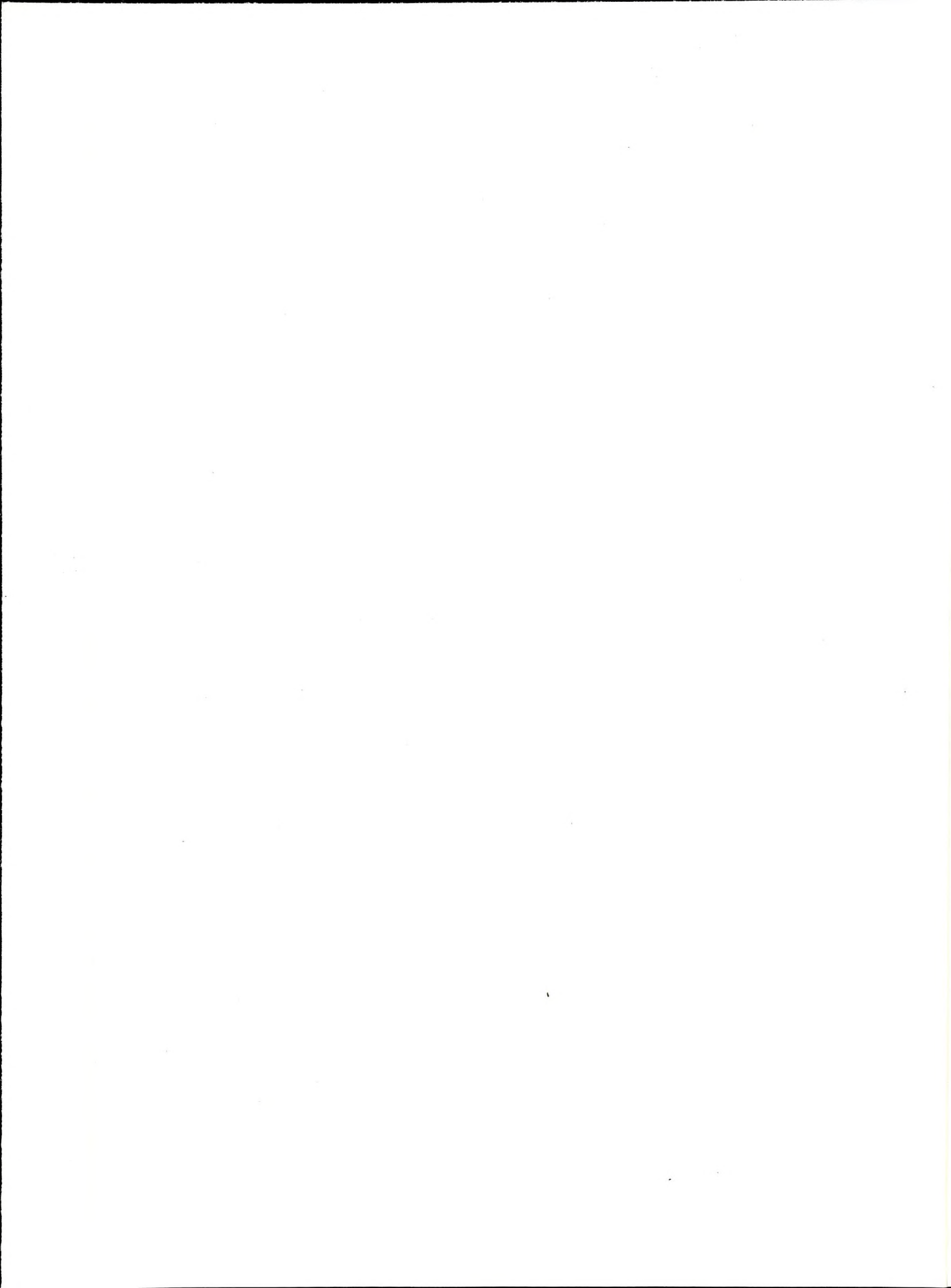
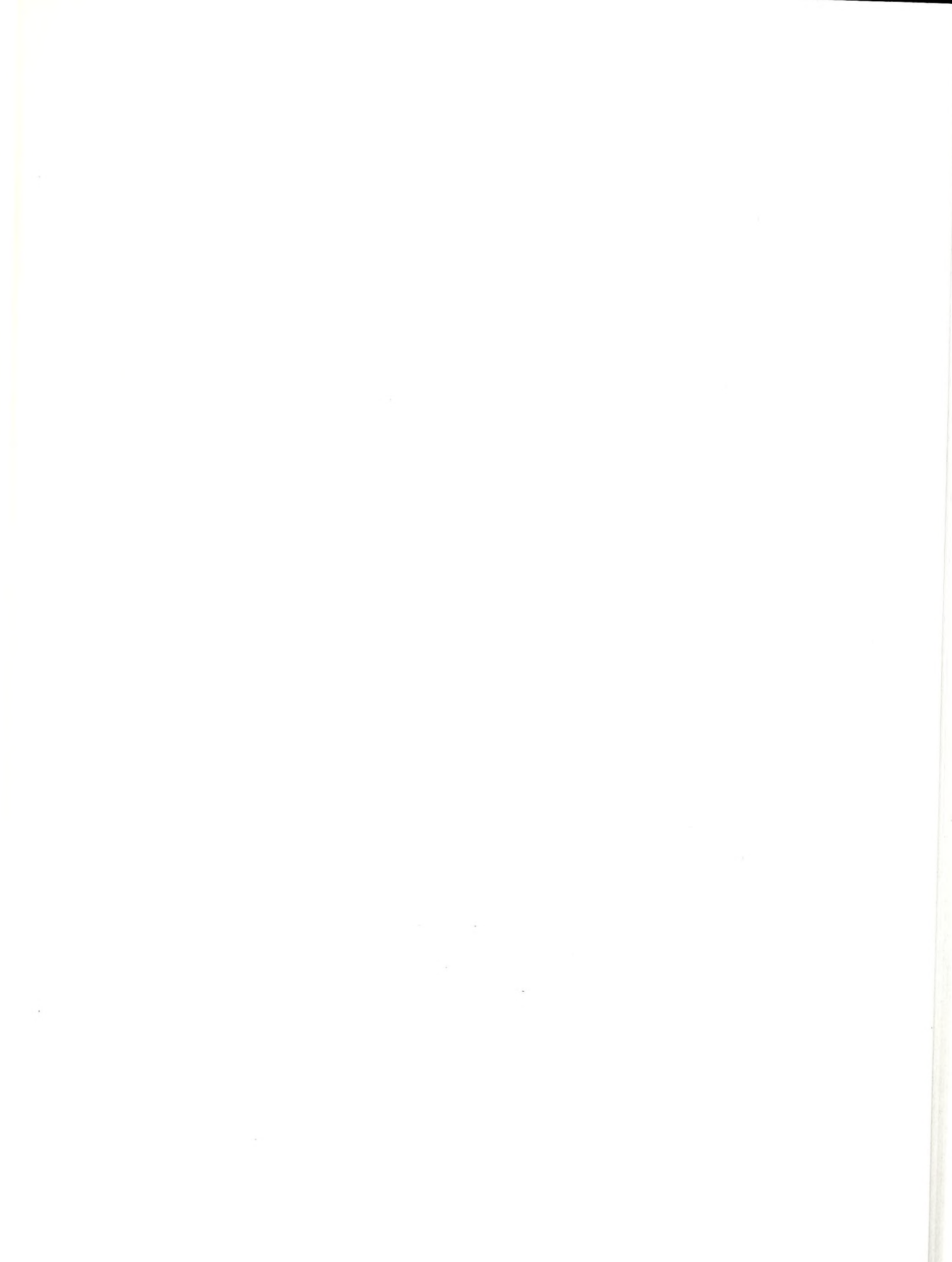


THE AMALGAMATION OF MOSES AND DAVID IN
BOOK IV OF THE PSALTER: AN ANSWER TO
THE FAILURE OF THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

BY

SEUNGHOO BAIK,
B.S., M.Div., Th.M.





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by

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A thesis submitted to
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ABSTRACT

“The Amalgamation of Moses and David in Book IV of the Psalter: An Answer to the Failure of the Davidic Covenant”

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This study examines Book IV of the Hebrew Psalter to understand the editorial purpose of the book in its final canonical form. After Wilson, many scholars have agreed that the Psalms is the result of intentional editorial activity and that Book IV provides an answer to the failure of the Davidic covenant illustrated in Ps 89: exalting YHWH’s exclusive kingship over the world and diminishing Davidic kingship. Against the prevailing notion that David is deemphasized in Book IV, I argue that the editors of the Psalter anticipate an ideal messianic figure by amalgamating the imageries of Moses, the great intercessor, and David, the great king. This thesis employs canonical and literary approaches to explore the seventeen psalms within Book IV (Pss 90–106), with a special interest in how the book responds to the issue of the seemingly broken Davidic covenant in Ps 89.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
AcBib	Academia Biblica
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
BCOTWP	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms
BDB	Brown, Francis, et al. <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford: Clarendon, 1907.
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHRG	Van der Merwe, Christo H. J., et al. <i>A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar</i> . 2nd ed. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.
BHS	Elliger, Karl, and Wilhelm Rudolph, ed. <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983.
BJSUCSD	Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego
BRev	<i>Bible Review</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBCK	Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea Version [Korean]
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CJT	<i>Canadian Journal of Theology</i>

DCH	Clines, David J. A. <i>The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> . 9 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993–2016.
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DKV	Duranno Korean Version [Korean]
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
ESV	English Standard Version
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FIOTL	Formation and Interpretation of Old Testament Literature
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
GBHS	Arnold, Bill T., and John H. Choi. <i>A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> . 2nd ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
GKC	Gesenius, Friedrich Wilhelm. <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Edited by Emil Kautzsch. Translated by Arthur Ernest Cowley, 2nd ed. Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1910.
HALOT	Koehler, Ludwig., et al. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–1999
IBHS	Waltke, Bruce K., and Michael P. O'Connor. <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> . Winona Lake, ID.: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
Joüon	Joüon, Paul, and T. Muraoka. <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> . SubBi 27. Revised English ed. Roma: Pontificio istituto biblico, 2006.
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series

<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KTU	M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín, eds. <i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit: Einschliesslich der keilalphabetischen Texte ausserhalb Ugarits. Teil 1. Transkription</i> . AOAT 24. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1976.
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LXX	Septuagint
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTG	Old Testament Guides
MT	Masoretic Text
NABR	New American Bible, Revised Edition
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NCTB	New Common Translation Bible [Korean]
<i>NETS</i>	Pietersma, Albert, and Benjamin G. Wright, eds. <i>A New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> . New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
<i>NIB</i>	Keck, Leander E., ed. <i>The New Interpreter's Bible</i> . 12 vols. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994–2004
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	VanGemen, Willem A., ed. <i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible

NJPS	<i>Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text</i>
NKJV	New King James Version
NKRV	New Korean Revised Version [Korean]
NKSV	New Korean Standard Version [Korean]
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
SBB	Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLHBS	Society of Biblical Literature History of Biblical Studies
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
StBibLit	Studies in Biblical Literature (Lang)
SubBi	Subsidia Biblica
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The present thesis aims to discern the editorial function of Book IV of the Psalter in its final canonical form. Psalms, one of the most beloved books in the Bible, has been studied by many scholars. Some of them have regarded the book as a random anthology of unrelated prayers and praises. Others have understood the book as a unified collection deliberately arranged under an editorial intention to deliver an overarching message. This study will attempt to find the canonical function of Book IV. My thesis is that Book IV functions as an answer to a question regarding the abandonment of David by YHWH in Ps 89 and suggests the hope for the messiah by amalgamating the images of Moses and David, which serves as a foundation for the theme of messianic expectation in Book V.

Previous Approaches to the Book of Psalms and Book IV

Form Critical Approaches

Hermann Gunkel's pioneering books *Die Psalmen* and *Einleitung in Die Psalmen* were published in 1926 and 1933 respectively. They represented the first form-critical approach to the Psalms and significantly changed the focus of previous Psalms studies from historical backgrounds to the literary forms/genres (*Gattungen*) and the original social setting in life (*Sitz im Leben*) related to the genres.¹ His approach has dominated

¹ See Gunkel, *Psalmen*.

Psalms studies for most of the twentieth century, and its influence remains. His classification of the “chief genres” of the psalms—hymns, enthronement psalms, communal complaints, royal psalms, individual complaints, and individual thanksgiving psalms²—still functions as “a mainstay” in the study of the Psalms.³ While he emphasized the *Sitz im Leben* and the *Gattungen* of individual psalms,⁴ he barely paid attention to the arrangement of the psalms. Although he admitted that the “collector” of the Psalter intentionally placed doxologies at certain locations to divide the whole Psalter into five divisions, he regarded Pss 90–150 as a random collection of individually transmitted psalms.⁵

Sigmund Mowinckel followed Gunkel’s historical method and refined it by locating the social setting of almost all the psalms in Israel’s cult. In *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship* (1962), he wrote, “To understand a psalm means to see it in the right cultic connexion.”⁶ Also, based on discoveries about the feasts in ancient West Asia, he postulated the autumn New Year Festival which had celebrated and reenacted the enthronement of YHWH as king every year.⁷ As for Book IV of the Psalms, he connected his theory of the enthronement of YHWH with Pss 93–100, translating יהוה מלך (‘YHWH reigns’ or ‘YHWH is king’), the characteristic phrase of these psalms (Pss 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1), as “YHWH has become king!” He regarded the phrase as “the

² See Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction*, 19.

³ Sparks, “Form Criticism,” 112.

⁴ For his detailed discussion on the *Gattungen* of the psalms in Book IV, see Gunkel, *Psalmen*, 396–468.

⁵ Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction*, 347–48.

⁶ Mowinckel, *Worship*, 1:34.

⁷ See Mowinckel, *Studies*, especially part 1 of “Psalm Studies 2: YHWH’s Enthronement Festival and the Origin of Eschatology.”

acclamation of YHWH as king.”⁸ Although there is no evidence in the Old Testament for the existence of such a festival and thus Mowinckel’s hypothesis is highly speculative, his approach has had a strong influence on commentaries on the Psalms, causing them to have “a history-of-religions perspective.”⁹ Like Gunkel, Mowinckel also focused only on the analysis of individual psalms.

Form Critical Approaches with Structural Interest

After Gunkel and Mowinckel, many scholars have applied form critical approaches, with some variation, to the Psalms, including Book IV. Claus Westermann employed form critical analysis, focusing on the genres of the psalms.¹⁰ However, he showed some interest in the shape of the Psalter: he identified the function of some praise psalms and royal psalms as the framing elements of the Psalter and discerned a *movement* in the canonical Psalter from lament to praise, with the turning point at Ps 90.¹¹ While regarding Pss 90–106 and 107–150 as non-independent collections, he also found small collections in Book IV: “the so-called enthronement psalms 93–99 (excluding 94), with Psalm 100 as the conclusion, and the psalms of praise 103–107.”¹² Hence, he “anticipated the work of Childs and Wilson.”¹³

Michael Goulder also made a canonical observation that Book IV is “an *ordered* collection.”¹⁴ Following Mowinckel’s hypothesis, Goulder suggested a liturgical setting

⁸ Mowinckel, *Worship*, 1:106–15.

⁹ Wenham, “Towards a Canonical Reading of the Psalms,” 334.

¹⁰ See Westermann, *Praise and Lament*; Westermann, *The Living Psalms*.

¹¹ Westerman, *Praise and Lament*, 255–58.

¹² Westerman, *Praise and Lament*, 255; Westerman, *Psalms*, 18.

¹³ Howard, “Editorial Activity,” 56. See below.

¹⁴ Goulder, “Fourth Book,” 269–70 (emphasis original).

for Book IV, which was related to an eight-day Tabernacles Festival.¹⁵ While he related Book IV to other passages in the canon associated with the Feast of Tabernacles (Exod 6–34; 2 Sam 24–1 Kgs 4),¹⁶ he did not much focus on internal links between psalms in Book IV.¹⁷

Instead of Westermann's suggested movement from lament to praise at Ps 90, Walter Brueggemann observed a tension between two divisions of the Psalter; the first part (Pss 1–72) emphasizes the obedience to the Torah which is suggested in Ps 1, and the second part (74–150) pays attention to the praise of God which culminates in the very last psalm. He considered Ps 73, a pivotal psalm, to be the turning point in the theology of ancient Israel.¹⁸ Therefore, according to his analysis, the psalms of Book IV have an emphasis on the praise of God. However, his analysis, as well as Westermann's, seems too broad to specify the theology of Book IV.

Canonical Approaches

One of the most important and influential alternative approaches has been that of Gerald Wilson. In his doctoral dissertation defended at Yale University in 1981,¹⁹ proceeding from Brevard Childs' canonical approach and James Sanders' canonical criticism, Wilson disputed the perspective that the book of Psalms is an anthology which randomly collected individual psalms and argued that the final form of the Psalter is "the result of a

¹⁵ Goulder, "Fourth Book," 274–75.

¹⁶ Goulder, "Fourth Book," 274, 286.

¹⁷ Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 12.

¹⁸ Brueggemann, "Bounded by Obedience and Praise," 66–92.

¹⁹ Wilson, *Editing*.

purposeful, editorial activity which sought to impart a meaningful arrangement which encompassed the whole.”²⁰ According to him, through the deliberate arrangement of psalms that produced the final form of the canonical Psalter, “these very human words to God have made the shift to become God’s word to us.”²¹ After the publication of his monumental dissertation *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (1985), there has been an increased interest in the topic of the canonical “shape” of the Psalter and its editorial “shaping” among scholars in the past about thirty years.²² A shift “from *Sitz im Leben* to *Sitz im Buch*, from setting in life to setting in the Psalter” has taken place.²³

Previous Theories about the Function of Book IV

Diminished David and the Emphasis on YHWH’s Kingship

Using his canonical approach, Wilson suggested that Book IV functions as “the editorial center” of the whole Psalter. He went on to say,

As such this group stands as the “answer” to the problem posed in Ps 89 as to the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant with which Books One–Three are primarily concerned. Briefly summarized the answer given is: (1) YHWH is king; (2) He has been our “refuge” in the past, long before the monarchy existed (i.e., in the Mosaic period); (3) He will continue to be our refuge now that the monarchy is gone; (4) Blessed are they that trust in him!²⁴

Also, he argued that the use of royal psalms at the “seams” of the Psalter (Pss 2, 72, 89) constitute a royal Davidic frame in Books I–III, which tells the story of the rise and

²⁰ Wilson, *Editing*, 199.

²¹ Wilson, “Structure,” 245, emphasis original.

²² McCann, “Changing our Way of Being Wrong,” 21–23.

²³ Brown, “The Psalms: An Overview,” 17.

²⁴ Wilson, *Editing*, 215.

demise of the Davidic kingship.²⁵ On the basis of the absence of royal psalms at the seams in Books IV–V and the emphasis on the kingship of YHWH in them which can be detected in YHWH-*malak* psalms (Pss 93–99), he also contended that the last two books tell the story of hope in YHWH’s ideal kingship instead of the story of vain hope in defective human kings.²⁶ According to him, there has taken place a shift of theological perspective from the human kingship to the divine ideal kingship at Book IV as “the editorial center.”²⁷ He went on to say that the role of Davidic kingship is diminished and YHWH’s ideal kingship over Israel is emphasized in Books IV and V.²⁸ He asserted that these different editorial strategies indicate the theological shift as a response to exilic agony: He wrote, “For Yahweh is king and David is not, delight in his Torah!”²⁹

On the basis of Wilson’s theory, Nancy deClaissé-Walford approached the Psalms as “a story within a canonical context.”³⁰ She identified Ps 90 as the beginning of “the end” of the story, whereas Pss 1–3 begin “the beginning.”³¹ Like Wilson, she believed that Books I–III tell the story of the failure of the Davidic monarchy and Book IV emphasizes YHWH’s kingship and faithfulness.³² For deClaissé-Walford and Wilson, the turning point from the human kingship of David to the divine monarchy of YHWH is Ps 90. They argued that David has almost disappeared after this shifting point. However, they should pay attention to Pss 101 and 103 which have לְדָוִד (“of David” or “to David”)

²⁵ Wilson, “The Use of Royal Psalms,” 85–94; Wilson, “Structure,” 233–34.

²⁶ Wilson, “The Use of Royal Psalms,” 90–92.

²⁷ Wilson, *Editing*, 215.

²⁸ Wilson, *Editing*, 214–28.

²⁹ Wilson, “Structure,” 235–36.

³⁰ deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, vii.

³¹ deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 81.

³² deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 81–91.

in their superscriptions. In addition to Book V, which has fifteen psalms dedicated to David (Pss 108; 109; 110; 122; 124; 131; 133; 138; 139; 140; 141; 142; 143; 144; 145), David reappears even in Book IV (Pss 101; 103). Zion also has not been erased from Book IV (Pss 97:8; 99:2; 102:13[12], 16[15], 21[20]).³³

Robert Wallace also excludes the kingship of David from Book IV. In his unique approach to the Psalms, he argues that “the narrative effect of Book IV within the book of Psalms as reflected in the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Psalter focuses the reader on Moses, Torah, and the proper place for Yahweh in the cosmos.”³⁴ There is no place for David in his analysis. Out of the ruins of the Davidic covenant in Ps 89, Moses has appeared and changed the direction of the story in Ps 90.³⁵ As for the rejuvenating of David in Book IV, he argues that David defers to the covenant of Moses (Ps 103), as well as to the kingship of YHWH (Ps 104).³⁶

An Eschatological View with Messianic Interests

The study of David Mitchell has to be noted here. He suggests that the placement of the royal psalms at the seams displays an eschatological program with messianic interests in the book of Psalms.³⁷ He disagrees with the view stated above that the kingships of YHWH and David are mutually incompatible.³⁸

It therefore seems that the David of Books IV and V is not a minor player at all.

³³ The verse citations featured in this thesis correspond to Hebrew (MT) verse numbers, which frequently does not match English versification. The corresponding English citation is offered in brackets.

³⁴ Wallace, *Narrative*, 1.

³⁵ Wallace, *Narrative*, 88.

³⁶ Wallace, *Narrative*, 76.

³⁷ Mitchell, *Message*, 243–71.

³⁸ Mitchell, “Lord, Remember David,” 538.

He is the King Messiah, conquering his foes (cx); entering Jerusalem in triumph (cxviii); to whom the tribes of Israel go up, as in Zechariah xiv, to celebrate the Feast of Sukkot (Pss. cxx-cxxxiv) in the city of David (Ps. cxxii) before the messianic throne (Ps. cxxxii); and who conquers every last uprising (Ps. cxliv).³⁹

Although his argument about the status of David is valid, he scarcely comments on the psalms within Book IV. Therefore, the theme of the messianic David in Book IV needs to be explored.

Finding Messianic Expectation through Amalgamating Moses and David

The importance of Moses in Book IV has widely been recognized in scholarship.⁴⁰ The first psalm of the collection is dedicated to Moses (Ps 90. תְּפִלָּה לְמֹשֶׁה “A prayer of Moses”), and he reappears in the last psalm (Ps 106:23). As briefly discussed above, however, the role of David has long been ignored by modern scholars. On the other hand, some scholars argue that important themes in the Hebrew Bible such as Zion, the temple, and the Davidic kingship are not obliterated in the Psalter, including Book IV.⁴¹ However, no one yet has attempted to amalgamate the Moses and David of Book IV into an ideal figure. Therefore, I propose to study Book IV of the Hebrew Psalter (Pss 90–106) using canonical and literary analyses, in order to articulate the function of Book IV in its final form. This study attempts to determine the validity of the thesis that Book IV offers an answer to a question concerning the failure of David, which is raised in Ps 89,

³⁹ Mitchell, “Lord, Remember David,” 537.

⁴⁰ Creach, “The Shape of Book Four,” 65; Goulder, “The Fourth Book of the Psalter,” 274–75; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 530; Wilson, *Editing*, 187–88, 215.

⁴¹ Gundersen, “Davidic Hope”; Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 206–7; Mays, “David,” 155; Mitchell, “Lord, Remember David,” 526–548. However, Creach sees the idealized David reappears in Book V (from Pss 108–110), not in Book IV. Creach, *Yahweh*, 100–101.

and provides the hope for the messianic figure through the amalgamation of the idealized Moses and David. I hope that my own analysis will articulate the messianic expectation in the Psalter, especially in Book IV, which has been neglected in modern scholarship.

Methodology

The aim of this thesis is to understand the editorial function of Book IV in the canonical context of the whole Psalter. To achieve this goal, this study will employ a canonical approach to Book IV, which reads the Masoretic canonical Psalter as a unified book deliberately arranged by editor(s). First, I will begin by suggesting the questions of Ps 89, which await answers. After dividing Book IV into four groups according to their themes (Pss 90–92; 93–100; 101–103; 104–106), I will explore each division. To find the message of each psalm and of each division, I will conduct a literary analysis which will consist of my own translation and a close reading of each psalm in Book IV, focusing on literary patterns and poetic devices such as parallelism, keywords, and metaphors.⁴² At the level of each psalm's immediate context, by comparing the psalm to the surrounding psalms in canonical order, I will attempt to discern any progress or change of the theme, focusing of the lexical and thematic links between the psalms. The superscriptions of each psalm are significant factors as well in helping to trace a narrative progression within Book IV. Although there is an ongoing debate on the superscriptions, I will treat them as a part of the canonical Psalter because they are included in the final form of the

⁴² Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*; Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*; Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*; Petersen and Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry*; Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*; Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*.

Psalter.

On the level of the context of the entire Psalter, my interpretation of each psalm in Book IV and of each group divided above will be analyzed in the overall context of the Psalter. The perspective of Childs which sees the Psalter as a unified whole will be applied. I will trace the *narrative flow* of Book IV in the context of the Psalter, with a special focus on the relationship of Book IV and the end of Book III, Ps 89. By *narrative flow* I intend a thematic movement that can be detected by a reader who reads the Psalter as a unified book from the beginning. By observing thematic linkages on the basis of an interpretive frame offered by Pss 1 and 2 as an introduction to the entire Psalter, I will analyze the narrative flow of Book IV.

I will pay attention to various references to biblical characters, incidents, and vocabulary that are appropriated by the psalmists to highlight their topics.⁴³ Not only direct references to other psalms within or outside Book IV and to other passages in the Old Testament but also indirect ones will be focused;⁴⁴ I will demonstrate allusions and thematic connections employed by the psalmists to express imageries of Moses and David.⁴⁵ For example, the psalms within Book IV show various links to the Mosaic traditions, especially Exodus and Deuteronomy. These links are not exclusively limited to a lexical and semantic similarity. They include similarity in theme and content between the texts.

⁴³ Martens, "Reaching for a Biblical Theology of the Whole Bible," 96.

⁴⁴ Porter categorizes quotation and paraphrase as a direct reference and allusion and echo as an indirect one. See Porter, "Allusions and Echoes," 29–30.

⁴⁵ As for the concept of allusions, I am indebted to Boda, "Quotation, Allusion," 296–98 and Porter, "Allusions and Echoes, 29–40.

CHAPTER 2: MOSES PRAYS FOR DAVID (PSALMS 90–92)

Psalm 89 and the Unresolved Questions

Book III ends with a royal psalm.¹ Psalm 89 can be divided into three divisions: hymn (vv. 2–19[1–18]), divine discourse (vv. 20–38[19–37]), and lament (vv. 39–52[38–51]).² The psalm praises YHWH’s power and faithfulness (vv. 2–3[1–2], 6–19[5–18]), and recalls the covenant of everlasting kingship, which YHWH has made with David, by quoting YHWH’s own voice (vv. 4–5[3–4], 20–38[19–37]) that affirms David’s status as YHWH’s chosen “servant” (v. 4[3]), anointed one (v. 21[20]), and “firstborn” (v. 29[28]). David is exalted as “the highest of the kings of the earth” (v. 28[27]) and his descendants are established forever (v. 30[29]), as described in 2 Sam 7:12–16. Then, the mood abruptly changes; וְאַתָּה זָנַחְתָּ וְתַמָּאִס הִתְעַבְרַת עַם־מְשִׁיחֶךָ (“But you, you have rejected and spurned, you have been enraged with your anointed!” [v. 39, ET 38]).³ Now the poet laments the broken covenant and the expelled king (vv. 39–52[38–51]). The covenant with David has been repudiated (v. 40[39]), and the king’s throne has been hurled to the ground (v. 45[44]). The lament culminates in painful questions: “How long, O YHWH?

¹ Anderson, *Out of the Depths*, 241; Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 468; deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 33; Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, 99–120; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 202; Wilson, *Psalms*, 66; Zenger, “Zion as Mother of the Nations in Psalm 87,” 159. See the useful index of form-critical categorizations provided by Philip Johnston. Johnston and Firth, eds., *Interpreting the Psalms*, 295–300.

² Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 406–7. The last verse (v. 52) is a doxology which ends the psalm and Book III.

³ Unless otherwise indicated, all the English translations of the Hebrew texts are mine.

Will you hide yourself forever? Will your wrath burn like fire forever?" (v. 47[46])

"Where is your steadfast love of old, O Lord, which you swore to David in your faithfulness?" (v. 50[49]).

As Wilson and other scholars have noted, the Davidic covenant is viewed as failed.⁴ However, this does not necessarily mean the permanent failure of the covenant. The Davidic dynasty sustained by the covenant, as Brueggemann and Bellinger properly note, is "not simply a political achievement (which it was) but a strategy of YHWH's governance of the world whereby the Davidic king is YHWH's regent to maintain order and justice in creation."⁵ Even though the Davidic covenant has been broken, YHWH's providence and reign themselves do not come to an end. Despite the ostensible failure of the Davidic dynasty, the poet never abandons the faith that YHWH still reigns the world. The one who removed the scepter from David's hand is none other than YHWH (v. 45[44]). The foes of David were able to rejoice over him only because YHWH exalted them (v. 43[42]). YHWH has punished the Davidic descendants according to the promise: "If his children forsake my Torah and do not live according to my justice . . . then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with plague (vv. 31–33[30–32])." The other dimension of the promise is that YHWH will not permanently take away his steadfast love from the Davidic line (v. 34[33]) nor violate his own covenant with them (v. 35[34]). On the basis of YHWH's *חַסְדּוֹ* ("steadfast love," vv. 2[1], 3[2], 15[14], 25[24], 29[28], 34[33], 50[49]) and *אֱמוּנָה* ("faithfulness," vv. 2[1], 3[2], 6[5], 9[8],

⁴ See Chapter 1.

⁵ Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 385.

15[14], 25[24], 34[33], 50[49]), the poet petitions YHWH to remember מְשִׁיחֶךָ (“your anointed”) who has been mocked and abused (vv. 50–52[49–51]), sustaining the hope for the rejuvenating of the anointed Davidic line. YHWH’s lordship is already emphasized in Ps 89. Thus, the hypothesis of an abrupt distinction between the human kingship and divine kingship at the junction of Pss 89 and 90 cannot be substantiated.

The psalm, however, ends unresolved. There is no response from YHWH. Although the poet still sustains the hope for the restoration of David, his throne remains empty. Book III ends with the unanswered questions concerning the Davidic covenant. Therefore, one who reads through the Psalter expects an answer to be provided in the following psalms. Many scholars have argued that Book IV provides an answer to the questions raised in Psalm 89.⁶ Various thematic and lexical links between Ps 89, the end of Book III, and Ps 90, the beginning of Book IV, connect the two psalms and thus the two books. Michael McKelvey has noted several lexical links between them: the divine epithet אֲדֹנָי (“Lord” in Ps 89:50[49], 51[50] and Ps 90:1,⁷ 17; חַמָּתְךָ (“your wrath” in Ps 89:47[46] and Ps 90:7);⁸ and the root דָּכָא (as the verb which means “to crush” in Ps 89:11[10] and as the noun which means “dust” in Ps 90:3).⁹ Furthermore, Pss 89 and 90 show significant thematic connections. They contrast eternity (Pss 89:2–3[1–2], 5[4];

⁶ deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 685–86; Gundersen, “Davidic Hope,” 74–90; Holm, “Moses in the Prophets and the Writings of the Hebrew Psalter,” 47; Howard, “A Contextual Reading of Psalms 90–94,” 110–11; McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 1040; McKelvey, *Moses*, 16–20; Wenham, “Towards a Canonical Reading of the Psalms,” 337; Wilson, *Editing*, 215.

⁷ While the epithet אֲדֹנָי is frequently applied to God in the Psalter, it occurs only in Ps 90 within Book IV.

⁸ Three successive occurrences of the term חַמָּה, which refers to God’s wrath, are found only in Pss 88, 89, 90, out of total nine occurrences within the Psalter (Pss 6:2[1]; 38:2[1]; 59:14[13]; 78:38; 79:6; 88:8[7]; 89:47[46]; 90:7; 106:23). See McKelvey, *Moses*, 36.

⁹ This rare root occurs only six times within the whole Psalter (Pss 34:19[18]; 72:4; 89:11[10]; 90:3; 94:5; 143:3). See McKelvey, *Moses*, 36–37.

90:1–2, 4) and ephemerality (Pss 89:48–49[47–48] and 90:3–6).¹⁰ YHWH’s servant(s) (Pss 89:4[3], 21[20], 51[50]; 90:13, 16) are afflicted because YHWH’s divine wrath burns against them (Pss 89:47[46]; 90:7). Employing the divine name יהוה, both psalms ask the time question: “How long? O YHWH!” (Ps 89:47[46]); “Return, O YHWH! How long?” (Ps 90:13).¹¹ Based on these links between Ps 89 and the opening psalm of Book IV, readers can anticipate that Book IV will respond to the ostensible failure of the Davidic kingship in Ps 89.

The first response of Book IV is to recall Moses. Psalm 90, the beginning of Book IV, has a unique superscription which refers to Moses, תְּפִלָּה לְמֹשֶׁה אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים (“A prayer of Moses, the man of God”). This is the only psalm ascribed to Moses in the whole Psalter. Psalm 106, the end of Book IV, also refers to Moses as YHWH’s chosen one. Thus, Pss 90 and 106 form a Mosaic “envelope.”¹² According to Wilson, Pss 90–92 and 94 form a “Mosaic frame” together with Pss 105–106, the concluding psalms of Book IV.¹³ References to Moses’ name throughout the whole Psalter occur only seven times, all but one of them in Book IV (Pss 90:1[0]; 99:6; 103:7; 105:26; 106:16, 23, 32).¹⁴ These strong Mosaic overtones make Book IV the “Moses Book,”¹⁵ and remind readers of a great intercessor of ancient Israel; Book IV pays tribute to Moses for his intercessory prayer that saved the Israelites from YHWH’s punishment (Ps 106:23; cf. Exod 32). In this chapter, I will explore the opening part of Book IV, which sets the tone for the entire

¹⁰ Clifford, *Psalms 73–150*, 96; Gundersen, “Davidic Hope,” 75–78.

¹¹ Gundersen, “Davidic Hope,” 87.

¹² Creach, “The Shape of Book Four of the Psalter,” 65.

¹³ Wilson, “Shaping the Psalter,” 75–76.

¹⁴ The only exception that occurs outside the collection is Ps 77:20.

¹⁵ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 530.

book.

Psalm 90: Moses' Prayer for David

Translation of Psalm 90¹⁶

1 A prayer of Moses, the man of God.¹⁷

Lord, YOU¹⁸ have been a shelter¹⁹ for us²⁰ in every generation.

2 Before the mountains were begotten,²¹
Before you brought forth²² the earth and the world,
From everlasting to everlasting you are God.

3 You return²³ human beings to dust, saying,²⁴
“Return, you mortals!”

4 For a thousand years in your eyes
Are like yesterday that has passed,
Like²⁵ a watch of the night,

¹⁶ I will provide my translations of each psalm and discuss issues concerning the texts in the footnotes.

¹⁷ While many modern translations do not number the superscription but count the very next verse after the superscription as verse 1, I follow the MT textual tradition by counting the superscription as verse 1 and then continuing enumerating.

¹⁸ The subject “you” is emphasized by the use of אַתָּה.

¹⁹ BHS suggests מְעוֹן (refuge) in lieu of מְקוֹן (dwelling). Both images can be retained by using “shelter.”

²⁰ Beth Tanner rightly points out the “seemingly small but theologically significant structure” of the syntax לַיהוָה לָנוּ מְעוֹן. God has been a shelter for us; God is not *our possession* but offers a shelter *for us*. deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 691.

²¹ This is one out of only two cases in which *qatal* is used for a past action with the conjunction וְ. See Joüon §113j; BHRG §41.8.

²² Some English translations (ESV, NRSV, KJV) follow *πλασσω* (to form/mold) in LXX for לָחַץ. However, by a parallel of יָלַד and חָלַל with Deut 32:18, Walter Brueggemann finds the paternal connotation for יָלַד (to beget), and the maternal connotation for חָלַל (to give birth). These verbs are used as metaphors of God's creation. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 148.

²³ The shortened *yiqtol* form of שׁוֹב is used here in a non-jussive meaning. See BHRG §19.4.

²⁴ According to Waltke and O'Connor, וְאַתָּה after the short prefix form אָשׁוּב expresses gnomic values. See IBHS §33.3.2.

²⁵ The comparative particle כִּי is omitted. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 260.

- 5 You overwhelm them;²⁶ they become sleep;²⁷
 In the morning,²⁸ like grass that is renewed.
- 6 In the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
 In the evening it withers and dries up.
- 7 For we are consumed by your anger,
 And by your wrath, we are dismayed.
- 8 You have set our iniquities before you
 And our secrets in the light of your face.
- 9 For all our days dwindle away²⁹ under your wrath;
 We exhaust our years like a sigh.
- 10 The days of our years are seventy years,
 And if in strength, eighty years;
 But their span³⁰ is only toil and trouble;
 They are gone swiftly, and we fly away.
- 11 Who knows the power of your wrath?
 Your wrath is much like the fear of you.³¹
- 12 Teach us to count our days rightly
 That we may gain a wise heart.
- 13 Turn, O YHWH!
 How Long?
 Have compassion on your servants.

²⁶ While BDB proposes “to pour forth in floods” for *זרם*, *DCH* and *HALOT* suggest “to overwhelm,” “to destroy,” or “to make an end of life.” The latter fits with v. 3. BDB 281; see *DCH* 3:139; *HALOT* 1:281.

²⁷ Amongst several textual problems in this psalm, vv. 5–6 are the most difficult ones to understand. The plain meaning of the text is obscure: *שָׁנָה יִהְיוּ* “they become sleep.” LXX took *שָׁנָה* instead of *שָׁנָה* and translated it as *ἔτη* (year): *τὰ ἐξουθενώματα αὐτῶν ἔτη ἔσσονται* (“years shall be the objects of their scorn”). BHS suggests *שָׁנָה שָׁנָה* (year by year). However, these are speculative. I rendered it as close as possible to the MT.

²⁸ Hans-Joachim Kraus deletes *בְּבִקֵּר* in v. 5, proposing it was added via dittography of it in v. 6. He also reads *זָרְעָתָם* (to seed them) instead of *זָרְמָתָם* (to sweep them) and *שָׁנָה* (year) instead of *שָׁנָה* (sleep). Thus he translates v. 5 as “you seed them year after year; they are like the grass that grows again and again.” See Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 212.

²⁹ As in Jer 6:4, *פָּנָה* is read as “to decline” or “to dwindle away.” “Woe to us, for the day declines, the shadows of evening lengthen!” See *DCH* 6:707; *HALOT* 3:938; Tate, *Psalms 50–100*, 434.

³⁰ *רְחֵבָם* is a *hapax legomena*, which probably means “their pride.” The editors of BHS suggest *רָבָם*, which corresponds with the reading of LXX, *πλείον* (“many”). According to some versions for MT, Tate reads *רְחֵבָם* (“their extent/span”). This reading fits well in the context. See Tate, *Psalms 50–100*, 435; Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 3:22; deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 693.

³¹ This is another enigma in this psalm. I have paraphrased this from its literal translation: “and like your fear is your wrath.”

- 14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
- 15 Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us,
As many years as we have seen evil.
- 16 Let your work be seen by your servants,
And your splendor by their children.
- 17 May the favor of the Lord, our God, be upon us;
And the work of our hands, establish it for us;
The work of our hands, establish it.

Structure of Psalm 90

Psalm 90 is traditionally considered as having two divisions: vv. 1–12 as an original psalm and vv. 13–17 as a subsequent expansion.³² However, the theory is only a conjecture. The psalm seems to be one unit,³³ yet it can be divided into three sections (except the superscription) according to its themes.

Mosaic superscription	(v. 1a)
God's eternity vs. humanity's brevity	(vv. 1b–6)
Complaint about the long-lasting affliction	(vv. 7–11)
Prayer for restoration	(vv. 12–17)

Mosaic Superscription (v. 1a)

Psalm 90 is the only psalm which is attributed to Moses in its superscription in the entire Psalter. While scholars agree that the superscriptions are later editorial additions, they are still important because they are included in the final form of the Hebrew texts and thus are part of the canonical Psalter.³⁴ Moreover, they reflect how the psalms were understood

³² Although admitting that the evolutionary hypothesis is now neglected by scholars, Zenger still holds the theory. See, Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 420. Also, Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 161.

³³ Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 214.

³⁴ According to VanGemeren and Stanghelle, "If the titles are later additions, this does not necessarily rule out their canonical status or negate their authority. The titles may not be original, but may still be canonical and authoritative. Their authority need not be ruled out if the titles are later additions and

in the very early stage of the interpretation of the psalms.³⁵

Thus, the superscription of Ps 90, תְּפִלָּה לְמֹשֶׁה (“A prayer of Moses”), shows that the early interpreters thought of this psalm as Moses’ prayer and wanted other readers to consider it in the same way as they did. The poet’s pleas for YHWH to turn (שׁוּבָה) and to relent (הִנָּחֵם) in v. 13 evoke the intercessory role of Moses at the golden calf incident in Exod 32–34.³⁶ Moses prayed to YHWH to save the Israelites from the divine wrath and used the same words (Exod 32:12): “Turn (שׁוּב) from your fierce anger; relent (הִנָּחֵם) and do not bring disasters on your people” (NIV). הִנָּחֵם (“relent!”), the *niphal* imperative (2ms) form of נָחַם addressed to God, occurs only twice in the entire Hebrew Bible: Exod 32:12 and Ps 90:13. Freedman persuasively argues:

Only Moses has the status and the familiarity that permit him to tell God to “turn (*sûb*) . . . and repent (*hinnāhem*)!” (Exodus 32:12). Two verses later, we are told, “And Yahweh repented [using the same verb] of the evil which he thought to do to his people” (Exodus 32:14). . . . Whoever put the heading on Psalm 90, attributing it to “Moses, the Man of God” must have known that Moses alone tells God to “turn” and “repent.” Another possibility—and a more likely one in my view—is that the composer of the psalm based it on the episode in Exodus 32 and imagined in poetic form how Moses may have spoken in the circumstances of Exodus 32.³⁷

Furthermore, the designation of Moses as אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים (“the man of God” [v. 1a]) harks back to Deut 33, another Mosaic text. While this phrase occurs seventy times within the Old Testament, only one occurrence within the Pentateuch is found in Deut 33:1: “This is

not authentic to the author.” VanGemeren and Stanghelle, “A Critical-Realistic Reading of the Psalm Titles,” 289.

³⁵ Childs, *Introduction*, 520–22; Jacobson and Jacobson, *Invitation to the Psalms*, 94.

³⁶ deClaisse-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*, 85; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 438; Zenger, “God of Israel’s Reign,” 166;

³⁷ Freedman, “Who Asks (or Tells) God to Repent?,” 58–59.

the blessing that *Moses, the man of God*, blessed the Israelites before his death.” As in Ps 90:1a, the designation, which is applied to Moses, introduces Moses’ prayer of blessing.³⁸ These connections of Ps 90 to Exod 32–33 and Deut 33 invite its readers to “imagine how Moses might speak again at a crucial point in Israel’s theological and historical life.”³⁹ The context of Pss 89 and 90 and links between them stated above make the readers posit the “crucial point” as the failure of the Davidic covenant. Therefore, the psalmist, together with the compiler of Ps 90, invites its readers to think this psalm as an “imagined prayer of Moses” at the crisis of the Davidic failure.⁴⁰

Response to Psalm 89: The Reason of the Failure

The imagined Moses now laments over how ephemeral human life is, contrasting the eternity of God with the brevity of human beings (vv. 1b–6).⁴¹ Given that “sleep” can be used as a metaphor for death,⁴² v. 5b may be rendered as “they have become almost dead.” The reason for their death is YHWH’s decision: “You return human beings to dust, saying, ‘Return, you mortals!’” (v. 3). The psalmist is not talking about an inevitable death, which is normal for mortals. Psalm 90:3 cannot be related to Gen 3:19;⁴³ although the term אֶפְרָי overlaps the semantic range of אֶפְרָא which is used for “dust” in Gen 3:19, it has the connotation of crushed substance⁴⁴ and thus its reference in Ps 90:3 is related to

³⁸ Tanner, *The Book of Psalms through the Lens of Intertextuality*, 92.

³⁹ Tanner, *The Book of Psalms through the Lens of Intertextuality*, 98.

⁴⁰ McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 1041.

⁴¹ Broyles, *Psalms*, 360.

⁴² Williams, “אֶפְרָא,” *NIDOTTE*, 2:546.

⁴³ In Gen 3:19, the return to dust is not presented as an immediate result of the death penalty. It is depicted as the ultimate destiny of human beings who are expelled from Eden. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 83. That said, it is still the consequence of the disobedience of the man and woman.

⁴⁴ *DCH*, 2:437.

YHWH's "violent" action of crushing human beings.⁴⁵ The second section overtly shows that human beings perish because of their sins. Using "we" speech, the psalmist suggests the causes that kindled the divine wrath (vv. 7–8): the iniquities and secret sins of human beings. Seitz rightly observes,

Moses, the great intercessor, the one with the power to stay God's hand in judgment in the wilderness, by putting him in mind of his great love and his need to preserve his own name, here acknowledges that the wrath Israel experiences has to do with their iniquities and secret sins, and not primarily with the impotence of God or a failure to honor a covenant made with David (Ps 90:8).⁴⁶

Under the divine wrath, all the days of Israel have dwindled away (v. 9). Here is a response to Ps 89. In Ps 89, lamenting over the failure of the Davidic dynasty, the psalmist asked, "Who can live and never see death? Who can escape the power of Sheol?" (v. 49[48]). Psalm 90 answers: "No one." The psalm also provides the reason: our sins. The afflictions, which Israel experiences, is not because of God's impotence or indifference, but because of their iniquities. Given that Ps 89 asked the reason for the broken covenant with David, the response of Ps 90 can also be understood as about the covenant; the Davidic dynasty is destroyed because its iniquities have been set before the eye of God (Ps 90:8).

The question in v. 11 shows the unfathomable wrath of God: "Who knows the power of your wrath?" The Israelites have experienced the divine fury during their whole life. By referring to "seventy"⁴⁷ and "eighty years" (v. 10), "the psalmist argues that even

⁴⁵ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 422.

⁴⁶ Seitz, *Word without End*, 162.

⁴⁷ As stated above, this may be a reflection of the prophecy of the exilic period (Jer 25:11, 12; 29:10).

the oldest members of the community have never experienced anything but divine wrath.”⁴⁸ The references to “many days” and “many years” (v. 15) also show that the length of the pain has been too long to grasp. Nevertheless, they still do not know how fierce the wrath is. In other words, they do not know when their afflictions will finally end. They have been unable to fathom the depth of the divine anger and thus cannot estimate the day when they will be restored.⁴⁹ Throughout the psalm, various terms concerned with “time” are used: דָּר (v. 1), בְּטָרַם (v. 2), מֵעוֹלָם (v. 2), עַד־עוֹלָם (v. 2), שָׁנָה (v. 10), יוֹם (v. 4), אֶתְמוּל (v. 4), לְלֵילָה (v. 4), בְּקֶרֶב (v. 5, 6, 14), עָרַב (v. 6), עַד־מָחָי (v. 13), אֲשַׁמְרָה (v. 4).⁵⁰ The use of a number of synonyms regarding “time” shows its dominant theme. Hence, the natural next step for the poet would be a petition to let them know the end of the period of the divine wrath.

Moses' Prayer for Restoration

Verse 12 is a plea for YHWH to teach the audience how to count their days rightly. Some scholars regard this verse as a petition for wisdom to grasp the finitude of humanity.⁵¹ However, this verse can also be understood as a plea for a revelation of the length of the afflictions.⁵² Based on his observation of Ugaritic and Akkadian usage of the idiom “to

⁴⁸ Clifford, *Psalms 73–150*, 99.

⁴⁹ I have explained v. 11a. However, v. 11b is enigmatic. Tanner reads v. 11b as a question; “Is your wrath like your fearlessness?” While admitting that any translation is tentative, she offers an interesting suggestion: “if the syntax is asking if God’s *wrath* will last as long as God’s *fearlessness*, then the frightening answer to the second question is ‘eternity.’” deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 695 (emphasis original).

⁵⁰ Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 288.

⁵¹ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 423; Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 3:36; Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 338–39;

⁵² Clifford, *Psalms 73–150*, 100.

count days/month,” Richard Clifford argues that this idiom denotes simply to count a “pre-determined time period.”⁵³ Then he renders v. 12 as follows: “Let (us) know how to compute accurately our days (of affliction), let us bring that knowledge (into) our minds.”⁵⁴ The imagined Moses asks God how long (v. 13b) and mentions the days that God has afflicted Israel (v. 15a). Keeping the afflictions that Israel is experiencing in mind, the audience can read this plea as Moses’ prayer: “Let us know when our days of affliction will end.” An outpouring question in v. 13b gets to the core of the psalm. “How long it will take to end this long-lasting affliction?”

Moses’ daring petitions in v. 13 (“Turn!” and “Have compassion/Relent!”) show his trust in YHWH. Verses 1b–2 open the psalm, affirming that God has been a dwelling place/refuge/shelter for humankind from generation to generation. The confirmation that “from everlasting to everlasting you are God” recalls the promise given to the Israelites through Moses (Exod 6:7); “I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am YHWH your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians.” The poet expands the promise by insisting that even before God created the world “you are God” (v. 2). The psalm shows surprisingly deep trust in God; the relationship between God and Israel was not initiated from the exodus but from the creation. The confidence declared in these verses also offers a foundation for the petitions in vv. 16–17. Thus vv. 1b–2 and vv. 16–17 form a “frame” for the psalm.⁵⁵ Adele Berlin also finds an *inclusio* between v. 1b and v. 17 on the basis of a sound play:

⁵³ Clifford, “Psalm 90,” 203.

⁵⁴ Clifford, *Psalms 73–150*, 100.

⁵⁵ Tate, *Psalm 51–100*, 437.

Ps 90:1 אֲדֹנָי מַעוֹן אַתָּה הָיִיתָ לָנוּ
 Lord, you have been our refuge ...
 'dōnoy mā' ōn hāyītā

Ps 90:17 יְהִי נַעֲמִים אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ
 May the favor of the Lord our God be upon us ...
 wihi nō'am 'adōnoy⁵⁶

This trust in God and the confidence-based petition surround the whole psalm. The generosity stated in vv. 1b–2 offers a firm foundation for the confidence for restoration.⁵⁷

We can find another response to Ps 89 in Moses' petitions. Verse 14a says, "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love." Moses responds to the question raised in Ps 89: "Where is your steadfast love of old, O Lord, which you swore to David in your faithfulness?" (Ps 89:50[49]). Answering the painful question, Moses repeatedly recalls the eternity of God. God is eternal and thus trustworthy. Because YHWH has been the shelter for Israel from everlasting to everlasting, there is no need to worry about the permanent cessation of YHWH's steadfast love. By calling upon YHWH for satisfying Israel with YHWH's steadfast love, Moses gives an answer to Ps 89: "The steadfast love, which YHWH swore to David, never ends." In his prayer, he attempts to restore the relationship of David with God who has been a shelter for humanity (Ps 90:1). He intentionally uses the term "your servants" (vv. 13, 17) to emphasize the relationship of Israel with YHWH. By identifying David with Israel,⁵⁸ Moses extends his prayer to include the whole of Israel.

⁵⁶ Berlin, *Dynamics*, 124.

⁵⁷ Clifford, *Psalms 73–150*, 98.

⁵⁸ Or, we can construe David as the representative of Israel.

Summary

Psalm 89 ends with unanswered questions. The superscription ascribed to Moses in the next psalm then draws the readers back to Moses' time and responds to Ps 89. As the ancestors of Israel were about to be consumed by the divine wrath provoked by their sins at the golden calf incident, the Davidic dynasty has similarly failed and thus Israel has suffered so long due to their iniquities. As God changed the plan to destroy Israel by Moses' petition (Exod 32:14), the psalmist or compiler wants to change YHWH's mind by appropriating Moses' prayer. The imagined Moses solicits restoration of David along with Israel from the everlasting God.

Psalm 91: Salvation Oracle Given to David through Moses

Translation of Psalm 91

- 1 One living in the hiding place of the Most High
Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2 I will say⁵⁹ of YHWH,⁶⁰ "My refuge and my stronghold,
My God in whom I trust."
- 3 Truly, HE⁶¹ will deliver you from the fowler's snare,
From the plague⁶² of destruction.
- 4 With his pinions he will cover you;
Under his wings you will find refuge;
His fidelity is a shield and rampart.
- 5 You will not fear terror by night
Nor an arrow that flies by day,

⁵⁹ The editors of *BHS* suggest יאמר ("he will say") for אמר according to LXX (ἐπεῖ).

⁶⁰ In the sense of "I will say concerning YHWH." "I will say to YHWH" is also possible.

⁶¹ The psalmist emphasizes the subject by using הוא.

⁶² Zenger (*Psalms* 2, 426) and Tanner (*Psalms*, NICOT, 698) translate תִּבְרָר as "thorn" according to *HALOT*'s suggestion. While this rendering seems to fit in the context, it cannot explain why the same term was used in the meaning of "plague" or "pestilence" in v. 6. See *DCH* 6:672.

- 6 Pestilence that walks in the darkness,
Nor destruction that ravages at noon.
- 7 A thousand may fall at your side,
Ten thousand at your right,
But it will not reach you.
- 8 Only with your eyes, you will watch,
The retribution for the wicked you will see.
- 9 Because you have made YHWH “my refuge,”⁶³
The Most High your dwelling place,
- 10 No evil will befall you;
No disease will reach your tent.
- 11 Because his angels he will command for you,
To guard you in all your ways.
- 12 On their hands, they will carry you,
Lest you strike your foot against a stone.
- 13 Upon a lion and an adder you will tread;
You will trample a young lion and a serpent.
- 14 “Because the one loves me, I will rescue;
I will protect the one who knows my name.
- 15 The one⁶⁴ calls on me, I will answer;
I will be with the one in trouble;
I will rescue and I will honor.
- 16 With long life, I will satisfy this one;
And I will show my salvation.”

Structure of Psalm 91

Statement	(vv. 1–2)
Encouragement 1	(vv. 3–8)
Encouragement 2	(vv. 9–13)
Divine oracle of salvation	(vv. 14–16)

Identities of the Addresser and the Addressee

There is no scholarly consensus on the category of Ps 91. Various opinions have been

⁶³ See below.

⁶⁴ The original subject is the 3rd masculine singular.

suggested: a wisdom psalm,⁶⁵ an individual lament of the sick and anguished,⁶⁶ an individual hymn of thanksgiving,⁶⁷ a psalm for instruction and exhortation,⁶⁸ a psalm of blessing,⁶⁹ and a psalm of confidence.⁷⁰ For the sake of our discussion, it will suffice to say that the psalm is addressed to an individual “you” to teach/encourage/bless the addressee. It is important to identify who the addresser and the addressee of this psalm are—more precisely, the assumed identities according to the readers of the Psalter.

Along with Ps 90, Ps 91 also can be regarded as Moses’ psalm. Since the psalm lacks a superscription,⁷¹ readers keep the image of Moses from the preceding psalm as the speaker when they read it.⁷² Psalm 91 also has allusions to Moses. The divine names used in the psalm, *יְיָ* (the Most High, vv. 1, 9) and *יְיָ* (the Almighty, v. 1), were both pre-Israelite epithets originally given to the top deity in the Canaanite pantheon and were taken over to refer YHWH.⁷³ *יְיָ* is a short form of *יְיָ אֱלֹהִים*⁷⁴ which was known to the patriarchs before God revealed the name YHWH to Moses (Exod 6:2–8). Hence, Pss 90 and 91 are related to each other in the Mosaic theme. According to Wilson:

⁶⁵ Gunkel and Begrich, *Psalms*, 296–304; Sabourin, *Psalms*, 379–80. Cf. Botha, “Psalm 91,” 260–76.

⁶⁶ Bullock, *Encountering*, 128–30.

⁶⁷ deClaissé-Walford, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 148.

⁶⁸ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 450.

⁶⁹ Mowinkel, *Psalms Studies*, 2:594–96, 705; Gerstenberger (*Psalms Part 2*, 167) applies the term “benediction.”

⁷⁰ Dahood, *Psalms 51–100*, 329; Gillingham, *Poems and Psalms*, 231; Futato, *Psalms*, 161; Longman, *How to Read*, 31; Longman, *Psalms*, 329; Lucas, *Psalms and Wisdom*, 11. Following Koenen, Zenger (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 429) classifies it as a “psalm of trust *sui generis*.”

⁷¹ While MT has no superscription, LXX has Αἶνος ᾠδῆς τῷ Δαυιδ (“A praise song to David”). 11Q11 has לְדָוִד (“Of David”); García Martínez, et al., *Qumran Cave 11*, 202–3.

⁷² Wilson (*Editing*, 135) argues the lack of superscriptions is probably an “editorial technique” to connect a psalm without a superscription to the preceding psalm. See also Wilson, “Use of ‘Untitled’ Psalms,” 404–13, contra Willgren, *Formation*, 90.

⁷³ Schmidt, “Most High,” 4:922; Zobel, “יְיָ ‘elyôn,” 11:123–30; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 222; Kraus, *Theology*, 25.

⁷⁴ DCH 8:269.

Certain correspondences between the two may suggest a rationale for juxtaposition, if not for combination or unity. Ps 90 is attributed to Moses and praises YHWH in verse 1 as a “refuge in all generations.” It then questions the reasons for God’s distance from his people and pleads for his return. Ps 91 picks up on the refuge motif in 91:1 and suggests the protective presence of YHWH is still available to those who put their trust in him. Similarly, the suggestion in 91:1 that those who trust Elyôn [*sic*] “[God] Most High” and are protected by Sadday “The Almighty” (two pre-Mosaic epithets of the deity) will also trust in YHWH, is reminiscent of the revelation to Israel of the divine name in Exodus (Exod 3:1–22; 6:2–8), an event in which Moses played a most significant role.⁷⁵

Clinton McCann also asserts the close relationship between these psalms is confirmed by the occurrence of the term מְנוּחָה (“dwelling place”) in both psalms (Pss 90:1; 91:9).⁷⁶

Consequently, these links to Ps 90 make the readers of Ps 91 consider the psalm to be closely connected to Ps 90, which is ascribed to Moses.

In addition, מְלִיץ (Ps 91:1, 9) only occurs twice throughout the whole Pentateuch and one of them is Moses’ designation of God in his song: “When the Most High gave nations their homes” (Deut 32:8a).⁷⁷ The metaphor for God as a protecting bird (Ps 91:4) occurs in Exod 19:4 and Deut 32:11 to express divine protection; פִּינְיוֹן (“pinion”) is used only four times in the whole Hebrew Bible (Deut 32:11; Job 39:13; Pss 68:14; 91:4), yet the term is connected to the deity only in Ps 91:4 and Deut 32:11 to express divine protection.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the theme of the name of YHWH is important in Ps 91 and Deut 32; YHWH will rescue the one who knows the name (Ps 91:14) and Moses

⁷⁵ Wilson, *Editing*, 177–78.

⁷⁶ McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 1047. See also Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 94.

⁷⁷ The other occurrence is in Balaam’s oracle (Num 24:16). In Gen 14, it is used four times by Melchizedek and Abraham (Gen 14:18, 19, 20, 22), yet they are all combined with אל thus אל עליון (“God the Most High”).

⁷⁸ McKelvey, *Moses*, 47.

confesses that he will proclaim the name (Deut 32:24). These close links between Pss 90 and 91, and between Ps 91 and Deut 32 make the readers of the Psalter posit the poet of this psalm as Moses.

If we regard the speaker of this psalm as Moses, then the key to understanding the psalm is the identity of “you” who hears Moses’ words. Psalm 91 is a sort of oracle affirming the divine salvation and protection: “HE will deliver you” (v. 3), “he will cover you” (v. 4), “you will not fear” (v. 5), “the retribution for the wicked you will see” (v. 8), “his angels, he will command for you, to guard you in all your ways” (v. 11), “you will trample a young lion and a serpent” (v. 13). John Eaton argues that “the individual on whom such promises are lavished could hardly be any but the king.”⁷⁹ Examining the parallels between Ps 91 and Pss 20, 46, and 121, John Goldingay concludes that the psalm is addressed to “the king who especially needs Yhwh’s rescue and protection in battle.”⁸⁰ Given the context that flows from the lament over the loss of King David (Ps 89) to the intercessory prayer for the king (Ps 90), the recipient of the oracle is likely to be the Davidic king.⁸¹

Moses Encourages David

The postulated poet of Ps 91, Moses, begins the psalm by setting his agenda: “One living in the hiding place of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty” (v. 1).

Then he confesses his own faith: “My refuge and my stronghold, my God in whom I

⁷⁹ Eaton, *Kingship*, 57.

⁸⁰ Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 39.

⁸¹ Croft, *Identity*, 100–101.

trust” (v. 2). What follow the confession are Moses’ encouragements (vv. 3–8, and 9–13); Moses repeatedly assures David that YHWH will save him. The translation of v. 9a is problematic because the identity of הָיָה (“you”) is uncertain. Does this second personal pronoun indicate God or the one who will be saved by God? Also, there has been some debate on how to read הַיָּהוָה; “my refuge” or “your refuge.” LXX has ὅτι σὺ, κύριε, ἡ ἐλπίς μου (“Because you, O Lord, are my hope”). Except for the LXX’s substitution of “refuge” for “hope,” Marvin Tate⁸² and Beth Tanner⁸³ have similar translations. If הָיָה denotes God and the possessive suffix of הַיָּהוָה is 1cs common singular, however, then this sudden change of person does not fit the context of vv. 3–8 and vv. 10–13 which is delivered to a human character in a second-person statement. Hence some English translations (NRSV, NABR) and scholars read “your refuge”⁸⁴ but this rendering is tentative due to the lack of manuscript evidence. Therefore, retaining MT, I connect the clause with the verb הָיָה in v. 9b and regard הַיָּהוָה as a direct quotation of the expression in v. 2: “you have made YHWH ‘my refuge.’” Goldingay writes that “The first-person expression ‘my refuge’ then describes the king’s attitude in his own words, taken up from v. 2 and formulated from his perspective.”⁸⁵ On the basis of this translation, v. 2 can be viewed as Moses’ exhortation to David to make YHWH his refuge. Moses demonstrates his confession, “YHWH is my refuge,” as an exemplar for David (v. 2). David seems to

⁸² “Truly you, O Yahweh, are my refuge!” Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 448–49.

⁸³ “For you are the LORD, my refuge!” deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 698–99.

⁸⁴ Briggs and Briggs, *Book of Psalms*, 2:278; Dahood, *Psalms 50–100*, 333; Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 402; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 220; Terrien, *Psalms*, 647; Weiser, *Psalms*, 604. The editors of *BHS* also suggest הַיָּהוָה.

⁸⁵ Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 46.

accede to the advice (v. 9).

Divine Oracle According to Moses' Requests

Through the intercessory prayer (Ps 90) and the encouragement/exhortation of Moses (Ps 91), David and his descendants finally obtain YHWH's affirmation of their salvation (vv. 14–16). Scholars point out that the petitions in Ps 90 are answered in Ps 91 and the problems in the previous psalm are resolved in the current psalm.⁸⁶ According to McCann, "Two of the concluding petitions of Ps 90:13–17 are explicitly answered in Ps 91:16, where God promises to 'satisfy' (see Ps 90:14) and to 'show' (see Ps 90:16)."⁸⁷ Botha also argues, "Yahweh is granting the requests made by 'Moses' in Ps 90."⁸⁸ In Ps 90, Moses requested YHWH to "satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love" (90:14) and to show YHWH's work and splendor (90:16). Now God declares that "I will satisfy" and "I will show" (91:16). YHWH faithfully answers Moses' prayer for the restoration of David. Therefore, we can be assured that Moses' other petition will also be answered:⁸⁹ "Turn, O YHWH! How Long? Have compassion on your servants" (90:13). YHWH will turn to David and have compassion on the servant of God.

Summary

Psalm 91 is closely connected to Moses' prayer in Ps 90 and shows links to Moses' song in Deut 32. Hence, the readers construe the addresser of this psalm as Moses. The context

⁸⁶ Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 95; McCann, "Psalms," 1047.

⁸⁷ McCann, "Psalms," 1047.

⁸⁸ Botha, "Psalm 91," 274.

⁸⁹ Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 95.

of Pss 89–90 also provides clues to regard the addressee as David. Through the great intercessor’s prayer (Ps 90), David along with Israel receive YHWH’s oracle, which affirms their salvation. A natural and proper response to the promises will be thanksgiving and praise, which follows in the next psalm.

Psalm 92: Praise of the Delivered King

Translation of Psalm 92

- 1 A psalm. A song for the Sabbath day.
- 2 It is good to give thanks to YHWH,
To sing praise for your name, O Most High,
- 3 To proclaim in the morning your steadfast love,
Your faithfulness every night⁹⁰
- 4 Upon a ten-stringed lyre,
Upon melody on a harp.
- 5 For you have made me glad, O YHWH, in your deeds;
At the works of your hands, I shout for joy.
- 6 How⁹¹ great are your works, O YHWH;
How very deep are your thoughts!
- 7 A stupid one does not know,
A fool cannot understand this;
- 8 Even though the wicked sprout like grass
And all the evildoers bloom,
It is to be destroyed forever.
- 9 But you are on high⁹² forever, O YHWH.
- 10 Surely your enemies, O YHWH,
Surely your enemies will perish,
All evildoers will scatter.

⁹⁰ The MT has the plural form בַּלַּיְלוֹת (“in the nights”).

⁹¹ The pronoun מֶה is applied both in v. 6a and 6b.

⁹² LXX has ὑψιστος and reads “you are the Most High forever.” However, מְרוֹם (“height”) denotes “on high” or “in heaven,” when used without a preposition. *DCH* 5:483.

- 11 But you have raised my horn like that of a wild ox;
You have anointed me with fresh oil.⁹³
- 12 My eyes have looked down on my enemies;
From those who rise up against me doing evil, my ears have
heard.⁹⁴
- 13 The righteous will bloom like a date-palm,
And like a cedar in Lebanon they will grow;
- 14 Planted in the house of YHWH,
In the courts of our God, they will greatly bloom.⁹⁵
- 15 They will still bear fruit in old age,
They will be full and green,
- 16 Proclaiming “YHWH is upright,
My rock, and there is no unrighteousness⁹⁶ in him.”

Structure of Psalm 92

Superscription	(vv. 1[0])
An affirmation of thanksgiving to YHWH	(vv. 2–5[1–4])
YHWH’s great works	(vv. 6–12[5–11])
The blessed life under YHWH’s protection	(vv. 13–16[12–15])

Continuity with the Previous Psalms

Psalm 92 functions as a conclusion of Pss 90–92, a “compositional unit” which begins Book IV.⁹⁷ By using the specific divine name, עֶלְיוֹן (“the Most High,” [v. 1]), the psalm connects itself to the preceding psalm (Ps 91:1). A keyword, which is picked up at the last

⁹³ The first-person statement in the MT (בִּלְתִּי) is problematic. Some English translations (NABR, NJB, NRSV) and scholars (Briggs and Briggs, *Psalms*, 283; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 226; deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 703; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 434) emend the text from the first-person verb to a second-person one with a first-person suffix (בִּלְתִּי). DCH also suggests בִּלְתִּי and reads “you have mixed me with oil,” which indicates the act of anointing. *DCH* 2:179.

⁹⁴ What is heard is not specified in the text.

⁹⁵ The verb פָּרַח is used here in the *Hiphil* form unlike the *Qal* forms in vv. 8[7] and 13[12]. Zenger suggests that the poet intended intensification by using the *Hiphil* form. See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 434.

⁹⁶ The meaning of the *ketib* עֲלֵתָה is uncertain. I read עֲלֵתָה (“unrighteousness/injustice”) according to the *qere*. See *DCH* 6:298.

⁹⁷ Zenger, “God of Israel’s Reign,” 168.

stanza of Ps 91 and occurs at the first stanza of Ps 92, reinforces the continuity between these psalms: God declares the protection for the one who knows God's name (שׁוֹמֵר, Ps 91:14), and the psalmist sings praise for God's name (שׁוֹמֵר, Ps 92:2b[1b]). The theme of YHWH as the shelter/refuge/dwelling ties together Pss 90–92. Psalm 90 declares that God has been the shelter (מְעוֹן) for Israel. Psalm 91 demonstrates the Most High as the hiding and dwelling place (סִתְרוֹ [Ps 91:1], מְעוֹן [v. 9]), and as the refuge (מְחֻסָּה [v. 2]). Psalm 92 celebrates that the righteous will be like the blooming tree in the house of YHWH and in the courts of God (vv. 13–14[12–13]). The poet of Ps 92 also depicts YHWH as צוּר (“my rock,” v. 16[15]). While Ps 90 prays, “Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love” (Ps 90:14a), Ps 92 declares that it is good to proclaim YHWH's steadfast love in the morning (Ps 92:2–3[1–2]). These connections of Ps 92 with Pss 90–91 strengthen the understanding the psalm as the thanksgiving song by the king who is promised deliverance in Ps 91 by Moses' intercession in Ps 90.

Psalm 92 is related not only to Pss 90–91, but also Ps 89. The psalm reverses the situation in Ps 89. The anointed one was rejected (Ps 89:39[38]) but now he is anointed again by YHWH (Ps 92:11b[10b]). God exalted the enemies of David (Ps 89:44[43]), but now has exalted the poet's horn (Ps 92:11a[10a]). Whereas Ps 89 asked where YHWH's steadfast love is (Ps 89:50[49]), Ps 92 proclaims it every morning (Ps 92:3[2]). Therefore, readers find that David, once rejected and spurned (Ps 89:39[38]), is now restored, through Moses' intercessory prayer (Ps 90). Moses' prayer has been fulfilled by YHWH.

Divine Rest Given to the King

The superscription of Ps 92 מְזֻמָּר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת (“A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath Day”) seems to deviate from the context. It should be noted here, however, that the theme of rest in the Bible is closely related to the temple. Psalm 132 describes Zion as a resting place of YHWH. “For the YHWH has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation: ‘This is my resting place forever; here I will reside, for I have desired it’” (Ps 132:13–14, NRSV). John Walton convincingly argues that, in the ancient West Asian “cosmological cognitive environment,” the temple is a resting place for the deity who has conquered his/her enemies⁹⁸ and that the divine rest in the temple is an “act of engagement” rather than an “act of disengagement.”⁹⁹ Gregory Beale sees God’s rest in Gen 2 as a “kingly rest” that reveals the sovereignty of God.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the reference to the Sabbath might be a device to make readers recall the image of divine rest in the temple. Jon Levenson points out that David tried to build the temple after “YHWH had given him *rest* from all his enemies around him (2 Sam 7:1b).”¹⁰¹ Now YHWH defeats all the adversaries and thus give the psalmist rest again (Ps 92:12[11]). The unique superscription mentioning the Sabbath leads the readers to imagine that David takes a rest given by God in the temple. YHWH has restored and planted David in YHWH’s house (v. 14[13]).

⁹⁸ Walton, *Genesis 1*, 110–18.

⁹⁹ Walton, *Genesis 1*, 180.

¹⁰⁰ Beale, *Temple*, 62.

¹⁰¹ Levenson, *Creation*, 107. For the detailed discussion on the creation motif of Ps 92, see Sarna, “Psalm for the Sabbath Day,” 159–65.

Amalgamation of David and Moses

As discussed above, the temple is depicted as the place where the blooming trees, the righteous, are planted (vv. 13–14[12–13]). This imagery of trees planted in a good place recalls Ps 1. The verb שָׁתַל (“to be planted” in the passive voice) occurs only in Pss 1 and 2 within the whole Psalter. Whereas the one, who is happy, is planted by streams of water in Ps 1 (v. 3), the righteous ones are planted in the house, the court of YHWH, in Ps 92 (v. 14[13]). If readers of the Psalter have read it from Ps 1 to Ps 92, then they will likely discover the difference between the imageries of the planted trees in Pss 1 and 92, which reflects editorial intent. In Ps 1, it is said that the tree will produce its fruits, delighting in the instruction of YHWH and meditating on the Torah day and night (Ps 1:2–3). Keeping this imagery in their minds, the readers will observe the imagery of trees bearing fruit in the house of YHWH in Ps 92 (vv. 13–14[12–13]). Then the readers, if they ponder these two imageries together, might conclude that the place where the happy one meditates on the Torah is the temple. It should be noted that the Torah was given to Israel through Moses (cf. Ps 103:7). The righteous are those who mediate on the Torah (Ps 1) in the temple (Ps 92). Therefore, the imageries of David and Moses begin to overlap in Ps 92.

Summary

The strong connection between Pss 92 and the previous psalms (Pss 89–91) buttress the reading of these psalms altogether. In the context of Pss 89–91—the broken covenant with David (Ps 89), the intercession of Moses for David (Ps 90), and the consequent salvation oracle (Ps 91)—the readers understand Ps 92 as the praise of David to whom

the oracle is given. In addition, the Psalm implies the amalgamation of the king and the intercessor.

Conclusion

I have shown that Pss 90–92 should be read as a group, which emphasizes the intercessory role of Moses, on the basis of the close links between the psalms within the group and their obvious Mosaic overtones. The first sub-division of Book IV attempts to provide several responses to the questions of Ps 89. By recalling one of the greatest intercessors of Israel in their history and by providing the prayer of the imagined Moses, Ps 90 responds to the despair in Ps 89; YHWH never abandoned the Davidic covenant permanently, since the everlasting God will listen to the prayer of the imagined intercessor like Moses. By providing the salvation oracle from God, Ps 91 assures the readers the restoration of the covenant with David. Then the sub-division culminates with the thanksgiving praise of the king to whom the restoration oracle is given (Ps 92). In this way, the first three psalms of Book IV reverse the desperate situation of Ps 89.

CHAPTER 3: AMALGAMATION OF MOSES AND DAVID (PSALMS 93–100)

Gunkel has classified Pss 93, 96–99 as well as Ps 47, as “songs about YHWH’s enthronement.”¹ Some commentators, however, prefer to use a more neutral designation due to the highly hypothetical aspect of YHWH’s annual enthronement celebration:² “Yahweh-kingship psalms,”³ “hymns of Yahweh as king,”⁴ or “kingship-of-Yahweh psalms.”⁵ In any case, scholars agree that these psalms share the theme of YHWH’s kingship. Some scholars regard Pss 90–100 as a unit concerning the kingship of YHWH.⁶ These psalms repeatedly affirm the sovereignty of YHWH by proclaiming יהוה מלך (Ps 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1), which can be translated as “YHWH is king,” “YHWH has become king,” or “YHWH reigns.” As stated above, however, this does not necessarily mean that David is deemphasized in these psalms. As David Howard has correctly observed, Davidic kingship and Zion are still important to YHWH’s plan in Book IV.⁷ Furthermore, these Davidic themes not only remain in Book IV but also evolve by being mixed with another theme, the Mosaic one. This chapter will explore Pss 93–

¹ Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction*, 66–81.

² See Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 505.

³ Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1*, 258.

⁴ Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 45.

⁵ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 505.

⁶ Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 171–81; Wilson, *Editing*, 216–17; Zenger, “God of Israel’s Reign,” 168–83; Gillingham, “Psalms 90–106,” 90–94; VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 687–78, 707; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 450; Ross, *A Commentary*, 3:78. Though Kidner (*Psalms 73–150*, 369) excludes Ps 94, he also regards Pss 93–99 or 100 as a group.

⁷ Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 206–7.

100, with a special focus on the amalgamation of the Mosaic overtones going on in these psalms with the Davidic themes retained.

Psalm 93: Proclamation of the King

Translation of Psalm 93

- 1 YHWH reigns! With majesty he is robed.
YHWH is robed; with strength he has girded himself.
Indeed, the world is established; it will not be shaken.
- 2 Your throne is established from long ago;⁸
You are from everlasting.
- 3 The rivers have lifted up, O YHWH;
The rivers have lifted up their voice;
The rivers lift up their pounding.
- 4 More than the voice of many waters,
Mightier than the breakers of the sea;
Mighty on high is YHWH.
- 5 Your decrees are indeed reliable,
In your house, a holy habitation,⁹
O YHWH, for length of days.

Structure of Psalm 93

YHWH's stable reign	(vv. 1–2)
YHWH's sovereignty over the chaotic forces	(vv. 3–4)
YHWH's reliable decrees	(vv. 5)

⁸ Usually translated as “from then.” מֵאָז is used as an adverb referring “a duration of time in the distant past.” BHRG §40.6.1.b.

⁹ Since נֶאֱוָה is a *hapax legomena*, it is hard to understand. 4QPs^a has נוה (“habitation”) instead of נֶאֱוָה (“to befit”). Howard applies נוה to the text and finds a parallel between נוה קדש (v. 5) and נוה קדשך (“your holy abode,” Exod 15:13). This rendering fits well into the context of Ps 93 which recalls Exod 15. See Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 41; see also Kselman, “Sinai,” 73; Broyles, *Psalms*, 369.

Continuity with the Previous Psalms

Psalm 93, which begins with a declaration יהוה מֶלֶךְ, opens the unit of Pss 93–100.¹⁰ At first glance, Ps 93 seems to deviate from the flow of Pss 89–92 we have discussed above because it has no direct mention of Mosaic or Davidic themes; one might think there occurs an abrupt thematic shift to YHWH's kingship. Howard, however, finds some lexical and thematic links between Pss 92 and 93. He takes notice of the use of מְרוֹם (“height”) in both psalms (Pss 92:9[8]; 93:4)¹¹ and the references to YHWH's בַּיִת (“house”) as an attractive place (Pss 92:14[13]; 93:5).¹² Given that Pss 93–100 emphasize the high kingship of YHWH, Ps 92:9[8] anticipates the theme of YHWH's kingship in Pss 93–100 by affirming: “But you are on high forever, O YHWH.”¹³ Also, focusing on the statements of YHWH's eternity (Ps 93:2, 5), he argues that Ps 93 offers an answer to Ps 90,¹⁴ YHWH's throne, which is depicted in Ps 93 as firmly established from everlasting, makes the readers trust YHWH in spite of their own ephemerality described in Ps 90. Tate also believes that these two psalms are closely related. Not only because of lexical links between these adjacent psalms, but also because of ones between Pss 92 and 94,¹⁵ as Tate concludes, Pss 92 and 93 “should be read together.”¹⁶

¹⁰ See above. Howard argues that the climax of this unit occurs in Ps 100. Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 180–81.

¹¹ The term מְרוֹם occurs only three times within Book IV (cf. Ps 120:20[19]).

¹² Howard, “Contextual Reading,” 113. YHWH's house (בַּיִת) is mentioned only here in Pss 92 and 93 throughout the whole Book IV.

¹³ Howard, “Contextual Reading,” 113.

¹⁴ Howard, “Contextual Reading,” 113.

¹⁵ בעֵר (“stupid” or “brutish,” 92:7[6] and 94:8), צוֹר (“rock,” 92:16[15] and 94:22), and פְּעֵלֵי אֵן (“evildoers,” Ps 92:8[7], 10[9] and 94:4, 16).

¹⁶ Tate, *Psalms 50–100*, 476.

Mosaic Motifs in Ps 93

Furthermore, Ps 93 shows close connections to the Mosaic tradition. The depiction of YHWH as mightier than the aquatic forces (v. 4) reminds the readers of the creation and the exodus. Rendering Gen 1:1 as an adverbial clause of time—“When God began to create”—and Gen 1:2 as the state of things when God began to create, Nahum Sarna argues that Gen 1:1–3 shows “a conventional opening style for cosmological narratives” which accords with *Enuma Elish*.¹⁷ If Gen 1:2 is a description of the state when God created the universe, the verse indicates that there were the darkness (אֲדָמָה), the deep (תְּהוֹמוֹת), and the waters (מַיִם) when God began to speak.¹⁸ Scholars have suggested similarities between Gen 1 and the Mesopotamian creation epic *Enuma Elish*, including *Chaoskampf*, the cosmogonic combat between the supreme god with the chaotic waters.¹⁹ God created the world by subduing and by separating these pre-existent chaotic waters. Thus the image of YHWH, depicted as greater and mightier than the waters (Ps 93:4), leads the readers directly to the creation. The establishment of YHWH’s throne (v. 2) also indicates the creation story which is written in the first book of Moses: YHWH’s taking a rest in the palace after completing the work of creation by defeating the chaotic waters (cf. Gen 2:1–3).²⁰

More importantly, the image of YHWH’s strength over against the waters is also rooted in the memory of the event at the Red Sea. McCann rightly points out:

¹⁷ Sarna, *Genesis*, 5.

¹⁸ Thus Brueggemann states, “Israel’s horizon of creation is not *ex nihilo*. See Brueggemann, *Theology*, 529, cf. 158.

¹⁹ Batto, *Slaying*, 75–84; Gunkel, *Creation*, 3–111; Levenson, *Creation*, 3–13; Mettinger, *Search*, 6–7.

²⁰ Levenson, *Creation*, 108–9. For detailed discussions, see Beale, *Temple*, 60–66.

It is significant, too, that God's majesty is also celebrated in the Song of the Sea in Exodus 15 (see Exod 15:7), where God defeats not only the Egyptians (a historical foe), but also the waters (v. 8). The whole episode is a demonstration of God's strength (vv. 2, 13), and the song culminates in the proclamation of God's reign (v. 18). The song in Exodus 15 is also framed by a verbal form of the root that appears in 93:1 as "majesty" (see Exod 15:1, 21).²¹

Psalm 93 also praises the might of YHWH (Ps 93:1, 4) and its climax is the affirmation of YHWH's reign (v. 1). This declaration reminds the readers of the delightful shouts that exploded when the Israelites saw the great work YHWH accomplished against the Egyptians (and the waters) through Moses on the banks of the Red Sea: יהוה ימלך לעולם ועד ("YHWH will reign for ever and ever!" [Exod 15:18]). Therefore, the psalm recalls the memories of glorious events, the creations of the world and of Israel, with which YHWH manifested YHWH's own high sovereignty.²²

Saved King's Proclamation: "Only YHWH Reigns!"

Given the continuity of Ps 93 and Pss 90–92 stated above and the connections between Pss 90–91 and Ps 89 analyzed in Chapter 3, the readers of the Psalter who have followed the previous psalms might likely think the poet of Ps 93 is David. As discussed in Chapter 2, in Ps 90, Moses, the greatest mediator in Israel's history, prayed for David who was abandoned in Ps 89. Through the prayer of the man of God, David finally received a salvation oracle (Ps 91) and gave thanks to YHWH (Ps 92). As Moses and Israel proclaimed YHWH's sovereignty after they experienced miraculous salvation,

²¹ McCann, "The Book of Psalms," 1053–54.

²² Wallace, *Narrative*, 38.

David also shouted with joy and humble gratitude that he was not the king but only YHWH was. The lack of superscription supports this idea.²³ While Ps 93 in MT lacks a superscription, LXX (Ps 92) has Εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ προσαββάτου, ὅτε κατώκισται ἡ γῆ· αἶνος ᾠδῆς τῷ Δαυιδ (“For the day of the eve of the Sabbath, when the land has been inhabited, a praise of a song by David”).²⁴ Not only the reference to David but also the remark about the Sabbath show the probability that the translators and readers of LXX connected Ps 93 (Ps 92 in LXX) to Ps 92 (Ps 91 in LXX) and regarded the poet of these psalms as David.

Sinai and Zion in Psalm 93

As discussed above, Ps 93 has strong Mosaic overtones. Brueggemann rightly points out, “The theme of *kingship of God in Israel* . . . appeals to the old Moses-Sinai tradition.”²⁵ Close connections between Ps 93 and Exod 15 bring the readers to the banks of the Red Sea. During Moses’ era, although the term אֲרֹן was not used, YHWH’s throne (כִּסֵּאֵי יְהוָה “your throne,” Ps 93:2) was considered to be the ark.²⁶ Given that the ark of the covenant was made in the wilderness of Sinai in front of the mountain (Exod 25:10–22), the affirmation that YHWH’s throne is established (Ps 93:2) might lead the readers to Mount Sinai. The imaginary distance between the Red Sea and the mountain in the memory of Israel is very close because the deliverance from the sea and the establishment of the

²³ Wilson (*Editing*, 135) regards the lack of superscriptions as an “editorial technique” to relate a psalm to the preceding psalm with a superscription.

²⁴ Brannan et al., eds., *The Lexham English Septuagint*.

²⁵ Brueggemann, *Message*, 151 (italics original).

²⁶ Seow, “Ark of the Covenant,” 1:388–89.

covenant with YHWH are a single event from their perspective, which cannot be divided. Calling Moses from the burning bush, God promised Moses, “After you have freed the people from Egypt, *you shall become servants of God* at this mountain” (Exod 3:12).²⁷ The purpose of God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt on eagles’ wings was to establish a covenant with them and thus make them a priestly kingdom and a holy nation (Exod 19:4–6). Hence, the supposed location of this psalm can be considered as Mount Sinai. However, the theme of *כִּסֵּה* is also associated with Jerusalem and Zion where the temple and the palace of David are located.²⁸ Therefore, the image of Sinai and that of Zion are overlapped here.

John Kselman proposes that the role and status of Sinai are transferred to Zion.²⁹ He adopts *נוה* (“abode/habitation”)³⁰ for *נִאֲוָה* (“befit/be appropriate”) according to 4QPs^b and reads *שִׁיר לְבֵיתֶךָ נִאֲוָה-קֹדֶשׁ* as “Surely your house is a holy habitation,”³¹ instead of traditional reading “Holiness befits your house.”³² Pointing out that YHWH’s habitation in Exod 15 is in the area of Mount Sinai, Kselman argues that the poet of Ps 93 relocates YHWH’s abode from Sinai to Zion.³³ While his adoption of *נוה* is acceptable, his argument of the relocation of YHWH’s habitation from Sinai to Zion is problematic. If the poet intended to replace Sinai with Zion, it would be more effective to mention the

²⁷ I translated *וְתַעֲבֹדוּן אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים* as “you shall become servants of God” instead of “you shall worship God.” See Durham, *Exodus*, 28.

²⁸ Cornelius, “כִּסֵּה (kissē), כִּסֵּה (kissēh),” 2:664–66.

²⁹ Along with Albright and Cross, Kselman regards *עֲדִית* as a cognate word of Arabic *ahd* which denotes “covenant.” See Kselman, “Sinai,” 73–75.

³⁰ BDB, 627.

³¹ Kselman, “Sinai,” 71.

³² ESV, NABR, NRSV, NJPS.

³³ Kselman, “Sinai,” 73–75.

names of the mountains directly. Rather, by not making references to the specific names and by just alluding to the mountains, the psalmist deliberately mixes the imageries of the mountains. This is not a replacement of Sinai by Zion; Sinai is not superseded by Zion. As Levenson argued in his book *Sinai and Zion*, these two traditions fulfill each other and form the greater whole.³⁴ Since the temple is an earthly manifestation of God's heavenly abode built in Zion,³⁵ "your house" (v. 5) brings the readers to Zion. The poet has given an impression that the imaginary place of this psalm is in front of Sinai and thus YHWH's throne is established on that very mountain in vv. 1–4. Now, by using "your house" and "a holy habitation" in an apposition-like construction, the psalmist mixes the imagery of Sinai and Zion.

Summary

While Ps 93 begins a new sub-division, which emphasizes YHWH's kingship, it also shows enough continuity with Pss 90–92 to read these psalms altogether. When we read this psalm in the context of Pss 90–92, it can be regarded as an extended praise of the king to whom the restoration promise is given; David praises the supreme kingship of YHWH who promised deliverance to him. The strong Mosaic imagery draws the readers to think that David is proclaiming YHWH's kingship on the banks of the Red Sea, gazing in awe up the throne of YHWH established at Mount Sinai. By using the terms related to Zion, such as YHWH's throne and house, the psalmist mixes the imageries of the two mountains.

³⁴ Levenson, *Sinai*, 209.

³⁵ Eaton, *Psalms*, 332.

Psalm 94: Intercessory Prayer and Teaching of Moses/David

Translation of Psalm 94

- 1 God of vengeance, O YHWH
God of vengeance, shine forth!
- 2 Rise up, judge of the earth;
Give back the arrogant what they deserve!
- 3 How long will the wicked, O YHWH,
How long will the wicked exult,
- 4 They utter; they speak arrogance;
All the evildoers boast themselves.
- 5 Your people, O YHWH, they crush
And they afflict your heritage.
- 6 Widow and sojourner they kill
And orphans they murder.
- 7 And they say, “YH³⁶ does not see,
And the God of Jacob does not perceive.”

- 8 Understand, you stupid ones among the people!
You fools, when will you get wisdom?
- 9 Shall the one who plants the ear not hear?
Or shall the one who fashions the eye not see?
- 10 Shall the one who instructs the nations not rebuke?
The one who teaches knowledge to humankind—³⁷
- 11 YHWH knows human’s thoughts,
That they are but a breath.

- 12 Happy is the one whom you teach, O YH,
And with your teachings, you instruct,
- 13 To give peace to the one from evil days,
Until a pit is dug for the wicked.
- 14 For YHWH will not abandon his people,
And his heritage he will nor forsake.

³⁶ MT has יְהוָה.

³⁷ A final clause is missing or elided.

- 15 For unto righteousness, justice will return³⁸
And after it, all the upright of heart will return.³⁹
- 16 Who will rise up for me against the bad ones?
Who will stand up for me against evildoers?
- 17 If YHWH were not my help,
My soul would soon dwell in silence.
- 18 When⁴⁰ I said, "My foot is slipping,"
Your steadfast love, YHWH, sustained me.
- 19 When my worries are many within me,
Your consolations bring joy to my soul.
- 20 Can a throne of destruction be allied with you,
One that forms trouble by statute?
- 21 They band together against the life of the righteous,
And condemn innocent blood to death.
- 22 So YHWH has become⁴¹ my stronghold,
And my God is my rock of refuge.
- 23 He will repay their iniquity upon them;
For their wickedness, he will destroy them;
YHWH our God will destroy them.

Structure of Psalm 94

Intercessory prayer about the wicked	(vv. 1–7)
Refutation to the wicked	(vv. 8–11)
Teachings to the people	(vv. 12–15)
Testimony and affirmation of confidence	(vv. 16–23)

³⁸ The editors of BHS suggest צַדִּיק ("righteous") for צְדָקָה ("righteousness"). However, this is unnecessary, because "righteousness" can be regarded as an abstract personified noun. See Ross, *A Commentary*, 3:94; deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 711.

³⁹ The verb of the second clause seems to be elided. I employ the verb of the first clause (ישׁוב) into it.

⁴⁰ Here ׀א is used in the temporal sense. See Joüon §166p; GKC §164d.

⁴¹ After יִגְדֹל (yqtI form) in v. 21, יִהְיֶה (wayyqtI form) is used in a progressive imperfective tense. See *IBHS* §33.3.3c.

Relationships to the Neighbouring Psalms

The Kingship of YHWH: Connections to YHWH-malak Psalms

The theme of “God of vengeance” seems abrupt in the context of Pss 93–100, the so-called YHWH-*malak* psalms. However, since the act of vengeance is a kind of judgment (cf. vv. 2, 15, 23) and YHWH-*malak* psalms emphasize YHWH’s royal judgment (Pss 96:13; 97:2, 6, 8; 98:9; 99:8), the theme of YHWH’s vengeance connects Ps 94 to its surrounding Pss 93 and 95–100.⁴²

Connections to the Previous Psalms

Psalms 94 and 90–92 share the imagery of YHWH as a “refuge/shelter/dwelling place” (Pss 90:1; 91:1–2, 4, 9; 94:22; Cf. 92:14). Psalms 94 and 92 both depict YHWH as צור (“a rock,” 92:16[15]; 94:22). Also, these psalms show a wisdom aspect which criticizes רשעים (“the wicked,” Ps 92:8[7]; 94:3, 13) and פְּעֻלֵי אָוֶן (“evildoers,” Ps 92:8[7], 10[9]; 94:4, 16).⁴³ Psalm 92 admonishes בֶּעֶר (“stupid one”) and כֶּסֶל (“a fool,” v. 7[6]) and Ps 94 berates בְּעֵרִים (“stupid ones”) and כֶּסֶלִים (“fools,” v. 8). These connections support my reading of the psalm in the context of the previous psalms.

Concatenation and Contrasts of Ps 94 and 93

The lexical links between these two psalms show their continuity. The first example of the lexical links is דָּבַק (“pounding,” Ps 93:3) and יִדְבְּאוּ (“they crush,” Ps 94:4). The

⁴² Howard, “Psalm 94,” 683; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 489–90.

⁴³ Howard, “Psalm 94,” 670.

former is derived from דכה and the latter from דכא, which both belong to the same semantic field “to crush, pulverize.”⁴⁴ On the basis of the rarity of the root, Frank-Lothar Hossfeld finds the link between “pounding rivers” (Ps 93:3) and “crushing ones” (Ps 94:5) deliberate.⁴⁵ כִּסֵּא (“throne,” Pss 93:2 and 94:20) and נִשָּׂא (“to lift up,” Pss 93:3 and 94:2) also occur in both psalms. Though not exactly the same words, עֲדוּת (“decrees,” Ps 93:5) and תּוֹרָה (“teachings/Torah,” Ps 94:12) are thematically related terms.⁴⁶

At the same time, Pss 94 and 93 show contrasts as well. While מַגָּל (“majesty”) is applied to YHWH (Ps 93:1), גָּאִים indicates “the arrogant” (Ps 94:2) who are definitely against the people of God and thereby against Godself. Whereas כִּסֵּא in Ps 93:2 is YHWH’s, that in Ps 94:20 is “of destruction.” Plus נִשָּׂא is used to depict the motion of the chaotic water in Ps 93:3, but its imperative form is applied to YHWH in Ps 94:2; “Rise up, judge of the earth.”

Conclusion: Ps 94 as a Hinge

Therefore, in contrast to the first impression that Ps 94 breaks the continuity of Book IV, it has significant links with its surrounding psalms: the theme of YHWH as a refuge is consistent with Pss 90–92. Though indirect, the psalm also shares the theme of YHWH’s kingship with Pss 93, 95–99. At the same time, it shows juxtapositions and contrasts with Ps 93. Thus, we can regard Ps 94 as a “hinge” between Pss 90–93 and Pss 95–99.⁴⁷

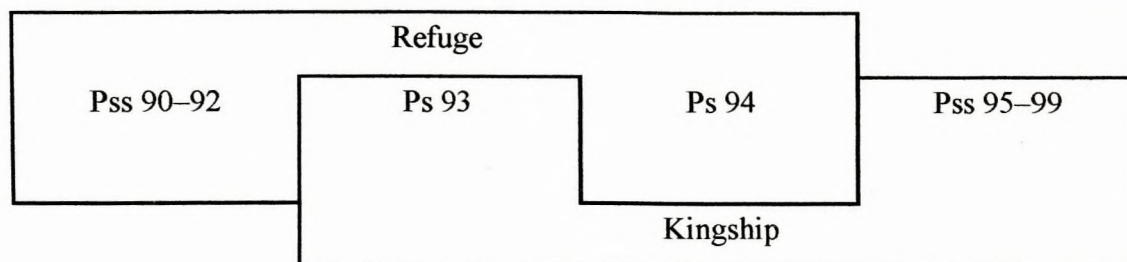
⁴⁴ DCH, 2:436–37.

⁴⁵ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 449. Also see Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 106–7.

⁴⁶ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 449; Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 108.

⁴⁷ Howard, “Psalm 94,” 668.

According to Howard, “It contributes in an integral way to the flow of thought and development of themes at this juncture in book 4.”⁴⁸ Based on Wilson’s diagram, Jerome Creach demonstrates Pss 93 and 94 as a “purposeful interlocking device” of Pss 90–99 as follows:⁴⁹



Mosaic Motifs in Ps 94

As examined above, Ps 94 shows close connections with its previous psalms. When it comes to the Mosaic motifs, we can detect significant clues of this from the very first verse. אֱלֹהֵי נִקְמָתוֹ (“God of vengeance”), which is repeated twice, reminds the readers of the poem of Moses in Deut 32; נִקַּם occurs four times in the poem:

Vengeance (נִקַּם) is mine, and recompense,
for the time when their foot shall slip (Deut 32:35a NRSV).

I will take *vengeance* (נִקַּם) on my adversaries,
and will repay those who hate me (Deut 32:41b NRSV).

Praise, O heavens, his people,
worship him, all you gods!
For he *will avenge* (יִקוּם) the blood of his children,
and take *vengeance* (נִקַּם) on his adversaries;
he will repay those who hate him,

⁴⁸ Howard, “Psalm 94,” 668.

⁴⁹ Creach, *Yahweh*, 98.

and cleanse the land for his people (Deut 32:43 NRSV).

In his poem, Moses depicts YHWH as “God of vengeance” through YHWH’s self-affirmation in Deut 32:35; “Vengeance is mine!” Moreover, *נָפַע*, which is used in the author’s first petition *הוֹפִיעַ* (“Shine forth!” in Ps 94:1), is found in the exordium of Moses’ last words: “YHWH *shone forth* (*הוֹפִיעַ*) from Mount Paran” (Deut 33:2).⁵⁰

Although the moods are different, these obvious connections between Ps 94 and Deut 32–33 are enough to let the readers hark back to Moses. While Ps 93 led the readers to the banks of the Red Sea (Exod 15), Ps 94 brings them to the border of Canaan where Moses gave his last speech to Israel (Deut 32–33).⁵¹ The compassion for the widows, sojourners, and orphans (Ps 94:6) can also serve as a device to direct the readers to Moses because these victims are “*personae miserabiles*, who are described in the conceptual terms typical of Deuteronomic-Deuteronomistic thought.”⁵² These Mosaic motifs provide a foundation for presuming the speaker of Ps 94 is Moses.

Petitions and Complaints

Scholars have categorized this psalm as a lament.⁵³ The double address *אֱלֹהֵי נִקְמָה* (“God of vengeance!” v. 1) and the double painful question *עַד־מָתַי* (“how long?” v. 3) emphasize “the intolerable nature of human suffering.”⁵⁴ Since I have argued that the

⁵⁰ Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms 73-150*, 90.

⁵¹ Wallace, *Narrative*, 39.

⁵² Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 454.

⁵³ Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction*, 94; Anderson, *Psalms 73-150*, 670; Bellinger, *Psalms*, 50; Day, *Psalms*, 19; Gillingham, *Poems*, 65; Clifford, *Psalms 73-150*, 111; deClaisse-Walford, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 99–100.

⁵⁴ Schaefer, *Psalms*, 234.

questions raised in Ps 89—“how long?” (Ps 89:47[46]) and “where is your steadfast love of old?” (Ps 89:50[49])—are answered in Pss 90–93, these urgent petitions seem not to fit into the flow: Moses’ intercession (Ps 90), the divine oracle of salvation (Ps 91), thanksgiving (Ps 92), and the proclamation of YHWH’s kingship (Ps 93). Now the speaker of Ps 94 is making impassioned pleas to YHWH to shine forth and to pay back the arrogant. However, this is not a deviation from the flow, but rather an editorial device to remind the readers of the futuristic aspect of YHWH’s intervention. God answered the questions of Ps 89 and promised the salvation to David and Israel in Pss 90–93, yet the deliverance is not fully accomplished. By repeating the question “how long?” (Pss 94:3 and 89:47[46]), which is typical in laments, Ps 94 recalls the theme of God’s rejection and punishment of Israel in Ps 89 and thereby shows that the theme continues. Psalm 94, as well as Pss 90–93, are dealing with the issue of the abandonment of God’s people and their king. In fact, as stated in Chapter 1, the entirety of Book IV offers an answer to the questions suggested in Ps 89. Psalm 94, therefore, lets the readers of the Psalter realize that they are in the process of finding the answer that Book IV provides.

After the intercessory prayer of vv. 1–7, therefore, Moses, the presumed speaker of this psalm, switches his audience from YHWH to בְּעָרִים בְּעָם (“stupid ones among the people,” v. 8). Brueggemann and Bellinger observe that “the *voice of instruction* displaces the *voice of prayer*.”⁵⁵ As Moses taught the people of Israel in Deut 32–33,⁵⁶ the speaker of Ps 94 teaches “stupid ones among the people.”⁵⁷ The purpose of the teaching

⁵⁵ Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 407 (italics original).

⁵⁶ Moses called his audience “foolish and unwise people” (עַם נְבִל וְלֹא חָכִים) in Deut 32:6.

⁵⁷ It is difficult to assure the identity of בְּעָרִים בְּעָם in vv. 8–11. I assume that they are identical with the evildoers in vv. 1–7 and in vv. 16–23. See Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 492; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*,

and admonition is to let them understand that God is alive and “they are but a breath” (v. 11). While the speaker calls on “God of vengeance” to retaliate against the wicked for their wrongdoings, this petition is not to destroy them but to make them repent by warning that God will repay their iniquity (v. 23).

Overlapping of Moses and David

Psalm 94 again mixes the roles of Moses and David. It should be noted that the speaker teaches on the basis of his/her own experience of deliverance.⁵⁸ “When I said, ‘My foot is slipping (מוט),’ your steadfast love, YHWH, sustained me” (v. 18). On his observation that God will repay the evildoers with “vengeance” (נקם) when their foot “slips” (מוט) in Deut 32:35, Wallace argues, “A reader may rightly wonder if the psalmist is despairing because the psalmist views himself as the victim, not only of earthly oppressors, but of YHWH’s wrath.”⁵⁹ Analyzing the technique of employing contrasting voicing in Ps 94, Meghan Musy argues, “Through *individual testimony*, the psalm makes the case that Yahweh is intimately involved in the affairs of humanity. The prayerful *confession* and *testimony* of Yahweh’s care for the individual enables the communal confession of trust in the last line of the psalm.”⁶⁰ Whose experience of “slipping” and testimony of YHWH’s steadfast love are these? Given the context of Pss 89–94 that deals with the rejection and reinstatement of the Davidic kingship, we can assume that this is the experience of David, not as a historical figure but as a representative.

454.

⁵⁸ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 487.

⁵⁹ Wallace, *Narrative*, 40

⁶⁰ Musy, “Hearing Voices,” 115 (emphasis mine).

After investigating the occurrences in which the people are depicted as YHWH's נחלה ("inheritance/heritage") in the Psalter (Pss 28:9; 33:12; 78:61, 71; 94:5, 14; 106:40), Adam Hensley concludes, "When it is the *people* who are YHWH's נחלה . . . the context is usually one of judgment or intercession for them as in Deut 9:25–29."⁶¹ Deuteronomy 9:25–29 restates Moses' intercessory prayer which took place at the incident of the golden calf (Exod 32:7–14). Moses successfully persuaded God not to annihilate the Israelites by emphasizing that they are נַחֲלָתְךָ ("your possession," Deut 9:26, 29). Observing that the psalms where נחלה is used to designate the people as YHWH's heritage are "intercessory in function" recalling Deut 9, Hensley argues, "Anonymous Ps 94 is similar in this regard. Verse 5 employs the עם/נחלה parallel in a prayer for YHWH's people, whom the wicked (רשעים) are crushing. Verse 14 later affirms YHWH's faithfulness to his 'people' and 'heritage.'"⁶² The speaker is praying an intercessory prayer which is reminiscent of Moses' role in Deut 9, on the basis of his/her own experience of YHWH's deliverance. Therefore, we can conclude that the roles of Moses and David are overlapping.

Summary

As a hinge, Ps 94, along with Ps 93, connects the first and the second sub-divisions of Book IV to each other. The continuity with the previous psalms and Mosaic motifs induce the readers to hear Moses' prayer and teaching from this psalm. At the same time, the

⁶¹ Hensley, *Covenant*, (emphasis original) 122.

⁶² Hensley, *Covenant*, (emphasis original) 120.

personal experience of YHWH's deliverance in this psalm reminds the readers of the context of Pss 89–93 and thus makes them think the speaker is David.

Psalm 95: Call to Worship and Warning

Translation of Psalm 95

- 1 Come, let us sing for joy to YHWH,
Let us shout to the rock of our salvation!
 - 2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,
With songs, let us shout to him.
 - 3 For a great God is YHWH,
And a great king above all gods;
 - 4 Whom in his hand are the depths of the earth,
And the peaks of the mountain peaks are his;
 - 5 To whom the sea belongs, and *HE* made it;
And dry land his hands formed.
 - 6 Come, let us bow down and bend the knee,
Let us kneel before YHWH our maker!
 - 7 For he is our God,
And we are the people of his pasture,
And the sheep of his hand.
- Today, if only you would listen to his voice,⁶³
- 8 Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah,
As the day at Massah, in the wilderness,
 - 9 When your ancestors tested me,
and tried me, even though they had seen my work.
 - 10 For forty years, I loathed that generation,
So⁶⁴ I said, "People who have wayward hearts are they;
They do not know my ways!"
 - 11 Therefore I swore in my anger,
"They will surely not come into my rest!"

⁶³ An optative clause is made with אִם and *yiqtol* form that follows; see Joüon §163c; GKC §151c.

⁶⁴ *wayyqtl* (וַיִּקְרָא) offers here a consequent of the preceding clause; see *IBHS* §33.3.3b, example 3.

Structure of Psalm 95

Invitation to worship the Creator	(vv. 1–7c)
Warning not to reiterate the past	(vv. 7d–11) ⁶⁵

Psalm 95 seems to be a combination of disparate genres: hymn (vv. 1–7c) and a prophetic warning oracle (vv. 7d–11). However, many scholars argue for its unity.⁶⁶ Highlighting YHWH as a great king and the maker of all creation and Israel, the first part of the psalm invites the readers/audience to worship the king-creator. By recalling the past mistakes of Israel’s ancestors, the second part warns of the disaster that will befall Israel when they fail to obey the king.

Continuity with the Previous Psalms

The author opens Ps 95 with the image of YHWH as צור (“rock,” v. 1) which also occurs at the end of Pss 92 and 94 (Pss 92:16[15]; 94:22). Psalm 95 continues the theme of YHWH’s kingship of Ps 93 by depicting God as מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל (“great king,” v. 3). Hossfeld finds some significant lexical links between Pss 95 and 94: the group expression “our” (94:23; 95:1), the designation עם (“people” [94:5, 8, 14; 95:7, 10]), the divine title אל (“El/God” [94:1; 95:3]) and אלהים with a first person possessive suffix (“Elohim/God” [94:22–23; 95:7]), the verb יצר (“to form/create” [94:9; 95:5]) to express YHWH’s creative activity, and ארץ as the realm of YHWH’s dominion (“earth/world” [94:2; 95:4]).⁶⁷ Also, Pss 94 and 95 share important themes. These psalms demonstrate YHWH

⁶⁵ Cf. Kirkpatrick, *Book of Psalms*, 571.

⁶⁶ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 498. For further discussion on the unity of Ps 95, see Prinsloo, “Psalm 95,” 393–410; Savron, “The Contrasting Voices of Psalm 95,” 17–32; Davies, “Psalm 95,” 183–95.

⁶⁷ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 455–456.

as the creator: God formed the ear and the eye (Ps 94:9) and created not only the sea and the dry land (Ps 95:5) but also Israel (Ps 95:6).⁶⁸ Moreover, they show the “covenantal motif” which emphasizes the federal relationship between God and Israel: Ps 94 calls Israel the “people” and “heritage” of God (vv. 5, 14) and Ps 95 describes YHWH as “our God” and Israel as YHWH’s “people” and “sheep” (v. 7).⁶⁹ This continuity justifies our reading of Ps 95 in the context of the previous psalms.

Mosaic Motifs in Ps 95

Along with its preceding psalms, Ps 95 also shows Mosaic motifs. The references of the rebellion at Meribah and Massah (v. 9) and the “forty years” in the wilderness (v. 10) are obvious links to the Mosaic era. Howard finds Ps 95 and Deut 32 share certain divine epithets: YHWH as צור (“rock”) in Ps 95:1 and in Deut 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31(x2), אֱלֹהִים (“God”) in Ps 95:3 and Deut 32:4, 18 and אֱלֹהֵינוּ (“our God”) in Ps 95:7 and in Deut 32:3 (לְהִינֹ), and הוּא (“he”) in Ps 95:5, 7 and in Deut 32:4, 6(x2), 39.⁷⁰ Moreover, following Freedman’s analysis, Howard argues that both Ps 95 and Deut 32 speak of “the rebellious wilderness generation but in the context of addressing a later generation.”⁷¹ Like the case of Ps 94, these connections to Deut 32 also take its readers to Moses.⁷²

⁶⁸ See Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 121.

⁶⁹ McKelvey, *Moses*, 90. See also, Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 120–21.

⁷⁰ See, Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 61.

⁷¹ Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 60.

⁷² Wallace, *Narrative*, 42.

Teachings for the Future

The place of Ps 95 and its references to YHWH's punishment reveal an editorial purpose: the salvation oracle that was given in Ps 92 is not yet accomplished. As Ps 94 called the readers' attention to the progressive nature of YHWH's promise of salvation that is not yet fully realized, Ps 95 emphasizes that the current generation has to obey God in order to enter the resting-place of YHWH which they have not reached (v. 7, 11). Listening to God's voice does not merely indicate physical hearing of sounds; it demands to incline one's ear *and to obey* the voice of YHWH.⁷³ Although the speaker of Ps 95 is not mentioned, its strong Mosaic motifs allow positing that Moses, as he once taught in Deut 32, exhorts Israel not to repeat the sins of Israel's ancestors—disobeying YHWH's voice.

Overlapping of Moses and David

In the context of Ps 95, which refers to the wilderness period, coming into YHWH's rest (v. 11) denotes the inheritance of the promised land. Agreeing with Georg Braulik's observation that Solomon's prayer demonstrates that the rest of YHWH is given after the completion of the temple (1 Kgs 8:56),⁷⁴ Howard concludes that "'my rest' in Ps 95:11 points beyond the land of the inheritance to the Temple, where YHWH's presence and true rest are to be found. The psalm, then, despite its clear references to the Exodus and wilderness periods, brings the readers into the present, the period of the monarchy."⁷⁵ While the rest promised to Israel (Exod 33:14; Deut 3:20; 12:9-10; 25:19; Josh 1:13, 15)

⁷³ Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 404.

⁷⁴ Braulik, "Gottes Ruhe," 41-41.

⁷⁵ Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93-100*, 57.

as a gift of God is stated as being achieved under Joshua (Josh 21:44; 22:4; 23:1), it is also said to be realized under David (2 Sam 7:1, 11) and Solomon (1 Kgs 5:18[4]; 8:56).⁷⁶ This double meaning of the achievement of the rest gives the readers an impression that it will be consummated by someone who resembles David and Moses (and their successors).

It should be noted that Ps 95 does not suggest the historical Moses as an ideal character. The reference to Meribah recalls the failure of Moses, which eventually prohibited his entrance to the land of Canaan (Num 20:12). As the historical David and his descendants failed (Ps 89), so did the historical Moses. While it is true that the psalms we have discussed demonstrate Moses as the greatest leader of Israel, Ps 95 does not idealize Moses by ignoring his failure at Meribah. Thus, what Book IV expects is not the return of Moses. By pointing out Moses' failure and overlapping him with David, Ps 95 implies that an upgraded and idealized Moses/David is needed.

Summary

Psalms 95 also shows enough continuity with the previous psalms to read them together. Its Mosaic motifs allow the readers to consider this psalm as Moses' calling to worship and warning against disobedience. The imagery of YHWH's rest supports the idea that the psalmist overlaps the images of Moses and David. By mentioning Moses' mistake, the psalm does not allow the readers to idealize the historical Moses. Rather, it anticipates a new Moses who is amalgamated with David.

⁷⁶ Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 432.

Psalm 96: YHWH's Universal Kingship

Translation of Psalm 96

- 1 Sing to YHWH a new song;
Sing to YHWH, all the earth!
- 2 Sing to YHWH, bless his name;
Proclaim from day to day his salvation!
- 3 Declare among the nations his glory,
Among all the peoples his wonders.

- 4 For great is YHWH, and worthy of all praise,
To be feared above all the gods;
- 5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
But YHWH made the heavens!
- 6 Honor and majesty are before him;
Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

- 7 Give to YHWH, O families of peoples,
Give to YHWH glory and strength!
- 8 Give to YHWH the glory of his name,
Bring an offering and come into his courts.
- 9 Bow down to YHWH in holy splendor;
Tremble before him, all the earth!

- 10 Say among the nations, "YHWH reigns!"
Surely the world is established; it will never be shaken;
He will judge the peoples with equity.

- 11 Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice;
Let the sea roar and all that fills in!
- 12 Let the field exult and all that is in it!
Then all the trees in the forest sing for joy,
- 13 Before YHWH, for he is coming,
For he is coming to judge the earth;
He will judge the world in righteousness
And the peoples with his faithfulness.

Structure of Psalm 96

Call upon all people to worship

(vv. 1–3)

First rationale for worship	(vv. 4–6)
Call upon all families of nations to worship	(vv. 7–9)
Second rationale for worship	(v. 10)
Call upon all creation to worship	(vv. 11–13)

Psalm 96 contains a three-fold invitation to worship. The speaker first calls upon all nations and thus all people to worship YHWH, the God of Israel (vv. 1–3). The reason behind this call is the greatness and supremacy of YHWH over all the gods of the people (vv. 4–6). The second invitation directs all tribes of nations to join the worship of YHWH (vv. 7–8) because YHWH reigns and will judge the people equally (v. 8). Then the third call follows, which is upon all creation (vv. 11–13).

Relationships to the Neighbouring Psalms

Psalm 96 is a hymn which opens a small unit (Ps 96–99) within Book IV,⁷⁷ which consists of psalms classified as enthronement hymns that celebrate YHWH's kingship.⁷⁸ This psalm reaffirms the theme of YHWH's kingship by repeating the opening phrase of Ps 93: יהוה מִלְּךְ (“YHWH reigns!” [v. 1]). The imagery of the sea shows thematic progression; the waters once lifted their voice against God (93:3–4), then were proclaimed as YHWH's creation and possession (95:5), and now are allowed to “roar” to praise their maker (96:11).⁷⁹ Psalms 95 and 96 both emphasize YHWH's supremacy על־כָּל־אֱלֹהִים (“above all the gods,” 95:3; 96:4).⁸⁰ Plus, both psalms invite their audience

⁷⁷ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 504–9.

⁷⁸ See, Johnston and Firth, eds., *Interpreting the Psalms*, 298–99. On the designation of these psalms, see Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 505. I prefer to call them “YHWH-*malak* psalms.”

⁷⁹ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 128.

⁸⁰ Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 132.

to בוא (“come” [95:6; 96:8]) and חוה (“worship” [95:6; 96:9]).⁸¹ “Psalms 95 and 96 appear to have been juxtaposed for the purpose of continuing the already present kingship of YHWH theme.”⁸² Since Pss 93–95 have close connections to Pss 90–92 and Ps 89 as well, Ps 96 continues the flow of the previous psalms in Book IV.

Dividing Pss 96–99 into two “twin-psalms,”⁸³ Tate finds “content patterns” between them.⁸⁴

96	97	98	99
a new song	Yahweh reigns	a new song	Yahweh reigns
earth called to praise Yahweh	thanksgiving to Yahweh	sea and world called to praise Yahweh	exaltation of Yahweh
Yahweh’s coming to Judge the world	Zion	Yahweh’s coming to judge the world	Zion
	holy name		holy hill

Following Howard’s investigation of the relatedness of Pss 96–99, Tate goes on to say, “The lines of evidence seem to point to a parallelistic pattern of Pss 96–99 of ABAB.”⁸⁵ Therefore, Ps 96, together with Ps 95, links the opening part of Book IV and its middle part (Pss 96–99).

⁸¹ Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 132.

⁸² McKelvey, *Moses*, 104.

⁸³ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 508.

⁸⁴ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 509.

⁸⁵ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 509; for detailed discussions of the relationship between Pss 96–99, see Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 176–80.

Thematic Continuity of Psalm 96 within Book IV

Along with the change of the status of the sea from the enemy to the worshipper of YHWH,⁸⁶ Ps 96 shows significant thematic continuity and progress within Book IV. It contains an apparent universalistic implication. In comparison with Ps 95, Ps 96 extends the subject of the invitation from Israel to all nations and even to all creation. Psalms 96:7–9 and 29:1–2 have a striking parallel:

הָבוּ לַיהוָה מִשְׁפְּחוֹת עַמִּים
הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וָעֹז:
... הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ
הִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לַיהוָה בְּהַדְרַת־קֹדֶשׁ
(Ps 96:7–9)

הָבוּ לַיהוָה בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים
הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וָעֹז:
הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ
הִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לַיהוָה בְּהַדְרַת־קֹדֶשׁ:
(Ps 29:1–2)

McCann argues that Ps 96 uses the language of Ps 29 and changes בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים (“heavenly beings”) into מִשְׁפְּחוֹת עַמִּים (“families of peoples”).⁸⁷ This change shows the author’s intention to extend the theme of YHWH’s kingship over all the world; all the nations and all the creation should worship the God of Israel. YHWH will judge the world in righteousness and with his faithfulness (v. 13). The psalm makes it clear that YHWH’s reign covers all the nations as well as Israel. This universalism is a thematic progression from the previous psalms within Book IV. However, Ps 96 and the preceding psalms share eschatological⁸⁸ overtones. The author emphasizes the eschatological nature of God’s reign by repeating the declaration “YHWH is coming” (v. 13). Consequently, Ps

⁸⁶ See above.

⁸⁷ McCann, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 45.

⁸⁸ Exploring various eschatological traditions in the OT is beyond our present scope. By “eschatological,” I mean the future orientation which expects the consummation of YHWH’s reign.

96, with its preceding psalms, makes the readers expect the future that YHWH will come and judge the world.

Summary

The close links between Pss 95 and 96 function as a connector of Pss 90–95 and 96–99. While Ps 96 shows thematic continuity with its preceding psalms, it also extends the theme of kingship by its universalism. The emphasis on YHWH's coming anticipates the theme of the following psalms—the king who will come to judge the world.

Psalm 97: Theophany from Sinai, Response from Zion

Translation of Psalm 97

- 1 YHWH reigns! Let the earth rejoice!
Let the many coastlands be glad!
- 2 Clouds and thick darkness surround him;
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.
- 3 Fire goes before him,
And it consumes his enemies all around.
- 4 His lightning flashes light up the world;
The earth sees and trembles.
- 5 The mountains melt like wax at the presence of YHWH,
At the presence of the Lord of all the earth.
- 6 The heavens proclaim his righteousness,
And all the peoples see his glory.

- 7 All the servants of images are ashamed,
Those who boast in idols.
Worship him all you gods!⁸⁹

⁸⁹ LXX has *οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ* (“his angels”) for אֱלֹהִים. However, given the references to פְּסֵל (“images” [v. 7a]) and אֱלִילִים (“idols [v 7b]), אֱלֹהִים should be rendered as “gods.”

- 8 Zion hears and rejoices;
And Daughter Judah is glad,
Because of your judgments, O YHWH!
- 9 For you, O YHWH, are the Most High above all the earth;
You are exalted far above all the gods!
- 10 O you who love YHWH, hate evil!
He⁹⁰ is preserving the lives of his devoted ones;
From the hand of the wicked, he will save them.
- 11 Light is sown⁹¹ for the righteous,
And joy for the upright in heart.
- 12 Rejoice in YHWH, you righteous,
And give thanks to his holy name!

Structure of Psalm 97

Theophany from Sinai	(vv. 1–6)
Response from Zion	(vv. 7–9)
Sermon about God's care	(vv. 10–12)

The theme of YHWH's kingship continues as Ps 97 begins by proclaiming יהוה מלך (‘‘YHWH reigns!’’ v. 1) like Ps 93. The speaker describes an epiphany of YHWH in clouds and thick darkness (vv. 2–6). The second section demonstrates the response to the theophany (vv. 7–9). The last part of the psalm is a sermon of exhortation and encouragement (vv. 10–12).

⁹⁰ Due to the sudden change of the subject from a plural participle to a singular one, LXX and Targum add here κύριος.

⁹¹ Since ‘‘light sown for the righteous’’ is a difficult, many propose זָרַח (‘‘to rise/shine’’) instead of זָרַע (NABR, NIV, NJB, NRSV; Gunkel, Kraus, Weiser, Howard). However, this emendation is unnecessary, because it is comprehensible as a poetic metaphor. Zenger writes, ‘‘the light, that is, YHWH's saving and life-giving presence, can already be experienced now by individual righteous persons in the mode of ‘‘being sown,’’ that is, as seed that irresistibly pushes toward full development.’’ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 476.

Continuity with the Previous Psalms

Psalm 97 carries on the kingship of YHWH motif. The phrase יהוה מלך has been repeated in Ps 93, 96, and 97. Howard observes several keyword links between Pss 97 and 96:⁹² תגל הארץ (“let the earth rejoice!” [96:11; 97:1]), אֱלִילִים (“idols” [96:5; 97:7]),⁹³ שָׁמַיִם (“heavens” [96:5, 11; 97:6]),⁹⁴ כְּבוֹד (“glory” [96:3, 7, 8; 97:6]), גִּיל (“to rejoice” [96:11; 97:1, 8]),⁹⁵ חִיל (“to tremble” [96:6; 97:4]).⁹⁶ Also, both psalms emphasize YHWH’s sovereignty not only over all the people (96:3, 5, 7, 10, 13; 97:6) and nature (96:1, 5, 9, 10, 11, 13; 97:1, 4, 5, 6, 9) but also over all the gods (96:4, 5; 97:7, 9). While these psalms share the universalism that includes all the people and the creation as YHWH’s worshippers, Ps 97 extends the boundary to even all the “gods”.⁹⁷ “Worship him all you gods!” (v. 7c).⁹⁸ Goldingay points out the correspondence between the beginning of Ps 97 and the end of Ps 96 (96:11 and 97:1) and calls Ps 97:1 “summary” of Ps 96.⁹⁹ The only newly added element יַמֵּי־אֲרָצוֹת (“coastlands”) in Ps 97:1, is a metaphor of the farthest place that could be imagined by the author.¹⁰⁰ By adding this new feature, Ps 97 further broadens the universalism of Ps 96. Psalm 97 also can be connected to Ps 89. At the end of Book III the poet says, “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of *your* throne”

⁹² Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 142–43.

⁹³ The only occurrences in the entire Psalter.

⁹⁴ The only occurrences within Pss 93–100.

⁹⁵ The only occurrences within Book IV.

⁹⁶ The only occurrences within Book IV, except Ps 90:2.

⁹⁷ McKelvey, *Moses*, 114.

⁹⁸ Given the references to פְּסָלִים (“images” [v. 7a]) and אֱלִילִים (“idols [v. 7b]), the poet seems not to allow the existence of other gods.

⁹⁹ Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 111–12.

¹⁰⁰ Tate notes, “The יַמֵּי־אֲרָצוֹת may have been most directly the islands and shores of the Mediterranean Sea, including the coastland of Europe and Northern Africa. In figurative language, however, the meaning is that of remote areas and nations, distant shores at the limits of the earth.” Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 516. See also, Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 112.

(Ps 89:15a[14a]). Now the clause occurs with a change of person from second masculine singular to third masculine singular: “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of *his* throne” (Ps 97:2b).¹⁰¹ This quotation¹⁰² functions as a remark that God, who appears in Ps 97, is the same God who was depicted in Ps 89 and thus who was asked the sorrowful questions at the end of Book III: “How long, O YHWH? Will you hide yourself forever?” (89:47[46]). While reading the description of the theophany in Ps 97, therefore, the readers can expect God will answer the questions. As I will discuss below, the theophany itself is an answer to the questions.

Sinai and Zion in Psalm 97

Psalm 97 contains the imagery of Mount Sinai. Verse 2 describes YHWH as surrounded by ענן (“clouds”) and ערפל (“thick darkness”). With אש (“fire”) and ברק (“lightning flashes”) in vv. 3–4, YHWH appears. One might detect mythological overtones in vv. 2–5. In the Ugaritic text, Baal the storm god defeats the chaotic water-gods.¹⁰³ Psalm 97 depicts YHWH as the “Storm God.”¹⁰⁴ This description of the Storm God’s theophany shows an obvious parallel with Sinai motifs. In Exodus, YHWH’s theophany is described in storm imagery: thunder (קול), lightning (ברק), thick cloud (ענן), and fire (אש) (Exod 19:16, 18; 24:15–18). Moses recalls the epiphany of YHWH at Sinai with the same

¹⁰¹ The change of the person is because of the difference of the addressee between Pss 89 and 97. While Ps 89 is addressed to YHWH, Ps 97 invites the earth (v. 1), the gods (v. 7), and the righteous (vv. 11–12) to worship YHWH.

¹⁰² What I am focusing on is not the diachronic relationship between these psalms, but the impact which these two clauses make upon readers, when they read Pss 89 and 97 according to the current arrangement. See Boda, “Quotation and Allusion,” 296–98.

¹⁰³ KTU 1.2 IV; Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 321–24.

¹⁰⁴ Clifford, *Psalms 73–150*, 123.

language in Deuteronomy: dark clouds (עָנָן וְעַרְפָּל) and fire (אֵשׁ) (Deut 4:11–12a), a mighty voice (קוֹל גְּדוֹל), the thick darkness (הָעָנָן וְהָעַרְפָּל), darkness (חֹשֶׁךְ), and fire (אֵשׁ) (Deut 5:22–23a). The words עָנָן (“clouds”) and עַרְפָּל (“thick darkness”) indicate the presence and glory of YHWH that was manifested at Mount Sinai. אֵשׁ (“fire”) and בָּרָק (“lightning flash”) are the power and majesty of YHWH who came upon the mountain. Therefore, Ps 97 is reminiscent of the powerful theophany on Sinai.

The psalm also has conspicuous references to Zion: “Zion hears and rejoices; and Daughter Judah is glad, because of your judgments, O YHWH!” (v. 8). Since the theology of Zion is the central key to legitimizing the Davidic dynasty,¹⁰⁵ readers may associate these references with the Davidic kingship. It is interesting that v. 2, which has mythic overtones, declares that “righteousness and justice” (צֶדֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט, v. 2b) are the foundation of YHWH’s throne. Gerstenberger writes, “Parallelism of two pairs of metaphors, one mythological (‘clouds, darkness,’ v. 2a) and one ethical (‘justice, right,’ v. 2b), is remarkable . . . a mythical and a historical colon are dramatically glued together.”¹⁰⁶ The words צֶדֶק and מִשְׁפָּט are suggested as the foundation of not only YHWH’s reign but also the Davidic dynasty in the Psalter. In Ps 72:1–2 the poet pleads with God to give the king מִשְׁפָּט and צֶדֶק so that the king may judge people with them. Therefore, the reference to the throne of justice and righteousness conjures up the imagery of the ideal king’s reign from Zion. Therefore, we can conclude that Sinai motif of clouds and thick darkness and the Zion motif of justice and righteousness are placed in

¹⁰⁵ Strong, “Zion,” 1314.

¹⁰⁶ Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 192–93.

apposition to each other in Ps 97:2.

Response to Psalm 89

To the question of Ps 89, “Will you hide yourself forever?” (89:47[46]), Ps 97 responds by recalling the memory of YHWH’s appearance at Sinai. The Sinai motif fits well with the continuing references to YHWH’s teachings (93:5; 94:12; 95:7d) and judgment (94:2, 8–11, 23; 95:8–11; 96:10, 13) because the mountain is the place where the Torah was given, and the covenant between YHWH and Israel was cut (Exod 19–24). Psalm 97 encourages its audience by recalling YHWH’s power. Also, the memory of Sinai reminds them of the importance of obedience: “O you who love YHWH, hate evil!” (v. 10a). If they listen to the voice of YHWH and obey it, YHWH will come and save them from the hand of the wicked (v. 10c). By emphasizing obedience to the Torah, Ps 97 responds to Ps 89: “YHWH will not hide forever if we obey the Torah.”

Summary

Celebrating YHWH’s kingship, Ps 97 extends it to the extreme: even all the gods have to surrender to it. The epiphany of this mighty king at Sinai is juxtaposed with the core values of the kingship of Zion: righteousness and justice. Again, the images of the two mountains are overlapped. With the emphasis on obeying YHWH’s teachings, Ps 97 gives an answer to Ps 89: obedience is crucial to the restoration of the covenant.

Psalm 98: YHWH's Steadfast Love and Faithfulness

Translation of Psalm 98

1 A psalm.¹⁰⁷

Sing to YHWH a new song,
For wonders he has done.
His right hand¹⁰⁸ has brought victory to him,
And has his holy arm.

2 YHWH has made known his salvation,
To the eyes of the nations;
He has uncovered his righteousness.

3 He has remembered his steadfast love,
And his faithfulness to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
The salvation of our God.

4 Raise a shout to YHWH, all the earth;
Break forth, and sing for joy, and sing praise!

5 Sing praise to YHWH with a lyre,
With a lyre, the sound of a song!

6 With trumpets and the sound of a horn,
Raise a shout before the King, YHWH!

7 Let the sea roar and all that fills it.
The world and those who dwell in it.

8 Rivers, let them clap their hands,
Together mountains, let them sing for joy.

9 Before YHWH, for he is coming
To judge the earth;
He will judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples with equity.

Structure of Psalm 98

Calling Israel to praise YHWH

(vv. 1–3)

Calling all the earth

(vv. 4–6)

¹⁰⁷ LXX (Ps 97) has Ψαλμὸς τῷ Δαυὶδ (“A psalm to David”).

¹⁰⁸ While יְרֵךְ usually denotes “his right (side),” יָמֵי also has the meaning of “right hand.” See DCH 227.

Calling the nature to sing for YHWH's future actions

(vv. 7–9)

Psalm 98 is the only case that has a superscription among the YHWH-*malak* psalms (Pss 93–99). מְזִמֹּר (“a psalm”) might indicate “a new song” that should be sung to YHWH (v. 1) because Ps 98 is “both an exhortation to praise and an offering of it.”¹⁰⁹ It calls Israel, all the nations of the world, and all the creation to worship YHWH. Also, the psalm itself is a song of praise for God’s חֶסֶד (“steadfast love”).

Continuity with the Previous Psalms

Instead of יהוה מֶלֶךְ, the typical phrase of the YHWH's kingship theme, Ps 98 has הָרִיעוּ יהוה לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ יהוה (“Raise a shout before the King, YHWH!” [v. 6]), which still maintains the same motif. The poet of Ps 98 continues the idea of God who judges with equity and righteousness (v. 9; cf. Pss 96:10, 13; 97:2, 6, 8). The psalm shares universalism with Pss 96–97; it invites all the people and nature as well as the people of Israel to worship YHWH.

While Ps 97:2b echoes Ps 89:15a[14a],¹¹⁰ Ps 98:1c and 1d recall Ps 89:14[13]:

You have a mighty *arm* (זְרוֹעַ);

Your hand is strong, *your right hand* (יְמִינְךָ) is lifted (Ps 89:14[13]).

His right hand (יְמִינוֹ) has brought victory to him,

And has his holy *arm* (זְרוֹעַ) (Ps 98:1c and 1d).

These clauses are two out of only three occurrences of the combination of the divine מֶלֶךְ

¹⁰⁹ Davis, “Psalm 98,” 172.

¹¹⁰ See above.

(“right hand”) and זְרוֹעַ (“arm”) in the entire Psalter.¹¹¹ Through the links between Pss 98 and 89, the readers might expect that Ps 98 provides an answer to the questions in Ps 89.

An Answer to Psalm 89

Psalm 97 offered an answer to one of the questions in Ps 89—“Will you hide yourself forever?” (89:47[46])—by describing the grand epiphany of YHWH at Mount Sinai.

Now Ps 98 attempts to give a more direct answer to another question raised in Ps 89:

Where is your steadfast love (דָּוָק) of old, O YHWH,
Which you swore to David by your faithfulness (הֶאֱמַנְתָּ)? (Ps 89:50[49])

He has remembered his steadfast love (דָּוָק),
And his faithfulness (הֶאֱמַנְתָּ) to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
The salvation of our God (Ps 98:3).

Given the emphasis on the universal nature of YHWH’s kingship in Pss 95–98, “the house of Israel” should not be limited to the northern kingdom.¹¹² There is no reason for the author to intentionally separate the two kingdoms and to exclude the southern kingdom from the salvation of YHWH in this context. The term covers the whole of Israel, and, of course, David cannot be excluded from Israel. Davis rightly notes, “The just Judge recalls the past with an eye not to recrimination but to promise. God’s faithfulness to an unreliable people (ancient Israel or ourselves) is anything but naïve. Looking unblinkingly at past failure, God’s faithfulness simply overpowers it.”¹¹³ Psalm 98 assures that YHWH has never forgotten the steadfast love which YHWH has sworn to

¹¹¹ Cf. Ps 136:12.

¹¹² See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 480.

¹¹³ Davis, “Psalm 98,” 173.

David.

Summary

Whereas Ps 97 responded to the question of YHWH's concealment in Ps 89, Ps 98 answers the question of the absence of YHWH's חַסֵּד ("steadfast love") by declaring that "God has remembered!" and that "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God!" God has never forgotten חַסֵּד and אֱמֻנָה ("faithfulness") toward Israel, including David. Psalm 98 shares eschatological overtones with Pss 93–99: "Before YHWH, for he is coming to judge the earth; He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity" (Ps 98:9). YHWH's kingship and salvation are not yet fully realized. Psalm 98, therefore, makes the readers hope that God's sovereignty and restoration will be accomplished through God's חַסֵּד and אֱמֻנָה to the covenant with David as well as Israel.

Psalm 99: YHWH Answers from the Holy Mountain

Translation of Psalm 99

- 1 YHWH reigns!
Let the people tremble.
He is enthroned on the cherubim!
Let the earth shake.
- 2 YHWH is great in Zion.
He is exalted over all the peoples.
- 3 Let them praise your name;
Great and Awesome!
Holy is he!¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ The phrase אֱדוּשׁ הוּא ("holy is he!") functions as a refrain in vv. 3, 5, 9. See Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 82.

- 4 And the strength of a king loves justice;¹¹⁵
 YOU have established equity;
 Justice and righteousness in Jacob,
 YOU¹¹⁶ have formed.
- 5 Exalt YHWH you God!
 And worship at his footstool!
 Holy is he!
- 6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests;
 And Samuel was among those who called on his name,
 Calling on YHWH,¹¹⁷
 And HE would answer them!
- 7 In the pillar of cloud he would speak to them;
 They obeyed his decrees and his statutes he gave to them.
- 8 O YHWH our God, YOU answered them;
 A God who forgives you were to them
 And one who avenges their wrongdoings.¹¹⁸
- 9 Exalt YHWH, our God!
 And worship at his holy mountain;¹¹⁹
 For holy is YHWH, our God!

Structure of Psalm 99

YHWH as king	(vv. 1–3)
YHWH's justice and righteousness	(vv. 4–5)
YHWH listens	(vv. 6–9)

Continuity with the Previous Psalms

Psalm 99 continues the theme of YHWH's kingship by affirming יהוה מלך again (v. 1; cf.

¹¹⁵ A plethora of translations has been suggested for this difficult clause not only because of its grammatical and syntactical difficulties but also because of its ambiguity of meaning: it seems unlikely that עז ("strength") functions as the subject of the verb אהב ("to love"). However, it may be understood as poetic expression. LXX also rendered the clause as και τιμη βασιλευς κρισιν αγαπη ("and a king's honor loves justice").

¹¹⁶ The subject אמתה indicates emphasis in both v. 4b and v. 4d.

¹¹⁷ I read קראים אליהוה as a modifying participle clause. See BHRG §20.3.2.2.

¹¹⁸ Howard (*Structure*, 87) rendered נקם as "vindication." However, Zenger's interpretation as an allusion to Exod 34:6–7 seems to more fit in the context. See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 482.

¹¹⁹ The phrase להר קדשו can also be rendered as "at the mountain of his holiness."

Ps 93:1; 96:10; 97:1). The first verse of Ps 99 and the last verse of Ps 98 are thematically linked; God will judge the earth (Ps 98:9b) and the earth shall shake (Ps 99:1d). Although the terms are not exactly the same between Ps 99:1 and Ps 98:9, the “catchword” strategy that links the beginning part of a psalm with the last part of the preceding is likely to be used to connect Pss 96–99. For examples, קִדְּשׁוּ (“his holiness”) occurs at the end of Ps 97 (v. 12b) and at the beginning of Ps 98 (v. 1d). We can also find תִּגַּל הָאָרֶץ (“let the earth rejoice”) in the first verse of Ps 97 (v. 1a) and also in the last part of Ps 96 (v. 11a).

Psalm 99 also shows parallels with Ps 97.¹²⁰ In addition, these psalms share the theophany motif. Psalm 97 describes YHWH’s epiphany with עָנָן (“clouds”), עֲרַפֵּל (“thick darkness”), אֵשׁ (“fire”), בָּרָק (“lightning flashes”).¹²¹ Also, the poet of Ps 97 states that the mountains and all the earth “melt down at the presence of YHWH” (v. 5). Psalm 99 also speaks of trembling and shaking of the earth (v. 1).

Sinai and Zion in Psalm 99

Along with other psalms in Book IV, especially the psalms that have been analyzed so far, Ps 99 shows close links with Mosaic motifs. McCann finds many links between Ps 99 and the song of Moses in Exod 15: מִלְּךְ (“to reign” [Ps 99:1; Exod 15:18]), רָוַם (“to be exalted” [Ps 99:2, 5, 9; Exod 15:2]), גָּדֹל (“great” [Ps 99:2–3; Exod 15:16]), נִרְאָה (“he is awesome” [Ps 99:3; Exod 15:11]), עֹז (“might” [Ps 99:4; Exod 15:2, 13]), and קִדְּשׁ (“holy” [Ps 99:3, 5, 9; Exod 15:11, 13]) are applied to YHWH in both songs.¹²² Pointing

¹²⁰ See my analysis of Ps 96 above.

¹²¹ See my analysis of Ps 97.

¹²² McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 1074–75.

out that people (עַמִּים) tremble (רָגַז) in both texts (Ps 99:1; Exod 15:14), McCann persuasively concludes, “It seems as if Psalm 99 intentionally recalls Exod 15:1–18 as a way of affirming for a later generation—discouraged by events like those described in Book III—that God *still* reigns.”¹²³ Moreover, trembling and shaking (v. 1) are expressions of the Sinai theophany (Exod 19:16, 18).¹²⁴ It should be noted that Ps 99 has the intense hue of Zion at the same time. YHWH is enthroned upon the cherubim (v. 1b). Verse 5 invites people to worship YHWH at הַדָּם רַגְלָיו (“his footstool”), which refers to the ark of the covenant (Ps 132:7; 1 Chr 28:2) and Zion (Lam 2:1). The cherubim, and thus the ark, once belonged to the tent in the wilderness, yet later they were placed in the temple at Zion. Above all, while echoing Mosaic motifs, the psalm affirms that YHWH is great in Zion (v. 2a). Thus, the psalmist intentionally mixes the motifs of Sinai and Zion.

Furthermore, Moses and Aaron, mentioned as YHWH’s priests (vv. 6–9), were the ones who witnessed YHWH’s deliverance from the Red Sea and presence at Mount Sinai. They also lead readers towards the Sinaitic experiences. Verses 7–8 evoke the event in which YHWH gave Moses the two tablets of the covenant at Mount Sinai (Exod 31–34). Moses and Aaron (and Samuel) are told that “they obeyed his decrees and his statutes he gave to them” (Ps 99:7b). YHWH spoke to Moses in the pillar of cloud (Exod 33:9; cf. Num 12:5) and gave him the decrees and law (Exod 34:1–29). Facing the golden calf incident, YHWH exacted retribution for the wrongdoings of the Israelites and forgave them at the end (Exod 32:25—33:23). Verse 8 is likely to echo the incident; “A God who *forgives* you were to them, and one who *avenges* their wrongdoings” (Ps 99:8). In this

¹²³ McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 1074–75 (italics original).

¹²⁴ Weiser, *Psalms*, 641.

context of Sinaitic experiences, the reference to Samuel seems not to fit. Some scholars point out that Samuel opposed the human monarchy.¹²⁵ However, the recalling of Samuel leads the readers back to the dawn of the Davidic kingship because he anointed David as the king of Israel (1 Sam 16:13); given that the readers will soon face a Davidic psalm (Ps 101), it can be concluded that the reference to Samuel functions as a prelude to the coming of David.¹²⁶ The poet regards the roles of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel in the same way: they cried to YHWH, and “HE would answer them” (Ps 99:6). Their roles and poetic images are overlapped here.

This overlapping of two different motifs gives a hint for understanding the unnamed “holy mountain (v. 9).” It seems that the name of the mountain is intentionally not given. Verses 1–5 mixes the powerful theophany at Sinai with the mighty kingship of YHWH at Zion. The readers can detect the overlapping of Moses and Samuel, who prepared the Davidic dynasty by anointing the historical David, in vv. 6–8. Therefore, by not identifying the specific name of the mountain, Ps 99 helps the readers imagine that YHWH’s unnamed holy mountain contains both Sinai and Zion imagery.

YHWH’s Answer: Intercession and Obedience

Psalm 99 emphasizes YHWH’s answer: “HE would answer them!” (v. 6d) and “YOU answered them” (v. 8a).¹²⁷ Keeping in mind that Book III ended with unanswered questions, the readers now encounter YHWH who answers. It is important to note the

¹²⁵ E.g. McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 1074.

¹²⁶ Wallace, *Narrative*, 47.

¹²⁷ Both clauses use emphatic personal pronouns.

YHWH answers Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, all remarkable mediators between YHWH and Israel in their history. Psalm 99 insinuates that YHWH will answer the questions of Ps 89 through an intercessor like Moses, Aaron, and Samuel. By stating that YHWH is a forgiver and, at the same time, an avenger of people's wrongdoings (v. 8), the psalm also implies that the broken covenant in Ps 89 is YHWH's punishment of David and Israel for their sins. Hence, the psalm emphasizes the importance of obedience. The intercessors could be answered by YHWH because they obeyed the decrees and statutes of YHWH (v. 7). God will speak to them not only because of their calling on God's name but also because of their obedience. Therefore, Ps 99 prepares the readers for the appearance of the one who calls on YHWH's name on behalf of Israel and obeys the Torah.

Summary

Continuing the theme of YHWH's kingship, Ps 99 amalgamates the motifs of Sinai and Zion. The psalm also suggests that God will answer through a mediator who calls on God's name and observes the statutes and decrees of God. The amalgamation of Sinai and Zion give a clue to the identity of the mediator; the intercessor will be the one who can carry out the roles of Moses (Sinai) and David (Zion) at the same time.

Psalm 100: Thanksgiving

Translation of Psalm 100

1 A psalm for thanksgiving.

Shout to YHWH, all the earth!

- 2 Serve YHWH with joy!
Come before him with rejoicing!
- 3 Know that YHWH, he alone is God,
He made us, and we are his,¹²⁸
His people and the sheep of his pasture.
- 4 Come into his gates with thanksgiving,
His courts with praise;
Give thanks to him, bless his name.
- 5 For YHWH is good, his steadfast love endures forever,
And his faithfulness from generation to generation.

Structure of Psalm 100

Superscription	(v. 1a)
First call to worship and its reason	(vv. 1b–3)
Second call to worship and its reason	(vv. 4–5)

Although Ps 100 does not use any explicit lexis regarding YHWH's kingship, it also shares the concept of the sovereign kingship of YHWH. The shepherd imagery (v. 3) is usually employed to depict gods and kings in ancient West Asia as well as in Egypt.¹²⁹ Also, it echoes the same imagery as Ps 95:7, where YHWH's kingship above all gods is celebrated.¹³⁰ Psalms 95:6b–7c and 100:3 form an *inclusio*.¹³¹

Ps 95:6b–7c	Ps 100:3
Let us kneel before <u>YHWH</u> our <u>maker</u> ! For <u>he</u> is our <u>God</u> , And <u>we</u> are the <u>people</u> of <u>his</u> pasture, And the <u>sheep</u> of his hand.	Know that <u>YHWH</u> , <u>he</u> alone is <u>God</u> , He <u>made</u> us, and <u>we</u> are his, His <u>people</u> and the <u>sheep</u> of <u>his</u> pasture.

This *inclusio* allows the readers to connect these two psalms and then construe the

¹²⁸ I follow the *qere* and read יָיָ.

¹²⁹ Vancil, "Sheep, Shepherd," 5:1188–89.

¹³⁰ McKelvey, *Moses*, 161.

¹³¹ Gundersen, "Davidic Hope," 149.

shepherd imagery of Ps 100 as an affirmation of YHWH's kingship.¹³² The psalm continues not only the kingship theme but also universalism of Pss 93–99: “Shout to YHWH, all the earth!” (v. 1). Scholars agree that Ps 100 functions as a conclusion of the sub-division of Pss 93–100.¹³³ Seven imperatives within Ps 100 suggest proper responses to the universal king: “shout” (v. 1), “serve,” “come” (v. 2), “know” (v. 3), “come,” “give thanks,” and “bless” (v. 4). The theme culminates with these imperatives commanding appropriate responses to YHWH as king.

While Ps 99 responded to Ps 89 indirectly by saying “God will answer!” (Ps 99:6–8), Ps 100 gives a more direct answer to the question, “Where is your steadfast love (דָּוָה) of old, O Lord, which you swore to David in your faithfulness (אֱמֻנָה)?” (Ps 89:50[49]). The psalmist affirms that YHWH's steadfast love (דָּוָה) and faithfulness (אֱמֻנָה) endure forever (v. 5). The rationale behind the imperatives mentioned above is YHWH's enduring steadfast love and faithfulness. These qualities seemed to disappear in Ps 89. Now Ps 100 asserts that they endure from generation to generation.

Having considered the context of Pss 90–92, Ps 100 can be regarded as an invitation and command to David to praise YHWH, who has promised David his restoration according to Moses' prayer. While calling for the earth to worship YHWH (v. 1), the psalm also addresses Israel and exhorts them to know that they are YHWH's possession (v. 3). Hence, in the context of Pss 93–99, it can be concluded that the psalm calls for Israel and all the earth to celebrate YHWH, who will restore them through the

¹³² McKelvey, *Moses*, 161.

¹³³ Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 428; Clifford, *Psalms 73–150*, 133; Futato, “The Book of Psalms,” 319; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 494–95; Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, 388; McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 1077; McKelvey, *Moses*, 159; Ross, *A Commentary*, 3:186–87; Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 450.

one in whom David and Moses are amalgamated, according to YHWH's steadfast love and faithfulness.

Conclusion

Pss 93–100 show enough connectivity to Pss 90–92 to read them together according to their sequence. Strong Mosaic overtones throughout Pss 90–100 substantiate this reading. While celebrating YHWH's sovereign kingship over the universe, this sub-division responds to the conspicuous failure of the Davidic covenant in Ps 89 and the restoration oracle given to David through Moses' intercession (Pss 90–92). Psalms 93–100 buttress the oracle by praising YHWH's might and theophany. They encourage their audience by affirming YHWH's steadfast love and faithfulness and thus respond to Ps 89; the faithful king has never forgotten the covenant with David and will come to restore the world. Also, by amalgamating the imageries of Moses and David, these psalms begin to reveal YHWH's plan to restore Israel and the world. As the king of steadfast love and faithfulness, YHWH will save the world by performing steadfast love and being faithful to the covenant with David; to consummate YHWH's kingship over the world, YHWH will restore David. One might think that the accomplishment of YHWH's deliverance of the world is dependant on a physical descendant of David. However, the amalgamation of David and Moses adjusts the idea. A Davidide, through whom YHWH will work and save the world, is not merely a physical progeny of David, but an idealized one who can carry out both roles of Moses and David—ideal intercessor and king.

CHAPTER 4: REINSTATEMENT OF DAVID (PSALMS 101–103)

Pss 101–103 form the third subdivision within Book IV,¹ which begins with the return of a superscription attributed to David.² These psalms show strong Davidic overtones. Both Pss 101 and 103 have the superscriptions לְדָוִד (“Of David”), and Ps 102 emphasizes the centrality of Zion (Ps 102: 14[13], 14[16], 22[21]). As discussed in Chapter 1, some scholars argue that Ps 89 ends with a negative view of the Davidic dynasty. Wilson states that Ps 89 depicts the Davidic covenant as “broken” and “failed.”³ Goldingay even writes, “Ps 89 makes clear that God has abandoned the king.”⁴ However, as I have examined in the previous chapters, the Davidic motifs are not obliterated in the psalms after Ps 89. Moreover, the reoccurrence of the superscriptions dedicated to David and the Davidic emphasis in Pss 101–103 undermine the perspectives of the “abandoned” David. In this chapter, the meaning of this reemergence of David in Pss 101–103 will be discussed.

¹ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 2; Wallace, *Narrative*, 52; Gillingham, “Psalms 90–106,” 94–95; Grant, “The Psalms and the King,” 109.

² The last occurrence of the Davidic superscription is Ps 86.

³ Wilson, *Editing*, 213.

⁴ Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 691.

Psalm 101: The Pledge of the Returned David

Translation of Psalm 101

1 Of David. A psalm.

Steadfast love and justice, I will sing!⁵
To you, O YHWH, I will make music.

2 I will study⁶ the blameless way;
When will you come to me?

I will walk in the integrity of my heart within my house.

3 I will not set before my eyes something vile;
To do transgression, I hate;
It shall not cling to me.

4 A perverse heart shall be far from me;
I will not know evil.

5 The one who slanders a neighbour secretly,
I will destroy.
Proud eyes and a haughty heart,
I will not endure.

6 My eyes are on the faithful of the land,
That they may dwell with me.
The one who walks in the way of integrity,
That one will serve me.

7 The one will not dwell within my house,
Who practices deceit.
The one who speaks lies will not be established
Before my eyes.

8 Every morning⁷ I will destroy all the wicked of the land,
So that I cut off from the city of YHWH all evildoers.

⁵ The verbs in vv. 1 and 2a are cohortatives that declare the speaker's intent and firm resolution. While some render these verbs as requests and thus read "let me . . ." (CEB; NICOT), many English translations (ESV, KJV, NASB, NIV, NJB, NJPS, NKJV, NRSV, etc.) and commentators read them "I will . . .": Botha, "Psalm 101," 2; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 11; Kraus, *Psalms* 60–150, 276; McKelvey, *Moses*, 170–71; Ross, *A Commentary*, 3:1–2; Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 460–61; Weiser, *Psalms*, 647–48. These readings as self-determination fit well with the following expressions of the king's determination to walk in YHWH's way: "I will (not) . . . !" (vv. 2c, 3, 4, 5, 8). Moreover, the actions of singing (אֲשַׁבֵּחַ), playing (אֲזַמְרָה), and studying (אֲשַׁבֵּחַ) do not require the consent or permission of another. See BHRG §19.5.1.2; GBHS §3.3.3; Joüon §114c.

⁶ The verb שָׁבַל means "to study" or "take note of" with preposition אֶל. See DCH 151.

⁷ The definite article in לְבֹקְרִים (literally "to/for the mornings") is the article of totality, so "every morning." See Joüon §137i.

Structure of Psalm 101

Davidic superscription	(v. 1a)
King's determination for the blameless life	(vv. 1b–2b)
Details of the determination	(vv. 2c–8)

The Return of David's Voice

Here we find the return of the explicit voice of David. Due to the presence of the Davidic superscription לְדָוִד מְזֻמָּר (“Of David. A psalm”)⁸ and most scholars’ classification of Ps 101 as a royal psalm,⁹ it is not groundless to consider the speaker of the psalm as David.¹⁰ Gerstenberger democratizes the psalm and argues that the speaker is not a king but anyone in the group of YHWH believers.¹¹ However, his argument cannot be corroborated. Let alone the superscription attributed to David, the power to “destroy” and “cut off” all the evildoers from Zion affirms (cf. vv. 5, 8) the extraordinary authority of the speaker, most likely a royal figure.

David as an Ideal King

After expressing the resolution to sing of רַחֲמֵי (“steadfast love”) and מִשְׁפָּט (“justice/judgment”), the king declares his determination to study the blameless way of life (vv. 1b–2a). Throughout most of the psalm, the royal speaker offers the details of the life of integrity.¹² Since the life depicted by the speaker is likely that of an ideal king, some commentators identify the *Sitz im Leben* behind the psalm as a coronation of a king and

⁸ LXX also has Τῷ Δαυιδ ψαλμός (“Pertaining to David. A Psalm.” *NETS*; Ps 100:1 in LXX).

⁹ See Johnston and Firth, eds., *Interpreting the Psalms*, 299.

¹⁰ This does not necessarily mean that the psalmist is the historical David. Rather, the figure is a somewhat idealized agent of YHWH’s rule over the world. See below.

¹¹ Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 209–210.

¹² Cf. *DCH* 8:643.

argue that this psalm was used to teach the king.¹³ However, this is speculative. In any case, the life that the king dedicates himself to is the דרך תמים (“blameless/perfect way,” v. 2a). He will walk in integrity (v. 2c) and will know nothing of evil (v. 4). The blameless way is not limited to personal dimensions. Rather, it includes communal aspects. He will take care of the weak of the community (v. 5) and the faithful in the land (v. 6). Moreover, he will punish and destroy all the wicked of the land every morning (vv. 5, 8). All these activities may be categorized into the two things that the psalter sings about at the beginning: חַסְדֵּךְ and מִשְׁפָּט.

Given that the meaning of חַסְדֵּךְ includes “kindness,” “love,” and “mercy” as well as “loyalty,” and “faithfulness,” the king’s caring actions towards the faithful are classified as חַסְדֵּךְ. Punishing and destroying the evildoers are categorized as מִשְׁפָּט. In Pss 93–100, the psalmists applied the term חַסְדֵּךְ to express God’s salvific actions as a mighty king (94:18; 98:3). The other object of the speaker’s singing, מִשְׁפָּט, has also occurred throughout the YHWH-*malak* psalms to explain the YHWH’s kingship (94:15; 97:2, 8, 99:4). According to Hossfeld, the verb צמח in its *hiphil* form (“to destroy,” vv. 5, 8) is primarily applied to YHWH in Psalter.¹⁴ Among the total eleven occurrences of the *hiphil* forms of צמח in the entire Psalter (54:7[5]; 69:5[4]; 73:27; 88:17[16]; 94:23[x2]; 119:139; 143:12), only Ps 101 (vv. 5, 8) and Ps 18:41 are the cases applied to a human being who assumes YHWH’s role.¹⁵ That is, the returned David dedicates himself to

¹³ Anderson, *Psalms 73–150*, 700; Barré, “The Shifting Focus of Psalm 101,” 201–11; Mays, *Psalms*, 321; Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, 57

¹⁴ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 16.

¹⁵ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 16.

executing the steadfast love and justice/judgment *on behalf of YHWH* by taking care of the faithful and punishing the wicked of the land (vv. 2c–8). In Ps 101, the readers can find an idealized king who enacts the steadfast love and justice/judgment in the city of YHWH.

Eschatological Nature of the Ideal King

Given the firm declarations of the speaker's will throughout the psalm, the question "when will you come to me? (v. 2b) seems to be abrupt.¹⁶ This question could indicate the poet's feeling of distance from YHWH.¹⁷ At the same time, it also shows the psalm's eschatological nature which is shared with the previous psalms.¹⁸ The question asking "when" implies that "the Davidide in [Ps] 101 desires to embody God's reign by enforcing God's justice, but he must mournfully await the appointed time (101:2)."¹⁹ Many scholars and modern translations find Ps 101 future-oriented.²⁰ Moreover, as briefly stated above, Ps 101 shows lexical links with the YHWH-*malak* psalms: דָּוִד and בְּיָמָיו . The psalm's strong contrasts between the righteous and the wicked also echo Pss 94 and 97. While the faithful may dwell with the ideal king, those who practice deceit will not (101:6–7). Those who walk in the way of integrity will serve the king, but all the

¹⁶ Because of the presence of this complaint, some scholars think Ps 101 is also a lament as well as a royal psalm; e.g., Longman, *Psalms*, 350.

¹⁷ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 14–15; Longman, *Psalms*, 350.

¹⁸ See Chapter 3.

¹⁹ Gundersen, "Davidic Hope," 170.

²⁰ Clifford, *Psalms 73–150*, 135–36; Creach, *The Destiny of the Righteous in the Psalms*, 97–98, 107–8; deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 742–43; Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 122; Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 138–39; Grogan, *Psalms*, 170; Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 638–39; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 277; McCann, "The Book of Psalms," 1082–83; Ross, *A Commentary*, 3:197; Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 460; Weiser, *Psalms*, 648–49; English Translations: ESV, NASB, NIV, NJB, NJPS, NKJV, NRSV. However, NABR reads the all verbs in Ps 101 as present tense; Korean Translations: CBCK, DKV, NCTB, NKR, NKS.

wicked will be destroyed by the king (vv. 6, 8). In Ps 94, the heavenly king YHWH will destroy (94:23[x2]) all the evildoers. The one who does not know the way of God *will not* enter the rest of God (95:11). Psalms 96 and 98 state that in order to judge the world with righteousness, God will come soon (96:13; 98:9). These continuities between Ps 101 and the YHWH-*malak* psalms support the idea that the eschatological overtones also continue in David's question.

Therefore, Ps 101 should not be regarded as a lament. It does not reflect the failure of the Davidic dynasty.²¹ There is no sense of guilt or shame; neither is there a reference to the sin of the Davidic kings. The returned voice of David is neither regretting nor complaining. Rather, it declares the royal will to establish its house by executing דָּקָה and טִשְׁטֵן . Given that these virtues have been depicted as essential for YHWH's kingship in the previous sub-division, we can conclude that David is "instrumental in realizing the vision of the previous psalms (Pss 93–100)."²²

Summary

The reemergence of the superscription dedicated to David in Ps 101 draws the readers to think that the speaker of the psalm is David. David, who has entered YHWH's gates with praise and thanksgiving according to the invitation in Ps 100:4,²³ now pledges responsibility for the people, house, land, and city of YHWH.²⁴ The king pledges himself

²¹ Contra McKelvey, *Moses*, 180, 191–92, 267, 313–15.

²² Hensley, *Covenant*, 237.

²³ Psalms 100 and 101 are closely connected. Psalm 101 picks up the term דָּקָה ("steadfast love") from the last verse of the preceding psalm (Ps 100:5) and uses it in the first verse (Ps 101:1b).

²⁴ Clifford, *Psalms 73–150*, 135; deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 741.

to conduct **מִשְׁפָּט** and **חֶסֶד** as an ideal agent of YHWH's reign. He is the earthly vice-regent through whom the heavenly king will consummate the universal reign envisioned in Pss 93–100.

Psalm 102: The Intercessory Prayer of the King

Translation of Psalm 102

- 1 A prayer of an afflicted person, when faint and pouring out one's lament before YHWH.
- 2 O YHWH, hear my prayer,
Let my cry come to you!
- 3 Do not hide your face from me,
In the day of my distress;
Turn your ear to me,
In the day when I call, quickly answer me!
- 4 For my days vanish²⁵ like smoke,
And my bones are burned like a hearth.
- 5 My heart is struck and withered like grass
For I forgot to eat my bread.
- 6 Because of the sound of my groaning,
My bone clings to my skin.
- 7 I am like an owl in the wilderness,
I have become like a tawny owl²⁶ of waste places.
- 8 I lie awake, and I am
Like a lonely bird on a roof.
- 9 All the day long my enemies revile me;
Those who mock me use my name as a curse.²⁷
- 10 For I eat dust like bread;
I mingle my drink with tears.
- 11 Because of your indignation and your wrath,
For you have lifted me up and cast me down.

²⁵ This is the first occurrence of the verb **בָּלָה** ("to be complete" or "to vanish") after Ps 90:7, 9.

²⁶ *DCH* 4:377.

²⁷ The *niphal* form of **שָׁבַע** with **אֵל** indicates "to curse by means of someone's name." See *DCH* 8:241–42; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 281, 285.

- 12 My days are like lengthening shadow,
And I wither like grass.
- 13 But you, O YHWH, are enthroned forever,
And a memory of you endures from generation to generation.
- 14 You will arise and take mercy upon Zion,
For it is time to be gracious to her, for the time has come.
- 15 For your servants delight in its stones,
And they have compassion on its dust.
- 16 The nations will fear the name of YHWH
And all the kings of the earth your glory.
- 17 For YHWH has rebuilt²⁸ Zion
And appeared in his glory.
- 18 He has regarded the prayer of the destitute
And has not despised their prayers.
- 19 Let this be written for a generation to come,
That a people to be created²⁹ may praise YH.
- 20 For YHWH has looked down from his holy height;
He has looked from heaven at earth,
- 21 To hear the groan of the prisoner,
To set free those condemned to death,
- 22 So that the name of YHWH may be declared in Zion,
And his praise in Jerusalem,
- 23 When peoples are gathered together
And kingdoms to worship to YHWH.
- 24 He has broken my strength³⁰ in the way,
He has shortened my days.
- 25 I say, my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days!
Your years endure for generation after generation.

²⁸ Some English translations and commentators read the suffix conjugations, בָּנָה (“to build/rebuild,” v. 17[16]) and פָּנָה (“to turn/regard,” v. 18[17]), as future tenses. Cf. NIV, NRSV; deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 750. However, they read another suffix conjugation in v. 20[19], שָׁקַף (“to look down”), as past (NIV, NRSV) or present (*NICOT*) tenses, which are inconsistent with their readings of the verbs in v. 17[16] and v. 18[17]. I read these verbs as prophetic perfects, which express the certainty of future events by representing them as they have already happened. See *BHRG* §19.2.5.1.

²⁹ The *niphal* participle of בָּרָא functions here as an adjective expressing a possible state. See Waltke et al., *The Psalms as Christian Lament*, 219; *IBHS* §23.3d.

³⁰ I read כְּחִי (“my strength”) according to the *qere*, instead of the *ketib* כְּחוֹ (“his strength”).

- 26 Long ago you laid a foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of your hands.
- 27 They will perish, but YOU will stand;
All of them will wear out like a garment,
You change them like clothing, and they will pass away.
- 28 But you are the same,
Your years never end.
- 29 The children of your servants will dwell in peace;
Their seed will be established in your presence.

Structure of Psalm 102

Superscription	(v. 1)
Prayer and complaint	(vv. 2–12)
Hope for the future of Zion	(vv. 13–23)
Conclusion	(vv. 24–29)

The Extended Voice of David

The superscription of Ps 102 indicates that this psalm is to be read as “a prayer of an afflicted person.” The last time we found the term תַּפִּלָּה (“a prayer”) used as a title was in Ps 90, where the psalm was attributed to Moses. Whereas a specific figure in Israel’s history, Moses, prayed in Ps 90, now in Ps 102 an unidentified person who is in distress prays. This is a very unique superscription; it is the only case that does not specifically identify the person to whom the psalm is dedicated among the superscriptions that are ascribed to a person or a group.³¹ The non-specific superscription allows anyone who is afflicted to pray this psalm on their own behalf.³²

At the same time, however, the psalm can be read as a prayer of David for several

³¹ All the other superscriptions dedicated to a person or a group indicate their objects of dedication: David, Asaph (Pss 50; 73–83), Solomon (Pss 72 and 127), Herman the Ezrahite (Ps 88), Ethan the Ezrahite (Ps 89), Moses (Ps 90); the sons of Korah (Pss 42; 44–49; 84–85; 87–88). See Jacobson and Jacobson, *Invitation to the Psalms*, 93–94.

³² Jacobson and Jacobson, *Invitation to the Psalms*, 95.

reasons. The place of Ps 102, which is “sandwiched” between Pss 101 and 103, both dedicated to David, might indicate the intention of the compiler(s) to let the readers consider the speaker of Ps 102 to be David.³³ Pointing out that the psalmist’s main concerns are related to Zion/Jerusalem (vv. 14[13], 15[14], 17[16], 22[2]), Erich Zenger argues that they are Davidic/royal.³⁴ All the occurrences of תְּפִלָּה (“a prayer”) in superscriptions are found in the Davidic psalms (17:1[0]; 86:1[0]; 142:1[0]) except for Ps 90:1[0] that is dedicated to Moses.³⁵ In addition, the petitions in Ps 102:2–3 can be called typical Davidic ones because they occur frequently in the Davidic psalms:³⁶

שְׁמָעָה תְּפִלָּתִי

Hear my prayer (Pss 102:2[1] and Pss 39:13[12]; 84:9[8])

אַל־תְּסַתֵּר פְּנֶיךָ

Do not hide your face (Pss 102:3[2] and 27:9; 69:18[17]; 102:3[2]; 143:7; cf. 55:2[1])

הִטָּה אָזְנוֹךָ

Incline your ear (to me) (Pss 102:3[2] and 31:3[2]; 71:2; 86:1; 88:3[2])

מְהֵרָה עֲנֵנִי

Answer me quickly (Pss 102:3[2] and 69:18[17]; 143:7)

These observations support the idea that to read Ps 102 as David’s prayer is the editor’s intention. The voice of David, which returned in Ps 101, continues in Ps 102.

³³ Hensley, *Covenant*, 237; for the “sandwiching technique,” see 42–45.

³⁴ Zenger, “The God of Israel and the Nations,” 182–83. He also contends that the superscription of Ps 102 is inspired by Ps 142:3[2]: “I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him” (NRSV). Psalm 142 has the Davidic superscription: מִשְׁכַּל לְדָוִד בְּהִיזְתּוֹ בְּמַעְרָה תְּפִלָּה (“A Maskil of David. When he was in the cave. A Prayer”). However, this is speculative.

³⁵ Witt, “Hearing Psalm 102 within the Context of the Hebrew Psalter,” 593.

³⁶ The only exceptions are Pss 84 (the sons of Korah) and 88 (Heman the Ezrahite).

Royal Intercessory Prayer

If we regard the psalmist as the royal voice of David continuing since Ps 101, we can immediately detect the change of mood in Ps 102. There is no more the relentless guardian of *דָּקָה* (“steadfast love”) or strong executor of *מִשְׁפָּט* (“justice”). Although the psalm seems to be a personal lament at first sight, what captures the king’s mind is not merely a personal restoration, but also that of Zion and generations to come.³⁷ The psalmist opens the prayer with typical vocabularies of invocation (vv. 2–3[1–2])³⁸ and then describes the distress. The afflictions imposed upon the poet are not only physical (vv. 4–6[3–5]) but also social: “I am like an owl in the wilderness . . . I am like a lonely bird on a roof . . . my enemies revile me” (vv. 7–9[6–8]). The speaker knows all the sufferings are caused by God: “Because of *your* indignation and *your* wrath!” (v. 11a[10a]). Then the psalm abruptly moves from the complaint (vv. 4–12[3–11]) to confidence and petitions (vv. 13–23[12–22]). *וְאַתָּה יְהוָה* (“but you, O YHWH”) indicates the quick shift and clear contrast (v. 13[12]). Verse 14[13] overtly shows that David is interested in the restoration of Zion: “It is time to be gracious to Zion!” The psalmist now pays attention to YHWH and “your servants” (v. 15[14]) rather than the personal afflictions described in the previous part. Declaring trust in God, the royal voice continues expressing concerns for Zion/Jerusalem and for people who will live there: “You will . . . take mercy upon Zion. . . . Your servants . . . have compassion on its dust. . . . Let this be written . . . that a people to be created may praise YHWH. . . . The name of

³⁷ Hensley, *Covenant*, 237.

³⁸ For further discussion of the parallel between the invocation of Ps 102 and those of other Davidic psalms, see Witt, “Hearing Psalm 102 within the Context of the Hebrew Psalter,” 594–95.

YHWH may be declared . . . in Jerusalem . . . when peoples are gathered together” (vv. 14–23[13–22]). Moving from the personal distress, the voice prays for Zion/Jerusalem and a community (probably Israel) based on the trust in YHWH’s eternity. In the last part of the psalm, the psalmist reiterates the same pattern: personal affliction (vv. 24–25a[23–24a]) → confidence in YHWH (vv. 25b–28[24b–27]) → petition for the people (v. 29[28]). The repetition of swift changes from personal affliction to communal one shows that the king does not distinguish them from each other; David identifies himself with his people and with Zion/Jerusalem and prays for them as an intercessor.

Wallace construes Ps 102 as an expression of the inability of human kingship. He argues that the place of this prayer of the king who is in distress right after the king’s vow declared in Ps 101 indicates that “the vow of Ps 101 is never honored.”³⁹ However, the king’s affliction does not necessarily mean dishonored vows. Moreover, the king in Ps 102 is more active than he was in Ps 101. The plea not to hide God’s face (v. 3a[2a]) implies the absence of God and thus echoes the question in Ps 101: “When will you come to me?” (Ps 101:2b) Whereas the vowing king asked God to “come to me” in Ps 101, the praying king now requests that the prayer “come[s] to you” (Ps 102:2b[1b]).⁴⁰ The passive question of “when?” has turned to the active affirmation: “It is time to be gracious to her, for the time has come!” (v. 14b[13b]). After all, YHWH has looked positively on the prayer: “He has regarded the prayer of the destitute / And has not despised their prayers” (v. 18[17]). Of course, the psalmist emphasizes the mercy (רחם)

³⁹ Wallace, *Narrative*, 62.

⁴⁰ Cf. Gundersen, “Davidic Hope,” 189.

and grace (חַנּוּן) of YHWH (v. 14[13]), yet the king's prayer should not be neglected. In Ps 101, it is declared that the wicked will not dwell in the house of the king and not be established before the king (v. 7). The current psalm prays that the king's descendants will dwell in peace and be established in the presence of YHWH (Ps 102:29[28]). There is no clue that this petition of David will fail or be ignored. Rather, the confidence in God that goes through the whole psalm assures that the prayer will be answered by God. It also insinuates that, without the prayer of David, the response of YHWH would not come. Therefore, the psalm is a royal intercessory prayer of the ideal king who has pledged himself to YHWH's דָּקָה and טָשָׁתָהּ in Ps 101 and now equates himself with the city and the people of YHWH.

It should also be noted that Ps 102 has strong connections with Ps 90, the beginning of Book IV. Wilson's observation is helpful:

1. The transient nature of humanity is emphasized (102:3, 11; cf. 90:5–6, 9–10).
2. In contrast, the psalmist sets the eternity of God (102:12, 24–27; cf. 90:1–2, 4).
3. God's wrath is poured out because of his indignation with humanity (102:9–10; cf. 90:7–8).
4. And yet the servants' children "will dwell secure" (102:28; cf. 90:16). YHWH will relieve the distress of his people.⁴¹

The speakers of Pss 90 and 102 contrast the transience of humanity with the eternity of YHWH. They both understand the YHWH has afflicted them (Pss 90:15 and 102:11[10], 24[23]). Among others, Pss 90 and 102 are both titled as תְּפִלָּה ("a prayer"). Psalm 102,

⁴¹ Wilson, *Editing*, 218.

the prayer of the ideal king David, responds to the prayer of the ideal intercessor Moses. Also, McCann observes several links between Ps 102 and Ps 89: (1) YHWH's shortening (קצר) of the days (ימים) of the psalmist (Pss 102:24b[23b]; 89:46a[45a]); (2) YHWH's hiding (סתר) (Pss 102:3[2]; 89:47[46]); (3) YHWH's wrath upon the psalmist (Pss 102:11[10]; 89:47[46]); (4) the transience of humanity (and the king) (Pss 102:4–5[3–4], 12[11]; 89:48–49[47–48]); and (5) the taunt (חרף) of the enemies (אויבים) (Pss 102:9[8]; 89:51–52[50–51]).⁴² These links allow the readers to consider Ps 102 as David's response to Ps 89; as Moses prayed for David and Israel in 90, now David prays for his people (and himself) in Ps 102.

Summary

The parallels between Pss 90 and 102 draw the readers to find similarities in their speakers: Moses and David. Moses prayed for Israel in Ps 90, and in Ps 102 David is doing exactly what Moses did: praying for the people of God. Whereas David was a beneficiary of Moses' intercessory prayer in Ps 90, now he becomes an intercessor like Moses. In Ps 101 David, as the ideal king, pledges that he will protect the people of YHWH and Zion by executing YHWH's חֶסֶד ("steadfast love") and מִשְׁפָּט ("justice"). As the ideal intercessor like Moses, he prays for the people of God in the presence of YHWH. The imagery of the ideal king and the ideal intercessor are amalgamated here.

⁴² McCann, "The Book of Psalms," 1088.

Psalm 103: The Praise of the Steadfast Love and Mercy

Translation of Psalm 103

1 Of David.

Bless YHWH, O my soul!⁴³
All my inmost parts, his holy name!

2 Bless YHWH, O my soul!
Do not forget all his benefits!

3 The one who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,

4 Who redeems your life from the pit,
Who crowns you with steadfast love and mercies,

5 Who satisfies your life⁴⁴ with good things;
Your youth renews itself like an eagle.

6 YHWH does righteousness,
And justice for all the oppressed.

7 He made known his ways to Moses,
His deeds to the people of Israel.

8 Merciful and gracious is YHWH;
Slow to anger⁴⁵ and abundant in steadfast love.

9 He will not always accuse;
He will not remain angry forever.

10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins;
He has not repaid us according to our iniquities.⁴⁶

⁴³ The noun נַפְשִׁי has a wide range of meaning: “neck, throat, desire, breath, life, being,” etc. With the 1st common singular pronominal suffix, the term refers to the whole self, the traditional rendering “my soul” somewhat reduces its meaning. Nevertheless, I retain “my soul” due to the parallel with כָּל-קִרְבִּי (“all my inmost parts”) in v. 1c.

⁴⁴ The noun עֲדָרְךָ means “your jewelry/ornament,” which does not fit the context. LXX has ἐπιθυμίαν σου (“your desire”). I adopt one of the suggestions by the editors of BHS: עֲדָרְךָ (“your existence/lifetime”). This rendering fits well in the context and with a slight emendation. See also Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 26; cf. *DCH* 6:294.

⁴⁵ The adjective אָרֶךְ is the ms construct of אָרֶךְ (“long”), thus אָרֶךְ אַפַּיִם is rendered as “long of anger,” that is “slow to anger.” See *DCH* 1:379–80.

⁴⁶ Verses 10–11 are good examples of grammatical parallelism. The two lines in each verse are syntactically and morphologically identical:

negative particle (לֹא)—preposition (לְ) + temporal noun—verb (*qal yiqtol* 3ms) (v. 9)

negative particle (לֹא)—preposition (בְּ)+noun+possessive suffix (1cpl)—verb (*qal qatal* 3ms)—

- 11 For as high as heavens are above the earth,
So mighty is his steadfast love upon those who fear him.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west,
So he has put our sins transgressions away from us.
- 13 As a father has mercy upon children,
YHWH has mercy for those who fear him,
- 14 For HE knows our formation;
He remembers⁴⁷ that we are dust.
- 15 A human being,⁴⁸ like grass are its days;
Like a flower of the field, so it blossoms.
- 16 When the wind passes over it, and it is no more,
Its place acknowledges it no longer.
- 17 But steadfast love of YHWH is from everlasting
To everlasting upon those who fear him,
And his righteousness is for the children's children,
- 18 For those who keep his covenant,⁴⁹
And for those who remember his precepts, to do them.
- 19 YHWH, in the heavens, has established his throne
And his kingdom rules over all.
- 20 Bless YHWH, you his messengers,
You, mighty ones of strength who do his word,
To listen to the voice of his word!
- 21 Bless YHWH, all his hosts,
His servants who do his will!
- 22 Bless YHWH, all his works,
In all the places of his dominion.
Bless YHWH, O my soul!

indirect object (preposition + 1cpl suffix) (v. 10)

These parallelisms heighten the focus on the forgiveness of YHWH. See Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 31–32, 141.

⁴⁷ The form of רָכַז is a passive participle. However, it has an active sense in this case. See Joüon §50e.

⁴⁸ The noun בְּנֵי אָדָם (“an individual human being”) is used as a collective sense in this context. See DCH 334–35.

⁴⁹ LXX has $\tau\acute{\omega}\nu \epsilon\acute{\nu}\tau\omicron\lambda\acute{\omega}\nu \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ (“his commandments”).

Structure of Psalm 103

Davidic superscription	(v. 1a)
Call to praise	(vv. 1b–5)
Mighty steadfast love of YHWH	(vv. 6–14)
The transience of humanity and eternal steadfast love	(vv. 15–18)
Call to praise	(vv. 19–22)

Psalm 103 is one of the two psalms that have the Davidic superscriptions (דָּוִד לְיְהוָה “Of David”; cf. Ps 101). It shares the theme of divine eternity (Ps 102:13[12], 25b–26[24b–25], 28[27]; 103:17) and human transience (Ps 102:4–5[3–4], 12[11], 25b[24b], 27[26]; 103:15–16) with Ps 102. Both psalms employ the imagery of “grass” to express the ephemerality of humanity (עֵשֶׂב in Ps 102:5[4], 12[11] and תִּצְיָר in Ps 103:15). These links between Pss 103 and 102, along with the Davidic superscriptions of Pss 103 and 101, make Pss 101–103 a “Davidic triad.”⁵⁰

After the royal pledge to YHWH’s steadfast love and justice/judgment in Ps 101 and the intercessory prayer appealing to the mercy (רַחֵם) and grace (חַנּוּן) of YHWH in Ps 102, the Davidic triad culminates with the praises of YHWH’s steadfast love and mercy in Ps 103. The cognates of רַחֵם (“to love” or “to have compassion on”) occur six times within Book 4 and four of them are in Ps 103 (vv. 4, 8, 13[x2]; cf. Ps 102:14[13]; 106:46). In these praises of the steadfast love and mercy of God, readers can find a response to the hope of praise anticipated in Ps 102:16[15], 19[18], 22–23[21–22].⁵¹ Psalm 103 assures its readers that YHWH will accomplish the ideal reign pledged in Ps 101 and the restoration of Zion/Jerusalem anticipated in Ps 102 through steadfast love

⁵⁰ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 28.

⁵¹ McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 1091; Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 440–41.

and mercy in spite of human transience.

Appeal to YHWH's own Character Revealed to Moses

It is noticeable that the psalmist employs the terms and expressions used in God's self-revelation to Moses in Exod 34:

YHWH! YHWH! A God *compassionate and gracious* (רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן), *slow to anger* (אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם), *abundant in steadfast love* (וְרַב־חַסֵּד) and faithfulness (Exod 34:6).

Merciful and gracious (רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן) is YHWH;
Slow to anger (אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם) *and abundant in steadfast love* (וְרַב־חַסֵּד) (Ps 103:8).

Suggesting YHWH's character as a response to the hope for restoration in Ps 102, the psalmist cites the "character creed,"⁵² which demonstrates the divine attributes and reoccurs throughout the Old Testament,⁵³ and pinpoints the name of the one to whom the revelation was given first: "He made known his ways to Moses" (Ps 103:7a). It should be noted that this revelation of God was given according to Moses' request to show him YHWH's glory (Exod 33:18) after the golden calf incident (Exod 32) and Moses' intercession (Exod 33).⁵⁴ The Davidic psalmist deliberately recalls the incident where Israel was about to be consumed by YHWH's burning wrath (Exod 32:8). Despite Israel's "great sin" (חַטָּאת גְּדוֹלָה, Exod 32:21), YHWH forgave them and restored their status as God's people. Remembering this experience of forgiveness and restoration, the Davidic speaker suggests God's forgiving character as the solution for Israel's restoration:

⁵² I borrowed this expression from Boda, *Heartbeat*, 27.

⁵³ Boda, *Heartbeat*, 44–51, 155.

⁵⁴ Boda, *Heartbeat*, 43.

YHWH's נְקֻמָּה (“steadfast love”) and רַחֵם (“mercy”). YHWH is crowned with steadfast love and mercy (Ps 103:4). In spite of Israel’s sin, YHWH will not repay them according to their iniquities (Ps 103:10), because God’s steadfast love is mighty (v. 11). Just like a father has compassion (רַחֵם) for his children, the heavenly father’s mercy will be shown upon those who fear YHWH. Although human beings are ephemeral, the steadfast love of God will be everlasting (vv. 15–18). The psalmist reassures the audience that they will be restored through the steadfast love and mercy of God just like Israel once was at the golden calf incident.

Emphasis on the Torah

The Davidic voice does not forget to emphasize the Torah. God’s forgiveness based on God’s character is not—to use the expression coined by Dietrich Bonhoeffer—“cheap grace.”⁵⁵ YHWH’s steadfast love will be great עַל־יְרֵאָיו “upon those who fear him” (v. 11). YHWH will show mercy עַל־יְרֵאָיו (v. 13). The steadfast love and mercy of God will be everlasting עַל־יְרֵאָיו (v. 17). The repetition of עַל־יְרֵאָיו overtly shows the psalmist’s emphasis on obedience to God. The fear of God does not merely indicate a fearful emotion; it is rather an “attitude expressing itself in the actions.”⁵⁶ In the last calls to praise (vv. 20–22) which form an *inclusio* with vv. 1b–2, the psalmist mentions those who do God’s word (v. 20b), who listen to God’ voice (v. 20c), and who do God’s will (v. 21b). Moreover, it is confirmed that steadfast love and mercy will be forever with those

⁵⁵ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 47.

⁵⁶ Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 174.

who keep God's covenant and remember God's precepts, to do them (v. 18). The reminiscence of Moses and the reference to God's ways known to him (v. 7) also call to mind the teaching given to Israel through Moses: the Torah. Focusing on YHWH's steadfast love and mercy, the Davidic psalmist also pays attention to the importance of obeying the Torah.

God's everlasting steadfast love gives hope to readers for restoration, yet mercy never exempts them from the "fear of God." Mark Boda notes,

Psalm 103 celebrates God's merciful forgiveness for sin (v. 3), thanking him for not dealing with his people according to their sins (v. 10) but instead removing these sins as far as the east is from the west (v. 12). However, on three occasions in the composition the psalmist reminds his audience that such mercy is afforded only to those who fear Yahweh (vv. 11, 13, 17), that is, according to verse 18, "those who keep His covenant / And remember His precepts to do them." Here obedience, and thus repentance, is not the expected result of God's grace . . . but rather the prerequisite for it.⁵⁷

It is interesting to note that the speaker mentions the transience of humanity (vv. 15–16). At this point, readers might face a dilemma. Thanking YHWH for forgiveness, one might want to fear God by obeying the Torah. However, the reference to the vulnerability of humanity implies that one will never be able to keep the covenant perfectly.

The Solution for the Dilemma: The Ideal David and Moses

The solution for this dilemma can be found (again) in YHWH's steadfast love and mercy. The foundation of the hope for restoration is the steadfast love that will not repay readers according to their iniquities (v. 10). However, the obligation of remembering and obeying

⁵⁷ Boda, *Return to Me*, 119.

God's precepts is still in force. The problem is the fallibility of humanity. Human beings are like grass (v. 15); when the wind blows against them, they will be blown away (v. 16; cf. Ps 1:4). But God already knows that "we are dust" (Ps 103:14). The steadfast love and mercy of God reappear as the solution to this problem; they are the solution not only for the iniquities of individual human beings but also for the weakness of humanity. Readers can find the details of the solution in the context of the Davidic triad (Pss 101–103). In the first psalm of the triad, the ideal king vowed that he would execute the steadfast love and justice of God. In the following psalm, the king interceded with YHWH on behalf of his people, as Moses did in the incident of the golden calf. As the prayer of Moses had been heard by YHWH in Exod 32–34, royal prayer merged with Moses' voice will be heard, too. Then readers might anticipate someone who executes the steadfast love and prays for them. This one will realize YHWH's justice by obeying the Torah and will intercede on behalf of those who want to fear YHWH but are not able to do it.⁵⁸

Pointing out the changes of the recipients in Ps 103 from the individual (vv. 1–5) to the community (vv. 6–4), then to humanity (vv. 15–18), Hee Suk Kim argues that Ps 103 is an example of the "democratization of the kingship."⁵⁹ He contends that the psalmist of Ps 103 switches the focus of YHWH's steadfast love from the leader/king of the community to the community of YHWH-fearers itself.⁶⁰ However, it should not be overlooked that in Exod 34:6, as Kim himself rightly observes, "YHWH's covenantal fidelity was given to a community (Israel) *through an individual leader* of the community

⁵⁸ As Num 20 reports, Moses was not perfect. Hence, the one who will perfectly obey the Torah should be idealized Moses. See Chapter 5.

⁵⁹ Kim, "Exodus 34.6," 48.

⁶⁰ Kim, "Exodus 34.6," 43, 47–48.

(Moses).”⁶¹ This is also the case in our present context of Pss 101–103. It is true, however, that the recipients of YHWH’s steadfast love and mercy expand from an individual to humanity. This reflects the universal nature of the kingship of YHWH demonstrated in Pss 93–100. Given the context of the emergence of the ideal leader in Pss 101–103, however, the focus of this expansion lies not on the extension itself but on the mediator of it. Therefore, the one suggested as the solution in Ps 103 plays the roles of both Moses and David. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, this one is neither the Davidized Moses nor the Mosesified David. The one will be the amalgamation of the ideal David and the ideal Moses.

Summary

Recalling YHWH’s self-manifestation given at the golden calf incident, the Davidic voice convinces the audience of YHWH’s restoration. The psalm also emphasizes the essentiality of obedience to Torah. The restoration will be upon those who fear YHWH, but the theme of human fallibility intimates that human beings are not able to properly fear YHWH. Nevertheless, the psalm ends with deep confidence in YHWH. The solution to this dilemma is found in the context of Pss 101–103.

Conclusion

Psalms 101–103 form a Davidic triad which contains explicit Davidic overtones. David, who once seemed to be abandoned in Ps 89, is now not only fully reinstated but also

⁶¹ Kim, “Exodus 34.6,” 47 (emphasis mine).

somewhat idealized. He pledges himself to become an ideal vice-regent of YHWH who executes YHWH's steadfast love and justice/judgment in the world (Ps 101). In Ps 102, the king prays for his people, beseeching YHWH's mercy (רחם) and grace (חנן) for them, as an ideal intercessor like Moses. As if his prayer has been heard by YHWH, the royal voice praises YHWH's steadfast love and mercy in Ps 103. The memory of YHWH's self-revelation to Moses functions in two ways: (1) reassuring the audience that YHWH's steadfast love and mercy will be poured out to them; (2) implying that the steadfast love and mercy will be given through a Moses-like individual. The Davidic context of Pss 101–103 reveals that the individual will also be a David-like one. This amalgamation of David and Moses suggests that the dilemma between the essentiality of obedience and the fallibility of humanity will be resolved by the one who resembles both the ideal David and the ideal Moses.

CHAPTER 5: EXPECTATION FOR THE IDEAL ONE (PSALMS 104–106)

Now we turn to the last section of Book IV that consists of three relatively long psalms dealing with the history of nature and Israel. Psalm 104 blesses YHWH for the (ongoing) history of creation. Psalms 105 and 106 recite the history of Israel in terms of YHWH's great works for them and their repetitive rebellion against YHWH. These psalms all end with "hallelujah!" (Pss 104:35; 105:45; 106:48), which, according to Wilson, "mark the conclusion of Psalter segments."¹ Thus Hossfeld and Zenger call this group the "Hallelujah triad," marked by Hallelujahs at the end of each psalm.² Creach observes thematic coherence in these psalms concerning YHWH's great works and acts.³ David Gundersen argues that Ps 104 functions as an introduction to a psalm series that recounts YHWH's "faithful and forgiving rule": "He rules over creation (104), led his chosen people from Abraham through the exodus (105), and patiently forgave and redeemed them from the exodus through the exile (106)."⁴

Some scholars, however, have noted the connections between Ps 104 and its preceding psalm Ps 103. Zenger, for instance, points out that the common "motifs of 'satisfying with good' (Pss 103:5; 104:28) and of the 'renewal' of life by YHWH (Pss

¹ Wilson, *Editing*, 186.

² Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 39–40.

³ Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 99.

⁴ Gundersen, "Davidic Hope," 246.

103:5; 104:30)” might show evidence of redaction.⁵ He also goes on to say,

The two psalms are linked to one another by motif at their “seams.” Psalm 103 closes in 103:19–22 with the image of YHWH who has erected the royal throne in heaven and is there surrounded by YHWH’s “messengers” and “ministers” (משרתיו). With precisely this image Ps 104:2–4 then begins anew, and in this connection it cannot be by chance that “the ministers” of YHWH appear only in these two psalms in the entire psalm book.⁶

Wallace also observes that Ps 104 begins with the last phrase of Ps 103: בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי בְּרַכֵּי יְהוָה (“Bless, O my soul, bless YHWH!” [Pss 103:22c; 104:1a]).⁷ Moreover, Ps 103 invites all the works of YHWH (כָּל־מַעֲשָׂיו “all his works” [103:22a]) to praise YHWH, and Ps 104 praises the innumerableness of YHWH’s works (מַה־רַבּוֹ מַעֲשָׂיו “how many your works are” [104:24a]).⁸ Given these double connections of Ps 104 with Ps 103 and with Pss 105–106, we can conclude that Ps 104 functions as a “hinge” between the Davidic collection (Pss 101–104) and the historical collection closing Book IV (Pss 104–106).⁹ To use Wallace’s expression, it is a “nice transition psalm.”¹⁰

We begin our investigation with this “hinge” or “transition.” The psalmist portrays YHWH’s sovereignty and faithful sustainment over the whole creation. YHWH’s steadfast providing and sustaining acts have been revealed throughout Israel’s history (Ps 105). On the other hand, Israel has repeatedly failed in keeping the covenant of YHWH (Ps 106). Nevertheless, there is still hope because YHWH remembers the covenant, and shows compassion according to the abundance of YHWH’s steadfast love (Ps 106:45). In

⁵ Zenger, “God of Israel’s Reign,” 185.

⁶ Zenger, “God of Israel’s Reign,” 185.

⁷ Wallace, *Narrative*, 70.

⁸ Wallace, *Narrative*, 70.

⁹ Gundersen, “Davidic Hope,” 245.

¹⁰ Wallace, *Narrative*, 70.

this chapter, we will explore the “hope” that these last psalms of Book IV suggest.

Psalm 104: YHWH the Creator and Sustainer

Translation of Psalm 104

1 Bless YHWH, O my soul!

YHWH, my God, you are very great;
You are clothed with majesty and splendor,

2 Surrounding yourself with light like a mantle,
Stretching out the heavens like a tent,

3 The¹¹ one who lays the beams of his chambers on the waters,
Who makes the clouds his chariot,
Who rides on the wings of the wind,

4 Making the winds his messengers,
Burning fire his ministers.

5 He has set¹² the earth on its foundations;
It shall not be shaken forever and ever.

6 You covered it with the deep like a garment;
Above the mountains, the waters stood.

7 At your rebuke, they fled,
At¹³ the sound of your thunder they hurried away.

8 They ascended the mountains, they descended valleys,
To the place that¹⁴ you appointed for them.

9 You set a boundary that they cannot pass,
So that never again they cover the earth.

10 You are the one who makes springs gush forth into the valleys;
Between the mountains, they flow.

¹¹ While the participles in vv. 2 and 4 lack the definite articles, מְקַרְרָה in v. 3 has its article. In 4QPs all the participles in vv. 2–4 lack the articles. I retain the MT.

¹² Some commentators read the participle form יִסֵּד instead of יָסַד in the MT, according to LXX and 4QPs. deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 771; Ross, *A Commentary*, 3:242. However, this emendation is not necessary. Although it is confusing, the frequent shifts in addresser are not rare in ancient texts.

¹³ In this case, מִן indicates the grounds of an event. See *BHRG* §39.14.4.b.

¹⁴ The demonstrative pronoun הַיָּמִן introduces a relative clause. See *BHRG* §36.3.3.1.

- 11 They give drink to all the beasts of the field;
The wild donkeys quench their thirst.
- 12 Above them the birds of the sky dwell;
Among the branches, they sound out their voice.
- 13 You are the one who irrigates the mountains from his lofty
chambers,
From the fruit of your works, the earth is satisfied;
- 14 You are the one who causes grass to grow for the cattle,
And plants for the work of humanity,
In order to bring forth food from the earth.
- 15 And the wine to gladden the human heart;
To make the face shine with oil,
And bread to sustain the human heart.
- 16 The trees of YHWH are sated with water;¹⁵
The cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
- 17 Where birds make their nests,
The stork has her home in the junipers.
- 18 The high mountains are for wild goats;
The rocks are a shelter for the badgers.
- 19 He made the moon for the appointed times;
The sun knows its setting time.
- 20 You bring on¹⁶ darkness and it is¹⁷ night,
Wherein all the beasts of the forest crawl.
- 21 The lions roar for prey,
And seek their food from God.
- 22 The sun rises; they return;
And they lie down in their dens.
- 23 A human being goes out to work,
And to labor until the evening.
- 24 How many your works are, O YHWH!
You have made them all with wisdom.
The earth is full of your creatures.

¹⁵ Cf. *DCH* 8:106.

¹⁶ The verb *שׁוּב* denotes "to bring into existence." *DCH* 8:343.

¹⁷ The MT has the short form of *הָיָה* ("to be" or "to become") which typically denotes an indirect command (jussive). However, it is also used in non-jussive contexts especially in poetic sections. *BHRG* §19.3.6, 19.4.

- 25 This is the sea, great and immeasurably wide;
There are moving things, beyond number,
Living things, small and great.
- 26 There go the ships,
Leviathan which you formed to play with it.
- 27 All of them look to you,
To give their food in due season.
- 28 You give it to them, they gather it;
You open your hand, they are satisfied with good.
- 29 You hide your face, they are terrified;
You take back their breath, they die.
And to their dust, they return.
- 30 You send forth your spirit, they are created;
And you renew the face of the earth.
- 31 May the glory of YHWH be forever!
May YHWH rejoice in his works!
- 32 The one who looks down the earth and it trembles,
He touches the mountains, and they smoke!
- 33 I will sing to YHWH as long as I live;
I will make music for my God as long as I exist.¹⁸
- 34 May my prayer be pleasing to him,
I will rejoice in YHWH.
- 35 May the sinners vanish from the earth,
And may the wicked be no more.

Bless YHWH, O my soul!
Hallelujah!

Structure of Psalm 104

Opening call to praise YHWH	(v. 1a)
YHWH the creator of the heavens	(vv. 1b–4)
YHWH the creator of the earth	(vv. 5–9)
YHWH the sustainer of all creatures	(vv. 10–18)
YHWH the creator of time	(vv. 19–23)
YHWH the ruler over the land and the sea	(vv. 24–26)
YHWH the ruler over life and death	(vv. 27–30)

¹⁸ The term $\pi\iota\upsilon$ indicates an unspecified long duration. See *BHRG* §40.37.6.

Psalmist's will to please YHWH
Closing call to praise YHWH

(vv. 31–35b)
(v. 35c–d)

Ps 104 embodies the “quintessential creation psalm.”¹⁹ Given the close connections between Pss 104 and 103 discussed above and the Davidic superscription of Ps 103, we can hear the Davidic voice from Ps 104 once again. Recalling the natural history of the world, the royal voice praises YHWH the creator and sustainer of the universe. Since the psalmist connects natural history with human history, anticipating a world without evil in the last stanza, the psalm can be understood to deal with *Heilsgeschichte* (“salvation history”).²⁰

YHWH the Creator

After the opening call, which occurs both at the beginning and at the end of Pss 104 and 103, the speaker celebrates YHWH's works (מַעֲשֵׂהוּ [cf. v. 24]) in the natural history since the creation. While Ps 103 emphasized the steadfast love of YHWH, Ps 104 focuses on YHWH's greatness (גָּדֹל), majesty (הִוָּד), and splendor (הִדְרָה) (v. 1b–c).²¹ These terms were used to describe YHWH's grandeur as the king of the world in the YHWH-*malak* psalms: גָּדֹל (Pss 95:3[x2]; 96:4; 99:2, 3), and הִוָּד and הִדְרָה (Ps 96:6). Also, these psalms connect the theme of YHWH's kingship with the divine creative work (93:1; 95:3–5; 96:5; cf. 103:19).²² Thus, the motif of YHWH's great creation resounds with the theme of Pss 93–100: “YHWH reigns!”

¹⁹ Futato, “The Book of Psalms,” 330.

²⁰ Deissler, “The Theology of Psalm 104,” 31.

²¹ deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 774.

²² Futato, “The Book of Psalms,” 331.

By depicting the creation of the world as YHWH's great work, the psalmist portrays YHWH as the powerful creator-king. YHWH subdued the chaotic waters (vv. 6b–8), established the divine residence on them (v. 2b), and set a boundary before them to prevent their return (v. 9). The creation story in vv. 1b–9 reflects the divine warrior imagery of the Canaanite religious tradition.²³ The warrior image of YHWH who rides on the clouds and the wings of the wind (v. 3b–c) and rebukes the waters with thunder (v. 7) draws the readers back to the theophany event at Mount Sinai,²⁴ as well as its playback in Ps 97. Yet, it should be noted that the creator-king is demonstrated to be even more powerful than in Ps 97. The psalmist describes the primordial aquatic monster Leviathan as YHWH's "rubber ducky":²⁵ "Leviathan which you formed to play with it" (v. 26b). The formidable monster is not merely tamed but formed to be a "plaything" of YHWH.²⁶ This "demythologization of the sea monster"²⁷ functions as a device to celebrate YHWH's sovereignty as the creator-king over the universe.²⁸

YHWH the Sustainer

The statement that Leviathan is formed by YHWH indicates that it is contingent on YHWH's sustaining power. According to Brown, "Overturning the traditional depiction of Leviathan as an eminently fear-inspiring creature, the psalmist . . . has incorporated the sea monster into the fold of God's life-sustaining order."²⁹ As the creator of time (vv. 19–

²³ Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 162.

²⁴ Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 168–69.

²⁵ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 17.

²⁶ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 17, 53–54.

²⁷ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 17, 53–54.

²⁸ Wallace, *Narrative*, 72.

²⁹ Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 161.

23), YHWH, according to the appointed time, faithfully provides vital necessities for all creatures: shelter, water, food, wine, oil, bread, and so on (vv. 10–28). As the sustainer-king, YHWH satisfies all creatures and renews the whole creation (vv. 28–30).

The Problem Still Remaining: Sin

Celebrating YHWH's mighty kingship as the creator and sustainer, the psalmist ends the psalm by expressing its will to praise YHWH forever: "I will sing to YHWH as long as I live; I will make music for my God as long as I exist" (v. 33). At the end of the psalm, the psalmist adds a comment which seems awkward in this creation hymn: "May the sinners vanish from the earth, / And may the wicked be no more" (v. 35a–b). However, this verse recalls the royal pledge in Ps 101. There the Davidic voice vowed that it would "destroy all the wicked of the land" (v. 8a). While Ps 101 expresses the king's will to eradicate evil from the world and Ps 104 demonstrates the king's desire for vanishing the wicked, they both paradoxically reveal that evil still exists. These verses show that the problem of sin still remains even under the rule of the mighty king. Levenson rightly observes,

In a worldview in which even Leviathan was formed for benign purposes and continues to delight his creator, only humanity is capable of posing a challenge to God. The recognition of the possibility of human evil and its stubborn persistence suggests how humanity may participate in the grand cosmogonic drama. . . . The implication of this discordant last verse is that the bright and cheerful vision of the created order which has been the psalmist's subject is not fully in force so long as people resist the creator's will. The great struggle for the altogether good world has moved from cosmogonic myth into the human community and perhaps the human heart as well.

Accordingly, the next psalms move from natural history to human history. The desire for the annihilation of evil betrays the fact that the problem of sin must be dealt with in

humanity itself.

Summary

Ps 104 celebrates YHWH's wonderful works that have been done in natural history. YHWH is the heavenly king-creator and king-sustainer of the world. Nevertheless, the problem of human disobedience threatening the whole creation must be removed. Keeping this psalm's praise of the creator and sustainer in mind, the readers can expect that YHWH will sustain the creation by providing a solution to the problem. The context of Pss 101–104 implies that the solution will be an earthly agent of YHWH, the ideal one as the result of the amalgamation of David and Moses.

Psalm 105: YHWH's Faithfulness in History

Translation of Psalm 105

- 1 Give thanks to YHWH! Call out his name!
Make his deeds known among the peoples!
- 2 Sing to him, sing praise to him,
Tell³⁰ of all his wonderful acts!
- 3 Glory in his holy name;
Let the heart of those who seek YHWH rejoice!
- 4 Seek YHWH and his strength;
Seek his face continually.
- 5 Remember his wonders that he has done,
His miracles, the judgments of his mouth.
- 6 O seed of Abraham, his servant,
Children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

³⁰ The verb *דָּבַר* is associated with a verbal activity, rather than mental. See *DCH* 8:124–25.

- 7 HE, YHWH, is our God;
In all the earth are his judgments.
- 8 He remembers his covenant forever,
The word he commanded for a thousand generations,
- 9 Which he made with Abraham,
And his oath to Isaac.
- 10 And he established it for Jacob as a statute,
For Israel as an eternal covenant.
- 11 Saying, "To you, I will give the land of Canaan,
As the allotted portion, your inheritance."
- 12 When they were few in number,
Few, and sojourners in it,
- 13 And wandering from nation to nation,
From one kingdom to another people,
- 14 He did not allow anyone to oppress them,
But he rebuked kings for their sake.
- 15 "Do not touch my anointed ones,
And my prophets, do not harm."
- 16 Then he called famine on the land;
Every staff of bread, he broke.
- 17 He sent a man before them;
Joseph was sold as a slave.
- 18 They afflicted his feet³¹ with a fetter;
His neck was put in iron.
- 19 Until his word came to be,
Until the word of YHWH tested³² him.
- 20 A king sent and released him;
A ruler of the peoples freed him.
- 21 He set him the lord over his house,
And ruler over all his property,

³¹ The *qere* reads the singular form רגלו ("his foot") instead of the plural form רגליו ("his feet") of the *ketib*, probably to match the number of the singular noun כַּבֵּל ("fetter"). However, this seems unnecessary because the number of these terms does not necessarily need to be matched.

³² The LXX reads ἐπύρωσεν (literally, "to burn") for צִרְפָּתָהוּ. It probably denotes "to purify/refine/test." *DCH* 7:164.

- 22 To instruct³³ his princes as he pleased³⁴
And teach his elders.
- 23 Then Israel came to Egypt;
And Jacob lived as a sojourner in the land of Ham.
- 24 YHWH made his people very fruitful;
He made them stronger than their foes.
- 25 He turned their heart to hate his people,
To conspire against his servants.
- 26 He sent Moses his servant,
And Aaron, who he had chosen.
- 27 They set among them the word of his signs,
And miracles in the land of Ham.
- 28 He sent darkness and made it dark;³⁵
And they did not rebel³⁶ against his word.
- 29 He turned their waters into blood,
And he killed their fish.
- 30 Their land swarmed with frogs,
Even in the chambers of their kings!
- 31 He spoke and a swarm of flies came,
Gnats throughout their whole territory.
- 32 He turned their rain into hail,
flaming fire over their land.
- 33 He struck down their vines and their fig trees,
And shattered the trees in their territory.
- 34 He spoke and locusts came,
Grasshoppers without number.
- 35 And they devoured all the vegetation in their land;
They ate up the fruit of their soil.

³³ The MT has לָאָסַר (“to bind”) which seems not to fit the context. LXX reads παιδεύσαι (“to instruct”) which fits the parallelism with יָחַס (“to teach”).

³⁴ The Hebrew expression בְּנַפְשׁוֹ means “in his life,” or “in himself.” In this context, it can probably be rendered as “as he pleased.”

³⁵ The hiphil form of חָשַׁךְ denotes “to make dark.” Cf. *DCH* 3:331; *HALOT* 1:361.

³⁶ This clause seems disconnected from the context. LXX omits the negative particle לֹא to make it clear, and so many modern translations do (CBCK, NABR, NJB, NKRV, NKSV, NRSV): “the Egyptians rebelled against YHWH’s word.” NIV and NJPS and render the clause as a rhetorical question: “did they not defy His word?” However, the MT can be retained if we construe the subject as Moses and Aaron as in vv. 26–27. See Ross, *A Commentary*, 3:269; McKelvey, *Moses*, 225–26.

- 36 He struck down every firstborn in the land,
The first of all their strength.
- 37 He brought them out with silver and gold,
And among his tribes there was no one who stumbled.
- 38 Egypt rejoiced when they departed,
For their dread had fallen on them.
- 39 He spread out a cloud as covering,
And a fire to give light at night.
- 40 He gave orders,³⁷ and he brought quails,
And he satisfied them with the bread of heaven.
- 41 He opened the rock and water gushed;
They flowed forth in the desert like a river.
- 42 For he remembered his holy word,
To Abraham his servant,
- 43 He brought out his people with rejoicing,
With shouts of joy his chosen ones.
- 44 He gave them the lands of the nations,
And they inherited the fruit the people's toil.
- 45 So that they would keep his statutes,
And keep his instructions.
Hallelujah!

Structure of Psalm 105

Call to worship YHWH	(vv. 1–7)
YHWH's faithfulness to the Patriarchs	(vv. 8–15)
YHWH's faithfulness to Joseph	(vv. 16–23)
YHWH's faithfulness in the land of Egypt	(vv. 24–38)
YHWH's faithfulness in the wilderness	(vv. 39–41)
Conclusion	(vv. 42–45)

While Ps 104 speaks of the genesis of the universe, Ps 105 recalls that of Israel; in both cases, the emphasis is on YHWH's sovereignty and faithfulness.³⁸ Schaefer explains the

³⁷ The verb *שאל* is usually understood as "he asked." The LXX reads *ἤτησαν* ("they asked"). However, I retain the MT, following Clines' suggestion "to give orders" for *שאל*. See *DCH* 8:215.

³⁸ Wallace, *Narrative*, 77.

relationship of Ps 104 and Pss 105–106 as follows: “Psalm 104 is to Psalms 105–106 as Genesis 1–11 is to the rest of the Torah, creation and the history of God’s people.”³⁹

Recounting Israel’s history from the period the Patriarchs to the entrance into the promised land, Ps 105 celebrates the power of YHWH that created a nation despite many obstacles, and the trustworthiness that remembered the covenantal promises given to the servants of YHWH. The might and faithfulness of YHWH anticipate that the vision stated in the last stanza will be accomplished: “He gave them the lands . . . / So that they would keep his statutes, / And keep his instructions” (vv. 44–45).

The Faithfulness of YHWH

The psalmist recites Israel’s history according to their ancestors’ movement: Canaan (vv. 8–15)—Egypt (vv. 16–38)—the wilderness (vv. 39–41)—the promised land (vv. 42–45). In each stage of history, the focus is on עֲלֵלוֹתָיו (“his deeds” [v. 1]) or נִפְלְאוֹתָיו (“his wonders” [vv. 2, 5]). These expressions are “shorthand phrase[s]” indicating what God has graciously done in history.⁴⁰ The psalmist also emphasizes that YHWH has done all these works for Israel according to the covenantal promises made with them. Keywords concerning YHWH’s faithfulness to the covenants occur throughout the psalm: ברית (“covenant” [vv. 8, 10]), שבועה (“oath” [vv. 9]), דבר (“word/promise” [vv. 8, 19, 27, 42]), and זכר (“to remember” by YHWH [vv. 8, 42]). Rolf Jacobson rightly argues, “The point of the historical recitals, of course, is not what happened but that *what happened was*

³⁹ Schaefer, *Psalms*, 259.

⁴⁰ Jacobson, “Faithfulness,” 121.

God's doing and that what God did once has ongoing import."⁴¹ By remembering YHWH's deeds done for Israel in history, the psalm gives confidence to the readers that YHWH of their ancestors will restore them; YHWH has been, still is, and will be faithful to the covenants made with them forever.

The Servants of YHWH

Scholars point out that the psalm's central message can be found in the last stanza: YHWH created Israel so that they may observe YHWH's statutes and instructions.⁴² The psalm also mentions YHWH's many servants in history: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron. While the psalmist's emphasis is on the fact that the one who has faithfully acted is the God of Israel, it is still true that God has worked with and through God's servants throughout history to create Israel. YHWH cares about the promises established with God's servants. Therefore, readers can conclude that YHWH, with and through YHWH's servants, will accomplish the creation of people who obey the Torah.

Observing that the title of "YHWH's servant" is applied to Abraham and Moses (vv. 6, 26), Wallace argues that the psalmist is not interested in David.⁴³ He also points out that YHWH calls the patriarchs משיחי ("my anointed ones" [v. 15]), which is usually applied to David (cf. Ps 2; 18:50), and contends that David "loses" the special title and thus David's role is deemphasized in Ps 105.⁴⁴ However, applying the title of משיחי to

⁴¹ Jacobson, "Faithfulness," 121 (emphasis original).

⁴² Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 312; Mays, *Psalms*, 338; Ross, *A Commentary*, 3:272; Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 521–23; Wallace, *Narrative*, 80.

⁴³ Wallace, *Narrative*, 78.

⁴⁴ Wallace, *Narrative*, 78.

others does not necessarily mean David's loss of the title. Although משיח is also used to refer to the patriarchs in 1 Chr 16:22, yet David neither is deemphasized nor loses the title in the books of Chronicles. The purpose of Ps 105 is not to "deemphasize" David, but to emphasize that YHWH has worked with משיח ("my anointed ones") in every stage of history.

In the context of Pss 101–105, the readers have already noticed that these psalms are interested in the theme of obeying YHWH's words. Psalm 105 urges the readers to remember YHWH's wonderful works. Dennis Tucker and Jamie Grant appropriately write, "The call to mindfulness is bifocal: remembering his *works* encourages remembrance of his *words*."⁴⁵ The interesting expression משפטי־פיו ("judgments of his mouth" [v. 5]) is construed as the judgments imposed upon Pharaoh. Given the statement that YHWH's judgments are in the earth (v. 7b), משפטי־פיו can also be regarded as the instruction and rules of YHWH's reign over the world.⁴⁶ Then it is possible to regard that the exhortation to remember "the judgments of his mouth" (v. 5) resonates with the last verse of the psalm: "So that they would keep his statutes, / And keep his instructions" (v. 45a–b).

Summary

Psalm 105 praises YHWH's wonders and deeds that have been done to create the nation that keeps the divine words. To accomplish the divine plan, YHWH has been faithful to

⁴⁵ Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 513 (emphasis original).

⁴⁶ Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 513, n. 7; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 70–71.

the covenants made with YHWH's servants and has worked with/through them.

Therefore, the psalm makes the readers expect that YHWH will work with/through another servant of YHWH, who will not fail in realizing YHWH's plan over the world.

Celebrating YHWH's deeds done in natural history, Ps 104 ended with the recognition of the problem to be solved: human sin. Praising YHWH's power and faithfulness, Ps 105 closes with the awareness of the ongoing need of obeying YHWH's rules. The next psalm recites Israel's history of repeating failure in keeping these covenants with YHWH.

Psalm 106: Israel's Unfaithfulness in History

Translation of Psalm 106

- 1 Hallelujah!
Give thanks to YHWH, for he is good,
For his steadfast love endures forever!
- 2 Who can declare the mighty acts of YHWH;
Or proclaim all his praise?⁴⁷
- 3 Happy are those who keep justice,
The one who does⁴⁸ righteousness at all times.
- 4 Remember me, O YHWH, when you favor your people,
Attend to me in your salvation,
- 5 So that I may see the goodness of your chosen ones,
That I may rejoice in the joy in your people,
That I may glory with your inheritance.
- 6 We have sinned, together with our ancestors;
We have done wrong, have done wicked.

⁴⁷ LXX has the plural form of ἡπληθύνη: τὰς αἰνέσεις αὐτοῦ ("his praises").

⁴⁸ LXX has the plural form ποιοῦντες.

- 7 Our ancestors in Egypt
 Did not give thought to⁴⁹ your wonders;
 They did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love,
 And they rebelled at the sea, the Sea of Reeds.⁵⁰
- 8 But he saved them for the sake of his name,
 To make known his power.
- 9 He rebuked the Sea of Reeds and it dried up;
 He led them through the depths as through a desert.
- 10 He saved them from the hand of those who hated them;
 He redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
- 11 Waters covered their adversaries;
 Not one of them remained.
- 12 Then they trusted in his words;
 They sang his praises.
- 13 They hastily forgot his works;
 They did not wait for his plan.
- 14 They craved intensely⁵¹ in the wilderness;
 They tested God in the desert.⁵²
- 15 He gave them their request;
 He sent a wasting disease into their lives.
- 16 They were jealous of Moses in the camp,
 Of Aaron, the holy one of YHWH.
- 17 The earth opened⁵³ and swallowed Dathan;
 It covered the company of Abiram.
- 18 A fire burned against their company;
 A flame set ablaze the wicked.
- 19 They made a calf at Horeb;
 They worshipped a forged image.

⁴⁹ The *hiphil* form of עָלַם means “to ponder,” “to give thought to,” or “to take note of” when it is used with an accusative. See *DCH* 8:151.

⁵⁰ To harmonize this double place indication, LXX renders עַל־יַם as עֲלֵי־יָם, thus ἀναβαίνοντες (“those rising up”). NABR, NJB, NRSV read “the Most High” by emending עַל־יַם to עֲלֵי־יָם. So does Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 65. However, this conjecture is without evidence.

⁵¹ The MT has וַיִּתְאַוּ תַּאֲוָה, which literally means “and they craved a craving.”

⁵² The noun יִשְׁמֹן often occurs with מִדְבָּר as a synonym, both indicating the place where the wandering in the wilderness took place (Deut 32:10; Isa 43:19–20; Ps 78:40; 107:4). See Petersen and Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry*, 74.

⁵³ LXX has ἠψολχθη, the passive form (probably *niphal*) of פָּתַח (“to open”), thus “the earth was opened.” However, פָּתַח can be used as an intransitive verb. See *DCH* 6:803.

- 20 They exchanged their glory
For the image of a bull that eats grass.
- 21 They forgot God, their savior,
Who had done great things in Egypt,
- 22 Wonders in the land of Ham,
Awesome deeds at the Sea of Reeds.
- 23 Then he decided⁵⁴ to destroy them,
Had not Moses, his chosen one,
Stood in the breach before him,
To turn away his wrath from destruction.
- 24 They rejected the desirable land;
They did not trust his word.
- 25 They grumbled in their tents;
They did not listen to the voice of YHWH.
- 26 Then he raised his hand against them,
To make them fall in the wilderness,
- 27 To make their descendants fall among the nations,
And to scatter them throughout the lands.
- 28 They joined themselves to the Baal of Peor;
They ate the sacrifices of the dead.
- 29 They provoked (him)⁵⁵ with their deeds,
And a plague broke out among them.
- 30 But Phinehas stood and intervened,
And the plague was stopped.
- 31 It was reckoned to him as righteousness
From generation to generation forever.
- 32 They infuriated (him)⁵⁶ at the waters of Meribah,
And it went ill with Moses because of them;
- 33 For they rebelled against his spirit,
And he spoke impetuously with his mouth.
- 34 They did not destroy the peoples,
As YHWH had said to them.

⁵⁴ Literally, "and he said." Clines (*DCH* 1:324) suggests the connotation of command, thus "and he would have given the command." With ל and infinitive, אמר can also be used to express intention especially to threaten. See *DCH* 1:324; *HALOT* 1:66.

⁵⁵ The LXX adds the 3ms accusative αὐτόν and reads "and they provoked him."

⁵⁶ The LXX adds the 3ms accusative αὐτόν and reads "and they provoked him."

- 35 They mingled with the nations,
And they learned to do their works.
- 36 They served their idols,
Which became⁵⁷ a snare to them.
- 37 They sacrificed their sons,
And their daughters to demons.
- 38 They shed innocent blood,
The blood of their sons and daughters,
Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan,
And the land was polluted with bloodshed.
- 39 And they became impure by their works;
They prostituted themselves by their deed.
- 40 The anger of YHWH burned against his people;

And those who hated them ruled over them.

- 42 Their enemies oppressed them,
And they were subdued under their hand.
- 43 Many times he rescued them,
But THEY rebelled in their own counsel,
And they were brought low by their sin.
- 44 But he looked upon their distress,
When he listened to their cry.
- 45 He remembered, for their sake, his covenant;
He relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love.
- 46 He placed them into compassion
Before all their captors.
- 47 Save us, O YHWH, our God,
And gather us from the nations,
So that we may praise your holy name,
And glory in your praises
- 48 Bless YHWH, the God of Israel,
From everlasting to everlasting,
And let all the people say, "Amen."
Hallelujah!

⁵⁷ Literally, "and they became." The "they" in this context indicates "their idols."

Structure of Psalm 106⁵⁸

Call to worship YHWH	(vv. 1–5)
YHWH's faithfulness and Israel's sin at the Sea of Reeds	(vv. 6–12)
YHWH's faithfulness and Israel's sin from the sea to Horeb	(vv. 13–23)
YHWH's faithfulness and Israel's sin from Horeb to the land	(vv. 24–33)
YHWH's faithfulness and Israel's sin in the land	(vv. 34–46)
Closing petition and praise	(vv. 47–48)

Psalm 106, the last psalm of the hallelujah triad of Pss 104–106, ends with the doxology that closes both the psalm itself and Book IV of the Psalter.⁵⁹ The structure of Ps 106 is simple. Between the introductory call to worship (vv. 1–5) and the closing plea and praise (vv. 47–48), the history of YHWH's faithfulness and Israel's unfaithfulness unfolds (vv. 6–46). While Ps 105 recapitulates the history of YHWH's faithfulness to Israel, Ps 106 shows whether the plan of YHWH mentioned at the last verse of the preceding psalm has actually worked through Israel's history.⁶⁰ YHWH's plan to create a nation that keeps the Torah has failed so far due to Israel's relentless unfaithfulness.

Israel's Forgetfulness and Unfaithfulness

The last psalm of Book IV begins the recapitulation of Israel's history by confessing that “We have sinned, together with our ancestors” (v. 6a). Scholars agree that Ps 106 presupposes the exile.⁶¹ The mention that YHWH scattered Israel's descendants “among the nations” (v. 27) and the petition for the gathering of them “from the nations” (v. 47)

⁵⁸ Cf. deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 797.

⁵⁹ Wilson, *Editing*, 184–90.

⁶⁰ Mays, *Psalms*, 337.

⁶¹ Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 67–68; Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 241; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 85; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 322; Longman, *Psalms*, 371, 373; Mays, *Psalms*, 342; McKelvey, *Moses*, 245–45; Ross, *A Commentary*, 3:282; Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 538, 542; Terrien, *Psalms*, 733; VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 789.

support the idea that the psalm is applied to the exilic period or thereafter. The psalmist states that the main reason for the exile is Israel's forgetfulness of YHWH's wonders and unfaithfulness to YHWH's words: (1) The forebears of Israel in Egypt gave no thought to YHWH's wonders and did not remember the abundance of YHWH's steadfast love (v. 7); they forgot not only YHWH's deeds (v. 13) but also YHWH, their savior (v. 21); (2) They did not trust YHWH's word (v. 24), did not listen to YHWH's voice (v. 25), and did not obey YHWH's commands (v. 34); they rebelled against YHWH (v. 7, 33, 43). Verse 43 simply summarized Israel's history: "Many times he rescued them, but THEY rebelled in their own counsel." Psalm 106 shows that the hope in Ps 105 for the nation that observes YHWH's statutes is in crisis due to Israel's relentless disobedience.

YHWH's Faithfulness and Steadfast Love

Nevertheless, Ps 106 harbours hope for restoration. Pointing out that the first person plural pronouns occur only in vv. 6, 7, and 47, Wallace Wolverton suggests that the psalm "would have *induced* lament by the people; but it is not itself such a lament."⁶² However, it is also not true that the psalm aims to induce lament in its audience. Given the emphasis on YHWH's faithfulness, the purpose of the psalmist is to convey confidence to its audience that YHWH will deliver them. Before petitioning for deliverance, the psalmist affirms, "He remembered, for their sake, his covenant; He relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love. He placed them into compassion / Before all their captors" (vv. 45–46). Also, the repeated confessions that Israel's ancestors did not give

⁶² Wolverton, "Sermons in the Psalms," 174 (*italics original*); cf. Wallace, *Narrative*, 81.

thought to YHWH's steadfast love urge the audience to remember and trust that YHWH's goodness and steadfast love endure forever.

Moreover, the placing of this psalm also gives hope to the readers of Psalter. YHWH's steadfast love has been emphasized throughout the whole of Book IV. At the beginning of Book IV, Moses petitioned, "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love" (Ps 90:14) and YHWH declared, "I will satisfy" (Ps 91:16). The voice of Ps 92 (probably David) stated that it is good to proclaim YHWH's steadfast love in the morning and faithfulness in the nights (Ps 92:2–3). The YHWH-*malak* psalms maintain the themes of YHWH's steadfast love and faithfulness as well as the kingship: "For YHWH will not abandon his people" (Ps 94:14); "Your steadfast love, YHWH, sustained me" (Ps 94:18); "He will judge . . . the people with his faithfulness" (Ps 96:13); "He has remembered his steadfast love, / And his faithfulness to the house of Israel" (Ps 98:3). The last psalm of Pss 93–100 closed the subsection with the passionate declaration: "For YHWH is good, his steadfast love endures forever, / And his faithfulness from generation to generation" (Ps 100:5). The Davidic voice in Pss 101–103 declared that YHWH is "slow to anger and abundant in steadfast love" (Ps 103:8) and that YHWH's steadfast love is upon the YHWH fearers "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps 103:17). Psalms 104 and 105 celebrated YHWH's faithful and wonderful works that have been done in creation and Israel's history. Book IV as a whole emphasizes YHWH's relentless steadfast love. Therefore, the readers of Book IV trust and expect that God of creation and Israel will faithfully show God's steadfast love to them again in spite of their rebellions.

The One of Justice and Righteousness

At the same time, the psalmist expresses a pessimistic perspective for the future. “Who can declare the mighty acts of YHWH; Or proclaim all his praise?” (v. 2) Some regard this question as a rhetorical one anticipating a negative answer.⁶³ However, this question is not “purely rhetorical”⁶⁴ because it is followed by an answer to it: “Happy are those who keep justice, / The one who does righteousness at all times” (v. 3). This shows that only those who are just and righteous can properly proclaim YHWH’s praise. Others argue that the combination of a question and an answer in vv. 2–3 is didactic, to teach how important justice and righteousness are and thus to exhort the audience to live virtuous lives.⁶⁵ Given that Ps 106 demonstrates the reiterated failures of Israel in their history, however, the psalmist is not likely to believe that the readers can live that kind of lives. The lives which are just and righteous enough to declare YHWH’s mighty acts have never been realized in Israel’s history. Jacobson rightly summarizes the message of this answer: “Those who do justice and maintain righteousness may be *fortunate*, but Israel as a nation is not among those who have managed to do this.”⁶⁶ The answer the psalms suggests to the question in v. 2 is that no one has been able to do that. Comparing Ps 106 to Ps 105, Gärtner has noted that these psalms see a single event from completely different point of views: while portraying the event concerning manna and quail, Ps 105 focussed on YHWH’s faithful provision for Israel in the desert (Ps 105:40), yet Ps 106

⁶³ VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 781; Ross, *A Commentary*, 3:284; McCann, “The Book of Psalms,” 1110.

⁶⁴ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 87.

⁶⁵ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 87; Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 70.

⁶⁶ deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 801.

only mentions the craving of Israel (Ps 106:14).⁶⁷ Hence she concludes, “Psalm 106 complements the story of salvation of Psalm 105 with its anthropological dimension.”⁶⁸

Against the divine dimension of the salvation story, YHWH’s faithfulness in Ps 105, Ps 106 insists on the mortal aspect of the story, the unending unfaithfulness of Israel.

Keeping justice and righteousness “at all times” has appeared to be an impossible mission for these mortals.

As discussed above, however, the psalmist and the compiler(s) of Book IV never abandon hope for the restoration. The affirmation that the ones who always keep justice and righteousness are happy in v. 3 contains not only an imperfect mortal dimension, it reminds the readers of **הַיְהוָה** (“the one”) who was depicted as an ideal one in Ps 1. This “beatitude formula”⁶⁹ which begins with **אֲשֶׁר** recalls Ps 1:1. Psalms 1 and 2, as a combined introduction to the entire Psalter, provide a hermeneutical foundation to understand the Psalter: the ideal anointed king (Ps 2) who obeys the Torah perfectly (Ps 1).⁷⁰ Moreover, the virtues that those who are happy keep at all times—**מִשְׁפָּט** (“justice”) and **צְדָקָה/צְדָק** (“righteousness”)—are the very same things required for the ideal king in Ps 72. It has been recognized that royal psalms in Books I–III (Pss 2, 72, 89), which are placed at the “seams” of the Psalter, show the theological development concerning the

⁶⁷ Gärtner, “The Torah in Psalm 106,” 487.

⁶⁸ Gärtner, “The Torah in Psalm 106,” 487.

⁶⁹ For the detailed discussion, see Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 397–98.

⁷⁰ Cole, *Psalms 1–2*, 1–45; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 59–60; deClaisse-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 55; Firth, “The Teaching of the Psalms,” 160; Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 200–207; Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 67; Grant, “The Psalms and the King,” 108; Howard, *Structure of Psalms 93–100*, 200–207; Mays, “The Place of the Torah-Psalms in the Psalter,” 10; Miller, “The Beginning of the Psalter,” 83–92; Seitz, *Word without End*, 159; Terrien, *Psalms*, 79–80.

Davidic covenant.⁷¹ According to Wilson, Ps 72 expresses the transfer of the Davidic covenant to the Davidic kings of Israel, which is inaugurated in Ps 2.⁷² מִשְׁפָּט (“justice”) and צדקה/צדק (“righteousness”) are the duties of the covenant which are also passed on to successive generations of Israelite kings (cf. Ps 72:1–2). Book IV has recalled that מִשְׁפָּט and צדקה/צדק are the foundations of YHWH’s kingship (Ps 97:2). Hence, the anointed king in Ps 2 is the one who delights in Torah day and night (Ps 1:1–3) and executes justice and righteousness in the earth as the vice-regent of YHWH (Ps 72; cf Ps 101). Psalm 106 suggests that only the one who keeps justice and righteousness at all times can declare the wonders of YHWH (Ps 106:2–3). Therefore, the readers can regard the one depicted in Ps 106 as the anointed king suggested in the combined introduction Pss 1 and 2 and in Pss 72 and 101. While Ps 106 shows a pessimistic perspective of humanity’s unfaithfulness, it still maintains the hope for the ideal anointed one who can properly proclaim YHWH’s mighty acts by executing justice and righteousness.

The One of Intercession

The psalm also demonstrates that YHWH’s chosen ones have played essential roles in pacifying YHWH’s wrath in Israel’s history. When Israel made the golden calf and worshipped it, it was only because Moses stood in the breach before YHWH to turn away YHWH’s wrath from destroying them, that they could survive (vv. 19–23). When they devoted themselves to Baal of Peor, it was only because of Phinehas’ intervention that the

⁷¹ Wilson, “The Use of Royal Psalms,” 85–94; McCann, “Books I–III,” 93–95; Mitchell, *Message*, 243–71.

⁷² Wilson, *Psalms*, 123–24.

plague imposed upon them was stopped (vv. 28–31). Boda calls this phenomenon “Patience by Intercession”: “the people sin (vv. 19–22, 28), Yahweh is provoked and either threatens or begins to exact discipline (vv. 23a, 29), but his patience is secured by an intercessor who arises to turn away this threat (vv. 23b, 30–31).”⁷³ The intercessory role of Moses recalls Ps 90. The first psalm of Book IV implied that Israel, after the failure of the kingship of David, needed a mediator like Moses. The last psalm of Book IV also emphasizes the importance of intercessory roles in Israel’s history. Therefore, Ps 106 insinuates that YHWH will save Israel through the intercessory prayer of YHWH’s chosen one.

The Ideal One

It should be noted that the emphasis on the intercessory role neither elevates Moses and David nor degrades them. It only highlights the role of Moses as a great intercessor. The psalmist reports the rebellion at Meribah (vv. 32–33). Rather than hiding the great intercessor’s disgrace, the psalm underlines Moses’ mistake: “he spoke impetuously with his mouth” (v. 33b). Consequently, Moses was not allowed to enter the promised land (Num 20:10–12): “And it went ill with Moses” (Ps 106:32b). This overtly shows that Ps 106 does not anticipate the return of the historical Moses. The psalm waits for the ideal one who can stand in breach before YHWH, just like Moses did at Horeb/Sinai. On the other hand, David is also not elevated in Ps 106. As a matter of fact, none of the psalms within Book IV mention the name of David. David only appears in the superscription of

⁷³ Boda, *Praying the Tradition*, 84.

Pss 101 and 103. This implies that the hope for the return of the Davidic king found in Pss 101–106 is not for the imperfect mortal descendants of David. What Pss 101–106 imagine is the ideal one who can faithfully do righteousness and keep justice for the world at all times. Therefore, the one Ps 106 along with Pss 101–105 awaits is the one who can play both the role of the ideal king epitomized by David and the role of the ideal intercessor exemplified by Moses.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

The present thesis began with the hypothesis that Book IV of the Psalter responds to the theological crisis of the failure of the Davidic monarchy by amalgamating the imageries of Moses and David. Wilson's work is foundational to this study, which regards the canonical Psalter as a unified book resulted from a deliberate editorial arrangement. Applying a canonical approach based largely on Wilson's work, this thesis drew a completely different conclusion from Wilson's; in Book IV, David is not deemphasized but idealized by being amalgamated with Moses.

To verify the validity of my proposal, this study focused on the arrangement of Book IV and its relationship with the end of Book III, Ps 89, by investigating each psalm within Book IV, according to their sequence in the canon, and analyzing their relationships with each other. Chapter 2 briefly showed the questions which Ps 89 raised. Psalm 89 lamented the failure of the Davidic dynasty and asked painful questions concerning the Davidic covenant, which should be answered. Did YHWH break the covenant with David and thus abandon him forever? Did YHWH decide to permanently cease YHWH's steadfast love toward David? Then the chapter analyzed the following three psalms (Pss 90–92) and concluded that these psalms attempted to reverse the painful situation of Ps 89 by suggesting the great intercessor of Israel, Moses. These psalms induced readers to imagine that Moses was praying for David (Ps 90) and that his

prayer resulted in the giving of the salvation oracle to David (Ps 91). Psalm 92, consequently, could be read as a thanksgiving praise proclaimed by the king.

Chapter 3 explored the following section, the YHWH-*malak* psalms (Pss 93–100), and argued that it responded to Pss 90–92 as well as Ps 89. Continuing the Mosaic overtones of the previous sub-division, Pss 93–100 affirmed YHWH's sovereign kingship over the universe, and thus reinforced the conviction that, regardless of how miserable the present situation of David and Israel may be, YHWH can restore them according to the oracle given to David in Pss 90–92. By emphasizing YHWH's steadfast love and faithfulness, which were assumed to be absent in Ps 89, Pss 93–100 also assured their audience that YHWH would come to deliver them. Observing that these psalms depicted the consummation of YHWH's kingship as a future/eschatological event, I showed that, by amalgamating Moses and David, these psalms began to suggest an idealized one through whom God would accomplish God's kingship over the universe.

Chapter 4 demonstrated that the Davidic voice returned in Pss 101–103. The reinstated David dedicated himself to the qualities of the ideal king: steadfast love and justice/judgment (Ps 101). Then the ideal king interceded with YHWH for Israel just like an ideal intercessor, Moses (Ps 102). The sub-section culminates with the joyous shouts of praise of YHWH's steadfast love and mercy (Ps 103). As Pss 93–100 did, Pss 101–103 reassured the audience about their deliverance based on YHWH's steadfast love and mercy. Recalling that the steadfast love and mercy of YHWH had been given to Israel through Moses, the greatest intercessor of Israel, the Davidic triad insinuated that YHWH would pour out YHWH's steadfast love upon Israel, through the one like Moses.

However, it pointed out both the significance of obedience and also the incapability of humanity to fully observe the Torah. Through the amalgamation of the restored royal voice of David and the memory of the great intercessor, readers could anticipate that YHWH would solve this dilemma by sending an individual who could carry out the roles of the king and the intercessor.

The last sub-division of Book IV, Pss 104–106, forms the “Hallelujah triad.” Chapter 5 investigated the three psalms within the triad which recited the history of nature and Israel. While celebrating YHWH’s deeds done in history, the triad also emphasized the fallibility of humanity. As in Pss 101–103, the clear dilemma between the essentiality of obedience in accomplishing YHWH’s plan for restoration and the frailty of humanity appeared in Pss 104–106. The solution to this dilemma, which Pss 104–106 suggested, was the ideal king executing YHWH’s justice and righteousness in the world, and also the ideal intercessor beseeching YHWH’s steadfast love and mercy for the world.

In conclusion, Book IV functions as a response to the theological crisis in Ps 89. Psalms 90–92 show that the broken covenant will be recovered by the intercessory prayer of the Moses-like one. Praising YHWH’s kingship over the world, Pss 93–100 demonstrate that YHWH has been and will always be faithful to YHWH’s covenant with David. By overlapping the imageries of Sinai and Zion, the YHWH-malak psalms make the readers pay attention to both Moses and David. Psalms 101–103 display that the ideal king will be reinstated, through whom YHWH will consummate YHWH’s plan for the world. They also portray the king as the ideal intercessor like Moses. This amalgamation

also happens in Pss 104–106. Emphasizing the roles not only of the king like David who executes justice and righteousness of YHWH, but also of the intercessor like Moses, Book IV suggests that YHWH's plan to solve the dilemma between YHWH's requirement of obeying the Torah and humanity's inability to satisfy it is the amalgamated one of the ideal Moses and the ideal David.

Who is this ideal one? Book IV tells no more about this one's identity. Book IV induces the readers to anticipate the ideal one who will be revealed more clearly in Book V. Readers will soon encounter Ps 110, which has been understood to be messianic from the early days of biblical interpretation (cf. Mk 12:35–37). As Book IV does, this thesis also prepares the way for further studies to connect the ideal figure suggested in Book IV to the messianic one in Book V.

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