THE CONFLICT BETWEEN FAITH AND EXPERIENCE AND

THE EDITING OF PSALMS 73–83

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APPROVAL SHEET

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN FAITH AND EXPERIENCE AND

THE EDITING OF PSALMS 73–83

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For my wife, Briana.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Bib	*Biblica*
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BSac	*Bibliotheca sacra*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue biblique
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
DCH	*The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HBS	Herders Biblische Studien
HTKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*

ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*
JANESCU	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NIBCOT	New International Bible Commentary on the Old Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
SBLABib	Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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PREFACE

I am indebted to many for constant support and encouragement during the long process that this work represents. The present study reflects the influence of many past professors, both at Reformed Theological Seminary and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I am grateful for the intellectual and personal investment that they have made; it will continue to shape me for years to come. It has been a blessing and a privilege to learn from so many excellent pastor-scholars at these institutions.

I would like to especially thank my advisor, Duane A. Garrett. He has constantly pushed me to become a more clear and effective writer throughout this process. I am a better thinker and writer because of his investment.

My parents, extended family members, and the students and staff at the Sovereign Grace Pastors College have been a constant encouragement to me. This work bears the imprint of their support.

Finally, I am most indebted to, and grateful for, my wife, Briana. She has sacrificed greatly to pursue what I believe to be God's calling. This opportunity would simply have been impossible apart from her steadfast love, support, and willingness to work so many long shifts in the ER and take additional work as a nurse educator.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A major interest of modern day Psalms studies is canonical or editorial

criticism of the Psalter.[1] This approach attempts to identify intentional structure in the

Psalter and determine its interpretive significance.[2] Its current prominence in Psalms

studies can be traced back to Brevard Childs' *Introduction to the Old Testament as*

Scripture.[3] But the major catalyst was the dissertation of Childs' student, Gerald Wilson.

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[1]Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); J. Clinton McCann, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, JSOT Sup 159 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993); J. Clinton McCann, "Psalm 73: An Interpretation Emphasizing Rhetorical and Canonical Criticism" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1985); Matthias Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters: Ein Formgeschichtlicher Ansatz*, FAT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); Patrick Miller Jr., "Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer: The Theology of Psalms 15–24," in *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung*, ed. Klaus Seybold and Erich Zenger, HBS 1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1994), 127–42; Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, JSOTSup 217 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997); David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, JSOTSup 252 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); David M. Howard Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, Biblical and Judaic Studies 5 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997); Jamie A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms*, SBLABib 17 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004); Robert E. Wallace, *The Narrative Effect of Book IV of the Hebrew Psalter*, Studies in Biblical Literature 112 (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); John C. Crutchfield, *Psalms in their Context: An Interpretation of Psalms 107–118*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2011); James H. Keener, *A Canonical Exegesis of the Eighth Psalm: YHWH'S Maintenance of the Created Order through Divine Reversal*, Journal of Theological Interpretation Supplement Series 9 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013); Michael G. McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh: A Canonical Study of Book IV of the Psalter*, Gorgias Biblical Studies 55 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013); Michael K. Snearly, *The Return of the King: Messianic Expectation in Book V of the Psalter*, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 624 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016). For a thorough survey of past editorial-critical studies, see Jean-Marie Auwers, *La composition littéraire du Psautier. Un état de la question*, CahRB 46 (Paris: Gabalda, 2000).

[2]See J. A. Grant, "Editorial Criticism," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, & Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008): 149–56. In this study I use "editorial criticism," "canonical criticism," and "canonical approach" synonymously.

[3]Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 512–14.

Wilson's 1985 study, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, sparked an interest in the canonical approach to the Psalter that does not appear to be waning any time soon.[4]

Thesis

The present study is evidence of this continuing interest. Its purpose is to evaluate Psalms 73–83 from the standpoint of editorial criticism.[5] The working thesis is that Psalms 73–83 give a sustained and coherent answer to a disorienting conflict of faith and experience precipitated by God's absence in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in the sixth century B.C.E.[6] That answer—the major theological message the collection communicates—is as follows: "Faith sticks to God's self-revelation amid conflicting evidence."[7] Consequently, I suggest, Book III of the Psalter (at least its opening collection of psalms) reflects the *high point* of Psalmic faith, not a low point as some studies have claimed.

Outline of the Present Study

The present chapter discusses the scope of the analysis but focuses on

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[4]There has, however, been a shift in recent years from analyses of the Psalter as a whole to smaller units of shape within it. Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, "The Canonical Approach to Scripture and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms: The Current State of Scholarship*, ed. Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, Ancient Israel and its Literature 20 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 9. Of course, like any approach, this one has its detractors as well. See R. N. Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book*, JSOTSup 222 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "Der Psalter als Buch und als Sammlung," in *Neue Wege Der PsalmenForschung*, ed. Klaus Seybold and Erich Zenger, HBS 1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1994).

[5]Justification for singling out these eleven consecutive psalms for analysis is provided below.

[6]The expression "conflict between faith and experience" is taken from Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study*, JSOTSup 52 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989). Chapter 3 discusses the presence of this crisis of faith in the Psalter in detail.

[7]I have borrowed this way of framing the collection's message from Ingvar Fløysvik. It represents the conclusion Fløysvik reached regarding the contribution of the "God-lament" psalms (see chap. 3) to the Psalter. Ingvar Fløysvik, *When God Becomes My Enemy: The Theology of the Complaint Psalms* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 1997), 176. The present study argues that Fløysvik's conclusion is an even more fitting summation of the theological contribution of Pss 73–83 to the Psalter.

methodology in editorial criticism. I use the proposed method to evaluate Psalms 73–83 in chapters 4 through 9. Chapter 2 situates the present study within the context of relevant scholarship on Psalms 73–83. The literature survey reveals the need for the present study's fresh appraisal of Psalms 73–83. Chapter 3 investigates the crisis of a conflict between faith and experience in the lament psalms. The conclusions I reach in this chapter lay an important foundation for the combined argument of chapters 4 through 9: Psalms 73–83 have been shaped to answer this specific theological crisis, though in a number of different manifestations.

Chapters 4 through 9 are the heart of the study. They consist of a detailed editorial-critical analysis of Psalms 73–83. Chapter 4 focuses on the opening Psalm 73. This consideration of Psalm 73 is key to understanding the macro-structure and overall message of the collection. Chapters 4 through 7 argue for the literary unity of Psalms 73–78. Chapters 5 and 6 respectively argue that (1) Psalms 74–76 (chapter 5) and 77–78 (chapter 6) are both deliberate psalm groupings and (2) each grouping is shaped to resolve a conflict of faith and experience.

The conclusions reached in chapters 5 and 6 form the basis for the argument of chapter 7. I argue here that Psalms 74–76 and 77–78 together form a larger unit composed of Psalms 74–78. Correspondences between this unit and Psalm 73 indicate that Psalm 73 serves as its programatic introduction. These chapters conclude that Psalms 73–78 are shaped to resolve a conflict of faith and experience precipitated by the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. The message that Psalms 73–78 communicates is that "Faith sticks to God's self-revelation amid conflicting evidence."

Chapters 8 and 9 argue for the literary unity of Psalms 79–82. This second major grouping of psalms in the collection likewise consists of two smaller ones (Pss 80–81; 79/82), which are arranged in an A (Ps 79), B (Ps 80), B' (Ps 81), A' (Ps 82) pattern. These chapters conclude that Psalms 79–82 are shaped to resolve the same theological crisis as the first major grouping (Pss 74–78), and to communicate the same basic

theological message. Chapter 9 concludes by showing that Psalm 83 is a fitting

conclusion to Psalms 74–82. Chapter 10 discusses conclusions and implications.

The Scope of the Analysis

Psalms 73–83 are situated at the head of Book III of the Psalter (Pss 73–89).

What justification, then, is there for analyzing them as an independent unit? The answer

is that Psalms 73–83 appear to constitute an independent collection that has been

incorporated into the Psalter. This is, in fact, the standard view in Psalms scholarship.[8]

The most substantial evidence supporting it is the common authorial superscription that

these eleven consecutive psalms share (לאסף). The many correspondences in content

between these psalms is further evidence of their unity as a collection.[9] Indirect support

comes from the observation of other similar groupings in the Psalter (e.g., Pss 3–14; 42–

49; 84–85; 51–72; 108–10; 120–34). These brief considerations are sufficient to justify

the scope of analysis in the present study.[10] The canonical analysis of Psalms 73–83 in the

following chapters provides further evidence of the unity and distinctiveness of this

collection.

Method in Editorial Criticism

I mentioned above that editorial criticism seeks to identify evidence of

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[8]See Hermann Gunkel, *An Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, completed by Joachim Begrich, trans. James D. Nogalski, Mercer Library of Biblical Studies (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 343–44; Claus Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content & Message* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), 16–19; Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 1–10; Nancy L. DeClaisse-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth L. Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 25.

[9]For this point, see the literature survey on Pss 73–83 in Christine Dannette Brown Jones, "The Psalms of Asaph: A Study of the Function of a Psalm Collection" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2009), 8–42, 60.

[10]The claim being made here is not that Pss 73–83 are hermitically sealed off from their context within Book III (i.e., Pss 84–89) or other parts of the Psalter. It is simply that there is warrant for analyzing these psalms as unit.

intentional structure in the Psalter and determine its interpretive significance. This claim naturally raises the question of how such evidence is detected. That is to say, it raises the question of the principles that constitute sound editorial-critical methodology. In what follows, I first consider common ways that the method has been misused (or even abused) in order to avoid these pitfalls in the present study. I then lay out principles that guide the analysis of Psalms 73–83 in chapters 4 through 9.

Common Misuse/Pitfalls

The first misuse is the "tendency to overreach, trying to explain the editorial purpose of a large section of text . . . based upon cursory observations."[11] Snearly rightly points to Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford's study, "Reading from the Beginning," as a study that falls into this category. DeClaissé-Walford's study has the lofty goal of answering the question, "Why these 150 psalms and why this order?"[12] Yet she only deals with a handful of these 150 psalms (i.e., those occurring at the beginning of each of the Psalter's five books). As a result, her study (and those like it) ends up providing a rather impressionistic account of the Psalter's final shape and its interpretive significance.[13] To guard against this pitfall, "editorial critics must be committed to a thoroughgoing analysis of the most pertinent data—the text itself—in order to make substantive contributions to biblical studies."[14]

A second misuse is the tendency to amass "frivolous links . . . that either overshadow the more plausible evidence or, worse, stand in the place of genuine

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[11]Snearly, *The Return of the King*, 18–19.

[12]DeClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, vii.

[13]David M. Howard Jr., "Recent Trends in Psalms Study," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, ed. David. W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker: 1999), 339.

[14]Snearly, *The Return of the King*, 18.

evidence."[15] This is editorial criticism's version of "parallelomania." The literature review in chapter 2 shows that Robert L. Cole's book, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, falls into this trap.[16] Cole "tends to see any similarity whatsoever as evidence of editorial significance."[17] Snearly draws an analogy from text criticism to help editorial critics avoid this pitfall: "evidence must be weighed, not counted."[18] Potential evidence must be collected *and* evaluated. Conclusions about intentional structure should be based on only the "weightiest data."[19]

A third misuse is related to this last concern: failing to make the important distinction between "indicators" and "significance" in one's analysis. Wilson urged the following caution to canonical critics:

> In dealing with these two questions of "indicators" and "significance," one must take care not to confuse them. The reason is that assumptions regarding the significance of the arrangement of the Book of Psalms can influence what one takes to be indicators of shape.[20]

Wilson refers to this pitfall in another place as the "working hypothesis."[21] His comments are worth quoting at length:

> Working hypotheses are a valid and useful means of research in the sciences where they can be tested repeatedly through experimentation in a controlled environment. They are, however, much more problematic in literary analysis where they can have the unfortunate effect of providing self-fulfilling prophecies. Especially in such a thematically diverse literature as the Psalms, a hypothesis set out beforehand can allow the researcher to see what supports the thesis and ignore what does not.[22]

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[15]Snearly, *The Return of the King*, 19.

[16]Snearly himself uses Cole's study to illustrate this particular misuse.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Gerald H. Wilson, "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," *Int* 46 (1992): 129.

[21]Gerald H. Wilson, "Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 42–45.

[22]Ibid. As an example of this misuse, Wilson points to John Walton's canonical study of the Psalter. See J. H. Walton, "Psalms: A Cantata about the Davidic Covenant," *JETS* 34 (1991): 21–31.

This pitfall is avoided by allowing "any sense of the structure that develops to derive from an intensive and thorough analysis of the psalms in question in terms of their linguistic, thematic, literary, and theological links and relationships."[23] This point is developed in more detail below.

A fourth pitfall is that of making "marmalade out of wonderful pieces of fruit."[24] That is, of "blending" individual psalms together so that their distinctiveness (or aspects of it) is all but lost in arriving at "the canonical meaning." We will see in chapter 2 that Cole's study is at times guilty of this misuse. The "canonical meaning" of a group of psalms emerges when the boundaries of its constituent psalms are respected, not blurred. The best way to avoid this pitfall is to begin with a careful exegesis of each psalm under consideration. Only then should the interpreter investigate the literary relationships that proximate (or distant) psalms share and consider their interpretive significance.

A fifth and final pitfall is an overemphasis, or sole focus, on the concatenative principle. The very idea of intentional *structure* implies both literary conjunction *and* disjunction. It is not enough to identify significant connections between psalms. As Grant explains, "The reader should also look for indicators of *editorial separation* of groups of psalms from their setting" (emphasis mine).[25] Cole's study mentioned above is a classic example of this pitfall. He focuses almost solely upon the similarities between psalms in his investigation of the shape and message of Book III. By heeding Grant's counsel, the present study shows that Cole's failure (and that of other studies) to look for signs of literary disjunction has obscured rather than clarified the structure of Psalms 73–83.[26]

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[23]Wilson, "Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter," 48.

[24]Eric Zenger, "Psalmenexegese und Psalterexegese: Eine Forschungsskizze," in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms*, ed. Erich Zenger, BETL 238 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 25.

[25]Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 226.

[26]See the discussion of Cole's work in chap. 2.

Sound Editorial-Critical Methodology

This section turns to the positive task of laying out methodological principles for analyzing Psalms 73–83. These principles arise from a consideration of the above pitfalls and best practices of previous studies.[27]

Guideline 1: Editorial criticism is a valid approach to the Psalter. This first consideration is more of a foundational principle than a guideline. The method has been misapplied or abused at times. But this is true of any method. The method should not be faulted for the negligence of its practitioners. Even a perusal of the works of Wilson, Howard, Grant, Creach, McKelvey, Snearly, and others, demonstrates the method's potential for shedding light on the structure and message of the Psalter. There is nothing in principle invalid about looking for deliberate literary unity among a group of individual psalms. What is needed is simply a more clearly defined and consistently applied methodology for doing so.

On the theoretical level, Snearly has recently provided a more solid linguistic footing for the method. He grounds the idea that groups of psalms can be read as a literary unity or "text" in the fields of text-linguistics and poetics. He argues that the Psalter may legitimately be read as a unified text if it can "meet the text-linguistic requirements for being called a text [i.e., written communication that is both cohesive and coherent]."[28] Parallelism can provide the mechanism for meeting this requirement: demonstration of significant parallels (i.e., key word links; thematic links, etc. [see below]) at different levels of the Psalter (i.e., neighboring psalms or more distant relationships) can identify structure and literary cohesion at different levels of the "text."

A second linguistic "pillar" upon which Snearly seeks to set the canonical

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[27]The discussion here is indebted to Snearly's excellent recent methodological discussion. See Snearly, *The Return of the King*, 23–53.

[28]Ibid., 45–46.

approach is poetics. He observes that the expansion of parallelism in recent years to include all levels of the individual text

> opens an avenue for grounding the relationship between psalms in the field of poetics. If parallelism exists at higher literary levels than the line, then it could be possible to demonstrate that parallelism exists at the highest literary levels: groups of poems and books. And if it could be shown that parallelism exists at those highest levels, then a case could be made that those highest levels were meant to be read as literature.[29]

The observation that parallelism operates at the highest literary levels *within* individual poetic texts opens the possibility that the Psalter's authors/editor(s) employed this device *between* texts. There is no reason in principle why this literary device could not have been used to deliberately group psalms. If convincing evidence can be produced, there is warrant for reading the psalms so linked as a literary unity.

Guideline 2: Parallelism is the primary means of detecting literary unity at the inter-psalm level. Parallelism is not the only means of identifying structure in the Psalter. And not every instance of parallelism between psalms is evidence of deliberate structure. But parallelism is nevertheless the fundamental means of identifying literary unity at the inter-psalm level. Snearly has recently isolated five complementary criteria that have distinguished themselves as "the soundest ways of demonstrating links between neighboring passages."[30] He derives these criteria from the most substantial contributions to the field since Wilson's seminal study. What follows is a brief discussion of these criteria. I have augmented Snearly's observations with my own throughout. My purpose here is to lay a solid foundation for discerning deliberate structure in Psalms 73–83, not to exhaust the possible forms that parallelism may take.

The five criteria are as follows: (1) key–word links; (2) distant parallelism; (3) common theme; (4) structural parallels; and (5) superscriptions.[31] Not a few scholars,

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[29]Snearly, *The Return of the King*, 48.

[30]Ibid., 37.

[31]Most editorial critics similarly take an eclectic approach. See Erich Zenger, "Was wird anders

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Snearly included, give pride of place to key-word links. Shimon Bar-Efrat supplies a general definition of a key word that can be used in editorial-critical analyses.[32] A key word is "a word or root [that] is repeated meaningfully within a text or series of texts."[33] For example, Snearly draws attention to fourteen different lexica that collectively "bind . . . together" Psalms 107–118.[34] This is one argument for the literary cohesion of these psalms. Editorial critics have applied the term "key word" to more than just individual words or forms. David Howard observes that key-word links may consist of single words,[35] whole clauses (e.g., הריעו ליהוה כל הארץ in Ps 98:4 and 100:1), whole verses (e.g., Pss 96:13 and 98:9),[36] and "complexes of identical words and ideas" (e.g., Ps 95:6–7c and 100:3).[37]

Distant parallelism consists of the occurrence of parallel features—key words, common theme, common motif, etc.—at some distance from each other. More than one scholar has argued that distant parallelism serves a bracketing function. That is, it can

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bei kanonischer Psalmenauslegung?," in *Ein Gott, eine Offenbarung: Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese, Theologie und Spiritualität*, ed. F. V. Reiterer (Würzburg, Germany: Echter, 1991), 397–413; McKelvey, *Moses, David, and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 6–19.

[32]Some scholars have very stringent qualifications for what constitutes a "key word." In his study of Book V, Snearly only considers a word a key word if it "represents at least 50% of the usage within Book V and/or 20% of the usage within the Psalter." Snearly, *The Return of the King*, 117. Such specific percentages, however, seem to me arbitrary and unnecessary.

[33]Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (New York: T&T Clark: 2004), 212.

[34]Snearly, *The Return of the King*, 117.

[35]Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 100.

[36]These two verses differ in only one word. Compare לפני יהוה כי בא כי בא לשפט הארץ ישפט תבל בצדק ועמים באמונתו (". . . before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth, he will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in *faithfulness*") and לפני יהוה כי בא לשפט הארץ ישפט תבל בצדק ועמים במישרים (". . . before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth, he will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in *uprightness*").

[37]"Come, let us worship and bow down; let us bless before the Lord, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the flock of his hand. This day, O that you would hear his voice! (באו נשתחוה ונכרעה נברכה לפני יהוה עשנו כי הוא אלהינו ואנחנו עם מרעיתו וצאן ידו היום אם בקלו תשמעו)" (Ps 95:6); "Know that the Lord, he is God. He is our maker (and) we are his, we are his people and the flock of his pasture (דעו כי יהוה הוא אלהים הוא עשנו ולא ולו אנחנו עמו וצאן מרעיתו)" (Ps 100:3).

demarcate the boundaries of a deliberately arranged psalm group. Michael Mckelvey, for example, argues that the "Mosaic motif" binding together the sub-groups Psalms 90–92 and 105–6 functions as an *inclusio* bracketing Book IV.[38] Similarly, Snearly argues that the repetition of the summons הדו ליהוה כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו ("Give thanks the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!") in Psalm 107:1 and 118:29 forms an *inclusio* that signals the boundaries of the first major unit of Book V (i.e., Pss 107–118).[39]

The third criterion is common theme. Bruce Waltke observes that "Themes are short topics that wind their way through a work and are usually identifiable by key words/motifs."[40] It has long been observed that themes can have a structuring and unifying function. They can "grant coherence and simplicity to what might seem on the surface disparate and divided,"[41] act as a "unifying and integrating principle,"[42] and even function as a "determining factor in the overall composition of the book."[43] It is important to point out that themes are not always apparent on the surface of the text. They must sometimes be "abstracted by interpretation."[44] This point is important to keep in mind since different language can be used to describe one and the same theme. Motifs and key words can help identify a text's themes.[45]

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[38]McKelvey, *Moses, David, and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 272. McKelvey argued earlier that Pss 90–92 and Pss 105–6 constitute two distinct psalm groups based upon (1) conjunctive features that bind them together, and (2) disjunctive features that distinguish them amid their proximate context (21–65, 221–51, 256–61, and 270–72).

[39]See Snearly, *The Return of the King*, 105ff.

[40]Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 90.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Shimon Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," *VT* 30 (1980): 169.

[43]Ibid., 168–69. Bar-Efrat shows how the theme of "transference of leadership" in 1 Sam functions as "a determining factor in the overall composition of the book." Ibid.

[44]Ibid., 169.

[45]Robert Alter defines as a motif as "a concrete image, sensory quality, action, or object [that]

Theme functions similarly in the Psalter to create literary unity among groups of psalms. An oft cited example is the theme of Yahweh's kingship that runs through Psalms 93–100. According to McKelvey, this theme "proves to be the primary conjunctive feature that binds Pss 93–100 as a sub-group in Book IV."[46] Howard points out that this theme is reflected in Psalms 93–100 by what he calls "thematic word links." He defines these as "themes elaborated via repeated words or lexemes . . . found in any two psalms that show connections between the two."[47] Howard has also observed other, lesser, themes binding these psalms together that are *not* reflected in common vocabulary and lexemes. Thus, Howard distinguishes between two types of thematic links in his study: those reflected in common vocabulary, and those that are not.

Superscriptions, the fourth criterion, have long been recognized as indicators of structure in the Psalter. As is well-known, Gerald Wilson drew attention to the changes in author designation at the "seams" of Books I–III in his seminal study. This pattern suggested that the editor(s) used such changes to indicate the divisions between these books. There is a shift from David (Ps 41) to the "sons of Korah" (Ps 42) at the "seam" of Books I and II; from Solomon (Ps 72) to Asaph (Ps 73) at the "seam" of Books II and III; and from "Ethan the Ezrahite" (Ps 89) to Moses (Ps 90) at the juncture of Books III and IV. Another example is Jamie Grant's observation that the lack of superscriptions on Psalms 1 and 2 sets these psalms apart as a group distinct from Psalms 3–89, where superscriptions predominate.[48]

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recurs . . . . It has no meaning in itself without the defining context of the narrative." Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 95. An example of a motif suggesting intentional structure in the Psalter is the above-mentioned "Mosaic motif" at the boundaries of Book IV, Pss 90–92 and 105–6. McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 272.

[46]McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 263.

[47]Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 100.

[48]Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 227–29. See also McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 259–60, 265, 268–69, and 271.

Finally, structural parallels are another means by which scholars have detected literary unity on an inter-psalm level. Structural parallels come in various forms. Those most relevant for the present study are two forms of inverted parallelism, chiastic (e.g., A, B, B', A') and concentric (e.g., A, B, X, B', A') patterns. Such patterns are widespread in both Hebrew narrative and poetry, though the degree to which this is true is debated. They operate at all levels of these texts, from the individual verse or line to the poem or book as a whole.[49] It is, therefore, not surprising that Psalms scholars have detected these patterns at work on the inter-psalm level as well. Scholars have advanced arguments for the concentric arrangement of Psalms 15–24,[50] 84–88,[51] and even Books II (Pss 42–72) and III (Pss 73–89) as a whole.[52] More recently, O. Palmer Robertson has argued for the chiastic arrangement of Psalms 49–52.[53] Such literary patterns are significant for present purposes because they demonstrate the literary unity of the text(s) so arranged.[54]

I would add a sixth criterion to Snearly's five, though it is more of a qualification or clarification. Some editorial critics have discounted certain parallels as significant on the grounds that they are used in different contexts in their respective psalms. For example, Snearly claims in his study that parallels between Psalms 118 and

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[49]For thorough documentation of this point, see John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Hildesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981).

[50]See Miller, "Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer,"; Phillip Sumpter, "The Coherence of Psalms 15–24," *Bib* 94 (2013): 186–209.

[51]See Marcello Fidanzio, "Composition des Psaumes 84–88," in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms*, 468–83.

[52]E.g., Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 71. The arrangement is as follows: A (Korah Pss 42–49), B (Asaph Ps 50), X (David Pss 51–65 and 68–70), B' (Asaph Pss 73–83), A' (Korah Pss 84–85, 87, 88 [89]). Significantly, Mitchell appeals to this structure as evidence that the so-called "Elohistic Psalter" (i.e., Pss 42–83) includes Pss 84–89.

[53]See O. Palmer Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering Their Structure and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), 93–95.

[54]This is not to deny that some chiastically arranged units had a literary pre-history attributable to multiple authors/editors. But it is to say that, whatever its literary pre-history, the unit's final form is clearly intended to be read as a literary unity.

119 pointed out by Yair Zakovich should not be considered significant since "in every case the words are not used in the same types of contexts."[55] Regardless of whether these parallels are significant, the grounds upon which Snearly dismisses them are invalid. The Psalter is replete with examples where words "not used in the same types of contexts" are meaningfully repeated.

Consider, for example, the network of lexical repetitions that McCann observes between the two halves of Psalm 73, a number of which are displayed in table 1 on the following page. Table 1 shows that a set of lexical items first occurs in a lament-like section where the psalmist details the prosperity of the wicked (vv. 4–12). Each lexical item then recurs in a completely different context in verses 18–28. Additionally, the link איכה/איך is also used in a different sense in its second occurrence (as an interjection instead of an interrogative). Commenting on these repetitions, McCann observes, "It is possible that some of the instances of repetition . . . are coincidental. However, the number of cases involved and their pattern suggests that the repetition is used intentionally as a rhetorical device to highlight the reversal that has taken place in the psalmist's perspective."[56] Thus, Psalm 73 furnishes an example of an entire network of links "not used in the same types of context" but that nevertheless communicate significant meaning. In fact, the rhetorical effect McCann describes arises *precisely because* these links are "not used in the same types of contexts."

The following principle can be derived from the above observations: it is not required that a lexical item (or some other feature) be used in the same context, or even same sense, for its repetition to communicate significant meaning. It is only required that a semantic/logical relationship exists between the contexts in which the lexical item (or some other feature) occurs. From a methodological standpoint, this means that the

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[55]Snearly, *The Return of the King*, 114.

[56]McCann, "Psalm 73," 82.

Table 1. Select lexical links between Psalm 73:4–12 and 18–28[57]

Lexical item	*Verses 4–12*	*Verses 18–28*
עם ("with")	". . . *with* man, they (i.e., the wicked" are not afflicted." (v. 5)	"When my heart was embittered, I was a beast *with* you."; "I am continually *with* you." (vv. 22, 23) See also v. 25.
שית ("set/make")	"They (the wicked) *set* their mouth in heaven." (v. 9)	"Surely, you *set* them (i.e., the wicked) in slippery places" (v. 18); "I have *made* the Lord God my refuge" (v. 28)
בארץ + בשמים (" in heaven/ "on earth")	"They (the wicked) set their mouth in *heaven*, and their tongue walks through the *earth*." (v. 9)	"Who is there for me in the *heavens*, but with you I am pleased on the *earth*."(v. 25)
עולם ("forever")	"Behold, these are the wicked . . . *forever* they increase riches." (v. 12)	"God is the rock of my heart and my portion *forever*." (v. 26)
איכה/ איך ("how")	"*How* does God know?" (v. 11)	"*How* they become destroyed in a moment." (v. 19)
ידע ("to know")	"How does God *know*?" "Is there *knowledge* in the Most High?" (v. 11)	"When my soul was embittered . . . I was without *knowledge*." (v. 22)

interpreter only needs to reasonably establish that such a relationship exists between psalms. Indeed, a number of scholars have observed this principle at work on the inter-psalm level.[58] The analysis of Psalms 73–83 in the present study reveals it to be a particularly prominent type of parallelism at work between these psalms.

Guideline 3: Evidence must be weighed, not counted. This guideline has

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[57]Table 1 is adapted from the discussion in McCann, "Psalm 73," 79–82. As McCann himself notes, other scholars have noticed some or all of these repetitions, and the rhetorical effect that McCann assigns to them. Ibid., 82n65.

[58]Grant makes the following observation about the verb הגה ("to meditate/ plot") in Pss 1:2 and 2:1: "The repetition of this verb serves to contrast the attitude of the personae which represent opposing worldviews in these two psalms [i.e., the righteous psalmist of Ps 1; the wicked nations of Ps 2]." Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 61. See also Mckelvey's observations on the verb עוף ("to fly") in Pss 90:10 and 91:5, McKelvey, *Moses, David, and the High Kingship of Yahweh*, 48.

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already been touched on above. Not every instance of parallelism between two or more psalms is evidence of intentional editorial activity. Parallels must not simply be amassed, but must be evaluated to weed out incidental links. Otherwise, the method will almost certainly slip into "rampant subjectivity."[59] The goal of the editorial critic is to identify *significant* parallels between psalms, those reflecting intentional structure.

There is no one formula, standard, or process for doing so. Each link should be considered on a case by case basis. Consider the criterion of key words from above. A key word is by definition a word that is *meaningfully* repeated. Bar-Efrat gives some guidelines for determining whether a root, word, or group of words is being meaningfully repeated in a text. He advises that

> attention should be paid to three aspects: 1. how frequently the word is used in the Bible; 2. how frequently the word is used within the text or series of texts; 3. how near the repeated words are as regard to their position in the text. The greater the frequency of the word in the Bible, the more densely should it occur (more often or with greater proximity); and the rarer it is, the less intensively need it occur (less often and at a greater distance).[60]

Bar-Efrat's "frequency criteria" can be, and have been, used to discern intentional structure in the Psalter. The editorial critic should consider how frequently the word or root occurs within (1) the particular group of psalms under consideration; (2) the "book" within which this group occurs; (3) the Psalter as a whole; and (4) even the Hebrew Bible as a whole. Less justification is needed in the case of rarer words.[61] More is needed in the case of commonly occurring ones. The frequency criteria can (and should) be applied to any type of parallelism detected. Studies that have produced the most compelling results have made consistent use of some version of the "frequency" criterion.[62]

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[59]Grant, "Editorial Criticism," 153.

[60]Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 212.

[61]In this regard, see the *dis legomenon* משואות in Ps 73:18 and משאות in 74:3. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 29.

[62]See Howard, *Psalms 93–100;* McKelvey, *Moses, David, and the High Kingship of Yahweh*; Snearly, *The Return of the King*.

Often multiple lines of evidence are needed to justify a given parallel. This is frequently the case, for example, with potential instances of distant parallelism. There is an added element of subjectivity given the remote nature of these types of links. The reader will recall the example of distant parallelism noted above from Snearly's study, the summons הדו ליהוה כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו ("Give thanks the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!") in Psalm 107:1 and Psalm 118:29. Snearly's argument for the intentionality of this link is not merely that the verses are identical. He notes as well their location (i.e., the opening and closing verses of a psalm respectively) and, most important of all, the inner cohesion of the psalms that they bracket.

Guideline 4: Significance should be distinguished from evidence. This guideline too was discussed in the above consideration of methodological pitfalls. I simply state the principle positively here. Sound methodology should consist of a two-step process. The first step is identifying indicators or evidence of intentional structure; the second is deriving the significance of the structural unit from the nature of the evidence.

Guideline 5: Deliberate structure is a function of literary conjunction *and* disjunction. The final guideline also relates back to the earlier discussion. Both conjunctive and disjunctive features of a group of psalms must be considered when determining their structure and message(s). This guideline has been perhaps the most neglected principle in previous canonical studies. In 2004 Grant noted the following:

> To date psalm groupings have been defined largely by focusing on the factors that link the psalms under examination. Little consideration has been paid to the factors that separate a group of psalms from its near neighbors. This seems to be a methodological weakness and clearer definition must be given to this important factor within the canonical approach.[63]

Grant continues by explaining that,

> as well as looking for linking, the reader should also look for indicators of editorial

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[63]Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 226.

separation of groups of psalms from their setting. The whole idea of a psalm grouping implies both a *conjunctive* and *disjunctive* literary function. On the one hand, the idea of a "psalm grouping" implies a degree of connection between the psalms within that grouping, and, logically it in turn implies a degree of separation from the other neighboring psalms which are not part of this psalm grouping.[64]

The Psalter's structure emerges as attention is given to both conjunctive an disjunctive features. Consistently carried out, such a process results in the identification of "psalm groupings"—deliberate and distinct clusters of psalms. It is a happy development that scholars have given greater attention to disjunctive features since Grant penned the above words.[65] Nevertheless, literary disjunction is still a neglected aspect of canonical studies. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, attention to this principle is especially important for understanding the structure and message of Psalms 73–83.

The above guidelines are not an exhaustive set of principles for discerning intentional structure in the Psalter. But they have proven to be an effective means of identifying it in past studies. Consequently, they guide the analysis of Psalms 73–83 in chapters four through nine of the present study.

Conclusion

In this chapter I set forth the thesis of the present study, discussed the study's scope of analysis, and considered the important issue of methodology in editorial criticism. Regarding the latter, I first considered methodological pitfalls to be avoided, and then set forth principles that have proved to be effective for detecting deliberate structure and theological messages in the Psalter in previous studies. These principles guide the present analysis of Psalms 73–83.

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[64]Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 226.

[65]Two examples that stand out are Mckelvey's study of Book IV and Snearly's study of Book V mentioned in this section.

CHAPTER 2

PREVIOUS EDITORIAL-CRITICAL STUDIES OF
PSALMS 73–83

In this chapter I situate the present study within the context of precedent research on Psalms 73–83 from a canonical perspective. As seen below, canonical analyses of Psalms 73–83 are found in works of varying scopes: studies on Psalms 73–83 as a unit, Book III as a unit, and those considering the entire Psalter. My purpose in this chapter is to provide a representative (though thorough) survey of proposals for the structure of Psalms 73–83 and the message(s) communicated in/by its final form. I give particular attention to how previous scholars have arrived at their proposals, the issue of method. The survey is arranged according to author.

Gerald Wilson

I begin with Gerald Wilson given his influence on the discipline. Wilson's most substantial comments on Psalms 73–83 are not found in his seminal dissertation, but in a later essay.[1] He argues here that Book III is part of a segment of the Psalter (i.e., Books I–III) that forms a response to the "agony and loss in the exilic community."[2] He points to Psalms 74 and 89 as psalms that "leave us no choice" but to acknowledge this fact. Within Book III itself, Wilson suggests that Psalm 73 was added to the book's opening "seam" during the final stage of the Psalter's redaction.[3] He claims

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[1]See Gerald H. Wilson, "The Structure of the Psalter," in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, ed. David Firth and Phillip S. Johnston (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005), 235–40.

[2]Ibid., 235. He notes here his belief that *both* Books I–III and IV–V are responses to the agony of the exile. In the Psalter's final redaction, the viewpoint of the latter two books takes precedence.

[3]Ibid., 239. He points out that the Qumran evidence is consistent with this observation. Psalm 73 is only one of nineteen canonical psalms from Pss 2–89 for which there is no manuscript evidence. Ibid.,

that this psalm stands outside of the "bookends" of Psalms 74 and 89—which have a more "angry and demanding tone"—and "offers a contrasting way forward in response to the loss of exile."[4] Wilson's overall assessment of Book III is surprisingly positive: "the psalms of the third book offer mostly hopeful encouragement for those who remain loyal to Yahweh under the pressures of exile."[5]

Wilson's conclusions, however, suffer from "overreaching."[6] They rest largely on his understanding of the psalms at or near the book's "seams," Psalms 73–74 and 89.[7] A consideration of these important psalms is a good place to start. But it is not a firm basis on which to rest conclusions about the significance of an entire book, as Wilson himself observed elsewhere.[8] Unfortunately, Wilson's untimely death prevented him from carrying out such an analysis of Psalms 73–83 or Book III as a whole.

J. Clinton McCann

J. Clinton McCann's study, "Books I–III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter," is one of the earliest studies of Book III (and so Pss 73–83) from a canonical perspective.[9] McCann attempts to build upon Wilson's thesis that the Psalter

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239n18.

[4]Wilson, "The Structure of the Psalter," 239.

[5]Ibid., 240. Wilson notes that Ps 88 is an exception to this hopeful tone.

[6]See the methodological discussion in chap. 1.

[7]In other places Wilson offered a more in-depth study of these psalms than he does in his dissertation. For example, see Gerald H. Wilson, "The Use of Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter," *JSOT* 35 (1986): 85–94.

[8]Gerald H. Wilson, "Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 48.

[9]J. Clinton McCann, "Books I–III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter," in McCann, *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, 93–107. This essay is an expansion and refinement of ideas first set forth in chap. 5 of McCann's doctoral dissertation. See J. Clinton McCann, "Psalm 73: An Interpretation Emphasizing Rhetorical and Canonical Criticism" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1985), 123–79.

addresses the apparent failure of the traditional Davidic/Zion covenant theology. Wilson argued that the answer to the problem documented in Books I–III comes in Books IV–V. McCann's burden is to show that "Books I–III already begin to answer the problem posed by the exile, dispersion and oppression of Israel by the nations in the post-exilic era."[10] He argues this claim by considering the psalms beginning Books I–III (Pss 1–2; 42–44; 73–74) and the shape of Book III itself. According to McCann, these considerations reveal a pattern "that serves to instruct the postexilic community not only to face the disorienting reality of exile but also to reach toward a reorientation beyond the traditional grounds for hope, that is, beyond the Davidic/Zion covenant theology."[11]

McCann begins with Book III because he believes that it most clearly reflects the failure of the Davidic covenant. He argues that the book has been significantly shaped by the experience of exile: it is communally oriented; it contains most of the communal laments in the Psalter; and Psalms 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, and 89 clearly reflect exilic influence.[12] Further, Psalm 73 pictures the psalmist maintaining hope in the midst of trouble, while Psalm 74 is a communal lament over the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. In fact, according to McCann, the arrangement of the entire book reflects exilic influence. Apart from Psalms 79–80, the book's communal laments do not occur side by side; they are punctuated with psalms which "grasp for threads of hope amid the experience of exile and dispersion by celebrating God as judge of all the earth or by rehearsing God's past deeds on Israel's behalf despite Israel's unfaithfulness."[13] Thus, the book's final form has a structure that consistently alternates between expressions of

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[10]J. Clinton McCann, "Books I–III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter," in McCann, *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, 95.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid., 96.

[13]Ibid.

lament and hope.[14] McCann claims that Psalm 73, with its movement from lament (vv. 1–16) to hope (vv. 18–27), anticipates this arrangement. In this way it "sets the tone" for the entire book.

McCann's central thesis, and most original claim, is that such an arrangement—the alternation between lament and hope—"serves to assist" the community both to face the horror of exile and to reach for fresh hope beyond the traditional David/Zion theology. This is how Book III "already begins to answer" the problem posed by the exilic crisis. This message is implied in the juxtaposition of the traditional David/Zion theology and communal laments over its apparent failure throughout the book. In his view, these juxtapositions are intended to signal the rejection of the David/Zion theology as a basis of hope. One example is the sequencing of Psalm 78:68–72, which recounts the David/Zion theology, and Psalm 79:1–2, which lament the desecration of the temple and destruction of Jerusalem.[15] The message communicated is that hope for the future is not found in the David/Zion theology. Rather, hope is found in the psalms that stress God's role as judge (e.g., Pss 75–76) and that rehearse God's past deeds (e.g., Ps 77:12–21; Ps 78). Psalm 73 is "an example to the postexilic community of how to respond to the problem of exile and dispersion,"[16]

McCann's central thesis, however, is based on rather cursory observations about the book's structure. He assumes the significance of the alternating pattern he recognizes, rather than demonstrating this point from a detailed analysis of the links between the psalms. The same is true about his claim that this alternating pattern

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[14]For example, the communal laments Pss 74, 79, 80, 83, 85:1–8, 89:39–52 are offset with the hope expressed in Pss 75, 76, 81:12–17, 82, etc.

[15]Other such juxtapositions he points to are Ps 89:1–38/ 39–52 and Pss 73/74. It should be noted that McCann does think that the two "Zion psalms" (Pss 84 and 87) are "two-edged"; they remind the community of God's past deeds, but their juxtaposition with laments "makes the traditional hope ring hollow at best." J. Clinton McCann, "Books I–III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter," in McCann, *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, 98.

[16]Ibid., 100.

functions to point the reader *away* from the David/Zion theology. There is no question that psalms containing this theology and psalms lamenting it are juxtaposed in the collection (e.g., Ps 78:68–72; Ps 79:1–2). But much more detailed work would need to be done to demonstrate that editors intended such juxtapositions to point the reader *away* from the David/Zion theology. Cursory observations could equally lead to precisely the opposite conclusion: the book opens with a psalm in which a psalmist finds resolution to a crisis of faith at the symbol par excellence of the Zion theology, the temple (Ps 73:17). This observation could be taken to imply that the book instead points the reader *towards* the Zion theology. McCann's own proposal could even be marshaled to support this conclusion. He himself considers Psalm 73 to be "an example to the post-exilic community of how to respond" to the failure of the David/Zion theology.

Further, McCann's thesis is problematic at the level of the individual psalm. Psalms 74 and 79 certainly lament the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. But they do not thereby signal the need for "reorientation that moves beyond the traditional Davidic/Zion theology." Moving beyond such theology is precisely what the psalmist/ community responsible for these psalms refuses to do! Psalms 74 and 79, which lament the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, are written from the perspective of Israelites who refuse to accept what these experiences seem to imply. Laments such as Psalm 79:1– 2 and Psalm 74:1–12 are aimed at persuading God to *act in accordance with the David/ Zion theology*. They reflect an inflexible commitment to this traditional theology, and are predicated on the hope that God will hear and act in accordance with it—even though it appears to have failed at present.[17] It is, therefore, difficult to see how such psalms point

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[17]As R. N. Whybray notes, "However much the psalmists may accuse God of breaking his word and becoming an enemy, hope always remains that intercession will be effective." R. N. Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book*, JSOTSup 222 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 93. Craig Broyles similarly observes that "the aim of these psalms . . . is never simply to complain, for this protest is always directed towards the purpose of summoning God to conform to his promises, as contained in these traditions." Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study*, JSOTSup 52 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 221. Ingvar Fløysvik considers the major theological contribution of psalms like Pss 74 and 79 to be that "faith sticks to God's

the reader away from the traditional theology. These psalmists are not interested in any sort of "reorientation" that excludes the David/Zion theology.

Robert L. Cole

Robert L. Cole's book, "The Shape and Message of Book III of the Psalter (Psalms 73-89)," is the most exhaustive study of Psalms 73–89 from a canonical perspective.[18] It is the only full-length monograph devoted to the topic. Cole seeks to build upon the work of Wilson and others by examining the purposeful arrangement of Psalms 73–89. His methodology is derived from the field of poetics, in particular Adele Berlin's observation that parallelism operates at every level of a text. Cole describes his understanding of editorial criticism as follows:

> It has become clear in recent years that the phenomenon of parallelism and repetition in the Psalter must be extended beyond that of the individual poems to surrounding psalms and finally the entire collection. The ordering and shaping of the collection casts the individual psalms in a new light . . . . Such a focus moves from what the individual poem expresses to a meaning implied by the final compilation, the latter becoming a single 'text.' Consequently, the study of the final shape of the Psalter is simply a recognition that parallelism is not restricted to the individual poem.[19]

Cole embarks upon a rigorous 230 page study of the "text" of Psalms 73–89. He works systematically through all seventeen psalms and constructs the book's "shape and message" on the basis of copious amounts of parallel features culled from these psalms. The links that Cole cites are lexical, phonological, thematic, and structural in nature. In this survey my focus is Cole's understanding of Psalms 73–83.

For Cole, "the dominant theme of Book III is the prolonged postponement of expectations that Ps 72 aroused."[20] He argues that the psalms of Book III communicate

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self-revelation in the midst of conflicting evidence." Ingvar Fløysvik, *When God Becomes My Enemy: The Theology of the Complaint Psalms* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 1997), 176.

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

[19]Ibid., 10.

[20]Ibid., 61.

this theme by a "continuing dialogue," or even drama, centered around the fulfillment of promises contained in Psalm 72. Psalm 72 serves as the basis for the lament, questioning, and promise of future restoration that run throughout Book III. The recurring themes that he detects correspond to different voices in a three-way "continuing dialogue"; a lamenting, sinful, and questioning nation (Pss 73:10; 74; 79; 80; 82; 83); a series of Divine responses to the nation (Pss 75; 76; 81:9-15; 82); and a righteous Davidide—distinguished from the nation by his obedience—who figures prominently in Cole's understanding of the book's message (Pss 73:15–17; 75:10–11; 77; 78:1; 80:18; 84; 85; 86; 88).

Book III begins in Psalm 73 with conditions which "are the opposite of those promised in Ps 72" (16). The "dialogue" begins in Psalm 74 with a communal lament to God. The "How long?" questions voiced first in this psalm (see vv. 9–10) will recur throughout the remainder of Book III (77:8–10; 79:5, 10; 80:5; 82:2; 85:6; 89: 47) (34). But Psalm 74 does not simply complain; it requests the fulfillment of Psalm 72 (36). This request is answered in Psalms 75 and 76. Psalm 75 answers both the "How long?" and "Why?" questions of Psalm 74 (38). In Psalm 75:3 God himself responds that he will judge with equity at a Divinely appointed time. On the other hand, the judgement of God mentioned in verses 3 and 8 provides an indirect response to the "Why?" of Psalm 74:1 and 11. It also responds to the problem of the wicked in Psalm 73 (38). Further, in promising the "long-awaited judgement" of the wicked, Psalm 75 "rekindles hope in the eventual fulfillment of . . . Ps 72" (45). Psalm 76 is a "more detailed and vivid outworking" of the appointed time of God's judgement mentioned in 75:3. Many links with Psalm 74 indicate that "each point of Psalm 74 is being answered by . . . 76" (49). In addition, the promised salvation of "the afflicted ones" (v. 10) "reiterates the promise of a future kingdom of peace and justice seen in Psalm 72" (53).

The "dialogue" continues in Psalm 77 with another lament. "Parallel vocabulary to Ps 77 in both 76 and 74 reveal continued discussion of the desired

redemption" (55). Psalm 77 longs for the destruction of the enemies promised in the preceding Psalm 76. But Psalm 77 also reminds the people of their past failures; the community suffers under God's wrath (v. 10). An important aspect of Psalm 77 concerns the verb אזן in v. 2. In Cole's view, this verb "begins a string of the same through Psalms 77, 78 [v. 1], and 80 [v. 2], revealing a dialogue between God and the people at the canonical level . . . the response of Ps 78 answers complaints voiced in 77, but due to the nature of that response Ps 80.2 . . . again asks for a hearing" (60). Psalm 77 is to be understood as another appeal for the restoration promised in Psalm 72. Psalm 78 provides a detailed response to the lament of Psalm 77. This response both explains the dismal situation of the people in terms of sin and disobedience, and provides "the pledge of an eventual restoration of Zion which now lies in ruins and of another shepherd like David. In the midst of complaints and laments, the promises of Psalms 72, 75, and 76 have been reaffirmed" (70).

The presence of many links between the closing verses of Psalm 78 (vv. 67–72) and the opening verses of Psalm 79 (vv. 1–3) indicates that Psalm 79:1–3 is a response to the David/Zion theology found at the conclusion of Psalm 78—the former is a complete reversal of the latter (80). The "How long?" of the community continues in Psalm 79, a question that is "never fully answered in Book III" (81).The community continues to speak in Psalm 80. This lament is "another appeal to God by the faithful community" that responds "to issues raised in Psalm 78, but also repeats questions similar especially to those seen in Psalm 74. Furthermore, promises given in Psalm 72 are also recalled" (95). Psalm 81 follows as a Divine response to the appeals of both Psalms 79 and 80. The answers that Psalm 81 provides for Psalm 80 "prove that God still answers, even if not in the desired manner" (98). In Psalm 81, God responds to the people's "Hear!" (Ps 80:2) in kind, exhorting *them* to "Hear!" (Ps 81:9, 12, 14). The nature of this response is both sober and hopeful. God explains the people's sad state in terms of their disobedience (Ps 81:12–13). However, if his people would listen, God

promises to turn his hand back upon their enemies and deliver them (Ps 81:14–17).

Psalm 82 continues the Divine response of Psalm 81. The prominent "How long?" of the community is now taken up on the lips of God himself (Ps 82:2): "In answer to the question of how long the desolation would last, the same is thrown back at the nation asking how long their corrupt judgement would continue."[21] Another reassertion of the promise of Psalm 72 is found here in the closing verse of Psalm 82. This verse promises that "all of the nations" will eventually be brought under "divine dominion."[22] At the same time, the request for God's action in Psalm 82:8 is "pleading for the promises of Psalm 72 to be fulfilled."[23] The Asaphite collection closes with Psalm 83. According to Cole, the "oppressive situation described in Psalm 83 is a direct result of the disobedience described in 81 . . . Psalm 83 pleads for God's wrath upon the nations and "ironically brings to the fore Israel's own guilt, as expressed in previous psalms of Book III."[24]

Perhaps the greatest strength of Cole's work is that it provides the editorial critic with a substantial amount of data to work with. One gets the impression from Cole's work that he has left no stone unturned; if a link exist between two psalms, Cole has found it. As mentioned in chapter one, data collection is a necessary preliminary step for detecting significant parallels. Particularly valuable is the brief appendix, where Cole lists and analyzes the book's *dis legomena* (forms that only occur twice in Pss 73–89).[25] Further, Cole's appeal to poetics in an effort to ground reading Book III as a literary unity

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[21]Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 103. Cole understands the plural אלהים of Ps 82 as a reference to corrupt "judges in Israel, and not a pantheon of foreign gods." Ibid.

[22]Ibid., 104.

[23]Ibid., 105.

[24]Ibid., 111, 114. According to Cole, this irony results from the speaker of Ps 83 asking that the judgement of Ps 73 be brought to bear upon God's enemies. This request is ironic because, at the canonical level of Book III, such a judgement would include Israel. Ibid., 113.

[25]Ibid., 236–39.

is in principle valid and contributes to editorial-critical methodology.

Unfortunately, the methodological weaknesses of Cole's work outweigh its strengths. As Snearly has pointed out, Cole "tends to see any similarity whatsoever as evidence of editorial significance."[26] One negative consequence is that it gives Cole's work a highly subjective character. One is often left wondering if the connections cited are links that the editor(s) intended the reader to make, or if they are simply ones that Cole is able find by an exhaustive investigation of these psalms.

What is severely lacking from Cole's work is a systematic attempt to distinguish *evidence* of intentional structure and its *significance*.[27] These two concerns are constantly conflated in Cole's work. As a result, the truly significant links between these psalms often get lost in the mix. A related concern is the near complete neglect of attention to literary disjunction among these psalms in determining their "shape and message." Cole's appeal to parallelism is valid. But his extreme focus on concatenation actually confuses instead of clarifies the distinctive shape of these psalms.[28] As discussed in chapter 1, scholars such as Grant, McKelvey, and Snearly have demonstrated that the Psalter's structure emerges when careful and systematic attention is given to *both* conjunctive *and* disjunctive features. A final weakness of Cole's work is that the reader is often left feeling that Cole's analysis has made "marmalade out of wonderful pieces of fruit," that is, out of the individual psalms that constitute Book III.[29]

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[26]Michael K. Snearly, *The Return of the King: Messianic Expectation in Book V of the Psalter*, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 624 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 19. This was the third misuse of editorial criticism discussed in chap. 1.

[27]See the chap. 1 for a discussion of the related issues of evidence and significance.

[28]Evidence for this claim is given in the analysis of Pss 73–83 in chaps. 4 through 9.

[29]A few examples will suffice. Many others could be cited. Cole claims that parallels between Pss 82 and 83 suggest that Ps 83 "ironically brings to the fore Israel's own guilt, as expressed in previous psalms of Book III." Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 114. But not a seed of such irony is present in Ps 83 itself. Cole assumes that the inclusion of Ps 83 in the "text" of Book III enables the interpreter to modify its fundamental meaning once it acquires this new context. A second example relates to Cole's appeal to one psalm to explain the specific content of another. His explanation of the "sanctuaries of God"

In short, methodological weaknesses of Cole's work call into question many of his conclusions, and detract from its overall contribution to the field.

Christine Brown Jones

In her 2009 dissertation, "The Psalms of Asaph: A Study of the Function of a Psalm collection," Christine Brown Jones builds upon both the work of McCann discussed above and Wilson's seminal dissertation.[30] Her study of the Asaph psalms (Pss 50, 73–83) attempts to fill two related gaps. The first is a scholarly lack of attention to questions of the collection's arrangement and placement within the Psalter. The second is lack of attention in canonically-oriented studies to smaller collections of psalms in the Psalter.[31] Her central thesis is that the Asaph collection serves to "guide the reader through the turmoil experienced by the people as a result of the exile."[32] She claims that her editorial-critical approach pays close attention to linguistic and thematic links between these psalms and questions of arrangement. An important component of her method is attention to the "impact" of these considerations upon the reader.[33] After

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(מקדשי אל) in Ps 73:17 is a good example. He begins by noting that "This plural (i.e., מקדשי אל) has provoked a variety of opinions among scholars . . . . Here the important point is its relation canonically to the following psalm." Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 22. This statement leaves the reader wondering whether Cole thinks that the meaning of Ps 73:17 at the individual psalm level is fundamentally different from its "canonical meaning." Cole reasons as follows to determine the "canonical meaning" of Ps 73:17: (1) there are lexical parallels between the destroyed temple sanctuary in Ps 74:2–8 and the psalmist's arrival at the sanctuary in 73:17–18; therefore (2) the psalmist arrived at a destroyed sanctuary *in Ps 73*. Thus, the juxtaposition of these psalms implies that "Arrival at the sanctuaries brought enlightenment because, as Psalm 74 later explains, they were in ruins." Ibid., 23. The point here is not that the parallels Cole recognizes are insignificant. Further, it is not invalid to argue from the text of Ps 73 itself that the psalmist arrived at a sanctuary that was in ruins (see Harris Birkeland, "Chief Problems of Ps 73:17ff," *ZAW* 67 [1955]: 100). The point is Cole's questionable method of arriving at the "canonical meaning."

[30]Christine Dannette Brown Jones, "The Psalms of Asaph: A Study of the Function of a Psalm Collection" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2009).

[31]Ibid., 59–61.

[32]Ibid., 2.

[33]By "reader" she means a careful exilic or post-exilic reader strongly concerned about Judah's fate. Brown Jones, "The Psalms of Asaph," 5.

conducting her analysis of the collection, she briefly considers the function of the collection in the Psalter as a whole.

In chapter 5 Brown Jones examines various linguistic and thematic links that communicate recurring messages to the reader. Her goal is to ask what these links reveal about the purpose of the collection as a whole. The main themes arising from her analysis are as follows: (1) God as the sole sovereign just judge of the world. Though presently judging the people, he can still be trusted to save his people; (2) an antagonist who serves as a foil to demonstrate God's faithfulness; (3) a "faithful" group opposed to the antagonist, which highlights God's sovereignty; (4) the theme of "remembering," the key to remaining faithful; and (5) "the king."[34]

Chapter 6 contains her conclusions about the message that the arrangement communicates, and the contribution of the collection to the Psalter as a whole. According to Brown Jones, the collection's message is communicated by a combination of the following: (1) the themes running throughout the psalms discussed in chapter 5; and (2) the collection's arrangement. She discusses Psalm 50's placement first and suggests that it functions as a literary bridge between the Korahite collection (Pss 42–49), the Davidic collection (Pss 51–72), and the Asaphite collection (Pss 73–83).[35] Further, it "also establishes an idea that is challenged at the beginning of the Asaphite collection—the wicked will be punished and the righteous will be rewarded."[36]

Psalm 73 introduces the general problem of the main collection: the wicked prosper but hope still exists. Psalm 74 introduces the specific problem: the temple is destroyed because of God's anger. Psalms 75 and 76 function as responses to Psalm 74 by

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[34]Brown Jones, "The Psalms of Asaph," 147–74.

[35]Ibid., 141, 177. Her conclusion comes after reviewing various proposals for the compilation of the Elohistic Psalter (Pss 42–89) for clues regarding the placement of Ps 50. She admits that its position is a puzzle.

[36]Ibid., 177.

asserting God's role as judge of the wicked and assuring the reader that God will act. Psalms 77–79 are the heart of the collection. The destruction of the temple as a consequence of God's anger is stressed again. But so is the idea of remembering God's past deeds as a way forward. Psalm 80 is an appeal for God to turn from his anger. A divine speech in Psalm 81 (vv. 9–17) responds that such is contingent upon the people's repentance. Psalm 82 returns to the theme of God as judge and illustrates why the idolatry described in Psalm 81 is misplaced: other gods will perish. Finally, Psalm 83 pleas with God to commence this judgement with the surrounding nations. It concludes the Asaph collection by calling God to demonstrate his sovereignty in a definite manner.

Brown Jones' analysis reveals that she understands Psalms 73–83 similar to Cole, in the sense that "the psalms of the collection move in ebb and flow of waves of despair over the reality that the wicked are still present and threatening and waves of remembrance that God delivered before and can/will deliver again."[37] This view is reflected in statements such as, "the struggles of Psalm 73 and 74 seem to fade at the beginning of Psalm 75," "the praises of Psalm 76 are dimmed by the anguished cries of Psalm 77," and "the apparent celebration of the last verses in Psalm 78 does not last for long."[38] Her understanding of the "ebb and flow" nature of the collection is a direct result of a foundational methodological principle of the study: the importance of considering the "impact" of the arrangement upon the reader

Taken as a whole, Brown Jones understands the collection to be "an honest reflection of the confusion encountered after the destruction of the temple and the exile" (184). Its primary message is that the people should continue to obey and be faithful because God will one day judge the wicked and because God's past actions provide assurance of his faithfulness towards the people (185). According to Brown Jones, the

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[37]Brown Jones, "The Psalms of Asaph," 48.

[38]Ibid., 73, 78, 90.

Asaph psalms pose something of a challenge to attempts to understand the Psalter as a whole (188). The reason is that many of the themes found elsewhere in the Psalter are tempered in these psalms, such as the role of David as king, God's kingship, and the faith of the righteous (188–90).

The major weakness of Brown Jones' study is methodological. Her conclusions about the significance of the collection's arrangement are not grounded in the lexical and thematic links between its psalms. To be sure, she does appeal to lexical and thematic links (see chapter 5). But she does so to determine the *purpose* of the collection. The significance of the arrangement is virtually a completely separate issue in her study. There is simply the assumption that the arrangement is significant, and that its significance is determined by considering the "impact" of the collection on the reader.

Such an approach is highly subjective, even if the intention is to read from the perspective of the exilic audience. The arrangement is bound to have different "impacts" upon different interpreters. Determining the *impact* of the collection upon a reader is not the same thing as determining the *actual intention* behind its arrangement. There is no necessary connection between the two. The former situates the locus of meaning with the interpreter; the latter with those responsible for compiling the collection. For the canonical approach to remain credible, the focus should be on determining the message(s) that the editor(s) intended, and developing methodologies to this end.

Further, Brown Jones' approach begs the question. It assumes the very thing that needs proving—that these eleven consecutive psalms exhibit a deliberate structure. Third, and related, the approach does not yield a distinctive structure for the collection. Focusing on "the impact" of the collection on the reader virtually guarantees that disjunctive features will be minimized or overlooked in ones interpretation. But attention to such features is a crucial component in determining structure, and so the theological message(s) being communicated. Chapters 4 through 9 of the present study provide evidence that an "ebb and flow" understanding of these psalms, a feature common to the

studies of both Brown-Jones and Cole, is symptomatic of a failure to give attention to disjunctive features within Psalms 73–83.

Matthias Millard

In an important monograph, "Die Komposition des Psalters: Ein formgeschichtlicher Ansatz," Matthias Millard brings to bear the method of form-criticism (*Formgeschichte*) on the question of the shape and shaping of the Psalter.[39] Millard contends that form-criticism is able to shed light on the structure and function of the various collections that constitute the Psalter as it has individual psalms. In his view, the Psalter reached its present form in the Persian period. This collection of psalms was meant for individual use, not for corporate worship.[40]

Millard begins with a form-critical analysis of individual psalms: untitled psalms, those grouped by common titles (e.g., the Asaph psalms; Korahite psalms; the Psalms of Ascent; etc.), the many "pairs of psalms" (*Zwillingspsalmen*) (e.g., Pss 9–10; 20–21), concentrically arranged groups (e.g., Pss 15–24), etc. He focuses on what he calls clusters, the combination of motifs, genres, or formulas in a single psalm. The main portion of the study identifies similar kinds of clusters across the psalm groups he has identified.[41] According to Millard, the fundamental feature around which these collections are organized is a "compositional arc" (*Kompositionsbogen*). This "arc" consists of the following elements: lament, oracle, and hymn (or thanksgiving). Like the form-critical analysis of individual psalms, not every element is or needs to be present in each collection. For example, the oracle is sometimes absent, as in the first collection of

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[39]Matthias Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters: Ein Formgeschichtlicher Ansatz*, FAT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994).

[40]See ibid., 240–48.

[41]Ibid., 163–68.

Korahite psalms.[42] An additional element may also be present, such as the presence of Psalm 82 in the first *Kompositionsbogen* of the Asaph psalms (see below).

Most relevant for the present survey is the way in which Psalms 73–83 bear out this thesis. Millard observes first that the *Kompositionsbogen* mentioned above is twice repeated in the Asaph psalms. The first is composed of Psalm 74 (lament theme), Psalm 75 (oracle), and Psalm 76 (Zion psalm/hymn). The second consists of Psalms 79–80 (lament theme), Psalm 81 (oracle), and Psalm 82 (Zion psalm).[43] Further, as is true of other compositional arcs, Millard claims that wisdom psalms function to introduce both groups (i.e., Pss 73; 78), while laments function as conclusions (i.e., Pss 77; 83). Psalm 78 also functions as a "separator" (*Trenner*) between Psalms 77 and 79.[44] The hope of intervention that the psalm provides explains the presence of Psalm 77 at the conclusion of the first sub-composition (vv. 12–21).[45] The same is true of the placement of Psalm 83 at the conclusion of the second.

Millard's conclusions seem forced at times.[46] But his study is an important contribution to the study of Psalms 73–83. His form-critical approach has identified multiple intentionally arranged groups of psalms within the collection, the above mentioned *Kompositionsbogen* composed of Psalms 74–76 and 79–82. That Millard has discovered similar structures elsewhere in the Psalter lends additional support to the

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[42]Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 162.

[43]Ibid., 162.

[44]Ibid., 90.

[45]Ibid., 102.

[46]His classification of Pss 78 and 84 as "wisdom psalms" is one example that stands out. These psalms contain what might be called "wisdom elements." But classifying them as "wisdom psalms" is a bit of a stretch. More convincing is Richard Clifford's argument that "Psalm 78's closest analogues in the psalter" are not so-called wisdom psalms but "those psalms which celebrate Zion (e.g., Pss 2, 46, 48, 76) and the Davidic ruler (Pss 2, 18, 110, 132)." Richard J. Clifford, "In Zion and David a New Beginning: An Interpretation of Psalm 78," in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith*, ed. B. Halpern and Jon D. Levenson (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 137.

intentionality of these arrangements. Further corroboration comes from the observation that other studies covered in this survey have arrived at similar conclusions with a different methodology.[47]

Hossfeld and Zenger

Another important German contribution is the commentary on Psalms 51–100 by Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger.[48] The authors first treat the individual psalm with more traditional methods. They then turn to consider its *Sitz im Buch* as a valid and important interpretative horizon. Like other German scholars, Hossfeld and Zenger give much more attention to diachronic concerns than most North American editorial-critical studies. However, their canonical analysis is also quite similar to many North American works in its attention to specific links between psalms. These links form the primary basis of their conclusions on the structure and message(s) of Psalms 73–83. The major contours of their views are as follows.

Hossfeld and Zenger understand Psalms 73–83 to be structurally parallel to Psalms 84–88. Both groupings have apparently has been influenced by the same "compositional arc."[49] This "arc" is repeated twice in the Asaph collection: teaching (Ps 73); community lament (Ps 74); oracle/ Divine response (Pss 75–76); lament (Ps 77); teaching (Ps 78); community lament (Pss 79–80); oracle/ Divine response (Pss 81–82); lament (Ps 83).[50] Hossfeld and Zenger ground these arcs much more firmly in the links between the individual psalms than does Millard. At the same time, their approach is

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[47]In this regard, recall the discussion of Cole's work above. It will be seen below that Brown-Jones and Hossfeld and Zenger make similar claims with respect to at least one of these groups.

[48]Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005). The commentary was originally part of Herder's *Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament*.

[49]The authors also mention a "contextual link" between Pss 87 and 83 based upon common themes. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 387.

[50]Ibid., 250, 271, and 336.

much more conservative than Cole's, as it focuses on the *major* links that proximate psalms share.[51]

In addition to these "arcs," the authors identify Psalms 77–79 as a "triad" of psalms (294). These are so tightly bound by links, claims Hossfeld, that there is no "possibility of placing a caesura between the three psalms" (250). There is, however, evidence of a caesura between Psalms 76 and 77. This break is indicated by the observation of strong links between Psalms 77 and 78, but relatively weak ones between Psalms 77 and 76 (280). The collection also has as an intentionally positioned introduction, Psalm 73, though the psalm was not created for its present context (237). Psalm 73 anticipates a number of ideas found in the following collection. But it "acquires additional dimensions of meaning from the collection . . . " as well (237). Psalm 83 functions as a "programmatic conclusion" for Psalms 73–83 (345). It has been placed in its current, final, position "because it shares essential theological perspectives with the psalms here collected, and because . . . it is an effective conclusion to the collection."[52]

The commentary of Hossfeld and Zenger is a significant contribution to the canonical study of Psalms 73–83. The authors ground their conclusions on structure and significance in the evidence of the texts themselves. Significantly, unlike other studies surveyed (e.g., Cole; Brown Jones), attention to both conjunctive *and* disjunctive features (e.g., the caesura between Pss 76 and 77) is an important part of their method. As a result, a definite structure is proposed for Psalms 73–83: an introduction (Ps 73), a conclusion (Ps 83), and two parallel compositional arcs (Pss 74–76; 79–82).

W. H. Bellinger

In an essay entitled, "The Psalter as Theodicy Writ Large," W. H. Bellinger

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[51]They observe that Pss 74–76 are cohesively bound by "the idea common to them all, of God as the (saving) judge (74:22; 75:3, 5; 76:9–10), the theologoumenon of divine wrath (74:1; 75:9; 76:8), and the theology of the Divine name (74:7, 10. 18, 21; 75:2; 76:2)." Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 250.

[52]Ibid., 345–46.

explores the "persuasive impact" of the Psalter's approach to questions related to theodicy on the post-exilic reading community. Bellinger points out that such issues would have been central to this community.[53] He argues that the Hebrew Psalter "moves in at least two directions in response to questions of evil, suffering, and chaos that characterize the aftermath of exile."[54] One of these responses is the "tradition of protest" that pervades the final shape of Book III. Bellinger seeks to build upon McCann's claim that Book III already begins to respond to the crisis of exile. To this end, he highlights this "tradition of protest" in Book III to show that its final shape "centers on questions of theodicy" in light of this crisis.[55] Theodicy, he argues, is not a theoretical issue in Book III; it takes the form "of protest poems brought into the honest dialogue of faith."[56] Bellinger points to Psalms 73, 74, 79, 80, 86, 88, and 89 as examples of such poems. He suggests that the honest dialogue reflected in these poems, persisting in a time of crisis, would have provided an example for the post-exilic community still confronting questions of theodicy.

Bellinger's observation that the "protest poems" of Book III are a significant aspect of the Psalter's response to questions of theodicy is insightful. It also highlights an important aspect of the nature of Book III. But his focus on the "persuasive impact" of the book's protest poems does little to illumine the distinctive structure of the book itself.

O. Palmer Robertson

O. Palmer Robertson's recent book is one of the most recent contributions to

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[53]W.H. Bellinger, Jr., "The Psalter as Theodicy Writ Large," in *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms: Conflict and Convergence*, ed. Susan Gillingham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 147–60.

[54]Ibid., 152.

[55]Ibid., 156.

[56]Ibid.

the field.[57] He argues that the Psalter as a whole exhibits an intentional "flow" or development of thought progression. In its broadest possible themes, Robertson conceives of the Psalter's "flow" along the following lines: confrontation (Book I); communication (Book II); devastation (Book III); maturation (Book IV); consummation (Book V).[58] Robertson's method focuses on the "substance" of the psalms themselves as the most important indicator of intentional structure in the Psalter.[59] He also takes into consideration genre, psalm titles, and thematic and key-word links.

Robertson's summation of Book III as "devastation" reflects his view that the book's "predominant message" is the devastation of the corporate community of God's people by foreign nations.[60] He contends that the book provides a completely different view on the continuing significance of the two major elements of Yahweh's covenant with David (i.e., "dynasty" and "dwelling place") than Books I and II.[61] The dynasty of David and the Lord's dwelling place have been devastated. In a significant departure from Wilson, Robertson argues that the Davidic covenant has not, therefore, failed. The repeated mention of the *everlasting* covenant with David in Psalm 89 anticipates a coming David-like descendent.[62]

Robertson believes that Book III has an intentional structure. My concern is limited to his understanding of Psalms 73–83. Psalms 73–74 are thematic introductions (one individual [Ps 73], one communal [Ps 74]). They introduce the book's focus on the

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[57]O. Palmer Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering Their Structure and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015).

[58]Ibid., 52.

[59]Ibid., 52n6, 92n8.

[60]Ibid., 122.

[61]Robertson observes that these two themes appear first in Ps 2 and anticipate much of the Psalter's "flow." Ibid., 47–49.

[62]Ibid., 146.

devastation of God's people. Robertson cites parallels between Psalms 73–74 and the

opening psalms of Book II (Pss 42–43 and 44) to justify both psalms as introductory.

Next are two psalms asserting God's kingship over earthly kings (Pss 75–76). Psalm 75 is

as an intentional response to the cry for deliverance in the preceding psalm.[63] Psalm 76

"almost certainly describes the humiliation of Sennacherib king of Assyria."[64]

Seven psalms follow (Pss 77–83) that, according to Robertson, an editor /

collector "appears to have deliberately grouped . . . at the midpoint of Book III . . . with

the specific intent of relating the devastation of both kingdoms as well as their

deliverance by their respective messianic figures."[65] These figures are Joseph and Jacob,

who are referenced throughout these seven psalms. For Robertson, these figures function

as a major disjunctive feature (he does not use that specific term) that sections off these

seven psalms as an intentional psalm grouping.[66] The center of this collection is Psalm 80,

a psalm focusing on a "son of man" that God has raised up as a deliverer (vv. 15, 17).

After "rehearsing" the devastations of Psalms 74, 77, 79, and 80, Psalm 81 (vv. 6–13)

"boldly declares that his [God's] people can be saved from all these oppressive armies

[vv. 14–17]."[67]

Robertson claims that an important message arising from Psalms 73–83 and

Book III as a whole is the "failure of faith" and its negative consequences. In his view,

the failure of the covenant people's faith explains how God's people could suffer the

devastation described in the book: "Trust in Yahweh that might have functioned as the

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[63]Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms*, 127.

[64]Ibid., This claim is base on the title in the LXX (πρὸς τὸν Ἀσσύριον).

[65]Ibid., 138. See his discussion on pp. 128–38.

[66]Another element of cohesion he observes is the shepherd imagery binding Pss 77–79 together (see Pss 77:20; 78:52, 72; 79:13: 80:1), noting that "this extension of a common phrasing across several psalms represents a typical technique of organizational arrangement." Ibid., 129.

[67]Ibid., 135.

instrument of their deliverance appears at its weakest."[68] He claims that the scarcity of words for trust in Book III supports this interpretation. Robertson points to five words or phrases for trust that occur frequently elsewhere in the Psalter but seldom, or only in a negative sense, in Book III. These statistics suggest to Robertson that Book III is distinctive for its "paucity of references to the nation's response in faith."[69] According to Robertson, in Psalm 82 God promises to judge the (human) judges of the nations. The Most High God will arise and judge the earth, since he possesses all nations (v. 8). The final psalm of the collection (Ps 83) envisions "the ultimate end" of Israel's enemies. But surprisingly, this "end" consists of their seeking God's name (v. 16).

Robertson has contributed to the ongoing discussion of Psalms 73–83 in at least three ways. First, his methodological focus on the actual substance of the psalms is commendable. Second, this focus leads to definite three-part structure for Psalms 73–83: Psalms 73–74 as an introduction, Psalms 75–76 as response, and Psalms 77–83 as the heart of the collection (with Ps 80 being the heart of the heart). Third, Robertson detects multiple clear messages arising from this structure.

Negatively, Robertson's claim that Psalms 77–83 form a "special collection" that *focuses* on the "son" of Psalm 80 is unconvincing. One gets the sense that Robertson himself realizes this to some degree, as he notes that this "element of structure within the Psalter" is "not quite so apparent as other structures."[70] Robertson has demonstrated that these seven psalms *can* be read together. But it is questionable whether he has demonstrated through a careful examination of the the links between these psalms that the editor(s) thought that they *should* be considered a unit. Further, his emphasis upon a

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[68]Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms*, 143.

[69]Ibid., 145. The lexica Robertson discusses are בטח ("to trust"); קוה ("to wait"); יראת יהוה ("the fear of the Lord"); חסה ("to seek shelter/refuge"); אמן ("to believe"). See his discussion on pp. 144–45.

[70]Ibid., 138.

"son of David" and a "son of Joseph" (Pss 78:65–66, 70–72; 80:1–2, 15, 17) is disproportionate to their actual prominence in these psalms.[71]

Finally, Robertson's claim that "the failure of faith" is a major message arising from Book III is not persuasive. Similar to the above critique of McCann, this view is based upon a misunderstanding of the book's lament psalms. We do not see faith's *failure* in these psalms; we see its *high point*. These psalms bear witness to God's people clinging to God's self-revelation in the midst of conflicting evidence. One must adopt a hermeneutic that focuses on the event behind the text, rather than the argument of the text itself, to conclude that "destruction" or "devastation" is the major contribution of these psalms to the theology of Book III. Robertson's appeal to the paucity of words for "trust" does little to prove his point; resolute faith is a major underlying theme of at least Psalms 73, 74, 75, 77, 79, 80, and 82, regardless of the specific vocabulary used (or not used) in these psalms.

David Mitchell

David Mitchell's book, "The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms," seeks to demonstrate that the Psalter "may have been redacted as a literary unit with an intentionally eschatological reference" and that "this redaction takes the form of a programme of eschatological events."[72] The Asaph psalms (Pss 50, 73–83, 105–6[73]) are the first group of psalms on which he tests this thesis.

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[71]Robertson's argument for their prominence depends too heavily on Ps 80 being "strategically located at the midpoint of Book III." Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms*, 130–31. It is not at all clear that Ps 80 should be considered the midpoint of the book, notwithstanding the fact that the counting of letters by the Jewish scribes locates Ps 80:14 as the middle letter of the Psalter. Ibid., 131n10. Based upon the number of *verses*, the Masoretes noted that Ps 78:36 actually marked the center part of the Psalter. See חצי הספר ("half of the book") in the margin at Ps 78:36.

[72]David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms* JSOTSup 252 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 90.

[73]In light of the observation that 1 Chr 16 (where David appoints Asaph to gives thanks) combines the text of these psalms, Mitchell refers them as "deutero-Asaph Psalms."

Mitchell's burden is to show that the Asaph psalms "contain a sequence of events that can be read as depicting an eschatological programme."[74]

Mitchell appeals first to the heading לאסף to support this thesis, which heads Psalms 50 and 73–83. Mitchell argues in detail that this heading evokes a "wide-image complex" that "involves the Asaphite guild of singers as cultic prophet-musicians, the cultic rite of remembrancing, performed by the *mazkir* ("remembrancer") at times of invasion and siege by foreign armies, the sounding of trumpets and the gathering of the people."[75] These traditions associated with the Asaphites are reflected in multiple ways in the Asaph psalms. The tradition of the Asaphites as prophet musicians is reflected in the presence of divine oracles, which is three times greater than in rest of Psalter, and in the observation that Psalms 82:8 and 83:18 look forward to the future rule of Yahweh over all the earth.[76] Asaph's function as a "remembrancer" (המזכיר) (Isa 36:22), closely tied to the *zikhron* (זכרון) or "remembrancing" ritual (1 Chr 16:4), is reflected in the following features of these psalms:[77] (1) the several references in the Asaph psalms to foreign invasion, such as the LXX superscriptions to Psalm 76 (πρὸς τὸν Ἀσσύριον) and Psalm 80 (ψαλμὸς ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἀσσυρίου); (2) the reference to a foreign invasion in Psalm 79:1–3; (3) the oracle concerning the ten-nation confederacy in Psalm 83; (4) the predominance of the root זכר ("to remember") in the Asaph psalms, which occurs sixteen times (thirteen times in the main group, and three more times in the "deutero-Asaph Psalms" 105 and 106). This is an impressive one-third of the total occurrences of this verb in the Psalter;

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[74]Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 90.

[75]Ibid., 101.

[76]Ibid., 93.

[77]Mitchell deduces from texts in Chronicles, Numbers, and other places, that the "remembrancer" (see 1 Chr 16:4) was a functionary in the cultic right of "remembrancing" Yahweh. This was apparently a rite that was central to Israel's Holy War traditions." Ibid., 96. He argues that this role was tied closely to a rite that consisted of blowing *hazozerot* ("trumpets") before Yahweh in times of foreign invasion. This would bring Yahweh to remembrance of Israel's plight and obtain his deliverance.

(5) the "feature of historical review" in the Asaph psalms (i.e., Ps 74:12–23; 77:8–13), aimed at putting God in remembrance of his former acts on Israel's behalf; (6) the multiple places that mention calling out to God in the time of hostility (Pss 50:15; 77:2–3; 81:8); and (7) Psalm 81, which mentions the sounding of the trumpet, and sets out terms of deliverance from enemies (vv. 4, 14–17).

Finally, he observes that the collection reflects the theme of ingathering. This theme is associated with the Asaphite tradition in the following ways: (1) the name "Asaph" (אסף) means "to gather" and so the the heading לאסף "might be taken as meaning something like *For the Ingathering*";[78] (2) "the first word of the first divine oracle of the first Asaph psalm is a command to ingather" (i.e., Ps 50:5), and the last psalm "describes a ten nation alliance gathered against God and Israel" (100); (3) the Asaph psalms show an especial interest in Joseph, a name cognate to Asaph. He observes a similar interest in Jacob in the Asaph psalms, where seven of the Psalter's twenty-six references to Jacob occur. This observation is significant because it could connected with his reputation as an ingatherer (Gen 49:1–2).

The next line of evidence Mitchell offers to support his thesis is the "eschatological orientation" of the Asaph psalms. He notes that several passages in these psalms "seem to refer intentionally to latter day events" (101). Mitchell's argument focuses mainly on reasons why Psalm 83, which describes an unattested ten nation allegiance against Israel, "should be regarded as an intentionally eschatological prediction" (102). He also points to others psalms that "have a feeling of ultimacy about them," such as Psalms 50 and 82. Additional support for reading these psalms eschatologically, Mitchell argues, is that some later interpreters believed they referred to eschatological events.[79]

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[78]Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 99.

[79]See his discussion on pp. 103–4.

Mitchell's final consideration is the sequence of the collection. He tentatively argues that Psalms 73–83 "contains a sequence of events that can be read as depicting eschatological ingathering" that climaxes in battle.[80] The evidence supporting this claim is a narrative progression in thought that he detects from Yahweh's ingathering of Israel from exile for judgement (Ps 50) to the ingathering of nations against Israel in order to destroy them (Ps 83):[81]

1. Psalm 50. God commands the ingathering of Israel and pronounces sentence; the righteous are delivered while the wicked are torn to pieces.

2. Psalm 73. The wicked prosper now but God will destroy them when God rises up.

3. Psalm 74. The nations destroyed the temple and continue to mock God. God is reminded of such deeds and exhorted to repay them.

4. Psalm 75. Praise because God's judgment is near.

5. Psalm 76. Remembering that God has delivered in the past.

6. Psalm 77. God is called to remembrance and urged to act on Israel's behalf on the basis of God's former love for Israel.

7. Psalm 78. Recalling that Israel has failed but God is merciful.

8. Psalm 79. The nations have invaded and destroyed Jerusalem.

9. Psalm 80. A plea for God to restore the nation; in return the people promise.

10. Psalm 81. In an oracle God announces that the condition of deliverance is obedience.

11. Psalm 82. God responds by judging the deities of the nations.

12. Psalm 83. A ten-nation confederacy gathers against Israel signaling that the day of hostility spoken in Psalm 50 has arrived.

Mitchell's research is impressive, but his central thesis is ultimately unconvincing. Showing that a group of psalms *can* be read in a certain way (i.e., eschatologically) is not the same as showing how they *should* be read (i.e., the intention of the editor[s] in grouping them). Mitchell has shown that these psalms can be used to

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[80]Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 90.

[81]This list is an adaptation of Mitchell's bulleted list on pp. 106–7.

support his thesis. But he has shed little light upon the structure and message that arises from a systematic analysis of the collection on its own terms. In the end, Mitchell "injects" an "eschatological hope of the final redactors of the Psalter . . . into the narrative sequence of . . [the] collection."[82]

Commentaries

In addition to that of Hossfeld and Zenger, several other commentaries on the Psalms have appeared that seek to integrate an editorial-critical approach with more traditional methods. J. C. McCann's contribution to the *New Interpreters Bible Commentary* is one such example. McCann's understanding of Book III has already been discussed above. The more recent commentary by Walter Brueggemann and Bill Bellinger occasionally explores a psalm's position within the Psalter, or its relationships with neighboring psalms.[83] This method is only applied a handful of times in Book III. For example, commenting on Psalm 74, they note that "the centrality of the temple in the resolution of the crisis of faith in Psalm 73 makes the destruction of the temple even more disturbing."[84] Bruggemann and Bellinger observe that Psalm 75 reads like a response to Psalm 74 when Psalms 73–75 are read in sequence. Psalm 83 is a fitting conclusion to the Asaph collection given its thematic ties with Psalms 82 and 73.[85]

Published in the same year, the commentary by DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner also incorporates editorial criticism.[86] Beth Tanner's introduction to Book III notes her agreement with McCann that Psalms 73–89 appear to have been decisively

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[82]Brown Jones, "The Psalms of Asaph," 48.

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

[84]Ibid., 325.

[85]Ibid., 321, 325, 360.

[86]Nancy L. DeClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth L. Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

shaped by the exile. Her comments on the individual psalms bear this point out.[87]

However, being a "poetic rendering of theodicy," Book III "represents every time when the world and its violence makes no sense, times when we do not understand why God does not simply fix it."[88]

There is a consistent effort to read Book III as a literary unit in the above commentaries. The discussions of the relationship *between* psalms is, however, characteristically cursory. The main contribution of these commentaries is that they reflect the growing interest among Psalm's scholars in editorial criticism.

Miscellaneous Studies

A number of studies explore (or focus on) the function of a single psalm within the final shape of Book III. Thomas Hieke argues for the purposeful placement of Psalm 80 in the final form of Book III.[89] Lexical and thematic parallels with Psalm 79 indicate that Psalm 80 (originally composed for a different setting) should be read with Psalm 79 as a response to the fall of Jerusalem. Links with Psalm 81 suggest that Psalm 80 answers "Why?" (למה) the community is experiencing God's anger in a "Deuteronomistic" way (v. 13). This answer is provided by the God-speech stressing Israel's disobedience (Ps 81:12–15). Psalm 81 thus answers the problem of theodicy left open in Psalm 80.[90] Consequently, according to Hieke, the meaning of Psalm 80 in the final form of the book "contradicts the original intention and expression of the text."[91]

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[87]DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 583. On this point, see especially the discussions of Pss 73, 74, 77, 79, 80, and 89.

[88]Ibid., 583.

[89]Thomas Hieke, "Psalm 80 and Its Neighbors in the Psalter: The Context of the Psalter as a Background for Interpreting Psalms," *BN* 86 (1997): 36–43.

[90]Ibid., 40–41.

[91]Ibid., 41. The intentional placement of Ps 80, according to Hieke, also reveals the (Deuteronomistic) theological perspective of the collection's editors.

Joseph Jensen explores the relationship of Psalm 75 to its neighbors in the book's final shape.[92] Jensen argues that the sequence of Psalms 74–76 develops a progression first occurring in Psalm 73. The lament of Psalm 74 corresponds to the wicked's prosperity in Psalm 73:1–16. Psalm 75, with its assurance of divine justice, corresponds to the revelatory experience in the temple in Psalm 73:17. The celebration of God as warrior and ruler of Zion in Psalm 76 "develops the meditation on the fate of the wicked in Psalm 73:18–28."[93] Jensen suggests that Psalm 75 may have functioned as an important link between these neighboring psalms in a liturgical setting where these four psalms were employed together.[94]

Beat Weber has argued that the "open end" of Psalm 77 invites one to "read on" and understand Psalm 78 as the *Deutungshorizont* ("horizon of interpretation") for Psalm 77.[95] For Weber, Psalm 78, with its focus on the defeat of the northern tribes, "answers" Psalm 77 by providing a theological explanation of God's judgement upon Joseph/ Ephraim (see "sons of Jacob" and "Joseph" in Ps 77:16); God's presence is now found with Judah, Jerusalem, the Davidic kingdom, and Zion.

Conclusion

At least three conclusions emerge from this survey. First, there is currently no consensus on the structure of Psalms 73–83. Second, there is correspondingly no consensus on the theological message(s) that the collection communicates. Third, a number of the most important studies have fallen into one or more of the methodological

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[92]Joseph E. Jensen, "Psalm 75: Its Poetic Context and Structure," *CBQ* 63 (2001): 416–29.

[93]Ibid., 419.

[94]Ibid., 427–28.

[95]Beat Weber, *Psalm 77 und sein Umfeld: Eine poetologische Studie*, BBB 103 (Weinheim, Germany: Beltz Athenäum, 1995), 290. See also Beat Weber, " 'In Salem wurde sein Versteck . . .': Psalm 76 im Lichte literarischer und historischer Kontexte neu gelesen," *BN* (1999): 100–101; and Beat Weber, "Psalm 78 als 'Mitte' des Psalters?—ein Versuch," *Bib* 88 (2007): 305–25.

pitfalls discussed in chapter 1. These three conclusions reveal the need for a fresh appraisal of Psalms 73–83 from the standpoint of editorial criticism. The remainder of the study is devoted to this task.

CHAPTER 3

FAITH AND
EXPERIENCE IN THE LAMENT PSALMS

My goal in this chapter is to show that psalms in which a "conflict between faith and experience" figures prominently are relatively rare in the Hebrew Psalter, but particularly prominent in one of its constituent collections, Psalms 73–83. This conclusion lays important ground work for the combined argument of chapters 4 through 9: Psalms 73–83 have been shaped as a response to different manifestations this singular theological crisis as it confronted God's people in the calamity of Jerusalem's destruction in the sixth century B.C.E.

Exaggeration of the Conflict in Recent Scholarship

The following comments of Walter Brueggemann illustrate the types of blanket descriptions sometimes made of the lament psalms (which he calls "psalms of complaint"):

> It is important to note that these psalms are indeed voices of complaint or judicial protest, and not lamentations, as they are often called. The psalms of complaint are committed to the general claim that Yahweh has not been faithful to Yahweh's covenant commitments, either by neglect and inattention, or by direct negative action. The assumption of the complaint psalms is the same tight world of covenant sanctions to which the prophets appeal. . . . For if Yahweh had honored the covenant, it is argued, bad things would not have happened to Israel. Bad things would not have been received at the hand of Yahweh. Or bad things would not have been received at the hand of the enemy if Yahweh had not been negligent. . . . Therefore, the work of the petition is to reengage Yahweh—who has, it is alleged, been negligent—with the threat of the enemies.[1]

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[1]Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 375. Fredrick Lindström expresses a similar view: "These psalms [i.e., lament psalms] are voices of protest and complaint, not lamentation as they are often wrongly called." Freidrich Lindström, "Theodicy in the Psalms," in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, ed. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 260. Such quotations could easily be multiplied.

These comments paint a picture of a homogenous category of psalms ("lament" or "complaint" psalms) that exhibits few, if any, significant nuances in terms of how the psalmists interpreted distress and suffering. They suggest that the the psalmists' perception of an inconsistency in Yahweh's character or behavior amid distress is a fundamental assumption of the entire lament category; it is a virtual prerequisite for qualifying as a lament psalm. One is left with the impression that the psalmists viewed the very experience of suffering and distress as indicative of a rift in their relationship with God. For Brueggemann and like-minded interpreters, Yahweh's negligence is implied in the mere fact that the psalmists make their suffering and distress known to him, and petition to be delivered from it. The fundamental aim of a lament psalm, it is alleged, is to *re*engage an estranged God, never simply to engage him.

Craig C. Broyles' book, "The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study," shows that such blanket statements overlook important nuances within the lament category.[2] Broyles' application of form-criticism to the lament genre led him to discern two distinct types of appeals, two different ways of "attaining something from God" (14, 51). The basis of this distinction is the types of predications of God (i.e., the various form-critical motifs or components) contained in these psalms. The "psalms of plea" only affirm and uphold the praise of God. They affirm God "as Savior and so establish the plea that he actualize tradition" (51). While some of these psalms do not have any clear predications of God, Broyles observed, they do contain other motifs "that imply that the praise of God has not been called into question" (49–50). Such laments constitute the majority of the genre.

In the "God-laments," however, references to earlier saving activity, or other elements of praise, work not to extol God but to "establish the incongruity of the past and

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[2]Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study*, JSOTSup 52 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989).

present in the form of a complaint, and thus summon him to his prescribed disposition and conduct."[3] These "psalms of complaint" charge Yahweh with having denied or failed certain traditions normally expressed as praise. Central to their appeal is the perception and expression of a conflict between faith and experience. According to Broyles, the type, nature, and function of the predications of God in these psalms are so consistent that they should be considered a distinct sub-genre with the lament category.

**The God-Lament and the Conflict
Between Faith and Experience**

Broyles' findings that God-lament psalms have a distinctive shape can be appreciated even if one does not accept his claim that they constitute a distinct sub-genre. At the very least, Broyles has demonstrated that their appeals have been crafted to draw God's attention to a perception of a conflict between faith and experience. This is true even if some predications in these psalms do uphold God's praises. Drawing Yahweh's attention to this crisis of faith is the most significant feature distinguishing these psalms from other laments.

The psalmists' perception of a conflict between faith and experience is reflected in the appeal in the "Thou-lament" or "God-lament." The "I/We lament" and the "They (foe) lament" bemoan a hardship but do not attribute it to God.[4] The God-lament distinctively presents the psalmist's perception of God's role in the distress. Consider the God-lament of Psalm 89:39–41:

> But you have rejected and despised;
>> you have become furious with your anointed.
> You have broken down his walls;
>> you have made his fortification a ruin.

These indicative statements clearly reflect the psalmist's perception of God's role in the

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[3]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 51.

[4]Both forms of lament, however, can be used in conjunction with a God-lament to indicate a conflict of faith and experience. See Broyles' discussion of Pss 9–10 for this point. Ibid., 135–39.

current distress. This example illustrates that God-laments may predicate both unfavorable attitudes (i.e., God's rejection of the community) and actions of God (i.e., God's bringing the community to ruins). Other God-laments, such as those in Psalms 10:1 and 22:1, make predications about God's perceived inactivity:

Why, O Lord, do you stand far away?
    Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? (Ps 10:1)
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
    Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? (Ps 22:1)

These two God-laments also clearly reveal the psalmist's belief that God is at least partially responsible for the distress lamented in the "I/We-laments" and/or "They(foe)-laments" (see Pss 10:2–11; 22:7–9, 13–19).

The function of God-laments as rebukes or complaints is typically indicated by the presence of one or both of the following characteristics. The first is that the majority are in the form of rhetorical questions. Such questions typically begin with the interrogatives "Why (למה)?" (e.g., Ps 22:2) or "How long (עד מה)?" (e.g., Ps 89:47). The contexts in which these questions occur indicates that they are not mere requests for information. As Broyles observes, the petitions that frequently accompany them make this point clear (e.g., Ps 79:5–6).[5] Rather, these "questions" are indirect statements implying reproach or complaint.[6] "Why?" questions typically indicate that the psalmist finds Yahweh's conduct inexplicable and imply reproach. "How long?" questions, on the other hand, convey a sense of urgency and imply that the distressful situation has "gone on long enough!"[7]

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[5]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 80–82.

[6]See the discussion of Ps 80 below. See also Broyles' exegesis of all laments containing these questions in chaps. 6 and 7 of his work. Broyles points out that James Barr reached similar conclusions in his thorough study of the question "Why?" (למה) in the Hebrew Bible. See J. Barr, "'Why?' in Biblical Hebrew," *JTS* 36 (1985): 1–33. See also Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 320.

[7]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 81. See also Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 319.

The second characteristic is that God-laments, whether as indicative statements or rhetorical questions, are frequently juxtaposed with form-critical motifs recounting God's praiseworthy behavior (i.e., narrative or hymnic praise, references to God's earlier saving deeds). By themselves these motifs read like "straight praise." But in context their juxtaposition with one or more God-laments creates a contrast that "makes clear that what God is seen to be doing in the present distress is contrary to his past praiseworthy behavior. It is this incongruity with God's traditional conduct that signals the tone of complaint in [the] lament."[8] In these contexts, the primary function of "praise" motifs is "clearly persuasive, not laudatory."[9]

For example, in the earlier example of Psalm 89, the psalmist juxtaposes an extended praise section (vv. 2–38) with an extended lament that is essentially framed by God-laments (vv. 39–52). The various linguistic and conceptual parallels between the two sections indicate that the psalmist is presenting the lament as an explicit denial of the praise.[10] The psalmist perceives that the experience lamented implies an inconsistency in God's behavior. Another example comes from Psalm 80:9–13. The psalmist recounts God's earlier saving deeds in the Exodus, conquest, and settlement in verses 9–12. He then immediately asks, "Why have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass by pluck its fruit?" (v. 13). This juxtaposition of praise and God-lament shows that verses 9–12 are not "straight praise." The "praise" functions to establish the incongruity between Yahweh's past and current behavior (i.e., God's breaking down his "vineyard's" walls and leaving it exposed to the enemy). The psalmist of Psalm 10 subordinates a They(foe)-lament (vv. 2–11) to a God-lament ("Why, O Lord, do you stand far way? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" [v. 1]) to achieve the same effect. The clear

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[8]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 39.

[9]Ibid., 43.

[10]See the exegesis of Ps 89. Ibid., 168–73.

implication is that Yahweh's inactivity amid the psalmist's distress implies an inconsistency between the "God of belief" and the "God of experience" [11] It is this type of crisis of faith or "faith dissonance" that Broyles refers to as "the conflict of faith and experience." The laments that reflect this experience, the God-lament psalms, are the focus of his study.

Broyles' careful analysis led him to conclude that it was not merely the experience of distress *as such* that led a psalmist to perceive a conflict between faith and experience:

> It is not distress itself which causes dissonance (as the psalms of plea make clear); something else must have happened–or have failed to. We have observed a correlation between the distress reflected in the lament psalms and the expression of complaint (i.e., God-lament). The expression arises because the distress has been prolonged, which means Yahweh has not heard previous petitions; or because the distress is about to take the psalmist's life, which in the thinking of the psalmists means nothing but the termination of life with God.[12]

Broyles therefore observed that the God-lament, and the conflict between faith and experience it points to, correlated with distresses that were particularly intense or of a prolonged duration.[13] He is quick to point out, however, that the psalmists by no means *had* to charge God with denying certain praise traditions in these situations. A number of psalms of plea reflect distresses similar to those in God-lament psalms, as the example of Psalm 86 below indicates. However, when the psalmists sensed an inconsistency in God's character or behavior, these are types of distress in which they did so.

Broyles concluded that no such expectation had been disappointed in laments lacking God-laments. These laments contain most (though not all) of the same motifs as

[11]The expressions "God of belief" and "God of experience" are borrowed from Ingvar Floysvik, *When God Becomes My Enemy: The Theology of the Complaint Psalms* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 1997),176. Floysvik's book focuses on the theological contribution of God-lament psalms to the Psalter.

[12]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 223. See chap. 4 for exegetical justification.

[13]See chap. 4 of Broyles' study for a detailed discussion of this point.

those that do.[14] The most important difference is that God-laments *connoting protest* are absent. A few do contain God-laments. But it is clear from other statements that the psalmist finds God's negative behavior both explicable and warranted, albeit undesirable.[15] These psalms also contain the motifs of narrative and hymnic praise. But the praise motif has its "normal" laudatory function, not being juxtaposed with a God-lament. According to Broyles, therefore, there is no indication that God's behavior amid distress implies a conflict between faith and experience.

> Psalm 86 illustrates these points:
>
> O God, insolent men have risen up against me;
>> and a company of violent men seek my life,
>>> and they do not set you before them.
> But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,
>> slow to anger and great of steadfast love and truth.
> Turn to me and be gracious to me.
>> Give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your truth (Ps 86:14–16).

These verses contain a They(foe)-lament (v. 14), hymnic praise (v. 15), and petitions for deliverance (v. 16). The psalmist is simply bringing the distress to Yahweh because he seeks to be rescued from it. He is confident that Yahweh will *not* disappoint the expectation of deliverance: "In the day of my distress I call upon you, because *you will answer me* (ביום צרתי אקראך כי תענני)" (emphasis added) (v. 7).[16] Both the enemy attack and the psalmist's prayers appear to have persisted for some time ("For to you I call out *all of the day*" [v. 3]). But such assurances of being heard indicate that these

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[14]References to God's earlier saving deeds are almost entirely restricted to God-lament psalms. Broyles notes that "the only hint" of this motif outside of them is found in Ps 83. In Psalm 83 this motif " simply adds dramatic effect to the petition (vv. 9–12)." Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 43.

[15]Ibid., 39–40.

[16]For more examples of such statements in the psalms of plea, see Pss 3:4; 4:4; 5:4; 7:11–14; 12:6, 8; 14:5–6; 17:6; 25:3, 5, 15; 27:10; 28:5; 31:6, 15, 20–21; 36:6–7; 38:16; 40:18; 41:2–4; 51:6; 54:6–7; 55:17–20, 24; 56:10–12; 57:3–4; 58:11–12; 59:11, 17–18; 61:6; 64:8–10; 70:6; 71:3, 5–8, 20; 86:5,7; 106:8, 44–46 (see Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 124); 109:31; 123:2; 126:5–6; 130:7–8; 139:7–12; 137:8; 140:6–7, 13–14; 142:6–7; 143:12.

circumstances did not imply Yahweh's negligence of the psalmist.[17] The praise in verse 15 is "straight praise" aimed at actualizing the desired deliverance ("Turn to me!"; "Be gracious to me!"). The petitions of verses 16 do not reflect the attempt to *re*engage a negligent God (contra Brueggemann); no expectation about how Yahweh "should" act has yet been disappointed. Their aim is simply to *engage* God as a benevolent third party amid a distress for which an enemy—not God—is considered responsible.

Summary and Conclusion

Assessments of the lament psalms such as Brueggemann's quoted earlier overlook important nuances within the genre. Broyles' form-critical analysis of lament psalms shows that the perception of a conflict between faith and experience is not present throughout the entire category. Psalms of plea (i.e., those lacking God-laments) are not predicated upon this experience. By way of summary, Broyles notes that in these psalms we see

> distress within the bounds of tradition. . . . Yahweh is envisaged as the deliverer. Although this tradition assures psalmists that Yahweh will save, it does leave latitude for distress to befall the psalmists. Yahweh does not guarantee to preserve psalmists continually from all mishaps. Distress appears to be a given within this tradition and within life in this world. . . . These psalms give no evidence that expectation has been disappointed. God is not accused of having had a role in the distress. . . . when enemies threaten, God is simply called upon as a third party to come to the rescue. That one (even if he be 'righteous') may encounter distress and subsequently call on Yahweh appears to be a given in Israelite faith.[18]

Broyles' findings reveal, therefore, that the psalmists *do* have a category for distress that does not imply Yahweh's negligence. The mere utterance of an I/We-lament or a They(foe)-lament is *not* an implicit accusation against God. The "contract," so to speak, between Yahweh and the psalmists is not that Yahweh would always and everywhere keep them from suffering and distress. Rather, Yahweh's promise was to hear their cries

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[17]Because of laments like Pss 86, Ps 55, and a few others, Broyles introduces an important distinction between a continuing and a prolonged distress. See the discussion in Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 122–23.

[18]Ibid., 131, 223.

and deliver them *when they encountered these experiences*.[19] Laments reflecting this perspective, psalms of plea, constitute the majority of the category: Psalms 3; 4; 5; 7; 12; 14 = 53; 17; 25; 26; 27; 28; 31; 36; 38; 40b = 70; 41; 51; 54; 55; 56; 57; 58; 59; 61; 64; 69; 70; 71; 83; 86; 106; 109; 120; 123; 126; 130; 137; 139; 140; 141; 142; and 143.[20]

The perception of a disorienting conflict between faith and experience does, however, underlie lament psalms containing God-laments. The presence of this motif indicates that the psalmist *does* believe that God's behavior amid distress disappoints an expectation about how he "should" be acting: "These protest psalms depict how distress and tradition collide, thus showing that the psalmist's dilemma is not simply his own but one that threatens the integrity of Yahweh's own character."[21] These laments represent the more radical form of appeal, and are the minority appeal among the genre (roughly one-third): Psalms 6; 9–10; 13; 22; 35; 39; 42–43; 44; 60; 74; 77; 79; 80; 85; 88; 89; 90; 94; 102; and 108.[22]

Predications of God Not Reflecting a Conflict between Faith and Experience

Few would disagree with Broyles' assessment that psalms containing God-laments reflect a "conflict between faith and experience." Many, however, claim that motifs other than the God-lament, and so psalms other than the "God-lament psalms,"

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[19]For only a small sampling of verses that reflect this perspective, see Pss 1:3; 11:1–3; 23:4; 25:15, 22; 27:1–6; 31:5–6, 8–9, 16; 34:17–19; 37:23–24; 71:20; 86:7, 14–16; 113:7–9; 138:7.

[20]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 233n7. Broyles includes Ps 94 in this group. However, the God-lament in v. 3 ("How long, O Lord, shall the wicked, How long shall the wicked exult?") suggests it should not be included.

[21]Ibid., 53.

[22]Both Pss 9–10 and 41–42 are counted as one, in line with most commentators. Ibid., 135, 201. William S. Morrow recognizes an "in between" category, "psalms of indirect protest . . . a transitional group that has affinities with both of the other groups [i.e., psalms of plea and God-lament psalms]." William S. Morrow, *Protest Against God: The Eclipse of a Biblical Tradition*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 54. See pp. 48–51. Morrow places the following psalms in this intermediate category: Pss 25; 26; 27; 28; 38; 40; 41; 51; 55; 59; 69; 70–71; 109; 140; 141; 143. According to Morrow, negative petitions signal the conflict of faith and experience in these psalms. See the discussion of negative petitions below for a refutation (or, at the very least, qualification) of this claim.

reflect this crisis of faith as well. We have already addressed whether it is implied in the experience of distress as such, and concluded that it is not. But there are two other motifs that some believe imply this crisis of faith: negative petitions and enemy quotations.

Negative Petitions

When the psalmists petition Yahweh *not* to do something, does this indicate that an expectation about how Yahweh "should" be acting has been disappointed? The present section seeks to answer this question. The discussion here only covers negative petitions in laments (and a few non-laments) that *lack* God-laments. For present purposes, there is no need to consider negative petitions in laments that contain God-laments. The presence of the latter motif makes clear that the psalmist does, in fact, perceive a conflict between faith and experience.

There are twenty-three psalms that contain negative petitions but lack God-laments connoting protest (19; 25; 26; 27; 28; 31; 36; 38; 40/70; 51; 55; 59; 69; 71; 83; 109; 119; 132; 138; 140; 141; and 143).[23] The following analysis is divided somewhat artificially into two sections. I first consider petitions that do not have a close formal resemblance with God-laments. I then turn to those that do, or at least are more consistently interpreted like God-laments. Not all of the petitions below have been equally understood as implicit complaints. However, I will consider each negative petition in these twenty-three psalms, even if only briefly, for the sake of comprehensiveness

Negative petitions not resembling God-laments. Psalm 19:14 reads, "Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins; do not let them have dominion over me (מזדים

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[23]The petitions occur in the following verses: 19:14; 25:2, 3, 7, 20; 26:9; 27:9, 12; 28:1, 3; 31:2, 18; 36:12; 38:2, 17, 22; 40:12, 18.; 51:13; 55:2; 59:6, 12; 69: 7, 15, 16, 18, 26, 28, 29; 70:6; 71:1, 9, 12, 18; 83:2; 109:1, 12, 14; 119:8, 10, 19, 31, 43, 116, 121, 122, 133; 132:10; 138:8; 140:9, 12; 141:4, 5, 8; 143:2, 7. This list is taken from LeAnn Snow Flesher's exhaustive list of negative petitions in the Psalter. See LeAnn Snow Flesher, "The Rhetorical Use of the Negative Petition in the Lament Psalms" (PhD diss., Drew University, 1999), 227–39.

(חשך עבדך אל ימשלו בי)." This petition expresses the psalmist's desire for godliness; it is not an implicit complaint against God for unduly allowing sin to rule over him. The preceding verse (v. 13) makes this clear: "Who can discern errors? Acquit me from from sins I do not even realize I have committed" (lit. hidden things [נסתרות])."

In Psalm 25 negative petitions occur in verses 2, 7, and 20.[24] Verse 2 is a request that the psalmist not be "put to shame" (אל אבוש) (vv. 2, 20). The petition "Do not let the enemies exult over me!," parallel to this petition in verse 2, has a similar meaning. It fleshes out what "shaming" would look like. It would involve the enemy "exulting over" the psalmist (v. 2). The assurance of deliverance in verse 3 helps clarify the meaning of this petition: "Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame; those who are treacherous without cause shall be put to shame (גם כל קויך לא יבשו יבשו הבוגדים ריקם)." This affirmation shows that the petitions in verses 2, 7, and 20 are simply requests for God to vindicate the psalmist by delivering him. They are not implicit complaints against Yahweh for actually or potentially bringing shame upon the psalmist. The petition is essentially a negatively framed counterpart to the positive request for deliverance that it parallels in verse 20 (שמרה נפשי והצילני ["Guard my soul and deliver me."]). Verse 7 also contains a negative petition: "Do not remember the sins of my youth (חטאות נעורי ופשעי אל תזכר)." The psalmist is not here rebuking God for unduly "remembering" past sins; he is requesting mercy and forgiveness. Verse 11 proves this to be the correct interpretation: "For the sake of your name, forgive my iniquity, for it is great (וסלחת לעוני כי רב הוא) (see also v. 18)."[25]

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[24]Flesher also takes 25:3a as a petition, translating the clause גם כל קויך לא יבשו as "let none who wait for you be put to shame." But the negated *yiqtol* לא יבשו should be interpreted as an indicative statement rather than a petition: "Surely, none who wait for you shall be put to shame." The psalmists are clearly making indicative statements, not requests, when a second masculine singular *yiqtol* is preceded by the particle לא (e.g., Pss 16:10; 22:2; 44:9 51:16–17; 60:10; 108:11). The same goes for the negated *yiqtol* in Ps 40:12a. Snow Flesher also misunderstood this *yiqtol* an indicative statement. See אתה יהוה לא תכלא רחמיך ממני ("You, O Lord, will not restrain your mercy from me").

[25]The form וסלחת, a *weqatal*, could be taken as an indicative statement ("you will forgive"), but it is most likely a petition requesting forgiveness ("forgive!"). For a discussion of the *weqatal* to express a positive command/petition, see S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew and*

Psalm 26 contains one negative petition: "Do not gather my soul with sinners, nor my life with men of blood (אל תאסף עם חטאים נפשי ועם אנשי דמים חיי)." This petition clearly aims at averting God's judgement. But not because the psalmist believes God is going to unjustly or inexplicably bring judgement upon him. The petition actually assumes the opposite, namely, that Yahweh would not do such a thing. It is the culmination of an argument for why Yahweh should vindicate (שפט [v. 1]) the psalmist when he judges the wicked (vv. 1–8). The assumption is that Yahweh will vindicate the righteous because he is righteous. This explains why the psalmist takes pains to distance himself from wicked in these verses by establishing his own devotion to Yahweh. The negative petition in verse 9 is, therefore, equivalent to the idea expressed positively in verse 1: "Vindicate me, O Lord (שפטני יהוה)."

In Psalm 27:12, the psalmist petitions, "Do not give me to the desire of my adversaries (אל תתנני בנפש צרי)." The strong statement of confidence in verse 10 ("For my father and mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in")[26] indicates that the psalmist does *not* believe that God will leave him to the wicked's desires. This petition in verse 12 is therefore simply an urgent request for protection. Psalm 28:3 contains the following petition: "Do not drag me off with the wicked, with workers of evil." The petition does not reflect fear that God will unjustly "drag away" the psalmist with the wicked. Like Psalm 26 discussed above, the assumption is that God, being just, would not do such a thing. The psalmist is confident that God will "destroy (הרס)" the wicked and "build them no more" because they "do not regard the works of the Lord" (v. 5). Like Psalm 26:9 above, this petition only requests that God would make a distinction between

Some Other Syntactical Questions (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 139–41.

[26]The initial particle כי in Ps 27:10 is often taken concessively ("though"). But a systematic analysis of כי clauses following petitions "suggests the interpretation as a motivation expressing confidence in Yahweh, in effective contrast with the disloyalty of the parents: ". . .*for* (כי) my father and mother have forsaken me, but Yahweh will take me up." Anneli Aejmelaeus, *The Traditional Prayer in the Psalms*, BZAW 167 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986), 73–74.

the psalmist and the wicked when God judges the latter.[27]

The petition "let me not be put shame," addressed already above, occurs twice in Psalm 31 (vv. 2, 18). It has the same meaning as in Psalm 25: the petition requests that Yahweh would prove the firm foundation of the psalmist's trust (vv. 2, 5, 7, 15). It is essentially equivalent to the requests for deliverance in verses 2 and 17 (i.e., פלטני ["Rescue me!"]; הושיעני ["Save me!"]). It is true that in verse 23 the psalmist admits of an earlier feeling of despair: "I said in my haste/ alarm (בחפזי), 'I am cut off from before your eyes!'" But the psalmist is simply quoting his former view as an interpretation now rejected. The perspective he now embraces is given in the second half of the verse: "But you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cried to you for help."

In Psalm 36:12 the psalmist petitions, "Let not the foot of pride come upon me; do not let the hand of wickedness drive me away (אל תבואני רגל גאוה ויד רשעים אל תנדני)." Context (i.e., vv. 6–11) indicates that this petition amounts to a request that God would *continue his steadfast love to the psalmist* by protecting him from the wicked. The psalmist is confident that the wicked will not prevail (v. 13). The negated *yiqtol* לא תכלא is Psalm 40:12 is sometimes taken as a petition. But it should be understood as an indicative statement.[28] Psalm 51:13 reads, "Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me (אל תשליכני מלפניך ורוח קדשך אל תקח ממני)." These petitions are not complaints against unfair treatment, but parts of a humble appeal for spiritual renewal and restoration following a grievous sin (vv. 9–14). They may reflect fear of God's rejection. But God's negative treatment is seen as a just response to the psalmist's sin (vv. 5–8). The psalmist is not, therefore, complaining that God's anger has

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[27]Contra Flesher who reads this petition as an implicit complaint, claiming that it petitions "against God's active involvement in bringing the psalmist to destruction." Flesher, "The Rhetorical Use of the Negative Petition in the Lament Psalms," 75–76. But v. 9 is not petitioning *against* "God's active involvement"; it is petitioning *for* it: the psalmist is requesting that a distinction be made between himself and the wicked in the judgement.

[28]See the discussion of the petitions in Ps 25 above.

been unduly excessive.

Psalm 38:2 contains the following negative petition: "O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath (יהוה אל בקצפך תוכיחני ובחמתך תיסרני)." This petition is clearly aimed at averting God's anger. However, the following God-laments in verses 3–4 show that the petition is "stated to prevent any intensification in the psalmist's suffering—not to rebuke God for the affliction as such."[29] Further, the parallelism of verse 4 indicates that God's anger is justified in light of the psalmist's sin: "There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin." God's action is undesirable, but not inexplicable or unwarranted.

Psalm 59:6 petitions God as follows: "Do not be gracious to those who are treacherous in iniquity (אל תחן כל בגדי און)." Elsewhere the psalmist clearly expresses confidence that God will not in fact be gracious to the enemy (vv. 9–11). Consequently, this petition is best interpreted as a form of litotes, a figure of speech that emphasizes a positive idea by negating its opposite (in this case, "being gracious").[30] Litotes often involves significant understatement to make the point, as in Psalm 59:6. The petition "Do not be gracious . . ." is semantically equivalent to a strong *positive request* that God would destroy his enemies: "Do not be gracious!" means something like "Utterly punish/ destroy!"[31] It is essentially a more emphatic formulation of the request in the parallel line: "Rouse yourself to punish all the nations! (הקיצה לפקד כל הגוים)." A second negative petition occurs in verse 12: "Do not kill them (i.e., the wicked), lest my people forget."

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[29]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 39.

[30]See "Meosis," in *HandBook of Biblical Criticism*, ed. Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 110.

[31]A cognate noun of the verb חנן ("to be gracious") (i.e., תחנה) is used in Josh 11:20 in a similar way: "For, it was from the Lord to harden their heart to meet Israel for war so that they might be devoted to destruction and receive no mercy (תחנה) but be destroyed, as the Lord commanded Moses (כי מאת יהוה היתה לחזק את לבם לקראת המלחמה את ישראל למען החרימם לבלתי היות להם תחנה כי למען השמידם כאשר צוה יהוה את משה)."

The psalmist is requesting that God would bring the enemy to destruction gradually (see v. 12), since "the people forget so suddenly; a sudden destruction would not establish itself effectively in their memories."[32]

Psalm 69:7 contains two essentially synonymous negative petitions: "Let them not be ashamed (אל יבשו) through me, those who hope in you . . . let them not be dishonored (אל יכלמו) through me, those who seek you." Such petitions have already been discussed in connection with Psalms 25 and 31. The difference in Psalm 69 is that the psalmist includes others who similarly "hope" in God in his request (vv. 4, 7). God's deliverance will prove that both their hope, and that of the psalmist, rests on a firm foundation. The petition in verse 7 aims at securing such deliverance. Another negative petition comes in verse 15: "Do not let me sink (in the mire) (אל אטבעה)." This petition simply (re)states negatively (and more vividly) what the immediately preceding petition states positively: "Deliver me from the mire!" The same is true of the following three similar petitions in verse 16: "Let not the flood of waters flow over me!; let not the deep swallow me!; let not the pit close its mouth upon me! (אל תשטפני שבלת מים ואל תבלעני מצולה ואל תאטר עלי באר פיה)." These negated forms are virtual restatements of the petition for deliverance in verse 15. They do not presuppose God's negligence, only the urgency of the situation.[33] Three final petitions come in verses 26, 28, and 29.[34] They are part of a series of imprecations against the wicked shot through with poetic justice. The

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[32]Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 98.

[33]This point is seen more clearly by considering the psalmist's overall argument. The argument for intervention is that the psalmist suffers attacks because he is innocent (vv. 5–6). He is not thereby protesting that God has unjustly brought upon him the reproach and suffering lamented in the psalm (vv. 1–5; 8–13; 15–16, 18, 20–22). The psalmist *willingly* takes upon himself the reproaches directed at God: "for your sake I have borne reproach" (v. 8) . . . zeal for your house has consumed me" (v. 10). These are not "implicit protests." Contra Samuel E. Balentine, *The Hidden God: The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 51. Patrick D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 78. Blame for the distress is laid solely (and emphatically) at the enemy's feet, not God's.

[34]"Let no one dwell in their tents! (באהליהם אל יהי ישב)"; "Let them not enter into your vindication! (אל יבאו בצדקתך)"; "Let them not be written with the righteous! (עם צדיקים אל יכתבו)."

petitions are simply strong requests for the God of justice to punish the wicked for *their* injustice, like the rest of the imprecations.

The petition "let me never be shamed (אל אבושה לעולם)" in Psalm 71:2 has already been discussed multiple times, and so I will not do so again here. The long series of imprecations in Psalm 109 (vv. 6–15) contains two negative petitions: "let there not be one who extends steadfast love to him! (אל יהי לו משך חסד)" in verse 12, and "Let not the sin of his mother be blotted out (וחטאת אמו אל תמח)!" in verse 14. Both requests are an appeal to God's justice, not a rebuke for apparent injustice. They implore the God of Justice to repay the wicked for their wickedness (vv. 2–5, 22–25).

Psalm 119 contains six negative petitions that belong to the category under discussion (see vv. 10, 31, 43, 116, 121, 122). In verse 10 the psalmist petitions, "Do not allow me to stray from your commandments (אל תשגני ממצותיך)." The desire for purity expressed in verse 9 suggests that the *hiphil* תשגני should be taken as permissive ("Do not *allow* me to stray . . .").[35] The petition is not rebuking God but expressing desire for godliness. In verses 31 and 116 the psalmist makes the same request, "Do not let me be put to shame (אל תבישני)." The *hiphil* is used again to express a permissive idea. These petitions are simply requests for Yahweh to bring honor upon the psalmist and deliver him because of his trust and obedience. In verse 43 we find: "Do not ever take the word of truth from my mouth (ואל תצל מפי דבר אמת עד מאד)." John Goldingay's suggestion that this is an instance of litotes seems correct (i.e., "Do not take it [i.e., the word of truth] away at all!").[36] Put positively: "Let your word of truth be always in my mouth." The final two petitions are in consecutive verses (vv. 121 and 122): "Do not leave me to my oppressors (בל תניחני לעשקי)"; "Do not let insolent ones oppress me (אל יעשקני זדים)."

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[35]Bruce K. Waltke and M. O' Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 445. Against this view is the observation that the *hiphil* of שגה appears to have a causative sense in its remaining four occurrences (Deut 27:18; Ps 73:12; Job 12:16; Prov 28:18).

[36]John Goldingay *Psalms 90–150*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker 2008), 400.

Both are simply prayers for protection based upon the psalmist's faithfulness. The assumption of the petition is that Yahweh will protect the psalmist because of his fidelity, not that Yahweh will unduly abandon the psalmist to the enemy.

In Psalm 132:10 the psalmist prays: "For the sake of David, your servant, do not turn back the face of your anointed (בעבור דוד עבדך אל תשב פני משיחך)." The psalmist is not chastising God for "turning back the face of the anointed." He is requesting that God would show favor to the king of Israel, and hear his requests on account of God's covenant with David (vv. 11–12).[37] Psalm 138 closes with the negative petition, "Do not abandon (lit. "let drop") the works of your hands (מעשי ידיך אל תרף)" in verse 8. The "work of your hands (מעשי ידיך)" refers to God's saving activity. The psalm gives no indication that the psalmist believes God has or will abandon him (see vv. 7–8). The petition is not, therefore, an implicit complaint that God has or might cease protecting the psalmist. It simply expresses the desire and urgent need for God to *continue these works* on the psalmist's behalf.

Psalm 140:9 contains three negative petitions: "Do not grant, O Lord, the desires of the wicked; do not promote his plot so that they be exalted (אל תתן יהוה מאויי רשע זממו אל תפק ירומו)." These petitions are not implicating God for unduly allowing the wicked to succeed in their scheming. The psalmist is confident that God will "maintain the cause of the afflicted" and "execute justice for the needy" (v. 13). They are requests that God would stamp out the plans of the wicked, stopping them "dead in their tracks,"

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[37]The Chronicler uses Ps 132:10 in this way in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple in 2 Chr 6:41–42. There the petition is parallel to "Remember your steadfast love for David your servant." This expression (אל + *hiphil yiqtol* or *jussive* of שוב + פנה) also occurs in another royal context, 2 Kgs 16 (vv. 16, 17, and 20). Here it is a humble request to someone in or having access to power and authority. In vv. 16–17 Adonijah uses it in an address to Solomon's mother, who has the king's ear: "I have a request of you; do not turn back my face (אל תשבי את פני). . . . Please ask Solomon the king—for he will not turn back your face (לא ישיב את פניך)—to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife." It is used again in v. 20 when Solomon's mother takes Adonijah's request to Solomon: "I have one small request to ask of you; do not turn back my face (אל תשב את פני)." And the king said to her, 'Make your request, my mother, for I will not turn back your face (לא אשיב את פניך).' " The only other time this expression occurs is in the Rab Shakeh's (i.e., field captain) address to Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 18:24 (Isa 36:9).

so to speak. The final negative petition in Psalm 140 (v. 12) is one in a series of imprecations aimed at the wicked (vv. 10–12): "Do not let the slanderer (lit. "man of tongue") be established in the land (איש לשון בל יכון בארץ)." Verse 13 clarifies that they are not implicit charges against Yahweh for treating the psalmist unjustly. The psalmist is confident that Yahweh will give justice to those suffering injustice. The petition in verse 12 simply requests that Yahweh would actualize his justice in the present situation. The same is true of the preceding positively framed imprecations.

Psalm 141:4, 5, and 8 all contain negative petitions. Verse 4 petitions: "Do not let my heart incline to an evil thing (lit. "Do not incline my heart to an evil thing [אל תט לבי לדבר רע]") and "let me not eat of their (i.e., the wicked) delicacies (בל אלחם במנעמיהם)." These ask for Divine assistance to remain faithful in the face of evil, and the temptation to commit it. The petition in verse 5 has a similar aim: "Let a righteous man strike me—(it is) a kindness; let him correct me—it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it (אל יני ראשי)." The final negative petition comes in verse 8: "Do not leave my soul exposed (to danger) (אל תער נפשי)." The following petition for God to "guard" the psalmist (v. 9) shows that the psalmist is simply seeking protection from the danger to which wicked men have exposed him. He is not implicitly rebuking Yahweh for unduly placing his "soul" in harm's way.

The final negative petition under this first heading comes in Psalm 143:2: "Do not enter into judgement with your servant (ואל תבוא במשפט את עבדך)." The subordinate clause, "for no one living is righteous before you," reflects the psalmist's view that God is justified in rejecting the preceding requests for attention (v. 1). Consequently, the petition not a complaint for unjust treatment; it is a plea that God would nevertheless mercifully give attention to the psalmist's prayer.

Negative petitions resembling God-laments. This second category represents the negative petitions most commonly interpreted as implying a conflict between faith

and experience.[38] The reason is readily discernible: these petition formally resemble God-laments, or contain ideas similar to them. Compare the following God-laments with the petition "Do not hide your face from me (אל תסתר פניך ממני)!" (Pss 27:9; 69:18; 102:3; 143:7):

Why do you hide your face (למה פניך תסתיר)? (Ps 44:25)

How long, O Lord? Will you hide yourself forever (עד מה יהוה תסתר לנצח)?
(Ps 89:47)

Similarly, compare the petition "Do not abandon me (אל תעזבני)!" (Pss 27:9; 38:22; 71:9, 18; 119:8) and the God-lament "Why have you abandoned me (למה עזבתני)?" in Psalm 22:2. Further examples could be cited.[39] Other petitions contain ideas that resemble the sentiments that God-laments express, even though they do not share identical (or similar) vocabulary. This is true, for example, of petitions containing the idea of "delaying": "Do not delay (אל תאחר)!" (Pss 40:18/ 70:6). Such resemblances have suggested to interpreters that these petitions are essentially the semantic equivalent of a God-lament. For example, Anneli Aejmelaeus claims that these petitions "may be interpreted as accusations against God. Each of these cases could possibly be replaced by a למה question with the verb concerned in the affirmative."[40] A variation of this view is Patrick Miller's claim that these petitions are *mitigated* forms of the ideas expressed in God-laments."[41]

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[38]For a convenient list of the petitions most commonly associated with God laments in the literature, see Aejmelaeus, *The Traditional Prayer in the Psalms*, 46. This list guided the decision over which petitions would be discussed in the present section.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., 46.

[41]Miller, *They Cried to the Lord*, 77. Westermann expressed a similar view. See Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 185. Flesher has adopted Westermann's view. LeAnn Snow Flesher, "Rapid Change of Mood: Oracles of Salvation, Certainty of a Hearing, or Rhetorical Play?," in *My Words Are Lovely: Studies in the Rhetoric of the Psalms*, ed. Robert L. Foster and David M. Howard, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 467 (New York: T &T Clark, 2008), 38n25. Similarly, see Morrow, *Protest Against God*,

But the nature of the semantic relationship between these petitions and God-laments is not as obvious as these scholars imply. The determinative factor in the meaning of any utterance is not its resemblance to other utterances. It is the situational and literary context in which it is made. There usually is some sort of semantic correspondence between utterances with similar surface structures (i.e., those that employ the same or similar linguistic symbols). But these similarities are not determinative. Utterances with similar or even identical surface structures may have completely different meanings. Conversely, utterances with completely different surface structures may mean essentially the same thing.

These considerations are important to keep in mind when interpreting a non-indicative utterance such as a petition. It is entirely possible that the petition "Do not abandon me!" implies the same beliefs about God as the God-lament "Why have you abandoned me?" But it is also entirely possible that the petition, being in the non-indicative mood, implies only that the psalmist does not *want* to be left to face the distress alone. In this case the petition would simply be articulating the psalmist's utter need of deliverance. There would be no implication that Yahweh has or will inexplicably and/or unduly abandon the psalmist.[42] The point here is that formal similarity—no matter how striking—does not entail semantic equivalency. The determinative factor is the context in which the utterance is made.

The analysis thus far has borne these points out. It was seen above that many negative petitions are really only restatements of positive petitions in the near context.

49–50.

[42]The Gibeonites plea to Joshua in Josh 10:6 appears to be a narrative example of such a petition: אל תרף ידיך מעבדיך ("Do not let your hands drop from your servants!"). The Gibeonites had every reason to believe Joshua would *not* abandon them (see chapter 9). The negative petition is thus simply an urgent petition for deliverance amid formidable circumstances. It is semantically equivalent to the following positive petitions ("Come up quickly and save us! And help us!"). See also אל תחרש ממנו ("Do not be deaf to us [lit. from us]!") in 1 Sam 7:8. The NET translates the latter positively: as "Keep crying out!," apparently reflecting the interpretation espoused here.

There was little, if any, discernible difference in meaning between the two. A consideration of the contexts in which the negative petitions in question occur suggests that they have a similar meaning. Each of these petitions occurs in intra-verse or inter-verse parallelism with a semantically equivalent, though positively framed, petition.[43] Consider, for example, the following two negative petitions:

האזינה אלהים תפלתי

ואל תתעלם מתחנתי

Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer;
　　And do not hide yourself from my plea! (Ps 55:2)

ואני עני ואביון אלהים חושה לי

עזרי ומפלטי אתה יהוה אל תאחר

But I am poor and needy; O, God, Hurry to help me!
　　My help and deliverer are you; O, Lord, do not delay! (Ps 70:6)

Both negative petitions in these verses are semantically equivalent to the positive petition in the preceding line. Adele Berlin observes that Psalm 55:2 is an example of positive/negative parallelism.[44] This is a common type of parallelism in which the same thought is expressed twice, once positively and once negatively.[45] The negation in the second line creates semantic agreement, not contrast, with the first line: "giving ear (אזן)" and "hiding (עלם)" are antonymic ideas, but "giving ear (אזן)" and *not* hiding (אל + עלם)" are

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[43]This does not mean that an equivalent positive petition is present everywhere the negative petition occurs. The petition "Do not be deaf (אל תחרש)" is parallel to "Hear (שמעה)" and "Give ear (האזינה)" in Ps 39:13, but stands alone in Ps 109:1. The point is that the parallelism in the former verse sheds light on the meaning of the petition in the latter. Cf. also "Do not delay! (אל תאחר)" in Ps 70:6 and 40:18. Some of these petitions almost always occur in a parallel relationship to one or more semantically equivalent positive petitions. See "Do not hide your face from me (אל תסתר פניך ממני)" (Pss 27:9; 69:18; 102:3; 143:7). In all but one case, Ps 27:9, this petition directly parallels petitions to "hear" or "answer."

[44]Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 94. For a number of other examples of this type of parallelism, see Adele Berlin, "Grammatical Aspects of Biblical Parallelism," *HUCA* 50 (1979): 35–36. Berlin's examples also show that the negative may precede the positive (e.g., Prov 3:1).

[45]Berlin, "Grammatical Aspects of Biblical Parallelism," 35. In the language of generative semantics (see the discussion in Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 93–94), the positive petition in the first line ("Give ear!") and the negative one in the second ("Do not hide yourself!") appear to be "different realizations of the same underlying semantic entity." Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 93.

synonymous. Positive/negative parallelism is, therefore, a type of *synonymous* parallelism.[46] The negative petition in Psalm 70:6 may be analyzed in the same way. The lines as a whole do not correspond as closely as those of Psalm 55:2. But the petition "Do not delay!" in the second line similarly restates in different language the thought of the positive petition "Hurry!" in the first.

The point is that the petition "Do not hide yourself!" in Psalm 55:1 and "Do not delay!" in Psalm 70:6 need not imply that God is unduly concealing himself or slow to deliver. The former is an alternate way of requesting that God "Hear!" the psalmist's plea, the idea expressed by the positive petition in the first line.[47] The latter is an alternative way of requesting God's *swift* deliverance, the idea expressed in the parallel positive petition, "Hurry to help!"[48] To borrow the language of generative semantics, the negative petition has a different surface structure than the positive petition it parallels, but the same underlying semantic deep structure.[49] The negative petition does not express a different idea than the parallel positive petition; it expresses the same idea differently.

This interpretation is supported by examples of positive/negative parallelism in the indicative mood that use the same vocabulary or ideas as these negative petitions. Consider Psalm 119:60:

I hurry and *do not delay* (חשתי ולא התמהמהתי) to keep your commandments.

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[46]Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse*, JSOTSup 170 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 475n172; Berlin, "Grammatical Aspects of Biblical Parallelism," 35. Watson gives the English example "Swim, do not sink!" to demonstrate the synonymous nature of positive/negative parallelism. He observes that this example can be analyzed as [+SWIM] // neg [-SWIM]. Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse,* 475n172. Similarly, the petitions in Ps 55:2 ("Give ear!"; "Do not hide yourself!") can be analyzed as [+GIVE EAR] // neg [- GIVE EAR]. Such parallelisms are sometimes deemed "antithetical parallelisms." But there is "nothing antithetical whatever" about them. The negation creates agreement, not contrast, between the two thoughts. James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 14.

[47]The same is true of the essentially equivalent petition "Do not hide your face from me (אל תסתר פניך ממני)" (Ps 27:9; 69:18; 102:3; 143:7). In Ps 69:18, 102:3, and 143:7 the petition is surrounded by semantically equivalent positive petitions containing ideas associated with the "face" of Yahweh: "Hear/ Give ear" and/or "Answer me."

[48]The petitions in Ps 70:6 may be analyzed as "Hurry! // Do not delay!" = [+HURRY] // neg [- HURRY]. This analysis reveals the synonymous relationship between "Do not delay!" and "Hurry!"

[49]See the discussion in Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 93–94.

The psalmist's point is not that he has been previously negligent in obeying God. The negative statement simply emphasizes or reinforces the psalmist's *eager desire to obey/ commitment to God* expressed in the preceding positive statement ("I hurried").[50] It does not imply anything about the psalmist's negligence.

The other negative petitions commonly understood as God-laments may be analyzed in the same way. "Do not be far (אל תרחק)" (Pss 22:12, 20; 35:22; 38:22; 71:12) occurs in intra-verse parallelism to the semantically equivalent "Hurry to my help! (לעזרתי חושה)" in Psalms 22:20 and 71:11. It appears in inter-verse parallelism with the petition in Psalm 38:22–23. "Do not be far" is an urgent request for God's saving presence to be *brought near*, without necessarily implying that God has been unduly distant.[51] The petition "Do not be deaf" (Pss 28:1; 35:22; 39:13; 83:2; 109:1) stands in intra-verse parallelism to the semantically equivalent "Hear (שמע)" and "Give ear (האזינה)" in Psalms 39:13, and in inter-verse parallelism to "Hear (שמע)" in Psalm 28:1– 2. "Do not be deaf" in this context does not imply that God has or might unduly shut out the psalmist's prayer. It restates the more common petitions "Hear (שמע)" and "Give ear (האזינה)."[52] One further example will suffice. The petition "Do not abandon me (אל תעזבני)" in Psalms 27:9, 38:22, 71:9, 18, and 119:8 does not necessarily imply the belief that God has or might unduly leave the psalmist to face the distress alone.[53] It is a negatively framed request for God's *protection and saving presence*, the idea reflected in the parallel petition "Hurry to my help" (חושה לעזרתי) in Psalm 38:23. Confirmation from

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[50]Similarly, the statement "he did not delay" (לא אחר) in Gen 34:19 simply emphasizes that Shechem hurried to fulfill Jacob's requirements for taking Dinah as a wife. It does not imply that he has been slow to do so either in the past or present.

[51]The God-laments in Pss 22: 2 and Ps 35:17 indicate the psalmist's perception of God's negligence. *In these contexts*, therefore, the petitions in Pss 22:20 and 35:22 may assume God's distance. But this is a function of the context in which the petition is uttered, not the petition itself.

[52]The petition "Do not be deaf" in Ps 35:22 may imply God's negligence given the God-lament in v. 22.

[53]Contra Flesher, "The Rhetorical Use of the Negative Petition in the Lament Psalms," 106.

context that these petitions do not imply God's negligence is supplied by statements of confidence or trust that God *will* hear and act, and/or will *not* abandon the psalmist (e.g., Ps 27:10).[54]

Thus, linguistic evidence provided by the context of these petitions suggests that their semantic equivalent is a *positive petition*, which very often occurs in a parallel line—*not* a formally similar God-lament. Their function is simply to actualize Yahweh's deliverance like the positive petitions they so frequently parallel, without implying the psalmist's perception of God's negligence. The negated form may have been considered a more urgent or emphatic expression of the idea expressed positively.[55]Alternatively, it may be a stylistic variation that simply reinforces the request being made.[56] Whatever the reason is for the negative form, the negative petitions considered above are not best interpreted as implicit complaint against God.

This investigation of negative petitions validates Broyles' assessment of the petition motif as a predication of God: "The petitions should be included among the predications of God but their significance cannot weigh so heavily since they are not in

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[54]"For my father and mother have abandoned (עזב) me, but the Lord will take me in." (Ps 27:10); "Because they do not regard the works of the Lord . . . he will tear them down and not build them up" (Ps 28:5); "For I wait for you, O Lord; it is you who will answer, O Lord my God" (Ps 38:16); "But I will hope continually, and continue to praise you (lit. "add to all of your praise") (Ps 71:14); "For he stands at the right hand of the needed, to save (him) from those who condemn his soul" (Ps 109:31).

[55]Aejmelaeus, who views these petitions as equivalent to God-laments, closes her discussion with the following alternative proposal: "On the other hand, these negated petitions could be regarded as variants of some of the more common prayer imperatives. . . . That is, the negated form of a petition need not as such contain any special notion that would class it as a special type of petition. It could perhaps rather be felt as stylistically more effective." Aejmelaeus, *The Traditional Prayer in the Psalms,* 47.

[56]Kugel observes that "Hebrew is fond of using negatives to reinforce." Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 14. See the following examples: "He devoted to destruction (החרם) every person in it. He *did not leave* (לא השאיר) any survivors" (Josh 10:28); "I will multiply them (הרבתים), and they shall *not be few* (לא ימעטו)"; You have forgotten (שכח) the God of your salvation; and have *not remembered* (לא זכר) the rock of your refuge" (Isa 17:10); "Hear (שמע), my son, your father's instruction, and *do not forsake* (אל נטש) your mother's teaching" (Prov 1:8); "For the one who avenges blood remembers (זכר) them; he does *not forget* (לא שכח) the cry of the afflicted (Ps 9:13)"; "You know (ידעת) the wrongs I have done; my wrongs are *not hidden* (לא נכחדו) from you"(Ps 69:6); "I hurry (חוש) and *do not delay* (לא מהה) to keep your commandments" (Ps 119:60).

the indicative mood [emphasis added]."[57] Because of their non-indicative nature, petitions resembling God-laments should not be considered on par with God-laments as predications reflecting an underlying conflict between faith and experience.

**Enemy Quotations That Attack
God**

Scholars have also argued that implicit complaints against God come in the form of enemy quotations attacking God. Psalm 3:1–2 provides an example of this motif:

O Lord, how many are my foes!

Many are rising up against me;

Many are saying to my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God."

Rolf Jacobson's exhaustive study of direct discourse in the Hebrew Psalter contains the most systematic and comprehensive treatment of this motif.[58] Jacobson first considers the formal role that such enemy quotations play in their respective psalms. He then proposes that these quotations perform a number of different rhetorical functions. One is that the psalmists used them to express their own complaints against God.[59] Jacobson's argument draws heavily upon modern quotation theory. "Role play" is one aspect of the function of quotations that all the linguists he surveys agree upon. When one reporter quotes another, that person is temporarily speaking from the perspective of the other speaker. An important function of "role play," notes Jacobson, is that it enables a speaker to "dissociate" himself/herself from the content of the quotation; the speaker is not

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[57]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 46.

[58]Rolf A. Jacobson, *Many Are Saying: The Function of Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Psalter*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 397 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 27–59. Jacobson identifies twenty-five enemy quotations that attack God in nineteen psalms (Pss 2:3; 3:2; 10:4, 6, 11, 13; 11:1–3; 12:4–5; 14:1; 22:8; 42:3, 10; 53:1; 59:7; 64:5–6; 71:10; 73:11; 74:8; 78:19; 79:10; 83:4, 12; 94:7; 115:2; and 137:3, 7). He defines an "enemy quotation" as inset direct speech that comes on the lips of: "the wicked"; "my enemy"; "my enemies"; "the fool"; "the speaker of lies"; "the people"; "those who seek to snatch away my life"; "my adversaries"; "those who watch for my life"; "the arrogant"; "your foes"; "their ancestors;" "the nations"; "all evil-doers"; "the Edomites"; and "our captors." Ibid., 27n1.

[59]Patrick Miller and Walter Bruggemann also consider enemy quotations implicit complaints against God. See Miller, *They Cried to the Lord*, 73; Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology*, 320.

responsible for the content, just for presenting the material quoted. Dissociation is particularly useful when speakers desire to express "sentiments that might otherwise be deemed unacceptable," and to exempt themselves from the responsibility of actually uttering them.[60]

Jacobson then applies these observations to the Hebrew Psalter. When quoting an enemy that attacks God, argues Jacobson, the psalmists temporarily assume the role of the Lord's enemy so that

> they can speak words that no servant of the Lord can speak. The psalmist cannot say, 'There is no God'. But the psalmist can say, 'The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." . . . it is possible to hear in the psalmist's quotation an echo of his own unspoken doubt . . . Through direct discourse, the psalmist is literally 'giving voice' to words which the pious person cannot voice. And yet, because the actual words belong to the fool, the enemy, the wicked, and so on, the psalmist bears no responsibility for speaking those words.[61]

In short, an enemy quotation enables a psalmist to register a complaint against God while avoiding the responsibility of having uttered it.[62] Consequently, Jacobson argues that enemy quotations should be considered an implicit "You (God)-lament" that express complaint against God.[63]

A fundamental problem with this view is that the psalmists can and do speak such "unspeakable" things to Yahweh. Jacobson anticipates this objection. He counters that

> there is a delicate qualitative difference between asking, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' and asserting, 'There is no God', or 'God does not care'. The former is an outcry born of faith, the latter are acts of derision born of unbelief. . . . The words that psalmist attributes to the enemies are of a completely different

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[60]Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 54.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Brueggemann articulates a similar view. Commenting on the enemy quotation, "Where is your God?" in Ps 43:2, he notes, "The question is a quote from 'people,' but we may surmise that this is a rhetorical device of distancing, when in fact the speaker voices the speaker's wonderment and dismay." Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology*, 320.

[63]Jacobson, *Many are Saying*, 54. Thus, these quotations do "double duty" as both a "They/foe lament" and "God-lament."

class than any complaints that the psalmists on her own behalf.[64]

But such an assessment is not borne out by the texts themselves. The words that the psalmists attribute to the enemy are not identical with his own. But there is certainly an observable *overlap* between the enemy's sentiments towards God and those of the psalmist, in at least some psalms. Psalm 10, for example, attributes to the enemy the view that God has "hidden (סתר)" his face from the psalmist (v. 11). The psalmist's own God-lament in verse 1 contains a similar sentiment that is reflected in synonymous vocabulary: "Why do you *hide* yourself (עלם) in the time of distress?" It is true that the enemy's claim is born of unbelief and the psalmist's of faith. But the sentiments themselves are not "qualitatively different" or of a "completely different class" as Jacobson claims. We saw earlier that interrogative God-laments like the one in Psalm 10:1 function as indirect statements, or rhetorical questions, that imply reproach. The "question" in Psalm 10:1 is equivalent to an implicit charge that God is hiding and that such behavior inexplicable.[65] The inset enemy quotation also asserts that God is hiding from the psalmist, albeit out of different motives. There is, therefore, an observable semantic overlap between the two sentiments. The psalmist's choice to use language from the enemy quotation in his own complaint against God suggests that this overlap is intentional.

These observations reveal a second, more serious, problem with Jacobson's view. They demonstrate that the rhetorical effect of "complaint" is *not* created by dissociating or distancing as Jacobson claims.[66] It is is rather created by the psalmist's *association* with the sentiment expressed on the lips of the enemy. The semantic overlap

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[64]Jacobson, *Many are Saying*, 54.

[65]This is clear both from the praise traditions asserted in the joined Ps 9 (see Ps 9:5–11; 17–19), and the extended foe-lament that follows the God-lament (vv. 2–10). Both work with the God-lament to articulate the accusation against God.

[66]Brueggemann also makes an explicit appeal to "distancing" to explain these quotations. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 320.

between the enemy's sentiments about God and the psalmist's own in Psalm 10 noted

above (see vv. 1 and 11) has the effect of implying that "the wicked appears to have it

right."[67] This insight indicates that the enemy quotation is not expressing a complaint that

"a pious person cannot voice" through the device of dissociation. Rather, the quotation

bolsters a complaint that the "pious person" *has already voiced* by means of *association*

(see v. 1). The example of Psalm 10, thus, provides a textual means of evaluating if and

when these enemy quotations are functioning as an implicit complaint:[68] such is only an

interpretive option in cases where there is observable semantic overlap between the

enemy's sentiments about God and the psalmist's own. It follows that these quotations

may only function as implicit complaints in psalms that also contain a *God-lament*; these

are the only predications of God that contain a sentiment similar to that of the enemy

quotation.

This criterion isolates the following enemy quotations as potential implicit

complaints: Psalms 13:5; 22:8; 35:21, 25; 42:3, 10; 73:11; 74:8; 79:10; and 94:7.[69] It also

indicates that the motif under consideration does *not* function in this way in at least

twelve instances: Psalms 2; 3; 11; 12:4–5; 14; 59:7; 64:5–6; 71; 78; 83:4, 12; 115, 137. In

each of these cases, we do not see semantic overlap (reflected lexically or not) between

the psalmist's predications of God and those of the enemy. We *only* see the opposite:

semantic polarity. The enemy believes one thing about God's involvement (e.g., God will

not save the psalmist), and the psalmist asserts *only* the opposite view (i.e., God *will* save

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[67]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 138.

[68]Jacobson's claim is, therefore, false that "it is, of course, impossible to prove that the psalmists used the device of quotation to speak . . . 'unspeakable' complaints against God. That is precisely the point of using quotations, to defer responsibility!" Jacobson, *Many are Saying*, 55.

[69]I say "potential" because the presence of a God-lament does not necessitate such an interpretation of the enemy quotation. The rhetorical function of each should be determined on a case by case basis. For example, like Ps 10:1 and 11, there is semantic overlap (reflected lexically) between the God-lament of Ps 22:1 and the enemy quotation of v. 9. The God-lament reads: "Why are you so far from *saving* me (מישועתי)?" (Ps 22:1). The enemy quotation uses partially synonymous vocabulary for deliverance: "Let him *deliver* (פלט) him; let him *rescue* (נצל) him!" (Ps 22:9). In this case, it appears that the enemy quotation is an implicit complaint bolstering the psalmist's own in v. 1.

the psalmist) (see Pss 2:4–6; 3:4; 11:4–7; 12:6–8; 14:2, 5–7; 59:9–11; 64:8, 9, 11; 115:3).

Since there is no evidence of an overlap in sentiment in these psalms (i.e., how the

psalmists create the rhetorical effect of "implicit complaint" [see Ps 10 above]), there is

consequently no textual evidence that the psalmist has included the enemy quotation to

express his own complaint against God.

There is, therefore, an important variation in how this motif functions that has

gone unobserved in previous studies: enemy quotations that attack God are *not always*

used to express an implicit complaint against God.[70] This variation is important for the

present study. It indicates that enemy quotations do not imply the perception of a conflict

of faith and experience in at least the twelve instances cited above.

The Conflict of Faith and Experience and Psalms 73–83

The above discussion has identified the following lament psalms as reflecting a

conflict between faith and experience: Psalms 6; 9–10; 13; 22; 35; 39; 42–43; 44; 60; 74;

77; 79; 80; 85; 88; 89; 90; 94;[71] 102; and 108[72]. With the exception of one psalm (Ps 94),

this is the same list that Broyles' study yielded. The investigation of negative petitions

and enemy quotations in this chapter has provided deeper roots for Broyles' conclusions.

Conversely, the following—majority—of lament psalms do not appear to reflect this faith

crisis: Psalms 3; 4; 5; 7; 12; 14 = 53; 17; 25; 26; 27; 28; 31; 36; 38; 40b = 70; 41; 51; 54;

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[70]Broyles observes that one shortcoming of form-critical studies is that "once a particular motif is identified, it is often assumed that this motif has the same function in each psalm of that category. Rather, one should note the consistency and variation in the function of each motif among the psalms." Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 27. His own study revealed an important variation in how the praise motif functions: sometimes as laudatory, sometimes in the service of complaint (e.g., Ps 74:12–17; 80:9–12). Ibid., 42–44. Variation also exists in the case of enemy quotations that attack God.

[71]Broyles does not include Ps 94, but should. Broyles, who discusses Ps 94 with "psalms that contain no God-lament," seems to have overlooked the one in v. 3: "O Lord, how long shall the wicked exult? How long shall the wicked exult."

[72]Ingvar Fløysvik does not include Ps 108 in the list of God-laments in his study of the theology of God-lament psalms. Ingvar Fløysvik, *When God Becomes My Enemy: The Theology of the Complaint Psalms* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 1997), 20n26. But the presence of the God-lament in v. 12 indicates that it should be included, even though ultimately "faith breaks through and trusts in God's help." Ibid.

55; 56; 57; 58; 59; 61; 64; 69; 70; 71; 83; 86; 106; 109; 120; 123; 126; 130; 137; 139;

140; 141; 142; and 143. This disorienting crisis of faith is, therefore, *not* a virtual

prerequisite for a lament psalm, as discussions of the genre often imply. In actuality the

opposite is true: this crisis of faith characterizes less than one-third of all laments (about

20 of the 65). The relative paucity of these psalms should not be surprising. For in them

"we see Israel's faith in a *position of extremity* [emphasis added], when circumstances

test that faith with challenge and lead to a critical examination of faith's foundations."[73]

But while relatively rare in the Psalter, the above list reveals that these psalms

are particularly prominent in one of its collections: Psalms 73–83.[74] Four of the

collection's eleven total psalms are "God-laments" (Pss 74, 77, 79, and 80). The

following chapter demonstrates that this same crisis of faith also figures prominently in

the opening Psalm 73. Consequently, a conflict of faith and experience figures

prominently in *nearly half* of the psalms in this collection (Pss 73, 74, 77, 79, 80). Thus,

the analysis carried out in this chapter isolates the Asaph psalms heading Book III as a

group of psalms that has been particularly, and distinctively, shaped by this crisis of

faith—more so than any other place in the Psalter.[75]

The rest of this study is devoted to showing that this crisis of faith has not

simply had a significant influence upon the shape of Psalms 73–83 in a general way (i.e.,

the mere presence of five psalms that feature it). This crisis of faith, I argue, is *the* driving

force behind this collection's structure and message.

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[73]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 222.

[74]I say "psalms" and not "lament psalms" because, by its very nature, the perception of such a crisis of faith is not present in psalms outside of the lament category. Psalm 73 is the lone exception. The following chapter discusses this psalm in detail.

[75]Book I has more total psalms in which this faith crisis figures prominently, six (Pss 6; 9–10; 13; 22; 35; 39) in comparison to the five of Pss 73–83 (Pss 73; 74; 77; 79; 80). But it also contains over three times as many psalms. Thus, only about 15% of its psalms center on this conflict. By way of contrast, about 45% of the psalms in Pss 73–83 feature it. There are two in "Korah I" (Pss 42–43; 44), three in Book II as a whole (Pss 42–43; 44; 60), one or two in "Korah II" (Pss 85 and possibly Ps 88), three in Book IV as a whole (Pss 90; 94; 102), and one in Book V as a whole (Ps 108).

Conclusion

In this chapter I sought to demonstrate that (1) contrary to claims frequently made about the genre, laments in which a conflict between faith and experience figures prominently are relatively rare in the Hebrew Psalter; (2) these laments are particularly prominent in one of the Psalter's constituent collections, Psalms 73–83. Consequently, this crisis of faith shaped Psalms 73–83 in a way that is not true of other parts of the Psalter.

CHAPTER 4

PSALM 73: FAITH AMID CONFLICTING EVIDENCE

Chapters 4 through 9 are the heart of the present work: a canonical analysis of

Psalms 73–83. These chapters make the case that Psalms 73–83 give a sustained and

coherent answer to the crisis of faith shown to be a distinctive feature of the collection in

the preceding chapter. The present chapter focuses on the collection's opening psalm,

Psalm 73. It lays an important foundation for understanding both the structure and

message of the collection as a whole. The chapter has three goals: (1) to demonstrate that

the same crisis of faith characteristic of the God-lament psalms discussed in chapter 3

also characterizes Psalm 73; (2) to establish the basic two-part structure or progression of

the psalm; and (3) to determine the basic message communicated in this progression.

Analysis of Psalm 73

There is a long standing debate over the *Gattung* of Psalm 73.[1] I will not,

therefore, attempt to locate it among any one of the traditional genre classifications. In

fact, I agree with John Vassar that Psalm 73 resists such classification.[2] It is sufficient to

observe that the psalm contains elements of a number of different *Gattüngen*, and also

reflects a wisdom influence.[3] There has also been considerable debate over the psalm's

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[1]For detailed discussions of the various proposals, see Leslie C. Allen, "Psalm 73: An Analysis," *TynBul* 33 (1982): 107–18; J. Clinton McCann, "Psalm 73: An Interpretation Emphasizing Rhetorical and Canonical Criticism" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1985), 88–101; Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 231–33.

[2]John S. Vassar, *Recalling a Story Once Told: An Intertextual Reading of the Psalter and the Pentateuch* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 67.

[3]I have intentionally avoided the language "wisdom psalm." I agree with Murphy's suggestion that it is better to "speak of wisdom influence on certain psalms . . . rather than argue for a wisdom classification." Roland E. Murphy, *The Gift of the Psalms* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 15–16.

structure.[4] My own analysis yields the following arrangement:

    A. The problem: the prosperity of the wicked (vv. 1–3)
        B. Elaboration on the problem: the stability of the wicked (vv. 4–12)
            C. Initial response: the instability of the psalmist (vv. 13–16)
                D. Resolution: restored confidence in God's judgement (v. 17)
            C'. Final response: the instability of wicked (vv. 18–20)
        B'. Elaboration on the resolution: the stability of the psalmist (vv. 21–26)
    A'. Summary of the resolution (vv. 27–28)

The psalm consists essentially of a two-part sequence or progression arranged in an inverted parallel fashion (vv. 1–16; 18–28). The particle אַךְ in verses 1 and 18 marks the beginning of these two parts.[5] This particle also heads verse 13, but there it marks the opening of a sub-unit within the first major unit (i.e., vv. 13–16). The two parts pivot upon verse 17, the psalm's turning point.

The Problem: Verses 1–16.

      The psalm's first part (vv. 1–16) details the problem facing the psalmist: the conflict between the doctrine stated in verse 1 ("God is good to Israel, to the pure of heart") and the perpetual prosperity of the wicked (vv. 3–12). It divides into three sub-units: verses 1–3 summarize the problem; verses 4–12 elaborate upon the problem; and verses 13–16 describe the psalmist's initial response to the problem.

      Verses 1–3 summarize the problem that faced not merely an individual psalmist, but "Israel" (v. 1).[6] The seemingly perpetual prosperity of the wicked (see עוֹלָם

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    [4]For a thorough discussion of the numerous proposals, see Allen, "Psalm 73," 92–106; McCann, "Psalm 73," 49–75. McCann discusses thirty-four different structural proposals in his study.

    [5]In addition to the factors mentioned below, further evidence supporting unit boundaries at vv. 18, and 27 (as well as v. 13) are the "unusual parallelisms/colon arrangements" of these verses. See the discussion in Nicholas P. Lunn, *Word-Order Variation in Biblical Hebrew Poetry: Differentiating Pragmatics and Poetics*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2006), 160–76, 184–87, 194. Lunn shows that such parallelisms have a structuring function.

    [6]As is well-known, interpreters (especially of the twentieth century) have often emended לישראל ("to Israel") to ל ישר אל ("to the upright") because it seemingly creates "better" parallelism. But an emendation is unnecessary and there is no textual support for it. The LXX τῷ Ισραηλ ("to Israel") supports the MT. An emendation would obscure the fact that the psalm addresses Israel as a whole.

["forever"] in v. 12) appeared to contradict a core Israelite belief: "God is good to Israel, to the pure of heart (טוב לישראל אלהים לברי לבב)" (v. 1). The Hebrew Bible indicates that this belief was foundational to Israel's conception of God's character, as God himself had revealed it. Its close connection to the core Israelite credo of Exodus 34:6–7 demonstrates this point. When Moses asks God, "Please, show me your glory" in Exodus 33:18, the author places the words "I will cause all of my goodness (טובי) to pass before you" on God's own lips. The foundational Israelite credo of Exodus 34:6–7 is a fulfillment of *this* promise. This credo consists of God's own self-description of various "good" expressions of his character that his people benefit from (e.g., mercy, grace, and steadfast love). The many echoes of Exodus 34:6–7 in the Hebrew Bible, and many occurrences of the affirmation "God/the Lord is good,"[7] confirm the foundational nature of the belief expressed in the affirmation of Psalm 73:1.

The other side of this belief is that God is *not* good to the wicked. They instead (should) experience God's judgement. This belief was so entrenched in Israel that citations are virtually unnecessary.[8] The biblical writers place this belief on God's lips as well, revealing the central role that it played in their conception of his character. In Psalm 75:2, for example, God himself promises, "At an appointed time, I will judge uprightly." The following verses describe how "all the wicked of the earth (כל רשעי ארץ)" will be made to drink of the cup of God's judgement (v. 9). Instances where God's failure to judge the wicked evokes complaint also evince the centrality of God's justice to his basic character (e.g., Hab 1:2–4; 12–17). Thus, the theology expressed in the affirmation of verse 1 was deep-seated in Israel and rooted in God's own self-revelation.

The psalmist explains in verse 3 that lived experience seemed to severely

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[7]See Nah 1:7; Ps 25:8; 34:9; 86:6; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1; Jer 33:11; Lam 3:25.

[8]See the following sampling of texts: Ps 50; 76:8–10; 82; Gen 18:22–33; Mal 3:13–18 Ps 96:13; 98:7–9.

undermine the theology of verse 1: those who were *not* pure of heart (i.e., the wicked/ boasters) seemed to perpetually experience שלום ("well-being/ prosperity").[9] Conversely, verse 14 indicates that the psalmist's experience was one of suffering. But the psalmist's conception of retribution does not appear to have been simplistic or naive. He did not expect the wicked to *never* experience prosperity, nor the righteous to *never* suffer. This assumption is reflected in verses 12–14. Here the psalmist explains that both the wicked's prosperity and his own suffering were of an exceedingly long duration (see especially עולם ["forever"] in verse 12; "continually"; "every morning" [v. 14]). It was the *persistent, ongoing* nature of these realities (and so God's absence) that, over time, had undermined the truthfulness of the doctrine in verse 1—it was not the wicked's prosperity or the psalmist's suffering *as such*.[10] The psalmist candidly confesses his envy (קנא) of the wicked (v. 3) amid these circumstances, and how it nearly turned him away from a life characterized by purity of heart (v. 2).

The next sub-unit (vv. 4–12) shifts the focus to the wicked. This extended description of the wicked firmly establishes the incongruity of lived experience with the doctrine of verse 1. Verses 4–5 expound upon the wicked's condition of שלום mentioned in verse 3. The psalmist then underscores the apparent failure of Divine justice by turning to an extended moral assessment of the the wicked in verses 6–12. Importantly, in these verses the reader discovers that so far the psalm has had non-Israelite wicked in view.[11] The first clause of verse 10 explains that some of "*his* [i.e., God] people (עמו)"

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[9]The expected recipients of שלום were those obedient to God (Isa 48:17–18; 54:14; Jer 6:14; 14:13; Ezek 13:16), not the wicked (Isa 57:18–20). Also reflecting this point are texts in which שלום ("peace") and טוב ("good") are parallel ideas or otherwise clearly associated (Gen 26:29; Deut 23:7; Jer 8:15; 14:19; 33:9; Ps 34:15; Esth 10:3; 9:12).

[10]Psalm 73 thus assumes what Kenneth Kuntz has called a "realistic" stance on retribution (contra Kuntz's own classification of Ps 73): "notwithstanding his fidelity to Yahweh, the צדיק is forced to cope in an imperfect world and to suffer moments of hardship, hostility, and anguish. Nevertheless . . . sooner or later the destruction of the רשע and the deliverance of the צדיק will be effectively secured." J. Kenneth Kunz, "The Retribution Motif in Psalmic Wisdom," *ZAW* 89 (1977): 232.

[11]McCann, "Psalm 73," 188–91; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 229.

apostatized (שוב) and joined the wicked ("here" [הלם]), the implication being that the wicked are *not* God's people (i.e., non-Israelites). The apostasy of God's people was a consequence of the powerful and secure position of these non-Israelite wicked (vv. 6–9), and God's apparent indifference towards it (v. 11).

Verses 11 and 12 close out this sub-unit. The "enemy quotation" in verse 11 summarizes the stance that the non-Israelite wicked (vv. 4–9) and apostate Israelites (v. 10) adopted towards God in light of their impunity: "How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?" This sentiment is an affirmation of God's apparent indifference, apathy, and possibly approval of the wicked. The quotation is especially significant for what it reveals about *the psalmist's* attitude towards God at the time. It gives explicit voice to his own questioning of whether God was perhaps indifferent, uninterested, or, worse, approving of the wicked. The "God of experience" described in verse 11 bore little resemblance to the "God of faith" in verse 1. The final verse of this sub-unit (v. 12) summarizes the wicked's prosperity: "Look! These are the wicked; forever at ease, they increase wealth."

Verses 13–16 are the final sub-unit of the psalm's first half.[12] Verse 13 allows listener/reader to eavesdrop on the verbal expression of the psalmist's near apostasy mentioned in verse 2:

> Surely (אך), in vain I have cleansed my heart (לבב)
> > and washed my hands in innocence
> For I was stricken continually
> > and rebuked every morning (Ps 73:13–14)

These verses constitute the psalmist's preliminary conclusion amid the circumstances recounted in the preceding verses. Striving to maintain a pure heart had been futile. The retributive principle of verse 1 appeared to have been turned on its head. God's absence

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[12]Two factors indicate that the beginning of a new textual unit begins in v. 13: (1) there is a clear shift in focus from the wicked in vv. 4–12 to the psalmist in vv. 13–17; (2) the summary statement about the wicked in v. 12 clearly marks a closing boundary, indicating that v. 13 begins a new unit.

in the wicked's prosperity/the psalmist's suffering challenged whether the psalmist really was the recipient of God's "good" benefits. This point is signaled by an allusion to the opening credo of verse 1 in verse 13.[13] Both verses 1 and 13 make equally strong affirmations about the benefit of striving to maintain purity of heart (see אַךְ ["surely"] in vv. 1 and 13). But they represent *contradictory* assessments of it (see "good" [v. 1]; "vain" [v. 13]). The intention is to lay before the reader the jarring crisis of faith that the psalmist faced: lived experience implied "a contradiction that reflects on God himself," raising the question, "is God, in fact, 'good . . . to those who are pure of heart?" (v. 1).[14] Thus, Psalm 73 centers on a crisis of faith that is of the same nature as the one that characterizes the God-laments considered in the preceding chapter: a conflict between faith ("God is good Israel") and experience (the prosperity of the wicked/suffering of the psalmist).

Verse 15 explains that concern for the faithfulness of other Israelites (see "the generation of your sons [דור בניך]") led the psalmist to refrain from uttering this conclusion publicly. This decision is significant: even though experience appeared to contradict the doctrine in verse 1, the psalmist remained a part of Israel.[15] Verse 16 closes out the psalm's first half by describing the inner turmoil and intellectual burden (עמל) that lived experience had brought upon the psalmist.

Turning Point: Resolution at the Sanctuary: Verse 17.

Verse 17 explains that the intellectual burden was lifted when the psalmist

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[13]Some interpreters think that these similar verses form an inclusio bracketing what they believe to be the first major unit of the psalm (i.e., vv. 1–13) (e.g., Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999, 300]). But the concluding summary statement of v. 12 indicates that v. 13 begins a new unit.

[14]Broyles, *Psalms*, 300.

[15]In light of its significance in the psalm, McCann argues in his dissertation on Ps 73 that v. 15 is "the theological turning point of Ps 73." McCann, "Psalm 73," 68–69, 209. But as will be seen below, there are better reasons for considering v. 17 to be the psalm's theological turning point.

entered the Temple sanctuary (v. 17).[16] The entire mood and direction of the psalm

changes after verse 17, clearly indicating that it forms the psalm's turning point.[17]

Consequently, verse 17 divides Psalm 73 into two clearly distinct halves: verses 1–16 and

18–28. Verses 18–28 demonstrate that these two halves reflect markedly different

postures towards God and perspectives on his involvement in the affairs of his people/ the

world.

The second half of verse 17 reveals what removed the psalmist's intellectual

burden: "I understood their (i.e., the wicked) end (אחרית) (i.e., outcome/future)." Verses

18–20 make clear that by "end" the psalmist means God's future, material, destruction of

the wicked.[18] This statement shows that it was not a new belief that changed the

psalmist's perspective. It was reassurance of an "old" one. At the temple the psalmist

gained fresh assurance of the "other side" of the credo in verse 1, which experience had

formerly led him to doubt: God's certain judgement of the wicked. Whatever the catalyst

at the temple,[19] the resultant reassurance of the wicked's disastrous "end" resolved the

conflict between faith and experience recounted in the psalm's first half. The statement in

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[16]The Hebrew has מקדשי אל ("the sanctuaries of God"). The plural מקדשי has been variously interpreted. For a summary of views, see McCann, "Psalm 73," 37–39, 212–13. Using the plural מקדשי to refer to the sanctuary is rare in the Psalter, but not unprecedented (see קדשיך ["your sanctuaries"] in Ps 68:36. See the singular in vv. 16–18, 25, and 30). See also the plural "dwelling places (משכנות)" as a reference to the temple in Ps 84:2. The plural in 73:17 may be a plural of intensification, in which case it would highlight the "holiness of the place." If it is a "plural of local extension," it would refer to the "temple and all its precincts (Jer 51:51; Ezek 21:7; Lev 21:23; and others)." Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 229n17a.

[17]"The center [of a concentric pattern] serves as a turning point that shifts the focus from one level of meaning to another." John Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language: Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994), 336.

[18]McCann's claim that vv. 18–20 have "nothing to do with the outward, material condition of the wicked" (McCann,"Psalm 73," 214–15) is unconvincing. It is difficult to see how these verses could be read in any other way. Consider how the language of these verses is used elsewhere: חלקות ("slippery places") (v. 18; Ps 35:6; Jer 23:12); נפל ("fall") (v. 18; Ps 35:8; Jer 23:12); משואה ("ruins") (v. 18; Zeph 1:15; Ps 35:8, Isa 47:11 [שואה]; שמה ("destruction") (v. 19; Isa 13:9;); רגע ("in a moment" (v. 19; Isa 47:9 [God as logical subject, v. 3]); סוף ("utter end") (v. 19; Isa 66:17); בלהה ("terrors") (v. 19; Ezek 26:21; Job 27:20); כחלום ("like a dream") (v. 20; Isa 29:7; Job 20:8 [vv. 4–7 for context]); קיץ ("awake") (v. 20; Ps 78:65). McCann is aware of how these terms are used elsewhere, but does not draw the natural conclusion for Ps 73:18–20: the psalmist has in view the outward, material, destruction of the wicked.

[19]This point has been the cause of much (unnecessary) speculation among scholars. The text focuses on the *result* of having entered the temple (i.e., renewed assurance of the wicked's "end"), not on what brought about that result.

verse 17 also shows that the resolution to the psalm's crisis of faith did not consist of changed circumstances. The psalmist became sure of God's involvement in the affairs of his people/the world, but had not yet experienced it. Rather, resolution consisted in a changed perspective on the wicked, and especially God, amid circumstances that remained unchanged (i.e., the wicked still prosper [vv. 3–12]; the psalmist still suffers [v. 26]). The second half of the psalm is largely an elaboration upon the resolution that the psalmist found at the sanctuary.

Resolution: Verses 18–28.

The particle אַךְ ("Surely") in verse 18 marks the opening of the second part of the psalm (vv. 18–28) just as it did the first (see v. 1). As just mentioned, these verses reflect and elaborate upon the resolution brought about at the sanctuary (v. 17). McCann has demonstrated that their language and imagery deliberately signals a complete reversal in the psalmist's perspective from that of the psalm's first half.[20] This second half of the psalm consist of three sub-units that stand in an inverted parallel relationship with the first three.

The first sub-unit (vv. 18–20) elaborates on the "end/future (אחרית)" of the wicked mentioned in verse 17. It consist of the psalmist's confident affirmations about God's future, though certain, destruction of the wicked. As such verses 18–20 stands in a sharp contrastive parallel relationship with the psalmist's former response to the wicked's prosperity (vv. 13–17).[21] And they represent a complete reversal in the psalmist's perspective on the wicked amid the circumstances recounted in verses 2–14. But most

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[20]For example, McCann shows that there are seven words in vv. 18–28 which are deliberately repeated from vv. 4–12 to highlight this reversal in perspective. McCann, "Psalm 73," 79–82. In this discussion, McCann also draws attention to parallels in imagery that function in the same way (e.g., "slippery places" [v. 18]; my feet nearly had nearly slipped [lit. "were poured out [שֻׁפְּכוּ]"] [v. 2]).

[21]The contrastive statements beginning with אַךְ in vv. 13 and 18 highlight this parallel relationship. The particle introduces a statement reflecting the *instability* of the *psalmist* in v. 13, and a strong affirmation of the future *instability* of the *wicked* in v. 18 ("you will set them in *slippery places*").

significantly, they represent a markedly different perspective on *God's involvement in the affairs of the world/his people*. God's certain future activity means that he is *not* indifferent or unjust in his current inactivity—despite apparent evidence to the contrary (vv. 3–12).

Verses 21–26 form the next sub-unit.[22] These verses stand in a contrastive parallel relationship to verses 4–12.[23] Verses 4–12 had described the stability and security of the wicked. Verses 21–26, on the other hand, describe the stability and security of the psalmist. Thus, this section also reflects a radical reversal in perspective from the psalm's first half. The psalmist confesses that he had behaved like a brute beast in his former envy of the wicked (vv. 21–22). Verses 23–26 reflect a confident assurance of the experience of God's presence. This provides the psalmist with stability and security ("God is the *rock* [צור] of my heart and portion [חלקי] forever").[24] It thus appears that assurance of God's certain (albeit future) destruction of the wicked awoke in the psalmist the corresponding realization that God had *not* abandoned the righteous, despite appearances (vv. 13–14, 26). The psalmist had, in fact, been "with (עם)" God (v. 23) all along and was receiving his guidance (v. 24).[25]

The final two verses of this section form a succinct conclusion to the psalm as a whole: the instability of the wicked (v. 27); the stability of the psalmist (v. 28). As the

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[22]Verses 21–26 are framed by references to the psalmist's "heart (לבב)" in vv. 21 and 26. Giving them inner cohesion is the repetition of the prepositional phrase "with you (עמד)" (vv. 22, 23, 25), a key phrase in this section.

[23]Both sections begin with the particle כי (vv. 4, 21), and conclude with contrastive statements about the security of the wicked and psalmist respectively. Each statement contains the noun עולם ("always") (vv. 12, 26).

[24]Both "rock of my heart" and "portion" are metaphors for security. A parallel passage is Ps 142:5, where "portion (חלק)" parallels "refuge" (מחסה): "You are my refuge (מחסה), my portion (חלק) in the land of the living." William Brown rightly notes that, being parallel to "refuge" (which conveys an analogous image as "rock [צור]" in 73:26), "portion" is here a metaphor for protection. William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 205.

[25]The meaning of the much discussed אחר כבוד תקחני in the second clause of v. 24 need not detain us here. Whatever its precise meaning, it is clearly an affirmation reflecting the reversal in perspective that is characteristic of the psalm's second half.

psalm's conclusion, verse 27 fittingly returns to the realization that brought about

resolution to the crisis of faith: God's certain judgement of the wicked (see vv. 18–20).

Except here in verse 27 the scope of God's judgement is narrower than in verses 18–20.

The reason is that one burden of the psalm is clearly to warn against the perils of

abandoning God based upon his apparent absence. The psalmist himself had nearly

apostatized for this reason (vv. 2–3; 13–14). But, receiving reassurance of God's active

involvement at the temple, the psalmist concludes with a strong affirmation about the

perils of straying "far (רחק)" from God (v. 27; see v. 2). All Israelites who "commit

harlotry from you (זונה ממך)"[26]—like those mentioned in verse 10—will "perish" and be

destroyed by God. Thus, reassurance of the wicked's future (though certain) instability (v.

27) had put their current stability (v. 12) into perspective.[27]

The instability of the wicked in verse 27 is contrasted with the stability of the

"pure of heart" in verse 28. Doubt over whether God was, in fact, "good (טוב) to the pure

of heart" had placed the psalmist on unstable ground at the beginning of the psalm (vv. 1–

2). It had led him to question the benefit gained by striving for purity of heart. Verse 28

makes explicit that the psalmist regained confidence in both the value and necessity (v.

27) of striving for "purity of heart" through the experience recounted in the psalm: "But

as for me, nearness to God is good (טוב)."[28] This statement, which forms an inclusio with

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[26]The verb זנה is used almost exclusively to refer to Israelite apostasy, and idolatry in particular in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Lev 17:7; 20:5; Deut 31:16; Judg 2:17; 8:27; Jer 2:10; 3:1, 6, 8; Ezek 6:9; 16:15, 35, 41; 23:3, 19, 30, 43; Hos 1:2; 2:7; 4:12, 15; 9:1; Ps 106:39. Particularly relevant are the two other occasions where, like Ps 73:27, the verb זנה is followed by the preposition מן ("from") (Hos 4:12; 9:1). With the preposition, זנה more clearly conveys the idea of *leaving* God, and therefore indicates Israelites are in view. McCann observes that the only place where the verb זנה is applied to non-Israelites is Nah 3:4 (i.e., Nineveh). McCann, "Psalm 73," 228.

[27]The psalmist highlights this point by evoking his former conclusion about the wicked (see v. 12) in v. 27: "*Look*! (הנה) These are the wicked; forever at ease, they increase wealth" (v. 12); "*Look*! (הנה) Those far from you shall perish; you will destroy all who commit harlotry from you" (v. 27).

[28]The construct chain קרבת אלהים translates "nearness to God" above. It is best taken in the sense of a Greek "objective genitive" (the psalmist's nearness to God), not a "subjective genitive" (God's nearness to the psalmist). This is indicated first by the parallel expression "those far from you (רחקיך)." The antonymic nature of "near" and "far" indicates that the psalmist intends to make a contrastive parallel between the conduct and respective "end" of the wicked and the righteous: the wicked are unfaithful ("far") and perish (v. 27); the psalmist remains faithful ("near") and experiences God as a refuge (v. 28). Secondly, the only other occurrence of the expression קרבת אלהים in the Hebrew Bible (Isa 58:2) refers to

verse 1, is not defining the adjective "good" (i.e., "good" = "nearness to God"). That is, the psalmist is *not* claiming that "purity of heart is its own reward."[29] It is instead predicating something about "nearness to God" (i.e., "purity of heart"), namely, that it is *beneficial* (i.e., "good"); it "pays off." It therefore becomes evident that the affirmation "nearness to God is good (i.e., beneficial)" in verse 28 and "God is good . . . to the pure of heart" in verse 1 are two different ways of saying the same thing. Verse 28 brings the psalm full circle.

However, unlike verse 1, verse 28 fleshes out what is meant by "beneficial": the pure of heart experience God as their "refuge (מחסה)." God provides them with stability and security, as the psalmist could already testify (vv. 21–26), even amid continual suffering (v. 26; see v. 14). But the psalmist most likely has in view primarily refuge/security from God's own judgement given the parallel verse 27 ("Those far from you shall perish . . .").[30] Thus, as the psalmist looks to God for refuge from the coming judgement, he "recounts (ספר)" all of God's works, eagerly expecting a future demonstration of them. This statement reflects a complete reversal from the psalmist's former temptation to publicly "recount (ספר)" that purity of heart is futile (v. 15).[31]

The Basic Message of Psalm 73

The basic theological message arising from the psalm's two-part progression,

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faithfulness/obedience to God. McCann, "Psalm 73," 48, 229–30. The expression is equivalent to "pure of heart" in the psalm.

[29]Contra McCann, "Psalm 73," 231.

[30]Nahum 1:7–8 is another text that fleshes out God's goodness in terms of his being a "refuge" from judgement: "The Lord is good (טוב יהוה), a place of protection in the day of distress (למעוז ביום צרה); He knows all who take refuge in him (וידע חסי בו). But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of his adversaries [i.e., Nineveh]."

[31]The infinitival clause "recounting all your works (לספר כל מלאכותיך)" in v. 28 most likely has the "works" of God's judgement in view. The verb ספר is only used with מלאכה in Ps 73:28. In fact, apart from Ps 73:38, only five of the remaining 166 occurrences of the noun מלאכה in the Hebrew Bible refer to "works" performed by God of any kind (Gen 2:2 [2x], 3; Jer 48:10; 50:25). Three are irrelevant for Ps 73 since they refer to God's works of creation (Gen 2:2 [2x], and 2:3). The remaining two refer to God's works of *judgement*, not salvation (Jer 48:10; 50:25). Given that judgement is prominent in the immediate context, it is preferable to interpret מלאכה in Ps 73:28 as a reference to God's judgements.

which hinges upon verse 17, may be summarized as follows: "Faith sticks to God's self-revelation in the midst of conflicting evidence."[32] The psalmist confidently affirms the truthfulness of the core Israelite belief that, "God is good to Israel, to the pure of heart" (v. 1) amid the conflicting evidence of the wicked's perpetual prosperity (vv. 3–12), and his own continual suffering (vv. 14; 26). This message hangs like a banner over the entire psalm in verse 1 "as a summary of the whole psalm: In spite of everything, I nevertheless maintain that God is good."[33]

Conclusion

In this chapter, I showed that (1) a conflict of faith (i.e., "God is good to Israel") and experience (i.e., the prosperity of the wicked) analogous to the faith crisis at the heart of the God-lament psalms also characterizes Psalm 73; (2) the opening Psalm 73 has a basic two-part structure or progression: the psalmist's encounter with a conflict between faith and experience (vv. 1–16); the psalmist's resolution of this crisis of faith (vv. 18–28); and that (3) the basic theological message arising from the psalm's two-part progression may be summarized as "faith sticks to God's self-revelation amid conflicting evidence."

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[32]Ingvar Fløysvik, *When God Becomes My Enemy: The Theology of the Complaint Psalms* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 1997), 176. As already mentioned, this statement is Fløysvik's conclusion on the major theological contribution of the God-lament psalms considered in the last chapter. That it can also be used to summarize Ps 73 reveals the latter's affinity with the God-lament psalms.

[33]N. H. Snaith, "The Meaning of the Hebrew אַךְ," *VT* 14 (1964): 223. Many others recognize v. 1 as the psalm's conclusion. See, for example, John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms: Psalms 36–92* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 124; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 233–35; John Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 400; Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 226.

CHAPTER 5

PSALMS 74–76

This chapter continues the analysis of Psalms 73–83. It has a twofold aim, to show that (1) Psalms 74–76 have been deliberately grouped together, and that (2) Psalms 75–76 answer/resolve the conflict between faith and experience precipitated by the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in Psalm 74.

Analysis of Psalms 74, 75, and 76

I begin with a concise analysis of Psalms 74, 75, and 76.

Psalm 74

Psalm 74 is a communal lament most likely composed in response to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 586 B.C.E (vv. 3–8).[1] It is one of the laments Broyles identifies as a "God-lament" in his study.[2] Psalm 74, therefore, belongs to the subset of lament psalms that form their appeal by drawing God's attention to a conflict between faith and experience. The psalm's emphasis on the prolonged duration of God's inactivity (vv. 1, 3, 9–10, 23) suggests a date later in the exilic period for its composition.[3]

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[1]Walter Bouzard agues that Ps 74 likely dates to the pre-exilic period. He cites as evidence for this claim what he considers indicators of a Mesopotamian literary milieu and various linguistic features pointing to a pre-exilic date. See W.C. Bouzard Jr., *We Have Heard with Our Ears, O God*, SBLDS 159 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 174–85. A straightforward reading of the psalm, however, favors the scholarly consensus that the psalm is exilic/post-exilic and was composed in response to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple.

[2]See the discussions in Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study*, JSOTSup 52 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989),150–54; Ingvar Fløysvik, *When God Becomes My Enemy: The Theology of the Complaint Psalms* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 1997), 68–92.

[3]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 151.

Graeme E. Sharrock has convincingly shown that the psalm is arranged in a five part concentric arrangement, signaled by inversely parallel verbal patterns:[4]

    A. Imperatives (apart from introductory complaint [v. 1]) (vv. 1–3)
      B. Perfects (with supplementary imperfect in v. 9) (vv. 4–9)
        C. Imperfects (vv. 10–11)
      B'. Perfects (with supplementary imperfect in v. 14) (vv. 12–17)
    A'. Imperatives (and supporting jussives, etc.) (vv. 18–23)

Sharrock demonstrates that correspondence in content between the parallel sections confirms the psalm's concentric arrangement.[5] The following analysis adopts Sharrocks's proposed structure, but is not organized in terms of it.

The community interprets the catastrophe (i.e., an enemy's destruction of God's dwelling place [vv. 4–12]) as God's wrathful (אף) rejection (זנח) of his people (v. 1).[6] However, the enemy is not characterized as the instrument of God's anger. They are instead God's enemy (see "*your* adversaries" [v. 4]) acting on their own accord (vv. 4–9). Thus, as Broyles notes, God's "disposition is considered one of wrathful rejection but his conduct one of restraint."[7] The central problem facing the community is not the temple's destruction per se. It is the theological implications of God's inactivity in the wake of this calamity. God's absence implies either that he is indifferent, or worse, that the Great King has been defeated by the enemy's god.[8] The former is implied by the prolonged nature of God's inactivity.[9] The latter is implied by an enemy who has set up military standards

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[4]Graeme E. Sharrock, "Psalm 74: A Literary-Structural Analysis," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 21 (1983): 211–23.

[5]Ibid., 214–19.

[6]"Why do you reject forever? Why does your anger smoke against the flock of your pasture?" (v. 1).

[7]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 151.

[8]Rolf A. Jacobson, *Many Are Saying: The Function of Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Psalter*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 397 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 46. Jacobson considers this to be the central theological dilemma of the psalm, which is named by the enemy quotation in v. 8: "Let us destroy [the Lord's sanctuaries] altogether . . . ." See also the similar comments in Fløysvik, *When God Becomes My Enemy*, 87–91.

[9]This is a prominent theme: "Why . . .do you reject *forever* (לנצח)?" (v. 1); "*perpetual* (נצח)

carrying the emblem of their god in God's own dwelling place.[10] All of this, the psalmist

stresses, is threatening God's great "name (שם)"; it threatens God himself and

particularly his reputation as king.[11]

The psalmist highlights this conflict between faith and experience by placing

multiple God-laments at the psalm's prominent central location:

> How long will the adversary reproach?
> > Will they despise your name forever?
> Why do you withdraw your hand, even your right hand?
> > (Take it) out from your bosom! Destroy! (Ps 74:10–11)

Zenger rightly observes that the "withdrawal" of God's hand and hiding of his "right

hand" in his garment (v. 11) is an "accusation of actual and deliberate inactivity" that

"stand[s] in contradiction to his 'exodus action' . . . .With this, the accusation of God

reaches its climax: the situation lamented in the psalm is a contradiction within God

himself!"[12] The juxtaposition of a "reference to God's earlier saving deeds" as the mighty

"king of old (מלכי מקדם)" (vv. 12–17) with these complaints reveals that the calamity

undermines God's past self-revelation as *king*. As the Great King, God had defeated all

chaotic forces in the past (vv. 12–14) and ordered the created world (vv. 14–17). The

juxtaposition of this hymnic description with a lament over the chaos ensuing in Zion (vv.

1–11) indicates that verses 12–17 are not "straight praise." It is "praise" in the service of

lament.[13] This "praise" section highlights the massive discrepancy between God's past

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ruins" (v. 3); "How *long*?" (v. 9–10); "Will the enemy despise your name *forever* (לנצח)?"; "the uproar of those who rise against you goes up *continually* (תמיד)" (v. 23).

[10]Fløysvik, *When God Becomes My Enemy*, 87.

[11]God's "name (שם)" is a major theme in Ps 74 (vv. 7, 10, 18, and 21). God's "name" is a "metonym for the total character, presence, reputation, and authority of God." Sharrock, "Psalm 74," 222. While true, God's "name" is tied particularly to his reputation as king in Ps 74. On the importance of this theme Sharrock notes: "If indeed C [vv. 10–11] is the axis of the petition, then the primary theme of the psalm is the status of God's name and reputation. Ibid., 223.

[12]Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 247–48.

[13]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 43. Others have observed this point as well. Fløysvik, *When God Becomes My Enemy*, 89; John Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 430; Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*,

praiseworthy behavior as the subduer of chaos/ orderer of creation and the chaos/disorder prevailing in Zion. At the same time it "reminds" God of "what his conduct should be" so that he will intervene and show himself to be king once more.[14]

Psalm 75

Psalm 75 does not fit any one of the traditional *Gattüngen*.[15] The psalm progresses as follows. It opens with a praise introduction (v. 1), in which the community praises God because his "name (שם)" is "near" (v. 2).[16] This is followed by a God quotation, the length of which is not entirely clear. I have adopted a conservative approach by limiting it to verses 3–4 in light of the "Selah" at the end of verse 4. But it is possible that it extends further. The voice addressing the wicked in verses 5–10 is then that of the psalmist. His confident admonition for the wicked not to "boast" or "lift up" their horn in pride arises from, and is firmly rooted in, the divine self-disclosure of verses 3–4:[17]

Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 253–54. Brown Jones, wrongly in my view, claims that vv. 12–17 "assures the people that God does indeed have the power to right the situation." Christine Danette Brown Jones, "The Psalms of Asaph: A Study of the Function of a Psalm Collection" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2009), 70. As Tate notes, "The hymnic section in vv. 12–17 is more description than declarative and is not really praise but rather prayer intended to emphasize God's painful inactivity. The language of praise is put to use in the service of lament." Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 253–54. These verses do not so much "assure" the people of God's power to "right the situation" as they do *reflect* their deep-seated belief in it.

[14]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 43.

[15]Rejecting Gunkel's designation "prophetic liturgy," Matthias Millard proposes the designation "Orakelpsalm" for Ps 75 and other similar psalms (see Pss 81, 82, 95). Matthias Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters: Ein Formgeschichtlicher Ansatz*, FAT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 95–96. But such a designation is unhelpful since the term "oracle" can only be applied to the Divine speech in Ps 75 in a very loose sense. See below.

[16]The verb הודינו in v. 2 (which occurs twice) is best understood as a performative *qatal*, not a past tense statement (contra Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 252–53, 255): "we give you thanks/praise you!" That is, the *qatal* "does not describe anterior (perfect), past, present, or even future events or situations" but "is employed in order to perform determined acts, such as blessing, thanking, and challenging . . . .by uttering the sentence, the speaker does not state how reality was, is or will be, but imposes an immediate modification of the adjacent world." Alexander Andrason, "Making It Sound—The Performative Qatal and Its Explanations," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 12 (2011): 37, accessed July 5, 2018, http:/ www.jhsonline.org/Articles/article_170.pdf.

[17]Similar language elsewhere support the psalmist as the speaker. Compare, for example, these verses with Ps 66:7: "Let the rebellious not exalt themselves [אל ירומו]" [reading the *Qere* ירומו]), and sections of the "Song of Hannah" In 1 Sam 2. In terms of the latter text, compare especially תדברו גבהה גבהה ("Do not speak proudly") in 1 Sam 2:3 and תדברו בצואר עתק ("Do not speak with a haughty neck") in

> "When I take an appointed time,
>   I will judge with equity.
> When the earth and its inhabitants melt/totter,
>   it is I who keeps its pillars steady" (Ps 75:3–4)

This Divine speech most directly depicts God as the universal judge (מישרים אשפט ["I will *judge* uprightly"]). But similar language elsewhere (e.g., Pss 9:9; 96:10; 98:9; 99:4) reveals that the fundamental image reflected is that of God as the great and sovereign *king*[18]; God's judgement is a central aspect of his kingship. Jacobson cautions that the (common) designation "oracle" should only be used of this Divine speech "with the greatest of care."[19] He points out that an oracle implies present communication from God. But the Divine speech in this and other similar psalms (Pss 50, 81, 95) is best understood as "either a quotation of words of God that had been communicated in the past . . . or as artistic liturgical compositions that drew upon the theological traditions of Israel's past."[20] The focus should therefore be on the rhetorical function of the Divine speech in the text's present form. The content of the oracle is best interpreted as the "wonders" of God judgment recounted by the congregation praising God (see ספרו נפלאותיך [v. 2]). Thus, God's promise of future judgement/to bring order to the chaos (vv. 3–4) is "a 'wonder' to which the faithful of God look forward and for which they give praise."[21]

Ps 75:6.

[18]Compare the following texts, both lexically and thematically, with Ps 75:3–4 (". . . I will judge uprightly [מישרים אשפט].When the earth totters, it is I who steadies its pillars"). Notice especially how God's sovereign control and "upright" judgement mentioned in Ps 75:3–4 is understood as a function of God's *kingship*: "Say among the nations, "The Lord *reigns* (מלך)! Surely the world is established; it shall not be moved; he will judge (ידין) the people with uprightness (ידין עמים במישרים) (Ps 96:10); "Shout in joy before the *king* (המלך), the Lord . . . he comes to judge the earth (לשפט הארץ). He will judge (ישפט) the world with righteousness, and the peoples with uprightness (במישרים); "The King is mighty; he loves justice (משפט).You have established equity (מישרים)." Others have observed this point as well. See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 255.

[19]Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 92.

[20]Ibid., 109. See the discussion on pp. 92–93, 111–112. As Jacobson points out, Ps 75 is a liturgical composition (cf. v. 1) and the God-quotation would be repeated every time the psalm was performed. In short, the "oracle" recorded in vv. v. 3–4 is "more a *liturgical* than a *prophetic* phenomenon." James L. Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 266 (quoted in Jacobson, *Many are Saying*, 112).

[21]Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 110.

The psalmist's admonition of the wicked to not arrogantly "lift up" (רום) their

horn is rooted in the oracle of verses 3–4. It is the central motif in the psalm (see vv. 5, 6,

7,[22] 8, and 11). The motif functions to highlight God's sole sovereign authority as judge

and the certainty of his judgement of the wicked. The Great King is the one who "lifts

up" and "brings low," who will make "all of the wicked of the earth" drain the cup of his

wrath to its dregs (vv. 8–9). This confident admonition is followed by a vow to "sing" to

God (v. 10), the sovereign king. This praise clearly arises from the reality of God's

sovereign justice. The psalm ends with a closing oracle (v. 11) reinforcing the certainty of

the Divine King's judgement. The Divine King will "cut off" all the horns of the wicked

but "lift up" all the "horns" of the righteous. This closing oracle, like that of verses 3–4,

is also introduced by and subordinate to praise: "I will declare [your judgement][23]

forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob (v. 10).

This summary suggests that Psalm 75 reflects a delay in God's judgment as the

wicked flourish.[24] Such a delay is suggested by the psalm's preoccupation with the

arrogant wicked (vv. 5–9), and the focus on God's *future* judgement. The oracles of

verses 3–4 and 11 provide a Divine, authoritative, answer to these circumstances. The

purpose is to elicit and bolster the faith of God's people. But it is also to warn the wicked

among them.[25] The righteous maintain, on the basis of God's self-revelation (vv. 3–4, 11),

that God *will* "cut off" the horns of the wicked in due time (vv. 11).

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[22]In v. 7 the form is הרים. Some interpret this form as a plural of the noun הר ("mountain"). This reading is supported by the LXX's ὀρέων. While possible, I have read it instead as a *hiphil* infinitive construct from the verb רום ("to lift up/exalt"), given that this verb is a keyword in the psalm (vv. 6, 7, 8, 11). Thus, לא ממדבר הרים is in v. 7 is translated, "not from the wilderness is lifting up/exaltation."

[23]The words "your judgement" are not in the text, which simply reads "I will declare (אני אגיד)." I have supplied "your judgement" since God's judgement is clearly the implied object of the verb "to declare" in context.

[24]Others have observed this point as well. Jacobson, *Many are Saying*, 111. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 255–58.

[25]Jacobson notes in his conclusion on the function of this, and similar, God quotations in the Psalter: ". . . these psalms give a *divine answer* to the problem of sin and the seeming absence of God." Jacobson, *Many are Saying*, 111.

Psalm 76

Psalm 76 has traditionally been labeled one of the "Songs of Zion."[26] It is a hymn that celebrates God as the leonine[27] warrior who is "renowned (נודע)" in Judah and whose "name (שם)" is great in Israel (v. 2). But he is also sovereign over the "kings of the earth (מלכי ארץ)" (v. 13). The main section of the psalm (vv. 5–10) puts on vivid display the basis for the praise in the opening verses:[28] God's self-revelation as the incontestable defender of Zion, who comes in judgement (משפט) to protect/save its poor inhabitants (v. 10). Though implied all along, the final verses (vv. 12–13) make explicit that the majestic image of God in the psalm is a picture of his mighty *kingship*.[29] Tate notes that "Yahweh is presented as a great king who overcomes the raging of humankind (v. 11) and waits for the fulfillment of vows to him by homage-paying vassals. The neighboring people, along with the Israelites, are exhorted to bring tribute to God who awes kings and mortifies the rebellious wills of princes."[30]

This hymn is undoubtedly rooted in (and its content informed by) historical occasions where Yahweh was believed to have acted mightily. But the position that Psalm 76 has a specific battle in view should be rejected. The psalm employs generalized

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[26]Other psalms so labeled are Pss, 46, 48, 84, 87, and 122. Some reject this designation because the focus is Zion's lion/warrior and not the city as such. Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms (Part 2) and Lamentations*, FOTL (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 87.

[27]The psalmist applies lion imagery to God in v. 3 with the terms סך and מענה. The terms סך and מענה occur in parallel in Job 38:40 to describe the dwelling of a lion. The term מענה is used elsewhere in this way in Amos 3:4, Nah 2:13 Ps 104:22, Can 4:8. For סך, see Jer 4:7, 25:38, Ps 10:9. Zenger thus rightly notes that in 76:3 these terms reflect "the imagery of YHWH as a lion who has chosen Salem/Zion as his 'covert' (סך) and his (hidden) "camp" . . .in order, from there, to fall upon the armies and destroy their weapons." Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 265.

[28]It is common to take the *niphal* participles in vv. 2 (נודע ["known"]), 5 (נאור ["majestic"]), and 8 (נורא ["feared"]) as structural indicators, marking the beginning of the first three sections of the psalm. The final section then consists of vv. 11–13. Others (e.g., Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 264) consider the term סלה ("selah") at end of vv. 4 and 10 to be the major structural indicator, yielding a three-part structure for the psalm: vv. 2–4, 5–10, 11–13. The latter is preferable because it does not break up vv. 5–10, which form one section delineating God's incontestable defense of Zion and salvation of its people.

[29]"Make vows to the Lord your God and repay them! Let all around him bring tribute to the one who is to be feared! He cuts off the spirit of princes. He is one to be feared by the kings of the earth" (Ps 76:12–13).

[30]Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 266. See also the comments of Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 271.

imagery of God as the great leonine King that is rooted in specific occasions.[31] The hymn is clearly forward looking (vv. 11–13), but is not strictly eschatological. Tate's judgement seems to accurately capture the "direction" that the psalm is pointing the reader: "In its present canonical context, Ps 76 invites the reader to look backward and forward, but especially to the latter, to the time when the resplendent majesty of Yahweh will be demonstrated in great acts of rebuke and judgement. The shape of the future lies in the past."[32] Thus, the psalm looks backward to provide a solid foundation for *future* hope and confidence in God.

The Psalm Group of Psalms 74–76

Having considered each psalm on its own terms, I now make the case that Psalms 74–76 have been deliberately grouped together. In accordance with the method laid out in chapter 1, I first present evidence for this claim and only then consider its significance.

Psalms 74–76 as a Psalm Group: Evidence

The evidence consists of significant parallels at different levels of the sequence. Most of this evidence appears in one study or another. However, most studies lack a consistent process of evaluating the parallels between these psalms. Chapter 2 showed that such is especially true of the major canonical study of Book III, Cole's *The Shape and Message of Book III*. But we also saw that it was characteristic of other studies as well. For this reason, I provide a brief justification of each parallel's significance. The reader should observe that the evidence cited below is, to differing degrees, both conjunctive and disjunctive in nature. It suggests both the deliberate sequencing of these

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[31]Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 266. The LXX interprets the psalm historically, where the title diverges from the MT by including πρὸς τὸν Ἀσσύριον ("concerning the Assyrian").

[32]Ibid., 264.

three psalms and their distinctiveness as a group within the proximate context. The latter

concern (i.e., distinctiveness) receives significantly more support as the argument

develops in the following chapters. I follow others (e.g., Howard, Grant, McKelvey,

Snearly) in presenting only the most significant evidence.[33] This practice provides the

strongest possible foundation for assessing the significance of the grouping in the

following section. The significant links between the adjacent Psalms 75 and 76 are listed

first:

1. God as judge of the wicked (Ps 75)/enemies (Ps 76) is the main image of God and a major theme in each psalm. In each case this theme is reflected in words built from the root שפט ("to judge") (Ps 75:3, 8; 76:10). Such words do not occur again until Psalm 81 (v. 5). Further, as seen above, in both psalms this theme reflects God's larger role as king.

2. "Name (שם)" theology appears at the beginning of both psalms (Ps 75:2; 76:2). It does not occur again until Psalm 79. This link is both a significant lexical and structural parallel.

3. The epithet "God of Jacob (אלהי יעקב)" (75:10; 76:7) that these psalms share only occurs in one other psalm in the collection (Ps 81:2, 5). This title may specifically be tied to God's role as king.[34]

4. The motif of thanksgiving occurs in both, and is reflected by the verb ידה ("to give thanks") (75:2 [2x]; 76:11). This verb occurs only once elsewhere in Psalms 73–83 (Ps 79:13).

These links sufficiently evince the deliberate juxtaposition of Psalms 75 and

76.[35] They also begin to distinguish these psalms from their proximate context. The main

feature binding them together is the central image of *God as judge/king* that both share.[36]

Each, however, develops this image in different ways. Psalm 75 presents God as the

universal judge and king who will judge the wicked and vindicate the righteous at a

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[33]In this connection, see the methodological discussion in chap. 1.

[34]See Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion, the City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult*, JSOTSup 41 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 75.

[35]See also Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 258, 271. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 37–53.

[36]"Name" theology is also important in both, but it reflects this larger theme.

sovereignly appointed time. Psalm 76 presents God above all as the saving judge and

king of Zion, and the entire world.

Each of these psalms is bound individually to Psalm 74 by numerous

significant links. Consider the links joining Psalms 75 with 74:

1. Like Psalm 76, Psalm 74 shares the important theme of God as judge/king with Ps 75 (74:12, 22; 75:3–4).

2. Also like Psalm 76, Ps 74 shares "name (שם)" theology with Psalm 75 (Ps 74: 7, 10, 18, 21; 75:2). Like both Psalms 75 and 76, Psalm 74 ties "name" theology to the image of God as king/judge—albeit one who seems to have failed to exercise these roles. The presence of "name theology" in a God-lament at the pivot of the psalm further establishes its significance ("Will the enemy despise your *name* [שם] forever?" [v. 10]).[37]

3. Both contain the motif of God as the "Guarantor of cosmic stability"[38] (Ps 74: 16–17; 75:4). This motif does not appear again until Psalm 82.

4. These adjacent psalms contain seven of the nine total occurrences of the root רום ("to lift up/exalt") in Psalms 73–83 (Ps 74:3; 75:5, 6 [2x], 7, 8, 11). The central role of this root in Psalm 75 further establishes its significance: רום is *the* key-root/word repeated to underscore God's sovereign justice and universal kingship.

5. Three of the five total occurrences of the noun מועד ("appointed time/ place") in the entire Psalter are in these adjacent psalms (Ps 74:4, 8; 75:3). The remaining two come in Psalm 102:14 and 104:19.

6. Both contain references to God's powerful "hand (יד)" (Ps 74:11; 75:9). There are only two other specific references to God's "hand" in Psalms 73–83 (Ps 78:42; 80:18). Though, related references to God's "arm" and "right arm" do appear elsewhere [see 74:11; 77:11]). Like "name theology" above, the position of this parallel at the center of Psalm 74 also strengthens its significance (v. 11).

7. The motif of praise also binds the two psalms together (see הלל ["to praise"] in 74:21 and ידה ("to give thanks/praise") in 75:2 [2x]. See also 75:10).[39] The verb ידה occurs only at Psalm 79:13; הלל occurs one other time in addition to Psalm 74:21 (78:63).

The reader will no doubt have noted that a number of the parallels cited occur in different

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[37]See the discussion of Ps 74 earlier in this chapter for evidence of the psalm's concentric arrangement.

[38]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 258.

[39]The semantic overlap of הלל and ידה is evidenced by cases where they occur in parallel or otherwise proximate contexts (e.g. Isa 38:18; Ps 35:18; 44:9; 106:1; 109:30; 111:1; Ezra 3:11; Neh 12:24; 1 Chr 16:4; 23:30; 25:3; 29:13; 2 Chr 5:13; 7:6; 31:2).

contexts in these psalms. Some are also used in different senses. For example, in Psalm 74 the noun מועד refers to appointed *places* of worship that an enemy has destroyed (vv. 4, 8), whereas in Psalm 75 it refers to the appointed *time* of God's judgement (v. 3). At this point, the reader should recall the discussion of methodology in chapter 1 that parallels do not have to occur in the same contexts, or even in the same sense, to communicate significant meaning.[40] There only has to be a semantic/logical relationship between the contexts in which these, and other, parallel features occur, a point I will argue below. For the time being, the observations cited above (e.g., מועד only occurs twice elsewhere in the entire Psalter) are sufficient to reasonably establish these links as significant. These comments should be kept in mind as we consider the parallels between Psalms 74 and 76:

1. God as judge/king is the main image of God and a central theme in both psalms. This image is thus a major feature binding Psalms 74–76 together.

2. "Name (שם)" theology (Ps 74: 7, 10, 18, 21; 76:2) occurs in both psalms. It is particularly prominent in Psalm 74, being a major theme. Thus, six of the thirteen total occurrences of the noun שם in Psalms 73–83 (i.e., Ps 74:7, 10, 18, 21; 75:2; 76:2) cluster in Psalms 74–76.[41] As noted earlier, the noun שם does not occur again until Psalm 79. Consequently, the noun שם is a significant binding (conjunctive) and distinguishing (disjunctive) feature of this sequence of psalms.

3. Both contain references to "Zion (ציון)" as God's dwelling place (Ps 74:2; 76:3). This term is only found one other time in Psalms 73–83 (Ps 78:68).

4. Both psalms have the verb שבר ("to shatter") in the Piel stem (Ps 74:13; 76:4) and a word built from the root ישע ("to save") (ישועות [Ps 74:12]; להושיע [Ps 76:10]) in descriptions of God's great deeds. The former verb (שבר), in any stem, appears nowhere else in Psalms 73–83. A word built from the root ישע does not occur again until Psalm 78:22. Outside of Psalms 74 and 76, there are only three other psalms in the collection that contain such words (78 [v. 22]; 79 [v. 9]; 80 [vv. 3, 4, 8, and 20]).

5. Psalms 74 and 76 contain three of the six occurrences of the verb קום ("to rise") in Psalms 73–83 (Pss 74:22, 23; 76:10; 78:5, 6; 82:8). It is connected in both to the image of God as judge/king. This is only true of the verb in one other place (Ps 82:8).

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[40]See the discussion on pp. 13–15 of the present work.

[41]As observed earlier, Sharrock argues that the status of God's name or reputation may be *the* major theme of the psalm. Sharrock, "Psalm 74," 223.

6. These two psalms contain the only two occurrences of the noun מלך ("king") in Psalms 73–83 (Ps 74:12; 76:12).

7. Both contain a "theology of the poor/afflicted" (עני; ענו) (Ps 74: 19 21; 76:9–10). This motif does not occur again until Psalm 79.

8. These are the only two psalms in Psalms 73–83 that employ lion imagery (Ps 74:4 ["Your adversaries *roar* [שאג] in the midst of your sanctuary"][42]; 76:3).

9. There are twelve statements directly addressing God that begin with the subject pronoun אתה ("you") in Psalms 73–83. Ten of these occur in Psalms 74 and 76 alone (74:13, 14, 15 [2x], 16, 17 [2x]; 76:5, 8 [2x]).

10. Similar to Psalms 74 and 75, the motif of praise binds these psalms together as well. (see הלל ["to praise"] in 74:21 and ידה ["to give thanks/praise"] in 76:11). Apart from Psalms 75 and 76 the verb ידה occurs only at Psalm 79:13; הלל occurs one other time in addition to Psalm 74:21 (78:63).

Conclusions regarding the evidence. The above evidence reasonably establishes the deliberate grouping of Psalms 74–76. As already mentioned, the distinctive nature of this grouping becomes even clearer as this study progresses.

Psalms 74–76 as a Psalm Group: Significance

I explained in chapter 1 that the significance of a psalm grouping should be determined by the *specific nature* of evidence binding its constituent psalms together. The nature of the above links can be seen most clearly when they are considered within the immediate context of their respective psalms. For this reason, I have presented these links in tabular form below in table 2 below. As table 2 highlights, the significant features that first occur in Psalm 74 appear in a markedly different context in Psalms 75 and/or 76, a point already observed above. This is due to the drastically different nature and tone of the psalms themselves. For example, in Psalm 74 the noun מועד refers to the "appointed places of God (מועדי אל)" that an enemy has burned (v. 9), and *the* appointed place (מועד)

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[42]This statement almost certainly evokes lion imagery. In all but two of its twenty occurrences in the Hebrew Bible (i.e., Ps 38:9; Job 37:4), the verb שאג either literally or figuratively has the "roaring" of a lion in view. See Judg 14:5; Isa 5:29; Jer 2:15; Jer 25:30 (3x; Hos 11:10; Amos 3:8) Jer 51:38; Ezek 22:25; Hos 11:10 (2x); Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2, 3:4, 8; Zeph 3:3; Ps 22:14; 104:21.

of God's dwelling (i.e., the temple) that is occupied by that enemy (v. 3). In marked contrast, this noun is not associated with the shocking effects of God's absence in Psalm 75. Instead it is tied to the opposite image of God as the universal judge: "At the *appointed time* (מועד) I set, I will judge uprightly."

Table 2. Significant parallels between Psalms 74–76

Parallel	Psalm 74	Psalm 75	Psalm 76
שם ("name")	"They defile the dwelling place of your *name*." (v. 7); "Will the enemy despise your *name* forever." (v. 10); See also vv. 18, 21.	"We praise you, for your *name* is near." (v. 2)	"God has made himself known in Judah; in Israel his *name* is great." (v. 2)
God as the "Guarantor of cosmic stability"	Conception of God undermined by Divine inactivity (vv. 16–17)	Conception of God forming basis for praise and confidence (v. 4)	
מועד ("appointed time/ place")	"Your adversaries roar in the midst of your *appointed place*." (i.e., the sanctuary) (v. 4); "They burn all the *appointed places* of God in the land." (v. 8)	"At the *appointed time*, I [God] will judge uprightly." (v. 3)	
רום ("to lift up/ exalt")	"*Lift up* your steps to the eternal ruins!" (v. 3)	"I say to the wicked, do not *lift up* your horn!" (vv. 5, 6); "Not from the wilderness is *lifting up*, but God is judge." (v. 8); See also vv. 7, 11.	
יד ([God's] "hand")	"Why do you draw back your *hand* . . . ?" (v. 11)	"A cup is in the *hand* of the Lord . . . all of the wicked of the earth will drain it to its dregs." (v. 9)	
Theology of the poor/afflicted (עני ;ענו)	"Do not forget the life of your *poor* forever" (v. 19; see also v. 21)		"When God arose for judgement, to save all the *poor* of the earth" (v. 10)

Table 2 continued

Parallel	Psalm 74	Psalm 75	Psalm 76
ישע/שבר ("shattering"/ "saving")	Used to describe conception of God undermined by experience (vv. 12–13)		Used to describe the Great King's mighty defense of Zion/ judgement (vv. 4, 10)
מלך ("king")	"O God, my *king* from of old." (v. 12) (conception of God undermined in Ps 74)		" . . . God . . . who is to be feared by the *kings* of the earth." (v. 12)
Lion imagery	"Your [i.e., God's] adversaries have *roared* amid your meeting place." (v. 4)		"In Salem was his [i.e., God's] *covert* (סך), his *dwelling place* (מענה) in Zion." (v. 3)
ציון ("Zion")	"Why do you reject forever? . . . . Remember Mt. *Zion* . . .where you dwelt." (v. 2)		"His dwelling place is in *Zion*. There he broke the flashing arrows." (v. 2)
קום ("to rise")	"*Arise*, O God, defend your cause!" (v. 22); "Do not forget . . . the uproar of *those who rise against you*." (v. 23)		"When God *arose* for judgement, to save all the poor of the earth." (v. 10)

The links between Psalms 74 and 76 are of the same nature as those between Psalms 74 and 75. The verb קום ("to rise"), for example, is used in Psalm 74 in desperate pleas for God to "Rise up! (קומה)" and to not forget the uproar of "those who rise up against you (קמיך)" (vv. 22, 23). But in Psalm 76 the same verb is used to describe God's incontestable defense of Zion and salvation of its inhabitants: "From heaven you uttered judgement; the earth was afraid and silent; when God *arose* (קום) for judgement, to save all the oppressed of the earth" (v. 10). A close examination of table 2 reveals that all of the links that Psalm 74 shares with Psalm 75 and/or Psalm 76 are of a similar nature.

These observations show that the links in table 2 contrast the markedly

different perspective on God and his involvement in the affairs of his people/the world in Psalm 74 and Psalms 75–76. These contrasting perspectives are present with or without the above links; Psalm 74 and Psalms 75–76 are markedly different in both genre and tone. The community of Psalm 74 perceives that the Great King/Judge is enigmatically absent, apparently indifferent, and even potentially defeated. The hymnic non-laments Psalms 75 and 76 also portray God as the Great King/Judge. But the Great/King is decidedly *not* inactive (75:4) and *not* indifferent towards the wicked/his people's plight (75:3–4, 7–11; 76:3–10). His self-revelation is the firm basis of trust and praise (75:3–4; 76:4–10), *not* of lament and disorientation (see Ps 74:12–17).[43] The links displayed in table 2 do not create these contrastive semantic relationships; they simply, and skillfully, *highlight* them for the reader.

The links between Psalm 74 and/or Psalms 75–76 are not, therefore, a disparate or unconnected group. They are a unified network signaling the reader to read Psalms 75–76 as an answer to the crisis of faith in Psalm 74. Psalms 75–76 are a joint interpretive horizon in the collection's final form that resolves the conflict of faith and experience in Psalm 74:[44] the Great King is *not* indifferent, he has *not* been defeated, he *will* order the chaos in Zion in due time (75:3–4; 76:4–10)—despite considerable evidence to the contrary (Ps 74:1–12). Consequently, the deliberate sequencing of these psalms communicates a clear and important theological message to the reader: faith resolutely sticks to God's self-revelation (Pss 75/76) in the face of conflicting evidence (Ps 74).

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[43]The reader will recall in this regard that the recounting of God's self-revelation as the savior-king and order of creation in Ps 74:12–17 is not "straight praise." It functions both to draw God's attention to the discrepancy between it and the present chaotic situation in Zion, and to motivate God to swiftly act in accordance with it.

[44]I am borrowing the expression "interpretive horizon" from Thomas Heike. See Thomas Heike, "Psalm 80 and its Neighbors in the Psalter: the Context of the Psalter as a Background for Interpreting Psalms," *BN* 86 (1997).

Conclusion

In this chapter I sought to demonstrate two points. The first was that Psalms 74–76 are deliberately grouped together in the collection's final form. Secondly, based upon the specific nature of the evidence linking these psalms together, I argued that Psalms 75–76 answer/resolve the conflict between faith and experience precipitated by the destruction of the Jerusalem temple's destruction in Psalm 74.

CHAPTER 6

PSALMS 77–78

This chapter makes the case that (1) Psalms 77–78 constitute the second deliberate psalm grouping in the collection, and (2) the *raison d'être* of Psalm 78 in its canonical location is to answer/resolve the conflict of faith and experience voiced in Psalm 77.

Analysis of Psalms 77 and 78

We begin once again with a concise analysis of the psalms under consideration.

Psalm 77

The focus on national deliverance (i.e., the Exodus event) in verses 12–21 suggests that "the 'I' of Psalm 77 speaks on behalf of the nation."[1] The particular occasion of the lament is unspecified. The psalmist mentions only the "day of my distress" (v. 3). It becomes clear as the psalm progresses that the major problem is an apparent inconsistency in *God himself*. Thus, like Psalm 74, Psalm 77 is one of the God-laments.

Psalm 77 appears to be concentrically arranged, with multiple God-laments at its center:[2]

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[1]Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study*, JSOTSup 52 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 155; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II: 51–100*, Anchor Bible Commentary (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1968), 224.

[2]What follows is an adaption of the structural proposal in Beat Weber, *Psalm 77 und sein Umfeld: Eine poetologische Studie*, BBB 103 (Weinheim, Beltz Athenäum: 1995), 40–184. The key structural indicators are verbs זכר ("to remember") and שיח ("meditate/muse") in vv. 4, 7, 12–13 in conjunction with סלה ("Selah"), which marks the conclusion of a section in vv. 4, 10, and 16. The shift to questions in v. 8 marks the beginning of the psalm's central section. The major adaptations of Weber's proposal are as follows: (1) I have taken 11–16 as a single strophe instead of Weber's two (11–13; 14–16

A. Description of (unanswered) cry for intervention (vv. 2–4)

   B. Reflection on God's past deeds (vv. 5–7)

      C. Interrogative God-laments (vv. 8–10)

   B'. Reflection on God's deeds (vv. 11–16)

A'. Exodus theophany aimed at intervention (vv. 17–21)

The psalmist recounts in verses 2–3 that God has been unresponsive in the face of continual cries for him to "hear" (v. 3).[3] He turns to "remember (זכר)" and "ponder (שיח)" God and the "days of old, years of long ago" amid this season of unanswered prayer (v. 6). But this only exacerbates the psalmist's distress, producing not comfort but groaning (המה) and faintness (עטף) of soul (v. 4). A series of questions that voice the psalm's central theological dilemma make apparent the reason:

Will the Lord reject forever,
    and not again be favorable?
Has his lovingkindness ceased?
    Has his promise come to an end for all generations?
Has God forgotten to be gracious?
    Has he shut up his compassion in anger? (Ps 77:8–10)

Unlike those in Psalm 74, the third person nature of these questions suggests that they are

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[Ibid., 94–137]). This strophe is bracketed by references to God's "right hand" (v. 11) and "arm" (v. 16), and the references to God's "work/deeds" in vv. 12–13 and "wonders" in v. 15 argue for the unity of vv. 11–16; (2) I have also taken vv. 17–21 as a single strophe, instead of Weber's two (17–19, 20–21 [Ibid., 138–73). I see no good textual reason for a division in the middle of the theophanic vision of God that unifies vv. 17–21; and (3) based upon the previous two decisions, vv. 8–10 form the hinge of the psalm. This contrasts with Weber's view that vv. 11–13 form the hinge section ("Scharnierglied"). Ibid., 179. The structural centrality of these questions in the psalm reflects their theological centrality. Others have made similar observations about the importance of questions in vv. 8–10. See, for example, J. S. Kselman, "Psalm 77 and the Book of Exodus," *JANESCU* 15 (1983): 51–58; Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 273.

[3]The Hebrew of v. 2 is as follows: קולי אל אלהים ואצעקה קולי אל אלהים והאזין אלי ("My voice to God and I will cry out, my voice to God that he will hear me"). The *yiqtol* אקרא ("I will call out") has most likely been elided in each line: "my voice to God (I will call out) and I will cry out! My voice to God (I will call out) in order that he will hear me!" See Ps 3:5 (קולי אל יהוה אקרא). The form והאזין (which I have taken as a *hiphil weyiqtol*) indicates the purpose of the "calling out" after the gapped אקרא, namely, *in order that* God would hear the psalmist. This is not a direct address to God but a third person musing on the psalmist's continual address to God (to no avail). The predominance of the first singular and third person references to God in vv. 1–11 (see vv. 2, 4, 9–11) suggest that these verses are best taken the personal meditations/ musings of the psalmist. The shift in appeal from personal meditations to addressing God comes in v. 12. From then on the second person address to God dominates.

real (i.e., not rhetorical) questions reflecting the inner pondering of the psalmist/community.[4] Reflection on the past only exacerbated the psalmist's anguish because it impressed upon him the massive "discrepancy between divine activity in the past and the lack of intervention in the present."[5] God's prolonged inactivity, a manifestation of Divine anger (אף) (v. 10), raised the question of whether God had rejected (זנח) his people forever (v. 8). This in turn seemed to contradict God's past self-revelation as a God characterized by lovingkindness, promise keeping, graciousness, and compassion (vv. 9–10). John Kselman has shown that the questions in verses 9–10 are framed in terms of the foundational Israelite credo of Exodus 34:6–7; they are a point by point refutation of it.[6] God's behavior had seemed to undermine the reliability of the community's *most basic/core beliefs about God's nature as he himself had revealed it*. Verse 11 is really the climax of the questions in verses 8–10: God's mighty "right hand," so active in the past, appears to have *changed*—and God's basic character along with it.

Many have detected a change in mood/perspective/understanding in verses 12–21; from questioning, doubt, and confusion, to confident trust and resolution of the dilemma in verses 8–11.[7] Along these lines, some (e.g., Kselman) argue that verses 12–21

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[4]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 155–56.

[5]Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 280.

[6]Compare: " . . . a God compassionate and gracious (אל רחום וחנון), slow to anger (ארך אפים) and great in steadfast love (חסד) and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love (חסד) for thousands, forgiving iniquity . . ." (Exod 34:6–7) with "Has his [God's] steadfast love (חסד) ceased forever? Has God (אל) forgotten to be gracious (חנות)? Has he shut up his compassion (רחמיו) in anger (אף)? See Kselman, "Psalm 77 and the Book of Exodus," for discussion. As mentioned in chapter four, the foundational nature of this credo is indicated by the many echoes of it in the Hebrew Bible. For only a few, see Num 14:18; 2 Chron 30:9; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:5, 15; 103:8; 111:4; 112:4; 116:5; 145:8; Joel 2:13.

[7]See Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, ed. Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 258–67; Kselman, "Psalm 77 and the Book of Exodus," 51–58; Lawrence Boadt, "The Use of 'Panels' in the structure of Psalms 73–78," CBQ 66 (2004): 544–46; Millard does not speak of "resolution" but clearly understands these closing verses as primarily creating the anticipation of God's future saving intervention. Matthias Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters: Ein Formgeschichtlicher Ansatz*, FAT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 101. The same is true for Weber: "Ps 77 schliesst mit der Zuversichtsaussage, dass Jahwe sein Volk wie eine Herde durch die Vermittlung von Mose und Aaron

give a positive answer to the questions of verses 9–10. Remembrance of the great Exodus

redemption provides assurance that God's loyal love/compassion has not ceased. But the

remembrance of God's past wonders (vv. 12–13) and the hymn recalling the Exodus

event (vv. 14–21) more likely continue "the painful reflection of vv. 4–11 on God's

failure to duplicate his great works in the present."[8] The repetition of vocabulary from

these earlier verses supports this point (זכר and שיח in verses 12–13 [see v. 7]). These

closing verses are better interpreted as a shift in *appeal* rather than mood.[9] The psalmist

shifts from speaking primarily *about* God (vv. 2–11) to speaking directly *to* God (vv. 14–

21). This section certainly moves in the direction of resolution and a corresponding

change in mood/understanding/perspective. But this movement is not completed within

the psalm itself. Thus, the reflection on God's past deeds in these verses "does not

eliminate or solve the discrepancy between divine activity in the past and the lack of

intervention in the present."[10] Consequently, as the psalm comes to a close, the searching

questions of verses 8–10 are left open-ended and unanswered. The psalmist stands "at the

threshold of a new understanding but has not entered."[11]

Broyles helpfully observes that the entirety of Psalm 77 functions as an appeal.

The psalm has no formal petition, and lament is only *directly* addressed to God in verse 5.

But, as he notes, the turn to God in the closing verses indicates that the psalm as a whole

has been uttered in God's presence. In this way, the entire psalm functions as an appeal

for Yahweh to actualize the "praise" recounted in verses 14–21.[12]

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führ(t)e (emphasis added)." Weber, *Psalm 77 und sein Umfeld*, 289.

[8]Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 275.

[9]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 156. Others do not detect a shift in mood in these verses either. See, for example, Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 275–76.

[10]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 280.

[11]Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 276.

[12]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 157.

Psalm 78

Richard J. Clifford has offered a compelling proposal for the structure and purpose of Psalm 78.[13] The major contours are followed here with some modification. The psalm consists of an introduction followed by two parallel historical recitals. Both climax in "a sequel in which divine merciful response is depicted":[14]

Introduction to Psalm (vv. 1–8)[15]

First recital:	Second recital:
Preface to first recital (vv. 9–12)	Preface to second recital (vv. 40–43)[16]
Wilderness events (vv. 13–32)	From Egypt to Canaan (vv. 44–64)
Gracious act (vv. 13–16)	Gracious act (vv. 44–55)
Rebellion (vv. 17–20)	Rebellion (vv. 56–58)[17]
Divine anger and punishment	Divine anger and punishment[18]
(manna and quail) (vv. 21–32)	(destruction of Shiloh) (vv. 59–64)

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[13]See Richard J. Clifford, "In Zion and David a New Beginning: An Interpretation of Psalm 78," in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith*, ed., B. Halpern and Jon D. Levenson (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 121–41. Legitimating Clifford's proposal is the fact that others have frequently adopted it, with minor modifications. For example, see Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 287–88; James L. Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 201; Stephen Dunn, "Wisdom Editing in the Book of Psalms: Vocabulary, Themes, and Structures"(PhD diss., Marquette University, 2009), 87, accessed Aug 21, 2018, http: epublications.marquette.edu/ dissertations_mu/13. Unlike Clifford, however, Dunn believes that Ps 78 is using Israel's history as "wisdom instruction." Ibid., 88.

[14]Clifford, "In Zion and David a New Beginning," 129.

[15]Clifford contends that the introduction consists of vv. 1–11. But the rebellion of the "sons of Ephraim" in vv. 9–11 is better taken as the opening verses of the first recital. The parallels between vv. 9–12 and the opening verses of the second recital (vv. 40–43) confirm this point: וישכחו עלילותיו ("they forgot his deeds") (v. 11) and לא זכרו את ידו ("They did not remember his hand") (v. 42); מצרים . . . שדה צען ("Egypt . . . field of Zoan") (see vv. 12, 43). Thus, vv. 9–12 and vv. 40–43 function as prefaces to the two parallel recitals aimed at accomplishing the purpose set forth in the introduction of vv. 1–8: encouraging later generations not to respond "like their fathers" to God's great deeds, but rather place their confidence in God on the basis of them. The many parallels in vocabulary between vv. 1–8 and the two recitals confirm this point (e.g., "so that . . . they [i.e., later generations] might not forget the deeds of God [ולא ישכחו מעללי אל] [v. 8]; "They [i.e., earlier generations] forgot his deeds" [וישכחו עלילותיו] [v. 11]; "They [i.e., earlier generations] did not remember his hand" [לא זכרו את יד] [v. 42]).

[16]Various lexical repetitions highlight the parallel nature of these sections. See n. 15 of the present chapter, and the following discussion for examples.

[17]Lexical repetitions between the opening verses highlight the parallel nature of these sections. See מרה ("to rebel") and נסה ("to test"), and עליון ("Most High") in vv. 17–18, 56.

[18]The parallel nature of these sections is indicated by the exact repetition of the same sentence in their opening verses. See שמע יהוה ויתעבר ("God heard and became angry") in vv. 21 and 59.

The psalm opens with an authoritative Mosaic-esque command to God's people (v. 1): "Hear (האזינה), O my people, my teaching; incline your ear to the words of my mouth!"[19] This teaching is what the psalmist and his generation have received from previous generations of Israelites. They are to pass it on to subsequent generations who are to do likewise (vv. 4 and 6). This teaching consists of two parallel accounts of the God-Israel relationship: God performs great deeds for his people (vv. 12–16; 44–55); the people respond with rebellion (vv. 17–20; 56–58); God's anger is provoked and the people are punished (vv. 21–31; 59–64); God's response is ultimately one of compassion (vv. 38–39; 65–72). Verses 5–8 show that this teaching has a definite goal: that later generations trust and obey God on the basis of his wonders—not forget them like their rebellious and unbelieving forefathers (vv. 6–8). This goal is accomplished in large part by showing how the unbelieving response of this "stubborn and rebellious generation" (v. 8) kindled God's anger/wrath and led to their punishment. Each recital, however, does not climax in God's anger. It climaxes in God's compassionate response in accordance with the foundational credo of Exodus 34:6–7.

The first "recital" (vv. 13–32) contains traditions from the Pentateuch but structures them differently. It recounts God's gracious acts in the Exodus event, God's leading the people in the wilderness, and his miraculous provision for them there (vv. 12–16). The next two sections (vv. 17–32) form a structural unit. They explain that, despite the "wonders" (v. 4) just recounted, the people "sinned again." They consequently incurred God's anger and judgement (vv. 21–32). The heart of the matter is that God's

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[19]Clifford rightly notes that this command, and the wisdom like elements that follow (see "parable"; "riddles of old"), does *not* indicate that the speaker of Ps 78 is a wise man or that Ps 78 is a "wisdom psalm." A better comparison is with the book of Deuteronomy, and in particular the "Song of Moses" in Deut 32:1–43 (cf., Ps 78:1–2 and Deut 32: 1–3): "The speaker of the psalm, then, is not a wise man solving riddles or merely teaching a lesson from history. He authoritatively restates the traditions so that Israel will be able to decide for Yahweh." Clifford, *In Zion and David a New Beginning*, 131. See also Weber, *Psalm 77 und sein Umfeld*, 289–90. In light of these observations, Millard's classification of Ps 78 as a "weisheitspsalm" ("wisdom psalm") (Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 90) misses the mark.

people rebelled and failed to trust in his salvation (vv. 17, 22, 32; see v. 8).[20] The message is clear: later generations should respond by placing their trust in God and obeying him (vv. 4–8). The concluding verses of the first recital (vv. 33–39) are a "sequel" that represent a break in the narrative. They describe God's compassionate response to his people, despite their persistent infidelity:[21]

> But he is compassionate (רחום); he atones for iniquity (עון)
> > and he does not destroy.
> He holds back his anger (אף) often,
> > and he does not arouse all of his wrath.
> He remembered that they are flesh,
> > a breeze that goes out and does not return. (Ps 78:38–39)

These verses (v. 38 in particular) give "a thematic description of God's nature, in stylistic and lexical dependence on the credo in Exod 34:6–7"[22] ("The Lord, the Lord, a *compassionate* [רחום] God . . . slow to *anger* [אף] . . . forgiving *iniquity* [עון] . . ."). They reveal that God's response was ultimately governed by his self-revelation to Israel in Exodus 34:6–7. God "remembered" their frailty and mortality, that they are mere "flesh" (v. 39).[23] He did not utterly destroy his people in anger.

A second recital parallels the first (vv. 40–64). Clifford observes that verses 44–55 are arranged after the pattern found in Exodus 15:1–18. They describe God's gracious acts of redeeming his people from Egypt, bringing them to his "holy territory (i.e., Canaan)," and deciding to dwell with them at the Shiloh sanctuary (i.e., "this

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[20]See אמן ("to believe/trust") in vv. 8, 22, and 32; מרה ("to rebel") in vv. 8, 17.

[21]The clause type heading v. 38 indicates a break in the narrative. The verbless/nominal clause והוא רחום does not describe a narrative event, but gives a static description of God: "But/yet he *is* compassionate." Like Clifford, Hossfeld and Zenger (*Psalms 2*, 283, 297), and others, I take the *yiqtols* of v. 38 (יכפר, ישחית, and יעיר) as generalizing statements about God: "He *atones* for iniquity . . . he *does not destroy* . . . he *does not arouse* all of his wrath." Another option is to take them as past frequentive. So S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew and Some Other Syntactical Questions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 127–28.

[22]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 297.

[23]Both "he remembered that they are flesh" and "a breeze that goes out and does not return" (רוח הולך ולא ישוב) in v. 39 are statements about Israel's mortality. For the former see especially Ps 103:9–14. See also Job 10:9. For the latter see Job 7:7; Ps 39:5–7.

mountain your right hand bought" [v. 54]).[24] Israel's "rebellion" (vv. 56–58) and the resultant "Divine anger and punishment" (vv. 59–64) corresponds to that of verses 17–32. The consequence of Israel's rebellion was that God forsook his dwelling place at Shiloh ("the tent where he dwelled with man [אהל שכן באדם]") (v. 60), and gave his people over to the adversary (vv. 61–64). These negative consequences are intended to deter later generations of God's people from responding to God's great wonders in the same way (vv. 4–8).

A second "sequel" parallel to the first (vv. 33–39) follows (65–72). It pulls double duty as the climax of both the second recital and the psalm as a whole. It too recounts God's compassionate decision to continue in relationship with his wayward people. He does not *permanently* remove his presence from them. As Clifford notes, verses 33–39 spoke in general terms about God's mercy towards Israel. Here in verses 65–72 God's mercy is specified in the selection of Judah, Zion, and David (136–137). The parallel nature of the second recital with the first suggests that God's compassionate response in verses 65–72 is a further (more specific) outworking of the foundational credo of Exodus 34:6–7 (see vv. 38–39).

The closing verses explain that, in spite of Israel's persistent rebellion, God "awoke" to defeat their adversaries. He chose the tribe of Judah (not the tribe of Ephraim [v. 67]) and Mount Zion. Here, he set up a new dwelling place that was more firmly established than the Shiloh sanctuary (v. 69). The language of these verses (i.e., vv. 68 and 71) evokes that of verses 52, 54, and 55, which describe God's former dwelling place at Shiloh (135). The purpose is not to stress that God had rejected northern tribes in favor of the southern, as has been commonly claimed. The point is instead that "the destruction of one shrine does not mean that God will not choose another" (135). This "sequel" is not about God's choice of one tribe over another. It is about God's willingness to continue to

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[24]Clifford, "In Zion and David a New Beginning," 133.

dwell among "*all Israel*"—despite their persistent sinfulness and disobedience. Clifford summarizes this point well:

> The first [sequel] . . . spoke in general terms of Yahweh's merciful intent to forgive sin and not destroy, his willingness to live with a persistently sinful people. Here [i.e., the second "sequel"], that same merciful intent is specified in the selection of Judah, Zion, and David. The destruction of Shiloh does not mean the end of the sanctuary in Israel's midst. God begins a fresh mercy in Zion-Jerusalem.[25]

Clifford argues that the psalm's overall intent is to celebrate "God's merciful choice of Zion and David as the continuation today of the ancient shrine celebrating the exodus and conquest tradition. It unites the old sacred epic with the new religious tradition of the choice of Zion and David" (137). He therefore suggests that the closest parallels in the Psalter in terms of genre are other psalms that celebrate Zion (e.g., Pss 2, 46, 48, and 76) (137). I do not disagree with either of these observations. But the celebration of God's merciful choice of Zion and David in verses 65–72 serves the larger purpose set forth in the psalm's introduction: to encourage later generations to trust in God on the basis of the great wonders he has done for his people. It therefore seems that this larger, more general, purpose more closely reflects the psalm's overall intent.

An important aspect of Clifford's study alluded to above should be highlighted. Clifford's study shows that Psalm 78 is *not* aimed at legitimating the southern over the norther tribes, as has commonly been claimed. He rightly points out that the Ephraimite defeat is an instance of *all Israel's* infidelity. Further, the destruction of God's dwelling place at Shiloh "is a punishment dealt to all Israel. The tribe of Ephraim/Joseph is no longer the site of the shrine. Judah is the new location. The northern tribes *per se* are not rejected."[26] Psalm 78 is about God's remarkably merciful choice to continue dwelling among "all Israel" in light of their continual sin and rebellion.

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[25]Clifford, "In Zion and David a New Beginning," 136–37.

[26]Ibid., 132. Clifford rightly points out here that "their forefathers (אבותם)" in v. 8 has in view all of the Israelite tribes, and that "in vv. 21, 31, 33, 55, 59, and 72, Jacob/Israel designates the whole people, not only the northern tribes." Ibid.

The Psalm Group of Psalms 77–78

Having considered Psalms 77 and 78 on their own terms, this section argues that these adjacent psalms are a deliberate grouping. A number of studies surveyed in chapter two (e.g., Hossfeld and Zenger; Weber) observe a low-level break or *Zäsur* between Psalms 76 and 77. Cole is a notable exception. But his failure to detect such a break is unsurprising given his neglect of literary disjunction in Psalms 73–83. The evidence for such a break, however, is strong. As others have noted, it consists of the presence of strong links between Psalms 77 and Ps 78, and comparatively weak ones between Psalms 76 and 77. Weber is therefore correct to conclude that "Ist die Relation von Ps 77 zu Ps 76 disjunktiv/zentrifugal, so die zu Ps 78 konjunktiv/zentripetal."[27] The caesura between Psalms 76 and 77 is confirmed by the literary symmetry that the groupings of Psalms 74–76 and 77–78 share, as I show in chapter 7.

All of the studies surveyed in chapter 2 agree that Psalms 77 and 78 are deliberately grouped. But quite a few would disagree with the decision in the present study to exclude Psalm 79 from this group (e.g., Hossfeld and Zenger; Brown Jones; Robertson).[28] Hossfeld is particularly forceful on this point: "If we survey the triad of Psalms 77–79, we observe equivalent linkages between Psalm 78 and its predecessor and successor, *without any possibility of placing a caesura between the three psalms*"

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[27]Weber, *Psalm 77 und sein Umfeld*, 289. There are a several links between Pss 76 and 77 that could be significant, though any number could certainly be incidental: נגינה ("song") in 76:1/77:7; statements about God's self-revelation using the verb ידע in 76:2/77:15; predications that God is "great (גדול)," in 76:2/ 77:14; the verb אור ("to light up"/ "shine") with reference to God in 76:5/77:19; Rhetorical question with מי ("who?") used as indirect assertions about God's power/greatness in 76:8/77:14. Cole characteristically interprets these parallels as indicating that Pss 76 and 77 belong to the same psalm group. See the discussion in Robert L. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III (Psalms 73-89)*, JSOTSup 307 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 54–62. But lexical parallels alone (even if they are significant) are insufficient to establish that psalms belong to the same *psalm group*. Disjunctive factors must also be taken into account. In the present case, the strong parallels between Pss 74–76 and 77–78 are indicative of a minor break between Pss 76 and 77. The real unity, as we as we shall see, is between the former two *groups* of psalms.

[28]"Psalms 77–79 are at the heart of the Asaphite collection." Christine Danette Brown Jones, "A Study of the Function of a Psalm Collection" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2009), 179; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering Their Structure and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015), 128–38. Millard is a notable exception, who sees Ps 79 as beginning the second of two *Kompositionsbogen* ("compositional arcs") separated by Ps 78. Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 90.

[emphasis added].[29] But notwithstanding Hossfeld's certainty, there are good reasons for holding that Psalm 78 concludes a grouping (Pss 77–78) and Psalm 79 begins a new one; there is a minor break between the two psalms. Even Hossfeld and Zenger's own analysis points in this direction. On the one hand they argue that Psalms 77–79 form a very tightly knit group of psalms. But on the other they endorse Millard's view that Psalm 79 *begins* the second of two *Kompositionsbogen* (i.e., Pss 79–82).[30]

Those grouping Psalm 79 with Psalms 77–78 have misunderstood the literary level at which the parallels between Psalms 78 and 79 are functioning. This misunderstanding is due to a failure to recognize that Psalms 79–82 form a distinct psalm group (chapter 9). Consequently, the parallels between Psalms 78 and 79 link groups of psalms (i.e., Pss 77–78 and 79–82)—not psalms within a group (i.e., Pss 77, 78, and 79). The next chapter takes up the issue of the exclusion of Psalm 79 from this grouping in greater detail. The focus here is on establishing the deliberate grouping of Psalms 77 and 78 and determining its significance.

Psalms 77–78 as a Psalm Group:
Evidence

Consider the following significant parallels between Psalms 77 and 78.[31]

First, the theme of God's past saving deeds predominates in both. Psalm 77 is

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[29]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 294. While Cole does not make such a direct statement, his analysis is consistent with it. Characteristic of his study, Cole detects strong conjunction but no element of disjunction between Pss 78 and 79. See Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 79–86.

[30]"This compositional arc [i.e., one analogous to Pss 74–76] is found again in the sequence of Psalms 79 + 80 (lament), Psalm 81 (divine oracle as answer), and Psalm 82 (intervention of YHWH through the disempowerment of the gods)." Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 250. "Within the Asaph collection Psalm 79, together with the community lament Psalm 80, open the compositional arc "lament" (Psalms 79–80), "divine oracle" (Psalm 81) (as answer to the lament), "YHWH's seizure of world governance through disempowerment of the gods" (Psalm 82) (as realization of the judgement announced in Psalm 81)." Ibid., 307.

[31]As was observed in the case of Pss 74–76, most of these links have been cited in one study or another. However, unlike most previous studies, I have provided an explanation for why each link was considered significant. Further, the present study also stresses that this explanation in turn reflects not only the intentional linking of these psalms (as observed in other studies), but also that Pss 77–78 are a distinct grouping amid their proximate context. The latter point receives considerably more support from the observations made in the following chapter.

centered on the disparity between God's past saving activity and present inactivity. Psalm 78, the second largest psalm in the Psalter (next to Ps 119), is a massive recital of God's past saving deeds (78:4). This emphasis on God's past deeds is noticeably absent from Psalm 79.

Second, the above theme is articulated similarly in both psalms. Each contains (but is not limited to) the following significant elements:[32] the Exodus motif (77:14–21; 78:12–13; 42–55); the phrases "from of old (מקדם/מני קדם)" (see 77:6, 12; 78:2); the phrase "deeds of God/Yah" (see מעללי יה in 77:12, מעללי אל in 78:7)[33]; the noun עלילה ("deed") (77:13; 78:11)[34]; words built from the root עזז ("to be strong") (77:15; 78:4, 26, 61)[35]; words built from the root פלא ("to be wonderful") (77:12, 15; 78:4, 11, 12, 32).[36] In both psalms this root also occurs in a description of God containing the verb עשה ("to do/ make"): "You are a God who *works wonders* (עשה פלא) (77:15); "His [God's] *wonders* that he has *done* (פלאותיו אשר עשה) (78:4); references to God's "right hand (ימין)" as effecting deliverance (77:11; 78:54)[37]; use of the root גאל ("to redeem") to refer to God as "redeeming" Israel or as Israel's "redeemer" (77:16; 78:35 [see also פדה in 78:42]).[38]

Third, three of the four occurrences of the root אזן ("to hear") in Psalms 73–83 occur in these adjacent psalms (77:2; 78:1 [2x]). More specifically, each contains a verb in the *hiphil* stem built from this root (האזין in 77:2; האזינה in 78:1). The remaining

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[32] For other potentially significant links not mentioned here, see Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 293.

[33] These phrases (or the noun מעלל ["deed"]) occur nowhere else in Pss 73–83.

[34] These are the only two occurrences of the noun in Pss 73–83.

[35] Words built from this root only occur two other times in Pss 73–83 (74:13; 81:2).

[36] These instances account for six of the seven total occurrences of the root פלא in Pss 73–83 (the other being 75:2).

[37] References to God's "right hand" only appear in two other Asaph psalms (74:11; 80:16, 18).

[38] This verb only occurs once elsewhere in Pss 73–83 (74:2). Outside of the Asaph psalms, it only appears in six other psalms in the Psalter (Ps 19:15; 69:19; 72:14; 103:4; 106:10; 107:2 [2x]; 119:154).

occurrence of the root comes in 80:2 (האזינה).

Fourth, these adjacent psalms contain four of the five occurrences of the verb נחה ("to lead") in Psalms 73–83. Psalm 73:24 has the fifth and final one.

Fifth, the preceding two links draw attention to a striking structural parallel between Psalms 77 and 78: (1) both have the verb אזן in the *hiphil* stem in their opening verses (77:2; 78:1); and (2) the final verse of each (77: 21; 78:72) is a statement containing the verb נחה ("to lead") in the context of a shepherd metaphor. In both cases, God "leads" his people by the "hand(s)" of one or more prominent figures from Israel's past ("You [God] led [נחה] your people like a flock by the hand [יד] of Moses and Aaron" [77:21]; "He [David] shepherded them with an upright heart, and led [נחה] them with the skillfulness of his hands [כפיו]" [78:72]).[39]

Sixth, in both psalms, the foundational credo of Exodus 34:6–7 plays a significant role.[40] The disorienting questions in Psalm 77:8–10 are framed as a point by point refutation of this credo. In Psalm 78 the account of God's past relationship with his people demonstrates the truthfulness of this credo (vv. 38–39; 65–72). The influence of this credo upon both psalms is reflected in the presence of the same/similar vocabulary from it: the root רחם ("to have compassion/ compassion") and noun אף ("anger") (Ps 77:10; 78:38).[41]

Seventh, these two psalms contain the only two occurrences of the verb מאן ("to refuse"/ "reject") in the entire Psalter (Ps 77:3; 78:10).

Eighth, the only two occurrences of the verb יסף ("to add"/ "do again") in Psalms 73–83 are in these psalms (77:8; 78:17). This verb only occurs six other times in

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[39]Others have observed this significant structural parallel. See Weber, *Psalm 77 und sein Umfeld*, 289; Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 60.

[40]This parallel has been overlooked in previous studies.

[41]These occurrences of the root רחם represent two of the three in Pss 73–83 (Ps 77:10; 78:38), the other coming in 79:8.

the entire Psalter (Pss 10:18; 41:9; 61:7; 71:14; 115:14; 120:3). Further, in both 77:7 and 78:17 the verb occurs with the adverb עוד ("again"). This adverb only occurs in two other Asaph psalms (Ps 74:9; 83:5). Strengthening the significance of this link is its presence in the most structurally and theologically significant section of Psalm 77 (i.e., the questions of vv. 8–10).

Ninth, both psalms contain references to the patriarch "Joseph (יוסף)" (77:16 and 78:67). His name only appears in two other psalms in the entire Psalter (Ps 80:2, 6; 105:17).

Tenth, these adjacent psalms contain seven of the twelve occurrences of the verb זכר ("to remember") in Psalms 73–83 (77:4, 7, 12 [2x]; 78:35, 39, 42[42]). Beyond the mere verb, the theme of "remembering" that it reflects is significant in both psalms.

Eleventh, three of the five instances of the verb שכח ("to forget") in Psalms 73–83 are in these two psalms. The others appear in Psalm 74 (vv. 19, 23) (77:10; 78:7,[43] 11).

Four other significant links should be noted. First, the only two occurrences of the noun שנה ("year") in Psalms 73–83 are in these adjacent psalms (77:6; 78:33). Surprisingly, this common noun only occurs in six other psalms in the Psalter (Ps 31:11; 61:7; 65:12; 90:4, 9, 10 [3x], 15; 95:10; 102:25, 28).

Second, the motif of "the connection of generations" is common to both psalms. In each case the motif is reflected in the noun דור ("generation") (77:9; 78:4, 6, 8).[44] This motif only appears in two other psalms in the collection (see 73:25 and 79:13).

Third, as Weber points out, Psalm 77 ends with a reference to Moses (v. 21), and Psalm 78 begins with a clear reference (deutlichen Bezug) to the Song of Moses in

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[42]"They did not remember (לא זכרו)" here could have equally been listed with שכח ("to forget") below, since the two are semantically equivalent.

[43]"They might not forget (לא ישכחו)" could equally have been listed with זכר ("to remember").

[44]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 293.

Deuteronomy 32 (Ps 78:1).[45]

Finally, the Divine title אדון ("Lord") occurs only six times in Psalms 73–83. Half of these are in these Psalms 77 and 78 (Ps 77:3, 8; 78:65). Strengthening this link is the observation that the title occurs only once in the lengthy Psalm 78. Further this title comes in a structurally significant location in each psalm: the questions at the heart of Psalm 77 (vv. 8–10 [see v. 8]); the second "sequel" of Psalm 78 stressing God's compassionate response to his people (vv. 65–72).

Conclusions regarding the evidence. These links constitute compelling evidence for the deliberate grouping of Psalms 77 and 78. Indeed, the ties are so strong that Weber has even suggested that one psalm may have been composed in light of the other.[46]

**Psalms 77–78 as a Psalm Group:
Significance**

Once again the specific nature of the parallels between the linked psalms reveals the significance of their grouping. Table 3 on the following page reveals a number of significant links that contrast the differing perspectives on God and his involvement in the affairs of his people in these adjacent psalms. The first is the theme of God's past deeds. In Psalm 77 the absence of God's saving deeds undermines confidence in God (vv. 8–11). The central purpose of Psalm 78, on the other hand, is to evoke *confidence* in God and obedience to him by transmitting the history of his saving deeds (vv. 4–8).

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[45]Weber, *Psalm 77 und sein Umfeld*, 290. This type of "tail-head linkage" is reminiscent of the technique used to link two independent but related narratives together. For example, the clause אחרי מות יהושע ("after the death of Joshua") in Judg 1:1 and the reference Joshua's death in Josh 24:29 (וימת יהושע ["And Joshua died"]) binds the narrative of Judges to that of Joshua. A similar technique between Deut 34 and Josh 1 link those two books. Later in this study we will see an even closer analogue to this narrative technique appears at the transition from Ps 78 to 79.

[46]Weber, *Psalm 77 und sein Umfeld*, 290. Other significant parallels could be listed, such as the verb דרש ("to seek"), which only occurs in Ps 77:3 and 78:34 in Pss 73–83.

Table 3. Significant parallels between Psalms 77–78

Parallel	Psalm 77	Psalm 78
אזן ("to hear")	"My voice to God (I will call out) in order that he will *hear* me!" (v. 1)	"*Hear*, O my people, my instruction." (v. 1)
Theme of God's past deeds	Focuses on discrepancy between God's past saving activity and present inactivity (vv. 8–10)	Central purpose is to pass down God's past deeds as basis for confidence in God and obedience to him (vv. 4–8)
רחם ("compassion")/ אף ("anger")	"Has he shut up his *compassion* in *anger*? (v. 10)	"But he is/was *compassionate* . . . he holds/held back his *anger* often." (v. 38)
Credo of Exod 34:6–7	Truthfulness severely *undermined* by prolonged absence of God's saving deeds (cf. vv. 77:8–9)	Truthfulness *demonstrated* by God's past dealings with his people (vv. 38–39; 65–72)
The Divine title אדון ("Lord")	"Will the *Lord* reject forever?" (v. 8)	"The *Lord* awoke from sleep . . . and smote his adversaries." (vv. 65ff)
דור ("generation")/ motif of "the connection of generations"	"Has his promise ended for all *generations*?" (lit. for *generation* and *generation*") (v. 9)	". . . declaring to a later *generation* the praiseworthy deeds of God, his strength and the wonders he has done." (v. 4); "He (i.e., God) commanded our fathers to make them known to their sons so that a later *generation* . . . might rise up and declare them to their sons, that they might set their confidence in God." (vv. 5–7); "that they not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellions *generation*, a *generation* whose heart was not established . . ." (vv. 7–8)
יד / ימין ("right hand"/ "hand")	"My sickness is this: the changing of the *right hand* of the Most High." (v. 11)	"He brought them to the border of his holy land, the mountain that his *right hand* acquired." (v. 54); "They did not remember his *hand*, the day he redeemed them from the adversary." (v. 42)

Table 3 continued

Parallel	*Psalm 77*	*Psalm 78*
זכר ("to remember")/שכח ("to forget") (*God's people as subject)	"I will *remember* God (while) I groan/moan." (v. 4); "I will *remember* my song in the night." (v. 7); "I will *remember* the deeds of the Lord; I will *remember* your work of old." (v. 12)	" . . . that they might set their confidence in God, and not *forget* the works of God." (v. 7); "They *forgot* his deeds, the wonders he showed them." (v. 11); "They [temporarily] *remembered* that God was their rock."(v. 35); "They did not *remember* his hand." (v. 42) (encouragement to trust/ obey [v. 7]; examples of disobedience/failure to trust [vv. 11, 35, 42])
שנה ("year")	"I considered . . . the *years* long ago." (v. 6) (i.e., the time when God worked mightily in the past)	"and (he made) their *years* (end) in terror." (v. 33) (i.e., because of continual sin/ unbelief, despite God's great wonders [see v. 32]; example of disobedience/ failure to trust)
יסף ("to add/ do again")	"(Will the Lord) not be favorable *again*?" (v. 8)	"And they sinned yet *again* against him." (vv. 17, 32) (i.e., despite God's great deeds [see vv. 12–16]; example of disobedience/ failure to trust)
Moses Motif	Part of hymn (vv. 17–21) continuing the "painful reflection" on God's past saving activity (v. 21)	Informs authoritative exhortation to trust and obey God based upon his past deeds (v. 1; see vv. 2–8)
שכח ("to forget")/זכר ("to remember") (*God as subject)	"Has God *forgotten* to be gracious?" (v. 10)	"He (i.e., God) *remembered* that they are flesh." (v. 39)

The second significant tie is אדון ("Lord"; 77:8, 78:65). In Psalm 77 the psalmist perceives that the Lord (אדון) has rejected Israel forever in anger (v. 8). However, in Psalm 78 recounts how the Lord (אדון) rejected Israel only *temporarily* in anger. He then reestablished his presence among them more firmly than before (i.e., in the choice of David/Zion) (v. 65; see vv. 59–72).

The third link is דור ("generation")/ motif of "the connection of generations" (77:9, 78:4, 6, 8). The psalmist of Psalm 77 perceives that God's promise has ended with the present generation (דור) (v. 9). But Psalm 78 sets forth God's past deeds as the basis for confidence in God among *all generations* (דור) (vv. 4, 6, 8).

The fourth link is שכח ("to forget")/זכר ("to remember") (God as subject) (77:10; 78:39). In Psalm 77 God's absence results in questioning whether God has "forgotten" (שכח) to be gracious to Israel (v. 10). Psalm 78 recounts how God graciously stayed his anger because he "*remembered*" (זכר) Israel's frailty and mortality of (v. 39).

Fifth is רחם ("compassion")/ אף ("anger") (Ps 77:10; 78:38). Psalm 77 laments that God's compassion (רחמים) has been shut up in his anger (v. 10), while Psalm 78 recounts how compassion often *stayed* his anger (רחום) (v. 38).

The sixth parallel is ימין / יד ("right hand"/ "hand") (77:10; 78: 42, 54). In Psalm 77 God's absence suggests that his "right hand" (ימין) has changed. By way of contrast, Psalm 78 recounts the great wonders God's mighty "right hand" (ימין) (v. 54)/ "hand" (יד) had *accomplished* (v. 42) (i.e., the Exodus and conquest/ settlement).

The credo of Exodus 34:6–7 is the seventh and final link to be mentioned.[47] In Psalm 77 God's absence severely undermines the enduring truthfulness of this foundational credo (see vv. 8–10). Psalm 78, on the other hand, demonstrates its *truthfulness* from God's past relationship with Israel (see vv. 38–39; 65–72)

These seven links highlight that Psalm 78 provides a point by point rebuttal to the questions of Psalm 77:8–10 and the shocking conclusion arising from them (v. 11).[48]

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[47]This link overlaps with most of the others above. We saw earlier that the above lexical items occur in a portion of Ps 77 that has been shaped as a point by point refutation of this foundational credo (i.e., the questions of vv. 9–10; the conclusion of v. 11). For this point, see the exegesis of Ps 77 earlier in this chapter. It deserves to be listed separately because Ps 78 itself is intent on demonstrating the reliability of this foundational credo (see vv. 38; 65–72).

[48]The link between Ps 77:1 and 78:1 confirms that Ps 78 should be read as a response/rebuttal to Ps 77. As others have noted (e.g., Cole, Hossfeld and Zenger), the exhortation for God's people to "Hear! (האזינה)" in 78:1 reads like a direct address to the requests for God to "hear (האזין)" in 77:1.

The clear implication is that the history of God's past dealings with his people should inform their present perspective on him. God has not *permanently* rejected Israel; his promise has *not* come to an end; he has *not* forgotten to be gracious; his anger has *not* shut up his compassion; the foundational credo of Exodus 34:6–7 *is* still reliable; God's mighty "right hand" has *not*, in fact, changed—despite evidence to the contrary (see 77:8–10). Psalm 78 is, therefore, a new interpretive horizon for Psalm 77 that resolves the conflict of faith and experience voiced in vv. 8–11.[49] The central importance of these questions in Psalm 77 itself (see the exegesis of Ps 77 above) suggests that such is the *raison d'être* of Psalm 78 in the collection's final form.

The nature of the links in table 3 suggests that Psalm 78 has further relevance for Psalm 77. An observable pattern arises from the following three significant links.

First are the verbs זכר ("to remember") /שכח ("to forget") (God's people as subject). In Psalm 77 the psalmist is intent on remembering (זכר) God/ God's past deeds (vv. 4, 7, 12). A major goal of Psalm 78 is to exhort God's people to not forget (שכח) God's great deeds (v. 7). This goal accomplished largely by giving the negative example of the forefathers. They incited God's anger and punishment by constantly not remembering (לא זכרו) (vv. 35, 42)/ forgetting (שכח) (v. 11) God/God's great deeds.

The second link is שנה ("year").[50] The psalmist of Psalm 77 looks (to no avail) to the "years of long ago (שנות עולמים)" (i.e., God's past deeds) for comfort and encouragement amid distress. Psalm 78 recounts how God made "their years (שנותם) (i.e., the forefathers) vanish in terror" (v. 33) because of their continual sin and unbelief (see v. 32).

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[49]Thus, contra Kselman, Brueggemann, and others (see the exegesis of Ps 77 above), it is *Ps 78* (not 77:12–21) that completes the reversal in perspective/understanding that begins within Ps 77 itself.

[50]Two considerations strengthen the significance of this link (a common Hebrew word): (1) its occurrence in a prominent position in Ps 78 (i.e., the first "sequel," vv. 33–38); and (2) the word's paucity in both the Psalter (fourteen times in twelve verses [in six total psalms]) and Pss 73–83 (only 77:6 and 78:33).

Lastly, we have the verb מאן ("to refuse/ reject"). In Psalm 77 the psalmist's soul "refuses (מאן) to be comforted" as he makes continual efforts to remember and mediate upon God amid distress (v. 3). Psalm 78 recounts the Ephraimites (i.e,. "all Israel") refusal (מאן) to walk according to God's instruction. This is the first negative example intended to deter the reader from forgetting God (v. 10).

These three links contrast differing attitudes/postures towards God,[51] commitment on the one hand (Ps 77), and Israel's lack of commitment (with its negative consequences) on the other (Ps 78). Consequently, these links highlight a second aspect of Psalm 78's response to Psalm 77: the importance of "remembering" God/ God's great deeds, obedience, and perseverance in seeking God. Psalm 78 is a strong exhortation to continue in these things amid the current crisis of faith.[52] Like the links discussed above, therefore, these do not create a new "canonical" meaning not present in either psalm. They simply signal the reader to bring relevant aspects of Psalm 78 to bear upon the crisis of faith in the adjacent Psalm 77.

Conclusion

This chapter argued two main points: (1) Psalms 77–78 form the second deliberate grouping in the collection, and (2) the *raison d'être* of Psalm 78 in the collection's final form is to resolve the conflict of faith and experience voiced in Ps 77.

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[51]The link יסף ("to add"/ "do again") could also be added here (77:8; 78:17).

[52]Cole interprets these and other links as explaining the dismal situation of the people in Ps 77: "In 77.10 the poet wonders if God has forgotten (השכח) to be gracious. In reality it is not God who has forgotten but Israel in general (לא זכרו) (78.42), and the sons of Ephraim in particular (וישכחו), in spite of the fact that they were commanded not to forget (ולא ישכחו) (78.7)." Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 66. This is a major characteristic of Cole's view of Ps 78's significance, namely, that the sin/rebellion of the people in Ps 78 explains God's anger in Ps 77 (Ibid., 63–76). However, Cole has "made marmalade," so to speak, out of Ps 78 at this point. The recitals of Ps 78—on Ps 78's own understanding—are not intended to *explain* the dismal situation of God's people (how Cole uses them). Their purpose is to *exhort* God's people to obey so that they will not be "like the fathers" (vv. 7–8). The same critique applies to Weber's view that the defeat of the northern tribes in Ps 78 explains the judgement upon "Jacob" and "Joseph" in Ps 77. See Weber, *Psalm 77 und sein Umfeld*, 290. Weber's view should also be rejected because it is based upon the faulty understanding that Ps 78 is about the norther tribes, not "all Israel." For this point, see the exegesis of Ps 78 earlier in this chapter.

CHAPTER 7

THE LITERARY UNITY OF PSALMS 73–78

In this chapter, I synthesize and develop the conclusions of chapters 4 through 6. My primary goal is to establish the literary unity of Psalms 73–78, both in terms of their structure and message. I conclude that Psalms 73–78 have been shaped to answer a conflict between faith and experience precipitated by the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in the sixth century B.C.E. A subsidiary goal is to demonstrate the exclusion of Psalm 79 from this grouping.

Psalms 74–76 and Psalms 77–78 as Parallel Psalm Groups: Evidence

In this first section I demonstrate the parallel nature of the two psalm groupings discussed so far, Psalms 74–76 and 77–78. I considers the implications of this observation in the following section.

Initial Psalms

Various correspondences between these two groupings reveal their parallel nature. First, there are similarities between their initial psalms, Psalms 74 and 77. Both are psalms that Broyles identifies as God-laments in his study. They are part of the subset of lament psalms in which Israel's faith is in a "position of extremity." The specific beliefs that lived experience challenges are different in each case: God as Kingly Subduer of chaos/orderer of creation (Ps 74); God as the worker of great deeds of deliverance / Exodus 34:6–7 (Ps 77). But, as Broyles' study showed, the two psalms center on the same basic theological crisis of faith: a conflict of faith and experience. This is a significant thematic correspondence, especially given the relative paucity of this theme in the Psalter

(chapter 3). This unity in the crisis of faith underlying these psalms is reflected in the following parallel: both lament the prolonged inactivity of God's mighty "hand"/ "right hand" (ימין) (Ps 74:11; 77:11) (i.e., saving/judging activity) amid circumstances in which God "should" be acting. This Divine inactivity is interpreted as a sign of God's wrathful (אף) rejection (זנח) in both psalms (74:1; 77:8, 10).[1]

Parallels in structure, vocabulary, and motif/theme reinforce and further evince the parallel nature of these initial psalms. Some overlap in language/form is to be expected given the stereotypical nature of psalmic language. But these God-laments are *strikingly* similar. Consider the following connections between them.

First, both psalms are concentrically arranged with multiple God-laments at the prominent central location (74:10–11; 77:8–10).[2]

Second, at the structural center of each is a crisis involving the prolonged inactivity of God's mighty "right hand" (ימין) (77:11; 74:1). In both cases, this problem represents the major theological crisis facing the psalmist/community.

Third, both contain mythopoetic imagery relating to the chaotic "waters (מים)"(see 74:13–14; 77:17, 18, 20).

Fourth, Psalms 74 and 77 share a slew of similar vocabulary. The most significant are as follows: גאל ("to redeem") (74:2/77:16)[3]; זכר ("to remember") (74:2, 18, 22; 77: 4, 7, 12); שכח ("to forget") (74:19, 23; 77:10)[4]; זנח ("to reject") (74:1; 77:8) with temporal adverbial modifier (עולמים/נצח); ימין ([God's] "right hand") (74:12; 77:11);

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[1]These are the only two occurrences of the verb זנח in Pss 73–83. The verb only occurs eight other times in the Psalter (in six psalms) (Pss 43:2; 44:10, 24; 60:3, 12; 88:15; 89:39; 108:12). In both 74:1 and 77:8 the verb occurs in a God-lament with a similar temporal adverb or adverbial phrase ("Why do you *reject forever* [זנחת לנצח]?" (74:1); "Will the Lord *reject foreve*r [הלעולמים יזנח]). The verb only occurs with a similar phrase in one other place in the Psalter (Ps 44:24).

[2]See the discussion of the structure of these psalms in chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

[3]This verb only occurs one other time in Pss 73–83 (78:35).

[4]These two psalms account for three of the five instances of this verb in Pss 73–83. The other two come in Ps 78 (vv. 7, 11).

לילה/ ("night") יום ("day") (74:16, 22; 77:3, 6, 7); צאן ("flock") (74:1/ 77:21); נצח ("forever") (74:1, 3, 10, 14; 77:9; in God-laments in 74:1, 10 and 77:9), which reflects the same important time motif in both psalms (74:1, 3, 9, 10, 19, 23; 77:6, 8, 9); עז ("might") (74:13; 77: 15); the root פעל ("work" [of God]) (74:12; 77:13)[5]; קדם ("of old") (74:2, 12; 77:6, 12)[6]; קדש (holiness/holy) (74:3; 77:14).[7]

Inter-Psalm Progression

Both groupings also exhibit an analogous inter-psalm progression. Each progresses from a God-lament psalm (Ps 74; Ps 77) to one or more psalms that answer/ resolve the conflict of faith and experience at its center (Pss 75–76; 78). Further, the specific nature of the answer/resolution is analogous. Neither is theodical in nature. The psalm(s) bound to the God-lament by significant links do not explain the psalmist/ community's dismal situation or God's delay.[8] Rather, they direct the reader to continued trust in God's self-revelation/obedience in the face of unchanged circumstances. Consequently, the basic message communicated is analogous, namely, that faith sticks to God's self-revelation in the face of conflicting evidence.

This correspondence in theological message is reflected in parallels in lexicon and theme at the level of the grouping considered as a unit. Three links in particular stand out: (1) the status of God's mighty "hand" (יד)/ "arm" (זרוע)/ "right arm" (ימין) plays an important role in the theological crisis and its resolution in both sequences (74:11 and 75:9; 77:11, 16 and 78:42, 54). This motif has in view the Exodus event in both groups;

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[5]This root occurs nowhere else in Pss 73–83.

[6]This noun occurs only elsewhere in the collection at 78:2.

[7]There are only two other occurrences of this noun in Pss 73–83 (78:54; 79:1).

[8]Psalm 78 itself does give a theodicy for God's anger/punishment against the forefathers: their disobedience and unbelief. But the previous chapter showed that the function of these accounts in the psalm is not to explain the reason that future generations find themselves in similar dismal circumstances. As I showed there, it is rather to to encourage/exhort future generations to not be like the forefathers, but trust and obey.

(2) the "recounting (ספר)" of God's "wonders" (נפלאות) plays an important role in the answer/ resolution in each grouping (75:2; 78:3, 4, 6);[9] (3) the same is true of Zion theology. Psalm 76 is a "Zion psalm" celebrating the Great King's mighty defense of Zion and sovereign (universal) justice. Psalm 78 climaxes in God's compassionate act of continuing in relationship with Israel by his choice of Zion and David (vv. 65–72). In this connection, the reader should recall Clifford's conclusion from the last chapter that the closest generic analogues of Psalm 78 are Zion psalms like Psalm 76. This thematic link is reflected in the common expression "Mt. Zion (הר ציון)" (see 74:2; 78:68), which occurs nowhere else in the collection.

Psalms 77–78 and Psalms 74–76 as
Parallel Psalm Groups: Significance

The observation of parallels at different levels indicates structure at different levels (chapter 1). The parallels between Psalms 74–76 and Psalms 77–78 indicate the literary unity of these five psalms as a larger structural unit in the collection, Psalms 74–78. Two additional literary features support this conclusion. The first is their titles. The psalms at the extremities (i.e., Ps 74 and 78) are the only two Asaph psalms with the superscription משכיל לאסף ("a Maskil of Asaph").[10] Further, the first element in the superscription of each intervening psalm (Pss 75–77) is the same, למנצח ("To the choirmaster"?).[11] Given that (1) there are other factors indicating the unity Psalms 74–78 (i.e., their parallel relationship); and (2) others have observed the structural significance of superscriptions (both their presence and absence),[12] this symmetry among the

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[9]Similar statements in Pss 73–83 only appear in 73:28 (on which, see below) and 79:13.

[10]There are only eleven other psalms in the Psalter so designated (Pss 32; 42; 44; 45; 47; 52–55; 88–89; 142).

[11]Even if למנצח + an optional prepositional phrase in Pss 76:1 and 77:1 was originally a postscript to the preceding psalm as Waltke has suggested, it now stands in a superscript heading Pss 76 and 77 in the Psalter's final form. See Bruce K. Waltke, "Superscripts, Postscripts, or Both," *JBL* 110 (1991): 583–96.

[12]See the methodological discussion in chap. 1.

superscriptions of Psalms 74–78 is further evidence of their unity. As a paratextual element,[13] the superscription משכיל לאסף heading Psalms 74 and 78 is the most prominent feature signaling the boundaries of this unit, and so setting it off from other psalms/psalm groups in the proximate context.[14]

Secondly, an inclusio formed by 74:1–3 and 78:67–72 works in tandem with the superscription משכיל לאסף as a boundary marking feature. It is indicated by the clustering of the same (or synonymous) group of lexical items and themes/imagery at these extremity locations: synonymous verbs for "reject" (זנח/מאס) (78:67; 74:1);[15] the phrase הר ציון ("Mt. Zion")[16] (74:2; 78:68); references to the Jerusalem sanctuary having the root קדש ("holy place/ sanctuary") (74:3; 78:69); shepherd imagery reflected in similar vocabulary (i.e., צאן [flock] [74:1; 78:70]); the root רעה ["to shepherd/pasture"][17] [74:1; 78:71]); references to God's people as a "tribe (שבט)"[18] and "inheritance (נחלה)"[19] (see 74:2; 78:67, 68, 71). The recurrence of these features at the extremities of a psalm sequence that appear to constitute a larger unit is striking, and further evinces their unity.

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[13]The term "paratext" is taken from David Wilgen, who himself borrows it from the french literary scholar Gérard Genette. A paratext is an element of a text that is not part of its body but directs or even controls its reading in various ways (such as titles, prefaces, epilogues, and marginal notes). See David Wilgren, *The Formation of the Book of Psalms*, FAT 2. Reihe 88 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 29–32. It should be noted that Wilgen is highly critical of the editorial-critical enterprise.

[14]Additional support for the claim that the term משכיל may serve a structuring function is the following observation. All but two of its twelve remaining occurrences (i.e., Ps 32:1;142:1) are in superscriptions of *consecutive* psalms (see Ps 42–45 [Pss 42 and 43 are unity]; Pss 52–55; 88–89). The term also appears in Ps 47, but in the body of the psalm (see v. 8).

[15]The verb מאס only occurs elsewhere in Pss 73–83 at 78:59 (and in the Psalter at 15:4; 36:5; 53:6, 8; 89:39; 106:24; 118:22). The verb זנח only appears elsewhere at 77:8 (and elsewhere in the Psalter at 43:2; 44:10, 24; 60:3, 12; 88:15; 89:39; 108:12).

[16]This phrase occurs nowhere else in Pss 73–83. The exact phrase only occurs elsewhere in the Psalter in two other psalms (see 48:3, 12; 125:1). The plural הררי ציון ("mountains of Zion") appears in 133:3.

[17]This root only occurs elsewhere in Pss 73–83 at 79:13, 80:2, 14.

[18]The only other place this term occurs in the collection is in 78:55. The noun שבט is used in the sense of "tribe" in only two other psalms in the Psalter (105:37; 122:4 [2x]). The only other occurrence with the sense "tribe" is in 78:55.

[19]Psalms 78:55, 62, and 79:1 are the only other occurrences of this noun in the collection.

In summation, Psalms 74–78 constitute the first large structural unit within Psalms 73–83. The boundaries of this unit are signaled by the following features: (1) the superscription משכיל לאסף in 74:1 and 78:1; and (2) an inclusio formed 74:1–3 and 78:67–72.[20]

The Unit of Psalms 74–78:
Significance

The specific nature of the parallel relationship between the constituent groupings of this larger unit (Pss 74–76; 77–78) reveals its significance. More specifically, the significance of this unit arises when we consider the similarities and differences that exist between its groupings. Regarding the former, we saw above that both groupings (1) center on and answer/resolve the same underlying crisis of faith (a conflict of faith and experience); (2) resolve this crisis in an analogous non-theodical way; and (3) communicate the same basic message (i.e., faith clings to God's self-revelation amid conflicting evidence).

But the analyses of these groupings also indicates significant *differences* between them. One important set concerns their initial psalms. These psalms differ in their orientation, setting, focus, the psalmist/community's posture, and in terms of the effects of God's inactivity. Regarding Psalm 74, notice that (1) the predominant orientation is communal; (2) the setting is concrete (i.e., the aftermath of the temple's destruction [vv. 2–9]); (3) the focus is on an enemy of the nation/God (see vv. 3–8, 18–

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[20]Canonical critics have recognized inclusios bracketing a number of psalm groups in the Psalter. For example, the introductory Pss 1 and 2 are bracketed by the term אשרי ("Blessed") (see Ps 1:1; 2:12). 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), 61; Snearly has argued the repetition of הדו ליהוה כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו ("Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, and his steadfast love endures forever!") marks the boundaries of a grouping consisting of Pss 107–118. Michael K. Snearly, *The Return of the King: Messianic Expectation in Book V of the Psalter*, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 624 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 110; McKelvey has argued that the Mosaic motif of Pss 90 (with Pss 91 and 92, which he argues collectively form a psalm group) and 106 functions as an inclusio bracketing all of Book IV. Michael G. McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh: A Canonical Study of Book IV of the Psalter*, Gorgias Biblical Studies 55 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013), 272.

23); (4) the posture is decidedly Godward[21]; and (5) the psalm emphasizes the effects of God's prolonged inactivity upon God himself (i.e., God's "name" or reputation [see especially vv. 4, 7, 10, 13–17, 18, 19, 21–23]). Regarding Psalm 77, on the other hand, we see that: (1) its orientation is not communal but individual; (2) its setting is not concrete but vague and unspecified ("the day of my distress" [v. 3]); (3) its focus is not on an enemy but solely on the God-Israel relationship (i.e., no third-party is in view); (4) its posture is predominantly not Godward but selfward[22]; and (5) it emphasizes the effects of God's enigmatic inactivity on God's people, not God's reputation.[23]

Additionally, we observed above a difference in the core beliefs challenged in each grouping. In Psalm 74, God's status as kingly subduer of chaos/orderer of creation is challenged, an emphasis that Psalm 77 lacks. In Psalm 77, the enduring truthfulness of Exodus 34:6–7 is particularly at stake, an emphasis that Psalm 74 lacks.

Psalms 74–78: crisis over the temple's destruction. These observations suggest that Psalms 74–78 should be read as giving an answer to a *singular* theological crisis but from two *different* perspectives: a conflict of faith and experience precipitated by the the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. The destruction of the temple in Psalm 74 provides the concrete historical setting for the entire unit. Whatever the original setting of Psalm 77, two factors suggest that it has been (re)contextualized within the historical

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[21]Such a posture is reflected in the following features of the psalm: (1) the imperatives addressed to God (see vv. 2, 3, 11, 18, 20, 22 (3x)]; (2) the predominance of the second person singular pronominal suffix referring to God (25x in fourteen verses); (3) the cluster of second person masculine singular pronouns in addresses to God in the "praise" section of vv. 12–17 (seven occurrences); and (4) the many second person singular verbs addressed to God (seventeen in ten verses).

[22]This posture is reflected in the following features of the psalm: (1) the sparsity of any address to God in the first half of the psalm (only in v. 5). The psalmist only begins to address God in v. 12; (2) the use of real third person questions in vv. 8–10, rather than the usual rhetorical questions addressed to God; (3) the sixteen first person singular verbs (in nine verses) referring to the psalmist; (4) the statements focusing on the distress caused to the psalmist (vv. 3–5).

[23]This emphasis is reflected in the direct statements focusing on the distress caused to the psalmist (vv. 3–5), the third person questions vv. 8–10, and the absence of an explicit concern for the effects of God's inactivity for his reputation in the psalm.

context of Psalm 74 in its current location. The first is the striking parallels that Psalm 77 shares with Psalm 74 noted above. The second is the psalm's vague and unspecified setting ("the day of my distress" [v. 3]), which makes it particularly adaptable for such (re)use.

Psalms 74 and 77 reflect two different perspectives on this singular crisis. Psalm 74 reflects this crisis from the communal, external (i.e., enemy focus), and Godward perspective. Here the emphasis is on the effects of God's absence on God himself. Psalm 74's perspective is that this crisis posed a formidable challenge to God's past self-revelation as Zion's Kingly subduer of chaos/orderer of creation (vv. 12–17). The grouping resolves this crisis of faith by pointing the reader to cling to God's self-revelation as the great King and Judge of Zion/the universe (Pss 75 and 76) amid such conflicting evidence. Psalm 77, on the other hand, reflects *this same crisis* but from an individual, internal (i.e., God-Israel focus), and selfward perspective. It emphasizes the effect of the crisis upon God's people. The distinctive perspective of Psalm 77 is that God's absence in the temple's destruction was undermining the truthfulness of the foundational credo of Exodus 34:6–7. Psalm 78 resolves this crisis of faith by directing the reader to God's past-self revelation to Israel in history. It provides assurance amid this calamity that God's basic character and "right hand" have *not* changed.

The inclusio formed by 74:1–3 and 78:67–72 summarizes the major theological crisis and central message of the unit it brackets (Pss 74–78): lived experience suggests that the Great Shepherd's rejection of his flock is permanent (74:1–3). It is only temporary; God will reestablish his (benevolent) presence among them even more firmly in his sovereign timing (78:67–72).

The Literary Relationship between Psalm 73 and Psalms 74–78

There is considerable agreement among editorial critics that the opening

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location of a "book"/collection is a significant location.[24] Interpreters have observed that psalms at such locations appear to serve important introductory functions. While suggestive, the primary basis for this conclusion is not merely the initial location of the psalm. It is the presence of demonstrable—and significant—correspondences that the initial psalm shares with the unit that follows. Depending upon their nature, such correspondences suggest that the initial psalm serves a number of important introductory roles. For example, it can introduce prominent themes/motifs or theological concerns of the unit. Or it can provide a hermeneutical lens through which the unit is to be read.

The following evidence suggests that Psalm 73 introduces Psalms 74–78.

Correspondences between Psalm 73 and Psalms 74–76

The most fundamental correspondence is that Psalms 74–76 follows a two-part progression that mirrors that of Psalm 73: (1) encounter with a conflict between faith and experience (Ps 73:1–16; Ps 74); (2) resolution of that crisis of faith (73:18–28; Pss 75–76).[25] Another correspondence arises from J. Clinton McCann' observation of a poetic technique involving lexical repetition in Psalm 73 that highlights the resolution reached at the temple. I refer the reader to table 1 in chapter 1 for this technique. This literary

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[24]Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 204–7; Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* JSOTSupp 217 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 74; Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 223–50; McKelvey, *Moses, David, and the High Kingship of Yahweh,* 39; Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 237.

[25]A few previous studies have made similar observations. For example, according to Jensen, "Ps 74 relates to Ps 73:1–16 and Ps 76 to 73:18–28, with Ps 75 corresponding to the revelatory experience in 73:17. . . . The sequence of the linked Psalms 74, 75, and 76 extends and develops the progression in Ps 73 from doubt, to presence, to faith." Joseph E. Jensen, "Psalm 75: Its Poetic Context and Structure," *CBQ* 63 (2001): 419. Restricting Ps 75's correspondence to Ps 73:17 alone does not, however, fit with the evidence. As seen below, Ps 75 shares significant links with 73:4–12 as well. McCann also observes a correspondence between Ps 73 and Pss 74–76, as well as with the entirety of Book III. He notes that "Psalm 73, with its movement from lament to hope, sets the tone for the whole of Book III," which he points out has a similar arrangement. J. Clinton McCann, "Books I–III and the Editorial Purpose of the Psalter," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 96–97. Beyond this observation, however, McCann does not develop the nature or significance of this correspondence.

strategy is notably similar to the nature of the parallels that exist between the two "parts" of the psalm grouping (i.e., Ps 74 and Pss 75–76). For this point, compare tables 1 and 2 in chapters 2 and 5 respectively, and see the discussions in those places. This comparison reveals that an analogous compositional strategy has been used, just at different literary levels. Thus, the inter-psalm "movement" of Psalms 74–76 not only follows an analogous two-part progression as Psalm 73. It also highlights the resolution to the crisis of faith with a strikingly similar literary technique involving parallelism.

The non-theodical nature of this resolution noted earlier is a further point of correspondence. Neither consists in an explanation for God's behavior. Both point the reader to trust God's self-revelation in the face of conflicting evidence amid unchanged circumstances (73:18–28, 27; Ps 75:3–11; 76: 4–10). Consequently, like both Psalms 74–76 and 77–78, the basic theological message communicated in the opening Psalm 73 and the grouping of Psalms 74–76 is the same (faith clings to God's self-revelation amid conflicting evidence).

Parallels in lexicon and motif further indicate this literary correspondence. The "recounting" God's "wonders" of judgement in Psalm 75 (see ספרו נפלאותיך in 75:2) resembles the "recounting" God's "works" of judgement in Psalm 73 (see לספר כל מלאכותיך in 73:28).[26] The wicked are described with the same group of uncommon lexical items:[27] מצה ("to drain") (73:10; 75:9)[28]; חמס ("violence") in 73:6 and 74:20[29]; the related

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[26]Others have observed this parallel as well. Robert L. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III (Psalms 73-89)*, JSOTSup 307 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 39; Jensen, "Psalm 75," 420. I argue below, however, that neither of these scholars (as well as others) recognizes the significance of this link: it is evidence that Ps 73 functions as an introduction to the grouping of Pss 74–76.

[27]Cole draws attention to the following links in his study. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 37–45. However, he fails to see their significance: they evince the introductory function of Ps 73 (see below).

[28]*Dis legomenon* in the Psalter. I am borrowing Cole's terminology here. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 236.

[29]*Dis legomenon* in Pss 73–83. The noun only occurs in nine other psalms in the entire Psalter, for a total of twelve occurrences (7:17; 11:5; 18:49; 25:19; 27:12; 35:11; 55:10; 58:3; 72:14; 140:2, 5, 12).

terms רשע ("wicked") (Ps 73:3, 12; 75:5, 9, 11)[30] and הלל ("to boast") (73:3; 75:5 [2x]).[31]

Another significant lexical parallel is למשאות / למשואות ("to ruins") in 74:3 and 73:18.

This is an instance of a *dis legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible.[32] Additionally, both include

the motif of an enemy quotation by a foreign nation that is introduced by the quotative

frame "they say (אמרו)" (74:8; 73:11).[33]

Three other correspondences are noteworthy. First, the promise of God's future

judgement in Psalm 75 that resolves the crisis of faith in Psalm 74 is set within a context

of worship (75:2–3). Similarly, in Psalm 73 resolution (prompted by God's judgement)

comes about at the place of worship *par excellence*, the temple sanctuary (v. 17). Second,

Zion theology plays a significant role in resolving the crisis of faith in both. Psalm 76 is a

"song of Zion"; as just mentioned, in Psalm 73 resolution comes about when the psalmist

enters *the temple* [v. 17]). Finally, Psalm 75's encouragement/warning to remain

righteous amid the wicked's flourishing (see 75:11) parallels Psalm 73's emphasis that

Israel should continue to be faithful amid the wicked's prosperity (vv. 2, 13–15, 26–28).

The context of both is one of God's future judgement.

**Correspondences between Psalm
73 and Psalms 77–78**

Here too the most fundamental correspondence is similar two-part progression:

(1) encounter with a conflict between faith and experience (Ps 73:1–16; Ps 77); (2)

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[30]This term only occurs elsewhere in Pss 73–83 in Ps 82 (vv. 2, 4).

[31]This verb occurs nowhere else in the collection. It only appears two other times in the Psalter (Ps 5:6; 102:9).

[32]Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 236.

[33]There are only two other enemy quotations in Pss 73–83 (79:10; 83:5). In his study of direct discourse in the Hebrew Psalter, Jacobson also includes Israel's complaint against God in Ps 78:19–22 as an "enemy quotation." Rolf A. Jacobson, *Many Are Saying: The Function of Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Psalter*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 397 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 37–38. It is not included here because this example is distinguished from the remaining two by coming on the lips of Israel, not a foreign nation.

resolution of that crisis of faith (73:18–28; Pss 78). Further, like Psalms 74–76, the nature of the resolution is non-theodical and the basic message communicated is the same. There are also significant parallels in lexicon, motif, and theme. "Recounting" (ספר) the "praises of God, his strength and his wonders (נפלאותיו)" (see 78:3, 4, and 6) resembles "recounting" all of God's "works" in 73:28 (see לספר כל מלאכותיך). Zion theology plays a significant role in Psalms 77–78 as it does in Psalm 73 (see v. 17). The previous chapter showed that the climax of Psalm 78 is God's merciful choice of David/Zion (vv. 65–72), which included God's building of the Jerusalem sanctuary (מקדש) (78:69).[34] This feature of Psalm 78 should be compared with מקדשי אל ("the sanctuaries of God") in 73:17.[35]

A few other correspondences are noteworthy. The motif of God's leading Israel is important in both Psalm 73 and Psalms 77–78 (73:24; 77:21; 78:14, 53, 72). The motif is reflected in the verb נחה ("to lead") in each case.[36] Second, the concern for the faith of future "generations" (דור) is an important concern in both (73:15; 77:9; 78:4, 6, 8 [2x]).[37] Third, while both Psalm 73 and 77 have *all* Israel in view (73:1; 77:21–21), the psalms themselves are decidedly individual in their focus, something not true of any other psalms in the collection. Such a focus is reflected in the high number, and near equivalent amount, of first person verbs that have the psalmist as subject (sixteen in Ps 73 and fifteen in Ps 77).[38] These occurrences account for thirty-two of the thirty-five first person

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[34]In this connection, the reader should recall Clifford's claim that the closest parallels to Ps 78 in the Psalter in terms of genre are other psalms that celebrate Zion, such as Ps 76. Richard J. Clifford, "In Zion and David a New Beginning: An Interpretation of Psalm 78," in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith*, ed. B. Halpern and Jon D. Levenson (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 137.

[35]Outside of these two psalms, noun מקדש ("sanctuary") only occurs one other time in Pss 73–83 (74:7).

[36]The verb נחה occurs nowhere else in Pss 73–83.

[37]This noun only occurs in one other psalm in the collection (Ps 79:13 [2x]).

[38]Ps 73:3 (2x), 13 (2x), 14, 15 (3x), 16, 17 (2x), 21, 22 (2x), 25, 28; 77:2, 3, 4 (3x), 5, (2x), 6, 7 (2x), 11, 12 (2x), 13 (2x).

verbs in the collection (nearly 91%).[39] Only three other psalms even contain first person

verbs with the psalmist as subject (75 [3x]; 78 [2x]; and 81 [2x]).[40] Further, in both cases

a reflective nature or tone accompanies the individual focus—also something not

characteristic of any other psalm in the collection. There is virtually no address to God in

the first half of both psalms (73:1–17; 77:1–11) (but see 73:15; 77:5). Rather, the first

half of both Psalm 73 and 77 consist of the psalmist's personal reflection or musings on

God/God's dealings with the psalmist. In both, reflection leads to the perception of a

conflict between faith and experience (Ps 73:1–2, 13–16; 77:8–10).

**Implications of the
Correspondences**

These correspondences have a number of important implications for

understanding the structure and message of Psalms 73–83.

The Introductory Role of Psalm 73. The nature of the above correspondences

suggests that Psalm 73 is a programmatic introduction to Psalms 74–78. This

relationship is represented in table 4 below.[41] As table 4 indicates, Psalm 73 anticipates

(1) the fundamental crisis of faith that the unit focuses on: a conflict of faith and

experience (Ps 74:1–11; Ps 77:8–10; 73:1–16); (2) the two-part progression of the unit's

constituent psalm groups: conflict (Ps 74; Ps 77; 73:1–16); resolution (Pss 75–76; 78; Ps

73:18–28); and (3) the basic message of the unit, namely, stick to God's self-revelation,

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[39]Ps 73:3 (2x), 13 (2x), 14, 15 (3x), 16, 17 (2x), 21, 22 (2x), 25, 28; 75:5, 10 (2x); 77:2, 3, 4 (3x), 5, (2x), 6, 7 (2x), 11, 12 (2x), 13 (2x); 78:2 (2x); 81:6 (2x; alternatively, these could have God a subject).

[40]In addition, apart from Ps 73, only one other psalm contains a first person singular subject pronoun (either אני or אנכי) with the psalmist as subject (75:10). The first person pronoun is rare in these psalms. The form אני is used four times in this way in Ps 73, and אנכי once in 75:10.

[41]Zenger has also argued that Ps 73 serves an introductory role (for Pss 74–83) in its current location (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 237), though his proposal is of a much different nature than what is being argued for here.

and remain obedient, amid conflicting evidence.[42]

It is unclear whether Psalm 73 was created for its present location or not.[43] Regardless, it is a remarkably fitting introduction to the unit of Psalms 74–78 in the collection's final form.

Table 4. Psalm 73 as programmatic introduction to Psalms 74–78

Psalm 73:1–16 (Conflict)	*Psalm 73:18–28 (Response/Resolution)*
Psalm 74 (Conflict)	Psalms 75–76 (Response/Resolution)
Psalm 77 (Conflict)	Psalm 78 (Response/Resolution)

The message of Psalms 73–78: God is good to Israel. The discussion above shows that the introductory Psalm 73 stands in a *parallel* relationship with the constituent groupings of Psalms 74–78. The semantics of biblical parallelism can, therefore, shed light on this relationship. It is well-known that the second of two parallel lines of Hebrew poetry (most often) does not merely repeat the idea expressed in the first. Rather, as Robert Alter has noted, "the characteristic movement of meaning is one of heightening or intensification . . . of focusing, specification, concretization, even what could be called dramatization."[44] Similarly, the unit of Psalms 74–78 is not a mere replication or reproduction of the fundamental theological crisis and message of Psalm 73 on an inter-psalm level.

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[42]This last relationship is not explicitly represented in table 4.

[43]Zenger overstates his case when he claims that Ps 73 was "certainly not created for this context." Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 237. The nature of the correspondences pointed out above suggest that it may very well could have been.

[44] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 19.

Like so many parallel lines of Hebrew poetry, the semantic "movement" from Psalm 73 to the parallel unit of Psalms 74–78 is from general (Ps 73) to specific/concrete (Pss 74–78). Tate has rightly observed that Psalm 73 is "a good example of what Miller has called 'openness to new contexts'," the psalm not being "locked into any one particular setting in history."[45] This makes Psalm 73 a particularly fitting introduction to Psalms 74–78. The latter unit focuses on the same basic theological crisis (a conflict of faith and experience) as Psalm 73 but contextualizes it in a more concrete historical setting, namely, the aftermath of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (Ps 74:1–12). Correspondingly, in the unit of Psalms 74–78, "the wicked" of Psalm 73 (vv. 3, 12) are given a concrete face in the enemy nation who has hacked God's temple to pieces, set up its banners there signaling the victory of their god, and burned all of the "appointed places of God" in the land (74: 1–9).[46]

This parallel relationship also suggests that Psalm 73 is a hermeneutical lens through which to view the crisis of faith and its resolution in Psalms 74–78. Significantly, this relationship signals the reader to interpret God's absence in the temple's destruction ultimately as a threat to Israel's core doctrine that God is "good" to Israel (Ps 73:1). In addition to the parallel relationship between Psalm 73 and Psalms 74–78 shown above, a more specific correspondence between Psalm 73 and 77 supports this conclusion. A consideration of the exegesis of Psalm 77 in chapter 6 reveals that the same core belief about God is challenged in both Psalm 73 and 77. There we noted Kselman's observation that God's absence in Psalm 77 posed a challenge ultimately to the foundational Israelite credo of Exodus 34:6–7.[47] This point is significant for present purposes because, as

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[45]Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 233.

[46]The correspondence receives confirmation from the observation made earlier that, within the psalm grouping itself, the enemy of Ps 74 is characterized as the "wicked (רשעים)"/ "boasters (הוללים)" (vv. 5, 9, 11). The same is true within Ps 73 itself (vv. 3, 12).

[47]See the discussion of Ps 77 in chap. 6 of the present study.

discussed in chapter 4, the Israelites understood this foundational credo specifically as an expression of God's *goodness* (טוב) (Exod 33:18; 34:6–7)[48]—precisely the core belief about God that lived experience challenges in Psalm 73 (i.e., "God is good [טוב] to Israel" [v. 1]).

This last observation confirms what is already implied in the parallel relationship between the introductory Psalm 73 and Psalms 74–78: the conflict of faith and experience that is the focus of Psalms 74–78 ultimately raised the question of whether Israel can still affirm that "God is good to Israel." The singular message communicated by the interpretive horizons that Psalms 75–76 and Psalm 78 provide for Psalms 74 and 77 respectively is emphatically that they *can*—despite considerable evidence to the contrary (74:1–12; 77:8–10; 73:1–16).

A canonical analysis thus bears out the introductory comments that Tate makes about the affirmation of Psalm 73:1 ("Surely, God is good to Israel") in his commentary: "The reader knows right away that this thesis is going to be tested severely in this section of the Psalter, both in terms of individual faith and in terms of the nation Israel."[49] I would modify Tate's observation slightly in light of the analysis of chapters 4 through 7 in the present study. Psalm 73:1 not only signals that this thesis will be *tested* on both a national (Ps 74) and individual level (Ps 77). More importantly, as summarizing *affirmation* it signals that the truthfulness of this thesis will also be *reaffirmed* (Pss 75–76; 78). In its current canonical context Psalm 73:1 is, therefore, a succinct summary of the central message of the unit that Psalm 73 introduces (Pss 74–78).

The Exclusion of Psalm 79

Before concluding this chapter, we revisit the question of Psalm 79's placement from chapter 6. Having shown the literary unity of Psalms 74–78, we are now

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[48]See chap. 6 above for discussion.

[49]Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, xxv.

in a better position to address this issue. We noted in chapter 6 that a number of scholars

claim that Psalm 79 should be grouped with the preceding Psalms 77 and 78. This view is

not without foundation. Psalm 78 does, in fact, share many links with the adjacent Psalm

79.[50] And, as scholars have pointed out, some of these suggest that the opening verses of

Psalm 79 are a response to the closing verses of Psalm 78.[51] Psalm 78 ends (vv. 68–72)

with the psalmist recounting God's choice of Mt. Zion (הר ציון), his building of the

sanctuary (מקדש) like the heavens (רמים) and earth (ארץ), and bringing (בוא) David to

shepherd his inheritance (נחלה). Psalm 79 opens (vv. 1–2) by lamenting that nations have

come (בוא) into God's inheritance (נחלה), defiled his holy (קדש) temple, turned

Jerusalem (ירושלם) to ruins, and given the corpses of God's servants to the birds of the

heavens (שמים) and beasts of the earth (ארץ). These links draw attention to an underlying

thematic-historical connection between the concluding verses of Psalm 78 and those

opening Psalm 79: the sequential movement from Psalms 78 to 79 mirrors the historical

movement from the establishment of Jerusalem, David, and the temple (78:65–72) to the

dissolution of these establishments in sixth century B.C.E. (Ps 79:1–3). Psalm 79 "picks

up" where Psalm 78 leaves off.

By way of response, it is first necessary to point out that the presence of

significant parallels between adjacent psalms does not necessarily indicate that they

belong to the same *low-level psalm group*. This can be demonstrated by considering the

many links that Psalms 105–107 share. This example is particularly fitting because

Psalms 105–107 occur at a structural boundary in the Psalter (i.e., a location of clear

literary disjunction), the one demarcating Books IV and V, and exhibit a "tail-head"

linkage similar to that of Psalms 78:68–72 and 79:1–2. Barry C. Davis has observed that

the first three verses of Psalm 107 (the first psalm of Book V) "echo lexically and

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[50]See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 293–94; Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 77–87; McCann, Books I–III and the Editorial Purpose of the Psalter," 99.

[51]Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 80.

respond thematically to the terminology and issues presented in the concluding five verses of Psalm 106 [the final psalm of Book IV]. Of the 15 lexeme families of Ps 107:1–3, 7 (47 percent) are replicated in Ps 106:44–48 [sic]."[52] In addition to this observation, Davis explains that

> the beginning of Psalm 107 also provides a thematic response to the plea recorded in Ps 106:47 for the LORD to deliver (ישע) his people from distress and to gather (קבץ) them from exile among the nations (גוי). Psalms 107:2–3 reports that the people of God have been redeemed (גאל) out of their disastrous situation and gathered (קבץ) from the lands (ארץ) to which they had been dispersed.[53]

These and other links have suggested to some that the boundary between Book IV and V is a "soft" one, with Psalms 105–107 forming a psalm group (e.g., Egbert Ballhorn).[54]

But despite these significant connections, Davis (and most others) nevertheless affirms the traditional "hard" book boundary between Books IV and V.[55] Snearly summarizes the evidence for this claim: (1) the similarity between the doxologies at the end of the books; (2) the cohesion of Book IV itself; (3) the cohesion of Book V itself, which Snearly's entire study argues; (4) in addition to the many parallels, there are also significant differences between Psalm 105 and Psalms 106–107. For example, the distribution of the phrase הללו יה ("Praise the Lord!"); (5) they key root זכר ("to remember") in Psalms 105–106 (105:5, 8, 42; 106:4, 7, 45) is absent from Psalm 107; (6) Psalms 105–106 seem to address the exilic crisis (106:47), while Psalm 107 is "written from the perspective of restoration (104.3; see also 7, 14, 20, 30)."[56]

The example of Psalms 105–107 confirms an important point we have observed throughout this study: concatenation is not the only factor to be considered in

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[52]Barry C. Davis, "A Contextual Analysis of Psalms 107–118" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1996), 68. Quoted from Snearly, *The Return of the King*, 106–7.

[53]Davis, "A Contextual Analysis of Psalms 107–118," 68. Quoted from Snearly, *The Return of the King*, 107.

[54]Snearly, *The Return of the King*, 106.

[55]Ibid., 109.

[56]Ibid.

identifying intentional structure in the Psalter. Disjunctive features (in the case of Pss 105–107, those indicating a book division) should be given equal weight. Psalms 105–107 show that the kinds of links that exist between Psalms 78 and 79 can be present and the psalms so linked *not* belong to the same grouping. It must quickly be added that this is not to say that Psalms 105–107 or 78–79 are not deliberately arrangements. It is only to say that they do not belong to the same, low-level, psalm grouping. We have seen multiple times in this study that parallels at different levels indicate structure at different levels. An important part of "weighing" parallels is determining the literary level at which they are functioning. The process of "weighing" by Snearly cited above indicates that the parallels between Psalm 106 and 107 reflect literary cohesion *between* larger groups of psalms (i.e., Books V and VI)—not *within* a lower level grouping (i.e., a group composed of Pss 105–107). Thus, the question that needs to be asked of the parallels between Psalms 78 and 79—which do appear to be significant—is the structural level at which they are operating.

I offer the following considerations in defense of the view that a low-level break exists between Psalm 78 and 79. The first is the inner cohesion and coherence of Psalms 77–78 argued for in chapter 6. Second, Psalms 77–78 are distinguished by the structural parallel mentioned in that chapter. The verb אזן ("to hear") in the *hiphil* stem occurs at the beginning of both (77:2; 78:1); the verb נחה ("to lead") occurs at the end in connection with a prominent figure from Israel's past (77:21; 78:72).[57] Third, the parallel relationship between Psalms 74–76 and 77–78 argues for the distinct nature of both sequences, and so the exclusion of Psalm 79 from the latter. Fourth and related, there is substantial evidence that Psalms 74–78 form a unit. Fifth, there is a significant difference between the grouping of Psalms 77–78 and 79 often not pointed out. Psalm 79 lacks a

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[57]It is true that the shepherd metaphor also appears at the end of Ps 79 (see v. 13). But there is also a significant *difference* not often pointed out. Unlike both Ps 77:21 and 78:72, in 79:13 this metaphor is not connected to a prominent figure from Israel's past.

focus on the major feature binding Psalms 77–78 together, the theme of God's past saving deeds. Sixth, the observation that the first two groupings began with a God-lament (Pss 74, 77) suggests that Psalm 79, also a God-lament (see chapter 8), will likewise begin a (third) psalm grouping.[58] The pattern emerging is that God-laments *begin* psalm groups in the collection. Finally, the evidence presented in chapter 9 for the unity of Psalms 79–82 confirms the break between Psalms 78 and 79.

These seven considerations collectively establish a low-level break between Psalm 78 and 79. Psalm 78 marks the closing boundary of both a low-level psalm grouping (Pss 77–78) and the collection's first major structural unit (Pss 74–78). Psalm 79 constitutes the opening boundary of a third low-level psalm grouping and a second major structural unit (Pss 79–82) (chapter 9). Consequently, whatever the significance of the links between Psalm 78 and 79, they do *not* indicate that the two psalms belong to the same low-level psalm grouping.

Conclusion

The main point I argued for in this chapter was the literary unity of Psalms 73–78. This unity, I contended, is reflected in terms of the collection's structure, singular theological crisis, and coherent message. I also made a case for the exclusion of Psalm 79 from this unit. This latter point cannot be fully demonstrated until the literary unity of Psalms 79–82 is shown in the chapters that follow.

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[58]Strong parallels that Ps 79 shares with both Pss 77 and 74 (especially the later) adds considerable weight to this point. I point out these parallels in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 8

PSALMS 80–81

The focus of this chapter is on Psalms 80–81. I argue here that (1) Psalms 80–81 constitute a third psalm grouping within Psalms 73–83, and that (2) Psalm 81 answers/resolves the conflict of faith and experience lamented in Psalm 80. The reasons for departing from a sequential analysis of the collection will become clear over the course of the next two chapters.

Analysis of Psalms 80 and 81

As has been the practice in preceding chapters, the first task is to provide a concise analysis of the psalms under consideration.

Psalm 80

Psalm 80 is a communal lament. Like Psalms 74 and 77 analyzed already, Psalm 80 is likewise a God-lament psalm.[1] As seen below, the conflict of faith and experience confronting the community is articulated at length in verses 5–16. The psalm's unclear setting has been the subject of lively debate.[2] The clearest structural indicator is

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[1]See Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study*, JSOTSup 52 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 161–65.

[2]See the concise summary of views in Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 309–13. A particularly noteworthy view for which there is some evidence is that the psalm was composed in response to the Assyrian conquest of the Northern kingdom in the late eighth century B.C.E. Pointing in this direction is the presence of ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἀσσυρίου ("concerning the Assyrian[s]") in the LXX, the use of "Israel" and "Joseph in v. 2, and the mention of the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, an Manasseh, in v. 3. Even if one were to grant that such were the occasion and rough date of the psalm (conclusions which are by no means certain), there is still the question of whether the psalm originated in the Northern or Southern kingdom, a point over which there is also considerable debate. Ibid.

the refrain of verses 4, 8, and 20. This refrain consists of a petition for Yahweh to "restore" (*hiphil* of the verb שוב ["to return"]) the community in language reminiscent of the Aaronic benediction (Num 6). Broyles points out that this petition may exploit the various meanings of the verb שוב (i.e., "restore" / "repent") to imply an admission/ acknowledgment of past failure.[3] It is clear that the refrain marks the conclusion of a section given its appearance at the end of the psalm (v. 20). Consequently, verses 4 and 8, also instances of the refrain, mark the closing boundary of a sub-section. Three considerations suggest that verses 15–16 also mark a closing boundary:[4] (1) verse 15 resembles the psalm's refrain, which concludes a section[5]; (2) verses 17–20 witness a shift to volitives that continues throughout the rest of the psalm[6]; and (3) the verb נטע ("to plant") and the noun גפן ("vine") are repeated in verses 15–16 from the unit's opening verse (v. 9). This repetition signals an inclusio around the section focusing on the vine metaphor. A four part structure emerges:

    A. Prayer for Deliverance (six volitives) (vv. 2–4)[7]

        B. God-lament ("How long?"): transformation of Shepherd metaphor (vv. 5–8)

        B'. God-lament ("Why?"): transformation of vineyard metaphor (vv. 9–16)

    A.' Prayer for Deliverance (five volitives) (vv. 17–20)[8]

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[3]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 163–64. As discussed below, the community's acknowledgement of past failure is also implied in v. 19: ". . . then we will not *turn back* (נסוג) from you." See Ps 44:18; 53:4; Isa 50:5, 59:13; Zeph 1:6.

[4]The *waw* fronting v. 16 (see וכנה אשר נטעה ימינך ["*even* the stock that your 'right hand' planted"]) indicates the grammatical dependency of v. 16 on v. 15. The two verses, therefore, should not be separated.

[5]Compare אלהים צבאות שוב נא הבט משמים וראה ("O God of Armies, turn! Look from heaven, and see!") in v. 15 with: אלהים השיבנו והאר פניך ("O God of Armies, restore us! [lit. "cause us to return"] Let your face shine!") (v. 4); אלהים צבאות השיבנו והאר פניך ("O God of armies, restore us! [lit. "cause us to return"] Let your face shine!") (v 8); and יהוה אלהים צבאות השיבנו האר פניך (O Lord God of Armies, restore us! [lit. "cause us to return"] Let your face shine!") (v. 20).

[6]See the discussion below for this point.

[7]האזינה ("give hear!"); הופיעה ("shine forth!"); עוררה ("stir up!"); and לכה ("come!"). השיבנו ("restore us!"); האר פניך ("shine your face!").

[8]יאבדו ("may they perish!") (v. 17); תהי ("may it be") (v. 18); תחינו ("revive us!") (v. 19); השיבנו ("restore us!") (v. 20); האר פניך ("may your face to shine!") (v. 20).

Verses 2–4 form an opening plea for deliverance. The community appeals to God as the "Shepherd of Israel," "the one who drives Joseph like the flock," and "the one who dwells upon the cherubim." These appellations recall God's care for the community in the Exodus and conquest, as well as his royal military prowess associated with the ark of the covenant. The community desperately implores God with six volitives: "Hear!," "Shine forth!," "Rouse your strength!," "Come to our salvation," "Restore us!," and "Shine your face!" (v. 3). The latter two occur in the initial instance of the psalm's refrain, which marks the conclusion of the first section: "O God, restore us (השיבנו); shine your face upon us, that we might be saved!"

Sections B and B' (vv. 5–16) are the heart of the appeal. Verses 5–8 take up the shepherd metaphor from verses 2–4, but transform it to draw attention to a conflict between faith and experience:[9]

> O Lord, God of Hosts, how long will you smoke against the prayers of your people?
>> You have fed them the bread of tears,
>> and have given them tears to drink in great measure. (Ps 80:5–6)

These verses accuse God of having fed his flock with tears instead of bread. The basis for this charge is the community's perception that God has—for a prolonged duration—failed to answer their prayers. The implication is that such Divine behavior contradicts Israel's traditional conception of God as a *good* shepherd.[10] In verse 7 the community laments that this situation has resulted in mocking from Israels' neighbors (v. 7). The first section of the central unit closes with a second instance of the refrain (v. 8).

The second half of this central section (vv. 9–16) transforms another of Israel's

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[9]Hee Suk Kim, "A Critique Against God? Reading Psalm 80 in the Context of Vindication," in *Why?. . . How Long?*, ed. LeAnn Snow Flesher, Carol J. Dempsey, and Mark J. Boda (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 103. See also the discussion in Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 161–62.

[10]By "traditional" I do not mean to suggest that this metaphor belongs to certain stratum of religious tradition in ancient Israel. I only mean that, when used of God, the shepherd metaphor is used consistently in the Hebrew Bible to depict God as a *good* rather than negligent shepherd (Ps 23; 77:21; 28:9).

conventional metaphors, that of the vine. Hee Suk Kim has pointed out that the psalmist here takes up an image used elsewhere in scripture to critique Israel of unfaithfulness (e.g., Isa 5:1–7; Jer 2:21, 12:10; Ezek 15:1–8; Hos 10:1) and shockingly turns it on its head to critique *God*.[11] In verses 9–12 God is portrayed as a benevolent gardener or vinedresser. With much care he uprooted his vine from Egypt, drove out many nations to protect it (i.e., the conquest), and firmly planted it in the promised land. It flourished under David and Solomon. However, like the "praise" motif in Psalm 74:12–17, verses 9–12 are not "straight praise." They have as their goal the God-lament that follows in verse 13: "Why have you broken down its walls so that every passerby plucks it?" This "praise" section works with the God-lament to draw God's attention to an inconsistency between his past praiseworthy conduct (vv. 9–12) and his present behavior (v. 13). As a whole, verses 9–13 point out the absurdity of a gardener destroying the protective walls of a vine—thereby exposing it to danger—for which he has taken so much time and care to cultivate.[12]

The petitionary verse 15 that follows and closes the section indicates the rhetorical nature of the question: the psalmist seeks not an explanation but change. The psalm concludes in verses 17–19 like it began, with petitions for deliverance/restoration. These include a final instance of the refrain (v. 20). The conclusion also contains a communal pledge of renewed faithfulness to God ("may your hand be upon the man of you right hand . . . *then we will not turn away from you* [ולא נסוג ממד]").[13] As noted above, this pledge seems to "betray an awareness that the people have defected from

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[11]Kim, "A Critique Against God?," 105.

[12]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 162.

[13]The verb סוג ("to turn away/back") is often used to express the idea of unfaithfulness. It most often occurs in the *niphal* when it has this meaning (Isa 50:5; 59:13; Jer 38:22; Zeph 1:6; Ps 44:19). But it is also used this way, as here, in the *qal* (Psa 53:4; Prov 14:14). Significantly, the verb is used elsewhere in Pss 73–83 in the sense of unfaithfulness (Ps 78:57), though there the verb is in the *niphal*.

God."[14]

Psalm 81

Psalm 81 is in two major sections. Verses 1–6 are a hymnic introduction; verses 7–16 constitute an extended divine oracle.[15] The first four verses are a congregational summons to worship at a festal gathering. The congregation is summoned to "sing" and "shout for joy" to the "God our strength" (אלהים עוזנו)" and the "God of Jacob" (v. 2). Goldingay right notes that "vv. 6–16 [Heb. 7–17] will spell this out."[16] For, in these verses God himself recounts how he manifested his great strength on Israel's behalf by delivering them from Egyptian bondage (vv. 7–8, 11).[17] He also, and most importantly, promises to continue protecting and providing for his people—if they would only "listen" to his voice (i.e., obey) (vv. 16–17). Further, the congregation is summoned to "lift up a song" and "blow the horn" "on the day of our feast (ליום חגנו)" (vv. 3–4). The prepositional phrase ליום חגנו in verse 4 is usually understood as a reference to the Festival of Tabernacles. But it is possible that another festival is in view (e.g., Passover). Verses 5–6 give the reason for the summons to praise: God decreed it as a statute to Israel and made it "a testimony in Joseph" "when he [God]" went out against the land of Egypt"

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[14]Hieke overstates his case when he claims that "Psalm 80 does not contain a confession of sin or guilt, and there is *no trace* of *any* explanation for the immense distress or any solution of the problem" (emphasis added). Thomas Heike, "Psalm 80 and its Neighbors in the Psalter: the Context of the Psalter as a Background for Interpreting Psalms," *BN* 86 (1997): 40. Verse 19 contradicts this claim.

[15]I follow Jacobson in using the term "oracle" for the extended God-quotation in vv. 7–16 "with the greatest care." Rolf A. Jacobson, *Many Are Saying: The Function of Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Psalter*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 397 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 92. "Oracle" implies present communication from God. But God-quotations in psalms like Ps 81 are best understood as "either a quotation of words of God that had been communicated in the past . . . or as artistic liturgical compositions that drew upon the theological traditions of Israel's past." Jacobson, *Many are Saying*, 112. See his discussion on pp. 92–93, 111–12.

[16]John Goldingay *Psalms 42–89*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 548.

[17]Supporting the view that "God, our strength (עוזנו)" has in view God's Exodus redemption in the following Divine speech is the observation that God is referred to as "my strength (עזי)" in the opening lines of the so-called song of Moses that celebrates this great event (see Exod 15:2).

(v. 6).[18] Thus, the joyous festal gathering has its origins in God's great Exodus redemption. It celebrates God's great acts of deliverance, which God himself recounts at length in the oracle of verses 7–17.

Scholars have offered various interpretations of the final (and difficult) clause of verse 6 (שפת לא ידעתי אשמע).[19] I take a view similar to that of Michael Goulder's.[20] These are the words of a psalmist leading the gathered congregation (vv. 1–5). They are specifically leading in a renewed commitment to "hear (שמע)"[21] (i.e., obey) the voice of God (lit. "lip of" [שפת]). And it is a voice that God's people have not steadfastly obeyed in the past (". . . that I [i.e., God's people] had not known [לא ידעתי] [i.e., obeyed])."[22] The "voice of God" is heard at length in the oracle of verses 7–17. This interpretation makes good sense in light of the content of the oracle. Verses 7–13 consist of God's account of/lament over the failure of the Exodus generation to "listen (שמע)" to his voice (v. 12), and the judgement received for not complying (v. 13). Verses 14–17, on the other hand, consist of a Divine promise of protection and blessing for future generations, provided that they "listen (שמע)" (v. 14). Thus, the gathered congregation, and every

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[18]The MT of the first half of v. 6 reads as follows: עדות ביהוסף שמו בצאתו על ארץ מצרים ("A statute in Joseph he made it when he [i.e., God] went out over/against the land of Egypt."). The LXX has μαρτύριον ἐν τῷ Ιωσηφ ἔθετο αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἐξελθεῖν αὐτὸν ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου· ("a testimony in Joseph he made it when he [i.e., Joseph] went out from the Egypt"). The MT makes good sense here in light the emphasis on God's Exodus deliverance in the following God quotation (vv. 7, 8, 11 ["I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt."]). Also, the parallel with "Israel" and "Joseph" in vv. 5–6 argues for seeing Joseph as the recipient of the command rather than the subject of the verb "to go out" in v. 6.

[19]For a concise summary, see Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 319–20.

[20]See Michael D. Goulder, *The Psalms of Asaph and the Pentateuch*, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 233 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 153–54.

[21]As is commonly the case, the *yiqtol* אשמע ("I will hear") does not express future tense but emphasizes the volition of the speaker: "I *will* hear."

[22]I take the verbs ידע ("to know") and שמע ("to hear") to mean "heed" or "obey." Both are used in this way in Ps 95, with which Ps 81 is commonly compared: "if only you would obey/hear his voice (אם בקלו תשמעו)" (v. 7;); "They have not known (i.e., obeyed) my ways (לא ידעו דרכי)" (v. 10). For other examples of שמע in this sense, see Gen 26:5; Deut 21:18; Lev 26:21; Neh 9:17). The nomen regens שפת ("lip of") is understood to be in construct to an asyndetic relative clause: שפת (אשר) לא ידעתי ("Speech *that* I did not know"). See the discussion in R. D. Holmstedt, "The Restrictive Syntax of Genesis i 1," *VT* 58 (2008): 59–63.

generation thereafter who sings/utters the words of the psalm, resolves to respond differently than the forefathers. Consequently, they are positioning themselves to receive God's promise of protection and blessing.

I understand the oracle of verses 7–17 to be in four parts of two to three verses each (vv. 7–8; 9–11; 12–13; 14–17). "Selah (סלה)" at the end of verse 8 marks the conclusion of the first part. The other sections are marked by the occurrence of the key word שמע ("hear"/ "obey") at or near their beginning (see vv. 9, 12, 14). An analysis of the oracle supports this division. In verses 7–8, Yahweh recounts how he answered his people's cry to be freed from Egyptian bondage, delivering and putting them to the test in the wilderness. Verses 9–11 form a unit that consists of an "oracle within an oracle, which represents the oracle by which God tested the Israelites at Meribah (8c)."[23] Here God longs that his stubborn people would heed his voice (v. 9), a response to the great deliverance they received (v. 11). If only they would listen, God declares, he would abundantly "fill" their mouths (v. 11). In verses 12–13, however, God laments the disobedient response of his people: Israel was *not* willing to "listen/obey." Consequently, God sent them away in the stubbornness of their heart to follow their own desires.

The final section of the oracle (vv. 14–17) shifts the focus from past generations to present/future ones. It contains God's most direct address to the gathered congregation and subsequent hearers/readers of the psalm. These verses are, therefore, in one sense the most important of the psalm. Significantly, they reveal that this oracle, while solemn, is a *hopeful* exhortation to obedience. The verses that have preceded (vv. 7–13) were primarily a solemn Divine warning for the gathered congregation to avoid the disobedient response of the forefathers. Continuing that tone of lament, God expresses his desire that present/future generations of his people would "listen to/obey (שמע) me" and "walk in my ways" (v. 14). Graciously attached to this exhortation is the Divine promise

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[23]Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 323–24.

that compliance will result in (1) God's swift deliverance ("Quickly I would subdue their enemies, and turn my hand against their foes")[24]; and (2) God's abundant provision for his people ("He would fill them [lit. "him] with the best of wheat . . .") (vv. 15–16). The language here recalls God's response/promise to past generations, described in verses 8 ("You called out in distress, and I delivered you") and 11 ("Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it"). Thus, as Tate notes, "the preaching in Ps 81 lays before the congregation an open future of blessing (vv. 14–17)."[25] Despite the persistent unwillingness of God's people to obey, God nevertheless graciously holds out an abiding promise to protect and bless them—if they would "listen" to his voice.

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The Psalm Group of Psalms 80–81

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We turn now to consider the evidence for and significance of the deliberate grouping of Psalms 80 and 81.

**Psalms 80–81 as a Psalm Group:
Evidence**

It should be kept in mind that the *number* of links (whether many or few) is not the most significant factor in identifying structure in the Psalter. It is rather their *nature*.[26] Psalms 80 and 81 do not share as many significant links (lexical or otherwise) as other groupings we have analyzed. There is nevertheless sufficient evidence to suggest that their sequencing is deliberate.[27] In fact, the deliberate grouping of Psalms 80 and 81 is

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[24]As others have noted (e.g., Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 555), this statement need not presuppose a life setting of national subjugation by an enemy. It may simply be a general promise for when God's people find themselves in such a situation because of their disobedience.

[25]Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 327.

[26]There is an analogy with text criticism here: it is not the number of manuscripts supporting a reading that matters most, but the nature or quality of those that do. To recall Snearly's similar dictum from chapter 1, "Evidence must be weighed, not counted." Michael K. Snearly, *The Return of the King: Messianic Expectation in Book V of the Psalter*, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 624 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 19.

[27]That said, Hossfeld's claim that there are "intense ties between Ps 81 and its predecessor" seems to be overstating the case a bit. Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 325. This

one of the most agreed upon conclusions of previous studies.[28] The following are the
most significant links between these psalms.[29]

The first significant link is that Psalm 80 opens with a communal cry for God
to "hear! (האזינה)" (vv. 2).[30] In Psalm 81 *the* key word of the Divine oracle in verses 7–17
is שמע ("to hear") (vv. 6, 9 [2x], 12, 14).[31] This verb reflects the psalm's emphasis that
God's is willing to protect and provide for his people, if they would but "hear" (i.e., obey)
him.

Second, the motif of "saving"/ "delivering is central to both psalms (80:3, 4, 8,
and 20; 81:7–8, 11, 15–16). This motif is reflected in partial synonyms for "delivering"/
"saving" (see ישע in 80:3, 4, 8, 20, and חלץ in 81:8). The significance of this link is
strengthened by the presence of the verb ישע as a key word (together with שוב ["to
restore"]) in the prominent refrain of Psalm 80. It is also enhanced by the infrequency of
the verb חלץ ("to deliver") in the Psalter. This verb only occurs eleven other times total,
and nowhere else within Psalms 73–83.

Third, the motif of God "feeding" his people is also significant in both psalms
(80:6; 81:11,[32] 17). It is reflected in the verb אכל ("to eat") in the *hiphil* stem in both

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statement would be more fitting for the the preceding psalm grouping of Pss 77–78.

[28]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 325. Hieke, "Psalm 80 and its Neighbors in the Psalter," 36–
43; Robert L. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III (Psalms 73-89)*, JSOTSup 307 (Sheffield: Sheffield
Academic Press, 2000), 96–101; Matthias Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters: Ein Formgeschichtlicher
Ansatz*, FAT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994)*, 90; Kim, "A Critique Against God?,"113.

[29]There are other links between these psalms not listed here, some of which may be significant.
An example is the verb הלך ("to walk/come") in 80:3 ("*Come* to save us!") and 81:13 ("They were *walking*
in their own counsels"), which Cole considers significant (Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 99).
This verb occurs sixty-eight times in the Psalter, over 1500 times in the Hebrew Bible, and in seven of the
eleven total Asaph psalms. It also appears in all but one psalm in the string of Pss 77–83 [Ps 79]), within
which Pss 80–81 appear. Thus, while it *may* be significant, it is excluded because it does not constitute the
strongest evidence of intentional structure. I have excluded שלח ("to send") for similar reasons (cf. Ps
80:12; 81;13).

[30]Words built from the root אזן ("to hear") only occur elsewhere in 77:2 and 78:1 (2x).

[31]"The call to 'obey/hear' is repeated in the God quotation to the point that it can be considered
the quotation's 'unifying theme'."Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 108–109. Psalm 81 alone contains five of
the nine occurrences of this verb (שמע) within Pss 73–83.

[32]Verse 11 reads: "I am the Lord your God who brought you up from the land of Egypt. Open

(80:6; 81:17).[33] These are the only two occurrences of the verb אכל in the *hiphil* stem in the Psalter.[34] The occurrence of this verb in the important closing verses of the Divine oracle strengthens its significance (vv. 14–17).

A fourth consideration is the motif of "salvation history." In Psalm 80 the community recounts God's benevolent dealings with his people from the Exodus until David (vv. 9–12). In Psalm 81 God's deliverance of his people, in both the Exodus event and promised deliverance for the obedient,[35] is an important theme (vv. 7–8; 11, 15–17). This link is reflected in the proper noun מצרים ("Egypt") in both psalms (80:9; 81:6, 11).[36]

Fifth, there are thirteen occurrences of the verb שוב ("to return") in Psalms 73–83, five of which are in these adjacent psalms (80:4, 8, 15, 20; 81:15). Three observations enhance the significance of this lexical link: (1) its high frequency;[37] (2) its recurrence as a key word in the prominent refrain of Psalm 80 (and a line closely resembling it [i.e., v. 15]); and (3) its presence in the important closing verses of the Divine oracle (vv. 14–17).

Sixth, both psalms include a reference to Israel's enemies using the noun איב ("enemy") (80:7; 81:15). This noun is common in the Psalter (seventy-four occurrences, seven times in Pss 73–83). But its presence in the important closing verses of the Divine

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your mouth wide and I will fill (מלא) it." The verb מלא ("to fill") here in 81:11 does also occur in Ps 80: "it [i.e., the vine] *filled* (מלא) the land" (80:9). This link may be significant. It is not listed because the occurrence of the verb in 81:11 is part of a *more prominent* link between these psalms, the motif of God's feeding his people.

[33]The verb אכל occurs in two other psalms within Pss 73–83 (Ps 78 [vv. 24, 25, 29, 45, 63] and 79 [v. 7]). It is not used of God's feeding his people in either psalm.

[34]This verb only occurs, in any stem, in seventeen other psalms (Pss 14; 18; 21; 22; 27; 41; 50; 53; 59; 69; 78; 79; 102; 105; 106; 127; 128).

[35]Obviously, God's promised *future* deliverance is not salvation *history*. But it should be included as part of this motif because God's past and promised future deliverance are closely connected in the psalm.

[36]The proper noun מצרים only occurs in one other Asaph psalm, Ps 78 (vv. 12, 43, 51).

[37]Only one other psalm in the Psalter has more occurrences than Ps 80 (Ps 85 [5x]). Only one other psalm is tied with it (Ps 78 [4x]).

oracle (vv. 14–17) with other significant links (i.e., שוב and אכל) underscores its significance.

Finally, Psalm 80 and 81 both contain references to God's powerful "right hand" (ימין) (80:16 and 18) or "hand" (יד) (80:18 and 81:15). Like the preceding link, the significance of this one is also enhanced by its location (see vv. 14–17).

Psalms 80–81 as a Psalm Group:
Significance

Once again, I look to the specific nature of the parallels to determine the significance of the grouping. Consider these links within their immediate contexts:

Table 5. Significant parallels between Psalms 80 and 81

Parallel	Psalm 80	Psalm 81
Motif of God's "hearing (שמע /אזן)"	"*Hear*! O Shepherd of Israel" (v. 2)	"*Hear*, O my people, I will admonish you! O Israel, if you would *listen* to me!" (v. 9); "But my people did not listen . . ." (v. 12); "O, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways!" (v. 14);
Motif of "delivering (חלץ)" /saving (ישע)	"Come and *save* us!" (v. 3); "let your face shine that we might be *saved*" (cf. vv. 4, 8, 20);	"In distress you called out and I *delivered* you" (v. 8); "*I brought you up* from the land of Egypt" (v. 11); "Oh, that my people would listen to me . . .Quickly *I would subdue your enemies . . .*" (v. 14, 15)
The motif of God "feeding (אכל)" his people	"How Long will you be anger with the prayers of your people? You have *fed* (them) with bread of tears" (v. 6)	"I am the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt. *Open your mouth wide and I will fill it*" (v. 11); "Oh, that my people would listen to me . . . I would *feed* him [i.e., Israel] with the best of wheat" (v. 14, 17);

Table 5 continued

Parallel	Psalm 80	Psalm 81
The motif of "Salvation history" (מצרים)	"You brought a vine out of *Egypt* . . . ." (v. 9) (used in "praise" section drawing attention to conflict of faith and experience)	"He made it a decree in Joseph when he went out over the land o *Egypt*" (v. 6); "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of *Egypt* (v. 11); "I would quickly subdue their enemies . . .") (vv. 15–16)[38]
שוב ("to return"; "to restore" [*hiphil*])	"O God (of Hosts), *restore* us!" (vv. 4, 8, 20); "O God of Hosts, *turn*! Look down from heaven, and see!" (v. 15)	"Oh, that my people would listen to me . . . I would *turn* my hand against their adversaries" (vv. 14–15)
איב ("enemy")	"Our *enemies* are mocking us" (v. 7)	"Oh, that my people would listen to me . . . Quickly I would subdue their *enemies*" (vv. 14–15)
"right hand" (ימין) / "hand" (יד)	"have regard for . . . the stock that your *right hand* planted" (v. 16); "may your *hand* be upon the man of *your right hand*" (v. 18)	"Oh, that my people would listen to me . . . I would turn my *hand* against their adversaries" (vv. 14–15)

The first significant observation arising from table 5 is as follows. In Psalm 80 almost every significant link comes on the lips of the community, whereas in Psalm 81 almost every one comes on God's "lips." This suggests that the extended Divine oracle of 81:7–17 should be read as a Divine response to the communal lament of Psalm 80. Such is, in fact, how all canonical critics surveyed in chapter 2 have read it. Supporting this conclusion is the observation that the community urges *God* to "hear! (*hiphil* of אזן)," while most of the adjacent Psalm 81 consists of God's address for *his people* to "hear (שמע)" (see vv. 9 [2x], 12, 14).[39] The reader will recall a similar "call and response" or

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[38]Admittedly, there is overlap here with motif of "delivering (חלץ)" /"saving (ישע)".

[39]A further link that may support the point being made here is the proper name name "Joseph"

"request and answer" type relationship between Psalms 77 and 78. The former psalm opened with a description of repeated prayers for *God* to "hear (*hiphil* of אזן)" (77:2); the latter with an authoritative call for God's *people* to "hear! (see "my people [עמי]" and the *hiphil* of אזן in v. 1)"[40]

Not a few interpreters have argued (or assumed/claimed) that the Divine oracle of Psalm 81 provides a theodical or "deuteronomistic" explanation for God's harsh behavior Psalm 80.[41] This oracle, it is claimed, answers the "Why?" question in 80:13 in terms of the community's disobedience (see 81:12–13). The nature of the links displayed in table 5, however, points in a different direction. These links do suggest, as previous studies maintain, that the main significance of the oracle is to resolve the conflict of faith and experience at the center of Psalm 80 (vv. 5–16). But they point *away* from, not towards, a deuteronomistic means of doing so.

Table 5 reveals that the majority of significant links cluster in *the hopeful concluding section* of the divine oracle, verses 14–17:

"Oh, that my people would *listen* (שמע) to me!
I would quickly subdue their *enemies* (איב)
and *turn* (שוב) my *hand* (יד) against their adversaries . . .
He [i.e., God] would *feed* (אכל) you with the finest wheat." (Ps 81:14, 15, 17)

Note the pattern that arises from a consideration of the the highlighted links in 81:14–17 and their counterparts in Psalm 80.[42]

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(see יוסף in 80:2 and הוסף in 81:6). There are only three other psalms in the Psalter that contain the name of Joseph (77:15; 78:67; 105:17). Its occurrence in these adjacent psalms could highlight the point that the group calling out to God in Ps 80 (v. 2) is the same one being addressed in Ps 81 (v. 6) (i.e., Joseph).

[40]Others have observed a similar literary relationship between proximate psalms. McKelvey, for example, finds evidence that Pss 90–92 "dialogue" with one another in a similar manner. Michael G. McKelvey, *Moses, David, and the High Kingship of Yahweh: A Canonical Study of Book IV of the Psalter*, Gorgias Dissertations in Biblical Studies 55 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 258–59.

[41]Hieke, "Psalm 80 and its Neighbors in the Psalter," 40–41; Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 98–101; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 325–26.

[42]The connections listed below have been observed by other scholars. See, for example, the discussions in Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 325–326; Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 96–101.

First, the prominent refrain of Psalm 80 (and a line similar to it [v. 15])

repeatedly urges God to become active once again and "restore (שוב)" the community

(vv. 4, 8, 15, 20). In Ps 81:15 God himself promises to "turn (שוב)" his hand against his

people's enemies (v. 15)—if they would but obey him and walk in his ways (v. 14).

Second, in Psalm 80, the community laments that their enemies (איב) mock

them while God, the "bad Shepherd," continually shuts out their prayers (v. 7). In Psalm

81:15 God promises to quickly subdue his people's enemies (איב) (v. 15)—if they would

but obey him and walk in his ways (v. 14).

Third, in Psalm 80 the community petitions God to once again put into action

his mighty "right hand" (ימין)/ "hand" (יד) (v. 16), which he enigmatically withholds at

present. In Psalm 81:15 God himself promises to swiftly and mightily turn his "hand" (יד)

against his people's adversaries (v. 15)—if they would obey him and walk in his ways (v.

14).

Lastly, in Psalm 80 the community's current perception of God is as a "bad

Shepherd" who has been "feeding (אכל)" them a steady diet of the bread of tears (see

"How long?" in v. 5) (v. 6). In Psalm 81:17 God promises his willingness to "feed (אכל)"

his people with good things (v. 17)—if they would obey him and walk in his ways (v. 14).

Further, the earlier discussion indicated that the remaining two links are

thematically related to these verses (see table 5 above). The nature of these links are of

the same hopeful nature as those just discussed. Considering the following two links.

First, in Psalm 80 God's people repeatedly call for an absent God to "save

(ישע)" them in the present (vv. 3, 4, 8, and 20). Psalm 81:15–16 stress God's willingness

to save present/future generations as he had delivered (חלץ) in the past (vv. 8, 11, 14,

15).[43]

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[43]In addition to חלץ, another link that 81:8 shares with Ps 80 is קרא ("to call"). In Ps 80:19 the
people promise to "call out (קרא)" to God when he restores them; in Ps 80:8 God reminds the gathered
congregation that he rescued them when they "called out (קרא)" to him. If significant, this link would thus
be of the same hopeful nature as חלץ discussed here. Cole, who sees קרא as a significant link, interprets it

Second, in Psalm 80 the community accuses God of virtually (and excessively) reversing the history of salvation that began with the Exodus from Egypt (מצרים) (v. 9; see. vv. 9–12). In Psalm 81 God promises to duplicate his saving activity that was so mightily displayed in that event (see מצרים) (v. 11; see vv. 15–17). He promises this despite his people's past waywardness (vv. 15–16), if they would obey him and walk in his ways (vv. 14–16).

The links between Psalm 81:14–17 and Psalm 80, therefore, contrast the differing perspectives on God's involvement in the affairs of his people in these adjacent psalms.[44] In Psalm 80 the people cry out to a God who is apparently unwilling to hear, deliver, and restore them. He is a "bad Shepherd" who "feeds" them only with the bread of tears (vv. 5–6). Further, God's destructive actions seem to have "reversed what he began in salvation history" (vv. 9–13).[45] In Psalm 81, on the other hand, God is characterized by his own self-revelation as a "God of strength" (vv. 1, 7–17). He is a God who *remains* willing to hear and deliver his people (both in the past and present/future). And he promises to "feed" them with *good* things—if they would but listen to him and walk in his ways (vv. 14–17; 7–11). God's own self-revelation in Psalm 81 promises that salvation history is *not* permanently reversed; God can (and is willing to) duplicate his past actions of salvation and provision.

This clustering of significant links in 81:14–17 indicates that *these verses* are the most significant aspect of God's response to the appeal of Psalm 80. God' self-revelation in these verses is not "deuteronomistic" or theodical in nature. It consists of God's hopeful (yet solemn) promise of swift deliverance and abundant provision for his people—if they would but listen to his commandments. *This* is the primary response that

in this way. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 98.

[44]The reader will observe that these links consequently resemble the nature of those identified between Pss 74 and 75–76, and 77–78 in previous chapters.

[45]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 162.

the new interpretive horizon of Psalm 81 provides for the communal lament of Psalm 80.

It should not, however, be concluded that the oracle of Ps 81 fails to answer the "How long?" and "Why?" questions of Psalm 80. It does; just not in a "deuteronomistic" way. God's promise to hear, deliver, and feed an obedient people with good things resolves the community's perception of God as a "bad Shepherd" reflected in the "How long?" question of 80:5. God's willingness to duplicate his past mighty acts of salvation (81:8, 11, 15–16) and compassionate acts of provision (see 81:11, 17) resolves the skewed image of God reflected in the "Why?" question of 80:13 (i.e., a malevolent vinedresser who has seemingly reversed salvation history [see vv. 9–16]). Consequently, the new interpretive horizon that Psalm 81:14–17 in particular provides for Psalm 80 resolves the disorienting crisis of faith at the heart of that lament. And it does so by communicating that faith clings to God's self-revelation (81:14–17) in the face of conflicting evidence (80:5–16).

Conclusion

In this chapter I made a case that (1) Psalms 80 and 81 are deliberately grouped together but (2) the attempts of previous studies to read Psalm 81 as a deuteronomistic response to Psalm 80 are mistaken. The evident links between the two psalms resolve the crisis of faith in Psalm 80 by indicating that God *is* willing to hear the community's prayers and restore them.

CHAPTER 9

PSALMS 79–82

This chapter builds upon the last chapter's conclusion that Psalms 80–81 are a deliberate psalm grouping. My main goal in what follows is to demonstrate the literary unity of Psalms 79–82. The conclusion I reach is that Psalms 79–82 have been shaped to answer and resolve the same faith crisis as the first major unit in the collection (i.e., Pss 74–78): a conflict between faith and experience precipitated by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. The chapter also presents evidence that Psalm 83 forms a conclusion to the entire collection.

Analysis of Psalms 79 and 82

This opening section shows that the psalms flanking Psalms 80 and 81, Psalms 79 and 82, are intended to be read together; they have been deliberately paired in the collection's final form. I begin with a concise analysis of Psalms 79 and 82.

Psalm 79

Psalm 79 is another God-lament psalm, forming its appeal by drawing God's attention to conflict between faith and experience.[1] Scholars have disputed that Psalm 79 has in view the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.[2] But the evidence suggests that

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[1]See the discussion in Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study*, JSOTSup 52 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 157–60.

[2]See the concise summary in Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 298–99. After surveying objections raised against this view and alternative proposals, Tate concludes: "In spite of all of these problems and theories, the time after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 seems to be best for the original setting of the psalm . . . it seems most probable that Ps 79 belongs to the sizable corpus of OT literature (including Ps 74) which emerged from the community which remained in Palestine during the exile and was used in penitential liturgies during that period." Ibid.

this is, in fact, the clear setting of the psalm. Hossfeld and Zenger point out that the psalm opens in verse 1 with an implicit citation of Micah 3:12.[3] The implication is that "the lamented catastrophe is interpreted as fulfillment of the destruction of the Temple and Zion announced in Mic 3:12."[4] This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that this same verse is quoted in the judgement discourse against the Temple in the book of Jeremiah (see Jer 26:18).[5] Further, in conjunction with this last observation, Psalm 79 reflects heavy influence of the book of Jeremiah.[6] Based upon these observations, Hossfeld and Zenger conclude: "the conclusion is inescapable: Psalm 79 engages with the destruction of the Temple and the fundamental crisis brought on *in* and *by* that event."[7] This is the view taken in the present study.

The literature suggests that the psalm's structure can be analyzed in a number of ways. The following two-part division reflects the flow of the text well:[8]

    I. The Community's complaint (vv. 1–5)
    II. The Community's petition (vv. 6–13)

The first five verses are a foe-lament (vv. 1–4) that culminates in an interrogative God-

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[3]Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 304–5; The relevant portion of Mic 3:12 reads: ציון שדה תחרש וירושלם עיין תהיה ("Zion shall be plowed [as] a field; and Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins"). Compare with Ps 79:1: באו גוים בנחלתך . . . שמו את ירושלם לעיים ("nations have come into your inheritance . . . they have turned Jerusalem into a heap of ruins"). Strengthening the likelihood that Ps 79:1 is an implicit citation of Mic 3:12 is the observation that the noun עי ("ruin") only occurs in two other texts in the Hebrew Bible outside of Ps 79:1, Mic 3:12, and Jer 26:18 (i.e., Mic 1:6; Job 30:24).

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Zenger lays out the following evidence of the influence of the book of Jeremiah on Ps 79: 79:1: cf., Jer 26:18 = Mic 3:12; 79:2: cf., Jer 7:33; 16:4; 34:20; 79:3: cf., Jer 8:12; 14:16; 16:4, 6; 79:4: cf., Jer 19:8; 79:6–7: cf., Jer 10:25; 79:8: cf., Jer 11:10; 79:9: cf., Jer 24:9; 29:18; 42:18; 44:8, 12; 79:13: cf., Jer 23:1. Ibid., 305.

[7]Ibid., 304–305.

[8]Others have divided the psalm along these same lines. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 300; Rolf A. Jacobson, *Many Are Saying: The Function of Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Psalter*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 397 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 43.

lament (v. 5). The psalm opens in verse 1 with the complaint that nations (גוים) have come

into "your inheritance (נחלתך)," defiled "your holy temple (היכל קדשך)," and turned

"Jerusalem to ruins (ירושלם לעיים)." Verses 2–3 are a graphic description of the carnage

wrought by the ruthless invaders upon "your servants" and "your faithful ones" (e.g.,

"They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem" [v. 3]). The goal is

not to "inform" Yahweh of something he does not know, but to move him to intervene.

The repetition of the second person masculine singular pronoun referring to Yahweh in

these verses depicts the nations as God's own enemies. Together with the picture of the

carnage in Jerusalem, this depiction communicates that "the barbaric actions of the

conquerers, for whom literally nothing is sacred, neither the Temple nor the corpses, are

judged as such a fundamental offense against the order of law that YHWH, for the sake

of his own divinity, can no longer accept."[9] In addition, the community complains that

"we have become a taunt (חרפה) to our neighbors" (v. 4). The actual content of the taunt

comes in verse 10, and is central to the psalm's argument for God to act.

The section's closing verses shift from foe-lament to God-lament:

How Long, O Lord? Will you be angry forever?
Will your jealousy burn like fire? (Ps 79:5)

There may be a sense in which these questions are seeking information. But their main

thrust is rhetorical. This point is indicated by the following barrage of petitions (vv. 6–

12); it is action, not an answer, that the community seeks. The community acknowledges

that Yahweh's anger is in some measure just (see "Do not remember our former

iniquities!" [v. 8]). But the God-lament of verse 5 reveals their belief that it has "burned

(בער)" beyond what is warranted.[10] It needs to come to an end.

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[9]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 159; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 306.

[10]Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 157–58; John Goldingay *Psalms 42–89*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids, Baker 2008), 523.

As just alluded to, petitions dominate the psalm's second section (vv. 6–13).[11] Verses 6–7 focus on redirecting God's wrath to the nations because of the harm done to God's people ("For he [i.e., the nations] has consumed Jacob" [v. 7]). Verses 8–9 aim at removing it from God's people, pleading for God to have compassion and atone for their sins. What is at stake, the community argues, is nothing less than God's great "name (שם)" (vv. 6, 9 [2x]) or honor/reputation. Verse 10 contains the content of the nation's taunt mentioned in v. 4: "Why should the nation's say, 'Where is their god?'" Jacobson has shown that this formulaic taunt characteristically occurs during a conflict between nations that is also understood to be a conflict between national gods. Importantly, this taunt is "directed as much toward the defeated nation's god as it is toward the nation itself . . . .the victors speak the taunt because they interpret the defeat of the foreign nation as the defeat of the foreign god."[12]

Jacobson shows that within the psalm's overall argument this taunt is presented as the main reason that God should respond to the community's prayer.[13] The taunt is first mentioned in verse 4. The actual content is given in verse 10 as motivation supporting the petition. Then, following the taunt the psalmist petitions God to, "Return to our neighbors sevenfold to their laps, their taunts with which the taunt *you* (חרפתם אשר חרפוך) (emphasis added)" (v. 12). The taunt is nothing less than an assertion that Israel's God has been defeated with his people. Clear evidence of this view (at least according to the nations) is the destruction of both Jerusalem and the Temple, God's very dwelling place

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[11]See שפך חמתך אל הגוים אשר לא ידעוך ("Pour out your wrath upon the nations who do not know you!") (v. 6); אל תזכר לנו עונת ראשנים ("Do not remember our former iniquities!") (v. 8); מהר יקדמונו רחמיך ("Let your compassion meet us quickly!") (v. 8); עזרנו ("Help us!") (v. 9); הצילנו ("Deliver us!") (v. 9); כפר על חטאתינו ("Atone for our iniquities!") (v. 9); תבוא לפניך אנקת אסיר ("Let the groans of the prisoners come before you!) (v. 11); הותר בני תמותה ("Preserve the sons of death!") (v. 11); השב לשכנינו שבעתים ("Return to our neighbors sevenfold.") (v. 12).

[12]Jacobson, *Many are Saying*, 42. These claims are based upon Jacobson's analysis of this formulaic taunt elsewhere (see Ps 42:3, 10; Ps 115:2), and taunts very similar to it found in Isa 10:9–10; 36:18b–20; Mic 7:10; Joel 2:17; and 1 Kgs 18:27. See Jacobson's excursus on this taunt on pp. 40–42.

[13]Ibid., 42.

(see v. 1). Jacobson explains the significance of this enemy quotation in the psalm: "By quoting this enemy taunt, the psalmist names a pressing theological problem: Has the Lord been defeated, as some people believed? . . . . One may conclude that, as in previous psalms, the enemy quotation is the key element in the argument of the psalm."[14]

At the same time, Hossfeld and Zenger are correct in observing that this final section pleads for "the establishment of the order of law in the world of the nations by YHWH as the God of justice"[15] The taunt in verse 10 "makes unmistakably clear that this conflict between Israel and the nations is . . . about YHWH's own, *specific divinity* (emphasis mine). The question, "Where is *your* God?" calls into question" Yahweh's divine profile as "protector of life, savior of the oppressed, guarantor of law and justice . . . ."[16] As these scholars point out, the petitions in verses 10–12 (e.g., "let the vengeance of the blood of your servants that is poured out be known among the nations!") are pleading for the recovery of *this* particular divine profile among both Israel and the nations.[17] As such, it becomes evident that the "fundamental God-crisis" that the psalm is concerned with is not only God's apparent defeat; it is his reputation as a righteous and just God. "The psalm laments, above all that through these events YHWH's competence as a God of justice . . . is hugely called into question."[18]

The psalm concludes on a surprisingly hopeful note. The community confidently affirms that they are "your people, and the flock of your pasture," and that they will praise God forever upon restoration (v. 13). The assumption is that praise will

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[14]Jacobson, *Many are Saying*, 42. Jacobson's systematic analysis of enemy quotations that attack God reveals that they often articulate the psalm's central theological dilemma (e.g., Pss 3; 9/10; 11; 12; 14/53; 22; 59; 64; 71; 94; 115). See his detailed analysis of these quotations on Jacobson, *Many are Saying*, 28–49.

[15]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 306.

[16]Ibid., 307.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., 304.

follow restoration. But the people's praise does not appear to be contingent upon deliverance: the community resolutely sticks to Yahweh even amid the catastrophic situation they are experiencing.

Psalm 82

This penultimate Asaph psalm centers on an important image in the collection: God as Judge and King (Pss 73, 74, 75, 76). However, in Psalm 82 this image occurs in a unique setting, that of the "divine council" (עדת אל) (v. 1). In this short but much discussed/debated psalm, God is pictured as the Most High of the earth who possesses all the nations (vv. 6, 8). He is consequently able to authoritatively stand "in the midst of the [negligent] gods (בקרב אלהים)." He stands specifically as the accuser (vv. 2–4) and judge (vv. 6–7) of these אלהים, to whom he delegated authority for administering justice in these nations (see Deut 32:8–9 [LXX; Qumran]). Lowell K. Handy's careful analysis of Psalm 82 shows that the psalm is divided into four units. These units are inversely parallel and are arranged around a central element:[19]

   A. Section I Assembly / God-rises (שפט) (v. 1)
        B. Section II Address / gods confronted (vv. 2–4)
             C. Section III Address / chaos described (v. 5)
        B'. Section IV Address / gods confronted (vv. 6–7)
   A. Section V Assembly God rises (שפט) (v. 8)

Section one (v. 1) consists of a third person description of God (אלהים) taking his stand (נצב) amid the "divine council (עדת אל)." The reference to the "divine council" in Psalm 82:1 reflects "Israel's version of the heavenly bureaucracy . . . of divine beings who administer the affairs of the cosmos" that was common among the cultures of the Ancient Near East (ANE).[20] This divine council is found in a number of other texts of the

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[19]The following structure is adapted from Lowell K. Handy, "Sounds, Words and Meanings in Psalm 82," *JSOT* 47 (1990): 63. Others, such as Tate, have independently arrived at at similar concentric structure for the psalm. Whereas Handy sees God's address in vv. 2–4 and 6–7 as one section a piece, Tate divides them each into two (vv. 2 and 3–4, and 6 and 7), thus arriving at a seven-part concentric pattern. See Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 334.

[20]The language "heavenly bureaucracy" is borrowed from Michael Heiser. See M.S. Heiser,

Hebrew Bible (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:19–20; Ps 89:5–7; 29:1; Job 1:6; 2:1; Deut 32:8–9, 43 [LXX; Qumran]). In Psalm 82:1 God is pictured as the undisputed leader of the divine council, who takes his stand "in the midst of the gods (בקרב אלהים)" to administer judgement upon them (שפט).[21] The direct speech that immediately follows in section two (vv. 2–4) is best taken as the voice of the Most High God.[22] Using language more at home on the lips of the psalmists, the Most High asks rhetorically "How long? (עד מתי)" the אלהים of v. 1 will judge unjustly (v. 2). The clear implication that it has been "too long" (cf. vv. 6–7).[23] Verses 3–4 consist of a string of imperatives from the Most High. They command the אלהים to administer justice in the territories among the nations where the Most High had assigned them.[24] They are a strong accusation of the אלהים for failing to

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"Divine Council," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, & Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008): 113. See pp. 113–16 for a concise discussion of the concept of the "divine council" in Israel and the broader ANE. As Heiser points out in this discussion, the most precise parallel to the "divine council" in Ps 82:1 comes from the texts discovered at Ras Shamra. These texts indicate that "El" was the leader of the divine council in Ugarit, the same proper name found in s 82:1(see עדת אל). Ibid., 113. There is no need, however, to postulate (as some do) a direct influence of the Ugaritic concept of a divine council. As Goldingay points out, such is not necessary since the concept of a divine council was a common feature of the intellectual world of the ANE. John Goldingay *Psalms 42–89*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids, Baker 2008), 560–61. The expression עדת אל in Ps 82:1 is, therefore, is best understood as simply reflecting the Israelite version of this common cultural concept.

[21]The use of the term אלהים in v. 1 to refer both to the Most High and the other members of the divine council should not be taken as evidence that Israelite religion was polytheistic or henotheistic at one time, with Ps 82 being a key text reflecting the transition to monotheism. As Heiser points out, the Hebrew Bible is replete with texts asserting Yahweh's utter uniqueness and supreme authority, many widely considered among the earliest in the Hebrew Bible. See the discussion in Heiser, "Divine Council," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 114; based upon texts such as Exod 21:6; 22:7–8, and 27, not a few scholars over the centuries have understood the אלהים (plural) mentioned in v. 1 and referenced throughout the rest of the psalm to be *human* Israelite judges. For the serious problems with this view and a refutation of it, see James M. Trotter, "Death of the אלהים in Psalm 82," *JBL* (2012): 228–30; Heiser, "Divine Council," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 114–15.

[22]Most understand the speech of vv. 2–4 to be God's. E.g., Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 334; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 333–34; Jacobson, *Many are Saying*, 113; Goldingay takes a minority view in seeing the entire psalm as on the lips of the psalmist. Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 559–60.

[23]This is the only instance in the Psalter where Yahweh asks this question. However, this question is attributed to Yahweh elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (see Exod 10:3; Num 14:27; Jer 23:26).

[24]As many have pointed out, the background here (seen more clearly of v. 6 ["You are gods, sons of the Most High"]) is provided by Deut 32:8: "When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the boundaries of the peoples *according to the number of the sons of God* (emphasis mine)." The majority of text critics consider the text of the LXX and Dead Sea Scrolls, which read "according to the number of the sons of God" (cf. the interpretive ἀγγέλων θεοῦ of the LXX) for the last phrase, to be superior to the MT here, which reads "according to the number of the sons of Israel" (למספר בני ישראל). For a discussion of the textual issues involved and defense of the LXX and Qumran readings over the MT, see Michael S. Heiser, "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God," *BibSac*

administer justice among the nations.

The third person speech of section three (v. 5) could either continue God's words in verses 2–4, or reflect a switch to the speaker of verse 1 and 8: "They [i.e., the אלהים] do not know, they do not understand, the walk about in darkness; all of the foundations of the earth are shaken." This description of the אלהים "reveals the cosmic dimension of their failure," which has resulted in a chaotic situation that has shaken the very foundations of the earth (see Mic 6:2).[25] Section four (vv. 6–7) is a second address of the Most High to the אלהים that parallels that of verses 2–4. It consists of the Most High's order-bringing response to the chaotic situation of verse 5: a death sentence for all of the אלהים ("You are gods, all of you. Therefore, you will die like men."). Zenger observes that "verse 7 proclaims the end of these gods . . . because they do not match the concept of God proclaimed by this psalm . . . the 'gods' and 'sons of the Most High' are not what they pretend to be—namely, instances that guarantee justice and righteousness in the human world and in so doing make visible the face of the true God."[26] The Most High's death sentence to the אלהים puts on display his divine profile as the supremely Just One.

The psalm closes in a somewhat unexpected way (v. 8) (section V). It ends with a *petition* urging the Most High to "arise (קומה)!" and "judge (שפטה) the earth! For you possess all the nations (כי אתה תנחל בכל הגוים)."[27] In his important study of the Divine council in ancient Israel, Michael Heiser draws upon B. Batto's research to shed light on this petition.[28] Batto's study focused on the "rising" of a deity in the ANE. from his throne to take action. Heiser notes Batto's observation that the imperative קומה was

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158 (2001): 52–74.

[25]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 334.

[26]Ibid., 335.

[27]The reader will note the inclusio in vv. 1 and 8 formed by the verb שפט ("to judge").

[28]See the discussion in Michael S. Heiser, "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature," (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004), 79–81.

"standardizing language for awakening God" and "stereotypical language" often found in "universal prayers for time of duress."[29] Further Batto observes that

> the motif of the sleeping deity is used to express Israel's belief in Yahweh's absolute kingship . . . this conviction gives [Israel] the confidence to appeal for help. Yahweh's reign is supreme and he can be counted on to 'awaken' and maintain that right order which he decrees as creator and sovereign of all."[30]

Thus, Heiser rightly observes that in this closing petition the Most High is "not asked to arise to begin a new, heretofore unimagined governance of the nations; he is beseeched to *maintain* the order he decreed in ancient times. He is not asked to assume a new role; he is expected to act because he already is the eternally supreme king."[31]

The Psalm Group of Psalms 79 and 82

This section provides evidence that Psalms 79 and 82 have been deliberately paired in the present form of the collection, and then considers the interpretive significance of this observation.

Psalms 79 and 82 as a Psalm Group: Evidence

The following evidence indicates that Psalms 79 and 82 are intended to be read together.

First, a major thematic link between these psalms is the justice of God. In Psalm 79, God's absence in the face of the carnage wrought by the גוים "hugely" calls into question his profile as "a God of justice," both within Israel and among the nations (see vv. 2–4, 10). In Psalm 82 *the* Divine profile of God in the psalm is as the Most High

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[29]Cited from B. Batto, "The Sleeping God: An Ancient Near Eastern Motif of Divine Sovereignty," *Bib* 68 (1987): 169 in Heiser, "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature," 80. Many interpreters point out that Ps 82 presupposes a time of duress. Below I argue that this point is further confirmed by the psalm's deliberate pairing with Ps 79.

[30]Batto, "The Sleeping God," 169.

[31]Ibid. This final clause כי אתה תנחל בכל הגוים is, therefore, best understood as introducing the grounds of the preceding petition, with the *yiqtol* תנחל stresses the ongoing nature of Yahweh's ownership of the nations, not Yahweh's future possession of them: "*For* (כי) you *possess* (תנחל) all the nations." The preposition ב prefixed to כל הגוים introduces the object of נחל.

Judge and King, as *the* just and righteous אלהים among the nations (גוים) of the earth (v. 8). This focus on the relationship between God's justice and the גוים is absent from the intervening Psalms 80–81.

Second, a related, and equally prominent, link is the motif of the "defeat of the gods/God." In Psalm 79 the central claim of the taunt of the גוים (vv. 4, 10) was that Yahweh had been defeated along with his people (see "Where is their God?" [v. 10]). In Psalm 82 this motif takes the form, not of Yahweh's apparent defeat, but of Yahweh's *authoritative death sentencing of the gods of the nations* (vv. 6–7). This significant motif is absent from the intervening Psalms 80–81.

A third consideration is that words built from the root דלל ("to be low/poor") only appear eight times in the Psalter (41:2; 72:13; 79:8; 82:3, 4; 113:7; 116:6; 142:7). Three are in Psalms 79 and 82 (see 79:8 [דלל] and 82:3,4 [דל]).

Fourth, the rhetorical question "How long?" In Psalm 79:5 the community "asks" God "How Long? (עד מה)" his anger will burn against his people. In Psalm 82:2 God "asks" the אלהים "How long? (עד מתי)" they will judge unjustly. Reinforcing the significance of this link is the observation that this question does not occur on Yahweh's lips anywhere else in the Psalter.

Fifth, the only two occurrences of the verb נצל ("to deliver") in Psalms 73–83 are in these psalms. In Psalm 79:9 the community pleads for God to "Deliver!" for his name's sake. In Psalm 82:4 Yahweh commands the אלהים to "Deliver!" the weak and needy from the hand of the wicked. In both cases the form is a *hiphil* imperative.

A sixth piece of evidence is that five of the eight occurrences of the noun גוים ("nations") in Psalms 73–83 are in these two psalms (79:1, 6, 19 [2x]; 82:8).[32] The

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[32]The remaining three occurrences are in 78:55; 80:9; 83:5. The nations are also important in the adjacent Ps 83. But as argued below, Ps 83 is not part of the same psalm grouping as Pss 79 and 82. While the noun גוים occurs in the adjacent Ps 80 as well (1x [v. 9]), the nations are clearly not as prominent as they are in Ps 79.

importance of this noun in both psalms strengthens its significance: in Psalm 79 the havoc that the nations wreak in Jerusalem and its implications for Yahweh's reputation is a central theme. In Psalm 82 Yahweh's authority over all of the nations (גוים) of the earth is of central importance in the psalm (v. 8).

Seventh, words built from the root מות ("to die") appear four times in Psalms 73–83. Two come in Psalms 79 and 82 (79:11; 82:7). Further suggesting the significance of this link is (1) the similarity of the forms themselves (see the noun תמותה in Ps 79:11 and verb תמותון in 82:7); and that (2) the noun תמותה in Psalm 79:11 only occurs one other time in the Hebrew Bible (Ps 102:21).

Finally, Psalms 79 and 82 contain two of the nine occurrences of the root נחל ("to inherit/possess") in Psalms 73–83 (see נחלה ["inheritance"] in 79:1 and נחל ["to possess"] in 82:8). In both cases it occurs in close relationship with the noun גוים ("nations"). This is only true elsewhere of the root in the collection at Ps 78:55. There are only two other occurrences of the verb נחל in the Psalter (Ps 69:37; 119:111).

Psalms 79 and 82 as a Psalm
Group: Significance

We turn once again to the nature of the parallels between the linked psalms to determine the significance of their grouping. The nature of these links reveals a pattern common to the collection. The links presented in table 6 on the following page contrast the markedly different perspectives on God and his involvement in the affairs of his people/the world reflected in these two psalms. For example, in Psalm 79 God's saving absence "hugely" challenges Yahweh's profile as a God of justice. In sharp contrast, Yahweh's speech and actions in Psalm 82 powerfully reflect his profile as *the* Just Judge of all the earth. Similarly, in Psalm 79 the nations taunt that Yahweh has been defeated along with his people. This reality, they think, is evidenced especially by the destruction of both Jerusalem and the Temple. Psalm 82, on the other hand, paints precisely the opposite picture of Yahweh. Yahweh is anything but defeated; he is (1) the Most High

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God who possesses all the nations; (2) the One who has sovereign authority over their

Table 6. Significant links between Psalms 79 and 82

Parallel	Psalm 79	Psalm 82
Theme of the justice of God	Yahweh's profile as a God of justice is "hugely" called into question	Yahweh's profile as *the* Just Judge of all the earth firmly established
Motif of "defeat of the gods/ God"	The nations taunt Yahweh as having been defeated by their god(s) (cf. vv. 4, 10)	Yahweh depicted as the Most High God who sentences the gods of the nations to death (cf. vv. 2–4; 7–8)
The root דלל ("to be low")	"Let your compassion meet us quickly, for we are brought very *low*" (v. 9) (community to Yahweh)	"Give justice to the *lowly/ weak*" (v. 3); "Rescue the *lowly/weak*" (v. 4) (Yahweh to the אלהים)
נצל ("to deliver")	"*Deliver* us, and atone for our sins for the sake of your name" (v. 9) (community to Yahweh)	"*Deliver* (the weak and needy) from the hand of the wicked" (v. 4) (Yahweh to the אלהים)
"How Long? (עד / עד מה/ מתי)	"*How long*, O Lord? Will you be angry forever? (v. 5) (community to Yahweh)	"*How long* will you judge unjustly? (v. 2) (Yahweh to the אלהים)
גוים ("nations")	"*Nations* have come into your inheritance" (v. 1); "Pour out your wrath upon the *nations*" (v. 6); "Why should the *nations* say, 'Where is their God?'" Let the vengeance of the blood of your servants which is poured out be known among the *nations*!" (v. 10)	"Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you possess all of the *nations*!" (v. 8)
The root מות ("to die")	"Preserve the sons of *death*!" (v. 11) (community to Yahweh)	"Therefore, you (i.e., the אלהים) shall *die* like men" (Yahweh to the אלהים)
נחל ("to inherit/possess")	"O God, nations have come into your *inheritance*" (v. 1)	"Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you *possess* all of the nations!" (v. 8)

gods; and (3) *the* Just Judge who sentences the אלהים to death for failing to carry out

justice.

The lexical links in table 6 also highlight these contrasting Divine profiles. In Psalm 79 the root דלל, the verb נצל, the "question" "How Long?," and the root מות all occur on the lips of the community. They appear in petitions/questions that reflect a Divine profile that sharply contrasts that of their praise traditions: a God of questionable justice/ a God apparently defeated by the gods of the nations. In Psalm 82, however, these same lexical items occur on *Yahweh's* lips. And they are found in commands and rhetorical questions that reflect the "traditional" profile of Yahweh as *the* Just Judge of all the earth, and the Most High God who is sovereign over all the gods of the nations. The final two links, גוים and נחל, draw attention to this same contrast. The only difference is that in Psalm 82 these lexica do not appear on Yahweh's lips. In Psalm 79 both גוים and the root נחל are on the community's lips in complaints/ petitions reflecting the skewed Divine profile. But in Psalm 82 both appear in the concluding petition of the psalm (v. 8). To recall Batto's observations, this petition reflects the psalmist's firm conviction amid duress that "Yahweh's reign is supreme and he can be counted on to 'awaken' and maintain that right order which he decrees as creator and sovereign of all."

The above links signal the reader that Psalm 82 provides an answer to the crisis of faith facing the community in Psalm 79. The links function in the same way as the other psalm groupings analyzed so far. Psalm 82 is a new interpretive horizon for Psalm 79 in the collection's present form. It resolves the conflict between faith and experience at the heart of Psalm 79: God *is* a God of justice—*the* God of justice; he has decidedly *not* been defeated by the gods of the nations (Ps 82:1–8). He can be counted on to "arise" (v. 8) and bring order to the chaos in Jerusalem in due time—despite what appears to be considerable evidence to the contrary (see Ps 79:1–5, 10). Zenger has summarized this point well: "the destruction of the Temple literally made the God of Israel placeless, so that in Psalm 79:10 the nations could say: 'Where now is your God?' . . . Our psalm [Ps 82] attempts a radical answer: the God who is apparently the loser is in fact the one true

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God."[33] Faith sticks to God's self-revelation in the midst of conflicting evidence.

The Unit of Psalms 79–82

The combined conclusions of chapters 8 and 9 establish the following structure for Psalms 79–82:

A. Psalm 79
    B. Psalm 80
    B'. Psalm 81
A'. Psalm 82

The chiastic arrangement of these psalms is an argument for their literary unity.[34] The following observations are additional support for this conclusion. First, the superscriptions/titles of these psalms exhibit a symmetry similar to that of Psalms 74–78 observed in chapter 7. Those at the extremities (Pss 79 and 82) are identical (מזמור לאסף ["a song of Asaph"]) (see Ps 79:1; 82:1), while those intervening begin with למנצח ("to the choir director/master"?) (see 80:1; 81:1).[35] The symmetry is evidence for the literary unity of Psalms 79–82, given that (1) there are other grounds for considering Psalms 79–82 to be a unit; (2) others have observed structuring function of superscriptions;[36] and that (3) a similar symmetry exists in the titles of the preceding unit (Pss 74–78). As a paratextual element, the superscription מזמור לאסף heading Psalms 79 and 82 would then

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[33]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 336.

[34]See the methodological discussion in chap. 1. For the structuring function of chiasmus see Wilfred G.E. Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse*, JSOTSup 170 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 369–70. Particularly significant for present purposes is Watson's observation that "*Editors* have also used chiastic patterning when compiling books (and portions of books) of the OT" (emphasis mine). Ibid., 368. As an example he cites the study of Walker and Lund, who argued that the entire book of Habakkuk has been so arranged. See A. Walker and N. Lund, "The Literary Structure of the Book of Habakkuk," *JBL* 53 (1934): 355–70. These and similar studies lend support (or are at least consistent with) the present claim that the *Psalter's* editor(s) have employed similar literary techniques to structure groups of psalms.

[35]The reader will recall the similar phenomenon observed with respect to Pss 74–78: the psalms at the extremities (Pss 74 and 78) share an identical title (משכיל לאסף) (see Ps 74:1; 78:1), while the intervening Pss 75–77 all began with the prepositional phrase למנצח (see 75:1; 76:1; 77:1).

[36]I refer the reader to the methodological discussion in chap. 1 for this point.

be the most prominent feature signaling the boundaries of this unit.

A second consideration works in tandem with the superscriptions of these psalms. An inclusio is formed by the the first verse of Psalm 79 and the last verse of Psalm 82:

"O God, *nations* (גוים) have come into your *inheritance* (נחלה) . . ."

(Ps 79:1)

"Arise, O God, judge the earth; For you *possess* (נחל) all the *nations* (גוים)!"

(Ps 82:8)

As seen above, the noun גוים and the root נחל only occur one other time in the same verse in this collection (78:55). This point is significant given the *location* of the remaining two verses in which this uncommon lexical combination appears (i.e., Ps 79:1; 82:8): they bracket four psalms that constitute a literary unity on other grounds, Psalms 79–82. Consequently, the noun גוים and root נחל in 79:1 and 82:8 form an inclusio that works in tandem with the superscriptions of Psalms 79 and 82 to mark the boundaries of this unit. The significant *semantic* relationship observed earlier between these verses supports this conclusion: the profile of Yahweh depicted in 82:8 resolves the crisis of faith articulated by the community in 79:1.

Four additional observations indirectly support the unity of Psalms 79–82. First, as alluded to above, it is widely recognized that inverted parallel arrangements serve a structuring function in ancient Hebrew Literature. They signal the unity of the text(s) so arranged. Consequently, the A, B, B', A' pattern of Psalms 79–82 is an argument for the unity of these four psalms. Second, those studying such patterns at length have observed that they are very frequently bracketed by an inclusio.[37] It was just shown that an inclusio formed by 79:1 and 82:8 brackets the unit of Psalms 79–82. Third,

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[37]For example, after examining these structures in detail for over three-hundred pages, John Breck concludes that this is one of four "laws" governing chiastic and concentric patterns. John Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language:Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's seminary press, 1994), 335–36. See also the discussion in Watson, *Traditional Techniques*, 376–80.

we have seen throughout the course of this study the prominence of the inverse parallel arrangement in this collection. It has been used to structure a number of the individual psalms that make up the collection (see the exegesis of Pss 73, 74, 77, 80, and 82). It is therefore unsurprising to find the same pattern operating at the inter-psalm level. Fourth and finally, other groups of psalms appear to have been arranged in such patterns.[38]

Psalms 79–82 as a Unit:
Significance

The significance of this unit arises from Heike's observation that Psalm 80 is to be read with Psalm 79 as a "reaction to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Exile" in the collection's final form.[39] Pointing in this direction is the editorial placement of Psalm 80 adjacent to Psalm 79, and the nature of the links it shares with that lament. A number of scholars have pointed out that Psalm 80 reads like a "continuation" of Psalm 79's lament.[40] Psalm 79 concludes with the community's self designation as "the flock (צאן) of your pasture (מרעית)" (v. 13). Psalm 80 opens by imploring the "Shepherd (רעה)" of Israel who leads Joseph "like a flock (צאן)" (v. 2). Further, like the adjacent Psalm 79:[41]

1. Psalm 80 is a God-lament centering on the same basic crisis of faith as Psalm 79: a conflict between faith and experience. In both psalms this crisis of faith is reflected in the God-laments "How long?" (עד מתי) (80:5; see 79:5) and "Why?" (למה) (v. 13) (see 79:10).

2. Psalm 80 is also concerned that Yahweh's behavior has resulted in the "mocking/ laughing (לעג)" of Israel's "neighbors (שכן)" (80:7; Ps 79:4).[42]

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[38]Phillip Sumpter, "The Coherence of Psalms 15–24," *Bib* 94 (2013); O. Palmer Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering Their Structure and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015), 93–95.

[39]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 317. Heike, "Psalm 80 and Its Neighbors in the Psalter," 39. Heike suggests that the reference to the three tribes Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh in v. 2 "might point to the last years of the Northern Kingdom" (late eighth century) for the original setting of this psalm. The psalm was then handed down in the tradition (with various redactional changes) and used by the "Asaph collectors" to lament the destruction of Jerusalem and the Exile. See the discussion in Ibid., 39–40.

[40]Heike, "Psalm 80 and Its Neighbors in the Psalter," 39; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 317; Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 89.

[41]What follows is not an exhaustive list of the links between these psalms, just enough to make the point.

[42]These adjacent psalms contain the only three occurrences of the noun שכן ("neighbor") in Pss

3. Psalm 80 also reflects a concern for God's "name (שם)" (80:19; see 79:6, 9 [2x]). These correspondences are sufficient to establish that, in its canonical context, Psalm 80 is to be read against the same sixth century setting as the adjacent Psalm 79.

Psalms 79–82: crisis over Jerusalem's destruction. These observations indicate that Psalms 79–82 should be read as reflecting and answering/resolving a *singular* theological crisis, but from two different perspectives: a conflict of faith and experience precipitated by the destruction of Jerusalem (Ps 79:1). This was virtually the same conclusion arrived at in the case of the first major structural unit, Psalms 74–78. Except the focus of the second unit is broader: not the temple only (Ps 74:1–12) but Jerusalem as a whole (Ps 79:1).[43] In the collection's final form, Psalm 79 *and* 80 reflect different viewpoints on this singular crisis. The perspective of Psalm 79 is that this crisis severely undermined God's justice and implied his defeat by the gods of the nations. The grouping it heads (Pss 79/82) resolves this crisis by directing the reader to God's self-revelation as *the* Just Judge of the earth, and the Most High God over all the so-called gods of the nations.

The perspective of the linked Psalm 80 is different. Pairing this lament with Ps 79 in the collection's final form communicates that God's absence in Jerusalem's destruction also undermined Israel's deep-seated belief in Yahweh as a *good* Shepherd who hears the prayers of his people (80:6–8). The same is true for the community's perception that Yahweh had reversed salvation history (80:9–13). Psalm 81 resolves this crisis of faith by directing the reader particularly to God's self-revelation in 81:14–17. God's own words assure the community of his willingness to hear (i.e., God *is* a good

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73–83 (see Ps 79:4, 12; 80:7). This noun only occurs three other times in the Psalter (Ps 31:12; 44:14; 89:42). Words built from the root לעג ("to mock/laugh/deride") occur nowhere else in Pss 73–83, and only six other times in the Psalter (Ps 2:4; 22:8; 35:16; 44:14; 59:9; 123:4).

[43]Broyles is correct that in Ps 74 the temple is a synecdoche for nation as a whole. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 150. But there is a clear focus on the temple in that psalm that is not characteristic of Ps 79.

Shepherd) and duplicate his past saving acts (i.e., the people's situation is *not irreversible*)—for an obedient people. There may also be an intended focus specifically on the Northern Kingdom in Psalm 80 (see vv. 2–3).[44] If so, Psalm 79 would reflect the crisis from the perspective of the Southern Kingdom, and Psalm 80 the Northern.

Links between Psalm 78 and 79

Recognition of the unity of Psalms 79–82 enables a right interpretation of the links between Psalm 78 and 79 discussed in chapters 6 and 7. The unity of Psalms 79–82 confirms the claim made in those chapters that these links bind groups of psalms (i.e., Pss 74–78 and 79–82), not psalms within a group (i.e., Pss 77–79). Consequently, the significance of these links should be sought at the level of the groupings that they bind together.

As scholars have pointed out (e.g., Cole; McCann), the "tail-head linkage" shown in chapter 7 between the closing verses of Psalm 78 (vv. 68–72) and the opening verses of Psalm 79 (vv. 1–2) highlights a clear semantic relationship between these psalms. The situation in Psalm 79 (i.e., the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple) is a complete reversal of God's prior action in history (i.e., God's choice of David and Zion; God's building the Temple). Other significant links between these psalms highlight this same point. To cite only one, God's apparent unwillingness to "atone (כפר)" for his people's sin, evidenced by his withholding deliverance, (79:9) appears to contradict his nature as God who "atones (כפר)" for sin (78:38).[45] The number, location, and nature of the links between these psalms suggest rather clearly that Psalm 79 has been deliberately sequenced after Psalm 78.[46]

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[44]Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 317.

[45]The root כפר occurs nowhere else in Pss 73–83. The root רחם and verb 78:38 and 79:8 highlights the same point. It only appears elsewhere in this collection at 77:10. See also זכר ("to remember") in 79:8 and 78:39.

[46]For a fuller list of the links between Ps 78 and 79 than is provided here, see Hossfeld and

The problem with previous studies, however, is their claim that this reversal or apparent contradiction is the message that the editor(s) intended to communicate. To recall McCann's claim from chapter 2, the "tail-head linkage" mentioned above "signals" the rejection of the David/Zion theology as a basis for hope. The above analysis shows this claim to be mistaken. The apparent failure of this theology is the *starting point* of the grouping that Psalm 79 heads (i.e., Pss 79/82 and 79–82), not *the theological message that the grouping communicates*. The additional context that Psalm 78 provides for Psalm 79, highlighted by the links between these psalms, further underscores the crisis of faith lamented in Psalm 79 itself. But, as shown above, the grouping that Psalm 79 heads is shaped to *resolve* this crisis. Psalm 82 provides a hopeful response to the crisis of faith lamented in Psalm 79; the Just One will arise and and show himself to be the God of gods in due time. Thus, McCann's view, and those similar to it, is based upon a failure to recognize the unity of Psalms 79–82 and its implications for the links between Psalms 78 and 79.

The Literary Relationship between 73 and Psalms 79–82

Chapter 7 argued that Psalm 73 is a programatic introduction for Psalms 74–78. A number of lines of evidence indicate that it also introduces Psalms 79–82.

Direct Correspondence

The first is direct correspondence between Psalm 73 and the constituent psalm groupings of Psalms 79–82. Relative to Psalms 74–78, these correspondences are not *as* strong. Nevertheless, they are strong enough to indicate a deliberate literary relationship. I will briefly list this evidence in list fashion since they are essentially the same correspondences noted in the case of Psalms 74–78. The reader should consult chapter 7 for a fuller discussion. Five correspondences are noteworthy:

Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 293–94; Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 77–87.

1. Both the constituent psalm groupings (i.e., Pss 80/81; 79/82) and Psalm 73 follow a progression of (1) conflict (i.e., Pss 79/80; 73:1–16) and (2) resolution (Ps 81/82; see 73:18–28).

2. The network of parallels between the two "parts" of the constituent groupings (79/ 82; 80; 81) and two halves of Psalm 73 (see vv. 4–12; 18–28) are analogous: they are contrastive in nature, and function to highlight/signal resolution to the faith crisis.[47]

3. Resolution to the faith crisis is non-theodical or non-deuteronomistic in both constituent groupings and Psalm 73, contra most canonical scholarship on Psalms 80–81. In both cases resolution consists in directing the reader to continued trust in the very beliefs about God that lived experience challenges.

4. The Divine oracle that effects resolution in Psalms 80–81 (81:7–17) is related to communal worship (see 81:1–6); resolution in Psalm 73 comes about at the place of worship *par excellence*, the temple sanctuary (v. 17).[48]

5. Psalm 73 and the grouping of Psalms 80–81 share a similar concern for the necessity of obedience or to Yahweh (Ps 73:7, 27; 81:10).

Indirect Correspondence

Indirect correspondence is a second line of evidence indicating the introductory role of Psalm 73, that is, the parallel relationship between Psalms 79–82 and the first major structural unit, Psalms 74–78.

Psalms 74–76 and Psalms 79/82. There is first the correspondence between the initial groupings of each unit. There are close similarities between Psalms 74 and 79, in the areas of setting, language, and imagery. In fact, these similarities even led Beat Weber to conclude that Psalm 74 served as a model for the composition of Psalm 79.[49]

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[47]The reader should compare tables 1, 8, and 9 in this study. Admittedly, the correspondence is not *as* strong as in the case of Pss 74–76 and Ps 73.

[48]Jacobson, whose concern is not a canonical analysis of these psalms, has also observed a thematic correspondence between Ps 73:17 and both Ps 75 and 81. He comments that "The fact that God's answer [in Pss 75, 81, and 95] occurs during worship in response to the people's praise reminds one of the epiphany that the writer of Psalm 73 experienced. That person, it will be recalled, considered 'talking on' in the 'way' of the enemies, 'until I went into the sanctuary of God' (vv. 15, 17)." Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 111. I would only modify Jacobson's comments slightly. It is not clear to me that God's answer is a *response* to the people's praise in these psalms, though it certainly occurs in connection with it.

[49]Beat Weber, "Zur Datierung der Asaph-Psalmen 74 und 79," *Bib* 81 (2000): 521–32.

Consider the following selected correspondences between the two psalms:

1. Both psalms are God-laments, laments centering on a conflict of faith and experience. In each case this crisis of faith is precipitated by God's absence in the destruction of Jerusalem/ the Temple.

2. Both interpret this catastrophe in relation to God's anger (see אף in 74:1 and its denominative verb אנף in 79:5). Second, reference is made to Israel as God's inheritance (נחלה) at the beginning of both (74:2; 79:1).

3. These psalms contain the identical designation צאן מרעיתך ("flock of your pasture") for Israel (74:1; 79:13). This construct chain occurs only once elsewhere in the Psalter (Ps 100:3) (though צאן and מרעית are both used of Israel in Ps 95:7).

4. Both contain interrogative "Why? (למה)" (Ps 74:1; 79:10) and "How long? (עד מתי or עד מה)" God-laments (74:10; 79:5). Connected to the latter in both cases is the adverbial expression לנצח ("forever") (74:10 [see vv. 1, 3, and 19]; 79:5).[50]

5. Both reflect a concern that the catastrophe lamented is having a negative impact on God's "name (שם)" (see Ps 74: 7, 10, 18, 21; 79:6, 9 [2x]).

6. Words built from the root חרף ("to reproach") play an important role in both psalms (see the verb חרף ["to reproach] in Ps 74:10, 18, 22; 79:12 and related noun חרפה ["reproach] in 74:22; 79:4, 12.[51]

 For a more comprehensive discussion of the similarities between these psalms, I refer the reader elsewhere.[52] The above connections sufficiently establish the parallel relationship between Psalms 74 and 79.

There is also significant correspondence between the second "halves" of these groupings (i.e., Pss 75–76 and 82). The image of God as the Just Judge/King of all the earth is prominent in both (75: 3–4, 5–11; 76:9–10; 82:1–8). In both "halves" this theme is reflected in the root שפט ("to judge") (see 75:3; 8; 76:10; 82:1, 2, 3, and 8). A word built from this root only occurs once elsewhere in the collection (see the noun משפט ["judgement/ ordinance"] in 81:5). Similar ideas/motifs occur in connection with this

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[50]Outside of Pss 74 and 79, this phrase only occurs elsewhere at 77:9.

[51]Words built from this root only occur once elsewhere in Pss 73–83 (78:66).

[52]See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 305; Weber, "Zur Datierung der Asaph-Psalmen 74 und 79."

theme in both cases: (1) references to "the wicked (רשעים)" (see 75:5, 9, 11; 82:2, 4)[53]; (2) the motif of cosmic instability/stability ("When the earth totters, I make straight its pillars" [75:3]; "all of the foundations of the earth are shaken" [82:5; see also v. 8]); and (3) the distinctive image of God "arising (קום)" to judge (שפט)/ for judgement (משפט) (Ps 76:10; 82:8).[54]

Psalms 77–78 and Psalms 80–81. The most noteworthy parallels are as follows: (1) the initial God-lament of each grouping opens with an occurrence of the verb אזן ("to hear") in the *hiphil* stem. God is the addressee in both cases (see האזין in 77:2 and האזינה in 80:2)[55]; and (2) the psalm linked to the God-lament urges *God's people* to "Hear!" (see האזינה עמי ["Hear, O my people,"] [78:1]; שמע עמי ["Hear, O my people,"] [81:9; see also vv. 12, 14].[56] In both cases this lexical connection signals/reflects a similar "call and response" type relationship between the joined psalms.[57]

The following correspondences are also noteworthy. First, both Psalm 77 and 80 contain the similar image of God "leading" his people "like a flock": "You led you people like a flock (נחית כצאן עמך)" (77:21); " . . . you who lead Joseph like a flock" (נהג כצאן) (80:1).[58] Second, the only four occurrences of the noun עדות ("testimony") occur in Psalms 78 and 81 (78:5, 56; 80:1, 6). Third, both Psalm 78 and 81 share a similar salvation history motif that makes reference to the Exodus and the wilderness events

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[53]References to "the wicked" only occur in one other psalm (Ps 73: 3, 12).

[54]In this connection, compare also the petitions of Ps 74:22 and 82:8: "Arise, O God, dispute your case (קומה אלהים ריבה ריבך) . . ." (74:22); "Arise, O God, judge the earth (קומה אלהים שפטה הארץ)" (82:8). Though not in the second "halve" of each grouping, the presence of this strikingly similar petition in both groupings supports the general point being made here: that there is a significant correspondence between Pss 74–76 and 79/82.

[55]The verb אזן, in any stem, occurs nowhere else in Pss 73–83.

[56]No other psalms in Pss 73–83 contain similar commands for God's "people" to "hear."

[57]The reader should consult chapters 6 and 8 of this study for evidence of this claim.

[58]The phrase "like a flock [lit. *the* flock] (כצאן)" only occurs once elsewhere in Pss 73–83 (78:52).

(78:13–16; 81:7–8, 11).

Fourth, and related, the lengthy recital of Psalm 78 and the extended Divine oracle of Psalm 81 reflect an analogous pattern of God's dealings with his people: God performs great deeds for his people (78:12–16; 44–55; 81:7–8, 11); the people respond not with faith and obedience, but rebellion (78:17–20; 56–58; 81:12); God consequently punishes his people (Ps 78: 21–31; 59–64; 81:13); God's response is ultimately compassionate and hopeful (78: 38–39; 65–72; 81:14–17).

Implications

The implications of the correspondence between Psalm 73 and Psalms 79–82 are virtually the same as those between Psalm 73 and the unit of Psalms 74–82 discussed in chapter 7. This is due to the parallel relationship between of Psalms 74–78 and 79–82 demonstrated above. Thus, to avoid unnecessary repetition, the implications of the correspondence between Psalm 73 and Psalms 79–82 are left to the study's conclusion. They will be addressed in connection with the structure and message of the collection as a whole.

<div align="center">

Psalm 83 as Conclusion to Psalms 73–83

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The above discussion raises the question of the role of Psalm 83 within Psalms 73–83.[59] The evidence cited in this chapter for the unity of Psalms 79–82 suggests that Psalm 83 stands outside of this unit at the end of the collection. As the final psalm, Psalm 83 appears to function as a conclusion to the entire collection. This is indicated both by the nature of the psalm itself, and by correspondences it shares with many of the preceding psalms. It is something of a paradigmatic lament that incorporates a number of

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[59]Psalm 83 divides neatly into two parts: vv. 1–9 are primarily a lament over an attack threatened (not actually undertaken) by a stereotypical list of Israel's enemies. Verses 10–19 are dominated by petition for Yahweh to judge these enemies. These enemies are making war with *Yahweh himself* (see vv. 3, 6) and threatening the very existence of Yahweh's people (v. 5).

significant theological perspectives from the collection.[60]

First, the perspective of Psalm 83 is communal. This is the dominant perspective in both major blocks of psalms.[61] Second, the opening verses of Psalm 83 reflect the important perspective found in both blocks that the nation's are *God's* enemies, not just Israel's.[62] A third, related, perspective is that the threat of God's enemies has negative implications for God's "name" (שם), while God's intervention will have positive implications for it (see שם in Pss 74;7, 10, 18, 21; 75:2; 76:2; 79:6, 9; 80:19; 83:5; 83:17, 19). Fourth, the nations threaten to annihilate or make extinct the people of God: "They say, 'Come, let us annihilate them from being a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no more' " (83:5). This perspective is reflected most prominently in Psalm 79, especially in the opening lament of the carnage wrought by the enemy in Jerusalem (see vv. 1–4, 7). Fifth, Psalm 83 shares with the collection (particularly the first major unit) the perspective that God should act on behalf of his people in the present/future in accordance with his past works of salvation/judgement (see 83:10–13; Ps 74:12–17; 77:12–21[63]). Sixth, the psalm's closing verses reflect the concern found especially in the grouping of Psalms 79/82 that the nations would recognize that Yahweh is the Most High (עליון) over all the earth (see Ps 83:19; 82:6, 8). Seventh, the opening urgent three-fold petition ("Do not keep silence; do not be silent; do not be still") (83:2) reflects the overall perspective of the collection that the community is in urgent need of God to act and intervene on their behalf (see Pss 73, 74, 77, 79, 80, 82).

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[60]For a similar assessment, see Zenger *Psalms 2*, 345.

[61]The reader will recall that while Pss 73 and 77 had an individual focus, the community was also in view (see "Israel" in 73:1; the focus on national deliverance in 77:12–21).

[62]See "*your* adversaries" (74:4; 23); "those who rise up against *you*" (74:23); "nations have come into *your* inheritance. They have defiled *your* holy temple" (79:1); the reproach with which they reproach *you* (79:12); "*your* enemies," "those who hate you" (83:3); "against *you* they make a covenant" (83:6).
[63]For the petitionary nature of these verses within Ps 77, see Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 156.

One final perspective that Psalm 83 shares with the preceding collection could be its most significant. If the conclusions reached in chapter 3 regarding negative petitions are sound (i.e., that those in 83:2 do *not* reflect a conflict of faith and experience),[64] then the concluding Psalm 83 would be the only lament in the collection that does *not* center on a disorienting conflict of faith and experience. That is to say, while the circumstances lamented are formidable, the community of Psalm 83 expresses confident trust amid them that Yahweh will act in accordance with his past behavior (vv. 10–19)—*not* that he has or will enigmatically contradict such behavior. Psalm 83 could then be read as a paradigmatic lament reflecting the resolution that each of the psalm groupings is driving towards: trust in God's self-revelation amid circumstances that remain unchanged. In this case the collection would end precisely where it began (see Ps 73:18–28).[65]

Conclusion

The main point argued in this chapter was the literary unit of Psalms 79–82. Like the collection's first major unit (Pss 74–78), the literary unity of the second is reflected in terms of its structure, singular theological crisis, and coherent message. Further, we showed that Psalm 83 is a fitting conclusion to the entire collection.

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[64]Supporting this interpretation of the petitions in the present case is not only their non-indicative nature. It is also the fact that the attack lamented has not taken place yet. They are simply urgent pleas for deliverance analogous to the negative petition that the Gibeonites address to Joshua in Josh 10:6. See the discussion of negative petitions in chap. 3.

[65]It is worth pointing out in this connection that two of the three occurrences of the verb אבד ("to perish") come towards the end of Pss 73 and 83 (see 73:27; 83:18). The only other instance of the verb appears in 80:17.

CHAPTER 10

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The present study has evaluated Psalms 73–83 from the standpoint of editorial criticism or the "canonical approach." This chapter summarizes the argument advanced and draws various conclusions from it.

The working thesis proposed in chapter 1 was that Psalms 73–83 give a sustained and coherent answer to a singular theological crisis, a disorienting conflict between Israel's faith and experience. The precipitating circumstance of this crisis was God's absence in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in the sixth century B.C.E. The collection's answer to this faith crisis is that "Faith sticks to God's self-revelation in the midst of conflicting evidence."[1] After a brief discussion of the study's scope, chapter 1 focused on method in editorial criticism. I first considered common misuses of the method. I then set forth various principles to guide the analysis of Psalms 73–83 in chapters 4 through 9.

Chapter 2 situated the present work within the context of relevant past scholarship. Three conclusions emerged that revealed the need for a fresh appraisal of Psalms 73–83: (1) a lack of consensus on the collection's structure; (2) a lack of consensus on the message(s) the collection communicates; and (3) methodological weaknesses of past studies.

Chapter 3 laid important ground work for the combined argument of chapters 4

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[1]Ingvar Fløysvik, *When God Becomes My Enemy: The Theology of the Complaint Psalms* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 1997), 176.

through 9. The chapter showed that (1) contrary to claims frequently made about the genre, laments in which a conflict between faith and experience figures prominently are relatively rare in the Hebrew Psalter; and that (2) these laments are particularly prominent in one of its collections, Psalms 73–83.

Chapters 4 through 9 were the heart of the study. Chapter 4 focused on Psalm 73. My analysis had three objectives, namely, to show that (1) a faith crisis analogous to the one at the heart of God-lament psalms also characterizes Psalm 73; (2) the opening Psalm 73 has a basic two-part progression: conflict of faith and experience (vv. 1–16); resolution of this crisis (vv. 18–28); and that (3) the psalm's basic message is "faith sticks to God's self-revelation amid conflicting evidence." Chapter 5 sough to establish two points. First, Psalms 74–76 are deliberately grouped. Second, Psalms 75–76 resolve the conflict of faith and experience precipitated by the temple's destruction in Psalm 74. Chapter 6 made the twofold case that Psalms 77 and 78 are deliberately grouped, and that the *raison d'être* of Psalm 78 in the collection's present configuration is to resolve the crisis of faith voiced in Psalm 77:8–11.

Chapter 7 synthesized and developed the conclusions of chapters 4 through 6. The main point argued was that Psalms 73–78 are a literary unity. This unity is reflected in terms of the unit's structure, singular theological crisis, and coherent message. I also made a case for the exclusion of Psalm 79 from this unit. Chapter 8 aimed to demonstrate (1) that Psalms 80 and 81 are deliberately grouped together but (2) the attempts of previous studies to read Psalm 81 as a deuteronomistic response to Psalm 80 are mistaken. The evident links between the two psalms resolve the crisis of faith in Psalm 80 by indicating that God *is* willing to hear the community's prayers and restore them. The final chapter argued for the literary unity of Psalms 79–82. Like the collection's first major unit (Pss 74–78), I showed that the literary unity of the second is reflected in terms of its structure, singular theological crisis, and coherent message. Chapter 10 concluded by showing that Psalm 83 forms a conclusion to the entire collection.

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Conclusions

At least the following conclusions can be drawn from the preceding evaluation of Psalms 73–83. This study of Psalms 73–83 has validated the proposed thesis. Different manifestations of a conflict between faith and experience are reflected in the God-laments Psalms 74, Psalm 77, Psalm 79, and Psalm 80. The precipitating circumstance of this crisis is reflected in Psalms 74 and 79: God's absence in the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C.E. The editorial juxtaposition of Psalms 75–76, 78, 81, and 82 with the above God-laments respectively communicates the collection's sustained and coherent answer to this crisis: faith sticks to God's self-revelation amid conflicting evidence.

Psalm 73 is a programmatic introduction for the entire collection in its final form. It anticipates (1) the singular crisis of faith encountered in the collection (see Pss 74; 77; 79; 80; 73:1–16); (2) the two-part progression of each constituent psalm grouping: conflict (Pss 74; 77; 79; 80; 73:1–16) / resolution (Pss 75–76; 78; 82; 81; Ps 73:18–28); and (3) the collection's message. Psalm 73 is also a hermeneutical lens through which to view the crisis of faith and its resolution. It signals the reader at the outset to interpret the crisis of faith encountered in the collection as fundamentally a threat to God's *goodness* (Ps 73:1). The collection is shaped to lead the reader to cling to various aspects of God's-self revelation amid this faith crisis (Pss 75–76; 78; 81; 82), and consequently to a(n) (re)affirmation of God's goodness—despite evidence to the contrary (Pss 74; 77; 79; 80; 73:1–16).

Table 7 on the following page displays the macro-structure and message of the collection arising from the present study. The conclusions reflected in table 7 further confirm the growing consensus that Psalms 73–83 are a response to the exilic crisis.[2] But they also refine it in important ways. One is that the collection does *not* "move in an ebb

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[2]The reader will recall from the literature survey in chap. 2 that this is becoming something of a consensus view.

and flow" between "waves" of espair and hope, as important studies claim or imply.[3]

Table 7. The structure and message of Psalms 73–83

Programmatic Introduction: Psalm 73 ("God is good to Israel")	
Psalm 73:1–16 (Conflict)	Psalm 73:18–28 (Resolution)
Psalm 74 (Conflict)	Psalms 75–76 (Resolution)
Psalm 77 (Conflict)	Psalm 78 (Resolution)
Programmatic Introduction: Psalm 73 ("God is good to Israel")	
Psalm 73:1–16 (Conflict)	Psalm 73:18–28 (Resolution)
Psalm 79 (Conflict)	Psalm 82 (Resolution)
Psalm 80 (Conflict)	Psalm 81 (Resolution)
Conclusion: Psalm 83	

Table 7 displays that the collection's "psalms of hope" are editorially bound to its

"psalms of despair" to *resolve* the crisis of faith in the latter. The crisis of one grouping

does not "carry over" to the next. The structure is not linear but recursive. Each grouping

deals with the *same* basic theological crisis (i.e., a conflict of faith and experience),

develops it in a particular direction, and then resolves it. The programmatic Psalm 73

signals this important point from the very beginning: the crisis of faith recounted in

verses 1–16 is *resolved* in verses 18–28. An "ebb" and "flow" view of Psalms 73–83,

therefore, fails to recognize that the collection's structure and message is a function of

both literary conjunction *and* disjunction.[4]

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[3]"In Psalm 77 we return apparently to the present pre-judgment time, since the complaints of Psalm 74 are raised again." "Parallel vocabulary to Ps 77 in both 76 and 74 reveal continued discussion of the desired redemption." Robert L. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III (Psalms 73-89)*, JSOTSup 307 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 61, 55. See also the following examples from Brown Jones: "The praises of Psalm 76 are dimmed by the anguished cries of Psalm 77," "The apparent celebration of the last verses in Psalm 78 does not last for long." Brown Jones, "The Psalms of Asaph: Christine Danette Brown Jones, "A Study of the Function of a Psalm Collection" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2009)," 78, 90. See also pp. 48 and 73 of her study. Many more such examples could be cited.

[4]Hence the importance of methodology in editorial criticism. McCann's central thesis that the

A second refinement is that Psalms 73–83 have a more specific setting and singular focus than is generally recognized. They are not shaped to respond to "the exilic crisis" in general, or in a variegated way (i.e., to the exile, dispersion, Jerusalem's fall, etc). They confront the *singular* crisis of a conflict between faith and experience (in different manifestations) precipitated *specifically* by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. This collection bears especial witness to the fact that God's people were forced to (re)assess—and reaffirm (see below)—their most basic beliefs about God's character and attributes in light of his absence in this catastrophe (i.e., the image of God as King, Just Judge, good Shepherd, the foundational credo of Exod 34:6–7).

A third refinement builds upon the second. Psalms 73–83 respond to the exilic crisis in a more sustained and hopeful way than previously discerned. Table 7 reflects a consistent and singular message arising from the collection: God's people should resolutely cling to the truthfulness of God's self-revelation (e.g., the image of God as King, Judge, the credo of Exod 34:6–7) *even* when confronted with substantial evidence to the contrary.[5] Consequently, the faith reflected in this collection—in each psalm grouping—is remarkably *robust*. Contrary to certain studies reviewed in chapter 2, therefore, Israelite faith is decidedly *not* at a low point in Book III.[6] At least in the case of

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collection points the reader *away* from Zion theology as a basis for hope is misguided for the same reason. Table 7 displays that "Zion psalms" form the *basis* of resolution in two psalm groupings (i.e., Ps 76 and 78 [see vv. 65–72]). This same theology is present implicitly in the image of God as King in Pss 75 and 82. McCann's failure to see literary disjunction between the groups leads to the misguided view that such Zion psalms are "two-edged expresses of hope . . . they serve to remind the community of God's past deeds; on the other hand, the juxtaposition of traditional David/Zion theology with laments of the community make the traditional hope ring hollow at best." J. Clinton McCann, "Books I–III and the Editorial Purpose of the Psalter," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 98.

[5]Broyles and Fløysvik have shown that this is a major contribution of the God-laments themselves. The present study has shown that the pairing of "hopeful" psalms with these God-laments (e.g., Pss 75–76; 78) communicates this message even more forcefully. The faith reflected in the psalm groupings as a whole (e.g., Pss 74–76) is even more robust than in the God-laments themselves (e.g., Ps 74).

[6]"Trust in Yahweh . . . appears at its weakest." O. Palmer Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering Their Structure and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015), 143; "Tempered in Asaphite collection is the faith of the righteous." Brown Jones, "The Psalms of Asaph," 189.

Psalms 73–83, Book III bears witness to Israelite faith at its *highest*, for it is a " 'faith despite,' the height of religious commitment rather than its waning."[7]

The final conclusion relates to the contribution of Psalms 73–83 to the Psalter as a whole. Christine Brown Jones concluded in her study of Psalms 73–83 that "Attempts to understand the Psalter as a whole are challenged in the Psalms of Asaph."[8] This conclusion was based on her observation that many of the Psalter's major themes are not present, or are greatly diminished, in Book III (e.g., David's role as king; God's kingship). The present study shows that Psalms 73–83 also, and especially, challenge overarching theses by the features that *are* present in these psalms. Chapter 3 argued at length that psalms featuring a conflict of faith and experience are relatively rare in the Psalter, but are *particularly prominent in Psalms 73–83*. The analysis that followed in chapters 4 through 9 then established that this crisis was the very driving force behind the collection's overall structure and message. Thus, while not unique to this collection, this crisis of faith is certainly *distinctive* to it; nowhere else in the Psalter is it present in such a prominent and concentrated way. This characteristic feature of Psalms 73–83 in particular makes the collection resistant to proposals about the Psalter's "overall concern."

But I would suggest that this resistance is also wherein the collection's greatest *contribution* to the Psalter lies. The distinctive place of this faith crisis in Psalms 73–83 is what preeminently sets the collection apart from the rest of the Psalter. Nowhere else is this crisis that shakes faith's foundations more palpably felt. Nowhere else is it given such a sustained and coherent answer. Nowhere else is Psalmic faith at its highest. Faith clings to God's self-revelation amid conflicting evidence.

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[7]Andrew Davies, "My God. . . 'Why?' Questioning the Action And Inaction of YHWH In The Psalms," in *Why?. . . How Long?*, ed. LeAnn Snow Flesher, Carol J. Dempsey, and Mark J. Boda (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 52. This statement reflects Davies' view of "Why?" questions in the Psalter.

[8]Brown Jones, "The Psalms of Asaph," 188.

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ABSTRACT

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN FAITH AND EXPERIENCE AND
THE EDITING OF PSALMS 73–83

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This study evaluates Psalms 73–83 from an editorial-critical standpoint. Chapter 1 focuses on methodology. Chapter 2 highlights aspects of precedent research that demonstrate this study's need: (1) lack of consensus over the collection's structure; (2) lack of consensus over the message(s) communicated in it; (3) methodological weaknesses of previous studies.

Chapter 3 investigates the crisis of a conflict between faith and experience in the lament psalms. It lays an important foundation for the collective argument of chapters 4 through 9: Psalms 73–83 have been shaped to resolve different manifestations this singular faith crisis.

Chapters 4 through 7 argue the literary unity of Psalms 73–78. Psalms 74–76 and 77–78 are two deliberate psalm groupings that constitute a larger unit, Psalms 74–78. Correspondences between this unit and Psalm 73 indicate that Psalm 73 serves as its programatic introduction. These chapters conclude that Psalms 73–78 are shaped to resolve a conflict of faith and experience precipitated by the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. The message that Psalms 73–78 communicates is that "faith sticks to God's self-revelation amid conflicting evidence."

Chapters 8 and 9 argue the literary unity of Psalms 79–82. This second major unit likewise consists of two smaller groupings (Pss 80–81; 79/82), which are arranged in an A (Ps 79), B (Ps 80), B' (Ps 81), A' (Ps 82) pattern. These chapters conclude that Psalms 79–82 are shaped to resolve the same faith crisis as the first, and to communicate the same basic theological message. Chapter 9 ends by showing that Psalm 83 is a fitting conclusion to Psalms 74–82.

Chapter 10 discusses conclusions and implications. The most important is that Psalms 73–83 give a sustained and coherent answer to a disorienting conflict of faith and experience precipitated by God's absence in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in the sixth century B.C.E: "Faith sticks to God's self-revelation amid conflicting evidence." Consequently, Psalms 73–83 are the *high point* of Psalmic faith, not a low point as is often believed.

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