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Book IV of the Psalter:
An Examination of Editorial Relationships

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Abstract

The study of editorial work upon the Psalter has been one of the growth areas in psalms study in the past twenty years. This study focuses upon a particular group of psalms, Book IV of the Psalter, and examines the theories of editorial work as they apply to this collection of psalms. My thesis is that there is evidence of purposeful editing of the Psalter, and Book IV in particular. As a result of the creation of this collection of psalms we can discover a wider range of relationships between the psalms in Book IV. In a brief concluding chapter this study suggests that the existence of editorial work upon the Psalter has implications (1) for the use of form critical methods of psalms study and (2) for the possibility of articulating an inclusive and coherent Biblical Theology.

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Standard Reference works and Abbreviations

BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , ed. K Elliger and W Rudolf, 1969-1975, Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft
G	Greek Old Testament
GKC	Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, ed. E Kautzsch, tr. and ed. A E Crowley, 1910, Oxford, Clarendon Press
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
Lisowsky	Lisowsky, Gerhard, Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament, 1958, 1981, Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft
MT	Masoretic Text
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis in five volumes, Willem A VanGemeren, General Editor, 1996, Carlisle, Paternoster Press
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version, 1989, Oxford, Oxford University Press
s/s(ss)	Superscript (superscripts)
Targ	Targum

Chapter 1 Introduction

This paper is a study of editorial practices in the Psalter. In particular I will seek to ground the theory of editorial work upon the Psalter in an examination of Book IV of the Psalter.

This study is inspired by the increased production of works in the field of psalm studies concentrating upon editorial work in the final collection of the Psalter. It is important to mention the work of Gerald H. Wilson, in particular his *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, from 1985. This work has become the starting point for most of the studies in this area since then. Of special interest is the work of David M. Howard on psalms in Book IV of the Psalter, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*. This detailed study presented a form of psalms analysis based upon an in-depth lexical analysis of groups of psalms. Although this volume was published in 1997 its origins are in 1986¹ and so in chronology Howard's contribution to the McCann volume, *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, in 1993, 'A Contextual Reading of Psalms 90-94', builds upon this major work. In the second footnote to this essay Howard intimates "... a larger project on all of Book IV, which will consider every lexeme in all of its relationships, along with other cohesive phenomena." (1993:108f.). I am not aware of this larger project having reached publication.

The aim of this study is to contribute to the examination of what Howard calls 'other cohesive phenomena'. As I will suggest later there is an area of study of the relationships between psalms that does not engage in such precise and detailed study of 'every lexeme in all of its relationships', which does not in any way seek to detract from such valuable projects. What I am looking to uncover are relationships between the psalms, Psalms 90 to 106, that form layers of meaning and display creative editorial purposes in the creation of Book IV of the Psalter.

In this study I have consistently turned to the commentary of Kraus and the commentaries in the Word Biblical Commentary series by Craigie, Tate and Allen². These commentaries more than adequately reflect the breadth of modern

¹ See footnote 2 in Howard 1993:108.

² Unfortunately the recently published Revised Edition of Allen's volume was not available to me.

scholarship on the psalms and do not by any means work from the same presuppositions or arrive at the same conclusions.

In Chapters 2, 3 and 4 I will examine various aspects of editorial work upon the psalms and offer comment upon them. The aim of these chapters is to demonstrate that there has been editorial work taken place upon the Psalter.

In Chapter 5 I will turn to the psalms in Book IV giving consideration to each one and its relationships with other psalms in the group. The aim here is to show that the tools of editorial work described in the earlier chapters are in fact employed on a specific group of psalms.

Finally in Chapter 6 I offer brief comments on two areas of psalms study that will benefit from the recognition of editorial work upon the Psalter.

Chapter 2 The Major Seams

It has been suggested (by Arens for one) that to discover the editorial purpose behind the Psalter arrangement one must begin by looking at the pss which mark the seams between the books. (Wilson 1985: 209).

A seam is a line of joining, usually in a garment where two pieces of cloth are stitched together. A weaver of cloth does his work on the pieces of cloth either side of the seam; a tailor works upon the seams. In the Psalter a seam is where two units, collections or groupings of psalms are joined together. By analogy the author of a Psalm does his work upon the Psalm; an editor of the Psalter does his work at the seams.

This description of seams within the Psalter already depends upon the assumption that an editor, or editors, of the Psalter took existing Psalms, or Psalm collections, and used them in their editorial work without altering the text of the particular Psalm. This assumption will be considered later in this chapter when discussing the doxology phrases found in the Psalter.

Within the Psalter we may describe major seams and minor seams. A major seam is between two of the five books that now comprise the Psalter. A minor seam would be a place within one of these five books where two Psalms or two collections of Psalms are brought together³.

Wilson comments at length (1985:139-41) demonstrating that apart from Ps. 72:20,

The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended.

there are "No other *explicit* indicators of segmentation ... in MT 150" (1985:139)⁴. The headings Book I, Book II etc. that appear in our English Bibles do not appear in the manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible. In a modern edition of the Septuagint (Rahlfs 1935) the divisions of the five books are marked by a line, however, it is not clear if this reflects a similar mark in the Greek manuscript tradition. If we are to find evidence of editorial work we must look more closely at the collection of the Psalter, in particular for those seams where editors have joined existing psalms, or psalm collections, together.

³ I will consider the minor seams in chapter 3 once I have considered the presence of earlier collections within Book IV of the Psalter.

⁴ There is an additional note on Ps 72:20 at the end of this chapter.

2.1 The Five Books

The Psalter is divided into five books as follows:

Book I	Psalms 1 – 41
Book II	Psalms 42 – 72
Book III	Psalms 73 – 89
Book IV	Psalms 90 – 106
Book V	Psalms 107 – 150

Kraus writes, “The extent of these books we can ascertain exactly, for each book always closes with a doxological formulation.” (1993a:16). Craigie discusses the five-book division at the conclusion of his introductory comments on the compilation of the Psalter (1983:30), which may imply he considers this to be a final stage in compilation. Anderson more explicitly writes “Finally there came the division of the Psalter into five books, ...” (1972:27).

The only marker in the text, and in the Hebrew manuscript tradition, of the five-book division is the presence of the four doxological phrases: Ps 41:14⁵, Ps 72:18f, Ps 89:53 and Ps 106:48. If the division into five books is a final, or the final, stage in compilation of the Psalter then there are three possible conclusions; that a final editor has either inserted these doxologies into psalms where they were not originally, or has relocated psalms with doxologies from elsewhere in the collection, or has introduced these five psalms with their doxologies to create his desired five book form. Of these three the third seems the least likely; while we know there are other Hebrew psalms that were not included in the Psalter as we have it in the Masoretic tradition it is difficult to imagine additional psalms being added at a late stage in the process. The Psalms that have these doxological verses are well placed in their particular locations, as we will see in the chapter on earlier collections. The second would create problems by relocating psalms already placed in collections, which leaves the first, that a final editor has newly placed these doxologies into these psalms. Of course there is a fourth option. Craigie considers it possible that “the presence of the doxologies in particular psalms prompted the editor(s) to choose those points in the text for the division of the Psalter into five books.” (1983:30). Surely this

⁵ Unless otherwise noted all verse number will refer to the Hebrew text.

would mean that the five-book division is not a product of a final editor, or editors, but rather a function of some earlier stage in the process.

A similar alternative may be that the four doxologies are not to be considered together. This line of thinking is that over the process of writing and compiling the psalms and Psalter the doxologies were found in the text. Perhaps the doxology on Psalm 41 appeared first then was copied by other later psalm writers or editors. If such a suggestion were to be held then the use of the doxologies for describing final stage editorial work falls. At best we could use this information to describe an earlier stage in editorial work which has been subsumed within a final editorial process.⁶

What are the implications of this five-book division? Kraus writes

Again and again we encounter the explanation that in the process of canonization a counterpart to the Pentateuch (תורה) was fashioned. This statement certainly can refer only to the formal division and the technical process of canonization. If we were to construe an analogy in substance between the books of the Pentateuch and those of the Psalter, the results would show a series of absurd correspondences ... (1993a:17).

It is not credible to compare Genesis with Book I or Numbers with Book IV and make any sense at all. Many attempts have been made to describe a lectionary of readings of the Psalter that match a three-year reading programme from Torah⁷. The significant difficulty with any such scheme is that the required number of reading portions does not match. Wilson notes that in the various schemes proposed there are a variety of readings portions for Torah. Thus each scholar has their own suggestions as to the details of this lectionary scheme. The disparity in size between Book IV and Book V leads some scholars to propose an alteration in the division between these books, perhaps taking the division at the end of Psalm 118. However, such proposals cut across the doxological evidence for the limits of the five-book divisions.

It appears to me that the existence of the five-book division of the Psalter may be a brute fact. If the five-book division had been introduced to reflect Torah then surely we would find some indicators of how this reflection works or why it was

⁶ There is a full discussion of the doxologies in section 2.2

⁷ See the work of Goulder 1975.

created. Of course it may be that next year someone will find an ancient manuscript of a synagogue lectionary that perfectly answers all the questions we have about how the psalms were read alongside the Torah readings. It is much more likely that by closely attending to the content of the psalms themselves we may find some shape within the Psalter that will help us work through the five-book division and discern some purpose.

2.2 The Doxologies

Even without lines in the text or headings to indicate divisions between the five-books a careful reading of the text of the Psalter would draw one's attention to four verses that display a remarkable similarity in style and language: Psalms 41:14; 72:18f.; 89:53 and 106:48.

Ps. 41:14 בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִהָעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם
אֱמֵן וְאֱמֵן:

Ps. 72:18, 19 וּבָרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹדוֹ לְעוֹלָם וַיִּמְלֹא כְבוֹדוֹ אֶת-כָּל הָאָרֶץ
אֱמֵן וְאֱמֵן:

Ps. 89:53 בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם אֱמֵן וְאֱמֵן:

Ps. 106:48 בָּרוּךְ-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן-הָעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם
וְאָמַר כָּל-הָעַם אֱמֵן
הַלְלוּ-יָהּ:

2.2.1 Shared vocabulary

Each of these verses uses the words בָּרוּךְ and עוֹלָם and אֱמֵן and an examination of the use of these words in the Psalter reveals the following information. The words בָּרוּךְ and עוֹלָם appear in the same verse only in these four doxologies, and the word אֱמֵן appears in the Psalter again only in these same four doxologies. When we further notice that the word עוֹלָם appears in one of its forms 140 times and בָּרוּךְ some 72 times in the Psalter, and that these

are both words commonly used and fitting with the nature of the psalms, it is surely of some significance that they appear together only these four times.

The double **אמן** formula is found three times in the doxologies and is found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible in Num. 5:22 and Neh. 8:6⁸. The Numbers text is from part of that book where there is “very general acceptance of a total priestly contribution” (Budd 1984: xviii). It would appear that this Priestly source is to be traced to the exilic or early post-exilic period, which would be the sixth and/or fifth centuries B.C. The Nehemiah text cannot predate the early years of the post-exilic period. If this formula is an important contemporary liturgical formula, or at least a customary pattern, being used in the early post-exilic period then we could imagine an editor of the book of Psalms after this period using this formula in a significant way to mark the divisions of his work.

2.2.2 Differences

Having commented upon the shared vocabulary that unites the four doxologies we must notice the differences between them.

If we allow that the word **לְעוֹלָם** (Ps. 89:53) is parallel to the phrase

מִהָעוֹלָם וָעַד הָעוֹלָם (Ps. 106:48) then the doxology in Psalm 89:53 represents the minimum of content with each word being represented in the other doxologies. The argument from brevity can go both ways; an earlier short doxology has been expanded by later writer, or earlier longer doxologies have been summarised by a later writer.

Psalm 106:48 has two phrases not found in any of the other doxologies.

וְאָמַר כָּל-הָעָם ‘And let all the people say,’ is almost identical to the phrase in Nehemiah 8:6 referred to in an earlier footnote (footnote 7). The phrase in Neh. 8:6 is

וַיַּעֲנוּ כָל-הָעָם ‘and all the people answered’. The differences between **אָמַר** and **עָנָה** in this context are not significant; indeed one could imagine an author penning a doxology making this change, as from memory, without realising that the original was slightly different. I do think it is most reasonable to hold the Nehemiah passage to reflect a usage that predates the doxology. If this is the case

⁸ There is a second parallel between Neh. 8:6 and Ps 106:48 in the phrases ‘and all the people answered’ and ‘And let all the people say’. Williamson writes on Neh. 8:6 “The peoples response was threefold, and may have followed a customary pattern.” (1985: 289)

then the use of this phrase here must be intended to draw the readers' attention to the parallels between the doxology and the formula used in the liturgical setting reflected in Nehemiah. If we consider Books IV and V to have been created in a post-exilic setting in contrast to Books I to III then the extended use of a contemporary liturgical formula may be part of a process of helping the reader of the psalms engage with the contemporary situation in Israel at that time.

Psalms 106:48 also has the phrase **הַלְלֵי-יְיָ**, the only use of this phrase in the doxology verses. This is a significant phrase in the concluding psalms in Book IV, being found in Psalms 104:35, 105:45 and 106:1. It is possible that this repeated use of **הַלְלֵי-יְיָ** may indicate a small collection of *hllwyh* psalms⁹. Thus the inclusion of this phrase here, which we note comes at the very end of the verse, may be considered to function in a way that connects Psalm 106 to the preceding psalms rather than having any great significance in relation to the other doxological verses. The implications of this are that the doxology was already in place before the **הַלְלֵי-יְיָ** was added at the end of the verse, the end of the psalm. Some have suggested that the **הַלְלֵי-יְיָ** should be considered an introductory heading to Psalm 107, but this will be considered more fully in chapter 4.

Psalms 72:19 is at first glance the least in common with the other doxology verses. In this verse the divine name is not used, in either form **יְהוָה** or **אֱלֹהֵי**. Rather a circumlocution is employed: **שֵׁם קְבוֹדוֹ** 'his glorious name'. The word **שֵׁם** appears in the Psalter some 105 times, five of these being used for names other than the Lord's. Of the remaining 100 that refer to the Lord's name 42 of these are part of a phrase that includes a divine title e.g. Ps. 148:13a **שֵׁם יְהוָה**. 58 uses of **שֵׁם** occur in phrases that clearly refer to the Lord but do not make use of a divine title e.g. Ps. 148:13b **שִׁמְרוּ לְבָבְךָ לַיהוָה**. An avoidance of the use of the divine title, particularly **יְהוָה** became common in Jewish practice and this may be reflected in the use of such circumlocutions

⁹ This will be investigated in chapter 4, section 4.5

referring to the Lord. And so while the phrase is notably different it may be that 'שֵׁם כְּבוֹדוֹ' in Ps. 72:19 is functionally parallel to those phrases in the other doxology verses that do use the Lord's name.

The stand out phrase in Ps. 72:19, and indeed in the four doxology verses, is

וְיִמְלֵא כְבוֹדוֹ אֶחָד-כָּל הָאָרֶץ 'may his glory fill the whole earth.' This line

picks up the use of כָּבֹד from the first line of the verse. There are six other verses in the Psalter that refer to the Lord's name as glorious or connect ideas of glory with the name of the Lord (Psalms 29:2; 66:2; 79:9; 86:9, 12 and 115:1). In three other verses we read of God's glory being 'over the earth', Psalms 57:5, 11 and 108:5 and in one verse of God's glory being above the heavens, Psalm 8:1. The closest parallels in the Psalter to this filling of the earth are in Psalms 33:5 and 119:64 where it is the יְהוָה הִסְדֵּךְ (Ps. 33:5) and יְהוָה הִסְדִּיךָ (Ps. 119:64) that fills the earth. Psalm 72 is a psalm of the king. If this psalm were originally written about a Davidic king it may be that the particular emphasis found in the doxology has been introduced to remind the reader, and the Davidic king, that God is the great King and he is the one who fills the whole earth with his glory. And so it may be that here is evidence for this doxology being created to fit the context and theme of the psalm it is attached to.

The differences between the doxologies may reflect the hand of different authors for these verses: either the different psalmists who wrote the psalms and attached these doxologies, or the hand of different editors who at various times created or attached these doxologies. However, it is not impossible to imagine a skilful and creative editor choosing to create such differences in his doxology verses to reflect in some way the content of the psalm they are to be attached to, or indeed to give some clue as to the editorial purposes behind the placing of particular psalms, or more likely, particular doxology verses at key points in the Psalter.

2.2.3 Connection to the text of the Psalm

While it is possible for these verses to be interpreted as part of the Psalms to which they are attached, commentators do not often do this. Kraus consistently handles the doxologies as a separate section of the Psalm and indeed on Psalm 72 he opines:

“An analysis of the structure reveals initially that vv. 18-20, the ‘closing hymn’ and the editorial epilogue for the ‘Psalms of David’ (Psalms 3-41 and 51-72), are to be removed from the royal psalm.” (1993b:76).

Nevertheless as I have suggested above it is possible to make connections between the content of Ps. 72:19 and the rest of the psalm.

A different picture is revealed when we consider the quotation of Ps. 106:48 in 1 Chronicles 16:35. Kraus comments

The observation that in 1 Chron. 16:35, where Psalm 106 is quoted, the closing doxology already seems to be combined with the psalm could lead to the assumption that the Chronicler already was familiar with the Psalter divided into five books. Still, in view of corresponding datings of the collection and canonization of the Psalter, caution is required. (1993b:322).

In his section on Purpose and Date from his introduction to 1 Chronicles, R. Braun writes “while any date from about 515-250 B.C. is possible, the separation of Chronicles from Ezra-Nehemiah at a minimum permits an earlier dating for Chronicles than would otherwise be the case.” (1986:xxix). If Ps. 106 is quoted in 1 Chronicles 16 then, by the time of this quotation, the doxology verse, v. 48, is already closely associated with v. 47. No one has so far suggested that the final editing of the Psalter took place before 350-300 B.C. If 1 Chronicles were dated earlier in Braun’s range this would mean the doxology being attached to the Psalm before the final editing.

Although metre is problematic in Hebrew poetry, and while the metre of Psalms 41:14, 72:18f and 89:53 does not seem unusual, the meter in Psalm 106:48 is worthy of note. Both Kraus and Allen assign the metre 4+3+3 to v. 48, which is the only verse in the psalm with this metre. Allen writes, “V 48 is unrelated to the psalm: it forms a closing doxology to the fourth book of the Psalter.” (1983: 50). It would appear that in Psalm 106 we have a doxological verse which is not related to the Psalm to the extent that it may well have been a phrase added to an already completed text by a later editor. However, the evidence from 1 Chronicles and Nehemiah suggest that this addition took place early in the post-exilic period rather than later. It should not surprise us to learn that editorial work has been taking place on particular Psalms and the whole Psalter from an early period.

Certainty is now impossible, but it could be argued that an editor has created these verses and attached to these Psalms to mark divisions between the five books of the Psalter. And if we are right to think that 1 Chronicles quotes Psalm 106 from an early period this editorial work may have taken place earlier than might usually be supposed.

2.3 Psalm 150

Psalm 150 is different. Those Psalms that conclude the first four books all end with a doxological phrase. This phrase is missing, or not present in Psalm 150.

Psalm 150 is a song of praise in which the meter is regular at 3 + 3; except for v. 6 that is either “a lone triple meter” (Kraus 1993b:569) or “a single colon” (Allen 1983:323). Interestingly, whichever meter is chosen for v. 6 it is different from the rest of the psalm, a pattern we notice in the other psalms concluding books. Nevertheless, it is clear that v. 6 is substantially different from the four doxological verses already considered, as we can see. Apart from the use of the verb **הלל** which we find in Ps. 106:48 there are no verbal parallels at all.

Ps. 150:6 **כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תִּהְלֵל יְיָ**
 הַלֵּל-יְיָ:

There is a temptation to refer to Psalm 150 as a conclusion to the Psalter “This final psalm not only concludes the special group of praising psalms (Psalms 146-150), but appears also to represent a doxology to the fifth book and indeed to the whole Psalter.” (Allen 1983:324). While it may be true that Psalm 150 should be considered as an appropriate conclusion to the Psalter it is not doxological in the same way as Psalms 41:14; 72:18f; 89:53 and 106:48, there is no use of the common terms **ברך** and **עולם** and **אמן**. Anderson, noting that Psalm 150 is “often regarded as the concluding doxology to the entire Psalter” also comments “It is not certain, however, that this Psalm was composed with this purpose in mind.” (1972: 955). And so while it is possible to make the case that the four doxological verses have been editorially created and placed for editorial purposes this case may not be so simply made with Ps 150. Yes, the group of *Hallel* psalms 146-150 may have been placed together at the conclusion of the Psalter but this is different from an editor creating new material to express an editorial purpose.

At this point we may reasonably conclude that the five-book division of the Psalter is an intentional product of an editor, or editors. The doxologies in Psalms 41:14; 72:18f.; 89:53 and 106:48 mark the endings of the first four books. There is no comparable doxology at Psalm 150; however, the ending of the final collection is marked in another way. It is thus reasonable to investigate the major seams at Psalm 90 and Psalm 106 marking the beginning and ending of Book IV, our area of study.

2.4 Psalm 90

2.4.1 Structure

There are a number of difficulties with Ps 90 in relation to its structure. The meter of the Psalm is irregular; we can tabulate the finding of Kraus (1993b:212f), Tate (1990:431f) and Fokkelman (2002:100) as follows:

Meter	Kraus	Tate	Fokkelman
3 + 3	vv. 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10a/b, 11-13, 15, 16	vv. 1, 3, 6, 8, 12, 14, 15	vv. 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10c/ d, 12, 14, 15
4 + 4	v. 10aαβ		
3 + 4	v. 14		
3 + 1	v. 7		
2 + 2		v. 7	v. 7
2 + 4		v. 5	
4 + 3		v. 9	
4 + 4			v. 10a/b
3 + 2(3)		v. 11	
3 + 2		vv. 13, 16	vv. 11, 13, 16
2 + 2 + 2	v. 1		
3 + 3 + 3		vv. 2,	
3 + 3 + 3(4)	vv. 2, 4, 17		
3 + 3 + 4			v. 2
3 + 3 + 2		v. 4	v. 4
4 + 4 + 3		v. 17	v. 17
4 + 4 + 3 + 3		v. 10	

Table 2.1 Meter in Psalm 90.

As we can see from this table the comments of Kraus are well justified when he writes

It is hardly possible to reconstrue a uniform meter (3 + 3). ... The psalm is extraordinarily agitated. To even it out and weight it out in symmetrical sections cannot and dare not be the task of the interpreter. (1993b:214).

We can illustrate this point by considering v.1 as offered in the three scholars work. Kraus suggests a meter 2 + 2 + 2, giving:

אֲדֹנֵי מַעֲוֹן אֶתְּהָ קִיִּיתָ לָנוּ בָּדַר בָּדַר: נֹדֵר:

In his analysis Tate offers the simple 3 + 3:

אֲדֹנֵי מַעֲוֹן אֶתְּהָ (קִיִּיתָ) לָנוּ בָּדַר בָּדַר: נֹדֵר:

Fokkelman, who writes of “the crucial value of the correct division of the text.” (2002:10), appears to give up on v. 1 having the whole line printed as one unit of text:

אֲדֹנֵי מַעֲוֹן אֶתְּהָ קִיִּיתָ לָנוּ בָּדַר בָּדַר: נֹדֵר:

It is surely sufficient to say that the structure of Psalm 90 cannot be clearly delineated and in this poem a skilful poet has combined the use of a variety of meter to great effect in creating this striking, if difficult to analyse neatly, poem.

Kraus uses the designation of community prayer song to classify Psalm 90, noting that vv. 1-4 display “traces of hymnic address” and that “the type of the didactic poetry is discernible, i.e., wisdom like traditions have found their way into the psalm.” (1993b:214). Tate describes the psalm as “a communal prayer composed of grateful reflection, complaint, and petitions for gracious divine action.” (1990:437). Even if the psalm has “the general nature of a prayer of lament” Tate concedes that some of the elements usually associated with such a categorisation are missing from Psalm 90 and concludes

Thus it seems more probable that Ps 90 is a literary composition, belonging to the category of ‘learned psalmography,’ i.e., psalmography from circles of sages and scribes for the use of individuals and groups, but especially for personal piety and devotion. Von Rad (“Psalm 90,” 222) summarizes this interpretation: “the genre of the national song of complaint, which gives the psalm, even in its present form, its unmistakable stamp, is accordingly to be understood only as an art form. It is no longer cultic, but a freely chosen literary figure which an unknown poet used for his poem.” ... “According to Mowinckel, the ‘learned psalmography’ was characterized by the pastiche-like nature of compositions; intermixed materials which ‘do not keep to the rules’ and make genre classification

difficult, and by the reuse of old primary forms (see Mowinckel, *PIW*, II, 104-25;". (1990: 439).

This designation of some psalms as 'learned psalmography' recognises that "non-cultic poems do appear to have been included in the Psalter;" (Mowinckel 1962:111). These are psalms reflecting a didactic purpose and composed by scribes. It may be that there are a number of other psalms, e.g. Psalms 73 and 82 that may be described in this way.¹⁰

It is possible then that Psalm 90 is a text which reuses older forms of psalm poetry and mixed categories of psalm genre. Such a mixing of forms and categories is most likely to be a careful creation of a master poet who knowing the rules deliberately sets them aside for his greater purposes. Such an understanding of the psalm would lead us to a late date for its composition, certainly post-exilic. There is no need to consider vv. 1-12 as an original psalm to which vv. 13-17 have been added later. In its present form we can read the structure of the psalm in this way:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| vv. 1-2 | title and hymnic introduction |
| vv. 3-17 | a lament on the theme of the frailty of human life |
| vv. 3-12 | a complaint |
| vv. 13-17 | petitions following from the complaint |

2.4.2 Title

The title to Psalm 90 is unique in the Psalter.

Ps. 90:1a תְּפִלָּה לְמוֹשֶׁה אִישׁ-הָאֱלֹהִים

Grammatically the preposition לְ introduces a dative case "Hence, regularly (ψ3¹, &c.) a *psalm of David* (properly belonging to David as the author)" (GKC 1910:419) In Waltke-O'Conner we read:

Another set of relations denoted by *l* has a structure similar to the locational : allative spatial set. These relations are based on connections with regard to ... authorship (*lamed auctoris*; #17) [citing Psalm 18:1 as example #17] (1990:206).

It is this grammatical usage that has resulted in attempts to ascribe those psalms with such titles to the specific authorship of those named, whether David, Solomon, Moses or whoever. Waltke-O'Conner continue:

¹⁰ For further reading on Learned Psalmography see Mowinckel 1962:104ff.

The *lamed* of interest or (dis)advantage (*dativus commodi et incommodi*) marks the person for or against whom an action is directed (##28-33); the term “benefactive dative” is sometimes used of this *l*. [Citing Gen. 31:30 ‘for your father’s house’ and Isa. 2:12 ‘There is a day [prepared] for YHWH of Hosts.’] (1990:207-08).

And so, rather than understanding the ל prefix to refer to authorship in these psalm titles, it may describe some other relationship in which the named person, or character, has an interest in the content of the psalm which is to follow. It need not even be the historical person named who has an interest; the interest may be on the part of the community using the psalm in the historical figure of David or Moses in a representative role. If this is a reasonable understanding of this prefix we must ask in what sense is this psalm ‘for Moses’?

There must be some significance in this Mosaic title. Of 116 psalm titles in the Psalter this is the only one in which Moses is mentioned. By far the most common name mentioned in psalm titles is David; of the seven psalms in Book IV that have a title only three use a name: the other two are Psalms 101 and 103 ascribed to David.

The naming of Moses in the Psalter is of some interest here. Apart from Book IV Moses is only mentioned in the Psalter in Psalm 77:20, which given the importance of Moses in the history of the Israelite people and his religious significance may seem worthy of note. In Book IV as well as the title to Psalm 90 Moses is named 6 times; Psalms 99:6; 103:7; 105:26; 106:16, 23 and 32. Having previously ignored Moses suddenly there is a marked increase in interest in the lawgiver and covenant maker.

However, before we can fully consider the implications of the Mosaic title we must consider the links between Psalms 90 and 89.

2.4.3 Links with Psalm 89

Psalm 89, with its concluding doxology, clearly marks the end of a book in the Psalter, a major seam.

Like Psalm 90, Psalm 89 has a unique title.

Ps. 89:1 מִשְׁכִּיל לְאַתָּן אֶזְרָחַי:

Wilson describes how a change in authorship ascription is used editorially to mark a major division in the final arrangement

A third observation about these author-groupings is that they serve to mark strong disjunctions within the first three Books (3-89). This is most noticeable since these abrupt breaks correspond with the ‘seams’ between the Books. (1985:157).

Wilson is suggesting that changing the author designation in the title of psalms is one of the strategies used by later editors “to indicate disjuncture between such divisions or to make use of such existing points of disjuncture in the division of the Psalter.” (1985:157).

The structure of Ps 89 is more straightforward than that of Ps 90, Kraus suggests:

- vv. 1-18 a hymn on the **חִסְדֵּי יְהוָה**
- vv. 19-37 a detailed reference to an oracle of God
- vv. 38-51 a lament over the decline of the kingdom of David (1993b:

202)

We may further analyse the lament as follows:

- vv. 38-45 a complaint on the failure of the Davidic covenant
- vv. 46-51 petitions following upon the complaint

This structural analysis is interesting in comparison to Psalm 90. There is no element in Psalm 90 that can be compared to the oracle of God, vv. 19-37; however, the other elements do bear some comparison.

The hymnic introduction in Psalm 90:1-2, is much shorter than the hymn on the **חִסְדֵּי יְהוָה** in Psalm 89:1-18, and yet the opening two verses of each psalm do show some similarities. The direct verbal parallels are the phrases **לִדְר וְדָר** Ps. 89:1 and **בִּדְר וְדָר** Ps. 90:1, and in Ps. 89:2 **עוֹלָם** and in Ps. 90:2 **עוֹלָם-וּמִעוֹלָם עַד**. In Psalm 89 an individual voice declares its intention to sing of the LORD’s steadfast love, proclaiming his eternal faithfulness not only to their own generation, but also to all generations. In Psalm 90 God is addressed by the community who assert their fellowship with all generations in having the Lord as their dwelling place. The praise of God is an eternal praise for an eternal God who has been God before the foundations of the earth were laid.

In the other hymnic verses in Psalm 89 we read of David and the covenant sworn with David (vv. 4f), God’s praise in the heavens as the God above all others (vv. 5-8), God’s powerful rule over creation (vv. 9-11), his throne (v. 14) and a

congregation gathering to declare the 'festal shout' (v. 15). These themes of praise are very ancient: the God of creation, the great God above all others, and yet there are also themes from the time of the monarchy: David and the covenant, the temple worship. This is a hymn of praise suitable for a people who know this God is the God of their fathers and also the God of their king. Such a hymnic introduction leads naturally into a reflection upon the oracle of God about the kingdom of his chosen servant David (vv. 19-37).

Verse 38 would be felt as a blow to all that was held dear and all for which this God was praised.

2 Samuel 7 is the narrative account of the making of the covenant with David¹¹ and as we read through Ps 89:38-45, comparing these verses with 2 Sa 7, we can see that what is rejected, what is broken is this Davidic covenant.

2 Samuel	Psalm 89:38-51
10b – they may live in their own place	40a – you have broken through all his walls
10c – evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly	41 – All who pass by plunder him; he has become the scorn of his neighbours
11b – I will give you rest from all your enemies	43 – you have turned back the edge of his sword, and you have not supported him in battle.
13b – I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.	44 – You have removed the sceptre from his hand and hurled his throne to the ground.

Table 2.2 Comparison of 2 Sam. 7 and Ps. 89:38-45.

We are clearly focusing upon the Davidic covenant in this complaint section of the lament. Beginning in v. 46 we find the imperative cry of the petitioner, 'How long, O LORD?' In this section of the lament we find many parallels with Psalm 90.

Ps. 89:46-51	Ps. 90
v. 46a – How long, O LORD?	v. 13 - O LORD! How long?
v. 46b – How long will your wrath burn like fire?	v. 7 – We are consumed by your anger
vv. 47-48 – the brevity and frailness of human life	v. 3 – human mortality v. 10 – the brevity of human life

¹¹ There is a parallel in 1 Chron. 17 which passage is "by almost universal consent (see the exceptions noted in Williamson, 132-33) considered to be directly dependent upon 2 Sam 7." (Braun 1986:198).

v. 49a – Lord, where is your steadfast love of old	v. 14a – Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love
vv. 49-51 – remember the trouble we have endured	vv. 15-17 – after trouble let us know again the joy of your presence

Table 2.3 Comparison of Ps. 89:46-51 and Ps. 90:3-17.

The petitions in Psalm 90 reflect in a marked degree the petitions expressed in Psalm 89. What is different about Psalm 90 is the complaint that gives rise to the petitions in the psalm. The complaint in vv. 3-12 is about the failure not of the Davidic covenant but about an older and more fundamental covenant, the covenant between God and man in creation.

In Gen. 3:19 we read

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
until you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.

These are words of the LORD God to the man that are words of curse following his sin of rebellion. Implicit in the language of Genesis 2 and 3 is a covenant agreement between the LORD and man. This covenant fails, is broken, when the man falls in the garden. The terms of Gen. 3:19 are very similar to those used in Ps. 90:3. Psalm 89 is concerned with the Davidic covenant, Psalm 90 with another broken covenant.

Wilson writes

It is to this problem of the failure of YHWH to honor the Davidic covenant that Ps 89 directs its plea. How long? And it is with this plea that the first part of the Psalter ends. ... In my opinion Pss 90-106 function as the editorial 'centre' of the final form of the Hebrew Psalter. As such this grouping stands as the 'answer' to the problem posed in Ps 89 as to the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant with which Books One-Three are primarily concerned. (1985: 214-15).

Psalms 89 and 90 are joined together by their reflections upon failed covenants. It is in reflecting upon these failed covenants that the answer Ps. 89 requires is sought.

2.4.4 The implications of the ascription to Moses

Here is where we find the implications of the title to Psalm 90 ascribing an interest to Moses. In time and history Moses precedes David; he has no historical interest in the Davidic covenant, although Deuteronomy 17 does record Moses speaking to the people of a king being set over them. Whoever applied the title to Psalm 90 has recognised that this psalm is not immediately concerned with the Davidic covenant, but with another covenant. This older covenant is implied in those books ascribed to Moses, the Torah. Surely this is the point. We are keying into another relationship, another way of living in covenant with the LORD: not a way so different as to be incompatible with the Davidic way, just different. If the problem of the failure of the Davidic covenant is to be solved we must now look beyond David, beyond his kingdom, beyond those who have failed and see if there is any other way.

For a people, a community, faced with the immediacy of the failure of the Davidic covenant in exile, or in the years just after returning from exile, there is hope remembering that before David there was a covenant that failed. After such failure there is still hope; a new covenant was made with David, not to replace the old one so much as to renew, reaffirm the grace and the blessing of the earlier covenant in a new way. Where did our fathers find this covenant renewal? How did they rise up from failure to the glory of David and Solomon, from which we have recently fallen? The answer to the problem of the failure of the Davidic covenant may well be the same answer as our father found to the failure of an earlier covenant.

We can see that Psalm 90 is well matched to Psalm 89; these psalms have not haphazardly been placed together. They are not so similar as to deal directly with the same theme; rather, they have a correspondence that joins them together. In exegesis of either psalm, to ignore or fail to take account of the significance of these editorial connections will result in the psalm being misunderstood and misapplied.

2.5 Psalm 106

2.5.1 Structure and form

Psalm 106 stands at the end of Book IV, as is indicated by the presence of the doxology in v. 48. In content Psalm 106 is a retelling of the history of the people of Israel, vv. 7-46, with a surrounding framework, vv. 1-6 and v. 47. The structure given by Kraus is very helpful here:

- vv. 1f – a hymnic introit, summons to thanksgiving and praise
- v. 3 – a felicitation to the “righteous”
- vv. 4f – a petition (an element from the prayer song category)
- v. 6 – the beginning of a penitential song
- vv. 7-46 – a grand historical narrative
- v. 47 – a petition (like vv. 4f) (1993b:316-17).

On the combination of elements of thanksgiving and praise with a telling of history Kraus writes “As we can see from Psalms 105 and 136, thanksgiving and praise by its very nature belongs to the poetic presentation and narration of history” (1993b:316) Allen comments “Formally, then, the psalm can be defined as a communal complaint strongly marked by hymnic features.” (1983:50). Again we see that a form-critical analysis of a psalm does not necessarily produce a tidy designation of form. Such a psalm is most likely the product of a desire to tell, or retell, the history of Israel for a specific purpose. Indeed v. 3 introduces a beatitude form which according to Allen “reveals a didactic, moralizing function comparable with 105:45; so too does the historical account of vv 8-46 with references to Yahweh in the third person.” (1983:50).

There are two important features of Psalm 106 that must be noted. Firstly, we must recognise that Psalm 106 follows the order of events in the history of Israel in the order presented in the canonical version of the Pentateuch more closely than other historical psalms, Psalms 78, 105 and 136; following the pattern of the Pentateuch in this way places Psalm 106 in the post-exilic period. Secondly, Kraus writes of a “‘Deuteronomistic structure’ of the historical presentation” (1993b:317) What he means by this is to recognise that in Ps 106 the praise of Yahweh for his faithfulness to his people in their history is intermingled with a confession of the guilt of the people for their faithlessness to Yahweh. Kraus writes “Worth noting is the fact that all these traditions [reported in vv. 7-35] are permeated by the thematic principle: Yahweh’s goodness and Israel’s guilt. This formative principle reminds us of the Deuteronomistic theology of history, which is also sharply contoured as to form.” (1993b:316). Again this analysis places Psalm 106 into the post-exilic period.

The prayer song petitions in Psalm 106 are not without hope, nor assurance of being answered. The implications of the hymnic framework is to reassure the worshipper, or the person using the psalm as a basis for meditation, that this Lord

is good in his enduring steadfast love, (v. 1) and that his history is one of saving (gathering together) his people that they may praise him, (v. 47).

At the end of Book IV we find a long historical poem set in a framework of hymnic praise and prayer song petitions. This part of the Psalter, Book IV, which is “the ‘answer’ to the problem posed in Ps 89” (Wilson 1985: 215) opens with a psalm that reflects upon a failed covenant and closes with a psalm reading the history of Israel in terms of Yahweh’s faithfulness and the Israel’s failure and guilt.

2.5.2 Links with Psalm 107

Standing at the end of a book in the Psalter, Psalm 106 forms one half of a major seam with Psalm 107. It is worthy of note that neither Psalm 106 nor Psalm 107 have a title or superscript at the head of the text. These are the only two psalms at the beginning or end of one of the five-books that do not have such a title.¹² I noted earlier Wilson’s description of the function of author changes in titles to mark major divisions within the Psalter. Clearly this does not function here; the only marker of a major break is the doxology verse in Ps 106:48. In the next chapter when we consider earlier collections within the Psalter we will see that Psalm 106 functions as part of a group of *hllwyh* psalms, Psalms 104-106, and Psalm 107 cannot be part of this group. However, such a change from a group of *hllwyh* psalms would usually be understood as a minor break occurring within one of the five books of the Psalter.

It is possible that the boundary between Books IV and V marked by the doxology in Ps. 106:48 is not as sharp as other boundaries. The absence of headings from both psalms creates a soft boundary, or perhaps a fuzziness, where it is not a strong change. This may reflect something of the nature of these books and of the pattern of their growth and compilation over a period of time. If there were more major seam divisions within the Psalter, or if we had comparative texts with similar types of division, we could better assess this evidence. Without more positive reasons for not recognising a major seam between Psalm 106 and Psalm 107 we will follow the presence of a doxology in Ps. 106:48 as marking this major seam.

The structure of Psalm 107 may be described as follows:

¹² Psalm 1 has no title. However, Psalms 1 and 2 serve a particular function in relation to the whole Psalter and Psalm 3, which may be considered the beginning of Book 1 does have a title.

- vv. 1-3: an introduction in which the 'redeemed of the LORD' are called to give thanks to him.
- vv. 4-32 four groups called to give thanks to the LORD are described.
- vv. 33-43 a hymn, which may be considered as an addition. "This is probably a secondary expansion of the original liturgy for the festival of thanksgiving." (Kraus 1993b: 325).

The central section, vv. 4-32, is not a retelling of the history of Israel as a nation. Rather in these verses we read of situations of need faced by individuals or groups, reported in a general way that may have occurred at various points in the history of the nation. Having said this, the mention of wandering in the desert, v. 4, and being prisoners, v. 10 may reflect upon the exodus and the time in Egypt from the history of Israel. The common feature is the repeated lines,

v. 6 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble
and he delivered them from their distress.

Verses 13, 19 and 28 repeat this theme, with only minor alterations of terms. Throughout the history of the nation the LORD has been faithfully with his people, when they have cried out to him he has heard their cry and answered them in their situation of need, whatever that need might be. This is what it is to be 'the redeemed of the Lord' v. 2, one who knows that the Lord leads, sets free, rescues and brings home those who have called out to him.

This central section of the psalm is generally taken, together with v. 1, to be a liturgy: a hymnic, "liturgical introduction to the thanksgiving sacrifices of individual people who were saved from great distress". (Kraus 1993b: 330). The addition of vv. 2, 3 and vv. 33-43 introduce a considerable change in the emphasis of this psalm. Kraus writes

The summons that once applied to various groups of people obligated to give thanks now extended to people who have come home from exile and are therefore obligated to provide thanks and praise. (1993b: 331).

In Ps. 106:27 we read of the judgment of the LORD being to disperse the people among the nations and thus the urgent petition in v. 47a,

Save us, O LORD our God,
and gather us from among the nations,

That which is sought by petition from Yahweh in Psalm 106, a return from exile and dispersion, is the setting out of which the reuse of an earlier liturgy of thanksgiving combined with a didactic meditation on the praise of Yahweh arises. This is Psalm 107, not so much the answer to a problem raised by Psalm 106 as an indication that the petitions lifted to Yahweh have been heard and answered.

If it is right to see in the placing together of Psalms 89 and 90 a problem and the beginnings of a solution, then in the placing together of Psalms 106 and 107 we see the people moving from finding the solution to living with the solution they have found.

2.5.3 Psalm 90 and Psalm 106

Are there any lines of connection between these two psalms that open and close Book IV?

First of all we notice that the reference to Moses in the title of Psalm 90 is picked up at the end of Book IV and in Psalm 106 with the retelling of the history of Israel and mentioning Moses' role in that history. Indeed we might say that Moses is emphasised in Psalm 106 because the account of Moses' disobedience at Meribah, recorded in vv. 32-33, is the only part of the history retold in Psalm 106 not in the order it appears in the final form of the Pentateuch. Even Moses is not excluded from participating in the failure of the covenant reflected in Psalm 90.

Formally Psalm 90 does not contain a historical narrative, and Psalm 106 does not contain a complaint similar to Ps. 90:3-12. Both psalms have a section that may be described as a petition, Ps. 90:13-17 and Ps. 106:4f. and 47. In Ps. 90 and Ps. 106:4f. the petitions are not specific; they are general and could easily be applied to any period in the life of the people. The petition in Ps. 106:47 is much more specific: 'gather us from among the nations'. Such a petition will come from the time of the exile or after the exile when there were many of the people still in Persia and thereafter scattered in other lands. There are other indications that Psalm 90 is from this post-exilic period; however, it is worthy of note that the petitions have become more specific by the end of Book IV.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have investigated the major seams at the beginning and ending of Book IV. The following conclusions can be drawn from this part of my study.

The existence of five books within the Psalter is not a matter of chance, or some traditional addition, but a product of a specific editorial design. The use of doxologies as markers for the breaks between the books can be demonstrated. This is of course only relevant between books, which may explain why there is no doxology verse at the conclusion of Book V.

It has been valuable to compare the psalms at either side of the major seam. Psalms 89 and 90 do closely correspond to one another in form as in content. It is in part the parallels in form and content between the two psalms that confirm the reading of Psalm 90 as being a psalm dealing with a failure of a covenant, although not the Davidic covenant. In a similar way, when we compare Psalms 106 and 107 we find help in understanding both psalms. Psalm 106 is not a vain crying in the darkness for help from a God who may or may not be able and willing to hear and help because we know from Psalm 107 that he has in particular answered the petition of Psalm 106.

Whatever the overall editorial purpose of the editing of the book of Psalms, and I am not yet in any position to comment on this, we can see that there are significant movements in crossing from Book III to Book IV and then again from Book IV to Book V.

Additional Note

Psalm 72:20 : כָּלֹה תַפְלִיחַת דָּוִד בֶּן־יִשָּׁי :

Psalm 72 has been categorised as a royal psalm since the work of Gunkel. Verses 18-20 do not fit the structure of the psalm and Kraus considers "... that vv. 18-20, the 'closing hymn' and the editorial epilogue for the 'Psalms of David' (Psalms 3-41 and 51-72), are to be removed from the royal psalm." (1993b: 76). Verses 18 and 19 fit in with the pattern of doxological verses marking the conclusion of the books of the Psalter and it is reasonable to consider that the editor who inserted the other doxologies has added them to this psalm.

Verse 20 is unique in the Psalter, as Wilson has noted. The Psalm bears the title "Of Solomon" or "A Solomonic Psalm" Tate writes "In its present canonical placement, the note at the end (v 20) suggests that the psalm was read in later times as a prayer of David for his son and successor, Solomon." (1990: 222).

While understanding the verse as referring to the title this explanation does not account for the final words 'are ended'.

Anderson writes

... this is the note of the compiler, reminiscent of a similar note in Job 31:40. The annotation (lacking in some Hebrew MSS.) probably dates from a time when *this* collection of Davidic Psalms was not followed by other Psalms of David, probably when it existed as the Elohist Psalter. Then it would separate the prayer of David from the Asaphite psalms. (1972: 527).

Here the function of v. 20 is to conclude a collection of psalms, not with a doxology but with a definite conclusion. The Elohist Psalter is the name given to a collection of psalms, Psalms 42 to 83, the main feature of which is the use of the Divine name Elohim rather than Yahweh. Firstly, we must note that this collection crosses between Books II and III, thus the five-book division is secondary to this collection and is imposed upon an already existing collection. Verse 20 appears at the end of Psalm 72 rather than the end of Psalm 83 since Psalms 73-83 are a collection ascribed to Asaph and so Ps 72 does mark the end of the prayers of David.

It is of importance that vv. 18 and 19 are inserted before v. 20, although on this scheme they will have been created later than v. 20. The scheme in view is that the Elohist Psalter has been added to Book I and then the remainder of Book III with Books IV and V before the final division into five books took place. A decision has been taken to end Book II at Psalm 72 and to insert the required doxological marker. It must be respect for the terminal note of v. 20 that has led the editor to place the doxology before v. 20. The editor has been able to recognise v. 20 as an earlier editorial note and correctly conclude that inserting vv. 18f. will not disrupt the structure of the Psalm itself.

One must conclude from this that the placing of the doxologies is purposeful and deliberate.

Chapter 3 The Minor Seams 1: The Psalm Headings

The Psalter is divided into five books; the divisions between these five books form the major seams. As we have seen, it is profitable to look at the seams to identify editorial work on the Psalter. When we look within the five books we find a series of what we may call minor seams. These are locations where smaller collections of psalms are joined together. In this chapter I will describe the use of the psalm headings to mark out collections of psalms and the nature of the seams linking such collections together.

There are 116 psalms in the collection of 150 that have a superscript or psalm heading. The Hebrew text incorporates these superscripts within v. 1 of each psalm that has a superscript. However, it is clear from the content of these superscripts that they are not an integral part of the psalm; they could without detriment to the poetry of the psalm be omitted.

There are five types of information included in the psalm superscripts: a) the psalm is associated with a person or a group, b) there is historical information, c) liturgical information, d) musical information and e) genre information.¹³

3.1 Headings making associations with a person or group

Psalms of David	Psalms 3-41 (10, 33 have no title) Psalms 51-70 (66, 67 have no ascription to David) Psalms 108-110 Psalms 138-145
There are some isolated, individual Psalms of David	Psalms 86, 101, 103, 122, 124, 131
Psalms of Asaph	Psalm 50 Psalms 73-83
Psalms of Korah	Psalms 42-49 (Psalm 43 has no title) Psalms 84-88 (Psalm 86 has an ascription to David)
Songs of Ascents	Psalms 120-134
Other headings:	
To the leader	Psalms 66-67
Of Solomon	Psalms 72, 127

¹³ This five-fold designation of psalm headings follows Craigie (1983:32). Kraus assembles the information in 25 groups without giving comparable type descriptions (1993a:21-31).

Of Ezra the Ezrahite	Psalm 89
Of Moses	Psalm 90
No author ascription	Psalms 92, 98, 100, 102
No Heading	Psalms 1, 2, 10, 33, 43, 71, 91, 93-97, 99, 104-107, 111 119, 135-137, 146-150

We notice that the first Davidic collection ends at Psalm 41 where Book I ends. Book II opens with a change of association introducing the first Korahite collection. Book II closes with Psalm 71 having no superscript and Psalm 72 being associated with Solomon. Book III opens with the Asaphite collection and closes with Psalm 89, which alone is associated with Ethan the Ezrahite. Books IV and V do not reflect the same concentration of such groups of Psalms with superscript associations.

Wilson comments "authorship cannot be considered the *primary* organizational concern of the final Hebrew Psalter." (1985:156). And then

This correspondence of authorship-change with the book divisions and the doxologies which serve to mark them is hardly fortuitous. It must represent conscious editorial activity either to introduce such author-changes in order to indicate disjunction between such divisions or to make use of such existing points of disjuncture in the division of the Psalter. (1985:157).

Wilson considers that the authorship changes at the book divisions are stark. There is no attempt made to ease the transition between authors at book divisions. There are authorship changes within the five books. However, the use of other information in the psalm headings tends to soften the change and to bind together psalms ascribed to different authors by the use of similar genre or musical terms in the heading (see Wilson 1985:163).

3.2 Headings with historical information

There are fourteen psalms that may be considered to offer some historical information in the psalm heading.

Life of David	Psalms 3, 18, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56-57, 59-60, 63, 142, also 7
Other	Psalm 102

3.2.1 Life of David

I have noted Psalm 7 as being unusual since the reference there is not otherwise known from the life of David. The heading for Psalm 7 reads

Ps. 7:1 A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning
Cush, A Benjaminite.

Cush, mentioned in the early chapters of Genesis and 1 Chronicles 1, is the son of Ham and father of Nimrod, and his name becomes associated with an area of land. In the David narratives Saul was a Benjaminite and no doubt David would have had many dealings, good and ill, with Benjaminites, it is just that none with a Benjaminite named Cush is recorded in Samuel or Chronicles.

The possible connections between the psalms and a historical heading are neatly summarised by Craigie, commenting in particular upon Ps 3

(1) the psalm may have been *composed* by David, during or after his flight from Absalom. (2) The psalm might have been composed at a later date, to fit the account of David's flight; thus 'to David' (לְדָוִד) would imply 'concerning David' with respect to this psalm. (3) The parallels [between Ps 3 and accounts of David's life in 2 Sa 15, 16, 17 and 19] may be entirely coincidental, but were sufficiently striking to prompt a later editor to add the superscription, identifying the psalm with David's flight. (1983:73).

In chapter 2 I commented upon the ascription to Moses in the heading to Psalm 90. Here we can see that Craigie's (1) would be a *lamed auctoris* and (2) would be the *lamed* of interest or (dis)advantage (*datives commodi et incommodi*). If we find (1) or (2) to have been the way in which the text was produced then the heading becomes part of the author's work in creating or producing the psalm for public use. The extent of editorial work using the psalm headings would then be to gather together psalms with similar authorial ascriptions. This, of course, does not explain why there are no examples of all the psalm headings with an authorial ascription occurring together.

If one of these three possibilities is found to explain the ascription of historical headings to some psalms then such an ascription, for these reasons, does not represent final editorial work upon the psalms. Only in the third option is the heading added to the psalm after the composition of the psalm, and that, we may reasonably presume, at a time before the final editing of the Psalter. As we will see, there is evidence that information contained within the headings has been used in the final editing of the Psalter, this work more likely being done on existing headings rather than on headings newly created for the final editing.

3.2.2 Other

Psalm 102, which is in our particular area of interest, has the following heading,

Ps. 102:1 A prayer of one afflicted, when faint and pleading before the LORD.

It would not be difficult to find a situation in the life of David when he was afflicted, faint and pleading before the Lord. However, this psalm has no Davidic ascription and there is no need to add one.

Allen writes of Psalm 102 being a "complex psalm". He continues,

All would be clear if the psalm consisted on of vv 2-12 and 24, 25a. They bear the stamp of an individual complaint, ... But what of the psalm's two other parts, vv 13-23, 25-29? They include obviously communal references." (1983:11).

Allen then outlines the many different opinions of earlier scholars before concluding "Overall there seems to be no compelling need to reject the organic unity of the psalm. The form of the individual complaint is elastic enough to contain elements of trust and praise." (1983: 13).

In Psalm 102 there is a clear division within the psalm: in vv. 1-11 and 23, 24a, b – I, me, my dominates, and in vv. 12-22 and 24c-28 there is no first person at all. The individual represented in the first person sections knows that their life is closely tied to the reality of God's being, presence and covenant promises. Psalm 102 seems to attend to the constantly pressing problem of relating my present, which often is a situation of distress, to God's future with its promises of blessing. Kraus writes

The sufferer knows that his own fate is indissolubly tied to Yahweh's salvific activity in his chosen people. At the time of the exile, or immediately after the exile, Yahweh turned away from his people. Thus the petitioner may not derive any comfort or any assurance from the history of salvation. He looks into the future. Hope and prophecy take up the proclamation of salvation (by Deutero-Isaiah?). That Yahweh will help his people – this assurance forms a decisive support, to which the sufferer clings. (1993b: 284).

However, rather than "not deriving any comfort or any assurance from the history of salvation" I would think that the shape of the Psalter, and Psalm 102's place within that shape, suggests that the sufferer, or user of this psalm in the

post-exilic period, would indeed seek hope and assurance from the truth of salvation history that the people of God have failed in their covenant commitments in every generation but have found a future and a hope in the LORD who remains faithful. As the psalm declares

- Ps 102:25 In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth,
 and the heavens are the work of your hands.
- 26 They will perish, but you remain;
 they will all wear out like a garment.
 Like clothing you will change them
 and they will be discarded.
- 27 But you remain the same,
 And your years will never end.
- 28 The children of your servants will live in your presence;
 their descendants will be established before you.

Far from finding no help in the history of God's salvific works, it is precisely this salvation history that records the eternal faithfulness of the eternal God to his covenant promises, "from everlasting to everlasting you are God." Psalm 90:3.

And so the heading on Psalm 102 is properly not associated with David. An association with David places this psalm too precisely within the salvation history; the aim of the heading is to point to the whole sweep of God's saving work. This psalm may then be the work of a suffering psalmist, or the heading may be a later addition to an existing psalm. The effect of the heading is that we read the text as a prayer used by one afflicted in every context of affliction without reference to any one particular situation.

It may be that we should read those psalms with historical headings referring to the Davidic history as coming from, or having their headings attached, at a time when there was confidence in the Davidic dynasty, which would mean before the exile. Another possibility is that the headings with references to the Davidic history have been added by a group in the post-exilic period that has developed a range of messianic hopes. In such a scheme the Davidic monarch and the history of David have become the fertile soil from which a political, militaristic vision of the coming messiah springs. If this second possibility is correct then for editorial work to take place using headings that have already been associated with particular psalms pushes this editorial work further away from the return from

exile than may otherwise be necessary. And this may count against such a proposal.

Psalms 102 should be read as from that post-exilic period when the Davidic covenant had failed and a new answer was sought. The answer being worked out does not depend upon a Davidic dynasty, or upon re-signifying Davidic hopes. A salvation history answer includes David and the monarchy as part of God's great redemptive work in history together with all the other aspects of this work of God. This reading, however, cannot be offered with any certainty since there is only one psalm with a historical heading that does not refer to the Davidic history.

3.3 Headings with liturgical information

Craigie notes that some titles contain "liturgical information" (1983:32) without further specifying what this may mean, and lists only two psalms, Psalm 38 and Psalm 100. I think to this list we need to add Psalms 30, 70 and Ps 92¹⁴. Thus two of the five psalms with liturgical information in their titles are in Book IV.

3.3.1 At the dedication of the temple

In Psalm 30 the title reads:

Ps. 30:1 מְזִמּוֹר שִׁיר-הַנֶּחֱפֵץ הַבֵּית לַיהוָה:

A Psalm. A Song at the dedication of the temple. Of David.

Kraus understands this as a reference to "the festival of the rededication of the temple since 165 B.C. (1 Macc. 4:52ff.; 2 Macc. 10:5ff.; John 10:22) ..." (1993a:354). Craigie offers the following opinion

The title of the psalm indicates that the initial function and setting of the psalm changed radically at a later period in the history of the psalm's use in the cult. It was used, according to the Talmud, in the celebration of *Hanukkah* (*b. Sop* 18b), established in the cleansing and dedication of the temple under Judas Maccabaeus ... The use of the psalm was not restricted to *Hanukkah*, for according to the Mishnah the same psalm was also to be used at the presentation of the first fruits (*Bikkurim* 3.4; cf. Deut 26:1-11). But none of the later uses of this psalm reflect clearly its original usage, namely that of thanksgiving and praise consequent to healing and

¹⁴ It is possible that the heading for the Songs of Ascents may be considered a liturgical term. Even if this is so this group of psalms functions as a group and I will consider them as an earlier collection of psalms in the next chapter.

deliverance from death, and how such changes in usage occurred cannot be determined with certainty. (1983:252-53).

If the later use of this psalm is not reflected in the “original usage” of the psalm is this radical change of usage a function of the heading? At the very least we can say that the heading does not confine a reading of the psalm to an original setting, but sets the text in a new context.

3.3.2 For the memorial offering

The title of Psalm 38 reads:

Ps. 38:1 מְזִמֹּר לַדָּוָד לְהַזְכִּיר:

A Psalm of David, for the memorial offering

The same liturgical phrase is found in Psalm 70:

Psalm 70:1 לְמַנְצָה לַדָּוָד לְהַזְכִּיר:

To the leader. Of David, for the memorial offering.

In Kraus we read,

לְהַזְכִּיר ... could literally mean ‘to bring to remembrance.’ But Targ [the Aramaic Targum of the Psalter] thinks of the word as a denominative from אֶזְכְּרָה. According to Lev. 2:2, 9, 16; 5:12; 6:8; Num. 5:16, אֶזְכְּרָה is that part of the cereal offering which, with the addition of frankincense, is to be burned. We are therefore to think of an act of worship. (1993a:29).

Noting the same cross-references as Kraus, Craigie writes on Psalm 38

But equally, the term might imply no more than it says, namely that the psalm was for regular use by a sufferer in bringing his plight to God’s remembrance. In other words, the title may or may not imply cultic usage; but since it cannot be determined whether or not the title is a part of the original psalm, the resolution of the meaning of the term would not clarify the problem of the psalm’s original purpose and setting. It might only be indicative of the psalm’s later usage in the history of Israel’s worship.” (1983:303).

Again a title with a liturgical reference is part of a process of releasing a psalm from an original setting. On Psalm 70 Tate writes

... the use of *l'hazkir* in the titles of Pss 38 and 70 may refer (1) to the psalms as appropriate for chanting while the sacrificial act of *azkarah* took place (Cohen), or (2) to remind Yahweh of the distress of the worshipper (so Mowinkel, PIW, II, 212)." (1990: 203).

Both Psalm 38 and Psalm 70 are individual prayer songs that the title would now have us read as part of a liturgy of remembering, or memorial. Of course, answered prayer is always worthy of being remembered, yet the heading does seem to indicate something more than this.

3.3.3 For the Sabbath Day

The title of Psalm 92 is:

Ps. 92:1 מְזִמֹּר שִׁיר לַיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת:

A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath Day.

We can easily observe that Psalm 92 is the only psalm in the Hebrew Psalter with such a title, although in the Septuagint there are a further four psalms with Sabbatical titles: Psalms 23; 47; 93; 91 and Tate notes

... possibly also originally for 81; 82 (Sarna, 155, n. 3).¹⁵ The fact that only Ps 92 is specified for the Sabbath in MT probably indicates that its selection for this liturgical use was earlier than that of the other six, being used with the *tamid* offering on Sabbaths, or other Sabbath worship, in the post-exilic temple in Jerusalem (Sarna, 156). Of course, the psalm probably had an earlier history unrelated to Sabbath worship; most likely in thanksgiving services during festival times to commemorate the mighty works of Yahweh (J H Eaton¹⁶, 225)." (1990:465).

Tate would again have us read Psalm 92 as a psalm where an original setting, here in a hypothesised festival, has been reset by the addition of a heading, now read and used for the Sabbath. Recognising that Psalm 92 formally may be described as an individual psalm of thanksgiving with some didactic characteristics does not preclude such a psalm being appropriate for the Sabbath day from the time of its composition. Nevertheless to imagine such a heading being applied to a psalm from the time of its composition would make it even

¹⁵ In Tate the psalm numbers refer to Hebrew and English version number, the Septuagint numbers would be 80 and 81. The reference Sarna is Sarna, N M "The Psalm for the Sabbath Day (Ps 92)." *JBL* 81 (1962) 155-68.

¹⁶ Eaton, J H (1967) *Psalms*. Torch Bible Paperbacks. London: SCM Press.

more unusual than it already is. It better fits my understanding of these psalm headings for this heading also to have been attached to the psalm at a later stage, thus signalling a reuse of the psalm for worship on the Sabbath day.

3.3.4 Of thanksgiving

Finally there is a liturgical heading in Psalm 100:

Ps. 100:1 מְזִמֹּר לַתְּהִלָּה

A Psalm of thanksgiving

Kraus writes “The translation of תְּהִלָּה is not entirely clear.” (1993b:274). Tate comments “The תְּהִלָּה probably originally was a sacrifice offered in a thanksgiving ceremony and then became a ‘song of praise’ to accompany the sacrifice (Gerstenberger, Psalms, 14)¹⁷.” (1990:533). Both these commentators note the use of this word in v. 4, Kraus “The title surely applies to v. 4.” (1993b:274). Rather than being a genre term, describing a category of psalm type, the word appears to be used in this heading to indicate the offering or presentation of thanksgiving as part of a liturgy of thanksgiving.

In Psalm 100 we have a psalm where the heading has least significance in terms of understanding the psalm when compared with the other psalms we have considered to have liturgical information in the psalm heading. Having written of the cultic use of the psalm Tate writes

However, it was most probably used apart from occasions of public worship for family and individual use. The language may have been cult-specific in its original formulation, but in the present psalm it is generalized and not restricted to particular specific services of worship.” (1990: 535).

With such use of the psalm we see the heading in another light. Rather than defining or controlling the use of the psalm the heading indicates how the psalm may have been use at one time, either originally or more likely at a later time in the cult. Nevertheless a psalm with such a heading may be taken over for another use; here Tate envisages a private, meditative use of the psalm.

Having considered these psalms with liturgical information in the heading I would conclude that there is a high degree of uncertainty about the precise usage and meaning of these liturgical terms, if indeed they are liturgical terms at all!

¹⁷ Gerstenberger, E S (1988) Psalms Part 1, with an Introduction to Cultic Poetry. FOTL 14. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

However, it can be shown that if these are liturgical terms usually they are attached to a psalm after its composition, most likely when it had been in wide use for some time. The attachment of a liturgical heading to a psalm did not so much release the psalm from an earlier setting into a freedom-of-context but rather re-set the psalm in a new fixed setting. If Tate is correct, as I think he is, that Psalm 100 took on a further use and setting within the community then we can see that even attaching a psalm heading with liturgical information did **not** stop the processes of use and reuse of a psalm that was found helpful by the worshipping people, in public or private devotions.

3.4 Headings with musical or genre information

While I noted these as two separate categories earlier, it will be helpful to take them under consideration together at this point. At the end of this chapter I have included a table showing the musical and genre terms used in the Psalter with the English version of these phrases given by the NRSV and then a list of psalm numbers in which these terms are used in the headings. The top portion of the table records musical terms and then from מִזְמֹר down records genre terms.

The common feature between these two types of information is the extreme uncertainty of meaning and significance of these terms. Many of the terms used appear only in single titles and are not found elsewhere in the Hebrew bible, or at best very rarely.

שִׁיר is commonly used and rendered 'A Song'. Sometimes it is used together with מִזְמֹר, only once is it found with מִשְׁכִּיל in Psalm 88. These three are by far the most common of what I have called genre terms and yet the difference between the three is not readily apparent, indeed the difference between שִׁיר and מִזְמֹר "is not discernable" (Kraus 1993a:21). On the very common phrase לְמִנְצָח Kraus writes that it "is basically still unexplained." (1993a:29).

In the light of such general and widespread uncertainty any use we attempt to make of such genre or musical headings must at the very best be only provisional. An accurate understanding of these terms and their use may very well radically change any patterning we discern in the use of these terms.

It is also clear that the psalm headings use of genre categories do not correspond to our modern form critical categories in psalms research. To take one example,

the table shows that the heading **תפלה** appears in five psalms (Psalms 17, 86, 90, 102 and 142) However Kraus, taken as one example of the commentators, writes "By far the largest number of psalms collected in the Psalter belong to the songs of prayer." (1993a:47), and in his heading to this section he uses the Hebrew word **תפלה** to designate this category of psalm. Kraus then takes from page 47 to page 56 to describe this category of psalm including within it many psalms that do not have the term **תפלה** in the title.

Wilson does however make an attempt to construe some purposeful arrangement from the use of genre terms in psalm headings. Wilson identifies six terms "which are fairly clearly distinguished and generally accepted as genre categories." (1985:158). These categories, in Hebrew characters, are:

1. **שנירן** (Ps. 7)
2. **מכתם** (6 Pss.)
3. **תפלה** (5 Pss.)
4. **משכיל** (13 Pss.)
5. **תהלה** (Ps. 145)
6. **הללויה** (16 Pss.)

Wilson claims "The major distinguishing characteristic of these terms is that they never occur together in the same s/s." (1985:158). Although we note that the heading to Ps 142 includes the terms **משכיל** and **תפלה**¹⁸. To these categories Wilson adds a further two

7. **מזמור** (57 Pss.)
8. **שיר** (30 Pss.)

"It is clear that these last two are by far the most frequent and perhaps the most general of the genre designations included in the s/ss. This may explain their combination with other terms contrary to the general rule." (1985:158).

Wilson then shows, I think persuasively, that there are groupings of psalms with headings sharing genre terms, and that not simply a correspondence of one term

¹⁸ While Wilson considered **הללויה** to be a superscript term I do not think this is clear. At the very least we must say this term does not appear in psalms headings in the same way as the other terms being considered here. I prefer to consider the **הללויה** psalms as forming a smaller collection found within the five books and will consider them in the next chapter.

but the repetition of two or more terms in consecutive psalm headings in groups. To take just one example, Psalms 19-24 all share the use of the term **מוֹזְמֹר**, the full headings read as follows:

Ps. 19 **לִמְנַצַּח מוֹזְמֹר לְדָוִד**

Ps. 20 **לִמְנַצַּח מוֹזְמֹר לְדָוִד**

Ps. 21 **לִמְנַצַּח מוֹזְמֹר לְדָוִד**

Ps. 22 **לִמְנַצַּח עַל-אֵילַת הַשָּׁחַר מוֹזְמֹר לְדָוִד**

Ps. 23 **מוֹזְמֹר לְדָוִד**

Ps. 24 **לְדָוִד מוֹזְמֹר**

This is one example of ten groups of **מוֹזְמֹר** psalms. In this group we can note the use of **לְדָוִד** in all six psalms, **לִמְנַצַּח** in four of the six psalms. Wilson concludes "This multiple correspondence over a number of consecutive s/ss certainly affirms the purposful arrangement behind the juxtaposition." (1985:160) The same multiple correspondences can be demonstrated in the **מִכְחָם** psalms (Psalms 56-60) and the **מִשְׁכִּיל** psalms (Psalms 42/3-45, 52-55 and 88-89).

Given the caution I mentioned earlier, namely that we really do not know what these genre terms describe, Wilson's conclusions seem reasonable. There would indeed appear to be some conscious attempt to use psalm headings for editorial purposes throughout the Psalter. Wilson offers the following possible explanation for an editorial use of these genre headings

Just above I indicated how author-groupings are used to mark points of disjuncture in the Psalter, especially those which mark the boundaries between the first four books. The editorial use of genre categories in the s/ss is related to that phenomenon, but is different in that the genre designations are used to bind together, to "soften" transition between groups of pss. There are a number of instances of this "binding/softening" technique. (1985: 163)

Wilson works through four examples of this; we will consider one of these examples, Pss 87-89. The psalm headings in question are

Ps. 87:1 **לְבִנְיָקָרַח מוֹזְמֹר שִׁיר**

Ps 88:1 שִׁיר מִזְמוֹר לְבִנֵי קֶרַח לְמִנְצַח עַל־מַחֲלָה לַעֲנוּת מִשְׁכִּיל
לְהִימָן הָאֲזֹרָחִי:

Ps 89:1 מִשְׁכִּיל לְאִיתָן הָאֲזֹרָחִי:

Wilson notes the problems associated with the psalm heading in Psalm 88. This is interesting as the heading on this psalm cuts across all the expectations that have been built up for scholarly handling of psalm headings. This heading contains the genre terms *מִזְמוֹר*, *מִשְׁכִּיל* and *שִׁיר*, the only psalm to have three such terms in the heading¹⁹. There are two author references in this psalm heading *קֶרַח לְבִנֵי* and *לְהִימָן הָאֲזֹרָחִי*, which again is very unusual. We then note that the term *לְמִנְצַח* is used in this heading but not in the initial position, as Wilson notes “This is the *only* instance in which it does not occupy *initial position*.” (1985:165). Even if we try to divide the heading into two parts, beginning the second part with *לְמִנְצַח*, there remain two genre terms in the first part *מִזְמוֹר* and *שִׁיר*. Thus the origins of this complex psalm heading are unclear, which may sum up much of our understanding of psalm headings as they relate to matters of genre description. Nevertheless Wilson writes “Regardless of the origin, its effect is quite clear. The first half binds Ps 88 with what precedes (the Qorahite collection) while the second half, with its use of the terms *mskyl* and *h'zrlhy*, binds it to Ps 89 as well.” (1985:165)²⁰ As Wilson notes the complex heading does work in this way each part referring both backwards and forwards to the surrounding psalm headings.

The point being made here is that where psalm headings with author indicators change these changes are abrupt and are used to mark major disjunctions, the divisions between the five books. Within these five books where there are author changes the effect of these changes is softened by other techniques using genre terms in the psalm headings, which bind psalms together over an area of change. If this is a result of editorial processes there is much work to be done in explaining the need for such editorial work. However, the uncertainties

¹⁹ We note that only two psalms, Psalm 45 and Psalm 142, contain two genre terms in their headings.

²⁰ In this quotation I have been unable to reproduce the diacritical marks used by Wilson in his transliteration of the Hebrew terms.

surrounding this level of work with psalm headings are great and much caution should be exercised here.

3.5 Psalms with no headings

As I noted earlier there are 116 psalms with headings. The distribution of these headings over the five books is displayed in the following table.

	Headings	No Headings	% No Headings
Book I	37	4	9.75
Book II	28	2	6.67
Book III	18	0	0
Book IV	7	10	58.8
Book V	26	18	40.9

Table 3.1 Psalms with Headings/No Headings.

If we consider Book I to III we would conclude that it is very unusual for a psalm not to have a heading, as only one in nearly 15 psalms does not have a heading. However, in both Book IV and V more than one third, in Book IV over half, do not have a heading.

3.5.1 Books I, II and III

Wilson enquires into why there are unusual occurrences of untitled psalms in Books I to III. Apart from Psalms 1 and 2 all the untitled psalms in Books I and II have been connected to the preceding psalm in part of the manuscript tradition, for example BHS in the footnotes comments that “many manuscripts join Ps 43 with Ps 42 correctly; a few manuscripts put ללך before Ps 43, the Septuagint and Theodotion’s Greek translation of the OT put ψαλμὸς τῷ Δαυιδ.”²¹ And there are various degrees of manuscript support for joining together Psalms 9 and 10; Psalms 32 and 33 and Psalms 70 with 71. On Psalms 42 and 43 Wilson notes

The general agreement as to the original unity of these pss is based largely on agreement in vocabulary and style, bolstered by *qina* meter and a recurring refrain (42:5-6; 42:11; 43:5) which breaks the unified ps into three, balanced stanzas. Further grammatical connections are found in:

42:10 למה שכהתני

²¹ In this quotation I have reproduced the BHS footnote without the abbreviations used by BHS.

למה־קדר אלך בלחץ ארוב:

43:2 למה זנחתני

למה־קדר אחלהך בלחץ ארוב: (1985:176).²²

Craigie (1983:325) and Kraus (1993a:435ff.), who translates the two psalms as one, share this general agreement. Wilson, however, continues writing of the division between the two psalms

Justification for division might be found in the change of mood and address which occurs at the beginning of 43:1. Up to this point the poet has been self-reflective, speaking of God in the third person (except for the quote included in 42:10). At 43:1 the psalmist addresses to God his plea for divine assistance (43:1-4). While this plea functions admirably in the context of the unified ps, it could as easily serve as an independent unit in its own right. It is not surprising, then, that MT has juxtaposed the two, signifying the tradition of unity by the omission of the s/s with Ps 43. (1985:176f).

How are we to understand this conclusion of Wilson's? Did the editors of the Psalter in the MT find two independent psalms that traditionally had been united and so decide to place them next to one another, signalling this tradition of unity by removing a heading from Psalm 43? Such a convoluted suggestion seems to depend more upon a desire to find editorial purposes here than a realistic assessment of the evidence. Craigie writes

The reason for the separation into the two extant units is not known; it may originate with *G*, which provides a title for Ps 43 ("a psalm of David"), which in turn may have reflected an interpretation of the distinction between *lament* (Ps 42) and *prayer* (Ps 43). If the division of the original psalm was as early as *G*, then it is also the case that the unity (after the division) was recognized from an early period, at least as early as the time of Eusebius (1983:325).

It would seem more modest to claim that the evidence from Books I and II suggests that at one time untitled psalms were united with the psalm they now follow, and this is supported by manuscript traditions, thematic content and

²² I have replaced Wilson's transliterated text for an unpunctuated Hebrew text set out as in BHS.

structural considerations. These psalms have been used together since they belong together and have only been separated by some now unknown process and then this separation cemented in the Greek tradition by the addition of headings. Thus we may imagine the first stage editors of the MT have simply left these two psalms as they found them, separate and one untitled, and this practice has been followed by later and final editors.

Book III has no psalms without headings and so does not really contribute to the discussion at this point except to highlight the change that occurs when we turn to Books IV and V.

3.5.2 Books IV and V

Now moving out from Books I, II and III we find not a few isolated untitled psalms but rather groups of untitled psalms:

Psalms	93-97
Psalms	104-107 (crossing the division between Books IV and V)
Psalms	111-119
Psalms	135-137
Psalms	146-150

Where in Books I and II it is probable that each untitled psalm, except Psalms 1 and 2, was originally part of a combined psalm with the one preceding psalm, this is unimaginable for such groups of untitled psalms. While it is possible to imagine Psalm 117, for example, being joined to either Psalm 116 or Psalm 118, we can hardly imagine Psalm 119 being joined to any other text. I do not then think we can accept the conclusion that the grouping together of untitled psalms reflects an editorial technique on this basis. Rather these psalms are grouped together and find their place within the Psalter on other grounds. This raises interesting questions about the placing of Psalm 107 at the beginning of Book V without a heading and also the isolation of Psalm 47 from the other Yahweh as King Psalms 93, 95-99. I will take up these considerations in the next chapter.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to consider the minor seams as marked by psalm headings. We cannot neatly say that when an author ascription in a psalm heading changes there is a major seam, a division between one of the five books, because clearly there are author changes occurring within the five books. Perhaps we should conclude that it is the doxology verses alone which mark the division

between the five books, however, this would mean the author changes noted being purely coincidental.

The minor seams then mark divisions between smaller collections of psalms that have been gathered together into a larger collection. The author groups are clear examples of this, the other information in psalm headings being less useful for distinguishing smaller collections.

The presence of psalm headings, many of which, if not all, have been added at a time later than the composition of the psalm, is of great interest. While I am happy to consider these psalm headings as later than the composition of the psalm, they are still ancient, being found in the Dead Sea Scrolls psalms manuscripts. Here we can see clear evidence of editorial work upon the psalms. Headings have been added to psalms to create a context in which to read and use these psalms, they give guidance on the content and purpose of the psalm. This need not represent a drastic change of use for a psalm text, an individual prayer may be associated with the life of David and still be an individual prayer. However, where psalms have been individual texts this editorial work in part aims to relate these texts to a community who need to pray and worship the God of David. We will need to consider further the implications of such editorial work in the psalm headings.

Hebrew Term	NRSV	Psalms Numbers
למנצח	To the leader	4-6, 8, 9, 11-14, 18-22, 31, 36, 39-42, 44-47, 49, 51-62, 64-70, 75-77, 80, 81, 84, 85, 88, 109, 139, 140
בנגינות	with stringed instruments	4, 6, 54, 55, 67, 76
על-נגינת	with stringed instruments	61
אל-הנחילות	for the flutes	5
על-השמינית	according to The Sheminith	6, 12
על-הגתית	according to The Gittith	8, 81, 84
עלמות לבן	according to Muth-labben	9
על-אילת השחר	according to The Deer of the Dawn	22
על-שושנים	according to the Lilies	45, 69
על-שושן עדות	according to the Lily of the Covenant	60
אל-ששנים עדות	on Lilies, a Covenant	80
על-עלמות	according to Alamoth	46
על-מחלת	according to Mahalath	53
על-מחלת לענות	according to Mahalath Leannoth	88
על-יונה אלם רחוקים	according to The Dove on Far-off Terebinths	56
אל-תשחח	Do Not Destroy	57-59, 75
מזמור	A Psalm	3-6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 19-24, 29-31, 38-41, 47-51, 62-68, 73, 75-77, 79, 80, 82-85, 87, 88, 92, 98, 100, 101, 108-110, 139-141, 143
שיר המעלות	A Song of Ascents	120-134
משכיל	A Maskil	32, 42, 44, 45, 52-55, 74, 78, 88, 89, 142
שיר	A Song	46, 48, 65-68, 75, 76, 83, 87, 88, 92, 108
מכתם	A Miktam	16, 56-60
תפלה	A Prayer	17, 86, 90, 102, 142
שגיון	A Shiggaion	7
שיר ידידות	A love song	45
ללמד	for instruction	60
תהלה	Praise	145

Table 3.2 A Table of Musical and Genre Terms used in Psalm Headings.

Chapter 4 The Minor Seams 2: Earlier Collections

In chapter 3 I gave consideration to the minor seams at points of joining between collections contained within the five book division marked out by changes in psalm headings. It is also possible within the collection of the Psalter to identify earlier collections of psalms. In this chapter I will consider the editorial implications of the existence of collections of psalms that have been collected before the final editorial processes that created the Psalter of the Masoretic Text.

Describing the process of compilation of the Psalter Craigie writes

In summary form, one can trace four stages in the process: (a) a psalm is composed; (b) it is linked together with other psalms to form a small collection, analogous to the *Book of the Wars of the Lord* or the *Book of Yashar*; (c) several small collections are brought together to form a larger unit; (d) the current Book of Psalms emerged, being a “collection of collections,” with various individual psalms added by the editor(s) of the final book. (1983:28).

4.1 The presence of small collections

Some of these smaller collections are identified by the use of information from Psalm headings:

Davidic collections	Psalms 3-41; 51-70; 108-110; 138-45
Psalms of Asaph	Psalms 73-83
Psalms of the Sons of Korah	Psalms 42-49; 84-88
Songs of Ascent	Psalms 120-134

A smaller collection, of 42 psalms, which crosses the boundaries of these psalm-heading groups, and indeed between Books II and III, is the so-called Elohistic collection, Psalms 41 to 83. This collection is not identified by information from the psalm headings, but from a consideration of the use of the divine name within the psalms. It is possible that other small collections may be identified using similar markers from within the text of the psalms such as the Yahweh as King Psalms or *hllwyh* psalms.

4.2 The Elohistic collection

The evidence for this Elohistic collection is that in Psalms 1 to 41 the use of the divine name Yahweh dominates over the use of the name Elohim. Craigie quotes

Driver “272 occurrences of *Yahweh*, and 15 of *Elohim*” (1983: 29). There is a marked change after Psalm 41, Craigie tells us: “in Pss 42-83 *Yahweh* is used only 43 times, in contrast to some 200 uses of the word *Elohim*.” (1983: 29). We can show this as follows:

	Yahweh	Elohim
1 – 41	94.7%	5.3%
42 - 83	17.7%	82.3%

Table 4.1 Use of divine name in psalms 1-83.

In the Elohist collection a conscious decision has been made to prefer Elohim to Yahweh. The existence of a repeated psalm, Psalm 14 and Psalm 53, demonstrates that a text can be changed to accommodate this preference for one divine name against another²³. However, as Craigie notes

The evidence, however, is not without ambiguity, for in Ps 40:13-17, duplicated in the “Elohistic Psalter” in Ps 70, *Yahweh* (Ps 40:13) is replaced in one instance by *Elohim*, but in another place *Elohim* (Ps 40:17) is replaced by *Yahweh* (Ps 70:5)! (1983: 29).

The existence of the Elohist collection does not demonstrate an exclusive use of Elohim rather than Yahweh, but a preference, which is in contrast to the preference found in Ps 1-41.

If this Elohist Psalter corresponded with other collections, or the book divisions, there would be little more to say. However, clearly this Elohist Psalter covers the whole of Book II and two-thirds of Book III. It includes the first Korahite collection, Psalms 42-49, but not the second, Psalms 84-88; indeed it stops immediately before this second Korahite collection starts, the end being coincident with a minor seam. It includes one of the David collection Psalms 51-70 and all of the Asaphite collection Psalms 73-83. The beginning and ending of the Elohist Psalter does correspond with the beginning of the first Korahite collection and the ending of the Asaphite collection.

²³ The differences between Ps 14 and Ps 53 may be more complex and editorially significant than merely the difference in use of the divine name. See additional note on Pss 14 and 53.

Psalm numbers	Collection	
1 – 41	David 1	Elohistic Collection
42 – 49	Korah 1	
51 – 70	David 2	
73 – 83	Asaph	
84 – 88	Korah 2	

Table 4.2 Showing the Elohistic Collection.

Clearly we could describe the Elohistic collection as following author divisions from the psalm headings. The division between Psalms 41 and 42 is a major seam with Psalm 42 opening Book II, however, the division between Psalms 83 and 84 is a minor seam marked by the change in author ascription from Asaph to Korah and softened by the use of the genre term **מִזְמוֹר** in each psalm heading from Psalm 82 to Psalm 85. Wilson notes the existence of the Elohistic collection

The really striking feature of these data [use of Yahweh and Elohim in the whole Psalter] is not so much the reduced occurrence of the name Yahweh in the “Elohistic Psalter” as it is the *almost complete elimination* of ’lhym as a designation for the God of Israel elsewhere. Could this be evidence of a concerted effort to eradicate the more ambiguous term in favor of the more particularistic Yahweh? (1985:197).

Are we really to view the Book of Psalms as a coordinated attempt to particularise the worship and religion of Israel? Elsewhere the distinction between the use of Yahweh and Elohim is the foundation of the source criticism of the Pentateuch, in Rendtorff’s Introduction we read

... J was usually dated in the early monarchy and E in the later monarchy (with great variations); E was often thought to come from the northern kingdom, in contrast to J, which came from Judah.

The history of the ‘newer documentary hypothesis’ shows that the questions and problems could always be formulated much more clearly than the answers and solutions. (1985: 159).

Rendtorff seems uneasy about using such documentary evidence and the history of the documentary hypothesis bears out his concerns. We must therefore be equally cautious in using the existence of the Elohistic collection in the Psalter. If the supposition is correct that in the Pentateuch the use of the term Elohim predominated in the northern kingdom and Yahweh in Judah we may propose

that since the temple, the main site of Israelite worship, was in Judah and that the exiles returning from Babylon came to Jerusalem the psalms they used and collected would reflect this geographical and historical preference for Yahweh over Elohim.

Again, this would be fine except for the authorship information in the psalm headings and the references to the history of David. Of the 13 psalms with historical references to the life of David in their titles, eight are found in the Elohist collection. It was to prevent the people going down to Jerusalem to worship that Jeroboam established worship centres at Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:25-33). Would a king having rebelled against the Davidic dynasty happily permit psalms with Davidic headings to be used regularly in his alternative worship sites? It may be that the presence of the psalm titles in the Elohist collection reflects the wishes of the people to retain headings already attached to psalms and considered important in their continuing use. Thus from the northern kingdom we have smaller collections ascribed to Korah, David and Asaph which become incorporated in a larger Psalter after the return from exile.

It must be the case that the creation of the Elohist Psalter predates the creation of the five-book division in the Psalter. Any later editor deciding to change Yahweh to Elohim would not so casually cross the major boundary between Books II and III. A possible process could be as follows: a) individual psalms are gathered together either because superscripts suggest they belong together or having been gathered superscripts are added to the text of the psalms to create a union between these psalms, b) an Elohist collection known and used in the Jerusalem of early post-exilic days is joined to these earlier collections, or is incorporated within these earlier collections, c) these smaller collections of psalms, including the Elohist Psalter, become gathered together into larger collections, d) a final editor adds various individual psalms, e.g. Psalm 1, and creates the five book division by placing Psalms which already include doxological verses at key points in his collection. The doxology at Psalm 72 is placed there in the knowledge that the Elohist collection continues beyond that point to Psalm 83. Kraus comments "A closing formula that brings to a close the group of Psalms of David collected by the 'Elohist compiler' is found in Ps. 72:20," (1993:18). Does this, as it suggests, offer an explanation for the phrase "The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended." in Ps 72:20? Is this verse simply

saying that the collection of Davidic prayers recorded in the Elohist collection is ended? Even so, the use of the doxology at Ps 72:19 is not thus explained.

4.3 The Songs of Ascents

This collection of psalms, Psalms 120-134, is marked out by a shared, and unique, heading

שִׁיר לַמִּילֹחַ (Ps. 121) שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת (Pss. 120, 122-134)

לְשִׁלְמָה (Ps. 127) לְדָוִד (Pss. 122, 124, 131, 133)

The precise meaning of this term is unclear. Kraus considers “the most reasonable” explanation to be that “From **מַעֲלוֹת** one will have to go back to the characteristic verb **עָלָה**. ... Thus **שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת** could be understood to mean ‘pilgrimage song’ or ‘processional song.’” noting that “... only Psalm 122 is to be applied to a pilgrimage, and only Psalm 132 to a procession.” (1993a:24). Kraus here displays his commitment to the form critical method of psalms study identifying those psalms whose form fits the headings and considering the other psalms in the group as additional pieces that have somehow been added to this collection.

Craigie in a brief comment tells us “These psalms have not only a certain similarity in content, but probably also shared a common function, namely use during or preceding Israel’s great festivals, specifically the Feast of Tabernacles.” (1983:29) Here an understanding of the form critical category of the particular psalm(s) does not preclude a psalm being made part of a collection for use in a festival setting whatever its original purpose.

Allen has an intriguing comment

Pss 120-134 form a collection of cultic songs of diverse origins, probably sung by pilgrims in festival processions: ... probably the psalm title was originally the title of the whole collection and was subsequently applied to the individual psalms (cf. GKC 127e). The collective singular **שִׁיר** “song” (cf. 137:3) was then related to the single psalms within the collection. The consequent awkward phrasing was improved in the heading to Ps 121. (1983:146)

Thus a group of psalms are collected on account of a shared function and have a heading applied to the whole collection. Presumably we are to imagine that when

this collection was incorporated into the Psalter this editor made the decision to attach the heading to each individual psalm together with any existing heading that may have already been attached to a psalm (Psalms 122, 124, 127, 131 and 133). This however, doesn't explain the slightly altered "improved" heading on Psalm 121. If the headings were added when the collection was included in the Psalter why did this editor make Psalm 121 different? If this is a later improvement, why is it applied only to one psalm?

Before too much is made of the difference in the heading of Psalm 121, the evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls should be noted. From Peter Flint's work on the Qumran psalm scrolls we note the following; the heading to Ps 121 is *המעלות* in 11QPs^a and some manuscripts of the Masoretic text, in contrast to the majority of the MT witnesses that read *למעלות*. Then we notice that the heading in Ps. 123 reads *[שיר ל]דוד למעלות* in 11QPs^a in contrast to *שיר למעלות* in the Masoretic text witnesses with the omission of *לדוד* (1997:106). Flint writes that it is "the largest and best preserved of all the Psalms manuscripts, 11QPs^a, which contains several major differences in comparison to the Masoretic Psalter." (1997:39). The differences between the Masoretic Psalter and 11QPs^a in relation to the headings of Psalms 121 and 123 cannot be described as major. The variant reading on Psalm 121 is an easier reading since this is the form of the word used in all the other headings in the Masoretic text, and on the principle of accepting the harder reading we would adopt the Masoretic text. However, the variant on Psalm 123 has the effect of moving the difficult reading from Psalm 121 to Psalm 123. It is hard to see any reason behind such an alteration of a text and it may be that these variations cannot now be explained. When it is noted that 11QPs^a and some Masoretic Text witnesses harmonise the heading of Psalm 121 with that of the rest of the Songs of Ascents it may be a fair conclusion that the variant reading in the Masoretic Text in the heading of Psalm 121 is not especially significant. It is likely that this variant reading has more to do with textual critical matters than editorial purposes.

Wilson writes

Genre does not constitute a *primary* editorial principle for the organization of the Psalter. ...

1. *The "Pss of Ascents."* I will begin with the one apparently complete genre collection. The presence of the *one* group of pss (120-134) emphasizes the lack of such concern in the rest of the Psalter. It is an anomaly, probably to be explained as a previously existing collection which has been incorporated as a whole into MT 150." (1985:161f.).

The point here is that for the final editor of the Psalter genre categories in psalm headings were not a primary concern. As we have seen there is some interest in genre categories, but no major interest. When a collection of psalms with a unique term in their headings is found the conclusion that they had formed an earlier collection seems inescapable.

In a study seeking "to demonstrate the internal coherence of these Psalms" having briefly reviewed the likely meanings of the term **מעלות** Hunter writes "The broad consensus is that this group of Psalms must have had some locus in a festival, possibly with an element of pilgrimage." (1999:177). This 'broad consensus' suggests that as a group this collection of psalms functioned within the liturgical life of the community. This is slightly different from defining the term **מעלות** as a liturgical term. Certainly **מעלות** does not appear to be a technical liturgical term in the same way as the other liturgical terms considered in chapter 3 were. Given that the word **מעלות** is found in the Psalter only in these fifteen psalms and that its meaning is far from clear rather than postulating some liturgical sense we can more simply consider this to be a word used in this context to unite these fifteen psalms in one collection. If we are to say more than this perhaps the most we can safely say is that whatever the term means the psalms as a group have been associated with the festivals of Israel, or at least the pilgrimage journey to Jerusalem for one of these festivals. It is in this sense that I understand the term to be a genre term rather than a liturgical term.

Neither the Elohistic collection nor the Songs of Ascents form part of Book IV, our area of concern. However a consideration of these two collections helps us to establish the existence of earlier collections within the final form of the Psalter. The Songs of Ascents are a relatively straightforward case: a tightly bound together group of psalms is known to the compiler of the Psalter and, we may imagine, still in use at festival times. When the decision is made to include this

collection in the Psalter it is easy to decide to leave this group as a coherent collection.

The Elohist collection is not so straightforward, although if we have a previously existing group (or groups) of psalms favouring the use of Elohim for the divine name over Yahweh again we may understand the decision of a later compiler to leave such a previously existing group together.

In Book IV, it is possible to identify two groups of psalms that may have existed as earlier collections: Psalms 93, 96-99 the 'Yahweh as King' Psalms and Psalms 104 to 106 a group of *hllwyh* psalms. I will now consider these psalms.

4.4 'Yahweh as King' Psalms

In the Psalms 93, 96-99 we notice the use of the phrase **יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ**. Tate tell us

The expression **יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ** has received much attention, especially since S Mowinckel's proposal in 1921 to translate it as a cultic affirmation in the celebration of Yahweh's kingship, with the meaning "Yahweh has become king" (*Psalmenstudien*, II, 6-8). (1990:472).

We notice the following: in Psalms 93, 97 and 99 the phrase is the opening words of the psalm and in Psalm 98:6 the phrase is reversed with the article, **יְהוָה הַמֶּלֶךְ**. In Psalm 95:3 the two terms that make up the phrase appear together in one verse, but divided over the two lines of the verse, thus as set out in BHIS

כִּי אֵל גִּדּוֹל יְהוָה וּמֶלֶךְ גִּדּוֹל עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים:

Elsewhere in the Psalter we note Psalm 47 where we find a parallel phrase in verse 9 where the verse opens with the words **מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹהִים**. Psalm 47 is part of the Elohist collection where we would expect to find the term Elohim being preferred to Yahweh for the divine name, also we observe that the reversed phrase is found in Psalm 98. It is likely that Psalm 47 is a very close parallel to Psalms 93, 96-99. Elsewhere in the Old Testament the phrase appears in 1 Chron. 16:31b where it appears to be a quotation from Ps. 96:10a.

Let us try to identify those features that mark out these psalms as a collection.

Psalms 93, 97 and 99 all begin with the phrase **יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ**. Psalms 96 and 98 also share a common opening phrase **שִׁירוֹ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ**. Thus we have a pattern of parallels in opening phrases.

Not only do Psalms 96 and 98 share an opening phrase the final verse in each psalm is almost exactly identical:

Ps. 96:13 לִפְנֵי יְהוָה כִּי בָא כִּי בָא לְשֹׁפֵט הָאָרֶץ

יִשְׁפֹּט-חֶבֶל בְּצֹרֶק וְעַמִּים בְּאַמְוִנָּהוּ:

Ps. 98:9 לִפְנֵי-יְהוָה כִּי בָא לְשֹׁפֵט הָאָרֶץ

יִשְׁפֹּט-חֶבֶל בְּצֹרֶק וְעַמִּים בְּמִישְׁרִים:

Again we find a pattern of common phrases making connections between these two psalms. If these five psalms ran together we would easily identify a chiasmic type structure shared across the psalms. Certainly this can be seen in Psalm 96-99. Did Psalm 93 ever stand in closer connection to Psalms 96-99? Have Psalms 94 and 95 been introduced into an existing collection?

Answering these questions will be a significant focus of the second part of this study. At present we should note the close connections between Psalms 94 and 95. Howard writes of Psalm 94 “whose closest companion among Psalms 93-100 – significantly – is Psalm 95.” (1997:175).

Wilson commenting on Book IV writes

In my opinion, pss 90-106 function as the editorial “centre” of the final form of the Hebrew Psalter. As such this grouping stands as the “answer” to the problem posed in Ps 89 as to the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant with which Books One – Three are primarily concerned. Briefly summarized the answer given is: (1) YHWH is king; (2) He has been our “refuge” in the past, long before the monarchy existed (i.e., in the Mosaic period); (3) He will continue to be our refuge now that the monarchy is gone; (4) Blessed are they that trust in him! (1985:215).

Such an understanding of Book IV leads Wilson to see the following set of connections between Psalms 93, 94 and 95. Psalm 93 “The first of the ‘Enthronement’ pss celebrates the kingship of YHWH as the whole of creation joins the cry YHWH malak, ‘YHWH reigns!’” (1985:216). Following this introduction to a celebration of the kingship of Yahweh in Psalm 94, “The theme shifts once more to the current situational problem which prevents Israel from

recognizing the kingship of YHWH.”²⁴ (1985:216). Then Ps 95 is another transitional psalm providing the “transition to the celebration of YHWH’s kingship.” (1985:217)

If Psalms 93, 96-99 ever did exist as a collection they do so no longer. However Psalms 94 and 95 came to be placed between Ps 93 and Psalms 96-99, they have been well placed and will be shown, in chapter five of this study, to contribute significantly to the purpose of Book IV within the Hebrew Psalter. It is not likely that Psalms 93-99 ever existed as a collection outwith the Hebrew Psalter; this is a grouping of psalms that has been created for this place within this larger work. That these psalms do however form a collection within the larger work, i.e. Book IV or indeed the whole Hebrew Psalter seems a reasonable conclusion. The influence of such a collection is a matter we will return to.

4.5 The *hllwyh* psalms

In the Psalter we find four groups of *hllwyh* psalms:

Psalms 104-106

Psalms 111-117

Psalm 135

Psalms 146-150.

It is noteworthy that all these psalms appear in Books IV and V. Wilson discovers that these groupings of *hllwyh* psalms also occur in the DSS manuscript 11QPs^a and writes

The first appearance of a group of *hllwyh* pss in the canonical Psalter (Pss 104-106) coincides precisely with the conclusion of the fourth book as indicated by the “doxology” at the end of ps 106. The last grouping of such pss (146-150) occurs at the very end of the whole Psalter. This fact suggests that groups of *hllwyh* pss are used to mark the conclusion of segments of the Psalter – at least in the last two books. (1985:127).

Looking at psalms 104-106 we observe the following:

Psalm 104 concludes with the phrase מְלִיכָהּ לְעֵלְיוֹן. This phrase does not complete the meter of verse 35 in the psalm and we should rather consider v. 35a, b to be a bi-colon 3 + 3, v. 35c a single colon of 3 units and then v. 35d a single colon of

²⁴ Here Wilson is referring to thematic shifts he has earlier identified between Psalms 91 and 92, Psalms 92 and 93 and then Psalms 93 and 94.

one unit of text. Thus it is reasonable to conclude that the הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה phrase is included here to mark the conclusion of a unit of text, namely Psalm 104, while at the same time making a link between this psalm and others using the same phrase in a similar way.

Psalm 105 opens with the phrase הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה קְרָאוּ בְּשִׁמּוֹר this is a significant phrase used in a number of psalms. Particularly the הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה element is repeated in the opening of other psalms, e.g. Psalm 107. In Psalm 105 הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה confirms the opening of a new unit of text, the next psalm in the Psalter and we find that הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה is again used in the final verse, v. 45, to mark the end of this psalm. Once again we can note the irregular meter of v. 45 with the third colon containing only one element.

Psalm 106 opens with a combination of elements, verse 1 in BHS being set out as follows:

Ps. 106:1 הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה

הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי־טוֹב כִּי לַעֲוֹלָם חֲסִדּוֹ:

In this psalm הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה functions almost as a psalm heading. This phrase does not fit into any regular metrical scheme for this verse and is placed in the emphatic first position. Once again we find that הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה is used in the final verse, v. 48, to signal the conclusion of the psalm.

We should note the first use of הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה in the Psalter is in Psalm 102:19. Thus all the occurrences of this phrase are in the final two books. Indeed, more pointedly, we note that the incidence of this phrase is exclusive to the groups of *hllwyh* psalms noted above, except for Psalm 102:19.

Opening verse	Middle of psalm	Final verse
106:1; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1; 135:1; 135:21; 146:1; 147:1; 148:1; 149:1; 150:1	102:19; 135:3	104:35; 105:45; 106:48; 113:9; 115:17*, 18; 116:19; 117:2; 146:10; 147:20; 148:14; 149:9; 150:6

Table 4.3 Table showing distribution of הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה

Such a concentrated use of the term very clearly suggests that it is a marker for groups, or collections of psalms. It would appear the term can be used either in a pair, to open and close a psalm, or singly either to open or close. In the group Psalms 104 to 106, there is only one opening use and three terminal uses. In the group Psalms 111 to 117 there are three opening uses before the disjunction caused by Psalm 114 and then three terminal uses. In passing we note that Psalm 115:17, while using the phrase, uses it in a particular way that is not parallel to these opening and closing uses. Psalm 135 is very unusual being an isolated, or apparently isolated, use of לְלֹא־יְיָ . Wilson seeks to demonstrate “strong verbal correspondences in 134 and 135.” (1985:225).

The use of לְלֹא־יְיָ in Psalms 104-106 does appear significant in marking out these psalms as a group, and in bringing the collection of psalms in Book IV to a close. This is the conclusion of Wilson “The study of 11QPs^a has revealed the use of *hllwyh* pss to indicate internal divisions within that scroll. ... There [in MT 150] we find four groups of *hllwyh* pss, all of which mark the conclusion of Psalter segments.” (1985:186).

4.6 The *hwdw* psalms

This group of psalms is similar to the *hllwyh* psalms and often appears in combination with *hllwyh* psalms.

Opening verse	Final verse
75:2*; 92:2*; 105:1; 106:1; 107:1; 111:1; 118:1; 136:1; 138:1	30:13; 45:18; 52:11; 79:13; 97:12; 106:47 [§] ; 118:29; 136:26; 140:14; 142:7
* - there is a psalm heading for Ps 75 and 92 which in the Hebrew text is verse 1, thus the first verse of the psalm proper is verse 2.	
[§] - the final verse in Ps 106 is verse 48. However, this verse is already somewhat overloaded being a doxology and having לְלֹא־יְיָ . It may be that v. 47 is as close to the end as לְהַדִּיר can appear in Ps 106.	

Table 4.4 Table showing distribution of לְלֹא־יְיָ

At once we notice the distribution of *hwdw* is spread throughout the Psalter; once in Book I, twice in Book II and Book III, five times in Book IV and nine times in Book V. These figures and verses shown in the table are only those verses where

hwdw appears in the opening or final verse of the psalm, in total there are some 66²⁵ uses of this hiphil form of the verb יָדָה.

Of particular interest is the combination of *hllwyh* and *hwdw* in opening and closing verses of psalms. We see this in Psalms 105, 106 and 111.

In Psalm 105 verse 1 reads

Ps 105:1 הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה קְרָאוּ בְשִׁמּוֹ הוֹדִיעוּ בְּעַמִּים עֲלִילוֹתָיו:

where the opening word is a form of יָדָה. This gives some opening correspondence to the use of הִלְלוּ־יָהּ in v. 45.

In Psalm 106 we have both terms in the opening verse

Ps. 106:1 הִלְלוּ־יָהּ
הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי־טוֹב כִּי לַעֲוֹלָם חֲסָדּוֹ:

and both terms coming close together in the final verses

Ps. 106:47 הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְקַבְּצֵנוּ מִן־תְּגוּיִם

לְהוֹדוֹת לְשֵׁם קְדוֹשְׁךָ לְהַשְׁתַּבֵּחַ בְּתִהְלֹחֶךָ:

Ps. 106:48 בְּרוּךְ־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם

וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעַם אָמֵן

הִלְלוּ־יָהּ:

We must note that Ps 107 opens with this word

Ps. 107:1 הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי־טוֹב כִּי לַעֲוֹלָם חֲסָדּוֹ :

and thus we have a group of Psalms (105, 106 and 107) all using this word in their opening verses. It may be that this is one example of a technique to soften the transition between seams, although the only one crossing a major seam.

It would seem reasonable then to suggest that the combination of הִלְלוּ־יָהּ and one of the forms of יָדָה creates a group of psalms that runs from Psalm 104 through to Psalm 107.

²⁵ Lisowsky

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we have considered the existence of earlier collections of psalms, that is, groups of psalms that have been purposefully put together before the final editing of the Hebrew Psalter. That there are such earlier collections strongly argues in favour of there being a final collection, a final work of bringing together all the pieces of discrete psalms and groups of psalms used and treasured by the community.

In particular we noted how the Elohist collection disregards the major division between Books II and III. Thus the five-book division within the final form of the Hebrew Psalter is a final form imposed upon a collection of earlier collections. This does not mean the five book division should casually be discarded as being secondary. The form of the Hebrew Psalter that has come to us is marked out as being arranged into five books.

Apart from the Elohist collection we considered the Songs of Ascents. This group would appear to be the only earlier collection to be preserved in the Hebrew Psalter which has been gathered together in terms of genre. As I mentioned earlier, since we cannot recover a liturgy involving the use of these psalms it is safer to work with them as a group having been used by the community and identified as a group by marking them with a unique term in the psalm heading.

The Yahweh as King Psalms dominate Book IV of the Psalter. In the context of Book IV we cannot however consider this group of psalms to be only those using the key phrase; we must consider Psalms 94 and 95 and Psalms 100 and probably 101, as we will see. Either these Psalms using the מִלְּךָ יְיָ phrase will have been created for use in this place in Book IV or they will already have found a place within the life of the community using these psalms and so been incorporated into the final collection. However, their placing within the collection is highly significant.

The *hllwyh* and *hwdw* combine to form a strong and definite conclusion to Book IV. Even if there is an overlap into Psalm 107 that is of the order of a softening of a major break in the collection and there is no suggestion that Psalm 107 be brought into Book IV, rather it serves as the opening gateway into Book V.

Additional note

Psalms 14 and 53.

Psalms 14 and 53 are one of the classic examples of repetition within the Psalter, indeed the only one involving a whole psalm. There is an interestingly different treatment of this psalm in two of the major commentaries of recent years.

In his commentary Kraus does not deal with Psalm 53 independently but sends the reader to Psalm 14 for his comments. Under Psalm 14 in his section on Form Kraus writes

The text of our psalm is transmitted once more, with slight variations, in Psalm 53. Obviously, the song was present in two collections that were included in the Psalter [and here refers to the relevant section of his introduction]. ... On the whole, B. Duhm has clearly pointed out that the divergent readings of psalm 53 are in all points secondary over against Psalm 14 (with the exception of Ps 14:4, which is influenced by the Elohist redaction). (1993a:220).

In the remainder of his chapter on Psalm 14, Psalm 53 is not mentioned again.

Tate follows quite a different path. Certainly we must note that Tate is only writing on Psalms 51 to 100 and so does not have the same liberty as Kraus to treat the two psalms as one, however, it is apparent that even if he could have Tate would not have chosen this option. Tate comments "Ps 53 is a different version of the same psalm found in Ps 14." (1990:40). But then more fully

Ps 53 should not be treated as merely the product of editorial changes or textual corruption, as is often the case in modern commentaries. Each psalm has its own message, and the redactions should be respected. In the case of Ps 53, it can be argued (at least) that vv 5-6 have given the psalm a new genre, or, better, a variant of the genre suggested above for Ps 14 [the genre of prophetic judgment speech]. Ps 14 may be read as referring to evildoers in Israel ... In Ps 53 the situation is that of Israel having been recently under siege and of the powerful intervention of God against foreigners who try to devour his people. (1990:41).

Tate follows this up in his section headed 'Explanation'

The first part of Ps 53, regardless of its original usage, carries the same message as Ps 14. The fool, whether Israelite or foreigner, demonstrates folly by assuming that there is no effective presence of God. ...

Ps 53 shifts the emphasis from Israelites who ignore their God and devour one another (Ps 14) without regard for the divine will to foreigners who are fools enough to think that they can destroy the people of Yahweh. The psalm expresses both confidence and longing for the divine intervention which will bring to an end the corrupt and godless domination of the world. Yahweh is the great judge who will reduce to impotence the powerful rebellions of humankind. Let the fools on earth take notice. (1990:43).

It does not appear as though Tate is overstating the case in making the differences between Ps. 14:5f and Ps. 53:5 significant for his understanding of the psalms. As rendered in the NRSV

Psalm 14

5 There they shall be in great terror,
for God is with the company of the righteous.
6 You would confound the plans of the poor,
but the LORD is their refuge.

Psalm 53

5 There they shall be in great terror,
in terror such as has not been.
For God will scatter the bones of the ungodly;
they will be put to shame,
for God has rejected them.

In Psalm 14 the fool is most likely one from Israel. V. 4 refers to evildoers 'who eat up my people as they eat bread' and v. 6 to confounding 'the plans of the poor', the kind of complaint common in the prophets against the wealth Israelites in the land. Tate's case for considering the fools in Psalm 53 as foreign besiegers of Israel turns on the translation of one word in v. 5 (in the Hebrew text v. 6). The word is **עצמות**, the root meaning of which is bone. Tate renders the word "besiegers' bones" which may be more than the word itself can bear, although under this word the follow comment can be offered "Especially severe divine judgment results in the bones of God's enemies being scattered or exposed (Ps

53:5(6); and others..." (NIDOTTE vol 3:500). Even if Tate is making too much of this, the verses are significantly different. The reference to terror has been intensified by parallelism. The poor have disappeared to be replaced by God scattering bones in judgment. Where Ps. 14:6 ends with a positive word of encouragement for the poor who will find Yahweh to be their refuge, in Ps. 53:5 the climax is focused upon the ungodly who are rejected by God.

In Psalm 14 the salvation for Israel is the reversal of the fortunes of the poor who have been mistreated but will receive vindication from God and be restored in his favour. The salvation given from Zion in Psalm 53 is also a restoration of the fortunes of the people of God, but here it is following a defeat of enemies, the ungodly whose bones have been scattered, who have faced such terror as cannot be imagined. We are not to imagine two different and separate salvations from the Lord for his people, rather two aspects of the one great work of salvation. It is part of the function of the differences between the two similar psalms to identify these two aspects of salvation. Such differences between two closely similar psalms cannot be minimised without missing the point. If all that were at stake was the use of the divine name no more would need to be said, but there is more here. By changing one verse the focus of the psalm has been changed. It is surely the task of a commentator alert to the possibilities of editorial work within the Psalter to comment upon such differences and changes in texts. At the very least, we can say that here is an example where a later reworking, (and there is no need to doubt that Psalm 53 does post-date Psalm 14,) has been undertaken to effect a considerable change in focus of the psalm.

In passing Tate comments

It is interesting to note that Pss 11, 12, 13, and 14 can be taken together as a kind of prophetic liturgy. The same could be said for Pss 52 and 53. Not enough attention has been paid to the placement of psalms in the Psalter and their interrelations. (1990:41).

I could not agree more!

Chapter 5 Psalms 90 to 106

In this chapter we turn to consider the contents of the psalms in Book IV. Having examined the evidence for editorial work in the Psalter in general we will look more closely at this specific group of psalms and try to observe the editorial process at work here.

5.1 Introductory remarks

These psalms are marked out from the surrounding psalms as a group by the doxology verses in Psalms 89 and 106. It will be helpful to give consideration to the content of Psalms 89 and 107 that we might identify connections between them and the group of psalms between them.

Within the group a noticeable feature is the absence of psalm headings from many of the psalms. Only seven out of 17 psalms in the group have headings. The run of psalms from Psalm 93 to Psalm 97 is the longest run of psalms in the Psalter without headings. The import of this is that techniques used by editors employing information from psalm headings will not be a major feature of the editorial work in Book IV. This feature continues into Book V and Wilson has written

In the first three books, author and genre designations in the psalm-headings are utilized editorially to group psalms together and to indicate divisions between such groupings. In the later books, where such designations are largely lacking, *hllwyh* psalms (or groups of such psalms) regularly mark the conclusion of segments while *hwdw* psalms (those beginning with *hwdw lyhwh ky twb ky l'wlm hsdw*) begin subsequent sections. (1993b:73).

In this study we recognise the work done on these psalms in Book IV by David M Howard. In his work Howard recognises two levels of editorial work on the Psalter, writing of “the higher level of organization of the Psalter itself or of large collections therein and on the lower level of inter-psalm links.” (1993:108). Howard has given us an example of an examination of this ‘lower level’ study of the lexical links between psalms in his major work *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*. For such a study to be exhaustive, Howard contends it should examine “every lexeme in all of its relationships, along with other cohesive phenomena.”

(1993:108, note 2). Wilson supports Howard's methodology here, writing in the same volume

Analysis of the arrangement of psalms must proceed from ... (2) the detailed and systematic investigation of linguistic and thematic connections between psalms within these groupings and their subgroups. (1993b:50).

This level of detailed study will indeed prove very helpful in identifying connections between psalms and groups of psalms. However, a warning must be raised. How are we to think of psalms or groups of psalms being written? If a group of psalms were written by a single author then we could reasonably expect to find such a high level of lexical correspondence between psalms. I am not aware that anyone in the modern period has suggested that all the psalms or groups of psalms have a common author. Even the work done on the Korahite or Asaphite psalms presents a model of a school or group of psalmists working together to produce their psalms. A second concern would be the accessibility of such lexical connections to a reader of the psalms. Are we to imagine that someone meditating upon the psalms in the second Temple period would engage in high level lexical study to uncover the details of linking that exist between psalms? The use of computer aided study techniques have produced a great concern for word counting at a level no ordinary reader of the text could engage in.

This study cannot be exhaustive in the way Howard describes and does not attempt to be. However there is still a contribution to be made in psalms study without such attention to lexical detail. Howard writes of his essay in the McCann volume

The present essay will undertake to investigate the inter-psalm links of a group of consecutive psalms in Book IV, Psalms 90-94. Attention is paid primarily to lexical repetitions between psalms. The study is not exhaustive, in that it does not consider every lexical repetition among every psalm in this group, but it considers the significant links between adjacent psalms, as well as other links among non-adjacent psalms. (1993:108f.).

The distinction Howard is making seems to be that there are 'significant links' that can be observed on the face of the text, from a close reading of the text, without this high level of lexical engagement. It is this level of study I intend for this chapter. I have considered beginning my study of these psalms with the

major groups found within Book IV, namely the Yahweh as King psalms, Psalms 93, 96-99, and the *hllwyh*, *hwdw* psalms, Psalms 104-106. I have decided against this since this is not the normal way a reader would approach these psalms. If we are correct to understand Psalm 1 to be setting out a programme of reading the psalms and meditating upon them, surely part of that programme is to use the following book in the order it is presented to the meditating reader.

5.2 Books I to III and Psalm 89

The place and function of Psalm 1 has been a focus of study in recent years. B. S. Childs writes of the introduction to the Psalter

Psalm 1 is generally classified as a 'Torah Psalm' and is akin to Pss. 19b and 119 in its praise of the law. ... It is highly significant that the psalmist understands Israel's prayer as a response to God's prior speaking. Israel's prayers are not simply spontaneous musings or uncontrolled aspirations, but rather an answer to God's word which continues to address Israel in his Torah.

The present editing of this original Torah psalm has provided the psalm with a new function as the introduction to the whole Psalter. ... Certainly in its final stage of development, Ps. 1 has assumed a highly significant function as a preface to the psalms which are to be read, studied, and meditated upon. ... The introduction points to these prayers as the medium through which Israel now responds to the divine word. Because Israel continues to hear God's word through the voice of the psalmist's response, these prayers now function as the divine word itself. The original cultic role of the psalms has been subsumed under a larger category of the canon. (1979:513).

Childs presents us with Psalm 1 having originally existed in another context being taken and reused in this crucial introductory role in the Psalter. The two ways are set before the meditating reader and the way that will be blessed by Yahweh is the way of faithful, sustained reading and meditating upon his Torah. By this we are to understand the written self revelation of Yahweh

In Psalm 1 this merciful revelation of the will of God is presupposed as something fixed and written. For an understanding of this view of תורה we must in the first place adduce the late Deuteronomic, or

Deuteronomistic, conception. The תורה is the complete, written revelation of the will of God, which may be read in public (Deut. 31:9-11) or in private (Josh. 1:7). (Kraus 1993a:116).

We approach the Psalter as a text, a written text, to be used in meditation upon the Torah of Yahweh. The final sentence from my quotation of Childs is apt: 'The original cultic role of the psalms has been subsumed under a larger category of the canon.' We may disagree about the nature or scope of canon. However, the first point in this sentence is valid, and the psalms are not now to be read as liturgical or cultic texts, even though for many – if not all – this has been their original background. It is not the cult, but the editorial framework, that will provide the hermeneutic for the person who delights in the Torah of Yahweh to read and find his blessing.

In a seminal essay on the function of the Psalter Walter Brueggemann has written of the reader of the psalms moving from obedience to praise. Opening the Psalter Psalm 1 "asserts that the Psalter is intended for and intends to evoke and authorize a community of trusting, joyous obedience." (1991:66). At the other end of the Psalter, Psalm 150 is an unrestrained offering of praise to Yahweh.

The Psalm expresses a lyrical self-abandonment, an utter yielding of self, without vested interest, calculation, desire, or hidden agenda. This praise is nothing other than a glad offer of self in lyrical surrender made only to the God appropriately addressed in praise. (1991:67).

The path taken on this movement from obedience to praise is of great importance "My thesis is that the way from torah obedience to self-abandoning doxology is by way of *candour about suffering* and *gratitude about hope*. (1991:72, emphasis is the author's own). One of the important achievements of this essay is to describe a movement throughout the entire Psalter. Over the years the repeated suggestion that the Psalter is the hymn book of ancient Israel has robbed the Psalter of such a sense of cohesion and purpose. Certainly in most, if not all, modern hymn books there is very little sense of the texts moving from one to the next in a pattern that could be described as a movement. Here is the conclusion Brueggemann offers at the end of his essay

The literature of the Psalms articulates the shape, not only of a biblical book, but of Israel's faith and of Israel's life. In the end, the obedience of

Psalms 1 and the praise of psalm 150 are not simply literary boundaries, but the boundaries for Israel's life and faith. For all the drama of faith and life between these two Psalms and between these two gestures of faith, we are required to have both a sense of a beginning and a sense of an ending, both about this literature and about his faith. (1991:91).

To meditate upon and through the Psalter is to engage upon a journey of faith and life. This is a journey in the real world of hope and dreams, of failures and disappointments. It is at one of the key turning points on this journey that we meet Psalms 90 to 106.

In Books I to III psalms headings highlight for us concerns about authorship and genre. There is a significant interest in David and the life of David, and in the content of the psalms upon the Davidic covenant. Wilson writes "A brief glance at Pss 2, 41, 72 and 89 reveals an interesting progression in thought regarding kingship and the Davidic covenant." (1985:209). The psalms mentioned here are the concluding psalms in Books I, II and III together with Psalm 2 which forms a second introduction to the Psalter, or perhaps to Book I. Having considered Psalms 2, 41 and 72 Wilson writes

If Book One is viewed as an independent unit bounded by Pss 2 and 41, the resulting effect is a very Davidic group of pss in which the proclamation of YHWH's special covenant with his king in Ps 2 is matched by David's assurance of God's continued preservation in the presence of YHWH. ... So the covenant which YHWH made with David (Ps 2) and in whose promises David rested secure (Ps 41) is now passed on to his descendants in this series of petitions in (sic) behalf of "the king's son" (Ps 72). (1985:210f.).

Thus Book I and II reflect a story of faith and life in the nation focused upon God's covenant with his chosen king and the king in obedience resting upon the covenant promises made for him by Yahweh. There is a noted change in Book III the former confidence in the covenant with David and in the king and the nation's obedience and commitment to this covenant has been shaken and this is highlighted in Psalm 89.

Psalms 89 is composed of three elements

- (1) Vv. 1-18: a hymn on the **הוֹדָה יְהוָה** which have become evident in God's work of creation (battle against chaos) and in the election of the

dynasty of David. (2) Vv. 19-37: a detailed reference to an oracle of God by which David was elected and – for his descendants – received the promise of the abiding protection of Yahweh. (3) Vv. 38-51: a lament over the decline of the kingdom of David. (Kraus 1993b:202).

The decline of the kingdom of David is a problem to be faced for those holding to the faith and life of Israel. In his concluding comments on this psalm Kraus writes

The **ברית** with David has installed the earthly rulers of the house of David as representatives of the universal rule of Yahweh. Irrefragable is the great basic promise. **אמנה** is the predominant term in vv. 19-37. Yahweh means to keep his word. His promise is not to be rescinded by any unforeseen incident. On the background of these two facts the lament about the incomprehensible rejection and repudiation of the Davidites breaks loose. Does Yahweh no longer stand behind his promises? Does he break the covenant? Indeed, he has dissolved it! He has hidden himself and placed his servant in the midst of his enemies as one scorned and despised.

Here the OT comes upon an inconceivable situation. (1993b:211).

This is the question, the anguished cry from the heart of the reader of the psalms to which, as Wilson proposes, Book IV stands as the answer.

In my opinion, Pss 90-106 function as the editorial “centre” of the final form of the Hebrew Psalter. As such this grouping stands as the “answer” to the problem posed in Ps 89 as to the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant with which Books One-Three are primarily concerned. (1985:215).

5.3 Psalm 90

In chapter 2 I have written on Psalm 90 and its relation to Psalm 89 when commenting upon the major seams linking the five book division of the Psalter. Having shown that these two psalms are well matched to conclude and introduce these two Books I will not repeat that argument here.

Psalm 90 can be analysed as follows:

Verses 1 and 2 – the title to the psalm with an introduction, certainly to the particular psalm and possibly to the collection that is Book IV.

Verses 3 to 12 – the first main section of Ps 90, which with Kraus is more easily divided into three parts; vv. 3-6, vv. 7-9 and vv. 10-12, rather than the NRSV's five-part division.

Verses 13 to 17 – the conclusion to this psalm with the Imperative opening the appeal to the Lord in these verses.

5.3.1 Verses 1 and 2

As I have mentioned the ascription to Moses is unique and unexpected. The opening section of the psalm brings us into the realm of the eternal God, a God who has been for all generations. If this psalm is a post-exilic creation, and indeed deliberately placed to open Book IV there will be a need to tie back in with the history of the people of Israel from before the exile, and perhaps the further back the better. There are two psalms in Book IV ascribed to David, so the tradition of associating psalms with David is not being abandoned whole scale. But this is not only the faith of David, whose kingdom and line has apparently failed; this is the faith and the God of Moses.²⁶

That Yahweh is an eternal God, the eternal God, is very important in understand Book IV. We should note that this theme is picked up through this group of Psalms:

- Ps 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
 or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
 from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
- Ps 92:8 (9) but you, O LORD, are on high forever.
- Ps 93:2 your throne is established from of old:
 you are from everlasting.
- Ps 100:5 For the LORD is good;
 his steadfast love endures forever,
 and his faithfulness to all generations.

²⁶ This looking back beyond an immediate historical context to a foundational time is part of the history and self understanding of the Church of Scotland. Dr Cox comments of the reformation of the Church in 1560, "That achievement was not its [the Church of Scotland's] origin but its reformation, while in great measure also its transformation, without loss of its identity. The Church of our fathers has a much longer lineage and a much greater heritage than is comprised in four centuries. It has been built up, stage by stage, 'upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.' The Church of Scotland is a part of the One Holy and Catholic Church" (1976:1) The Church of Scotland looks back beyond the events of the sixteenth century to the foundational events of the first century and defines herself as a Church in these more ancient terms.

- Ps 102:12 (13) But you, O LORD, are enthroned forever;
your name endures to all generations.
- Ps 103:9 He will not always accuse,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
- Ps 103:17 But the steadfast love of the LORD is
from everlasting to everlasting
on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,
- Ps 104:5 You set the earth on its foundations,
so that it shall never be shaken.
Heb: בִּלְתִּי־הִמּוּט עוֹלָם וָעֶד
- Ps 104:31 May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works—
- Ps 105:8 He is mindful of his covenant forever,
of the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,
- Ps 105:10 which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
- Ps 106:1 Praise the LORD!
O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.
- Ps 106:48 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
And let all the people say, "Amen,"
Praise the LORD! (NRSV)

For completeness we note in Ps 106

30 Then Phinehas stood up and interceded,
and the plague was stopped.

31 And that has been reckoned to him as righteousness
from generation to generation forever. (NRSV)

Yahweh, who is from everlasting to everlasting, is the one who is able to bless his servants, in this case Phinehas, with a gift of righteousness that will endure to eternal generations.

Thus in 17 psalms we find the form of the word עולם used 15 times, or 0.882 times per psalm. The figures for this word in the rest of the Psalter are:

	No of Psalms	No of uses of עולם	Use per psalm
Book I	41	22	0.536
Book II	31	17	0.548
Book III	17	17	1.00
Book V	44	68	1.545

Table 5.1 Use of עולם in Books I, II, III and V.

The percentage use of עולם per psalm increases in Books III and IV over Books I and II and is much increased in Book V. If the question being raised in Psalm 89 is how can Yahweh abandon his covenant with David? Then part of the answer is to remind the reader that Yahweh is an eternal God whose steadfast love, faithfulness, glory and name are eternal and who is “mindful of his covenant forever” Ps. 105:8. Finding עולם in the opening section of Psalm 90 and in the frame of Psalm 106 is surely significant; Book IV opens and closes with references to Yahweh as eternal God.

This introduction turns the eyes of the worshipper away from this earth, indeed to that time and place before this earth when there was only God. He alone was in the ‘everlasting’ time before creation and he will remain into the ‘everlasting’ time that is to come. In this context, worshipping this God the person using this psalm is to reflect upon the human condition, the futility of life, the certainty of death. Wrestling with such an apparently hopeless condition no one need be alone, for this everlasting God is eternally present. Together with this eternal God the reader is able to turn to the wisdom traditions we face in the next section of this psalm.

5.3.2 Verses 3 to 12

The first main section of the psalm opens with the Hiphil Imperfect, which is set against the Qal Imperative in which opens v. 13. The human condition, that all people are turned back to dust, is the work of God. The subject of v. 3 cannot be any other than the God introduced in vv. 1, 2. In contrast to this God who sees a thousand years as yesterday, our lives are short and soon over.

This reality of life is further identified as a function of the exercise of God's wrath, vv. 7-9. There is no truth in the proud human shaking a fist at life and death, our short years end with a whimper.

In the midst of the troubles faced in this life, and the people returned from exile knew something of the troubles of this life, no one learns how to take account of the days. The human condition is endured; it is not examined that we may learn from it. Verse 12 begins to tackle this troubling situation; wisdom for the accounting of the days of our lives may be had, but only from God and only in prayer.

The problem of the human condition does not overshadow the problem of the failure of the Davidic covenant. Rather together they form part of the larger problem of faith and life that the Psalter wrestles with. How can a frail and mortal human live in covenant with an eternal and powerful God? The covenant with David is intended to be part of the answer to this greater question and so any apparent failure in this covenant must be attended to.

The use of wisdom themes in this section surely reinforced the influence of the wisdom school upon the final form of the Psalter. If Psalm 1 is representative of this school of writing and reflecting upon Yahweh's self revelation then the psalms have been moved out of the cultic framework into this new way of relating to Yahweh. Psalm 90 is part of this programme as we see the reflection upon human frailty carried out in a non-cultic context of meditation a word from Yahweh, v. 3b. The use of didactic and wisdom traditions in other psalms in Book IV will similarly be noted.

5.3.3 Verses 13 to 17

Now the second Imperative in the psalm v. 13, the first is the opening word of the Lord's judgment upon humanity in v. 3. It is a powerful, pleading cry from a heart given over to seeking Yahweh and his truth, to knowing the reality of life in the presence of an eternal Lord

The language in these verses is the language of mercy and covenant. The compassion of the Lord is sought for his servants, those who have already come into a relationship with him. It is only in this section and here only once, that the covenant name of the Lord is used. The desire of this prayer is for satisfaction in the Lord's love, for the experience of rejoicing and gladness. In vv. 16f. the desire is to see the works of the Lord, his power and in requesting the favour or

beauty of the Lord to be upon us, is it not the presence of God, the light of his face, which is desired.

These petitions of the lamenting reader or community display a complete dependence upon Yahweh. As Kraus writes

After this greater depth of repentance and lamentation has been achieved in vv. 1-12, the petitions break out in vv. 13ff. They reveal the hunger for mercy and goodness on the part of the people of God who have suffered a long time. Yahweh has hidden himself. All the petitions are to the effect that he may appear again, that he may show himself as the Lord of history again. Without his effective intervention, all human activity is without foundation and empty (vv. 16f) Therefore the community prays for a new establishment of all of the work of life through Yahweh's goodness. (1993b:218).

Only the sovereign work of Yahweh as eternal God will bring restoration to the people who in meditating upon his Torah and by prayer depend upon him.

5.4 Psalm 91

Unlike Psalm 90, there is no title to Psalm 91. Kraus notes that the Greek Septuagint offers 'a stereotype formula' (1993b:220). As Kraus suggests this is unnecessary and should not be considered as part of the Hebrew text of the Psalm.

Wilson, building on evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls psalms texts proposes that in some instances the s/s (or rather the *absence* of a s/s) may function as an intentional editorial method to indicate a tradition of the combination of the "untitled" ps with its immediate predecessor." (1985:173).

Noting that there is Hebrew manuscript evidence joining Psalm 91 with Psalm 90, Wilson rejects this adding that data from the Qumran manuscripts "indicates these hymns enjoyed an independent existence." (1985:178). Wilson comments on the relationship between the two psalms

Certain correspondences between the two may suggest a rationale for juxtaposition, if not for combination or unity. Ps 90 is attributed to Moses and praises YHWH in verse 1 as a "refuge in all generations." It then questions the reasons for God's distance from his people and pleads for his return. Ps 91 picks up on the refuge motif in 91:1 and suggests the protective presence of YHWH is still available to those who put their trust in

him. Similarly, the suggestion in 91:1 that those who trust 'Elyôn "[God] Most High" and are protected by Šadday "The Almighty" (two pre-Mosaic epithets of the deity) will also trust in YHWH, is reminiscent of the revelation to Israel of the divine name in Exodus (Exod 3:1-22; 6:2-8), an event in which Moses played a most significant role. Again, while these connections suggest the reasons why Pss90 and 91 came to occupy consecutive positions, it does not seem likely that they formed an original unity. (1985:177f.).

As Wilson shows there are connections between Psalms 90 and 91, however, even without a title on Psalm 91 we can see that these are not of the same order as other pairs of psalms earlier in the Psalter where the second psalm has no title, e.g. Psalms 9 and 10. Howard comments on the presence of a number of psalms without titles in Books IV-V

... even here the convention seems to apply. Some manuscripts combine up to four consecutive psalms as one, and at least one combines five. ... The presence of lengthy and complex compositions that emerge from such combinations argues against these having been composed together originally, but rather points to their combination having been an editorial one. (1993:119).

The absence of a title on Psalm 91 alerts us to an editorial connection between Psalms 91 and 90. Psalm 91 is described by Kraus as a didactic poem and by Tate as a psalm for instruction and exhortation. This form being used in Psalm 91 clearly continues the learned psalmography form found in Psalm 90, especially in vv. 3-12.

Psalm 91 is usually analysed in three sections:

Verses	Kraus	Tate
1-2	A formula of invitation (spoken by the priest)	Opening declarations of trust and commitment
3-13	A didactic poem	A sermonette of encouragement
14-16	An oracle from God	A divine oracle

Table 5.2 Analysis of Psalm 91.

5.4.1 Verses 1 and 2

There is an interesting difference in interpretation of these two verses. Kraus is thinking of "A person who has entered the protective area of Yahweh, the sanctuary, is called on to make a thankful confession" (1993b:221), and later will more precisely define this protective area

סֶחָר, originally "the hiding place," "the refuge," has in the language of the psalms become a term for the protective area of the sanctuary (cf. Pss. 27:5; 31:20; 61:4). And with צֶל, as is clear from v. 4, צֶל כְּנֹפֶיךָ (Pss. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 63:7), the reference is to the secure area underneath the outstretched wings of the cherubim in the holy of holies. (1993b:222).

This we may describe as a typical liturgical, cultic understanding of the psalm. We are invited to imagine a troubled worshipper coming into the Temple in their distress and being called upon by a priest, or perhaps by another worshipper, to trust in Yahweh.

Tate offers an alternative. Taking v. 1 as a thematic statement "It is a kind of 'text' for the prayer-exhortation in vv 2-13." (1990:453). Answering the question of who is speaking Tate writes

The speaker is an individual person of faith who bears testimony of his/her commitment while delivering a sermonette-like exhortation on the basis of a "text" (thematic statements) in v 1 ... The direct address to God in v 2 is the speaker's testimony to personal appropriation of the statement in v 1. This basic thesis is then explicated in a series of striking metaphors in vv 3-13, interrupted by another affirmation to God in v 9a. The whole is given divine authenticity in the form of the oracle in vv 14-16, where God declares that he does indeed do what the speaker has said. The last words in the psalm are not spoken *to* God but are spoken *by* God to us (Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 157).

(1990:458, emphasis is the author's own).

It is surely possible the Kraus is right; at one time this may indeed be how the psalm was used. But this is not how the psalm is presented to us in its present context. A move away from the temple has taken place and we find ourselves beside the praying person meditating upon the word of the Lord. The dialogue in the psalm may be an internal dialogue between the worshipper and their soul or

spirit. In a way parallel to that in Psalms 103 and 104 when they call upon ones own soul to bless the Lord, so here the call may be issued by oneself and directed to oneself to seek refuge in Yahweh.

The use of divine titles in v. 1 is surely interesting, having noted the ascription to Moses on Psalm 90 here we find very ancient titles for God being used

the divine names Elyon and Shaddai are also well known in the Yahwistic traditions (see Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 49:25; Exod 6:3; Deut 32:8; Ruth 1:20, 21; Job passim; Ps 18:14; Joel 1:15). Their usage represents significant developments in the history of Israelite religion, and they were used in cults other than that of Yahweh, but in the present context there is no doubt that they are names of Yahweh. (1990:453).

Once again we see the user of the psalm reaching back to the very beginnings of the spiritual life of Israel and yet bringing all that is found there in submission to Yahweh.

5.4.2 Verses 3 to 13

The difference between a didactic poem and a sermonette of encouragement is slight. We are to identify the speaker in vv. 3-13 with the one making the expression of trust and faith in v. 2. Kraus is surely right to say "The didactic speech in vv. 3-13 underpins the confession intimated in v. 2." (1993b:222). Faith in Yahweh is not ever blind trust; it grows following meditation upon his word. Thus even expressions of faith or trust such as v. 2 must depend upon some revelation of Yahweh for its relevance and strength. All the metaphors and images used in these verses are of the warp and woof of the religion of Israel.

5.4.3 Verses 14 to 16

These climactic verses are an oracle from Yahweh. As such they have a significant connection to verses in Psalm 95

The presence of an oracle of Yahweh at the close of this psalm parallels that at the close of Ps 95, except, of course, the context is quite different. These are the only two oracles in Pss 90-100, which seem to form an anthological subunit, introduced by the Moses-psalm in Ps 90 and recalling the early days of Israel's history under the leadership of Yahweh's great servant (Tate 1990:458).

This is to look ahead, and we will see the connection between these two oracles more clearly looking back from Psalm 95.

The oracle here functions as a vindication of the didactic poem and the expression of trust and faith earlier in the psalm. It is as though Yahweh were saying something like 'Yes, I am this kind of God and I will do all that you have declared of me.' We should note that in v. 16 Yahweh promises to satisfy his people with long life, an especially apt promise following the pained consideration of the frailty and brevity of human life in Psalm 90. The wrestling and troubled nature of Psalm 90 is being transformed into a confident declaration of faith and hope in the eternal Yahweh.

5.5 Psalm 92

Psalm 92 is a hymn of thanksgiving, although, as Kraus notes, it contains elements of prayer song and didactic poetry and is thus the third psalm in a row with didactic elements. Howard writes of Psalm 92

Read in conjunction with the preceding two psalms, it now expresses the reader's/worshipper's response to the assurances of Psalms 90 and 91, especially 91. It is full of the trust and thanksgiving that are largely absent in Psalm 90. It is the first psalm in Book IV that contains the classic vocabulary of musical and joyful praise (vv. 2-5 [Eng. 1-4]). (1993:112).

An analysis of the psalm is unclear in that Kraus and Tate, as representative commentators, differ in this. Kraus offers a simple two part division of the psalm: vv. 2-4 an introduction, vv. 5-16 the main theme.²⁷ Tate offers a more complex chiasmic structure

A vv 1-4
 B vv 5-7
 C v 8
 D v 9
 C' v 10
 B' vv 11-12
 A' vv 13-16 (1990:464).

This seems unnecessarily complicated. It may be possible to offer a simpler structure that recognises the pivotal verse Tate's scheme seeks to highlight, namely v. 9. I would offer the following:

vv. 2-4 a hymnic element rejoicing in the delight of giving thanks to Yahweh.

²⁷ Here using Hebrew text verse numbers, in his commentary Kraus uses English verse numbers.

vv. 5-8 a wisdom section contrasting the one who delights to give thanks to Yahweh with the fool.

v. 9 the key verse focusing upon the eternity of Yahweh.

vv. 10-12 describing the victory of Yahweh over his enemies and over the worshipper's enemies.

vv. 13-16 describing the thriving of the righteous

5.5.1 Verse 1

I have commented upon the heading to Psalm 92 in chapter 3. Here let us note that the presence of a heading separates Psalm 92 from Psalm 91 as a discrete unit of text, there can be no suggestion of the two being one psalm.

5.5.2 Verses 2 to 4

Here we notice the reappearance of two terms at the end of v. 2 **לְשִׁמְךָ עֲלֵיוֹן** that appeared in Psalm 91, in v. 14 and v. 1. The reuse of an ancient title for God in the opening verse of the two psalms has a significant force bringing the two psalms into a relationship. The contemporary reader of the psalm is at home with ancient practices and description of Yahweh.

The morning and night theme in v. 3 is taken up from Ps. 90:5f., and perhaps in a slight way in Ps. 91:6, where there are references to the darkness and the noonday.

5.5.3 Verses 5 to 8

Verse 7 introduces major wisdom themes and v. 8 picks up the grass metaphor (cf. Ps. 90:5f.). For a hymn such as verses 2-4 to continue into a wisdom reflection surely demonstrates the pervasiveness of this wisdom thinking and tradition in the religion of Israel.

5.5.4 Verse 9

In contrast to the wicked who rise up and pass away Yahweh is the eternal God. Here again this major theme in Book IV appears, this time at the pivotal point of the psalm. There is no escaping from the everlasting Yahweh.

5.5.5 Verses 9 to 12 and Verses 13 to 15

These verses show in turn the defeat of the enemies and the vindication of the righteous. The use of the term **צוּר** in v. 16 represents another ancient designation of God (cf. Gen. 49:24; Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30). Part of the idea behind 'rock' as an appropriate description of Yahweh surely is permanence, the

immovability of a rock. And so without using the same language the theme of eternity is present here.

Howard shows how the psalm responds to Psalm 90

In general terms, Psalm 92 contains the answer to the petitions of Psalm 90, especially 90.13-17. Most strikingly, Ps 90:14a asks YHWH to 'satisfy us in the morning (with) your steadfast love' ... while Ps. 92:3a (Eng. 2a) states that it is good 'to declare in the morning your steadfast love'. Furthermore, 90.14b asks for these things 'that we may rejoice ... and be glad ... all our days', and 92.5 (Eng. 4) affirms that YHWH indeed has made the psalmist glad ... , and that he does rejoice. (1993:112).

Overall Psalm 92 changes the tone from a quiet trust, or even a troubled wrestling with faith and life in the presence of Yahweh into one of praise and thanksgiving. If the answer has not been given in physical terms, by faith it is grasped and rejoiced in.

5.6 Psalm 93

In Psalm 93 we come to the first of the Yahweh as King Psalms in Book IV, remembering that Psalm 47 from earlier in the Psalter is to be included in this type of psalm. In chapter 4 I have considered the evidence that these psalms form a recognisable type of psalm, even if a sub group of the song of praise.

This psalm is clearly a song of praise. It is not obviously an entrance ritual psalm, such as Psalm 24, which is how Kraus presents v. 1a. Kraus analyses the psalm in three parts; v. 1a – an entrance formula, vv. 1b-4 – the main body of the psalm, v. 5 – a conclusion focusing on God's law. (1993b:233-36). Tate also offers a three part division of the psalm; vv. 1-2 – an acclamation of divine kingship, vv. 3-4 – Yahweh's cosmic victory, v. 5 – The trustworthy testimonies of Yahweh (1990:479f.).

This is a tightly constructed psalm in which ideas and themes are rolled on from verse 1 into verse 2, then from verse 3 into verse 4. Verse 5 is a change from what has gone before introducing the Lord's words and his temple. The ideas and themes in the double set of two paired verses do suggest that these verses should be taken as a unit yielding Tate's simple structure.

5.6.1 Verses 1 and 2

Kraus wants to distance his comments from Mowinkel's "festival of the enthronement of Yahweh", yet he does not move completely away from a cultic,

festival setting for this and the other Yahweh as King Psalms. Discussing the setting for these psalms

... the question about the cultic “Sitz im Leben” of the song arises anew. When? At which occasion were the “Yahweh as King hymns” sung? Individual allusions may be found in Pss. 95:6; 96:9; 99:5. These verses show that in connection with the “entrance” of the festival gathering in the temple area (cf. מִיָּה in v. 5) a prostration before the God of Israel worshipped as “king” took place. ... There is much that suggests that the “entrance” and the “prostration” before “King” Yahweh belong to the cult of the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Zech. 14:16) But then we can also understand why in Ps 93:5 עֲדָנָה alludes to God’s law. The cultic expression of God’s law is from of old rooted in the fall festival of Israel, the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Deut 31:10ff;...) (1993b:233).

And thus Kraus eliminates the “enthronement festival of Yahweh” and replaces it with a setting in the Feast of Tabernacles. This is not Kraus’ only argument for rejecting the “enthronement festival of Yahweh”. He argues persuasively from v. 2a that “The unchanging, eternal state of Yahweh’s being king is here emphatically stressed.” (1993b:234).

On the meaning of the formula יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ Kraus helpfully writes of the difference introduced by the word order

The verbal statement יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ refers to a lively and stirring event, to the conclusion of the act of enthronement (cf. 1 Kings 1:11; Ps. 47:8; Isa 52:7); the statement of a condition מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה, on the other hand, describes an unchangeable state of being (cf. 1 Kings 1:18; Pss 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1). (1993b:233).

Kraus supports this reading with reference to v. 2a. Tate writes of the kingship of Yahweh “The King himself is no newcomer; his going forth is from eternity, and his throne was established long ago.” (1990:479). These verses then turn the focus fully away from any human king, who shares the human condition described in Psalm 90 onto the one who alone is eternal.

5.6.2 Verses 3 and 4

These verses demonstrate the reign of King Yahweh over all the chaos of the cosmos. Here are very ancient myths and legends used to display the greatness of Yahweh. We notice that the high position of Yahweh described in v. 4 takes up that theme from Ps. 92:9. In that key verse in Psalm 92, not only is Yahweh everlasting, he is on high, above all and over all.

Commenting on the imperfect form of the verb **שׁוּב** in the third colon of verse 3 Tate writes that

The case for continuation of the past tense in such verb sequences seems to be well established ...

Nevertheless, the cosmogonic victory of Yahweh should not be treated as a purely past event. The context of acclamation indicates a continuing threat: Why the acclamation of Yahweh as the Victor King if the “floods” have long ceased to be a problem? ... The “significations” do change, but *not fundamentally*. The drama is still real and it is actualized every time Yahweh is acclaimed King and the stories of his victories are told. In a sense the “floods” belong to the distant past, but their primordial roaring is also contemporary. (1990:480).

That which is ancient is resignified in a contemporary setting of the faith and life of Israel. Yahweh who has always been King, who remains King, who overcame the powerful forces of cosmic chaos can overcome today’s foes, be they exile, perplexity about the human condition or the failure of the Davidic covenant.

5.6.3 Verse 5

The decrees of the Lord that are very sure are the Torah of the Lord upon which the righteous person will meditate through using the Psalter. The house of the Lord is that place of the presence of Yahweh with his people; this is where the righteous will be planted, Ps. 92:14.

5.6.4 The place of Psalm 93

Not having a title may suggest that there is an editorial attempt to connect Psalm 93 with Psalm 92 and in the text of the psalm there have been noted correspondences in theme and language. However, Psalm 93 takes its connections to Psalm 92 and looks not back to the preceding psalm but forward to those coming next Psalms 94-100. It could be that the emphatic place given to

the **יהוה מלך** formula while not being a psalm heading in the technical sense is being used to introduce the series of Yahweh as King Psalms. Such an editorial arrangement clearly intends to include Psalms 94 and 95 within this framework. At this point in Book IV we are already beginning to see that the answer to the failure of a human king, or a covenant with a human king, is that Yahweh is King and always has been.

5.7 Psalm 94

Although this psalm has no heading, as with Psalm 93 we should not think there is any intention to combine these two psalms. The following table shows an analysis of the structure of the psalm, with my own headings in the third column.

Kraus	Tate	Kennedy
vv. 1-2 An appeal to Yahweh the Judge	vv. 1-2 Address to Yahweh and petitions	vv. 1-2 Prayer
vv. 3-7 A prayer song	vv. 3-7 Lament about present distress	vv. 3-7 A description of the wicked
vv. 8-11 Replies to v. 7	vv. 8-11 Rebuke of the fools	vv. 8-11 A warning
vv. 12-15 Instruction for the righteous	vv. 12-15 Reassurance for the righteous	vv. 12-15 Blessed assurance
vv. 16-23 The fate of the petitioner	vv. 16-23 Reassurance based on personal experience	vv. 16-23 Only Yahweh is my fortress

Table 5.3 Analysis of Psalm 94.

The form of Psalm 94 is agitated displaying the prayer form, verses of exhortation and encouragement and declarations of faith and trust.

Howard demonstrates a significant series of vocabulary links between Psalms 93 and 94 and writes

Throughout Psalm 94, what is at issue is human pride and arrogance; thus YHWH's pride in 93.1 forms the counterpoint to this in 94.2ff. The fact the YHWH is clothed with this proud majesty and with strength reduces the pride of the wicked ones of Psalm 94 to an insignificant or absurd position. ... Confidence in YHWH's sovereignty provides a measure of justification

for the call on God to intervene in the people's behalf in Psalm 94.
(1993:115).

This is entirely right and establishes a clear thematic connection between Psalm 93 and Psalm 94. It is therefore surprising to read later in the same essay "By subject matter, it is somewhat misplaced among a group largely composed of kingship of YHWH psalms." (1993:120). At this later point Howard resorts to the unhappy position of using the absence of a psalm heading to combine Psalms 93 and 94. There is no need to go to such lengths, especially after demonstrating such lexical cohesion.

5.7.1 Verses 1 and 2

There is no point in declaring **יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ** unless Yahweh does the work of a king. This is the subject of the prayer in these verses; to do vengeance, justice, to 'give the proud what they deserve' (v. 2b, NRSV). It is only because Yahweh is King that such a prayer can be offered. The Davidic king can only do these things in part, at best imperfectly, and after a failure in the Davidic dynasty not at all. Someone needs to be the protector and judge of the people; this is the work of the king. Now that there is no Davidic king who will do this? And so Howard is entirely right, Yahweh's sovereign rule over his people, as celebrated in Psalm 93 is the only foundation for this prayer.

5.7.2 Verses 3 to 7 and 8 to 11

In the description of the wicked we should note that in their wickedness they abuse words v. 4. For a God who has made himself known by words and calls those who will be righteous to meditate upon his words this is a great wickedness. This is not to ignore the wickedness of social injustice practiced upon the poor and needy vv. 5f. The warning against the wicked in vv. 8-11 turns upon the people seeking Yahweh who indeed sees and knows that he might make them wise in his ways.

5.7.3 Verses 12 to 15

The wisdom of the blessed life is again presented here and we note how in v. 12 this is closely connected to the Torah of Yahweh. The repeated negative in v. 14 emphasises the eternal, continual security of Yahweh's people.

5.7.4 Verses 16 to 23

The climax to the psalm is a turning to Yahweh as King. No other king will do only Yahweh can be an effective king in the situation of the reader of this psalm. In all anxiety and trouble this King will remain a strong rock-like help and support. We notice that the rock theme to describe Yahweh returns from Ps. 92:16

Taking the psalm as a whole while the key phrase **יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ** does not appear in the psalm there can be little doubt but that this is a psalm intended to turn the heart and mind of the reader who meditates upon it towards the functions of Yahweh who is King. And so while not forming part of a declaration of Yahweh as King this psalm is very much part of a presentation of Yahweh as King. It is little good being declared king unless the work of the king is done, and this is what Psalm 94 addresses.

5.8 Psalm 95

The analysis of Kraus is helpful here

vv. 1-7a, song of thanksgiving with two introductions (vv. 1-2 and 6) and two main sections introduced by **כִּי** ... vv. 7b-11, prophetic word of admonition. Conspicuous is the sudden change from the joy of praising God (vv. 1-7a) to the seriousness of warning and admonishing (vv. 7b-11) (1993b:245).

Again there is no title or heading on Psalm 95 and we should not look to combine this psalm with Psalm 94.

5.8.1 Verses 1 to 7a

Immediately we see connections with surrounding psalms. The rock appears again, as has been noted in Psalms 92:16; 94:22. In v. 1 **רִנֵּן** is an synonym of **שִׁיר** in Psalms 96 and 98 and is used in v. 1 of Psalm 100 at the end of this series of psalms in the midst of Book IV.

In v. 3 the two words **יְהוָה** and **מֶלֶךְ** are used adjacent to one another, but each is in one of the two lines of the verse. Nevertheless we should not miss this use of these key terms even if not exactly in the form required to fully include Psalm 95 in the type of a Yahweh as King Psalm. The language is not identical but the thought in v. 3 that Yahweh is 'above all gods' (NRSV) finds a thematic parallel

in the idea of Yahweh being 'on high' Ps. 92:9 and Ps. 93:4. The theme of Yahweh as creator is again an ancient theme in Israel's understanding of God. This hymnic section of the psalm is certainly not out of place in this part of Book IV.

5.8.2 Verses 7b to 11

It is surprising to read of such difficulties in combining the two sections of Psalm 95. If we ask ourselves the simple question, how is the King whom we are call to praise with songs in vv 1-7a made known? How are we to honour and serve him who alone is our King? The answer is in this second section of the psalm.

7b Today, if you hear his voice,
8 do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah,
as you did that day as Massah in the desert,

The references are clearly to two narratives in Exod. 17:1ff. and Num. 20:1ff. The implications are unmistakable: where your fathers in the desert heard the voice of Yahweh and did not obey, you must now hear and obey.

Here is another reference to Moses and the exodus traditions. This time it is not a positive reference. Looking back beyond the failure of the Davidic covenant there is no golden age when all was well in the land and the people were universally righteous and obedient to the word of Yahweh. But is this not incredibly hopeful? Even after such rebellion in the desert Yahweh led his people into the land, he chose and established his king and his temple and made covenant promises with a people whose fathers had been guilty rebels. And so for a people post-exile reading and meditating upon this psalm and the whole word of Yahweh there is hope. Yahweh has not withdrawn his word. There is still a place for those who will hear and obey this word to live in the presence of this God who is eternally faithful to his covenants and promises.

5.9 Psalms 96 to 99

Although these psalms are four independent units of text I think there is wisdom in considering the group as a unit, or at least as a group of psalms closely and intimately associated with one another. Tate in his commentary treats these psalms as a unit apparently on the basis that they are all of the type designated "enthronement psalms". Tate is unhappy with the designation "Enthronement psalms" preferring kingship-of-Yahweh psalms. Let us look in general at the four psalms and see what areas of connection there are within this group.

5.9.1 Psalms 96 and 98

Psalm 96 and Psalm 98 both open with an identical first line.

שִׁירֵי יְהוָה שִׁיר חָדָשׁ

The psalm heading on Psalm 98 is a very general and non-specific psalm heading and may indicate no more than Psalm 98 being a new unit of text discrete from Psalm 97 and so in that way highlighting the opening line identical to that used just two psalms earlier.

Within the text of the psalms there are areas of correspondence particularly in the final part of each psalm.

Ps. 96:10 has the key phrase **יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ** and this is not in the initial place. Ps. 98:6 has the phrase at the end of the second line **יְהוָה הַמֶּלֶךְ** in reverse. Although BHS suggests that **יְהוָה** should be deleted on account of meter this should not be accepted. As has been commented before meter in Hebrew poetry is complex and agreement on meter is far from certain and to delete this part of a significant phrase on such subjective grounds is dangerous. Clearly as used in this verse **יְהוָה הַמֶּלֶךְ** cannot be read as an acclamation of enthronement, but remains a confident assertion of the kingship of Yahweh.

From v. 11b to the end in Psalm 96 and v. 7 to the end in Psalm 98 there is great similarity between these psalms.

Psalm 96	Psalm 98
v. 11b let the sea roar, and all that fills it;	v. 7a Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;-
v. 12a let the field exult, and everything in it.	v. 7b the world and those who live in it.
v. 12b Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy	v. 8 let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy
v. 13a before the LORD; for he is coming,	v. 9a at the presence of the LORD, for he is coming
v. 13b for he is coming to judge the earth.	v. 9b to judge the earth
v. 14a He will judge the world with righteousness,	v. 9c He will judge the world with righteousness,
v. 14b and the peoples with his truth.	v. 9d and the peoples with equity.

Table 5.4 Showing parallels between Ps. 96:11b-1 and Ps. 98:7-9.

On these impressive correspondences Tate comments “These verses [Ps. 98:7-9] are very similar to 96:11-13 and function in a similar way in this psalm.” (1990:525). Tate offers the following analysis of the two psalms that may be set against one another:

Psalm 96

vv. 1-6: A call to praise Yahweh,
who is greater than all other gods.

vv. 7-13: A call to praise Yahweh,
who is coming to judge the earth.
(1990:512f).

Psalm 98

vv. 1-6: A call to praise Yahweh,
and to celebrate his wonderful
works.

vv. 7-9: A call to praise Yahweh,
who is coming to judge the world.
(1990:524f).

Psalm 96 displays considerable parallels with Ps 29; v. 7 with Ps. 29:1f, v. 9 with Ps. 29:2b. There is also an exact parallel in Ps. 96:10aβ with Ps. 93:1c. Thus Psalm 96 shows an awareness of older traditions such as Psalm 29 which is a very ancient psalm and yet is set in the context of the Yahweh as King Psalms such as Psalm 93.

Both psalms, Psalm 96 and Psalm 98, follow a similar pattern and cover the same ground. There is an introductory call to ‘sing to the LORD a new song.’ (96:1a; 98:1a). The newness of the song is not that it has never been sung before but that it is sung anew in the situation of the reader of the psalms. The song is a song of Yahweh and his ‘marvellous works among all the peoples.’ (96:3b). In the light of the failure of the Davidic covenant these psalms insist that ‘The LORD has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.’ (98:2). The vindication being revealed must be that of the Lord’s people who have apparently been defeated and scattered over the face of the world. Both psalms conclude with a call to those people, who know Yahweh as King, to praise him and glorify him. The declaration **יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ** is to be made ‘among the nations’ (96:10a). All creation is to join to praise him and so all the world is to be told that Yahweh he is King.

5.9.2 Psalms 97 and 99.

Ps 97 and Ps 99 also open in terms showing a high level of similarity.

1:97 **יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ תִּגְלַת תִּאָּרֵץ**

The initial phrase is the key refrain for the Yahweh as King Psalms only the ending of the line show a slight variation.

There are four other significant points of connection between these two psalms.

Ps. 97: 2 Clouds and thick darkness are all around him;

Ps. 99: 7 He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud;

The 'pillar of cloud' must be a reference to the leading of the people while in the wilderness by Yahweh, an integral part of the exodus narrative. The verse in Ps 97 can also refer to the exodus narrative, this time not to the leading of the people in the wilderness, but to the theophany of Yahweh appearing on Mt Sinai when we read of 'a thick cloud on the mountain' (Exod. 19:16) and that 'the cloud covered the mountain' (Exod. 24:15).

Ps. 97: righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

Ps. 99: 4a Mighty King, lover of justice,

The work of the king is to do justice, but this king loves justice. It was in Psalm 94 we read of the Yahweh doing this work of the king as he acts as judge of all the earth (94:2).

Ps. 97:4 His lightnings light up the world;
the earth sees and trembles.

Ps. 99:1b He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

This pair of verses is not verbally equivalent, and so Howard's practice of looking for lexical repetitions might not pick up on this set of parallels. In one verse the earth quakes, in the other it trembles. This is the response of the earth to Yahweh ascending upon his cherubim-borne chariot throne. The association of the cherubim, the burning shining ones with flashes of lightning is well established. The tradition of the winged cherubim set atop the ark of the covenant is very old in Israel, and yet in exilic times Ezekiel was shown visions of cherubim bearing the throne of Yahweh that he might be with his people (Ezek. 1 and 10). This is a very powerful way of impressing upon a reader of the psalm that Yahweh as King is not remote from his people but is very present with them and powerfully able to come to them.

Ps. 97: 8a Zion hears and is glad,

Ps. 99: 2a The LORD is great in Zion;

These references to Zion are the first in Book IV. Indeed, Zion is only mentioned in one other psalm in Book IV: Psalm 102. Zion has great associations with David and the Davidic covenant. What great promises we find here for a city destroyed by war, having endured years of the emptiness of exile before the return of her people. These are not so much promises for the future for Yahweh is 'now' great in Zion. 'Now' in the reading and hearing of these psalms Zion hears again the voice of Yahweh and rejoices.

I would think it is reasonable to conclude that these psalms form two pairs. Thus we have a pattern of a pair of psalms, Psalms 96 and 97, followed by a similar pattern of another pair of psalms, Psalms 98 and 99.

Kraus in his comments points out the connections between Psalms 96, 97 and 98 and the book of Isaiah, especially chapters 40 to 66.

Ps 96	Isaiah	Ps 97	Isaiah	Ps 98	Isaiah
v. 11	44:23; 49:13	v. 1	49:13; 42:10, 12	v. 1	42:10; 52:10; 59:16; 63:5
v. 12	44:23; 55:12	v. 3	42:25	v. 3	40:5; 52:10; 66:18
v. 13	40:10; 59:19f; 60:1; 62:11	v. 6	40:5	v. 4	52:9
		v. 7	42:17; 45:16	v. 5	51:3
		v. 11	58:4	v. 7	55:12

Table 5.5 Parallels between Psalms 96, 97 and 98 and Isaiah

(Kraus 1993b:252, 258, 263).

The comments Kraus makes on the connections between Isaiah and Psalm 96 may be read for all these psalms

These connections and dependencies can hardly be dismissed with the explanation that there are common references to the festival cult which make precise dating impossible. The "late origin of the poem" (H. Gunkel) cannot be doubted (also cf. A. Feuillet). Psalm 96 is later than Isaiah 40-66. And this fact alone justifies the exegete in taking an eschatological understanding as its basis. (1993b:252).

What Kraus means by 'an eschatological understanding' becomes clear in later comments on Psalm 96

But the appearance of Yahweh, which v. 9 seems to indicate in its statement, transcends the cultic space and framework. As in Deutero-Isaiah, we hear of a real eschatological seizing of power on the part of Yahweh that penetrates the whole world. ... ever since Deutero-Isaiah the eschatological, cultically transmitted historical potency of the God-King, the creator of the world and the judge of the world, was proclaimed. Psalm 96 has a part in this picture, and, in the introduction (vv. 7-9), leads up to a universal eschatological event. (1993b:254).

These parallels with Isaiah are relevant in displaying to us the close connections that exist between the various parts of the Old Testament. The particular emphasis of an eschatological vision of the coming of Yahweh to intervene in the events of history in a climactic way is one that the New Testament will have no trouble incorporating, but which for the Old Testament is still largely revelation from Yahweh being received and awaiting fulfilment.

These four psalms, Psalms 96-99, form the core of Book IV. They have been centrally positioned for emphasis. We cannot begin a consideration of Book IV with these psalms, rather we must work our way through the foothills of Psalms 90-95 ever ascending to this great height from where we can see how all that these psalms have reached out to of the King who is Yahweh is now within the grasp of the humble reader of the Torah of Yahweh.

5.10 Psalm 100

Psalm 100 is one of the psalms in Book IV with a heading. I have considered the heading in chapter 3 and here we need only note that the presence of a heading indicates that Psalm 100 is not to be combined with Psalm 99 as one psalm. When we note that Psalm 101 has a heading we can conclude that the use of the heading here is marking Psalm 100 out as a conclusion or frame to the run of preceding psalms.

That Psalm 100 is related to Psalm 95 has been recognised by many; however Howard has contributed most to our understanding of the relationship between these two psalms.

Although Psalm 95 is roughly twice as long as Psalm 100, the two are very closely related in several ways. As psalms that share several important

themes and are similar structurally, they form an inclusion or frame around Psalms 96-99, which are all Kingship of YHWH psalms. ... [after describing the many links between the psalms] ... The most important function of Psalm 95, in the shaping of Book IV, however, is to anticipate themes in Psalm 100 and with it, to bracket Psalms 96-99 as a discrete unit, forming a clear inclusion of "frame" around these Kingship of YHWH psalms. Psalms 95 and 100 are among the closest of all the psalms in the 93-100 group in common vocabulary, themes, and structure. Psalm 100 answers the question that might arise from the end of psalm 95, which is "Has YHWH rejected succeeding generations?" The answer in psalm 100 is "No!" (1997:138, 141).

Psalm 100 is clearly a hymn "it is an imperative hymn, a judgment which is sustained by the seven imperative verbs used in vv 1b-4 ..." (Tate 1990:534). Psalm 100 is a rightly loved hymn, the praise is sustained and uninterrupted. Howard writes

The crescendo of praise that has been building since Psalm 93 reaches a climax in Psalm 100. For the first time in the section, the unreserved praise of YHWH, who appears as the particular God of Israel and who is associated with the Temple in Jerusalem, is finally manifested. In each previous psalm, this praise is tempered in one way or another, or it is not expressed in specific praise terms. Strikingly, the climax occurs in a very short psalm. (In an analogous way, the entire Psalter ends with a short, concentrated, climactic burst of praise in Psalm 150.) The praise and affirmations are expressed succinctly, and they are not repeated. (1997:180).

Can we offer any explanation of this creation of a frame around Psalm 96-99? Of course we could say that the frame serves to emphasize that the psalms within the frame are to be considered as a unit, and that is undoubtedly true, but is there something more?

Howard's footnote, which is represented in parenthesis in the quotation above, indicates a connection in content between Psalms 100 and 150. Both are short psalms entirely given over to the praise of Yahweh. Commenting on Psalm 95 I noted that the conclusion to that psalm is a call to obedience, the reader of the psalm is not to follow the example of the rebels of Meribah and Massah, rather

by hearing and obeying the word of Yahweh the promised rest will be entered. At the beginning of this chapter I made reference to Brueggemann's essay 'Bounded by Obedience and Praise'. Is there not a connection here between Psalm 95 and Psalm 1? Both psalms commend the word of Yahweh and call for obedience to the word of Yahweh once it is received. The macro-frame for the Psalter of Psalms 1 and 150, obedience and praise, is reflected in the micro-frame for Psalms 96-99 of Psalms 95 and 100, bounded by obedience and praise.

Yahweh as king is the powerful declaration of Psalms 96 to 99; this is the ultimate reality of life and the guiding truth of the faith of Israel. How is this God, Yahweh who is king to be served, honoured, and glorified? How will any human live together with such a great God? Beginning with obedience to the gracious self-revelation of Yahweh, which includes the revelation that he is and always will be king, moving towards unrestrained praise, in this way the reader and worshipper using these psalms will walk 'in the way of the righteous' (Ps. 1:6a) Knowing that Yahweh is God, knowing that he has created all things, including all people, knowing that he has a great pastoral care for his people, that people of Yahweh will enter into his presence with songs of joy and shouts of praise.

Howard as quoted above makes the following observation on Psalm 100 "YHWH, who appears as the particular God of Israel and who is associated with the Temple in Jerusalem, ..." (1997:180). If here Howard intends to say that the God who is praised in this unrestrained way in Psalm 100 is Yahweh, the God particularly made known to Israel and who has been particularly associated with the Temple in Jerusalem then his comments are well made. But I think we need to say something more to clarify this. That Yahweh is the particular God of Israel does not mean that Yahweh is only God for Israel, or only the God of Israel. One of the key themes of Psalm 100 is in the opening verse

100:1 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

It is all the earth that is summoned to praise Yahweh, not Israel alone. This theme has been in evidence in the hymns of Yahweh as king; Psalms 96:1, 3, 7, 10; 97:1, 9; 98:2, 3, 4, 7, 9; 99:1, 2, 3. The particularity of Yahweh in relation to Israel is that Yahweh particularly chose this people to make himself known, *to the whole earth*. The Yahweh as king hymns are not celebrating some local deity who is king over one small people, or one insignificant nation, no, he is king over

all. Even the other gods, not that there are any, cannot compare to Yahweh who is the eternal king; Psalms 95:3; 96:4, 5; 97:7, 9.

Psalm 100 is a fitting climax to the Yahweh as king psalms. In its many connections with Psalm 95 this psalm highlights the great themes of the kingship of Yahweh and in the parallels between Psalms 95 and 100 with Psalms 1 and 150 we see the great themes of the Psalter brought to bear upon our daily living together with Yahweh who is king.

5.11 Psalm 101

The heading on Psalm 101 identifies this as a Psalm of David; the function of the heading is to identify this psalm as a unit of text. After a run of psalms without headings, except for Psalm 98, we have come into a run of four psalms with headings.

Kraus writes "we would have to interpret Psalm 101 as "a king's vow of loyalty" or a "a ruler's vow of cleanness" ... It belongs among the royal psalms." (1993b:227). Allen agrees that Psalm 101 is a royal psalm however finds the specific genre more difficult to describe, finally concluding "Most probably the psalm is a royal complaint, more precisely a psalm of innocence, containing a hymnic passage and wisdom motifs." (1983:4).

It is surely significant that the first psalm following the frame psalm for the Yahweh as king hymns includes wisdom elements, this takes us right back to the opening frame psalm, Psalm 95 and the earlier psalms in Book IV that included wisdom elements. Let us particularly notice v. 2

101: 2 I will study the way that is blameless.

Is this not exactly the programme set out for the reader of the psalms in Psalm 1? This is one of the duties placed upon the idealised king of Deut. 17:18f, to 'have a copy of this law written for him ... and he shall read in it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, ...'

What function does this psalm have in Book IV following the Yahweh as king psalms?

Clearly the content of the psalm is focused upon the king. We read of the king here doing the work of the king. However the terms of his doing the work of the king are taken to extremes, there is no room for falling short of the expected standard in this psalm.

v. 3b – 'nothing that is base.'

v. 4b 'I will know nothing of evil.'

v. 5 – the slanderers and arrogant will not be tolerated, but destroyed.

v. 6 – only the blameless will serve this king.

v. 7 – no deceit, no liars will remain in his house.

This is more than an idealised king, this is a perfect king. If this were a psalm for a human king and he dared utter it he would be ridiculed and laughed at. Who could say such things?

Kraus writes

In bold formulations the anointed one takes up the function transferred to him in goodness. ... The king rules like God. This event points to the end-time fulfilment of Θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ (2 Cor. 5:19). The exalted Christ is in the NT the judge among his chosen people (Acts 5:1ff.; Rev. 1:16, 2:1ff.). (1993b:280).

And Allen also writes

Wettermann ... is probably correct in deducing from the scattering of the royal psalms throughout the Psalter an understanding of them in eschatological and messianic terms. (1983:5).

Commenting on Psalm 96 we noted that Kraus detected an eschatological perspective being introduced through the influence of Isaiah. Here is another introduction of an eschatological element, which also serves in part to tie Psalm 101 in content, if not in form, together with the Yahweh as king psalms. The only one who can be such a king is Yahweh himself, there is no other who can so fully and so perfectly be the king and do the work of the king in executing justice for his people; punishing the wicked and vindicating the righteous. A Christian reader of this psalm cannot fail to recognise the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords in this psalm. For those first readers of the psalm surely the presentation of the king here is received by them as an expectation, a hope to be cherished and prayed for. The Davidic monarchy is not this perfect king, it never was and never could be, and so any failure in the Davidic covenant is a human failure, not a divine failure. Even if the human kings in the Davidic line failed in being this king, Yahweh will not fail and one day, one eschatological day, he will come and be this king for his people.

The function of this psalm then is to have the reader of the psalm look forward, not back. It is easy to look back and wish that the present was like the previous 'golden age'. Or when the past is a past of failure and exile, to sink into a depression of the kind where yesterday was bad, today is worse and tomorrow is unthinkable. But with Yahweh as King there is no place for such a view of life and history. Yahweh is King, the great and perfect king, any tomorrow in which Yahweh is King will be better than today and beyond comparing with yesterday. The future Yahweh is preparing for his people is a future with him in which his people will enjoy the blessings of his kingly reign. Such a forward looking, eschatological expectation of Yahweh as King will prevent any declaring this present time to be the perfect present time in which this one or that one is the coming king promised in this psalm. There is no place for the reader of these psalms to settle down and rest here for this is not the final home of the people of God.

5.12 Psalm 102

Psalm 102 has a heading that has been considered in chapter 3. Here we can note that the heading together with the content of this psalm remind us that between the boundaries of obedience and praise there is a life to be lived which is often filled with suffering and affliction. It is generally agreed that Psalm 102 is of the type of an individual complaint, however, there is a mixture of forms in this psalm as Kraus notes "In passages 'of individual complaint' (vv. 1-11 and 23-24) not only hymnic (vv. 12, 25-27) but also prophetic (vv. 13-22, 28) elements have been scattered here and there." (1993b:283). This individual complaint is one of the prayer songs, according to Kraus "By far the largest number of psalms collected in the Psalter belong to the songs of prayer." (1993a:47).

Wilson offers some comments of the correspondences between Psalm 102 and the other psalms in Book IV. In particular Wilson notes parallels with the content of Psalm 90

1. The transient nature of man is emphasized (102:3, 11; cf. 90:5-6, 9-10).
2. In contrast, the psalmist sets the eternality of God (102:12, 24-27; cf. 90:1-2, 4).
3. God's wrath is poured out because of his indignation with man (102:9-10; cf. 90:7-8).

4. And yet the servants' children "will dwell secure" (102:28; cf. 90:16).
YHWH will relieve the distress of his people.

The recurrence of so many of the themes and concerns of Ps 90 in such similar terms leaves a strong impression of intentional arrangement. It also forms an *inclusion* of the whole collection. (1985:218).

While Wilson is correct to offer such correspondences between Psalms 102 and 90 I am not sure in what way Psalm 102 "forms an *inclusion* for the whole collection." Does this separate Psalms 103-106 from the collection?

Above it was noted that Kraus identified prophetic elements within Psalm 102, these would be vv. 13-22 and 28.

At the time of the exile the section vv. 13-22 was spoken. It begins with an address to Yahweh (vv. 13f.) and so lets us clearly recognize the evidences of the trusting expressions of assurance and hope: **צִיּוֹן תִּרְחֹם** (cf. Isa. 30:18; 49:13; Jer. 30:18; 31:20; Zech. 1:12). ... The love of the sanctuary in Jerusalem, which is expressed in the songs of Zion, has not been broken by the destruction of the city of God. Even as a city of ruins, Zion remains the sanctuary of God (v. 14; ...) (1993b:286).

Earlier we noted references to Zion in Psalms 97:8 and 99:2. In the answer to the failure of the Davidic covenant being offered by Book IV nothing is being left behind. The old ways of knowing Yahweh and receiving his grace are not being abandoned, rather they are being resignified in a new way, for a new time and a developing situation.

Although Psalm 102 can be counted as one of the penitential psalms, this is not its function within Book IV. Here the psalms function to locate the present situation of the distressed reader of the psalm within the confident safety of Yahweh's future. The purpose of the psalm is that by meditation upon these words one might come to a place of greater hope and greater trust in Yahweh who is king. For even in this psalm the idea of Yahweh enthroned as king remains, cf. v. 13 (Eng. v. 12). There is a change in this psalm from an expression of confidence in past deeds, there is no great retelling of the former deeds of Yahweh, here the reader is to know Yahweh as king in his present, even if it is a present of affliction and distress, and so hope in Yahweh as king for the future.

5.13 Psalm 103

Psalm 103 is the last psalm in Book IV with a heading. Wilson has written of the combination of psalms without headings and the preceding psalm with a heading. This, as we have considered earlier, works well in Books I to III and especially where there is only a single psalm without a heading. It would not be wise to attempt to combine these psalms into one unit of text although we will notice that the opening phrase in Psalm 103 is repeated in Psalm 104 forming an inclusion for that psalm.

103:1b בָּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה

103:22c בָּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה

104:1a בָּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה

104:35c בָּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה

Psalm 103 is identified as a unit of text by the repeated use of בָּרַכִּי in vv. 1, 2, 20-22. Psalm 103 is to be considered as an individual hymn of thanksgiving. It is generally thought, from vv. 3-5 that sickness and healing from sickness is the immediate cause for the thanksgiving. It is noticeable how following v. 6 the thanksgiving is widened to include all

103:6 The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. This is not only for the one suffering and receiving healing, but for all in any kind of situation of oppression.

We notice that many themes from earlier in Book IV appear in this psalm:

v. 7 – Moses.

v. 14 – the frailty of human life.

v. 15 – the grass metaphor.

v. 17 – the eternity of Yahweh, here with respect to his love.

v. 19 – the kingly rule of Yahweh.

vv. 20-22 – the praise of Yahweh from all creation.

In v. 20 the significant theme of obedience to the word of Yahweh returns. In this verse we are told that the angelic beings who serve his will do so by their obedience to his word. The pattern established by the heavenly beings is that to be followed by the reader of the psalm.

This is a psalm expressing great confidence in Yahweh, a confidence grounded in personal experience but which is through a reflection on the universal reign of Yahweh widened to enable all to share in the blessings of his kingly reign.

5.14 Psalm 104

Psalm 104 is the first psalm in a group of *hllwyh/hwdw* psalms, which as we saw in chapter 4 runs from Psalm 104 to Psalm 107. This is the only instance in the Psalter where such a group of psalms crosses a major seam between two of the five books. Wilson writing of the four groups of *hllwyh* psalms in the Psalter (Psalms 104-106; 111-117; 135; 146-150) has the following to say

In each of the first three instances, this concluding group of *hllwyh* pss is related to an immediately following ps beginning with the phrase: *hwdw lyhwh ky twb ky l'wlm hsdw*. I have presented evidence to suggest that these *hwdw* pss are not part of the concluding grouping, but serve to introduce the succeeding section. For this reason the *hwdw* Ps 107 begins the fifth book of the Psalter, regardless of any internal thematic similarities with Pss 104-106. (1985:187).

That Psalm 104 is a *hllwyh* psalm is confirmed by v. 35 where this is the concluding phrase. And as Wilson has indicated Psalm 105 follow this opening with *hwdw*. The following table shows the distribution of *hllwyh* and *hwdw* in Psalms 104 to 107.

	<i>hllwyh</i>	<i>hwdw</i>
Ps. 104	v. 35	
Ps. 105	v. 45	v. 1
Ps. 106	vv. 1 and 48	v. 1
Ps. 107		v. 1 (vv. 8, 15, 21 and 31)

Table 5.6 Table showing distribution of *hllwyh* and *hwdw* in Psalms 104 to 107.

We notice that the *hwdw* in the initial verses of Psalms 105 to 107 corresponds to the *hllwyh* in the final verses of Psalms 104 to 106. The repeated use of *hllwyh* as a frame in Psalm 106 may in part be used to mark out this psalm from the others in this group confirming the position of Psalm 106 as the final psalm in Book IV. Although given the presence of the doxology in v. 48 there is hardly any other

markers needed. It would seem reasonable to conclude that there is a genuine editorial attempt to define these psalms as a group.

The general theme of these psalms is similar without being identical. There is a sustained focus upon the deeds of Yahweh in the past; Psalm 104 takes us back to Yahweh's work in creation and then Psalms 105, 106 and 107 work over the story of Yahweh's saving works for his people, Psalms 105 and 106 having a particularly clear set of references to the exodus narrative while this is not so clear in Psalm 107.

Psalm 104 may be analysed as follows:

vv. 1-4 – where the reader of the psalm is encouraged to bless or praise Yahweh from their whole being. This is similar to the opening of Psalm 103 where the person making use of the psalm is encouraged to praise. Here the greatness of Yahweh is in view.

vv. 5-9 – in these verses the reader is reminded of Yahweh's creative work, in terms that may reflect the myth of victory over the cosmic chaos of the raging waters, cf. Psalms 89:1-18; 93:3, 4.

vv. 10-13 – here Yahweh is seen to be the one who provides water for all the beasts and the birds. Yahweh is the one who dwells in a 'lofty abode' v. 13, which is fitting for the Most High, cf. Psalms 91:1, 9; 92:1, 8; 93:4; 97:9; 103:11; 106:7 and 107:11.

vv. 14-23 – focus upon the work and labour God has given men and women to occupy themselves with, notice the frame

v. 14 You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,

and plants for people to use,

v. 23 People go out to their work

and to their labour until the evening.

In v. 14 the plants are for people to use, to employ in their business or use for food and we find in v. 23 a reference to the work or labour of humanity each day until evening. This is a mature reflection upon the human condition, not here reflecting upon the frailty of humanity as in Psalm 90 but upon the labour of humanity which is without end. This unceasing labour of humanity is a key theme for wisdom reflection as is seen in Ecclesiastes where this is introduced as one of the major themes of the book

Eccl 1:3 What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil
under the sun?

vv. 24-26 – we can no longer ignore the wisdom influences upon this psalm.
Consider the parallels between v. 24b and Prov. 3:19

Ps 104:24b כָּלֶם בְּחִכְמָה עָשִׂיתָ

Prov 3:19 יְהוָה בְּחִכְמָה יָסַד־אָרֶץ

In both these verses Yahweh is active and his activity is guided by wisdom. The phrase, בְּחִכְמָה, is applied to human activity making use of wisdom in Eccl. 1:13; 2:3, 21; 7:23; 9:15. Yahweh is a God, a king who does his works by wisdom. This calls us to consider again the way of wisdom as taught by the wise man in the psalms that opened Book IV.

vv. 27-30 – here is the response of wisdom, that response taught by meditation upon the word of Yahweh, a complete dependence. Apart from the spirit, רוּחַ, of Yahweh there is no life of any kind, all life depends upon the providing, sustaining work of Yahweh.

vv. 31-35 – in this final stanza there is a concluding prayer for the glory of Yahweh. We have noted many times since Psalm 90 the eternity of Yahweh, here is has become the subject of prayer that his glory may endure forever.

In v. 34 the word מִשְׁכָּח is rendered in the NRSV as ‘meditation’, Kraus offers ‘poetry’ (1993b:297). and Allen has ‘reflections’ (1983:25). The word is found in the title on Psalm 102 where it is rendered ‘complaint’, and Psalm 105:2 ‘tell’. Diamond offers the following comments on this word

In the Psalms, the vb. is used by the psalmist primarily in a transitive sense (11x), for reflection on the saving deeds of Yahweh on behalf of Israel, and secondarily in an intransitive sense (2x), to speak of the psalmist’s act of complaint or lamentation ... Within the context of Israel’s ritual psalmody, *syh* constitutes one of the vbs. of worship Its principal object, Yahweh’s deeds [here Diamond mentions Ps 105:2 among others] ... anchors Israel’s worship in the reverent recollection and personal reappropriation of her story of national origin as a history of divine love and deliverance within

the election-promise-exodus-divine guidance-conquest/inheritance framework. (NIDOTTE, 4:1234f.).

If the psalms are to be detached from the cult they are not to be removed from the sphere of worship, corporate or private. The meditation upon the word of Yahweh that is the path of obedience for the righteous reader is an act of worship that is to be pleasing to Yahweh.

5.15 Psalms 105 and 106

These two psalms, together with Psalm 78, are to be considered as historical psalms. They show both remarkable similarities and differences from one another. Writing of the use of historical materials in the book of Jubilees von Rad comments

The form of 'historical summaries', that is, fairly short or fairly detailed recapitulations of Yahweh's dealings with Israel, had a long history in Israel. It is not, then, surprising that in earlier ages, too, such historical summaries could be drawn up from very different aspects. Ps 105 narrates the history of Israel from quite different points of view from those of Ps 106. (1972:271).

When using the historical narratives of Yahweh's dealings with the people there is no one preset purpose in retelling these histories, although there are similarities in form. We can set out the contents of the two psalms in a table for the purpose of comparison, using the comments of Kraus (1993b:308, 316) as a guide:

Psalm 105		Psalm 106			
vv. 1-6	Introductory call to praise	vv. 1-6	Introductory call to praise (1ff)		
			Petitions to remember (4f)		
			Confession of sin (6)		
vv. 7-11	The Patriarchs: main theme – Yahweh’s care and provision				
vv. 12-15	The Patriarchs in Canaan				
vv. 16-22	Joseph				
vv. 23-25	Israel in Egypt				
vv. 26-36	Moses and the plagues against Egypt				
vv. 37-42	The exodus: leaving Egypt, guidance by Yahweh	vv. 7-46	Exodus traditions: Rebellion at the Red Sea (7-12)		
	The provision of food and water (40f)		The craving for food (13ff)		
			The rebellion of Dathan and Abiram (16ff)		
			The sin of the golden calf (19ff)		
			Complaining in the desert (24ff)		
			Sin of Baal of Peor (28ff)		
			Complaining at Meribah (32f)		
			Adultery with foreign nations (34ff)		
		vv. 43-45	Conclusion: main theme – Yahweh’s faithfulness to covenant and promises	vv. 40-48	Conclusion: Yahweh’s wrath and gracious intervention (40ff)
					Petition to Yahweh (47)
Doxological conclusion (48)					

Table 5.7 Showing a comparison of the contents of Psalms 105 and 106.

In the table as I have set it out we can see that Psalm 105 picks up the history of Yahweh's saving deeds for Israel at the time of the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, none of whom feature in Psalm 106. Psalm 105 also recounts the history of Joseph, the time of Israel in Egypt before the enslavement and the record of Moses and the plagues against Egypt. We see very clearly the different emphasis on the retelling of this history in the way the exodus narratives are handled. Psalm 105 is very positive recounting all the many ways Yahweh was blessing the people and the ways they were responding to him, especially notice the matter of food in the desert,

v. 40 They asked, and he brought quails,
and gave them food from heaven in abundance.

v. 41 He opened the rock, and water gushed out;
it flowed through the desert like a river.

Psalm 106 is uniformly negative in its retelling of the exodus narrative, not negative about Yahweh's power or grace, but about the people's response to Yahweh, there is nothing but rebellion, unless it is complaining. Compare this account of the provision of food in the desert,

v. 14 But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness,
and put God to the test in the desert;

v. 15 he gave them what they asked,
but sent a wasting disease among them.

All the episodes recounted in Ps. 106:7-46 display the great faithfulness of Yahweh in contrast to the rebellious ways of Israel.

Any one of these psalms on its own is unbalanced; both are needed to gain an insight into the workings of Yahweh and the response of his people to him over the years of his work for them. The key theme in each psalm is that of Yahweh being mindful of, or remembering, his covenant with Israel. We see this in Ps. 105:8 and 42; Ps. 106:4 and 45. Even if the covenant promises were made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob still they are an eternal covenant which Yahweh will remember forever. What is the answer to the failure of the Davidic covenant? The history of Yahweh's faithfulness to his own covenant is the answer. There is nothing any human can do to change the cycle of receiving Yahweh's covenant mercies – falling into sin and rebellion – Yahweh intervening to restore and renew his covenant promises. Not only can a human not prevent the falling into

sin, neither can he or she prevent the intervention of Yahweh who having determined to save a people for himself will not forget his covenant and will continue to work for these people, to continue to bear them up and bring them to himself as on eagles' wings (see Exod. 19:3-6).

The reuse of these historical traditions reflects the work of the schools of wise teachers at work in Israel and so Book IV concludes on themes from the wisdom schools as it opened in Psalm 90. These psalms are in practice an example of the kind of sustained meditation about the self revelation of Yahweh in his word that we have seen called for through this series of psalms.

This is now an appropriate place to reflect upon one of the key themes of Book IV not yet commented upon. The word **לִלְיוֹן** appears right the way through this collection of psalms: Psalms 90:14; 92:3; 94:18; 98:3; 100:5; 101:1; 103:4, 8, 11, 17; 106:1, 7, 45. It is this **לִלְיוֹן** of Yahweh that satisfies those who seek him, is the theme of their songs, is their support in time of trouble, is remembered by Yahweh as one of his covenant blessings and like Yahweh so his **לִלְיוֹן** endures, remains forever. What is the answer to the failure of the Davidic covenant? Is it not the eternal **לִלְיוֹן** of Yahweh?

5.16 Psalm 107 and Book V

Following the doxology in Ps. 106:48 Psalm 107 opens Book V of the Psalter. The initial verse leads us to suspect that Psalm 107 will be a song of thanksgiving. While noting that there are many permutations of "form, content and unity" in Psalm 107 this is the analysis of Allen

In form the psalm falls into two Gattungen: vv 1-32 are a type of song of thanksgiving, while vv 33-43 are a hymn or more precisely a passage marked by both hymnic and sapiential features. (1983:60).

Briefly let us notice that Psalm 107 follows the retelling of the history of Yahweh's works for Israel introduced in Psalms 105 and 106. The final verse shows a connection with themes from Book IV

v. 43 Let those who are wise give heed to these things,
and consider the steadfast love of the LORD.

The verse, indeed the psalm, is addressed to 'those who are wise' or perhaps this is an encouragement to those who would be wise in the ways of Yahweh. In all

these saving deeds of Yahweh recounted here it is his **סֶדֶק** that stands out for special consideration.

Thus Psalm 107 is taking up major themes from Book IV and does so in a way that will result in fresh meditation upon the word of Yahweh, making wise those who submit to its guidance.

Chapter 6 The implications of editorial work on the Hebrew Psalter

In the preceding chapters I have described the processes involved in the editing of the Hebrew Psalter, chapters 2 to 4, and then offered some comments upon a particular group of psalms, Book IV and the evidence of editorial work in this collection, chapter 5. That such editorial processes have been involved in shaping the Hebrew Psalter is now a regular feature of scholarly work, indeed Howard can write

During the 1970s and 1980s a more steady stream of works concerned with the links, structure, and overall motifs of the Psalter has emerged, and it has become a torrent in the 1990s. (1997:4).

Both the major commentaries I have referred to have introductory sections on "The Compilation of the Psalter" (Craigie 1983:7, 27-31) and "The Psalter as a Collection" (Kraus 1993a:7, 16-21). It is however significant that in the body of these commentaries we find an initial dependence upon a Form Critical analysis and only passing comments on the relationship between adjacent psalms and any structure being created by the placing of psalms with the Psalter. In this concluding chapter I hope to offer some thoughts on the implications of editorial work on the Psalter. These thoughts cannot, due to the limits of this study, be taken to a final conclusion but are an attempt to indicate the kind of direction psalms study should pursue in the coming years.

6.1 Form Critical analysis

Kraus in his commentary is one of the major exponents of a form critical method in studying the psalms, it will do well to quote his comments on this method of study

The investigation of types (*Gattungsforschung*) introduced into the scholarly work on the Psalms by H. Gunkel may rightly be called a decisive event in the history of biblical interpretation. Even though there had been efforts before H. Gunkel to arrange the Psalms in groups according to contents, it was finally the form-critical method introduced by him that led the way to a systematic and categorized differentiation. Gunkel's basic demand was that "literary material must first of all be classified according to laws of its own type, in other words, according to laws taken from literary history" (H. Gunkel and J. Begrich, *Einl-Ps* 9)

[after describing Gunkel's principles Kraus continues] These basic principles for setting up literary types are indispensable positions for appropriate scholarly work on the Psalms. (1993a:38f)

Kraus then discusses scholarly criticism of Gunkel's work concluding

The first four German editions of this commentary were essentially still determined and influenced by Gunkel's investigation of types. But now, in this new edition, it has proved to be indispensable to restudy the principles and presuppositions, but especially the basic concepts, of Gunkel's and Begrich's form-critical research. (1993a:38).

In the following pages it becomes clear the Kraus' has a great concern to control the cultic interpretation of the psalms being employed by other commentators. He writes of his own work

By contrast, the present commentary in the explanation of each psalm is concerned first with a precise investigation of the formal data. The literary form is then also pursued and defined – even in its ramifications – whenever there could be danger that the entire psalm disintegrate and split apart. Only this consistent form-critical work can call a halt to arbitrary cultic hypotheses. (1993a:42).

In practice Kraus wants to define new categories for the psalms, to recognise that not every psalm can be forced into neat form critical categories, and certainly not a cultic hypothesis. He remains committed to 'consistent form-critical work' in the pattern of Gunkel, but without the cultic framework of Mowinckel, Weiser and others.

Returning to Book IV we can demonstrate the form critical analyses offered for each psalm in the following table

Psalm	Kraus	Tate/Allen
90	Prayer song discernable didactic poetry	Learned psalmography ²⁸
91	Didactic poem	A psalm for instruction and exhortation
92	Hymn of thanksgiving with elements of prayer song and didactic poetry	An individual psalm of thanksgiving
93	Yahweh as King hymn ²⁹	A hymn celebrating Yahweh's kingship and victory kingship-of-Yahweh psalm
94	Community prayer song followed by an individual prayer song with elements of wisdom poetry	A psalm for instruction and exhortation
95	Song of thanksgiving and prophetic word of admonition	An extended call to worship combined with an oracle of prophetic-like preaching
96	Yahweh as King hymn	kingship-of-Yahweh psalm
97	Yahweh as King hymn	kingship-of-Yahweh psalm
98	Yahweh as King hymn with an eschatological message	kingship-of-Yahweh psalm
99	Yahweh as King hymn	kingship-of-Yahweh psalm
100	Song of praise/ Song of thanksgiving	An imperative hymn
101	A royal psalm, "a king's vow of loyalty"	A royal complaint, a psalm of innocence, containing a hymnic passage and wisdom motifs
102	Passages of individual complaint with hymnic and prophetic elements scattered here and there	An individual complaint
103	Song of thanksgiving with a hymnic glorification of the merciful deeds of Yahweh	A song for a thanksgiving liturgy to stimulate praise to Yahweh
104	Hymn of an individual	An individual hymn
105	History psalm presented in hymnic style	An expanded hymn of the imperative type
106	A historic summary in a framework of hymnic introduction and words of repentance and petition.	A communal complaint strongly marked by hymnic features

Table 6.1 Form Critical categories describing psalms 90 – 106.

²⁸ Learned psalmography – "psalmography from circles of sages and scribes for the use of individuals and groups, but especially for personal piety and devotion." (Tate 1990:439).

²⁹ Yahweh as King hymn – a group within the category of songs of praise "in which the kingship of Yahweh is the actual subject of the glorification and praise." (Kraus 1993b:232).

This table shows that two contemporary commentaries are resulting to ever increasing layers of specialisation to describe psalm types. It could be said, from this table, that the most common psalm type is the mixed type!

If our starting point in examining a psalm is a determination of its type we are committing ourselves to a study of the psalms that isolates one psalm from its neighbour. Once the psalms have been arranged 'in groups according to contents' what is more natural than to comment upon them 'in groups according to contents'. On this theme M. Goulder writes

The dazzled student soon suppresses as naïve his instinct that it is proper to study 1 before 2, and that there is something curious in beginning a book on the Psalter with the 110th, or 89th psalm. ... The instinct that the order of the psalms may be important is not however naïve, and is far from irrational ... [I]t is entirely proper to begin the study of the Psalter with the expectation that it will be an ordered and not an assorted collection; or, at the very least, that it will contain elements that were rationally ordered. (1982:8).

Having demonstrated the presence of editorial work, and editorial concerns, within the Psalter it is surely time to challenge the seemingly unchallengeable. Why are we so wedded to a form critical study of the psalms as being the primary method? It is not that form critical study of the psalms has gleaned no results; there have been great gains in understanding the psalms from the work of those employing form critical methods. However, the method works against recognising connections between psalms, other than the purely formal.

We now read and use the psalms in a form presented to us in the Hebrew or Christian bible and this presentation has a determinative influence upon our understanding of these psalms. While the insights gained from a formal comparison of Psalm 47 with Psalms 93, 96 to 99 are many and helpful, nevertheless, we cannot comment upon Psalm 47 as though it were a part of Book IV and not in fact surrounded by Psalms 46 and 48, to which Psalm 47 has significant connections. Rather than pouring over pages of work trying to assess the implications of the heading on Psalm 100, would it not be more useful to comment upon the role of Psalm 100 in Book IV, in relation to Psalms 93 to 100? If our first questions asked of a psalm were how does this psalm function in its immediate context, in the context of the Psalter as a whole, what does this

psalm add to our understanding of the preceding and following psalm(s)? Then we would write very different commentaries and find that in the Psalter we have a purposefully arranged collection of psalms.

Under this heading of form criticism is it useful to include comments upon cultic and in particular liturgical interpretations of the psalms. In his major work *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* S. Mowinckel developed a theory of cultic interpretation understanding most, if not all, of the psalms to have originated within cultic practices associated with the Jerusalem temple. It is now generally recognised that such a wide ranging view of the Psalter as being so closely tied to the cult is an extreme position.

A further development in this area is to seek links between liturgical practices common in Israel that are not specifically tied to cultic festivals. M. Goulder's work is a prime example of this form of study. In 1975 in an article entitled "The Fourth Book of the Psalter" Goulder sought to demonstrate that Book IV had been purposefully organised. Noting that themes described by Mowinckel for the Autumn Festival are found in Book IV Goulder suggests that these psalms have been collected in an ordered manner, in a form analogous to the modern *Book of Common Prayer* (1975:269). In his essay Goulder seeks to demonstrate that there is an alternating pattern of psalms for evening and morning and that the psalms in this pattern were used in combination with a lectionary series of readings. Although Goulder seeks to show that his liturgical and lectionary pattern has been preserved over the years in introducing his scheme he writes "We have been able thus to hypothesize something of the Tabernacles liturgical practice in the Jerusalem community before and after the Exile, ..." (1975:286). However confidently Goulder may write this remains no more than a hypothesis. The foundations for such a liturgical reconstruction are very unstable and it seems very unwise to attempt to support an exegesis of the psalms on such a base.

If we had no way into an exegesis of the psalms then it may be we would welcome educated and learned hypotheses. However, we have at hand a ready way into the study of the psalms, namely a study of the psalms as we find them. Rather than introducing external materials into our study where they are not needed we can following Psalm 1 delight in the law of the Lord and meditate upon it.

6.2 The Psalms and Biblical Theology

There has been a great disservice to the cause of Biblical Theology over the years in the quest for *Die Mitte*. Much has been written on the search for the centre, the great unifying theme of the Old Testament. The increasing specialisation of scholars into ever decreasing areas of specialisation has resulted in great and detailed study of the trees, but the forest has vanished from view.

In the 1970 B.S. Childs led a revival in interest in the canon, which revival in interest led to differing views on canon, its purpose and extent. Nevertheless in seeking to address the issue that we approach the biblical texts as part of a unifying text there has been great value in this line of study.

In our study of the psalms in Book IV I have suggested that we can indeed view this group of psalms as presenting the answer to the failure of the Davidic covenant. Here we must recognise a Biblical Theological framework.

The revelation of Yahweh as the God of Israel is a progressive revelation; in his wisdom Yahweh did not drop the whole bible upon Moses on the top of Mt Sinai! A group of psalms answering a question must follow that question in chronology as well as in terms of revelation and theology. If this group of psalms had been in place before the existence of the Davidic monarchy, or the Davidic covenant, no one would ever imagine their purpose was to answer questions raised by its failure. This touches not only upon the dating of the editorial work on this collection, but upon the existence of texts relating to the Davidic monarchy and the Davidic covenant before the creation of Book IV of the Psalter. I am not here saying that all the psalms presently in Book IV have their origins in the post-exilic period; some may be from the period of the monarchy; however the collection of Book IV as Book IV of the Psalter must be located after the exile, indeed after the return from exile.

A whole bible Biblical Theology seeks not a unifying theme for the bible, but to locate the texts that compose the bible within an overall framework of the gracious self-revelation of Yahweh. In the understanding of Book IV achieved by approaching these psalms seeking their editorial connections we find a place for such texts in such a whole bible Biblical Theology.

The failure of the Davidic covenant is not more than an apparent failure. Book IV demonstrates that Yahweh is King, that his purposes are eternal, as he is eternal and that after failure there is hope. On the human side the history of

Yahweh's covenants has only been one of failure. This cannot be true of Yahweh the great God who alone is able to do all that he purposes to do. Even if the fulfilment of all the covenant promises of Yahweh awaits the eschatological age, all his covenant promises will be fulfilled. A Christian community reading these psalms would be justified to see in Psalm 101 a sure glance toward the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ the one who comes in the name of the Lord as the promised King, not only for Israel but for all the earth. Human kings, like the grass of the field rise and pass away. However, the eschatological reign of Yahweh, whether we interpret this christologically or in some other way, will not fail or pass away, but will remain, from everlasting, to everlasting.

That the Hebrew word given as a title for the Psalter may be rendered 'prayers' is surely a guide for us in our using these poems of ancient Israel. This collection of psalms has been gathered for those who have come to know that Yahweh has made himself known in his words, his law, and that by a prayerful meditation upon these words of Yahweh a greater knowing of him as Lord and King may be gained. The Psalter is not an anthology of useful prayers from a former age, but, in its presentation of the life of the person delighting in Yahweh and his word, displays patterns of living that lead the worshipper in the way of the Lord. It is in a deeper knowing of Yahweh as King that the apparent failure of his promises is resolved in his eternal purposes. It is in the details of our human condition, our fears and our sufferings, that Yahweh is King, our King, to do the work of the King for us that we might rest in him. It is in the unrestrained praise of Yahweh as King that the future for all who worship and serve him lies, all glory to his name.

בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם

וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן

הַלְלוּ־יָהּ:

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