

READING PSALM 29 WITHIN THE PSALTER

By

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ABSTRACT

“Reading Psalm 29 within the Psalter”

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Psalm 29 is studied first as a discrete poem using poetic analysis (parallelism, imagery, verse patterns) and then as a psalm within the larger context of the Psalter using a canonical approach. Psalm 29 as a discrete poem reveals the mighty power of the LORD as eternal king over His created world. The meaning of Ps 29 is clearly expanded in the context of the whole Psalter. In the context of the introductory (Pss 1-2) and concluding psalms (Pss 146-150) of the Psalter, Ps 29 emphasizes the theme of the kingship of the LORD. In the context of Pss 23-30 and in the wider canonical contexts (Books I-V), however, the emphasis of Ps 29 clearly shifts from the theme of the kingship of the LORD to the theme of the temple of the LORD. Reading Ps 29 in the context of the Psalter, reveals not only the kingship of the LORD over the cosmic forces, but also the importance of the temple of the LORD where the LORD dwells.

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
BDB	<i>The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic</i>
BHS	<i>Biblical Hebrew Stuttgartensia</i>
FOTL	<i>Forms of Old Testament Literature</i>
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar.</i>
HB	Hebrew Bible
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	JSOT Supplement series
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuaginta
MT	Masoretic Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCB	New Century Bible
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis</i>
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.</i>
TgOnq	Targum Onqelos
TNK	Tanakh Version
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

Chapter 1: General Introduction

Psalm 29 is generally recognized as a hymn praising the mighty power of the LORD over His created world. Psalm 29 contains many ideas: the seven voices of the LORD (קול יהוה) as His appearance in a thunderstorm (vv. 3-9); the heavenly court where the heavenly beings gather (vv. 1-2); the temple of the LORD (v. 9c); and the enthronement of the LORD at מְבִיל (v. 10). Why are these ideas combined into one psalm? How do we read and understand this Psalm? What context is to be used to read it? In seeking to answer these questions, this thesis will examine the meaning of Ps 29 in the canonical context of the Psalter.

1.1. Recent Research on the Book of Psalms

In terms of studying the Book of Psalms, the analysis of the present shape of the Psalter is a relatively recent endeavour and still hardly out of its infant stage.¹ From the beginning of higher critical study of the Bible, study of the overall message of the Book of Psalms has largely been ignored with the focus instead on how the content of the Psalms has arisen from various religious traditions in the ancient Near East.²

Throughout the 20th century, there were three general methodological approaches for reading the Book of Psalms. The present chapter will refer to them as three waves of

¹ Gillingham, "Studies of the Psalms," 209-16. Gillingham explains "there are likely to be more publications on the linguistic and theological relationship between adjacent psalms, using not only the Hebrew but also the Versions, which will illuminate further the theological concerns of the editors and compilers."

² Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 12. Creach says "before the rise of historical criticism the Church read the psalms of the Hebrew Psalter together as the words of Christ spoken prophetically by David. The New Testament clearly reflects this perspective (Mk 12:35-37; Acts 1:26; 2:25-28; 4:25-26; Rom 11:9-10; Heb 2:5-9; 4:7; 10:5-7)." Although W. F. Albright calls this comparative study methodology "a new day" in studying the Psalms in the 20th century, S. Mowinckel correctly observes that Albright's methodology belongs to the period before 1900. These studies comparing each Psalm to the corpora of other ancient Near East nations give us some insights into the historical and literary background of Israelite religious poetry, but these results are not very helpful for understanding the Book of Psalms itself (see Albright, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," 1-18; Mowinckel, "Psalm Criticism between 1900 and 1935," 13-33).

methodology. The first wave viewed the Book of Psalms as a collection of disparate psalms so that the Psalms must be separated from each other and considered individually as to their significance. In terms of the understanding of the Psalter, this methodology was a continuation from the 19th century. In contrast, the second wave concentrated on the final form of the Hebrew text of each individual psalm and the third wave was concerned with investigating the significance of the work as a whole.³ These three major approaches to reading the Book of Psalms have greatly influenced the study of the Psalms in the field of biblical scholarship. The first wave in the study of the Psalms was introduced by H. Gunkel at the beginning of the 20th century and carried through by S. Mowinckel.⁴ Their method of form criticism is well known and set out in the standard textbooks of biblical studies. Both major figures focused on individual Psalms and classified the Psalms according to different types: hymns, laments, wisdom, royal psalms and so on, and then suggested possible *Sitze im Leben* for the different groups of psalms. These kinds of works contributed to our understanding of psalm groupings by theme and genre, but the Psalms' traditional moorings in the Psalter and their canonical order in the HB (MT 150) were largely ignored.⁵ Those who used this methodology to read the Book of Psalms viewed the canonical arrangement as an accidental product of an extended collection process.⁶

James Muilenburg, however, opened the way for new approaches for reading the Psalms. In his famous article, "Form Criticism and Beyond," in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1969), he challenged his colleagues in biblical scholarship to move from their fixation on a form critical approach to one focused on the rhetorical shape of the

³ Wilson, *Editing*, 1.

⁴ Wenham, "Towards a Canonical Reading of the Psalms," 333-51.

⁵ Wilson, *Editing*, 2.

⁶ Wilson, *Editing*, 2.

individual psalms.⁷ Muilenburg's work opened the way for the second methodological wave represented by literary critics like Robert Alter and Adele Berlin, who looked at the literary features of the poetry in the Psalms in their final form.⁸ Although analysis of Hebrew poetry predates Old Testament literary criticism,⁹ the general emphasis on literary detail created a good climate for new debates on this vital older issue by important literary figures, such as Alter and Berlin.

Berlin's work on biblical parallelism, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*,¹⁰ refined some traditional notions about Hebrew poetry, such as synonymous, antithetical, and synthetical parallelism, which were suggested by Robert Lowth. Although these three categories of parallelism were almost universally acknowledged, Berlin strongly asserted that they were not comprehensive.¹¹ She showed that parallelism existed not only in thought patterns called semantic parallelism, but also in sound and grammar structure. Berlin named the latter case grammatical parallelism and she divided it into two subcategories: morphological parallelism and syntactical parallelism.¹²

However, because of the way the HB is translated into English, grammatical parallelisms are difficult for the non-Hebrew reader to identify. Despite this difficulty,

⁷ Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 1-18.

⁸ Cf. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*; Berlin, *Biblical Parallelism*.

⁹ Petersen, *Interpreting*, 21-2. In terms of parallelism, most scholars recognize the origin of parallelism from the work of Robert Lowth in the middle of the 18th century. Since Robert Lowth's seminal work on Old Testament poetry in 1753, most biblical scholars who study Hebrew poetry have accepted the idea that Hebrew verse consists of parallel thought sequences in consecutive lines.

¹⁰ Berlin, *Biblical Parallelism*, IX. Berlin explains that this book had taken a number of years to complete. She says, "It was begun with a study of the grammatical aspect of biblical parallelism which was supported by an NEH summer Stipend (1978) and published in the *Hebrew Union College Annual* 50 (1979), 17-43. A later study, which now forms part of chapter 4, was published as 'Parallel Word Pairs: A Linguistic Explanation' in *Ugarit-Forschungen* 15 (1983), 7-16."

¹¹ Kugel, *Biblical Poetry*, 1-58. At this point Berlin is not the only person to extend the ideas of Robert Lowth. James L. Kugel also convincingly suggests that the parallel lines should be understood as "A is so, and what's more, B," which is in contrast to the idea of Lowth, "A is B." Tremper Longman III also follows Kugel's suggestion for understanding the poetry parallelism as "B includes A and develops A" (cf. Longman, *How to Read the Psalms*).

¹² Berlin, "The Grammatical Aspect of Biblical Parallelism," 311-48.

David Petersen correctly pointed out, “one needs to be aware of the tremendous range of options that Hebrew poetry had at its disposal to further parallelism.”¹³ Especially morphological parallelism called attention to the substitution of words in two parallel lines rather than to word order. This parallelism could be articulated through gender, number, tense, conjugation, definiteness, and a number of other elements. In this matter Wilfred Watson showed the variety of parallelisms in his book, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*.¹⁴ In chapter 6 on parallelism, Watson divided parallelism into six categories: gender-matched, word-pairs, number, staircase, noun-verb, and “Janus” parallelism.¹⁵ Like Berlin, Watson’s work also seemed to be a revision of Lowth’s categories designed to understand Hebrew poetry better.

Although parallelism is a key component, literary criticism also involved a fuller analysis, by studying such things as verse patterns, imagery, poetic devices, and sound patterns in Hebrew poetry. In terms of verse patterns Watson suggested three patterns in Hebrew poetry, such as the chiasmic pattern, the terrace pattern (Anadiplosis),¹⁶ and the pivot pattern.¹⁷ The poet sometimes uses figurative languages to evoke images. Besides the imagery of Hebrew poetic style, the poet also employs the simile and the metaphor, which express the same thing but in different ways. Broadly speaking, simile is more obvious than metaphor.¹⁸ At the same time Hebrew poetry also applies various structuring

¹³ Petersen, *Interpreting*, 31.

¹⁴ Cf. Watson, *Classical Hebrew*.

¹⁵ Watson, *Classic Hebrew*, 159. According to Watson, “Janus parallelism hinges on the use of a single word with two entirely different meanings: one meaning paralleling what precedes, and the other meaning, what follows.”

¹⁶ Watson, *Classic Hebrew*, 208. The terrace pattern is simply a form of repetition where the last part of a line is repeated as the beginning of the next line.

¹⁷ Watson, *Classic Hebrew*, 214. The “pivot pattern” is a couplet where the expected final word is not expressed as it is implied by the last word (or words) of the first line.

¹⁸ Petersen, *Interpreting*, 50.

poetic devices,¹⁹ namely repetition, ellipsis, irony, keywords, hendiadys,²⁰ allusion and so on. Besides parallelism, literary criticism involves these poetic devices in Hebrew poetry.

The third wave of the study of the Psalms emerged at the end of the 20th century. One of the important milestones in the third wave was the work of Gerald Wilson. When Wilson published his dissertation *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (1985), things slowly began to change. The focus shifted to the Psalter as a canonical collection with integrity rather than as an anthology of individual psalms.²¹ Wilson's work was preoccupied with a canonical approach to the Book of Psalms. In terms of a canonical approach, it was introduced by Brevard Childs.²² Although Childs recognized the importance of the foundational work of form-critical scholars like Gunkel and Mowinckel, Childs strongly suggested that biblical scholarship should turn away from studying the "original setting" of the psalms and rather emphasize the "canonical setting" of each psalm.²³ He developed his method, "canonical analysis" (also known as "canon criticism") in his work *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (1979). He viewed the biblical texts as fixed entities that should be approached and studied ultimately in their final, literary form. For Childs, scholars did not need to try to discover the historical settings of the texts

¹⁹ Watson, *Classic Hebrew*, 273-343. Watson makes 17 categories under the theme of poetic devices: repetition, envelope figure, keywords, refrain, allusion, ellipsis, irony, oxymoron, abstract for concrete, hyperbole, merismus, hendiadys, the "break-up" of a composite phrase, enjambment, delayed identification, rhetorical question, and ballast variant.

²⁰ Watson, *Classic Hebrew*, 324. Hendiadys is the expression of one single but complex concept by using two separate words, usually nouns. According to Watson, in Jer 3:2 the phrase *בְּגִימָתְךָ וּבְרֵעֵתְךָ* does not mean "your harlotry *and* your evil" as if the wife, symbolizing Judah, had committed crimes on top of being unfaithful. Instead, the expression means "your vile harlotry," her continuing infidelity condemned as evil.

²¹ Wenham, "Towards a Canonical Reading of the Psalms," 333-51. Wenham identifies two major ways for approaching the reading of the Book of Psalms: Form criticism and Canonical criticism. In Canonical criticism he starts with Gerald Wilson's work; Gillingham, "Studies of the Psalms," 209-16. Gillingham says that most commentators agree that Wilson's work has influenced the reading of the Book of Psalms.

²² Although the canonical approach was introduced by Childs, Wilson followed James Sanders rather than Childs.

²³ Childs, "Reflections on the Modern Study of the Psalms," 377-88.

because the editorial process had updated texts in such a way that their historical moorings were completely obscured and could not be known.²⁴

After Childs introduced this canonical methodology, there arose two kinds of research on the Hebrew Psalter: studies on the Psalter as a whole and research on the arrangement of particular sections of the Psalter. The latter approach is represented by W. Zimmerli who worked on some psalms (Pss 104-105; 111-112), and M.D. Goulder²⁵ who studied two large groups of psalms (Pss 42-49; 84-89) which reflect the “sequence of events in the Danite Feast of Tabernacles.”²⁶ The former one is represented by Wilson, J.L. Mays and G.T. Sheppard, who dealt with the Psalter as a whole in its canonical context. This research method is more closely related to the present thesis so will be explored in more detail.

Wilson’s monograph in 1985 provided evidence that ancient collections of hymnic material, including the Hebrew Psalter, had a larger editorial purpose.²⁷ Wilson began with Mesopotamian collections of hymns and the collections of psalms at Qumran and then compared these with the Hebrew Psalter.²⁸ Wilson offered the following conclusions at the end of his book: (1) Pss 1-89 show a clear editorial arrangement, with the royal psalms (Pss 2, 72, 89) at the breaks between collections;²⁹ (2) these royal psalms in Books I-III have been given a special place as a Davidic framework to trace the events of the covenant

²⁴ Childs, *Introduction*, 79.

²⁵ Goulder has continued such studies: The prayers of David (Pss 51-72), the Psalms of Asaph, Pss 107-150, The Psalms of the Sons of Korah, and the song of fourteen songs (cf. Goulder, *The Prayers of David*; Goulder, *The Psalms of Asaph*; Goulder, *The Psalms of the return*; Goulder, *The Song of Fourteen Songs*).

²⁶ Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 14. Creach notes that Zimmerli believes that because these psalms have nearly identical content or structure, they have been placed together.

²⁷ Wilson, *Editing*, 13-61.

²⁸ Wilson, *Editing*, 63-197.

²⁹ Wilson, *Editing*, 207-14.

monarchy, from beginning to exile;³⁰ (3) Pss 90-150 provide a kind of “answer” to the ending of Ps 89 which shows its cry of outrage at God’s abandonment of his promises to the king;³¹ (4) Book IV (Pss 90-106) functions as the “editorial center” of the Hebrew Psalter and these psalms point back to the Mosaic period when Yahweh alone served as Israel’s king.³²

These observations of Wilson about the theological and literary structure of the final form of the Psalter have prompted further reflections in edited works. Most attention in these works is focused on Pss 1-2 which are studied by Sheppard³³ and Mays.³⁴ The works of these two scholars suggest that Pss 1-2 function as a unit introducing the Psalter as a whole,³⁵ and provide important information about “how the Psalter is intended to be read.”³⁶ There are other works which have focused on the Psalter in its final form. J. Clinton McCann’s edited book, *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (1993), showcased debates within the Psalms Group of the Society of Biblical Literature over the literary and theological aspects of psalmody.³⁷ This volume was devoted exclusively to the issue of the arrangement of the Psalms, and contained nine essays on the subject. The first four were by Mays, R.E. Murphy, W. Brueggemann and Wilson, who agreed that contextual interpretation is a valuable discipline for understanding the Psalms.³⁸ The fifth essay was

³⁰ Wilson, *Editing*, 207-8; Gillingham, “Studies of the Psalms,” 209-16. Gillingham says that these royal psalms play an important role for understanding the Psalter because of their reflections on the covenant between God and the Davidic king.

³¹ Wilson, *Editing*, 215.

³² Wilson, *Editing*, 214-28.

³³ Cf. Sheppard, *Wisdom*.

³⁴ Cf. Mays, “The Place of the Torah-Psalms in the Psalter,” 3-12; Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 15-6.

³⁵ Boda, “Declare His Glory Among the Nations,” 1-30.

³⁶ Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 16.

³⁷ Cf. McCann, *The Shape*.

³⁸ The essays are: Mays, “The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation,” 14-20; Murphy, “Reflections on Contextual Interpretation of the Psalms,” 21-8; Brueggemann, “Response to James L. Mays, ‘The Question of Context,’” 29-41; Wilson, “Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter,” 42-51.

an update of D.M. Howard's review of the recent development of interest in editorial activity in the Psalter. Two more essays which were presented by Wilson and McCann dealt with the shaping of the Psalter.³⁹ And the last two, by P.D. Miller and Howard, dealt with inter-psalm links.⁴⁰

Besides these helpful works for understanding the arrangement of the Psalter, David Howard, Nancy DeClaisse-Walford, Robert Cole and Carleen Mandolfo have also based their works upon Wilson's dissertation, but they have completed their works in different ways.⁴¹ Concerning the methodologies of these figures, DeClaisse-Walford provided keen insight into understanding the Book of Psalms as a whole. In terms of understanding the whole Psalter, it appears that the Psalter is shaped by purposeful editing and it may tell a "story" about the ancient Israelites.⁴² If so, what purpose can be discerned in the shape of the Psalter? DeClaisse-Walford answers this question in her *Reading from the Beginning* (1997). There she searched for the "hermeneutical underpinnings-the footprints-of the text's shaping community," i.e. the contemporary cultural community at the time of shaping, and she identified some existential questions of the ancient Israelites, such as "who are we who returned from exile?" and "what are we to do in our present circumstances?"⁴³ In her opinion, these questions help readers of the Psalter to understand the Psalter fully. In answering these questions she convincingly asserted that Books I-III

³⁹ Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter," 72-82; McCann, "Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter," 93-107.

⁴⁰ Miller, "The Beginning of the Psalter," 83-92; Howard, "A Contextual Reading of Psalms 93-100," 108-23.

⁴¹ Gillingham, "Studies of the Psalms," 209-16.

⁴² Wilson, *Editing*, 4; McCann, *The Shape*, 7. Wilson convincingly demonstrates that the Psalter evidences purposeful editing and that it told a "story" to the ancient Israelites-a story about their past history, their present situation, and their hope for the future. J. Clinton McCann also observes that scholars are increasingly aware that "the purposeful placement of psalms within the collection seems to have given the final form of the whole Psalter a function and message greater than the sum of its parts."

⁴³ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 7.

are an answer to the first question, “Who are we?” while Books IV-V answer the second question, “What are we to do?”⁴⁴ DeClaissé-Walford’s questions are helpful for conducting a unified study of the Book of Psalms, because they are basic existential questions for the community which shaped the canonical Psalter into its present form. DeClaissé-Walford also convincingly asserts, “In order to fully understand the Psalter, we must understand something about the life circumstances of the shaping community.”⁴⁵

In summary, recent research on the Book of Psalms highlights a clear shift from form criticism to literary criticism in the middle of 20th century in terms of the studying the Psalter. Literary criticism once again highlighted parallelism, verse patterns (chiastic structure), imagery, poetic devices (repetition, ellipsis, or keywords), and sound patterns in Hebrew poetry and developed our understanding of it. At the end of the 20th century literary criticism highlighted the arrangement of the Psalter. Both of these developments clearly play an important role in the current study of the Book of Psalms.

1.2. Method and Framework

Since H. L. Ginsberg suggested that Ps 29 is related to Ugaritic epics,⁴⁶ the relationship between Ps 29 and Canaanite poetry has been the focus of much study on Ps 29. After Ginsberg, the study of Ps 29 has been dominated by analysis of the relationship between the psalm and ancient Near Eastern poetry, scholars coming to both positive and negative conclusions. By doing this, the comparative study has ignored the understanding of Ps 29 in the context of the Psalter and its canonical order. Therefore, the present study

⁴⁴ DeClaissé-Walford, *Reading*, 82.

⁴⁵ DeClaissé-Walford, *Reading*, vii.

⁴⁶ Ginsberg, “A Strand in the Cord of Hebraic Hymnody,” 45-50. Ginsberg is the first scholar to suggest this issue. He said in his article that Ps 29 was written in the United Monarchy.

will focus on the Psalter as a whole and attempt to find the meaning of Ps 29 in that context. Thus this thesis can be considered a new way to understand Ps 29.

This present thesis will employ two methodologies. Chapter 2 of the current study will be devoted to the understanding of Ps 29 using the methodology which arose in the second phase described above, that of literary criticism. In that chapter the works of Berlin and Watson will be used on two levels: the grammatical level (morphological and syntactical parallelism) and the semantic level. Other elements of poetic interpretation will also be applied in order to discover the meaning of Ps 29. This will include imagery, verse patterns (chiasmus and chiasitic patterns, etc.) and other poetic devices (key word, reframe, allusion, ellipsis, etc.). This discussion will be presented in chapter 2 of this thesis.

Chapter 3 of this thesis will deal with the arrangement of the Psalter.⁴⁷ As the previous section demonstrated, research on the arrangement of the final form of the Psalter is continuing to be developed among many scholars. This current study is indebted to previous research, especially Wilson's works which are summarized above and DeClaisse-Walford's idea that the shape of the Psalter identified Books I-III as answering for the postexilic community the question: "who we are?" while Books IV-V as answer the question: "what we are to do now?." Upon these assumptions chapter 3 of this thesis will be seek to understand the meaning of the arrangement of the Psalter as a whole.

Chapter 3 will use the canonical method introduced by James Sanders. The canonical method was introduced by Childs, but Sanders differed from Childs in terms of

⁴⁷ Traditionally the Psalter, shaped into five Books, is understood as a narration about the history of ancient Israel. Books I-II, as the prayers of David (Ps 72:20), celebrate the United Kingdom of Israel during the reigns of David and Solomon, and Book III shows the dark days of oppression during the divided kingdom of Israel and the Babylonian exile. Books IV-V of the Psalter describe the people of the postexilic community who look forward to, and rejoice in, the restoration of Israel to the promised land and in the reign of the LORD as their eternal king.

the approach to the canonical text of the final form of Hebrew Psalter. Unlike Childs⁴⁸ Sanders recognized that canonical texts are grounded in historical community settings, which can be discovered and are important for understanding the canonical shape of the texts.⁴⁹ He convincingly asserted that community is the foundation of canon and discovering the hermeneutics of the communities is the foundation of the canonical approach. He also emphasized the importance of knowledge of the ancient historical contexts.⁵⁰

In terms of studying the arrangement of the Book of Psalms, Wilson and DeClaisse-Walford, whose approach will be considered in chapter 3 of this thesis, more closely follow Sanders.⁵¹ Chapter 3 of this work will use the canonical method of Wilson and DeClaisse-Walford.

The last chapter of this thesis will examine the meaning of Ps 29 in the broader contexts of the Psalter as a whole. First of all, we will look at the meaning of Ps 29 in the context of the introductory psalms (Pss 1-2), and then we will examine the meaning of Ps 29 in the context of small groups of adjacent Psalms: among Pss 28-30 and then among the collection in Pss 23-30. Third, chapter 4 of this thesis will show the meaning of Ps 29 in the contexts of Book I (Pss 3-41), Books I-III (Pss 3-89), and Books I-V (Pss 3-145). And finally we will consider Ps 29 in the context of the concluding *hallel* Psalms (Pss

⁴⁸ Childs said that canonical analysis focuses on the final form of texts, the HB, but he rejected the use of other sources of information by which scholars sought to reconstruct a history of the religious development of ancient Israel. He maintained the need to investigate any historical influences on the canonical shapers to the extent that they can be determined, but that the main focus of “canonical analysis” should not lie in pursuing the editors’ motivations and biases (see Childs, *Introduction*, 73; Childs, “Response to Review of *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*,” 52-62)

⁴⁹ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 12.

⁵⁰ Sanders, *From Sacred Story*, 82. Both Childs and Sanders use similar canonical methodology to study the Book of Psalms but their roots are different. Sanders seeks to find historical community settings of the final form of the Book of Psalms but Childs strongly rejects that idea.

⁵¹ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, vii-viii; Wilson, *Editing*, 1-6. DeClaisse-Walford finds answers to basic existential questions, such as “Who are we?” and “What are we to do in our present circumstances?” Sanders also finds answers to the same questions in his study (see Sanders, *Torah and Canon*, xv).

146-150). And then in conclusion we will observe the different emphases of the meaning of Ps 29 in its different canonical contexts.

This thesis will focus on the function of Ps 29 in the Psalter as a whole and on how the postexilic community would understand this Psalm in the context of the Psalter as a whole. This connection to the Psalter as a whole, however, will be conducted only after a close study of the meaning of the text of Ps 29 as a discrete poetic unity its own right. This study attempts to examine how the meaning of Ps 29 changes in different contexts, and what the function of Ps 29 is in the final form of the Psalter as a whole. This study will use the parallelism of the Hebrew poetry and other elements of poetic interpretation in chapter 2 and a canonical methodology in chapters 3 and 4 in order to hopefully construct a theologically-sound and fresh approach to Ps 29.

This thesis will argue that Ps 29 should be read in the context of the whole Psalter in order to fully understand its meaning. By comparing the meaning of Ps 29 in different canonical literary contexts, this thesis will provide a good method for reading every psalm in the context of the entire Psalter.

Chapter 2: The Meaning of Psalm 29

2.1. Introduction

Psalm 29 is a general hymn,¹ which describes the powerful appearance of the LORD as “the voice of the LORD” in a thunderstorm in Ps 29:3-9.² This poem is characterized by repetition of words and ideas: the phrase קוֹל יְהוָה (“the voice of the LORD”) appears no less than seven times;³ הִבְדוּ לַיהוָה (“ascribe to the LORD”) is mentioned three times; the covenant name of God יְהוָה occurs 18 times.⁴ These repetitions could be employed for the psalm’s artistry by the poet. At the same time they could also effectively build excitement and intensity for the reader of Ps 29.

The present chapter will focus on Ps 29 to find out the meaning of this Psalm.⁵ First of all, Ps 29 will be divided into four sections in terms of structure: superscription, prelude (vv. 1a-2b), body (vv. 3a-9c), and postlude (vv. 10a-11b). In this section the parallelism and imagery of Hebrew poetry will be used for understanding Ps 29. Secondly, it will draw conclusions as to the meaning of Ps 29 as a distinct poem. The thesis will proceed to compare the meaning of Ps 29 to its meaning in the context of the whole Psalter.

¹ Bellinger, *Psalms*, 81.

² Kraus, *Psalms*, 1:345.

³ Verses 3, 4 (2×), 5, 7, 8, 9.

⁴ Verses 1 (2×), 2 (2×), 3 (2×), 4 (2×), 5 (2×), 7, 8 (2×), 9, 10 (2×), 11 (2×). The divine name appears at least once in every verse except v. 6. At the same time other phrases, such as “thunders” (v. 3), “breaks the cedars” (v. 5), “shakes the desert” (v. 8), and “sit” (v. 10) appear twice.

⁵ Textual limits and the determination of the Hebrew text of the psalm are covered in the appendix.

2.2. The Structure and Meaning of Psalm 29⁶

Psalm 29 consists of 11 strophes and of 23 cola excluding the superscription.

These 11 strophes divide into six stanzas and are classified into three sections: the prelude, the main body, and the postlude.⁷

2.3. Superscription

Besides the other psalms in Book I (Pss 1-41) of the Book of Psalms, Ps 29 also has a short superscription, לְדָוִד מְזֻמָּר.⁸ The term מְזֻמָּר means a “song,” or “psalm,” and in the LXX מְזֻמָּר is translated with ψαλμὸς (“psalm”). There are two words to describe “Psalms” in the Psalter: מְזֻמָּר and שִׁיר. These two terms, however, are not completely distinguished. The former (מְזֻמָּר) is used to denote singing with instrumental accompaniment (cf. Pss 33:2; 71:22; 98:5; 147:7; 149:3),⁹ but the latter (שִׁיר) is used a

⁶ Watson, *Classical Hebrew*, 13. In terms of terminology I follow Watson. According to Watson, a strophe is a verse-unit of one or more cola, but this is only valid when the stanza consists of a single strophe. A sub-section of a poem is a stanza and each stanza consists of one or more strophes.

⁷ Bellinger, *Psalms*, 82-3. Bellinger points out that the hymns of praise have a typical structure: the introduction is a call to praise, the body of the hymn gives the reason(s) for praising the LORD, and the conclusion is a renewed call to praise. Psalm 29 also has a very similar structure but the last section is different. Psalm 29:10-11 deals with a wish or a confession of those who heard the reason(s) for praising the LORD, with which I will deal later.

⁸ In the Book of Psalms there are seven psalms which have this short superscription (Pss 15, 23, 24, 29, 101, 141). According to the BHS apparatus, the LXX adds ἐξοδίου σακηνης (“at leaving the tabernacle”) to the superscription of the MT. The variant reading of the LXX may indicate that Ps 29 was used at the Feast of Tabernacles, which commemorated the journey through the wilderness (Lev 23:36). Peter C. Craigie suggests that “This addition to the title reflects later usage, rather than the psalm’s initial setting” (Craigie, *Psalm 1-50*, 242). According to Emilie Grace Briggs, the phrase ἐξοδίου σακηνης, the עֲצֵרָה, occurs in the Jewish year the day after the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles in a liturgical assignment, but there is nothing of this in the earliest Palestinian tradition (Briggs, *Psalms*, 1:252). Franz Delitzsch says, “Psalm 29 belongs to the Psalm-portions for the intervening days of the feast of tabernacles,” and he believes that this Psalm is for the festival of Pentecost and the tradition of the synagogue (Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:367-8). Like the MT, however, Targum does not have this addition (Stec, *The Targum*, 67). Thus we can say that ἐξοδίου σακηνης was added in later and was not in the initial setting, but we can assume that the LXX understands that Ps 29 is connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, which shows God’s protection for and grace to Israel.

⁹ Kraus, *Psalm 1-59*, 1:22. Kraus uses the root meaning of the *Piel* זָמַר here and he adds that in the OT this term first and foremost has the meaning “to sing,” “to play,” or “to praise.”

secular or of a religious song in a general sense.¹⁰ In the Psalter שִׁיר most often indicates the act of worship or the holy place (Pss 120-134; 137:3), so שִׁיר suggests the meaning a “cultic (temple) song.”¹¹ The word מְזִמּוֹר occurs 57 times by itself and it occurs 37 times with לְדָוִד in the Psalter. Although Gesenius asserts that the preposition לְ is used for describing the author,¹² this preposition has a broad range of meaning: “to,” “for,” “in relation to,” “in behalf of,” and “belonging to.”¹³ At this point the term לְדָוִד in the superscription of Ps 29 offers little basis for a decision about authorship. However, generally the superscription of Ps 29, מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד, is translated as “a psalm of David,” which can mean that Psalm 29 is attributed to David.

2.4. Prelude (stanza 1)

2.4.1. The Structure of Stanza 1

The poet uses staircase parallelism to open Ps 29 in the following way:

Worship the LORD in majesty of holiness.	הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לַיהוָה בְּהַרְרַת־קִדְשׁ: 2b
Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name	הִבּוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ 2a
Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength;	הִבּוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וְעֹז: 1b
Ascribe to the LORD, O sons of God	הִבּוּ לַיהוָה בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים 1a

This staircase shows that the following colon completes the previous colon. In 1a the poet calls בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים to ascribe to the LORD, but the poet does not mention what they are to

¹⁰ Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 1:37.

¹¹ Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 1:22. Kraus strongly suggests that the combinations שִׁיר צִיּוֹן (Ps 137:3) and שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלֹחַ (Pss 120-134) show that the term שִׁיר appears in connection with the temple worship on Zion and could be a specific designation for the cultic song and temple song in which the LORD and the place of his presence are praised.

¹² Kautzsch, *GKC*, 419-20. According to *GKC*, the preposition לְ introduces a genitive and he adds, “To prevent a nomen regens being determined by a following determinate genitive.” Thus the superscription לְדָוִד means a psalm of David, which means properly belonging to David as the author. Some scholars understand superscriptions as indicating the author, for instance, E.W. Hengstenberg, F. Delitzsch, and A.F. Kirkpatrick.

¹³ Brown, *BDB*, 510-8.

ascribe to the LORD. In the next colon the poet exhorts **בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים** to ascribe to the LORD **כְּבוֹד וְעֹז** (“glory and strength”), but the meaning of them is not clear in 1b. And then in 2a the poet commends them to bring **כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ** (“the glory of His name”). Here the poet clearly describes what **בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים** ascribe to the LORD. They should bring to the LORD **כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ**. In 2b, as the climax of the staircase parallelism, the poet calls **בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים** to worship the LORD in majesty of holiness. In terms of morphology the first three cola are identical,¹⁴ but syntactically they are different. The noun phrase in 1a functions as a vocative to describe addressees of Ps 29. The others, however, function as the accusative of the verb **יָהַב** (“to bring”; vv. 1b-2a). In 2b the poet uses an adverbial phrase to describe how **בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים** worship the LORD. The poet uses staircase parallelism to begin Ps 29 in order to make the audience and the readers attentive to this Psalm.

2.4.2. The Meaning of Stanza 1

Stanza 1, as the introduction to Ps 29, consists of two strophes and four cola. In stanza 1 the poet calls **בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים** to ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name (vv. 1a-2a) and to worship the LORD in the majesty of holiness (v. 2b).

¹⁴ Each colon in stanza 1 begins with an imperative form. In the first three cola the poet uses the imperative form of the verb **יָהַב** (“to ascribe”) and in the last colon he uses the imperative form of the verb **הָרָה** (“to worship”). These four imperative forms are followed by the covenant name of God **יְהוָה** with the preposition **לְ**, and then the noun phrase in the first three cola and the adverbial phrase in the last colon add to them.

2.4.2.1. Strophe 1

Colon 1a commences with the forceful imperative *הָבוּ* (“ascribe”),¹⁵ which is directed towards the appellative *בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים*.¹⁶ The parallel line 1b also begins with the same *Qal* imperative form of the verb *יָהַב*, but the poet describes *כְּבוֹד וְעֹז* (“glory and strength”) as the object of the imperative. Morphologically these two parallel lines are identical, but syntactically they are different.¹⁷ In 1a the poet describes those who are addressed by the imperative, and in 1b what they bring to the LORD.

The imperative *Qal* of the verb *יָהַב* is addressed as *בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים*. The term *אֱלֹהִים* appears only four times in the HB, twice in the genitive construct chain *בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים* (Pss 29:1; 89:7 [6 Engl.]) and twice by itself (Exod 15:11; Job 41:25).¹⁸ The term *אֱלֹהִים* is the noun masculine plural of either *אֵל* or *אֱלִיל*¹⁹ (“ram” or “might”). Thus *בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים* as the vocative, can be interpreted in various ways. First of all, this phrase can mean the “sons of gods,” as understood in light of Canaanite mythology, and the second one is the “sons of God,” or the “sons of the mighty” (NASB). The next one is the “mighty ones (rulers)” (KJV, NIV), or the “heavenly beings” (RSV). According to Mitchell Dahood, “in Canaanite mythology *בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים* (“the sons of El”) are the minor gods who form part of the pantheon of which El is the head.”²⁰ The scene of the heavenly pantheon shines through most clearly in Ps 82:1.

¹⁵ The imperative form of the verb *יָהַב* occurs six times in the Psalter. These occurrences appear in only two psalms (Pss 29, 96). Except for the addressee, syntactically both psalms are identical (Pss 29:1-2; 96:7-8). In Ps 29 the poet addresses *בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים*, but in Ps 96 the poet calls *בְּנֵי עַמִּים* (“the families of the peoples”).

¹⁶ The phrase *בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים* functions as the vocative rather than as the object in 1a.

¹⁷ Morphologically these two parallel lines are the same as the imperative + prepositional phrase + noun phrase, but syntactically the last noun phrase in each colon is different. In colon 1a the noun phrase as the genitive construction functions as the vocative, but in the second colon the noun phrase which is connected by the conjunctive *waw*, functions as the object of the verb.

¹⁸ Wilson, *Psalms*, 1:504.

¹⁹ Brown, *BDB*, 17-8. The noun *אֱלִיל* can be interpreted in four ways: “ram” as leader of flock, “projecting pillar,” “leader” (ruler or might), or “terebinth,” probably as a lofty tree.

²⁰ Dahood, *Psalms*, 1:175.

According to Ps 97:7 the gods and powers are subject to God and according to Ps 89:6 none of them is equal to God.²¹ At the same time, “in the Old Testament this pantheon of gods is ‘demythologized’ in that the godly powers were thought of as ministering spirits in the heavenly world,”²² Kraus says.

In Ps 29, probably the phrase בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים is a summons to the angels as the sons of God. In the HB the phrase בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים also indicates the heavenly beings (Ps 89:7 [6 Engl.]; Job 38:7).²³ In the context of Ps 29 this phrase can be used for describing the heavenly beings who are in the heavenly court as the sons of God. In Ps 29:2b the poet describes worshipping God in the heavenly court. In stanza 1, it is clear that בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים should be interpreted as worshippers of the LORD. Colon 2b calls בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים to worship the LORD (הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לַיהוָה²⁴).²⁵ Thus בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים can be understood as the sons of God as worshippers in the heavenly court. In the heavenly court the heavenly beings²⁶ worship the LORD. At the same time, it is possible that the heavenly beings as worshippers in this strophe are a “demythologized” form of the assemblies of gods, such as are found in the Babylonian and Canaanite myths.²⁷ In this way בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים could be translated as “sons of God” as worshippers, including both the bands of angels and the assemblies of gods. The poet strongly addresses these heavenly beings as the sons of God to worship the LORD. The

²¹ Psalm 89:7 [6 Engl.] “For who in the skies above can compare with the Lord? Who is like the Lord among the heavenly beings?” (NIV).

²² Kraus, *Psalm 1-59*, 1:29. Anderson also says the “sons of God” can sometimes mean “stars” as in Job 38:7, but the “stars” can be also regarded as divine beings (Deut 4:19; see Anderson, *Psalms*, 1:234).

²³ Briggs, *Psalms*, 1:252. Briggs suggests that in the conception of BH the phrase בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים is used for denoting the servants and worshippers of the LORD (cf. Ps 89:7 [6 Engl.]; Job 38:7).

²⁴ *Hishtaphel* imperative masculine plural of חָוָה (to worship) + the proper noun, the name of God, with the preposition לְ.

²⁵ At the same time the poet also describes responses of those who are in the temple of the LORD in 9c, where they are saying קְבוֹרָה (“Glory!”), precisely what the poet exhorted בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים to bring to the LORD in 1b.

²⁶ Stec, *The Targum*, 67. Targum also interprets בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים as the “band of angels.”

²⁷ Anderson, *Psalms*, 1:234.

poet also shows reasons in Ps 29:3-9b why the heavenly beings as both the bands of angels and the assemblies of gods, should worship the LORD, which we will consider later.

In the line parallel to 1a, the sons of God are called to ascribe נָעוּ כְבוֹד^{28} (“glory and strength”) to the LORD. It is not clear what the nouns נָעוּ and כְבוֹד mean in this colon. The staircase parallelism of Ps 29:1-2 brings more clarity to their meaning in the next parallel lines in strophe 2. In strophe 1, however, the poet calls the sons of God to ascribe to the LORD “glory” and “strength” (נָעוּ כְבוֹד), with which we will deal in the next section.

2.4.2.2. Strophe 2

The parallel lines in strophe 2 also begin with the forceful imperative form הָבִי (“to ascribe”; v. 2a) and הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ (“to worship”; v. 2b). These two imperative forms are directed toward the sons of God (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים) introduced in strophe 1. The sons of God are called to ascribe to the LORD (v. 2a) and to worship the LORD (v. 2b). Morphologically these two parallel lines are very similar to strophe 1,²⁹ but the poet uses the imperative forms of a different root ($\text{יָהַב} // \text{חָוָה}$) and a different conjugation (*Qal // Hishtaphel*) in this strophe to create a climax and focus the attention of the audience. The poet begins strophe 1 with the imperative form of the verb יָהַב (“to ascribe”) at the beginning of three cola, and now in the climax of the prelude he uses the imperative form of a different verb חָוָה (“to worship”) to make clear what the poet describes in this prelude of Ps 29.³⁰ Thus the poet strongly

²⁸ Both are noun masculine singular absolute form and they are connected by the conjunctive *waw*.

²⁹ In strophe 1 the poet uses the same root (יָהַב) and the same conjugation (*Qal*) in both parallel lines.

³⁰ Watson, *Classical Hebrew*, 150. According to Watson, “Staircase parallelism is a form of couplet or tricolon which proceeds in steps.” Verses 1 and 2 of Ps 29 (Ps 96:7-9) are one of the best instances of

urges the sons of God to worship the LORD in the prelude. In the HB the term *חזה* means not only an act of worshipping the LORD, but it also involves an act of prostrating oneself before the person honoured (cf. Gen 33:3; Ps 72:11). The poet addresses the sons of God as both the bands of angels and the assemblies of gods to worship the LORD as an act of prostrating before the LORD who controls His created world in His strength and power in the prelude.

In 2a the poet more precisely describes what the sons of God should bring to the LORD. In the previous colon (v. 1b) the poet exhorts *בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים* to bring to the LORD “glory” and “strength,” which are not clear in 1b. And now *כְּבוֹד* and *עוֹ* are intensified in 2b with the *שְׁמוֹ*³¹ (“the glory of His name”). The poet calls the sons of God to praise the glory of the name of the LORD. Craigie strongly suggests that the terms *עוֹ* and *שְׁמוֹ* have military connotations.³² He proves his suggestion by using the Song of the Sea (Exod 15) and the Song of Deborah (Judg 5).³³ Although these two old Hebrew victory poems

staircase parallelism, but this is not a form of couplet or tricolon. They consist of four cola and the last one can be used as the complementary element.

³¹ This is the genitive construct chain and they consist of noun masculine singular construct form + noun masculine singular construct form with 3rd person singular pronominal suffix. Syntactically this genitive construct chain functions as the accusative of the verb *ירב*.

³² Craigie, *Psalms*, 246-7.

³³ Craigie, *Psalms*, 245. Craigie convincingly asserts that there is the continuity between the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1-18) and Ps 29. He provides four points to make the continuity between these two Hebrew poems: the use of *עוֹ* (“strength”; Exod 15:2, 13; Ps 29:1, 11); the conjunction of *עוֹ* and *שֵׁם* (“name”) in Exod 15:2-3 and Ps 29:1-2; the reference to the divine assembly (Exod 15:11; Ps 29:1), and the stress on the kingship of the LORD (Exod 15:18; Ps 29:10). The term *עוֹ* (“strength”) occurs at the beginning of the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:2) with a military connotation. In Exod 15:2 Moses extols, *עוֹ וְזִקְרָה יְהוָה לִי*, *לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וְאֲמוּנָהוּ אֱבִי וְאֲרִמְמוֹנָהוּ* (“The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will extol Him”; NASB) The strength of the LORD demonstrated in the victory following the battle is praised by the sons of Israel. In the following strophe (Exod 15:3) *שְׁמוֹ* (“His name”) is also strengthened with the military associations. Moses continually extols that the LORD is a man of war and the LORD is *His name*. In the Song of the Sea, Moses describes the LORD as a warrior, and praises the LORD in His name. The praise of Moses is directed towards the name of the LORD (Exod 15:3). In the same way in stanza 1 of Ps 29 the poet calls the sons of God to praise the LORD and the praise is to be directed toward the name of the LORD (v. 2a), which is described as “the source of strength and victory of Israel” in the Song of the Sea. Thus the phrase *כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ* (“the glory of His name”), which is ascribed to the LORD by the sons of God, may constitute an allusion to Exod 15 and mean that the sons of God are to praise the LORD’s victory. This interpretation is supported by an understanding

show the victory of the LORD over the nations, in Ps 29 the poet describes the victory of the LORD over the created world in a general sense. This victory of the LORD is vividly described in Ps 29:3-9b, that is the appearance of the LORD as the seven voices of the LORD in a thunderstorm.

In 2b the poet addresses the sons of God to worship the LORD with the adverbial phrase *בְּהִרְרַת־קֹדֶשׁ*.³⁴ Samuel Terrien suggests, “the translation might vary from ‘sacred vestment’ to ‘holy place,’ and ‘the Holy one.’”³⁵ So, the adverbial phrase *בְּהִרְרַת־קֹדֶשׁ* can be translated as “in the splendor of his holiness” (KJV, NIV), “in holy array” (NASB, RSV), or “in the majesty of holiness” (TNK), which is splendor associated with clothing as befitting the rank and character of the one who wears them.³⁶ In connection with the verb *חָוָה*, this verb occurs seven times with the preposition *בְּ* in the HB.³⁷ In this combined structure (*חָוָה + בְּ*) the preposition *בְּ* is used for denoting the location where the worshipping takes place (1 Sam 1:3; 2 Kgs 18:22; Isa 27:13) or for introducing the manner by which the worshipping takes place with the preposition *אֵל* identifying the location where the worshipping takes place (Ps 5:8 [7 Engl.]).³⁸ The other three occurrences are the same construction with the prepositional phrase *בְּהִרְרַת־קֹדֶשׁ* (1 Chr 16:29; Pss 29:2; 96:9). These three cases seem to be introducing the location where the worshipping takes place, because

of the role of the storm in old Hebrew victory poetry (Exod 15; Judg 5). In the Song of the Sea, the poet describes the victory of the LORD by using *רוּחַ* (“wind”; Exod 15: 8, 10), which can be interpreted as “wind,” “spirit,” or “breath.” In Exod 15:8, 10 it can be understood as the breath of the LORD’s nostrils, at the same time it can be understood as the LORD’s wind. In the Song of Deborah, the victory of the LORD is also associated with the phenomenon of the storm (Judg 5:4-5, 19-21).

³⁴ This is the preposition *בְּ* + noun feminine singular construct form + noun masculine singular absolute form. This phrase is the attributive genitive construction with the preposition *בְּ* and functions in an adverbial sense to describe a manner (see Arnold, *A Guide*, 10, 19). The word *הִרְרָה* occurs five times in the construct form: one time as “splendor of a king” (Prov 14:28) and four times as *הִרְרַת־קֹדֶשׁ*, the translation of which is highly debated (1 Chr 16:29; Pss 29:2; 96:9; 2 Chr 20:21).

³⁵ Terrien, *Psalms*, 277.

³⁶ Wilson, *Psalms*, 1:504.

³⁷ First Samuel 1:3; 1 Kgs 18:22; 1 Chr 16:29; Pss 5:8; 29:2; 96:9; Isa 27:13.

³⁸ Psalm 5:8 [7 Engl.] - *אֵל־הַיְכָל־קֹדֶשְׁךָ בְּיִרְאָתְךָ* (“at Your holy temple I will bow in reverence for You”).

the construct chain הַדְרֹת־קֶדֶשׁ (“the splendour of holiness”) denotes the appearance of the LORD. At the same time in the HB the combined structure (בְּ + חוּה) is usually used for introducing the location which we seen above, and there is no other prepositional phrase which describes the location like Ps 5:8 [7 Engl.].³⁹

In Ps 29:2b the poet uses בְּהַדְרֹת־קֶדֶשׁ in the adverbial sense to state that the sons of God should worship the LORD in splendour of holiness which will be described in Ps 29:3-9. Structurally the adverbial phrase בְּהַדְרֹת־קֶדֶשׁ is parallel with זָכוֹר וְעָזָר in 1b and with זָכוֹר וְעָזָר in 2a. However in terms of the staircase parallelism, they are not identical. Rather the next parallel lines provide a more precise meaning of the previous parallel lines. Thus the poet states that the sons of God ascribe to the LORD strength and glory in 1b and then calls them to ascribe to the LORD glory of His name in 2a. Finally the poet calls the sons of God to worship the LORD in the majesty of holiness, which means that the sons of God must worship the LORD with the understanding of the works of the LORD for His people described in Ps 29:3-9b.

In conclusion, in the prelude of Ps 29 the poet uses staircase parallelism to call the sons of God as heavenly beings to worship the LORD (v. 2b). The imperative form of יִהְיֶה (“to ascribe”) in the first three cola can be understood as close to the meaning of the imperative of the verb חוּה (“to worship”), because to ascribe the glory of His name is understood as ascribing honor usually to God in public worship.⁴⁰ At the same time the sons of God as the heavenly beings worship the LORD not just as an exacting action, but as a reasonable action given the understanding of the mighty power of the LORD, especially the triumph of the LORD over the created world. Both the bands of angels and

³⁹ The LXX understands this prepositional phrase as denoting location ἐν ἀγίῳ ἁγίῳ αὐτοῦ (“in his holy court”).

⁴⁰ VanGemeren, *NIDOTTE*, 2:580.

the assemblies of gods should submit themselves to the mighty power of the LORD, because the LORD is the powerful and mighty God. The poet describes this mighty and powerful God over the created world in the body of Ps 29.

2.5. Body of Psalm 29 (stanza 2-stanza 5)

At the core of Ps 29 lay seven strophes (vv. 3a-9c), which deal with the coming of the LORD from the heavenly court to the earth in a thunderstorm. This body of Ps 29 consists of four stanzas, which depict the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm as the appearance of the LORD in order to show His power over the created world.⁴¹ A thunderstorm starts at the Mediterranean Sea (vv. 3-4) and it blows to the north of the land of Canaan (vv. 5-6) and then to the south of the land of Canaan (vv. 8-9). The voice of the LORD is accompanied by flames of fire in strophe 7. A thunderstorm as the voice of the LORD affects nature, the sea, the mountains, and the wilderness. The poet, however, illustrates not just the natural phenomenon in the storm, but the mighty power of the LORD over cosmic forces in a figurative way. Except in one case (strophe 6), קול יְהוָה occurs in every strophe in the body of Ps 29. It clearly makes the voice of the LORD the major theme of the body of Ps 29.⁴²

2.5.1. The Structure of the Body of Psalm 29

The poet uses a chiasmic structure in Ps 29:3-9b to show the power and glory of the LORD as the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm.

A The mighty power over the many waters (vv. 3a-4b)

⁴¹ Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:369.

⁴² Wilson, *Psalms*, 1:504-5.

- B The trees in the mountains (vv. 5a-6a)
 - C The mountains of the northern region (v. 6b)
 - D Flames of fire as a means of the LORD (v. 7a)
 - C' The wilderness of the southern region (vv. 8a-8b)
 - B' The animals in the wilderness (vv. 9a-9b⁴³)
 - A' The Glory of the LORD (v. 9 c)

This chiastic structure shows that the poet describes the mighty power of the LORD (A) and the glory of the LORD (A'), which the sons of God were called to ascribe to the LORD in the prelude (vv. 1b-2a). The mighty power of the LORD is described by the voice of the LORD, as a thunderstorm (A), and the glory of the LORD by the voice of the people who are in the temple (A'). Thus the poet begins the body of Ps 29 with one of the elements, the power of the LORD, which should be ascribed to the LORD, and closes it with the people of God bringing glory to the LORD. In the middle of the chiastic structure the poet describes how the voice of the LORD affects the created world and the climax of it is the flames of fire as the means of the LORD in strophe 7 (D). When all creatures see and hear the power of the LORD as a thunderstorm with lightning, they realize the sovereignty and mighty power of the LORD, so that they praise the glory of the LORD with loud voices in the temple of the LORD (A').

⁴³ In terms of translation colon 9b is difficult. Many versions translate this colon as “strips the forests bare” (KJV, NASB, RSV, NIV, TNK, etc.). However it is possible to translate this colon as “brings the kids to premature birth” according to *KBL*. I will deal with it below in detail (see Koehler, *Lexicon*, 339, 391).

2.5.2. The Meaning of Stanza 2

Stanza 2 consists of two strophes: strophe 3 (vv. 3a-3c) and strophe 4 (vv. 4a-4b). Except for colon 3b, the poet uses nominal clauses to describe the voice of the LORD, which is the main theme of the body of Ps 29. Syntactically they are identical, but morphologically they are different.⁴⁴ In strophe 3 the poet uses nominal clauses to describe circumstances (vv. 3a, 3c), and in 3b he describes the action of the LORD through a verbal clause. In other words, 3a introduces the voice of the LORD on the waters. And then in 3b, the poet describes 3a more vividly as the God of glory thunders, which is a description of how the voice of the LORD is on the waters. In 3c the poet again describes 3a, but he uses the covenant name of God יהוה as the subject rather than קול יהוה. Although יהוה as the subject can be understood as ellipsis of the voice of the LORD, the poet uses יהוה to emphasize the LORD Himself who sits on many waters rather than the voice of the LORD.⁴⁵ Thus we can understand the voice of the LORD as the LORD Himself in Ps 29.⁴⁶ In strophe 4 the poet describes the voice of the LORD as powerful (4a) and majestic (4b) using nominal clauses.

⁴⁴ Syntactically each colon is the same as “subject + prepositional phrase” except for colon 3b, which is “subject + verb.” In terms of morphology, however, the poet describes the subject of these cola in different ways. In 3a, 4a, and 4b the poet uses קול יהוה, which is the construction of the genitive of subject (= the voice of the LORD), and אֱלֹהֵי הַכְבוֹד (“the God of the glory”), which is the construction of the attributive genitive (= the glorious God). In colon 3c the poet uses the name of God יהוה (cf. Arnold, *A Guide*, 9-10).

⁴⁵ Watson, *Classical Hebrew*, 155. The poet uses the name of God יהוה three times in the same way (3c, 5b, 8b). In these three cola they are understood as ellipsis but perhaps more importantly, the name of God יהוה is understood as referring to the LORD Himself, and not to קול יהוה.

⁴⁶ Anderson, *Psalms*, 1:235.

2.5.2.1. Strophe 3

Colon 3a simply shows that the voice of the LORD is על־הַמַּיִם (“over the waters”) and in 3c the poet states that the LORD is על־מַיִם רַבִּים (“over many waters”).⁴⁷ At the same time in 3b, the poet describes 3a more vividly as the God of glory thunders, which is the description of how the voice of the LORD is on the waters.⁴⁸ The poet interprets the voice of the LORD as the הַרְעָם (“the thunder”), which denotes the power of God, not merely the power of nature.⁴⁹ The voice of the LORD as thunder is associated with Baal and his “holy voice.”⁵⁰ Baal, the Canaanite weather-god, is associated with storm, thunder, and lightning.⁵¹ In the ancient Near East thunder was understood as the deity’s word.⁵² Craigie convincingly asserts that “the psalmist, who rejects the possibility of any real power of Baal over weather or the outcome of battle, adapts the language of storm and integrates it with his description of God’s glory.”⁵³ The voice of the LORD can be understood as proclaiming the Creator’s power. This represents a polemic over the created world against the weather-god Baal. Thus the LORD descends to the earth in a thunderstorm showing the mighty power of the LORD over His created world.

⁴⁷ In 3a the subject is קוֹל יְהוָה and in 3c יהוָה, and in both cola the poet uses the prepositional phrase (עַל) to describe the circumstance of the subject.

⁴⁸ Watson, *Classical Hebrew*, 15. This strophe also has sound repetition (rhyme) ים at the end of each colon. Even this end-repetition is made in between noun (vv. 3a, 3c) and verb (v. 3b). The poet also describes the action of God in the same length with the other parallel lines. Thus the poet creates a balance among these three parallel lines.

⁴⁹ Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 1:126.

⁵⁰ Dahood, *Psalms*, 1:176.

⁵¹ Craigie, *Psalms*, 247.

⁵² Kraus, *Psalms*, 1:348-9.

⁵³ Craigie, *Psalms*, 247. At the same time we find that the power of the LORD expresses itself in thunder throughout the HB (Ps 18:13; Isa 30:30; Job 37:4-5). The voice of thunder comes from the heaven as the judge’s word of power (Amos 1:2; Joel 4:16; Jer 25:30). Thunder is also associated with God’s appearance (Exod 19:16; Pss 46:6; 77:18). In a sense קוֹל יְהוָה as thunder could be understood at the word of God, especially in His role as judge. Targum interprets Ps 29:3-4 in a different way. “The voice of the Lord is heard upon the water: in the strength of his glory, the Lord thunders upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is heard in strength; the voice of the Lord is heard in splendor.”

In cola 3a and 3c, the LORD is upon the waters (the great waters), which can mean the Mediterranean Sea. The LORD as the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm comes from heaven to the Mediterranean Sea at first and then proceeds to the north of the promised land (Ps 29:5-6) and finally to the south of the promised land (Ps 29:8). At the same time we can understand this strophe differently in terms of the imagery. The term מַיִם is used in three ways in the Bible: as a cosmic force that only God can control and govern, as a source of life, and as a cleansing agent.⁵⁴ In Ps 29 the poet uses מַיִם in 3a and 3c to denote a cosmic force. The poet describes that קוֹל יְהוָה is upon the waters (v. 3a), which means that the LORD comes upon cosmic forces to control and subdue them (v. 3c). Moreover מַיִם is used with the adjective רַבִּים⁵⁵ to denote “many waters.” In a sense מַיִם רַבִּים in 3c can be understood as describing the cosmic forces, which arise against the LORD. At the same time in Ps 29 the poet uses מַיִם to describe the LORD as a victorious king over His created world, and the poet utilizes a number of allusions to Ugaritic mythology. Willem VanGemeren points out that Ps 29 shows that the LORD is superior to Baal who subdued the god Yam.⁵⁶ Craigie also asserts that in Ps 29 the poet describes the LORD as one who is victorious over the chaotic god (Yam) who was conquered by Baal.⁵⁷ In this way the poet describes that it is the LORD who subdues the chaotic god (Yam), not Baal.

In strophe 3, these three parallel lines show that the voice of the LORD is closely associated with the God of glory (v. 3b) and with the LORD Himself (v. 3c). In this way

⁵⁴ Ryken, *Biblical Imagery*, 929.

⁵⁵ Adjective masculine plural absolute form of רַב. This word form is used as an attribute adjective to modify the noun מַיִם, meaning “many waters.”

⁵⁶ VanGemeren, *NIDOTTE*, 2:932.

⁵⁷ Craigie, *Psalms*, 247. Craigie says, “In the Ugaritic texts, Yam (‘sea’) is the ‘god of the mighty waters’; yet the chaotic god, Yam, was conquered by Baal.” Craigie also uses the Song of the Sea (Exod 15) and the Song of Deborah (Judg 5) to prove that the LORD is described as the victorious one over the chaotic forces.

the poet professes the coming of the LORD as thunder in His created world to show His power.

2.5.2.2. Strophe 4

The fourth strophe consists of two cola as a nominal clause. Syntactically both parallel lines are identical and function to describe *קול יְהוָה* by using *בָּחַ* (“powerful”) and *הָרַר* (“majestic”). These two nouns are used in an adjectival sense to identify the voice of the LORD.⁵⁸ First of all, *בָּחַ* is used to describe the power of the LORD who created the heavens and the earth and who controls His created world in the HB (Jer 27:5; Isa 50:2). The LORD is so powerful that nothing is able to stand against Him (2 Chr 20:6).⁵⁹ The noun *הָרַר* is used of God to describe God’s impressive or imposing character in the Bible (cf. Ps 90:16; Isa 2:10, 19, 21). The poet uses these two words to denote the power of God and the splendor of God over His created world. In this manner the poet describes in strophe 3 the LORD sitting upon the many waters in a metaphorical way.

In conclusion, in strophe 3 the poet describes *קול יְהוָה* as thunder (v. 3b) in addition to the LORD Himself (v. 3c) who comes upon cosmic forces to control them and to subdue them. In strophe 4 the poet states that *קול יְהוָה* is powerful (v. 4a) and majestic (v. 4b) as the work of the LORD to create the heavens and the earth and to control them. In stanza 2 the poet denotes *קול יְהוָה* as the triumphant works of the LORD Himself over cosmic forces. The poet describes the wonderful works of the LORD over His created world as coming upon the many waters as a powerful and majestic action, which means

⁵⁸ Arnold, *A Guide*, 106. The preposition *בְּ* is used for denoting essence in this strophe.

⁵⁹ VanGemeren, *NIDOTTE*, 2:624-5.

that the LORD has triumphed over the cosmic world and over the “god of mighty waters.”

In stanza 2 the poet describes קול יהוה as the triumph of the LORD over the created world.

2.5.3. The Meaning of Stanza 3

In strophe 5 the poet illustrates that קול יהוה comes to break cedars which are on the mountains of Lebanon, and in strophe 6 the poet describes the response of the cedars of Lebanon and the response of the mountains. A thunderstorm which was over the sea (vv. 3a–4b) is now in a northern area of the promised land. In this stanza the poet mentions two mountains, Lebanon and Sirion⁶⁰ (vv. 5b-6b), which are the highest mountains in the northern area of Palestine at the northern territorial extent of the twelve tribes of Israel (Josh 13:5).⁶¹ In stanza 3 the poet describes the coming of the voice of the LORD as the coming of the LORD Himself to the northern area of the promised land and the response of that area.

2.5.3.1. Strophe 5

In this strophe the poet uses partial chiasmus between these two parallel lines.

אֲרָזִים	שֶׁבַר	קוֹל יְהוָה	the voice of the LORD	//	breaks	//	the cedars
c	b	a	a		b		c
אֲרָזֵי הַלְבָּנוֹן:	יְהוָה	וַיִּשְׁבַּר	breaks in pieces	//	the LORD	//	the cedars of Lebanon
c*	a*	b*	b*		a*		c*

Using a partial chiasmus, the poet vividly describes the action of the LORD as the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm. In 5b the poet describes 5a in a more precise way. In 5b the poet uses יהוה rather than קול יהוה (v. 5a), and the poet specifically mentions אֲרָזֵי הַלְבָּנוֹן

⁶⁰ Anderson, *Psalms*, 1:236. The name שִׁרְיִן (“Sirion”) in 6b is the Phoenician name of Mount Hermon (Deut 3:9). Some suggest that שִׁרְיִן is the name of the Anti-Lebanon range, which includes Mount Hermon. There are some theologians in this camp, such as Perowne, Cales, Gordon, etc.

⁶¹ Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence*, 35.

(“the cedars of Lebanon”) rather than אֲרָזִים (“the cedars”; v. 5a). He also uses different verbal stems of the same root in these parallel lines.⁶² In this manner we can understand that the poet describes natural things when a thunderstorm comes to break the cedars as the natural phenomenon in 5a, but in 5b he explains that this is not just a natural phenomenon but the powerful action of the LORD. The LORD uses a thunderstorm as His voice to break the cedars of Lebanon.

Although the phrase אֲרָזֵי הַלְבָּנוֹן (“the cedars of Lebanon”) is an image used in various ways in the HB,⁶³ in this strophe the poet uses the phrase ‘the cedars of Lebanon’ to show the giant trees growing on Mount Lebanon (cf. Isa 2:13), and the status of the greatest of the trees (cf. Judg 9:15). In strophe 5, the famous cedars of Lebanon are easily broken by קוֹל יְהוָה. The voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm breaks off the limbs, breaks down the trees themselves, and breaks them in pieces. It shows that the LORD surpasses in strength and power the cedars of Lebanon which are the greatest of the proud and lofty trees. The poet describes the great power of the LORD over the cedars of the Lebanon. In 5b the poet describes that it is the LORD who breaks in pieces the cedars of the Lebanon. The poet uses a partial chiasmus to emphasize the triumphal power of the LORD over the cosmic forces in these two parallel lines.

⁶² In 5a he uses the *Qal* participle form (שֹׁבֵר), which is the general stem in the Hebrew verbal system, but in 5b he uses the *Piel* imperfect with *waw* consecutive (וַיִּשְׁבֹּר), which at times functions as an intensive form of the *Qal* stem. In terms of the meaning of the *Piel*, this often serves as an intensive of the *Qal* in some verbs: שָׁבַר (“to break”), שָׁאַל (“to ask”), רָץ (“to cry out”). The poet uses the *Qal* participle of the verb שָׁבַר (“to break”) in colon 5a and then in 5b he uses the *Piel* imperfect of the same verb. In these two parallel lines the poet uses different verbal conjugations to emphasize the second parallel line (see Davidson, *Hebrew Grammar*, 106).

⁶³ Cf. Ryken, *Biblical Imagery*, 891. The cedar is used for describing those who have power (Judg 9:15; Amos 2:9), and a special relationship between God and Israel (Ps 80:10). The cedars of Lebanon are also found in the representation of Assyria and Egypt in the Bible (Ezek 31). Human self-exaltation and arrogance is also illustrated by the proud and lofty tree as the cedars of the Lebanon (Isa 2:13). This metaphor is extended further in the imagery of cutting down trees as an act of judgment (Ezek 31; Isa 10:34; cf. Kraus, *Psalms*, 1:349).

2.5.3.2. Strophe 6

The poet uses ellipsis in this strophe. There is no subject or verb in the second parallel line 6b. However, it can be translated as “*the LORD makes Lebanon*⁶⁴ and Sirion skip like a young wild ox.” The verb רָקַד (“to skip”; v. 6a) can be understood as the verb of 6b. In 6b the poet uses good poetic style in employing ellipsis. In this way he also uses the longer form (קָמוּ) of the preposition כִּי in both parallel lines.

In 6a, קוֹל יְהוָה makes the cedars of Lebanon skip⁶⁵ like a calf.⁶⁶ Naturally the cedars of Lebanon which bend down before the storm quickly rise up again. Mt. Lebanon and Sirion also skip like a young wild ox in 6b. The words “calf” and “wild ox” are used in metaphors in the Bible, but it is not easy to define them in this strophe.⁶⁷ In the Bible עֵגְלָה (“calf”) is used in metaphors as Egyptian mercenaries are like fattened calves (Jer 46:21). Malachi 3:20 [4:2 Engl.] compares those who will experience the coming time of salvation with calves that leave their stalls and leap for joy. On the other hand, רֵאֵם (“wild ox”) occurs three times in the Psalter (Pss 22:21; 29:6; 92:10), but the context of each of these three instances is different. In Ps 22:21, the wild ox is described as one who has hostile power, and in Ps 92:10 the horn of the wild ox is used to describe the psalmist himself vividly. Psalm 29, however, is different from these two instances. The mention of the wild ox in connection with Mount Lebanon and Sirion may be due to the presence of

⁶⁴ According to MT accentuation, the word “לְבָנוֹן” belong to 6b and functions as an object syntactically. In this manner, these two proper names (לְבָנוֹן וְסִרְיֹן) can be used as the direct object of the verb רָקַד.

⁶⁵ There is the *Hiphil* form of the verb רָקַד in 6a, which means “to skip about.”

⁶⁶ Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:370. The Hebrew verbal suffix “ם,” here translated by “them,” describes the cedars in verse 5b. Some think that the suffix is the mountains, Mt. Lebanon and Mt. Sirion after this colon, but it is not convincing. Some also suggest that the suffix “ם” is the “Enclitic *Mem*,” but it destroys the parallelism. So, it is not convincing in this verse.

⁶⁷ Ringgren, *TDOT*, 10:447.

these animals there.⁶⁸ In strophes 5-6, קול יהוה as a thunderstorm, breaks the cedars of Lebanon, and Mt. Lebanon and Mt. Sirion skip like a calf at קול יהוה. The poet alludes to the terrific noise of thunder, which seems almost to shake the foundation of the mountains. Here the poet describes the action of the calf and the young wild ox, when they hear thunder as the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm. They should be frightened by this thunder, if they have not heard it before. If even the wild ox can be frightened by a thunder, how much more frightening for a calf and a young wild ox. In Ps 29:5-6, the poet describes the appearance of the LORD as a thunderstorm upon the high Mount Lebanon and Mount Sirion⁶⁹ in the northern area of the promised land and the lofty trees of the cedars of Lebanon. The highest mountains and trees will be made low themselves and will be humbled before the LORD.⁷⁰ The poet uses the cedar of the Lebanon in 6a and the mountains of Lebanon and Sirion in 6b to describe the triumphant power of God over His created world, as if shaking the foundation of the mountains.

In conclusion, the poet describes the LORD coming to the north of the promised land as קול יהוה in a thunderstorm. The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars of Mount Lebanon. The LORD Himself causes the cedars to skip like a calf and Mount Lebanon and Sirion to skip like a wild ox. The poet uses this imagery to describe the mighty power of the LORD over the created world.

⁶⁸ Ringgren, *TDOT*, 13:246.

⁶⁹ The collection of Lebanon and Sirion makes a well-known pair which is mentioned also in Ugaritic texts. Therefore, some suggest that this is evidence that proves that Ps 29 is derived from Phoenician literature. But I think that the poet uses these words the other way.

⁷⁰ Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 1:126. These two parallel lines can be compared to Isa 2:11-17, which describes the Day of the Lord. In that day, all cedars of Lebanon and all mountains will be humbled. In Isa 2:11-17, the cedars of Lebanon and all mountains are described as the arrogant man and the pride of men (Isa 2:11, 17). Isaiah 2:11-17: "The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of man brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.for all the cedars of Lebanon,for all the towering mountains The Lord alone will be exalted in that day."

2.5.4. The Meaning of Stanza 4

The fourth stanza consists of one strophe and one colon. Strophe 7 represents the climax of the body of Ps 29. The poet uses the flames of fire at its climax (v. 7a).⁷¹ In Ps 29:7, קול יְהוָה, identifies with “lightning,” which creates an association with Baal.⁷² The phrase לְהַבֹּת אֵשׁ in 7a,⁷³ can be translated as “flames of fire” or “flashes of lightning” (NIV). The term לְהַבֹּת (“flame”) is described in two senses: as protection and destruction (Job 41:13; Hos 7:6). At the same time לְהַבֹּת can also denote a “weapon.”⁷⁴ In Ps 104:4 God also uses the “flames of fire” as His servant. In connection with חָצַב,⁷⁵ it is difficult to understand “flame of fire” in this strophe. The verb חָצַב generally is associated with rocks and mining, and the participle form is the predominant form in the Bible.⁷⁶ But in Ps 29 the verb חָצַב is used in connection with “flames of fire.” Thus, the seventh strophe is translated as “the voice of the LORD strikes down flames of fire.” Some commentators translate the “flames of fire” as the object of the verb חָצַב, but this is difficult to accept. It can also be understood as an accusative of means.⁷⁷ Thus, it is better translated as “the voice of the Lord strikes down *with flames of fire*.” The קול יְהוָה breaks down the cedars of Lebanon and makes the mountains skip like a wild ox in the previous stanza. In strophe 7, קול יְהוָה also strikes down with flames of fire (lightning). Each peal of thunder is immediately followed by a flash of lightning. Delitzsch strongly suggests that the voice of

⁷¹ Terrien, *Psalms*, 278.

⁷² Craigie, *Psalms*, 248.

⁷³ The word לְהַבֹּת (“flame”) is rarely used alone (Judg 13:20; Job 15:30) in HB. This word usually occurs in combination with fire.

⁷⁴ Ringgren, *TDOT*, 7:471.

⁷⁵ Holladay, *A Concise*, 113. Colon 7a is a nominal sentence and the participle form of verb חָצַב is used, which is translated as “to hew,” “to quarry,” or “to strike.”

⁷⁶ Ringgren, *TDOT*, 5:125-6.

⁷⁷ Anderson, *Psalms*, 1:237. Anderson says, “the flames of fire (the lightning) may be the object of the verb or the phrase could be an accusative of means.” *GKC* describes an accusative of manner in section 118, 5 (Kautzsch, *GKC*, 374). Gibson also suggests that “noun and adjectives may be freely used in an adverbial in definitions of instrument or means (Gibson, *Davidson’s Introductory*, 144).

the LORD denotes not merely the thunder as a phenomenon, but also the omnipotence of God with flames of fire in colon 7.⁷⁸

Interestingly, strophe 7, as only one colon, is placed between two geographical references: Mount Lebanon in stanza 3 and the wilderness of Kadesh in stanza 5, which are used for describing the border of the promised land. The LORD as the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm is moving from the northern area to the southern area of Palestine. At the middle of this powerful movement, the poet vividly shows the mighty power of the LORD with flames of fire in a thunderstorm. The coming of the LORD in a thunderstorm has been described using an auditory image, but now shifts to a visual image. The mighty power of the LORD over the created world is described not only by hearing thunder but also by seeing a flash of lightning.

However, Strophe 7 should still be understood in connection with the previous stanza 3. The voice of the LORD as a thunderstorm shows the mighty power of the LORD over His created world. The poet continually portrays the mighty power of the LORD by describing a flash of lightning.

2.5.5. The Meaning of Stanza 5

In strophe 8 the poet describes the response of the wilderness as the *קול יהוה* enters the southern area of the promised land and in strophe 9 the poet deals with two things, which are responses to the voice of the LORD. First, he describes the reaction of animals which live in the wilderness (vv. 9a-9b), and second the response of the people of God who are in His temple (v. 9c).

⁷⁸ Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:371.

2.5.5.1. Strophe 8

Syntactically this strophe is very similar to strophe 5. In strophe 8 the poet uses the partial chiasmus between these two parallel lines like strophe 5,⁷⁹ but he employs the subject-verb parallelism in this strophe. The poet places the voice of the LORD as a subject in first place followed by the verb form הִלֵּל in 8a. In parallel line 8b, he places the verb form first and then the covenant name יְהוָה as a subject like strophe 5. In this way the poet describes the voice of the LORD shaking the wilderness in 8a and then in 8b the poet emphasizes that it is the LORD who causes the wilderness to tremble, rather than the voice of the LORD as thunder with lightning. The poet also gives a specific name to this wilderness as Kadesh in 8b like strophe 5.

In the HB the verb הִלֵּל ⁸⁰ is used sometimes for describing a twisting in pain, which is compared to the experience of birth pangs (Isa 26:17-18; Jer 4:31; Mic 4:9). At the same time הִלֵּל is used for denoting a trembling in fear (Pss 96:9; 97:4; 114:7). In this way, the poet describes that the wilderness trembles at the voice of the LORD with fear in strophe 8. This verb is also connected with strophe 9, which uses this verb in the *Polel* form. In strophes 8-9 the poet uses this verb to depict a writhing or gyrating either in travail or in dance.⁸¹ The voice of the LORD makes the wilderness tremble in fear (v. 8a), and the LORD Himself makes the wilderness of Kadesh tremble like a woman who has birth pangs (v. 8b).

⁷⁹ Strophe 5 has a different conjugation in the two parallel lines as the *Qal* in 5a and as the *Piel* 5b, that is called partial chiasmus. Strophe 8 also has very similar structure, because the imperfect form of the verb הִלֵּל is identical in both the *Qal* and the *Hiphil* form. However, most scholars regard the verb form הִלֵּל as the *Hiphil* imperfect in this strophe. If so, the poet uses the partial chiasmus between two parallel lines not by using different conjugations like strophe 5, but by using the subject-verb parallelism in strophe 8.

⁸⁰ Brown, *BDB*, 296-7. The basic meaning of הִלֵּל is “to whirl,” “to dance,” or “to writhe,” and in the *Hiphil* form הִלֵּל means “to make writhe,” or “to make tremble.”

⁸¹ Kidner, *Psalms 1-71*, 1:127. Kidner convincingly points out that this meaning can also give a vivid picture of desert dust-storms to the audiences.

In biblical traditions, the wilderness of Kadesh⁸² is the wilderness known as Kadesh Barnea, which is the center of the ancient sacred place where Israel sojourned a long time prior to their entrance into the promised land (Num 14:32-35; 20:10-13).⁸³ The wilderness of Kadesh is mostly likely the southeast section of Palestine (Gen 14:7; 16:14; 20:1).⁸⁴

In terms of the structure of Ps 29:5-9b, as I mentioned above, there is a chiasmic structure.

A. Trees (vv. 5a-6a)

B. Mountains (v. 6b)

C. Flames of fire (v. 7a)

B' Wilderness (vv. 8a-8b)

A' Animals (vv. 9a-9b)

In terms of conception, trees (A) and animals (A') refer to animate elements which live within the inanimate geographic area of mountains (B) and wilderness (B'). In this sense the wilderness is not a literal desert but primarily a "land without permanent settlements."⁸⁵ The voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm with lightening (C) comes upon the promised land and the poet describes their response (A, B, B', A'). As קול יהוה makes Mt. Lebanon and Sirion skip like a wild ox in strophe 5, the voice of the LORD also

⁸² The name "wilderness of Kadesh" is also mentioned in Ugaritic texts. In light of this use in Ugaritic texts, the wilderness of Kadesh should be sought in the environs of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountain ranges, perhaps near Kadesh on the Orontes (see Anderson, *Psalms*, 1:237).

⁸³ Briggs, *Psalms*, 1:254; Stec, *The Targum*, 68. Targum also translates this as "the wilderness of Rekam," which is a frequent Targumic equivalent for Kadesh (TgOnq Gen 14:7). Like Rekam, Geah is found as a Targumic equivalent for Kadesh Barnea (TgOnq Num 34:4). The wilderness of Kadesh is mostly like then the southeast section of Palestine (Gen 14:7; 16:14; 20:1).

⁸⁴ In terms of imagery the wilderness can be used as a grazing land in this strophe. The noun מְרִבָּר can be used as an adjacent space to villages and towns or in the borderland between cultivated land and desert. מְרִבָּר is not meant as a wasteland in which nothing lives, but as an inhabited land in which nomadic tribes and animals live. But in strophe 8, we understand in a general sense that the poet mentions the wilderness of Kadesh as geography.

⁸⁵ Dahood, *Psalms*, 1:178.

makes the wilderness of Kadesh tremble in this strophe. These two verses clearly reveal the mighty power of the LORD over the created world. There is nothing superior to the LORD in the world. Even the solid mountains and the wilderness can be shaken before the voice of the LORD.

In terms of semantic parallelism, the poet describes the wilderness as trembling at קול יהוה in 8a, and then he emphasizes that it is the LORD Himself who makes the wilderness tremble in 8b. Previously in strophe 6, the poet describes how the LORD makes Mount Lebanon and Sirion skip like a young wild ox at קול יהוה as the LORD Himself (v. 6b). In these two strophes the poet describes the power of the appearance of the LORD Himself as the skipping of the mountains and as the shaking of the wilderness. The LORD causes the highest mountain Lebanon to skip and shakes the sacred place of the wilderness of Kadesh. Here the poet depicts the mighty power of the LORD like shaking the axis of the earth. The highest mountain can be low and the solid foundation of the earth shakes so that everything on it breaks into pieces and is destroyed. In these two strophes the poet clearly reveals the mighty power of the LORD over cosmic forces. In between these two descriptions the poet places קול יהוה as striking down with the flame of fire in strophe 7, which is the visual description for denoting the omnipotence of the LORD as the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm.

In this strophe the poet continually describes the mighty power of the LORD over His created world using the response of the wilderness of Kadesh. The wilderness of Kadesh trembles at the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm. The wilderness trembles with great fear at the coming of the LORD. The foundation of the wilderness is shaken by

the power of the LORD and everything on it trembles at this shaking which vividly appears in strophe 9.

2.5.5.2. Strophe 9

In 9a-9b the poet describes animals which live in the wilderness of Kadesh. The poet dealt with the response of the wilderness of Kadesh in the previous strophe. Now he describes that the does and kids are frightened at קול יהוה as a thunderstorm with lightning. The poet uses ellipsis again here. Syntactically, however, in 9b the subject may be either קול יהוה or יהוה. In the previous strophes the poet used קול יהוה as a subject in the first parallel line (vv. 3a, 5a, 8a), and then in the second parallel line he used יהוה as a subject (vv. 3c, 5b, 8b). Both cases are possible here, but it seems that יהוה as a subject is better than קול יהוה, because the poet emphasizes the LORD Himself who uses a thunderstorm as the voice of the LORD to describe His power over the created world.⁸⁶

In 9a, there are animals which not only hear קול יהוה, but also experience the shaking the foundation of the wilderness where they live. The poet uses the same verb חיל⁸⁷ which is used in the previous strophe. The voice of the LORD as a thunderstorm with lightning brings the does to birthpains. In terms of translation, 9b is the crux in Ps 29. Many versions translate 9b as “He [the LORD] strips the forest.” They follow the suggestion of the BHS apparatus which is a masculine plural of יער (“wood”).⁸⁸ However,

⁸⁶ In terms of semantic parallelism, the poet uses chiasmic structure to describe the power of the LORD over the created world. In strophes 5a-6a, he describes the cedars and then in 6b he deals with the mountain where the cedars were. But in 8a-8b the wilderness is first and then the poet describes the reaction of the animals which live in the wilderness at קול יהוה in 9a-9b

⁸⁷ Holladay, *A Concise*, 102. The verb חיל is used as the imperfect form of the *Polel*, which is translated as “to bring (female) into labor (birth-pangs),” or “to bring (young) to birth.”

⁸⁸ The term יער (“the wood”) is a very unusual form in the Bible, thus the BHS apparatus wants to change it. Many scholars say, “it also makes sense in connection with the verb form יַחַטֵּף, which means ‘to strip the bark from’” (Holladay, *A Concise*, 118; cf. Wilson, *Psalms*, 506).

the verb *הִשָּׁח* means “to strip” or “to bring to premature birth,” and in the MT the object of this verb is *יְעָרוֹת*, which is the plural form of the feminine noun *יְעָרָה*. Koehler suggest that the plural form of *יְעָרָה* can mean “kid.”⁸⁹ Thus it is also possible to translate 9b as “He [the LORD] brings the kids to premature birth.”⁹⁰ If so, both 9a and 9b deal with animals which live in the wilderness of Kadesh, just like cola 5a-6a deal with the cedars, which are on the mountains in 6b. Thus the poet describes the effect of the voice of the LORD as the does and the kids which live in the wilderness and experience premature birth in these two cola. In cola 9a-9b the poet depicts the response of animals to the coming of the LORD. The appearance of the LORD is powerful so that the wilderness of Kadesh trembles with fear before the LORD and the animals which live in this wilderness are also frightened by the coming of the LORD. The poet continually reveals the mighty power of the LORD over His created world using the wilderness of Kadesh and animals which live in it in stanza 5.

In 9c, the poet portrays the fulfillment of the commandment in stanza 1. The poet commanded to ascribe the glory of the name of the LORD and strength (vv. 1b-2a), and the worship of the LORD with the majesty of holiness (v. 2b). Now in God’s temple all say *כְּבוֹד* (“Glory!”) in 9c, which means that all who are in the temple of God, worship the LORD and praise Him, who powerfully appeared in a thunderstorm as the voice of the LORD over the promised land. We see this wonderful and majestic appearance of the LORD in Ps 29:3a-9b.

In terms of the temple, it can be understood in two ways. On the one hand it may refer to an earthly temple. In this way 9c is understood as “a liturgical rubric introducing”

⁸⁹ Koehler, *Lexicon*, 391.

⁹⁰ Anderson, *Psalms*, 1:238.

the final praise of Ps 29:10-11. On the other hand, the temple can be understood as the heavenly temple. In this way, 9c is used as the concluding line of the central section of Ps 29.⁹¹ On this matter there is no agreement among the scholars.⁹² However, the phrase “in His temple” could be understood as both the earthly temple and the heavenly temple. The temple in its most basic sense symbolizes the dwelling place of God. In the Bible the temple is understood as “the house of God,” “the house of the Lord,” “the sanctuary,” or simply “Zion” (Pss 9:11; 74:2; 132:13).⁹³ However, in the HB the earthly temple is a “shadow and copy” of the heavenly temple. The LORD says, “Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is my resting place?” (Isa 66:1). But in Ps 11:4, there is no tension between the heavenly temple and an earthly temple: “the LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD’s throne is in heaven.”

In this sense the temple could be understood as both the heavenly and earthly temple in colon 9c. God provides mercy to those who are in the temple and gives them protection from harmful and severely destructive situations in 3a-9b, but it is also a symbol of the real heavenly temple where God’s dwelling place is. In an earthly temple there are those who cry out “Glory!” responding in humility, joy, and understanding to a

⁹¹ Craigie, *Psalms*, 248.

⁹² Some believe that the second interpretation is better than the first, because the first one creates a contradiction between 3a-9b and 9c in terms of the context of Ps 29. In 3a-9b, everything is broken down and trembling at the voice of the LORD, even mountains and wilderness which have a solid foundation. Every living creature trembles at a thunderstorm as the voice of the LORD. But in 9c there is a group of people who cry out “Glory!” with a loud voice in the temple. If this temple is on the earth, it does not fit in the context of the previous cola (vv. 3a-9b). If the temple is the heavenly temple, the worshipers who shout “Glory!” with loud voices, are fulfilling the call of the opening cola of Ps 29 (vv. 1a-2b). However, it also does not fit with the context of the body of Ps 29. The context of the body of Ps 29 is on earth not heaven, strongly suggesting that colon 9c should also be a part of this context. Thus “in His temple” may mean the earthly temple. The answering cry of “Glory!” is a response of humility, joy and understanding which reveals that the storm is not an outbreak of meaningless or hostile forces, but the voice of the LORD, heard in all His works (see Wilson, *Psalms*, 1:506). All tremblers and all worshippers know the glory of the LORD. John Calvin says, “God’s voice fills the whole world, and spreads itself to its farthest limits; but the prophet declares that his glory is celebrated only in his church, because God not only speaks intelligibly and distinctly there, but also there gently allures the faithful to himself” (see Calvin, *Psalms*, 1:481).

⁹³ Ryken, *Biblical Imagery*, 849.

thunderstorm which is not an outbreak of meaningless or hostile forces, but the voice of the LORD. They have heard and seen all God's works. In the heavenly temple, there are heavenly beings before God's throne. All the heavenly beings cry "Glory!" with loud voices. In this way, in Ps 29:9c, both the heavenly and earthly temple cry out "Glory!" with loud voices.

Colon 9c functions as a transition from the body of Ps 29 to the conclusion of Ps 29 (vv. 10a-11b). The appearance of the LORD as the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm with lightning can be understood not only as showing His mighty power over His created world but also as revealing that it is the LORD who controls the created world and subdues the cosmic forces rather than Baal in Ps 29:3-9b. Finally, His people who hear and see this mighty appearance of the LORD praise the glory of the LORD in His temple.

In the body of Ps 29 the poet uses chiasmic structure to show the power and the glory of the LORD for which the poet commands the sons of God to bring glory to the LORD at the outset of the poem.

- A. The power of the voice of the LORD (vv. 3a-4b)
 - B. Trees in the mountain (vv. 5a-6a)
 - C. The mountains of the northern region (v. 6b)
 - D. Flames of fire as a means of the LORD (v. 7a)
 - C' The wilderness of the southern region (vv. 8a-8b)
 - B' Animals on the wilderness (vv. 9a-9b)
 - A' The glory of the LORD (v. 9c)

The center of this structure is the flames of fire in a thunderstorm. The poet uses the voice of the LORD as a sound in a thunderstorm in Ps 29:3a-6b, and then in the last half of it the

visual scene includes the sound as well (vv. 7a-9c). In this powerful activity the mountains and the wilderness are shaken by קול יְהוָה as the appearance of the LORD Himself (vv. 6b, 8a, 8b). Moreover, the trees which are in the mountains are broken down by קול יְהוָה (B) and the animals which live in the wilderness are also frightened by קול יְהוָה (B'). This is not just the description of the natural phenomenon but the description of the mighty power of the LORD over cosmic forces. The LORD controls and subdues His created world. The poet shows this powerful God in Ps 29:5-9b. In the first two strophes the poet describes how glorious and powerful the voice of the LORD is (A). And then in 9c the poet depicts the glory of the LORD by using the mouth of the people who are in His temple (A'). The poet uses this chiasmic structure to show the mighty power of the LORD over His created world.

2.6. Postlude (Stanza 6)

2.6.1. The Meaning of Stanza 6

Stanza 6 as the postlude of Ps 29 describes the confession of the people of God. They confess that the LORD sits on מְבוֹל as king forever (v. 10), and the LORD will give strength to His people and bless them with peace (v. 11). After hearing and seeing the mighty power of the LORD over His created world, they confess their faith and their hope in this postlude.

2.6.2. The Structure of Stanza 6

In this stanza the poet uses chiasmic parallelism in a different way to emphasize the LORD Himself. In strophe 10 the poet uses subject-verb chiasmic parallelism, but in strophe 11 he uses verb-object chiasmic parallelism.

יָשָׁב	יְהוָה לְמִבְּרֵל	10a	c	<u>b a</u>		<u>S + adv + V</u>
יְהוָה מְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם:	וַיָּשָׁב	10b	<u>b' a'</u>	c'		<u>V + S + adv</u>
יְהוָה	עוֹ לְעַמּוֹ	11a	d	<u>c b</u>	a	<u>S + DO + IDO + V</u>
יְהוָה	יְבָרֵךְ אֶת־עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם:	11b	<u>c' b'</u>	d'	a	<u>S + V + DO + adv</u>

We can see that the poet uses two chiasmic patterns in this stanza to emphasize יהוה syntactically. In strophe 11 the subject (יהוה) is placed particularly before the chiasmic pattern in order to emphasize it. Stanza 6 serves as the conclusion to Ps 29 as the poet describes the LORD as the King who sits on מִבְּרֵל forever, and then as the King who rules over cosmic powers who will give His protection and blessing to His people. In this Psalm the poet reveals that it is the LORD who rules over the created world using the same terminology with which other gods are described by the other nations, especially Baal. Finally, the people of God confess that the LORD will give protection and blessing to His people. This is the hope of the people of God. They have heard and seen the appearance of the LORD in the natural phenomenon of a thunderstorm. Now the poet illustrates that it is the LORD who controls heaven and earth and who will give protection and blessing to His people. It is the fundamental promise of God for those who believe in Him. In the conclusion the poet emphasizes this fundamental promise.

2.6.3. Strophe 10

In the last stanza the poet describes the LORD Himself rather than the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm. The LORD completes His works through a thunderstorm as the

voice of the LORD.⁹⁴ The poet sings about the enthronement of the LORD as King (v. 10b). The phrase *יְהוָה קוֹל* completes its purpose and then the LORD sits on *מְבוּל* (10a) where He sits as king forever (10b). Some understand *מְבוּל* as the quasi-flood which results from the torrent of rain accompanying the lightning and thunder.⁹⁵ But *מְבוּל* in strophe 10 is not *לְמְבוּל*, but *לְמְבוּל*.⁹⁶ The word *מְבוּל* occurs 12 times in the Bible.⁹⁷ All of them are connected with the flood narrative in Noah (Gen 7-8). In the story of the flood of Noah, the meaning of *מְבוּל* shifts from the heavenly ocean to the deluge (flood).⁹⁸ In the former instances (Gen 6:17; 7:6, 7, 10, 17), *מְבוּל* seems to describe the heavenly ocean which is God's dwelling place. In Gen 7:10, the water of *מְבוּל* comes upon the earth and in Gen 7:6 *מְבוּל* as a subject becomes water upon the earth literally. Moreover, in Gen 6:17 God says, "I am bringing the *מְבוּל* of water upon the earth." In these instances, *מְבוּל* seems to be a place where the water of Noah's flood was. In this manner *מְבוּל* can be recognized as the heavenly ocean that is God's dwelling place. On the other hand, the other instances (Gen 9:11, 15, 28; 10:1, 32; 11:10) use *מְבוּל* for describing the flood of Noah. Thus the meaning of *מְבוּל* progresses from heavenly ocean to flood. In connection with Ps 29, *מְבוּל* is used for denoting God's enthronement on the heavenly ocean which is God's dwelling place, rather than for describing God's enthronement on the flood of Noah. Although many commentators believe that the word *מְבוּל* indicates the flood of Noah in Genesis,⁹⁹ it can

⁹⁴ The phrase *יְהוָה קוֹל* is mentioned seven times in the body of Ps 29. The number seven carries the connotation of perfection in the Bible (cf. Ryken, *Biblical Imagery*, 774).

⁹⁵ Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:372.

⁹⁶ This word is articular.

⁹⁷ Genesis 6:17; 7:6, 7, 10, 17; 9:11, 15, 28; 10:1, 32; 11:10; Ps 29:10.

⁹⁸ Koehler, *Lexicon*, 491.

⁹⁹ Wilson, *Psalms*, 1:507; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:373. They say that *מְבוּל* refers to the threatening, chaotic water that the LORD subdued once and for all. The verb *יָשָׁב* ("to sit"), which is used in connection with *מְבוּל* in the strophe 10, also confirms this idea. The reference to the flood of Noah is also confirmed by the verb *נִישַׁב*, which follows the perfect form of the same verb *יָשָׁב*. This verb is connected with *נִישַׁב* consecutive, which produces the same perfect aspect.

hardly be reconciled with the word לְעוֹלָם (“forever”).¹⁰⁰ If we understand מַבּוּל as the flood of Noah, it does not make sense in connection with the word לְעוֹלָם.

On the other hand, if מַבּוּל refers to the heavenly ocean which is God’s dwelling place, there is no contradiction between God sitting on מַבּוּל and a temporal expression לְעוֹלָם. The LORD sits on the heavenly ocean as king forever. He never leaves His throne nor gives up His power to control the created world and to subdue cosmic forces.

Thus, in 10a the poet describes the LORD sitting on מַבּוּל, which is the heavenly ocean¹⁰¹ and then in 10b the poet confesses that the LORD king sits forever. In these two parallel lines the poet describes that the LORD as King sat on מַבּוּל forever in order to control His created world. When the LORD made the heavens and the earth, He sat on מַבּוּל controlling the cosmic world, which the poet describes in strophe 3 symbolically. He never stops His work to control the cosmic forces, that is, the poet vividly describes in the body of Ps 29 the use of natural phenomenon. This natural phenomenon is not just a natural principle, but the powerful work of the LORD as King on מַבּוּל, which is God’s heavenly dwelling place. Now the poet clearly indicates that the LORD is the King forever who rules over the created world in 10b.

2.6.4. Strophe 11

The poet uses different verbs in strophe 11, but in a sense they are the same category of giving. In connection with God as a subject, the verb נתן (“to give”) and בָּרַךְ (“to bless”) are described by the action of God’s giving. The LORD provides for His people what they need in this world. In 11a the poet describes the LORD giving strength

¹⁰⁰ Briggs, *Psalms*, 1:255.

¹⁰¹ Koehler, *Lexicon*, 491.

to the people of God in order to protect themselves and in order to conquer those who stand against the LORD as the agent of the LORD. The term *ṣ* is used in stanza 1 as one of the elements to bring to the LORD. Here the LORD, as owner of this strength, will give the same strength to His people to do the same thing as an agent of the LORD. This word is used for describing the strength of God as a military power.¹⁰² At the same time *ṣ* can mean “protection,” or “refuge.”¹⁰³ These two meanings could be discerned in this Psalm. In stanza 1 the poet uses the sense of “strength” or “mighty” and in stanza 6 he uses the sense of “protection” or “refuge.” In this manner the poet describes the LORD giving protection for His people in 11a. In 11b the poet states that the LORD will bless His people with peace, which means that the LORD will provide what they need both physically and spiritually. In the last strophe of Ps 29 the poet describes the power of the LORD and the blessing of the LORD for the people of God. Thus we can see that the poet emphasizes that the LORD Himself will give protection and blessing for His people rather than Baal or other things.¹⁰⁴

This final strophe functions as a confession by those who experience God’s appearance in a thunderstorm as the voice of the LORD. They have learned about the God who made the heaven and the earth and who controls them according to His purpose. They have heard about God’s works for His people and seen God’s power over His created world. Thus they confess their faith in God in strophe 11. It is not only to confess their faith, but also to speak of their future hope.

¹⁰² Craigie, “Psalm 29 in the Hebrew Poetic Tradition,” 143-51.

¹⁰³ Koehler, *Lexicon*, 693.

¹⁰⁴ Syntactically the subject is emphasized in the last strophe. In both cola the subject is placed at the beginning of the colon, which was presented above.

In the body of Ps 29 the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm attacks the promised land, which not only displays the mighty power of the LORD, but also reveals the LORD who controls and subdues cosmic forces. Thus, in 9c, those who have experienced God praise the glory of the LORD, and then in 11b they confess their faith in praising the LORD for His promised blessing of peace for His people.

2.7. Conclusion

Psalm 29 is a hymn extolling the victory of God over cosmic forces, describing God's appearance as the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm. In the prelude of Ps 29 the sons of God are called to ascribe to God the strength and glory of His name (vv. 1a-2a). They are also called to worship God in the majesty of holiness (v. 2b). The body of Ps 29 gives the reason why the sons of God are called to worship the LORD. In Ps 29:3-9 God appears as קול יְהוָה in a thunderstorm over God's promised land. By means of a thunderstorm God shows His power over chaotic forces. When He appears upon the created world, nothing can stand before Him. Through the voice of the LORD, God reveals His sovereignty, majesty and power over the created world. Those who have heard and seen God's appearance as the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm, sing "Glory!" to God with a loud voice in heaven and on earth (v. 9c).

In the postlude, the people of God, who are in His temple because of God's protection and God's mercy, praise God by confessing their faith. God gives them strength and blesses them with peace. The LORD sits upon מַבִּיל as king over the created world forever. He rules over His created world with power and glory and peace forever.

Thus in Ps 29 the poet extols the mighty power of the LORD over His created world. At the same time the poet describes that it is the LORD who controls and subdues

cosmic forces and not Baal, using the same terminology associated with Baal. Therefore the poet summons the sons of God as heavenly beings including the assembly of gods to worship the LORD. The people of God who hear the mighty works of the LORD praise the LORD with joyful voices in His temple and confess their faith and their hope in the LORD. The LORD will give strength and bless His people with peace continually. In Ps 29 the poet describes this glorious and powerful God.

Chapter 3: Shaping the Psalter

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter we investigated the meaning of Ps 29 as a distinct poem. The present chapter will focus on the Psalter as a whole. Why does the Psalter consist of 150 psalms and why are they arranged into five books in their present order? Can we read the Psalter as a story? If we can, in what manner may we read it as a story? Three decades ago, the 150 psalms in the Book of Psalms were dealt with individually, but in recent years many scholars have been trying to understand the Book of Psalms as a whole. Their works provide a new context for interpreting the Psalter and give a new meaning to the Book of Psalms compared to previous studies of individual psalms. Thus the present chapter will deal with the Psalter as a whole in order to provide a new hermeneutical literary context (that of the Psalter as a whole), which we will use to reread Ps 29 within the whole Psalter in the next chapter.

The present chapter will focus on the Psalter's arrangement and the relationship between the five books. It will begin by looking at the works of contemporary scholars interested in this in order to understand the shaping of the Psalter. This will be followed by a close look at each book in the final form of the Psalter including the introduction and the conclusion of the Psalter.

3.2. Shaping the Psalter

The Psalter has been divided into five books. Many scholars have tried to determine the precise historical process by which the Book of Psalms came into

existence.¹ Complete agreement is hard to find, but in general they agree that Books I-III were compiled before Books IV-V were added to this collection. However, we cannot know the process by which the Book of Psalms achieved its final form. With regard to an intentional scheme in the Psalter, it may also not be possible to account for the position and adjacent relation of every psalm,² but we can find overarching, organizing patterns which show what the editor (or a group of editors) had in mind. The Book of Psalms is clearly neither the work of one single author, nor the result of one single act of compilation. As Gerald Wilson and others correctly suggest, the final form of the Psalter is the result of a purposeful, editorial activity.³ What then was the purpose for shaping the whole Psalter in this way? It is not easy to answer to this question, but it is a fundamental question in terms of understanding the whole Psalter. Unfortunately we do not have

¹ Anderson, *Psalms*, 1:26-7. A.A. Anderson suggests five stages for the composing of the Psalter. In the first stage there were several smaller collections like the first Davidic psalter, and then these smaller collections became larger compilations which can be called Elohist psalter (Korahite, Davidic, and Asaphite Psalms). The third stage was joining the first Davidic psalter with the Elohist collection. This new compilation may have been introduced by Ps 2. In the next stage the combined Psalter (Pss 2-89) was gradually enlarged by the addition of smaller collections. Anderson asserts that at some point Ps 1 was added to the whole collection as a kind of “motto” for the aim and use of the whole Psalter. And then in the final stage of the whole Psalter came the division into five books. Craigie also suggests the stages of the composition of the Psalter in his commentary. He traces four stages in the process: first, a psalm was composed; second, it was linked together with other psalms to form a small collection; third, several small collections were brought together to form a large unit; fourth, the current Book of Psalms emerged with various individual psalms added by the editor(s) of the final book (Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 28-9). James G. Murphy suggests that it is to be assumed that the several collections were made at times of high religious life such as: Book I near the close of David’s life, Book II in the days of Solomon, Book III by the singers of Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 17:20), Book IV by the men of Hezekiah (2 Chr 29-31), and Book V in the days of Ezra (Murphy, *Psalms*, 45-7).

² Delitzsch and Alexander offer helpful arguments for the contiguous relations of every psalms in their commentary on the Book of Psalms. However, they only try to make relations between adjacent psalms, but do not offer any overall intentional scheme for the whole Psalter (cf. Delitzsch, *Psalms*; Alexander, *Psalms*).

³ Wilson, *Editing*, 198. The whole issue of the final shape of the Psalter has been reopened for discussion in the aftermath of the 1981 Yale dissertation by Gerald Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, who began by analyzing some of the principles of arrangement of psalmic literature observable in the ancient Near East in collections such as the Sumerian temple hymns and the Mesopotamian catalogues of hymnic incipits.

enough data to find the exact process by which the Psalter was shaped, but we have some clues into this process and the purpose of the final form of the Psalter.⁴

The canonical Psalter attained its final form in the postexilic period of Israel's history. DeClaisse-Walford convincingly asserts that the Psalter is the product of the "exigencies of postexilic life."⁵ If so, we must understand something about the life circumstances of the postexilic community in order to fully understand the Psalter. The postexilic community lived in circumstances very different from their ancestors. They were under the power of other nations⁶ and had lost the Davidic kings forever. Temple and cult had to be the central focus of their nationhood and their source of identity.⁷ In these circumstances the postexilic community shaped the Psalter in order to survive their community among the nations. With regard to these circumstances of the postexilic community the final form of the Psalter was shaped by them in order to provide them with a solution to survive their community from their difficult circumstances. In this way this thesis will understand the Psalter.

3.3. The Introduction of the Psalter

Psalms 1-2 function as an introduction to the whole Psalter. Although Wilson, in *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, suggests that only Ps 1 serves as an introduction to the Psalter, and, following the traditional viewpoint,⁸ G.T. Sheppard correctly argues that Pss

⁴ In this matter, I will examine the works of some scholars, who have studied the Book of Psalms in terms of understanding it as a whole, such as: Gerald Wilson, J.L. Mays, Nancy L. DeClaisse-Walford, etc.

⁵ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, vii.

⁶ The postexilic community was subjected first to the Persians, then the Greeks, and then the Romans.

⁷ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 29.

⁸ Wilson, *Editing*, 204.

1-2 are intended as an introduction to the Psalter.⁹ He uses the vocabulary and theme of these two psalms to support his argument. J.L. Mays develops this idea further by considering the nature and strategic location of Pss 1, 19, and 119. He convincingly suggests that these three psalms, which are called wisdom psalms, are the latest psalms in the Psalter and that they provide important information about how the Psalter is intended to be read.¹⁰

There is strong evidence to support the argument that Pss 1-2 are bound together in order to introduce the Book of Psalms. First, lexically these two psalms are closely related.¹¹ Psalm 1 begins with אָשְׁרֵי (“blessing”; v. 1) and Ps 2 ends with אָשְׁרֵי (v. 12), this term forming a bracket around these two psalms. The repetitions of the verb הִגֵּה (“to meditate,” “to plot”; Pss 1:2; 2:1), the noun דֶּרֶךְ (“path,” “way”; Pss 1:1, 6; 2:11), the verb אָבַר (“to destroy”; Pss 1:2; 2:1), and the verb יָשַׁב (“to sit,” “to dwell”; Pss 1:1; 2:4) also imply a close relationship between these two psalms.¹²

Second, Pss 1-2 have no superscription which is unusual in Book I (Pss 1-41). There are only four psalms in all of Book I (Pss 1, 2, 10, 33), which do not have superscriptions in the MT. In fact Pss 9-10 are treated as a single poem in the LXX. Although divided in the MT, these two psalms contain a continuous alphabetic acrostic. The absence of a superscription supports the view that it is a continuation of Ps 9. This acrostic poem begins in Ps 9 and concludes in Ps 10, but the mood changes. Psalm 9 is a pure lament whereas Ps 10 is a prayer for divine intervention against the wicked.¹³

⁹ Sheppard, *Wisdom*, 138-42.

¹⁰ Mays, “The Place of the Torah-Psalms in the Psalter,” 3-12.

¹¹ Boda, “Declare His Glory Among the Nations,” 22.

¹² For this list see Boda, “Declare His Glory Among the nations,” 22; Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 78; Sheppard, *Wisdom*, 139-40; Murphy, *The Gift of the Psalms*, 20.

¹³ See Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 1:68; Dahood, *Psalms*, 1:54.

Psalm 33 also does not have a superscription in the MT, although the LXX ascribes it to David. Psalm 33 begins just like the closing of Ps 32 in order to illustrate the last verse of Ps 32. A.F. Kirkpatrick suggests that Ps 33 appears to be of later date, inserted as an answer to the invitation of Ps 32:2 and as an example of the “songs of deliverance” spoken of in the previous psalm (Ps 32:7).¹⁴ In this way Pss 10 and 33 are closely related to the previous psalms (Pss 9, 32), forming in each case a pair of psalms. Therefore, it is clear why Pss 10 and 33 do not have superscriptions.

The absence of a superscription in Pss 1-2 has no apparent reason other than the fact that Pss 1-2 should be read together as an introduction to the Book of Psalms. Yet, DeClaisse-Walford correctly points out “the strong connection between them [Pss 1-2] certainly may explain why they were selected together to introduce the Psalter, but not that they should be understood and interpreted as a single psalm.”¹⁵

Serving in this way, Pss 1-2 bring together two topics: *torah* and the kingship of the LORD, and elevate these paired topics.¹⁶ In terms of the double topics of *torah* and the kingship of the LORD, Ps 1 is concerned with the problem of the wicked in society, and Ps 2 deals with the problem of the nations of the world. These two psalms show a choice of two ways for the individual (Ps 1) and for nations (Ps 2). Roland E. Murphy also makes a good observation that in their introductory role Pss 1-2 together highlight a double theme, individual and nation. He asserts that the emphasis of the introductory psalms is

¹⁴ Kirkpatrick, *The Psalms*, 165.

¹⁵ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 39.

¹⁶ Mays, “The Place of the Torah-Psalms in the Psalter,” 3-12. Mays convincingly suggests that all psalms which deal with the living of life under the LORD must be understood and recited in the light of the kingship of the LORD. At the same time, all psalms which are concerned with the kingship of the LORD must be understood and recited with the *torah* in mind.

not only on the individual and personal morality (Ps 1), but also on the preservation of a just order by the LORD's agent (Ps 2).¹⁷

In conclusion, Pss 1-2 have been prefixed to the Psalter and function as a hermeneutical introduction. These two psalms provide the interpretive context the postexilic community to read the entire Psalter.¹⁸ Thus this introduction gives a window into the whole Psalter and provides a literary context for reading the whole Psalter. With regard to this we can understand the Book of Psalms under the themes of *torah* and the kingship of the LORD, which describe the way of righteousness in two ways, in both an individual context to keep *torah* (Ps 1) and in a national context to obey the kingship of the LORD (Ps 2).

3.4. The Conclusion of the Psalter

The fact that Pss 1-2 function as the introduction of the whole Psalter raises the question of whether there is also a conclusion to the whole Psalter. Interestingly Books I-IV have a doxology at the end of each book (Pss 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48).¹⁹ However, Book V (Pss 107-150) ends not with a doxology, but rather with a series of *hallel* psalms (Pss 146-150). Wilson convincingly asserts that the lack of any concluding doxology at the end of Book V suggests that the final *hallel* psalms function as the

¹⁷ Murphy, *The Gift of the Psalms*, 20.

¹⁸ McCann, "Book I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter," 93-107. McCann also summarizes Wilson's idea about the purpose of the Psalter. He says, "The purpose of the Psalter in its final form was to address the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant in light of the exile, the diaspora and the oppression of Israel by the nations in the postexilic era."

¹⁹ Boda, "Declare His Glory Among the Nations," 18-20. Boda makes a good observation about these doxologies. He says that these doxologies reveal striking similarities such as: "blessed be" (Ps 41:13; 72:18, 19; 89:52; 106:48), "YHWH, God of Israel" (Ps 42:13; 72: 18; 106:48), "forever" or "everlasting" (Ps 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48), and "amen" (Ps 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48).

conclusion of the whole Psalter rather than as the conclusion of Book V,²⁰ and he adds that the actual conclusion of Book V itself occurs in Ps 145, which also provides the trigger for the final *hallel* psalms.²¹ Mark Boda correctly supports Wilson's idea to look at the last verse of Ps 145. Boda argues that Ps 145:21 serves as the doxology for Book V, since it contains terms common to the various doxologies: the verb בָּרַךְ ("blessed") and the term עוֹלָם ("everlasting"). Furthermore, he convincingly asserts that Ps 145 also functions not only as the conclusion of Book V, but also as an introduction to the final *hallel* psalms by not employing the term אָמֵן ("amen").²²

Thus, the final *hallel* psalms (Pss 146-150), which begin and end with הַלְלֵי יְהוָה, function as the conclusion of the Psalter. However they are not a random collection of *hallel* psalms. DeClaisse-Walford says, "It [Pss 146-150] possesses a progression of thought that moves the reader/hearer from the praise of a specific aspect of YHWH's 'gracious acts' to a general 'unqualified, unencumbered praise.'"²³ The whole Psalter is closed by praising the LORD as eternal king.

In terms of the contents of the final *hallel* psalms (Pss 146-150), Ps 146, as the first psalm of the *hallel* psalms, again deals with the theme of the kingship of the LORD through an individual person (vv. 1-2).²⁴ DeClaisse-Walford convincingly suggests that the poet understands the LORD as the ideal king who performs all the essential duties of

²⁰ Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter," 72-82.

²¹ Wilson, *Psalms*, 124.

²² Boda, "Declare His Glory Among the Nations," 20. Boda gives further explanation for the other elements of the doxologies. He says, "In addition it makes reference to the name יהוה (YHWH) and to קִדְשׁוֹ שֵׁם ("his holy name"), the latter reminiscent of the שֵׁם כְּבוֹדוֹ ("his glorious name") in the doxology of Ps 72:19. The lack of the phrase ("the God of Israel") is not unusual since it is missing in the doxology of Ps 89."

²³ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 99.

²⁴ In Ps 146:1 the poet addresses himself to praise the LORD (הַלְלֵי יְהוָה). And then in Ps 146:2 the poet confesses, "I will praise the LORD as long as I live" (אֶהְלֵלָה יְהוָה בְּחַיֵּי אֲמִירָה לְאֵלֵהי בְעוֹדִי). These two beginning verses clearly show that the LORD has been extolled by an individual person.

kings (vv. 7-10).²⁵ Thus Ps 146 clearly reveals that the LORD is the ideal king so that every one should bow down before the kingship of the LORD and acknowledge the limitation of human kings. In Ps 147, the praise of the kingship of the LORD is shifted from an individual to all of the Israelites as the worshipping community (v. 12). In Ps 147:12, the poet calls יְרוּשָׁלַם (“Jerusalem”) and צִיּוֹן (“Zion”) as the worshipping community which praises the LORD.²⁶ However, the poet still uses very “kingly” language to emphasize the kingship of the LORD as the LORD of the universe and the helper of His people (vv. 5, 6, 13-15).²⁷

The first half of Ps 148, as a creation hymn,²⁸ is addressed to the heavenly world (vv. 1-6), while the second half of it calls upon earthly creatures, created things and meteorological phenomena to magnify the LORD as their creator (vv. 7-14). This creation language is introduced in the previous psalm²⁹ and then is fully described in Ps 148. In Ps 148 the poet summons the entire created world to praise the kingship of the LORD who creates and controls the heavens and the earth. DeClaisse-Walford convincingly points out that Ps 148 reminds the reader/audience to move one step further along the succession of praise that closed the whole Psalter.³⁰ In this matter Pss 146-148 are purposely placed by the shaping community. In Ps 146 an individual person, and then the worshipping

²⁵ In Ps 146:7-10, the poet states that the LORD gives food to the hungry, sets prisoner free, gives sight to the blind, loves the righteous, protects the strangers, and supports the fatherless and the widow, but the LORD turns down the way of the wicked.

²⁶ Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:947. Anderson understands “Jerusalem” as the worshipping community and “Zion” as a parallel term to Jerusalem. He understands these two terms as the same worshipping community.

²⁷ In Ps 147:5 the poet describes the mighty power of the LORD and then in v. 6 the poet states that the LORD reassures the humble but reduces the wicked. In Ps 147:13-15 the poet deals the LORD as a commander who controls the created world.

²⁸ Bellinger, *Psalms*, 81.

²⁹ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 3:309. The poet introduces creation language in vv. 8, 9, and 16-18 of Ps 147. In these verses the poet describes the power of the LORD not only as creator but also as controller.

³⁰ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 101.

community, namely the people of Zion (Ps 147), and now the entire created world both in heaven and on earth are called upon to praise the LORD (Ps 148).

Like Ps 147, Ps 149 is again directed to the people of Israel, the sons of Zion, as the worshippers of the LORD (v. 2). Psalm 149 continually relates to the previous three psalms in terms of the kingship of the LORD and His creation. In Ps 149:2 the poet urges the sons of Zion to praise the LORD as their king (מְלֶכֶם)³¹ and their creator (עֹשֵׂי),³² which is the main theme in Pss 146-148.³³ However, Ps 149 adds a new direction to the praise of the LORD. In Ps 149:6-9 the poet describes the vengeance and the judgment of the LORD upon the rebellious nations and their kings and peoples, who do not serve the LORD as their king. Interestingly in the previous psalm the poet addresses kings and all the peoples, princes and all judges, young men and virgins, and old men and children to praise the LORD (Ps 148:11-13). DeClaisse-Walford suggests that these rebellious nations and peoples in Ps 149 are the consequences for those who are mentioned in Ps 148.³⁴ They do not serve the LORD as their king and their creator so that the LORD as the king of the created world punishes them by the hand of the Israelites who are the addressees of Ps 149. In the previous three psalms an individual person, then all the people of Zion, and finally the entire created world are called upon to praise the kingship of the LORD, and now the LORD punishes those who do not praise the LORD in Ps 149. Then Ps 150 brings the story of the Psalter to a climatic conclusion.

³¹ Noun masculine singular construct with 3rd person masculine plural suffix of מֶלֶךְ (“king”).

³² *Qal* Participle masculine plural construct form with 3rd person masculine singular suffix of עָשָׂה (“to make”). The 3rd person masculine singular suffix denotes Israel as collective noun and this participle can be translated as “its maker.”

³³ Goulder, *The Psalms*, 297. Michael D. Goulder makes a number of links between Ps 149 and the earlier psalms, but his observations are not limited to the final *hallel* psalms (Pss 146-150).

³⁴ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 102.

Psalm 150 has the tenfold repetition of the imperative הַלְלֵי־הוּא (“Praise him [God]”).³⁵ This may sound rather monotonous, but it is used for the sake of special emphasis. With its opening and closing *Hallelujah*, Ps 150 is a glorious expansion of the joys of Pss 146-149. Here, the poet praises the LORD and summons every living creature to praise the LORD.³⁶

The LORD is the eternal king. Only He is ultimately worthy of trust and His steadfast love for His people endures forever.³⁷ In this way the Book of Psalms is closed. The Psalter opens by showing the way of life, which is the way of righteousness in the context of an individual (Ps 1) and in the context of the world (Ps 2) and then it closes praising the LORD as the eternal king, who protects His righteous people who keep the *torah* and who serve the LORD as their eternal king, and who causes the wicked to perish both as individuals and as nations who do not serve the LORD as their eternal king and their creator.

3.5. Book I (Pss 3-41)

Psalms 1-2 function as the introduction of the whole Psalter in terms of the topic of *torah* and the kingship of the LORD. Patrick D. Miller convincingly argues that the two topics of the introductory psalms unfold dominantly in Book I. In terms of the topic of *torah*, he studies a group of psalms (Pss 15-24) in order to prove that this group of psalms is placed at the center of Book I with focus on delight in and obedience to the *torah* of the

³⁵ In v. 1, the poet uses הַלְלֵי־אֱלֹהִים (“Praise God”) and then he uses הַלְלֵי־הוּא (“Praise him”), which is *Piel* imperative masculine plural of הָלַל with 3rd person masculine singular object suffix which indicates God.

³⁶ Psalm 150:6 - כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהַלֵּל יְהוָה הַלְלֵי־הוּא (“Let all that has breath praise the LORD!”).

³⁷ Wilson, *Editing*, 220-8.

LORD.³⁸ Miller asserts that Ps 19 is the most reflective of Ps 1, in particular, in its emphasis on the *torah*, the joy of studying it, and its positive benefits for those who do. In Ps 19:7-10 the poet describes in great detail the positive character of *torah* and then in v. 11 he describes great reward (עֲקָב רָב)³⁹ for those who study and keep *torah*. Psalm 19 is the center of the group of Pss 15-24, which is arranged in an inclusion structure of which Pss 15 and 24 are the outer ring (inclusion).

On the other hand, in terms of the topic of the kingship of the LORD in Ps 2, Miller also suggests that the superscriptions of Book I, which mention the name of David, go on to make this direction quite explicit.⁴⁰ All the psalms in Book I can be placed on the lips of David,⁴¹ so that reading psalms in Book I involves hearing the voice of the king, because Ps 2 particularly leads the readers/audience into what follows. It is the foundation for other psalms by and about the king,⁴² Miller suggests. But he fails to go deeply enough to find out why Book I is arranged in this way.

McCann also asserts that Pss 1-2 function as a literary context for reading Book I and affirm the possibility of hope amid at the realities confronted by the postexilic community such as: exile, dispersion and the loss of royal sovereignty and national autonomy in the postexilic era. He suggests that the individual lament psalms, which are the most noticeable characteristic of Book I, can be read not only as individual expressions

³⁸ Miller, "The Beginning of the Psalter," 83-92.

³⁹ Both words are adjective masculine singular absolute forms, and the term עֲקָב basically means "consequence." However this term can mean "gain" or "reward" in connection with the basic meaning of "consequence." Thus this adjective phrase can be translated as "great reward" (cf. Brown, *BDB*, 748).

⁴⁰ Miller, "The beginning of the Psalter," 83-92.

⁴¹ Wilson, *Editing*, 173-6. As I have noted, the apparent exception with Pss 10 and 33 are not really exceptions. They are to be read in connection with the previous Pss 9 and 32. Psalms 1-2 are not also exceptions, but they are marked as the introduction of the Psalter with no superscriptions.

⁴² In Ps 2 we hear the king's voice in the prepositional phrase לִּי ("to me") in v. 7 and the divine direct address that follows it (vv. 7-9).

of difficulties but also as expressions of the problems of the community.⁴³ In this way Book I plays a key role for the postexilic community by confronting the difficulties without a total loss of confidence, because all the individual lament psalms in Book I always first describe difficulties and then express confidence in the LORD.

On this matter it is better to look at the beginning and ending psalms first (Pss 3, 41) in order to understand the arrangement of Book I, as done by DeClaisse-Walford.⁴⁴ Book I is a collection of the Psalms of David, and Ps 3, as the opening psalm of Book I, introduces the readers/audience to the subject matter of Book I, using the life of David. Psalm 3 begins with the superscription: “A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son.”⁴⁵ Although it is hard to find any connection between the contents of Ps 3 and the event in David’s life to which the superscription refers,⁴⁶ DeClaisse-Walford convincingly points out that the superscription directs the attention of the readers/audience to David, the chosen king of the LORD, and to the story they were about to hear, by recalling to mind a specific event in the life of David.⁴⁷ In Ps 3 the poet begins with an invocation and a complaint about the enemies (צָרִי)⁴⁸ who are all around in vv. 2-3 [1-2 Engl.], and then he describes his petition which includes a lengthy rationale for depending on the LORD to

⁴³ McCann, “Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Psalter,” 93-107.

⁴⁴ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 48. DeClaisse-Walford says that according to the principles of canonical criticism Ps 3 as the beginning of Book I should contain clues about why Ps 3, and the psalms that follow it, were included in the Psalter by the shaping community.

⁴⁵ The superscription of Ps 3 is מְזוֹמֵר לְדָוִד בְּקִרְהוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲבִשְׁלֹם בְּנוֹ, which locate themselves in particular historical settings in the life of David like 12 other psalms in the Psalter (Pss 7; 18; 34; 51; 52; 54; 56; 57; 59; 60; 63; and 142).

⁴⁶ In this matter Kraus completely dismisses the value of the superscription for understanding Ps 3 (cf. Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 139).

⁴⁷ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 50. DeClaisse-Walford follows James L. Mays’ suggestions about the historical notes found in the Psalter. Mays says, “David was the sweet psalmist of Israel. The songs that come out of his life as shepherd and warrior, as refugee and ruler, were the inspired expression of a life devoted to God in bad times and good, and therefore the guiding language for all who undertook lives of devotion” (Mays, “The David of the Psalms,” 143-55).

⁴⁸ This is noun masculine plural construct form of צָר (“adversary”) with 1st person common singular suffix.

protect and sustain him in vv. 4-7 [3-6 Engl.]. In the last two verses the poet denotes a sure confidence in the LORD who has struck down the enemies and has blessed His people. In this way Ps 3, a personal lament which can be understood as the king's personal grief in terms of its superscription, marks the beginning of Book I. This psalm reminds the postexilic community that they have a long-standing and powerful relationship with the LORD.⁴⁹ By introducing the life of David, the chosen king, Ps 3 provides them with a hope in the LORD and reminds them of their identity in the LORD in the midst of their crisis. Psalm 3 reminds the postexilic community, who faced all kinds of difficulties, that ancient Israel had once been a powerful nation under the leadership of David, the chosen king of the LORD. But dark days came and Babylon carried the people of Israel away into exile. They came back to their own land, but their enemies remained all around. The postexilic community learned from Ps 3 that they should totally depend on the LORD as their forefathers did in the past under the leadership of David, so that the LORD will strike down their enemies and bless them once again like the poet as David describes in Ps 3. Thus Ps 3 as the opening psalm of Book I, reveals the identity of the postexilic community as being in a long-standing relationship with the LORD and encourages them to continually rely on the LORD who will keep and bless His people.

At the same time Ps 41 as a concluding psalm of Book I closes with great self-assurance in the graciousness of the LORD in Ps 41:12-14 [11-13 Engl.]. At the beginning of Ps 41, Craigie points out that the poet describes the words spoken by the priest of the temple to the sick person, then the lament of the sick person in vv. 5-11 [4-10 Engl.], and finally the unrecorded oracle from the LORD concerning healing for the sick person and

⁴⁹ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 55. In general DeClaisse-Walford follows Wilson's conclusion but she deals with the beginning and the ending psalms of each book.

the confidence of the sick person in the LORD's graciousness.⁵⁰ Interestingly Ps 41 begins with אֲשֶׁרִי, with which Ps 1 begins and Ps 2 ends. At the beginning of Ps 41 the term אֲשֶׁרִי reminds the readers/audience to go back to the introductory psalms (Pss 1, 2). At the same time in vv. 2-4 [1-3 Engl.], the poet uses the 3rd person, and then he uses the 1st person in the rest of Ps 41. DeClaisse-Walford convincingly suggests that the shift in voice from 3rd person to 1st person reminds the postexilic community of the *torah*, at the beginning of Psalter, which also begins with the 3rd person: "How blessed is the man" (אֲשֶׁרִי-קָאִישׁ; Ps 1:1).⁵¹ For these two reasons Ps 41 is well placed as a conclusion of Book I in order to remind the postexilic community of the topic of the *torah* and to encourage them to continually keep the *torah* of the LORD through which the LORD blesses them.

In summary, Book I of the final form of the Psalter shows that the postexilic community has a long-standing and wonderful relationship with God through the Davidic covenant and line,⁵² which are introduced by the superscription of all psalms in Book I. Although the postexilic community has lost their king in the kingship of the Davidic line, Book I continually encourages them to keep *torah* and to obey the LORD as their eternal king in their reality of crisis. Psalms 3 and 41, as the opening and ending psalms of Book I, remind the postexilic community to have confidence in the LORD as their eternal king who had blessed the ancient Israel under leadership of David (Ps 3) and to remember the LORD's *torah* and His protection in the midst of their enemies (Ps 41).

⁵⁰ Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 319.

⁵¹ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 56.

⁵² At the same time, if Books I-II are understood as a celebration of the reigns of David and Solomon as argued in the traditional view point, then Ps 3 is also used to introduce David, the ideal king of the golden age of Israel's history to the postexilic community to encourage them to have hope in the LORD who gave blessing to ancient Israel under the leadership of David

3.6. Book II (Pss 42-72) and Book III (Pss 73-89)

The reality of the postexilic community failing the Davidic covenant is more clearly revealed throughout Books II-III. The composition of Books II-III of the Psalter dramatically changes. The first book (Pss 3-41) contains individual lament psalms which can be read as both personal expressions and communal expressions. In Books II-III, however, there are many groups of communal lament psalms rather than individual ones.⁵³ Book II opens with a Levitical collection (Pss 42-49), which is attributed to the sons of Korah in the superscriptions. Although Ps 43 does not have a superscription in the MT,⁵⁴ many argue that Pss 42-43 belong together as a unit because of the common refrain shared by these two psalms: *מָה־תִּשְׁחַחֲחִי נַפְשִׁי וְתִהְיֶנּוּ עָלַי הוֹחִלִי לְאֱלֹהִים כִּי־עוֹד אֶזְכֹּר אֲדֹנָי יִשְׁעוֹת פָּנָיו וְאֱלֹהֵי*⁵⁵ (Pss 42:6 [5 Engl.], 12 [11 Engl.]; 43:5). Although these three verses are not identical, Wilson convincingly explains that the refrains in Pss 42:12 [11 Engl.] and 43:5 end, “the help of my countenance and my God” (NASB). Changing Ps 42:6 [5 Engl.] to conform to the other two refrains would require making the first word of Ps 42:7 [6 Engl.] *אֱלֹהֵי* (“my God”) the last word of Ps 42:6 [5 Engl.] *פָּנָיו* (“His presence”) and changing the word division. Thus *פָּנָיו וְאֱלֹהֵי* would become *פָּנָיו וְאֱלֹהֵי*.⁵⁶ Even though LXX also separates these two psalms and gives a superscription to Ps 43 as *ψαλμὸς τῷ Δαυιδ* (“A Psalm of David”), vocabulary, style and the refrain in these two psalms strongly suggest that the two psalms should be considered together. But it does not mean that these two psalms were at one time a single psalm. DeClaisse-Walford also correctly sees dissimilarity between the two

⁵³ McCann, “Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Psalter,” 95-107.

⁵⁴ The MT separates these two psalms, but Kennicott lists 39 manuscripts and de Rossi adds nine additional manuscripts which join Pss 42 and 43 together (see Wilson, *Editing*, 176).

⁵⁵ “Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God” (NASB).

⁵⁶ Wilson, *Editing*, 176 (see e.g., Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 1:435-42; Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 323-9).

psalms; in Ps 42 the poet is speaking to himself as 3rd person and in Ps 43 the poet addresses his plea to God for divine assistance (Ps 43:1-4).⁵⁷ At the beginning of Book II, these two psalms also describe a personal expression of someone who is not only expressing difficulties, but also who is able to maintain hope. Unlike Book I, Book II directly presents reality through communal lament psalms,⁵⁸ rather than through individual laments which had dominated Book I. Interestingly, this composition style more clearly occurs in Book III. Strikingly, in Book III 15 of 17 psalms are attributed to Asaph and Korah as communal psalms, and only one psalm is attributed to David. We will deal with this evidence further below.

After the Levitical collection (Pss 42-49), individual lament psalms occur again in Ps 50 (the Asaph psalm) and Pss 51-70 (the Davidic collection). This is a shift in the overall shaping of Books I-II (Pss 3-72) from individual lament psalms to communal lament psalms. Although the focus of Book II is still the “Davidic dynasty,”⁵⁹ the name of David, which is mentioned in the superscription of Psalms in Books I-II, slowly disappears in the second book of the Psalter. The name of David is not prominent in Book II any more. However, the contents of Book II are similar to Book I, describing not only the identity of the postexilic community which has a long-standing relationship with the LORD as their eternal king, but also the encouragement of keeping *torah* and obeying the LORD as their king in the midst of their crisis. In this matter, Book II also reveals the reality of the postexilic community and provides a hope in the LORD by using the lament psalms and the royal psalm (Ps 72).

⁵⁷ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 69.

⁵⁸ McCann, “Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Psalter,” 93-107. McCann asserts that the Levitical collections are psalms of the community rather than individual psalms as the David psalms.

⁵⁹ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 67.

At the same time Ps 42, as the beginning psalm of Book II, reminds the readers/audience that all was not well, even in the days of David and Solomon.⁶⁰ But like David and Solomon, the readers/audience can hope in the LORD in the midst of their difficulties. In this way Book II of the Psalter encourages the postexilic community to hope in the LORD in their crisis.

Like Book II, Book III also opens with a Levitical collection (Pss 73-83), the Asaph psalms.⁶¹ However, Book III contains another Levitical collection, the psalms of the sons of Korah (Pss 84-85; 87-88). Strikingly there are only two individual psalms in Book III, and only Ps 86 is attributed to David. The communal lament psalms dominate Book III. With the close of Ps 72, especially the last verse⁶² “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended” (NASB), David now moves into the background. Wilson asserts that Book II, ending with a royal psalm attributed to Solomon (Ps 72), has the effect of suggesting that the promise of God to David in the Davidic covenant is good for Solomon and all other Davidic descendants as well.⁶³ DeClaissé-Walford follows Wilson, but she extends the descendants of David to the postexilic community, not just successors of the kingship of Davidic line. She says “the focus is now on the descendants of David, who

⁶⁰ The superscription of Ps 42 is לְמַנְצִיחַ מוֹשֵׁבֵי לְבָנֵי-קֹרַח (“For the director of music. A maskil of the Sons of Korah”). The sons of Korah are closely associated with David and Solomon in the united kingdom of Israel. First Chronicles 9:19 states that “the Korahites, were over the work of the service, keepers of the thresholds of the tent; and their fathers had been over the camp of the LORD, keepers of the entrance,” and 1 Chr 6:31-32, “Now these are those whom David appointed over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after the ark rested there. They ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem; and they served in their office according to their order.” In a sense Ps 42 as the opening psalm of the collection of the sons of Korah shows the dynasty of the Davidic kingdom without using the name of David.

⁶¹ Asaph is the brother of Heman, the son of Berechiah, a descendant of Levi through Gershom, and part of one of the great families or guilds of musicians and singers in preexilic Israel (1 Chr 6:39; 25:1, 2; 2 Chr 5:12). DeClaissé-Walford says, “The songs in the Psalter which are attributed to Asaph were probably part of a much larger collection of songs” (see DeClaissé-Walford, *Reading*, 74).

⁶² Psalm 72:20 - כָּל־חַפְּלוֹת דָּוִד בְּיָשָׁי.

⁶³ Wilson, *Editing*, 209-14.

will determine the future of ancient Israel.”⁶⁴ In this way Book III of the Psalter is dominated by lament psalms of the community.⁶⁵ McCann convincingly claims that Book III has been decisively shaped by “the experience of exile and dispersion.”⁶⁶ He also makes a helpful observation that these communal laments in Book III are not arranged consecutively, but rather they are placed between “the psalms of hope”⁶⁷ in the midst of the experience of exile and dispersion.

Interestingly Ps 73, as the opening psalm of Book III, is comprised of two parts: lament and hope, like the arrangement of Book III.⁶⁸ In the first two sections of Ps 73 the poet laments the security, well-being, and arrogance of the wicked (vv. 1-12), and is tempted to believe that there is no benefit for the one who obeys the instruction of the LORD (vv. 13-17). In the last section the poet denotes a hope in the LORD. The wicked are set in slippery places but the poet is secure because God is continually present (vv. 18-28). The poet finishes this psalm singing that the nearness of God is good (Ps 73:28). On the other hand Ps 89 as the ending psalm of Book III also has the same “lament-hope” pattern, but the poet describes the hope first. Psalm 89 begins by rehearsing all the elements of the Davidic covenant (vv. 1-38), but it concludes by lamenting that the Davidic covenant has failed (vv. 39-52).⁶⁹ Psalm 89 ends in lament without an expression of confidence in the LORD which is normally found in the lament psalms in the Psalter.⁷⁰ Thus Book III begins with a lament (Ps 73:1-17) and also ends with a lament (Ps 89:39-

⁶⁴ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 73.

⁶⁵ Many psalms are classified as community lament psalms in Book III, such as: Pss 74, 79, 80, 82, 83, 85, and 89.

⁶⁶ McCann, “Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Psalter,” 93-107.

⁶⁷ McCann, “Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Psalter,” 93-107. McCann classifies the psalms of hope as Pss 75; 76; 78; 81; 82; 84; 85:9-14; 87; 89:1-38. These psalms celebrate God as judge of all the earth or rehearse God’s past deeds on Israel’s behalf despite Israel’s faithlessness.

⁶⁸ McCann, “Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Psalter,” 93-107.

⁶⁹ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 78-9.

⁷⁰ Bellinger, *Psalms*, 46.

52). Although Book III is shaped in a pattern between hope and lament, these two psalms clearly show that the volume of lament seems to have overpowered the hope expressed in Book III.

On this matter J. Clinton McCann correctly adds to Wilson's conclusion about understanding the Psalter. Wilson asserts that the Davidic king and the Davidic covenant are given prominence in Ps 2, and this is seen not only by the predominance of David in the superscriptions of Books I-III, but also in the appearance of royal psalms at the "seams" of Books I-III (Pss 2, 72, 89).⁷¹ Then Wilson concludes that Books I-III were arranged to document the failure of the Davidic covenant in the light of the exile and dispersion.⁷² And then he sees Books IV-V as the answer to the problem documented by the first three books.⁷³ However, McCann correctly adds to Wilson's conclusion that in Books I-III the answer to the problem posed by the exile, dispersion and the oppression of Israel by the other nations in the postexilic era is already there.⁷⁴

Thus the lament psalms in Book III do not totally vanquish hope for those experiencing exile and dispersion. Rather they forge new expressions of hope in enabling the postexilic community to survive. In this way, Book III serves to assist the community not only to confront squarely the miserable reality of exile, but also to reach a new expression of hope in the LORD, who is continually present in the midst of the reality of despair.

In summary, the prayers of David in Books I-II combine with Levitical collections in Books II-III, which are songs of David's official singer-guilds. This combination

⁷¹ Wilson, *Editing*, 207-14.

⁷² McCann, "Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Psalter," 93-107.

⁷³ Wilson, *Editing*, 94.

⁷⁴ McCann, "Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Psalter," 93-107.

clearly shows that in Books I-III there is a definite shift from individual lament psalms to communal lament psalms. All the psalms in Book I are attributed to David as individual psalms, while in Book II 17 of 35 psalms are attributed to David. Finally, in Book III only Ps 86 is attributed to David. This movement reveals that Davidic kingship and covenant slowly fade away in the Psalter, which means that Books I-III inform the postexilic community about the failure of the Davidic covenant. At the same time Books I-III continually remind the postexilic community of their identity while reminding them of the topic of *torah* and the kingship of the LORD by shaping the royal psalms (Pss 2, 72, 89) in order to provide for a hope in the LORD. The shift to more communal psalms in the Psalter reveals to the postexilic community the failure of the Davidic covenant and instructs them about who they are. Although their reality is so difficult, they are continually the chosen people of the LORD, who never fails to rule over the world. Now that their human Davidic kings, the successors of King David, have failed, the LORD as their eternal king is continually present in the midst of their miserable realities. Books I-III encourage the postexilic community to seek the LORD as their king. For this reason these three books end with the very questions for which the postexilic community needed answers in order to specifically seek the LORD Himself (Ps 89:47) and His former lovingkindness to David (Ps 89:49). The stage is now set for Books IV-V to solve the problems raised by Books I-III.

3.7. Book IV (Pss 90-106) and Book V (Pss 107-145)

The final form of the whole Psalter functions as a kind of instruction of the LORD to the postexilic community, in which the people of God are to find their identity and

tasks.⁷⁵ As already argued above, in Books I-III the postexilic community found their identity. Books I-III reminded the postexilic community that they had a long-standing and wonderful relationship with their God. Now Books IV-V will reveal the tasks of the postexilic community.

However, the structure of Books IV-V is not so easily discerned. These two books are mostly linked by their subjects or uses,⁷⁶ rather than by their superscriptions. In Books IV-V untitled psalms dominate.⁷⁷ Strikingly only 19 of 61 psalms in Books IV-V name an author: Moses, David, and Solomon. In this matter the editor of the Psalter shifts the subject matter from human kingship in the Davidic line (Pss 2-89) to the divine kingship of the LORD, which dominates Book IV.⁷⁸ Thus Ps 90 becomes a turning point in the final form of the Psalter, and gives the readers/audience a new direction for reading Books IV-V.⁷⁹

Book IV, as the ‘editorial heart’ of the Psalter,⁸⁰ contains two major collections of psalms: מלך יהוה psalms (Pss 93; 96-99) and the Davidic psalms (Pss 101; 103-104). Concerning the מלך יהוה psalms, Wilson evaluates the work of David M. Howard and says “Howard discovers that Pss 95 and 100 form a ‘frame’ around the core מלך יהוה psalms (Pss 96-99).”⁸¹ Howard argues that Book IV provides an interlocking mechanism by

⁷⁵ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 79-80.

⁷⁶ Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 1:5. Kidner classifies Books IV and V into four categories including the world-wide kingship of the LORD (Pss 93-100), the “Egyptian *Hallel*” (‘praise’) sung on Passover night (Pss 113-118), “songs of Ascents” (Pss 120-134) or the “Great *Hallel*” (Pss 120-136), and the final *Hallel* (Pss 146-150). He also adds two sets of Davidic psalms (Pss 108-110; 138-145).

⁷⁷ Wilson, “Shaping the Psalter,” 72-82. In Book IV only seven of these 17 psalms have titles and only three of these titles name an author (Moses in Ps 90 and David in Pss 101, 103). In Book V 26 of 44 psalms have titles, but only 16 psalms mention the name of David (Pss 108-110; 122; 124; 131; 133; 138-145) and the name of Solomon (Ps 127).

⁷⁸ Howard, “Editorial Activity in the Psalter,” 52-70.

⁷⁹ See McCann, *A Theological Introduction*, 155-62; Wilson, *Editing*, 214-9; Brueggemann, *The Message*, 110-5; DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 81-8.

⁸⁰ Wilson, *Editing*, 215.

⁸¹ Wilson, “Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms,” 42-51.

which מלך יהוה psalms are bound together with the preceding psalms (Pss 90-92; 94).⁸² Although Howard offers helpful insights, as noted by Wilson, he fails to explain the separation of Ps 93 from the group of מלך יהוה psalms. However, Wilson convincingly follows Howard's "interlock" technique for binding groups together in order to make Wilson's claim.⁸³

In terms of the contents of Book IV, the opening psalm, Ps 90, is ascribed to Moses. Books I-III have focused on the kingship of David and his descendants, and on the failure of Davidic covenant through the failure of the kings in the Davidic line. Now Moses represents a different time, a time at the beginning of the nation of Israel. Thus Ps 90 reminds the postexilic community that they must now go back to the beginning, before the Davidic monarchy. At this point the name of Moses introduces a "pre-monarchy," being dependent on the LORD alone who did marvelous works for Israel, rather than encouraging confidence in the human rulers who are the descendants of the Davidic line.⁸⁴ Thus the following psalm (Ps 91) instructs the audience to find refuge in the LORD who alone is eternal king (Ps 92:1-2). These themes provide a suitable introduction to the group of מלך יהוה psalms which praise the kingship of the LORD. At the same time Book IV closes celebrating the marvelous deeds of the LORD on behalf of ancient Israel in Pss 105-106, similar to the opening psalms of Book IV (Pss 90-92; 94).⁸⁵ But Ps 106 concentrates more on the failure of ancient Israel to trust the LORD, than on the saving acts of the LORD, the subject matter of Ps 105. DeClaisse-Walford points out that Ps 106

⁸² Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter," 72-82.

⁸³ Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter," 72-82.

⁸⁴ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 82-8.

⁸⁵ Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter," 72-82. Wilson sees Pss 105 and 106 as closely related and he binds them together as the closing psalm of Book IV. He also adds, "Psalms 90-92 and 94 share numerous verbal and thematic connections with the concluding psalms of Book IV (105-106)."

reminds the postexilic community that their ancestors had been unfaithful to the LORD, but the LORD had been continually faithful to them. This is also good for the postexilic community. They understand that the LORD is still good to them during their unfaithful deeds in the past. Thus Ps 106 encourages the audience to trust in the LORD once again.

Book V is possibly the most difficult to sort out because of untitled psalms in it. However, 39 psalms of Book V (Pss 107-145) can be divided into four major sections: Davidic psalms (Pss 108-110; 138-145), *hallel* psalms (Pss 111-118; 135), a group of Songs of Ascents (Pss 120-134), and untitled psalms (Pss 107; 119; 136; 137). In the second group (Pss 111-118; 135) traditionally Pss 113-118 are called ‘Egyptian *Hallel*’ by the Jewish tradition, which is distinguished from the ‘Great *Hallel*’ (Pss 120-136),⁸⁶ and from the concluding *hallel* of the Psalter (Pss 146-150). These ‘Egyptian *Hallel*’ psalms were used at the Passover, and Pss 113-114 were sung before the Passover meal, and Pss 115-118 afterwards.⁸⁷ However, Pss 111-112 are also connected by the term הַלְלוּ יְהוָה at the beginning of these two psalms. Thus Pss 111-118, which include the term הַלְלוּ יְהוָה, can be treated as one group of *hallel* psalms.⁸⁸ In fact Pss 111-113 begin with הַלְלוּ יְהוָה, and Pss 113 and 115-117 end with it.⁸⁹ Psalms 111-113 describe the powerful God who is worthy of humanity’s trust (Pss 111:2, 6-8; 112:5-9), and Pss 114-117 also reveal the power of the LORD (Ps 115:3-8) and His intent and ability to save His people (Ps 116:1-2, 5-6, 8-11).

⁸⁶ Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:779. The ancient Jewish authorities were not agreed on the extent of the “Great *Hallel*” thus the “Great *Hallel*” is recognized as Pss 120-136, Pss 135-136, or Ps 136 alone.

⁸⁷ Dahood, *Psalms*, 3:130.

⁸⁸ Wilson also includes Pss 111-112 in the group of *hallel* psalms (Pss 111-118; cf. Wilson, *Editing*, 220).

⁸⁹ Wilson, *Editing*, 221. In fact Pss 114 and 118 do not have the term הַלְלוּ יְהוָה. Wilson convincingly asserts that thematically Ps 114, which does not have הַלְלוּ יְהוָה, serves an important role at the center of these *hallel* psalms (Pss 111-118) for denoting the mighty power of the LORD displayed on behalf of Israel in the Exodus.

Thus this group of psalms extols the mighty power of the LORD and exhorts the readers/audience to fear the LORD and to trust in Him.

The third group of psalms (Pss 120-134) has the superscription: שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת (“A Song of Ascent”),⁹⁰ which were probably used by the pilgrims on their way up to the temple at Jerusalem for the feast.⁹¹ Thematically this group of psalms exhorts the postexilic community to rely on the LORD alone.⁹² Wilson points out that Pss 132-134 describe “a renewed reflection on the Davidic covenant and the LORD’s faithfulness to it.”⁹³ Therefore like *hallel* psalms (Pss 111-118), the group of “Songs of Ascent” exhorts the readers/audience to depend on the LORD who is faithful to the Davidic covenant.

There are also two groups of Davidic Psalms in Book V at the beginning (Pss 108-110) and end (Pss 138-145). Howard who follows Wilson’s idea convincingly, asserts that David is seen as modelling reliance and trust the LORD in the midst of difficulties in these two groups of psalms.⁹⁴ In the first group of Davidic psalms, David emerges as “wise man” (חָכָם) in Ps 107:43, who “gives heed” (יִשְׁמַר) in Ps 107:39-42, and who totally relies on “the steadfast love of the LORD” (חַסְדֵי יְהוָה) in Ps 109:26-31. Interestingly the theme of reliance to the LORD is followed by the group of *hallel* psalms (Pss 111-118) as seen above. Thus in the first group of Davidic psalms (Pss 108-110), King David serves as a model of reliance on the LORD in the midst of difficulties for the postexilic community

⁹⁰ In Ps 121 the superscription is לַמַּעֲלוֹת which is the combination of preposition לְ + article + noun feminine plural absolute form. Leslie C. Allen suggests that the term לַמַּעֲלוֹת (“Processional”) serves to clarify the indeterminate nature of the construct form שִׁיר (“a song”). This is one of the evidences that Pss 120-134 form a collection of cultic songs of diverse origins (cf. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 3:146, 151).

⁹¹ Koehler, *Lexicon*, 705. The verb עלה (“to go up”), which is the origin of the term מַעֲלָה, is often used as a technical term for going on a pilgrimage or for the processional ascent to the sanctuary (cf. Ps 24:3).

⁹² Howard, “Editorial Activity in the Psalter,” 52-70. At the beginning of each psalm the theme of reliance on the LORD is depicted (Pss 120:1; 121:1; 123:1; 124:1-3, 8; 125:1; 126:1 127:1-2; 130: 5, 7; 131:3).

⁹³ Wilson, *Editing*, 225.

⁹⁴ Howard, “Editorial Activity in the Psalter,” 52-70; Wilson, *Editing*, 220-2.

who faced so many difficulties. At the same time, in the second group of Davidic psalms (Pss 138-145) David also serves as an example following the plaintive cry of the exiles expressed in Ps 137:4.⁹⁵ Thematically Wilson property asserts that David's example of confidence in the LORD's protection which is introduced by Ps 138, continually appears in the following psalms (Pss 139-144).⁹⁶ Thus these two groups of Davidic psalms reintroduce David as a model of reliance of the LORD and as an example of confidence in the LORD's protection from enemies in order to encourage the postexilic community to follow David in the midst of their crisis.

In connection with the untitled psalms, Ps 107 is the opening psalm of Book V and is widely understood as a psalm of the exiles returning from Babylon, which is a response to the plea of exiles expressed in Ps 106:47a.⁹⁷ The poet of Ps 107 describes the expression of gratitude of four different groups of people for their deliverance.⁹⁸ At the same time Goulder strongly suggests that Ps 137 is also understood as "a psalm for the exiles returned from Babylon."⁹⁹ Before Ps 137, there is a historical psalm which is sometimes traditionally known as the "Great *Hallel*" (Ps 136). Structurally Ps 136 presents praise for the lordship of the LORD over nature and history from the Exodus to the Settlement. The last untitled psalm is the massive Ps 119. Psalm 119, along with its clear relation to the introductory Ps 1, emphasizes the primacy of the law in man's relationship

⁹⁵ Psalm 137:4 - אַךְ נָשִׂיר אֶחֱ-שִׁיר-יְהוָה עַל אֶרֶץ נָכַר - (How shall we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land?).

⁹⁶ Wilson, *Editing*, 222.

⁹⁷ Psalm 106:47a - הוֹשִׁיעֵנו יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְקַבְּצֵנוּ מִן-הַגּוֹיִם ("Save us, O LORD our God, And gather us from among the nations").

⁹⁸ There are travelers (vv. 4-9), released prisoners (vv. 10-16), those healed from their illnesses (vv. 17-22), and seafarers (vv. 23-33) in Ps 107.

⁹⁹ Goulder, *The Psalms*, 14-6. Goulder makes a simple parallel structure in Book V, mostly given by the heading in the text: historical psalms (105-106//135-136), return from exile (107//137), Davidic psalms (108-110//138-145), alphabetic psalms (111-112//145), *Hallel* psalms (113-118//146-150), and praise of the law (119//1).

to the LORD. Wilson points out that “this relationship is viewed as primarily one of individual approach and access through the appropriation of and obedience to *torah*, a concept shared with Ps 1.”¹⁰⁰

Although Book V is heterogeneous, it mainly reveals an attitude of dependence and trust on the LORD alone. In this way David is seen as modelling this attitude in two groups of Davidic psalms (Pss 108-110, 138-145) at the beginning and end of Book V. At the same time the group of *hallel* psalms (Pss 111-118) and the songs of ascents (Pss 120-134) also reveal reliance on the LORD alone in the midst of difficulties. Thus Book V calls the postexilic community to follow David as a model who relies on the LORD in crisis.

To sum up, Books IV-V instruct the postexilic community to continually trust in the LORD. Book IV begins with the prayer of Moses in order to remind them of the faithfulness of the LORD in the history of ancient Israel. It closes with celebrating the marvelous works of the LORD on behalf of ancient Israel in the midst of the unfaithfulness of ancient Israel. However, the LORD never fails to keep his lovingkindness to the people of God (Ps 106). Thus Book IV encourages the postexilic community as the people of God to return to the LORD and to trust Him as their eternal king. Book V encourages the postexilic community to seek refuge in the LORD (Ps 107) and to depend on Him totally. In this way David functions as a model of trust and dependence on the LORD in Book V. These are the tasks of the postexilic community. Now the questions in the last psalm of Books I-III are solved in Books IV-V. The LORD as their eternal king never hides Himself from them, but the people of God forget their God and leave the LORD their eternal king. Thus the people of God as the postexilic

¹⁰⁰ Wilson, *Editing*, 223.

community must return to the LORD and continually trust Him only and totally depend on the LORD. This is the only way to survive the postexilic community.

In this way the concluding psalms (Pss 146-150), which have been considered above, exhort the people as individuals and as a community and all created things in heaven and on earth to praise the LORD as their eternal king and to trust Him only.

3.8. Conclusion

The final form of the Psalter constitutes the instruction of the LORD to the postexilic community in which they can find answers to the questions about their identity and about their tasks in the midst of their miserable reality.¹⁰¹ Books I-III reveal that they have a long-standing wonderful relationship with God, but they fail to keep their relationship with the LORD and the Davidic covenant. In this matter, the Psalter begins with an emphasis on an individual lamentation of David (Pss 3-41), but individual lamentation is dramatically replaced by the communal lamentation in Books II-III to show the failure of the Davidic kingship and Davidic covenant. But the LORD never fails to keep His lovingkindness for the people of God. Books I-III continually reveal the LORD's faithfulness to the people of Israel. Books I-III also uncover the reality of the postexilic community and their identity in order to teach them to seek the LORD as their eternal king. In this way Books IV-V show the postexilic community what they are to do. They must seek the LORD as their eternal king rather than a human king Davidic line. The postexilic community is encouraged to return to the LORD and continually trust Him as their protector and as their eternal king. This is the only way for their community to survive among the nations.

¹⁰¹ DeClaisse-Walford, *Reading*, 79.

The Psalter is shaped purposefully to instruct the postexilic community. So the Psalter could be read in this way and could be understood in terms of the literary context of the Psalter as a whole. In this context this present thesis will now proceed to examine the meaning Ps 29 in the literary context of the Psalter as a whole in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: The Meaning of Psalm 29 in the Psalter

4.1. Introduction

The previous two chapters presented the meaning of Ps 29 and the meaning of the final form of the Psalter as a whole. This chapter will bring the results of the previous two chapters into dialogue in order to understand the meaning of Ps 29 in the Psalter as a whole. First, the meaning of Ps 29, which was presented in chapter 2, will be summarized. Second, this chapter will look at Ps 29 in its canonical context, in relation to Pss 1-2 as the introduction to the Psalter, Book I (Pss 3-41), Books I-III (Pss 3-89), and finally the whole Psalter (Pss 3-145) including the conclusion of the Psalter (Pss 146-150). This chapter will examine how the meaning of Ps 29 changes in relation to these different contexts and how to understand each psalm in the context of the Psalter as a whole.

4.2. The Meaning of Psalm 29

Chapter 2 dealt with Ps 29 in order to find out its meaning. Here is a brief summary of Ps 29. Psalm 29 is a general hymn¹ to praise the victory of God over the cosmic forces, which describes the appearance of the LORD as the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm. In Ps 29:1-2 the sons of God are called to ascribe to God the strength and glory of His name and to worship God in the majesty of his holiness. The middle section of Ps 29 provides the reason why the sons of God are called to worship God. In Ps 29:3-9, the LORD appears as קול יְהוָה (“the voice of the LORD”) in a thunderstorm over His promised land. By means of a thunderstorm God shows His power over chaotic forces. When He appears upon the created world, nothing can stand before Him. Through the

¹ Bellinger, *Psalms*, 23. Bellinger classifies 150 psalms into four categories: praise, lament, royal, and wisdom Psalms. I will follow his classification in this thesis.

seven voices of the LORD in Ps 29:3-9b, the LORD reveals His sovereignty and His majesty and His power over the created world. Those who have heard and seen the appearance of the LORD as the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm, sing “Glory!” to God with a loud voice in heaven and on the earth (v. 9c).

In the last section of Ps 29 those who hear the voice of the LORD as the appearance of the LORD praise the LORD by confessing their faith. They confess that God gives them strength and blesses them with peace. The LORD sits upon מְבִיל as king over the created world forever. He has ruled over His created world with power and glory and peace forever.

In relation to this Ps 29 should be understood as a general hymn to praise the victory of God over the created world. The poet calls the sons of God to worship the LORD (Ps 29:1-2), because He is the eternal king ruling over His created world (Ps 29:10).

Up to this point Ps 29 has been interpreted as an independent literary unit, but this chapter will seek to identify the meaning of Ps 29 in the context of the Psalter as a whole and its “new interpretation” for the postexilic community.²

4.3. Psalm 29 in the Context of the Introduction of the Psalter (Pss 1-2)

The previous chapter presented Pss 1-2 as the introduction to the Book of Psalms. These two psalms join together to introduce the double topics of *torah* (Ps 1) and the kingship of the LORD (Ps 2) which are the way of life for the righteous as individuals in the society (Ps 1:6) and as a nation in the world as well (Ps 2:12). As the introduction to

² McCann, “Book I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter,” 93-107. McCann asserts that the new interpretation of the Book of Psalms is for the postexilic community because the Psalter was arranged by them.

the Psalter Pss 1-2 provide direction for how those who read the Book of Psalms should read the whole Psalter.³ Now Ps 29 will be examined in light of these two psalms.

First of all, Ps 29 can be understood as an example of the topic of the kingship of the LORD. Psalm 29 as a general hymn of praise portrays the LORD as King who sits enthroned on *קַבְוֹל* forever (Ps 29:10). In this way Ps 29 functions as an example of the kingship of the LORD (Ps 2). Especially at the end of Ps 2, the poet states that those nations who do not obey the LORD are destroyed in their way (Ps 2:12). In Ps 29:3-9b, the poet vividly portrays the great power of the LORD over the created world. Even Mount Lebanon and the wilderness of Kadesh are terrified by the coming of the LORD and their solid foundations tremble at a thunderstorm as the manifestation of the voice of the LORD. Nothing can stand before the LORD. The LORD has exercised His power over the created world to show His kingship over it. In this way Ps 29 is an example of the kingship of the LORD. From the perspective of the postexilic community, Ps 29 clearly shows the great power of the LORD as their eternal King as a convincing reason for the sons of God to praise the LORD (Ps 29:1),⁴ which will be dealt with in the second point. Thus Ps 29, as an example of the kingship of the LORD, shows the postexilic community that the whole created world including the nations who stand against the LORD must perish (Ps 29:3-9b). However, those who obey the LORD as their king shall surely survive (Ps 29:9c) just as Ps 2 informs them (Ps 2:12).

Second, the addressees of Ps 29, *בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים*, would now be extended to the postexilic community as the sons of God. If Ps 29 functions as an example of the kingship of the

³ Miller, "The Beginning of the Psalter," 83-92. Miller concludes that Pss 1 and 2 as the introduction to the whole Psalter give important clues that tell us (as the reader of the Book of the Psalms) many things about how to read without ever exhausting the possibilities.

⁴ Bellinger, *Psalms*, 82. Bellinger explains that the hymns of praise consist of three parts: introduction, body, and conclusion. The body of the hymn gives the reason(s) for praising God.

LORD for the postexilic community in terms of the viewpoint of the introductory psalms of the Psalter (Pss 1-2), then the phrase בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים, as the addressees of Ps 29,⁵ would now be related to the postexilic community as the sons of God. If so, the poet calls the postexilic community as the sons of God to worship the LORD. And then the poet gives a convincing reason to praise the LORD in Ps 29:3-9b.⁶ At the same time in Ps 29:9c, the temple is clearly understood as the earthly temple where the postexilic community gathers together to worship the LORD. All the people who are in His temple cry with joyful voices, “Glory!” Now this praise becomes the praise of the postexilic community. In terms of the context of Ps 29, it is difficult to define who the addressees (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים) are, and the place (הַיְכָל) where it is. But in the context of the arrangement of the Psalter as a whole these terms would be applied to the postexilic community and the earthly temple in which the postexilic community worship the LORD. In this way Ps 29 could become their psalm, their praise, and their confession.

Third, Ps 29 provides hope in the LORD as the eternal king for the postexilic community. Now the postexilic community as the sons of God, whom the poet calls to praise the LORD, understand the LORD as their eternal king who controls the created world not only to destroy the wicked nations (Ps 2) but also to protect the righteous as His people (Ps 1). Although their reality is so dark and they face so many difficulties, they can still hold on to their hope in the LORD who continually rules over His created world with His power. The postexilic community learns from Ps 29 that the LORD never fails to exercise His kingship over the created world. With regard to this, the postexilic

⁵ The praise has been translated in various ways: “sons of gods,” “sons of God” or “sons of the mighty” (NASB), “mighty ones (rulers)” (KJV, NIV), or “heavenly beings” (RSV).

⁶ Bellinger, *Psalms*, 95.

community can find in the kingship of the LORD the solution to their difficulties.⁷ In Ps 29:11, the poet describes the confession of those who are in God's temple (Ps 29:9c). They confess that the LORD will give His people strength and bless His people with peace. This confession also becomes the confession of the postexilic community. The only way to solve their problems is to obey the LORD as their eternal king. The only way to rescue their community in the midst of darkness is to take refuge in the LORD. Thus Ps 29 clearly provides hope in the LORD, and exhorts the people to return to the LORD as their eternal king.

In summary, in connection with the introduction of the Psalter (Pss 1-2), Ps 29 functions as an example of the kingship of the LORD over the created world (Ps 2), and it provides hope in the LORD for the postexilic community in the midst of a dark period, in order that they might continually praise the LORD as their God and take refuge in the LORD. In this way, Mays correctly writes, "As a hymn for use in liturgy, it [Ps 29] is designed to confront human finitude with divine majesty in a solving way."⁸ Now Ps 29 clearly becomes a meaningful psalm for the postexilic community. When we look at Ps 29, it seems to declare the power of the LORD in a general situation,⁹ but in light of Pss 1-2 Ps 29 also can be used to help the postexilic community to seek the kingship of the LORD as their eternal king, who judges the wicked nations and who blesses the righteous.

⁷ Mays, "Psalm 29," 60-4.

⁸ Mays, "Psalm 29," 60-4.

⁹ Many scholars see Ps 29 as the description of the power of the LORD in a storm in a general sense. Although Craigie sees this psalm as a victory hymn over the created world, with whom I agree in my study in chapter 2, it is not easy to determine the historical context of this psalm (see Craigie, *Psalm 1-50*, 249).

4.4. Psalm 29 in the Context of Book I (Pss 3-41)

In connection with the introduction of the Book of Psalms, Ps 29 plays an important role for the postexilic community to help them to seek the LORD again as their eternal king. This section will examine Ps 29 in the context of Book I (Pss 3-41).

4.4.1. Psalm 29 in the Context of Adjacent Psalms

Although some commentators have shown interest in inter-psalm relationships,¹⁰ these works have been limited in focus to catch-word (or key-word) connections between consecutive psalms,¹¹ that is, key words at the end of one psalm and the beginning of the next.¹² This section will present the relationship of Ps 29 to adjacent psalms (Pss 28, 30). And then the next section will deal with a broader consideration of the relationship between adjacent psalms (Pss 23-30).

4.4.1.1. Relationships Between Psalms 28-29

Psalms 28-29 are classified into two different categories. Most exegetes have described Ps 28 as an individual lament psalm, but Ps 29 clearly belongs to the category of general hymns which show the greatness of the power of the LORD.¹³ While an initial glance over these two psalms may not suggest a relationship between them, a closer look

¹⁰ Howard, "Editorial Activity in the Psalter," 52-70. Howard provides a good survey of this subject matter. According to Howard, Franz Delitzsch paid considerable attention to the connection between consecutive psalms and he saw links of thought or ideas between consecutive psalms, and saw these running topically through the Psalter, especially a concern with the Davidic covenant and a messianic concern. On the other hand J.A. Alexander devoted a major section to coherence within the Psalter. He gave careful attention to details of possible connections between psalms, including key words, motifs and even grammatical constructions. Howard also describes the works of S.R. Hirsch and C. Westermann.

¹¹ Brennan, "Some Hidden Harmonies in the Fifth Book of the Psalms," 126-58.

¹² Cassuto, "The Sequence and Arrangement of the Biblical Sections," 1-6. He asserts that this principle was traditionally used to arrange a book in ancient culture. He calls this principle "verbal association."

¹³ Bellinger, *Psalms*, 45, 81.

reveals that these two psalms are related to each other in terms of an essential idea and a catch-word.

First, the essential idea in Ps 29 is the same as in Ps 28.¹⁴ Both psalms emphasize God's provision of strength to His people through His mighty deeds. Psalm 29 has certain verbal ties to Ps 28. Psalm 28 ends with the declarations that the LORD is *יְשׁוּעָה* ("my strength"; v. 7), and the LORD is *יְשׁוּעָה* ("strength") for His people (v. 8). At the beginning of Ps 29, the poet calls the sons of God to ascribe glory and *יְשׁוּעָה* ("strength") to the LORD (v. 1) and at the end of Ps 29 the poet says the LORD gives *יְשׁוּעָה* to His people (v. 11). J.F.D. Creach convincingly suggests that in this way Ps 29 is included with Ps 28 in the collection,¹⁵ which contains echoes of all the previous five psalms (Pss 23-27).¹⁶ Thus Ps 29 can be included within the collection of Pss 23-28, which will be discussed further below. Although these two psalms essentially deal with the same idea, they are concluded in a different way. In these two psalms, divine power is proved or exemplified, and then applied to the believer's consolation.

Second, Pss 28-29 can be understood as having a causal relationship. In Ps 28 the poet asks God for deliverance (vv. 1-3) and for the punishment of the wicked (vv. 4-5),¹⁷ while in Ps 29 the poet portrays the power of the LORD over His created world (Ps 29:3-9) in which, in light of the influence of Ps 2, wicked nations could also be included. At this point the request of the poet in Ps 28 can be considered in Ps 29. In Ps 29 such a strange request of the poet in Ps 28:1-3 becomes visible to human eyes. In this manner,

¹⁴ Alexander, *Psalms*, 236.

¹⁵ Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 76.

¹⁶ Knight, *Psalms*, 1:142.

¹⁷ The poet repeatedly asks God for the punishment of wicked according to their deeds. The poet says, "Repay them for their deeds and for their evil work; repay them for what their hands have done and bring back upon them what they deserve. Since they show no regard for the works of the LORD and what his hands have done, he will tear them down and never build them up again" (NIV; Ps 28:4-5).

these two psalms (Pss 28-29) are semantically related. From the viewpoint of the postexilic community these two psalms provide confidence in the LORD who responds to the prayers of His people. The postexilic community firmly believes that the LORD Himself is continually faithful to His people. Therefore, the postexilic community should trust Him and wait for His mercy in the midst of their crisis.

To sum up, Pss 28-29 are related to each other in two ways: thematically and semantically. Thematically these two consecutive psalms reveal that the LORD provides strength (עֹז) for His people. Semantically they show that the LORD faithfully responds to the prayers of the people of God, so that Pss 28-29 provide hope in the LORD for the postexilic community. These two psalms stand together and support each other to provide hope and confidence for the postexilic community.

4.4.1.2. Relationships Among Psalms 28-30

In contrast to the general hymn Ps 29, Ps 30 is classified as an individual thanksgiving psalm of one who has been restored from a serious illness.¹⁸ It is difficult to make a connection between Pss 29-30. However, a closer look at the flow within Pss 28-30, reveals the story of the experience of a poet.

In Ps 28 the poet prays to the LORD for deliverance and for the punishment of the wicked, and then in Ps 29 the poet vividly describes the powerful action of the LORD over the created world. In Ps 30 the poet gives thanks to the LORD for His deliverance from death. In Ps 28:2 the poet asks the LORD, “Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry (בְּשֹׁעֵי) to You for help” (NASB), and then in Ps 30:3 the poet praises the LORD, “I *cried* (שָׁעַרְתִּי) to You for help, and You healed me” (NASB). At the same time in Ps 28:1 the poet

¹⁸ Anderson, *Psalms*, 1:239 (see Bellinger, *Psalms*, 75).

states that “if You are silent to me, I will become like those who go down to the pit (יִרְדּוּ בֹרַחַי)” (NASB) and then in Ps 30:4 the poet praises the LORD again. “You *have kept* me alive, that I would not go down to the pit (מִיִּרְדּוּ בֹרַחַי)”¹⁹ (NASB). In Pss 28-30 the poet describes his prayer and the answer of the LORD to that prayer.

In this way, Pss 28-30 are bound together and show the experience of the poet that the LORD faithfully hears and answers the prayers of the people of God. In this matter Ps 29 functions as an example showing how the LORD does answer the prayer of His people. At the same time Pss 28-30 are related through the theme of the temple of God, that is, one of the central themes in the group of Pss 23-30,²⁰ which will be addressed in the next section.

In summary, Pss 28-30 are bound together to show the faithfulness of the LORD who continually hears the prayers of His people and who faithfully answers those prayers. In terms of the perspective of the postexilic community, these three consecutive psalms reveal that the LORD as their powerful king has been faithful to His people who cry for help, and instructs them to continually pray for help and to wait patiently for the answer of

¹⁹ The preposition *מן* + *Qal*, participle masculine, plural construct form of *ירד* (“to go down”) following *Kethib*.

²⁰ Wilson, *Psalms*, 1:514. In Ps 28:2 the poet lifts up his hand toward *קִדְשׁוֹ* (“your [the LORD’s] holy sanctuary,” which denotes the Holy of Holies (or temple). Wilson convincingly suggests, “The reference in this verse [Ps 28:2] is to the ‘rear room of the temple where the holiness of Yahweh resides.’” He explains the usage of the term *דְּבִיר*, which is used for denoting the rear room of a “Syrian type of temple” and later came to be called in Hebrew parlance the “Holy of Holies” (see Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:364). Psalm 29 notes that all those gathered in the temple of the LORD (*בְּהִיכָלוֹ*) worship the LORD with a loud acclamation of “Glory!” (Ps 29:9c). Psalm 30 is also related to the temple of the LORD in its superscription, which describes the purpose of this psalm: “For the dedication of the house (*הַבַּיִת*; “temple”)” (NIV). The term *בַּיִת* (“house”) in this context is ambiguous. It can refer to the “royal palace.” However, with the noun *הִקְדִּישׁ* (“dedication”) which is most frequently used to refer to the dedication of the temple alter (Num 7:10, 11; 2 Chr 7:9), the term *בַּיִת* means the temple of the LORD. The cognate verb *הִקְדִּישׁ* (“to dedicate”) twice refers specifically to dedicating the house of the LORD (1 Kgs 8:63; 2 Chr 7:5; see Wilson, *Psalms*, 1:514). Interestingly Ps 30 does not contain anything that points to the dedication of a house or a temple. For this reason, the superscription of Ps 30 may show that the group of editors of the Psalter have used the theme of the temple of the LORD to create a collection of Psalms in Pss 23-30 in which the temple of the LORD is one of the central themes. In this way these three consecutive psalms are thematically related to each other.

the LORD in the midst of their difficulties. At the same time these three psalms are connected with the theme of the temple of the LORD, through which Pss 23-30 can be bound together as a group. Now we will proceed to look at this group of Psalms (Pss 23-30) in detail.

4.4.2. Psalm 29 in the Context of Psalms 23-30

The previous section dealt with the relationships of Pss 28-30. As we have seen these three psalms can be bound together in terms of the theme of the temple of the LORD and the theme of the faithful answer of the LORD to those who cry out for help. Now these themes will be examined in the broader context to see how they identify a group of psalms in Book I.²¹

²¹ Wilson, *Psalms*, 431. Although Wilson firmly suggests that Pss 23-30 are bound together in the theme of the temple of the LORD, others suggest different groupings for Book I by different themes like John Walton, and V.J. Steiner. Walton has suggested that the arrangement of the final form of the Psalter could be explained as a ‘cantata about the Davidic covenant.’ He understands Book I (Pss 3-41) as developing the theme of ‘David’s conflict with Saul,’ and divides Book I into seven subgroups by comparing them with historical events in the life of David. In his work Walton focuses on the contents of each psalm rather than their titles. Walton’s hypothesis, which provides ‘a logical rationale for the ordering of the Psalms,’ has been built on two elements of editorial structure emphasized in former scholars’ especially Wilson’s work. Walton starts his working with two elements of editorial structure: Pss 1 and 2 as the introduction of the Psalter and the progression of the seam psalms, which are royal psalms (Pss 2, 72, 89), *torah* psalms (Pss 1, 19, 119), or *Hallel* psalms (Pss 146-150). Although Walton makes some insightful observations, his methodology in literary analysis is problematic, like Wilson’s evaluation, because the Book of Psalms is thematically diverse literature which is difficult to bind together. For instance, Walton suggests that Pss 27-30 are “reflections on the second incident where David could have taken Saul’s life (1 Sam 26).” And then he briefly explains these four psalms according to this historical event, but he does not mention anything about Ps 29. Walton explains the group of Pss 27-30 in this way, “[Ps] 27:12 speaks of false witnesses and shows close correlation to 1 Sam 26:19. The deliverance of the anointed of the Lord in [Ps] 28:8 would have two sides to it, and Ps 30 is, like Ps 18, a report of deliverance rather than the typical request for deliverance.” Thus the thematic connections and links Walton suggests, while occasionally apt, do not fit well within the context of the whole Psalter (see Walton, “Psalms: A Cantata about the Davidic Covenant,” 21-31).

Steiner also presents his unfinished study on the Book of Psalms in his lectures. This is his lecture which he gave his students in his class in January 1997 at the *Miqra* Institute in Lincoln Nebraska. Unfortunately he has not published anything about this subject matter beyond these lecture notes. He views the Book of Psalms as the theme of ‘the anticipation of messiah and his kingship,’ and it is introduced and tested in Book I. After the introduction (Pss 1-2), he divides Pss 3-41, which is seen as ‘Life awaiting messiah-king, the promised son of David,’ into three groups (Pss 3-7, Pss 8-10, and Pss 11-41). The last group (Pss 11-41) shows that David and his followers of faith experienced all kinds of trials, obstacles, and

4.4.2.1. The Making of a Group of Psalms for Psalm 29

As we have seen, the previous section presented the relationships among Pss 28-30. One of the relationships among these three psalms is the theme of the temple of the LORD. This present section will look at the wider context of the psalms adjacent to Ps 29 to see how they relate to each other. First of all this section will identify the group of psalms in which Ps 29 is found. To this point, it has been argued that Ps 28 plays an important role in connecting Pss 28-30 and Pss 26-27.

As noted by Wilson, Ps 28 shares many links with Pss 26-27.²² In Ps 28:1, the poet calls the LORD “my rock” (צִרְיָי), which appeared in Ps 27:5 as denoting the protecting place of the LORD. The poet also asks the LORD “Do not drag me away with the wicked” in Ps 28:3, which links back to Ps 26:9. The poet of Ps 28 finds help from the LORD (v. 7), which is connected with Ps 27:9. This theme is also found in Ps 30:11 [10 Engl.], where the poet calls the LORD “my helper.” In Ps 28:7, the poet praises the LORD with joy, which is again linked to Ps 27:6 and to Ps 30:12. Kidner correctly sees that in Pss 26-28 the house of the LORD comes into view,²³ which is also connected to Pss 28-30. In Ps

troubles. He again divides this last group into six subgroups. Steiner divides Pss 11-41 into six groups (Pss 11-14; 15-18; 19-25; 26-34; 35-37; 38-41). However, he does not give any reason why they were divided in this way. Like Walton, Steiner basically focuses on the contents of each psalm rather than titles or other editorial elements. Although his study is detailed and gives some insight into understanding the Psalter, he does not give sub-themes to make them into subgroups among these psalms. His explanation for these subgroups is good, but he focuses too much on making a nice flow among psalms in these subgroups. For instance, Steiner binds Pss 26-34 together as a subgroup and explains each psalm, but he does not touch on the main contents of these psalms. There are some connections between Pss 30 and 31. Delitzsch uses the terms וָאָנִי אָמַרְתִּי (‘‘I said’’) (Pss 30:5; 31:24), הַסִּידִים (‘‘kind’’ [adj.]) (Pss 30:5; 31:24) to make a connection between Pss 30 and 31 (see Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:381). But the context of these two psalms is very different. In Ps 30 the poet praises the LORD who delivers the poet from his mortal illness, but in Ps 31 the poet again cries for deliverance from deathly illness (Ps 31:1-12). At the same time some scholars see Pss 34-35 as one pair, but Steiner divides these two psalms into two different subgroups. These two psalms contain the term מַלְאָךְ־יְהוָה (‘‘the angel of the LORD’’; Pss 34:8; 35:5, 6), which is found nowhere else in the Psalter (see Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 1:130; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:416). However, it is hard to evaluate his work, because the material is so limited (cf. Steiner, ‘‘The Book of Psalms,’’ 1-7).

²² Wilson, *Psalms*, 1:494-8.

²³ Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 1:117.

26 the poet notes that he loves the house of the LORD (v. 8), and then the poet sees this house as a sanctuary from his enemies, and as a place where God and humans come together (Ps 27:4-5). In Ps 28 the poet brings forward his petition, spreading his hand as a supplication towards the Holy of Holies (רַב־בַּיִת; v. 2). Wilson convincingly asserts that the theme of “the house of the LORD”²⁴ clearly plays an important role as a link between Pss 26-28 and Pss 28-30.²⁵

Moreover, Ps 28 as a hinge between these two small groups closes with the description of the divine shepherd, רֹעֵם²⁶ (“Be their shepherd”) with which Ps 23 also begins. At the beginning of Ps 23, the term רעה is used in a metaphorical way to describe the LORD as the poet’s shepherd. At this point Wilson strongly suggests, “The effect of the linkage between Pss 28 and 23 is to mark off these psalms ‘as a collection linked by many common themes.’”²⁷ Thus the term רעה may be considered a boundary marker to delineate a grouping for Pss 23-28. This small group of Psalms begins with the picture of the divine shepherd and closes with it as well. Interestingly at the end of Ps 23 the poet introduces the theme of the house of the LORD, which is one of the main themes that binds Pss 26-30 as one group. In Ps 23:6, the poet expresses his trust in the LORD and his confidence in the LORD in this way: “I shall return to *the house of the LORD* as long as I shall live”.²⁸ He *shall keep on returning* to the temple of the LORD and he shall keep on

²⁴ Among these psalms there are four terms to denote the house of the LORD, such as בַּיִת (“house”; Ps 26:8; 27:4; 30:1), הַיְקָל (“temple”; Ps 27:4; 29:9), אֹהֶל (“tent” or “sanctuary”; Ps 27:5, 6), and רַב־בַּיִת (“Holy of Holiness” or “sanctuary”; Ps 28:2). These four terms are used for denoting the house of the LORD as the temple of the LORD in these psalms (Pss 26-30).

²⁵ Wilson, *Psalms*, 1:471-524.

²⁶ In the whole Psalter this term only occurs three times (Pss 23:1; 28:9; 80:1).

²⁷ Wilson, *Psalms*, 1:498.

²⁸ Psalm 23:6 - וְשָׁבְתִי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה לְאָרְךָ יָמִים - The term וְשָׁבְתִי is *waw* consecutive + *Qal* perfect 1st person singular of שָׁב (“to return”). Thus וְשָׁבְתִי means, “and I shall return,” but Delitzsch suggests that this construction is implying “I shall also dwell (וְיָשַׁבְתִּי).” Thus this colon can mean “I *shall return* to the house of the LORD and I *shall dwell* in it” (cf. Delitzsch, *Psalms* 1:332).

sharing in its worship as long as he shall live.²⁹ For these reasons Pss 23-30 could be bound together under the theme of the house of the LORD.³⁰

In summary, the psalms adjacent to Ps 29 form a group of Psalms (Pss 23-30) united by the theme of the house (temple) of the LORD. This theme continually reappears throughout Pss 23-30. In Ps 23, the poet expresses his desire to return (to dwell) in the house of the LORD, where the poet hopes to find protection and security. Psalm 24 then describes liturgical preparation for entering the city of Jerusalem and the temple. The poet expresses his love for the dwelling place of the LORD (Ps 26:8), and earnestly seeks to dwell in the house of the LORD in Ps 27:4-5. In Ps 28 the poet lifts his hand toward the holy sanctuary of the LORD for protection (v. 2), and all who acknowledge the LORD as the eternal glorious king cry out “Glory!” in the temple of the LORD (Ps 29:9c). Finally Ps 30 has a superscription, “dedication of the house (temple).”³¹ Therefore, Pss 23-30 can be bound together as one group of psalms under the theme of the house of the LORD in order to remind the postexilic community of the importance of the temple of the LORD. This is important since the temple had become one of the key and only identity signs for the postexilic community. In the opening psalm of this group (Ps 23) the poet confesses his confidence in the LORD, “I *shall return* to the house of the LORD.” Psalm 30, as the closing psalm of this group, is linked to the theme of the temple of the LORD by its superscription “the dedication of the temple,” even if Ps 30 does not deal with this subject

²⁹ This perfect verb שׁוּב with אָוֹן consecutive does not mean a “one-time-for-all” completed action, but denotes a continuous action by the following time expression “for length of days.” Thus this colon could be paraphrased in this way (cf. Anderson, *Psalms*, 1:199).

³⁰ On the other hand Pss 30-31 can not be bound together using the theme of the temple of the LORD. As the previous section already mentioned, the mood of these two psalms (Pss 30-31) is very different.

³¹ Wilson, *Psalms*, 430-524.

matter. The postexilic community should return to the temple where the LORD dwells. The temple where they should meet the LORD is their re-starting point after their crisis.

4.4.2.2. The Meaning of Psalm 29 in the Context of Psalms 23-30

In light of Pss 28-30, Ps 29 functions as an example of the LORD's faithful answer to the prayers of those who ask for deliverance from the wicked. The LORD as the eternal king judges those who stand against Him and His people, and protects His people. However, in the context of Pss 23-30 the theme of the temple of the LORD plays an important role in binding them together. The theme of the temple of the LORD shows the postexilic community how to live in their difficult situation, how to solve their problems, and how to respond to the LORD as their eternal king.³² Psalms 23-30 continually remind the postexilic community of the temple where the LORD dwells. In the temple they should meet the LORD as their protector and should see the glory of the LORD as the source of their life. This should be the ongoing experience for them in temple worship. In this way Pss 23-30 instruct them to seek refuge in the LORD who dwells in His temple. This is the only way to solve their problems and rescue their community from their enemies.

In the context of Pss 23-30, the focus of Ps 29 slightly changes. In light of the theme of the house of the LORD, Ps 29 focuses on the people who are in the temple of the LORD and their response, rather than the action of the LORD who continually exercises His kingship over the created world. The response of those who are in the temple (Ps 29:9c) could be the response of the postexilic community who were living in the midst of their crisis. In this way Ps 29 encourages them to praise the LORD in His temple by

³² Wilson, *Psalms*, 438-41. Wilson provides the meaning of the temple of the LORD in the context of the Bible. Wilson understands the temple of the LORD as place of refuge and as the source of light and life.

understanding what the LORD has done and what He will do for His people. The temple of the LORD is important for understanding Ps 29 in the context of Pss 23-30. Now we will look at Ps 29 in the context of Book I.

4.4.3. Psalm 29 in the Context of Book I (Pss 3-41)

As the previous chapter explained, Book I of the Psalter shows that the postexilic community has a long-standing and wonderful relationship with God through the Davidic covenant and by the kingship of the Davidic line, which are introduced by the superscription of all psalms in Book I. Although the postexilic community had lost their Davidic king, Book I continually encourages them to keep *torah* and to obey the LORD as their eternal king in the reality of their crisis. Psalms 3 and 41 as the opening and ending psalms of Book I, remind the postexilic community to have confidence in the LORD as their God who had blessed ancient Israel under the leadership of David (Ps 3) and to remember the LORD's *torah* and His protection in the midst of their enemies (Ps 41). In this way Book I reveals not only the identity of the postexilic community which has a long-standing and good relationship with the LORD but also their hope in the LORD who is continually with them as their eternal king.

In the context of Book I, Pss 23-30, in which the theme of the temple of the LORD is distinguished, should be understood as encouraging hope in the LORD who dwells in His temple. Wilson also understands Pss 23-30 in the same way, grouping Pss 23-30 under the title of "Hope for Dwelling in the House of Yahweh."³³ In the temple, the postexilic community should meet the LORD as their protector, should praise Him by understanding

³³ Wilson, *Psalms*, 82. Wilson convincingly suggests, "Dwelling in God's house is viewed as an expansive rather than a restrictive experience." Dwelling in the house of the LORD means an experience of blessing and honour as well as protection (see Wilson, *Psalms*, 440).

what He has done for His people, and should find the source of their community life in the LORD. Everything which the postexilic community needs should be found in the temple of the LORD, so that they restart their community as the covenant people of God and rebuild their faith in the LORD in the house of the LORD. At this point the temple of the LORD functions as the source of their community, their faith, and their identity.

Interestingly Pss 23-30 follows a section dominated by lament psalms,³⁴ which denote the experiences of all kinds of trials, obstacles, and troubles. These lament psalms may be used to reveal the reality of the postexilic community. Although they are still people of God, their circumstances are extremely dark. They face all kinds of difficulties which make them fear for their community life. In this dark situation the theme of the temple where the LORD dwells provides hope for their community and leads them to return to the temple of the LORD and to restart their life as the covenant community. For this reason Pss 23-30 are bound together under the theme of the temple of the LORD and are placed here in order to reintroduce the house of the LORD to the postexilic community.

Psalm 29 can also be understood in the same way. As we have seen previously, Pss 23-30 emphasize those who are in the temple of the LORD and their response to the LORD. This emphasis on the temple and on the response of those who are in it in Ps 29 is continually presented in Book I. When the postexilic community reads Ps 29 in the context of Book I, they know who they are, what they need, and how they are to respond. They are the people of God whom the LORD has chosen and blessed, and they should return to the house of the LORD and worship the LORD as their eternal king and as their protector. Although their reality is extremely dark, the LORD still dwells in the temple

³⁴ Bellinger, *Psalms*, 23. Bellinger classifies the Book of Psalms into four categories. According to his work before the group of psalms (Pss 23-30) there are 14 lament psalms (Pss 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 22), three royal psalms (Pss 18, 20, 21), and three praise psalms (Pss 8, 15, 19).

which is in the midst of their community. Therefore they return to the LORD who dwells in the temple and find the LORD as their refuge and as the source of their covenant community life.

4.5. Psalm 29 in the Context of Books I-III (Pss 3-89)

In terms of Books I-III of the Psalter, the prayers of David in Books I-II combine Levitical collections in Books II-III, which are songs of the official singer-guilds. As the previous chapter mentioned, this combination clearly shows that in Books I-III there is a definite shift from individual lament psalms to communal lament psalms. All the psalms in Book I are attributed to David as personal psalms, and then in Book II 17 of 35 psalms, and finally in Book III only Ps 86 is attributed to David. This movement reveals that the Davidic kingship and covenant slowly fade away in the Psalter, which means that Books I-III highlight for the postexilic community the failure of the Davidic covenant. At the same time Books I-III continually remind the postexilic community of their identity as well as reminding them of the topic of *torah* and the kingship of the LORD by shaping the royal psalms (Pss 2, 72, 89) in order to provide hope in the LORD. The shift to communal psalms in the Psalter reveals to the postexilic community the failure of the Davidic covenant and instructs them about who they are. Although they face so many difficulties, they continue to be the chosen people of the LORD who never fails to rule over the world.

In light of this understanding of Books I-III, Book I (Pss 3-41) could function as showing the prosperity of the Davidic kingdom to the postexilic community,³⁵ because all the psalms in Book I are attributed to David. If this is correct, Book I not only reveals the

³⁵ DeClaissé-Walford, *Reading*, 7. DeClaissé-Walford says, “If Book One of the Psalter celebrates the reigns of David and Solomon, then we may suggest that Psalm 3 introduces David, the ideal king of the golden age of Israel’s history.”

identity of the postexilic community which has a long-standing relationship with the LORD as their eternal king, but also shows them how the Davidic kingdom was prosperous in their national history. In connection with the latter point of view, the theme of the temple of the LORD in Pss 23-30 plays an important role in showing the cause of the prosperity of the Davidic kingdom. Although King David also faced all kinds of difficulties, shown in his lament psalms throughout Pss 3-22, the Davidic kingdom was blessed by the LORD, because David returned to the house of the LORD (Ps 23:6) and found his strength and the source of his kingdom from the LORD who dwells in His temple. In this way, Pss 23-30 provides for the postexilic community a solution for their difficulties. The temple of the LORD is the only way to solve their problems and difficulties in their present dark situation. In the house of the LORD they meet the LORD as their eternal king, find refuge from their enemies, and receive the strength and blessing of the LORD.

At this point Ps 29 can be understood not only as revealing the works of the LORD for His people, but also as providing the postexilic community with the source of the prosperity of the Davidic kingdom in terms of the theme of the temple in Pss 23-30. The meaning of Ps 29 still focuses on the theme of the temple of the LORD, but its function becomes more diverse. In the context of Books I-III Ps 29 can function in two ways as showing the former prosperity of the Davidic kingdom and as introducing the importance of the temple of the LORD for the life of God's covenant community.

4.6. Psalm 29 in the Context of the Psalter as a Whole (Pss 3-145)

As the previous section in this present chapter has demonstrated, the meaning of Ps 29 has slowly shifted and extended as it has been read within its broader contexts. The

meaning of Ps 29 shifts from showing the kingship of the LORD over His created world to revealing the theme of the temple of the LORD which is the only way to solve the difficulties of the postexilic community. In the context of Books I-III, the significance of the theme of the house of the LORD extends not only to introducing the temple of the LORD as the important source for His covenant community, but also to showing that the Davidic kingdom found its prosperity from the LORD who dwells in His temple.

Now the present section will examine the meaning of Ps 29 in the context of the whole Psalter. As the previous chapter argued, Books IV-V instruct the postexilic community to continually trust in the LORD and to depend totally on the LORD. Book IV exhorts the postexilic community as the people of God to return to the LORD and to trust Him as their eternal king. Book V encourages the postexilic community to seek refuge in the LORD (Ps 107) and totally depend on Him alone in the midst of difficulties. In this matter King David functions as a model of trust and dependence on the LORD in Book V. The name of David, which slowly disappeared in Books I-III, reappears in Books IV-V and, especially in Books IV-V, the name of David functions as a model for the postexilic community. Book V instructs the postexilic community to live by faith and to trust in the LORD like King David did. The questions in the last psalm of Books I-III (Ps 89), in which the poet seeks the face of the LORD and His lovingkindness, are fulfilled in Books IV-V. Books IV-V reveal that the LORD as their eternal king never hides Himself from them, but the people of God forget their God and leave the LORD, their eternal king. The people of God as the postexilic community must return to the LORD and continually trust in Him only and totally depend on Him. This is the only way that the postexilic community can survive in their national crisis. In the broad sense of understanding the Psalter, Books I-III reveal that the postexilic community fails to keep the Davidic

covenant and the kingship of the Davidic line, which causes difficulties in their community. Books IV-V provide a solution for their difficulties and their failure to keep the Davidic covenant. However, this solution for the difficulties of the postexilic community is already foreshadowed in Books I-III. As the previous sections already stated, the theme of the temple of the LORD functions as a solution for the difficulties of the postexilic community. In Book I, Ps 29 emphasizes those who are in the temple of the LORD and their response to the LORD, which the postexilic community should follow. At the same time, in Books I-III Ps 29 reveals not only the importance of the theme of the temple of the LORD, but also the success of the kingdom of David caused by the temple where the LORD is dwelling. Considering all these things, in the context of the whole Psalter Ps 29 can be understood as providing a solution for the problems of the postexilic community. Psalm 29 reveals to the postexilic community that they should remain in the temple of the LORD and should praise the LORD who dwells in His temple (Ps 29:9c). In the temple the postexilic community should worship the LORD who exercises His kingship over His created world (Ps 29:3-9b). In this way they will solve their problems and their community will survive in the midst of their crisis, and their nation will be restored by the LORD like the kingdom of David in the history of ancient Israel. In this matter Ps 29 is understood in the context of the whole Psalter.

4.7. Psalm 29 in the Context of the Conclusion of the Whole Psalter (Pss 146-150)

As the previous chapter presented, the final *hallel* psalms (Pss 146-150), which begin and end with יהוה לללו, function as the conclusion of the Psalter in order to exhort the readers/audience to praise the kingship of the LORD. An individual person in Ps 146, and then the worshipping community as the people of Zion in Ps 147, and finally all created

world both in heaven and on earth in Ps 148 are called upon to praise the LORD as their eternal king. Psalms 146-148 remind the readers/audience of Ps 29, in which the poet vividly describes the kingship of the LORD over His created world. At the same time in Ps 149 the poet continually summons the people of Israel, the sons of Zion, as the worshippers of the LORD (Ps 149:2), to praise the kingship of the LORD, but in Ps 149:6-9 the poet describes the punishment of the LORD on those who do not praise Him. In Ps 148 the poet calls the entire created world to praise the LORD as their eternal king and their creator. And then in Ps 149 the LORD punishes those who do not praise Him as their king. In a similar way, in Ps 29:1-2 the poet calls the sons of God as heavenly beings in both bands of angels and the assembly of gods to worship the LORD and then the LORD appears as the voice of the LORD in a thunderstorm to show His mighty power over the cosmic forces in order to control and to subdue them (vv. 3-9b). In this way Ps 29 foreshadows the ultimate destination of the Psalter: the execution of the kingship of the LORD over the created world.

Like Pss 146-149 Ps 150 concludes the story of the Psalter by exhorting every creature to praise the LORD. The LORD is eternal king, only He is ultimately worthy of trust and His steadfast love for His people endures forever.³⁶ In this way the Book of Psalms comes to a conclusion. The whole Psalter opens showing the way of life, which is the way of righteousness (Pss 1-2) and then it closes praising the LORD as the eternal king, who protects His righteous people who keep the *torah* and who serve the LORD as their eternal king, while destroying the wicked, both individuals and nations who do not serve the LORD as their eternal king and their creator (Ps 149).

³⁶ Wilson, *Editing*, 220-8.

In the context of the final *hallel* psalms (Pss 146-150) Ps 29 emphasizes the kingship of the LORD over His created world again. In the previous sections the meaning of Ps 29 shifts from the theme of the kingship of the LORD to the theme of the temple of the LORD in the context of Book I, Books I-III, and Books I-V. And now in the context of the final *hallel* psalms, the kingship of the LORD which is vividly described in Ps 29:3-9b, is reemphasized. However the reemphasis on the theme of the kingship of the LORD does not diminish the theme of the temple of the LORD, because praising the kingship of the LORD is performed in the temple of the LORD, where the worshipers should meet the LORD as their eternal king, find a solution for their difficulties, and receive the protection and the blessing of the LORD. In the context of Pss 146-150 the meaning of Ps 29 again shifts from emphasis on the theme of the temple of the LORD to emphasis on the theme of the kingship of the LORD, which is introduced in the introductory psalms of the Psalter (Ps 2).

4.8. Conclusion

The present chapter has examined how the meaning of Ps 29 changes in the different contexts of the Psalter. In the context of the introductory psalms of the Psalter the theme of the kingship of the LORD is emphasized and then the emphasis of Ps 29 shifts from the theme of the kingship of the LORD to the theme of the temple of the LORD in the context of Pss 23-30. In the context of the introductory psalms, Ps 29 emphasizes the kingship of the LORD in connection with Ps 2, but in the context of Pss 23-30 the theme of the temple of the LORD is emphasized. The temple of the LORD is continually emphasized in the context of Book I, Books I-III, and Books I-V. And then in the final *hallel* psalms (Pss 146-150) the meaning of Ps 29 emphasizes the theme of the kingship of

the LORD again, which is also emphasized in the context of the introductory psalms (Pss 1-2). However in connection with Ps 29, these two themes, the theme of the temple of the LORD and the theme of the kingship of the LORD, are closely related to each other and stand together to exhort the postexilic community to rely on the LORD alone who dwells in His temple.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

This thesis has examined the meaning of Ps 29 in the different canonical literary contexts of the Psalter in order to find the best way to read individual psalms of the Book of Psalms. Initially this study dealt with Ps 29 individually. Chapter 2 outlined how Ps 29 reveals the mighty power of the LORD over cosmic forces. In the first stanza the poet summons the heavenly beings to worship the LORD in the majesty of holiness (Ps 29:2b). In Ps 29:3-9b the poet vividly depicts *the kingship of the LORD* over His created world in order to provide a reason to worship the LORD. In colon 9c, those who are in *the temple of the LORD* praise the glory of the LORD. In Ps 29:10-11 the poet describes the LORD as *the eternal king* who gives strength and who blesses His people with peace through the confession of His people. Psalm 29 clearly reveals that it is the LORD who controls the cosmic forces, and not Baal. The LORD is the eternal king over the cosmic forces, so that Ps 29 exhorts the readers/audience to praise the LORD as the eternal king over the created world.

In chapter 3 the present study attempted to understand the meaning of the whole Psalter not only by using some evidence of editorial activity in the Psalter, especially the superscriptions of each psalm in the Psalter, but also by using the content of each psalm placed at important positions especially at the beginning and end of each Book in the Psalter. As the introductory psalms to the whole Psalter, Pss 1-2 introduce two topics: *torah* and the kingship of the LORD which function as a window through which to view the whole Psalter. In these directions Books I-V reveal the identity of the postexilic community and a future hope for their community. Book I (Pss 3-41) shows that they have a long-standing relationship with God but Books II-III (Pss 42-89) reveal the realities of the postexilic community which has lost the king of the Davidic line and the Davidic

covenant. On this matter Books I-III use the name of David in their superscriptions. In contrast Books IV-V (Pss 90-145) reveal the kingship of the LORD and exhort the postexilic community to rely on the LORD only as their king in order to solve their difficulties in the midst of crisis. At the conclusion of the Psalter the *hallel* psalms (Pss 146-150) extol the kingship of the LORD over His created world and reveal the punishment of the LORD in order to provide the postexilic community with a hope in the LORD who continually judges the wicked nations and blesses the righteous. In this way the 150 psalms of the Psalter are arranged and are used for helping the postexilic community to rely solely on the LORD as their eternal king and to patiently wait for the blessing of the LORD in their crisis.

On the basis of these two chapters, chapter 4 examined how the meaning of Ps 29 changes in the different contexts of the Psalter. As outlined in the previous chapter, the emphasis of Ps 29 shifts in the different canonical contexts of the Psalter. In the context of the introductory psalms (Pss 1-2) and concluding psalms (Pss 146-150) of the Psalter, the emphasis of Ps 29 is on the theme of the kingship of the LORD, which is vividly depicted in Ps 29:3-9b. In this context, Ps 29 stresses the kingship of the LORD over the cosmic forces, and hence over the created world.

In the other canonical contexts of the Psalter, however, the emphasis of Ps 29 clearly shifts from the theme of the kingship of the LORD to the theme of the temple of the LORD. The meaning of Ps 29 is emphasized under the theme of the temple of the LORD in the context of Pss 23-30 and it continues in the wide canonical contexts, Book I, Books I-III, and the whole Psalter. The theme of the temple of the LORD shows that the postexilic community should return to the temple of the LORD, should meet the LORD in the temple as the eternal king, and should find refuge in the LORD which is the only way

to survive as a community in the midst of their crisis. Psalm 29 remarkably reveals a group who praise the glory of the LORD in His temple (v. 9c). They have heard and seen the mighty power of the LORD and therefore they praise the LORD in His temple. In the context of Ps 29, these two themes are closely related to each other and support each other in order to exhort the postexilic community to continually return to the temple of the LORD and to rely completely on the LORD alone, who has mighty power as the eternal king over His created world.

In the context of the whole Psalter, Ps 29 reveals not only the kingship of the LORD over the cosmic forces, but also the importance of the temple of the LORD where the eternal king of the LORD dwells. The meaning of Ps 29 is clearly expanded in the context of the whole Psalter. Therefore in connection with the present study, reading each psalm in the Book of Psalms in the context of the entire Psalter will expand the meaning of each psalm. Thus it is a fruitful method to employ when studying individual Psalms.

Appendix 1

Text and translation

Superscription

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד

A Psalm of David

Stanza 1 (Prelude)

הִבְּרִי לַיהוָה בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים
הִבְּרִי לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וְעֹז:
הִבְּרִי לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ
הַשְׁתַּחֲוֶי לַיהוָה בְּהַרְרַח־קָדְשׁ:

1a *Ascribe to the LORD, O sons of God,*
1b *Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.*
2a *Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name*
2b *Worship the LORD in the majesty of holiness.*

Stanza 2 (Body)

קוֹל יְהוָה עַל־הַמַּיִם
אֱלֹהֵי־הַכְּבוֹד הֲרָעִים
יְהוָה עַל־מַיִם רַבִּים:

3a *The voice of the LORD (is) upon the water,*
3b *The God of glory thunders,*
3c *The LORD (is) upon many waters.*

קוֹל־יְהוָה בְּכֹחַ
קוֹל יְהוָה בְּהַרְרָה:

4a *The voice of the LORD is powerful*
4b *The voice of the LORD is majestic*

Stanza 3

קוֹל יְהוָה שִׁבַר אֲרָזִים
וַיִּשְׁבַּר יְהוָה אֶת־אֲרָזֵי הַלְבָנוֹן:
וַיַּרְקִדֵם כַּמִּוֶּעֶגֶל
לְבָנוֹן וְשִׁרִיֹן כַּמִּוֶּעֶגֶל בְּרִיאַמִּים:

5a *The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars,*
5b *The LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon*
6a *And He makes them skip like a calf*
6b *(He makes) Lebanon and Sirion (skip) like a young wild ox*

Stanza 4

קוֹל־יְהוָה חָצַב לְהַבּוֹחַ אֵשׁ:

7 *The voice of the LORD strikes down with flames of fire.*

Stanza 5

קוֹל יְהוָה יַחֲלֵל מִדְבָּר
יַחֲלֵל יְהוָה מִדְבָּר קָדְשׁ:
קוֹל יְהוָה יַחֲלֵל אֵילֹתַי
וַיַּחֲשֵׁף יַעֲרוֹתַי

8a *The voice of the LORD trembles the wilderness,*
8b *The LORD makes the wilderness of Kadesh tremble*
9a *The voice of the LORD brings the does to birth-pains,*
9b *(The voice of the LORD) brings the kids to premature birth.*
9c *And in His temple all say, "Glory!"*

וּבְהֵיכְלוֹ כָּל־אָמַר כְּבוֹד:

Stanza 6 (postlude)

יְהוָה לִמְבּוּל יֹשֵׁב
וַיֹּשֶׁב יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם:
יְהוָה עַז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן
יְהוָה יְבַרְךָ אֶת־עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם:

10a *The LORD sits at the Mabbul*
10b *The LORD King sits forever.*
11a *The LORD will give strength to His people*
11b *The LORD will bless His people with peace.*

Appendix 2

A. Textual Limits

The textual limits of Ps 29 are determined by the formal structure, which is made up of the imperative and the vocative. Psalm 29 begins with the phrase *הִבּוּ לַיהוָה בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים* (“Ascribe to the LORD, O sons of God!”; v. 1b), which is a combination of the imperative of the verb *יָהַב*, the indirect object with the preposition *לְ* and the vocative. This combination of the imperative and the vocative marks the beginning of a new literary unit in the book of Psalms.² At this point colon 1a in Ps 29 can be treated as a boundary marker separating Ps 29 from Ps 28. On the other hand Ps 30 begins with *אֶרְוַמְנֶךָ יְהוָה* (“I will extol You, O LORD!”; v. 2a). This phrase is a combination of the *polet* imperfect 1st person singular of the verb *רָוַם* with the 2nd person masculine singular pronominal suffix and the vocative. We can also argue that the 1st person singular form of the verb *רָוַם* and the LORD described by the 2nd person as the pronominal suffix in this phrase function as boundary markers between Pss 29 and 30.³

At the same time in terms of scribal tradition, Ps 29 is separated from Ps 30. The symbol of the large *ס* with a special mark above it in the left margin of Ps 29 in *Biblia*

¹ The phrase *בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים* is the one of the difficult textual critical problems in Ps 29. This phrase is interpreted in various ways such as: “heavenly beings” (RSV), “the mighty ones” (NIV), “divine beings” (TNK), “sons of might” (NASB), etc. I will deal with this phrase in my textual critical analysis in detail.

² Groenewald, *Psalm 69*, 15. He says that the combination of the imperative and the vocative serves as an introduction to a new literary unit in the Book of Psalms (Pss 12:2a; 16:1a; 26:1a; 43:1a; 56:2a; 69:2a). At the same time there are examples of literary units which are introduced by various combinations of the imperative and the vocative (Pss 5:2a; 6:2a; 17:1a; 29:1a; 33:1a; 35:1a; 49:2a; 51:3a; 54:3a; 55:2a; 59:2a; 61:2a; 64:2a; 66:1a; 70:2a; 72:1a; 78:1a; 80:2a; 83:2a; 86:1a; 94:1a; 100:1a; 102:2a; 113:1a; 117:1a; 132:1a; 134:1a; 140:2a; 143:1a; 146:1a). In terms of the vocative in this combination, he adds, it could also represent human beings.

³ Syntactically Pss 29 and 30 are quite different. In Ps 29 the LORD (the voice of the LORD) as a subject is just described as the 3rd person and there is no use of the 1st person as a subject, but in Ps 30 the LORD is described in the 2nd person (vv. 2b, 2c, 3c, 4a, 4b, 8a, 8b, 12a, 12b) and there are uses of the 1st person as a subject (vv. 2a, 3b, 7a, 9a, 9b, 13b).

Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) refers to the liturgical divisions of the text.⁴ This symbol, an abbreviation for סדר (“order,” or “sequence”), indicates the beginning of an order or sequence.⁵ Thus this symbol shows that the scribal tradition placed a division between Pss 29 and 30.⁶

Therefore, Ps 29 is a firmly demarcated unit. It is demarcated from Ps 28 by colon 1a in Ps 29 and delimited from Ps 30 by Ps 30:1a. This demarcation is also confirmed by the superscriptions of Pss 29 and 30.

B. The Text-critical Analysis

A) Strophe 1-b

Whereas the MT reads אֵילִים, a few medieval Hebrew manuscripts read אֵילִים⁷ (“rams”), and the *Septuagint* (LXX) also adds ἐνέγκατε τῷ κυρίῳ υἱοὺς κριῶν (“bring the young rams to the Lord”). The MT reading אֵילִים is the noun masculine plural of either אֵיל⁸ or אֵיל (“ram”). A few Hebrew manuscripts understand it as אֵיל (“ram”) and read it as אֵילִים. The LXX also reads it as κριῶν⁹ (“rams”) and it functions as an object of the verb form ἐνέγκατε (“bring”).¹⁰ Syntactically the MT reading אֵילִים is recognized as a vocative rather

⁴ Brotzman, *Textual Criticism*, 100.

⁵ Kelley, *The Masorah*, 155.

⁶ In the Book of Psalms this symbol is used 19 times (Pss 1, 11, 20, 29, 35, 41, 49, 57, 67, 72, 78, 84, 90, 100, 105, 111, 119, 128, 140). Most of them occur at the end of each psalm, except four psalms (Pss 1, 49, 78, 119). In Ps 1 this symbol is located at the beginning of Ps 1, and in the other three it is placed in the middle of each psalm.

⁷ Noun masculine plural absolute of אֵיל.

⁸ Holladay, *A Concise*, 15. The noun אֵיל is used in various ways such as the high god El, gods as plural, the title of YHWH, the God of Israel, might, etc. At the same time this noun אֵיל can also be understood as the construct form of אֵיל as “ram,” “might tree,” or “door-post.”

⁹ Noun genitive masculine plural of κριός (“ram”).

¹⁰ Aorist active imperative 2nd person plural of φέρω (“to bring”).

than an object.¹¹ In terms of the context of stanza 1 (Ps 29:1-2), the poet commands the audience to ascribe to the LORD and to worship the LORD, using four imperative forms.¹² If we read the MT as an object like the medieval Hebrew manuscripts and the LXX, there are no addressors to ascribe to the LORD and to worship the LORD. This is not a normal construction in the Book of Psalms.¹³ Now in regard to parallelism, stanza 1 of Ps 29 is arranged as the “staircase” parallelism. Thus the direct object of the verb *יִבֵּן* (“Ascribe”)—which requires a direct object—is made in colon 1b rather than colon 1a. On the basis of this argumentation the reading of the MT is intelligible and will not be reconstructed. However, the interpretation of the MT reading *אֲלִים* is still difficult. I dealt with this matter in more detail above.

B) Strophe 2-a

In contrast to the MT reading *בְּהִרְרָה* (“in ornament”), the LXX and the Syriac read *ἐν αὐτῶν* (“in court [yard]”). Thus, the text-critical apparatus recommends that it should be *בְּהִצְרָה* (“in court [yard]”). The second colon in the strophe 2 also begins with the verb form *הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ*¹⁴ (“bow down”), thus the editor of BHS suggests that it would happen in the court of the LORD. However the reading in MT is *הִרְרָה*,¹⁵ which derives from the word *הִרְרָה* (“ornament” or “the glory of God”). Many commentators and lexica follow the reading of the MT. Kraus has argued that this word may better be translated as “revelation” or

¹¹ In terms of interpretation the versions and commentators do not agree with each other but they do agree in recognizing the MT reading as a vocative.

¹² In the first three cola the poet uses the *Qal*, imperative masculine plural of the verb *יָבֵן* (“to bring,” “to ascribe”), and in the last colon the the *Histaphel* imperative masculine plural of the verb *יָרָה* (“to worship”) is used.

¹³ The construction, the imperative + vocative, is a very formal construction at the beginning of a psalm in the Book of Psalms (cf. The Textual Limit section above).

¹⁴ *Histaphel* imperative masculine plural of the verb *יָבֵן* (“to bow down”).

¹⁵ Noun feminine singular construct form of *הִרְרָה* (“attire”).

“appearance.”¹⁶ If we accept the meaning of הִרְרָה as “revelation” or “appearance,” the reading of the MT is clear. Then we read, “Bow down to God at the appearance of the holy one.” According to Hans-Joachim Kraus this meaning is also to be assumed in Ps 96:9 and 1 Chr 16:29.¹⁷ At the same time this interpretation fits well in the context of Ps 29, which describes the appearance of the LORD in a thunderstorm. Thus the suggestion of the MT apparatus is not acceptable.

C) Strophe 2-b

The translation of the LXX (as well as the Syriac) differs with the MT on the reading קָדְשׁ.¹⁸ The LXX reads ἁγιότης αὐτοῦ (“his holiness”), which is in accordance with the Hebrew word קָדְשׁוֹ¹⁹ (“his holiness”). If we follow the new meaning of הִרְרָה (“appearance”), we could follow the suggestion of the editors of BHS. However, in the reading of the MT קָדְשׁ (“holiness”) also can be used in the same grammatical sense. The word קָדְשׁ (“holiness”) is used to show “holiness adhering to God.”²⁰ Thus the reading of the MT is also appropriate in giving the meaning of “his holiness.”

D) Strophe 9-a

The editorship of the BHS proposes that instead of the MT reading אֵילֹת²¹ (“does”) the text should rather read אֵילֹת (= אֵילִים).²² However, it is not easy to determine the meaning of אֵיל, the root of אֵילֹת. The word אֵיל means “ram,” “lofty tree (not a specific

¹⁶ Gordon, *Ugaritic Handbook*, *Analecta Orientalia* 25 [1947], 3:225, cited here from Kraus' commentary on the Book of Psalms (cf. Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 1:345).

¹⁷ Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 1:345.

¹⁸ Noun masculine singular absolute form, meaning “holiness.”

¹⁹ Noun masculine singular construct form of קָדְשׁ + 3rd person masculine singular pronominal suffix.

²⁰ Holladay, *A Concise*, 315.

²¹ Noun feminine plural absolute form of אֵילָה (“hind,” or “doe”).

²² Noun feminine (masculine) plural absolute form of אֵיל.

kind of tree),” or “man of power” as a metaphor.²³ In the context of strophe 9 it can be defined as “lofty trees” (not a specific kind of tree). Thus the MT apparatus proposes that we should read אֵילוֹת (= אֵילִים) (lofty trees) rather than אֵילוֹת (“does”). This text-critical note is very closely related to the next text-critical note, namely the strophe 9b. Thus I will deal with both together in the strophe 9b.

E) Strophe 9-b

Following the MT apparatus, the editor of the BHS proposes that the text should read יַעֲרִים²⁴ or יַעֲלוֹת²⁵ instead of יַעֲרוֹת, which is the feminine form of יַעֲרָה, because the feminine form is an unusual form rather the masculine form otherwise expected. The editor of the BHS believes that it has dropped out. The verb form יַחֲשֹׁף²⁶ also causes some problems, because it is a *hapax legomenon* with יַעֲרוֹת. Mitchell Dahood interprets the verb חֲשַׁף as “to strip,” and finds evidence for this interpretation from the Ahirom Inscription. Thus Dahood interprets this colon וַיַּחֲשֹׁף יַעֲרוֹת as “strips the forests bare.”²⁷ If it is correct, then in the previous parallel line we should read אֵילוֹת (= אֵילִים; “lofty trees”) rather than אֵילוֹת (“does”) in terms of the parallelism. But Kraus says that Dahood’s interpretation is very problematic,²⁸ thus Kraus keeps the reading of the MT. Besides the meaning of “forest,” the reading of the MT יַעֲרוֹת also means “kids” as the plural form of יַעֲרָה.²⁹ At the

²³ Brown, *BDB*, 17-8.

²⁴ Noun masculine plural absolute form of יַעַר (“wood,” or “forest”).

²⁵ Noun feminine plural absolute form of יַעֲלָה (“female goat”).

²⁶ *Waw* consecutive + *Qal* imperfect 3rd person masculine singular of חֲשַׁף.

²⁷ Dahood, *Psalms*, 1:179. Dahood says, “The verb *hasap*, ‘to strip,’ has correctly been identified with Phoen. *hsp* in the Ahirom Inscription, *thtsp htr mspth*, ‘May the scepter of his judicial authority be stripped off.’ Though this is the only instance of feminine plural *ye ‘arot*, the Ugaritic place name *y’rt* and the gentilic *y’rty* bespeak a double gender of this substantive, just as the unique occurrence of feminine plural *‘olamot* in Ps 48:15 is sustained by Ugaritic plural *‘lmt*.”

²⁸ Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 1:345.

²⁹ Koehler, *Lexicon*, 391.

same time the meaning of the verb הָשִׁיב can also be “bring to premature birth.”³⁰ Thus the second colon of the stanza 9 can be interpreted as “bring the kids to premature birth.” In this matter in the previous parallel line the reading of the MT אֵלֵינוּ (“does”) is retainable, in terms of the parallelism. In both parallel lines the poet describes animals not woods, effected by the voice of the LORD. It is the best way of reading to keep the reading of the MT in both text-critical editorship, as “the voice of the LORD brings the does to birth-pains, brings the kids to premature birth,” rather than to follow the editor’s suggestion, which means that “Yahweh’s voice makes the oaks skip and strips the forests bare.”³¹

³⁰ Holladay, *A Concise*, 118.

³¹ Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 1:126-7. There are some versions to follow in this way. “The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare” (NIV), and “The voice of the LORD makes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forests bare” (RSV).

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