

ABSTRACT

The Narrative Effect of Book IV of the Hebrew Psalter

Robert E. Wallace

Mentor: William H. Bellinger, Jr.

This dissertation asserts that a reader encountering the canonical Hebrew Psalter can read from the beginning and capture a sense of plot. The turning point of the story is Book IV (Psalms 90-106). It is at this point in the story that the questions of the failure of the Davidic monarchy are answered.

Recent approaches to the Psalter (championed by Gerald Wilson and Nancy deClaissé-Walford) have suggested that the Psalter was redacted purposely to help the exilic and post-exilic communities answer the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant. According to these proposals, the first two books in the Psalter set up the importance of the Davidic monarchy and the Davidic covenant. The third book of the Psalter expresses the problem of Yahweh's apparent rejection of the

Davidic covenant which culminates in Psalm 89. Book V ultimately leads the reader to the fact that Yahweh should be king over Israel and over the nations. Such studies have emphasized the importance of the beginning of Book IV, calling Book IV the “theological pivot point.” These approaches have focused on Psalm 90, and how this psalm shifts the reader’s focus to the importance of the Mosaic covenant in light of the failure of the Davidic covenant.

As this analysis demonstrates, Book IV does not simply change the focus of the reader to the Mosaic Covenant at its beginning, the book emphasizes Moses throughout. Psalms 90-100 speak with a “Mosaic voice” and Psalms 101-106 demonstrate a “Mosaic remembrance.” Book IV as a unit answers the concern of Book III—the failure of the Davidic Covenant. Book IV also introduces the concern of Book V by proclaiming the necessity to focus the attention of the reader on YHWH as King in Psalms 93-100.

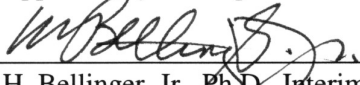
The Narrative Effect of Book IV of the Hebrew Psalter

by

Robert E. Wallace

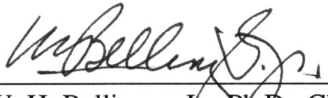
A Dissertation

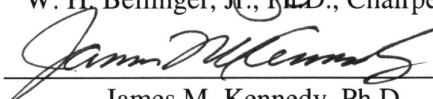
Approved by the Department of Religion

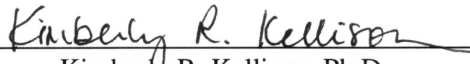

W. H. Bellinger, Jr., Ph.D., Interim Chairperson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy

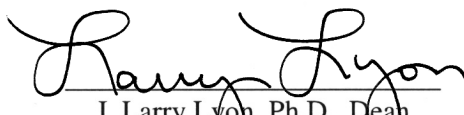
Approved by the Dissertation Committee


W. H. Bellinger, Jr., Ph.D., Chairperson


James M. Kennedy, Ph.D.


Kimberly R. Kellison, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School
May 2006


J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Copyright © 2006 by Robert E. Wallace

All rights reserved

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
Chapter	
1. THE CONTEXT FOR THE DISSERTATION	1
Introduction	
History of Scholarship	
Methodology: The Narrative of Biblical Poetry	
2. THE INTERCESSION OF MOSES (PSALMS 90-92)	31
The Back-Story	
Psalm 90: An Ancient Authority Speaks	
Psalm 91: Same Song, Different Verse	
Psalm 92: From Obedience to Praise	
Conclusion	
3. MAJESTY OF YAHWEH (PSALMS 93-100)	66
From Obedience to Praise	
Psalms 93-100: יהוה מלך	
Psalm 93	

Psalm 94

Psalm 95

Psalm 96-98

Psalm 99

Psalm 100

Conclusion

4. DAVID'S DEFERENCE TO MOSES (PSALMS 101-103) 107

"I'll Come in Again"

Psalm 101: A Psalm of David

Psalm 102: Lament of Loss

Psalm 103: Remember Moses

Conclusion

5. BACK TO THE BEGINNING (PSALMS 104-106) 146

Creation

Psalm 104: Hallelujah

Psalm 105: Promises Kept

Psalm 106: Promises Broken

Psalms 107-150: A Glance Ahead in the Story

6.	THE END OF THE MATTER	181
	The Context for the Project	
	The Narrative Effect of Book IV	
	Conclusion	
	WORKS CITED	199

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure		Page
1.	Wilson's Interpretive Frame	196
2.	Interpretive Frame for This Project	197

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One does not come to this place in life without numerous people who need acknowledging. Daniel C. Browning began this journey for me by opening the door to an academic world I had never known and suggesting I pursue something that I never dreamed possible. Bennie R. Crockett instilled a love of biblical languages and first suggested to me that the “unexamined life is not worth living” and that the unexamined faith is not worth believing.

J. Randall O’Brien provided an environment of and opportunities for success. He also has reminded by his example that “this above all: to thine own self be true.” He should also be acknowledged for giving me the hope that if I do not succeed as a biblical scholar, I may at least have a future as a chef.

W. H. Bellinger, Jr. has passed on his love for the “hymnbook of ancient Israel” and has demonstrated enthusiasm for this project. He may need to be acknowledged more, however, for his quiet confidence throughout my graduate work and his gentle shepherding through this process.

Of course, no acknowledgements would be complete without mention of the widow and orphans of this project, my wife, Cindy, and my two boys, Daniel and Thomas. It is one thing to say you support someone; it is quite another to live that support out and make dreams possible.

As I look forward to a career of teaching and research, I hope that I will be able to be a blessing to others in the same measure that all of these individuals have been a blessing to me.

To those whose love made me believe
this quixotic task was possible

CHAPTER ONE

The Context for the Dissertation

Yet it is only in a poem of some length that a variety of moods can be expressed; a variety of moods requires a number of different themes or subjects. . . . These parts can form a whole which is more than the sum of the parts; a whole such that the pleasure we derive from the reading of any part is enhanced by our grasp of the whole.

T. S. Eliot, *From Poe to Valery*

Introduction

In the history of Psalms study, traditional methodologies have treated the book of Psalms as an anthology. Research focused on individual poems. It is only within the past 30 years, that scholars have begun to analyze the significance of the literary relationships of the psalms within the Psalter. Much of the recent canonical work concerns the redaction history, usually termed the “shaping” of the Psalter. My intention is to focus on the fixed, final form, the canonical “shape” of the Hebrew Psalter, specifically, how the shape of Book IV (Pss. 90-106) affects the way one reads the whole Psalter, and vice versa.

The canonical shape of the Psalter provides a hermeneutical setting in which one can productively read Book IV. While according to traditional form-critical categories the Psalter is not classified as

“narrative,” a narrative impulse exists within the Psalter, and Book IV is a part of that story. This analysis will consider linguistic, literary, and thematic linkages within Book IV, the Psalter, and the greater story of the history of Israel in the Hebrew Bible. The narrative effect of Book IV within the book of Psalms as reflected in the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Psalter focuses the reader on Moses, Torah, and the proper place for Yahweh in the cosmos.

History of Scholarship

Any discussion of modern psalm scholarship begins with Hermann Gunkel. It is hard to overestimate his impact on biblical studies in general, and on psalms studies in particular. His methodology, which would come to be known as form criticism, had far-reaching implications beyond the psalms and beyond the Hebrew Bible. In the years following Gunkel, even those who disagreed with his conclusions used his interpretive method and vocabulary to express their differences.

Hermann Gunkel was the first to provide a language for the discussion of psalms with similar syntactic and thematic characteristics. Gunkel’s psalm types (*Gattung*) were connected to the ancient cult of

Israel.¹ Sigmund Mowinckel followed Gunkel's methodology and further emphasized details regarding the cultic *Sitz im Leben* of the psalms.² Gunkel's form criticism and Sigmund Mowinckel's cult-functional concerns analyzed individual psalms and considered their significance within the context of a historically reconstructed, ancient cult of Israel.³

Although Gunkel felt that dating the final form of the Psalter was necessary, he also found it a difficult enterprise. He estimated that the Psalter achieved its final form from 350-200 BCE.⁴ Why it came together the way it did was a much more difficult question to which Gunkel could find no satisfying answer. The scattering of the different *Gattung* throughout the Psalter suggested no clear principle around which the

¹ See Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926); Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms : The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (Completed by Joachim Begrich ; trans. James D. Nogalski; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998).

² See Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*.

³ Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas; 2 vols; Nashville: Abdingdon Press, 1962).

⁴ Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, 337-339.

Psalter came together.⁵ As a result, the research which followed Gunkel focused primarily on the analysis of individual psalms.

For nearly a century, Gunkel's method of reading the Psalter dominated the interpretive landscape. Historical questions concerning the religious development of ancient Israel dominated the discussion of Psalms study. In the history of scholarship, relatively little attention has been paid to the overall shape of the Psalter or the Psalter's redaction history.⁶

Samson Raphael Hirsch is an exception worth mentioning.⁷ A Jewish scholar writing before Gunkel at the end of the nineteenth century, Hirsch provided a translation and commentary which guided

⁵ Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, 334-348.

⁶ For a representative list of form critical approaches to the Psalter, see Hans Schmidt, *Die Psalmen* (HAT, 15; Tübingen: Mohr, 1934); W. O. E. Oesterly, *A Fresh Approach to the Psalms* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937); M. Battenweiser, *The Psalms: Chronologically Treated with a New Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938); Elmer Leslie, *The Psalms: Translated and Interpreted in the Light of Hebrew Life and Worship* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1949); Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* (trans. H. Hartwell; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962); A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (2 vols; New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); H. J. Kraus, *Psalmen* (2 vols; BKAT, 15; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978).

⁷ Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Psalms* (trans. Gertrude Hirschler; 2 vols; New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1960).

the reader through the Psalter, psalm by psalm. For Hirsch, David is the key to the Psalter in the way that Moses is the key to Torah. Even in psalms which are not explicitly connected to David, Hirsch notes that, “The spirit of David pervades all [non-Davidic] Psalms whose content is primarily of import to the nation as a whole.”⁸ Hirsch extrapolates each psalm from the life of David to the ancient and modern exilic state of Israel. After all, “David’s whole personality and the entire course of his life rendered him well qualified to carry out this task which entailed the moral and spiritual guidance of his people *for all times to come*” (emphasis mine).⁹ For Hirsch, the story of the psalms provides guidance to the exiled nation of Israel throughout Jewish history and demonstrates God’s concern for this people to be a blessing to all nations. This concern is reflected in Hirsch’s unique translation of Psalm 72:20. Once the glory of God fills all the earth (72:19), “Then the prayers of David, the son of Jesse will be at an end.”¹⁰

Though still form-critical in his analysis, Claus Westermann anticipated later canonical hermeneutical concerns. While discussing the

⁸ Hirsch, *The Psalms*, xx.

⁹ Hirsch, *The Psalms*, xvii.

¹⁰ Hirsch, *The Psalms*, 505.

significance of Gunkel's work, Westermann began to broaden the notion of *Sitz im Leben* and the value of historical context in providing insight into interpretation. "It becomes clear what the hymn is in its original significance: praise of God."¹¹

Westermann anticipated later redactional concerns, as well. He envisioned an original Psalter framed by two wisdom psalms, Psalm 1 and Psalm 119.¹² Subsequent psalms were added later, and within the framework of the Psalter come other smaller groupings of Psalms.¹³ Westermann made the canonical observation that the first half of the Psalter is dominated by lament Psalms, while the latter part of the Psalter is dominated by praise with the turning point at Psalm 90.¹⁴ David Howard observes that as a result, Westermann understands the shape of the overall Psalter to parallel the form of a lament psalm.¹⁵

¹¹ Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard Soulen; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1965), 22.

¹² Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 253.

¹³ Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 253-256.

¹⁴ Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 257.

¹⁵ David Howard, "Editorial Activity in the Psalter," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clint McCann; JSOT Supplement Series, 159; ed. David Clines and Philip Davies; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 56.

Old Testament scholarship soon recognized limits to form criticism. An ancient setting for literature is not the best way to determine genre; and further, it is usually idealistic and futile to analyze original settings and pure types.¹⁶ In the 1970s and 1980s, text-immanent approaches to analyzing text became more popular among biblical scholars. Form critical and tradition-history approaches to the biblical text made room for different hermeneutical approaches. Many scholars attempted to work in both areas.

In 1976, Joseph Brennan suggested that the Psalter revealed a purposed redaction. "It is not enough to study each of its 150 components in the historical context from which it originally sprang. They must all be studied in their relationship to each other."¹⁷ Though strongly interested in form-critical issues, Brennan demonstrates thematic connections between the psalms throughout three "cycles" in Book V of the Psalter. In a later article dealing with the first eight psalms, Brennan makes explicit what he implies earlier. While it is

¹⁶ Rolf Knierim, "Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered" *INT* 27 (1973): 467-8; Martin Buss, "Buss, Martin J. "Idea of *Sitz im Leben*: History and Critique." *ZAW* 90 (1978): 157-170.

¹⁷ Joseph P. Brennan, "Some Hidden Harmonies of the Fifth Book of Psalms" in *Essays in Honor of Joseph P. Brennan* (ed. Robert F. McNamara; Rochester, NY: St Bernard's Seminary, 1976), 127.

possible that the perceived connections seen in adjacent Psalms could be an accident of history, the evidence does seem to suggest a logical, imposed order upon the redaction of the Psalter.¹⁸

Brevard Childs receives credit for challenging biblical scholars to rethink the way the Psalms are analyzed.¹⁹ Childs has gained distinction for his text-immanent approach to the interpretation of scripture where the proper interpretation of a text takes into account both the final accepted form of the biblical text and the reality that the texts are considered canonical scripture. His sensitivity to the canonical shape of the text has led to Childs's "canonical approach" to the text.

Though still sensitive to the historical analyses which had come before him, Childs was willing to describe the organization of individual psalms apart from the psalm's particular historical origin. In fact, the psalm's origin could be seen as secondary since it seems the Psalter was not redacted as a result of a concern with historical origins. Attending

¹⁸ Brennan, "Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies" *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 10 (1980): 28.

¹⁹ 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 Lemke, and Patrick Miller; Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), 377-388.

closely to the canonical shape of the Psalter, Childs recognizes that Psalms 1 & 2 provide an introduction and a hermeneutical lens through which one can view the rest of the Psalter.²⁰

Childs illustrates that dehistoricization in his discussion of Psalm 2. The mythopoetic language used in the psalm has no context in the current shape of the Psalter. As a result, the new focus of Psalm 2 is on Yahweh's reign over all the earth.²¹ This psalm is illustrative of what has happened throughout the Psalter. No matter the original *Sitz im Leben*, the canonical shape of the Psalter guides the reader to a messianic eschatology. "[the royal Psalms] were treasured in the Psalter for a different reason, namely, as a witness to the messianic hope which looked for the consummation of God's kingship through his Anointed One."²²

Childs was also the first among modern readers to emphasize the use of superscriptions in the study of the canonical shaping of the Psalter. It was generally accepted by scholarship that the

²⁰ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 513-514.

²¹ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 516.

²² Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 517.

superscriptions were secondary additions to the text. As a result, psalm titles offered no help to the scholar seeking the original cultic setting for the relevant psalms. This weakness for form criticism, however, proves to be a strength for canonical criticism. The later superscriptions provide insight into the redactors and their understanding as the Psalter was organized.²³ Perhaps psalms which functioned in one way in the cult of ancient Israel come to have a different function and meaning in the context of the canonical Psalter. Childs is typically given credit for validating the study of psalms in the context of the canon.²⁴

Gerald Wilson followed Childs with a detailed canonical study of the Hebrew Psalter. Wilson's analysis demonstrated concern for the canonical shaping of the text of the Psalms. His analysis demonstrates that Mesopotamian and Qumran hymn collections exhibit organizing principles which are analogous to the Psalter's organization. Wilson was the first to demonstrate that clear editorial purpose can be seen in the canonical arrangement of the Psalter.²⁵ For Wilson, the editorial purpose

²³ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 520.

²⁴ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 522.

²⁵ Gerald Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico: Scholar's Press, 1985), 11.

of the Psalter was to help the exilic and post-exilic communities find a solution for the failure of the promised, eternal Davidic covenant.

Nancy deClaissé-Walford's work follows Wilson, and according to their readings, the first two books in the Psalter establish the importance of the Davidic monarchy and the Davidic covenant. The third book of the Psalter expresses the problem of Yahweh's apparent rejection of the Davidic covenant which culminates in Psalm 89. Book V ultimately leads the reader to the recognition that Yahweh is king over Israel and over the nations.²⁶

Nancy deClaissé-Walford's work emphasizes "reading from the beginning."²⁷ Both deClaissé-Walford and Wilson emphasize the importance of the beginning of Book IV, Wilson calling Book IV the "editorial 'center' of the final form of the Hebrew Psalter."²⁸ For both scholars the Psalter turns on Psalm 90. This psalm shifts the reader's focus to the Mosaic covenant in light of the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant.

²⁶ Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 209-228; Nancy deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 172-185.

²⁷ Nancy deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*.

²⁸ Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 215.

Following Wilson, J. Clinton McCann has also contributed to the discussion of the shape of the Psalter. McCann wants to understand the Psalter as “torah.”²⁹ The canonical form of the Psalter provides McCann a hermeneutical lens through which to interpret the psalms. Psalm 1 serves as an introduction defining the Psalter as “torah” for the reader. Though McCann organizes his discussion of the Psalms by redefined form-critical categories, he understands all of the psalms working together to teach the reader. McCann reads each of the Royal Psalms as emphasizing the kingship of God, rather than any one earthly king.³⁰ McCann also understands the voice of the psalmist as the voice with which the righteous should pray.³¹

James Luther Mays’ work is very similar to McCann’s. Mays suggests that while the Psalms are individual works, usually analyzed individually, the place of a psalm within the Psalter can impact the meaning of the individual psalm.³² Mays believes when considering the

²⁹ J. Clinton McCann, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 18-20.

³⁰ McCann, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 43-45.

³¹ For example, “the laments offer to the righteous the language to address to God the reality that ‘life isn’t right.’”; McCann, *A Theological Introduction*, 88.

³² James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville : John Knox Press, 1994), 15.

shape of the Psalter a number of things can be said: the Psalter has an introduction (Psalm 1-2), a conclusion (Psalm 146-150) and five independent sections marked by four doxologies (41, 72, 89, 106).³³ For Mays, the introduction of the Psalter guides the reader on a hermeneutical path throughout the book that teaches in all circumstances that Yahweh reigns.³⁴ Psalm 1 elevates the Psalter for the reader to the place of Torah.³⁵ The instruction which this new “Torah” provides is revealed in Psalm 2. Yahweh is king over the nations.³⁶ Where Wilson and deClaissé-Walford see this affirmation as the concluding proclamation of the Psalter in Books IV and V, Mays sees this proclamation at work in the Psalter from the very beginning.

Walter Brueggemann’s analysis provides a unique voice in this discussion. Brueggemann also asks questions about the Psalter’s canonical shape. Instead of the “seams” of the individual books of Psalter which are important to Wilson and McCann, the beginning and the end of the Psalter, i.e., Ps 1 and Ps 150 are the focus for

³³ Mays, *Psalms*, 15; *The Lord Reigns*, 120.

³⁴ Mays, *The Lord Reigns*, 122.

³⁵ Mays, *Psalms*, 15; *The Lord Reigns*, 121-122.

³⁶ Mays, *The Lord Reigns*, 122-123.

Brueggemann.³⁷ After establishing the content of the frame of the text, Brueggemann then charts how the reader proceeds through the Psalter, “how the body of material permits movement from beginning to end.”³⁸

For Brueggemann, the Psalter moves, not from King David to King Yahweh, but from naïve obedience (as expressed in Psalm 1) to naïve praise (as expressed in Psalm 150).³⁹ He views the faith of Israel as a complicated journey reflected in the Psalter. The thematic purpose of which begins to shift at Ps 73.⁴⁰ Brueggemann’s insights can play a helpful role in this study—particularly, the way in which Torah functions in his reading.

Little work has been done in Book IV, specifically. M. D. Goulder published an article in 1975 dealing with the shape of Book IV of the Psalter.⁴¹ His form-critical approach basically assumes that Book IV

³⁷ Walter Brueggemann, “Bounded by Obedience and Praise” in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (ed. Patrick D. Miller; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 190.

³⁸ Brueggemann, “Bounded by Obedience and Praise,” 190.

³⁹ Brueggemann, “Bounded by Obedience and Praise,” 190-193.

⁴⁰ Brueggemann, “Bounded by Obedience and Praise,” 206.

⁴¹ Michael D. Goulder, “The Fourth Book of the Psalter,” *JTS* 26 (1975): 269-289.

derives from the Enthronement Festival in ancient Israel. Sigmund Mowinckel first proposed the existence of such a festival.⁴² Goulder spends a great deal of effort connecting the reading of all the psalms of Book IV twice daily throughout this two week festival. While some have connected this “enthronement festival” to analogous practices in the ancient Near East,⁴³ the biblical text offers no explicit discussion of a holiday of this type. For most, the “Enthronement festival becomes a circular argument: the psalms come from a festival—a festival, the evidence for which are these “Enthronement Psalms.”⁴⁴

J. Reindl was among the first to examine connections between adjacent psalms.⁴⁵ He suggests that the psalms have been redacted into an order for the personal devotion of a reader or congregation. Reindl emphasizes the importance of Pss 1 and 150 for framing the Psalter and the lexical and thematic links between adjacent psalms. Reindl

⁴² Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 106-192.

⁴³ A. A. Anderson, *Psalms II* (London: Oliphant, 1972), 700.

⁴⁴ Gerald Wilson, “Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clinton McCann; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 45-46.

⁴⁵ Joseph Reindl, “Weisheitliche Bearbeitung Von Psalmen,” in *Congress Volume :Vienna, 1980* (ed. John A. Emerton; Leiden : E J Brill, 1981), 350-356.

illustrates this connection by using the psalms at the beginning of Book IV, Pss 90-92. While all three psalms belong to different *Gattung*, the psalms thematically wrestle with the nature of the human condition.⁴⁶ Reindl uses this section (and others) to support a final “wisdom” redaction of the Psalter.

David Howard has provided an excellent work on the Enthronement Psalms at the heart of Book IV (93-100).⁴⁷ Building on the work before him (namely Wilson), Howard’s study reflects the growing trend in Psalms study to accept as fact the belief that the Psalter’s organization represents purposed, editorial activity.⁴⁸ His synchronic analysis pays little attention to the redaction history questions which had come before.

Howard’s analysis demonstrates from a close lexical study that Psalms 93-100 can be read as a deliberately redacted, coherent whole.⁴⁹ Howard also contributes to this study with insights regarding the

⁴⁶ Reindl, “Weisheitliche Bearbeitung Von Psalmen,” 350-355.

⁴⁷ David M. Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997).

⁴⁸ Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 20.

⁴⁹ Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 20.

Enthronement Psalms and his microcanonical methodology. The morphological and lexical analysis between pairs of psalms provides an instructive microcanonical perspective.

In contrast, Frank-Lothar Hossfeld's article, "Ps 89 und das vierte Psalmenbuch (Ps 90-106)" provides a diachronic analysis of the editorial shaping of the text.⁵⁰ While the emphasis of the article is redaction history, Hossfeld does provide some interesting thematic analyses in the article suggesting that the concerns raised in Ps 89 permeate Book IV and even Book V of the Psalter.⁵¹

Like Hossfeld, Erich Zenger's primary emphasis has focused on the redaction history and the editing of the Psalter.⁵² In more recent work, however, he provides an interesting synchronic survey of Book IV

⁵⁰ Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, "Ps 89 und das vierte Psalmenbuch (90-106)" in *„Mein Sohn bist du“ (Ps 2,7) Studien zu den Königpsalmen* (ed. Eckart Otto, & Erich Zenger; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002), 173.

⁵¹ "An den drei Linien Anthropologie, Königtum und Geschichte Israels dürfte deutlich geworden sein, wie der umfangreiche Ps 89 über die Hauptzäsur im Psalter gerade auf das vierte Psalmenbuch ausgestrahlt hat. Und es steht zu vermuten, dass das vierte Psalmenbuch die oben genannten Themen an das fünfte Psalmbuch weitergeben hat." Ibid., 183.

⁵² See Klaus Seybold, and Erich Zenger, ed., *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung. Für Walter Beyerlin* (Herders biblische Studien 1; Freiburg: Herder, 1994).

with some redactional comments in the course of the article. Zenger (tempering Wilson) reads Books I-III as advocating a “messianic” program, which promotes the Davidic monarchy, and Books IV-V as advocating a “theocratic” program, which promotes YHWH as king.⁵³ Zenger understands Book IV as promoting Moses and David as the administrators of Yahweh’s “utopian reign on earth.”⁵⁴ For Zenger, the Enthronement Psalms express the proper place for Yahweh and Yahweh’s ordering of the world.⁵⁵ He understands the new world to be expressed under the authority of Israel’s two great leaders: Moses (Pss 90-92) and David (Pss 101-106).⁵⁶

Matthias Millard’s work is distinct from his German contemporaries, Zenger and Hossfeld. Where Zenger and Hossfeld often focus on lexical contiguity and the redaction history of individual psalms (though as noted some of Zenger’s more recent work has focused

⁵³ Erich Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),” in *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms*, (ed. Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger; trans. Everett R. Kalin; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 161.

⁵⁴ Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign,” 190.

⁵⁵ Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign,” 169.

⁵⁶ Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign,” 190.

on the “shape” of the Psalter rather than its “shaping.”), Millard prefers analysis of genre and theme and the redaction history of groups of psalms.⁵⁷ Millard also gives some attention to the superscriptions of the psalm. Like many scholars, Millard begins with a form critical analysis and moves from form criticism to literary relationships.

Millard follows Westermann and Brueggemann in his view the move of the Psalter from lament to praise forms the interpretive arch throughout the Psalter. Like Westermann, Millard believes that wisdom plays an important role in the final shape of the Psalter, and he connects this wisdom editing with the destruction of the Temple. Millard believes the Psalter was collected in exile and post-exile in an effort to help orient private families (not public worship) to deal with this crisis.⁵⁸ Millard understands the Psalter to have a practical function in the life of those for whom it was authoritative, including the inspiration for rebuilding of the temple.⁵⁹ The purposed arrangement of the Psalter could shepherd the individual from lament to praise.

⁵⁷ Matthias Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters : Ein Formgeschichtlicher Ansatz* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 9; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1994),

⁵⁸ Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 240-250.

⁵⁹ Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 248.

R. N. Whybray provides a dissenting voice for canonical analyses. Whybray deals critically with the methodologies concerning the redaction and the final form of the Psalter.⁶⁰ Whybray finds no basis for a “purposed” editorial activity in the Psalter. He believes that those who advocate a final “torah”⁶¹ or “wisdom”⁶² redaction of the Psalter oversimplify the Psalter’s complexity. In Whybray’s opinion, Torah and wisdom were certainly two of the concerns of post-exilic Jewish communities, but were likely not the only concerns of those communities.⁶³ Whybray also believes that Wilson’s analysis paints with too broad a brush in its classification of the themes of the individual books calling his analysis “rather bland.”⁶⁴ Whybray does provide a close analysis of this newer hermeneutic, and his criticisms should be taken seriously. Criticism of Whybray’s analysis, however, has taken the

⁶⁰ R. N. Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book* (JSOTSup 222; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1996)

⁶¹ E.g., James Mays, “The Place of Torah-Psalms in the Psalter,” 106 *JBL* (1987).

⁶² E.g., Kenneth Kuntz, “Wisdom Psalms and the Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter,” in *For A Later Generation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 144-160.

⁶³ Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book*, 86.

⁶⁴ Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book*, 85.

form of his criticism in that though his work is well read and researched, he is often too broad in his criticisms.

William Brown has provided a unique look at the canonical Psalter. Brown investigates the theological use of the metaphors of the Psalter. He believes this examination provides an important perspective since “Scripture is not so much a source of propositions, much less a series of creeds or doctrines, as a vast collection of interwoven images.”⁶⁵ Brown selects “central metaphors” around which he organizes his research: refuge and pathway. His analysis of individual psalms is in constant dialogue with other psalms in the Psalter demonstrating an impressive, primarily intratextual analysis of the psalms. Brown’s analysis does not concern itself with the “shaping” of the text, though at times he does attempt to place the metaphors from the biblical text in an ancient Near Eastern context. Brown is more comfortable moving within the Hebrew Psalter as it stands, taking for granted the canonical “shape.”

Presently, approaches to the Psalter’s shape fall into different categories. The majority of the research has focused on the overall

⁶⁵ William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 11.

structure or redaction history of the Psalter, i.e., the macrocanonical concerns (e.g., Wilson). There is a growing attention among scholars to the microcanonical connections between and among psalms, which include lexemic and thematic connections (e.g., Howard). Jerome Creach provides a variant of this approach. Instead of analyzing the psalms' relationships to one another, Creach analyzed the importance of a specific lexeme (מִבְּרֵית "refuge") throughout the Psalter.⁶⁶ This study continues the canonical trajectory of recent Psalms studies.

Methodology: The Narrative of Biblical Poetry

No book in the Bible has been used more for personal or communal devotion than the Psalms. "[The Psalms] alone have known no limitations to a particular age, country, or form of faith."⁶⁷ The Rule of St. Benedict established the minimum requirement to encourage diligent service in the monks: reading the entire Psalter in a week.⁶⁸ St. Robert of Newminster, like many faithful saints, was said to read the

⁶⁶ Jerome Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*. (JSOTSup 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

⁶⁷ Rowland E. Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life* (London: J. Murray, 1904), 5.

⁶⁸ *The Rule of St. Benedict in English* (ed. Timothy Fry; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982), 47.

entire Psalter on daily basis.⁶⁹ The Psalms have been interpreted by humanity in every historical situation.⁷⁰ Their “meaning” was clearly connected to more than just the historical *Sitz im Leben* out of which they emerged and which modern scholars have emphasized.

Instead of focusing on the historical *Sitz im Leben* of the individual psalms, I am concerned, in a post-critical move, with the literary *Sitz im Leben* of the individual psalms. In *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, Robert Alter asked the question, “What difference does it make to the content of the Psalms that they are poems?”⁷¹ Alter’s analysis is sensitive to the Psalms as poems. I want to ask the question, “What difference does it make to the content of the Psalms that they are in a book?” Is it profitable to consider the Psalter as a narrative whole?

Using traditional genre categories, the book of Psalms is not narrative material. There is, however, a narrative effect that results from looking at the Psalter holistically. The work of Gerald Wilson and Nancy deClaissé-Walford focuses on editorial concerns in relationship to the

⁶⁹ Hugo Hoever, *Lives of the Saints* (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing, Co., 1999), 227-8.

⁷⁰ Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life*, 7.

⁷¹ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, (New York : Basic Books, 1985), 113.

Psalter.⁷² In their analysis, however, a sense of “plot” is revealed which permeates the book of Psalms.⁷³

This story is not a homogenous one. The material in the Psalter is as diverse as the material in the rest of the Hebrew Bible, material that repeatedly resists systematizing. In Athanasius’ letter to Marcellinus on the interpretation of the Psalms, Athanasius states “Each of these books [in the Bible], you see, is like a garden which grows one special kind of fruit; by contrast, the Psalter is a garden which, besides its special fruit, grows also some of those of all the rest.”⁷⁴ Ancient Israel’s theological concerns are expressed throughout the Psalter, and the Psalter is a useful (and textual) starting place to examine the theology of the Hebrew Bible.⁷⁵ What happens when the reader encounters the diverse theology of ancient Israel revealed in the canonical order of the Psalter?

⁷² See Gerald Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* and Nancy deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*.

⁷³ One could add McCann, Bruggemann, et. al. While none of these scholars has used this language, different readers recognize a different “plot” depending on their specific interpretive concerns.

⁷⁴ *Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, (trans. Robert C. Gregg; New York : Paulist Press, 1980.), 102.

⁷⁵ W. H. Bellinger, “The Psalms as a Place to Begin for Old Testament Theology,” in *Psalms and Practice: Worship, Virtue, and Authority*, (ed. Stephen Breck Reid; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), 33-36.

According to Wilson and deClaissé-Walford, the redaction history of the Psalter parallels the story of the history of Israel.⁷⁶ My analysis follows from the work of Wilson and deClaissé-Walford; however, I am concerned specifically with the shape of the Hebrew Psalter, rather than the process of shaping. Methodologically, this project will take a step away from the redactional concerns of Wilson, Zenger, Millard, and others, by reading and drawing conclusions from the final form of the book of Psalms as found in the Masoretic Text. The task is to articulate the narrative crafted by the whole of Book IV and explore how that narrative functions in the story the whole book of Psalms suggests. For my analysis, the question of “purposed” arrangement is a non-issue. This study is a reading of Book IV within the Psalter’s canonical arrangement. Whether the arrangement is an editorial feature, or an accident of history is a secondary concern to this study.

⁷⁶ Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*; deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*; deClaissé-Walford, “Anzu Revisited: The Scribal Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter,” *Word & World* 15 (Summer 1995): 358-366.

Biblical poetry has a “narrative impulse.”⁷⁷ I want to be sensitive to the narrative impulse on a macro-canonical scale across the Psalter. Robert Alter recognized issues of narrative impulse on a micro-canonical scale between adjacent verses and lines in the biblical text.⁷⁸ My analysis is looking at a narrative impulse revealed over the Psalter as a whole, and how Book IV fits within that narrative impulse.

It will also be instructive to be sensitive to the “narrative setting”⁷⁹ of the Psalter. Within the context of the Hebrew Bible, the reader does not encounter the Psalms innocently. A reader proceeding through the Hebrew Bible has moved from the creation of the cosmos, to the creation of the ancient Hebrews, to the creation of the nation of Israel, and from the dissolution of the United Monarchy, to the dissolution of the northern kingdom, to the dissolution of the southern kingdom. The reader has read the prophets’ call to obedience, the call for divine judgment, and the hope that always abides in the prophet’s message. These canonical texts exhibit semantic and thematic connections to the

⁷⁷ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 28.

⁷⁸ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 28.

⁷⁹ Richard Bauckham, “Reading Scripture as a Coherent Story,” in *The Art of Reading Scripture* (ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 39.

Psalter (Book IV specifically) that provide an instructive narrative setting for the Psalter.

While the narrative quality of the text is important to this study, the Psalter is simultaneously majestic poetry. Verbal communication can function in a number of ways (often concurrently).⁸⁰ One speaks of “poetry” when the poetic (or aesthetic) function of communication is dominant.⁸¹ The psalms, like all poetry, have many effects at work within the book (for example, aesthetic, referential, emotive, etc.).⁸² I believe the lexical allusions, the superscriptions, and the topics of the poetry of the Psalter create a narrative impulse which is meta-poetic, i.e., the poetic elements of the Psalter work together to form a narrative which transcends each psalm.

Readers also play a role in determining what a text means. The extent of the reader’s role is a matter of debate. Some suggest that

⁸⁰ Linda R. Waugh, “The Poetic Function and the Nature of Language,” in *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time* (ed. Roman Jakobson, Krystyna Pomorska, and Stephen Rudy; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 144.

⁸¹ Roman Jakobson, “Linguistics and Poetics,” in *Style in Language* ed. Thomas A Sebeok (Cambridge: Technology Press of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1960), 350-377.

⁸² Waugh, “The Poetic Function and the Nature of Language,” 144.

readers create meaning.⁸³ My analysis considers meaning to be found in the dynamic relationship between text and reader. The text provides indications that readers must form into meaning.⁸⁴ Informed readers throughout the history of biblical interpretation have provided insight into how a text is to be read.

For this analysis, the process of the reading of the Hebrew Psalter is important. This phenomenological analysis will be sensitive to the indicators of meaning which a text provides and which readers appropriate as story. Micro-canonical issues, including poetic vocabulary and syntax, within individual Psalms will be considered. Form-critical questions and historical questions regarding the editorial process of the Hebrew Psalter will be noted; however, they are only important to this study as they inform the reading of the book.

When looking at individual psalms, the microcanonical issues (the importance of which is illustrated by Howard) will be noted. The lexemic and thematic issues, along with literary devices, between and

⁸³ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 327.

⁸⁴ Wolfgang Iser, *Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 274-275.

among the psalms of Book IV remind the reader of the interconnectedness of this material and allow the reader to proceed through the Psalter as story.

The psalms also demonstrate a number of lexical and thematic connections with other psalms in the Psalter and with important speeches of Moses (notably, Deut 32 and 33). That fact will fit into the macrocanonical issues in this study. Those connections will allow the reader to “narrativise” the poetic text. An important part of this analysis is placing the psalms within the overall “story” of the text of the Hebrew Bible. In the end, methodologies are best seen worked out with texts as I will now demonstrate.

CHAPTER TWO

The Intercession of Moses (Psalms 90-92)

Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end.

Anonymous

Introduction

According to Nancy deClaissé-Walford's and Gerald Wilson's reading of the Psalter, the Psalter's redaction is shaped by a concern for the Davidic monarchy and Davidic covenant. The first two books in the Psalter contain psalms which establish the importance of the Davidic monarchy and the Davidic covenant.¹ The third book of the Psalter expresses the problem of YHWH's apparent rejection of the Davidic covenant, culminating in Ps 89. For Wilson and deClaissé-Walford, Book V ultimately leads the reader to the fact that the Davidic is subordinate to YHWH's position as king over Israel and over the nations.²

¹ Gerald Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico: Scholar's Press, 1985); Nancy deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997).

² DeClaissé-Walford, 172-185.

Both of these studies have emphasized the importance of the beginning of Book IV, calling Book IV the “editorial ‘center’ of the final form of the Hebrew Psalter.”³ For both of these scholars, the key to the shift from Davidic monarchy to Yahwistic theocracy is Ps 90. Psalm 90 shifts the focus of the Psalter to the importance of the Mosaic covenant and YHWH as king in response to the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant.

Book III and the Setting for Book IV

The reader finds a desperate situation in Book III of the Psalter. In Ps 73:14, the psalmist is a person suffering *עָנָה* (“punishment”) and YHWH’s affliction (*יָכַח*). This tormented soul struggles to make sense of personal undeserved suffering and the prosperity of the wicked.⁴ Psalm 74 moves the lament from the individual to the community and opens with a cry of desperation, “Why, O YHWH, have you cast us away forever?” The reader finds that in Ps 74, the sanctuary of YHWH and YHWH’s Holy Mountain have been destroyed (74:7). The psalmist’s foes

³ Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 215.

⁴ H. J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary* (trans. H. C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 86.

mock and destroy. Though YHWH is remembered as powerful, the divine power is not yet manifest, and the psalmist must beg YHWH to use that power to deliver. Despair continues throughout the psalms of Book III. Using traditional form-critical categories ten of the sixteen psalms from Ps 74 to Ps 89 contain individual or communal lament characteristics.⁵

As the reader comes near the end of Book III, Ps 88 confronts the reader as a “prayer song filled with an impenetrable darkness” where “the breath of approaching death drifts through every line.”⁶ In Ps 88, the reader finds a lament psalm without a confession of faith or trust. Though the psalmist recounts numerous pleas and requests brought before the Almighty (Ps 88: 2, 14 [1, 13]), this psalm contains no direct requests for healing or deliverance. Weiser suggests that following God’s perceived absence, the psalmist “cannot even nerve himself to

⁵ Pss 74, 77, 79, 80, 82:8, 83, 85, 86, 88, 89:39-52; Hermann Gunkel & Joachim Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms: the Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (trans. James D. Nogalski; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 82; W. H. Bellinger, *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 45.

⁶ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 192.

make any more direct requests for God's help."⁷ This despair in Ps 88 is a significant point in the story of the Psalter.

In many of the psalms in Books I-III, a reader can find an expectation of YHWH's responsibility to save the people. The psalmists seem to be willing to be patient. Dennis Tucker has suggested that language used in the Psalter reveals that a patron-client relationship existed in the background of a number of the laments.⁸ When YHWH, the faithful patron, fails to rescue the ones who are perishing, YHWH's honor and faithfulness are compromised and the status of the covenant itself could be called into question.⁹

The consequence of such failure is shame for the client (the community itself), and to a greater degree, shame for the Patron (Yahweh). Further, these psalms attempt to restore honor to the client-community by recognizing the shame of the failed Patron. The shamed Patron must act in a manner consistent with his reciprocal

⁷ Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 586.

⁸ Dennis Tucker, "Facets of Shame in the Communal Laments." (Paper presented at the Regional Meeting of the Southwest Commission on Religious Studies, Irving, Texas, 6 March 2004), 4-6.

⁹ For Tucker, Pss 44, 74, and 79 are paradigmatic of this relationship.

22 occurrences of shame words in 11 Psalms (with Psalm 119 having 10 of the 22 occurrences). The variance seems to be statistically significant enough to demonstrate that something is happening to the way psalmists speak of YHWH in the story of the Psalter.

Until Book III, a reader has found that the psalmists seem to believe that YHWH is a faithful patron who is simply operating in a different time frame from the client. Though YHWH is obligated to remember the people, in Ps 17:15, the psalmist is content to say “When I awake I shall be satisfied,” or even following the destruction of Jerusalem in Ps 74:22, “Rise up, O God, plead your cause; remember how the impious scoff at you all day long.” These psalms show an expectation of God to act, perhaps, as Tucker has suggested because God’s honor must be defended. Even in the face of providential delay, the psalms demonstrate confidence in YHWH. By Ps 88, however, it seems the hope that God is waiting to provide deliverance is gone.

That hope is gone, perhaps, because, as Ps 89 reminds the reader, the Davidic monarchy is gone, and what honor can the patron preserve when YHWH seems to be a liar. How can the everlasting house of David no longer exist? Everlasting things should be everlasting. Psalm 89 eloquently revisits the ancient promises of YHWH. At its beginning, the

psalm confidently remembers the faithfulness of YHWH and the promises of YHWH (vv 1-4). Psalm 89 remembers promises made and the eternal nature of the line of David (vv 3-4; 19-37). After these beginning statements of confidence and trust in YHWH's past promises and creative power, the reader discovers the psalmist's desperate concern in v 38. According to the superscription, Ethan the Ezrahite tries to make faithful sense in the face of reality. God has forsaken the Davidic covenant (vv 38-40). A fundamental promise for ancient Israel has been abandoned.

YHWH has brought shame upon the chosen king (vv. 42 and 46). Though hope seemed abandoned in Ps 88, as Book III comes to a close, YHWH is entreated to "remember" how the servant is taunted (חָרַף). YHWH is challenged to defend the honor of the servant, and to demonstrate the faithfulness which he formerly promised to David. In this doxology, there is a challenge that YHWH has an obligation to fulfill the former promise for the sake of honor.

Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David? Remember, O Lord, how your servant is taunted; how I bear in my bosom the insults of peoples, with which your enemies taunt, O Lord with which they taunted the footsteps of your anointed. Ps 89:49-51 RSV

Psalm 90: An Ancient Authority Speaks

To whom can the people of Israel turn to give them instruction in this formative time of despair? As Book IV opens, the reader finds that Ps 90 provides the answer. The superscription of Ps 90 reminds the reader of one who came before David—one who was the archetype for prophet—"a prayer of Moses, man of God." Israel once again hears a message from Moses.

The relationship between this psalm and Moses was mentioned more frequently in psalm study before Hermann Gunkel's form-critical method achieved hegemony in psalm interpretation.¹² The personal/historical approach to psalm study¹³ which dominated "pre-Gunkel" interpretations is likely the reason for that. The reader is provided a unique superscription, and naturally, earlier interpreters reflect that fact in their interpretation.

¹² Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (trans. David Eaton; 3 vols.; London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1889); J. J. Stewart Perownes, *The Book of Psalms* (London: 1883); Henry Van Dyke, *The Story of the Psalms* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1921).

¹³ William H. Bellinger, *Psalms*, 15.

Hermann Gunkel noted that Ps 90 was unique because the hymnic section of this “mixed poem” is dominated by the second person.

¹⁴ The entire poem directly addresses the Almighty. Freedman suggests that Ps 90 is the poetic expression of how Moses might have spoken following the Golden Calf incident in Exod 32, and that incident certainly is connected with this psalm through literary allusion. For Freedman, it was that story which motivated the composition of Ps 90.¹⁵

The superscription, however, is not the only Mosaic connection in the psalm. The psalm reminds the reader of Moses throughout the text. In fact, it is suggested by Tate that the similarities between this psalm and the last speeches of Moses may have inspired the superscription, or that it was Deut 32-33 (not Exod 32) which inspired the composition of the psalm.¹⁶ Allusions to both stories are seen in the text.

Moses is called “man of God” only once in the Torah. Deuteronomy 33 begins much like Ps 90 by referring to “Moses, man of

¹⁴ Gunkel, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 22, 33, 60.

¹⁵ David N. Freedman, “Other than Moses . . . Who Asks (or Tells) God to Repent?” *BR* 1 (1985): 56-59.

¹⁶ Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 438.

God.” So, the lexical connection can immediately draw the reader to Deuteronomy. The setting of the psalm, however, is reminiscent of Exodus. Following the golden calf incident in Exod 32, YHWH was ready to destroy the people and make a nation from Moses.¹⁷ Moses interceded on the people’s behalf, and YHWH forgave them.¹⁸ In verse 13 of Ps 90, Moses is portrayed as again interceding for the people using the same language in a plea to YHWH. The verse also presents Moses speaking to YHWH with the words “שׁוּב” (“repent”) and “רַחֵם” (“have compassion”). Both words also occur in Exod 32:12 as Moses pleads for YHWH’s mercy. When a reader has reached Ps 90, however, the reader has found a new context for רַחֵם. In Deut 32:36 (from the mouth of Moses) and in Deutero-Isaiah,¹⁹ the רַחֵם of YHWH is associated with the end of the desperate situation of divine punishment. In Ps 90, readers see Moses remind humanity of its brevity and YHWH’s eternity, and once again Moses intercedes to rescue ancient Israel from itself.

¹⁷ Exod 32:9-10.

¹⁸ Exod 32:11-14.

¹⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 113; cf. Isa 40:1 (2 occurrences); 49:13; 51:3 (2 occurrences), 12; 52:9; 54:11; 61:2; 66:13 (3 occurrences).

With the superscription guiding the reading of the psalm, the reader begins to notice a number of connections between this psalm and Deut 32 and 33. The first association made in this psalm is the word מַעוֹן (“dwelling place”) in verse 1. Deut 33:27 reminds the reader that the ancient God is a מַעֲנֶה. A direct parallel is also found in the phrase, דֹּר וָדֹר, (“generation and generation”) which occurs in Ps 90:1 and Deut 32:7.²⁰

Psalm 90 also displays an unusual cosmogony.²¹ In Ps 90:2, the mountains are given birth to (יִלְדוּ). It is a similar metaphor of creation which God uses to refer to the people’s origins in Deuteronomy. In the proleptic discussion of the exile in Deut 32:18, the people are warned that later rejection by YHWH will happen because they will forget that God gives birth to them (יִלֵּד).

In Ps 90:15, the reader encounters the feminine form of the plural for the word for “years,” שָׁנֹת (instead of שָׁנִי). This form is found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible; however, it first appears in the text of

²⁰ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (trans. David Eaton; 3 vols.; London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1889), 3:4

²¹ Gunkel, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 53.

Deut 32:7.²² The plural יָמִים (“days”), adding an effective parallel (instead of יָמִי), is found only in Ps 90:15 and in Deut. 32:7.²³

The use of the noun פִּעַל (“works, deeds”) in Ps 90:16 occurs in the Pentateuch only in Deut 32:4 (“The Rock’s deeds are perfect”) and Deut 33:11 (“accept the work of [YHWH’s] hand”).²⁴ Both references associate the work with the direct action of YHWH. In Ps 90:16, YHWH is entreated by Moses to allow YHWH’s פִּעַל to be manifest.

The hope in Ps 90 is that YHWH’s פִּעַל (Ps 90:16) will be manifest, and that Israel’s מַעֲשֵׂה (Ps 90:17) will be prospered. The use of the term מַעֲשֵׂה to represent the actions of Israel (as in Ps 90:17) is found throughout the book of Deuteronomy.²⁵

²² Delitzsh, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 3:16.

²³ Mitchall Dahood, *Psalms II: 51-100* (The Anchor Bible 16; ed. by William F. Albright and David N. Freedman; Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1968), 326.

²⁴ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 3:59; פִּעַל does occur twice as a verb in the Pentateuch: Exodus 15:17 and Numbers 23:23. In both cases, God is the subject.

²⁵ Deut 2:7; 4:28 14:29; 16:15; 24:19; 27:15; 28:12; 30:9; 31:29; Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 3:17.

These connections are more than simply interesting. For the reader, they provide a latent hermeneutical impulse which provides an interesting context in terms of the “story” of the Psalter. Psalm 90 refers to the members of the Israelite community as עֶבֶד (“slaves, servants”) in Ps 90:13 and 16. The narrative impulse of the Psalter to this point has emphasized to the reader the desperate situation of exile. This post-exilic situation is reinforced by referring to the people of Israel with the post-exilic reference, עֶבֶד.²⁶ Tate associates this word with the post-exilic situation citing uses of the word in the second portion of Isaiah and other texts generally associated with the post-exile.²⁷

Psalm 90, therefore, with its Mosaic superscription and allusions to Moses speeches in Deuteronomy focuses the reader on a Mosaic voice for Ps 90. Moses has been mentioned once before in the Psalter; he is used as a paradigmatic example of leadership. After the good times of Davidic reign have come to an end, Ps 77 remembers Moses and Aaron. It is a lament seeking answers in the face of God’s seeming absence. In

²⁶ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 438.

²⁷ Is 56:6; 65:8-9; 65:13-15; 66:14; Tate also references Mal 3:18; 3:22 [4:4]; Ps 123:2; 134:1; 135:1; Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 438.

Ps 77:20, the leadership of the people through the ministry of Moses and Aaron is the climax of the Psalm. By Ps 90, when the questions of the people have turned to the despair of Pss 88 and 89, one verse remembering Moses is no longer sufficient. It seems the people, if they are going to survive this crisis, must hear a word from the mouth of Moses.

The use of מַחְשָׁבָה (“grunt, breath, meditation”) in Ps 90:9 is worth attention. The book of Psalms has more occurrences of this root than any other book in the Hebrew Bible.²⁸ The use of the word in the book of Psalms is distinct from its use elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. In Ps 90, the years of humanity come to an end, just like a מַחְשָׁבָה. The reader remembers that in Ps 1:2, the righteous individual מַחְשָׁבָה (“meditates”) on the Torah of YHWH. In Ps 2, the tumultuous nations מַחְשָׁבָה (“plots, meditates”) in vain against YHWH’s king. Psalms 37 and 38 provide an interesting parallel to Pss 1 and 2. In Ps 37:30, the righteous מַחְשָׁבָה wisdom. In Ps 38, the wicked מַחְשָׁבָה treachery. The word is most often used in a positive sense indicating the righteous person’s proper focus.

²⁸ Eleven of the twenty-six occurrences of this root are in Psalms. Eight of the twenty-six occurrences are in Isaiah.

A faithful person should **הגה** on YHWH's justice (cf. 35:28 and 71:24), YHWH's **פעל** (cf. 77:13 and 143:5), or even simply YHWH (cf. 63:7).

The reader may see the beginning of a shift in the theological attitude of the Psalms. Psalm 1 and 2 provide a simple formula for the reader. The **הגה** of the righteous brings success; the **הגה** of the wicked is futile. With the despair of Ps 88 and the hard questions of Ps 89 providing the context, the usage of the word in Ps 90 provides the reader a perspective analogous to Qoheleth. Life is as fleeting as a **הגה**. In other words, all **הגה**, righteous or unrighteous, are fleeting as well.

Several commentators have noted a connection between Ps 90 and wisdom. Gunkel notes that Ps 90:1 has a similar cosmogony to that of Job 38:8ff.²⁹ While Westermann classifies this psalm as a communal lament at its heart, he makes the observation that pictures of birth and death in 90:3 and 90:5 reminds the reader of Eccl 3:2.³⁰ Von Rad sees a direct connection between this psalm and the wisdom tradition in Israel.

²⁹ Hermann Gunkel, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 53.

³⁰ Claus Westermann, *The Living Psalms* (trans. J. R. Porter; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1989), 160.

Since this psalm is “too reflective” to have a cultic or liturgical context, it belongs to Israel’s wisdom tradition.³¹ Since, as von Rad understands it, Israel’s faith was given expression in God’s actions in history and Ps 90 contains only a vague historical reference (90:1), this psalm belongs to a later, history-less tradition, namely wisdom.³² The first petition in the psalm (v. 12) is an invocation for God to “teach” his people. Von Rad specifically connects Ps 90 to Ecclesiastes. The transience of human existence and the profoundly transcendent Almighty with an absence of historical action lead von Rad to read these texts in dialogue.³³ Von Rad finds in Ps 90 the same melancholy, futility for humanity in its living echoed in Ecclesiastes. Psalm 90 is wisdom which will at least provide answers to why there are no answers. God is eternal, and humanity’s years pass like a הנה.³⁴

³¹ Gerhard von Rad, “Psalm 90,” in *God at Work in Israel* (trans. John H. Marks; Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980), 221-222.

³² Von Rad, “Psalm 90,” 218-219.

³³ Von Rad, “Psalm 90,” 219-222.

³⁴ Bruce Vawter, “Post-exilic Prayer and Hope,” *CBQ* 37 (1975): 463.

Brueggemann also notes the wisdom flavor of Ps 90. The goal of the psalmist's prayer is "a wise heart" (v. 12).³⁵ The wise heart, however, is not one that finds despair in the divine control of humanity's transitory nature. "There may be wistfulness, even chagrin, but Psalm 90 is not a meditation on *futility and death*, as much as on the power of God in the fact of human reality."³⁶ Brueggemann understands this psalm to be connected, not with the speculative wisdom of Ecclesiastes, but with practical, retributive wisdom. Brueggemann makes this association since the psalm does not make clear that humanity's desperate condition is in any way unjustified.³⁷

Krüger also does not believe the psalm is an explicit meditation on the frailty of human life. Rather, he suggests that because of the language used, the psalm reflects the psalmist attempting to make sense of the period of exile. For Krüger the psalmist is acknowledging the desperate situation for humanity and is attempting to understand how humanity can once again experience the blessings which are provided by

³⁵ Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 111.

³⁶ Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 112.

³⁷ Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 112.

YHWH.³⁸ Krüger's interpretation does fit in the context of the Psalter. For the reader coming out of Book III, it is the exile concerning the psalmists, and this psalm of Moses with its Mosaic superscription and allusions to speeches of Moses in Deuteronomy can be read as an ancient authority interceding on behalf of the exiled people for the mercy of YHWH.

Psalm 91: Same Song Different Verse

Is verse 17 of Psalm 90 the last word of Moses? Perhaps not. Kennicott notes six Hebrew manuscripts which join Pss 90 and 91.³⁹ While such an occurrence is not uncommon for psalms without superscriptions,⁴⁰ it is also possible that something else could be at work here. The shapers of those Hebrew manuscripts may have noticed certain lexical and thematic connections between these psalms.

³⁸ Thomas Krüger, "Psalm 90 und die Vergänglichkeit des Menschen," 75 *Biblica* (1994): 191-219.

³⁹ Codices 74, 97, 133, 245, 260, and 326; Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 134.

⁴⁰ Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 135; 173-182.

In Psalm 90, Moses praises YHWH as a **מַעוֹן** (“refuge”) from generation to generation. Psalm 91 picks up this image by proclaiming YHWH is **מַחֲסִי**, another word for refuge, twice in the psalm.⁴¹ Psalm 91 also uses two names for the deity, typically associated with pre-Mosaic religion: **שָׁדַי** and **עֲלִיּוֹן**. The shadow of **שָׁדַי** provides protection in Psalm 91, and Moses is told in Exodus 6 that it is the name by which the patriarchs knew YHWH.⁴² Further, **עֲלִיּוֹן** is a term that Moses himself uses for the divine in one of his last speeches in Deut 32.⁴³ The faithful in Ps 91 will also find the protection of Yawheh’s “אֲבֵרֶה” or “pinions” (v. 4). This word is used in Deut 32:11, as well. When the divine does speak in Ps 91, YHWH states in verse 14b, “I will protect those who know my name.” The phrase is conspicuous when read with Deut 32:3, “I will call on the name of YHWH.”

These Mosaic connections, along with the lack of superscription on Ps 91, may have contributed to the combining of these psalms in those six Hebrew manuscripts. Wilson notes that while it is unlikely these

⁴¹ Ps 91:2, 9.

⁴² Exod 6:2-8.

⁴³ Deut 32:8.

psalms form an original unity, it is reasonable to see why they were redacted consecutively.⁴⁴ Erich Zenger does not stop the reasonable connection at Ps 91. Zenger suggests that Pss 90-92 demonstrate “thematic unity.”⁴⁵ In his opinion, the compositional structure of the Psalter allows the reader to hear Ps 91 coming from the mouth of Moses.⁴⁶

As previously noted, the only occurrence in the Torah of “Moses, man of God,” addressing Israel comes in Deut 33. There, Moses was standing and addressing the people of Israel for the last time as they prepared for his death and their entry into the Promised Land. The reader finds a formative time in the story of Israel with the people wrestling with the change in leadership and the challenges which lay ahead. Moses blesses the children of Israel, tribe by tribe, reminding

⁴⁴ Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 178.

⁴⁵ Erich Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalm 90-106)” in *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms*, edited by Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger, translated by Everett R. Kalin (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000):167.

⁴⁶ Erich Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalm 90-106),” 167.

them of their individual gifts and their need to recall YHWH as their warrior in their imminent battles.

In the previous chapter, Deut 32, Moses warned the children of Israel of the consequences of their progeny's disobedience and the punishment that awaits those who choose to ignore the covenant. Though a specific punishment is not identified, the "Song of Moses" is typically associated with the Babylonian exile.⁴⁷ An exilic reading of Deut 32 with its lexical and thematic connections to the Psalter provides an important interpretive context for the reader.

Returning to the Psalter, the reader has seen throughout Book III of the Psalter that YHWH's people have lived the nightmare of exile. They were disobedient and suffered what is described by Moses in Deut 32 as bitter pestilence, the teeth of beasts and the venom of those crawling in the dust (Deut 32:24). Facing that kind of identity-shaking tragedy, the people turn again to Moses in Psalm 90. As James Sanders remarked,

⁴⁷ Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy* (trans. D. Barton; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster press, 1966), 198; Patrick Miller, *Deuteronomy* (Louisville, Ky: J. Knox Press, 1990), 224.

. . . in crisis situations only the old, tried and true, has any real authority. Nothing thought up at the last minute, no matter how clever, can effect the necessary steps of recapitulation and transcendence needed by the threatened community, if it is to survive with identity. A new story will not do; only a story with old, recognizable elements has the power for life required.⁴⁸

In Ps 90, Moses intercedes again for YHWH's people. The reader also finds, just as the proleptic exile in Deut 32 gives way to Israel's blessing in Deut 33, so the story of the book of Psalms changes focus from the exile (Pss 89-90) to the blessing of the faithful (Ps 91). It is not difficult for the reader to make the leap made explicit by those six Hebrew manuscripts and place Ps 91 in the mouth of Moses. Psalm 90 ends seeking the blessing of YHWH. The reader moves from the direct petition for deliverance from YHWH's judgment in Ps 90:13, to the supplication of a blessing from YHWH at the end of Ps 90, to the means by which blessing is bestowed on the people in Ps 91, namely love and faithfulness to YHWH.

It was Hermann Gunkel who first categorized the first 13 verses of Ps 91 as having the form of blessing.⁴⁹ Historically, however, Ps 91 has

⁴⁸ James Sanders, "Adaptable for Life: The Nature and Function of Canon" in *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 21.

⁴⁹ Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, 223.

proven to be a hard psalm to classify. Gunkel argued that the psalm was a “psalm of blessing” with connections to wisdom. The psalm is often considered a wisdom psalm. The psalm reminds the reader that those who are faithful will be blessed with divine protection (as in Ps 1). While the way of the wicked is not explicitly expressed, the logical conclusion is, of course, that the one who does not trust in YHWH will find trouble and difficulty. Of course, the wisdom formula is also closely tied to the theology expressed throughout the book of Deuteronomy. Obedience to YHWH brings blessing. Disobedience brings punishment.

In Ps 91:3-13, the reader finds a number of references to the specific difficulties from which an individual with faith in YHWH can be protected. Traditionally, the interpretation of Ps 91:3-13 has emphasized the psalm’s use to protect the reader from demonic forces in the world. Oesterley clearly illustrates the specific demonic reference in each verse of Ps 91 in his commentary.⁵⁰ Other interpreters suggest that the verses do not refer to any particular danger, but they reflect a general

⁵⁰ W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms: Translated with Text-critical and Exegetical Notes* (London: SPCK, 1962), 407-411.

expression of the drastic physical anxieties that ancient Israel might face.⁵¹

There are references within the text itself that may provide clues to a reading of this psalm. In Ps 91:5 readers find that they may receive protection from the “arrows that fly by day.” In Deut 32:23, the reader has seen that YHWH will send arrows against the disobedient generation. In Ps 91:13, the reader finds that the faithful can tread upon the lion and the adder. In Deut 32:24, the reader has been warned that YHWH will send the teeth of beasts and the venom of things crawling in dust against the disobedient generation. While there is no direct semantic contiguity between the “pestilence” [דִּבְרָא] in Ps 91:6 and Deut 32, the pestilence from which the reader is afforded protection in Ps 91:6 is found in Deut 28:21 as a punishment for forsaking the covenant. In light of these allusions, it is possible that the protection afforded in Ps 91 is not protection from numerous demonic forces or metaphors for general anxieties of life. Using allusions and direct semantic

⁵¹ James Luther Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 297; Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 156.

connections, Ps 91 can be read as offering a blessing for protection from the consequences of exile.

Perhaps the “way of the wicked” is not made explicit in Ps 91 because the consequences for the wicked have already been expressed in Ps 90. This psalm represents the logical progression of the story from Ps 89, the reality of the exile, to Ps 90, the prayer for deliverance from exile, to Ps 91, a blessing on the people to avoid exile in the future.

With the exile informing the reading of these psalms, YHWH’s dramatic appearance and direct address of the psalmist in the final three verses of the psalm seems to be a product of the sincere longing of the psalmist.⁵² Those who know YHWH’s name and call out to YHWH will find protection and rescue. The reader can read that protection is from the harsh reality of exile.

Psalm 92: From Obedience to Praise

Several authors treat Pss 90-92 as one interpretive unit at the beginning of Book IV (redacted by an accident of history or purposely)

⁵² Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 157.

which reflects a shared vocabulary and thematic similarities.⁵³ The psalmist moves the reader to a type of conclusion with Ps 92.

After YHWH's direct address at the end of Ps 91, the reader finds the only psalm in the Hebrew Psalter meant as a "Song for the Sabbath Day." The reader might have a difficult time separating an eschatological reading of Sabbath here.⁵⁴ On the other side of struggle and exile, the psalms bring the reader to "Sabbath" with an expression of paradise where the wicked are doomed to destruction forever and the righteous flourish like palm trees. One is not necessarily compelled to interpret the psalm eschatologically, however. It is possible that this "Sabbath" could come as a resolution of exile.

⁵³ Erich Zenger, "The God of Israel's Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106)," 167-168; David M. Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 172-174; David M. Howard, "A Contextual Reading of Psalms 90-94," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clint McCann; JSOT Supplement Series, 159; ed. David Clines and Philip Davies; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 112; Jerome Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (JSOT 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 93-96

⁵⁴ Ancient readers of the text did. Mishna Tamid 7:4 reads regarding this psalm, "It is a psalm and a song for the era to come, the day that is entirely Sabbath and contentment for life everlasting"

In the Septuagint seven psalms are associated with the Sabbath week.⁵⁵ It has been suggested that the liturgical selection from these seven psalms would correspond to the libations of wine after the daily *tamid* offering.⁵⁶ While Ps 92 uses the name of YHWH seven times (as one might hope for a Sabbath psalm), some scholars say nothing specific makes this psalm a Sabbath psalm.⁵⁷ Others suggest that there is a connection to creation (and therefore Sabbath) in the destruction of YHWH's enemies.⁵⁸ If one accepts an eschatological notion of "Sabbath," the picture of paradise could explain the superscription from a standpoint of redaction.⁵⁹ For the reader, however, the psalm can be read as the only logical reaction to YHWH's deliverance (which comes at the end of Ps 90), that is thanksgiving.

⁵⁵ Psalm 92 is the seventh psalm to be read in the Sabbath week; M. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 465.

⁵⁶ Nahum M. Sarna, "The Psalm for the Sabbath Day (Ps 92)" *JBL* 81 (June 1962), 155; Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. (trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962) I, 2-3

⁵⁷ Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 411.

⁵⁸ N. Sarna, "The Psalm for the Sabbath Day (Ps 92)," 159-165; James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 299.

⁵⁹ Isaiah 58:10-14 may give support to this interpretation.

The psalm has traditionally been typed as a “thanksgiving” psalm.⁶⁰ Dahood adds that it is a “royal” song of thanksgiving.⁶¹ A number of phrases in this psalm are connected by Dahood to other psalms of “royal” classification. J. H. Eaton also understands the psalm to demonstrate royal content and concern.⁶² For Eaton, joining the speaker’s victories with YHWH’s victories (vv 11-12 and vv. 9-10) shows that God’s enemies and the kings are the same. Coupled with the reference to the “horn” in v 10 and its reference to anointing, “the appropriateness of the language of Ps 92 for a king should not be doubted.”⁶³

While not everyone will be convinced of an explicit royal character to the psalm, perhaps the reader does not need explicit royal references. These subtle allusions do prepare the reader, not for the rebirth of the

⁶⁰ H. Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 199; Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien* (I; Amsterdam : Verlag P. Schippers, 1961), 161, 163.

⁶¹ Mitchall Dahood, *Psalms II: 51-100* (The Anchor Bible 16; ed. by William F. Albright and David N. Freedman; Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1968), 336-338.

⁶² J.H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), 58-59.

⁶³ Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 465.

Davidic monarchy, which failed in Book III, but for the recognition of YHWH as the true king over the people, which the reader is about to experience in Pss 93-100. Eaton is correct that the speaker's enemies and YHWH's enemies are the same; however, what qualifies them as "enemy" is their character. "The wicked . . . and all evildoers . . . are doomed to destruction forever." (v 7) "All evildoers shall be scattered" (v 9). Even the enemies of the speaker are defined as "evil assailants." (v 11)

The psalm also has been classified as displaying wisdom characteristics.⁶⁴ With the apparent expression of retributive justice, the classification is likely unavoidable. While the thanksgiving message of the psalm is clear, it is hard not to see a remembrance of Ps 1 in Ps 92:12-15. For Oesterley, the primary purpose of the psalm is to provide an answer to the problem of the suffering righteous and successful wicked person.⁶⁵ The psalm is simply a summary of Ps 37 and Ps 73-eventually, the wicked will be destroyed. H. J. Kraus sees a mixing of psalm types

⁶⁴ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 464.

⁶⁵ Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 411.

in Ps 92.⁶⁶ The discussion of the wicked and righteous influences this individual psalm of thanksgiving demonstrating the psalm was “shaped by wisdom poetry.”⁶⁷ As though aware of a canonical reading of the Psalter, it is also clear to Kraus that this psalm of thanksgiving has come after a time of doubt and struggle.

Obviously the persecuted person had to wait a long time for YHWH’s help. The righteous activity on the part of his God became subject to question. Temptations and questions, such as appear in Psalms 37; 49; and 73, are in the background also in Psalm 92. But all doubts are now laid to rest.⁶⁸

Certainly, the reader has seen question and doubt throughout Book III and has only in Ps 91 received an answer from YHWH. The answer has come only after remembering Moses and Torah.

Erich Zenger notes that Psalm 92 closes a Mosaic introduction to Book IV. Ps 92 builds upon and demonstrates that the promise of Ps 91 is not empty.⁶⁹ In Ps 91:14, YHWH states, “I will protect those who know

⁶⁶ H. J. Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary* (trans. H. C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 51; H. J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 227.

⁶⁷ Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 59.

⁶⁸ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 227-228.

⁶⁹ Zenger, *The God of Israel’s Reign over the World*, 167.

my name.” Ps 92 wastes no time making clear the psalmist knows YHWH’s name by using it in verse 1. “It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High.”

The psalm continues the Mosaic introduction to Book IV and, as a result, provides an authoritative voice for the reader. As Gunkel notes, one of the powerful features of the thanksgiving hymn is the direct involvement of the speaker.⁷⁰ This psalm does not include the voice of a third party trying to empathize with an individual’s thanksgiving. The speaker of the psalm is directly expressing thanksgiving.

That person’s heart is full from that which he has just experienced. In more than a few of these poems, the impression which those of us born later can still perceive is so strong that we do not for a moment doubt that those speaking so powerfully are speaking from their own experience.⁷¹

The connection of Ps 92 with Pss 90-91 is more than just its position in the book. Lexical connections reinforce to the reader the reading of these three psalms together. Psalm 92 demonstrates lexical connections to both Pss 90 and 91, and it also demonstrates connections

⁷⁰ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 213; H. J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 227.

⁷¹ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 213.

to Deuteronomy. Psalm 92 refers to YHWH as **עליון** connecting it with Ps 91 (92:2; 91:1). The psalm refers to the **פעל** of YHWH, as in Ps 90 (90:16; 92:5) as well as connecting it with speeches of Moses in Deuteronomy (32:4; 33:11) Psalm 92 is further associated with Deut 32 less subtly. Compare:

Psalm 92:16

Deut 32:4

Showing that the LORD is upright (**ישר**); he is my rock (**צור**), and there is no unrighteousness (**עול**) in him.

The Rock (**צור**), his work is perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God, [in whom] there is no unrighteousness (**עול**), just and upright (**ישר**) is he;

The root **הגה** returns in Ps 92:3[4] (note Ps 90: 9[10]). In Ps 92, the noun **הגיון** refers to pleasant music.⁷² The reader has been on an interesting journey with this word. The pluck of a string in Ps 92 does not seem to have the deep theological significance of Ps 1. In Ps 1 to **הגה** on torah brought life like a tree planted by stream. By Ps 90, **הגה** accomplishes nothing lasting, and it is as transient as the grass. In Ps 92, **הגיון** does not bring about success, but it does accompany the declaration of YHWH's steadfast love. In Ps 92, the righteous are

⁷² G. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament Vol. III* (trans. John T. Willis and Geoffrey Bromiley; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1978), 321.

planted in the house of YHWH, not necessarily because of their actions, but because of YHWH's works.

In some ways, Psalm 92 ends with a look back to the beginning of the Psalter. No longer is the productive tree planted by the streams of water.⁷³ Now, the flourishing tree is planted in the house of YHWH and the courts of God. The tree is no longer reliant upon God's provision indirectly (through the stream) but directly (in the court it will have direct attention).

Conclusion

Different scholars have different opinions on what brought Pss 90-92 together. It was Reindl who first suggested that these three psalms of different *Gattung* are thematically linked by the discussion of the ephemeral nature of humanity. Reindl argued that the order of the psalms shows the fleeting nature of human life (Ps 90) to the confidence in YHWH's deliverance (Ps 91) to the thanksgiving that YHWH has provided protection for the righteous (Ps 92).⁷⁴

⁷³ Ps. 1:3; 92:14; Jer. 17:8; Ezek. 17:8, 10, 22; 19:10, 13; Hos. 9:13.

⁷⁴ Joseph Reindl, "Weisheitliche Bearbeitung Von Psalmen," in *Congress Volume :Vienna, 1980* (ed. John A. Emerton; Leiden : E J Brill, 1981), 350-356.

Jerome Creach also asserts that the transience of human beings and the refuge of YHWH brought these three psalms together.

The [righteous] enjoy success and fruitfulness even in old age. . . . This statement [v 15] continues a prominent idea of Pss 90:10 and 91:16 and is perhaps part of the motivation for the placement of these three psalms; each psalm deals with the brevity of human existence and the reward of extended life and security for those who recognize YHWH as the only source of refuge.⁷⁵

All three psalms have been variously identified as having wisdom characteristics. Von Rad sees Ps 90 as skeptical wisdom. Brueggemann sees Ps 90 as practical wisdom. Pss 91 and 92 are generally seen as simple, practical wisdom. Zenger sees all three psalms redacted to function as a Mosaic introduction to Book IV. Walter Brueggemann's canonical interpretation of Psalms (from obedience to praise)⁷⁶ is reflected on the microcanonical scale at the beginning of Book IV.

Whatever the editorial purpose, the text as it stands reflects a strong Mosaic concern. Moses' message in the Psalter was to remind the

⁷⁵ Jerome Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (JSOT 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 95.

⁷⁶ Walter Brueggemann, "Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon," in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (ed. Patrick Miller; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 189-213.

people that it was not the Davidic monarchy in which they place their trust, but something long before the Davidic monarchy. With Psalm 90 calling Moses the “man of God,” it immediately draws the reader to the previous time Moses gave an address after being called the “man of God.” Moses pronounced his blessing on the tribes in Deut. 33. Prior to that in Deuteronomy the ancient Hebrews were told what would happen to them as a result of their disobedience. With the semantic links to Deut. 32:23-24, Ps 91, taking the form of a blessing, reminds post-exilic Israel that although they had suffered the fate which Moses foretold, they could find refuge and security by trusting in YHWH. Psalm 92 then offers thanksgiving to YHWH for answering in Ps 91. The singer of the psalm has the same enemies as YHWH (ala Moses), and the “royal” flavor of the psalm prepares the reader for the “YHWH Reigns” psalms which follow.

Several points in these Psalms stand out: Yahweh is a refuge; the one who seeks refuge in Yahweh will be protected and blessed with long life; *tora* is a source of security, a refuge for those who are troubled by adversaries. The final point is important because of the possible relationship between *tora* and the “mosaic” emphasis in book four.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Jerome Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 96.

Psalm 91 moves the reader from the blessings of obedience to the praise of Psalm 92, which further gives support to the view that the three psalms (Pss. 90-92) create a thematic unity.

CHAPTER THREE

Majesty of Yahweh (Psalms 93-100)

He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.

Friedrich Nietzsche

From Obedience to Praise

The story of the Psalter has brought the reader to a time of hope. The questioning despair of Book III has humbly been refocused to the remembrance of Moses and of the Mosaic Covenant and a growing recognition of Yahweh's place in the universe. This reorientation has not been an easy process. The reader has been led through a song of repentance (Ps 90) to a song of praise (Ps 92). So, does the reader pause to take a breath here? Does Psalm 93 open a new chapter? Or, does the story continue uninterrupted from the beginning?

No consensus exists on exactly how to organize Book IV. Citing a "Mosaic quality" at the beginning of Book IV, Zenger emphasizes Pss 90-92 as an interpretive unit. For Zenger, this corresponds to a Davidic unit (101-103) organized around Yahwistic theocracy (Pss 93-100).¹ Tate,

¹ Zenger, "The God of Israel's Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106)," 165-168.

however, suggests that Pss 90-100 can be read together as they make up a “Moses book.”² Howard, moreover, prefers to divide Book IV into three parts: Pss 90-94, Pss 95-100, Pss 101-106.³ The reader, therefore, has little guidance in this matter (or perhaps too much guidance in this matter). Book IV might seem to be a disjointed collection of random psalms.

That is not the case, however. In fact, because of thematic and lexical connections, recent scholarship has begun to analyze these psalms together. Though Howard does divide Book IV into three sections, he also believes, “There are overlapping links and echoes that jump across many psalms in Book IV, but these three groupings hang together especially well.”⁴ It will be helpful first to consider how the reader should understand יהוה מלך and then analyze the psalms’ significant individual contributions to the “story” of the Psalter.

² Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), xxvi.

³ David Howard, “A Contextual Reading of Psalms 90-94,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clint McCann; JSOT Supplement Series, 159; ed. David Clines and Philip Davies; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 109.

⁴ Howard, “A Contextual Reading of Psalms 90-94,” 109.

Psalm 93 begins a new emphasis for the reader. YHWH is recognized as king in Israel. YHWH's rule is permeated with the Torah and Mosaic concerns the reader has seen in the beginning of Book IV, and those concerns continue throughout Pss 93-100. Additionally, the strong Mosaic character at the first of the book provides a hermeneutic lens through which to read the rest of the text. As demonstrated by a number of scholars, "beginnings" are important to a reader.⁵

Psalms 93-100: יהוה מלך

For many scholars, Pss 93-100 serve as the thematic center of the entire Psalter.⁶ James Mays believes יהוה מלך is the root metaphor for

⁵ Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon: Mercer, 1997), 1-3; Boris Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*, trans. Calentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig (Berkeley: University of California, 1973) 137, 149; Mikeal C. Parsons, "Reading a Beginning/Beginning a Reading: Tracing Literary Theory on Narrative Openings," *How Gospels Begin*, ed. Dennis Smith, *Semeia* 52 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1990) 11-31; Menakhem Perry, *Literary Dynamics: "How the Order of a Text Creates its Meanings," Poetics Today* 1 (1979) 35-64, 311-361.

⁶ James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 12-13; David Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 183; Gerald Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico: Scholar's Press, 1985), 216-217; Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A*

the Psalter and the key to understanding the psalms when they are read as components of a book.⁷ It was widely accepted for years that these psalms were the product of an “enthronement festival.” Based on analogous practices in other parts of the Near East, Sigmund Mowinckel suggested that these Psalms functioned within the cult to usher in the New Year and celebrate YHWH’s enthronement.⁸ Since Mowinckel, these psalms (and other related material like Ps 24:7-10 and Ps 89:6-15) have been associated with this celebration.⁹

Mowinckel’s theory has received its share of criticism. From the beginning, Gunkel was skeptical of exactly how precise one can be regarding a single “Enthronement Festival,” though he thought that there was sufficient evidence to infer some specific worship setting

Theological Commentary (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 140-152.

⁷ Mays, *The Lord Reigns*, 12-13.

⁸ Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien* (II; Amsterdam : Verlag P. Schippers, 1961), 6-8; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship* (I; trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 108.

⁹ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 475.

similar to the Babylonian festival.¹⁰ Westermann thought that it was improper to form-critically designate any psalms as “enthronement psalms” since those psalms typically had different form-critical characteristics.¹¹ Michel thought that Mowinckel presumed too much from the translation of the phrase, יהוה מלך, and that too much freedom, regarding the meaning of the phrase, was placed in the power of the exegete. Michel suggested that it was impossible to determine the best translation based on context, and to infer anything regarding the worship life of Israel was irresponsible.¹² Ulrichsen thought that Mowinckel and Michel were both wrong to some degree. In his opinion, Mowinckel may have assumed too much placing a heavy emphasis on his translation; however, Michel’s argument emphasizing word order

¹⁰ Hermann Gunkel, *An Introduction to the Psalms the Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (trans. James D. Nogalski; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 69-77.

¹¹ Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen; Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 146-147.

¹² Diethelm Michel, “Studien zu de sogenannten Thronbesteigungpsalmen,” *VT* (1956): 53.

was also overreaching.¹³ The reader's encounter with this phrase will be emphasized as the study proceeds through the Psalter.

This analysis has focused on how the story of the Psalter moves the reader from the emphasis on Davidic kingship to YHWH's kingship by means of the messenger Moses and remembrance of Torah. Thematically, the Psalter's emphasis on the kingship of YHWH draws the reader's attention to Moses. Brueggemann notes that the "theme of the kingship of God in Israel . . . appeals to the old Moses-Sinai tradition."¹⁴ Delitzsch notes "the theocracy itself is a reciprocal relationship between God and men, exalted above these intermediary forms, which had its first manifest beginning when Jahve became Israel's King (cf. Deut 33:5 and Exod 15:18)."¹⁵ That thematic connection is supported with lexical associations as well. Delitzsch refers to two scriptures of great importance to this study. Deuteronomy 33 has already been shown to play a significant role in the beginning of Book

¹³ Jarl H. Ulrichsen, "JHWH Malak: Einige Sprachliche Beogachtungen," *VT* (1977): 361-374.

¹⁴ Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 151.

¹⁵ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (trans. David Eaton; 3 vols.; London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1889), 73.

IV. That role will continue through Pss 93-100. Exodus 15 will also contribute to the story as well.

Psalm 93

David Howard believes Ps 93 is also likely the earliest of the psalms in the 93-100 group.¹⁶ H. G. Jefferson demonstrated the connection of Ps 93 to cosmogony in Ugaritic literature.¹⁷ In fact, the Ugaritic connection is so widely accepted that comments on the theory are made in most analyses of the psalm. Mowinckel's theory regarding the "Enthronement Festival" and its relationship to an analogous Babylonian New Year practice has also led scholars to find analogies in Ps 93 to Babylonian worship texts.¹⁸

The connection of Near Eastern myth with the creation of YHWH in Ps 93 originates with Gunkel in the first incarnation of form criticism.¹⁹ YHWH is clearly the master of chaos, greater than Marduk.²⁰

¹⁶ Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 171.

¹⁷ H. G. Jefferson, "Psalm 93" *JBL* 71 (1952): 155-60.

¹⁸ H. J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary* (trans. H. C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 233.

¹⁹ Regarding Ps 93 Gunkel writes, "*Als Nachklänge des Mythos wird man demnach auch betrachten können, wenn in den Schilderungen der*

Also, in Ps 93, YHWH establishes a house following creation, greater than Baal.²¹ The reader finds the psalmist celebrating the sovereignty of YHWH, not simply over creation, but by implication over other gods as well.

On a first reading, the psalm has little to connect it with what has come before. Psalms 92 and 93 have only five lexemes in common and two of these are divine names.²² Westermann notes that there is no obvious connection between Pss 90-92 and Ps 93.²³ Wilson concludes that any original unity between Pss 92 and 93 would seem highly unlikely (though Kennicott cites 8 manuscripts which join the two psalms).²⁴

Königsherrlichkeit Jahves das Brausen des Meeres eine Rolle spielt." in Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895), 106.

²⁰ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 233.

²¹ Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II: 51-100* (The Anchor Bible 16; ed. by William F. Albright and David N. Freedman; Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1968), 343.

²² Howard, "A Contextual Reading of the Psalms 90-94," 109.

²³ Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 255.

²⁴ Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 178; Wilson suggests that this is likely due to the tendency to combine untitled psalms with immediately preceding titled psalms.

In spite of the seeming disjunction, “editorial unity” provides a reason to read the psalms together.²⁵ The psalms’ few connections are interesting. Both psalms mention YHWH’s house (92:14 [13]; 93:5). Further, מְרוֹם occurs in 92:9 [8] and 93:4. In both verses מְרוֹם is followed by the divine name, YHWH. While the lexical connections are slim, they do provide readers a impulse to continue the story of the Psalter.

More significant than the lexical connections are the thematic connections between the psalms.

Despite the fact that Psalms 92 and 93 are of different form-critical genres, and despite the presence of a wisdom-flavored portion (vv 7-10) in Psalm 92, this psalm nevertheless functions well in anticipating the predominant motif of the following psalms. They affirm YHWH’s kingship, sovereignty and everlasting peace.²⁶

Continuing through the story of Book IV, the reader discovers that the celebration of YHWH as king does not appear *ex nihilo* in Ps 93. “The groundwork for the shift in Psalm 93 has already been established in the general and joyful praises in Psalm 92”²⁷

²⁵ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 476.

²⁶ Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 171.

²⁷ Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 171.

Psalm 93 continues the reorientation of the people to the sovereignty of YHWH. YHWH is king and creator and superior to chaos and all other gods in this brief hymn, but what of Moses and the Torah? Does Moses continue to play a role in this reorientation? One might expect not. The primary concern of the psalm is the “Kingship of God.” Though Brueggemann believes to involve YHWH’s kingship is to associate with Sinai and Moses, the account of God’s supreme revelation to Moses at Mt. Sinai never uses the metaphor of kingship.²⁸ In spite of this fact, Brueggemann is likely correct as there are direct semantic links and thematic allusions to Moses and Torah in Ps 93.

Verse 5 contains the most explicit reference to the Mosaic covenant. Form-critically one might expect scholars to excise this verse from the first four since the subject matter seems to differ greatly from the rest of the psalm. Interestingly enough, most analyses maintain the integrity of the psalm. Those scholars who do maintain unity do so by hypothesizing that the translation has been misunderstood;²⁹ that the

²⁸ Nahum Sarna, *On the Book of Psalms: Exploring the Prayers of Ancient Israel* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1993), 179.

²⁹ E.g, James Donald Shenkel, “An Interpretation of Psalm 93,5” *Biblica* (1965):404-409; Dahood, *Psalms II: 51-100*, 339-342.

verse concludes the psalm well as traditionally translated;³⁰ or that it is unclear how it fits but it easily belongs.³¹

The word which begins v. 5, עֲדָתַי, likely comes from עֲדָה traditionally translated, “decrees.”³² Within the Psalter, the reader has already seen this word associated directly with Torah in Ps 19:8 and Ps 78:5 (the reader will later encounter this word 23 times in the great Torah psalm, Ps 119). A. A. Anderson suggests that the word may be used to represent the Covenant as a whole (noting its use in Ps 119:2).³³ עֲדָה is used in Exodus and Numbers to refer to laws in general, and it is used to refer to the Ark of the Covenant (or the Ark of the “Decrees”) on numerous occasions.³⁴ Further, the tablets of the “decrees” were

³⁰ E.g., Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 236; Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 618.

³¹ E.g., Westerman, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 150.

³² F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1907), 730; Shenkel and Dahood translate this verse differently; however, most scholars have not found their arguments convincing enough to move from the traditional rendering of the passage.

³³ A. A. Anderson, *Psalms II* (London: Oliphant, 1972), 669.

³⁴ E.g., Exod 25:16, 21, 22; 26:33-34; 30:6, 26; 31:7, 18, et. al.

smashed by Moses in Exod 32 when he observed the sin of the people, an event the reader has already been reminded of by Moses' intercession in Ps 90. In Ps 93, the recognition of YHWH as creator is to recognize YHWH's covenant with Moses. God the sovereign insures the welfare of the community by the issuing of decree.³⁵ Recognition of God as sovereign requires the psalmist to be subject to those decrees.

Before the reader encounters the lexical Torah and Mosaic covenant allusions in v. 5, the psalm reminds the reader of Moses through thematic associations. This psalm celebrates YHWH's kingship. One powerful encounter the reader had in scripture with God's kingship comes from the very beginnings of Israel as a nation, Exod 15. Moses' "Song of the Sea" ends with the declaration, "YHWH will reign forever and ever."³⁶ In a sense, YHWH's kingship is tied to Moses from the beginning of the nation. Mowinckel notes that the creation of Israel as a nation is connected with the creation of the cosmos.³⁷

³⁵ Nahum Sarna, *On the Book of Psalms*, 187.

³⁶ Exod 15:18.

³⁷ Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, 108.

Psalm 93 also has several direct lexical connections with Exod 15. The phrase(s), מַיִם רַבִּים אֲדִירִים is notably similar to the phrase מַיִם אֲדִירִים which only occurs in Exod 15:10. Interestingly, Howard emends the text of Ps 93:4 in his translation, and the phrase directly corresponds to the Exodus passage.³⁸ The reader, therefore, is reminded that the waters which YHWH is more majestic than (Ps 93) are like the waters in which the Egyptians sank like lead (Exod 15). The psalm remembers a time when YHWH miraculously demonstrated sovereignty and saved the nation. Coming from the despair of Book III, the reader can easily understand the psalmist's desire to have a "new" exodus and deliverance.

This would not be the first time the reader has encountered Exodus and creation tied together. The connection between the chaos waters and Exodus is certainly significant in Isa 40-55.³⁹ The God who announces a New Exodus is also "The creator of Israel, your King."⁴⁰

³⁸ Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 39.

³⁹ e.g., Isa 43:15-16; 44:24; 45:11-13; 54:5; Pss 93-100 have been noted by many scholars as having significant connections to Deutero-Isaiah. See Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (JSOT Supplement Series 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 119. Kraus argues for dependence between the

In 93:5, the reader finds נִסְיָהָּ קִדְּשׁ which corresponds well with Exod 15:13, יְיָהּ קִדְּשׁ. It is interesting that the verses which contain the clearest allusions to Moses and Torah (vv 4-5) are also the verses which have the lexemic connections to Psalm 92. Again, the reader is drawn quietly to Moses and reminded that the reader is reading part of a greater whole.

In many ways, Psalm 93 takes the reader back to the beginning. At first glance, it seems the reader is going all the way back to the very beginning, the beginning in which God created the heavens and the earth. The text, however, subtly guides the reader to another beginning, sung in harmony with the creation of the universe—the creation of the nation. It is on the banks of the Red Sea that Moses first declares YHWH's reign, which the reader now explicitly celebrates in the psalm. Following the time of exile and the fall of the Davidic covenant, the

Enthronement Psalms and Deutero-Isaiah. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 247. Battenwieser goes the furthest by arguing that Deutero-Isaiah was the author. Moses Battenwieser, *The Psalms: Chronologically Treated With A New Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), 326-32.

⁴⁰ Isa 43:15; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "Fighting the Powers of Chaos and Hell – Towards the Biblical Portrait of God" 39 *Studia Theologica* (1985) 21-38.

people need a new beginning—a new Exodus. Psalm 93 again reminds the reader that YHWH can bring new creation.

Psalm 94

Psalm 94 has typically had a difficult time connecting with Ps 93-100 for several reasons. It is nearly twice as long as the next longest psalm in the group (Ps 96). It is also distinct as it is the only psalm in this group classified a lament (with other forms blended with it). While most scholars organize the psalm into three or four sections, its unity is defended or assumed by most commentators.⁴¹ Psalm 94 lacks the explicit reference to the kingship of YHWH found in the surrounding psalms. It has been noted, however, that the vengeance called for by this psalm (94:1) is the function of a king executing legitimate authority.⁴² Tate also believes this psalm fits within a royal context by using the metaphor of God as “judge.”⁴³

⁴¹ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 486.

⁴² George Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of Biblical Tradition* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1973), 70-104.

⁴³ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 489-90.

Dahood classified the psalm as one of thanksgiving.⁴⁴ Tate, however, disagrees, “It is true that the speaker draws on past experience of deliverance . . . but in the psalm as a whole the situation is a current one; the speaker shares the present distress with the community whose petitions and laments are expressed in vv 1-7.”⁴⁵ The reader can read the psalm as part of the same despair of Book III.

Reference to YHWH as “God of vengeance” provides a lexical connection to the “Song of Moses” in Deut 32.⁴⁶ Deut 32:35 affirms that only YHWH can perform the acts requested here. Moses begins his last speech to the people in Deut 33:2 (after being called “man of God”; cf. Ps 90) by calling for YHWH to “shine forth” (הִזְכִּיחַ as in Ps 94:1). Deuteronomy 32-33 played an important lexical role for the reader in Pss 90 and 91. Again, their lexical influence is felt connecting Moses to this psalm. Psalm 93 reminds the reader of Moses first speech to the “nation” of Israel standing on the banks of the Red Sea in Exod 15.

⁴⁴ Dahood, *Psalms II* 51-100, 346.

⁴⁵ Tate, *Psalms* 51-100, 487.

⁴⁶ Deut 32: 35, 41, 43; W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms: Translated with Text-Critical and Exegetical Notes*. (London: S. P. C. K., 1962), 416.

Psalm 94 then takes the reader to the last speeches of Moses to the nation of Israel standing on the verge of the land of Canaan in Deut 32-33.

The “dullards” are lamented in Ps 94:8. The use of **בער** connects the psalm with Ps 92. **בער** may also provide a subtle allusion to the victims in Ps 94. The verb which is based on the same root is used throughout the book of Deuteronomy. The verb is used as a remembrance of the “burning” of the holy mountain of YHWH⁴⁷ and as a command to “put away evil.”⁴⁸ Throughout the Psalter, the word is used for the wrath of God “burning” against the wicked.⁴⁹

The reference to the **בערִים** in 94:8 may not simply connect to Ps 92; it can be a subtle indication of who the dullards truly are. These “dimwits” can be associated by the readers as the “ones who are being

⁴⁷ Deut 4:11; 5:23; 9:15.

⁴⁸ Deut 13:5; 17:7, 12; 19:13, 19; 21:9, 21; 22:21, 22, 24; 24:7

⁴⁹ Ps 2:12 (failure for the “kings” to serve the Lord with fear will lead to God’s wrath **בער**); Ps 18:8 (YHWH manifests as a devouring fire ready to destroy the enemies of David); Ps 39:3 (The psalmist’s heart burned as a result of his transgressions); Ps 79:5; Ps 83:14 (A prayer that God would consume the enemies like fire consumes the forest); Ps 89:46; 106:18 (a fire consumed the wicked in Moses company).

burned.” In a sense, these are the ones who have (rightly) suffered the burning wrath of God. These are the ones who have failed to put away evil as commanded in Deuteronomy. These people are directly connected with the failure to observe the Mosaic Covenant. In Ps 89:46 the reader found the cry of the psalmist, “How long will God’s wrath **בער**?” The reader will soon be reminded in Ps 106 that God kindled (**בער**) a fire and consumed the wicked in Moses’ company. So in Ps 94, the text may be providing an association which guides the reader to a new understanding of the word.

Psalm 94:18 provides an interesting turn in the story. The reader finds that the psalmist’s foot was slipping. In Deut 32:35, YHWH will bring “retribution” (**נקם**) as in Ps 94:1) on the wicked ones when their foot “slips” (**מוט**) as in Ps 93:1 and 94:18). A reader may rightly wonder if the psalmist is despairing because the psalmist views himself as the victim, not only of earthly oppressors, but of YHWH’s wrath. It is only YHWH’s **חסד** which holds up the psalmist. YHWH again is a refuge, called a “rock” (**צור**) which links this psalm to Ps 92:16 (and also to Ps 95:1). The psalm also focuses on God’s teaching as a refuge from danger

posed by the wicked.⁵⁰ The Torah has a protective function in the life of the psalmist.⁵¹

What is the great sin of the evildoers in Ps 94? They “crush” YHWH’s people (שָׁרַף) in 94:5 in the same way the waves in 93:3 (which were subdued by YHWH) pound the shores (שָׁרַף).⁵² Moving through the Psalter, the reader has already seen that the role of the Davidic king is to uphold the poor of the people and the children of the needy and to שָׁרַף the oppressors (Ps 72:4). Before coming to Psalm 93, the reader has seen that YHWH was able to שָׁרַף the chaos dragon, Rahab (Ps 89:10). Yet now, the reader sees that this “corrupt throne” is שָׁרַף “crushing” YHWH’s heritage. YHWH is the “the Father of orphans, the champion of widows” (Ps 68:6). Yet, these corrupt rulers kill the widows and murder the orphans (Ps 94:6). Not only are these very poor rulers, they are in direct violation of several Torah passages.⁵³

⁵⁰ William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know Press, 2002), 194-195.

⁵¹ Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 98.

⁵² Howard, “A Contextual Reading of the Psalms 90-94,” 114.

⁵³ Exodus 22:20-23; Deut 24:17-18; 10:17-19.

Just who are the “evildoers” in this passage? Some scholars suggest it is clear that the “enemies” are non-Israelites.⁵⁴ On the other hand, some suggest it is “clear” that “they were Jews, and not aliens”⁵⁵ While conceding that it is possible to read the text a number of ways, the judgment is stronger if the evil-doers are those directly connected to Israel. These rulers have had a commission to be like YHWH (cp. Ps 72:1-4 and Deut 10:18), and they have failed to live up to that challenge. The story of the Psalter echoes the story of Deuteronomic history where so many kings failed to “walk in the way of David.”

Psalms 93 and 94 provide the reader with the contrast of YHWH’s kingship and humanity’s kingship. YHWH’s throne is eternal (93:1). Humanity’s throne will be wiped out (94:20, 23).⁵⁶ YHWH is greater than the chaos waters (93:4). Humanity’s kings are like the chaos waters (cp. 94:5 and 93:3). When the floods “lift up” their roaring (93:3), YHWH “rises up” to judge the earth. (94:2). It is YHWH, who does not “move or stagger” (93:1), who rescues the ones who “move and slip” (94:18).

⁵⁴ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 89.

⁵⁵ Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 416.

⁵⁶ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 489.

By providing this indictment of human leaders (and by association the Davidic monarchy) and refocusing on YHWH's sovereign power to deliver, the psalm further distances the heritage of David from the focus of the people's salvation. Torah is explicitly mentioned as the means of salvation, and the entire psalm provides lexical and thematic links to remind the reader of the Mosaic quality of Book IV.

Psalms 95

Psalms 95 begins by connecting to the psalms before it by again referring to YHWH as a **צור**. This anadiplosis keeps the reader moving through Book IV as the story unfolds. It has been hypothesized that the "rock" referred to here is a tacit reminder of the "rock" in the wilderness tying the early portion of the psalm to the ending.⁵⁷ As the reader comes to Psalms 95, Moses and Torah have had an ever-present, if sometimes subtle voice. Subtly is lost in Ps 95 and the psalmist remembers Moses and Torah explicitly.

⁵⁷ Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 54; Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, 353.

The psalm is broken into two sections, a hymnic section from vv 1-7a, and a “sermonic challenge” from 7b-11.⁵⁸ YHWH’s kingship is revisited, and the sovereignty of YHWH is established over all other gods and all of creation. YHWH is also celebrated as the “Maker” of the psalmist. God is depicted as a shepherd (מֵרֵעִיתוֹ), and the people are referred to as sheep (צֹאֵן). There are several texts that mention God as both the creator and shepherd (Isa 43,1, 15, et. al).⁵⁹ Most significant for this study is the mention in Deut 32:6. In fact, Howard notes several connections which link this Psalm to the “Song of Moses.”⁶⁰

1) The general situation underlying the psalm easily corresponds to that of the Song. The psalm speaks of the rebellious wilderness generation but in the context of addressing a later generation (7b-11). The first generation addressed in this way was the generation in Deuteronomy 32, namely the children of the rebellious generation.

2) In the Song, Moses is seen exhorting them at some length not to repeat the mistakes of their fathers. In the psalm the message of the prophetic oracle is much the same.

⁵⁸ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 503.

⁵⁹ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 247; Dennis Tucker, “Psalm 95: Text, Context, and Intertext,” *Biblica* 81 (2000), 536.

⁶⁰ Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 61.

- 3) The psalm assumes the same role that Moses did in the Song, the role of one who addresses the people and exhorts them on behalf of YHWH.
- 4) The psalmist speaks directly, quoting YHWH (vv 8-11), while Moses in the Song usually refers to YHWH in the third person, but at times quotes him directly (vv 20-27, 34-35, 37-42).
- 5) Like the Song, the psalm does not mention any of Israel's history after Moses, such as the Conquest and Settlement or any part of the monarchy [except perhaps the Temple in v. 11b]"

In addition to the thematic connections, Howard notes that the psalm shares a number of lexical connections with the Deut 32. The word צוֹר occurs in Ps 95:1 and referring to YHWH six times in the Deut 32. The word אֱל ("God") occurs in 95:3 and at least twice in Deut 32; אֱלֹהֵינוּ occurs in 95:7 and once in Deut 32; and אֱלֹהֵי, referring to YHWH, occurs in 95:5 and 7 and occurs three times in the Deut 32.⁶¹ Again, the reader is drawn to Moses and exile with the literary connection to Deuteronomy 32.

It has also been suggested that Psalm 95:1-7a emphasizes a message of YHWH as "Savior."⁶² Whether the text does "emphasize" this

⁶¹ Howard, *The Structure of Psalms* 93-100, 61.

⁶² Charles B. Riding, "Psalm 95:1-7c as a Large Chiasm" 88 ZAW 3 (1976): 418; Riding connects the notion of "we are his people" to "savior" by means of Lev 26:12-13 and Jer 11:4 and the Exodus event.

point or not, it is significant that YHWH is characterized as a “rock of salvation” in the opening verse. This portrayal, as well as the celebration of God as creator in vv 4-5, coming after the ominous warning of God’s judgment in Ps 94:23 reinforces the hope the psalmist displayed at the conclusion of Ps 94.

The first word of the prophetic oracle (95:7b) is “today” (הַיּוֹם). הַיּוֹם begins the speeches of Moses in Deut 2:18 and 26:3. Tucker understands this beginning as a Deuteronomic introduction which prepares the reader for the Deuteronomic influence which is to come.⁶³ Tate also believes that the use of הַיּוֹם recalls the frequent use of this term throughout the book of Deuteronomy,⁶⁴ and emphasizes the links of the covenant with the present.⁶⁵ “The hardening of the hearts and the test of God, as at Meribah, cannot be relegated to the past and left there. The matter still lives and the congregation is at Meribah again. Massah (“testing”) is now.”⁶⁶ Hossfeld also suggests the use of this term calls for

⁶³ Tucker, “Psalm 95,” 538.

⁶⁴ הַיּוֹם appears at least 54 times in the book of Deuteronomy.

⁶⁵ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 502.

⁶⁶ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 502.

an immediate action from the obedient (*Gehorsam*).⁶⁷ The terms “Massah” and “Meribah” often occur individually in the Hebrew text.⁶⁸ It is uncertain when the traditions connected; however, it is interesting to note a passage which has been important to Book IV from the beginning contains both terms, Deut 33:8.

There is some debate over what the “place of rest” mentioned in v 11 references. The most obvious allusion is the “Promised Land,” as it is specifically called the “place of rest” in Deut 12:9.⁶⁹ It is also possible that the Promised Land allusion is supposed to be read in a spiritual sense.⁷⁰ Howard believes that because the centralization of the worship of YHWH is mentioned in Deut 12 with this phrase, this verse could be the only association with the monarchy in the psalm.⁷¹ Howard’s

⁶⁷ "Psalm 95: Gattungsgeschichtliche, kompositionskritische, und bibeltheologische Anfragen," in *Neue Wege Der Psalmenforschung: Für Walter Beyerlin* (ed. Klaus and Eirch Zenger Seybold; Freiburg: Herder, 1994), 36.

⁶⁸ E.g., in Deut 6:16; 9:22, there is only mention of Massah; in Num 20:1-13 and Ps 81:7 there is only mention of Meribah; G. H. Davies, “Psalm 95” ZAW (1973) 193-194.

⁶⁹ Cp. Deut 12:9.

⁷⁰ Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 421.

⁷¹ Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 57.

allusion may overreach a bit. It may simply be that the “place of rest” is the destination of “the new Exodus” alluded to in Ps 93.

The reader finds that Ps 95 has taken very seriously the message of the psalms which have come before. Ps 95:1-7a celebrates YHWH’s power and position in the cosmos, analogous to Ps 93. Ps 95:7b-11 offers the prophetic warning and challenge to follow God’s Torah,⁷² lest the reader end up like the dimwit of Ps 94. The psalmist uses warning which reminds the reader of two significant incidents in the wilderness story.⁷³ In both stories, the people doubted YHWH’s provision, and in one Moses failure to follow YHWH’s instruction cost him the ability to finish the journey with his people and go into the Promised Land. If a new Exodus is to begin, it is important to learn the lessons of the old one.

Psalms 96-98

Psalms 96-98 are treated as a unit here, though each psalm has its own distinctive qualities. Their similarities have been noted for some time. Battenwieser suggests that Pss 93, 97, 98, and 96 (in that order)

⁷² Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, 353.

⁷³ Exodus 17: 1-7; Numbers 20: 2-13

originally formed a single poem.⁷⁴ Tate treats 96-99 as a single group, suggesting that the four psalms divide into two major divisions 96-97 and 98-99.⁷⁵

In this section, YHWH is not confined as the God of Israel; rather, YHWH is king over all the earth. For example, YHWH's glory is "declared among the nations," (Ps 96:3) "The earth" rejoices (Ps 97:1), and "all the peoples behold his glory" (Ps 97:6). [YHWH's] vindication has been shown "in the sight of the nations" (Ps 98:2). This universalism and some verbal parallels have suggested to scholars that the psalmist is in some measure indebted to Isaiah 40-55.⁷⁶ This fact should not be surprising to the reader. Book IV has provided the reader a lyrical presentation of an exilic people searching for refuge. They have found refuge by remembering Moses and YHWH's proper place in the cosmos.

⁷⁴ Buitenhuis, *The Psalms*, 320-321.

⁷⁵ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 508.

⁷⁶ Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, 357; J. D. W. Watts, "Yahweh Malak Psalms" *Theologische Zeitschrift* 21 (1965): 341-348; H. J. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms* (trans. Keith Crim; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 90-91; W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 427. Westermann in his Isaiah commentary mentions that he believes Second Isaiah is dependent on the psalms; C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1969), 8.

Deutero-Isaiah also provides the reader a lyrical presentation of an exilic people searching for refuge. They find refuge in a new Exodus. Thematic (and even lexical) connections should therefore not be too surprising.

Psalms 96-98 demonstrate several lexical and thematic connections to the psalms around them. Tate suggests that these psalms (including Ps 99) contain all five⁷⁷ of Watts' characteristics of "kingship."⁷⁸ Howard's analytical examination of the psalms suggests that their shared lexemes and thematic emphasis imply that they were redacted together purposely.⁷⁹

Coming to these psalms, the reader discovers a change in focus. In Ps 90 God's servants expressed a desperate desire to see God's פלא (90:16). In Ps 96:3, God's נפלאות are proclaimed among the nations. In Ps 96 and Ps 98, YHWH's נפלאות have inspired a "new song." That

⁷⁷ 1) Concern with all the earth, all peoples or all nations; 2) References to other gods; 3) Signs of exaltation and kingship; 4) Characteristic acts of Yahweh: making, establishing, sitting, judgment, etc. 5) Expressions of the attitude to praise before the heavenly king; Watts, "Yahweh Malak Psalms," 343.

⁷⁸ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 509.

⁷⁹ Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 176-180.

“new song” might be the psalm itself.⁸⁰ The new song might be an “ever new song,” celebrating the “ever newness” of YHWH.⁸¹ The psalm could be an eschatological reflection that “transcends time and space.”⁸² Though each of these interpretations would produce a fitting meaning for the text, in the context of Book IV, it might be that the “new song” corresponds to the “new thing” which YHWH does for Israel in Isa 43:18-19. The reader has read the cry of desperation from the people throughout Book IV. The reality of the exile has been felt just below the surface of the reading. Now, Isaiah’s new thing has been put into song, and YHWH’s deliverance will be seen by חסידיו and heard in Zion (Ps 97:8). Psalm 96:10 states that YHWH “vindicates peoples” (ידין עמים) with equity. This phrase remembers Deut 32:36 where Moses proclaims that YHWH will ידין עמו when their might and strength have left them. In the midst of this celebration of YHWH’s kingship, there is a remembrance of Moses’ final words to the people.

⁸⁰ Dahood, *Psalms II* 51-100, 357.

⁸¹ Anderson, *The Psalms II*, 682.

⁸² Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 264.

How has this transformation come about? In Ps 89:14, the psalmist acknowledged that the qualities of God's throne included צדק, משפט, חסד, and אמת. Despite that acknowledgement, the psalmist in Ps 89 is still desperate to answer the question of the rule of David's throne. In Ps 96 following the Mosaic reorientation at the beginning of Book IV, the reader now sees that the psalmist explicitly acknowledges that YHWH is king (96:10) and YHWH will exhibit direct rule over all the nations in צדק and אמת (96:13).

Psalm 97 continues that concern and provides further connections to Ps 89:14.⁸³ In Ps 97:8, the psalmist proclaims that Zion rejoices because of YHWH's משפט. The psalm makes clear that חסידיו ("YHWH's covenant people") can know that YHWH guards their lives. Within these psalms, the confession of God as king comes without reservation. The psalmist no longer asks of God, "Where is your חסד?" (Ps 89: 50). In fact, Zion will hear and be glad, and towns of Judah will rejoice (Ps 97:8). No longer is the fact that YHWH "repudiated the covenant" (Ps 89:40) with David and "shattered all his strongholds" (Ps 89:41) a source of despair and questioning.

⁸³ Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, 361.

Longman believes that Ps 98 is a Divine Warrior psalm which celebrates the return of YHWH after waging a victorious holy war.⁸⁴ He identifies Pss 96-98 (among others) as fitting the general characteristics of victory song. He also connects Exodus 15 as an analogous victory song.⁸⁵ Tate also notes the Divine Warrior language and connects the psalm to Deut 33:2-5, 26-29 and other hymns of triumph.⁸⁶ Psalm 98 also draws on the thematic element of the “arm of YHWH” (98:1). Tate connects this thematic element with Exod 15:6, 12, and 16 explicitly and also Deut 33:2. Even when making statements about YHWH, the psalmist uses allusions and lexical phrases associated with speeches of Moses.

Psalm 99

Psalm 99 brings the reader to another shift in focus. While Pss 96-98 focused attention on God as ruler over all the earth, Ps 99 has the

⁸⁴ Tremper Longman, “Psalm 98: A Divine Warrior Victory Song,” JETS (1984): 267-274.

⁸⁵ Longman, “Psalm 98,” 274.

⁸⁶ Tate references Judg 5:4-5; Pss 46:7; 68:8-9; 77:17-20; 114:3-6; Nah 1:2-8; Hab 3:3-15; Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 524.

scope of the activity and power of God enthroned in Jerusalem.⁸⁷

“To be sure, the God-King Yahweh—in keeping with the Jerusalem traditions—is ‘God Most High’ and king of the world . . . But above all, he is the covenant God who is favorable to his people with ‘justice and righteousness.’”⁸⁸

Again, the references to Moses and Torah have moved from the subtle to the obvious. Scholars have noted that the portrayal of the theophany in the psalm exhibits the features of the divine epiphany at Sinai.⁸⁹ Kraus also suggests that the traditions of God’s law and the covenant are projected into the psalm with אלהינו as the name of the God of the covenant in Ps 99:5, 9 strengthening the imagery.⁹⁰

Following the re-orientation of the psalmist through Pss 96-98, Ps 99 celebrates Moses, who was answered when he “cried to the YHWH.” It is also significant that Moses, Aaron and Samuel followed YHWH’s

⁸⁷ Kraus *Psalms 60-150*, 269.

⁸⁸ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 271.

⁸⁹ Weiser, *The Psalms*, 641; H. Schmidt, “Jahwe und die Kulttraditionen von Jerusalem,” *ZAW* 67 (1955), 168-197.

⁹⁰ Kraus *Psalms 60-150*, 269.

עֲדָה (cp. 93:5). Book IV has brought the reader on an interesting journey. Moses cries out to YHWH in Ps 90. YHWH directly answers in Ps 91. Ps 93 reminds the reader that YHWH's decrees are sure. After facing destruction in Ps 94, the psalmist offers a prophetic warning not to test God in Ps 95. Pss 96-98 have celebrated YHWH's kingship, and now Ps 99 reminds the reader that the decrees of YHWH are intimately connected with YHWH's answer. YHWH answered Moses, Aaron and Samuel in Ps 99:6 and Ps 99:8. YHWH's answers surround his decrees and statutes in Ps 99:7.

The reader may be puzzled by the occurrence of Samuel in Ps 99. It should not surprise the reader of Book IV that verses 6-7 link Yahweh's kingship to the Torah tradition of Moses and Aaron, with reference to the wilderness sojourn and to the Sinai commandments.⁹¹ This association has been seen from the beginning of Book IV. Samuel represents a new character in this story. What does his appearance suggest to the reader?

⁹¹ Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 149.

Samuel could occur here to offer sanction to the Davidic monarchy. It was Samuel who began the line of David by anointing David.⁹² The reader will soon discover that Ps 101 is a “psalm of David.” Again, Samuel precedes David in the story. This occurrence might undermine the thesis that Book IV emphasizes Moses instead of the Davidic monarchy. Samuel’s appearance prepares the reader for David’s appearance in the story. Indeed, Zenger suggests that the end of Book IV (which is fast approaching) has a Davidic influence, in the way that the beginning of the book had a Mosaic influence.⁹³ It is important to note that YHWH’s trouble was not with David (who received the promise of an everlasting line); rather, it was with those in David’s line who failed to behave like David. Psalm 89 remembers God’s promise to David and YHWH’s subsequent rejection of his servant (not mentioned as “David”).

The mention of Samuel (and later David), however, need not be a veneration of the Davidic covenant. The reader will soon wrestle with

⁹² I Sam 16:13.

⁹³ Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),” 165-168.

that in Pss 101-103. The reference to Samuel could be read as remembering Samuel as the one who insisted on the kingship of Yahweh. Samuel felt the people needed to resist all human kings,⁹⁴ whom he regarded as “pretenders and as threats to and diminishment of the kingship of Yahweh.”⁹⁵

Psalms 100

Psalms 100 shares a number of similarities with Ps 95. In fact, the teaching is remarkably similar except for the absence of the prophetic warning.⁹⁶ Remembering the Deuteronomic quality of Ps 95, the reader should not be surprised by the strong Deuteronomic associations in Ps 100. First, the reader encounters an expression which Kraus considers to be specifically Deuteronomic,⁹⁷ כִּי יְהוָה הוּא אֱלֹהִים (“that YHWH, he is God!”).⁹⁸ Mays comments that the use of the term parallels its use in

⁹⁴ Cf. 1 Sam 8:7; 12:15, 25.

⁹⁵ Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 149

⁹⁶ Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 431.

⁹⁷ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 274.

⁹⁸ Cf. Deut 4:35, 39.

Deuteronomic texts.⁹⁹ Like Ps 95, there is an emphasis on YHWH as maker and shepherd which parallels Deut 32.¹⁰⁰ What is absent from Ps 95, however, is important in the reading of Ps 100. "Throughout Ps 95 . . . there is no mention of the steadfast love (חסד) of YHWH, or of his faithfulness (אמונה). And certainly there is no mention that these qualities will carry on 'forever' or from 'generation to generation.'" ¹⁰¹

Form-critically, there is a widespread consensus that Ps 100 is the earlier of the two psalms.¹⁰² Given that interpretive predisposition and the conviction that Ps 95 is an exilic composition, the reading of the two psalms provides an interesting insight into the life of exilic Israel.

When Ps 95 and Ps 100 are placed side by side, one cannot help but notice a conspicuous absence of any reference to 100:5. I would contend that the psalmist intentionally omitted any reference to 100:5 . . . Because of the exile and the theological conundrum which it produced, the psalmist felt he could no longer make such absolute statements as the psalmist in Ps 100 once did. The community could

⁹⁹ Cf. Deut 4:39; 7:9; James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns*, 75.

¹⁰⁰ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 106.

¹⁰¹ Tucker, "Psalm 95," 537.

¹⁰² William M. Schniedewind, "'Are We His People or Not?' Biblical Interpretation During Crisis," *Biblica* 76 (1995): 540-550; Tucker, "Psalm 95," 537.

no longer see itself as immune to the threats of foreign powers and domination simply because 'the Lord is good'.¹⁰³

It may be true that Ps 95 was composed chronologically later than Ps 100. What is certain is that Ps 100 was redacted at a position later in the Psalter than Ps 95. The psalmist might have felt it was impossible to express simple faith in YHWH after enduring the myriad difficulties of exile. The Psalter, however, expresses that faith. Something significant has happened in the Psalter since Ps 95. YHWH has truly "become king." As already discussed, the translation of the phrase יהוה מלך has been a subject of debate since Mowinckel. Mowinckel preferred the translation "YHWH has become king," connecting it to the similar verbal construction in the Absalom passage in 2 Kings 15:10 (though the word order is different) and emphasizing its function in a New Year celebration.¹⁰⁴ Mowinckel explicitly says that this kingship is not a lasting condition for the people.¹⁰⁵ To say, "YHWH has become king," however, implies to some that YHWH might *not* be king at some point.

¹⁰³ Tucker, "Psalm 95," 537.

¹⁰⁴ Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien*, 6-8; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 115.

¹⁰⁵ Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 107.

The OT never allows for any attack of that nature on YHWH's throne.¹⁰⁶ For that reason, no major biblical translation favors Mowinckel's translation.¹⁰⁷ Traditionally, the passage has been translated, "Yahweh reigns!"

It is not necessary, however, to criticize Mowinckel too strongly. It is possible to read יהוה מלך as "Yahweh has just become king," and not compromise YHWH's sovereignty. That reading may not say as much about the worshipped as it does the worshipper. Mowinckel believes that these psalms function in cult, and in the cult "past, present, and future are welded into one."¹⁰⁸ For the reader to understand that "YHWH has become king" might be "not chronological affirmation but liturgical experience."¹⁰⁹ Mowinckel and Brueggemann use Christian hymns as an illustration of their point. At Christmas, the Orthodox

¹⁰⁶ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 234.

¹⁰⁷ Howard, *The Struction of Psalms 93-100*, 40.

¹⁰⁸ Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 113.

¹⁰⁹ Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 144

Church sings, "Our Saviour has been born today."¹¹⁰ At Easter, many Christians sing, "Christ the Lord is Risen Today."¹¹¹

The reader may see the psalmist making a personal statement throughout the enthronement psalms. Perhaps, "YHWH reigns" in Ps 93, but when the reader gets to Ps 100, "YHWH has become king" to the psalmist. After all, while approaching Ps 100, the reader has seen the focus of the Psalter narrow. Psalms 96-98 are clearly universalistic in their focus. YHWH is sovereign over all the nations and all creation. In Ps 99, however, the focus seems more exclusively on Israel. YHWH has "executed justice and righteousness in Jacob" (Ps 99:4). YHWH is great in Zion, and the worship of God is at "his holy mountain" (Ps 99:2, 9). Perhaps, this narrowing is not an act of ethnocentrism, but an act of refocusing.

Conclusion

Psalms 93-100 provide the reader a complex journey of faith. What has happened in between Psalms 93 and 100 is significant. The reader

¹¹⁰ Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 113.

¹¹¹ Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 144.

finds the Psalter in a state of disillusionment and disorientation at the end of Ps 89. Psalm 90 provides the means of the reorientation, Torah and Moses. Psalms 91-92 celebrate the benefits of the reorientation. Psalms 93-100 move the reader to the consequences of the reorientation: YHWH reigns. The acceptance of human kings is no longer taken for granted. As the reader comes to Book IV, מֶלֶךְ (“king”) could refer to YHWH or human royalty. After Ps 93, YHWH reigns, and the “kings of the earth” are struck down by YHWH.¹¹²

Throughout Pss 93-100, the reader has found a recurring emphasis on Moses and the Torah. Along with the numerous lexical and thematic allusions to Exodus and Deuteronomy, the psalms contain a number of explicit commands. Psalm 93:5 says “Your decrees are very sure.” Psalm 94:12 reminds the reader that “Happy are those . . . whom you [i.e., YHWH] teach out of your Torah.” Psalm 95 references a people who did not regard YHWH’s “ways” (Ps 95:10). Psalms 96-98 remind the reader of YHWH’s role as judge (Pss 96:10, 13; 97:8; 98:9); something that

¹¹² E.g., Pss 110:5; 135:10; 136:17-18. The exceptions would be Ps 144:10 where YHWH provides salvation to the king (again demonstrating YHWH’s position), and Ps 148:11 where the “kings of the earth” are asked to praise YHWH.

the psalmist cried out for in Ps 94:2). In Ps 99, Moses and Aaron are paragons of service because they followed YHWH's decrees (Ps 99:7). Psalm 100 shows a psalmist who echoes the goal which comes from the mouth of Moses in the Deut 7:9 by proclaiming "Know that YHWH, he is God."

When the reader comes to the end of Ps 100 and finds the psalmist able to make confession of faith which was lacking in the similar Ps 95, the reader asks "why?" The answer is simple. YHWH may have always reigned. YHWH may have always ruled with "righteousness" and "faithfulness." YHWH may have always ruled over creation. YHWH may have always been sovereign over all nations. For the psalmist, however, YHWH has just now become king, and for the first time in Book IV, the psalmist is able to say that "YHWH is good" (Ps 100:5).

CHAPTER FOUR

David's Deference to Moses (Psalms 101-103)

"NOBODY expects the Spanish Inquisition! Our chief weapon is surprise . . . surprise and fear . . . fear and surprise. . . . Our two weapons are fear and surprise . . . and ruthless efficiency. . . . Our three weapons are fear, surprise, and ruthless efficiency . . . and an almost fanatical devotion to the Pope. . . . Our four . . . no . . . Amongst our weapons. . . . Amongst our weaponry . . . are such elements as fear, surprise. . . . I'll come in again."

"The Spanish Inquisition Skit," Monty Python

"I'll Come in Again"

In the "Spanish Inquisition" skit performed by Monty Python, Cardinal Ximenez has a recurring problem.¹ The scene begins in a normal way. The troupe of cardinals enters the scene to ominous music, and they begin to attempt to terrorize the other members of the scene. As Cardinal Ximenez recites his intimidating rhetoric, however, he continues to make mistakes in his dialogue which need fixing. Each time he corrects the mistakes of the previous recitation, he goes on to make

¹ Graham Chapman, Eric Idle, Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones, *The Complete Monty Python's Flying Circus: All the Words, Volume 1* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1989), 192ff.

new mistakes. Ultimately, the problems become insurmountable and the troupe of cardinals is forced to “come in again.”

As the reader comes to Ps 101, it seems the Psalter has “come in again.” The reader is revisited by themes found prior to and earlier in Book IV. Only now, the reader can note theological adjustments that have taken place in the interim. Just as Cardinal Ximenez’s second entrance reflected what was learned from the first entrance; so also, this new telling of the story reflects what the story of the Psalter “has learned” coming through Book IV.

The reader has encountered this “retelling” previously in the Psalter. YHWH’s choice of David as king over Israel is “retold” in Ps 73 and Ps 89. In Ps 73, the choice of David is discussed in the context of the Exodus and wandering stories. In Ps 89, the choice of David is discussed in the context of creation.² When the reader comes to Ps 101, the reader finds a retelling of the story in light of the “story” of the Psalter to this point. This retelling, however, has a different narrator. For the first time in Book IV, David himself has something to say.

² Melody D. Knowles, “The Flexible Rhetoric of Retelling: The Choice of David in the Texts of the Psalms” *CBQ* 67 (2005): 236-249.

Psalm 101 begins a new section for the reader. Psalms 101-103 have a number of characteristics that distinguish them from the immediately preceding psalms. Psalms 101-103 have superscriptions, compared to the numerous “untitled” psalms in 93-100.³ As previously demonstrated, Pss 93-100 share significant lexemic connections with Pss 90-92. In contrast, though there are some lexemic connections, Pss 101-103 do not connect as strongly lexically with Pss 93-100. These psalms, however, do demonstrate strong lexical and thematic connections to the end of Book III and the beginning of Book IV.

Though lacking in significant lexical connections, the psalms do show thematic connections to Pss 93-100. Zenger remarks that Pss 101 and 102 fit the perspective established in Pss 93-100.⁴ Howard believes that Ps 100, “though the last in the 93-100 section, also looks forward to the following section by virtue of its superscription: the next three

³ Six of the eight psalms lack a superscription: Pss 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, and 99. Additionally, neither of the “titled” psalms makes a reference to an individual.

⁴ Erich Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),” in *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms*, (ed. Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger; trans. Everett R. Kalin; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000): 184.

psalms all bear one as well.”⁵ Creach reads Pss 93-103 as a collection of material intended to emphasize the foolishness of trusting in anything other than YHWH for refuge.⁶ While Pss 90-100 have a strong Mosaic voice emphasizing Sinai Covenant and Torah, Pss 101-103 have a strong Davidic voice remembering Moses, Sinai Covenant and Torah. This Mosaic remembrance ultimately crescendos to a strong Mosaic voice again at the end of Book IV.

Psalm 101: A Psalm of David

Coming to Ps 101, the reader is drawn to the subtle connections which help continue the story. Both Ps 100 and Ps 101 have the superscription מִזְמוֹר. The psalms also use anadiplosis around the word חֶסֶד. It is a simple matter, again, for the reader to continue to read these psalms, not as individual compositions, but as part of an overall story of the Psalter. As the reader comes to Ps 101, however, the

⁵ David Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 181.

⁶ Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (JSOT Supplement Series 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 99.

story is being told with a different voice. For the first time in Book IV and for the first time since Ps 86, David has something to say.

Determining the form critical type of Ps 101 is apparently not a difficult matter. Psalm 101 is a royal psalm. On that point, the majority of interpreters agree with near unanimity.⁷ Determining how this royal psalm should be read is somewhat more problematic.

The majority of interpreters read Ps 101 as a royal vow in which King David (often read as representing the entire Davidic monarchy) promises to be of noble character. The psalm is believed to have a sapiential character and has been read as a description of ideal royal behavior.⁸ Westermann reads the psalm analogous to Ps 1. In this case,

⁷ Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (trans. James D. Nogalski; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 99, 102; Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, Word Biblical Commentary 21, ed. John D. W. Watts (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1983), 3; Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen; Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 258; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1993), 277; Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1962), 648.

⁸ Helen Ann Kenik, "Code of Conduct for a King: Psalm 101," *JBL* 95 (1976): 391; Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 181; W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms: Translated with Text-Critical and Exegetical Notes* (London: S. P. C. K., 1962), 431.

Ps 101 uses royal language to establish the way of the wicked and the way of the righteous.⁹ Following that interpretation, the psalm is a manual of instruction or proverb for the king.

Delitzsch emphasizes the ideal moral character of the king in the psalm and reads it as “an echo out of the heart of David” and directly related to Ps 99:4.¹⁰ In fact, Delitzsch calls that verse the “motto” of Ps 101. Oesterley also reads this psalm as an expression of proper royal behavior and calls the psalm an “idealistic conception of kingship.”¹¹ He comes to this conclusion because “a despotic Oriental king would not have thought it necessary to ingratiate himself among his subjects by making a declaration of this kind.”¹² Howard suggests that this psalm describes the way the kings should walk as they lead the people.¹³

⁹ Claus Westermann, *The Living Psalms* (trans. J. R. Porter; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 57.

¹⁰ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (3; Trans. David Eaton; London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1889), 108.

¹¹ Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 431.

¹² Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 431.

¹³ Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 181.

Mowinckel sees this psalm as corresponding to Ps 72 (and analogous to Ps 2).¹⁴ Psalm 101 is the counterpart to the intercession for the king in Ps 72. “The king promises to pay all this ‘righteousness’ and ‘goodwill’ on the part of Yahweh by ruling the ‘house’ of Israel and the ‘city of Yahweh’ in conformity with them.”¹⁵ Therefore, for Mowinckel, the reader has returned to Ps 72 where the promise of the Davidic covenant is transferred to David’s progeny. In Ps 72, the king guarantees his moral character. In Ps 101, in a covenant renewal ceremony for the Davidic covenant, the king again guarantees his moral character.

Some scholars interpret the psalm as a vow which may have been used for an installation ceremony for the king, analogous to similar ancient Near Eastern ceremonies.¹⁶ In this reading, the assertions of innocence throughout the psalm are read as a promise for the future.

¹⁴ Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship* (I; Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1967), 67.

¹⁵ Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, I, 67.

¹⁶ A. A. Anderson, *Psalms II* (London: Oliphant, 1972), 700; Artur Weiser, *The Psalms*, 648-649; L. Dürr, “Ursprung und Ausbau der israelitisch-jüdischen Heilserwartung” *ZAW* (1925): 77; James Luther Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 322.

Kraus also relates the statements of innocence as a royal vow to remain blameless in the leadership of the people.¹⁷ Westermann understands the origin of this psalm relating to the king's coronation.¹⁸ Mays suggests that this vow compels the king to go beyond the legal requirements of the position and to develop a character and practice a life of "theological morality."¹⁹

Kenik also suggests that this psalm fits well within the context of the royal inauguration. In her opinion the style is suited to that type of recitation.²⁰

The king declares what is required of the royal leader (vv 2-3a).

The king declares what he must reject to live faithfully (vv 3b-5).

The king declares what attitude the people must have to be in covenant with YHWH (vv 6-7).

This promise in a ritual situation would bond the king and people in a "peaceful, harmonious, and wholesome experience."²¹

¹⁷ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 277.

¹⁸ Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, 57.

¹⁹ Mays, *Psalms*, 322.

²⁰ Kenik, "Code of Conduct for a King: Psalm 101," 398.

²¹ Kenik, "Code of Conduct for a King: Psalm 101," 398.

The notion of the psalm as royal vow or as a description of appropriate royal character, however, is made difficult by the question asked in Ps 101:2, **מתי תבוא אלי** (“When will you come to me?”). Because of the unique quality of the phrase compared to the rest of the psalm, many scholars emend the text to smooth the reading.²² Typically, **מת** (“when”) is changed to **אמת** (“truth”), which leads to the reading, “Truth will come to me.”²³

Lacking manuscript support for an emendation, however, some scholars have suggested readings for the text as it stands. Booij suggests that the psalmist is craving a prophetic vision from YHWH analogous to Solomon’s vision of YHWH at Gibeon in 1 Kgs 3.²⁴ “Yahweh’s coming” will be in the form of a pillar of cloud or dream by night. Dahood makes a brief comment that the phrase might be referring to a “vision or some palpable form of spiritual comfort.”²⁵ Delitzsch interprets v 2 as

²² Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1926), 432-434; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 648-649; Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 277.

²³ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 2.

²⁴ Thijs Booij, “Psalm 101:2 – ‘When Wilt Thou Come to Me?’” *VT* 38 (1988): 458-462.

²⁵ Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III:101-150*. (The Anchor Bible 17A; ed. William F. Albright; Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1968), 2.

reference to 2 Samuel 6:7-11, and David's question of when the Ark will come to him.²⁶ Eaton reads Ps 101:2 as representing a king vicariously suffering for his people.²⁷ This reading comes from Eaton's belief that part of the installation ceremony for a new king contained a time of ritual ordeal and penitential humiliation. Eaton notes analogous practices in other ancient Near Eastern cultures which allow him to read Ps 101 as a vow of moral innocence and include Ps 101:2 without emendation.²⁸

Kselman has provided an interesting interpretation of the psalm suggesting that only Ps 101:1-5 represents the voice of the king. In his reading, Ps 101:6-7 (and likely v 8) represent the voice of God.²⁹ YHWH responds to the king's promise through a divine oracle. Kselman relates Ps 101 to Ps 32 which contains a divine oracle in vv 8-9. This interpretation makes the question asked in Ps 101:2 easy to understand.

²⁶ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 108.

²⁷ John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (SBT; Second Series 32; Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1976), 80.

²⁸ Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 123.

²⁹ John S. Kselman, "Psalm 101: Royal Confession and Divine Oracle," *JSOT* 33 (1985): 45-62.

The psalmist asks, *מתי תבוא אלי* ("When will you come to me?"). Kselman answers that YHWH comes to the psalmist at the end of the psalm.

Kaiser also rejects the emended reading, and he suggests that this psalm should be read as a royal lament on the basis of the question in 101:2 and the *qinah* meter, which is popular in laments.³⁰ Gunkel and Mowinckel both believe that this psalm contains elements of lament.³¹ Dahood's analysis overall supports Kaiser, and he also believes this psalm should be read as a lament.³² Dahood believes the meter of the psalm and the LXX translation warrant reading this psalm as a lament. Though the psalm's imperfect verbs are typically translated as denoting future action, throughout his psalm commentaries, Dahood argues that imperfect verbs can be translated as denoting past action in poetry. He,

³⁰ Otto Kaiser, "Erwägungen zu Psalm 101" ZAW 74 (1962): 195-205.

³¹ Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 423-426; Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship I*, 65-67.

³² Dahood, *Psalms III:101-150*, 2.

therefore, feels vindicated when the LXX translation of Ps 101 translates the imperfect verb forms of the psalm as referring to past action.³³

Kaiser suggests the interrogative use of מַתִּי in Ps 101:2 is a literary device that signals lament. It associates this psalm directly with the lament passages of Pss 42:3 [2] and 119:82, 84. Kaiser also notes that the more common עַד־מַתִּי “how long” occurs in 6:4 (3), 74:10, 80:5 (4), 90:13 (12) and 94:3.³⁴ It is noteworthy to the reader that this expression has occurred twice (in two laments) in Book IV. This lexical connection might predispose the reader to experience Ps 101 as a lament since it is an easy interpretive move for the reader canonically.

The hymnic introduction to the psalm does not discourage Kaiser in the interpretation as lament. In fact, Kaiser suggests that the hymnic introduction of Ps 101 is analogous to the hymnic introductions of Pss 89 and 144.³⁵ Compare:

³³ Dahood firmly argues that this is typical of the poetic use of the imperfect verb; Dahood, *Psalms III 101-150*, 2.

³⁴ Kaiser, “Erwägungen in Ps 101,” 199.

³⁵ Kaiser, “Erwägungen in Ps 101,” 200-201.

Psalm 89:2a [1a]

חסדי יהוה עולם אשירה

Psalm 101:1

חסד־ומשפט אשירה
לך יהוה אזמרה

Kaiser believes all this evidence leads one to conclude, “ . . . als daß Ps 101 durchgehend als ein Klagelied angesprochen werden muß: Der hymnischen Einleitung folgt der kurze Klageruf.”³⁶ He reads the king in Ps 101 as expecting YHWH to honor the alliance between the kingship and the deity, recognizing that YHWH intervenes on behalf of those in need: citing Pss 94:1; 96:13; 98:9, and 50:2. While Kaiser reads Ps 101 as directly related to Ps 89 in *Sitz im Leben* and in interpretation,³⁷ his reading concedes that this “lament” psalm contains an important theological point emphasized in the center of Book IV, YHWH’s deliverance of the righteous. Based on Kaiser’s research the reader envisions the psalmist attempting to revisit the problems of Ps 89 in light of the promises of Pss 94, 96, and 98.

If Ps 101 is a lament, analogous to Ps 89, what is the implication for the reader as to the story of the Psalter? The reader finds the Psalter

³⁶ Kaiser, “Erwägungen in Ps 101,” 201.

³⁷ Kaiser, “Erwägungen in Ps 101,” 203.

is singing the story again. Psalm 101 brings the reader back to Ps 89. In this case, it is not Moses who laments the condition of Israel, but David. Some interpreters believe that Ps 101 signals a “new” David in the Psalter.³⁸ This new David speaks with the authority analogous to Moses in Ps 90. With the emphasis on the remembrance of Moses and Torah that will follow, the reader might not envision a “new” David, but a David who was representative of YHWH’s ideal of human kingship.

In a lament reading of Ps 101, David sings of YHWH’s justice and faithfulness (vv 1-2a), then laments when YHWH will come to Israel (v 2b). David then proclaims his behavior has been above reproach in vv 3-5 (following Dahood). Then following Kselman and analogous to Ps 91, YHWH answers, “I will look with favor on . . . whoever follows the way of the blameless.” (Ps 101:6-7). If YHWH is speaking in vv 6-7, then the “house” mentioned in v 7 is YHWH’s house where only the righteous may dwell (Ps 92). The reader should note that Ps 101:6-7 (if read from the mouth of YHWH) does not provide an unconditional blessing of the king or by extension the Davidic Covenant, but an unconditional

³⁸ Gunild Brunert, *Psalm 102 im Kontext des vierten Psalmenbuchs* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1996); Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),” 183-184.

blessing of the righteous. This reading would resonate well with YHWH's speech at the end of Ps 91.

Further, with the lexical association and the thematic connections, it is also possible the reader is reminded of the first part of Ps 89 where the promises of the Davidic covenant are celebrated. When the reader comes to Ps 101, it is a simple matter to read David's promises that the office of kingship will conduct itself as YHWH would want. The reader could then interpret vv 6-7 as the voice of the king or the voice of YHWH. If Ps 101:6-7 are the voice of YHWH in a vow of noble character, then the function of the psalm is prophetic. The psalmist promises to follow YHWH, and YHWH warns that only those who fulfill that promise are in YHWH's good favor.

In either reading of Ps 101, the reader finds important connections to the end of Book III and the beginning of Book IV. Is Ps 101 a lament or vow? If the reader can allow both possible meanings to stand in tension, the continued reading of the story of the Psalter will provide a context for meaning.

Psalm 102: Lament of Loss

Much like Ps 101, the *Gattung* of Ps 102 is not difficult to determine. It is a lament. This psalm even provides identification of its type in its superscription.³⁹ The determination of what type of lament and how it should be interpreted is somewhat more complicated. While interpreters like Mays are impressed with the “compositional unity”⁴⁰ of the psalm, interpreters like Westermann believe the psalm reveals several editorial expansions.⁴¹

Most readers notice two specific thematic sections within the psalm. The first is the lament which is found in vv 2-12 [1-11] and vv 24-25 (23-24). The second is the celebration of the power (using royal imagery) of YHWH in vv 13-23 (12-22) and vv 26-29 (25-28). Most interpreters suggest the psalmist is purposely contrasting the transience of humanity with the enduring character of YHWH.⁴² Mays suggests that

³⁹ Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, 111.

⁴⁰ Mays, *Psalms*, 323; Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 13.

⁴¹ Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, 110; Hans Schmidt, *Die Psalmen*, (Tübingen, Mohr, 1934), 184; Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien* (I; Amsterdam : Verlag P. Schippers, 1961), 166.

⁴² Franz Sedlmeier, “Zusammengesetzte Nominalsätze und Ihre Leistung für Psalm CII” *VT* 45 (1995): 249-250; Robert Culley, “Psalm 102: A Complaint with a Difference,” *Semeia* 62 (1993): 28-29; Dahood,

the emphasis of that point in the psalm may bring some relief for the distress of the psalmist.⁴³

The suffering of the individual is described with vivid imagery in this psalm. The psalmist has suffered failing health. The days are passing away like smoke, and the psalmist's bones are wasting away with fever (v 2 [1]). In fact, the psalmist seems ready to die from exhaustion and consumption.⁴⁴ The cause of the suffering of the psalmist is not explicitly determined. While the psalmist does have "enemies" (v 9 [8]), no specific blame is attributed to them, and unlike other psalms, no divine punishment is called down upon the enemies.⁴⁵

While many consider this psalm a psalm of penitence,⁴⁶ in truth, there is never an explicit mention of the specific cause of the psalmist's misery. The only individual specifically given credit for the psalmist's

Psalms III: 101-150, 10; Mays, *Psalms*, 323; Gerald Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico: Scholar's Press, 1985), 218.

⁴³ Mays, *Psalms*, 323.

⁴⁴ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 285.

⁴⁵ Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 437.

⁴⁶ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 287; Eaton, *Kingship in the Psalms*, 80-81; Additionally, this psalm is one of the church's seven penitential psalms (Pss. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143).

suffering is YHWH. It is YHWH who has cast the psalmist aside in divine anger (v 11). YHWH has broken the psalmist's strength and shortened his or her days (v 24). One possible reading, therefore, finds the psalmist complaining unto YHWH for the inappropriate delay in the psalmist's deliverance.⁴⁷ The hymnic sections represent the psalmist's establishing the case for deliverance. YHWH lifts up the innocent; therefore, YHWH should deliver the psalmist.

One of the difficulties the reader encounters is the seeming disjunction between the psalmist's individual concerns in vv 1-12 and the psalmist's communal concerns in vv 13-23. Mowinckel believes the psalm originally was a shorter individual lament which was expanded in exile to meet the needs of the community.⁴⁸ Delitzsh, however, feels it is important that the reader maintain the personal nature of the psalm.⁴⁹ Kraus agrees that the attempts to decipher the "composite" psalm are arbitrary and ultimately lead to no progress.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ W. H. Bellinger, "Psalm 102: Poetry and Theology," (Paper presented at the Regional Meeting of the Southwest Commission on Religious Studies, Irving, Texas, 12 March 2005), 6-7.

⁴⁸ Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien* I, 166.

⁴⁹ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 112.

⁵⁰ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 283.

It is possible that for the psalmist the affliction of the עני will only be remedied in the restoration of Zion, and this psalmist is so completely a servant of YHWH that it is inconceivable that deliverance could come apart from that restoration.⁵¹ It is also possible that the עני in this psalm could be the personification of the exiled people. Here, as is found in Lamentations 3 and Isaiah 40-66, the psalmist is the nation singing unto YHWH. The individual concerns are in actuality communal concerns.⁵² It is also possible that the psalmist's identity is one which might be thought of in a communal sense, in other words, a king.

What does the reader know of this psalmist? While the superscription identifies the anonymous singer of this psalm simply as an עני ("afflicted, poor one"), Zenger favors reading Ps 102 as "Davidic," making Ps 102 a royal lament. The similarity between the superscription in Ps 102 and the Davidic psalm, Ps 142:2-3 [3-4] along with its canonical position between two Davidic psalms suggests to Zenger that Ps 102 is also to be read as a Davidic psalm.⁵³ Zenger reads Pss 101 and 102 as a

⁵¹ Mays, *Psalms*, 325-326.

⁵² Mays, *Psalms*, 326.

⁵³ Along with the concern for Jerusalem in Pss 101:8 and 102:13,14, 16, 21 [14, 15, 17, 22]; Zenger, "The God of Israel's Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106)," 183-184.

contrast in kingship. In Ps 101 the reader found a royal defender. The king will devote himself to Torah.⁵⁴ The king will preserve the city of YHWH by destroying all evildoers. In Ps 102, the reader then finds the royal defender who is contrasted with expectations. In Ps 102, the royal defender is not a warrior, but a humble supplicant who bears the characteristics of the suffering servant in Deutero-Isaiah.⁵⁵

Zenger is not alone in reading a royal concern in Ps 102. Dahood recognizes several thematic concerns that suggest a royal emphasis.⁵⁶ Eaton reads Ps 102 as a royal psalm depicting a king who is vicariously suffering for his people.⁵⁷ The tension of whether this psalm should be read as an individual or communal lament is reconciled in the leader's personal representation of the nation.⁵⁸ For Eaton, this reading is what

⁵⁴ Brown notes that the "way" motif (101: 2) becomes analogous with Torah in the Psalms. William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know Press, 2002), 39.

⁵⁵ Zenger, "The God of Israel's Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106)," 184.

⁵⁶ Dahood, *Psalms III 51-100*, 10.

⁵⁷ This reading comes from Eaton's belief that part of the installation ceremony for a new king was a moment of ritual ordeal and penitential humiliation. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 80, 123.

⁵⁸ Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 80.

gives the psalm its strongest royal quality. Eaton concedes that this notion of vicarious suffering is the only characteristic to identify the psalmist as a king.⁵⁹

The most clear royal allusions in the psalm are not associated with the psalmist; they are associated with YHWH. In 102:13, YHWH “sits [enthroned] forever” (עולם תשב), reminding the reader of Ps 99:1 where YHWH is king . . . “he sits [enthroned] upon cherubim” (ישב כרובים). In Ps 94, the psalmist prayed that the judge of the earth would “rise up” (הנשא) in v 2 and asked who will “rise up” (יקום) against the wicked in v 16. The reader finds out in Ps 102:14, YHWH will “rise up” (תקום). In Ps 102:16-17, the psalmist sings of YHWH’s “glory” (כבוד). YHWH’s glory is celebrated four times in two kingship of YHWH psalms, Pss 96 and 97.⁶⁰ In Ps 102:20, YHWH is celebrated “from a holy height (מרום).” In the first of the psalms to explicitly celebrate YHWH’s kingship in Book IV, Ps 93, the psalmist remembers how YHWH is “majestic on high (מרום)” (Ps 93:4). While YHWH is not proclaimed “king” explicitly in Ps

⁵⁹ Eaton, *Kingship in the Psalms*, 80.

⁶⁰ Psa 96:3, 7-8; 97:6.

102, it is clear that the lexical associations with the kingship of YHWH psalms reveal a psalmist who does recognize YHWH's position as king.

The reader has already discovered that Ps 101 reminds one of the end of Book III. In the same way, Ps 102 demonstrates strong lexemic and thematic connections to the beginning of Book IV. Wilson demonstrates a strong connection between Ps 102 and Ps 90.⁶¹

- 1) The transient nature of humanity is emphasized (102:3, 11; cf. 90:5-6, 9-10).
- 2) The psalmist compares the transience of humanity to the eternalness of God (102:12, 24-27; cf. 90:1-2, 4).
- 3) God's wrath is poured out because of his indignation with humanity (102:9-10; cf. 90:7-8).
- 4) And yet the servants "will dwell secure" (102:28; cf. 90:16) because YHWH will relieve the distress of his people.

Additionally, the comparison of the human condition to grass (עֵשֶׂב) is only found in Book IV of the Psalter (Pss 92:8; 102:5, 12).⁶² The reader

⁶¹ Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico: Scholar's Press, 1985), 218.

⁶² Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (JSOT Supplement Series 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 98-99; Jerome F. D. Creach, "The Shape of Book Four of the Psalter and the Shape of Second Isaiah," *JSOT* 80 (1998): 69-70.

has found an ironic twist in the use the word עֵשֶׂב. In Ps 72:16, Solomon prays that the people of the cities spring up like עֵשֶׂב as a manifestation of the king's glory. In Book IV, the people's condition is like grass, both עֵשֶׂב in Ps 102 and חֲצִיר in Ps 90. Here, however, the עֵשֶׂב does not bring the king glory but is a reminder of the psalmist's limitations.

These limitations have forced the psalmist to consider himself an עֲנִי. In Deut 8:2-3, YHWH עָנָה ("afflicts") the people to test their hearts and whether they would follow YHWH's commandments and decrees. In Ps 89:22 the reader remembers that this kind of oppression would never come to David's line. Yet, the reader knows that the psalmist has cried "אֲנִי עָנִי" ("I am afflicted") in Ps 88:16. David himself uttered the same phrase in Ps 86:1. At the end of Book III the reader finds the Psalter struggling with YHWH's role in the suffering of David.

In Ps 102, again, YHWH is involved. YHWH is said to קָצַר ("shorten") the days of the psalmist. Eaton notes connections between this phrase in Ps 102:24 [23] and Ps 89:46.⁶³ In Ps 90:15, it is YHWH who עָנָה ("afflicts") the people. In 94:5, the wicked rulers, likely from

⁶³ Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 80.

David's line, עַם the people. By Ps 102:24 [23], the Psalter has returned to YHWH as the source of affliction.

Now, in Ps 102:28 [27], the psalmist confesses to YHWH, "You are He." (אַתָּה הוּא). This expression is perhaps a subtle allusion to a Deuteronomy passage which deals specifically with the problem of exile. In Deut 32:39, God proclaims to Israel, אֲנִי אֵל וְאֵין כֵּמוֹנִי.⁶⁴ This confession would help to explain the curious fact that in this lament, no punishment is called down on the enemies.⁶⁵ The reader has discovered a change has taken place. Israel seems to be taking responsibility for disobedience. It is YHWH who chastises because Israel has deserved it.

What are the implications of the canonical placement of Ps 101 and Ps 102? The answer to this question is connected with the reader's experience of Ps 101. If Ps 101 is a vow expressing the king's holy moral character and Ps 102 is read as a communal lament, their canonical position could establish a reading that would remind the reader that even good King David, one who displayed the characteristics of king that YHWH wanted, could not stave off the wrath of God against the

⁶⁴ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 287.

⁶⁵ W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 437.

nation. This reading would be analogous to Ezek 14:14. The holiness and attitude of David alone is not enough to cover the depravity of the people.

If Ps 101 contains a vow of future promises of innocence with a divine oracle in vv 6-8, Ps 102 moves the reader along in the story. In Ps 101, David (and by extension his progeny) promises to be worthy of the kingship which God has bestowed (Ps 101:1-5). God warns that only the righteous will associate with YHWH (Ps 101:6-8), and Psalm 102 reminds the reader of the ending of that story. The king and nation have not been righteous. The king is now עָנִי ("afflicted, poor") and the nation is now in need of YHWH's deliverance. The end of the psalm foreshadows deliverance that may take place. The lexical and thematic associations with the beginning of Book IV imply to the reader the means of that deliverance; however, Ps 103 provides an explicit connection.

If the reader follows the traditional reading and envisions Ps 101 as a vow of moral innocence and does not read Ps 101:6-7 as a divine oracle, then the Psalter has truly "come in again." The reader finds a pair of psalms, Pss 101 and 102, whose canonical shape mirrors the overall shape of another pair of psalms, Pss 89 and 90. As already noted, Ps 101 begins with a hymnic introduction analogous to Ps 89. Psalm 101

celebrates the qualities of the Davidic kingship. Psalm 89:1-37 also celebrates the qualities of Davidic kingship. Accepting the “royal” quality of Ps 102, Ps 102:1-12 reflects the lament of the king in which the king laments the taunts of the king’s enemies. Psalm 89:38-51 also reflects a lament for Davidic kingship with Ps 89:50-51 specifically lamenting the taunts that are directed at David; however, a change has occurred in the story from Ps 89. In Ps 89:50-51, the psalmist equates the enemies of the king with the enemies of YHWH. In Ps 102, the psalmist recognizes that may not be the case, with the psalmist simply calling those enemies, “my enemies” (Ps 102:9). Additionally, Psalm 102:25, “I say, ‘My God! Do not take me up in the midpoint of my life” might be read as analogous to Ps 90:13, “Turn, O YHWH, How long?! Have compassion on your servants.” The connections to Ps 90 and Moses become more explicit as the reader continues to Ps 103.

Psalm 101 demonstrates a king of noble character who is an עֲנִי by Ps 102. Psalm 102 (and the reader’s previous encounters in Book III) reminds the reader that the vow of Ps 101 is never honored. The progeny of David were not faithful, and now Zion has no one to take pity on her. The tone has changed, however, from the end of Ps 89 and Ps 102. In Ps 89:51-52, the reader finds an insistent tone. YHWH must

fulfill his obligation as patron of the covenant; after all, YHWH's enemies are the psalmist's enemies. Ps 102, the reader finds a psalmist offering no demands. The second half of the psalm demonstrates a tone of quiet confidence based not on the prescriptions of covenant, but on the character of YHWH. Psalm 103 then provides the more fully expressed answer to Pss 101-102 that Ps 90 provided for Ps 89.

Psalm 103: Remember Moses

James Mays' reaction to Ps 103 is representative of many readers of the Psalter

The one hundred and third psalm is the perennial psalm of the mercy of God in every age: in liturgical contexts from Sunday service to graveside, in the prayers of the simple and sophisticated, this psalm bears forth the presence of God whose ways impel the soul to bless the Lord.⁶⁶

This hymn of praise sweeps away many of its interpreters.

Brueggemann calls it "a most exquisite psalm of praise."⁶⁷ While few scholars can agree on whether this psalm is meant for individual or

⁶⁶ James L. Mays, "Psalm 103 Mercy Joined to Loving Kindness," *Austin Seminary Bulletin: Faculty Edition* 105 (1990): 27.

⁶⁷ Walter Brueggemann, "The Psalms as Prayer," in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (ed. Patrick Miller; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 52.

communal praise or cultic or non-cultic, most like Weiser, regard this psalm as “one of the finest blossoms on the tree of biblical faith.”⁶⁸

Psalm 103 is identified by scholars as a song of thanksgiving.⁶⁹

The beginning of the psalm is dominated by first person singular suffixes and the end of the psalm is dominated by first person plural; so many of the same frustrations that existed in attempting to understand the singer in Ps 102 exist in Ps 103. Additionally, the original setting and focus of the psalm is a matter of debate. Some scholars understand a cultic origin for the psalm.⁷⁰ Eaton goes so far as to ascribe a particular cultic setting for the psalm, namely the autumn festival.⁷¹ Others read

⁶⁸ Weiser, *The Psalms*, 657.

⁶⁹ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 290; Weiser, *Psalms*, 658; Anderson, *Psalms II*, 712; Frank Crüsemann, *Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel* (WMANT, 32; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 298-304; Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 442; Joachim Becker, *Israel deutet seine Psalmen: Urform und Neuinterpretation in den Psalmen* (Stuttgart : Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1966), 74-77.

⁷⁰ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 290; Weiser, *Psalms*, 658; Anderson, *Psalms II*, 712.

⁷¹ J. H. Eaton, *Psalms : Introduction and Commentary* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1967), 246-247.

this psalm as a non-cultic appropriation of older forms which would be used in the post-exile.⁷²

Regardless of the historic use of the psalm, the thanksgiving quality of the psalm brings an expected quality to the story of the Psalter. At the end of Ps 102, the reader finds the expectation that YHWH will deliver his people. Psalm 103 functions as a transitional psalm for the reader. The psalm heightens the theme of YHWH's mercy which began to emerge in Psalm 102 as the fundamental power of YHWH's reign.⁷³

Psalm 103 demonstrates from the mouth of David what has been conspicuously absent in the two previous psalms: Mosaic Covenant. "Psalm 103 is praise for the God of the Sinai covenant."⁷⁴ Allen says that Ps 103 has a "nomistic coloring."⁷⁵ Following the mention of Moses, both

⁷² Crüsemann, *Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel*, 298-304; Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 442; Becker, *Israel deutet seine Psalmen*, 74-77.

⁷³ Zenger, "The God of Israel's Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106)," 184-185.

⁷⁴ Zenger, "The God of Israel's Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106)," 187-188.

⁷⁵ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 20.

the words פְּקֻדִּים (“precept”) and בְּרִית (“covenant”) provide a metonym for Torah.⁷⁶

The psalm demonstrates YHWH’s compassion. Typically, YHWH’s חֶסֶד is paired with the term “faithfulness” (אֱמוּנָה).⁷⁷ In Ps 103, YHWH’s חֶסֶד is connected with “compassion” (רַחֵם). רַחֵם is what YHWH would show to the people when the exile would come to an end (Deut 30:3). “Compassion is a caring that prevails over anger.”⁷⁸ The compassion foreshadowed in Ps 102:14 is now celebrated in Ps 103.

The compassion of God is likened to a father for a son. Here, the relationship is less about heritage and more about obedience.⁷⁹ The image of father and son has been used before, e.g., Deut 32:6 and Ps 89:26. In these occurrences the focus is primarily on the creation of the people⁸⁰ or the conferring of royal lineage.⁸¹ In Ps 103, the metaphor focuses on YHWH’s compassionate concern for the community as a

⁷⁶ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 20.

⁷⁷ Mays, *Psalms*, 328.

⁷⁸ Mays, *Psalms* 328.

⁷⁹ Anderson, *Psalms II*, 715.

⁸⁰ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 292.

⁸¹ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor*, 192.

whole,⁸² and certainly those who demonstrate obedience. The children of God are those who fear him (Ps 103:11).

In Ps 102, no justice is called down on any enemies. The psalmist (or nation) seems to recognize that the punishment which comes from YHWH is deserved. In Ps 103, however, "Israel need linger no longer over its sense of inadequate self. Israel's praise draws Israel well out beyond itself to lodge its life in Yahweh, whose *hesed* is not diminished or restricted by human problematics."⁸³ Sin is not denied in Ps 103; however, YHWH's mercy and compassion cover the nation's iniquities.⁸⁴

In Ps 102 it was YHWH who caused the psalmist's desperate condition. In Deut 29:21, YHWH is the one who inflicts diseases (תחל'אים) as evidence of the divine wrath upon the disobedient of the land. Included in YHWH's mercy in Ps 103:3 is the ability to "heal all תחל'אים" ("disease"). Within this psalm of David is the subtle indication

⁸² Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor*, 192.

⁸³ Walter Brueggemann, "The Psalms as Prayer," in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (ed. Patrick Miller; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 53.

⁸⁴ Brueggemann, "The Psalms as Prayer," 52.

of the understanding of exile, and the reader finds that hope exists for YHWH to forgive and restore the land.

Freedman suggests that Ps 90 is a song demonstrating how Moses might have prayed after the Golden Calf incident.⁸⁵ Mays suggests the same for Ps 103, calling it a “theological reflection on [Exod 33-34] that expounds the relation between *hesed* and רַחֲמִים”⁸⁶ The middle of Ps 103 shows a number of significant lexical connections with Exod 33-34. The allusion seems so direct that Zenger believes the psalmist must have known Exod 33-34 in its final form.⁸⁷ Specifically, the reader is drawn to the relationship between Ps 103:7 and Exod 33:13.⁸⁸ Likewise Ps 103:8 is reminiscent of Exod 34:6.⁸⁹ Compare:

⁸⁵ David N. Freedman, “Other than Moses . . . Who Asks (or Tells) God to Repent?” *BR* (1985): 56-59.

⁸⁶ James L. Mays, “Psalm 103 Mercy Joined to Loving Kindness,” 27.

⁸⁷ Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),” 188.

⁸⁸ Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),” 188; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 292; Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 122.

⁸⁹ Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, 661; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 292; James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, 328; Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),” 188.

Exodus 34:6b

יהוה יהוה אל רחום וחנון
 ארך אפים ורב־חסד ואמת

Psalm 103:8

רחום וחנון יהוה
 ארך אפים ורב־חסד

For some, this verse is the theological emphasis of the psalm, and the rest of the psalm is simply commentary.⁹⁰ When comparing Ps 103 to Exod 34, the new accents certainly stand out. Most significantly, in Ps 103:3, YHWH forgives all iniquity.⁹¹

As YHWH was understood as king in Ps 102, YHWH (not David) is the just king in Ps 103. YHWH, the king of the world, demonstrates the proper behavior for a king by emphasizing the deliverance of the oppressed and despised (Ps 103:6).⁹² This power is something that Solomon was said to have at the end of Book II (Ps 72:12-14), but the reader finds the monarchy never fulfilled that promise in Book III. Even Ps 94 seems to condemn behavior of the rulers in charge (possibly Davidic) for failing to care for the disadvantaged in society (Ps 94:5-7)

⁹⁰ Gene Rice, "An exposition of Psalm 103" *JRT* (1982): 58.

⁹¹ Zenger, "The God of Israel's Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106)," 189.

⁹² Zenger, "The God of Israel's Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106)," 186.

Certainly, a nation in exile would identify with being oppressed and despised (Ps 103:6). The “Pit of Sheol” has been taken literally (e.g, Dahood) and figuratively (e.g., Briggs). To speak with certainty of one way of reading would likely rob the poem of its power. In this reading, however, it does seem that “Babylon” would be a legitimate figuration for the phrase.

It is significant that the restoration of exile is tied to the “ways of the Lord” revealed to Moses.⁹³ This restoration is emphasized using allusions not only of covenant, but covenant renewal.⁹⁴ Deliverance from YHWH’s wrath following the Golden Calf incident was YHWH’s showing Moses the divine “ways” followed by renewing the covenant with the people. In Ps 103:8, David notes that YHWH’s ways were “made known” to Moses. The reader would certainly be reminded of Exod 33:13 where Moses asked for YHWH’s ways to be made known, and YHWH appeared to Moses. Lacking an analogous event for David and remembering that in Ps 101, David vowed to study the “ways” of YHWH, it seems the veneration of Moses within the psalm by David is

⁹³ Mays, *Psalms*, 329.

⁹⁴ Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),” 188.

made explicit in Ps 103:8. The Psalter is orienting the reader's attitude toward Moses as law-giver and away from Davidic covenant.

It is fitting for the Psalter to remember the Golden Calf incident in Ps 103 since Book IV opened with some direct allusions to the incident and its connection to exile. Psalm 103 and its focus on covenant renewal fits well in the story of the Psalter. In fact, for Wilson, Ps 103 shares even more correspondences to Ps 90 than Ps 102:⁹⁵

- 1) YHWH forgives the iniquity of man (103:3, 10, 12; cf. 90:7-8).
- 2) YHWH responds to man with steadfast love and mercy (103:4, 8, 11, 17-18; cf. 90:14).
- 3) YHWH satisfies man with good as long as he lives (103:5; cf. 90:14).
- 4) Moses is mentioned as the mediator of the divine will (103:7; cf. 90:1).
- 5) YHWH pities those who fear him (103:13; cf. 90:13).
- 6) YHWH knows man is dust and therefore frail (103:14; cf. 90:3).
- 7) The transient nature of man is emphasized using comparison with "grass" which perishes (103:15; cf. 90:5-6).

Wilson suggests this "purposed" editing of Ps 103 provides an answer to the questions raised in Ps 90.⁹⁶ Those answers, however, have

⁹⁵ Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 218.

⁹⁶ Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 218.

already been provided by Pss 91-100. The reader does not have to travel back to the beginning of Book IV to find questions that need answering. Psalm 103 provides the reader an answer to the questions David has raised in Pss 101 and 102. David places himself below Moses, and venerates Mosaic Covenant. The reader could envision the shift from the first person singular to the plural in the psalm as David moves out of the role as king and associates himself with the suffering and exile of the people. David defines the characteristics of those who serve Yahweh; they are the ones who are subject to the terms of the Covenant and who act obediently toward the commandments of God.⁹⁷ YHWH's רָחֻם will last all eternity for those who keep YHWH's covenant and precepts (103:17-18). It was assumed that YHWH's רָחֻם would last for all eternity for those on the throne of David (Ps 89:33). Now, David explicitly subjects himself (and by association his dynastic line) to Mosaic Covenant.

David confesses that YHWH is abounding in רָחֻם (Ps 103:8), the same רָחֻם lacking from the Davidic Covenant in Ps 89. In Ps 103, the reader does not find a questioning or bitter David. Where Psalm 89

⁹⁷ A. A. Anderson, *Psalms II*, 716.

showed a psalmist defiant about YHWH's feckless attitude regarding the Davidic covenant, Ps 103 shows David himself confident in YHWH and even "blessing the Lord" with all his soul. Brueggemann suggests that Ps 103, and its emphasis on YHWH's יְהוָה ,⁹⁸ is significant in the Psalter's hard fought reorientation moving from obedience to doxology.⁹⁹ Certainly, with the prominent role David has played in the Psalter to this point, Davidic sanction of the shift in focus to Mosaic Covenant would be an indispensable part of the story. The Psalter does not simply leave David behind. Rather, David gives full support to the focus on Torah and Mosaic covenant.

Conclusions

It is possible that David may not be established by Pss 101-103 as an isolated authority figure to speak to the exiles (contra Zenger and Brunert). Rather, David is speaking as a fellow sufferer. David may begin as king in Ps 101, but by Ps 103, YHWH is clearly the just and only proper king of Israel (something the reader was reminded of in Ps 99 by the appearance of Samuel).

⁹⁸ Ps 103: 4, 8, 11, 17.

⁹⁹ Walter Brueggemann, "The Psalms as Prayer," 203.

In reading Ps 102 as “Davidic” the reader finds there (and likely in Ps 101) that David is no different from the people. After all, David is the psalmist in Pss 101-103, not the object of the song. Moses, on the other hand, more frequently finds himself not as singer, but as song. It seems to the reader that David is looking for answers, and in Ps 103 David turns to Moses.

Pss 101-103 provide the reader the same story from a new perspective. In Ps 94, the psalmist was lamenting the oppressive rule of the human royalty. In Ps 101-103, the psalmist is the royalty. Book IV presents a David who, though vowing (or testifying) to be blameless through Pss 101 and 102, still seeks God’s presence through the person of Moses and Torah in Ps 103:7, 18.

Psalm 102 (read from the mouth of David) shows David hurting from exile with the nation. The Psalter orients the reader’s attitude toward David in Ps 103 when David honors Moses. The reader can rest assured without divided loyalties that the Mosaic covenant is the priority. Davidic sanction of Moses’ primacy as prophet and of Mosaic covenant as the means of salvation provides the reader with the answer to the question, “But what would David say to all this?”

“The relative absence of David from the body of the texts is notable not only in comparison with his frequency in the superscriptions but also given the frequency and length of other historical motifs such as the exodus, the Red Sea, and the wilderness wanderings.”¹⁰⁰ It is also interesting that the relative absence of Moses from the superscriptions (only Ps 90) is notable when compared to frequency and length of Mosaic motifs in the body of texts. Perhaps, Moses has more to offer as the subject of the song.

¹⁰⁰ Knowles, “The Flexible Rhetoric of Retelling,” 237.

CHAPTER FIVE

Back to the Beginning (Psalms 104-106)

A hard beginning maketh a good ending.

John Heywood, 1546

Creation

Book IV ends with three psalms, which are significantly longer than the others in Book IV and demonstrate a complex relationship to one another. Erich Zenger suggests the redaction of these psalms demonstrates clear purpose. He reads Pss 103 and 104 as a continuation of a thematic purpose found in Pss 101 and 102.¹ For Zenger the number of connections between Ps 103 and Ps 104 leads him to interpret them as “twin psalms.”² Tradition supports Zenger, and the *Midrash Tehillim* reads Pss 103 and 104 as a continual composition.³ The Midrash reads

¹ Erich Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),” in *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms*, (ed. Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger; trans. Everett R. Kalin; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000): 185.

² Erich Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),” 184-185.

³ *Midrash on Psalms: Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by William G. Braude*. (New Haven: Yale University, 1959), 157.

the appeal that occurs five times in the two psalms, “Bless the LORD, O my soul” (103:1, 2, 22; 104:1, 35), in relationship with the five books of the Torah, and it directly relates the cries to specific situations in David’s life (beginning *in utero*). Echoing that interpretation, Zenger suggests that Pss 103 and 104 should both be read as a “psalm of David” based on the superscription in Ps 103. Tradition again supports Zenger as the Septuagint affixes the superscription “of David” to Ps 104.

While Pss 103 and 104 provide several interpretive reasons to read them together, Pss 104-106 also share connections with one another.⁴ All three psalms end with הַלְלֵי יְיָ (‘‘Hallelujah’’), the first ‘‘hallelujahs’’ the reader has encountered in the Psalter. While Zenger reads the final six psalms in Book IV as three ‘‘pairs’’ of psalms which are grouped to provide hope in exile,⁵ Howard suggests that Pss 104-106 lack

⁴ David Howard, ‘‘A Contextual Reading of Psalms 90-94,’’ in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clint McCann; JSOT Supplement Series, 159; ed. David Clines and Philip Davies; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 109.

⁵ Erich Zenger, ‘‘The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),’’ 183.

connections with Pss 101-103 and the internal connections of the last three psalms of Book IV function as a concluding group of their own.⁶

Lexical features, like the “hallelujahs,” suggest an “explicit example of editorial activity” to Gerald Wilson at the end of Book IV.⁷

Creach believes that the shared features of Pss 103 and 104 may provide an explanation for the redaction; however, Creach also suggests that Ps 104 fits with the thematic presentation of the final three psalms of Book IV.⁸ As a result, Ps 104 provides a nice transition psalm for the reader. The reader is moved along in the story by Ps 104, connecting with what has immediately preceded it and introducing what is to follow.

Psalm 104: Hallelujah

In an explicit continuation for the reader, Psalm 104 begins as Ps 103 ends: בָּרַכִּי יְהוָה אֱתֵנִי (‘‘Bless YHWH, O my soul’’). Psalm 103

⁶ David Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 182.

⁷ G. H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico, CA: Scholar’s Press, 1985), 182-197.

⁸ Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (JSOT Supplement Series 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 99.

calls on all of “YHWH’s works” (מַעֲשֵׂיוֹ) to bless the divine (Ps 103:22). Psalm 104 with its emphasis on creation is a celebration of YHWH’s works (מַעֲשֵׂיוֹ), which are mentioned in Ps 104:24.

The reader can note additional shared lexemes between Pss 103 and 104. Paul Dion makes note of some of the more significant: עוֹד/חַיִּים (103: 4-5 [emended]/104:33); מִשְׁרַת/מִלֹּאךְ (103: 20-21/104:4); the verb חָדַשׁ (103:5/104:30); and the anthropological use of עָפַר (103:14/104:29).⁹ The number of direct lexical connections between the psalms and the similarity in form and subject matter make it clear to Dion that both psalms were written by the same author. While some scholars attempt to make that somewhat overreaching argument, it is generally accepted that the determination of authorship is impossible, and it is more likely that the similarities can be attributed to traditional liturgical styles.¹⁰ However an individual explains the similarities

⁹ Paul E. Dion, “YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god: The Double Legacy of Egypt and Canaan as Reflected in Psalm 104,” *ZAW* 103 (1991): 44.

¹⁰ Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (Word Biblical Commentary 21; ed. John D. W. Watts; Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1983), 26; A. A. Anderson, *Psalms II* (London: Oliphant, 1972), 717.

between the psalms, it seems to be an easy exercise for the reader to associate Ps 104 with Ps 103 in a continued reading of the story.

Rather than making a lexical argument, Zenger believes these two psalms were redacted together primarily as a result of their thematic connections. The concept of “satisfying with good” (Pss 103:5; 104:28) and of the “renewal” of life by YHWH (Pss 103:5; 104: 30)¹¹ are significant shared motifs; but for Zenger, the strongest thematic links are found at the end of Ps 103 and the beginning of Ps 104.

The two psalms are linked to one another by motif at their “seams.” Psalm 103 closes in 103:19-22 with the image of YHWH who has erected the royal throne in heaven and is there surrounded by YHWH’s messengers and ministers. With precisely this image Ps 104:2-4 then begins anew, and in this connection it cannot be by chance that “the ministers” of YHWH appear only in these two psalms in the entire book.¹²

A royal portrayal of YHWH certainly does resonate with the understanding of the deity in Book IV.

While the psalm does not contain the title מֶלֶךְ (“king”) for YHWH or the verb מָלַךְ (“to rule”), the psalm does portray YHWH as clothed in

¹¹ Erich Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),” 185.

¹² Erich Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106),” 185.

הַדָּוָר וְהַדָּוָר ("majesty and splendor"). This phrase with its royal association has already been encountered by the reader in Ps 96:6. The "greatness" (גִּדְלוֹ) ascribed to God in the beginning of the hymn is another common characterization for a king which the reader has encountered (Pss 47:3; 95:3; 96:4; 99:2).¹³ Kraus is likely sensitive to these features when he says of Ps 104, "the conception of the heavenly king stands behind the whole psalm."¹⁴ Mays summarizes the psalm using a variety of royal images:

The LORD is portrayed as a royal deity (v 1b) clothed in light itself (v 2a) who builds his royal residence on the waters as a manifestation of his kingship over them (vv 2b, 3a) and then goes forth as a warrior using the thunderstorm as chariot (v 3bc) and its winds and lightning as his cohorts (v 4) to triumph over the primeval ocean over which he shows his power by establishing the earth and banishing the waters (vv 5, 7) that covered the earth (v 6) so that the mountains and valleys would emerge (v 8) and the waters be confined to an appointed place from which they would not return to cover the earth (v 9).¹⁵

¹³ Alfons Deissler "The Theology of Psalm 104" in *Standing before God* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1981), 34.

¹⁴ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1993), 304.

¹⁵ James Luther Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 333.

Another image in the psalm which emphasizes the divine rule over the creation is the interaction between YHWH and Leviathan. The docile and domesticated picture of Leviathan is a distinctive feature of the psalm. One normally associates Leviathan with the representation of the *Chaoskampf*, analogous to Tiamat in the *Enuma Elish* or Lotan in the Canaanite literature.¹⁶ The reader, however, does not find a lurking and menacing beast threatening YHWH's created order in Ps 104. Rather, it is popular to say that Leviathan has been "demythologized" in the Ps 104 account.¹⁷ In Ps 104, Leviathan is a play-thing, a "rubber ducky" for the divine.¹⁸ "Rather than pitting them as mortal enemies [the psalm] has incorporated the sea monster into the fold of God's life-sustaining order."¹⁹

¹⁶ A. A. Anderson, *Psalms II*, 724.

¹⁷ Leslie Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 27; William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know Press, 2002), 161; Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row), 57.

¹⁸ Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 57.

¹⁹ William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 161.

Perhaps it might be more helpful to understand Leviathan as “remythologized” or reoriented to its proper place in Ps 104. In that reading, the psalm would be a powerful statement of YHWH’s power. Rather than assume the “grotesquely weakened”²⁰ Leviathan has now come to represent the “crocodile or . . . whale,”²¹ perhaps the reader should read a majestically strengthened YHWH. No doubt the reader should still fear Leviathan; however, the reader should remember that YHWH does not. The shift is much like that between Job 3, where Job shows some measure of fear toward Leviathan, and Job 41, where Leviathan is described as a wholly fearsome creature to Job which YHWH treats with the similar whimsy of Ps 104. In Job 41:9, YHWH says that Job cannot approach it and that other gods may be overwhelmed by Leviathan; however, YHWH, it seems, is not intimidated. That could likely be the Leviathan the reader encounters in Ps 104:26—a fearsome beast which inspires no fear for YHWH. The great sea monster, which so often serves as a metaphor for the enemy of

²⁰ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 303; A. A. Anderson, *Psalms II*, 724.

²¹ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (trans. David Eaton; 3 vols.; London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1889), 135.

creation, “serves only for God’s peculiar amusement”²² and provides the reader another example of YHWH’s unchallenged control over the universe. Everything falls under the dominion of YHWH.

With its concern for YHWH’s kingship, Ps 104 affects the reader of Pss 101-104 (and the new entrance to the story these psalms present) in the way Pss 93-100 affected the reader following Pss 89-92. The psalmist in Pss 101-102 provides a number of allusions which were reminiscent of Ps 89. Psalm 103 refocuses the attention to Moses analogous to the affect of Pss 90-92. Ps 104, then, celebrates YHWH as king over creation, analogous to the celebration of YHWH as king in Pss 93-100. This celebration has led to a mention of something new. Just as YHWH is called “good” in Ps 100 for the first time in Book IV, the psalmist is able to sing “Hallelujah” for the first time in the entire Psalter at the end of Ps 104.

Though the reader finds a celebration of YHWH’s unquestioned reign over the divine works, Ps 104 does not provide a naïve look at God or creation. Many interpreters note that the psalmist is aware of creation

²² Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 32.

which is “red in tooth and claw.”²³ There are times when “God hides from the world, when creatures die and return to dust (v 27-30).”²⁴ Many read Psalm 104:32 as an allusion to the epiphany at Sinai; however, the reader may also find in that verse a reminder that earthquakes can be catastrophes as well.²⁵

The psalm acknowledges that the “prey” of the כפִּיר (“young lions”) is provided by God (Ps 104: 21). The roar of these animals is a prayer unto YHWH.²⁶ These are the same כפִּיר which could be trampled underfoot by the faithful according to Ps 91. YHWH provides the meals for these animals, and it is also YHWH who makes these fierce animals lie down in their dens (Ps 104:22). Again, protection from these creatures comes from YHWH. If the reader understood the כפִּיר of Ps 91 as a reference to exile, then here, the reader is reminded that the danger from these animals is ultimately from YHWH and that the only hope of deliverance from these animals is from YHWH.

²³ Leslie Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 34.

²⁴ Virgil Howard, “Psalm 104,” *Int* 46 (1992): 178.

²⁵ Virgil Howard, “Psalm 104,” 178.

²⁶ Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 669.

Within the psalm there are additional allusions to exile and to the people's punishment by YHWH. The reader is struck by the pairing of all the creatures which "creep" out of the woods in Ps 104:20 and the **כפיר** in Ps 104:21. Like Ps 91, the reader is reminded of the "venom of things crawling in dust" (Deut 32:24), the "poison of serpents" and "venom of asps" (Deut 32:33) and "teeth of beasts" which pursue the disobedient in Deut 32:24. It is in Deut 32:22 that YHWH sets fire to the foundations of the mountains. In Ps 104:32, the mountains smoke when YHWH touches them.

In Ps 104:23-24, the people go out to their **פעל** ("work") and their **עבודה** ("service or labor"). In Deut 32:4, it is YHWH's **פעל** which is perfect. Throughout the Psalter, the reader has found that it is the **פעל** of YHWH that is often the focus. Ancestors celebrate YHWH's **פעל** (Ps 44:1). People declare the **פעל** of God (Ps 64:9). YHWH's **פעל** must be meditated on (Ps 77:12). In Ps 90:16 the reader heard Moses pray that YHWH would reveal the divine **פעל**.

In contrast to the **פעל** of God, the **פעל־יֵאֵוִן** ("workers of iniquity") have been a problem throughout the Psalter. In Book IV, these people have been mentioned in Ps 92: 7, 9 and Ps 94: 4, 16. Most recently, Ps 101:8 proclaimed these individuals would be cut off from the

city of YHWH. Now, in Ps 104, the reader finds a world which functions just as the Creator would have it function—from the wild goats in the high mountains to the trees that are watered by YHWH.

Perhaps in Ps 104 where the world functions as the divine wishes, the “work” that is done by people is in fact the **פעל** that is so often associated with YHWH—not the **פעל־יֵאוֹן**, who no doubt will be destroyed like the “wicked” and the “sinners” (Ps 104:35). Here the reader finds people whose daily service is defined by their **פעל**, reminding the reader of the “work” of God which has been comforting in Ps 92:4 and didactic in Ps 95:9—the “work” of God that is perfect (Deut 32:4).

Psalm 104 can be read as an “orienting” psalm, analogous to Pss 93-100. In Ps 104, humanity is not the king of all creation, but a part of all creation. The anthropocentric view of creation the reader found in Ps 8 has been replaced by an “ecocentric” outlook.²⁷ Human beings are simply one more creature who must rely on YHWH for sustenance and, in the case of exile, deliverance.²⁸

²⁷ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 158.

²⁸ James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, 334.

The means by which YHWH will deliver humanity is also alluded to within the psalm. The psalm's orientation may be read in the connection of creation and salvation history.²⁹ In addition to a royal connection, Zenger connects Pss 103 and 104 around a thematic emphasis on YHWH's רַחֵם. For Zenger, Ps 103 is a call to praise YHWH's steadfast love and mercy, which YHWH promised the people in the covenant at Sinai as a "covenant for the forgiveness of sins." Psalm 104 then is a call to praise for YHWH's steadfast love, with which YHWH rules and animates the entire creation.³⁰ Psalm 104 becomes for the reader appropriate response of praise to the God of the covenant. Deissler offers further allusions to covenant found in Ps 104. The psalmist uses the name of the covenant God (יְיָ) for this ruling Creator eight times (v 1 [twice], v 24, v 31 [twice], v 33, v, 34, v 35). The second use of the tetragrammation is followed by אֱלֹהֵי ("my God"). Deissler reads this combination as a responsive echo of the self-

²⁹ Alfons Deissler "The Theology of Psalm 104," 33.

³⁰ Erich Zenger, "The God of Israel's Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106)," 185-186.

revelation of God in the Decalogue (which he calls the “covenant charter”): “I am Yahweh your God.”³¹

In Ps 104:34 the psalmist asks for this פִּשְׁ (‘‘prayer, song, complaint, meditation, telling’’) to be pleasing to YHWH. The word פִּשְׁ goes on an interesting interpretive journey for the reader at the end of Book IV. The reader has already found that the word occurs in Books II and III of the Psalter most often in the sense of ‘‘complaint.’’³² The reader will soon find that in Book V, פִּשְׁ occurs most often in the sense of ‘‘meditate’’ or ‘‘talk.’’³³ Book IV’s three occurrences of the word, however, have different senses. In Ps 102:1 the word conveys ‘‘complaint.’’ In Ps 104:34 ‘‘meditation’’ or ‘‘prayer’’ seems to be appropriate, and in Ps 105:2, ‘‘tell’’ or ‘‘speak’’ is the sense of the translation. This word in these three psalms provides a microcosm of the Psalter’s overall move from lament to praise—a move the reader has experienced at the beginning of Book IV in Pss 90-92.

³¹ Alfons Deissler ‘‘The Theology of Psalm 104,’’ 33.

³² Pss 55:2, 17; 64:1; 69:12; 77:3; The notable exception is Ps 77 where the word occurs as ‘‘complaint’’ in v 3 and likely ‘‘meditate’’ in vv 6 and 12.

³³ Pss 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 148; 143:5; 145:5, the notable exception being Ps 142:2, which is analogous to Ps 102.

Anderson suggests that the apparent disjunctive and imprecatory ending to Ps 104 could rightly be understood, not as a condemnation of the wicked, but as a statement for the preservation of the covenant.³⁴ The sinners (שׁוֹנֵאִים) have been important in the course of the Psalter. In Ps 1, the שׁוֹנֵאִים do not meditate on the Torah. These sinners will be swept away in Ps 26:9. In Ps 51, the psalmist David even promises to “teach” the sinners, perhaps in the hope they will avoid destruction.

By Ps 104, however, there is no hope for the sinners and the psalmist (possibly read as David) relegates the sinners to oblivion. That interpretation finds growth in the faith of the psalmist. In Ps 102, Zion needed to be restored because YHWH’s servants held it dear. In Ps 104, the wicked should be consumed from the earth because the omnipotent and sustaining character of YHWH cannot be compromised, not because of anything that the psalmist has done or will do.

At a first reading, the psalm appears to be a straightforward celebration hymn unto YHWH. Like so many of the “psalms of

³⁴ Anderson, *Psalms II*, 725.

orientation," there is no great tension to resolve. There are no hard questions to answer; and therefore for some, these psalms could be seen as "not the most interesting."³⁵ Within the context of Book IV, however, the reader may find that a psalm subtly expresses the awareness of exile, and in 104:35, expresses a desire that those responsible for the oppression (who are in the hand of God like the young lions of v 21) be consumed. After all, the reader has seen again that YHWH is king. Once again, after a refocusing of the reader's attention on Moses and Mosaic covenant (Ps 103), the reader is reminded who is king. If Zenger is right, and this psalm should be understood as Davidic, then the point is made even more strongly for the reader. David defers to Moses in covenant (Ps 103) and YHWH in kingship (Ps 104).

³⁵ Walter Brueggemann, "The Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function," in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (ed. Patrick Miller; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 10; David G. Barker, "The Waters of the Earth: An Exegetical Study of Psalm 104:1-9" *Grace Theological Journal* 7 (1986): 57-80.

Psalm 105: Promises Kept

Some scholars (like Zenger) consider Pss 103 and 104 to be a “thematic pair;” many also interpret Pss 105 and 106 in this way³⁶ though the interconnectedness of the last six psalms makes it difficult to see clear divisions. The reader moves easily between the two thematic pairs of 103-104 and 105-106 around the anadiplosis of the word לְשׁוֹן in Ps 104:34 and Ps 105:2. It is also an easy matter for the reader to connect the final three psalms around the “Hallelujahs” which occur at the end of each.

It was likely Walter Zimmerli who first applied the term, *Zwillingspsalmen*, to Pss 105 and 106 suggesting that the redaction of these psalms in this position was not accidental.³⁷ Most interpreters believe Pss 105 and 106 fall into the same literary *Gattung* (along with Ps

³⁶ In fact the majority of interpreters read these psalms as together in dialogue. See: Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 308-309; Mays, *Psalms*, 337; Gerald Wilson, “Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clint McCann; JSOT Supplement Series, 159; ed. David Clines and Philip Davies; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 76; Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 99.

³⁷ Walther Zimmerli, “Zwillingspsalmen,” in *Wort, Lied und Gottesspruch*. (ed. J. Schreiner; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1972), 105-113.

78) of “historical” psalm.³⁸ Holm-Nielson rightly points out, however, that even though these psalms share a number of similar characteristics, it is impossible to consider each of these psalms as identical.³⁹ Psalm 105 celebrates YHWH’s unconditional love and salvation of the people. Psalms 78 and 106 are more didactic and remind the reader of Israel’s need for repentance.⁴⁰

Psalm 105 continues the emphasis of Ps 104, that is, YHWH’s creative power. In this psalm, however, the emphasis is on YHWH’s creation, not of the cosmos, but of the chosen people. The psalm, going back to the patriarchs, emphasizes YHWH’s work on the people’s behalf and YHWH’s faithfulness to the ancient promise to Abraham. The reader finds the psalm next to the creation-oriented Ps 104 “doubtless because the themes of Yahweh’s lordship of creation and history are frequently juxtaposed within psalms.”⁴¹

³⁸ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 40.

³⁹ Svend Holm-Nielson, “The Exodus Traditions in Psalm 105,” *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute XI* (Festschrift Gillis Gerleman; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 27.

⁴⁰ Holm-Nielson, “The Exodus Traditions in Psalm 105,” 27.

⁴¹ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 40.

In Psalm 104, YHWH is omnipotent and unchallenged. In Ps 105, YHWH is still omnipotent and unchallenged. In Ps 104, YHWH demonstrates sustaining power over all creation. In Ps 105, YHWH again is the sole actor displaying salvific and sustaining power in the preservation of Israel.⁴² Psalm 105 is unique among the historical psalms in that the actions and reactions of Israel are not mentioned (as in Psalms 78 and 106).⁴³ The focus in the psalm is entirely on YHWH as the actor. This perspective resonates well with the characterization the reader has seen of YHWH in Book IV. The psalm celebrates YHWH's power (and honors Moses and Aaron) by proclaiming that YHWH, Moses, and Aaron are the executors of the plagues of Egypt, most of which are enumerated in this psalm⁴⁴ continuing the theme of YHWH as king. Whenever the

⁴² Mays, *Psalms*, 337.

⁴³ Mays, *Psalms*, 337.

⁴⁴ Only the fifth and sixth plagues are omitted. The third and fourth are inverted, and it seems that special priority is given to the ninth. Allen and others suggest that the account is so similar it must reflect an author freely using the canonical book of Exodus; Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 41.

psalms emphasize the great deeds of YHWH, references to the worldwide and nation-ruling power of Yahweh quickly emerge.⁴⁵

The details of the story of YHWH's interaction with Abraham (a major focus of Ps 105) are mentioned in the Psalter for the first time.⁴⁶ Ps 105:45 contains a reference to the laws and statutes one typically associates with the Mosaic covenant, and Moses and Abraham are both mentioned explicitly as YHWH's servants. This honor paid to Moses and Abraham in Ps 105 may prove even more significant for the reader when considering David Barker's reading of Ps 104. Barker believes that Psalm 104:6-9 should be read as a reference to the flood of Noah, not the original creation week as it is typically understood.⁴⁷ While Barker's arguments are not entirely convincing, it would provide an interesting turn in the story. The reader finds that the psalmist, David, defers to the priority of Moses in Ps 103. Psalm 104 (following Barker) alludes to Noah; Psalm 105 mentions Abraham; and Psalms 105 and 106 mention

⁴⁵ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 312.

⁴⁶ The name Abraham occurs only in Ps 45:9 [10] and here in Ps 105:6, 9, 42; Anderson, *Psalms II*, 727.

⁴⁷ David G. Barker, "The Waters of the Earth," 57-80.

Moses. Following Barker's interpretation of Ps 104, the end of Book IV alludes to three non-Davidic covenants.

David loses another important title in Ps 105:15; the patriarchs are referred to as מְשִׁיחִי "my anointed ones." It may suggest to the reader that by transferring a term associated with Davidic monarchy to the patriarchal period the psalmist has emphasized the thought of God's inviolability (cf. 2 Sam 1:14, 15).⁴⁸ That interpretation would certainly be in keeping with the emphasis in the rest of the psalm on God's faithfulness. The divine promise is without exception.

Inviolability, however, is unfortunately not truly inviolable because the reader has already seen that the anointing of David and his house has come to an end. Its end is lamented and questioned strongly in Ps 89. By using this term (מְשִׁיחִי) which is so often associated with David and applying it to Abraham, the reader again finds the Psalter deemphasizing the role of David. It was the king who was "my anointed" in Ps 2. It was David and his seed that were anointed in Ps

⁴⁸ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 38.

18:50. To speak of the patriarchs as “anointed” of God again moves the focus off of David.

Further, in Ps 78:70 David is referred to as YHWH’s servant. In Ps 105 both Abraham and Moses are called YHWH’s servant (Ps 105:6, 26). The reader finds Book IV has moved the focus, again, away from David and Davidic monarchy. For the first (and only) time in the Hebrew Bible, all of the patriarchs are referred to as “prophets” (105:15).⁴⁹ Moses’ reputation as a prophet is well-established in the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁰ The reader finds that the people receiving honor in this psalm are individuals receiving titles that formerly were held by David or having characteristics that distinguish them from David.

While the historical movement of the psalm exhibits a nice balance: Canaan to Egypt, dwelling in Egypt, and Egypt to Canaan,⁵¹ the narrative effect of the Psalter provides a polyvalent meaning which

⁴⁹ Abraham is called a prophet in Gen 20:7; however, that term is only applied to all of the patriarchs in Ps 105; W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms: Translated with Text-Critical and Exegetical Notes* (London: S. P. C. K., 1962), 447.

⁵⁰ Num 12:6-8; Deut 34:10.

⁵¹ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 42.

seems to be exilic. While the choice of the verb מָכַר “sell” in verse 17 is certainly a reference to Gen 37:28, S. Holm-Nielsen has noted the applicability of the verb מָכַר “sell” to the exilic situation (cf. Isa 50:1; 52:3).⁵² The specific sufferings of Joseph in prison in v 18, while not in the Genesis account of the story of Joseph, Holm-Nielsen has compared with Isa 42:22 and 43:14 as intentionally evoking Israel’s experience in exile.⁵³ Allen writes:

In the bitter fortunes of Joseph he was preparing the way for eventual blessing not only for him but for his kin. Joseph’s experience was that of Israel in miniature. The path to glory lay through suffering and had not Israel suffered in exile? The prophetic word came true in the end – take heart! — and made all the trial and testing worthwhile.⁵⁴

Kraus and Mays also make reference to this psalm and exile. The exodus “in joy” in Psalm 105:43 is seen as an allusion to the “new exodus” in Deutero-Isaiah (cf. Is 35:10; 51:11; 55:12).⁵⁵ Holm-Nielsen agrees that Joseph’s selling as a slave is also an allusion to the Lord’s

⁵² Svend Holm-Nielsen, “The Exodus Traditions in Psalm 105,” 24-25.

⁵³ Svend Holm-Nielsen, “The Exodus Traditions in Psalm 105,” 24-25.

⁵⁴ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 43.

⁵⁵ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 312; Mays, *Psalms*, 339.

surrender of the people to the enemy in Deut 32:30 and therefore about the exile, and he references Is 50:1; 52:3.⁵⁶

Though there is general agreement on the perspective and the setting of this psalm, there is debate over the psalm's central message. Holm-Nielson understands the theme of the psalm to be found in Ps 105:7-11; 42-45: "Yahweh is Israel's God who has fulfilled his promise to the patriarchs to give Israel the land of Canaan."⁵⁷ Clifford also believes the emphasis of the psalm is the land and the patriarchs, saying, "the exodus and (divinely sustained) existence in the desert are seen as the result of the patriarchal promise of the land."⁵⁸ Ceresko notes that the ten-fold repetition of ארץ and the echo of its sounds א and צ in other words or groups of words emphasize the "land" throughout the poem."⁵⁹

The notion of the "promise of land" is significant in the text, and Holm-Nielson notes the explicit connection between Ps 105:11 and Deut

⁵⁶ Svend Holm-Nielson, "The Exodus Traditions in Psalm 105," 25.

⁵⁷ Svend Holm-Nielson, "The Exodus Traditions in Psalm 105," 23.

⁵⁸ R. J. Clifford, "Style and Purpose in Psalm 105" 60 *Biblica* (1979): 422-426.

⁵⁹ Anthony R. Ceresko, "A Poetic Analysis of Ps 105 with Attention to Its Use of Irony," 64 *Biblica* (1983): 44.

32:9 in which the phrase חבל נחלתכם ("lot of your inheritance") occurs with the words in the same construct state.⁶⁰ Dahood also makes note of the allusion of this verse to Deut 32:9, as well as to Deut 32:7 and Exodus 15:7. Reading the exilic setting subtly in the patriarchal and exodus stories is in keeping with the story of the Psalter the reader has encountered. The remembrance of the promise of land in exile would be a comfort for the singer. From the exile, the people must again resume possession of their territory, and it is necessary for them to renew the epic of the exodus.⁶¹

While the patriarchs do play a dominant role in Psalm 105, the psalm contains a number of references that allow for a different interpretation. Kraus understands the central message of the psalm to be that "Yahweh's covenant faithfulness is to waken and produce a new obedience to the commandments of God."⁶² Mays also sees Ps 105:45 as a central emphasis in the text. YHWH was not faithful without purpose.

⁶⁰ Svend Holm-Nielson, "The Exodus Traditions in Psalm 105," 23.

⁶¹ Evode Beaucamp, *Le Psautier: Psaumes 73-150* (Sources Biblique; Paris: J Gabalda, 1979), 162.

⁶² Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 312.

YHWH wanted to create a people obedient to the divine laws.⁶³ The reader might also remember the numerous references to the patriarchs by Moses in Deuteronomy as a reminder of the faithfulness of YHWH.⁶⁴

This interpretation would be in keeping with the story of Book IV. The covenant with Abraham is therefore not the first priority of the psalm; it is a means to an end. The covenant with Abraham and YHWH's faithfulness to it was to result in a covenant people faithful to YHWH's statutes and laws . . . statutes and laws which were given to Moses.

Psalm 106: Promises Broken

Leaving Ps 105 on the optimistic note of a people who will "keep [YHWH's] statutes and observe [YHWH's] laws, Hallelujah!" the reader finds the conclusion of a more troubling story in Ps 106. Actually, the double statement told by the redaction of Ps 105 and 106 effectively shares two sides of the same story.⁶⁵ Psalm 105 emphasizes God's

⁶³ Mays, *Psalms*, 338.

⁶⁴ Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5, 27; 29:13; 30:20.

⁶⁵ W. Zimmerli, *Zwillungspsalmen*, 109-11.

faithfulness to the covenant to Abraham by mighty works. Nothing compromises God's actions in Ps 105. Psalm 106, however, tells of an Israel that failed to remember YHWH's mighty works in its continual sinning. The first psalm calls for trust, the second psalm for repentance.⁶⁶ This twin use of psalms with Exodus allusions has been seen before by the reader. Psalms 77 and 78, along with Pss 80 and 81, are examples of the Exodus tradition used together as hymn and lament.⁶⁷

Psalms 105 and 106 continue that thematic use as they review Israel's history. Psalm 106 presents an Israel bound to a faithful God and yet unfaithful. While Gunkel regards Ps 106 as a Communal Complaint Song,⁶⁸ Wolverton makes an interesting point by suggesting that this psalm "would have *induced* lament by the people; but it is not itself such

⁶⁶ James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, 337.

⁶⁷ Susan Gillingham, "The Exodus Tradition and Israelite Psalmody," *SJT* 52 (1999): 40.

⁶⁸ Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (trans. James D. Nogalski; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 82-83.

a lament.”⁶⁹ For Wolverton, the insufficient use of first person plural pronouns in the psalm suggests a different *Gattung*, and Anderson agrees with his assessment.⁷⁰

In keeping with what the reader has seen in Book IV, it likely is not too surprising that most of the interpreters of this psalm note the large number of references to Deuteronomy. The people quickly “forgot” YHWH’s works (Ps 106:13). “Forgetting” is something that the writer of Deuteronomy was constantly worried about (cf. Deut 4:9, 23, 31; 6:12; 9:7; 25:19; 32:18).⁷¹ This word, שָׁכַח (“forget”), also provides a lexical and thematic connection with an earlier psalm (the reader has already seen that Ps 103:2 had the same concern about “forgetting” YHWH), further demonstrating the interconnectedness of Psalms 101-106.

Allen and Kraus both recognize a Deuteronomic character to the psalm. Allen calls the Deuteronomistic structure of the psalm “evident,”

⁶⁹ Wallace I. Wolverton, “Sermons in the Psalms,” *CJT* 10 (1964): 174.

⁷⁰ Anderson, *Psalms II*, 735.

⁷¹ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 319; Anderson, *Psalms II*, 740.

particularly in vv 40-46.⁷² Kraus believes that the emphasis on YHWH's goodness and Israel's guilt reminds the reader of Deuteronomy.⁷³ Because of its assumed *Gattung*, Westermann connects the interpretation of the psalm with Ps 78 and Deut 32,⁷⁴ though for Westermann, the structure of Ps 106 clearly connects it with Deut 26.⁷⁵

Oesterley reads the use of 'ָלָ (‘‘nation’’) to identify Israel in Ps 106:5 in connection to Deut 32:28 (as well as Jud 2:20, Isa 1:4; 10:6). Oesterley also suggests that the use of the word 'ָלָ instead of the more common ׀ֹעַ is an allusion to Israel's sinful condition.⁷⁶ Anderson rightly points out that this reference is not an absolute rule. Israel is called a holy 'ָלָ in Exod 33:12, and notes other references.⁷⁷ This title for YHWH's people is unusual in the Psalter, however. Further, in this

⁷² Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 51.

⁷³ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 316.

⁷⁴ Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. by Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen; Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 241.

⁷⁵ Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 114.

⁷⁶ Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 451.

⁷⁷ Anderson, *Psalms II*, 738.

psalm, the use of לְיִשְׂרָאֵל to refer to Israel makes an important interpretive statement. The reader finds that though Israel received the wonders of YHWH, the people are not distinguished in any way from the rest of the world (Ps 106:5 and 106:27, 35, 41, 47). The reader often found Israel in the יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ psalms worshipping YHWH with the rest of the world without distinction.⁷⁸ Ps 106 finds Israel again portrayed to be like the rest of the world, this time, presumably, in their sinfulness.

Some other Deuteronomic influences of note include the use of the word שְׂדִיִּים [“demons”] in Ps 106:37. This word is found only in Deut 32:17.⁷⁹ Allen also notes the connection between Ps 106:26 and Deut 32:40.⁸⁰ It is striking to the reader the number of times that Deut 32 has been referenced in the analysis of this psalm, considering the number of times the passage has been alluded to in the analysis of Book IV.

Though the Deuteronomic allusions abound, in Pss 105 and 106, the Exodus is the dominant tradition. There is no reference to David or even to Zion in either psalm, again continuing a diminishing status for

⁷⁸ Pss 96:1, 3, 7, 10, 13; 97: 1, 6; 98: 2-4; 99: 1-2; 100:1.

⁷⁹ Anderson, *Psalms II*, 746; Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 49.

⁸⁰ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 49.

David in the story of Book IV. Tate argues that the numerous Mosaic influences in Book IV, particularly in Pss 105 and 106, subsume Davidic theology and place an emphasis on Moses.⁸¹ Though the second section of Book IV (Pss 101-106) has not spoken *as* Moses with the direct lexical allusions that the reader found in the first section, there is a strong Mosaic remembrance in Pss 101-106. Moses only occurs by name eight times in the Psalter.⁸² Five of the occurrences are in Pss 101-106. Four of the eight occur in Pss 105 and 106. The reader cannot help but be struck by this strong Mosaic emphasis at the end of Book IV.

Like Ps 105, the narrative recounted in Ps 106 remembers the Exodus, though the setting of the narrative effect of the psalm fits well in the Exile. No heroes exist in this remembrance of the Exodus. The psalmist recognizes that the people stand with their ancestors as sinful (Ps 106:6). This sinful people even caused the hero of Book IV, Moses, to have his struggles (Ps 106:32-33). In fact, the last explicit mention of Moses in Book IV, and in the Psalter, is this remembrance of his failure.

⁸¹ Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), xxvi.

⁸² Pss 77:20; 90:1; 99:6; 103:7; 105:26; 106:16, 23, 32.

This belief in the perpetual unworthiness of the people of God is reminiscent of the prophet Ezekiel, who also noted the people's unworthiness from the time of their origin.⁸³

When Pss 105 and 106 are read together, the two psalms illustrate for the reader the tension between the promise and the purpose of God on the one hand (Ps 105) and the perversity of the people of God on the other (Ps 106) as the heart of Israel's story.⁸⁴ For example, Psalm 106:13-15 refers to the demanding of food and reception of manna in the wilderness condemning the people for their attitude. Psalm 105:40 mentions the same event without a single word about the disobedience of the people.⁸⁵ The message of the two psalms when read together seems to turn on Ps 105:45. Psalm 105 surveys the wondrous works of YHWH emphasizing YHWH's faithfulness and makes the point that YHWH's purpose was that Israel should obey Torah (v 45). Ps 106 surveys the same history emphasizing Israel's faithlessness to YHWH's

⁸³ Note specifically, Ezekiel 16; 20; and 23. Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 241.

⁸⁴ Mays, *Psalms*, 340.

⁸⁵ Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 241.

desires throughout and makes the point that Israel's salvation depends on YHWH's great faithfulness.⁸⁶

The faith of Ps 106 (and Book IV) ends in a valley which seems far removed from the mountaintop of Pss 93-100 or Pss 104 and 105. Within this failure to properly respond to YHWH's graciousness, however, the reader finds that the psalmist remembers some of the previous lessons of Book IV. Psalm 106:44-46 recalls the confidence in YHWH, which was present in 99:6-8. YHWH is the only one who answers the people.⁸⁷

The story of Book IV has also seen a growth in the faith expressed in the Psalter. Where Book III ends with questions about the Davidic Covenant, Book IV ends with a de-emphasis on the Davidic covenant. Where Book III struggles with questions: "Where is your steadfast love?" (Ps 89:49), Book IV has provided answers: "YHWH is king." The psalmist wants YHWH's people to be gathered from the nations, not because their enemies will gloat (Ps 89:50), but because the people want to praise YHWH (Ps 106:47). Moses' covenant and Torah are the

⁸⁶ James Mays, *The Lord Reigns* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 133.

⁸⁷ David M. Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 182.

responsibility of the chosen people. YHWH will deliver the chosen people not because of a patron-client obligation (as in Ps 89:50-51), but because “YHWH is good and his steadfast love endures forever” (Ps 106:1). After all, the psalmist recounts in Ps 106:45 that in the past, YHWH has shown חַסְדּוֹ (“compassion”) because of an abundance of אֱמֻנָה (“steadfast love”). חַסְדּוֹ and אֱמֻנָה are what the Psalter has been wanting from YHWH since Moses asked for it Ps 90:13-14.

Psalms 107-150: A Glance Ahead in the Story

Knowing what the reader knows leaving Book IV, David’s role in the Psalter is likely to undergo some change. David again becomes the singer in Book V of the Psalter. David appears quickly in the story in Pss 108, 109, and 110. In the first two, the psalmist is lamenting a difficult situation with the surrounding nations and enemies, only to be vindicated in Ps 110. The close reader of Book IV, however, will not be surprised that the grand celebration of YHWH’s Torah (Ps 119) comes not long after this vindication of David.

Certainly, the line of David receives accolades in Book V. Even David’s line is celebrated as Solomon sings again (Ps 127). The reader should note, however, that the lesson has been learned to take nothing

for granted. The Davidic covenant is conditional. “If your sons keep my covenant and my decrees . . . their sons also shall sit on your throne forevermore” (Ps 132:12).

Though praise outnumbers lament in Book V, David’s praise is not without its problems. Even nearing the end of the story, David still must cry, “Deliver me O YHWH from evildoers” (Ps 140). In a cave, David must “cry to YHWH with my voice . . . I pour out my complaint” (Ps 142:1-2), a psalm that in its introduction seems to purposely call Ps 102 to the reader’s mind. Additionally, David’s enemy has pursued him (Ps 143:3), and he needs rescuing from a cruel sword (Ps 144:11). The reader finds in Book V a David shaped by the perspective of Book IV. The David of Book V is a David whose power is not absolute, and whose throne and progeny are not certain. It is a David who begins to sing like Moses (cp. Pss 90:9 and 144:4).

When the reader finally encounters the unfettered praise of the story’s doxology in Pss 146-150, the lessons taught in that section echo the lessons already learned in Book IV. “Hallelujah, YHWH reigns!”

CHAPTER SIX

The End of the Matter

There will come a time when you believe everything is finished. That will be the beginning.

Anonymous

The Context for the Project

A student sat in my office and stated, “I just don’t know why I never noticed that the Old Testament tells a story from Genesis to 2 Kings. I should have. . . . I mean it has been right there in front of me.” The roots of this project likely can be found in that question which also came to my mind long ago as a student in my first “Introduction to the Old Testament” class. Now, however, it is asked about the Psalter. The book of Psalms “has been right in front of me.” Is there anything I have been taking for granted? Is there anything I simply had not noticed?

I began this project with the question, “Is there any significance to the fact that these psalms occur in a book?” For centuries, people of faith could answer that question in the affirmative. For Hirsch, the struggle of David throughout the book of Psalms mirrors the struggle of

the Jews throughout history.¹ For St. Benedict, and the Benedictine monks who follow, the Psalter is a book that absolutely must be read in its entirety in a week for due diligence to be shown in service.² The “book” of psalms clearly has provided instruction and inspiration as a whole.

For the contemporary reader, however, there are obstacles to overcome. The post-Enlightenment mind continually struggles with the Near Eastern ability to find harmony in contrasting facts. The fact that the creation stories of Gen 1 and 2 were redacted together is not as shocking to the Western reader as the fact that the biblical text does not need to harmonize the differences. The question asked by religiously conservative students encountering these texts for the first time, “But, which one is right?” is not a question with which the biblical text ever seems to struggle. Do Joseph’s brothers find their money on the journey home or in the presence of their father? Is David the court musician for Saul, or does Saul meet David during the Goliath story? Who killed Goliath, David or Elhanan?

¹ Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Psalms* (trans. Gertrude Hirschler; 2 vols; New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1960), xvii.

² *The Rule of St. Benedict in English* (ed. Timothy Fry; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982), 47.

This kind of story-telling only emphasizes the distance between the post-Enlightenment reader and the biblical redactors. This gap is widened when the reader comes to the psalms. In the Psalter, no obvious attempt has been made to redact these individual “sources” into a seamless narrative. Yet, these individual psalms have been collected into five units which are collected in a single book, a book that has traditionally been interpreted as “anthology.”

While according to traditional form-critical categories the Psalter is not classified as “narrative,” there is a “narrative impulse” to biblical poetry.³ Canonically, the reader can find meaning in the Psalter by analyzing connections between the individual psalms. The Psalter provides an interpretive setting in which one can productively find meaning in considering the psalms of Book IV.

Robert Alter recognizes issues of narrative impulse on a micro-canonical scale between adjacent verses and lines in the biblical text.⁴ I believe a narrative impulse is also revealed over the Psalter as a whole. The work of Nancy deClaissé-Walford and Gerald Wilson laid the

³ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 28.

⁴ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 28.

foundation for this project. Their theories regarding the theological redaction of the individual books of the Psalter suggested a narrative purpose. Indeed, the redactional purpose mirrored the story of Israel.

A subtle sense of “story” emerges for the reader of the Psalter, and Book IV is the turning point to that story. The broad narrative impulse throughout the entire Psalter when combined with the “narrative setting”⁵ of the individual psalms and the semantic and thematic connections Book IV shares with other portions of the Psalter and the Hebrew Bible contribute to the sense of “plot,” which emerges for the reader. This plot provides a hermeneutic lens for the reader.

While this project has not focused on redactional concerns, the emphases of these individual readers along with readers who have been guided by form critical concerns have provided valuable insight into possible movements in the story of the Psalter. What was originally *Sitz im Leben* in form-critical analysis often has become *Sitz im Buch* in this reading.

⁵ Richard Bauckham, “Reading Scripture as a Coherent Story,” in *The Art of Reading Scripture* (ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 39.

As an analysis based on the canonical shape of the text of the Psalter, this reading takes the superscriptions of the psalms seriously, perhaps too seriously for some. While the majority of scholars might not go as far as von Rad and say the superscriptions have “have no authoritative value,”⁶ many would also not allow the superscription to influence the context of the reading of the text to the degree this project does. If the reader is going to take seriously the canonical form of this text, however, the superscriptions have to be more than simply interesting. The superscriptions should find a significant place within the interpretation. When the text makes an association to a historical setting or with an individual, a canonical reader of the psalms needs to wrestle with the implications of that association. In this analysis, the superscriptions provide an interpretive setting through which a reader encounters the text.

The Narrative Effect of Book IV

So how does Book IV fit within the story of the Psalter?

Westermann notes that the Psalter is dominated by laments in the first

⁶ Gerhard von Rad, “Psalm 90” in *God at Work in Israel* (trans. John H. Marks; Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980), 212.

portion and by praises in the second.⁷ The Psalter does begin by celebrating the anointed (king) of YHWH and his ultimate success in the face of raging nations (Ps 2). The Davidic monarchy soon comes under fire, however, and as Westermann notes, the laments soon dominate the story of Books I-III. These laments become their most desperate at the end of Book III. The reader finds psalmists expressing total despair (Ps 88) and searching for answers to the question of how the divine can simply ignore the everlasting covenant that YHWH established with the king (Ps 89).

Psalms 90-92

The reader then comes to a turning point. Psalms 90-92 mark a shift in focus for the reader. An authoritative voice from Israel's past intercedes on behalf of the nation. Different scholars have different opinions on what brought Pss 90-92 together. It may be that Reindl and Creach are correct when they suggest that these three psalms of different *Gattung* are thematically linked by the discussion of the ephemeral nature of humanity.⁸ All three psalms have also been variously

⁷ Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. K. Crim and R. Noulen; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 250-258.

⁸ Joseph Reindl, "Weisheitliche Bearbeitung Von Psalmen," in *Congress Volume :Vienna, 1980* (ed. John A. Emerton; Leiden : E J Brill,

identified as having wisdom characteristics. Zenger has suggested that a perceived Mosaic emphasis guided the redaction of the psalms. Though these psalms are of different *Gattung*, Zenger suggests that Ps 90-92 demonstrate “thematic unity.”⁹

Whatever the editorial purpose, the text as it stands does reflect a strong Mosaic voice. The text certainly demonstrates a connection to Moses from the superscription, the only psalm of Moses in the entire Psalter. Additionally, the lexical and thematic connections demonstrate a strong association with the speeches of Moses in Deut 32-33 and Exod 32. Moses appears in the Psalter for the first time as the singer and brings a message that reminds the reader that it was not the Davidic monarchy, but something long before the Davidic monarchy, which should be primary.

With Ps 90 calling Moses the “man of God,” it immediately draws the reader to the previous time Moses gave an address after being called the “man of God.” Moses pronounced his blessing on the tribes in Deut

1981), 350-356; Jerome Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (JSOT 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 95.

⁹ Erich Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World (Psalm 90-106)” in *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms*, edited by Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger, translated by Everett R. Kalin (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000):167.

33. Prior to that in Deuteronomy the ancient Hebrews were told what would happen to them as a result of their disobedience. Moses intercedes once again in Ps 90 (using the same terms he used in Exod 32) for YHWH's servants. With David's covenant lying in ruins (Ps 89), Moses' appearance in Ps 90 changes the direction of the story.

Both Pss 90 and 91 provide the image of YHWH as refuge. Psalm 91 lacks a superscription, a fact which likely contributes to six Hebrew manuscripts linking the two psalms. These factors can guide a reader to continue reading Ps 91 from the mouth of Moses. This Mosaic voice is further emphasized by the strong semantic links with Deut. 32:23-24. The protection that is afforded the faithful in Ps 91 is protection from elements associated with exile in Deut 32. Ps 91, taking the form of a blessing, reminds post-exilic Israel that although they had suffered the fate which Moses foretold (i.e., exile), they could find refuge and security by trusting in YHWH.

Following the intercession of Moses in Ps 90 and the protection offered in Ps 91, Ps 92 then offers thanksgiving to YHWH for answering in Ps 91 (YHWH speaks in Ps 91:14-16). The superscription of Psalm 92 establishes this psalm as the only psalm in the Psalter written for the "Sabbath Day." An eschatological reading would likely be tempting for

the reader since on this Sabbath Day the singer of the psalm has the same enemies as YHWH and the righteous dwell in the house of the YHWH. The psalm does provide an excellent transition from the first portion of Book IV to the second. A “Sabbath” could come as a resolution to the exile, which brings to a close Pss 90-92, and the subtle “royal” references of the psalm prepare the reader for the “YHWH Reigns” psalms which follow.

Psalms 93-100

The story of the Psalter has brought the reader to a time of hope. The questioning despair of Book III has been refocused to the remembrance of Moses and of the Mosaic Covenant and a growing recognition of Yahweh’s place over all of the universe. This reorientation has not been an easy process. The reader has been led through a song of repentance (Ps 90) to a song of praise (Ps 92).

Though Pss 93-100 share a similar theological perspective (the explicit or underlying commitment that YHWH is king), these psalms also provide the reader a journey of faith. What happens between Psalms 93 and 100 is significant. The reader finds the Psalter in a state of disillusionment and disorientation at the end of Ps 89. Psalm 90

provides the means of the reorientation, Torah and Moses. Ps 91-92 celebrate the benefits of the reorientation. Psalms 93-100 move the reader to the consequences of the reorientation: YHWH reigns. The acceptance of human kings is no longer taken for granted. As the reader comes to Book IV, מֶלֶךְ (“king”) could refer to YHWH or human royalty. After Ps 93, YHWH reigns, and the “kings of the earth” are struck down by YHWH.¹⁰

The emphasis on Moses and Mosaic Torah continues through Pss 93-100. Indeed, Brueggemann suggests that simply to invoke the theme of kingship draws the reader to the Moses-Sinai tradition.¹¹ The psalms also offer numerous lexical and thematic allusions to Exodus and Deuteronomy, the psalms contain a number of direct references to Torah as well. Psalm 93:5 says “Your decrees are very sure.” Psalm 94:12 reminds the reader that “Happy are those . . . whom you [i.e., YHWH] teach out of your Torah.” Psalm 95 references a people who did not regard YHWH’s “ways” (Ps 95:10). Psalms 96-98 remind the reader of

¹⁰ E.g., Pss 110:5; 135:10; 136:17-18. The exceptions would be Ps 144:10 where YHWH provides salvation to the king (again demonstrating YHWH’s position), and Ps 148:11 where the “kings of the earth” are asked to praise YHWH.

¹¹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 151.

YHWH's role as judge (Pss 96:10, 13; 97:8; 98:9), something that the psalmist cried out for in Ps 94:2. In Ps 99, Moses and Aaron are paragons of service because they followed YHWH's decrees (Ps 99:7). Psalm 100 shows a psalmist who echoes the goal which comes from the mouth of Moses in the Deut 7:9 by proclaiming "Know that YHWH, he is God."

When the reader comes to the end of Ps 100 and finds the psalmist able to make confession of faith which was lacking in the similar Ps 95, the reader asks "why?" The answer is simple. YHWH may have always reigned. YHWH may have always ruled with "righteousness" and "faithfulness." YHWH may have always ruled over creation. YHWH may have always been sovereign over all nations. For the psalmist, however, YHWH has just now become king, and for the first time in Book IV, the psalmist is able to say that "YHWH is good" (Ps 100:5).

Though there are few direct references to Moses, the allusions to Mosaic texts (specifically Exod 15 and Deut 32-33) are more common in this section. It is likely this emphasis of the text that leads Tate to call Pss 90-100 a "Moses book."¹² This section of Book IV consistently speaks

¹² Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), xxvi.

with a “Mosaic voice,” which does not simply remind the reader of actions of Moses but directly invokes Moses speeches from the Torah.

Psalms 101-103

David sings for the first time in Book IV in Ps 101. Some read David’s appearance at this point in Book IV as a new authority figure analogous to Moses at the beginning of Book IV. It certainly should be significant to the reader that David is singing again after being absent since Ps 86 (the only psalm of David in Book III). The reader has found that a great deal has happened since David last appeared in a superscription. The reader has read: a lament without a moment of hope (Ps 88); a long psalm questioning the faithfulness of YHWH to the Davidic covenant in the light of its destruction (Ps 89); a refocusing on Moses and Torah (Pss 90-92); and a celebration of YHWH as king using images associated with Moses and Torah (Pss 93-100).

Reading the “story of the Psalter” it is possible that David does not appear as a “new David” in Pss 101-103 who can speak to the exiles (contra Zenger and Burnert). Rather, David could be singing as a fellow sufferer. David may begin as king in Ps 101, but by Ps 103, YHWH is

clearly the just and only proper king of Israel (something the reader was reminded of in Ps 99 by the appearance of Samuel).

In reading Ps 102 as “Davidic” the reader finds there (and possibly in Ps 101) that David is no different from the rest of Israel. After all, David is the psalmist in Pss 101-103, not the object of the song. It is not David or Davidic covenant that is celebrated. Moses, on the other hand, more frequently finds himself not as singer, but as the subject of the song. In Ps 101 David is king. In Ps 102, it can seem to the reader that David is looking for answers, and in Ps 103 David turns to Moses to find those answers.

Psalms 101-103 provide the reader the same story from a new perspective. In Ps 94, the psalmist was lamenting the oppressive rule of the human royalty. In Ps 101-103, the psalmist is human royalty. Book IV presents a David who, though vowing (or testifying) to be blameless through Pss 101 and 102, still seeks God’s presence through the person of Moses and Torah in Ps 103:7, 18.

Psalm 102 (read from the mouth of David) shows David hurting from exile with the nation. The Psalter orients the reader’s attitude toward David in Ps 103 when David honors Moses. The reader can rest assured without divided loyalties that the Mosaic covenant is the

priority. Davidic sanction of Moses' primacy as prophet and of Mosaic covenant as the means of salvation provides the reader with the answer to the question, "But what would David say to all this?"

Psalms 104-106

Psalms 90-100 have a strong Mosaic voice emphasizing Sinai Covenant and Torah. Psalms 101-103 have a strong Davidic voice, which emphasizes Moses, Sinai Covenant and Torah. This Mosaic remembrance ultimately crescendos to a strong Mosaic emphasis again at the end of Book IV.

Psalms 101-103 bring the reader back to the beginning of Book IV. There the reader is reminded of the failure of the Davidic monarchy and the importance of Davidic covenant. The ending of Ps 103 again focuses the reader on the position of YHWH as king, and Ps 104 continues this emphasis, functioning in the story analogous to Pss 93-100. The end of Pss 93-100 confesses that "YHWH is good" for the first time in the Psalter. Likewise, the end of Ps 104 implores with "Hallelujah!" for the first time in the Psalter.

Psalms 105 and 106 function as twin closing psalms, demonstrating two sides of the same coin. Psalm 105 celebrates the unconditional love

and faithfulness of YHWH. Psalm 106 reminds the reader of the need for YHWH's unconditional love and faithfulness, i.e., Israel's continual defiance.

The conclusion of Book IV demonstrates the change of emphasis that has occurred in the story. In Ps 89:50, the psalmist wants YHWH to demonstrate the divine faithfulness so that enemies of the divine will have no reason to gloat. In Ps 106:47, the psalmist wants YHWH to gather the people from the nations so they may give thanks to the divine. The focus on Moses and Torah has moved the psalmist from a patron-client relationship to a praise of YHWH which recognizes the divine position.

Conclusions

While this approach does not necessarily represent the majority way in Psalm studies, it does seem to be a next logical step in the analysis of this material. The theories of redaction put forward by both Nancy deClaissé-Walford and Gerald Wilson suggested a "plot" at work in the redaction of the Psalter. The analysis of the Psalter as "book" instead of anthology becomes a next logical step in that analysis. One

strength of such an analysis is the freedom to move from hypothetical reconstructions of text to a finite text which sits in front of the reader.

Wilson's close look at the structure of the Psalter and Book IV demonstrates the purposed redaction of the Psalter. His interpretive frame (Figure 1) focuses areas of clear contrast in the Psalter. Much is made of Wilson's emphasis on the "seams" of the text, i.e., the Book III and Book IV juncture and Book IV and V juncture. Wilson's frame also connects psalms with what he would consider obvious editorial connections.¹³ These psalms would include Pss 95 and 100; Pss 101 and 103-104; and the psalms which explicitly refer to YHWH reigning.

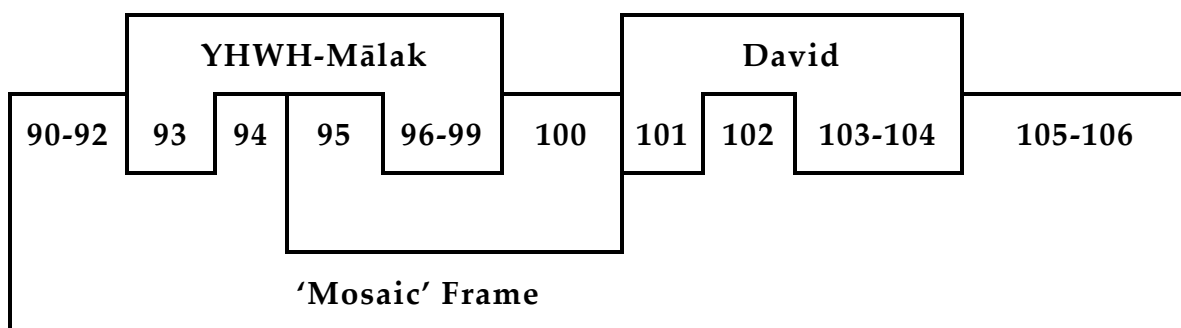


Fig. 1. Wilson's Interpretive Frame

¹³Gerald Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clint McCann; JSOT Supplement Series, 159; ed. David Clines and Philip Davies; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 77.

My analysis supports Wilson’s Mosaic frame for Book IV. I believe, however, Moses can be read as the unifying character throughout Book IV. The reader finds a strong Mosaic “voice” in Pss 90-100. This includes obvious references to Moses (in Pss 90 and 95) and the lexical associations with Mosaic texts throughout the “YHWH Reigns” psalms.

In Pss 101-106, the reader then finds a strong Mosaic remembrance, which includes the majority of the explicit references to “Moses” in the Psalter. The Davidic psalms function as a unit within this Mosaic remembrance to orient the reader to the proper attitude toward David and Davidic monarchy and to emphasize the position of Moses within Book IV.

Mosaic Voice						Mosaic Remembrance		
90-92	YHWH-Mālak					Davidic Deference	YHWH-Mālak	105-106
	93	94	95	96-99	100	101-103	104	

Fig. 2. Interpretive Frame for this Project

Methodologically, my analysis pays closer attention to the relationships between the individual psalms of Book IV. While not every psalm from Pss 93-100 mentions “YHWH reigns,” the work of Howard, and others, provides sufficient justification for reading the YHWH-Malak psalms as a unit within Book IV.

That unit functions with a Mosaic voice to speak with authority that YHWH is king. David has deferred to the leadership of Moses in Ps 103. The authority of Moses establishes the “Mosaic frame” for Book IV: three psalms, which speak as Moses at the beginning of Book IV, and two psalms, which speak about Moses at the end of Book IV. What is the message that is conveyed by this authority? Davidic covenant can be set aside. David agrees that Moses is the authority, and David no longer rules. YHWH reigns!

WORKS CITED

Books

- Allen, Leslie C. *Psalms 101-150*. Word Biblical Commentary 21. Edited by John D. W. Watts. Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1983.
- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. New York: Basic Books, 1985.
- Anderson, A. A. *The Book of Psalms*. 2 vols. New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972.
- Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*. Translated by Robert C. Gregg. New York : Paulist Press, 1980.
- Beaucamp, Evode. *Le Psautier: Psaumes 73-150*. Paris : J Gabalda, 1979.
- Becker, Joachim. *Israel deutet seine Psalmen: Urform und Neuinterpretation in den Psalmen*. Stuttgart : Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1966.
- Bellinger, W. H. *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Praises*. Peobody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990.
- Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907.
- Brown, William P. *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984.
- Brunert, Gunild. *Psalm 102 im Kontext des vierten Psalmenbuches*. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1996.

- Buttenweiser, Moses. *The Psalms: Chronologically Treated with a New Translation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938.
- Chapman, Graham, Eric Idle, Terry Gilliam, and Terry Jones. *The Complete Monty Python's Flying Circus: All the Words, Volume 1*. New York, NY: Pantheon, 1989.
- Childs, Brevard. *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.
- Creach, Jerome F. D. *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 217. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.
- Crüsemann, Frank. *Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel*. Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, 32. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969.
- Dahood, Mitchall. *Psalms II: 51-100*. The Anchor Bible 16. Edited by William F. Albright and David N. Freedman. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1968.
- _____. *Psalms III:101-150*. The Anchor Bible 17A. Edited by William F. Albright and David N. Freedman. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1968.
- DeClaissé-Walford, Nancy. *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997.
- Delitzsch, Franz. *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*. Translated by David Eaton. 3 vols. London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1889.
- Eaton, John H. *Kingship and the Psalms*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986.
- _____. *Kingship and the Psalms*. Studies in Biblical Theology. Second Series 32. Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1976.
- _____. *Psalms : Introduction and Commentary*. London: S.C.M. Press, 1967.

- Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in This Class?: Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980.
- G. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament Vol. III*. Translated by John T. Willis and Geoffrey Bromiley. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1978.
- Gunkel, Hermann and Joachim Begrich. *Introduction to Psalms : The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*. Translated by James D. Nogalski. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998.
- Gunkel, Hermann. *Die Psalmen*. Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926.
- _____. *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*. Göttingen: Vanderhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895.
- Hirsch, Samson Raphael. *The Psalms* (trans. Gertrude Hirschler; 2 vols; New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1960).
- Hoever, Hugo. *Lives of the Saints*. New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing, Co., 1999.
- Howard, David M. *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997.
- Iser, Wolfgang. *Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.
- Kraus, Hans-Joachim, *Psalms 60-150*. Translated by H. C. Oswald. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1993.
- _____. *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*. Translated by H. C. Oswald. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988.
- _____. *Theology of the Psalms*. Translated by Keith Crim. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986.

- Leslie, Elmer. *The Psalms: Translated and Interpreted in the Light of Hebrew Life and Worship*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1949.
- Levenson, Jon D. *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988.
- Mays, James Luther. *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994.
- _____. *Psalms*. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989.
- McCann, J. Clinton. *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1993.
- Mendenhall, George. *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of Biblical Tradition*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1973.
- Midrash on Psalms: Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by William G. Braude*. New Haven: Yale University, 1959.
- Millard, Matthias. *Die Komposition des Psalters : Ein Formgeschichtlicher Ansatz*. Forschungen zum Alten Testament 9. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1994.
- Miller, Patrick. *Deuteronomy*. Louisville, Ky: J. Knox Press, 1990.
- Mowinckel, Sigmund. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. Translated by D. R. Ap-Thomas. 2 vols. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962.
- _____. *Psalmstudien*. 2 vols. Amsterdam : Verlag P. Schippers, 1961.
- Oesterley, W. O. E. *The Psalms: Translated with Text-Critical and Exegetical Notes*. London: S. P. C. K., 1962.
- _____. *A Fresh Approach to the Psalms*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937.
- Perownes, J. J. Stewart. *The Book of Psalms*. London: G. Bell & Sons, 1883.

Prothero, Rowland E. *The Psalms in Human Life*. London: J. Murray, 1904.

Sarna, Nahum. *On the Book of Psalms: Exploring the Prayers of Ancient Israel*. New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1993.

Seybold, Klaus and Erich Zenger, eds., *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung. Für Walter Beyerlin*. Herders biblische Studien 1. Freiburg: Herder, 1994.

Tate, Marvin. *Psalms 51-100*. Biblical Commentary 20. Edited by John D. W. Watts. Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990.

The Rule of St. Benedict in English. Edited by Timothy Fry. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982.

Uspensky, Boris. *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*. Translated by Calentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig. Berkeley: University of California, 1973.

Van Dyke, Henry. *The Story of the Psalms*. New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1921.

Von Rad, Gerhard. *God at Work in Israel*. Translated by John H. Marks. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980.

_____. *Deuteronomy*. Translated by D. Barton. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966.

Weiser, Artur. *The Psalms: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962.

Westermann, Claus. *The Living Psalms*. Translated by J. R. Porter. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1989.

_____. *Isaiah 40-66*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969.

_____. *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*. Translated by Keith R. Crim and Richard Soulen. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1965.

Whybray, R. N. *Reading the Psalms as a Book*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series, 222. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1996.

Wilson, Gerald. *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, 76. Chico: Scholar's Press, 1985.

Articles

Barker, David G. "The Waters of the Earth: An Exegetical Study of Psalm 104:1-9." *Grace Theological Journal* 7 (1986): 57-80.

Bauckham, Richard. "Reading Scripture as a Coherent Story." Pages 38-53 in *The Art of Reading Scripture*. Edited by Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003.

Bellinger, W. H. "Psalm 102: Poetry and Theology." Paper presented at the Regional Meeting of the Southwest Commission on Religious Studies. Irving, Texas, 12 March 2005.

_____. "The Psalms as a Place to Begin for Old Testament Theology." Pages 28-39 in *Psalms and Practice: Worship, Virtue, and Authority*. Edited by Stephen Breck Reid. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001.

Booij, Thijs. "Psalm 101:2 – 'When Wilt Thou Come to Me?'" *Vetus Testamentum* 38 (1988): 458-462.

Brennan, Joseph P. "Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 10 (1980): 25-29.

_____. "Some Hidden Harmonies of the Fifth Book of Psalms." Pages 126-158 in *Essays in Honor of Joseph P. Brennan*. Edited by Robert F. McNamara. Rochester, NY: St Bernard's Seminary, 1976.

Brueggemann, Walter. "Bounded by Obedience and Praise." Pages 189-216 in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*. Edited by Patrick D. Miller. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

_____. "The Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function," Pages 3-30 in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*. Edited by Patrick D. Miller. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

_____. "The Psalms as Prayer," Pages 33-66 in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*. Edited by Patrick D. Miller. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Buss, Martin J. "Idea of *Sitz im Leben*: History and Critique." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 90 (1978): 157-170.

Ceresko, Anthony R. "A Poetic Analysis of Ps 105 with Attention to Its Use of Irony." *Biblica* 64 (1983): 20-46.

Childs, Brevard S. "Reflections on the Modern Study of the Psalms." Pages 377-388 in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God. Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright*. Edited by Frank Moore Cross, Werner Lemke, and Patrick Miller. Garden City: Doubleday, 1976.

Clifford, Richard. J. "Style and Purpose in Psalm 105." *Biblica* 60 (1979): 422-426.

Creach, Jerome F. D. "The Shape of Book Four of the Psalter and the Shape of Second Isaiah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 80 (1998): 63-76.

Culley, Robert. "Psalm 102: A Complaint with a Difference." *Semeia* 62 (1993): 19-35.

Davies, Gwynne Henton. "Psalm 95." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 85 (1973) 183-195.

DeClaissé-Walford, Nancy. "Anzu Revisited: The Scribal Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter." *Word & World* 15 (1995): 358-366.

- Deissler, Alfons. "The Theology of Psalm 104" in *Standing Before God: Studies on Prayer in Scriptures and in Tradition with Essays in Honor of John M. Oesterreiche*. Edited by Asher Finkel and Lawrence Frizzell. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1981.
- Dion, Paul E. "YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god: The Double Legacy of Egypt and Canaan as Reflected in Psalm 104." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 103 (1991): 43-71.
- Dürr, L. "Ursprung und Ausbau der israelitisch-jüdischen Heilserwartung." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 43 (1925): 77.
- Freedman, David N. "Other than Moses . . . Who Asks (or Tells) God to Repent?" *Bible Review* 1 (1985): 56-59.
- Gene Rice, "An Exposition of Psalm 103" *Journal of Religious Thought* 39 (1982): 55-61.
- Gillingham, Susan. "The Exodus Tradition and Israelite Psalmody," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 52 (1999): 19-46.
- Goulder, Michael D. "The Fourth Book of the Psalter." *Journal of Theological Studies* 26 (1975): 269-289.
- Holm-Nielson, Svend "The Exodus Traditions in Psalm 105," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 11 (1978): 22-30.
- Hossfeld, Frank-Lothar. "Ps 89 und das vierte Psalmenbuch (90-106)." Pages 173-183 in *„Mein Sohn bist du“ (Ps 2,7). Studien zu den Königpsalmen*. Edited by Eckart Otto, & Erich Zenger. Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002.
- _____. "Psalm 95: Gattungsgeschichtliche, kompositionskritische, und bibeltheologische Anfragen." Pages 29-44 in *„Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung“ Herders biblische Studien*. Edited by Klaus Seybold and Erich Zenger. Freiburg i Br: Herders, 1994.

Howard, David M. "A Contextual Reading of Psalms 90-94." Pages 108-123 in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*. Edited by J. Clint McCann. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series, 159. Edited by David Clines and Philip Davies. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

_____. "Editorial Activity in the Psalter." Pages 52-71 in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*. Edited by J. Clint McCann. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series, 159. Edited by David Clines and Philip Davies. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

Jakobson, Roman. "Linguistics and Poetics." Pages 350-377 in *Style in Language*. Edited by Thomas A Sebeok. Cambridge: Technology Press of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1960.

Jefferson, Helen G. "Psalm 93." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 71 (1952): 155-160.

Kaiser, Otto. "Erwägungen zu Psalm 101." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 74 (1962): 195-205.

Kenik, Helen Ann. "Code of Conduct for a King: Psalm 101." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (1976): 391-403.

Knierim, Rolf "Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered" *Interpretation* 27 (1973): 449-468.

Knowles, Melody D. "The Flexible Rhetoric of Retelling: The Choice of David in the Texts of the Psalms." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 67 (2005): 236-249.

Krüger, Thomas. "Psalm 90 und die "Vergänglichkeit des Menschen," *Biblica* 75 (1994): 191-219.

Kselman, John S. "Psalm 101: Royal Confession and Divine Oracle," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33 (1985): 45-62.

- Kuntz, Kenneth. "Wisdom Psalms and the Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter." Pages 144-160 in *For A Later Generation*. Edited by Randal A Argall, Beverly A. Bow, and Rodney Alan Werline. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000.
- Longman, Tremper. "Psalm 98: A Divine Warrior Victory Song," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27 (1984): 267-274.
- Mays, James Luther. "Psalm 103 Mercy Joined to Loving Kindness," *Austin Seminary Bulletin: Faculty Edition* 105 (1990): 27-32.
- _____. "The Place of Torah-Psalms in the Psalter," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987): 3-12.
- Menakhem, Perry. "Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates its Meanings." *Poetics Today* 1 (1979) 35-64, 311-361.
- Mettinger, Tryggve N. D. "Fighting the Powers of Chaos and Hell – Towards the Biblical Portrait of God" *Studia Theologica* 39 (1985) 21-38.
- Michel, Diethelm. "Studien zu de sogenannten Thronbesteigungspsalmen." *Vetus Testamentum* 6 (1956): 40-68.
- Parsons, Mikeal C. "Reading a Beginning/Beginning a Reading: Tracing Literary Theory on Narrative Openings." *Semeia* 52 (1990): 11-31.
- Reindl, Joseph. "Weisheitliche Bearbeitung Von Psalmen." Pages 350-356 in *Congress Volume :Vienna, 1980*. Edited by John A. Emerton. Leiden: E J Brill, 1981.
- Riding, Charles B. "Psalm 95:1-7c as a Large Chiasm." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 88 (1976): 418.
- Sanders, James "Adaptable for Life: The Nature and Function of Canon." Pages 9-39 in *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

- Sarna, Nahum M. "The Psalm for the Sabbath Day (Ps 92)" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (1962): 155-168.
- Schmidt, H. "Jahwe und die Kulttraditionen von Jerusalem." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 67 (1955), 168-197.
- Schniedewind, William M. "'Are We His People or Not?' Biblical Interpretation During Crisis." *Biblica* 76 (1995): 540-550.
- Sedlmeier, Franz. "Zusammengesetzte Nominalsätze und Ihre Leistung für Psalm CII." *Vetus Testamentum* 45 (1995): 239-250.
- Shenkel, James Donald. "An Interpretation of Psalm 93,5." *Biblica* (1965): 401-416.
- Tucker, Dennis. "Facets of Shame in the Communal Laments." Paper presented at the Regional Meeting of the Southwest Commission on Religious Studies. Irving, Texas, 6 March 2004.
- _____. "Psalm 95: Text, Context, and Intertext." *Biblica* 81 (2000): 533-541.
- Ulrichsen, Jarl H. "JHWH Malak: Einige Sprachliche Beobachtungen," *Vetus Testamentum* 27 (1977): 361-374.
- Vawter, Bruce. "Post-exilic Prayer and Hope." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 37 (1975): 460-470.
- Virgil Howard, "Psalm 104," *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 176-180.
- Watts, J. D. "Yahweh Malak Psalms." *Theologische Zeitschrift* 21 (1965): 341-348.
- Wilson, Gerald. "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms." Pages 72-82 in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*. Edited by J. Clint McCann. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series, 159. Edited by David Clines and Philip Davies. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

_____. "Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms." Pages 42-51 in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*. Edited by J. Clint McCann. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series, 159. Edited by David Clines and Philip Davies. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

Wolverton, Wallace I. "Sermons in the Psalms," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 10 (1964): 166-176.

Zenger, Erich. "The God of Israel's Reign over the World (Psalms 90-106)." Pages 161-190 in *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms*. Edited by Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger. Translated by Everett R. Kalin. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000.

Zimmerli, Walther "Zwillingspsalmen," Pages 105-113 in *Wort, Lied und Gottesspruch*. Edited by J. Schreiner. Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1972.