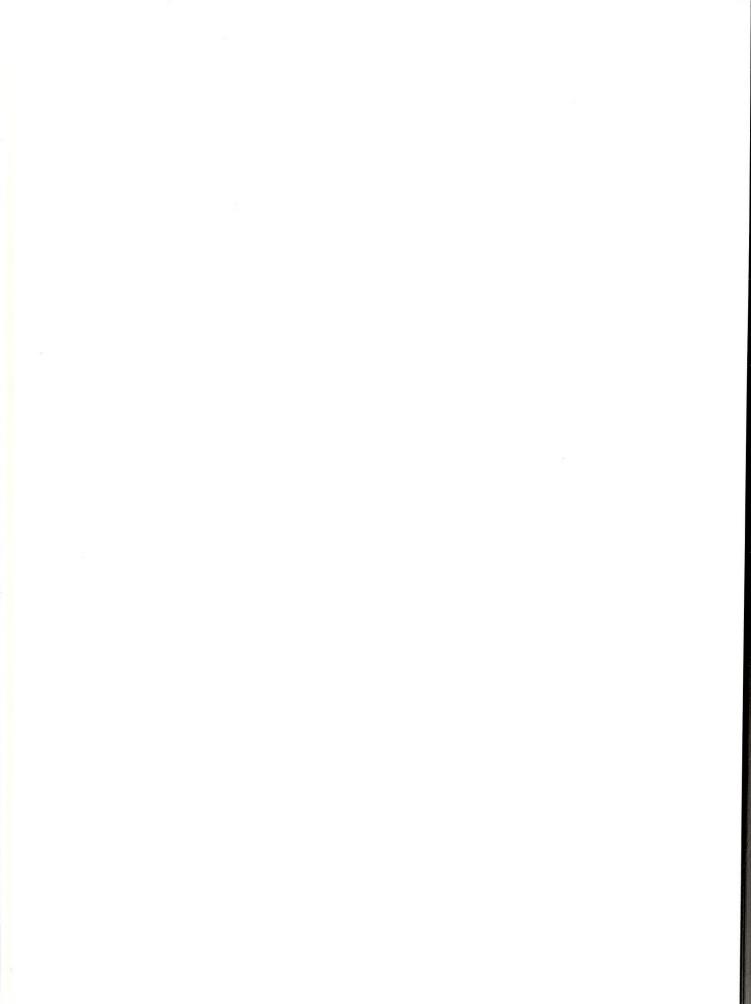HEARING VOICES:
EXPLORING PSALMIC MULTIVOCALITY AS LYRIC POETRY

BY

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HEARING VOICES:
EXPLORING PSALMIC MULTIVOCALITY AS LYRIC POETRY

by

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A dissertation submitted to
the faculty of McMaster Divinity College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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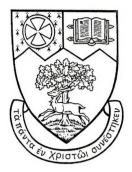   Exploring Psalmic Multivocality as Lyric Poetry

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ABSTRACT

"Hearing Voices: Exploring Psalmic Multivocality as Lyric Poetry"

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Psalms slip from cries of imprecation and lament to divine answer, from quoting the accusations and slander of the enemies to testifying to the character of Yahweh, from reflexive commands to communal imperatives. As these constructed voices and addressees oscillate, they create dialectics of distance and proximity, play with center and periphery, and fluctuate between presence and absence. The poetic devices of biblical Hebrew poetry allow for multiple voices to be heard and evoke experiences. The goal of this dissertation is to demonstrate, by using a lyric poetic approach, that voicing—especially shifts in voicing—contributes to the meaning of a psalm and lyric sequence. The Psalter calls to be read as lyric poetry, a voiced genre that is heard and overheard. The vocality of the Psalter invites hearers to listen to the dynamism of shifting voices, which create dialectics of distance and proximity, presence and absence.

The three chapters of analysis explore the vocalic nature of lyric poetry. These chapters address twenty-five psalms in the Hebrew Psalter. The analyses of the ten individual psalms are sorted into two chapters based on the nature of the voicing they feature: psalms that feature shifts in addressee (Pss 23, 28, 32, 76, and 146) and psalms that featured shifts in both speaker and addressee (Pss 12, 46, 52, 91, and 94). The third chapter of analysis explores vocality in a lyric sequence, the Songs of the Ascents (Pss 120–134). The interpretation of these ten individual psalms as well as the fifteen-psalm lyric sequence demonstrate how the vocality of these lyric poems contribute to the construction of meaning and the cohesion of its respective text. This study makes contributions to biblical scholarship in two main areas: 1) it advances the conversation on voicing in Hebrew lyric poetry and 2) it applies a lyric approach to biblical Hebrew poetry.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
ANE	Ancient Near East
AOAT	Alter Orient un Altes Testament
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
AugStud	*Augustinian Studies*
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BCOTWP	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHRG	van der Merwe, Christo H. J. et al. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002.
BHS	*Bibliotheca Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
Bijdr	*Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie*
BJSUCSD	Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BT	*The Bible Translator*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2006.
CAT	Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament
CBQ	*Catholic Bible Quarterly*
cf.	[Lat.] confer, compare
CHALOT	Holladay, William Lee. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Leiden: Brill, 1988.
CTA	*Corpus des tablettes en cuneiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939*
CTJ	*Calvin Theological Journal*
DCH	*Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Edited by David J. A. Clines. 9 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 1993–2014.
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
e.g.	*exempli gratia*

ed.	editor; edition
EDB	*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature
et al.	*et alii*, and others
Eth.	Ethiopic
ETR	*Etudes Théologiques et religieuses*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
GBHS	Arnold, Bill T., and John H. Choi. *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
GKC	Gesenius, Wilhelm. Thesaurus Philologicus Criticus Lingue Hebrae et Chaldae Veteris Testamenti. 2 vols. 2nd ed. Lipsiae: Vogelius, 1839.
GuL	*Geist und Leben*
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HB	Hebrew Bible
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HHBS	History of Biblical Studies
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HSAT	*Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments*
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
HvTSt	*Hervermde teologiese studies*
i.e.	*id est,* that is
IBHS	Waltke, Bruce K., and Michael Patrick O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
Int	*Interpretation*
ISBL	Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBQ	*Jewish Bible Quarterly*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JPT	*Journal of Pentecostal Theology*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplemental Series
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
LASBF	*Liber Annuus Studii Biblici Franciscani*
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
Mid.	Midrash
MT	Masoretic Text
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis

OG	Old Greek
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
p.	page
para.	paragraph
RB	*Revue biblique*
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SB	Sources bibliques
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertations Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
Sem	*Semitica*
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
StBibLit	Studies in Biblical Literature (Lang)
Sym	Symmachus's translation of the Psalms, as printed in Fridericus Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt,* vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1874; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1964).
Syr.	Syriac
Tg	Targum
Th	Theodotian's translation of the Psalms, as printed in Fridericus Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt,* vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1874; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1964).
TLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
trans.	translator, translated by
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
UCOP	University of Cambridge Oriental Publications
v(v).	verse(s)
vols.	volumes
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
Vulg.	Vulgate
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WBC	*The Women's Bible Commentary*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WW	*Word and World*
ZAW	*Zeitshrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenshafte*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie un Kirche*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The book of Psalms showcases the emotions of the human experience more than other biblical books. The psalms display the finitude of humanity in their laments, imprecatory cries, and desperate prayers for deliverance. They give voice to the deepest groanings of the human experience and raise their voices in confrontation of and trust in Yahweh. The psalmic voices are not third-person historiographers or theologians recording the interactions of Yahweh with his people, prophetic vessels delivering divine speeches, or sages recording godly wisdom. They are dynamic, including soaring praise of Yahweh, raging exasperation for divine intervention, and imprecations of righteous indignation. The psalms give voice to the range of human emotions in a way that other biblical material does not.

The constructed voices of the psalms are broken vessels, exuberant worshippers, and creative poets. Thus, psalms are often read as a guide for facilitating relationship with God, providing templates and scripts for monologues directed toward Yahweh. Walter Brueggemann writes,

> The psalms function not only as discipline and instruction about how to pray but also as invitation and authorization to speak imaginatively beyond these words themselves. These words in the psalms initiate a trajectory of dangerous speech that we can continue. We not only reiterate these prayers in their timeless words now found timely but are authorized and nourished by these words to find our words, fresh words that are more resonant to our own experience, more congruent with our own life, more crucial for our own faith.[1]

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[1] Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, 33–34.

Categorizing the psalms as prayers, the book of Psalms is relegated to functioning as an ancient form of a book of common prayer—an anthology that informs the liturgy and prayers of contemporary faith communities. For Brueggemann, the shared human experience allows contemporary communities to borrow from the ancient lectionary verbatim and for inspiration.[2]

J. Clinton McCann Jr., draws attention to the prevalence of reading the psalms as a model for responding to God's address in both contemporary Psalms scholarship as well as ecclesial settings.[3] He provides evidence from *The Book of Common Worship* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): "The singing of a psalm is appropriate at any place in the order of worship. However, the psalm appointed in the lectionary . . . is intended to be sung following the first reading, where it serves as a congregational meditation and response to the reading. The psalm is not intended as another reading."[4] According to liturgical books, psalms may be sung but not preached; they are useful for responding to Yahweh but not for hearing from Yahweh. Daniel J. Estes explains psalms' function as "prompts and patterns" by which faith communities can draw closer to God.[5] The words of ancient Israel's worship can be reused for contemporary communities. W. H. Bellinger Jr., writes, "Pilgrims of faith find themselves in Psalms, and they find themselves praying. 'Prayer Book of the Bible' is a fitting title for the book."[6] Yet, if the psalms are only read as prayers directed to God, how can one account for the other voices of the Psalter? Viewing psalms simply as prayers addressed to Yahweh ignores the

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[2] Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, 7.
[3] McCann, "Hearing the Psalter," 278–79.
[4] *The Book of Common Worship*, 37. For McCann's comments, see "Hearing the Psalter," 278.
[5] Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms*, 141.
[6] Bellinger, *Psalms*, 1.

multivocality of the Psalter and glosses over the powerful rhetorical effect of oscillating voices.

Multivocality in the Psalms

Describing the shock of the inclusion of the book of Psalms in the Christian canon, Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, "Now there is in the Holy Scripture a book which is distinguished from all other books of the Bible by the fact that it contains only prayers. The book is the Psalms."[7] He assuages the offense of having human words considered sacred text by placing the psalms in the mouth of Christ. He argues that Christ's indwelling enables Christians to pray the psalms; Christians pray through Christ, and he prays with them. According to Bonhoeffer, the psalms are both the words of humanity and the words of Yahweh as the God-man gives them utterance.[8]

Augustine, on the other hand, recognizes the multivocality of the psalms. Employing a common patristic hermeneutic, Augustine uses prosopological exegesis to understand psalmic material. He identifies and explores the voicing heard in various pericopes; however, in his prosopological analyses of the book of Psalms, Augustine not only finds material he concluded to be about Christ but to be spoken by Christ.[9] Augustine hears the psalms as the Word of God by making Christ one of the dialogue partners that contributes to the Psalter's multivocality.[10] Bonhoeffer and Augustine's approaches to reading the Psalter as the Word of God certainly have hermeneutical and theological appeal in certain contexts but cannot be supported by internal evidence of the

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[7] Bonhoeffer, *Psalms*, 13.
[8] Bonhoeffer, *Psalms*, 13–14.
[9] Fiedrowicz, "General Introduction," 50–51.
[10] Bosma, "Discerning the Voices in the Psalms," 129.

book of Psalms.[11] A Christological reading cannot account for the psalms' rhetorical function within ancient Israel. It robs them of their power in their ancient contexts, which preserved them and were part of the process of inscripturation. Anachronistic Christological readings also fail at hearing the range of psalmic voices within their ancient and literary contexts.

Prayer

The common definition of prayer is that it is direct address to God.[12] According to this definition and the common conception of the Psalter, the language of the psalmists is intended directly for Yahweh's ears. Some concede that prayer can include both second-person and third-person language, but Yahweh is the intended recipient of this language.[13] W. Derek Suderman explains, "While many scholars recognize the difficulty of defining prayer, most believe it consists of at least two elements: prayer is (1) direct address or some form of dialogue, (2) addressed to God (or the gods)."[14] Yahweh must be the intended recipient. Thus, prayer occurs on the vertical plane, the axis between humanity and the divine. The dialogue does not include address to third parties. Samuel E. Balentine writes, "All prayer is directed to God,"[15] and describes the Psalter as "Israel's official prayer literature."[16] In his essay "The Psalms as Prayer," Brueggemann writes, "The psalms are *prayers addressed to a known, named, identifiable You. This is the most stunning and decisive factor in the prayers of the Psalter. Prayer is direct address*

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[11] Bosma, "Discerning the Voices in the Psalms," 30.

[12] Suderman, "Prayers Heard and Overheard," 153.

[13] Greenberg, *Biblical Prose Prayer*; Newman, *Praying by the Book*; Miller, *They Cried to the Lord*. For a discussion on the prevalent definitions of prayer within Hebrew Bible (HB) scholarship, see Suderman, "Prayers Heard and Overheard," 194–99.

[14] Suderman, "Prayers Heard and Overheard," 194.

[15] Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible*, 33.

[16] Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible*, 35.

to, and conversation and communion with, an agent known from a shared, treasured past."[17] The psalms reveal the raw humanity and emotion with which the psalmists approach God. The psalmists tell of the good, the bad, and the ugly; declarations of confidence, laments, and imprecations all flow from the psalmists' mouths and directly to Yahweh's ears.

In the Psalter, 91.5 percent of the words are voiced by the psalmists.[18] Of this psalmist-spoken material, 45.2 percent is directed toward Yahweh.[19] Thus, less than half of the material in the Psalter qualifies as prayer according to the scholarly consensus on the definition and nature of prayer. The book of Psalms contains elements of prayer—portions in which individuals or communities communicate directly to Yahweh.[20] Psalmists do approach Yahweh directly with worship and requests. Prayers are spoken in this psalmist-God relationship, in which the psalmists exercise their powerful privilege to approach Yahweh in response to Yahweh's acts and their own human condition while remaining submissive to the sovereignty of God.[21] The breadth and depth of the psalmist-God relationship is thoroughly explored as the psalmists and their respective communities transition between the stages of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation.

Conversely, less than half—44.2 percent—of the material in 'Israel's official prayer literature' actually qualifies as prayer.[22] This book whose place in the Christian

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[17] Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, 34 (emphasis original).

[18] Boda, "'Varied and Resplendid Riches,'" 78. In this introduction, "psalmist" is used to represent the composer or the one(s) giving the psalm utterance.

[19] The other addressees are the community (43.3 percent), inanimate objects (1 percent), enemies (0.9 percent), and self (6 percent). See Boda, "'Varied and Resplendid Riches,'" 78.

[20] Boda, "'Varied and Resplendid Riches,'" 63–65.

[21] Cottrill, *Language, Power, and Identity*, 136–37.

[22] Boda, "'Varied and Resplendid Riches,'" 79.

canon seems only to be reserved in some people's estimations by its efficacy in modeling prayer—direct address to God—cannot claim prayer as its major component. Not only does it contain the words of humans, but a great portion of these words are not even directly addressed to Yahweh. Just less than half of the psalmists' words move across the horizontal plane, addressing other humans whether they are a part of the community of worshippers or cast as the enemies. With such a high percentage of the Psalter being social address, what then, is the nature of this psalmic material and how does it function?

Testimony

Almost all of the psalmists' words that are not addressed to Yahweh directly are addressed to the community. The psalmists' words directed toward the community comprise approximately 43.3 percent of the Psalter.[23] This horizontal address, at times, takes the form of imperatives, directing the community to respond appropriately to God, whether that response should be praise, obedience, or repentance. In fact, 13.5 percent of the Psalter is couched in directives to the community and calls them to act. The other 30 percent of the psalmists' words to the community are in the indicative mood.[24] These words are didactic, describing and declaring the characteristics of Yahweh and recounting his deeds. The majority of the psalmists' speech is either directed toward God or directed to the community to evoke worship and right relationship with Yahweh.

In response to Brueggemann's description of psalms being prayers to the divine You, Suderman remarks, "Most [psalms] also involve elements of social address. In other words, more often than not these psalms also address a largely *un*known, *un*named,

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[23] Boda, "'Varied and Resplendid Riches,'" 79.
[24] Boda, "'Varied and Resplendid Riches,'" 79.

*un*identifiable, and social '*you*.'"[25] About 30 percent of the book of Psalms is composed of indicative statements issued by the psalmists. The misnomer of the Psalter as a prayer book and the modern constructs of worship and literature also import false expectations in regard to the content of the Psalter. When just less than half of the Psalter is humans' words to God and almost just as much is directed toward the community, individual pericopes that feature these modulations in voicing should not be surprising. In fact, Suderman argues that social address should be considered an expected characteristic rather than a form-breaking intrusion in individual lament psalms.[26]

Testimony within the cultic context reflects Israel's rhetoric about Yahweh in other contexts. However, within the cultic context, testimony affirms the character of Yahweh for the benefit of the community.[27] Israel's declarative and descriptive praise, to borrow Claus Westermann's terms,[28] testify to the faithfulness, sovereignty, acts, and character of Yahweh both to be overheard by Yahweh and to be heard directly by the community. Brueggemann argues that voicing declarative and descriptive praise in fact testifies and verifies to the community the constructs of their relationship with God. He explains, "Much of the importance of this liturgical procedure is in the utterance. Israel needed to speak its witness out loud, for the *saying* is effective in affirming and enhancing the relationship."[29] The testimonial elements within the psalms assert a view of reality. The indicative statements of descriptive praise actually testify to the identity of

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[25] Suderman, "Prayers Heard and Overheard," 224–25 (emphasis original).
[26] Suderman, "Prayers Heard and Overheard," 225.
[27] Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 128.
[28] Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 31–35.
[29] Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 129 (emphasis original).

Yahweh and the community's relationship with him.[30] The psalmists declare and describe

the character of Yahweh.

Yahweh is known, and in the knowledge of who he is and their relationship to

him, the psalmists can also rage against injustice, weep in exasperation, and shout for joy.

The testimonies of Israel also carve out a place for all the emotions and pangs of

humanity to be displayed before Yahweh. The memories of God's acts and recollection

of his character are what call the psalmists and their communities to voice their lament in

the presence of Yahweh. If they have not known him to be who they describe him to be

in their testimonies, then why turn to him in perceived abandonment, eras of crisis, and

moments of darkness? The blunt and confrontational cries of *why?* and *how long?* and the

crude pleas of imprecation are brought before Yahweh. They are voiced within the

constructs of covenant relationship. Scott A. Ellington argues:

> Testimony . . . is both a primary resource that allows the psalmist to explore the
> experience of God's silence, hiddenness and absence and a necessary response to
> divinely answered laments. Without testimony it becomes difficult if not
> impossible to explore openly and candidly the circumstance of lament, because
> testimony to God's saving acts in the past provides the necessary hope that
> permits both an honest appraisal of the present and hope for the future.[31]

Because of what is said in the indicative mood, the psalmists can voice their prayers to

Yahweh. The words directed to the community grammatically direct the community to

Yahweh. Recounting his acts and character call for second-person praise and prayer. The

social aspect of the psalms facilitates direct communication with God. Just as the

community within the liturgical context overhears the psalmists' direct dialogue with

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[30] Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 129; Cottrill, *Language, Power, and Identity*, 136–37.
[31] Ellington, "The Costly Loss of Testimony," 57–58.

Yahweh, indeed, Yahweh too overhears the psalmists' social address.[32] Address on the

horizontal plane directs its hearers to engage in vertical communication and relationship.

The Psalter contains more than prayer, according to its common definition; the Psalter

also contains social address—the psalmists words directed to the community, which

serves as a complement to vertical communication.

Prophecy

The Psalter contains prayers and petitions directed to Yahweh, and a look at voicing

demonstrates the inclusion of social address. However, the psalmists not only talk to God

and about him but also hear from him. They incorporate communication on both the

horizontal and vertical planes as well as feature two-way communication on the vertical

plane.[33] The psalmists are not only heard and overheard by Yahweh but are also

answered by him. The divine voice is heard in 3.8 percent (95.5 verses) of the Psalter,[34]

both in direct quotations of Yahweh's speech as well as an interjecting, unframed voice.[35]

The divine voice responds, and its inclusion in the Psalter has raised many questions

concerning the relationship between cultic prophecy and psalmody.

Prophecy "is human transmission of allegedly divine messages. As a method of

revealing the divine will to humans, prophecy is to be seen as another, yet distinctive

branch of the divine that is generally called 'divination.'"[36] The Psalter contains prayer,

praise, and prophetic voice. Almost 4 percent of the Psalter consists of quotations of the

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[32] Suderman, "Are Individual Complaint Psalms Really Prayers?" 165.
[33] Boda, "'Varied and Resplendid Riches,'" 80.
[34] Boda, "'Varied and Resplendid Riches,'" 80.
[35] Bosma, "Discerning the Voices in the Psalms," 132–43.
[36] Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 1.

divine voice.[37] To reduce the content of psalms to Israel's response to Yahweh "shortchanges the prophetic element in the Psalter."[38] The people of Israel responded to Yahweh's acts and care and brought before him their pleas, prayers, and petitions, yet they also listened for his response. The divine voice is a part of the text. The psalms were a part of ancient Israel's liturgy. As psalms were used and reused within the cultic setting, the divine voice does not resonate as new revelation or prophetic utterance. Nonetheless, the inclusion of divine quotations reveals the dimensions of the ancient Israelite imagination, which included call and response with Yahweh. Ancient liturgy included not only communicating to and about Yahweh but also hearing from him. The Psalter preserves this reality. As part of the Psalter, ancient Israelites say God's words back to him.

The psalms are not a one-sided response to Yahweh's acts nor are they God-directed shouts of lament and praise. The voices echo from a diversity of mouths—mouths of the psalmists, enemies, the community of the righteous, as well as Yahweh. The vocalic diversity of the psalms encompasses both those uttering the words as well as the recipients of them. The words of the psalmists are not always directed to God. Describing the Psalter as a prayer book neglects to account for the diversity of both the voices and the recipients of psalmic content. The psalms are textured with voicing—voices addressed to God, to community, to enemies, to inanimate objects. They contain but cannot be entirely categorized by contemporary communities' standards as prayer. Describing the book of Psalms as a handbook of prayer misleadingly asserts that the psalms it contains were each written only for a divine audience. Rather, they are directed

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[37] Boda, "'Varied and Resplendid Riches,'" 80.
[38] Bosma, "Discerning the Voices in the Psalms," 143.

toward a variety of addressees. The psalmists use second-person language, but this second-person language is not only directed to Yahweh in the form of requests and worship. The psalmists' second-person language also takes on the form of imperatives that are reflexive as well as directed toward the community. Not only do the psalmists use imperatives as calls to worship and relationship with Yahweh, but they also employ third-person language, especially third-person language about God. This third-person language functions as testimony, laying the foundation for prayer, praise, and prophecy. The multivocality of the Psalter does work, communicating and creating meaning, and has been neglected for too long.

Approaching the Multivocality of the Psalter

Fifty years ago, a new category of biblical interpretation emerged. The stream of scholarship that focused on the history of biblical texts was renamed; the former "literary criticism" became known as "source criticism." Form criticism had taken the stage as scholars, particularly Gunkel,[39] became disenchanted with the Wellhausenian school of thought. Then, in the 1960s, in what can be interpreted as a reaction to the form-critical emphasis on the oral traditions predating the literature of the Bible, scholars turned to literary readings.[40] There had been approaches informed by literary theory or developed

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[39] Any approach to psalmic material would be amiss not to address the foundation Gunkel laid for modern Psalms scholarship. Deemed the father of form criticism, Gunkel's exploration of the Psalter set the stage for form criticism to dominate the field throughout the twentieth century. Miller, "Current Issues in Psalms Studies," 132.

[40] Literary readings were not a new development in the 1960s. Scholars and religious leaders have been interpreting biblical texts based on literary observations. From the allegorical readings of the Early Church to the Midrash of rabbis, from medieval scholastics to the Reformers who notice seconding, character development, or narrative elements, the Bible has been read as literature. Berlin ("Literary Approaches to Biblical Literature," 45) asserts, "New and ever-changing, though, is the mode of this literary inquiry." In the second half of the twentieth century, the field of HB studies was ripe for a change in methodologies.

out of the "Bible as literature" movement; however, "only recently has explicit

theoretical discourse or self-critical awareness of these assumptions been exposed by

their critics."[41] Literary criticism envelops a number of approaches, including (but not

limited to) intertextuality, rhetorical criticism, structuralism, narrative criticism, and

poetics. Adele Berlin states, "The overarching purpose of a literary inquiry is a better

understanding of the text—its construction, its forms of expression, its meaning,

significance, and/or its relationship to non-textual events or to other texts."[42]

In his presidential address at the 1968 Society of Biblical Literature, James

Muilenburg made a case for his rhetorical criticism and challenged his colleagues to

move beyond form criticism. He praised form criticism. He lauded Gunkel, the father of

form criticism. However, he argued that form criticism only seeks answers to certain

questions. Form criticism does not address the modes of Hebrew literary composition,

linguistic patterns, word formations or repetition, verbal sequences, nor does it lay bare

the beauty and creativity of the literary forms. No, form criticism cannot be the final

stage of interpretation. Muilenburg contends:

> But there are other latitudes which we have not undertaken to explore. T. S. Eliot
> once described a poem as a raid on the inarticulate. In the Scriptures we have a
> literary deposit of those who were confronted by the ultimate questions of life and
> human destiny, of God and man, of the past out of which the historical people has
> come and of the future into which it is moving, a speech which seeks to be
> commensurate with man's ultimate concerns, a raid on the ultimate, if you will.[43]

Muilenburg did not initiate the era of literary criticism; however, his challenging address

is indicative of the shift within the guild. As the shift occurred, the merits of form

criticism were not completely denied nor was its application abandoned. Rather, scholars

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[41] Beal et al., "Literary Theory, Literary Criticism, and the Bible," 159.

[42] Berlin, "Literary Approaches to Biblical Literature," 46–47.

[43] Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 18.

moved towards appreciating biblical texts as literature and reading them as such, building off of the foundation of form criticism.[44] Literary criticism offered a new kind of freedom to dialogue with other disciplines and creatively explore pericopes.

Hearing Voices

In the past 20 years, four scholars—Carleen Mandolfo, Rolf A. Jacobson, John W. Hilber, and W. Derek Suderman—have directly addressed psalmic voicing in depth, and their work sets up the scaffolding for an expansion on understanding the didactic dynamism of voicing of the Psalter.[45]

Carleen Mandolfo

In her groundbreaking work, *God in the Dock: Dialogic Tension in the Psalms of Lament*, Mandolfo calls for a new hearing of the voices of the psalms. She turns to a nineteenth-century bishop and English scholar, S. Horsley, to help build a foundation for her study.[46] Although not fully developed in his writing, Horsely viewed the psalms' performative and dramatic qualities as calling to be heard through dialogic reading. He pointed to modern norms of formatting dialogic and dramatic pieces as the obstacle hindering

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[44] Beal et al., "Literary Theory, Literary Criticism, and the Bible," 159–60; Becking, "Nehemiah as a Mosaic Heir," 4.

[45] Susan Gillingham ("From Liturgy to Prophecy") examines the intersection of psalmody and prophecy, but her focus is on the use of final forms of psalmic material employed in later ancient contexts and communities. Other scholars, such as A. R. Pete Diamond, John D. W. Watts, and Robert Alter, have recognized the polyphony of prophetic texts. Kenneth W. Shoemaker's dissertation, "Speaker and Audience Participants in Micah: Aspects of Prophetic Discourse," attempts to address the insufficient methodologies within the guild of biblical studies for exploring the shifts in speaker and addressee in prophetic literature. He argues that the most pertinent questions are not being asked of biblical texts, writing, "To ignore the questions, 'Who is speaking here?' and 'To whom is this discourse ostensibly addressed?' is to ignore the most basic, and often the most crucial, questions of any literary work" (15). Thus, Shoemaker approaches prophetic discourse through its narratival, rhetorical, and dramatic elements. His thorough participant analysis and examination of the Hebrew of Micah demonstrate the need for the careful treatment of deictic pronouns and quotations. Investigations of these literary elements illuminate the cohesion and rhetorical thrust of poetic texts.

[46] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 9–11. See Horsley, *The Book of Psalms*.

modern readers from hearing the shift in voices. Contemporary dramatic works,

generally, enact shifts in voice through nominal prefixes on the dialogic content. The

voicing shifts in the Psalter are at times unmarked by some dialogic formula. The shifts in

voicing have to be intuited or recognized on the textual-grammatical level. Horsley

posited that if contemporary readers were informed of the dialogic context, they too

would more aptly intuit the voicing of the psalms.[47] Therefore, Mandolfo resurrects

Horsley's sensitivity to voicing and builds off of form-critical categories and deductions

to present a new approach to reading the psalms—dialogic criticism.[48] She appreciates

the form-critical work of scholars like Gunkel and his successors; however, their work

only serves as a foundation for her own approach to the biblical texts. Her application of

dialogic criticism works toward teasing out the socio-rhetorical function and theological

import of psalmic voicing.[49]

In her dialogic exegesis of thirteen psalms,[50] Mandolfo argues for the validity of

hearing their multivocality. She views her study as representative of psalmic material

although her primary focus is on laments and the didactic voice within them. She uses M.

M. Bakhtin's socio-linguistic and philosophical approaches to texts, previous form-

critical scholarship, and Brueggemann's dialogical model to conduct her textual analysis

and to interpret her results. She collects textual data and attempts to explain the function

of what she calls the "didactic voice" in light of the cultic context. Her amplification of

the multivocality of the psalms forces the acknowledgment—at the very least—of the

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[47] Horsley, *The Book of Psalms*, xvi–vii.

[48] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 5.

[49] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 11.

[50] Mandolfo (*God in the Dock*) exegetes eleven laments (Pss 4; 7; 9; 12; 25; 27; 28; 31; 55; 102; 130) and two thanksgiving psalms (30; 32). Although her primary focus is voicing in laments, she includes these thanksgiving psalms because "these two prayers, both of which contain a fairly thorough lament, as well as a didactic element, will help round out the study" (28).

cacophony of voices in the Psalter. However, her analysis of the occurrence and rhetorical effect of voicing within the psalms' ancient cultic contexts leaves room for further exploration and begs for a better interpretation of the dynamic—rather than dramatic—poetics of the Psalter.

In her essay, "Dialogic Form Criticism: An Intertextual Reading of Lamentations and Psalms of Lament," Mandolfo moves to interpret Lam 1–2 and psalms of lament as "double-voiced."[51] She asserts that in Lam 1–2, "the speech of 'characters' is clearly delineated, and voices/discourses alternate in ways quite like some of the psalms."[52] She hears the respective supplicants' voices being combined and interrupted by didactic voices, marked by grammatical shifts. She defines her *didactic voice* as "a third-person voice that speaks of and for, rather than to, God and is thus a didactic rather than a prayerful discourse."[53] She explains:

> Psalms as prayer assume a primary dialogic movement from human being to God. Psalms as revelation assumes an opposite, but still vertical, movement. A study of didactic interjections assumes neither orientation, but rather a horizontal dynamic—the human-to-human flow of information. In other words, didactic interjections can be read as instruction emanating from humans, and flowing to humans. Needless to say, this communication functions in cooperation with the vertical. In other words, the ritual aim of most psalms is to establish or maintain a connection with the divine, and somehow to assist in the continued ordering of the universe. Furthermore, the didactic elements of laments are quite likely meant to be understood as a counterpart to God's own speech. While the psalms may have undergone permutations since the time of their production, at the very least, we still have 'patterns' in many psalms that seem to reflect their cultic origins. Granting such a postulation, instruction finds its place in the cult.[54]

Although Mandolfo confesses that the voicing of the Psalter may be a literary convention, she grounds her interpretation in ancient performative contexts. She hears the

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[51] Mandolfo, "Dialogic Form Criticism," 73.
[52] Mandolfo, "Dialogic Form Criticism," 78.
[53] Mandolfo, "Dialogic Form Criticism," 73.
[54] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 13.

grammatical shifts in voicing within the context of performance literature.[55] For her, the grammatical shifts in voicing mark shifts in voices—characters, consciousnesses; that is to say, she reads the voicing dramatically rather than dynamically, without due consideration for poetic, rhetorical devices. Thus, Mandolfo's dialogic approach to psalmic material forces dramatic interpretations, conjuring tension in the grammatical voicing shifts. Reading the Psalter as a collection of performative literature, Mandolfo detects—if not parts for a cast of choir members at the very least—"the perception that two worldviews are interacting."[56]

For Mandolfo, the voicing in the psalms is indicative of tension within the cultic institution and a negotiation of theology in ancient Israel. In the final chapter of *God in the Dock,* Mandolfo presents her conjecture concerning the social role of dialogue within ancient Israel (if the rhetorical dialogism in the psalms is representative of actual dialogue) and the cultic settings for these dialogic psalms.[57] She places the psalms within a cultic setting, weighs the possible cultic personnel who could be dialogue partners, and uses Hannah's prayer narrative, 1 Sam 1:9—2:10, to further explore dialogue in a cultic setting. However, at the end of this brief section, she throws up her hands and admits that details about the cultic context will probably never be known by contemporary inquirers. Therein lies the problem. Mandolfo's interpretation of psalmic voicing is based on her categorization of them as performative texts; an understanding of these performative texts, in turn, pivots on a rough reconstruction of ancient liturgical practices. The strain to hear the clash of worldviews in the lyric poetry of the Psalter desensitizes the ear.

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[55] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 2.
[56] Mandolfo, "Dialogic Form Criticism," 76.
[57] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 197–206.

Mandolfo's focus on lament psalms and commitment to a dialogic approach limits her ability to hear the didactic dynamism of the Psalter invoked by literary convention and poetic devices. In her hearing, the rhetorical power and relationship between voices within a respective psalm, a literary text, are drowned out by Mandolfo's cultic framework and dialogic approach. Her dependency on form-critical constructs prevents her analysis from offering interpretations that hold in tension a diversity of voices and the coherency of a given psalm.

Rolf A. Jacobson

Jacobson's *Many Are Saying: The Function of Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Psalter* builds off of the assertion that the psalms are predominantly rhetorical texts "composed in order to persuade some audience . . . to act in some way or to adopt some belief or way of life."[58] His study attempts to fill this perceived void within biblical studies—the utter lack of "sustained treatment" of Hebrew poetry's use of direct discourse and quotation—with his historical-critical and rhetorical reading.[59] He defines *direct discourse* as "an act of speech that is embedded in another act of speech"[60] and describes its employment as an intentional choice for rhetorical impact. Jacobson dedicates a chapter to each type of psalmic quotation: enemy, self, God, and community. Each chapter explores the form and function of these quotations.

The strength of his work is in his grammatical and textual analysis of direct discourse and quotations based on modern linguistic theory. His attention to detail and methodological approach to analysis proffers a valuable result and lays a solid foundation

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[58] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 3.
[59] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 1–3.
[60] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 5.

for further exploration and discussion of direct discourse and voicing in the Psalter. However, his discussions of the function of the quotations remain within form-critical structures and stay resolutely committed to identifying the functions of the categories of quotations. His interpretation is colored by the thrust of historical criticism to describe the speaker(s) instead of voice. For Jacobson, the primary domain of the voices is in the world behind the text not the world within the text. Jacobson never moves to the world the text creates through the voices. Fragmenting psalms into blocks of direct discourse, he explores how the blocks fit together but not necessarily what they construct. The forms and categories of his analysis overshadow the nuances of juxtaposed voices, *enallage,* and other literary and poetic devices that reported speech cannot fully explain. His meticulous analysis stifles the import of the dynamism that rings out from the voices of the Psalter. However, his work provides a springboard for hearing the multivocality of individual psalms; Jacobson teases out the voicing of the Psalter and provides valuable analysis of each category's functions. The next step of analysis is hearing the voices in a given psalm or across a lyric sequence together.

John W. Hilber

Hilber seeks to settle or at least contribute to the debate on the relationship between cultic prophecy and the Psalter by searching out parallels in Assyrian cult and prophecy, exploring the realm of possibility for cultic prophecy in the ancient Near East (ANE). He traces the debate on psalmic cultic prophecy back to Sigmund Mowinckel and Hermann Gunkel, with the first arguing that some psalmic material is a direct result of cultic prophecy and the latter rejecting a direct connection between cultic prophecy and psalmody. The interjections of the divine voice are merely constructs of the psalmists

employed for rhetorical effect. Psalmists mirrored prophetic style in order to invoke the register of prophecy. Mowinckel and Gunkel represent the two ends of the spectrum: those that accept the divine voice as rising out of some function of the cultic setting and those that thought cultic prophecy and psalmody were mutually exclusive genres.[61]

Hilber outlines[62] various options for explaining the voice of the divine in psalms that "overcome objections to the incorporation of cultic prophecy in psalms."[63] First, as Mowinckel proposed, it could be espoused that prophetic figures prepared material in advance to speak within the worship setting. Within the cultic setting, the prophetic figure would voice his or her composition during the liturgy. The initial utterance of this figure would be considered cultic prophecy, with it later being included in a written form of the psalm. This view seems like a plausible explanation for compositions like the royal psalms. The theme and focus of the liturgy would be predictable and could easily accept a prophetic interjection. Unity within the psalm could be the result of later scribal transmission.

The second view, however, takes more seriously the literary unity of particular psalms. The psalmist could be the prophetic figure, composing and performing the entire psalm with the shifts in voicing. Third, the interjected divine speech may originally have been voiced spontaneously by a cultic figure, who incorporated the "themes and phrases of other functionaries in the setting."[64] Hilber hedges this option, admitting that it would take a great deal of skill for a prophetic figure to compose and deliver material spontaneously that contributes to psalms with high levels of intertextual unity. The fourth

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[61] Hilber, "Cultic Prophecy in Assyria and the Psalms," 29.
[62] Hilber, "Cultic Prophecy in Assyria and the Psalms," 35–37.
[63] Hilber, "Cultic Prophecy in Assyria and the Psalms," 35.
[64] Hilber, "Cultic Prophecy in Assyria and the Psalms," 36.

view is that the psalmists are quoting prophetic material; they make use of material that has already been delivered and/or recorded. This would account for the authenticity of the prophetic style as well as the unity of certain psalms without configuring a situation in which the prophetic and liturgical material were delivered at once.[65]

Hilber demonstrates through an examination of the framing devices, structure, rhetoric, themes, and settings of the divine speech within psalms how these elements lend these quotations authenticity as prophetic speech that would have been delivered by a prophetic figure. Invoking the voice of Yahweh, without the psalmist having some conviction of actually hearing from him seems incompatible with the character and expected behavior of one who is calling the community to worship and relationship with Yahweh. It seems highly unlikely that the psalmists considered themselves to be putting words into Yahweh's mouth.[66] On the other hand, each of Hilber's possible explanations for the connectivity of psalmody and cultic prophecy places the onus on the prophetic and poetic figures. Hilber factors in whether or not a prophetic figure could have the skills and aptitude to respond to a liturgy on his or her feet. Or is it conceivable that a prophetic figure could script material based on the situation beforehand and deliver it in the cultic setting with the result of unified psalms?

In each of Hilber's explanations, he describes the prophetic figure as author rather than vessel. If the material he identifies as being voiced by a prophetic figure is in fact composed by this figure, then does it not cease to be divine speech? Perhaps, there is a disparity in understandings of prophecy; however, it seems that the views Hilber describes do not account for the divine. If Yahweh is listening to the prayers, praise, and

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[65] Hilber, "Cultic Prophecy in Assyria and the Psalms," 34–37.
[66] Hilber, "Psalms and Cultic Prophecy."

testimony of Israel, then readers of the psalms should be surprised by the

interconnectivity of the voiced material in the psalms. Martti Nissinen delineates the

components of prophet transmission, explaining, "The prophetic process of transmission

consists of the divine sender of the message, the message itself, the human transmitter of

the message and the recipient(s) of the message. These four components should be

transparent in any written source to be identified as a specimen of prophecy."[67]

Investigating the phenomena of cultic prophecy in relationship to psalmody holds a

valuable place, yet it cannot overshadow the rhetorical function of the divine voice in the

Psalter.[68] The psalmists and scribes did not include quotations or interjections of the

divine voice for them to be perceived as a farce; the representation of Yahweh's speech is

leveraged in the psalms as coming from the mouth of Yahweh.

Specific identifications of the figures and occasions from which the psalms were

originally composed and recorded are only conjecture. Nevertheless, the cultic setting

provides a general context for hearing the psalms and the divine voice within them.

According to Hilber, the quotations of the divine voice function within their respective

contexts in a variety of ways: to affirm the monarchy (Pss 2; 89; 110; 132), to establish

obedience and orthodoxy (Pss 50; 75; 81; 95), to address prayers and petitions (Pss 12;

46; 60; 75; 82; 91; 132), and to represent God's will or intention (Pss 35; 90; 105).[69] The

divine voice functions differently in each psalm based on placement, content, and

context. In the throes of humanity's orientation, disorientation, and reorientation, the

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[67] Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 2.
[68] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 91.
[69] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 98–130; Hilber, "Cultic Prophecy in Assyria and the Psalms," 31.

divine voice interjects at times providing assurance, calling back to covenant loyalty, initiating a change in perspective, or endorsing leadership.

Hilber's work offers a close comparative analysis of divine voicing in the Psalter in light of Assyrian cultic prophecy; however, its scope, by necessity, is limited. Because his aim is to "explain the poem by tracing it back to its origins,"[70] one cannot also turn to his work to hear dynamics of voicing in the Psalter. Patrick D. Miller concludes his 1985 survey of Psalms scholarship, writing, "The full hearing of the Psalms will be greatly enhanced when the familiar tendency to abstract content from form or to empty form of its content is overcome. To know the Psalms are poetic is not to forget that they are Scripture. To read and hear them as Scripture requires that one receive them also as poetry. From either direction, *understanding* is all."[71] Hilber's work is informative and most helpful when the world behind the text—the world that produced the texts—is the priority of one's inquiry. However, the limited scope of his research does not shed enough light on how the vocality of the Psalter constructs meaning in the world within the text.

W. Derek Suderman

Suderman's dissertation, "Prayers Heard and Overheard: Shifting Address and Methodological Matrices in Psalms Scholarship,"[72] problematizes popular approaches to Psalms and offers a different approach to hearing psalmic voicing, which includes shift in both subject and audience. Suderman builds off Westermann's[73] categories of subjects in

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[70] Eliot, *The Three Voices of Poetry*, 30–31.
[71] Miller, "Current Issues in Psalms Studies," 143.
[72] Suderman, "Prayers Heard and Overheard."
[73] Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms.*

individual complaint psalms—God, the psalmist, and 'others'—to explore "who is being addressed."[74] He asserts that these psalms are best understood as being both heard and overheard both within their ancient social contexts and that the rhetoric of the psalms reflect the dynamic of hearing and overhearing.[75] His analysis of the shifts in the voicing of individual complaint psalms reveals multiple addressees, both human and divine, and demonstrates that social address is an integral component of these psalms.[76] Suderman attempts to diverge from a form-critical approach by using a "methodological matrix" that explores the relationships between text, context, and author.[77] In this way, Suderman acknowledges that method affects reading as he investigates the much ignored dialectics of hearing and overhearing in divine and social address in the Psalter. Suderman's work pushes the study of psalmic voicing further, offering an alternative to disjointed readings permeated by conflict and redaction. By changing the research question, Suderman explores the rhetorical effect of voicing in the individual complaint psalms. His work, however, is still confined by form-critical categories even if it is in the limited scope of his project. He has opened the door to explore divine voicing and social address in other types of psalms and within their canonical contexts. His question "who is being addressed" is a significant contribution to the current discussion of voicing in the Hebrew Bible (HB).

The work of Mandolfo, Jacobson, Hilber, and Suderman are important contributions to the study of Psalms, the intersection of psalmody and prophecy, and

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[74] Suderman, "Prayers Heard and Overheard," 1–2.

[75] This language of "hearing and overhearing" will be adopted and employed throughout this study.

[76] Suderman, "Prayers Heard and Overheard," 2, 242.

[77] For Suderman's chapter dedicated to exploring methodological matrices, see "Prayers Heard and Overheard," 13–99.

voicing in biblical poetry. However, they leave ample work to be done and many questions unanswered. Hilber's work is primarily concerned with the divine voice, and his comparative approach is more concerned with the world behind the text than the world created by the text. Focusing on reconstruction and plausible contexts for composition, Hilber's work accomplishes his goals but offers little help in discerning the rhetorical effect of voicing in the Psalter. Mandolfo and Suderman hope that their studies of a sample of psalms will illuminate interpretations of voicing in all biblical psalmic material. However, the limiting scope of their analyses to only lament psalms—a specific form—has rendered limited applications of their conclusions. Mandolfo's work is controlled by her assumption that psalms were composed as performative pieces within a cultic context in which negotiating theology played a part of the liturgy. Her argument is circular: she traces the voicing in psalms to conflict within the cultic context but she also deduces that conflict must have been a cultic reality because of psalmic voicing. Suderman's study approaches voicing through a methodological matrix and offers provoking analyses of voicing. His problematizing of voicing studies is a much-needed corrective within the field of biblical studies and he leaves space for analyzing shifts in speaker and audience alongside each other and in various types of lyric poetry. Suderman's project does not include reading these various shifts—in both speaker and audience. Jacobson's work, on the other hand, analyzes the rhetorical function of the different categories of speakers within respective psalms but does not move to explore the psalms as rhetorical events—appreciating the juxtapositions of these different voices. He does not bring the voices back into conversation with one another. It is time to read individual psalms in their final forms as rhetorical events, hearing the poetic texture that

voicing creates and listening for the dynamism of voicing shifts across forms and categories of voices.

The Task at Hand

The stage has been set for a new approach to hearing the voices in the Hebrew Psalter. In terms of method, this dissertation abandons the form-critical question of 'who is speaking'—which produces educated, historical-critical guesses to interpret the literary work through reconstructed biographical sketches and contexts—in order to listen to the voices of the Psalter through lyric poetic analysis. It focuses on point-of-view rather than a reconstructed historically rooted perspective, hearing the voices of the Psalter as constructed. It explores the Psalter as text, reading psalmic material primarily as literary compositions instead of byproducts of ancient performances. John Goldingay contends, "The Psalms conceal their origins. It is thus an odd fact that study of the Psalms in both the premodern and modern periods paid considerable attention to their authorship and historical background."[78] Reading lyrically recognizes psalmic material as compositions that function within ancient liturgical settings and interprets them as complete compositions instead of fronting questions of authorship or historical context.

Voicing is an effective lyric strategy, influencing interpretation and meaning. Instead of reading shifts in voicing in lyric poetry as dialogic or fragmenting, voicing should be read as part of the texture of lyric poetry. The voicing in the Psalter has been neglected or misinterpreted for too long because psalms have not been approached as lyric poetry. Reading psalms as lyric poetry grants space for appreciating and exploring the rhetorical value of their voicing and the contribution voicing makes to the poetic

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[78] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:25.

texture and affective power of the psalms. This project diverges from previous studies of voicing in the Psalter by using a lyric framework and specific lyric tools—poetic or literary devices employed in lyric poetry—for investigating the rhetorical function of the poetic phenomenon of voicing. Due to the breadth of the corpus and the limits of the project, the detailed discussion of psalmic material is not exhaustive but exemplary. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on the lyric poetry and voicing of the Masoretic Text (MT) of the Psalter, offering translations and interpretations of twenty-five psalms. The goal of this dissertation is to demonstrate, by using a lyric poetic approach, that voicing— especially shifts in voicing—contributes to the meaning of a psalm and lyric sequence. The Psalter calls to be read as lyric poetry, a voiced genre that is heard and overheard. The vocality of the Psalter invites hearers to listen to the dynamism of shifting voices, which create dialectics of distance and proximity, presence and absence.

Procedural Outline

This study is divided into six chapters. Chapter 2, "A Lyric Poetic Approach," argues for understanding the poetry of the Psalter as lyric and discusses the implications of assigning psalmic poetry to this genre. Delineating and describing the characteristics of lyric poetry and, specifically, biblical lyric poetry establishes the foundation for understanding voicing as integral to poetic structure and strategy. This chapter presents the impetus and groundwork for hearing and appreciating the multivocality of the Psalter. This chapter will conclude by explaining the procedure for identifying and analyzing shifts in voicing.

Chapter 3, "Shifts in Addressee," embarks on the task of taking a lyric poetic approach to the voicing in individual psalms. It focuses on a sample of five psalms—Pss

23, 28, 32, 76, and 146 —that were chosen not for their date, authorship, form, or place in the Psalter but for the shifts in voicing they contain. The psalms discussed in this chapter feature voicing that falls into the first category of shifts—shifts in addressee but not speaker. In this way, the project speaks to these shifts, which Suderman argues are often overlooked, before it addresses psalms that feature shifts in both addressee and speaker. Appreciating these shifts on their own first—as a control—allows them to be heard more richly in juxtaposition with other poetic shifts and devices. The discussion of individual psalms includes identification of shifts, analysis of each voicing, and exploration of the relationship between the voices.

The fourth chapter, "Shifts in Speaker," discusses five psalms that feature a concert of voices, Pss 12, 46, 52, 91, and 94. While these psalms may include shifts in addressee, they also contain shifts in speaker. Therefore, this chapter proceeds as the previous chapter, offering detailed discussion of individual psalms. However, the focus of this chapter is the second category of voicing— those in which the constructed speaker shifts. Between Chapters 2 and 3, the discussion offers exemplary studies according to which psalmic voicing and biblical lyric poetry can be explored.

Chapter 5, "The Songs of the Ascents," analyzes the voicing of a lyric sequence. The Songs of the Ascents, Pss 120–134, offers a reasonable lyric sequence—fifteen psalms—to analyze for the length restraints of this project. Where lyric poetry's rhythm of association calls for the interpretation of the juxtaposition of voices within individual psalms, lyric sequence calls for the interpretation of voices through the juxtaposition of individual psalms. This chapter offers discussion of individual psalms in step with the

previous two chapters but then moves a step further to discuss Pss 120–134 as a collection, as a lyric sequence.

The conclusion, Chapter 6, summarizes the argument of this study and highlights the significance of the findings of the textual analysis and exploration of psalmic lyric poetry. In addition to offering a synopsis of this project's development and contribution to scholarship—especially in the areas of voicing, lyric poetics, and lyric sequencing, the conclusion offers suggestions for future study and a way forward, making space for nuanced readings of psalms as lyric poetry and in regard to voicing.

CHAPTER 2: A LYRIC POETIC APPROACH

Vocality is a lyric strategy that contributes to the meaning of individual psalms as well as

lyric sequences. Exploring all of the facets of lyric poetry is not in the purview nor is it

the purpose of this study. The nature and function of voicing in psalmic material is in

focus, so a lyric poetic approach to psalmic vocality will be employed. This dissertation

is not an inquiry into lyric poetry but an inquiry into vocality via a lyric poetic approach.

This approach explores psalms as cohesive literary units and helps access the ways in

which poetic devices and lyric strategies create meaning and yield cohesion. In his

reflections on the nature of poetry, John Ciardi writes:

> For WHAT DOES THE POEM MEAN? is too often a self-destroying approach to
> poetry. A more useful way of asking the question is HOW DOES A POEM
> MEAN? Why does it build itself into a form out of images, ideas, rhythms? How
> do these elements become the meaning? How are they inseparable from the
> meaning? As Yeats wrote:
> *O body swayed to music, O quickening glance,*
> *How shall I tell the dancer from the dance?*[1]

Vocality is part of the dance of biblical lyric poetry. Taking a lyric poetic approach

attempts to discern the role of voicing in the poetic texture and meaning of psalms.

For too long, attention to the beauty and artistry of biblical lyric poetry has been

sacrificed for the sake of investigating the world behind the text. The biblical studies

guild has been distracted. Scholars have been so seduced by the search for

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[1] Ciardi, *How Does a Poem Mean?*, 4 (emphasis original). See, also, Yeats, "Among School Children," 217.

historiographical contexts that they have gotten lost in enthronement festivals, Assyrian cultic ceremonies, and Jerusalem temple courts. T. S. Eliot writes:

> But if, either on the basis of what the poets try to tell you, or by biographical research, with or without the tools of the psychologist, you attempt to explain a poem, you will probably be getting further and further away from the poem without arriving at any other destination. The attempt to explain the poem by tracing it back to its origins will distract attention from the poem, to direct it on to something else which, in the form in which it can be apprehended by the critic and his readers, has no relation to the poem and throws no light upon it.[2]

Excavating the historiographical context of the Psalter and its individual psalms has its place and its value; however, the dynamism of biblical lyric poetry and the rhetorical power of psalmic voicing resound when one listens to its literary devices and poetics. Reading lyrically is a move to read "biblical poetry *qua* poetry—to give more attention to the *meaning* of a poem and to how a poem achieves its meaning."[3]

Defining Lyric Poetry

In the case of a lyric poetic approach, the art is built on a definition. Therefore, one must first define lyric poetry. David Noel Freedman estimates that one quarter to one third of the HB is composed of poetry and writes, "In poetry, the medium and message are inseparably intertwined to produce multiple effects at different levels of discourse and evoke a whole range of responses: intellectual, emotional, and spiritual."[4] Poetry and prose are distinct in form, and form directs function. The poetry and prose of the HB— and generic subcategories—are employed for their respective purposes and effects. One assumes that authors choose forms, at least partially, based on intention. In literature and

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[2] Eliot, *The Three Voices of Poetry*, 30–31.
[3] Berlin, "On Reading Biblical Poetry," 26.
[4] Freedman, "Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy," 5. Tremper Longman III ("Biblical Poetry," 81) writes, "The Bible is an affective book that communicates much of its meaning by moving the feelings and the will of its readers." See, also, Estes, "The Hermeneutics," 419.

communication, media are chosen based on the purpose of the respective communicative acts and the ways in which a medium can accomplish it.

Yet interpreters have been asking inappropriate questions of lyric poetry; searches for narratival elements like characters and setting have led to the neglect of the poetics of individual psalms. Speaking of the lyric poetry of the HB, F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp asserts, "Narrative approaches, which still dominate (even if only tacitly) the literary study of the Psalms, will only illuminate this kind of poetry to a limited degree. Psalmic verse requires reading strategies properly attuned to the discourse's leading features and central practices."[5] Readers should adjust their approach and interpretation based on generic forms and functions. Reading lyrically provides a more focused hearing of the poetic devices that produce and control the meaning of the psalmic material. Ariel Bloch and Chana Bloch assert:

> It makes no sense to judge lyric poetry by the standards of logical discourse, requiring a systematic progression from A to B to C and thence to a conclusion, with every link soldered firmly into place, as some exegetes do. None of the poems in the Bible would fit such a model. Even a short lyric like the Twenty-third Psalm brings together disparate elements: 'He makes me lie down in green pastures' and 'You spread a table before me in full view of my enemies,' shifting abruptly from shepherd to host and from the third person to the second. Apparently the biblical poets had a more flexible notion of unity and structure than many scholars have recognized.[6]

Therefore, responsible readers must approach Hebrew lyric poetry, especially the poetry of the Psalter, with an understanding of the conventions, poetic devices, and literary tools that Hebrew lyric poetry employs.[7]

Lyric is an ancient form of expression, both written and oral, and its shape and

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[5] Dobbs-Allsopp, "Poetry of the Psalms," 84. See, also, Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry*.
[6] Bloch and Bloch, *The Song of Songs*, 20.
[7] Longman, "Biblical Poetry," 81.

sound are malleable; the history of lyric is expansive, and its definition is "elusive."[8] The

term *lyric* comes from the Greek word λυρικός.[9] However, this subcategory of poetry

encompasses literature across cultures and time. The differences and complexities of the

genre of lyric poetry between cultures and contexts (compare, for example, Greek lyrics,

Shakespearean sonnets, and the lyrics of contemporary, American, reggae, rap, and rock

artist Matisyahu) have led to the neglect or misinterpretation of "lyric genre, the lyric

voice, and lyric subject."[10] The library of lyric poetry produced over millennia by a

multitude of cultures has not been adequately explored because of its breadth and

diversity. Generic discussions of lyric poetry help heighten sensitivity to poetic devices

and literary conventions; however, one should not limit definitions of lyric to historically

or culturally bound paradigms. Dobbs-Allsopp offers the example of the Greek

symposium, a cultural institution in which lyric poetry would have been performed but

also that has no known equivalent in ancient Israel. Cultural context alone offers space

for lyric poetry of those cultures to diverge in quality and quantity.[11] The lyric poetry of

the HB, thus, reflects the culture of ancient Israel and the larger context of the ANE. The

lyric poetry of the Hebrew Psalter calls for attention.

To read the Psalter as a collection of lyric poetry is not to assert that the psalmists'

compositions were informed by the genre category of 'lyric poetry'; rather, it is to

acknowledge that this collection of psalms is part of an ANE corpus of literature that

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[8] Lindley, *Lyric,* 1; Blevins, "Introduction," 11.

[9] Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry,* 178. Some claim that the term is etymologically derived from the word λύρα ("lyre"), which is the name of a stringed, musical instrument. However, in poetic theory, it has come to be a subcategory of poetic literature only loosely tied to musicality. See Heffelfinger, *I Am Large,* 42; Strawn, "Lyric Poetry," 437, 437; Linafelt, "Lyrical Theology," 292.

[10] Blevins, "Introduction," 11. See also Culler, *Theory of the Lyric,* 3–4; Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry,* 180; Jackson, "Lyric," 834; Blasing, *Lyric Poetry,* 4; Wong, "A Promise (Over)heard in Lyric," 271; Johnson, "Lyric," 713; Finnegan, *Oral Poetry,* 13.

[11] Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 346–48.

corresponds to the genre of lyric poetry, in a number of ways, as it is understood today.[12]

After recognizing the difficulty of even beginning a discussion of the nature of lyric

poetry, Dobbs-Allsopp asserts:

> One way to begin gaining a firmer fix on the lyric, is following the lead of N.
> Frye, to say what it is not: the lyric is not a narrative; or better, it is *chiefly* . . . a
> nonnarrative, nondramatic, nonrepresentational kind of poetry (here accenting the
> model sense of the term). It is the noncentrality, and indeed frequent absence, of
> features and practices (plot, character, and the like) that are otherwise definitive of
> more discursive modes of literary discourse (e.g., narrative, drama) that so
> distinguishes the medium of lyric verse and shapes the basic contours of its
> discourse.[13]

Lyric poetry is often defined by what it is not:[14] it is not narrative; it is not epic;[15] it is not

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[12] Heffelfinger (*I Am Large*, 44) makes this argument for reading Isa 40–55 as a lyric poetic sequence. Lyric poetry may be a modern, literary category; however, its use as a tool for classification and interpretation is not anachronistic. Mutlu Konuk Blasing (*Lyric Poetry*, 5) argues, "If lyric poetry is dismissed today as an anachronistic, nineteenth-century phenomenon, the criteria used for this judgment are nineteenth-century, moralistic, normative criteria following from expectations that poetry do something other than poetry—the expectations of a last-ditch humanism." The question of anachronism is raised concerning lyric poetry as a genre because of how the academic study of it developed. Ancient cultures did not use the language of narrative criticism as they told stories, yet they were producing narratives. While narrative is an ancient universal genre, how narratives are shaped and details of their form are tailored to the cultures that produced them. In the same way, lyric poetry is an ancient, universal genre and lyric poetic approaches as critical, academic inquiry are a modern development. Although wordplay, for example, may take different forms in contemporary English and ancient Hebrew poems, wordplay is still a characteristic of poetry. To discuss a literary genre is not to erase its distinctions in cultural contexts. A lyric poetic approach, just like narrative criticism, can use modern language to analyze and discuss ancient texts.

[13] Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 350. Cf. Frye, "Approaching the Lyric," 31.

[14] Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry*, 184–85; Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 350; Heffelfinger, *I Am Large*, 38–39; Ryken, *Words of Delight*, 230; Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 11; Frye, "Approaching the Lyric," 31; Driver, *An Introduction*, 360. Perhaps, a helpful analogy is that of *a cappella* music, which is defined by its lack of instrumental accompaniment. This style of musical performance, which spans time and culture, encompassing varying styles and sounds, may be most readily defined by what it is not; however, this style relies more heavily than other forms of musical performance on vocal harmonies, the differences in basic pitch, and the contrasts in voices (i.e., the differences between male/female, adult/child voices).

[15] Robert Alter (*The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 27) writes, "The Hebrew writers used verse for celebratory song, dirge, oracle, oratory, prophecy, reflective and didactic argument, liturgy and often as a heightening or summarizing inset in the prose narratives—but only marginally or minimally to tell a tale." The HB does not offer any comparable pieces of literature to the narrative/epic poems found in other ANE cultures (i.e., Ugarit and Mesopotamia). See Dobbs-Allsopp, "Poetry of the Psalms," 83; "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 353, 364; Strawn, "Lyric Poetry," 439; Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 27–28. Strawn ("Lyric Poetry," 439) asserts, "Even the so-called historical psalms (e.g., Pss 78; 105; 106) are not of sufficient scale to approximate narrative/epic poetry." The paratactic quality of Ps 114 also demonstrates the lack of narrative/epic poetry equivalents in the HB. See Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 353.

drama. S. R. Driver contends, "Hebrew poetry is almost exclusively *lyric*."[16] What, then, is lyric poetry and how does it illuminate the subject of voicing in the Psalter? Susanne K. Langer describes lyric poetry as "the literary form that depends most directly on pure verbal resources—the sound and evocative power of word, meter, alliteration, rhyme, and other rhythmic devices, associated images, repetitions, archaisms, and grammatical twists. It is the most obviously linguistic creation, and therefore the readiest instance of poesis."[17] Without the literary devices and features of these categories (e.g., plot, setting, characterization), which lend structure, thrust, and meaning, from where does lyric poetry draw its cohesion and rhetorical function? Lyric poetry draws on 'pure verbal resources.' All of the elements of lyric poetry may be found in other literary genres; however, it is lyric poetry's necessary reliance upon these literary tools that is distinctive and, thus, demands attention.[18] Katie M. Heffelfinger defines *lyric poetry* as "that subcategory of poetic literature that is characterized by the absence of plot or discursive argument, and that thus must overcome the fragmentation produced by its commonly paratactic flow so as to achieve a sense of cohesion through other means, most notably the address of the voice(s), musicality, and imagistic and/ or stylistic use of language."[19] The lyric poetry of

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[16] Driver, *An Introduction*, 360 (emphasis original). A. F. Kirkpatrick (*The Book of Psalms*, viii) concurs, arguing, "Lyric poetry is the most ancient kind of poetry, and Hebrew poetry is mainly lyric. Neither epic nor dramatic poetry flourished in ancient Israel."

[17] Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 258–59. See also Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 12–13. Barbara Hardy (*The Advantage of Lyric*, 1) argues, "The advantage of lyric to the critic is its easy access, which permits inspection of its form in a way not often feasible in longer works. But the advantage of lyric in itself is its concentrated and patterned expression of feeling. The advantage is negatively definable: the lyric does not provide an explanation, judgment or narrative; what it does provide is feeling, alone and with histories or characters."

[18] Dobbs-Allsopp, "Poetry of the Psalms," 83; "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 348, 356–57; *Lamentations*, 12; Strawn, "Lyric Poetry," 437; Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 258–59.

[19] Heffelfinger, *I Am Large*, 37.

the HB is characterized by its rituality,[20] brevity,[21] "rhythm of association" (i.e., the

juxtaposition of elements that elicit a response to the whole),[22] musicality,[23] and vocality.

A Focus on Vocality

Vocality is a characteristic or strategy that lends cohesion and meaning to lyric poetry; it

is one of the resources upon which lyric poems often depend. The language used to

describe vocality should be poetic and not borrowed from the vocabulary of narrative.

For example, in describing the lyric poetry of Song of Songs, Harold Fisch contends,

"What we have really are impassioned voices rather than characters. There is dialogue to

be sure, but it is dialogue that gives us the maximum of relationality, the minimum of

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[20] On the spectrum between fiction and ritual, Western lyric tradition tends toward the former; however, the lyric of the HB tends toward the latter. Roland Greene ("Sir Philip Sidney's Psalms," 23) posits, "Taken singly, the psalms generally belong at the most 'open' or performative end of the spectrum that runs from ritual to fiction, for they allow, or better, require the reading voice to assume the identity of their represented speaker; in a certain sense a psalm scarcely represents a speaker at all, but is the script for sacred ritual cast in lyric discourse." Ritual lyric dominates the lyric of the HB. See, also, Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry*, 202–10.

[21] Northrup Frye ("Approaching the Lyric," 31) describes lyric as "anything you can reasonably get uncut into an anthology." Heffelfinger (*I Am Large*, 40) notes that, in general, lyric poetry, without plot or argument to provide coherence, "cannot sustain itself, or the attention of its hearer, over long periods." The 'pure verbal resources,' upon which the cohesion of lyric poetry depends, lead to shorter pieces of poetry. Indeed, longer pieces of lyric poetry utilize specific strategies to sustain their length (e.g., employment of alphabetic acrostic in Ps 119). See Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 365; *On Biblical Poetry*, 198–99.

[22] Frye (*Anatomy of Criticism*, 254) describes "the poetic creation" as "an associative rhetorical process, most of it below the threshold of consciousness, a chaos of paronomasia, sound links, ambiguous sense links, and memory links very like that of the dream." Derek Attridge (*Poetic Rhythm*, 3) parses the differences between meter and rhythm by defining *rhythm* as "a patterning of energy simultaneously produced and perceived; a series of alternations of build-up and release, movement and counter-movement, tending toward regularity but complicated by constant variations and local inflections." See, also, Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry*, 199–202.

[23] Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 364–79; *On Biblical Poetry*, 195–98. While the term *lyric* perhaps fronts the idea of musical expression etymologically, the category of lyric does not unequivocally assert that each piece of lyric poetry is intended to be sung. Rather, "the presence of musicality may range from poems that are full-fledged hymns . . . to texts that merely have a particular concentration of alliteration, assonance, and rhythm" (Heffelfinger, *I Am Large*, 41). A strong argument can be made for inferring the musical presentation of at least a bulk of the psalms (see Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry*, 181–84; "Poetry of the Psalms," 83; "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 374–76), but the musicality of the lyric poetry of the HB is not limited to its presentation. The language of lyric is imbued with musicality. The poetic devices of lyric, like alliterative, assonance, rhythm, and repetition create a form of musicality—"the thump of rhythm and the play of sound" (Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 377; 374–77).

personality or setting."[24] So it is with biblical lyric poetry, with the poetry of the Psalter. The lyric poetry of the Hebrew Psalter does not present characters; rather, the lyric strategy of voicing in the poetry of the Psalter creates dialectics of distance and proximity and presence and absence, which demonstrate relationality. Therefore, the language of voices—in contrast to the language of characters, audience, and authors—is adopted. Lyric poetry offers a voiced experience. Daniel J. Estes writes:

> The ultimate purpose of lyric poetry is not simply to communicate information to the mind. If that were the case, poetry would be an unnecessarily inefficient means. Poetry does convey cognitive data, but that is only a part of its purpose. The poet uses language to reconstruct in the reader an experience comparable to what the poet felt. The poem broadens and deepens the reader's experience by guiding him into participation with the author's experience. In effect the poem enables the reader to "remember an experience that he has never had."[25]

His explanation of the purpose of lyric poetry is both helpful and problematic. On one hand, he draws attention to the emotive and experiential aspect of poetry. To run roughshod over the poetics of the Psalter is to deny the beauty of lyric poetry and stifle its rhetorical power. Poetry provokes, goads, and emotes in lilts, tenors, and language that other forms of literature do not.

On the other hand, however, one must not confuse the voice of the poet within a particular piece of literature with the poet himself or herself. Jacob Blevins argues:

> In order to approach lyric as a convergence of voice, the stigma of an isolated lyric subject has to be tossed aside and the lyric self understood as primarily a generic feature, not as an *actual*, literal self. In theory, such a concept is easy enough to accept in today's critical climate, but a long history of criticism has made it difficult to view the lyric voice as a constructed voice (consider, for

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[24] Fisch, *Poetry With a Purpose*, 204. See, also, Linafelt's "Lyrical Theology" for his discussion of voice. Jonathan Kaplan (*My Perfect One*, 80) also notes a shift among some scholars in the twentieth century away from dramatic readings to interpreting the Song of Songs as lyric sequence. The Song of Songs fronts emotion and "has largely resisted . . . all attempts at determining plot."

[25] Estes, "The Hermeneutics," 419.

example, how many teachers without qualification continue to refer to a speaker of a lyric poem as the poet himself or herself).[26]

Poets are not necessarily "using language to reconstruct in the reader an experience comparable *to what the poet felt*"[27] but to construct an experience in or evoke a response from the reader. Thus, it is more truthful to say that poems invite readers to participate in the experience of the poem itself. The constructed voices and voicing of the Psalter are a lyric strategy, creating an experience and inviting the reader to encounter the psalm's message. Lyric poetry is a voiced genre.[28]

Interpreting Psalmic Voicing

Multivocality is a feature of the Psalter, but not every psalm is multivoiced. The book of Psalms features a concert of voices; individual psalms may be the utterance of a single voice. One example would be Ps 124; it maintains a consistent perspective and does not change the direction of address. In this case, voicing is detected on the textual-grammatical level alone.[30] As a short sample, consider the first stanza (vv. 1b–5)[31] of Ps 124:

לוּלֵי *יהוה* שֶׁהָיָה לָ**נוּ**	1	If it had not been *Yahweh* who was for **us**,
יֹאמַר־נָא יִשְׂרָאֵל:		**Let Israel say,**

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[26] Blevins, "Introduction," 11–12.

[27] Estes, "The Hermeneutics," 419 (emphasis mine).

[28] Pellatt, "Introduction," 1.

[30] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 28.

[31] In this study, superscriptions are considered paratexts and priority is given to the core text of the Hebrew Psalter. Valerie Pellatt ("Introduction," 1) defines *paratext* as "the text that surrounds and supports the core text, like layers of packaging that initially protect and gradually reveal the essence of the packaged item." Therefore, in the first two chapters of analysis, which deal with a sample of ten individual psalms, superscriptions are set aside for the most part. Gérard Genette ("Introduction to the Paratext," 261) explains, "The literary work consists, exhaustively or essentially, of text, that is to say (a very minimal definition) in a more or less lengthy sequence of verbal utterances more or less containing meaning. But this text rarely appears in its naked state . . . ." He goes on to describe *paratext* as "the means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public" (261). Since superscriptions and lyric sequencing function on the same or similar redactional level and contribute to the making of the collections of psalms, superscriptions are given weight in the chapter on the Songs of the Ascents. See, also, Genette, *Paratexts*.

Hebrew		English
לוּלֵי יְהוָה שֶׁהָיָה לָנוּ	2	If it had not been *Yahweh* who was for **us**
בְּקוּם עָלֵינוּ אָדָם:		When <u>humanity</u> rose up against **us**,
אֲזַי חַיִּים בְּלָעוּנוּ	3	Then alive <u>they</u> would have swallowed **us**
בַּחֲרוֹת אַפָּם בָּנוּ:		When <u>their anger</u> burned against **us**.
אֲזַי הַמַּיִם שְׁטָפוּנוּ	4	Then the waters would have flooded over **us**,
נַחְלָה עָבַר עַל־נַפְשֵׁנוּ:		A torrent would have passed over **our souls**.
אֲזַי עָבַר עַל־נַפְשֵׁנוּ	5	Then it would have passed over **our souls**,
הַמַּיִם הַזֵּידוֹנִים:		The seething waters.

Psalm 124 uses a collective voice, which is evidenced by the repetition of first-person, plural pronominal suffixes and the phrase יאמר־נא ישראל ("let Israel say"; line 1c). This identification is only the first step in describing the voicing of this psalm. This psalm employs a first-person, plural voice. To whom or what does this voice speak? About whom or what is this voice speaking?[32] Answering these questions in addition to "who" is speaking illuminates the relationality of the psalm. In Ps 124, there is no explicit addressee; in other words, this psalm does not employ direct address (singular or plural second-person language). At different times, the lyric poetry of the Psalter directly addresses a whole host, including the wicked, the righteous community, Yahweh, Jerusalem, and self. About whom is Ps 124 speaking? It speaks of both Yahweh and humanity with third-person language. The first step in interpreting psalmic voicing is taking an inventory of first-person, second-person, and third-person language with both their singular and plural counterparts. In the case of Ps 124, the inventory of voicing elements or answers to the series of voicing questions do not change throughout its verses; its voicing is consistent, without changes in speaker or direction of address.

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[32] One of the significant contributions of Suderman's work is his emphasis on asking these two questions in order to recognize and explore social address in the Psalter. See Suderman, "Prayers Heard and Overheard," 104–5.

Identifying Shifts in Voicing

An analysis of psalmic voicing must also be attuned to shifts in vocality, which could include shifts in speaker or the direction of address. Signals or markers of these shifts fall into three categories. 1) The first category includes changes in subject and/or addressee that are indicated grammatically.[33] Psalm 46:11–12 serves as a prime example:

הַרְפּוּ וּדְעוּ כִּי־אָנֹכִי אֱלֹהִים	11	Be quiet and know that I am God!
אָרוּם בַּגּוֹיִם		I will be exalted among the nations.
אָרוּם בָּאָרֶץ:		I will be exalted in the earth.
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ	12	Yahweh of Hosts is with us.
מִשְׂגָּב־לָנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב סֶלָה:		Our refuge is the God of Jacob. *Selah*.

Although the voice of Yahweh is not introduced before his voice is heard, one can detect the shift in voicing because of the contrast between Yahweh's self-identification as God and first-person language associated with exaltation v. 11 and v. 12's third-person references to Yahweh. 2) In other instances, shifts in speaker are explicit because of the inclusion of framed quotations. Psalm 94:5–7 quotes the wicked within a petition to Yahweh:

עַמְּךָ יְהוָה יְדַכְּאוּ	5	Your people, O Yahweh, they crush.
וְנַחֲלָתְךָ יְעַנּוּ:		Your possession they afflict.
אַלְמָנָה וְגֵר יַהֲרֹגוּ	6	Widow and sojourner they slaughter;
וִיתוֹמִים יְרַצֵּחוּ:		And orphans they murder.
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא יִרְאֶה־יָּהּ	7	They have said, "Yah does not see,
וְלֹא־יָבִין אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:		And the God of Jacob does not pay attention."

The words of the wicked are introduced by an embedded frame, a clear marker of direct discourse. The quoted speech is introduced; thus, the shift in voicing is explicitly demarcated in the text. 3) Although it is rare, there may also be shifts in speaker that are only detected by changes in pronominal referents. For example, a petition could directly

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[33] Suderman, "Prayers Heard and Overheard," 107; Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 28–30; Schaefer, *Psalms*, xxii.

address Yahweh, using second-person language, and Yahweh could respond, using

second-person language. In this case, the referents of the second-person language would

be different and would be one of the signals of a shift in voicing. Additionally, consider

Ps 89:2–4:

חַסְדֵי יהוה עוֹלָם אָשִׁירָה לְדֹר וָדֹר אוֹדִיעַ אֱמוּנָתְךָ בְּפִי:	2	Of the steadfast love of Yahweh I will sing forever. Throughout all generations, I will make your faithfulness known with my mouth.
כִּי־אָמַרְתִּי עוֹלָם חֶסֶד יִבָּנֶה שָׁמַיִם תָּכִן אֱמוּנָתְךָ בָהֶם:	3	For I said, "Forever your steadfast love will be established. In the heavens, you will establish your faithfulness."
כָּרַתִּי בְרִית לִבְחִירִי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְדָוִד עַבְדִּי:	4	"I have cut a covenant with my chosen one. I have sworn to David my servant."

These three verses feature first-person speech; there is no shift on the grammatical level

that indicates and change in speaker or perspective. Rather, the "hierarchical deixis"[34]—

shift of hierarchy between vv. 2–3 and v. 4—indicates the shift in perspective. Although

v. 3 features a framed self-quotation, the shift to Yahweh's speech in v. 4 is unmarked

grammatically. The pronominal referents and objects in these verses are the indicators of

a change in voicing.

Analyzing the Function of Voicing in a Psalm

The second phase of analysis focuses on the function of these identified shifts in voicing;

it explores the relationships between the voices. This discussion of vocality investigates

how the different voices contribute to the meaning of a respective psalm or lyric sequence

and to the evocation of an experience. The project diverges from previous studies of the

vocality in the Hebrew Psalter by using a lyric poetic approach, allowing poetry to be

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

interpreted as poetry and appreciating the constructive qualities of lyric strategies and poetic texture.

Without recognizing that the rhythm of association is a characteristic of lyric poetry, psalmic parataxis may be described as disjunctive through reductionist misinterpretation. This paratactic or disjunctive effect of modulating voices and quotations in Hebrew lyric poetry has been labeled *dialogic* by some scholars, like Mandolfo. However, lyric poetry is not drama, requiring that speaking parts be doled out. These dialogic interpretations are often disjunctive and fragmenting; the parataxis (i.e., rhythm of association) of lyric poetry is explained away as a remnant of redaction. Perhaps some of the shifts in voicing or paratactic qualities of individual psalms are due to the compositional process. However, as lyric poems that have been preserved in the Hebrew Psalter, individual psalms can be interpreted as cohesive literary units. The psalmic shifts in voicing should not be reduced to access points to the world behind the text; rather, they should be interpreted as part of the poetic texture that contributes to meaning-making and the construction of the world within the text. Lyric poetry achieves cohesion through the rhythm of association—the juxtaposition of poetic devices and literary elements. Perceiving this rhythm of association, especially when it comes to voicing, as merely disjunctive is a misunderstanding of the genre that leads to misinterpretation.

The framework of poetry offers space for contrasting elements to sound rhetorically—to hear shifts in poetic devices as playing a role in the cohesive meaning of the text. For example, the metaphors in Ps 23 are dissimilar or disjunctive in that they cannot be collapsed into a single image. The metaphors are juxtaposed like two unique

paintings hung as a pair. The juxtaposition of Ps 23's metaphors would be misheard if paraphrased as, "Yahweh is my shepherd, *but* Yahweh is my host"; rather, the psalm asserts, "Yahweh is my shepherd and my host." This shift in metaphor is not subversive or counterproductive to the cohesion of the text or the development of meaning. In other words, this parataxis should be appreciated as an element within the text itself not explained away by placing its originating context outside of the world of the text. Parataxis is an element of lyric poetry; lyric poetry is governed by a rhythm of association. With this characteristic of lyric poetry in mind, shifts and modulations in poetic devices and literary elements of biblical texts are free to be analyzed as elements of the poetic texture. It is not enough just to recognize the fact that there are two metaphors; both metaphors must be explored for what they are and then interpreted in light of each other. In the same way, reading the multivocality of the lyric poetry includes the identification of shifts of voicing, analysis of the voices, and exploration of the relationship between the voices.

Two Categories for Analysis

Shifts in voicing may be sorted into two categories: those in which the addressee shifts and those in which the constructed speaker shifts. The purpose of sorting the shifts in voicing is practicality; concentrating on shifts in the direction of address before including shifts in speaker is an attempt to gradually address a complex literary phenomenon. The starting point of inquiry for both categories is the same: inventory the voicing of a psalm and explore the relationship between the voices and their contribution to the meaning and experience of the psalm.

Analysis of the first category of voicing attempts to discern how the shifts in the direction of address contribute to the poetic texture and meaning of the psalm. For instance, what does the oscillation between testimony and prayer in Ps 23 contribute to its meaning or what does it evoke? To whom or what one is talking, about whom or what one is talking, and the emotions with which one is talking all inform interpretation and effect. Changes in the direction of address in a lyric poem create dialectics of distance and proximity and presence and absence. The direct address (second-person language) and description (third-person language) of a psalm communicate emotions, attitudes, and relationships. The concert of voices as well as the ways in which voicing shifts contribute to the meaning and effect of individual psalms. The interpreting of psalms that feature shifts in address begs questions of relationality; what is communicated by who is hearing and overhearing?

The rhetorical function and poetic contribution of the shifts in voicing that fall into the second category of voicing—shifts in implied or constructed speaker—will be analyzed by considering how the representations of speech are controlled. When different speakers are represented, how are their voices meant to be heard? Jacobson delineates four "aspects of quotation by which the psalmist controls the inset" (which he constructs based on Cynthia Miller's work on representations of speech):[35] 1) the content of the reported speech, 2) the verbs framing the speech, 3) the speaker's identity, and 4) "modifying words or phrases" in the frame.[36] The content of the speech, while perhaps

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[35] Miller, *The Representation of Speech*.

[36] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 25–26. Jacobson's categories are informed by work on direct discourse in both narrative poetry. In the literature of the HB, emotions and attitudes are often conveyed through direct discourse, and lyric poetry and narrative both employ utterance to convey perspective, emotions, and attitudes. See Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*; Miller, *The Representation of Speech*; Miller, "Discourse Functions of Quotative Frames," 155–82; Miller, "Introducing Direct Discourse," 299–241; O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*; Fox, "The Identification of Quotations," 416–31; Crim, "Hebrew

the most obvious, is the most important of these aspects. The tone and message of the content signals whether the representation of speech is being used as negative or positive reinforcement of the message or thrust of the psalm. For example, a quotation of the enemy may be leveraged to amplify a petition for Yahweh to hear and act. Quotations are representations of speech; they are interpretations of speech that contribute to the meaning of the psalm. The representation of speech is evocative and serves a constructive purpose. Anna Wierzbicka explains:

> I submit that the "illocutionary purpose" of the semidirect discourse, is roughly this: I want to cause you to know what this person said, whereas that of direct discourse is double: I want to cause you to know what this person said, I want to cause you to know how he said it. I believe that it is this double purpose which is responsible for the fact that in the case of direct speech both the meaning and the surface structure are syntactically and semantically relevant.[37]

Representations of speech, or direct quotations, within lyric poetry are utterances in an interpretive context.

If the speech is framed, then the verbs of speaking and the modifying words and phrases also serve as controlling elements for the rhetorical impact of the speech. Speech framed with the verb "to scoff" calls to be interpreted much differently than if it were framed with the verb "to sing." Other phrases and words within the frame can also offer clues to interpretation, e.g. the rulers and kings speak "*against Yahweh and his holy one*" (Ps 2:2). In other instances, who is speaking offers clues as to how their speech should be interpreted. The imperative, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion," out of context may sound encouraging; it sounds very different when one realizes that its frame places this imperative on the lips of Babylonian captors and tormentors in Ps 137:3. These

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Direct Discourse," 311–16; Gordis, "Quotations as a Literary Usage," 157–220; Gordis, "Quotations in Wisdom Literature," 123–47.

[37] Wierzbicka, "The Semantics," 274–75.

representations of speech are often controlled by their frames. However, some shifts in speaker have no frame. Just as the content of the frames offer interpretive clues, even the presence of a frame can also serve as a controlling element. The contrast of the ways in which voices are controlled create dialectics of presence and absence as well as distance and proximity. Analyzing these aspects of control and hearing these shifts in voicing in concert with the shifts of the first category of voicing provides a more detailed picture of the lyric strategy employed by the psalmists.

Hearing Voices in a Lyric Sequence

Because lyric poetry depends on 'pure verbal resources,' lyric poems tend to be short; in order to sustain longer poems, other lyric strategies are coupled with the rhythm of association, which contributes to cohesion. One strategy or aspect of lyric poetry is lyric sequence. Brent A. Strawn explains, "Despite the fact that the lyric contains no extended logical argumentation or developed progression of plot or character, poets have long strung together independent and self-contained poems into larger collections or lyric sequences."[38] Just as the rhythm of association facilitates meaning-making, the sequencing of individual lyric poems allows these poems, characterized by brevity and parataxis, to evoke an experience or communicate a message as a collection. Hearing the multivocality of a lyric sequence is to take the identification and analysis of voicing in the individual psalms one step further and hear those voices in concert. It is to ask how the modulations in voicing not only function within a psalm itself but how they function in relationship to the voicing of the other psalms within the sequence or collection. Lyric sequencing leverages the literary artistry of individual lyric poems to create a more

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[38] Strawn, "Lyric Poetry," 440.

complex lyric experience.

In both confessional settings and academia, the vocality of the Hebrew Psalter has been neglected or stifled. The Psalter has been reduced to being described as a collection of prayers without offering a qualified definition of *prayer* or acknowledging the complexity of psalmic address and quotation. However, psalms slip from cries of imprecation and lament to divine answer, from quoting the accusations and slander of the enemies to testifying to the character of Yahweh, from reflexive commands to communal imperatives. As these constructed voices and addressees oscillate, they create dialectics of distance and proximity, play with center and periphery, and fluctuate between presence and absence. The poetic devices of biblical Hebrew poetry allow for multiple voices to be heard and evoke experiences. Dobbs-Allsopp contends:

> Identifying the Psalms' basic mode of discourse as lyric and foregrounding the poems' evaluative, expressive, and even aesthetic dimensions are not in any way to diminish the seriousness and intellective rigor of this poetry. The sentimentality of some contemporary lyric verse should not mislead us into thinking that lyric poetry in general is unable to accomplish serious work.[39]

Indeed, it is through the poetic devices employed that meaning is constructed and conveyed. The vocality of the Psalter contributes to the construction of meaning. Previous approaches to the Psalter have not adequately listened to its voicing. There have been recent attempts to rectify this neglect by scholars like Mandolfo, Jacobson, Hilber, and Suderman, but these efforts fall short by imposing reconstructions of cultic settings upon the text as interpretive frameworks, forcing psalms into form-critical categories and describing the exceptions from the "norm," or limiting analysis to either speaker or addressee. Therefore, the following chapters approach twenty-five psalms as lyric poetry

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[39] Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 378.

and attempt to listen carefully to their vocality, considering the dynamism of shifting

voices and what they contribute to 'how a poem means.'

CHAPTER 3: SHIFTS IN ADDRESSEE

This first chapter of analysis explores five psalms, which serve as a representative sample of lyric poems that feature shifts in addressee. The analysis begins here, because the unchanging, constructed speaker of a respective psalm is used as a control, with the addressee being the variable. In other words, in each of these psalms, the speaker in consistent; however, the direction of address changes. Each interpretation in this chapter offers a translation, the identification of voices, and an analysis of the function of vocality. The voice(s) both heard and overheard may function differently in each psalm, but, in each case, the vocality contributes to the meaning of the psalm. The analysis of these five psalms will highlight how the vocality of lyric poetry creates dialectics of presence and absence, distance and proximity. The voices of lyric poetry are calling to be heard.

Psalm 23

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד	1	A Davidic psalm.
יהוה רֹעִי לֹא אֶחְסָר:		Yahweh is my shepherd; I do not lack.
בִּנְאוֹת דֶּשֶׁא יַרְבִּיצֵנִי	2	He causes me to lie down in pastures of fresh grass.
עַל־מֵי מְנֻחוֹת יְנַהֲלֵנִי:		By restful waters he guides me.
נַפְשִׁי יְשׁוֹבֵב	3	He restores my life.
יַנְחֵנִי בְמַעְגְּלֵי־צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ:		He leads me on right paths for the sake of his name.
גַּם כִּי־אֵלֵךְ בְּגֵיא צַלְמָוֶת	4	Even when I walk in the valley of deep shadows,
לֹא־אִירָא רָע		I fear no evil,
כִּי־אַתָּה עִמָּדִי		Because you are with me.
שִׁבְטְךָ וּמִשְׁעַנְתֶּךָ הֵמָּה יְנַחֲמֻנִי:		Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

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תַּעֲרֹךְ לְפָנַי שֻׁלְחָן	5	You arrange a table before me
נֶגֶד צֹרְרָי		In the presence of my enemies.
דִּשַּׁנְתָּ בַשֶּׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי		You have anointed my head with oil.
כּוֹסִי רְוָיָה:		My cup is full.
אַךְ טוֹב וָחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי	6	Surely goodness and steadfast love will pursue me
כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּי		All the days of my life.
וְשַׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית־יהוה		I will return to[1] the house of Yahweh
לְאֹרֶךְ יָמִים:		For the length of days.

Psalm 23 is one of the most well-known biblical psalms, and the use of metaphor within it is often its characterizing feature. Psalm 23 employs a number of poetic devices as well as shifts in these literary elements. These shifts do not all occur at once; the transitions of metaphor and voicing come in waves.[2] Psalm 23 is rich with imagery. However, one diorama could not encapsulate the images created by the text and, at the same time, display a realistic scene.[3] Overlaying the images created by the metaphors places sheep at a banqueting table, a divine host in the sheepfold, and anointing oil pooling into the restful water. Indeed, the two metaphors of Yahweh as shepherd and Yahweh as host are not overlaid; they are juxtaposed like two paintings hung together.[4] They are not

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[1] This MT clause, וְשַׁבְתִּי, is often emended according to the OG, τὸ κατοικεῖν με ("my dwelling"). A reconstruction of the Hebrew from the OG only differs from the MT in vowel pointing, not in consonants. The unpointed phrase ושבתי is rendered as a *qal* first-person, singular suffix conjugation with a *vav* consecutive from the verb שוב in the MT; whereas, the OG renders the phrase as the noun שבת (related to the verb ישב) with a first-person, singular possessive pronoun. Interpretations of the verb ישב also appear in the Tg (אתיב) and Jerome's Vulg. (*ut inhabitem in*). However, the MT does not need emendation. Although the preposition ב is unexpected in this clause, it functions as a terminative or pregnant ב; being paired with a verb of motion, this preposition marks the destination to which something is moving. deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 240; Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §253; *GBHS* §4.1.5(a); *IBHS* §11.2.5b. (Craigie [*Psalms 1–50*, 204] also acknowledges that this "construction is pregnant," yet his translation does not follow the MT.) Contra Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 80; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:345; Tanner, "King Yahweh as the Good Shepherd," 283; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 304.

[2] Jacobson (deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 239) describes the shifts in metaphor and voicing as "two structural developments."

[3] Contra Clines, "Psalm 23 and Method," 176–77.

[4] Although some scholars count three metaphors and others vary in how many verses the shepherd metaphor is in effect, it seems most probable that the metaphor from Yahweh as shepherd in vv. 1–4 shifts to Yahweh as host in vv. 5–6. Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 122–25; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 239–44; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:346–53; Arterbury and Bellinger, "'Returning' to the Hospitality," 387–95; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 58–59; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 305, 307; Mazor, "Psalm 23," 416–

simultaneously enacted nor are they in dissonant conflict with one another. These metaphors work in tandem, so that the shift in metaphor from shepherd to host is distinct but not disjunctive. The shifts in voice also help facilitate this shift in imagery.

The shift in metaphor comes in v. 5; however, it is preceded by the shift in voice in v. 4. It is in the development of the first metaphor that the shift from third-person description to second-person address occurs. The psalmist begins with describing the divine shepherd as provider and counselor. In vv. 1–3, the imagery is pleasant and common material for artists' canvases and sketchbooks. The imagery evokes peace and provision on a pastoral landscape. While the metaphor is sustained in v. 4, the scene changes. The painter would have to expand her palette to include dark and meddling shades; the images of lush grass and calming waters gives way to the darkness of the valley.

There in the valley of shadows, as if the psalmist's voice catches as the darkness looms, the shift in voice occurs. Third-person description of Yahweh gives way to direct address as the described situation calls for divine help.[5] The speaker is constant, but the shift in voice seems to beckon Yahweh nearer.[6] In the pasture, by the restful waters, and in the paths of righteousness, Yahweh is described in the third person: יהוה רעי ("Yahweh is my shepherd"; line 1b), ירביצני ("he causes me to lie down"; line 2a), ינחני ("he guides"; line 2b), ישובב ("he restores"; line 3a), ינחני . . . למען שמו ("he leads . . . for the sake of his

20; Smith, "Setting and Rhetoric in Psalm 23," 61; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 204–9. Contra Nel, "Yahweh Is a Shepherd," 79–103; Tanner, "King Yahweh as the Good Shepherd," 267–84; Green, "The Good, the Bad and the Better," 78–79; Koehler, "Psalm 23," 227–34; Morgenstern, "Psalm 23," 14–19.

[5] Mandolfo (*God in the Dock*, 61) notes this shift as she compares Pss 23 and 27, writing, "Although the plaintive tone is subdued, Psalm 23, like 27, makes explicit mention of trouble only in the portion of the psalm addressed directly to the deity."

[6] Smith, "Setting and Rhetoric in Psalm 23," 63; Weiss, *The Bible from Within*, 266.

name"; v. 3b). But in the valley of shadows, אתה עדמי ("you are with me"; v. 4).[7] Meir Weiss writes, "Just when he speaks of a situation in which one is liable not to feel the presence of God, the author of Psalm 23 sets God before him. Turning to God in the second person — the 'present'— he achieves the feeling of His presence."[8] The darkness necessitates direct address. Jacobson writes:

> Here, the threatening presence of *the darkest valley* is named. But the fear-evoking danger of that presence is more than balanced by the courage-providing, fear-removing presence of the Lord. This is the true setting of the psalm: the existential space of being in the presence of something that is terrifying, a space in which every reflective human being finds himself or herself at some point, and a space in which, according to the witness of the poem, the Lord can also be found.[9]

Up to this point, the voicing introduced in the opening verbless clause, יהוה רעי ("Yahweh is my shepherd"; v. 1),[10] has been maintained. However, in the second verbless clause of the psalm (אתה עדמי ["you are with me"]; v. 4), the alternation between *I* and *he* transitions to *I* and *you*. Yahweh is not described but addressed; it is important to note that this shift is a change only in pronouns and not referents. The sustainment of the metaphor ensures there is no confusion as to who this *you* is. The lines immediately following the shift in voice employ the shepherd metaphor: שבטך ומשענתך המה ינחמני ("Your rod and your staff, they comfort me"). It is only after the transition in voice has been made that the metaphor also gives way to the next development. The image of Yahweh changes; in vv. 5–6, Yahweh is host, preparing a banquet table and anointing.

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[7] Trudinger, "The Changes in Person and Mood in Psalm 23," 139; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 308; Smith, "Setting and Rhetoric in Psalm 23," 62.

[8] Weiss, *The Bible from Within*, 266.

[9] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 238–39.

[10] Douglas J. Green ("The Good, the Bad and the Better," 76) takes the confession of line 1a to be the "introductory thematic statement that is then developed through the rest of the psalm." However, such a view does not adequately account for the verbless clauses of lines 4c and 5c and their significance to the shifts in voicing within the psalm as a whole. See, also, Mittmann, "Aufbau und Einheit des Danklieds Psalm 23"; Cooper, "Structure, Midrash and Meaning," 11.

The provision and protection, which were illustrated in the domain of the shepherd, are now found at the table. The presence of the enemies is not dismissed with the change in metaphor. Rather, in this image too, Yahweh's presence is more effective than the enemies' presence is terrifying. In the dark valley, Yahweh is there. In threatening company or in the sight of those who stand in hostility, Yahweh sets the table and anoints.

The third verbless clause, כוסי רויה ("my cup is full"; v. 5), initiates the transition back into the alternation between first person and third person. Returning to the voicing of vv. 1–3, the psalm shifts back into testimony. It is only goodness and steadfast love stalking the psalmist.[11] Once protection has allowed provision to become the focus again, the voicing safely returns to referring to Yahweh in the third person. In this psalm, the voicing creates a dialectic of distance and proximity. That is not to say that Yahweh seems to be far off when the psalmist uses the third person, because that would contradict the metaphors being employed. Nevertheless, Yahweh does seem to be brought nearer by the use of the second person. Mark A. Smith comments, "The opening of Psalm 23, vv. 1-3, depicts God before the psalmist. The middle of the poem, v. 4, describes God with the psalmist. The end of the poem, vv. 5-6, invokes divine goodness and mercy to follow after the psalmist. The structure of the psalm, beginning, middle and end, re-presents how the divine presence goes before, with and after the psalmist . . . ."[12] The metaphors and shifting voicing work in concert to achieve the intimacy and sense of assurance in this

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[11] Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 124; Arterbury and Bellinger, "'Returning' to the Hospitality," 392; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:352; Tanner, "King Yahweh as the Good Shepherd," 283; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 308.

[12] Smith, "Setting and Rhetoric in Psalm 23," 62–63.

lyric poem.[13] While the beauty of their harmony may have the same effect, an analysis of this psalm without hearing its voicing—along with its metaphors—is incomplete.

Psalm 28

לְדָוִד	1	Davidic.
אֵלֶיךָ יהוה אֶקְרָא		To you, O Yahweh, I call.
צוּרִי אַל־תֶּחֱרַשׁ מִמֶּנִּי		O my Rock, do not be deaf to me,
פֶּן־תֶּחֱשֶׁה מִמֶּנִּי		Lest you be silent to me,
וְנִמְשַׁלְתִּי עִם־יוֹרְדֵי בוֹר׃		And I become just as those who go down to the pit.
שְׁמַע קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנַי	2	Hear the sound of my supplication,
בְּשַׁוְּעִי אֵלֶיךָ		When I cry out to you,
בְּנָשְׂאִי יָדַי		When I lift up my hands,
אֶל־דְּבִיר קָדְשֶׁךָ׃		To the place of your holiness.
אַל־תִּמְשְׁכֵנִי עִם־רְשָׁעִים	3	Do not drag me away with the wicked,
וְעִם־פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן		And with doers of iniquity,
דֹּבְרֵי שָׁלוֹם עִם־רֵעֵיהֶם		Those who speak peace with their neighbors,
וְרָעָה בִּלְבָבָם׃		But evil is in their hearts.
תֶּן־לָהֶם כְּפָעֳלָם	4	Give to them according to their deeds
וּכְרֹעַ מַעַלְלֵיהֶם		And according to their evil practices.
כְּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם תֵּן לָהֶם		According to work of their hands, give to them.
הָשֵׁב גְּמוּלָם לָהֶם׃		Return their dealings to them.
כִּי לֹא יָבִינוּ אֶל־פְּעֻלֹּת יהוה	5	Because they do not understand the deeds of Yahweh
וְאֶל־מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו		Or the work of his hands,
יֶהֶרְסֵם וְלֹא יִבְנֵם׃		He will tear them down and he will not rebuild them.
בָּרוּךְ יהוה	6	Blessed be Yahweh,
כִּי־שָׁמַע קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנָי׃		Because he has heard the sound of my supplication.
יהוה עֻזִּי וּמָגִנִּי	7	Yahweh is my strength and my shield;
בּוֹ בָטַח לִבִּי		In him, my heart trusts.[14]
וְנֶעֱזָרְתִּי וַיַּעֲלֹז לִבִּי		I was helped, and my heart rejoiced!
וּמִשִּׁירִי אֲהוֹדֶנּוּ׃		With my song, I will thank him!
יהוה עֹז־לָמוֹ וּמָעוֹז	8	Yahweh is their strength and stronghold;
יְשׁוּעוֹת מְשִׁיחוֹ הוּא׃		He is the deliverances of his anointed one.

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[13] Although Tanner ("King Yahweh as the Good Shepherd") advocates for understanding all of the imagery of Ps 23 "under the rubric of Yahweh as king" (270), she does argue that the juxtaposition of the powerful metaphors with personal address to Yahweh "is but one of the twists that will cause the reader to look at the contrasts in the psalm as part of its message" (269).

[14] Here, בטח, the 3ms suffix conjugation of the verb בטח, functions as an experience perfect. See Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §163; *GBHS* §3.2.1c; Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 143; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 275; Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 96; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:403; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 178.

הוֹשִׁיעָה אֶת־עַמֶּךָ וּבָרֵךְ אֶת־נַחֲלָתֶךָ 9 Deliver your people and bless your inheritance!
וּרְעֵם וְנַשְּׂאֵם עַד־הָעוֹלָם׃ Shepherd them and carry them forever!

In terms of genre and form, the voicing of Ps 28 invites consideration and discussion. The voicing of Ps 28 makes genre identification difficult. Since this psalm includes elements from multiple constructed form-critical categories, some scholars understand Ps 28's structure to be a plea for help (vv. 1–4), answered by a salvation oracle (v. 5), and concluded by a song of thanksgiving (vv. 6–9).[15] Jacobson admits, "This identification is problematic, however, because the poem is missing the normal framework of a song of thanksgiving (such as one sees in the first verses of Psalms 30 and 40). Furthermore, the approach is problematic because it forces the interpreter to assume either that different voices speak different parts of this psalm, that time has passed between vv. 5 and 6, or both."[16] Interpretations of this psalm are guided by interpreters' expectations. Which elements of the psalm receive the most attention affects the genre identification of the whole, and vice versa; genre identification privileges certain verses over others. For example, a lament classification brings emphasis to vv. 1–4, but hearing it as a song of thanksgiving shifts the weight to vv. 6–9.[17] The problem with genre identification is that it has a propensity to dictate expectations for respective psalms, making the focus on how the psalm breaks the mold of a constructed paradigm and drawing attention away from the relationship between the present elements. Additionally, genre or form identification creates expectations where voicing is concerned. However, a lyric poetic approach attempts to focus on the literary phenomena present within a respective psalm and

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[15] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 273; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 150; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 237.
[16] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 273.
[17] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 273.

explore the interplay and relationships between the various poetic devices. A lyric poetic

reading of Ps 28 explores the contrasting voicing (shifting addressees) and tone (moving

between desperation and confidence) and appreciates the poetic transitions between

request and praise.

Before embarking on a lyric poetic reading, the implications of a dialogic reading

should be noted. Mandolfo interprets the shift in voicing in v. 5—from addressing

Yahweh in the second person (vv. 1–4) to describing Yahweh in the third person—as a

new discourse, because she finds it "particularly odd that in the middle of a speech unit

YHWH is addressed both directly and indirectly."[18] She goes on to explain, "While the

actual speaker behind this discourse cannot be known, it is clear that it serves a different

rhetorical function than the previous discourse of the supplicant."[19] Mandolfo

unnecessarily equates a shift in rhetorical function with a shift in perspective; a change in

the direction of the speech does not automatically imply a change in the origin of the

speech. She, in fact, is inconsistent with this method of doling out speaking parts. Where

v. 5 is concerned, Mandolfo introduces another speaker due to the change in addressee(s).

However, concerning the following verses, she argues, "Because of the use of 1cs

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[18] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 65. For a similar interpretation of Ps 28, see Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 236–41; Ridderbos, *De Psalmen*, 1:287–88, and Bosma's use of Ridderbos' interpretation in his articles on voicing: "Discerning the Voices in the Psalms. Part 1," 206–8; "Discerning the Voices in the Psalms," 145–46. Craigie (*Psalms 1–50*, 239) posits, "These words are distinguished from the preceding part of the liturgy partly by their declarative substance and partly by the change in the form of address; whereas in the supplication, the psalmist addressed the Lord in the second person, now the speaker refers to the Lord in the third person." Craigie, too, fails to present a strong argument for understanding the declarative nature and shift in addressee in v. 5 as a change in speaker without using genre identification as a crutch for interpretation. Jacobson (deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 273–80) lays both interpretations—hearing one sustained voice and hearing a second voice responding to the supplicant—side by side in his commentary on Ps 28. It should be noted that Jacboson does not include Ps 28 in his monograph, *Many Are Saying*, which analyzes direct discourse in the Hebrew Psalter and defines *direct discourse* as "an act of speech that is embedded in another act of speech" (5). See, also, Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 177.

[19] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 66.

pronouns, 'my', 'I', it is clear that vv. 6–7 mark a return to the supplicant's discourse."[20] Although vv. 6–7 continue v. 5's third-person description of Yahweh, she associates these verses with the second-person address to Yahweh in vv. 1–4. She cites the use of the first person as the indicator of the supplicant's voice but does not exclude v. 4, which directly addresses Yahweh but contains no first-person language, from the supplicant's plea. For these very reasons—both a lack of first-person language ("personal element"[21]) and third-person references to Yahweh—Mandolfo contends that v. 8 also represents an interrupting, didactic voice that refers to the supplicant in the third person.[22] She labels the speaker of the final lines (v. 9) as "indeterminate";[23] she neglects to comment on who addresses Yahweh here, leaving the didactic voice addressing Yahweh, for the first time in this psalm, as a possibility. According to her interpretation of Ps 28, the efficacy of the four lines of v. 5 is incredible. Without directly addressing the supplicant's prayer, the message of the didactic voice causes the faith and perspective of the supplicant to pivot. Verse 8, then, offers an interpretation of all that has transpired in vv. 1–7. Mandolfo comments, "The supplicant invoked and then petitioned YHWH, was answered and subsequently responded with joy to the oracular discourse. The didactic voice of v. 8 interprets for the audience the meaning of what they have observed—YHWH—has paid heed to his 'anointed one'."[24] In v. 9, the supplicant is heard once again, but the petition is now for communal, not just personal, concerns.

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[20] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 66.
[21] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 66.
[22] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 66–68.
[23] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 64.
[24] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 68.

A dialogic reading of Ps 28 is a plausible explanation for the shifts in voicing, especially if one's interpretation is controlled—rather than informed—by the world behind the text in particular, reconstructed cultic contexts. However, as a lyric poem that was, evidently, preserved for its continuing use, Ps 28's shifts in voicing should be explored as poetic phenomena and in the context of this psalm's other literary devices. Benjamin J. Segal offers an alternative interpretation of the voicing, arguing, "In conflict and with a degree of desperation (the Pit signifying death), someone prays. Afterward, feeling that his prayer has been accepted, he expresses his gratitude, but then moves on to pray for others. . . . The three principle sections of Psalm 28 are clear: (a) the speaker's request for himself vis-à-vis evildoers (vv.1–5); (b) thanksgiving for acceptance of the prayer (vv. 6–7); and (c) a prayer for others (vv. 8–9)."[25] Psalm 28 opens with cries for Yahweh to listen, speak, and respond. Fronting the addressee of this desperate prayer, v. 1 opens: אליך יהוה אקרא "To you, O Yahweh, I call." The prepositional phrase (אליך; "to you"), indicating the intended recipient of the plea, and the two vocatives—יהוה ("O Yahweh") and צורי ("O my Rock")—set the tone for vv. 1–4. These verses are overtly direct address, which begs Yahweh to hear, be attentive, and take action. Concepts of sound and silence dominate vv. 1–2. Five of the seven lines reverberate with the sounds of the supplicant and petition Yahweh not be deaf or silent: אקרא ("I call"; line 1b); אל־תחרש ("do not be deaf"; line 1c); פן־תחשה ("lest you be silent"; line 1d), שמע קול תחנוני ("hear the sound of my supplication"; line 2a); בשועי ("when I cry out"; line 2b). The reason for desperation is given in line 5e: joining the horde that is destined for the pit.[26]

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[25] Segal, A New Psalm, 126–27.

[26] Goldingay, Psalms, 1:404. Goldingay (Psalms, 1:404) explains, "Death involves going into a tomb or down into a grave or down into Sheol, the metaphysical Pit (strictly the 'pit,' bôr, is a cistern, a

William P. Brown explains, "In the anguished language of lament, the psalmist is invariably set between pit and refuge, between God's absence and presence, death and deliverance."[27] The dire situation demands the loud petition, crying out to the Rock. With voice raised and hands lifted, the desperate presses into the presence of Yahweh.

Verses 3–4 continue directly addressing Yahweh but the focus is on actions. Whereas vv. 1–2 focus on prompting Yahweh to listen and intervene, vv. 3–4 center on the actions of the wicked. The wicked are described as פעלי און ("doers of iniquity"; v. 3); duplicitous—speaking peace but thinking evil (v. 3); and engaging in אלליהם ("their evil practices"; v. 4). These verses petition Yahweh to discern between the wicked and the righteous, and then heap the consequences of wickedness upon the guilty. These people working so diligently to do evil should receive their recompense.[28] Both their speech and works condemn them. In v. 5, request turns to declarative statement; instead of beseeching Yahweh through direct address concerning the wicked, v. 5 describes Yahweh, in the third person, demolishing the wicked.[29] They will be destroyed because יבינו אל־פאלת יהוה ואל־מעשה ידיו ("they do not understand the deeds of Yahweh or the work of his hands"); they will be punished for their deeds because they do not understand the deeds of Yahweh. (The implication is that if they acknowledged the works of God, then their works would be different.)[30] Jacobson asserts, "It is possible . . . to understand the speaker as a continuation of the voice of vv. 1–4, with 5a functioning as a motivating

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huge underground storage place for water that might be seen as like a huge grave pit and might be grave shaped, though much bigger.)" See, also, Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 62–73.

[27] Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 27.

[28] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:406.

[29] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:406.

[30] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 277; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:407; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 239. This is highlighted by the phonological seconding in the Hebrew. God will destroy the wicked and not rebuild them (לא יבנם; line 5c), because they failed to understand (לא יבינו; line 5a) his deeds. See Segal, *A New Psalm*, 128; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:407.

clause, which supports the request of 4d, with *kî* being translated as *for*: *Return to them their dues, for they do not perceive.* . . . In this reading, the plaintiff voice continues, and the statement of v. 5c *(he will break them)* is understood as a simple statement of anticipatory trust, similar to those found in many prayers for help."[31] Using paronomasia, specifically phonological seconding, v. 5 undercuts v. 1's suggestion that Yahweh may be deaf. Verse 5's clause, יהרסם ("he will tear them down"), is the answer to v. 1's cry, אל–תהרש ממני ("do not be deaf to me").[32]

The confidence of v. 5 foreshadows the jubilance of vv. 6–7. For it follows that if God is attentive to the dealings of the wicked and the recompense of the wicked is punishment, then surely Yahweh is aware of the righteous and discerns that their speech and acts are different from those of the wicked. Verses 6–7 praise Yahweh for hearing and helping. This psalm does shift into "the key of praise,"[33] but the transition is not as drastic as some make it out to be, especially in light of the voicing. Even though vv. 1–4 speak of Yahweh being deaf or silent, the divine direct address assumes a different reality. For God not to intervene in the situation would render God effectually deaf and silent on that matter. However, speaking directly to Yahweh—with an emphasis on sound and demonstrative actions and the use of the evocative vocative, צורי ("O my Rock"), presumes Yahweh is indeed hearing, paying attention, and the source of protection and deliverance. So, the key change into the praise of Yahweh for hearing does not represent a great transformation; it would only be a great transition if one thought Yahweh might actually have a disability. The disability language of v. 1 is only hyperbole, and this is

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[31] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 277.
[32] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:407.
[33] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 277.

evident because of the voicing. Because desperation has been voiced in vv. 1–4 and the

surety that Yahweh punishes evil has been declared in v. 5, praise breaks forth.

Verses 6–7 resume the imagery called up with the vocative צורי ("O my Rock"; v.

1), by describing Yahweh as עזי ("my strength") and מגני ("my shield"). The images of

Yahweh as protector and deliverer are sustained in declarative praise and continue in v. 8,

where Yahweh is described as עז-למו ("their strength") and מעוז ("their stronghold").

Verses 8–9 are the song of the one sure that Yahweh hears. Line 7d—ומשירי אהודנו ("With

my song, I will thank him!")—mitigates the transition from personal prayer (vv. 1–4) and

confidence (vv. 5–7) to a song of communal praise (v. 8) and petition (v. 9). Verses 8–9

leave behind the use of the first-person, singular language, which pervaded vv. 1–7.

Verse 8, still referring to Yahweh in the third person, uses a third-person plural pronoun

with the descriptor of Yahweh; Yahweh is *my* strength and *my* shield in v. 7, but *their*

strength in v. 8. Line 8a refers to Yahweh as *their* strength and line 8b describes Yahweh

as the deliverances of משיחו ("his anointed one"). This masculine, singular noun could be

a reference to the leader of Yahweh's people and inheritance or the collective עמך ("your

people"), which is grammatically masculine, singular. In either case, the variation in

number of these pronouns and objects of God's deliverance should not be interpreted as

poorly integrated interjections or additions. Verse 8 is a statement of confidence that

Yahweh acts on behalf of the community, in contrast to the statements of confidence

concerning the destruction of the wicked in v. 5 and personal deliverance in vv. 6–7.

Kraus writes, "In v. 9 the confession (v. 8) develops into an intercession for the people of

God."[34] Shifting back to direct address to Yahweh, the final verse, v. 9, petitions God

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[34] Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 342.

Psalm 32

לְדָוִד מַשְׂכִּיל	1	A Davidic *maskil*.[38]
אַשְׁרֵי נְשׂוּי־פֶּשַׁע כְּסוּי חֲטָאָה:		Blessed is the one whose transgression is lifted, Whose sin is covered.
אַשְׁרֵי אָדָם לֹא יַחְשֹׁב יהוה לוֹ עָוֹן וְאֵין בְּרוּחוֹ[39] רְמִיָּה:	2	Blessed is the one to whom Yahweh does not reckon guilt, And there is no deceit on his breath.
כִּי־הֶחֱרַשְׁתִּי בָּלוּ עֲצָמָי בְּשַׁאֲגָתִי כָּל־הַיּוֹם:	3	Indeed, I was silent; my bones were worn out, Because of my crying out all day.
כִּי יוֹמָם וָלַיְלָה תִּכְבַּד עָלַי יָדֶךָ נֶהְפַּךְ לְשַׁדִּי[40] בְּחַרְבֹנֵי קַיִץ סֶלָה:	4	Indeed, day and night your hand was heavy[41] upon me. My vigor changed as in the heat of summer. *Selah.*
חַטָּאתִי אוֹדִיעֲךָ וַעֲוֹנִי לֹא־כִסִּיתִי אָמַרְתִּי אוֹדֶה עֲלֵי פְשָׁעַי לַיהוה וְאַתָּה נָשָׂאתָ עֲוֹן חַטָּאתִי סֶלָה:	5	My sin I made known to you. My guilt I did not cover. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to Yahweh myself," And you lifted the guilt of my sin. *Selah.*
עַל־זֹאת יִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל־חָסִיד אֵלֶיךָ לְעֵת מְצֹא רַק[42]	6	Therefore, all the devout will pray to you At a time of distress.
לְשֵׁטֶף מַיִם רַבִּים אֵלָיו לֹא יַגִּיעוּ:		At a flood of great waters, they will not reach him.
אַתָּה סֵתֶר לִי מִצַּר תִּצְּרֵנִי רָנֵּי פַלֵּט תְּסוֹבְבֵנִי סֶלָה:	7	You are my hiding place. From trouble you deliver me. With joyous shouts of deliverance you surround me. *Selah.*
אַשְׂכִּילְךָ וְאוֹרְךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ־זוּ תֵלֵךְ אִיעֲצָה עָלֶיךָ עֵינִי:	8	I will teach and instruct you in the way that you should go. I will advise; my eye is on you.
אַל־תִּהְיוּ כְּסוּס כְּפֶרֶד אֵין הָבִין בְּמֶתֶג־וָרֶסֶן	9	Do not be like a horse, like a mule. There is no understanding with bit and bridle.

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[38] This psalm is riddled with textual issues. Any translation of some lines can only claim possibility not certainty. However, these issues do not obscure the voicing of this psalm. Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 110–12.

[39] The OG reads ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ; a reconstruction of the Hebrew would be בְּפִיו ("in his mouth"). A Hebrew reconstruction from the Syr. would possibly be בְּלִבּוֹ.

[40] The meaning of this clause in unclear. Emendations such as לשון (*tongue*) are problematic, just as the OG (εἰς ταλαιπωρίαν) is unhelpful. This term only occurs in the HB here and in Num 11:8. The meaning of the word in uncertain, with Holladay ("לְשַׁד," 179) providing "cake." David J. A. Clines ("לְשַׁד," 4:576) offers "cake, delicacy" but also "moisture, i.e., strength, vigor." Given the context, the translation *vigor* to represent dehydration in the heat of summer is tenable. Any translation is tentative. See Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:451; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 306–7. Contra Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 367; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 263–64.

[41] Prefix conjugations may express repeated actions in the past (Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §168; *GBHS* §3.2.2b; *BHRG* §19.3.4; *IBHS* §31.2b; *GKC* §107e). Given the preceding phrase יומם ולילה ("day and night") and the immediate context, this *qal* prefix conjugation is rendered into English as "was heavy."

[42] This phrase, מצא רק, is also problematic. All translations are tentative, but the emendation מצוק (*distress*) is the most plausible. Craigie (*Psalms 1–50*, 264) argues, "If the *waw* was written erroneously as *resh*, the *aleph* in MT may then have been introduced to resolve the anomalous form. This general solution is adopted by RSV, NAB and NEB." See, also, deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 307; Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 111. Contra Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 366–67; Delkurt, "Psalm 32," 47.

עֶדְיוֹ לִבְלוֹם   His ornamentation is to restrain.

בַּל קְרֹב אֵלֶיךָ׃   He does not come near you.[43]

רַבִּים מַכְאוֹבִים לָרָשָׁע   10   Many are the pains of the wicked person.

וְהַבּוֹטֵחַ בַּיהוה חֶסֶד יְסוֹבְבֶנּוּ׃   But steadfast love will surround one who trusts Yahweh.

שִׂמְחוּ בַיהוה וְגִילוּ צַדִּיקִים   11   Be glad in Yahweh and rejoice, O righteous ones!

וְהַרְנִינוּ כָּל־יִשְׁרֵי־לֵב׃   Shout joyously, all the upright of heart.

Psalm 32 has two major sections, vv. 1–7, and 8–11[44] and three major shifts in voicing, vv. 1–2, 3–7, and 8–11. Propositional truths (vv. 1–2) are unpacked with prayer heard and overheard (vv. 3–7); then, direct address to Yahweh gives way to didactic implications of the personal confessions of sin and trust (vv. 8–11). The shifting voices of Psalm 32 contribute to its artful complexity. A careful consideration of the voicing highlights the coherence and cohesiveness of this psalm and demonstrates the didactic function and the virtue of its utilization in such a context. Verses 1b–2 are cast as beatitudes. These אשרי statements speak generically about an individual whose sin is forgiven; that person is blessed.[45] There is no explicit addressee as these four lines are not addressed grammatically to anyone; they speak of both the forgiven and Yahweh—the

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[43] Tanner (deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 307) remarks that all interpretations of this verse are educated guesses and "no solution is superior to the other." There are two main issues in interpreting this verse: 1) the phrase עדיו and 2) the syntax. Where the MT offers עדיו, the OG provides τὰς σιαγόνας αὐτῶν ("their cheeks"). Kraus (*Psalms 1–59*, 367), following Mowinckel's sense of the term in this verse (*Psalm Studies*, 1:56), emends the text and reads עזו ("his strength"). A. A. Macintosh ("Third Root עדה in Biblical Hebrew") proposes that the nouns עדיו (Ps 32:9), עדיק (Ps 103:5), and בעדי עדיים (Ezek 16:7) are derived from a third root of the verb עדה. Macintosh argues, by comparing its Arabic cognate (غزا[ى])and its uses, that this third root "indicates the swift movement of water and of horses" (467). Therefore, he proposes עדיו should be translated "his swift movement, gallop" or "his liveliness, sprightliness" (468). Craigie (*Psalms 1–50*, 264–65) adopts this view, translating lines 9a–b, "Do not be like a horse, like a mule without understanding, whose gallop must be restrained with bridle and halter" (265). However, the translations and interpretations of other scholars—such as Tanner (deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 307), Alter (*The Book of Psalms*, 112), Holger Delkurt ("Psalm 32," 47)— reflect a close reading of the MT.

[44] Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 367. Potgieter ("The Structure and Homogeneity of Psalm 32," para. 8) uses structural elements to argue for the composition of this psalm in its entirety; based on his identification and analysis of chiastic structures, he contends that vv. 1–5 make up the first half and vv. 6–11 the second. Holger Delkurt ("Psalm 32," 48) divides the psalm into two sections: vv. 1–5, which describe liberation from sin, and vv. 6–11, which teach the implications of this liberation.

[45] Jacobs, "Sin, Silence, Suffering, and Confession," 15; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:453; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 266; Jenson, "Psalm 32," 172.

forgiver—in the third person.[46] These אשרי statements speak generally because they are propositional, and the two following sections, vv. 3–7 and 8–11, explore the veracity and impact of these beatitudes.[47]

Verses 3–7 testify to the truth of vv. 1–2, providing personal experience as support.[48] In contrast to the proverbial generalities of vv. 1–2, these verses are cast in the perspective of an individual who has experienced the relief of forgiveness.[49] They describe the misery of the unrepentant. Where vv. 1 and 2 each begin with אשרי ("blessed"), vv. 3 and 4 each begin with the particle כי ("indeed"); this heightens the contrast between the general description of one who has been forgiven and the first-person description of experiencing life without forgiveness.[50] The proverb takes on flesh. The transition into first person is made in v. 3, but line 4a provides the first indicator that vv. 3–7 have an explicit addressee. Here, the suffering speaker says: כי יומם ולילה תכבד עלי ("Indeed, day and night your hand was heavy upon me"), but to whom these verses are directed does not become clear until v. 5. In v. 5, the supplicant recounts to Yahweh having repented and received forgiveness. Also, embedded within this prayer is a line of self-quotation. In this space of suffering, the speaker breaks the described silence and repeats the resolution to repent directly to Yahweh,[51] recounting: אמרתי אודה עלי פשעי ליהוה ("I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to Yahweh myself,'" [line 5c]). This self-quotation demonstrates two things: 1) "development of character"[52] as it represents the

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[46] Delkurt, "Psalm 32," 49; Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 100–101.

[47] Delkurt, "Psalm 32," 49.

[48] Botha, "Psalm 32 as a Wisdom Intertext," para. 6–7; Delkurt, "Psalm 32," 49; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 266.

[49] Jacobs, "Sin, Silence, Suffering, and Confession," 19; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 266.

[50] Tanner, "Preaching the Penitential Psalms," 92.

[51] Jacobs, "Sin, Silence, Suffering, and Confession," 31; Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 63; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 369.

[52] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 81.

actual decision to seek forgiveness, and 2) a change in relationship to Yahweh as the contrast between referring to Yahweh in the third person in the past and speaking directly with him now gives the impression of present closeness. Verse 5 resonates with vv. 1–2 by seconding the three terms used for wrongdoing. In each case of repetition, these terms are affixed with first-person, singular possessive pronouns.[53] Thus, with the declaration ואתה נשאת עון חטאתי ("and you lifted the guilt of my sin"), the psalm echoes the message of vv. 1–2 but with the rhetorical impact of personal testimony. Before sin was confessed, Yahweh's hand was oppressive (v. 4); however, Yahweh's response to confession is lifting the guilt of sin. Tanner comments, "It has taken eight lines to describe the weight of sin and the path to confession, and here it is reversed with four words describing God's act."[54]

Verses 6–7, also directly addressing Yahweh, resume the generalizing nature of vv. 1–2 and then offer personal statements of assurance and praise. This prayer is testimonial. Given the immediate context of this divine address, it appears that the speech is intended to be heard by Yahweh and overheard by the righteous and upright ones addressed directly in vv. 8–11.[55] Suderman argues that when psalms feature shifts in addressees, each addressee or group of addressees "also has the potential to overhear what is being said to someone else."[56] Describing personal suffering because of sin serves as a warning for those who do not heed the message and wisdom of vv. 1–2. Therefore,

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[53] Each term is repeated once on its own: חטאה ("sin"; line 1c) and חטאתי ("my sin"; lines 5a); פשע ("transgression"; line 1b) and פשעי ("my transgressions"; line 5c); and עון ("guilt"; line 2a) and עוני ("my guilt"; line 5b). However, עון and חטא are repeated a second time in line 5d in a construct relationship: עון חטאתי.("the guilt of my sin").

[54] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 308.

[55] Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, 547; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:457; Botha, "Psalm 32 as a Wisdom Intertext," para. 3.

[56] Suderman, "Prayers Heard and Overheard," 209.

the first-person speech of vv. 3–7 operates on both the vertical and horizontal planes—directly addressing Yahweh and providing the foundation of personal testimony for the didactic discourse addressed to people that is to follow. These verses may be classified strictly as prayer when they are considered in isolation and are evaluated only on the textual-grammatical level. Indeed, they are prayer; however, given their context, they also function as testimony. David G. Firth argues that testimony calls for response and "the new insight towards which it works is its didactic goal. Testimony does not guarantee an answer to a specific problem for those who hear it, but as a strongly self-involved medium it seeks to challenge those encountering it to work towards the same insight in their experience."[57] This prayer also functions as testimony as it is overheard, modeling repentance and trust. Verses 1–5 declare the blessedness of those who turn to Yahweh in their sin, and vv. 6–7 proclaim the deliverance of those who turn to Yahweh in distress. The last two verses of this section, vv. 6–7, follow the same pattern of those preceding them—moving from generality (vv. 1–2) to personal experience (vv. 3–5); using the collective כל־חסיד, v. 6 describes the devout as praying during times of distress and being spared, and v. 7 is first-person confession directed to Yahweh concerning refuge and deliverance.

In vv. 8–11, those who have been overhearing are addressed directly now. Prayer turns to instruction; the wisdom being offered is direct. This second-person address alternates between the singular and plural. Verse 8 is directed to an individual addressee. In fact, on the grammatical level, the voicing in v. 8 is consistent with vv. 3–5. There is, however, a clear change in addressee in terms of content.[58] The divine "you" of vv. 4–7 is

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[57] Firth, "The Teaching of the Psalms," 161.
[58] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 101.

not the "you" receiving instruction and being watched over in v. 8; the speaker turns from

address on the vertical plan to address on the horizontal plane.[59] Artur Weiser explains:

> Using the form of a didactic exhortation and speaking in a much more restrained
> fashion, the poet now turns to the community of the godly ones whom he wants to
> spare the bitter experience of his own struggle. It accords with the style of the
> epigrammatic saying of the Wisdom writers that the psalmist used the word 'you'
> in addressing them, as indeed his attempt to make the truth of his experience clear
> to them by using parables (v. 9) and proverbs (v. 10) throws into relief, in sharp
> contrast to the direct character of the first part of the psalm, the didactic element
> inherent in the maxims of the Wisdom writers.[60]

Weiser focuses on the wisdom elements of Ps 32, so his descriptive language is steeped

with wisdom references. However, Hilber, who categorizes Ps 32 as a psalm of

thanksgiving, also contends that the shift in addressee in v. 8 should be interpreted as the

petitioner's shift into exhortation.[61] Form-critical categories and approaches have skewed

scholars' interpretations of Ps 32, leading to interpretations based chiefly on form-critical

expectations and not a close poetic analysis of Ps 32 itself. Nevertheless, the two main

positions on the speaker of v. 8 are not necessarily tied to one genre subcategory over

another or to a particular argument concerning form.

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[59] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 309; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2:137; Castellino, "Psalm 32," 39; Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms*, 300. This analysis of voicing follows the interpretation of Ps 32 as voiced by a single speaker with multiple addressees, because the arguments for assigning the words of v. 8 to Yahweh are so varying and tenuous and Yahweh is referred to in the third person in vv. 10–11. The interpretation of v. 8 or vv. 8–9 as interjected divine speech or quoted divine speech is plausible, but the case for this is ambiguous. Ultimately, the choice to follow the interpretation of divine speech would only significantly affect which chapter the analysis of Ps 32 appears in: this one or the one focusing on psalms that feature shifts in speakers; this interpretive choice would also ungird the thesis of this project.

[60] Weiser, *The Psalms*, 286. For more on the wisdom elements or classification of Ps 32, see Botha, "Psalm 32 as a Wisdom Intertext"; Willmes, *Freude über die Vergebung der Sünden*, 28–31; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 200; Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 1*, 141; Perdue, *Wisdom and Cult*, 324; Murphy, "A New Classification of Literary Forms in the Psalms," 161.

[61] Hilber, *Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms*, 169, 208. He bases this interpretation on form-critical expectations. He proposes this is the best interpretive option because vv. 8–9 come where one would expect exhortation directed toward the community in an individual thanksgiving psalm. Along with Hilber, a number of scholars recognize wisdom elements or a connection to the wisdom tradition and maintain the classification of psalm of thanksgiving for Ps 32; see deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 306; Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 100–101; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 367–68; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 265–66; Jenson, "Psalm 32," 172–76.

The lack of consensus concerning who the speaker and addressee(s) are may be attributed primarily to the abrupt nature of the shift in voicing. Some scholars identify v. 8 (and 9) as a divine interjection on the basis of the unexpected nature of the shift in addressee, form-critical expectations, or the automatic attribution of עֵינִי עָלֶיךָ ("my eye is on you") to Yahweh.[62] For example, Goldingay writes, "While the psalm does imply that this repentant sinner could leap into being a teacher, the 'you' is singular, and there is no individual whom one can identify as addressee; further, 'My eye is upon you' sounds more like Yhwh's words."[63] On the other hand, this sudden shift prompts some scholars to equate the change in addressee(s) in vv. 7–8 with a shift in speaker. The change in the direction of address does create a contrast with the preceding verses; however, Tanner comments, "Psalms often change from the plural to singular person and back again without explanation . . . . Psalm 51 makes the same move, going from confession and forgiveness to teaching (51:13-15). A response to forgiveness is warning others so they will not follow the same path."[64] Why would Yahweh respond to the one testifying and praising with words of caution and sharp warning? It is more plausible that one who has conversed with Yahweh and has experienced the great relief of forgiveness would then instruct others to also choose the right path. Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger Jr. write:

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[62] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:458; Limburg, *Psalms*, 104; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 204; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 371; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 267.

[63] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:458. Hossfeld (*Die Psalmen I*, 204) argues that Yahweh's response provides additional assistance or counsel for the newly repentant supplicant. Mandolfo (*God in the Dock*, 100–103) follows a third reading, recognizing two different discourses (because of stylistic discrepancies, oscillation between singular and plural addressees, and third-person references to Yahweh in vv. 10–11) and assigning vv. 8–11 to a third participant.

[64] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 309. Brueggemann and Bellinger (*Psalms*, 161) also make this comparison and argument. Gunkel (*Introduction to Psalms*, 300) identifies the addressee as an individual who can benefit from the experience of the psalmist. See, also, Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 1:397-98.

This educational ministry is not presumptuous, for the psalmist witnesses not to his or her own righteousness but to divine grace – God's willingness and God's ability to set things and persons right. Thus 'the way you should go' (v. 8) points to the psalmist's example of breaking silence to confess sin (vv. 4, 5) and to his or her conviction of God's willingness to forgive and restore (vv. 7, 10). This psalmist's witness in vv. 6–11 is in essence an invitation to others, including the readers of Psalm 32, to confess their own sinfulness and to live in dependence upon the grace of God.[65]

Verses 8–11 perpetuate the oscillation between the singular and plural regarding the righteous. Verse 1 describes an individual who experiences forgiveness. Verse 6 uses the collective phrase כל־חסיד ("all the devout") but then refers to an individual escaping the terror of flood waters: אליו לא יגיעו ("they will not reach him"). In v. 8, the speaker turns from prayer to exhortation, promising to teach and instruct a masculine, singular "you" (אשכילך ואורך) and stating: עליך עיני ("my eye is on you").[66] In contrast, v. 9 issues a plural negative directive (אל־תהיו כסוס כפרד; "do not be like a horse, like a mule"). This metaphoric language likens invoking discipline to ignorance. The proverbial nature of v. 9 may explain the shift to the plural second-person address. Verse 10 switches back to generic, descriptions of individuals, referring to a wicked person and one who trusts Yahweh. There is an individual aspect to repentance and forgiveness; however, again, in v. 11 a group is addressed. The view is broadened and כל־חסיד ("all the devout") come

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[65] Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 161–62.

[66] Some scholars—such as Goldingay (*Psalms*, 2:458–59), Tournay (*Seeing and Hearing God with the Psalms*, 167), Kraus (*Psalms 1–59*, 371), and Craigie (*Psalms 1–50*, 267)—argue this clause belies a divine perspective; only Yahweh could say: עליך עיני ("my eye is one you"). Thus, they use this clause to support assigning Yahweh the role of speaker for at least v. 8. However, there are other examples in the HB of this collocation in which Yahweh is not the subject. In 1 Kgs 1:20, Bathsheba confronts David concerning who will succeed him and says . . . ואתה אדני המלך עיני כל־ישראל עליך ("But you, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are upon you . . . "). In 2 Chron 20:12, Jehoshaphat, in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, petitions Yahweh. He confesses to Yahweh that they do not have the power or knowledge to confront the looming attack and declares: כי עליך עינינו ("Indeed, our eyes are on you"). Jeremiah 40:4 reports the Nebuzaradan captain of the bodyguard as saying to the prophet Jeremiah: ועתה הנה פתחתיך היום מן־האזקים אשר על־ידך אם־טוב בעיניך לבוא אתי בבל בא ואשים את־עיני עליך . . . ("Now, notice, I have freed you today from the shackles which were on your hands. If it appears good to you to come with my Babylon, come, and I will keep my eye on you . . . "). Thus, the phrase עיני עליך should not trigger an automatic categorization of divine perspective.

back into focus, as imperatives call for צדיקים ("righteous ones") to be glad and rejoice and כל־ישרי־לב ("all the upright of heart") to shout joyously. In Ps 32, the explicit directives (אל־תהיו in v. 9; שמחו ,גילו, and הרנינו in v. 11) are plural; whereas, the indicative instruction is singular. Mandolfo writes: "What are we to make of a plural addressee bounded front and back by singular addressees? Perhaps this rhetorical strategy indicates the teaching is to be understood as directed toward the individual penitent primarily, but meant also to have an impact on the congregation . . . ."[67] This oscillation between the singular and plural in respect to the recipients of the message of this psalm has the effect of a merism, both targeting the individual and having communal impact and import. By issuing the explicit directives to an expanded audience the speaker softens the force of the commands for the individual and maintains the general nature of the wisdom being offered. Goldingay explains the shifts between plural and singular pronouns and nouns "encourage people to see the verses' application to them as individuals and not to hide behind community."[68] Thus, the individual is encouraged to receive the teaching and guidance personally as well as to recognize that all are responsible for the way they should go.

Psalm 32 begins with אשרי statements concerning an individual who has repented and been forgiven (vv. 1–2). The wisdom of these statements is incarnate as the speaker addresses Yahweh (vv. 3–7), testifying to the misery of living in unrepentance and the relief and liberation of forgiveness. The prayer, which describes the repentance process and announces the salvation to be found in Yahweh, has a didactic function as overheard prayer serves as testimony. The prayer itself, not just the content, is a testimony to the

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[67] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 102.
[68] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:459.

transformation; the one who was reduced to silence and groaning in a state of sin now addresses Yahweh directly. Verses 8–11 are not addressed directly to Yahweh but offer instruction that echoes the wisdom of the אשרי statements of vv. 1–2 and stands upon the experience described in vv. 3–7. These verses alternate between singular and plural address. With both the individual and community in view, the plural, negative directive in v. 9 is bounded by instruction directed to an individual. Universal wisdom must be applied individually. Verse 10, a "general observation in didactic style,"[69] has no explicit addressee, speaking of Yahweh, the wicked person, and one who trusts Yahweh in the third person. Finally, v. 11, calls for praise using plural imperative directed to the righteous and upright. Psalm 32 begins with a picture of personal righteousness and concludes with commands for the upright congregation. The didactic strategy of the psalm includes the oscillation between singular and plural address and description of the righteous and the inclusion of prayer to be overheard as testimony. This didactic psalm calls for repentance and praise and its thrust is bolstered by the texture of its voicing.

Psalm 76

לַמְנַצֵּחַ בִּנְגִינֹת מִזְמֹור לְאָסָף שִׁיר[70]׃	1	For the director. With strings. An Asaphic psalm. A song.
נֹודָע בִּיהוּדָה אֱלֹהִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גָּדֹול שְׁמֹו׃	2	God is known[71] in Judah; In Israel, his name is great.
וַיְהִי בְשָׁלֵם סֻכֹּו וּמְעֹונָתֹו בְצִיֹּון׃	3	His lair has been in Salem And his den in Zion.
שָׁמָּה שִׁבַּר רִשְׁפֵי־קָשֶׁת מָגֵן וְחֶרֶב וּמִלְחָמָה סֶלָה׃	4	There he broke lightning flashes of the bow, Shield and sword and war. *Selah.*

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[69] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:459.

[70] Some OG manuscripts add πρὸς τὸν Ἀσσύριον ("concerning the Assyrian").

[71] Tate (*Psalms 51–100*, 260) interprets נודע as an epithet for Yahweh and translates this line as a verbless clause: "The Renowned One in Judah is God."

נָאוֹר[72] אַתָּה — 5 Resplendent are you,

אַדִּיר מֵהַרְרֵי־טָרֶף: More majestic[73] than the mountains of prey.[74]

אֶשְׁתּוֹלְלוּ אַבִּירֵי לֵב — 6 The stronghearted let themselves become plunder,

נָמוּ שְׁנָתָם They slumbered their sleep,

וְלֹא־מָצְאוּ כָל־אַנְשֵׁי־חַיִל יְדֵיהֶם: And none of the valiant men found their strength.[75]

מִגַּעֲרָתְךָ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב — 7 At your rebuke, O God of Jacob,

נִרְדָּם וְרֶכֶב וָסוּס: Rider and horse fall asleep.

אַתָּה נוֹרָא אַתָּה — 8 You! Fearsome are you!

וּמִי־יַעֲמֹד לְפָנֶיךָ מֵאָז אַפֶּךָ: Who will stand before you when you are angry?

מִשָּׁמַיִם הִשְׁמַעְתָּ דִּין — 9 From the heavens, you proclaimed judgment.

אֶרֶץ יָרְאָה וְשָׁקָטָה: Earth feared and was quiet

בְּקוּם־לַמִּשְׁפָּט אֱלֹהִים — 10 When God rose to judge

לְהוֹשִׁיעַ כָּל־עַנְוֵי־אֶרֶץ סֶלָה: To deliver all oppressed of the earth. *Selah*.

כִּי־חֲמַת אָדָם תּוֹדֶךָּ — 11 For the wrath of humanity will praise you;

שְׁאֵרִית חֵמֹת תַּחְגֹּר:[76] With a remnant of wrath, you will gird yourself.

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[72] This is the occurrence of this *niphal* participle. Here, too, Tate (*Psalms 51–100*, 261) interprets the participle as an epithet, rendering נאור אתה: "You are the Resplendent One." Kraus (*Psalms 1–59*, 107–8) argues that the consonants have been interchanged, emends the text to נורא, and translates line 4a as "Fearful you are." Theodotian's translation reflects נורא, and Tg's נהיר דחיל testifies to both Hebrew participles—נאור and נורא. See, also, Weiser, *The Psalms*, 524.

[73] The adjective אדיר with the prepositive מן (here, in its prefix form) expresses a comparison. Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 328; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 609; Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 265; Segal, *A New Psalm*, 352; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 107. Contra Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:448; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 259–60; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 261. Concerning comparative adjectives, see Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §76, 317; *BHRG* §30.5.1, 39.14.8; *GKC* §133a.

[74] Where the MT reads מהררי־טרף ("than the mountains of prey"), the OG reads ἀπὸ ὀρέων αἰωνίων ("from the eternal mountains") and the Syr. is line with the OG. Some scholars—such as Goldingay (*Psalms*, 2:448), Tate (*Psalms 51–100*, 261)—imagine a scenario in which a scribe reads עד, understand it to mean *prey* in this context and substitutes its synonym טרף in this verse. Where עד represents two semantic domains—*everlasting* and *prey*, טרף only conveys *prey*.

[75] The phrase ידיהם ("their hands") is used figuratively here for *their strength, ability*, or *power*. Cf. Deut 34:12; Josh 8:20; 2 Sam 8:3; 1 Chron 18:3; Ps 78:42; Job 27:11. Clines, ed., "יד," 4:82–94. Alter (*The Book of Psalms*, 266) substitutes the English idiom "could not lift a hand" for this Hebrew idiom.

[76] Translating and interpreting this verse is fraught with difficulty. Erich Zenger (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 260–61) points out that those who want to maintain the consonants of the MT have two interpretive options based on whether the subject of line 11a is God or wrath. Emerton ("A Neglected Solution of a Problem in Psalm LXXVI 11," 136–46) searched for solutions that do not involve emending the consonantal text and discovered two scholars who also advocated for solutions for Ps 76:11 in the same vein. Charles-François Houbigant (*Notae Criticae In Universos Veteris Testamenti Libros*, 2:64) argues that the root of תודך in the MT is דוך or דכה and would then mean *he breaks* or *crushes*. I. I. Kahan (in Kittel, *Die Psalmen*, 280) suggests תכך from the root דכך, which would provide the translation: *for the wrath of humanity you will smash*. Emerton ("A Neglected Solution of a Problem in Psalm LXXVI 11," 145) follows this argument, understanding God as the subject of the verb, asserting דוך/דכך is the root of תודך, and offering, "Surely thou dost crush the wrath of man." However, others, who follow the consonants of the MT, interpret המת ("wrath") as the subject of the verb. Alter (*The Book of Psalms*, 266) contends, "Without performing extensive reconstructive surgery on the text, one may tentatively propose the following sense: Even human beings in the momentum of their fury are compelled to acknowledge God when they see Him exercising the mere residue of all the furies at His disposable (or, alternately, exercising all possible furies to their last remains." See, also, deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 609; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:449; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 260–61; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 261–62. On the

נִדְרוּ וְשַׁלְּמוּ לַיהוה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם	12	Make vows to Yahweh your God and fulfill them!
כָּל־סְבִיבָיו יוֹבִילוּ שַׁי לַמּוֹרָא:		Let all those around him bring a gift to the Fearsome One.
יִבְצֹר רוּחַ נְגִידִים	13	He will cut off the spirit of the leaders.
נוֹרָא לְמַלְכֵי־אָרֶץ:		He is feared by kings of the earth.

Psalm 76 is filled with robust and vivid imagery of Yahweh. The descriptive language about Yahweh's character and acts, expressed both as being heard and overheard by him, make conjecture concerning the original context and development of this psalm enticing. What event begged for such a song? What memories ushered it into the Psalter? Many scholars have directed their attention and scholarship to situating this psalm and its development in a specific historical context.[77] Elements of Ps 76 do resonate with particular events and eras in Israel's history; however, such estimations can only remain conjecture. Goldingay elaborates, "The psalm reflects events in Israel's story, but it does not encourage us to tie it to particular events; this story will have been celebrated in worship, but we do not know how; the psalm celebrates the fact that Yhwh will so act again . . . ."[78] Psalm 76 uses testimony, prayer, and community address to leverage memories of what God had done to call for worship and faithfulness. The description of and address to the Fearsome One leads to devotion.

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other hand, others—such as Krause (*Psalms 1–59*, 108, 111), Otto Eissfeldt ("Psalm 76," 801–8), Louis Jacquet (*Les psaumes et le cœur de l'homme*, 2:492, 494), Hans Schmidt (*Die Psalmen*, 145), and Eduard König (*Die Psalmen*, 422)—focus on the consonantal text and interpret the words אדם in line 11a and חמת in line 11b as the proper nouns Edom and Hamath. While it is plausible, this reading is accompanied by its own set of interpretive challenges.

[77] For examples, see, Vermeylen, *Jérusalem centre du monde*, 87; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 259–64; Seybold, "Psalm 76"; Seybold, "Jerusalem in the View of the Psalms"; Schreiner, *Sion-Jerusalem, Jahwes Königssitz*, 233; Eissfeldt, "Psalm 76," 801–8.

[78] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:450. Mowinckel (*The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 110) also points out the futility of focusing on the historical reconstruction and historical interpretation of Zion hymns, which Ps 76 is often categorized as, writing, "Attempts have been made to interpret them historically, in connexion [*sic*] with some particular historical event, in which Yahweh had clearly proved himself king, e.g. the fall of the Chaldean kingdom and the return of the first 'Diaspora Jews' to Zion. But this does not explain the universal, world-embracing character of these psalms. And why are there no definite references to actual historical events?"

Verses 2–4 declare God's fame and abiding in a series of localities: Judah, Israel, Salem, and Zion. This testimony serves as a declaration of power and presence yet its language also has a distancing effect. God has chosen Judah and Israel in which to dwell; he has made himself known there. Knowing and being known often connote some level of closeness, and the places mentioned illicit the concepts of covenant and God's inbreaking presence. However, v. 4 describes God's peace-making as being שמה ("there"). Judah, Israel, Salem, and Zion are described as distant places, and there is a tension between God being known and the spatial separation evoked by the language. In addition to this distancing language, these verses of testimony use third-person language to describe God. This voicing, further stoking the tension between presence and absence, reinforces the separation that the spatial language communicates. While v. 2 broadcasts that God is known in Judah and his name is great in Israel, only the generic term אלהים ("God") is used. Already there are connotations of covenant and war, but neither the tetragrammaton—the covenantal name יהוה (*Yahweh*)—nor more descriptive divine epithets (e.g., יהוה צבאת, "Yahweh of Hosts") are used. This testimony of God's renown and greatness describes him as powerful and peace-making yet maintains a degree of separation and reverence.

However, in the second stanza, vv. 5–7, God is directly addressed. Two verses are explicit in their direct address: נאור אתה אדיר מהרר־טרף ("Resplendent are you, more majestic than the mountains of prey!"; line 5a) and מגערתך אלהי יעקב נרדם ורכב וסוס ("At your rebuke, O God of Jacob, rider and horse fall asleep"; v. 7). According to the flow of logic, v. 6 also recites to Yahweh the effect of his encounter with the warriors who oppose him. Verses 5–7 are consistent with vv. 2–4 in regard to the imagery of Yahweh's

power; however, there is a clear shift in voicing from the third-person description of God to second-person praise to God. Yahweh's splendor and the effects of his rebuke are spoken back to him. This direct address climaxes with the vocative אלהי יעקב ("O God of Jacob"; v. 7).[79] Verses 2–4 highlight God's relationship with his people with references to specific locations; in vv. 5–7, this relationship is emphasized with a divine epithet. By using direct address, the God who acted in those places is assumed to be hearing now; speaking to God implies he is near. Verses 5–7, using both direct and indirect address, present a formidable picture of Yahweh and construct this image with references to past acts of war and dominion.

Verses 8–11 maintain the imagery of previous verses, feature a variant of the voicing pattern in vv. 5–7, and transition to calling for an appropriate response. This stanza begins with the pronouncement: אתה נורא אתה "You! Fearsome are you!" The direct address of v. 8 is accentuated by the fronting and seconding of the pronoun אתה ("you"). Like vv. 5–7, this stanza begins and ends with direct address. Verses 8–9a, again, directly proclaim to God his formidability. However, the intense language describing Yahweh as divine warrior, which dominates this psalm, now projects future responses to Yahweh. Instead of alluding to past events and victories, v. 8 posits the question: ומי־יעמד לפניך מאז אפך ("Who will stand before you when you are angry?"). The rest of the stanza indirectly answers this question through both direct address to Yahweh and testimony. Line 9a, maintaining the second person, moves back to referring to a past occurrence. Understanding Yahweh's character and sovereignty, as demonstrated by his previous speech and deeds, lays the foundation for encountering Yahweh in the present

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[79] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 267.

and future. Verses 9b–10, then, shift back into testimony, referring to Yahweh, again, as

אלהים (God; line 10a) to describe his actions as judge and defender of the oppressed.

Shifting back into prayer or praise, v. 11 asserts that there is coming a day when the fury

and wrath of humanity will become the praise of Yahweh.

These middle stanzas, vv. 5–7 and 8–11, play with impressions of distance and

proximity—God hearing and overhearing. They hold in tension the frightful image of

Yahweh a divine warrior, against whom the stronghearted and valiant fall, and the God of

Jacob, who is near and listening. These shifts in voicing communicate both reverent fear

and relationship; they are not merely the exposed seams of cultic material stitched

together, producing an incoherent or disjointed composition. Pierre Buis states that these

shifts in voicing are a typical feature in the Psalter, especially in psalms of praise, which

couple the commands to praise with reasons that motivate the praise.[80] Matthias Burger

argues that the structure of Ps 76, with its shifts in voicing, creates dialectics of distance

and proximity, testimony and prayer.[81] He maintains:

> Schon die Tatsache der Entstehung des Psalms zeigt, daß der ehrfurchtgebietende,
> manchmal unverständliche, ferne Gott nicht zu Resignation führt, vielmehr zu
> einem Gebet, zur Entstehung und Verschriftlichung eines Psalms. Menschen
> erfahren Gott in seiner „Schrecklichkeit" und finden zum Gebet. Das Vertrauen,
> die Nähe zu Gott ist im geschichtlichen Handeln JHWHs begründet. [Certainly,
> the reality of the formation of the psalm shows that the awe-inspiring, sometimes
> incomprehensible, distant God does not lead to resignation, but rather to a prayer,
> to the formation and transcription of a psalm. People experience God in his
> "horror" and find their way to prayer. This trust, this closeness to God, is
> grounded in YHWH's historical action.][82]

The imagery of Ps 76 creates a vivid portrait of Yahweh as divine warrior and

offers a frightful depiction of those who stand against Yahweh; the direct address in vv.

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[80] Buis, "Le Seigneur libère les hommes," 412.

[81] Burger, *Psalm 76*, 51–52, 155–56.

[82] Burger, *Psalm 76*, 156. Translation mine.

5, 7–9a, and 11 testify to a different experience—one of relationship. Without mitigating the frightfulness of Yahweh as conquering king and powerful peace-maker, the voicing in these verses audaciously assumes the presence of Yahweh and his attention. Then, v. 12, calls for a righteous response. This verse issues two masculine, plural imperatives—נדרו ("make vows") and שלמו ("fulfill them)—to whom may be assumed to be the righteous community. In the direct address to Yahweh in v. 7, the epithet is used, indicating that listening to the testimony and overhearing the prayer are to the benefit of those who identify with Jacob, with the people for whom Judah and Israel are significant. More significantly, v. 12 commands that vows be made and fulfilled ליהוה אלהיכם ("to Yahweh your God"). Erhard S. Gerstenberger describes the use of יהוה (Yahweh) in v. 12 as "a sort of climax."[83] God is named explicitly throughout the psalm (vv. 2, 7, 10, 12), but only, here, in the direct address to the community is the name *Yahweh* used. Erich Zenger posits, "Here the explicit mention of the divine name YHWH in a psalm otherwise marked by 'Elohist' features (cf. vv. 2, 10) is striking. It is not surprising, because v. 12 is concerned with concrete cultic obligations toward YHWH, the God of Zion."[84] In Ps 76, אלהים ("God") is used in third-person descriptions, but more distinct epithets are used in direct address—אלהי יעכב to Yahweh and יהוה אלהיכם in community address; less generic names are used in the speech that alludes to relationship. Verse 12 prescribes the means of right relationship, also summoning those in the presence of Yahweh to bring gifts.

Following these directives, v. 13 returns to the counter image that dominates vv. 2–11: יבצר רוח נגידים נורא למלכי־ארץ ("He will cut off the spirit of the leaders. He is feared by kings of the earth"). The seconding of the root ירא in vv. 12–13 provides the answer to

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[83] Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 85. See, also, Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:455–56.
[84] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 270–71.

the rhetorical question in v. 8. After the declaration that Yahweh is נורא ("fearsome"),

using the *niphal*, participial form of the word ירא, line 8b asks who will endure the anger

of the God. While vv. 9b–11 address this question indirectly, vv. 12–13 make the answer

explicit. Those who wish to stand before Yahweh must revere him, making and keeping

their commitment unto him and remembering the might and power of the one they

worship. Line 12b uses the noun מורא ("the Fearsome One"), related to the verb ירא, to

suggest that those who call Yahweh their God also recognize Yahweh as one to be

revered. Verse 13 purports that those who do not willingly acknowledge Yahweh will

come to fear him. Yahweh will cut them off. The final line of Ps 76 (line 13b) asserts,

נורא למלכי־ארץ ("He is feared by the kings of the earth), employing the *niphal* participial

form of ירא again to bolster the message. The implication is that the leaders and kings of

the earth are too full of pride or self-sufficiency to submit to the ways of Yahweh, the one

who is to be feared but fights for peace and the oppressed.

The imagery of Ps 76 confronts those who encounter it, and its voicing models the

appropriate response. The testimonies of Yahweh's awesomeness and might should lead

to prayer and praise. Reverence for Yahweh should be the underpinning for relationship.

Marvin E. Tate argues:

> The psalm seeks to provoke and evocate a commitment to a counter world-view.
> The reality of divine judgment seems remote in a world so apparently dominated
> by natural and human powers. The psalm invites the reader to join the company of
> those who affirm, in the teeth of seemingly overwhelming evidence, that there is a
> judgment which sets right the horrible endemic evil in human existence.[85]

The descriptions of Yahweh—his character and deeds—in the past are the foundation for

confidence in the future. The imagery and voicing in Psalm 76 creates dialectics of

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[85] Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 268.

distance and proximity. The testimony and prayer of vv. 2–11 provide platform for the imperatives of v. 12. In light of all the evidence, hope for the future lies in commitment to Yahweh, the God of Jacob. The final verse emphasizes the choice at hand. Despite the appearance of present circumstances, the reality is that God is known in Judah and his name is great in Israel; no one can stand against his anger, and the wrath of humanity will be transformed into praise. Through powerful imagery and the often-overlooked effect of voicing, Ps 76 invites those who encounter its testimony to turn to prayer and worship.

Psalm 146

הַלְלוּ־יָהּ	1	Praise Yah!
הַלְלִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יהוה:		Praise Yahweh, O my soul!
אֲהַלְלָה יהוה בְּחַיָּי	2	I will praise Yahweh with my life.
אֲזַמְּרָה לֵאלֹהַי בְּעוֹדִי:		I will sing praise to my God while I am still alive.[86]
אַל־תִּבְטְחוּ בִנְדִיבִים בְּבֶן־אָדָם	3	Do not trust in leaders, in a human,
שֶׁאֵין לוֹ תְשׁוּעָה:[87]		In whom there is no deliverance.
תֵּצֵא רוּחוֹ יָשֻׁב לְאַדְמָתוֹ	4	His breath will go out; he will return to his earth.
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אָבְדוּ עֶשְׁתֹּנֹתָיו:		On that day, his thoughts will perish.[88]
אַשְׁרֵי שֶׁאֵל יַעֲקֹב בְּעֶזְרוֹ	5	Blessed is the one who has the God of Jacob as his help,
שִׂבְרוֹ עַל־יהוה אֱלֹהָיו:		His hope is in Yahweh, his God,
עֹשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ	6	Who creates the heavens and earth,
אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם		The sea and all that is in them;
הַשֹּׁמֵר אֱמֶת לְעוֹלָם:		The keeper of faith forever;
עֹשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט לָעֲשׁוּקִים	7	Who executes justice for the oppressed,
נֹתֵן לֶחֶם לָרְעֵבִים		Who gives bread to the hungry.
יהוה מַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים:		Yahweh frees prisoners.
יהוה פֹּקֵחַ עִוְרִים	8	Yahweh opens the eyes of the blind.
יהוה זֹקֵף כְּפוּפִים		Yahweh lifts up those bowed down.

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[86] See Clines, ed., "עוֹד," 6:289–94, especially p. 294a for בְּעוֹד as the subject of a nominal clause.

[87] Jacobson (*Many Are Saying*, 33) comments, "The Hebrew root ישׁע, 'help/save'deliver', is one of the most frequent words in Psalter, occurring in almost half of the psalms. The subject of the word is always God, except where the ability of humans to provide 'help' is denied." This is the case in Ps 146:3. Cf. Pss 33:16–17; 44:4, 6; 60:13; 108:13.

[88] This suffix conjugation, אברו, functions as a perfect of certitude or prophetic perfect; it describes an event in the future, indicated by the temporal cause, ביום ההוא, using a suffix conjugation to convey certitude. See Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §165; *GBHS* §3.2.1d; Rogland, *Alleged Non-Past Uses of Qatal*, 53–114; *BHRG* §19.2.5(ii); *IBHS* §30.5.1e; *GKC* §106m–n; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 996; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 608.

יְהוָה אֹהֵב צַדִּיקִים׃   Yahweh loves the righteous.

יְהוָה שֹׁמֵר אֶת־גֵּרִים   9   Yahweh guards a sojourner,

יָתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה יְעוֹדֵד   The orphan and widow he will comfort,

וְדֶרֶךְ רְשָׁעִים יְעַוֵּת׃   But the way of the wicked he will bring to ruin.

יִמְלֹךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם   10   Yahweh will reign forever.

אֱלֹהַיִךְ צִיּוֹן לְדֹר וָדֹר   Your God, O Zion, for all generations.

הַלְלוּ־יָהּ׃   Praise Yah!

Psalm 146 is the first psalm in a subset called the Psalter's "Final Hallel."[89] These psalms

open with the imperative הללו יה/הללו־יה ("Praise Yah!"). This imperative is a form of

praise of and (indirectly) to Yahweh, but it is grammatically directed to plural

addressees—the community or congregation. Psalm 146 never directly addresses

Yahweh; instead, it employs a reflexive command, communal imperatives, and a

beatitude to render praise. Goldingay comments, "Verses 1–2, 10c and vv. 3–6b thus give

contrary indications regarding the psalm's essential nature. One suggests an act of praise

of the kind one expects in the Psalter; the other an exhortation to reliance on Yhwh with a

didactic concern; near the end of the psalm, vv. 9c–10b with its 'your God' is also

implicit exhortation and recalls the way the Psalter itself opens. The psalm thus holds

praise and exhortation in balance."[90] Psalm 146 is a song of praise, calling for personal

and communal acknowledgement of the care and reign of Yahweh. The praise and

exhortation of Ps 146 calls for all to join in the song to Yahweh.

The opening imperative, הללו־יה ("Praise Yah!), is repeated as the last line of this

psalm. These commands form a frame around the praise and exhortation of the rest of the

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[89] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 996; Segal, *A New Psalm*, 679–80; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 606–7, 612; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 339.

[90] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:707. His comment reflects his own interpretation of Ps 146's structure, which links line 6a with what follows it instead of what precedes it. Regardless of one's view of the structural relationship of line 6c, Goldingay's point holds; the concerns of this psalm are both horizontal and vertical in orientation. See, also, Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 607–8; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 340.

psalm. The first directive (הללו; "praise") is a masculine, plural imperative; however, the psalm immediately shifts and issues a feminine, singular imperative, addressing נפשי ("my soul"), which is grammatically feminine. Line 1b declares: הללי נפשי את־יהוה ("Praise Yahweh, O my soul!"). By using synecdoche, the imperative force is maintained but the directive is reflexive. Synecdoche and the vocative are leveraged together to express complete personal resolve to praise Yahweh. This personal exhortation to praise Yahweh precedes "a personal declaration of intent."[91] Verse 2 uses first-person prefix conjugations to express a commitment to "ongoing praise."[92] The move from communal imperative, to reflexive imperative (by synecdoche), and, then, to first person language, conveys the personal resolve to participate in the praise to which the community is called.

With v. 3, the psalm shifts back into explicit communal address, using a masculine, plural imperative again. Verses 3–4 deliver a negative directive concerning human leadership: אל־תבטחו בנדיבים בבן־אדם . . . ("Do not trust in leaders, in a human . . . "; line 3a). This line issues a direct command and the rest of vv. 3–4 unpacks the finiteness and insufficiency of human leaders. In the exhortation of vv. 3–9, only line 3a has explicit, although not specific, addressees. Verse 3 is a complete thought, so line 3b also addresses a group. Verse 4 provides further description of the finite leader, without indicating the shift in orientation but only offering third-person description of the earthly authority. Verses 5–9 proceed to describe Yahweh in the third person, but they continue the flow of logic. In fact, v. 5 is integral to the structure of the psalm, issuing an אשרי statement. Beatitudes or אשרי statements typically have a structural function and are

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[91] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:708.
[92] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 609.

found either at the beginning, exact middle, or end of a psalm.[93] The אשרי statement of v. 5 stands at the middle of the psalm and serves as the center; it contrasts with the description of earthly leaders and is supported by the verses that follow it.[94] While the most striking difference between vv. 3–4 and v. 5 is the contrast in the quality of leadership and deliverance, it is also noteworthy that the command in v. 3 is plural but the wisdom of v. 5 targets an individual. Numbers seem to be fluid in this psalm, and the implications of this exhortation and praise are both personal and communal. The plural imperatives have personal implications, and the individual of the beatitude is generic, applying to all who hope in the God of Jacob.

Just as vv. 3–4 presented the poor credentials of earthly leaders to provide deliverance, vv. 6–9 uses a litany of participles and short clauses with prefix conjugations to recite God's credentials as life-sustainer (v. 6) and righteous ruler (vv. 7–9).[95] These verses establish the motivation for praise and crescendo to the statement and imperative of v. 10. Unlike the human leader, who will return to the earth, v. 10 asserts: ימלך יהוה לעולם ("Yahweh will reign forever"). This clause, line 10a, marks the end of the exhortation without explicit addressee. The following line (line 10b), which further describes Yahweh, shifts in the second-person singular address: אלהיך ציון לדר לדר ("your God, O Zion, for all generations"). Goldingay explains, "The address to Zion more likely sees the city as personifying its people than taking 'Zion' as a term for the people."[96]

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[93] Jacobson, "Psalm 33," 114. In her survey of אשרי statements in the Hebrew Bible, Jacobson ("Psalm 33," 114) discovered they most commonly occur in Proverbs and psalms, especially Torah psalms. According to deClaissé-Walford (*The Book of Psalms*, 997), Book Five of the Psalter contains eleven of the Psalter's twenty-six אשרי statements.

[94] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 610; Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 613.

[95] Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 607; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 997–98; Segal, *A New Psalm*, 679; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 610, 614–15; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:710–12; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 340.

[96] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:713.

Either way, using this personification of Zion as a collective for Yahweh's people, the shift to the second person makes the wisdom and expectations of this psalm more personal and less abstract. As the vocative in v. 1 called for personal resolve to praise, the vocative in v. 10 punctuates the call for praise from Yahweh's own people. Line 10c, הללו־יה ("Praise Yah!"), returns to the plural imperative to deliver the final call to praise.

Psalm 146 features oscillations in number: singular (v. 1) and plural imperatives (vv. 1, 3, 10); the juxtaposition of Zion (line 10b)—a collective personified metaphor for the people—and plural imperative (line 10c); singular (בבן־אדם) and plural (בנדיבים) in apposition to describe leaders (v. 3); plural directives (vv. 1, 3, 10) and a beatitude describing an individual (v. 5). This oscillation in number functions as a sort of merism or inclusive element; the community as well as the individuals that make it up are responsible for praise. The individual is not swallowed up by the community. Personal resolve and intention to praise Yahweh are imperative for the concert of praise coming from Zion. There is a transfer in the responsibility or a sharing of the responsibility to praise that is accomplished in the psalm. Erich Zenger points out the three "divine predicates" of the three parts of the psalm: אלהי ("my God"; line 2b) in the personal declaration; אלהיו ("his God"; line 5b) in main section of exhortation; and אלהיך ("your God"; v. 10) in the address to Zion.[97] The changes in the possessive pronouns—from first person, to third person, to second person—reflect the transformational or gathering thrust of the psalm. As the psalm issues its imperatives and exhortation, the "I" of v. 1 fades away to present—in the third person—a generic individual before using the more pointed, second-person pronoun. In Ps 146, praise and exhortation comingle, being

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[97] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 610. See, also, Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:713.

directed to addressees on the horizontal plan but being overheard by Yahweh. James L. Mays asserts, "The hymn is composed as a sung lesson. Those who sing and hear and read it will be taught as they praise."[98] Psalm 146 uses varied voicing and a variety of literary devices to assemble individuals for communal worship.

Conclusion

Lyric poetry attains cohesion through the rhythm of association, the juxtaposition of literary devices and poetic elements. The analyses of these five psalms, which focus on shifts in voicing, has demonstrated how the vocality and rhythm of association of lyric poetry contribute to the meaning and thrust of the respective psalms. Although the function of each psalm's vocality is tailored to each psalm's message and the impact of the voicing influences and is influenced by the other poetic devices at work, these analyses demonstrate that modulations in voicing are more than disjunctive, psalmic elements but a part of lyric strategy, lending cohesion, demonstrating relationality, and orienting.

The voicing in Ps 23, moving between third-person description of and direct address to Yahweh, creates a sense of intimacy and presence. The voicing complements Ps 23's vivid metaphors and allows the interplay of testimony and prayer to communicate confidence in the care and presence of Yahweh. The juxtaposition of metaphors and passages with varied voicing in Ps 23 are examples of the rhythm of association characteristic of lyric poetry. These varied literary devices, bringing images in and out of focus and giving the impression of movement—Yahweh drawing near, elicit a response to the whole. They work in concert to assert the protective presence and pursuant

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[98] Mays, *Psalms*, 440.

goodness of Yahweh.

In Ps 28, on the other hand, the alternation between prayer and testimony is orienting, moving from petitioning Yahweh out of personal concern (vv. 1–4) to praying because of communal concern. The confidence in the attentiveness and righteousness of Yahweh that underlie the cry of vv. 1–4 is alluded to with the use of divine direct address but is fully expressed in the declarative praise and statements of confidence in vv. 5–7. The desperate cries are bounded by the understanding of Yahweh's works, which also inspires the declaration of and request for communal care in vv. 8–9. The variation in voicing inversely corresponds to the expressions of need and praise. More specifically, the praise and statements of confidence speak about Yahweh in the third person, not being spoken for Yahweh's direct benefit; whereas, need and uncertainty are addressed to Yahweh himself, tempering the hyperbole. The voicing and varied functions of the sections balance each other to produce a cohesive psalm that holds the experience of desperate situations and trust in Yahweh in tension.

The voicing in Pss 32, 76, and 146 contributes to their didactic thrusts. Psalm 32, after its generic אשרי statements, uses prayers heard and overhead to lead into community address. The beatitudes (vv. 1–2) and content of the prayer (vv. 3–7) serve as the foundation for the commands and instruction given in vv. 8–11. The voicing serves as a testimony to transformation as well as contributes to the psalm's movement from general wisdom, to personal application, and, finally, to a broader call for the application of the wisdom of repenting and serving Yahweh. Similarly, Pss 76 and 146 culminate with communal commands. Psalm 76 oscillates between prayer, specifically direct divine address, and testimony filled with powerful images of Yahweh as warrior before its

imperatives. The voicing of 76, moving between testimony and prayer, models the appropriate response to the terror of Yahweh's might. These modulations in voicing in vv. 2–11 create impressions of distance and proximity but also lead up to the ultimatum addressed to the community in vv. 12–13 —make vows to Yahweh or join the kings who will be destroyed. Psalm 146, with a very different tone, also achieves the momentum behind its communal imperatives through testimony. In fact, while Ps 146 praises Yahweh, none of it is addressed to Yahweh. Rather, Ps 146 uses variations in number, direct address to self and community, as well as third-person description of Yahweh to express praise. Psalm 146 is praise intertwined with exhortation. The shifts in voicing both praise Yahweh and call the community to praise Yahweh. Psalm 146 is praise heard and overheard.

The psalms examined in this chapter are a representative sample, including psalms from different books of the Psalter and psalms sorted into different categories by form critics.[99] While this analysis of five psalms in not an exhaustive look at the shifts in addressee in the Psalter by any means, the exploration of the voicings of these psalms is an exemplary study that has implications for reading psalms as lyric poetry. This look at psalmic shifts in voicing, which were limited to the shifts in the direction of address, reveals the part voicing plays in creating dialectics of distance and proximity and presence and absence as well as in contributing to the meaning of respective psalms.

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[99] For example, refer to Gunkel and Begrich, *Einleitung in die Psalmen*.

CHAPTER 4: SHIFTS IN SPEAKER

Building on the detailed discussions of individual psalms offered in the preceding

chapter, this chapter offers a lyric poetic reading of psalms that fall into the second

category of voicing. The sample of five psalms included in this chapter feature shifts in

both speaker and addressee. They feature the voices of others—Yahweh, enemies, and

the community. The discussion of vocality in relationship with lyric poetry's rhythm of

association now expands to include the shifts in speaker and direct quotations. Psalm 12

features juxtaposed framed quotations of the wicked and Yahweh. In Ps 46, Yahweh's

voice interjects. A hypothetical quotation of the righteous in Ps 52 serves as an example

of community quotation. The voice of Yahweh has the final word in Ps 91, where

Yahweh is never directly addressed. Finally, Ps 94 leverages self-quotation against the

words of the wicked to teach trust and promote righteousness. Each analysis investigates

the form and function of shifts in speaker, offering a translation and discussion of the

literary use of voicing. Along with the previous chapter, this discussion offers exemplary

studies according to which psalmic voicing and biblical lyric poetry can be explored. A

lyric poetic reading of these psalms, which feature shifts in both speaker and addressee,

demonstrates the constructive and evocative quality of vocality and appreciates the

concert of voices within the Psalter's lyric poetry.

Psalm 12

לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל־הַשְּׁמִינִית	1	For the director. On the eight-stringed instrument.
מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:		A Davidic psalm.
הוֹשִׁיעָה יהוה	2	Save,[1] O Yahweh!
כִּי־גָמַר חָסִיד		For the devout one has vanished,
כִּי־פַסּוּ אֱמוּנִים מִבְּנֵי אָדָם:		For the faithful ones have disappeared from among humanity.
שָׁוְא יְדַבְּרוּ אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ	3	Each speaks to his friend nothingness;
שְׂפַת חֲלָקוֹת בְּלֵב וָלֵב יְדַבֵּרוּ:		With a flattering lip and with a double heart they speak.
יַכְרֵת יהוה כָּל־שִׂפְתֵי חֲלָקוֹת	4	May Yahweh cut off all flattering lips
לָשׁוֹן מְדַבֶּרֶת גְּדֹלוֹת:		—a tongue speaking great things,
אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ לִלְשֹׁנֵנוּ נַגְבִּיר	5	Because they have said, "We will make ourselves strong with
שְׂפָתֵינוּ אִתָּנוּ מִי אָדוֹן לָנוּ:		our tongues.
		Our lips are our weapons. Who will be our master?"
מִשֹּׁד עֲנִיִּים	6	"Because of the devastation of the afflicted
מֵאַנְקַת אֶבְיוֹנִים		Because of the groaning of the needy,
עַתָּה אָקוּם יֹאמַר יהוה		"Now I will arise," says Yahweh,
אָשִׁית בְּיֵשַׁע יָפִיחַ לוֹ:		"I will appoint as salvation a witness for him."[2]
אִמְרוֹת יהוה אֲמָרוֹת טְהֹרוֹת	7	The sayings of Yahweh are pure sayings,
כֶּסֶף צָרוּף בַּעֲלִיל לָאָרֶץ		Silver smelted in the furnace of the earth,
מְזֻקָּק שִׁבְעָתָיִם:		Refined seven times.
אַתָּה־יהוה תִּשְׁמְרֵם	8	You, O Yahweh, will guard them.
תִּצְּרֶנּוּ מִן־הַדּוֹר זוּ לְעוֹלָם:		You will keep him from this generation forever.
סָבִיב רְשָׁעִים יִתְהַלָּכוּן	9	All around, the wicked ones pace
כְּרֻם זֻלּוּת לִבְנֵי אָדָם:		Because worthlessness is exalted by humanity.

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[1] The OG provides a first-person, singular direct object for the imperative. While an object would typically be expected, especially if this psalm were to be categorized an individual prayer, the cry for deliverance is not on behalf of an individual. The supplied pronominal suffix in the OG appears to be the result of a generic expectation. deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 152–53; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:197; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 136.

[2] There is no scholarly consensus on the translation of יפיח. However, David Pardee's argument for *yph* meaning *witness* in both Hebrew and Ugaritic ("YPḤ 'Witness' in Hebrew and Ugaritic") laid the foundation for Miller to effectively contend יפי in Ps 12:6 should be read, as *witness*, as opposed to "the usual interpretation of it as a Hiphil form of the verb *pwḥ*" (496). He argues, "Such a translation involves no consonantal or vocalic emendation of the text. It has other advantages in addition. The resultant syntax is clear and non-problematic, which is generally not the case with other translations" (497). J. Gerald Janzen ("Another Look at Psalm xii 6"), following Miller's interpretation of יפיח, further argues עשבי is a *bet essentiae* and יתשא should be translated "provide, appoint," producing the translation: "I will provide as salvation a witness for him." See, also, deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 152; Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §249.

Psalm 12 uses contrasts to assert that Yahweh keeps his word and protects the righteous.

Yahweh does not take cues from the words of the unfaithful or the duplicitous but

responds to the groans of the needy. This psalm contrasts the voices of the unfaithful and

Yahweh and opens by fronting an imperative: הושיעה יהוה ("Save, O Yahweh!").

Goldingay writes, "It is rather impolite to begin with the bald imperative 'deliver' (Ps. 69

is the only parallel), though the baldness is tempered by the –*â* sufformative . . . . But

Yahweh evidently finds it acceptable for the psalmist to come with such a heartfelt

urgency."[3] This pleading imperative gives way to description. Although the second

person is only employed in this one imperative before the shift to a third-person

description of the situation, Yahweh remains the addressee. The two following כי clauses

establish the problem, the reason for divine help. The psalmist directly addresses Yahweh

for salvation because of the disappearance of the righteous and the words of the wicked.

These hyperbolic statements about the righteous lead into the description of the wicked.

The words of the wicked are empty, and their flattering lips reveal their duplicitous

thinking. This description functions as a report to Yahweh—an element of the plea for

assistance. Surely divine intervention is needed when the righteous cannot be found and

the rhetoric of the wicked appear to reign.

In contrast to the direct address to Yahweh expressed as the pairing of an

imperative and vocative in v. 2, v. 4 calls for Yahweh to act through a phrase driven by a

jussive verb: יכרת יהוה ("may Yahweh cut off . . . "). While the psalmist still conveys a

desire for Yahweh's intervention, the request is indirect.[4] May Yahweh silence the

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[3] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:197.
[4] Goldingay (*Psalms*, 1:198) describes the difference in commands as seemingly "appealing to some obligation bigger than Yhwh." However, he does not offer a supporting argument for this explanation, and this interpretation does not seem to fit with the confrontational imperative for Yahweh to

wicked, cutting off their flattering lips and each tongue speaking "great things." To further provoke Yahweh to act, the psalmist offers evidence, including the words of the wicked:[5] "We will make ourselves strong with our tongues. Our lips are our weapons. Who will be our master?" (v. 5). They speak, but their voices are controlled. The psalmist contextualizes their words. As the reporter, the psalmist provides not only what has been said but also clues as to how to interpret it. The psalmist has already described the source of the speech as the lips and the hearts belonging to those other than the devout and faithful and portrayed the content as trivial, obsequious, and deceitful. This is the context in which the psalmist presents the speech of the wicked. Although the verb of speaking (אמרו) is a generic term—not carrying inherent negative connotations, the preceding description serves as a filter for the words being relayed. Additionally, the psalmist creates space between the direct address to Yahweh and the reported speech of the wicked. As if the psalmist does not want to report this speech directly into the ear of God, both the third-person description of the situation in vv. 2b–3 and employment of the jussive in v. 4 continue to call for Yahweh to act and create a boundary between Yahweh and the wicked. The psalmist serves as the intermediary.

The bicolon of v. 5 is the climax of the description of the wicked. In v. 3, they speak flatteries and emptiness. In v. 4, they speak great things and deserve to be silenced. In v. 5, their voices are heard asserting their own self-sufficiency. However, their words do not serve as the climax of the psalm. Rather, the speech of Yahweh in v. 6 serves as the pivot point of this psalm.[6] Now, Yahweh will act. In contrast to the כי clauses in v. 2,

save in v. 2 nor with the fact that Yahweh remains the subject of this command.

[5] Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 209.

[6] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 154; Prinsloo, "Man's Word—God's Word," 394; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 210–11; Miller, "YĀPÎAḤ in Psalm 12," 49. Zenger (*A God of Vengeance?*, 28)

Yahweh speaks two מִן prepositional phrases[7] to indicate who has persuaded him to act. He is not provoked by the words of the wicked but by the cries of the afflicted and needy.[8] Because of their cries, Yahweh declares: עתה אקום ("Now I will arise"; v. 6). He will arise in order to provide salvation through a witness. In this divine speech, the root ישע is seconded, with the noun of v. 6d (ישע) echoing the imperative in v. 2a (הושיעה).[9] Yahweh's words both answer the call of the psalmist and undermine the words of the wicked.[10]

Yahweh's words are privileged above those of the wicked. First, the words of Yahweh immediately follow the arrogant question, "Who will be our master?" (v. 5). Initially, the shift between the two sections of direct discourse can only be discerned through the shift in perspectives of the original speakers.[11] The focus shifts from building up self with rhetoric to the desperation of the afflicted and needy. The frame for Yahweh's words appears in the middle of his speech. Again, the generic יאמר is used as the verb of speaking. However, the second signal of the privileging of the words of Yahweh is contextualization. The psalmist sets up the words of the wicked to be rejected, describing what comes out of the mouths of the wicked negatively. On the other hand, Yahweh's words are not preceded by an introduction to lend them credibility; it is after the words of Yahweh are heard that the psalmist affirms his words.

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writes, "The word of God does not provoke the violence of the victims against their executioners; the vicious circle is broken here by the remembrance of YHWH as the rescuer and protector of the poor."

[7] See Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §319.

[8] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:199; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 96.

[9] Prinsloo, "Man's Word—God's Word," 397.

[10] Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 138.

[11] Artur Weiser (*The Psalms*, 160) points out that the lack of transition facilitates the deliberate contrast between the voices. Schaefer (*Psalms*, 30) asserts, "God's oracle relieves the tension of the opening lines. Ironically it is situated after the challenge of these scoffers, 'who is our master?'" See, also, Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 138.

In v. 7, the voice shifts back to that of the psalmist, signaled by the third-person reference to Yahweh. Seconding the use of the root אמר as the verbs of speaking, the psalmist asserts: אמרות יהוה אמרות טהרות ("The sayings of Yahweh are pure sayings"; v. 7a). The affirmation of the words of Yahweh continue as the psalmist employs the metaphor of highly refined silver to create a tangible image for the intangible descriptor "pure." This affirmation and description of the words of Yahweh are the antithesis of the description of the words of those who think they reign. The words of the wicked attempt to assert independence through emptiness, flattery, and pomp, but they are nothing. Yahweh's words declare salvation for the needy and are likened to refined precious metal.[12]

The psalmist returns to directly addressing Yahweh in v. 8, making a distinct shift by fronting the second-person pronominal suffix followed by a vocative (אתה־יהוה). Now, this direct address is a statement of confidence that Yahweh will do what he has said.[13] The psalmist has transitioned from imperative call for salvation (v. 2), to jussive desire for Yahweh to silence the wicked (vv. 4–5), and, finally, to indicative, direct address expressing confidence in Yahweh's salvific action.[14] However, v. 9 reveals that the situation has not changed: "All around, the wicked ones pace because worthlessness is exalted by humanity." The second-person statement of confidence is followed by a final third-person description of the problem—wickedness parades about. The general situation that seems to have been the motivation of the cry for help goes unaltered.

Mandolfo imputes a chiastic structure upon the psalm, hearing interjected

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[12] Prinsloo, "Man's Word—God's Word," 398; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 138.

[13] Jacobson (*Many Are Saying*, 122) describes v. 7 as a "confession of trust."

[14] Conversely, Goldingay (*Psalms*, 1:200–201) argues for understanding the verbs of v. 8 as *yiqtols* functioning as pleas. He contends, therefore, v. 8 pleads for Yahweh to do what has been promised.

conflicting voices. She splices the psalm (excluding the superscription) into three

discourses and a refrain: "the supplicant's discourse forms the outer layer of the structure

[vv. 2–3, 8], with the didactic discourse forming an inner layer [vv. 4–5, 7][15] enclosing

the words of the deity [v. 6],"[16] and the "generically irregular"[17] refrain of v. 9 echoing

the complaint. She asserts, "Thus, the central objective of the didactic discourse (along

with the oracle) is to eliminate any concern on the part of the supplicant, but the voice of

doubt and complaint gets the last word anyway."[18] Identifying shifts in grammatical

voicing as changes in persona or speaker actually makes less sense of the psalm, creating

a juxtaposition of perspectives that results in dissonance and incoherence. According to

Mandolfo, the thrust of vv. 2–8 is undermined and subverted by v. 9. In other words, the

chiastic structure she identities is ineffective; the heart of the psalm is overpowered. The

final refrain returns to the situation that prompted the complaint, with no work being

accomplished. What, then according to this reading, is the value or cogency of this

psalm?

A dialogic reading of Ps 12 that tends toward conflict renders the psalm impotent

at best. On the other hand, sensitivity to the voicing in Ps 12, which does not equate

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[15] Mandolfo (*God in the Dock*, 48) relies on her interpretation of the verb in v. 4 as a prefix conjugation instead of a jussive to hear a didactic voice in vv. 4–5. She translates line 4a, "YHWH will cut off all flattering lips," and interprets vv. 4–5 as an assuring response to the petition of vv. 2–3. She does admit that a jussive reading is possible; however, following this reading would disrupt her argumentation. Suderman ("From Dialogic Tension to Social Address," 13) explains:

> Both the vocalization and consonantal text of this term corresponds directly to a *hiphil* jussive form, while the lack of a *hireq yod* makes her preferred reading less likely. While Mandolfo does not dwell on it, the majority jussive reading here creates a problem for her proposal. Instead of an imperfect claiming God's assured response, read as a jussive this verse repeats the preceding appeal for divine aid spoken by and not addressed to the initial supplicant. In other words, rather than "eliminate any concern on the part of the supplicant," this section underscores the initial petition and awaits a divine response as is common within individual laments.

[16] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 51.

[17] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 52.

[18] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 52.

grammatical shifts with oscillating speakers, allows for Ps 12 to be read as a cogent lyric. Mandolfo is correct in evaluating v. 9 as an integral part of the psalm. The seconding of בני אדם (humanity) in v. 9 creates an *inclusio*, emphasizing the return to the initial image—the wicked dominate society.[19] The *hithpael* of הלך with the adverbial accusative constructs the image of caged or deranged animals walking in circles. They are moving but not getting anywhere. The wicked try to govern themselves and use their rhetoric to maintain their independence; nevertheless, it is in vain. Their language and rhetoric are emptiness. Although the presence of the wicked and worthlessness of their rhetoric have not been mitigated, the psalmist has transitioned from desperation to confidence. The shift in perspective is communicated by the transitions in direct address to Yahweh from imperative (v. 2), to jussive (vv. 4–5), and, finally, to indicative confession. This transition pivots on the words of Yahweh, which stand in contrast to the words of the wicked. The voicing of the psalm both attests to and helps accomplish the communication of this transition. The situation has not changed; however, the point of view has. Gert T. M. Prinsloo comments, "After the expression of confidence in 8ab the reader knows that the apparent power of the wicked is only temporary. Yahweh will intervene on behalf of the poor."[20] Psalm 12 holds two realities in tension: the wicked pervade society with apparent power and Yahweh's words to protect and save the righteous are true and effective.

Psalm 46

לַמְנַצֵּחַ לִבְנֵי־קֹרַח עַל־עֲלָמוֹת שִׁיר:	1	For the director. Of the sons of Korah, according to *Alamot*. A song.

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[19] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 50.
[20] Prinsloo, "Man's Word—God's Word," 399.

אֱלֹהִים לָנוּ מַחֲסֶה וָעֹז	2	God is our refuge and strength,
עֶזְרָה בְצָרוֹת נִמְצָא מְאֹד׃		A very sufficient help in distress.
עַל־כֵּן לֹא־נִירָא בְּהָמִיר אָרֶץ	3	Therefore, we will not fear when the earth changes
וּבְמוֹט הָרִים בְּלֵב יַמִּים׃		Or when the mountains totter into the heart of the seas.
יֶהֱמוּ יֶחְמְרוּ מֵימָיו	4	Its waters roar and foam,
יִרְעֲשׁוּ־הָרִים בְּגַאֲוָתוֹ סֶלָה׃		Mountains quake at its swelling. *Selah.*
נָהָר פְּלָגָיו יְשַׂמְּחוּ עִיר־אֱלֹהִים	5	There is a river whose channels delight the city of God,
קְדֹשׁ מִשְׁכְּנֵי עֶלְיוֹן׃		—the holy dwelling places of the Most High.
אֱלֹהִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ בַּל־תִּמּוֹט	6	God is in the midst of it; it will not be overthrown.
יַעְזְרֶהָ אֱלֹהִים לִפְנוֹת בֹּקֶר׃		God will help it as morning approaches.
הָמוּ גוֹיִם מָטוּ מַמְלָכוֹת	7	Nations have roared. Kingdoms have tottered.
נָתַן בְּקוֹלוֹ תָּמוּג אָרֶץ׃		He has raised his voice. The earth melts.
יהוה צְבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ	8	Yahweh of Hosts is with us.
מִשְׂגָּב־לָנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב סֶלָה׃		Our refuge is the God of Jacob. *Selah.*
לְכוּ־חֲזוּ מִפְעֲלוֹת יהוה	9	Come, behold the deeds of Yahweh,
אֲשֶׁר־שָׂם שַׁמּוֹת בָּאָרֶץ׃		Who has set desolations in the earth,
מַשְׁבִּית מִלְחָמוֹת עַד־קְצֵה הָאָרֶץ	10	Causing wars to cease to the end of the earth.
קֶשֶׁת יְשַׁבֵּר וְקִצֵּץ חֲנִית		A bow he breaks, and he cuts a spear in two.
עֲגָלוֹת יִשְׂרֹף בָּאֵשׁ׃		Shields[21] he burns with fire.
הַרְפּוּ וּדְעוּ כִּי־אָנֹכִי אֱלֹהִים	11	Be quiet and know that I am God!
אָרוּם בַּגּוֹיִם		I will be exalted among the nations.
אָרוּם בָּאָרֶץ׃		I will be exalted in the earth.
יהוה צְבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ	12	Yahweh of Hosts is with us.
מִשְׂגָּב־לָנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב סֶלָה׃		Our refuge is the God of Jacob. *Selah.*

The thrust of Ps 46 is Yahweh's assuring sovereignty, power, and presence in the midst of upheaval and chaos. Interestingly, the statements of confidence that punctuate this psalm are predominantly verbless clauses. The psalm opens with the declaration אלהים לנו

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[21] The word עֲגָלוֹת, with the Masoretic pointing attested to in Ps 12:10 in the BHS, is usually rendered *wagons* or *carts* in English. It does not appear in the HB in the context of war, which would warrant an understanding and translation of this term as *chariot* or *some other wagon used in battle* (see Segal, *A New Psalm*, 208; Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 164). However, the OG, Tg, and Vulg. all translate this word *shields*, suggesting a repointing of this word as עֲגִלוֹת. See Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:65; Cook, "Prayers that Form Us," 459; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 286; Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 1:355. Regardless of the translation, the effect, here, is the same. These instruments of war—whether shields or chariots—are destroyed by Yahweh.

מחסה ועז עזרה בצרות נמצא מאד "God is our refuge and strength, a very sufficient help in

distress" (v. 2), using a first-person plural pronoun to modify the description of Yahweh

and, thus, establishing the dominant voicing as communal. God is "our" sufficient source

of protection, aid, and strength. This third-person, indicative description of Yahweh (in

relation to "us") grants license to assert: . . . על־כן לא־נירא ("Therefore, we will not fear . .

. "; v. 3).[22] Indeed, referring to the first common plural verbal form in v. 3, Ryan Cook

asserts, "The use of the first common plural is itself rhetorically significant. By leading

the congregation in a hymn in which they declare that God is a refuge 'for us', they are

making a self-involving statement."[23] The facts of v. 2 motivate the proclamation of

fearlessness in vv. 3–4, which go on to recite images of mythic and metaphorical images

of terror and chaos[24]—not confidence-inducing acts of Yahweh. In this way, the

indicative statements about God and declaration of community courage are preemptive,

establishing the ethics of the community in the face of crisis. Goldingay comments, "We

will discover the psalm speaks metaphorically, and it may also speak mythically of the

power of the supernatural waters of disorder, but whether such events take place literally,

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[22] Jacobson (*Many Are Saying*, 118) exhorts, "Note especially the positive reformulation of the normal injunction 'fear not.'"

[23] Cook, "Prayers that Form Us," 464.

[24] Gunkel ("Psalm 46," 29–30) reads the chaos images of Ps 46 as eschatological reappropriation of a primeval *chaoskampf*. For, Gunkel, the chaos is both past and future but not present. To the contrary, while Childs ("Enemy from the North and the Chaos Tradition," 189) acknowledges Gunkel was the first to provide a detailed exploration of the chaos motif in this psalm and agrees with the presence of this motif, Childs asserts "within a liturgical framework, the chaos is conceived as a present force in opposition to Yahweh, and being held in submission by him" (189). The chaos of Ps 46 is not distant past or future but is an element of the present threatening reality. Rebecca S. Watson (*Chaos Uncreated*, 136–37) asserts—against the readings of Weiser (*The Psalms*, 371), Anderson (*The Book of Psalms*, 1:358), Zenger (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 288), Mowinckel (*The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 110), Terrien (*The Psalms*, 372–73), and Gerstenberger (*Psalms, Part 1*, 192)—that Ps 46 is not a "'historicization' of myth" (137). There is no reference to creation or a combative engagement with chaos. Watson contends that any linking of the imagery in this psalm with a creation background is "conjectural" (137). Instead, she argues, "It seems that God's undoubted, and most impressive, control in the cosmic sphere serves to provide reassurance in the historical realm, the implied comparison [between the roaring waters and nations as well as the tottering mountains and kingdoms] being underscored by the wordplay between the evocations of the two arenas of activity (vv. 3-4 and 6-7)" (137).

metaphorically, or mythically, 'we are not afraid' because we have that refuge."[25] If or

when any of these disasters come to be, the response has been decided.[26]

The next stanza begins with a subversion of the threat and trauma of the roaring,

foaming, swelling waters. Indeed, the image of water in v. 5 does not threaten but

delights. The river water is at the service of the city of God; in the presence of the Most

High, channels of water amuse and babble—not threaten and roar.[27] With this contrasting

image of water in the place of Yahweh's dwelling comes the second set of confident

assertions: "God is in the midst of it; it will not be overthrown. God will help it as

morning approaches" (v. 6). Here, the phrase בל־תמוט ("it will not be overthrown")

repeats the verb of the mountains' tottering in v. 3, although in a different form.[28] In

contrast to v. 2, v. 6 presents God's relationship to the city of God and not the explicit

"us" of v. 2. These statements of confidence also mark a transition from more mythic or

possible threats to present, political upheaval and perils. The turmoil and trouble is real

not hypothetical or mythic. The seconding of verbs make the connection between the two

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[25] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:68.

[26] In other words, the statement of confidence in the face of disorder in mythic proportions foreshadows the call for an appropriate response to the political disorder described later. Watson (*Chaos Uncreated*, 135) writes, "The threat of instability is thus placed in the historical realm, and the nations are implicitly correlated with the sea on which the earth rests, and which may threaten to engulf it. Here, the archetype of the most impossible and dreaded scenario is that the foundation of the world should crumble, and tumultuous waters topple what had previously been synonymous with absolute stability." See, also, Cook, "Prayers that Form Us," 465.

[27] Cook, "Prayers that Form Us," 460, 465; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 424; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:68; Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 135–36; Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 116; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 116; van Uchelen, *Psalmen*, 42; Kelly, "Psalm 46," 309. The reference to rivers and channels resonates with Canaanite mythology, in which the dwelling place of El, the high god, sits at the head of two rivers. See *CTA* 17.vi.47; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 344; Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 163. deClaissé-Walford (*The Book of Psalms*, 424) compares the water imagery in Ps 46 to that in Ps 42. She explains, "In Psalm 42, the singer begins with calm images of water — running brooks and tears — and moves to chaotic images — waterfalls and breakers and waves. In Psalm 46, the imagery moves in the opposite direction . . . . In each instance, the presence of God signals calm and order, while God's absence or distance from the psalmist elicits images of chaos" (424).

[28] In vv. 2 and 7, מוט occurs in the *qal*. Verse 2 uses an infinitive construct, and v. 7 employs a 3mp suffix conjugation of the verb. Whereas, v. 6 features a *niphal* 2fs prefix conjugation; thus, leading to different word choices in English.

sets of images more explicit. The waters and nations roar (יהמו, v. 4; המו, v. 7); mountains

and kingdoms totter (מוטוב, v. 3; מטו, v. 7).[29] One description is of "cosmic disorder," and

the other is of "political disorder."[30]

Yet above the noise and chaos, God "has raised his voice" (v. 7). In response, the

earth melts.[31] Then, the psalm features another statement of confidence, using verbless

clauses: יהוה צבאות עמנו משגב־לנו אלהי יעקב סלה) ("Yahweh of Hosts is with us. Our refuge is

the God of Jacob. *Selah*"; v. 8).[32] Verses 2–8 feature a juxtaposition of images of turmoil

as well as contrast between these descriptions and the descriptions of God. Still, the

voicing has remained consistent with third-person descriptions of God in a first-person

plural voice of the community. However, in v. 9, the voicing shifts: moving from first-

person plural indicative to masculine plural imperative. As if to enact the declaration of

confidence in v. 3, back-to-back imperatives direct to "Come, behold!"[33] Verses 9–10

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[29] Kelly, "Psalm 46," 306; Cook, "Prayers that Form Us," 460.

[30] Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 135; Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 118; Kelly, "Psalm 46," 307; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 116.

[31] Sidney Kelly ("Psalm 46," 306–7) argues that in both v. 3 and v. 9, the earth responds similarly to its counterparts, changing as the mountains totter and quake and the water roar and foam as well as melting as the nations roar and kingdoms totter. In parallel fashion, the images of the earth are also that of threatening disarray. He contends:

> This conclusion is supported by the parallelism in vs. 11b where Yahweh declares his victorious exaltation with respect to (בָּ) the nations and *'ereṣ*. In turn, the parallelism of vs. 11b suggests that *'ereṣ* in 7b is a cosmic image for the nations/kingdoms of 7a; thus, the political disorder is overcome and quieted in terms of the melting (תָּמוּג) of *'ereṣ*. Indeed, vs. 11 may be considered an explication of the theophanic rebuke in vs. 7b. Finally, whatever the meaning of the verb used with *'ereṣ* in vs. 3a, clearly it expresses a threatening activity which is normally to be feared; vs. 3 (or vss. 3–4) draw(s) a conclusion from vs. 2; "we will *not* fear" the threatening activity of *'ereṣ* and the mountains (and the waters) because God is a refuge in such troubles (307).

[32] The divine epithet יהוה צבאות conveys God's position—and, thus, power—as the commander of armies or "warrior hosts"(Brettler, "Images of YHWH," 145). Marc Zvi Brettler ("Images of YHWH," 146) highlights the fact that in Ps 46 the use of the divine warrior metaphor breaks expectations; Yahweh of Hosts brings an end to war and destroys implements of war. This refrain, which is seconded in v. 12, also contains the verbless clause משגב־לנו אלהי יעקב. Although nine times out of thirteen this word is modified by a first-person singular pronominal suffix or a possessive ל with a first-person pronominal suffix, Ps 46 is the only place in the Psalter where the pronominal suffixes are plural (cf. Pss 18:3; 59:10, 17, 18; 63:3, 7; 144:2). Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 41–42.

[33] Goldingay (*Psalms*, 2:71) explains, "Imperatives now suddenly feature in driving home the implications of the psalm."

call for an evaluation of the character and deeds of God. The previous references to God were statements of confidence; v. 9 calls for the consideration of the deeds of God, who brings an end to political upheaval and war. The use of imperatives forces the issue. Although these imperatives may be understood as universal—calling for the nations and kingdoms to behold the works of God, those issuing the commands are "also impacting their own perception of Yhwh."[34] In light of the facts—God is our refuge and strength, a very sufficient help in distress, God is in the midst of the city, Yahweh of Hosts is with us, our refuge is the God Jacob—and in the face of cosmic and political chaos, will we fear? Will you fear? "Come, behold the deeds of Yahweh . . . " (v. 9)!

Then, in v. 11, the voicing shifts again. Without an explicit introduction or frame, Yahweh speaks. Here, too, the direct address begins with a pair of masculine, plural imperatives: be quiet and know. These two instances of direct address witness to the veracity of the refrains that frame them: "Yahweh of hosts is with us. Our refuge is the God of Jacob" (vv. 8, 12). The third-person description of God that is presented for evaluation in vv. 9–10 and the commands and declarations of exaltation from the voice of God in v. 11 garner further recognition of God's power. They bolster the effect of using the epithet *Yahweh of Hosts*. Jacobson comments, "The LORD's assertion of exaltation over the nations on one hand, over the earth on the other, is not merely poetic parallelism. The LORD figuratively stills the raging of the dual threats that were cited earlier in the psalm: that of the nations and kingdoms . . . and that of creation (the waters, the mountains, the earth . . .)."[35] The content of Yahweh's speech communicates power. Hearing the voice of God communicates presence. The unframed, unmarked voice of

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[34] Cook, "Prayers that Form Us," 466.

[35] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 119.

Yahweh demonstrates "Yahweh of Hosts is with us" (vv. 8, 12), evoking divine encounter. The waters and nations roar, but their voices are not heard. The waters are at the service of the city of God. The nations are subservient to the power of God. In contrast to the threatening cacophony, Yahweh's voice calls for silence and recognition. In times of uproar and upheaval, God's voice is heard, and the earth melts. The psalm ends with a shift back to third-person description of God from a first-person plural perspective, repeating the words of v. 8: "Yahweh of Hosts is with us. Our refuge is the God of Jacob. *Selah*" (v. 12). In this psalm, uproar and upheaval are described, but God's presence is demonstrated through his unframed direct address.

Psalm 52

לַמְנַצֵּחַ מַשְׂכִּיל לְדָוִד:	1	For the director. A Davidic *maskil*.
בְּבוֹא דּוֹאֵג הָאֲדֹמִי וַיַּגֵּד לְשָׁאוּל וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בָּא דָוִד אֶל־בֵּית אֲחִימֶלֶךְ:[36]	2	When Doeg the Edomite came and reported to Saul, he said to him, "David went to the house of Ahimelech."

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[36] The connection of this psalm with the events in 1 Sam 21–22, especially 22:9, is not consistent across textual traditions. In fact, in the Eth. and Syr. traditions, Hezekiah and Sennacherib's siege are the historical backdrop for this psalm. Meier, "The Heading of Psalm 52," 144. Samuel A. Meier ("The Heading of Psalm 52") rejects the identification of the deceitful person in Ps 52 as Doeg or Saul on the basis of paratext, which has dominated the interpretation of this psalm. Instead, he makes the case that the paratextual information is intended to present David as the guilty mighty man. Therefore, the psalm may be heard as David's guilty confession as well as repentant confession of trust. For in the narrative of 1 Sam 21–22, Doeg and Saul are not deceitful; Doeg may be an informant, but what he said was true. In 1 Sam 21–22, David tells a series of lies. Meier also compares that superscription of Ps 51— . . . בבוא־אליו נתן הנביא ("When Nathan the prophet came to him . . ."; v. 2)—with that of Ps 52 — . . . בבוא דואג האדמי ("When Doeg the Edomite came . . ."; v. 2). In the narratives these superscriptions allude to, Nathan exposes David's sin and Doeg exposes his location. The arrival of these men initiate a reckoning of choices for David not their own trials. Thus, according to Meier, the paratexts of these psalms were intended to be heard as David's voice expressing his own guilt and repentance.

מַה־תִּתְהַלֵּל בְּרָעָה הַגִּבּוֹר	3	Why do you boast of evil, O mighty one?
חֶסֶד אֵל כָּל־הַיּוֹם:		The lovingkindness of God is all day long.[37]
הַוּוֹת תַּחְשֹׁב לְשׁוֹנֶךָ	4	You plot words[38] for your tongue;
כְּתַעַר מְלֻטָּשׁ עֹשֵׂה רְמִיָּה:		It is like a sharpened razor, O doer of deceit.
אָהַבְתָּ רָּע מִטּוֹב	5	You love evil more than good,
שֶׁקֶר מִדַּבֵּר צֶדֶק סֶלָה:		A lie more than speaking righteousness. *Selah.*
אָהַבְתָּ כָל־דִּבְרֵי־בָלַע	6	You love all the words that devour,
לְשׁוֹן מִרְמָה:		O tongue of deceit.
גַּם־אֵל יִתָּצְךָ לָנֶצַח	7	Yet[39] God will bring you down forever.

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[37] Where the MT provides the phrase אל חסד ("the lovingkindness of God"), the OG supplies ἀνομίαν ("lawlessness"). The OG would be a rendering of the Hebrew חמס, instead of חסד, and makes no mention of God in this line. On the other hand, the Syr. retains a two-part phrase, but the reconstruction of the Hebrew would be אֶל־חָסִ(י)ד ("against a devout one"), linking this phrase to the clause that precedes it; the Syr. translates a phrase that is in reverse word order and differently pointed than that of the MT. Jacobson (*Many Are Saying*, 138) and Kraus (*Psalms 1–59*, 508–9) follow the Syr. Tanner (deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 460) describes the MT line as "disconnected or misplaced," so she emends the text and translates from the OG: "Why do you boast in evil, Mighty One? Violence all the day?" Richard J. Clifford (*Psalms 1–72*, 255) also recommends emendation because "the syntax of the line is awkward as is its placement in the poem." Conversely, Hossfeld (*Psalms 2*, 26) argues a an emendation of the MT is unnecessary. The verbless clause of line 3b works in contrast to line 3a. Where others gravitate toward readings that make elements of v. 3 grammatically (e.g., אל־חסד | ברעה) or lexically parallel (e.g., חמס | רעה), Hossfeld (*Psalms 2*, 26–27, 31), Goldingay (*Psalms*, 2:141, 143), Segal (*A New Psalm*, 238), and Alter (*The Book of Psalms*, 184) all translate the MT without modifying v. 3 and comment on the stark contrast between its two lines. The pomposity of the mighty person is ridiculous in comparison to the enduring lovingkindness of God.

[38] Meir Lubetski ("The Utterance from the East") argues that connections drawn between הוות in the HB and Arabic cognates are "semantically superficial" (218). He argues, conversely, that the term הוות can be traced back to Akkadian and Ugaritic roots. Lubetski writes, "While the sense of Ugaritic *hwt* can be felt in Biblical literature and language, it is only in one aspect of the term: in the meaning of 'word'. The Akkadian *a-wa-tu*, however, with its richer nuances, left a more variegated impact on the Bible. As listed in *CAD*, *a-wa-tu* (*a-ma-tu*) is 'the spoken word', 'utterance', 'formula' and its derived meanings are 'thought', 'plan' and 'incantation'" (222; see, also, Oppenheim et al., eds., "amatu," 29–43). Shifts in language affected the morphology of this word, creating the etymological puzzle Lubetski attempts to solve. Given this evidence and emphasis on speech in Ps 52, line 4 is best translated, "You plot words for your tongue." Words are the weapons of this "mighty one." Concerning the use of הוות in v. 9, Lubetski writes, "We suggest that the verse discusses the mighty man who does not place his trust in God, but rather relies upon the abundance of his wealth, and draws strength for himself *b^ehawwātô* which can be explained literally as: 'from his word'. The wealthy man relies on his riches and builds himself up with words, that is, he is arrogant, vain, insolent" (221). Lubetski's argument better explains the use of הוות in a number of biblical texts (e.g., Pss 5:10; 38:13; 55:12; 57:2; 91:3; and Prov 11:6), especially this speech-themed text of Ps 52. See, also, Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 31; Kselman, "Ambiguity and Wordplay in Proverbs XI," 545.

[39] The word גם is often used to communicate a correspondence with what precedes it, being rendered as *also* or *even*. Goldingay (*Psalms*, 2:142) translates גם emphatically, offering, "God himself will break you . . . ." However, this English rendering is a bit of a stretch. The word גם, according to Holladay ("גַּם," 61–62), does sometimes join clauses or thoughts with an intensifying effect. Perhaps, along these lines, the OG translates it in this context as διὰ τοῦτο ("therefore"); the OG also translates the verb as jussives—instead of indicatives, which is also a factor in the choice of the adverb "therefore." Tate (*Psalms 51–100*, 32, 34) also translates גם as *therefore* and compares v. 7 with prophetic announcements of judgment, such as Isa 66:4; Ezek 16:43; and Mal 2:9. However, there is another option for translating גם, which fits better in this context; according to Holladay ("גַּם," 62), it can be adversative. The Vulg. treats גם

יַחְתְּךָ וְיִסָּחֲךָ מֵאֹהֶל He will snatch you up and tear you from a tent.
וְשֵׁרֶשְׁךָ מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים סֶלָה: Then he will uproot you from the land of the living. *Selah*.

וְיִרְאוּ צַדִּיקִים וְיִירָאוּ 8 The righteous will see and fear.
וְעָלָיו יִשְׂחָקוּ: And they will make fun of him:
הִנֵּה הַגֶּבֶר לֹא יָשִׂים אֱלֹהִים מָעוּזּוֹ 9 "Here is the man who does not make God his stronghold.
וַיִּבְטַח בְּרֹב עָשְׁרוֹ But he trusts in the greatness of his riches.
יָעֹז בְּהַוָּתוֹ: He grows strong with his words."[40]

וַאֲנִי כְּזַיִת רַעֲנָן בְּבֵית 10 But I am like a lush olive tree in the house of God.
אֱלֹהִים בָּטַחְתִּי בְחֶסֶד־אֱלֹהִים עוֹלָם I put my trust in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever.
וָעֶד:

אוֹדְךָ לְעוֹלָם כִּי עָשִׂיתָ 11 I will give you thanks forever because you have acted.
וַאֲקַוֶּה שִׁמְךָ כִי־טוֹב נֶגֶד חֲסִידֶיךָ: I will hope in your name because it is good in the sight of your devout ones.

Psalm 52 functions as a didactic psalm, instructing those who encounter it as to where to place their trust. It also serves as an example of a psalm that features a community quotation. Although the majority of the psalm rails against a deceitful person, Yahweh is never beseeched to intervene. Instead, the indictment is followed by confession of trust spoken about Yahweh and to Yahweh. The psalm promotes trust rightly placed by supplying a negative example and immediately providing the counterexample. Phillipus J. Botha writes, "Psalm 52 is not a haphazard compilation of pre-existent texts, but a cleverly devised instrument of communication . . . ."[41] This psalm contrasts the speech of the deceitful mighty one with the projected words of the righteous and first-person profession of faith. The quotation of the righteous in v. 9 marks the transition in tone of the psalm—from judgment to testimony.

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as an adversative in this context, translating גם as *sed* ("but"). Indeed, Yahweh's actions against the individual stand in contrast to the evil and lies in which the individual boasts.

[40] See the note concerning הוות in v. 4.

[41] Botha, "'I Am Like a Green Olive Tree,'" para. 4.

Verses 3–7 address a derisively identified גבור ("mighty one"; v. 3). The psalm

opens with a confrontational question, מה־תתהלל ברעה ("Why do you boast in evil . . . ?";

v. 3). The vocative, הגבור, attached to this question establishes the direction of address.

The term גבור does not have an inherently negative connotation; however, in this context,

it is used pejoratively. The "mighty one" being addressed is derided for his love of

deception and destruction. In contrast, line 3b testifies of the endurance of God's

lovingkindness. Goldingay purports that 3b functions to underscore the ridiculousness of

the mighty one's glorying in evil. He writes:

> The stupidity of it lies in the reminder in the second colon, which has several
> possible implications. It might imply that the only thing worthy of even a
> warrior's trust is God's commitment. It might imply that the guarantee of that
> commitment to the people who belong to God means that this exulting will turn
> out to be unwise. It might imply that this is the warrior's own conviction, in
> connection with his own life; he thinks it applies to him, but his wickedness
> means it does not.[42]

The assertion about God's lovingkindness highlights the audacity of the addressee's

position; one of destructive arrogance and deceit.

Verses 3–6 use two other vocatives besides הגבור—עשה רמיה ("doer of deceit"; v.

4) and לשון מרמה ("tongue of deceit"; v. 6). As these descriptive vocatives indicate, these

verses emphasize the individual's active deception and love of evil: תתהלל ("you boast";

v. 3); תחשב ("you plot"; v. 4), שפר . . . אהבת רע ("you love evil . . . a lie"; v. 5), אהבת כל־

דברים־בלע ("you love all the words that devour"; v. 6). Terms of speech dominate the

portrayal of this person.[43] In fact, the third vocative, לשון מרמה ("tongue of deceit"; v. 6),

employs synecdoche, representing the individual by the organ with which he deceives

and seals his fate. Although the rhetoric and speech of the addressee is the focus of the

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[42] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:143.

[43] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 461.

description, his speech is not reported. The nature of the individual's speech is vividly described, but his voice is not heard.

Instead, after judgment is issued, directly addressing this deceptive individual in v. 7, vv. 8–9 present the projected speech of the righteous. These verses mark a shift in voicing; the individual is no longer addressed but is referred to in the third person. The shift follows the description of his undoing. The righteous will see the downfall of the "mighty one" and laugh, saying, הנה הגבר . . . לא ישים אלהים מעוזו ("Here is the man who does not make God his stronghold . . . "; v. 9). Tanner comments, "Indeed, in what may seem like a cold act, they *laugh* (v. 6), just as God does in Psalms 2:4; 37:13; 59:8 and as Personified Wisdom does in Prov. 1:26. The effect is chilling, but just as in these other instances, the audience learns here that the reason for the laughter is that the Mighty One has trusted in the things he has acquired, instead of placing trust in God."[44] In the speech of the righteous, the "mighty one" (הגבור; v. 3) is reduced to a man (הגבר; v. 9). These terms have identical consonants, making an effective wordplay.[45] The boast of the self-aggrandized individual is described but not repeated. Instead, the one who traded righteousness for lies and good for evil will be mocked for his misplaced trust by those labeled "righteous." The righteous will laugh and speak. Jacobson writes, "It should be stressed that the future speech of the righteous is hypothetical; it does not yet exist. By quoting the hypothetical, future speech of the righteous in the present moment, however, the psalmist lends those future words a reality that functions to deny apparent present victory of the wicked."[46] The shift from second person to third person in relation to the

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[44] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 462. See, also, Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:145.

[45] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 138; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 37–38.

[46] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 139.

lying individual and coupled with the hypothetical rejoicing of the righteous at his

destruction further undermines the agenda of the wicked. Even the divine epithets reflect

this shift. In vv. 3–7, Yahweh is referred to as אל ("God"; vv. 3, 7); however, in vv. 8–11,

Yahweh is referred to as אלהים ("God"; vv. 9, 10). In the direct address to the wicked, the

epithet אל is used. In contrast, when the righteous community speaks, the name אלהים is

used (v. 9). The first-person testimony repeats the name used in the quotation of the

righteous. Hossfeld, Zenger, and Kraus all argue that the variation represents a

substitution for the covenantal name, *Yahweh*.[47] In this case, the name Yahweh is

reserved for the hearing of the righteous, those whose trust is placed in him. The shift in

divine epithet serves to reinforce the contrast between the rhetoric of the wicked and the

speech of the righteous.

Verses 8–10 do not have an explicit addressee; however, v. 10 introduces first-

person speech. The psalm moves from second and third person concerning the "mighty

one" to first person, contrasting the perspectives and choices of the two.[48] Jacobson

writes:

> The theme of transformation is continued in this closing speech, as vocabulary
> introduced earlier in the psalm is retrieved. In v. 1, the psalmist had asked the
> mighty one why he did evil against 'the faithful' (חסד). In v. 9, the mighty one
> was said to trust (יבטח) in his wealth. The psalmist now confesses: 'I trust [בטחתי]
> in the steadfast love [חסד] of God . . . I will proclaim your name, for it is good, in
> the presence of the faithful [חסידיך]' (vv. 10b-11b). The psalm thus ends with the
> psalmist contrasting his own present confession of faith with the present violent
> speech of the enemies.[49]

The confession of trust draws a stark contrast between the deceitful one, who trusts in

riches and is uprooted and destroyed, and choosing to trust in God's lovingkindness,

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[47] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 32; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 508–9.

[48] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 462.

[49] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 138.

which leads to flourishing in the presence of God. The self-description without an explicit addressee in v. 10 gives way to direct address to God in v. 11. In vv. 3–7, the psalm decries the wicked for speaking lies and loving evil, and vv. 10–11 offers the antithesis of his perverted love and rhetoric—testimony and prayer that reverberate dependence upon God and delight in his presence. Segal writes, "The 'mighty one' boasts of his evil, which is described in the opening section most exclusively in terms of speech. The reaction of the righteous is also a matter of spoken communication: the praise at the end; the reaction in verse 9, and, to no small extent, the psalm itself."[50]

Psalm 52 contrasts three sections of speech, which work together to silence the voice of the deceitful and allow the words of the righteous to resound. Schaefer explains:

> The wicked, so evident at the beginning completely disappear from the text. After a lengthy address to the wicked (vv. 1-5 [3–7]), the psalmist turns to God, thanking him 'because of what you have done' (v. 9 [11]), which amounts to exterminating the wicked and curbing their oppression of the faithful. The evil speech contrasts with the poet who will 'proclaim' . . . God's goodness.[51]

This shift in focus and direction of address from the "mighty one" (vv. 3–7) to God (v. 11) is negotiated by the projected eulogizing by the righteous (vv. 8–9) and confession of trust (v. 10), which refer to the "mighty one" and God in the third person. The shifts in voicing facilitate a shift in perspective, moving from detailed, vivid description of the toxicity of the wicked one's rhetoric to praise of God, who is trustworthy and acts.

Psalm 91

יֹשֵׁב בְּסֵתֶר עֶלְיֹון	1	One dwelling in the hiding place of the Most High
בְּצֵל שַׁדַּי יִתְלֹונָן׃		In the shadow of Almighty will abide.
אֹמַר[52] לַיהוה מַחְסִי וּמְצוּדָתִי	2	I say to Yahweh, "My refuge and my stronghold,

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[50] Segal, *A New Psalm*, 240.

[51] Schaefer, *Psalms*, 133.

[52] The OG reads יאמר, maintaining the 3ms of v. 1; whereas, 11QApPs[a] uses a definite 3ms

אֱלֹהַי[53] אֶבְטַח־בּוֹ׃		My God in whom I trust."
כִּי הוּא יַצִּילְךָ מִפַּח יָקוּשׁ מִדֶּבֶר הַוּוֹת׃	3	Indeed, he will deliver you from a snare of a fowler, From the thorn[54] of destruction.
בְּאֶבְרָתוֹ יָסֶךְ לָךְ וְתַחַת־כְּנָפָיו תֶּחְסֶה	4	With his pinion[55] he will cover you; Under his wings you will take refuge.
צִנָּה וְסֹחֵרָה אֲמִתּוֹ׃		A shield and encompassing wall is his faithfulness.
לֹא־תִירָא מִפַּחַד לָיְלָה מֵחֵץ יָעוּף יוֹמָם׃	5	You will not be afraid of the terror of the night, Of the arrow that flies by day,
מִדֶּבֶר בָּאֹפֶל יַהֲלֹךְ מִקֶּטֶב יָשׁוּד צָהֳרָיִם׃[56]	6	Of the pestilence[57] that will prowl in the darkness, Of the destruction that will devastate at noon.
יִפֹּל מִצִּדְּךָ אֶלֶף וּרְבָבָה מִימִינֶךָ	7	At your side a thousand will fall, And ten thousand at your right side.
אֵלֶיךָ לֹא יִגָּשׁ׃		You it will not approach.
רַק בְּעֵינֶיךָ תַבִּיט	8	Only with your eyes will you look,

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participle (האומר). See García Martínez et al., *Qumran Cave 11.II*, 202. Zenger (*Psalms 2*, 427) argues that following these texts "destroys the pragmatism of the psalm" in the MT. Tanner (deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 700) notes that alternate readings of the MT are not efforts to navigate incomprehensible grammar or text corruption; rather, they only mitigate questions of voicing (see *BHS* critical apparatus; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 219). Such an emendation—substituting a third-person speaker for a first-person—leaves the shift in voicing in v. 9, which has structural significance, unresolved. deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 700; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 452. Instead of an emendation of the MT to read the quotation in v. 2 as hypothetical speech of a third party, the verb of speech of v. 2 may be heard as a first-person confession of trust—and identification with the person described in v. 1. deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 697; Segal, *A New Psalm*, 433; Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 321; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:37; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 91–92. Contra Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 140; Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 203; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 220.

[53] In 11QApPsª, אלהי is followed by the participle מבטו. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (*Qumran Cave 11.II*, 203) offer the translation, "my God is the safety in which I trust"; whereas, Tanner (deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 697) suggests, "[My God] the trusted one, I trust," and describes it as a scribal expansion.

[54] The primary translation of the Hebrew word here, דֶּבֶר, is as something within the semantic range of "pestilence" or "plague." See Holladay, "דֶּבֶר," 68; Clines, ed., "דֶּבֶר," 2:410–11. While such a translation in this context is possible, another meaning, "thorn" seems more appropriate. Zenger (*Psalms 2*, 427) dismisses the translation "the pestilence of destruction," Gunkel's proposal to alter the consonants to render מבור הוות as "from the destructive [pit]fall," and the alternative vocalization that would produce "before the word of destruction"; instead, he argues that "thorn" is more probable, since it fits with the imagery of a sharp instrument (like an arrow) of the fowler used to kill the trapped bird. See, also, deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 698; Holladay, "דֶּבֶר," 68. Additionally, v. 5 seconds the images of v. 3. The snare—or hidden danger—(v. 3a) and terror of night (v. 5a) will be thwarted; indeed, the thorn of destruction (v. 3b) and the arrow (v. 5b) will fail to reach their target.

[55] Note the singular אברתו compared to the plural כנפיו. There is a tendency to make them agree in number by translating אברתו, which would also reflect OG and S manuscripts (see deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 698; Segal, *A New Psalm*, 433; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:38; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 220; even García Martínez and Tigchelaar [*Qumran Cave 11.II*, 203] translate the singular noun in 11QApPsª as the plural "feathers"). However, there is no reason to change the number of this noun in a rendering of the MT. In fact, אברתו and כנפיו are also parallel terms (with contrasting number) in Deut 32:11. See Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 322; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 427.

[56] In 11QApPsª, the lines of v. 6 are inverted; however, 4QPsᵇ concurs with the order in the MT. García Martínez et al., *Qumran Cave 11.II*, 202; Ulrich et al., *Qumran Cave 4.XI*, 27; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 698.

[57] Here, the noun דבר is seconded although rendered into English differently.

וְשִׁלֻּמַת רְשָׁעִים תִּרְאֶה׃		And you will see the recompense of the wicked.
כִּי־אַתָּה יהוה מַחְסִי	9	Indeed, "You, O Yahweh, are my refuge";[58]
עֶלְיוֹן שַׂמְתָּ מְעוֹנֶךָ׃		The Most High you have made your hiding place.
לֹא־תְאֻנֶּה אֵלֶיךָ רָעָה	10	Evil will not be allowed to meet you.
וְנֶגַע לֹא־יִקְרַב בְּאָהֳלֶךָ׃		And a plague will not come near your tent.
כִּי מַלְאָכָיו יְצַוֶּה־לָּךְ	11	Because he will give his angels charge of you
לִשְׁמָרְךָ בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ׃		To keep watch over you in all your ways.
עַל־כַּפַּיִם יִשָּׂאוּנְךָ	12	Upon their hands they will carry you
פֶּן־תִּגֹּף בָּאֶבֶן רַגְלֶךָ׃		So that your foot will not strike a stone.
עַל־שַׁחַל וָפֶתֶן תִּדְרֹךְ	13	Upon a lion and a cobra you will tread.
תִּרְמֹס כְּפִיר וְתַנִּין׃		You will trample a young lion and a serpent.
כִּי בִי חָשַׁק וַאֲפַלְּטֵהוּ	14	Because he loves me I will deliver him.
אֲשַׂגְּבֵהוּ כִּי־יָדַע שְׁמִי		I will protect him because he knows my name.
יִקְרָאֵנִי וְאֶעֱנֵהוּ	15	He will call me, and I will answer him.
עִמּוֹ־אָנֹכִי בְצָרָה		I will be with him in trouble.
אֲחַלְּצֵהוּ וַאֲכַבְּדֵהוּ׃		I will rescue him; and I will honor him.
אֹרֶךְ יָמִים אַשְׂבִּיעֵהוּ	16	With long life I will satisfy him,
וְאַרְאֵהוּ בִּישׁוּעָתִי׃		And I will show him my salvation.

Psalm 91 champions trust in Yahweh. First-person confessions of faith (vv. 2, 9a), assurance directed to an individual addressee (vv. 3–8, 9b–13), and the confirming voice of Yahweh (vv. 14–16) all sound to declare the trustworthiness of Yahweh and the security of the one who puts this trust into practice. Although none of this psalm is directly addressed to Yahweh, Yahweh's voice breaks in, responding to the preceding exhortation with confirmation and concluding this psalm of trust with divine promise.[59]

Verse 1 declares that a person who seeks shelter in Yahweh will find it. This declaration makes use of a masculine, singular participle (ישׁב) functioning substantively and a finite verb (יתלונן) to make a generic statement about those who trust in Yahweh. This verse serves as an introduction to the theme of the psalm.[60] Verse 2, with the same

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[58] Segal, *A New Psalm*, 433.
[59] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:39.
[60] Goldingay (*Psalms*, 3:37, 41) explains that v. 1 "announces the psalm's theme" (41); however, he leaves the ambiguity of the relationship between vv. 1 and 2 unresolved. His translations of v. 1, "One

thrust as v. 1, makes a personal declaration: אמר ליהוה ("I say to Yahweh . . . ").[61] While

this self-quotation is addressed to a human addressee—enveloped by verses that speak of

Yahweh in the third person, followed by direct address to an individual, and referring to

Yahweh in the third person in the frame (אמר ליהוה; "I say to Yahweh"), the reported

speech is directly addressed to Yahweh. A person reports addressing Yahweh as מחסי

ומצודתי אלהי אבטח־בו ("my refuge and my stronghold, my God in whom I trust").

In the contrast to vv. 1–2, beginning in v. 3, the addressee is explicit yet still

unidentified. The rest of this human-to-human address (vv. 3–13) is directed toward a

masculine, singular "you," and this shift in the direction of speech is signaled by the word

כי.[62] But what does this shift represent? One of the difficulties of reading Ps 91 is

discerning how many speakers this text presents. In vv. 14–16, where Yahweh's voice is

heard, the shift in perspective demarcates the change in speaker. However, in this section,

there are two dominant views amongst those who adhere to a close reading of the MT.

Interpretations of the voicing in vv. 2–13 may be divided into these two categories: 1)

those that attribute the shift in voicing to the dynamic between testimony and exhortation,

hearing a consistent speaker,[63] and 2) those that equate the shift in voicing with a shift in

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who lives in the shelter of the Most High who stays in the shade of the Almighty" (37), reveals his choice
to read both verbs as substantival participles functionally (see also Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 406; *GKC* 116x),
and his use of a colon at the end of verse makes room for any one of the three possible interpretations he
outlines. He writes, "Admittedly it is then unclear how v. 1 relates to v. 2. It might be a pair of self-
contained noun phrases describing the psalm's theme. Or the description might stand in apposition to the
subject to the verb v. 2 as the beginning of the minister's self-description. Or it might be a vocative address
to the person addressed in v. 2 (so NJPS)" (41).

[61] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 427.

[62] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 427.

[63] See deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 700–701; Hilber, *Cultic Prophecy in the
Psalms*, 203, 207; Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 120–21, 140; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 228–29; Tate, *Psalms 51–
100*, 453. Additionally, in Tg, David is identified as the speaker of the exhortation within the psalm itself.
David precedes his exhortation to Solomon in the following verses with his confession of trust in v. 2. Also
of note is that the confession of v. 9a is placed in the mouth of Solomon.

speaker and addressee, establishing a dialectic of confession and affirmation.[64] Both

views are plausible interpretations of the MT.[65] Whereas it is plausible to attribute a shift

in voicing to the dynamic between testimony and exhortation and one of the premises of

this study is that shifts in voicing do not necessarily represent shifts in speaker, this

interpretation of Ps 91 will situate itself in the first category of readings. As already

demonstrated, shifts in voice on the grammatical level serve a variety of functions.

Brennan Breed explains, "Whatever the historically correct original context may be, by

the time the psalm was incorporated into the Psalter, the questions of speaker, problem,

and solution, among others, were left open."[66] Therefore, the following discussion

explores the voicing shifts in vv. 2–13 as testimony and exhortation.[67]

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[64] See Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 321; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:43, 46; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 429. Goldingay (*Psalms*, 3:39) admits that there is "no compelling need" to reconstruct an original context and its speakers. However, his interpretation of Ps 91 does tend toward hearing two voices, and he posits, "Perhaps v. 2 is the king's own opening words of commitment, declaring from the start that Yhwh is indeed 'my refuge'; the rest of the psalm would then be a response to that." Interpretive decisions concerning vv. 1–3 also affect one's readings of v. 9. Line 9a may be interpreted as either an utterance by the petitioner in v. 2 and as a respondent's echo of the petitioner's confession. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 428–30; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:38. For responsory readings of Ps 91, see the interpretations of Asher Eder ("Psalm 91 as Responsory") and Ronald W. Goetsch ("The Lord Is My Refuge").

[65] Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 450–53.

[66] Breed, "Reception of the Psalms," 298. The focus here is not on reconstructing the details of an original context. The *Sitze im Leben* of individual psalms are not at the forefront of this lyric poetic analysis as it would be in other approaches. Some interpret the shifts in voicing coupled with royal and military imagery as impetus for doling out speaking parts. Generally, reading in light of a specific historical context motivates a parsing of vv. 2–13 into multiple speaking parts. However, reading these verses without assuming shifts in voicing does not exclude the possibility that this psalm originated in a multivocalic situation. However, the question at hand is how the voicing functions within the literary text. Psalm 91 does not present characters or scripted dialogue or liturgy. Scott R. A. Starbuck (*Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 204), in arguing against the interpretation of Ps 91 in the MT as a royal psalm, compares Ps 91 to extant Egyptian oracular amuletic decrees, makes a case for the democratization of Ps 91, and asserts that it is "appropriate for common worship and prayer, thus demonstrating the transfer of court style to greater humanity." The lack of details in Ps 91 lends it to a broader use. For more on the democratization of royal psalms in general, see Grant, "The Psalms and the King," 109–12.

[67] On the other hand, a hearing of two voices interacting in vv. 2–13 is plausible and still arguable through a lyric poetic approach. Instead of testimony and exhortation, the shift in voicing represent a confession or petition and an affirming response. For example, Zenger (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 428) argues that the confession of v. 2 also serves as a petition, and this cry for refuge is met with another individual's reassuring images of protection and deliverance. Both Zenger and Goldingay (*Psalms*, 3:39–40) imagine the reassuring voice to belong to a person within the cultic circle, either a priest, prophet, or Levite. While the dynamic changes when one imagines multiple speakers contributing to vv. 1–13, confession and response along with the juxtaposition of images still communicate the message that safety

Verses 2–13 may be divided into two subsections: vv. 2–8 and 9–13, with both of these sections beginning with a self-quotation and then transitioning into second-person address to a human.[68] These verses directly address an unidentified individual about the safety and security found not in Jerusalem or the temple but in Yahweh.[69] Thus, the confession of trust in v. 2 provides the confidence and credentials for speaking vv. 3–8. Verses 3–8 exhibit a shift in voicing as well as a shift in focus, moving from explicitly describing Yahweh's protective acts to describing the individual's experience of being protected. Verse 2 reports a confession to Yahweh but leads to the two explicit statements of Yahweh's acts, speaking of Yahweh in the third-person, in vv. 3–4: הוא יצילך ("he will deliver you"; v. 3) and יסך לך ("he will cover you"; v. 4a). In v. 2, the reported speech is described as being directed to Yahweh; in v. 3, Yahweh is referred to in the third-person (as in the frame of the self-quotation of v. 2). However, in the rest of this section, vv. 4–8, Yahweh is not the subject of the verbs of action. In vv. 4–6, the individual being addressed is the subject of the verbs of action in the main clauses: תחסה ("you will take refuge"; v. 4) and לא־תירא ("you will not be afraid"; v. 5). In vv. 7–8, the trouble that is being avoided becomes the focus—thousands fall but אליך לא יגש ("it will not approach you"; v. 7). Then, in v. 8, the individual becomes the subject again—תביט ("will you look") and תראה ("you will see"). In vv. 1–4, Yahweh is unequivocally described as refuge and the source of deliverance. In vv. 1–2, the divine epithets include עליון (Most High; v. 1), שדי (Almighty; v. 1), יהוה (Yahweh; v. 2), מחסי ("my refuge"; v. 2); מצודתי

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and security are found in Yahweh. The respondent reinforces the confession of the petitioner. Then, the voice of Yahweh in vv. 14–16, speaking about the petitioner in the third person, declares to the respondent his promises to deliver and protect the petitioner. Therefore, Yahweh's words also affirm the assurances of the respondent and confirm the message of v. 1.

[68] Segal, *A New Psalm*, 434; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 700–701; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 427–28.

[69] Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 395; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:41.

("my stronghold"; v. 2), and אלהי ("my God"; v. 2). In vv. 3–4, Yahweh is only referred to pronominally, and in vv. 5–8 God is not mentioned or alluded to at all. However, vv. 1–8 are united by the theme of protection and focus on the experience of protection. Because Yahweh is established as protector in vv. 1–4, it may be assumed that the protection promised in vv. 5–8 derives from Yahweh. Although God is only named in the first two verses and explicitly described as providing protection in vv. 3–4, vv. 5–8 elicit trust and offer comfort by highlighting the experience of being protected.[70]

Seconding v. 2, line 9a asserts: כי־אתה יהוה מחסי ("Indeed, 'You, Yahweh, are my refuge'"). Here, as in v. 9, Yahweh's name is evoked, the reported speech is direct address to Yahweh, and he is called מחסי ("my refuge"). The variance in translations of this line may primarily be attributed to negotiations of the voicing—not difficulties on the textual-grammatical level.[71] Regardless, Zenger argues, "The new beginning in v. 9 is marked by the fact that the speaker, in a kind of short quotation, repeats the 'performative' confession of trust in v. 2, confirming it with the deictic particle כי, 'yes, indeed,' . . . ."[72] In v. 3, the word כי is followed by a third-person pronoun (referring to Yahweh), marking the shift in the direction of voicing from the direct address to Yahweh in the self-quotation (v. 2) to the reassurance directed toward a human addressee (v. 3).

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[70] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 430.

[71] One's interpretation of v. 9 reflects choices made concerning preceding verses. On one hand, Tanner (deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 697, 700–701) offers, "For you are the LORD, my refuge!"; her translation reflects her interpretation that one person voices vv. 1–13. Schaefer (*Psalms*, 228) also interprets line 9a a shift back into reported prayer. Taking the middle ground, Segal (*A New Psalm*, 433) interprets this line as reported prayer, providing, "Indeed, You, LORD, are my refuge,"; however, he remains ambiguous as to what the shifts in voicing represents. On the other hand, Zenger (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 426, 431) translates this line, "Yes—'You, YHWH, are my refuge,'" (426), and interprets this as the respondent quoting the petitioner. In Golindgay's translation (*Psalms*, 3:38), only the term מחסי is a quoted by the respondent: "Because you are the one who has made Yhwh 'my refuge.'" Alter (*The Book of Psalms*, 322) does not render line 9a as a quotation at all; instead, it is second-person reinforcement: "For you—the LORD is your refuge." Similarly, Kraus (Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 220) provides, "For you—Yahweh is 'your' refuge," he also emending the MT's מחסי to be מחסך.

[72] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 431.

However, in v. 9, the word כי is followed by a second-person pronoun (referring to Yahweh), marking the shift into the reported direct address to Yahweh from addressing the "you" of vv. 3–8. In both places, the use of כי is emphatic but also helps negotiate the shift in voicing. The shift in voicing here mirrors that of v. 2. The one speaking exhortation, declaring protection in the face of danger for the one trusting Yahweh, offers a second confession of trust. Tanner writes, "This one can make these declarations to others because God has served as refuge in the past. The second line encourages those listening to do the same. As noted, many modern translations alter the person of this line so that there is no break here. However, a reading of the MT is possible without the change, and like v. 2, it validates the words of the speaker as true confession."[73] As Tanner acknowledges, others do interpret line 9a as the respondent's quotation of the petitioner[74] or as second-person reinforcement of an individual's trust.[75] In these cases, this line echoes the reassurance of vv. 3–8 by intensifying the message and confession of vv. 1–2.

In describing vv. 3–8 and 9–13 as "two analogous subsections," Zenger writes, "The subsections are each shaped in such a way that they begin with images that evoke YHWH as a saving place of refuge (vv. 3–4b and 9–10), then describe the dangers in the outside world by means of images (vv. 5–7 and 11–12), and finally show the petitioner as the rescued victor in the midst of the hostile or chaotic powers (vv. 8 and 13)."[76] As in the previous subsection, Yahweh is only referred to with divine epithets—יהוה (Yahweh, v.

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[73] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 700–701. See also Segal, *A New Psalm*, 433; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 228; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 458.

[74] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:38; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 426, 431. See also Segal, *A New Psalm*, 433.

[75] Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 322; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 220.

[76] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 430.

9a) and עליון ("Most High"; v. 9b)—at the beginning of the series of images. Yahweh is described as charging angels with protective care in v. 11, but in vv. 10 and 12 the focus of the imagery is the avoided danger. The juxtaposition of images in vv. 9–13 promote the message that safety is found in trusting Yahweh even though the direct involvement and presence of Yahweh are not explicit in each image. In fact, in both subsections, vv. 2–8 and 9–13, the opening reported confessions of trust are directed to Yahweh (vv. 2 and 9a), conveying a sense of divine presence and attention. However, in vv. 5–8 and 10–13 the evidence of divine protection, which is so apparent in vv. 1–4 and 9, is not the direct intervention of Yahweh; the images of Yahweh as refuge (vv. 1–4, 9) are juxtaposed with harrowing images of threats evaded (vv. 5–8, 10–13) to evoke the sense that danger is imminent but God is also close. There is a protection and security that the pious individual experiences in the face of threats and endangerment that are found in harboring within the presence of Yahweh. The divine voice heard at the end of the psalm affirms this.

In vv. 14–16, the voicing shifts altogether but is once again signaled by the word כי. The syntax of line 14a fronts the object of the verb: כי בי חשק ("Because he loves me . . . "). Although the pronoun is attached to a preposition in this verse, the word order seems to follow the pattern of vv. 3 and 9, where כי is followed by a pronoun referring to Yahweh.[77] Thus, there is a progression in the כי-plus-pronoun pattern from third person in v. 3, to second person in v. 2, and, finally, to first person in v. 14. The divine speech begins with כי and a self-reference and proceeds to describe a reciprocal relationship in vv. 14–15a. These first three lines feature the reciprocity of a relationship between

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[77] Compare כי הוא in v. 3 and כי־אתה in v. 9.

Yahweh and an unidentified, third party. This individual that Yahweh speaks about may be presumed to be the individual to whom vv. 2–13 are addressed. Hilber asserts, "The shift to third person address in Ps 91:14 does bring a wider audience into view but this does not preclude there being a continuation of the prophetic encouragement to the individual seeking divine protection."[78] He asserts that prophetic utterance and a didactic thrust are not mutually exclusive, as demonstrated in other biblical texts as well as comparative Assyrian texts.[79] Therefore, the individual spoken about in the third person in vv. 14–16 may be the same one addressed in the previous section. Yahweh's voice confirms the comforting message delivered in the previous verses: Yahweh protects, delivers, and satisfies the one who loves, knows, and calls him. In vv. 15b–16, Yahweh's words focus only on his actions toward the individual. The individual is the subject of half of the verbs of vv. 14–15a, but Yahweh is the only subject in vv. 15b–16. Yahweh declares that he will act on behalf of the individual, promising his presence, rescue, honor, longevity, and revelation of salvation. Yahweh's speech confirms the message of v. 1, the one who seeks refuge in Yahweh finds it. In keeping with vv. 2–8 and 9–13, vv. 14–16 move from focusing on the relationship between Yahweh and an individual to highlighting the experience of the benefits of that relationship—mainly deliverance and salvation.

Yahweh is never directly addressed in this psalm; the only speech directed to Yahweh is that in the self-quotations addressed to the "you" of vv. 2–13. Confession of

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[78] Hilber, *Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms*, 207.

[79] Hilber, *Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms*, 207–9. He compares vv. 14–16 with Isa 41:17–20; 42:14–17; 53:12, which are all first-person prophetic announcements that refer to the one or those being delivered in the third person. Thus, he argues, "A switch from second to third person in Ps 91:14 simply adds a didactic emphasis to the divine speech but does not necessarily make Ps 91:14-16 any less prophetic" (208).

trust gives way to images of protection and danger escaped, and the voice of Yahweh confirms the veracity of the message. He is worthy of trust; Yahweh is not far off or distant. Even when not directly addressed, Yahweh speaks. The thrust of Ps 91 is the promotion of an active faith in Yahweh, of taking shelter in the Most High. Personal confession (vv. 2, 9a), reinforcing rhetoric directed to an individual addressee (vv. 3–8, 9b–13), and the confirming voice of Yahweh (vv. 14–16) all substantiate v. 1: the one who seeks shelter in Yahweh finds a dwelling place in his presence.

Psalm 94

אֵל־נְקָמוֹת יהוה	1	O God of vengeance, O Yahweh;
אֵל נְקָמוֹת הוֹפִיעַ:		O God of vengeance, shine forth!
הִנָּשֵׂא שֹׁפֵט הָאָרֶץ	2	Rise up, O Judge of the Earth!
הָשֵׁב גְּמוּל עַל־גֵּאִים:		Bring recompense upon the proud!
עַד־מָתַי רְשָׁעִים יהוה	3	How long will the wicked, O Yahweh,
עַד־מָתַי רְשָׁעִים יַעֲלֹזוּ:		how long will the wicked rejoice?
יַבִּיעוּ יְדַבְּרוּ עָתָק	4	They spout and speak arrogantly.
יִתְאַמְּרוּ כָּל־פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן:		All the doers of iniquity boast.
עַמְּךָ יהוה יְדַכְּאוּ	5	Your people, O Yahweh, they crush.
וְנַחֲלָתְךָ יְעַנּוּ:		Your possession they afflict.
אַלְמָנָה וְגֵר יַהֲרֹגוּ	6	Widow and sojourner they slaughter;
וִיתוֹמִים יְרַצֵּחוּ:		And orphans they murder.
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא יִרְאֶה־יָּהּ	7	They have said, "Yah does not see,
וְלֹא־יָבִין אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:		And the God of Jacob does not pay attention."
בִּינוּ בֹּעֲרִים בָּעָם	8	Pay attention, O stupid ones among the people!
וּכְסִילִים מָתַי תַּשְׂכִּילוּ:		O fools, when will you think?
הֲנֹטַע אֹזֶן הֲלֹא יִשְׁמָע	9	The one who plants an ear, does he not hear?
אִם־יֹצֵר עַיִן הֲלֹא יַבִּיט:		Or one who forms an eye, does he not look?
הֲיֹסֵר גּוֹיִם הֲלֹא יוֹכִיחַ	10	The one who disciplines nations, does he not convict?
הַמְלַמֵּד אָדָם דָּעַת:		The one who teaches humanity knowledge . . . . [80]
יהוה יֹדֵעַ מַחְשְׁבוֹת אָדָם	11	Yahweh knows the thoughts of humanity,
כִּי־הֵמָּה הָבֶל:		Because they are vapor.

[80] Some scholars choose an emendation of this line, reading it as incomplete or corrupt. See Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 2:673; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 238. For example, the MT proposes המלמד אדם הלא מדעת or המלמד אדם הלא מדעת or הלא ידע, in keeping with the pattern of vv. 9–10a. However, others reject an emendation and adhere to the MT and OG texts in their renderings of the text. See deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 711; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 452; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:74, 79–80; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 235.

אַשְׁרֵי הַגֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר־תְּיַסְּרֶנּוּ יָּהּ	12	Blessed is the person whom you discipline, O Yah,
וּמִתּוֹרָתְךָ תְלַמְּדֶנּוּ:		And the one whom you teach your instructions,
לְהַשְׁקִיט לוֹ מִימֵי רָע	13	To provide him respite from days of trouble
עַד יִכָּרֶה לָרָשָׁע שָׁחַת:		Until a pit for the wicked has been dug.
כִּי לֹא־יִטֹּשׁ יהוה עַמּוֹ	14	For Yahweh will not forsake his people,
וְנַחֲלָתוֹ לֹא יַעֲזֹב:		And his possession he will not abandon.
כִּי־עַד־צֶדֶק יָשׁוּב מִשְׁפָּט	15	For until[81] righteousness does, justice will return
וְאַחֲרָיו כָּל־יִשְׁרֵי־לֵב:		And, after that, all the upright of heart.

מִי־יָקוּם לִי עִם־מְרֵעִים	16	Who will rise up for me against[82] those doing evil?
מִי־יִתְיַצֵּב לִי עִם־פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן:		Who will take a stand for me against the doers of iniquity?
לוּלֵי יהוה עֶזְרָתָה לִּי	17	If Yahweh were not my help,
כִּמְעַט שָׁכְנָה דוּמָה נַפְשִׁי:		My soul would easily have settled into silence.
אִם־אָמַרְתִּי מָטָה רַגְלִי	18	If I say, "My foot has slipped,"
חַסְדְּךָ יהוה יִסְעָדֵנִי:		Your steadfast love, O Yahweh, will sustain me.
בְּרֹב שַׂרְעַפַּי בְּקִרְבִּי	19	When great are my anxious thoughts within me,
תַּנְחוּמֶיךָ יְשַׁעַשְׁעוּ נַפְשִׁי:		Your encouragements delight my soul.
הַיְחָבְרְךָ כִּסֵּא הַוּוֹת	20	Will a throne of destruction ally with you,
יֹצֵר עָמָל עֲלֵי־חֹק:		Forming hardship by statute?
יָגוֹדּוּ עַל־נֶפֶשׁ צַדִּיק	21	They gather against the righteous soul;
וְדָם נָקִי יַרְשִׁיעוּ:		Innocent blood they condemn.

וַיְהִי יהוה לִי לְמִשְׂגָּב	22	But Yahweh has been like a refuge for me;
וֵאלֹהַי לְצוּר מַחְסִי:		My God is like a sheltering rock.
וַיָּשֶׁב עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת־אוֹנָם	23	And he has brought their iniquities back upon them.
וּבְרָעָתָם יַצְמִיתֵם		In their wickedness, he will destroy them.
יַצְמִיתֵם יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ:		Yahweh, our God, will destroy them.

Psalm 94 petitions and expresses trust. It directly addresses Yahweh as well as those in opposition to him. It employs a quotation of the wicked along with self-quotation. These elements all work together to counter atheistic or deistic doubts about God with declarations of God's involvement with humanity, care for the righteous, and

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[81] Here, the preposition עד denotes temporal positioning and the prepositional phrase expresses how long or unto what point justice will reign—until righteousness has returned. Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §311; BHRG §39.18.2.

[82] Given the context—a psalm containing a complaint against the wicked, it follows that עם should be understood as adversative. See Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §332; BHRG §39.20.2. The position toward the wicked is that of confrontation; therefore, here, the preposition is rendered "against" for both occurrences in this verse.

consequences for the wicked. Verses 1–8 are a Yahweh-directed complaint about the
wicked. The first two verses, using vocatives and imperatives, directly petition Yahweh
to bring justice. Then, the question—עד־מתי רשעים יהוה עד־מתי רשעים יעלזו ("How long will
the wicked, O Yahweh, how long will the wicked rejoice?"; v. 3)—initiates the
accusations against the proud, explaining the depth and breadth of their wickedness. Not
every line of vv. 1–7 is directly addressed to Yahweh grammatically (i.e., some lines
feature vocatives or second-person verbs or pronouns); vv. 4, 6–7 are third-person
descriptions of the wicked, but they are part of the argument against the wicked, the
argument for Yahweh to act. Verse 4 provides the motivation for crying עד־מתי ("how
long?"; v. 3) and describes the speech of the wicked, characterizing it as arrogant and
boastful. Instead of providing immediate evidence for this charge, vv. 5–6 describe their
actions not their rhetoric. They crush, afflict, slaughter, and murder. Building the case for
Yahweh to act, v. 5 asserts that the wicked attack and oppress עמך and נהלתך ("your
people" and "your possession"). Their actions threaten and torture "the wards of God,"[83]
the vulnerable and weakest in society—widows, orphans, and sojourners.

In v. 7, the petition against the wicked reaches its crescendo.[84] Following the
description of their behavior, the accusation that the wicked boast and speak arrogantly is
demonstrated in the framed quotation v. 7 offers.[85] The reported words of the wicked are
the climax of the argument or accusation as well as the height of their transgression. The
claim of the wicked is not that there is no God; rather, they assert that Yah, the God of
Jacob—the God who previously paid attention, is now indifferent or unaware of the

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[83] Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 240.

[84] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:78; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 234.

[85] Ababi, "Dieu des vengeances, resplendis!," 470.

affairs of humanity.[86] The two divine epithets, *Yah* and *God of Jacob*, in the mouths of

the wicked reflect the severity of their attitude and assertion; the use of these names

expose their knowledge of the covenant relationship of the people with Yahweh and their

words proclaim that either the efficacy of the covenant or the interest or power of

Yahweh have expired. Even the grammar of their reported speech undergirds their

claims. In contrast to the voicing of the preceding verses, they speak *about* Yahweh and

not *to* Yahweh. They speak as if Yahweh does not see or hear; he is not present. Frank-

Lothar Hossfeld writes, "The climax of their crime is the cynicism of practical atheism,

which denies God's activity or even God's living presence."[87] The initial description of

their rhetoric occurs in v. 4, but the speech is not presented immediately. Verse 5

employs second-person possessive pronouns to modify "people" and "possession" and a

vocative with Yahweh as the reference; in contrast, the description in v. 6 uses third-

person language to describe the wicked, not language directly addressed to Yahweh

grammatically. This slight distancing segues into the reported speech of the wicked.

Verses 5–6 function as further contextualization for the appropriate reception of the

words of the wicked. Therefore, presenting the words of the wicked, the psalm asserts

that the wicked are not only arrogant sinners but murderers who undermine and threaten

the people of God. The words of the wicked are contextualized and then leveraged to

strengthen the case against them.

Verse 8, however, shifts abruptly to directly addressing the wicked. As if

triggered by their outrageous rhetoric, the imperative of v. 8 (בינו) echoes back the verb

used by the wicked in v. 7b (יבין). They think Yahweh does not pay attention; on the

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[86] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:79; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 240.
[87] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 454.

contrary, they need to pay attention.[88] Verses 8–10 feature questions directed toward the

wicked, who are addressed as בערים ("stupid"; v. 8) and כסילים ("fools"; v. 8). These

rhetorical questions challenge the reported rhetoric of the wicked[89] and leads to an

assertion about the relationship between Yahweh and humanity: יהוה ידע מחשבות אדם כי־

המה הבל "Yahweh knows the thoughts of humanity, because they are vapor" (v. 11). This

statement, while still seemingly directed toward the wicked because of the logical flow of

the psalm, employs neither imperative nor rhetorical questions; rather, it speaks in the

third-person about Yahweh and humanity. This descriptive statement gives way to

beatitude.

Hossfeld describes vv. 12–15 as a unit, writing, "The . . . section, vv. 12-15, is

held together by the logic of argumentation: it is an extended beatitude with two

explanations given. The text first swings back toward a prayer-address to YHWH in vv.

12-13, and then in v. 14 again shifts the direction toward discourse about YHWH."[90]

Diane Jacobson observes that אשרי statements generally occur at specific points in a

psalm, either the beginning, exact middle, or end.[91] In this case, it appears in the middle,

initiating a shift in voicing, declaring the future realities for both the righteous and the

wicked and marking a move from protesting the rhetoric and behavior of the wicked to

demonstrating the opposite of their assertion: God pays attention and responds.[92]

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[88] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:79. In describing the change in address, Jacobson (*Many Are Saying*, 38) writes, "The vocabulary for the shift is provided by the quotation inset." This repetition is also in line with the staircase parallelism found in vv. 1 and 3.

[89] Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 240–41.

[90] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 452.

[91] Jacobson, "Psalm 33," 114. Jacobson supplies the examples of Pss 1:1; 2:12: 32:2; 119:1–2; and 144:15, in addition to 94:12. She also writes, "Almost all of the occurrences of אַשְׁרֵי are found in psalms (often in Torah psalms) and Proverbs" (114).

[92] Schaefer (*Psalms*, 233) describes the beatitude as dividing the two halves, which respectively characterized by "crisis" and "relief."

Just as the first half of the psalm features a contrast in direct address—with vv. 1–7 calling for Yahweh to judge and vv. 8–11 commanding fools to reevaluate reality, this twofold beatitude includes a shift in voicing that sets a pattern for the rest of the psalm. Verses 12–13 directly address Yahweh grammatically about a singular subject—the person (גבר) he disciplines and instructs. However, in vv. 14–15, the explanation for the assertion of vv. 12–13 is provided in third-person description of Yahweh and the situation; additionally, here, the objects are collective—עמו and נהלתו ("his people" and "his possession"; cf. עמך and נהלתך in v. 5). The declaration of personal care in days of trouble is supported by confidence in collective care and that justice will come with righteousness on its heels. This beatitude continues to refute the words of the wicked. Blessed are those who think—whose knowledge comes from Yahweh, because they know that present situations (a seeming lack of justice) are not necessarily representative of reality. The wicked crush and afflict but Yahweh does not forsake or abandon his people, his possession.[93]

The shifts between prayer and testimony as well as individual and communal orientation continue through the second half of this psalm, which consists of two sets of questions and answers: vv. 16–20 and vv. 21–23.[94] Verse 16 poses the first pair of

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[93] Goldingay (*Psalms*, 3:81–82) emphasizes this comparison by pointing to the contrasting possessive pronouns on the term עם and נהלה in vv. 5 and 14. He writes:

> In vv. 12–13, the promises were expressed negatively and individualistically. Here is the other side of that, the positive and communal. Digging a ditch to trap the faithless is the means of delivering Yhwh's people and thus the evidence that Yhwh does not abandon them. The line again emphasizes that the punishment of the faithless and security of the faithful are based on the fact that the faithful are Yhwh's people, Yhwh's possession; compare the significance of the suffixes on these same words in v. 5. "Crushing" and "afflicting" in v. 5 are confronted by "not forsaking" and "not abandoning" (81–82).

[94] Schaefer (*Psalms*, 234) describes the shifts in voicing as heightening the drama of the psalm and its questions (vv. 3, 8, 9, 10, 16, 20) as "lend[ing] a tone of impatience to the psalm." See, also, Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:82.

questions, introducing the use of the first-person singular in this psalm.[95] These questions

ask who will rise up and stand with "me" against the wicked. These questions—without

explicit addressee(s)—echo the call for justice, opposition to the wicked.[96] The answer is

supplied through three statements of assurance (vv. 17–19) that depict the coming aid of

Yahweh, although his aid does not come in the form of destroying the wicked

immediately but as respite in the meantime. Verse 17 asserts that without Yahweh's help,

death would have been certain.[97] Verse 18 presents a self-quotation and a shift in voicing:

אם־אמרתי מטה רגלי חסדך יהוה יסעדני ("If I say, 'My foot has slipped,' your steadfast love, O

Yahweh, will sustain me"). Since the apodosis provides Yahweh's response to the

content of the self-quotation in the protasis, the quotation may also be considered prayer,

a cry directed toward Yahweh. In contrast to the reported speech of the wicked, who talk

about Yahweh and his distance from his people, the self-quotation of direct address to

Yahweh exposes the assumption that Yahweh is, in fact, paying attention. Not only does

he pay attention, the apodosis reveals the expectation he will intervene. This hypothetical

cry for help ushers the psalm back into direct address, and the confession of trust

continues in v. 19 with a sustained first-person, singular perspective. The first-person

singular voice directly addresses God, describing Yahweh's encouragements as תנחומיך

("your encouragements"). The shift in vv. 17–19 from third person about Yahweh to

second person in relation to Yahweh parallels the intimacy of care described in these

verses: Yahweh keeps me from death, you sustain me when I call, you know and calm

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[95] Segal (*A New Psalm*, 450–51) describes the shift into the first person not as an "ego trip" but as testimony that counterbalances the tension in the early verses. The testimony does not deny the injustice; it speaks of the sustaining care of Yahweh in times of trouble.

[96] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 455.

[97] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:83; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 455.

my anxious thoughts. Yahweh not only sustains life but responds to individuals' voiced pleas for help as well as internal turmoil. These verses contend that Yahweh is responsive, listening to the individual and paying attention to the inmost details of people. The voicing assumes that Yahweh observes and hears.

The second unit of question and answer (vv. 20–23) inversely reflects the voicing of vv. 16–19; these verses move from prayer to testimony instead of from testimony to prayer. Verse 20 addresses Yahweh, maintaining the second person of the previous verses (vv. 18–19). In contrast to the question of v. 16, this verse asks if the wicked will rule with Yahweh. In response, v. 21 offers third-person, plural description of the wicked; they gather against and condemn the righteous and innocent. The justice of the situation is emphasized with the contrast between plural pronouns used for the wicked and the singular descriptors of the righteous: נפש צדיק ("righteous soul") and דם נקי ("innocent blood"). The wicked gang up on and attack the righteous. The description of the wicked leads into description of (as opposed to direct address to) Yahweh. Verse 22 describes Yahweh as a refuge and rock, seconding the concept of protecting care in vv. 12–13. In these verses, Yahweh is described as providing respite for an unidentified individual; however, here, Yahweh is described as having been לי למשגב ("like a refuge for me").[98] This seconding identifies the speaker with the righteous but also testifies to the veracity of the beatitude. Similarly, v. 23 confirms the beginning of the end for the wicked. The first two lines of this verse describe both Yahweh and the wicked in the third person,

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[98] According to Jerome F. D. Creach (*Yahweh as Refuge*, 27–28, 41–42) the Hebrew word משגב, translated here as *refuge*, is one of five terms in the Psalter that conveys "Yahweh's protection for one pursued by enemies" (27), with the others being מצוד, derivatives of עזז, צור, and מגן. In various forms, משגב occurs thirteen times in the Psalter; predominately, משגב appears with first-person singular pronominal suffixes (Pss 18:3; 59:10, 18; 63:3, 7; 144:2) or accompanied by a possessive ל with first-person suffixes (singular: Ps 59:17; plural: 48:8, 12).

without any accompanying possessive pronouns. This description serves as transition for

the last shift in voicing. The final line asserts: יצמיתם יהוה אלהינו ("Yahweh, our God, will

destroy them"). This last line contains the psalm's only first-person plural pronoun,[99]

representing the people and possession of Yahweh (vv. 5, 14). The petitions against the

wicked as well as the personal testimony and confessions of trust end with a communal

assertion that justice is in Yahweh's hands.

Dale Patrick and Kenneth Diable observe, "Within psalmic piety, the ideal is to

rely upon God; the antithesis is to rely on anything or anyone less."[100] Psalm 94 begins

with imploring Yahweh to respond to the heresy of the wicked, which gives them license

to execute violence against and oppress Yahweh's people. The rest of the psalm (vv. 8–

23) works to refute the audacious claim of the wicked that Yahweh is neither aware of

nor concerned with the matters of humanity. In fact, the epithets יה (Yah) and אלהי יעקב

(the God of Jacob) are found in the mouths of the wicked (v. 7). This psalm refutes their

claim that the God of the covenant is indifferent to or insufficient to care for his people.

The direct address of the wicked asserts that Yahweh is in fact aware of the matters of

humanity. Verses 12–14 demonstrate through the fluctuation between testimony and

prayer and contrast in individual and collective care that God responds to humanity. The

second half of the psalm responds to the words of the wicked by asserting that Yahweh is

a refuge for the righteous. In fact, Patrick and Diable explain that the metaphor of

Yahweh as refuge is often connected to reports of the wicked asserting independence or

Yahweh's indifference to the affairs of humanity.[101] In Ps 94, the testimony of the

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[99] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:85.

[100] Patrick and Diable, "Persuading the One and Only God to Intervene," 26.

[101] Patrick and Diable, "Persuading the One and Only God to Intervene," 26.

individual refutes the heresy of the wicked in order to garner a communal confession of trust. The wicked proclaim that Yah no longer shows any regard for his people, so they oppress and persecute. The wicked appear to have dominion. Creach explains, "Ps 94 complains throughout that the wicked presently enjoy hegemony. However, Yahweh is a 'rock and refuge' at the time of trouble (Ps. 94.22), and *tôrâ* is a 'respite' (a source of security/refuge) from the attack of the enemies (Ps. 94.13)."[102] 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. Although the people of Yahweh may experience oppression and persecution, with the assurance that Yahweh enacts justice until righteousness returns, they may confess: יצמיתם יהוה אלהינו ("Yahweh, our God, will destroy them"; v. 23). This final statement resonates with the concern for the community in vv. 2–7, 14.[103] Thus, this psalm employs contrasting voicing—address to Yahweh (vv. 1–7, 12–13, 18–21), speech about Yahweh (vv. 9–11, 14–15, 17, 22–23), reported speech of the wicked (v. 7), address to the wicked (vv. 8–11), self-quotation (v. 18), and both singular (vv. 16–18, 22) and plural first-person (v. 23) perspective—to refute the deistic assertion of the wicked using direct address, prayer, and testimony to promote communal trust in Yahweh.

Conclusion

A dialogic reading of Ps 12 makes v. 9 like graffiti sprayed across a mural; it violates the beauty and message of the art to which it is attached. The psalm, rendered incoherent,

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[102] Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 96.

[103] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:85.

seems an unlikely candidate for liturgical use and canonical material. On the other hand, a lyric poetic reading of Ps 12 demonstrates a sensitivity to the rhetorical strategy of the juxtaposition of voices. Although the final verse portrays an unaltered situation from that which seems to motivate the petition in v. 1, the contrast between the juxtaposed voices of the wicked (v. 5) and Yahweh (v. 6) mark a transition in perspective. The threatening power of the rhetoric of the wicked is subverted by the voice of Yahweh. Desperation gives way to confidence, and the light in which the situation is cast changes through the shifts in direct address—from desperate imperative (v. 2), to jussive (vv. 4–5), and, finally, to confident confession (v. 7–9). The words of the wicked are rendered powerless in comparison to the pure sayings of Yahweh.

Similarly, in vv. 1–8 of Ps 46, the echoes of upheaval and turmoil (vv. 3–4, 7)—the roaring waters and nations, the tottering mountains and kingdoms—sound alongside statements of confidence in the presence and protection of Yahweh (vv. 2, 5–6, 8). In contrast to Ps 12, the threatening parties are granted no representation in this psalm; the chaos is described as making noise but is not heard. The pattern of images of threat framed by images of divine presence and security constructed by a first-person plural voice is interrupted by the call in vv. 9–10 to come and behold the deeds of Yahweh. Verse 11 also uses plural imperatives, but the voice, here, is Yahweh's. Yahweh interjects, and the divine presence described in vv. 2, 6, and 8 is experienced at the sound of Yahweh's voice. With the tumult and tension silenced and stilled, the psalm resolves with the repetition of the refrain: יהוה צבאות עמנו משגב־לנו אלהי יעקב סלה ("Yahweh of Hosts is with us. Our refuge is the God of Jacob. *Selah*"; v. 12). The voicing of Ps 46 both describes and demonstrates the presence of Yahweh of Hosts.

Psalm 52, which includes a hypothetical quotation of the צדיקים ("righteous"; v. 9), serves as an example of lyric poetry featuring community quotation. The psalm begins with scathing words directed toward one who loves evil over good and lies over righteousness. Verses 3–7 denounce the rhetoric of the wicked, and v. 7 pronounces judgment up on the individual. Verses 8–9 shift out of direct address; instead, the righteous are heard mocking the downfall of "the mighty one." Their speech delineates his sins and also marks the transition from judgment to testimony and prayer. Following the words of the righteous community, first-person testimony (v. 10) gives way to direct address to Yahweh (v. 11), expressing confidence in the power and presence of God. The three segments of speech, characterized by different voicing, work together to communicate that trust rightly placed is the salvation of the righteous. Those rooted in the presence of Yahweh and on whose lips are testimony and prayer have the last laugh.

Psalm 91 differs from the other psalms in this chapter in that Yahweh's unframed words conclude the psalm. Without introduction or invitation, Yahweh speaks. In fact, without being spoken to, Yahweh speaks. Yahweh responds to the exhortation to trust. Psalm 91 presents translational and interpretive issues; one of which is determining the voicing dynamic in vv. 1–13. The interpretation explored in this study is that of a consistent speaker, hearing the dynamic between prayer and exhortation. Thus, the testimony of vv. 2 and 9a are the ground upon which the counsel of the vv. 3–8 and 9b–13 stand. The dynamic between testimony and exhortation as well as the juxtaposition of images of danger and Yahweh as refuge construct an evocative argument for trusting Yahweh. The psalm declares that security is found in the presence of Yahweh and describes in detail the protection of Yahweh's presence. His presence is described and

encountered. The closing verses, vv. 14–16, are Yahweh's words of promise, protection, salvation, to the one in relationship with him. A lyric poetic reading of Ps 91, again, illuminates the contribution of voicing to the relational dynamics of biblical poetry. The voicing of Ps 91 evokes a sense of the reality that the words describe: Yahweh is present to deliver.

Finally, Ps 94 is textured with varied voicing, including both a quotation of the wicked and a self-quotation. Verses 1–8 are directed toward Yahweh, introducing a complaint against the wicked with vocatives and imperatives for Yahweh, the God of vengeance, to judge. The pride (vv. 3–4) and violence (vv. 5–6) of the wicked are described in terms of their speech (v. 4) and deeds (vv. 5–6), but their sin is effectively demonstrated with a quotation. In contrast with the preceding verses, the speech of the wicked is about Yahweh; it is not directed to him. They assert that the God of Jacob is no longer interested in his people. Yet the voicing and thrust of the psalm rail against their atheistic or deistic assertion. Calling them בערים ("stupid ones"; line 8a) and כסילים ("fools"; line 8b), vv. 8–11 directly address the wicked and proclaim the abilities and attentiveness of Yahweh. The extended beatitude of vv. 12–15 shifts back into directly addressing Yahweh (vv. 12–13) and into third-person references to Yahweh in statements of confidence. The next section (vv. 16–21) also shifts between prayer and testimony but also introduces the use of the first-person singular. The self-quotation in v. 18 ushers the psalm back into prayer and is the antithesis to the words of the wicked. The self-quotation asserts that Yahweh is aware and acts on behalf of the individual. Verse 22 slips back into testimony; this time, it is a first-person testimony. However, v. 23 issues statements of judgment upon the wicked from a corporate perspective. The wicked believe Yahweh

is not attentive to the children of Jacob, and their choices as individuals reflect that. Conversely, the righteous are cognizant of the personal care of Yahweh, so they can join in the testimony of the community. In this psalm, the words of the wicked and self-quotation are leveraged against each other to argue that the God of the covenant is still at work on behalf of his people.

This sample of psalms has included examples of quotations of the wicked, the community, and Yahweh as well as self-quotation. In each case, the quotations are presented and positioned intentionally to contribute to the meaning of the psalm. A lyric poetic reading of these psalms, with a focus on vocality, highlights the lyric strategy of shifts in voicing and use of quotations. Dialogic readings or analyses that neglect to take into account the relationships between sections of direct discourse or other voicing fail to recognize and appreciate the dynamism and poetic texture voicing supplies. Vocality is not a byproduct of cultic phenomenon creating fragmented or conflict-ridden poetry but a literary tool integral to the construction of the meaning of a psalm. Shifts in speaker and addressee(s) create dialectics of distance and proximity, presence and absence. The psalms analyzed here convey a distancing of the wicked from Yahweh but also assume the presence of Yahweh, who is readily available to hear the imperatives and cries of the individual and respond to the petitions and praise of his people. The voicing of Hebrew biblical poetry positions those who utter or hear its words with respect to the ways of the wicked and the words of Yahweh. The exploration of voicing in this chapter has further demonstrated that psalms are utterances to be heard and overheard.

CHAPTER 5: THE SONGS OF THE ASCENTS

The Songs of the Ascents (Pss 120–134) is a lyric sequence, which is part of a greater

collection of the Hebrew Psalter. Therefore, it offers a reasonable sample of psalms to

analyze for the time and length restraints of this project. Where lyric poetry's rhythm of

association calls for the interpretation of the juxtaposition of voices within individual

psalms, a lyric sequence calls for the interpretation of voices through the juxtaposition of

individual psalms. The two previous chapters analyzed voicing within individual psalms;

this chapter will offer discussion of individual psalms in step with the previous two

chapters but then move a step further to discuss Pss 120–134 as a collection, as a lyric

sequence.

The Songs of the Ascents as a Collection

The Songs of the Ascents are a subset of fifteen psalms, Pss 120–134, which feature the

superscription שיר המעלות; the only exception in the MT is Ps 121, which features the

variation שיר למעלות.[1] These superscriptions are definite construct chains and mean "the

song of the ascents." The interpretation of these superscriptions has received much of the

attention directed toward the psalms they label. The myriad of approaches to the Songs of

the Ascents attempt to give an account for the sense of movement perceived within the

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[1] The OG superscriptions, in all fifteen cases, read: Ὡιδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 287; Knowles, *Centrality Practiced*, 93; Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return*, 20; Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 1–3.

lyric sequence as well as the superscription these psalms bear. An overview of past approaches to the Songs of the Ascents serves as an appropriate and effective starting place for appreciating what a lyric poetic reading of a lyric sequence, like the Songs of the Ascents, offers. Previous approaches to these psalms are varied, including mystical, historicizing, formal, and cultic interpretations.[2]

Mystical Interpretations

Some of the earliest interpretations of the Songs of the Ascents in the Common Era are mystical, understanding the ascent or movement of these psalms as "the mystical ascent of the human soul to God, with all that this implies in a Platonic framework."[3] These early interpretations are characterized by allegory and Hellenistic philosophy; Pss 120–134 portray a pilgrimage that is only a shadow of the ascent of the soul.[4] Origen linked the Songs of the Ascents with the march up from Egypt in Num 33, which he allegorizes as a spiritual ascent.[5] He also argued that the Songs of the Ascents and Song of Songs are derived from the same larger collection of Hebrew songs and that, as part of the collection, each of the psalms within the Songs of the Ascents are a resource for discerning the "steps for the soul in its progress" toward God.[6] Augustine of Hippo interpreted the movement of the Songs of the Ascents as representative of the movement of the human soul from the fallen state to the heavenly Jerusalem.[7] In his homily on Ps

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[2] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 1–27.

[3] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 5.

[4] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 5

[5] Origen, "Homily XXVII on Numbers," 250–51.

[6] Origen, "Commentary on the Song of Songs," 239.

[7] McLarney, ed., *St. Augustine's Interpretation*, 123–50; Clark, "Introductory Note," 195–98. Michael C. McCarthy ("The Psalms of Ascent," 113) argues:

By the time he preaches on the Psalms of Ascent, Augustine had by no means abandoned the motif of rising to God, but the gradations of ascent that had been articulated in earlier works had far less discernible features. In the *en. Ps.*, Augustine seems far less interested in stages of ascent than in the

119 (MT 120) Augustine explicates:

> As its title indicates, it is a "song of steps." Steps are either of ascent or descent, but as used in these Psalms, steps signify an ascent. Let us understand them, therefore, as ascending steps, and let us not seek to ascend with our feet and in a carnal manner but as suggested in another Psalm: "He has prepared ascents in his heart, in this valley of tears, in this place which He has fixed" (Ps 83:6–7). Where then are these ascents? In the heart. For what should we ascend? From the valley of tears.[8]

The historical context of these psalms was not the focus for Augustine; he was focused on a deeper, spiritual meaning. Similarly, *De Titulis Psalmorum*, a tract written by either Athanasius or Hesychius of Jerusalem, interprets the superscript and movement of these fifteen psalms as the spiritual journey from sin and idolatry toward heaven.[9] In keeping with their era of philosophy and theology, these interpretations are fixated on the symbolism of Pss 120–134. The mystic interpretations of the Songs of the Ascents are rooted in concepts of spiritual pilgrimage and gradually deepening communion with God.[10]

Historicizing Interpretations

Other interpretations are less metaphorical—or, at least, less mystical—and focus on the historical settings of these psalms and focus on their origin and usage in particular contexts. The Songs of the Ascents have been interpreted as the songs of the exiles returning from Babylon and going up to Jerusalem. The superscriptions שיר המעלות are, thus, linked to the language and descriptions of the returns in Ezra 2:1 and 7:9, which use

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performative force of biblical locutions expressing a longing for God and communicating the pain of alienation. In a way, discovering oneself in the very verses of the psalms becomes the ascent through and with the Word that came down to us and took us as his body.

Augustine interpreted the Songs of the Ascents as a timeless resource or model for spiritual formation and preached them with an ahistorical perspective.

[8] Augustine, "Psalm 119," 199.

[9] Quasten et al., *Patrology*, 3:38. See, also, Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 8.

[10] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 8–9.

the participles העלים ("those who came up"; 2:1) and המעלה ("the ascent"; 7:9).[11] The

earliest historicizing interpretations are midrashic, and the *Midrash Tehillim* places the

Songs of the Ascents in the mouths of returnees.[12] However, the psalms also take on

eschatological significance in these texts. The commentary on Ps 121 says that after God

has rescued Israel from the "kingdom of Esau," then Israel will "sing the song of the last

ascent whereto Thou wilt raise us from the among the kingdoms."[13] The Syrian tradition

maintains a similar interpretation, rooting Ps 120 in the return of exiles from Babylon but

also seeing a progression toward Christ's manifestation in Ps 132.[14] Historical

interpretations have persisted into the modern period.

Heinrich Ewald offered the classic historical argument, linking the Songs of the

Ascents with Ezra 7:9 and viewing these psalms as belonging to the exiles who returned

from Babylon.[15] This type of historicizing interpretation does explain the movement and

structure of these psalms. Loren D. Crow explains:

> The collection begins with a song that on the surface appears to refer to exile
> (Psalm 120). The next (Psalm 121) looks like a blessing on those setting off on a
> journey. The third song (Psalm 122) may tell of a recently rebuilt Jerusalem,
> praying for its prosperity. Psalm 126 seems to refer to the restoration of the
> Judean community after the exile. Psalm 133 is sometimes thought to refer to
> temple gatherings, in which the "brothers" are all together, or to the restored
> community at Jerusalem. Finally, the last song (Psalm 134) could be taken to refer
> to the re-establishment of temple worship proper.[16]

Ewald's view accounts for the progression in these psalms by placing them in a particular

context, the return of exiles from Babylon as described in Ezra and Nehemiah. Rudolf

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[11] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 288.
[12] Braude, trans. by, *The Midrash on Psalms*, 2:294. See, also, Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 9–10; Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return*, 20.
[13] Braude, trans. by, *The Midrash on Psalms*, 2:294; Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 10.
[14] Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return*, 20; Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 10–11; Bloemendaal, *The Headings of the Psalms*, 29.
[15] Ewald, *Allgemeines über die hebräische Poesie*, 195–96; Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 11.
[16] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 12–13.

Preß saw a similar relationship between the psalms, and, using linguistics and sociology, placed them in the same context as Deutero-Isaiah—the earlier years of the Babylonian exile.[17] However, Cuthbert C. Keet and Michael Goulder, like Ewald, have pushed the dating forward to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.[18] Goulder, in fact, places the Songs of the Ascents in the mouth of Nehemiah and argues that each psalm corresponds to the testimonial narrative found in the Nehemiah memoir.[19] Zenger challenges such historical interpretations, arguing:

> [They] have . . . two fundamental methodological deficits: (1) They do not reconstruct the history of the psalms' origins from the psalms themselves but import them into the text from outside. That, of course, is the general problem with the historical dating of texts when there is no existing *external evidence*. (2) They extract individual aspects of the psalms and use them as the basis for a general hypothesis.[20]

These historical interpretations focus on reconstructing the world behind the texts based on the superscriptions to the neglect of the texts themselves. The proposed, very specific *Sitz im Leben* are difficult to verify and shed minimal light on the interpretation of the texts themselves.

Formal Interpretations

Some scholars have adopted formal interpretations, exploring the literary or performance features of the psalms instead of their specific, original settings. Saadiah Gaon, a tenth-century Jewish biblical exegete, and Abraham Ibn Ezra, an eleventh-century Jewish scholar, both argued that the superscriptions attached to the Songs of the Ascents were

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[17] Preß, "Der zeitgeschichtliche Hintergrund," 414; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 288; Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 13.

[18] Keet, *A Study of the Psalms of Ascents*, 11–12; Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return*, 27–33.

[19] Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return*, 19–113.

[20] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 289.

musical notations, although they disagreed over what these notations mean.[21] John Calvin

adopted Ibn Ezra's interpretation, writing, "The Hebrew word for *degrees* being derived

from the verb עלה, *tsalah* [*sic*] *to ascend* or *go up*, I agree with those who are of the

opinion that it denotes the different musical notes rising in succession."[22] While these

interpretations of the superscriptions are possibilities, they shed no light on the collection

or the respective individual psalms.[23] Conversely, some nineteenth-century scholars,

including Franz Delitzsch[24] and Wilhelm Martin de Wette,[25] adopted Wilhelm Gesenius'

view; Gesenius argued that the superscriptions described the step-like poetic structure

found within the individual psalms. While some of the Songs of the Ascents do feature

intensifying semantic parallelism and anadiplosis, this form of parallelism is not found in

all the psalms in this subset nor is anadiplosis more prevalent or uniquely employed in

these psalms compared to other collections of Hebrew lyric poetry.[26] Anadiplosis is

prevalent in the Songs of the Ascents, but its use in these psalms does not warrant this

distinctive label.

B. D. Eerdmans, on the other hand, believed that these psalms were labeled as a

collection because the individual psalms could only be rightly understood in relation to

one another; the paratext signals that they function as a collection. He argues, "As songs

of the pilgrims, recited either in the temple or on their way to the holy city, the psalms are

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[21] Ibn Ezra, *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra's Commentary*; Simon, *Four Approaches*, 244; Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 15.

[22] Calvin, *Commentary*, 5:54. See, also, Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 15.

[23] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 15.

[24] Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 3:264–68.

[25] de Wette, *Kommentar über die Psalmen*, 593.

[26] Gesenius, *Thesaurus Philologicus Criticus*, 2:1031–32. Quite a few scholars have challenged this interpretation. See Booij, "Psalms 120–136," 244–45; Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 16; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 23; Kittel, *Die Psalmen*, 435–36; Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 3:404–6; Ewald, *Allgemeines über die hebräische Poesie*, 209; Hitzig, *Die Psalmen*, 365–66.

difficult to understand if they are taken separately. But the context shows that such a

method should not be applied. The psalms appear to be mutually connected."[27] Mitchell

Dahood[28] and Marina Mannati[29] have argued not only that superscriptions marked a

collection but that the label was a genre identifier. Dahood offered a new translation of

the superscription—"song of extolments"[30]—in light of Apostrophe to Zion 14 (11QPs[a]);

however, this new translation did not contribute to understanding the form or function of

the individual psalms. Mannati viewed the Songs of the Ascents as gradual psalms,

distinct in genre in that they are defined as part of the whole. She argued that this

sequence of psalms constructs a "literary pilgrimage";[31] these *"psaumes graduels"*

("gradual psalms"), as a lyric sequence, elicit the concept of pilgrimage.[32] In contrast to

those who adopt historicizing interpretations, Mannati does not insist that the collection

necessarily originated amongst Jerusalem's pilgrims but that the lyric sequence of Pss

120–134 found in the Hebrew Psalter simply conveys the concept of pilgrimage. The

psalms in the Songs of the Ascents are, thus, labeled individually based on their inclusion

in this pilgrimage collection.[33] Formal interpretations, like those explored here, attempt to

explain the superscriptions in terms of literary functions and descriptions and the sense of

movement within individual psalms or the collection itself as literary devices.

Cultic Interpretations

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[27] Eerdmans, *The Hebrew Book of Psalms*, 555–56.
[28] Dahood, *Psalms III*, 195; Dahood, "The Psalms Scroll," 143.
[29] Mannati, "Les Psaumes Graduels," 85–100.
[30] Dahood, *Psalms III*, 194–95.
[31] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 18. See Mannati, "Les Psaumes Graduels," 85–100.
[32] Mannati, "Les Psaumes Graduels," 85–100.
[33] Mannati, "Les Psaumes Graduels," 90; Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 18.

Those interpretations that do not fall into the categories of mystical, historicizing, and formal are cultic, but the category of cultic interpretation includes a diversity of views. These views differ from historicizing interpretations in that, while they are also historicizing in nature, they directly connect the Songs of the Ascents with cultic activity. Historicizing interpretations tie these psalms directly to specific historical events or eras; whereas, cultic interpretations connect these psalms to cultic liturgy and festivals, which would have been used or celebrated over time.

Temple Liturgy

Based on liturgical elements and priestly language in the Songs of the Ascents, some scholars tie these psalms directly to temple liturgy. As early as the rabbinic period, scholars and authors have attempted to situate the Songs of the Ascents within very particular temple contexts. The Talmud (*b. Sukkah* 51b; *b. Mid.* 2:5) correlates these fifteen psalms with the fifteen temple steps, which are described in Ezek 40:26, 31.[34] In the modern era, Ferdinand Hitzig expanded upon Martin Luther's view that the superscription refers to the place where the singers performed these psalms—from an elevated position in relationship to the congregation.[35] Like Luther, Hitzig challenged the notion that these fifteen psalms originally corresponded to the fifteen steps into the interior of the temple. However, he did not shy away from asserting a concrete correlation. He argued that Pss 120–129, which each have seven or eight verses, reflect

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[34] Willems, "Les Psaumes Dans La Liturgie Juive," 410–11; Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 19–20.

[35] For Luther's view, see Luther, *A Commentary on the Psalms Called Psalms of Degrees*, 109–10. Luther (*A Commentary on the Psalms Called Psalms of Degrees*, 110) was not comfortable asserting the particulars of the performance of these psalms, writing, "Seeing, therefore, among such a multitude of Psalms, when the law was yet in its full force and power, some were wont to be sung with one manner of ceremony, and some with another, according to the time and place, as the use and custom then was, let this suffice us to think that this title pertaineth to no point of doctrine, but only to the ceremony of the singer, what manner of ceremony soever it was."

the flights of stairs into the interior of the temple, which had seven and eight steps, respectively. Therefore, the verses of these ten psalms correspond to the temple steps. He, then, speculated that the tradition was lost and replaced with the correlation of whole psalms with the temple steps; with this new interpretation, Pss 130–134 were added to the collection to complete the correspondence to the steps between the court of women and the Israelite court.[36]

The Talmud, Luther, and Hitzig were focused more on the location of the performance of these psalms; whereas, Leon J. Liebreich explored the connections between these psalms and the Aaronic blessing in Num 6:24–26.[37] He argued that eleven[38] of the fifteen Songs of the Ascents develop "four of the key words of the Priestly Blessing"[39]—שלום, ויחנך, ישמרך, יברכך. Thus, these psalms were given their label because they correspond to the blessing the priests pronounced as the priests ascended the steps into the interior of the temple.[40] Although Liebreich explores the theological connections of these psalms, the four cultic interpretations explored here are grounded in the architecture of the temple.

Cultic Festivals and Commissioning

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[36] Hitzig, *Die Psalmen*, 364–66.

[37] Liebreich, "The Songs of Ascents and the Priestly Blessing," 33–36. Keet (*A Study of the Psalms of Ascents*, 112–34) also espouses this view; he concludes, "Each of the twelve psalms, whatever the particular historical circumstances surrounding it, may be said to have been composed under the direct inspiration of one or more words of the Priestly Blessing" (36). See, also, Mello, "I salmi graduali e la benedizione sacerdotale," 293–302; Fishbane, "Form and Reformulation of the Biblical Priestly Blessing," 115–21.

[38] Specifically: 120:6–7; 121:3–8; 122:6–8; 123:2–3; 125:5; 127:1; 128:4–6; 129:8; 130:2, 6; 132:15; 133:3; 134:3.

[39] Liebreich, "The Songs of Ascents and the Priestly Blessing," 34.

[40] Liebreich, "The Songs of Ascents and the Priestly Blessing," 36. Liebriech ("The Songs of Ascents and the Priestly Blessing," 36) notes that the rabbinic works, specifically Tosefta Soṭah VII.7, describe the priests climbing the steps from the hall to the interior temple while reciting the Aaronic blessing.

Where the scholars who linked the Songs of the Ascents to the liturgy performed on the steps of the temple were ambiguous about the specific contexts for the rituals and performance of the liturgy, other scholars connected these psalms to specific festivals and cultic occasions. Mowinckel, in keeping with the scholarship of his era, rooted his psalmic analysis with cultic *Sitz im Leben*. He placed the Songs of the Ascents within the context of Israel's counterpart to the Babylonian *Akītu* festival—the New Year's celebration. Mowinckel explains:

> New Year's Day was celebrated in ancient Israel as the day of YHWH's enthronement. This day was one of the grand, apparently week-long, annual celebrations out of which the three independent festivals of New Year's, Atonement, and Booths later developed (in post-Deuteronomic times). Every New Year's Day, YHWH repeated his accession to the throne with all its real effects. In the ecstatic and shared events of the festival that greatly moved souls, one experienced YHWH's arrival, the bestowal of divine power, and the pledge of a blessed year bringing well-being in every respect.[41]

He argued that Pss 120–134 were composed to be performed at the three major pilgrimage festivals[42] and asserted that these psalms "constituted an important part of the New Year's and fall festival and probably ultimately even became a characteristic of this festival."[43] Thus, according to Mowinckel, Pss 120–134 were associated with the ascension of the ark to the temple in Jerusalem and the enthronement of Yahweh.[44] Eduard Lipiński also espoused the view that these songs were sung at these three major festivals but also drew connections to the choir processions at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem in Neh 12:31–40.[45] He postulated that the choirs sang these psalms as they

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[41] Mowinckel, *Psalm Studies*, 2:523.
[42] Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 195.
[43] Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 169.
[44] Mowinckel, *Psalm Studies*, 1:169, 184–85; Mowinckel, *Psalm Studies*, 2:604, 814; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 3, 208–9.
[45] Lipiński, *La Royauté de Yahwé*, 449.

marched upon the newly rebuilt walls. In both cases, Mowinckel and Lipiński classified

these psalms as songs of the pilgrimage festivals not of the pilgrimages themselves; in

other words, they were sung by pilgrims at their destination.[46]

Thomas Willi, likewise, challenged the idea that Pss 120–134 were pilgrimage

songs; however, he also questioned their relationship to the pilgrimage festivals. Instead,

Willi proposed that these psalms, with their motifs of departing, remaining, and returning,

reflect the post-exilic representational, sacrificial system in Jerusalem. As priests, cultic

personnel, and those who accompanied them set out toward Jerusalem, those whom they

would represent with their sacrifices and temple service sent them off with prayers and

songs. These delegations—part of the "מַעֲמָדוֹת tradition"[47]—would be received home in a

similar way. Thus, Willi claimed that the Hebrew term מעלות referred to the caravans

going up to Jerusalem and Pss 120–134 envelop their going and coming.[48] Zenger

contests this view, writing:

> This is, on the one hand, a suggestion that reflects the concrete situation of the
> Persian-Hellensitic epoch, but on the other hand, it creates new problems: (1) The
> problem of participation in the Jerusalem sacrificial cult as the sacrificial service
> of all Israel that Willi so strongly emphasizes plays no part at all in the *ma'ălōt*
> psalms; Psalms 120–134 nowhere mention sacrifice. (2) It is true that the

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[46] Crow (*The Songs of Ascents*, 22–23) places Han-Joachim Kraus in the same camp as Mowinckel and Lipiński; however, where Mowinckel argued for an enthronement festival, in which Yahweh's kingship was central, Kraus (*Die Königsherrschaft Gottes im Alten Testament*, 84–86) contended there was a royal Zion festival, which celebrated Zion and David's kingship. Kraus (*Psalms 1–59*, 23–24) does find the interpretation of Pss 120–134 as songs of pilgrimages and processions for cultic purposes most plausible but does not assign them all to a single context like Mowinckel. He (*Psalms 1–59*, 24) writes, "We do have to consider that in the group of Psalms 120-134 only Psalm 122 is to be applied to a pilgrimage, and only Psalm 132 to a procession. Therefore we will have to assume that שׁיר המעלות denoted a collection of psalms which one could call 'songbook for pilgrimages,' but in which also other prayers and songs have been collected." Kraus connected some of the Songs of the Ascent directly to pilgrimage or a festival procession, but he maintained that the collection is only loosely tied to these cultic events in Israel's history. Alastair G. Hunter ("The Psalms of Ascents," 173–87) has also argued, based on theme, linguistic style, and vocabulary, for the unity of the Songs of the Ascents and the context of a festival celebrating the presence of Yahweh in Jerusalem.

[47] Willi, "Das שׁיר המעלות," 161.

[48] Willi, "Das שׁיר המעלות," 152–64. See, also, Zenger's discussion of Willi's interpretation: Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 292.

dialogical structure of these psalms is rendered very vivid through the postulated scenes of departure and return, but the complex *social* dimension that is the subject of Psalm 120–134 (and not specific to the *ma'ămādôt* institution postulated by Willi!), as well as the concept of the nearness of God and the divine blessing developed in the overall composition, and especially in Psalms 133–134, cannot really be explained by the *ma'ămādôt* thesis. (3) it is very questionable whether there was even such a *ma'ămādôt* institution in the Persian period.[49]

Mowinckel, Lipiński, and Willi attempt to assign Pss 120–134, as a collection, to specific cultic rituals in ancient Israel. However, Booij has not selected a particular occasion for these psalms; he has argued that the collection was intended for processions in Jerusalem. He asserted that biblical records indicate that processions included music and singing,[50] the content of the individual psalms in the collection fit the context of cultic processions, and Pss 120–134, as sequence or collection, reflect the progression of a procession into the sanctuary. For these four scholars—Mowinckel, Lipiński, Willi, and Booij, some individual psalms in the lyric sequence seem to fit their proposed contexts better than others; however, all their proposals recognize the sense of movement across these psalms coupled with encounter with Yahweh.[51] While their interpretations may not be the most plausible explanations, they all attempt to account for the progression and movement that these psalms evoke.

Pilgrimage Songs

The interpretation of Pss 120–134 as songs of pilgrimage has the most scholarly support.[52] One of the earliest scholars to espouse and promote this interpretation was

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[49] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 292.

[50] Booij ("Psalms 120–136," 246) points to 2 Sam 6:1–5, 12–17; Pss 42:5; 68:25–27; 100:4; Neh 12:31–43; and 1 Chr 13:5–8, 15.

[51] Booij, "Psalms 120–136," 246–48.

[52] Besides those discussed, scholars holding this view include Allen (*Psalms 101–150*, 220), Westermann (*Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 250–58), D. Rudolf Kittel (*Die Psalmen*, 435–36), Bernhard Duhm (*Die Psalmen*, 428), Theodoro Adriano Clarisse (*Psalmi Quindecim Hammaäloth*, 2–24), and Johann Gottfried Herder (*The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, 2:261–64).

David Kimḥi, a twelfth and thirteenth-century French rabbi. In one of his commentaries

on the Psalter, he explored four interpretations of the Songs of the Ascents as a

collection, and his preferred interpretation was that of pilgrimage songs. He writes, "It is

also possible to interpret the meaning of המעלות as being מעלות הגלות—the ascents from

exile—that is, the ascents whereby Israel will at some future time go up from the lands of

the exile to the land of Israel."[53] In contrast to the historicizing interpretations, Kimḥi did

not connect Pss 120–134 with one specific pilgrimage from Babylon but with the waves

of pilgrims from the diaspora who would return. He also viewed the collection as

anticipatory; the collection originally looked forward to exiles returning to the land—to

the temple.[54] Ernst Hengstenberg revived the pilgrimage interpretation in the nineteenth

century. He identified characteristics of Pss 120–134 that set them apart as post-exilic

pilgrimage songs.[55] He acknowledged that individual psalms reflect different eras in

Israel's history and argued that, as a collection, they were sung during the Second Temple

period, especially during the time the temple building was interrupted.[56] He contends,

"The simplicity, the want of the parallelism, the artless way of forming a transition by a

word retained from the preceding verse, the brevity, all of these are peculiarities of sacred

popular and pilgrim song."[57]

More recently, Melody D. Knowles has dated Pss 120–134 to the Persian period

and delineated four pilgrimage elements that are featured throughout this collection: 1)

calls to pilgrimage, which include the identification of a cultic destination and "a verb of

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[53] Kimḥi, *The Commentary of Rabbi David Kimḥi*, 2–3.

[54] Kimḥi, *The Commentary of Rabbi David Kimḥi*, 2–3. See, also, the discussion in Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return*, 20–21 and Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 23–24.

[55] Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 3:407–8.

[56] Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 3:403.

[57] Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 3:408.

travel in the cohortative and/or imperative plural form"[58] (e.g., Pss 122:7; 132:7);[59] 2) the

geographic connection between Yahweh and Jerusalem (e.g., Pss 122:1, 3, 9; 128:5; 132;

133:3; 134:1, 3); 3) the pursuit of justice[60] (e.g., Ps 122:5); and 4) the theme of fertility[61]

(e.g., Pss 126, 127, 128).[62] Knowles explains, "The connection to pilgrimage in Pss 120–

134 is best made not by locating the texts at specific liturgical moments but by locating

the several themes that relate to pilgrimage throughout the ancient world."[63] Therefore,

she identified the Songs of the Ascents as the songs of those traveling to Jerusalem to

worship at the temple during the Persian period and uses the Zion theology of these

psalms in constructing her argument for the centrality of Jerusalem in Israel's religious

life.[64]

Klaus Seybold and Crow have also argued for reading Pss 120–134 as a "pilgrim

psalter" but tease out redactional layers.[65] Seybold and Crow have attributed the

pilgrimage theology of these psalms to a redactional process. Seybold has contended that

the individual psalms within the collection originated as the prayers and songs of

laypeople, who had made pilgrimage to Jerusalem and presented their compositions to

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[58] Knowles, *Centrality Practiced*, 96.

[59] Knowles (*Centrality Practiced*, 96) compares to the formulaic calls in Pss 120–134 to those in 1 Sam 11:14; Isa 2:3; and Jer 31:6; and highlights the language of Ps 134:1, the last psalm of the collection.

[60] Knowles (*Centrality Practiced*, 98) argues that because legal systems were often centralized and close to cultic centers in the ANE, the search for justice was a motivation for some pilgrims. She points to Deut 17:8–9; 2 Chr 19:8–11; and Isa 2:3–4; as well as the Persian-period temples of Ianna and Šamaš in Larsa in Babylonia. See van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, 35–36; Dandamayev, "State and Temple in Babylonia in the First Millennium B.C.," 590–91; Reisman, "Iddin-Dagan's Sacred Marriage Hymn," 185–202. Contra Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 47; Donner, "Psalm 122," 86–89; Keet, *A Study of the Psalms of Ascents*, 36.

[61] See, also, Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 61–66, 71–73; Grossberg, *Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Biblical Poetry*, 43–44; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 223.

[62] Knowles, *Centrality Practiced*, 93–102.

[63] Knowles, *Centrality Practiced*, 94.

[64] Knowles, *Centrality Practiced*, 93–96.

[65] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 289.

temple personnel after giving voice to them.[66] He used redaction criticism and weighed

linguistic and poetic evidence to contend that these "votive texts" were later placed in a

specific sequence and shaped with Zion theology to produce a pilgrimage collection. In

fact, he imagined the fifteen Songs of the Ascents being copied onto small, easily

portable scrolls.[67] The temple personnel in the Persian period transformed the individual

prayers and songs given as offerings by common people and created a hymnal shaped by

Zion theology and their perspectives for a new generation of pilgrims. He writes:

> Die überkommenen Zeugnisse werden zurechtgeschnitten, korrigiert und
> erweitert, in einen harmonischen Gesamtklang gebracht. Die Ziontheologie tritt in
> Erscheinung als ein orthodoxes Rahmensystem, das die viefältigen Einzelaspekte
> in sich aufzunehmen vermag, als eine strukturell kultische Theologie, die mit
> einigen wenigen Hauptbegriffen und Grundvorstellungen operiert: Jahwepräsenz
> auf dem Zion, Segen Jahwes vom Zion, Israel als Gemeinde um Zion. [The
> passed down testimonies are redacted, corrected and expanded, and combined into
> one harmonious sound. The Zion theology, in this instance, appears as an
> orthodox framework, which can absorb the diverse individual aspects into itself, a
> structurally cultic theology, which operates with very few main ideas and basic
> concepts: Yahweh's presence on Zion, the blessing of Yahweh from Zion, Israel
> as a congregation at Zion.][68]

Seybold's analysis and argument are commendable for his attention to the texts

themselves and not just the superscriptions. On the other hand, too much material is cut

away to produce what Seybold considered to be the original psalms.[69] Zenger delineates

three flaws in Seybold's proposal: 1) the psalms Seybold reconstructed are not complete

texts; 2) the very unity that Seybold highlighted renders a diverse layperson authorship

unlikely; and 3) the concept that each psalm corresponded to stations along the pilgrims'

paths was "very vague."[70]

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[66] Seybold, *Die Wallfahrtpsalmen*, 41–42, 61–63.
[67] Seybold, *Poetik der Psalmen*, 357.
[68] Seybold, *Die Wallfahrtpsalmen*, 83. Translation mine.
[69] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 25.
[70] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 290.

Crow has also espoused the concept of a two-stage process for producing the Songs of the Ascents. His analysis of the "nucleus group," those texts that would be redacted and shaped into the collection, places the original compositions in the Persian period and concludes their composers were most likely common people "in the fertile north-Israelite highlands rather than in the south."[71] He uses linguistic, geographical, and cultural evidence to support his conclusion that this nucleus group of psalms offers a wisdom perspective and reflects northern farm life.[72] According to Crow, the most plausible explanation for the extant collection is that a redactor transformed—reshaping and adding to—the nucleus group into a pilgrim psalter for those traveling to Jerusalem during the Second Temple period.[73] He argues, "Viewed as a piece of rhetoric, the central point of the Songs of Ascents would seem to be that Jews in all of these locations—and by extension, Jews wherever they are—must look to Jerusalem as the source of their prosperity. If this is correct, then the nucleus songs would seem to have been included *because* they were folk songs from outside Jerusalem."[74] His argument is that a redactor reappropriated nucleus songs, with their petitions, testimonies, and imprecations, in a collection aimed to form identity and draw pilgrims to Jerusalem.[75] Although some of the details or finer points of his analysis may be debatable,[76] Crow's proposal holds in tension the characteristics of individual psalms and the efficacy of the whole. It accounts

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[71] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 169.

[72] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 159–69.

[73] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 182–83.

[74] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 186.

[75] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 187.

[76] For example, Hossfeld and Zenger adopt Crow's proposal overall but challenge some of Crow's minor conclusions. Zenger (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 291) writes, "Even though we may express some reservations regarding some literary- and redaction-critical points in Crow's hypotheses, especially as concerns the provenience of his 'underlying layer' from the northern kingdom and the assignment of all the Zion references to the redaction, he offers us an overview that is quite plausible and that we can adopt and carry further."

for the sense of movement and the texture created by the diversity of geographical references, linguistic phenomena, and cultural references. Interpreting the Songs of the Ascents as pilgrim songs has received the most scholarly support due to the fact that it offers a reasonable account for the sense of movement in these psalms and a plausible explanation for how the collection came together.

Songs of Zion Theology

Some scholars, including Prinsloo,[77] David C. Mitchell,[78] Egbert Ballhorn,[79] and Hendrik Viviers[80] have argued for a more general cultic situation. While they have different approaches, Mitchell and Prinsloo explore the Zion theology and eschatological perspective of the Songs of the Ascents. Prinsloo has used a sociology of space to approach these psalms. In his article, on the Songs of the Ascents, he argues that their juxtaposition of images of physical spaces with images of abstract and emotional spaces offer the community who sang them a theological perspective and construct for trusting in the provision and protection of Yahweh while living as exiles in their own land. Thus, through this lyric sequence, pilgrims in the Second Temple period, celebrating the ancient festivals, sang of an eschatological hope for Israel and of their well-placed trust in Yahweh.[81] Mitchell, on the other hand, has interpreted the Songs of the Ascents in the context of Isa 2:1–5; Mic 4:1–4; and Zech 14:16–19 and has argued that these psalms speak of an eschatological feast; they represent "a joyful ascent to the Feast of Sukkoth in

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[77] Prinsloo, "The Role of Space," 457–77.
[78] Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 117, 126–27.
[79] Ballhorn, *Zum Telos des Psalters*.
[80] Viviers, "The Coherence of the ma'alôt Psalms," 275–89; Viviers, "When Was the ma'alôt Collection," 798–811.
[81] Prinsloo, "The Role of Space," 457–77.

the aftermath of war."[82] Ballhorn has moved further away from the label "pilgrimage psalter" and has suggested the label "Zion psalter." According to Ballhorn, the Songs of the Ascents should not be associated with literal pilgrimages; rather, these psalms offer their hearers/readers a community and an identity in the heart of Israel and space of waiting for the presence of Yahweh. Echoing the early church fathers in some ways, Ballhorn has argued that the Songs of the Ascents are spiritually constructive and the movement they embody is towards Yahweh, not just Jerusalem as a cultic center.[83]

The Songs of the Ascents as a Lyric Sequence

Over the centuries, there have been many proposals concerning the nature of the Songs of the Ascents—specifically, over the nature of the collection. Most of the theories have focused on the superscriptions, interpreting the individual psalms themselves in relation to the proposed meaning of the superscriptions. For the most part, approaches that prioritize the superscriptions over the content of the respective psalms beg the same types of questions of the texts that historical-critical and form-critical approaches pose. While these questions have their place, they and the information they garner have their limits.[84] Often, the reconstructed world behind the text overshadows the world within the text; these reconstructions can only be ranked in terms of plausibility and cannot be verified. Many of the proposals search for a flight of steps to connect these psalms to and use the proposed staircase as a filter for interpreting the psalms themselves. In his review of the categories of proposals, Crow remarks:

> It is certain that מעלות, at least when in the plural and pointed this way, means "steps" in most contexts (Isa 38:8; 2 Kgs 20:9, 10, 11; Neh 12:32). It seems most

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[82] Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 117.
[83] Ballhorn, *Zum Telos des Psalters*, 249–50.
[84] Viviers, "When Was the ma'alôt Collection," 798.

probable that some set of actual steps is meant by the superscript. But an examination of the theories . . . that account for the superscript will reveal that no one flight of steps comes immediately to mind. And even if it did, any of the alternatives that appeal to the meaning "steps" ultimately suffer from an inability to explain all of the songs in the collection satisfactorily.[85]

That is not to say that the explored proposals are meritless; indeed, each explanation did address some of the characteristics of the Songs of the Ascents—especially the sense of progression or movement.

Conversely, other questions and approaches are required for better investigating and exploring the world with the text—the literary features of the texts themselves.[86] Understanding the Songs of the Ascents as pilgrimage songs that were authored separately and brought into a collection to be used by pilgrims in the Second Temple period—as Seybold and Crow propose and Hossfeld and Zenger[87] accept, better accounts for the diversity, texture, and sequencing of this collection of psalms. This approach to interpreting the Songs of the Ascents acknowledges the older traditions, vocabulary, and linguistic elements within these psalms, appreciates the diversity of these psalms in terms of mood and foci, but also recognizes a "literary, or at least a redactional, unity."[88]

This grouping of psalms shares a number of characteristics, such as a common length (with the exception of Ps 132), vocabulary, linguistic elements and style, distinct phrases, poetic devices, anadiplosis, and a Zion theology.[89] However, the Songs of the

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[85] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 26.

[86] Viviers, "The Coherence of the ma'alôt Psalms," 276.

[87] See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 391–92.

[88] Satterthwaite, "Zion in the Songs of Ascents," 105.

[89] These characteristics are not distinctive of these psalms; the Songs of the Ascents are not unique in comparison to other psalms in the MT because of anyone of these elements or features. However, as psalms placed in juxtaposition it may be said that they share these qualities. For more on the shared features of Pss 120–134, see Costacurta, *Il laccio spezzato*, 17–23; Satterthwaite, "Zion in the Songs of Ascents," 105–8; Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 148–49; Viviers, "The Coherence of the ma'alôt Psalms," 275–89; Beaucamp, *Le Psautier: Ps 73–150*, 233–55, esp. 239–47; Beaucamp, "L'unité du recueil des montées,"

Ascents are interpreted as a lyric sequence because of their canonical placement as well as their shared superscription. As a paratextual element, the superscriptions indicate that these psalms are intended to be associated with one another. Michael Rohde writes,

> Psalms 120-134 are bound together in their present form through their common heading 'songs of ascents' or 'pilgrimage psalms'. Latest at the time when the headings of Psalms were edited, these individual psalms were understood to comprise a collection and there are reasonable assumptions that the pilgrimage Psalter was even passed on as a separate tradition before being incorporated into the complete Psalter.[90]

Collections or sequences of lyric poems take different forms. When lyric poems are juxtaposed without explicit demarcation, the effect of the sequence's parataxis is not mitigated by breaks between poems. Second Isaiah (Isa 40–55) and Song of Songs are examples of lyric sequences that prioritize hearing the whole over hearing them as individual poetic units. On the other hand, some lyric sequences "foreground the individual lyric poems."[91] This is the case with the Psalter in the MT, especially as it is considered to be a collection of sub-collections—such as the five books of the Psalter—made up of individual poetic units. However, because the Psalter is considered a collection and not just a depository of lyric poems, scholars have given attention to the

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73–90; Seybold, *Die Wallfahrtpsalmen*, 20–22; Liebreich, "The Songs of Ascents and the Priestly Blessing," 33–36; Eerdmans, *The Hebrew Book of Psalms*, 548–71, esp. 555–56.

[90] Rohde, "Observations on the Songs of Ascents," 24. See, also, Prinsloo, "The Role of Space," 457; Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 108.

[91] Heffelfinger, *I Am Large*, 60. Daniel Grossberg (*Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Biblical Poetry*, 5–7) borrows the labels "centripetal" and "centrifugal" from E. Stankiewicz ("Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Poetry," 217–42) to differentiate these two categories of lyric sequences. Grossberg (*Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Biblical Poetry*, 5) explains:

At the centripetal extreme are those poetic works marked by a prevailing uniform structure and tight pattern; at the centrifugal extreme are those works with disparate figures and a predominantly loose composition. In the former, the parts unify, centralize and contribute to the coherence of the whole. The second type stresses detail for its own sake, tends away from centralization and thus evidences an atomistic structure. The effect of the complete text of this latter type is more of a loose aggregate with the parts perceived in succession, than of an integrated assemblage featuring a simultaneity.

According to Grossberg, the centripetal and centrifugal extremes counterbalance each other in the Songs of the Ascents. Each psalm has its own unifying features, which make them distinct from the others in the sequence; however, there is also a centripetal element, which contributes to the effect of the whole.

arrangement or sequence of the lyric poems within the Psalter.[92]

Scholars have also considered the arrangement of the psalms within the Songs of the Ascents. Seybold characterized Pss 120–122 as depicting the ascent to and arrival in Jerusalem, Pss 123–132 as celebrating the return to Zion, and Pss 133–134 as representing the departure or return home from Zion.[93] Évode Beaucamp argued for a different tripartite structure: Pss 120–122, 123–128, and 129–134.[94] He has asserted that the Songs of the Ascents move from petition to blessing by way of statements of confidence; Pss 120–122 represent the ascent toward Jerusalem, Pss 123–128 explore the nourishing confidence found in living in the presence of Yahweh, and Pss 129–134 offer hope for the future.[95] Pierre Auffret divided these psalms into three sections evenly: 120–124, 125–129, and 130–134. Based on collocations, verbal links, and linguistic style, he outlined a chiastic structure—one greater chiasm made up of three smaller chiasms. Thus, for Auffret, the sequence of the psalms in the MT may be attributed to the complex chiasm(s) he has discerned.[96] Zenger espoused the same divisions as Auffret but for different reasons, discerning "arc[s] of tension" between lament and praise and understanding the central psalms (Pss 125–129) as comparing and contrasting the lives of

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[92] For examples from the past few decades, see deClaissé-Walford, ed., *The Shape and Shaping*; deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning*; deClaissé-Walford, "Anzu Revisited"; McCann, "The Shape and Shaping"; McCann, "The Shape of Book I"; McCann, *The Shape and Shaping*; Zakovitch, "On the Ordering," 214–88; Zakovitch, "The Interpretive Significance"; Hossfeld, "Der elohistische Psalter"; Koorevaar, "The Psalter"; Labuschagne, "Significant Sub-Groups"; Trublet, "Approche Canonique"; Wallace, *The Narrative Effect*; Grant, *The King as Exemplar*; Clifford, *Psalms 73–150*; Cole, *The Shape and Message*; Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return*; Goulder, *The Psalms of Asaph*; Zenger, "The Composition and Theology"; Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*; Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*; Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*; Creach, "The Shape of Book Four," 63–76; Koenen, *Jahwe wird kommen*; Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*.

[93] Seybold, *Die Wallfahrtpsalmen*, 71–72.

[94] Beaucamp, *Le Psautier: Ps 73–150*, 252.

[95] Beaucamp, *Le Psautier: Ps 73–150*, 252–55.

[96] Auffret, *La sagesse*, 439–531. Philip E. Satterthwaite ("Zion in the Songs of Ascents," 117–18) and Crow (*The Songs of Ascents*, 153–54) both strongly challenge Auffret's proposal.

the wicked and the righteous.[97]

Philip E. Satterthwaite, has interpreted the Songs of the Ascents in triads, arguing that this is justified because the first and last three psalms "do seem to form distinct groups,"[98] the triads better emphasize the progression "from enemy lands to temple, from alienation to blessing and worship in the temple,"[99] and this structure holds the similarities and differences of the individual psalms in tension.[100] Viviers has proposed five groups within the sequence, but has also claimed that the first half of these psalms focus on "Yahweh the Saviour" and the second half on "Yahweh the benedictory God."[101] While these two major divisions are based on theology, the reasoning for subdivisions includes varying criteria. He groups Pss 120–122 because they begin with using the first person and shift to second-person address. Psalms 123–126 are collective psalms that pivot on an imperative-vocative sequence.[102] Psalm 129, a collective song of confidence, is connected to Pss 127–128 because of seconding on the semantic level and a shared focus; additionally, Viviers describes Pss 127–128 as wisdom psalms that form a chiasm when read together.[103] He couples Pss 130–131, because he describes one as a "song of confidence" and one as "a prayer of confidence."[104] Finally, Ps 132, an "eschatological prayer of trust,"[105] is connected to Pss 133–134, which both open with

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[97] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 296.

[98] Satterthwaite, "Zion in the Songs of Ascents," 117.

[99] Satterthwaite, "Zion in the Songs of Ascents," 117.

[100] Satterthwaite, "Zion in the Songs of Ascents," 117.

[101] Viviers, "The Coherence of the ma'alôt Psalms," 281.

[102] Viviers ("The Coherence of the ma'alôt Psalms," 284–85) notes that Pss 123:3; 125:4 and 126:4, which mark the "turning points" of their respective psalms, feature an imperative followed by the vocative יהוה ("O Yahweh") and a repetition of the stem of the imperative. Psalm 124:6 is the exception in this grouping, because it features the variation of a vocative preceded by a passive participle.

[103] Viviers, "The Coherence of the ma'alôt Psalms," 281.

[104] Viviers, "The Coherence of the ma'alôt Psalms," 285.

[105] Viviers, "The Coherence of the ma'alôt Psalms," 286.

the word הנה ("attention!"). David G. Barker has drawn on an outline presented by other scholars, like Allen,[106] Kaiser,[107] and Mays,[108] for his proposed structure. Barker interprets Pss 120–122 as an introduction and focus on reaching and entering Jerusalem. Psalms 123–126 juxtapose lament and thanksgiving. Barker contends, "They are a reflection of the life of faith outside the place of worship and they anticipate the reorientation that the worship at the sanctuary would bring."[109] While Pss 127 and 128 are a pair celebrating the blessings of trusting Yahweh, Ps 127 is the center of the sequence. Psalms 129–131 return to petitions but with a statement of trust. Psalm 132, a messianic psalm, precedes the final psalms (Pss 133–134), which offer "a call to unity and a final liturgy of doxology to Yahweh."[110] Prinsloo offers yet another view on the structure on the Songs of the Ascents: Pss 120–122 represent upward movement in physical space; Pss 123–125 represent upward movement on the "abstract and emotional level";[111] Pss 126–128 depict Yahweh as surrounding his people—present in all lived spaces; and Pss 129–131 return to the realm of abstract space—contrasting experiences in and outside the presence of Yahweh; and Pss 132–134 uses concrete spaces to establish that Jerusalem is the seat of Yahweh's presence, from which blessings and peace flow.[112] Prinsloo asserts, "The שירי המעלות tells a (spatial) story with a sad beginning (Ps 120) and a happy ending (Ps 134), a story of suffering, ridicule and contempt, but also of happiness, prosperity and contentment."[113] Prinsloo explains the lyric sequencing of Pss

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[106] Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 220.

[107] Kaiser, *The Journey Isn't Over*, 17. See, also, Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*.

[108] Mays, *Psalms*, 386–87.

[109] Barker, "Voices for the Pilgrimage," 110.

[110] Barker, "Voices for the Pilgrimage," 111.

[111] Prinsloo, "The Role of Space," 467.

[112] Prinsloo, "The Role of Space," 462–72.

[113] Prinsloo, "The Role of Space," 472.

120–132 and unpacks his spatial sociological interpretation using narrative language.

This recital of proposals on the structure of the Songs of the Ascents is only a sample of the interpretations offered by scholars. The variety of the views testifies to the tendency of the human mind to look for patterns. However, it is also a testament to the beauty of the rhythm of association and sequencing of lyric poetry. Just as the rhythm of association—the juxtaposition of the various elements in a particular order—of each psalm produce a particular thrust because of the relationship of the elements, so one arrangement of psalms within a lyric sequence produces a different thrust than another arrangement of the same psalms would. Regardless of how or why the sequencing came about, the Songs of the Ascents is a lyric sequence within the MT. Within the canonical text, the Songs of Ascent have been preserved as a lyric sequence through their proximity to one another and their shared superscription. Whether or not the redactor(s) had an agenda for the arrangement of the psalms, one may read across them and explore the relationship between them. Heffelfinger comments, "Lyric sequences seem to exist in the ancient world, and modern conceptions of how these sequences may be interpreted may prove to be useful in thinking about them."[114] Therefore, exploring the voicing in each psalm within the sequence and across the whole, renders a deeper understanding of the thrust and message of the Songs of the Ascents.

Voicing in the Songs of the Ascents

Psalm 120

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[114] Heffelfinger, *I Am Large*, 60.

| | 1 | A song of the ascents. |
|שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת| | |

אֶל־יְהוָה בַּצָּרָתָה לִּי		To Yahweh, in my distress,
קָרָאתִי וַיַּעֲנֵנִי׃		I called and he answered me.
יְהוָה הַצִּילָה נַפְשִׁי מִשְּׂפַת־שֶׁקֶר	2	O Yahweh, deliver my soul from a lying lip,
מִלָּשׁוֹן רְמִיָּה׃		From a deceitful tongue.

מַה־יִּתֵּן לְךָ וּמַה־יֹּסִיף לָךְ	3	What will he give to you and what will he add to you,
לָשׁוֹן רְמִיָּה׃		O deceitful tongue?[115]
חִצֵּי גִבּוֹר שְׁנוּנִים	4	Arrows of a mighty one, sharpened,
עִם גַּחֲלֵי רְתָמִים׃		With broomwood coals.

אוֹיָה־לִי כִּי־גַרְתִּי מֶשֶׁךְ	5	Woe to me because I have sojourned in Meshek[116];
שָׁכַנְתִּי עִם־אָהֳלֵי קֵדָר׃		I have dwelt among the tents of Kedar.
רַבַּת שָׁכְנָה־לָּהּ נַפְשִׁי	6	For too long[117] my soul has dwelt
עִם שׂוֹנֵא שָׁלוֹם׃		With a hater of peace.
אֲנִי־שָׁלוֹם	7	I am peaceful.
וְכִי אֲדַבֵּר הֵמָּה לַמִּלְחָמָה׃		But when I speak, they are for war.

Psalm 121

| שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת | 1 | A song of the ascents. |

| אֶשָּׂא עֵינַי אֶל־הֶהָרִים | | I will lift my eyes to the mountains. |
| מֵאַיִן יָבֹא עֶזְרִי׃ | | From where will my help come? |

עֶזְרִי מֵעִם יְהוָה	2	My help is from Yahweh,
עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ׃		Creator of the heavens and earth.
אַל־יִתֵּן לַמּוֹט רַגְלֶךָ	3	He will not allow your foot to slip.
אַל־יָנוּם שֹׁמְרֶךָ׃		The one who keeps you will not sleep.
הִנֵּה לֹא־יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן	4	Indeed, he will not slumber and he will not sleep,
שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל		The keeper of Israel.
יְהוָה שֹׁמְרֶךָ	5	Yahweh is your keeper.

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[115] Yahweh is understood to be the subject of this verse, which is addressed to a wicked person through synecdoche (לשון רמיה; "O deceitful tongue"). Zenger (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 301) writes, "That לְךָ in v. 3a is a masculine form, although לשון is feminine, can be explained by the fact that the enemy as 'owner' of the tongue is in view."

[116] The proper name, משך (Meshek), functions as an accusative of place, providing the location of where the sojourn took place, so it is translated as a prepositional phrase in English. See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 300–301; Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §54b; GBHS §2.3.2(a); BHRG §33.2.3(i); IBHS §10.2.2b; GKC §118g.

[117] In the clause רבת שכנה־לה נפשי ("For too long my soul has dwelt . . . "), רבת ("too long") serves as a nominative absolute. The resumptive pronominal suffix in לה refers to the nominative absolute. See Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §35; GBHS §2.1.4; BHRG §34.5, §46.1.2(i)(3); IBHS §4.7b–c, 8.3a; GKC §143.

יְהוָה צִלְּךָ עַל־יַד יְמִינֶךָ:		Yahweh is your shade at your right hand.
יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא־יַכֶּכָּה	6	By day, the sun will not strike you,
וְיָרֵחַ בַּלָּיְלָה:		Nor the moon by night.
יְהוָה יִשְׁמָרְךָ מִכָּל־רָע	7	Yahweh will keep you from all harm.
יִשְׁמֹר אֶת־נַפְשֶׁךָ:		He will keep your soul.
יְהוָה יִשְׁמָר־צֵאתְךָ וּבוֹאֶךָ	8	Yahweh will keep your going out and coming in
מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם:		From now and forevermore.

Psalm 122

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד	1	A song of the ascents. Davidic.
שָׂמַחְתִּי בְּאֹמְרִים לִי		I rejoiced with those saying to me,
בֵּית יְהוָה נֵלֵךְ:		"We will go to the house of Yahweh."
עֹמְדוֹת הָיוּ רַגְלֵינוּ	2	Our feet were standing[118]
בִּשְׁעָרַיִךְ יְרוּשָׁלָם:		In your gates, O Jerusalem.
יְרוּשָׁלַם הַבְּנוּיָה כְּעִיר	3	Jerusalem is built like a city
שֶׁחֻבְּרָה־לָּהּ יַחְדָּו:		That is joined together for itself.
שֶׁשָּׁם עָלוּ שְׁבָטִים	4	That is where tribes go up,[119]
שִׁבְטֵי־יָהּ		The tribes of Yah,
עֵדוּת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל		—it is an ordinance for Israel—[120]
לְהֹדוֹת לְשֵׁם יְהוָה:		To give thanks to the name of Yahweh.

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[118] The participial phrase עמדות היו is controversial; some scholars interpret it as referring to the past, but others as the present. Some scholars—including Zenger (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 332–33), Leslie C. Allen (*Psalms 101–150*, 155–56), and Luis Alonso Schökel and Andrzej Strus ("Salmo 122")—argue this clause is resultative, portraying part of the journey as it unfolds. However, Alter (*The Book of Psalms*, 439) notes, "As in other psalms of Zion, the liminal experience of crossing into the walled city, or into the temple precincts, is strongly marked." For others who interpret this suffix conjugation as referring to the past, see deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 900; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:461; Seybold, *Die Psalmen*, 479; Donner, "Psalm 122," 190–93; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 431, 433.

[119] The suffix conjugation עלו functions as a gnomic perfect here. It describes the reoccurring event of people making their pilgrimage to Jerusalem. See *GBHS* §3.2.1e; *BHRG* §19.2.4; *IBHS* §30.4, §30.5.1c.

[120] Thijs Booij ("Psalm CXXII 4," 262–63) argues for reading עדת לישראל instead of עדות לישראל, and he points to 11QPsª, which offers עדת ישראל ("the congregation of Israel") and Symmachus, which provides ἐκκλησία τῷ Ἰσραήλ ("the congregation for Israel"). He contends, "The congregation, on its way to praise YHWH's name, represented Israel; doing so, it also *was* Israel ('the tribes'). Stressing the notion of representation, we may translate: 'the congregation which for Israel was to praise the name of YHWH'. Stressing the notion of identity, we may translate: 'the congregation of Israel which was to praise the name of YHWH'" (265). This emended reading is repetitious without a clear purpose, and the MT is the more difficult reading. Rick R. Marrs ("Psalm 122,3.4," 108–9) attempts to smooth out the MT's עדות לישראל by inserting the words כי שמה, which appear in v. 5 and Marrs argues were casualties of haplography. Thus, he proposes: כי שמה עדות לישראל ("he made it a sworn obligation for Israel"; p. 109). These recommendations may solve one set of difficulties but they carry their own. Commenting on these proposals, Goldingay (Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:462) states, "The end results seems no improvement on the MT." See, also, deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 900; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 332, 334; Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 440.

כִּי שָׁמָּה יָשְׁבוּ כִסְאוֹת לְמִשְׁפָּט	5	For there the seats of judgment are located,[121]
כִּסְאוֹת לְבֵית דָּוִיד:		Thrones of the house of David.
שַׁאֲלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלָם	6	Ask for the peace of Jerusalem:
יִשְׁלָיוּ אֹהֲבָיִךְ:		"May those who love you have peace.
יְהִי־שָׁלוֹם בְּחֵילֵךְ	7	May there be peace in your rampart,
שַׁלְוָה בְּאַרְמְנוֹתָיִךְ:		Prosperity in your palaces."
לְמַעַן אַחַי וְרֵעָי	8	For the sake of my brothers and my friends,
אֲדַבְּרָה־נָּא שָׁלוֹם בָּךְ:		Let me speak peace: "Peace within you!"
לְמַעַן בֵּית־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	9	For the sake of the house of Yahweh, our God,
אֲבַקְשָׁה טוֹב לָךְ:		I will seek your good.

Psalm 123

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת	1	A song of the ascents.
אֵלֶיךָ נָשָׂאתִי אֶת־עֵינַי		To you I have lifted up my eyes,
הַיֹּשְׁבִי בַּשָּׁמָיִם:		O the one who dwells in the heavens.
הִנֵּה כְעֵינֵי עֲבָדִים	2	Indeed, like the eyes of servants
אֶל־יַד אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם		Are on the hand of their masters,
כְּעֵינֵי שִׁפְחָה		Like the eyes of a slave woman
אֶל־יַד גְּבִרְתָּהּ		Are on the hand of her mistress,
כֵּן עֵינֵינוּ אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ		So our eyes are on Yahweh, our God,
עַד שֶׁיְּחָנֵּנוּ:		Until he is gracious to us.
חָנֵּנוּ יְהוָה חָנֵּנוּ	3	Be gracious to us, O Yahweh! Be gracious to us,
כִּי־רַב שָׂבַעְנוּ בוּז:		Because we are greatly sated[122] with contempt.
רַבַּת שָׂבְעָה־לָּהּ נַפְשֵׁנוּ	4	Our soul is greatly sated
הַלַּעַג הַשַּׁאֲנַנִּים		With the mockery of the prosperous,
הַבּוּז לִגְאֵיוֹנִים:		With the contempt of the proud.[123]

Psalm 124

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד	1	A song of the ascents. Davidic.
לוּלֵי יְהוָה שֶׁהָיָה לָנוּ		If it had not been Yahweh who was for us,
יֹאמַר־נָא יִשְׂרָאֵל:		Let Israel say,

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[121] Here, the suffix conjugation ישבו functions as a stative perfect, describing a condition or state of affairs. See Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §161; *GBHS* §3.2.1b; *BHRG* §19.2.2; *IBHS* 3§0.2.3, 30.5.3; *GKC* §106g.

[122] In the context, the verb שבענו, a suffix conjugation, functions as a stative perfect. See Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §161; *GBHS* §3.2.1b; *BHRG* §19.2.2; *IBHS* §30.2.3, §30.5.3; *GKC* §106g.

[123] The *qere* corrects the *ketiv*, לגאיונים—a *hapax legomena*, with יונים לגאי "proud oppressors." The *qere* does not really change the meaning of this last line, and the *ketiv* is preferred by a number of scholars. See deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 904; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 344–45, 349–50; Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 442; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:469.

לוּלֵי יְהוָה שֶׁהָיָה לָנוּ	2	If it had not been Yahweh who was for us
בְּקוּם עָלֵינוּ אָדָם:		When humanity rose up against us,
אֲזַי חַיִּים בְּלָעוּנוּ	3	Then alive they would have swallowed us
בַּחֲרוֹת אַפָּם בָּנוּ:		When their anger burned against us.
אֲזַי הַמַּיִם שְׁטָפוּנוּ	4	Then the waters would have flooded over us,
נַחְלָה עָבַר עַל־נַפְשֵׁנוּ:		A torrent would have passed over our souls.
אֲזַי עָבַר עַל־נַפְשֵׁנוּ	5	Then it would have passed over our souls,
הַמַּיִם הַזֵּידוֹנִים:		The seething waters.
בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה	6	Blessed be Yahweh,
שֶׁלֹּא נְתָנָנוּ טֶרֶף לְשִׁנֵּיהֶם:		Who did not give us as prey to their teeth.
נַפְשֵׁנוּ כְּצִפּוֹר נִמְלְטָה מִפַּח יוֹקְשִׁים	7	Our souls, like a bird, have escaped from the snare of fowlers.
הַפַּח נִשְׁבָּר וַאֲנַחְנוּ נִמְלָטְנוּ:		The snare is broken, and we, we have escaped.
עֶזְרֵנוּ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה	8	Our help is in the name of Yahweh,
עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:		Creator of the heavens and earth.

Psalm 125

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת	1	A song of the ascents.
הַבֹּטְחִים בַּיהוָה כְּהַר־צִיּוֹן		Those who trust in Yahweh are like Mount Zion.
לֹא־יִמּוֹט לְעוֹלָם יֵשֵׁב:		It will not totter; forever it will remain.
יְרוּשָׁלַם הָרִים סָבִיב לָהּ	2	Jerusalem—the mountains surround her,
וַיהוָה סָבִיב לְעַמּוֹ		And Yahweh surrounds his people
מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם:		From now and forevermore.
כִּי לֹא יָנוּחַ שֵׁבֶט הָרֶשַׁע	3	For the scepter of a wicked one will not rest
עַל גּוֹרַל הַצַּדִּיקִים		Upon the lot of the righteous ones,
לְמַעַן לֹא־יִשְׁלְחוּ הַצַּדִּיקִים		So that the righteous will not stretch out their hands
בְּעַוְלָתָה יְדֵיהֶם:		unjustly.
הֵיטִיבָה יְהוָה לַטּוֹבִים	4	Do good, O Yahweh, to the good ones,
וְלִישָׁרִים בְּלִבּוֹתָם:		And to those who are upright in heart.
וְהַמַּטִּים עֲקַלְקַלּוֹתָם	5	But those who turn aside to their crookedness
יוֹלִיכֵם יְהוָה אֶת־פֹּעֲלֵי הָאָוֶן		Yahweh will lead away the doers of iniquity.
שָׁלוֹם עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:		Peace be on Israel!

Psalm 126

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת	1	A song of the ascents.
בְּשׁוּב יְהוָה אֶת־שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן		When Yahweh brought about the restoration of Zion,
הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים:		We were like dreamers.
אָז יִמָּלֵא שְׂחוֹק פִּינוּ	2	Then our mouth was filled with laughter

וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה		And our tongue with rejoicing.
אָז יֹאמְרוּ בַגּוֹיִם		Then they said among the nations,
הִגְדִּיל יהוה לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם־אֵלֶּה׃		"Yahweh has done great things for these."
הִגְדִּיל יהוה לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ	3	Yahweh has done great things for us!
הָיִינוּ שְׂמֵחִים׃		We rejoiced!
שׁוּבָה יהוה אֶת־שְׁבוּתֵנוּ	4	Bring about, O Yahweh, our restoration,
כַּאֲפִיקִים בַּנֶּגֶב׃		Like channels in the desert.
הַזֹּרְעִים בְּדִמְעָה	5	Those who sow with tears,
בְּרִנָּה יִקְצֹרוּ׃		With rejoicing will reap.
הָלוֹךְ יֵלֵךְ וּבָכֹה	6	He will surely go and weep,
נֹשֵׂא מֶשֶׁךְ־הַזָּרַע		Carrying a bag of seed.
בֹּא־יָבוֹא בְרִנָּה		He will surely come with rejoicing,
נֹשֵׂא אֲלֻמֹּתָיו׃		Carrying his sheaves.

Psalm 127

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לִשְׁלֹמֹה	1	A song of the ascents. Solomonic.
אִם־יהוה לֹא־יִבְנֶה בַיִת		If Yahweh does not build a house,
שָׁוְא עָמְלוּ בוֹנָיו בּוֹ		Uselessly its builders labor[124] on it.
אִם־יהוה לֹא־יִשְׁמָר־עִיר		If Yahweh does not guard a city
שָׁוְא שָׁקַד שׁוֹמֵר׃		Uselessly a guard watches.[125]
שָׁוְא לָכֶם מַשְׁכִּימֵי קוּם	2	It is useless for you, rising early,
מְאַחֲרֵי־שֶׁבֶת		Delaying resting,
אֹכְלֵי לֶחֶם הָעֲצָבִים		Eating the bread of toil.
כֵּן יִתֵּן לִידִידוֹ שֵׁנָא׃		Accordingly, he gives to his beloved sleep.
הִנֵּה נַחֲלַת יהוה בָּנִים	3	Attention! The inheritance of Yahweh is children,
שָׂכָר פְּרִי הַבָּטֶן׃		A reward is the fruit of the womb.
כְּחִצִּים בְּיַד־גִּבּוֹר	4	As arrows in the hand of a mighty one,
כֵּן בְּנֵי הַנְּעוּרִים׃		So are the children of the time of youth.
אַשְׁרֵי הַגֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר מִלֵּא אֶת־אַשְׁפָּתוֹ	5	Blessed is the man who fills[127] his quiver.
מֵהֶם[126] לֹא־יֵבֹשׁוּ		Of them they will not be ashamed
כִּי־יְדַבְּרוּ אֶת־אוֹיְבִים בַּשָּׁעַר׃		When they speak with enemies in the gate.

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[124] The suffix conjugation עמלו functions as a gnomic perfect here. See *GBHS* §3.2.1e; *BHRG* §19.2.4; *IBHS* §30.4, §30.5.1c.

[125] The suffix conjugation שקד is also interpreted as a gnomic perfect.

[126] Following the MT and the common collocation of בוש מן (cf. Isa 1:29; 20:5; Jer 2:36; 12:13; 48:13; Hos 4:19; 10:6; Mic 7:16; Zeph 3:11; Zech 13:4), I connect מהם with the verb בוש and not מלא. See Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:498; and Clines, ed., "בוש," 2:131.

[127] The suffix conjugation מלא functions as a gnomic perfect here and is translated with the present tense in English because of the proverbial nature of this clause. See *GBHS* §3.2.1e; *BHRG* §19.2.4; *IBHS* §30.4, §30.5.1c.

Psalm 128

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת   1   A song of the ascents.

אַשְׁרֵי כָּל־יְרֵא יהוה   Blessed are all who fear Yahweh,
הַהֹלֵךְ בִּדְרָכָיו: The one who walks in his ways.
יְגִיעַ כַּפֶּיךָ כִּי תֹאכֵל   2   The labor of your hands you will indeed[128] eat.
אַשְׁרֶיךָ וְטוֹב לָךְ:   Blessed are you, and it will go well[129] for you.
אֶשְׁתְּךָ כְּגֶפֶן פֹּרִיָּה   3   Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
בְּיַרְכְּתֵי בֵיתֶךָ   In the inner rooms of your house.
בָּנֶיךָ כִּשְׁתִלֵי זֵיתִים   Your children will be like shoots of olive trees
סָבִיב לְשֻׁלְחָנֶךָ:   Around your table.

הִנֵּה כִי־כֵן יְבֹרַךְ גָּבֶר   4   Attention! So, too, a man will be blessed,
יְרֵא יהוה: Who fears Yahweh.
יְבָרֶכְךָ יהוה מִצִּיּוֹן   5   May Yahweh bless you from Zion!
וּרְאֵה בְּטוּב יְרוּשָׁלָ͏ִם   So you may see[130] the prosperity of Jerusalem
כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:   All the days of your life.
וּרְאֵה־בָנִים לְבָנֶיךָ   6   So that you may see your children's children.

שָׁלוֹם עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל: Peace be on Israel!

Psalm 129

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת   1   A song of the ascents.

רַבַּת צְרָרוּנִי מִנְּעוּרַי   Many times, they have attacked me from my youth,
יֹאמַר־נָא יִשְׂרָאֵל: Let Israel say,
רַבַּת צְרָרוּנִי מִנְּעוּרָי   2   Many times, they have attacked me from my youth,
גַּם לֹא־יָכְלוּ לִי: Yet they have not prevailed over me.

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[128] Here, כי functions as an emphatic particle. See Clines, ed., "כִּי," 4:388; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 921; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 396; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:507. Contra Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 451.

[129] Being a suffix conjugation functioning as a perfect of certitude or confidence, טוב is translated into English with the future tense. See Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, 165; GBHS 3.2.1d; BHRG §19.2.5(ii) and p. 364; IBHS §30.5.1e; GKC §106m–n; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 921; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 396.

[130] The directives וראה, which occur in vv. 5 and 6, are in the imperative form; however, they are translated as jussives because they are connected by vav-conversives to the jussive יברכך in line 5a. Loren D. Crow (*The Songs of Ascents*, 74) argues, "Probably this is to be explained on the basis of the jussive verb *yĕbārĕkka* (v. 5), which has YHWH as the subject, so that the imperative become consequents of that blessing." Zenger (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 396–97) also argues that this verb sequence renders the imperative forms in vv. 5 and 6 with a "final or consecutive meaning" (397). See, also, deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 921–22; Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 452; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:507.

עַל־גַּבִּי חָרְשׁוּ חֹרְשִׁים[131]	3	On my back the plowers have plowed;
הֶאֱרִיכוּ לְמַעֲנוֹתָם:		They have made their furrow[132] long.
יְהוָה צַדִּיק	4	Yahweh is righteous.
קִצֵּץ עֲבוֹת רְשָׁעִים:		He has cut through the rope of the wicked ones.
יֵבֹשׁוּ וְיִסֹּגוּ אָחוֹר	5	May they be put to shame and turn back,
כֹּל שֹׂנְאֵי צִיּוֹן:		All the haters of Zion.
יִהְיוּ כַּחֲצִיר גַּגּוֹת	6	May they become like the grass of roofs,
שֶׁקַּדְמַת שָׁלַף יָבֵשׁ:		Which withers[133] before one plucks it,
שֶׁלֹּא מִלֵּא כַפּוֹ קוֹצֵר	7	With which a reaper does not fill his hand,
וְחִצְנוֹ מְעַמֵּר:		Or a gatherer the fold of his cloak.
וְלֹא אָמְרוּ הָעֹבְרִים	8	And the passerby will not say,[134]
בִּרְכַּת־יְהוָה אֲלֵיכֶם		"The blessing of Yahweh to you!
בֵּרַכְנוּ אֶתְכֶם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה:		We bless you in the name of Yahweh!"[135]

Psalm 130

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת	1	A song of the ascents.
מִמַּעֲמַקִּים קְרָאתִיךָ יְהוָה:		From the depths, I have called you, O Yahweh.
אֲדֹנָי שִׁמְעָה בְקוֹלִי	2	O my Lord, listen to my voice
תִּהְיֶינָה אָזְנֶיךָ קַשֻּׁבוֹת		May your ears become attentive
לְקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנָי:		To the voice of my pleas for favor.
אִם־עֲוֹנוֹת תִּשְׁמָר־יָהּ	3	If you record iniquities, O Yah,
אֲדֹנָי מִי יַעֲמֹד:		O my Lord, who will stand?

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[131] The OG reads οἱ ἁμαρτωλοί, which would be הרשעים ("the wicked") in Hebrew and better harmonizes with v. 4, and 11QPs^a offers רשעים ("wicked"). However, the MT is readable and maintained here. See deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 923; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 406.

[132] The *qere*, למענותם, is a correction in spelling that does not change the identification of the *ketiv*, מענותם. The OG provides τὴν ἀνομίαν αὐτῶν, which would be reconstructed as לעונות ("their lawlessness") and is similar to the Syr.'s לעונותם. Here, the MT is maintained. See, also, Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 922; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:514.

[133] The three suffix conjugations in this series—שלק, יבש, and מלא—are part of a description that is not time bound. Therefore, they are translated as gnomic perfects. See *GBHS* §3.2.1e; *BHRG* §19.2.4; *IBHS* §30.4, §30.5.1c.

[134] This suffix conjugation, אמרו, functions as a perfect of certitude and continues the curse initiated in v. 5. See Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §165; *GBHS* §3.2.1d; *BHRG* §19.2.5(ii) and p. 364; *IBHS* §30.5.1e; *GKC* §106m–n; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 921; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 396.

[135] Compare this withheld harvest greeting with 1 Kgs 9:8/2 Chron 7:21. Yahweh presents Solomon with the contrast between the future if he and his children are faithful and the future if they are unfaithful. One of the consequences of unfaithfulness is the destruction of the temple, and, in 1 Kgs 9:8, Yahweh says: כל־עבר עליו ישם ושרק ואמרו על־מה עשה יהוה ככה לארץ הזאת ולבית הזה נזה (All who pass by it will be appalled, hiss, and say, "Why has Yahweh done such as this to this land and to this house?"). Goldingay compares Ps 129:8 to the exchanged greetings is Ruth 2:4.

כִּי־עִמְּךָ הַסְּלִיחָה	4	But[136] with you is forgiveness,
לְמַעַן תִּוָּרֵא:		So that you may be feared.[137]

קִוִּיתִי יהוה קִוְּתָה נַפְשִׁי	5	I have waited for Yahweh, my soul waited,
וְלִדְבָרוֹ הוֹחָלְתִּי:		And I have waited for his word.
נַפְשִׁי לַאדֹנָי	6	—my soul for my Lord,
מִשֹּׁמְרִים לַבֹּקֶר		More than those who watch for the morning,
שֹׁמְרִים לַבֹּקֶר:		More than those who watch for the morning.

יַחֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יהוה	7	Wait, O Israel, for Yahweh
כִּי־עִם־יהוה הַחֶסֶד		Because with Yahweh is steadfast love
וְהַרְבֵּה עִמּוֹ פְדוּת:		And redemption with him is great.
וְהוּא יִפְדֶּה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכֹּל עֲוֹנֹתָיו:	8	And he will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Psalm 131

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד	1	A song of the ascents. Davidic.
יהוה לֹא־גָבַהּ לִבִּי		O Yahweh, my heart has not been proud,
וְלֹא־רָמוּ עֵינַי		My eyes have not been haughty.
וְלֹא־הִלַּכְתִּי בִּגְדֹלוֹת		I have not walked in great things,
וּבְנִפְלָאוֹת מִמֶּנִּי:		Or with things too wondrous for me.
אִם־לֹא שִׁוִּיתִי וְדוֹמַמְתִּי נַפְשִׁי	2	Rather, I have stilled and quieted my soul,
כְּגָמֻל עֲלֵי אִמּוֹ		Like a weaned child against his mother,
כַּגָּמֻל עָלַי נַפְשִׁי:		Like a weaned child is my soul upon me.
יַחֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יהוה	3	Wait, O Israel, for Yahweh
מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם:		From now and forevermore.

Psalm 132

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת	1	A song of the ascents.
זְכוֹר־יהוה לְדָוִד		Remember, O Yahweh, for the sake of David,
אֵת כָּל־עֻנּוֹתוֹ:		All of his afflictions,[138]
אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לַיהוה	2	The one who swore to Yahweh,
נָדַר לַאֲבִיר יַעֲקֹב:		Vowed to the Strong One of Jacob:

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[136] In this verse, כי is adversative. Allen (*Psalms 101–150*, 172) argues that כי introduces "the reason for the negative implication of the condition of v. 3a." See, also, Clines, ed., "כִּי," 4:387; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 927; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 421.

[137] Greek versions vary here, and some (cf. Th and Sym) offer τοῦ νόμου σου, which would reflect תורתך ("your instruction"). See deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 927; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 421–22; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:521.

[138] This *pual* infinitive construct, ענות, functions substantively. See Clines, ed., "ענה II," 6:499; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 933.

אִם־אָבֹא בְּאֹהֶל בֵּיתִי	3	"I will not[139] enter the tent of my house,
אִם־אֶעֱלֶה עַל־עֶרֶשׂ יְצוּעָי׃		I will not go up on the couch of my bed,
אִם־אֶתֵּן שְׁנַת לְעֵינָי	4	I will not give sleep to my eyes,
לְעַפְעַפַּי תְּנוּמָה׃		To my eyelids slumber,
עַד־אֶמְצָא מָקוֹם לַיהוה	5	Until I find a place for Yahweh,
מִשְׁכָּנוֹת לַאֲבִיר יַעֲקֹב׃		Dwelling places for the Strong One of Jacob."
הִנֵּה־שְׁמַעֲנוּהָ בְאֶפְרָתָה	6	Attention: we heard of it in Ephrathah;
מְצָאנוּהָ בִּשְׂדֵי־יָעַר׃		We found it in the fields of Jaar.
נָבוֹאָה לְמִשְׁכְּנוֹתָיו	7	Let us enter his dwelling places,
נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לַהֲדֹם רַגְלָיו׃		Let us worship at the footstool of his feet.
קוּמָה יהוה לִמְנוּחָתֶךָ	8	Arise, O Yahweh, to your resting place,
אַתָּה וַאֲרוֹן עֻזֶּךָ׃		You and the ark of your strength!
כֹּהֲנֶיךָ יִלְבְּשׁוּ־צֶדֶק	9	Let your priests be clothed with righteousness,
וַחֲסִידֶיךָ יְרַנֵּנוּ׃		And let your devout ones rejoice!
בַּעֲבוּר דָּוִד עַבְדֶּךָ	10	For the sake of David, your servant,
אַל־תָּשֵׁב פְּנֵי מְשִׁיחֶךָ׃		Do not turn your face from your anointed one.
נִשְׁבַּע־יהוה לְדָוִד אֱמֶת	11	Yahweh swore to David
לֹא־יָשׁוּב מִמֶּנָּה		An oath from which he will not turn back:
מִפְּרִי בִטְנְךָ		"One of the fruit of your body,
אָשִׁית לְכִסֵּא־לָךְ׃		I will set on your throne.
אִם־יִשְׁמְרוּ בָנֶיךָ בְּרִיתִי	12	If your children keep my covenant,
וְעֵדֹתִי זוֹ אֲלַמְּדֵם		And my testimony, which[140] I will teach them,
גַּם־בְּנֵיהֶם עֲדֵי־עַד		Their children, also, forevermore,
יֵשְׁבוּ לְכִסֵּא־לָךְ׃		Will sit on your throne."
כִּי־בָחַר יהוה בְּצִיּוֹן	13	For Yahweh chose Zion;
אִוָּהּ לְמוֹשָׁב לוֹ׃		He desired it as his dwelling.
זֹאת־מְנוּחָתִי עֲדֵי־עַד	14	"This is my resting place forevermore;
פֹּה־אֵשֵׁב כִּי אִוִּתִיהָ׃		Here I will dwell because I desired it.
צֵידָהּ בָּרֵךְ אֲבָרֵךְ	15	Its provision I will surely bless;
אֶבְיוֹנֶיהָ אַשְׂבִּיעַ לָחֶם׃		Its needy I will satisfy with bread.
וְכֹהֲנֶיהָ אַלְבִּישׁ יֶשַׁע	16	And its priests I will clothe with salvation;
וַחֲסִידֶיהָ רַנֵּן יְרַנֵּנוּ׃		And its devout ones will surely rejoice.
שָׁם אַצְמִיחַ קֶרֶן לְדָוִד	17	There I will cause a horn for David to grow;
עָרַכְתִּי נֵר לִמְשִׁיחִי׃		I have set up a lamp for my anointed one.

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[139] When אם occurs in the protasis of an oath or vow, it initiates a negative declaration. See Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §456; *GBHS* §4.3.2(e), 5.3.2; *BHRG* §40.5.4, §41.3.6(i); *IBHS* §40.2.2a–c; *GKC* §149; deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 934; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 454–55; Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 458.

[140] In this verse, זו functions as a relative pronoun, with עדתי ("my testimony") as the antecedent. The fact that this particle is feminine and singular aids in the interpretation of its antecedent, which could also be understood as plural without other context clues. See Clines, ed., "זו," 3:94; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 455–56; Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 461; *Joüon* §145c; Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 99, 101; *IBHS* §19.5.

אֹויְבָיו אַלְבִּישׁ בֹּשֶׁת   18   His enemies I will clothe with shame,
וְעָלָיו יָצִיץ נִזְרֹו׃   But on him will shine his crown."

Psalm 133

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלֹות לְדָוִד   1   A song of the ascents. Davidic.

הִנֵּה מַה־טֹּוב וּמַה־נָּעִים   Attention! How good and how lovely
שֶׁבֶת אַחִים גַּם־יָחַד׃   Is brothers sitting together.
כַּשֶּׁמֶן הַטֹּוב עַל־הָרֹאשׁ   2   Like good oil on the head,
יֹרֵד עַל־הַזָּקָן זְקַן־אַהֲרֹן   Going down the beard, the beard of Aaron,
שֶׁיֹּרֵד עַל־פִּי מִדֹּותָיו׃   Which goes down on the lip of his collar.
כְּטַל־חֶרְמֹון   3   Like the dew of Hermon,
שֶׁיֹּרֵד עַל־הַרְרֵי צִיֹּון   Which goes down on the mountains of Zion.
כִּי שָׁם צִוָּה יהוה אֶת־הַבְּרָכָה   Because there Yahweh has commanded blessing,
חַיִּים עַד־הָעֹולָם׃   Life forevermore.

Psalm 134

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלֹות   1   A song of the ascents.

הִנֵּה בָּרֲכוּ אֶת־יהוה   Attention! Bless Yahweh,
כָּל־עַבְדֵי יהוה   O all servants of Yahweh,
הָעֹמְדִים בְּבֵית־יהוה בַּלֵּילֹות׃   Who stand in the house of Yahweh in the night![141]
שְׂאוּ־יְדֵכֶם קֹדֶשׁ   2   Lift up your hands to the sanctuary,
וּבָרֲכוּ אֶת־יהוה׃   And bless Yahweh!

יְבָרֶכְךָ יהוה מִצִּיֹּון   3   May Yahweh bless you from Zion,
עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ׃   Creator of the heaven and earth.

Psalm 120 is the only psalm in the Songs of the Ascents to directly address the wicked or an out-group. While this direct address plays a significant role within this psalm, it is juxtaposed with first-person, singular testimony, prayer, and lament. The psalm opens with testimony, reporting that Yahweh answered a previous petition. This review of Yahweh's response in the past fronts the addressee of the petition—אֶל־יהוה ("to

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[141] Joüon (Joüon §136b) indicates that לֵילֹות should be interpreted as a plural of composition, writing that it "sometimes seems to mean parts of the night, nocturnal hours." Cf. Isa 21:8; Song 3:1, 8; Pss 16:7; 92:3. See, also, Hossfeld and Zenger, Psalms 3, 484; Goldingay, Psalms, 3:570.

Yahweh")—and lays the foundation for the following prayer.[142] Goldingay observes, "In speaking of what Yhwh once did, the psalm addressed other people. In turning to pray, it addressed Yhwh; the move between third and second persons is common in the Psalms."[143] Verse 2 presents the petition, which, again, fronts the addressee by beginning with a vocative: יהוה ("O Yahweh"). Both the testimony and prayer of vv. 1b–2 emphasize the mention of Yahweh. However, v. 2 also introduces another party. The prayer beseeches Yahweh for deliverance from a dishonest person described as שפת־שקר ("a lying lip") and לשון רמיה ("a deceitful tongue").[144] Verses 3–4, following this introduction, shift to directly addressing this deceitful third party, in contrast to directly addressing Yahweh in the previous verse. The contrast is amplified with use of another vocative, which seconds the description of the liar in v. 2: לשון רמיה ("O deceitful tongue). The confidence that Yahweh is responsive—to both the righteous (evident in the prayer) and the wicked (evident in the words directed toward the deceitful tongue)—heightens the intensity of the imprecation in vv. 3–4. The contrast in direct address is negotiated through another poetic device, anadiplosis. Crow comments, "The transition from praying to YHWH (v. 2) to addressing the enemy is masterfully smoothed by the repetition of 'treacherous tongue.'"[145] The liar is described, confronted with a rhetorical question, and provided with the answer.[146] What does Yahweh give a deceitful person? He gives destruction.[147] The words aimed at the deceptive person follow the words about and

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[142] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 894; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 302; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:449.

[143] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:449.

[144] Maré, "Images of the Enemies in the Macalôt-Psalms," 166–67.

[145] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 35.

[146] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 302.

[147] The imprecation in vv. 3–4 is also magnified by the wordplay. Verses 2–3 employ the appositional phrase לשון רמיה ("deceitful tongue"), instead of the construct chain לשון מרמה. Zenger (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 303) argues, "Since in v. 4 the activity of the deceitful/treacherous tongue

directed to Yahweh; the imprecation follows the testimony and prayer.

The second half of the psalm, vv. 5–7, moves away from the prayer and confrontation of direct address in vv. 2–4. Instead, explicitly first-person lament flows from these verses and offers more details about the context of the prayer and imprecation against the wicked. The interjection אויה־לי ("woe to me"; line 5a) heralds the transition to personal lament. Verses 5–7, like v. 1b–c, do not explicitly directly address anyone; however, these verses express grief over "one's own situation."[148] Zenger writes, "It is a lament over the world, experienced as alien and warlike, in which the petitioner lives."[149] Verses 5–7 reverberate with angst over foreignness and metaphorical distance. Verse 5 uses the juxtaposition of two geographical realities, Meshek and Kedar. The geographic realities of Meshek and Kedar lie in opposite directions of each other. Meshek was a location in the north, just south of the Black Sea, and inhabited by "warlike mountain people."[150] *Kedar*, on the other hand, labeled a group of nomadic tribes to the south, in the Arabian desert. This juxtaposition of places creates a merism, and this merism functions metaphorically.[151] Gerstenberger contends:

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is closely defined by (or rather compared with) the shooting of arrows, the noun רְמִיָּה begins a wordplay, because the root of the verb רמה I means 'throw, shoot/propel arrows' (cf. Ezek 15:1, 21; Jer 4:29; Ps 78:9)." The link between the deceitful tongue and its destruction is emphasized by wordplay. The adjective שנונים ("sharpened"), which modifies חצי גבור ("arrows of a mighty one"), is similar to the word for *tooth* (שן; שנים in the plural). The wordplay is effective because of the preceding references to lips and a tongue. See, also, Maré, "Images of the Enemies in the Macalôt-Psalms," 167; Grossberg, *Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Biblical Poetry*, 23–24.

[148] Clines, ed., "אוֹי," 1:150; Clines, ed., "אוֹיָה," 1:151. Cf. 1 Sam 4:7, 8; Isa 6:5; 24:16; Jer 4:13, 31; 10:19; 15:10; 45:3; Lam 5:16. This words אוי and אויה are poetic and distinct from the interjection הוי, which is also a cry of woe. Zenger (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 309) notes that הוי "has its original *Sitz im Leben* in laments for the dead (cf. 1 Kgs 13:29-30; Jer 22:18; 34:5)."

[149] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 302.

[150] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 309.

[151] There is no scholarly consensus on the specific historical situation that gave rise to the use of these geographic references side by side. Although explanations can only remain conjecture without new textual or archeological evidence, proposals that posit one individual could be referencing personal experiences linking Meshek and Kedar need not be dismissed. While Meshek and Kedar were places separated by a significant distance, the verbs in v. 5 may provide insight. Verse 5 uses גרתי ("I have sojourned") and שכנתי ("I have dwelt"); perhaps the juxtaposition of these place names and contrast in

> In my opinion, it is futile to speculate about the historicity and geographical location of such hostile tribes. Arguing from the nature of psalm texts that were used by many people in succeeding generations . . . , one must admit that any possible reference to a concrete situation must have acquired symbolic value in order to stay meaningful to the users of the text. We may surmise, therefore, that the complaint gives voice proverbially to how much a given suppliant is suffering from ostracism among his or her neighbors, all the more so whenever a foreigner becomes the target of communal disdain.[152]

While the spatial language conveys a distance from the people of God, who share the same values and seek peace, the voicing reveals that distance from the people of God does not imply separation from God himself. Directly addressing Yahweh assumes that he is hearing; it assumes presence. For even when dwelling among war-loving people and in conflict with a lying mouth, one can lift one's voice and petition to Yahweh. Even in Meshek or among the tents of Kedar, Yahweh hears and can be expected to answer. The wicked are described as close; however, their voices are not heard despite references to a lying lip and deceptive tongue (vv. 2, 3). The words of the wicked have conjured angst and produced frenetic desperation, but their words are not repeated. In this way, their power is stifled. Psalm 120 issues a call to Yahweh, confronts the deceitful tongue, and makes declarative, contrasting statements against a backdrop of deceit, hostility, and aggression. Yet, the attentiveness and responsiveness of Yahweh is assumed. Imprecation is enveloped by testimony, prayer, and lament, which contrast the values of the righteous and the agenda of the wicked.

Psalm 121 begins with a personal declaration of faith. Viviers notes that Pss 120–

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verbs can be explained through one's experience traveling with a Kedarene caravan or band—even as a slave or servant—in the region of Meshek. (With thanks to Mark J. Boda.) See, also, Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 309–10.

[152] Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 319. See, also, deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 893; Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 436; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:451–52; Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 33–34; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 743.

122 share a similar structure related to voicing: "In each psalm there is a switch from the first person to the second at the beginning. The main themes of all three are introduced in the opening strophes and then elaborated further on."[153] These first three psalms in the Songs of the Ascents open with personal testimony before launching into direct address. Just as Ps 120:3–4 asserts the future of the liar by posing a confrontational question and then giving the answer, so Ps 121:1b–2 takes the form of a question and answer: מאין יבא עזרי: עזרי מעם יהוה ("From where will my help come? My help is from Yahweh . . . "; lines 1c–2a). Here, the question and answer serve as a statement of faith. This personal declaration functions as testimony as well as the foundation for the second-person address throughout the rest of the psalm. Psalm 121, unlike Ps 120, addresses neither Yahweh nor the wicked directly. Instead, the testimony in vv. 1b–2 undergirds the encouragement offered in vv. 3–8.

Verse 3 initiates a series of statements about Yahweh's protective character; the pronominal shifts come with this exposition of Yahweh as the source of help. The psalm moves from using the first-person singular perspective to using direct address, explicitly addressing an unidentified individual with second-person, masculine language. Zenger explains, "From here to the close of the psalm a 'you' is addressed, with this perspective of address to 'you' strongly emphasized through the ten (!) appearances of the personal and possessive pronoun in the second person singular."[154] Verses 3–8 assert Yahweh's imminence and transcendence in relation to this individual. There is no indication in the psalm that this protection and attention from Yahweh is special treatment. Rather, Yahweh's identity as corporate Keeper is made personal: he is the Keeper of Israel, but

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[153] Viviers, "The Coherence of the maʿalôt Psalms," 284.

[154] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 319.

he is also שֹׁמְרֶךָ ("your [masculine, singular] keeper"; v. 5). Scholars have taken various approaches to discerning whether the psalm is a dialogue or a monologue.[155] Some scholars interpret the shift from first-person testimony to second-person, singular address as a change in speaker and then propose various *Sitz im Leben* for the dialogue.[156] Zenger reasons:

> The change in the direction of discourse in v. 3 need not necessarily be taken as indicating a dialogue for which, then a corresponding *Sitz im Leben* in worship or the school with different actors must be sought. It is also possible that the literary-fictional situation of the speaker in vv. 1-2 and vv. 3-8 is identical: vv. 1-2 is the petitioner's confession of trust. With vv. 3-8 he explains to himself the extent to which and why, for him, 'help comes from YHWH.'[157]

How this psalm originated is unknown; however, its place in the Hebrew Psalter testifies to its use "in various settings and ways in the life and faith of the worshiping Israelites."[158] It is plausible to hear this psalm as an internal dialogue, a cultic or pilgrim dialogue,[159] or an antiphonal pilgrimage song[160] in different eras of Israel's history.[161] On the other hand, on the literary level, there is no explicit change in speaker. There is a grammatical shift in voicing, but there is no explicit signal or identification of a change in speaker or perspective. In fact, the shift in voicing is from generic first-person language to explicit addressee, with the use of the second-person, masculine, singular pronoun used repeatedly. What is clear is the sharp contrast in the voicing between Pss 120 and 121. In Ps 120, the prayer, direct address of the wicked, and first-person declarative

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[155] John T. Willis ("Psalm 121 as a Wisdom Poem," 436–42) offers a thorough overview of scholars' positions. See, also, Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 317–20.

[156] See Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:455, 457–60; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 427–30; Deissler, *Die Psalmen*, 146; Herkenne, *Das Buch der Psalmen*, 401; Schmidt, *Die Psalmen*, 222; Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 539–41; Kittel, *Die Psalmen*, 390.

[157] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 320.

[158] Barker, "'The Lord Watches over You,'" 170.

[159] Herkenne, *Das Buch der Psalmen*, 401; Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 539–41.

[160] Deissler, *Die Psalmen*, 146.

[161] Barker, "'The Lord Watches over You,'" 170.

language confront the wicked and express lament. In Ps 121, the wicked are out of focus. Psalm 121's first-person testimony and second-person exhortation promise personal protection, provision, and divine presence. Psalm 120 creates the impression of distance from Yahweh's people and those who value righteousness and peace; Ps 121 alludes to travel, with references to feet slipping (line 3a), being outside day and night (lines 5b–6b), and coming out and in (line 8a). Psalm 121 leverages personal testimony through first-person language (vv. 1b–2) to support personal encouragement through second-person address (vv. 3–8).

The opening verses of **Psalm 122** return to first-person, singular language. It begins with the joyous statements concerning the invitation to go up to the temple. The frame שמחתי באמרים לי ("I rejoiced with those say to me"; line 1b) offers an interpretive clue for the embedded speech of line 1c: בית יהוה נלך ("We will go to the house of Yahweh"). The substantive participle (באמרים; line 1b) and the content of the embedded speech maintain a sense of ambiguity; there are no portraits of whose voices are heard. However, the quotation belongs in the mouths of the throngs also on the road to Jerusalem, those longing to be in the house of Yahweh. Psalm 122 marks transition; the first-person, singular language gives way to communal voicing in the gates of Jerusalem. The Songs of the Ascents do not completely abandon the lyric-I at this point; however, these psalms now oscillate between personal and communal concerns and voicing. In Psalm 120, the wicked are confronted and their voices are silenced. Psalm 121 reverberates with personal protection and presence. Psalm 122, like these two previous psalms,[162] moves from first-person to second-person language in the beginning verses.

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[162] Viviers, "The Coherence of the maʿalôt Psalms," 284.

Here, the pilgrims' embedded quotation functions as a transition into first-person, plural

language and the reference to the house of Yahweh serves as an introduction for the

addressee of the following verse.

Verse 2—עמדות היו רגלינו בשעריך ירושלם ("Our feet were standing in your gates, O

Jerusalem")[163]—indicates a fulfillment of the desire expressed in v. 1, moves into

communal language, and directly addresses Jerusalem. From this point forward, the

Songs of the Ascents will move back and forth between first-person singular and plural

language. Psalms 120 and 121 create impressions of being surrounded by the wicked or

being isolated; however, after the communal voicing is introduced in Ps 123, it is

employed frequently in the lyric sequence. Thus, the assumption that psalms are both

heard and overheard is more explicit. This psalm is voiced as if Jerusalem is hearing; the

direct address of Jerusalem is marked by second-person pronominal suffixes and a

vocative. As one would speak to a person face-to-face, v. 3's direct address of Jerusalem

demonstrates presence within the city more profoundly than describing being within

Jerusalem's gates with third-person language. Third-person language is reserved for

proclaiming the merits of the city in vv. 3–5. The psalm moves from declaring presence

within the city limits of Jerusalem (vv. 1–2) to outlining the significance of the city for

the people (vv. 3–5) with third-person descriptions. The descriptions of Jerusalem in vv.

3–5 unpack the excitement expressed in vv. 1–2. The following verses (vv. 6–9)

articulate concern.[164]

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[163] According to Othmar Keel (*Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 121), the psalmist's feet could be standing "in" the gates because "in most instances there were two or three gates staggered one behind another, forming two or three chambers."

[164] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:466.

Directives dapple vv. 6–9: an imperative in v. 6a; jussives in vv. 6b–7; and

cohortatives in vv. 8–9).[165] Verse 6 initiates a shift in voicing, beginning with a

masculine, plural imperative. This imperative calls for blessing or prayer on behalf of

Jerusalem,[166] places it on lips of the community, and frames the proposed requests in vv.

6b–7. In contrast to the reported past speech in v. 1, here the throng's speech is

hypothetical or prescribed. This embedded prayer uses two jussives (ישלוה, line 6b; יהי,

line 7a) with Jerusalem as the focus. The direct address of Jerusalem is resumed as if the

city hears and God overhears the blessing. Zenger comments, "That this section is very

strongly imbued with an emotional concern for Jerusalem is evident from the five uses of

the feminine suffix in the second person singular (vv. 6b, 7a, 7b, 8b, 9b)."[167] The blessing

presses into the heart of Jerusalem: it begins with all those who love her (without regard

to distance), declares peace within her walls, and seeks peace within her palaces. So, the

hope for peace and prosperity are proclaimed for the entirety and then to her supporters,

her inhabitants, and her leadership in a crescendo-like manner.

Verse 8 falls back into first-person, singular language, presenting personalized

desire for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem. The community is still in focus with the

references to brothers and friends and the term אלהינו ("our God"; line 9a) in apposition to

יהוה (Yahweh). However, verses 8–9 declare personal resolve. The brothers and friends

are אחי ("my brothers") and רעי ("my friends"). Instead of imperatives or jussives,

cohortatives articulate blessing to Jerusalem. The first-person, singular language of vv. 1

and 8–9 form an inclusion, framing the communal language and praise and blessing of

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[165] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 335.
[166] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 45.
[167] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 335.

Jerusalem. The individual and communal experience of being in Jerusalem and the

lasting desire for her wellbeing are expressed as direct address to Jerusalem. The direct

address evokes the sense of arrival and excitement of being within the city's wall.

Addressing the sequence of Pss 120–123, Zenger argues,

> . . . one perceives a movement from the margins of the world to Jerusalem as the
> world's center, where, or because, there is the protecting and hospitable "house of
> YHWH" . . . . It is evident that this is where the accent lies in Psalm 122 because
> the psalm names the "house of YHWH" in the first and last bicola (*inclusio*). At the
> same time, the emphatic words "house of YHWH" prepare for the metaphor used
> in Psalm 123 of the "household community" of Israel, with YHWH at its head as
> "master" and "mistress."[168]

While Ps 123 makes no explicit mention of the temple or Jerusalem, the metaphor of

household community along with the voicing communicate the near presence of Yahweh.

In contrast to Ps 122, Ps 123 addresses Yahweh directly—not Jerusalem.

In the beginning, **Ps 123** maintains the first-person, singular language with which

Ps 122 concludes; however, the direct addressee in lines 1b–c is no longer Jerusalem but

Yahweh: אליך נשאתי את־עיני הישבי בשמים ("To you I have lifted up my eyes, O the one who

dwells in the heavens"). Fronting the addressee, v. 1 orients the psalm on the vertical

plane. The opening statement of trust is initially personal, echoing the personal

declaration of faith in Ps 121:1. The metaphors picked up in v. 2 serve as a transition into

a communal statement of trust. While the first four lines of v. 2 have no explicit

addressee(s) and contain no first-person language, they serve as a segue into the first-

person plural language employed in the rest of the psalm. These lines use similes to

compare those looking to Yahweh in prayer as slaves and servants look to their masters.

These comparisons of the עבדים ("servants") and שפחה ("slave woman"), which differ in

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[168] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 342.

gender and number, are parallel terms that help navigate the shift from personal to communal language in this psalm. Crow comments, "This alternation probably represents poetic and stylistic concerns more than actual social realities, especially since the servants themselves are not the point of the song, but serve rather as a metaphor for the dependence of the worshiper on God."[169] These juxtapositions are part of the rhythm of association that govern this lyric poem. The metaphors transition v. 1's personal petition to Yahweh to the community declaration about Yahweh in v. 2e–f: כן עינינו אל־יהוה אלהינו עד שיחננו ("So our eyes are on Yahweh, our God, until he is gracious to us"). Zenger states, "In Psalm 122 the eyes that in Ps 121:1 were lifted 'to the mountains' (of Zion) are turned farther upward to God in heaven. The grammar and imagery change accordingly. Psalm 123 begins with an individual statement but then shifts to the plural (v. 1: 'to you I have lifted up *my* eyes'; v. 2: 'so are *our* eyes [lifted] to YHWH *our* God') . . . ."[170]

The communal statement of faith in v. 2 leads into the communal petition in vv. 3–4. Seconding the verb in line 2f, שיחננו ("he is gracious to us"), v. 3 turns back to directly addressing Yahweh and petitions: חננו יהוה חננו ("Be gracious to us, O Yahweh! Be gracious to us . . . "). Here, the plea for Yahweh's intervention precedes a description of the distressing situation. The overwhelming contempt and mockery of the prosperous and proud necessitate the imperatives directed to Yahweh. The final four lines of this psalm express vexation, but they follow the personal and communal statements of faith. The exasperation of these verses is directly addressed to Yahweh, following the logical flow of the vv. 3–4. The communal lament unpacks the communal petition, which was preceded by personal trust.

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[169] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 49.
[170] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 349.

Psalm 124 is a declarative song of praise, which features no shifts in voicing. The contrast between the communal voicing in Ps 123:3–4 and that of this psalm is found in the tone. Where Ps 123 petitions Yahweh to act, Ps 124 praises Yahweh for having acted. Addressing the quotation formula יאמר־נא ישראל ("Let Israel say": line 1c) in Pss 124 and 129, Jacobson argues, "The function of the liturgical quotations in each of these psalms is for the community to take the words of the quotation and make them their own: 'Israel should make these expressions its own.'"[171] The quotation formula serves as an invitation to utter the proposed words of the psalm. The explicit mention of Israel broadly contextualizes the works of Yahweh. There are no references to specific events or enemies named; although the quotation formula connects these words to those who identify as Israel and the people of God, the generality of testimony of God's intervention (in both positive and negative terms) leaves the invitation for utterance and reutterance open. Thus, Ps 124 has a didactic thrust by orienting utterers (and hearers) to right belief and an appreciation for God's involvement in humanity's affairs.

Similarly, **Psalm 125** testifies to the assurance found in Yahweh. In this psalm, however, the voicing is not communal, but predominately instructive or testimonial. In vv. 1–3, there is no explicit addressee; these verses describe Yahweh, those who trust in Yahweh, and Jerusalem with third-person language. Verses 1–2 compare the righteous to Mount Zion through simile— הבטחים ביהוה כהר־ציון ("those who trust in Yahweh are like Mount Zion"; line 1b), proceeds to describe Yahweh's surrounding protection of Jerusalem, and asserts Yahweh surrounds his people. Although v. 3 expresses a level resolve of the righteous to act justly regardless of the power of the wicked, v. 4 petitions

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[171] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 134. Here, Jacobson quotes Crüsemann, *Studien zur Formgeschichte*, 167. See, also, Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 440.

Yahweh to treat the righteous well. Verse 4 is direct address, fronted by an imperative:

היטיבה יהוה לטובים ולישרים בלבותם ("Do good, O Yahweh, to the good ones, and to those

who are upright in heart"). The trouble alluded to in vv. 1–2 and the tension the surfaces

in v. 3 find their full expression in vv. 4–5. Verse 4 petitions Yahweh to act on behalf of

the righteous, but v. 5 asserts the fate of the wicked. Using third-person language, v. 5

declares that Yahweh will remove the wicked. While the assuring declaration concerning

the righteous precede the prayer in v. 4, the assertion about the wicked follows the prayer.

The sudden shift out of prayer to contrast the fate the wicked may communicate that

Yahweh's care for the righteous includes the destruction of the wicked or that expressing

the concern to Yahweh replaces the tension with confidence that any present oppression

or trials are temporary. Line 5c concludes the psalm with a blessing of peace for Israel.

While the security and divine care of Jerusalem and Israel are mentioned in this psalm,

they are not the focus they were in Ps 124 and are in Ps 126.

Psalm 126 shifts back into communal voicing. Psalm 124 communicated

Yahweh's past provision and protection; whereas, Ps 126 testifies concerning the past but

also pleads for Yahweh to act again.[172] Verses 1–3 recounts the restoration of Zion from a

first-person plural perspective. In vv. 1–2, the focus is on the corporate response to the

restoration: היינו כחלמים ("we were like dreamers," line 1c) and ימלא שחוק פינו ולשוננו רנה

("our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with rejoicing," v. 2). These lines

describe the sounds of the righteous—those experiencing restoration, but it is the words

of the nations that are recalled. Here, the nations are not taunting or scoffing. Instead,

their words are leveraged as testimony. Seconding the particle אז, which introduced the

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[172] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:491; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 375–77.

noisy jubilation of the righteous, lines 2c–d frame and contain the response of the nations. When Yahweh restored Zion, the nations declared: הגדיל יהוה לעשות עם־אלה ("Yahweh has done great things for these"). The tetragrammaton is on the lips of the nations, and they express awe in response to Yahweh's works. The communal voice then seconds the words of the nations with modification: הגדיל יהוה לעשות עמנו ("Yahweh has done great things for us!"; line 3a). The testimony of the nations is not only quoted but then repeated reflexively in the full-throated communal voice. This strophe concludes with the declarative היינו שמחים ("We rejoiced!"; line 3b).

The next strophe shifts in both voicing and timbre. The previous strophe reflected on past restoration and referred to Yahweh in the third person. Verse 4, however, uses direct address to petition Yahweh for restoration. This prayer maintains the first-person plural voicing but turns to Yahweh directly: שובה יהוה את־שבותנו ("Bring about, O Yahweh, our restoration"). The timbre shifts from jubilance to concern as the voicing shifts from testimony to prayer. LeAnn Snow Flesher writes, "Through the shifts in tense and mood the author has created a rhetorical flow that reminds God and the community of the great restoration that took place the day the Jews were freed to return to Jerusalem. This reminder sets the stage for the following petition, 'O LORD, restore our fortunes, like the watercourses in the Negeb.'"[173] The testimony of vv. 1–3 lays the foundation for the petition of v. 4 and the statements of confidence in vv. 5–6. Verse 5–6 have no explicit addressee(s) and do not employ any first-person language; instead, they assert the certainty of restoration, describing the future rejoicing, gathering, and harvesting of those

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[173] Flesher, "Psalm 126," 435.

who cry and weep. Although v. 4 petitions Yahweh to bring about restoration, vv. 1–3 serve as a precedent and vv. 5–6 declare it.

Psalm 127 has a didactic thrust,[174] and the majority of it is written without explicit addressees and from an ambiguous perspective. Just as the communal testimonies of Ps 124 are followed by the instruction and prayer of Ps 125, the communal testimony and concern of Ps 126 are followed by the instruction of Pss 127 and 128. Psalm 127 opens with two proverbs[175] that "demonstrate the futility of life without the help of Yʜwʜ."[176] Following these proverbs, v. 2 moves from direct address to a generic, masculine, plural "you": שוא לכם משכימי קום מאהרי־ישבת אלכי לחם העצבים ("It is useless for you, rising early, delaying rest, eating the bread of toil"). Zenger argues that this shift in voicing gives the message of this strophe "still more concreteness . . . with reference to a plural 'you.'"[177] Here, the generic wisdom of the psalm becomes overtly personal and applicable. For a moment, the voicing transforms the audience from eavesdroppers, overhearing wisdom, to hearers, being directly addressed. Although lines 2a–c use explicit second-person language, the line that immediately follows (2d), returns to

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[174] Human, "'From Exile to Zion,'" 69; Clifford, *Psalms 73–150*, 238; Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 345; Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 177; Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 866; Deissler, *Die Psalmen*, 506. Patrick D. Miller ("Psalm 127," 119) argues, "There is a fairly widespread consensus that Psalm 127 is composed of two sayings (vv. 1-2 and 3-5) of a wisdom character, one having to do with the vanity of building a house, protecting a city, and human toil without Yahweh's power and involvement, the other affirming the blessing of God's gift of sons." Until the middle of the twentieth century, the prevailing treatment of Psalm 127 was to read vv. 1–2 and vv. 3–5 as unrelated wisdom sayings or psalms spliced together. See Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms*, 2; Duhm, *Die Psalmen*, 438–39; Briggs and Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:457–58; Kittel, *Die Psalmen*, 447–48; Closen, "Gottvertrauen und Selbstbescheidung," 192, no. 4; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 1962; Keet, *A Study of the Psalms of Ascents*, 54–63. Since then, the tide has shifted. Elie Assis ("Psalm 127," 257) asserts, "On the contrary, there are several clear signs, as a great number of scholars have thought, that despite the tension between the two parts of this psalm, they constitute one work." See, also, Schmidt, *Die Psalmen*, 228–29; Lipiński, "Macarismes et Psaumes," 350; Dahood, *Psalms III*, 222–23; Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 1977; Miller, "Psalm 127," 119–32; Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 258; Estes, "Like Arrows in the Hand," 305–6.

[175] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 918; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:499.

[176] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 70.

[177] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 387.

proverbial language: כן יתן לידידו שנא ("accordingly, he gives to his beloved sleep"; line

2d). This line addresses no one in particular, describing both Yahweh and the one he

blesses with third-person singular language. The direct instruction in lines 2a–c is

enveloped with proverbial, generic speech.

The second strophe contains two proverbs (vv. 3–4) and a beatitude (v. 5), which

also speak of both Yahweh and individuals with third-person language. The material in

this second strophe focuses on the blessings of children. Addressing the tension between

and juxtaposition of these two strophes, Crow argues:

> The common thread between the two parts can be stated thus: Just as the source of
> sustenance and real protection is mysterious (i.e., belongs to the realm of the
> divine), so the source of children is mysterious, yet both are necessary for
> continued life. The verbs of the last line have the sons (not the father) as the
> subject. This fact is puzzling, until it becomes apparent that the poem is returning
> to the theme of God as the provider of a person's security: the sons, as God's gift,
> are the ones who are not 'ashamed' in the gate, but rather are successful in
> providing the necessary protection for the father and the rest of the city.[178]

The psalm asserts that Yahweh builds the house—whether the house represents a

physical shelter and provision for physical needs (vv. 1–2) or refers to the family line (vv.

3–5). The brief move into direct address in v. 2 reveals the underlying personal concern

for the application of general wisdom. This juxtaposition of proverbs, beatitude, and

explicit direct address is carried forward in Ps 128.

Miller writes, "Psalm 127 is immediately followed by a psalm which also speaks

of the blessing of children but as the reward for those who fear the Lord. The subject of

the psalm is the God-fearer, the one who walks in his ways. The body of the Psalm

describes the blessings that come to such a one."[179] Just as Ps 127 concludes with an אשרי

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[178] Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 70. See, also, Miller, "Psalm 127," 127–28.
[179] Miller, "Psalm 127," 128.

statement, **Ps 128** begins with an אשרי statement.[180] The beatitude of v. 1 sets the tone for the strophe it opens. Verses 2–3, however, shift into direct address. Goldingay contends, "The transition to direct address is unexpected (contrast Ps. 1); it has the effect of bringing the objective point home to the individual way that demands appropriation."[181] The implications of the generic beatitude in v. 1 become personal in the two following verses as an unidentified, masculine, singular "you" is addressed. Line 2b initiates another beatitude, and it maintains the direct address on the horizontal plane. These verses reverberate with a similar message to that of Ps 127:5; however, these verses are more personal with the singular second-person being used.

Verse 4 seconds elements of v. 1;[182] because of its placement in the lyric sequence, it also harkens back to Ps 127:3. The second strophes of both Ps 127 and Ps 128 launch with the term הנה, marking a transition. In 128:4, the voicing resumes the generic language of v. 1, with no indicators of addressees and referring to the one Yahweh blesses with third-person language. Zenger argues that the general wisdom of v. 4 is linked to the images in vv. 2–3 through the particles הנה ("attention!") and כי־כן ("so, too") and comments on the shift in voicing, remarking, "The general validity of the statement is visible also in the change of the direction of discourse from the second person (vv. 2-3) to the third person. From a content point of view, v. 4 goes beyond vv. 1-3 to the extent that the cause-and-effect relationship is now qualified as a blessing."[183]

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[180] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:508.

[181] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:509. Also, Zenger (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 400) explains, "While v. 1 is formulated in general terms in the third person, it is followed in vv. 2-3 by a beatitude addressed to a particular person, using a singular 'you' and also giving concrete shape to the cause-and-effect relationship. Verses 2-3 are in a sense the application to the 'ordinary people' who are the center of the interest throughout the Pilgrim Psalter."

[182] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:510–11.

[183] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 403.

Verses 5–6 declare a blessing to singular "you," as in vv. 2–3. DeClaissé-Walford

maintains, "Psalm 127 does not offer words of blessing in language comparable to Psalm

128. Psalm 128 moves beyond the wisdom admonitions found in Psalm 127 and brings

the psalm-singer home to Israel, the place of *goodness (ṭôḇ)* and *well-being (šalôm)*."[184]

The focus of the blessing broadens throughout the psalm, moving from an individual (vv.

1–2; 4), to his spouse (v. 3a–b), to his children (v. 3c–d), to Zion/Jerusalem (v. 5) and

future generations (v. 6a). Goldingay comments, "It eventually widens to become a

prayer for the well-being of the whole people that meets there."[185] The final blessing is

issued in v. 6b: שלום על־ישראל ("Peace be on Israel!").

Psalm 129 returns to the voice of Israel, seconding the quotation formula—יאמר־

נא ישראל ("let Israel say"; line 1c)—in Ps 124:1c. Unlike Ps 124, Ps 129 uses first-person

singular language. "The congregation begins to tell Israel's story," Goldingay explains,

"as if it is the story of the individual human being; the psalm recycles the language of an

individual prayer to put it on the community's lips."[186] The use of the first-person

singular personal and possessive pronouns in vv. 1–3 makes the perspective explicit. The

communal voice speaks of personal injury. These are prescriptive words for Israel. In

discussing both Pss 124 and 129 Jacobson writes, "The function of the liturgical

quotations in each of these psalms is for the community to take the words of the quotation

and make them their own . . . . In Psalms 124 and 129, by repeating the words offered by

the liturgical leaders, the community is to confess the belief that it owes its history [of]

deliverance from attacks to God's saving help."[187] Psalm 124 features no shifts in

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[184] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 922.

[185] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:512.

[186] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:516.

[187] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 134.

voicing, maintaining first-person plural language through confession, praise, and testimony. However, in Ps 129, after v. 3, the perspective is not made explicit through voicing again until the framed quotation of v. 8. Verse 4 contrasts the character of Yahweh with the demise of the wicked,[188] speaking of both Yahweh and the wicked with third-person language.

Verses 5–7 use jussives to call for the humiliation and destruction of the wicked. These verses do not use direct address, boldly petitioning Yahweh nor bluntly confronting the wicked. These verses remain in a middle space; they offer an overheard imprecation, which benefits the congregation. The agricultural language of plowing and tilling, which described the oppression and attacks of the wicked, in vv. 2–3 is answered with language of a failed harvest to describe the passing of the wicked in vv. 6–7.[189] The failure of the wicked is the comfort of the congregation. Thus, v. 8 presents, using an embedded quotation, a blessing that will not be spoken—a withheld blessing directed toward an unidentified, plural "you." Jacobson, addressing the rhetorical function of embedded quotations or—in Jacobson's language—direct discourse, explains, "One of the aspects of direct discourse that makes it such a flexible literary device is that, through direct discourse, one not only can quote what a person *does* say but also what a person *does not* say."[190] The use of embedded quotation enables the psalmist to effectively

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[188] In v. 4, the demise of the wicked is clearly connected to the deliverance of the suffers because of the continued plowing imagery. Elaine James ("'The Plowers Plowed,'" 173) explains, "Cutting 'the cords of the wicked' continues the plowing metaphor, since עבות refers to a cord that attaches one thing to another (Exod. 28:25; 39:18), especially an animal to a cart (Isa. 5:18) or to a plow (Job 39:10). Taken together, Ps. 129:3-4 present the sufferer's treatment by the enemy, and eventual liberation, in terms of the plow."

[189] James, "'The Plowers Plowed,'" 174; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 408–9.

[190] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 141. Jacobson (*Many Are Saying*, 141) further explains:
The ending of Psalm 129 thus creates a unique of real and unreal, spoken and unspoken words. The literal sense of the text is that the quoted words of blessing are not spoken . . . . However, the words of the psalm were indeed spoken, perhaps by a liturgical leader and perhaps responsively by the community

communicate that the blessing will be withheld. While the refusal of a blessing serves as a curse for the wicked, "the other level of irony is that this is actually good news"[191] for those the wicked have been attacking. Psalm 129 uses communal testimony and imprecation to assert that confidence in Yahweh, which is stated positively in v. 4 and negatively in v. 8. The community testifies to the personal experience of hardship (vv. 1–4) and confidence in a future reckoning for their enemies (vv. 5–8).[192]

In contrast to Ps 129, which is a prayer overheard, **Pss 130** and 131 use explicit direct address. These psalms both petition Yahweh and directly address Israel with exhortation. Psalm 130:1–4 shift into personal prayer and petition. These verses call for Yahweh's attention and response, and they are punctuated with vocatives: יהוה ("O Yahweh"; line 1b), אדני ("O my Lord"; lines 2a and 3b), יה ("O Yah"; line 3a). This prayer is personal; it addresses Yahweh both directly and repeatedly by name but, also, uses first-person singular language. The first three verses use overtly personal language as they petition Yahweh to listen. Tanner stresses, "Psalm 130 contains no platitudes or enticements for God to listen; instead the words demand that God turn God's ears and hear the cries of the pray-er."[193] Verse 3 still uses personal language (אדני ["O my Lord"; line 3b]) but poses a rhetoric question.[194] Seguing into vv. 5–6, vv. 3–4 address Yahweh

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also. Therefore the 'unreal' words of the blessing were actually spoken by members of the community to each other—thus making the words real words of blessing. By saying aloud the blessing that the fictive reapers and binders do not say to each other, the people is fact do bless each other 'in the name of the LORD.'

    For more on quotations of non-speech, see Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 143; Clark and Gerrig, "Quotations as Demonstrations," 794–95.

[191] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:519. See, also, Botha, "A Social-Scientific Reading of Psalm 129," 1406.

[192] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 409.

[193] Tanner, "Preaching the Penitential Psalms," 94.

[194] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 432.

directly and move from petition (vv. 1–2) to rhetorical question (v. 3) to statement of confidence in Yahweh's forgiveness (v. 4).

Verses 5–6, then, maintain the overtly personal—first-common singular—language but use third-person language about Yahweh, instead of language directed to Yahweh.[195] These verses express personal (first-person, singular) longing and waiting; vv. 1–2 reverberate with the sounds of supplication directed toward Yahweh (קראתיך ["I have called you"; line 1b]; שמעה בקולי ["listen to my voice"; line 2a]; תהיינה אזניך קשבות ["may your ears become attentive"; line 2b]; and לקול תחנוני ["to the voice of my pleas for favor"; line 2c] while vv. 5–6 emphasize desperately waiting to hear from Yahweh, specifically לדברו ("for his word"; line 5a). The described waiting in vv. 5–6 is personal; however, the waiting in vv. 7–8 is prescribed. The voicing shifts and is directed toward Israel, a congregation of individuals, indicated by the plural imperative in line 7a: יחל ישראל אל־יהוה ("Wait, O Israel, for Yahweh"). These verses directly address Israel about Yahweh, offering exhortation to wait for and rely upon Yahweh.

Mandolfo, on the other hand, interprets the shift in voicing as a change in speaker based of the levels of confidence she discerns in the text. She argues:

> The lack of strong confidence demonstrated in the supplicant's discourse is countered by the DV's [didactic voice's] absolute confidence in procuring a response from YHWH. Whereas in v. 4 the supplicant says, 'there is forgiveness' with YHWH, the didactic discourse in v. 7 proclaims 'and with [YHWH] is great redemption', and then the assurance is added that YHWH is also loyal (חסד). In other words, not only is redemption an attribute of YHWH's, but here should be no concern that he will not apply that attribute to the situation at hand.[196]

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[195] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:528; Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 90.
[196] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 91.

The more "straightforward" interpretation is to read the change in voicing in vv. 7–8 as a shift into social address.[197] Those who were overhearing are now the hearers. To follow Mandolfo's reading, would be to introduce difficulties. Why would a didactic voice respond to the personal cries and longsuffering for attention and forgiveness (vv. 1–6) with communal—impersonal—exhortation to keep waiting? If there is a contrast, as Mandolfo proposes, between the confidence and perspectives of vv. 1–6 and 7–8, then the "absolute confidence" of vv. 7–8 seems more corrective than comforting. Suderman contests Mandolfo's interpretation, challenging, "By attending primarily to the audience being addressed the movement of the psalm poses little difficulty for a single speaker who moves from addressing Yhwh (vv. 1b–4), to self-description to a social audience (vv. 5–6), and finally an imperative call for others to follow her example (vv. 7–8)."[198] The confidence and exhortation of Ps 130 is offered in all three parts of the psalm, the prayer (vv. 1–4), description of personal trust (vv. 5–6), and social address (vv. 7–8). The voicing in Ps 130 mirrors the broadening concern of the psalm, moving from direct address to Yahweh (with others overhearing), to a description of waiting to hear from Yahweh (with both Yahweh and others overhearing), and, finally, to a call for others to join in waiting for Yahweh's word (with Yahweh overhearing). Psalm 130 plays with dialectics of hearing and being heard.

Psalm 131 follows the same pattern as Ps 130. Zenger observes, "They have the same structure: they each begin with individual experience of a נפש (130:1-6; 131:1-2) and culminate in a collective exhortation directed to Israel (139:7-8; 131:3); the

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[197] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:530; Suderman, "From Dialogic Tension to Social Address," 21–22; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 438; Prinsloo, "Psalm 130," 465–67; Crow, *The Songs of Ascents*, 89–90.
[198] Suderman, "From Dialogic Tension to Social Address," 21.

imperative challenge to Israel in 130:7 and 131:3a is identically formulated."[199] The

voicing in Pss 130 and 131 is almost parallel. In Ps 131, v. 1 addresses Yahweh directly,

fronting the vocative, יהוה ("O Yahweh"). This first-person, singular prayer professes

humility; these four lines express personal humility through negative statements: לא־גבא

לבי ("my heart has not been proud"; line 1b), לא־רמו עיני ("my eyes have not been

haughty"; line 1c), and לא־הלכתי ("I have not walked"; line 1d).[200] Verse 2 continues the

description with a positive statement: שויתי ודוממתי נפשי ("I have stilled and quieted my

soul"; line 2a). (The contrast between the positive and negative statements is highlighted

by the use of אם־לא ["rather"; line 2a] to introduce the positive statement.)[201] Psalm 131:2

is parallel to Ps 130:5–6 in their expressions of patience and submission to Yahweh.

However, the voicing does not shift in Ps 131:2 like it does in Ps 130:5–6. There is no

explicit addressee in v. 2 of this psalm. While this verse may be interpreted as a

continuation of the prayer from v. 1, the absence of vocatives and evidence of direct

address also serves to transition into v. 3's voicing shift. Verse 2 consists of indicative

statements with no explicit addressee, moving toward the change in addressee. Seconding

130:7a, 131:3a commands: יחל ישראל אל־יהוה ("Wait, O Israel, for Yahweh"). Again, a

masculine, plural imperative is used to direct Israel, who presumably has been

overhearing the prayer to Yahweh, to wait. Without further explanation or exhortation,

the psalm ends with commanding Israel, the congregation, to wait מעתה ועד־עולם ("from

now and forevermore"; line 3b). Both Pss 130 and 131 present a confidence in two

things: earnest prayers have been spoken and Yahweh will speak.

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[199] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 418.
[200] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 930.
[201] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:536; Robinson, "Form and Meaning in Psalm 131," 183–84.

Psalm 132, the longest of the Songs of the Ascents, leverages the words of David

and Yahweh's words to and about David in prayer concerning Yahweh's faithfulness.

Jacobson identifies Ps 132 as one of the four psalms that "contain quotations in which

God speaks about David, the Davidic monarchy, or the Davidic king," with the others

being Pss 2, 89, and 110.[202] Psalm 132 opens by petitioning Yahweh to remember David,

his suffering, and his vows. Verse 1 directly addresses Yahweh, with a vocative—יהוה

("O Yahweh"; line 1b)—immediately following the imperative, זכור ("remember"). By

calling Yahweh to remember the vow of David, it reutters a past vow and present prayer.

The directive aimed at Yahweh in v. 1 leads into v. 2's frame for the words placed in

David's mouth in vv. 3–5.

Verses 1 calls for Yahweh's attention, and v. 2, speaking of both Yahweh and

David in the third person, makes space for David's vow to be heard. Goldingay states:

> Such a plea for mindfulness could be made on David's own behalf (cf. 25:6–7;
> 74:2; 136:23) or could mean that he is the basis of an appeal on someone else's
> behalf (Exod. 32:13; Deut 9:27). It is only as the psalm unfolds that it will
> become clear that this prayer works in the latter way. It is the prayer for the later
> community, based on who David was and what he did. It is identified with him, so
> Yhwh "owes" them in "owing" him.[203]

In the first strophe, the communal nature of the prayer is not yet revealed;[204] however, the

frame for David's speech refers to him in the third-person, so David's words are

presented as being quoted back to Yahweh. Verses 3–5, however, are direct speech from

David, a vow concerning building a temple for Yahweh, and his vow refers to Yahweh

with third-person language. The frame, v. 2, interprets the words of David about Yahweh

as a vow unto Yahweh. This segment of David's speech concludes in v. 5 by seconding

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[202] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 98.

[203] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:545.

[204] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 460.

the epithets in v. 2. According to the grammar of vv. 3–5, his speech is an utterance overheard by Yahweh, the Strong One of Jacob. David's vow is enveloped by prayer and testimony, and his commitment to the dwelling place of Yahweh is reenacted.

The second strophe, vv. 6–10, launches with the particle הנה ("attention!") and communal language. In the first strophe, the words of David are swept up in communal prayer; these verses use overtly communal voicing in recounting "the story of the ark of covenant."[205] Verses 6–7 transition between David's words and the incorporation of material concerning the relocation of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. Goldingay notes, "Although vv. 2–5 spoke of David making an oath at the beginning of the sanctuary-finding process, vv. 6–7 jump forward to speak of the process whereby the people began to implement the oath."[206] These verses, which refer to Yahweh in the third person, frame the prayer of vv. 8–10. Verses 8–10 directly address Yahweh, employing the vocative יהוה ("O Yahweh") in line 8a, fronting the pronoun אתה ("you") in line 8b, and repeatedly using second-person possessive pronouns to emphasize Yahweh's responsibility to his resting place (line 8a), the ark of his strength (line 8b), his priests (line 9a), his devout ones (line 9b), and his servant and anointed one, David (v. 10). The prayer petitions Yahweh for his presence and blessing; its reutterance invokes this petition again. As the psalm incorporates older traditions and speech, it effectively unites the voices of generations in the call for Yahweh to remember and be faithful to his promises as David was faithful to his vow. The voices of past and present speak the vow and invoke the presence of Yahweh.

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[205] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 935.
[206] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:548–49. See, also, deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 435; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 461–62; Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 99.

The second half of the psalm consists of two strophes (vv. 11–12 and vv. 13–18), which both quote divine speech with frames that refer to Yahweh with third-person language. Verse 11a–b issues a statement of confidence that Yahweh will fulfill his vow to David and grants context for Yahweh's voice to be reheard. Offering assurance that Yahweh will continue to faithfully respond to David's words and respond to the communal cry, v. 11a–b segues, using indicative language without explicit speakers or addressees, to the vow Yahweh previously spoke to David. Verses 11c–12 are Yahweh's words addressed directly to David. The frame (v. 11a–b) identifies David as the masculine, singular "you" addressed by Yahweh in these verses. Yahweh has promised to establish and maintain the Davidic monarchy if his heirs keep his covenant. Because of this quoted speech, v. 13, shifting back into an indicative statement about Yahweh, confidently asserts that Zion is Yahweh's chosen dwelling place. This confidence is rooted in Yahweh's promises spoken directly to David in the previous verses but also mitigates the shift between Yahweh's speech directed to David in vv. 11c–12 and his speech in vv. 14–18, which reference David with third-person language. In vv. 14–18, Yahweh promises his presence and blessing for the people of Zion and David's descendants.

This psalm moves in and out of direct address, shifting between divine speech, quoted material, and third-person language about Yahweh, David, and the people of Israel. How, then, should Yahweh's voice be heard? Is the divine speech in the second half of the psalm heard as prophetic utterance as a direct response to the petition in the first half, or is the divine speech leveraged to provoke Yahweh to act? This question is a matter of who is hearing. Jacobson argues:

> If the implied audience of the psalm is God, then the divine speech of the second half is likely to be understood as a motivating reason for God to answer the prayer. If the implied audience of the psalm is the worshipping community, then the second half is likely to be understood as an answer to the prayer. There is no reason to choose between these two options—both interpretations are valid for their respective implied audiences, and neither implied audience need exclude the other. In fact, both implied audiences (and both interpretations) are necessary to an adequate understanding of worship. In public worship, a person who leads a prayer at once directs a genuine prayer to God and at the same time speaks to the congregation. To account for the dual audience of a public prayer it is helpful to understand the second half of the psalm as both 'answering' the first half in that it assures the congregation that God will do what God has promised, and motivating God by reminding God of promises made in the past.[207]

The thrust of the psalm is carried by dialectics of hearing and overhearing. The words of David, the previous congregation, and Yahweh are repeated, building the faith of the community and calling Yahweh to further faithfulness by reappropriating what had been already heard. This reutterance testifies to the promises of David and Yahweh and reaffirms their efficacy. The frames for the quoted material facilitate the shifts in the voicing, and the multivocality evokes the presence of Yahweh amongst the congregation of Israel.

The last two psalms in the Songs of the Ascents serve as the finale to the sequence. **Psalm 133** maintains consistent voicing; it does not feature shifts in voicing, first-person language, or explicit addressees. However, within the lyric sequence of the Songs of the Ascents, it builds on the gathering voices of Ps 132; Ps 133 uses vivid imagery and similes (e.g., oil flowing down Aaron's beard and collar, dew dripping down Hermon and the mountains of Zion) to describe the goodness and loveliness of unity amongst the people of God. This psalm declares the blessings of Yahweh upon the gathering of his people. It describes the goodness of unity in the presence of Yahweh that

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[207] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying*, 100.

Ps 132 asks for and demonstrates in its content and voicing. In this way, Ps 133 is like a simple, resolving chord as it follows the multifaceted and multivocalic Ps 132. However, it is not the final chord.

Psalm 133 speaks *of* community, but Ps 134 speaks *to* community. **Psalm 134** moves into communal voicing and issues masculine, plural imperatives to bless Yahweh. The directives in vv. 1–2 are ברכו את־יהוה ("bless Yahweh"; lines 1b and 2b) and שאו־ידכם קדש ("lift up your hands to the sanctuary"; line 2a). This psalm identifies the addressees of these directives with a vocative: כל־עבדי יהוה העמדים בבית־יהוה בלילוח ("O all servants of Yahweh, who stand in the house of Yahweh in the night"; lines 1c–d). These commands elicit the impression of the presence of a host of people. Verses 1–2 directly address the righteous community and call the cultic context to mind, speaking to the worshiping community in the heart of the sanctuary.

The final verse, v. 3, issues a blessing directly addressed to an unidentified, masculine, singular "you": יברכך יהוה ("may Yahweh bless you"; line 3a). Here, the blessing is inverted.[208] deClaissé-Walford comments, "The people are called upon to bless the Lord; the Lord is called upon to bless the people. The people acknowledge the presence of God in their lives; God acknowledges the presence of the people in a reciprocal relationship."[209] In vv. 1–2, people are called to bless Yahweh; however, in v. 3, an individual is to receive blessing from Yahweh. Verse 3 directly addresses the one to be blessed and uses a jussive to make Yahweh the subject of the blessing. Yahweh is called to bless, but he is called indirectly; he is the one overhearing as the congregation is

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[208] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 484; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:571; Auffret, "Note on the Literary Structure of Psalm 134," 89.

[209] deClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 941.

called to bless Yahweh and blessing is echoed back. Not only does the direction of

blessing change, but the voicing shifts. Goldingay writes:

> While it might thus be that the speaker of vv. 1–2 . . . turns from speaking to the whole congregation or the body of ministers to address the individual, perhaps the individual pilgrim, the dynamic of the psalm parallels that of the psalms such as Ps. 121 and makes more sense if we reckon that the servants who have been addressed in vv. 1–2 now respond with a declaration of blessing for the one who addressed them there.[210]

The direct address shifts from communal to individual just as the direction of blessing

shifts. The people's worship and blessing are aimed at the sanctuary; Yahweh blesses

from Zion. Because of the shifts in addressee and the contrast in voicing, which trace the

reciprocity of blessing, v. 3 may be understood as a communal blessing upon an

individual. Through Ps 134's continued use, as a canonized psalm, the voicing, unaided

by frames or other markers, has a democratizing function and helps demonstrate the

blessing described in Ps 133. Psalm 133 describes the blessing of unity, which flows

down the mountains. Psalm 134 commands a host to bless Yahweh and speaks blessing

over the individual. The congregation hears calls for blessing; the presence of Yahweh is

assumed as the voicing reveals the expectation that he is overhearing.

Conclusion

The voicing of Pss 120–134 conveys movement—movement from the margins to the

heart of the righteous community. Many scholars have sensed this progression and

attempted to root it in literal and historical movements, festivals, and pilgrimages. The

Songs of the Ascents did arise in a specific historical context; however, knowing the

details of their origination and canonization is not necessary for appreciating the

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[210] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:573. See, also, Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 488–89.

rhetorical power of the voicing in these psalms, which have been sung and used in faith communities across millennia. The Songs of the Ascents begin in the margins, communicating distance from people of Yahweh and suffering in the presence of the wicked. Psalm 120, the opening psalm in this sequence, is the only one to directly address the wicked. It laments dwelling among the wicked—those who hate peace—and directly addresses Yahweh for intervention. While this psalm speaks of distance from the people of peace and its voicing demonstrates the presence of the deceitful people, it effectively silences the wicked and assumes the presence of Yahweh, who hears.

While the rest of the Songs of the Ascents will move in and out of communal address and voicing and in and out of prayer and testimony, the wicked are not given the floor. The only quotation from others in the Songs of the Ascents occurs in Ps 126. The nations, who are not explicitly classified as wicked, are quoted as having testified to the deeds of Yahweh. The frame of their quoted speech grounds their words in the past, maintaining a sense of distance from the people of the nations. Yet the reutterance of their words benefits the people of Yahweh. The only other voicing that involves the direct address of the other or hearing their words occurs in Ps 129. Psalm 129 records the withholding of blessing: ולא אמרו העברים ברכת־יהוה אליכם ברכנו אתכם בשם יהוה ("And the passerby will not say, 'The blessing of Yahweh to you! We bless you in the name of Yahweh!"; v. 8). Psalm 120 suggests that the wicked are hearing, but the rest of the psalms move out of earshot. As Ps 121 depicts traveling and Ps 122 describes arriving in Jerusalem, the wicked are no longer hearing or overhearing.

Inversely, the righteous are addressed and heard more frequently. Psalm 121 offers instruction, through direct address, to one who trusts in Yahweh. Psalm 122 repeats

the call to pilgrimage to Jerusalem (line 2a) and directly addresses Jerusalem (vv. 2 and 8–9), signifying arrival within the gates of Jerusalem. Psalm 123 contains first-person plural lament and prayer (vv. 3–4). Psalm 124 is communal testimony and praise, and Ps 125 also uses first-person plural language to testify of the past and petition Yahweh to act again. Like Ps 121, Pss 127:2 and 128:2–3, 5–6a offer instruction and blessing to an individual. Psalm 129, like Ps 127, proposes words for Israel. Psalms 130 and 131 conclude with exhortations, directly addressing Israel and encouraging Yahweh's people to wait. Psalm 132 includes explicit communal voicing (vv. 6–7), the words of David (vv. 3–5), and the prayer of a previous generation to reutter a call for Yahweh's faithfulness and his presence. The final psalm in the sequence issues plural imperatives to bless Yahweh and a blessing addressed to an individual. Following the voicing of Pss 120–134, the congregation drowns out the sounds and threats of the wicked.

The language and voicing of the Songs of the Ascents create the sense of moving toward the sanctuary and into the throngs of people, who also trust and worship Yahweh. While these psalms relocate those uttering and reuttering their verses from the margins to the center in respect to the people of God, Yahweh is always assumed to be hearing or overhearing. Throughout the sequence, the psalms move freely between testimony and prayer. Yahweh is directly addressed in the psalm that references Meshek and Kedar (Ps 120) as well as the psalm that harmonizes voices across generations in Zion (Ps 132). The message of Ps 121 is demonstrated by Yahweh's hearing and overhearing at various points in the progression, from the tents of those dwelling among war-loving people to the gates of Jerusalem to the temple itself. The prayers, testimony, and instruction of Pss 120–134 use voicing to communicate the messages of individual psalms and translate

those reuttering their words from crying out from the margins to echoing the words of David and previous generations to commanding the righteous host to bless Yahweh. The multivocality of the Songs of the Ascents significantly contributes to their rhetorical power and facilitates the sense of movement this lyric sequence evokes.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The present study began with the proposal that progress could be made in understanding how the vocality of the psalms contributes to their meaning. With the aim of focusing on the function of vocality in psalmic lyric poetry, the analyses presented here prioritized questions that explored psalms as literary creations—as lyric poems—instead of fronting historical-grammatical and form critical questions, which better illuminate the world behind the text. Listening closely to the voices of psalms called for a lyric poetic approach. This dissertation has explored 'how a poem means.' Employing a lyric poetic approach has demonstrated that the vocality of the Hebrew Psalter not only lends poetic texture but also contributes to the meaning of a psalm and lyric sequence. The Psalter calls to be read as lyric poetry, a voiced genre that is heard and overheard.

Summary of Argument

The three chapters of analysis laid bare the vocalic nature of lyric poetry. These chapters addressed twenty-five psalms in the Hebrew Psalter. The lyric poetic readings and interpretations of these psalms provided more than a mere commentary. Instead, they tested the thesis of this study repeatedly. The interpretation of each of these ten individual psalms as well as the fifteen-psalm lyric sequence demonstrated how the vocality of these lyric poems contribute to the construction of meaning and the cohesion of its respective text. These psalms were not cherry-picked; rather, they represent various form-critical

categories—ranging from lament to songs of Zion—and span all five books of the Hebrew Psalter. They serve as a representative sample.

The analyses of the ten individual psalms were sorted into two chapters based on the nature of the voicing they featured: psalms that featured shifts in address and psalms that featured shifts in both speaker and address. Chapter 3 focused on five psalms (Pss 23, 28, 32, 76, and 146) that contained shifts in addressee—or shifts in the direction of address—alone. Psalm 23's shifts between testimony and prayer evoke the experience of intimacy and presence. The juxtaposition of metaphors working in tandem with the shifting direction of address (from third-person description of and direct address to Yahweh) is a prime example of how the rhythm of association creates coherence in lyric poetry and how vocality is a constructive element. Psalm 28 also moves between prayer and testimony; however, the function of its voicing is to orient those who encounter it. This psalm expresses need and praise as well as personal and communal concern by oscillating between divine direct address and statements of confidence.

The prayers—direct address of Yahweh—both heard and overheard flow into community address in Ps 32; general wisdom gives way to personal application and communal application. Psalm 76's modulations in voicing—the movement between prayer, testimony, and communal commands—create impressions of distance and proximity and then move into the concluding community address. The ebb and flow of praise and exhortation in Ps 146 swell into communal imperatives. The vocality of this psalm assumes it is heard and overheard, praising Yahweh who overhears and commanding worship from its hearers. The lyric poetic interpretations presented in this chapter, which was limited to psalms with shifts in addressee only, supports the claim

that the vocality is a constructive element in lyric poetry. The juxtaposition of psalmic material with contrasting voicing is not a problem to overcome; vocality and the rhythm of association are characteristics of lyric poetry, which contribute to coherence and meaning.

The following chapter analyzed another eclectic group of five psalms (Pss 12, 46, 52, 91, and 94) and also revealed the value of vocality in lyric poetry. Chapter 4's focus was on a set of psalms that feature both changes in speaker and shifts in address. This sample of psalms includes self-quotation as well as the voices of the wicked, the community, and Yahweh. In this chapter, vocality of these psalms was not reduced to echoes of cultic figures, reconstructed historical contexts, or interjected tension. Instead of constructing an apology or accounting for the voices, this chapter interpreted them as elements of lyric poetry, since they have been preserved in the text, and explained their function. This chapter challenged dialogic interpretations by reading the vocality of these psalms as a lyric strategy to be appreciated. In Ps 12, the words of the wicked are reuttered to strip them of their power. Yahweh's voice drowns them out. The situation may remain the same, but Ps 12 reorients the hearer, moving from desperation to hope by contrasting the words of the wicked with Yahweh's. This subversion of power and the shift to confidence are facilitated by the psalm's vocality. In Ps 46, Yahweh also speaks. This psalm describes upheaval and chaos with images of roaring waters and nations and tottering mountains and kingdoms; however, it uses communal statements of confidence, plural imperatives, and the inclusion of Yahweh's voice to still and silence the tumult and tension and declare Yahweh's protection and presence.

Psalm 52 leverages a hypothetical community quotation to mock the wicked and

bolster the position of the righteous. This psalm includes condemning direct address of the wicked, amplifies the imprecation with this mockery from the mouths of the righteous, and expresses confidence in Yahweh's steadfast love and presence through personal testimony and prayer. In Ps 91, Yahweh speaks without introduction or invitation. This psalm's movement between testimony and exhortation culminates in the unframed voice of Yahweh. Even though Yahweh is not addressed, he answers. Yahweh overhears the testimony and exhortation, responding to the need for protection; his voice demonstrates presence. Psalm 94 uses the words of the wicked against them in imprecatory prayer and employs hypothetical self-quotation to assert Yahweh is attentive to the righteous. The vocality of Ps 94, which includes prayer, direct quotation, testimony, and both personal and communal language, helps make the case that Yahweh is faithful to his covenant and is attentive to his people on both the personal and communal levels.

Chapter 4 demonstrated that the voices of the Psalter are not the scars of redaction or tension-introducing interjections. The shifts in speaker and the direction of address produce dialectics of presence and absence, distance and proximity. The vocality of these psalms is used to strip the wicked of their power and distance them from the righteous. The vocality also communicates the presence of Yahweh and gathers the righteous community. As the voicing of these lyric poems move in and out of prayer, prophecy, praise, testimony, and address of the wicked, it undergirds the messages of individual psalms and it becomes part of 'how the poem means.'

Then, the chapter on the Songs of the Ascents (Pss 120–134) explored the veracity of the thesis in a lyric sequence. First, this chapter recited examples of previous

approaches to explaining how the psalms in this lyric sequence, designated as such by each psalm's superscription, work together and what they accomplish. The approaches fall into four main categories: mystical, historicizing, formal, and cultic interpretations. Scholars have attempted to explain the designation and meaning of the Songs of the Ascent by connecting them to where or how they were performed in ancient Israel or hearing them as the accompaniment or soundtrack to certain pilgrimages in the history of ancient Israel. Perhaps, one of these theories is the backstory of the Songs of the Ascents, but these approaches do not elucidate how these psalms in their sequence embody this sense of movement as literary texts. How do they communicate movement or embody progression even when they are not sung on a set of steps or heard coming from the mouths of pilgrims but read as poems in the Hebrew Psalter?

By approaching the Songs of the Ascents as a voiced genre, Chapter 5 revealed how vocality contributes to the sense of movement this lyric sequence evokes. This chapter offered a brief exploration—governed by the focus on vocality—of each of the fifteen psalms of this sequence. The movement from the margins to the heart of the community, from the desperate cries arising from the tents of Kedar to the loud praise of the community and Yahweh's blessing from Zion is facilitated by the voicing of these psalms. The wicked are directly addressed in the opening psalm but they are distant memory in the concluding psalms of the sequence. As the oppression of the wicked fades in these psalms, the communal voices and address increases. The vocality of the Songs of the Ascents—with shifts in and out of prayer and testimony, both communal and personal voicing, and the inclusion of quotations from Yahweh, the nations, and previous generations—relocate those uttering these psalms from the margins to the congregation

of the people of Yahweh. By the end of the Songs of the Ascents, those reuttering their words are echoing the testimonies and prayers of former generations and declaring the praise of Yahweh. These psalms also move easily between testimony and prayer without invoking the presence of Yahweh; they assume Yahweh is hearing and overhearing. The juxtaposition of voices and shifts in address contribute to the movement and the meaning the Songs of the Ascents; the vocality of this lyric sequence is dynamic and creates dialectics of distance and proximity, presence and absence. Listening to the vocality of these lyric poems sheds light on the psalms' function as a lyric sequence and how their sequence creates and evokes an experience.

Significance of Findings

This study makes contributions to biblical scholarship in two main areas: 1) it advances the conversation on voicing in Hebrew lyric poetry and 2) it applies a lyric approach to biblical Hebrew poetry.

Voicing in Hebrew Lyric Poetry

The sample of psalms in this study was intentionally inclusive, addressing psalms with varying form-critical labels and from across the five books of the Psalter. While the works of Mandolfo and Suderman were catalysts for this study, their conclusions directly applied only to lament. This study carried on the conversation they initiated by exploring the vocality of an eclectic group of psalms, including, for example, mixed forms, psalms of trust, general individual complaints, songs of Zion, hymns, and wisdom psalms. The diversity of the sample is part of what makes this work distinct and unique from previous scholarship concerned with voicing; its implications are relevant for all biblical lyric

poetry, not just certain forms, psalms from a particular era, or a specific book within the Hebrew Psalter. The findings of this study are applicable to all the lyric poetry of ancient Israel.

<div align="center">Methodological Contribution</div>

Following the trend in literary studies toward lyric, there has been a push in the biblical studies guild in recent years to read biblical poetry as lyric.[1] A lyric poetic approach offers a new way to engage critical questions about 'how a poem means,' especially when one is interpreting lyric poetry from another culture and era in history. It offers alternative explanations for incidences of parataxis and vocalic phenomena that appreciates psalms as cohesive literary units. Other explanations are so rooted in the world behind the text that they fail to make sense of what has been preserved in the world within the text. The purpose of this study has not been to argue for the impotence or irrelevance of form criticism or other methodologies. It has attempted, nevertheless, to loosen the grip form criticism has held on the guild. Different research questions call for different approaches and methodologies. Form criticism should be leveraged where appropriate. A lyric poetic approach should be employed when investigating the ways in which the literary and poetic devices create meaning and contribute to a specific poem, lyric sequence, or larger collection of poetry.

Approaching the Songs of the Ascents as a lyric sequence rendered insight into Pss 120–134 as a collection but also demonstrated the efficacy of reading lyric poems in sequence. The sequencing of lyric poems contributes to their meaning as a collection.

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[1] This is evidenced in the work of scholars such as Dobbs-Allsopp, Heffelfinger, Linafelt, and Strawn, as well as in the program units and papers presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature.

Just as the interplay between poetic and literary devices—the rhythm of association—within a psalm creates meaning, the juxtaposition of lyric poems within a sequence also produces meaning. A sequence may, thus, evoke a different experience or communicate a different message than individual poems within the sequence. For example, the sense of movement from the margins to heart of Yahweh's congregation is not communicated in any one of the Songs of the Ascents; the sense of intimacy and movement is constructed by the shifts in voicing and relationships between the poetic and literary devices across these psalms as a collection. Therefore, this dissertation has offered examples of a lyric poetic approach to hearing the vocality of the Psalter and attempted to not just demonstrate but describe the process of interpretation. The focus on the nature and characteristics of lyric poetry undertaken in this study rendered the vocality of the Psalter as an asset. The application of the lyric tools and strategies allowed for the complexities of voicing to be explored as valuable elements of the texts and lyric sequences.

Avenues for Further Research

This study prepares the way for several avenues for further research within Psalms studies as well as in the broader corpus of biblical poetry. The analyses and interpretations offered, here, are not exhaustive but could be exemplar. This study was limited to twenty-five psalms, but a thorough treatment of the Psalter should be pursued. The rest of the Hebrew Psalter should be explored with a focus on vocality and for the interplay of other lyric poetic devices and strategies. The opportunities for expansion include investigating other smaller lyric sequences in the Hebrew Psalter, the books of the Psalter, and the Psalter as a whole. A study that considers how vocality and other lyric strategies are conveyed or translated in other manuscripts and traditions, such as the OG,

would also be fruitful. Finally, the function and value of vocality and taking a lyric poetic

approach are relevant for biblical Hebrew outside of the Psalter as well. Lyric poems,

such as those found in Second Isaiah, Song of Songs, and Lamentations, are also part of

the corpus of biblical lyric poetry that call for more attention.

Conclusion

This study employed a lyric poetic approach to demonstrate that vocality makes a

valuable contribution to the poetic texture and meaning of psalms and lyric sequences.

Vocality is an effective lyric strategy and is part of the answer to the question of 'how a

poem means.' The multivocality of the Psalter is dynamic, creating dialectics of distance

and proximity, presence and absence. The voices of lyric poetry are heard and overheard;

they are utterance waiting to be reuttered. This dissertation has called for a more careful

listening of biblical lyric poetry and offers an invitation to approach the Psalter as lyric

poetry and hear its voices.

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