DAVIDIC HOPE IN BOOK IV OF THE PSALTER
(PSALMS 90–106)

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APPROVAL SHEET

DAVIDIC HOPE IN BOOK IV OF THE PSALTER

(PSALMS 90–106)

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To Cindi, Judah, Ember, Isaiah, and Brooklyn

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ASB	*Austin Seminary Bulletin*
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BCOT	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Bib	*Biblica*
BJS	Biblical and Judaic Studies
BR	*Bible Review*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
CBW	*Conversations with the Biblical World*
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca
CR	*Currents in Research*
EBC	*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed.
ETR	*Études Théologiques et Religieuses*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
GDBS	Gorgias Dissertations in Biblical Studies
HBS	Herders Biblische Studien
HOTE	Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis
HTKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*

HTS	*Hervormde Teologiese Studies*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JHebS	*Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	JSOT, Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KEL	Kregel Exegetical Library
LD	Lectio Divina
LHB/OTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NAC	New American Commentary
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NEchtB	Neue Echter Bibel
NIB	*The New Interpreter's Bible*
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
RevExp	*Review and Expositor*
RevQ	*Revue de Qumran*
RNBC	Readings: A New Biblical Commentary
SBL	Studies in Biblical Literature
SBLAIL	SBL, Ancient Israel and Its Literature

SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SJET	*Scottish Journal of Evangelical Theology*
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
THOTC	Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary
TrinJ	*Trinity Journal*
TS	*Theological Studies*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	VT, Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTS	*Westminster Theological Journal*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table Page

Table Page

Figure

PREFACE

Without Christ, the Psalms would be silent for me, and I would be silent about the Psalms. So I am first grateful that God rescued me in Christ, forgave my sins, and gave me a new song (and a new Psalter) to sing.

I am next thankful for my parents, Dennis and Naomi Gundersen, who first taught me the Bible whose story shapes the Psalter. I cannot estimate their impact in my life, and I will always remember their regular messages of prayer and support as this project neared completion.

Building on my parents' foundation were my professors at The Master's College, The Master's Seminary, and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. They have molded me in ways I (once again) cannot calculate. Among these teachers, I give thanks especially for Will Varner and Todd Bolen, my two most influential and inspiring Bible professors in college; Bill Barrick and Michael Grisanti, who taught my graduate courses in Hebrew and the Psalms; and Jim Hamilton, whose instruction, guidance, encouragement, enthusiasm, and friendship has brought joy and direction to my PhD studies.

I owe glad thanks to my readers Peter Gentry, Duane Garrett, and Robert Cole who each lent their energy and expertise to refine this study, and to my ministry colleagues Jordan, Anna, and Spencer, whose happy friendship refreshed me all along the way and whose constant support strengthened me for the final climb.

To my children: I love you more than words can tell. Judah, you are growing up to be a strong and noble man, and I hope you never lose the sparkle in your smile and the life in your eyes. Ember, you are a beautiful young woman with the purest joy I have ever seen, and your future is as bright as your happiness. Isaiah, you are my little buddy,

and you fill my heart with joy. I hope you never stop smiling and running. Brooklyn, you are a brave, beautiful, and unbroken young girl, with courage matched only by your kindness. You are growing, but you will always be my little one.

Most of all: Cindi. Your steadfast love reflects the faithfulness of God which makes the psalmists sing. You are a beautiful and heroic person, and I honor you for the sheer loyalty and rugged love you have shown our family over these twelve years. I will gladly spend my life loving you, and leading the chorus as your works praise you in the gates. Thank you for taking this journey with me.

Finally, if the saints never suffered, we would have few psalms. Therefore this work stands as a memorial to the suffering saints whose psalms we study and sing today. May this dissertation honor their suffering and the Sovereign who sustained them, and may this study echo their songs.

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Louisville, Kentucky
May 2015

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades, concentrated research on the canonical Hebrew Psalter has advanced the view that the Psalter bears an intentional structure. Interpreters have explored the placement of individual psalms, pairs, sets, groups, collections, books, and multi-book sections. Many have attempted to discern organizational structures, theological perspectives, and connected themes across the Psalter.[1] For example, Walter Brueggemann sees the Psalter expressing *orientation*, *disorientation*, and *reorientation* (e.g., the lament psalms express disorientation).[2] David Mitchell proposes an "eschatologically oriented editorial agenda" rather than an arrangement based on

[1]For the last century, see Thorne Wittstruck, *The Book of Psalms: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1994), 1:1–10. For the last few decades, see Howard's multiple surveys of trends published over the last twenty years: David M. Howard, Jr., "Editorial Activity in the Psalter: A State-of-the-Field Survey," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. J. C. McCann (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 52–70; idem, "Recent Trends in Psalms Study," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, ed. D. W. Baker and B. T. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 329–68; idem, "The Psalms and Current Study," in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, ed. D. G. Firth and P. Johnston (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 23–40. Kuntz has provided two surveys eighteen years apart: Kenneth Kuntz, "Engaging the Psalms: Gains and Trends in Recent Research," *CR* 2 (1994): 77–106; Kenneth Kuntz, "Continuing the Engagement: Psalms Research Since the Early 1990s," *CBR* 10 (2012): 321–78. Bruce Waltke and Willem VanGemeren each write autobiographically about their own journeys interpreting the Psalms: Bruce K. Waltke, "Biblical Theology of the Psalms Today: A Personal Perspective," in *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul*, ed. A. J. Schmutzer and D. M. Howard, Jr. (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 19–28; Willem A. VanGemeren, "Entering the Textual World of the Psalms: Literary Analysis," in *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul*, ed. A. J. Schmutzer and D. M. Howard, Jr. (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 29–48. Two relevant 2014 publications include William P. Brown, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) and Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms: The Current State of Scholarship*, SBLAIL 20 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014).

[2]Walter Brueggemann, "Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function," *JSOT* 17 (1980): 6l; cf. Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984); Walter Brueggemann, "Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon," *JSOT* 50 (1991): 63–92.

historical concerns.[3] Jamie Grant sees the juxtaposition of royal and torah psalms arising from and evoking the ideal torah-saturated king in Deuteronomy 17:14–20.[4]

Some, developing rather than discounting these ideas, sense a narrative pulse within the Psalter.[5] Building on Gerald Wilson's groundbreaking work, a company of scholars broadly agree that Books I–III form a Davidic shape.[6] Psalms 1–2 set the royal agenda, Davidic superscriptions fill Books I–II, and Books I–III are bound by royal psalms at their seams (Pss 2, 72, 89).[7] The trajectory moves loosely from the ideal king (Pss 1–2) through the life and sufferings of David (Books I–II) to a Solomonic coronation (Ps 72). The Psalter then darkens with the storm of exile (Book III), culminating in the apparent failure of the Davidic promises (Ps 89:39–52).

Those who sense this narrative trajectory, however, differ over the part Book IV plays. Book IV as a whole has been the subject of many studies,[8] while more focused

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[3]David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, JSOTSup 252 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 82–89.

[4]Jamie A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

[5]Some actually use the phrase "story line" (e.g., James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010], 277; Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, in vol. 5 of *EBC*, ed. T. Longman III and D. E. Garland [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008], 38).

[6]Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985).

[7]For the most thorough and recent study of Pss 1–2 as an introduction to the Psalter, see Robert L. Cole, *Psalms 1-2: Gateway to the Psalter* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013); see summary in Robert L. Cole, "Psalms 1 and 2: The Psalter's Introduction," in *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul*, ed. A. J. Schmutzer and D. M. Howard, Jr. (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 183–95.

[8]M. D. Goulder, "Fourth Book of the Psalter," *JTS* 26 (1975): 269–89; Klaus Koenen, *Jahwe wird kommen, zu herrschen über die Erde: Ps 90-110 als Komposition*, Bonner biblische Beiträge 101 (Weinheim, Germany: Beltz Athenäum, 1995); Jerome F. D. Creach, "The Shape of Book Four of the Psalter and the Shape of Second Isaiah," *JSOT* 23, no. 80 (1998): 63–76; Hyung Jun Kim, "The Structure and Coherence of Psalms 89–106" (PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 1998); 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*, trans. E. R. Kalin (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 161–90; Gordon Wenham, "Rejoice the Lord Is King: Psalms 90–106 (Book IV)," in *Praying by the Book: Reading the Psalms*, ed. C. G. Bartholomew and A. West (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2001), 89–120; James Todd Borger, "Moses in the Fourth Book of the Psalter" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002); Anthony Gelston, "Editorial Arrangement in Book IV of the Psalter," in *Genesis, Isaiah, and Psalms: A Festschrift*

studies have explored specific sections or themes within the book.[9] Yet interpreters continue to discuss whether David, so central early in the Psalter, disappears in Book IV.

The Disappearance of David?

What happens to the Davidic promises in Psalms 90–106? Some see Book IV responding to the failure of the Davidic program (Ps 89) by returning to the Mosaic program and reenthroning Yahweh before an exiled people. David is minimized, Moses is promoted (90:1; 99:6; 103:7; 105:26; 106:16, 23, 32), and Yahweh reigns as king (93–100). For Wilson, Book IV redirects Israel's hope away from the Davidic line and toward Yahweh as her royal refuge.[10] For Zenger, the "'messianic' program" of Books I–III yields to the "'theocratic' program" of Books IV–V.[11] For Wallace, Book IV emphasizes the Mosaic covenant over the Davidic covenant and the reign of Yahweh over the reign of David: "Davidic covenant can be set aside. David agrees that Moses is the authority,

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to Honour Professor John Emerton for His Eightieth Birthday, ed. K. J. Dell, G. I. Davies, and Y. V. Koh (Boston: Brill, 2010), 165–76; Nathan Dean Maxwell, "The Psalmist in the Psalm: A Persona-Critical Reading of Book IV of the Psalter" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2007); Robert E. Wallace, *The Narrative Effect of Book IV of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBL 112 (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); Michael G. McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh: A Canonical Study of Book IV of the Psalter*, GDBS 55 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010); Bernard Gosse, "La Réponse des Ps 90–106 aux Ps 88–89 Quant à la Manifestation de l'Amour de Yahvé," *ETR* 87, no. 4 (2012): 481–86; Sampson S. Ndoga, "Revisiting the Theocratic Agenda of Book 4 of the Psalter for Interpretive Premise," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms: The Current State of Scholarship*, ed. N. L. deClaissé-Walford, SBLAIL 20 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 147–59.

[9]David M. Howard, Jr., "A Contextual Reading of Psalms 90–94," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. J. C. McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 108–23; Johannes Schnocks, "Mose im Psalter," in *Moses in Biblical and Extra-Biblical Traditions*, ed. A. Graupner and M. Wolter (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 79–88; Jinkyu Kim, "The Strategic Arrangement of Royal Psalms in Books IV–V," *WTJ* 70, no. 1 (2008): 143–57; EunMee Moon, "The Sapiential Reading of Psalms 107–18 in the Framework of Books IV and V of the Psalter" (PhD diss., Trinity International University, 2008); Lindsay Wilson, "On Psalms 103–106 as a Closure to Book IV of the Psalter," in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms*, ed. E. Zenger (Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2010), 755–66; Krista Mournet, "Moses and the Psalms: The Significance of Psalms 90 and 106 within Book IV of the Masoretic Psalter," *CBW* 31 (2011): 66–79; Andrew Witt, "Hearing Psalm 102 within the Context of the Hebrew Psalter," *VT* 62, no. 4 (2012): 582–606.

[10]Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 215. According to Wilson, Book IV responds to the failure of the Davidic monarchy in four ways: "(1) YHWH is king; (2) He has been our 'refuge' in the past, long before the monarchy existed (i.e., in the Mosaic period); (3) He will continue to be our refuge now that the monarchy is gone; (4) Blessed are they that trust in him!"

[11]Zenger, "Psalms 90–106," 161.

and David no longer rules. YHWH reigns!"[12] These interpreters broadly agree that Book IV bends the direction of the Psalter from David to Yahweh through Moses.

David in the Shadows?

But does the Davidic king disappear from Book IV as Yahweh takes center stage? Davidic superscriptions reappear in Book IV, beginning with a kingship psalm (101) that follows the יהוה מלך psalms (93–100). David appears again heading the celebratory Psalm 103. Sandwiched between is the unattributed Psalm 102, suggesting that 101–103 be viewed as a Davidic triad.[13] Davidic titles then open, punctuate, and close Book V (108–10, 122/124/131/133, 138–45). The kingship Psalm 110 is ascribed to David and evokes previous royal psalms (2, 72, 89), while Psalm 132 pronounces the permanence of God's firm covenant with David.

Lindsay Wilson challenges the false dichotomy that David's line and Yahweh's kingship are mutually exclusive (Psalm 2 alone undoes the dichotomy by presenting the messianic king as Yahweh's ruling representative). So rather than discounting the Davidic promises, Book IV shows that "any future Davidic kingship can only be possible if Yahweh's prior claim of kingship is upheld."[14] Creach and Dempster similarly highlight the importance and position of the royal Psalm 101 as it follows the יהוה מלך psalms.[15] McKelvey interprets a Davidic voice in Psalms 101–104 as evidence that a Davidic hope remains even in Book IV.[16]

After all, if Yahweh (who reigns in Book IV) has reneged on his promises to

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[12]R. Wallace, *Narrative Effect of Book IV*, 94.

[13]Witt, "Psalm 102," 590–96. McKelvey views Pss 101–104 as a "Davidic collection" (McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 192–93).

[14]L. Wilson, "Psalms 103–106," 766.

[15]Jerome F. D. Creach, *The Destiny of the Righteous in the Psalms* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2008), 107–8; Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 199 (see 199n14).

[16]McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 309–22.

David, where is the basis for Israel's hope? Her hope is not only that Yahweh is sovereign over the universe but that Yahweh is faithful to his covenant. So if Yahweh's reign undercuts David rather than upholding him, why the paeans of praise? Mitchell raises his well-known objection:

> But what kind of hope is this? For if the house of David 'has come to nothing,'[17] then the divine promises are worthless. Yet the redactor seems deliberately to emphasize their failure, and God's falsehood, in vividly representing the disappointment of their hopes [Ps 89]. Is it for this celebration of divine disloyalty and incompetence that jubilant halleluyahs close the Psalter? Such an approach would hardly encourage future trust in God alone, as Wilson suggests.[18]

Yahweh clearly overshadows David in Book IV, but I suggest that he does so for protection and not destruction. The reign of Yahweh does not erase the Davidic promise but ensures it. The same ruling arm of Yahweh that upended David's line will uphold his covenant. David has not disappeared. He is just in the shadows.

Thesis and Overview

In this dissertation I propose that Book IV of the Psalter sustains the hope that Israel will be restored with the revival of the Davidic line. Chapter 1 introduces the thesis, overviews the history of Psalms interpretation, and summarizes views of Book IV that see David either diminished or sustained. Chapter 2 defines the canonical approach and proposes an eclectic, multi-angled methodology for a canonical interpretation of the Psalter. Chapter 3 analyzes the problem-petition relationship between the Davidic catastrophe in Psalm 89 and the Mosaic prayer in Psalm 90. Chapter 4 explores the unified series in Psalms 90–92 including its allusions to Exodus 32–34 and Deuteronomy 32–33 and its progression that suggests Davidic hope. Chapter 5 evaluates Psalm 101 and argues that its Davidic title, royal voice, lamenting tone, thematic relationships, strategic placement, and inter-psalm allusions make it a central psalm sustaining Davidic hope in

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[17]Mitchell is citing Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 213.

[18]Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 80.

Book IV. Chapter 6 explores Psalms 102–103 and proposes that the individual and corporate restoration celebrated in Psalm 103 answers the petitions of both Psalms 90 and 102. Chapter 7 summarizes the findings and proposes a unified progressive structure for Book IV that sustains Davidic hope.

History of Interpretation

The development, use, and interpretation of the Psalter are rich arenas for investigation. Naturally, the examples below will be broadly representative rather than exhaustive. This aerial survey will funnel down to Book IV in eight stages:

1. Psalms in Scripture
2. The Psalter's Textual Development
3. Pre-Critical Approaches to the Psalter
4. Critical Approaches to the Psalter
5. Canonical Approach to the Psalter
6. Form-Critical Views of Book IV
7. David-Diminished Views of Book IV
8. David-Sustained Views of Book IV

Psalms in Scripture

Even outside the Psalter, the OT portrays the prevalent use of music and song in Israel's life and worship. Individual songs are embedded in or extracted from narratives and prophecies (e.g., Exod 15:1–21; Judg 5:1–31 [cf. Ps 68:8–9]; 1 Sam 2:1–10; 2 Sam 22:1–51 [cf. Ps 18:1–51]; Jonah 2:1–9; Hab 3:1–19).[19] The rich harmonies of cultic worship resound as liturgical organization and festal activity are presented in detail (1 Chr 6:31–32; 13:8; 15:15–16; 16:8–36; 2 Chr 29:26–30; 30:21–22; Ezra 2:6; 3:10–11; Neh 12:40–43). Major characters like Solomon author songs that do not appear in the Psalter: he "spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005" (1 Kgs 4:32).

The canonical Psalter itself contains 150 diverse psalms spanning the full range

[19]See James W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative*, JSOTSup 139 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992).

of human experience and emotion. Often these psalms (mainly in Books I–II) bear historical superscriptions inviting the reader to interpret and express them through the colored lenses of recorded events in Israel's history. Moreover, fresh praise must arise as God maintains his faithfulness to Israel and his work in the world, so the invitation to "sing a new song" is both expressed and answered (Exod 15:1–21; Judg 5:1–31; 2 Sam 22:1–51; Pss 33:3; 96:1; 98:1; 149:1; Isa 42:10). Clearly the Psalms are the pulse of the OT.[20]

In the NT, reading and praying the Psalms was common practice among the believing community (Mark 14:26; 1 Cor 14:26). Expressing the psalms in corporate worship for mutual encouragement was a mark of being filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16). The NT church followed Jesus himself in interpreting and quoting psalms messianically, even while reading them on various levels[21] and using them for various purposes.[22] Since NT figures sometimes attribute even untitled psalms to David (e.g., Ps 2:1–2 in Acts 4:25; Ps 95:7b–8a in Heb 4:7), it might be said that when the NT authors read the Psalms, they saw the hand of David and heard the voice of Christ.[23]

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[20]For the use and development of the psalms during the Second Temple period, see William Lee Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 54–112 and Susan Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 1:5–13.

[21]J. Clinton McCann, Jr., "Psalms," in *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey*, ed. K. J. Vanhoozer, C. G. Bartholomew, and D. J. Treier (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 157–58.

[22]Three examples might include typological messianic proof (Acts 2:25–28, 34–35), doctrinal instruction (Rom 3:10–18), and spiritual encouragement (Eph 5:18–19; Col 3:16).

[23]Further research should explore whether the NT authors' uses of individual psalms may reflect patterns that reveal a presupposed view of the Psalter's structure. Wenham suggests, "There has been much discussion as to how Jesus came to understand that his role would be that of a suffering Messiah, when the common first-century Jewish expectation was that the Messiah would be a conquering king. Scholars usually look to Isaiah 53 to explain the scriptural basis of his conviction. But recent study of the Psalms, as I have shown, perhaps points to another source. The juxtaposition of the triumphant king in Psalm 2 with the persecuted in Psalms 3 onward could also lead to the conclusion that the future David would suffer before he triumphed. This I believe was the understanding of the editors of the psalms. Their careful arrangement of the psalms gives us sufficient clues for reconstructing their understanding" (Gordon J. Wenham, *The Psalter Reclaimed: Praying and Praising with the Psalms* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013], 99). For the use of specific psalms in various NT books, see Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J Menken, eds.,

The Psalter's Textual Development

This dissertation explores the canonical form of the 150-song Hebrew Psalter as represented in the Masoretic Text (A.D. 1008). In the LXX version of the Psalter, likely originating around the second century B.C.,[25] the numbering differs slightly due to variations in the joining and division of the psalms (table 1). Many psalms untitled in the Hebrew are ascribed to David in the Greek.[26] But the actual psalms and their order still match the MT. Even the placement (at the end) and the title ("outside the number") of the famous Psalm 151 indicate awareness of its apocryphal status.[27]

Table 1. Psalm numbering in the MT and LXX[24]

Book	MT	LXX
I	1–41	1–40
II	42–72	41–71
III	73–89	72–88
IV	90–106	89–105
V	107–150	106–150

The discovery of over thirty psalms manuscripts at Qumran in the middle of the twentieth century, however, raised serious questions about the Psalter's textual stability around the first century A.D. James Sanders acknowledged that the evidence from Qumran "points toward a general proto-Masoretic profile of the psalms materials," including a strong emphasis on Davidic authorship.[28] But he also suggested that the variant order and the apocryphal psalms in 11QPs[a] represent "a limited but valid Psalter tradition." Books IV–V, Sanders proposed, probably experienced textual fluidity possibly

The Psalms in the New Testament (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004) and Gillingham, *Psalms through the Centuries*, 13–23.

[24]Adapted from Roger T. Beckwith, "The Early History of the Psalter," *TynBul* 46, no. 1 (1995): 6.

[25]Tyler F. Williams, "Towards a Date for the Old Greek Psalter," in *The Old Greek Psalter: Studies in Honour of Albert Pietersma*, ed. R. J. V. Hiebert, C. E. Cox, and P. J. Gentry, JSOTSup 332 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 248–76.

[26]Beckwith, "Early History of the Psalter," 16.

[27]Beckwith, "Early History of the Psalter," 6.

[28]James A. Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 12–13.

lasting into the first century A.D.[29] In further research, Peter Flint found that the superscriptions of individual psalms and the order of the psalms showed a 92% match between the Qumran Psalms scrolls and the MT for Psalms 1–89, but only a 40% match for Psalms 90 and following. Flint therefore proposed a more precise two-stage development for the Psalter: Psalms 1–89 were stabilized prior to the first century B.C., and Psalms 90 and following not until the first century A.D.[30] Roger Beckwith, however, argues convincingly that the Psalter was concretized much earlier. Therefore the divergent order and apocryphal psalms in the Qumran texts are evidence of liturgical adaptation rather than a soft canon. Beckwith shows that (1) the largest Qumran Psalms scroll (11QPs^{a}) displays awareness of the 150-psalm Psalter; (2) there are mixtures of Books I and V (for example) and not just reordering within Books IV–V; (3) the Psalm titles are represented at Qumran basically in their MT form; and (4) the Psalter was already stable outside Qumran (i.e., in the Septuagint).[31] If indeed the Greek Psalter was created around the second century B.C.,[32] any apparent fluidity within the Hebrew Psalter likely would have been limited to textual variants (minor) or liturgical adaptations (major) rather than legitimate alternative pre-canonical editions.[33]

Pre-Critical Approaches to the Psalter

How did pre-critical interpreters view the Psalter as a whole? Did the structure

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[29]Sanders, *Dead Sea Psalms Scroll*, 13.

[30]Peter W. Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms*, STDJ 17 (New York: Brill, 1997), 148–49.

[31]Beckwith, "Early History of the Psalter," 1–27. Patrick Skehan was the first main opponent to Sanders' Qumran Psalms hypothesis (see Patrick W. Skehan, "Qumran and Old Testament Criticism," in *Qumran: Sa Piété, Sa Théologie et Son Milieu,* ed. M. Delcor, BETL 46 [Paris: Duculot, 1978], 163–82). Elsewhere Beckwith proposes specific theories regarding liturgical adaptations (Roger T. Beckwith, "The Courses of the Levites and the Eccentric Psalms Scrolls from Qumran," *RevQ* 11, no. 4 [1984]: 499–524).

[32]Williams, "Date for the Old Greek Psalter," 248–76.

[33]Sectarian documents are another possible explanation for apparent textual fluidity.

and order of the psalms seem "arbitrary" and "obscure" or "theologically coherent"?[34] Three select representatives illustrate speculation, curiosity, or relative silence over the Psalter's arrangement.[35]

Diodore of Tarsus (c. 330–390). This fourth-century Antiochene interpreter proposed two organizational structures for the Psalter. First, he attempted to capture the Psalter's "didactic purpose" by distinguishing between ethical psalms and dogmatic psalms.[36] Second, Diodore saw the Babylonian exile coloring the Psalter. Individual psalms could therefore be categorized by the historical situation the author seemed to express: those anticipating capture, those already exiled, those hoping to return, and those already home (along with other categories).[37] Diodore sought to discern the historical background and setting of individual psalms. But the chaotic chronology strewn throughout the Psalter led him to hypothesize that the book had been destroyed in the Babylonian invasions, rediscovered in fragments around the time of Ezra, and reconstructed according to the disorderly fragmentation in which it was found. Though his theories differ from later historical critics, "Diodore offers his own historical construction of how the Psalter reached its canonical form."[38]

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[34]Matthias Henze, "Patristic Interpretations of the Composition of the Psalter," in *Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture*, vol. 2, *Later Versions and Traditions*, ed. C. A. Evans, LSTS 51 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 135–47.

[35]Regarding medieval approaches, Beal notes, "Medieval scholars are not noted for moving Psalms interpretation into fresh arenas. Instead, they reproduce the tradition of the fathers, amassing collections (called glosses) of nonannotated patristic comments that surround and interleave each psalm" (L. Wray Beal, "Psalms 3: History of Interpretation," ed. T. Longman III and P. Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, IVP Bible Dictionary Series [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008], 607).

[36]Henze, "Patristic Interpretations," 138–39.

[37]Henze, "Patristic Interpretations," 139.

[38]Henze, "Patristic Interpretations," 140. See Jean Marie Olivier, *Diodori Tarsensis: Commentarii in Psalmos I–L*, CCSG (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1980).

Augustine of Hippo (354–430). *Enarrationes in Psalmos* ("Expositions on the Psalms") holds two distinctions. It is Augustine's "longest single work" as well as "the oldest existing commentary on the entire Psalter." Produced over the course of three decades (c. 392–420), these expositions were not strategically planned. They are rather a blended composition of the bishop's brief reflections, transcribed homilies, and dictated treatises (which he gave in order to complete the work). These varying reflections offered in diverse formats were later brought together (by others) into a more unified whole. Augustine worked from the Latin versions of the Septuagint, referring occasionally to the Greek but not the Hebrew.[39]

Before his reflections on Psalm 150, Augustine comments briefly on the structure of the Psalter. He admits that "the arrangement of the Psalms . . . seems to me to contain the secret of a mighty mystery" which "hath not yet been revealed unto me." Because his generation has "not as yet pierced with the eye of our mind the depth of their entire arrangement," he does not want to be "over-bold." He likewise admits that "when I endeavoured to make out the principle of this [five-book] division, I was not able."[40] Nevertheless, Augustine does see significance in the number 150, and he performs complex numeric symbolism attempting to mine its riches.

John Calvin (1509–1564). Calvin does not discuss the arrangement of the Psalms either at the beginning or end of his commentary, but he does note the strategic placement of Psalm 1.

> He who collected the Psalms into one volume, whether Ezra or some other person, appears to have placed this Psalm at the beginning, by way of preface, in which he inculcates upon all the godly the duty of meditating upon the law of God.

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[39]Hildegung Müller, "Enarrationes in Psalmos," in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, ed. K. Pollmann and W. Otten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1:412–17.

[40]Augustine of Hippo, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series 1, ed. P. Schaff (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1886–89; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 8:681–82.

> When David here speaks of *the law*, it ought not to be understood as if the other parts of Scripture should be excluded . . . . He must, therefore, be understood as meaning to exhort the faithful to the reading of the Psalms also.[41]

Calvin clearly recognizes editorial intentionality in the placement of Psalm 1 but does not apply the same principle to the remainder of the Psalter.

Critical Approaches to the Psalter

Critical approaches to the Psalter involve more nuanced methods than expressed below, but the following few stages capture the broad movements of Psalter studies since the nineteenth century.

Historical approach. Before the arrival of higher criticism, the psalm titles were commonly viewed as central for psalm interpretation. But in the nineteenth century they were "almost universally abandoned as late, inauthentic, and insignificant."[42] In the second half of the nineteenth century, scholars turned to focus primarily on the historical setting of the psalms. The approaches and conclusions of conservative and liberal scholars differed, but the aim of their efforts—historical reconstruction—was unified.[43]

Life-setting and form-critical approach. Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932) and his nuanced historical approach became a watershed in Psalms studies.[44] Gunkel sought to identify the specific genres (literary types) of the psalms in order to discern the life-setting from which they arose and the cultic environments which shaped them. He identified hymns, enthronement songs, community laments, royal psalms, individual

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[41]John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. H. Beveridge (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 1, 4.

[42]Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 509.

[43]John C. Crutchfield, *Psalms in Their Context: An Interpretation of Psalms 107–118* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2011), 1–2.

[44]See Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction*, trans. T. M. Horner (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967); Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. J. D. Nogalski (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998).

complaint songs, individual thanksgiving songs, as well as smaller genres.[45] This focus on individual psalms and genres would hold sway for the century to come.

Cultic approach. Gunkel's protégé Sigmund Mowinckel (1884–1965) would follow but refine his teacher's form-critical approach, seeking to complete Gunkel's work, which Mowinckel believed had gone "only half-way." Gunkel had identified psalm-genres and envisioned life settings involving the cult, but Mowinckel objected, "The majority of extant psalms were in Gunkel's opinion no real cult psalms; they were 'spiritualized' imitations of the old, now mostly lost, cultic psalm poetry."[46] In contrast, Mowinckel set out to show that "the psalms are—with very few exceptions—real cult psalms, made for cultic use."[47] This principle produced his main contribution: the idea of an annual enthronement festival as the impetus and background for numerous psalms.[48]

Canonical Approach to the Psalter

Brevard Childs (1923–2007) helped shift Psalms studies from *behind* and *beneath* the text to *within* the text, focusing on its final canonical form and its contemporary function as the voice of God for the people of God. In the Psalter, Childs heard the present voice of God, saw an eschatological horizon, and heard a communal cry. His primary concern was not to unearth historical backgrounds or refine psalm genres but to ask, "In what way does the final editing of the Psalter testify as to how the collectors understood the canonical material to function for the community of faith?"[49] Childs acknowledged the contributions of Gunkel and Mowinckel but keenly observed

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[45]Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms*, v.

[46]Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 1:29.

[47]Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:30.

[48]Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:106–92.

[49]Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 512–13.

how their narrow emphases on life settings and cult functions disabled them from seeing how the individual psalms had been crafted into the canonical Psalter and reconfigured as sacred Scripture designed to embed an eschatological, communal hope within the people of God.[50] One of Childs' students would grasp his mentor's vision and begin exploring new vistas involving the canonical shape of the Hebrew Psalter.

In 1985, Gerald Wilson published his paradigm-shifting dissertation *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, completed under Childs' supervision.[51] Wilson's comparative and comprehensive treatment gave firm footing to a canonical approach. Wilson examined Sumerian temple literature, Mesopotamian hymnic literature, Qumran psalms manuscripts, and the MT of the Psalter attempting to discern ancient editing approaches to sacred hymnic literature. He concluded that the Psalter bears an intentional shape marked mostly by "tacit" (rather than explicit) organizational methods: the five-book division marked by concluding doxologies; the use and distribution of superscriptions (and untitled psalms); the placement of royal psalms at book-seams; authorial, thematic, form, and genre groupings; juxtaposition of psalms bearing similar incipits (i.e., opening words); juxtaposition of psalms using the same name for deity; and the use of catch phrases or link words between psalms.[52] Wilson then explored the potential significance of the canonical shape, concluding that Books I–III reflect the rise and fall of the Davidic kingship while Books IV–V shift the reader's focus and trust to the eternal kingship of Yahweh.

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[50]Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 504–25.

[51]See also Gerald H. Wilson, "Evidence of Editorial Division in the Hebrew Psalter," *VT* 34, no. 3 (1984): 336–52; Gerald H. Wilson, "The Qumran Psalms Scroll Reconsidered: Analysis of the Debate," *CBQ* 47, no. 4 (1985): 624–42; Gerald H. Wilson, "The Use of Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter," *JSOT*, no. 35 (1986): 85–94; Gerald H. Wilson, "The Qumran Psalms Scroll (11QPs^{a}) and the Canonical Psalter: Comparison of Editorial Shaping," *CBQ* 59, no. 3 (1997): 448–64; Gerald H. Wilson, "The Structure of the Psalter," in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, ed. D. G. Firth and P. Johnston (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 229–46.

[52]Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 139–97.

Growing out of Wilson's work, canonical approaches to the Psalter have flourished. Interpreters have explored the structure of the Psalter from diverse angles. They have analyzed individual psalms,[53] pairs,[54] sets,[55] groups,[56] collections,[57] books,[58] and multi-book sections.[59] They have proposed deliberately juxtaposed themes,[60] analyzed the placement of individual psalms,[61] explored inner-biblical structural parallels,[62] evaluated possible pivot-points in the Psalter,[63] explored unifying themes,[64] argued for conceptual development,[65] and presented narrative trajectories.[66]

Three recent commentaries illustrate the canonical approach, which involves

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[53]Witt, "Psalm 102," 582–606; Wenham, *Psalter Reclaimed*, 147–59 (Psalm 103).

[54]Ryan M. Armstrong, "Psalms Dwelling Together in Unity: The Placement of Psalms 133 and 134 in Two Different Psalms Collections," *JBL* 131, no. 3 (2012): 487–506; Cole, *Psalms 1–2*.

[55]Howard, "Psalms 90–94," 108–23.

[56]David M. Howard, Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, BJS 5 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997); Crutchfield, *Psalms 107–118*.

[57]David C. Mitchell, "'God Will Redeem My Soul from Sheol': The Psalms of the Sons of Korah," *JSOT* 30, no. 3 (2006): 365–84; Christine Danette Brown Jones, "The Psalms of Asaph: A Study of the Function of a Psalm Collection" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2009).

[58]Robert L. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III (Psalms 73–89)*, JSOTSup 307 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*; Michael K. Snearly, "The Return of the King: An Editorial-Critical Analysis of Psalms 107–150" (PhD diss., Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012); cf. summary in Michael K. Snearly, "The Return of the King: Book V as a Witness to Messianic Hope in the Psalter," in *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul*, ed. A. J. Schmutzer and D. M. Howard [Chicago: Moody, 2013], 209–17).

[59]Kim, "Strategic Arrangement of Royal Psalms in Books IV–V," 143–57.

[60]Grant, *King as Exemplar*.

[61]Witt, "Psalm 102," 582–606.

[62]Creach, "Shape of Book Four of the Psalter and the Shape of Second Isaiah," 63–76.

[63]Kenneth Share, "The Pivot Point in the Psalter: An Exegetical Contribution to the Current Canonical Debate" (PhD diss., Fordham University, 2002).

[64]Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, JSOTSup 217 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

[65]Brueggemann, "Bounded by Obedience and Praise," 63–92.

[66]Michael Barber, *Singing in the Reign: The Psalms and the Liturgy of God's Kingdom* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road, 2001), 81–133.

(but is not limited to) interpreting individual psalms in literary context, analyzing possible evidence of structural intentionality, observing and interpreting interconnections between psalms, and evaluating possible progression within the book as a whole.[67]

In 1993, 2002, and 2008, Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger published their three-volume commentary in German.[68] In 2005 and 2011, Hermeneia published revamped English editions of the second and third volumes.[69] In their introductions, Hossfeld and Zenger propose a progressive composition where the Psalter grew through small groupings of Psalms being added over time. In this construction, each addition was strategic: "The various subgroups of Psalms were collected by the redactors not in an unplanned fashion, but rather according to a definite plan revealing liturgically and/or theologically relevant compositional arcs."[70] Therefore, "each psalm is a text in itself with an individual profile, and at the same time it is open to the context in which it stands within the book of Psalms, which gives it an additional dimension of meaning."[71]

In 2006, Jean-Luc Vesco published his two-volume, 1424-page French commentary on the entire Psalter.[72] He promotes and practices a canonical reading

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[67]On the other hand, two recent commentaries have avoided a canonical approach: John Goldingay (2006–2008, see below) and Allen P. Ross (*A Commentary on the Psalms* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011]). Goldingay sees too much speculation in the canonical approach. He maintains, "The Psalter's division into books seems somewhat arbitrary, like the arrangement of the Psalter as a whole." Seeking to ascertain the Psalter's structure requires "too much imagination in connecting too few dots." Goldingay therefore prefers to "focus on the [individual] psalms as we have them" (John Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, BCOT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 11–12; also see *Psalms 1–41* (2006) and *Psalms 42–89* [2007] in the same series). For cautious optimism, see Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms*, THOTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 21–29.

[68]Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen I: Psalm 1–50*, NEchtB (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993); idem, *Die Psalmen II: Psalm 51–100*, NEchtB (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2002); idem, *Psalmen 101–150*, HTKAT (Freiburg: Herder, 2008).

[69]Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. L. M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005); *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150*, trans. L. M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011).

[70]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 2.

[71]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 7.

[72]Jean-Luc Vesco, *Le Psautier de David: Traduit et Commenté*, 2 vols., LD (Paris: Cerf, 2006).

centered on the MT, arguing that the Psalms have an "ultimate sense" that arises from the relationships among individual psalms and their connections:

> Seule une lecture globale permet de renouer les fils qui unissent entre eux les différents psaumes et de mieux dégager la théologie de leurs mutuelles relations ainsi que de leur sens ultime.[73]

In 2008, Willem VanGemeren published his commentary for the revised Expositor's Bible Commentary. He surveys the development of Psalms studies and approves of the recent canonical approach (while still valuing and gleaning from other approaches): "Reading the Psalter as a book encourages the reader to interpret individual psalms in relation to the whole." Seeking to employ this method wisely, VanGemeren asks, "How does one determine the boundaries that shape the interpretation of a psalm?" He proposes that readers should interpret each psalm at three levels: (1) the psalm on its own, (2) the psalm "within the thematic framework in Psalms 1 and 2," and (3) the psalm within the greater Psalter. This approach "opens the reader to the world of the Psalter."[74]

In 2014, two more canonically sensitive commentaries were published: *Psalms* by Walter Brueggemann and W. H. Bellinger and *The Book of Psalms* (NICOT) by Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf Jacobson, and Beth Tanner. Brueggemann and Bellinger take a blended approach utilizing various methodologies both old and new (see below).[75] The NICOT commentary provides canonical overviews of the structure and message of the Psalter and each of its five books but does not emphasize word-links or thematic development within the summary addressing the psalms of Book IV.[76]

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[73]Vesco, *Psautier*, 1:34. Translation: "Only a comprehensive reading allows us to retie the threads which bind together the different psalms and to better identify the theology of their mutual relationships as well as their ultimate meaning" (translation mine, with editorial assistance from Dieudonné Tamfu).

[74]VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 37, 39.

[75]Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms*, NCBC (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[76]Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 21–38.

Davidic Hope in Book IV: Diminished or Sustained?

The canonical approach has spawned many specific studies of Book IV. This survey will explore treatments of Book IV from the latter half of the twentieth century. Several of the earlier and more prominent form-critical approaches to Book IV are included in the survey, though form-critical treatments of Book IV now seem outnumbered by canonically sensitive treatments. The following survey will reveal the ongoing debate regarding the status and role of the Davidic kingship in Book IV.

Form-Critical Views of Book IV

Form criticism by nature focuses on individual psalms, genre categories, and cultic backgrounds more than the structure, progression, and message of the Psalter's five books. Nevertheless I include several of the earlier and more prominent form-critical approaches to Book IV in order to demonstrate the interpretational progression over time.

Claus Westermann (1967). Westermann follows form-critical categories and focuses on psalm genres. He discerns various collections in the Psalter but no overall structure. The arrangement appears "random," "rough," and "disorganized." Even the five-book division is "artificial" and "formal."[77] Two discernable groupings appear in Book IV: "so-called enthronement psalms" (93–99) and "psalms of praise" (103–107).[78] Westermann sees no overarching structure and therefore offers no cohesive message (including or excluding Davidic hope) arising from the Psalter.

Michael D. Goulder (1975). Goulder proposes that the seventeen psalms of Book IV are an "ordered collection" containing the morning-evening liturgy of the feast

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[77]Claus Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content, and Message*, trans. R. D. Gehrke (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 16–17.

[78]Westermann, *Psalms*, 18. Westermann excludes Ps 94 from the enthronement group in 93–99 and sees Ps 100 as the group's conclusion.

of tabernacles celebrated each autumn.[79] One even-numbered psalm was chanted each evening, and one odd-numbered psalm each morning. The festival commenced on the evening of 15 Tishri with the recitation of Psalm 90. Each psalm in Book IV was then expressed liturgically on its appropriate morning or evening as the feast progressed.[80] Goulder, like Westermann, precedes the rise of the canonical approach, so form-critical categories guide his proposed structure for Book IV. Naturally, then, he does not address the more recent debates over the continuation or discontinuation of Davidic hope in Book IV. But Goulder does observe, "The most striking feature of Book IV as a whole is the break in mood between the triumphant rejoicing at Yahweh's reign in xci–c and the somber, penitent mood of ci–cii."[81] I will discuss this mood shift in chapters 5–6.

Walter Brueggemann (1984). Brueggemann traces the trajectory of both the Psalter and the soul from *orientation* to *disorientation* to *new orientation*.[82] Blending the critical contributions of Gunkel, Mowinckel, and Westermann with a spiritual-psychological awareness of typical seasons of the soul, Brueggemann pursues a "postcritical" interpretation.[83] Since form-critical categories are both inescapable and

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[79]Goulder, "Fourth Book," 269–89. Goulder later addressed other psalm collections in *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, JSOTSup 20 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983); idem, *The Prayers of David (Psalms 51–72): Studies in the Psalter, II*, JSOTSup 102 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990); and idem, *The Psalms of the Return (Book V, Psalms 107–150): Studies in the Psalter, IV*, JSOTSup 258 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

[80]See the proposed schedule in Goulder, "Fourth Book," 286.

[81]Goulder, "Fourth Book," 283.

[82]Brueggemann, *Message of the Psalms*; idem, "Psalms and the Life of Faith," 3–32.

[83]"Psalm interpretation is at the present time beset by a curious reality. There is a devotional tradition of piety that finds the Psalms acutely attuned to the needs and possibilities of profound faith. . . . This tradition of Psalm usage tends to be precritical, and is relatively uncomplicated by any scholarly claims. There is also a well-established scholarly tradition of interpretation with a rather stable consensus. This tradition of interpretation tends to be critical, working beyond the naivete of the devotional tradition, but sometimes being more erudite than insightful. These two traditions of interpretation proceed without much knowledge of, attention to, or impact on the other. The devotional tradition of piety is surely weakened by disregarding the perspectives and insights of scholarship. Conversely, the scholarly tradition of interpretation is frequently arid, because it lingers excessively on formal questions, with inability or reluctance to bring its insights and methods to substantive matters of exposition. . . . What seems to be

insightful, form criticism must be blended with a faith-filled approach to the psalms. Brueggemann uses his template of *orientation*, *disorientation*, and *new orientation* to categorize psalm genres and spiritual experiences. He then locates specific psalm genres and individual psalms within these three stages. In his selective commentary, Brueggemann categorizes ten of the seventeen psalms from Book IV: one fits the *orientation* category (Ps 104), one *disorientation* (Ps 90), and eight *new orientation* (Pss 91, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 103).[84] Book IV therefore moves the Psalter and the soul toward a new orientation.

Summary of form-critical views. Westermann, Goulder, and Brueggemann represent form-critical, cult-functional, and postcritical interpretations of the psalms in Book IV. Each approach is tied to form critical values in some way. These authors (at least their earlier works) precede the rise and refinement of canonical views. Brueggemann, however, has consistently demonstrated his ability to engage and glean from diverse approaches arising in Psalms studies over the decades.[85] Thirty years after publishing *The Message of the Psalms* (with its blended "postcritical" approach), he co-authored a new Psalms commentary using a four-fold methodology including canonical concerns regarding the Psalms as a whole.[86] As we continue traversing the fresh canonical trail in Psalms studies, Brueggemann models heuristic humility: an embrace of

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needed (and is here attempted) is a *postcritical* interpretation that lets the devotional and scholarly traditions support, inform, and correct each other, so that the formal gains of scholarly methods may enhance and strengthen, as well as criticize, the substance of genuine piety in its handling of the Psalms" (Brueggemann, *Message of the Psalms*, 15–16).

[84]Commentary on select psalms from Book IV in Brueggemann, *Message of the Psalms*: Orientation: Ps 104 (pp. 31–33). Disorientation: Ps 90 (pp. 110–15). New Orientation: Ps 91 (pp. 156–57); Ps 93 (p. 146); Ps 96 (pp. 144–46); Ps 97 (pp. 146–47); Ps 98 (pp. 147–48); Ps 99 (pp. 148–49); Ps 100 (p. 165); Ps 103 (pp. 160–61).

[85]See Brueggemann, "Bounded by Obedience and Praise," 63–92; idem, "Response to James L. Mays, 'The Question of Context,'" in *Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. J. C. McCann, Jr., JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 29–41; and Walter Brueggemann and Patrick D. Miller, "Psalm 73 as a Canonical Marker," *JSOT*, no. 72 (1996): 45–56.

[86]Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 4–8.

of new methods that pursues engagement without enslavement, and an employment of old methods that reflects careful appreciation without inflexible nostalgia. In that spirit I now move into canonical views of Book IV, aiming not to silence previous contributors but stand on their shoulders.

Davidic Hope Diminished in Book IV

Many canonical interpreters over the past three decades have argued, suggested, or assumed that the Davidic kingship, fallen and failed in Psalm 89, gives way to Moses and the kingship of Yahweh in Book IV, thereby minimizing the Psalter's previous emphasis on the Davidic king. Book IV therefore urges Israel to turn her hopes to her true heavenly king, Yahweh, and abandon hope in human rulers. Naturally, no two interpreters (or their views) are created equal, but each author in this section emphasizes that Davidic hope has greatly diminished or even disappeared in Book IV.

Gerald H. Wilson (1985). In his seminal work, Wilson suggested that Book IV is the "editorial center" of the Psalter and is "especially the product of purposeful editorial placement."[87] Untitled psalms fill Book IV: twelve of the seventeen psalms are untitled in the MT, unmoored from the authorial, historical, musical, or liturgical contexts often signaled by superscriptions.[88] These psalms are especially flexible for placement. Naturally, then, Book IV is also marked by "the close interweaving of theme and verbal correspondences."[89] This intentionality warrants close attention to lexical links, thematic connections, and strategic progression in Book IV.

Wilson then concluded that Books I–III reflect the rise and fall of the Davidic

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[87]Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 215.

[88]Wilson says that 13 of the 17 psalms in Book IV are untitled, but earlier he mentions that Psalm 98 does bear the simple title מזמור ("a psalm").

[89]Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 215. What follows is a survey of "interrelationships" between the psalms of Book IV (215–19).

kingship while Books IV–V shift the reader's focus and trust to the eternal kingship of Yahweh. Book IV functions as the "'answer' to the problem posed in Psalm 89 regarding the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant with which Books I–III are primarily concerned. Book IV provides four main answers: "(1) YHWH is king; (2) He has been our 'refuge' in the past, long before the monarchy existed (i.e., in the Mosaic period); (3) He will continue to be our refuge now that the monarchy is gone; (4) Blessed are they that trust in him!"[90] Therefore the Davidic monarchy yields to the kingship of Yahweh. In Psalm 106, "YHWH's mercy still serves as the basis of future hope and the fourth book closes with a plea of its own: not a plea for YHWH to live up to his covenant obligations to David and his descendants, but a plea simply for restoration from exile."[91]

Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford (1997, 2004, 2014). DeClaissé-Walford has consistently argued that Davidic hope has diminished and even disappeared in Book IV.[92] In *Reading from the Beginning* (1997) she suggests that Psalm 90 "begins the end" of the Psalter, shifting the storyline in a "new direction."[93] Drawing a connection between the verb הגה in Psalms 2:1 and 90:9, deClaissé-Walford suggests, "Ancient Israel's attempt at 'self-rule' in the Davidic dynasty is as empty as the plotting of YHWH's enemies in Psalm 2."[94] In response to the failure of David's line (Ps 89), Moses' "updated intercession" (Ps 90) prompts remembrance of ancient times when Yahweh alone was king, long before the monarchs ruled her land and the royal line ruled her hopes. With these royal hopes now dashed, Israel is summoned back to her Yahweh-alone

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[90]Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 215.

[91]Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 219.

[92]Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 81–91; idem, *Introduction to the Psalms: A Song from Ancient Israel* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2004), 99–111; deClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *Psalms*, 21–38.

[93]DeClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 81–82.

[94]DeClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 87.

perspective. In light of Psalms 1–2, what is the function of the last two books?

> They remind the postexilic community that YHWH was their king long before the days of David and Solomon and tell the people that YHWH will continue to be their king with all the identity and stability that kingship entails. Ancient Israel can survive if it relies completely on the two tenets by which Israel survived through centuries of its historical past—YHWH's תורה (Psalm 1) and YHWH's kingship (Psalm 2).[95]

In her *Introduction to the Psalms* (2004), deClaissé-Walford still sees no positive role or future hope for David in Book IV. The monarchy, including David's line, was a "grand experiment" that "failed."[96] Therefore the Davidic kingship functions only as a foil for the reign of Yahweh. Davidic rule has no future and must be left in the past. Israel's sole hope is now the unmediated reign of God (deClaissé-Walford never addresses Pss 101–104).

There are two main characters in Book IV: Moses and God. Moses' appearance in Psalm 90 reminds Israel of the exodus and the wilderness wanderings when God alone was her king. Book IV is therefore "a turn away from looking back to the days of King David and a turn toward looking forward to the reign of God as king over Israel once again." Indeed, "Yahweh is king. The Israelites have no need of an earthly king." Therefore, this collection of psalms "admonishes the Israelites to stop looking back and longing for the days of the Davidic dynasty, and to look ahead to the days of the reign of God as king over Israel." After all, "their temple could be rebuilt, their religious practices could continue, but the nation-state under the leadership of a king of the line of David would not be restored." Israel could only survive "if they acknowledged that God and not a human of the line of David was to be their king."[97]

Finally, her multi-authored commentary *The Book of Psalms* (2014) continues

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[95]DeClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 82.

[96]DeClaissé-Walford, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 101.

[97]The quotations in this paragraph may be found (respectively) in deClaissé-Walford, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 104–105, 108, 110, 140, and 139.

to deemphasize Davidic hope within Book IV.[98] The canonical overview reads, "The community of faith cannot return to the days of King David." God is king "rather than a king of the Davidic line."[99] The overview of Book IV briefly concedes Davidic hope as "the real David monarchy becomes more of a messianic hope," but even here the authors express surprise over the reappearance of Davidic superscriptions and draw a distinction between "the *real* Davidic monarchy" and "the messianic hope."[100]

Erich Zenger (2000). Zenger argues that Book IV paints a grand vision of a new world order in which Israel and the nations are unified at Zion.[101] Here in Book IV the "messianic program" of Books I–III yields to the "theocratic program" of Books IV–V.[102] Lohfink and Zenger see three sections in Book IV: 90–92, 93–100, and 101–106. Psalms 90–92 express lament (90), assurance (91), and thanksgiving (92). Psalms 93–100 trumpet the "universal reign of Yahweh" which ensures a "just and life-affirming world order."[103] Psalms 101–106 then sound a Davidic voice testifying to Yahweh's reign.

Book IV demonstrates *continuity* with Books I–III in that "Book IV holds fast to this utopia of the king's universal reign—against all catastrophic experiences in Israel's history (Psalms 102, 105–106) and against all experiences of mortality and death (Psalms 90 and 102)." But *discontinuity* is found in the identity of the king. It is now Yahweh and not David who reigns, and it is Yahweh and not David who will reign forever. Davidic superscriptions appear in Book IV only because David and Moses stand

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[98]DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *Psalms*, 21–38.

[99]DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *Psalms*, 34.

[100]DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *Psalms*, 688 (emphasis added). Considering the covenantal and genealogical trajectory pulsing through the OT and specifically the Davidic covenant, the bifurcation between the Davidic line and Israel's messianic hope seems inexplicable and indefensible.

[101]Zenger, "Psalms 90–106," 161–90.

[102]Zenger, "Psalms 90–106," 161.

[103]Zenger, "Psalms 90–106," 169.

together as two "foundational figures" who testify together to Yahweh's reign.[104]

C. Hassell Bullock (2001). The placement and themes of Book IV accomplish two main goals within the Psalter. First, Book IV swings sharply from the Davidic covenant to the Mosaic and Abrahamic covenants. Second, Book IV sweeps away the rubble of the Davidic kingship to reveal the eternal foundation of Yahweh's reign. The יהוה מלך psalms trumpet three main praises: God is sovereign in creation, justice, and judgment.[105] Bullock contrasts sharply between Books I–III and Books IV–V. Royal psalms 2, 72, and 89 mark Books I–III with a Davidic hue. But Psalm 90 reintroduces Moses as Israel's historical mediator as she faces the harrowing realities of exile (Book III). Moses' intercessory confession betrays the true cause of Israel's predicament—torah-breaking—which escaped undiagnosed in Psalm 89's lament. Book IV aims "to divert attention away from the Davidic covenant, which had so miserably failed, back to the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, especially the Mosaic."[106] Bullock analogizes from Hosea 1:8–11 where God denies Israel as his people but then reiterates the Abrahamic promise on their behalf. As Book IV progresses, the magnified presence of Moses is meant to remind the Israelites of the kingship of Yahweh and their failed relationship with his law. Indeed, the יהוה מלך psalms and David's own declaration in 103:19 draw attention away from the "defunct" and "symbolic" monarchy to the "true reality" of Yahweh's reign.

Jean-Luc Vesco (2006). Vesco, like others, sees Book IV responding to the failure of the Davidic covenant in Psalm 89.[107] He also sees significance in the

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[104]Zenger, "Psalms 90–106," 190.

[105]C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 187–97.

[106]Bullock, *Encountering the Psalms*, 66–67.

[107]Vesco, *Psautier*, 2:841–42, 2:1017–19.

prevalence of untitled psalms in Book IV. Shared themes are therefore the key to their arrangement: "Les thèmes communs à certains d'entre eux permettent de retrouver le principe de leur regroupement."[108] Book IV comprises three sections: 90–92, 93–100, and 101–106. Psalms 90–92 mourn wrath but end in thanksgiving; 93–100 celebrate Yahweh's reign; and 101–106 display the disposition required of the faithful. Psalms 90 and 106 bookend Book IV, sharing the themes of God's wrath against sinners and his faithful favor toward his people. Vesco's overall assessment of Book IV follows Wilson closely: Book IV answers Psalm 89 by raising the high kingship of Yahweh over the fallen monarchy. "Le vrai roi c'est YHWH, qui règne sur l'univers entier."[109]

Robert E. Wallace (2007). Wallace argues that Book IV shifts sharply to Moses and the reign of Yahweh, excluding any continuation of Davidic hope within the book. Moses intercedes for Israel (90–92), Yahweh reigns in majesty (93–100), David defers to Moses (101–103), and Israel is reminded of Yahweh's faithfulness despite her sin (104–106). When David does appear in Book IV (101–103), he honors Moses, turns to Moses for answers, and promotes the primacy of the Mosaic covenant. Even the David who returns in Book V is a David "whose power is not absolute, and whose throne and progeny are not certain."[110] In his final summary, Wallace excludes the Davidic kingship from any role in Book IV: "Davidic covenant can be set aside. David agrees that Moses is the authority, and David no longer rules. YHWH reigns!"[111]

Krista Mournet (2011). Mournet examines the bookends of Book IV (Pss 90 and 106).[112] With the Davidic covenant broken (Ps 89), Moses enters to intercede for

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[108]Vesco, *Psautier*, 2:842.

[109]Vesco, *Psautier*, 2:842.

[110]Wallace, *Narrative Effect of Book IV*, 84.

[111]Wallace, *Narrative Effect of Book IV*, 94.

[112]Mournet, "Moses and the Psalms," 66–79.

Israel. Psalm 90 then shifts dramatically away from David as Moses reveals that God is Israel's ultimate refuge (90:1). Both Psalms 90 and 106 allude to the golden calf incident, providing intercession (90) and hope (106), because "if God could [forgive and restore] in the past, God can do it again."[113] Mournet concludes that Psalms 90–106 function to remind Israel that God is king, he acts in response to his people's prayers, and he will sustain his people in the absence of the Davidic monarchy. She also suggests "two unique, concurrent streams of Psalmic development: the Qumran Psalter, which elevates David, and the Masoretic version, which elevates Moses at a key point in the Psalter's arrangement in Book IV."[114]

Bernard Gosse (2012). Gosse sees Book IV responding to Psalms 88–89.[115] The dark tomb of 88 and Davidic disaster of 89 seem to swallow Yahweh's steadfast love. Further, the problem extends beyond David: all of Abraham's descendants are afflicted, and future generations are in doubt (Ps 90:14–16). But steadfast love reappears in the morning and evening praises (Ps 90:14; 92:3; cf. 88:2, 14), and again in Yahweh's sovereign redemption of Israel from exile (98:2–3) which demonstrates his faithfulness to the patriarchs (Pss 105:8–11, 42–45; 106:45–47). Therefore the redemption celebration in 107 ends by inviting the "wise" to recognize that Yahweh is (and will be) faithful to his promises (107:43).

Book IV continues the Psalm 89 diminishment of David: (1) the established "throne" in 103:19 refers to Yahweh's throne (89:15; 93:2; 97:2), not David's (89:5, 30, 37, 45); (2) the Abrahamic covenant in 105:6–9 replaces ("se substitue") the Davidic covenant in 89:4; and (3) "chosen one" (בחיר) occurs only 5x in the Psalter (89:4; 105:6, 43; 106:5, 23), first referring to David (89:4) but then transferred to Abraham and Israel.

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[113]Mournet, "Moses and the Psalms," 73.

[114]Mournet, "Moses and the Psalms," 78.

[115]Gosse, "La Réponse des Ps 90-106 aux Ps 88-89," 481–86.

Davidic Hope Sustained in Book IV

The interpreters above believe that Psalms 90–106 respond to Psalm 89 by diminishing or discontinuing the hope for a Davidic king during the exilic period portrayed by this portion of the Psalter. The interpreters below, on the other hand, believe that Psalms 90–106 (or 90–150) sustain the hope for a Davidic king in various ways.

David M. Howard, Jr. (1997, 2013). Howard, opposite deClaissé-Walford, has consistently allowed for Davidic hope in the final two books of the Psalter.[116] His main argument has been theological: the kingships of Yahweh and David are not contradictory but complementary. In *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, even after emphasizing the kingship-of-Yahweh psalms which many interpreters view overshadowing Davidic hope in Book IV, Howard concludes that Yahweh's reign is the Psalter's theme *and* that his rule includes the representative reign of the Davidic monarch, so that the Davidic covenant promises are upheld.[117]

> [T]he Davidic kingdom and YHWH's kingdom coexist in complementary roles throughout the Psalter. Of the two, YHWH's kingdom is clearly the more important and the one from which the Davidic kingdom derives its legitimacy and authority. Yet Zion and the Davidic kingdom are the earthly expressions of YHWH's kingdom in important ways.[118]

Howard argues this point once again in his more recent essay, because "the Psalter tells the story of God's kingdom, both in its cosmic dimensions—he is king over all nations, rulers, nature, etc.—and in its earthly dimensions, mediated through the sons of David."[119] The major contribution Howard makes is blending the permanence of the cosmic reign of Yahweh with the perseverance of the earthly reign of the Davidic line.

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[116]Howard, *Psalms 93–100*, 166–83; idem, "Divine and Human Kingship as Organizing Motifs in the Psalter," in *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul*, ed. A. J. Schmutzer and D. M. Howard, Jr. (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 197–207.

[117]See appendix 4 entitled "Wisdom and Royalist/Zion Traditions in the Psalter" in Howard, *Psalms 93–100*, 200–207.

[118]Howard, *Psalms 93–100*, 201.

[119]Howard, "Divine and Human Kingship," 206.

Howard recognizes that while Psalm 90 is meant to "refocus our attention on God as the true source of security and refuge" and while Moses was "the great leader in Israel at a time when there was no king in Israel," this pair of realities "does not signal that the Davidic covenant is dead."[120] The reign of Yahweh does not undercut the Davidic future but upholds it. Further, the Psalter begins weaving together threads of divine and human kingship whose full tapestry will be seen in the future coronation of the ultimate Messiah who will inaugurate, manifest, and climax the eschatological reign of God.

David C. Mitchell (1997). Mitchell disagrees with David-deemphasizing views of Books IV–V on several grounds. Literarily, why does David reappear rejuvenated in Psalm 103 and ruling in Book V? Ethically, how can the Psalter encourage worshipers to trust God as king if the covenantal catastrophe in Psalm 89 remains unresolved? Historically, where is the contemporaneous literature showing that the abandonment of Davidic hope characterized the periods surrounding the final redaction of the Psalter? Unsatisfactory answers to these questions lead Mitchell away from Wilson's influential thesis.[121]

Mitchell proposes that the Psalter is shaped by an eschatological rather than a historical agenda. His eschatological and messianic reading is based on four arguments.

> First, [the Psalter] originated in an eschatologically conscious milieu.
>
> Second, the figures to whom the Psalms are attributed were regarded as future-predictive prophets even in biblical times.
>
> Thirdly, certain psalms seems [*sic*] to be of an intrinsically 'ultimate' character, that is, they describe a person or event in such glowing terms that the language far exceeds the reality of any historical king or battle.
>
> Fourthly, the very inclusion of the royal psalms in the Psalter suggests that the

[120]Howard, "Divine and Human Kingship," 205.

[121]Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 272–303.

redactor understood them to refer to a future *mashiah*-king.[122]

In this eschatological program, Psalm 90 is the Psalter's "turning point,"[123] introducing the eschatological exilic wanderings of Book IV. The book then divides into Psalms 90–100 and 101–106. The dominant themes in Book IV include the "wilderness exile and ingathering" and "guilt and forgiveness" (in a "context of national punishment"). It progresses "from sin through repentance to forgiveness, from despair to expectation of a new world order, from exile to ingathering."[124] As a whole, Book IV reflects Israel's latter-day exile among the nations portrayed in Zechariah 13:7–14:2.[125] The reign of Yahweh in Psalms 93–100 either anticipates the worldwide eschatological kingdom of God or displays how knowledge of Yahweh has spread among the nations through Israel's sojourn. Mitchell is careful not to bifurcate between the historical and the prophetic. After all, "The essence of Israel's view of prophecy was that historic events prefigure future ones."[126]

Hyung Jun Kim (1998). Kim performs the most detailed and complete analysis of lexical, thematic, and structural linkage binding Psalm 89 and Book IV, especially 90–103.[127] Psalm 90 continues the lament of 89:39–52, but 90 and 106 pinpoint sin as the cause of Israel's suffering. Two major sections then comprise Book IV: 90–100 and 102–106, with 101 in the middle. Logical thematic progression marks the order in Book IV, and the declarative Psalm 101 stands at the center as a royal psalm forecasting future hope for a kingless people. According to Kim, even within Book IV a

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[122]Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 82–89.

[123]Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 75.

[124]Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 295.

[125]Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 272. Therefore Book IV is not referring primarily to the Babylonian exile but the latter-day exile (Ezek 20:35–38; Zech 13:7–14:2; Hos 2:16 [14]) (274).

[126]Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 84.

[127]Kim, "Structure and Coherence."

future Davidide stands ready for the eschatological fulfillment of God's promises:

> Psalm 101 is positioned in the middle between the first section and the second, and the effect of this position seems to give Book IV an orientation to the future that implies a messianic expectation. By being placed after a series of Yahweh-kingship psalms, Psalm 101 seems to have taken an important position: the anticipation of Yahweh's coming as king can be correlated with the advent of a human king.[128]

Michael Barber (2001). Barber reads the Psalter as a carefully crafted post-exilic anthology with a narrative structure reflecting Israel's historical hope for the restoration of the Davidic kingdom whose establishment would consummate the purposes and promises embedded in God's previous covenants with Adam, Abraham, and Israel. "This hope for the restoration of the Davidic kingdom represents the message and editorial principle of the Psalter."[129]

Book IV begins with exiled Israel in a new wilderness awaiting a new exodus. The book reverberates with Pentateuchal echoes. Moses intercedes over the threatened Davidic covenant in Psalms 90–92 as he interceded for the threatened Abrahamic covenant in Exodus 32–34. The יהוה מלך psalms evoke the Song of the Sea (Exod 15) by their declaration that "Yahweh reigns" (93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1; Exod 15:18), their invitation to "sing a new song" (96:1; 98:1), and their reminders of the glory cloud (97:2–3; 99:7). The Davidic king reappears in Psalms 101–103, and 104–106 recount salvation history from creation (104) to the patriarchs (105) to the wilderness wandering (106).

> The cumulative effect of these three psalms is to present the restoration of Israel from exile under the Davidic king as the fulfillment of all salvation history. By bringing mankind back to Himself through the son of David and the kingdom of God, the Lord accomplishes His goal in creation, fulfills His oath to Abraham, realizes the vocation of Israel, and remembers the covenant He swore to David.[130]

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[128]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 413–14.

[129]Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 60.

[130]Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 125–26.

James Todd Borger (2002). Borger investigates the explosion of Moses language in Book IV. After evaluating Moses' roles in the Torah, Prophets, Writings, and Psalms 90–106, Borger concludes that Book IV presents Moses as Israel's intercessor.[131] Israel's problem, then, is her sin. As a whole, Book IV comprises two main sections: 90–101 and 102–106. Borger then repurposes Brueggemann's *orientation-disorientation-reorientation* schematic, mapping it onto the way the Psalter traces the Davidic covenant:

> [T]his movement from orientation, to disorientation, to new orientation seems to be exactly what is happening in the Psalter in terms of the establishment, disestablishment, and reestablishment of the Davidic covenant. The Mosaic portion of the Psalter under investigation here is part, and in fact the catalytic part, of the new orientation.[132]
>
> Thus, if Psalm 89 represents the 'failure' of the Davidic covenant, Psalms 101 and 103 represent the 'redemption' of the covenant and the renewal of its place in Israel's faith.[133]

Jerome F. D. Creach (2008). Creach counters the common view that Book IV marginalizes David through its emphases on Moses, the wilderness period, and the reign of Yahweh. Rather, Psalms 101–104 present David's reentry. David seeks the kingship so that he might enact righteousness and justice in the land (Ps 101);[134] he suffers as he waits for God's vindication (Ps 102); he "proclaims hope for the righteous community and promises that God's steadfast love will sustain them" (Ps 103); and he rejoices in creation before declaring the future destruction of the wicked (Ps 104). The placement of royal Psalm 101 directly following the יהוה מלך psalms indicates that David plays a role in establishing God's rule on earth. Finally, Moses reappears in Psalms 105–106 (*inclusio* with Ps 90), repeating his intercessory role petitioning God to gather his

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[131]Borger, "Moses in the Fourth Book," 164–72.

[132]Borger, "Moses in the Fourth Book," 14.

[133]Borger, "Moses in the Fourth Book," 165.

[134]Creach repeatedly returns to Ps 101 as a central psalm in Book IV, a psalm which highlights the sustained hope of Davidic restoration (*Destiny of the Righteous*, 78–79, 96–98, 107–8).

people from their exile among the nations despite their history of rebellion.[135]

Michael G. McKelvey (2010). McKelvey presents the most complete and balanced canonical study of Book IV thus far. He works sequentially through all seventeen psalms in Book IV and concludes that Book IV reorients the Psalter's post-exilic audience by reminding them of (a) their sin and resultant exile, (b) the high kingship of Yahweh who sustains them, (c) the hope for Davidic restoration, and (d) the promise of God's mercy based on his past compassion. Psalms 90–92 present a Mosaic voice interceding for Israel and reminding her of former times when God alone ruled through Moses; 93–100 remind Israel that Yahweh is her ultimate king who reigns despite all appearances; 101–104 implicitly critique past kings while sustaining the hope that a future king from David's line will be restored; and 105–106 recount the history of Israel's sin and God's deliverance.

> Thus, in reply to Psalm 89, YHWH has not neglected his covenant with David or been unfaithful to its promises. Instead, the fall of kingship in Israel resulted from the failure of Davidic kings to uphold the standards expected of Israelite royalty. However, though a human king does not exist at present, Book IV states that the promise of God to David still has future relevance. The connection between David and YHWH's kingship in Book IV suggests that a coming messianic figure will bring fulfillment to YHWH's promises by instituting the eschatological, transnational kingdom of God.[136]

Lindsay Wilson (2010). Wilson explores Psalms 103–106 to ascertain first their relationship to the divine kingship so prominent earlier in Book IV and then "the relationship between God's kingship and any future Davidic hope." Within these final four psalms he identifies two pairs: 103–104 and 105–106. Their most prominent themes are creation (Ps 104) and redemption (Pss 103, 105–106). But "if we dig a little deeper, we strike the bedrock of God ruling as king." In other words, beneath the twin

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[135]Creach treats Book IV in *Destiny of the Righteous*, 70–79.

[136]McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 323.

themes of creation and redemption stands the rule of God, thereby making Psalms 103–106 a fitting close to Book IV. "Together these 4 psalms close off Book IV by emphasising God's active kingly rule in the world, in personal deliverance and in national deliverance." Finally, Book IV's resounding reminder of Yahweh's reign is not antagonistic to Davidic hope.

> Book IV does respond to the failure of the Davidic covenant by pointing to God's enduring kingship, but it does not preclude a future Davidic hope. The kingship of Yahweh is the crucial issue, and so any future Davidic kingship can only be possible if Yahweh's prior claim to kingship is upheld.[137]

Andrew Witt (2012). Witt analyzes the untitled Psalm 102, calling it a "literary hinge" between the confused complaints closing Book III and the clear praises concluding Book IV.[138] Davidic superscriptions surrounding Psalm 102 (101, 103) signal that its speaker is a "suffering royal Davidic figure associated with Psalms 88–89 and 101, 103."[139] Opening this Davidic triad (Pss 101–103), "Psalm 101 is best heard as the complaint of a kingly figure who has vowed his loyalty to YHWH and wants to know when he will appear to him (101:2)."[140] In the middle, Psalm 102 is then "a meditative response of an afflicted Davidic king to the questions of the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant and YHWH's delay in returning his steadfast love to his people."[141] Closing the triad, "Psalm 103 is to be read as a response to the lamentation of 102, perhaps even a theological explanation of 102."[142] Most significantly, this subgroup

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[137]The four quotations in this paragraph are found (respectively) in L. Wilson, "Psalms 103–106," 757, 760, 765, and 766.

[138]Witt, "Psalm 102," 582, 606.

[139]Witt, "Psalm 102," 582.

[140]Witt, "Psalm 102," 591. Witt cites J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *The Book of Psalms: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, in vol. 4 of *NIB*, ed. L. E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 1081.

[141]Witt, "Psalm 102," 604.

[142]Witt, "Psalm 102," 592–93.

within Book IV is not reminiscing about the historical David or a past prince from David's line but forecasting "an imagined future Davidic king."[143]

Sampson S. Ndoga (2014). Ndoga argues that Book IV is "organized under a theocratic rubric." The Moses-authored Psalm 90 reminds Israel that her torah-breaking caused her exile, since "Moses and the Torah are synonymous." Psalms 91–92 then offer hope for security in Yahweh. Psalms 93–99 multiply this hope as the יהוה מלך series answers the royal collapse of David's house by epitomizing and expressing the Psalter's "overall emphasis": the kingship of Yahweh. Psalms 100–106 then culminate in a narrative remembrance of Yahweh's faithfulness (106).[144]

The juxtaposition of "failed monarchy" and "thriving theocracy"—Psalm 89 moving into Book IV—billboards the theocratic agenda. But Ndoga emphasizes the unconditional nature of the Davidic covenant, so that the shift from Davidic kingship is not a "complete departure." Rather, the remembrances of prior covenants in Book IV "show the foundational basis that the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants provide for the Davidic covenant." Therefore, the theocracy held high in Book IV may be complemented by a human monarchy, so that the Davidic kingship is given "theocratic overtones."[145]

Summary of Canonical Views of Book IV

In 1985 Gerald Wilson launched the contemporary discussion over the role of the Davidic covenant in Books IV–V of the Psalter. As seen above, many have followed or responded to his view. In 2005 Wilson published his own response, restatement, and clarification.[146] Here he reaffirms his original view of Psalms 90–150: "The intent is to

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[143]Witt, "Psalm 102," 600.

[144]For the quotations in this paragraph see Ndoga, "Theocratic Agenda of Book IV," 148, 151, 154.

[145]For the quotations in this paragraph see Ndoga, "Theocratic Agenda of Book IV," 151.

[146]Gerald H. Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God: Revisiting the Royal Psalms and

redirect the hopes of the reader away from an earthly Davidic kingdom and to the kingship of Yahweh."[147] To those who argue that Davidic psalms reappear in Books IV–V, Wilson responds that (1) Davidic references in Books IV–V are paltry outside the headings;[148] (2) the David-heavy Psalms 132 and 144 still raise Yahweh over David; and (3) Psalm 110 replaces David's "eternal (human) kingship" with an "eternal priesthood."

Wilson nevertheless states that he always viewed the royal psalms as messianic. He then clarifies the real question he was aiming to answer in his earlier works: "*Just what kind of messianic figure comes into view when these psalms are read in concert and within the final shaping of the Psalter as a whole?*"[149] Wilson gives a four-part answer. First, David is undeniably "down-played" both in "frequency" and "prominence" in Books IV–V.[150] Second, the root מלך is often used for human kingship in Books I–III but never refers to kings of Israel or Judah in Books IV–V. Third, the terms עבד ("servant") and משׁיח ("anointed one") are used consistently through Books I–III *and* Books IV–V to refer to Israel's kings, including David. Fourth, human rule in Genesis 1–2 is designed to bring creation under divine rule. So "the role of the Davidic מֶלֶךְ recedes in the final form of the Psalter, while David's role as the eschatological messiah (מָשִׁיחַ) and Servant (עֶבֶד) who ushers in the kingdom and reign of Yahweh moves to the foreground."[151]

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the Shape of the Psalter," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. P. D. Miller, Jr. and P. W. Flint, VTSup 99 (Boston: Brill, 2005), 391–406; cf. Wilson, "Structure of the Psalter," 229–46.

[147]Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," 392. "The result is a Psalter that recalls the pre-monarchial faith of Israel (Psalms 90, 105–106), and directs the faithful to trust in Yahweh as king rather than in fragile and failing human princes (Psalms 145–146)" (Wilson, "Revisiting," 392–93).

[148]Wilson lists 122:5; 132:10, 11, 17; and 144:10 (Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," 396).

[149]Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," 400–401 (original emphasis).

[150]Wilson contrasts the "unmistakably diminished" role of David in the final form of the Hebrew Psalter with the greater Davidic emphasis in the LXX and Qumran Psalms Scroll (11QPs^{a}) (Wilson, "King, Messiah, and Reign of God," 401–2).

[151]Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," 404.

> The shape of the canonical Psalter would ultimately affect the way the royal psalms and earlier references to Davidic kingship were interpreted. In light of the distancing that takes place in the later books, these references would have been increasingly understood *eschatologically* as hopeful anticipation of the Davidic descendant who would—as God's anointed servant—establish God's direct rule over all humanity in the Kingdom of God."[152]

Surprisingly Wilson does not seem to recognize that this kind of eschatological Davidic hope is precisely what many interpreters have in mind when they argue for the continuation of Davidic hope in Books IV–V. Wilson's clarification is helpful but his restatements and emphases still tend to minimize Davidic hope and lean toward a tension between the ultimate kingship of Yahweh and the representative kingship of David. Wilson often seems to imply that David's line *must* be diminished for Yahweh to reign supreme. Mitchell highlights seven specific problems with Wilson's clarification (a clarification which Mitchell does believe moves in the right direction).[153]

1. The David of Books IV and V is still bigger than Wilson thinks.
2. The Kingships of Yahweh and David are not mutually exclusive.
3. Wilson's theory does not accord with Israel's attitude to the house of David at any time.
4. An initial collection of Books I to III alone would not "foster hope for the restoration of the Davidic kingdom."[154]
5. There is no evidence that Psalms 1 and 73 were added later to form a "cohesive sapiential framework."[155]
6. Neither 11QPs^{a} nor LXX are evidence that Books IV and V were added to an already existing collection of Books I to III.
7. Dismissal of the LXX Psalter in support of the 11QPs^{a} theory is not credible.[156]

Any one of these points could warrant a full examination. But my aim is much more narrow. I will examine the actual content and progression of specific psalms and

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[152]Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," 404–5.

[153]Mitchell suggests that "unable to dismiss the Messiah, Wilson tries instead to demote him" (David C. Mitchell, "Lord, Remember David: G. H. Wilson and the Message of the Psalter," *VT* 56, no. 4 [2006]: 534).

[154]Mitchell, "Lord, Remember David," 541, citing Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," 391.

[155]Mitchell, "Lord, Remember David," 542, citing Wilson, "Structure of the Psalter," 237.

[156]I am quoting these points verbatim from Mitchell, "Lord, Remember David," 532–47.

groupings within Book IV which clearly indicate that the reestablishment of a Davidic king is intertwined with Israel's hope (and God's promise) for her restoration.

One final reason warrants this focus on Book IV. Koh disagrees with Wilson's original David-diminished view of Psalms 90–150 because "there is a clear and continual presence of Davidic psalms in the *final two books* of the Psalter." But Koh lists only psalms from Book V: 110, 122, 132, and 144.[157] Koh joins many others who find evidence for Davidic restoration in Book V.[158] Wenham, for example, concedes that Wilson's view might stand within Book IV alone but that it clearly fails in Book V.[159] Thus one element still needed in the discussion is more clear and objective evidence for Davidic hope from the content, connections, progression, and themes of specific psalms and groupings within Book IV.

Canonical interpreters of Book IV share many joint observations. They agree that Psalm 89 marks a crisis that cries out for resolution. They agree that the transition between Books III and IV is a turning point in the Psalter. They agree that Psalm 90 inaugurates the message of Book IV. They agree that Moses appears prominently in Book IV. They agree that the reign of Yahweh is central to Book IV (structurally and thematically). But a survey of canonical treatments of Book IV still displays differences and debates regarding the status of the Davidic covenant and the role of Davidic hope

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[157]Yee Von Koh, "G. H. Wilson's Theories on the Organization of the Masoretic Psalter," in *Genesis, Isaiah, and Psalms: A Festschrift to Honour Professor John Emerton for His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. K. J. Dell, G. I. Davies, and Y. V. Koh (Boston: Brill, 2010), 187 (emphasis added).

[158]Snearly, "Return of the King," 113–17, 201–3; Robert E. Wallace, "Gerald Wilson and the Characterization of David in Book 5 of the Psalter," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms: The Current State of Scholarship*, ed. N. L. deClaissé-Walford, SBLAIL 20 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 193–205; Norman Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book*, JSOTSup 222 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 94–98; Wenham, *Psalter Reclaimed*, 93–94.

[159]Wenham, *Psalter Reclaimed*, 93–94. "I think it is more likely that the psalmist believed God's reign would be demonstrated by his keeping his promises to David about an eternal dynasty and all nations serving him. But had the Psalter ended with book 4 (Psalm 106), I would regard this arguable but not proved. It is the return of two collections of Davidic psalms in book 5 (108–10, 138–45) and in particular Psalms 110 and 132 that demonstrate that these points are still valid." Elsewhere Wenham states clearly that he sees evidence for Davidic hope within Book IV itself (Wenham, *Psalter Reclaimed*, 157; Wenham, "Rejoice the Lord Is King: Psalms 90–106," 97–98).

within these seventeen psalms.

My argument is not that the Davidic covenant stands at the summit of Book IV; I do not suggest that Book IV trumpets the Davidic kingship as its main theme; and I will not argue against the clear Yahweh-is-king emphasis in Book IV or the obvious Moses-emphasis marking the book. Rather, I am suggesting that while the Davidic covenant, kingship, and hope may *appear* to run dry at the end of Book III, the stream only goes underground. This subterranean stream then springs up strategically in Book IV, forming oases of hope that help sustain Israel's post-exilic faith.

CHAPTER 2
METHODOLOGY

Biblical interpreters rightly warn against the potential subjectivity of source criticism, historical criticism, form criticism, and other interpretive approaches. But what protects canonical interpreters from developing our own hypotheses unmoored from firm evidence? As with any burgeoning field of study, adherents of the canonical approach continue to hone and establish viable and clear methods.[1]

The canonical approach, like any other methodology, has ditches on both sides: overnarrow conservatism and overimaginative sensationalism. Both under-interpretation and over-interpretation are forms of misinterpretation. Therefore methodology and evidence must remain intimate companions and intricate dance partners. When divorced, misinterpretation ensues. Psalmic evidence must be approached with proper methodology lest the evidence be exaggerated, suppressed, or distorted, while the best features of canonical methodology arise from the evidence itself. In this brief chapter I will overview my approach to interpreting the psalms in Book IV of the Psalter.

Canonical Approach

This dissertation explores the canonical form of the 150-psalm Hebrew Psalter represented by the MT. LXX readings are occasionally highlighted for comparison, but

[1]See the following dissertations: Hyung Jun Kim, "The Structure and Coherence of Psalms 89–106" (PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 1998), 11–17; James Todd Borger, "Moses in the Fourth Book of the Psalter" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002), 8–31; Kilnam Cha, "Psalms 146–150: The Final Hallelujah Psalms as a Fivefold Doxology to the Hebrew Psalter" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2006), 39–41; Michael G. McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh: A Canonical Study of Book IV of the Psalter*, GDBS 55 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 5–20; Michael K. Snearly, "The Return of the King: An Editorial-Critical Analysis of Psalms 107–150" (PhD diss., Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 48–87.

the Hebrew Psalter is the object of inquiry and source of study. Brevard Childs rightly argued that the canonical Hebrew Psalter is a valid object of investigation as the final form of the sacred text through which God's people hear God's voice.[2]

What is a "canonical approach" or "canonical interpretation" of the Psalter? Daniel Owens identifies "three possible concepts of canon: canon as a closed list, canon as structure, and canon as co-text."[3] First, the concept of canon as a *closed list* may be viewed from an exclusive or inclusive angle. The canonical list is closed to outside texts (exclusive) while including others (inclusive). Yet scriptural inclusion does not merely mean that the included books are "acceptable." Inclusion also implies theological harmony.[4] Second, the concept of canon as *structure* assumes the presence and significance of both microstructures and macrostructures deliberately arranged by "ancient editors" with "theological agendas"[5] guided by the Holy Spirit. The canonical approach seeks to recognize and interpret individual texts within these broadening concentric structures. Third, the concept of canon as *co-text* views the canonical Scriptures as the shared grand text that inherently informs (and is informed by) every smaller text it envelops. Interpreters must recognize the intricate interplay between the collective text and each individual text in order to grasp both rightly.[6] Waltke outlines the hermeneutical stages and interpretational layers required in full-orbed Psalms study:

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[2]Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 508–23.

[3]Daniel Owens, "The Concept of Canon in Psalms Interpretation," *TrinJ* 34NS, no. 2 (2013): 156.

[4]I would add that canonical inclusion also implies *biblical-theological* and *biblical-narratival* harmony. The Hebrew Psalter, by virtue of its divine inspiration and inclusion in the sacred Scriptures of Israel and the church, will be and must be harmonious with the biblical-theological development and the narratival progression evident within those Scriptures.

[5]Owens, "Concept of Canon," 156. I will use the terms "arranger," "editor," "redactor," "compiler," and "anthologist" interchangeably.

[6]See Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 15–23.

> (1) the meaning of the psalm to the original poet, (2) its meaning in the earlier collections of psalms associated with the First Temple, (3) its meaning in the final and complete Old Testament canon associated with the Second Temple, and (4) its meaning in the full canon of the Bible including the New Testament with its presentation of Jesus as the Christ.[7]

Regarding canon as a closed list, my approach assumes that the Psalter belongs in this closed authoritative list of inspired sacred texts. Regarding canon as structure and co-text, my approach assumes that the shape and message of the Psalter harmonizes with the form and theology of the OT such that each part expresses its full voice and contributes to a meaningful unity. Further, individual psalms and the Psalter as a whole should illuminate and be illuminated by the entire sacred story running through the OT and NT. That being said, I will rarely appeal to passages outside the Psalter unless the psalms I am addressing allude to those passages. Although the Psalter complements and harmonizes with the OT Scriptures and finds eschatological clarity and fulfillment within the NT Scriptures, I aim to demonstrate my thesis primarily from within the Psalter itself without appealing extensively to outside texts to "prove" my psalmic observations.

Five-Book Division

The canonical approach honors the Psalter's five-part division. The Psalms are sectioned into five books. Concluding doxologies end each book (41:14; 72:19–20; 89:53; 106:48), finishing with a flourish in the five-psalm crescendo climaxing Book V (146–150).[8] If the untitled Psalms 1–2 introduce the Psalter,[9] Book I proper contains 39 psalms (3–41). If Psalms 146–150 function as the fivefold doxology to the Psalter, Book

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[7]Bruce K. Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. J. S. Feinberg and P. D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 3–18. I do not know if Waltke is suggesting that we can recover sub-collections from the First Temple period and discern their meaning in that historical context. Other than that point, I agree with his basic stages of interpretation. Most of all, his outward-moving concentric circles of interpretation seem self-evidently appropriate.

[8]I will not explore whether the fivefold division is intended to evoke Pentateuchal and Torah overtones.

[9]Argued most thoroughly by Cole, *Psalms 1–2*, 46–143.

V proper also contains 39 psalms (107–145). Books III and IV both contain 17 psalms (73–89; 90–106).[10]

Table 2. Psalms per book

Book	Psalms	#
Introduction	*1–2*	*2*
I	3–41	39
II	42–72	31
III	73–89	17
IV	90–106	17
V	107–145	39
Doxology	*146–150*	*5*

Several reasons warrant treating the Psalter by its five-book structure.[11] First, the book-closing doxologies indicate that the final compilers sealed these collections. Second, the seam-psalms seem to carry significant themes. Wilson highlighted the royal psalms at the "seams" of the Psalter,[12] and unique psalms regularly mark these seams. Book II begins with sister psalms whose repeated refrain clearly identifies them as a unified pair (42–43), and Book II ends with the first of only two Solomonic superscriptions (72; cf. 127). Book III ends with the darkest psalm in the Psalter (88) followed by the mysterious paradox of Davidic majesty and exilic misery (89). Book IV begins with the only Mosaic superscription in the Psalter (90) while Book V begins with a magisterial hymn of redemption with a crisp structure, fourfold refrain (107:8, 15, 21, 31), and clear linkage with the preceding Psalm 106.

Third, this book-to-book linkage often appears at the seams (see Pss 72–73,

[10]I am not suggesting any particular significance arising from the mirrored number of psalms in Books I and V and Books III and IV, but the phenomenon is noteworthy.

[11]Many interpreters have published book-specific studies. Book I: Gianni Barbiero, *Das erste Psalmenbuch als Einheit: Eine synchrone Analyse von Psalm 1–41* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999); J. Clinton McCann, Jr., "The Shape of Book I of the Psalter and the Shape of Human Happiness," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. P. D. Miller, Jr. and P. W. Flint, VTSup 99 (Boston: Brill, 2005), 340–48; Book II: Michael Goulder, "The Social Setting of Book II of the Psalter," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. P. D. Miller, Jr. and P. W. Flint, VTSup 99 (Boston: Brill, 2005), 349–67; Book III: Robert L. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III (Psalms 73–89)*, JSOTSup 307 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); Book IV: M. D. Goulder, "Fourth Book of the Psalter," *JTS* 26, no. 2 (1975): 269–89; McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*; Kim, "Structure and Coherence of Psalms 89–106"; Book V: M. D. Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return (Book V, Psalms 107–150): Studies in the Psalter, IV*, JSOTSup 258 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Snearly, *Return of the King*.

[12]Gerald H. Wilson, "The Use of Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter," *JSOT*, no. 35 (1986): 85–94.

89–90, 106–107).[13] For example, Books IV and V are linked as the cry to "gather us from among the nations" (קבצנו מן־הגוים, 106:47) is answered when God's people are "gathered in from the lands" (מארצות קבצם, 107:3).[14] In Psalm 106 the goal of this "gathering" is gratitude—"that we may give thanks" (להדות) (106:47). Such thanksgiving for redemption then resounds through Psalm 107 (ידה, 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31).

Fourth, each book houses specific sets and collections. Book I contains mostly Davidic psalms (3–9, 11–32, 34–41). Book II is marked by a Korahite series (42–49) and the second main Davidic collection (51–65, 68–70). Book III includes an Asaphite series (73–83), a second Korahite series enveloping a Davidic center (84–85 | 86 | 87–88), and a pair of משכיל psalms by Heman and Ethan (88–89; cf. 1 Kgs 5:11). Book IV contains a Mosaic collection (90–92), יהוה מלך series (93–100), Davidic triad or collection (101–103 or 101–104), and hymnic history series (104–106 or 105–106). Book V contains the *hallel* collection (111–118), the magisterial Psalm 119, the Songs of Ascents (120–134), a final Davidic collection (138–145), and a fivefold doxology (146–150).

Fifth, specific themes and auras color particular books. Books I–II are heavily Davidic. Book III highlights the temple, alternates between lament and hope, and asks "Why?" and "How long?" Book IV contains mainly untitled psalms with strong Mosaic, Exodus, wilderness, and divine kingship themes. Book V is enveloped by praise and thanksgiving (111–118) and the concluding doxological crescendo (146–50). Such distinctive books warrant treatments that account for their individual structures, unique messages, and thematic progressions.

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[13]For linkage between Pss 72 and 73, see Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 15–17, and Jean-Luc Vesco, *Le Psautier de David: Traduit et Commenté*, LD (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 1:647. For linkage between Pss 89 and 90, see chap. 3, and Vesco, *Psautier*, 2:843–44. For linkage between Pss 106 and 107, see Snearly, *Return of the King*, 121–24, and Vesco, *Psautier*, 2:1025–26.

[14]The "nations" (בגוים) and the "lands" (בארצות) have already been paired as the disciplinary locations of God's "scattering" (ולזרותם) (106:27).

Superscriptions, Incipits, and Closings

The canonical approach values the superscriptions as interpretational signals and literary lenses. These titles—whether authorial, musical, liturgical, or narratival—are an embedded feature of the MT. Superscriptions signal the reader to view the psalm through a particular lens ("song for the Sabbath," Ps 92), hear the psalm from a particular voice ("Moses," Ps 90; "David," Pss 101, 103), sing the psalm to a particular tune ("Lilies," Ps 45), associate the psalm with a specific series ("sons of Korah," Pss 42–49), or imagine the psalm in a specific situation (David-Bashsheba, Ps 51). The sheer variety of the titles, the occurrence of joint attribution (e.g., Ps 88), and the presence of collections unified by their superscriptions show that the Psalter is "a collection of psalms drawn from earlier collections."[15] Thus the compilers who assembled the final Psalter worked with many already-attributed psalms whose message or function was already known by oral, scribal, or cultic tradition. These compilers then arranged these defined psalms and collections so that their placement contributed to the overall editorial agenda.

There are few total superscriptions in Book IV (5) and even fewer authorial superscriptions (3). The appearance of Moses is surprising (Ps 90), making him the most prominent author in Book IV. But two psalms in Book IV bear Davidic titles, making David the most common author in Psalms 90–106. The LXX displays nine additional τῷ Δαυιδ superscriptions in these seventeen psalms (see Table 3 below). Nevertheless I will not appeal to these additional Davidic titles as an argument for Davidic hope in Book IV.[16] My aim, once again, is to explore (without making significant appeals to the LXX, the rest of the OT, or the NT) whether Book IV of the canonical Hebrew Psalter sustains Davidic hope by its content, themes, arrangement, and overall message.

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[15]Gordon J. Wenham, *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 48.

[16]Anderson addresses the question of whether the LXX has "Davidized" Book IV (R. Dean Anderson, Jr., "The Division and Order of the Psalms," *WTJ* 56, no. 2 [1994]: 223–24, 238–39; cf. Albert Pietersma, "David in the Greek Psalms," *VT* 30, no. 2 [1980]: 213–26).

Table 3. LXX superscriptions in Book IV

LXX	MT	Superscription
89	90	Προσευχὴ τοῦ Μωυσῆ ἀνθρώπου τοῦ θεοῦ
90	91	Αἶνος ᾠδῆς τῷ Δαυιδ[17]
91	92	Ψαλμὸς ᾠδῆς, εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ σαββάτου
92	93	Εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ προσαββάτου, ὅτε κατῴκισται ἡ γῆ, αἶνος ᾠδῆς τῷ Δαυιδ
93	94	Ψαλμὸς τῷ Δαυιδ, τετράδι σαββάτων
94	95	Αἶνος ᾠδῆς τῷ Δαυιδ
95	96	Ὅτε ὁ οἶκος ᾠκοδομεῖτο μετὰ τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν, ᾠδὴ τῷ Δαυιδ
96	97	Τῷ Δαυιδ, ὅτε ἡ γῆ αὐτοῦ καθίσταται
97	98	Ψαλμὸς τῷ Δαυιδ
98	99	Ψαλμὸς τῷ Δαυιδ
99	100	Ψαλμὸς εἰς ἐξομολόγησιν
100	101	Τῷ Δαυιδ ψαλμός
101	102	Προσευχὴ τῷ πτωχῷ, ὅταν ἀκηδιάσῃ καὶ ἐναντίον κυρίου ἐκχέῃ τὴν δέησιν αὐτοῦ
102	103	Τῷ Δαυιδ
103	104	Τῷ Δαυιδ
104	105	(Αλληλουια) (*incipit*)
105	106	(Αλληλουια) (*incipit*)

Most psalms in Book IV have no title. But these untitled psalms play their own unique role. First, untitled psalms are particularly malleable for placement, suggesting deliberate arrangement within Book IV.[18] Second, the lack of authorial superscriptions makes the few attributed songs stand out (90, 101, 103). Third, many of the untitled psalms in Book IV are identified and even linked by their incipits and closings.

[17]Δαυιδ is underlined to show where the LXX differs from the MT in Davidic attribution.

[18]Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 215.

Wilson points out the presence of these incipits and closings—phrases that begin or conclude juxtaposed or nearby psalms (e.g., 96 and 98; 93, 97, 99; 103 and 104).[19] These opening or closing phrases function as thematic superscripts. On the basis of this evidence, we may first conclude that these psalms are arranged deliberately. Such juxtapositions then lead us (rightfully) to explore complementing, contrasting, or conjoined themes one psalm may share with its neighbor, since the worshiper naturally reads these shared-incipit psalms with mental unity. The juxtaposition of shared incipits or closings does not guarantee interpretational significance in the body of juxtaposed psalms. But it does demonstrate intentional placement, which in turn warrants further exploration.

Table 4. Shared incipits and closings in Book IV

Ref.	MT
93:1	יהוה מלך
97:1	יהוה מלך
99:1	יהוה מלך
96:1	שׁירו ליהוה שׁיר חדשׁ
98:1	שׁירו ליהוה שׁיר חדשׁ
103:1	ברכי נפשׁי את־יהוה
103:22	ברכי נפשׁי את־יהוה
104:1	ברכי נפשׁי את־יהוה
104:35	ברכי נפשׁי את־יהוה
104:35	הללו־יה
105:45	הללו־יה
105:1	הודו ליהוה
106:1	הללויה הודו ליהוה
106:48	הללו־יה

Narrative Progression

Earlier I mentioned that many interpreters sense a loose narrative progression that recounts the main features of Israel's monarchial story through God's covenant with David.[20] I have already outlined this broad progression, and my thesis will assume it while addressing the role Book IV plays. Walton proposes a much more precise narrative progression guided by each psalm's content regardless of its superscription. He too suggests that the Psalter parallels the historical development of the Davidic covenant, but

[19]Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 194–95, 214–19.

[20]James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 276–79; Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5 of *EBC*, ed. T. Longman III and D. E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 38; Michael Barber, *Singing in the Reign: The Psalms and the Liturgy of God's Kingdom* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road, 2001), 83–86.

his progression is tightly chronological.[21]

Table 5. Walton's structure of the Psalter[22]

Books and Psalms	Topics and Progression
INTRODUCTION (1–2)	Vindication of the Righteous; Theocratic Sponsorship of the Israelite (Davidic) King
Book 1 (3–41)	David's Conflict with Saul
Book 2 (42–72)	David's Reign
Book 3 (73–89)	Assyrian Crisis
Book 4 (90–106)	Introspection about Destruction of Temple and Exile
Book 5 (107–145)	Praise/Reflection on Return and New Era
CONCLUSION (146–150)	Praise Relating to Themes of Psalter

Walton's *overarching* thesis seems accurate as the Psalter does seem to trace the establishment, progress, regress, and restoration of Israel vis-à-vis the Davidic kingship. But Walton performs an overly strict narrative reading as he attempts to move step-by-step with the Samuel narrative, matching individual psalms in Books I–II with specific situations from David's life recorded chronologically in 1–2 Samuel. To perform this lock-step reading, Walton must allow psalm content to trump psalm titles, rather than accounting for both. For example, he interprets Book I as "David's conflict with Saul" despite the superscription of Psalm 3 which introduces the later David-Absalom conflict. This father-son struggle did not arise until after David became king and Saul was long dead.[23] Further, Walton proposes that Book III reflects the earlier Assyrian invasion

[21]John H. Walton, "Psalms: A Cantata about the Davidic Covenant," *JETS* 34, no. 1 (1991): 21–31.

[22]Adapted from Walton, "Cantata," 24.

[23]There may be an explanation for the Absalom-David superscription in Ps 3 that still sees Books I–II moving chronologically through David's life, but I believe the content of a historical superscription should at least be explained when attempting to discern the rationale for psalmic placement.

rather than the later Babylonian crisis. This view undervalues the clear temple-destruction language throughout Book III as well as the lament regarding the fall of the Davidic line in Psalm 89, a fall distinctly related to the Babylonian invasions and exile.

My view, rather, is that the narrative impulse within the Psalter reflects a *loose progression*, not a strict chronology. The development advances in broad strokes so that the Psalter presents a mosaic rather than a crisp digital portrait with a high pixel-count.[24]

Cyclical Movement

Contributing to this broad progression, the Psalter seems to cycle through its scenes. One major problem with Walton's strict chronological proposal is the presence of self-contained series in the Psalter like Psalms 90–92 (see chap. 4), 95–100, or 101–104 (see chaps. 5–6). These series often seem to trace "compositional arcs,"[25] sometimes toward a sense of finality (see Pss 92, 100, or 104), but their culmination and closure are followed by new series and collections. Therefore, based on the evidence, my approach assumes the presence of these cyclical series, so that I expect the message of Book IV to move forward in cyclic, recurrent patterns rather than unbroken linear progression.

Lexical Links

Gordon Wenham has applied the work of David Carr and Paul Griffiths to the Psalms and argued that the 150-psalm Hebrew Psalter is an anthology crafted from previous collections and individual psalms and designed for memorization within a primarily oral society intent on enculturating a religious worldview through the internalization of these sacred songs.[26] Various psalmic elements would have assisted

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[24]Regardless, my thesis does not demand either a loose or strict progression within the Psalter.

[25]Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. L. M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 2.

[26]See Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 41–56; citing David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) and Paul J. Griffiths, *The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

with memorization such as the plethora of poetic devices, unforgettable musical accompaniment, and purposeful word-links, thematic movements, and collectional unity.

Recognizing and evaluating lexical repetition between psalms has proven central to the canonical approach.[27] Different terms are used to describe the phenomenon, which appears to be a structuring strategy: word-links, key words, concatenation, *Stichworter*, even "lexical ligaments."[28] Regarding the process of arrangement, I suggest that the editors compiled lexically-related and thematically resonant psalms, massaging them into place with a "light editorial touch" that maintains (and builds upon) the original authorial or collectional message while overlaying further editorial and compilational intent.[29] With that in mind, however, the canonical approach is synchronic rather than diachronic, focusing mainly on "the connections that are visible" rather than debating potential layers of editing within the Psalter.[30]

In his study on Psalms 93–100, Howard categorizes lexical links in several ways. He first aims to establish "lexical, thematic, generic, and structural links" between and among these psalms. He then categorizes the links as "key-word links," "thematic word links," or "incidental links." Finally, he identifies the "key-word links" as *Leitwörter*, "the important words that were undoubtedly present in the editors' thinking as they made decisions about bringing the Psalter together."[31] Kim likewise organizes his study of inter-psalm linkage in Psalms 89–106 according to "lexical," "thematic" and

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[27]See Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 12; David M. Howard, Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, BJS 5 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 19–20; Cole, *Psalms 1–2*, 33–34, 41; Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 81–133; Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 9–14.

[28]The phrase "lexical ligaments" is found in Andrew J. Schmutzer, "Psalm 91: Refuge, Protection, and Their Use in the New Testament," in *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul*, ed. A. J. Schmutzer and D. M. Howard, Jr. (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 87–88.

[29]I am borrowing the phrase "light editorial touch" from personal conversation with Jim Hamilton.

[30]Howard, *Psalms 93–100*, 100n3.

[31]Howard, *Psalms 93–100*, 99–100.

"structural" connections between particular psalms. But Howard and Kim differ in their definitions. Howard categorizes *some* lexical links as "key-word links" and *other* lexical links as "thematic links." But Kim (more helpfully) uses the category "thematic links" to identify themes shared by adjacent psalms through the use of *synonymous* words or ideas rather than identical terms. Howard slices his categories too thin as he attempts to differentiate between *lexical repetition obviously employed by an editor to bind two psalms together* and *lexical repetition that indicates thematic relationships*. My approach follows Kim, because he clearly separates lexical links from thematic connections.

Howard has also suggested that word-links may be "incidental" or "significant." Kim takes up the same categories and sees more significance in lexical links involving rare words. I agree that interpsalm linkage between rare words signals editorial significance, but I also suggest that the presence of "significant links" between psalms does not only indicate that the editors juxtaposed the psalms deliberately, but that the word-linkages *invite us to read related or juxtaposed psalms in light of each other*. In other words, the lexical linkage, thematic development, or structural similarities summon the reader to interpret juxtaposed psalms against each other, overlapping and overlaying them in order to see the complements and contrasts that arise. Word-links invite us to walk a lexical bridge from one psalm to the next, comparing and contrasting the respective landscapes on either side of the bridge as the terrain changes beneath us. Therefore my end goal is not to identify which major links the editors recognized or created in bringing two psalms together, but rather to discern the complements and contrasts that arise when one psalm is read in light of juxtaposed, nearby, or otherwise related psalms. Such an approach is not reader-oriented but rather editor-driven, because the arrangement itself deliberately invites us to discern meaningful connections and comparisons between related psalms (like Pss 1–2).[32]

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[32]But I do not go as far as Cole, who writes that "the phenomenon of parallelism and repetition in the Psalter must be extended beyond that of individual poems to the surrounding psalms *and finally the*

Theoretical debates about the word-link approach should be submitted to analysis of the evidence. I submit that, methodologically, exploring word-links between psalms is justified in light of the clear lexical linkage often shared by juxtaposed or otherwise related psalms. The Psalter demonstrates inter-psalm lexical linkage beginning with its dual introduction in Psalms 1–2, thus setting the tone for the rest of the Psalter.

First, the "beatitudinal envelope"[33] marked by the repeated makarism "blessed" (אשׁרי, 1:1; 2:12) wraps divine favor around the messianic man portrayed in these first two psalms. Second, this Joshua-like man "meditates" (יהגה, 1:2) on Yahweh's law while the rebellious nations "plot" (יהגו, 2:1) against Yahweh's anointed. Third, the scoffers have a "seat" (במושׁב, 1:1) in which this righteous man refuses to "sit" (ישׁב, 1:1), while the wicked "set themselves" (יתיצבו, 2:2) against Yahweh who "sits" (יושׁב, 2:4) in the heavens.[34] Fourth, the "way" (דרך, 1:1) of the wicked is alien to the righteous and leads to death (דרך, 1:6; 2:12) but the "way" (דרך, 1:6) of the righteous is favored by Yahweh. Fifth, the "way of the wicked will perish" (דרך רשׁעים תאבד, 1:6) like the uprising kings who will "perish in the way" (תאבדו דרך, 2:12). Sixth, in contrast, the torah-saturated man is an Edenic tree that "gives" (יתן, 1:3) its fruit as Yahweh promises to "give" (אתנה, 2:8) the nations for his Messiah's inheritance.[35]

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entire collection. . . . Such a focus moves from what the individual poem expresses to a meaning implied by the final compilation, the latter becoming a single 'text'" (Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 10; emphasis added). I hesitate to adopt the fullest version of Cole's approach because I am not convinced that the Psalter's compilers intended readers to draw interpretive conclusions from any and all lexical connections from any one psalm to any other psalm within a particular book. Rather, taking a more limited approach, I believe there is evidence that juxtaposed or clearly resonant psalms are intended to be compared and overlaid in ways that highlight their shared or contrasting terms, themes, and structures.

[33]Cole, *Psalms 1–2*, 30.

[34]The root יצב (2:2) rhymes with the root ישׁב (1:1; 2:4), so that the mutinous earthly kings are taking their temporary stand against the one who sits permanently in the heavens.

[35]See Cole, *Psalms 1–2*, 46–143 for the intricate relationships within this psalm pair.

Table 6. Select word-links in Pss 1–2

Verse	MT	LXX	English
1:1	אשׁרי	μακάριος	blessed
2:12	אשׁרי	μακάριοι	blessed
1:2	יהגה	μελετήσει	meditates
2:1	יהגו	ἐμελέτησαν	plot
1:1	במושׁב	καθέδραν	in the seat
1:1	ישׁב	ἐκάθισεν	sits
2:4	יושׁב	κατοικῶν	he who sits
2:2	יתיצבו	παρέστησαν	set themselves
1:6	תאבד	ἀπολεῖται	(it) will perish
2:12	תאבדו	ἀπολεῖσθε	you perish
1:1	בדרך	ὁδῷ	in the way
1:6	דרך	ὁδὸν	the way
1:6	דרך	ὁδὸς	the way
2:12	דרך	ὁδοῦ	in the way
1:3	יתן	δώσει	yields
2:8	אתנה	δώσω	I will give

Further examples abound, but multiplying them here would be superfluous. Just as wisdom is vindicated by her children, the significance of lexical links is displayed (or discounted) by whether repeated terms illuminate or obfuscate meaning. The evidence itself will dictate or dismiss the methodology.

Finally, I suggest six initial criteria for evaluating lexical links and their potential significance for interpretation. First, clustered lexical links between psalms naturally display a closer connection or tighter linkage between those psalms. Second, interpsalm linkage involving words used rarely in the OT or the Psalter shine brighter than linkages between common terms. Third, lexical links that touch on the major themes

of a psalm or its neighbors may stand out. Fourth, lexical links that contribute to a clear continuation, complement, or contrast between psalmic themes should be noted. Fifth, lexical links that share the same context may illuminate a particular theme unfolding between two psalms. Sixth, lexical links central to the structure of one or both psalms may warrant more attention.

Thematic Resonance

In addition to meaningful lexical repetition, psalms may display diverse thematic relationships. It is impossible to exhaust the diverse ways that two psalms might relate to one another thematically, but three examples will suffice to illustrate potential dynamics. First, Psalms 89 and 90 show *thematic development* regarding the theme of God's anger. Psalm 89 mourns that God is filled with "wrath" (עבר, 89:39) and "anger" (חמה, 89:47) but nowhere explains the cause. Psalm 90 fills the gap by using an identical term (חמה, 90:7), a similar term (עברה, 90:9, 11), and a synonym (אף, 90:7, 11) as Moses confesses that God is not just whimsically angry but justifiably angry over Israel's sin. Second, Psalms 101 and 102 show *thematic continuation* regarding the theme of God's chosen city. In Psalm 101, "David" (100:1) voices a royal lament involving his future intentions for the "city of Yahweh" (100:8). In Psalm 102, the afflicted psalmist voices his hope for the ruined but soon-to-be-restored city of "Zion" (102:14–17). In both psalms the psalmist awaits the reconstitution or reconstruction of the holy city, though the term "city" (עיר, 101:8) is not shared between them. Third, Psalms 102 and 103 display a *thematic contrast* regarding the condition of the psalmist. In Psalm 102, the afflicted psalmist likens his condition to a "desert owl" (102:6) or a "lonely sparrow" (102:7). But in Psalm 103, the restored David likens his renewed youth to an "eagle" (103:5). These are just three examples of thematic resonance that may indicate purposeful arrangement and offer interpretive insights.[36]

[36]In addition to lexical linkage and thematic resonance, structural similarities or contrasts

Inner-Biblical Allusions

Inner-biblical allusions, including unmistakable inter-psalm connections between distant psalms, may reveal particular emphases or moods within a given psalm or series of psalms. These dynamics may be diluted if the allusions go unrecognized. Allusions may activate the purpose, content, or context of prior revelation. Borger explains, "The earlier text can be repeated, expanded, explained, inverted, reversed, modulated, amplified, or any number of other transmutations."[37]

For example, the Mosaic title heading Psalm 90 evokes the similar heading in Deuteronomy 33:1. Psalms 90–92 then contain a clustered allusion to Deuteronomy 32–33 that clarifies and amplifies the message of these three psalms. Likewise, Psalms 90:13 and 106:19–23 both contain a clear allusion to Exodus 32–34. This allusion helps form bookends that color Book IV with an intercessory mood. The vast contemporary discussion over intertextuality and allusions is beyond the scope of my study, but I can summarize my overall approach by citing Leonard's eight reasonable principles for discerning allusions from one passage to another:

1. Shared language is the single most important factor in establishing a textual connection.
2. Shared language is more important than nonshared language.[38]
3. Shared language that is rare or distinctive suggests a stronger connection than does language that is widely used.
4. Shared phrases suggest a stronger connection than do individual shared terms.
5. The accumulation of shared language suggests a stronger connection than does

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between psalms may also illuminate meaning.

[37]Borger, "Moses in the Fourth Book," 31.

[38]Leonard explains, "The presence of shared language may serve to indicate a connection between texts or traditions. More importantly, however, the fact that a text contains additional language that is idiosyncratic or not shared in no way undermines the possibility of a connection. Unique or idiosyncratic language may be a reflection of the creativity or writing style of a given author. It may even point toward an author's use of multiple sources. It tells us very little, however, about the existence or nonexistence of allusions in the language that is shared with other texts" (Jeffery M. Leonard, "Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions: Psalm 78 as a Test Case," *JBL* 127, no. 2 [2008]: 249).

a single shared term or phrase.

6. Shared language in similar contexts suggests a stronger connection than does shared language alone.

7. Shared language need not be accompanied by shared ideology to establish a connection.

8. Shared language need not be accompanied by shared form to establish a connection.[39]

Eclectic Approach

The healthy canonical approach is robustly eclectic because the Psalter is a masterpiece. If structured intentionally, which seems beyond reasonable doubt, the Psalter is a tapestry. Its artistry cannot be captured by a single lens, nor its treasures unearthed by a single tool, nor its facets exhausted from a single perspective. In the Psalter we witness shifting shades across the tapestry, intricate connections among the threads, seamed movement from scene to scene, sections and frames and patterns, continuations and complements and contrasts, along with linear, cyclical, and patterned movement. Therefore the multigenerational poetic artistry and the inspired compilational insight that created the literary tapestry of the Psalter requires an eclectic methodology. For this reason I aim to utilize both the hard methods of grammar and exegesis and the soft artistries of inner-biblical awareness, literary sensitivity, and poetic imagination. A wise eclectic approach that aims to account for the diverse evidence we find in the Psalter is surely the path for discerning the editorial agendas in the Psalter's shaping.

Conclusion

In this brief chapter I have aimed to establish a reasonable eclectic methodology that honors the evidence the Psalter itself presents. I affirm the five-book structure and recognize the interpretive and compilational significance of superscriptions,

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[39]These eight points are quoted verbatim from Leonard, "Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions," 245–57.

incipits, and closings. My treatment will follow the broad narrative progression observed by many while accounting for the self-contained, cyclical, or recurrent nature of psalmic series and collections. Lexical links, thematic resonance, and inner-biblical allusions will also play a key role in discerning the intended meaning of psalmic juxtapositions, progressions, and collections.

We cannot recover every editorial intention that influenced the Psalter's arrangement. Nor can we reconstruct every literary tool used by the compilers to arrange or massage individual psalms into their place in this canonical book. But there is a multitude of multiform evidence, despite its "tacit" nature, that enables us to advance with confidence as we seek to define accurately and proportion properly the message intended by these compilers who invested their Spirit-guided literary skill and their Spirit-governed theological agenda in forming the Psalter.

CHAPTER 3

DAVIDIC DEVASTATION (PSALMS 89–90)

Many canonical interpreters believe that Book IV of the Psalter deliberately shifts away from the Davidic covenant.[1] Their proposed evidence is found not only within Book IV itself but also in the conclusion to Book III. The apparent failure of the Davidic promises in Psalm 89 along with specific features of Book IV lead many to view Book IV as a David-less book designed only to lift Israel's eyes from the rubble of the failed monarchy, with no enduring hope for its restoration.

Thesis and Overview

Most canonical interpreters agree that Book IV responds to Psalm 89.[2] In order to grasp the message of Book IV, we must engage with Psalm 89 as its canonical interlocutor. This chapter explores the structure and message of Psalm 89, the relationship between Psalms 89 and 90, and the implications for Davidic hope in Book IV. I first argue that Psalm 89 measures the faithfulness of God by his covenant with David, associates the reign of God with the reign of David, questions the character of God because of the Davidic catastrophe, and pleads that Yahweh restore the Davidic king and Israelite people. I then argue that Psalm 90 simultaneously continues, complements, and contrasts the message of Psalm 89, thereby starting to answer the problem portrayed at the end of Book III. The next chapter will explore many more aspects of Psalm 90, but this chapter centers on the message of Psalm 89 and its relationship with Psalm 90.

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[1]See chap. 1 for a survey of recent canonical interpretations of Book IV.

[2]See below.

Book III and Psalms 88–89

The seventeen-psalm Book IV answers the seventeen-psalm Book III. The last psalm of Book II celebrated the coronation of the first royal Davidic son Solomon as the Davidic promises were transferred to David's descendants (Ps 72).[4] Second Samuel 7, and Psalm 2, were coming true. But the royal honeymoon was short-lived. Book III captures Israel moving into exile as the temple is razed and the king cast down. Community laments fill Book III, reflecting the gathering storm of exile.[5] Lament alternates with hope, however, as rhythmic rays of hope pierce the darkness.[6]

Table 7. Alternating lament and hope in Book III[3]

Mood	Psalm(s)
lament	73:1–13
hope	*73:18–28*
lament	74
hope	*75, 76*
lament	77:1–11
hope	*77:12–21; 78*
lament	79, 80
hope	*81, 82*
lament	83
hope	*84*
lament	85:1–8
hope	*85:9–14*
lament	86
hope	*87*
lament	88
hope	*89:1–38*
lament	89:39–52

Eleven Asaphic psalms commence Book III (73–83). Then a Korahite frame (84–85, 87–88) envelops a single prayer of David (86), forming a chiasm centered on David's exodus-saturated petition (Ps 86:5 cites Exod 34:6; Ps 86:8 echoes Exod 15:11; Ps 86:10 reflects Deut 6:4; and Ps 86:15 quotes Exod 34:6). Psalm 88 faces both ways, closing the Korahite chiasm (84–88) and beginning an Ezrahite pair (88–89). These twin Ezrahite

[3]J. Clinton McCann, Jr., "Books I–III and the Editorial Purpose of the Psalter," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. J. C. McCann, Jr., JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 97. Others agree that these psalms "fluctuate between songs of praise and prayers for help" (Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014], 583).

[4]Many canonical interpreters recognize this move in Ps 72: Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 211; Michael Barber, *Singing in the Reign: The Psalms and the Liturgy of God's Kingdom* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road, 2001), 104–5; Mark D. Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*, HOTE (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 82–84; Howard N. Wallace, *Psalms*, RNBC (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 119, 122.

[5]R. Wallace independently notes this feature of Book III (Robert E. Wallace, "The Narrative Effect of Psalms 84–89," *JHebS* 11 [2011]: 3).

[6]McCann, "Books I–III," 96–97.

psalms then close Book III: Heman's (88) and Ethan's (89).[7] Both are titled משכיל. Psalm 88 is infamous for its hopeless lament, Psalm 89 for its covenantal catastrophe. The fate of individual (88) and community (89:51) are bound in the juxtaposition of these two psalms. Further, king and people are intertwined as the people crumble along with the Davidic throne (89).

> The two psalms make contact in the acerbity of their lament or accusation against God; Psalm 89, with its lament over God's "faithlessness" toward his own great promises, can be read as an intensification of Psalm 88. Both psalms utter an intense cry for the saving "steadfast love/graciousness" and "faithfulness" of God (88:12 and 89:2–3, 9, 15, 25, 29, 34, 50).[8]

Book III has already mourned the fall of the temple (73:17; 74:3–8; 79:1; 84:2–5, 10). Now it mourns the fall of the king (89:39–52). McCann suggests that the rhythm of lament and hope cycling through Book III is meant to cultivate hope in the shadow of exile even before Books IV and V. But 89:1–38, which McCann charts as a ray of hope, serves mainly as a rhetorical rise setting up the covenantal collapse of 89:39–52. The epic recounting of the Davidic promises in 89:1–38 only makes the dissonance unbearable when the king is cast down (89:39), the crown defiled (89:40), and the covenant renounced (89:40). Psalm 89:1–38 does instill hope, but the structure and progression of Psalm 89 also creates a mystifying covenantal contradiction. McCann is nevertheless correct to identify the tension between the lament and hope cycling through Book III and spiraling to its conclusion in Psalm 89.

Psalm 89:1–38 initially seems to stand as a central pillar supporting the royal

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[7]"Ethan the Ezrahite" and "Heman" appear in 1 Kgs 5:11 (MT 4:31), listed as sages whom Solomon surpassed: "For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than *Ethan the Ezrahite*, and *Heman*, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations." Gosse describes Psalms 88 and 89 as wisdom reflections ("réflexions de sagasse") (Bernard Gosse, "Le Parallélisme Synonymique *ḥsd 'mwnh*, le Ps 89 et les Réponses du Quatrième Livre du Psautier, Ps 90–106," *ZAW* 122, no. 2 [2010]: 185). See also 1 Chr 6:29 and 15:17, 19.

[8]Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. L. M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 397.

bridge running from Psalms 2 and 72 (before) to 110 and 132 (after).[9] But what will uphold this royal bridge when its central pillar crumbles in the Davidic disaster of 89:39–52? The stakes are high: "The Davidic monarchy . . . is reckoned to be not simply a political achievement (which it was) but a strategy of YHWH's governance of the world whereby the Davidic king is YHWH's regent to maintain order and justice in creation."[10] The fall of God's king, therefore, not only disturbs his people but disorders the world.[11]

Because the king is fallen, the people forsaken, and the covenant unfulfilled, Book III repeats two questions: "Why?" and "How long?" The question "Why?" is repeated in 74:1 (למה), 74:11 (למה), 79:10 (למה), 80:13 (למה), and 88:15 (למה). The question "How long?" is repeated in 74:9 (עד־מה), 74:10 (עד־מתי), 79:5 (עד־מה), 80:5 (עד־מתי), 82:2 (עד־מתי), and 89:47 (עד־מה).[12] "Why?" expresses pain and confusion over God's continued anger. "How long?" expresses agonized waiting for God to fulfill the Davidic promises of Psalms 2 and 72.[13] Book III thus displays an emotional schizophrenia marking a people whose former sense of divine assurance is now equaled and even overshadowed by their current sense of divine abandonment. Nowhere is the whiplash more violent than in Psalm 89, whose sheer internal dissonance demands a response in Book IV.

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[9]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 402.

[10]Walter Brueggemann and W. H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms*, NCBC (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 385.

[11]This sense that cosmic order is maintained through the reign of Yahweh's representative helps explain the necessity and message of the יהוה מלך series (Pss 93–100). When the Davidic reign ceased, divine rule was questioned.

[12]This theme of agonized waiting appears in Book III even apart from the phrase עד־מה (e.g., 77:8–10; 85:6–7).

[13]Robert L. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III (Psalms 73–89)*, JSOTSup 307 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 231.

Message and Movement of Psalm 89

Psalm 89 mourns the astounding collapse of the Davidic kingship and questions the divine covenant expected to uphold it. The psalm evaluates Yahweh's "steadfast love" (חסד) and "faithfulness" (אמונה) by his apparent disloyalty to his own Davidic promises. The terms "steadfast love" (חסד, vv. 2, 3, 15, 25, 29, 34, 50) and "faithfulness" (אמונה, vv. 2, 3, 6, 9, 15 [אמת], 25, 34, 50) saturate Psalm 89. Six times these terms appear as a pair (vv. 2, 3, 15, 25, 34, 50). The first three pairings refer to God's character in general. The last three pairings refer to his promises to David. "These two key attributes of God (Exod. 34:6) are praised, promised, and then questioned."[14] Thus the psalmist measures God's overall faithfulness by his faithfulness to the Davidic promises, leading to a lament over the apparent contradiction between God's sure character and his shattered covenant.

Table 8. חסד and אמונה as a pair in Ps 89

Verse	Referent
89:2	God's character
89:3	God's character
89:15	God's character
89:25	Davidic covenant
89:34	Davidic covenant
89:50	Davidic covenant

Table 9. Permanence in Ps 89

Term	MT	Verses (MT)
"forever"[1]	עולם	2, 3, 5, 29, 37, 38
"steadfast love"	חסד	2, 3, 15, 25, 29, 34, *50**
"faithfulness"	אמונה	2, 3, 6, 9, 25, 34, *50**
"for all generations"	לדר ודר	2, 5
"establish"[1]	כון	3, 5, 22, 38
"covenant"	ברית	4, 29, 35, *40**
"sworn"	שׁבע	4, 36, *50**
** Marked verses are from the lament section (vv. 39–52)*		

[14]DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *Psalms*, 674.

Psalm 89 begins with this "steadfast love" and "faithfulness" (vv. 2–3) manifested in God's eternal covenant with David (vv. 4–5). The twofold introduction (vv. 2–3, 4–5) prefigures twofold praise (vv. 5–19, 20–38), praise that again blends God's character (vv. 5–19) with the Davidic promises (vv. 20–38). Thus vv. 2–3 introduce vv. 5–19 before vv. 4–5 introduce vv. 20–38.[15] These sections interweave God's character and David's covenant and identify God's reign with David's throne. But the potential ramifications are stunning. If the throne falls and the covenant fails and the promise lags, suspicions will seep into the people's psyche about God's character, his power, and his rule. With the stage set, the disastrous Davidic collapse (vv. 39–46) provokes vehement questions in the concluding lament and petition (vv. 47–52).[16]

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[15]The term סלה concludes both the introduction (v. 5) and the main body of praise (v. 38).

[16]"In Ps 89 the reader finds an inverted lament—the moment of trust comes before the complaint" (R. Wallace, "Narrative Effect of Psalms 84–89," 13). Goldingay calls the great reversal in vv. 39–52 an "extraordinary somersault" (John Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, BCOT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 664). Many interpreters independently argue for the general structure I have proposed. Gerstenberger presents the same structure: Superscription (v. 1), initial praise (vv. 2–3), David oracle (vv. 4–5), Yahweh hymn (vv. 6–19), retrospective David story (vv. 20–38), complaint (vv. 39–46), petition (vv. 47–52), and praise formula (v. 53) (Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, ed. R. P. Knierim, G. M. Tucker, and M. A. Sweeney, FOTL 15 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 147). Cole divides Ps 89 into four slightly broader strophes: vv. 2–5, 6–19, 20–38, and 39–53 (Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 209). See also Hyung Jun Kim, "The Structure and Coherence of Psalms 89–106" (PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 1998), 187, and Melody D. Knowles, "The Flexible Rhetoric of Retelling: The Choice of David in the Texts of the Psalms," *CBQ* 67, no. 2 (2005): 236–49. Goldingay divides the first two main sections into vv. 6–15 and vv. 16–38 based on metrical considerations, but he calls vv. 16–19 "a bridge between the celebration of Yhwh's power as creator [vv. 6–15] and the commemoration of Yhwh's commitment to David [vv. 20–38]" (Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 674). Floyd argues that the main shift does not take place between vv. 20–38 and vv. 39–52 but between vv. 20–46 and vv. 47–52. He reasons that vv. 20–46 narrate Yahweh's actions even though there is a shift from positive actions (vv. 20–38) to negative actions (vv. 39–46). Then comes "a rhetorical shift at v. 47 from narration of Yahweh's past actions to reproachful questioning concerning the possibility of Yahweh's taking action to alleviate the crisis" (Michael H. Floyd, "Psalm LXXXIX: A Prophetic Complaint about the Fulfillment of an Oracle," *VT* 42, no. 4 [1992]: 445–46). But the marked shift from Yahweh's own speech (vv. 20–38) to the psalmist's direct address (vv. 39–52) along with the dramatic reversal in tone from praise (vv. 20–38) to accusation, lament, and questioning (vv. 39–52) supports the common division between vv. 20–38 and vv. 39–52.

Table 10. Structure and movement of Ps 89

Verses	Structure and Movement
89:2–3	Introductory Praise for Yahweh's Permanent Faithfulness
89:4–5	*Introductory Praise for Yahweh's Eternal Covenant with David*
89:6–19	Hymnic Rehearsal of Yahweh's Permanent Faithfulness
89:20–38	*Hymnic Rehearsal of Yahweh's Eternal Covenant with David*
89:39–46	Accusatory Lament for Yahweh's Abandonment of Davidic King
89:47–52	Desperate Plea for Yahweh's Restoration of Davidic King and People
47–49	Question: "How Long?"
50–52	Question: "Where Is Your Steadfast Love and Faithfulness to David?"
89:53	Doxology Closing Book III

Psalm 89 launches with resounding praise for God's sure character and eternal covenant with David. Verses 2–5 are framed by the phrases "forever" (עולם, vv. 2, 5) and "all generations" (לדר ודר, v. 2; לדר־ודור, v. 5). The verbs "build" (בנה) and "establish" (כון) then form a chiasm in vv. 3 and 5: "בנה—כון—כון—בנה."[17]

Verses 2–3 praise Yahweh for the permanence of his "steadfast love" (חסד) and "faithfulness" (אמונה) (paired 2x) which stand "forever" (עולם) "to all generations" (לדר ודר). Verses 4–5 likewise praise Yahweh for the permanence of his "covenant" (ברית) with David which will last "forever" (עולם) because Yahweh "swore" (שׁבע) to "establish" (כון) it "for all generations" (לדר־ודור). These complementary introductions harmonize in emphasizing Yahweh's promised faithfulness to keep eternally his promise to David. "The pattern of repetition . . . immediately links God's steadfast love and faithfulness to the origin and continuity of the Davidic dynasty."[18]

[17]Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 420.

[18]J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *The Book of Psalms: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, in vol. 4 of *NIB*, ed. L. E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 1034. Tate notes, "Vv. 2–5 present the major thesis that the stability of the Davidic dynasty should be as lasting as the faithfulness of God in the heavenly realm" (Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 419).

Introductory Praise in 89:2–3 and
Hymnic Rehearsal in 89:6–19

Verses 6–19 expand on vv. 2–3. God's "steadfast love" (חסדי, v. 2; חסד, v. 3) and "faithfulness" (אמונתך, v. 2; אמונתך, v. 3) form a doxological pair that echoes in v. 15 (חסד ואמת). His "faithfulness" (אמונתך, v. 2) continues to resound as the heavenly assembly joins the chorus praising his "faithfulness" (אמונתך, v. 6) because his "faithfulness" (אמונתך, v. 9) fills his presence.

God's faithfulness is established in the "heavens" (שׁמים, v. 3) and he owns "the heavens" (שׁמים, v. 12) so his wonders are praised by the "heavens" (שׁמים, v. 6). His faithfulness is "established" (תכן, v. 3) in the heavens like righteousness and justice are the "foundation" (מכון, v. 15) of his throne. Throughout this section God is praised because he rules all other beings (vv. 6–9), conquers all rival powers (vv. 10–11), owns the created world (vv. 12–13), reigns from a righteous throne (vv. 14–15), and blesses his chosen people and their king (vv. 16–19). His powerful and unparalleled reign (vv. 6–19) will undergird, guarantee, and find expression in David's reign (vv. 20–38).

Introductory Praise in 89:4–5 and
Hymnic Rehearsal in 89:20–38

Verses 20–38 expand on vv. 4–5. The major words and themes in vv. 4–5 are repeated and expanded in vv. 20–38.[19] Both sections begin with an oracle about David spoken directly by Yahweh (vv. 4, 20). This Davidic "covenant" (ברית, v. 4) is an inviolable and even unalterable "covenant" (ברית, vv. 29, 35). In both sections God recounts his unbreakable oath to David with the declaration "I have sworn" (נשׁבעתי, v. 4; נשׁבעתי, v. 36). This David, God's "chosen one" (לבחירי, v. 5), is "one chosen" (בחור, v. 20) from the people.

"David my servant" (לדוד עבדי, v. 4) receives God's promise, so God finds and

[19]Only three important words from vv. 4–5 are *not* repeated in vv. 20–38, though synonymous concepts are emphasized. The three unrepeated terms are "cut" (i.e., a covenant) (כרתי, v. 4), "build" (בניתי, v. 5), and "all generations" (לדר־ודור, v. 5).

anoints "David my servant" (דוד עבדי, v. 21). God's promise to "establish" (אכין, v. 5) David's offspring forever is reaffirmed when God once again promises to "establish" (תכון, v. 22) him, even to "establish" (יכון, v. 38) his offspring and his throne forever. Three times God guarantees such permanence to David's "offspring" (עד־עולם . . . זרעך, v. 5; לעד זרעו, v. 30; זרעו לעולם, v. 37). This permanence is repeatedly expressed by the adverb "forever" (עולם, vv. 5, 29, 37, 38). The promise to build David's "throne" (כסאך, v. 5) eternally is also reiterated twice (כסאו, v. 30; כסאו, v. 37). Thus Psalm 89:20–38 clearly expands on 89:4–5.

Divine Themes in 89:6–19 Become Davidic Themes in 89:20–38

The two sections of praise—general (vv. 6–19) and specific (vv. 20–38)—share many common terms and themes. Once again the character and attributes of God (vv. 6–19) are expressed and reflected in his establishment of the Davidic king (vv. 20–38).[20] The "heavens" (שׁמים) that praise Yahweh (v. 6) and belong to Yahweh (v. 12) also reflect the permanence of the Davidic throne (v. 30). Yahweh's "faithfulness" (אמונה) that surrounds him (v. 9) and receives praise (v. 6) also supports David (v. 25) and overcomes the covenantal discipline of his descendants (v. 34).[21]

The "holy ones" (קדשׁים, v. 6) praise Yahweh and the "holy ones" (קדשׁים, v. 8) fear Yahweh because Yahweh himself is "the Holy One" (לקדוש, v. 19) who anointed David with his "holy" oil (קדשׁי, v. 21) and swore by his "holiness" (בקדשׁי, v. 36) to uphold David. No being "in the skies" (בשׁחק, v. 7) compares to Yahweh who offers "in the skies" (בשׁחק, v. 38) a witness to the permanence of the Davidic covenant.[22]

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[20]Psalm 89:20–38 clearly draws from the "quarry" of 2 Sam 7 (Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 150; cf. McCann, *Psalms*, 1035–36). Listing and describing these many connections, however, is beyond the scope of this study.

[21]The related root אמן also appears twice in vv. 20–38: God's covenant with David will "stand firm" (נאמנת, 89:29) and "remain faithful" (נאמן, 89:38).

[22]See Timo Veijola, "The Witness in the Clouds: Ps 89:38," *JBL* 107, no. 3 (1988): 413–17.

The God who rules "the sea" (הים, v. 10) sets David's hand "on the sea" (בים, v. 26). The God who "crushed" (דכאת, v. 11) Rahab promises to "crush" (כתותי, v. 24) David's opponents.[23] The divine "arm" (בזרוע, v. 11) that scatters his adversaries—his strong "arm" (זרוע, v. 13)—is an "arm" (זרועי, v. 22) that strengthens David.[24] The God who scatters his own "enemies" (אויביך, v. 11) outmaneuvers David's "enemy" (אויב, v. 23). The God who owns the "earth" (ארץ, v. 12) places David above the kings of the "earth" (ארץ, v. 28). Yahweh's strong "hand" (ידך, v. 14) is a "hand" (ידי, v. 22) committed to David so that David's "hand" (ידו, v. 26) rules the sea. Likewise Yahweh's "right hand" (ימינך, v. 14) is raised in strength and victory and he places David's "right hand" (ימינו, v. 26) on the rivers in strength and victory. This God whose arm is "strong" (עזך, v. 11) is his people's "strength" (עזמו, v. 18), and his arm "strengthens" (תאמצנו, v. 22) the king from David's line.[25] Since the arm of this God is "mighty" (גבורה, v. 14), he has chosen one who is "mighty" (גבור, v. 20) to rule for him.

The mountains praise Yahweh's "name" (בשמך, v. 13), his people praise his "name" (בשמך, v. 17), and in his "name" (בשמי, v. 25) the Davidic king is exalted. God's right hand is "exalted" (תרום, v. 14) in power, God's people are "exalted" (ירומו, v. 17) in his righteousness, and their horn is "exalted" (תרים, v. 18) in his favor. God likewise "exalted" (הרימותי, v. 20) David from among the people and promises to "exalt" (תרום, v. 25) his horn. God's "people" (העם, v. 16) are blessed, and God chooses his anointed "from the people" (מעם, v. 20). Under God's rule his people rejoice "all the day" (כל־היום, v. 17), and such permanence marks David's offspring and his throne which will last "as the days of the heavens" (כימי שמים, v. 30).

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[23]The verbs דכא and כתת are not identical but synonymous.

[24]Each time "arm" (זרוע) appears it is described by "mighty" or "strength." God has a "mighty" (עז, 89:11) arm and an arm of "strength" (גבורה, 89:14) that will "strengthen" (תאמצנו, 89:22) David.

[25]The root אמץ ("strengthen," v. 22) joins the terms עז (v. 11) and גבורה (v. 14) to describe the strong arm of Yahweh. Thus these terms function synonymously in the context.

The God who exalts the "horn" (קרנו, v. 18) of the people exalts the "horn" (קרנו, v. 25) of the Davidic king. The foundation of "justice" (משפט, v. 15) upholding Yahweh's throne forms the "rules" (במשפטי, v. 31) required of the Davidic throne. The thrones of Yahweh and David are associated as the "throne" of Yahweh has a "foundation" (מכון כסאך, v. 15), the "throne" of David is "established" (שמתי . . . וכסאו, v. 30) forever, and again the "throne" (כסאו, v. 37) of David will endure as long as the sun. Through this association, permanence and stability mark both the divine and the Davidic thrones. Finally, Israel's "king" (מלכנו, v. 19), who belongs to Yahweh, is elevated by Yahweh to be "the highest of the kings of the earth" (עליון למלכי־ארץ, v. 28).

The number and nature of these parallels demonstrate that the canonical shape of Psalm 89 is deliberately structured to associate the reigns of Yahweh and David.[26] "One of the effects achieved by this . . . repetition is to portray the reign of the Davidic king [vv. 20–38] in the same terms used to describe the reign of God [vv. 6–19]."[27]

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[26]Not every repeated term between these sections illuminates this complementary relationship. There are numerous terms shared between these sections that do not mark a clear continuation, complement, or contrast. For example, the "sons of the gods" (בבני אלים, 89:7) cannot compare with Yahweh; "the son of the wicked" (בן־עולה, 89:23) cannot conquer his Davidic king; "his sons" (בניו, 89:31) (sons of the Davidic king) cannot eradicate the covenant despite their sins; and the "sons of man" (בני־אדם, 89:48) are fleeting. Similarly, the verb "walk" (יהלכון, v. 16) describes how God's people walk before him and then describes how David's sons will receive covenantal punishment if they "walk" (ילכון, v. 31) against God's commands.

[27]McCann, *Psalms*, 1034 (I have replaced McCann's English verse references with the corresponding MT references). Cole independently notes this interplay between 89:6–19 and 89:20–38. "[T]he reign of Yahweh in 89.6–19 is described in ways identical to the one promised to the Davidic house of 89.20–38. A picture emerges from this psalm of a David who rules as Yahweh's very representative" (Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 178). Tate makes similar observations and explains six features:

1. David possesses power proportional to that of Yahweh; cf. vv 6–19 and 22–28. David is the highest of the kings of the earth (v 28) just as Yahweh is the most exalted cosmic ruler (vv 7–9).

2. The mighty arm and hand of Yahweh (v 14) used to establish and maintain his cosmic rulership is used to empower David so that no enemy can defeat him (vv 22–24).

3. Yahweh raises the horns of his faithful people in v 18 and raises the horn of David through the divine name in v 25 (note also the use of "name" in vv 13 and 17).

4. David will exercise power over the rivers and the sea (v 26), as Yahweh rules the surging sea and stills its roaring waves (vv 10–11).

Principles and Promises from 89:1–38
Violated in 89:39–52

The personal adversative ואתה ("But you," v. 39) marks the abrupt swing from hymnic praise (vv. 6–19) and ancient oracle (vv. 20–38) to accusation (vv. 39–46), complaint (vv. 47–49), and petition (vv. 50–52). Sections of the psalm once again interact with each other, but now they do not complement but contradict, displaying the brutal contrast between Yahweh's promise and his alleged performance. Terms and themes from vv. 1–38 are violently contradicted in vv. 39–52.

The first and most dramatic shift is the "you" of hymnic praise (89:9–15) that veers into a "you" of piercing accusation (vv. 39–41, 43–46).[28] Why such a strong indictment? Because from the psalmist's perspective, Yahweh's actions are exactly the opposite of his promise. Divine oracle and divine action seem wholly contradictory.

Yahweh "anointed" (משׁחתיו, v. 21) David as king but now the "anointed" (משׁיחך, vv. 39, 52) faces the wrath of God and the ridicule of his enemies. Yahweh made an eternal "covenant" (ברית, vv. 4, 29, 35) with David but now Yahweh has renounced that "covenant" (ברית, v. 40). David was called "David my servant" (דוד עבדי, vv. 4, 21) but now Yahweh's "servant" (עבדך, v. 40) is rejected and his "servants" (עבדיך, v. 51) ridiculed.

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5. Righteousness (צדק) and justice (משׁפט) support the throne of Yahweh while Loyal-Love (חסד) and Faithfulness (אמת) stand ready to do his bidding (v 15); David is sustained by Yahweh's faithfulness (אמונה) and loyal-love (חסד) in [v 25].

6. David is given the status of the Most High (עליון) in relation to other kings of the earth. Mettinger (*King and Messiah*, 263) argues that though עליון is not used of Yahweh in Ps 89, the first part of the psalm describes him as the head of the heavenly assembly (vv 6–9) and עליון is used elsewhere for Yahweh as head of the divine council (cf. Ps 82:6). Thus the עליון-status of the king is the counterpart of that of Yahweh in the heavenly realm: "The king does on earth what God does in heaven." The cosmic ruling power of God is invested, in considerable measure at least, in the Davidic king.

The six points above are quoted verbatim from Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 423. For Tate's citation and quotation of Mettinger in point 6, see Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (Lund, Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1976), 263.

[28]DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *Psalms*, 675; Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 387.

Previously God scattered his "enemies" (אויביך, v. 11) and promised to conquer David's "enemy" (אויב, v. 23) but now the king's "enemies" (אויביו, v. 43) rejoice in victory over him, and God's "enemies" (אויביך, v. 52) mock both king and people. So although "his foes" (צריו, v. 24)— the king's foes—were destined for crushing defeat, now "his foes" (צריו, v. 24) celebrate their resounding victory.

The psalmist lays this reversal squarely at God's feet. God's right hand was "exalted" (תרום, v. 14) in power, his people were "exalted" (ירומו, v. 17) in his righteousness, their horn was "exalted" (תרים, v. 18) in his favor, God "exalted" (הרימותי, v. 20) David from among the people, and God promised to "exalt" (תרום, v. 25) David's horn, but now God has "exalted" (הרימות, v. 43) David's enemies. Indeed, Yahweh's strong "hand" (ידך, v. 14) was a "hand" (ידי, v. 22) committed to David so that David's "hand" (ידו, v. 26) ruled the sea, but now the "hand" (יד, v. 49) of Sheol overtakes all life. Likewise Yahweh's "right hand" (ימינך, v. 14) was raised in strength and victory and he placed David's "right hand" (ימינו, v. 26) on the rivers in strength and victory, but now David's enemies raise their "right hand" (ימין, v. 43) in the stunning reversal.

God "created" (בראתם, v. 13) the world and generated joy, but now it appears that he "created" (בראת, v. 48) mankind for futility. The God who owns the "earth" (ארץ, v. 12) placed David above the kings of the "earth" (ארץ, v. 28) but now David's crown and throne are thrown to the "earth" (לארץ, vv. 40, 45). God's "people" (העם, v. 16) were formerly blessed and shielded but now "all the many peoples" (כל־רבים עמים, v. 51) ridicule the psalmist, the king, and God's servants (vv. 51–52). Indeed, God's people sang beneath God's reign "all the day" (כל־היום, v. 17) and God promised that eternal "days" (כימי, v. 30) would mark the Davidic reign, but now God has "cut short the *days* of his youth" (ימי, v. 46).

God's character and his king were promised to remain "forever" (עולם, vv. 2,

3, 5, 29, 37, 38) but now God hides himself "forever" (לנצח, v. 47).[29] Therefore the "who" (מי, v. 7, 9) of worshipful trust becomes a "who" (מי, v. 49) of mournful doubt as the worshipful question, "Who can compare with Yahweh?" (vv. 7, 9) becomes the complaining question, "Who can deliver man from death?" (v. 49). Both questions imply the same comprehensive answer—"no one"—but the first answer praises Yahweh for his high position while the second questions him over mankind's inescapable plight.[30]

In addition to these shared terms whose meaning or context is reversed from vv. 1–38 to vv. 39–52, many themes are likewise reversed.[31] In vv. 1–38 Yahweh "built" (יבנה, v. 3; בניתי, v. 5), "founded" (יסדתם, v. 12), and "established" (כון, vv. 3, 5, 15, 22, 38) David's offspring and throne (esp. vv. 5 and 37–38). But the promised construction has become demolition: Yahweh has now overturned David's throne (v. 45), breached his walls and torn down his strongholds (v. 41), and left him plundered by passersby (v. 42).

David was elected (vv. 4, 20) but is now rejected (v. 39).[32] David was honored (v. 28) but is now shamed (vv. 42, 45–46, 52). David was high (v. 28) but is now low (vv. 40, 45). David was guaranteed victory (vv. 23–24) but now tastes defeat (vv. 41–44). David's life and line were lengthened (vv. 4, 29–30, 34, 37–38) but now are cut short (v. 46). David received a divine promise (vv. 4–5, 20–38) but now mourns divine betrayal (vv. 38–46, 50). God's distinct presence (v. 16) becomes a deafening absence (v. 47), so that David's trusting cry of sonship (v. 27) becomes a doubting cry of abandonment (v.

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[29]The adverb עולם appears in the book-closing doxology (89:53), but this occurrence should be viewed separately from the psalm itself.

[30]The question about who can deliver man from death implies "No one—except Yahweh." But because Yahweh has not delivered the Davidic king and the Davidic line, the question implies hopelessness. The question insinuates, "If Yahweh has not delivered us, who else can?"

[31]Naturally there are terms shared between vv. 1–38 and vv. 39–52 whose thematic relationship does not seem to connote anything particularly noteworthy, such as the repeated verb נשׂא (89:10, 51). God stills the waves when they "rise" (בשׂוא, 89:10) and the psalmist "bears" (שׂאתי, 89:51) many insults.

[32]I refer to the Davidic line as "David" in this paragraph because Psalm 89 itself speaks this way. David begins and represents his royal line.

47).

God promised not to allow David to be outwitted or humbled (v. 23), but his walls have been breached (v. 41) and his royal insignia dashed (vv. 40, 45). God shared his "mighty" power and "strong" arm with David (vv. 9, 11, 14, 20, 22), but now there appears no "strong man" (גבר, v. 49) who can overcome death. God's "favor" (ברצנך, v. 18) has turned to "wrath" (התעברת, v. 39) and "fury" (חמתך, v. 47). The one "chosen" (לבחירי, v. 4; בחור, v. 20) has been cast off, rejected, and renounced (vv. 39–40). Creation "praised" (ירננו, v. 13) Yahweh and his people "exulted" (יגילון, v. 17) in him, but they are now outshouted by the triumphant "rejoicing" (השׂמחת, v. 43) of David's enemies.

The structure, progression, and contradictions within Psalm 89 are abundantly clear. Specific principles and promises from vv. 1–38 are violated egregiously in vv. 39–52. These covenantal contradictions produce the covenantal complaint that closes the psalm and concludes Book III.

Final Petition in 89:50–52

The rejection of "your anointed" (משׁיחך) frames this final section (vv. 39, 52). Confusion and complaint resound because God has rejected his chosen one. The final questioning prayer (vv. 50–52) clearly begins after the term "Selah" (סלה, v. 49) closes vv. 39–49. The twofold address "Lord" (אדני, vv. 50, 51) marks the closing petition.

50 Lord, where is your steadfast love of old,
  which by your faithfulness you swore to David?
51 Remember, O Lord, how your servants are mocked,
  and how I bear in my heart the insults of all the many nations,
52 with which your enemies mock, O Yahweh,
  with which they mock the footsteps of your anointed.

The psalmist's penetrating question picks up the major themes of the psalm, primarily continuing the contrast between vv. 1–38 and vv. 39–52. The final pairing of "steadfast love" and "faithfulness" (חסדיך + באמונתך, v. 50) questions Yahweh over his repeated promises. The first five occurrences of this pair denoted Yahweh's character or

promises (vv. 2, 3, 15, 25, 34). But now these twin pillars face direct questioning because the Davidic covenant they promised to uphold has collapsed. Therefore the psalmist reminds Yahweh that he "swore" (נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ, v. 50; cf. vv. 4, 36), and that he swore "to David" (לְדָוִד, v. 50; cf. vv. 4, 36).[33] Further, the promise was sealed long ago (הָרִאשֹׁנִים, v. 50) just like God spoke to David through Nathan in times "of old" (אָז, v. 20).

The psalmist then implores Yahweh to "remember" (זכר, v. 51)—not just his past promise but his people's present plight. This plight has multiplied because the affliction burdening Yahweh's singular "servant" (עבד, vv. 4, 21, 40) is now expanded to affect the community of "your servants" (עֲבָדֶיךָ, v. 51). King and community share the same fate.

Finally, the "enemies" from vv. 11, 23, and 43 reappear (אויביך, v. 51), but the battle has already been decided. Israel's multinational opponents—"all the many peoples" (כָּל־רַבִּים עַמִּים)—no longer wage war or celebrate victory but spitefully "mock" (חרף 3x, vv. 51–52) Yahweh's defeated servants and his humiliated anointed one. The exile is in full form: king fallen, people afflicted, enemies taunting, and covenant shattered. Now the haunting question hangs between earth and heaven: "How long?"

Summary of Psalm 89

How does Psalm 89 function within this portion of the Psalter? First, Psalm 89 crafts an inextricable relationship between the faithfulness of God and his covenant with David. Second, the psalm deliberately creates an unbearable tension between the invincible steadfast love and faithfulness of Yahweh and the catastrophic failure of the promises God made to David. Third, Psalm 89 reflects the relationship already established in the Psalter between the kingship of Yahweh and the kingship of David (see Pss 2, 72). Yahweh's reign and David's reign are not contradictory; rather, the Davidic monarch is God's representative king. Fourth, the end of Psalm 89 communalizes the

[33]Only once in Ps 89 does the name "David" appear *without* the verb "swore" (שׁבע) (v. 21).

problem it mourns so that king and people share the same fate. In this vein, Gerstenberger overreaches when he suggests that "the ancient promises of Yahweh have long been assimilated by the community, which is struggling to revive them in her own midst through her own institutions."[34] The king and the people are not conflated, but the king does represent the people, and in the exile, king and people have suffered the same fate. Full restoration will require that God redeem and reestablish both the Israelite nation and a Davidic ruler.

Before moving to Psalm 90, I would suggest that Psalm 89 clearly assumes and implies the future restoration of the Davidic kingship, lest God prove unfaithful to his promises. The promises that fill the psalm and the prayer that closes the psalm imply just such a restoration, since promises warrant trust and psalmic lament is a form of trust. Of course, Book IV must give its own answer, but the setup in Psalm 89 is profound, leaving Book III with a dramatic dissonance that cries out for resolution in the coming collection.

Psalms 89 and 90

Psalm 89 is clearly disharmonious. The first 38 verses are a symphony of praise for Yahweh's eternal covenant with David. But the final 14 verses are a cacophony of confusion as Yahweh appears to violate his covenant, betray his promise, and abandon the Davidic king. Psalm 90 immediately follows this dethronement and apparent abandonment. Many canonical interpreters agree that Psalm 90 corresponds with and responds to Psalm 89.[35]

In addition to their juxtaposition and thematic relationship—problem in Psalm

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[34]Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 155.

[35]Michael G. McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh: A Canonical Study of Book IV of the Psalter*, GDBS 55 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 36–39; Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5 of *EBC*, ed. T. Longman III and D. E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 687–89; H. Wallace, *Psalms*, 153–54; Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 219; Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 187–97; Jean-Luc Vesco, *Le Psautier de David: Traduit et Commenté*, LD (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 2:843–44.

89, prayer in Psalm 90—meaningful word-links connect the two psalms. Kim identifies thirty-three shared words but rightly differentiates between "significant" and "incidental links.[36] The intricate relationship between Psalms 89 and 90 can be seen through its lexical, thematic, and structural correspondences.[37] These three categories overlap and intertwine. In some ways, Psalm 90 continues Psalm 89. In other ways, Psalm 90 complements Psalm 89. In still others, Psalm 90 contrasts with Psalm 89. So Psalm 90 joins with, responds to, and begins answering the problem in Psalm 89.

Time and Eternity,
Transience and Permanence

Contrasts between time and eternity or transience and permanence fill Psalms 89–90. God's faithfulness across the expanse of time marks both psalms. Both use the phrase "all generations" (דר ודר, 89:2, 5; 90:1) and the term "forever" (עולם, 89:2, 3, 5) in their opening lines. Psalm 89 sings of Yahweh's steadfast love and faithfulness "to all generations" (לדר ודר, 89:2) because Yahweh has established David's throne "for all generations" (לדר־ודור, 89:5). But the fall of the Davidic line demands explanation. So in Psalm 90 Moses begins, "Lord you have been our dwelling place *in all generations* (בדר ודר, 90:1).[38] Thus lexical, thematic, and structural associations support an argument for purposeful linkage. Psalm 90 affirms that despite the Davidic downfall, Yahweh

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[36]Kim identifies thirty-three total terms shared between Psalms 89 and 90: אדם (89:48; 90:3); אדני (89:50, 51; 90:1, 17); אור (89:16; 90:8); אל / אלהים (89:8, 9, 27; 90:1, 2, 17); אמר (89:3, 20; 90:3); ארץ (89:12, 28, 40, 45; 90:2); בן (89:7, 31, 48; 90:3, 16); גבורה (89:14, 20; 90:10); דר ודר (89:2, 5; 90:1); היה (89:37, 42; 90:1, 5, 17); חמה (89:47; 90:7); חסד (89:2, 3, 15, 20, 25, 29, 34, 50; 90:14); יד (89:14, 22, 26, 49; 90:17); ידע (89:2, 16; 90:11, 12); יהוה (89:2, 6, 7 [2x], 9 [2x], 16, 19, 47, 52, 53; 90:13); יום (89:17, 30, 46; 90:4, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15); ירא (89:8; 90:11); כון (89:3, 5, 15, 22, 38; 90:17 [2x]); עבד (89:4, 21, 40, 51; 90:13, 16); עבר (89:42; 90:4); עברה (89:39; 90:9, 11); עד (89:5, 30, 47; 90:13); עולם (89:2, 3, 5, 29, 37, 38, 53; 90:2); עון (89:33; 90:8); עז (89:11, 14, 18; 90:11); עלם (89:46; 90:8); ענה (89:23; 90:15); פנה (89:15, 16, 24; 90:8); ראה (89:49; 90:16); רנן (89:13; 90:14); שוב (89:44; 90:3, 13); שמח (89:43; 90:14, 15); תבל (89:12; 90:2) (Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 189n3).

[37]Kim analyzes the relationships between psalms using these three categories of lexical, thematic, and structural correspondence (Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 184–86).

[38]Interpreters independently note this correspondence: Vesco, *Psautier*, 2:843; Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 219–20.

himself has always been Israel's refuge. I would suggest that Psalm 90 implicitly affirms that Yahweh's constant presence and protection overshadows and undergirds the Davidic promise. The omnigenerational covenant with David is preceded by but also protected by the omnigenerational refuge of Yahweh.

In Psalm 89, the adverb "forever" (עולם, 89:2, 3, 5, 29, 37, 38) repeatedly emphasizes the eternality of God and the permanence of his promises. The doxology closing Book III likewise blesses Yahweh "forever" (עולם, 89:53). But worship turns to waiting as these grand lengths of time become problematic rather than praiseworthy: "How long, O Yahweh? Will you hide yourself forever (לנצח)? How long will your wrath burn like fire?" (89:47). The synonymous adverb נצח appears rather than עולם in 89:47 because נצח is used in the Psalms to denote lengthy human suffering or matters that seem unending from a human perspective (9:7, 19; 10:11; 13:2; 44:24; 49:10, 20; 52:7; 74:1, 3, 10, 19; 77:8; 79:5; 89:47; 103:9).[39] Nevertheless, despite this questioning of God's faithfulness and promises in 89:39–52, Psalm 90 reaffirms that "from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (מעולם עד־עולם, 90:2).[40] Structurally, the term עולם occurs 3x in the four-verse introduction to Psalm 89 (89:2–5). It also appears twice in the opening lines of Psalm 90 (90:2).

Initially in Psalm 89, the people's joy resounds "all the day" (כל־היום, 89:17) and the "days" (ימי, 89:30) of the Davidic line are lengthened by Yahweh. But life is soon cut short in both psalms (89:46, 48–49; 90:3–6, 9–10, 12) as the "days" of king and people become brief (יום, 89:46; 90:4, 9, 10, 12). Death stares down even the young (עלומיו, 89:46) and the strong (גבר, 89:49; בגבורת, 90:10). Therefore the psalmist urges

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[39]The two other uses of נצח in the Psalms appear in 16:11 and 68:17. Both occurrences refer to an aspect of God's eternality, but this is a much more rare usage.

[40]Cole notes, "Yahweh's power in 89 is a guarantee of the covenant with David, and in 90 his eternal nature similarly assures its fulfillment. If the Davidic pact is eternally valid in 89.5 (עד־עולם), it is because the God behind it is eternal, as stated in 90.2 (ומעולם עד־עולם)" (Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 220).

God to remember "how short" (מה־חלד) his lifetime has become, as "vanity" (שׁוא, 89:48) consumes humanity. Death and Sheol thus control every man (89:49).[41]

In addition to these lexically-driven themes, Psalm 90 portrays vastly different perspectives on time. God shelters Israel in every generation (90:1) as their eternally preexistent Maker (90:2). For him, even a thousand years passes like yesterday, or like a night-watch (90:4). Mankind, in contrast, returns quickly to dust (90:3). Human beings enter and exit the world stage as quickly as a flood sweeps by, a dream passes, or grass withers (90:5–6). Cole seems correct to explain that Psalm 90 zooms out and reframes God's unfulfilled promises with his eternal perspective.[42] In Psalm 89, the psalmist is tempted to believe that Israel's lengthy affliction under God's wrath means that God has forgotten her and will never fulfill his promises to David (89:47–49). Even in Psalm 90, Moses and the people have spent entire lifetimes under God's unceasing anger (90:7–10). But Psalm 90:1–4 is a prayerful reminder that God sees all of time simultaneously, so that vast measures of time (even long periods of affliction) pass like yesterday before his eternal eye. Therefore, to him, his promise has not been forgotten despite the slow passage of time experienced by humanity, and his anger against his people does not last long at all (cf. Ps 103:9).

> Centuries and even millennia may appear to mortals as interminable lengths of time, but not in God's perspective. For the eternal God (v. 2) a thousand years are like a human yesterday or even the few hours of a night watch, and so the promise to David has not been forgotten.[43]

The apostle Peter cites Psalm 90:4 in a similar context that includes ancient times, creation, the flood, God's wrath, sleep, and people wondering about a divine promise unfulfilled (2 Pet 3:4–9).[44] When people doubt God and ask, "Where is the

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[41]The term יום occurs in 89:17, 30, 46; 90:4, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 15.

[42]Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 219–23.

[43]Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 234.

[44]Psalm 90 also mentions ancient times (90:1–2), highlights creation (90:2–3), uses a flood

promise of his coming?" because the length of time between promise and fulfillment has been vast (2 Pet 3:4), Peter encourages his readers to remember "that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet 3:8). Peter reframes time by zooming out and showing how God's eternal perspective should shape his people's view of long-awaited promises. The takeaway is clear: "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness" (2 Pet 3:9).

If Psalms 89 and 90 are indeed juxtaposed to contrast human and divine perspectives on time related to an unfulfilled promise, one more intricate wordplay may be possible. God promised to "keep" his covenant forever (אשמור, 89:29) even if David's line did not "keep" his commandments (ישמרו, 89:32). So when the psalmist laments the non-fulfillment of the Davidic promises (89:39–52), God in his eternality (90:1–3) views even a thousand-year delay as a brief night "keep" (אשמורה, 90:4).[45] God sees the long night of exile as it passes, but the night-keep for him is short.

Psalm 90 does not respond to Psalm 89 by moving away from the Davidic covenant. Rather, Psalm 90 shows that the intertwined futures of David and Israel are upheld by an eternal God who, against all appearances, has never forgotten his promises.

Man's Sin and God's Wrath

In Psalm 89, God is on the stand. The psalmist's complaint is not only directed *to* God but leveled *at* God. The spectacular promises in 89:1–38 have ended in exile, and

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metaphor (90:5), focuses on God's wrath (90:3, 5–6, 7–11, 15), mentions night, morning, and a dream (90:4–6), and shows God's people waiting for him to redeem them (90:13–17). Second Peter 3:4–9 reads, "They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.' [5] For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, [6] and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. [7] But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. [8] But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. [9] The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

[45]I owe this insight to Robert Cole through personal correspondence. Cole makes a similar observation in published form in Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 221.

God apparently has not kept his covenant with David. Therefore God is besieged by waves of second person singular accusations (89:39–46), interrogated with six accusatory questions (89:47–52), and urged twice to "remember" (זכר, 89:48, 51). From the psalmist's perspective, God appears forgetful at best and unfaithful at worst.

But Psalm 90 firmly corrects the notion that a merciless or malicious God is to blame for the royal failure of David's line and the ongoing exile of the nation. Nowhere does Psalm 89 acknowledge the historical reality that God's wrath was provoked by Israel's sin—the sins of the people and the sins of the kings. So Psalm 90 reframes Psalm 89, exonerating Yahweh by laying the exilic blame where it belongs. It is not Yahweh's disloyalty but Israel's depravity that has brought wrath upon the Davidic throne. There is no covenantal conundrum after all. This reversal of guilt is good news, because it not only justifies God's judgment but also creates hope. If Yahweh has proven unfaithful, any future hope is foolish. But if the fault lies with Israel, forgiveness is not only possible but promised, and restoration will surely follow repentance.

In Psalm 89, God's "fury" (verb, התעברת, 89:39) against his anointed is mourned but not explained. But God's twofold "fury" in Psalm 90 (noun בעברתך, 90:9; עברתך, 90:11) is a response to Israel's sin (90:8), so that Israel is clearly indicted for provoking God's anger.[46] The same root עבר appears in 89:42 and 90:4 referring to plunderers "passing by" (עברי, 89:42) and a thousand years "passing" like yesterday in God's eternal sight (יעבר, 90:4). So the same root עבר denotes "fury" and "passing," which (a) may reflect the differing conceptions of time already noted in these two psalms, and (b) may suggest that God's anger will not last forever like the psalmists suspect (89:47; 90:13). Thus the repeated time-oriented question "How long?" (89:47; 90:13) is put in perspective by the eternality of God (90:1–4).

In Psalm 89, the "sins" (עונם, 89:33) of David's descendants were mentioned,

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[46]Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 221. The verb is עבר (89:39; cf. 89:42) and the noun is עברה (90:9, 11).

but only hypothetically or prospectively (89:31–32; cf. 2 Sam 7:14).[47] God did promise to discipline the Davidic sons for their disobedience (89:33), but nowhere does Psalm 89 record or confess the actual sins of the royal house. But in Psalm 90, just such "sins" (עונתינו, 90:8) provoke God's punishment. In this way Psalm 90 again explains that Yahweh's wrath in Psalm 89 was provoked by Israel's sins, while maintaining that God will still keep his promises (since he already accounted for their sins in 89:31–36 and guaranteed that he would keep his promises regardless).

Both psalms also present the "wrath" (חמה, 89:47; 90:7) of God raging,[48] yet Psalm 89 once again gives no reason for God's wrath and even objects to its length: "How long will your *wrath* burn like fire?" (89:47). But Psalm 90 reframes the lament in Psalm 89, showing that Israel's sins are clearly the cause (90:8). Similarly, Kim sees "great significance" in the shared root עלם (89:46; 90:8) which is translated "his youth" (עלומיו, 89:46) and "sins of our youth" (עלמנו, 90:8).[49] Kim suggests that the parallel term "shame" in 89:46 may hint that sin is involved with the term עלם. He also observes that only Psalms 89 and 90 contain all four of these roots: חמה ("wrath," 89:47; 90:7), עבר ("anger," 89:39; 90:9, 11), עלם ("youth" or "hidden" or "sins of youth," 89:46; 90:8), and עון ("iniquity," 89:33; 90:8).[50] Their usage in Psalm 89 never occurs in a setting where sin is acknowledged, but their usage in Psalm 90 deals exclusively with sin.

The emphasis on Israel's sin develops further in Psalms 89 and 90. Yes, the ancient promises to David have been long delayed, and seemingly denied: God has "turned back" (תשׁיב, 89:44) the battle-sword of the Davidic king, leading to defeat and possibly death. But in Psalm 90, such divine "turning" is God's response to man's sin:

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[47]The conditional אם can mean "if" or "when."

[48]This connection is independently observed by Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 413.

[49]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 189.

[50]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 189–90.

God in his justice "turns" (תשׁב, 90:3) man back to the dust of death (citing God's righteous judgment on mankind in Gen 3:19). This earned fate leads Moses to ask that God mercifully "turn" (שׁובה, 90:13) from his righteous anger.

Ultimately all men share the fate of the Davidic king, so in both psalms the "children of man" are fleeting (בני־אדם, 89:48; 90:3).[51] In 89:48, the psalmist pleads, "Remember how short my time is! For what vanity you have created all the *children of man* (בני־אדם)!" In 90:3, citing Genesis 3:19, Moses humbly acknowledges, "You return man to dust and say, 'Return, O *children of man*!" (בני־אדם). Both contexts are emphasizing (1) divine creation, (2) divine wrath, and (3) the brevity and futility of life. First, divine creation is emphasized as God "created" (בראת, 89:48) the children of man and returns his creatures to dust (90:3; cf. Gen 3:19). Second, divine wrath is emphasized as (a) God's anger leads the psalmist to lament the fate of the children of man (89:47–48) and (b) God's anger also produces the curse on man (90:3; cf. Gen 3:19). Third, the brevity and futility of life is emphasized by the "short" (חלד) and "empty" (שׁוא) lives of mankind (89:48) that match the transient lives Moses mourns (90:3–6, 10, 12). To summarize, in Psalm 89, the reference to the "children of man" insinuates that God intentionally created them for futility (89:48), but in Psalm 90, the allusion to Genesis 3:19 clearly implies that the "children of man" are cursed with brief and futile lives because of their own sin (90:3).

Both psalms mention "the light of your face" (פנים + אור, 89:16; 90:8) but with sharply contrasting implications.[52] In 89:16, the people who walk "in the light of your face" (באור־פניך) are blessed to have Yahweh as their strong God. But in 90:8, Israel's sins have been laid bare "in the light of your face" (למאור פניך), so that God's eye of

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[51]Interpreters independently note this connection: Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 413; McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 413.

[52]See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 413; Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 221–22; McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 37.

judgment burns unfiltered against Israel. Thus in Psalm 89, walking in the light of God's face means protection and exaltation (89:16–17), but the same divine presence in Psalm 90 brings judgment and terror because the people have sinned (90:7–9).

Likewise, Psalm 89 rejoices that God "crushed" (דכאת, 89:11) Rahab by his power while Psalm 90 mourns that God pulverizes man to "dust" (דכא, 90:3) as his curse for sin.[53] God's crushing is redemptive in Psalm 89 but punitive in Psalm 90.

Similarly, Psalm 89 praises the "strength" (גבורה, 89:14) of God's redeeming arm and remembers ancient times when God chose David the "strong one" (גבור, 89:20). But the complaint section of Psalm 89 highlights the fatal destiny of every "strong youth" (גבר, 89:49), and Psalm 90 picks up on this negative connotation by mourning the fast-passing days of even those who live long "by strength" (בגבורת, 90:10).[54] This contrast is heightened by the context of longevity in Psalm 89. Divine and Davidic "strength" in Psalm 89 lead to long life for the royal line, but the sins of the people have shortened the lifetimes of even the strongest men in Psalm 90.

Another term for "strength" (עז) appears in 89:11, 14, 18, and 90:11. Psalm 89 praises this divine strength (89:11, 14) because it sides with Israel (89:18), but Psalm 90 mourns "the *strength* of your anger" (עז, 90:11) that now stands against Israel because of her sin. Similarly, in Psalm 89 the psalmist "makes known" (אודיע, 89:2) God's faithfulness and the people "know" (יודעי, 89:16) the festal shout, but in Psalm 90 such "knowing" (יודע, 90:11) relates only to God's wrath and to life navigated fearfully under his anger (הודע, 90:12). Therefore the God who was "fearsome" (נורא, 89:8) for the good of his people is now to be "feared" (ביראתך, 90:11) by his people due to his immeasurable anger and dangerous wrath.

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[53]Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 220. McKelvey underscores the rarity of the root דכא in the Psalter (34:19; 72:4; 89:11; 90:3; 94:5; 143:3) (McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 37).

[54]Kim lists this connection in his list of verbal correspondences between Pss 89 and 90 (Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 189n3).

These lexical and thematic connections show the prayer of Psalm 90 clarifying the lament in Psalm 89 by putting Israel's covenantal (un)faithfulness under the microscope rather than Yahweh's. The anger of Yahweh that has disciplined the Davidic line and the Israelite people is just and warranted.

Even so, these two psalms still hold out hope that God will maintain his covenant despite his people's sins. Although Psalm 89 never explicitly confesses the sins that brought down the Davidic line, the promise section does mention the possibility while emphasizing God's promised response (89:31–36).

At least five possible wordplays show that Yahweh will keep his covenant even when the sons of David sin (esp. 89:31–36). Even if David's descendants do not "keep" (יִשְׁמְרוּ, 89:32) God's covenant, God will "keep" (אֶשְׁמוֹר, 89:29; cf. לֹא־אַשְׁקֹר, 89:34) his promise. Even if David's children "violate" (יְחַלְּלוּ, 89:32) God's commandments, God promises not to "violate" (לֹא־אֲחַלֵּל, 89:35) his covenant. Even if they are unfaithful to his "commandments" (מִצְוֹתַי, 89:32), God will be faithful to his "word" (מוֹצָא, 89:35). Even if they break his "rules" (בְּמִשְׁפָּטַי, 89:31), God will not alter the word that came from his "lips" (שְׂפָתַי, 89:35). Even if David's children "forsake" (יַעֲזֹבוּ, 89:31) God's law, God will not "lie" (אֶכְזַב, 89:36) to David.

Table 11. Wordplays in 89:29–36: Davidic unfaithfulness and divine faithfulness

Verse	Form	Root	Contrast
89:32	יִשְׁמְרוּ	שׁמר	If David's descendants do not *keep* the covenant…
89:29	אֶשְׁמוֹר	שׁמר	… God will still *keep* his promise.
89:32	יְחַלְּלוּ	חלל	If David's children *violate* God's commandments…
89:35	אֲחַלֵּל	חלל	… God will not *violate* his covenant.
89:32	מִצְוֹתַי	מצוה	If David's children break God's *commandments*…
89:35	מוֹצָא	מוצא	… God will not break his *word*.

Table 11 continued

89:31	במשפטי	משפט	If David's children break God's *rules*…
89:35	שפתי	שפה	… God will not alter what he spoke with his *lips*.
89:31	יעזבו	עזב	If David's children *forsake* God's law…
89:36	אכזב	כזב	… God will not *lie* to David.

This section relates the Mosaic law with the Davidic covenant. Even if the king and his descendants break God's "law" (תורה), his "rules" (משפט), his "statutes" (חקה), and his "commandments" (מצוה) (89:31–32), God will keep his eternal covenant with David. God will not break his covenant when David's children break his commandments. He will discipline his people but not destroy them. Therefore even when Psalm 90 redirects the blame of Psalm 89 away from Yahweh and toward Israel, there is no reversal of the Davidic promises. God has already accounted for generations of royal sin in 89:31–36, and he is prepared to remain faithful in the face of kingly and communal rebellion.

God's Character, Covenant, and Faithfulness

Both psalms appeal to אדני ("Lord") at key junctures. The only two occurrences of אדני in Psalm 89 close Ethan's psalm (89:50–51), while the only two occurrences of אדני in Psalm 90 frame Moses' prayer (90:1, 17). In 89:50, the psalmist questions, "*Lord* (אדני), where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David?" In 90:1, Moses answers, "*Lord* (אדני), you have been our dwelling place in all generations." In 89:51, the psalmist concludes by pleading, "Remember, O *Lord* (אדני), how your servants are mocked, and how I bear in my heart the insults of all the many nations." In 90:17, Moses concludes by praying, "Let the favor of the *Lord* (אדני) our God be upon us." Thus Moses addresses אדני in Psalm 90 in ways that address

Ethan's complaints to אדני in Psalm 89.[55]

The "steadfast love" of Yahweh resounds through Psalm 89 (חסד, 89:2, 3, 15, 25, 29, 34, 50). But it appears only once in the lengthy complaint and petition section (89:39–52): "Lord, where is your *steadfast love* of old?" (89:50). This question is strategically placed at the beginning of the final petition in Psalm 89. Then in Psalm 90, the single occurrence of חסד in 90:14 matches its strategic placement in Psalm 89. In both psalms, the main section of lament is followed by a direct appeal for God's חסד (89:50; 90:14).[56]

What gives Israel stability in these shifting times? What gives her assurance that Yahweh is able to act? Both psalms proclaim that "you" (אתה) made the "earth" (ארץ) and the "world" (תבל) (89:12; 90:2).[57]

Table 12. You made the earth and the world

Verse	MT	English
89:12	ארץ תבל . . . אתה	earth, world, you
90:2	ארץ ותבל . . . אתה	earth, world, you

Psalm 89:12 highlights God's power in creation, while 90:2 highlights his eternality in preceding creation. Thus Israel's instability is answered by God's stability; his creation power secures her precarious position.

Psalm 89 is marked by second person statements ("you") praising Yahweh in

[55]Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 219.

[56]DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *Psalms*, 695; McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 36; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 413.

[57]Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 220. Table 12 is adapted from Cole.

89:9–18.[58] But praise turns to accusation as second person statements ("you") again mark 89:39–41, 43–36. Second-person praise then returns at the beginning of Psalm 90 as Moses encloses his opening doxology with the 2ms pronoun אתה ("you," 90:1–2).[59]

Prayer for Restoration

Psalms 89–90 also resonate with pleas for restoration. Bound for exile and standing in the rubble of the monarchy, Psalm 89 twice pleads, "How long?" (עד־מה, 89:47 [2x]). Moses repeats this long-suffering plea that has marked Book III and now carries over into Book IV: "How long?" (עד־מתי, 90:13).[60] In both psalms, this question occurs in the near context of God's "wrath" (חמה, 89:47; 90:7) which has shortened the days of the mourners (89:46, 48; 90:5–6, 10, 12).[61] Further, the question appears at key junctures in both psalms. Psalm 89:47 directly follows the initial section that accuses Yahweh with direct address ("you") and ends with "Selah" (סלה) (89:38–46), while Psalm 90:13 marks the beginning of Moses' petitionary conclusion (90:13–17). Thus "the adjacent Psalms 89 and 90 both begin with assurance of perpetual presence (דר ודר, 89.5; 90.1b) and end with questions of a temporal nature (עד מה, 89.47; עד־מתי, 90.13)."[62]

The root כון ("establish" or "foundation") occurs 5x in Psalm 89 (89:3, 5, 15, 22, 38) and 2x in the concluding plea of Psalm 90:17 ("establish the work of our hands"). Its strategic prevalence in 89 and strategic placement in 90 seem to signify an intentional connection. In the juxtaposition of Psalms 89 and 90, Moses seems to pray that God

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[58]Many interpreters note this phenomenon (e.g., McCann, *Psalms*, 1035; Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 150; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 421).

[59]Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 219.

[60]74:9 (עד־מה), 74:10 (עד־מתי), 79:5 (עד־מה), 80:5 (עד־מתי), 82:2 (עד־מתי), and 89:47 (עד־מה). Many interpreters note the repetition of this question (e.g., McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 37; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 413; Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 222).

[61]The noun חמה ("wrath") occurs in three consecutive psalms (88:8; 89:47; 90:7) (McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 36).

[62]Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 220.

would reestablish Israel's work which was de-established in Psalm 89.[63]

Further, in 90:17, the verb כון ("establish") twice occurs with the term יד ("hand"). Moses concludes with the twofold petition that God "establish the work of our hands." In Psalm 89, God's "hand" was raised high (89:14), and he promised that "my *hand* shall be *established*" with David (ידי תכון, 89:22). Further, "I will set his hand on the sea, and his right hand on the rivers" (89:26). But God "exalted the right hand of his foes" (89:43) and allowed the "hand" or "power" of Sheol to continue ruling over man (89:49). Moses therefore prays for a reversal where God reestablishes the work of Israel's hands (90:17).

In Psalm 89 enemies of the Davidic king "rejoiced" (השׂמחת, 89:43), so Moses prays that Yahweh would restore Israel so that she might "rejoice" (נשׂמחה, 90:14; שׂמחנו, 90:15). Likewise, Israel was promised protection from "affliction" (יענגו, 89:23) but now has suffered untold "affliction" from God (עניתנו, 90:15), so Moses prays that years of God-given gladness would balance the scales.

Finally, the covenantal name יהוה appears throughout Psalm 89 (89:2, 6, 7 [2x], 9 [2x], 16, 19, 47, 52, 53) but only once in Psalm 90 (90:13). Its strategic placement heading the complaint in Psalm 90:13 matches its strategic placement heading the complaint in Psalm 89:47. In Psalm 89 the psalmist cries, "How long, O *Yahweh*" (89:47). In Psalm 90, Moses cries, "Return, O *Yahweh*! How long?" (90:13). Both appeals respond to God's wrath (89:47; 90:11) and both ask the agonizing time-question at central junctures in their respective psalms.

King and People: Shared Fate and Joint Hope

The majority of Psalm 89 focuses on the king. Even a brief glimpse of the people still centers on their relationship with their king (89:16–19). But when the royal

[63]Hossfeld and Zenger suggest that the shared term כון ("establish") reflects "God's supportive and sustaining attitude" (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 413).

"servant" (עבדי, 89:4, 21) is afflicted (עבדך, 89:40), all "your servants" (עבדיך, 89:51) are mocked. The final petition in 89:50–52 blends the threefold suffering of "your servants," the psalmist himself ("I," "my heart"), and God's "anointed." Together God's servants and God's anointed face the brunt of exilic "mockery" (חרפת, 89:51; חרפו, 89:52).[64]

Psalm 90 picks up this communalization of the king's plight and prays for nationwide restoration: "Have pity on *your servants*" (עבדיך, 90:13) and "Let your work be shown to *your servants*" (עבדיך, 90:16). Kim sees the "servants" in 89:51 as the royal Davidic descendants, but still views the "servants" in 90:13 and 16 as the contemporary Israelite community.

> The plural form עבדיך in v. 51 seems out of place, but its presence likewise refers to the descendants of David associated with the Davidic covenant. The presence of the plural form "servants" in Psalm 90:13 and 16 picks up the descendants of David in Psalm 89 and identifies them with the contemporary people of the psalmist, thus making it possible to read Psalm 90 as a continuation of Psalm 89.[65]

The ambiguity of the term "your servants" (עבדיך) at the end of Psalm 89 and its communalization at the end of Psalm 90 highlights the shared fate and joint hope of the royal line and Israelite nation. Exilic wrath has overwhelmed both David's progeny and Israel's community.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that Psalm 90 corresponds with and responds to Psalm 89. Some themes in Psalm 90 continue and complement the praises and prayers in Psalm 89. Other themes in Psalm 90 answer Psalm 89 by providing contrasts and explanations that reframe the complaint.

The structure and message of Psalm 89 measures the faithfulness of God by his covenant with David, associates the reign of God with the reign of David, questions the

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[64]H. Wallace independently observes this move from the individual "servant" to the community of "servants" in Pss 89–90 (H. Wallace, *Psalms*, 153).

[65]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 195.

character of God because of the Davidic catastrophe, and pleads that Yahweh restore the Davidic king and Israelite people. The promise of permanence deeply embedded in Psalm 89 requires the view that the covenant with David eventually will be fulfilled. The question is not *whether* but *when*, *how*, and *who*.

Psalm 90 then continues, complements, and contrasts the message of Psalm 89 in different ways. Five overarching themes clarify the relationship between Psalms 89 and 90. First, both psalms are marked by the relationship between time and eternity and the relationship between man's transience and God's eternality. The ancient promise to David remains unfulfilled, leading the psalmist to question God's faithfulness (89:50). But Psalm 90 replaces the microscope of lament with the telescope of perspective. Moses' prayer reveals that God is neither forgetful nor unfaithful but infinite. Therefore this plodding period of nonfulfillment and the extended night of exile may seem unbearably long, but even a millennium is but a night-watch to the eternal God who sees Israel's suffering and hears her cries.

Second, Psalm 90 vindicates God by confessing what Psalm 89 concealed: Israel has transgressed God's law, so God's wrath is righteous. Therefore the complaint in Psalm 89 is legitimate but incomplete. With this new perspective, there is no covenantal contradiction, which implies that there will be no permanent Davidic disbandment. After all, God already planned for the disobedience of David's sons, promising to discipline but never destroy (89:31–36). This theme, too, logically sustains Israel's hope that the current dissolution of David's line is not permanent.

Third, both psalms portray God's character, covenant, and faithfulness. Psalm 89 reverberates with his paired attributes of "steadfast love" (חסד) and "faithfulness" (אמונה) (89:2, 3, 15, 25, 34, 50). These twin pillars define his character (89:2, 3, 15) and uphold David's covenant (89:25, 34, 50). Therefore Israel appeals to him not only as sovereign ruler (אדני, 89:50, 51; 90:1, 17) but also covenant God (יהוה, 89:47, 52; 90:13). He does predate the earth and the world as their creator (89:12–13; 90:2), but he also

rules with "steadfast love" (89:50). Therefore Moses in Psalm 90 can ask him to shower his "steadfast love" (חסד) on Israel once again (90:14).

Fourth, the concluding sections of each psalm sound a prayer for restoration. Both raise the haunting question, "How long?" (89:47; 90:13), and both ask God to show mercy to his suffering "servants" (89:51; 90:13, 16). God previously "established" David and his royal line (89:3, 5, 22, 38), so now Moses asks that God reestablish the work of his people's hands (90:17). These joint petitions are grounded in the hope that God hears his people's cries and keeps every one of his promises.

Fifth and finally, Psalms 89 and 90 display corporate solidarity. The plight of God's royal "servant" parallels the punishment of God's community of "servants" (90:13, 16). King and people share a common fate, a joint hope, and a corporate prayer.

The relationship between Psalms 89 and 90 does not exhaust the significance of Psalm 90 or the way Moses' prayer helps sustain Davidic hope as Book IV begins. Psalm 90 is a "Janus-faced" psalm, looking both ways as it responds to Book III and leads into Book IV.[66] Therefore the next chapter will explore the message of Psalm 90 and its psalmic series in Psalms 90–92.

[66]David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, JSOTSup 252 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 76; cf. McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 40).

CHAPTER 4

MOSAIC INTERCESSION (PSALMS 90–92)

The "magisterial" Psalm 90 marks the "turning point" in the Psalter.[1] As the curtain rises on Book IV, with monarchic rubble still strewn across the stage, an ancient figure suddenly appears: Israel's paradigmatic prophet, first leader, and boldest mediator. His first and only superscripted appearance in the Psalter is striking. Why does Moses appear in Psalm 90 directly following Psalm 89? Why is Moses selected to open and close Book IV of the Psalter? How will Moses relate to David? The יהוה מלך psalms begin with Psalm 93 and stake claim to the center of Book IV. But Moses, with all his redemptive-historical *gravitas*, commences Book IV and permeates its themes. Why Moses, and why here?

Thesis and Overview

This chapter explores how Psalms 90–92 help sustain Davidic hope in Book IV. I will examine the Mosaic motif permeating Book IV; the repeated allusion to the golden calf incident (Exod 32–34) in Psalms 90 and 106; the superscription, form, setting, and structure of Psalm 90; the connections and progression unifying Psalms 90–92 as a series; the clustered allusion to Deuteronomy 32–33; and the connections between Psalms 91–92 and Psalm 89.

Psalm 90 begins answering the loss of land, temple, and king in Book III by presenting Moses prayerfully confessing Israel's exile-inducing sin (allusion to Deut 32) and successfully interceding with God in response to a broken covenant (allusion to Exod

[1]Respectively, Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 110; Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 81.

32–34). Psalms 90–92 then form a series that follows Moses' confessional intercession by depicting a faithful and flourishing Davidide (Ps 91) restored and rejoicing among the righteous (Ps 92) before Book IV sails skyward into the יהוה מלך collection (93–100).

Book-Initiating Superscriptions

Book IV begins with the only psalm attributed to Moses. Book-initiating superscriptions signal starts and shifts. Even if they did not follow the doxologies closing preceding books, these book-initiating superscriptions alone introduce shifts in the Psalter. Introducing Book I, Psalms 1 and 2 serve as the meta-superscription for the Psalter itself. These twin pillars form a "gateway to the Psalter,"[2] thereby requiring no standard title themselves. Introducing Book II, Psalms 42–43 form a dual psalm sharing a previously unseen superscription introducing an eight-psalm series attributed to "the sons of Korah" (לבני־קרח) (Pss 42–49).[3] Introducing Book III, eleven psalms "of Asaph" appear (לאסף) (Pss 73–83), completing an *inclusio* with the single Asaphic psalm in Book II (Ps 50).[4] Introducing Book IV, the lone Mosaic superscription then signals a seismic shift in the Psalter (Ps 90:1).

Books IV and V are linked by *conjunctive* headings rather than the *disjunctive* superscriptions marking the transitions among Books I–IV. Closing Book IV and opening Book V, the repeated doxological incipits of the untitled Psalm 106 (v. 1) and Psalm 107

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[2]Robert L. Cole, *Psalms 1–2: Gateway to the Psalter* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013).

[3]Psalms 42–49 are all attributed explicitly to "the sons of Korah," except for the untitled Ps 43 which is paired with the titled Ps 42. If Pss 42–43 are read together, "the sons of Korah" form a seven-psalm series. If Pss 42 and 43 are read separately, "the sons of Korah" form an eight-psalm series. Near the end of Book III "the sons of Korah" superscription appears four times, organizing a five-psalm series encasing a Davidic psalm (84–85 | 86 | 87–88).

[4]Books II and III appear intertwined by a chiastic structure arranged with Korahite bookends (Pss 42–49 and 84–88), an internal Asaphic frame (Pss 50 and 73–83), and a Davidic center (Pss 51–72). Barber sees the solitary Asaphic Ps 50 as likely evidence of "deliberate editorial intent," a psalm strategically placed "to complete the literary structure" (Michael Barber, *Singing in the Reign: The Psalms and the Liturgy of God's Kingdom* [Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road, 2001], 92; cf. David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, JSOTSup 252 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997], 71–72).

(v. 1) catapult the final book of the Psalter into the hymnic praise which will characterize this collection until its crescendo in Psalms 146–50.[5] Wilson suggests that the paucity of named authors in Books IV and V creates a situation where "author-change can no longer serve as an effective indicator of disjuncture. In this segment, therefore, we find the הללויה ["praise Yahweh"] and הודו ["give thanks"] performing the same function."[6] In Books I–IV, however, book-initiating superscriptions clearly mark shifts and send signals. The shift is seismic in Psalm 90.

Superscription of Psalm 90

The leading superscription of Book IV is sudden and striking: "A prayer of Moses, the man of God." Psalm 90 is first labeled a "prayer" (תפלה). The term תפלה occurs 77x in the OT and typically connotes petitionary prayer.[7] More specifically, תפלה appears 32x in the Psalter: 27x in poetry proper but only 5x in superscriptions (17:1; 86:1; 90:1; 102:1; 142:1). Three תפלה superscriptions are explicitly Davidic (17:1, 86:1, 142:1), one is implicitly Davidic (102:1), and one is Mosaic (90:1).[8] Psalm 90 is a petition, but more specifically a confessional lament and intercession as Moses confesses corporate sin and offers prayer for a community.

The ל prefix (למשׁה) either marks authorial attribution or provides a functional literary lens. Considering the nature of the psalm and its allusions to the Pentateuch,

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[5]Psalm 105:1 reads, "Oh give thanks to Yahweh!" Psalm 106:1 reads, "Praise Yahweh! Oh give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!" Psalm 107:1 reads, "Oh give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!"

[6]Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 157–58.

[7]The term תפלה is used extensively in the account of Solomon's dedication of the temple (1 Kgs 8:28 [2x], 29, 38, 45, 49, 54; 9:3; 2 Chr 6:19 [2x], 20, 29, 35, 39, 40; 7:12, 15).

[8]The content and placement of Ps 102:1 casts a Davidic hue. First, it is sandwiched between the only Davidic titles in Book IV (101:1 and 103:1). Second, it presents an afflicted individual which matches the progression in Psalms 101–103. Third, the Davidic Ps 103 responds to 102 in many ways. For further evidence and discussion, see Andrew Witt, "Hearing Psalm 102 within the Context of the Hebrew Psalter," *VT* 62, no. 4 (2012): 590–96, 600–606. See chap. 6 below for further discussion.

Mosaic authorship is likely. The superscription, regardless, signals the reader to view the psalm through a Mosaic lens.[9] Moses is then identified as "the man of God" (אישׁ־האלהים). This phrase alludes to Deuteronomy 33:1 which heads the final blessing of Moses on the tribes of Israel: "This is the blessing with which *Moses the man of God* (משׁה אישׁ האלהים) blessed the people of Israel before his death." The superscription of Psalm 90 immediately evokes this narrative superscription in Deuteronomy 33.[10]

Moses is the first OT character given the title "man of God" (אישׁ־האלהים) (Deut 33:1; cf. Josh 14:6; 1 Chr 23:14; 2 Chr 30:16; Ezra 3:2). In the Pentateuch, he alone bears the name. Later the phrase אישׁ האלהים (or אישׁ אלהים) typically describes named prophets or unnamed messengers from God.[11] This solemn title therefore signals prophetic activity more than personal piety, and calling more than character.[12]

When encountering this solemn Mosaic superscription, the reader is compelled to ask, "Why Moses?" and "Why here?" What shift is marked, and what signal sent, by this book-initiating superscription of Psalm 90? The answer is layered.

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[9]I take the superscription at face value and assume Mosaic authorship, especially because of the numerous Pentateuchal allusions and clear parallels with Mosaic poetry. McCann, who does not hold to Mosaic authorship, still sees the superscription providing a literary lens essential to the message of the psalm. "Thus the superscription of Psalm 90 should be taken seriously—not as an indication of Mosaic authorship, but as a clue to read Psalm 90 in the context of the stories about Moses in the Pentateuch." Further, "the editors of the psalter intended for readers to hear this psalm as a poetic imagining of how Moses might have spoken to the monumental crisis posed by the loss of land, Temple, and monarchy . . ." (J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *The Book of Psalms: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, in vol. 4 of *NIB*, ed. L. E. Keck [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996], 1040–41).

[10]Vassar suggests that the phrase אישׁ האלהים ("the man of God") does not refer to Moses but simply titles Psalm 90 in a way that urges the reader to be a "man of God" (John S. Vassar, *Recalling a Story Once Told: An Intertextual Reading of the Psalter and the Pentateuch* [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007], 94–95). But the clear allusion to Deut 33:1 suggests otherwise.

[11]Named referents include Samuel (1 Sam 9:6–10), David (2 Chr 8:14; Neh 12:24, 36), Elijah (1 Kgs 17:18, 24; 2 Kgs 1), Elisha (2 Kgs 4–8; 13:19), Shemaiah (1 Kgs 12:22), Hanan (Jer 35:4), and the angel of Yahweh who prophesied Samson's birth (Judg 13:6, 8). Unnamed referents include Eli's prophetic confronter (1 Sam 2:27), Jeroboam's mysterious antagonist (1 Kgs 13), and Ahab's victory-promising messenger (1 Kgs 20:28).

[12]Calling and character are not mutually exclusive, and both may be present in the phrase "man of God." But in the OT, the "man of God" usually describes not personal character but prophetic function.

First, every other canonical character named in an MT superscription reflects the monarchic period of Israel's history (see Table 13).[16] Moses alone evokes the ancient paradigmatic events narrated in the Pentateuch. The reader of Psalm 90 is catapulted back across the history of Israel to the complex of events surrounding the Exodus from Egypt. The Mosaic superscription therefore prompts the reader to scan the landscape of the Pentateuch for a setting that suits the psalm. Through inner-biblical allusions (see below), the psalm itself then answers this search started by the superscription.

Table 13. OT characters in superscriptions

OT Character(s)	Psalm(s)
David	*73 total pss*[13]
Absalom	3
Cush the Benjaminite	7
Saul	18, 52, 54, 57, 59
Abimelech	34
Jeduthun[14]	39
sons of Korah	42, 44–49, 84–85, 87–88
Asaph	50, 73–83
Nathan the prophet	51
Bathsheba	51
Doeg the Edomite	52
Ahimelech	52
Ziphites	54
Philistines	56
Joab	60
Solomon	72, 127
Heman the Ezrahite[15]	88
Ethan the Ezrahite	89
Moses	*90*

Second, regardless of the specific setting envisioned, the attribution to Moses evokes canonical memories of Israel's premonarchic days when Yahweh alone was king and his presence alone protected and guided her. "Connecting the prayer to Moses suggests that the psalm responds to the

[13]Psalms 3–9, 11–32, 34–41, 51–65, 68–70, 86, 101, 103, 108–10, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138–45.

[14]"Jeduthun" (ידיתון) appears in three psalms (39, 62, 77). In Ps 39, the psalm is "*to* Jeduthun" (ל), possibly referring to the worship leader by that name in 1 Chr 16:41–42 and 25:1. In Pss 62 and 77, the psalm is "*according to* Jeduthun" (על), perhaps a musical notation.

[15]"Ethan the Ezrahite" (איתן האזרחי) and "Heman" (הימן) appear together in a list of sages whose wisdom Solomon surpassed (MT 1 Kgs 4:31; ESV 5:11).

[16]Moses is also the last new figure to appear in a superscription. Only Moses, David, and Solomon appear in Books IV–V, and David and Solomon have already appeared in Books I–III.

question of the fall of Jerusalem by going back to a time when the community's relationship with YHWH shaped the life of Israel but was not mediated by temple and king."[17]

Third, the phrase "man of God" evokes the end of Moses' life, reflecting the introduction to Moses' final prayer-blessing in Deuteronomy 33:1 (משׁה איׁש האלהים). Here Moses blessed the twelve tribes of Israel before ascending Mount Nebo to die. Moses did not enter Canaan, so his life ended with God's promise visibly unfulfilled. Perhaps this theme of promises unfulfilled contributes to the placement of Psalm 90.

Fourth, this "prayer" (תפלה) expresses an entreaty, plea, or petition—a confessional intercession. Further, although the psalm is attributed to Moses, he prays using the first person plural (90:1, 7–17). Moses is expressing a mediatorial confession and petition on behalf of God's people, a fitting role for Israel's first mediator.

Fifth, chapter 3 has already shown how Psalm 90 continues, complements, and contrasts with Psalm 89. Moses' prayer thus responds to both the national crisis spiraling through Book III and the royal crisis concentrated in Psalm 89. The title reintroduces Israel's first mediator confessing the people's sin and interceding with God in the aftermath of a broken covenant. Many interpreters recognize the intercessory connotation of Moses' appearance.[18] But the traumatic divide prompting his intercession—the broken *Davidic* covenant in Psalm 89—is often missed. Moses' Pentateuchal petitions are never generic; neither will be his psalmic prayer.[19] Moses-references throughout Book IV will establish his intercessory role.

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[17]Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms*, NCBC (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 392; cf. deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 82–91. Mathews, however, argues that Moses' Pentateuchal portrayal has strong royal overtones (Danny Mathews, *Royal Motifs in the Pentateuchal Portrayal of Moses*, LHB/OTS 571 [New York: T&T Clark, 2012]).

[18]See the section below on allusions to Exod 32–34 in Ps 90.

[19]I am not arguing that Moses appears in Ps 90 to intercede *only* for the Davidic covenant. I am only emphasizing that the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant closes Book III, implying that Moses' prayer responds to the failure of that covenant (and the exilic situation intertwined with its failure).

Prominence of Moses in Book IV

The superscription of Psalm 90 is no cameo for Moses. In contrast with the rest of the Psalter, Moses takes center stage in Book IV. Book IV begins with the only psalm attributed to Moses (90:1) and ends with his mediating ministry (Ps 106:6–33). His name alone appears 7x in Book IV (90:1; 99:6; 103:7; 105:26; 106:16, 23, 32) after appearing only once in the rest of the Psalter (77:21).

Israel's history is retold in detail in Book IV: Abraham to the exodus (105), and the exodus to the exile (106). Historical vignettes are provided (99:6–8; 103:6–8), urging the community to respond differently than Moses' generation (95:7–11). Thus the Mosaic superscription heading Book IV does more than introduce Psalm 90; it introduces a particular Moses-emphasis in Book IV.

Canonical interpreters see this Mosaic material functioning in several ways. First, most emphasize that his appearance implicitly reminds Israel of premonarchic times when Yahweh alone was her king.[20] With the Davidic kingship in shambles, this ancient reality offers comfort and confidence through a dramatic reorientation. Second, Moses' reappearance also implicitly confronts Israel's sin since Moses mediated the Sinai covenant and instituted the Mosaic law.[21] Moses arrives with gavel in hand: the violation of law and covenant has brought on the exile. Third, Book IV portrays Israel in a new wilderness exile among the nations (e.g., Ps 91:1–13; 95:7–11; 99:6–8; 105:37–43; 106:13–47). Thus Moses' reappearance is embedded within a broader wilderness theme marking Book IV.[22] Fourth, Barber sees a new exodus implied as Moses reappears to lead

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[20]Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 215; deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 82–88; Vassar, *Recalling a Story Once Told*, 102–3; McCann, *Psalms*, 1040; Mark D. Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*, HOTE (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 86–87; Krista Mournet, "Moses and the Psalms: The Significance of Psalms 90 and 106 within Book IV of the Masoretic Psalter," *CBW* 31 (2011): 70.

[21]Sampson S. Ndoga, "Revisiting the Theocratic Agenda of Book 4 of the Psalter for Interpretive Premise," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms: The Current State of Scholarship*, ed. N. L. deClaissé-Walford, SBLAIL 20 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 151–52.

[22]Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 530–31; Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 272–92. Mitchell

Israel out of her captivity among the nations (see Ps 107).[23] If the Psalms tell the same story promised to the patriarchs and predicted by the prophets, a new exodus on the near horizon is precisely what Israel should expect at this stage of the Psalter.

Each of these views is a reasonable inference from the content and contours of Book IV. But there is one final Mosaic function, often mentioned by interpreters, that makes sense of direct statements and clear inner-biblical allusions in Psalms 90–106.[24] Moses appears 7x in Book IV. What does the evidence itself suggest?

Prayerful Prophetic Authority

Moses opens Book IV of the Psalter in prophetic fashion. The title "man of God" (איש האלהים, 90:1) typically represents prophets or messengers of God (see above). But Moses appears not to prophesy but to pray (תפלה, "prayer"). This combination of prophetic title and petitionary purpose implies a prayer with prophetic authority. Moses' prophetic identity and function will flow out in prayer. Thus Moses prays *to* God *for* Israel while speaking *from* God *to* Israel. Such prayerful prophetic authority undergirds many of Moses' appearances in Book IV.

Mediator and Intercessor

Moses forms a frame around Book IV.[25] The majority of Mosaic references appear in Psalms 90 and 105–106 (90:1; 105:26; 106:16, 23, 32). Only two occur in more

surveys wilderness themes throughout Pss 90–106 and argues that Book IV depicts Israel's latter-day wilderness exile among the nations.

[23]Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 118–26.

[24]See the section below for citations of interpreters.

[25]Many canonical interpreters recognize this frame. Creach sees the Mosaic identities of mediator and intercessor at work (Jerome F. D. Creach, "The Shape of Book Four of the Psalter and the Shape of Second Isaiah," *JSOT* 23, no. 80 [1998]: 65–66). Mournet sees the intercessory plea in 90:13 and the answer in 106:45 but does not highlight further parallels (Mournet, "Moses and the Psalms," 70–73). Borger provides the most through evaluation of all Moses-references in Book IV and concludes that Moses appears in Book IV primarily as intercessor (James Todd Borger, "Moses in the Fourth Book of the Psalter" [PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002], 173–74).

central psalms (99:6; 103:7). Occurrences in Psalms 90 and 106 especially frame Book IV, crafting a lens that clarifies Moses' role within the collection: Moses is Israel's mediator and intercessor. Each psalm either evokes or cites Moses pleading with Yahweh to keep his covenant in the aftermath of the golden calf incident. Psalm 90:13–16 recalls Moses' covenant-saving prayer, Psalm 106:19–23 recounts his covenant-saving courage, and both passages plead or assume God's covenant-keeping mercy (I will explore this allusion below in the section on Exodus 32–34 in Psalm 90).

Other Mosaic appearances likewise highlight Moses' role as mediator or intercessor. Psalm 99:6–8 remembers Moses, Aaron, and Samuel as priests whose prayers were effective.[26] They "called upon his name. They called to Yahweh, and he answered them" (96:6). Further, their prayers were not generic but intercessory: "O Yahweh our

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[26]Psalm 99 is a יהוה מלך psalm divided into two clear sections (vv. 1–5 and vv. 6–9). Both sections end with a doxological summons to "exalt Yahweh our God and worship" in his presence (רוממו יהוה אלהינו והשתחוו, vv. 5, 9) because he is "holy" (קדוש, vv. 5, 9). Verses 1–4 celebrate the just reign of holy king Yahweh over all nations. Verses 6–8 recall his prayer-answering faithfulness toward Moses, Aaron, and Samuel. The psalm repeats that they "called" (בקראי and קראים in v. 6) and he "answered" (יענם in v. 6; עניתם in v. 8). Borger analyzes OT uses of the phrase "calling on the name of the Lord" (99:6) and concludes: "The act of calling on the name of the Lord, then, was done by a variety of persons, at a variety of places, and for a variety of purposes. It cannot be isolated to a particular class of people (priests, prophets, etc.) or to a particular purpose (intercession)" (Borger, "Moses in the Fourth Book," 126). Context must therefore dictate the purpose of the prayer, and the context in Psalm 99 is *law-giving* and *responses to sin* (forgiveness and judgment). "O Yahweh our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God to them, but an avenger of their wrongdoings" (99:8). Thus intercession is implied. Detailed discussion over the nature of the connection among Moses, Aaron, and Samuel is unnecessary for our purposes. All three are mediators, chosen men assigned to minister between God and Israel. Moses is therefore portrayed as a petitioning priest whose prayers Yahweh consistently answered.

Interpreters debate whether Moses should be called a "priest" (כהן, 99:6). Borger deems it appropriate because (a) Moses performed priestly activity to initiate the priesthood and (b) Moses' ministry would have been deemed priestly by the later ministerial standards of the priesthood (Borger, "Moses in the Fourth Book," 127–29). In addition, Moses' birth narrative ingeniously leaves his parents anonymous (later named Amram and Jochebed in Exod 6:20 and Num 26:59) in order to focus on their tribal ancestry: "Now a man from the house of *Levi* went and took as his wife a *Levite* woman" (Exod 2:1; emphasis added). So Moses was born as a Levitical prototype who would become Israel's foremost mediator.

Although vv. 7–8 use third person plurals to refer back to Moses, Aaron, and Samuel as joint antecedents, Moses is more central by implication since he was the main one who experienced God speaking "in the pillar of the cloud" (v. 7), the main one who received God's "testimonies" and "statute[s]" (v. 7), and the only one who directly received Yahweh's unique self-revelation in Exodus 34:6–7 (referenced in v. 8). So Moses is presented here as a "priest" (כהן, v. 6) who "called" (קרא [2x], v. 6) upon God and whom God "answered" (ענה, vv. 6, 8) with the result that the people were forgiven even though they were disciplined (v. 8).

God, you answered them; you were a *forgiving* God to them, but an *avenger* of their *wrongdoings*" (96:8; emphasis added). Once again Yahweh's self-revelation following the golden calf incident is highlighted (Exod 34:6–7).

Psalm 103:7–8 recalls the revelatory response to Moses' intercession following the golden calf debacle: "[Yahweh] made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. Yahweh is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Ps 103:7–8; cf. Exod 34:6–7). Indeed, God forgives the very "iniquity" (עון, Ps 103:3, 10; Exod 34:7 [2x], 9), "transgression" (פשע, Exod 34:7; Ps 103:12), and "sin" (חטאה, Exod 34:7; חטא, Ps 103:10) that provoked his threat of destruction following Israel's egregious idolatry at Sinai.

Psalm 105:26 recalls how God sent Moses and Aaron to deliver Israel from Egyptian captivity. Through Mosaic mediation God "brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing" (105:43).[27] Psalm 106, which recounts Israel's sinful history from Exodus to the exile, recounts how the people were jealous against their leader Moses (106:16) and provoked him to anger in the wilderness (106:32). Nevertheless, early in their rebellious history, Moses interceded for Israel, and God heard him (106:19–23). Concluding Book IV, the end of Psalm 106 recounts God's response to his people's pleas, again alluding to his self-revelation after the golden calf incident: "For their sake he remembered his covenant, and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love" (106:45). Book IV reminds exiled Israel that the prophetic intercessory prayers of Moses the mediator have been heard before and will be heard again.

[27]Borger explains that Ps 105:26 is the only reference to Moses in Book IV that does not immediately relate to Moses' role as intercessor. The reason is that Ps 105 recounts how God led and redeemed Israel, and any mention of intercession would imply Israel's sin and God's anger, topics the psalmist is clearly avoiding (Borger, "Moses in the Fourth Book," 138–39).

Summary of Moses in Book IV

Borger shows that in the Pentateuchal narratives, Moses is repeatedly presented as Israel's intercessor. Borger then demonstrates that the Moses-references in Book IV of the Psalter primarily highlight his role as intercessor.[28] McCann concludes, "For a new wilderness experience—the exile—Psalm 90 offers Moses as intercessor."[29]

Thus Book IV is strategically placed as a response to the failed Davidic kingship in Book III. Centuries of royal sin have brought wrath on Israel, and the Davidic covenant appears in jeopardy. Who should approach Yahweh on Israel's behalf? "Moses, the man of God" (90:1). Just as Moses interceded for the covenant-breaking generation at Sinai, he now intercedes for the covenant-breaking generation in exile. Dempster explains the hope generated by Moses' appearance:

> The next Psalter division (Pss. 90–106) . . . begins with a wisdom psalm, whose unique Mosaic title points back to the wilderness experience of the Israelites as a time when Israel was consumed by God's wrath and judgment for their sin. Why? To suggest that, just as the previous exile ended, so will this one.[30]

Wenham agrees: "Book 4 looks back at the Mosaic era by recounting the history of Israel's disobedience and God's forgiveness of them in that era. This gives the reader of the Psalms hope that the same could happen again (Psalms 95, 103, 105–6)."[31] This interpretation of Moses' blended role—to implicitly condemn and explicitly intercede—will soon be substantiated by clustered allusions to Exodus 32–34 and Deuteronomy 32–33 within Psalms 90–92.

Moses is strategically resurrected in the arrangement of the Psalter to help the Israelites navigate their new exile and new wilderness—"no land, no temple, no

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[28]Borger, "Moses in the Fourth Book," 173–74.

[29]McCann, *Psalms*, 1043.

[30]Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 199.

[31]Gordon J. Wenham, *The Psalter Reclaimed: Praying and Praising with the Psalms* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 93.

monarchy."[32] Israel knows that when Moses speaks, whether old or new, she must listen.[33] And when Moses prays, whether then or now, God listens.

Form, Setting, and Structure of Psalm 90

For my purposes, the nuances of form, setting, and structure in Psalm 90 are secondary concerns. Therefore this section will illustrate representative options, suggest likely views, and relate relevant issues to my thesis.

Form of Psalm 90

In some cases, form-critical categories help illuminate the canonical placement and meaning of individual psalms, neighboring psalms, and collections (e.g., the hymnic history series in Pss 105–106). In other cases, factors other than form and genre may play a more prominent role in a psalm's placement (e.g., lexical links, thematic progression, and shared allusions in Pss 90–92). In still others, focusing on standard form-critical categories may distract from other factors influencing psalmic placement.

Psalm 90 is usually categorized as a community lament or a wisdom psalm.[34]

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[32]Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms through the Lens of Intertextuality* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 98.

[33]The appearance of Moses long centuries after his time naturally evokes Moses' own prediction in Deut 18:15–18 where he prophesied that God would raise up a new Moses in generations to come. There is no indication that Ps 90 portrays the voice of this new Moses, but the Deuteronomic prophecy would have raised the antenna of the hearers when any new Moses-like figure arrived on scene. Deuteronomy 18:15–18 reads, "Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—just as you desired of Yahweh your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of Yahweh my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' And Yahweh said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."

[34]See discussion in Richard J. Clifford, "Psalm 90: Wisdom Meditation or Communal Lament?" in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. P. W. Flint and P. D. Miller, Jr., VTSup 99 (Boston: Brill, 2005), 190–205. Clifford "challenges the consensus" by arguing that "the poem is not a wisdom meditation on mortality and the brevity of human life, but a communal lament that asks God to bring an end to a lengthy period marked by divine wrath" (191). Hossfeld and Zenger note that "the psalm has also been read as a Wisdom reflection, a Wisdom prayer, or a Wisdom lament" (Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. L. M. Maloney, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005], 418).

But McKelvey observes how its communal voice (throughout), hymnic introduction (vv. 1–2), lamenting tone (vv. 3–10), wisdom themes (vv. 11–12), and closing petition (vv. 13–17) give it a "mixed" makeup that eludes singular and unanimous form-critical classification. "Thus, it can be considered a mixed poem in the form of a communal hymn or prayer, which contains lamentation, a wisdom section and a plea to God."[35]

Letting Psalm 90 speak within the canonical structure of the Psalter requires pressing back against the impulse to pigeonhole the psalm into a singular and exclusive form-critical category. Rather, we must survey its entire tapestry, magnifying features only to discern how they fit the larger whole rather than exaggerating them to the exclusion of other legitimate features.

The three main features of Psalm 90 are its communal voice, wisdom themes, and lament (including petition). Juxtaposed with Psalm 89's lament over the king, Psalm 90's *communal voice* displays corporate solidarity as the people mourn the same fate. The king's loss is the people's loss, just as the king's deliverance will be the people's deliverance. The *wisdom themes* make sense in light of Psalm 89 and the exile, as well, since Israel must respond to the discipline of Yahweh with wise discernment expressed in wise living. Hard lessons about sin and punishment, man and God, and covenant and kingship must not go unlearned in the school of exile. Finally, the *lament* shows both leader (Moses) and people (community) mourning the loss of the kingship, including all the losses that mounted throughout Book III. But the *petition* that closes Psalm 90 (vv. 13–17) holds out hope that God will yet restore his people, answering their confessionary pleas. Thus each intermixed element of form and genre in Psalm 90 plays a role in the canonical structure of the Psalter as Book III moves into Book IV.

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[35]Michael G. McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh: A Canonical Study of Book IV of the Psalter*, GDBS 55 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 22n3. Tate likewise recognizes the blended makeup of Psalm 90: "a communal prayer composed of grateful reflection, complaint, and petitions for gracious divine action" (Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 437). Kraus calls Ps 90 a "community prayer song" with "traces of hymnic address" and evidence of "wisdomlike traditions" (Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, trans. H. C. Oswald [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989], 214).

Setting of Psalm 90

Like its debated form-critical classification, the Mosaic title and non-situated lament in Psalm 90 invite curiosity over its background and setting. Many settings—whether genuinely historical or literary-functional—are suggested for Psalm 90. Many see its communal lament arising from "distress in the postexilic community."[36] But specific threats like foreign invasion or occupation, personal enemies or antagonists, famine or natural disaster, or persecution by the wicked are nowhere to be found. Tate attributes this situational ambiguity to the art of "learned psalmography,"[37] and Vassar sees this ambiguity generalizing the psalm. "Instead of any one particular calamity, we find instead a general meditation on human frailty and the ephemeral nature of humanity."[38] But the Mosaic authorship of Psalm 90, its strategic canonical placement, and its clustered Pentateuchal allusions color the psalm.[39] Borger explains:

> Reading Psalm 90 as a Mosaic psalm, then, one must ask whether the psalm is "about" the brevity of life and the eternality of God as most commentators and popular treatments suggest, or whether the psalm is a prayer of repentance on behalf of a people removed from their covenant promises and exiled in a foreign land. One must ask whether the reference in 90:7 is to some unspecified, generic sin, or whether the problem in Psalm 90 is specifically the breach of God's covenant through idolatry. The Pentateuchal context and the fact that Psalm 90 follows Psalm 89 would argue that God's wrath in Psalm 90 is the result of a broken covenant and that the people have lost the covenant promises of the land and king.[40]

Like Borger, others who value the Mosaic lens recognize that the psalm is meant to be read with a Moses-imagination. Their proposals are varied, but they find common ground in the post-exodus wilderness settings they imagine. During Moses'

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[36]Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 391; cf. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 438–39; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 214–15.

[37]Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 439.

[38]Vassar, *Recalling a Story Once Told*, 93.

[39]Even though I believe Ps 90 suggests a general setting, the lack of any explicit statement does produce a psalmic ambiguity that enables Ps 90 (like most other psalms) to serve future generations who can express their diversely situated trials through unsituated language.

[40]Borger, "Moses in the Fourth Book," 121–22.

lifetime, only after the Israelites left Egypt and entered the wilderness did they experience the kind of divine wrath mourned by Moses in Psalm 90. Their prior pain was due to their involuntary captivity not their active depravity. Interpreters therefore turn to the wilderness period recounted in Exodus 15:22–Deuteronomy 34:12.[41]

Based on the similarity between Exodus 32:12 and Psalm 90:13 (see more below), Freedman suggests "that the composer of the psalm based it on the episode in Exodus 32 and imagined in poetic form how Moses may have spoken in the circumstances of Exodus 32."[42] The people's egregious idolatry, the threat of divine destruction, and the imminence of covenant dissolution match the canonical placement and the "turn and relent" allusion in Psalm 90 (v. 13). For Mitchell, the corporate groan of long-suffering wanderers in Psalm 90 evokes the forty years that Israel wandered in the wilderness due to their unbelief (Num 14:21–35). They were "a generation dying in futility" with a "corporate sense of the brevity and futility of life," trapped in these mournful decades because their own sin had provoked the righteous anger of God.[43] Westermann pictures Moses standing at Pisgah longing to enter Canaan but knowing he is barred from entry (Deut 34).[44] H. Wallace senses "a time of waiting and hope, even as Moses failed to see the fulfillment of his leadership of God's people (Deuteronomy 34)."[45] DeClaissé-Walford also sees parallels between Israel in the plains of Moab before

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[41]Mitchell surveys each psalm in Book IV and concludes that Pss 90–106 are "distinguished by wilderness themes" (Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 272–96).

[42]David Noel Freedman, "Other Than Moses . . . Who Asks (or Tells) God to Repent?" *BR* 1 (1985): 59.

[43]Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 276; cf. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, trans. F. Bolton (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 3:48.

[44]Brueggemann, *Message of the Psalms*, 110; cf. McCann, *Psalms*, 1041; Eckart Otto, "Singing Moses: His Farewell Song in Deuteronomy 32," in *Psalmody and Poetry in Old Testament Ethics*, ed. D. J. Human, LHB/OTS 572 (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 179–80.

[45]Howard N. Wallace, *Psalms*, RNBC (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 150. Wallace suggests three reasons for Moses' appearance: (1) Moses interceded effectively with God; (2) Moses suffered under divine wrath; (3) Moses experienced a similar situation where he did not personally experience God's promises but had to trust that God would fulfill them (Deut 34).

entering the promised land in Deuteronomy 33 and Israel in exile before reentering the promised land (Ps 90).[46]

These views are not mutually exclusive. Each represents helpful angles of imagination invited by the superscription itself. Based on the psalm and its placement, I suggest several overlaid lenses. First, the Mosaic superscription compels the worshiper to read Psalm 90 through a Mosaic and therefore Pentateuchal lens, imagining historical settings that would suit such a Mosaic supplication. Second, the phrase אישׁ האלהים ("the man of God") evokes the end of Deuteronomy where Moses recorded a song and blessing (Deut 32–33) before dying without witnessing the fulfillment of God's promises. Third, the length of punishment and the extreme weariness of the lamenters reflect a longer period of suffering than the Exodus 32 setting suggested by Freedman. Fourth, however, the clear petition that God "turn and relent" (90:13), an allusion to Exodus 32:12, mirrors the golden calf incident below Sinai and signals the apparent danger that God might not keep his promises. Fifth, the lament over human sin and divine anger reveals that the cause of the people's suffering is not morally benign.

Since entire lifetimes seem to pass under God's wrath (90:9, 10, 15), the most likely setting is the end of the wilderness wanderings. Decades had passed as an entire generation expired in the wilderness, with wrath unrelenting and promises unfulfilled.[47] Thus the canonical placement of Psalm 90 within the Psalter analogizes between the wilderness wanderings suffered by ancient Israel and the exilic wandering now underway. The toilsome lifespan of "seventy years" may support this analogy since it evokes the length of the Babylonian exile (Ps 90:10; cf. Jer 25:11–12; Zech 1:12; 2 Chr 36:21).[48]

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[46]DeClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 84.

[47]For example, the emphasis on days, years, and ages in Num 14:29–35 supports this view.

[48]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 425; cf. John Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, BCOT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 30; Clifford, "Psalm 90," 200; Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A.

Structure and Themes of Psalm 90

Many structures are proposed for Psalm 90, but the two main movements are clear: lament (vv. 1–12) and petition (vv. 13–17).[49] Further subdivisions may include a hymnic introduction highlighting God's eternality and his constant protection of Israel (vv. 1–2), a dual lament progressing from universal plight (vv. 3–6) to communal plight (vv. 7–12), a wisdom interlude punctuating the lament section (vv. 11–12 or v. 12 alone), and a concluding petition (vv. 13–17) with a closing request (v. 17).[50]

In vv. 1–6, Moses contrasts the eternality of God (vv. 1–2, 4) with the transience of man (vv. 3, 5–6). Verses 7–12 then lament how Israel's mortality (vv. 7, 9, 10, 12) results from the violent collision between their sin (v. 8) and God's judgment (vv. 7, 9, 11).[51] The inescapable biblical formula is clearly articulated: sin + judgment = death. Therefore vv. 13–17 conclude with a prayer for mercy, restoration, and renewed favor. Major themes include God's eternality and man's transience alongside God's anger and man's plight. These unbearable tensions provoke the petition in vv. 13–17.

Lexical and thematic repetition frames sections and subsections within Psalm 90. Chiasm marks vv. 1–2, bracketed by names of God and centering on his eternality.

Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 694–95.

[49]The marked contrast between these two main sections has generated debate over the original integrity of the psalm, but this debate moves beyond the scope of my dissertation which addresses the shape and meaning of the canonical Hebrew Psalter. The debate, however, does illustrate the clarity of the division between vv. 1–12 and vv. 13–17. McCann divides Ps 90 into emphases on God (90:1–2), time and human transience (90:3–6), human transience due to divine anger (90:7–12), and hope (90:13–17) (McCann, *Psalms*, 1041). Goldingay suggests that the psalm recalls God's protection of Israel (90:1–5), protests current problems (90:6–12), and pleads for restoration (90:13–17) (Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 22–23).

[50]Verses 1–2 may function as an introduction based on (a) the chiasm bracketing vv. 1–2, (b) the thematic unity of vv. 3–6 which focus on the transience of man, and (c) the repetition of the verb שוב in vv. 3 and 13, marking the beginning of both the lament (v. 3) and the petition (v. 13). Likewise, v. 17 may function as a conclusion punctuating vv. 13–16 based on (a) the names "Lord" and "God" as a framing device in the introduction and conclusion (vv. 1–2, 17) and (b) the bracketing of vv. 13–16 with the phrase עבדיך ("your servants").

[51]In vv. 3–6 man's transience is the explicit theme, but its root cause—sin—is clearly implied. Man's "return to dust" alludes to God's well-known judgment in Gen 3:19. Therefore v. 3 insinuates that human transience is caused by human sin which God punishes.

Table 14. Chiasm in Ps 90:1–2

MT	English
אדני . . . אתה	Lord . . . you
בדר ודר	in all generations
ומעולם עד־עולם	from everlasting to everlasting
אתה אל	you are God

Verses 3–6 are framed by man's return to the dust of death (v. 3), portrayed metaphorically by morning grass that dies at dusk (v. 6). Framing the central section is the noun אף ("anger"), which stands parallel with חמה ("wrath") and עברה ("rage") (vv. 7, 11), leaving a solemn prayer for wisdom punctuating the section (v. 12). Finally, vv. 13–16 are enclosed by the covenantal phrase עבדיך ("your servants," vv. 13, 16), a humble self-identification meant to elicit mercy.

Further lexical repetition and thematic progression reveal structural intricacy and contrasting movements. The divine names אדני ("Lord") and אל or אלהינו ("God" or "our God") frame the entire poem (vv. 1–2, 17), settling the psalm beneath the shade of divine rule.[52] The covenantal name יהוה then marks the central plea for deliverance (v. 13). The contrasted repetition of the verb שׁוב ("return/turn," vv. 3, 13) illustrates the message of the entire prayer: God "turns" man back to dust (v. 3), but Moses pleads that he "turn" from his anger (v. 13). Likewise all the "children of man" (בני־אדם, v. 3) face death but Moses prays that the "children" (בניהם, v. 16) of God's people would see God's redeeming power. Moses, however, requests more than deliverance. The "days" (יום) and "years" (שׁנה) of divine anger become the measure of Moses' plea that God match past punishment with future flourishing. First he laments, "For *all our days* (כל־ימינו) pass away under your wrath; we bring *our years* (שׁנינו) to an end like a sigh" (v. 9). Indeed,

[52]The use of the name אדני ("Lord") to introduce and close Ps 90 is significant in the transition from Book III to Book IV. As the monarchy dissolves around him, Moses acknowledges God as sovereign lord and refuge of his people.

the "days of our years" (ימי־שנותינו, v. 10) are short, and such wrath-filled "days" (ימינו, v. 12) must be numbered carefully. So Moses prays for gladness "all our days" (בכל־ימינו, v. 14), a blessing proportional to the punishment: "Make us glad for *as many days* (כימות) as you have afflicted us, and for *as many years* (שנות) as we have seen evil" (v. 15). McCann notes how several of these key lexical repetitions create a connection and contrast between the prayer in vv. 13–17 and the lament in vv. 1–12.

> Verses 13–17, like vv. 1–12, are still a prayer about time, but the perspective on time has been remarkably transformed. Whereas previously the passage of time could be perceived only as "toil and trouble" (v. 10), now there are new possibilities. Because God is faithful, "morning" can "satisfy" (v. 14) rather than mark a fleeting moment on the way to our demise (cf. vv. 5–6; see also Lam 3:19–24). Because God is faithful, "days" and "years" can bring gladness rather than tedium (v. 5; cf. vv. 9–10). The occurrence of the word "children" (בנים) in v. 16 recalls v. 3, and again the perspective has been transformed. Whereas children in v. 3 are involved in the dissolution of life, in v. 16 they represent the continuity of human life. There will be a future![53]

The central section is marked by God's "anger" (אף, vv. 7, 11), "wrath" (חמה, v. 7), and "rage" (עברה, vv. 9, 11) that "consumes" (כלה, vv. 7, 9) the "days" (יום, vv. 9, 10, 12) and "years" (שנה, vv. 9, 10) of his people because of their "iniquities" (עון) and "secret sins" (עלם) (v. 8). But God's repeated "rage" (עברה, vv. 9, 11) is put in perspective because even a thousand years in God's sight are quickly "past" (יעבר) like yesterday (v. 4). So his anger is short-lived even when it appears long-lasting. This hope—that God's anger will be assuaged and his covenant kept—is highlighted by the evocative prayer Moses prays in vv. 13–16 (evoking Exod 32–34).

[53]McCann, *Psalms*, 1044.

Exodus 32–34 in Psalm 90

Many see the golden calf incident reformulated in the petitionary section of Psalm 90 (vv. 13–17).[54] Several times Book IV evokes this notorious affair to instill hope that the God who has seemingly forsaken Israel will still forgive her. "For the psalmists the Golden Calf episode shows the depth of God's love and his strength of commitment to his people Israel."[55] In the Psalter's arrangement, such hope is needed most after Book III which depicts the exile and the shattering of the Davidic kingship (Ps 89).

Table 15. Exod 32:12–14 in Ps 90:13–16

Passage	Lexical Connections	
Ex 32:12	"Turn"	שׁוב
Ps 90:13	"(Re)turn"	שׁובה
Ex 32:12	"relent"	הנחם
Ex 32:14	"relented"	ינחם
Ps 90:13	"Have pity"	הנחם
Ex 32:12	"with evil intent"	ברעה
Ex 32:12	"disaster"	הרעה
Ex 32:14	"disaster"	הרעה
Ps 90:15	"evil"	רעה
Ex 32:13	"your servants"	עבדיך
Ps 90:13	"your servants"	עבדיך
Ps 90:16	"your servants"	עבדיך

Further, the golden calf incident highlights the central role Moses played as the people's mediator who averted God's wrath by appealing to God's covenant. Now that David's line (and all Israel) is facing such dire circumstances again (Ps 89), the same kind of mediating prayer is needed (Ps 90). The end of Book IV abbreviates the story (Ps 106:19–23):

19 They made a calf in Horeb
  and worshiped a metal image.
20 They exchanged the glory of God
  for the image of an ox that eats grass.
21 They forgot God, their Savior,
  who had done great things in Egypt,
22 wondrous works in the land of Ham,
  and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.

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[54]Vassar, *Recalling a Story Once Told*, 98–101; Tanner, *Psalms through the Lens of Intertextuality*, 85–107; Robert E. Wallace, *The Narrative Effect of Book IV of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBL 112 (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 18–31; McCann, *Psalms*, 1042–43; Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:58.

[55]Gordon J. Wenham, "The Golden Calf in the Psalms," in *God of Faithfulness: Essays in Honour of J. Gordon McConville on His 60th Birthday*, ed. J. A. Grant, A. Lo, and G. J. Wenham (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 181.

23 Therefore he said he would destroy them—
had not Moses, his chosen one,
stood in the breach before him,
to turn away his wrath from destroying them.

Forming a frame with Psalm 106, Psalm 90 alludes to this same incident and thereby reestablishes Moses' role as intercessor in this crucial shift in the canonical form of the Psalter. Several clear allusions support this idea.

Iniquities Pardoned and Punished
(Exod 34:7, 9 and Ps 90:8)

In Exodus 34:7, Yahweh reveals to Moses that he both pardons and punishes "iniquity" (עון 2x). In response, Moses bows, pleading that Yahweh forgive "our iniquity" (לעוננו, Exod 34:9). Such "iniquities" (עונתינו) reappear in Psalm 90:8 as Moses mourns how God has exposed the people's sin in the burning light of his holy presence. These iniquities have incited God's "anger" (אף in 90:7, 11). Indeed, "the anger (אף) of God because of the iniquity (עון) of the people is the central problem in both of these texts."[56]

Turn and Relent
(Exod 32:12 and Ps 90:13)

If any generation of Israelites were to sin grievously against Yahweh and be threatened with annihilation, they would hope for a Moses-type intercession.[57] In the OT, Moses possesses the best track record in turning back the righteous anger of God.

In Exodus 32:12, Moses dares to voice perhaps the boldest imperative recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. As the Israelites are committing idolatry below, God confronts Moses atop Mount Sinai and threatens to destroy the people. But Moses responds, "Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people." The imperatives "turn" (שׁוב) and "relent" (נחם) are spoken from man to God only in Exodus 32:12 and Psalm 90:13: "*Return* (שׁובה), O Yahweh! How long? *Have pity* (הנחם) on your

[56]Tanner, *Psalms through the Lens of Intertextuality*, 96.

[57]Freedman, "Other than Moses," 59.

servants!"[58] The ESV translation "return" is understandable in light of the following question "How long?" but it distracts from the clear allusion to Exodus 32:12. Moses is not calling Yahweh to return from an absence but to turn from his anger.[59]

These two terms שׁוב ("turn") and נחם ("relent") appear together in Joel 2:12–14 and Jonah 3:9, both in contexts involving (a) divine anger, (b) repentance, and (c) allusions to Exodus 32–34 (see Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). שׁוב and נחם also appear together in Isaiah 12:1 as Israel responds to God's forgiveness and deliverance: "I will give thanks to you, O Yahweh, for though you were angry with me, your anger *turned away* (שׁוב), that you might *comfort* me (נחם)."

Does God hear Moses' prayer in Psalm 90? The psalm itself gives no answer. But Psalm 106 closes Book IV by revisiting Moses' effective intercession during the golden calf incident (106:19–23) and announcing that God has answered his people's pleas throughout their history: "For their sake he remembered his covenant, and *relented* (ינחם) according to the abundance of his steadfast love."[60] Thus Psalm 106 recounts Israel's entire history leading up to the exile and recalls that God consistently relents and

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[58]Interpreters almost universally highlight this allusion: deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 85; Tanner, *Psalms through the Lens of Intertextuality*, 96–97; 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*, trans. E. R. Kalin (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 166; Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 24, 32; deClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, Tanner, *Psalms*, 34, 695; Elieser Slomovic, "Toward an Understanding of the Formation of Historical Titles in the Book of Psalms," *ZAW* 91, no. 3 (1979): 376; Mournet, "Psalms 90 and 106," 71–72; W. Dennis Tucker, Jr., "Exitus, Reditus, and Moral Formation in Psalm 90," in *Diachronic and Synchronic: Reading the Psalms in Real Time: Proceedings of the Baylor Symposium on the Book of Psalms*, ed. J. S. Burnett, W. H. Bellinger, Jr., and W. D. Tucker, Jr. (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 147; Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, JSOTSup 217 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 93; McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 33–34; and Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:58.

[59]Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:58 independently note this translational dynamic. I do not mean to draw a strong dichotomy between God's anger and his absence in Ps 90. But the clear and central allusion to Exod 32:12 creates the primary layer of meaning for the verb שׁוב in Ps 90:13 ("turn"). I acknowledge that the verb שׁוב may be translated "return" in Ps 90:3, indicating a possible secondary layer of meaning for שׁוב in Ps 90:13, i.e., "return to us," just as man "returns" to the dust (90:3).

[60]Tanner notes the use of נחם at key points in the Pentateuch and its double use in Isa 40:1 in the context of exile (Tanner, *Psalms through the Lens of Intertextuality*, 96–100).

keeps his covenant just as he revealed to Moses in Exodus 34:6–7. Further lexical links will continue to reveal a clustered allusion from Psalm 90 to Exodus 32–34.

An Evil Disaster
(Exod 32:12 [2x], 14; Ps 90:15)

In Psalm 90:15, Moses mourns the "evil" (רעה) experienced by the people. This "evil" stands parallel to Yahweh's discipline (90:15a), so the apparent "evil" is Yahweh's doing (i.e., disaster or devastation). The same word רעה occurs 3x in the golden calf episode, always referring to divine punishment (Exod 32:12 [2x], 14). Thus it is likely that in Psalm 90, Moses is asking God to relent from the same kind of "disaster" Moses sought to avert in Exodus 32—a catastrophic, covenant-breaking judgment (like the permanent severing of the Davidic line and nonfulfillment of the Davidic promises).

Remember Your Servants
(Exod 32:13; Ps 90:13, 16)

In Exodus 32:13, Moses urges God to remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob "your servants" (עבדיך). Remembering these figures means remembering the covenant. Likewise, in Psalm 90:13 and 16, Moses prays again that God would consider "your servants" (עבדיך).[61] This remembrance should cause God to turn and relent as he did in Exodus 32:14. Once again, Moses is invoking the covenant in his plea to God.

Consuming Anger, Slow to Anger
(Exod 32:10, 12; 33:3, 5; Ps 90:7, 9, 11)

The golden calf incident is haunted by the repeated threat that God may "consume" (כלה) his people for their idolatry. The verb occurs 4x in the narrative, expressing either the jealous anger of Yahweh or the desperate intercession of Moses (Exod 32:10, 12; 33:3, 5). Yahweh vents his desire to "consume" his people, and Moses pleads with him not to "consume" them. This indelible scene, burned into Israel's cultural

[61]Slomovic independently notes this connection (Slomovic, "Historical Titles," 376).

image bank, is reframed by Moses in Psalm 90.[62] Twice he employs the verb כלה to portray God's righteous wrath: "we are brought to an end" (כלינו, 90:7) by God's anger, and "we bring our years to an end" (כלינו, 90:9) with a groan.

Further, just as the "anger" of Yahweh burns against Israel throughout the golden calf narrative (see אף / ὀργή in Exod 32:10, 11, 12, 19, 22) until Yahweh forgives them and announces that he is "slow to anger" (ארך אפים, μακρόθυμος, Exod 34:6), so the "anger" of Yahweh burns against the people Moses represents in Psalm 90:7 and 11.

Table 16. "Consume" (כלה) and "anger" (אף)
in Exod 32–34 and Ps 90

Passage	Lexical Connections		
Ex 32:10	"consumed"	אכלם	ἐκτρίψω[63]
Ex 32:12	"consume"	לכלתם	ἐξαναλῶσαι
Ex 33:3	"consume"	אכלך	ἐξαναλώσω
Ex 33:5	"consume"	כליתיך	ἐξαναλώσω
Ps 90:7	*"brought to an end"*	כלינו	ἐξελίπομεν
Ps 90:9	*"bring ... to an end"*	כלינו	ἐξελίπομεν
Ex 32:10	"wrath"	אפי	ὀργῇ
Ex 32:11	"wrath"	אפך	ὀργῇ
Ex 32:12	"anger"	אפך	ὀργῆς
Ex 32:19	"(Moses') anger"	אפי	ὀργισθεὶς
Ex 32:22	"anger"	אף	ὀργίζου
Ex 34:6	"(slow to) anger"	ארך אפים	μακρόθυμος
Ps 90:7	*"anger"*	באפך	ὀργῆς
Ps 90:11	*"anger"*	אפך	ὀργῆς

[62]Interpreters independently note this connection: Tanner, *Psalms through the Lens of Intertextuality*, 95; McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 33–34 (אף).

[63]My focus is on the shared terminology in the MT. I have provided the corresponding LXX terms simply for comparison.

Summary of Exodus 32–34 in Psalm 90

Psalm 90:13–17 creates hope by alluding to Exodus 32–34. Despite Israel's blatant idolatry and God's raging anger, God heard Moses' prayer in Exodus 32–34, so that "the people's sinfulness and God's anger were not the final words."[64] Now in the structure of the Psalter, with the Davidic covenant unraveled and the royal promise seemingly severed (Ps 89), Moses begins twisting these tatters into a thread of hope that will weave a redemptive tapestry into Book IV.

The allusion to Exodus 32–34 is often highlighted. But interpreters rarely mention that the nearest covenant in context—the covenant under apparent threat of divine abandonment—is the Davidic covenant in Psalm 89.[65] This covenant, canonical interpreters agree, has set the trajectory for the Psalter thus far. Therefore if Yahweh hears Moses' lament in Psalm 90:1–12 and answers Moses' petition in 90:13–17, there is hope for the Davidic covenant. If Mosaic intercession implies covenantal hope, then from the outset of Book IV, the Psalter maintains the hope of Davidic restoration.

The three-psalm series in Psalms 90–92 will form one cycle within Book IV showing that Yahweh hears and answers Moses' prayer in Psalm 90. Psalms 90–92 will develop the charcoal sketch of a protected (Ps 91) and restored (Ps 92) Davidic figure with an exalted horn and an anointed head (92:11) rejoicing and flourishing with the righteous in the courts of God (92:13–16).

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[64]McCann, *Psalms*, 1042–43; cf. Mournet, "Psalms 90 and 106," 70–75; Wenham, "Golden Calf in the Psalms," 181.

[65]Further, in the biblical storyline, the covenants are intertwined, so that even if the covenant in question were the Abrahamic (for example), the Psalter has already been hoping and praying that the Davidic line will usher in the blessings promised to Abraham (Ps 72:15–17).

Psalms 90–92 as a Series

Many canonical interpreters see Psalms 90–92 as a series.[66] Bound by the end of Book III (Ps 89) and the beginning of the יהוה מלך series (Ps 93), this triad displays shared terms, interwoven themes, observable progression, and a clustered allusion to Deuteronomy 32–33. The terms, themes, and progression within Psalms 90–92 will be established before exploring their widespread allusion to Moses' final song and prayer in the Pentateuch (Deut 32–33).

Within Psalms 90–92, God is a "dwelling place" (מעון, 90:1; 91:9) and the "Most High" (עליון, 91:2, 9; 92:2). In Psalm 90 Moses prays for a redemptive display of "steadfast love" (חסד) "in the morning" (בבקר) leading to "gladness" (שׂמח) and "rejoicing" (נרננה) because of God's "work" (פעלך) (90:14–16), and Psalm 92 answers with a song of "steadfast love" (חסד) "in the morning" (בבקר) by a psalmist "made glad" (שׂמח) and now "rejoicing" (ארנן) over God's "work" (פעלך) (92:3–5). Moses pleads that God restore Israel by establishing "the work of our hands" (מעשׂה ידינו, 90:17), and God's work receives the praise when the plea is answered so that the psalmist rejoices "at the works of your hands" (במעשׂי ידיך, 92:5; cf. מעשׂיך, "your works," 92:6).[67]

References to morning, evening, day, and night also color these three psalms. In Psalm 90, Moses uses a morning-evening metaphor to bemoan the curse of death hovering over humanity. Like grass at dawn, humanity overpromises and underdelivers,

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[66]Zenger, "Psalms 90–106," 168; H. Wallace, *Psalms*, 154–55; David M. Howard, Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, BJS 5 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 167–70; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 424; Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 399; Jean-Luc Vesco, *Le Psautier de David: Traduit et Commenté*, LD (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 2:842–43; David M. Howard, Jr., "A Contextual Reading of Psalms 90–94," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. J. C. McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 112; Andrew J. Schmutzer, "Psalm 91: Refuge, Protection, and Their Use in the New Testament," in *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul*, ed. A. J. Schmutzer and D. M. Howard, Jr. (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 87–88. Mitchell divides Book IV into 90–100 and 101–106 but implicitly acknowledges 90–92 as a mini-series within the larger Mosaic collection in 90–100 (Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 272–84).

[67]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 424. Keil and Delitzsch argue that Ps 91 is placed after Ps 90 because the "salvation" God promises in 91:16 is the "work" of God that Moses prayed to see in 90:16 (Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:61).

flourishing "in the morning" (בבקר) but fading by nightfall (לערב) (90:5–6). This time-laden fate, faced by all humankind, has fallen hard on the people for whom Moses prays. Israel's sin has enflamed God's consuming anger (90:7–12) so that all her "days" (ימינו) and "years" (שׁנינו) (90:9) are consumed by his wrath. Indeed, the "days" (ימי) of their "years" (שׁנותינו) (90:10) evaporate in the heat of judgment. These shortened "days" (ימינו, 90:12) must be numbered carefully and lived wisely. Moses therefore prays that God visit his sinful people with redemption "in the morning" (בבקר, 90:14), restoring the gift of long life currently withheld by divine judgment. "In בבקר there lies the thought that it has been night hitherto in Israel. 'Morning' is therefore the beginning of a new season of favour."[68] This new season, if God hears and answers, will be marked by gladness "all our days" (בכל־ימינו, 90:14)—"as many days" (כימות, 90:15) and "years" (שׁנות, 90:15) as the people suffered previously.

This morning-evening, day-night theme continues in Psalm 91, but now protection is promised throughout the day: neither "night" (לילה) terrors nor "day" (יומם) arrows, neither "dark" (באפל) pestilence nor "noonday" (צהרים) destruction need be feared by the God-sheltered Israelite (91:5–6). This daylong protection in 91:5–6 calls for daylong praise in 92:3: "to declare your steadfast love *in the morning* (בבקר), and your faithfulness *by night*" (בלילות). Thus the morning-evening problem in 90:5–6 produces a prayer for morning deliverance in 90:14; the prayer for deliverance is then met with a promise of daylong protection in 91:5–6; and the problem, prayer, and promise are finally answered by morning and evening praise in 92:3.

Under the curse of sin, the whole of humanity and especially the wicked fare badly. Humans "flourish" (יציץ) only for a morning before withering "like grass" (כחציר) (90:5–6). The wicked likewise appear to "flourish" (יציצו) "like grass" (כמו עשׂב) but they

[68]Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:58.

are destined for destruction (92:8).[69] The recompense promised the "wicked" (רשׁעים) (91:8) is not forgotten as the "wicked" (רשׁעים) are "doomed to destruction forever" (92:8). But the destiny of the righteous, rooted in Yahweh, is vibrant and verdant. The fast-fading grass portraying humanity in 90:5–6 turns to "fruitful palms and deep-rooted, high-standing cedars" in 92:13–16.[70] The righteous ripen deep into old age, bearing the fruit of being planted in God's house (92:13–16).

Psalm 90 ends with Moses asking God to "satisfy" (שׂבענו) the people, delivering them to lead a long and joyful life (90:14–15). Psalm 91 ends with God promising to "satisfy" (אשׂביעהו) the faithful Israelite with just such a "long life" (ארך ימים, 91:16). Psalm 92 ends by answering both the plea of Psalm 90 and the promise of Psalm 91: the righteous are found flourishing fruitfully, deep into "old age" (בשׂיבה), declaring that Yahweh keeps his promises (92:13–16).

God had promised to protect the one who knows his "name" (שׂמי, 91:14). Now as the Sabbath morning dawns in Psalm 92, the psalmist seems delivered: "It is good to give thanks to Yahweh, to sing praises *to your name* (לשׂמך), O Most High" (92:1). As the people fall in the wilderness of exile (90:3–12), the faithful God-fearing Israelite who seeks refuge in Yahweh survives the manifold threats of the wilderness (91) and finds himself restored and flourishing (92).

This picture closes the 90–92 series. In the absence of land, temple, and king, God once again proves that he is Israel's dwelling place in all generations (90:1–2). Therefore despite God's devastating punishments and long-standing anger (89:39–52; 90:3–12), prayers may be offered (90:13–17), protection will be granted (91:1–16), and praise will arise (92:1–16).

Thematic progression within Psalms 90–92 is observable from the lexical and

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[69]The noun עשׂב "grass" occurs often at the end of Book IV: 102:5, 12; 104:14; 105:35; 106:20.

[70]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 424.

thematic connections above. Clearly their "compositional arc" and "curve of events" shows progression from one psalm to the next.[71] This "curve of events" creates a trajectory moving from (a) lament and petition in Psalm 90 to (b) a clear promise of deliverance in Psalm 91 to (c) worshipful singing and lifelong flourishing as the promise is fulfilled in Psalm 92. The progression is clear: lament (90), promise (91), and thanksgiving (92).[72] The connections within this collection are further clarified by its clustered allusion to Deuteronomy 32–33.

Deuteronomy 32–33 in Psalms 90–92

The Moses-themed triad in Psalms 90–92 clearly alludes to the final two poetic statements of Moses: his final song (Deut 31:30–32:43) and his final prayer-blessing (33:1–29).[73] This strong allusion, focused on Deuteronomy 32, illuminates the meaning and placement of Psalms 90–92 and helps introduce the message of Book IV.

Deuteronomy 31–34 concludes Deuteronomy and the Pentateuch. Shortly before Moses' death, Yahweh predicts Israel's apostasy and punishment. He establishes two witnesses against their future rebellion: his "law" (תורה) (31:24–29) and Moses' "song" (שירה) (31:16–22).[74] This dual witness fulfills the legal requirements for

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[71]Zenger, "Psalms 90–106," 167; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 424.

[72]Many interpreters sense this progression. Schmutzer labels the progression "lament–assurance–thanksgiving" (Schmutzer, "Psalm 91," 87–88). Zenger says, "lament—word of encouragement from God—thanksgiving" (Zenger, "Psalms 90–106," 167). Otto calls the same movement "complaint" and "petition" (90), "a divine promise of salvation" (91), and "a thanksgiving psalm that differentiates between unjust and just people" (Otto, "Singing Moses," 179). See also H. Wallace, *Psalms*, 154–55. Ndoga sees a "Mosaic theme" throughout Pss 90–92 but does not identify any progression (Ndoga, "Theocratic Agenda of Book 4," 151–52).

[73]Most interpreters recognize at least several allusions between Pss 90–92 and Deut 32–33: Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 276–81; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 438, 452; Zenger, "Psalms 90–106," 166; Tanner, *Psalms through the Lens of Intertextuality*, 90–101; R. Wallace, *Narrative Effect of Book IV*, 19–31; Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 23–24; Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 120; Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:48–49; Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, trans. H. Hartwell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 595; James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 294; Mitchell J. Dahood, *Psalms II: 51–100*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 322. Otto argues that Pss 90–92 are the source texts (Otto, "Singing Moses," 178–80).

[74]James W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative*, JSOTSup 139

establishing fact (Deut 17:6; 19:15).[75]

Deuteronomy 31 emphasizes similarities between the law and the song. Both are witnesses, both are textualized and transmitted, and both are written down by Moses.

> The psalm, however, is taught to the whole people (31.19, 22, 30), whereas the law is transmitted to the Levites and the elders (31.9, 25, 28). This difference in the material's intended transmission depicts the psalm as a popular synopsis of the law, which by its poetic form is better able to transmit Deuteronomic notions to a large audience than the law book itself can.[76]

Thus the song of Moses functions as a concise, accessible, memorable, transmittable, and recitable summary of Deuteronomy and the law.[77] It serves several purposes. First, the song condemns Israel in advance by predicting her future apostasy. Second, the song reveals "divine insight into the basic character of the people and their constant tendency to unfaithfulness."[78] Third, the song reminds the people that their covenant-breaking will be the cause of God's discipline.[79] Fourth, its "proleptic force"

(Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 64. I am closely paraphrasing Watts, who writes, "The fifth and seventh speeches, found in vv. 16–22 and vv. 24–29, are by Yahweh and Moses respectively and are concerned with establishing witnesses against the people's future apostasy. The witnesses are the Song of Moses in vv. 16–22 and the law in vv. 24–29."

[75]Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 404.

[76]Watts, *Psalm and Story*, 67.

[77]Watts, *Psalm and Story*, 67. The form of Moses' song is debated, but detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this study. Wright suggests a covenant lawsuit (G. Ernest Wright, "The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenberg*," ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962], 26–67; cf. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, NAC, 409; Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, NIBC [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996], 297–98). Boston emphasizes its wisdom components (James R. Boston, "The Wisdom Influence upon the Song of Moses," *JBL* 87 [1968]: 198–202). Thiessen underscores its hymnic features and cultic function (Matthew Thiessen, "The Form and Function of the Song of Moses [Deuteronomy 32:1–43]," *JBL* 123, no. 3 [2004]: 401–24). Weitzman sees both wisdom and lawsuit features (Steven Weitzman, "Lessons from the Dying: The Role of Deuteronomy 32 in Its Narrative Setting," *HTR* 87, no. 4 [1994]: 377–93). Craigie views strict identifications of the song's form as anachronistic (Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], 374).

[78]Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 372.

[79]The song is "directed mostly to the distant future, when the song's remembrance and performance will remind the people of the divine covenant which they have broken" (Watts, *Psalm and Story*, 66).

warns Israel against acting like the people portrayed in the song.[80] Fifth, the song does not only "describe" their future apostasy, judgment, and deliverance but also "prescribes" the appropriate future response to their future departures from Yahweh.[81] Sixth, the song displays broad contours that may be used to interpret and respond to the many different sinful periods in their long, rebellious history.

> The language is purposefully vague and the enemy intentionally faceless. The author's goal was not to describe a particular historical situation but to compose a liturgical work that would not quickly become obsolete. The very nature of a liturgical work is that it lends itself to being used for recurring occasions. Thus, the only clear referents in the text are YHWH, Israel, and the election of Israel in the wilderness and the entrance into the land. The description of the covenant infidelity of the people (32:15–18), the resulting judgment of YHWH on his people through a foolish nation (32:19–33), and YHWH's judgment against his enemies and in favor of Israel (32:34–43) lack clear historical referents. Thus, Israel can use this history of itself in different time periods.[82]

Finally, while the song does predict that Israel will sin and suffer judgment, it also promises deliverance (Deut 32:36–43). This closing promise is followed by Moses' subsequent prayer-blessing for Israel (33:2–5, 26–29) and the twelve tribes (33:6–25), which also echoes in Psalms 90–92.[83] I will survey the allusions within Psalms 90–92 before discussing their overall significance. Because of the Mosaic superscription discussed earlier (Ps 90:1 alluding to Deut 33:1), "connections to other Mosaic speech"

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[80]The phrase "proleptic force" is used by Watts, *Psalm and Story*, 66. The idea that the song functions as a future-oriented moral prescription comes from Thiessen, "Song of Moses," 424.

[81]Thiessen, "Song of Moses," 424.

[82]Thiessen, "Song of Moses," 423.

[83]Deuteronomy 32 and 33 bear a close relationship. Both include lengthy poetic statements by Moses. Both are future-oriented, the first predicting primarily Israel's sin and punishment (Deut 32), the second her tribal blessings and divine support (Deut 33). Both promise a bright future (32:35–43; 33:26–29). Both stand as final words in the context of Moses' impending death, within a tight narrative chronology (Deut 31:14, 22, 30; 32:48; 33:1). Hossfeld and Zenger note that איש־האלהים in Ps 90:1 evokes Deut 33:1, making Ps 90 a blended petition and blessing. "In this way our psalm obtains a special dignity: it is a petition of Moses (like the one in Exodus 32, the hearing of which is narrated there), and at the same time it is his 'blessing' (cf. v. 17 as the request for blessing that closes the psalm)" (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2,* 421).

are "not accidental, but should be seen rather as intentional interpretive points."[84]

The Character of God

Deuteronomy 32–33 and Psalm 90 share terminology that highlights God's character. "God" (אלהי) is Israel's "dwelling place" (מענה), and his support is "everlasting" (עולם) (Deut 33:27a). Therefore she may enter Canaan with confidence (Deut 33:27b). The same three terms appear in Psalm 90:1–2: "Lord, you have been our *dwelling place* (מעון) in all generations . . . from *everlasting* (עולם) to *everlasting* (עולם) you are *God* (אל)."[85] In the structure of the Psalter, Israel once again waits to (re)enter the land as she dwells with Yahweh in the exilic wilderness. His character is her confidence.

Both Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 90 emphasize "generations" (דור).[86] Moses summons faithless future Israel to remember how Yahweh has been faithful for "many generations" (דור־ודור, Deut 32:7).[87] God's faithful love is then contrasted with Israel's "corrupt," "blemished," "crooked," "twisted," "perverse," "faithless" "generations" (דור, Deut 32:5, 20). But despite Israel's sin, God has been stalwart: Israel's Lord has been her dwelling place "in all generations" (בדר ודר, Ps 90:1). Thus epochs of time mark both passages as generations of covenant rebellion in Deuteronomy 32 meet the omnigenerational faithfulness of Yahweh in Psalm 90:1.

The name "Most High" (עליון) occurs in both passages (Deut 32:8; Ps 91:1, 9;

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[84]Borger, "Moses in the Fourth Book," 111–12.

[85]Many interpreters observe the connection with מעון: Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:49; Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 276, 278; Zenger, "Psalms 90–106," 166; Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 119; Slomovic, "Historical Titles," 376n78; Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 94. Barber says that outside the Psalter, only Deut 33:27 describes God as Israel's מעון ("dwelling place"). Mays sees the term מעון from Deut 33:27 motivating the psalm's attribution to Moses in Ps 90:1 (Mays, *Psalms*, 294).

[86]Independently noted by Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:49, and Slomovic, "Historical Titles," 376n78. The rare form ימות ("days") in Ps 90:15 occurs elsewhere only in Deut 32:7, where the phrase דור־ודור ("many generations") also appears.

[87]The mention of "days" and "years" in the context of the phrase דור־ודור (Deut 32:7) is similar to the pervasive theme of "days" and "years" in Ps 90 which also mentions בדר ודר ("in all generations" (Ps 90:1).

92:1).[88] עליון appears 52x in the Hebrew Bible, 22x in the Psalter, and 3x in Psalms 91 and 92 (Ps 91:1, 9; 92:2). In narrative, it signifies "upper" or "high" locations. In poetry, it usually names God as "Most High" (even poetry embedded in narrative, e.g., Gen 14:18–22).[89] עליון appears 3x in Deuteronomy (26:19; 28:1; 32:8), but only in the song of Moses does it refer to God (32:8). Exiled Israel is laid low, but God is still Most High.

God is not only high but also strong. "Rock" (צור) language is strewn through the song of Moses (Deut 32:4, 13, 15, 18, 30, 31 [2x], 37) and concludes Psalm 92 (92:16).[90] Yahweh is Israel's immovable and invincible source of stability and shelter in Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 92.

Finally, God is not only a rock but an upright rock with no unrighteousness. Elderly Moses summarizes Yahweh's character: "The *Rock* (הצור), his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and *without iniquity* (אין עול), just and *upright* (ישר) is he" (Deut 32:4). The psalmist likewise promises that the righteous will flourish deep into old age "to declare that Yahweh is *upright* (ישר); he is my *rock* (צורי), and *there is no unrighteousness* (לא־עלתה) in him" (Ps 92:16).[91] Just as the elderly-but-flourishing Moses (Deut 34:7) opens his song by affirming the moral perfection of Yahweh (Deut 32:4), so the Mosaic triad of Psalms 90–92 closes with the elderly-but-flourishing righteous (Ps 92:15) reaffirming the moral perfection of Yahweh.[92] Yahweh

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[88]Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 120 also highlights this allusion.

[89]Thirty-two times עליון appears in poetic contexts, 30x as a title for God. The other two occurrences of עליון (Pss 89:28 and 97:9) lean toward descriptions rather than divine names. In Ps 89:28 God prophesies of the Davidic king: "And I will make him the firstborn, the highest (עליון) of the kings of the earth." In Ps 97:9, the psalmist declares, "For you, O Yahweh, are most high (עליון) over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.

[90]Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 121 independently notes this connection.

[91]Many interpreters also point out parts of this cluster: Otto, "Singing Moses," 179; Zenger, "Psalms 90–106," 168; Richard D. Patterson, "Psalm 92:12-15: The Flourishing of the Righteous," *BSac* 166, no. 663 (2009): 275; Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:71 (mentions עול only).

[92]"Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated" (Deut 32:7). "They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green . . ." (Ps 92:15).

may judge his people with exilic disaster, but he is their upright Rock who does not share in their unrighteousness.

Sin and Punishment

The character of God and the character of Israel are opposite. A faithful God has bound himself to a faithless people. Therefore Israel's future sins and punishments, predicted in Deuteronomy 32, echo in Psalm 90.

Israel commonly forgot her Creator: "You were unmindful of the Rock that *bore you* (ילדך), and you forgot the God who *gave you birth* (מחללך)" (Deut 32:18).[93] In Psalm 90:2, Moses explicitly evokes Deuteronomy 32 and implicitly indicts the Israelites by remembering the Creator they forgot: "Before the mountains were *brought forth* (ילדו), or ever you had *formed* (תחולל) the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." The same verbs ילד and חיל occur in the same order, with God as subject (creator) in both cases.[94]

God had promised to punish Israel with the "venom" or "poison" (חמת, Deut 32:24, 33) of serpents. In Psalm 90:7, Moses laments God's "venom" or "wrath" (בחמתך). Moses mourns the kind of poisonous punishments God promised. God had also guaranteed that Israel's enemies would see "their doom *come swiftly*" (חשׁ, Deut 32:35), and now Moses laments the wrath-laden lives that pass "swiftly" (חישׁ, Ps 90:10).[95] Israel is now experiencing the punishment promised her enemies.

In Deuteronomy 32:7, Moses rebukes foolish and senseless Israel for forgetting

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[93]Interpreters independently note this link: deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 84; Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 23n28; deClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, Tanner, *Psalms*, 692n9. This creation-link may be supported by "the ancient mountains" (הררי־קדם, Deut 33:15) and the (implied ancient) "mountains" (הרים, Ps 90:2) that appear in both passages (Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:50).

[94]Earlier in Deut 32, Moses has already reminded Israel that God is their Father who made them, using three other verbs: קנה, "create"; עשׂה, "make"; כון, "establish" (Deut 32:6). Further, twice in Deut 32 the people are either called to remember or accused of forgetting (Deut 32:7, 18).

[95]Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:57.

Yahweh. He then summons her to "*consider*" (בינו) God's past election and redemption. In 32:10, the same verb בין (Piel this time) describes Yahweh's considerate "*care*" for Israel (יבוננהו). In 32:29, Israel's opponents fail to "*consider*" (יבינו) their fast-coming fate, unaware that they owe their short-lived victories to God's disciplinary providence and not their military prowess. Psalm 92 likewise rebukes presumptuous evildoers because "the fool cannot *understand*" (יבין) that the fast-sprouting wicked will quickly be cut down (92:7–9). Psalm 92:7 resonates with Deuteronomy 32:29 as the foolish nations (Deut 32:29) and the foolish wicked (Ps 92:7) are alike blind to their imminent judgment.

Beyond the repetition of the verb בין, the contrasting themes of folly and wisdom run strong. The people, both Israelites and others, are foolish and senseless. A variety of words and phrases are used to express foolishness or hard-heartedness: "foolish" (נבל, Deut 32:6); "there is no . . . understanding" (אין … תבונה, Deut 32:28); "void of counsel" (אבד עצות, Deut 32:28); and "senseless" (בער, Ps 92:6). Lexically, Deuteronomy 32:6 and Psalm 90:12 also contrast. Moses' song questions the "foolish and senseless people," using the negated phrase "not *wise*" (לא חכם, Deut 32:36). But his psalm provides a contrast as he asks for a "heart of *wisdom*" (לבב חכמה, Ps 90:12).[96]

Petitionary Prayer Offered

Sin and judgment do not have the final word. Deuteronomy 32 predicts the future sin and judgment of Israel but ends with a promise of future deliverance. Psalm 90 likewise mourns the current sin and judgment of Israel but ends with a plea for current deliverance. In Psalm 90 Moses' prayers for restoration allude to his ancient song.

Deuteronomy 32:7 and Psalm 90:15 share the rare feminine plural forms ימות and שנות ("days" and "years") rather than the standard masculine plural forms ימים and שנים.[97] The *dis legomena* ימות occurs only in these two passages in the Hebrew Bible.

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[96]Slomovic, "Historical Titles," 376n78 (Slomovic mistakenly lists Deut 32:6 as Deut 32:4).

[97]Several interpreters note these rare forms: Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:59; Tate, *Psalms*

The "poetical" שׁנות appears outside these two passages, but Deuteronomy 32:7 is its first occurrence.[98] The rarity of these particular forms signals significance. The common nouns יום ("day") and שׁנה ("year") each occur 6x in the time-laden Psalm 90.[99] The fourfold appearance of the standard masculine plural constructs ימי (90:10) and ימינו (90:9, 12, 14) backdrops their noticeable feminine plural alternative ימות (90:15). Likewise, the standard masculine plurals שׁנים (90:4) and שׁנינו (90:9) set the stage for the surprising feminine plurals שׁנותינו (90:10) and שׁנות (90:15). The contexts of both passages run parallel. In Deuteronomy 32:7, Moses summons condemned future Israel to contemplate the "days" (ימות) and "years" (שׁנות) of their painful past. Likewise, in Psalm 90:15, disciplinary affliction and covenantal calamity has consumed the people's days and years, so Moses prays for a restoration of equal length: "Make us glad for as many *days* (ימות) as you have afflicted us, and for as many *years* (שׁנות) as we have seen evil."

The phrase "have compassion on your servants" (נחם + על + עבד) is used in complementary ways in both passages.[100] God had promised that he would treat his punishment-weary people with compassion: "For Yahweh will vindicate his people and *have compassion on his servants*" (על־עבדיו יתנחם, Deut 32:36a). This line stands as the first direct announcement of future deliverance in a song predicting primarily sin and judgment. When Psalm 90 transitions in a similar way from lament to petition, Moses asks for deliverance by appealing to the pity promised in his song: "Have compassion" (נחם) "on" (על) "your servants" (עבדיך).[101] Thus the Deuteronomic promise is expressed

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51–100, 436n15a, 438; Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 276; Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 23n28 (only mentions ימות); deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 85 (following Tate).

[98]Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:59. The term *dis legomena* refers to "twice-only occurrences of specific forms in a specified corpus of texts" (Robert Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III [Psalms 73–89]*, JSOTSup 307 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 236).

[99]יום ("day") in 90:4, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 15; שׁנה ("year") in 90:4, 9, 10 (3x), and 15.

[100]Otto, "Singing Moses," 178; Zenger, "Psalms 90–106," 166; McCann, *Psalms*, 1043; deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 85; Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:58.

[101]McCann notes that only 4x in the Pentateuch is God the subject of the verb נחם. Exodus

in psalmic petition, both at turning points in their respective passages.[102]

The noun פעל ("work") appears 37x in the OT but only 2x in the Pentateuch (Deut 32:4; 33:11). In Deuteronomy 32:4, Moses introduces Yahweh as "the Rock" and calls his "work" (פעל) blameless. Because the Levites shared God's passion for blameless work, Moses asks Yahweh to bless the "work" (פעל) of their hands (Deut 33:11). Just as the noun פעל marks Deuteronomy 32–33, it occurs twice in Psalms 90–92. [103] In 90:16, Moses prays that Yahweh would show his powerful redemptive "work" (פעלך) to his servants. Then in 92:5, the psalmist sings gladly because Yahweh has done this redeeming "work" (בפעלך), vindicating his blamelessness in relation to Israel.

The phrase "the work of our hands" (יד + מעשׂה) appears in Deuteronomy 31:29, Psalm 90:17 (2x), and Psalm 92:4. This phrase crosses a rich semantic range. Its meanings in Deuteronomy 31:29 (Israel's idolatry) and Psalm 92:4 (God's redemption) are clear. But in Psalm 90:17, Moses twice asks Yahweh to "establish *the work of our hands* (מעשׂה ידינו) upon us." What is he asking? The expression "work of hands" (יד + מעשׂה) is used four different ways in the Hebrew Bible: idolatry, evildoing, agrarian work, or God's work.[104] It likely has a layered meaning in Psalm 90:17. The most natural sense for the phrase "work of hands" in Psalm 90:17 is agrarian work that represents all good and godly labors that Israel might pursue. But in Deuteronomy 31:29, Moses

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32:12, 14 (counting as one occurrence) and Deut 32:36 are two of these four occurrences (McCann, *Psalms*, 1043).

[102]McCann, *Psalms*, 4:1043. McCann suggests that "Psalm 90 imagines Moses' words for the exilic situation" and points out that in Isa 40:1 the same verb is used twice in reference to God having compassion on his exiled people. Thus "the prophet is commissioned to proclaim what Moses prays for in Exodus 32 and Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 90: God's compassion upon the people in the form of the forgiveness of sins (see also Isa 49:13; 51:3, 12)."

[103]Interpreters independently note this connection: Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 438; Slomovic, "Historical Titles," 376n78; Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:59.

[104]First, "work of hands" is used in the full catchphrase "provoking him to anger by the works of your hands" (8x), which always condemns idolatry, or in the shorthand phrase "work of hands" which also condemns idolatry in the right contexts (15x). Second, "work of hands" is used to condemn evildoing in general (3x). Third, "work of hands" is used to refer to agrarian work, manual labor, or the fruits thereof (12x). Fourth, "work of hands" is used for God's creation, God's work, or God's people (15x).

prefaces his final song by predicting Israel's idolatry: "you will do what is evil in the sight of Yahweh, *provoking him to anger through the work of your hands* (להכעיסו במעשׂה ידיכם)."[105] The theme of idolatry runs strong through Deuteronomy 32 (כעס, "provoke to anger," Deut 32:16, 21 [2x]). Thus in Psalm 90:17 Moses uses an ironic idiom that implicitly confesses idolatry as the sin that, according to Deuteronomy 32, caused the exile. In other words, Moses ends his prayer asking that God make Israel's work flourish once again, but in light of the phrase "works of your hands" in Deuteronomy 31:29, his plea insinuates that judgment has fallen because the works of Israel's hands have been idolatrous. I suggest that Moses is praying, "Reverse the trend. The 'works of our hands' have been idolatrous, and we have deserved your punishment. But now we want the 'works of our hands' to be faithful, favored, and fruitful." In this way, Psalm 90:17 ends Moses' prayer in the same way that Deuteronomy 31:29 leads into his final song.

Exilic Protection Promised

Just as sin and judgment are not the last word in Deuteronomy 32 or Psalm 90, neither is prayer and petition. Psalm 91 clearly and repeatedly cites Deuteronomy 32, pledging protection for the faithful Israelite who seeks shelter from Yahweh. This Israelite is guaranteed refuge from the exilic storm.

The same wings and pinions that carried Israel from Egypt in Deuteronomy 32:11 cover and carry the trusting Israelite in Psalm 91:4.[106] In Exodus 19:4, Yahweh recounts Israel's deliverance from Egypt in ornithological terms: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings (כנפי נשׂרים) and

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[105]This full catchphrase occurs 8x in the OT and always condemns idolatry (Deut 31:29; 1 Kgs 16:7; 2 Kgs 22:17; 2 Chr 34:25; Jer 25:6, 7; 32:30; 44:8).

[106]This connection is highlighted by Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 278; Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 120; Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:63; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 427; and Otto, "Singing Moses," 179.

brought you to myself." Moses invokes this metaphor in Deuteronomy 32:11 where he likens Yahweh's covenantal care to an eagle protecting, carrying, and guiding her young. "Like an eagle" (כנשר), Yahweh covers, carries, and bears his people with "wings" (כנפיו) and "pinions" (אברתו). Then Psalm 91:4 clearly alludes to Deuteronomy 32:11 as the trusting Israelite is protected by Yahweh's sheltering "pinions" (אברתו) and "wings" (כנפיו). The rare noun "pinions" (אברה) occurs only 4x in the OT—each time in poetic contexts, and always parallel with "wings" (כנף) (Deut 32:11; Job 39:13; Ps 68:14; 91:4). The threefold connection is instructive: In the exodus, Yahweh carried Israel from Egypt on eagles' wings (Exod 19:4). Later in Moses' song, Yahweh cared for Israel in the wilderness, carrying her on eagles' wings and pinions (Deut 32:10–11). Finally, in the structure of the Psalter, languishing in the wilderness of exile, Yahweh now cares for the Yahweh-trusting, refuge-seeking Israelite by sheltering him under divine wings and pinions (Ps 91:4). Thus the Israelite individual in Psalm 91 experiences the same deliverance and protection the Israelite nation received in the exodus and the wilderness.

The root חסה ("refuge") occurs in both Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 91.[107] In Deuteronomy 32:37, Moses predicts that Yahweh will interrogate his people and mock the impotent idols whose security they sought. "Then he will say, 'Where are their gods, the rock in which they *took refuge* (חסיו)?'" (Deut 32:37, 38b). In contrast, Psalm 91 uses the root חסה three times to portray Yahweh as the righteous man's refuge: (a) "I will say to Yahweh, '*My refuge*'" (מחסי, 91:2); (b) "under his wings you will *find refuge*" (תחסה, 91:4); and (c) "the Most High, who is *my refuge*" (מחסי, 91:9). Idolatrous Israel sought shelter beneath crumbling idols while the faithful Israelite seeks security in Yahweh. This man therefore survives the exile because he seeks a faithful God instead of faithless idols.

Arrows fly in both Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 91.[108] The divine bow releases

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[107]Interpreters independently note this connection: Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 278; Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 120.

[108]Others also mention this allusion: Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 120; Otto, "Singing Moses,"

punishing arrows (חץ) in Deuteronomy 32:23 and 42. Yahweh first promises to punish his own disobedient people: "I will spend *my arrows* (חצי) on them" (Deut 32:23). Then he promises to punish his hate-filled enemies: "'I will make *my arrows* (חצי) drunk with blood'" (Deut 23:42). But in Psalm 91:5, the shielded Israelite "will not fear the terror of the night, nor *the arrow* (מחץ) that flies by day." Psalm 91 promises protection from the sharp shafts that pierce exiled Israel and her enemies in Deuteronomy 32.

In Deuteronomy 32:24, Israel is threatened with "pestilence" (קטב) and "fever" (רשׁף) for her idolatrous rebellion. The rare noun קטב occurs only 4x in the Hebrew Bible (Deut 32:24; Ps 91:6; Isa 28:2; Hos 13:14). But in Psalm 91:6, the trusting Israelite is protected from "pestilence" (מקטב) (91:6) and "plague" (דבר) (91:3, 6).[109] This connection continues the pattern where Psalm 91 promises protection from the covenantal punishments of Deuteronomy 32.[110]

In Deuteronomy 32:30, Moses predicts that when God exposes Israel to her enemies, one enemy will chase a "thousand" (אלף) Israelites and two will chase "ten thousand" (רבבה). Only Yahweh's disciplinary abandonment would allow such lopsided defeats. But in Psalm 91:7 the statistics shift as the divinely sheltered Israelite is protected from the fate of the "thousand" (אלף) and "ten thousand" (רבבה) falling close at hand. Psalm 91:7 thus promises protection from the covenantal curse in Deuteronomy 32:30.[111] The faithful refugee survives the slaughter and escapes the exile. In Moses'

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[109]Several other interpreters observe this connection: Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 278; Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 120; Otto, "Singing Moses," 179.

[110]The punishments escaped by the faithful Israelite in Ps 91 are exilic, following the lead of Deut 32. Deuteronomy 32:24–25 presents an avalanche of exilic trouble including "famine" (רעב), "pestilence" (קטב), and "sword" (חרב). Jeremiah and Ezekiel package these three punishments—with דבר instead of קטב—in their frequent sword-famine-pestilence triad (Jer 14:12; 21:7, 9; 24:10; 27:8, 13; 29:17, 18; 32:24, 36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17, 22; 44:13; Ezek 6:11; 7:15 [2x]; 12:16; 14:21). Such punishments are specific covenantal consequences God uses to discipline Israel in the exile.

[111]Deuteronomy 33 also depicts the victorious strength of "thousands" and "ten thousands" in 33:2, 17. Moses first recounts the Sinai theophany when Yahweh "came *from ten thousands* (מרבבת) of holy ones" (33:2). Later in the tribal blessings, "the *ten thousands* of Ephraim" (רבבות) and "the *thousands*

song, Israel is overrun by divine punishment (Deut 32:30), but in Psalm 91, the faithful Israelite is overshadowed by divine protection (Ps 91:4).

In both Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 91, God will rescue the righteous by repaying the wicked.[112] In Deuteronomy 32:35, "recompense" (שלם) belongs to God, and he promises to "repay" (אשלם, 32:41) those who hate him, specifically to "avenge the blood of his children" (32:43). Psalm 91:8 then promises the refuge-seeking Israelite that he will "see the *recompense* (שלמת) of the wicked."

The verb "bear" (נשׂא) appears in both Deuteronomy 32:11 where God "bears" (ישׂאהו) Israel like an eagle and Psalm 91:11 where God commands his angels to "bear" (ישׂאונך) the faithful Israelite.[113] The allusion seems clear for several reasons. First, the allusion to "wings" and "pinions" seen earlier (Deut 32:11 in Ps 91:4) supports this similar allusion within the same lines (Deut 32:11). Second, wilderness settings mark both passages (Deut 32:10–11; Ps 91:2–3, 5–6, 10, 12–13; cf. Matt 4:6). Third, protection is explicit in both contexts (Deut 32:10b–11; Ps 91 [see v. 11]). Fourth, both settings portray a creature—eagle and angel—carrying an Israelite. Fifth, the eagle is a picture of God and the angel is a messenger of God, making God the protector in both instances. For these reasons the verb נשׂא ("bear") in Psalm 91:12 likely alludes to Deuteronomy 32:11. In Deuteronomy 32:11, God bears Israel away from Egyptian captivity. In Psalm 91:12, God's messengers bear an Israelite away from exilic catastrophe.

In Deuteronomy 32:35, the God-ordained nations who have punished Israel will be punished themselves when "their foot" (רגלם, Deut 32:35) slips.[114] But in Psalm

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of Manasseh" (אלפי) (33:17) signal dominant strength. These myriads of angelic beings (33:2) and myriads of Ephraimite and Manassite warriors contrast the "thousand" (אלף) and "ten thousand" (רבבה) who fall beside the protected Israelite in Ps 91:7.

[112]Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 278.

[113]Interpreters independently note this connection: Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 278; Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 40. Mitchell notes that both verbs are Qal imperfect forms of נשׂא (Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 278).

[114]The noun רגל appears again in Deut 33:3, 24.

91:12, God's angelic messengers will prevent the foot-injury of the faithful Israelite traversing the wilderness: "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot (רגלך) against a stone" (Ps 91:12).[115]

Fortunes are reversed when God's people who were punished by beasts and snakes (Deut 32:24b) turn and trample the lion and the snake (Ps 91:13). Both Deuteronomy 32:33 and Psalm 91:13 pair the terms תנין ("dragon" or "serpent") and פתן ("venomous snake").[116] This serpentine pair appears only here in the Hebrew Bible.[117] In Deuteronomy 32:24, God promises animalistic punishments on his people: "I will send the teeth of beasts against them, with the venom of things that crawl in the dust." In Deuteronomy 32:33, God likewise condemns the nations who will harm exiled Israel: "their wine is the poison of *serpents* (תנינם) and the cruel venom of *asps* (פתנים)." But in Psalm 91:13, the singular Israelite receives an opposite guarantee: "You will tread on the lion and the *adder* (ופתן); the young lion and the *serpent* (ותנין) you will trample underfoot." Juxtaposing the statements, God is shown reversing the exilic punishment as the singular Israelite is shown conquering Israel's exilic enemies.

Though not lexically identical, the disciplinary "teeth of beasts" (Deut 32:24) also find contrast in the synonymous "lion" and "young lion" which are trampled underfoot (Ps 91:13). Lions illustrate and represent sharp-toothed beasts; thus fortunes are once again reversed as God's people trample the animals that afflicted them (Deut 32:24b; Ps 91:13). Likewise, Psalm 91:13 uses the same verb + preposition that Deuteronomy 33:29 uses to describe how Israel will conquer her antagonists: "Your enemies shall come fawning to you, and you shall *tread upon* their backs" (תדרך + על) (Deut 33:29); "You will *tread on* (תדרך + על) the lion and the adder; the young lion and

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[115]Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 20 also highlights this link.

[116]Also noted by Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 278.

[117]Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 278.

the serpent you will trample underfoot" (Ps 91:13). Once again, animals and enemies are juxtaposed, and their assaults and attacks are reversed and conquered.

In the narrative introduction to Moses' song (Deut 31:16–22) Moses twice promises that "many evils and *troubles*" (צרות, Deut 31:17, 21) will befall future Israel.[118] The protected individual in Psalm 91 faces this trouble, but Yahweh stands close by: "I will be with him *in trouble*" (בצרה, Ps 91:15). Because this faithful Israelite loves, knows, and calls on Yahweh (Ps 91:14–16), he finds Yahweh present in his trouble. In view of the many links between Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 91, this "trouble" may allude to the exilic "troubles" in Deuteronomy 32.

Finally, both Deuteronomy 33 and Psalm 92 portray the horns of a wild ox.[119] In Deuteronomy 33:17, Joseph will conquer the nations because "*his horns are the horns of a wild ox*" (קרניו ראם קרני). In Psalm 92:11, the psalmist also contrasts himself with God's enemies: "But you have exalted *my horn like that of the wild ox*" (כראים קרני). Both contexts include head-anointing as well. The "exalted horn" in Psalm 92:11 stands parallel with the phrase "you have poured over me fresh oil."[120] Meanwhile in Deuteronomy 33:13–16 the "choicest gifts" (v. 13), the "choicest fruits" (v. 14), the "rich yield" (v. 14), the "finest produce" (v. 15), the "abundance" of the hills (v. 15), and the "best gifts" (v. 16) earth and heaven can produce will rest on the "head" and "pate" of Joseph, "him who is prince among his brothers" (v. 16). Abundant "oil" (שׁמן, Deut 32:13; 33:24; Ps 92:11) also appears in both passages as a sign of God's favor.

The blessing in Deuteronomy 33:17 promised Joseph an exalted horn like a wild ox. This blessing was likely fulfilled in his descendant Joshua who conquered many

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[118]The noun צרה ("trouble") appears 73x in the Hebrew Bible including 2x in Deuteronomy, 24x in Psalms, and 1x in Book IV.

[119]Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 121; cf. Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:69.

[120]The term שׂבע ("filled") appears in Deut 33:23 as Naphtali is *"full* (שׂבע) of the blessing of Yahweh" and Ps 90:14 as Moses prays that God "*satisfy us* (שׂבענו) in the morning with your steadfast love" (Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 276).

people groups with God's help. Thus Psalm 92:11 has a Joshuanic hue as the psalmist has his horn exalted like that of the wild ox so that he crushes God's enemies.[121] In addition, Psalm 92:11 likely picks up Psalm 89:18 & 25 where the "exalted horn" of the people (תרים קרננו, 89:18) refers to the "exalted horn" of the Davidic king (תרום קרנו, 89:25).[122]

Summary and Significance of the Allusion

The allusion from Psalms 90–92 to Deuteronomy 32–33 is clear. First, the *superscription* למשה איש־האלהים (Ps 90:1) evokes the heading of Deuteronomy 33:1. Second, Psalms 90–92 clearly form a *unified series* so that a shared allusion is not only reasonable but may also contribute to their adjoining placement. Third, *bookended allusions* frame Psalms 90–92: Psalm 90:1–2 (beginning) alludes to Deuteronomy 33:27 (end) and Psalm 92:16 (end) alludes to Deuteronomy 32:4 (beginning). Both allusions are three-word clusters at the beginning or end of their respective passages, inviting the reader to view the psalmic triad through a Deuteronomic lens. Fourth, clear (and mostly rare) *word-pair allusions* appear in Psalms 90–91: ילד "bring forth" and חיל "give birth" (Deut 32:18; Ps 90:2), ימות "days" and שנות "years" (Deut 32:7; Ps 90:15), אברה "pinion" and כנף "wing" (Deut 32:11; Ps 91:4), אלף "thousand" and רבבה "ten thousand" (Deut 32:30; Ps 91:7; cf. Deut 33:17), and תנין "serpent" and פתן "poisonous snake" (Deut 32:33; Ps 91:13). Fifth, both passages share *key clusters and phrases*: "dwelling place + everlasting + God" (Deut 33:27; Ps 90:1–2), "compassion + your servants" (Deut 32:36; Ps 90:13), "horn + wild ox" (Deut 33:17; Ps 92:11), and "rock + upright + no iniquity" (Deut 32:4; Ps 92:16). Sixth, standout divine names and descriptions appear in Psalms 90–92 such as מעון "dwelling place" (Deut 33:27; Ps 90:1; 91:9), עליון "Most High" (Deut 32:8; Ps 91:1, 9; 92:2), מחס "refuge" (Deut 32:37; Ps 91:2, 9) and צור

[121]Mitchell explores the later tradition of a Josephite messiah (Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 282–84).

[122]Cf. the "exalted horn" and the "horns of the wild ox" in messianic prophecies in 1 Sam 2:10 and Num 23:22 and 24:8 (personal correspondence with Jim Hamilton).

"Rock" (Deut 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31, 37; Ps 92:16).[123] Finally, the *narrative context* of Deuteronomy 32–33 records Israel's former wilderness experience while the *compilational context* of Psalms 90–92 reflects Israel's current exilic experience as structured in the Psalter. In both instances Israel was suffering God's wrath during a time of landless wandering while hoping to (re)enter her land and fulfill God's promise.

Through this clustered allusion, the Moses-themed series in Psalms 90–92 activates the purpose and content of Deuteronomy 32–33, especially Moses' song in Deuteronomy 32. In Deuteronomy 31:14–29, Moses announces that this song will testify against the Israelites when they break God's covenant in the future. The song itself then predicts Israel's sin and judgment while also promising deliverance. Psalm 90 then reintroduces Moses who reformulates Deuteronomy 32 to lament and intercede for a new generation whose sin and judgment has fulfilled his Pentateuchal prediction. Moses highlights their sin and judgment (which he predicted) while praying for their promised deliverance (which he pledged). Thus Psalms 90–92 invoke an ancient lyrical witness against Israel, a witness that explains their exile while anticipating their exodus.[124]

Someone may object that we cannot infuse the message and function of Deuteronomy 32 into Psalms 90–92. But the thick Deuteronomic threads fingering through these psalms suggest that the clustered allusion equals more than the sum of its parts: the song of Moses is deliberately interwoven within this psalmic series. After all, Moses meant for his forward-looking song to be sung and applied in exilic situations far

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[123]The name צור ("rock") appears twice in Deut 32:31, once referring to God, once referring to the god of Israel's enemies.

[124]Further, if Ps 90 indeed portrays elderly Moses mourning (a) the forty-year curse decimating the wilderness generation and (b) his own impending death that will prohibit him from seeing Canaan, the connection with Deut 32 becomes even more clear: "Deuteronomy 32:48–52 locate Moses' song in the situation of YHWH's announcement of his death after Moses had heard about this already in Deut 1:37 and Deut 3:23–28. Deuteronomy 32:48 (בעצם היום הזה, "at the same day") directly connects Moses' song with the announcement of his death in order to underline that Moses' death is the context for his song. Situating the song in the situation of Moses' death also connects his song thematically with Pss 90–92, which deal with the human fate of mortality" (Otto, "Singing Moses, 179).

into the future (Deut 31:14–22). It was written for this very reason, and passed down for this very purpose.

The Protected Davidide of Psalm 91

Psalm 91 displays the strongest connections to Deuteronomy 32. The number and nature of these connections reveal that Yahweh in Psalm 91 promises to deliver a faithful Israelite from the exilic curses of Deuteronomy 32. Psalm 91 mingles prayer and promise. The speakers alternate between an individual (91:2, 9b), God (91:14–16), and a third party (91:1, 3–13). But lexical links between Psalms 89 and 91 suggest that this Israelite who emerges after Moses intercedes in Psalm 90 may be more than a hypothetical faithful Israelite. Cole explains that he "fits exactly descriptions of the righteous Davidide in Book III."[125] Kim sees Psalm 91 answering problems from Psalm 89, but Kim communalizes the connections so that Israel receives the deliverance David missed.[126] I suggest that Psalm 91, while giving Israel hope and encouraging all Israelites to trust Yahweh, simultaneously sketches a charcoal outline of a delivered Davidic figure.[127] With threats of death all around, including "thousands" and "ten thousands" dying at his side (91:7), this seemingly invincible Israelite appears to answer the haunting question from Psalm 89:49: "What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? *Selah*." In this way Psalm 91 insinuates that the darkness of exile will not extinguish the Davidic covenant because God can and will protect his promised one from all dangers. The lexical network linking Psalms 89 and 91

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[125]Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 224. Cole notes lexical links between Pss 91–92 and various psalms from Book III, but I will focus on links between Pss 89 and 91–92.

[126]Hyung Jun Kim, "The Structure and Coherence of Psalms 89–106" (PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 1998), 198–201.

[127]This "charcoal outline" is *suggestive* and *evocative* rather than *declarative* and *emphatic*. I am suggesting that the unnamed, singular, faithful Israelite in Ps 91 is sketched in terms that subtly link him with the Davidic line in Ps 89. Thus Ps 91 may suggest that the Davidic promises will survive the exile.

makes this subtlety almost inescapable.[128]

Protection of the Individual in Psalm 91

God promised to discipline the Davidic line with "stripes" or "plagues" (בנגעים, 89:33), but no "plague" (נגע, 91:10) will touch the tent of this trusting one.[129] God likewise committed to "strike" (אגוף, 89:24) David's enemies, and although a great reversal left David defeated by them (89:39–52), God will protect this faithful individual so that he does not "strike" (תגף, 91:12) his foot in the wilderness.[130] God's high "right hand" (ימין, 89:14) empowered David so that David's "right hand" (ימינו, 89:26) ruled the rivers, and even though God later exalted his enemies' "right hand" (ימין, 89:43) in military victory, this faithful individual is now safe even though ten thousand countrymen fall at his "right hand" (מימינך, 91:7).[131] God promised to "keep" (אשמור, 89:29) steadfast love for David's offspring, and the psalmist pledges that God will "guard" (לשמרך, 91:11) the individual Israelite with angelic attendants. Yahweh promised to exalt the Davidic king "in my name" (89:25, בשמי), and now promises to secure this individual

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[128]I owe many of my lexical observations in these final two sections to Cole, *Shape and Message of Book III*, 224–25 and Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 198–206. Kim lists 18 words shared between Pss 89 and 91. I have expanded his list to include the preposition עם and the word צרה / צר (shared root): אל / אלוה / אלהים (89:7, 8, 9, 27; 91:2); אמת (89:15; 91:4); אמר (89:3, 20; 91:2); יהוה (89:2, 6, 7 [2x], 9, 16, 19, 47, 52, 53; 91:2, 9); דרך (89:42; 91:11); ידע (89:2, 16; 91:14); יום (89:17, 30; 46; 91:16); ימין (89:13, 14, 26, 43; 91:7); ישועה (89:27; 91:16); נגע (89:33; 91:10); נגף (89:24; 91:12); נשׂא (89:10, 51; 91:12); עליון (89:28; 91:1, 9); עם (89:14, 22, 25, 34, 39; 91:15); צרה / צר (89:24, 43; 91:15); קרא (89:27; 91:15); ראה (89:49; 91:8, 16); שׂים (89:26, 30, 41; 91:9); שמר (89:29, 32; 91:11); שם (89:13, 17, 25; 91:14).

[129]Kim, "Structure and Coherence, 198. The term נגע appears only two other times in the Psalter, in adjoining psalms (38:12; 39:11). These two psalms seem to start a series where David is near death at the end of Book I.

[130]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 198–99. The term נגף appears nowhere else in the Psalms (only 89:24 and 91:12).

[131]Kim misinterprets Ps 91:7 by viewing the "thousand" and "ten thousand" as attacking enemies whom the faithful Israelite will strike down by Yahweh's "right hand" (Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 200–201). But the "right hand" belongs to the protected individual himself, and in light of Deut 32:30, these "thousand" and "ten thousand" are Israelites whom God allows to be defeated in the exilic punishments. They are "fellow Israelites who do not make Yahweh their refuge" (Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 45); cf. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 455–56; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 431). Further, in Ps 91:7, the "right hand" seems to signal personal proximity more than military power.

because he knows "my name" (שמי, 91:14). God pledged his presence and power to David so that God's hand was "with him" (עמו, 89:22), his steadfast love was "with him" (עמו, 89:25), and his loyalty was never removed "from (with) him" (מעמו, 89:34), and now God applies these promises to the faithful Israelite: "I will be *with him* in trouble" (עמו, 91:15). Of all the earth's kings David was the "most high" (עליון, 89:28), but with the Davidic crown and throne toppled, this new faithful one puts twofold trust in God "Most High" (עליון, 91:1, 9). Although God appeared to contradict his commitment to David to crush "his foes" (צריו, 89:24; צריו, 89:43), God now pledges his presence when this faithful one finds himself "in trouble" (בצרה, 91:15). Indeed, God's "faithfulness" (אמת, 89:15) that goes before him is now a "faithfulness" (אמתו, 91:4) that shields this enigmatic individual.

Salvation of the Individual in Psalm 91

God promised that David would "cry to me" (יקראני, 89:27) in celebration of his "salvation" (ישועתי, 89:27), and now God promises to hear this Israelite "when he cries to me" (יקראני, 91:15), and to show him "salvation" (בישועתי, 91:16). God's people rejoiced in his reign "all the day" (כל־היום, 89:17) and God promised to David everlasting "days" (כימי, 89:30), but then God cut short David's "days" (ימי, 89:46). Now to this new faithful individual God will give "length of days" (ארך ימים, 91:16). Plunderers fill the "way" (דרך, 89:42) that passes David's fallen fortresses, but God guarantees the faithful Israelite that "all your ways" (בכל־דרכיך, 91:11) will be guarded. Finally, the Davidic downfall has revealed that every man "sees" (יראה, 89:49) death, but the trusting Israelite "sees" (תראה, 91:8) only the recompense of the wicked as God "makes him see" (אראהו, 91:16) salvation.

Summary and Conclusion of Psalm 91

Psalm 91 promises that God will guard and save the faithful, trusting, loving,

clinging Israelite who seeks refuge in Yahweh. This individual escapes the exilic punishments promised by Deuteronomy 32. Further, lexical links between Psalms 89 and 91 draw a faint but formidable outline that looks like a faithful Davidic figure surviving the exile. The lexical repetitions between Psalm 89 and 91 are not conclusive, but their number and nature are certainly suggestive. In the absence of a Davidic king, such a charcoal sketch may undergird Israel's hope that God keeps his promises firmly in mind.

The Restored Davidide of Psalm 92

If indeed Psalm 91 insinuates an exile-surviving Davidide, what (or whom) should we expect to find in Psalm 92? Psalm 92 closes the 90–92 series. The failed Davidic covenant (Ps 89) produced a triadic progression of complaint and petition (90), promise and protection (91), and restoration and flourishing (92). Further lexical links and thematic connections with Psalm 89 continue suggesting that a restored Davidide rejoices in Psalm 92.[132] Once again, I am not arguing that this series of psalms crafts a highly pixelated portrait but a subtle and suggestive sketch.

Exalted Horn and Anointed Head

The most striking lexical links between Psalms 89 and 92 are the exalted horn and oil-anointed head that appear in both psalms. The root רום ("high," "raised," "exalted") fills Psalm 89 (89:14, 17, 18, 20, 25, 43; 92:9 [מרום], 11). God's right hand was "exalted" (תרום, 89:14) in power, his people were "exalted" (ירומו, 89:17) in his righteousness, their horn was "exalted" (תרים, 89:18) in his favor, God "exalted" (הרימותי, 89:20) David from among the people, and God promised to "exalt" (תרום,

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[132]Kim lists 20 terms shared between Pss 89 and 92: איב (89:11, 23, 43, 52; 92:10 [2x]); אל / אלוה / אלהים (89:7, 8, 9, 27; 92:14); אמונה (89:2, 3, 6, 9, 15 [אמת], 25, 34, 50; 92:3); יהוה (89:2, 6, 7 [2x], 9 [2x] 16, 19, 47, 52, 53; 92:2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, 16); חסד (89:2, 3, 15, 25, 29, 34, 50; 92:3); יד (89:14, 22, 26, 49; 92:5); ידע (89:2, 16; 92:7); עד (89:5, 30, 47; 9:8 [2x]); עולה (89:23; 92:16); עליון (89:28; 92:2); עולם (89:2, 3, 5, 29, 37, 38, 53; 92:9); צדיק / צדקה / צדק (89:15, 17; 92:13); צור (89:27, 44; 92:16); קום (89:44; 92:12); קרן (89:18, 25; 92:11); רום (89:14, 17, 18, 20, 25, 43; 92:9 [מרום], 11); רנן (89:13; 92:5); שׂמח (89:43; 92:5); שׂם (89:13, 17, 25; 92:2); שׂמן (89:21; 92:11) (Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 201–202n13.

89:25) David's horn, but then God "exalted" (הרימות, 89:43) David's enemies. The promise that "in my name *shall his horn be exalted*" (תרום קרנו, 89:25) is answered by the restored psalmist who declares, "*you have exalted my horn*" (תרם...קרני, 92:11).

> The lament section of Psalm 89 contains a reference to the exaltation of David's enemies reflecting on his defeat in battle or on the failure of his dynasty. In the light of a concatenation perspective, the exaltation of the psalmist's horn in Psalm 92 seems to respond to the lament about David's failure.[133]

Further, God said of David, "with my holy *oil* I have anointed him" (בשׁמן, 89:21), and now the restored psalmist says to God, "you have poured over me fresh *oil* (בשׁמן, 92:11). These lexical links highlighting an exalted horn and oil-anointed head pick up central themes and metaphors from Psalm 89. The psalmist in Psalm 92 is described like David in Psalm 89 and receives identical royal treatments.

Character and Work of God

The twin pillars of "steadfast love" and "faithfulness" (חסד + אמונה) that were celebrated (89:2, 3, 15, 25, 34) and then questioned (89:50) because of the Davidic downfall suddenly reappear together as the restored psalmist praises "your steadfast love (חסדך) in the morning, and your faithfulness (אמונתך) by night" (92:3). This key pair appears at the beginning of both psalms (89:2; 92:3), and they do not occur together in the intervening psalms.

God scattered his "enemies" (אויבך, 89:11) and promised that the "enemy" (אויב, 89:23) would not outwit David, but then gave victory to "his enemies" (אויביו, 89:43) so that these "enemies" (אויבך, 89:52) mocked God's anointed. The turnaround in Psalm 92 is striking: "For behold, *your enemies* (איבך), O Yahweh, for behold, *your enemies* (איבך) shall perish" (92:10). The verbs used for their scattering and destruction are similar: "scatter" (פזר, 89:11), "perish" (אבד, 92:10), and "scatter" (פרד, 92:10).[134]

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[133]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 206.

[134]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 202.

The enemies of the Davidic king had also "rejoiced" (השׂמחת, 89:43) at his defeat but now the restored psalmist "rejoices" (שׂמחתני, 92:5) over God's redemptive work.

God prophesied that David would cry out, "*the Rock* of my salvation" (צור, 89:27), and the saved psalmist cries out, "he is *my rock*" (צורי, 92:16). Thus the psalmist seems to receive David's salvation and offer David's praise. Yahweh had a strong "hand" (ידך, 89:14) and his "hand" (ידי, 89:22) strengthened David so that David set his "hand" (ידו, 89:26) on the sea, but the "hand" (מיד, 89:49) of Sheol stole away all life. Now the restored psalmist rejoices at the works of God's "hands" (ידיך, 92:5). David was made the "most high" (עליון, 89:28) of earth's kings, but after his downfall and deliverance, the psalmist now praises God "Most High" (עליון, 92:2). In Psalm 89 the psalmist sang "forever" (עולם, 89:2), steadfast love was built "forever" (עולם, 89:3), David's line was established "forever" (עולם, 89:5), God kept his steadfast love "forever" (לעולם, 89:29), and David's offspring and throne would endure "forever" (לעולם, 89:37; עולם, 89:38), but God's apparent abandonment and man's obvious transience called such permanence into question. Now, though, the restoration reveals that Yahweh is truly on high "forever" (לעלם, 92:9). The adjective עולם is common, but two considerations suggest that it still may provide linkage between Psalms 89 and 92. First, עולם is a key word in Psalm 89, repeated heavily alongside other supratemporal themes. Second, the main question in Psalm 89 focuses on whether God truly rules with steadfast love and faithfulness since his visible kingship—the Davidic throne—has been overturned. The statement in Psalm 92:9—"you, O Yahweh, are on high forever"—reaffirms the reign of God which was severely questioned in Psalm 89.

God's throne was founded on "righteousness" (צדק, 89:15), his people were exalted in his "righteousness" (בצדקתך, 89:17), and now the "righteous" (צדיק, 92:13) flourish like well-planted trees. The mountains praised God's "name" (בשׁמך, 89:13), the people praised his "name" (בשׁמך, 89:17), and David's horn was exalted in his "name" (בשׁמי, 89:25), so the redeemed psalmist begins his psalm, "It is good to give thanks to

Yahweh, to sing praises to your *name* (לִשְׁמְךָ), O Most High."

Summary and Conclusion of Psalm 92

Kim explains, "Psalm 90 is a prayer of reflection on the failure of the Davidic dynasty, and Psalm 91 provides the assurance that Yahweh will answer . . . Psalm 92 in turn seems to reflect on the eventual success of David's house or that of Yahweh's people."[135] I would suggest that the restoration of "David's house" and "Yahweh's people" can and does work together. The Psalter can hope and pray for both simultaneously, interweaving rather than separating them. Finally, Psalm 92:13–16 depicts this restoration in terms that send the reader back to the beginning of the Psalter.

13 The righteous flourish like the palm tree
  and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
14 They are planted in the house of the Lord;
  they flourish in the courts of our God.
15 They still bear fruit in old age;
  they are ever full of sap and green,
16 to declare that the Lord is upright;
  he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

What does the restoration look like? The righteous planted, flourishing, and bearing fruit in the courts of God. Psalms 1 and 92 share the terms "righteous" (צדיק, Ps 1:5, 6; 92:15) and "planted" (שׁתול, 1:3; 92:4) along with Hebrew synonyms or similar phrases for trees, flourishing, fruit-bearing, and long-term verdancy. In the Psalms, the term "planted" (שׁתול) occurs only in 1:3 and 92:14, and the only other occurrence of the verb "flourish" (פרח) in the Psalms is 72:7 where the "righteous" (צדיק) will flourish under the reign of the Davidic king.

Cole has argued persuasively that Psalms 1–2 together constitute the introduction to the Psalter, and that the righteous man in Psalm 1 should be identified with the eschatological messiah in Psalm 2.[136] Thus Psalm 92, a song for the Sabbath,

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[135]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 206.

[136]Cole, *Gateway to the Psalter*, 142–43.

presents a sketch of a restored man with an exalted horn and anointed head planted and flourishing along with the rest of the righteous in God's "house" and "courts"—i.e., a Davidic king with a righteous community in a restored temple in a renewed land.[137]

Table 17. Ps 1 and Ps 92:13–16

Verse	MT	Translation
1:5	צדיקים	"the righteous" (*plural*)
1:6	צדיקים	"the righteous" (*plural*)
92:13	צדיק	"the righteous" (*singular*)
1:3	כעץ	"like a tree"
92:13	כתמר	"like a date-palm/palm-tree"
92:13	כארז	"like a cedar"
1:3	יצליח	"he prospers" (*singular*)
92:13	יפרח	"he flourishes" (*singular*)
92:14	יפריחו	"they flourish" (*plural*)
1:3	שׁתול	"planted" (*singular*)
92:14	שׁתולים	"planted" (*plural*)
1:3	פריו יתן	"that yields its fruit" (*singular*)
92:15	ינובון	"they bear fruit" (*plural*)
1:3	עלהו לא־יבול	"its leaf does not wither"
92:15	דשׁנים ורעננים יהיו	"they are ever full of sap and green"

Summary and Conclusion

Moses takes center stage in Book IV of the Psalter with his bold, book-initiating superscription heading Psalm 90. He appears with prophetic authority and

[137]H. Wallace points out that "courts" imply temple (H. Wallace, *Psalms*, 155), and I suggest that temple implies land. The term "courts" (חצר, 92:14) is used in 96:8 and 100:4 to invite Israel and the nations into the "courts" of God.

immediately intercedes with God for Israel who is now suffering God's wrath in her wilderness exile. His intercession echoes an ancient incident scarred into Israel's historical psyche: the golden calf. Now facing the Davidic downfall of Psalm 89 and the apparent abandonment of God's covenant with David, Moses enters the structure of the Psalter and again pleads with God to turn and relent, lest all Israel be consumed.

Psalms 90–92 then form a series that progresses from plaintive petition (Ps 90) to promised protection (Ps 91) to restored rejoicing (Ps 92). This triad features a clustered allusion to Deuteronomy 32–33, especially activating the content and purpose of Moses' ancient lyrical witness against Israel which was inscribed proleptically for her exilic experiences. Nevertheless, hope springs up in the desert as Psalm 91 shares five word-pairs with Deuteronomy 32, revealing a solitary sheltered Israelite receiving promised protection from exilic punishment as he takes refuge in Yahweh. This faithful figure meets the criteria and matches the description of the Davidic king from Psalm 89.

No wonder the psalmist in 92:3 resolves "to declare your steadfast love (חסדך) in the morning, and your faithfulness (אמונתך) by night" for the first time since these twin pillars were (a) praised for upholding the Davidic covenant (Ps 89:1–38) and (b) questioned when the kingship collapsed (Ps 89:50). No wonder the psalmist celebrates the first "exalted horn" (תרם...קרני, 92:11) since the "exalted horn" (תרים קרנו, 89:19; תרום קרנו, 89:25) of the Davidic king and the first anointing with "fresh oil" (בשׁמן רענן, 92:11) since God anointed David his servant with "oil" (בשׁמן, 89:21). No wonder the psalmist in 92:16 confidently claims what Psalm 89 had violently questioned: "Yahweh is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." No wonder the vibrant singing of Psalm 89:2 has finally returned in 92:4 since the shortened and shameful days of the cut-down Davidide (89:46, 48) have grown into a righteous and restored Davidide flourishing into old age in the courts of God. And no wonder the Sabbath song (Ps 92) soars directly into the יהוה מלך series (93–100), since a Davidic restoration is reaffirming the divine reign that Psalm 89 questioned. Indeed, "you, O *Yahweh*, are *on high* forever"

(יהוה...מרום, 92:9), yes, "*Yahweh on high* is mighty (במרום יהוה, 93:4)!"[138]

[138]Wilson notes the lexical link in 92:9 and 93:4 (Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 216).

CHAPTER 5
DAVIDIC DECLARATION (PSALM 101)

Nestled in the foothills of the majestic יהוה מלך series (93–100), Psalm 101 marks a thematic junction as Book IV descends from the high peaks of divine kingship. What is the role of this royal Davidic psalm directly following the יהוה מלך series and leading into the next section of Book IV?

Thesis and Overview

In this chapter I explore the message and function of Psalm 101 within Book IV and argue that its intra-book links, Davidic title, royal voice, lamenting tone, future orientation, inter-psalm allusions, and strategic placement make it a central psalm sustaining Davidic hope in Book IV. In light of Psalms 89 and 101, the יהוה מלך psalms do not elevate the reign of Yahweh to castigate the line of David. The reign of Yahweh rather upholds the line of David, answering the suspicions of Psalm 89 where God was questioned because he had bound his earthly rule with the (now) fallen Davidic throne.

General Placement of Psalm 101

Psalm 101 signals a shift (but not a rift) within Book IV. Disjunctive structural elements draw a clear dividing line between Psalms 93–100 and Psalm 101. But conjunctive thematic elements signal a strong complementary relationship between the cosmic reign of Yahweh and the earthy declaration of David. Thus structural discontinuity meets thematic unity as Yahweh's globalized theocracy meets David's localized monarchy. The discontinuity (treated first) and the continuity (treated next) become evident when moving outward from the core of the יהוה מלך psalms (96–99).

The יהוה מלך Core in Psalms 96–99

Howard calls Psalms 95–100 the "heart" and "core" of a "concentric tripartite arrangement" in Book IV: 90–94, 95–100, and 101–6.[1] Although 93–100 form a slightly broader collection, 95–100 rise to a peak while 96–99 stand at the summit of Book IV heralding the universal reign of God.

Psalms 96 and 98 share the same incipit: the doxological summons to "sing to Yahweh a new song" (שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חָדָשׁ) (96:1; 98:1). Psalms 97 and 99 likewise share their own incipit: the doxological proclamation that "Yahweh reigns!" (יהוה מלך) (97:1; 99:1). Clearly these alternating incipits are purposefully placed, creating a rhythmic effect: "Sing a new song—Yahweh reigns! Sing a new song—Yahweh reigns!" How should their joint summons be understood? Either (1) sing a new song *because* Yahweh reigns or (2) sing a new song *that* Yahweh reigns. Yahweh's reign is either the *cause* or the *content* of the new songs. Judging by the content of all four psalms, the answer is both. The reign of Yahweh both generates and guides these new songs. Divine rule inspires fresh praise, and the divine king is the subject of this fresh praise. The four hymns then harmonize: Yahweh's cosmic rule creates a worldwide symphony of nations and nature welcoming and worshiping the God of Israel.

Inclusio in Psalms 95 and 100

These central יהוה מלך psalms (96–99) are framed by Psalms 95 and 100.[2] The bookends are built of lexical, thematic, and structural connections. Howard notes 15 shared lexemes between Psalms 95 and 100. Eight are "key-word links" shared primarily

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[1]David M. Howard, Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, BJS 5 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 166.

[2]Howard, *Psalms 93–100*, 138–41. See also Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, trans. L. M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 462; J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *The Book of Psalms: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, in vol. 4 of *NIB*, ed. L. E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 1061, 1077; Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 535; Howard N. Wallace, *Psalms*, RNBC (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 157.

between 95:6b–7c and 100:3b–c: יהוה ("Yahweh" in 95:1, 3, 6; 100:1, 2, 3, 5), הוא ("he" in 95:5, 7; 100:3 [2x]), עשׂה ("make" in 95:5, 6; 100:3), אנחנו ("we" in 95:7; 100:3), עם ("people" in 95:7, 10; 100:3), מרעית ("pasture" in 95:7; 100:3), and צאן ("sheep" in 95:7; 100:3). Six are "thematic word links": רוע ("make a joyful noise" in 95:1, 2; 100:1), רנן/רננה ("shout for joy" in 95:1; 100:2), תודה ("thanksgiving" in 95:2; 100:1, 4), בוא ("come/enter" in 95:6, 11; 100:2, 4), דר/דור ("generation" in 95:10; 100:5 [2x]), and ארץ ("earth" in 95:4; 100:1). One is an "incidental repetition": ידע ("know" in 95:10; 100:3).[3]

Table 18. Shared lexemes in Pss 95 and 100[4]

"Key-Word Links"		
95:1, 3, 6; *100:1, 2, 3, 5*	יהוה	Yahweh
95:5, 7; *100:3 (2x)*	הוא	he
95:3, 7; *100:3*	אלהים	God
95:5, 6; *100:3*	עשׂה	make
95:7; *100:3*	אנחנו	we
95:7, 10; *100:3*	עם	people
95:7; *100:3*	מרעית	pasture
95:7; *100:3*	צאן	sheep
"Thematic Word Links"		
95:1, 2; *100:1*	רוע	make a joyful noise
95:1; *100:2*	רנן(ה)	shout for joy
95:2; *100:1, 4*	תודה	thanksgiving
95:6, 11; *100:2, 4*	בוא	come/enter
95:10; *100:5 (2x)*	דר/דור	generation
95:4; *100:1*	ארץ	earth
"Incidental Repetitions"		
95:10; *100:3*	ידע	know

[3]Howard, *Psalms 93–100*, 138–41.

[4]Table 18 adapted from information in Howard, *Psalms 93–100*, 138–41.

The inclusio framing Psalms 95–100 is formed primarily with the mirrored sections in 95:6b–7c and 100:3b–c. These sections share a cluster of lexical links.

Table 19. Inclusio framing Pss 95–100 in 95:6b–7c and 100:3

Psalm 95:6b–7c	Psalm 100:3
[6b] let us kneel before Yahweh, our Maker! [7a] For he is our God, [7b] and we are the people of his pasture, [7c] and the sheep of his hand.	[3a] Know that Yahweh, he is God! [3b] It is he who made us, and we are his; [3c] we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
[6b] נברכה לפני־יהוה עשׂנו [7a] כי הוא אלהינו [7b] ואנחנו עם מרעיתו [7c] וצאן ידו	[3a] דעו כי־יהוה הוא אלהים [3b] הוא־עשׂנו ולא[5] אנחנו [3c] עמו וצאן מרעיתו

Hossfeld and Zenger rightly argue that the Israel-specific description in 95:6b–7c is universalized in 100:3. The nations, like Israel, are created by Yahweh, so they too belong to him as "his people" and "the sheep of his pasture."[6] Thus the initial invitation, "Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, *all the earth* (כל־הארץ)" (100:1), summons the entire earth to worship the God of Israel.[7]

Within the collectional context (Pss 95–100), usage of ארץ (7x) and כל־הארץ (7x) strongly supports a global meaning for כל־הארץ in 100:1.[8] All seven occurrences of

[5]"The *ketiv* of MT reads ולא אנחנו, 'and not we (ourselves),' but the *qere* reads ולו אנחנו, 'and we are his'" (Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 533). Both readings have good external support. Tate concludes that לא is emphatic ("indeed") rather than negative (Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 533–34). Howard more persuasively argues for לו for contextual reasons (Howard, *Psalms 93–100*, 92–94).

[6]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 494. McCann agrees: "Psalm 100 wants us to know that God is shepherd both of God's people and of the whole cosmos" (McCann, *Psalms*, 1079).

[7]Kraus agrees that the entire earth is summoned in 100:1, but associates 100:3 with Israel (Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, trans. H. C. Oswald [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989], 274).

[8]The noun ארץ ("earth") appears 14x in Pss 95–100 (95:4; 96:1, 9, 11, 13; 97:1, 4, 5, 9; 98:3, 4, 9; 99:1; 100:1).

ארץ alone refer to the entire globe or its inhabitants (95:4; 96:11, 13; 97:1, 4; 98:9; 99:1). Its other seven occurrences appear with the modifier "all" (כל), strongly suggesting a universal meaning (כל־הארץ). Usage confirms that five of the seven occurrences of כל־הארץ in Psalms 95–100 are clearly universal (96:9; 97:5, 9; 98:3 [כל־אפסי־ארץ]; 98:4), and the two ambiguous references lean strongly toward a universal usage—Psalm 96:1 because its invitation to worship is echoed in universal terms later in the psalm (96:7, 9, 11–12), and Psalm 100:1 because it concludes this collection where ארץ is used universally almost without exception.

If this universal summons (100:1) informs the rest of the psalm, then 100:3 may refer to the nations belonging to Yahweh: "Know that Yahweh, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." Tate acknowledges the universal summons in 100:1 but interprets several other references as Israel-specific.[9] McCann, however, rightly notes how the ambiguity throughout the psalm serves to associate Israel and the nations: "The ambiguity is appropriate, for Israel could never tell the story of its election apart from an understanding of God's intention for 'all the earth.'"[10] Therefore these bookends join to declare that the God who reigns over the cosmos and the nations is the maker and shepherd of Israel (95:6b–7c), and the God who covenanted with Israel is maker and shepherd of the nations (100:3). These tender tones (95:6b–7c; 100:3) also complement the towering center (96–99) so that the king who shakes the earth also shepherds the nations.

Beyond these clustered links connecting 95:6b–7c and 100:3, Psalms 95 and 100 also pair up thematically through their eager invitations to worship. Four worship-words occur in both psalms: רוע ("make a joyful noise" in 95:1, 2; 100:1), רנן/רננה ("shout for joy" in 95:1; 100:2), תודה ("thanksgiving" in 95:2; 100:1, 4), and בוא

[9]Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 536–38.

[10]McCann, *Psalms*, 1078.

("come/enter" in 95:6, 11; 100:2, 4). These festive liturgical orders calling Israel and the nations into the temple courts help Psalms 95 and 100 encase Psalms 96–99.

Davidic Collection in Psalms 101–104

Descending from the soaring peaks and stratospheric praise of Psalms 93–100, Book IV turns to David. Several interpreters sense a Davidic triad in Psalms 101–103 or a Davidic collection in 101–104.[11] The Davidic superscriptions of Psalms 101 and 103 exert a magnetic effect on each other. Together these two Davidic and first-person psalms sandwich the first-person Psalm 102.[12]

The triad structure (101–103) and the collection structure (101–104) are both warranted based on the hinge-role played by Psalm 104. Psalm 104 is placed differently in different scholarly reconstructions, but it refuses this either-or by masterfully facing both ways: linked verbally with 103, concluding a Davidic collection (101–104); and linked thematically with 105–106, introducing a hymnic conclusion (104–106).[13]

Psalms 103 and 104 are bound by their doxological self-summons opening and closing both: "Bless Yahweh, O my soul!" (ברכי נפשי את־יהוה) (103:1, 22; 104:1, 35). But Psalms 104, 105, and 106 are also bound by their hymnic features and their shared closing invitation: "Praise Yahweh!" (הללו־יה) (104:35; 105:45; 106:48; cf. 106:1). Thus

[11]Michael G. McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh: A Canonical Study of Book IV of the Psalter*, GDBS 55 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 169; 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*, trans. E. R. Kalin (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 183–86; Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150*, trans. L. M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 28, 37; Jamie A. Grant, "The Psalms and the King," in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, ed. D. Firth and P. S. Johnston (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 109; Howard N. Wallace, *Psalms*, RNBC (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 157–58. Howard does not describe 101–103 or 101–104 as Davidic, but he does identify 101–106 as a collection with 104–106 as its conclusion (Howard, *Psalms 93–100*, 182).

[12]Witt concludes, "Psalm 102 should be heard as a meditative response of an afflicted Davidic king to the questions of the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant and YHWH's delay in returning his steadfast love to his people" (Andrew Witt, "Hearing Psalm 102 within the Context of the Hebrew Psalter," *VT* 62, no. 4 [2012]: 604). I examine Ps 102 briefly in chap. 6.

[13]Allen independently notes this dual role played by Ps 104 (Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, WBC [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2002], 4).

Psalm 104 faces both ways, linking a Davidic collection (101–104) with a hymnic history series (104–106).[14]

The beginning of Psalm 101 and the end of Psalm 104 resonate with each other lexically and thematically, further suggesting a four-psalm Davidic collection. Psalm 101 begins with David singing: "*I will sing* (אשׁירה) of steadfast love and justice; to you, O *Yahweh* (יהוה) *I will make music* (אזמרה)" (101:1). Near the end of Psalm 104, the words אשׁירה, אזמרה, and יהוה reappear as the psalmist still sings: "*I will sing* (אשׁירה) to *Yahweh* (יהוה) as long as I live; *I will sing praise* (אזמרה) to my God while I have being" (104:33). Further, Psalm 101 begins with contemplation as David considers the blameless way: "*I will ponder* (אשׂכילה) the way that is blameless (101:2). Though using a different term, Psalm 104 likewise concludes with contemplation: "May *my meditation* (שׂיחי) be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in Yahweh" (104:34).

This term שׂיחי ("my meditation") occurs only 5x in the Psalter (55:3; 64:2; 102:1; 104:34; 142:3). The other 4x שׂיח means "complaint," including in Psalm 102:1, where it identifies the entire psalm as a complaint. Therefore the end of Psalm 104 may portray David praying that Yahweh be pleased with his meditational "complaint" contained in the Davidic collection. Since Psalm 104 is far more celebration than complaint, it is more likely that any sense of tension refers to the entire collection rather than Psalm 104 itself.

Further, a tinge of "complaint" in 104:34 would match David's "pondering" in 101:2, because his "pondering" is framed with complaint as David asks, "Oh when will you come to me?" (101:2). He also clearly desires that his "pondering" please Yahweh as he pledges radical and comprehensive obedience in 101:2b and throughout the entire

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[14]This intricate linkage between Pss 103, 104, and 105 may help explain why some interpreters see Pss 101–106 as its own collection (see Jean-Luc Vesco, *Le Psautier de David: Traduit et Commenté*, LD [Paris: Cerf, 2006], 2:928; Howard, *Psalms 93–100*, 181–82; Sampson S. Ndoga, "Revisiting the Theocratic Agenda of Book 4 of the Psalter for Interpretive Premise," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms: The Current State of Scholarship*, ed. N. L. deClaissé-Walford, SBLAIL 20 [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014], 155).

psalm.[15]

Finally, the end of 101 resonates with the end of 104 both lexically and thematically, further suggesting a four-psalm Davidic collection. Like the inclusio in 95 and 100, Psalm 104:35 globalizes David's localized commitment in Psalm 101:8.

Psalm 101:8[16]
Morning by morning I will *destroy* (אצמית)
all the *wicked* (רשעי) in the *land* (ארץ),
cutting off (להכרית) all *evildoers* (פעלי און)
from the city of *Yahweh* (יהוה)

Psalm 104:35
Let *sinners* (חטאים) be *consumed* (יתמו) from the *earth* (הארץ),
and let the *wicked* (ורשעים) be no more!
Bless *Yahweh* (יהוה), O my soul!
Praise *Yahweh* (יהוה)!

By the end of this Davidic collection (101–104), the Davidic promise to cleanse all the wicked from the local land (ארץ) has become a Davidic prayer that God consume all the wicked from the global earth (הארץ).[17] Thus Psalm 101 commences a Davidic series marked by progression on several levels.

Summary: Structural Disjunction

The structural and thematic unity woven through Psalms 93–100 and especially 95–100 is tied off before Psalm 101 as a new series begins (101–104). Several threads slip through, but disjunction generally marks the relationship between the יהוה מלך psalms and Psalm 101.

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[15]Some might object that "rejoicing" (אשמח) stands parallel to the "meditation" in 104:34b, so that the "meditation" must be positive rather than plaintive. But David's rejoicing in Yahweh is actually the basis for his hope that Yahweh be pleased with his meditation; the meditation and the rejoicing are not synonymously parallel. Logically, why would David wonder if his "meditation" would please Yahweh if his meditation were entirely celebratory? Finally, David's final plea that sinners be consumed from the earth insinuates that the idealistic creation order portrayed in the psalm awaits consummation (104:35a).

[16]Identical words are underlined and italicized, with synonymous words italicized only.

[17]Psalm 101 resonates with Isa 11:3–4: "And his delight shall be in the fear of Yahweh. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked" (Peter Gentry, personal notes).

First, the bright bookends framing Psalms 95–100 signal closure (95:6b–7c and 100:3b–c). Psalm 101 clearly does not belong to the יהוה מלך series but starts its own. Second, Psalm 101 draws attention by bearing the first Davidic superscription since Psalm 86, the first explicit Davidic mention since Psalm 89, the first Davidic superscription in Book IV, and the first authorial superscription since Psalm 90. Third, the dramatic collapse of the Davidic kingship in Psalm 89 backdrops the sudden reappearance of a new royal Davidide in Psalm 101. Fourth, the hallowing and heralding of Yahweh's kingship throughout Psalms 93–100 heightens the effect of a sudden Davidic entrance. Fifth, Psalm 101 stands out as the only royal psalm—dealing with a human king—in Book IV of the Psalter. Sixth, the first person singular voice in Psalm 101 marks a noted change from Psalms 93–100. Before Psalm 101, the only first person utterances (from a psalmist) occur in Psalms 91, 92, and 94. These six disjunctive elements signal a shift between Psalms 93–100 and Psalms 101ff.

Table 20.
Shared lexemes in Pss 100 and 101[18]

Verse	MT	Translation
100:1	מזמור	psalm
101:1	מזמור	psalm
100:5	אמונתו	his faithfulness
101:6	בנאמני	upon the faithful
100:1	הארץ	(all) the earth
101:6	ארץ	(in) the land
101:8	ארץ	(in) the land
100:2	באו	come
100:4	באו	enter
101:2	תבוא	will you come
100:1, 2, 3, 5	יהוה	Yahweh
101:1, 8	יהוה	Yahweh
100:5	חסדו	his steadfast love
101:1	חסד	steadfast love
100:3	דעו	know
101:4	אדע	I will know
100:3	עשׂנו	he made us
101:3	עשׂה	the work
101:7	עשׂה	who practices

[18]The purpose of table 20 is to demonstrate the paucity of shared lexemes rather than their prevalence. Further, "keyword correspondences to the preceding Psalm 100 occur at distinct points and have altogether different subjects" (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 16).

Caveat: Thematic Conjunction

Despite these strong disjunctive elements, several thin threads slip through, lightly binding Psalms 100 and 101. (1) Both are titled מזמור ("psalm"; 100:1; 101:1), a musical notation used only 4x in Book IV. (2) Psalm 101 begins as Psalm 100 ends: praising the permanence of Yahweh's חסד ("steadfast love"; 100:5; 101:1). (3) Psalm 100 begins with the command to sing, Psalm 101 with the commitment to sing. Psalm 100 implores the nations to "make a joyful noise" (הריעו, 100:1) and enter God's presence "with singing" (ברנה, 100:2), and David answers the invitation: "I will sing" and "I will make music" (אשׁירה and אזמרה, 101:1). (4) Psalm 100 summons all the earth to make a joyful noise "to Yahweh" (ליהוה, 100:1). David then makes music "*to you* (לך יהוה, 101:1), O Yahweh." (5) Both psalms present a comprehensive vision: Psalm 100 begins with "all the earth" (כל־הארץ, 100:1) summoned to praise Yahweh while Psalm 101 ends with "all the wicked" (כל־רשׁעי) and "all the evildoers" (כל־פעלי און) destroyed from the land and city (101:8). (6) Psalm 101 is a human royal psalm following a series of divine royal songs. This divine-human juxtaposition is not surprising considering this common dynamic in the psalms (Pss 2, 72, 89, 110, 132). (7) Psalm 101 expresses a strong commitment to comprehensive justice which follows (and applies) the coming justice of Yahweh trumpeted throughout 93–100. (8) Psalm 101 uses temple-approach language to describe the ideal person who can enter Yahweh's presence in response to the invitations in 95–100 (95:2; 96:8; 99:5, 9; 100:2, 4; cf. Pss 15:1–5 and 24:3–4 in 101).[19] I will explore some of these conjunctive themes in more detail below.

Psalm 101: Superscription, Structure, Content, Themes

This section examines the Davidic superscription, intricate structure, royal voice, and lamenting tone of Psalm 101. Each aspect helps form the distinct message of this psalm which shapes and sustains Davidic hope in Book IV.

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[19]I owe this final observation to Vesco, *Psautier*, 2:928.

Davidic Superscription

Both the MT and LXX entitle Psalm 101 "a psalm of David" (לדוד מזמור, Τῷ Δαυιδ ψαλμός).[20] This Davidic superscription is the first since Psalm 86, the first explicit mention of David since Psalm 89, one of only three authorial titles in Book IV, and one of only two Davidic titles in Book IV. In light of the book-ending doxology closing Book II ("The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended"), the solitary Davidic psalm in Book III (Ps 86), and the dramatic collapse of the Davidic kingship in Psalm 89, the natural question arises: *Who is this "David"?* At this point in the structure of the Psalter, the original David has seemingly exited the stage (Ps 72), and the Davidic line has allegedly suffered an irrecoverable blow (Ps 89). Further, the figure in Psalm 101 is not reigning but appears to be waiting in the wings. I will revisit the identity of the speaker after examining the structure, royal voice, content, themes, and inter-psalm connections.

Intricate Structure

Interpreters propose many different structures for Psalm 101.[22] Allen concludes that vv. 1–5 display personal "praise, plea, and testimony," and vv. 6–8 explain the king's expanding "circles of influence."[23] Kselman observes a chiasm in vv. 3–7 (see Table 21). He divides the psalm into an introduction (vv. 1–2), the voice of the king (vv. 3–5), an oracle from

Table 21. Chiasm in Ps 101:3–7[21]

MT	Verse	Translation
לנגד עיני	v. 3a	*before my eyes*
דבר	v. 3a	*report*
עשׂה	v. 3b	*work*
עינים	v. 5b	*eyes*
עיני	v. 6a	*my eyes*
עשׂה	v. 7a	*does*
דבר	v. 7b	*speaks*
לנגד עיני	v. 7b	*before my eyes*

[20]Psalm 101 is numbered 100 in the LXX.

[21]Adapted from John S. Kselman, "Psalm 101: Royal Confession and Divine Oracle," *JSOT*, no. 33 (1985): 47.

[22]See overview in Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 9–10.

[23]Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 10.

God to the king (vv. 6–7), and a conclusion (v. 8).[24] Most interpreters see the main division coming between vv. 4 and 5 or vv. 5 and 6, along with a progression from personal and private concerns to public and political matters.[25]

McCann rightly argues that the lexical repetition cycling through Psalm 101 displays a complexity that defies a simple linear structure. "The complexity suggests that the structure moves on more than one level" because "the frequent repetitions move in several directions."[26] Jacobson agrees: "To emphasize one structure in this psalm, one must emphasize some data while ignoring other data. While there are many repetitions, they do not shake out cleanly into any discernable pattern."[27] I follow the majority of interpreters who see two broad divisions (vv. 1–4 and vv. 5–8), leaving room for intricate overlap due to the lexical repetition throughout the psalm.[28] I further analyze structural and thematic movements in the following section.

Royal Voice

Interpreters taking various approaches are unified in hearing a royal voice in Psalm 101.[29] Hossfeld and Zenger summarize the main form-critical views which all fall

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[24]Kselman takes an unusual view as he attributes vv. 6–7 to Yahweh and not David (Kselman, "Psalm 101," 45–62; cf. Michael L. Barré, "The Shifting Focus of Psalm 101," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. P. D. Miller, Jr. and P. W. Flint, VTSup 99 [Boston: Brill, 2005], 206–7).

[25]See discussion below for these interpreters. The introductory vv. 1–2 will be discussed below, but they are not sharply divided from the rest of the psalm.

[26]McCann, *Psalms*, 1082; cf. Phil J. Botha, "Psalm 101: Inaugural Address or Social Code of Conduct?" *HTS* 60, no. 3 (2004): 728ff.

[27]Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 741–42.

[28]Allen and McKelvey both mention this majority view (Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 9; McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 170n1).

[29]The general consensus is mentioned by Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 277; Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 7; Helen A. Kenik, "Code of Conduct for a King: Psalm 101," *JBL* 95, no. 3 (1976): 391; and Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms*, NCBC (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 431. For examples, see Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5 of *EBC*, ed. T. Longman III and D. E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 743–44.

into royal categories: a royal vow for a coronation ritual, a declaration of royal innocence in a temple entrance liturgy, or a declaration of royal intentions. The psalm seems tinged by the plaintive question in v. 2, but the song is clearly royal in content and theme. This royal orientation is clear even without the superscription, but "the attribution to David confirms the interpretation of the body of the psalm as a royal prayer."[30] Kraus therefore calls it a "royal psalm" expressing "a king's vow of loyalty" with a future orientation.[31]

Early in Psalm 101 (vv. 1–4), David appears to represent a zealous righteous man in Israel. He sings and makes music, worshiping Yahweh for his steadfast love and justice (v. 1). He contemplates a blameless lifestyle and commits to integrity in his most intimate dealings (בקרב ביתי, "in the inner parts of my house," v. 2). He rejects worthless things and moral wanderers (v. 3). He devotes himself to good by distancing himself from evil (v. 4).[32]

But later in Psalm 101 (vv. 5–8), David's royal perspective and prerogative become clear, reframing his earlier statements. His stalwart guarantees display confidence in his settled role as judge in the land, and his impeccable moral calculus show that his intentions are pure as the torah. He silences secret slanderers and does not tolerate the arrogant (v. 5). He approves and positions the faithful and the blameless (v. 6). He drives away deceivers (v. 7) and daily destroys all the "wicked" and "evildoers" from Yahweh's holy city (v. 8).

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[30]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 13, 16–17. See thorough discussions of form and genre in Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 7–9 and Karl Möller, "Reading, Singing and Praying the Law: An Exploration of the Performative, Self-Involving, Commissive Language of Psalm 101," in *Reading the Law: Studies in Honour of Gordon J. Wenham*, ed. J. G. McConville and K. Möller, LHB/OTS 461 (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 113–25.

[31]Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 277. I prefer the phrase "royal voice" rather than "royal psalm" because I do not want the classification "royal psalm" to overshadow other important features in the psalm such as the lament in v. 2 or the temple-entrance qualities throughout.

[32]Verse 1 alone or vv. 1–2a may function as an introduction as David celebrates the character of Yahweh (v. 1) and asks his plaintive question which colors the psalm (v. 2a).

Personal convictions in vv. 1–4 become judicial actions in vv. 5–8.[33] Repeated terms reveal this relationship. David does not only ponder "the blameless way" (בדרך תמים, v. 2) but also promotes and positions he who walks "in the blameless way" (בדרך תמים, v. 6) as his companion and minister. His private integrity of "heart" (לבבי, 101:2) and his personal rejection of a perverse "heart" (לבב, 101:4) produce his commitment to punish the arrogant "heart" (לבב, 101:5). With private integrity he walks "within my house" (בקרב ביתי, 101:2), which means that the deceitful are kept from dwelling "in my house" (בקרב ביתי, 101:7).[34] He states personally that no worthless matter is allowed "before my eyes" (לנגד עיני, 101:3) before stating judicially that no liars are allowed "before my eyes" (לנגד עיני, 101:7). He refuses to entertain any "worthless *matter*" (דבר־בליעל, 101:3), which may refer to a false "word" or malicious "report" (דבר), since he soon promises to cast out the "one who *speaks* lies" (דבר שקרים, 101:7). His personal rejection of "evil" (רע, 101:4) becomes a public cleansing of the "wicked" (רשעי, 101:8), and finally, he sings of justice privately in the presence of "Yahweh" (יהוה, 101:1) before enacting justice publicly in the city of "Yahweh" (יהוה, 101:8).[35] Clearly this Davidide possesses both the moral conviction and the royal position to enact divine ideals throughout the city and the land.

Gerstenberger objects to the standard royal interpretation and instead sees in

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[33]Hossfeld and Zenger divide the psalm differently (vv. 1–2; vv. 3–5; vv. 6–8) but see the same private-to-public progression within the two main sections: "The first part is about private behavior and avoiding sin [vv. 3–5]; the second is about forensic activities and avoiding the wrong society [vv. 6–8]." Thus they divide between "private activities" and "forensic activities" (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 13–14). McKelvey sees "the commitment of the king" (vv. 1–4) and "the effects of the commitment on the people" (McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 170n1). Allen describes this common view without holding it himself: "the king's personal standards" (vv. 1–4) and "those for his people" (vv. 5–8) (Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 9). Allen himself senses a positive-to-negative movement: "The king sets forth what he will do and whom he will encourage, and then what he will avoid and whom he will discourage or destroy" (Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 10).

[34]The clear royal connotations recast the "house" as the king's "palace" (בית, 101:2, 7; cf. 1 Kgs 4:6; 16:9) (Mitchell J. Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150*, AB [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970], 4).

[35]The name יהוה frames the psalm by occurring only at the beginning and end (101:1, 8). This framing device is independently noted by Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 9–10.

Psalm 101 a portrait of the righteous man—"the ideal believer in Yahweh." But his interpretation forces awkward exegesis, such as his view that the daily, authoritative, citywide moral cleansing in v. 8 expresses how "the righteous also will take any measure available to him in order to cleanse his community from evildoers."[36] This generic "righteous-man" view makes David's moral resolve in v. 8 sound more like vigilante justice than royal authority. Similar to Gerstenberger, McCann notes, "With the disappearance of the monarchy and the eventual realization that it would never be reinstituted, Psalm 101 could at least be understood as an articulation of the values that God wills to be concretely embodied among humans—love, justice, integrity."[37] This kind of "democratization" is certainly an appropriate implication and application of the psalm, but the interpretation of Psalm 101 within the canonical structure of the Psalter remains decidedly royal.[38]

For example, Hossfeld and Zenger note that the repeated Hiphil form of the verb צמת ("silence" or "destroy" in 101:5, 8) usually has God as the subject, so that David is taking on a role usually assigned to God. David is therefore not speaking as an average Israelite helping his community toward holiness. He is rather exercising a God-given role under the moral authority of Yahweh.[39] Thus moral character meets royal capacity as a righteous king pledges to enforce a righteous culture.

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[36]Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, ed. R. P. Knierim, G. M. Tucker, and M. A. Sweeney, FOTL 15 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 206–10.

[37]McCann, *Psalms*, 1083.

[38]The quote from McCann appears in his final "Reflections" section on Ps 101 rather than the commentary proper, so he may be describing more of an application. But his comment that "the monarchy . . . would never be reinstituted" is too comprehensive and ignores the eschatological promises to David's house.

[39]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 16; cf. McCann, *Psalms*, 1083.

Divine Judgment and Davidic Enforcement in Psalms 94 and 101

Lexical and thematic interplay between Psalms 94 and 101 amplify and explain the royal voice in Psalm 101. Some canonical interpreters note these lexical and thematic connections, which I will explore below.[40] As noted earlier, Psalms 95 and 100 frame the core יהוה מלך psalms (96–99). Psalms 94 and 101 color this frame by showing how the kingship of Yahweh (93, 95–100) intersects with a wicked world (94, 101): God and his Davidic king judge the wicked and reorder the land.

Placement of Psalm 94 within Psalms 93–100. Psalms 93 and 95–100 form the central יהוה מלך series. But interpreters often underscore the curious placement of Psalm 94, even though evidence within the psalm clearly maintains the theme of divine governance.[41] In the opening lines God is called "God of vengeance" (94:1) and "judge of the earth" (94:2). He is summoned to "rise up" and "repay" (94:2) those who subvert his moral order. The plight of the widow, sojourner, and orphan is laid before him (94:6), but he is neither blind to their plight nor deaf to their pleas, for he sees and hears all (94:7–9). Since he disciplines the nations (94:10) and teaches the law (94:12), he will enact justice for the righteous (94:15) and reject wicked rulers (94:20), wiping them out for their sin (94:23).

The divine ruler in Psalm 94 suits the יהוה מלך series, but the degenerate culture does not.[42] If Yahweh reigns eternally and invincibly as the inaugural Psalm 93 announces (93:1–4), why does Psalm 94 graphically depict the ongoing suffering of

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[40]Hyung Jun Kim, "The Structure and Coherence of Psalms 89-106" (PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 1998), 331–34; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 16.

[41]Howard, *Psalms 93–100*, 174–75; David M. Howard, Jr., "Psalm 94 among the Kingship-of-Yhwh Psalms," *CBQ* 61, no. 4 (1999): 667–85; McCann, *Psalms*, 1057; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 488–89.

[42]McCann calls the placement of Ps 94 an "apparent intrusion" (McCann, *Psalms*, 1057), Howard calls it "puzzling" (Howard, *Psalms 93–100*, 174), and Tate admits that it appears "anomalous," "out of order," and "random" (Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 488). Each of these interpreters, however, does explain the placement of Ps 94 in terms similar to the view I will explain in this section.

God's people at the hands of "wicked rulers" (94:20)? Why launch the יהוה מלך series only to come crashing back down to the injustice and ignominy faced by the righteous? Does Yahweh reign or not? Eaton offers one explanation:

> Hardly has the great series of psalms (93–100) proclaiming the kingship of the Lord got under way, when this psalm intervenes with its picture of a world subjected to a 'throne of destructions', a reign of mindless cruelties. *So the harsh context for faith in God the King is acknowledged*.[43]

Hossfeld and Zenger offer a similar explanation but from the divine perspective. The יהוה מלך psalms praise Yahweh's universal rule, but his rule is complicated by the need to separate the righteous from the wicked, which requires active and violent judgment. Psalm 94 answers this call. Hossfeld and Zenger call the redactors' placement of Psalm 94 (between 93 and 95) "theological brilliance."[44] Their observations (redactional speculations aside) are helpful for discerning the significance of the canonical shape. They postulate that Psalms 93, 95, 96, 98, and 100 formed an earlier collection that concluded Psalms 2–100.

> This [earlier] Psalter praised the kingship of God over the universe, Israel, and the nations, and called for an integrating pilgrimage of the nations; the judgment of the nations falls upon Israel, the nations, and the universe in the sense of a restoration of universal order. *Psalms 94, 97, and 99 were inserted into this older composition (possibly in connection with the formation of the fourth book of Psalms). These three psalms bring complications with them: they emphasize the Judge (94:1; 99:8) or the judgment (97:2, 6, 8).*[45]

Thus Psalm 94 does not interrupt the reign of God but rather acknowledges the disordering of Israel's world while appealing for its reordering through divine justice. I propose that the righteous and waiting Davidide in Psalm 101 deliberately follows the

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[43]John Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 336 (emphasis added). McKelvey joins in emphasizing the sinful setting of earth over which God reigns: "Psalm 94 serves to remind the reader of the setting for faith in the kingship of YHWH. Though the factors of life and the world may be unfavourable to God's people, YHWH still reigns and rules over all things, even if present circumstances might suggest otherwise" (McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 91).

[44]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 456.

[45]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 456 (emphasis added).

יהוה מלך series, eager to enforce this world-ordering justice (101).

Lexical and thematic links between Psalms 94 and 101. Several clear lexical repetitions between Psalms 94 and 101 suggest a relationship between God's coming justice and David's coming rule. Kim identifies 15 terms shared between Psalms 94 and 101 and concludes:

> The parallels . . . are so close that it seems difficult to deny that Psalm 101 responds to Psalm 94. A large number of the lexical and thematic correspondences between the psalms are used in contrast, and the presence of the king in Psalm 101 is seen as answering to the questions posed by the lament Psalm, 94.[46]

Psalm 94 is framed by the twofold plea for God's "vengeance" (נקמות, 2x in 94:1) and his twofold promise to "wipe out" the wicked (יצמיתם, 2x in 94:23). Then in Psalm 101 David promises to "wipe out" secret slanderers (אצמית, 101:5) and "wipe out" all the wicked (אצמית, 101:8).[47] Several lines of evidence support this meaningful connection between Psalms 94 and 101. First, the repetition of צמת at the end of Psalm 94 creates a memorable crescendo of justice picked up in 101. Second, צמת closes both psalms as the ruler's moral cleansing has the last word (94:23; 101:8). Third, all four occurrences of צמת express promises of coming justice. Fourth, צמת occurs twice in each psalm but nowhere else in Book IV. Fifth, in Psalm 101 צמת occurs near the phrase "all doers of evil" (כל־פעלי און, 101:8), another key word shared between these two psalms (cf. 94:4, 16; see more below). Sixth, each usage of צמת relates to the destruction of the "wicked," though different terms are used (רעה in 94:23; רשׁע in 101:8). Kim explains, "Psalm 94 asks for their destruction, while Psalm 101 promises their extermination."[48] What Psalm 94 promises of God, this Davidide pledges to perform. This clear lexical and thematic link centers on the core message of both psalms, inviting an interwoven reading.

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[46]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 334 (see 331–334; the phrases "answering to" and "Psalm, 94" are original); cf. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 16.

[47]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 16 independently note this lexical repetition.

[48]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 332.

In Psalm 94 the psalmist mourns over "all doers of evil" (כל־פעלי און, 94:4) and asks who will protect the psalmist against these "doers of evil" (פעלי און, 94:16) before promising that God will bring the "evil" (אונם, 94:23) of the wicked back on their head. In Psalm 101 David then promises to cleanse "all doers of evil" (כל־פעלי און, 101:8) from the city of Yahweh.[49] Once again David pledges to perform what Psalm 94 promised God would do. In Psalm 94 the suffering psalmist asked, "Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against doers of evil (פעלי און)?" (94:16). The future Davidide answers the call: he will cut off "all doers of evil" (כל־פעלי און, 101:8).

Psalm 94 also appeals to God the "judge" (שׁפט, 94:2) and promises that "justice" (משׁפט, 94:15) will come to the righteous. Psalm 101 then depicts David musically pondering "justice" (משׁפט, 101:1), which he enforces stringently in the remainder of the psalm. This justice must be enacted in real time and space, so Psalm 94 asks Yahweh to arise as judge of "the earth" (הארץ, 94:2), while David approves the faithful "in the land" (ארץ, 101:6) and destroys the wicked "in the land" (ארץ, 101:8).

In Psalm 94, the wicked assume that God is blind to their ways, so the psalmist admonishes them, "When will you *be wise*?" (תשׂכילו, 94:8). Psalm 101, in contrast, introduces David who "ponders" (אשׂכילה, 101:2) the blameless way. Both contexts are related to justice. The wicked keep breaking God's law and oppressing God's people because they assume they have escaped God's gaze. But David is wiser than the wicked: he considers God's laws and ways so that he can obey and enforce the moral code.[50]

Psalm 94 asks how long "the wicked" (רשׁעים, 2x in 94:3) will be allowed to exult but also promises punishment on "the wicked" (לרשׁע, 94:13). Yet wicked rulers are still found "condemning" ("making wicked") (ירשׁיעו, 94:21) the innocent. So in Psalm

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[49]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 16 independently note this lexical repetition.

[50]The verb שׂכל only occurs once more in Book IV, referring to the sins of the fathers (106:7) (Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 332).

101, David resolves to cleanse the city of "the wicked" (רשעי, 101:8).[51]

On a positive note, Psalm 94 says that all the upright in "heart" (לב, 94:15) will follow justice. In Psalm 101, the heart matters greatly to David. He walks with integrity of "heart" (לבבי, 101:2), condemns the perverse "heart" (לבב, 101:4), and rejects the arrogant "heart" (לבב, 101:5). Psalm 94 also mentions the cares of the psalmist's "inner parts" (בקרבי, 94:19), which likely relate to a desire for justice. David then uses the same term twice as he keeps pure the "inner parts" (בקרב, 101:2; בקרב, 101:7) of his house.

In Psalm 94, God sees all because he formed the "eye" (עין, 94:9). In Psalm 101, David's eyes are likewise central in his plans to enforce justice. His "eyes" (עיני, 101:3) gaze on nothing worthless, he does not endure haughty "eyes" (עינים, 101:5), he sets his "eyes" (עיני, 101:6) on the faithful in the land, and he rejects all liars from before his "eyes" (עיני, 101:7).

The man whom God teaches his law will get rest from "evil" (רע, 94:13), a rest which David will help create because he will know nothing of "evil" (רע, 101:4). Indeed, Psalm 94 accuses the wicked of arrogant "words" (ידברו, 94:4), but David promises to stay away from all who "speak" (דבר, 101:7) lies.

Thematically, Psalm 94 depicts the "proud" (גאים, 94:2) and "arrogant" (עתק, 94:4) boasting that Yahweh does not see their evil deeds (94:7), but David in Psalm 101 will not endure the "haughty" (גבה, 101:5) and "arrogant" (רחב, 101:5).[52] Psalm 94 condemns unjust rulers who seek to be allied with God but are rejected by him because "they frame injustice by statute" (94:20). It seems that Psalm 94 may bemoan unjust

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[51]The root רשע occurs only once between Pss 94 and 101, declaring that Yahweh delivers the righteous from the wicked: "O you who love Yahweh, hate evil! He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the *wicked*" (רשעים, 97:10).

[52]There are even more shared lexemes that may be incidental but could be significant. For example, Yahweh "knows" (ידע, 94:11) the thoughts of man, but David will "know" (אדע, 101:4) nothing of evil. Similarly, the psalmist is upheld by Yahweh's "steadfast love" (חסדך, 94:18) and David sings of Yahweh's "steadfast love" (חסד, 101:1). I suggest that the complementary repetition between Pss 94 and 101 invites the worshiper to read them alongside one another, in which case the repetitions stand out.

kings that the righteous may encounter in Israel or in the exile; these wicked rulers cannot and do not reign as God's representative. If this view is implied, the rejection of unjust kings makes sense of David's declaration of righteousness in Psalm 101.

Finally, Psalm 94 asks "How long?" (עד־מתי, 94:3), and David asks, "When will you come to me?" (101:2). Both psalmists are waiting, and their waiting centers on justice. Thus the linkage between the justice-requesting 94 and the justice-announcing 101 helps explain the plaintive undertone of Psalm 101. The cosmic order heralded throughout 93–100 but questioned in 94 still awaits enactment.

Lamenting Tone

Psalm 101 is a royal psalm with a lamenting tone, marked especially by the plaintive question "Oh when will you come to me?" (מתי תבוא אלי, 101:2b).[53] The temporal interrogative adverb מתי ("when") appears 12 other times in the Psalter: 2x directed toward humans (41:6; 94:8), 3x directed to God in lament (מתי, 42:2; 119:82, 84), and 7x directed toward God in lament using the full phrase עד־מתי ("How long?" or "Until when?" in 6:4; 74:10; 80:5; 82:2; 90:13; 94:3 [2x]). Since the adverb מתי expresses lament in its 10 other occurrences directed to God, David is surely lamenting in 101:2.

Psalm 101 begins with singing as the יהוה מלך tones seep into this new series (101:1). David states three intentions that harmonize in a Hebrew rhyme: "I will sing," "I will make music," and "I will ponder" (אָשִׁירָה + אֲזַמֵּרָה + אַשְׂכִּילָה, 101:1–2a). Obviously the first two verbs stand parallel, but Dahood translates even the third verb אשׂכילה as "rhapsodize" because all three verbs fit the same "conceptual category."[54] Booij also

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[53]Dahood, *Psalms III*, 2; McKelvey notes both dynamics and identifies Ps 101 as a royal lament/complaint (McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 170–71n1). Allen sees the "hymnic introduction" as another reason to hear the psalmist lamenting because it functions as an "indirect appeal represented by his praise" (Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 8–9, 11). But Allen provides no solid basis for viewing hymnic features as plaintive.

[54]Dahood, *Psalms III*, 3.

notes that אשׂכילה matches the other two cohortatives in v. 1 rather than the simple imperfect forms in the rest of the psalm.[55] This general threefold synonymy suggests a musical meditation, which is precisely what David crafts in the main body of the psalm. David's topics, then, are "steadfast love" (חסד, 101:1), "justice" (משׁפט, 101:1), and "the blameless way" (בדרך תמים, 101:2). The "blameless way" likely refers to God's law.[56]

But despite David's singing and study in vv. 1–2a, and despite his grand promises of justice, integrity, order, and city-cleansing in vv. 3–8, a cloud of lament hangs over his royal declaration. He asks, "When will you come to me?" (מתי תבוא אלי, 101:2b). As noted above, the question clearly expresses an unfulfilled desire, i.e., a lament. But the question's clear tone is clouded by its ambiguous meaning.[57] What is David asking, and why does he ask the question here?

Johnson argues that Psalm 101 depicts a "ritual humiliation" during an autumnal festival where the king undergoes a "lesson in dependence on Yahweh" as he pleads for Yahweh's presence.[58] Booij hears David requesting a revelatory dream or vision like Solomon received in 1 Kings 3 (cf. בוא אל ["came to . . ."] in the context of

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[55]Thijs Booij, "Psalm 101:2—'When Wilt Thou Come to Me?'" *VT* 38, no. 4 (1988): 458. See Duane A. Garrett, *A Modern Grammar for Classical Hebrew* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 226. Kselman views the third verb as introducing the king's response to Yahweh's steadfast love and justice because in the first two cola the word order is object-verb but in the third cola the word order reverses to verb-object (Kselman, "Psalm 101," 46). But the Hebrew rhyme, cohortative form, and God-centered object shared by the three verbs suggest that we read them synonymously.

[56]DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, Tanner, *Psalms*, 743–44; cf. J. H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, SBT 32 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1976), 141–42. For example, Ps 19:7 reads, "The *law* of Yahweh is *perfect*" (תורת יהוה תמימה). Further, the opening of Ps 119 equates the "blameless way" with the law of Yahweh: "Blessed are those whose *way* is *blameless*, who walk in the *law* of Yahweh" (אשׁרי תמימי־דרך ההלכים בתורת יהוה, 119:1). Later the psalmist expresses his desire to be "blameless" related to God's "statutes" (תמים בחקיך, 119:80).

[57]Most interpreters note the ambiguity of the question in v. 2 (e.g., Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 14–15; Barré, "Shifting Focus of Psalm 101," 207–8; Booij, "Psalm 101:2," 458–62; Botha, "Psalm 101," 734–35.

[58]Aubrey R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967), 113–16; cf. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 122–23.

night-visions in Gen 20:3; 31:24; Num 22:8–9, 19–20).[59] Hossfeld and Zenger suggest the possibility of a theophany (cf. Deut 33:2; Hab 3:3) since the request calls for "movement by Yhwh toward the royal petitioner."[60] Keil and Delitzsch propose that David desires that the ark of Yahweh be installed in Jerusalem, making it the "city of Yahweh" (101:8).[61] Dahood hears David asking, "When am I going to be awarded by God's presence for my perfect conformity to his will in the past?"[62] Botha suggests the question may "draw attention to the divine sanction of the authority of the speaker" and display a "close association between speaker and Yahweh."[63] Kselman does not explain the meaning of the question in v. 2 but does argue that Yahweh responds to the question by coming to David in vv. 6–8 (where Kselman sees Yahweh speaking, not David).[64]

Rather than analyzing each view in detail, I propose an interpretation of David's question that (1) fits the royal voice and ruling concern in the psalm, (2) matches the plaintive tone, (3) suits the message and flow of Book IV, (4) naturally follows the preceding יהוה מלך series, (5) explains the verb "come" (בוא), and (6) identifies a central concern shared by many of the views just described.[65]

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[59]Booij, "Psalm CI 2," 460; cf. Dahood, *Psalms III*, 2. Booij does not mention that 1 Kgs 3 records that God "appeared to" (אל ... ראה, 1 Kgs 3:5) Solomon rather than "came to" him.

[60]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 15.

[61]C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, trans. F. Bolton (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 3:108. In this view, Ps 101:2 reflects David's question in 2 Sam 6:9 after people died for mishandling the ark on its way to Jerusalem (Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:109; contra Booij, "Psalm CI 2," 459). "And David was afraid of Yahweh that day, and he said, 'How can the ark of Yahweh come to me?'" (2 Sam 6:9). The prayers are similar: "When will you come to me?" (מתי תבוא אלי) (Ps 101:2) and "How can the ark of God come to me?" (איך יבוא אלי ארון יהוה) (2 Sam 6:9).

[62]Dahood, *Psalms III*, 4; cf. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 114–16.

[63]Botha, "Psalm 101," 734–45.

[64]Kselman, "Psalm 101," 57. This interpretation requires Kselman's unlikely view that the king speaks in vv. 3–5 while Yahweh speaks in vv. 6–8.

[65]Often in detailed discussions over interpretive debates, atomistic evaluation of the views can create blinders that hinder us from seeing how some or all of the views may overlap by sharing common principles or key concerns.

The specific meaning of David's question is initially ambiguous, but numerous elements are still clear. First, the question must be related to the clear theme of the song: the righteous rule of an Israelite king on earth. Second, the question should be heard from a Davidic voice due to the superscription. Third, the question implies "spatial distance" between the king and God, a distance that dissatisfies David.[66] Fourth, the question assumes that such distance is not ideal, i.e., not the ideal relationship between God and his king. Fifth, the question assumes that God must close the gap to draw near to the king. Sixth, the question presupposes some obligation on Yahweh's part to respond, so that "when" and not "whether" is the question. Seventh, the question assumes that the royal righteousness David claims in vv. 3–8 will motivate Yahweh to respond to his question.

Considering the royal voice, plaintive tone, pledges of justice, inter-psalm connections, and the preceding יהוה מלך psalms, the verb "come" (תבוא) appears to echo the announcement of Yahweh's "coming" explicitly promised in the יהוה מלך series. The verb בוא occurs throughout this series. Four times it refers to people "coming" before Yahweh to worship him (95:6; 96:8; 100:2, 4) and once it refers to Israel being prohibited from "entering" his rest (95:11). But three times, in the core songs headed by the incipit יהוה מלך (96, 98), the verb בוא describes Yahweh himself coming as king to judge the earth (96:13 [2x]; 98:9). Both statements conclude their respective psalms, each rising to a crescendo that depicts Yahweh "coming" to reorder the world.

Psalm 96:13
before Yahweh, for he comes (בא),
  for he comes (בא) to judge (לשפט) the earth (הארץ).
He will judge (ישפט) the world in righteousness,
  and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Psalm 98:9
before Yahweh, for he comes (בא)
  to judge (לשפט) the earth (הארץ).
He will judge (ישפט) the world with righteousness,
  and the peoples with equity.

[66]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 15.

Therefore I propose that in Psalm 101:2 we hear a Davidic king-in-waiting soulfully meditating on the faithfulness of Yahweh (v. 1). He asks Yahweh to come as promised (v. 2) so that the Davidic king might begin ordering the city and land (vv. 3–8), performing locally what Yahweh does globally: order and restore all of creation through his royal judgment. Lexical and thematic relationships between the יהוה מלך psalms and Psalm 101 (in addition to the clear links between 94 and 101) support this interpretation.

God rules as "judge" and comes to "judge" (שׁפט) throughout Psalms 93–100 (94:2; 96:13 [2x]; 98:9 [2x]). His "justice" and "judgments" (משׁפט) reign throughout the series (94:15; 97:2, 8; 99:4).[67] Nearest to Psalm 101, Psalm 99 declared, "The King in his might loves *justice* (משׁפט). You have established equity; you have executed *justice* (משׁפט) and righteousness in Jacob" (99:4). Now David ponders God's "justice" (משׁפט, 100:1) which he plans to enact. Indeed, after Psalms 93–100, Psalm 101 seems "appended as an echo out of the heart of David."[68] The Davidide in 101 desires to embody God's reign by enforcing God's justice, but he must mournfully await the appointed time (101:2).

The celebration throughout the יהוה מלך series likewise echoes into Psalm 101. Psalms 96–99 summon creation to "sing" (שׁירו, 96:1a; שׁירו, 96:1b; שׁירו, 96:2; שׁירו, 98:1) and "sing praises" (זמרו, 98:4; זמרו, 98:5) because God orders the world with his justice.[69] Psalm 101:1 then presents David who "sings" (אשׁירה, 101:1) and "sings praises" (אזמרה) as he commits to supply this justice.

The center of Book IV likewise shows concern for the "earth" (ארץ) (94:2; 95:4; 96:1, 9, 11, 13; 97:1, 4, 5, 9; 98:3, 4, 9; 99:1; 100:1). Virtually all 44 appearances of

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[67]Many other words and phrases throughout Pss 93–100 emphasize God's judgment, but space limitations require that I focus on the central root שׁפט.

[68]Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:108.

[69]Dozens more worship-words fill Pss 93–100, but here I am simply showing how David picks up several lexically connected themes from Pss 93–100.

ארץ in Book IV denote the global "earth" rather than a particular land. But in Psalm 101, where ארץ is once again a priority (101:6, 8), the meaning is clearly local rather than global. The "faithful in the land" (בנאמני־ארץ, 101:6a) will receive the king's favor, the "wicked in the land" (רשׁעי־ארץ, 101:8a) his impartial judgment.[70] Book IV moves from the worldwide "earth" (ארץ) in 93–100 to the localized "land" (ארץ) in 101, suggesting that God's universal reign and world-ordering justice will be embodied and enacted first in his holy city (101:8). Here the nations will gather to worship the God who summons them into his courts in Psalms 95–100. After all, the eschatological hope of Israel was not that Jewish and Gentile worshipers would float to heaven but stream to Zion.

In summary, lexical and thematic runoff from the יהוה מלך peaks flows into Psalm 101, helping us interpret David's question, "When will you come to me?" (1) God comes to judge, and David desires to enact his judgment. (2) Creation sings at God's coming, and David sings to anticipate his coming. (3) God's judgment will enact moral order and cosmic justice throughout creation, and David's judgment will enact moral order throughout the land and citywide justice throughout Jerusalem. But (4) God comes in fullness only in the future, so David wants that future to come now: "When will you come to me?" Thus it appears that a Davidide in v. 2 is waiting (and asking) for Yahweh to "come" and judge the earth by installing him as king so that he can do Yahweh's royal bidding, localizing God's galactic rule.

Earlier I described many different interpretations of the plaintive question in v. 2. Together they display one overarching concern: the presence, guidance, and power of Yahweh is needed for David to reign in fullness. A proposed "ritual humiliation" would illustrate how the king needs God. A divine vision would serve the cause of godly rulership in Israel (e.g., Solomon's vision). A theophany would reorient the king toward

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[70]Psalm 101 has a local feel. David twice speaks of his "house" (ביתי) (101:2, 7), highlights the slanderer's "neighbor" (רעהו) (101:5), and speaks of "the city of Yahweh" (מעיר־יהוה) (101:8). Meanwhile there are no unambiguous global or universal references.

God's power, presence, and principles. The presence of the ark near David in Jerusalem would vividly illustrate how God favors and empowers Davidic rule (and more importantly, how David serves and enacts divine rule). Thus my interpretation honors the central concern inherent in other views.

McCann notes that the question in v. 2 colors the psalm. "Without the question, Psalm 101 would make good sense as a pledge or oath of office that the king might have recited at his coronation, following the assumption of office (see Psalm 2) and perhaps appropriate ceremonial prayers (see Psalm 72)." But the question "has the force of a plea for help and gives the rest of the psalm the character of a complaint." McCann goes on:

> [S]ince Psalm 89 suggests the failure of the covenant with David and the disappearance of the monarchy, why are there any royal psalms at all in Books IV and V (see Psalms 110; 144)? Assuming the placement is not simply haphazard, one can respond that in its current literary setting, the royal complaint in Psalm 101 is a response to the destruction of the monarchy, as are Psalms 90–100. The voice of an imagined future king says, in effect, "I shall do everything right," implying that the monarchy should be restored; *the question in v. 2 thus asks when the restoration will occur*.[71]

Earlier I noted how the psalmists ask "How long?" throughout Book III: 74:9 (עד־מה), 74:10 (עד־מתי), 79:5 (עד־מה), 80:5 (עד־מתי), 82:2 (עד־מתי), and 89:47 (עד־מה). Moses repeats the question in Psalm 90:13 as Book IV continues to await fulfillment of the Davidic promises of Psalms 2 and 72. Now in light of the bold statements and recent promises that "Yahweh reigns," a waiting Davidide asks a similar but more specific question: "When?"

> If we permit this question that the king asks of God to determine the whole of the psalm, then we may take it that the psalm is in fact an urgent petition to God, that God's faithful generosity should establish a better societal order. The bid of the king is that God should come visibly and bring a new order to the realm of the king. The several pledges of the king's recital . . . function as *motivations* to move God to act in the king's favor . . . This petition is an acknowledgement by the king that his

[71]McCann, *Psalms*, 1081 (emphasis added).

governance is at best penultimate; it awaits the new governance of YHWH.[72]

Future Orientation

Psalmic lament is inherently future-oriented, straining through the dark present toward the bright horizon of God's promise. Therefore the lamenting tone of Psalm 101 immediately suggests a future orientation. Most modern English translations, like many interpreters, construe Psalm 101 as future-oriented.[73] The psalm is often viewed as a vow employed at a coronation or celebration ritual.[74] But the time-orientation within Psalm 101 depends primarily on the temporal conception of its verbs. Psalm 101 is filled with imperfect verbs, but the imperfect verb does not dictate a specific temporal orientation. Rather, imperfective aspect portrays an action as not completed or in process.

Some hear the psalmist claiming a current or past pattern of faithfulness rather than vowing blameless behavior for the future.[75] Johnson suggests that a past and current perspective best clarifies the lament in v. 2: David requests that Yahweh come to him based on David's own "steadfast love and justice" (חסד־ומשׁפט).[76] Dahood cites the LXX translation as further evidence.[77] The LXX translates the fifteen Hebrew imperfect verbs with three different tenses: four futures, four aorists, and seven imperfects.

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[72]Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 431–32.

[73]Translations: ESV, HCSB, NAS, NET, NKJV, NRSV, RSV. Interpreters: McCann, *Psalms*, 1081–82; Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:108–10; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 277; John Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, BCOT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 138–40; Jerome F. D. Creach, *The Destiny of the Righteous in the Psalms* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2008), 97–98, 107–8; Eaton, *Kingship in the Psalms*, 122.

[74]Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, trans. H. Hartwell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 648–49; James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 321.

[75]Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 114–16; Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 12.

[76]Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 114–16.

[77]Dahood, *Psalms III*, 2.

Table 22. Hebrew imperfective verbs and
LXX verb tenses in Ps 101

Verse	MT	ESV	LXX	Greek Tense
101:1	אשׁירה	I will sing	ᾄσομαί	Future
101:1	אזמרה	I will make music	ψαλῶ	Future
101:2	אשׂכילה	I will ponder	συνήσω	Future
101:2	תבוא	will you come?	ἥξεις	Future
101:2	אתהלך	I will walk	διεπορευόμην	Imperfect
101:3	לא־אשׁית	I will not set	προεθέμην	Aorist
101:3	לא ידבק	it shall not cling	ἐμίσησα	Aorist
101:4	יסור	shall be far	ἐκολλήθη	Aorist
101:4	אדע	I will know	ἐγίνωσκον	Imperfect
101:5	אצמית	I will destroy (*silence*)	ἐξεδίωκον	Imperfect
101:5	לא אוכל	I will not endure	συνήσθιον	Imperfect
101:6	ישׁרתני	he shall minister to me	ἐλειτούργει	Imperfect
101:7	לא־ישׁב	(No one) shall dwell	κατῴκει	Imperfect
101:7	לא־יכון	(no one) shall continue	κατεύθυνεν	Aorist
101:8	אצמית	I will destroy	ἀπέκτεννον	Imperfect

Ultimately, neither the MT nor LXX tenses prove a specific time-orientation for these verbs.[78] Neither does the plaintive question in v. 2, because David could be expressing any of three perspectives, all of which could ground his plea that Yahweh come to him: (1) he has already kept his way blameless and established moral order in the land; (2) he currently keeps his way blameless and maintains moral order in the land; or (3) he will in the future keep his way blameless and establish moral order in the land. David could even be claiming all three: past, present, and future faithfulness. Therefore while David's temporal perspective on *Yahweh's coming* is clearly future-oriented, David's temporal perspective on his own royal actions is debated.

[78]For an explanation of the aorist and imperfect verbs in the LXX translation, see Möller, "Psalm 101," 123–24n71.

For contextual, theological, and canonical reasons, it is unlikely that David is recounting his past performance. Contextually, if David were recounting his royal faithfulness in the past, the "steadfast love," "justice," and "blameless way" celebrated in v. 1 would seemingly refer to David's own performance rather than Yahweh's character, an unlikely interpretation. Theologically, the grand vision of comprehensive righteousness—personal and political, administrative and judicial, attitudinal and behavioral—strikes an eschatological chord that resonates with the future more than the past.[79] Canonically, since Psalm 89 recounted the fall of David's line, and Psalm 90 confessed that sin was the cause (a confession confirmed by the egregious history of Judean kingship), a Davidide now claiming comprehensive faithfulness would cut against the canonical position of Psalm 101.

It is also unlikely that David is presenting his current performance for Yahweh's consideration. The imperfective verbal aspect could naturally express ongoing royal activity, but (once again) the comprehensive and ideal perspective in the psalm suits eschatology better than history. Further, the canonical context of wilderness exile marking Book IV (including the picture of a crumbled Zion in 102:14–23) suggests that no Davidide is enthroned at this point in the Psalter's story.

Therefore, the verbs in Psalm 101 are best interpreted as future-oriented—the pre-commitments of a future Davidide. As noted, the holistic and comprehensive pronouncements fit better with a vow than with history. Mitchell notes that these kinds of ideal realities, never seen in Israel's history, strike an eschatological tone. His assessment regarding the eschatological perspective of the entire Psalter is worth repeating:

> First, [the Psalter] originated in an eschatologically conscious milieu.
>
> Second, the figures to whom the Psalms are attributed were regarded as future-

[79]The immediately preceding יהוה מלך series paints a similar idealistic picture and strikes the same eschatological chord (see David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, JSOTSup 252 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997], 85–86, 284–85).

predictive prophets even in biblical times.

> Thirdly, certain psalms seems [*sic*] to be of an intrinsically 'ultimate' character, that is, they describe a person or event in such glowing terms that the language far exceeds the reality of any historical king or battle.
>
> Fourthly, the very inclusion of the royal psalms in the Psalter suggests that the redactor understood them to refer to a future *mashiah*-king.[80]

The imperfective verbs thus express the torah-shaped values this future Davidide promises to embody, endorse, enact, and enforce. Indeed, the entire discussion about verbal aspect is contextualized by psalmic arrangement. Even if David's psalm on its own expressed past actions, what does it now insinuate here in Book IV of the Psalter?

Psalm 101 (a) presents the first named Davidide since David's line was severed in Psalm 89, (b) follows the יהוה מלך psalms where God's global reign was promised, (c) resonates with Psalm 94 where God's justice is yet unrealized, (d) begs God to "come" and empower this Davidide to embody divine rule; (e) vows a righteous tenure to motivate Yahweh to respond, and (f) precedes Psalm 102 where an individual mourns his afflictions amidst a fallen Zion. The perspective is clearly future-oriented.

Finally, Allen illustrates a wise canonical reading by taking seriously the placement of Psalm 101 and interpreting its microelements within a macrohermeneutic. Allen interprets the psalm as a king looking back on his actions, but still views the psalm as forward-looking within the structure of the Psalter:

> This royal psalm has an important canonical role within Book IV of the Psalter. It became the witness that Book IV provides to the messianic hope of Israel. It serves to appeal for the restoration of the Davidic dynasty by reference to God's self-imposed obligations and attests the perfection of that coming kingdom . . .[81]

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[80]Mitchell, *Eschatological Programme*, 82–89.

[81]Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 12.

Ascending the Hill of Yahweh: Psalms 15 and 101

Psalm 101 resonates lexically and thematically with several distant psalms. This resonance helps illuminate the role Psalm 101 plays in Book IV. Interpreters often note similarities with Psalms 15 and 24. Below I explore lexical and thematic repetition among these psalms and seek to interpret their mutually illuminating relationships.

Structure of Psalms 15–24

Many note a chiastic structure binding Psalms 15–24.[82] The temple entrance psalms (15 and 24) provide the frame. The torah-exalting Psalm 19 stands at the center, surrounded by royal Psalms 18 and 20–21. Complaint and petition (17, 22) alongside songs of trust (16, 23) complete the collection. Miller senses a unified message involving obedience, trust, deliverance, kingship, and torah. "Obedience to torah and trust in Yahweh's guidance and deliverance are the way of Israel and the way of kingship."[83] Grant agrees that "righteousness and relationship with God are to be found in the keeping of his torah."[84] Sumpter sees the ideal "framing psalms" (15, 19, 24) providing theological (and eschatological) context for the "intervening psalms" which reflect the real-time struggle of the faithful. This ten-psalm collection tells "the eschatological narrative of God's consummation of creation by bringing his righteous king . . . into the

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[82]Interpreters credit Auffret for identifying this chiasm, and many have applied and expanded his view. See Pierre Auffret, *La Sagesse a Bâti Sa Maison: Études de Structures Littéraires dans l'Ancien Testament et Spécialement dans les Psaumes*, OBO (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 407–38; Patrick D. Miller, "Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer: The Theology of Psalms 15–24," in *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung*, ed. K. Seybold and E. Zenger, HBS 1 (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1994), 127–42; Jamie A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 72–74, 234–40; Jean-Luc Vesco, *Le Psautier de David: Traduit et Commenté*, LD (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 1:175; William P. Brown, *Psalms*, IBT (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2010), 97–107; William P. Brown, "'Here Comes the Sun!' The Metaphorical Theology of Psalms 15–24," in *Composition of the Book of Psalms*, ed. E. Zenger (Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2010), 259–77; Philip Sumpter, "The Coherence of Psalms 15–24," *Biblica* 94, no. 2 (2013): 186–209.

[83]Miller, "Psalms 15–24," 140–41.

[84]Grant, *King as Exemplar*, 240.

reality beyond the threshold of his temple."[85] Brown sees Psalms 15 and 24 sitting at the foothills of a chiastic structure which rises to a torah peak in Psalm 19. "Because both psalms make reference to God's 'holy mountain' or 'hill' (15:1; 24:3), the overall arrangement of this cluster takes on a distinctly metaphorical shape, with Psalm 19 assuming the 'summit' of the arrangement." Thus the life-giving, world-ordering, king-qualifying torah governs this series just as the torah governs Israel's king and community.

	Psalm 19 *torah psalm*	
Psalm 18 *royal psalm*		Pss 20–21 *royal psalms*
Psalm 17 *complaint-petition*		Psalm 22 *complaint-petition*
Psalm 16 *song of trust*		Psalm 23 *song of trust*
Psalm 15 *entrance liturgy*		Psalm 24 *entrance liturgy*

Figure 1. Chiastic structure of Pss 15–24[86]

The bookends in Psalms 15:1–5 and 24:3–6 create a psalmic highlight picked up by Psalm 101. Psalm 15:1 begins, "O Yahweh, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?" Psalm 24:3 likewise asks, "Who shall ascend the hill of Yahweh? And who shall stand in his holy place?" Both psalms then sketch a portrait of the man whose character answers these questions (15:1–5; 24:3–6). Now in Book IV, a waiting Davidide promises to embody and enforce these principles (101).

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[85]Sumpter, "Psalms 15–24," 209.

[86]Adapted from Brown, *Psalms*, 97. Brown notes that "YHWH's 'hill' or 'holy place' constitutes a microcosm of the well-established earth. To ascend it is, in effect, to scale the pinnacle of creation" (Brown, *Psalms*, 99).

Connections between Psalms 15 and 101

Only "he who walks blamelessly" (הולך תמים, 15:2) may ascend Yahweh's holy hill. So David contemplates the "blameless way" (בדרך תמים, 101:2) and vows to promote only servants who "walk in the way that is blameless" (הלך בדרך תמים, 101:6). This torah-saturated lifestyle is the dual qualification for entering Yahweh's presence (15:1) and leading Yahweh's people (101:2, 6).

Ethics create actions, so both psalms emphasize "doing" (עשׂה). The acceptable worshiper "does" (עשׂה, 15:3) no wrong to his neighbor, and the one who "does" (עשׂה, 15:5) the lifestyle of Psalm 15 will be established. David complements this emphasis by hating the "doing" (עשׂה, 101:3) of transgressors and those who "do" (עשׂה, 101:7) deceit. The root עשׂה is also joined by the root פעל ("work," "practice"): the one who "does" (פעל, 15:2) right is qualified, but David will destroy those who "do" (פעלי, 101:8) evil.

This emphasis on "doing" expands beyond individual incidents, occasions, and events. Both psalms emphasize that righteousness is a lifestyle. God desires a blameless "walk" (הולך, 15:2), so David promises to "walk" (אתהלך, 101:2) with integrity while affirming those with a blameless "walk" (הלך, 101:6).

This walk starts in the heart. Only the one who speaks truth "in his heart" (בלבבו, 15:2) and has a pure "heart" (לבב, 24:4) may ascend God's mountain. Therefore David is well qualified: "I will walk with integrity of *heart*" (לבבי, 101:2). David also rejects a perverse "heart" (לבב, 101:4) and an arrogant "heart" (לבב, 101:5). Thus he not only commits to cultivate the right heart himself but drives all corrupt hearts from God's presence. David internalizes, embodies, and enforces the righteous qualities God desires.

Both psalms reflect the principle that the heart overflows in speech. The ascending worshiper must "speak" (דבר, 15:2) truth in his heart. David enforces this truth-speaking requirement, rejecting all who "speak lies" (דבר שׁקרים, 101:7) and practice "deceit" (רמיה, 101:7). Slander is likewise condemned in both psalms, though the terms are synonymous rather than identical. The righteous man "does not slander"

(לא־רגל, 15:3), and David promises judicial violence upon "whoever slanders" (מלושני, 101:5). Explicit slander with the "tongue" (לשׁנו, 15:3) is then broadened to include "evil" (רעה, 15:3), "reproach" (חרפה, 15:3), and false "swearing" (נשׁבע, 15:4; cf. נשׁבע, 24:4). Malicious attacks and false oaths, including but not limited to false testimony in judicial settings, are the shared targets in both psalms.

Truthful speech is central because righteousness is primarily relational in both psalms. The qualified worshiper does no evil to "his neighbor" (לרעהו, 15:3). David, cultivating this quality by enforcing the requirement, vows to punish the one who slanders "his neighbor" (רעהו, 101:5). David himself steadfastly avoids this kind of relational "evil" (רעה, 15:3) in all areas of life: "I will know nothing of "evil" (רע, 101:4).

The "eyes" (בעיניו, 15:4) of the righteous despise vile people, and David embodies the principle perfectly. His "eyes" (עיני, 101:3) will entertain nothing worthless; his "eyes" (עיני, 101:6) will favor the faithful; his "eyes" (עיני, 101:7) will reject all liars; and he will rebuff those with proud "eyes" (עינים, 101:5).

Finally, both psalms use synonyms to portray visiting or settling in God's presence. Psalm 15 asks, "Who shall *sojourn* (יגור, 15:1) in your tent? Who shall *dwell* (ישׁכן, 15:1) on your holy hill?" David vows that the faithful rather than the deceitful will "dwell" (לשׁבת, 101:6; ישׁב, 101:7, 101:7) with him, presumably in a restored Jerusalem, the "city of Yahweh" (מעיר־יהוה, 101:8), which rests on his "holy hill" (בהר קדשׁך, 15:1).

Table 23. Lexical and thematic repetition in Pss 15 and 101

Verse	MT	Translation
15:1	מזמור לדוד	a psalm of David
101:1	לדוד מזמור	a psalm of David
15:2	הולך תמים	he who walks *blamelessly*
101:2	אשׂכילה בדרך תמים	I will ponder the *blameless* way
101:6	הלך בדרך תמים	walk in the way that is *blameless*

Table 23 continued

15:3	עשׂה	*does* no evil to his neighbor
15:5	עשׂה	He who *does* these things
101:3	עשׂה	the *work* of those who fall away
101:7	עשׂה	the one who *does* deceit
15:2	פֹּעל	*does* (what is right)
101:8	כל־פֹּעלי און	all *doers* of evil
15:2	הוֹלך תמים	he who *walks* blamelessly
101:2	אתהלך בתם־לבבי	I will *walk* with integrity of heart
101:6	הלך בדרך תמים	he who *walks* in the way that is blameless
15:2	בלבבו	and speaks truth *in his heart*
101:2	לבבי	I will walk with integrity of *heart*
101:4	לבב	a perverse *heart* shall be far from me
101:5	לבב	an arrogant *heart*
15:2	דבר	*speaks* truth in his heart
101:7	דבר	who *speaks* lies
15:3	לא־רגל *	does not *slander* *[87]
101:5	מלושני *	whoever *slanders* *
15:3	לרעהו	does no evil to *his neighbor*
101:5	רעהו	Whoever slanders *his neighbor* secretly
15:3	רעה	does no *evil* to his neighbor
101:4	רע	I will know nothing of *evil*
15:4	בעיניו	in whose *eyes* a vile person is despised
101:3	עיני	I will not set before *my eyes*
101:5	עינים	a haughty *look*
101:6	עיני	*I will look* with favor on the faithful in the land
101:7	עיני	shall not continue before *my eyes*
15:1	בהר קדשׁך *	on *your holy hill* *
101:8	מעיר־יהוה *	from *the city of Yahweh* *

[87]Asterisks mark words or phrases that are not identical but have similar meaning.

Psalm 101 Embodies and Enforces Psalm 15

How does Psalm 101 apply the standards in Psalm 15? H. Wallace suggests that Psalm 101 "echoes the entrance liturgies in Psalms 15 and 24.3–6."[88] Kraus notes similarities with the "liturgies of the gate" in Psalms 15 and 42 and suggests that "the king is the guardian of the Torah of the gate."[89] Regardless of the precise setting envisioned, the Davidic king in Psalm 101 both *embodies* and *enforces* the required covenantal qualities of the accepted worshiper in Psalms 15:1–5 and 24:3–6. But why is a psalm that repeats these qualities placed here in the canonical structure of the Psalter? I suggest four overlapping reasons. First, Psalm 101 is positioned to portray David meeting God's requirements to ascend the hill of Yahweh in response to the cosmic invitations to worship filling Psalms 93–100.[90] Second, Psalm 101 is positioned to portray David as the foremost example of a torah-keeping worshiper as Israel and the nations stream to Zion and enter Yahweh's land, city, temple, and presence.[91] Third, Psalm 101 is positioned to portray David announcing that he will enact and enforce the righteous requirements of temple worship as Israel and the nations ascend Zion in response to Yahweh's invitation (Pss 95–100). Fourth, Psalm 101 is positioned to portray David declaring that he meets the requirements to rule with Yahweh and enforce justice in the land, because the Davidic throne is installed on the same "holy hill" that houses God's temple (Pss 2:6; 15:1), and the torah that governs the temple governs both city and land, king and people. Therefore these qualities are not only temple entrance requirements. After all, Psalm 15 does not

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[88]H. Wallace, *Psalms*, 157; cf. McCann, *Psalms*, 1083; Botha, "Psalm 101," 730.

[89]Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 279.

[90]Zenger independently takes this same view (Zenger, "Psalms 90–106," 184).

[91]See Grant's helpful and balanced discussion regarding the "democratization" of royal psalms as the king stands as the foremost example for the people (Grant, *King as Exemplar*, 281–89). Grant displays balance by not allowing such democratization (I prefer the term communalization) to diminish the messianic and eschatological hope inherent in these psalms and in the entire Psalter (Grant, *King as Exemplar*, 33–39).

conclude with a successful entrance to the temple but with the promise, "He who does these things shall never be moved" (15:5). Likewise Psalm 24:5: "He will receive blessing from Yahweh and righteousness from the God of his salvation." David reformulates and applies themes from Psalms 15:1–5 and 24:3–6 because these two psalms are more than temple entrance requirements. Anyone wanting to visit, sojourn, stand, or settle at the high point of Zion must be torah-saturated and torah-obedient. David desires exactly this dwelling-place that he might enact Yahweh's rule in the land. So David promises to embody, enforce, and extend torah-keeping in Yahweh's city.

Psalms 18 and 101

Many interpreters also note resonance between Psalms 18 and 101.[92] Psalm 18 is a royal psalm, also found embedded within the Samuel narrative in 2 Samuel 22, where David recounts his lifelong deliverance by Yahweh. David's declaration of innocence in 18:21ff. especially matches many elements in Psalm 101.

The root תמם ("blameless") appears 5x in Psalm 18. The adjective תמים occurs 4x (18:24, 26, 31, 33) and the verb תמם once (18:26). Twice the root תמם refers to man (18:24, 26), twice to God (18:26, 31), and once to God making David's way blameless (18:33). In Psalm 18:21ff. David establishes his innocence as the grounds for God's deliverance. Likewise, in Psalm 101, blamelessness is the "organizing moral term in the litany of commitments" David makes.[93] The theme of blamelessness proves central to both psalms for similar reasons, one looking back (Ps 18) and the other forward (Ps 101).

After David recounts his deliverance in Psalm 18, he provides a reason: he was "blameless" (תמים, 18:24), and his integrity warranted God's deliverance. David then

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[92]Andrew Mein, "Psalm 101 and the Ethics of Kingship," in *Ethical and Unethical in the Old Testament: God and Humans in Dialogue*, ed. K. J. Dell, LHB/OTS (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 63–64; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 15–16; Kenik, "Code of Conduct," 397; Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 139–40.

[93]Mays, *Psalms*, 321.

explains a moral reciprocity principle: The "blameless" (תמים, 18:26) enjoy covenantal reciprocity from their "blameless" God (תתמם, 18:26) while the crooked find themselves outmaneuvered by his crafty judgments (18:26–27). Even in judgment, God is always "blameless" (תמים, 18:31). He keeps his promises and shields those who seek his shelter. David then praises the God who made his way "blameless" (תמים, 18:33).

In Psalm 101, David twice announces his intention to be blameless. He ponders the "blameless way" (בדרך תמים in 101:2) and chooses companions who follow the "blameless way" (בדרך תמים in 101:6).[94] This dual devotion to personal integrity and righteous companions grounds his question, "Oh when will you come to me?" (101:2). If this question expresses a lamentable situation from which he pleads rescue, and if his intentions for integrity are the ground for such a rescue, then Psalm 101 meets squarely the moral calculus in Psalm 18. Psalm 18 recounts deliverance on the basis of blamelessness, and Psalm 101 requests deliverance on the basis of blamelessness. If David was indeed delivered from Saul and all his enemies in Psalm 18, then Yahweh will certainly hear his prayer for deliverance in Psalm 101.[95] After all, what is the ultimate lesson of Psalm 18? "Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever" (18:51).

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[94]In Ps 18:22 David explains that God delivered him because he kept "*the ways* of Yahweh" (דרכי יהוה).

[95]This clear lexical and thematic link between Pss 18 and 101 invites further comparisons, especially within the section of Ps 18 that recounts the reciprocity principle (18:21ff.). God brings down "haughty eyes" (עינים רמות, 18:28) and David rejects "haughty eyes" (גבה־עינים) (101:5). God punishes the "crooked" (עקש, 18:27) person and David rejects the "crooked" (עקש, 101:4) heart. God helps David "destroy" (אצמיתם, 18:41) his enemies and David promises to "destroy" (אצמית, 101:5) the slanderer and "destroy" (אצמית, 101:8) all the wicked. David declares, "I have not wickedly departed (לא־רשׁעתי, 18:22) from God" and then promises to destroy the "wicked" (רשׁעי, 101:8). David kept himself from "sin" (מעוני, 18:24) and promises to destroy all doers of "evil" (און, 101:8). David has clean hands "before [God's] eyes" (לנגד עיניו, 18:25) and then promises not to allow anything worthless "before my eyes" (לנגד עיני, 101:3) or any liars "before my eyes" (לנגד עיני, 101:7). This lexical and thematic repetition between Pss 18 and 101 helps show that David is expecting Yahweh to answer him in Ps 101:2 on the basis of his vow to righteousness. Other passages confirm the same expectation. For example, in Ps 73:13, David bemoans that he has kept his heart clean and remained innocent, yet he has not been delivered. He is lamenting the apparent non-fulfillment of the moral reciprocity principle that appears in texts like Ps 18:21ff.

Conclusion

"Psalm 101 has often been overlooked in discussions of the theological message of Book IV."[96] But this psalm deserves a central place in these discussions due to its royal Davidic voice, its vow of righteous kingship, its striking placement directly following the יהוה מלך series, and its role in introducing a thematically progressive Davidic collection.

In this chapter I have explored the message and function of Psalm 101 within Book IV and argued that its intra-book links (within Book IV), Davidic title, royal voice, lamenting tone, future orientation, inter-psalm connections, and strategic placement make it a central psalm sustaining Davidic hope in Book IV.

Psalms 96–99 form the heart and core of the יהוה מלך series. Their alternating incipits create a four-part harmony calling for fresh songs celebrating the reign of God. Psalms 95 and 100 frame these core psalms by inviting first Israel (95) and then all the earth (100) to enter God's courts and worship him as the exalted king. A brief Davidic collection follows, moving from a plaintive declaration of royal intentions (101) to a personal lament and petition over Zion (102) to a resounding hymn of restoration (103) to a celebration of creation order (104) that leads into the hymnic history series closing Book IV (105–106).

The Davidic superscription heading Psalm 101 makes a sudden and striking appearance after the Davidic devastation mourned in Psalm 89 and the reign of Yahweh trumpeted throughout Psalms 93–100. Psalm 101 introduces a pensive and passionate royal voice pledging torah-saturated governance over the city of Yahweh. This Davidide promises to exemplify and enact justice throughout the land in terms that apply God's promises of global justice in Psalm 94. Divine judgment becomes Davidic enforcement.

But this Davidide is a king-in-waiting, mournfully asking Yahweh when Yahweh will "come" and empower him to enact the kind of world-ordering justice the

[96]Creach, *Destiny of the Righteous*, 107.

יהוה מלך series celebrates and promises. Thus Psalm 101 displays a future orientation as the royal figure searches the horizon for signs of Yahweh's coming kingship.

As he waits, this future Davidic king is prepared to ascend the holy hill of Yahweh as both worshiper and ruler, because he will embody and enforce the kind of internal, relational, judicial, and covenantal torah-obedience Yahweh requires (Ps 15). He therefore appeals to his integrity as grounds for Yahweh to respond. He can be confident that his distressed prayer (101:2) will be heard, because the life of the original David displayed a clear reciprocity principle where a blameless God heard and rescued his blameless king (Ps 18).

Ultimately, Psalm 101 reveals that the unbearable tension and covenantal dissonance marking Psalm 89 will be resolved—"a just Davidide will one day rule."[97] The relationship between Psalms 102 and 103 will further clarify this hope-filled role of Psalm 101, revealing that the reign of Yahweh does not upend the Davidic line but upholds it.

[97]Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 199.

CHAPTER 6
DAVIDIC RESTORATION (PSALM 103)

The soaring praise of Psalm 103 immediately captures the imagination. The inaugural litany of blessings launches the soul into doxology: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" The psalm's descriptions are stratospheric ("as high as the heavens are above the earth"), its analogies mind-bending ("as far as the east is from the west"), but its tone tender ("as a father shows compassion to his children"). Its gentle interweaving of human weakness and divine compassion shows a softened saint skillfully at work.

But within the structure of Book IV and the Psalter as a whole, the magisterial Psalm 103 grows even more majestic. Its beauty is intricately interwoven with surrounding psalms as it stakes a central position and plays a pivotal role within the loose Davidic kingship narrative running through the Psalter. Specifically, its strong lexical and thematic resonance with Psalms 90 and 102 suggest that these three psalms (90, 102, 103) share a purposeful and positioned relationship that upholds Davidic hope within Book IV.

Thesis and Overview

This chapter explores the lexical and thematic resonance among Psalms 90, 102, and 103. My argument is twofold: (1) In the near context of Psalms 101–104, the restoration in Psalm 103 arises from the royal prayer of the waiting Davidide in 101 and the hopeful prayer of the afflicted Davidide in 102. (2) In the broader context of Book IV, the restoration in Psalm 103 answers the Mosaic intercession in 90 which was offered in response to the Davidic downfall in 89. Thus the crescendo of Davidic praise in Psalm 103 responds to both the Mosaic intercession in 90 and the Davidic prayers in 101–102.

Psalms 101–102

Psalms 101 and 103 bear Davidic titles, coloring the afflicted psalmist in 102 with a decidedly Davidic hue.[1] The superscription of Psalm 102 reads, "A prayer of one afflicted, when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the Lord" (102:1). Witt argues, "Psalm 102 should be heard as a meditative response of an afflicted Davidic king to the questions of the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant and YHWH's delay in returning his steadfast love to his people."[2] Therefore 101–102 together offer a "meditative response of the afflicted Davidic king to the questions posed in Psalm 89."[3] Evidence for a Davidic identification includes (a) Davidic juxtaposition within Psalms 101, 102, and 103; (b) the lamenting tone and content of both 101 and 102; (c) the way 102 is answered by the Davidic 103; (d) the predominantly Davidic use of תפלה ("prayer") in superscripts and postscripts (17:1; 72:20; 86:1; 142:1; cf. 90:1 [Moses]); (e) invocation language in 102 used primarily in Davidic laments; and (f) lexical resonance with the Davidic afflictions in Psalms 88–89. The connections between Psalm 102 and Psalms 89 and 101 provide the strongest evidence for a Davidic voice in Psalm 102, according to Witt.[4]

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[1]Many canonical interpreters suggest a Davidic collection in 101–103 or 101–104: Michael G. McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh: A Canonical Study of Book IV of the Psalter*, GDBS 55 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 169; 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*, trans. E. R. Kalin (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 183–86; Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150*, trans. L. M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 28, 37; Jamie A. Grant, "The Psalms and the King," in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, ed. D. Firth and P. S. Johnston (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 109; Howard N. Wallace, *Psalms*, RNBC (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 157–58.

[2]Andrew Witt, "Hearing Psalm 102 within the Context of the Hebrew Psalter," *VT* 62, no. 4 (2012): 604; cf. McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 191–93. Hossfeld and Zenger suggest the poor person in 102:1 is David based on the surrounding superscriptions and the "plausible sequence" within 101–103. Thus 101–103 form a "David triad": Psalm 101 is a "royal prayer," 102 is "the king in distress," and 103 is "praise and thanksgiving for rescue" (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 28).

[3]Witt, "Psalm 102," 582.

[4]Witt, "Psalm 102," 590–96.

Low-Volume Lexical Repetition

Psalm 102 thus continues and complements the lament in Psalm 101, even though Kim lists only nine shared terms and deems the lexical relationships "very weak."[5] Psalm 101 does stand out in Book IV, with few lexical links on either side, as the first Davidide since Psalm 89 announces his royal intentions while awaiting the coming of Yahweh. Still, the low-volume lexical repetition between 101 and 102 does display some interplay between David's declaration (101) and his hope-filled prayer (102).

In terms of affliction, David vowed that no evil would "cling" (ידבק, 101:3) to him, but his vow does not alter his affliction as his bones "cling" (דבקה, 102:6) to his flesh. He promised to punish those who slander in "secret" (בסתר, 101:5)—one of many reasons why Yahweh should come to him—but Yahweh still seems to "hide" (תסתר, 102:3) himself. David pledged to judge the perverse "heart" (לבב, 101:5) and the arrogant "heart" (לבב, 101:4), demonstrating his own blameless "heart" (לבבי, 101:2), but his "heart" (לבי, 102:5) has still been struck down.[6] David chose the blameless "way" (בדרך, 101:2; בדרך, 101:6), but God has broken his strength along the "way" (בדרך, 102:24).

In terms of restoration, David committed that no liar would be "established" (יכון, 101:7) before him, but when Zion is restored the descendants of God's servants will be "established" (יכון, 102:29).[7] David lamented that Yahweh has not "come to me" (תבוא אלי, 101:2), so he asks that his prayer "come to you" (אליך תבוא, 102:2), and he rejoices when the appointed time "comes" (בא, 102:14).

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[5]I have added the adjective תמים and related verb תמם to Kim's list: ארץ (101:6, 8; 102:16, 20, 26); בוא (101:2; 102:2, 14); דרך (101:2, 6; 102:24); יהוה (101:1, 8; 102:1, 2, 13, 16, 17, 19 [יה], 20, 22, 23); ישׁב (101:6, 7; 102:13); כון (101:7; 102:29); לבב (101:2, 4, 5; 102:5 [לב]); סתר (101:5; 102:3); עשׂה (101:3, 7; 102:26 [מעשׂה]); תמים / תמם (101:2, 6; 102:28) (Hyung Jun Kim, "The Structure and Coherence of Psalms 89–106" [PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 1998], 289n54).

[6]McKelvey highlights the repetition of לבבב (101:2) and לב (102:4) and suggests a "progression from strength to weakness (i.e. integrity to withering)" (McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 179–80).

[7]In the shared verb כון McKelvey sees a contrast between "the rejection of the wicked in Ps 101 and the acceptance of the descendants of the righteous in Ps 102" which indicates "God's favour towards his people" (McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 179).

High-Volume Thematic Development

Despite sharing few lexemes, Psalms 101–102 resonate with shared themes. These shared themes stand out against the paucity of shared terms. Psalm 102 clearly complements, clarifies, and answers the tone and perspective of Psalm 101.

First, the Davidic figure in Psalm 101 intends to rule the "land" (ארץ, 101:6, 8) and the "city of Yahweh" (מעיר־יהוה, 101:8). But the last explicit mention of a landed Davidide appeared in the rubble-strewn complaint of Psalm 89: walls breached, fortresses fallen, throne overturned, and crown cast down (89:40–41, 45). So where is this "land," this "city of Yahweh" (101:8), and how will it be reconstituted? Psalm 102 answers that the time has come for God to pity (102:14) and rebuild (102:17) "Zion" (ציון, 102:14, 17, 22), synonymous with Jerusalem (102:22). He will have mercy on those mourning their holy city (102:15), and he will favor and rebuild his fallen capital (102:17). Thus in both psalms the city of Yahweh—i.e., Jerusalem or Zion—waits to be restored and reordered.

Second, the afflicted figure in 102 clarifies and amplifies the lamenting tone in 101. The psalmist is not just waiting (101:2) but suffering (102:2–12, 24–25); not just suffering but miserably afflicted (102:2–12); not just miserably afflicted but overturned and broken by the angry hand of God (102:11, 24–25a). Most importantly, he is not alone. The camera slowly zooms out to show this afflicted Davidide surrounded by the mourning servants of God (102:15), the dust and stones of Zion (102:15), and the imprisoned exiles (101:21) groaning for redemption (102:18). Therefore this Davidide is not just waiting for divine presence (101:2) but divine deliverance—for himself, his city, and his people (102:13–23).[8] With this in mind, Psalm 102 clarifies the ambiguous plaintive question, "When will you come to me?" (101:2). Earlier I argued that the Davidide in Psalm 101 desired Yahweh to "come" and fulfill the promises of the יהוה מלך series so that David could enact Yahweh's world-ordering justice. But Yahweh has not

[8]"Thus, the king who vows innocence and commitment (Ps 101) then furthers his lament in complaining about his enemies and confessing his hope in YHWH (Ps 102)" (McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 180).

yet "*come to me* [i.e., David]" (תבוא אלי, 101:2) in power, so David "*comes to you* [i.e., Yahweh]" (אליך תבוא, 102:2) in prayer. David's pained prayer in 102 explains his complaint in 101: He asked "When?" (מתי) in 101:2 because he was awaiting the "time" (עת, 102:14) when God would fulfill his promises. But now, "the appointed time has come" (כי־בא מועד, 102:14). What does this mean? It means that Yahweh himself is coming: he will "arise," "hear," "regard," and "appear" so that he might "pity," "favor," "set free," and "build up" (12:13–23) his humbled people and his holy city. Thus each psalm begins with a prayerful lament (101:2; 102:2–12), but 102 explains and broadens the lament from 101, and then states outright the hope that was only implicit in 101.[9]

Third, despite this hope, Psalm 102 still reiterates the problem of time and waiting. David had asked "When?" (101:2), and the afflicted one has answered that the appointed time has come (102:14), *but he is still afflicted*: his "days" (ימי) still pass away quickly and painfully (102:4, 12, 25). Yet the permanence of God puts this fast-passing life in perspective, bolstering the psalmist's hope for deliverance: God predates, created, and outlasts the universe (102:26–27), and he endures "throughout all generations" (102:25), without changing and with "no end" (102:28). Thus both 101 and 102 are future-oriented, but 102 expresses both the pain and the promise more pointedly.

Fourth, Psalm 102 paves an international path to a rebuilt Zion and shows the multinational response to the global summons ringing through Psalms 95–100. The envisioned restoration draws widespread worshipers to Zion including "peoples" and "kingdoms" (102:23). The rebuilding of Zion (102:14–15, 17, 22), the resettling of the land, and the ingathering of the nations (102:23) necessitate the holy-hill requirements David pledges to embody and enforce throughout 101. God redeems his people "that they

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[9]Psalm 102 clarifies David's question in 101:2 and answers a possible objection to my interpretation in chap. 5: Why does David ask Yahweh to come "to *me*" (אלי, 101:2) if he is seeking a broader movement from God that matches the promises in the יהוה מלך series? How does his personal prayer in 101:2 express a sweeping eschatological desire like the fulfillment observed in 102:13–23? The Psalter is indicating that the reinstatement of a just future Davidide coincides with (and perhaps causes) the restoration of Zion and the ingathering of the nations.

may declare in Zion the name of Yahweh, and in Jerusalem his praise, when peoples gather together, and kingdoms, to worship Yahweh" (102:22–23). God's chosen city, the joy of all the earth (Ps 48:2), will be rebuilt, and its people must be pure (101:3–8).

Fifth, these two psalms juxtapose the kingships of David and Yahweh. In 101, David awaits God's coming and declares his readiness to rule righteously, but he can only envision—not inhabit—the restored "land" and "city of Yahweh" (101:8). In 102, a Davidide still waits, but the restoration arrives when the eternally enthroned God (102:13) "looks down from his holy height" (102:20), sees his people's plight and hears their pleas (102:20–21), and rises to rebuild Zion (102:14, 17). When "he appears in his glory" (102:17), he is feared by "all the kings of the earth" (102:16). Thus Psalms 101 and 102 juxtapose (a) the heavenly king who redeems his people and rebuilds Zion and (b) the human king who rules God's rebuilt city with torah and justice. These two psalms harmonize to declare that when and where Yahweh restores, David will rule.

McCann summarizes: "Psalms 101–102 together address the three key elements of the crisis of exile—loss of monarchy, Zion/Temple, and land."[10] Hossfeld and Zenger explain that the psalm pair 101–102 "transplants," "explains," and "concretizes" the rule of Yahweh. Yahweh will enact his rule through the Davidic king (101:1–8) in "the city of Yahweh" (101:8) which coincides with a "rebuilt Zion" (102:13–23).[11] Thus psalmist and city will be restored together: the razed city (102:14–15) will be raised again (102:17, 22), and the offspring of the afflicted will flourish unafraid (102:29).

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[10]J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *The Book of Psalms: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, in vol. 4 of *NIB*, ed. L. E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 1081. Witt argues that Ps 102 is a central hinge within Book IV and the Psalter as a whole: "Psalms 101–102 form a literary hinge upon which the answers to exile are given in Book IV. Without Psalm 102, there would not be [a] decisive turning point in the Psalter between the lamenting questions posed by Book III and the strong affirmations of YHWH's faithfulness and steadfast love for his people in Book IV. Considering the importance of Book IV in the shape and message of the entire book, the declaration of the king in Psalm 102 may even be the hinge upon which the Psalter can finally turn from lament into praise" (Witt, "Psalm 102," 606).

[11]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 1–2.

Psalm 102

I have surveyed the main contours and themes of Psalm 102 in connection with 101, so here I will simply highlight several other key features. Allen ominously notes, "A bewildering multiplicity of interpretations has been offered for this complex psalm."[12] Both Allen and Witt overview its history of interpretation, and Witt acknowledges that its "unique structure" and "ambiguous speaker" have made reconstructive efforts difficult for historical and form critics.[13] But a robust canonical approach addresses the final form of the psalm in its widening canonical context, so I take the psalm and its structure at face value and ask: What main movements mark Psalm 102?

Table 24. Outline of Ps 102[14]

Verses	Outline
102:1	*SUPERSCRIPTION*
102:2–12	*PETITIONS AND LAMENT*
102:2–3	Introductory petitions for a divine hearing
102:4–12	Recital of personal suffering, exacerbated by enemies and Yahweh
102:13–23	*CONFESSION OF TRUST AND HOPE*
102:13–15	Yahweh's everlasting kingship guarantees his intervention for Zion
102:16–18	Worldwide reaction to such intervention
102:19–21	Israel's subsequent praise in Zion
102:22–23	Praise from Israel and the nations in Zion
102:24–29	*LAMENT AND PETITION, PRAISE AND HOPE*
102:24	Suffering at Yahweh's hands
102:25–28	Petition for a regular lifespan based on Yahweh's everlastingness
102:29	Assurance of the community's survival

[12]Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, WBC (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 16.

[13]Witt, "Psalm 102," 582–90; cf. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 16–19.

[14]Adapted slightly from Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 19–20. Witt proposes a similar structure but sees vv. 26–28 expressing praise and providing motivation for the petitions in vv. 25 and 29 (Witt, "Psalm 102," 582–83).

Hossfeld and Zenger see (broadly) "the petitioner's lament" (vv. 2–12), the "promise of a turnabout for Zion" (vv. 13–23), and a "return to lament" (vv. 24–29).[15] Many interpreters discern these broad movements.[16] But several standout lines or statements receive attention: (1) the commission to record the future redemption so that generations to come will praise Yahweh (v. 19), the sudden return to lament (vv. 24–25a) which somehow still involves praise (vv. 25b–28), and the closing lines that predict security for future generations (v. 29).

Psalm 102 distinctly blends personal and corporate suffering by moving from personal (vv. 2–12) to communal (vv. 13–23) back to personal (vv. 24–28) before concluding with communal (v. 29).[17] The plight of the psalmist matches the plight of the city and people. The city sits in ruins (v. 15) and the psalmist sits like a bird amidst these ruins (v. 7). He eats "ashes" (אפר, v. 10) as the city sits in "dust" (עפרה, v. 15). His "groans" (אנחתי, v. 6) match the captives' "groans" (אנקת, v. 21).[18] His days are endangered (v. 25a) alongside the prisoners who are "doomed to die" (v. 21). Therefore his "prayer" (תפלה, v. 1; תפלתי, v. 2) matches "their prayer" (תפלתם, v. 18). The psalmist "shares the calamity that has befallen Jerusalem and its homeless people, both in outward circumstances and in the very depth of his soul."[19] Thus Psalm 102 "unites personal and corporate anguish over the demise of Zion."[20]

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[15]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 22–23.

[16]Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 19–20; John Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 355–57; Walter Brueggemann and W. H. Bellinger, *Psalms*, NCBC (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 435–38; John Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, BCOT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 148–49.

[17]Interpreters commonly note this personal-corporate dynamic (e.g., McCann, *Psalms*, 1081; McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 187–88; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 20).

[18]These synonymns differ by only one letter: אנח֗ה (v. 6) and אנק֗ה (v. 21). Even the letters that differ make a similar sound: ח and ק.

[19]C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, trans. F. Bolton (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 3:112.

[20]McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 169.

Psalm 102 also swings, somewhat violently at times, from current lament (vv. 2–12) to future hope (vv. 13–23) back to current lament (vv. 24–28) before concluding with future hope (v. 29). In this tension between the afflicted present and the promised future, the hope of the transient psalmist (vv. 4–5, 12, 24–25a) centers on the eternality of God (vv. 13, 25a–28).

The psalmist makes his personal affliction explicit (vv. 2–12, 24–25a) but receives no explicit personal resolution in the psalm. Meanwhile, the suffering of the community (vv. 15, 21) is described only in the context of promised restoration (vv. 13–23). Even the desperate final prayer of the individual (vv. 24–25a) resolves only in the settled future of the community (v. 29). Thus the structure and movement of the psalm assumes (without stating) that the individual will be delivered along with the community, and the community will be delivered due to the kind of "prayer" the individual prays (תפלה, vv. 1, 2, 18).

The corporate suffering in Psalm 102 sounds an exilic groan. No particular setting stands out within the psalmist's personal lament (vv. 2–12, 24–25a), but the communal lament (vv. 13–23) centers on pitiful Zion (v. 14), her "stones" and "dust" (v. 15), the need for rebuilding (v. 16), the cry of destitute people (v. 18), and groaning prisoners marked as "children of death" (v. 21) living among the nations (v. 16).[21] Verses 20–21 vividly describe God's response: "he looked down (השקיף) from his holy height; from heaven Yahweh looked (הביט) at the earth, to hear (לשמע) the groans (אנקת) of the prisoners (אסיר), to set free (לפתח) those who were doomed to die." This description reflects similar (though not identical) language describing God's compassion toward his enslaved people in Exodus.

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[21]Gerstenberger suggests that the psalm portrays God's people surrounded by the nations (Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, ed. R. P. Knierim, G. M. Tucker, and M. A. Sweeney, FOTL 15 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 212). Wenham sees 102:14–17 clearly referring to the exile (Gordon Wenham, "Rejoice the Lord Is King: Psalms 90–106 [Book IV]," in *Praying by the Book: Reading the Psalms*, ed. C. G. Bartholomew and A. West [Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2001], 95).

> [23] During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned (יאנחו) because of their slavery (העבדה) and cried out for help (יזעקו). Their cry (שׁועתם) for rescue from slavery (העבדה) came up to God. [24] And God heard (יׁשמע) their groaning (נאקתם), and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. [25] God saw (ירא) the people of Israel—and God knew (Exod 2:23–25).

Psalm 102 then prays and promises that God will respond (vv. 13–23). Verbs expressing redemptive action fill vv. 13–23: regard, look, hear, pity, arise, appear, build, and set free. Two afflicted objects provoke his compassion: Zion (vv. 14, 17, 22) and his mourning, captive people (vv. 15, 18, 21). But deliverance is promised because God's sympathy arouses his sovereignty: "But you (ואתה), O Yahweh, are enthroned forever" (v. 13). The high kingship of Yahweh introduces and grounds the entire section promising salvation (vv. 13–23). This return to the kingship-of-Yahweh theme and the fact that the high kingship of Yahweh grounds the hopes of the afflicted Davidide and his community suggest that the יהוה מלך psalms are not arranged in Book IV to castigate the Davidic throne but to save it.

Finally, the restoration predicted in Psalm 102 brings about the worldwide worship previously portrayed in 93–100: "that they may declare in Zion the name of Yahweh, and in Jerusalem his praise, when peoples gather together, and kingdoms, to worship Yahweh" (102:22–23). So David will be restored, the people will be redeemed, Zion will be rebuilt, and the nations will gather to worship. Nevertheless, the psalm is oriented toward a future generation who will praise Yahweh for what the psalm promises: "Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise Yahweh" (102:19).

Psalm 102 and Psalm 89

In Psalm 102:24 the afflicted psalmist complains about God that "he has shortened my days" (קצר ימי). This striking phrase clearly picks up the psalmist's accusation in Psalm 89: "You have cut short the days of his youth" (הקצרת ימי עלומיו,

89:46).[22] The subject, verb, and both objects are the same in each psalm: *God* has *cut short* the *days* of a *Davidide*. Both statements are complaints at key points in their respective psalms. In 89:46 this statement climaxes the main accusation against Yahweh (89:39–46), and in 102:24 the same statement marks the abrupt transition from praise back to lament. In Psalm 89, Ethan registers the complaint on behalf of the Davidic king (third person), but in Psalm 102, the afflicted Davidide makes the complaint himself (first person). Some see this connection warranting a Davidic voice in Psalm 102.[23]

This repeated accusation about shortened days is just the beginning of the resonance between 89 and 102.[24] The lexical and thematic connections between them indicate that the afflicted psalmist in Psalm 102 is experiencing and lamenting the kind of Davidic catastrophe described in Psalm 89. The nature of the linkage intertwines both lament and hope. So the afflicted Davidide in 102 is awash in the aftermath of Psalm 89 but afloat on the unsinkable promises of God. Yet unlike Psalm 89 where the psalm began with praise and ended in petition, in Psalm 102 the flood comes first.[25]

The "enemies" (אויביך, 89:52) who "mocked" (חרפת, 89:52) God's anointed

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[22]Several interpreters note this lexical link: Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 234; Witt, "Psalm 102," 595; McCann, *Psalms*, 1088; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 26–27.

[23]McCann, *Psalms*, 1088; Witt, "Psalm 102," 595–96.

[24]Kim lists 35 terms shared between Pss 89 and 102: יב(ו)א (89:11, 23, 43, 52; 102:9); אל (89:7, 8, 27; 102:25); אמר (89:3, 20; 102:25); ארץ (89:12, 28, 40, 45; 102:16, 20, 26); בן (89:7, 23, 31, 48; 102:21, 29); דור (89:2 [2x], 5 [2x]; 102:13 [2x], 19, 25 [2x]); דמה (89:7; 102:7); דרך (89:42; 102:24); יהוה / יה (89:2, 6, 7 [2x], 9 [2x], 16, 19, 47, 52, 53; 102:1, 2, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23); היה (89:37, 42; 102:7, 8); זכר (89:48, 51; 102:13); זרע (89:5, 30, 37; 102:29); חרף / חרפה (89:42, 51, 52 [2x]; 102:9); יד (89:14, 22, 26, 49; 102:26); יום (89:17, 30, 46; 102:3 [2x], 4, 9, 12, 24, 25); יסד (89:12; 102:26); ירא (89:8; 102:16); כון (89:3, 5, 22, 38; 102:29); מות (89:49; 102:21); מלך (89:19, 28; 102:16); נשׂא (89:10, 51; 102:11); סתר (89:47; 102:3); עבד (89:4, 21, 40, 51; 102:15, 29); עולם (89:2, 3, 5, 29, 37, 38; 53; 102:13); עם (89:16, 20, 52; 102:19, 23); ענה / עני (89:23; 102:1, 24); פנה (89:15, 16, 24; 102:1, 3, 11, 26, 29); קדשׁ (89:6, 8, 19, 21, 36; 102:20); קום (89:44; 102:14); קצר (89:46; 102:24); קרא (89:27; 102:3); ראה (89:49; 102:17); שׂבע (89:4, 36, 50; 102:9); שׁם (89:13, 17, 25; 102:16, 22); שׁמים (89:3, 6, 12, 30; 102:20, 26) (expanded slightly from Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 234n50).

[25]Psalms 89 and 102 bear reverse structures. Psalm 89 moves from praise to lament while Ps 102 moves from lament to praise (Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 237). Even when the lament returns abruptly (102:24–25a), Ps 102 still ends in praise (102:25b–29).

one mirror the "enemies" (אויבי, 102:9) who now "mock" (חרפוני, 102:9) his afflicted one. In both psalms God seems to "hide" (תסתר, 89:47; תסתר, 102:3) from the affliction of a Davidide.[26] God had "sworn" (שׁבע, 89:4, 36, 50) to David but now David's enemies use his name to "swear" (נשׁבעו, 102:9).[27] God promised that David would "cry" (יקראני, 89:27) to him "my God" (אלי, 89:27) over his salvation but now this Davidide "cries" (אקרא, 102:3) to him "my God" (אלי, 102:25) in his desperation. The introductory "I said" (אמרתי, 89:3) led into a statement about God's eternal love, but now the introductory "I say" (אמר, 102:25) leads into a lament about impending death.

Both psalms are deeply concerned with "days" (יום) and "years" (שׁנה). They were blessed who praised Yahweh "all the day" (כל־היום, 89:17), but "all the day" (כל־היום, 102:9) the afflicted Davidide is now taunted by his enemies. The Davidic throne was promised security like the unending "days" (ימי, 89:30) of heaven but Yahweh then cut short his "days" (ימי, 89:46). Therefore his "day" (ביום, 102:3 [2x]) is distressful and desperate, his "days" (ימי, 102:4, 12) pass quickly, and his "days" (ימי, 102:24) are still shortened by Yahweh, so he pleads that Yahweh continue his "days" (ימי, 102:25). This plea is based on the reality that Yahweh himself possesses unending "years" (שׁנותיך, 102:25; שׁנותיך, 102:28).

In both psalms God "founded" (יסדתם, 89:12; יסדת, 102:26) the "earth" (ארץ, 89:12; הארץ, 102:25) and the "heavens" (שׁמים, 89:12, שׁמים, 102:26). In Psalm 89 this truth grounded the Davidic promise (89:6–19 grounds 89:20–38); in Psalm 102, the same truth grounds the Davidic hope (102:25b–28 grounds 102:25a, 29). In Psalm 89 God "established" (תכן, 89:3) his faithfulness, promised to "establish" (תכון, 89:22) David, and promised to "establish" (אכין, 89:5; יכון, 89:38) David's "offspring" (זרעך, 89:5; זרעו,

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[26]Both psalms portray God hiding from the affliction of the psalmist (Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 235).

[27]Kim mentions this shared term but finds it difficult to discern the theme that relates the two occurrences (Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 236). Yet the wordplay is evident based on the double meaning of the term "swear" in both Hebrew and English. It can mean a covenant or a curse.

89:30; זרעו, 89:37), so the afflicted Davidide in Psalm 102 trusts that God will "establish" (יכון, 102:29) the "offspring" (זרעם, 102:29) of God's suffering people. Although the "children of man" (בני־אדם, 89:48) faced certain "death" (מות, 89:49) by virtue of their humanity, the exiled "children of death" (בני תמותה, 102:21) in Psalm 102 will be rescued because even the sinful "children" (בניו, 89:31) of David and the future "children" (בני, 102:29) of the afflicted are promised security. David was God's "servant" (עבדי, 89:4; עבדי, 89:21), but this "servant" (עבדך, 89:40) was renounced, so God's "servants" (עבדיך, 89:51) were mocked by their enemies. God, however, will pity his "servants" (עבדיך, 102:15) so that even the offspring of these "servants" (עבדיך, 102:29) will dwell secure.

David did not "stand" (קום, 89:44) in battle but God will "stand" (תקום, 102:14) and do battle for his city and people (102:16 implies warfare). The fall of David and the exile of Israel showed that every man must "see" (יראה, 89:49) death, but when Yahweh rises to restore Zion, his glory will be "seen" (נראה, 102:17) by the destitute and dying (102:18, 21). His everlasting existence, faithfulness, sovereignty, and promises—"for all generations" (לדר ודור, 89:2, 5; 102:13, 25)—give hope for the next "generation" (לדור, 102:19). The imperative "remember" (זכר, 89:48, 51) stands at the center of the final two lament sections in Psalm 89, but the lament will be answered because God himself is always "remembered" (זכרך, 102:13) as the eternal sovereign king. God had made David "the highest of the kings of the earth" (עליון למלכי־ארץ, 89:28), and though the Davidic downfall questioned this status, God will rebuild Zion and reestablish his people so that "all the kings of the earth" (כל־מלכי הארץ, 102:16) will fear his glory.[28] Indeed, the God "feared" (נורא, 89:8) in the council of heaven will soon be "feared" (יראו, 102:16) by the kings of earth. Therefore, while the lament section of Psalm 89 twice asked "How long?" (עד־מה, 89:47 [2x]), the promise section of Psalm 102 answers that the "time" (עת, 102:14)—"the appointed time" (מועד, 102:14)—has finally come.

[28]Noted by Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 27.

The dramatic shift in both psalms is marked by the adversative, "But you" (ואתה, 89:39; ואתה, 102:13). In Psalm 89, this adversative turns to interrogate God, but in 102, the phrase turns to celebrate his eternal kingship.

These two psalms also display several shared themes. Both psalms bemoan the wrath of God but nowhere acknowledge its cause (89:39, 47; 102:11). Both psalms depict a fallen city related to an afflicted Davidide (89:41–42; 102:14–15, 17). Both psalms make God responsible for the calamity (89:39–46; 102:11, 24). Both psalms express a prayer for active mercy (89:48, 51–52; 102:2–3, 25).[29] Thus Psalm 102 picks up many terms and themes from Psalm 89, suggesting that Psalm 102 be read as a continuation, personalization, and expansion of the Psalm 89 problem.

Psalm 102 and Psalm 90

Since Psalm 103 appears to answer both 90 and 102, we might expect 90 and 102 to resonate with each other. Indeed, many canonical interpreters note connections between 90 and 102.[30] Wilson briefly mentions two contrasts: (a) the transience of man (102:3, 11; cf. 90:5–6, 9–10) and (b) the eternality of God (102:12, 24–27; 90:1–2, 4) and (a) the outpouring of God's wrath against man (102:9–10; cf. 90:7–8) and (b) the security of the next generation (102:28; cf. 90:16). He sees Psalms 90 and 102 demonstrating "intentional arrangement" and forming an "inclusio" around their collection.[31]

What does the lexical and thematic evidence suggest? Psalm 102 picks up many terms and themes from Moses' prayer in Psalm 90.[32] I suggest that Psalm 102 picks

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[29]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 236–37.

[30]Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 218; Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5 of *EBC*, ed. T. Longman III and D. E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 688; Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 311–15; Jean-Luc Vesco, *Le Psautier de David: Traduit et Commenté*, LD (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 2:935; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 27; Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 436.

[31]Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 218; cf. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 688.

[32]I have added several additional references (but no additional terms) to Kim's list of 23 terms

up the central language, concerns, themes, and contrasts of Psalm 90 and applies them explicitly to an afflicted Davidide and a fallen Zion.

Only these two psalms in Book IV are titled a "prayer" (תפלה, 90:1; 102:1). The term תפלה then occurs three more times in 102 as the afflicted Davidide asks God to hear his "prayer" (תפלתי, 102:2) before pledging twice that God hears his destitute people's "prayer" (תפלת and תפלתם, 102:18).[33]

Moses prays on behalf of a community "afflicted" (עניתנו, 90:15) for many years. Then in Psalm 102 "one afflicted" (לעני, 102:1) begs God not to violently "afflict" (ענה, 102:24) his days. Both psalms emphasize the transience of man by comparing humans to "grass" that quickly "withers." Mankind "withers" (יבשׁ) "like grass" (כחציר) (90:6), and the afflicted psalmist mourns (twice) that he "withers" (יבשׁ) "like grass" (כעשׂב, 102:5, 12). In Psalm 102, this picture of withering grass bookends vv. 5–12, making the analogy a central feature of the psalm. In both psalms, this transience is due to God's anger (synonyms for "anger" in 90:7, 9, 11; 102:12).

Moses mourns that his people are "consumed" (כלינו, 90:7) by God's anger and their years are "consumed" (כלינו, 90:9) by God's wrath. The Davidide mourns that his own days are also "consumed" (כלו, 102:4), and later clarifies that God's wrath is the cause (102:11). Moses laments that the "children of man" (בני־אדם, 90:3) face death, so he prays that the "children" (בניהם, 90:16) of God's servants—the next generation—instead experience his redemptive power. Psalm 102 then predicts that God will rescue

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shared by Pss 90 and 102: אל / אלהים (90:1, 2, 17; 102:25); אמר (90:3; 102:25); ארץ (90:2; 102:16, 20, 26); בוא (90:12; 102:2, 14); בן (90:3, 16; 102:21, 29); דור (90:1 [2x]; 102:13 [2x], 19, 25 [2x]); יהוה (90:13; 102:1, 2, 13, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23); היה (90:1, 5, 17; 102:7, 8); יד (90:17 [2x]; 102:26); יבשׁ (90:6; 102:5, 12); יום (90:4, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15; 102:3 [2x], 4, 9, 12, 24, 25); יראה / ירא (90:11; 102:16); כון (90:17 [2x]; 102:29); כלה (90:7, 9; 102:4); לב / לבב (90:12; 102:5); עבד (90:13, 16; 102:15, 29); עולם (90:2 [2x]; 102:13); עני / ענה (90:15; 102:1, 24); מעשׂה (90:17 [2x]; 102:26); תפלה (90:1; 102:1, 2, 18 [2x]); פָּנָה / פָּנֶה (90:8, 9; 102:1, 3, 11, 26, 29); ראה (90:15, 16; 102:17); שׁנה (90:4, 9, 10 [3x], 15; 102:25, 28) (Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 311n2).

[33]The term תפלה appears 5x in Pss 90 and 102 but nowhere else in Book IV (Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 311).

the exiled "children of death" (בני תמותה, 102:21) and the "children" (בני, 102:29) of God's servants will dwell securely. Moses prays for pity on "your servants" (עבדיך, 90:13) and salvation for "your servants" (עבדיך, 90:16), and the afflicted figure in Psalm 102 shows God pitying "your servants" (עבדיך, 102:15) and portrays the children of "your servants" (עבדיך, 102:29) restored and secure.[34] The iniquities of Moses' people have been set "before you" (פניך, 90:8), but the psalmist pours out his complaint "before" (לפני, 102:1) the Lord. Intercession rather than iniquity is now before God's eyes. Moses and his people had "seen" (ראינו, 90:15) evil but wanted to be "shown" (יראה, 90:16) the redemptive work of God. The psalmist then sees God rise and "appear" (נראה, 102:17) to his people in glory when he moves to save Zion.

For Yahweh, his everlasting nature and eternal perspective make a thousand years like one "day" (יום, 90:4), but for Moses and his people, their painful lives leave their days and years afflicted, shortened, and threatened. All their "days" (כל־ימינו, 90:9) pass away under God's anger, and their "years" (שׁנינו, 90:9) are consumed by his wrath. The "days" (ימי) of their "years" (שׁנותינו) are only seventy "years" (שׁנה) or even eighty "years" (שׁנה) (90:10), but the toil and trouble involved makes them number their "days" (ימינו, 90:12). So Moses prays that God would make them glad all their "days" (בכל־ימינו, 90:14)—"as many days" (כימות) and "as many years" (שׁנות) as they have been afflicted (90:15). The days of Psalm 102 match the dark days of Psalm 90. The afflicted one faces a "day" (ביום, 102:3) of distress, a "day" (ביום, 102:3) of crying out to God. All his "days" (ימי, 102:4) go up in smoke and he is taunted by his enemies "all the day" (כל־היום, 102:9). His "days" (ימי, 102:12) are like an evening shadow—his "days" (ימי, 102:24) have been shortened—so he pleads that the God of unending "years" (שׁנותיך, 102:25; שׁנותיך, 102:28) would not allow him to die in the midst of his "days" (ימי, 102:25).

The psalmist directly addresses "God" (אל, 90:2; 102:25) as eternal in both

[34]Hossfeld and Zenger independently note this linkage (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 27).

psalms: "from everlasting to everlasting you are *God*" (אל, 90:2); "O my *God* (אל) . . . you whose years endure throughout all generations" (102:25). In Psalm 90, God shelters Israel "in all generations" (בדר ודר, 90:1). In Psalm 102, God can rescue Israel and the afflicted psalmist because God rules "for all generations" (לדר ודר, 102:13) and exists through "all generations" (בדור דורים, 102:25). Therefore a future "generation" (לדור, 102:19) will sing his praise. God secures Israel because he exists "from forever to forever" (מעולם עד־עולם, 90:2 [2x]), and God will save Israel because he is enthroned "forever" (לעולם). Thus both psalms are consumed with time—the contrast between the eternal time of Yahweh and the transient time of both Israel and the afflicted Davidide.

But God is the creator who made the "earth" (ארץ, 90:2; הארץ, 102:26), which guarantees Israel's security (90:2) and gives the afflicted Davidide hope (102:26). Moses concludes his petition by praying that God would "establish the work of our hands" (מעשׂה ידינו כוננה, 90:17 [2x]), and the afflicted figure in Psalm 102 trusts that God's people will be "established" (יכון, 102:29) because the heavens are "the work of your hands" (מעשׂה ידיך, 102:26). The eternality and creation power of Yahweh guarantees the security of Israel and David.

Hossfeld and Zenger see Psalms 90 and 102 sharing an "anthropological orientation." They see three themes linking the two psalms, all focusing on human mortality: the anger of Yahweh (90:7, 9; 102:11), withering grass that illustrates man's transience (90:5–6; 102:5, 12), and days and years that measure lifetimes (90:9–10, 12, 14–15; 102:4, 12, 25).[35] VanGemeren also notes similarities between Psalms 90 and 102 and agrees with Wilson's view (above) regarding their framing function within Book IV:

> Psalms 90 and 102 appear to form one set of bookends within this collection of psalms. . . . God's wrath consumes humans because their sins provoke his wrath and because they are inherently frail. The frailty of human beings is seen at many levels. Not only is their existence different from God's, but also they are mortal and transitory by nature. They experience and cause trouble and anguish, and their only

[35]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 27.

> hope lies in God's favor. Both psalms bring out God's strength, eternality, and rule over creation. The theme of God's rule and lordship over creation binds Psalms 90–102 together.[36]

I agree that Psalms 90 and 102 deal with anthropology and divine kingship and specifically the transcience of man juxtaposed against the eternality of God. Yet these matters are not treated in generic theological terms but through the lens of exilic affliction and new-exodus hope. In other words, the frailty of man is vividly illustrated by the exile, and the eternal kingship of God explicitly grounds Israel's hope for deliverance (102:25–28) and restoration (102:13). McCann rightly highlights how the theme of human transience is situated in exilic affliction at this point in the structure of the Psalter: "The exile apparently made Israel particularly aware of the general frailty and transience of human existence."[37] Likewise, the eternal kingship of Yahweh is not celebrated here in the Psalter just because it is theologically true but because it is desperately needed. The juxtaposition of human frailty and divine kingship therefore creates a humble hope—just the right attitude for exiles afflicted for sin but anticipating salvation. This salvation, answering both Moses' prayer in Psalm 90 and the Davidide's prayer in Psalm 102, will be celebrated in the epic Psalm 103.

Psalm 103

I suggest that Psalm 103 is positioned to resonate with and respond to both Moses' confessional petition in Psalm 90 and David's prayer of affliction in Psalm 102. In this section I will evaluate the lexical and thematic connections that show the Davidic and communal restoration in Psalm 103 answering the prayers in 90 and 102. My focus on psalmic interconnections and progression necessitates only a brief introductory treatment of the superscription, structure, and themes.

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[36]VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 688.

[37]McCann, *Psalms*, 1087.

Superscription of Psalm 103

Psalm 103 is attributed to David (לדוד). It bears the second of only two Davidic titles in Book IV (101, 103). This superscription at this position in the Psalter may suggest the voice of a future Davidide praising Yahweh for fulfilling his promised deliverance for both (future) David and (future) Israel.

First, the historical David seems to exit the stage following the doxology at the end of Book II: "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended" (Ps 72:20).[38] Knowing that Davidic prayers are included in the remaining books, the inclusion of this postscript by the final compilers of the Psalter may imply that future Davidic superscriptions should be read as a future eschatological Davidide.[39]

Second, the Davidic postscript directly following Psalm 72 suggests that Psalm 72 is a Davidic prayer for his heir Solomon (see the superscription לשלמה). Such a Solomonic coronation may suggest that the original David is passing from the scene.

Third, the preceding Psalms 51–71 form a lengthy Davidic block with many titles describing historical situations from David's life.[40] The untitled but first-person Psalm 71 caps off this Davidic block before Psalm 72 closes Book II. David's tenure

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[38]Cole proposes an alternate interpretation of the postscript closing Book II in Ps 72:20. Rather than "The prayers of David are completed," Cole suggests, "The prayer-prophecies of David are perfected." He prefers the concept "perfected" because "the previous description [Ps 72] represented the perfection, culmination and fullest outworking of the promise to David." The noun תפלות ("prayers") signifies prophecies since (1) Ps 72 functions as a prophecy, (2) other non-Psalter prayers function prophetically (2 Sam 2:1–10 and 2 Sam 22–23 framing 2 Samuel), and (3) David the "sweet psalmist of Israel" claims to speak the words of Yahweh: "The Spirit of Yahweh speaks by me; his word is on my tongue" (2 Sam 23:1–2) (Robert L. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III [Psalms 73-89]*, JSOTSup 307 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 138–39n9). Others suggest that the postscript simply marks the conclusion of an earlier Davidic collection from which the canonical Psalter began. But there seems little reason to state that the prayers of David are ended if Ps 72 on its own marked the end of the book. Only if more psalms follow is the postscript meaningful. Therefore the postscript seems to have a meaningful function within the 150-psalm Psalter.

[39]My point is not that the postscript in Ps 72:20 requires Davidic superscriptions in Books I–II to express the voice of the historical David and those in Books III–V the voice of the messianic and eschatological David. Rather, if the Psalter bears a loose narrative trajectory and a messianic hue, Davidic prayers in Books I–II (in general) may be viewed as *typologically* messianic while Davidic prayers in Books III–V (in general) may express a more direct messianic tone.

[40]Within Pss 51–71, only 66 and 71 bear no Davidic title.

appears to be winding down as David reflects on his long life and emphasizes his old age:

> Upon you I have leaned *from before my birth*;
> you are he who took me *from my mother's womb*.
> My praise is continually of you (71:6).
>
> Do not cast me off *in the time of old age*;
> forsake me not *when my strength is spent* (71:9).
>
> O God, *from my youth* you have taught me,
> and *I still proclaim* your wondrous deeds.
> So *even to old age and gray hairs*,
> O God, do not forsake me,
> until I proclaim your might to another generation,
> your power to all those to come (71:17–18).

Fourth, the covenantal catastrophe so vividly portrayed in Psalm 89 centers on a Davidic disaster: the collapse of Davidic kingship in Israel and Yahweh's apparent abandonment of the Davidic promises. Canonical interpreters generally agree that Book IV responds to the collapse of Davidic kingship in Psalm 89.[41] Thus the two Davidic titles in Book IV are naturally seen as prompts readying the reader for a future David.[42]

Fifth, and quite significantly for the entire Psalter and its Davidic voice, the prophets sometimes call the future messianic king "David" without differentiating between the original David and the eschatological David. Many prophecies, of course, promise that David's royal house will be restored and that a future messiah will arise from David's line. But in several passages the name "David" does not just identify the ancestry of this future king but the future king himself. Ezekiel and Hosea prophesy:

> And I will set up over them one shepherd, *my servant David* (עבדי דויד) and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, Yahweh, will be their God, and *my servant David* (עבדי דוד) shall be prince among them (Ezek 34:23–24).
>
> *My servant David* (עבדי דוד) shall be king over them, and they shall all have one

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[41]See chap. 3.

[42]Psalm 86 is the only psalm in Book III "by David" (תפלה לדוד). Barber suggests that its connections with Ps 72 make Ps 86 "a lament psalm based on the nonfulfillment of the prayer for Solomon in Ps 72. It places the hope of future fulfillment in the coming Davidic king who will bring about the restoration of Israel with the nations" (Michael Barber, *Singing in the Reign: The Psalms and the Liturgy of God's Kingdom* [Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road, 2001], 114).

> shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and *David my servant* (דוד עבדי) shall be their prince forever" (Ezek 37:24–25).
>
> For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek Yahweh their God, and *David their king* (דוד מלכם), and they shall come in fear to Yahweh and to his goodness in the latter days (Hos 3:4–5).

These five reasons suggest that Psalms 101 and 103 present the voice of a future Davidic figure.[43]

Structure of Psalm 103[44]

Psalm 103 launches with a litany of praise (vv. 1–5). Twice the psalmist summons his own soul to bless Yahweh (ברכי נפשי את־יהוה) for "all his benefits" (vv. 1–2). Five parallel participles then enumerate these personal benefits: "forgives," "heals," "redeems," "crowns," and "satisfies" (vv. 3–5). The main body then unpacks corporate reasons for praise, centering on Yahweh's immeasurable compassion toward weak and sinful people (vv. 6–18).[45] The conclusion calls all of creation to worship the enthroned king who rules over all (vv. 19–22). Wilson calls v. 19 the central message of the psalm as David "encapsulates the central themes of the fourth book" by acknowledging the

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[43]Even though Ps 103 portrays David recounting past deliverance, it is vital to remember that praise for past deliverance often functions as faith for future deliverance. Thus these psalms, by recounting the actions of Yahweh in the past, are predicting similar actions in the future. Further, these records of Yahweh's attributes inherently predict that he will remain true to his character in the future. Thus psalmic gratitude and psalmic praise have a proleptic function.

[44]For my purposes, discussing the literary structure of Ps 103 is relevant only for its potential connections with related psalms and the message of Book IV overall. Therefore I present only an overview here, discussing relevant nuances in the sections below.

[45]Interpreters divide vv. 6–18 in many different ways (see summary in Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 28–29). Verse 14 is often viewed as concluding vv. 6–14 or beginning vv. 14–18. Kraus sees vv. 14–18 introducing human frailty as the reason for Yahweh's mercy (vv. 6–13) (Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, trans. H. C. Oswald [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989], 293). Gerstenberger divides vv. 6–18 into a penitential section (vv. 6–14) and a sapiential section (vv. 15–18) (Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 215–19). Brueggemann and Bellinger are persuasive regarding the place of v. 14: vv. 11–14 are unified, with "verses 11 and 14 both beginning with "For/Because" [כי] and verses 12 and 13 each beginning with a comparison [כ-prefix]" (Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 442). Verses 15–18 then present a balanced contrast between the frailty of man (vv. 15–16) and the kindness of God (vv. 17–18).

heavenly kingship of Yahweh: "Yahweh has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all" (v. 19).[46] Hossfeld and Zenger connect v. 19 with the יהוה מלך series by painting a powerful picture:

> God's throne is linked with the heavens, and the heavens are apparently imagined as a firmament with the divine throne at the center. Heaven is thus not a space but a kind of vault atop which stands the royal throne. The height of this throne symbolizes rule over the universe.[47]

Themes in Psalm 103

The main themes of Psalm 103 are encapsulated in contrasts and complements: man's sin and God's forgiveness (vv. 3, 8–10, 12), man's frailty and God's faithfulness (vv. 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13), and man's redemption and God's reign (vv. 4, 6, 13, 19). Mosaic motifs are captured in the allusion to Yahweh's self-revelation in Exodus 33–34 (103:7–8). This Moses-dimension will be explored near the end of the chapter.

The dominant chord is praise, of course, as ברכי ("Bless") bookends the psalm by fronting each verse in both the introduction (vv. 1–2) and the conclusion (vv. 20–22). The psalm ends as it began, with an explosion of praise: v. 1 is the catapult, v. 22 the crescendo. But the psalm itself resounds not just with the invitation to praise but with eminent reasons for praise. This praise is not only a response to Yahweh's intervention in the history of Israel, but his intervention in the structure of the Psalter.

Psalm 103 Answers Psalm 102

Many canonical interpreters identify connections between Psalms 102 and 103.[48] Hossfeld and Zenger see the connections relating to "anthropology and

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[46]Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 218–19. Most interpreters place v. 19 at the beginning of the conclusion (vv. 19–22) (Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 290, 293; Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 215–19; Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 442–43; James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994], 330; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 36).

[47]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 36–37.

[48]Vesco, *Psautier*, 2:944–45; McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 190–91; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 28; Witt, "Psalm 102," 591–93; McCann, *Psalms*, 1091; Kim,

theology."[49] Brueggemann and Bellinger similarly note that these two psalms share an emphasis on "divine permanence and human transience, and divine justice and compassion."[50] But Kim moves from these *connections* to their *interaction*, honing in on the relationship: The prayer of the afflicted Davidide in 102 finds an answer in Psalm 103's Davidic description of God's love and mercy. "The numerous thematic links . . . show that Psalm 103 can be read as the answer to the prayers expressed in Psalm 102." Indeed, "many questions raised in Psalm 102 are answered in Psalm 103."[51] Thus not only is Psalm 102 prayer and Psalm 103 praise; the praise of Psalm 103 answers the prayer of 102. Lexical, thematic, and structural touch points establish this relationship. Barber sees the praise in 103 responding to the announcement that "the appointed time has come" to restore Zion (102:14).[52] Thus the announcement of *coming* restoration and the celebration of *accomplished* restoration link the two psalms.

"Structure and Coherence," 290–95.

[49]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 28.

[50]Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 441; cf. McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 190–91.

[51]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 294–95, 411.

[52]Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 124–25.

Table 25. Lexical links and synonyms
between Pss 102 and 103[53]

Psalm 102; *Psalm 103*	Root	Gloss
102:16, 20, 26; *103:11*	ארץ	earth
102:20, 26; *103:11, 19*	שׁמים	heaven
102:20	מרום	height
103:11	גבה	high
102:21, 29; *103:7, 13, 17 (2x)*	בן	son / child(ren)
102:13 (2x), 19, 25 (2x)	דור	generation
102:29	זרע	offspring
102:1, 2, 13, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23; *103:1, 2, 6, 8, 13, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22 (2x)*	יהוה	Yahweh
102:16; 22; *103:1*	שׁם	name
102:9, 16, 27; *103:1, 2, 3 (2x), 6, 19, 21, 22 (2x)*	כל	all
102:24; *103:7*	דרך	way
102:13; *103:14, 18*	זכר[54]	remember
102:5; *103:2*	שׁכח	forget
102:3 (2x), 4, 9, 12, 24, 25; *103:15*	יום	day
102:16; *103:11, 13, 17*	ירא	fear
102:29; *103:19*	כון	establish
102:24; *103:20*	כח	strength
102:16, 23; *103:19*	מלך[55]	king
102:13	ישׁב	sit enthroned
103:19	כסא	throne
103:19	משׁל	rule
103:22	ממשׁלה	dominion

[53]Information adapted and expanded from Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 290n55. Indented entries indicate similar words that express the same theme by touching the semantic range of the word above them. Indented entries only appear in one psalm or the other.

[54]The root זכר appears in three different forms: the noun זֵכֶר ("mention") in 102:13, the adjective זכור ("mindful") in 103:14, and the verb זכר ("remember") in 103:18.

[55]The root מלך appears in three different nouns: מלך ("king") in 102:16, ממלכה ("kingdom") in 102:23, and מלכות ("dominion") in 103:19.

Table 25 continued

Psalm 102; *Psalm 103*	Root	Gloss
102:13; *103:9, 17 (2x)*	עולם	forever
102:15; *103:14*	עפר	dust
102:10	אפר	ashes
102:26; *103:6, 22*	עשׂה[56]	work
102:20; *103:1*	קדשׁ	holy
102:14; *103:4, 8, 13 (2x)*	רחם[57]	compassion
102:14, 15; *103:8*	חנן[58]	gracious
102:2, 21; *103:20*	שׁמע	hear

Enthronment and Kingship
(102:13, 20; 103:19, 22)

The high kingship of Yahweh stands at the center of both psalms. His kingship is heavenly (102:20; 103:19), eternal (102:13), comprehensive (103:19; 103:22), sovereign (103:20–22), and fearsome (102:16). In 102:13, God is "enthroned" (תשׁב) forever. This eternal truth transforms lament (102:2–12) into hope (102:13–23). In 103:19, his established heavenly "throne" (כסאו) and his all-ruling "kingdom" (מלכותו) govern the entire celebration. He is feared by "all the kings of the earth" (כל־מלכי הארץ, 102:16) as he rules from "his holy height" (ממרום קדשׁו, 102:20). When he redeems Israel and restores Zion, "kingdoms" (ממלכות, 102:23) gather to worship him. The king whose reign appeared ideal (and perhaps distant) in the יהוה מלך series now concretizes his reign by restoring David and Israel.

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[56]The root עשׂה occurs in two different forms: the noun מעשׂה ("work") in 102:26 and 103:22 and the verb עשׂה ("work") in 103:6.

[57]The root רחם appears in three different forms: the verb רחם ("have compassion") in 102:14 and 103:13 (2x), the noun רחמים ("compassion") in 103:4, and the adjective רחום ("compassionate") in 103:8.

[58]The root חנן appears in two different forms: the verb חנן ("be gracious") in 102:14 and 15 and the adjective חנון ("gracious") in 103:8.

Fearing and Worshiping the King
(102:16; 103:11, 13, 17)

Fear and worship are the dual responses to the reign of God in Psalms 102 and 103. In 102:16, nations and kings "fear" (יראו) Yahweh when Zion's suffering rouses him to deliver her. By the end of the section (102:23), international fear has led to Zion-centered worship (102:22). Following v. 21, v. 22 initially portrays only God's redeemed people—the former "prisoners" and "children of death"—praising the name of Yahweh in Jerusalem and Zion. But v. 23 globalizes the participants: "when peoples (עמים) gather together, and kingdoms (ממלכות), to worship Yahweh." Thus both the redeemed people of God and the humbled nations of the world gather at the sacred city of Zion, worshiping Yahweh with one voice for his merciful and mighty salvation.

In Psalm 103, the prepositional phrase "upon/to those who fear him" (על־יראיו) occurs 3x (103:11, 13, 17). Yahweh-fearers are the recipients of his steadfast love (חסד in 103:11, 17) and compassion (רחם in 103:13). Thus Psalm 102 portrays the rulers of the earth and the nations of the world fearing Yahweh when he rises to redeem his people and rebuild Zion, while Psalm 103 portrays Yahweh showing steadfast love and compassion toward his own who fear him. In Psalm 102, God's redeeming work incites godly fear. In Psalm 103, godly fear invites God's redeeming work.

In both psalms this fear and worship focuses on Yahweh's "name." Nations will fear his "name" (שֵׁם, 102:16) when he rises to restore Zion and his people will praise his "name" (שֵׁם, 102:22) when they gather in Zion. Psalm 103 then fulfills these prayerful predictions as David urges his soul to bless Yahweh's holy "name" (שֵׁם, 103:1).

Throne and People Established
(102:29; 103:19)

Because God's throne is established, his people are also established (102:29; 103:19). Psalm 102:29 closes the psalm promising that the next generation of God's people will be "*established*" (יכון). Despite the frightening fate of the heavens and earth—

they will "perish," "wear out," "be changed," and "pass away" (102:26–27)—God's unchanging nature and eternal existence (102:28) guarantee that future generations of his servants will settle securely. Their immovability is grounded in his immutability, their security in his sovereignty. The main body of Psalm 103 closes similarly, announcing that "Yahweh has *established* (הכין) his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all" (103:19).[59] This declaration grounds the preceding statements. Despite the transience of man (103:15–16), Yahweh's steadfast love for his own lasts forever (103:17–18). Therefore "those who fear him," "those who keep his covenant," and those who "remember to do his commandments" can expect his steadfast love. His invincible heavenly throne and his universal sovereign kingdom (103:19) give them assurance.

This connection between established throne and established people suggests that the interpsalm linkage of the word כון is significant. The permanence of Yahweh's reign (103:19) grounds the permanence of his people (102:29). Vesco agrees: "Le Ps 102 se terminait sur un espoir d'affermissement pour les serviteurs de Dieu (v. 29). Le Ps 103 rappelle que l'affermissement est l'œuvre de Dieu (v. 19)."[60]

God of Heaven and Earth
(102:16, 20, 26; 103:11, 19)

The relationship between God's reign and his redemption is also reflected in the use of "heaven" and "earth" in Psalms 102 and 103. These two terms, whether separately or together, occur 5x in Psalms 102 and 103 (102:16, 20, 26; 103:11, 19). In 102:16, the "earth" (הארץ) simply refers to the sphere of kings. In 102:20, Yahweh looks from "heaven" (מִשָּׁמַיִם) down to "earth" (אל־ארץ). In 102:26, the "earth" (הארץ) and the "heavens" (שָׁמַיִם) are God's creation, evidence of his eternality. In 103:11, the

[59]Psalm 103 clearly concludes with three rhythmic invitations to "bless Yahweh" (ברכו יהוה, vv. 20, 21, 22b) capped by a final crescendo: "Bless, O my soul, Yahweh!" (ברכי נפשי את־יהוה) (v. 22c). Verse 19 therefore appears to function as a central statement summarizing the main body and transitioning into the conclusion.

[60]Vesco, *Psautier*, 2:944.

immeasurable height of the "heavens" (שמים) above the "earth" (הארץ) reflects the steadfast love Yahweh shows toward the faithful. In 103:19, Yahweh reigns in the "heavens" (בשמים), so he reigns over all.

Two meaningful connections may arise from these common shared terms. First, in 102:16, when Yahweh rises to deliver his people and redeem Zion, all kings on earth fear him (102:16) who is enthroned in the heavens (102:13). Likewise in 103:19, Yahweh is enthroned in the heavens, ruling all other rulers and enabling Israel's full restoration celebrated throughout the psalm. Thus his comprehensive rule grounds and guarantees the rescue of both the Davidide and Israel in Psalms 102–103.

Second, both 102:20 and 103:11 mark the distance between earth and heaven. In both, the height of the heavens is emphasized (מרום, "height," 102:20; כגבה, "as high," 103:11); in both, earth is lowly by comparison; in both, God crosses the chasm; and in both, his steadfast love is the operative measure.

In 102:20, Yahweh looks down from heaven, "his holy height" (ממרום קדשׁו), to the earth. He descends to hear his imprisoned people groaning, and he sets free the "children of death" (102:21). The heavenly "height" (מרום) emphasizes his transcendence. The downward "look" (השׁקיף and הביט) emphasizes his imminence. His steadfast love impels him to cross the divide between his high throne in heaven and the lowly state of his people.

Likewise, in 103:11, only the immeasurable distance between heaven and earth can describe the incalculable loyalty Yahweh shows his people. Once again, the heavens' height is emphasized, with earth far below. Though 103:11 does not present the distance as a chasm that must be crossed, Yahweh's steadfast love still fills the immeasurable gap.

Two wordplays in 103:11 further emphasize height. The wordplay between גבה ("high") and גבר ("rise, tower") noted by Allen[61] may suggest the translation, "For as

[61]Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 29.

the heavens *rise high* over the earth, so his steadfast love *towers* over those who fear him." The repetition of the preposition על may suggest that it be translated spatially in both halves. Rather than saying "*over* the earth" and "*toward* those who fear him," both prepositions may be translated spatially: "For as the heavens rise high *over* the earth, so his steadfast love towers *over* those who fear him." This spatial emphasis running parallel in both halves of v. 11 matches the spatial emphasis running parallel in both halves of v. 12, including matching spatial prepositions (מן): "*as far as* (כרחק) the east is *from* (מן) the west, *so far* (הרחיק) does he remove our transgressions *from* (מן) us."[62]

Children, Offspring, Generations
(102:13, 19, 21, 25, 29; 103:7, 13, 17)

Psalm 103 celebrates the redemption portrayed in 102. Psalm 102 mixed lament and hope, but 103 is all praise. Psalm 102 focuses especially on the next generation(s): "children" (בנים / בני) (102:21, 29; 103:7, 13, 17 [2x]), "offspring" (זרע, 102:29), "generations" (דור, 102:13 [2x], 19, 25 [2x]), and "a people yet to be created" (עם נברא, 102:19). The psalmist commissions a memorial written by or for a future "*generation*" (דור אחרון). This "people yet to be created" (עם נברא) will praise Yahweh for redeeming their ancestors. In 102:21, the written memorial is commissioned to bear this content: Yahweh rescued the imprisoned "*children* of death" (בני תמותה) so that they might praise him in Zion (102:22). Salvation then produces security for future generations: "The *children* of your servants (בני־עבדיך) shall dwell secure; their *offspring* (וזרעם) shall be established before you" (102:29).

In 103:7, "the *children* of Israel" (בני ישׂראל) are shown the ways and acts of Yahweh (103:6–8). Surrounding verses specify these "ways" and "acts": his deliverance of the oppressed (v. 6), his covenantal kindness (v. 8), his merciful disposition (v. 9), his

[62]The preposition מן ("from") is used 3x in 103:12, twice in the first half of the comparison due to the typical phrasing in Hebrew comparisons. Literally, "As far *from* the east is *from* the west, so he removes far *from* us our transgressions."

patient forgiveness (vv. 10, 12), his steadfast love (v. 11), and his fatherly compassion (vv. 13–14). This compassion is best explained by the earthly image of a father with "*children*" (בנים) (103:13). The parental analogy embedded in the synonymous parallelism suggests that Yahweh's "children" are "those who fear him." In 103:17, David again associates "*children's children*" (בני בנים) with "those who fear him" (יראיו).

In Psalm 102, references to the next generation cluster around themes of praise and stability. In 103, the term "children" consistently refers to those who experience Yahweh's revelatory redemption (103:7), fatherly compassion (103:13), and covenant righteousness (103:17). In both psalms, the children are restored and established.

Dust and Compassion
(102:10, 15; 103:14)

God shows compassion in response to dust and ashes in both psalms. In 102:10, the psalmist describes himself consumed with sorrow: eating "ashes" (אפר) and drinking tears. This rare noun אפר ("ashes") closely resembles the more common עפר ("dust"). אפר ("ashes") occurs only 22x in the OT, usually associated with humility, and more specifically mourning.[63] עפר ("dust") occurs 110x in the OT, 13x in the Psalter, and 3x in Book IV. Its three occurrences in Book IV fall within consecutive psalms (102:15; 103:14; 104:29). Usage of עפר ("dust") in the Psalter is likewise associated with humility, affliction, mourning, and death.[64]

In 102:15, the stones and "dust" (עפרה) of Zion provoke pity from God's

[63]The noun אפר ("ashes") occurs 3x in the phrase "dust and ashes." This phrase denotes humility (Gen 18:27), mourning (Ezek 27:30), or repentance (Job 42:6). It also stands alone signifying human weakness (Job 13:12; 30:19). It may be the result of burning, whether sacrificial (Num 19:9, 10), idolatrous (Isa 44:20), or punitive (Ezek 28:18; cf. trampling in Mal 3:21). Most often, though, it signifies mourning (2 Sam 13:19; Isa 61:3; Ps 102:10; Job 2:8; Lam 3:16), or more specifically mourning with sackcloth (Isa 58:5; Jer 6:26; Jonah 3:6; Esth 4:1, 3; Dan 9:3). In one occurrence it stands as an analogy for the way frost is scattered by Yahweh (Ps 147:16).

[64]The noun עפר ("dust") occurs 13x in the Psalter. All occurrences but one denote lowliness—either humility and affliction (44:26; 72:9; 102:15; 103:14; 113:7; 119:25) or death (7:6; 18:43; 22:16, 30; 32:10; 104:29). The one exception is dust as an analogy for God's abundant provision of manna (78:27).

people. Yahweh's own compassion (תרחם, v. 14) is then a response to their pity (יחננו, v. 15), because he shares their heart toward Zion: "You will arise and *have pity* (תרחם) on Zion; it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come. For (כי) your servants hold her stones dear and *have pity* (יחננו) on *her dust* (עפרה)" (102:14–15). Further, the rhyming wordplay between עֲבָדֶיךָ ("servants") and אֲבָנֶיהָ ("stones") highlights the close connection and shared suffering of people and city. As Yahweh's suffering servants pity Zion's collapsed stones, Yahweh pities both: his chosen people and his sacred city.

Psalm 103:13–14 shows the same divine response to the same human condition: "As a father shows *compassion* (כרחם) to his children, so Yahweh shows *compassion* (רחם) to those who fear him. For (כי) he knows our frame; he remembers that we are *dust* (עפר)." God sees the dust-like weakness and transience of his people and he shows compassion. Kim's observations are worth repeating:

> Psalms 102:15 and 103:14 use [עפר] metaphorically: in the former it is used to mention the debris of ruined Jerusalem, while in the latter it is used to describe the weakness of human beings. Both psalms use it quite differently, but nevertheless its use is similar in the final analysis, since the expression in Psalm 103:14 containing the word, "he remembers that we are dust" (זָכוּר כִּי־עָפָר אֲנָחְנוּ) may have an echo in the description of the fate of Zion in Psalm 102:14–15. Indeed, Psalm 103:14 is associated with a context similar to that in Psalm 102:14–15 where Jerusalem was described as having been destroyed. First of all, the word רחם "pity," which is very rare in Book IV, occurs in Psalms 102:14 and 103:13. These verses precede those containing the word עפר. Moreover, the word זכר "remember" is found in Psalms 102:13 and in 103:15, and in both Yahweh's people are also mentioned. In addition, in both psalms a similar motive concerning the use of the word עפר is found: in Psalm 102 the reason that Yahweh should have pity on Zion, is that his servants still have pity on the dust of the ruined Jerusalem (i.e. the love of Jerusalem), while in Psalm 103 the weakness (i.e. dust) of human beings causes Yahweh to have pity on his people. Thus, in both psalms the word "dust" is used as a motive for Yahweh to act. Thus, Psalm 102:14–15 have many similarities with Psalm 103:13–14 by sharing motifs and words. In the light of these analyses the expression "we are dust" in Psalm 103:15 probably alludes to the fate of Zion dealt with in Psalm 102.[65]

The term "dust" (עפר) occurs again in 104:29: "When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust (עפרם)"

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[65]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 291.

(104:29). Clearly the psalmist is alluding to the "dust" in the creation account (Gen 1:30; 2:7; 3:19) where "dust" is not only the dirt from which God created man but also the result of his curse. But even in Psalm 104:29, the "dust" of death is not the final word: "When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground" (104:30).

Forgetting and Remembering
(102:5; 103:2)

In 102:5, the psalmist is given over to deep mourning, so afflicted that he "forgets" (שכחתי) to "eat" (מאכל) his "bread" (לחמי). Several verses later, however, the words "eat" (אכל) and "bread" (לחם) occur together again. Because of God's anger, he says, "*I eat* ashes *like bread* and mingle tears with my drink (102:9–10). He cannot eat, will not eat, or simply neglects to eat, for he finds himself feeding on sorrow.

But in 103:2, David reminds his soul not to "forget" (אל־תשכחי) Yahweh's many benefits. He then enumerates these remembered benefits, including diseases healed, youth renewed, and body and soul satisfied (103:3–5). The afflicted Davidide in 102:5 forgets life's bare essentials, but the restored David in 103:2 determines *not* to forget God's diverse blessings. Then a smorgasbord of divinely provided "bread and food" is remembered in Psalm 104, which is clearly bound to Psalm 103: God provides the "bread" that man enjoys (לחם 2x) (104:14, 15) and the "food" (אכל 2x) sought by the young lions (104:21) and needed by all creatures (104:27; cf. 145:15). In other words, in Psalm 102 food gets forgotten, but Psalms 103–104 are filled with food and satisfaction.

Psalm 104:14–15 likewise responds to Psalm 102:5 with three shared words: "grass/plants" (עשׂב), "food/bread" (לחם 2x), and "heart" (לבב 2x). In Psalm 102, the psalmist mourned his affliction. In Psalm 103, the psalmist rejoiced over his restoration. In Psalm 104, creation is reordered so that man's heart regains its proper relationship with food.

Psalm 102:5
My *heart* (לבב) is struck down like *grass* (עשׂב) and has withered;
I forget to eat my *bread* (לחם).

Psalm 104:14–15
You cause the *grass* (חציר) to grow for the livestock
and *plants* (עשׂב) for man to cultivate,
that he may bring forth *food* (לחם) from the earth
and wine to gladden the *heart* (לבב) of man,
oil to make his face shine
and *bread* (לחם) to strengthen man's *heart* (לבב).

Witt suggests that the connections surrounding the verb "forget" (שׁכח) portray the psalmist in 103 reminding himself that God had indeed provided bread in 102 (especially in light of God's clear provision of לחם ["bread"] in 104:14–15) but the psalmist had forgotten.[66] The point of contrast, however, is not mainly between the psalmists' *perspectives* (one forgetting God's provision, the other remembering) but their *situations* (one so overwhelmed he cannot eat, the other so satisfied he must worship). Therefore Psalm 102 portrays an afflicted Davidide, Psalm 103 a delivered David.

Countering the forgetting is the motif of remembrance. In 102:13, the hinge where 102 turns from plea to praise, the kingship of Yahweh is "remembered" (זכרך). In 103:14, God "remembers" (זכור) his people's frail condition—not only their general humanity but also their specific calamity ("dust" in 102:15). In 103:18, God expresses his covenant loyalty "to those who remember" (לזכרי) and obey his commandments. Thus remembrance in these two psalms works in several complementary ways: God is remembered, he remembers his people, and his people remember his commandments.

Broken Strength and Strong Angels
(102:24; 103:20)

In 102:24–25 the afflicted psalmist complains, "He has broken my *strength* (כחו)[67] in midcourse; he has shortened my days. 'O my God,' I say, 'take me not away in

[66]Witt, "Psalm 102," 592.

[67]I agree with McKelvey who prefers the reading כחי ("my strength") over כחו ("his strength") for contextual reasons. The כחי reading "follows the *Qerê*, Symmachus, Syriac and Targum" (McKelvey,

the midst of my days . . .'"[68] The psalmist mourns over his broken strength and pleads for deliverance from death. In contrast, the delivered David praises Yahweh and summons his angels—his "mighty ones of *strength*" (גברי כח) who do his bidding—to join the chorus of praise (103:20). McKelvey notes that כח is a "rare term" occurring only twice in Book IV, but says nothing regarding the meaning of the linkage. Kim also notes its twofold occurrence in Book IV but only highlights its differing usage: "the weakness of the psalmist" versus "the strength of the angels."[69]

But may we move beyond the *presence* of this shared term to any *meaning* evident from its linkage? If so, the broken strength of the psalmist is answered by the mighty strength of the angels—their power answers his plight. Other angelic appearances in Book IV support this kind of thematic connection. The "mighty ones" (גברי כח) in 103:20 stand parallel to the standard term מלאך ("angel/messenger"). מלאך appears only 8x in the Psalter, 3x in Book IV (34:8; 35:5, 6; 78:49; 91:11; 103:20; 104:4; 148:2). The joint back-to-back appearances of "his messengers" (מלאכיו) and "his ministers" (משׁרתיו) in 103:20 and 104:4 help bind Psalms 103 and 104, making these messengers key figures in the structuring strategy.[70] In both psalms they simply do God's will, so that 104 repeats 103. But earlier in Book IV, in Psalm 91:11—the last appearance of "his messengers" (מלאכיו) before Psalm 103—these heavenly beings rescue the threatened Israelite.

Thus in Psalm 91:11, the faithful Israelite is promised that Yahweh will command "his messengers" to rescue him; in Psalm 102:24, the afflicted Israelite has lost all strength and pleads for deliverance from Yahweh; and in Psalm 103:20, David's deliverance song ends with Yahweh's strong messengers presented doing his bidding.

Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh, 184).

[68]Psalm 71:9 expresses a similar prayer that Yahweh not abandon his servant: "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when *my strength* (כחי) is spent" (Ps 71:9).

[69]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 290.

[70]The term מלאך also clusters in Book I as the angel of Yahweh protects and delivers the faithful three times in consecutive psalms (מלאך־יהוה in 34:8; 35:5, 6).

Withering Grass
(102:5, 12; 103:15)

Withering grass is a theme in both psalms. In Psalm 102, the psalmist twice describes himself as withering grass, using the same terms: "My heart is struck down like *grass* (כעשׂב) and has *withered* (יבשׁ)" (102:5). "My days are like an evening shadow; I *wither away* (איבשׁ) like *grass* (כעשׂב)" (102:12). In v. 5, the withering grass seems to depict deep depression ("heart struck down," "forget to eat"). In v. 12, the depression slinks toward death ("like an evening shadow"). In Psalm 103, David employs different but similar words to expose human frailty: "As for man, his days are like *grass* (כחציר); he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone (איננו), and its place knows it (יכירנו) no more" (103:15). Psalm 103 even picks up the term "days" (ימיו, 103:15; cf. 102:4, 12, 24, 25) to emphasize the brevity of life and the transience of man. Thus human frailty is a theme in both psalms, but Psalm 103 quickly responds to this frailty with the everlasting steadfast love of Yahweh (103:17–18).

Divine Anger and Forgiveness
(102:11; 103:8–10, 12)

The psalmist explicitly blames divine anger for his affliction and humiliation in Psalm 102: "because of your indignation (זעמך) and anger (קצפך); for you have taken me up and thrown me down" (102:11). No sin is mentioned, and God is deemed responsible for the pain: "He has broken my strength in midcourse; he has shortened my days. 'O my God,' I say, 'take me not away in the midst of my days!'" (102:24–25). But anger has abated in Psalm 103. Psalm 103 clarifies that (a) God forgives sin, implying that sin needed to be forgiven, and (b) God is "slow to *anger*" (אפים, 103:8) and does not "keep his anger" (יטור, 103:9). Rather, God forgives all iniquity (103:3), shows great mercy, (103:10), and removes transgressions far from his people (103:12).

Owl to Eagle and Ruins to Renewal
(102:7–8; 103:5)

In 102:7–8, the afflicted psalmist likens himself to three woeful birds. First, the "desert owl" (קאת, 102:7a) appears only 5x in the OT. It is an unclean bird (Lev 11:18; Deut 14:17) that inhabits ruinous wastelands devastated by divine judgment (Isa 34:11; Zeph 2:14). Second, the "owl" (כוס) in 102:7b appears only 3x in the OT (Lev 11:17; Deut 14:16). It too is an unclean bird, usually called a "little owl," and always parallel to the "desert owl." Third, the psalmist adds that he is "like a lonely sparrow" (צפור, 102:8). These pitiful birds—the owls for their uncleanness and wasteland habitation and the sparrow for his small size and loneliness—stand in stark contrast to the majestic eagle whose vigor illustrates the renewed youth experienced by David in Psalm 103:5.[71]

Further, the ruinous wasteland inhabited by these birds illustrates the ruins of Zion ("stones" and "dust" in 102:15 and the need for "building" in 102:17). The "waste places" (חרבות) inhabited by the owl-imitating psalmist are not just a wilderness. They fulfill the prophecies of exile (Lev 26:31, 33) and appear two other times in the Psalter to describe cities ruined by judgment (9:7; 109:10). But God often promises that such "ruins" (חרבה) will be rebuilt (Isa 44:26; 51:3; 52:9; 58:12; 61:4).

Sickness and Healing
(102:4–6; 103:3)

Finally, Kim observes how these two psalms, read alongside each other, demonstrate a physical reversal. In 102:4–6 the afflicted Davidide bemoans his devastation in terms of bodily sickness. But in 103:3 a restored David praises Yahweh because he "heals all your diseases."[72] The sick Davidide becomes a satisfied David.

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[71]Vesco, *Psautier*, 2:944. The eagle is also an unclean bird (נשר, Lev 11:13; cf. Ps 103:5). But the contrasting environments (ruins vs. sky) and postures (sitting vs. flying) along with the purpose of their comparison (death vs. renewal) demonstrates that the juxtaposition of these birds is meant to highlight their differences rather than their similarities.

[72]Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 293–94.

Conclusion of Psalms 102 and 103

Together Psalms 102 and 103 announce that the high kingship of Yahweh answers the afflictions of David, Israel, and Zion. The restoration and rebuilding announced in 102 begins to be fulfilled in 103 as David praises Yahweh for his covenantal kindnesses to both David as an individual and Israel as a people.

Thus the blend of personal and corporate concerns continues as a restored David celebrates God's steadfast love for his people (Ps 103) using terms and themes that answer the personal and corporate prayer offered by an afflicted Davidide (Ps 102). This development reveals a clear progression running through Psalms 101–103. In Psalm 101, a waiting Davidide declares his intention to govern a restored Jerusalem as soon as Yahweh "comes" to him. In Psalm 102, an afflicted Davidide pleads with God to arise and rebuild Zion and announces that "the appointed time has come." Then in Psalm 103, the Davidic voice celebrates personal forgiveness and healing that stems from Yahweh's merciful treatment of sinful people, his immeasurable covenant love toward Israel, and his omnipotent position ruling over all. The kingship of Yahweh is shown delivering David and forgiving Israel, warranting hope that he will restore Israel and rebuild Zion.

Psalm 103 Answers Psalm 90

In this chapter I have observed how Psalm 102 repeats many terms and themes from Psalms 89 and 90. Psalm 102 personalizes the lament over the fall of the Davidic kingship in Psalm 89 by depicting the resulting personal and communal affliction, but also sounds a note of hope for the afflicted Davidide and fallen Zion. Psalm 102 also picks up the central language, concerns, themes, and contrasts of Moses' prayer in Psalm 90, expressing similar concerns from an afflicted Davidide and fallen Zion, again with a strong note of hope. Psalm 103 then answers Psalm 102 by celebrating the kind of personal and communal restoration requested in 102. But Psalm 103, a central psalm within Book IV, does even more.

Psalm 103 draws together diverse themes from Book IV, resolving many problems and providing many answers expressed by previous prayers. In this final section, I will examine its relationship with Psalm 90. Westermann observes similarities and contrasts between Psalms 90 and 103. Both emphasize human frailty contrasted with God's eternality. Similarly, Psalm 90 emphasizes God's anger and Psalm 103 his goodness. Yet Westermann does not mention any macro-structural relationship between them. Instead he contrasts the form-critical genres of lament (90) and praise (103).[73] Together these two psalms highlight "the polarity of lament and praise that corresponds to the polarity of the anger and mercy of God." These two "'musical modes' . . . make up the genuine tonality of the Psalter."[74]

Westermann's comparison and contrast is helpful, but I sense a more specific and strategic relationship between Psalms 90 and 103. Moses' prayer in Psalm 90 addresses the Davidic problem in Psalm 89, and David's praises in Psalm 103 resolve Moses' petitions from Psalm 90.[75] Thus Psalm 103 appears positioned to solve the problems and answer the petitions of both Psalms 89 and 90. The *number* and the *nature* of the connections between Psalms 90 and 103 strongly suggest this call-response relationship. In many cases, Psalm 90 contains the mournful request and Psalm 103 the joyful restoration. Specifically, I argue that David's praises for personal and corporate restoration in Psalm 103 correspond with Moses' intercessory pleas for restoration in Psalm 90. Shared terms and themes between Psalms 90 and 103 show how David and

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[73]Claus Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content, and Message*, trans. R. D. Gehrke (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 119–22.

[74]Westermann, *Psalms*, 121–22.

[75]Wilson independently sees the parallels between Pss 90 and 103 without recognizing the potential Davidic emphasis. "These numerous correspondences can hardly be coincidental, but must represent purposeful arrangement. *Ps 103 stands almost as an answer to the questions and problems raised in Ps 90; problems which received their impetus from the situation described in Ps 89*. Ps 103's final answer has no correspondence in 90, but encapsulates the central themes of the fourth book" (emphasis added). To Wilson, the "theme" is the reign of Yahweh in 103:19: "Therefore Israel can trust in him where human monarchs are doomed to fail" (Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 218–19).

Israel in Psalm 103 receive the divine answer to Moses' prayer in Psalm 90.[76]

Mosaic Petition, Mosaic Deliverance
(90:1; 103:6–8)

Psalm 90:1 introduces "a prayer of *Moses* (למשׁה), the man of God." Moses then laments the wrath of God and the brevity of life (90:3–12) before appealing for God's mercy (90:13–17). Psalm 103 resonates with Moses' prayer as David recounts the mercy of God toward Moses and his generation (103:7–8): "He made known his ways to Moses (למשׁה), his acts to the people of Israel. Yahweh is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." Thus Psalm 103 answers Psalm 90 as David celebrates how Yahweh revealed his redeeming and forgiving ways to Moses and Israel.

Dust of Judgment, Dust of Compassion
(90:3; 103:14; 104:29–30)

Psalm 90 is overrun with divine judgment. In Psalm 90:3, the psalmist contrasts the eternality of God (90:1–2) with the transience of man (90:3–6). The contrast centers on God as the everlasting Creator (90:1–2) and man as his fleeting creation (90:3–6). The contrast immediately alludes to the Genesis account of man's cursing (Gen 3:19).

Cursed to dust (Gen 3:19 in Ps 90:3). Dust covers the judgments of Genesis 3:14–19. The serpent will slither on the ground and eat "dust" (עפר, 3:14), and man will "return to the ground" (האדמה, 3:19). Because he was taken from the "dust" (עפר), he will return to the "dust" (עפר) (3:19). Even the "ground" (האדמה, 3:17) itself is cursed.

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[76]I have slightly refined Kim's list of 18 terms shared between Pss 90 and 103: אנושׁ (90:3; 103:15); אף (90:7, 11; 103:8); ארץ (90:2; 103:11); בן (90:3, 16; 103:7, 13, 17 [2x]); גבורה / גבור (90:10; 103:20); יהוה (90:13; 103:1, 2, 6, 8, 13, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22 [2x]); חסד (90:14; 103:4, 8, 11, 17); חציר (90:5; 103:13); ידע (90:11, 12; 103:7, 14); יום (90:4, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15; 103:15); יראה / ירא (90:11; 103:11, 13, 17); כון (90:17 [2x]; 103:19); משׁה (90:1; 103:7); עון (90:8; 103:3, 10); עולם (90:2 [2x]; 103:9, 17 [2x]); מעשׂה (90:17 [2x]; 103:22); ציץ (90:6; 103:15 [2x]); שׂבע (90:14; 103:5) (Kim, "Structure and Coherence," 315n6).

Table 26. Gen 3:19 in Ps 90:3

Passage	Textual Connections		
Gen 3:19	"dust"	עפר	γῆ
Gen 3:19	"dust"	עפר	γῆν
Ps 90:3	"dust"	דכא	ταπείνωσιν
Ps 104:29	"dust"	עפרם	χοῦν
Gen 3:19	"return"	שׁובך	ἀποστρέψαι
Gen 3:19	"return"	תשׁוב	ἀπελεύσῃ
Ps 90:3	"return"	תשׁב	ἀποστρέψῃς
Ps 90:3	"return"	שׁובו	ἐπιστρέψατε
Ps 104:29	"return"	ישׁובון	ἐπιστρέψουσιν
Passage	Contextual Connections		
Gen 3:19	context of creation (Gen 1–2)		
Ps 90:3	context of creation (Ps 90:2)		
Gen 3:19	context of sin (Gen 3:1–13)		
Ps 90:3	context of sin (Ps 90:7–11)		
Gen 3:19	context of judgment (Gen 3:14–19)		
Ps 90:3	context of judgment (Ps 90:3–11, 15)		

Psalm 90:3 alludes to Genesis 3:19 where God punishes man with death because of sin. Man will return to the dust from which he was created. The term used used for "dust" in Psalm 90:3 (דכא) portrays fine powder that comes from crushing or pulverizing. Its LXX translation *ταπείνωσιν* highlights the inherent humiliation. Even though neither דכא nor *ταπείνωσις* appears in the Genesis passage, the allusion to Genesis 3:19 is clear. The twofold verb "return" in Genesis 3:19 (שׁובך and תשׁוב) finds a twofold echo in Psalm 90:3 (תשׁב and שׁובו). Likewise, three contextual layers are shared by both passages: (1) creation (Gen 1–2; Ps 90:2), (2) sin (Gen 3:1–13; Ps 90:7–11), and (3) judgment (Gen 3:14–19; Ps 90:3–11, 15). But if the psalmist is clearly drawing on Genesis 3:19, why use the term דכא (Ps 90:3) rather than the original and repeated term

עפר (Gen 3:19 [2x]; cf. 2:7; 3:14)? The first reason is that the creation account itself uses multiple terms to signify "dust," "ground," and "earth." But more importantly, the psalmist may be highlighting the crushing punishment connoted by דכא.[77]

The emphasis in Psalm 90:3 is the judgment that befalls transient man in contrast to God's everlasting nature as creator (90:1–2). God is the creator and judge, evidenced by his decree that mankind return to dust as punishment for rebellion.

Created from dust (Gen 2:7–8 in Ps 103:14). In Psalm 90, our earthy origin and crushing punishment stand as twin testimony that we are frail and broken before God. However, as the praise of David in Psalm 103 answers the prayer of Moses in Psalm 90, God's knowledge that we are "dust" (עפר) (103:14) becomes the grounds (כי) for his compassion (103:13). "As a father shows compassion to his children, so Yahweh shows compassion to those who fear him. *For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust*" (Ps 103:13–14). The allusion to Genesis is unmistakable. In Genesis 2:7, God "formed" man (ייצר) from the "dust" (עפר) of the ground.[78] In Psalm 103:13–14, remembrance of this humble beginning provokes God to compassion. He recalls our "frame" (i.e., our *formation*) (יצרנו) and remembers that we are "dust" (עפר).[79]

Table 27. Gen 2:7–8 in Ps 103:14

Passage	Textual Connections		
Gen 2:7	"formed"	וייצר	ἔπλασεν
Gen 2:8	"formed"	יצר	ἔπλασεν
Ps 103:14	"frame"	יצרנו	πλάσμα
Gen 2:7	"dust"	עפר	χοῦν
Ps 103:14	"dust"	עפר	χοῦς

[77]The verb "crush" in Ps 94:5 (ידכאו) carries the same root as the word for "dust" in Ps 90:3 (דכא). Every other occurrence of this root in the Psalms refers to being crushed in terms of suffering or punishment (Ps 34:19; 72:4; 89:11; 94:5; 143:3). The idea seems to be *pulverized*, *pounded*, or *ground into dust* (Samuel E. Balentine, "Turn, O Lord! How Long?" *RevExp* 100 [2003]: 468).

[78]Genesis 2:8 refers back to the man whom God "formed" (יצר).

[79]Walter Brueggemann, "Remember, You are Dust," *Journal for Preachers* 14, no. 2 (1991): 5.

Psalm 104, which is bound to Psalm 103 by their shared bookends,[80] also answers Psalm 90:3. Psalm 104:29 echoes Psalm 103:14 by alluding to Genesis 3:19, thereby joining the response to Psalm 90:3. Psalm 104:29 reads, "When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust." The divine judgment that leaves God's creatures "dismayed" (יבהלון) repeats the withering anger of Psalm 90:7. Further, their deathly "return to their dust" (ישובון and עפרם) picks up the exact terminology of Psalm 90:3. But unlike Psalm 90, Psalm 104:29 does not leave humanity dismayed in the dust of death. Rather, it harmonizes with Psalm 103 by sounding another note of hope: "When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground" (104:30).

The contrast between the use of Genesis in Psalm 90:3 and its use in Psalm 103:13–14 is significant. In Psalm 90:3, the creation account reminds Moses of God's *curse* that sent humanity back to the dust of death as punishment for sin (Gen 3:19). But in Psalm 103:14, our earthy origins remind God of his precious creation (like a father with children), provoking him to compassion.

In Genesis 3:19 and Psalm 90:3, man is *cursed* and *crushed* to dust. But in Psalm 103:14, man is *created from* dust. In Psalm 90, mankind's return to dust is evidence of divine judgment. But in Psalm 103, mankind's creation from dust is reason for divine compassion.[81]

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[80]The shared, repeated bookend is "Bless Yahweh, O my soul!" (103:1, 22; 104:1, 35).

[81]In Ps 89, the Davidic crown has been defiled in the "dust" (לארץ, 89:40) and the throne cast down to the "ground" (לארץ, 89:45). Although a different term is used, the references to "dust" highlighting the transience of humanity in Book IV may reflect the failure of the Davidic covenant in Ps 89. Further, in Deut 9:21, the retelling of the golden calf incident, Moses says: "Then I took the sinful thing, the calf that you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small, until it was fine as dust (לעפר). And I threw the dust of it (עפרו) into the brook that ran down from the mountain." Considering the allusions to Exod 32–34, this may be in the psalmist's mind as well.

Grass, Flowers, and Faithfulness
(90:5–6; 103:15–16)

In both 90:5–6 and 103:15–16, mankind is likened to grass and flowers that fade and wither.[82] Both passages evoke Isaiah 40:6–8 where humanity is portrayed as a fast-withering flower in contrast to the everlasting word of Yahweh.[83] The illustration captures human frailty.

Psalm 90:5–6
5 You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream,
like grass (כחציר) that is renewed in the morning:
6 in the morning it flourishes (יציץ) and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.

Psalm 103:15–16
15 As for man, his days are like grass (כחציר);
he flourishes (יציץ) like a flower (כציץ) of the field;
16 for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.

Psalm 90:5–6 paints a collage of judgment imagery illustrating the transience of humanity—being swept away like a flood, passing like a dream, and most of all, fading and withering "like grass" (כחציר) that "flourishes" (יציץ) after a rainstorm in the wilderness but quickly shrivels in the heat of the day.

In Psalm 103:15–16, mankind is again portrayed "like grass" (כחציר) that "flourishes" (יציץ) before withering. Even without this frail analogy, the humble term אנוֹשׁ ("man," 103:15) alone connotes man's fragility and repeats the same term from 90:3 where God returned "man" (אנוֹשׁ) to dust.[84] But the human frailty in 103:15–16 (picking up the frailty in 90:3, 5–6) is now answered with divine faithfulness (103:17–19).[85] Like

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[82]The imagery of withering grass is repeated elsewhere in Book IV (92:7; 102:5, 12). However, the last appearance of grass in Book IV portrays the flourishing of God's creation (104:14).

[83]See parallels between Pss 90–106 and Isa 40–55 in Jerome F. D. Creach, "The Shape of Book Four of the Psalter and the Shape of Second Isaiah," *JSOT* 23, no. 80 (1998): 63–76.

[84]Even the "strong" (בגבורת, 90:10) among men only last eighty years in Ps 90, but their limited strength is contrasted by the "strong" angels (גברי, 103:20) who do Yahweh's bidding.

[85]I have already observed several times how Ps 90 is marked by short and painful "days" (יום, 90:4, 9, 10, 12) and "years" (שׁנה, 90:10 [3x], 15) and how Moses asks God to gladden the "days" and

Isaiah 40:8 where the wilted grass is compared with the word of Yahweh that stands forever, Psalm 103:17 contrasts transient man with Yahweh's covenant faithfulness. Man may pass away when the hot wind blows (103:16), but Yahweh's steadfast love (חסד, 103:17) remains forever. Thus Psalm 90 paints a bleak picture of feeble man fading and withering like grass beneath the heat and wind of divine judgment, but David splashes life onto the canvas by contrasting man's transience with the unfailing חסד of Yahweh.[86]

Iniquities Punished and Pardoned (90:8; 103:3, 10)

In Psalm 103, David and Israel find forgiveness for the iniquities whose judgment Moses mourns in Psalm 90. The noun עון ("iniquities") appears in 89:33 as God repeats his promise to discipline the Davidic descendant "when he commits iniquity" (2 Sam 7:14; root עוה). Nevertheless, God will maintain his covenant with David (89:34–38). The same noun עון is then repeated in 90:8 and 103:3, 10. The Davidic iniquities of 89:33 seem to be interpreted as the cause of God's judgment in 90:8, but Moses' intercession in Psalm 90 receives an answer in the forgiveness experienced by David (103:3) and Israel (103:10).

In 90:7–8, the anger of God rages against his people. Moses sees that the people's "iniquities" (עונתינו) and "secret sins" (עלמנו) have been fully exposed in God's holy presence (90:8). There is no patience or pardon in Psalm 90, only punishment and petition. But the guilty pleas of Moses are answered in the pardon-rich song of David.

In Psalm 103:3, David summons his soul to worship because Yahweh forgives all his "iniquities" (עונכי). Further, none of the people's "sins" (כחטאינו) and "iniquities"

"years" ahead (90:14, 15). In Ps 103:15, David still portrays frail mankind living out brief "days" (ימיו), but the brevity of life is overshadowed by God's everlasting love toward his faithful ones (103:17–18).

[86]The word עשׂב ("green plant") is prominent in Book IV. Earlier, in Ps 72:16, the eschatological reign of the Davidic king causes God's people to flourish (ויציצו) "like grass" (כעשׂב). In Ps 92:8 the wicked flourish (ויציצו) like grass (עשׂב) before being destroyed. Outside of Ps 72:16, the word עשׂב appears in the Psalter only in Book IV (6x: 92:8, 102:5, 12; 104:14; 105:35; 106:20).

(כעונתינו) have been repaid with their just punishment (103:10). Instead Yahweh has separated the people from their transgressions "as far as the east is from the west" (113:12). The "transgressions" forgiven in Psalm 103:12 (פֶּשַׁע) even match the "transgressions" of David's line whom God promised to discipline in Psalm 89:33 (פֶּשַׁע).

Once again, Psalm 103 is answering Psalm 90. In Psalm 90, Moses and his people experience the extreme judgment of Yahweh. In Psalm 103, David and his people experience the extreme forgiveness of Yahweh. Moses pleads for the very pardon that prompts David's praise.

Knowing Wrath, Knowing God's Ways
(90:11, 12; 103:7, 14)

Both psalms emphasize "knowing" (ידע), but the objects differ vastly. In Psalm 90, God's anger is unknowable (יודע, 90:11) in its ferocity, so Moses asks God to help the Israelites "know" (הודע, 90:12) their limited days so that they might live wisely before him. In both cases the object of knowledge is lamentable, and in both cases the Israelites are unable to "know" it on their own. God's wrath is too fierce and their lives too frail.

But in Psalm 103, the verb ידע relates only to God's kindness and redemption. He "made known" (יודיע, 103:7) his ways to Israel when he forgave her and revealed his character in Exodus 32–34 (Ps 103:7–8 clearly alludes to Exod 33–34). What did he make known? "Yahweh is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (103:8). Further, Yahweh is kind toward his people because he "knows" (ידע, 103:14) their inherent fragility as sinful human beings. This knowledge stirs up his compassion (103:13). "For he *knows* our frame; he remembers that we are dust" (103:14).

The Fear of Yahweh
(90:11; 103:13, 17)

In Psalm 90:11, Israel's "fear" of Yahweh (כיראתך) is wrapped up in his wrath. Moses fearfully responds to God's anger by seeking wisdom for God's people to steward

their transient lives wisely: "So teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom" (90:12). But in Psalm 103:11, 13, and 17, Israel's fear of Yahweh invites his compassion: Yahweh shows compassion and steadfast love to "those who fear him" (על־יראיו, 103:11; על־יראיו, 103:13; על־יראיו, 103:17).

The fearsome anger of God causes Moses to calculate carefully the length of human life (90:12), but David sees Yahweh smile on those who fear his name (103:13, 17). For Moses, the dreadful experience of divine wrath generates a deep-seated fear of Yahweh (90:12). But for David and Israel, the fear of Yahweh engenders God's fatherly compassion (103:13).

Consuming Anger, Slow to Anger
(90:7, 11; 103:8, 9)

In Psalm 90, Yahweh appears to Moses as a consuming fire. He appears unentreatable in his "anger" (אף) (90:7, 11). His wrath against sin (v. 7a) burns against his people (v. 7b). His anger consumes (v. 7a), dismays (v. 7b), and wearies (v. 9b). But in Psalm 103, God's anger has abated. He is "slow to *anger*" (ארך אפים) (103:8), he relents from his anger (יטור, 103:9), and he deals graciously with sinners (103:10–12). The wrath in Psalm 90 has been absorbed by mercy in Psalm 103.

Satisfaction Requested and Received
(90:14; 103:5)

In 90:14, Moses pleads, "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love." This hungry appeal for God to "satisfy" (שׂבענו) his people finds a promised answer in 91:16 as God pledges to "satisfy" (אשׂביעהו) the one who trusts him. שׂבע does not occur again until 103:5 where David declares that God "*satisfies* you with good" (המשׂביע).

The initial plea for satisfaction from the lips of Moses is only that—an unanswered plea (90:14). However, soon comes a promise of satisfaction from God (Ps 91:16), who then spreads a smorgasbord of satisfaction through the latter psalms in Book

IV. David is first in line to take his fill in 103:5. Then the earth is "*satisfied*" with the rain-sending work of God (תִּשְׂבַּע, 104:13), God's trees are "*satisfied*" with the water they receive from his hand (יִשְׂבְּעוּ, 104:16), and all God's creatures, like David in 103:5, are "*satisfied* with good things" (יִשְׂבָּעוּן, 104:28). Even the Israelites who wandered in their own exile in the wilderness can testify to God's gracious provision: he "*satisfied*" them with manna (יַשְׂבִּיעֵם, 105:40). Therefore, 107:9 can introduce Book V by summarizing God's liberal generosity in Book IV: "For he *satisfies* the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things" (הִשְׂבִּיעַ, 107:9).

The satisfaction Moses requests (90:14) is granted to the faithful Israelite (91:16), David (103:5), and the whole earth (104:13, 16, 28), just as the wilderness-wandering Israelites were fed with abundance (105:40). Therefore, Book V summarizes Book IV by announcing that Yahweh indeed "satisfies the longing soul" (107:9). Once again, the praise of Psalm 103 answers the plea of Psalm 90.

Table 28. "Satisfaction" (שׂבע) in Book IV

Text	Expression	ESV	MT
90:14	prayer	"*Satisfy* us"	שַׂבְּעֵנוּ
91:16	promise	"I will *satisfy* him"	אַשְׂבִּיעֵהוּ
103:5	reality	"*satisfies* you"	הַמַּשְׂבִּיעַ
104:13	reality	"earth is *satisfied*"	תִּשְׂבַּע
104:16	reality	"*watered abundantly*"	יִשְׂבְּעוּ
104:28	reality	"*filled* with good things"	יִשְׂבָּעוּן
105:40	history	"in *abundance*"	יַשְׂבִּיעֵם
107:9[87]	reality	"*satisfies* the longing soul"	הִשְׂבִּיעַ

[87]Psalm 107:9 introduces Book V, but it clearly answers Book IV by linking to Pss 105–106. The "satisfaction" experienced in 107:9 picks up the "satisfaction" language of Pss 103–105.

Compassion Requested and Received
(90:13; 103:13)

In Psalm 90:13, Moses responds to Yahweh's anger by pleading, "Have pity on your servants!" (הנחם על־עבדיך). Some of Moses' final words in the Pentateuch promised that Yahweh would answer this kind of humble prayer: "Yahweh will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants (על־עבדיו יתנחם)" (Deut 32:36).

In Psalm 103:13, those who fear Yahweh receive the compassion Moses requested. Psalm 90:13 uses נחם while 103:13 uses רחם (2x), but their one-letter difference and synonymous meaning suggest yet another link between these psalms. Further, the nature of this connection remains consistent with the other evidence presented thus far: the compassion Moses requests, David receives.

For the Children
(90:3, 16; 103:7, 13, 17)

In Psalm 90:3, God turns the "children of man" (בני־אדם) back to dust, demonstrating their sinfulness and frailty. Then in Psalm 90:16, Moses asks that Yahweh show his glorious redemptive power to the "children" (בניהם) of the Israelites. This prayer for redemption receives a threefold answer in Psalm 103. In 103:7, David records how God "made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the *children* (לבני) of Israel." In 103:13, Yahweh is portrayed as a father who shows compassion to his "children" (בנים). In 103:17, Yahweh maintains his righteousness to "children's children" (לבני בנים). So Moses prays that the next generation would see Yahweh's strong deliverance, and David praises Yahweh for showing numerous generations his steadfast love.

From Everlasting to Everlasting
(90:2; 103:17)

In Psalm 90:2, the dust-like, dream-like, grass-like transience of man (90:3–6) is contrasted with the eternality of God—"*from everlasting to everlasting* you are God" (מעולם עד־עולם, 90:2). Man's transience separates him from God's everlasting nature. But

in Psalm 103:17, the grass-like transience of man (vv. 15–16) is contrasted with the steadfast love of Yahweh which is "from everlasting to everlasting" (מעולם ועד־עולם) (103:17). Rather than mankind being separated from God by this distinction, those who fear Yahweh (though they be like grass) receive the steadfast love of his covenant.

Exodus 32–34 in Psalm 103

In chapter 4 I noted that Psalm 90:13–16 alludes to Exodus 32–34. Psalm 90 reformulates Moses' intercessory petition from Sinai and positions it at the beginning of Book IV to address the failure of the Davidic kingship and the exile of Israel.

Psalm 103 also alludes to Exodus 32–34, so that Psalms 90 and 103 share a common allusion to the golden calf incident and Yahweh's subsequent self-revelation. In Psalm 90, Israel's blatant idolatry, Yahweh's burning anger, Moses' desperate intercession, and Yahweh's self-revelation are reimagined once again. Psalm 103, however, picks up only positive elements from the story while Psalm 90 echoed only negative elements. Psalm 90 repeats themes of sin and iniquity, God's consuming anger, and Moses' pleas that Yahweh turn and relent. But Psalm 103 picks up themes of sin and iniquity being forgiven, Yahweh keeping his covenant, and God proclaiming his steadfast love afresh to his people.

Table 29. Exod 33:12–13 in Ps 103:7

Passage	Textual Connections	
Exod 33:12	"Moses"	מֹשֶׁה
Ps 103:7	"to Moses"	לְמֹשֶׁה
Exod 33:13	"show me"	הוֹדִעֵנִי
Ps 103:7	"he made known"	יוֹדִיעַ
Exod 33:13	"your ways"	דְּרָכֶךָ
Ps 103:7	"his ways"	דְּרָכָיו

First, in Exodus 33:13, Moses prayed, "please *show me* (הודעני) now *your ways*" (דרכך). In Psalm 103:7, David declares, "He *made known* (יודיע) *his ways* (דרכיו) to Moses." Second, the "sins," "iniquities," and "transgressions" of Exodus 34:7 are forgiven in Psalm 103 (vv. 10a, 10b, 12). In Exodus 34:9, Moses asks Yahweh to "pardon our iniquity and our sin." In Psalm 103:3, David calls his soul to praise Yahweh who "forgives all your iniquity." Third, the "anger" of God (אף) appears six times in the golden calf incident, but in Psalm 103:8 God is "slow to anger" (ארך אפים). Fourth, Yahweh holds punishment over "children's children" in Exodus 34:7, but in Psalm 103:17 he keeps "his righteousness to children's children." Fifth, and most significantly, the quintessential theophany in the OT (Exod 34:6–7) reappears in Psalm 103:8: "Yahweh is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

Table 30. Exod 32–34 in Ps 103[88]

Key Word	Exodus 32–34	Psalm 103
name	33:12, 17, 19; 34:5, 14	v. 1
forgive iniquity	34:7, 9	v. 3
steadfast love	34:6, 7	v. 4
mercy	34:19; 34:6	v. 4
goodness	33:19	v. 5
sins	32:21, 30, 31, 32, 34; 34:7, 9	v. 10
iniquities	34:7, 9	v. 10
steadfast love	34:6–7	v. 11
transgressions	34:7	v. 12
compassion	33:19; 34:6	v. 13
steadfast love	34:6–7	v. 17
covenant	34:10, 12, 15, 27, 28	v. 18

[88]Table 30 reproduced from Gordon J. Wenham, "The Golden Calf in the Psalms," in *God of Faithfulness: Essays in Honour of J. Gordon McConville on His 60th Birthday*, ed. J. A. Grant, A. Lo, and G. J. Wenham (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 178–79.

Finally, Psalm 103 does not echo the Deuteronomy version of the golden calf episode but the Exodus version. Wenham notes that "whereas Deuteronomy in recounting the Golden Calf story is emphasizing Israel's persistent sinfulness, Psalm 103 is, like the other psalms, using it as a paradigm of God's grace and mercy to Israel."[89]

Summary of Psalms 90 and 103

In Psalm 90 Moses intercedes before an angry God, but in Psalm 103 David remembers Moses experiencing a forgiving God. For Moses, man is dust, which illustrates God's judgment. For David, man is dust, which engenders God's compassion. Moses sees humanity as withering grass, but David sees how Yahweh is steadfast and faithful. The iniquities of Moses' generation have been measured meticulously with judgment meted out, but David and his people have been forgiven. Moses and his people know only fierce wrath and frail lives, but David knows a merciful and forgiving God. For Moses, the fear of God is wrapped up in wrath, but for David, fearing God invites compassion. Moses confesses that God has consumed his people in anger, but David remembers a God who is slow to anger. Moses requests both compassion and satisfaction, and David and his people receive both. Moses prays that the next generation would see the powerful work of God, and David watches as God pours out his compassion and his righteousness on children's children. Moses announces that God is everlasting and man is passing, but David connects God's eternality with his steadfast love which keeps God eternally loyal even to transient people. Finally, Moses recalls the golden calf incident to echo its desperate prayer, but David recalls the same incident in order to recount God's mercy and paradigmatic self-revelation that would forever mark the Israelite memory.

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[89]Wenham, "Golden Calf in the Psalms," 179. Psalm 90 is not addressed in his essay.

Conclusion

Together Psalms 101–102 portray an afflicted Davidide mourning amidst the ruins of a sacred city. He declares his royal intentions to govern the city and land with a full and fierce commitment to the torah (101), but reconstruction lies in the future (102:14–17). The universal king Yahweh has not yet "come" to establish him (101:2). So the Davidide waits and prays, pouring out a personal and corporate lament over his soul-deep sickness and his rubble-strewn city (102:2–23). His overwhelming grief (102:2–12) is laced with hope (102:13–23), but instability leaves him veering back to desperation (102:24–25a) before returning to remembrance (102:25b–28) and settled confidence (102:29).

Psalm 102 resonates with Psalms 89 and 90, personalizing the Davidic affliction and embodying the Davidic plea described in Psalm 89 while Davidizing the Mosaic complaint and reformulating the Mosaic prayer from Psalm 90. Psalm 103 is then positioned to climax the progression in 101–103.[90] Psalm 103 answers the prayers in both 90 and 102 with a jubilant celebration of God's restorative mercies to David and Israel.

Wilson rightly highlights how Psalm 103 answers Psalm 90. He also correctly identifies the high kingship of Yahweh in 103:19 as the centerpiece of the psalm. But his conclusion that "human monarchs are doomed to fail" is a bridge too far, a sweeping generalization that fails to account for the eschatological vision of the Davidic promises.[91] Wallace suggests that Psalm 103 portrays a diminished David: David is suffering with the people (rather than reigning), David is testifying to the Mosaic covenant (rather than his own), and "YHWH (not David) is the just king in Ps 103."[92] Thus "David honors Moses" so that there are "no divided loyalties." In this view "the

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[90]I will address Ps 104 briefly in the conclusion in chap. 7.

[91]Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, 219.

[92]Robert E. Wallace, *The Narrative Effect of Book IV of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBL 112 (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 63–68 (quotation on p. 65).

Mosaic covenant is the priority" and the "means of salvation."[93] Wallace underestimates the powerful progression pulsing forward from the יהוה מלך series (93–100) to the Davidide-in-waiting (101) to the petition and promise regarding Zion (102) to the restorative mercy bestowed on David (103:1–5) and the nation (103:6–18) based on the kingship of Yahweh (103:19–22). More importantly, the concept of "divided loyalties" between the Mosaic and Davidic covenants would be nonsensical to the OT authors. In fact, a future Davidide has just promised to enforce torah once Yahweh restores him (101:2–8).

One overarching benefit of my proposal is its deconstruction of false dichotomies. The Davidic covenant, and especially the Psalter, does not set the kingship of Yahweh against the kingship of David. Nor is there any sharp divide between the Mosaic covenant and the Davidic covenant.

The kingship of Yahweh instead establishes David's royal rule, and David represents Yahweh's universal rule by governing according to torah guidelines. Thus David's proclamation in 103:19 shows precisely the proper perspective any future Davidide and any generation of Israelites ought to have: Yahweh is their king, and his reign will bring their restoration.

Psalm 103 stands as a magnificent psalm on its own, anywhere in the Psalter, with Davidic titling or without. But its Davidic authorship, its celebration of individual and communal restoration by the mercies of God, and its placement at the height of the Davidic progression in 101–103 suggest that Psalm 103 upholds the hope for a king from David's line.

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[93]R. Wallace, *Narrative Effect of Book IV*, 68.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

I have argued that Book IV of the canonical Hebrew Psalter sustains the hope that God will keep his promises to David by restoring Israel with a king from David's line. Book IV does not parse out all the details, but these seventeen psalms clearly contain Davidic dynamics suggesting that the final compilers have kept the Davidic covenant in mind. Therefore, if Yahweh has not abandoned his promises to David, Israel should not abandon her hope for a future Davidide who will reign as Yahweh's representative over a redeemed people. In this brief conclusion, I will summarize each chapter before drawing together the implications.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Since Gerald Wilson published his groundbreaking dissertation *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* in 1985, canonical interpreters have either followed or challenged his David-diminished view of Books IV and V. Those who agree with Wilson point to the Davidic catastrophe in Psalm 89, the entrance and prominence of Israel's premonarchic leader Moses (90), the cosmic celebration of Yahweh's eternal kingship (93–100), and the paltry number of Davidic titles in Books IV and V (especially Book IV) compared to the rest of the Psalter. Some suggest that the Davidic promises have been communalized so that any hope for Davidic restoration has been transferred to the people as a whole.[1] Many who disagree with Wilson highlight Davidic elements in Book V, especially the return of Davidic psalms (108–10, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138–45) including psalms that

[1]The term "democratized" is often used, but I prefer the less anachronistic term "communalized."

assume or celebrate Davidic kingship (110, 122, 132). But even within Book IV we find Davidic superscriptions (101, 103), a royal Davidic voice (101), an afflicted Davidide (102), and a resounding Davidic celebration centering on how Yahweh forgives and restores both king and people (103). Thus I have proposed that even before Book V, Book IV sustains the hope that the Davidic promises will be fulfilled.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Chapter 2 overviewed the canonical approach and offered an eclectic methodology that seeks to honor the evidence the Psalter itself presents. This approach affirms the compilational significance of the five-book division and recognizes the structural and interpretive import of superscriptions, incipits, and closings.

The canonical approach does not require a narrative impulse in the Psalter, but I sense such a narrative impulse. The broad progression traces royal and Davidic concerns beginning with the messianic portrait and promise in Psalms 1–2. The Psalter then recounts the life and sufferings of David (Books I–II), the covenantal transfer to the first royal son Solomon (Ps 72), and the collapse of Israel's cultic center and Davidic king (Book III; Pss 88–89). Book IV introduces a reimagined Moses and portrays Israel wandering in the new wilderness of exile before Book V depicts a restoration and return beneath billowing banners of praise and thanks.

Within this broad progression, certain series and collections display internal cohesion and self-contained thematic arcs. These series cycle through the Psalter and contribute to the loose narrative construction, but they discourage us from seeing a strict chronological arrangement marching lock-step from one psalm to the next.

Nevertheless, the psalms are clearly arranged intentionally, often through lexical and thematic connections between adjacent psalms. Rather than limiting my observations to the "significant" lexical links that may have been recognized or inserted by Spirit-guided compilers to stitch psalms together, I propose that the juxtaposition,

mutual resonance, and collectional unity of various psalms invites the worshiper to compare and contrast their themes by an overlapped or overlaid reading that draws out both contrasts and complements between psalms.[2] Regarding the process of arrangement, I suggest that the editors carefully compiled lexically-related and thematically resonant psalms and massaged them into place with a "light editorial touch" that maintains the original authorial message while overlaying editorial and compilational intent.[3] Finally, recognizing inner-biblical allusions plays a key role in discerning the intended meaning of psalmic juxtapositions, series, progressions, and collections.

Chapter 3: Psalms 89–90

Most canonical interpreters see Psalms 88–89 as the deepest valley in the Psalter. The structure and message of Psalm 89 measures the faithfulness of God by his covenant with David, associates the reign of God with the reign of David, questions the character of God because of the Davidic catastrophe, and pleads that Yahweh restore the Davidic king and Israelite people. The Davidic throne is rooted in the reign of Yahweh, so if the Davidic branch withers, the vitality and veracity of divine rule is naturally questioned. Further, the multilayered promises of permanence deeply embedded in Psalm 89 require that the covenant with David be fulfilled, so Book III concludes with the desperate psalmist pleading that Yahweh remember his ridiculed king and servants.

Psalm 90 then responds by continuing and complementing the complaint over the Davidic throne in Psalm 89. Both psalms display a contrast between man's transience and God's eternality which puts in perspective the repeated cry "How long?" Both psalms display or imply God's character, covenant, and faithfulness. Both psalms also

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[2]The worshiper is provoked to participate in this process from the very beginning of the Psalter as the clear and meaningful word-links between Pss 1–2 set the compilational tone for the entire 150-psalm collection. I am not suggesting that all adjacent psalms should be read with the same *degree* of overlap. Rather, the overlap is based on the degree of lexical and thematic resonance that can be observed.

[3]I am borrowing the phrase "light editorial touch" from personal conversation with Jim Hamilton.

offer a prayer for restoration in their concluding sections, a restoration that intertwines king and people since they share the same fate and the same hope.

But one stark contrast stands out between these two psalms: Psalm 90 mournfully confesses the sin that Psalm 89 concealed. Thus Psalm 90 clarifies that Israel is to blame rather than Yahweh: Israel has sinned grievously and violated the covenant. Thus Psalm 90 both reiterates and reframes the lament in Psalm 89 as Moses arrives not mainly to complain but to confess. He does not indict God but intercedes for Israel.

Chapter 4: Psalms 90–92

Moses takes center stage in Book IV with his book-initiating superscription heading Psalm 90. With prophetic authority as a "man of God," he immediately voices a confessionary intercession for rebellious Israel now suffering God's wrath in her wilderness exile. This reimagined Moses reformulates his successful supplication from Sinai, pleading that Yahweh "turn" and "relent" rather than abandon his Davidic king and people whose future is just as precarious as that infamous golden calf generation.

The psalmic series 90–92 then progresses from plaintive petition (Ps 90) to promised protection (Ps 91) to restored rejoicing (Ps 92). This triad features a clustered allusion to Deuteronomy 32–33, activating Moses' ancient lyrical witness against Israel (Deut 32) which was recorded for her future exilic experiences. But Psalm 91 reveals an enigmatic individual in a wilderness setting receiving promised protection from the exilic punishments of Deuteronomy 32 as he takes refuge in Yahweh. This faithful figure displays the character God desires from his people, but also forms a faint figure who meets the criteria and matches the description of the Davidic king from Psalm 89. This charcoal sketch subtly suggests that God will shelter a righteous Davidide (i.e., keep his promises to David) even through Israel's harrowing wilderness journeys. This promise leads to praise: Psalm 92 resounds with gratitude that God's "steadfast love" (חסד) and "faithfulness" (אמונה) (92:3) have granted the psalmist an "exalted horn" (תרם...קרני,

92:11; cf. 89:25), "fresh oil" (בשמן רענן, 92:11; cf. 89:21), long life (92:15; cf. 89:46, 48), and fruitful flourishing (92:13–17) that matches the messianic man in Psalm 1. With this suggestive redemptive arc complete (90–92), Book IV launches into the יהוה מלך series (93–100) celebrating the high kingship of Yahweh.

Chapter 5: Psalm 101

The יהוה מלך series begins in Psalm 93, but Psalm 94 immediately interrupts the celebration with a desperate plea that God bring moral order to a chaotic and wicked world. Psalms 95 and 100 then bookend Psalms 96–99 by summoning Israel (95) and the nations (100) into his courts (95, 100) where they will join the entire cosmos singing fresh songs (96:1; 98:1) hailing Yahweh's righteous and resplendent reign (97:1; 99:1). But the יהוה מלך collection insinuates that Yahweh does not yet reign in fullness, either among his people or in his world. Psalm 94 mourns the violent arrogance of the wicked, Psalm 95:7–11 warns Israel not to rebel, and Psalms 96:13 and 98:9 announce that Yahweh is *coming*. Thus the blend of idealism and rebellion characterizing Psalms 93–100 casts a strong eschatological hue over the יהוה מלך collection.

In this eschatological context, Psalm 101 then depicts a musing Davidide awaiting Yahweh's world-ordering arrival. This future king pledges to embody and enforce the divine requirements for worship and kingship (101:3–7; cf. Ps 15) as he prepares to ascend the holy hill of Yahweh and rule the holy city of Zion (101:8; cf. Ps 15). Steeped in torah, he promises to personify the cosmic kingship of Yahweh celebrated throughout the יהוה מלך series (93–100). As the nations respond to the worldwide summons to gather in God's courts with songs of praise, this Davidide swears to ensure the purity of the city by enacting the world-ordering justice God promised in Psalm 94. Thus the intra-book links (within Book IV), Davidic title, royal voice, lamenting tone, future orientation, inter-psalm connections, and strategic placement make Psalm 101 a central psalm sustaining Davidic hope in Book IV.

Chapter 6: Psalm 103

Psalm 103 climaxes the Davidic collection in Psalms 101–104 before Psalm 104 concludes the collection while seamlessly transitioning into the hymnic history series in 104–106. In Psalm 103, God showers his restorative mercy on both David and Israel—king and community—so that Psalm 103 answers both the communal confession of Moses in Psalm 90 and the personal lament of the afflicted Davidide in Psalm 102.

Together Psalms 101–102 depict a musing and miserable Davidide mourning admidst the rubble of a ruined city. He pledges to enact divine justice in this city as soon as Yahweh establishes him as king (101), but the reconstruction of Zion remains a present hope for a future reality (102:14–17).

Psalm 102 resonates with Psalms 89 and 90, personalizing the Davidic pain and plea described in Psalm 89 while echoing the Mosaic prayer from Psalm 90. Psalm 103 is then positioned to climax the progression in 101–103. This Davidic psalm answers both (a) Moses' intercessory lament on behalf of the exiled people in Psalm 90 and (b) David's afflicted lament as the waiting king in Psalm 102. Lexical and thematic resonance among Psalms 90, 102, and 103 support this interpretive relationship.

There is a powerful progression marching forward from the יהוה מלך series (93–100) to the Davidide-in-waiting (101) to the Davidic petition and hope regarding Zion (102) to the restorative mercy bestowed on David and the nation (103:1–5, 6–18) based on the kingship of Yahweh (103:19–22).

Psalms 104–106

Psalm 104 plays a hinge role, concluding the Davidic collection (101–104) and opening the hymnic history series closing Book IV (104–106). I suggest that Psalm 104 is positioned to function in several ways.[4] First, Psalm 104 displays how the reign of God (104:1–4) orders creation (104:5–28). Second, the clear linkage between 103–104 implies

[4]An in-depth examination of Ps 104 is beyond the scope of this study.

that the restoration of David and Israel in Psalm 103 reestablishes creation order. Third, Psalm 104 suggests that a new creation results when God redeems and restores his people. Fourth, Psalm 104 ties together divine rule (104:1–4), the created order (104:5–34), and the moral order (104:35), just like the יהוה מלך psalms where God reigns, justice is executed, and creation rejoices. Finally, Psalm 104 introduces a three-psalm series recounting the faithful and forgiving rule of God. He rules over creation (104), led his chosen people from Abraham through the exodus (105), and patiently forgave and redeemed them from the exodus through the exile (106).

> The cumulative effect of these three psalms [104–106] is to present the restoration of Israel from exile under the Davidic king as the fulfillment of all salvation history. By bringing mankind back to Himself through the son of David and the kingdom of God, the Lord accomplishes His goal in creation, fulfills His oath to Abraham, realizes the vocation of Israel, and remembers the covenant He swore to David.[5]

Conclusion

If the Psalter is to maintain a cohesive trajectory, the Davidic covenant cannot be left in the grave of Psalm 89. Instead we should expect that the appearance of Moses and the reign of Yahweh in Psalms 90–106 will somehow support the royal covenant that has set the tone for the Psalter thus far. Abandoning that covenant for the remainder of the Psalter would undercut the hope it aims to promote and dilute the doxology it aims to provoke.

Book IV does broaden Israel's narrow monarchic hopes into a vast theocratic vision of Yahweh's universal reign (Pss 93–100), a theocratic vision necessitated by her kingless exile (Ps 89:38–51). But Book IV also reconstructs Israel's shattered hopes into an eschatological mosaic portraying a just Davidide preparing to rule a restored nation from a rebuilt Zion (Pss 101–103). Therefore these seventeen psalms maintain and advance the loose narrative trajectory already set in place in Books I–III.

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[5]Michael Barber, *Singing in the Reign: The Psalms and the Liturgy of God's Kingdom* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road, 2001), 125–26.

Book IV of the Psalter reveals that beneath the crumbling pillar of the Davidic dynasty stands the immovable foundation of Yahweh's cosmic rule. Israel is upheld not by the royal line of David but the right arm of Yahweh. Nevertheless, Yahweh's universal reign heralded throughout the center of Book IV (93–100) does not upend the Davidic line but upholds it (101–103). God promised through the prophet Nathan that the Davidic line may be disciplined and even disrupted (2 Sam 7:14–15; Ps 89:30–34; 132:12) but never destroyed.

Thus the Davidic river that courses through Books I–II, narrows to a trickle in Book III, and threatens to evaporate in Psalm 89 has not run dry in the wilderness of Book IV. Rather, the invincible stream, no matter how small, goes subterranean, reappearing only in subtle and suggestive ways in Psalms 90–92 before striking the bedrock of Yahweh's cosmic kingship (93–100) and springing up again in Psalms 101–103. With David and Israel forgiven and restored (at least proleptically) in Psalm 103, the renewal of David then waters a flourishing planet in Psalm 104 as David praises the reign of Yahweh whose kingship establishes creation order.

Through his unfolding revelation God made known his plan to rule the world not through a godless monarchy or a kingless theocracy but a theocratic monarchy. The king he chose was David, and David's line forever. This covenant will surely be kept, in the Psalter and beyond, because God always keeps his promises. A just Davidide will indeed rule the earth. His intentions will be pure (101), his afflictions severe (102), and his restoration glorious (103).

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ABSTRACT

DAVIDIC HOPE IN BOOK IV OF THE PSALTER

(PSALMS 90–106)

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This dissertation argues that Book IV of the canonical Hebrew Psalter (Pss 90–106) sustains the hope that God will keep his covenant with David by installing a future king from David's line.

Chapter 1 introduces the debate, states the thesis, surveys the history of psalmic interpretation, and summarizes recent canonical views that see David either diminished or sustained in Book IV.

Chapter 2 presents an eclectic canonical methodology that honors the five-book division, accounts for superscriptions, incipits, and closings, senses a broad narrative progression, acknowledges psalmic collections, recognizes lexical, thematic, and structural resonance beween psalms, and considers inner-biblical allusions.

Chapter 3 explores the covenantal contradiction in Psalm 89 and proposes that Psalm 90 continues and complements the lament in Psalm 89 which questioned the character and reign of God due to the fallen Davidic throne and the severed Davidic line.

Chapter 4 analyzes Psalms 90–92 and argues that a reimagined Moses enters Book IV to intercede for Israel (90) in response to the unfulfilled Davidic covenant in Psalm 89. Psalms 90–92 then allude to Deuteronomy 32–33 and progress from pained petition (90) to promised protection (91) to restored rejoicing (92).

Chapter 5 explores the message and function of Psalm 101 and argues that its

intra-book links, Davidic title, royal voice, lamenting tone, future orientation, inter-psalm allusions, and strategic placement make it a central psalm sustaining Davidic hope in Book IV.

Chapter 6 explores the lexical and thematic resonance among Psalms 90, 102, and 103 and argues that the afflicted Davidide in Psalm 102 applies and echoes the plaintive prayer of Moses in Psalm 90 and that the Davidic praise in Psalm 103 answers both Psalms 90 and 102. Thus David is forgiven and restored along with the people in Psalm 103.

Chapter 7 concludes by reviewing the evidence from each chapter and proposing that the overall structure and message of Book IV sustains the hope that God will keep his covenant with David.

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ORGANIZATIONS

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