalms, which appear only in Books IV and V (Pss. 104-106, 111-117, 135, and 146-150), that led him to argue that their function is to conclude Book IV and the small groupings of psalms in Book V. The use of a doxology to conclude compositions and segments was a common practice in the ancient Near East, as he pointed out in his dissertation. Considering such a common practice, his observation that the Hallelujah Psalms as the final doxology are strategically placed at the end of Books IV and V deserves merit if we consider Psalms 146-150 as part of the fifth book, because previous doxologies are integrated into each book as part of the text. His statement, however, raises a question that cannot be readily answered, for in his subtitle he included Book V in parenthesis as Psalms 107-145 only.<sup>20</sup> That is, for Wilson Book V consists of Psalms 107-145 only, and as such the final doxology, i.e., Psalms 146-150, stands outside the fifth book. His presentation of the overall structure of

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<sup>18</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, “The Use of Royal Psalms at the ‘Seams’ of the Hebrew Psalter,” *JSOT* 35 (1986), 87.

<sup>19</sup>Wilson, “Shaping the Psalter,” 78.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

the Psalter also includes Psalms 1-145 only. Wilson's chart of the final frame below reveals his view of the structure of the whole Psalter, save Psalms 146-150.

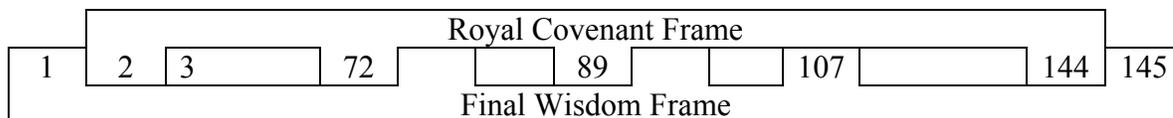


Fig. 2. Gerald H. Wilson's View of the Final Frame<sup>21</sup>

This decision to exclude Psalms 146-150 from the fifth book is due to Wilson's perception that "Ps 145 stands at the 'climax' of the fifth book of the Psalter, with the final *hallel* (Pss 146-150) drawing its impetus from 145:21."<sup>22</sup> For Wilson Psalms 146-150 are an extension of 145:21, and these psalms are unsuitable for his structural analysis of the whole Hebrew Psalter. These psalms, for Wilson, have no place in his structural analysis of the whole Psalter. In his analysis of the final frame, Psalms 1, 2, 144, and 145 play a crucial role. According to his analysis, Psalms 1 and 145 being wisdom psalms and Psalms 2 and 144 being royal psalms neatly form a chiasmic frame in the canonical Psalter. Thus the positioning of the final Hallelujah Psalms at the end of the Psalter is not suitable for his analysis of the structure. For Wilson the fifth book of the Hebrew Psalter practically concludes with Psalm 145, and Psalms 146-150 stand outside of the book. Consequently, his observation lacks a detailed analysis of Psalms 146-150.

In his later article "The Shape of the Book of Psalms" Wilson clarified his previous position. Here he suggested 145:21 to be the fifth doxology as he wrote:

[T]he whole grouping of *hllwyh* Psalms 146-150 constitutes the conclusion of the Psalter and that this final *hallel* is set in motion by the personal and universal calls

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>22</sup>Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 225.

to praise that are expressed at the end of Psalm 145:21 (“My mouth will speak the praise of Yahweh, and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever”). The blessing expressed in this verse is comparable to that expressed in the other concluding doxologies, and the vocabulary of the last half (“... bless his holy name for ever and ever”) is also similar (cf. 72:18-19).<sup>23</sup>

Wilson set aside Psalm 1 as the introduction and Psalms 146-150 as the conclusion of the Hebrew Psalter, contrasting his previous consideration of Psalms 146-150 as a conclusion to the fifth book and the whole Psalter.<sup>24</sup> For him, the one hundred forty-four psalms, between Psalm 1 and Psalms 146-150, constitute the five books of the Hebrew Psalter.

His presentation of the whole Psalter is as follows:

If, then, we set aside Psalm 1 as introduction and Psalms 146-150 as conclusion, we are left with one hundred forty-four psalms (2-145) divided into two major segments (2-89 and 90-144) by contrasting organizational techniques. These two segments are further subdivided into five “books” marked out by concluding doxologies (2-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-145).<sup>25</sup>

As Erich Zenger pointed out, Wilson’s thesis that Psalm 145 is actually the end of Book V of the Psalter was his first innovation.<sup>26</sup> In a more recent work, however, Wilson returned to the former ambiguous position once again. He writes:

You may have noticed in the above discussion that no mention was made of a fifth doxology concluding the final book of the Psalter. The solution to this seeming omission is the generally accepted observation that the final Hallel (Pss. 146-150) stands at the conclusion of the whole Psalter collection and admirably fulfills the role of concluding praise of Yahweh.<sup>27</sup>

That Psalms 146-150 conclude the whole Psalter is unambiguous and unchanged. Yet, his statement seems to leave ambiguity regarding the role of a fifth doxology. He seems

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<sup>23</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, “The Shape of the Book of Psalms,” *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 132-33.

<sup>24</sup>See Wilson, “Shaping the Psalter,” 78.

<sup>25</sup>Wilson, “The Shape of the Book of Psalms,” 133.

<sup>26</sup>Zenger, 83.

<sup>27</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, vol. 1 (NIV Application Commentary Series; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 77.

to agree with the generally accepted observation that Psalms 146-150 function as the fifth doxology. In so doing, he seems to regard these psalms as part of the fifth book, leaving his exact view to the reader's interpretation. His ambiguous position reflects a scholarly dilemma regarding the final Hallelujah Psalms. As we shall see below, scholars debate whether or not to include these psalms as part of the fifth book. Based on the writings of Wilson above, at least, those writings in which his view leaves no ambiguity, his division of the fifth book can be charted as following:

Table 5. Wilson's Division of the Fifth Book

Parts	Psalms	Content
Part 1	Ps. 107	Hodu Psalm
	Pss. 108-110	First Davidic Psalms
	Pss. 111-117	Hallelujah Psalms
Part 2	Ps. 118	Hodu Psalm
	Ps. 119	Torah Psalm
	Pss. 120-134	Psalms of Ascents
	Ps. 135	Hallelujah Psalm
Part 3	Ps. 136	Hodu Psalm
	Ps. 138	
	Pss. 139-145	Second Davidic Psalms

Wilson's division is clearly based on his understanding of the function of the הַדָּוִד and הַלְלֵה יְהוָה psalms as introductory and concluding psalms. Although Zenger criticized Wilson's division as overrating the הַדָּוִד and הַלְלֵה יְהוָה formulae, Wilson's threefold division remains cogent. Yet it does not explain the role of Psalm 119 and Psalm 137.

Thus we need to discuss how other scholars divide the fifth book of the Hebrew Psalter. In a recent article Erich Zenger summarizes and analyzes the structural proposals of the fifth book by Wilson, Koch and Kratz and investigates the composition and

theology of Book V. He suggests a number of problems with their proposals. First, he argues that all three of them “overrate” the הוֹדוּ or the הַלְלֵי הַיְהוָה formulae.<sup>28</sup> As a result, Zenger goes on to argue, Wilson and Kratz structurally separate Psalms 117 and 118 in spite of the fact that Psalm 118 concludes this sub-collection, and they also structurally separate Psalms 135 and 136. Zenger also remarks that their proposals do not explain the structural importance of Psalm 119.<sup>29</sup>

After his review and analysis of the structural proposals of the fifth book by other scholars, Zenger offers his own structural proposal of the fifth book. He divides it into several subgroups. His proposal can be translated into the following diagram:

Table 6. Erich Zenger’s Division of the Fifth Book<sup>30</sup>

Group	Psalms	Collection
Group 1 [R A]	Ps. 107	Royal beginning frame
	Pss. 108-110	Davidic (Eschatological/messianic)
	Pss. 111-112	Acrostic psalms
Group 2	Pss. 113-118	Exodus (Pesach)
Group 3 [A]	Ps. 119	Torah (Shabuoth) – Acrostic psalm
Group 4	Pss. 120-136	Zion (Sukkoth)
	Ps. 137	
Group 5 [R A]	Pss. 138-144	Davidic (Eschatological/messianic)
	Ps. 145	Acrostic end frame

Apparently, Zenger follows Wilson’s structural analysis of the Psalter with some emendations. Like Wilson, he proposes Psalms 107 and 145, which sing praises of the universal kingdom of YHWH and his saving care for all creatures, as the frame of the fifth

<sup>28</sup>Zenger, 87.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 87-88.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 98.

book.<sup>31</sup> Thus according to his proposal, Psalms 146-150 stand outside of the fifth book, and he labels them as “the closing Hallel.”<sup>32</sup> Both groups 1 and 5 begin with royal psalms, i.e., Davidic (Ps. 107 in group 1 and Pss.138-144 in group 5), and conclude with acrostic psalms (Pss. 111-112 in group 1 and Ps. 145 in group 5). With groups 2 and 4, his proposal nicely forms a chiastic structure of the fifth book, and Psalm 119 becomes the structural center of the fifth book.<sup>33</sup> Considering the importance of this massive acrostic psalm<sup>34</sup> his proposal to emphasize Psalm 119 structurally deserves merit.

The two acrostic psalms (Pss. 111 and 112) are a dual response to the oracles of Psalm 110, thus connecting the two sub-groups within group 1, Psalms 108-110 (Davidic psalms) and Psalms 111-112. Zenger also points out that these acrostic psalms exhibit a further connection to Psalms 108-110 by the lexeme רשע (wicked), which is missing in Psalms 113-118.<sup>35</sup> The following two sub-groups are the Egyptian Hallel (Pss. 113-118) with a dominating theme of exodus theology and the Songs of Zion (Pss. 120-137). Among the second of these sub-groups, the Songs of Ascents (Pss. 120-134) exhibit a coherent theological view acclaiming “Zion as the place of blessing and salvation to which Israel should go in ‘ascent’ or on ‘pilgrimage.’”<sup>36</sup> Then Psalms 135 and 136 are

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 88-89.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 101.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 98.

<sup>34</sup>For example, see David Noel Freedman, *Psalm 119: The Exaltation of Torah* (Biblical and Judaic Studies 6; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 89. He argues that Psalm 119 gives Torah “virtually the status of a divine hypostasis.”

<sup>35</sup>Zenger, 91.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 92.

redactionally connected to the Songs of Ascent as a sort of appendix.<sup>37</sup> Only Psalm 137 seems to be less integral to this sub-group although it also speaks of songs of Zion (Ps. 137:2), thereby exhibiting thematic affinity. Thus Zenger argues that it is “to be read as a theological commentary on the Zion Psalms (Pss. 120-136).”<sup>38</sup> For Zenger the fifth book of the Psalter is post-cultic. Yet it is interspersed with motifs and concepts that are theologically connected to Zion and the Temple. This fact, for Zenger, implies that the fifth book is “meant to be recited/meditated upon as a ‘spiritual pilgrimage’ to Zion which is the seat of the universal king YHWH and of the God of Sinai who teaches his Torah from Zion.”<sup>39</sup>

Reinhard Gregor Kratz proposed yet another threefold structural analysis of the fifth book. He follows Wilson’s structural analysis of the *הַלְלֵי יְהוָה* psalms and the *הַדְרֵי יְהוָה* psalms and divides the book into Psalms 107-117, 118-135, and 136-50. The following table charts Kratz’s proposal:

Table 7. Reinhard G. Kratz’s Division of the Fifth Book

Group	Psalms	Content
Group 1	Pss. 107-117	The gathering of people from all nations
Group 2	Pss. 118-135	The path of the pilgrimage to the temple
Group 3	Pss. 136-150	A summary

As the above table reveals, Kratz’s proposal is simpler than that of Wilson or Zenger.

Each of the three groups does not consist of any subgroups. For Kratz Psalms 107-117

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 96.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 100.

relate to the gathering of people from all the nations, while the second group of psalms, Psalms 118-135, describes the path of the God-fearing servants of YHWH to the Temple in Jerusalem, among whom David and Solomon are exemplary.<sup>40</sup> Psalms 136-150, according to Kratz, have the character of a summary.<sup>41</sup> Like Wilson, he considers Psalms 146-150 to be the conclusion to the Psalter, putting Ps. 145 (vv. 1-2 and 21) into effect as the praise progresses given by each individual (Ps. 146), by the community in Jerusalem (Ps. 147), and by all creation in heaven and on earth (Pss. 148 and 150).<sup>42</sup> But contrary to Wilson's proposal, Kratz regards the final Hallelujah Psalms as integral to the fifth book.

Klaus Koch also proposes a threefold division of the fifth book of the Psalter. Unlike Wilson, Koch includes Psalms 146-150 as part of the fifth book of the Psalter, and his division of the book also differs from that of Wilson. Each of the three parts, according to his division, consists of two elements. Koch's proposal can be fitted into the following diagram:

Table 8. Klaus Koch's Division of the Fifth Book<sup>43</sup>

Parts	Psalms	Sub-Collection
Part 1	Pss. 107-110	Psalms of David
	Pss. 111-118	Hallelujah Psalms
	Ps. 109	
Part 2	Pss. 120-134	Songs of Ascents
	Pss. 135-136	Hallelujah Psalms
	Ps. 137	
Part 3	Pss. 138-145	Psalms of David
	Pss. 146-150	Hallelujah Psalms

<sup>40</sup>Reinhard G. Kratz, "Die Tora Davids: Psalm 1 und die doxologische Fünfteilung des Psalters," *ZTK* 93 (1996), 24-25.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>43</sup>Klaus Koch, "Die Psalter und seine Redaktionsgeschichte," in *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung* (eds. Klaus Seybold and Erich Zenger; HBS 1; Freiburg: Herder, 1994), 251-253.

Apparently, Psalms 119 and 137 do not fit into his threefold division nicely. Thus Koch explains these psalms as “nachkompositionellen Zusatz” (post-compositional addition).<sup>44</sup> Besides these additions, each part begins with a core of titled psalms (psalms of David, 108-110; psalms of ascents, 124-135; and psalms of David, 138-45) and concludes with hallelujah psalms (111-118; 135-136; and 146-150). He then suggests that the composition of Psalms 107-118 and 135-150 ought to be earlier than the writing of Chronicles since he speculates their *Sitz im Leben* to be the songs of Levite singers in the temple during ritual celebration as it is described in Chronicles, and he holds the Psalms of Ascents (Pss. 120-134) to be a later addition.<sup>45</sup>

Other scholars who also propose their views concerning the shape and shaping of the fifth book of the Psalter include Douglas Stuart and Nancy deClaissé-Walford. On a more popular level, Stuart attempts to show how the Psalter functions as an entity of its own in his recent publication *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, co-authored with Gordon D. Fee. Like other scholars mentioned above, their interest is in reading the Psalter in its final canonical form. Specifically, they are concerned about helping their readers make some sense of the canonical arrangement of the Hebrew Psalter, which, in Stuart’s view, came from the post-exilic period to mirror the story of Israel from the time of David to the time after the exile. Stuart follows Psalms scholars in suggesting that the psalms “have been ordered and grouped in such a way that the whole together carries meaning that further enhances the affirmations each makes on its own. Therefore in the Psalter you can look for meaning both in the individual psalms and in their ordered

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 254-55, 258.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 256-59.

relationship with each other.”<sup>46</sup> He points out that “Book 5 begins with a psalm of praise that assumes the gathering of the exiles (107:2-3), followed by Psalm 108, which acclaims God’s rule over all nations,” and the rest of this book “looks forward in a variety of ways to God’s great future for his people.”<sup>47</sup> Observing the more heterogeneous nature of the fifth book in its form and content compared with the other four, he suggests that three sets of psalms form the major part of the book, with Psalm 119 playing the central role: Psalms 110-118, Psalms 120-134, and Psalms 138-145. The first major group of psalms, Psalms 110-118, looks forward to the renewal of Davidic kingship, the second, Psalms 120-134, betrays a future orientation in the present context, i.e., post-exilic, and the third group, Psalms 138-145, functions as a reprise, looking back to Books I and II, and concludes “on the note of the eternal nature of God’s kingdom and his faithfulness to his promise (145:11-13).”<sup>48</sup> His suggestion may be charted as follows:

Table 9. Douglas Stuart’s Division of the Fifth Book

Parts	Psalms	Content
Part 1	Pss. 107-109	In praise of God’s rescue of his people, and two Davidic laments
Part 2	Pss. 110-118	The coming King and festival psalms
Part 3	Ps. 119	In celebration of the law, Yahweh’s faithful Word
Part 4	Pss. 120-134	Songs of Ascents
Part 5	Pss. 135-137	In response to Ascents
Part 6	Pss. 138-145	The final Davidic collection
Part 7	Pss. 146-150	Fivefold Hallelujah

<sup>46</sup>Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 130.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 133.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 141.

Like Zenger and Koch, Stuart emphasizes the central role of Psalm 119, and like Brennan and Zenger, he views the fifth book to be reflecting the future longings of the postexilic Judaism. He views Psalms 146-150 to be punctuating the main point of the Psalter: “God is to be praised – for his being the Helper of the helpless (146); as Creator and Restorer of his people (147; note how these two themes are interwoven); from heaven above and earth below (148); with dancing, with the mouth, and with the sword in hand (149); and with calls to praise with all manner of music and dancing (150).”<sup>49</sup> He argues that Psalm 150 “seems to have been composed deliberately to conclude both book 5 and the entire Psalter.”<sup>50</sup>

Nancy deClaissé-Walford also built on Wilson’s work. In *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter*, a revision of her doctoral dissertation, she concentrates on the opening and closing psalms of each of the five books and seeks to show that the Psalter was shaped to meet the needs of the postexilic Jewish community in Judea.<sup>51</sup> For deClaissé-Walford, like Wilson, the theme of the fourth book is the kingship of Yahweh, and the fifth book also continues the theme of Yahweh’s kingship. Yet she does not discuss the structure of the fifth book in detail since she is concerned mainly with the opening and closing psalms. It is in her unpublished paper entitled “Let the One Who is Wise . . .” where she deals with the fifth book as a whole.<sup>52</sup> In this article she is more concerned about the hands which shaped the fifth book than the actual structure of

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Nancy deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997).

<sup>52</sup>Nancy deClaissé-Walford, “Let the One Who Is Wise . . .” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion At-Large Region, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 31 May, 2003), 1-21.

the book. Nonetheless, she does treat the fifth book as a whole, and her observation may be charted as follows:

Table 10. Nancy deClaissé-Walford's Division of the Fifth Book

Parts	Psalms	Content
Part 1	Ps. 107	Wisdom psalm, asking "who is wise?"
	Pss. 108-110	Davidic psalms, answering who the wise is
	Pss. 111-112	Acrostic wisdom psalms
Part 2	Pss. 113-118	Egyptian Hallel
Part 3	Ps. 119	A massive acrostic psalm
Part 4	Pss. 120-134	Psalms of Ascents
	Pss. 135-137	Untitled community hymns and lament
Part 5	Pss. 138-145	Davidic psalms
	Pss. 146-150	Final Hallel

DeClaissé-Walford, like Zenger, apparently emphasizes the central role of Psalm 119 which takes on the status of a divine being.<sup>53</sup> For her the Davidic psalms, in particular Psalms 108-110, play an important role for they answer the question with which the fifth book begins: "Who is wise?" In these psalms David is the ideal king of ancient Israel who acknowledges YHWH as king, which the postexilic community will have to follow by acknowledging YHWH as their king just as he was their king before David's time. The weakest point in deClaissé-Walford's presentation of the structure of the book is found in her explanation of the function of Psalms 135-137. She writes: "Psalms 135-137, untitled psalms, consisting of two community hymns and a community lament, each contribute in their own way to the shaping of Book Five."<sup>54</sup> Yet she never mentions what their contribution is at all.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 5.

*Summary of the Proposals and a New Proposal*

Based on the above proposals by various scholars, we may form a general consensus on the shape of the fifth book. Although their proposals vary from one to another, they all wrestle with the meaning of the presence of sub-groups within the fifth book. Thus the presence of these sub-groups of psalms supports a purposeful arrangement of the fifth book. Evidently, the fifth book begins with an untitled thanksgiving psalm that opens (107:1-3) in direct response to the prayer in Psalm 106:47-48. This observation implies that it has now become common, at least among those psalmic scholars who emphasize a contextual or literary understanding of the Psalter, to pay attention to what Wilson calls a tacit editorial technique or what is formerly known as a catchword connection between adjacent psalms.

The Psalter concludes with resounding praise, Psalms 146-150 which form the final Hallelujah Psalms. Both Wilson and Zenger argue that Psalms 146-150 are not integral to the fifth book while the rest regard these psalms as part of the fifth book. Neither Wilson nor Zenger provides any sufficient reason to exclude these psalms from the fifth book. In fact, if we are to apply Wilson's structural scheme, the fifth book should end with Hallelujah Psalms. According to Wilson's division, both parts one and two begin with a thanksgiving psalm and conclude with Hallelujah Psalms. Part 1, for example, begins with a thanksgiving psalm (Ps. 107), followed by a group of Davidic Psalms (Pss. 108-110), and concludes with Hallelujah Psalms (Pss. 111-118). Part 2 also begins with a thanksgiving psalm (Ps. 118) and ends with a Hallelujah Psalm (Ps. 135), and the Psalms of Ascents (Pss. 120-134) are placed in between these frames. Thus one would reasonably expect the same scheme in part 3: a beginning with a thanksgiving

psalm (Ps. 136), followed by a group of Davidic Psalms (Pss. 138-145), and a conclusion with Hallelujah Psalms (Pss. 146-150). In fact, such an understanding of part 3 parallels part 1, although it does not explain the presence of Psalm 137 sufficiently. Furthermore, we should keep in mind that other doxologies are integral to the books they conclude even if they were purely editorial works. And if we take Psalms 146-150 to be a fivefold doxology to the entire Psalter as well as the conclusion to the fifth book, they surely are not a doxology in its typical sense. Since a doxology's primary function is to mark the end of a book, thus separating two books, the final doxology does not have to be typical because no other book follows the final doxology. Psalms 146-150 are thus atypical, and the fact that they are fivefold is fitting to the fivefold division of the Psalter. Yet if we take Ps. 145:21b as the missing fifth doxology as Wilson did, Psalms 146-150 have no need to be included into the fifth book. We will discuss this possibility in detail later.

A majority of the scholars, e.g., Brennan, Wilson, Kratz and Koch, took a threefold division of the fifth book. Even though they do not propose a threefold division of the fifth book, other scholars are not far from it. Stuart, for example, acknowledges that the major part of the book is composed of three sets of psalms.<sup>55</sup> Thus if he were to propose in detail his understanding of the structure of the fifth book, he might also suggest a threefold division. Likewise, deClaissé-Walford, whose proposal lacks any clearly definable division, may not structure the fifth book as I charted if she were to mainly focus on its structure. This observation leaves Zenger as the only scholar who explicitly proposes a non-threefold division.

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<sup>55</sup>Stuart, 141.

Designated by the superscription, Psalms of David are placed at the beginning and at the end of the book (Pss. 108-110 and Pss. 138-145). Psalms 120-134, also designated by the superscription, comprise the collection of the “Songs of Ascents.” Although Psalms 114 and 118 lack the exact designation, Psalms 111-118, typically known as the Egyptian Hallel, constitute a collection of Hallelujah Psalms. This consensus leaves the role and the placement of the following psalms unresolved: Psalms 119, 135, 136, and 137. Although the scholarly views on Psalm 119 differ from one another in details, they all agree that this torah psalm plays a central role, which echoes the concern of Psalm 1.<sup>56</sup> The reason that the placement of Psalm 119 is not easily explainable is perhaps due to its former role as the end of the Psalter. Based on this consensus I propose my division of the fifth book as follows:

Table 11. My Proposal of the Division of the Fifth Book and Psalms 146-150

Parts	Psalms	Content
Part 1	Ps. 107	Thanksgiving psalm
	Pss. 108-110	Davidic psalms
	Pss. 111-117	Hallelujah psalms
Part 2	Ps. 118	Thanksgiving psalm
	Ps. 119	Torah psalm
	Pss. 120-134	Psalms of Ascents
	Ps. 135	Hallelujah psalm
Part 3	Ps. 136	Thanksgiving psalm
	Ps. 137	Exilic psalm – This world is not mine – eschatological
Conclusion	Pss. 146-150	Final Hallelujah Psalms

<sup>56</sup>Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen; Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 253. Speaking of the formation of the Psalter, Westermann argues that Psalm 119 once concluded the Psalter.

My proposal is virtually identical with that of Wilson, with the exclusion of Psalms 146-150 from the fifth book. In spite of the majority of the scholarly observations on the fifth book of the Psalter that regard Psalms 146-150 to be integral to the fifth book, I propose that Psalms 146-150, taken as the final fivefold, grand doxologies to the Hebrew Psalter are not integral to the fifth book. While both Wilson and Zenger excluded these psalms from the fifth book of the Psalter without sufficient explanations, my proposal is based on the following observations. First, following Wilson's proposal, I regard 145:21 ("My mouth shall utter the praise of YHWH, and all creatures shall bless his holy name for ever and ever") to be what Wilson calls "the missing doxology to the fifth book." As Wilson acknowledges, "[t]he blessing expressed in this verse is comparable to that expressed in the other concluding doxologies, and the vocabulary of the last half ('... bless his name for ever and ever') is also similar."<sup>57</sup> This verse, of course, is not a full-fledged doxology in its usual sense. Instead, it reiterates the psalmist's intention to praise, thus resuming the opening call to praise (145:1-2). Psalm 145 is an acrostic psalm. Perhaps it is for that reason that 145:21b uses יְבָרַךְ instead of the typical doxology form בְּרַךְ to match הַלְלֵה with which the verse begins to complete the acrostic effect. Furthermore, Psalm 150 does not end with a typical doxology form either in spite of the majority view to regard it as the fifth doxology. Psalm 150 ends with a jussive. We also need to note that a doxology does not always appear in the same form. Leopold Sabourin speaks of the doxology of judgment which defies the conventional understanding and form of a doxology. Although he does not include 145:21 as an unconventional category of doxology, he includes verses 7, 13 and 17 of

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<sup>57</sup>Wilson, "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," 133.

Psalm 145 to be examples of this doxology of judgment.<sup>58</sup> Also we need to keep in mind that the four doxologies at the end of the first four books of the Hebrew Psalter have the effect of dividing it into five books. This observation implies that the fifth book has no need to end with a doxology since Psalm 106:48 already divides the fourth and the fifth books. It is perhaps for this reason that Psalm 145:21 is not a typical, full-fledged doxology in its usual sense. Then Psalm 145:21 with its similar phraseology to the previous four doxologies assumes the function of doxology to conclude the fifth book of the Hebrew Psalter, only to lead into the full-blown fivefold grand doxology at the end to conclude the entire Hebrew Psalter. Unfortunately, neither Wilson nor Zenger provided any sufficient explanation as to why Psalms 146-150 should not be included in the fifth book.

Second, Psalms 146-150 form a self-contained unit. J. P. Fokkelman recently published a monograph entitled *The Psalms in Form: The Hebrew Psalter in its Poetic Shape*, whose result concerning Psalms 146-150 I adopted in Chapter Two. This publication is based on his previous works on structural and prosodic analysis of the Hebrew Psalter.<sup>59</sup> Fokkelman is convinced that the psalmists were concerned with both qualitative, i.e., sense and meaning, and quantitative (prosodic) aspects, i.e., the proportions of various textual levels down to the last syllable. Thus he counts the syllables of each psalm and offers its colometric division. According to his analysis of

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<sup>58</sup>Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning* (New York: Alba House, 1974), 290-91.

<sup>59</sup> J. P. Fokkelman, *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible at the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis, vol II: 85 Psalms and Job 4-14* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica: Assen: Van Gorcum, 2000), *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide* (trans. Ineke Smit; Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox, 2001), and another volume that was already in preparation and published two years later *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible at the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis, vol III: The Remaining 65 Psalms* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica: Assen: Van Gorcum, 2003).

Psalms 146-150, all but the initial הַלְלֵנוּ־יְהוָה in Psalm 146 and the final הַלְלֵנוּ־יְהוָה in Psalm 150 stay outside the psalm proper.<sup>60</sup> In other words, the initial הַלְלֵנוּ־יְהוָה in Psalm 146 becomes part of the first strophe in the psalm, and the final הַלְלֵנוּ־יְהוָה in Psalm 150 part of the last strophe in the psalm. Thus the first and the last הַלְלֵנוּ־יְהוָה frames in Psalms 146-150 nicely envelope the entire collection while the rest of the הַלְלֵנוּ־יְהוָה frames connect the adjacent psalms together, forming a nicely self-contained unit. This enveloping and connecting effect of the הַלְלֵנוּ־יְהוָה frames can be diagrammed as follows:

H1		H3		H5		H7		H9	
	146	H2	147	H4	148	H6	149	H8	150
									H10

Fig. 3. The Effect of the הַלְלֵנוּ־יְהוָה Frames on Psalms 146-150<sup>61</sup>

Third, I view Psalms 1 and 2 as a twofold introduction to the Hebrew Psalter,<sup>62</sup> and Psalms 146-150 as a fivefold doxology to the Hebrew Psalter befitting its fivefold division after the fivefold Torah. Interestingly, when we exclude Psalms 1 and 2 as a twofold introduction to the Hebrew Psalter from Book I, it consists of 39 psalms (Pss. 3-41). When we consider Psalms 146-150 as a fivefold doxology to the entire Hebrew Psalter and not integral to the fifth book, it also includes 39 psalms (Pss. 107-145), the same number of psalms as that of the first book. Perhaps, the same number of psalms in Books I and V of the Psalter is merely coincidental, but the fact that Books III and IV

<sup>60</sup>J. P. Fokkelman, *The Psalms in Form: The Hebrew Psalter in its Poetic Shape* (Leiden: Deo, 2002), 151-154, 172.

<sup>61</sup>H1-H10 stand for the ten הַלְלֵנוּ־יְהוָה frames. The odd numbers represent the הַלְלֵנוּ־יְהוָה frames that begin each psalm, and the even numbers the הַלְלֵנוּ־יְהוָה frames with which each psalm concludes.

<sup>62</sup>In the following chapter I will discuss in detail why I view Psalms 1 and 2 as the twofold introduction to the entire Hebrew Psalter.

also consist of the same number of psalms (17 psalms each) is suggestive. None of these reasons I call attention to are by themselves significant enough to prove that the final Hallelujah Psalms are a self-contained unit and not integral to the fifth book of the Hebrew Psalter. When taken together, however, they bring more weight to the hypothesis.

One may argue that the Torah has neither an introduction nor a conclusion that is non-integral to it. This argument may weaken my proposal of Psalms 1 and 2 and Psalms 146-150 as non-integral part of Book I and Book V respectively. My view of the structure of the Hebrew Psalter, however, is not the only case of a biblical book patterned after the Pentateuch that has a fivefold structure with a non-integrated introduction and conclusion. Numerous New Testament scholars have noted that the structure of the Gospel according to Matthew is patterned after the Pentateuch. Interestingly, like my proposal of the structure of the Hebrew Psalter, Matthew betrays a fivefold structure with a non-integrated introduction and conclusion.<sup>63</sup>

Fourth, when we view Psalm 145:21 as the missing doxology to the fifth book and Psalms 146-150 as the fivefold concluding doxology to the entire Hebrew Psalter but non-integral to the fifth book, we can observe a rough parallel between these two sets of fivefold doxologies. As commonly observed, somewhat similarly phrased and structured

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<sup>63</sup>Ever since Benjamin Bacon first proposed this pentateuchal theory of Matthew in *Studies in Matthew* (London: Constable, 1930), numerous scholars refined the theory. Patterned after the Pentateuch, Bacon proposed, Matthew consists of five narratives (Chs. 3-4; 8-9; 11-12; 14-17; and 19-23) followed by five discourses (Chs. 5-7; 10; 13; 18; and 24-25). Each narrative and discourse is marked by the same formula (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). According to Bacon, Matthew's purpose was to present Jesus as new Moses who gives new law to the Church, thus the fivefold structure patterned after the Pentateuch. Even though Bacon's theory is often criticized due to the fact that it does not include the infant narrative in chs. 1-2 and the passion narrative and the resurrection in chs. 26-28, the most important part of the book, Matthew's structure proposed by Bacon is similar to the structure of the Hebrew Psalter I propose.

doxologies occur at the end of Psalms 41, 72, 89, and 106, and Psalm 145 concludes similarly as the chart below shows.

Table 12. Doxologies at the End of the Five Books of the Psalter

41:14	Blessed is YHWH, God of Israel, for ever and ever. Amen and amen.
72:18-19	Blessed is YHWH God, God of Israel, who alone does wonderful things; Blessed is His glorious name forever; His glory fills the whole earth. Amen and amen.
85:93	Blessed is YHWH forever. Amen and amen.
106:48	Blessed is YHWH, God of Israel, for ever and ever. Let all the people say, “Amen.” Hallelujah.
145:21	My mouth shall utter the praise of YHWH, and all creatures shall bless His holy name for ever and ever.

Apparently, the doxologies at the end of the first four books consist of common elements and formal variations. ברוך יהוה (Blessed is YHWH) and אמן (Amen) are the only phrases that commonly occur in the first four doxologies. The phrase ועד עולם (for ever and ever) appears in Psalm 41:14 and 106:48. The phrase אלהי ישראל (God of Israel) occurs in Psalm 41:14, 72:18, and 106:48. This epithet of YHWH as God of Israel shows that the focus of the doxologies is, of course, on the God of Israel, thus espousing particularism. The third doxology in which the phrase “God of Israel” is absent is the only exception to this focus. Psalm 145 does not end with a typical doxology that consists of the common elements like the others. Yet it does share a similar phraseology. In fact, the psalmist here invites all the creatures to join the chorus of doxology for eternity: “All creatures shall bless his holy name for ever and ever.” In so doing, the focus changes to universalism with which Psalms 146-150 as the fivefold doxologies to the whole Hebrew Psalter conclude, as I have demonstrated in the previous chapter.

Like the doxologies at the end of Psalms 41, 72, and 106, Psalms 146, 147, and 149 consist of phrases describing a close relationship between YHWH, God of Israel, and the people of Israel. These phrases include the following: “The God of Jacob” (146:5), “your God, O Zion” (146:10), “the Builder of Jerusalem” (147:2), “your God, O Zion” (147:12), “revealing his word to Jacob, his decrees and laws to Israel, he has not done so for any other nation” (147:19-20a), and “[l]et Israel rejoice in its Maker; let the children of Zion be glad in their King” (149:2).

This focus on YHWH as God of Israel and his close relationship to his people Israel is somewhat weakened in Psalm 148. With the exception of the mention of Israel at the end of the psalm, it is universal in its scope as is apparent in the psalmist’s summons to the inhabitants of heaven in the first unit (148:1-6) and the inhabitants of earth in the second unit (148:7-14). Interestingly, the doxology with which Psalm 89 ends also reflects a somewhat weakened focus on Israel because of the absence of the phrase “God of Israel.”

Psalm 150 is also well-known for its universal scope of praise: All that breathes are summoned to praise God. Likewise, Psalm 145 ends with a universal call to praise YHWH. Thus both Psalms 145 and 150 share similarities by concluding with a universal call to praise YHWH: “All creatures” (145:21) and “all that breathes” (150:6), referring to all living creatures. The universalism of Psalm 145 is enhanced by its repeated use of the Hebrew term כל, which appears no less than seventeen times. What these two psalms call for is abundantly clear: All flesh, not just Israelites, is to bless his name for eternity. Then this parallel between the two sets of the fivefold doxology can be diagrammed as follows:

Table 13. Parallels between the Two Sets of the Fivefold Doxology

41:14	Blessed is YHWH, God of Israel	Particularity	The God of Jacob; your God, O Zion	Psalm 146
72:18-19	Blessed is YHWH, God of Israel	Particularity	The Builder of Israel; your God, O Zion; revealing His Word to Jacob ...	Psalm 147
89:53	Blessed is YHWH	Universality	Praise the Lord from the heavens [and] the earth	Psalm 148
106:48	Blessed is YHWH, God of Israel	Particularity	Let Israel rejoice in its Maker; Let the children of Zion be glad in their King	Psalm 149
145:21	All creatures shall bless His holy name	Universality	Let everything that has breath praise the Lord	Psalm 150

As the above table reveals, Psalms 146-150 as the fivefold grand doxologies to the Hebrew Psalter parallel the five doxologies at the end of each of the five books of the Hebrew Psalter in their blending of particularism and universalism.<sup>64</sup> The doxologies at the end of Books I, II, and IV show characteristics of particularity, emphasizing YHWH as God of Israel. Psalms 146, 147 and 149 parallels those doxologies in their emphasis on particularity. Both the doxology at the end of Book III and Psalm 148 betray universality. Likewise, the final doxology at the end of Book V betrays universality as well as Psalm 150, completing the parallels between the two sets of doxologies.

Thus Psalms 146-150 as a self-contained unit bring the Hebrew Psalter to a climax of long journey with the fivefold grand doxologies, patterned after the five doxologies at the end of each book, and as such these psalms as conclusion to the entire Hebrew Psalter respond to the introduction, Psalms 1 and 2, whose relations I will discuss in the following chapter.

<sup>64</sup>Jacob Chinitz makes a similar observation in his article, "Particularism and Universalism in Psalms" *JBQ* 29 (2001): 13-17. The major difference between his observation and mine is that he views Psalm 150 as the fifth doxology, thus employing Psalm 150 twice in his analysis, whereas I view Ps. 145:21 as the fifth doxology.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Psalms 1-2 and Psalms 146-150: The Twofold Introduction and the Fivefold Doxology to the Hebrew Psalter

In Chapter Two, we examined Psalms 146-150 as separate entities, employing the traditional form-critical and cult-functional approaches. In Chapter Three, the microstructural analysis focused on discerning the interconnectedness of the psalms because the psalms now appear in the context of the Hebrew Psalter. At the conclusion of the Chapter Four, I proposed that Psalms 146-150 serve as the fivefold doxology to the entire Hebrew Psalter, paralleling the five doxologies at the end of each book. If the proposal is correct, there should be numerous points of contact between these Hallelujah Psalms as the fivefold concluding doxology and Psalms 1 and 2, the twofold introduction to the Psalter, for readers would expect the beginning and ending of the Hebrew Psalter to relate to each other as is characteristic of Hebrew literary composition.<sup>1</sup>

Although one recent trend in poetry is to end a poem with “an open ending,” J. P. Fokkerman notes that such a practice does not happen in the so-called “literary canon” and is “even completely foreign to texts from antiquity.”<sup>2</sup> Likewise, biblical poems or books do not characteristically end with an open ending.<sup>3</sup> What makes a (biblical) poem or book into a literary whole is to have a beginning that deserves a closure. The

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<sup>1</sup>Frank Kermode. *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 4.

<sup>2</sup>J. P. Fokkerman, *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 141.

<sup>3</sup>The Book of Jonah comes close to a biblical book that ends with an open ending. Walter B. Crouch points out that Jonah’s story lacks closure, although that does not mean that the narrative does not end “appropriately” (101). For more details, see Crouch’s article “To Question an End, To End a Question: Opening the Closure of the Book of Jonah,” *JSOT* 62 (1994): 101-12.

beginning typically introduces the reader to themes and concepts prevalent in the entire literary work, and the end brings closure to the themes and concepts.<sup>4</sup>

The Hebrew poets employed various devices to make a poem into a literary whole. The most common option to achieve that effect is to compose a poem that ends exactly the same as it started. Psalm 8, for instance, begins and ends with an identical phrase, “Yahweh, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth,” providing a definite closure. Such closure is well structured and thought out and related to its beginning.

The same principle can be applied to a biblical book. While a few Old Testament books, such as Judges and Samuel, end with a rather unusual closure, defying a common expectation for a conclusion, most biblical books end with a conclusion that clearly relates to their introduction.<sup>5</sup> Some Old Testament books, for instance, have been composed in frames, employing significant literary forms at the beginning and end. The book of Job is a good example of this strategy. It begins with the story of Job that narrates the setting for the entire book (Job 1-2), and it returns to the narrative to complete the frame and conclude the book (42:7-16). If the Hebrew Psalter is indeed a literary whole, one would expect it to have a beginning, a middle, and an ending where tensions are created and resolved.

Thus we begin this chapter with a premise that the Hebrew Psalter as a whole belongs to this category with a definite introduction and a conclusion which resolves the

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<sup>4</sup>Robert Funk, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1988), 103. See also Patrick D. Miller, “The Beginning of the Psalter” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clinton McCann; JSOTSup; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 83-92, and W. H. Bellinger, Jr., “Reading from the Beginning (Again): The Shape of Book I of the Psalter” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL, Atlanta, GA., November 2004), 1-15.

<sup>5</sup>Judges 17-21, for instance, are often regarded as miscellaneous materials, for their content defies a common, modern expectation for closure.

tensions created in the middle. Gerald Wilson, for instance, in his dissertation *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* blazed the path to read the Hebrew Psalter as a literary whole that has both a beginning and an ending that correspond to each other. For Wilson the fivefold division of the Hebrew Psalter is intentional in that the first three books narrate the failure of the history of ancient Israel, and Books IV and V proclaim Yahweh as Israel's king who has been her refuge in the past, long before monarchy even existed.<sup>6</sup> In other words, Wilson argues, the Hebrew Psalter in its final shape moves from reliance on human kings in Books I-III to reliance on Yahweh as king in Books IV-V. For Wilson, the first three books present a problem of the failure of the monarchy, and the last two books provide the answer. Thus the tension created in the former part is resolved in the latter part.

Whereas Wilson focused on the entire Hebrew Psalter, in this chapter we will limit our discussion primarily to what can be appropriately called the beginning, i.e., Psalms 1-2, and the end of the Hebrew Psalter, i.e., Psalms 146-150. Thus we will focus on establishing intertextual relationships between these two groups of psalms. We will clarify affinities between these two important groups of psalms. Prior to this discussion, however, we will consider why Psalms 1 and 2 should be read together as a twofold introduction to the entire Hebrew Psalter. Before we move on to our primary concern of Psalms 1 and 2 as a general introduction to the entire Hebrew Psalter, however, a brief discussion on Psalm 1 as an introduction is in order since some scholars assume it to be the sole introduction to the Hebrew Psalter.

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<sup>6</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS 76; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 199-228.

*Psalms 1 and 2 as a Twofold Introduction to the Hebrew Psalter*

With its rich form and content Psalm 1 reveals a sapiential hand at work in this final shape of the book. It is didactic and lacks a cultic background. Its “primary setting is literary.”<sup>7</sup> It begins *שְׂאֵי־רֵיָאֵשׁׁר* (Happy is the one), reflecting the characteristics of wisdom calling the reader to make a wise choice based on the torah in order to lead a blessed life. Whether or not this psalm was composed to be the first psalm of the Hebrew Psalter is unclear, because of its wisdom characteristics its date is usually regarded as late. Of special interest in our discussion is the psalm’s strategic place at the beginning of the Hebrew Psalter. As such, it guides how readers appropriate the subsequent psalms, whether or not the guidance was intended. Considering this strategic placement of the first psalm, it is no wonder that a majority of Psalms scholars, past and present alike, has typically identified Psalm 1 as an introduction to the entire Hebrew Psalter. Norman Whybray warns that this notion of Psalm 1 as an introduction is merely “an inference,” but, as he acknowledges, the notion goes back at least as far as Jerome.<sup>8</sup> Martin Buber, for instance, points out the function of Psalm 1 as an introduction to the Hebrew Psalter. He suggests:

Often when I open the Psalms, I begin by looking at the first, which was early understood as a proem to the Psalter. I am inclined to think that even the oldest collection of Psalms (perhaps brought together under Hezekiah) was introduced by this Psalm. The intention behind that collection may have been to complete the ‘Torah’ or ‘direction’ (which means a book of teachings and laws edited at that time and ascribed to Moses) by means of hymns and songs of a ‘direct’ means to show the way which man should ‘choose’ (Ps. 25, 12), and that means to teach the man to distinguish this way, the right way, from the other, wrong ways.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (WBC 19; Dallas: Word, 1983), 59.

<sup>8</sup>Norman Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book* (JSOTSup 222; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 38-41.

<sup>9</sup>Martin Buber, *Good and Evil* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1991), 51.

Similarly, Claus Westermann suggests the same function of Psalm 1. He theorizes:

There was once a Psalter which began with Ps. 1 and ended with Ps. 119. Moreover, this framework bears witness to an important stage in the ‘traditioning’ process in which the Psalter, as a *collection*, no longer had a cultic function primarily, but rather circulated in a tradition devoted to the law. The Psalms have now become the word of God which is read, studied, and meditated upon.<sup>10</sup>

Brevard Childs also emphasizes the importance of Psalm 1 as an introduction to the entire Hebrew Psalter. For Childs, Psalm 1 testifies to a fundamental hermeneutical shift in the way the rest of the Psalter is to be understood. He writes, “The prayers of Israel directed to God have themselves become identified with God’s word to the people,” and the Torah mentioned in this psalm functions as “a guidebook along the path of blessing.”<sup>11</sup> With Psalm 1 readers begin pilgrimage and anticipate the destination.

Following his teacher Childs, Gerald H. Wilson also argues that Psalm 1 was intentionally placed as an introduction to the entire Hebrew Psalter.<sup>12</sup> As such, this introductory psalm does not stand on its own but as a part of the whole, and its strategic placement brings it an important hermeneutical function. For Wilson, Psalm 1 shifts the function of the rest of the psalms. They are no longer liturgical or communal.<sup>13</sup> He writes, “[t]he emphasis is now on the meditation rather than cultic performance; private

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<sup>10</sup>Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen; Atlanta: John Knox, 1991), 253.

<sup>11</sup>Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 513.

<sup>12</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS 76; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 204.

<sup>13</sup>Some scholars warn not to abandon the Psalter’s liturgical function. Walter Brueggemann, for example, argues that to talk about the Psalter as “post-cultic” is a “misnomer” because Psalms were cultic in some sense even after the exile. For more details see “Response to James L. Mays, ‘The Question of Context,’” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOTSup 159; ed. Clinton McCann; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 31-32.

individual use over public, communal participation.”<sup>14</sup> As such, for Wilson Psalm 1 is an invitation to the reader to meditate on Yahweh’s torah day and night to ensure his or her own prosperity. For Wilson the torah here is not limited to the Pentateuch only but also is extended to include the Hebrew Psalter because it, like the Pentateuch, is divided into five books to present itself as torah.

Wilson, as well as other scholars mentioned above, correctly emphasizes the strategic placement of the first psalm that functions as the introduction to the entire Psalter. His emphasis, however, needs to include Psalm 2 for a couple of reasons. First, these two apparently disparate psalms are closely connected to each other. The most commonly identified connection between these two psalms is the shared Hebrew term אֲשֶׁר־י (1:1 and 2:12). Other shared Hebrew terms include דָּרָדָר and אֲבָרָר (1:6; 2:12) and הִגָּה (1:2; 2:1). Second, both psalms are untitled. The first book of the Psalter consists of only a handful of untitled psalms, i.e., Psalms 1, 2, 10 and 33. Wilson classifies these psalms as “orphan,” and suggests that their function is to redactionally connect these psalms to the immediately preceding psalm.<sup>15</sup> Thus by his own admission Psalms 1 and 2 are redactionally connected. In fact, he acknowledges in his dissertation that both Psalms 1 and 2 are untitled possibly to function in an “introductory capacity.”<sup>16</sup> He argues,

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<sup>14</sup>Wilson, *The Editing of the Psalter*, 206-07.

<sup>15</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, “The Use of ‘Untitled’ Psalms in the Hebrew Psalter,” *ZAW* 97 (1985): 404.

<sup>16</sup>Wilson, *The Editing of the Psalter*, 173.

however, these psalms have a different introductory capacity in that Psalm 1 introduces the entire Hebrew Psalter and Psalm 2 the first Davidic collection, i.e., Book I.<sup>17</sup>

As noted above, Psalm 1 is typically identified as a wisdom psalm or torah psalm because of its use of image of a well-watered tree and the two ways that part to opposite directions (characteristics of the wisdom teaching): Psalm 2, however, is a royal psalm, traditionally understood as part of a coronation ceremony for Davidic kings. This genre of Psalm 2 implies that its date of origin is early, at least pre-exilic, as compared to a late date for wisdom psalms. Due to these differences as well as the scholarly tendency of interpreting psalms as separate entities, scholars in the past did not readily treat the two psalms in light of each other. John Willis in particular argues that “the internal unity and the strophic structure” of Psalm 1 support that it is a “self-contained literary unit.”<sup>18</sup> For Willis the use of the shared vocabulary is inconclusive for arguing that these psalms were originally a single piece. If one were to interpret Psalms 1 and 2 together as one psalm based on the use of certain words and phrases, Willis continues to argue, he/she could make a similar case for combining other adjacent psalms. Nevertheless, Willis acknowledges that Psalms 1 and 2 may have been juxtaposed because of the recurrence of certain terminologies.<sup>19</sup>

Recently, some scholars have begun to argue that Psalms 1 and 2 should be considered as a twofold introduction to the entire Hebrew Psalter. These scholars base their view on the following reasons. The most crucial support comes from a number of

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>John T. Willis, “Psalm 1 – An Entity,” *ZAW* 91 (1979): 381, 393.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 393.

rabbinic and patristic sources from antiquity into the Middle Ages. These sources testify to a tradition that counts the two psalms as one unit or views them as belonging closely together. The Talmud (Ber. 9b), for example, indicates that Psalms 1 and 2 form one psalm as it declares: “*Happy is the man* (i. 1) and *Why are the nations in an uproar etc.?* (ii. 1) form one Psalm.”<sup>20</sup> The fact that the Western Greek text of 13:33 attributes Psalm 2 to “the first psalm” may also support the unity of the two psalms. Although this reference may simply mean that Psalm 2 was regarded as “the first psalm” because Psalm 1 was not numbered and functioned as an introduction to the entire Psalter,<sup>21</sup> it is quite possible to interpret this reference to imply that Psalms 1 and 2 were once regarded as one psalm.

In addition to rabbinic and patristic texts that count Psalms 1 and 2 as one psalm, their literary form and theological emphases are also quite compatible. In fact, a number of linguistic and thematic lexemes link two previously independent psalms structurally and theologically. As to the form, Psalm 1 begins with אֲשֶׁר (happy), and Psalm 2 ends with it, nicely forming an *inclusio* and connecting these two psalms. It is likely that this link is editorial. As to the theology, both psalms reflect wisdom theology. Psalm 1 ends with a contrast between the way (דִּרְכּוֹ) of the righteous and the way (דִּרְכּוֹ) of the wicked (v. 6), and Psalm 2 ends with a warning against kings that they take heed lest they be destroyed in their way (v. 12). Psalm 1 declares that the way of the wicked will be *destroyed* (אָבַד), and the same Hebrew verb escorts the warning in Psalm 2, “lest he be

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<sup>20</sup>A. Cohen, *The Psalms: Hebrew Text & English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*, rev. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, Jerusalem, New York: The Soncino Press, 1991), 1.

<sup>21</sup>Jesper Høgenhaven, “The Opening of the Psalter: A Study in Jewish Theology,” *SJOT* 15 (2001): 170-71.

angry and you *be destroyed* (נִבְּאָ) in your way” (v. 12), thereby linking the two psalms. They are linked again by two different forms of meditating. In Psalm 1 the righteous meditate on the torah of Yahweh day and night (1:2). In Psalm 2 the nations “meditate” (2:1), except the same Hebrew term הִגָּה is used in quite a different sense: They are “conspiring” against Yahweh. When all of the external and internal evidences are taken seriously, it is quite plausible to suggest that Psalms 1 and 2 are deliberately placed in their present location to form a twofold introduction to the entire Hebrew Psalter.

Originally, as Willis contends, Psalm 1 was probably a “self-contained unit.” Likewise, it is likely that Psalm 2, being a royal psalm, was originally a self-contained unit. They certainly do not bear the same provenance. Various evidence that counts Psalms 1 and 2 as a single unit provides a secondary setting in that it reflects only a glimpse of how these two psalms were understood by later generations of the faithful. The evidence, however, testifies to an important history of psalms interpretation which justifies a new approach in which the secondary setting created by means of rereading is important for exegesis. As Childs warns, the importance of the secondary setting must not be neglected in our task of interpretation.<sup>22</sup> And we must note that out of all the biblical books the Psalter is one of the least rooted books in the original setting. It is “loosened from its cultic context” in order that it could be used in variety of new contexts.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Brevard S. Childs, “Reflections on the Modern Study of the Psalms,” in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God. Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright* (ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller; Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), 377-79.

<sup>23</sup>Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 515.

Psalms 1 and 2 are untitled psalms.<sup>24</sup> Considering the persistent tradition in the Hebrew Psalter that ascribes psalms to David, especially in Books I and II, it is extraordinary that the first two psalms lack the superscription. Untitled psalms, according to Wilson, appear to have been used at various junctures as introductions and as transitions from one collection of psalms to another.<sup>25</sup> In their present location Psalms 1 and 2, I would suggest, introduce themes that are to be discussed in the rest of the Hebrew Psalter, thus providing a hermeneutical key to understanding the rest of the Hebrew Psalter.

As we discussed in Chapter Four, the exact correspondence between Books III and IV (17 psalms each) and Books I and V (39 psalms each) also support the redactional literary unity of Psalms 1 and 2. Typically, scholars suggest that Book I consists of 41 psalms. Interestingly, when we exclude Psalms 1 and 2 as a twofold introduction to the entire Hebrew Psalter, Book I consists of 39 psalms (Pss. 3-41). Likewise, Book V consists of 39 psalms (Pss. 107-145) when Psalms 146-150 as a fivefold grand doxology to the entire Hebrew Psalter are excluded. Although we cannot speculate any further on this correspondence, it is nonetheless striking.<sup>26</sup> Thus while we acknowledge that Psalms 1 and 2 do not bear the same provenance, we will discuss the two texts as a twofold introduction to the Hebrew Psalter because numerous evidences warrant their juxtaposition and strategic placement in the book.

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<sup>24</sup>According to Acts 4:25 Psalm 2 is ascribed to David. Is this ascription a claim to Davidic authorship? If so, does it mean that the author of Acts was aware of a tradition that regarded Psalm 2 as Davidic, and the final editor(s) of the Hebrew Psalter purposefully placed the psalm in its present place without any ascription? It is unlikely, and the ascription of the psalm to David is probably a claim to authority rather than authorship on the part of the author of Acts.

<sup>25</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, "The Use of Untitled Psalms in the Hebrew Psalter," 404-13.

<sup>26</sup>Klaus Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms* (trans. R. Graeme Dunphy; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 18. He includes Psalms 1 and 2 and Psalms 146-150 in Book I and Book V respectively. Nonetheless, He points out the exact correspondence between Books III and IV, and the similarity between Books I and V is striking.

In his article “Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies” Joseph P. Brennan offers some helpful suggestions on the present shape of the Hebrew Psalter that anticipate later discussions on the introduction to the whole Psalter. Brennan argues that Psalms 1 and 2 are a hermeneutical key to understanding the Hebrew Psalter as a book. For Brennan Psalms 1 and 2 serve as “a kind of prologue overture” to the entire Psalter. His description of this prologue portrays well how it functions:

[T]he editors who are responsible for the Psalter as we now have it have skillfully taken this earlier collection and provided it with an introduction which not only sets the scene for the great conflict (Psalm 2), but also makes it possible for the reader to become involved in the process (Psalm 1). By aligning ourselves with “the just” in Psalm 1, and with those who “trust in Yahweh” in Psalm 2, “the wicked enemies” against whom the king prays for help in 3:8-9 become our enemies as well, as we become part of that people upon whom he invokes Yahweh’s blessing (3:9).<sup>27</sup>

Thematically, both Psalms 1 and 2 contrast the righteous with the wicked. In Psalm 1, however, the psalmist avoids the term “righteous” until the last two verses. Thus, the contrast between the righteous and the wicked is a contrast between singular (“Blessed is the person who . . .”) and plural (the wicked) in the first two thirds of Psalm 1. This contrast between the lone righteous and the wicked in the plural must be intentional because as Brennan suggests each individual must make his or her own choice to be involved in the great conflict.

As is commonly noted, Psalm 1 has two emphases: The centrality of תּוֹרַת יְהוָה (the torah of Yahweh) for the righteous and the security of the righteous *vis-à-vis* the wicked. The torah is preeminently identified with the Pentateuch. While the Hebrew term תּוֹרַת can be rendered as “law,” perhaps the best rendering is “instruction.” The

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<sup>27</sup>Joseph P. Brennan, “Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies,” *BTB* 10 (1980): 26.

term can also refer to the Decalogue. Due to this broad reference to the Hebrew term, the reader may ask to what it actually refers. From a canonical perspective, we can suggest that Psalm 1 asks the readers to consider the subsequent psalms as torah, Yahweh's instruction. That is, Psalm 1 invites its readers to meditate on the subsequent psalms as the torah of Yahweh, a path to a blessed life, as the psalm employs a metaphor comparing the torah of Yahweh to a life-giving water. Thus diligently adhering to the torah of Yahweh – what scholars call torah-piety – will prove to be a major theme of the entire Hebrew Psalter.

When taken separately, Psalm 1 introduces a life that may appear simplistic and naïve: It declares that the righteous who meditates on the torah of Yahweh will be blessed like a tree planted by streams of water, but the wicked will perish. With this theology of retribution, it draws a picture of life that is rather simple for the individual believer.<sup>28</sup> S/he is then urged to make a decision to choose a life of blessing. The psalmist (or the final editor of the Hebrew Psalter), however, is not so naïve but knows life better. Life is not so simple. It is filled with valleys and peaks. In fact, the psalmist knows that the righteous suffers in the “real world.” The fact that lament psalms dominate in the first two books of the Hebrew Psalter unambiguously indicates the psalmist's clear understanding of the whole scope of life. Thus one must ask what it means when the psalmist declares that the righteous will always be “blessed” and “prosper.” Certainly, prosperity here is not to be equated with worldly fortunes. In fact, quite the contrary is

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<sup>28</sup>Some scholars suggest that the theology of the Hebrew Psalter and that of the Book of Deuteronomy are similar. On a micro level, for example, Gunnell André, “‘Walk’, ‘Stand’, and ‘Sit’ in Psalm I 1-2,” *VT* 32 (1982): 326, points out that Psalm 1 employs the Deuteronomistic language, “walk,” “stand,” and “sit.” On a macro level, Patrick D. Miller compares the Psalter with the Book of Deuteronomy. He argues that both books are divine words indirectly (5), and the Psalter has “theology from below,” and the Book of Deuteronomy “theology from above” (6). For more details see, Patrick D. Miller, “Deuteronomy and Psalms: Evoking a Biblical Conversation,” *JBL* 118 (1999): 3-18.

the case. McCann describes its meaning well: “The prosperity of the righteous is real but hidden. It is an openness to and connectedness with God that sustains life amid all threats.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus the comparison of the righteous to a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season declares that he/she is a person who is not empowered by his/her own strength, but is given his/her energy from God. As the arboreal image indicates, however, continual blossoming is not in view here. The image suggests that the righteous will not always be productive, but only at certain times. Craig Broyles aptly points out the nature of the arboreal image: “The psalm does not necessarily describe a present, visible reality; it describes what will transpire at some unspecified time in the future.”<sup>30</sup>

Verse 6 also supports the same view of prosperity and blessedness that the psalmist espouses. It reads: “For Yahweh *knows* the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.” The Hebrew term used here is *יָדַעַ* which means “to know, to have intimate relationship with.” As Martin Buber points out, this sentence is not really intelligible.<sup>31</sup> God’s knowledge of the way of the righteous does not correspond to the destruction of the wicked well. Thus some English translations, *NIV* in particular, render it: For Yahweh *watches over* the way of the righteous. Such a rendering is quite possible. Mitchell Dahood, for example, notes that the Hebrew term “connotes to ‘care for, protect.’”<sup>32</sup> W. Schottroff also notes that the term refers to “the concrete attention of

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<sup>29</sup>J. Clinton McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. IV (ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 687.

<sup>30</sup>Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms* (NIBCOT; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 41.

<sup>31</sup>Buber, 55.

<sup>32</sup>Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I: 1-50* (AB 16; New York: Doubleday, 1965), 5

Yahweh in specific situations of distress or to his constant, helpful companionship.”<sup>33</sup>

Yet such is hardly a concept of protection in the common sense. The primary meaning of the term belongs to the sphere of contact in that it refers to having intimate relationship with someone. Another peculiarity to this assurance to the righteous, as Buber points out, is that the psalm does not say that Yahweh knows the righteous. Instead, it says he “knows the way of the righteous.” Buber argues that the way of the righteous is created in a way that in “each of its stages they experience the divine contact afresh.”<sup>34</sup> Thus the psalm assures that the righteous will experience an intimate relationship with Yahweh and are under his personal care and guidance as they choose the way of Yahweh by meditating on his torah day and night.

While the focus of Psalm 1 is Yahweh’s torah or instruction, Psalm 2 focuses on Yahweh’s reign. Typically known as a royal psalm, Psalms 2 now functions differently in the present shape of the Hebrew Psalter.<sup>35</sup> In this new literary context, as James W. Watts notes, an eschatological meaning has supplemented the original royal and cultic one.<sup>36</sup> Some argue that the present shape of the Hebrew Psalter is highly eschatological in nature. David C. Mitchell, for example, argues that the entire Hebrew Psalter, not just Psalm 2, presents an essentially eschatological theology centered around the figure of the

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<sup>33</sup>W. Schottroff, “ $\text{ׁוּדַע}$  to perceive, know,” *TLOT* 3:515.

<sup>34</sup>Buber, 57.

<sup>35</sup>John T. Willis, “A Cry of Defiance – Psalm 2” *JSOT* 47 (1990): 33-50. He argues against the common notion of Psalm 2 as a royal psalm by arguing that Psalm 2 is not so much a messianic psalm or an enthronement drama as a cry of defiance and by isolating three characteristic features of such a cry, namely threat of impending conflict, affirmations of confidence, and warning to enemy.

<sup>36</sup>James W. Watts, “Psalm 2 in the Context of Biblical Theology,” *HBT* 12 (1990): 73-91.

Davidic king.<sup>37</sup> Since the present shape of the Hebrew Psalter must have come from the postexilic period when ancient Israel lost her autonomy and the Davidic dynasty disappeared, the redaction of the Psalter with a hope of divine intervention to restore the house of David is quite reasonable.<sup>38</sup> The inclusion of other royal psalms, not as a group but scattered throughout the Psalter, suggests that the “canonical shaping” has given them a new function in the Hebrew Psalter, namely a “witness to the messianic hope which looked for the consummation of God’s kingship through his Anointed One.”<sup>39</sup>

When taken together, therefore, Psalms 1 and 2 then highlight the centrality of the torah of Yahweh and his reign. Clinton McCann puts the themes of the twofold introduction to the Hebrew Psalter well in his remark: “Psalms 1 and 2 together form an introduction to the Psalms. While Psalm 1 informs the reader that the whole collection is to be approached and appropriated as instruction, Psalm 2 introduces the essential content of that instruction – the Lord reigns!”<sup>40</sup> Likewise, James L. Mays proposes that the

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<sup>37</sup>David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms* (JSOTSup 252; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), see especially 82-89, 297-303.

<sup>38</sup>A traditional view assigns final closure of the Hebrew Psalter to a date sometime between the end of the Babylonian exile, as postexilic psalms (Psalm 137 in particular) attest, and the translation of the Septuagint. Gerald H. Wilson, however, argues for a first century C.E. date. For more details, see Gerald H. Wilson, “A First Century C.E. Date for the Closing of the Hebrew Psalter,” in *Haim M. I. Gevaryahu Memorial Volume* (ed. Joshua J. Adler; Jerusalem: World Jewish Bible Center, 1993), 136-143.

<sup>39</sup>Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 515-517. Isaiah Sonne, “The Second Psalm,” *HUCA* 19 (1945/46): 43-55, however, argues that the messianic, eschatological point of view is based on questionable phrases: “Against the Lord and the against His anointed” (v. 2c), “I will tell ... The Lord said unto me: Thou art my son, This day I have begotten thee” (v. 7), and “Kiss the son” (v. 12a). He argues that these phrases contain formal irregularities, and two of them in particular (vv. 7, 12) “offer almost insoluble difficulties as to the content.” Thus based on his reconstructed text and setting in life he suggests the psalm to be Hezekiah’s coronation psalm. The phrases, however, are not as questionable as he suggests them to be. One exception is verse 12 where the Masoretic text has “the son” in Aramaic, instead of Hebrew, thus presenting difficulty.

<sup>40</sup>J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 41.

liturgical proclamation “The LORD reigns” is an “organizing center” for the theology of the entire Hebrew Psalter.<sup>41</sup>

Whereas Psalm 1 focuses primarily upon the way of blessedness for the individual believer who follows God’s torah, Psalm 2 is concerned with the nation of Israel among the nations of the world. When compared to other psalms that follow this twofold introduction, in particular Psalms 3-41, Psalms 1 and 2 are unique in their style and content. There is no invocation of God, suggesting non-cultic settings. When taken together, Psalms 1 and 2 create an eschatological context for the twofold introduction to the Psalter. In other words, Psalm 2 in the present shape of the Hebrew Psalter is no longer a mere “royal psalm” or a “battle cry.” Rather it becomes eschatological in that it invites readers to be comforted, not by reflecting on past events – such as a coronation of Davidic kings – but by resting their hope in some future action of God. Robert Cole proposes that the battle depicted in Psalm 2, when taken together with Psalm 1, is to be understood as the final eschatological conflagration ushering in the kingdom of God through his anointed king: “Psalms 1 and 2 were not read as two disparate Torah and royal psalms respectively in the final redaction of the Psalter; rather, both depict the ideal Joshua-like warrior and king who through divinely given authority vanquishes his enemies.”<sup>42</sup> The issue which Psalm 2 deals with, however, is not historical but theological in that it deals with the ultimate power in the universe, i.e., God, not who the son is.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 12-22.

<sup>42</sup>Robert Cole, “An Integrated Reading of Psalms 1 and 2,” *JSOT* 98 (2002): 75-88, especially 88.

<sup>43</sup>James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 47.

Psalms 1 and 2 as the twofold introduction to the Hebrew Psalter invite us to a life of blessedness. They also introduce us to a way of understanding the entire Hebrew Psalter in light of the twofold introduction. The Hebrew Psalter is about a life God approves. Yet the Hebrew Psalter is concerned about more than an individual's life. It is instructive for the postexilic Israel in its entirety and even beyond.

Psalm 1 begins with אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר (happy is the one who), and Psalm 2 ends with אֲשֶׁר־יִכָּל־חַוְסֵי (happy are all who). Thus Psalms 1 and 2 share a keyword אֲשֶׁר, which nicely forms an inclusion, connecting two previously independent psalms semantically and thematically as a twofold introduction to the Hebrew Psalter. Then Psalms 1 and 2 are about blessedness. This blessedness, however, is not so naïve as it perceives the injustices and evil that pervade life. This theme of a blessed life, ironically filled with conflicts, recurs frequently in the Hebrew Psalter. As Brennan points out, Psalm 2 sets the scene with a great conflict. This conflict, however, is only a beginning, which Psalms 3-145 will describe in great details because the present shape of the Hebrew Psalter addresses Israel's experience of monarchy, the loss of kingship, and offers guidance for exilic and postexilic Israel. This conflict in a way can be depicted as a conflict between theological ideal and historical reality. Put in other words, the theological ideal expressed in Psalms 1 and 2 is incongruent with historical reality. This conflict must be resolved as the Hebrew Psalter comes to an end if the Hebrew Psalter is to be a literary whole. This resolution will constitute closure.

*Psalms 146-150 as the Fivefold Doxology to the Hebrew Psalter*

As the analysis of Psalms 146-150 in Chapters Two through Four shows, Psalms 146-150 share numerous affinities. The fact that the Hebrew Psalter ends with five

hymns of praise is not accidental. Just as Wilson and others have argued for the purposeful arrangement of the 150 psalms, these final Hallelujah Psalms, I suggest, are also strategically placed at the end of the Hebrew Psalter to close it with a fivefold doxology. The number “five” here perhaps is, W. Graham Scroggie suggests, related to the fact that the Psalter is composed of five Books.<sup>44</sup> It may also be related to the books of the Pentateuch.<sup>45</sup> Evidently, there exist numerous points of contact between these two groups of writings. I suggest that the points of contact, however, are not on specific contents or similarities. Rather they are on the characteristics of both writings as the torah of Yahweh. In other words, we suggest, the final editor(s) of the Hebrew Psalter intentionally divided the 150 psalms into five books – in spite of the fact the Hebrew Psalter is not so large to require several scrolls but could be accommodated quite comfortably in a single scroll – and had the Psalter conclude with the fivefold doxology and thereby relate the whole Hebrew Psalter as the torah of YHWH (Cf. Ps. 1:2).<sup>46</sup> Thus, as Wilson points out, “individual human psalms make the transition to become the Word of God to us” in the present shape of the Hebrew Psalter.<sup>47</sup> The fact that each major

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<sup>44</sup>W. Graham Scroggie, *Psalms*, vol. IV (London: Pickring & Inglis, 1951), 118-19.

<sup>45</sup>Bullinger relates Psalms 146-150 to the Pentateuch, each answering to its corresponding book in that collection. Quoted in Scroggie, 119.

<sup>46</sup>Nahum Sarna, *Songs of the Heart* (New York: Schocken Books, 1993), 17. He points out that “the pentateuchal division” of the Hebrew Psalter is “very strange” when we consider the size of the Psalter. It is less than one half the size of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch consists of 5,852 verses and the Psalter 2,461. When the differences between prose and poetry are taken into consideration, the pentateuchal division of the Hebrew Psalter is hardly accidental. Especially, when we consider a rabbinic statement in the Talmud, “Moses gave Israel five books of the Torah, and David gave Israel five books of the Psalms,” it is likely that the editor(s) of the Hebrew Psalter purposefully created the pentateuchal division to relate the Psalter to the Pentateuch.

<sup>47</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, “Psalms and Psalter: Paradigm for Biblical Theology,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann; Downers Grove & Leicester: InterVarsity Press & Apollos, 2002), 103.

division of the Hebrew Bible, as Sarna points out, begins with a reference to torah is also suggestive and supports the canonical intention to present the Psalter as the torah of Yahweh.<sup>48</sup> The Book of Joshua which begins the Former Prophets, for example, opens with an invitation to Joshua to observe torah (Josh. 1:7-8). The Book of Isaiah which begins the Latter Prophets also opens with a reference to torah as Isaiah calls upon Israel to give ear to torah (1:10). This way of opening each division of the Hebrew Bible with a reference to torah is suggestive concerning canonical intentions and adds weight to our assertion that the Hebrew Psalter which begins the third division of the Hebrew Bible, כתובים (the *Ketubim*, or Writings), appropriately opens itself with an invitation to torah, i.e., the Psalter. The canonical intention is unambiguously clear in that it is to “establish or confirm the status of the book as part of the canon of Scripture.”<sup>49</sup> As such, the final Hallelujah Psalms, along with the rest of the psalms including Psalms 1 and 2, are no longer only human words to YHWH but also the torah of Yahweh to humans, instructing what the righteous ought to do – that is, to praise, celebrating Yahweh as their King who is the Creator and Sustainer.

#### *The Affinities between Psalms 1-2 and Psalms 146-150*

Psalm 1 begins with the אֲשֶׁר־ formula, and Psalm 2 ends with it. This Hebrew term always occurs in the plural, the plural of accumulation or intensity, for there is no such thing as a single blessing. As such, the Hebrew term expresses the highest form of blessedness that is enduring.<sup>50</sup> Unlike בָּרַךְ, it always has a human being as its referent,

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<sup>48</sup>Sarna, 28.

<sup>49</sup>Klaus Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms*, 16.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 30.

and to be blessed one has to do something positive.<sup>51</sup> Although often rendered as “happy,” אֲשֶׁר־ has nothing to do with emotion or feeling but has everything to do with choice, i.e., making the right decision: Choosing to delight in Yahweh’s torah rather than to associate oneself with the wicked (1:1-2), to take refuge in Yahweh (2:12), and to seek Yahweh’s help (146:5). The term occurs twenty-six times in the Psalter: 6 times in Book I; once in Book II; 4 times in Book III; twice in Book IV; and 10 times in Book V, besides the first two occurrences of Psalm 1:1 and 2:12, and the last in 146:5. The term is strategically placed in the Psalter. As its occurrences reveal, the term occurs most frequently in Books I and V. Since Psalms 1 and 2 as the twofold introduction to the Psalter begin and end with the אֲשֶׁר־ formula, it is fitting that the last אֲשֶׁר־ formula occurs in the first psalm of the final Hallelujah Psalms (146:5). That is, with the use of this Hebrew term אֲשֶׁר־, the final collection in the Hebrew Psalter sends its readers “back to Psalms 1 and 2, the beginning of the Psalter, back to the two essentials for the postexilic community – the הַרְרָה and the kingship of YHWH.”<sup>52</sup> In this regard, just as Psalms 1 and 2 as the twofold introduction to the entire Hebrew Psalter are about blessedness, Psalms 146-150 as the fivefold grand doxology to the entire Hebrew Psalter are also about blessedness. The former introduces the reader to a life of torah blessedness, and the latter invites the reader to a life of praise, a different form of blessedness in spite of incongruencies between theological ideal and historical reality.

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<sup>51</sup>Henri Cazelles, “אֲשֶׁר־,” *TDOT* 1:446.

<sup>52</sup>Nancy deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 100.

Typically used in wisdom literature the אֲשֶׁר־י formula differs from the priestly blessing בְּרִיךְ. Although often rendered the same in English, these two Hebrew terms carry different nuances. The אֲשֶׁר־י formula refers to an ideal that should be emulated. In other words, it includes human obligation, reflected in one's lifestyle. The implication of this human obligation is that one has to choose the way of wisdom or torah-piety to be blessed. In Psalm 1 humans are given two ways to choose from, the way of torah-piety or the way of ungodliness, leading to life or to death. In terms of the final Hallelujah Psalms, "Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in YHWH his God" (146:5), but s/he is also given two ways to choose from. S/he has to choose either to "trust in princes" (146:3) or to hope in YHWH (146:5). For the psalmists, of course, the choice is crystal clear. There is no salvation in mortal princes; to trust them is to choose the way of death. While the rest of the final Hallelujah Psalms are not linked by the use of the same אֲשֶׁר־י formula, the collection as a whole emphasizes trust in YHWH thereby urging readers to choose wisely and linking the final collection together.

Psalms 2 and 149 have a very close affinity between them. This affinity prompts some commentators to suggest that these two psalms were added to the collection at the same time.<sup>53</sup> According to the suggestion, Psalm 2 is a prologue outlining the messianic and eschatological dimensions of the drama to be unfolded in the rest of the Psalter, and Psalm 149 serves as an epilogue, taking up the same theme. We cannot know with any certainty whether the two psalms were added to the Psalter at the same time.

Nevertheless, the suggestion does acknowledge the affinity between the two psalms.

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<sup>53</sup>Joseph P. Brennan, "Some Hidden Harmonies in the Fifth Book of Psalms," in *Essays in Honor of Joseph P. Brennan* (ed. Robert F. McNamara; Rochester: St. Bernard's Seminary, 1976), 151.

Psalm 2 is usually identified as a royal psalm. When we consider this psalm alone as a separate entity as in the traditional form-critical approach, its function and meaning are limited and even offensive to modern minds. David J. A. Clines, for instance, argues that Psalm 2 justifies violence in the form of ancient Israel's imperialistic ideology that he cannot readily accept due to its ethical shortcomings.<sup>54</sup> One can make the same criticism concerning Psalm 149 where ancient Israel is depicted as praising God while having a double-edged sword in their hands to execute vengeance upon the nations and to bind their kings with shackles and their nobles with iron chains to execute sentence against them (vv. 7-9). Moses Bottenwieser, for example, labels Psalm 149 to be "spiritually valueless," based on its warlike tone.<sup>55</sup>

For this reason, Psalm 2 – and also Psalm 149 for the same reason – is not so much important in its own right when one interprets it at its compositional level only. One must rather interpret it as a part of the twofold introduction to the whole Psalter. In other words, Psalm 2 has been loosened from its original, historical context and assigned a new significance in the context of the Hebrew Psalter. The psalm now has an orientation toward the future. That is, it is eschatological. As such, Psalm 2 introduces the cosmological conflict between Yahweh and the princes of nations, and Psalm 149 concludes it, serving as a triumphant epilogue taking up the same themes again for the final time.<sup>56</sup> Both psalms declare that the nations will be judged by Yahweh's agent.

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<sup>54</sup>David J. A. Clines, *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 205; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 244-75. He criticizes how commentators minimize or idealize Psalm 2, while neglecting to pay attention to its ethical shortcomings.

<sup>55</sup>Moses Bottenwieser, *The Psalm* (New York: Ktav, 1969), 690.

<sup>56</sup>Brennan, "Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies," 29.

As anticipated, Psalms 2 and 149 share numerous keyword and thematic links. “Nations” and “people,” for example, occur in both psalms (2:1, 8; 149:7). Both psalms share the term “kings” (2:2, 10; 149:8). Furthermore, “rulers” (2:2, 10) are, while not identical in Hebrew, also semantically parallel to “kings.” Another pair of terms that is semantically parallel includes “chains and fetters” (2:3) and “shackles” and “chains” (149:8).

Psalm 1 employs the antithesis between righteous and wicked, and Psalm 2 between the Davidic king and the nations. The antithesis between righteous and wicked occurs frequently throughout the entire Psalter. The antithesis between the Davidic king and the nations also occurs throughout the entire Psalter (Pss. 18, 20-21, 45, 72, 101, 110, and 144). This antithesis continues to be present in Psalm 149, except that it is now between Yahweh’s faithful and the nations, not between the Davidic king and the nations.

As I pointed out in Chapter Three, Psalm 149 editorially continues Psalm 148. The latter consists of an extended invitation to praise, thus anticipating both Psalms 149 and 150. Even though Psalms 148 and 150 deal with the scope of praise at a cosmic level, at the end of Psalm 148 its focus is on Yahweh’s faithful, i.e., Israel, and Psalm 149 continues to focus on Israel’s praise. In other words, for the readers Psalm 149 is a composition generated by the last verse of Psalm 148. Considering this continuation, affinities between Psalm 148 and the twofold introduction are to be expected. Indeed, Psalm 148:11 recalls Psalm 2:1-2, 10-12.<sup>57</sup> Both psalms call for recognition of God’s sovereignty, Psalm 2 at the beginning and Psalm 148 at the end of the Hebrew Psalter.

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<sup>57</sup>McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 1271.

Indeed, the call for recognition of Yahweh's sovereignty links Psalms 1-2 and Psalms 146-150.

Psalm 2 highlights the universality of God which is part of the "Zion tradition." One of the aspects of the Zion tradition, according to J. J. M. Roberts, is that "Yahweh is the great king not only of Israel but over all the nations and other gods of the earth."<sup>58</sup> Psalms 146-150 as the fivefold doxology to the Hebrew Psalter, as we saw in Chapter Four, alternate between particularism and universalism, thereby sending readers back to the introduction of the Psalter. Thus both the introduction and the conclusion to the Hebrew Psalter emphasize that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is also the God of the universe.

In their original compositional level, Psalm 1 is individualistic and Psalm 2 nationalistic. Psalm 1 invites its reader to a way of wisdom and to meditate on the torah day and night, and as such its invitation is individualized. Every reader has to make his or her own choice. Psalm 2, typically classified as a royal psalm, extends the invitation to a national level by inviting the readers to align themselves with "the just" in Psalm 1. Although Psalm 2 calls for "the nations" to choose the way of righteousness by acknowledging Yahweh as Lord and King and seeking refuge in him, when considered in its original compositional level, Psalm 2 remains nationalistic. Followed by the Davidic Psalms in Book I both psalms remain at the nationalistic level. It is true that Psalm 2 was regarded as eschatological as early as the rabbinic period, but as Mitchell convincingly argues, the present form of the Hebrew Psalter has eschatological overtones, establishing a strongly messianic reading of the first three books in particular.<sup>59</sup> Yet, it is at the end of

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<sup>58</sup>J. J. M. Roberts, "The Enthronement of Yhwh and David: The Abiding Theological Significance of the Kingship Language of the Psalms," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 675-86.

<sup>59</sup>Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 82-89, 297-303.

the Hebrew Psalter where eschatological, universalistic reinterpetive tendencies become apparent. That is, psalms in the context of the Hebrew Psalter are no longer mere remembrances of the past, but they are also a means to invite their readers to be involved in the ever present cosmic conflict between Yahweh and his enemies and to look forward to the coming reign of the universal God Yahweh.

As Brennan puts, it is not by accident that the “Book of Praises” begins with אֲשֶׁר־יֵאֵיֶשׁ (Happy is the man) and ends with הַלְלֵ-יְהוָה (Praise Yahweh).<sup>60</sup> Psalms 1 and 2, especially when combined with Psalms 146-150, give us an important clue about how the Hebrew Psalter defines blessing: Blessed is the person who praises Yahweh in all valleys and peaks of life. All the troubles of life may not be completely resolved. Nonetheless, all that breathes are invited to praise Yahweh. The fact that biblical laments, unlike other ancient Near Eastern psalms of lament, end with praise is but a small evidence of such a clue. In other words, the torah-piety which Psalm 1 espouses acknowledges Yahweh’s universal reign, and it is this faith in Yahweh’s universal reign which prompts the faithful to trust in Yahweh and to praise him. In this regard, the last word of the faithful must be הַלְלֵ-יְהוָה (Praise Yahweh), and indeed it is, because to praise is to speak about what one really cares about and complete one’s faith.<sup>61</sup> Thus praise of Yahweh is a fitting conclusion to the Hebrew Psalter which is rightly called תהילים (lit., praises). If the faithful do not praise Yahweh, something or someone else will take the place of Yahweh in their heart.

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<sup>60</sup>Brennan, “Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies,” 29.

<sup>61</sup>C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on Psalms* (San Diego, New York, London: A Harvest Book, 1986), 95. Lewis perceives that to praise is to speak about what one cares about, and praise completes one’s enjoyment. When applied to Yahweh, one’s praise of Yahweh completes one’s enjoyment of Yahweh. I equate this completion of enjoyment of Yahweh to the completion of faith.

In summary, Psalms 1 and 2 as the twofold introduction and Psalms 146-150 as the fivefold grand doxology to the Hebrew Psalter highlight the book in several ways. First, Psalm 1 sets the stage for the torah of Yahweh (Psalms 3-145) to become the all-encompassing paradigm of faith for each individual, and Psalm 2 places it in a cosmic, eschatological scale. As such, the focus shifts from the individual to the community of faith, and such a shift is also apparent in Psalms 146-150. As discussed in Chapter Three, Psalms 146-150 widen the scope of praise by summoning an individual, the nation of Israel, and all that breathes, forming a crescendo of praise of Yahweh who is the Creator and Sustainer.

In Psalm 149 Israel's praise of God becomes a double-edged sword of vengeance in Israel's hands. What it implies is that the present shape of the Hebrew Psalter invites Israel not to rely on military might. Instead, Israel is to turn to Yahweh and leave vengeance in his hands. One of the Davidic psalms sums it up well: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God" (Ps. 20:7).

Concerning the relationship between Psalm 1 and Psalm 150, Walter Brueggemann suggests that "It seems possible that the present shape of the collection is designed to announce that a life grounded in obedience, leads precisely to doxology."<sup>62</sup> Elsewhere Brueggemann emphasizes the world-making power of doxology. He suggests, "Israel's doxological activity which celebrates Yahweh also makes available a world over which Yahweh rules."<sup>63</sup> For Brueggemann the world-making doxology of Israel is a

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<sup>62</sup>Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 183.

<sup>63</sup>Walter Brueggemann, *Israel's Praise: Doxology against Idolatry and Ideology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 51.

radical act of hope in which Yahweh's just rule is available whereas all other worlds are characteristically imperial. Doxology, he argues, is an "act of hope" and essentially eschatological because it promises and anticipates the world that is beyond present reality.<sup>64</sup> Then what we can say about the introduction and the conclusion in the Hebrew Psalter is that they invite the readers into a radical act of world-making where they become participants in that world.

Klaus Seybold acknowledges the function of Psalm 1 as an introduction to the Hebrew Psalter and its strategic location as a work of the compilers and redactors who wished to give the book a suitable opening. He questions, however, whether different thinkers and different ideas stand behind Psalm 150.<sup>65</sup> On the one hand, it is quite possible that Psalm 150 – or Psalms 146-150 for that matter – may have come from a different hand. On the other hand, Seybold's question is understandable because the move from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150 is problematic and complex.

Walter Brueggemann is well aware of this complex nature of the movement from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150. He, unlike Wilson, is primarily concerned with the shape of the Hebrew Psalter while not being ignorant of the historical-critical quest of the shaping issues. Thus Brueggemann focuses on psalm content and how it affects the reader. In a series of articles, he presents his understanding of the Hebrew Psalter in its entirety and its movement from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150. In his response to James L. Mays's proposal of attention to the shape and shaping of the Psalter as a useful third way to Psalms studies, Brueggemann examines the Hebrew Psalter's opening and closing psalms, i.e., Psalms 1

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>65</sup>Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms*, 16-17.

and 150, and thereby identifies its theological movement. Like Seybold, he suggests that Psalms 1 and 150 present different theological messages. Brueggemann writes:

The canonical shape of the Psalter has as its problem movement from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150, from a beginning in obedience to an ending in praise. I submit that this move is made as difficult as can be by the affirmation of Psalm 1, which is utterly confident about the claims of torah piety. The move is difficult because Psalm 1 guarantees that the problem of theodicy will emerge, for in fact God is clearly not one who causes the righteous to flourish and the wicked to disappear. If we do not reflect much, we can imagine a direct move from obedience to praise. The lived experience of Israel, however, will not permit such an easy, unreflective, direct move. The Psalter itself knows better. The material between beginning and end is the stuff of Israel's lived faith, the stuff whereby Israel processes the confident theodicy of Psalm 1 and the glad overcome of Psalm 150. Along the way, the move from the one to the other is troubled and complex, and often disordered.<sup>66</sup>

But even if so, that possibility does not alter the effect the present shape conveys to the readers: The Hebrew Psalter begins with an invitation to meditate upon it as the torah of Yahweh and concludes with Hallelujahs in spite of valleys in between.

### *Conclusion*

In the beginning of the chapter, we began our discussion with a premise that the Hebrew Psalter constitutes a book, and Psalms 1 and 2 are its twofold introduction which introduces its readers to themes and concepts prevalent in the book, and Psalms 146-150 its fivefold doxology patterned after the Pentateuch. If the Hebrew Psalter is to be a literary whole, we acknowledged, it will likely have a beginning that deserves a fitting closure typical of biblical books. Thus Psalms 1 and 2 need to relate to Psalms 146-150. As we have discussed, one way they relate to each other is to trust in Yahweh and his just reign in spite of the incongruencies between faith and historical reality. In this regard, as Buber suggests, the Hebrew Psalter, editorially presented as the Torah, completes or

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<sup>66</sup>Brueggemann, "Response to James L. Mays, 'The Question of Context,'" in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, 37-38.

complements the Mosaic Torah.<sup>67</sup> Whereas the latter, Deuteronomy in particular, strongly affirms retribution theology, the former complements it by urging its readers to trust in Yahweh and praise him even though the historical reality may not appear to show that he uncompromisingly and unfailingly punishes the wicked for their evil deeds and rewards the righteous with prosperity. In that regard, the Hebrew Psalter in its final shape betrays an eschatological outlook, radically hoping and looking forward to Yahweh's just reign in the future.

As is commonly known, the Hebrew Psalter manifests a certain movement – from predominantly lament in Books I and II to mostly praise in Books IV and V. Likewise, when we limit our consideration to the twofold introduction and the fivefold conclusion to the Hebrew Psalter, they too manifest a certain movement. It begins with “Blessed is the one” and concludes with Hallelujah, הַלְלֵהוּ יְהוָה. In other words, it begins with a summons to obedience and ends with a summons to praise. Put differently, as Nahum Sarna points out, its direction is from humanity to God.<sup>68</sup> Just as we hear God's call to be his people and to live faithfully as his people in many of the books of the Bible, in the Hebrew Psalter we hear the same call amidst the challenges of life. It instructs us how to maintain perspective and how to retain a dynamic relationship with God through the valleys and peaks of life. Psalms 1 and 2 as the twofold introduction to the Hebrew Psalter invite us to make a decision to live a life of blessedness, which takes full account of the realities of life with valleys and peaks. Psalms 146-150 as the fivefold grand

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<sup>67</sup>Buber, 51.

<sup>68</sup>Sarna, *Songs of the Heart*, 27. Sarna limits his discussion to Psalm 1, but the same observation may be applied to Psalm 2.

doxology to the entire Hebrew Psalter, one for each book, call us to lead a life of praise.

Such a life is what the Hebrew Psalter calls “blessed.”

## CHAPTER SIX

### Conclusion

Chapter Six consists of two parts. First, it presents a brief summary of the dissertation and draws conclusions of the study. Then it suggests some of the implications of the methodology employed in the dissertation.

In recent decades, Psalms studies have undergone a paradigm shift. Scholars in the past have focused primarily on individual psalms, assuming the Hebrew Psalter to be an anthology of praises and prayers lacking any purposeful editorial shape. Now more and more scholars consider the Hebrew Psalter as a literary entity that is a coherent, unified book. In other words, the shape of the Hebrew Psalter has become an important element of the psalms studies that provides a context in which each psalm is understood. Consequently, more and more scholars seek a holistic reading of the Hebrew Psalter, paying close attention to the context of the Hebrew Psalter and to relationships of individual psalms amongst themselves and to the whole. Such a trend certainly constitutes a paradigm shift which Brevard S. Childs called for and heralded.

In this study I have applied the new paradigm in understanding Psalms 146-150 as part of the literary entity called the Hebrew Psalter. I began with the view that each psalm is part of a larger theological and canonical entity. As such, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. With this view in mind, the traditional form-critical and cult-functional questions are subordinated to the canonical ones in this dissertation. On the one hand, we have first examined each of the final Hallelujah Psalms as a separate entity

in Chapter Two, for each psalm, stemming out of its unique compositional setting, is an entity which deserves a separate treatment. On the other hand, we have examined these psalms as a collection with common theological purpose and sought to propose their function at the conclusions of the Hebrew Psalter. The purpose of our examination of Psalms 146-150 as separate entities in Chapter Two was twofold. First, the possibility of their different setting in life necessitates these psalms to be treated separately, paying attention to their possible historical compositional context with a limited amount of speculation. Second, the examination was to gather information concerning their intertextual relationships. In other words, it provides us with continuity for a canonical understanding of these psalms in the following chapters. It helped us to identify the important key-word links, thematic links, and repetitions that are crucial for identifying intertextual relationships of these psalms at the microstructural level.

In Chapter Three I analyzed the raw data we collected in Chapter Two with the hope of establishing a rationale for the placement of Psalms 146-150 at the end of the Hebrew Psalter. The fact that the canonical psalms no longer exist only as individual units necessitates this analysis. The result of this analysis revealed that these psalms share many common motifs. Many of the motifs found throughout Psalms 146-150 are common to almost all the psalms, in particular hymns. Nevertheless, these motifs link Psalms 146-150 by emphasizing Yahweh's mighty works in creation and his sustaining power and his incomparable mercy and care for his creatures, the humble and needy in particular. These Psalms depict Yahweh as "the Maker of the heavens and earth" who remains "faithful forever and whose reign is just." He is also at the same time "the Maker of Israel" and "the Builder of Jerusalem." In other words, Yahweh's sovereignty

reaches both Israel and the nations. Thus the Hebrew Psalter proclaims Yahweh to be a God of Israel and of the universe.

Moreover, these psalms betray a purposeful movement in several ways. As the Hebrew Psalter moves from plea to praise, Psalms 146-150 as its final collection rightfully ends with five consecutive psalms of praise to punctuate the Psalter with a dramatic close. In so doing, this collection widens the scope of praise by summoning an individual, the nation of Israel, and all that breathes. As such, Psalms 146-150 form a crescendo of praise. Quite expectedly, as the collection reaches to the end, the use of the personal name of God יהוה decreases, and the more universal reference to God as אֱלֹהִים occurs. Interestingly, the number of keyword and the thematic links between adjacent psalms also decreases as the collection reaches to the end. When we consider these aspects of movement at the end of the Hebrew Psalter, it is difficult to think that these psalms are haphazardly placed at the end. Instead, the Hebrew Psalter is structured theologically, and Psalms 146-150 form the last small collection of psalms at the end of the Psalter to accentuate the effect of praise.

In Chapter Four we examined scholarly proposals on Book V of the Hebrew Psalter as a literary whole and its relationship to Psalms 146-150. By and large, they fall into two camps: The traditional view which argues these psalms to be integral to Book V and the alternative view held by Gerald H. Wilson and Erich Zenger that sees Psalms 146-150 as non-integral to the book.

Gerald H. Wilson in particular suggests that Psalms 145-150 serve as an intentional conclusion to the Hebrew Psalter.<sup>1</sup> For him Psalm 145 concludes Book V,

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<sup>1</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS, 76; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985): 193-94.

and Psalms 146-150 are liturgically motivated by 145:21.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, he fails to discuss in detail their intertextual relationships and why these psalms stand outside the fifth book. Our analysis followed the alternative view held by Wilson and Zenger. But since neither of them provides any sufficient support as to why Psalms 146-150 do not belong to Book V, in Chapter Four I proposed that these psalms, taken as the fivefold, grand doxology to the Hebrew Psalter, stand outside the fifth book based on the following observations. First, following Wilson's proposal, I regard 145:21 ("My mouth shall utter the praise of YHWH, and all creatures shall bless his holy name for ever and ever") to be what Wilson calls "the missing doxology to the fifth book." As Wilson acknowledges, "[t]he blessing expressed in this verse is comparable to that expressed in the other concluding doxologies, and the vocabulary of the last half ('... bless his name for ever and ever') is also similar."<sup>3</sup> Second, Psalms 146-150 form a self-contained unit. The structural and prosodic analysis of these psalms reveal that all but the initial הַלְלֵהוּ יְהוָה in Psalm 146 and the final הַלְלֵהוּ יְהוָה in Psalm 150 stay outside the psalm proper. In other words, the initial הַלְלֵהוּ יְהוָה in Psalm 146 becomes part of the first strophe in the psalm, and the final הַלְלֵהוּ יְהוָה in Psalm 150 part of the last strophe in the psalm. Thus the first and the last הַלְלֵהוּ יְהוָה frames in Psalms 146-150 nicely envelope the entire collection while the rest of the הַלְלֵהוּ יְהוָה frames connect the adjacent psalms together, forming a nicely self-contained unit. Third, we view Psalms 1-2 as a twofold introduction and Psalms 146-150 as a fivefold doxology to the Hebrew Psalter befitting its fivefold division after the fivefold Torah. Interestingly, when we exclude Psalms 1 and 2 as a

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<sup>2</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, "The Use of Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter" *JSOT* 35 (1986): 87.

<sup>3</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 133.

twofold introduction to the Hebrew Psalter from Book I, it consists of 39 psalms (Pss. 3-41). When we consider Psalms 146-150 as a fivefold doxology to the entire Hebrew Psalter and not integral to the fifth book, it also includes 39 psalms (Pss. 107-145), the same number of psalms as that of the first book. Fourth, when we view Psalm 145:21 as the missing doxology to the fifth book and Psalms 146-150 as the fivefold concluding doxology to the entire Hebrew Psalter but non-integral to the fifth book, we can observe a rough parallel between these two sets of fivefold doxologies. That is, doxologies at the end of each book (Pss. 41:14; 72:18-19; 89:53; 106:48; 145:21) and Psalms 146-150 as the fivefold grand doxology to the Hebrew Psalter parallel in their blending of particularism and universalism. Thus I propose Psalms 146-150 to be a self-contained unit, bringing the Hebrew Psalter to a climax of long journey with the fivefold doxology, patterned after the five doxologies at the end of each book.

In Chapter Five we examined the points of contact between Psalms 1-2 and Psalms 146-150 because if indeed the Hebrew Psalter constitutes a book, and the former were the twofold introduction and the latter the fivefold doxological conclusion to the Hebrew Psalter respectively, the two groups of psalms should relate to each other. In other words, if the Hebrew Psalter were to be a literary whole, we acknowledged, it must have a beginning that deserves a fitting closure because biblical books do not characteristically end with an open ending. And we suggested that Psalms 1 and 2 as its twofold introduction introduce its readers to themes and concepts prevalent in the book: Psalm 1 introduces the Hebrew Psalter as Yahweh's torah, i.e., instruction, and Psalm 2 the content of that instruction, i.e., Yahweh's reign. Likewise, Psalms 146-150, the fivefold doxology patterned after the Pentateuch, praises Yahweh's sovereign reign, thus

establishing the relationship to the introduction. This relationship in trusting Yahweh and his sovereign reign in spite of the incogruencies between faith and historical reality as represented by the dominance of lament psalms in the Hebrew Psalter is significant because the Hebrew Psalter, editorially presented as the Torah of Yahweh, completes or complements the Mosaic Torah. Whereas the latter, Deuteronomy in particular, strongly affirms retribution theology, the former complements it by urging its readers to trust in Yahweh and praise him even though the historical reality may not appear to show that he uncompromisingly and unfailingly punishes the wicked for their evil deeds and rewards the righteous with prosperity. The Hebrew Psalter in its final shape betrays an eschatological outlook, radically hoping and looking forward to Yahweh's just reign in the future.

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valleys and peaks. Psalms 146-150 as the fivefold grand doxology to the entire Hebrew Psalter, one for each book, call us to lead a life of praise in spite of the valleys in our lives. Such a life is what the Hebrew Psalter calls “blessed.”

This dissertation has raised questions which have implications for Psalms studies. The first concern is about contextual interpretation of the Hebrew Psalter. The present shape of the Hebrew Psalter reflects the process of reinterpretation and redaction to which we need to pay close attention. While understanding of the original setting in life may at times present a valuable insight, to stop there is to leave the task of interpretation half finished. In this dissertation, we have attempted to interpret psalms on at least two levels, the compositional context and the final canonical context. If we interpret psalms at their compositional level alone, modern people would have difficulty in accepting the normative value of certain psalms like Psalm 2, as David Clines aptly points out.<sup>4</sup> It is imperative for us to acknowledge that it is in the shape and shaping of the Hebrew Psalter that psalms, manifestly human words addressed to God, become the divine words to us, as Wilson argues.<sup>5</sup> Without treating this process of selecting, arranging, preserving, adapting, reshaping, contextualizing, and reinterpreting ancient tradition, any interpretation of the psalms remains insufficient. The context of the whole Psalter reflects “an eschatological and messianic interpretation of psalms which had originally only a limited national and historic setting.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, once nationalistic psalms at one point in history have eventually become universal eschatological psalms in the

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<sup>4</sup>David J. A. Clines, *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 205; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 244-75. He criticizes how commentators minimize or idealize Psalm 2, while neglecting to pay attention to its ethical shortcomings.

<sup>5</sup>Gerald H. Wilson, “Psalms and Psalter: Paradigm for Biblical Theology,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect* (ed. Scott Hafemann; Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 101.

<sup>6</sup>Joseph P. Brennan, “Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies,” *BTB* 10 (1980): 29.

Hebrew Psalter, and all this is done by the strategic placement of a wisdom psalm and a royal psalm in the beginning and the Hallelujah psalms at the end of the Hebrew Psalter. For this reason, our treatment of psalms at the compositional context is subordinated to that of the final canonical shape (context) of the Hebrew Psalter.

In this dissertation I have primarily dealt with the shape of the Hebrew Psalter. In biblical studies a contextual interpretation is a must. Psalms studies in the past, however, formed a rare exception to this common practice because psalms were largely independent compositions with little, if any, relationship to the book in which they were found. Recent attempts at contextual interpretation of the psalms in that regard are truly a paradigm shift. The fact that out of all the parts of the Bible the psalms are not limited to their original setting has necessitated the shift. Nevertheless, canonical process, though more speculative, remains an important area of Psalms studies that will continue to aid those who adopt the canonical shape to be their interpretive context of the psalms.

The present shape of the Hebrew Psalter apparently creates a new interpretive context for the psalms. Although the psalms began their usage in the cultic setting, in the present shape the cultic setting is subordinated to the canonical literary context. As is apparent in our discussion of the twofold introduction, the Hebrew Psalter urges its readers to meditate on the psalms as Yahweh's torah as a source of blessed life and to acknowledge Yahweh's cosmic reign.

As noted in Chapter One above, three approaches to Psalms interpretation are available at the present, namely form-critical, cult-functional, and canonical. Each of these approaches stresses a different research strategy. The form-critical approach seeks to understand the psalms in light of their genre and the cult-functional approach in

reference to their function in ancient Israelite cult. A canonical approach seeks to understand the psalms in their canonical, literary context, focusing its attention on the final form of the Hebrew Psalter. The canonical approach to the Psalter has established itself as a new paradigm in Psalms studies in recent decades. The question remains, however, whether it will replace the older approaches for good and continue to be the one and only dominating paradigm in the near future. Certainly, the new paradigm's emphasis on the present shape of the Hebrew Psalter to be theologically normative is fundamentally important. Nevertheless, the complex nature of the shape of the Hebrew Psalter necessitates that it be analyzed by a combination of both diachronic and synchronic methods in order to seek a holistic understanding because each of these approaches has strengths and weaknesses. The form-critical and cult-functional approaches offer insight into the forces that shaped the psalms and how they functioned in ancient Israel's cult. Yet, an accurate reconstruction of historical context of most psalms is difficult, if not impossible. Furthermore, these two approaches neglect to pay attention to the final shape of the Hebrew Psalter in which human prayers and praises were transformed into Yahweh's instruction. A canonical approach, on the other hand, rightfully stresses the final shape to be theologically normative. Yet it also has its share of weaknesses. For example, it may downplay the intent of the original author of a given psalm in favor of the meaning conveyed by a later editor. In short, the new paradigm will not displace the old paradigm completely. Instead, both paradigms will remain as two viable methods that complement each other.

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