

**WISDOM AND SALVATION HISTORY  
IN THE WISDOM PSALMS**

**BY  
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2008**

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For my family  
and  
esapecially  
my deceased father



# ABBREVIATIONS

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| BASOR  | <i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>                         |
| Bib    | <i>Biblica</i>   |
| BibInt | <i>Biblical Interpretation</i>   |
| BDB    | The new Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament |
| BHS    | Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (1977)  |
| BSac   | <i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>   |
| BTB    | <i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>  |
| BWANT  | Beitrage zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament                              |
| BZAW   | Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft                      |
| CBQ    | <i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>   |
| CTJ    | <i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>  |
| CTM    | <i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>   |
| EvQ    | <i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>   |
| ExpTim | <i>Expository Times</i>  |

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|       |   |
|-------|---|
| HAR   | <i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>   |
| HBT   | <i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>                                  |
| HerTS | <i>Hervormde Theologiese Studies</i>                                  |
| HTR   | <i>Harvard Theological Review</i>                                     |
| HUCA  | <i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>                                    |
| ICC   | International Critical Commentary                                     |
| Int   | <i>Interpretation</i>   |
| JB    | Jerusalem Bible   |
| JBL   | <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>                                 |
| JETS  | <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>                 |
| JRL   | <i>The John Rylands Library</i>                                       |
| JSOT  | <i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>                     |
| JTS   | <i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>                                 |
| KJV   | King James Version  |
| LXE   | English Translation of LXX by Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, 1844, 1851. |
| LXX   | Septuagint  |

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| MT                 | Masoretic Text                               |
| NEB                | New English Bible                            |
| NIV                | New International Version                    |
| NJB                | New Jerusalem Bible                          |
| NRSV               | New Revised Standard Version                 |
| NRV                | New Revised Version                          |
| NT                 | New Testament                                |
| OT                 | Old Testament                                |
| OTE                | <i>Old Testament Essays</i>                  |
| 4QPs <sup>c</sup>  | Cave 4 Qumran Psalms                         |
| 11QPs <sup>a</sup> | Cave 11 Qumran Psalms                        |
| RevExp             | <i>Review and Expositor</i>                  |
| RSV                | Revised Stand Version                        |
| RTR                | <i>Reformed Theological Review</i>           |
| SJOT               | <i>Scandinavian Journal of Old Testament</i> |
| TBT                | <i>The Bible Today</i>                       |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| TNK   | The Jewish Publication Society (JPS) TANAKH   |
| TrinJ | <i>Trinity Journal</i>  |
| TynB  | <i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>   |
| WW    | <i>Word and World</i>   |
| VT    | <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>  |
| ZAW   | <i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i><br>World Bible Commentary |

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**CHAPTER 1**  
**INTRODUCTION**

## 1.1. FORMULATING THE PROBLEM

### 1.1.1. Background

The last decades have seen a spate of studies that focus on the phenomenon of wisdom and its significance for Old Testament studies. Despite the various issues surrounding wisdom theology, one of the salient issues frequently raised by scholars in this regard is how to integrate 'wisdom theology' into 'salvation history' that is considered by some as the mainstream of Old Testament theology (Perdue, 1994:19; Scobie, 1984:43). However, due to the dearth of correlatives between wisdom theology and salvation history, how wisdom theology is to be understood in Old Testament theology is still debated (Smith, 1992:3). Wright's comment (1952:44-45) is typical of this view when he asserts:

In any attempt to outline a discussion of Biblical faith it is the wisdom literature which offers the chief difficulty because it does not fit into the type of faith exhibited in the historical and prophetic literatures. In it there is no explicit reference to or development of the doctrine of history, election, or covenant.

In dealing with the difficulty, Westermann (1978:11) occupies one end of the spectrum, arguing that "wisdom has no place within the basic framework of an Old Testament theology, since it originally and in reality does not have as its object an occurrence between God and man; in its earlier stages wisdom is overwhelmingly secular".

W. Kaiser (1978:133) is one of those who oppose this view when he proposes that the concept of the 'fear of Yahweh' functions as something by which to integrate wisdom theology into the mainstream of Old Testament theology. Smith (1992:3) also argues that "God's sovereign rule over Israel, the nations, and nature" is a common element between wisdom theology and salvation history. Murphy

(1979:177) proposes, under the title, *Wisdom and Salvation*, “a broad understanding of wisdom that will allow for its salvific aspect.” The image of life and death that frequently appears in wisdom books, especially in the book of Proverbs, also occurs in Deuteronomy, and other prophetic books (i.e., Amos 5:14; Ezekiel 33:10; Isaiah 55:1-3). According to Murphy (1979:178), “this wisdom perspective shows that there is a soteriological dimension to wisdom in its task of coping with daily existence.” Thus he (1979:179) concludes, “Israel did not separate the experiences of redemption and deliverance in daily life, which is the domain of wisdom, from the experiences of the entire people in the realm of salvation-history.” As appears in his later works, Murphy argues that the theology of wisdom in scripture is central and not peripheral.<sup>1</sup>

Between the two approaches to the issue is Goldingay (1979:204) who proposes a kind of dialectical approach to the relationship between the two strands. He contends that it is unnecessary to attempt to incorporate wisdom theology into salvation history because ‘diversity’ is rather a gain than a loss (cf., Schultz, 1997:289).

Probably Crenshaw’s (1976:3) confession that “the many attempts to define wisdom [in the context of Old Testament theology] have not been altogether successful” seems to be approved by most contemporary scholars (e.g., Reventlow, 1985:184; Schultz, 1997:272). It might be safe, then, to contend that wisdom is not to be understood in the historical mode, that is, salvation history. L. Wilson explains that the attempt to demonstrate salvation history elements in wisdom books (i.e., Kaiser’s proposal of the ‘fear of Yahweh’) can, in turn, fail to show how wisdom and salvation history elements are integrated. L. Wilson (1990:63) notes,

It [the attempt to trace salvation history in wisdom books] establishes a point of contact, but says little about the interplay between the two strands. This leaves the reader

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, see ‘*The tree of life*’ (1990).

uncertain about how to cope with the tension between the two themes, and unsure about how to apply wisdom perspectives that appear to go beyond salvation history concerns.

Apparently no mention of the history of Israel is to be found in wisdom literature, and this makes it difficult to relate wisdom to salvation history in the context of the Old Testament. Such being the case, then, we need to seek an alternative, if possible, that makes it plausible to establish the relationship of the two strands: Is there any other part of the Old Testament that deals with both wisdom and salvation history?

### **1.1.2. Problem Statement**

Over the last decades a line of evidence in relation to understanding wisdom in the broader context of Old Testament theology has been emerging. This line of evidence is to examine wisdom elements in non-wisdom books. Various attempts have been made to discern wisdom influences in non wisdom- literature,<sup>2</sup> and have continued unabated “especially in the study of the Psalms” (Murphy, 1994:4). In this regard, Morgan (1981:125) remarks, “[t]here is, perhaps, no collections of writings outside the wisdom literature itself which contains so much evidence of wisdom literary forms and teachings as the Psalms”. In fact, it has been observed that there is a group of psalms in the Psalter, namely, the wisdom psalms, sharing the same elements with the major wisdom books. Although no two authors will agree in listing these psalms and some of them see the classification as “ambiguous” (Mays, 1987:3), the existence of the so-called wisdom psalms seems to be unanimously acknowledged. Until recently a reasonable amount of research has been done on the wisdom psalms, but it seems that these attempts are still directed on to which criteria should be applied to isolate those psalms from the Psalter, which has yet to reach a solid consensus.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the Joseph story in Genesis 37-50 (Von Rad, 1965), the book of Esther (Talmon, 1963), and the book of Amos (Wolff, 1964) have been considered in the light of wisdom perspective. For the purpose of this study I, standing in a kind of minimalist stance, shall limit my discussion to the canonical books in which apocryphal literature is not included in relation to wisdom literature.

However, if we admit that the psalms are basically Israel's praises in response to what God has done for his people in history, we can expect that theological expression of the psalms in general should be salvation-oriented. Then the real issue is to move from 'how we isolate the wisdom psalms from the Psalter' to 'what we can learn from the wisdom psalms in relation to salvation theme'. In light of this understanding, the following question is possible: How do we discern in the wisdom psalms the wisdom perspective, if any, in relation to the concept of salvation history? Or what is the relationship of wisdom to salvation history in the Psalter, particularly in the wisdom psalms?

In his book *Gospel and Wisdom*, Goldsworthy (1995[1987]:119) notes, "Some psalms appear to place wisdom into a close relationship with the Israelite concept of salvation", which is remarkable because he presents a wisdom psalm as one of "an unusual mixing of wisdom and salvation history". Thus he (1995[1989]:123) observes in psalm 78 "a reshaping of the salvation history recital to make it the subject of a wisdom lesson".

What is important in his treatment of a few wisdom psalms including Psalm 78, in spite of its compactness, is to open the possibility of establishing the relationship of wisdom to salvation history not only in the context of the Psalms, but also in the broader context of the Old Testament. While the so called wisdom psalms have often been acknowledged in terms of the criteria, their nature and the meaning in the context of the Psalms in relation to salvation history still await further exploration.

Consequently an examination of the relationship between wisdom and salvation history in the wisdom psalms is crucial if a constructive means is to be found. The purpose of this study therefore is to ascertain as well as probe the relationship of wisdom to salvation history in the wisdom psalms.

### **1.1.3. Questions Raised**

Given the above-mentioned problems, then, the main question is this:

- What is the meaning of wisdom in relation to salvation history in the wisdom psalms?

This main question of the study leads to the following major concerns:

- (1) The history of the interpretation of the wisdom psalms.
- (2) The criteria of the wisdom psalms
- (3) Reading the wisdom psalms in the context of the Psalter
- (4) The relationship of wisdom to salvation history in the wisdom psalms.

The subsequent questions are:

- How have the wisdom psalms been understood in the history?
- What are the wisdom psalms?
- How can the wisdom psalms be read in the context of the Psalter?
- What is the relationship of wisdom to salvation history in the wisdom psalms?

## **1.2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1.2.1. Aim**

This thesis examines the wisdom psalms to explore the relationship of wisdom to salvation history in the context of the Psalter.

### **1.2.2. Objectives**

In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives are set.

- To survey the contribution of contemporary Psalmic scholarship to the understanding of the wisdom psalms: the history of the interpretation of the wisdom psalms.
- To identify the wisdom psalms in the Palter.
- To examine how the wisdom psalms are understood in the context of the Psalter.
- To establish the relationship of wisdom to salvation history by scrutinizing the salvation history motif and the wisdom motif in the wisdom psalms.

### **1.3. CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT**

The hypothesis of this study is that wisdom in the Psalter is a means by which to respond to divine intervention revealed in the history of Israel by instructing the people of Israel and generations to come, to remember and praise His great deeds, and that the psalmic wisdom functions as a thread to integrate wisdom theology into salvation history in the Old Testament.

### **1.4. METHODOLOGY**

#### **1.4.1. Presupposition (Chapter 1)**

There is a growing consensus that one's presuppositions are taken for granted for a starting point of one's scholarship. As Wenham (1988:85) admits, with respect to the role of a methodological approach to Scripture, it "depends to a large extent on our understanding of the nature of Scripture". This is certainly true with this study. Fully recognizing this, this study is above all done within in the Reformed tradition that is based on the authority of Scripture (Van Bruggen, 1994:63). The methodological starting point of this study takes account of the fact that Scripture is both a completely divine book and a totally human book. A starting point of this investigation is, therefore, based on the fact that Scripture presents the revelation of

God written in human language (Helberg, 1988:4).

#### **1.4.2. Survey of Relevant Works (Chapter 2)**

To examine a number of proposals in light of the thesis, relevant works are introduced and analysed. In keeping with this focus on the history of reading the wisdom psalms, the criteria for the wisdom psalms will be also evaluated.

#### **1.4.3. Canonical Approaches (Chapter 3)**

As concerns presuppositions mentioned above, the attempt to draw out the divine intention of a text is certainly part of the exegetical task. As Beale (1989:93) confidently argues that, "if we concede that God is also the author of OT Scripture, then we are not concerned only with discerning the intention of the human author but also the ultimate divine intent of what was written in the OT, which could well transcend that of the immediate consciousness of the writer." In the case of the Psalms, we have a book that is a thoroughly human response to the deity and that finally becomes divine revelation to man.

The method, first of all, takes account of the fact that the Psalms as a whole are a literary collection edited by an editorial body. The context in which the psalms are to be read is not only the five books of the Psalms but also the whole Bible. Secondly, the method takes account of the fact that it does not divorce the human authorial intention from divine intention, which is in accord with the presupposition of this thesis.

Regarding the principles of the method, they first of all take account of the fact that the Psalms to be studied is considered as a literary unit. Thus five approaches that were undertaken under the rubric of canonical criticism will be considered, i.e., the canonical approach (Brevard Childs), the canonical criticism (James Sanders), the

canonical process approach (Bruce Waltke), the Christo-canonical approach (Jerry E. Shepherd), and the communito-canonical approach<sup>3</sup>(deClaissé-Walford). Legitimacy of examining the works of these five scholars is in the fact that all of them have done special work with the Psalms in their approaches.

#### **1.4.4. Reappraisal (Chapter 4)**

This chapter is to synthetically reappraise the results made in the previous chapter and to establish criteria for defining wisdom psalms in the Psalter. In so doing, the range of the wisdom psalms has expanded from several psalms (as 'distinct type') to almost fifty psalms (as 'wisdom-influenced psalms'), then finally to the whole psalms (as 'wisdom-framed Psalter'). And it shall be suggested that what we are working on is not 'wisdom psalms', but 'wisdom Psalter'. Every individual psalm contained in the Psalter is to be described in terms of plot rather than a separated part of anthology. Thus an attempt will be made to read the Psalms from the beginning to the end.

#### **1.4.5. From the Beginning to the End (Chapter 5)**

In the process of reading the Psalter, how the wisdom motif and the salvation motif function in the wisdom Psalter will be scrutinized, seeking to integrate the two themes in the context of the Psalms as a whole (Chapter 5), which is then followed by the final conclusion (Chapter 6).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE HISTORY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF THE**

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<sup>3</sup> I coined the term for the sake of convenience.

# WISDOM PSALMS

## 2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an inquiry into the contribution of contemporary psalmodic scholarship to the so-called wisdom psalms. The hypothesis of the existence of the wisdom psalms did not appear until H. Gunkel (1862-1932) acknowledged a group of psalms in the Psalter which he named as “wisdom poetry ” in his work, *An Introduction to the Psalms* (1998 [1933]:295).<sup>4</sup> It is true that the wisdom psalms were to be found through “an established result of *Gattung*-criticism” (Von Rad, 1972 [1970]:47). Since then most scholars have admitted that a certain number of Psalms have some commonalities with wisdom literature (Goldsworthy, 1995[1987]:119). It is also true that there are enough criteria, with some degree of certainty, to tell the existence of the wisdom psalms in the Psalter. According to Luyten (1990:60), there have been more than fifty psalms which scholars have called wisdom psalms somewhere. In spite of the wide recognition of these psalms, however, there is no consensus on the validity of the criteria so far proposed.

In discussing the wisdom psalms, three converging lines of interpretations have appeared in history. The first line of interpretation is related mainly to form criticism and to the existence of the wisdom psalms as a distinct type (*Gattung*) in the Psalter. The second line is to remain reluctant in accepting it as clear-cut or rather to reject the existence of the category. In more recent years, as the third one, research has turned to a consideration of the shape of the wisdom psalms in the canonical context of the Psalms as a whole.

This chapter will follow the three lines of approaches in which the wisdom psalms

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<sup>4</sup> Kuntz (1974:187) notes C.A. Briggs as one who for the first time appreciated the flavour of wisdom in the Psalms in 1906, but finds it difficult to label him as ‘pioneer’ in Old Testament wisdom psalms research because of his “modest concern for the didactic material within the Psalter”.

have been read mainly over the last century.

## 2.2. INTERPRETATION OF THE WISDOM PSALMS

### 2.2.1. First Line: Wisdom Psalm as a Distinct Type

Many scholars have not produced lengthy discourses of the wisdom psalms but have nonetheless contributed significantly to the discussion. Behind the discussion of the wisdom psalms basically lies the form critical understanding of H. Gunkel who put an emphasis on the significance of traditional language and ideas especially to the Book of Psalms. Gunkel understood the Psalms in the context of patterns of thought and expression that had been created and developed in particular life-settings (*Sitz im Leben*),<sup>5</sup> which enabled him to categorize the Psalms into five 'major' groups.<sup>6</sup> But he also recognized that there are a small number of psalms that do not properly fit the pattern of categorization he postulated.<sup>7</sup> In the process of dealing with these 'minor' psalms, the term 'wisdom poetry' appeared in his work as indicating a group of psalms with *wisdom forms* (i.e., the direct address, the אֲשֶׁר־יָמַן formula, the 'better sayings', and the 'impressive comparisons', etc.) or *wisdom themes* (i.e., admonitions, instruction, retribution, theodicy, etc.). Then, the method he employed here became typical of general practice in identification of the wisdom psalms (1998[1933]:295-296; cf., Perdue, 1977:261).

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<sup>5</sup> Gunkel was convinced that comparative study of the poetry outside the Psalter was crucial to the study of the biblical psalms (1998[1933]:3, 293-295). For him, the basic subject of wisdom is *human life*, which is followed by *moral and religious meditation* at a later stage. Then *doubt* is awakened against this foundational thought of the sages. A history of Israel's religious literature must begin with a history of its forms. Therefore "genre research in the Psalms is nonnegotiable, not something one can execute or ignore according to preference" (1998[1933]:5). His research on this approach spanned the period from 1904 until his death.

<sup>6</sup> He distinguished five main types of psalms, all of which had cultic origins (1998[1933]:221-222): (1) hymns, (2) communal complaint songs, (3) royal psalms, (4) individual complaint songs, and (5) individual thanksgiving songs.

<sup>7</sup> (1) Sayings of blessing and curse, (2) the pilgrimage song, (3) the victory song, (4) the thanksgiving song of Israel, (5) legends, (6) the torah psalms, (7) songs about Yahweh's enthronement, (8) prophetic psalms, (9) wisdom poetry, and (10) mixed types (1998[1933]:66-69, 222-250). While Gunkel thought the various types of psalms were mostly cultic in origin, he regarded them as having been freed from this connection to become more spiritual in outlook.

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Gunkel (1998[1933]:298) understands the wisdom poetry as 'instruction' rather than 'prayer' because "they speak about YHWH in the third person, and thus do not exhibit the form of a prayer". He (1998:303) maintains, "There is no doubt that wisdom poems did not originally have their place in the worship service". As far as wisdom psalms are concerned, he excludes them from the cultic context. According to Gunkel (1998[1933]:295-305), the following psalms are the product of the sages primarily for educational or private use: Psalms 1, 37, 49, 73, 91, 112, 127, 128 and 133. Then he concludes:

The overview thus depicts a *very comprehensive genre* which is found on foreign and Israelite soil, in the canon and the apocrypha, in the form of shorter "speeches" and longer "poems," even in entire books. Within the [P]salter, one finds this genre [of the wisdom psalms] within these poems, but also in diverse sayings which have been placed into other genres.

However, from the outset, a significant question has been highlighted by a number of scholars. Whybray (1995:152), for example, observed that these wisdom psalms "have no distinctive form of their own and but can only be distinguished by other criteria".<sup>8</sup> Thus "the vagueness of his characterization" of the category and its being "not completely clear in his listing of the wisdom psalms" were noted by Murphy (1963:157) and Kuntz (1974:188) respectively.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Gunkel's (1998[1933]:303-304) assumption that the forms of psalms evolved from pure and short units (wisdom sayings) to more sophisticated and longer one (wisdom poetry) has not been accepted by recent scholars any longer (Crenshaw, 2001:87). Nevertheless, it is still worth quoting Gunkel's work due to his contribution for the first time to distinguish the wisdom poetry from the other types of psalms. Since then the issue of whether the category exists or not has constantly evolved around psalmic wisdom

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8 For example, the thanksgiving song, according to Gunkel (1998[1933]:297-298) shares its forms and contents with wisdom poetry, which is also true with the hymn and the individual complaint song.

9 Most recently Crenshaw (2001:87) also complained that Gunkel's "use of the term... has produced more confusion than light in the scholarly community".

scholarship discussion.

In his treatise, *Israel's Wisdom Literature* (1936), Rankin spoke in passing about a list of wisdom psalms without mentioning why these psalms should belong to the category. He (1936: 1. n.1) merely states that Psalms 1, 19B, 32:8-11,<sup>10</sup> 34:12-23, 37, 49, 73, 94:8f, 111, 112, 119, 127, 128, and 133 belong to the arena of the wisdom literature. He simply dropped Psalm 91 and added six psalms to Gunkel's list. While the sources of his reference are unclear, it is worthy to note that a kind of consensus had already existed on the existence of the wisdom psalms since the momentous work of H. Gunkel.

Mowinckel continued the form critical study on the Psalms but thought that Gunkel had misunderstood the place of the cult. He (1955:205) claimed to have based his study on a presupposition that all the psalms were cultic in their origin and intention, and were actually composed for and used in the services of the temple. In the course of his investigation, however, he found a problem of the existence of the non-cultic psalms that do not agree to his cultic framework of the Psalter (1955:205). He argues that these non-cultic psalms in the Psalter originated in the circles of the wise men, and thus had the didactic character of private 'learned psalmography' (1955:206). However, he does not sharply distinguish the wise men from priests, prophets, and scribes, and only maintains, "psalmography was cultivated in the circle of learned scribes far down throughout the ages" (1955:207; see also 1962:105).

In light of this framework, Mowinckel (1955:208) adds that "The psalmists have learned from the learned men, and the learned men have learnt from the psalmist", and in the process of time, the sages might become the last collectors or redactors of the Psalms. In this way, according to him (1955:211, 217), the wisdom poems sneaked into the corpus of the Psalter, and "some of them may also have come to be used ritually in the cult". On one hand, Mowinckel certainly seems to distinguish non-

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<sup>10</sup> Numeration in this study will follow the Hebrew Bible.

cultic psalms from cultic psalms, and yet on the other hand, he seems to seek to integrate the former to the latter. Thus Mowinckel endeavours to relieve this conflict by considering the didactic psalms as “prayer” because “[T]hey will, as every real psalm, speak to God, even if they often are speaking to men as well” (1955:209) which is “one characteristic in common with genuine psalmography” (1962:108). Then he classifies the didactic psalms on the basis of the presence of sapiential *forms* (‘sayings’, ‘proverbs’, ‘exhortations’) and wisdom *themes* (‘theodicy’, ‘retribution’, and ‘two-ways theme’) that are both moralistic (didactic) and religious (1955:207-208; 1962:111). These psalms are 1, 19B, 34, 37, 49, 78, 105, 106, 111, 112, and 127, which show a result of “a dissolution of the style”<sup>11</sup> and of influence from the “poetry of wisdom” (1955:213). Since then, the interest in how the non-cultic psalms are related to the context of Israelite worship has had a substantial pedigree in the discussion of the wisdom psalms.

Mowinckel’s cultic approach to all the psalms, which views a didactic psalm as “a contradiction in adjective”, has been challenged by recent scholarship. As a case in point, Gerstenberger (1988:20) argues that “Wisdom psalms... were not composed and used strictly in a private or educational setting that was foreign to the cult... all these so-called wisdom psalms in reality were liturgical pieces from the very beginning” (see also Crenshaw, 2001:87). While Gunkel introduced the issue of the existence of wisdom psalms, Mowinckel raised the issue as to the relationship of non-cultic psalms to cultic ones.

In his brief article, *A Consideration of the Classification, ‘wisdom psalms’* (1963), Murphy gave full acknowledgement to the classification of the wisdom psalms. It was probably Murphy who has significantly contributed to the discussion of clarification of the wisdom psalms. Thanks to him, Psalmic scholarship came to share the assumption with a confidence in the group of psalms that have a sufficient

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<sup>11</sup> Mowinckel (1955:213) wrote, “As the poets would no longer compose poetry for a definite cultic occasion, the preservation of the modes of composition was no longer supported by their ‘*Sitz im Leben*’, as it used to be, and the different modes and motives were *mixed up*.”

commonality of stylistic, structural, thematic, and contextual characteristics to justify their existence as a distinct type. He (1963:159-161) used as his criteria *form* ("a certain uniformity of style") and *content* ("structure and recurrence of motifs") as follows: (1) style: the  $\text{אֲשֶׁר־אָמַר}$  formula, numerical sayings, 'better' sayings, the 'address-to-son' form, acrostic structure, simple comparison, and the admonition, (2) content: the contrast between the righteous and the wicked, the two-ways theme, the problem of retribution, practical advice for conduct, and the fear of Yahweh as the observance of the Torah.

With respect to the life setting, however, he admits, while it is presumably clear that the wisdom psalms were the product of the sages, it is not clear to what specific occasions one would relate these psalms. Based on the abovementioned analysis, Murphy (1963:161-167) presents Psalms 1, 32, 34, 37, 49, 112, and 128 as the wisdom psalms and continues to maintain that wisdom elements are also to be found in other psalms<sup>12</sup> that remain hymns, or thanksgivings in their types, which caused him to finally conclude, "it is still feasible to speak of "wisdom psalms" as a literary form parallel to other psalm types".

Scott approached the issue of wisdom in the Psalter under the title of "*Wisdom Piety*" in one of his works on wisdom.<sup>13</sup> He chooses and examines four wisdom psalms (1, 37, 49, and 112), on which, according to him, there is widest agreement as such. Then he proposes "two kinds of criteria for recognizing wisdom influence in the Psalter: (1) the *formal*; and (2) the *thematic*" (1971:197). In view of the formal features, instructional tone, wisdom vocabulary, and the adoption of wisdom stylistic forms (proverbs, rhetorical questions, etc.) were identified. With respect to themes, the following characteristics were mentioned (1971:198): (1) antithetical ways of life, (2) reward and retribution, (3) the character of the righteous to be imitated, (4) the Torah as a source of wisdom, (5) the worth of righteousness, (6) exhortation to trust

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<sup>12</sup> Psalms 25:8-10, 12-14; 31:24-25; 39:5-7; 40A:5-6; 62:9-11; 92:13-16.

<sup>13</sup> 'The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament' (1971), chapter 8.

Yahweh, and (7) theodicy.

Through these criteria, Scott (1971:198) found five psalms (32, 34, 127, 128, and 133) to retain “the greatest measure of affinity” with the first four psalms. At the outer of these second group is a third group of psalms with meditation on the Torah (19B and 119). As a final group there comes “another group of Psalms which direct their attention to Yahweh’s mighty deeds in Israel’s past” (1971:200), that is, salvation history (78, 105, and 106). However, Psalms 105 and 106 were counted out because of their prayerful tone rather than instructional tone, which definitely opposes Mowinkel’s position (see page 13). Thus the wisdom psalms for him are 1, 19B, 32, 34, 37, 49, 78, 112, 119, 127, 128, and 133. Now it seems whether the wisdom psalms can be considered as prayer or not became typical of wisdom psalm scholarship’s general concern.

The work done by Scott was further undertaken by Kuntz. He (1974:191) approached the issue of psalmic wisdom through a rhetorical point of view and proposed to consider seven distinct features of the wisdom psalms: (1) the ‘better’ saying, (2) the numerical saying, (3) the admonition, (4) the instructional address to ‘sons’, (5) the **אֲשֶׁר־י** formula, (6) the rhetorical questions, and (7) the simile, which were followed by detailed explanations of each case. Then he proceeds to review a study of the specific vocabularies of Israelite wisdom suggested by Scott (1971:192-201), acknowledging its limitation warned by Murphy (1967:410) and Crenshaw (1969:133), and finds that “only 13 of the 77 wisdom words enumerated by Scott fail to appear in the Psalter” (Kuntz, 1974:200). Among those 64 words, 28 words occurred in Psalm 119, 15 in Psalm 94, 13 in Psalm 32, 12 in Psalms 25 and 55, 11 in Psalms 19, 37, and 49, 10 in Psalms 10 and 107, 9 in Psalms 1, 5, 73, 92, and 139, 8 in 3 psalms, 7 in 11 psalms, 6 in 18 psalms, 5 in 10 psalms, 4 in 15 psalms, 3 in 15 psalms, 2 in 18 psalms, and only one word in 21 psalms (Kuntz, 1974:201). On this basis Kuntz (1974:202-208) examines “15 psalms which attest nine or more of the conjectured wisdom

words”, and concludes that only four psalms (1, 32, 37, and 49) may “legitimately” be regarded as wisdom psalms.

In discussing thematic elements in the Psalter, Kuntz (1974:208-214) identifies four thematic elements: (1) the fear of Yahweh and veneration of the Torah, (2) the contrasting life style of the righteous and the wicked, (3) the reality and inevitability of retribution, and (4) miscellaneous counsels pertaining to everyday life, which allow him to propose Psalms 34, 112, 127, and 128 as wisdom compositions. Finally Kuntz divides these wisdom psalms into three types in terms of rhetorical point of view: (1) sentence wisdom psalms (127, 128, and 133), (2) acrostic wisdom psalms (25, 34, 37, 111, 112, and 119), and (3) integrative wisdom psalms (1, 32, and 49).

In light of this analysis, Kuntz (1974:210) concludes that Psalms 1, 32, 34, 37, 49, 112, 127, 128, and 133 are the authentic canonical wisdom psalms. A problem of Kuntz’s approach, however, was highlighted in relation to his selection of the psalms, which can be also applied to this line of interpretation in general. He did not speculate on every psalm containing all seven or one of those features of wisdom, nor did he explain why he chose only some of those psalms (Crenshaw, 2001:90).

Perdue seems to carry the discussion one step further in that he is mainly concerned with the life setting of wisdom in particular. He (1977:261-324) argues, after a brief review of previous wisdom psalm research, that the wisdom psalms appear to be written by the sage when comparing these psalms to a number of the ancient Near Eastern wisdom texts. Because his main interest was in the relationship between wisdom and cult in Israel and in the ancient Near East, the issue of the wisdom psalms was to be dealt with in the light of this context. Perdue (1977:267) maintains,

The primary question which should concern us, however, is whether the sages intended some of their poetry to be wisdom psalms, written for usage in the cult, or whether the long didactic poems were merely academic exercises and instructional literature intended

for the teaching of sages and schoolboys.

Perdue (1977:268) juxtaposes both possibilities, and points out,

Some of these [wisdom] psalms were used to teach literature and ideology to young schoolboys (see Psalms 1, 37, 49, 112, and 127). Other poems (32, 34, and 73), while not intended for use as cultic literature, nevertheless, do reflect over cultic rituals and dogmas, thus providing for us some valuable sources for our analyses of sapiential views of cultic religion.

In regard to his methodology, Perdue acknowledges the presence of sapiential *forms, language, and themes* from the works of the previous scholars, and then adds a method of sapiential structure which he calls as “the methodology of New Stylistics” (1977:266). Then he contents on the same page that

the structure and the content of some didactic poetry are based upon a simple wisdom form such as a proverb, riddle, or אִשְׁרָאֵל saying. It is this form and its contents which provide the foundation for the development of the structure and content of the long didactic poems.

According to Perdue’s stylistic structure analysis (1977:269-323), there are seven subcategories in the didactic psalms: (1) ‘Proverb’ poems: 1, 19B, 34, 37, 112, and 127, (2) the אִשְׁרָאֵל poems: 32 and 119, (3) ‘Riddle’ poems: 19A, and 49, (4) ‘Cultic’ contribution: 19A, 19B, and 119, (5) Thanksgiving flavour: 32, and 34, (6) Lament-thanksgiving: 73, and (7) Pure didactic psalms: 1, 37, 49, 112, and 127.

These psalms eventually appear to fall into three realms associated with their milieu and purpose, that is, *cultic-wisdom psalms* originated in a wisdom context with a possibility of being served “as the contributions of certain sages to cultic literature” (1977:323), *non-cultic-wisdom psalms* associated with didactic characteristics that are nevertheless not cultic ones, and *pure wisdom psalms* that “are neither cultic literature nor reflections and instructions which broach the cultic realm” (1977:268, 324). Thus

the wisdom psalms for Perdue are 1, 19A, 19B, 32, 34, 37, 49, 73, 112, 119, and 127.

From the works of his precedents,<sup>14</sup> Kaiser (1978:133) also compiled criteria for distinguishing wisdom psalms that are divided into two categories: *formal* (literary style) and *thematic* (content), which was just another summary of the criteria to date. Nevertheless his list is not identical to any of lists proposed so far. Psalms 1, 37, 49, and 112 were most possible candidates, according to his assessment, with a probable set of psalms 32, 34, 111, 127, 128, and 133. Psalms 119 and 19:7-14 can be considered as wisdom psalms when meditation on the Torah is used as a category, and psalm 78 is also included given its invitation to wisdom lesson ("Give ear, my people, to my torah") and its use of wisdom terms (חִידָה, מִשְׁלָל). Then he concludes that Psalms 1, 19B, 32, 34, 37, 49, 78, 111, 112, 119, 127, 128, and 133 should be included in the wisdom psalms (Kaiser, 1978:134).

Avi Hurvitz (1988:43) approached the issue from a purely linguistic point of view, adapting the "minimalist" conception "which brings into this biblical category only the three classical sapiential compositions of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes", and appeared to succeed in presenting two words as hallmarks of the sapiential nature of the psalms: הוֹן (112:3 and 119:14) and סוֹר מִרְעֵה (34:15 and 37:27). Hurvitz (1988:43-44) suggests a "three-fold model" in order to single out the wisdom psalms: (1) the distinctive wisdom corpus (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes), (2) distinctive wisdom phraseology (typical words or phrases which have equivalent or opposite expressions employed in similar contexts in standard Biblical Bible), and (3) distinctive wisdom psalms (psalms containing a large proportion of elements classified as (2)). The analysis was made not merely by considerations of frequency of words but by the usage of exclusiveness. For example, הוֹן (money) is used only in the Wisdom literature while other 'opposition' (equivalent expression, אוֹצֵר 'treasure' in Jeremiah 15:13 ) is employed elsewhere in the Bible, which is the same

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<sup>14</sup> R. Murphy, S. Mowinckel, and R. B. Y. Scott.

for the phrase סִינַי מִרְעָה. His contribution in relation to the study of wisdom psalms is to urge the wisdom psalm scholars to include the linguistic data for the discussion on the wisdom psalms. The strength of his position lies in the fact that it is not based on hypothetical argument but on relatively independent and autonomous one. The weakness of his argument, however, is that he focuses only on two words, which is too narrow to be categorized. Nevertheless, as far as the two words are concerned, Hurvitz's treatment is compelling.

In her work of 2000 entitled *Get Wisdom, Get Insight*, Dell concurs with the first line of interpretation for the wisdom criteria of *form*, *content* and *context*, but she (2000:68) reflects on the impasse this line has faced by saying that "there are only a few psalms in which they are found in large enough quantity for us to classify the whole as a wisdom psalm". In fact, Dell (2000:64) raises a crucial point by quoting Day (1994:54-55) who highlights a significant question, "how many wisdom psalm characteristics a psalm must possess before it may legitimately be so described [as a wisdom psalm]?", a point to which we will come back in Chapter three.

In regard to forms, the contenders are proverbs (1:6, 33:16-17, 34:7, 10, 22; 37:2, 8-9, 12-13, 21; 37:12-13, and 127), numerical sayings (62:11), rhetorical questions (49:5-6), exhortations (34:14), the אִשְׁרַי formula (1:1, 32:1, 33:12, and 128:1), instruction genre (14:1-3, 32:8-9, and 78:1-2), autobiographical narrative (37:25, 35; 73:15-17), acrostic psalms (25 and 37), and other forms that are on the edge of the wisdom category (19:1-6, a hymn to the creator; 19:7-14, a meditation on the Torah).

While Dell identifies the presence of form critical categories, she emphasizes thematic approach rather than formal one, which is also problematic "because of the difficulty of deciding what kinds of content are typical of wisdom literature itself" (2000:68). Dell (2000:70-73) uses five thematic "yardstick(s)" to identify the psalms with the other wisdom books: (1) order in the world, (2) the justice in God's dealings

with human beings, (3) retribution, (4) life as the supreme good, and (5) confidence in wisdom to be taught. The wisdom psalms, then, can be acknowledged as a "microcosm" of the above-mentioned themes.

Dell seems to be well aware of the contextual studies in more recent scholarship on the wisdom psalms. She (2000:74) asked,

Is it not possible that there was a closer link from the beginning [of the shaping of the Psalter] between wisdom and cult and that these [wisdom] psalms and others were the product of early groups of psalmists influenced by the wisdom tradition?

This question leads us to reconsider a general-held assumption that wisdom influences are primarily *non-cultic*, and that wisdom is more of a *late* literary influence. She (2000:75) maintains that,

...there was a link with the cult from early times- an interest in order, in God's creative role and in the human order that derived from the divine... It seems reasonable to suggest that the didactic elements of these [wisdom] psalms may well have found a cultic context.

Such being the case, the idea of wisdom in the context of cult, then, can liberate the wisdom psalms from the bondage of the title, non-cultic, and leads the discussion into a broader context of the Psalm as a whole. Dell lists the following psalms as those belonging to the wisdom category in whole or in part: Psalms 1, 14, 19, 25, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 39, 49, 51, 53, 62, 73, 78, 90, 92, 94, 104, 105, 106, 111, 112, 119, 127, and 128, then, concludes that Psalms 1, 34, 37, 39, and 73 "have a good claim to be called wisdom psalms" (2000:74) with a comment that " we have been more inclined to speak of wisdom's having an influence on the Psalter as a whole" (2000:75). For Dell (2000:65), "wisdom is really inseparable from other genres of Old Testament material in the Psalter, and that all we can really speak of is a general wisdom influence".

In summary, the first line of the interpretation seems to be inclined to view the

wisdom psalms in the light of form critical perspective. The methodology used by those scholars has appeared to fall into three areas: *form*, *content*, and *life setting*. However, the fact that even in this line no authors agree with each other regarding the list of the wisdom psalms leads us to question the validity of the criteria. We remain uncertain whether the wisdom psalms exist in the form of genre or not in the Psalter. Nevertheless it is hard to deny the fact, at least, that in a way, this view of the wisdom psalms appreciates wisdom perspectives in the Psalter.

This brings us to the second line of interpretation, which is more cautious of determining the category.

### **2.2.2. Second Line: Wisdom Psalms as No Clear-cut Category**

The most significant contribution to this line is attributed to Engnell who has frequently been quoted as one arguing against the category of the wisdom psalms. He is remarkable in that he explicitly refuted the assumption that the Psalter contains the genre of wisdom psalm.

In his introductory essay on the Psalms in *A Rigid Scrutiny: critical essays on the Old Testament*, Engnell (1970:94-96), postulates several ways in which the psalms can be classified: liturgical subject, formal structure, and categories or types. With respect to the literary type in particular, he evaluates it less important than the cultic situation. He (1970:96) continues to assert that the terms of types ('royal psalm', for example) should not be drawn from "a form-critical classification", but from "an analysis of the contents" because "it is impossible to classify the psalms according to form-critical categories". Engnell (1970:95) maintains,

After all, the classification of the psalms according to types is nothing more than a means of arranging the literature in an orderly fashion in order to enable us to engage in a scholarly investigation of the material. Therefore, the attempt to write a literary history of the psalm types (corresponding to the work of Gunkel and others) was doomed to failure

from the very first.

Engnell (1970:75-76) assumes that the psalms originally used in the cult might be later transferred to "a different kind of cult", but quickly adds that this point of view should not be overemphasized, partly because it clearly rests on the assumption that the Book of Psalms contains several so-called Wisdom Psalms, which is by no means true". On this basis the didactic interpretation of the psalms is in view. According to Engnell (1970:99), the intention of the final collector(s) or editor(s) and the '*Sitz im Leben*' of the individual psalms are entirely different matters, so that it is misleading to interpret the Psalms as didactic or wisdom poems in light of "the Hymnbook of the Second Temple".<sup>15</sup> It appears that his concern is mainly with the analysis of the contents of the individual psalms focusing on each psalm's life setting that is cultic. Psalms 1, 112, and 127 were chosen to support his assertion that in the Psalter there are inescapable allusions to the cult. Psalm 1, for example, indicates "a definite cultic situation in which the so-called ethical requirements were cultivated" and these psalms "are no more didactic in the sense of being songs independent of the cult, or profane songs, than are any of the other psalms" (1970:100). Since Engnell took an 'either-or approach' to the wisdom psalms he became convinced that non-cultic psalms are "nothing but pure fiction" (1970:102), and concluded that the Psalms do not contain any wisdom psalms at all (1970:99).

Luyten (1990:63) concurs with Engnell in that he argues, "a genre 'wisdom psalm' as such cannot be reconstructed". In his article, *Psalm 73 and Wisdom*, Luyten (1990:63) lodged several reasons against the genre of the wisdom psalm: (1) the difficulty of locating *Sitz im Leben* from which the wisdom psalms came, (2) the irrelevance of the dichotomy of cultic and non cultic psalms, (3) the impropriety of applying the criteria, be it strict (no psalm meets every single requirement) or flexible (so many

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<sup>15</sup> The idea of regarding the Psalter as 'the hymn-book of the second temple' was originated from the school of history of religion, notably Wellhausen who argued that the Psalter was composed in the postexilic period (Clements, 1976:96).

psalms overlap with other genres). Thus “the search for a genre ‘wisdom psalm’<sup>16</sup> is in any case scarcely relevant to the attempt to locate the full extent and correct meaning of the relation between psalms and wisdom”, and hinders us from appropriating a number of psalms “which clearly have numerous characteristics in common with wisdom literature”(1990:63). Then he proposes to give up searching for the genre of wisdom psalm and to seek what he called “the dimension of wisdom”. Luyten (1990:64) remarks,

By the dimension of wisdom we mean the entirety of characteristics: stylistic, thematic and functional through which a psalm demonstrates a special relationship with wisdom literature, and specifically with the three classic wisdom books *proverbs*, *Job*, and *Qoheleth*.

Psalms 73 was selected and scrutinized to support his argument. In terms of ‘sapiential form’, given the variety of proposed forms (wisdom psalm, psalm of confidence, psalm of innocence, or thanksgiving psalm), according to him (1990:64-70), “Ps. 73 does not contain a typical structure of a wisdom or didactic poem - which, for that matter, does not exist - but does have a structure which is typical of the manner in which poems were composed in the wisdom literature”.

With respect to sapiential motifs, while Luyten (1990:71-73) admits there are a couple of themes (i.e., the opposition between the wicked and the just) that are specific to the wisdom literature, he also finds other themes (i.e., retribution) too general to consider as typical wisdom theme. Then he (1990:80) examined the affinity of Psalm 73 to the book of Job and remarked,

Job and Ps. 73 coincide most clearly in the challenge which the suffering of the just presents to those believing in Yahweh, a challenge which here is not solved through

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<sup>16</sup> Luyten (1990: 59, n. 5, 6, 10, 11) provides us with other scholars' lists of the wisdom psalms, which we do not deal with in the study: 1, 9-10, 12, 14, 15, 36, 47, 49, 52, 53, 73, 91, 94, 112, 119, 127, 128, and 139 (Castellino, 1955); 1, 8, 9-10, 14, 15, 19, 24, 25, 32, 34, 37, 49, 52, 62, 73, 78, 90, 92, 101, 105, 106, 111, 112, 119, 127, 133, 139, and 145 (Deissler, 1963); 19B, 25, 32, 34, 73, 119 (Munch, 1937); 1, 18, 32, 73, 77, and 90 (Michel, 1960).

intellectual reasoning, but rather one which is transcended by means of an absolute trust in God.

Through the comparison of Psalm 73 to the classical biblical wisdom books, particularly to the book of Job, Luyten (1990:80) becomes confident and concludes that in order to establish the relationship between the Psalms and wisdom, we should search for not the *genre*, 'wisdom psalm', but the wisdom dimension of psalms.

Von Rad, in *Wisdom and Israel* (1972), mentioned several psalms in relation to what he calls 'wisdom influences'. He (1972:203) considers Psalms 37, 49, and 73 as "didactic wisdom poems" because they deal with the theme of theodicy. In terms of form, Psalm 37 is an acrostic psalm, while Psalm 49 begins with "teacher's opening summons", and Psalm 73 adopts 'problem-solution' format, which are "particular literary form[s] of wisdom literature"(Von Rad, 1972:205). He (1972:47-50) also identifies a group of the Torah-psalms with wisdom perspective because they "celebrate the revelation of Yahweh's will as the source of all knowledge and as an indispensable guide in life". In the course of discussion he views the following psalms as the wisdom psalms: 1, 34, 37, 49, 73, 111, 112, 119, 127, 128, and 139.

Nevertheless, he (1972:48) notes that there are "no certain criteria for the determination of these psalms" because they can belong to other types as well. Thus, for Von Rad, the category of wisdom psalms is rather a general impression than a particular *Gattung*. In addition, Von Rad sees these psalms as *both* 'prayers' *and* 'instruction'. There is no distinction between the two because he believes 'prayers' were written by the wise for the purpose of instructing themselves.

Whybray has also analyzed the perspectives on the existence of the wisdom psalms in several articles. In the first of these, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament* (1974), he examines the distribution of the root  $\text{חכ}$  in the Psalms (19, 37, 49, 51, 90,

104, 107, 111 and 119), and concludes that these psalms with the occurrences of חכָּם ought to be classified as belonging to the intellectual tradition including further Psalms 1, 73, 92, 94 (1974: 154). However it is not clear yet which psalms must be included in the category of wisdom psalms. Years later in an essay Whybray (1989:245) claims, "Since the literary context... offers no hint of the existence of a distinct category of wisdom psalms, the only criteria available for their classification are the internal ones of *form* (and language) and *content*". However, he (1989:245) found, with regards to the form, that there is no distinct *Gattung* of wisdom psalm because the psalms as categorized as wisdom psalms can reasonably belong to other types. When it comes to themes, the affinities to the wisdom literature were noted, but they were nevertheless ambiguous. In relation to the life setting of the wisdom psalms, Whybray (1989:246) calls for an explanation that "is required for the fact that these poems now appear not in the setting of a wisdom book but in a collection of psalms which are now generally recognized as composed for use in worship".

Whybray returned to the subject in 1995 when he extended his analysis to the wisdom psalms. In an article, *The Wisdom Psalms*, Whybray (1995:154) contends that it is "mistaken" "to make an *absolute* distinction... between 'wisdom psalms' and the other psalms in the Psalter" in that "all liturgical texts have a didactic function" and the didactic texts have a liturgical function. He (1995:158) maintains, "But it would be mistaken to put the psalms all in the same category and to label them simply 'wisdom psalm'... It would be justifiable to call a psalm a 'wisdom psalm' only if its resemblance to some part of the OT wisdom books -- Proverbs, Job, or Ecclesiastes -- were so close as to be undeniable." Then he (1995:160) concludes that "The use of 'wisdom psalms' as a blanket term for all those psalms in the Psalter ... is mistaken one. This terminology may be useful if it extends the corpus of wisdom literature by identifying those few psalms which have marked affinities with the acknowledged wisdom books."

Crenshaw has also constantly contributed to the study of the wisdom psalms. In his earlier work, *Old Testament Wisdom: an introduction* (1981), he seemed to approve the existence of the wisdom psalms and included six psalms in that arena on the basis of the presence of *wisdom language* and *theme*. In detail he presented Psalms 37, 39, 49, and 73 as “discussion literature”, Psalm 19 as “torah meditation”, Psalms 127, 32, 94, and 62 as “psalms combined themes and images from the wisdom corpus”. Possible candidates for him were Psalms 1, 19, 33, 39, 49, and 104, as well as Psalms 94 and 107 with wisdom influences. He summarized his position as follows:

This delineation of wisdom psalms uses formal and thematic criteria. In any event, we have isolated sufficient evidence to suggest that Israel's sages eventually participated in the cultic life, which finds expression in the Psalter.

In his latest book, *The Psalms: an Introduction*, however, Crenshaw (2001:87-95) seems to change his previous position, after having scrutinized the attempts made by a group of wisdom psalm scholars (Gunkel, Mowinckel, Murphy, and Kuntz) who have appeared as main players in the history of the interpretation, and concludes,

My own research in the Psalter leads me to question the very category of wisdom psalms... I do not see any profit in attributing such psalms to the sages when we know little about the authors and their social contexts... The authorship and provenance [of the wisdom psalms] matter less than the accuracy and profundity of what they say.

To sum up, one common theme pertinent to the second line is the rejection of the category of wisdom psalm as a genre and to the search to ‘wisdom influences’ (i.e., Von Rad, Crenshaw), ‘wisdom dimension’ (i.e., Luyten), or ‘affinities to the wisdom literature’ (i.e., Whybray) in a broader sense.

### **2.2.3. Third Line: Wisdom Psalm as Part of Canonical Reading**

The purpose of the third line is to interpret the wisdom psalms in the context of the

Psalter as a whole, and to keep some distance from form criticism and cultic approach in favour of reading the Psalms as literature (Wilson, 1984:337). This approach is closely associated with what B.S. Childs (1979:513) has called a "hermeneutical shift" that he claims to have occurred in the late psalmody (cf., Whybray, 1995:153, Howard, 1999:329).

In *Reflections on the Modern Study of the Psalms* (1976), Childs challenges the historical-critical approach to the Psalms in which scholars' interest is in the authorship of each individual psalm, in the psalm's historical background, and in the date of its composition, and then proposed to explore "the issue of how the psalms were finally collected and given their present shape" (1976:380), which is associated with the issue of canon, of inner biblical exegesis, and of superscriptions to the psalms as well (1976:382-384). Of course Childs does not ignore the importance of historical critical analysis and the usefulness of form critical and cultic approach, but he maintains that the canonical setting of the psalms should be appreciated in the first place. His main idea in this regard is well expressed in his observation that "within late Israel, the psalms have been loosened from their original cultic context and the words assigned a new significance as Sacred Scripture for a new and different function" (1976:383). It is clear, then, that Childs is interested not in the process of canonization but in the final form of the Psalter.

Although the psalms were Israel's prayer as a response to God's revelation, these prayers now function as the divine word itself through continually hearing the voice of the psalmist's response (Childs, 1979:513). To support this hermeneutical change, Childs (1979:514-522) identified five other characteristics in the Psalms: (1) the anthological style,<sup>17</sup> (2) the royal psalms' functional change (2, 72, 89, and 132) from references to earthly kings to a witness to the messianic hope, (3) new eschatological interpretation as an announcement of God's coming kingship, (4) the corporate reference of 'I' as 'collective personality', and (5) psalm titles as new interpretations

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<sup>17</sup> For example, psalm 108 consists of two parts made up by joining psalms 57:7-11 and 60:5-12.

of the old cultic context. This new mode of interpretation of the Psalms as a coherent, integral, canonical text is based on the conviction that the final editor(s) are responsible for the theological concern of the final form of the Psalms (Howard, 1989:284).<sup>18</sup> Childs (1979:521) succinctly comments on this challenge, saying, “the effect of this new context has wide hermeneutical implications”.

In dealing with the wisdom psalms, D. Morgan has based his study on two issues, that is, the nature of the relationship of wisdom to cult and that of wisdom psalms to the Torah psalms. According to Morgan (1981:125), most wisdom psalms are dated in the postexilic period and these particular psalms were integrated into the cultic worship and life of Israel, given the observation that “the Psalms as a whole reflect the needs and concerns of the post-exilic community and therefore tell us more about the wisdom tradition in this period than any other” (1981:126). Thus, “it is clear that the Psalter witnesses to an interrelationship between the wisdom tradition and the cult [in the post-exilic period]” (1981:125). He argues, then, that the genre changes from cultic psalms to wisdom psalms occurred in the post exilic period “should not be viewed as disintegration or dissolution but rather necessary transformation in the light of new circumstances” (1981:130, cf., Mowinckel, 1955:213).

According to Morgan (1981:131), since the intention of the wisdom psalms is mainly to instruct people, the occasion of the post-exilic period in which instructional dimensions of wisdom were emphasized made it possible to identify wisdom with the Torah. Moreover the individualistic expressions of wisdom would properly fit into the torah-oriented community, and gradually integrate into the cultic community (Morgan, 1981:131).

Regarding the general classification of wisdom psalms, Morgan (1981:127) presents ‘rhetorical questions’ (49:5-6), ‘admonition’ (62:10), the  $\text{אִשְׁרַי}$  formula (40:4),

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<sup>18</sup> Westermann (1981:250-258) also suggests similar opinion to this.

'numerical formula' (62:11-12), "better" saying (37:16), 'proverbs' (37:12-13), 'lists' (104:14ff), and 'teacher's opening formula' (78:1-4) as literary forms and 'styles', 'the fear of Yahweh' (111:10), 'torah' (119), 'retribution' (1 and 37), and theodicy (73) as motifs and themes, although he remarks, "there is no generic form or structure shared by a majority of wisdom psalms" (1981:126).

In fact, Morgan did not establish his own list of the wisdom psalms and only quoted Psalms 1, 37, 49, 112, 127, and 128 as best classified wisdom psalms. Nevertheless we may deduce from Morgan's comments that he, at least, emphasized the compatibility of cult and wisdom and the ultimate identification of the torah with wisdom.

In his 1992 article, *The Psalms as Instruction*, McCann argues that the Psalms should be read as instruction. His argument is firmly based on "almost unanimous scholarly agreement that Psalm 1 was placed intentionally at the beginning of the Book of Psalms" (McCann, 1992:118). Since the word 'Torah' in Psalm 1:2 has a broader sense as 'instruction' than as the Mosaic Law, that is, the five books of Moses, the readers are called to read the Psalter, like the Pentateuch, "as God's instruction to the faithful" (1992:119). In fact, Psalm 1 plays a crucial role for this line of the interpretation to provide a solid foundation of reading the Psalter as a literary unit. Sheppard (1992:153) also takes this perspective when he notes that "At the outset, Psalm 1 calls us to seek wisdom and choose the way of the righteous over that of the wicked. By implication, therefore, we can anticipate that the Book of Psalms will help us in this regard". In Psalm 1, Solomonic wisdom and Mosaic Torah are incorporated, "with each serving as a literary resource for a better understanding of the other" (Sheppard, 1992:154). Now the real question turns out to be hermeneutical, that is, as McCann (1992:121) insightfully notes, "how does approaching the Psalms as instruction affect the interpretive task?" To this, he answers that "What the editorial activity in the Psalter ultimately reveals is that songs and prayers that originated as human words to God were appropriated by the faithful as *God's word to humans* - as torah, 'instruction' " (1992: 121).

If we can prove that the Psalms are likewise to be read as instruction, and that one of the decisive characteristics of wisdom is in its didactic intention, then we have a possibility of seeing the whole psalms in terms of wisdom perspective.

With respect to this 'movement' from form critical concern to canonical approach, it is Wilson who attempts the most comprehensive study of the structure of the Psalms. In his Ph.D thesis, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (1985), Wilson endeavours to prove that the Psalter had been arranged by purposeful, editorial activity (1985a:9-11, see also 1984:337-352; 1985b:404-413).<sup>19</sup> To this end, he presents two kinds of evidence: (1) explicit indications (superscripts and postscript at the conclusion of psalm 72:20); (2) tacit indications (the five-fold book division, groupings of psalms along with expressions or themes) (1985a [1981]: 9-10, 182-197).

In *Evidence of Editorial Divisions in the Hebrew Psalter* (1984), Wilson states that author changes (from David to Korah, Asaph, and Moses in the beginning of book 1, 2, 3, and 4), genre categories in the psalm headings (מְזִמֹּר, מְשִׁפִּיל, etc.), and the use of יהִלְלוּ הַלְלוּ יְהוָה psalms in conjunction with those introduced by the phrase, הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי־טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ, in the final two books of the Psalter were noted to confirm the reality of the five books as editorial divisions, which provides *transition* from one book to another and indicates *disjunction* between the books (1984:352). Since these arguments were valuable only to some of the books,<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> This view was challenged by Whybray who leveled the charge against the holistic reading of the Psalms. In *Reading the Psalms as a book* (1996), Whybray maintains that there is no evidence of "systematic editorial attempt" (1996:38, 84) in the Psalter when considering the wisdom (except psalm 73) and Torah psalms in relation to their placement. Although his main concern is the editorial shape of the Psalms, Whybray scrutinized the wisdom psalms in great detail. Here he (1996:50-75) designated the following psalms as psalms with wisdom material: 18:21-25; 27:11; 32:8-9; 86:11; 92:6-10, 13-15; 94:8-15; 105:45; 107:43; 111:2; 144:3-4; 146:3-4; and as pure wisdom psalms: 8, 14(53), 25, 34, 39, 49, 73, 90, 112, 127, 131, and 139, maintaining that the wisdom psalms are just randomly scattered in the book of Psalms.

<sup>20</sup> For example, the authorship changes and genre categories are of little value in books four and five "since the majority of the psalms (57%) are altogether untitled and 42 of 61 psalms (almost 69%) have

however, Wilson (1986:87) in his later work, *The Use of Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter*, claimed to additionally identify the presence of royal psalms at the 'seams' of the Hebrew Psalter (psalms 2, 72, and 89).<sup>21</sup> Through the placement of these royal psalms, the Psalms fall into two major blocks of materials (psalms 2-72 and 73-89), which are connected to each other in the theme of the Davidic covenant. On this basis he (1986:92) concludes that "[i]n its final form it reflects exilic (or post-exilic) evaluation of the hopes of the Davidic monarchy based on the covenant of David. The conclusion still manifests hope in the faithfulness of YHWH to his covenant promises and a plea for restoration."

Wilson (1992:129) returns to this subject in his article, *The Shape of the Book of Psalms*, and then confidently declares, "the question... is not whether it has a shape but what the significance of this shape is". For example, the placement of the royal psalms is to focus "the concern of those frustrated by the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant and kingdom, and (it) articulates their continuing appeal to God for redress and restoration" (Wilson, 1993b:75).

In the discussion of the shape of the Psalms, Wilson elaborates on his point in detail. Wilson sees the significance of the wisdom psalms in relation to the royal covenantal frame in particular.<sup>22</sup> He (1992:134) finally claimed to recognize "the strategic placement of wisdom psalms" that "provides a structuring framework in the last two books [of the Psalter]" on the assumption that Psalms 90, 91, 106[107?], and 145 are wisdom psalms. According to him the wisdom frame is primarily associated with book four and five. While the first psalm of Book five is generally classified as

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no designation of author" (Wilson, 1986:87). On the contrary, *הַלְלוּ יְהוָה* psalms are scattered in books four and five.

<sup>21</sup> Psalm 41 is not generally considered as a royal psalm, but as Wilson (1986:87) remarks, the lack of such a psalm at this particular 'seam' may be explained by the earlier combination of Books I and II (2-72) into a unified collection as the postscript in 72.20 suggests.

<sup>22</sup> Wilson (1992:134) argues, Psalm 144 is added to the Davidic covenantal frame as a royal psalm, which may indicate one of two ways: " Either the whole royal covenantal framework was imposed on the first three books at the time the last two books were appended, or a framework independently associated with the first three books was later extended to the last two as a means of binding the whole together"

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thanksgiving song (Anderson, 1983:241) or “kingship of Yahweh psalm” (Howard, 1999:337), Wilson (1993b:79) sees a “clear wisdom note” in Psalm 107: 42-43, and continues,

At the other end of the book, Psalm 145 presents a further wisdom challenge<sup>23</sup>. This acrostic psalm extols the kingship of YHWH and God's love, and it concludes in 145.19-20 with the wisdom admonition: 'He fulfills the desire of all who fear him, he also hears their cry, and saves them. YHWH preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy'.

Moreover, the recognition of Psalms 90 (wisdom concerns in verses 11-12) and 91 (a wisdom psalm) under the wisdom tradition leads us to extend the wisdom frame to Book IV (Wilson, 1993b:80). In light of this observation so far, Wilson argues that while Books I–III (Psalms 2-89) were shaped by the concerns of “royal covenant frame”, Books IV–V (Psalms 90-145) were characterized by the wisdom framework. However the recognition of Psalm 1 as introduction to the Psalms allows us to extend the wisdom frame to embrace the whole Psalter including Book I and II (Wilson, 1993b:80). The similar tone of the ‘two ways’ theme both in Psalm 1 and in Psalm 145 and of the ‘wisdom blessing’ both in 2:12 and in 144:15 reinforces the reality of a wisdom frame (Wilson, 1993b:80). More importantly “confirmation of the existence of this framework is further strengthened by the realization that even the third book opens with a wisdom psalm, Psalm 73” (Wilson, 1993b:81).

On this basis Wilson (1992:138) maintains wisdom elements are dominant over the royal covenantal frame in the final shape of the Psalter, which leads to the conclusion that “the Psalter assumed final form at a time when the sages had the upper hand in restructuring the community’s perception of these cultic traditions”.

It is here that the book of prayer now turns into the book of instruction in the name

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<sup>23</sup> Since Wilson maintains that Psalms 146-150 comprise a concluding doxology of the Psalter, Psalm 145 stands as a conclusion of Book V.

of wisdom. The Psalms, then, are a book of wisdom, containing Yahweh's instruction for the faithful and emphasizing his kingship (1992:137). As a book of wisdom, the Psalter plays an important role urging us to give up faith in the fallible human kings and to rest on Yahweh who alone is able to save (1997:464).

All of these works of the third line are characterized by the concept of shaping of the Psalter especially in the context of the ancient Israelite community of faith, notably in the postexilic period. In this regard deClaissé- Walford (2000:110) suggests,

What then is the canonical shape of the Psalter? Enter the story, along with King David, *through the lens of wisdom*. Read the story, delight in it, and *meditate* on it. Ask of these verses those vexing questions of identity: "Who are we?" and "What are we to do?" And in the end, along with David, praise YHWH as king over a new community, new people called Israel, who will survive.<sup>24</sup>

### 2.3. CLOSING REMARKS

The survey of the history of wisdom psalm interpretation indicates that there is a need to reconsider the existence of the wisdom psalms. The fact that no two lists of the wisdom psalms proposed so far have been in accord with each other brings us to wonder if the type of the wisdom psalms is viable. Moreover, as it appears, it is true that "there is no generic form or structure shared by a majority of wisdom psalms" (Morgan, 1981:126). They can belong to various psalm-types. There is a need to approach the phenomena in a different way.

The second line of interpretation seeks to resolve the problem by suggesting that in the Psalter there are only such psalms that have 'wisdom influences', 'wisdom dimension', or 'affinities to wisdom perspective'. No such thing as wisdom psalm as a genre exists, but there is a psalm with wisdom flavour. If this is the case, as

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<sup>24</sup> *Italics are mine*

Ceresko (1990:217-230) maintains, the presence of wisdom influences in the Psalter seems to approve the view that the Psalms have a didactic dimension.

The third line is associated with the shape of the Psalter. By understanding the shape of the Psalter as a witness to the instructional intention for the ancient Israel, the scholars attempt to treat the whole Psalter as a book of instruction rather than a prayer book in worship. The Psalms may have a consistent intention that is to instruct the people of Israel. In fact, the purpose of the Psalter in its finalized form is closely related to the question of canonization that will be dealt with in later stage of our study.

In relation to the aim of this study, the third approach is more attractive than the first two lines because it shows an overwhelming concern with the significance of wisdom in the Psalter as a whole: what is the Psalter as a 'wisdom -framed book' supposed to be to the ancient Israel?

I maintained in the preceding chapter that if we admit that the Psalms are basically Israel's praises in response to what God has done for his people in history, then, their theological expression in general should be salvation-oriented. And if the Psalter is to be considered in light of wisdom frame as Wilson proposed, then the subject of the wisdom embedded in the Psalter should be related to a recital of salvation history.

If this is the case, how can we deal with the apparent wisdom factors in the Psalter? Why is the wisdom flavour included in the Psalms that have long been considered as prayer in the context of worship? What is the function of wisdom in the Psalms? What follows is an attempt to establish our own criteria for the wisdom psalms in order to carry this understanding one step further.

## CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

## 3.1. INTRODUCTION

Before proceeding with the analysis of wisdom Psalter, it is necessary to make explicit the major principles of the method to be employed. Over the last 30 years after the form critical approach of H. Gunkel, studies on Psalm have focused much more on 'canonical analysis' of the entire Psalter. A paradigm shift in the interpretation of the Psalter has occurred.

Regarding the principles of the research method, they first of all take account of the fact that the Psalms to be studied is considered as a literary unit. Thus five approaches that were undertaken under the rubric of canonical criticism is to be considered: (1) the canonical approach of Brevard Childs, (2) the canonical criticism of James Sanders, (3) the canonical process approach of Bruce Waltke, (4) Christocanonical approach of Jerry E. Shepherd, and (5) the 'communito-canonical' approach<sup>25</sup> of deClaisse-Walford. Legitimacy of examining the works of these five scholars lies in the fact that all of them have done special work in the Psalms through their approaches.

Secondly, the method takes account of the fact that every individual psalm contained in the Psalter is to be described in terms of plot rather than a separated part of the anthology. One strategy for this approach is to read the Psalter from the beginning to the end.

## 3.2. CANONICAL ANALYSIS (Brevard Childs)

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<sup>25</sup> I coined the name for the sake of convenience.

Brevard Childs (1979:45) declared that scholars should go beyond a historical-critical approach of texts and take seriously their canonical shapes. His approach had begun with his clear stance that in a real sense the descriptive approach is not possible because apriority has already become a part of interpretation as a starting point (1964:437). He maintains that “[A]pproaches which start from a neutral ground never can do full justice to the theological substance because there is no way to build a bridge from the neutral, descriptive content to the theological reality” (1964:438). Then he faulted historical criticism for its claim of being descriptive. Childs (1970:99) proposed instead that “the canon of the Christian church is the most appropriate context from which to do Biblical theology.” What this means, he continues,

...implied in the thesis is the basic Christian confession, shared by all branches of historic Christianity, that the Old and New Testaments together constitute Sacred Scripture for the Christian church. The status of canonicity is not an objectively demonstrable claim but a statement of Christian belief.

From these lines, among others, Childs argues that the context of canon should be the whole church that appeared in the history. Childs’ approach, however, has been enhanced since the appearance of *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*.<sup>26</sup> He maintains that his approach

is descriptive in nature. It is not confessional in the sense of consciously assuming tenets of Christian theology, but rather it seeks to describe as objectively as possible the canonical literature of ancient Israel which is the heritage of both Jews and Christian. If at times the description becomes theological in its terminology, it is because the literature itself requires it.

In this work, he introduces the canonical analysis as a descriptive one focusing “its attention on the final form of the text itself” (1979:28). It studies the texts “as historically and theologically conditioned writings which were accorded a normative function in the life of this community [of Israel]” (1979:28). The significance of the

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<sup>26</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

final form of the text is that “it alone bears witness to the full history of revelation” (1979:75). What, then, about the process of ‘canonization’? Childs states that the collections in the previous stages should be governed only in the light of the final canonical form (1979:76):

Yet to take the canon seriously is also to take seriously the critical function which it exercises in respect to the earlier stages are handled. At times the material is passed on unchanged; at other times tridents select, rearrange, or expand the received tradition. The purpose of insisting on the authority of the final canonical form is to defend its role of providing this canonical norm.

Therefore, the most effective approach for understanding the meaning of the text is to study its final shape that “became normative for all successive generations of this community of faith” (1979:75). According to Childs, critical study cannot discover the history of the development of the canon because “those responsible for the actual editing of the text did their best to obscure their own identity” (1979:78).<sup>27</sup> Thus he (1980:54) states, “Unfortunately we know so little about their work that many theories have been exceedingly speculative up to now.” The reason why the ‘tradents’ have consistently sought to hide their identities is “to focus attention on the canonical text itself rather than the process” (1977:68). While there have been numerous objections to his approach,<sup>28</sup> his contribution of understanding the biblical text as their final form can hardly be ignored.

### **3.3. CANONICAL CRITICISM ( James Sanders)**

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<sup>27</sup> Childs (1979:79) calls the history of the shaping of the text in a process as ‘actualization’ that is not just updating the earlier stages, but transmitting traditions in such a way as to prevent their “being moored in the past.”

<sup>28</sup> Shepherd (1995:118) identifies three basic lines of attack to Childs’ position: (1) the approach, rather than being considered theological, should be seen instead as literary, (2) Childs is either unable to give any real theological justification for his position or has not done so, and (3) the theological insight at which Childs arrives are not a result of the approach but his own theology imposed on and though the canon.

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Sanders has also been considered, along with Childs, as a leading proponent of canonical criticism. But Sanders' basic concept of the text appears to be different from Childs'. While Childs understands the text as the final form within the Hebrew Bible, Sanders identifies the text as the result of a process of selection by historical communities. Sanders' position is well revealed in his definition of the term 'canon'. While Childs understands 'canon' as the final form of the text,<sup>29</sup> Sanders (1984:1) refers to it as "authoritative Scripture" rather than a closed collection of books, which has led him to be more open to understanding canon as follows: "A canon is basically a community's paradigm for how to continue the dialogue in ever changing socio-political contexts (Sanders, 2002:262). Thus he (2002:254) prefers the terms 'stabilization' and 'canonical process' to 'canonization'. He emphasizes the dynamic relationship between the biblical texts and the community (Sanders, 1987:166). Through the process of time, the community selected and preserved the texts, which made them become normative and authoritative. Simultaneously, the texts gave to the community a rationale to live. According to Sanders (1972:xv), the texts become normative when they are able to answer to two existential questions of 'who we are' and 'what we are to do'.

J. Shepherd (1995:131-134) identifies four agenda of Sanders' canonical criticism: the components of the canonical process are (1) repetition over generations (2) re-signification of the material in order to answer two vital questions for the later community; who they were and what they were to do (3) acceptance by the community (4) the sacred literature as canon.

In contrast to Childs' canonical analysis, many differences have been noted (Shepherd, 1995:146-150). First, Childs emphasizes the final canonical form, Sanders emphasizes the canonical process. Second, for Childs, the Masoretic Text is the

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<sup>29</sup> In fact, Childs' definition of canon is not clear in that his definition seems to be that of 'canonization' rather than 'canon'. But his ultimate concern is focused on the final form of the text. One issue raised is his choice of the Masoretic text as only authoritative. For more details, see Childs, *the exegetical significance of canon*; D. Knight (1980:138), *canon and the history of tradition*. Sanders, *canonical context and canonical criticism*, *HBT* (1980:186-187).

authoritative form of the Hebrew Bible, for Sanders it would be wrong to arbitrarily limit the canon to the Masoretic Text form of the Hebrew Bible. Third, Sanders pays more attention to the community shaping of the canon than does Childs. It is the community alone that shapes the canon. Fourth, Childs focuses his attention on the full context of the canon for interpretation, in Sanders' view there is no real precedent in the canon itself for a fixation on the final form. Fifth, in that sense, Sanders downplays "the moment of final shaping as not particularly more important than any other". Sixth, while Childs de-emphasizes the historical context of the communities because it would not be possible to discern the details, Sanders underscores those same contexts. Seventh, Childs understands the term 'shape' as the final form of the canon. For Sanders, however, it is not the form, but the hermeneutics that are responsible for that form.<sup>30</sup>

To sum up, Sanders acknowledges that for understanding the final shape of the canon, historical settings are crucial and can be discovered in the process of history. Because the biblical texts are rooted not in personal settings, but in communities of faith, he is mainly concerned with how to understand those communities that are the foundation of canon. Childs and Sanders share the same position in that their canonical approaches depart from the historical criticism that focuses on the text's underlying forms, histories, or traditions, but they depart from each other in their understanding the concept of text: The major matter for Childs is text as the final form within the Hebrew Bible, but for Sanders it is the process through which the text was selected and appropriated by historical communities.

The assumptions of Sanders' approach appear to be that authority is not intrinsic to the texts themselves. It is vested in them by human decision, that is, the community. Thus the authority increases as the canonization process proceeds, from oral stage to written stage and to the final stage of official promulgation as canonical scripture.

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<sup>30</sup> Shepherd suggested eight points on that issue, but I found the eighth point a bit irrelevant in that it seems to be a more subjective matter. Thus I missed it. He questioned Sanders' position of 'the need to interpret from a standpoint of faith.'

### **3.4. CANONICAL PROCESS APPROACH (Bruce Waltke)**

In his article from 1981 entitled “*A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms*”, Waltke proposed a type of canonical approach to the interpretation of the Psalms, which deserves more attention. What follows is a summary of the article.

#### **3.4.1. Three Interpretations of the Messianic Psalms**

Waltke begins his article with a traditional conviction of early church that the Old Testament and the New Testament are united in the concept of ‘promise-fulfillment’, which is culminated in the works of Jesus Christ. This observation brings him to particularly consider the so-called the ‘messianic psalms’ in the Psalter. From the early church the Psalms have occupied the centre of the interpretation of messianic significance. After discussing the Alexandrian school associated with allegorical exegesis, Waltke observed, in the Antiochene School with literal exegesis, three groups of interpretation of the messianic content of the Psalter. They are:

- (1) The pre-critical or non-critical expositors who would limit the number of messianic psalms only to the psalms quoted in the New Testament with respect to Jesus Christ. Waltke faults this group for their tendency to discredit the messianic claims of Christ by its neglect of history in favour of the prophetic elements.
- (2) Literary-historical critics who deny any real predictions. This group explains the messianic elements in the Psalter as reflections of the aspirations for the return of the Davidic dynasty. This discredits the New Testament by untying, or at least loosening, the bond connecting the New Testament with the original meaning of the Old Testament.
- (3) Literary-historical critics who see the Psalms quoted in the New Testament with reference to Jesus as containing both direct prophecies and indirect pre-

figuration of Christ. This group insists on the literal historical sense as the only proper sense, but also recognizes that the Psalter contains real predictions in that they present an ideal that was partially realized in ancient Israel, and then became real in the life of Christ. This method “maintains a balance between history and prophecy, yet fails to give a consistent and comprehensive method for identifying the messianic element in the psalms” (1981:6). Thus they do not have an answer to why some psalms are quoted in the New Testament when others are not.

Here Waltke identifies a major problem with the three approaches to the messianic psalms and attempts to resolve it through the ‘canonical process approach’.

### **3.4.2. The Canonical Process Approach**

One thing in common of those three approaches, according to Waltke, is in their ignorance of how the New Testament writers understood the Psalms. Thus he (1981:7) maintains,

I conclude, therefore, that both the non-historical and undisciplined [Alexandrian] allegorical method of interpreting the psalms and the Antiochian principle of allowing but one historical meaning that may carry with it typical significance are inadequate hermeneutical principles for the interpretation of the psalms. In place of these methods, therefore, I would like to argue for a canonical process approach in interpreting the psalms, an approach that does justice both to the historical significance(s) of the psalms and to their messianic significance. Indeed, I shall argue that from a literary and historical point of view, we should understand that human subject of the psalms—whether it be the blessed man of Psalm 1, the one proclaiming himself the son of God in Psalm 2, the suffering petitioner in Psalms 3-7, the son of man in Psalm 8—is Jesus Christ.

What he endeavours through the proposal is to disclose both the ‘historical significance’ and the ‘theological (messianic) significance’ by a “consistent and comprehensive method”. On the relationship between the two significances he

(1981:7) continues that “[b]y the canonical process approach I mean the recognition that the text’s intention became deeper and clearer as the parameters of the canon were expanded. Just as redemption itself has a progressive perception of meaning as they became part of a growing canonical literature.”

Two things should be highlighted in Waltke’s proposal. First, he does not ignore the process of the formation of the Psalter. The meaning of the text was not fixed at the beginning stage of the canonical process, but became ‘deeper’ and ‘clearer’ in the process of time. Second, his main concern nevertheless seems to be on the messianic significance of the whole psalms in the Psalter, which brings him to see Jesus Christ as the subject in almost all psalms.

Waltke contends that his approach is distinguished from Childs’ canonical approach in three ways. First, “Childs does not clearly distinguish ‘the stage of literary activity in the development of the text’ from ‘changes that take place through scribal activity on the text’” because of his lack of a clear definition of inspiration. Waltke distinguishes between the two by appreciating the involvement of the Holy Spirit’s inspiration in the course of the development of the text. Second, “Childs allows the possibility of a divorce between Israel’s history and the canonical witness to that history”, whereas Waltke admits “God’s supernatural intervention in Israel’s history”. Third, the context Childs depends on in understanding the Old Testament is the authority of the Jewish canon achieved at about A.D. 100, but for Waltke it is that of the New Testament.

One fundamental factor that makes Waltke’s ‘canonical process approach’ distinct from canonical criticism in general is well expressed in his following statement:

I agree with Childs’ emphasis on the unity of the text and the value of rhetorical criticism, and with his minimizing the recovery of original literary unities apart from their canonical form, but I would emphasize that canonical texts in their earlier stages in the progressively

developing canon were just as accurate, authoritative, and inspired as they are in their final literary contexts.

For Waltke, each stage in the development of the Psalter has its own significance and authority due to the divine intervention throughout the whole process. Thus at each stage of the canonical process, there was a messianic expectation inherent in the development. This becomes clearer when he distances himself from the concept of '*sensus plenior*' (fuller sense).<sup>31</sup>

Waltke claims that his approach is different from the concept of *sensus plenior*. First of all, the concept of *sensus plenior* is that God intended a fuller meaning in a text than those intended by the human writer. The canonical process approach, however, does not divorce the human authorial intention from the divine intention. The original composer presented their subjects in ideal forms that were fleshed out by progressive revelation. Secondly, *sensus plenior* tends toward allegorical interpretation by considering later writers as winning meanings from the text quite apart from their historical use and significance. The Canonical process approach, however, stresses the continuity of a text's meaning throughout sacred history, and notes that further revelation won for the earlier text a 'deeper' and 'clearer' meaning. Thirdly, *sensus plenior* tends to see the New Testament writers as 'supernaturally' discovering the fuller, divine meaning of the text. The canonical process approach recognizes the distinct stages in the winning of the clearer significance of the older texts through the discernment of the stages in the development of the canon.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.4.3. Four Meanings of the Four Distinct Stages

Then Waltke suggests the four distinct points in the progressive perception and

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<sup>31</sup> Brown (1955:92) defines the terms as the idea that "additional deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to exist in the words of a biblical text (or group of texts, or even a whole book) when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the understanding of revelation".

<sup>32</sup> One of the serious problems of *Sensus Plenior* firstly suggested by Catholic circle, from evangelical point of view, is that the fuller meaning can be acquired even by the interpretation of church.

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revelation of the text of the Psalter:

- (1) The meaning of the psalm to the original poet
- (2) The meaning in the earlier collections of psalms associated with the First Temple
- (3) The meaning in the final and complete Old Testament canon associated with the Second Temple
- (4) The meaning in the full canon of the Bible including the New Testament with its presentation of Jesus as the Christ.

According to Waltke's model of the formation of the Psalter, the context of a psalm expands from its original-historical setting, to the earlier collection(s), to the final stage of the Psalter, and finally to the New Testament.

#### **3.4.4. Four Fundamental Assumptions**

Waltke maintains that this framework virtually depends on four convictions: (1) knowledge and faith of older era were accumulated into the Israelite community throughout history, not by being changed but rather by being expanded in essence. Expansion does not mean that the former knowledge and faith have changed. The knowledge added later was consistent with the heritage, (2) God is the "ultimate author of the progressively developing canon". This makes it possible for any piece of the literature within the Bible to be studied in the light of its whole literary context, (3) "as the canon developed, lesser and earlier representations were combined to form greater units that are more meaningful than their component parts", and (4) the final and largest literary framework within which any given text is to be interpreted is the received Scriptures.

#### **3.4.5. Application of the Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms**

Waltke applied the approach to the Psalter as follows:<sup>33</sup>

- (1) The meaning of the psalms to the original poet (the original setting of individual psalms): After working from two lines of evidence, the external and internal, Waltke maintains that "the human subject of most of the psalms is a king".
- (2) The meaning of these psalms in their earlier canonical collections (the First Temple period): again the living king continues to be understood as the human subject of many psalms.
- (3) The meaning of these psalms in the broader context of the final shape of the Old Testament (the postexilic period): since no living king in the postexilic period could be associated with the messianic hope, the royal psalms must have played an important role by having been interpreted in terms of future kingship.
- (4) The meaning of these psalms in the full canon of Scripture with the addition of the New Testament: the New Testament wins back for the psalms their original significance. With the advent of Christ the messianic hope was satisfied, and within the literary context of the New Testament the psalms find their final and full meaning<sup>34</sup>.

In the light of this understanding, then, Waltke concludes,

[T]he Psalms are ultimately the prayers of Jesus Christ, Son of God. He alone is worthy to pray the ideal vision of a king suffering for righteousness and emerging victorious over the hosts of evil. As the corporate head of the church, he represents the believers in these prayers. Moreover, Christians, as sons of God and as royal priests, can rightly pray these

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<sup>33</sup> Craigie (1983:28) also suggests a similar four stages in the process: (1) a psalm is composed, (2) it is linked together with other psalms to form a small collection, (3) several small collections are brought together to form a large unit, (4) the current Book of Psalms emerged, being a 'collection of collections,' with various individual psalms added by the editor(s) of the final book, without mentioning the theological significance of the psalms that is the fourth stage of Waltke's reconstruction.

<sup>34</sup> The many references to and quotations of the Psalter in the New Testament show that it was the favorite Old Testament book of the New Testament authors. In fact, the New Testament provides a massive foundation for subsequent exegesis, citing the psalms some seventy times as prophetic of the messianic events.

prayers along with their representative Head.

This is, in fact, a bold statement. J. Shepherd (1995:188) points out that “[T]he approach is almost revolutionary...we are no more going to look for [some] messianic psalms—instead we are simply going to read a messianic Psalter”. In fact, it has appeared that the major concern of Waltke’s reconstruction is on the Christological significance of the Psalms, that is, the Psalter is the Book of Christ.<sup>35</sup> For him, David, the author of many psalms of the Psalter, is much more than an individual psalmist. The promises given to him as Israel’s king show that many of his psalms have a corporate and even eschatological significance. Whether we accept the notion that the psalmist is consistently the king and, therefore, the forerunner of the Messiah or not, the Old Testament notion of the ‘one and then many’ or the representative function of king is important because Jesus is not only the Davidic king-Messiah, he is also Israel, the people of God.

The Psalter is obviously a collection of literature. Mays (1994b:9) points out that “[T]he composition, transmission, and collection of the psalms and the formation of the book were a very long process that stretched across eras of change.” As the term, ‘canonical process approach’, indicates, Waltke’s method systematically adopts the perspective that the Psalms in their present form are the result of a long ‘process’ of selection, which was culminated around at the third stage. Then his reconstruction of the four stages can be summarized as follows. Namely that the first two stages mainly focus on the ‘historical significance’ of the Psalter. The psalms in these stages were probably used for cult and the subjects of most psalms are living Davidic kings. Second, that the third stage is more concerned with ‘hermeneutical significance’. The shape and shaping of the Psalter at its final stage indicates a ‘hermeneutical shift’ and the protagonist is the ideal Davidic king, the messiah. Last but not least, the fourth stage is associated with the ‘theological significance’. Jesus Christ is the

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<sup>35</sup> J. Shepherd (1995) developed Waltke’s method in his 1995 Ph.D. thesis, arguing that an investigation of the hermeneutical method of the Psalms in the New Testament shows that the Book of Psalms is the Book of Christ.

subject of the Psalter.<sup>36</sup>

In light of Waltke's four stages, there is a shift from individual cultic psalms, i.e., the first stage, to a smaller collection, i.e., the second stage, to a wisdom Psalter, i.e., the third stage, and then finally to a messianic Psalter, i.e., the fourth stage. More importantly, in relation to the study, since the psalms in their earlier stages in the progressively developing Psalter were just as accurate, authoritative, and inspired as they are in their final literary contexts (Waltke, 1981:8), each stage deserves to be dealt with separately in its full length.

### **3.5. CHRISTO-CANONICAL APPROACH ( Jerry Shepherd)**

After thorough examination of the above mentioned three scholars' canonical approaches, Shepherd (1995:204, 309) remarks, "that Childs' approach is not canonical enough, and Sanders' approach is not canonical at all', because Childs "still resorts to redactional reconstructions to find the canonical meaning of the final form" and Sanders' approach is "only the reconstruction that is canonical for him, never the text itself." He goes on to argue that "the evangelical approach to Scripture today must go beyond 'canonical'; it must be explicitly 'Christo-canonical.'"

Shepherd sets forth basic statements associated with his approach: (1) Christ is criterion of canon. In this respect, he strongly objects to the community as the main body of shaping the canon, maintaining, "the biblical documents are essentially individual and not community compositions, as God uses individuals to speak not only to, but against the community" (pp. 226-227), (2) Christ asserts himself as canon by his spirit. The Christo-canonical approach recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration and production of the biblical canon as a work done under the authority and direction of Christ. This means that a canon "was produced, not just

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<sup>36</sup> Similar argument is advanced by Sheppard (1992:155) noting, "On the basis of the New Testament, we may also say that Christ prays with us, sharing fully in our own pain and suffering..."

by the Holy Spirit, but by the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Christ" (p. 233), (3) Christ is Lord over the whole canon, which "rejects any form of 'canon within the canon,' for there is no part of the canon that is not under the lordship of Christ" (p. 234), (4) Christ asserts his authority in the covenantal canon. As such in essence, canon is covenantal. The biblical canon gives "a history of redemption culminating in the salvation achieved by Christ, the promise of salvation and eternal life with God, and the character for the faith and practice of the people of God" (p. 242), (5) Christ has incarnated himself in biblical canon. Christ, who incarnated himself in flesh, has also incarnated himself in word. This incarnation analogy explains that "as Christ is both human and divine, so the Scripture can be seen as word of men and word of God" (p. 251). More importantly, "as Christ was fully human, but sinless, so the Bible was fully human, but without error" (p. 251), (6) Christ is Lord over canonical meaning. While text-oriented and reader-response approaches among other ones have their own merits on meanings, "Christ is in complete control of the authorized meaning of his text, and...the text takes on no meaning independent of him" (p. 267), (7) Christ is Lord over the canonical meaning of the Old Testament. Of course, there is a historical sense in that the Old Testament is an Israelite documents, but "God, in his new work in Christ, has changed the terms of access to the Old Testament...Access is granted, not by way of human ancestry, but by faith in Christ" (p. 272). Then he (1995:275) concludes that we "do not see meaning in the Old Testament text as Jesus interprets it according to some principle; we see meaning in the Old Testament text as Jesus interprets it... Christ is the canon above the canon."

In the following chapter, Shepherd continues to suggest the main theses of Christocanonical approach under the theme of "Christ is Lord over the interpreter" as follows: (1) Christ is Lord over hermeneutical methodology. This means that from the beginning the Christian interpreter takes seriously a position of obedience to Christ. There is no neutral position in understanding the text. To achieve an unbiased view of the past is an act of disobedience. "Autonomous interpretation is not neutral, it is disobedient" (p. 279), (2) Christ is Lord over the disclosure of

meaning. A hermeneutical process must be done humbly in exegetical labor, in attitude, in interpreting the text, and in prayer, (3) Christ's canon is canonical over all scholarly reconstruction. It "presupposes that only the Christ-authorized canon is canonical, and not any purported scholarly reconstruction of events behind the canon" (p. 307). This is not to say that historical reconstruction may not be useful as an aid in the interpretation of a passage. However, this is to say that "reconstruction must never be regarded as authoritative" (p. 309), (4) Christ's canon is for Christ's church. Exegesis must be done in the context of the Christian church. Interpretation of Scripture is only for the goodness of the church, (5) Christ's canon is paradigmatically authoritative in terms of exegetical methodology. "It must be done in conformity to the pattern which the Lord of the canon himself used and imparted to his apostles, who, in turn, used it to interpret the Old Testament in the writing of the New" (p. 336), (6) Christ's canon is to be interpreted in the light of its canonical unity. It denies that the unity of the Scriptures comes from the divine author, while their diversity comes from their human authors, but affirms that both come from God, who is, in himself, unity and diversity, (7) Christ's canon is a 'fuller sense'.

In this way Shepherd in fact takes the position of Waltke, the fourth stage in particular, and argues for 'Christo-canonical approach.' For Shepherd, the heart of the Christo-canonical approach is the paradigm of New Testament. Thus the Psalms are to be interpreted according to the New Testament paradigm that is passed down to us from Jesus and his apostles.

### **3.6. COMMUNITO-CANONICAL APPROACH (deClaissé- Walford)**

deClaissé-Walford's approach seems to be deeply rooted in James Sanders' method of canonical criticism. While the approach of J. Shepherd is inclined to Childs' position and is receptive to Waltke, the position of deClaissé-Walford is close to that of Sanders in that she mainly focuses on the 'process' rather than the final form of text. She (1995:8) states that her interest in the shaping of the Psalter reflects the

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concerns of Sanders' canonical criticism that seeks to uncover the process by which the texts of the Hebrew Bible reached their final, canonical form." She observes that

Childs understands text as the final form within the Hebrew Bible – the literary text. Sanders understands text as the result of a process by selection and appropriation by historical communities. Canonization is an active and dynamic process, and text shapes community as much as community shapes text

The concept of 'shaping community' occupies the centre of her approach. The Communico-canonical approach is in fact to explore the *process* by which the community selected, appropriated, and shaped various psalms into the Psalter. It is not an individual but the community that played an important part in shaping the Psalter in its final form. deClaissé-Walford (1995:71) argues,

We cannot know the precise historical processes behind the formation of the Hebrew Psalter, but we can study its hermeneutical logic. Why do we have these 150 psalms and why are they in this particular order? I maintain that in them the postexilic community found a rationale for continued existence in a world it no longer controlled... If we study how historical communities appropriated traditional texts and formed their 'canons' then we perhaps can understand better how contemporary communities appropriate biblical texts and form their own 'canons'.

The text thus reflects the community. For deClaissé-Walford (1995:71), "how historical communities appropriated traditional texts and formed their canons" is a starting point for her understanding the Psalm. She continues,

...understanding the historical community can provide indications about the shaping of a text. The text thus reflects the community, and it in turn, supplies the reader with information about the community. For indeed, community shapes text and text shapes community.

In this way the story of the Psalter becomes one of survival of the community in the post-exilic period.

### 3.7. CLOSING REMARKS

Under the rubric of canonical study, Childs' canonical approach contributes to the importance of the text in its final form; Sanders' canonical criticism focuses on the process by which the community selected and shaped the Psalter; Waltke's canonical process approach suggests four stages in search of the meaning of an individual psalm; Shepherd argues that canonical understanding must go beyond 'canonical' to be explicitly 'Christo-canonical'; deClaissé-Walford's communito-canonical approach highlights the rationale of the Psalter for survival of the post-exilic community. This study basically agrees with the outlines the five scholars proposed because the Psalter reached its final form through the four stages by which the post-exilic community finally selected and appropriated the psalms into the Psalter. Particularly in the application of the four stages of Waltke, each approach seems to appear merely the difference of emphasis. For example, Shepherd focuses more on the final stage of the Psalms, but in the case of deClaissé-Walford, it is the third stage where the people of Israel strive for survival, to which this study is more related.

In fact the theme of wisdom motif has come to be associated with the post-exilic period. Croft (1987:159-160) summarizes three lines of understanding in the nature of the wise in Israel with the production and transmission of the Psalter: (1) a group of wisdom psalms as "products of the scribal schools attached to the temple", (2) general wisdom influence outside of these wisdom psalms themselves, which "is thought to have extended in the post-exilic period to the actual arrangement of the present psalm collection", (3) most of the wisdom psalms are regarded to be post-exilic in origin. It has also been generally agreed that the cult was a multi-functional device particularly in the post-exilic period and "one of whose chief function was the education of the people in the way of Yahweh" (Croft, 1987:161).

The canonical psalms were collected or written and arranged to encourage the post-

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exilic community not to forget their history of salvation. This understanding derives not only from a consideration of the psalm's presumed extra-textual circumstances, but is also indirectly supported by its canonical placement and relationship to the several liturgical genres that have been combined in its composition. The mentality of the period is well summarized in Wendland's (2004:324) comment on one of the Psalms:

The war with Babylon had been lost, the nation destroyed, and many of her leading citizens dispersed. The main threat now was not a military one from some pagan adversary; it was rather a serious internal, social-psychological challenge; How would people adjust to the current adverse status quo back home in *Zion*? Was accommodation and settlement in a foreign land the best option or at least a path of lesser resistance? There was no doubt that those who returned to Palestine with Persian permission would have no [option?]. . . ; rather, they could expect to face some very tough times and much hard testing. After the recent tragedies that had occurred to provoke this state of affairs, how many people would be prepared to risk everything again by starting all over? How many, whether still in exile in Babylon or those who had returned to Jerusalem, would be inclined to agree with the pessimistic outlook?

Then the story of the Psalter is to give a rationale that is 'wisdom', to the post-exilic community for survival in the face of destruction. In the next chapter the relationship of wisdom and its context will be dealt with in more details.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE WISDOM PSALMS IN THE PSALTER

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## 4.1. INTRODUCTION

Our task in this chapter is to synthetically reappraise the three lines of interpretation (in Chapter 2) in order to establish criteria for defining wisdom psalms in the Psalter. The research of the previous chapter has raised the question of whether there is a genre of the wisdom psalms, or rather opened a possibility of wisdom influence to the Psalter, and then carried the possibility one step further to be interpreted in the context of 'the shape of the Psalter' as a whole. How then can we identify wisdom psalms? In what sense and to what extent can we apply the significance of wisdom to the psalms in the Psalter? Do any hermeneutical clues exist in identifying these psalms? These are the questions that are at the centre of this chapter. What follows is, then, an attempt to seek answers to these questions.

## 4.2. REAPPRAISAL

As we have seen, the initial discussions surrounding the wisdom psalms were closely related to the form critical approach of Gunkel who categorized each psalm by its form (*Gattung*) and then endeavoured to discover the particular life setting (*Sitz im Leben*) in which such a psalm might have been created and used. However, the fundamental obstacle lies in the fact that, as Engnell (1970:95) maintained, "the classification of the psalms according to types is nothing more than a means of arranging the literature in an orderly fashion in order to enable us to engage in a scholarly investigation of the material". In other words, whether or not there were the types the psalmist already recognized, appreciated and followed at the original setting is highly speculative. Kroeze (1963:42) also challenged Gunkel's position, arguing that

Gunkel is considering the psalms as mere literary phenomena, but for this very reason he missed the point, because the psalms are not purely literary achievement. Certainly they testify to literary skill, but their essence is something quite different ... the point of departure should be the contents; for Gunkel it is the form... Gunkel's division is formal in character and this cannot be the only principle of division.

It is true that almost all critical studies of the Psalter begin with Gunkel's 'types', but it should be noted that, whether or not we accept the importance of the form critical approach to the Psalter, such a treatment is somewhat speculative and is based on the preoccupation that every psalm has a cultic origin in its *Sitz im Leben*. Thus, as Mowinckel (1962: 205) observed, "a problem arises when we find in the Psalter some [wisdom] poems which do not seem to have been composed for cultic use". In other words, the existence of the psalms with wisdom flavour that is foreign to the 'types' may suggest the limitation of form criticism in Psalmic scholarship.

In fact, the foible of the formal approach was particularly obvious in the classification of the wisdom psalms. The basic treatment of scholars with respect to the criteria of the wisdom psalms is well expressed in Murphy's (1983:145) assertion that "The classification, 'wisdom psalm', is a rather questionable one, not as clearly definable as are hymns, laments, and other types. Yet certain psalms betray themes and characteristics of the forms that are popular in Wisdom Literature." In other words, the proposal of the wisdom psalm as a distinct type is debatable, but the existence of a wisdom dimension in the Psalter is undeniable. As we have seen in the last chapter, there are the so-called wisdom psalms exhibiting wisdom features that clearly differ from other psalms and thus require separate treatment.

Thus, scholars have generally adopted three criteria to trace the wisdom psalms in the Psalter: form, content, and life setting. Dell's (2000:64) assertion is typical: "If we apply our criteria of form, content, and context [life setting], we find that many psalms contain wisdom forms, some wisdom content and some may have been devised or at least edited in wisdom circles."

The results obtained from the application of these criteria were similar to one another, but, as Whybray (1989:245) indicates, “the fact that no two of the lists [of wisdom psalms] are identical is significant”. Furthermore, that no single psalm appears in all the lists of the scholars we dealt with in the last chapter just seems to reinforce the fact that there is no wisdom psalm in the sense of genre.<sup>37</sup>

With respect to the form,<sup>38</sup> the major problem lies in the fact that many psalms described as wisdom psalm can also be designated as other types of psalms. Moreover, not every psalm that has the formal characteristic is designated as a wisdom psalm<sup>39</sup>. Interestingly, from the outset of the discussion, this problem was already sensed by Gunkel (1998[1933]: 297-298) when he said,

The confession of the *thanksgiving song* expresses the experiences of the one who has been delivered for the benefit of the community offering sacrifice. The thanksgiving song thereby approaches wisdom teaching. The thanksgiving song borrows from wisdom, including its forms of address (such as “my son,” or “sons”), the form of the beatitude, the expression “teach the path of YHWH,” the image of the stubborn animal, characteristic forms of wisdom (admonition and instruction), and the content of wisdom (observing the essence of the fate of the godless).

Scott (1971:192) also remarked that the problem in relation to identifying the category of the wisdom psalms is that the “wisdom element...is combined with other

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<sup>37</sup> According to Whybray's (1989:244-245) investigation of the lists of the wisdom psalms conducted by fourteen scholars, Psalm 37 appears in the entire list. But in my own investigation, the psalm fails to appear in Munch, Michel, and Wilson's lists. See the footnotes in pp.22 and 31.

<sup>38</sup> The formal characteristics suggested as typical of wisdom were: (1) the ‘address-to-son’ form, (2) admonition (‘saying’, ‘proverb’, ‘exhortation’), (3) instructional tone, e.g., the expression “teach the path of YHWH”), (4) the אֲשֶׁר־י formula (the form of the beatitude), (5) impressive comparisons, (6) numerical sayings, (7) ‘Better’ sayings, (8) acrostic structure, (9) simple comparison, (10) wisdom vocabulary (חֲכָמָה, הוֹן, סוּר מִרָע), (11) the adoption of wisdom stylistic forms (proverbs, rhetorical questions, etc.), (12) the simile, (13) autobiographical narrative, and (14) other forms that are on the edge of the wisdom category (19:1-6, a hymn to the creator; 19:7-14, a meditation on the Torah).

<sup>39</sup> For instance, Psalms 2 and 33 have the אֲשֶׁר־י formula in 2:12 and 33:12, but they are regarded as a royal psalm and hymn respectively.

features such as prayer, praise, and historical recital which have a different background in the religious tradition".<sup>40</sup> As an example, Psalm 73, which is generally considered as wisdom psalm (i.e., Anderson, 1983:241, Murphy, 1963:164 and Kuntz 1974:207), fails to appear in other wisdom psalm lists because it has the prayer form of thanksgiving. This phenomenon simply implies that the problem of formal approach to psalmic wisdom has not been resolved. The fact that a type of a psalm can also belong to another type seems to have made scholars loose confidence in the existence of the wisdom psalms as a distinct type. Thus, Whybray (1995:152) negates a possibility that there may be a genre of the wisdom psalms, arguing that those psalms designated as the wisdom psalms "have no distinctive forms of their own". Then there is a need to treat these characteristics somehow in a different way.

In my opinion, the problem seems to be caused by the attempt to understand the wisdom psalms as a distinct *type*, and to interpret them rigidly in 'either-or' mode, ignoring the possibility of 'both-and' mode—"that is, recognizing that even psalmic instructions are in some sense still psalms, or prayers to God" (Johnston, 1998:25). To take Psalm 73 as an example again, Ross (1978:169-170) argues,

Is Psalm 73 really a wisdom psalm, as it is so often claimed? Some have replied in the negative, saying that the psalmist's concern with the question of theodicy is not enough to justify that classification. And it is often noted that the motifs of thanksgiving, praise, and trust are prominent, also diverging (so it is thought) from the usual wisdom categories. But the didactic character of the work cannot be ignored... Again the answer seems to be "both/and." If my suppositions are correct, the psalmist solved his problems *both* by visiting the temple *and* by participating in the discussions of the nearby wisdom schools... Psalm 73 is *both* a wisdom psalm *and* a psalm of lament, trust, and thanksgiving.

Johnston also maintains that it is possible for the wisdom psalms to be interpreted as 'prayers' as well. He (1998:24) initiates the discussion by casting a question, "if the wisdom psalms are situated in the Psalter, why are they not interpreted as prayers like the rest? Then he (1998:25) continues to argue,

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<sup>40</sup> See also Terrien (1993b:54).

One need[s] not say that the prayers in the psalms have become teaching. Rather, one can look for connections between wisdom and both the hymn and thanksgiving psalms. What we have in the wisdom psalms is a joining of instruction with prayer, prayer with instruction... But rather than addressing God directly in praise, they are more indirect. They are reflective prayers, meditations on what God has done and on how life with God is to be characterized.

Ceresko (1990:221) concurs with Johnston when he says,

The wisdom redactors of the Psalter and authors of the wisdom psalms recognized an interest in and devotion to *prayer* as a further trait of the wise individual. First of all, the authors of these psalms picture themselves as uttering prayers (e.g., Ps 19:15; 32:5; 73:17, 23-25, 28; 119). Second, they exhort the reader or listeners to pray- to "magnify the Lord" and "exalt his name" (Ps 34:4), because "this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles (Ps 34:7)...Finally the Psalter as a whole is presented by its authors as a book to be used for prayer and praise.

In effect, by understanding the wisdom psalms both as *instruction* and as *prayer*, these scholars somehow contribute to alleviating the tension, and give us a clue to treat the psalmic wisdom in a broader sense: wisdom psalm with thanksgiving or thanksgiving psalm with wisdom character (i.e., Psalm 73), wisdom psalms with torah meditation or torah psalm with wisdom character (i.e., Psalms 1, 19), wisdom psalm with hymnic prayer or hymn with wisdom character (i.e., Psalms 111, 112, 127, 128), and so on.

With respect to the content of the wisdom psalms, the criteria of the wisdom psalms might best be more correlated with thematic characteristics rather than formal ones. Dell (2000:65) maintains.

One problem with ranging wisdom psalms together on the basis of form is that the wisdom grouping is not really a form-critical category because the links tend to be *more*

*thematic*<sup>41</sup> than formal. There are some wisdom forms, but few whole psalms can be designated wisdom on the basis of form alone.

This leads us to the thematic aspect<sup>42</sup> of psalmic wisdom. However, the thematic approach was also found problematic “because of the difficulty of deciding what kinds of content are typical of wisdom literature” (Dell, 2000:68). In reality, it is extremely difficult to single out comprehensive thematic criteria of the wisdom psalms. Although, from the last chapter (see footnote no.6), for instance, some fifteen thematic characteristics of the wisdom psalms were observed, the number simply depends on how one defines ‘wisdom’. As Whybray (1989:245) diagnoses, “there is evidently a great deal of room for subjectivism here”. In that sense Day (1992:54-55) is quite right when he asks, “how many wisdom characteristics must a psalm possess before it may legitimately be so described [as a wisdom psalm]?” Adding a ‘brand-new’ characteristic to the list simply means joining the club of ‘subjectivism’, while it is still necessary. What emerges from the question is real ambiguity, and, in fact, this ambiguity lies at the heart of the discussion of tracing the criteria of the wisdom psalms. How then do we treat the formal and thematic characteristics of wisdom that we cannot ignore in the discussion of the Psalter?

An attempt has been made to overcome the impasse that the formal and thematic approach encountered, by interpreting the psalmic wisdom under the umbrella of the idea of ‘wisdom influence’. Although we cannot establish the category of the wisdom psalms in terms of form critical point of view, we can still recognize wisdom ‘flavour’ in the Psalter through the formal and thematic characteristics. Murphy’s (1983:145) comment is pertinent: “if there is no strict literary type that can be termed sapiential, then at least several psalms betray wisdom influence”.

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<sup>41</sup> The *italics* is mine.

<sup>42</sup> From chapter three, the following themes were identified as the criteria of content: (1) instruction (2) theodicy (3) the contrast between the righteous and the wicked (4) the two ways (5) the problem of retribution (6) practical advice for conduct (7) the fear of Yahweh (8) the qualities of the righteous to be imitated (9) the Torah as a source of wisdom (10) exhortation to trust Yahweh (11) miscellaneous counsels pertaining to everyday (12) order in the world (13) the justice in God’s dealings with human beings, (14) life as the supreme good, and (15) confidence in wisdom to be taught.

This line of interpretation provides us with a kind of buffer zone to embrace the existence of the psalmic wisdom in the Psalter in an alternative way: If there is no wisdom psalm in the strict sense, then at least there are *wisdom influenced psalms*. Along with the *'both wisdom and other type psalm'* point of view, this understanding opens a possibility that we can use the term 'wisdom psalm' not as a sense of distinct type (genre), but as a broader sense of wisdom influence. While scholars differ to a considerable extent in their assessments of the formal and thematic features of psalmic wisdom, so far as the wisdom influence is traced in a psalm, it would be argued that, no matter what type the psalm belongs to, it can be possibly considered as 'wisdom (influenced) psalm'. Thus, from this point of view, a wisdom psalm with thanksgiving form (i.e., Psalm 73) or a lament psalm with wisdom flavour (i.e., Psalm 25) as such is to be called '*wisdom psalm*'.

From chapter 2, the psalms that have been suggested to belong in whole or in part to the wisdom category are as follows: Psalms 1, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19, 24, 25, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 39, 40 (19 psalms in book I); 47, 49, 51, 52, 53, 62 (6 psalms in book II); 73, 78, 84, 86 (4 psalms in book III); 90, 91, 92, 94, 101, 104, 105, 106 (8 psalms in book IV); 107, 111, 112, 119, 127, 128, 131, 133, 139, 144, 145, 146 (12 psalms in book V)<sup>43</sup>. If we allow these psalms to be 'wisdom psalms' at any rate, then the number (49 out of 150) seems to be compelling. These psalms, then, if not wisdom psalms in the strict sense, suggest "at least some influence from wisdom circles" (Ceresko, 1990:217).

However, the question is to what extent the idea of wisdom influence applies to the psalms. Does it include only the forty-nine psalms that betray the formal and thematic characteristics? The number still seems to be arbitrary and remains subjective. Then, can it extend to the rest of the Psalms in a way? In this regard, Ceresko (1990:217) has observed a viewpoint that "the Psalter itself is clearly the

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<sup>43</sup> The ratio of wisdom influence psalms to each book is as following: Book I (46%, 19/41), Book II (19%, 6/31), Book III (24%, 4/17), Book IV (47%, 8/17), and Book V (27%, 12/44).

product of the torah/wisdom teachers, and the final form of this collection of songs bears the stamp of their influence and intent". If this is the case, there is a need for "looking for answers to questions such as who were these sages and what concerns did they have; what was their purpose in creating the literary productions they have left us. [And then]...one could study the Psalter itself, the Book of Psalms, as the product of the sage's work" (Ceresko, 1990:217).

This consequently requires us to examine the *Sitz im Leben* of the psalmic wisdom in the context of the Psalter as a whole, which is also closely related to the issue of authorial intention: What was the *purpose* of the editor(s) in creating the literary collections of the Psalter? In this regards, Whybray (1989:246) note that "[a]n explanation is required for the fact that these [wisdom influenced] psalms now appear not in the setting of a wisdom book but in a collection of psalms which are now generally recognized as composed for use in worship."

In other words, what is the relationship of the wisdom perspective to the Psalter? Why were the wisdom-influenced psalms included in the collection of prayers or why were the wisdom factors inserted into a certain type of psalms? What clue do these psalms give us in understanding the overall purpose of the Psalter?

In this regard, Kuntz (1974:216) points out, "The instructional intent of the [wisdom] poem may be obvious enough [in the Psalter], but it may not be at all clear just where that instruction was to have occurred". Thus Murphy (1963:161) confesses, "it must be admitted that the precise life-setting of these [wisdom] poems eludes us". A description of the life setting of psalmic wisdom seems to be difficult to establish because we do not know much about who composed or edited the collection of the Psalms. Scholars have suggested possible candidates such as 'temple singers' or 'priests' (Gunkel), 'private learned psalmographer' (Mowinckel), or 'professional wise men of wisdom school' (Kuntz, Perdue), but little progress was made along the lines. Thus Crenshaw (2001:94) asserts, "I do not see any profit in attributing such

psalms to the sages when we know so little about the authors and their social contexts". Nevertheless, on the fundamental level, scholars seem to share the idea that the Psalter in Old Testament tradition has been 'sapientialized' in the process of time.

Whybray (1995:154) argues that the decisive aspect of wisdom tradition is in its didacticism, maintaining,

That there was a close connection in ancient Israel between religious observance and instruction is attested in such texts as Exod. xii 25-7. It can also be argued that all liturgical texts have a didactic function in that the confessions of faith which they make are also a kind of self-instruction in which worshippers remind themselves of the articles of that faith, as well as serving as lessons for the instruction of children.

Morgan (1981:130) also pointed out that one of the most prominent features associated with wisdom tradition<sup>44</sup> is its didactic intention. Crenshaw (1998:281) acknowledges the importance of didactic aspect in Israelite wisdom, and maintains that, "in the literature preserved by sages, the dominant voice is that of a parent, usually the father. A father/teacher addresses a son/student in an endless series of imperatives, exhortations, and threats".

In his research for the social world of the wisdom writers, Whybray (1989:229-235) provides us with a brief summary of views on 'the origin of literary wisdom in Israel' that appeared in the history: (1) tendency to see the postexilic period as the matrix of the wisdom literature (2) foreign-dominated royal court or wisdom school as the matrix of the Israelite wisdom literature (3) a gradual process of

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<sup>44</sup> 'Wisdom' means basically the "technical know-how of the agriculturist or the artisan or skilled warrior; or more vaguely, the skill and expertise of the professional counsellor, the wise man who was never at a loss in ticklish situation" (MacKenzie, 1963:76). However when it comes to the understanding of the history of wisdom in Israel, it appears not simple. Goldsworthy (1995[1987]:50-53) observes four kinds of evidence of it: (1) the scattered wisdom sayings in the narrative literature of the Old Testament (2) wisdom books themselves (3) the relatively recently acquired knowledge of the wisdom literature of ancient Near East and (4) the wisdom influences or the non-wisdom books of the Bible. In the light of the observation, he suggests that wisdom might be referred: (1) a type of literature (2) certain kinds of educational activity or (3) a broadly intellectual activity.

nationalization, a process which extended well into the postexilic period (4) folk wisdom as the matrix of the wisdom books in the Bible (5) oral and short wisdom sayings as the matrix of individual sayings in Proverbs (6) institutional education in the royal school as the matrix of wisdom literature (7) general authorship of wisdom materials beyond the scribal profession.

While these seven views are mainly associated with the wisdom books of the Old Testament, especially with Proverbs, one thing in common among these views is to highlight the post-exilic period as a matrix of Israelite wisdom. The assumption that Psalm 90 dates as early as the time of Moses and the fact that Psalm 137 does as late as a postexilic implies not only that the psalms had been written over a long period, but also that the final collection of the psalms probably belongs to the postexilic period. However, it is not easy to confirm the period of final collection. After working from comparing the text of the psalms to a Qumran manuscript (11QPs<sup>2</sup>) and the Septuagint, Seybold (1990:4) concluded,

As for the compiling of the Hebrew Psalter, we may assume that this collection of hymns and prayers belongs to the period of the second Jerusalem temple. But here too, it is difficult to say anything more precise and concrete. We are thrown almost onto internal criteria.

While the actual duration of this stage, which is closely related to the closing date of the Old Testament canon, is heavily debated, nevertheless, it is generally held that the final stage of the Psalter as a part of the Writings is associated with the postexilic period. The psalms of the Psalter arose out of the pre-monarch covenant community and out of the Davidic kingdom and, in the course of history, came to be related to the situation where Israel found herself in the postexilic period.

According to Guthrie (1966:177), wisdom “is implicit in the thought and vocabulary of the Old Testament, but did not provide the motifs for Israel’s enunciation of her faith in the pre-monarchical or Davidic periods.” In the process of time, with an

upheaval caused by the Philistine incursion into Palestine, “wisdom became, with the Mosaic covenant and ancient Near Eastern cosmology, a formative element of biblical theology.”

Furthermore, the corruption of the Southern Kingdom and the subsequent turmoil of exile led the people of Israel to expect the future messiah, but the expectation was repeatedly frustrated, which brought people in the postexilic era to expect certain *instruction* from Yahweh for understanding such an ambiguous historical situation. Guthrie (1966:179) states that, “[i]t was as a mythos for such an ambiguous historical situation that the wisdom motif, an element of the culture of which she [Israel] had been and was still a part, came to be appropriated by Israel...Exilic and postexilic Israel found a visible theological idiom in the traditions of wisdom.”

However, since whether the Psalter was finalized by the postexilic period as it is or not is still a live issue,<sup>45</sup> we need to turn to more concrete evidence, that is, the text itself.

In this regard, deClaisse-Walford (1995:71) keenly recognizes, “we cannot know the precise historical processes behind the formation of the Hebrew Psalter, but we can study its hermeneutical logic”. By focusing on ‘internal logic’ embedded in the text of the Psalter, we can disclose the intention of the final collection of the Psalms.

Since B. Childs’ canonical approach to the Psalter (1979), for instance, a number of scholars have argued for the evidence of the shape and shaping of the Psalter as ‘internal criteria’, maintaining that “the purposeful placement of psalms within the collection seems to have given the final form of the whole Psalter a function and message greater than the sum of its part” (McCann, 1993b:7; cf., McCann, 1993a:93-

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<sup>45</sup> It was generally held that the collection of the Psalter was finalized by the end of the First century BCE (Flint, 1997:14). But there has been a consensus that the final books of the Psalter were still in a state of flux as late as the first century BCE to the first century CE (see Wilson, 2005:393-394). In this study, the term, ‘post-exilic’, indicates the time between BCE 516 and 70 CE, namely, ‘Second Temple era’.

107). This indicates that we cannot escape the hermeneutical aspect of the text in approaching the issue of the life setting of psalmic wisdom. The individual psalms in the Psalter had originally been composed in their own particular *Sitz im Leben*, but in the process of time they were intended to other purpose that we could call a 'hermeneutical shift' in Childs' term (1979: 513). Ceresko (1990:217-218) also argues,

The composition [of the Psalms] therein, once the words by which Israel spoke to God in praise, thanksgiving, and supplication, have now become the Word of God to Israel, the means by which God reveals himself and his will to his people, especially to those trained and able to use the Book faithfully and wisely.

Then the wisdom influenced psalms played an important role in this process. In this regard, Morgan (1981:125) argues, "In their final canonical form, it is clear these particular [wisdom] psalms have been integrated into the cultic worship and life of Israel". Kugel (1988: 129) goes further to assert,

To imagine psalms of praise and petition in their original setting is an important part of any attempt to define the Psalter's spirituality, but it is not all. There came a time (or, rather, times) in Israel's history when the givens of that setting changed, and the conventions and words of psalmody acquired willy-nilly a new significance and status.

G. Sheppard (1980:13) argues that the wisdom perspective played an important role in a particular point of time, maintaining,

At a certain point in the development of OT literature, wisdom became a theological category associated with an understanding of canon which formed a perspective from which to interpret Torah and prophetic traditions. In this sense wisdom became a hermeneutical construct for interpreting sacred Scripture.

When, then, was the particular time of 'at a certain point?' As indicated above, it is the postexilic era. According to Kugel (1988:130), major change in understanding the Psalter happened around the postexilic period:

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That conquest [of the Babylonians] and exile in themselves certainly constitute the next

great step in the history of Israel's psalmody, as in all aspects of her cultural life... In regard to the Psalms, this is as much as to say that some of the "spiritualizing" approach to the Psalter which so much of modern psalms scholarship has aimed at unraveling began in the postexilic (or even exilic) period.

Given this understanding, it can be understood that the Psalms were edited around the postexilic period to instruct the ancient Israel who were struggling with the matter of survival. The fall of Jerusalem to Babylon revoked the Israel's belief that God rules over the world. Israel found herself in a situation where her identity as a chosen people was challenged. Under the circumstances of the dispersion and afterward, the Psalms functioned not merely as 'the hymnbook of the second Temple', but also as 'didactic wisdom materials' for the people of Israel in such a distressed situation.

deClaissé-Walford's Ph.D. thesis (1995), *Reading from the Beginning: the Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter*, is grounded in her conviction that the postexilic Israelite community shaped the Psalter into its final form as a gear to survive in the ancient Near Eastern circumstances. The postexilic community of Israel needed a cause to encourage them to hold their identity as God's chosen people under the circumstances where temple and cult, rather than Davidic king and court, had to be the centre of life. She (1995:127) understands the Psalter as a story and maintains, "The story of the Psalter is YHWH's instruction to the postexilic community, in which the people can find answers to the questions 'who are we?' and 'what are we to do?'" She (1995: 99) then urges us to read the Psalms as follows;

*We may read the Book of Psalms, then, as a contributing part of the story of the survival of ancient Israel... It celebrates the reigns of David and Solomon in books 1 and 2; laments the dark days of oppression during the divided kingdoms and the Babylonian exile in book 3; and looks forward to and rejoices in Israel's restoration to the land and in the reign of YHWH as king in books 4 and 5.*

Psalms 1, 2, 3, 41, 42, 72, 73, 89, 90, 106, 107, 145, and 146-150 were chosen to support

her argument because for her “the beginning psalm of each of the Psalter’s five books is a key indicator for the shaping of the text (deClaisse-Walford, 1995:72): Psalm 1 as a wisdom psalm encourages the reader to enter the story of the Psalter, to delight in it, and to meditate on it through the voice of wisdom; In Psalm 2, a royal psalm, we are introduced to Yahweh as our king sitting on the throne; Psalm 3 as an individual lament introduces us to the subject matter of Book I, that is, the dark days of Babylonian reign. Then the psalm “brings to mind king David, but it pushes its hearers beyond David to the new realities of postexilic life” (1995:106); By beginning with the **יְשׁוּעָה** formula, Psalm 41 brings the reader back to the Torah, the instruction, at the beginning of the Psalter; Psalm 42 as an individual lament urges the reader not to be discouraged within their present despair but to put the hope unto Yahweh; As a concluding psalm of Book II, Psalm 72, a royal psalm attributed to Solomon, brings to the minds of its readers/hearers who experienced the failure of Israel the covenant Yahweh made with David in 2 Samuel 7, which “anticipates the overwhelming cry of the lamenting questions in Psalm 89” (1995:117); Psalm 73, the opening of Book III, reminds again the readers of the exilic situation and the demise of ancient Israel, and encourages ancient Israel to survive through centuries of its historic past; In Psalm 89 as another royal psalm, “the volume of lament seems to have overpowered the confidence expressed at the beginning of the Book. Psalm 89 ends in lament, without the expression of confidence in Yahweh that is normally found in the psalms of lament” (1995:127); Psalm 90, the only Mosaic psalm as the opening psalm of Book IV, reminds the reader of the beginning of the Psalter (Yahweh’s kingship in Psalm 2) and of the Exodus from Egypt, indicating “the whole fourth book of the Psalter is dominated by the person of Moses” (1995:158);<sup>46</sup> As the closing psalm of Book IV, Psalm 106 requests Yahweh to save Israel, celebrating the kingship of Yahweh; Psalm 107, the beginning of Book V, answers to the request of Israel at the end of Psalm 106, that is, celebrating deliverance from the exile in Babylon; Psalm 145, as a wisdom influenced psalm and as “the overture to the final movement of the Psalter” (cf.,

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<sup>46</sup> In Book IV, Moses is referred to seven times (90:1; 99:6; 103:7; 105:26; 106: 16, 23, 32), while he is mentioned only once outside of Book IV (77:21) (1995:154).

Mays, 1994b:439), confirms that Davidic kingdom is everlasting and Yahweh's dominion endures through all generation; Psalms 146 through 150 as the grand final of the Psalter urge the people of Israel to praise Yahweh for His kingship and His salvation.

There are two things that should be noted about what deClaissé-Walford is attempting to do here. First, she says that she attempts to read the Psalms as a story from the beginning to the end. To discern the story from Book I to Book V, the first and the last psalms of each book were selected and examined. For deClaissé-Walford, the Psalms are a story of salvation to instruct the postexilic Israel to continue to survive in a world they no longer controlled. Second, she attempts to demonstrate this from a hermeneutical point of view, which means that it is important to show that there is a hermeneutical logic inherent in the texts of the Psalter. deClaissé-Walford's treatment is striking in that she reads the entire Psalter as a story, and the main strong point of her argument lies in the fact that the arrangement of the psalms plays an important role to relay the story line. Furthermore, her treatment gives us a context in which we can see the Psalms in terms of 'instruction' for the postexilic Israelite community rather than in terms of 'cultic material'. The story of the Psalter demonstrates that, in the process of time, the Psalter became a didactic book rather than a hymnbook. This view has been confirmed by a number of scholars. The intention of the Psalms and of the wisdom psalms in particular, according to Morgan (1981:130), is to instruct people and to affirm the order of the world. With respect to the didactic intention, he goes further to contend that instruction is not only to teach, but also to comfort people in the postexilic period. In this regard, Bellinger's (1990:129) comment is compelling:

The instruction in the Psalms centers on the honest dialogue between creator and the created that is at the heart of the life of faith. Placing this wisdom psalm [Ps.1] as the introduction to the Psalter helps readers view the Psalms as having significance for the life of faith beyond the text's original cultic setting...[O]ther kinds of psalms include

wisdom elements (e.g., Pss 14; 26; 36) allow the community to apply these texts broadly to the pilgrimage of faith. Wisdom texts, then, are integral in determining the final shape of the Psalter.

These scholars have provided us with a clue of *general* relationship between wisdom and the final shape of the Psalter, but they seem to fail to demonstrate a *specific* connection of the Psalter to the phenomenon of psalmic wisdom. In other words, we need to demonstrate how the psalmic wisdom relates to the overall significance of the Psalter: Have the wisdom psalms been carefully fitted into the framework of the Psalter to form integrated work or have they been scattered in the Psalter at random so as to simply imply wisdom influence?

In this regard, Ceresko (1990:217-230) suggests three ways of examination of the instructional character of the Psalter, and Bergant (1997:53) summarizes them as follows:

First, it has canonical significance as a book consisting of a wide variety of psalms, all of which, in this final form, serve as a means of meditation on life. Second, the specific wisdom psalms both explain and support the kind of behaviour that is expected of the believer, whether ancient or contemporary. Third, the presence of wisdom motifs in psalms that do not fall under the wisdom category adds a didactic dimension to the entire collection.

The final canonical purpose of the Psalter is to call people to meditate on the תּוֹרָה rather than cultic use (Wilson, 1985a:207; Seybold, 1990:15).

As we already noted in Chapter 2, it was Wilson who attempted to connect the insight to the issue of the wisdom psalms in the Psalter. According to Wilson (1993b: 80), the last two books (Book IV and V) of the Psalter are framed by the concerns of wisdom (Pss. 90, 107, 145), while the other three books (Book I, II, and III) are shaped by a 'royal covenantal frame' (Pss. 2, 72, 89). However, in the final analysis, he (1993:

81) concludes,

The shape of the canonical Psalter preserves a tense dialogue (or a dialogue in tension) between the royal covenantal hopes associated with the first two-thirds of the Psalter and the wisdom counsel to trust YHWH alone associated with the final third. In conclusion it seems apparent that wisdom has had the last word as demonstrated by the wisdom shaping of the covenantal Psalms 2 and 144 as well as the primary positioning of Psalms 1 and 145 in the final frame.

Wilson is remarkable in that he sees the whole Psalter from the wisdom perspective, which deserves the attention. One effect of Wilson's understanding of the Psalter in terms of 'wisdom frame' is that it gives us a possibility of considering the Psalter as a wisdom book. This is more attractive when the idea (wisdom frame) is associated with the context of the postexilic situation that deClaissé- Walford has observed. The idea is almost revolutionary given the little credit that has given to the wisdom psalms in the discussion surrounding the Psalter. However, if it is considered that about 50 psalms in the Psalter are wisdom-influenced psalms, the argument seems not to be impossible.

The weakness of his treatment, however, lies in the fact that his concern has focused on only four psalms (Pss. 1, 90, 107, 145) that, according to him, function to indicate the wisdom frame of the Psalter. What about other psalms which are located in significant positions of the Psalms? For example, how should we understand the first or last psalms of the book I to III in Wilson's framework of wisdom? Do these psalms also support Wilson's argument? I maintain that if the Psalter is to be read in light of a wisdom frame, we need to extend our attention further to the whole Psalter. In this regard, it is noteworthy that books I, III, and IV of the Psalter end with a psalm that has the אֲשֶׁר־י formula (Pss. 41, 89, 106). In the case of the Book V, Psalms 144 and 146 have that interjection, making Psalm 145 sandwiched in between these two psalms. Of course, as Kuntz (1974:197) points out, "it is not possible to claim that the reader inevitably step into the precincts of wisdom whenever he confronts the אֲשֶׁר־י

formula in the Psalter” because some psalms with the אֲשֶׁר־י formula offer the formula without a sapiential intent. However, it is difficult to escape the sense that the אֲשֶׁר־י formula is “undoubtedly a sapiential keyword”, and that this interjection “introduces, punctuates, and sometimes accentuates the apex of a psalm or even terminates its movement from topic to disparate topic, which all are found in Proverbs or in Job” (Terrien, 1993b:55). If so, the אֲשֶׁר־י formula can serve to reinforce the wisdom frame proposed by Wilson, and to make it possible to allot Psalms 41, 72, and 89, psalms that have never been described as wisdom psalms, to that category.

In dealing with the wisdom motif in the context of the Psalter, this study takes the arrangement of the psalms seriously. Recent scholarship has already confirmed ‘the five-book division of the Psalter’, ‘two distinct segments of the Psalter’ (Psalms 1-89 and 90-150), and ‘an introduction and a conclusion’ “as purposeful indications of editorial organization” (Wilson, 1993b: 72-74, see also 2005:393-405). In other words, while it is true that the Psalms are separate entities, at the same time, the sequence of the individual psalms arranged in the book is important for their understanding. Due to the fact that the Psalms are a collection of 150 individual poems, however, it would not be possible to fit each psalm to a story line in a strict sense. As Wilson’s (1993a:44) admits,

It is clear that the 150 psalms were not composed to function specifically in their present literary context. Certainly they were selected for that purpose from the vast wealth of hymnic compositions (now lost to us) that were originally developed for and employed chiefly in the ongoing worship of Israel. It is far from clear to me, however, that editors concerned to develop and communicate a theological message through the arrangement of the psalms would have selected compositions for relatively minor, even frivolous elements...

Thus, to endeavour to find thematic development between adjacent psalms from the first psalm to the end only results in manipulation and circular reasoning. As deClaisse-Walford demonstrated above, however, a hermeneutical logic can be

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discerned along the story line from one Book to the next. Each psalm is encapsulated with a purpose within the arrangement of the Psalter. As it has been maintained repeatedly, the main purpose of the Psalter is to instruct people to be wise enough to survive the postexilic circumstances. If so, that purpose should be embedded in the arrangement of the Psalter one way or another. The reappraisal of the categorization of the wisdom psalms dealt with in this chapter does not claim to have discovered a comprehensive set of criteria for the wisdom psalms. What the reappraisal does seek to do is to understand psalmic wisdom in the process of shaping of the Psalter. What it seeks to demonstrate is that given the postexilic situation where Israelite people struggled with their identity as God's chosen people, the collection of the Psalms in its final form is a more wisdom-centred work than has generally been recognized. However, this broad perspective on psalmic wisdom includes difficulties, because when the criteria are loosened to accommodate a wide variety of psalms, it becomes virtually meaningless to speak of the wisdom psalms as such. Thus the central question with respect to the criteria of the wisdom psalms is not one of types and forms, but rather the question of what psalmic wisdom is really about. By this we do not mean just what psalms we find as the wisdom psalms in the Psalter, but rather what aspirations hide behind the wisdom texts of the Psalms as a whole and what methodology is adopted to achieve them.

### **4.3. WISDOM PSALTER**

This understanding enables us to treat the Book of Psalms in terms of wisdom motif. Thus what we are working on is not wisdom psalms, but wisdom Psalter. The most distinctive contribution of this treatment lies in its idea that every psalm in the Psalter can be read from a wisdom point of view. Three things should be noted as a summary for this treatment. First, the formal and thematic characteristics associated with wisdom motif suggested that at least one third of the Psalter could be regarded as wisdom-influenced psalms. Second, the Psalms as a whole can be considered as a story, which makes it possible for us to read them from the beginning to the end

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along the storyline. As deClaissé-Walford demonstrated, the story of the Psalter is one of survival of the post-exilic Israel, where the didactic intention of wisdom was exercised and eventually integrated into the corpus of the Psalms. The circumstances of the postexilic period, in which there were no king and court, suggest that Israel's key to survival in the ancient Near East was to remind people of their identity as God's chosen one and of Yahweh as their king. Third, as Wilson argues, the wisdom-influenced psalms at the 'seams' of the Psalter (1, 90, 107, and 145) show that the Psalter was framed by wisdom motif. Moreover, the psalms 41, 89, and 106 with the אֱשֶׁר־י formula make it more probable to understand the Psalter in terms of a wisdom frame. Based on this understanding, I maintain that we are not going to look for wisdom psalms any longer. Instead we are simply going to read a didactic wisdom Psalter. In other words, as Mays (1993:18) asserts, "All psalms have a pedagogical potential". Under the circumstances of the postexilic period, the Psalter as a whole was edited to instruct Israel to be wise for survival.

The main concern of this study was in the relationship of wisdom motif to salvation history motif in the wisdom psalms. However, now that the range of the wisdom psalms has expanded from several psalms (as 'distinct type') to almost fifty psalms (as 'wisdom-influenced psalms'), then finally to all the psalms (as 'wisdom-framed Psalter'), the focus has shifted to 'what is the relationship of wisdom motif to salvation history motif in the *wisdom Psalter*'. In other words, what does the Psalter, as a wisdom book, tell us about salvation history?

In the following chapter an attempt will be made to answer the question by reading the Psalter from the beginning to the end. If we read the Psalter this way with special attention to wisdom perspective, then we can perhaps understand better the role of the psalms at the 'seams' in particular, which eventually shed some lights on how the wisdom motif relates to the salvation history motif in the Psalter. By 'the psalms at the seams' I mean the introduction and the conclusion psalms of the Psalter, and

the first and the last psalms of the five books of the Psalter. Since, as Goulder (1982:8) cautiously mentioned, “the instinct that the order of the psalms may be important is not naïve, and is far from irrational”, I have seriously taken into consideration of the arrangement of the psalms in the canonical shaping of the Psalter. Needless to say, however, a single thesis will not constitute a comprehensive treatment of every single psalm in the Psalter. In this regard, Hill & Walton (1992:275) writes,

One helpful suggestion is that the editor’s purpose is discernable from the ‘seam’ psalms. These are the psalms that come at the end of each of the first four books (i.e., 41, 72, 89, and 106). The theory speculates that these have been used by the editor to mark transitions from one book to the next, so that by examining them carefully we may be able to distinguish the primary topic of each book.

For convenience’ sake, it is necessary to set up an approach for our goal, because it would not be possible to treat every single psalm in this work. One of the prominent phenomena in the study of the canonical shape of the Psalter is “the placement of psalms at the ‘seams’, between the several ‘books of the Psalter’” (Brueggemann and Miller, 1996:45). deClaissé-Walford (1995:71) also maintained, “the beginning psalm of each of the Psalter’s five books is a key indicator for the shaping of the text”. In light of these observations, we have four groups of psalms: (1) the introduction and conclusion psalms of the Psalter (Psalms 1-2, 146-150), (2) the first and the last psalms of each book (Psalms 3, 41, 42, 72, 73, 89, 90, 106, 107, 145). To the list I add psalm 78 because it has generally been characterized as either a ‘wisdom psalm’ or a ‘salvation history recital psalm’, in which the two motifs are supposed to be interwoven.

## CHAPTER 5

# READING THE WISDOM PSALTER

## 5.1. INTRODUCTION

Against the existence of the wisdom psalms as a genre, in Chapter four, we followed the lead of approaches that persistently suggested the shape and shaping (as mentioned in J. Mays' work), the overall didactic intention (as mentioned in K. Dell's work), and the wisdom frame (as mentioned in G. Wilson's work), of the Psalter particularly in relation to the circumstances of the post-exilic period. The Psalter is not merely an anthology of individual psalms used for cult, but is also intended to be read as a source of *תּוֹרָה* that is an instruction. I have maintained, along with other scholars, in the process of classifying the wisdom psalm, that the presence of the wisdom motif in many psalms excluded from the wisdom category may add a didactic dimension to the entire Psalter. In so doing, we reached a conclusion that we are not merely dealing with 'wisdom psalms' within the Psalms, but 'wisdom Psalter' as a literary unit. By this I mean that every psalm in the Psalter contains pedagogical potential, which may well have been the probable intention of the editor(s) in the final stage of the Psalter.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Waltke suggests the 'canonical process approach' tracing the meaning of the psalms through a four-stage process whereby the Psalter reached its final shape. Referring particularly to the purpose of the study, the wisdom-salvation relationship, the focus is on the third stage around which the Psalter reached its final canonical shape. Scholars have tracked down the process with which the Psalter came into existence, but attempts to identify the historical backgrounds of the Psalter and other biblical texts still remain "speculative" (Childs: 1979:54). deClaisse-Walford seems to offer, for now, the best explanation as regards the question of the historical background of the Psalter. She (1995:71) states that the post-exilic community's rationale for continued existence in a world it struggled to

survive in was primarily sought for in the Psalter.

On such a basis, this study attempts to set up a strategy to read the Psalms from the beginning to the end, i.e., from book I up to book V, as a wisdom Psalter, particularly focusing on how the wisdom motif relates to the salvation history motif. As was already implied in previous chapters, this question is not just a question of its interpretation as isolated pieces, but one of what its presence in the book of Psalter implies regarding the relationship of wisdom and salvation history. This means that this chapter will be undertaken less from a historical and form critical approach, if not totally excluded, and more from a literary and canonical perspective.

For convenience' sake, more focus will be given to purposefully selected psalms while reading the wisdom Psalter. The reason they have been selected is because they were generally considered as the introduction and conclusion psalms of the Psalter (Psalms 1-2 and 146-150), and also because they were located at what is called the 'seams' of the Psalter that are the beginning and the end of each of the five Books (Psalms 3, 41, 42, 72, 73, 89, 90, 106, 107, 145). Psalm 78 is also added to the main list because it generally characterized as either a 'wisdom psalm' or a 'salvation history recital psalm', which are the two motifs supposed to be interwoven.

## **5.2. INTRODUCTION TO THE PSALTER (Psalms 1-2)**

The first book of the Psalter contains forty- one psalms when including Psalms 1 and 2, and is dominated by the Davidic psalms series (Psalms 3-41), comprising mostly of 'laments' which scholars call the "backbone of the Psalter"<sup>47</sup> (Day, 1992:19). The fact that the Psalms begin with the 'Davidic collection' <sup>48</sup> suggests that "The Psalter as a

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<sup>47</sup> About one-third of the Psalter belongs to the 'laments': Psalms 3-7; 9-10; 13; 17; 22; 25-28; 31; 35; 38-39; 40; 42-43; 51-52; 54-57; 59; 61; 64; 69-71; 77; 86; 88; 94; 102; 109; 120; 130; 139-143.

<sup>48</sup> Recent scholars have advanced the connection of psalms 9-10 and of psalms 32-33 as a single psalm. See Kraus (1988:188-189) and Wilson (1987:174-175), to which I agree. If this is the case, all the psalms of Book I (Pss. 3-41) are 'Davidic'.

whole may be seen as a reflection of David, the chosen, yet very imperfect, king of Israel" (deClaissé-Walford, 1995:91). In the context of the post-exilic period, the voice of David could give the people of Israel much relief and hope in that David had also suffered the affliction they had gone through. Psalm 3, a Davidic psalm, which marks the beginning of the first book of the Psalter, is preceded by the two anonymous psalms. Likewise, Psalm 145, a Davidic psalm which marks the end of the fifth book of the Psalter and concluded the whole Psalter, is followed by five anonymous psalms.

While the number of the psalms attributed to David decreases from Books I to III, and then increase from book IV to V,<sup>49</sup> its constant appearance throughout the Psalter indicates that the Psalter is a book of David. deClaissé-Walford (1995:64) suggests that this mentality was "the central focus of their 'nationhood' and their source of identity". Then she (1995:65) views the Psalter, the book of King David, as "one portion of that source of identity". The Davidic authorship suggests that the intention of the Psalter was closely related to the post-exilic expectation of the emergence of a Davidic Messiah. In the post-exilic context where the days of King David seemed to be gone forever, the Psalms in the name of David matches well with the hope for a Davidic Messiah.

### 5.2.1. Psalm 1

The Psalter begins with Psalm 1, which is not so much a prayer as it is a didactic poem. The opening verse quietly contradicts the general expectation that the Psalter is a prayer/praise book. As such, it is striking that the very first word of the entire Psalter appears not in a form of prayer, but in that of benediction: "אִשְׁרֵי is the man who..."

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<sup>49</sup> The distribution of Davidic psalms in the Psalter is as follows: 3-41 (including 9-10 and 32-33 as single psalms); 51-65 and 68-70; 86; 101, 103; 108-110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138-145. Main parts of the psalms are 3-41 (Book I), 51-70 (Book II), and 138-145 (Book V).

This is the first hermeneutical impact on readers at the gate of the house of the Psalms. The Psalter is not just a response *to* God, but also an instruction *from* God.<sup>50</sup> It is no longer to be sung as human response to God, but is to be meditated on as the source of the divine word for the reader. As Childs (1979:513) succinctly points out, “Certainly in its final stage of development Ps 1 has assumed a highly significant function as a preface to the psalm...” Before ‘being [in a] hurry to utter his agony before God, the reader should go near to listen to Him, which is a characteristic of the wise’ (cf., Ecclesiastes 5:1). Blessed is the man who is not hastily speaking but is mediating on the תּוֹרָה.

The subject matter of the psalm is the theme of ‘blessing.’ By this theme, ‘blessing’, the psalm can be divided into three sections: (1) who is blessed? (vv. 1-3); (2) who is not blessed? (vv. 4-5); and (3) who blesses? (v.6). Thus Engnell (1970[1969]:100) views the psalm as “a word of blessing”. De Pinto (1967:157) writes, “In accordance with the principle that the head of the book in some way sums up and contains the whole, it can be said that the Psalter is the book of happiness, the blueprint of men’s well-being”. If this is the case, the word ‘blessing’ is significant for understanding the entire Psalter and, as Mays (1994b:40) suggested, the rest of the Psalter is a commentary on this idea of ‘blessing’.

Within the concept of ‘blessing,’ two kinds of people are depicted; a ‘blessed man’ (הַאֲשֵׁר) and ‘cursed men’ (רְשָׁעִים). The blessed man is like a tree planted by the river, flourishing, yielding fruit (1:3), and only through meditating (יְהַגֵּה) on the תּוֹרָה of Yahweh day and night can he be obtained. On the opposite side stand ‘the wicked’ who are described as chaff (1:4). The contrast between הַאֲשֵׁר (v.1) and רְשָׁעִים (v.4),

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<sup>50</sup> The placement of Psalm 1 at the beginning of the Psalter is not accidental, but is a deliberate choice of the editor. The fact that unlike the most psalms in Book I, Psalm 1 does not have a title reinforces this suggestion. According to Wilson (1985c:405), the use of untitled psalms “reflects an awareness on the part of the Psalter editor(s) of alternative traditions for the combination/ division of these psalms and represents a purposeful technique employed to preserve both.” If this is the case, the unique position of the psalm at the beginning of the whole Psalter as well as Book I is important in understanding the function of the psalm in the context of the Psalter as a whole.

and then רְשָׁעִים (v.5) and צַדִּיקִים (v.6) clearly indicates that there is no grey area in life: “Either be a happy person who enjoys torah obedience and avoids alternative enterprises (vv. 1-2), or be like the wicked who refuse such delight (v. 4)” (Brueggemann, 1984:39). Furthermore, the theme of ‘two-ways’ is indicative of the nature of Yahweh’s salvation. That is, the “righteous shall be prosperous but the wicked shall perish” (v.6). The theme of salvation is definitely implied here at the beginning of the Psalter, if not explicitly. In light of the discussion so far, along with this ‘two -ways theme’, the sapiential terminologies,<sup>51</sup> אִשְׁרַי formula and simile, the psalm is generally identified as a wisdom psalm (cf., Perdue, 1977:269). Craigie (1983:58) also classifies Psalm 1 as a wisdom psalm “by virtue of its language and content”.

The concept of meditating on the תּוֹרָה, however, has forced scholars to describe Psalm 1 as a torah psalm. McCann (1993b:25) maintains that the effect Psalm 1 should take is “to elevate the concept of torah to one of central significance in understanding the Psalms.” Mays (1987:3) also points out that the concept of torah is “the central organizing topic and is viewed as the primary reality in the relation of mortals to God”. Hence, Brueggemann (1984:38) regards the psalm as “the most obvious and best-known torah psalm”. But what is the meaning of the תּוֹרָה here? Three lines have appeared in understanding the word (Whybray, 1996: 38-40): (1) the Law of Moses in terms of Deuteronomistic sense, (2) the Psalter itself, and (3) the Law along with all divine revelation in the widest sense including the Psalter in particular. First of all, there is nothing in the text of the psalm that indicates that the תּוֹרָה designates the Psalter itself. As Whybray (1996:39) rightly observes, there is a remarkable similarity between Psalm 1:2, Joshua 1:7-8 and Deuteronomy 17:18-19 in which the תּוֹרָה referred to is the “Deuteronomic code of laws.” He writes,

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<sup>51</sup> For example, עֵצָה (counsel), רְשָׁעִים (the wicked), חַטָּאִים (sinners), דֶּרֶךְ (way), יָדַע (to know) (cf., Vos, 2005:56).

In the Old Testament the principal meanings of the word תּוֹרָה are direction, instruction and law. In the last of these senses, *God's Torah* may denote particular priestly regulations, a group or body of laws, or a specific code of laws, especially that of Deuteronomy or (in Chronicles) the priestly code of laws- that is, the so-called Law of Moses. In the prophetic books the term occurs fairly frequently in the sense of Yahweh's teaching, sometimes in parallel with his justice. But it is never used in the Old Testament of any substantial written corpus of the Psalter (or if this meaning extended also to Pss. 19 and 119) this would be a unique usage.

As many scholars have suggested, however, the word תּוֹרָה here does not necessarily designate the 'Law of Moses', because "it is fruitless to speak of the Torah purely as law" (De Pinto, 1967:154). For De Pinto (1967:154), "the legal aspects are strictly connected with the historical traditions without which it would have no living roots, and the history of the chosen people always gives way to a manner of living expressed in the concrete forms that constitute the legal codes." The term in Psalm 1 rather "almost exclusively designates 'instruction', the teaching of the wise" (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:305; Zimmerli, 1971:28; Broyles, 1999:41; McCann, 1992:118-119). Also, Craigie (1983:62) states, "[i]n the last resort, the principal wisdom of the psalm can be reduced to v.2; the prosperity and happiness of the righteous depends upon their finding 'delight' in the Lord's Torah. But how is such delight to be found? In practical terms, it is achieved by constant meditation upon the Torah (v 2b), which is *God's instruction*."

More recently McCann (2001:113) writes, "Torah need not, indeed should not, be translated and understood in the narrow sense of 'law'. The word means 'instruction', or in more explicitly theological terms, it more broadly designates God's will". Perdue (1977:269) views the psalm as a 'proverb poem' because "the structure and the content of the poem are taken from the simple proverb found at the end of this didactic poem in v.6". In that sense, Psalm 1 is basically didactic in character, that is, a wisdom psalm, and meditating on the תּוֹרָה can be understood as a token of being wise.

How, then, is Psalm 1 related to the rest of the Psalter? Mays (1994b:40) maintains that, "The psalm [Ps. 1] is there to invite us to read and use the entire book as a guide to a blessed life". G. Sheppard (1992:153) concurs with Mays by saying that "at the outset, Psalm 1 calls us to seek wisdom and choose the way of the righteous over that of the wicked. By implication, therefore, we can anticipate that the Book of Psalms will help us in this regard." In relation to its historical context, deClaissé-Walford (1995:75) argues that Psalm 1 was used to provide an introduction and transition to the Psalter by the shaping the community of the post-exilic period. Wilson (1992:138) also suggests that the final shaping must have occurred when the temple was not in constant use, a time when the wise had the upper hand in restructuring the community's perceptions of cultic traditions. Brueggemann (1995:190) maintains that it voices the didactic piety of the postexilic period, when the book was put into final form. Wilson (1985a:206-207) writes,

It is this view of a "hymn book" which is normally applied to the Hebrew Psalter: a source book from which to extract individual pss [psalms] which are then read in another context which is provided for our own purposes. It is this view also which I have termed "unfortunate," for it obscures the indications that in its "final form" the Psalter is a book to be *read* rather than to be *performed*: to be *meditated over* rather than to be *recited from*.

This is a paradigm shift that took place in the post-exilic era when the people of Israel suffered political pressure. deClaissé-Walford (1995:85) summarizes the idea when she writes that "Psalm 1 calls its readers/hearers to listen to the instruction of YHWH as it is found in the psalms of the Psalter. Its introductory position alters the function of the Psalter for postexilic ancient Israel. The psalms that had once been used as cultic songs to YHWH are now to be listened to as instruction from YHWH."

As Brueggemann (1984:39) also succinctly asserts, Psalm 1 serves as "the voice of a community that is familiar with risks, dangers, costs, and boundaries", to which the readers had no choice but to listen to. Psalm 1 instructs readers that wisdom lies in

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meditating on the תּוֹרָה of Yahweh. In fact, the beginning phrase of Psalm 1, אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁכַּח, presupposes God's initiative in the relationship between man and God. As Wilcock (2001:21) points out, "[i]t [Psalm 1] does begin with God, a God who has already taken initiative. The holy relationship between him and the psalmists has already been made, so that they are God-centred from the outset. Their songs are a response – the many-faceted response of the 'man' God has 'blessed'.

Thus deClaisse-Walford's (1995:169) suggestion that "Psalm 1, as an introduction to the Psalter, certainly prescribes a 'wisdom' approach to reading the Psalter" is very plausible. Psalm 1 betrays individual meditation rather than communal recitation. In this way the psalm, as Wilson (1985a:143) maintains, "become[s] the source of each man's search for the path of obedience to the 'Torah of YHWH': the path which leads from death to life". Then its intention is "to present the Psalter as a study-book, as a work to be learned from, in much the same way as the book of Hosea is held up by the sapiential tag that concludes it (14:10)" (Murphy, 1963:162).

To sum up, Psalm 1 presents a torah-oriented wisdom teaching, in which the torah is portrayed as the source of wise conduct. The torah contains moral wisdom that leads to blessing for those who meditate on it and observe its commands. The obedience of and meditation on the torah serves to draw a line between those who are saved (viz., צַדִּיקִים) and those who are not (viz., רְשָׁעִים). In this way, the torah-oriented wisdom becomes the central theme of Psalm 1 and an important introductory concept of the Psalter.

### 5.2.2. Psalm 2

Scholars almost unanimously agree that Psalm 1 was either written or intentionally chosen to be an introduction to the Psalter. It is not clear whether Psalm 1 had been an independent 'untitled' psalm and then selected as an introduction, or whether it

had been composed for the final collection of the Psalter as such. At any rate, the fact that the psalm was untitled, which is an unusual phenomenon in Book I, suggests that it was selected or composed to serve as the introduction to the Psalter (Gerstenberger, 1988:45; deClaissé-Walford, 1995:75). However, in the case of Psalm 2, the opinion differs among scholars.

For example, Wilson (1985a:173) maintains that Psalm 1 functions as an introduction to the whole Psalter as Psalm 2 does to the first Davidic collection, namely, Book I. It seems that the reason why Wilson regards Psalm 2 as such is his belief that Psalms 2 and 72, which he suggests are royal psalms, should function as *inclusio* of the first two books of the Psalter (Pss. 2-72) (cf., Wilson, 1986:88). Beckwith (1995:10) seconds Wilson's claims when he writes that while Psalm 1 is an introduction to the Psalter, Psalm 2 is to a Book of David (Book 1) that speaks of "the theocracy of David and David's son."

It is obvious that there is vast difference in style between the two psalms, which support their own literary integrity. But there are also apparent indications that they are put together with an editorial intent. There has been a growing consensus that both psalms serve as the introduction to the Psalter to which I agree (cf., Mays, 1994b:15-16; Waltke, 1997:1110; McCann, 2001:112). The close connection between them is not in doubt where we consider the following features (Brennan, 1985:25, deClaissé-Walford, 1995:77): (1) they do not have a title, which is unusual as far as the first book of the Psalter is concerned; (2) they are framed by the אֲשֶׁר־י formula<sup>52</sup> in 1:1 and 2:12, thus forming an *inclusio* which binds the two compositions into a unity. The Babylonian Talmud includes the following words that "Every chapter that was particularly dear to David commenced with 'Happy' and terminated with 'Happy'" (Craigie, 1983:59), as happened in 1:1 and 2:12, (3) they are linked by יְהַגֵּה in 1:2 and 2:12, (3) they are linked by יְהַגֵּה (meditate on the torah) in 1:2 and יְהַגֵּה נַפְתָּלִים (meditate on a vain thing) in 2:1,

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<sup>52</sup> The word אֲשֶׁר־י occurs 28 times throughout the Psalter.

by the term אָבַד (to perish) in 1:6 and 2:12, and יָשָׁב (to sit) in 1:1 and 2:4. Furthermore, the fact that the first two psalms are not a mode of prayer but that of instruction followed by 'O Yahweh' of psalm 3, a typical call of prayer, reinforces the relationship between them. Whether psalm 1 and psalm 2 were originally a single psalm that were separated into two psalms, or two different psalms that were added to the Psalter is still subject to debate (deClaisse-Walford, 1995:76), but it seems plausible that they function as an introduction to the whole Psalter. As an introduction to the whole Psalter, Psalms 1 and 2 function to persuade the post-exilic Israelites not to meditate on the vain (2:1), but on the תּוֹרָה (1:2), the instruction of Yahweh, including the Psalter, in particular.

Psalm 2 is generally classified as a 'royal psalm' (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:99), or more specifically a 'coronation psalm', associated with the coronation of a Davidic king or 'messianic hymn' (Gerstenberger, 1988:48), and is sometimes interpreted in association with the Hebrew monarchy (Craigie, 1983:64).<sup>53</sup> It then introduces the principal subject, the king, in prayer (Waltke, 1997:1110). In the historical context, the first section (vv. 1-3) appears to be a warning to vassal kingdoms not to rebel during the accession of a new king. The divine appointment of the king of Israel implies that the political aspirations of the nations must be regarded as a rebellion against God Himself.

But what is the historical reality here? Even with a broad interpretation of this aspect, there is nothing in the history of Israel to match the suggestion of universal rule, partly because evidence is no longer preserved (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:67). Here we can only find a stylised use of ancient Near East conventions. In the ancient Near East the

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<sup>53</sup> Psalms 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, and 144 are also considered as royal psalms (Anderson, 1983:239-242; Bellinger, 1990:106). They share no formal characteristics, but the content requires the question about the subject matter and occasion (Day, 1992:91). The only common feature of these psalms is the reference to the king. A major concern associated with the classification of the royal psalm is that the main subject of the psalms is the person of the king or the anointed one, who is described as "God's representative ruling over the kingdom that God has established" (Bellinger, 1990:122).

coronation of a new king was often the occasion for the revolt of peoples and kings who had been subject to the crown.

In the second section (vv. 4-6) the universal rule of Yahweh is linked to God's choice of the king in Zion. Broyles (1999:45) calls this relationship a tension between "what is seen and what is unseen". He points out, "[t]he nations plot rebellion simply against Jerusalem's king, but in actuality they do so against the LORD and against his Anointed One (v.2). Moreover, this LORD is, in fact, *enthroned in heaven*.

Yahweh's 'Anointed One' (מְשִׁיחֹו) in verse 2 is identified with 'my king' (מֶלֶכִּי) in verse 6. This may be seen as the sure sign that the dynasty of David will continue, and that it will be the centrepiece of the rule of Yahweh. The third section (vv. 7-9) is the theological centre of the psalm reaffirming the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7. This is the only reference to the Davidic king in the Psalms as 'son'. 'Begetting' (אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדֶתֶיךָ) here seems, not a natural process (Willis, 1990:35), but rather a declaration of a special status under the covenant.

The decree of Yahweh is that the nations of the earth will be subjugated through the kingship of the son of God. This is a covenant relationship given to the people of God because in the Old Testament Israel is described as God's son (Exodus 4:22; Hosea 11:1). Some have seen this as a psalm composed by the Davidic king on the occasion of his installation (cf., Gunkel, 1998[1933]:67). Others view it as belonging to a festival that celebrates that installation (i.e., Mowinckel, 1962:62). However, the universal dominion of the kings of Judea (cf., in verse 2, מֶלֶכִּי־אֶרֶץ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) has no historical precedence. In this regard Craigie (1983:68) writes, "Because God is a universal god, the earthly king's jurisdiction is also presented in world-wide terms (2.8-9), though with respect to the Davidic kings, the world-wide authority always remained an ideal rather than a reality." If this is the case, then, it refers to a 'covenant promise' that awaits fulfilment in the future. The fourth (vv. 10-12) section

contains a universal call to either find refuge in the son of God (כָּל־חֹסֵי בּוֹ) or be consumed by His wrath. There is a textual problem in verse 12 where נִשְׁקוּ־בַר is disputed: it is rendered as 'kiss the Son' (KJV, etc.) or 'kiss His feet' (RSV, JB, etc.). The relationship between verse 11b (וְגִילוּ בְרַעְדָּה) and 12a (נִשְׁקוּ־בַר) is also controversial. That is, 'should they be separated to each verse' (KJV),<sup>54</sup> as the Masoretic text supports or do they form one sentence (NJB, NEB)?<sup>55</sup>

There are two reasons for the underlying controversy. First, in וְגִילוּ בְרַעְדָּה, 'to rejoice' and 'with trembling' do not match well together. Second, in verse 12a (נִשְׁקוּ־בַר), בַּר is an Aramaic word, which was considered uncertain by many commentators who deemed the text as being corrupted. They reconstruct the line to read 'His feet', thereby, forming a likely parallel to verse 11a (see Allis, 1953:26), that is, נִשְׁקוּ בְרַגְלָיו (kiss His feet with trembling). J. Barr (1968:284) views the position as "the best solution." However, LXX supports גִּיל in its rendering (ἀγαλλιᾶσθε αὐτῷ ἐν τρόμῳ)<sup>56</sup> and Vulgate also takes the same idea (exultate ei cum tremor).<sup>57</sup> Thus Leupold (1977[1959]:54) maintains, "[t]here are always two sides to any man's relationship to the Almighty... The one side is humble service; the other is exultation with becoming reverence. Neither rules out the other."

With respect to the 'בר (son) or רגל (foot) issue', one must ask whether it is submission to the 'Son' or to 'Yahweh's feet'. Perhaps both are possible, but there is no reason to ignore the Masoretic text witness and insist on a different meaning simply, because it does not make any difference. First of all, the ancient versions such as LXX, Vulgate, and Peshitta support the Masoretic text. Allis (1953:26) maintains,

<sup>54</sup> "11a Serve the LORD with fear, 11b and rejoice with trembling. 12a Kiss the Son, lest he be angry..."

<sup>55</sup> NEB reads it as "worship the LORD with reverence; tremble, and kiss the king lest the Lord be angry..." and NJB reads it as "In fear be submissive to Yahweh, 12a with rembling kiss his feet, lest be angry..."

<sup>56</sup> "rejoice in him with trembling"

<sup>57</sup> "exult in him with trembling"

“Jerome [Vulgate] undoubtedly had before him the same text as we have today since he transliterates the Hebrew as *nescu bar*;<sup>58</sup> and while the ancient versions had difficulty in translating these words, it seems fairly clear that they had the same text before them as Jerome did.”

Thus J. Barr (1968:5) is correct when he writes, “...the beginning of a textual discussion arises not primarily from the existence of variant reading but from the perception of difficulties in the Hebrew text.” Then the question is how the Aramaic term was inserted and used in the Hebrew text. When one considers that Psalm 2 (vv.10-12 in particular) is addressed to the kings (מְלָכִים) and rulers of the earth (שְׂפָטֵי אֲרָץ), that is, foreign kings, it would be natural to use an Aramaic word, a foreign language (cf., Craigie, 1983:64).

This understanding leads scholars to view the psalm in terms of Davidic kingship. For example, Cole (2002:88) argues that the subject matter of the psalm is a “righteous and royal figure who is granted complete military dominance over wicked rulers from his heavenly throne.” It is true that in its theme royal considerations and especially the institution of the Davidic covenant dominate the psalm (cf., vv. 2, 7). Thus deClaisse-Walford (1995:93) maintains that “to introduce the concept of the kingship of YHWH is precisely the role of Psalm 2 in the Psalter.” The image of Davidic kingship never fully matched the physical Davidic line, and was described as messianic in the New Testament,<sup>59</sup> which was accomplished in the person and work of Jesus Christ. From the canonical point of view that the psalm should be viewed in its present shape, the psalmist must have thought both of תּוֹרָה (Ps.1) and the Davidic Covenant (Ps.2) as a backbone of the Psalter. How, then, is this understanding related to the wisdom motif?

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<sup>58</sup> *Italics* are mine.

<sup>59</sup> Verses 1-2 are cited in Acts 4:25-26; verse 7 in Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5, 5:5; and verse 9 in Revelation 2:26-27, 12:5, 19:15.

The subject matter of Psalm 2 is the destiny of those who conspire and plot in vain against Yahweh and his Anointed One, which functions as a concrete example of how ‘the wicked (רָשָׁעִים)’ in Psalm 1:6 perish. The only way to escape Yahweh’s anger is to submit oneself to the Anointed One,<sup>60</sup> the saviour, and to take refuge (הִסָּתֵר) in Him (v.12). Those who are prudent (שָׂכֵל) in the instruction of Yahweh and serve Him with fear (בְּיִרְאָה) are blessed (v.v.10-12). Only when one is instructed by reality that the way of the wicked will perish (Ps. 1:6), as demonstrated in (Ps. 2:1-9), will he act wisely and obey Yahweh and his Anointed One. Salvation comes only from the ‘fear of Yahweh’ (v. 11), ‘the submission to His Son’ (v.12) after the understanding of ‘who the king is like’ (vv.2, 7), and of ‘the consequences of rebellion’ (v.12). Who is wise? The answer is, simply, the one who takes refuge in Yahweh. Thus, the implication of the wisdom influence on the psalm can hardly be missed.

### 5.3. BOOK I (Psalms 3-41)

#### 5.3.1. Psalm 3

While the two previous psalms (Pss. 1, 2) betray a form of instruction, the first psalm of Book I takes the form of a prayer. The psalm has long been classified as an individual lament psalm (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:121).<sup>61</sup> Mays (1994b:16) rightly introduces the psalm as follows: “The third psalm is a prayer. It is the voice of one of the people of the LORD surrounded by myriad forces who contradict his trust in the LORD for salvation”. Psalm 3 is attributed to David and is given a setting in a particular occasion of his life. This function is consistent with David’s reputation as a prolific poet and his role as Israel’s worship leader (2 Samuel 17-27, 22:1, 23:1; 2

<sup>60</sup> Psalm 2 is the only text in the Old Testament that speaks of God’s king, the Messiah, and the son in the one place, which makes it important to consider its links with the Christology of the New Testament.

<sup>61</sup> The term ‘complaint’ has occasionally replaced ‘lament’ by some scholars (e.g., Westermann, Gerstenberger). Since “almost all the lament psalms contain complaint as well as pleas” (Day, 1992:20), however, it is not necessary to draw a distinct line between them. Furthermore, from our point of view, i.e., reading the Psalter as a story rather than as a type, the terminology does not make any difference.

Chronicles 25:1-31). The superscription<sup>62</sup> indicates that the afflicted man is David, and the historical setting is the occasion in which David fled from his son Absalom (2 Samuel 15-18).<sup>63</sup> The superscript gives the reader an initial background for understanding the psalm as a kind of inner-biblical exegesis (Childs, 1976:384). With respect to Davidic authorship in particular, Mays (1986:154) suggests, that “[t]he notion of the David of the Psalms is an intra-textual reality. The notion arises from looking at the text in terms of certain relations to which the texts themselves guide the reader. It is a product of the Old Testament, not just separate books, and its function and effect is hermeneutic; its usefulness has to do with the interpretation of the text as Scripture and in liturgy.”

When we take seriously the intention of the editor(s) at the final stage of the Psalter,<sup>64</sup> the weight of the title is too ponderous to be ignored. Childs also suggests that this understanding contains wide hermeneutical implications. He (1979:521) writes, “The Psalms are transmitted as the sacred psalms of David, but they testify to all the common troubles and joys of ordinary human life...” If this is the case, the issue is not whether a psalm belongs to David, but whether the title shed a light on

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<sup>62</sup> It is generally held that the historical headings found in certain psalms were not initially an integral part of them and were affixed to those psalms in the final (or later) stage of the Psalter. The reason for this is mainly twofold (Slomovic, 1979:350-351): (1) the difference—in content and language—between the events referred to in the superscription and body of the psalm, (2) the variant historical superscription among manuscripts, i.e., the Septuagint, the Targums, and the Masoretic text. Thus a number of critical scholars have maintained that most psalm titles are secondary in character providing no clues as to the real authors of the psalms (Fohrer, 1968:283; cf., Mowinckel, 1962: 98-101). While there is unanimous consensus among scholars as regards this understanding, “there is another reason for studying the titles apart from their historical significance” because “the titles established a secondary setting which became normative for the canonical tradition” (Childs, 1971:137; 1979:520). Most significant in the titles is the close connection established with David. As Childs (1979:520) maintains, “David came to be regarded as the source of Israel’s psalms as Moses was for the law, and Solomon was for wisdom.” Moreover, there are two pieces of evidence that they may have been early additions to the Masoretic Text: (1) the presence of superscriptions in the Septuagint (2) the existence of superscriptions in the extant psalms of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Parsons, 1990:172, n.17).

<sup>63</sup> According to Slomovic (1979: 365-366), the word קָמוּם עָלַי (‘rise up against me’) in verse 2, for example, occurs twice in the event of David’s flight (2 Samuel 18:30-31). In addition, Slomovic’s main concern in this regard is to show that the historical superscriptions of the Psalter are the result of the very [hermeneutic] method which is found in the Septuagint and rabbinic *midrash*.”

<sup>64</sup> The early fourth century B.C. marks the beginning of the hermeneutical process through which the post-exilic Israelites shaped the final form of the Psalter (see deClaisse-Walford, 1995:51-60).

understanding the psalm.<sup>65</sup> The situation which David was facing was terribly threatening and unfair: David the king of Israel was fleeing from his own son Absalom. The sense of loss that king David was experiencing might have been the same mentality permeated among the people of Israel, God's chosen people, in the post-exilic period. Some time after the return from Babylon, the Jewish exiles must have found themselves in tough circumstances. Gone forever were the days of king David and the gloomy prospect frustrated the Israelites. As Morgan (1990:30) maintains, this was the mindset of post-exilic Israelites. The indication that Psalm 3 was written by King David in his time of agony must have given them much relief and sympathy.

With Psalm 3, the lament psalms series and the first Davidic collection (Pss. 3-41) in the Psalter begin as such:

O Yahweh, how *many* (מְהֵרָבֵי) are my enemies!<sup>66</sup>  
*Many* (רַבִּים) are rising up against me!  
*Many* (רַבִּים) are saying of my soul,  
 "There is no salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) for him in God" Selah (vv. 1-2).

The repetition of 'many' (רַב) is contrasted to the first person singular suffix, 'me' (אֲנִי), reinforcing the forlorn situation David is experiencing, in which any hope for 'salvation' has not been shown. The initial lament in verse 2 serves as the precursor of the overall sentiment of Book I, which is concretely expressed in the next verse: "There is no salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) for him in God" (v. 3). So the need for salvation begins.

<sup>65</sup> References to events in David's life occur in 13 psalms (3, 7, 18, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, and 142), all of which except Psalm 142 stand in the first and second books of the Psalter.

<sup>66</sup> Great attention has been shown to the question of identity of the enemies since H. Birkeland, but it goes beyond the concern of our study. The enemies in the Psalms and particularly in the individual psalms are mainly identified as 'foreigners', or 'foreign nations' who stand against the subject king (e.g., Birkeland, Mowinckel, Eaton, Croft, etc.). According to Day (1992:23-24), they are also identified as 'neighbours' (e.g., 41:6ff), 'violent and warlike imagery' (e.g., 64:3; 57:4; 140:3,9), or 'local Israelite' (55:12-13). From our point of view, i.e., reading the Psalms as a wisdom Psalter, however, it seems enough to view the enemies as those who are hostile to the psalmist in a general sense. More specifically, they can be best identified as the ones who opposed the post-exilic people of Israel.

In spite of the seemingly insoluble situation, David expresses his confidence in Yahweh who never failed to answer (וַיַּעֲנֵנִי) his cry (vv. 4-9). The term מָגֵן (a shield) in verse 4 is an important metaphor in the Hebrew Bible that denotes God who protects and delivers His people from the enemy (i.e., Genesis 14:20, 15:1; Deuteronomy 33:29). The centrality of this symbol for Yahweh is more evident in the Psalter.<sup>67</sup> As Creach (1996:50) rightly observes, “[t]he somewhat obscure nature of the care of the deity and the proper response of mortals is made comprehensible in the Psalter largely through the concrete symbol of ‘shelter’, in all its nuances. Yahweh is said to be a ‘refuge’, ‘fortress’, ‘dwelling place’, ‘rock’, and ‘shield’.”

The same Yahweh who installed his king in his holy mountain (הַר־קְדְּשָׁי) in Psalm 2:6 answers David, his king, from the same place (הַר־קְדְּשָׁי). David can sleep in the dreadful situation of tens of thousands foes surround him, for Yahweh sustains him (vv. 6-7). The last stanza (vv. 8-9) is a prayer of confidence that “God helps those who *cannot* help themselves” (Day, 1992:89):

Arise, Yahweh!  
 Save me (הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי), my God!  
 Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked.  
 To Yahweh there is salvation (הַיְשׁוּעָה),  
 Upon your people is your blessing.

While the situation seems to be wretched, the hope of יְשׁוּעָה is hinted elsewhere in the psalm (vv. 3, 4, 8, 9). Psalm 3, given by David, the anointed one, is then a lament prayer for salvation. The figure of David as a sufferer gives much relief to the people of Israel that there is a hope for restoration.

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<sup>67</sup> The term occurs 20 times in the Psalter: 3:4; 5:13; 7:11; 18:3, 31, 36; 28:7; 33:20; 35:2; 47:10; 59:12; 84:10, 12; 89:19; 91:4; 115:9, 10, 11; 119:114; 144:2). In the case of 76:4, the term is used for the enemy's part.

### 5.3.2. Psalms 4-40 (Davidic Collection I)

From Psalm 4 to 7,<sup>68</sup> in the beginning of each psalm, David calls on the name of Yahweh to hear (4:2) him, to give ear (5:2) to him, not to rebuke (6:2) him, and to save (הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי) (7:2) him in lamentation. The overall mood of the psalms is similar to one another in that it echoes hope for salvation in the midst of gloominess, which is also a recurrent phenomenon of lament psalms. The supplication for salvation in the present (i.e., עֲנֵנִי in Ps. 4:2) is based on Yahweh's acts of the past (i.e., וַיַּעֲנֵנִי in Ps. 3:5) (cf., Gerstenberger, 1988:55).

For the post-exilic people of Israel, who were trying to find a rationale for survival, David's cry for deliverance from his enemies seemed to perfectly correspond with theirs, and his cry became their own. In that sense, the fact that the first part of the Psalms begins with lamentation of David seems to appear intentional. It is very hermeneutical for and sympathetic to them.

Each of the four psalms ends with confidence that Yahweh alone makes one dwell in safety (לְבִטָּח) (4:9), that Yahweh surrounds one like a shield (כַּצִּנּוֹה) (5:13), that Yahweh hears one's supplication (6:10), and that Yahweh is a shield (מִגִּנִּי) that protects the psalmist (7:11) and will punish the wicked (7:12-17). Thus, at the end of Psalm 7 (v. 18), David declares to praise the name of Yahweh the Most High (עֲלֵיוֹן שְׁמֵי הַיְהוָה).<sup>69</sup> There are four components in understanding the overall atmosphere of these lament psalms<sup>70</sup>: (1) the existence of the wicked. The psalmist is persistently contrasted to 'sons of man (בְּנֵי אִישׁ)' (4:3), 'all evil-doers (כָּל-פְּעֻלֵי אָוֶן)' (5:6; 6:9),

<sup>68</sup> According to Gunkel (1998[1933]:121), Psalm 4 is a 'psalm of confidence' that has developed from the complaint psalms, but psalms 5-7 are classified as "individual complaint songs." In particular, Psalm 6 is regarded as the first of the seven Penitential Psalms (Pss. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143).

<sup>69</sup> The divine name עֲלֵיוֹן occurs 38 times throughout the Old Testament and appears 18 times in the Psalter, which is remarkable.

<sup>70</sup> Lament psalms consist of four or five elements in general: (1) Invocation (2) complaint (3) petition (4) expression of trust (5) expression of praise and adoration.

and all *his* pursuers (כָּל־רֹדְפָי) (7:2), which is one of the main themes of psalm 1, that is, the 'two-ways theme'; (2) the need for salvation. That Yahweh cannot dwell with the wicked (5:5) causes the psalmist to ask for salvation; (3) The psalmist's confidence in Yahweh comes from His טוב (4:7), His חַסֵּד, (5:8;6:5), and His צַדִּיק (7:17). Yahweh is also described as having the image of a shield (צָנָה in 5:13; מִגְנִי in 7:11); (4) the notes of instruction and the language of wisdom. In almost all cases, the opponents appear to do evil, which causes the psalmist to cry for salvation in confidence. In so doing, a couple of instructions are given for edification in the third person (Pss. 4:3-5; 6:9-11; 7:11-17).

Gerstenberger (1988:55) observes that the type of exhortation preceded by the call for salvation occurs in a wisdom debate in Job 19:2-6.<sup>71</sup> Then the theme of 'the suffering of the righteous' is hardly missed here. Furthermore, the psalmist's protest for his innocence in Psalm 7:4-6 reinforces the wisdom context. The closest formal parallel to the verses in the Old Testament is Job 31:5-40 containing a series of at least ten purificatory oaths (Gerstenberger, 1988:64). While these psalms take the form of prayer, the effect on the reader is instructive: a cry for deliverance will never be missed before Yahweh. It is Yahweh who makes the psalmist lie down in safety (4:9), surrounds him with His favour as with a big shield (5:13), hears his supplication (6:10), and protects him like a shield (7:11). Therefore, happy are those who take refuge (כָּל־חֹסֵי) in Yahweh (Pss. 2:12 and 5:12)!

Psalm 8, a song of creation,<sup>72</sup> takes over the baton of praise from Psalm 7: 18 and begins and ends with the phrase, "Yahweh our Lord! How majestic is your name in all the earth!" (8:2,10). The sudden change from lament to praise makes scholars postulate a possibility of interpolation of the psalm, but is "by no means inappropriate" because "it is linked with both Psalms 7 and 9 by the acclamation of

<sup>71</sup> "How long (עַד־אֵנָה) will you cause my soul grief...<sup>6</sup>Know that God (יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ)..."

<sup>72</sup> It has generally been classified as a 'hymn' (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:22; Gerstenberger, 1988:70).

the divine name [יְהוָה עֲלֵינוּ] (7:18; 8:2,10; 9:3,11),<sup>73</sup> and by the references to the *enemies* (7:6; 8:3; 9:4,7), and the *foes* (7:5,7; 8:3), both of whom had also figured in Psalm 6 (vv.8 and 11)” (Brennan, 1985:28). It begins and ends with praise of the name of Yahweh for His work in Creation, and in the middle it praises Yahweh for His work in caring for man (v.5), the crown of His Creation. In fact, Psalm 8 is perceptibly the first wisdom influenced psalm since the first psalm of the first book, in that it deals with the creation motif.<sup>74</sup> David’s confession that men have been made little less than the אֱלֹהִים (heavenly beings) and given dominion over all things also echoes the wisdom teaching (Perdue, 1994:144). Moreover, the rhetorical question in verse 5 beginning with מַה־אֲנוֹשׁ and the theme of ‘fragility-but-nobleness-of-human’ reinforce the wisdom influence on the psalm. According to Gerstenberger (1988:69), this fundamental and enduring question (מַה־אֲנוֹשׁ) is “used in OT wisdom passages in the context of suffering, the quest for justice, and the fear of mortality and guilt (Job 7:17; 15:14; Ps 144:3-4).”

The fact that men have been accorded such honour in creation, however, does not give them the right to be praised, for it is Yahweh who gives the mortal the honour of the crown of creation (v.6). As Childs (1969:24) states, “[t]he psalm is a praise to God the Creator who in his infinite wisdom and power has placed man at the head of his creation.” Psalm 8 extols Yahweh for exalting humanity to kingship over creation. If Yahweh is the LORD of all creation who cares for human beings, then, there is nothing to worry about. God will rule over and silence the enemy (v.3) as human beings rule over all things (v.7). It follows that praise and thanksgiving should be found in the psalm.

<sup>73</sup> In the case of Psalm 8, the divine name is יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ.

<sup>74</sup> The relationship of creation to wisdom has largely recognized. As Perdue (1994: 20) asserts, “creation theology and its correlative affirmation, providence, were at the centre of the sage’s understanding of God, the world, and humanity. More specifically McCann (2001:128) views ‘creation theology’ as ‘the broad horizon of a theology of the Psalms.’”

While the Masoretic text preserves Psalms 9 and 10 as two separate poems, several reasons force scholars to regard the two, in essence, as one. Psalm 9 is a psalm of thanksgiving and Psalm 10 is a psalm of lamentation (Craigie, 1983:156). However, Gunkel sees Psalms 9 and 10 as a mixed poetry<sup>75</sup> (cf., Holladay, 1993:69) in unity. According to him (1998[1933]:309), the alphabetic psalm consists of the individual thanksgiving song (Ps. 9:1-5, 14-15) and the eschatological hymn (Ps. 9:6-17) with the individual complaint song (Ps. 9:18-10:18). Moreover, Psalm 9, a thanksgiving poem with a tone of lament is closely connected to the previous psalm (Ps. 8) where Psalm 10, a lament psalm with the tone of wisdom, is related to Psalm 11 that is a wisdom influenced psalm.

Although Psalms 9 and 10 are distinct from each other, they probably formed a single form at one time. In fact, the two make an alphabetical acrostic poem (א to כ in Psalm 9 and ל to ט in Psalm 10) with a bit loosened order: ג is missing in Psalm 9:5-6; ז and ח are reversed in Psalm 10:3-6 as well as ט and ז in verses 7-9; and ט is absent.<sup>76</sup> The Greek Septuagint tradition supports this suggestion (Holladay, 1993:34). The term 'קִיּוּמָה יְהוָה' that appears both in Psalm 9:20 and 10:12 also supports the unity of the two psalms. Kraus (1988:191) suggests five grounds for the unity: (1) the alphabetic order; (2) the witness of the LXX; (3) the occurrence of סִלָּה at the end of Psalm 9;<sup>77</sup> (4) the absence of the prescription in Psalm 10 that is unusual in the case of Book I; and (5) the occurrence of similar expressions.<sup>78</sup>

David is surrounded by his enemies and the wicked, but he knows that Yahweh is

<sup>75</sup> The mixed poetry, according to Gunkel (1998[1933]:306-307) has been preserved through the various stages of development. Larger sections of one genre gradually become smaller and ultimately results in a mosaic of the smallest genre components.

<sup>76</sup> In relation to the reason why the psalmist (wisdom writer in this case) employs the acrostic device, the 'alphabetic thinking', Ceresko (1985:103) argues that those wisdom writers "effort to wrest some kind of order and coherence out of the variety and seeming disconnectedness of the especially language in its written form."

<sup>77</sup> In the Psalter סִלָּה always appears in the middle of a poem except Psalm 3:9.

<sup>78</sup> For example, קִיּוּמָה צָנָה בְּטַח יְהוָה (9:20; 10:12). לְעֵתוֹת בְּצָרָה (9:10; 10:1).

the stronghold (מִשְׁנֵבָה) for the oppressed (דָּוִד) in times of trouble (9:10), which provides a cause for him to sing praises to Yahweh (9:2-3). The salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) David is expecting here is deliverance from the enemy (9:4, 6). David identifies himself with the term, עֲנֻיִים (the afflicted) that is a metaphor of Yahweh's beloved.<sup>79</sup> Wisdom lessons from these psalms can be summed up in the following summary: (1) the wicked does not seek Yahweh in their arrogance because they think that 'there is no God' (10:3-11), but those who know Yahweh's name trust (בְּטָח) Him (9:11); (2) the wicked will return to the שָׂאֵל, but the afflicted shall not always be forgotten because Yahweh is righteous (9:9) and a stronghold for the oppressed (9:10); (3) based on this belief, the psalmist calls Yahweh to arise (9:20; 10:12) and to listen to the cry of the afflicted so as to show that 'there is God' who is a stronghold (מִשְׁנֵבָה) for the oppressed.

Psalm 11,<sup>80</sup> on the other hand, does not take a form of prayer. Thus, Gerstenberger (1988:78) calls the psalm as a "Psalm of contest" that is unique in the phenomena of the Psalter. However, judging from its contents, it seems to be in the affinity of a psalm of confidence. As Morgenstern (1950:221) succinctly observes, the psalm declares the unshakable trust in Yahweh and the righteous rule over the world. The psalm explains why David, the righteous one (צַדִּיק), takes refuge (חָסָה) in Yahweh (cf., v.3). The reason why the psalmist puts trust in Yahweh is closely related to the character of Yahweh: because (כִּי) Yahweh is righteous (צַדִּיק) (v.7). The theme of omniscience of Yahweh occurs in verse 4: Yahweh is in his holy temple (קִדְשׁוֹ) (בְּהֵיכַל), which contrasts well with the declaration of the wicked that 'there is no God', in the previous psalm (Ps.10:4). Yahweh watches over and scrutinizes the sons of Adam (בְּנֵי אָדָם), a term used as a metaphor to highlight the sinfulness of

<sup>79</sup> The term occurs elsewhere in the Psalms (9:19; 10:12,17; 22:27; 25:9; 34:3; 69:33; 149:4).

<sup>80</sup> Gunkel (1998[1933]:121) classifies the psalm as an individual complaint psalm, but there is no hint of complaint. Rather the psalm consistently reveals confidence on God in whom the psalmist take refuge (חָסָה).

humankind. Because Yahweh knows everything, there is nothing to worry about.

Psalm 12 accentuates the importance of the Words of Yahweh (אִמְרוֹת יְהוָה) (v.7), which are in contrast to the flattering lips and boastful tongue in verses 3-5. It is the Words of Yahweh that guarantee salvation (בְּיִשְׁעוֹ) for those who sigh for it (לֹא יִפְיֶיחַ). The promise in verse 6 that Yahweh will arise (קוּמ) and save the afflicted (עֲנִיִּים) are “pure words as silver tested in a furnace of clay, refined seven times” (v. 7). The term ‘seven’ is a holy number betraying the meaning of ‘perfection’ here (Briggs, 1906:97). Thus one has to trust the Words of Yahweh that he puts the afflicted in safety, which lasts from this generation to forever (לְעוֹלָם) (v.8). The concept of ‘the words of Yahweh’ here is thematically related to the תּוֹרָה of Psalm 1.

Psalm 13 is a lament psalm (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:121; Mowinckel, 1962:219).<sup>81</sup> The acute situation that the psalmist is facing is stressed by the expression, “how long?” (עַד־אָנָּה) that occurs four times in Psalm 13: 2-3. The rhetorical questions imply the influences of wisdom tradition in that they are rooted in the question of theodicy. In this regard, Job also used the expression in Job 19:2-3 (Gerstenberger, 1988:84): “How long will you torment me...? Ten times you have cast reproach upon me...” The tension, then, is relieved by David’s concrete declaration that “But I *trusted* in your חֶסֶד, my heart still *rejoices* in your salvation (בְּיִשׁוּעֵי־ךָ)” (v.6). The abrupt change from lamentation to praise seems to be absurd, but as Gerstenberger (1988:85) rightly points out, the psalm must have been recited only after the experience of salvation. If such is the case, then, the lamentation functions as mere retrospection. The change of the tense from ‘perfect’ (בְּטַחַתִּי) to ‘imperfect’ (אֲשִׁירָה) also shows that His joy in the present comes from his experience of the past. What is required is perseverance,

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<sup>81</sup> For Gunkel, it is ‘an individual complaint psalm’, and for Mowinckel, it is a congregational psalm of lament.

remembering Yahweh's salvation of the past.

Psalm 14 seems to be a wisdom psalm in that it opens with a proverbial sentence. However the mixture of wisdom (vv. 1-3) and prophetic elements (vv. 4-7) within the psalm has frustrated commentators. Thus, for Gerstenberger (1988: 86), it is both 'a congregational lament' and 'a wisdom psalm'. Bennett (1975:15) complains that "few have called attention to the continuance of the sapiential motif within the second strophe", arguing that the presence of two technical wisdom terms, נָבֵל (v.1) and עֵצָה (v.6), supports this understanding. With regard to the נָבֵל (foolish, senseless), Bennett (1975:18), after rapid overview on the root meaning of the term ('outcast') used both within and outside the wisdom literature, maintains that the psalm "is a sustained commentary on the נָבֵל, and as such is a lament based on the wisdom theme of the consequences for a community of godlessness in its midst." In relation to the עֵצָה ('counsel'), he (1975:19) argues that the term also serves "to confirm the presence of wisdom motifs in this psalm of lament", in that it "appears often in the Psalter, positively of Yahweh's counsel (Pss. 16:7; 32:8; 33:11) and always negatively of human counsel (Pss. 1:1; 5:11; 13:2; 33:10; 62:4; 71:10; 83:4)".

Yahweh is ever present when the fool says, "there is no God" (v.1), which is reminiscent of Psalm 10:4. One feature of the foolish is in their claim that there is no God. Such a slogan is taken as proof of the fool's perversity in early Jewish congregation (Gerstenberger, 1988:219). However, Yahweh, the refuge (מְחֻסָּה) of the poor (v.6), is still working for salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) for 'those who are wise seeking God' (מֵאֲמַר נָבֵל שְׂכִיל דָּרַשׁ אֶת־אֱלֹהִים) (v.2) and will restore His people from captivity (v.7).<sup>82</sup> The hope for salvation here is described as one of the characteristics of the

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<sup>82</sup> The image of 'the captivity' (שְׁבוּת) forces scholars to date the psalm back to the post-exilic period (Mowinkel, 1962:147), which is not certain. Rather the fact that the psalm has a twin (Ps. 53) in Book II possibly suggests its early date. Moreover, as Bennett (1975:18) argues, a thoughtful comparison of אֲמַר נָבֵל with the song of Moses (Deut.32:6, 21) suggests that the psalm "represents a kindred

wise. The fool would say, "There is no God, so there is no salvation", but the wise would say, "Who can bring the salvation of Israel from Zion? It is Yahweh who restores them from the captivity."

Who would, then, enjoy the salvation? The first verse of Psalm 15 redefines it in the following way: "Who may abide in your place; who may dwell in your holy hill? It is one who walks blameless (הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִים), does what is right (צֶדֶק), and speaks the truth (אֱמֶת) from the heart. The following verses are mere elaborations of verse 1. Then it ends with the confirmation that this kind of person will not be shaken. The word תָּמִים, a relative of תָּם that has the same meaning, is used in describing the character of Noah (Genesis 6:9), Abraham (Genesis 17:1), and Job (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3). Furthermore, in Proverbs 28: 18a, it is read, "One who walks in blamelessness (הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִים) will be saved..." תָּמִים, צֶדֶק, and אֱמֶת are suggested as the characteristics of those who fear Yahweh (Job 12:4, 36:4; Proverbs 8:7, 11:18; cf., McCann, 2001:111). The men described here are the ones with wisdom (cf., Job 1:1). The wise will dwell in the sanctuary and will not be shaken. As Murphy (1981:53) maintains, "wisdom brings life." A wisdom motif is closely connected to the salvation motif here.

Psalm 16 has been viewed as a song of confidence with a mood of thanksgiving (Gerstenberger, 1988:92) or a confession of faith (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:51). It begins with David's declaration that Yahweh is his refuge (פְּיִי־חֹסֵייתִי), his Lord (אֱדֹנָי), his portion, and his inheritance (נַחֲלָתִי) (vv. 1-6), which brings him a future confident hope of 'resurrection' for David and the Holy One (קֹדֶשׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל) (vv. 8-11). This movement sees verse 7 as the pivot of the poem. When the first half indicates David's present relationship with Yahweh and the second half focuses on his future hope, verse 7 bridges these two main sections through praise for Yahweh's instruction to

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union of prophetic and wisdom forms as well as points of view and doubtless also belongs to the era of the monarchy."

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David: "I will bless Yahweh who counselled me, even at night my heart instructed me." Yahweh would instruct and counsel David through his heart. The message of the psalm can be summarized as follows: (1) David turned to Yahweh for protection (vv. 1-6); (2) Yahweh would instruct and counsel him (v. 7); and (3) this present relationship then moved David to express confidence in the future deliverance for David and the Holy One (vv. 8-11). What God instructed David seems closely to be connected to the problem of human decay (v. 10)<sup>83</sup> and the path of life (v. 11) that will be given in the future. In particular, the interpretation of verses 8-11 has been the centre of controversy since the early church father's messianic position. The issue is on the question of whether this passage means a direct prophecy concerning the Messiah's resurrection or a pure hope concerning the salvation for David.<sup>84</sup>

According to Waltke (1997:1113), the referent of the passage has changed through the four stages: first, that of David's; second, David's royal line of succession; third, a future Messiah, and fourth, Jesus Christ. It is clear, from the fourth stage of the Psalm (cf., Waltke, 1981:9),<sup>85</sup> that these verses point to a direct prophecy from David concerning the Messiah's resurrection that is attested by the decay of David's body. However, in terms of the third stage on which this study has focused,<sup>86</sup> it is hard to imagine that the post-exilic Israelites fully understood the significance of the text. As Waltke (1981:12-15) suggests, they viewed the text just as a future hope. If this is the case, the future hope of salvation for the post-exilic Israelite is concreted in the supplication of David, a type of the coming Messiah. In this way the psalm appears as a counsel of Yahweh to persevere in waiting for the coming salvation.

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<sup>83</sup> How to understand the meaning of  $\text{תַּפְּסֵם}$  occupies the centre of the issue: corruption or pit. The LXX renders it as the former ( $\delta\iota\alpha\phi\theta\omicron\rho\acute{\alpha}\nu$ ) that represents an accurate representation of the Hebrew meaning. See Trull (2004: 434-435) for a detailed discussion of this. Waltke (1997:1113) supports 'corruption'.

<sup>84</sup> Trull (2004a:198-214) observes seven modern views on the passage in relation to Peter's understanding in Acts 2:25-32: (1) hermeneutical error, (2) Jewish hermeneutics, (3) Sensus Plenior, (4) Canonical approach, (5) Typology, (6) Single message, and (7) Direct prophecy.

<sup>85</sup> Its meaning in the full canon of the Bible including the New Testament with its presentation of Jesus as the Christ.

<sup>86</sup> Its meaning in the final and complete Old Testament canon associated with the Second Temple.

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As Gunkel (1998[1933]:154) astutely observes, Psalm 17 does not outwardly express a complaint that stands very much in the background. It is remarkable in that the psalm does not contain any confession of sin, which was also the case in Psalm 7. Thus the psalm has been regarded as ‘a poem of innocence’ to plead the cause before Yahweh (Gerstenberger, 1988:94). This confession “incarnates fortitude in times of utmost distress” (Terrien, 2003:188). The expression, ‘my feet have not slipped’ in verse 5 is a “typical wisdom psalm depiction of the journey through life and the corollary that whoever treads the path of righteousness, will not stumble” (Vos, 2005:161).<sup>87</sup> Moreover, the image of agony of the innocent is definitely reminiscent of Job (see Job 6:30, especially 31:1-40). The Psalmist appeals to his righteousness (צַדִּיק), which gives him confidence that Yahweh will rise up (קִיְמוֹהוּ) and rescue him. In that sense, Psalm 17 is, as Terrien (2003:188) suggests, not just a lament. “It sings the certitude of hope. It is solidly anchored in the tradition of a creating and re-creating deity, whose name, Yahweh, contains the seed of historical destiny. It demands shamelessly, for it hopes fearlessly. Judah may be tortured but will not die.”

Psalms 18-21 are basically concerned with thanksgiving and praise, in which Psalm 19, a creation psalm (Gerstenberger, 1988:101), is pitted against the Royal psalms (Pss. 18, 20, 21) - a ‘break’ for the reader from the mood of lament of Psalms 3-17. Psalm 18, generally identified as “a royal psalm’ (Gunkel, 1998[1933]: 99), is almost identical with the poem of 2 Samuel 22 that provides a background of it. As the heading indicates, the psalm is seen as a song of thanksgiving after a victory over David’s enemies. Kuntz (1983:3) classifies the psalm as “a royal song of thanksgiving.” The psalm is a testimony to Yahweh who gives salvation to his king (v. 51), showing His חַסְדּוֹ to His Anointed One and keeping his promise to the house of David forever. Thus the language throughout is that of salvation. In verse 3, Yahweh is portrayed as rock (סֶלֶעַי), fortress (מְצוּדָתִי), deliverer (מַפְלֵטִי), refuge (אַחֻסָּה), shield (מִגְנֵי), stronghold (מִשְׁגְּבִי) and the horn of salvation (וַיִּקְרֶן יְשׁוּעָי). In verses 4-6, the psalmist

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<sup>87</sup> See Psalm 15:5; 73:2; Proverbs 10:25, 30.



'torah psalm' (Anderson, 1983:239). It basically consists of two parts: (1) the glory of God as revealed in Creation (vv.2-7), (2) the perfect law of Yahweh (vv.8-15). Because of the differences in style and language, the two parts are considered as having originally been two separate poems. Thus the psalm has been classified as a "hymn to Creation" (Gerstenberger, 1988:101) with the first part or a "wisdom hymn" with the second part.

From the canonical point of view, however, the different tones of the two halves in content and form are viewed as "a natural combination of the hymnic and the didactic, suggesting the latter could indeed function in the context of worship" (Day, 1992:58). In fact, the association of ideas between creation and wisdom/torah is a very strong one. A close examination suggests that Psalm 19 pointedly presents the complementary nature of revelation through creation (vv.1-6) and revelation through the law (vv. 7-14). The mission of the creatures is to tell (סַפֵּר) the works of Yahweh revealed in Creation, and that of the תּוֹרָה is to tell the attributes of Yahweh. The God of creation is also the God of the תּוֹרָה, who rules over the nations and redeems his people (Pss. 93, 95, 96). Croft (1987:166) aptly suggests, "Not only was Torah seen as something which was as permanent as creation but in some traditions the law or wisdom can be seen as the agent of that creation itself." There seems to be a concrete relationship between the תּוֹרָה and wisdom in verses 8-10: the torah of Yahweh is blameless (תְּמִימָה), the testimony of Yahweh is trustworthy, and wisdom for the simple (v.8); the fear of Yahweh is pure, lasting forever (v.10). The תּוֹרָה makes the simple wise (מִחִכְיָמַת), which is more to be desired than silver and gold (cf., Proverbs 8:10, 19). Hoffmeier (2000:22) maintains that the law (תּוֹרָה) of Yahweh, the testimony (עֲדוּת) of Yahweh, the precepts (פְּקֻדִים) of Yahweh, the commandment (מִצְוָה) of Yahweh, the fear (יִרְאָה) of Yahweh, and the judgments (מִשְׁפָּט) of Yahweh in verses 8-10 "consciously connect God's revelation in the Torah to wisdom." So "the true source of wisdom is found in God's special revelation in

Scripture" (Hoffmeier, 2000:22). The essence of the psalm is, then, to instruct the reader to respond to the silent witness of creation and the verbal witness of Torah, which is deemed worthy before Yahweh who has ordained these things (Croft, 1987: 166). If we have read the Psalter from the beginning, i.e., Psalm 1 which produces a hermeneutical impact on the reader, the orientation could lead them to understand the term תּוֹרָה in broader sense: not just the Law, but also 'instruction.' The final response to the תּוֹרָה of Yahweh is to praise Him who is the rock (צוּר) and the redeemer (גּוֹאֲלֵנוּ) (v.15) because the God of creation is also the God of salvation.

Psalms 20-21, royal psalms as is Psalm 18 (Anderson, 1983:239). Psalm 20 is viewed as "a national psalm of intercession for the king before he goes to war" (Mowinckel, 1962:225), and Psalm 21 as "a thanksgiving prayer for a king" (Gerstenberger, 1988:107). The salvation motif is clear in the context of war. David calls Yahweh to answer the king in distress and the salvation motif here is associated with a victory in battle. Reliance on Yahweh in the face of war is imperative for the king, the Messiah, because victory belongs to Yahweh (Ps. 20:7). The supplication for victory and salvation in the end of Psalm 20 is answered in the beginning of Psalm 21:2.

Yahweh, the king rejoices in your strength.  
And how greatly he exults in your salvation (בְּיִשׁוּעָתְךָ)!

The terms, צִיּוֹן (20:3) and חֶסֶד (21:8), occur in explaining Yahweh's salvation. Motives for the joy of salvation include the fulfilment of the king's desire, which is a general phenomenon in the Old Testament (Gerstenberger, 1988:106). The salvation from Yahweh is closely connected to His anointed one, the Messiah (20:7).

Psalm 22 is well known as one of the so-called Messianic psalms (Hengstenberg, 1970: 94). The historical context of the psalm is under debate among scholars from as early as Saul's persecution of David in the Desert of Maon (1 Samuel 23:25-26) to as

late as the Maccabean Era (Patterson, 2004:214-215). As Patterson (2004:215) maintains, however, there are several reasons for arguing for the Davidic authorship: (1) the superscription, (2) its general reflection of David's stormy career, (3) a close resemblance to 2 Samuel 22, and (4) the psalm's use by Jesus, the Messiah and Davidic heir. In relation to the 'messianic reading' that presupposes a direct prophecy of Christ, it should be mentioned that such a reading of the psalm may lead to the pitfall of ignoring the historical situation of the psalm. As we already considered before, when it is considered in the context of the third stage of Waltke's proposal, David's personal suffering and his hope for future salvation should be understood in the context of the postexilic mentality.

McCann (1996:762) observes a close connection surrounding Psalm 22 and states,

In Psalms 20-21, there is the certainty that the sovereign God will answer and help the king, who lives by his trust in God. Thus the canonical sequence emphasizes the sharp contrast between Psalms 20 and 21 and Psalm 22:1-5:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Oh my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;  
And by night, but find no rest.

Notwithstanding the concrete evidence of past salvations, the present suffering the psalmist is facing seems hardly easy. This might be one of the reasons why the psalmist dramatically lapses back to the mentality of lamentation in Psalm 22. The psalm falls into two parts: lament in verses 1-22 and praise in verses 23-32. Thus it begins with such a severe lament, but ends with 'a flood of praise'. The turning point from lament to praise occurs in verses 5-6 where the psalmist recalls a past when his fathers cried to Yahweh and were saved. The constant tension between the agony of the present and the salvation of the past always ends with thanksgiving for or confidence on the future victory and salvation because the retrospection returns the psalmist to put trust on Yahweh. The frequent appearance of the word **בטח** (to trust, 3 times) in verses 5-6 represents "a strong affirmation of confidence"

(Gerstenberger, 1988:110) that Yahweh will save him. The word עֲנִיָּתִי (you *have rescued me*)<sup>89</sup> in verse 22 also indicates that the psalmist already experienced the answer from Yahweh, which inspires him to declare Yahweh's name in the congregation. He felt forsaken in verse 2, but now knows that God did not despise his affliction and calls his companies as those who 'fear Yahweh' (vv, 24, 26) whose mission is to join the psalmist in worship (vv. 23, 26) and to proclaim His righteousness (צִדְקָה) to the generations to come (v.32). As was already seen in Psalm 15:4, one of the characteristics of יְהוָה יִרְאֵי is צִדְקָה, and Yahweh cares for the way of the righteous (צִדְדֵי־קַיִם), the alternative term of the wise (Psalm 1:1).

Psalm 23 has generally been identified as a psalm of confidence or trust (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:121; Anderson, 1983:239). In Psalm 23, the psalmist is still surrounded by a band of evil men (בְּרָעִים) (Ps.22: 17; 23:4), but God is with him, which makes all the difference. Pardee (1990:279), however, views the psalm as 'a royal psalm'. Merrill also maintains that the notion of king and temple (v.6) are inseparable. He (1965: 359) argues that "the anointed of Yahweh, the king, who has experienced an act of salvation, perhaps in the ritual combat which accompanies the coronation ceremony, who knows the covenant goodness and faithfulness of his Suzerain, and is therefore intimately related to the sanctuary."

Psalm 23, then, can be viewed "not as a 'pure expression of confidence' but as a psalm of trust in a specific historical circumstance" (Merrill, 1965: 360). If this is the case, the position of Psalms 22 and 23 is "more than accidental" because "both are related to the enthronement of the king" (Merrill, 1965: 360).

In fact, the psalm is unique in that it consists only of testimony and trust. There is no

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<sup>89</sup> An attempt has made to suggest another vocalization of the consonants עֲנִיָּתִי as a noun, עֲנִיָּחִי, 'my poor one.' ( see Gerstenberger, 1988:112). Thus LXX translates it as ταπεινωσίμ μου (my lowliness). NJB reads the whole sentence as "Save me from the lion's mouth, my poor life from the wild bulls' horns!" But there is no specific reason to ignore the MT in this case.

prayer, no lament, or no general praise. It only testifies a personal relationship of David to Yahweh. The shepherd-sheep relationship reinforces this understanding. Thus Gerstenberger (1988: 114) insists that the initial formula (יְהוָה רֵעִי) implies “an almost ageless expression of personal faith.” Interestingly enough, however, one particular feature of the psalm lies in its tense. The tense of every verb that appears in the psalm is imperfect with one exception (וַיִּשְׁנֶה, v.5).<sup>90</sup> This observation makes it plausible that the psalm focuses not just on the *present* relationship with Yahweh but rather on the *future* blessing in the house of Yahweh, which is based on the חֶסֶד of Yahweh. The psalmist suggests the ultimate fulfilment of salvation as “the return to the house of Yahweh.”<sup>91</sup>

Psalm 24 does not take the form of prayer but that of torah instruction (Gerstenberger, 1988: 117). The first half of the psalm seems to contain an instruction for the entry to the hill of Yahweh (vv. 3-6):

Who shall go up to the hill of Yahweh?  
 And who shall stand in the holy place?  
 Those who have clean hands and pure heart;  
 Those who do not lift up his soul to vanity;  
 And has not sworn deceitfully

In fact, this is an echo of Psalm 15 where verse 2 reads,

Who may dwell in your sanctuary, Yahweh?  
 Who may live on your holy hill?  
 Those who walk in blameless;  
 The one who does what is righteous...

<sup>90</sup> In verse 6b, it is waw-consecutive (וַיִּשְׁנֶה).

<sup>91</sup> The MT reads 6b as וַיִּשְׁבְּתִי (I shall return) not as וַיִּשְׁבְּתִי (וַיִּשְׁבְּתִי?) (I shall dwell). LXX reads it as “καὶ τὸ κατοικεῖν με”

This instruction functions as a kind of appendix to Psalm 23: Surely טוב and נְסוּחַ of Yahweh will lead one to the house of Yahweh (23:6), but in the process of His guidance, it is required to be humble and clean.

The second part of the psalm is associated with an imagery of victory in the war. While the image of Yahweh in Psalm 23 is that of a good 'shepherd/king' caring for his sheep/people, the one of Psalm 24 is that of 'King of Glory', 'Yahweh, strong and mighty', 'Yahweh, mighty in war', and 'Yahweh Almighty', who guarantees the victory for the psalmist. As we already were informed in the previous chapter, an attempt has been made to see Psalm 23 as a song associated with the enthronement of the king. Then, Psalm 24 "would naturally follow as words spoken upon the return of the procession to the sacred site of the temple" (Merrill, 1965: 360). The instruction that one should have clean hands and a pure heart is firmly rooted in the fact that salvation in war belongs to the mighty Yahweh. As Eaton (2003:127) argues, "One can see here how reading the Psalms only as 'instruction' must fall short. One, who sings, hears or reads this poem with sympathy is caught up in a most powerful action."

Psalm 25 takes the form of acrostic poem and the content of lamentation. Thus Ruppert (1972: 576-582) views the psalm as 'a prayer that was influenced by the late wisdom movement' when Gerstenberger (1988:121) identifies it as "a congregational complaint." David asks Yahweh to teach him His way (דִּרְכָיו) and His paths (אֲרָחוֹתָיו). In fact, דִּרְךְ and אֲרָח appear in parallelism particularly in the wisdom literature (Job 6:18, 22:15; Proverbs 2:8, 13, 20; Psalms 27:11). The image of דִּרְךְ immediately brings the readers back to the first psalm of the Psalter where דִּרְךְ and תוֹרָה are closely connected to each other. Verse 11 summarizes the relationship as following:

All the paths (אֲרָח) of Yahweh are דִּרְךְ and אֱמֶת

To those who keep His covenant (בְּרִית) and His decrees

Moreover, Yahweh appears to teach the way to those who fear (יִרָא) (v.12), and his counsel is for those who fear (יִרָא) Him (v.14). Here in this psalm it is revealed that the refuge is not just a rock, or a shield, but is one's integrity (יָם) and one's uprightness (יָשָׁר) (v.21) because God is his salvation (אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵי) (v.5). Using both the acrostic form and the wisdom-related images (e.g., way, truth, fear), the psalmist wants to articulate the close relationship of wisdom to salvation: To be teachable in the instruction of Yahweh only guarantees the salvation for the Israelite of the postexilic age (cf., Gerstenberger, 1988:121).

While Gunkel (1998[1933]:121) classifies Psalm 26 as a psalm of complaint, it would be more plausible to see it as 'a prayer of the innocent' (cf., Gerstenberger, 1988:123-124). The sense of יָם (blameless) occupies in the centre of Psalm 26. The psalmist avows that he have led a blameless (יָם) life and is ready to be examined and judged by Yahweh. Once again in the last section he declares his integrity (יָם) and calls on mercy (v.11). As Gerstenberger (1988:123) suggests, "the assertion of integrity articulates the most basic concern of any Israelite (Job 1:1; 23:11; Psalm 15:2; 24:4a...etc)," which is one of the characteristics of the wisdom literature. However, what he actually seeks is His חֶסֶד and אֱמֶת which eventually results in redemption (פְּדוּתָה) from evildoers. The relationship of psalmist's integrity and Yahweh's mercy is the covenant-bond. Thus Eaton (2003:132) states:

There is indeed from God's side faithful love and compassion, but for a true relationship, these must be answered with loyalty and trust, from which is born a purity of heart and an abhorrence of evildoing. From such a relationship the prayer for rescue in sudden troubles rises with strength, and the way is open for the wonders of the Lord's salvation.

In the face of salvation, the psalmist expresses the thanksgiving (תְּהִלָּה) and narrates

all the great saving deeds of Yahweh (כָּל־נִפְלְאוֹתַיְהוָה) (v.7). The psalmist has lived a wholesome life and always will (v.12).

In Psalm 27, Yahweh is mentioned as 'my salvation' (יְשׁוּעִי) and 'my light' (אוֹרִי) (vv. 1,9). One thing the psalmist in Psalm 27:4 asked of Yahweh is to dwell in the house of Yahweh (בְּבַיִת־יְהוָה), which was also mentioned in Psalms 23:6 and 24:3. The pattern this psalm shows is that of "praise-followed-by-lament" that has its own logic (cf., Pss. 9-10; 40; 89) (Eaton, 2003:134). The apparent discrepancies between the first half (vv.1-6) and the second half (vv. 7-14) has forced some scholars to view the psalm as two separate psalms (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:112). However, the sudden change from praise in the first half to lament in the second indicates not only his chaotic situation but also his transparent communion with his God. In the context of cultic and liturgical entity, "the contingencies of ritual procedure...are responsible for alternating 'moods' in one and the same psalm" (Gerstenberger, 1988:125). In so doing the first half provides a reason for the second half: Based on the fact that Yahweh grants absolute protection to the supplicant, he can confidently ask Him to hear and answer his voice. Moreover, for the psalmist who is going through the affliction, Yahweh is a wisdom teacher who teaches the psalmist His way (דַּרְכֵי־כֶּדֶר) and leads him in His paths (בְּאַרְצֵךְ) (27:11). Therefore, it was deemed a virtue for the supplicant to wait for Yahweh (קְוֵה אֶל־יְהוָה) with a strong heart (v.14). Salvation is just around the corner.

Mowinckel (1962(I):74) classifies Psalm 28 as "a royal psalm", based on the occurrence of 'the anointed' (מְשִׁיחוֹ) (v.8). However, there is no need to specify further the genre classification of the psalm as individual lamentation (Gerstenberger, 1988:129). Rather Psalms 27 and 28 make a pattern of chiasmus:

A Praises (27:1-6)

B lamentations (27:7-14)

B' laments (28:1-5)

A' Praises (28:6-9)

The typical images of salvation recurrent in Psalm 28 are: 'my strength' (עֹז), 'my shield' (מָגֵן), 'a fortress' (מְצוּדָה), and shepherd (רֹעֵה). The reason why the wicked perish is because they do not discern (לֹא יִבִּינֻהוּ) 'the works of Yahweh and what God has done' (v.5). The ignorance of the saving works of Yahweh ends up with destruction. On the contrary, the knowledge of the salvation of Yahweh results in a prayer of confidence to "save (הוֹשִׁיעָה) your people and bless your inheritance" (v.9).

Psalm 29, a pure hymn (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:22), has been notorious for its similarity to old Canaanite traditions of the weather gods, Baal and Hadad (Ginsberg, 1935:472-476).<sup>92</sup> In opposition to this understanding, Craigie (1983:244-245) disputes that (1) no hymn has been found in Ugaritic poems. All poems are epic, (2) there is no 'exact' parallelism in their expressions, (3) the praise for the voice of Yahweh can be understood as that for Yahweh, the Creator of the universe (as Psalms 8 and 19). In fact, the creation theme with his Word predominates the psalm, and (4) in old Hebrew poems, the voice of Yahweh appears as an expression of theophany.

The sharp contrast between the two positions is enhanced by the fact that it is not Baal but Yahweh who rules the universe. The reference to Yahweh appears eighteen times in the psalm. As Eaton (2003:141) suggests, "the Lord's 'thunder-voice' is an aspect of his creative Word." Every mighty one, even Baal, has to attribute to Yahweh the glory. Viewed in this light, the theme of Psalm 29 is definitely 'the voice of Yahweh'<sup>93</sup> that will bring the blessing of שְׁלוֹמִים, the ultimate condition of salvation, to "the faithful congregation of postexilic times" (Gerstenberger, 1988:132).

<sup>92</sup> For example, (1) the pagan tradition to bless the voice of gods, (2) linguistic affinity with the ancient Near East, and (3) the first appearance of suffix ם (נִירְקִיָּם), which frequently occurs in Canaanite languages.

<sup>93</sup> The expression occurs seven times in eleven verses.

Psalm 30 seems to be rooted on the psalmist's personal experience of the past. First in that Yahweh delivered him from the **שָׂאוֹל** (v.4), and second in that he is complacent in his own security (v.7). The lessons the psalmist has learnt from the past are: (1) the necessity of calling Yahweh in the time of distress (v.3), (2) perseverance in hope (v. 6) because:

His anger lasts but a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime.

Weeping may remain for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning

, which is paraphrased in verse 12:

You have turned my mourning into dancing;

You have stripped off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.

In fact, verse 6 consists of two proverbial sayings, which lead scholars like Gerstenberger (1988:134) to argue for its later addition. On the surface, verse 6 suggests its affinity with wisdom influence in that it evinces a form of proverb. It matches well with the overall intention of the psalm that Yahweh's wrath passes in a moment, and his mercy wins over for good.

As Eaton (2003:142) suggests, the situation of Psalm 31 might be like the one that is described in the book of Job. Not only his enemies, but also his neighbours, close friends, and passing people seem to conspire against the psalmist (v.12). There is no indication of his guilt in the entire psalm. As such, the issue of innocent suffering comes to the fore. Then the theme of the psalm is associated with that of theodicy. Even in the face of the undeserved sufferings, the psalmist has taken refuge (**חֲסֵה**) (v.2) and put trust (**בַּטָּח**) in Yahweh (v.7). Thus he can encourage his pupils, the Yahweh-fearers (**לְיִרְאֵיךָ**) (v.20), to consistently love Yahweh and to be strong hoping in Yahweh (vv.24-25). The salvation-related terms abound in the psalm: 'take

refuge' (חסה) (vv.2, 20), 'deliver' (נצל) (vv.3, 16), 'save' (ישע) (vv.3, 17), 'my rock of refuge' (לְצוּר־מְעוֹז) (v.3), 'rock' (סֶלֶע) (v.4), fortress (מְצוּדָה) (v.4), refuge (מְעוֹז) (v.5), trust (בטח) (vv.7, 14), and חָסֵד (vv.8, 17, 22) (cf., Craigie, 1983: 259). Yahweh will save those who fear and take refuge in Him. Virtue required of Yahweh-fearers is to be strong and hope in Yahweh (v.25).

Psalm 32 is a wisdom psalm with a title, מְשִׁיבִיל לְדָוִד (Murphy, 1963:161; Kuntz, 1977:224). While some commentators view the psalm as an individual hymn (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:199; Gerstenberger, 1988:140), Craigie (1983:265) maintains that the hymn has been adapted from wisdom tradition. Anderson (1983:240) regards the psalm as "a penitential psalm with wisdom elements". In fact, the title מְשִׁיבִיל<sup>□ □</sup> can be rendered as a 'wisdom song' or 'meditation song' that promotes a deeper understanding of life and the art of living. The root of the word, שָׁכַל (to be prudent, to contemplate), might support this understanding (Terrien, 2003:292). Vos (2005:45) argues that the allocation of this title did not depend unconditionally on the content of the psalm, but the wording of the psalm was the deciding factor. The psalm begins with a happiness of a man whose transgressions are forgiven (vv.1-7). The אֲשֶׁר־י formula (vv. 1-2) connects the psalm to wisdom context (Gerstenberger, 1988: 141). The psalm is not a prayer, but rather an instruction on how one reaches out to happiness: by confessing the transgressions! Eaton (2003:149) correctly notes that "[i]t testifies to a surprising happiness given by way of confession and forgiveness, and sustained in a walk with the Lord...confession is seen as the gate to a life of happiness, surrounded and upheld by the God's faithful love."

Then Yahweh became the psalmist's hiding place (סִתְּוֶה) and surrounds him with songs of deliverance (v.7). Verse 8 is the direct words from Yahweh to instruct the

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<sup>94</sup> Psalms 32, 42, 44, 45, 52, 55, 74, 78, 88, 89, 142 are titled as such.

reader to trust the חֶסֶד and to rejoice in Him:

I will instruct you (אֲשַׁכִּילֶךָ) and teach you in the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my eyes upon you

Accordingly, Terrien (2003:294) maintains, that “[t]he poet is citing verbatim the words of the Lord, Master of wisdom. Yahweh sings in the person, and the style has become that of gnomic instruction (Proverbs. 28:13), not that of the sacerdotal or Levitical oracle.”

In fact, the theme of the innocent suffering in Psalm 31 and that of the humble confession in Psalm 32 reminds the reader of the story of Job, a wise man (cf., Job 3, 42). After having experienced the theophany, Job recanted his previous position of innocent suffering and repented in dust and ash (Job 42:6), which brought Job back to the initial wisdom. In the same vein, after having experienced Yahweh’s instruction (Ps. 32:8), the psalmist retracts his previous position of innocent suffering (Ps. 31) and confesses his sins (Ps. 32: 5). It is not accidental that Job 1:10 and Psalm 32:10 share the same root, סבב (to round, to beset): As Yahweh put a hedge around (מִסְבֵּיב) Job’s possession (Job 1:10), so the חֶסֶד of Yahweh surrounds (יְסֹבְבֵנִי) one who puts trust in Him (v.10; cf., v.7: תִּסְבְּבֵנִי).

It is so natural that the next psalm begins with a praise of joy after experiencing the forgiveness of Yahweh (Ps. 32:5), and the righteous (צַדִּיקִים) in Psalm 33:1 may be the same people from Psalm 32:11 (צַדִּיקִים), by which the two are connected. Gerstenberger (1988:144) goes further to insist that the two have a functional affinity in regard to key words, sentence structure, and liturgical setting.

Psalm 33 has a typical pattern of the hymn songs: first the call to praise (vv.1-3), grounds for the praise (vv.4-19), and then the conclusion (vv.20-22). One particular

feature of the psalm lies in the fact that it has twenty-two lines compatible with the Hebrew alphabet (e.g., Pss. 38 and 103). This alphabetizing tendency, if not acrostic psalms, ostensibly shows the wisdom influences. In other words, the psalm is a hymn with didactic intention. The Word of Yahweh occupies the centre of the sapiential intention of the psalm (vv. 4-12). The salvation of Yahweh is firmly rooted in the word of Yahweh that is right and true. The vast creation is found to be full of the divine faithfulness, truth, and the Word: “The counsel (עֲצָה) of Yahweh stands forever, the purpose (מִזְחָשְׁבָה) of his heart from generation to generation” (v.11). The faithfulness of Yahweh definitely guarantees His salvation. The word, יִירָא (let...to fear, v.8), אֶל-יִירָאֵיו (to those who fear him, v.18), and the אֲשֶׁר־י formula (v.12) indicates its affinities to wisdom, which is seen to be connected the theme of salvation:

The eyes of Yahweh are on those who fear Him;  
 Those who hope in His חֶסֶד  
 In order to deliver their soul from death  
 And to keep them alive in famine

The final verses (vv.20-22) fully corroborate this understanding. Those who fear Yahweh dwell in confidence and live on His חֶסֶד because Yahweh is their help (עֲזָרָה) and their shield (מִגֵּן).

Psalm 34 is an alphabetic acrostic psalm with only the א line missing after verse 6 (vv.2-22), and ends with a concluding verse that begins with א (v.23). Ceresko (1985: 100-101) argues that the reason why the psalm ends with א was to imply the verbal word אָלַף (to teach, *piel*), with the first character א and in the middle ל according to the alphabetical order (cf., Skehan, 1971:13). This alphabetic thinking, according to Ceresko (1985: 99), “reflects the concerns of Israel’s wisdom movement out of which this psalm has most likely come.” While this psalm begins with individual

thanksgiving that seems to be closely related to cult (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:199),<sup>95</sup> the reiteration of לִירְאֵי (vv. 8, 10, 12) and the appearances of 'למד' (to teach), 'שמע' (to listen) (v.11), and דרש (to seek) represent very strong case of wisdom influence on the Psalter (Anderson, 1983:240).

The first half (vv.2-7) is a hymn to praise Yahweh for His deliverance of David from fear and trouble. The phrase, 'I sought Yahweh and he answered me' appears as a typical formula (Gerstenberger, 1988:147). The psalmist identifies himself with the afflicted (עֲנִיִּים in verse 3 turns out עֲנִי וְזָה in verse 7). Later, the afflicted appear to be Yahweh-fearers (v.8) and finally the righteous (vv.16, 18). The second part of the psalm (vv. 8-23) is dominated by a number of wisdom elements. The psalmist exhorts to fear Yahweh (יִרְאֵי אֶת־יְהוָה) (v.8) because the concern of Yahweh in relation to salvation favours those who fear Him (v.10). Thus, blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) is the man who takes refuge (חָסָה) in Him (v. 9), which is a clear echo of Psalm 2:12 ('Blessed are all who take refuge in Him'). Verse 12 contains a typical wisdom call, "Come, O children, I will teach you the fear of Yahweh" (Gerstenberger, 1988:148) that is told in the rest of the psalm: comforting words for the righteous (vv.16, 18-21) and threats to the wicked (vv.17, 22). The only way to be redeemed is to fear and take refuge in Yahweh, which is the essence of wisdom.

Psalm 35 has generally been regarded as 'a complaint of the individual' (Gerstenberger, 1988:153)<sup>96</sup> with imprecatory factors (Martin, 1972:115). While the military language in the opening verses may indicate a real war situation, which leads scholars to view the psalm as 'a royal psalm' (Mowinckel, 1962:227-228), it seems more likely that the psalmist is in the situation where he has been unjustly

<sup>95</sup> It would be difficult, however, to perceive that the psalm is classified as a typical thanksgiving song. Eriksson (1991:64-65) suggests the following reasons: (1) the psalmist does not call the divine name as the case of thanksgiving songs, (2) the verb יָדָה does not occur, (3) there is no reference of offering for thanksgiving, etc.

<sup>96</sup> Gerstenberger observes the following larger division: requests (vv.1-8), hymn (vv.9-10), complaint (vv.11-16), requests (vv.17-26), and thanksgiving (vv.27-28).

accused by his enemies (Croft, 1987:42). Thus the direction of the psalm appears to be salvation-oriented. The images of shield and buckler (מִגָּן וְצַנְדָּה) are selected as metaphors of Yahweh's salvation (v.2), in which other typical salvation-related words (קִים and עֲזָרָה) are adopted as well. The prayer for salvation acknowledges that only Yahweh can deliver from the overwhelming might of the foes, and passionately urges that he should come swiftly through the great distance and silence that seem at present to hide him. At the same time, there is a strong focus on the destruction of the wicked. As a consequence, it stands to reason that the psalm ends with an expression of praise (תְּהַלֵּל).

Scholars classify Psalm 36 as 'a complaint of the individual' (Gerstenberger, 1988:156), a wisdom psalm with an exception in verse 10 (Van der Ploeg, 1973:230), or a mixed poem whose centre and main component is a hymn (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:40; Anderson, 1983:240). Ostensibly, elements characteristic of a lament, a hymn of praise, and a marked influence of wisdom tradition are visible in the psalm. As Dahood (1966:218) rightly points out, the existence of the three literary forms in a psalm suggests the limitations of form-criticism. At any rate, the influence of wisdom on the psalm can hardly be missed because the description of the wicked in the beginning of the psalm betrays the features of the wisdom tradition: the wicked say in his heart, 'there is no fear of God' (cf., Ps. 14:1), Psalm 36 begins,

This is an oracle of transgression of the wicked in his heart;

There is no fear of God before his eyes; (v.2)

...

The words of his mouth are deceitful;

He has ceased to be prudent (לֹא־שָׁפִיל) and to do good (v.4)

The psalmist seems to understand the wicked as being synonymous with the fool in Psalm 14, where it reads, "the fool says in his heart, 'there is no God'." In so doing the image of the wicked (vv.2, 12, 13) is sharply contrasted to that of the wise. As

Botha (2004b:508 n10) quotes from Van Uchelen, “פחד is typical of the lack of any relationship with God, while יראָה describes a vital element of the relationship of Yahweh’s followers with him” (cf., Gerstenberger, 1988:155). The first part of the psalm merely describes the character and actions of the wicked rather than the destination of them that will appear in the last part of the psalm (vv. 12-13).

The middle part (vv.6-10) concerns four characteristics of Yahweh: אֱמוּנָה, חֶסֶד, מִשְׁפָּט, and צְדָקָה. It contains a description of Yahweh as a faithful patron of all creation and of the upright (יִשְׂרָאֵלִים) who know Him. These words have consistently occurred in relation to the deliverance of Yahweh, and this time they are tightly connected to the theme of creation (cf., McCann, 2001:122), which may suggest the implication of wisdom tradition as well. The theme of two-ways also reinforces the wisdom perspectives of the psalm. Botha (2004b:513-514) rightly maintains that “[t]he wicked and the righteous are contrasted explicitly only in one important aspect: that of *perception*. It is said that the wicked has no ‘fear of God before his *eyes*’ and ‘flatters himself in his own *eyes*’, so that he has no perception of his own sin (vv. 2-3). In contrast, the worshippers of Yahweh find their perception in Yahweh, since they *see* the light in his light (v.10).”

The last part of the psalm (vv. 12-13) concerns the destination of the wicked (רְשָׁעִים): They will be cast down there (שָׁם)<sup>97</sup> forever! In the light of these considerations, then, Psalm 36 may be viewed as a psalm with wisdom perspective of the two-way theme. While the resting place of the righteous is in the חֶסֶד of Yahweh, that of the wicked is שָׁם, “an unspecified, despairing locality” (Botha, 2004b:516). With this mind, it comes as no surprise when the psalmist in the following psalm urges the reader not to fret about the prosperity of the wicked.

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<sup>97</sup> The adverb שָׁם is very non-specific in terms of a state of being cast down (Botha, 2004b:516)

Psalm 37, a wisdom poem, is arranged in an acrostic form on the general theme of reward for the righteous and retribution for the wicked (i.e., Theodicy). It deals with a typical wisdom theme of 'the prosperity of the wicked', not with lament, thanksgiving, and the like. Gunkel (1998[1933]:296) observes a number of cases showing how the psalm belongs to wisdom poetry: (1) admonitions and warnings, (2) the portrayals of the pious and the godless and their destiny, (3) the speeches about Yahweh's righteous retribution, and (4) the comparison of the value of two things. These observations have led Gunkel to view the psalm as a wisdom psalm, with which Gerstenberger (1988: 157) concurs as well.<sup>98</sup>

Approached from the perspective of contents, while it is difficult to sharply divide Psalm 37 into pieces in terms of structure due to its acrostic arrangement, Psalm 37 may fall into four didactic instructions: (1) admonition 'not to fret about the present prosperity of the wicked' (vv. 1, 7b-8); (2) the antithetical consequences of the righteous and the wicked (vv. 9- 22, 28); (3) description of the blessing that Yahweh bestows on the righteous (vv. 24-27, 29); and (4) admonition to "stay quiet before Yahweh and wait patiently for him" (v. 7a), to trust in Him (v. 3), and to "wait for Yahweh and to keep his way (תִּירָךְ)" (v. 34) because "the steps of a man are established by Yahweh" (v.23; cf., Proverbs 16:19) and "the wicked will be no more a little while" (v. 10). Remarkably, the themes of תִּירָךְ and wisdom are intertwined in verses 30-31 where it is written,

The mouth of the righteous (צַדִּיק) meditates (יְהַגֵּד) on wisdom (חֵכְמָה);  
 And his tongue speaks justice (מִשְׁפָּט);  
 The תִּירָךְ of their God is in his heart  
 His steps never slip

In Psalm 1:2, the psalmist meditates on the תִּירָךְ, and here in Psalm 37 he meditates

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<sup>98</sup> Gerstenberger provides three evidences as follows: (1) frequent occurrence of didactic imperatives (vv. 1-8, 27, 34), (2) a good portion of proverbial material (vv. 2, 8-9, 16, 21), (3) a sapiential motive, i.e., the junction of the righteous and the wicked.

on the חֲכָמָה because in his heart is the instruction of Yahweh, the תּוֹרָה. The last verses resound with the instructions of Psalm 1: the wicked will be cut off, but the righteous will be saved by Yahweh, the stronghold (מְעוֹז) in times of trouble, because (כִּי) they take refuge (חָסְדָה) in Him (vv. 39-40).

Psalm 38 has been identified as an ‘individual lament’ or ‘a penitential psalm’ (Anderson, 1983:240; Gerstenberger, 1988:163). More specifically it is regarded as a ‘psalm of sickness’ (Collins, 1971:189; cf., Gunkel, 1998[1933]:121). For Gerstenberger (1988:164), its setting is healing ritual that is “not limited to physical illness...but aim[s] at any evil that has beset a given person.” However, it is not clear that this psalm was used in healing ceremonies. Rather, the fact that it has twenty two verses may bear the imprint of wisdom tradition, if not the acrostic psalm. Psalm 38 could be viewed, then, as a psalm with didactic intention of helping the sick to revive from illness. It is saturated with comprehensive distress and sorrow. There is a tiny sign of hope emerging in the psalm where total despair predominates everywhere. Among twenty two verses, only three verses express the hope of salvation (vv. 16, 22-23):

Toward you O Yahweh! I waited for you;  
You, Lord (אֲדֹנָי) my God, will answer (תַּעֲנֶנּוּ) (v.16)

And again in verses 22-23,

Do not forsake me (תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי) Yahweh! (cf., Ps. 22:1: "עֲזַבְתָּנִי")  
Do not be far from me (תִּרְחַק בְּמִנִּי) my God! (cf, Ps. 22:2: "רְחֹק")  
Come quickly to help me,  
Lord, my salvation! (אֲדֹנָי תִּשׁוּעָתִי)

The psalmist's sins and follies (אֲוִלָּת) <sup>99</sup> may cause the anger (קִצְפָה) and wrath (חֲמָה) of Yahweh (vv.4-6) and cause the enemies to inflict pain on him. The only way to

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<sup>99</sup> אֲוִלָּת frequently occurs in the wisdom literature as a counterpart of wisdom (Proverbs. 12:23; 13:16; 14:17; 15:2; 16:22; 18:13; 19:3; 22:15; 24:9, etc.)

survive is to confess his sins (v.19), to be silent, i.e. a way for recovering from folly (v.14),<sup>100</sup> and to wait for Yahweh, because He will answer (הַעֲנֶנּוּ) his supplication (v.16).

Psalm 39 has generally been classified as 'an individual lament' (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:121; Anderson, 1983:240). On the surface, however, the customary overture of individual lament (i.e., an invocation, an affirmation of confidence, or the like) has been replaced by meditation (בְּהִנָּנִי)<sup>101</sup> in verses 2-4. The reflection, then, centres on the destiny of human beings, i.e., vanity! (vv.5-12). As Terrien (2003:334) argues, the psalm is "not the prayer of a sick man, as some critics have maintained, but the cry of a thinker who, for a moment, objectifies his faith, examines it from the outside, and eventually, at a deeper level, re-enters his old intimacy." The psalmist cries out against his own fate in the same manner of Job and Ecclesiastes (Croft, 1987:22). All this considered, Gerstenberger's classification of the psalm as 'a meditative prayer' (1988:165), if not a wisdom psalm, is certainly welcome.

The reflection of mortality brings the psalmist to a humble plea to listen to his cry for help (vv.13-14). In spite of the apparent meaninglessness of human life, the poet confesses that his hope is in Yahweh (v.8). The motif of Yahweh's wrath bears a striking resemblance to that of Psalm 38 in that the anger of Yahweh is caused by the iniquity of the psalmist (Pss. 38:5; 39:9). Thus, the psalmist suffers from illness (Pss. 38:3-9; 39:11-12), whereupon he urges himself to keep silent (Pss. 38:14; 39:2-3), and places his trust in Yahweh (Pss. 38:16; 39:8).

Interestingly enough, all these passages come from the wisdom tradition. Gerstenberger (1988: 165-167) keenly observes several links to the book of Job and

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<sup>100</sup> 'Being silent' is considered as a characteristic of wisdom (cf., Ecclesiastes 5:2).

<sup>101</sup> הִנָּנִי that means 'murmuring' brings the hint of the possibility of uttering the psalms (cf., Psalm 1:2, הִגַּדְתָּ (to murmur or to utter, *qal*), which is anticipated in the following expression, "then I spoke with my tongue" (v.4b).

wisdom tradition. That is to say, the reflection ('I said to my self') focused on the composure of the supplicant and the compulsion that leads to loud speech (cf., Job 30:25-28) aptly capturing the conflict between 'keeping silent' and 'bursting into speech of lament' (cf., Job 7:11; 9:27-28; 13:19; 16:6; 30:28). Second, the imperative 'let me know' in prayer situation (cf., Job 10:2; 13:23) seems to belong to "sapiential lament" (Job 21:34; Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14; 2:1, 11; etc.), rhetorical and existential questions (e.g., vv.8-12) (Job 17:15), and shying away from a mighty and arbitrary Yahweh (Job 9:27; 10:20-21; 14:6). The psalmist utters and meditates on the sinful nature of human beings, on the rebuke of Yahweh, on human fragility, and on mercy and hope for revival.

Much has been said about the unity of Psalm 40. The arguments include the strong contrast between the sentiments of praise and thanksgiving in the first section (vv.2-12) and that of lament in the second section (vv.13-18), and the similarity of verses 14-18 to Psalm 70. However, as Gerstenberger (1998:169) maintains, "the sequence of praise and thanksgiving followed by lament is quite feasible in the Psalms..." and "independent use of the complaint in Psalm 70 does not preclude the existence of a genuine liturgical composition that embraces precursory thanksgiving and praise."<sup>102</sup>

Psalm 40 begins with a thanksgiving in retrospect. The psalmist witnesses that, "I waited patiently (קָוִיתִי קוֹה)<sup>103</sup> for Yahweh, and he turned to me and heard (וַיִּשְׁמַע) my cry" (40:2). In fact, the theme of 'waiting' has occupied an important position in understanding the salvation of Yahweh particularly in the wisdom-influenced psalms (cf., Pss. 25:5; 27:14; 37:34; 39:8). Waiting for the answer from Yahweh is one

<sup>102</sup> The same was true of Psalm 27.

<sup>103</sup> קוה in *Piel*, with direct objective is rare and ambiguous in its translation (Gerstenberger, 1988: 170) because it usually has a preposition like ל (Proverbs. 20:22; Ps. 69:21) or אֶל (Pss. 27:14; 37:34). In the case of Psalm 40, as same as Isa. 26:8 (קָוִיתִי יְהוָה), יְהוָה is used like 'pronominal suffix'. Repetition of קוה (קָוִיתִי קוֹה) serves to emphasize its meaning, which makes it reasonable to render it as such.

of the characteristics of the wise. So “blessed is the man who has made Yahweh his trust (מִבְּטַח־הוֹ)”(40:5). The word מִבְּטַח is in fact one of the catchwords of wisdom books (Proverbs 14:26, 21:22, 22:19, 25:19; Job 8:14, 18:14; 31:24) and of the Psalms in particular (65:6, 71:5, 118:8,9). What Yahweh wants is not sacrifice and offerings (40:7), but the heart to do His תּוֹרָה (v.9). The psalmist does not keep silent any more (cf., 39:2-3). Based on the salvation he experienced in the past, he begins to speak of His righteousness (צְדָקָה), His faithfulness (אֱמוּנָה), His salvation (תְּשׁוּעָה), His truth (אֱמֶת), and His חֶסֶד (v.11). Gerstenberger (1988:171) argues that the term צְדָקָה is the pivotal point of the message to be delivered. In fact, the salvation of Yahweh is closely associated with the righteousness of Yahweh. In this regard, McCann (2001: 120) maintains that “[t]he effect of the psalmic prayers is to obliterate any comprehensive doctrine of retribution. In the Psalms, it is almost always the righteous who are suffering... but even the psalms that seem to [uphold the doctrine of retribution] actually end up undermining the [notion] by way of the psalmist’s conviction that God finally stands with the suffering victim.”

The situation depicted in Book I so far, however, still remains unresolved. So the second part of the psalm (vv.14-18) returns to the mood of affirmation of confidence on Yahweh. The psalmist identifies himself with those who are poor (עָנִי) and needy (אֲבִיּוֹן) to those who deem Yahweh to be their master (אֱדֹנָי), deliverer (מִפְּלִטָּה), and helper (עֹזֵרָה). This confidence, as often happens with the Psalter, is grounded in past experiences (vv.2-4).

### 5.3.3. Psalm 41

Psalm 41, the last psalm of Book I, forms the conclusion to the first book of the Psalter. The doxology (v.14) is probably not part of the psalm which serves to conclude Book I. It is a psalm of lament with self-assurance that Yahweh will have mercy on the psalmist in the face of his enemy’s malice (cf., Gerstenberger, 1988:174;

Houston, 1995:106), which is also the case in Psalm 3. Then Book I is blanketed by the individual laments with confidence on salvation.

The psalm can be divided into four sections. Verses 2-4 are didactic in character, expressing the confidence that Yahweh will salvage the psalmist from enemies and illness. Secondly, verse 5 is a call in the first person for Yahweh to show mercy and to heal, while verses 6-10 express the malice of his enemies and friends against him. Last but not least, verses 11-13 are the second call with confidence that Yahweh will show mercy on him. The dramatic shift from the third person in verses 2-4 to the first person in the rest of the psalm needs to be explained.

Several scholars have attempted to provide plausible explanations for the change in voice. For example, Craigie (1983:77) argues that this psalm was used in a cultic situation where a sick person came to the temple for healing. The words, "the priests of the temple," come first (vv. 2-4), which is followed by the sick person's lament (vv. 5-13). Thus he characterizes the psalm as a 'psalm of illness' (1983:319). If this is the case, the original context of the psalm may prove to be cultic.

However, if we are to take the superscript seriously in the first place, the original context should be viewed from David's point of view. David is the one who definitely enjoyed the salvation and protection of Yahweh in his times of agony. From his personal experiences of suffering, David must have learnt the precious lessons and now passes one of them on to the readers. The third person voice is, then, the instruction of David, the anointed one, who experienced Yahweh's mercy and deliverance in times of trouble, and the first person voice is also his personal witnesses of suffering he experienced.<sup>104</sup> As Croft (1987:58) suggests, "the psalmist is

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<sup>104</sup> Jesus applied the psalm (41:10) to himself in John 13:18. In fulfilling the role of his royal ancestor as God's anointed king over Israel, the great Son of David also experienced the hostility of men and the betrayal of a trusted associate, and thus, fulfilled his forefather's lament. Thus words that were originally part of a liturgy of sickness in the face of death are transformed into what amounts to a prophetic prediction through betrayal in the life of Jesus. However, this understanding is based on the last stage of the Canonical process approach (Waltke), which is beyond the limit of this study that

quoting a wisdom saying which he then uses as the basis of his plea from misfortune.” Supposedly, the third person section plays a role to paint the psalm with a didactic colour: “Blessed is he who has regard for the weak (וְיֵלֵךְ)” and he is called blessed on the earth (וְיֵאֱשָׁרֵךְ).” Mandolfo (2002:27) calls the wisdom lessons in lament psalms as ‘didactic voice’. He rightly observes that “[i]nto these [lament] prayers, however, are interjected didactic discourses, often sounding like wisdom lessons, characterized by a shift to third-person discourse.”

It has been also argued that the opening beatitude does not make sense in the context of the remainder of the psalm (Croft, 1987:57-58). However, the opening אֲשָׁרֵי formula is not accidental. When one takes into account the idea of ‘seam’ of the Psalms, the אֲשָׁרֵי formula immediately reminds the readers of Psalms 1 and 2, which have the same beatitude (1:1; 2:12). As Psalms 1 and 2 were added to the beginning of Book I, colouring the didactic intention to the Book, so too was included Psalm 41 to the end of the Book. deClaissé-Walford (1995:108) states that “the community which shaped the Psalter added verses 2-4 to the beginning of the psalm to tie Book one securely with Psalms 1 and 2” (1995:108). While the first book of the Psalter begins with Psalm 3 and ends with Psalm 41, as we already argued, the fact that the introductory psalms (Pss. 1-2) appear under the umbrella of Book I should not be ignored. That the first and the last psalms of Book I have the אֲשָׁרֵי formula is significant. It proves that the first book of the Psalter is a well-organized collection of wisdom. Murphy (1963:162) argues that “[i]n view of the total incidence of wisdom themes in Pss. 1-41 (cf., Pss. 31, 32, 34, 37, 39, 40, 41), it is very tempting to see here evidence that the first book (Pss. 1-41) was put together under particular influence of wisdom writers, from beginning to end. Both Psalms 1 and 41 are אֲשָׁרֵי psalms.”

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mainly focuses on the third stage of the approach.

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At the same time, when we admit that Psalm 3 is the beginning of Book I in its logic, there is still a need to explain the relationship of Psalm 41 to Psalm 3. Both psalms are 'psalms of lament' with the confidence of Yahweh's protection at the time of calamity, which leads us to a conclusion that Book I is a book of lamentation for salvation.

In fact, the themes of salvation history, the narratives of Israel's origins, are virtually absent from Book I, due to the fact that there is a strong link between the Davidic collection and the individual style (Houston, 1995:96-97). If we trace the theme of salvation in the first book of the Psalter, it would be the personal deliverance of David from the wicked. Houston (1995:100) goes on, saying, "[i]f we look outside the Psalter for parallels to this [Davidic] collection's ignorance or neglect of the traditions of Yahweh's dealings with his people, we find them, of course, in the Wisdom literature, which has certain contacts with the Psalms, but not especially with the Davidic group."

It is not unreasonable to postulate from the above that the אֲשֶׁר־י formula ties psalm 41 to the introductory psalms, and the theme of salvation connects the psalm to the first psalm of Book I, viz. Psalm 3. Yahweh who was asked to rise (קוּמָה) (Ps. 3:8) now raises the psalmist up (וַיִּקְיִמֵנִי) (Ps. 41:11) in his integrity (בְּתָמוּי) that is usually described as a token of the wise (cf., Job 1:1).

#### 5.4. BOOK II (Psalms 42-72)

While the second book of the Psalter opens with the first of the collection attributed to the 'sons of Korah' (Pss. 42-49),<sup>105</sup> the majority of the book is still Davidic (Pss. 51-65, 68-70). The so-called 'אֱלֹהִים Psalms' also begins with Psalm 42, a Korah psalm and ends with Psalm 83 that is an Asaph Psalm. In this way the 'אֱלֹהִים Psalms'

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<sup>105</sup> Four more such psalms occur in the third book of the Psalter: Pss. 84-85 and 87-88.

connects Book II to Book III. Even though David is not as prominent as Book I, the postscript, 'the prayers (תְּפִלֹּתַי) of David are ended (Ps. 72: 20) at the end of Book II, suggests that the focus is still on David.

Book II mainly consists of two collections: Davidic (Pss. 51-65 and 68-70) and Korah (Pss. 42-49). However, the closing mark, "the prayers (תְּפִלֹּתַי) of David, son of Jesse, are ended", urges the readers to read the first two Books of the Psalter under the rubric of Davidic authorship. If this is the case, Book I and II provide a rationale for the post-exilic community to meditate their situation through the eye of David's personal experience, and wisdom can be acquired from the previous generations. In relation to the theme of salvation, the narratives of Israel's origin are rare in the first two Davidic collections. Davidic psalms so far are more personal rather than national in their characteristics.

#### **5.4.1. Psalm 42/43**

Psalm 42, a lament, is the introductory psalm of the second book of the Psalter and one of eleven psalms of which headings are לְבָנֵי־קֹרַח ('of the sons of Korah'). It is not only David, but also the sons of Korah who cry for deliverance. After the lamentations of David, the next group takes the baton and starts over. The mood of lament continues in the second book of the Psalter. Why does Book II start with the Korah Psalms and how does Psalm 42 function in its present position? The title, 'the sons of Korah', probably provides the reader with two clues: their disgrace in the Mosaic era and their glory in the Davidic era.

Korah is said to be one of the descendents of Levi through Levi's son Kohath, a cousin of Moses (Exodus 6:16-24). He is said to have been eminent not only on account of his lineage, but also on account of his wealth. Numbers 16 tells a dramatic incident whereby Korah led a rebellion with some Reubenites and 250 Levites against Moses and Aaron. Because of this rebellion, they all perished with their tents

and households. Strange enough in the narrative, however, ‘the sons of Korah’ did not perish when Korah and his allies were consumed with divine fire. Rather, they became a sign (אֵי) of mercy and salvation for the generations to come (Num. 26:10). As Mitchell (2006:369) states, “they bore this memory high on their heart, recalling it in their names.

After Israel entered the Land, 2 Chronicles 20:18-22 refers to a Levitical choir, made up of the descendents of Korah, and appointed by David, to serve in the temple liturgy (cf., 1 Chronicles 6:31-38). It might be a privilege and a sign of mercy. They restore the glory of the past and now the name ‘the sons of Korah’ can remind the readers/the hearers of God’s mercy and redemption. Then we can expect the collection to be salvation-oriented.

Psalm 43 has no heading, but it has been considered as a Korah Psalm because of its affinity with Psalm 42. deClaisé-Walford (1995:111-112) maintains that it is not necessary to see the two as a single psalm on the basis that the Septuagint assigns Psalm 43 a different title, ‘a Psalm of David’, and that “in Psalm 42 the psalmist is speaking to himself, to אֵי , and in Psalm 43 the psalmist is speaking to God”, to which I do not agree, for no evidence is produced to corroborate her assumption. Both psalms are in fact speaking both to his אֵי (42:6,12; 43:5) and to God (42:2,7,10; 43:1,5).

The reason why Psalms 42 and 43 have been read together as two parts of a single poetic unit is based on three observations (Craigie, 1983:325; Gerstenberger, 1988:178). First, that many Hebrew manuscripts present the psalms as a single unit. Second, that Psalm 43 does not have a superscription, and third, that the two psalms have the same refrain. Furthermore, if we consider that it is a Jewish tradition that “unnamed psalms are ascribed to the last named writer” (Mitchell, 2006:366), there is a possibility that it was deliberately split into the two psalms, while once they were

one psalm, in order “to bring the Korah Psalms up to the talismanic [number] twelve.”<sup>106</sup> Then Psalms 42-49 form the first Korah collection.

This is the context which is suggested for the understanding of psalms 42-43. The mood of the psalmist is represented by the word **שׁיח** in 42:6, 7, 12 and 43:5. This brings him to yearn for the presence of God (Pss. 42:2, 3; 43:4). The psalmist longs to come to God in the temple: “When shall I go and behold the face of God (**פָּנֵי אֱלֹהִים**)?” The psalmist is suffering under the curse of malicious gossip in view of the accusation in 42:4,11b: “where is your God?” The expression of ‘my enemies taunt me, saying to me all day long’ in 42:11a makes this probable. The twice-repeated phrase said by the foes, ‘where is your God’, is answered by a threefold refrain that plays a dual role:

Why are you bowed down (**שׁיח**), my soul  
And become disturbed within me?  
Wait for God, for I will still praise Him  
For the salvation of his presence (**יְשׁוּעוֹת פָּנָיו**)

The first two lines are expressions of lament, but the last two are an instruction of wisdom. As we already noted (cf., Ps. 32), if we consider the musical title, **מִשְׁכִּיל**, as ‘a wisdom song’, then, Psalms 42-43 are lament psalms with a pedagogical intent. Yahweh’s integrity has been called into question, prompting the psalmist to ask for help in the form of the divine light and truth (Ps. 43:3), but at the same time, he teaches himself not to surrender to despair. The seemingly awkward expression, **יְשׁוּעוֹת פָּנָיו** could indicate the expression of trust that God will save him personally. It is God’s **חֶסֶד** toward the psalmist even in the midst of crisis for which he is praised (42:9). In this overall perspective, the mockery of “Where is your God” is significant in understanding this psalm in the context of the post-exilic period. deClaisse-

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<sup>106</sup> Interestingly, the Asaph Psalms are also twelve by adding Psalm 50 that is separately located far from the main Asaph Psalms (73-83).

Walford (1995:114-115) gives the following description of the mentality.

The remembered past of ancient Israel, the 'who are we?', is a story of despair--removal from the house of God--and nostalgia--thirsting after the past. But the despair in the story must be tempered with remembrance and anticipation. "Wait for God, you shall again praise Him," and you shall experience God's presence.

This instruction to wait for God carries with it the implication that the psalmist has confidence in God's **יְהוָה**.

#### 5.4.2. Psalms 44-49 (Korah Collection I)

Psalm 44, a communal complaint (Gerstenberger, 1988:185), begins with a retrospect on the old days of salvation. The phrase, "What You performed in their [forefather's] days, in the days of old" in verse 2 is a definite reminiscence of God's salvific action in the past history, which is a reason for Israel to praise (**הַלֵּל**) and give thanks (**נִרְדֶּה**) to God (v.9). But the present situation is different from the old days, which is indicated in the second half (vv.10-27). They are scattered like sheep and face death all day long. The lamentation, "you have not gone with our armies" in verse 10b reminds us of Yahweh's refusal to accompany the people of Israel in the desert of Sinai (Exodus 33:3), which is a part of Yahweh's salvation. The psalmist, however, appeals to his innocence, defending his people's case against God and rejecting God's verdict that weights so heavily on them (vv.18-22). As Gerstenberger (1988:185) maintains, this is "a theological reasoning comparable to that of the book of Job." In spite of the distress and oppression, however, the psalmist firmly grasps the **יְהוָה** that is a typical expression of trust in God (v.27) particularly in the Psalter. The typical petition, **קִיְמוּנָה**, occurs as well in verse 27 (cf., Pss. 3:8; 7:7; 10:12; 17:13). Verse 2 is significant in understanding the relationship of salvation history to wisdom motif. The phrase, "we have heard with our ears, God" in verse 2a appears in tandem with "Our fathers have told us the deeds you performed in their days, in

days of old" in verse 2b. Their forefathers have recounted (סִפְּרוּ) what God did for them (i.e., salvific action) over next generations in the form of instruction (i.e. wisdom). In that sense, Gerstenberger (1988:185) is right when he maintains that "the psalm contains much theological reflection and retrospection, a good deal of wisdom influence...". The recounting of God's salvation happened in the past plays a part of instruction for next generations.

Both the description of the title, a love song (שִׁיר יְדִידוּת), if not the original genre classification, and the content of Psalm 45 indicates that it was used for royal wedding to bless a Davidic king (Gerstenberger, 1988:189). In that sense, it can be classified as a royal psalm. The psalm celebrates the marriage of a Davidic king (vv. 2-10), instructs a foreign princess to honour him (vv.11-16), and blesses his monarch (vv.17-18). The highlight of the psalm can be found in verses 7-8 and 17-18 which alludes to the covenant with David (cf., 2 Samuel 7:14):

Your throne, God, endures forever and ever (v. 7a)  
 .....Therefore the nations will praise you [Davidic king] forever and ever (18b)

In fact, the relation between God and Davidic king plays an important part in understanding the Davidic covenant. Bateman (2001:6) makes the correct observation that "your throne (כִּסֵּאֲךָ), functioning as a metonymy of subject, identifies the Davidic monarch's current ruling authority as sanctioned by Yahweh (2 Samuel 7:16; 1 Chronicles 17:12; 22:10; 2 Chronicles 7:18; 1 Kings 9:5)." In that sense, "'Your throne' identifies the OT Davidic monarch's current rule, and 'forever' speaks explicitly of the duration of the monarch's rule during his lifetime and implicitly of the perpetuation of the dynastic line through his children."

The salvation image is indicated in the personal relationship of marriage here. One way to part-take in his glory is to be his bride. Then the princess is asked to listen (שְׁמָעִי), consider (וְרֵאִי), and give ear (וְהִנֵּי אָזְנְךָ), which "was presumably part of

the wedding ceremony” (Gerstenberger, 1988: 188). Because the king is her master (אָדוֹן), the bride was instructed to obey and submit (v.12). A new life as a bride of a Davidic king (salvation theme) starts with the admonition to forget her past (her people and her father’s house) and to bow down before him (wisdom theme).

Psalm 46 begins and ends with God as ‘our refuge’ (לָנוּ מִחֲסֵה) and ‘our fortress’ (מִשְׁגֵּב לָנוּ) respectively (vv. 2, 12). It mainly focuses on God’s image of salvation: He is “our refuge (לָנוּ מִחֲסֵה), strength (עֹז), and help (עֲזָרָה).” The refrains that appear in verses 8 and 12 reinforce the theme of the psalm:

יְהוָה אִשְׁרָיִם is with us  
The God of Jacob is our fortress (מִשְׁגֵּב לָנוּ), *Selah*

In fact, the theme of refuge is associated with Jerusalem, the city of God (vv.5-6). Thus Psalm 46 has been considered as ‘a Zion hymn’ in terms of its content while the psalm has been recognised more as ‘a song of confidence’ from the formal perspective (Gerstenberger, 1988:194). In the context of communal commemoration after Exile, where the postexilic Israel feel threatened from all sides, the city of God, Jerusalem, must have been regarded as their fortress (Gerstenberger, 1988:194). Thus, there is no reason to fear in the face of the uproar of the sea and the earth. Then the psalmist instructs the people to “come and see the [salvific] works (מַפְעָלָה) of Yahweh” (v.9) and to be still and know that he is God, their fortress (vv.11-12).

Psalm 47 declares that the real king of Israel is not the human king (cf., Ps. 45) but Yahweh himself. The psalmist summons the people (כָּל־הָעַמִּים) to praise God. It is not human king but Yahweh who should be praised (v.2) (cf., Ps. 45:18), for God is the king of all the earth (v. 8). Gerstenberger (1988:195) argues that the psalm belongs to the category of enthronement psalm (Pss. 93; 96-99) based on the appearance of

עֲלֶה אֱלֹהִים (v.6) and מִלְךְ אֱלֹהִים (v.9).<sup>107</sup> Mowinckel (1962:115-116) also classify Psalm 47 as such, arguing that it was used in the enthronement day of Yahweh “which originally was called ‘the day of the Lord...’” However, as Gerstenberger (1988:189) asks, “what festival formed the background for this psalm? What function did it have in the ceremony?”, which is very controversial. At any rate, the expressions such as ‘clap your hands’ (v.2) and ‘the sounding of trumpets’ (v.6), and the frequent occurrence of ‘sing praises’ (זַמְרוּ) in verses 7-8 (five times) firmly connect this psalm to the category of hymn for Yahweh, the real king.

In relation to the purpose of this study, the term זַמְרוּ מִשְׁכִּיל in verse 8b is noteworthy. The term has generally been viewed as something that is impertinent to wisdom. For example, Gerstenberger (1988:197) renders it as “a powerful song.” However, the term, מִשְׁכִּיל as was noted earlier, is a wisdom-related one. Thus, Terrien (2003:378) maintains that the term indicates a “chanted meditation of a pensive character: not only has God been elevated in a processional ascent, according to the manner of a human monarch, but he has also been symbolically enthroned”. In fact, the psalmist summons the people to praise God, the king, with a psalm of wisdom that occupies the centre of the praise, declaring:

God reigns (מִלְךְ אֱלֹהִים) over nations

God seats on his holy throne (v.9)

.....

For the shields (מִגְן) of the earth belong to God (v.10<sup>b</sup>)

The images of ‘God of Abraham’ and ‘shield’ (מִגְן) bring the reader back to the incident in Genesis 15, where Yahweh, the covenant God, told Abram that He was a מִגְן to him. Wisdom leads one to praise the covenant God who appeared as a shield to Abraham.

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<sup>107</sup> In Psalm 47, the subject יְהוָה is changed to אֱלֹהִים.

Psalm 48 is still a psalm of praise that began with Psalm 45. On the surface, the psalm is fraught with the image of צִיּוֹן, the city of God (vv.2,9), holy mountain (v.2), beautiful in elevation, the joy of all the earth, the city of the Great king (v.3), citadels (אַרְמוֹן), fortress (v.4), and the city of Yahweh Almighty (v.9), but, in fact, it focuses on God, the great king and Yahweh Almighty, instead of the mount when He is declared to have shown himself a fortress (נֹרְדַע לְמִשְׁנֵבָה) in particular (v.4). The image of God as 'fortress' makes good sense in conjunction with that of צִיּוֹן. In the process, the theme of the salvation of the city plays an important part in the psalm. Thus it has been categorised more specifically as "a Zion hymn" (Gerstenberger, 1988:199; Anderson, 1983:240). In verse 9, a message of salvation is given in the form of instruction: it was *told* that God makes the city secure forever. In the Mount צִיּוֹן, then, where the temple is located, the psalmist meditates on the כֶּסֶד of Yahweh (v.10), and summons the people of Zion to walk and go around Zion. A mission is given to those who go around her and count (סִפְרוּ) the towers that they may tell (תְּסַפְּרוּ) next generation about God, the guard even to the end (v.15), which is a pedagogical request. The usage of the word סָפַר (to count) in *qal* (v.13) and in *piel* (v.14) probably indicates a possibility of prudent meditation on salvation through the image of Zion. If this is the case, it seems natural to view the last verse as a sapiential instruction:

For this is God, our God forever  
He will lead us to the end (v.15)

Psalm 49 begins with a call to hear (שְׁמַעוּ) and give ear (הִשְׁמַעוּ), which is wisdom's proper mode of instruction,<sup>108</sup> if not the monopoly of her usages (cf., Genesis. 4:23;

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<sup>108</sup> Psalm 49 has generally been recognised as a wisdom poem based on the assumption the psalm began as some kind of private poetry (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:295; Anderson, 1983:240). Gerstenberger (1988:206) elaborates the position by arguing that "To label such a liturgical song simply 'wisdom

Deuteronomy 33:7; Isaiah 1:2). It takes a wisdom style in which a sage instructs his pupil about thought on life's enigmas. The nominal subjects of the verbs are all peoples (כָּל-הָעַמִּים) and all inhabitants of the world (כָּל-יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ). This indicates "a universal context" (Gerstenberger, 1988:204) of the psalm.<sup>109</sup>

An initial clue to such an understanding (i.e., wisdom perspective) is provided by four specific words found in the beginning section (vv.4-5): wisdom (חִכְמוֹת), understanding (תְּבוּנוֹת), proverb (מִשְׁל), and riddle (חִידָתִי):

My mouth will speak *wisdom*,  
 And the meditation (הִגִּיתִי) of my heart will be *understanding*,  
 I will incline my ear to a *proverb*,  
 I will open (פָּתַח) my *riddle* with the harp (vv. 4-5)

Presumably, the psalmist was suggesting his wisdom/understanding/proverb in the form of riddle. As Perdue (1974:533) duly maintains, Psalm 49 is "an elaborate answer to a riddle residing within the psalm itself." The rhetorical question in verse 7 is a precise expression of confidence that the psalmist will not fear the iniquity of the evil:

Why should I fear in days of evil;  
 [when] the iniquity of my foes (עֲקֵבַי)<sup>110</sup> surrounds me?

The real question posed here is, 'do you know why I do not fear my foes in days of

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psalm'... would be appropriate only if that communal setting were taken into account, which is not the case." Thus he (1988:206) labels the psalm "synagogal meditation and instruction." In fact, the cult for Israel was an occasion for teaching and exhortation as well as celebration. This psalm, then, might be intended to be used in the cult for the purpose of instructing the post-exilic community. At any rate, it may all the more be possible to view the psalm as a wisdom psalm because sapiential implications are portrayed in considerable detail throughout the psalm.

<sup>109</sup> Gerstenberger (1988:204) argues for the exilic or postexilic period of the psalm based on the observation that pre-exilic admonitions typically address Israel in particular (Hosea 4:1; 5:1; Amos 4:1; 5:1; 8:4).

<sup>110</sup> MT reads the word as עֲקֵבַי (my heels), which is supported by LXX (τῆς πτέρυγος μου). However, the meaning exposes logical flaw in its flow. Thus we understand the word, as it has been proposed (see the apparatus in BHS<sup>4TH</sup>:1131), as עֲקֵבַי.

iniquity?', which appears as *his* riddle (חִידָתִי), a riddle the psalmist propounds to the audience.<sup>111</sup> Then, the rest of the psalm is given as a clue for the answer to the riddle. The content of his riddle is declared in threefold. That nobody can redeem (פָּדוּהָ) the life of another, for no human wealth is ever enough. Human wisdom is as same as foolishness in that both the wise and the foolish alike perish (vv.6-13), second, that God alone can redeem (פָּדוּהָ) my נַפְשׁ from שְׂאוּל (v.15), and third, those who trust in their wealth, boast in the abundance of their riches, yet do not discern this riddle will perish like animals (vv.13, 21). Thus, Perdue (1974:538) maintains that the riddle is found in verse 21 and the solution is suggested in verse 13. Interestingly enough, the two verses have identical wording:

And man in splendour does not endure (בֶּל-יִלְיֶן);<sup>112</sup>

He is like the animals that perish (v.13)

Man in splendour, yet will not discern (וְלֹא יִבְיֶן);

He is like the animals that perish (v.21)

Wisdom here is seen as trusting in God, the only one who can save human נַפְשׁ from שְׂאוּל. The knowledge of the relationship between trusting in God and boasting of human leads the psalmist to declare, 'why should I fear?' (v.6), and finally to instruct his pupils, 'do not fear!' (v.17)

Psalm 50 is the only Asaph psalm in Book II and serves to divide the Book into Korah collection (Pss. 42-49) and David collection (Pss. 51-71).<sup>113</sup> The background of

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<sup>111</sup> חִידָתִי בְּכִנּוֹר (my riddle with the harp) in verse 5 indicates that the psalmist's wisdom was expounded with harp's accompaniment.

<sup>112</sup> LXX and Qumran (4QPs<sup>c</sup>) read it as 'טען' (to understand) in order to harmonize the meaning with verse 21 (cf., Pleins, 1996:26). As is well known, it is not unreasonable to expect a refrain to have identical wording throughout. But Gerstenberger (1988:203) succinctly observes that "poetry in general is not so rigidly fixed as to prohibit slight variations in refrains, especially if a song is presented by a cantor as in the case of Psalm 49." The slight alteration does not seem to be by chance. Pleins (1996:26) argues that such a reading like 4QPs<sup>c</sup> is "no more than a later scribal attempt to harmonize the text...Poetic considerations actually argue in favour of the MT reading."

<sup>113</sup> Psalms 66, 67, and 71 are anonymous psalms, but they are nonetheless regarded as Davidic (see

the psalm seems to be associated with the theophany on Mount Sinai where the Torah was given (Exodus 19:16-18). This serves to bring the readers to the context of 'making a covenant' between Yahweh and His people (cf., Exodus 34:10). In particular, the summons to pay attention to what God is about to speak in verse 7<sup>114</sup> is one of the common expressions in prophetic literature (cf., Gunkel, 1998[1933]: 277). In this overall perspective, Psalm 50 has been viewed as a "covenantal lawsuit" (Dahood, 1966:305), 'a Torah psalm with prophetic elements (Gunkel, 1998[1933]: 251), or "a liturgical sermon" (Gerstenberger, 1988:210).

The psalm parallels Psalm 81 that is also an Asaph psalm, in that the speaker of the psalm is God himself. It is אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה<sup>115</sup> who speaks and testifies (vv. 1, 7; cf., Joshua 22:22). God appears as a judge (שֹׁפֵט) who summons his covenantal people (חֲסִידַי כְּרַתִּי בְרִיתִי) to listen to His word (vv. 5, 6). As Gerstenberger (1988:207) rightly observes, the word of God "holds the center of attention throughout the psalm." God, as a judge of righteousness (v.6), speaks (v.1) both to his people (v.7) and to the wicked (v.16), and warns those who forget Him to discern (בִּין) (v.22) His statue (תְּקֵן), His covenant (בְּרִיתִי), His instruction (מוֹסֵר), and His word (דְּבַרִּי) (vv. 16-17). A sharp contrast is drawn between His people (i.e., His חֲסִידִים or those who made a covenant with God, v.5) and the wicked (i.e., those who forget God, v.22). Whether one belongs to the former category or not depends on his observance of the word of God. To call upon God in the day of distress (v.15) through 'thank offerings' (vv.14a, 23b) and to fulfil his vows (vv.14b)<sup>116</sup> eventually result in the salvation from God (vv.15, 23).

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n.68)

<sup>114</sup> "Hear my people, and I will speak; I will testify, Israel, against you. I am God, your God."

<sup>115</sup> Dahood (1966:306) translates the term as 'Yahweh, God of gods' that occurs twice only in Joshua 22:22, which is more probable than 'the Mighty one, God, Yahweh', judging from the fact that the former alternative emphasizes Yahweh's superiority over pagan gods and His dominion over the universe. Yahweh summons the earth (v.1) and commands the heavens to proclaim His righteousness (v.6), and He does not need to be fed like pagan gods (vv.9-13).

<sup>116</sup> The term נָדָר occurs with the verb שָׁלַם (to repay in *piel*) meaning 'fulfil the vows' (Pss. 22:26; 50:14; 56:13; 61:9; 65:2; 66:13; 76:12; 116:14, 18), which is closely related to thanksgiving sacrifice.

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### 5.4.3. Psalms 51–71 (Davidic Collection II)

Among thirteen psalms that reflect specific situations in David's life,<sup>117</sup> eight psalms are concentrated on the second Davidic collection. This phenomenon is probably caused by an attempt of the final redactor who wanted to encourage the readers to view Book II as a Davidic corpus as a whole. While Psalms 66-67 and 71 do not have לְדָוִד in their titles, and Psalm 72 has לְשִׁלְמֹה in its title, they are all regarded as Davidic by a number of scholars.<sup>118</sup> One feature of the second Davidic psalms is that seven psalms out of twenty-one psalms have historical references (33%), which is a much higher ratio than in the first Davidic collection (13%), five out of thirty-nine.

Psalm 51 is one of the seven penitential psalms<sup>119</sup> and was written by David, according to the title, when the prophet Nathan called him to account after his adultery and the murder of Uriah (2 Samuel. 11-12).<sup>120</sup> The use of the three main words for 'sin' throughout the psalm indicates the main theme of 'forgiveness': פָּשַׁע (vv.3,5,15), עֲוֹן (vv.4,7,11), and חַטָּאת (vv.4,5,6,7,11,15). In the face of the undeniable transgression, David appeals to the חֶסֶד (v.3a) for the restoration of his inner being. His pleas for cleansing should be answered only when the intention proves to be bona fide because "surely you [God] desire truth (אֱמֶת) in the inner parts (בְּטָחוֹת)" (v.8a). Moreover, the sacrifice God demands is a broken heart that He will

<sup>117</sup> Psalms 3, 7, 18, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 60, 63, and 142.

<sup>118</sup> Goulder (1990:179) argues that Psalms 66 and 67 were integral part of the Davidic collection, and David's name has just been dropped because they do not have historical reference of David's life, and that Psalm 71 is similar to Psalm 70 in its tone and content. See also Creach (1996:80-85). He views Psalms 65-68 as forming a row of works that give thanks and praise for blessings bestowed on the community.

<sup>119</sup> Psalms 6, 32, 38, 52, 101, 130, and 143. Due to the fact that the category of 'penitential psalm' is not known to 'form criticism', the practitioners usually classify such a psalm as 'individual lament (e.g., Gunkel, 1998[1933]:121). However, others see such psalms under the sub-category of lamentation (e.g., Anderson, 1983:99, Gerstenberger, 1988:211).

<sup>120</sup> Gerstenberger (1988:212) observes "some verbal coincidences between v.6 וְהָרַע בְּעֵינַיָּךְ and 2 Samuel 11:27b וְהָרַע בְּעֵינַי וְהָרַע לִיהוָה] and 12:13a וְהָרַע לִיהוָה]."

not despise (v.19). Based on this knowledge, David asks God to teach him wisdom (חֵכְמָה) in secret (v.8b). The term, wisdom (חֵכְמָה) plays an important role in God's demanding truth in heart. Whoever gives himself over to sin is a fool, but he who honestly confesses his sin is wise. To honestly confess sins before God is the wisdom that is known to David. However it is not possible for a sinner to be wise through his own efforts. Thus he asks God to create (אֶרְבֵּא) a pure heart in him (v.12) as He created (אֶרְבֵּא) the world (cf., Genesis. 1:1), because the sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit. The wisdom that God teaches David tells him that God will not despise the broken heart (v.19). Then wisdom makes it possible for a sinner to restore the joy of God's salvation by sacrificing not the animals but a broken heart.

Psalm 52 is a psalm of confidence in God while under attack by an arrogant enemy. The superscription suggests an association with an event in 1 Samuel 21-22 (cf., Gerstenberger, 1988:216). From the title's point of view, David is speaking to Doeg who is depicted such as the mighty (הַגִּבּוֹר) or a deceitful tongue (לְשׁוֹן מְרִמָּה). The one who boasts of evil stands in sharp opposition to the righteous (צַדִּיקִים). Gerstenberger (1988:217) views the psalm as a good example of how older complaint forms have changed to "communal instruction" in the process of the transformation of the worshipping group in the history of Israel, refusing the possibility of its derivation from wisdom contests. He (1988:216) maintains that the motif of impeachment of the wicked, along with its affinities to pre-exilic prophetic speech, frequently appears in wisdom literature, but "the expression of such ostracism in a person-to-person speech goes back to old liturgical customs of the complaint ceremony of the individual." However, it would be scarcely possible to ignore the implication of wisdom influence in the themes such as 'the arrogant who boast of wealth' (v.9), 'retribution' (v.7), and 'the righteous like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God' (v.10). The wicked does not make God his stronghold (מְעוֹזוֹ) and trust (בְּטַח) in his wealth (v. 9), but the righteous will trust (בְּטַח) in חֶסֶד of God (v.

10). Consequently, the wicked will be perished forever (לְנֶצַח) (v.7), but the righteous will praise God forever (לְעוֹלָם). As Beyerlin (1980:109) aptly maintains, to a certain extent, the psalm bears throughout the traits of wisdom motif.

Psalm 53 is almost identical with Psalm 14. The differences between Psalm 53 and Psalm 14 are in their divine names, their titles and a few variants in Psalm 53:6 and Psalm 14:5-6. Psalm 53 belongs to the so-called 'אלהים psalms' and is entitled as a מִשְׁכֵּיל. In its content, minor differences are found in verse 6 (=Ps. 14:5-6) where the anger of God towards the evildoers is described, which is absent from Psalm 14. Instead, Psalm 14: 5-6 emphasize Yahweh's image of 'refuge' (מְחֻסָּה) for the poor. The reason why the evildoers were afraid in Psalm 53:6 is because God scattered their bones, but in Psalm 14:6 the reason is because Yahweh is the refuge of the persecuted. The main difference is that Psalm 53 highlights the destruction of the wicked, while Psalm 14 pointedly focuses on Yahweh's protection for the poor (Gerstenberger, 1988:219).

Based on this observation, scholars understand Psalm 53 within the context of war. For example, Gunkel (1998[1933]:317) views the psalm as an angry prophetic judgement speech against the foes. More precisely, Gerstenberger (1988:220) views the psalm as "an instruction of the community concerning the fate of the godless." This understanding acquires unmistakable pedagogical overtones. The hope for salvation is described as one of the characteristics of the wise.

Psalm 54 is a prayer for deliverance from enemies who want to have the psalmist killed. Those who said that 'there is no God' in Psalm 53:1 appear not to set God before them (54:5). The historical situation is supposedly that of 1 Samuel 23:15-19 and matches well with this (Gerstenberger, 1988:221). The psalmist was already instructed by the previous psalm that salvation comes from Zion and God restores the captivity of his people by scattering the bones of the foes (53:7), which now leads

the psalmist to ask God to vindicate him by His might (בְּגִבּוֹרַתְךָ) (54:3). The initial lament in despair has been transmuted into hope in the process of time. The theme of salvation finds its fullest expression in verse 6 that God is help to the psalmist (לִי עֲזָרָה), and reaches its finest concentration at the ending that God has delivered (נִצַּל) in *Hiphil*) him from all the troubles (v.9).

Psalm 55, a מִשְׁכָּל and an individual lament (Gerstenberger, 1988:222), is a prayer for God's help when threatened by the enemy. Of special interest is that the scope of the enemy extends to the psalmist's close friends (v.14). The opponents expressed as the enemy (אֹיֵב) or the wicked (רָשָׁע) throughout the psalm finally converges on the expression, "the ones who do not change by themselves and do not fear God" (אֲשֶׁר אֵין חֲלִיפּוֹת לָמוֹ וְלֹא יִרְאוּ אֱלֹהִים) (v.20b). In particular, this mentality of the wicked has consistently occurred from Psalm 52:<sup>121</sup> They do not take refuge in God (52:9); they do not seek God, saying "there is no God" (53:1-2); they do not set God before them (54:5); and they do not fear (יִרְאוּ) God (55:20). Viewed in this light, it reveals that 'the wicked' actually stands for 'the fool', not the wise (cf., Ps. 53:1). Salvation is reserved only for the wise who do fear God. Based on this conviction, though besieged by the enemy, the psalmist supplicates God for a shelter (מִפְּלֵטָה) in evening, morning, and noon (vv.9, 18). As a counterpart of the fool, the psalmist declares that he will trust (בָּטַח) in God (v.24). According to one of the wisdom books (Proverbs. 16:20b), "blessed is he who trust in Yahweh" (בֵּיהוָה אֲשֶׁר יוֹדֵעַ וּבֹטֵחַ).

The theme of 'trusting God', one of the characteristics of the wise, operates more

<sup>121</sup> Interestingly, Psalms 52-55, among the second Davidic collection, belong to the psalms entitled "מִשְׁכָּל לְדָוִד". The function of genre categories in the superscriptions is one of the methods of grouping psalms (see Wilson, 1984:340-349).

strongly in the following psalm. In Psalm 56,<sup>122</sup> the word **בַּטַח** occurs three times (vv.4, 5, 12), reinforcing the importance of trusting God (**בַּאֱלֹהִים**) at the time of fear.<sup>123</sup> The trust motif is in fact based on the old formulas, 'I will not fear' and 'in Yahweh do I trust' (Gerstenberger, 1988:227), which is apparent in the subject so far. As such, the trust motif is intimately linked with the salvation motif. The psalmist takes refuge in God because he has experienced the deliverance of God (v.14).

Three features of Psalm 57 provoke an association with the previous psalm. These include grouping the psalms under the title of **מִכְתָּם**, the beginning part of the psalms (**חֲנֻנֵי אֱלֹהִים**), and the similarity of historical background (the situation under the pressure of the enemies). While the meaning of **מִכְתָּם** remains uncertain, the technical term serves to group certain psalms (Pss. 16 and 56-60). As soon as the psalm begins, the psalmist makes a plea for God's mercy and declares that he will take refuge (**חָסָה**) in God the Most High (**לֵאלֹהִים עֲלִיּוֹן**). The historical background asks the readers to view the psalms in terms of David's personal experience, i.e., his conflict with Saul (cf., 1 Samuel 22:1; 24:4). Even more remarkable is the psalms' reliance "on salvation experiences articulated in thanksgiving passages and trust motifs" (Gerstenberger, 1988:230). In particular, the theme of the ultimate destruction of the wicked in verse 7 suggests an association with wisdom motif (e.g., Proverbs 24:19-22; cf., Proverbs 1:18, 19; 2:22; 11:5). Based on this conviction that God will save (**יִשַׁע**) him with His **חֶסֶד** and **אֱמֶת** (salvation motif), and the wicked will fall into their own pitfall (wisdom motif), the psalmist praises and exalts God with thanksgiving (vv.8-12).

Psalm 58 has generally been categorized as an imprecatory psalm (Day, 2002:169)

<sup>122</sup> Gunkel (1998[1933]:121) views the psalm as an individual complaint psalm (cf., Gerstenberger, 1988: 226) in that the summons to God in the beginning of a psalm is one of the main characteristics of complaint song (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:177).

<sup>123</sup> The expressions (**בַּאֱלֹהִים** and **בַּיהוָה**) in verse 11 should be understood as that of trust.

because of the curses on the enemies in verses 7-9. However, the rest of the psalm evinces the wisdom flavour, which makes it plausible to view the psalm as a wisdom-influenced psalm. Thus Gerstenberger (1988:233) categorizes the psalm as “a communal instruction.”

The psalm begins in the interrogation with the vocative, the sons of אָדָם:

Do you indeed keep silence (אָלֵם) when you have to speak righteousness?  
Do you judge fairly, O sons of Adam? (v.2)

The text contains several allusions to the concept of ‘righteousness’. Notably, the following section is not a prayer, rather is a meditation on the nature of evil and righteousness. The sons of Adam, in the process of time, become identified as the wicked (רְשָׁעִים) (vv.4, 11) who are unjust and lie. They are born to be dishonest as if it were congenital. Thus the psalmist calls down God’s vengeance on the wicked (vv. 7-9). The seemingly brutal description of the divine vengeance should be understood in terms of the characteristic of genre and the covenantal promise: “what is voiced here is poetry...in which it may well be expressed emotively;” and “a promise given its initial and classical articulation in Deuteronomy 32, the ‘Songs of Moses’” in which God demonstrates his salvation by drawing His sword with his hand to bring vengeance on His enemies (Deuteronomy 32:41; Day, 2002:171-172). Harman (1995:70-71) also points out the relationship of the psalmic imprecation to the covenantal promise as follows:

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<sup>124</sup> Many scholars attempt to correct the term אָלֵם (silence) into אֱלֹהִים (gods) that makes a chiasmus with ‘sons of Adam.’ For instance, NASB renders the verse as following: “Do you indeed speak righteousness, O gods? Do you judge uprightly, O sons of men? (see also Weiser, 1962:429). Day (2002:169-170) also reads the term ‘gods’ and identifies them with ‘the rulers or judges within the community.’ However, as Terrien (2003:440) argues, “the context of the whole psalm clearly indicates its [MT’s] authenticity.” Gerstenberger (1988:233) also maintains that “the emendation is precarious because the context has nothing to reinforce it”. Even if it is the case, the term seems to refer to human authorities in general or the people of Saul in particular, which does not make any difference in the flow of meaning.

It is not surprising that from the opening psalm onwards there is a sharp contrast drawn between those who live...in and through the covenant, and those who...have separated themselves from God. In the covenantal relationship there were dual sanctions of blessings and cursings, the one flowing from obedience to the requirements of the covenant, the other the inevitable consequence of violation of the covenant.

The psalm suggests the salvation for the righteous in association with the covenantal curse on the wicked. In the beginning of the psalm, the sons of אֱלֹהִים were rebuked for they were silent in speaking what is just, but at the end of the psalm, it is declared that אֱלֹהִים will say (not silent), 'surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges the earth.'" As already was noted (cf., Ps.53), the fool say, 'there is no God, so there is no judgement', but the wise say, 'surely there is a God who judges, so there is the covenantal curse'.

The title of Psalm 59 indicates the urgency of the situation when Saul had sent men to watch David's house in order to kill him (1 Samuel 19:11-17). The text of the psalm has obvious affinities with that of 1 Samuel (Tate, 1990:95). Four participles describing the psalmist's opponent<sup>125</sup> and the frequent occurrence of the verbs in the imperative calling for salvation throughout serve to describe the situation (cf., Gerstenberger, 1988:236). In fact, the wicked are delineated as 'the mighty' (עֲזִיָּם) (v.4). By linking David to one of David's royal sons or subsequently to the Israelite who suffer from the hostile force, the readers of the psalm must have been given much relief and rationale to survive whenever they face enmity from many nations in the history. Once again, the typical metaphors symbolizing the God of salvation abound: God who is my stronghold (בְּשִׁנְיָי) (vv.10,17,18), our shield (בְּמִגְנֹנֵינוּ) (v.12), and refuge (מְנוּסָה) (v.17) will laugh (שָׂחַק) and scoff (לֵעָג) at the nations (v.9). It is remarkable that verse 9 shares the same words with Psalm 2:4, the introduction

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<sup>125</sup> The opponents in the Psalm 59 are described as 'those who are hostile to me' (אֹיְבֵי), 'those who rise up against me (מְרִקְוֵימַי), 'those who work evil' (פְּעֵלֵי אֲוֵן), and 'those who deal evil' (אֲוֵן בְּגֵרֵי) (cf., men of blood, אֲנָשֵׁי דָמִים in v.3).

psalm to the Psalter:

The one who is enthroned in heaven is laughing (שחוק)  
The Lord is scoffing (לעג) at them.

Moreover, it is God's חסר (vv.11,17,18) and עז (vv.10,17,18) that the psalmist appeals to for his salvation. While the mighty (עזים) may rise up against the psalmist, the might of God (עזו) will save him. In the process of reading the Psalter so far, recurrent expressions such as 'God as my stronghold' or 'God as my refuge' have become a wisdom maxim to educate the readers to trust Him.

Psalm 60 stands as the last psalm in a series of psalms designated as מִכְתָּם (Pss. 56-60). While the meaning of the technical musical terms in the Psalter generally remain uncertain, the word לְלַמֵּד (to be taught) in the superscription acquires a pedagogical overtone. Then the title can be rendered as 'a מִכְתָּם of David for instruction' on the occasion of victory over Edomites. The psalm seems to deal with the theme of war rather than the cultic pattern, and presents the psalmist's faith in God. Strangely enough, however, the overall tone of the psalm betrays that of lamentation. Thus Gerstenberger (1988:242) views the psalm as "a communal complaint song with homiletic response."

The first part of the psalm (vv. 3-6) reveals that the military reversals and their resulting tensions are caused by divine wrath. But there is no mention of sin, nor is there any assertion of innocence like Psalm 44. The confidence in victory over the nations comes from the direct promises of God: the victory will be given to those who fear (לִירֵאָה) God (v.6) and to whom God loves (v.7). The introductory formula, 'God speaks' (v.8), particularly in the psalms, "apparently turn into a homiletical device" (Gerstenberger, 1988:240). As Gerstenberger (1988:240) keenly argues, the

formula is neither prophetic nor priestly in origin. Rather it seems to be a reference to a well-known fact by observing God's salvation in the history. The final confession of trust in God (בְּאֱלֹהִים) (cf., Ps. 56:5, 11, 12) in verse 14 affirms what can be accomplished when God inspires. Because salvation of men (תְּשׁוּעַת אַדָּמָה) is in vain (v.13), the psalmist turns away from them and puts trust on God who will trample on his enemy. Salvation is guaranteed to the wise who fear God.

Psalm 61 has generally been classified as 'a lament' for restoration to God's presence (Gerstenberger, 2001:6; Anderson, 1983:240). In the first section (vv.2-5), the images of 'rock' (צוּר), 'refuge' (מְחֹסֶה), and 'strong tower' (מִגְדָּל-עֹז) are used to picture the God of salvation, which leads the psalmist to take refuge (חָסָה) in the shelter of God's wing. In the second section (vv.6-9), the psalmist appeals to God's חֶסֶד and אֱמֶת for his salvation. Additionally, a king is involved and he himself makes a vow to praise.<sup>126</sup> This forces Croft (1987:107) to view the psalm as a royal psalm (cf., Mowinckel, 1962: 226). While the identity of the king remain uncertain among scholars (cf., Croft, 1987:76), if the superscription is seriously considered as our study has presupposed from the beginning, the 'I' in the first and second section is synonymous with King David. The theme of salvation is occupied in the centre in association with the Davidic covenant. Based on this covenant, the psalmist cries to (v.2), takes refuge in (v.5) and makes a vow to God (v.9). These descriptions as such finally converge on those who *fear* the name of God (יִרְאוּ שְׁמֵי) in verse 6. The heritage prepared for them has been given to the psalmist who makes a vow to trust God. For the postexilic Israelite, the expression, 'those who fear the Name', must be a reminiscence of the "fearful of Yahweh" (Gerstenberger, 2001:6). When the verb (אָרָא) appears in combination with the divine name, the impression of wisdom motif can be hardly missed.

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<sup>126</sup> In fact it is difficult to distinguish between 'the prayer of a king' and 'the prayer for a king' (Tate, 1990:112). However such transition to the third person is known from the literature of the ancient Near East. Both in Psalm 61 and 63 it is the king who prays (Mowinckel, 1962[1]:226).

Psalm 62 has been classified as “a song of trust” (Anderson, 1983:240) or “a song of confidence” (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:191) in that the psalm is explicitly saturated with the psalmist’s personal confidence in God. The refrain (vv. 2-3 and 6-8) sums up the theme of trusting God as follows:

Truly my soul finds rest in God;  
 my salvation (יְשׁוּעָתִי) comes from Him  
 Truly He is my cliff (צוּר), my salvation (יְשׁוּעָתִי) and my stronghold (מְצֻלָּה);  
 I shall never be shaken.

Because the psalmist knows that the salvation and hope come only from God, he calls his נַפְשׁוֹ to find rest in God. My salvation (יְשׁוּעָתִי) occurs once again with the typical metaphors of a saving God, i.e., the mighty rock (צוּר-עֲזָרָה) and my refuge (מְחֻסָּה) in verses 8-9. Due to the fact that a wisdom motif occurs in verses 10-11, however, scholars notice a possibility of seeing the psalm as ‘a wisdom influenced psalm.’ Thus for Gerstenberger (2001:11), it is ‘a homily of confidence’, i.e., a discourse directed to the readers. Croft (1987:128) also observes “distinctive style akin to that of some of the wisdom psalms” in verses 9-11.<sup>127</sup> In the wisdom instruction (vv.10-11) the ‘Vanity’ theme occurs three times (הַבֵּל, מְהַבֵּל and תְּהַבֵּלוּ), which could be a reminiscence of the beginning of Ecclesiastes (1:2). Because בְּנֵי-אָדָם (or בְּנֵי-אִישׁ) are vain, one should trust (בְּטַח) not their imperfection (v.11), but in God, the refuge (v.9). The אֵן sentence in the beginning of verse 10 is a “real adage” drawn from wisdom sources to support the direct exhortative discourse (Gerstenberger, 2001:10). The numeric saying in verse 12 and the theme of retribution in verse 13 also seems indicative of wisdom influence:

<sup>127</sup> Croft (1987:127) holds the view that Psalm 63 is to be read as a royal psalm, which is based on two observations: (1) the situation in verse 9 where people (not individual) are instructed to trust in God seems suitable for a royal psalm, and (2) the psalm is permeated with royal style (the royal epithets for God in particular). However, it seems possible only when the psalm is to be considered as a psalm that stands in between two royal psalms, i.e. Psalms 61 and 63 in which a king is mentioned.

One thing God speaks, two things have I heard;  
That (כִּי) mighty belongs to God.  
חֶסֶד belongs to You my Lord;  
That (כִּי) You repay everyone according to his deeds

As Croft (1987:128) succinctly mentions, the instruction to take refuge in God (vv.8-19) is “probably to be seen as an oracle of salvation delivered after the prayer [for help]” In short, the theme of trusting God’s salvation is suggested as one of the characteristics of wisdom lesson.

Psalms 63, a psalm of confidence (Gerstenberger, 2001:15; Croft, 1987:180), reveals the depths of the psalmist’s spirituality to seek the presence of God. The superscription invites the readers to the reference to David’s sojourn in the wilderness. The expression in verse 2, “in a parched and thirsty land where there is no water” (בְּאֶרֶץ צִיָּה וְעַיִף בְּלֵי-מַיִם), serves to picture the harshness the psalmist suffers. In particular, the verb, “to seek eagerly (שָׁחַר in *piel*)”, in verse 2 is a term used for seeking ‘wisdom’ in the wisdom literature (i.e., Job 7:21; 8:5; 24:5; Proverbs 1:28; 7:15; 8:19) (Kim, 2005:304). In a similar vein, the psalmist’s נִפְשׁ eagerly seeks and meditate (הִגָּה) on God, which leads David, the king, to rejoice in Him, his help (עֲזָרָה). The ‘I’ throughout and the king in the third person at the end of the psalm (v.12) converge on the person of David whether it is “the expression of the spirituality of the psalm composer” or “the thanksgiving of a king” (Croft, 1987: 131). What matters is in the fact that the acts of seeking (cf., שָׁחַר) and meditating (cf., הִגָּה) on God for salvation provoke an association with the wisdom tradition.

Psalms 64 focuses more on the destiny of the wicked through the conspiracy of the unjust (vv.3-7), and their depravity (vv.8-9). The calamity upon the psalmist is associated with not ‘physical oppression’ but ‘evil words’ that is “an important

element in some complaints or sapiential diatribes” (Gerstenberger, 2001:18). The acts of God’s salvation revealed in bringing them to ruin eventually call אָדָם־כָּל to be wise (v.10):

All men will fear (יִרְאֵה);  
They will declare the works of God;  
And ponder (שִׁכַּל in *Hiphil*) what God has done.

Gerstenberger (2001:19) astutely recognizes “the sapiential language and concepts” and views the psalm as “the older genre complaint of individual has been adapted somewhat to the needs of later community life and worship.” This is remarkable in that the psalm is persuading the postexilic Israelite to read it in terms of wisdom motif. The meditation on what God has done for His people in the history of salvation makes them fear God, which in turn leads them to declare the works of God, to take refuge (חָסָה) in Him, and praise Him (v.11).

In Psalm 65, a hymn of thanksgiving, the mood of praise (cf., תְּהַלֵּל in v.2) continues. The concept of God’s dwelling place pervades the first part of the psalm (vv.2-5): Zion (צִיּוֹן), Your court (חֲצֵרֶיךָ), Your house (בֵּיתֶיךָ), and Your temple (הַיְיָכֹלֶיךָ). The Zion motif finds its fullest expression in verse 5 with אֱשֶׁרֵי formula:

Blessed are those whom you choose and bring near to dwell in your *courts*,  
We will be satisfied with the goodness of your *house*, your holy *temple*.

The vows mentioned in verse 2 may be pertinent to action associated with temple liturgy for forgiveness of sins (cf., תְּכַפֵּרֵם in v.4). The word כָּפַר has two meanings in *piel*: (1) to cover over, to pacify, and (2) to atone for sin (BDB, 498). Driver (1933: 38) adopts the second option and maintains that כָּפַר emphasizes a liturgical dimension. This may be all the more possible in that the psalmist calls God as ‘God of our salvation’ at the beginning of next section (vv.6-9). Where there is no

forgiveness, there is no salvation. The verses are on the assumption that God forgives their transgressions. God is considered here as the Provider and Sustainer who cares for everything He created, which becomes a cause for the psalmist to sing praises. Interestingly enough, this section begins with *נִוְרָאוֹת* (dreadful deeds)<sup>128</sup> (v.6) and ends with *וַיִּירָא* (to fear) (v.9). As Gerstenberger (2001:22) correctly understands, “Past wonderful experience with God wants to be renewed.” God’s salvific action is so fearful that people cannot help but fear Him. In other words, God saves those who *fear* Him, i.e. the wise, through His *fearful* deeds.

The third and last section (vv.10-14) is laden with water/rain imagery: the river of God, waters (v.10), to saturate, and abundant showers (v.11). Furthermore, the phrase ‘You crowned the year with your bounty’ in verse 12a may indicate, with the rain imagery, its connection to a festival in which the Israelite give thanks to God for the blessings they expect or already received. In so doing, the theme of salvation beginning with a personal forgiveness in his holy place takes one step further and ends with universal providence of God, the Creator-Sustainer of the cosmos. As Perdue (1994:186) keenly maintains, “In this image, wisdom serves as the foundation of the cosmos.”<sup>129</sup>

Psalm 66, an anonymous psalm, has generally been regarded as a psalm with hymn (vv.1-12) and thanksgiving (vv.13-20) (Anderson, 1983:240). Thus Gerstenberger (2001:30) calls the psalm collectively “a communal thanksgiving hymn.” However, it also betrays a wisdom flavour in it. After having summoned ‘all the earth’ to sing praise to God (or His name) (vv.1-4), the psalmist asks her ‘to come and see what God has done’ for the *בְּנֵי אֲדָמָה*, which is ‘awesome’ (*נִוְרָאוֹת*) (v.5). In fact, the psalmist

<sup>128</sup> *נִוְרָאוֹת* in *niphal* means ‘to cause astonishment and awe (of Yahweh himself)’ (BDB, 431).

<sup>129</sup> The phrase ‘You [God] who *established* (*בָּנִיתָ*) the mountain by your power’ in verse 7 also has a connection to the wisdom theme in this regard. Perdue (1994:186) writes, “He [God] then ‘established’ her [wisdom] much as he secured the foundations of the world (Jeremiah 10:12), the mountains (Ps. 65:7), and the heavens (Proverbs 8:27).”

takes the position of a guru who summons his pupil (all the earth), and gives a lesson in what God has done for His people, which makes her fear God, i.e., to be wise! Notably, the act of God's salvation is coupled with a wisdom motif, i.e., to fear God. A detailed account of 'what God has done' is given in the following section (vv. 6-12) that is the recital of the Exodus.

As the narrative continues, the identity of the pupil shifts from 'all the earth' to 'all who fear God' (כָּל-יִרְאֵי אֱלֹהִים) (v.16). Buitenwieser (1969:358) views the term as that which designates gentiles who are converted to Judaism, based on his understanding that the psalm belongs to the postexilic era. However, on closer inspection, the descriptions of sacrifice in verses 13-15 reveal that the term represents the pious Israelite. What is required of those who fear God is to listen to 'what God has done' for the psalmist's נִפְשׁוּ: He has answered the psalmist's prayer by showing His חֶסֶד, the fundamental basis for God's salvation. The lesson the psalmist, a sage, wants to deliver is closely related to what God has done for his people and the Exodus in particular. This psalm indicates that the works of God in the history of salvation might occupy a part of the contents of a wisdom lesson.

Psalm 67, like Psalm 66, is an anonymous psalm of praise. One particular feature of the psalm is that it abounds with 'blessing motif.' The word בָּרַךְ appears three times in the beginning and the end of the psalm in the imperfect forms (יְבָרֵךְנוּ). The first one in verse 2 (וַיְבָרֵךְנוּ) possibly has a jussive meaning and the last two in verses 7 and 8 are also understood as such (cf., Terrien, 2003:482; Botha, 2004a:365-379), i.e., "May God bless us!" In fact it is hard to ignore, as Gunkel (1986[1929]:281) did, the fact that eleven of the fourteen verbs are jussives. The confidence of future blessings from God comes from the experience of the past the psalmist had. Verse 7a is pivotal in understanding the psalm as a whole because it can give a clue for determining the *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm. Some scholars (e.g., Dahood, 1966:126)

understand the phrase to mean “the land *will* yield its harvest” on the basis that it contains the only occurrence of a ‘perfect’ tense in the entire psalm. Then, “this will be the community’s prayer for rains and good growth, the divine blessings that alone sustain life” (Eaton, 2003:245). However, as we have observed, if we consider that the present confidence of future salvation usually comes from the experience of the past, then, it is natural to read the phrase in the ‘perfect’ tense. Based on the fact that the earth has yielded its increase, the psalmist is now confident of God’s blessings. In this sense, he calls God to bless his people as He has blessed the earth (v.8). The salvation for the people of God and His way (דִּרְכָּי) have become known to all nations, which results in the fear of God for all nations (cf., ‘the ends of the earth’ in v. 8). In so doing, the wisdom motif (‘to fear God is the beginning of wisdom’ and ‘the way motif’) is given not only to the Israelite, but also to all nations.

Psalm 68 in its final form<sup>130</sup> has been considered as “an eschatological hymn” (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:264) or “victory songs” (Gerstenberger, 2001:34). Mowinckel (1962:152) views it as “a typical procession psalm for the new year festival” on the basis of cultic circumstances of the text, which is highly hypothetical. At any rate, the fact that hymn motif pervades the psalm is hardly missed (vv.5, 20, 27, 33, 34, and 36). In between the calls to sing praise are packed with the recitals of salvation.

The first phrase of the psalm beginning with ‘May God arise (יִקְוֶם אֱלֹהִים)’ is definitely an echo of Numbers 10:35, the famous spell about the ark. The reason why God arises is to scatter the wicked (cf., Pss. 3:7; 7:6; 9:19; 10:12; 17:13; 44:26, etc.). Three verbs that occur in psalm 68:2 exactly appear in order in Numbers 10:35: arise (קוֹם) - scatter (פּוֹצֵץ) - and flee (נוֹס) (Gerstenberger, 2001:35), which serves to lead the readers into the context of the Exodus (vv. 2-7). The almost literal correspondence of

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<sup>130</sup> Psalm 68 is notorious for the bad state of text-preservation and lack of consistency (Kraus, 1988[vol.2]:47; cf., Albright, 1950:2-7). What is important from our point of view is not in the history of redaction, but in the final form of the psalm. As Gerstenberger (2001:34) maintains, the only way to proceed is to examine the individual units of the psalm, which then leads to “tentative conclusion in regard to genre and function of the whole psalm.”

verses 8-9 with a part of Deborah song (Judges 5:4-5) attested by Gerstenberger (2001:37-38) also suggests a context of salvation, i.e. theophany for salvation of His people in the desert. The psalm depicts God as the champion of the poor, which is particularly confirmed in the event of Exodus and the subsequent conquest in respect of the nation (vv.8-9). Viewed in this light, it is plausible to refer to God as 'God the Saviour' in the next section (vv.20-21) and verse 20 stands as a centre of the psalm:

Blessed be the Lord  
Day by day He carries us along, God our salvation, Selah

This salvation theme brings about a sharp contrast between the wicked (רָשָׁעִים) and the righteous (צַדִּיקִים) (vv.3-4). If anyone in need humbles himself and admits he is poor, he places himself under God's protection, but if he is hostile to and hateful towards God, he will be scattered and flee before God. Especially interesting from our point of view is the last section (vv.34-36). After describing God's deliverance in Exodus narrative with a couple of calls to praise, the psalmist presents God as one who rides the heavens, the ancient heavens (v.34), God of majesty and power (v.35), and God who is awesome (נֹרָא). Presumably these characteristics of God converge on the word נֹרָא (נֹרָא in *niphal*). The meaning of the word may imply that God is awesome such to the degree that one cannot help but *fear* Him. It is not only the works of God in the history of salvation but also the person of God that brings people to praise and *fear* Him, which is the beginning of wisdom.

Psalms 69 mainly consists of a lament (vv.2-30) that ends with an imprecation against enemies (vv. 23-29), followed by a hymn of thanksgiving (vv.31-37). A water image is noticeable in the description of the psalmist's agony (vv. 2, 3, 15, 16). The emergency of the situation is apparent from the very opening lines when he cries,

Save me O God!

For the waters have reached toward [my] soul

The suffering of King David as an individual is synonymous with Israelite plight, which must have given much relief to the post-exilic Israelite people. As Eaton (1976: 52-53) points out, "When the king entered into the role of the representative penitent, he became the bearer of all the typical sorrows, including the sense of alienation." This typical mentality of the post-exilic period reached its climax when the psalmist calls himself poor (v.30) and foolish (לְאִילָתִי, v.6) (Croft, 1987:38, 56). As was mentioned in the discussion of Psalm 38, the word אִילָת is one of the recurrent words that frequently appear in the wisdom literature. Soon after the psalmist appeals to his innocence in verse 5 (הַנֶּחֱמָה, *for nothing*), he hastens to admit that folly is known to God as a sin in the next verse:

A You know  
B my folly  
C O God!  
B' And my guilt  
A' is not hidden from You (v.6)

In spite of the agony without cause (v.5), the psalmist holds fast to the belief that only God knows everything, not to mention the situation where he still remains foolish in terms of 'being ignorant of the cause of his suffering.' One way to be wise is to "envisage universal hymnody, the salvation of Zion, and the 'building' or strengthening of the cities of Judah" (Eaton, 1976:52). Salvation is given to the wise because, as one wise man (Proverbs 15:24) indicates, "the path of life leads upward for the wise (לְמַשְׁכִּיל) that he may turn away (סָר) <sup>131</sup> from שְׂאוֹל below."

Psalm 70, an individual lament, is almost identical with Psalm 40:14-18, in which the

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<sup>131</sup> Job 1:1 introduces Job as a man with wisdom who was blameless, upright, fearing God, and 'turning aside' (סָר) from evil.

text is used as an appendix to a thanksgiving hymn (Gerstenberger, 2001:55).<sup>132</sup> In a similar vein, Psalm 70 seems to function as an appendix of the previous psalm, which makes the text deserving of a separate treatment. In fact the psalm shares several features with Psalm 69: (1) cries that ring out from a situation of extreme distress and danger (Pss. 69:2; 70:2); (2) the curse on the enemies (Pss. 69:23-29; 70:3-4); (3) identification with the poor or the needy (Pss. 69:30; 70:6). In addition, the usage of *חָיֵשׁ* (to make haste) both in the beginning (v.2) and the end (v.6) hints at the urgency of the situation with which the psalmist is afflicted. God is declared as his help (*עֲזָרָה*) (vv.2, 6), and salvation will be given to those who love His salvation (*יִשְׁוֹעָה*) (v.5).

A closer reading of Psalm 71 reveals that the psalm also shares the three above-mentioned features with the two preceding psalms (Ps. 71:1, 13, 9 respectively). With this observation, Psalm 71 that has no title can be understood under the name of David, which is also supported by LXX (Eaton, 2003:259; Gerstenberger, 2001:59).<sup>133</sup> The psalm begins by emphasizing how the psalmist puts trust in God and His righteous fulfilment of all his formal assurances, and is laden by the typical salvation images: 'I take refuge (*חָסָה*) in Yahweh' (v.1); 'deliver (*נָצַל* in *Hiphil*) me' (v.2), 'rescue (*פָּלַט* in *piel*) me' (vv. 2, 4), 'save (*יָשַׁע* in *Hiphil*) me' (vv.2, 3), and 'redeem me' (*פָּדִינִי*) (v.23); your righteousness (*צִדְקָתְךָ*) (vv. 2, 15, 16, 19, 24), your salvation (*תְּשׁוּעָתְךָ*) (v.15), your strength (*זְרוּעֶיךָ*) (v.18), your might (*גְּבוּרָתְךָ*) (v.18), and your faithfulness (*אֱמֻנָתְךָ*) (v.22); 'rock of refuge' (*צוּר מְעוֹן*) (v.3), 'my cliff' (*סִלְעִי*) (v.3), 'my stronghold' (*וּמְצוּדָתִי*) (v.3), 'my hope' (*תְּקוּנָתִי*) (v.5), 'my confidence' (*מִבְטָחִי*) (v.5), 'my praise' (*תְּהִלָּתִי*) (vv.6, 8, 14), 'my mighty refuge' (*מִחֲסִי־עוֹ*) (v.7), and 'my

<sup>132</sup> Three attempts have been made to establish the relationship between the two psalms: (1) Psalm 70 is an independent psalm, and is added to Psalm 40 later (i.e., Kraus, 1988 [vol.2]: 67), (2) Psalm 70 has been taken from Psalm 40, the original piece, and was consciously remodelled for public purpose (i.e., Gerstenberger, 2001:55; Craigie, 1983:314), and (3) Psalms 40 is an altered psalm of Psalm 70, or the psalms are two different works of collaboration (Tate, 1990).

<sup>133</sup> The title is read, 'By David, of the sons of Jonadab, and the first that were taken captive.'

help' (עֲזָרָתִי) (v.12). It is God who imparts (לָמַד in *piel*) this knowledge to the psalmist, which eventually brings him to declare (נָגַד in *hiphil*) His marvellous deeds of salvation to the next generation (vv.17-18). Seen from this point of view, Gerstenberger (2001:61) maintains, that “[b]oth affirmations [of being taught by God and of proclaiming His wondrous acts] lead to the conclusion that Torah instruction and communal hymn singing are hinted at.”

This teacher-pupil relationship between God and the psalmist which began before his birth (v.6), is still continuing (vv.17, 24), and will last (v.18). What is said by the psalmist is intimated in verses 15, 16 and 24:

My mouth tells (סָפַר in *piel*) your righteousness and your salvation (v.15);  
 I [repeats again] to remember (זָכַר in *Hiphil*) your righteousness (v.16);  
 My tongue meditates (הִגִּיד) on your righteousness (v.24)

The theme of God’s class for the psalmist may be associated with the righteousness of God which is revealed in the history of salvation for good reasons (cf., Schmid, 1984:107-108). He pledges himself not only to tell, but also to meditate on the salvific works of God in which the righteousness of God will be manifest. An interesting analogy in this case can be made to Psalm 1 where the psalmist meditates (הִגִּיד) on the תּוֹרָה. Just as the תּוֹרָה, an instruction, occupies the centre of wisdom lesson in Psalm 1, so does the righteousness of God in Psalm 71.

#### 5.4.4. Psalm 72

Psalm 72 has generally been viewed as ‘a royal psalm’, which may be beyond question (cf., deClaissé-Walford, 1995:115; Gunkel, 1998[1933]:99; Day, 1992:88). The psalm lays out an idealized picture of the king’s rule over the world and his people<sup>134</sup> in justice and righteousness. However, there exists a controversy

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<sup>134</sup> The people in verse 2 are identified with the poor who are not singled out as a special group

surrounding this psalm as to whether the person named in the title (לְשֹׁלֹמֹה) is designated as the author or as the dedicatee. That is, was it written 'by Solomon' or 'for Solomon'? Ostensibly, the spirit of the psalm seems to echo that of the petition of Solomon in 1 Kings 3, which may corroborate the applicability to Solomon, e.g., the reference to the gold of Sheba, the main concern in justice (cf., 1 Kings 3:16-28), peace in an immense national territory (cf., 1 Kings 5:4), and Solomon's enormous splendour (1 Kings 5:14; 10) (Gerstenberger, 2001:65).

However, the psalm also seems to point to the more general ideology of the Davidic king. A closer reading of the text reveals that the title does not necessarily mean 'Solomonic authorship' because Psalm 72 is, on the surface, the only psalm attributed to someone other than David in the Books I-II known as a David collection. In fact, some Hebrew manuscripts leave out the title, linking the psalm to Psalm 71 (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:65). Also, the psalm ends with a postscript, "[t]his concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse" (Ps. 72:20). Although the verse is considered a conclusion to the collection as a whole, it is difficult to ignore the relationship of the verse to Psalm 72, and the intercession and wishes *for* a royal son consistently occur in the third person. Tate (1990:222) maintains that Psalm 72 "was read in later times as a prayer of David for his son and successor, Solomon" (cf., Hill & Walton, 1991:274), and entitles the psalm as "a prayer for the King". Gerstenberger (2001:64) also describes the structure of the psalm in terms of 'intercession and wishes *for* a king'. The psalm is, then, as Gerstenberger (2001:65) maintains, "nothing but a discourse or enactment... in benefit of an anonymous monarchic figure". In fact, the image of a king in the Psalms evokes the Davidic rulers in Jerusalem or his royal descendents who are portrayed as standing in a special relationship to God (Day, 1992:132). Viewed in this light, it is more plausible to see the title as the prayer of elderly David 'for Solomon' (cf., Childs, 1979:516).

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(Gerstenberger, 2001:65).

The psalm begins with a cluster of wishes for the king, i.e. endowment of God's justice (מִשְׁפָּט) and God's righteousness (צְדָקָה) for the salvation (יִשְׁעֵי) of the poor and the afflicted from the oppressors (vv.1-4). As Brueggemann (1995:205) aptly sums up, the psalm is an invitation that the king should practice righteousness and justice in order to save his people. Especially important from our point of view is verse 5 in that it possibly carries implications for a connection of salvation motif to wisdom motif:

They may *fear you* (יִירָאוּךָ) in the sight of the sun;  
In front of the moon, age after age (v.5)

The word יִירָאוּךָ is controversial in two respects because of the meaning in association with the spelling (אָר or אָרָ?), and the identity of the second person singular (ךָ) (God or king?). The sudden appearance of the third person plural in the context of the third person singular (vv.4-6 in particular) has made scholars feel uncomfortable in reading the MT as it is. Gerstenberger (2001:64-65) maintains that 'they may fear you' does not seem to make good sense, and suggests a different reading, "he may make long", i.e. יִאָרְךָ (אָרָ to prolong, in *Hiphil*), which is supported by many translations including LXX (e.g., NIV, NRSV, NJB).<sup>135</sup> This alternative reading, as they argue, seems to match well with the overall line of idea of the psalm: the king's rule will endure and his kingdom and his authority will extend to the ends of the earth (cf., vv.5-11).

However, there are also some other hints which might be construed as suggesting the possibility of reading the verse as it is (e.g., KJV, TNK). Above all, the text has been given as "they may fear you (יִירָאוּךָ), and the alternative reading does not seem too compelling to emend the wording of the MT. As already suggested, the

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<sup>135</sup> "καὶ συμπαραμενεῖ τῷ ἡλίῳ καὶ πρὸ τῆς σελήνης γενεὰς γενεῶν" (And he shall continue as long as the sun, and before the moon for ever) (LXE).

main theme of the previous section (vv.1-4) is that of righteousness. More specifically it is God's justice and righteousness that make it possible for the king not only to judge the poor of the people (עֲנִי־עָם) and to save the sons of the needy (לְבָנֵי אֲבִיוֹן), but also to crush the oppressor (עוֹשֵׂי־שָׂק) (v.4). Because 'the oppressor' (the third person singular) cannot be the antecedent of the third person plural, the afflicted people must be the antecedent if we read the text as it is. In the previous part, the psalmist is interceding to God for the king, to give him His righteousness so that he can accomplish the mission as a king. Then verse 5 serves as a response of the people to the works of the king, i.e., 'they (the people) may fear you (the king)'. This understanding forces us to view 'you' as 'a king', but the question of the identity of the pronominal suffix (ךָ) still remains unresolved because if the suffix (ךָ) is intended to designate the king, it must have turned into הוּ, which properly matches with the third person singular in verses 2-4. Rather, the suffix כָּ (you) is more suitable for the vocative, 'O God', in verse 1. The psalmist is calling the God in the second person singular.

Kim (2005:438) excludes both options for two reasons, for such a reading (i.e., יִירָאוּךָ) in itself does not fit the overall context, and also because such a concept as 'let the people fear the king' does not match well with the royal policy revealed in the Old Testament, which eventually leads him to stick to יִאֲרֶיךָ. This reading seems plausible, yet requires further examination. In fact, the king in the Psalms is generally described as "God's vicegerent...Yahweh's anointed one (Ps. 132:10, 17), or son of God by adoption (Ps. 2:7)" (Day, 1992:132). Likewise, the divine name (אֱלֹהֵי) (יְשׁוּעָאֵל) in verse 18 reveals that God is the real king (אֱלֹהִים) of His people (יִשְׂרָאֵל). In other words, the people of Israel experience the righteousness of God through the human king. This understanding points to the fact that behind the rule of the king of Israel is God's rule which should reflect its divine origin. The divine order of salvation is thus mediated by the king. He will be for the people the source of these

attributes from God. This prototype salvation sets the pattern of God's saving grace and love for all time.

In the following section (vv. 15-17), the בִּרְךָ motif stands in the centre: may the king be blessed (יְבָרֶכְנֵהוּ) to enjoy a long, prosperous, world-renowned reign, and then all nations will be blessed (וְיִתְבָּרְכֶנּוּ) through the king. However, in the end, as the benediction (vv.18-19) indicates, it is Yahweh God who is eventually blessed (בִּרְךָ). If this is the case, whether the pronominal suffix indicates God or a king does not make any difference in both cases (a king or God?) because the fear of a king is no other expression than the fear of God. All things considered, one can say that the righteous ruling of the king (salvation motif) eventually leads his people to *fear* (יִאֵר) God (wisdom motif).

The final remark in verse 20 appears unique in the Psalter (Wilson, 1985a:139), forcing the readers to view Psalms 3-72 under the rubric of Davidic authorship. A question immediately raised is closely related to the post-exilic situation where the Davidic king and Solomonic prosperity seems to have vanished forever. In reality, David's wishes for Solomon and his royal sons appear to fail in the history of Israel, which leads the post-exilic Jewish community to look forward to the ideal and future kingdom. Gerstenberger (2001:68) also notes that "[w]ith collection and books of psalms taking shape in anew social environment, a change of meaning of individual texts came about."

With Psalm 72 the post-exilic people of Israel find themselves in the midst of failure and revolutionary disruption, (Brueggemann, 1993:39), and expect God's salvation through the righteousness of the Davidic king, the Messiah on the day when they *fear* God.

## 5.5. BOOK III (Psalms 73–89)

Book III begins with a collection of the Asaph psalms (Pss. 73-83), and Psalm 73 stands as the first in that collection. The subsequent group is a Korah collection (Pss. 84-88), which is split with Psalm 86, the only Davidic psalm in Book III. The book concludes with a single psalm ascribed to Ethan (Ps. 89) who is also regarded as a son of Korah. With the third book of the Psalter, as the titles indicate, a shift from individual psalms to communal psalms occurs. McCann (1993b:142-143) maintains that the third book of the Psalter “is dominated by communal psalms of lament (Pss. 74, 79, 80, 83, and at least elements of Pss. 85 and 89). It seems likely that the experience of the “I” is offered as a model to the whole of God’s people in dealing with the prosperity of the wicked. This model would have been particularly appropriate in the years following the exile, Israel’s “darkest valley”, the experience of which the communal laments in Book III almost certainly reflect.”

These psalms are designed to be spoken either by Israel as a whole (“We’) or by the king or other representative of the community. Strangely enough, only one of seventeen psalms of Book III bears the name of David (Ps. 86). deClaissé-Walford (1995:117) interprets this phenomenon as “David mov[ing] to the background. The focus is now on David’s descendents, who will determine the future of ancient Israel”. This probably explains why relatively many of the psalms in Book III are *communal* lament, whereas *individual* lament psalms dominate in Books I-II. Beyond the person of David, the representative of Israel and the anointed one, the people of Israel now identify themselves with David and lament for themselves. The first psalm of the Davidic collection (Ps. 3) begins with a lament, but the counterpart of Book III begins with a call to wisdom.

### 5.5.1. Psalm 73

Psalm 73 is the beginning psalm of Book III, and stands as the first of the collection of

the eleven psalms ascribed to Asaph (Pss. 73-83)<sup>136</sup> who was the leader of one of David's Levitical choirs along with Heman and Ethan (or Jeduthun) (cf., 1 Chronicles 15-16). The Asaphites were one of the guilds of musicians in pre-exilic period (cf., 1Chronicles 6:39; 25:1, 2; 2Chronicles 5:12).<sup>137</sup> In fact, as Wilcock (2001b:6) suggests, it is not necessary to understand the word לְאָסָף as Asaphite authorship, namely, 'by Asaph'. Rather it serves to remind of the 'Golden Days' of David *and Asaph*, as "the choice of one of his descendants for just such a post". I maintain with others (e.g., Day, 1992:117) that certain Asaph collection(s) had been preserved within the circle of the Asaphite from one generation to another and finally integrated into the corpus of the Psalter. In that sense, it is neither David nor Solomon but Asaph who witnesses the collapse of Israel. deClaissé-Walford (1995:118) quotes a portion of 1 Esdras,

[P]art of the ones returning to the land of Israel were "the Levites:...the temple singers: the descendants of Asaph, one hundred twenty-eight". The songs in the Psalter attributed to Asaph are probably part of a much larger collection of songs, of which the twelve we find in the Psalter became 'normative and authoritative' for the postexilic community.

In addition, most of the Asaph psalms appear in so-called the אֱלֹהִים psalms. Wilcock (2001b:6) writes,

These psalms use the word 'God' (אֱלֹהִים) far more often than the word 'Lord' (יְהוָה). But the God of the Asaph collection is repeatedly a God who judges, as he did in Egypt; who speaks, as he did at Sinai; and who over the years constantly shepherds his people. In other words, he is the Elohim who by his acts shows himself very clearly to be Yahweh—the Lord, the God of Israel.

As the first of Book III, Psalm 73 introduces one of the most disturbing problems in wisdom tradition; how is it possible that the wicked so often prosper while the godly suffer so much? The psalm is the most explicit exploration on the threat to faith

<sup>136</sup> Another psalm ascribed to Asaph is Psalm 50 in the second book of the Psalter.

<sup>137</sup> While Psalm 73 is written in the first-person, there is a strong communal dimension to the psalmist's experience.

posed by the prosperity of the wicked. Because of its theme of 'theodicy' along with other wisdom dimensions, the psalm is often compared with the Book of Job and classified as a 'wisdom psalm' (Luyten, 1990:64). As we have already seen, Psalms 37 and 49 dealt with the great mysteries of life and death. In the same vein, Psalm 73 also deals with the problem of the success of the wicked, narrating in an autobiographical fashion of those who had almost slipped away from the community of the faithful because of that problem.

The deliberate structure of the psalm has been noted by a number of scholars (e.g., Perdue, 1977:288-289; Luyten, 1990:68; Brueggemann & Miller, 1996:46-47). For example, Brueggemann and Miller (1996:46-47) suggest a 'four-stage thematic flow' throughout the psalm: (1) a consensus statement of torah-oriented Israel (v. 1); (2) a contradict experience to the thesis of verse 1 (vv.2-16); (3) recovery to torah piety through some cultic experience (v. 17); and (4) a statement of re-embraced faith (vv. 18-28). In the light of this, the psalm can fall into six parts as follows:

- A Presupposition: the goodness of God (1)
- B The prosperity of the wicked (2-12)
- C Search for an answer (13-16)
- B' The end of the wicked: destruction (17-20)
- C' Reminiscence of searching for an answer (21-22)
- A' Rediscovery of God: the goodness of God (23-28)

The structure shows a loosened chiasm, indicating "the inclusion by means of which the statement in verse 1 after much questioning is reasserted in the closing verse" (Luyten, 1990:66).

The opening verse sounds like a proverb that confirms the previous psalm's affirmation that "[i]n his [the royal son's] days, the righteous will flourish" (72:7a): Surely God is so good as to bless the righteous who are pure (בָּרָא) in heart (73:1). At the same time it echoes the instruction of Psalm 1 that "all will go well for the person

who meditates on YHWH's Torah and doesn't cavort with the wicked" (deClaisse-Walford, 1995:120). However, what the psalmist experienced and saw in real life was not the **שְׁלוֹם** of the righteous (72:7b), but the **שְׁלוֹם** of the wicked (**רָשָׁעִים**) (73:3, 12). The actuality of life seems to suggest that the life-style of the 'wicked' seems to fly in the face of this doctrine, for they appear to prosper. It seems to be that there is no rational explanation on the reality of the apparent prosperity of the wicked. In the very next verses (vv. 4-12), the psalmist goes further to depict how the wicked enjoy the **שְׁלוֹם** in spite of their haughty self-reliance, which marks the climax in verse 11:

How can **אֵל** know (**יָדַע**)?  
Is there knowledge (**יְדָעָה**) in the Most High (**עֲלֵיוֹן**)?

In fact, the wicked is claiming to be wiser than God: the Most High has neither wisdom nor knowledge to explain this absurdity.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, this actuality of theodicy serves to function to rob the psalmist of wisdom. Thus he raises a question as to whether righteousness is worthwhile (vv. 13-16):

Surely in vain I have cleaned my heart  
And I have washed my hands in innocence (v.13)

However, the wisdom characteristics would include the view of a natural retribution that will inevitably overtake the wicked. An abrupt reversal happens in verse 17. The new orientation that Brueggemann (1984:118) speaks of occurs when he goes into the sanctuary. Surprisingly it is in the sanctuary of God that his question was answered:

Till I entered God's sanctuary;  
I discerned (**בִּי**) their final destiny.

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<sup>138</sup> This is much the same theme as found in the book of Job. The dialogues between Job and his friends focus on the issue of 'who is wiser on the problem of Job's innocent suffering?' In fact the book of Job is all about the nature of true wisdom where the readers are guided to the fact that mortals are not allowed to access wisdom directly because wisdom is found only in God, and that although wisdom is not given directly to mortals, the only thing that grants them wisdom is the fear of Yahweh (for more detail, see, Sim, 2001, TH.M thesis).

Somehow this enables him to see the bigger picture of reality in which God is Lord and judge. Any temptation to emulate the wicked is now dispelled. However, how the psalmist was informed of 'the end of the matter' (cf., Ecclesiastes 12:13) in association with the destiny of the wicked is not given in detail. As Wilcock (2001b: 8) asserts, "[that w]e have no idea how; to speculate about God's method (a prophetic word? a mystical experience?) is to miss the point. The fact is that the temple was where God called his people to meet him and with one another, to hear his word and to respond in praise and prayer and self-offering."

No matter what mode the answer may be, I maintain that it is a revelation. The final destiny of the wicked was revealed to the psalmist through the experience of God in the temple identical to the theophany Job experienced.<sup>139</sup> This leads the psalmist to convince that the wicked fall utterly and inevitably from their state of prosperity (vv. 18-20). He finds a way to become a wise man as Job did! In verse 24, the psalmist calls the 'revelation' as "your [God's] counsel" (עֲצָה):

With your counsel (בְּעֲצָתְךָ) you will guide me;  
And afterward, to glory you will receive me.

The psalmist confesses that he was senseless (בְּעֵר), ignorant (לֹא אָדָּע), and brutish (בְּהֵמוֹת) before God (v.22), but that he has recovered wisdom through God's counsel. Then in the next stage, the salvation motif is added to wisdom motif. For the psalmist, God is his rock (צוּר), his portion (חֵלֶק), and his refuge (מְחִסָּה). The last verse of the psalm, as with verse 1, makes the same confession: God is good to Israel (v.1) and God is good to me (v.28). The poem ends with a declaration that he finds his joy only in God.

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<sup>139</sup> In Job 42:3, after facing the magnitude of God's wisdom in creation (Job 38-41), Job humbles himself before God and confesses, "Thus I have uttered but did not discern (בִּי) what is extraordinary beyond me that I did not know", which makes it possible for Job to become a wise man once again.

What, then, is the message of Psalm 73? Psalm 72, a royal-wisdom psalm, was David's prayer for the prosperity of Solomon, his royal heir. However, David and Solomon, and their kingdom are now gone, and the reality of life appears to be very tough. As one possibly predicts, this sense of theodicy may be more prominent during times of upheaval and confusion. The wisdom characteristics would include the view of a natural retribution that will inevitably overtake the wicked. deClaisse-Walford (1995:125) argues, "(but) the message is clear. The sole ingredients, the hermeneutical underpinnings, for the survival of ancient Israel are YHWH and YHWH's Torah. These two ingredients allowed ancient Israel to survive through centuries of its historic past. And they will sustain Israel into its postexilic future."

McCann (1993b:142-143) summarize several observations surrounding the canonical arrangement and significance of Psalm 73. First of all, it is concerned with its placement, namely, the opening psalm of Book III. Second, it has been held that the third book of the Psalter is communally oriented and reflects the circumstances of exile. Third, it recalls Psalms 1 and 2 in many ways. He points out that "in short, Psalm 73 is a sort of summary of what the reader of the Psalter would have learned after beginning with Psalms 1 and 2 and moving through the prayers of Psalms 3-72; that is, happiness or goodness has to do not with material prosperity and success but rather with the assurance of God's presence in the midst of all the threats and dark valleys in which the psalmists find themselves. God is the only necessity of life!"

Fourth, Psalm 73 occupies the centre of the Psalter not only "theologically" but also "canonically" (Brueggemann, 1991:81). As McCann (1993b:143) writes, "Psalm 73 reinforces the essential instruction already offered in Psalms 1-72: God reigns; we belong to God; no experience separates us from God; happiness or goodness means to live in dependence not upon oneself but by taking refuge in God (Pss. 2:12; 73:28). This good news is the assurance derived from the book of Psalms." Upon achievement of a close relationship with God, the psalmist declares that he will tell of all the works of Yahweh who is his refuge (v.28), which is a means for obtaining

wisdom for him.

### 5.5.2. Psalms 74–77 (Asaph Collection)

Psalm 74, a communal lament (Gerstenberger, 2001:77), begins with a complaint that is expressed in the form of a question (How long?) and ends with a call to remember the threat of the adversaries. The historical background of the psalm is most probably the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC (cf., vv.5-8, see Kraus, 1988[vol.2]: 97; Day, 1992:35). In particular, verses 9-11 indicates the typical post-exilic situation that no palpable sign of future hope seem to manifest itself. There is a huge concern with salvation throughout the psalm where the psalmist appeals to the covenant of old that is based both on Yahweh's past works in salvation and creation. The image of Mount Zion in verse 2 probably plays a role reminiscent of Exodus of old. The concept of 'to remember' consistently occurs from the beginning to the end (vv. 2, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23), which implies that the psalmist's appeal is related to the covenant (בְּרִית) of old: God redeemed His own tribes long ago (קָדַם) (v.2), and He is "my king" from of old (מִקְדָּם) bringing salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) upon the earth (v.12). This means that the psalmist acquaints himself with the tradition of salvation history. On the surface, to what the term 'covenant' refers is not clear. Kim (2005:495) excludes the possibility of the Davidic covenant on the basis that there is no implication of the Davidic kingdom in the psalm, and suggests both the Abrahamic covenant and Sinai covenant (Exodus 19:4-6; 24:8), which seems to be more plausible. However, from our point of view, if we accept that the Psalter as a literary unit is given by the name of David in a broader sense, it is not possible to easily ignore a certain relationship of the term to the Davidic covenant. The image of God as a 'king' in the Psalms is occasionally connected with His creation of the world like verse 12 (cf., Pss. 93:1; 95:3; 96:10) (Day, 1992:125), but it can also be a 'hopeful reminiscence' of the Davidic king, the messiah, particularly in the situation of the post-exilic era where an earthly king was gone. In the presence of the 'present' agony, God's salvific works of the 'past' serves to encourage the post-exilic community to look forward to the 'future'

salvation through divine/Davidic kingship.

Psalm 75 is imbued with a judgement motif: I will judge (אֲשַׁפֵּט) uprightly (v.3), God who judges (שֹׁפֵט) (v.8), and dichotomy of the righteous (צַדִּיק) and the wicked (רָשָׁעִים) (v. 11), which makes it plausible to view the psalm as a hymn of judgement (Eaton, 2003:272). The fate of the two depends on God who judges. In the appointed time that is not distant, the wicked will be vanquished and the righteous will be lifted up. With respect to our purpose of the study, Gerstenberger (2001:82-83) is remarkable in that he suggests a possibility of teacher-pupil context in the psalm. He argues that the 'I' of 'אֲנִי־רִבִּי' in verse 5 indicates not God, but the leader of worship, which is supported by all other examples, e.g., Pss. 30:7; 31:5; 32:5; 38:17; 39:2; 40:11; 41:5; 73:15; 89:3; 116:11; 119:57. Gerstenberger (2001:83) goes on saying "[t]hat means that we are witnessing in vv. 3-9 a type of homiletic venture in early Jewish community service. The voice of God, recorded and recited by the leader of worship (vv. 3-4), is being interpreted by the latter."

The psalmist as a teacher delivers God's righteous judgement to his pupils that will draw a line between salvation of the righteous and destruction of the wicked. The hope of salvation mentioned in the previous psalm (Ps. 74) is yet fully answered but is not far, which is thankful (v.2) and praiseworthy (v.10).

Psalm 76 presents Yahweh as the ruler of his chosen place. The place in which God is known is Judah and Israel (v.2), Salem (v.3), Zion (v.3), and heaven (v.9). As Gerstenberger (2001:85) points out, "the locale of God's dwelling and action is clear from the beginning". However, the Zion theme remains secondary and "is subsumed to glorification of the supreme God of the Judean/Israelite community of faith" (Gerstenberger, 2001:87), which brings him to view the psalm as a "confessional hymn" against a 'Zion Psalm' (cf., Gunkel, 1998[1933]:29; Day, 1992:39). Once again, as in Psalms 66: 5 and 68: 35, God is presented as the one to be feared (לְמוֹרָא, גּוֹרָא),

גִּוְרָא (vv.8, 12, 13 respectively). Yahweh God is so awesome in His rising (בְּקִוּם) for salvation (לְהוֹשִׁיעַ) (v.10) that the earth (v. 9), all around God (v.12) and the kings of the earth (v.13) cannot help but fear Him (לְמוֹרָא, יִרְאֵהוּ). The meditation on the salvation of God eventually leads all creation to fear God, which is the beginning of wisdom.<sup>140</sup>

Psalm 77 sounds a note of hope for Yahweh's salvation in terms of the didactic purpose. It begins with calling God to hear the psalmist in unspeakable distress (vv.2-5). While the blessed man of Psalm 1 meditates (הִגִּיד) the Torah, this afflicted man of Psalm 77 meditates (הִגִּיד) on Yahweh's works and deeds from old (מִקִּדְמָם) (vv.12-13). His serious attitude toward the situation he is involved in is well-expressed in the following section (vv.6-10); he considered (חשב in *piel*), remembered (זָכַר), pondered (שָׁחַח), and searched (חפש in *piel*), which suggests an image of a seeker seeking after the truth. Six questions of meditation are presented in verses 8-10:

- Will the Lord reject forever?
- Will he never again show favour?
- Has His חֶסֶד disappeared forever?
- Has His promise (אָמַר) to an end for all time?
- Has God forgotten to be gracious?
- Has He in anger shut up His compassion?

The meditation on salvation history of the past in which Yahweh displayed His power convinces the psalmist of His חֶסֶד. The terms, 'the sons of Jacob and Joseph' (v.16), and 'the hand of Moses and Aaron,' (v.21) definitely remind the readers of

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<sup>140</sup> From the literary point of view, psalms 73-76 are closely related with one another: (1) Psalm 73 ends with Psalmist's resolution to tell (סַפֵּר in *piel*) of all God's deeds (כָּל-מַלְאֲכֹתֶיךָ); (2) Psalm 74 serves as a concrete example of God's deeds, i.e., God's actions in the history of salvation; (3) then Psalm 75 begins with people's resolution to tell (סַפֵּר in *piel*) of God's wonderful deeds (נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ); and (4) Psalm 76 shares similar expressions with Psalm 75 (e.g., God of Jacob; God as a judge).

Exodus (cf., Kidner, 1973:280), the prototype of God's salvation. In the post-exilic situation of distress, the psalm causes the readers to remember the years of long ago (v.6) when Yahweh performed miracles among His people (vv.12-16), and to consider all His mighty works that appear in the history of salvation (v.13). Wisdom is involved not only in meditation on general phenomena in creation, but also in meditation on specific works of God in the history of salvation.

### 5.5.3. Psalm 78

Psalm 78 is the most extended version of the Asaphite psalms, particularly Psalm 77:12-13 where the psalmist committed himself to remember and meditate on God's marvellous deeds of old. The psalm has often been classified as a 'historical psalm' (Kraus, 1989:122), a 'salvation history recital psalm' (Mays, 1994b:254), or a 'storytelling psalm based on the Davidic covenant' (Anderson, 1983: 241), along with Psalms 105, 106, and 136 (cf., Day, 1992:58; Goldsworthy, 1995[1987]: 119), because it recites God's mighty acts in the history of Israel.<sup>141</sup>

However, as Gerstenberger (2001:93) succinctly points out, the psalm is not at all just a 'summary of salvific events'. Rather it is a theological reflection/instruction on the salvation history. The overall impression is that the psalm was given under the strong influence of wisdom tradition. Thus Psalm 78 is also characterized as "didactic hymn" (Dahood, 1968:238), or a "wisdom poem" (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:247). Mowinckel (1962b:112), writes that "[t]he author [of the Psalter] seeks to prove that God has acted rightly. Therefore it often leads to a hymnal element in the style; we get a kind of *didactic hymn*,<sup>142</sup> like Pss. 78 and 105. The material is then usually derived from the history of Israel, and the intention is to testify to the faithfulness of

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<sup>141</sup> Du Toit (1963:24-25) observes the "main facts to which reference [to salvation history] is made can be found in Psalms 105, 78, 106, 136", that is: (1) Psalm 105— from the patriarchs to the invasion of Canaan, (2) Psalm 78—from the Exodus to David, (3) Psalm 106—from the crossing of the Red Sea to the period of the Judges, and (4) Psalm 136—from creation to deliverance from Egypt to the invasion of Canaan. His analysis shows that the span of salvation history recital in the Psalter ranges from creation to the invasion of Canaan.

<sup>142</sup> The *italic* is mine

Yahweh and the breaking of the covenant on the part of the people, proving the justice of punishment and disaster.”

The main feature of the psalm, then, is twofold: (1) its sapiential quality and (2) its recital of the historical traditions. Thus Gunkel (1998[1933]:247) take a safer position, viewing the psalm as “a wisdom poem which presents the material of the legend from the vantage point of the admonition and indoctrination of Israel”. All things considered, we can call the psalm a ‘psalm of instruction’ to remember God’s saving acts and marvellously persistent grace, and to keep faith in him and his covenant.

This psalm is remarkable in that it provides us with “an unusual mixing of wisdom and salvation history” (Goldsworthy, 1995[1987]:119). Mays (1994b:29) rightly points out, “Psalm 78 shows how Israel’s foundation story can be used for teaching.” We need to consider the possibility that Psalm 78 was deliberately constructed as a piece of wisdom literature sharing with wisdom an altogether different purpose from a more overtly hymnic psalm such as Psalm 136.

The psalm, a **מִשְׁפִּיל**,<sup>143</sup> begins with the dramatic hortatory call to listen to the תּוֹרָה of the psalmist:

Give ear, O my people, to my instruction (תּוֹרָתִי),  
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.  
I will open my mouth in a parable (בְּמִשְׁלָל),  
I will utter things hidden (חִידוֹת) from of old (vv. 1-2).

The first impression of the psalm through the first two verses is something that we

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<sup>143</sup> The term occurs also in the titles of Psalms 32, 42, 44-45, 52-55, 74, and 88-89. It has been believed to indicate that the psalm with the term contains instruction elements. Holladay (1993:73) suggests that it can mean a “didactic song”. However, it is used in too many non-wisdom contexts and, despite its etymology, **שָׁבַל** (to give insight or wisdom), its meaning seems to have become obscured. Nevertheless, if it really means some kind of didactic discourse, then this designation perfectly matches to the psalm. To sum up, **מִשְׁפִּיל** would appear to encroach on that grey zone where formal wisdom expressions overlap with everyday usage.

do not expect from the Psalter, i.e., the hymnbook of the second temple.<sup>144</sup> It rather suggests a teacher/pupil situation from which the instructions would come. The psalmist summons people to listen to *his* תּוֹרָה. Kraus (1989:125) observes, “The suffix of the first person singular in תּוֹרָתִי in the older writings of the Old Testament (and also in those influenced by the Deuteronomistic school) always refers to Yahweh”. Gerstenberger (2001:94) also maintains, “Within the Psalter and the prophetic canon it is always God himself who speaks this way, even if through his prophet or messenger”.<sup>145</sup> However in its context it is clear that the suffix indicates the psalmist himself. The term, תּוֹרָתִי, runs parallel to ‘the words of my mouth’. If this is the case, the meaning of תּוֹרָה cannot be a ‘law’ in the sense of Mosaic Law. As with Psalm 1, תּוֹרָה here means ‘instruction/teaching’.

Goldsworthy (1995[1987]:120) points out that “[t]he word for teaching (Hebrew: torah) is also the word for God’s law. Its root meaning is instruction and it always refers to God’s instruction except here and in three wisdom passages (Proverbs 3:1; 4:2; 7:2) where it is the instruction given by a wisdom teacher. It is therefore probable that it is expressive of wisdom in this psalm.”

By beginning with a call to hear, the psalmist focuses wisdom’s proper mode of reception. While the call to ‘hear’ is not exclusive to wisdom instruction, it is hard, from the outset, to deny the wisdom dimension of the psalm. The Hebrew words מִשְׁלַּח and חִידָה also reinforce an aspect of wisdom influence to the psalm. The word מִשְׁלַּח is considered as one of the key words in the vocabulary of wisdom that is usually translated ‘proverb’ or ‘parable’ (Guthrie, 1966:172). It may carry with it

<sup>144</sup> For example, Dumbrell (1988:208) points out, “Whatever the origin of the various individual psalms may have been, they finally all became cultic in the sense that Psalms now represents in its final form the hymnbook of the second temple”.

<sup>145</sup> References he (2001:94) provided for his argumentation are: Psalms 50:7; 81:9; Jeremiah 2:13; 4:22; “my torah”; Exodus 16:4; Isaiah 51:7; Jeremiah 6:19; 9:12; 16:11; 26:4; 31:33; 44:10; Ezekiel 22:26; Hosea 8:1; Psalm 89:31; 2 Chronicles 6:16.

the idea of a comparison, as Dahood (1968:239) suggests, which is certainly one of the techniques of wisdom. Tate (1990:281) maintains, "Parable is acceptable for Psalm 78:2, but the more general word 'story' seems better. The psalm is presented as a teaching/didactic psalm in the form of a story, told in poetry". The same can be said of חִידָה as well. It is usually translated as 'riddle', which appears in parallelism opposite מִשְׁלַּל.<sup>146</sup> According to Tate (1990:281), "riddles use words that belong to common knowledge but which conceal special meanings known only to those who know how to solve the riddle (and) the riddle connotes ambiguity and mystery, often revealing a 'paradox of reality'." After all, the use of all these aspects together suggests that the psalm should be examined with the possibility that it carries some distinctly wisdom nuances.

Three generations are involved in what has been passed down (vv.3-4): 'our forefathers' told 'us' to hand down the marvellous story of God's salvation to the 'next generation'. It is natural in the wisdom context that a sage addresses his pupil as a 'son'. For example, Solomon begins his hortative call in this way (Proverbs 1:8):

Listen to your father's instruction, my son  
And do not forsake your mother's teaching (תּוֹרָה).

The purpose of this wisdom tradition is to instruct the readers of next generations to put their trust in God and not to forget His wonderful deeds in salvation history (vv. 6-7). De Pinto (1967:169) understands the word תּוֹרָתִי in verse 1 as the "specific teaching that God has handed on to his people, first in the historical deeds by which he proved his love for them and his presence among them (vv. 4, 38) and then by the concrete body of laws and commandments from generation to generation that keeps alive in Israel the activating force of the Torah" (cf., vv.5, 10).<sup>147</sup> If this is the case, the

<sup>146</sup> See also Psalm 49:5

<sup>147</sup> The תּוֹרָה in these verses indicates the 'Mosaic Law' because it occurs in the context of Exodus. The psalmist is giving an instruction (תּוֹרָה) to his pupils that the ancient Israel in the desert did not

exercise of 'specific teaching' (i.e., wisdom) in Israel is closely related to 'history'.

In Psalm 78, Yahweh is celebrated for the mighty deeds of the past: He brought Israel out of Egypt, gave the nation His law (תּוֹרָה) (vv.5, 10), and fought the war that would settle Israel down in the land of Canaan.<sup>148</sup> This long recital of the wonderful works of God is explicitly designated as תּוֹרָה in the first verse of psalm. Thus the content of the psalm is the exposition of his תּוֹרָה that is spoken in a parable (מִשְׁלַל) and hidden things (חִידוֹת). In this way the wisdom motif is commingled with the salvation motif. In other words, the recital of salvation history becomes one of the substantial contents of wisdom lesson.

The beginning section (vv.1-8) clearly shows that the psalm's main concern is not with the recital of salvation history itself, but on the education through the recital that functions as a warning not to follow the example of Israel's rebellion. As Farmer (1998:837) rightly observes, "flashbacks from the Exodus (78:12-14 and 43-53), the wilderness (78:15-41), and the pre-monarchical traditions (78:54-64) are used by the psalmist to illustrate the remarkable restraint God has shown in dealing with constant provocation from previous generations of the chosen people (vv. 38-39)". The purpose of the recital of salvation history is not merely to bring disgrace upon the head of Israel, but also to let them put their trust in God, to never forget the salvific works of God, as well as to keep His commands (vv.7-8), which is very much didactic. As Gerstenberger (2001:98) succinctly sums up its intention, "edification of the community was the chief purpose of the liturgical teams". In this way, salvation history serves as a backdrop for the teaching on rebellion. The lesson is given in

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observe the Law (תּוֹרָה), and is urging them not to follow the example of their ancestors.

<sup>148</sup> When we compare this with other salvation history recitals (i.e., Exodus 15; Deuteronomy 26:5-9; Joshua 24; Psalm 105; 106; 136; Nehemiah 9) there are some notable differences as well as similarities. The recapitulation (vv. 42-43) of the theme of ingratitude returns us to more detailed treatment of the plagues. The second section stresses the activity of God, beginning with the detailed account of the plagues showing the power of God over the enemy, and ending with David's rule. The similarities of verses 70-72 and 2 Samuel 7: 8 are striking. The royal ideology is worth comparing with Isaiah 11:2-3 which shares similarities with Proverbs 8:12-15.

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three stages: Israel's unfaithfulness in the salvation of God; God's anger against Israel; and the ultimate salvation promised in the Davidic covenant.

Firstly, the psalm constantly emphasizes the unbelief of Israel throughout. In spite of God's deliverance, Israel refused to live by the Law (v.10), forgot His works of salvation (vv.11,42), continued to sin against Him (v.17), put Him to the test (vv.18,41,56), spoke against Him (v.19), did not believe and trust in God (vv.22, 32), lied to Him (v.36), were unfaithful to His covenant (vv.37, 56, 57), vexed the Holy One of Israel (v.41), and rebelled against the Most High (v.56).

Secondly, the recital shows God's anger to the rebellion of Israel in the context of salvation history. God's wrath broke out against Jacob (v.21), His anger rose against Israel and put them to death (v.31), ended their days in vain (v.33), rejected them completely (v.59), abandoned the tabernacles of Shiloh (v.60), sent the ark of his might into captivity (v.61), gave His people over to the sword (v.62), and rejected the tents of Joseph and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim (v.67). In terms of the story's linear surface, a wisdom theme seems to be presented in the form of retribution: Israel rebelled against God, so they were punished. However, it is a mystery (cf., חִידוֹת in verse 2), in a sense, that God rejected Israel, the chosen people. The reader cannot help but be puzzled.

Thirdly, in spite of Israel's rebellion, it emphasizes the everlasting grace of God who is presented as the Rock (צוּר) and the Redeemer (גֹּאֲלֵם). He forgave their sins, did not destroy them (v.38), remembered their mortality (v.39), brought them out and led them like sheep (v.52), drove out nations before them (v.55), and finally chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, and David His servant (vv.68-70). The final stirring of God to reject Ephraim and to establish Judah, Zion and David is unique in the salvation history recitals in the Psalter. חֵבְרִיּוֹת, a wisdom word meaning skill or astuteness (v.72), probably refers to the manner of David's exercise of power (his

'hand'). Thus the solution of Israel's continued apostasy starts over with the messianic wisdom of David's rule, which is, in turn, eschatological.<sup>149</sup>

To sum up, the educational role and teaching from the historical tradition is clearly evident in Psalm 78. In that sense Psalm 78 is not just a recital of salvation history, but a didactical instruction for Israel. The psalmist delivers what he has heard and known in the form of **לְמַשְׁלֵנוּ**. In fact, what God has done for Israel in the history of salvation is beyond understanding and unprecedented. The mystery of election and abandonment in the history of God's salvation finds its fullest expression in the word **לְמַשְׁלֵנוּ**. How is it possible for Israel, the chosen people, to rebel against God? And how is it possible for God to reject His people and the tabernacle of Shiloh? This riddle is resolved in the blameless (**יָשָׁר**) heart of David (vv.70-72). The restoration of Israel begins again with the wise counsel (**יָשָׁר**) of a wise king.

#### 5.5.4. Psalm 79–88

Psalm 79 points to a national disaster that is probably the destruction of Israel in 587 B.C. (cf., Pss. 44 and 74).<sup>150</sup> Verses 1-4 describe the profanity of the nations toward holy temple and Jerusalem, which lays the groundwork for Psalmist's lament over his bitter destiny. The urgency of the case finds its powerful expression in verse 5:

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<sup>149</sup> Matthew quotes Psalm 78:2 as a prophecy of Jesus' parabolic teaching in Matthew 13:35. He interprets that Asaph is the prophet and the subject of the psalm is none other than Jesus: According to 2 Chronicles 29:30, Asaph is described as **רֵאשִׁית** (seer). Peter also introduces David as **προφήτης** in Acts 2:30 when he quoted Psalm 16:8-11 and 89:3-4 in order to testify the authenticity of the resurrection of Jesus. The theme of messianic wisdom in the salvation of God has clear Christological implications. If we are right about the wisdom nuances in this psalm we see a significant amalgamation of wisdom and salvation history. As in the history of Solomon (1Kings 1-10), the anointed king is the wise man. The convergence of empirical wisdom (Solomon's proverbs and songs) with the theology of the temple (1Kings 8) and the light to the gentiles (1Kings 10) has its antecedent in David who is seen also to be the wise man. Luke affirmed this by linking Jesus with the teachers in the temple (Luke 2:46-47). Thus one theological strand is that of the failure of Israel to be wise and fearful of the Lord, a problem that is met by the gracious act of God in the election of David as the anointed wise saviour-king of Israel.

<sup>150</sup> For detail, see Anderson (1985), Briggs (1906-7), Dahood (1968).

How long, Yahweh, Will you be angry forever?  
Will your jealousy blaze like a fire?

Typical of such lament psalms, this kind of outright pleas move in two directions (Gerstenberger, 2001:101), i.e., plea for elimination of the nations, and rehabilitation of Israel. The psalmist solicits God, the saviour (יְשׁוּעָה), to pour out the very wrath that Israel once experienced on the nations. In this regard, the salvation of Israel is closely tied to the fate of other nations. The mockery, 'where is their God?', of the nations (v.10) conjures up the image of the fool in Psalm 14:1 saying, "the fool says in his heart, 'there is no God'". The act of God's condemnation on the nations reminds the psalmist of the existence of God. That is, God is there paying back the blood of His servants. Then they will praise the living God forever (vv.12-13). As Broyles (1989:160) states, "Instead of Yahweh's wrath going on 'forever', it is his praise which shall go on 'forever.'" The works of God's salvation will be recounted (נִסְפָּר) from generation to generation in the form of praise (תְּהִלָּה) (cf., v.13b). This understanding hints at the possibility that singing a psalm (תְּהִלָּה) was one of the modes in which to instruct people about God's salvation.

Psalm 79 closed with a description of His people as 'the flock of your pasture' (Ps. 79:13) and their resolution of recounting the works of God's salvation forever, and Psalm 80 commences with a 'Shepherd of Israel who leads Joseph like a flock' (Ps. 80:2). Then Psalm 80 is an extended version of Psalm 79's resolution. With respect to its context, God's leading 'Joseph' refers to the exodus out of Egypt, and His breaking down the wall may indicate the destruction of Northern Israel in 722 B.C. (Broyles, 1989:161,163; cf., Croft, 1987:34; Day, 1992:35-36),<sup>151</sup> but the historical background of the psalm still remains far from being fully answered. Presumably, in the process of time (from pre-monarchic to post-exilic time), as Gerstenberger

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<sup>151</sup> LXX adds to the title, 'A psalm concerning the Assyrian' (ψαλμὸς ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἀσσυρίου). Day (1992:118) maintains that it is remarkable that a number of references to the northern tribes of Israel, especially under the name of Joseph occur.

(2001:106) speculates, the psalm “transports the painful communal experiences of generations”.

Psalm 80 is a ‘communal lament’ (Day, 1992:33) that consists of complaints directed towards God and pleas to Him for deliverance. In verse 5, the psalmist expresses his uneasy feeling as follows:

O Yahweh God Almighty,  
How long will you be angry with the prayer of your people?

This cry immediately brings the reader back to the roar in Psalm 79:6 where he moans,

How long, Yahweh, Will you be angry forever?  
Will your jealousy blaze like a fire?

In so doing, appeals for salvation are systematically incorporated into the flow of the psalm, which is clearly demonstrated in four refrains (vv.4, 8, 20 and 15):

Bring us back, O God,  
Let your face shine upon us  
And we will be saved (vv. 4, 8, 20)

The only difference among the three verses is in their different appellations: God (v.4), God Almighty (v.8), and Yahweh God Almighty (v.20).<sup>152</sup> Verse 15 also serves to function as a refrain in spite of its difference in vocabulary, imagery, and contents (Gerstenberger, 2001:103):<sup>153</sup>

Come back to us (שוב in *qal*), O God Almighty, we pray,

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<sup>152</sup> אֱלֹהִים הַשִּׁבְנוּ וְהָאֵר פְּנֵיךְ וְנוֹשְׁעָה (v.4)

אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת הַשִּׁבְנוּ וְהָאֵר פְּנֵיךְ וְנוֹשְׁעָה (v.8)

יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת הַשִּׁבְנוּ הָאֵר פְּנֵיךְ וְנוֹשְׁעָה (v.20)

<sup>153</sup> אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת שׁוּבֵנוּא תִבְט מִשָּׁמַיִם וְרָאָה וְפָקֵד גַּפְּנֵי זֹאת (v.15)

Look down from heaven and see  
Watch over this vine [a metaphor of Israel] (v.15).

On the surface, there seems to be no indication of wisdom influence on the psalm. However, if we consider Psalm 80 in connection with the previous psalms, then the psalm is the teacher's plea for salvation on behalf of his pupils. The consistent occurrence of the first person plural ('we') throughout the psalm reinforces this proposal. The psalmist states at the end of Psalm 79 (v.13) that he will recount the works of God in the form of praise. And the psalmist as a sage is giving an example of how 'we' should call forth God's salvation in Psalm 80.

Psalm 81 roughly falls into two sections: (1) summons to praise (vv.2-5); and (2) oracles/sermons (vv.6-17) (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:107). The account of salvation in the psalm is associated with the Exodus (cf., אֱרֵץ מִצְרַיִם in vv. 6, 10). However, the account of God's salvation is 'a voice that he did not understand' (שִׁפְתַי לֹא־יָדַעְתִּי), which evinces wisdom flavour (v.6). Booij (1984:468) argues that 'what I did not understand' indicates the mystery and authority of God's word that is not expected before. Gerstenberger (2001:111) argues that "This audition formula [vv.5-6] clearly does not belong to prophetic traditions but could derive from sapiential discourse". Wisdom is in fact hidden with God rather than being accessible through human endeavour (cf., Job 28). In the similar vein, the knowledge of salvation goes beyond our understanding, which requires the reader to respond in faith. The invocation cast in Psalm 81:9 is also a reminiscence of the opening call of Psalm 78 in the style of wisdom teacher:

Listen my people, and I will admonish (וְאֶעֱיִדְךָ) you;  
If only you would listen to me, Israel!

Interestingly enough the instruction of warning is given in the first person of God who takes the position of a wise man. Even though the situation of distress seems to appear irrational, the reader is admonished to sing for joy to God (vv.2-4) and to

listen to the teaching (v.9), which stands in sharp opposition to the account of Israel's rebellion in verses 12. If they repent and follow His ways, they will be satisfied with the finest of wheat and honey from the rock (vv.14-17).

Psalm 82 is presented in the context of court. The theme of righteousness occupies in the centre of the psalm. In the preceding psalm, God warned His people not to bow down to a foreign god (אל), and now in Psalm 82 He warns the 'gods' (אלהים) not to defend the unjust. Without a proper explanation, the psalm begins with a description of אלהים (God) standing in the assembly of אל and judging the 'אלהים' (the divine beings). With respect to the reference to אלהים, the former takes singular verbs, whereas the latter (בְּקִרְבֵּי אֱלֹהִים) appears the parallel to the assembly of אל.<sup>154</sup> The fact that Psalm 82 belongs to the אלהים psalms may hint at the possibility that the original יהוה has been replaced by אלהים. At any rate, this picture provokes an association with the scene of the heavenly court in Job 1:6-12 (cf., 1 Kings 22:19), which is also a well known institution in ancient Near East (Gerstenberger, 2001:113; Handy, 1990:53). God accuses the 'gods,' for they defend the unjust and show favour to the wicked. They are admonished not to disobey God, the righteous Judge, who defends the cause of the weak and rescues the needy. Gerstenberger (2001:114) sees a sharp contrast between the weak/the needy and the wicked, which is a "crucial juxtaposition" at which "we note a strong affinity of this censure with sapiential and D[euteronomical] social ethos". Moreover, the reason why the gods totally failed in their job is because they neither know (ידע) nor understand (בין), and go about in darkness. In this way, the gods are presented as the foolish that eventually end up in death (v.7). As the wise man of Proverbs (11:19) instructs, "The truly righteous man is on the way to life, but to pursue evil leads to death". The psalm ends with a typical call for salvation (v.8): "rise up (קוּמָה), O God and judge

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<sup>154</sup> This interpretation has been accepted universally. For some more detailed explanations, see Handy (1990:53).

(שִׁפְטָהּ) the earth”, which implies that the final verdict belongs to God. To judge the earth is somehow associated with the providence of God in creation. As Handy (1990:61) maintains, God is being asked to stand up not to make an address, but “to take direct control of the cosmos and rectify the chaotic universe”. The experience of chaos and its ongoing threat in all areas of life is construed in terms of the wisdom tradition (cf., Perdue, 1994:34-48).

Psalm 83, the last Asaph psalm in the Psalter, is a curse type prayer asking God to destroy the enemies. The invocation to אֱלֹהִים in the beginning (v.2) connects the psalm to that of Psalm 82:8, whereas the divine name יהוה at the end (v.19) prepares a way to the ‘יהוה’ psalms’ that resume in the next psalm. The body of the psalm consists of the account of the rebellion of the nations including Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab, the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, and Assyria. They plot together with one mind to coalesce in conspiracy against God. The psalmist is asking God to rise up (82:8), then not to keep silent (83:2), and finally to revenge on the wicked (vv. 14-18) to whom יהוה, His name, alone will be known as the Most High (עֲלִיּוֹן) over all the earth (v.19). אֱלֹהִים is יהוה, the עֲלִיּוֹן. Therefore it is imperative for His people and the nations to praise Him. As Gerstenberger (2001:121) states, this is “full of praise for the mighty God who has the power to act on behalf of those who call to him”.

The Asaph psalms can be characterised by certain distinctive features in relation to our study. As Day (1992:118) maintains, a number of the psalms “appeal to Yahweh’s mighty deeds in the past (whether in history or at creation) as a motivation for Yahweh to act in the present or by way of warning or exhortation to the people”. Croft (1987:153) also concurs with Day when he states that one of the features in relation to the thesis of the Asaph collection is the “evidence of the didactic use of history and teaching from tradition”. In other words, the past history of the nation is

evoked as encouragement or as a warning.

### 5.5.5. Psalms 84–88 (Korah Collection II)

The second Korah collection forms a sequence from Psalms 84 to 88, but is divided into two sections by the intrusion of Psalm 86 that is Davidic. Then Psalm 89 comes immediately after the Korah Psalms to close the Book III. Discussion will centre on finding the key scene to the relationship between wisdom and salvation. In treating the relationship of the themes, following questions will be considered as well. Why is the only Davidic Psalm in Book III, inserted in the middle of Korah Psalms? And how does Psalm 89 relate to the second Korah collection from the canonical point of view?

Psalm 83 is marked as the last of the so-called 'אֱלֹהִים psalms' (Pss. 42-83), and 'יהוה' psalms' appear again with Psalm 84, the first of the second Korah collection. Interestingly enough, it was a Korah psalm that began the 'אֱלֹהִים psalms', that is Psalm 42. However, the mood of the psalms is quite different from each other, i.e., Psalm 84 (a Zion hymn) is much brighter than Psalm 42 (a lament). The origin of the psalm may come from the pre-exilic period for use in some capacity at the festival worship, i.e., the autumn celebration of Tabernacles (Croft, 1987:173). Gerstenberger (2001:126) argues against the early period and contends that "[t]he sanctuary on Mount Zion became an international symbol of Yahweh's presence, and therefore a visible sign of identity for the faith community, only after the end of Judean statehood." At any rate, however, from our point of view, the third stage of Waltke's approach, our concern is more on the psalm's effect on the post-exilic Jewish community than the original context. The psalm is constructed on three features: firstly, Psalm 84 is invested with divine names, beginning (v.2) and ending (v.13) with יהוה צבאות that turns to ואלהי ואלהי (v.4), אֱלֹהִים צבאות, and אלהי יעקב (v.9) in the middle. Implied in these combined names is a

notion that Yahweh is a mighty God who has a power to protect His people from the wicked's attack. Thus God is depicted as a shield (מָגֵן) (vv.10, 11).

Secondly, Yahweh's dwelling place is singled out in different terms: 'your dwelling place' (v.2), 'the courts of Yahweh' (v.3, 11), 'your altar' (v.4), 'your house' (v.5), and 'Zion' (v.8). The intense desire to be with Yahweh is well expressed in the astonished exclamation in verse 2, i.e., 'how lovely (בְּהַיְדִירוֹת) is your dwelling place!' The salvation will finally be achieved by getting into the dwelling place where Yahweh, a sun and shield, bestows favour and honour (v.13).

Thirdly, the eagerness for the presence/salvation of Yahweh resounds with the triple occurrence of the אֲשֶׁר־י formula in verses 5, 6, and 13:

Blessed are those who dwell in Your house;  
they ever praise You (v.5).

Blessed is the man whose strength is in You;  
in his mind is the highway [to Zion] (v.6).

Blessed is the man who trusts (בְּטַח) in You, O Yahweh Almighty (v.13).

Of special important for our study is the fact that the blessed man is also presented as one who walks in blamelessness (בְּתָמִים) in verse 12. As is well known, the word group אֲשֶׁר־י/תָּמִים betrays wisdom flavour. For example, Job is depicted as "blameless (תָּם), upright, fearing God, and shunning evil (Job 1:1). In this way the man who trusts (בְּטַח) in Yahweh is depicted as the one who walks in integrity (תָּמִים), which is one of the features of the wise. In maintaining strong ties with Zion the emblem of Yahweh's dwelling place, the divine names, and the identity of the blessed man, the post-exilic community maintained their own faith, identity, and wisdom (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:126).

Psalm 85 is a communal prayer calling God to show his **חַסְדֵּךָ** and salvation (i.e., v. 8), which is based on past experience of his grace (vv.2-4). Gunkel (1998[1933]:317) view the psalm as prophetic liturgy that “adopted and imitated the forms of salvation prophecy”. However, it is more plausible to see the psalm in terms of a retrospection of the salvation granted in the past because ‘Yahweh’s gracious acts in the past are cited as a motivation for the reader to act in the present (Day, 1992:34). The phrase, “you restored the captivity of Jacob’ (v.2), may indicate the return from the captivity from Babylon<sup>155</sup> that had been caused by God’s wrath (vv.4, 5, 6). Israel still suffers oppression apparently due to administrators of the Persian Empire, which forces the psalmist to beg not only for deliverance but also for the recovery of peace and prosperity. However, the salvation by His righteousness (**צְדִיקָה**) is applicable only to those who fear (**יִרְאֵהוּ**) Yahweh (vv.10-14). In other words, His salvation will be given to those who know what wisdom means, i.e., to fear Yahweh. As Gerstenberger (2001:129) correctly suggests, this “kerygmatic and sapiential language” are to be “composed of quotations from different [from prophetic tradition] sources”.

Psalm 86 is entitled **תְּפִלָּה לְדָוִד** (‘A Prayer of David’) and appears to be inserted in Korah psalms (Pss. 85-89). On the one hand, to identify the poet with the poor and the needy is a typical phenomenon of Davidic collections (Pss. 40:18; 69: 30; 70:6; 86:2; 109:22). On the other hand, the appearance of the theme of **שְׂאוֹל** (v.13) gives the psalm legitimacy for its inclusion to the Korah psalms where the theme predominates (Mitchell, 2006:376). Moreover, the superiority of Yahweh over gods (vv.8-10) is reminiscent of Psalm 82, an Asaph psalm. In any events, the name, David, in the series of the Korah psalms plays a part to bring the reader back to the David collections in Book I and II. Eaton (2003:309) observes the psalm’s particular affinity with Psalms 25-28 and 54-57 that are all Davidic psalms, which reinforces its function

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<sup>155</sup> The verb **שׁוּב** is most common for expressing the end of the ‘captivity’ (Terrien, 2003:607).

of a reminiscence of Davidic lamentation. In that sense the psalm is a summary book and a kind of incarnation of David of the previous books. The psalmist identifies himself with the poor and the needy (v.1), a servant trusting in Yahweh (v.2), the one fearing Yahweh's name (v.11), the one praising God (v.12), and the son of Yahweh's maidservant (v.16). Conversely, God is presented as abundant in רַחֵם, which reaches its climax in verse 15:

But You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God,  
Slow to anger, and abounding in רַחֵם and truth (אֱמֶת).

In the course of his prayer, the psalmist humbles himself to the position of pupil to learn the way that will lead him to *fear* Yahweh, the wisdom teacher (cf., Pss. 25:8, 12; 32:8; 119:33, 102):

Teach me your way, O Yahweh, I will walk in Your truth (אֱמֶת)  
Give me an undivided heart to fear (אֶרְיֵא) Your name (v.11)

In particular, the phrase, "give me an undivided heart to *fear* your name" is connected to that of the previous psalm, i.e., "his salvation is near to those who *fear* him (Ps. 85:10)." The abrupt appearance of David praying for salvation in the sequence of the Korah psalms must have given the post-exilic Israelite much relief and rationale for surviving. The God of David will teach the post-exilic community how to survive as He did to David, i.e., to trust and fear Yahweh.

The voice of the sons of Korah resumes again in Psalm 87, a Zion hymn like Psalm 84 (cf., Pss. 46; 48; 76; 84; 122; 132). The dwelling place of Yahweh, יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, is once again emphasized. His foundation<sup>156</sup> is rooted not in Rahab (a metaphor for Egypt) (Gerstenberger, 2001:139) and Babylon, but in יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, the Holy City. A closer reading of the text, however, reveals that the word יְרוּשָׁלַיִם is embodied in the term 'Zion's gates'

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<sup>156</sup> The term has no antecedent, but the point is clear: God has made his place in Zion (cf., VanGemeren, 1991:561-564).

(v.2). In fact, they were the means of access to the city. According to Allen (1996:135), “God loves Jerusalem; indeed, Zion is His dear ‘daughter.’ But God has an even greater love for Zion’s gates, because the gates allow people to come near to Him in holy worship. God is ever seeking true worshippers.”

Then they will be called as ones who were born in צִיּוֹן (v.6), which is a clear description of God’s salvation. Surprisingly, the speaker in verses 5-6 is none other than Yahweh. He is coming to צִיּוֹן in order to welcome the true worshippers and declaring that “all my fountains are in צִיּוֹן” (v.7). Salvation comes not from Rahab, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, or Cush, but from the City of God, צִיּוֹן.

Psalm 88, a מִשְׁכִּיל of a wise man (cf., 1 Kings 4:32), is the last Korah psalm of the second group. The psalm is filled with the images of the underworld: ‘Sheol’(v.4); ‘pit’ (v.5); ‘grave’ (v.6); ‘dark place’ (v.7); ‘ghost’ (v.11); ‘Abaddon’ (v.12); and ‘darkness’ (v.13). These are only full of darkness of אַבְדֹּן, אֲשֵׁרִית, and gloomy invocation for salvation. Based on this observation, scholars are quick to conclude that the psalm consists of one long lamentation with no indication of hope or assurance (e.g., Duhm, 1899:219; Croft, 1987:62), viewing the psalm as a psalm of illness or the like (e.g., Day, 1992:23; Dahood, 1968:302; Croft, 1987:139). One thing the psalmist is doing is to call and spread out his hands toward Yahweh for deliverance (v.10). The answer has not yet arrived, and the last theological word of the psalm is darkness (v.19) (Brueggemann, 1984:8).

However, the God the psalmist is calling is the God of his salvation (אֱלֹהֵי יְשׁוּעָתִי) (v.2). Furthermore, the six rhetorical interrogatives in verses 11-13 can be interpreted in terms of his confidence in God’s salvation, i.e., an appeal to His אֱמוּנָה, His חֶסֶד, and His צְדָקָה. The expected answer to those questions is that God will save him because of His three characteristics.

### 5.5.6. Psalm 89

Psalm 89, a royal psalm, concludes the third book of the Psalms. Tate (1990:416-418) views it as a 'royal lament' for a recent defeat of a Davidic king'. Anderson (1983:241) classifies the psalm as "Royal psalm based on the Davidic covenant" (cf., 2 Samuel 17) in its content, but divides it into two in its form; hymn (vv.1-37) and lament (vv. 38-51).<sup>157</sup> Murphy (1983:137) also notes that the psalm begins like a hymn but ends like a lament. Thus Wilcock (2001b: 70) argues that this psalm had two authors: the first half (vv.1-37) was a song of praise from a happy time of monarchy and the last half (vv.38-51) was added to be used "in that terrible decade of Judah's history".<sup>158</sup>

In any case, from our point of view, i.e., the third stage of Waltke's proposal, the flow from hymn to lament matches well with the adjacent psalms in that Psalm 88 seems to end with 'darkness' without hope, but, as we argued in its discussion, it is an ironical expression of a strong confidence on God's salvation. The beginning part of the hymn in Psalm 89 serves as a response to the salvation of God. In addition, Psalm 89 is considered as closely associated with the Korah collection (Pss. 84-88) because of the verbal relationship between the appeals of Psalm 88:11f (חֶסֶד, אֱמוּנָה, פִּלָּא, צְדָקָה) and the opening verses (1, 2, 5, and 16) of Psalm 89 (Goulder, 1982:211). Moreover, the similarity of its heading to Psalm 88:1 may indicate its close connection to the Korah collection, and the lament on the mortality of human life introduced in the latter part of Psalm 89 is in fact expanded in Psalm 90.

The psalm commences with the psalmist's praise of God's חֶסֶד and אֱמוּנָה that

<sup>157</sup> According to Broyles (1989:170), the psalm has three sections: (1) hymn: Yahweh's right to cosmic kingship (vv. 2-3, 6-19), (2) oracle: the Davidic covenant (vv. 4-5, 20-38), and (3) lament: the king's battle defeat (vv. 39-52).

<sup>158</sup> Of this psalm Brueggemann (1984:115) remarks, "[it] may be the most remarkable and satisfying of all the psalms... The very process of the psalm itself shows the moves made in faith, into, through, and out of disorientation, into a new orientation, which is marked by joyous trust... We should not fail to notice that this psalm is an act of faith. It is a mighty engagement with God, a struggle against God and a wondrous communion with God".

appears as a main theme throughout in relation to the Davidic covenant (vv.2-5).<sup>159</sup> In the hymn of verses 6-19, reasons are given as to why Yahweh should be praised. First, the heavens join the praise of God, supreme and awesome one among the assembly of the holy ones (vv.6-8). God's rule is expressed in his exaltation among the gods (בְּבִנְיֵי אֱלֹהִים). The rhetorical interrogatives beginning in verse 7, "who in the skies can compare with Yahweh...", by and large conjure up the praise of victory after crossing the Red Sea in Exodus 15:11, "who among the gods is like you?..." In a way, verses 7-12 remind the reader of the salvific deeds of Yahweh in Exodus. In so doing, the psalm serves to prepare the reader for Book IV that is generally considered an 'Exodus collection'. Second, the power of God is described as Creator with חֹסֵד and אֱמוּנָה and Sustainer with צֶדֶק and מִשְׁפָּט (vv.9-15);<sup>160</sup> The psalmist remembers feature of communal laments to recite glorious deeds of the past. The placement of the Creation story in the middle of the recital of the covenant and faithfulness suggest that Creation and the covenant with David constitute a single event (Obenhaus, 2000:135). The psalmist asks why, if God showed his faithfulness in Creation, he would not continue to show faithfulness in relation to his covenant with David. Third, the psalmist declares that 'Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) are those who know (יָדְעוּ) 'the joyful shout', which immediately takes the reader back to the חֹסֵד and אֱמוּנָה of verse 1 (vv.16-19).

Verses 20-38 are about the Lord's election of David to be his 'anointed one' and about his everlasting covenant with him. God puts the Davidic king's hand upon the sea and his right hand upon the rivers. Even though his royal descendants remain unfaithful, God will remain faithful because of the covenant with David, by which the Davidic kingdom will endure and be everlasting. God's חֹסֵד and אֱמוּנָה (vv. 25, 29, 34) is continually emphasized in association with a covenant with David

<sup>159</sup> The terms, חֹסֵד and אֱמוּנָה, dominate throughout the psalm (vv. 1-2, 8, 14, 28, 33, 49).

<sup>160</sup> 'Rahab' in verse 10, as with Psalm 87:4, refers to Egypt "when the Lord tamed her too at the time of the Exodus" (Wilcock, 2001b: 89).

(vv.29, 35, 36).

The first word, **וְאַתָּה** ('But you'), of verse 39, represents an agonizing turnaround in the flow of the psalm, bringing the readers to the present where Israel is suffering due to her rebellion against Yahweh (vv.39-46). There seems to be huge gap between the covenant and the reality.<sup>161</sup> The similarities of its function to the final psalm of book II (Psalm 72) is striking. According to Tate (1990:429), Psalms 73-74 and 88-89 function like matching 'bookends' to frame the rest of the psalms in book III, maintaining that "[a]t both ends of Book III there is a psalm which deals with the theological distress of an individual followed by a psalm which expresses the distress in terms of the nation. In fact, Book III seems to deal over and over with the bafflement of believers who are struggling with the gap between promise and reality."

Finally, God's present rejection of David's son brings the psalmist to appeal to God's **חַסְדֶּךָ** and **אֱמוּנָה** to his covenant with David (vv.47-52). As Murphy (1983:137) observes, "'How long?' (v.46) is typical of a lament, and so is the subject of the shortness of life (vv. 47-48)". Life is too short to wait for the answer endlessly. Thus the psalmist asks God to remember his mortality and his agony, based on his assurance of God's faithfulness to the Davidic covenant. The psalm, then, ends with a doxology in verse 53 that also brings to a close the third Book of the Psalms.

A salvation motif is the recurrent theme of Book III in which salvation is needed, received, and enjoyed, not to mention Books I and II. In fact, the theme of salvation runs throughout the first three books of the Psalter (Pss. 3-89). As Mays (1994b:16)

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<sup>161</sup> Wilcock (2001b:70) suggests, "Whoever the Davidic king was at the time, verses 38-41 lament the capture of his city and the loss of his crown. Much the most likely period is the reign of Zedekiah, from 597 BC to 587 BC. Zedekiah will not himself be the one of whom the psalm speaks; he is the puppet king installed by the Babylonians in the place of his nephew Jehoiachin, whom they have taken into exile". However, the historical reference remain uncertain, thus we cannot be sure of the date of this psalm, but it can be assumed, from the text itself, that this psalm is associated with a context where Yahweh's promise to his people seems to be nullified.

rightly points out, “It is all called taking refuge in the LORD repeatedly, with the clear implication that the prayers themselves are the means of taking refuge”. At the same time, the third book of the Psalm evinces a hint of something associated with wisdom theme as well. Ethan (אֵיתָן) in the superscription is probably another name for Jeduthun (יְדֻתוּן) (cf., 1 Chronicles 15:17, 19; 16:4, 41), who was one of David’s three choir readers (Asaph, Korah, and Ethan; cf., 1 Chronicles 16:41-42; 25:1-6; 2 Chronicles 5:12), and is called as David’s חוֹזֵה (seer) in 2 Chronicles 35:15. Interestingly, Asaph is also described as חוֹזֵה in Chronicles 29:30, which makes it plausible to suggest that the three temple musicians were also ‘the wise men’ (see also 1 Kings 4:31; cf., Day, 1992:120). Then the third book of the Psalter begins and ends with the wise men’s psalms, as with Psalm 73, a wisdom psalm, the type of Psalm 89 is מְשָׁכִיל, which means that Book III is placed between the two מְשָׁכִיל psalms. As we already examined in Psalm 73, the word מְשָׁכִיל seems related to ‘teaching’ or ‘understanding’ (Pss. 32 and 47), and the second part of the lament is in fact questioning the authenticity of God’s faithfulness, which raises the issue of theodicy (cf., vv. 39, 50), because the psalmist is struggling with the present denouncement of the covenant and with God’s faithfulness in those verses. As far as ‘seam psalm’ is concerned, then, Book III is framed by a wisdom theme.

In light of this understanding, Wilcock (2001a:109) maintains that Psalm 89 “grapples with a question very hard to understand”, which is associated with wisdom tradition to search for the mystery of life. This may explain why a scholar like Mays (1994a:105) describes the psalm as a “shattering quandary.” In fact the question of God’s חֶסֶד and אֱמוּנָה in verses 47 and 50 is not directly answered, which must leave the reader perplexed. Nevertheless, the reader is forced to praise Yahweh in the form of benediction (v.53). Will Yahweh give an answer to the questions peculiar to the post-exilic period? The answer is positive. The Psalter does not end with the lament of Psalm 89. With a Mosaic psalm, Book IV begins the end.

## 5.6. BOOK IV (Psalms 90–106)

As already was recognized by many commentators, Book IV reveals a different set of editorial techniques from those of the first half of the Psalter (Books I-III). One of them is the fact that untitled psalms dominate in the book.<sup>162</sup> Wilson (1985a:215) views this phenomenon as the product of purposeful editorial arrangement, and suggests that Book IV “functions as the editorial ‘centre’ of the final form of the Hebrew Psalter.” The fourth book of the Psalter does not have a group of psalms like ‘Korah Collection’ or ‘Asaph Collection’, but it has a point to such a title, namely, ‘Exodus collection’ (Wilcock), ‘Mosaic collection’ (Wilson, Tate), or ‘a collection of Autumn Festival psalms’ (Goulder).

According to Wilcock (2001b:73-74), Book IV is, first of all, characterized by (1) the implication of Exodus motif due to the heading of Psalm 90 that bears the name Moses which is a reminder of Exodus, (2) some psalms’ plausible connection to Moses’ time (Ps. 95:8-9 and Exodus 17:7; Ps. 99:6-7 and Exodus 24; Ps. 103:7-8 and Exodus 34:6), and (3) salvation history recital psalms based their story on Exodus (Pss. 105 and 106). Secondly, the praise of **יְהוָה מִלְּךְ** (‘Yahweh reigns’), which indicates God’s rule and authority as king (Pss. 93:1, 96:10, 97:1 and 99:1), leads us to consider these psalms as a group. Anderson (1992:86) describes those psalms as “another of the so-called Enthronement Psalms” which form a subdivision of the Hymns. The designation ‘enthronement psalms’ is mainly attributed to Mowinckel (1962:106-192) and generally refers to Psalms 47, 93, and 95-99, all of which speak of Yahweh as king or use the expression ‘Yahweh reigns’.<sup>163</sup> Thus, Psalms 93-99 are often thought of as a group (cf., Wilcock, 2001b:85). On this basis, Wilcock (2001b:74)

<sup>162</sup> 10 out of 17 psalms are untitled and only three psalms have a name on them (Moses in Ps. 90 and David in Pss. 101 and 103).

<sup>163</sup> Kraus (1992:87) argues that to translate **יְהוָה מִלְּךְ** as ‘Yahweh has become a king’ should be reconsidered. He maintains that this phrase means ‘Yahweh is king’.

suggests that it seems not unreasonable to call Book IV an 'Exodus Collection,' as the theme of salvation is hardly missing in these two observations.

Wilson (1993b:75-76) understands Book IV in terms of a 'Mosaic frame' in that the introductory psalms of the book (Pss. 90-92 and 94) are associated with the old divine names  $\text{שְׁרַי}$  and  $\text{עֲלֵי־יֹון}$ , references to Moses and Aaron, the Exodus wanderings and other thematic correspondences, and also because these psalms share numerous verbal and thematic connections with the concluding psalms (Pss. 105-106). On this basis Wilson (1993b:76) argues that "these psalms form a 'Mosaic frame' that provides an interpretive *entrée* to the book". In fact, a closer reading reveals that "there is a strong emphasis in Book Five [Four?] on the person of Moses" (Wilson, 1985a:187). According to Wilson (1985a:215), the book answers the problem posed in the previous Books, particularly in Psalm 89, as to the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant. The answer includes the following: (1) Yahweh 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; and (4) Blessed are they that trust in him. As we have already noted, reading from the beginning up to this point (Books I-III), the kingship of Yahweh, the image of refuge ( $\text{מְחֻסָּה}$ ), and a call to trust ( $\text{בַּטַּח}$ ) in Yahweh have served as tokens of God's salvation. Of special interest from Wilson's point of view is that the salvation motif is more closely related to the person and events of Moses.

With respect to the nature of Book IV, Goulder (1975:269) takes the position that the book is "a collection of Autumn Festival psalms", more specifically, "a collection of Tabernacles psalms". According to him (1975:270-275), the seventeen psalms were used for the seventeen liturgical occasions of Tabernacle; the even-numbered psalms would be chanted in the evening while the odd-numbered psalms in the morning, which is highly hypothetical and limited (cf., Wilson, 1993a:46). However, in relation to the previous two scholars' positions (Exodus and Mosaic motif), Goulder

(1975:275) also recognizes the book's connection to the Exodus motif as follows:

The people with their king or leader come to the Temple [for the festival]...: the king pronounces the judgments and laws...Behind the king stand his fathers David and Solomon...Behind David and Solomon stands Moses who built the Tabernacle; he ended the long Egyptian oppression and led to the people to the land...Behind Moses stands Yahweh [the Creator]...The function of the autumn liturgy is to assimilate the four images, making Yahweh's victory at creation present to people and leader now as they were to Moses and Solomon of old.

While the theory of Tabernacle is hypothetical, its connection to the person of Moses and the event of Exodus is plausible. The Exodus story is then the focus of the book giving the post-exilic community the hope of salvation.

In addition, from the view of our study, the book also reveals evidence of organization around the idea of wisdom. The psalms that registered more than once with the lists of wisdom influence psalms in the history of interpretation are 90, 91, 92, 94, 101, 104, 105, and 106. That 47 % (8 out of 17 psalms) comes first among the rest of the books is striking.

### 5.6.1. Psalm 90

This is the oldest psalm in the Psalter if we accept the title as it is; "A prayer of Moses, the man of God". With respect to 'the man of God' (אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים), we read the same expression in Deuteronomy 33:1: "This is the blessing that Moses *the man of God* pronounced on the Israelites before his death." And in Joshua 14:6 again, Caleb later reminds Joshua, "You know what Yahweh said to Moses *the man of God* at Kadesh Barnea." In relation to its date, however, Broyles (1989:174) argues that "[t]he lack of attention to the traditions fundamental to the pre-exilic laments, namely exodus and conquest, the Zion and Davidic traditions, may imply that Ps. 90 best fits the postexilic era."

Vawter (1975:461) also views the author as “a pious Jew in postexilic Palestine, speaking in the name of his people”. This is also the case with Dahood (1968:322) and Tate (1990:438). From our point of view, however, the title forces the reader to speculate the psalm under the name of Moses who is the quintessence of the Exodus, a typical example of salvation motif. As we have recognized up to this point, Books I through III of the Psalter are dominated by the name of David and members of David’s royal court. At the end of the third Book, Psalm 89, an individual lament over the failure of the Davidic Covenant and called Yahweh to remember the taunts with which the enemies mocked His anointed one (Ps. 89:51-52). Then the name of Moses in the first psalm of the next book immediately brings the readers “back to a time before the Davidic covenant, before the monarchy, before the judges, before the settlement in Palestine” (deClaisse-Walford, 1995:148). During the time of the wilderness wandering, according to deClaisse-Walford (1995:148-149), Moses occasionally sings in the form of oracle or instruction (e.g., Exodus 15; Deuteronomy 32-33). Interestingly enough, in those cases God is presented as a victor in war (Exodus 15:1, 3, 8), righteous rock (Deuteronomy 32:3, 4), and king of Israel (Deuteronomy 33:5), which must have inscribed the image of God as great warrior, i.e., the certainty of salvation in the heart of the people of Israel.

Psalm 90 begins with an introductory word on the everlasting God (vv.1-2) and moves to an extended statement about human mortality in the light of God’s eternity and God’s wrath (vv. 3-10), which is the main thrust of the content of the psalm. God is addressed here as אֱלֹהֵינוּ a designation used by Moses in Exodus 15:7 and Deuteronomy 3:24. Just as the designation “man of God” takes the reader back to Deuteronomy 33:1, so the notion of Yahweh as the dwelling place (מְעוֹן) of his people has its origins from the same source: “The eternal God is a dwelling place (מְעוֹן), and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33:27).

The Hebrew word for “dwelling place” (יְעוֹנָה) can also be translated as ‘refuge’, and indeed the Septuagint (καταφυγή) and Vulgate (*refugium*) presuppose a different Hebrew word (יְעוֹנָה) that does mean ‘refuge’ rather than ‘dwelling place’ (Kidner, 1973:328). But the allusion to Deuteronomy 33:27 indicates that in verse 1 the primary notion of Yahweh is the dwelling place for every generation of Israelites. That Moses can think of God as “our dwelling place throughout all generations” implies that he has been such for his people during the time of bondage in Egypt and in the generations that preceded this, going back to Abraham. Moses is describing an age that embraces him, an age in which God’s people had never entered into the land of promise. Truly, in all generations God’s people had never had a secure dwelling place on earth, which leads them to confess that God is their dwelling place. In verse 2, Moses returns to the first words of the Bible: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”. Meditating on this, Moses realizes that God is the only secure place in which men can dwell. At the very least verse 2 indicates, “His divine existence reaches out of the unlimited past into the unlimited future” (Delitzsch, 1952:50-51).

Temporal references abound throughout the psalm, emphasizing the shortness of human life. In this regard, Miller (1986:125) keenly observes, that “[t]he content of vv. 1-2, the six references each to ‘days’ and ‘years,’ as well as the several references to ‘morning’ and ‘evening,’ are the chief clues to the character of the psalm as a reflection and prayer about time and more particularly *our* days (vv. 9, 12, 14) and *our* years (vv. 9, 10: “the days of our years).”

Moses’ experience in the wilderness, watching his contemporaries die while outliving them all, highlighted for Moses the transition of people (Leupold, 1977[1959]:644). Then the psalmist confesses to know that the vanity of human life has been caused by the divine anger (vv. 7, 9, 11) in light of the iniquities of humankind (v. 8). Moses is very conscious that the return of man to dust is not just a

natural physical phenomenon. He has already implied this in his allusion to the language of Genesis 3:19 and now he makes the point explicit that human death is the outworking of God's curse on Adam. Kidner (1973:330) remarks that "We are shown God's wrath as doubly irresistible, by its vigour and by its justice, leaving us with no resource (v.7) and no excuse (v.8)." Moreover, the petition, "Return, Yahweh, how long?" in Psalm 90:13 echoes that of "How long, O Yahweh, will you hide yourself?" in Psalm 89:47, which indicates that "the people's current condition is considered harsher than usual" (Broyles, 1989:174). The gloomy mood of the first half may match well with the situation of the post-exilic period, with which the community is easily identified.

The pivot of the psalm is located in verse 12. In dealing with verse 12, Brueggemann (1984:111) maintains that the crux of the psalm is the goal of a "heart of wisdom". As so often in the wisdom psalms, wisdom results from taking death seriously and from refusing to let time pass by as though we were going to live forever. The prayer, "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom", presupposes that if God's people treat each day as precious, recognizing it will soon be gone, then it is possible to use it in a wise manner. Moses has just reflected on the emptiness of human toil (v.10). Now he balances this with the perspective that the wise will be able to live lives of significance. He will go on praying for lives that experience fulfilment and who are significant because they are lives which experience the joy of knowing God's  $\text{רָצוֹן}$  and also because God Himself is able to use 'the work of our hands' to accomplish his own purposes. But all of this begins with an acute awareness of the transition of life and a sense of immense urgency to make the most of the day that now lies ahead.

So far, this prayer was the response to the realization of the tragedy of human existence and the awareness that life is very short and empty. It is following this prayer that the tone of the psalm changes completely, from negative, brooding

thoughts to sanguine perspectives teeming with hope and confidence in God. Time is too short to spend idly. He needs wisdom to number his days, which begins with the knowledge of human mortality because of their sinfulness. Even more important to the wise is the conviction that Yahweh is a God of unfailing, irrevocable covenant love, **רַחֲמָיִם**, and it is this knowledge above all else which is the basis of profound hope in our lives. Thus Moses appeals to the **רַחֲמָיִם** of Yahweh, so that the mortal may enjoy the ‘days’ and ‘years’, making their works to be effective and enduring, though they are so transient. Time is not to be frittered away. Time must be used to know God and to allow him to use our work for His glory.

In verses 13-14, Moses uses two words that presuppose the covenant relationship between God and his people. First, God’s people are God’s ‘servants’, those who were redeemed from slavery in Egypt in order to serve God. Second, Moses can appeal to God’s **רַחֲמָיִם**, that is, his irrevocable commitment to the covenant, and therefore, the people of the covenant. On the one hand it remains true that ‘all our days pass away under God’s wrath. Yet, on the other hand, it is simultaneously the case that, knowing the **רַחֲמָיִם** of God, “we sing for joy and are glad all our days.” On the one hand, the freshness and newness people enjoy in the ‘morning’ is fleeting for by ‘evening’ people will be dead. Yet, on the other hand, prayer anticipates that God will satisfy us in the morning with His **רַחֲמָיִם** and that this fulfilment will enable us to rejoice all our days.

Moses’ prayer in verse 16-17 recalls the mighty acts of God (**פַּעֲלֵי יְהוָה**) in delivering his people from Egypt and preserving his people in the desert, acts that demonstrate the glory of God (**יְהוָה יִגְדַּל**). Yahweh will continue to act on behalf of His people, and that He will continue to show His glory to His people in all generations. By meditating on the prayer of Moses, the post-exilic community (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:161)<sup>164</sup> is, in

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<sup>164</sup> Gerstenberger views the psalm as a communal meditation, a sapiential reflection.

fact, taught that Yahweh will deliver them in His *time* with His **חֶסֶד** as He did for Moses and His servants, which is a heart of wisdom.

### 5.6.2. Psalms 91–105

The theme of Yahweh's 'dwelling place' continues in Psalm 91. Yahweh is described as **מְעוֹן** both in the beginning of Psalm 90 and in Psalm 91:9. Moreover, the terms, such as 'the shelter of the Most High' (**בְּסִתְּךָ עֲלֵי יוֹן**), 'the shadow of the Almighty' (**בְּצֵל שֹׁדֵי**), 'refuge' (**מְחֹסֶה**), 'fortress' (**מְצוּדָה**), and 'shield' (**צִנְהָ וְסִחְרָה**) stand as central motif of the psalm; Yahweh's protection for His people. Creach (1996: 94-95) writes that "Psalm 90 states that Yahweh has been Israel's **מְעוֹן**, in contrast to human strength which is futile and fleeting, and passes quickly. Psalm 91 declares, however, that the one who makes Yahweh a **מְעוֹן** will be protected and 'no scourge will come near your tent' (Ps. 91.10)."

Thus the psalmist maintains that he will dwell (**יָשֵׁב**) and obey (**לֹן** in *hithpoel*) in His shelter, and trust (**בָּטַח**) and seek refuge (**חָסָה**) in Yahweh (vv. 1, 2, 4, 9). The psalm does not take the form of prayer, but provides, in the style of benediction/sermon, the conviction that those who trust in Yahweh will find their refuge and salvation (Vos, 2005:137). Moreover, the call to return to his servants in Psalm 90: 13 is answered in Psalm 91: 14-16 where Yahweh declares, "I will deliver him... I will protect him... I will answer him... I will be with him in trouble...I will rescue him and I will honour him... I show him my salvation."

The shelter imagery is almost "proverbial" in the psalms (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:165),<sup>165</sup> indicating that seeking refuge in Yahweh is one of the characteristics of the wise. Furthermore, in the context of 'showing His salvation' the doctrine of

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<sup>165</sup> For example, see Pss. 17:8; 36:8; 57:2; 61:5; 63:8.

retribution, one of the wisdom's subjects, occurs in verse 8: those who take refuge in Yahweh will be delivered and see the punishment of the wicked. This understanding leads Gunkel (1998[1933]:296) to view Psalm 91 as a wisdom poem expressing "this doctrine in a form typical of wisdom poetry when they proclaim a blessing for the righteous". The same was true of the previous psalm. That is, the one who makes Yahweh/the Most High their dwelling place (מְעוֹן) is the same person who numbers his days and gains a heart of wisdom.

Psalm 92 is a thanksgiving psalm (Anderson, 1983:241) with a strong flavour of wisdom (cf., Howard, 1993:112). It begins with a thanksgiving for God's חֶסֶד and אֱמוּנָה that has appeared in his deeds (פִּעֵל) and works (מַעֲשֵׂה) (v. 4), and shares the divine name עֲלֵיָוִן with Psalm 91. In general terms, the expression of thanksgiving in Psalm 92 is a response to the certainty of salvation of the two precedent psalms. In particular, Moses' petition, "satisfy us in the morning in your חֶסֶד " in Psalm 90:14a is answered when the psalmist confesses, "it is good...to declare your חֶסֶד in the morning" in Psalm 92:3a (Howard, 1993:112).

This psalm also views those who do not understand Yahweh's great works (מַעֲשֵׂה) as foolish (v.7):

A brutal man (אִישׁ־בָּעַר) does not know (יָדַע);  
And a fool (כֹּסֵל) does not understand (בִּין) this

Moreover, there is a sharp distinction between the righteous (צַדִּיק) and the foolish/the wicked (רָשָׁעִים) (vv.8, 10 and 13-15). The datum point is in whether one knows the works of Yahweh's salvation or not. The wicked/the foolish fade as quickly as grass, but the righteous/the wise flourish like a tree planted in the house of Yahweh (cf., Ps. 1:3). Wisdom is to recognize the great deeds of Yahweh and proclaim his חֶסֶד and his faithfulness (אֱמוּנָה). The description of the two group's

opposite fate is based on the character of Yahweh's uprightness (v.16), which serves to evoke the idea of the doctrine of retribution.

Psalm 93 begins a group of the so-called enthronement psalms (Pss. 93, 95-99) (Mowinckel, 1962:106) with a phrase, **יְהוָה מִלְּךָ** ('Yahweh reigns'). Yahweh is proclaimed as the king over the world. Gunkel (1998[1933]:57) group the psalm into 'enthronement psalms' with Psalms 47, 96, 97, and 99, because they portray the idea of king's enthronement. Mowinckel (1962:32) maintains that Gunkel is wrong in excluding Psalm 95 from the category, arguing that "Ps. 95 has all the characteristics of the others, plus something more".<sup>166</sup> The water-related terms (streams, great waters, and sea) are used to give shape to human ruler over whom Yahweh reigns (vv.3-4). Moreover, the duration of His rule lasts forever (v.5), which once again conjures up the meditation of Moses in Psalm 90 where Yahweh's eternity was affirmed in a confident way contrasting it with human mortality (Howard, 1993:114). The relatively-short psalm (Ps.93) compared to others in the group seems to function, as a part of bigger picture, to introduce the theme of Yahweh's victory over the forces of chaos, which gives the reader the confidence of salvation.

Psalm 94 is similar to Psalm 92 in that it reflects on the condition of the righteous in the face of the wicked. Wilson (1985a:216) maintains that the focus once more moves to "the current situational problem which prevents Israel from recognizing the kingship of YHWH". Yahweh is described both as the 'protector' who avenges the righteous on the wicked and as the 'wise man' who teaches his pupil with knowledge (**דַּעַת**). The wicked say (v.7), "Yahweh does not see; the God of Jacob does not discern (**בִּי**)", as the fool in Psalm 14:2 would say in his heart, "there is no God". Likewise the wicked are identified with the stupid (**בְּעֵרִים**) and the fool

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<sup>166</sup> The origin of the enthronement psalms is generally agreed to be liturgical, specifically held at the enthronement festival in autumn (Mowinckel, 1962[vol.1]:118-129; Goulder, 1975:269). However, since the theory is highly hypothetical, as Wilson (1993:46) maintains, "it remains in need of convincing proof before it can be employed as an established datum to confirm additional hypotheses".

(כְּסִילִים) in verse 8. In so doing the themes of salvation and wisdom are interwoven in the image of Yahweh. He is the saviour and the wisdom teacher for His people. As the saviour, Yahweh is presented as his help (עֲזָרָה) (v.17), stronghold (מִשְׁגָּב), and rock of refuge (לְצֹר מִחֹסֵי) (v.22). He will support His people with His חֶסֶד (v.18) when 'my feet slips' (cf., Ps. 73:2). With respect to the wisdom motif, the theme of 'foolishness' once again occurs in verse 8, and this time a wisdom term שִׁכְל in the *hiphil* (תִּשְׁכִּילֵנִי) is contrasted to the 'dullest of people' (בֵּינוֹ בַּעֲרִים בְּעַם וְכִסְיִלִים) (v.8). The proud who would say, 'Yahweh does not see' in fact demonstrates his lack of wisdom. Thus one way for the fool to be wise is to be disciplined and taught by Yahweh through תּוֹרָה (v.12). The wise are convinced that whoever followed the תּוֹרָה would succeed in the desired goal which is to be wise and to be saved. Blessed (אֲשֶׁר־י) is the man whom Yahweh disciplines!

Psalm 95 begins with a call to praise Yahweh, the rock of salvation (לְצֹר יִשְׁעֵנוּ). The rock image immediately connects the psalm to Psalm 94 in which the psalmist proclaimed that Yahweh is the rock (צֹר) in whom he declared to take refuge (v.22). Moreover, Psalm 95 has affinity with Psalm 93 in the theme of Yahweh's kingship even though it does not contain the expression, 'Yahweh reigns': Yahweh is presented as the great King above all gods (v.3), the Creator of universe (vv.4-6), and the Shepherd of His flock (v.7a), all of which, in fact, converge on the image of Yahweh as the Rock of salvation (v.1). It may be true, as Gerstenberger (2001:185) maintains, that "the metaphor of pastures and sheep does not necessarily signify a royal background", but it may also be true that the 'leading his sheep' motif alludes to a king leading his people as God led Israel in the desert. In so doing, as Wilson (1985a:217) succinctly writes, the psalm "combines both the major theme of Yahweh as 'rock' and Yahweh as 'king'. What is needed for Israel is to hear His voice and not to harden his heart (v.7b-8), which serves to force the post-exilic community to meditate on the reality they are now facing. Wilson (1985a:217) points out that "[i]n a

return to the current problem, Israel's failure to accept YHWH's kingship is compared to the rebelliousness of Israel before Moses in the Exodus (95:7-11). The result then (as now) was the loss of the rest promised by God."

In this way, Psalm 95 functions as an admonition<sup>167</sup> for the community not to harden their hearts but to hear His voice in order to enter His rest, a metaphor for being saved. Thus the psalm is sometimes viewed as 'sermon' with praise and admonition (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:185).

At a glance, Psalm 96 is a hymn praising Yahweh's name and His salvation (v.2). After summoning all the earth to praise His marvellous deeds (v.3), reasons for praise are given: because (כִּי) Yahweh is superior to all gods (v.4). The paramountcy of Yahweh over all gods in verses 4-5 connects the psalm to the previous psalm where Yahweh is described as the great king above all gods (Ps.95:3). Moreover, the thematic sentence of kingship, 'Yahweh reigns' (יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ), occurs in verse 10 (cf., Mays, 1994:14a; McCann, 2001:126-127). What does Yahweh reign with? The psalm portrays Him judging the world in righteousness and His truth (vv.10, 13), clearly linking the judgment of Yahweh with that of His kingship. Thus he deserves to be worshipped and to be feared (נִרְאָה) above all gods (vv. 4, 9).

Psalm 97, another hymn of Yahweh's enthronement, commences with יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ (v.1) and emphasizes Yahweh's superiority to all gods once more (vv. 7, 9; cf., 95:3; 96:4). Even all gods must worship Him. As already was indicated in Psalm 96:9, the act of 'worshipping' Yahweh has particular connection to that of 'fearing' Him: the former is another expression of the latter. The expression of 'to hate evil (שָׂנֵא רָע)' is in fact coupled with the theme of 'fearing God', because, from a point of wisdom, to fear Yahweh is to hate evil (וַיִּרְאַת יְהוָה שָׂנֵאת רָע) (Proverbs. 8:13) (cf., Job. 1:1;

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<sup>167</sup> The fact that verbs throughout the psalm occur mainly in the form of either imperative (vv.1, 6,8) or cohortative (vv.1,2, 6) indicates that the psalm is not a prayer but a counsel.

28:28; Proverbs. 3:7). Yahweh is the only reliable protector who can deliver His people from the hands of the wicked (v.10). So he is depicted as a “divine warrior...in acts of judgement to maintain his sovereignty” (Mays, 1994a:15). What is requested at the sight of Yahweh’s deliverance is to rejoice (vv.1, 8, 12), to tremble (v.4), to worship (v.7), to hate evil (v.10), and praise (v.12). Those who appreciate the acts of Yahweh’s salvation cannot help but hate evil and fear Him.

Psalm 98 begins with the same expression as in Psalm 96: “Sing to Yahweh a new song” (שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ). The reason for the praise is more specific than Psalm 96: because (כִּי) Yahweh has worked salvation in His remembering אֱמוּנָה and חֶסֶד that has a strong association with the Exodus motif (vv.1-3). The water imagery once again appears (v.7) when the psalmist summons the universe to sing to Yahweh (cf., 93:3-4). The closing verse of the psalm bears a striking resemblance to that of Psalm 96:

כִּי בָא לְשֹׁפֵט הָאָרֶץ יִשְׁפֹּט-תְּהַבֵּל בְּצִדְקָ וְעַמִּים בְּמִישָׁרִים:

For He is coming to judge the earth;

He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples *with equity* (98:9).

כִּי בָא כִּי בָא לְשֹׁפֵט הָאָרֶץ יִשְׁפֹּט-תְּהַבֵּל בְּצִדְקָ וְעַמִּים בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ:

*For He is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth;*

He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples *in his faithfulness* (96:13).

In fact, all three words, righteousness, faithfulness, and equity, are presented in both psalms as one of the characteristics of Yahweh’s rule (Pss. 96:10, 13; 98:3, 9). Natural powers are summoned to join in praising the salvation of Yahweh. Then the coming of Yahweh to judge the earth is given as “the point of reference and the reason for jubilation” (Gerstenberger, 2001:197). In this case, the creation motif can be mentioned in association with wisdom. For example, Schmid (1984:102) argues that righteousness can refer to “the one, harmonious order of the world” that is one of the themes of creation theology. When Yahweh’s justice is executed in creation, the ends of the earth will see the salvation God (cf., v.3).

Psalm 99 marks the end of a group of the enthronement psalms (Pss. 93, 95-99). Ostensibly, the psalm falls into three sections by the refrain, “he is holy” (קָדוֹשׁ יְהוָה) (vv.3, 5, 9). The triple occurrence of the term could be “an echo of the trisagion of Isa 6:3” and may well be a liturgical response of choirs or congregation (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:199-200). In all cases, it serves as a literary device to emphasize the sovereignty of Yahweh. It is not a coincidence that the refrain is preceded by three exhortations to praise (יִרְהַ), to exalt (רָוַם) and to worship (חָוֶה):<sup>168</sup> Yahweh deserves to be worshipped because (כִּי) He is holy! Then the psalm cites three names that must have functioned as a token of hope for the post-exilic community: Moses, Aaron, and Samuel.

Yahweh answered Samuel’s intercession for the whole house of Israel in Mizpah and defeated the Philistines (1Sam 7:3-11), and He forgave Israel’s failures in the wilderness due to the prayers of Moses and the ministry of Aaron. Gerstenberger (2001:200) views this as ‘didactic’ in tone because “[a]pparently, the community of the time felt a need to deal with possible failure to live up to the ordinances of Yahweh”. Yahweh has given His people decrees to provide structure for their lives (v.7). The psalmist is in fact exhorting the community to praise Yahweh in hoping for His salvation as He did in the history to Moses, Aaron, and Samuel.

Psalm 100 is a kind of appendix or summary of the psalms so far (Pss. 93, 95-99). Howard (1986:207) argues that with Psalm 95, the psalm forms “an inclusion around the Kingship group in 96-99”. As a Hymn of thanksgiving, it (1) summons all the earth to ‘shout for joy to Yahweh’ (v.1; cf., 98:4), (2) describes Yahweh as Creator and Shepherd (v.3; cf., 95:7), (3) contains the theme of coming into his courts (v.4; cf., 96:8), and (4) emphasizes His חֹסֶן and אֱמוּנָה (v.5; cf., 98:3). Verse 3 is didactic in

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<sup>168</sup> For grammatical discussion on these words, see Gerstenberger (2001:199-200).

tone (cf., it begins with an exhortation to know (יָדַעַתְּ)), functioning as a closing lesson of the ‘enthronement psalms’, i.e., the issue of ownership (who belongs to whom?). Creatures belong to creator; sheep depend on shepherd; and the people rely on their king. Not vice versa. A proper way to treat Yahweh, the Creator-Shepherd-King, is to worship and praise Yahweh in thanksgiving.

Psalm 101 is one of the only two Davidic psalms in the fourth book of the Psalter (cf., 103). The hymnic introduction in verse 1 connects the psalm to the mood of joy and thanksgiving in the preceding psalm. Then verse 2 appears to be a personal resolution to do wisely (אֲשַׁכֵּילָהּ) in a blameless way (בְּדַרְךָ תָּמִים). The blameless way and heart are one of the important themes of wisdom:

I will be wise in a blameless way; when will you come to me?  
I will walk (אֲחִזֵּקְךָ) with blameless heart in my house.

The righteous one described throughout the psalm in fact conjures up the image of Job (1:1; 29:14; 29:17). Thus Gerstenberger (2001:209) views the psalm as a ‘reflection/confession’. Anderson (1983:241) understands the psalm in terms of royal perspective, but, as Gerstenberger (2001:209) points out, it “takes us not into the royal world of dynastic autocracy but into the midst of the theological anthropology of early Jewish communities”, and “may even develop the picture of an exemplary wise man, who may count on the visit of God at night or in some vision to communicate wisdom”. The contrast of perverse heart (לֵבָב עִקְשׁ) (v.4) to *blameless* way (vv.2a, 6)/*blameless* heart (v.2b) should be noted as well: eventually all the wicked (כָּל־רִשְׁעֵי־אָרֶץ) will be cut off.

Psalm 102, an individual lament<sup>169</sup> or a penitential psalm (cf., Anderson, 1983:241),

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<sup>169</sup> Gerstenberger (2001:213-214) sees the psalm as both an individual lament and communal prayer, based on his assumption that “prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem, and as such needs to be located in congregational worship”, and goes on asking, “how could they be composed into one unit?”

seems to revert back to the subject matter of Psalm 90 in many respects. As Wilson (1985a:218) observes, they are bound together in the following common themes: (1) the transience of human being (Pss. 102:3,11; 90:5-6, 9-10) compared with the immortal God (Pss. 102:12, 24-27; 90:1-2,4); (2) the anger of God wrought by His indignation with Man (Pss. 102:11; 90:7, 9, 11); and (3) confidence of His salvation for His people (Pss. 102:28; 90:16). The title indicates that the psalm is a prayer (תַּפִּלָּה) of complaint (שִׁיר). Then it may well be that the afflicted man (עֲנִי) in the title can be understood under the name of Moses in Psalm 90 that is also a prayer (תַּפִּלָּה). In addition, verses 24-25 are a reminder of Deuteronomy 34:7 in which we read, "...when he [Moses] dies, his eyes were not dim and his vigour were still fresh." Thus Moses could say, "You broke my strength in the course of my life, and cut short my days" (Ps. 102:23).

Even on the surface, it is clear that the main thrust of the complaint is the transience of life, which is a sapiential theme (Gerstenberger, 2001:212). In that sense, it is rather a sigh over vanity of life than complaint, which matches well with the post-exilic situation where there was no hope. Surprisingly, however, the sigh and the prayer for help (cf., vv.2-3) are heard and answered. Time has come for the community to change:

You will rise up and have mercy on צַדִּיק  
 For it is time to be gracious to her;  
 For the moment has come (v.14)...

He has turned to the prayer (תַּפִּלָּה) of the destitute  
 And He has not despised their prayer (תַּפִּלָּה) (v.18).

Based on His actions of salvation (צַדִּיק) that Yahweh has built Zion and has appeared in His glory (v.17), the nations and the kings of the earth will fear (יִירָאוּ) the name

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The answer is in fact on the presupposition that the final form of the Psalter has its origin in the context of liturgy, which eventually leads him to such a conclusion.

of Yahweh (v.16). The meditation on the fact that only Yahweh can deliver man from the vanity of life forces all the powers to fear Yahweh, which is the beginning of wisdom. The psalm tells us that it is written for the future generations to praise Yahweh for his deliverance from the bondage of death (v.19), and ends with a confidence that the next generations will dwell securely and endure in the presence of Yahweh (v.29). As one of the next generations, the post-exilic community must have felt much relief and security. Moreover, the shadow of Moses must have reinforced their confidence for salvation.

Psalm 103, a hymn of praise, begins and ends with a call to praise: "Praise Yahweh, O my soul" (vv. 1a, 22b), because He forgives all the sins and redeems His people from the pit. The body of the psalm recites in a concentrated way what Israel learned about the way of God's treatment for his people: Yahweh had not dealt with them according to their sins. The theme of the frailty of humans occurs once more in contrast to the theme of  $\text{פִּיִּי}$  that recurs throughout the psalm (vv. 4, 8, 11, 17). The appearance of the name of Moses in verse 7 and the characterization of Yahweh as "compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in  $\text{פִּיִּי}$ " in verse 8 possibly connect the psalm to the incident in Exodus 34:6-7 where Israel experienced the  $\text{פִּיִּי}$  after the idolatry of her with the golden calf. With the mouth of David the psalm declares that Yahweh made known His ways to Moses (v.8), which was confirmed in the preceding psalm. Especially interesting from our point of view is the fact that the  $\text{פִּיִּי}$  is especially given to those who *fear* ( $\text{סָרַר}$ ) Yahweh (vv. 11, 13, 17).<sup>170</sup> In other words, salvation is preserved only for the wise. Thus, Gerstenberger (2001:220) seems to be right in maintaining that "[t]he psalm quite naturally draws on motifs of salvation history (particularly the giving of divine

<sup>170</sup> According to Wilson (1985:218), Psalm 103 shares more similarities with Psalm 90 than Psalm 102 such as the following: (1) the forgiveness of sins (103:3, 10, 12; cf., 90:7-8); (2) His  $\text{פִּיִּי}$  and mercy toward His people (103:4, 8, 11, 17-18; cf., 90:14); (3) satisfaction of man with good as long as He lives (103:5; cf., 90:14); (4) Moses as the mediator of the divine will (103:7; cf., 90:1); (5) pity on those who fear Yahweh (103:13; cf., 90:13); (6) Yahweh's knowing of man's vanity (103:14; cf., 90:3); and (7) the transience of man in comparison with grass which perishes (Ps. 103:15; cf., Ps. 90:5-6).

ordinances) and at the same time proves well versed in international wisdom traditions and the discussion of basic philosophical issues of human existence.”

Psalm 104 also begins and ends with a call to praise as did Psalm 103: **נְפֹשֵׁי אֶת־יְהוָה**. One difference is the addition of **הַלְלֵי־יְהוָה** to the call in the case of Psalm 104. In fact, Psalms 104-106 are connected to one another with the shouts of **הַלְלֵי־יְהוָה** (Pss. 104:35; 105:45; 106:1, 48). In this way, the mood of jubilation commences with a call to praise (**בְּרַךְ**), goes further to the shout of **הַלְלֵי־יְהוָה**, and finally reaches up to the doxology in the end of Book IV (Ps. 106:48).

Psalm 104 is clearly concerned with the theme of creation. Howard’s (1992:177-178) analysis is helpful in understanding the psalm. He observes three movements and flows of the text. First, God is very great, which is dramatically reflected in His acts of Creation. Every creature including light, the heavens, clouds, winds, lightning, water, and human beings only marvel at His greatness (vv.1-23). Second, God is wise. The wisdom of God is reflected in the divine creation and preservation of the world. It is His **חֵכְמָה** that created the world (vv. 24-30). And third, as such, God is glorious and rejoices in the created world (vv. 31-35). Thus it is imperative for all the creatures to glorify and bless Yahweh the Creator. To sing the psalm is in fact to sing of promise and hope because the One who created the world will recreate and renew it again (v.30) (Howard, 1992:180). This sapiential thinking must have helped the post-exilic community to firmly grasp the promise of salvation. Because Yahweh rejoices in His divine works in creation and wisdom, the time can be envisioned when sinners and the wicked will vanish from the earth (v.35).

While Psalm 104 summons to celebrate Yahweh’s works in creation and praise (**בְּרַךְ**) Him, Psalm 105 declares to remember Yahweh’s works in salvation history and give thanks (**הוֹדֵי**) to Him. It appears to be a kind of duty for them to remember and tell

of the wonders Yahweh has done in the history of salvation. Thus the terms that conjure up the theme of salvation history occur in the beginning section of the psalm (vv.1-6): His deeds (עֲלֵי־לִוְתָיו); His wondrous acts (נִפְלְאוֹתָיו); and His miracles (מוֹפְתָיו). The ten imperatives<sup>171</sup> in the first five verses clearly demonstrate that the psalm is not merely a hymn or a salvation recital psalm (Mays, 1994a:133; cf., Anderson, 1983:241), but also a psalm of instruction (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:230, 235). The reason why Yahweh acts as such is because He remembers His covenant (בְּרִיתוֹ) (vv. 7-11). In so doing, the themes of salvation and covenant are recounted throughout as a lesson for the descendants of the patriarchs. The rest of the psalm is in fact a detailed recital of Yahweh's wondrous deeds in the history of salvation, particularly in Exodus, based on His covenant (vv. 12-44), which is followed by a final exhortation to keep and observe His תּוֹרָה (v.45). Based on mediation on the wondrous and salvific acts of Yahweh in past history, the reader is inculcated to praise in thanksgiving and to look forward to the final salvation in keeping His תּוֹרָה.

### 5.6.3. Psalms 105–106

Psalms 105 and 106 have been considered by some scholars as a pair “to bring topics together to create a more comprehensive theological statement.” That is to say, topics on the marvellous deeds of Yahweh for ancient Israel (Mays, 1994a:133). According to Mays (1994a:133), in the face of Yahweh's salvation, Psalm 105 emphasizes on keeping His תּוֹרָה, but Psalm 106 emphasizes continual dependence on Yahweh's great faithfulness. He (1994b:340) also maintains elsewhere, “Psalm 106 is the counterpart of Psalm 105 and stands in a relation of dialectical contrast to it”. In fact,

<sup>171</sup> 'To give thanks Yahweh' (הוֹדִיָה), 'to call upon His name' (קִיְיָ), 'to declare/ make known His deeds' (הוֹדִיעָה), 'to sing to Him' (שִׁירָה), 'to sing praise to Him' (זִמְרָה), 'to muse/ reflect His wondrous acts' (שִׁיחָה), 'to exult in His holy name' (הִתְהַלְלָה), 'to inquire of Yahweh' (דִּרְשָׁה), 'to seek His face' (בִּקְשָׁה), 'to remember His miracles' (בִּקְשָׁה).

the focal point is a bit different from one other. As deClaissé-Walford (1995:162) points out, Psalm 106 appears more negative than Psalm 105. More specifically speaking, where Psalm 105 focuses on “Yahweh’s great redeeming acts in the life of ancient Israel”, Psalm 106 focuses on “the rebellious response of Israel to Yahweh’s acts”(deClaissé-Walford, 1995:160).

To this end, it may be useful to quote Gerstenberger (2001:243) in analysing the psalm:

The opening part (vv. 1-7c) is hymnic, petitionary, and confessional in character, being matched by the closing verse (v. 47). In between these “corner posts” is a long, didactic elaboration of exemplary failures [thus they lament] and deliverances in Israel’s early history.<sup>172</sup>

Psalm 106 commences and ends with a shout of הַלְלוּ יְיָ (cf., Psalms 111-113; 117; 135; 146-150). The psalm divides into four sections in its theme: (1) a call to give thanks to Yahweh (vv.1-5) for His רִצּוֹן and the mighty acts revealed in His salvation; (2) a report on Israel’s disobedience and Yahweh’s revenge on them (vv. 6-43); (3) Yahweh’s רִצּוֹן based on His covenant (vv.44-46); and (4) a call on Yahweh to save them to praise Him (vv.44-48). Due to the mixed features of hymn, lament, and wisdom, however, the psalm has been classified as both a ‘communal hymn’ and a ‘communal lament’. For instance, Kidner (1973:378) classifies this psalm just as a ‘psalm of praise’, but, Gunkel (1998[1933]:247) view the psalm as a “communal complaint with a hymnic entry”. Gerstenberger (2001:236) entitles the psalm “communal confession of guilt; hymnic instruction”, in order to cover the three elements of lament, of hymn, and of wisdom.

While the main body of the psalm appears very negative in that the Israelite failure is extensively revealed throughout, it seems reasonable to assume that the purpose is

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<sup>172</sup> The scope of the history in the psalm begins with the Exodus and goes on to the Babylonian exilic period.

not just a complaint, but a confession of guilt (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:239). In other words, the accounts of failure serve to expect Yahweh's unconditional mercy based on His יְהוָה. By way of retrospection on Yahweh's salvation in the past, the psalm functions "as a warning not to ignore or forget Yahweh, but to trust in him while subsisting with difficulties in an alien empire" (Gerstenberger, 2001:244). deClaissé-Walford (1995:163) reaches a similar conclusion when she points out that Psalm 106, a celebratory hymn and a lament, functions as "a reminder to the people of their disobedience and a warning not to repeat the mistakes of the past". What is, then, expected for the community is to give thanks to His holy name and glory in His praise with confidence (יְהוָה) (vv.47-48). As the last psalm of the fourth book, Psalm 106 is given to the people of Israel as a lesson of admonition. In so doing, Book IV, as a whole, serves as a part of an answer to the question, "what are we to do in our present situation?", bringing us "back to the time before YHWH's covenant with David, back to the time when Israel relied solely on YHWH" (deClaissé-Walford:1995:161).

## **5.7. BOOK V (Psalms 107–145)**

Book V can be divided into three major sections (Wilson, 1993b:79): (1) a first Davidic group (Pss. 107-117); (2) Psalm 119 and the songs of accents framed by Psalm 118 and 135 (Pss. 108-135); and (3) a second Davidic group (Pss. 136-145). Furthermore, there is an additional 'wisdom frame' around this group of psalms. For instance, Wilson (1993b:79) argues that Psalms 107 (vv.42-43) and 145 (vv.19-20) betray a wisdom flavour, in that they present the contrast between the upright and the wicked, and the wisdom admonition respectively.

From the seam psalm's point of view, the purpose of Book V is three-fold: (1) a book of thanksgiving and praises; (2) a book of David; and (3) a book of wisdom frame. As was already examined from Chapter 4, it is remarkable that more than a quarter of Book V (28%, i.e., 11 out of 39 psalms) have been claimed to be wisdom influenced

psalm (Pss. 107, 111, 112, 119, 127, 128, 131, 133, 139, 144, and 145).<sup>173</sup>

Zenger (1998:77-82) observes five features that make the Book V stand apart from the four preceding books: (1) the dominance of the expression, הַלְלֵי-יְהוָה, (Pss. 111:1; 112:1; 113:1, 9; 115:18; 116:19; 117:2; 135:1,21); (2) the continued use of the two verbs הַלַּל (to praise in *piel*) and יָדָה (to praise in *hiphil*): for הַלַּל, Pss. 107:32; 109:30; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1,9; 115:17, 18; 116:19; 117:1,2; 119:164, 175; 135:1,3,21; 143:2, and for יָדָה, Pss. 107:1,8,15,21,31; 108:4; 109:30; 111:1; 118:1,19,21,28,29; 119:7,62; 122:4; 136:1,2,3,26; 138:1,2,4; 139:14; 140:14; 142:8; 145:10; (3) no evidence of the “twofold doxological formula”; (4) While the four doxologies in Books I-IV (Pss. 41:14, 72:18-19, 89:53 and 106:48) form a chiasmic structure with the three elements, מְהַעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם, (benediction), אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, (eternity formula), אָמֵן (Psalm 145 only has the term לְעוֹלָם in verse 21, the difference of the concept of the Davidic kingdom; (5) Whereas the first four books lament the end of the kingdom, the fifth book takes up the Davidic-messianic idea in a positive way, and the specific technique used in its composition and its open conclusion. For the purpose of our study, deClaissé-Walford (1995:172)’s comments keenly point out “Psalm 1 reminds the reader/hearer that wisdom lies in the תּוֹרָה of YHWH and Psalm 107 acknowledges YHWH as sovereign and able to protect and provide for the postexilic community. Thus wisdom elements begin the beginning and begin the ending of the Psalter.”

### 5.7.1. Psalm 107

Psalm 107 has been classified as a ‘psalm of thanksgiving’ (Anderson, 1983:241), an ‘individual thanksgiving song’ (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:199), or a ‘liturgy of a festival of thanksgiving for the liberated’ (Kraus, 1989:323), but other scholars, such as,

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<sup>173</sup> Psalms 146-150 are considered a conclusion to the whole Psalter, and Psalm 146 is also viewed as a wisdom influenced psalm.

Whybray (1974), Crenshaw (1981), and Wilson (1993) perceive the psalm to be a 'wisdom psalm' or 'wisdom influenced psalm'. Psalm 107 begins with a formula that is shared with three more psalms (106, 118, and 136):

Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is טוֹב,  
For His עֲוֹן endures forever.

The fact that Psalm 107:1 is identical to Psalm 106:1 indicates that Book IV and Book V are closely connected in the mood of thanksgiving. With respect to the opening verse, two points deserve attention. The first is that the exhortation to praise Yahweh connects the psalm to Psalm 106, functioning "as a response to the plea of the exiles expressed in Ps 106:47" (Wilson, 1985a:220). Holladay (1993:79) also argues that Psalm 107 functions to bridge Book IV and Book V in that it "picks up the theme of the 'gathering' of the exiles (107:2-3) with which Book IV ended (106:47)". Thus Zenger (1998: 89) emphasizes that Book V functions as "a commentary summarizing the preceding four books of psalms which are to be understood as a unit". While Psalms 105 and 106 are based on the events of Exodus, Psalm 107 opens with celebrating God's עֲוֹן in Israel's return from Babylonian exile (vv. 2-3), in which the salvation motif is embedded:

Let the redeemed of Yahweh say,  
The ones He redeemed from the hand of enemy.

The intent is clear: those who are redeemed (עֲוֹן) come together from all corners of the world and give thanksgiving for His everlasting עֲוֹן. Second, the opening exhortation serves to make Psalms 107 and 118 function as a kind of *inclusio* of the group of Psalms 107-118 in terms of thanksgiving for salvation.<sup>174</sup>

The main body of the psalm (vv. 4-32) points to God's עֲוֹן toward those who have cried to Him in crisis with a certain pattern: (1) sufferings due to rebellion (desertion,

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<sup>174</sup> Particularly Psalm 118 begins and ends with this formula.

imprisonment, disease, etc.); (2) crying for help and Yahweh's saving power, "Then they cried out to Yahweh in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their trouble" (vv. 6, 13, 19 and 28); and (3) the call to praise, "Let them give thanks to Yahweh for His  $\text{יְהוָה}$  and for His wonderful deeds to the sons of men" (vv. 8, 15, 21, and 31). This is a celebration of salvation through the works of Yahweh. It is noteworthy that at the end of the psalm (vv. 33-43) a choral hymn recalls the Exodus and seems to apply the preceding song to all of Israel, since it draws from it a lesson concerning a life of fidelity to Yahweh.

It is significant that Psalm 107:43 has a wisdom element in its question: "who is wise ( $\text{חָכָם}$ )? Let him observe these (things) and understand the  $\text{יְהוָה}$  of Yahweh". From the context of the Psalter so far and that of Psalm 107 in particular, what the wise must observe and understand is the  $\text{יְהוָה}$  of Yahweh revealed in the history of salvation. Wisdom is to understand what Yahweh has done for Israel in the history. This admonition takes the reader/hearer back to the beginning of the Psalter, i.e., Psalm 1, in which the psalmist exhorted them to meditate the instruction ( $\text{תּוֹרָה}$ ) of Yahweh day and night. deClaissé-Walford (1995:168) argues that "the 'wisdom' element of this verse in fact carries throughout Book V, so that the book seems to bear clearly the stamp of 'wisdom' shaping." The question of this verse, 'who is wise?' functions as a hermeneutical key to understanding the fifth book of the Psalter. In fact, as we have already examined, 'wisdom' was one of the most prevalent phenomena in the post-exilic period. Thus, as deClaissé-Walford (1995:168-169) maintains, "[m]uch of the wisdom material in the Hebrew Scriptures achieved its final shape in the postexilic period." In this regard, Wilcock (2001b:153) comment is also worthy noting:

Although the psalmist may be celebrating the end of the exile, his words have a far wider resonance. They take us right back to Genesis, and the promise to Abraham that 'all nations on earth' would be blessed through him...The exodus and thousand-year story...were the classic exposition for God's Old Testament people of his wonderful deeds

and unfailing love...This is what the wise will consider (v. 43), and what the redeemed will say (v.2).

Psalm 107 began with a declaration that Yahweh is טוב and his חסד is everlasting, and concludes with a lesson that the one who understands the חסד is wise. The knowledge of the חסד has been given to them through the meditation of what Yahweh had done (salvation history) of past. In the process of reading the Psalter as a תורה (instruction), the reader/hearer has been led from lament to praise, and more specifically speaking, from foolishness to wisdom:

Let them give thanks to Yahweh for His חסד  
And His wonderful deeds for men! (vv. 8, 15, 21, 31)

### 5.7.2. Psalms 108–119

The concluding wisdom question of Psalm 107:43 is answered by the Davidic psalms 108-110 (Zenger, 1998:90-91). As soon as the introductory psalm to the last book of the Psalter is finished with an exhortation of wisdom, 'who is wise (חכם)? Let him observe these (things) and understand the חסד of Yahweh' (Ps. 107:43), the next psalm recites the phrases that were already read in two psalms of Book II; the first half of Psalm 108 consisted of the portion of Psalm 57:8-12 (hymn), and the last half is of Psalm 60:7-10 (complaint), which are all under the heading of David. This arrangement does provide a more positive sense for the psalm, which has been reapplied to a different situation (Bellinger, 1984:76). David is still alive and the contents of the psalms are praises and confidence for salvation. While "hymnic elements are not totally foreign to complaints of the people", as Gerstenberger (2001:255) observes, however, it seems more reasonable in this case to say that lament elements are not totally foreign to praises of the people. Here, David is pictured as the wise person who sings and praises Yahweh for His acts of mercy

revealed in the history of salvation. Just as Psalm 86, the only Davidic psalm in Book III, reminded the reader/hearer of the presence of David in its position in the Psalter, so do these Davidic psalms (Pss. 108-110) in their sequence.

Psalm 109 is a psalm of curse on the wicked (an imprecatory psalm), who have attacked and accused the psalmist. It begins with a demand of retribution against the wicked, and lasts to verse 20, saying, “may this be Yahweh’s payment to my accusers, to those who speak against me.” Then the poet identifies himself with the poor and needy, which is a typical expression for the righteous in the Psalter. The psalmist’s cry for Yahweh’s aid that is considered a counsel for the defence is based on his confidence in salvation. The reason the psalmist will greatly extol and praise Yahweh is because (יְיָ) Yahweh stands at the right hand of the needy to save them from the wicked (v.31). This, according to Croft (1987:62), is “a statement very much in line with the theodicy [retribution] sayings of Proverbs and the wisdom tradition”.

Psalm 110, a Davidic psalm, has generally been interpreted in terms of the coronation ceremony enacting the installation of the Davidic king in Jerusalem (Eaton, 2003:384; Bateman, 1992:441-445). The psalm is addressed to the Davidic monarch whom Yahweh exalts and provides with His salvation in governance of the kingdom. It begins with a word of Yahweh to the psalmist’s Lord (יְיָ יְהוָה לַאֲדֹנָי). The person in verse 1a (אֲדֹנָי) must be a Davidic king, or more specifically, the messianic king, but is definitely subordinated to the lordship of Yahweh. As if to underscore this point, the king is presented as ‘an everlasting priest (כֹּהֵן לְעוֹלָם) in the order of Melchizedek’. The king will continue to function as a priest for the duration of his life (cf., Briggs, 1907:378-380).<sup>175</sup> As Eaton (1976:177-180) confidently assumes, there was an earlier link between the royal office and a royal work of

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<sup>175</sup> King David and his sons, Solomon, in particular, are described as fulfilling priestly functions elsewhere (2 Samuel 6:14-7:2; 8:18; 1 Kings 3:15; 4:2; 8:14,56). Moreover, the reference to Zion in verse 2 is associated with both the royal city (kingship) and Jerusalem temple (priesthood). In addition, Melchizedek is presented as a Jerusalem king (Genesis 14:18).

atonement. The Davidic kingdom is declared victorious against the nations, but the final victory is still to come in the future (v.1), which will definitely be accomplished on one day (vv. 5-7). The enemy will be progressively defeated until the age to come.

Moreover, Bateman (1992: 447-453) maintains that the king that David is referring to is an heir of his life time, Solomon, and is later applied to Jesus Christ in the New Testament as the ultimate and unique Davidic King and the Lord.<sup>176</sup> This hope for salvation is the result of Yahweh's presence at the Davidic king's right hand (v. 5). The first David in the final Book of the Psalter recites the words already spoken in Psalms 57 and 60 (Ps. 108), curses his enemies, which is a negative aspect of Yahweh's salvation (Ps. 109), and declares victory over the whole nations through the Lord (יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ), the Anointed One (Ps. 110). In association with the context of the 'messianic psalms' for the post-exilic period, Gerstenberger (2001:267) writes, "[t]he Jewish community of the Second Temple periodically developed fervent expectations of a restitution of the Davidic empire...or, more generally, hopes for a thorough change of all political, social, and economic affairs connected or not with the emergence of a special messianic figure..." Seen from this point of view, the hope for and confidence in Yahweh's salvation are closely related to the messianic expectation.

Such being the case, shouting 'הַלְלֵנוּ יְיָ' in the next psalm perfectly fits logic. Psalm 111 is a hymn of thanksgiving (Anderson, 1983:241) in its content, but the acrostic structure with sapiential languages also suggests a didactic character in its purpose. It begins with a personal resolution 'to give thanks (אֲדַבֵּר in *hiphil*) to Yahweh' and ends with a meditation that "His praise endures forever" (תְּהִלָּתוֹ). Then the

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<sup>176</sup> For main concern of our study is associated with the third stage of the shaping of the Psalms, i.e., its meaning in the final and complete Old Testament canon related to the Second Temple (Walke, 1981:9), in the case of the messianic psalms like Psalm 110, the Christological understanding of the psalm -- its meaning in the full canon of the Bible including the New Testament with its presentation of Jesus as the Christ -- will not be dealt with.

הַלְלֵנוּ יְהוָה merely functions as 'an individual wisdom teacher's exhortation' to sing out loudly (Gerstenberger, 2001:270; Croft, 1987:166). The term, מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה, indicates something Yahweh has done for his people, i.e., His salvific acts (cf., Exodus 34:10; Deuteronomy 11:7), which is to be studied (וְיִרְצֵהוּ) (v.2) and to be remembered (v.4) by all who delight in them. What Yahweh has done for His people is presented as something to be remembered and studied by men. The ones who delight in them (v.2) belong to the same group of the wise who fear Yahweh (v.5). In this short psalm, the themes of salvation, covenant, wisdom, and praise are joined together to accomplish a good harmony. Good understanding of the salvific deeds of Yahweh based on the covenant functions to engrave an authentic wisdom counsel on those who fear Him and eventually leads them to praise Him forever (v.10):

The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom;  
 All those who practice it have a good understanding (שִׂכָּל);  
 His praise endures forever

Thus it is quite appropriate to view the psalm as a praise of thanksgiving with didactic intention.

Psalm 112 is also an acrostic poem of 22 lines with wisdom flavour. As most commentators have observed, while Psalm 111 serves to praise the wonders of Yahweh's work in nature and in history", "to extol Yahweh" and to give "theology", Psalm 112 "celebrates the happiness of the righteous man, who is blessed by the Lord", "is dedicated to Yahweh's partner in covenant, the Yahweh believer" and gives "anthropology" (Terrien, 2003:760; Gerstenberger, 2001:274). It stands to reason, then, that the psalm was meant to be a sequence to Psalm 111, the nature of Yahweh-fearer's blessing (v.1):

Hallelujah! Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) is the man who fear (יִרֵא) Yahweh,  
 [the man] who greatly delights in His commandments.

The blessings given to the Yahweh fearers, which finally contrasts with the fate of the wicked (רָשָׁעִים) in verse 10 permeates throughout the rest of the psalm. Those who *fear* (יִרְאֵ) Yahweh do not *fear* (לֹא יִירָא) bad news (v.7b) and have no *fear* (לֹא יִירָא) (v.8), but put hope (בָּטַח) in Yahweh. In fact, to fear Yahweh (v.1) is to trust in Yahweh (v.7a). On the contrary, the desire of the wicked shall perish. On this note, the theology of ‘the righteous Yahweh fearers prosper, the wicked fall’ stands firm, which is definitely didactic in purpose.

Psalm 113, a hymn (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:21), begins and ends with ‘הַלְלֵהּ יְהוָה’. The fact that the two previous psalms have this term only in the beginning suggests that the ‘הַלְלֵהּ יְהוָה’ in the end of the psalm concludes the three ‘הַלְלֵהּ יְהוָה’ psalms (Pss. 111-113). Then Psalm 113 serves as the conclusion to a ‘three-part psalm’: praise Yahweh! Not only that, with ‘הַלְלֵהּ יְהוָה’ at the end of the psalm, it stands as the first of the Egyptian Collection, i.e., ‘the Great Hallel’ (Pss. 113-118).<sup>177</sup> The reason why the psalmist praises Yahweh lies in His paramountcy over all the nations (vv.4-5) and His sympathy for ‘the poor (לְרָעִים)’, and ‘the needy (אֲבִיּוֹן)’(vv.6-7).<sup>178</sup> In fact, these terms occur elsewhere throughout the Psalms as a token of lower-class and marginalized people, which may indicate a common stroke of hymnic material at the disposal of ancient liturgists (Gerstenberger, 2001:279; Croft, 1987:63). While “there are no reflections on creation or salvation history” (Gerstenberger, 2001:280), the salvation motif is haunted in the image of Yahweh who cares for the marginalized people. Especially interesting from our point of view is that caring for the poor (עֲנִי) and the barren woman is presented as one of the characteristics of the wise in the book of Job (29:12-16). Yahweh’s attitude to the poor is implicitly viewed as a demonstration of the nature of wisdom, which becomes a reason for praise,

<sup>177</sup> Zenger (1998:92) maintains, “The composition 113-18 is dominated by the theology of Exodus with Psalm 118 focusing on the sanctuary on Zion as goal of Exodus.”

<sup>178</sup> Interestingly, vv.7-8 are almost identical with 1 Samuel 2:8 that is part of Hannah’s prayer.

הַלְלוּ יְהוָה.

Psalm 114, a proclamation of Yahweh's salvation (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:281, 'a proclamation of Yahweh's reign'), only sketches the exodus and the crossing of the Jordan as a symbol of Yahweh's salvation. There is no call for praise, no lament, and no instruction. The salvation of exodus is plainly described. The power revealed in the actions of Yahweh's salvation is so terrifying and overwhelming that the earth, the representative of all world, is called to 'dance' (דָּנְסוּ) in the presence of Him (v.7).

Psalm 115,<sup>179</sup> a mixed psalm of hymn and liturgy (Gerstenberger, 2001:285; Anderson, 1983:242; Westermann, 1981:59), makes a sharp distinction between false gods and Yahweh in His אֱלֹהִים and אֱלֹהִים. The nations would say, "there is no God" (cf., Ps. 14:1), a line that functions as a 'litmus test' to identify the fool, but the community's God is in heaven and carries out whatever He pleases (v.3). The issue is in whom you trust (בְּטַח). Those who trust in idols will be like them (v.8), but those who trust in Yahweh will be blessed. The term, בְּטַח (*gal* in the imperative), stands out in the following unit (vv.9-13): the call to trust Yahweh is directed first to 'Israel', then to 'the house of Aaron', and finally converges on 'those who fear (יִרְאוּ) Yahweh', which may contain all the worshippers in one great unity. And a refrain of sorts is added to each call (vv, 9, 10, and 11):

Trust (בְּטַח) in Yahweh

He is their helper (עֲזָרָם) and their shield (מִגְדָּלָם)

And it goes on saying,

Yahweh has remembered us and will bless us

He will bless the house of Israel;

He will bless the house of Aaron;

He will bless those who *fear* Yahweh (vv. 12, 13a)

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<sup>179</sup> LXX reads Psalms 114 and 115 as one psalm.

In the face of the decimation as a result of warfare, plague, and oppression, the post-exilic community struggled to survive. Whether or not they survive depends on whom they trust. Not idols but only Yahweh who is the saviour and the shield, and who *is* in heaven can bless those who *fear* and trust in Him.

Psalms 116, an individual thanksgiving song (Anderson, 1983:242; Gerstenberger, 2001:291), opens up with a statement that Yahweh has heard the psalmist's voice. So the psalmist does not hesitate to express his love of Yahweh (vv.1-2):

I am filled with love (אָהַבְתִּי) <sup>180</sup>  
For Yahweh has heard the voice of my supplications

Looking back on the past when the psalmist was entangled by the anguish of שְׂאוֹל, he realises that Yahweh who is gracious, righteous, and compassionate (v. 5) listened to his prayer and delivered him from death (vv. 6, 8). What the psalmist wants to do is to fulfil his vows to Yahweh, as he is filled with sheer love, and to sacrifice a thanks-offering in the courts of Yahweh's house (vv.17-18) (cf., Eaton, 1976:188). Of particular interest in relation to our study is the statement in verse 15, "Precious in the sight of Yahweh is the death of His faithful," that appears enigmatic in light of the sequence of the psalm, the third person narrator in a series of the first person singulars and the abrupt occurrence of the death of the faithful. Gerstenberger (2001:294-295) understands the line as an interjection "to bring to mind those who died in the service of Yahweh" and goes further to introduce an emendation that views 'the dying' (הַמְּוֹתָה) as Aramaic הַמְּנוּתָה ('the devoted ones'), indicating "a confirmation of the suppliant's faith", which would not be necessary even though the understanding was authentic. In fact, the death motif already occurred in the

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<sup>180</sup> Gerstenberger (2001:292) points out that the verb (אָהַבְתִּי) does not have a direct object in an absolute state, which, he thinks, does not make sense, and suggests a minimal emendation that "I love Yahweh, because he has heard..." However, generally in the Psalms, according to Eaton (1976:169-170), "there should be no reluctance to accept that the most ardent expression of love, gratitude and trust towards God are appropriately found on the lips of the king..."

preceding verses (3, 7-9) where the psalmist declared that Yahweh delivered his soul from death. Therefore he is not in fear of his life. Westermann (1981:111) writes, "This statement is still focused on specific deliverance, but it looks beyond one saving deed to the total activity of God." At any rate, it is neither a supplication nor a declaration, but a form of counsel functioning as an interpolation to expound the theme of the psalm. Then Psalm 116 is a psalm of thanksgiving for the salvation with a wisdom counsel to summarise the psalm; do not be afraid of the anguish of death lifting up the cup of salvation, and fulfil your vows to Yahweh being filled with love.

Psalm 117 consists of one sentence that gives the reason for the imperatives (הַלְלֵנוּ and שִׁבְחֵהוּ) of the first verse: Because of Yahweh's חַסֵּד and אֱמֶת, all the nations and peoples must praise (הַלְלֵנוּ) and extol Him. Gerstenberger (2001:298) suggests a possibility that this kind of short psalmic composition were probably repeated endlessly in liturgy by the community. As the shortest psalm in the Psalter, it seems to play a triple role in its present position. First, it functions to conclude Psalm 116 with a call to praise Yahweh for His salvation.<sup>181</sup> Second, it serves to introduce the next psalm's main theme, that of Yahweh's חַסֵּד, and last but not least, it serves as a one-line summary of Book V and the Psalter as a whole. In fact the psalm begins with הַלְלֵנוּ אֶת־יְהוָה, and ends with הַלְלֵנוּ־יְהוָה, which is one of the main themes of Psalm 145 and Psalms 146-150, the conclusion psalms of Book V and the Psalter respectively. In the process of reading the Psalter so far, the phenomenon of praising Yahweh has been presented as an inevitable response to Yahweh's earlier acts of salvation. The people of Israel are asked to read, study, listen to, and meditate on His salvific deeds of the past, which eventually leads them to fear and praise Him.

Psalm 118 begins and ends with a typical call that is identical with the first line of Psalm 107:

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<sup>181</sup> Westermann (1981:255) argues that Psalm 117 concludes the group of Psalms 111-118, viz., hymns of thanksgiving, as a doxology, to which Psalm 118 was subsequently added.

Give thanks to Yahweh (הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה) for He is good;  
For His כְּסֵף endures forever.

In doing so, this call makes the psalms 107 and 118 form a frame of הוֹדוּ.<sup>182</sup> What is emphasized is Yahweh's כְּסֵף, which occurs five times throughout the psalm (vv.1, 2, 3, 4, and 29). Three groups of people are summoned to declare the כְּסֵף of Yahweh: Israel; the house of Aaron; and those who *fear* Yahweh (יִרְאֵי יְהוָה). With respect to the identity of the three groups mentioned in verses 2-4, it is more or less uncertain. Gunkel (1998[1933]:24, 206) suggests that the three groups specifically represent 'the people of Israel', 'the priest group', and 'temple choir' respectively. If we accept that the psalm was used in cultic context, then the summon to praise Yahweh can be viewed as giving to the congregation in worship (v.2), the priest group (v.3), and the temple choir (v.4). Only Aaronites (v.3), however, are most likely to designate the high priest of Israel. That one particular group should have been called 'Israel' is unreasonable when it is considered that the patriarch so named was the father of all Israelites (Gerstenberger, 2001:301). "To fear Yahweh", as Gerstenberger (2001:301-302) observes, "is the obligation of all believers (cf., 22:24,26; 25:12,14; 34:8,10; 52:8; 112:1; 145:19; Proverbs 3:7; 24:21)." Thus it is much safer to designate 'Israel' (v.2) as "general names for the whole of dispersed Israel" and 'Yahweh-fearers' as "general names for the congregation participating in worship (v.4)" (Gerstenberger, 2001:302). Mays (1988:304) suggests that "the term will assume the meaning of torah-piety rehearsed endlessly in Psalm 119 (cf., v.38), in which response to and hope in Yahweh's כְּסֵף depends on relationship to his torah." If this is the case, the fear of Yahweh and the torah-piety in the psalm are closely related to each other.

The next section shows how the כְּסֵף dissolves in Yahweh's acts of salvation (vv.5-

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<sup>182</sup> The use of the 'summons to praise in the plural form' is directed toward a worshipping community (Gerstenberger, 2001:301).

18). Yahweh answered the psalmist's cry (v.5), avenged him of his enemy (v.7), helped him (v.13), has become his strength, song, and salvation (וְיִהְיֶה־לִּי לְיִשׁוּעָה) (v.14),<sup>183</sup> and has done mighty things (vv.15, 16). The threefold emphasis on 'the right hand of Yahweh' (יְמִין יְהוָה) (vv.15, 16) and 'In the name of Yahweh (יְהוָה) (בְּשֵׁם) I will cut them off' (vv.10, 11, 12) visually demonstrates the psalmist's confidence in His salvation.

The reason why the psalmist gives thanks to Yahweh is based on the salvation that has already happened. Thus, most psalmic scholars view the psalm as a song of thanksgiving (e.g., Anderson, 1983:242) on the day Yahweh has made (עָשָׂה יְהוָה) (הַיּוֹם) in verse 24, i.e., the festivals of Tabernacles and Passover, and at the household meal (Mays, 1988:300; Petuchowski, 1955:266), which indicates that the psalm is closely related to the celebration of 'salvation of Yahweh'.<sup>184</sup> In celebrating the past salvation, then, the psalmist asks Yahweh to save the community he belongs to (אֲנֵנּוּ יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעָה) (v.25). The triple repetition of 'now' (אֲנֵנּוּ) in verse 25 alludes to the sense of emergency of salvation, which matches well with the post-exilic context.

To sum up, Psalm 118 tells how Yahweh's חֶסֶד, Yahweh's name (יְהוָה) (בְּשֵׁם), and his right hand (יְמִין יְהוָה) delivered Israel from the nations. The salvation of the past leads the psalmist to give Yahweh thanksgiving of the present and to ask Him for future deliverance. In that sense, Psalm 118, as Mays (1988:309) rightly understands, is "a song of grateful praise to the Lord for his salvation." This is true even more in verses 8-9, a wisdom instruction from the psalm, i.e., 'the better-than sayings' (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:303):

<sup>183</sup> The first person is understood in terms of the plural sense. The theological identity is corporate (see Mays, 1988:310)

<sup>184</sup> Mays (1988:300) writes, "[i]n both [Jews and Christians] traditions the psalm functions as a text that speaks of the salvation that creates a religious community. For Jews, it is the exodus, and all that symbol represents in their scripture and tradition; for Christians, it is the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ."

It is better to take refuge (לְחַסֹּת) in Yahweh than to trust (מִבְטָח) in man;  
 It is better to take refuge (לְחַסֹּת) in Yahweh than to trust (מִבְטָח) in princes.

This understanding indicates that the contents of wisdom lesson seem to be associated with the acts of trusting in Yahweh, the God of salvation.

Psalm 119, an acrostic psalm,<sup>185</sup> is generally called a torah psalm or a psalm of instruction/wisdom (Anderson, 1983:242; Gerstenberger, 2001:310). Notably, the psalm's concern with obedience to and meditation on the תּוֹרָה is the central theme throughout, but it retains the flavour of traditional wisdom as well. All the more significant is that the two themes are closely intertwined with one other. For example, a wisdom-related word, בִּין (to understand) that occurred thirteen times in Job and twelve times in Proverbs, also occurs seven times in the *hiphil* (הִבִּינִי, to teach/instruct) (Whybray, 1996: 54). And the subject of instruction is associated with specific terms (vv. 27, 34, 73, 125, 130, 144, and 169. cf., v. 104, אֶתְבוֹנֵן in *hitpoel*) used interchangeably with תּוֹרָה in the psalm.<sup>186</sup> In fact, the psalm is a psalmist's personal reflection on what he learnt from Yahweh. The first half of the first stanza (vv.1-4) serves to function as an introduction to the psalm written in the third person that real blessing belongs to those who walk blamelessly in Yahweh's תּוֹרָה. The rest of the psalm written in the first person reflects on what the psalmist understands about this introductory wisdom saying, which he learnt from Yahweh, a wisdom teacher.

The psalm begins with a strophe, a double beatitude, in which it reads, "אַשְׁרֵי are

<sup>185</sup> Psalm 119 consists of twenty-two stanzas (number of Hebrew alphabet from א to ת) with eight-verse units each, which arrives at 176 verses.

<sup>186</sup> Nine technical terms are used as equivalent of Torah (תּוֹרָה): decree (עֲדוּת/עֲדָה), way (דֶּרֶךְ), precept (פְּקוּדָה), statute (חֻק), commandment (מִצְוָה), judgment (מִשְׁפָּט), word (דָּבָר), promise (אִמְרָה), and path (אֶרֶץ).

those whose ways (דִּרְדָּר) are blameless (תָּמִים) who walk (הִלְךְ) in the תּוֹרָה of Yahweh. אֲשֶׁר־ are those who keep his decrees (עֲרָתָיו) who seek Him with their all hearts.”

The blamelessness (תָּמִים), a character of the wise (cf., Job 1:1), is deeply associated with the obedience to the תּוֹרָה of Yahweh that is extended in its meaning in the next verse: to keep His decrees (עֲרָתָה) and to seek Him with all heart is to blamelessly walk in the תּוֹרָה of Yahweh. The rest of the psalm appears to emphasize the meditation on תּוֹרָה. Thus the psalmist asks Yahweh to teach (לְמַדֵּנִי) him His statute (חֹק) (vv. 12, 26, 33, 64, 68, 108, 124, 135, and 171, cf., vv.66, 102), whereby Yahweh is presented as a wisdom teacher. As a pupil the psalmist is to learn (לְמַד) and ponder (שִׁיחַ) His instruction (vv.7, 71, and 73, and vv. 15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, and 148, respectively) that makes him fear (לִירְאָתָךְ) Yahweh (vv.38, 120, and 161) and befriend all those who fear (יִרְאֶיךָ) Him (vv.63, 74, and 79). In relation to the wisdom theme, it is worth citing the בַּ strophe (vv.97-104) that speaks about the relationship of תּוֹרָה to wisdom. The psalmist confesses his love for the תּוֹרָה so that he meditates on it all day long (v.97), which makes him wiser than his enemies (v.98), his teachers (v.99), and his elders (v.100). He is so teachable that he did not depart from the תּוֹרָה, and now ‘learns wisdom (אֶתְבוּנָן)’ (cf., NJB) (v.104). In so doing, the psalm consistently emphasizes that only Yahweh’s word (תּוֹרָה/דְּבָר) can give wisdom (בְּיָן) to the simple (v.130).

Furthermore, the enthusiasm for the תּוֹרָה seems to bear correlations to the persecution from the group of enemies. In the vortex of ceaseless reproaches (vv. 23, 39, 42, 51, 53, 61, 69, 78, 84, 86, 95, 98, 110, 115, 122, 134, 139, 150, 157, 161), the psalmist calls for the חֲסֵד and Yahweh’s salvation (תְּשׁוּעָה) according to His promise

that he trusts (בטח) in (vv. 41-42, 49, 81, 86, 88, 94, 107, 117, 145-149, 153-156, 159, 169-170, and 173-176). This is why he consistently declares that he will keep and obey the תּוֹרָה. It is important to recognise the psalmist's constant resolution to delight in His תּוֹרָה in the backdrop of severe slander from those who taunt him, for it matches well with the post-exilic situation. Yahweh's words/תּוֹרָה must have given the post-exilic people of Israel a rationale to overcome the sense of frustration they felt. Through the psalmist's confession of wisdom, the community may learn that meditation on the תּוֹרָה provides them with wisdom to endure the agony and to stay in His word, which eventually makes it possible for them to survive. The concluding verse of the psalm corroborates well this theme as follows (v.176):

I have strayed like a lost sheep [i.e., the situation they have come through];  
 Search for Your servant [i.e., the call for salvation],  
 for I have not forgotten Your commandments (בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ) [i.e., attitude of the wise]

### 5.7.3. Psalms 120–134 (Songs of ascents)<sup>187</sup>

Only these psalms stand as an unbroken group in the Psalter. It has been generally accepted that these מַעֲלֹת psalms were purposely arranged to be used "by pious laity marching on the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem" (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:347). The titles of the psalms seem to make it plausible that the collection was used as a kind of handbook for pilgrims to Zion during a certain festival (cf., Zenger, 1998:100).<sup>188</sup> However, the fact that there are non-cultic psalms in the collection (e.g., Ps. 127) has led some scholars to understand them from a different point of view. For instance, Viviers (1994: 798-811; cf. 1992: 64-77) argues that the group of the מַעֲלֹת psalms

<sup>187</sup> Each of these psalms bears the title שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלֹת with one exception שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלֹת (Ps. 121). Four psalms (122, 124, 131, and 133) are ascribed to David, and Psalm 127 to Solomon.

<sup>188</sup> Zenger argues that Book V has a strong liturgical character due to its basic hymn-like structure. On the basis of this scheme, he (1998:99-101) maintains, the sequence psalms 113-118, 119 and 120-36 were used in the succession of the three great feasts of the Jewish calendar: *Pesach* (Pss. 113-18), *Shabuoth* (Ps. 119) and *Sukkoth* (Pss. 120-136).

were intended to encourage the post-exilic people of Israel to trust Yahweh in their distress. Gunkel (1998[1933]:347) seems safe in his contention that “the purpose of the collection would fall between a devotional and prayer book...and a cultic psalter”.

Psalm 120, the first psalm of this group, begins with an unshakable fact that the psalmist have known from the experience of past:

In my distress I called Yahweh [for help]  
And He answered me (וַיַּעֲנֵנִי).

This confession of confidence stands as a ground to draw near to (i.e., עלה)<sup>189</sup> Yahweh, and leads the psalmist to call to save him from lying (שֶׁקֶר) lips and deceitful (רַמְיָהוּ) tongues that Job found in his three friends when he disputed with them over innocent suffering (Job 13:4, 7). Surrounded by those who hate שָׁלוֹם and adopt belligerence toward the psalmist, he holds firmly Yahweh’s faithfulness as Job did (Job 16:20), which is well expressed in the next psalm.

Psalm 121 is, thus, a psalm of assurance (Anderson, 1983:242), an assurance that his help (עֲזָרָה) comes from Yahweh who is the Maker of heavens and earth. The concept of ‘guarding’ (שָׁמַר) dominates throughout the psalm (vv. 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8). The body of the psalm (vv.3-8), in fact, takes the form of wisdom lesson in the personal address mode to console the reader that Yahweh will not cease to protect him. Gerstenberger (2001:322) disputes an attempt to emend verse 2a (‘my helper’) into second person address (‘your helper’) and change verse 3a (‘your foot’) into first person suffix (‘my foot’) in order to create a line-to- line dialogue based on his observation that “there is no textual evidence for it whatsoever”, which seems reasonable. An act of lifting up

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<sup>189</sup> The verb (‘to go up’) is a technical term for journeying to Jerusalem, the Holy city (Gerstenberger, 2001:320).

his eyes to Mount Zion<sup>190</sup> evokes the psalmist's knowledge that his help comes from Yahweh, which, then, brings him to deliver it to the reader in the form of instruction: Yahweh watches over Israel both now and forever!

While the psalmist in Psalm 121 has just lifted his eyes to Mount Zion, the one in Psalm 122 is now standing at the gates of Jerusalem. Psalm 122, a psalm to Jerusalem, has a triple feature that is worth mentioning: (1) an addition of לְיְרוּשָׁלַיִם to שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלֹת; (2) direct-address to hymns to Jerusalem other than Yahweh himself, which is "extraordinary in a monotheistic faith;" and (3) no reference to Zion "in spite of being so prominent in the Zion hymn proper (cf., Pss. 48 and 87)" (Gerstenberger, 2001:327). It has been generally held that the sporadic occurrence of the royal name in the collection (Pss. 124, 131, and 133) give no clue to the purpose of their position in the sequence of the psalms but an accidental interposition (Gerstenberger, 2001:326). However, from our point of view, the title urges the reader to put the words of the psalm into the mouth of David. For example, the appearance of David in the context of pilgrimage to Jerusalem seems enough to remind the reader of the event in 2 Samuel 6 in which David brought the Ark of Yahweh to the tent he prepared in his City, Jerusalem. It must have served to help the readers to identify themselves with David in his enthusiasm for worshipping Yahweh. The psalmist rejoices (שָׂמְחָה־יָ) when he heard to go up to the house of Yahweh (v.1) as David rejoices (בְּשִׂמְחָה־הָ) when he brought the Ark in Jerusalem (2 Samuel. 6:12; cf., 1 Chronicles. 15:25). The psalm refers to Jerusalem as 'the house of Yahweh' (vv. 1, 9) and 'the house of David' (v.5), which serves to remind the reader of Davidic dynasty, viz., the motif of 'thrones judgment' (מִשְׁפָּט פְּסָאוֹת), in a messianic way (Gerstenberger, 2001:327; cf., McCann, 1992:11-16). In so doing, royal

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<sup>190</sup> Eissfeldt (1959:13) views 'the mountains' (הַהָרִים) as 'heaven' on which Yahweh sits based on the expression of Psalm 123:1 ("I lift up my eyes to you whose throne is in heaven"). Dahood (1970:121) sees the plural as 'intensive plural' meaning a singular God himself. However, in the literal sense of the word, it may denote Mount Zion in which the Temple is located. On lifting up the mountain, the psalmist realizes that his help comes from God the Maker of it.

theology and that of Zion are interwoven with each other. In the backcloth of 'judgment', 'peace' (שָׁלוֹם) that is considered an expression of salvation, is guaranteed and given to those who love Jerusalem (vv.6-9).

In Psalm 123 the eyes of the psalmist turns from Mount Zion (Ps. 121:1) to Yahweh whose throne is in heaven. Pilgrims who stand in the gates of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:2) are now praying for grace. In the whirlpool of much contempt from the proud, he expresses his earnest double request of Yahweh's mercy (חַנּוּנֶיךָ) for the community he belongs to. As Gerstenberger (2001:331) keenly observes, "to be saturated by shame (v.3b; cf., v.4a) or other evils is a strong expression in...wisdom context...(Job 10:15)". Moreover the concept in association with 'the proud' (גִּבּוֹרִים) is "characteristic of proverbial and homiletical discourse" (Gerstenberger, 2001:331). Yahweh mocks proud mockers, but he keeps those who take refuge in Him from being snared (Proverbs 3:26, 34).

Psalm 124, the second Davidic psalm in the collection of הַמְעֵלֹת, has generally been classified as 'a communal song of thanksgiving' (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:240)<sup>191</sup> or 'a psalm of praise of the people' (Westermann, 1981[1965]: 81). Typical of a psalm of praise, the initial lamentations turn into praise when they are informed of Yahweh's marvellous deeds. However, in this psalm, there is no connection between the lamentation and the praise of the people, which results in the opinion that this category is one of the most difficult ones to classify. Some commentators, such as Crusemann, deny the existence of this genre based on the fact that there is no typical introduction to 'give thanks to Yahweh' nor general praise of Him, and see the psalm as belonging to other classes -- a psalm with a pedagogical intent rather than liturgy (cf., Day, 1992: 49).

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<sup>191</sup> Gunkel attributes only four psalms to this class (Pss. 66:8-12; 67; 124; 129) based on his observation that only a few communal thanksgiving songs exist in Israel.

The psalm commences with a jussive (יֹאמַר-נָא) to say Yahweh's presence within Israel. The first two conditional phrases (לִי-לֵילִי) (vv. 1b, 2a) govern the whole psalm in that they reinforce a specific act of salvation in the past (cf., the triple occurrence of אָזִי: temporal sense of the past). Thus it is imperative to declare, "Blessed (בָּרַךְ-יְיָ) be to Yahweh!" (v.6a). In fact the people of pilgrimages gratefully meditate on Yahweh's stay at the side of His people and learn that their help is in the name of Yahweh, the Maker of heaven and earth (v.8). The retrospective reflection on Yahweh's salvation in the past probably functions as an instruction to reassure them to trust in Him in the perils of a hostile world. In this way, the psalm of thanksgiving has been altered into a psalm of instruction.

Psalm 125 begins with a confidence from the preceding psalm that those who trust in (הַבְּטָחִים) Yahweh cannot be shaken but endures forever like Mount Zion. The destiny of the wicked (הַרְשָׁעִים) form a sharp contrast to that of the righteous (הַצְּדִיקִים); Yahweh will do the best for the ones who are good (v.4), but he may banish the wicked (the ones who turn to crooked ways) (v.5). The final greeting brings the reader back to Psalm 122 in which the psalmist blesses those who love Jerusalem with שְׁלוֹם. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so Yahweh surrounds His people. Thus there is nothing to worry about. Hence, peace be upon Israel! (v.5). The post-exilic Israelite must have felt much relief from this instruction.

Psalm 126 is at times considered as "one concrete allusion to the exile and return" (Croft, 1987:146). However, it depends on how we understand two main issues surrounding the psalm: (1) the meaning of 'שׁוֹב (שְׁבִית) שְׁיָבָה' in verse 1; (2) the temporal frame of reference to verses 1-6. Firstly does it mean 'to restore fortune' or 'to bring back captives?' Bellinger (1984:64) observes three options for the meaning: (1) the eschatological end-time; (2) the deliverance from the exile; and (3) God's restoration of his people in more general sense. Given the fact that no convincing

evidence has been put forth, the third option would be a safer choice in that it can embrace the implication of the other options. The first three verses can be rendered as a reminiscence of Yahweh's salvation in the past:

When Yahweh restored His people of Zion  
We were like those who dream;  
Then (אָנִי) our mouth was filled (מִלֵּלֵנוּ) with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
Then (אָנִי) they said (אָמְרוּ) among the nations, 'Yahweh has done great things for them'.  
Yahweh did great things for us  
We rejoiced.

Then verse 4 is an earnest request in the present to "restore His people like streams in the Negev". And finally verse 5 can be viewed as an expression of "future confidence, reinforced in v. 6 which clearly refers to hope for the future, hope that Yahweh will repeat the salvation described in vv.1-3" (Bellinger, 1984:65). If this is the case, Psalm 126 is, then, palpable evidence that Yahweh delivered those who trust in Him from captives, which in turn instructs the post-exilic people of Israel to persevere in tears for the joyful future (Ps. 126: 5-6).

However, it is not perseverance itself but Yahweh that makes it work: "Unless Yahweh builds the house, those who build it labour in vain" (Ps. 127:1). Psalm 127, a wisdom psalm, falls into two sections: (1) the vanity of building a house, protecting a city, and human toil without Yahweh's power; and (2) the blessing of Yahweh's gift of children. The fact that the psalm is attributed to Solomon, the patron of Israelite wisdom, reinforces its wisdom character although it is widely acknowledged as a post-exilic psalm (Day, 1992:120). The two seemingly unmatched sections, in fact, correspond well with one other. Miller (1986:131) provides well-reasoned analysis of the parts:

At a surface level, they [the two] are bound together by their beginning with key words that have different meaning but the same sounds: בָּנִיהַ, "build," and בְּנֵי, "sons," "children." Even more important, the "house" that is built in v. 1 must be related to the sons or children that are the heritage of the Lord in vv. 3-5.

Furthermore, 'sleep' in the first part and 'sons' in the second part are presented as a 'reward' from Yahweh. In the middle of the **הַמְעֵלוֹת** psalms, Psalm 127 emphasises the act of trusting in Yahweh who builds the house, watches over the city, grants peaceful sleep to His beloved ones, and blesses them with sons as a reward, which is eventually connected to the theme of blessing: "**אִשְׁרֵי** is the man whose quiver is full of them [sons]". The presence of the Psalm in the series of the **הַמְעֵלוֹת** psalms may force the reader to relate 'the house' to the temple, but the image of toiling for food to eat also brings him to view it as "any structures and communities where God will be at the centre" (Miller, 1986:136). Without Yahweh, then, their lives and activities will end up in vain (**שׁוֹן**). As Gerstenberger (2001:347) maintains, one of the basic tasks of wisdom lesson is to remind Yahweh-fearing people of their own limitations.

Psalm 128 is also a wisdom psalm that pictures the blessing for all those who fear (**יִרֵא**) Yahweh (vv.1, 4). It begins with the **אִשְׁרֵי** formula that has been used "for didactic and ethical purposes, to standardize behaviour and bestow positive powers upon those who complied with the accepted norms" (Gerstenberger, 2001:349). In particular, the psalm appears tied to Psalm 127 in many ways: *in* shared vocabulary such as 'man' (**אִישׁ**), 'blessed' (**אִשְׁרֵי**), 'fruit' (**פֵּרוֹת**), 'son' (**בֵּן**) and 'house' (**בַּיִת**); the blessing of having children and house; similes to describe that reward; and the function of 'lo' or 'behold' (**הִנֵּה**) to divide the psalm in two (Miller, 1986:136). In contrast to the preceding psalm, the blessing of children is bestowed as the reward for Yahweh-fearers (v.4). The blessing-related vocabulary (**אִשְׁרֵי**, **טוֹב**, and **בָּרַךְ**) permeates throughout the psalm (vv. 1,2, 4, and 5) and converges in the word **שְׁלוֹמ** that is presented as a final end of Yahweh's salvation (v.6). Furthermore, the final wish **שְׁלוֹמ עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל** in verse 6 serves to connect the psalm to Psalm 125 (v.5) as well as Psalm 122 (v.6). Only through life as a wise man by fearing Yahweh can one

secure the state of 'שְׁלוֹם' that comes from Yahweh's salvation. What a precious and relief-giving instruction it was for the post-exilic community of Israel!

While Psalm 129 has been considered in the general category of thanksgiving psalm (Gunkel, 1998[1933]:29; Gerstenberger, 2001:352), it has no explicit expression of gratitude to Yahweh. Thus some view the psalm as a community lament (e.g., Anderson, 1983:242), while others analyse it as a psalm of trust (e.g., Allen, 1983:189). On the surface, the psalm can fall into three sections: (1) complaint (vv. 1-3); (2) affirmation of confidence (v.4); and (3) imprecation (vv. 5-8b). The second half of the psalm is saturated with imprecations on enemies, but the declaration of 'יְהוָה יִצְדִּיק' in verse 4 and a priestly blessing of 'אֲתַחֲבֵם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה'<sup>192</sup> indicates Israel's trust in Yahweh who will avenge the wicked (רְשָׁעִים) and will bless them. In fact, even the imprecation on the enemy comes from the psalmist's trust in Yahweh. Thus, Psalm 129 is best categorised as a psalm of confidence in its intention (Day, 1992:49). In the face of oppression, the post-exilic Israel is instructed to reflect on this psalm that reminds her of the sufferings and Yahweh's deliverance as happened in the past history, which must have given much relief to her. Israel shall be blessed (v.8c), but the wicked (רְשָׁעִים) shall be like grass on the roof (v.6).

Psalm 130 is known as one of the seven penitential psalms.<sup>193</sup> A deep sense of shame and guilt permeates in the psalm. The depths (מַעְמִיקִים) of distress from which the psalmist cries seem to be caused not by the enemies, but by the sins he committed (v.3). While the tone appears personal throughout the psalm, however, according to Prinsloo (2002:454), "it should rather be seen as the 'prayer of a representative godly Israelite' with a strong sense of 'national guilty'". What the psalmist is waiting for is

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<sup>192</sup> The last line (v.8c) has been considered as an independent 'priestly blessing' by a number of scholars rather than as a direct-address that belongs to verse 8a, "Those who pass by do not say..." (Gerstenberger, 2001:354; Allen, 1983:187-188; Mays, 1994:405). A proper rendering of the verse would be as follows: "Even those who pass by will not say, 'the blessing of Yahweh be upon you', but we bless you in the name of Yahweh."

<sup>193</sup> Pss. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143.

forgiveness, רָצוֹן, and great redemption, the characteristics that belong to Yahweh (vv.4-7), which ultimately lead the psalmist to worship, serve, and fear (פָּחַד) Yahweh (Miller, 1986:142). As Prinsloo (2002:467) succinctly asserts, “[t]he poet wanted to turn attention away from guilt and shame to God of the covenant, the patron of the covenant community, as the only source of grace, forgiveness and redemption.” A counsel from the past salvation (cf., Prinsloo, 2002:454) is sounded as an instruction for the reader:

Put your hope (לְיְהוָה), O Israel, in Yahweh! (v.7a)  
 [because] It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities (v.8)

Psalm 131 functions as a kind of addition to Psalm 130. As the one who experienced Yahweh’s forgiveness and רָצוֹן, the psalmist makes a confession that he will not belong to the haughty and will trust in Yahweh like a child weaned from the mother’s milk. As was the case in Psalm 130:7, the psalmist instructs Israel to put her hope in Yahweh from now and forevermore, for salvation comes from only God himself (Ps. 131:3). In so doing, the people of Israel are educated to take over the instruction and make it their own confession, which will eventually result in the fear of Yahweh (cf., Ps. 130:4).

Psalm 132, a royal psalm or a Zion psalm (Day, 1992:88; Gerstenberger, 2001:363), has strong affinities to some events in the Davidic story (cf., 2 Samuel 6-7) in which the procession with the Ark to Jerusalem (cf., Ps. 132:1 -10) and the Davidic covenant (cf., Ps. 132:11-12, 17-18) are involved. In retrospection of these events, the psalmist calls Yahweh to remember all the hardship David endured and the covenant Yahweh made with David (vv.1, 11). In addition, Yahweh’s presence is closely connected to Mount צִיּוֹן (vv.13-14). The people of Israel conceived of Yahweh as dwelling at once in heaven and in the temple on Mount צִיּוֹן (cf., Ps. 11:4), and this is reflected in the psalm (Day, 1992:128). In the life experience of suffering, the psalm must have given the post-exilic Israel a message of hope because Yahweh is

presented as the one who will remember the covenant and will not renounce His word (v.11).

The next two psalms share the **צִיּוֹן** theme with Psalm 132 (Pss. 132:13; 133:3; 134:3). At the centre of these psalms is the theme of **צִיּוֹן** from which Yahweh blesses His people (Pss. 132:18; 133:3; 134:3). In particular, Psalm 133, a wisdom psalm (Anderson, 1983:242), announces that **צִיּוֹן** is the source of blessing, which serves as “a simple wisdom saying” (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:372). As a kind of conclusion of the collection of **הַמְעַלְלוֹת**, in Psalms 133-134, there is “a renewed reflection on the Davidic covenant and YHWH’s faithfulness to it” (Wilson, 1985a:225). Pilgrimage to **צִיּוֹן**, then, appears imperative because Yahweh blesses His people from **צִיּוֹן**. Importantly enough, the collection begins with a cry in distress (**צָרָה**) and ends with a wish for blessing (**בְּרָךְ**), a doubled blessing from the pilgrims to Yahweh, and from Yahweh on **צִיּוֹן** to the pilgrims, which perfectly matches with the purpose of pilgrimage. Moreover, as the last psalm of **הַמְעַלְלוֹת** collection, Psalm 134 functions both as “the concluding doxology to the collection” (Westermann, 1981:256) and as a ‘hinge’ to connect to the following psalm in terms of verbal correspondences (Wilson, 1985a: 223): **יְהוָה מְצִיּוֹן** (Pss.134:1; 135:1-2); **עֲבַדְיָ יְהוָה**, **בְּבֵית־יְהוָה** (Pss.134:1; 135:1-2); **יְהוָה מְצִיּוֹן**, **יְבָרְכֵךְ** [בְּרִיךְ] (Pss. 134: 3; 135:21).

#### 5.7.4. Psalms 135–137

Psalm 135, a hymn with salvation history (Anderson, 1983:242), commences and ends with **הַלְלוּ יְהוָה**. The call to praise (the imperative of **הַלַּל** in *piel*) or to give thanks (the imperative **יִרָה** in *hiphil*) is a common hymnic overture in Book V (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001: 378). It opens with a **הוֹדָה** psalm (Ps. 107), and then is occupied by the first group of **הַלַּל** psalms (Pss. 111-117) which are followed by a **הוֹדָה** psalm

(Ps. 118). While the psalm is placed in the midst of non-הלל psalms (Pss. 119-145), it functions as an *inclusio* with the last five psalms of the Psalter (Pss. 146-150) that are also הלל psalms. It is true that, as Gerstenberger (2001:378) maintains, “there is an explosion of hallelujah singing toward the end of the Psalter”. In its content the psalm is closely related to the next psalm (Ps. 136). Psalms 135-136 provide a reason as to why the servants of Yahweh praise Him: because He is good and gracious (Pss. 135: 3; 136:1). His goodness and graciousness are revealed in creation and salvation.

Three things can be emphasized here: (1) Yahweh is greater than all gods (Pss. 135:5; 136:2-3); (2) Yahweh is the God of creation (Pss. 135: 6-7; 136: 4-9); and (3) Yahweh is the God of salvation (Pss. 135: 8-12; 136: 10-24). The last two are closely entwined with one other in terms of divine act of salvation. Obenhaus (2000:135) asserts that the psalmists describe creation as “the first divine act in a chain of God’s salvific activity for Israel: God liberated Israel from oppression just as he liberated the world from chaos”, and goes on concluding, “[i]n short, creation and redemption are directly related to each other... In a sense, the psalmist’s praise in these psalms is not just for the goodness of the original creation, but for the goodness of the creation of Israel. Thus, in these psalms, Creation faith does not form the sole basis for the believer’s relationship with God, but serves in conjunction with God’s continuing action in history as evidence of Israel from Egypt.”

Yahweh’s salvific action revealed both in creation and the past is presented as the major reason (כִּי in Ps. 135:4-6) for praise and thanksgiving (Brueggemann, 1984:159). The psalmist instructs the reader with what he knows from the past (כִּי יִדְעוּ, Ps. 135:5), namely, Yahweh’s salvific action. To the post-exilic people of Israel who struggled to maintain their identity as a Yahweh community, the recital of salvation history must be a wonderful wisdom lesson to eventually lead her to praise and give thanks to Yahweh, because it should be an inevitable duty for those who

fear (יִרָא) Yahweh (Ps. 135:20). While the repetition of 'His קֹדֶשׁ endures forever' in Psalm 136 (26 times throughout) may indicate the possible feast or worship service in terms of liturgy (Gerstenberger, 2001:388), it also indicates a means of memorization in terms of wisdom lesson. In the course of worship, when the special acts of salvation that the people of Israel experienced in the past are sung and the responses repeated, the participant or the reader is steeped gradually with deep sense of dependency and joy.

Psalm 137, a communal lament psalm (Day, 1992:33; Anderson, 1983:242), is "the voice of those who have lived longer and have learned with anguish that things would not immediately be righted" (Brueggemann, 1984:77). The psalmist probably was "among the first groups of exiles who had eagerly returned to Jerusalem only to be shocked and dismayed by the devastation everywhere, including the site of their beloved Temple" (Wendland, 2004:322-323). The main gist or mindset of the psalm is that of "lest we forget the city of Yahweh, Zion". Because a Zion theme does not occur until the conclusion psalms of the Psalter (Pss. 146:10; 147:12; 149:2), Allen (1983: 239) views this psalm as a supplement to the הַמְעֵלוֹת collection (cf., Pss. 122; 126; 129; 132-135). In fact, the expression 'we remembered (בְּזָכְרֵנוּ) Zion' (v. 1) or 'If I forget (אִם־אֶשְׁכַּחְךָ) you Jerusalem' (vv.5, 6) is a declaration of confidence that Yahweh will remember (זָכַר) what the enemies (i.e., Babylon) have done to Israel, and repay them for it (v. 7-9). As Brueggemann (1984:77) rightly asserts, "[i]t is an act of profound faith to entrust one's most precious hatreds to God, knowing they will be taken seriously." While the imprecations on the enemy particularly in verses 8-9 are treated as one of "the most repellent words in scripture" and "the very reverse of true religion" (White, 1984:200), they should be understood in light of the concept of covenant (cf., Harman, 1995:65-72). Day (2002:174) rightly argues that "[t]he basis on which the psalmist pleaded for such horrid retribution, though interlaced with extreme emotion, is not the vicious fury of bloodthirsty revenge but the principle of

*divine justice itself...*"<sup>194</sup>

The imprecation is closely associated with the doctrine of retribution, namely, the principle of divine justice, which is considered as one of the wisdom themes. At the same time it is connected to the two-way theme of "the righteous shall prosper, but the wicked shall perish" (cf., Ps. 1:3, 6). The imprecations that arose out of a trusting covenant community "require a biblical-theological perspective so that they can be viewed as an integral part of the covenantal expression of Old Testament faith" (Harman, 1995:72). Likewise, the wisdom theme of retribution and the salvation theme of covenant are integrated at the point of imprecation.

#### 5.7.5. Psalms 138–144 (Davidic Collection III)

Psalms 138-145 stand out as the last group of Davidic psalms that seems to be very personal. If we view Psalm 145 as the conclusion of Book V, then, Psalms 138 and 144 mark a purposeful frame of praise. This collection begins and ends with a psalm of praises with personal lament psalms in its body (Pss. 139-143). Thus, the lament psalms are placed between Psalm 138 and Psalm 144 (praise-lament-praise).<sup>195</sup>

Psalm 138 is a psalm of thanksgiving to call David himself to praise and give thanks to Yahweh because (כִּי) he has exalted His name and His word above all things (vv.1-2). The כִּסְדֵי and אֱמֻנַת of Yahweh are also suggested as a warranty for salvation (v.2). The psalmist reflects on the day when his call was answered (וַיִּשְׁמַע יְיָ),<sup>196</sup> and realises that Yahweh has increased (וַיִּתְרַבֵּן)<sup>197</sup> his strength of soul (v.3). This retrospective reflection provides the psalmist with the conviction that Yahweh will refresh and save his life with His right hand amid affliction and

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<sup>194</sup> The *Italics* are mine.

<sup>195</sup> Vos (2005:207) also suggests a similar observation. According to him, Psalms 140-143 are linked by a common element, that is, prayers for salvation (Pss. 140:7; 141:1; 142:2; 143:1) that are framed by the psalms of confidence, Pss. 139 and 144.

<sup>196</sup> Waw consecutive imperfect in *qal*.

<sup>197</sup> Imperfect in *hiphil*.

suffering (v.7), which reaches the climax in verse 8: 'Yahweh will complete what I am concerned with (בְּעֵרִי)'. That is, not being abandoned by means of His everlasting חֲסֵד. What a solid expression of confidence in salvation it is! The experience of special protection and deliverance from the past leads the psalmist to a logical consequence of the declarations of thanksgiving and confidence.

The themes of Yahweh's omniscience and omnipresence abound in Psalm 139, an extended version of Psalm 138:6 in which it reads, "[t]hough Yahweh is on high, he sees the lowly; and He knows the haughty from afar". Yahweh thoroughly searches and knows (יָדַע) everything about the psalmist (vv.1-6), which causes him to confess, and not escape from Him (vv. 7-12). Some of the lexemes occurring in these sections as well as the mode of reflection in the psalm betray the influence of wisdom (Gerstenberger, 2001:402); 'to scrutinize' (חָקַר), 'to measure' (זָרַז), 'to know intimately' (סָכַח in *hiphil*), and 'marvelous' (פִּלְאִי). Thus Gerstenberger (2001:401) calls the first unit (vv.1-6) a "meditative prayer", and views the psalm as "a meditation", a wisdom psalm. The psalmist adds two more themes to the psalm: (1) predestination that is "the expression of a certainty...of having been brought into existence for a mission which fits into God's grand design" (Terrien, 1952:249; cf., Miller, 1986:147-150) (vv.13-16); and (2) the beginning and end of human existence (vv.17-18). The motivation for creating the poem can be found in verses 19-22: the threat of the enemies that the psalmist experienced. Because nothing can be hidden from Yahweh as far as the psalmist is concerned, there is no doubt that the affliction from the enemies is also wholly uncovered by Him. As already was suggested in the case of Psalm 137, the imprecatory prayer is made, in fact, to appeal to Yahweh's justice in terms of retribution, a wisdom theme. As Miller (1986:153) maintains, "[t]he human word that calls for God's judgment or vengeance cannot become the human deed of vengeance. The prayer for God's vengeance is once again the prayer for God's will to be done. Vengeance in the Old Testament is *vindication*, vindication of the purpose of God. It is the manifestation of justice and moral order, not a cruel

annihilation of certain persons or peoples for the sake of revenge or retaliation.”

The reflection on the divine attributes, viz., the omniscience and the omnipresence, brings the psalmist, in awe of Yahweh, to call upon Yahweh’s judgment and to lead him in the way everlasting (v.24), which might once again give the post-exilic Israel much relief and confidence.

As was the case in Psalm 139, Psalms 140-143 are Davidic psalms of individual lament (Anderson, 1983:242), and are placed in the body of the last Davidic collection, functioning to bring the readers back to the typical Davidic atmosphere for a moment. Psalm 140 begins with psalmist’s urgent call to rescue and protect him from his opponent<sup>198</sup> who is characterized in the psalm as ‘evil man’ (אָרָם רָע) (v.2a), ‘violent men’ (אִישׁ חֲמָסִים) (vv. 2b, 5b), ‘wicked hands’ (יְדֵי רָשָׁע) (v.5), and ‘proud men’ (גִּבּוֹרִים) (v.6a), the wicked (רָשָׁע) (v.9a), or slanders (אִישׁ לְשׁוֹן) (v.12a) throughout. A great deal of the psalm is devoted to the fate of the wicked (vv.9-12) that stands in sharp contrast to that of the needy/ the righteous for whom Yahweh secures justice (vv. 13-14). The curse on the wicked comes from the psalmist’s confidence that Yahweh will hear his cry for mercy and secure justice (מִשְׁפָּט) for the needy and the upright (יְשׁוּרִים). The theme of retribution and imprecation is firmly rooted in the justice of Yahweh.

In Psalm 141, a greater urgency than in the preceding psalm is envisaged by the call, “hasten to me (לִּי חַדְשָׁה) when I cry to you”(v.1b). The act of prayer (vv. 2, 5) is emphasized in the vortex of affliction (cf., Croft, 1987:100):

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<sup>198</sup> With regard to the issue of the identity of the enemies, see n.68 in this chapter. Some scholars regard the poem as ‘a royal psalm’ written for the king, based on the several references to war and to battles (vv. 3,8), which inevitably, they think, leads to the conclusion that the wicked in the psalm (esp. v.8) refers to the foreign nations (e.g., Croft, 1987:32). However, it is not clear that the psalmist plays a representative role on behalf of Israel here. Instead, the psalmist seems to be annoyed by ‘local Israelite’ rather than foreigners on the war (Day, 1992:89).

Let *my prayer* (תְּפִלָּתִי) be established as incense before you  
And the lifting up my hands as an evening sacrifice (v.2)

.....

Let the righteous man strike or rebuke me with kindness (רַחֲמֵי) <sup>(דְּקָר)</sup>  
But let the [fiery] oil of the wicked (שֶׁן־אֲוִי) not anoint my head<sup>199</sup>  
For *my prayer* is still going around against their evil deeds (v.5)

However, the prayer concerns not with vicious remarks on the wicked, but with 'keeping watch over the door of lips' (v.3) as well as the separation from evil (v.4). The sense of curses envisaged in the preceding psalm (Ps. 140:9-12) does not appear in this case that is far from the sense of ruthless curse. It rather focuses on the applicant's resolution to pray for integrity. Gerstenberger (2001:416) keenly recognizes a certain sapiential element in the psalmist's fear of "being dragged away from Yahweh, or rather from the right path with Yahweh, and probably from the community of the 'righteous'". To fix one's eyes on Yahweh (v.8) and to try to turn away from evil (עָרַב), by and large, conjure up the image of Job who is described as fearing God and shunning evil (עָרַב) (Job 1:1b). As Job responded to the innocent suffering with faith and unqualified trust in God (cf., Job 42:1-6), so the psalmist fixes his eyes upon Yahweh and prays to keep his integrity.<sup>200</sup>

Psalm 142, an individual lament, has an additional title of מִשְׁכִּיל, wisdom song,<sup>201</sup> and a background, 'when David was in the cave'. Gerstenberger (2001:419) connects the psalm either to 1 Samuel 24, when he was chased by Saul and entered the wilderness of En-gedi, or to 1 Samuel 22:1, when he escaped to the cave of Adullam.

<sup>199</sup> Basically two lines of translation regarding the line have been proposed: (1) 'My head will not refuse it' (NIV), 'let my head not refuse such choice oil (TNK), or (2) 'The wicked shall never anoint my head with my oil' (NJB), 'Never let the oil of the wicked anoint my head (NRV). The point is whether or not the psalmist accepts the attack of the wicked for any reason. Since the wicked have been treated in a negative light, the latter is probably the better option, which is also supported by LXX ("ἐλαίον δὲ ἁμαρτωλοῦ μὴ λιπανάτω τὴν κεφαλῆν μου" –'but let the oil of the sinner not anoint my head').

<sup>200</sup> Parsons (1992:22) asserts that the purpose of the Book of Job is "to show that the proper relationship between God and man is based solely on the sovereign grace of God and man's response of faith and submissive trust", which bears a close parallel to the theme of our psalm.

<sup>201</sup> For some details on the term, see the discussion of Psalm 32. See also Mowinckel (1962[vol.2]:209): It connotes "the cultic poem as the outcome of a super-normal 'wisdom' and 'insight' as to the way in which the deity ought to be worshipped and influenced".

However, the strength of his personal resentment -- e.g., [his] complaint, [his] trouble in verse -- more likely indicates Absalom's revolt that cast him into the 'wilderness' on barefoot (2 Samuel 16:23, 30). If this is the case, Psalm 142 functions to bring the reader back to Psalm 3 in the beginning written in the event of the flight from his son Absalom. In the process of the story of the Psalter up to now, the mood has changed from lamentation to praise not because of circumstances, but because of the consequence of instruction, namely, Yahweh's salvific works of the past. In fact, the title indicates that the situation has not changed yet. David is still in the cave. However, David in this psalm is not as same as the David in Psalm 3. There have been 139 fragments of ups and downs between the 'Davids', which must have prepared the readers for understanding the situation from a totally different point of view: they are fully prepared for praise! With this mind, the main body of the last Davidic collection (Pss. 139-143) seems to be present to send the readers back to the mentality of the first Davidic collection; that is, lament, before ushering him into the room of the grand final praise (Pss. 146-150).

The contrast between complaint and confidence illustrates two thematic oppositions in three ways: (1) no one is concerned for the sufferer, but Yahweh knows his way; (2) there is no refuge for the sufferer, but Yahweh is his refuge; and (3) there is a hidden snare awaiting the sufferer, but Yahweh deals gracefully with him. The complaint of 'not knowing' or 'not accepting' a sufferer is one of the sapiential meditations that also appears in the book of Job (cf., 19:13-22; 30:1-15) (Gerstenberger, 2001:419). In the face of the affliction, the psalmist appeals to Yahweh his refuge (מִחֹסֶה) for salvation (v.7).

Psalm 143 is the last lament psalm of the Psalter to 'hear' (שָׁמַע) and to 'heed' (אָזַן in *hiphil*) the psalmist's cry for mercy. The sequence of the two imperatives is one of the typical formulas of lament song (e.g., Pss. 17:1; 39:13; 49:2; 54:4; 84:9 etc.). The fact that the phrase 'answer me in your faithfulness (בְּאֱמֻנָתְךָ) and in your righteousness'

(בְּצַדִּיקִים) (v.1) has a double prepositional objects suggests its prosaic character. As Gerstenberger (2001:422) keenly points out, verse 2b, ‘for no one living is righteous before you [Yahweh]’, seems to be a “sapiential statement” put into a prayer form (cf., Job 4:12; 9:2; 15:14) functioning as the motive clause. In fact this is the lament over the transitoriness of life in the confession of guilt (cf., Pss. 7; 17; 26, viz., psalms to affirm the psalmist’s innocence). Another cause of the lamentation is closely associated with those who are hostile (אֹיִבִים) to the psalmist. In the agonies of darkness wrought by the enemy (vv.3-4), the psalmist remembers what Yahweh has done in the past (v.5):

I remembered the days of old  
 I meditated on (הִגִּיתִי) all your works  
 I pondered (שִׁיחַ in *poie*) the works of your hands

What the psalmist has meditated (הִגִּיתִי) on is not only the תּוֹרָה (cf., Ps. 1:2), but also what Yahweh has done in the history of salvation. In fact, the תּוֹרָה and the works of Yahweh plays the same role for the education of Israel. Pondering the past may provoke hope for the future, particularly when Yahweh’s salvific actions are reflected. Thus, he wants continually to meditate on the word of תּוֹרָה, i.e., the word of salvation (v.8) that will show him the way (דִּרְכֵי) he should go, which is based on his confession that he has put his trust (בְּטַח) in Yahweh. The psalmist is so teachable as to do Yahweh’s will (v.10, לַמַּד imperative in *piel*), because (כִּי) Yahweh is his God (teacher role) and he is Yahweh’s servant (pupil role) (v.12). To sum up, the meditation on Yahweh’s salvific action of the past results in the psalmist’s confidence in the salvation of the future and his eagerness to ponder the word of תּוֹרָה as a pupil of Yahweh, the teacher of wisdom.

Psalm 144 has generally been recognized as a sort of summary of the Psalms in that “it makes use of a variety of traditional theme and literary style” (Whybray, 1996:58).

The psalm basically falls into four themes (cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:427): (1) praise, (2) the vanity of mortal, (3) petition for salvation from the enemies, (4) blessings. However, the difficulty in locating thematic development between its various parts has led some commentators to regard the psalm as “a collection of unrelated fragments” (Whybray, 1996:58; cf., Gerstenberger, 2001:427). Our analysis may shed some light on this disposition.

The recurrent salvation-related images abound in the beginning part of the psalm (vv.1-2): my rock (צוּרִי), my *ḥṣṣ* (חֹסֶד), my fortress (מְצוּדָתִי), my stronghold (מְשֻׁנְבֵּי), my deliverer (מִפְּלִטָּי), my shield (מִגְּנִי), and the one I take refuge in (בּוֹ חָסִיחִי), which are presented as a cause for the praise of Yahweh. The general reflection on the transiency of human life in verse 4 definitely evinces sapiential thinking, which is preceded by the wisdom concept of human inferiority or of insignificance in verse 3 (Gerstenberger, 2001:428). Yahweh ought to be blessed because He saves Man with His *ḥṣṣ* in spite of his being like a breath (הַבָּל) (cf., Ecclesiastes 1: 2, 14; 2:1). The third section (vv. 5-12) is characterised by a refrain of a petition to deliver<sup>202</sup> the psalmist from the hands of foreigners whose mouths are full of lies and deceit. Yahweh is presented to scatter the enemies (vv. 5-6) and to give victory to Davidic kings (v.10), which causes the psalmist to praise again (v.9). Time and again, the act of Yahweh’s salvation always becomes the reason for praise. Thus, Croft (1987:105) categorizes the psalm as a song of thanksgiving for victory in battle.

Although it is not clear whether the last section (vv.12-14) is descriptive or petitionary because all the phrases in it only consist of nouns and participles (Gerstenberger, 2001:430), the theme of blessing in the section, with that of human vanity (vv. 3-4), may reflect sapiential influences (cf., Terrien, 2003:898). The six

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<sup>202</sup> Particularly the verb פָּצַח (to liberate, cf., נָצַל or יָשַׁע in *hiphil*) is used three times in the section (vv. 7, 10, 11, only here in Hebrew Scripture) (Gerstenberger, 2001:429).

blessings for family,<sup>203</sup> namely, sons, daughters, affluent food, sheep, cattle, and prosperity in every sphere of life, invoke an association with the blessings Job enjoyed, the blessing of the wise who fear Yahweh and shun evil (Job 1:2-3; 42:10-15; cf., Pss. 127 and 128). In fact the blessings of the fourth section are presented as a surprise preserved for those who experienced Yahweh's salvation in the previous sections. The act of Yahweh's salvation and His blessings for the saved afterward are closely related to each other. Thus, the psalm ends with a proclamation to summarize the intents of the psalm:

*Blessed* (אַשְׁרֵי) are the people to whom this is true;  
*Blessed* (אַשְׁרֵי) are the people whose God is Yahweh

In addition, the אַשְׁרֵי formula in verse 15 connects the psalm back to that of Psalm 2:12 in the introduction and ahead to that of Psalm 146:5 in the conclusion.

Blessed are all who take refuge (פָּלִי-חֹסֵי בּוֹ) in Him [Yahweh] (Ps.2: 12)  
 Blessed are the people whose God is Yahweh (Ps. 144:15)  
 Blessed is he whose help (בְּעֶזְרֹוֹ) is the God of Jacob  
 Whose hope (שִׁבְרָה) is in Yahweh his God (Ps. 146: 5)

The blessing of salvation comes from taking refuge in Yahweh, the God of Israel, who is the rock, the חֹסֶה, the fortress, the stronghold, the saviour, the shield, the hope, and the helper. It is no accident that the psalmist finds his whole life blessed by goodness and mercy or חֹסֶה. These are the primary divine characteristics that frequently recur as the reason for praise of Yahweh.

### 5.7.6. Psalm 145

Psalm 145, an acrostic hymn (Anderson, 1983:242; Gerstenberger, 2001:432), is the last Davidic psalm of the Psalter. Miller (1998:105) argues that the psalm serves as a

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<sup>203</sup> I add one more to Gerstenberger's (2001:430) list.

conclusion to the whole of the Psalter, viewing Psalms 146-150 merely as “a kind of coda to the whole [of the Psalter]” (cf., Brueggemann, 1993:37).<sup>204</sup> Wilson (1985a:193-194) also includes the psalm among the conclusion of the Psalter (Pss. 146-150). For Mays (1994b:439), Psalm 145 is the “overture” to the final movement of the Psalter. Wilson (1993b:78) elsewhere asserts that the doxology of Psalm 145:21 leads into Psalms 146-150, the final *Hallel* of the entire Psalter. It is true that Psalm 145 functions as a kind of conclusion, but in a different way. There are some reservations as to this position. For instance, the psalm belongs to the Davidic collection (by its superscription) and serves to close not only the group, but also Book III, and it does not begin and end with יה־הַלְלוּ, which isolates Psalm 145 from the seemingly homogeneous group of psalms. In the first place, the psalm has a special relevance to Book V. It is the final *Hallel* (Pss. 146-150) that concludes the Psalter (not Book V). Psalm 145 closes the last Davidic collection (Pss. 138-145) as the last psalm of Book V (not of the Psalter).

The presence of several groupings in the fifth book of the Psalter exhibits evidence of a previous history of collections: (1) הַרְוֵה לַיהוָה כִּי־טוֹב (Give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good) psalms (Pss.107, 118,136); (2) Davidic psalms (Pss. 108-110; 138-145); (3) יה־הַלְלוּ Psalms (Pss. 111-117; 135); and (4) שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת (Songs of ascents) psalms (Pss. 120-134). When we consider the arrangement of the book, it begins with הַרְוֵה introduction (“give thanks’) and ends with יה־הַלְלוּ conclusion (“praise Yahweh’). On the one hand, Psalm 107, the opening psalm of Book V, marks a new beginning and introduces the theme of the fifth book of Psalms with verse 1; “Give thanks to Yahweh; for he is good, for his חַסְדֹּם endures forever”. On the other hand, Psalm 145, the closing psalm of Book V, calls people to praise Yahweh, the king of

<sup>204</sup> The acrostic form and two-way theme seems to associate Psalm 145 with Psalm 1 that begins with אֲשֶׁר־י and ends with תִּאבֹד. See Vogels (1979:410-416) for details. However, as introduction and conclusion of the Psalter, Psalms 1-2 and Psalms 146-150 share a striking resemblance to one another, which will be examined in the discussion of the concluding psalms.

the world, whose goodness and greatness are revealed in that He, as the merciful, gracious God of Sinai, is willing to forgive, and as the God of creation, lifts up all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. Zenger (1998:98) points out that Psalms 107 and 145 are the hymns that “sing the praises of the universal kingdom of YHWH and his saving care for all creatures.” Then Psalms 107 and 145 mark a frame that covers Book V with **חֲסִדֵי** and the saving power of Yahweh. Furthermore, the beginning psalm of the Book I (Ps. 3) is a lament of David and the ending psalm of the Book V is a praise of David. The heart of the Psalter follows the story of David, the anointed one, who lamented his harsh fate but now praises Yahweh. In the beginning of the Psalter David cried, “Arise, Yahweh! Deliver (**ישׁע** in *hiphil*) me, my God!” (3:8), and now he extols Yahweh, his God of salvation (145:19; cf., **ישׁע** in *hiphil*). In this way, the body of the Psalter begins and ends with Davidic psalms (Psalms 3 and 145).

The term **תְּהִלָּה**, the singular form of **תְּהִלִּים**, occurs only in Psalm 145 throughout the Psalter as a title (cf., 33:1; 34:2; 40:4; 65:2; 109:1; 119:171; 148:14; and 149:1). Interestingly, the psalm begins with **לְיְהוָה לְדָוִד** (a praise of David) and ends with **תְּהִלָּה יְהוָה** (a praise for Yahweh). Thus, Mowinckel (1962b: 209) interprets it as a “(cultic) doxology by David” indicating that the psalm is the final praise of David for Yahweh. The acrostic structure is also significant, because it reflects “a disciplined learning community” (Brueggemann, 1984:29), and suggests a wisdom influence to “sum up the attributes of YHWH the king from **א** to **ת** (deClaissé-Walford, 1995:174).

The psalm exploits to the full the traditional language of praise. The phrases, “I will bless (**ברך**) your name forever and ever (**לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד**)” at the beginning and “Let every creature bless (**ברך**) His holy name forever and ever (**לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד**)” at the end, clearly show the purpose of the psalm: a hymn to Yahweh the great King. After initial commitment to praise God (vv. 1-2), the psalmist focuses on the great *works*

(מַעֲשֵׂיָךְ וּנְבוֹרֹתֶיךָ) of Yahweh (vv. 3-7). The wonderful deeds of Yahweh are passed on from one generation to another. If we diligently follow the story of the Psalter so far, then we can easily recognize that the works of Yahweh meant these in creation, in providence, and in redemption/salvation. In particular what people are willing to tell here is God's great salvific action that Israel experienced in the history of the past, which now becomes the subject of the psalmist's meditation (אֲשֵׁי־חַהֲהָ in v.5; cf., Ps. 143:5). Of special interest in this regard is in the fact that Book V began by urging the reader to heed these things (אֱלֹהֵהָ) (Ps. 107:43), namely, 'his wonderful deeds (נִפְלְאוֹתָיו) for men' (Ps. 107:8, 15, 21, 31), which is presented as a character of wise men (חֲכָמִים). In this sense, these two psalms stand in parallel.

The dictum of verse 8 ("Yahweh is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in חַסְדֹּךָ") bears witness to God's benevolent virtues in the history of salvation (cf., Pss. 103:8; 116:5) which moves all creatures to celebrate the glory of His kingdom (vv.9-13). In effect, the dictum and the tone of the following section (v.14-20) turns in favour of didacticism, which culminates in verse 20:

Yahweh is righteous (צַדִּיק) in all his ways (דְּרָכָי);  
 And loving in all his works (מַעֲשָׂיָךְ);  
 Yahweh is near to all who call upon him  
 To all who call upon him in truth (אֱמֶת);  
 He fulfils the desire of those who fear (יִרְאוּ) him,  
 He hears their cry and saves (יִשַׁע) them.  
 Yahweh preserves all those who love him,  
 But he will destroy all the wicked (הַרְשָׁעִים) (vv.17-20).

Firstly, the attributes of Yahweh are perceived; righteousness and kindness (חַסְדֵיךָ, as denoting active practice of חַסְדֹּךְ) (BDB, 202). Secondly, the doctrine of retribution is presented as a consequence of 'two ways theme'. On the surface, the Psalter seems to obliterate any comprehensive doctrine of retribution because the psalmists always

appear as victim of oppression from the wicked who seem to enjoy the present prosperity. However, as McCann (2001:120) sharply maintains, “the psalmists sometimes seem to uphold the doctrine of retribution (see Ps. 38:1-4, 17-18); but even the psalms that seem to do so actually end up undermining the doctrine of retribution by way of the psalmist’s conviction that God finally stands with the suffering victim...”

In the case of Psalm 145, salvation as the response for this innocent cry is given to those who fear Yahweh (v.19). And the psalmist announces the beatitude that concludes Book V. The beatitudes of each book in the Psalter so far consist of four components: divine name (יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל); infinite duration of time (לְעוֹלָם); reference to praise (בְּרַךְ); and אָמֵן as a faithful response. Psalm 41:14 is typical: בְּרִוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִהַעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם אָמֵן | וְאָמֵן. The psalm does not directly address Yahweh except as the object of praise and the response of ‘אָמֵן’. However, the following psalms with הַלְלֵי-יְהוָה (Pss. 146-150) may function as a response to Yahweh (cf., Ps. 106:48 ends with הַלְלֵי-יְהוָה), and He is blessed by way of the psalmist’s mouth and every creature.

Brueggemann (1984:19-23) views Psalm 145 as ‘a psalm of orientation’.<sup>205</sup> In fact he acknowledges “no development of plot or building of intensity” in the Psalter. He (1984:29) asserts, “[w]hat is true at the beginning of the psalm is still true at the end [without any development]. What is true from beginning to end is that Yahweh securely governs, and that can be counted on. We are given a series of affirmations that could be rearranged without disrupting the intent.”

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<sup>205</sup> According to Brueggemann (1984:19-23; 1997:155-156), the Psalter can be roughly grouped in categories of *orientation*, of *disorientation*, and of *new orientation* in terms of the realities of human life. ‘Psalms of orientation’ designate such psalms betraying “seasons of well-being that evoke gratitude for the consistency of blessing” in human life; ‘Psalms of disorientation’ are those describing “seasons of hurt, alienation, suffering, and death” that evoke “rage, resentment, self-pity, and hatred”; Psalms of new orientation are those psalms of restoration when joy breaks through the despair.

This understanding leads him to view the psalm that stands in the final stage of the Psalter just as ‘a psalm of orientation’. However, our process of reading the Psalter from the beginning to the end, if we apply his scheme to the Psalter, urges the reader to view the psalm in terms of ‘new orientation’. As already was suggested, there has been a development of plot from despair to thanksgiving, then from thanksgiving to praise. Psalm 145 is there as a praise (תְּהִלָּה) playing a dual role of completing Book V in terms of praise after the long journey from lament (Ps. 3 in the distance, and Pss. 139-143 close by), and ushering the reader into final grand praise (Pss. 146-150), הַלְלוּ יְיָ! (cf., Wilson, 1985a:227).<sup>206</sup>

## 5.8. CONCLUSION OF THE PSALTER (Psalms 146–150)

At a fundamental level, commentators seem to reach nearly universal consensus that Psalms 146-150 have several characteristics in common (cf., Kselman, 1988:588-591; deClaissé-Walford, 1995:176-183; Gerstenberger, 2001:437):<sup>207</sup> (1) they are all hymns; (2) each begins and ends with הַלְלוּ יְיָ; (3) a post-exilic date is assigned to them; and (4) no superscription is added to any of them. Furthermore, Wilson (1985a:193) regards these psalms as “an example of a thematically related grouping” and the theme of “the praise of YHWH throughout”.<sup>208</sup> deClaissé-Walford (1995:176-183) also asserts that there are “a progression of thought” and the “organization and

<sup>206</sup> Wilson argues that Psalms 146-150 function as a practical response to David’s exhortation of Ps. 145:21. Thus these psalms, he (1985a:226) insists, are also the words of David, which is plausible when the Psalter is read under the person and life of David.

<sup>207</sup> For example, the Aramaisms עֲשֵׂתֵנִי in verse 146:4 and שְׁבִרֹ in verse 146:5, and a late Hebrew word like זָקַף in 146:8 indicate a late date (Kselman, 1988:589). In the case of Psalm 146 in particular, the psalm has been considered an ‘anthology’ of other psalms, which also indicates a late date of composition.

<sup>208</sup> To quote Wilson’s long comment, which is worthy (1985a:227), “The following pss [psalms of 146-150], which stands as the increasing response of “all flesh” to the second half of 145:21, praise the power of YHWH which renders him trustworthy (Pss. 147:2-3; 148:14; 149:4). As more and more voices join in the chorus until all creation harmonizes, the theme turns once more in Ps 149 to the kingship of YHWH (149:2) and his ultimate, victorious power over the nations who oppress and will continue to oppress Israel (149:6-9). With this dramatic panorama of the kingly YHWH in view, Ps 150 rings down the curtain while “everything that has breath” proclaims the praise of God”.

movement” behind these five psalms. These features make it possible to view those psalms as a separate collection, viz., ‘the Final Hallel’. As Kselman (1988:596) argues, then, Psalms 146-150 is “the extended doxology that brings the fifth book of the Psalter, and indeed the whole collection, to an end on a note of praise”. As the last psalms of Book I-V end with a doxology, so does the Psalter itself with these psalms.

Psalm 146 begins with the psalmist’s personal call to his נַפְשִׁי to put trust in Yahweh, Creator (v.6), Protector for the outcasts (vv.7-9b) and Zion’s king (v.10). This image of Yahweh is in sharp contrast with that of mortals (בְּבָנִי-אָדָם) or of princes (vv.3-4). The admonition “may reflect the exilic disillusionment with the Davidic monarchy and the postexilic hopes of its rivals” (Broyles, 1999:507).<sup>209</sup> The fate of the outcasts also is contrasted greatly with that of the wicked. Therefore, blessings (cf., אֲשֶׁר־י in verse 5) only belong to those whose help is the God of Jacob (v.5).

It is not unreasonable to postulate the possibility of wisdom influence in the psalm. Formally, the psalm begins with a form of prayer, but it also serves as instruction. From verse 3 up to verse 9, the tone dramatically changes to that of instruction. It is framed by a prelude (vv.1-2) and a postlude (v.10) praising Yahweh, with main body that is composed of three parts (vv. 3-4; 5-7; 8-9). Keselman (1988:590) maintains, “[t]o those who emphasize the wisdom elements in vv 3-4 and 8-9, Psalm 146, though formally a hymn, is by content, a didactic poem”. The first psalm of the grand final is clearly shown to be influenced by sapiential speculation. The wisdom influence has frequently been identified by a number of scholars: (1) ‘human mortality’ that has no power to save, (e.g., Terrien, 2003:909); (2) ‘the beatitude’, “אֲשֶׁר־י is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in Yahweh his God” (v.5). Yahweh is depicted particularly as the God of Jacob, “the patriarch who

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<sup>209</sup> The context in which the psalm may be read is well explained by Broyles (1999:510) as follows: “The fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. precipitated the greatest theological crisis Israel experienced. There emerged two theological explanations among the general populus: either Yahweh was weaker than the gods of the Babylonians (or the Persians) or he did not care about his people.”

similarly experienced ‘famine’ or ‘hunger’ (Hebrew. רָעַב Gen[esis] 42:5; 43:1)” (Broyles, 1999:510). The man who is blessed because he expects help from the God of Jacob is described in the parallel statement as a man whose hope rests in Yahweh. This is a clear echo of Psalm 2:12 (כָּל-חַוְּסֵי בּוֹ) in its own essence, while the same word is not used (שִׁבְרוֹ עַל-יְהוָה). (3) ‘Creation theology’ in verse 6 (e.g., Crenshaw, 1976:26-35), and (4) the themes such as “the transience of human beings and their plans”, and “the contrasting fates of the righteous and the wicked” (Kselman, 1988:592).

To sum up, these features indicate “the impact of wisdom on the content and shape of Psalm 146” (Kselman, 1988:591). Here, in Psalm 146, wisdom element and human hope and faith in the future are interwoven: all serious hope in God is concentrated upon the one God of Israel, who is called upon with the name of Yahweh.

Psalm 147 is a hymn meant to celebrate the restoration of Jerusalem (v.2) by perusing the wonders of God throughout the natural universe and ends in praise of God’s word; “He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and ordinances to Israel” (v.19). The three imperative calls in verses 1, 7 and 12 divide the psalm into three parts including the divine name Yahweh:

תְּלַלּוּ יְהוָה (v.1)...Praise Yahweh  
 עֲנֵנוּ לַיהוָה בְּתוֹדָה (v.7)...Sing to Yahweh with thanksgiving  
 שִׁבְחֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶת-יְהוָה (v.12)...Praise Yahweh O Jerusalem

Like Psalm 146, the psalm opens with a form of prayer followed by that of instruction. Broyles (1999:512) observes three themes interwoven throughout the psalm: (1) the restoration of Jerusalem (vv. 2-3, 12-14); (2) Yahweh’s providence over creation (vv. 4-5, 8-9, 15-18); and (3) three contrasts of whom Yahweh favours (vv. 6, 10-11, 19-20). Here again Yahweh is described as the Creator (v.8), Yahweh of all creation, and Zion’s God (vv.12-18), who delights in those who fear (יִרְאֵ) Him.

Praise mainly rests on two themes: creation and salvation (Terrien, 2003:917). Particularly the infinite wisdom (תְּבוּנָה)<sup>210</sup> of Yahweh (v.5) and His word (דְּבַר; חֵק, מִשְׁפָּט) are emphasized in His acts of creation and salvation (vv.18-19). In the terms, חֵק (status) and מִשְׁפָּט (judgement) in particular, as Terrien (2003:916) maintains, "the Torah is clearly implied, but not in the sense of the completed and written Pentateuch." Rather, it seems that these words are the reminiscence of תּוֹרָה in Psalm 1. That is, Torah as a wisdom instruction. The instruction given to Israel, namely that, Yahweh builds up Jerusalem (salvation motif), has never been given to other nations who do not know his מִשְׁפָּט: Praise Yahweh! The salvation theme is repeatedly delivered to the reader in the form of a wisdom lesson, which, in turn, provides a cause to praise Him in holy fear (cf., v.11).

Psalm 148 goes beyond the two preceding psalms in that the imperative הִלְלוּ predominates the psalm. It begins with a call to all things in all creation to praise Yahweh because he is the Creator (vv.5b-6) and is exalted over the creation (v. 13). Thus, it is more specifically called a 'creation hymn' (Bellinger, 1990:81). In the series of the exhortations to praise, two verses provide reason for praise: (1) for (פִּי) they were created (בְּרָא in *niphal*) (v.5); and for (פִּי) Yahweh's name alone is above all creation (v.13). As was constantly emphasized, meditation on Yahweh's works revealed in creation is one of the modes of wisdom thinking, which eventually leads the reader to praise. Furthermore, the theme of torah firmly stands in the centre of the creation theme. It is Yahweh's decree (חֵק) that establishes the sun, moon, stars, and waters above the heavens forever. Above all, even the king of the earth and the nations that appeared to stand against Yahweh and His Anointed One in the introduction psalm (Ps. 2:2-3) are called to join in the universal worship of Yahweh (Vos, 2005:75), because Yahweh has raised up a horn (קַרְנֵי), a symbol of strength of

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<sup>210</sup> תְּבוּנָה and חֵקְמָה are used interchangeably elsewhere in the canonical wisdom books (Job 12:12; Proverbs 2:2, 3:13, 5:1,10:23, 21:30; Psalm 49:4).

His king Messiah (cf., 1 Sam 2:10, 16:13; Pss. 75:5; 132:17) for his people and the praise (תְּהַלֵּלָהּ) for His saints Israel who is near to Him (v.14).

Israel's praises are never exhausted because they sing a 'new song' (שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ) to Yahweh (Ps. 149:1; cf., Pss. 33:3; 40:4; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9). As Psalm 77:7 indicates, Israel muse on a song as an act of meditation. The repetitive action of musing psalms in the new spirit must have influenced the people of Israel in terms of educational point of view.

Psalm 149 is divided into two main sections with four verses each: (1) a call to praise Yahweh the king of Zion and the Maker of Israel (vv.2-5); and (2) a call to praise Yahweh who has given the saints the glory of bearing the sword as his army in service (vv.6-9). 'A new song' in verse 1 and 'king' in verse 2, according to Wilcock (2001b:283), "take us back to the first Exodus Collection, i.e., Book III, where several psalms begin with 'Sing to Yahweh a new song' (Pss. 96, 98), or 'Yahweh reigns' (93, 97, 99)", which reinforces the salvation motif in two ways: the joy of salvation and the God of salvation. In the following section the psalmist calls to the saints to inflict vengeance on the nations (גוֹיִם), kings (מְלָכִים), the peoples (לְאֻמִּים), and nobles (כְּבָד) participle in *niphal*/ שָׁפַט participle in *qal* in Ps. 2:10). Admittedly, the languages employed in the psalm suggest an association with Psalm 2:10-12 (cf., Bellinger, 1990:448), and serve to outline the consequences for those who rebel against Yahweh both in Psalm 2 and Psalm 148. While some of commentators may have long been puzzled over the purpose of the imprecation (cf., deClaissé-Walford, 1995:181), the readers, including those in the post-exilic Israel, would not be perplexed with the problem if they have diligently followed the line of the Psalter's thinking from beginning up to this point. At the centre of divine retribution and vengeance is the conviction that "Yahweh takes delight in his people; he crowns the meek with salvation" (v.4). It is not difficult to conceive of the tendency to alter hymnic patterns to "the reflective, exhortative, and instructional side" (Gerstenberger, 2001:456). As

the chosen people of Yahweh, the saints will enjoy the glory of victory over the nations. In this way, the story of the Psalter has become the story of salvation that now becomes a material of wisdom instruction.

Psalm 150, the final great תְּהַלֵּל יְהוָה psalm, brings the entire Psalter to a dramatic climax with the successive calls to praise Yahweh unconditionally. There are no reasons given for praise since they have been fully provided from the beginning, namely, the great works revealed in the history of salvation and creation. The Israelite community is only exhorted to enjoy the salvation in His acts of power (בְּגִבוֹרַת־תִּיּוֹ) and according to His exceeding greatness (כְּרָב גְּדֻלּוֹ). Perhaps it was composed to specifically close the Psalter with other four psalms (Vos, 2005:276). If this is the case, Psalm 150 is “an adaptation of forms of instruction to the purpose of praise” (Mays, 1994b:439). The psalm as the closing psalm of whole Psalter concludes with a crescendo of praise:

Let everything that breathes praise Yahweh!  
Praise Yahweh!

Commentators have attempted to identify the purpose of the psalm in its present position in the Psalter as the last psalm of the Psalter. For example, the first call to praise (תְּהַלֵּל-אֱל) and the last call to praise (יְהוָה תְּהַלֵּל) retain the first and the last letter, of Hebrew alphabet respectively. In this way the psalm probably sums up the call to praise from א to ת. This may explain the reason why the last verse employs the 3<sup>rd</sup> person imperfect verb (jussive in meaning) while all others use the 3<sup>rd</sup> person imperative. The term ‘הַלְלֵיהוָה’ occurs ten times in the psalm if the first imperative תְּהַלֵּל-אֱל (v.1) is counted. Vos (2005:277) explains the meaning of the number ten in this way:

The figure ten symbolises fullness...The number ten also conveys the beauty of life, which

lies concerned within Creation and history and for which, God must be praised. In a biblical context, the hallelujah, which is repeated ten times, can be linked to the ten words of the Decalogue, which the God of the Exodus proclaimed at Sinai. The ten words of the Creation, which made possible and established the fundamental cosmic order and the ten words of the Law, which established order in the lives of the liberated people, are answered by the ten words of the exhortation to praise in Psalm 150. The structure emphasises that the psalms are Israel's answer to God's acts of salvation.

While that may be true, Vos' concluding remarks (The structure...) is quite right given the psalm's constant summons to praise for the salvific actions of God both in history and creation (v.2). 'Who is called to praise' is not provided until the psalm reaches a dramatic close of the last verse: "Let all that breathes (כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה) praise Yahweh!" In the process of reading the Psalms so far, human life has always been presented in terms of its transiency, which is very negative. However, at this point, a mortal is no longer presented as such. McCann (1993b:56) sees Psalm 150 as a "reminiscence of the early chapters of Genesis" based on the same usage of נְשָׁמָה (breath) in Genesis 2:7 and 7:22, and goes on to assert, "Psalm 150 teaches us that the proper mode of existence for mankind and all creation is relatedness to God. In short, to live authentically is to praise God, and to praise God is to live", which is very positive. Significantly, in the act of praise, we learn a lesson that is in fact rooted in the history of Israel: the fate of man depends on God, the powerful Saviour and the Author of the universe who is worthy of everlasting praise. Those who do so enjoy His salvation, but those who do not perish, which has been attested in the history of salvation. Thus, men must trust in and fear not the nations, but Yahweh. For this instruction, the people of Israel were invited to read, sing, and muse on the Psalter from the beginning to the end. In so doing, the psalms once used as a song on its own, becomes a book of wisdom to instruct how to survive in the post-exilic situation. Now, as deClaisé-Walford (1995:182) maintains, "The Psalter is deeply imprinted with hermeneutical underpinnings from the community which shaped the text into the final form."

## 5.9. CLOSING REMARKS

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the relationship between wisdom and salvation motif and to demonstrate overall intention of the Psalter in the process of reading from the beginning to the end. The question was posed as to whether there was any connection between wisdom and salvation to provide a guide to reading the Psalms. The examination of the relationship between wisdom and salvation calls for several conclusions.

To read the Psalter as a book means that it is not necessary for every single psalm to have a wisdom factor and salvation motif in it. To read the Psalms from the beginning to the end means to understand a story embedded in the book in terms of theology. Every psalm in the Psalter does not need to have both a wisdom element and salvation history motif. It plays its own role as a part of the story of the Psalter as a literary unit. Thus, it would not be possible to find a completed story or theology in a psalm. But it would be possible to put the parts together into the whole story of the Psalter.

The Psalter began by proclaiming the אֲשֶׁרִי of the righteous and ended by calling all living things to praise Yahweh in his heavenly sanctuary. As an introduction of the whole Psalter, Psalm 1 calls the postexilic Israelite to seek wisdom and choose the way of the righteous over that of the wicked. Psalm 1 is to instruct people to listen to תּוֹרָה, and Psalm 150 is to call people to praise Yahweh. The תּוֹרָה here implies more than the Mosaic Law and possibly includes the Psalms. McCann (1993b:129) maintains, “[t]he First Psalm...applies the instruction and lesson [of how each person should live in the present to have a fortunate future]...to wisdom’s question about how life is to be lived. The torah of the LORD replaces wisdom and its human teachers.” G. Sheppard (1992:154) is right when he concludes that “one learns not only how to pray with the Psalms but is also instructed by them in matters of God’s

teaching, law, and wisdom.”

Between the two there were the psalms of agony, of lament, and of hope. At the centre of the reality of life was to reiterate Yahweh’s salvific action, that is, salvation history. The laments that come out of David’s mouth must have given much relief to the postexilic Israel in their identification with David’s suffering. That is probably the reason why the Psalter begins and ends with the Davidic collections (Pss. 3-41; 138-145). The Korah collections are also a sort of reminiscence of the past salvation. The term, ‘Sons of Korah’, may remind the postexilic Israel of their disgrace in Mosaic era and their glory in Davidic era. The fact that the Sons of Korah were saved in the mist of Yahweh’s wrath against Moses’ opponents gives the postexilic Israelite hope that is still awaited in the future. Thus, Yahweh has been constantly presented as the shield (מִגֶּן), the salvation (יְשׁוּעָה), the refuge (מְחֻסָּה), the rock (צוּר/סֵלֶע), the fortress (מְצוּדָה), the stronghold (מְצוּרָה) or the fortress (מִשְׁגָּב) which are the metaphors of concrete salvation.

From the beginning the theme of חֵכְמָה is closely connected to the theme of wisdom. If the Torah is the revelation of God’s wisdom from all eternity, then the psalms are the praise of wisdom, the spontaneous outburst of loving acknowledgement from the heart of Man. Mays (1993:18) maintains that “the group of psalms usually classified as Wisdom and Torah psalms are not a different kind of species from the rest, but stand in continuity with a long and developing tendency.” The obedience of the Torah is the content of the fear of Yahweh. According to the retrospective post-exilic perspective of the Chronicler, a gradual change emerged in the concept of the source of wisdom after the establishment of the dynastic monarchy as an institution. It was, in fact, David’s prayer that Yahweh would also grant Solomon this wisdom, so that Solomon would observe the Torah and have success (1 Chronicles 22:12-13), and consequently, Solomon did indeed receive wisdom from Yahweh to lead Israel (2 Chronicles 1:7-12). Solomon became the

prototypical wise king, modelled on the pattern of Deuteronomy 17:18-20, and subsequent 'wise' kings, such as Asa, Jehoshapat, Joash, Hezekiah, Josiah, were those who observed the Torah (2 Chronicles 14:4; 17:3-9; 24:6-9; 29:1-31:21; 34:14-15:19).

The theme of what Yahweh has done for Israel traces back to the Exodus, the salvation of the Hebrew slaves from oppression in Egypt in the time of Moses, which stands in contrast to the personal deliverance of David. In fact one frequent theme that appears in the Psalter is that of God's memorable deeds in the past (Tomes, 1989:265). The past experiences had helped to shape the psalmist's faith in God, which in turn gives a rationale for the post-exilic Israelite to persevere in survival. Historical background provides one explanation for the lack of uniformity in the Psalms' vision of wisdom. The composition of the Psalms which spanned nearly a millennium allowed natural evolution as well as outside cultural influences to shape the worldviews of the various psalmists. As Mays (1994b:16) rightly observes, salvation is the overarching theme in the Psalter: "salvation needed, received, and enjoyed. It is all called taking refuge in the LORD repeatedly, with the clear implication that the prayers themselves are the means of taking refuge."

The beginning of wisdom was to meditate on **תּוֹרָה**, the instruction of Yahweh, and the end of wisdom was to praise Him. Wisdom of the Psalter is closely related to what Yahweh has done for Israel throughout the history of salvation. To obtain wisdom, the people of Israel had to remember the miraculous deeds of Yahweh. It seems that sapiential Judaism used the story of salvation as an instruction material for wisdom lesson. In the history of salvation, the themes of Torah and wisdom are entwined to instruct God's people, and the materials for being wise are salvation history.

In the following chapter that will act as the final summary and conclusion, we will clarify and elaborate further the points we have made along with a discussion of the

two themes, namely, wisdom and salvation, focusing on the way in which the themes appear in each book of the Psalter, particularly in the seam psalms.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

This study began with the question often found inconclusive in the writing of the Old Testament theologies: how is the 'wisdom theology' to be integrated into 'salvation history?' While the latter is seen as the key concern in Old Testament theology, the former has often been considered as contrary to the redemptive-covenant theme. As such, it was appropriate for me to enquire what evidence could be found concerning the relationship of the two themes. In exploring the question, it seemed reasonable for me to choose the book of Psalms because in certain psalms,

such as Psalm 78, the Israelite concept of salvation appeared to have a close relationship with the wisdom theme. In Psalm 78, for example, there is an implication that the salvation theme was conveyed to the people of Israel in the mode of a wisdom lesson. For such reasons, the psalm has been viewed not only as a 'salvation history recital psalm', but also as a 'wisdom psalm'. It was true, as Westermann (1981:245) pointed out, "looking back reading of the Psalter from the beginning to the end has revealed that main theme of the Psalms is closely related to 'looking back at God's earlier saving deeds". However, it was also true that there is a group of psalms that betrayed some characteristics of wisdom. This observation led me to reopen the issue of the relationship by attempting an analysis of the Psalms in a thematic sense, and thus, led me to the conviction that there might be a juncture at which the two themes converge.

In the history of Psalm interpretation so far, we found that, due to scholastic difficulty in ascertaining the clear criteria of a genre, the concept of wisdom psalm had not been properly dealt with. Investigation on the history of the interpretation of the wisdom psalms showed that there was a need to reconsider the existence of the wisdom psalms. Three different lines of interpretations were scrutinized and each called for the following implications respectively (Chapter 2): (1) the fact that no two lists of wisdom psalms proposed so far have been in discord with one other just brings us to wonder whether the type of wisdom psalms is appropriate; (2) there is no definite standard for the wisdom psalm as a genre, but a psalm with a wisdom flavour that has a didactic dimension; and (3) the Psalms may have been intended to consistently instruct the people of Israel. In the process of scrutinizing the three types of interpretation, I have reached the conclusion that the Psalms in their final form were far more purposeful than were previously understood. The grounds for this initial conviction were presented in the reappraisal of the following chapter along with an explanation of the methodological principles that were to inform the subsequent analysis of the Psalter (Chapter 3). Five approaches executed under the rubric of canonical criticism were reviewed: (1) 'the canonical approach' of Brevard

Childs; (2) 'the canonical criticism' of James Sanders; (3) 'the canonical process approach' of Bruce Waltke; (4) 'the Christo-canonical approach' of Jerry E. Shepherd; and (5) 'the communito-canonical approach' of deClaissé-Walford. Legitimacy of examining the works of these five scholars lay in the fact that all of them had done special work on the Psalms through their respective theories. The five scholars laid the emphasis on the importance of the *text* in its final form as in the case of B. Childs, the general *process* by which the text had been appropriated as was laid out through J. Sanders' work, the four *stages* of the Psalter's formation as described by B. Waltke, *Christ* as the canon in the interpretation of the Psalms as articulated by J. Shepherd, and last but not least, N. deClaissé-Walford's emphasis on the post-exilic *community* that shaped the Psalter.

This thesis made use of these methodological principles by attempting to read the Psalter from the beginning to the end, and by focusing mainly on the final stage of the Psalter proposed by B. Waltke as the third stage, or the final and complete Old Testament canon associated with the Second Temple, and by purposefully limiting the scope of our study to around the post-exilic period. This meant that the Christological interpretation of the Psalter proposed by J. Shepherd, --Waltke's fourth stage of the Psalter-- remains yet to be determined in future research.

Against the existence of the wisdom psalms as a genre, we followed the lead of the approaches persistently suggesting the shape and shaping, wisdom frame, and overall didactic intention, of the Psalter particularly in relation to the circumstances of the post-exilic period (Chapter 4). Having dealt with the issue of classifying the wisdom psalm, the presence of the wisdom motif in many psalms which do not fall into the wisdom category may add a didactic dimension to the entire Psalter. In so doing, we reached a conclusion that what we were dealing with was not merely the wisdom psalms within the Psalms, but 'the wisdom Psalter' as a literary unit. Then, it can be said that the Psalter is not merely an anthology of individual psalms used for cult, but was meant to be read also as a source of *תורה*, an instruction. By this I

meant that every psalm in the Psalter has pedagogical potential, which may have been the ostensible intent of the editor(s) at the final stage of the formation of the Psalter.

On this premise, this study attempted to set up a strategy to read the Psalms from the beginning to the end from book I up to book V as a wisdom Psalter, with a particular focus on how the wisdom motif relates to the salvation history motif. The question did not merely concern their interpretation as disjointed pieces, but also what their presence in the book of Psalter meant in terms of the relationship between wisdom and salvation history. This meant that the study in the previous chapter (Chapter 5) was influenced less by a historical and form critical approach, but more from a literary and canonical perspective.

The Psalter begins with Psalms 1 and 2 (as the introduction to the Psalter) which appear not so much as a series of prayers, but more as didactic poems. These psalms serve to introduce the readers to the main themes that appear throughout the Psalter, among them, the contrast between the righteous and the wicked (two-ways theme), **הַיְהוָה** as an introduction, the fear of Yahweh, Yahweh's salvation, taking refuge in Yahweh and finally, blessing.

Book I (Pss. 3-41), the first Davidic collection, consists mainly of David's personal lamentations which function as a prerequisite for supplications for Yahweh's salvation. The historical background on Psalm 3 serves to urge the readers to view the psalm under David's personal experience and functions as an initial background for understanding the Psalter from the beginning. The situation that David is faced with is terribly grievous and unjust; David the King of Israel is fleeing from his own son Absalom! This sense of loss, we found, was in fact the similar prevailing mindset among the people of Israel during the post-exilic period; how can Yahweh's Chosen People suffer from the Gentile nations? At the beginning of the Psalter the post-exilic

community becomes united with David when praying the psalm through the mouth of David. Of particular importance was the transition from lamentations to confidence in deliverance (cf., Ps. 18, a psalm when Yahweh delivered David from the hand of his enemies). A close reading exhibited that the purpose of the psalm was not merely to complain, but to confide in Yahweh's salvation and in His destruction of the wicked. While the psalm takes the form of a prayer, the effect on the reader is instructive; Yahweh will not forsake a cry for deliverance.

Psalm 41 is a psalm of lamentation with the self-assurance that Yahweh has mercy on the psalmist in the face of his enemy's malice. Then Book I is blanketed by individual laments with a confidence in Yahweh's salvation. The voice in third person of verses 2-4 is the instruction of David who experienced Yahweh's mercy and deliverance in times of trouble, and the first person voice in the next section was his personal testimony on the suffering he experienced. The **אֲשֶׁר־י** formula immediately reminded the readers of Psalms 1 and 2, which have the same beatitude (1:1; 2:12). As Psalms 1 and 2 were added to the beginning of Book I, colouring the didactic intention to the Book, so was included Psalm 41 to the end of the Book. While the first book of the Psalter begins with Psalm 3 and ends with Psalm 41, the fact that the introductory psalms (Pss. 1-2) appear under the umbrella of Book I should not be ignored. The fact that the first and last psalms of Book I have the **אֲשֶׁר־י** formula was significant. It indicated that the first book of the Psalter was a well-organized collection of wisdom. It is not unreasonable, then, to postulate from the above that the **אֲשֶׁר־י** formula ties psalm 41 to the introductory psalms (Pss. 1-2), and the theme of salvation connects the psalm to the first psalm of Book I, viz., Psalm 3.

While the second book of the Psalter starts with the first of the collections attributed to the 'sons of Korah' (Pss. 42-49), the majority of the book was still Davidic (Pss. 51-65, 68-70). After the lamentations of David, the next group took the baton and transitioned into a different mood and from a different point of view. I suggested

that the title, 'the Sons of Korah', probably provided the readers with two clues: its disgrace in the Mosaic era and glory in the Davidic era. With this in mind, the Korah collection serves a pedagogical intent. Its eagerness for the presence of Yahweh came from the deliverance unconditionally given them in Numbers 27 and the privilege to work as temple singers. Yahweh's integrity was called into question when the psalmist was taunted with the question, 'where is your God?' presented as a characteristic of the fool (Ps. 42:4; cf., Pss. 14:2; 53:2). However, the psalmists instruct their נַפְשׁוֹ not to surrender to despair but to put their hope in Yahweh. The lamentation mood still permeates in Book II and forms an expressive reference to the psalmist's frame of mind.

Psalm 72 was often viewed as pertaining 'to Solomon' (לְשֹׁלֹמֹה), but I viewed it as the prayer of an elderly David 'for the prosperity of Solomon'. Moreover, I suggested that the final remark in verse 20 forced the readers to view Psalms 3-72 under the rubric of Davidic authorship. An immediate question raised was one closely related to the post-exilic situation in which the Davidic king and Solomonic prosperity seemed to have gone on forever. In reality, David's wishes for Solomon and his royal sons appeared to have failed in the course of Israel's history which now brings the post-exilic Jewish community to look forward to the ideal future kingdom. For the post-exilic people of Israel, Psalm 72 functioned first to recognize them amid failure and revolutionary disruption, and second, to expect God's salvation through the Davidic king's righteousness.

The first psalm of Book III begins with a call for wisdom. Psalm 73, an Asaph psalm, introduced one of the most disturbing problems in wisdom tradition: how is it possible that the wicked so often prosper while the godly suffer so much? The purpose of the psalm in its present position was presented as follows: Psalm 72, a royal-wisdom psalm, was David's prayer for the prosperity of Solomon, his royal heir. However, with David and Solomon, and their kingdom gone, the reality of life

appeared to be very distressing. As one can possibly predict, this sense of theodicy may be more prominent during times of upheaval and confusion. Nevertheless, the psalmist, having achieved close relationship with God, declared that his job it was to tell of all the works of Yahweh, his refuge (v. 28). In so doing, the wisdom theme of 'theodicy' filled the whole front page of Book III, thereby, functioning as a summary of the harsh ordeals the psalmists have endured so far.

Psalm 78, in particular, clearly shows the close relationship between salvation and wisdom themes. It was not a mere 'summary of salvific events,' but rather a theological reflection on the salvation history. The overall impression was that the psalm was given under the strong influence of wisdom tradition. The main features of the psalm, then, were its sapiential quality and its recital of historical traditions. The psalmist delivered what he had heard and known in the form of מִשְׁלֵי. In fact, what God has done for Israel in the history of salvation is beyond understanding and inestimable. The mystery of election and abandonment in the history of God's salvation finds its fullest expression in the word of מִשְׁלֵי. How is it possible for Israel, the Chosen People, to rebel against God? And how is it possible for God to reject His people and the tabernacle of Shiloh? The answer to this riddle is found in the blameless (צַדִּיק) heart of David (vv. 70-72). The restoration of Israel begins again with the wise counsel (צַדִּיק) of a wise king.

Psalm 89 is a poem asking Yahweh to remember the psalmist's mortality and agony, based on his assurance of God's faithfulness to the Davidic covenant. The salvation motif was the persistent theme of Book III in which salvation was needed, received, and enjoyed, as was also the case of the previous Books (I and II). The third book of the Psalms hinted at something that was associated with the wisdom theme: (1) Ethan (אֶתָן) in the superscription is probably another name for Jeduthun (יְדֻתֻן) (cf., 1 Chronicles 15:17, 19; 16:4, 41), who was one of David's three choir readers (Asaph, Korah, and Ethan; cf., 1 Chronicles 16:41-42; 25:1-6; 2 Chronicles 5:12), and

was called as David's חוֹזֵה (seer) in 2 Chronicles 35:15. Interestingly, Asaph was also described as חוֹזֵה in Chronicles 29:30, which made it plausible to suggest that the three temple musicians were 'the wise men' (see also 1 Kings 4:31; cf., Day, 1992:120). Then the third book of the Psalter both begins and ends with wise men's psalms, (2) as with Psalm 73, a wisdom psalm, the type of Psalm 89 was מְשֻׁכָּל, which meant that Book III was placed between the two מְשֻׁכָּל psalms. As we have already examined in Psalm 73, the word מְשֻׁכָּל seems to be related to 'teaching' or 'understanding' (i.e., Psalm 32 and 47) and (3) the second part of lamentations is in fact questioning the authenticity of God's faithfulness, which betrays the issue of theodicy (cf., vv. 39, 50), because the psalmist is struggling with the present denouncement of the covenant and with God's faithfulness in those verses. As far as the 'seam psalm' is concerned, therefore, Book III is framed by the wisdom theme.

Apart from the issue of its authenticity, the title of Psalm 90, a prayer of Moses, a man of God, forces the readers to view the psalm as bearing the authorship of Moses who was one of the strong reminiscence of the Exodus events, viz., the prototype of Yahweh's salvation. At the end of the third Book, Psalm 89 lamented the failure of the Davidic Covenant and beseeched Yahweh to remember the taunts with which the enemies mocked His anointed one (Ps. 89:51-52). Thus, it can be argued that the name of Moses in the first psalm of the next book immediately brings the readers "back to a time before the Davidic covenant, before the monarchy, before the judges, before the settlement in Palestine" (deClaissé-Walford, 1995:148). By meditating on the prayer of Moses, the post-exilic community was, in fact, taught that Yahweh delivers them in His time with His חֶסֶד as He did for Moses and His people.

As the last psalm of the fourth book, Psalm 106 is given to the people of Israel as a precaution. In so doing, Book IV as a whole serves as part of an answer to the question "what are we to do in our present situation?", and brings us "back to the

time before YHWH's covenant with David, back to the time when Israel relied solely on YHWH" (deClaisse-Walford:1995:161).

From the seam psalm's point of view, the purported functions of Book V are three-fold: (1) as a book of thanksgiving and praise; (2) as a book of David; and (3) as a book of the wisdom frame. The fact that Psalm 107:1 is identical to Psalm 106:1 indicates that Book IV and Book V are closely entwined in their overall thanksgiving mood. While Psalms 105 and 106 are based on the events of Exodus, Psalm 107 begins by celebrating God's **רִצּוֹן** in Israel's return from the Babylonian exile (vv. 2-3), in which the salvation motif is embedded. The intention is clear; those who are redeemed (**גְּאֻלָּתָם**) come together from all the corners of the world and give thanksgiving for His everlasting **רִצּוֹן**. Secondly, the opening exhortation serves to enable Psalms 107 and 118 to function as an *inclusio* of sorts for the group of Psalms 107-118, in terms of thanksgiving for salvation. It is significant that Psalm 107:43 has a wisdom element in its question: "who is wise (**חָכִים**)? Let him observe these (things) and understand the **רִצּוֹן** of Yahweh". From the context of the Psalter so far, and that of Psalm 107, in particular, what the wise have to observe and understand was the **רִצּוֹן** of Yahweh revealed in the history of salvation. Wisdom is to understand what Yahweh has done for Israel in the history. This admonition took the reader/listener back to the beginning of the Psalter, Psalm 1, in which the psalmist exhorts them to meditate on the instruction (**תּוֹרָה**) of Yahweh day and night. In the process of reading the Psalter as a **תּוֹרָה** (instruction), the readers have been led from lament to praise, and more specifically speaking, from foolishness to wisdom.

Psalm 145, an acrostic hymn, is the last Davidic psalm of the Psalter. Psalms 107 and 145 mark a frame that covers Book V with **רִצּוֹן** and the salvation of Yahweh. Furthermore, the beginning psalm of the Book I (Ps. 3) is a lament of David and the

final psalm of the Book V is a praise of David. The heart of the Psalter followed the story of David, the anointed one, who lamented his hard fate but came to praise Yahweh. At the beginning of the Psalter David cries, "Arise, Yahweh! Deliver (עֲשֵׂה in *hiphil*) me, my God!" (3:8), but gradually extols Yahweh, his God of salvation (145:19; cf., עֲשֵׂה in *hiphil*). In this way, the body of the Psalter began and ended with Davidic psalms (Psalms 3 and 145). In the process of our reading the Psalter from the beginning to the end, we descry the development of the plot from despair to thanksgiving, then from thanksgiving to praise. Psalm 145 is present as a praise (תְּהַלֵּל) which serve a dual role of completing Book V in terms of praise after the long journey from lamenting (Ps. 3 in the distance, Pss.139-143 close by), and of ushering the reader into the final grand praise (Pss. 146-150), הַלְלֵה לַיהוָה!

Psalms 146-150 is presented as the extended doxology that brings the fifth book of the Psalter, and indeed, the whole collection, to an end on a note of praise. As the last psalms of Book I-V end with a doxology, so does the Psalter itself with these psalms. In the act of praise they learnt a lesson that is in fact rooted in the history of Israel; the fate of Man depends on God, the powerful Saviour and the Author of the universe who is worthy of everlasting praise. Those who do so shall enjoy His salvation, but those who do not so shall perish, which was attested in the history of salvation. Thus, they had to trust in and fear not the nations, but Yahweh. To this end, the people of Israel were invited to read, sing, and muse on the Psalter from the beginning to the end. The conclusion served to reiterate the themes that occurred throughout the Psalter in praises: blessing (Ps. 146:5); taking refuge in Yahweh (Ps. 146:3, 5); the two-ways theme (Ps. 146:9; 157:6); the fear of Yahweh (Ps. 147:11); His laws and decrees as a set of instructions (Ps. 147:19); and Yahweh's salvation (Ps. 150:2a). In so doing, the psalms once used as a song on its own, became a book of wisdom instructing how to survive in the post-exilic situation by putting hope in future salvation by meditating on the salvation of the past. In the meantime, fear Yahweh, for that is wisdom.

Consequently, among the principal findings was the two-ways theme. From the beginning to the end a strong contrast was drawn between the psalmist and his opponents. The former was described as the righteous, the Godly, the afflicted, and the one who feared and took refuge in Yahweh, while the latter were depicted as the wicked, the arrogant, the enemies, the nations, the kings (rulers) of the earth, sinners, mockers, and foes, etc. In fact, the theme not only betrays the wisdom flavour, but also occupies the centre of salvation history as the history of selecting the one and abandoning the other (cf., Malachi 1:2-3),

A second finding concerned the identification of the psalmists with the ones who fear Yahweh. The word **תַּמִּים**, a relative of **תָּ** which has the same meaning, was used in describing the character of Noah (Genesis 6:9), Abraham (Genesis 17:1), and Job (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3). Furthermore, according to Proverbs 28: 18a, "One who walks blameless (**הוֹלֵךְ תַּמִּים**) will be saved..." **תַּמִּים**, **צַדִּיק**, and **אֱמֶת** were suggested as the characteristics of those who fear Yahweh (Job 12:4, 36:4; Proverbs 8:7, 11:18).

The third concerned **תּוֹרָה** as an instruction: From the beginning the theme of **תּוֹרָה** was closely connected to the theme of wisdom. **תּוֹרָה** implied an instruction rather than the Mosaic Law and possibly included the Psalms, which meant that the **תּוֹרָה** replaced wisdom and its human teachers (McCann, 1993b:129). One learns not only how to pray through the Psalms but is also instructed by them as concerns God's teaching, law, and wisdom (G. Sheppard, 1992:154). If the Torah is the revelation of God's wisdom from all eternity, the psalms are the praise of wisdom, the spontaneous outburst of loving acknowledgement from the heart of man. The beginning of wisdom was to meditate on **תּוֹרָה**, the instruction of Yahweh, and the end of wisdom is tantamount to the exultation of Him. In the history of salvation, the themes of Torah and wisdom are interwoven to instruct God's people, and one of the materials used for wisdom lesson is salvation history. A wise man of

Israel mused, “[w]hen anyone turns his ear from listening to the תּוֹרָה (as an instruction) (cf., TNK, 1985),<sup>211</sup> his prayer is an abomination” (Proverbs 28:9). Likewise, the wise man of the Psalter instructed his readers at the beginning of the Psalms that “[b]lessed is the man who...meditates on תּוֹרָה day and night” (Ps. 1:1-2). In light of wisdom, ‘walking in integrity’ (מִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתַמּוֹ) was regarded not only as a character of the righteous (צַדִּיק) (Proverbs 20:7), but also as that of the wise (Job 1:1, תָּם). On the contrary, the wicked were identified with the fool, for they thought that ‘there is no God’ (cf., Pss. 10:4; 14:2)

Lastly, the past experience of salvation was perceived as a warranty for future hope. The wisdom of the Psalter was closely related to what Yahweh had done for Israel in the history of salvation. In order to acquire that wisdom, the people of Israel had to remember the miraculous deeds of Yahweh. The past experiences helped to shape the psalmist’s faith in God. In this regard, Yahweh was constantly presented as a shield (מָגֵן), salvation (יְשׁוּעָה), refuge (מִחָסֶה), rock (צוּר/סֶלֶע), fortress (מְצוּדָה), stronghold (מְצוּדָה) or fortress (מְשֻׁנָּב) which were the metaphors of concrete salvation. It seems that sapiential Judaism used the story of salvation as material for wisdom lessons.

My reading of the Psalter from the beginning to the end forced me to conclude that the Psalter was not only a salvation-oriented book, but also a book of wisdom and that the two themes were closely related to one other. The Psalter began by proclaiming the אֱשֵׁרֵי of the righteous and ended by calling all living things to praise Yahweh in his heavenly sanctuary. As an introduction of the whole Psalter, Psalm 1 called the post-exilic Israelite to seek wisdom and choose the way of the righteous over that of the wicked. Psalms 1-2, the introduction, serve to instruct

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<sup>211</sup> TNK renders the verse as follows: “He who turns a deaf ear to instruction -- His prayer is an abomination.”

people to listen to the תּוֹרָה, and Psalms 146- 150, the conclusion, exhort people to praise Yahweh. Between the two there were psalms of agony, lament, confidence and hope. At the core, the reality of life was to reiterate Yahweh's salvific action, or, salvation history. The laments which came out of David's mouth must have given much solace to the post-exilic Israel in their identification with David's suffering. That was probably the reason why the Psalter began and ended with the Davidic collections (Pss. 3-41; 138-145). The psalms were collected and shaped for the survival of the people of Israel struggling with the situation of the post-exilic period with no kingship, courts, and temple. Reciting and meditating on Yahweh's salvation through the Psalter was one way to help them survive. The wisdom motif in the Psalter was presented as an instruction to remind Israel of what Yahweh had done for His people throughout past history. Yahweh's marvellous works of the past were adopted in this way to encourage the generations to come.

The assumption that wisdom theology is inferior to the theology of salvation history should now change: salvation history was simply delivered as one of the contents or curricula of wisdom. The community of Israel was indoctrinated on the wisdom lessons of what God had done for Israel in the past, and hence, finally survived the post-exilic era.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Wisdom and salvation history in the wisdom psalms**

This dissertation is an exploration of the relationship of wisdom to salvation history in the book of Psalms. The notional starting point of this thesis is a conviction that there might be a juncture at which the two themes converge because in certain psalms such as Psalm 78, the Israelite concept of salvation appears to have a close relationship with the wisdom theme. In the history of Psalm interpretation so far, the concept of wisdom psalm has not been properly dealt with due to scholastic difficulty in ascertaining the clear criteria of a genre. The process of scrutinizing the history of interpretation showed that the Psalms in their final form were far more purposeful than were previously understood. The major guiding principles of the

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method employed are: (1) 'the canonical approach' of Brevard Childs; (2) 'the canonical criticism' of James Sanders; (3) 'the canonical process approach' of Bruce Waltke; (4) 'the Christo-canonical approach' of Jerry E. Shepherd; and (5) 'the communito-canonical approach' of deClaissé-Walford. This thesis made use of these methodological principles by attempting to read the Psalter from the beginning to the end, and by focusing mainly on the final stage of the Psalter proposed by B. Waltke as the third stage, or the final and complete Old Testament canon associated with the Second Temple, and by purposefully limiting the scope of our study to around the post-exilic period.

Having dealt with the issue of classifying the wisdom psalm, the presence of the wisdom motif in many psalms which do not fall into the wisdom category serves to add a didactic dimension to the entire Psalter. In so doing, we reach a conclusion that what we are dealing with is not merely the wisdom psalms within the Psalms, but 'the wisdom Psalter' as a literary unit. Then, it can be said that the Psalter is not merely an anthology of individual psalms used for cult, but was meant to be read also as a source of *תּוֹרָה*, an instruction. This means that every psalm in the Psalter has pedagogical potential, which may have been the ostensible intent of the editor(s) at the final stage of the formation of the Psalter.

On this premise, this study attempts to set up a strategy to read the Psalms from the beginning to the end from book I up to book V as a wisdom Psalter, with a particular focus on how the wisdom motif relates to the salvation history motif. The question did not merely concern their interpretation as disjointed pieces, but also what their presence in the book of Psalter meant in terms of the relationship between wisdom and salvation history. This means that the study is influenced less by a historical and form critical approach, but more from a literary and canonical perspective.

The Psalter begins by proclaiming the *אֱשֶׁרִי* of the righteous and ended by calling

all living things to praise Yahweh in his heavenly sanctuary. As an introduction of the whole Psalter, Psalms 1-2 call the post-exilic Israelite to seek wisdom and choose the way of the righteous over that of the wicked. Psalms 1-2, the introduction, serve to instruct people to listen to the תּוֹרָה, and Psalms 146- 150, the conclusion, exhort people to praise Yahweh. Between the two there were psalms of agony, lament, confidence and hope. At the core, the reality of life is to reiterate the Yahweh's salvific action, or, salvation history. The laments which came out of David's mouth must have given much solace to the post-exilic Israel in their identification with David's suffering. That is probably the reason why the Psalter begins and ends with the Davidic collections (Pss. 3-41; 138-145).

Among the principal findings from the reading the Psalter is the two-ways theme. From the beginning to the end a strong contrast is drawn between the psalmist and his opponents. The former is described as the righteous, the Godly, the afflicted, and the one who fear and take refuge in Yahweh, while the latter are depicted as the wicked, the arrogant, the enemies, the nations, the kings (rulers) of the earth, sinners, mockers, and foes, etc. In fact, the theme not only betrays the wisdom flavour, but also occupies the centre of salvation history as the history of selecting the one and abandoning the other (cf., Malachi 1:2-3),

A second finding concerns the identification of the psalmists with the ones who fear Yahweh. The word תְּמִים, a relative of תָּם which has the same meaning, is used in describing the character of Noah (Genesis 6:9), Abraham (Genesis 17:1), and Job (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3). Furthermore, according to Proverbs 28: 18a, "One who walks blameless (הוֹלֵךְ תְּמִים) will be saved..." צַדִּיק, תְּמִים, and אֱמֶת are suggested as the characteristics of those who fear Yahweh (Job 12:4, 36:4; Proverbs 8:7, 11:18).

The third concerns תּוֹרָה as an instruction: From the beginning the theme of תּוֹרָה is closely connected to the theme of wisdom. תּוֹרָה implies an instruction

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rather than the Mosaic Law and possibly includes the Psalter itself, which means that the תּוֹרָה replace wisdom and its human teachers (cf., McCann, 1993b:129). One learns not only how to pray through the Psalms but is also instructed by them as concerns God’s teaching, law, and wisdom (cf., G. Sheppard, 1992:154). If the Torah is the revelation of God’s wisdom from all eternity, the psalms are the praise of wisdom, the spontaneous outburst of loving acknowledgement from the heart of man. The beginning of wisdom is to meditate on תּוֹרָה, the instruction of Yahweh, and the end of wisdom is tantamount to the exultation of Him. In the history of salvation, the themes of Torah and wisdom are interwoven to instruct God’s people, and one of the materials used for wisdom’s lesson is salvation history. A wise man of Israel mused, “[w]hen anyone turns his ear from listening to the תּוֹרָה (as an instruction), his prayer is an abomination” (Proverbs 28:9). Likewise, the wise man of the Psalter instructs his readers at the beginning of the Psalms that “[b]lessed is the man who...meditates on תּוֹרָה day and night” (Ps. 1:1-2). In light of wisdom, ‘walking in integrity’ (מִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתָמוֹן) is regarded not only as a character of the righteous (צַדִּיק) (Proverbs 20:7), but also as that of the wise (Job 1:1, תָּם). On the contrary, the wicked are identified with the fool, for they think that ‘there is no God’ (cf., Pss. 10:4; 14:2).

Lastly, the past experience of salvation is perceived as a warranty for future hope. The wisdom of the Psalter is closely related to what Yahweh has done for Israel in the history of salvation. In order to acquire that wisdom, the people of Israel have to remember the miraculous deeds of Yahweh. The past experiences help to shape the psalmist’s faith in God. In this regard, Yahweh is constantly presented as a shield (מָגֵן), salvation (יְשׁוּעָה), refuge (מַחְסֵה), rock (צוּר/סֵלֶע), fortress (מְצוּדָה), stronghold (מְצוּרָה) or fortress (מְשׁוֹנֵב) which were the metaphors of concrete salvation. It seems that sapiential Judaism used the story of salvation as material for wisdom lessons.

The psalms were collected and shaped for the survival of the people of Israel struggling with the situation of the post-exilic period with no kingship, courts, and temple. Reciting and meditating on Yahweh's salvation through the Psalter was one way to help them survive. The wisdom motif in the Psalter was presented as an instruction to remind Israel of what Yahweh had done for His people throughout past history. Yahweh's marvellous works of the past were adopted in this way to encourage the generations to come.

The assumption that wisdom theology is inferior to the theology of salvation history should now change: salvation history was simply delivered as one of the contents or curricula of wisdom. The community of Israel was influenced on the wisdom lessons of what God had done for Israel in the past, and hence, finally survived the post-exilic era.

## **OPSOMMING**

### **Wysheid en heilsgeskiedenis in die wysheidspsalms**

Hierdie proefskrif ondersoek die verhouding tussen wysheid en heilsgeskiedenis in die boek van die Psalms. Die vertrekpunt van die proefskrif is die oortuiging dat daar 'n punt is waar die twee temas saamvloei, omdat in sekere Psalms, soos Psalm 78, die Israelitiese konsep van verlossing skynbaar in noue verband staan met die wysheidstema. In die navorsingsgeskiedenis van die psalms tot op datum, het die konsep van Wysheidspsalms nie behoorlike aandag geniet nie, veral weens die probleem om duidelike kriteria vir hierdie genre vas te stel. In die beoordeling van die navorsingsgeskiedenis is bemark dat die psalms in hulle finale vorm 'n groter plan vertoon as wat vroeër gedink is. Die belangrikste fasette van die metode wat gebruik is, is: (1) die kanon-kritiese benadering van Brevard Childs; (2) die

kanonkritiek van James Sanders; (3) die kanoniese prosesbenadering van Bruce Waltke; (4) die Christo-kanoniese benadering van Jerry E. Shepherd; en (5) die 'communito-canonical, benadering van deClaissé-Walford. Hierdie proefskrif gebruik hierdie metodologiese benaderings deur die Psalmbundel van begin tot einde te lees, terwyl daar hoofsaaklik gefokus word op die finale fase van die psalmbundel soos voorgestel deur B. Waltke as die derde of finale fase, die volledige Ou-Testamentiese kanon wat met die tweede tempel verbind is. Die skopus van die studie word doelbewus beperk tot die na-ballingskapse periode.

Nadat aandag gegee is aan die klassifikasie van wysheidspsalms, word die wysheidsmotief nagevors in baie psalms wat buite hierdie kategorie val. Hierdie benadering dui op 'n didaktiese dimensie van die hele bundel. In hierdie proses is tot die konklusie gekom dat nie net die wysheidspsalms binne die bundel nie, maar dat die hele bundel as 'n wysheidspalter 'n literêre eenheid vorm. Hiervan kan afgelei word dat die bundel nie maar 'n bloemlesing van individuele psalms is wat in die kultus gebruik is nie, maar dat die geheel bedoel was om geles te word as 'n bron van הוֹרָה, 'n instruksie. Dit beteken dat elke psalm in die bundel 'n opvoedingspotensiaal het, wat die duidelike bedoeling van die redakteur(s) van die finale fase van die groei van die bundel was.

Met bogenoemde as vertrekpunt, poog hierdie studie om 'n strategie te ontwikkel om die Psalms van die begin van Boek 1 tot die einde van Boek 5 te lees as 'n wysheidspalter, met as besondere fokus die vraag hoe die wysheidsmotief verband hou met die heilshistoriese motief. Hierdie vraagstelling hou nie net verband met die interpretasie van die afsonderlike psalms nie, maar ook met die vraag na die betekenis van hulle teenwoordigheid in die bundel in terme van die verhouding tussen wysheid en heilsgeskiedenis. Hierdie studie is dus minder beïnvloed deur die historiese en vormkritiese benadering as deur die literêre en kanoniese perspektief.

Die Psalmbundel begin om die אֲשֵׁרֵי van die regverdige te verkondig en eindig met die oproep tot alle lewende wesens om Jahweh in sy hemelse heiligdom te loof. As 'n inleiding tot die bundel, roep Psalms 1-2 die post-eksiliese Israel om wysheid te soek en om die weg van die regverdige te kies bo die weg van die goddelose. Psalms 1-2, die inleiding, leer die mense om na die הוֹרָה te luister en Psalms 146- 150, die slot, roep die mense op om die Here te loof. Hiertussen kom psalms van smart, klag, vertoue en hoop voor. Die kern is dat die werklikheid van die lewe 'n mens oproep om die Here se verlossingsdade te verkondig, dit is die heilsgeskiedenis. Die klaagliedere wat Dawid uitgespreek het, moes die post-eksiliese Israel getroos het wanneer hulle met Dawid se lyding identifiseer. Dit is waarskynlike die rede waarom die bundel begin en eindig met Dawidiese versamelings (Psalms 3-41; 138-145).

Een van die belangrikste bevindinge van die studie hou verband met die twee weëtema. Dwarsdeur die bundel word die psalmdigter en sy vyande teenoormekaar gestel. Die digter is die regverdige, die gelowige, die beproefde en die een wat die Here vrees en by Hom skuil. Die vyande word beskryf as die goddelose, die arrogante, die nasies, die konings (regeerders) van die wêreld, sondaars, spotters, teenstanders, ensovoorts. Hierdie tema hou nie net met wysheid verband nie, maar ook met die heilsgeskiedenis. In hierdie geskiedenis word die een verkies en die ander verwerp (vergelyk Maleagi 1:2-3).

'n Tweede bevinding hou verband met die identifikasie van die psalmdigters met hulle wat die Here vrees. Die woord תַּמִּים, wat verband hou met תָּם wat dieselfde beteken, word gebruik om die karakter van Noag te beskryf (Genesis 6:9), asook Abraham (Genesis 17:1) en Job (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3). Verder, volgens Spreuke 28: 18a, "Die een wat volmaak wandel (הוֹלֵךְ תַּמִּים), sal gered word". צַדִּיק, תַּמִּים, en אֱמֶת beskryf die eienskappe van die een wat die Here vrees (Job 12:4, 36:4; Spreuke 8:7,

11:18).

Die derde bevinding hou verband met תּוֹרָה as onderrig. Van die begin af is die tema van die תּוֹרָה ten nouste verbind met die wysheidstema. תּוֹרָה wys eerder op onderrig as op die wette van Moses en sluit waarskynlik die Psalmbundel in. Dit beteken dat die תּוֹרָה wysheid en die meslike leraars vervang (vergelyk McCann, 1993b:129). Die psalms leer 'n mens nie net om te bid nie, maar dit leer die mens ook God se onderrig, wet en wysheid (vergelyk G. Sheppard, 1992:154). As die Tora van ewigheid af die onderrig van God se wysheid is, is die psalms die loof van die wysheid, die spontane uitdrukking van die liefdevolle erkenning komende uit die mens se hart. Die begin van die wysheid is die nadenke oor die תּוֹרָה, die onderrig van die Here, en die einde van wysheid kom neer op dy verhoging. In die heilsgeskiedenis is die temas van Tora en wysheid nou verweef om God se volk te onderrig. Een van die leerstukke wat die wysheid gebruik is die heilsgeskiedenis. 'n Wyse in Israel het dit uitgespreek: As iemand hom doof hou vir die wet van die here, sal die Here 'n afsku hê van so 'n man se gebed (Spreuke 28:9, NAV). Net so leer die wyse van die psalmbundel sy lesers aan die begin dat dit goed gaan met die man wat sy vreugde dag en nag in die תּוֹרָה vind (Psalm Ps. 1:1-2). In die lig van die wysheid is om volmaak te leef (בְּתַמּוֹן בְּתַהֲלֵךְ) beskou nie net as 'n eienskap van die regverdige (צַדִּיק) nie (Spreuke 20:7), maar ook van die wyse (Job 1:1, חָכֵם). Daarteenoor word die goddelose vereenselwig met die dwaas wat dink dat daar geen God is nie (vergelyk Psalm 10:4; 14:2).

Ten slotte word die ervaring van verlossing in die verlede gesien as 'n waarborg vir die toekomstige verwagting. Die wysheid van die Psalmbundel hou ten nouste verband met wat die Here in die heilsgeskiedenis vir Israel gedoen het. Om wysheid te bekom, moet die volk Israel die Here se wonderlike daade onthou. Die ervaring van die verlede het gehelp om die digter se geloof te vorm. In hierdie

verband word die here voorgehou as 'n skild (מָגֵן), verlossing (יְשׁוּעָה), skuilplek (מַחְסֵה), rots (צוּר/סֶלֶע), vesting (מְצוּרָה), burg (מְצוּרָה) of fort (מִשְׁבָּב), wat die metafore van konkrete verlossing is. Die wysheidsjudaïsme het die verhaal van die verlossing gebruik as die stof vir wysheidsonderrig.

Die psalms is versamel en gevorm met die oog op die oorlewing van die volk Israel wat geworstel het met die situasie van die post-eksiliese periode sonder konings, 'n hof en 'n tempel. Die voordra en nadenke van die Here se verlossing deur die Psalmbundel was 'n manier om hulle te help oorleef. Die wysheidsmotief in die Psalmbundel is as onderrig voorgehou om Israel te herinner aan wat die Here vir hulle gedoen het deur die geskiedenis heen. Die here se wonderdade van die verlede is aangeneem om die komende geslagte te bemoedig.

Die aanname dat die wysheidsteologie minder werd is as die heilsgeskiedenis moet nou vernader. Heilsgeskiedenis is aangebied as deel van die inhoud van die onderrig of die leerplanne van wysheid. Die gemeenskap van Israel is beïnvloed deur die wysheidsonderrig van wat Gods in die verlede vir Israel gedoen het en so het hulle in die post-eksiliese periode oorleef.

## **THE KEYWORDS OF THIS STUDY**

### **1. The keywords in relation to methodology**

- **Canonical Criticism**

Canonical criticism/ Canonical approach/ Canonical process approach/

Christo-canonical approach/ Communito-canonical approach

- **The post-exilic community of Israel**

- **The final stage of the shaping of the Psalter**

### **2. The keywords in relation to the content**

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- Wisdom
- The past history of salvation/ deliverance
- Torah as an instruction
- Wisdom psalms/ Wisdom Psalter as a literary unit
- Reading the Psalter from the beginning to the end
- The fear of Yahweh

## **Sleutel terme**

### **3. Metodologiese sleutel terme**

- Kanonieke Kritiek

*Kanonieke kritiek/kanonieke benadering/ kanonieke prosesbenadering/*

*Christo-kanoniese benadering/ "Communito-canonical" benadering*

- Die post-eksiliese gemeenskap van Israel
- Die finale fase van die samestelling van die Psalter

### **4. Inhoudelike sleutel terme**

- Wysheid
- Verlossing-/heilsgeskiedenis
- Tora as onderrig
- Wysheidpsalms/Wysheidpsalter as 'n literêre eenheid
- Om die psalms van voor tot agter te lees
- Die vrees van die Here

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