

THE REDACTIONAL CRITERIA AND OBJECTIVES  
UNDERLYING THE ARRANGEMENT OF PSALMS 3-8

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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any institution for a degree.

KG Smith

Johannesburg, 10 December 2007

## DEDICATION

I wish to express my gratitude to my wife, Lyndi, without whose love, support and patience I would not have been able to complete this study.

## **Abstract**

At present, research into the editorial shaping of the canonical Psalter holds a central role in psalms studies. In keeping with this trend, this dissertation examines links between Psalms 3-8 in an attempt to discern the criteria and objectives the editors used when arranging them.

The study begins with a detailed exegetical synopsis of each of the six psalms in the chosen corpus. This lays a foundation for examining links between the psalms that might have influenced the editors to arrange them in the canonical order. An exhaustive analysis of links first between adjacent psalms and then across the entire corpus follows; the goal is to identify the rationale for the ordering of the psalms.

The analysis suggests that verbal and thematic links provided the main basis of arrangement. The editors' primary objective was to ensure a natural verbal and thematic connection between each pair of adjacent psalms. Although editorial linking is most evident on the level of adjacent psalms, beyond this level the editors do seem to have considered shared terms and similarities in the headings; these considerations were subordinate to shared terms and themes amongst neighbouring psalms.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Throughout most of the twentieth century, psalms research was dominated by the form-critical approaches of Hermann Gunkel (see Gunkel 1926; Gunkel and Begrich 1998) and his student and successor Sigmund Mowinckel. Gunkel's method was to "define psalms according to categories of literary genres (*Gattungen*) and to discover the original life-setting (*Sitz im Leben*)" (Mitchell 1997:50). Mowinckel laid great stress on the importance of the cult as the setting for which the psalms were written and in which they were used. He attempted to reconstruct Jewish festivals and position specific psalms within certain festivals. Common to both form-critical schools was a tendency to view psalms individually, to see little or no literary relationship between adjacent psalms or collections of psalms.

Gerald Wilson's (1985a) dissertation, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, was a landmark event in psalms research. Unlike the form critics, Wilson argued that the Book of Psalms is not a random collection of unrelated poems and hymns, but a purposefully edited literary product in which the individual psalms were strategically positioned so that the final form conveyed a theological message. Wilson argued convincingly that there is clear evidence of purposeful redaction in the finished Psalter. His work has brought redaction criticism to the forefront of psalms research.

At the same time as redaction criticism was beginning to challenge form criticism as the main historical method of psalms exegesis, another paradigm shift was taking place in biblical hermeneutics—text-centred, literary approaches to exegesis were steadily growing in popularity, becoming a serious alternative to the traditional author-centred, historical methods. Prinsloo (1994) lists a bewildering array of factors to consider when using a literary approach to a text. These factors range from the morphology level to the discourse level, from structure to aesthetics, from syntax to rhetoric.

Biblical scholars now recognise that a holistic approach to exegesis requires a combination of historical and literary methods (e.g., Collins 1987; Zenger 1994b; Tate 1997; Human 1999; Baker and Arnold 1999; Broyles 2001; Bullock 2004; Wilson 2005a). However, since literary-redaction of the Psalter

is a relatively new field of psalms study, many corpi of psalms have not been analysed so as to ascertain the literary relationships within them and, therefore, the purpose for and rationale by which they were redacted.

## 1.2 Problem

A fundamental tenet of much modern research on the psalms is that the Psalter is a carefully crafted literary collection in which the individual psalms are purposefully arranged to convey a message. Whereas some scholars believe each and every psalm was carefully chosen and positioned, others believe the editorial shaping of the Psalter is primarily by the careful placement of key psalms.

*The main problem of this study is to determine redactional criteria and objectives underlying the arrangement of Psalms 3-8.* This main problem can be divided into three key research questions.

- a) *What verbal, thematic, structural and functional links are there between Psalms 3-8?* This question needs to be explored at two distinct levels. Firstly, links between pairs of neighbouring psalms need to be examined. Secondly, broader links within the corpus as a whole need to be explored.

- b) *What redactional rationale, if any, served as the basis for the arrangement of Psalms 3-8?* If there is evidence of purposeful arrangement, the study will endeavour to discover what criteria the redactors used to position psalms at the level of pairs of neighbouring psalms and across the entire corpus.
  
- c) *What unified literary message, if any, does the arrangement of psalms in this small corpus convey?* The study will endeavour to discover whether the editors had a communicative objective behind their arrangement and, if so, what that objective was.

### 1.3 Objectives

The objective of the study is to identify the relationships between Psalms 3-8 so as to determine how the final redactors compiled this corpus of psalms. In pursuit of this objective, I aim to discover three things about the redaction of Psalms 3-8.

- a) I aim to verify whether or not there is positive textual evidence of purposeful arrangement in the final order of Psalms 3-8.
  
- b) I aim to identify the criteria which the final editors used to determine the order of Psalms 3-8.

- c) I aim to discover the objectives which the final editors hoped to achieve by their arrangement of Psalms 3-8, that is, what message, if any, they were trying to convey.

Phrased differently, the objective of the study is to determine the level of redaction evident in the arrangement of Psalms 3-8. Did the final redactors serve as collectors, compilers or composers? Does the arrangement of the corpus reveal (a) collection: minimal redaction, (b) compilation: surface-level redaction or (c) composition: deep-level redaction? *Minimal redaction* would mean the final editors merely collected psalms, grouping them either randomly or based on superficial similarities. *Surface-level redaction* indicates the final editors compiled groups of psalms on the basis of surface-level similarities, such as authorship or hook words. *Deep-level redaction* occurs when editors carefully manipulate their materials to create a new literary composition, with all the marks of a literary work (e.g., purpose, unity, plot).

#### 1.4 Delimitations

The delimitation of the corpus is partially but not entirely arbitrary. Psalm 1 is universally regarded as a prologue to the Psalter. Psalm 2, likewise, is widely regarded as introductory (e.g, Brennan 1976 and 1980; Childs 1979; Sheppard 1980; Wilson 1985a; Zenger 1993; McCann 2001; Cole 2002; Stek

2002; Jeppesen 2003; Helberg 2005). Psalms 1-2 are the only psalms in Book I of the Psalter lacking Davidic inscriptions (since Psalms 9-10 are best considered as a unit<sup>1</sup> and Psalm 3 probably had a Davidic superscription originally). This makes Psalm 3, in effect, the first psalm of the Davidic collection that constitutes Book I, which makes it a sensible starting point.

Ending the corpus at Psalm 8 is less clear-cut. The decision was somewhat pragmatic, as the next logical ending point, at Psalm 14, would make the corpus too large for the study to be exhaustive. The selection of Psalm 8 is based on the fact that it is (a) the first praise psalm after a series of individual laments and (b) is closely tied to Psalm 7. In the context of Book I, which is dominated by laments, Psalm 8 is a unique psalm. It appears to have been inserted here to make the end of a first “movement”. If there is any credence to the theory that the arrangement of the psalms forms a kind of literary drama (Walton 1991; Malick 2004 and 2005), then Psalm 8 would seem to mark the end of Act 1, Scene 1.

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<sup>1</sup> So Bratcher and Reyburn (1991), Brueggemann (1991b), Motyer (1994), Craigie (1998), Broyles (1999), Richard (2002), Wilson (2002), Terrien (2003), Goldingay (2006) and Labuschagne (2007).

The validity of ending with Psalm 8 is confirmed by other scholarly analyses of this corpus. Brennan (1980) demarcated Psalms 1-8 as a unit. Labuschagne (2007) treats Psalms 2-8 as a sub-group, considering Psalm 1 as an introduction to the Psalter. He regards Psalms 2 and 8 as respectively the introduction and conclusion to the sub-group of Psalms 2-8. Van der Lugt (2005, cited in Labuschagne) considers Psalms 3-8 as a mini-collection.<sup>2</sup> Stek (2002:784, 789) treats Psalms 3-14 as a major group consisting of two balanced subsubgroups, namely, Psalms 3-8 and Psalms 9-14.

## 1.5 Design

The research design falls under qualitative, literary research (textual analysis; see Mouton 2001:167-168). The research asks primarily *descriptive and causal questions*, seeking first to identify links between the selected psalms (descriptive) and then to explain the rationale for those links (causal). The logical framework is *inductive* since the researcher will first gather data from observations of the psalms and then use the data to assess the basis and

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<sup>2</sup> Van der Lugt (cited by Labuschagne 2007) believes Psalm 7 is a composite of two independent poems, namely, verses 1-9a and 9b-18. Whether or not Psalm 7 was originally a single psalm does not materially affect his recognition that Psalm 8 represents the most logical ending point for the mini-corpus of psalms beginning with Psalm 3.

level of redaction in the corpus. For a full discussion of the research methodology, see chapter 3.

## 1.6 Definitions

I wish to make the following clarifying remarks with references to certain peculiarities of language usage reflected in this thesis.

- The term “my corpus” refers to the six psalms selected to be the object of this research, namely, Psalms 3-8.
- The term “concatenation”, which Merriam-Webster (2003, s.v. concatenate) defines as “to link together in a series or chain”, is used exclusively with reference to neighbouring psalms, that is, the touching links in the chain of psalms under investigation.
- The terms “the redactors”, “the editors” and “the compilers” are used interchangeably with no intended difference in meaning. All three terms refer to the person or people ultimately responsible for arranging the psalms in the final canonical order. We cannot be certain whether this was a single person (unlikely) or multiple hands (likely). I have chosen to use the plural forms throughout since it allows for gender neutral

references. I make no presupposition as to whether an individual or a group served as the final editor(s).<sup>3</sup>

- Masculine gender language is used without prejudice for references to God and individual psalms writers. I follow the biblical pattern of using masculine terms to refer to God without implying that the Lord has natural gender. In the case of the psalm writers, all composers named in the Scriptures were males. It is likely that the authors of Psalms 3-8 would have been men, but no prejudice is intended by the decision to use masculine terms for the psalm authors.

## 1.7 Hypothesis

The researcher expects the study of Psalms 3-8 to reveal surface-level redaction, but not deep-level redaction. That is, the final redactors grouped psalms that were in some respect similar (e.g., sharing key words, themes,

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<sup>3</sup> The general consensus within the field is that the final form of the Psalter evolved over time with multiple editorial hands at work in different stages of compilation on different collections (see, for example, Wilson 1985a; Anderson 1994; McFall 2000; Vos and Olivier 2002; Hegg 2003). In his analysis of the evidence from Qumran, Anderson (1994:219-225) demonstrates convincingly that the order of Books I-III was fixed much earlier than the order of Books IV-V.

life settings, etc.), but their redactive work did not extend to the creative production of a new literary text with its own purpose and message.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.8 Overview

Chapter 2 surveys the history of psalms research, indicating that except for the period between approximately 1820 and 1980 the prevailing view held the Psalter to be a purposefully arranged collection intended to convey an overall message.

The methodology employed in the study is spelled out step-by-step in chapter 3. To ensure that the research is as objective and scientific as possible and that the findings are concrete and verifiable, both the steps followed in each

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<sup>4</sup> Since the introductory chapter is being written at the end of the study, stating my hypothesis is difficult because it fluctuated significantly during the course of the research. My initial impressions were of a group of psalms deliberately organised with some sort of literary plot. While working on the exegesis of each psalm in chapter 4, I began to doubt whether there were *any* intentional links between the psalms; this perception was so strong that I was tempted to abandon the study at one point. By the mid-point of the study, I had come to suspect that there was evidence of the editors using shared words and themes to juxtapose similar psalms, but that the redaction was very much at a surface level.

phase of the study and the rationale for using those steps is described in detail.

Chapter 4 lays a foundation for the analysis of the links between the psalms by analysing each psalm individually, drawing attention to its most important features. The focus is on the concrete literary features of each psalm. More speculative theories and proposals are noted, but not laboured.

The heart of the study comes in chapters 5 and 6, an exhaustive analysis of the links between Psalms 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. Chapter 5 focuses solely on neighbouring psalms, exploring all similarities that might represent intentional links and thus provide editorial grounds for placing one psalm immediately after another. Chapter 6 examines broader relationships within the corpus as a whole, seeking to understand the redactional criteria and objectives reflected in the final compilation of the corpus.

Chapter 7 wraps up the study, drawing conclusions about the research problem in the light of the evidence gathered in chapters 4-6. The first section graphically summarises the patterns of linkage that were discovered between the psalms (answer to key question 1). On the basis of this evidence, conclusions are drawn as to the redactional rationale underlying the arrangement of Psalms 3-8 (resolution of key question 2). The study closes

with a tentative conclusion concerning the overall message of the selected corpus of psalms (conclusion regarding key question 3).

## Chapter 2

### History of Psalms Studies

#### 2.1 Introduction

In recent times, the level of scholarly interest in the Book of Psalms has risen to unprecedented heights. The Psalter held pride of place amongst the books of the Old Testament in the ministry of Jesus and the early church. Throughout the centuries, the psalms have captured the hearts of Christians and ranked amongst the most popular of all biblical materials in the devotional life of the church. Yet in terms of biblical scholarship since the advent of critical era, they have taken a back seat to most of the other Old Testament materials.

The current revival of scholarly interest in the psalms is largely due to research demonstrating that the Psalter is not a haphazard collection of psalms, but a purposefully arranged “book”, suitable for literary analysis. Over

the past 25 years, a great deal of work has been done on the literary relationships between psalms, but, since this is a new avenue of research, a great deal still remains to be done.

In this chapter, I briefly review the history of psalms study from biblical times until the present, demonstrating the validity of the present literary-redactional approach to the psalms. Then I survey the most significant scholarly work that has been done in this area. This survey indicates the need for the present study of Psalms 3-8 and serves to position it within the broader context of literary-redactional study on the Psalter.

## **2.2 Ancient approaches**

The Septuagint has appropriately been called “the first monument to Jewish exegesis” (Daniel 1971:855). In fact, the early translations of the Old Testament (e.g., Septuagint, Targums, Peshitta) suggest that the translators regarded the ordering of the Psalter as purposeful and significant. Although their numbering may differ, all the ancient translations of the Psalter follow the same order as the Masoretic Text. Furthermore, “the ancient translations endorse virtually all the internal structural markers, that is, the headings and doxologies, of the Hebrew Psalter” (Mitchell 1997:17). Since “later redactors might well have wished to reunite psalms that share common headings” (p.

18) or rearrange psalms to suit their own purposes, their retention of the order and the structural markers is convincing evidence that they believed the ordering of the Psalter to be purposeful.

Evidence from the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls indicates that the Qumran community produced its own purposefully arranged collections of psalms, including combinations of biblical and non-biblical psalms. While scholars believe their psalm collections generally followed the ordering of the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint (see Skehan 1978; Haran 1993), several collections of psalms have been found that do not follow the Masoretic Text, apparently having been arranged for special uses in the Qumran community (see Van der Ploeg 1971; Puech 1990). This demonstrates that the Qumran interpreters were accustomed to purposefully arranged collections of psalms and would likely have viewed the biblical Psalter as a purposefully arranged collection.

The New Testament contains implicit clues that the form of the Psalter was fixed by the first century, but it never attributes exegetical significance to the order of the psalms. The allusion to ὁ βιβλος ψαλμῶν (*the Book of Psalms*) in Acts 20 implies that the Psalter existed in a fixed form, presumably the Septuagint, the edition from which most New Testament citations are drawn. In Paul's sermon as recorded in Acts 13, the apostle alludes to "the second

psalm” (Acts 13:33), a small indication that Psalm 2 was indeed the second psalm in his text.

Ancient rabbinic writings give “evidence that the rabbis regarded the Psalter’s sequence of lyrics as purposefully arranged” (Mitchell 1997:29). Mitchell proceeds to cite several examples of rabbinical interpretation referring to the preceding or following psalms as the literary context for the interpretation of a psalm. Examples include the juxtaposition of Psalms 2-3, 52-54 and 110-111.

Among the church fathers, the historicity of the psalm headings was universally accepted. Augustine (1956) regarded the ordering of the psalms as both purposeful and mysterious.

The Reformers’ interpretation of the psalms emphasised (a) the value of the headings, (b) the need to understand the psalms in their historical setting and (c) the prophetic-messianic nature of the psalms, regarding David as a type of the Messiah. Calvin (1949), ever perceptive, regarded Psalm 1 as an editorial preface to the Psalter. As for the arrangement of the collection, they did not address the question of its purposeful ordering.

### **2.3 Historical criticism**

The nineteenth century witnessed a paradigm shift in biblical research. Led by a myriad of revolutionary German thinkers, a movement away from traditional,

conservative approaches to the Bible gained momentum, splitting biblical and theological scholars into two distinct camps—liberals and conservatives. Liberal scholars were revolutionary. They rejected out-of-hand the faith-based presuppositions about the Bible that had previously provided the framework within which the Bible was studied. Instead of treating the Bible as the inspired, inerrant Word of God, they regarded it as a book that is, like any other book, subject to scientific study. Hence was born the era of critical exegesis. Since the logical starting point for a critical analysis of the Bible lay in an analysis of the history of the text and the history in the text, the primary exegetical tool became known as historical criticism.

The Psalter certainly did not hold centre stage in the early application of historical-critical methods, but neither did it escape the pervasive tendency of critical scholars to reject all traditional views and adopt revolutionary new perspectives, especially as regards the authorship and dating of biblical texts. Under the guidance of such towering figures as De Wette (1811), Olshausen (1853), Ewald (1866; 1899) and Wellhausen (1898), early historical critics on the psalms completely rejected the historicity of the psalm headings as very late scribal additions to the text. Therefore, they also rejected all indications of authorship contained in the headings as well as whatever historical information they may have contained. They proposed that most, if not all, of

the psalms were written after the exile, perhaps as late as the Maccabean period.

The demise of the headings, coupled with a pervasively sceptical approach to the psalms, left little scope or basis for treating the final form of the Psalter as a purposefully arranged collection. Mitchell (1997:43) remarks:

The idea that the Psalter was purposefully arranged was also disputed. Indeed, after the headings fell, it was defenceless, for the headings and doxologies, demarcating groups of psalms, had always been the best evidence for internal structure. . . .

Thus many commentators of the period made no remark on the existence of concatenation or upon the characteristics of heading-defined internal collections, such as the Asaph or Korah Psalms.

The dominant view of the Psalter that emerged among liberal, critical scholars regarded it as a piecemeal evolution of hymns and prayers that were collected *ad hoc* for use as the hymnbook of the second temple (see Briggs and Briggs 1906). The period witnessed a complete loss of interest in exploring the relationship between adjacent psalms or between groups of psalms.

The leading conservative voice of the middle nineteenth century was Hengstenberg (1804-1888), who defended the ascriptions of authorship in the headings, the purposeful arrangement of the Psalter and the presence of messianic prophecy in the psalms. He heavily influenced Delitzsch (1813-1890), whose work on the Psalms represents the high-water mark of nineteenth century studies. Mitchell (1997:46) summarises Delitzsch's contributions perfectly.

Delitzsch . . . achieves the best balance between criticism and tradition of all nineteenth century commentators. He generally supports the validity of the headings. . . . He notes that the order of the lyrics cannot be explained purely on the basis of chronological evolution, and indicates evidence of editorial activity in the Psalter, noting concatenation in particular. In the light of this, he detects 'the impress of one ordering spirit'. . . . Delitzsch also maintains that a central theme is discernable in the collection, that is, concern with the Davidic covenant and its ultimate fulfilment in a future Messiah. He perceives the eschatological hope not only in the redactor's mind, but also in the mind of the individual psalmists.

In spite of the influence of Hengstenberg and Delitzsch, by the end of the nineteenth century the current of psalms studies was flowing away from the traditional view of the Psalter as a largely Davidic collection that was purposefully arranged to a critical view that it was a piecemeal collection of anonymous, post-exilic lyrics compiled for use as the hymnbook of the second temple. The great commentaries of the early twentieth century (e.g., Cheyne 1904; Briggs and Briggs 1906 and 1907; Kirkpatrick 1906) reflect the scepticism of the period.

#### **2.4 Form criticism**

A major change of direction occurred around 1920 under the influence of Hermann Gunkel, a towering figure in Old Testament studies during the first half of the twentieth century. Gunkel, the father of Old Testament form criticism, pioneered and popularised form critical analysis of the Psalter, the approach that dominated psalms' studies for the rest of the twentieth century and still remains a prominent field of exegesis.

Gunkel's approach had two elements. First, he categorised psalms according to literary genres (*Gattungen*). Second, he sought the original life setting (*Sitz im Leben*) that gave rise to each genre and, therefore, to each psalm within that genre. His approach was based on premise the form follows function.

- *Forms:* psalms can be grouped into categories on the basis of their tone and structure. Gunkel identified five primary forms, namely, individual laments, communal laments, praise hymns, thanksgiving psalms and royal psalms. “Within these principal categories Gunkel recognized the existence of other subsidiary classes”, including songs of Zion, enthronement psalms, psalms of confidence, vows, pilgrimage songs, wisdom poems and Torah liturgies (Harrison 1969:991-992).
- *Functions:* each form can be linked to a particular kind of life setting that gave rise to it. The underlying assumption is that each life setting gave rise to stereotypical literature that was suitable for use in that setting. The life setting is the key to understanding the origin and preservation of its literary forms.

Gunkel was by no means the first to recognise the presence of different types of psalms in the Psalter. Throughout the ages, exegetes had classified psalms into different groups on the basis their content or form, such as praise, lamentation, petition or meditation (see Harrison 1969:990). What separated Gunkel from previous interpreters, therefore, was not the use of genre groupings, but the claim that each psalm genre originated and functioned within a particular life setting in ancient Israel. The life settings for which they were written and in which they were used hold the key to identifying and

understanding the forms in the Psalter. A correct reading of the psalms, therefore, requires sensitivity to the relationship between form and function, to the connection between genre and setting, between *Gattungen* and *Sitz im Leben*. Gunkel's emphasis, however, lay on the literary forms themselves.

Gunkel did not view the psalms as professional compositions created for cultic occasions. In general, although he "argued that the literary forms emerged from typical occasions within the cult, he believed that most of the psalms preserved in the Psalter were not cultic liturgies, but more personal poems based on cultic prototypes" (Broyles 1989:12).

The Scandinavian scholar Sigmund Mowinckel, a student of Gunkel's, retained his teacher's categories and premises, but laid much greater emphasis on the cultic *Sitze im Leben* of the psalms. He believed that all the psalms originated and belonged in cultic settings, especially cultic festivals. Mowinckel postulated an annual *Enthronement of Yahweh Festival* as the setting for many psalms, reconstructing this alleged festival largely by way of analogy with the Babylonian New Year Festival that included a ceremonial enthronement of Marduk, and claiming to find corroborative evidence within the psalms (see Mowinckel 1922, vol. 2). Mowinckel's hypothesis of an *Enthronement of Yahweh Festival* met with a mixed response, being enthusiastically embraced by some (e.g., Leslie 1949) and severely criticised

by others (e.g., Eissfeldt 1928, quoted in Harrison 1969:994; Oesterley 1937 and 1939).

The influence of Gunkel (in particular) and Mowinckel dominated psalms studies from 1920 until 1980. Major commentators of the second half of the twentieth century almost all follow either Gunkel's method of classifying psalms according to their forms (e.g., Leslie 1949; Kissane 1953; Westermann 1965, 1980 and 1981; Dahood 1966, 1968 and 1970; Durham 1971; Kraus 1978, 1988 and 1989; Gerstenberger 1988; Allen 1998) or Mowinckel's attempt to position the psalms within their cultic settings in Israel's worship (e.g., Johnson 1951; 1979; Weiser 1962; Eaton 1967, 1976 and 1986; Day 1990).<sup>5</sup>

Gunkel's "forms" (*Gattungen*) are widely accepted to this day. Although scholars might modify his classifications slightly, analysing psalms according to their literary forms remains a standard and influential branch of psalms studies. Today few scholars support Mowinckel's hypothetical *Enthronement of Yahweh Festival*—Johnson (1979) and Eaton (1986) are notable exceptions—but many accept the assumption that a significant number of

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<sup>5</sup> Roberts (2005) has offered a recent defence of "Mowinckel's autumn festival as offering the best explanation for the ritual background of the enthronement psalms" (Williams 2006).

psalms were written for use in cultic rituals. Nevertheless, “[a]ttempts to fix specific liturgical settings for each type [of psalm] have not been very convincing” (Stek 2002:779).

Form criticism still held centre stage in major reviews of psalms studies by Ronald Clements (1976), John Hayes (1979) and Erhard Gerstenberger (1985), but by the mid 1980s two new but related approaches to the Psalms were coming to the fore—redaction criticism and literary analysis.

## 2.5 Redaction criticism

David Howard succinctly summarises the dominant view of the structure and message of the Book of Psalms towards the end of the 1970s.

[T]he Psalter was treated almost universally as a disjointed assortment of diverse compositions that happened to be collected loosely into what eventually became a canonical “book.” The primary connections among the psalms were to have been liturgical, not literary or canonical. The original life setting (*Sitz im Leben*) of most psalms was judged to have been the rituals of worship and sacrifice at the temple. The psalms came together in a haphazard way, and the setting of each psalm in the Book of Psalms (*Sitz im Text*) was not considered.

The Psalter was understood to have been the hymnbook of second-temple Judaism, and it was not read in the same way in which most other canonical books were read, that is, with a coherent structure and message (Howard 1999:332-333).

This state of affairs was turned upside-down by a paradigm shift in psalms studies that began in the late 1970s. There was a growing frustration among biblical scholars with the way historical criticism fragmented biblical texts rather than viewing them holistically. Influenced by the so-called *new criticism* that had been prominent among American literary critics since the 1940s (see Parsons 1991:261), Bible scholars began to experiment with literary approaches to the reading of texts. One natural consequence of the literary approaches was a tendency to read texts as literary wholes. This led to an interest in studying the theology of the final form of a biblical text, a practice that was pioneered in Old Testament studies by Brevard Childs. It later became known as *canonical criticism*.

Childs' most influential work, *An Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (1979), set the stage for a major shift in focus in psalms studies. He encouraged reading the Book of Psalms as a literary unity. He also made several striking observations about the editorial structure and message of the final form of the Psalter, such as noting the programmatic significance of

Psalms 1 and 2 for the reading of the final form and observing the strategic placement of royal psalms.

Under Childs' influence, and to a lesser extent that of Brennan (1976; 1980), a new avenue of psalms study opened up. Form critics had sought to understand the *Sitze im Leben* of the psalms. In this quest, they analysed psalms almost exclusively with reference to their historical context, paying little or no attention to possible textual relationships between psalms. Redaction critics began to study the Psalter as a literary work, seeking to identify possible relationships between psalms and to discover the redactional agenda behind the Psalter's final form. They shifted the focus from the *Sitz im Leben* to the *Sitz im Text* of the psalms.

The most outstanding and influential figure in the field of redaction critical analysis of the Psalter is Gerald Wilson, a student of Brevard Childs. His seminal work, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (1985a), remains the most comprehensive and authoritative work on the final redaction of the Psalter.

The greatest contribution of Wilson's research was his convincing demonstration that the Psalter is not an *ad hoc* collection of unrelated psalms, but that it bears evidence of purposeful editorial activity. He was not the first to hypothesise that the Psalter was purposefully organised, but he was the first to devise a sound method of testing the hypothesis. He began by analysing

collections of hymns from Qumran, Sumeria and Mesopotamia. Having scrutinised the inscriptions and colophons employed in these collections, he concluded that clearly identifiable editorial techniques were employed in the arrangement of each collection. He thus deduced that collections of hymns in the Ancient Near East were not arranged in random order; it was standard practice to sort them into a purposeful arrangement.

Based on his observations of non-biblical hymn collections, Wilson turned to the Old Testament Psalter expecting to find evidence of purposeful arrangement. In the headings and doxologies he found what he called *explicit* evidence of redaction. In his view,

A careful study of the use of psalm-headings to group the psalms of the Psalter indicates that the doxologies mark real, intentional divisions rather than accidental ones. Within the first three books (Pss 1-89), “author” descriptions and genre terms are employed to bind groups of consecutive psalms together and to indicate the boundaries that separate them (Wilson 1992:131).

Although he did not consider author designations to be “the primary organisational concern of the Hebrew Psalter” (Wilson 1984:338), he successfully demonstrated that in the first three books of the Psalter the

redactors deliberately used authorship designations to bind groups of psalms together and “to mark strong disjunctions” (p. 339). Within books two and three of the Psalter, he also demonstrated conscious use of genre designations to soften changes between authorship groupings when no strong disjunction is intended.

Wilson also found what he called *tacit* evidence of purposeful redaction. In the fourth and fifth Books of the Psalter, authorship designations are too scarce to serve as indicators of organisational intent. However, in the tradition of Mesopotamian hymn collections that often use “praise” or “blessing” to “conclude documents or sections within documents” (Wilson 1984:349), he observed that the redactors of the fourth and fifth Books used *hallelujah* psalms, that is, psalms opening and/or closing with הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה (*praise the Lord!*), to indicate the closing “boundaries of discrete segments of the larger collection” (p. 350). Furthermore, each group of *hallelujah* psalms is followed by a psalm opening with “Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his lovingkindness is everlasting” (the so-called הוֹדוּ psalms). Wilson interpreted this as a marker of the beginning of a new subgroup of psalms. He concluded:

All these factors confirm that the conjunction of *hllwyh* and *hwdw* psalms in these texts is not coincidental, but is the result of conscious arrangement according to accepted traditions and

serves to mark the “seams” of the Psalter as a whole (Wilson 1984:352).

Finally, Wilson found additional *tacit* evidence of purposeful editing in the strategic positioning of royal psalms at the seams of the first three Books of the Psalter. Psalm 2, the beginning of Book I, Psalm 72, the conclusion of Book II and Psalm 89, the conclusion not only of Book III, but of the first of the two major divisions of the Psalter, are all strategically positioned royal psalms. He viewed the placement of these psalms as one of the keys to understanding the overall redactional purpose of the finished form of the Psalter.

Wilson has written extensively about the editing of the Psalter. His most notable works include “The Use of ‘Untitled’ Psalms in the Hebrew Psalter” (1985b), “The Use of Royal Psalms at the ‘Seams’ of the Hebrew Psalter” (1986), “The Shape of the Book of Psalms” (1992), “Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise” (1993a) and “Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms” (1993b).

The influence that Gerald Wilson has exerted on the psalms studies since the mid 1980s is difficult to overstate. His work largely settled the question of whether or not the Psalter was purposefully arranged.<sup>6</sup> The previously prevailing view, which held that the Psalter is a loose collection of individual psalms, is now scarcely tenable. David Howard (1999:329) describes the difference as follows:

Psalms studies at the end of the twentieth century are very different from what they were in 1970. There has been a paradigm shift in biblical studies, whereby texts are now read *as texts*, that is, as literary entities and canonical wholes. This has manifested in Psalms studies in several ways, the most important of which is the attention to the Psalter as a *book*, as a coherent whole. It is also manifested in many literary and structural approaches.

David Mitchell asserted that “[t]he Psalter may be regarded as a book, rather than an *ad hoc* collection, if it bears evidence of careful arrangement” (1997:15). Wilson presented compelling reasons for accepting that the Psalter

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<sup>6</sup> The only major work I am aware of that argues against reading the Book of Psalms as a book is *Reading the Psalms as a Book* (Whybray 1996).

may indeed be regarded as a “book”. What followed his landmark thesis was a deluge of studies attempting to identify the editorial agenda underlying the final arrangement of the psalms in the Psalter. A few such studies attempted to discover the overarching structure, purpose and message of the entire Psalter. Most were more modest in their objectives, attempting to understand the structure, purpose and message of smaller groups of psalms.

## **2.6 Recent literary studies**

### ***2.6.1 Studies on the entire Psalter***

The first major contribution to the quest to discover the purpose and agenda of the final redactors of the Psalter came from Gerald Wilson himself. His seminal thesis, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Wilson 1985a), had two objectives. First, he sought to demonstrate that the Psalter was purposefully arranged. Second, he tried to uncover the significance of the arrangement, that is, the purpose of the redactors. The second objective was more subjective and illusive than the first, as Wilson (1992:136) himself admitted:

We are, it seems, left to our devices to discern and explain the final form of the Psalter. Any explanation of such significance, however, must make reference to, and be consistent with, those

indicators of shape we discussed in the first half of this presentation.

Working on the assumption that the final redactors of the Psalter brought together previously existing collections, Wilson reasoned that the likeliest indicators of his/their editorial agenda would be found at the “seams” between the five Books of the Psalter. Wisdom psalms are prominent at the seams—Psalms 1, 73, 90-91, 106 and 145 are all strategically placed wisdom psalms—indicating that wisdom interests dominate in the final shape of the Psalter. Wilson also noted that royal psalms—Psalms 2, 72 and 89—are found at three of the four seams of the first major segment of the Psalter (Books I-III, Psalms 1-89).<sup>7</sup> In these he sees “an interesting progression in thought regarding kingship and the Davidic covenant” (Wilson 1985a:209). Books I-III tell the story of the rise and fall of the Davidic dynasty: (a) Psalm 2 inaugurates the Davidic covenant; (b) in Psalm 72 the covenant is transferred to David’s successors; and finally (c) Psalm 89 portrays “its collapse in the destruction and despair of the Exile” (Wilson 1992:134). Thus the first major

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<sup>7</sup> Wilson first suspected that Psalm 41, at the end of Book I, may also be a royal psalm (see Wilson 1985a:209-210).

segment of the Psalter closes with the collapse of the Davidic covenant and dynasty.

Book IV focuses on the kingship of Yahweh. Wilson regarded it as the theological centre of the Book of Psalms, the redactor's response to the failure of the Davidic covenant. Trust in human kings had failed. Book IV points readers to Yahweh, the true King of Israel. "Thus, for Wilson, the Psalter is a historical retrospective (Books I-III) followed by an exhortation directing Israel's future hope to theocracy unmediated by a Davidic king. The redactor's narrative standpoint is somewhere in the middle of book IV" (Mitchell 1997:62).

Several other major enquiries into the shape and shaping of the Psalter have proceeded along similar lines to those pioneered by Gerald Wilson. Perhaps the work of Nancy deClaissé-Walford (1995; 1997; 2000; 2006) is the most notable in this category. In *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter*, DeClaissé-Walford (1997) claims that the shape of the Book of Psalms tells the story of Israel through the eyes of those who ordered the Psalter. Like Gerald Wilson, she focuses on the seam psalms—the psalms positioned at the beginning and the end of the five Books of the Psalter—for evidence of the editors' purposes in telling Israel's story. The "story" is told with a focus on *torah* and *kingship* as key themes. These themes are

prominent in the seam psalms. Psalms 1 (*torah*) and 2 (*kingship*) introduce these themes. Davidic psalms dominate Book I and, to a lesser extent, Book II. Psalm 73 laments the demise of the kingdom; it sets the tone for Book III. Similarly, Psalm 90 sets the tone for Book IV, which DeClaissé-Walford sees as looking back on the Mosaic era, the period before the monarchy when Yahweh was Israel's King. Perhaps questionably, she interprets Psalm 107 as a royal psalm and views Book V (especially Pss 146-150) as a celebration of Yahweh as King. The message of Books IV and V to the restored nation is that God and the law were sufficient for Israel before installation of the Davidic kings (Book IV) and they remain sufficient after the demise of the kingdom period.

In her own words, DeClaissé-Walford (2006:456-457) describes "the metanarrative" of the Book of Psalms like this:

Psalms 1 and 2 introduce the major themes of the Psalter. . . .

The remainder of Book One (Pss 3-41) and Book Two (Pss 42-72) recount the history of ancient Israel during the time of the kingship of David, son of Jesse; Book Three (Pss 73-89) reflects the times of Solomon, the divided kingdoms, the fall of the Northern Kingdom to the Assyrians, and the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians; Book Four (Pss 90-106) addresses the

Israelites in Exile in Babylon; and Book Five (Pss 107-150) recounts the return from Exile, the rebuilding of the Temple and life in postexilic Jerusalem—a life radically different from what it was before the Babylonian conquest.

Turning to the editorial purpose underlying this metanarrative, DeClaisse-Walford (2006:457) states:

The story of the Psalter seems to be a summons to the people of postexilic Israel to review their history, come to see that in their postexilic life setting having an earthly king of the line of David is no longer possible, and to acknowledge God as king and sovereign over Israel as a means for survival in their present circumstances and hope for the future.

Steven Parrish (2003) also analyses the canonical Psalter as conveying a narrative, namely, telling the story of Israel's survival as a nation. Books I and II tell of the establishment of the kingdom, while Book III laments its collapse. Books IV and V tell the story of the nation's re-emergence. His overall view of the Psalter builds on the view of Wilson (1985a), but with greater stress on the narrative value of all the psalms and more attention to the three dimensional interaction between Yahweh, the law and the king.

A similar view of the Psalter is presented by Marti Steussy (2004) in *Psalms*, a book written as an introduction to the Psalter for pastors and seminary students. Although she treats some aspects topically, for the most part Steussy works through the Psalter in canonical order. In the mould of Wilson and DeClaissé-Walford, she treats the five Books as telling Israel's story from the reign of King David, through the Babylonian exile, to the return and rebuilding of the Temple.

John Walton (1991, "Psalms: A Cantata about the Davidic Covenant") made an ambitious proposal that it may be possible to read the Psalter as a cantata about the Davidic covenant. Whereas Gerald Wilson's work focused almost entirely on psalm titles and seam psalms, Walton wondered if there might have been "an editorial rationale for the placement of each psalm" (Walton 1991:23). He based his analysis on the content of each psalm, not on the editorial information provided in the headings. In fact, one of the methodological presuppositions of his cantata theory is that the rationale for the placement of psalms may have nothing to do with the information provided in the psalm headings, since the headings are tied to the original historical context or life-setting, which may have no bearing on the final redactors rationale for placing the psalm within the final Psalter. Walton (p. 24) cautiously proposed and defended the following outline:

1. Introduction	Pss 1-2
2. Book I: David's Conflict with Saul	Pss 3-41
3. Book II: David's Reign as King	Pss 42-72
4. Book III: The Assyrian Crisis	Pss 73-89
5. Book IV: The Destruction of the Temple and Exile	Pss 90-106
6. Book V: Praise/Reflection on Return and New Era	Pss 107-145
7. Conclusion	Pss 146-150

In other words, Walton views the entire Psalter as a postexilic review of the history of Israel from the inauguration of the Davidic kingdom until the restoration of the nation after the Babylonian exile.

Contrary to the historical rationales of Wilson (1985a; 1992), DeClaisse-Walford (1997; 2006) and Walton (1991), Walter Brueggemann (1991a, "Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon"; cf. Brueggemann 1984; 1993) proposed a purely sapiential explanation for the theological shape of the Psalter. He asked how one would move through the Book of Psalms from beginning to end. Psalm 1, an intentionally positioned preface, "announces the main theme of the completed Book of Psalms" (1991:64). As an introduction, it serves two functions: (a) it implies that the Book of Psalms "should be read through the prism of torah obedience" (64) and (b) it presents an idealistic world, a perfectly coherent moral world in which the obedient prosper and the wicked perish. Similarly, Psalm 150 is an

intentionally positioned conclusion to the Psalter. It is unique among the praise psalms, being the only one that summons to praise without offering any reasons for praise.<sup>8</sup> The goal of the Psalter, therefore, is to move the reader from obedience to praise, from willing duty to utter delight, from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150.

However, the journey from the one boundary to the other is not smooth. The psalms consistently belie the idealistic world of Psalm 1. Throughout the Psalter, the psalmists struggle to come to terms with Yahweh's חֶסֶד (*chesed*) since in the trials of life he appears to have been unfaithful to his covenant. Brueggemann's thesis is that "the way from torah obedience to self-abandoning doxology is by way of *candor about suffering* and *gratitude about hope*" (1991a:72, emphasis in original). Psalm 73 stands at the centre of the Psalter, both literally and theologically, being a microcosm of the entire Psalter and denoting the turning point from obedience to praise (see Brueggemann and Miller 1996).

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<sup>8</sup> This might be a slight overstatement since Psalm 150:2, "Praise him *for his mighty deeds*; praise him *according to his excellent greatness*" (ESV, emphasis added), does contain grounds clauses. Brueggemann's point, however, was that the whole of Psalm 150, including verse 2, essentially functions as a call to praise. The psalmist does not pause to motivate praise with a catalogue of reasons.

Mihaila's (2001) article, "The Theological and Canonical Place of Psalm 73", seems to build on McCann's (1987) interpretation of Psalm 73 and embrace Brueggemann's (1991a) view of the Psalter as a movement from lament to praise. Mihaila argues that "in the canonical structuring of the Psalter, Psalm 73 stands at its center in a crucial role" (p. 54). He offers several reasons for its pivotal role: (a) it stands near the physical centre of the Psalter; (b) it marks the beginning of the Psalter's movement from lament (Books I-II) to hope and praise (Books IV-V); (c) it is a programmatic introduction to Book III, which functions as the transitional Book of the Psalter; and (d) it is a microcosm of the theology of the Book of Psalms and, indeed, of the entire Old Testament.

At around the same time, a number of studies appeared exploring the role of wisdom psalms in shaping the final form and purpose of the Psalter. Picking up on a thread in Wilson (1985a), Mays (1987, "The Place of Torah-Psalms in the Psalter") led the way in further exploring the strategic placement of wisdom psalms. In the early 1990s, Kuntz (1992, "Wisdom Psalms and the Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter"; later published in Argall, Bow and Werline [2000]), McCann (1992, "Psalms as Instruction"; 1993b, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah*) and Crenshaw (2000, "Wisdom Psalms?") explored the same question.

In an article entitled “The Division and Order of the Psalms”, Anderson (1994) worked his way through the Books I-V of the Psalter in canonical order discussing diverse points of interest, which ranged from authorship to ordering. He saw the compilation of the Psalter evolving Book by Book, beginning in the Davidic era (Book I and possibly also Book II) and ending around the time of Nehemiah (Books IV and V). He dates the compilation of Book III during the reign of Hezekiah.<sup>9</sup> He is sceptical of high-level literary arrangement, and tends to see the development of the final form as a somewhat piecemeal evolutionary process. He draws the following conclusions:

In summation we have seen that the division of the psalter into five books is indeed not only warranted, but gives evidence of a historical development of compilation over the ages since the times of Hezekiah or earlier. This work of compilation into known

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<sup>9</sup> With reference to the date of the final editing of the Hebrew Psalter, Gerald Wilson (2000) argues that Books I-III took on a stable form during the fourth century B.C., but that the final arrangement of Books IV-V only took place in the first century A.D. In the same article, Wilson also argues that the placement of a Mosaic psalm (Ps 90) at the beginning of Book IV represents “a call to a pre-Davidic lifestyle characterized by direct reliance on God alone” (Hegg 2003).

and well used canonical collections was probably completed only after the exile, perhaps in the time of Nehemiah. Whilst there are indications of internal ordering here and there, there appears to be no systematic attempt to structure the psalter internally. Given the historical development of compilation, the old interpretation of *midrash tehillim* (on Ps 1:5) that the five books reflect the five books of Moses is probably no more than a late reflection. The *Sitz im Leben* of this long process of compilation appears to have been the need to furnish recognized collections for use in the temple liturgy. . . .

In a major study of the overall purpose and message of the Psalter, David Mitchell (1997, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*) not only defended the view that the final form of the Psalter is a purposeful literary arrangement (a “book”) rather than a haphazard collection of psalms, but also sought to demonstrate that the final redactors intended the Psalter to be read eschatologically. He began with a comprehensive review of the history of psalms interpretation, demonstrating that until the rise of critical exegesis the psalms had always been interpreted eschatologically by both Jews and Christians. Next he offered four reasons why an eschatological agenda would have been likely:

- a) “[I]t originated within an eschatological milieu (p. 82).
- b) “[T]he figures to whom the Psalms are attributed were regarded as future-predicative prophets” (p. 83).
- c) “[C]ertain psalms . . . describe a person or event in such glowing terms that the language far exceeds the reality of any historical king or battle” (p. 85).
- d) “[T]he very inclusion of royal psalms in the Psalter suggests that the redactor understood them to refer to a future *mashiah*-king” (p. 86).

Mitchell proceeded to analyse several collections of psalms—the Psalms of Asaph (Psalms 50, 73-83), the Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120-134), and the whole of Book IV—as well as the royal psalms scattered throughout the Psalter and a few key themes within the Book of Psalms, demonstrating how the final arrangement is consistent with a prophetic, messianic, eschatological editorial agenda.<sup>10</sup>

Although not many would go as far as Mitchell in contending that the entire Psalter is to be read as a prophetic, eschatological “book”, a growing number

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<sup>10</sup> Georg Braulik (2004) argues that certain psalms, especially royal and/or Davidic psalms, were reinterpreted in a messianic or christological sense very early. Unlike Mitchell, he does not argue that the entire collection was edited with the intent that it be read eschatologically.

of scholars now concede that the Psalter does need to be read (in some sense) eschatologically. Childs, who sparked the modern quest for the editorial agenda behind the Psalter, believed that “the final form of the Psalter is highly eschatological in nature” (1979:518). Rendtor (1986:249; cited in Cole 1985:40), observing “the emphatic position of the royal psalms” and the overall movement towards the praise of God, felt that “[t]here can be no doubt that at this stage they were understood in messianic terms: the praise of God is not only directed to the past and the present, but also includes the messianic future.” Cole continues to list Hossfeld and Zenger, Mays and Mitchell as key scholars who read the Psalter eschatologically. He states:

Hossfeld and Zenger [1993:51] likewise detect an eschatological perspective in Psalm 2, and across the entire book. Mays [1987:10] states regarding the Psalter and its beginning, “[B]y the time the Psalter was being completed, the psalms dealing with the kingship of the Lord were understood eschatologically. . . . Psalm 2, reread as a vision of the goal of history, puts the torah piety of Psalm 1 in an eschatological context.” Mitchell [1997:87] notes that Psalms 1 and 2 together “announce that the ensuing collection is a handbook for the eschatological wars of the Lord, describing the coming events and the Yhwh-allegiance required of those who would triumph” (Cole 2005:40).

Cooper (1995:89) indicates that the recent trend is open to finding messianic allusions in the psalms, while not seeing all the psalms messianically.

Some of the early church fathers were so enamored with the hope of Messiah in the Psalms that practically all Psalms were considered Messianic. With the advent of higher criticism and rationalistic principles for the study of Scripture, the pendulum swung to the opposite extreme, and no Psalms were considered to be Messianic. Today it is generally acknowledged that while not all Psalms are Messianic, there are clear portraits of Messiah in many of them.

A recent monograph by Jamie Grant (2004, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms*) lent further weight to an eschatological reading of the Psalter. Grant notes that the editors juxtaposed torah psalms with royal psalms—Psalm 1 with Psalm 2; Psalm 19 with Psalms 18 and 20-21; and Psalm 119 with Psalm 118. He argues that the kingship law in Deuteronomy 17:14-20 lies behind the editors' attempt to link torah and kingship. These paired psalms point to a future exemplary king, the messiah, who would be a pious "torah-lover". In the case of Psalms 1 and 2, the editors intend their readers to associate the

torah-lover (Ps 1) with the anointed king (Ps 2). Thus the editors were pointing towards a future exemplary king.

Duane Christensen (1996, "The Book of Psalms within the Canonical Process in Ancient Israel") attempted, unconvincingly in my opinion, to resurrect the Edward King's (1904; see also Büchler 1893; 1906; Abrahams 1904; Snaith 1933) idea that the Psalter was designed to be read in a triennial cycle of Sabbaths. Supporting the old view that the five book divisions of the Psalter were patterned after the five books of the Pentateuch so as to form mirror collections of Moses and David, he posited that matching readings from the Pentateuch and the Psalter were read each Sabbath for three years.

Leslie McFall (2000, "The Evidence for a Logical Arrangement of the Psalter") tried to show that "the Psalter has been arranged on a logical overall plan and that the superscriptions . . . played an important part in the early development of the present arrangement" (p. 228). He identified four stages of sorting in the final structure of the Psalter: (a) by authors, (b) by divine names, (c) by genre and (d) by themes or key words. He did not believe that authorship was the main criterion of arrangement, but speculated that the compilers probably received author-defined collections of psalms. Then the compilers applied three stages of sorting. First, books were sorted according to the preponderance of the names Yahweh or Elohim. In the Elohist Psalter,

Psalms 42-83, not a single psalm uses the name Yahweh more than Elohim; conversely, in the two Yahwistic collections, Psalms 1-41 and 84-150, no psalm uses Elohim more than Yahweh. Therefore, McFall suggested that the first level of arrangement was to count divine names used in each psalm and group them based on the predominant name. Divine names took precedence over authorship, which explains the separation of Davidic, Korahite and Asaphite collections. Second, groups of psalms were sorted by genre. The compiler “took the Elohist collection and grouped the Psalms into blocks according to the genre term used in the superscriptions” (McFall 2000:233). Thus, the Korahite and Davidic psalms in the Elohist Psalter were grouped into *maskil* and *mizmor* blocks. This step was not applied to the Yahwistic collections because there were not enough psalms of each genre. Last of all, individual psalms were juxtaposed based on related topics, themes or link words.

*In summary*, Wilson (1985a), DeClaissé-Walford (1997) and Walton (1991) all offered historical explanations of the shape of the Psalter. Although all three view it as a commentary on the Davidic covenant, Walton’s view is highly speculative and seems strained in places, whereas Wilson’s (so too DeClaissé-Walford’s) is more measured and methodologically sound. Brueggemann (1991a) offered a purely sapiential explanation, which accords well with the general nature of the Psalter. Neither Christensen’s (1996)

liturgical explanation nor McFall's (2000) three-stage sorting theory offer convincing explanations of the final editorial agenda underlying the Psalter. David Mitchell's (1997) attempt to account for the shape of the Psalter as a prophetic, eschatological, messianic collection is convincing in its treatment of certain groups of psalms, but struggles account for the shape of the entire collection. In my judgement, both Wilson's historical explanation and Brueggemann's sapiential approach offer coherent explanations of the overall shape of the Book of Psalms.

A large number of studies have been published which focus on the redaction of smaller groups of Psalms. Although, as best I can determine, only one such study has been done on Psalms 1-8 (i.e., Brennan 1980), the following section surveys the major studies to demonstrate the kind of work that has been done to date.

### ***2.6.2 Studies on collections of psalms***

Before the current surge of interest in studying the literary relationships between groups of psalms, Michael Goulder (1975; 1982; 1990; 1996; 1997; 1998; 2005) had begun studying collections of psalms in order to uncover their cultic life-setting and function before they were incorporated into the canonical Psalter. He conducted studies of six units: (a) Book IV (Pss 90-106)

in 1975, (b) the Korahite Psalms in 1982, (c) the Prayers of David (Pss 51-72) in 1990, (d) the Psalms of Asaph (Pss 50, 73-78 and 82-83), (e) the Songs of Ascents (Pss 120-134) in 1997 and (f) Book V (Pss 107-150) in 1998. Although his work remained primarily form-critical in approach, not exploring in detail the literary relationship between psalms in a corpus, he was among the first modern scholars to call for psalms to be studied in corpi rather than in isolation, asserting that “it is entirely proper to begin the study of the Psalter with the expectation that it will be an ordered and not an assorted collection; or, at the very least, that it will contain elements that were rationally ordered” (Goulder 1982:8).

Four of Goulder’s works were major monographs published in the JSOT Supplement Series. He recognised that various groups of psalms (e.g., Korahite, Asaphite, Songs of Ascents) belonged together and sought to understand their relationships in terms of historical and cultic factors. Assuming that their liturgical use accounted for their arrangement, he studied corpi of psalms in an attempt to understand their cultic *Sitze im Leben*.

Goulder’s first monograph in the JSOT Supplement Series, *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah* (1982), equated “the sons of Korah” with the priesthood of Dan in the northern kingdom of Israel. He argued that the Korahite psalms were used in the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles at the royal shrine in Dan.

His second monograph was *The Prayers of David, Psalms 51-72* (1990). Goulder noted many similarities between these psalms; these persuaded him that they form a unit. He argued that they were written during the latter half of David's reign (perhaps by one of David's sons) in response to various events in the king's life, beginning with his sin against Uriah (Ps 51) and ending with the accession of Solomon (Ps 72). The canonical order, said Goulder, follows the chronological order of events and composition. The corpus shows a movement from penitence towards peace.

*The Psalms of Asaph and the Pentateuch* (1996) was third in Goulder's "Studies in the Psalter" series. The central thesis of the work is that the "the Psalms of Asaph were composed in Northern Israel in the 720s in response to the Assyrian threat, and were then taken and re-used in a (slightly) edited form in Jerusalem" (Goulder 1996:36). He positioned all the Asaphite psalms within a tentatively reconstructed autumn festival, treating them in pairs (Pss 73-74, 75-76, 77-78 and 82-83; Ps 50 is grouped with Pss 73-74).

In his fourth monograph, *The Psalms of Return, Book V: Psalms 107-150*, Goulder (1998) treats Book V of the Psalter as consisting of three collections: (a) Psalms 107-119, (b) Psalms 120-134 and (c) Psalms 135-150. He argues for a liturgical rationale for the collection and arrangement of each grouping. He associates Psalms 107-118 "with Ezra 1-6 and rebuilding the Temple,

celebrated at Passover, with Psalm 119 as a glorious conclusion at Pentecost” (Nowell 1999). Rather than a pilgrimage setting, Goulder links Psalms 120-134, the Songs of Ascents, with the Israelites’ return from exile in Babylon. He proposes they were used as morning and evening readings at the Feast of Tabernacles. Finally, he proposes that the *Sitz im Leben* for Psalms 135-150 relates to the return under Ezra.

If Gerald Wilson’s (1985a) dissertation was the first landmark work on the editing of the Hebrew Psalter, the publication of a short JSOT Supplement called *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (edited by JC McCann 1993a) was the second landmark work in the field. This short 130-page volume contained nine articles by many of the leading lights in the field (Mays, Murphy, Brueggemann, Wilson [2], Howard [2], Miller and McCann). It offered a succinct summary of the state of research on the shape and shaping of the Psalter as it stood at the time. A brief synopsis of the articles in this volume is in order.

Mays (1993:14-20), “The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation”, argues that the editors of the Psalter transformed independent cultic pieces into a literary-theological collection. He sees the final shape of the Psalter as reflecting both (a) wisdom or Torah and (b) kingship, both Davidic and divine, concerns. The final form of the Book of Psalms can thus be considered as

both literary-theological and a prophetic-eschatological (messianic) collection. Like Wilson (1985a), Mays stresses the programmatic function of Psalms 1 and 2, as well as the strategic significance of Psalms 89 and 93-100, in reflecting the redactional agenda of the editors.

The articles by Murphy (1993:21-28) and Brueggemann (1993:29-41) sound some cautions in response to Mays. Murphy warns that Mays' approach is as dependent on hypothetical historical reconstructions as the form-critical method is. Brueggemann too objects that Mays' approach to understanding the final shape and purpose of the Psalter is too dependent on discerning the historical circumstances that gave rise to it. He favours a pure sapiential reading in which Psalms 1, 73 and 150 serve respectively as the point of departure, turning point and destination.

The first of Wilson's two contributions, "Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise" (Wilson 1993a:42-51), criticises three inadequate approaches, namely, (a) Walton's cantata hypothesis that relies on minor details in certain psalms to create a storyline, (b) Goulder's dependence on a hypothetical festival to understand the sequence of psalms and (c) Arens' proposal that the psalms were arranged to fit a three-year lectionary. His second essay, "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Psalms" (Wilson 1993b:72-

82), reiterates his view that the Book of Psalms is shaped by a wisdom frame (represented by Pss 1, 73, 90, 107 and 145) and a royal covenant frame (embodied in Pss 2, 72, 89 and 144).

David Howard also made two contributions. The first was a synopsis of the state of the field (Howard 1993b:52-71). In his second essay, "A Contextual Reading of Psalms 90-94" (Howard 1993a:108-123), he divides Book IV into three groups—Psalms 90-94, 95-100 and 101-106—noting the links within and between the groupings. He focuses on Psalms 90-94, especially the key position of Psalm 90. The last two articles look respectively at Psalms 1-2 (Miller 1993, "The Beginning of the Psalter", 82-93) and the alternation between lament and hope in Book III (McCann 1993c, "Books I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter", 93-107).

Amongst scholars focusing on the literary relationships between psalms (as opposed to focusing on liturgical relationships), two corpi have attracted widespread interest: (a) Psalms 1-2 and (b) Book V, especially the Kingship of Yahweh Psalms. The reason for the widespread interest in these two groups lies in the fact that they seem to be pivotal for understanding the message of the final form of the Psalter.

Although Psalm 1 was long considered to be an introductory psalm, Brennan (1976; 1980), Childs (1979), Sheppard (1980) and Wilson (1985a) all argued

that Psalms 1-2 together form a programmatic editorial introduction to the Psalter.<sup>11</sup> Later studies, most notably by Miller (1993), Zenger (1993), Cole (2002; 2005) and Botha (2005a), corroborated this view, which has now been widely accepted by scholars. Botha conducted an in-depth analysis of ideological links between Psalms 1 and 2. On the basis of six important ideological links he discovered,<sup>12</sup> Botha concluded that “Psalm 1 was seen to be compatible with Psalm 2 because it displays the same ideal of honourable existence within a theocratic society, based on dedication to Yahweh’s decrees and his promises of intervention to establish justice” (p. 202).

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<sup>11</sup> Recently, Botha (2005b) has argued that Psalm 1 may originally have been added as an introduction to Books I-III rather than to the whole Psalter. He disputes that the reference to torah in Psalm 1:2 should be taken to mean “that ‘the Torah of Yahweh’ . . . would now be understood to include the Psalter itself” (p. 503), as is now widely held amongst psalms scholars.

<sup>12</sup> The six links are as follows: (a) the pious believer in Ps 1 parallels the anointed of the Lord in Ps 2; (b) the mockers and scoffers of Ps 1 parallel the rebel kings of Ps 2; (c) delighting in the torah in Ps 1 parallels drawing strength of the Lord’s decree in Ps 2; (d) the stability of the fruitful tree (person) in Ps 1 is echoed in Ps 2 by the anointed king who is assured that Yahweh has established his rule; (e) the wicked are scattered in Ps 1, whereas they are dashed to pieces in Ps 2; and (f) those who dissociate themselves from the wicked (Ps 1) and associate themselves with the Lord’s anointed (Ps 2) will be blessed.

There is widespread agreement that Psalms 1 and 2, a wisdom (torah) psalm and a royal psalm respectively, establish the editorial vantage point from which the Book of Psalms should be read. Although individual psalms may still be read with reference to their historical and cultic settings, Psalm 1 requires that the Book of Psalms can and must be read as a wisdom collection. Psalm 2, being a royal (some would add messianic) psalm, indicates that the Davidic covenant and kingship is a major theme in the Psalter and played a pivotal role in the structuring of the Book of Psalms.

Gerald Wilson viewed Book IV, especially the Kingship of Yahweh Psalms (ca. Pss 93-100), as the theological and editorial centre of the Book of Psalms. Mays (1994b) also argued that the declaration יהוה מלך represents the theological centre of the Book of Psalms. Since Wilson, major studies by Howard (1993a, "A Contextual Reading of Psalms 90-94"; 1997, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*), Zenger (1991; 1994a), Creach (1996, "The Shape of Book Four of the Psalter and the Shape of Second Isaiah") and Culley (2002, "The Kingship of Yahweh Psalms") have been devoted to the study of the relationships between the psalms of Book IV, especially Psalms 90-100. Gerstenberger (2001) also examined the concept of Yahweh as a global ruler that is expressed in the kingship of Yahweh psalms (Pss 47, 93-100) by comparing the ideas expressed in these psalms with ideologies of universal rulership in Ancient Near Eastern empires.

Since the mid 1980s, many other corpi have been the focus of specialised studies. Howard (1997:11) alludes to the work of Auffret (1982) as “series of collected structural studies on individual psalms, including three studies on collections in the Psalter (Psalms 15-24, 120-134, and 135-38).” Nasuti (1988) published a tradition-historical study on the Psalms of Asaph, which was a reworked version of his 1983 doctoral dissertation at Yale University. Miller (1994, “Kingship, Torah Obedience and Prayer: The Theology of Psalms 15-24”) analysed Psalms 15-24. He believed that the two temple entrance liturgies, Psalms 15 and 24, demarcate a mini-corpus. He argued that kingship, torah obedience and trusting prayer form a thematic thread that binds them together. Barker (1995), in laying the foundation for an exegetical study of Psalm 121, makes several insightful observations about the arrangement of the Songs of Ascents (Pss 120-134). According to Halligan’s (1999) review,<sup>13</sup> Zenger (1998, “The Composition and Theology of the Fifth Book of the Psalter”) considered Book V as a collection of “psalms with a strong liturgical character” that have been assigned a new post-cultic setting. Noting that Book V “is interspersed with motifs and concepts which are theologically connected with Zion and the Temple”, yet lacks “concrete

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<sup>13</sup> I was unable to obtain a copy of this article.

references to the Temple cult”, Zenger posited that these psalms are “post-cultic and meant to be recited/meditated upon as a ‘spiritual pilgrimage’ to Zion”. The central position of Psalm 119 draws attention to living by the torah, reiterating the message of Psalms 1-2.

In an unpublished doctoral dissertation at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Barry Davis (1996) conducted a detailed *Contextual Analysis of Psalms 107-118*. Although I have been unable to obtain a copy of the dissertation, in an article dealing with Psalm 110 Davis (2000:168) restates his conclusions regarding Psalms 107-113 as follows:

Psalm 110 is the linchpin psalm of the first seven psalms of Book Five of the Psalter. Besides occurring in the middle of the seven psalms (Pss. 107-113), Psalm 110 joins two different groups of psalms together. Psalms 107-109 express anguished pleas for deliverance; Psalms 111-113 overflow with praise for Yahweh. Psalm 110, the connecting psalm, reveals that the Messiah is both a King and a Priest who gives victory to His people. Thus because God more than meets the grief-stricken cries of His people, He is to be praised.

Commenting on Davis’ study, Aloisi (2005:112) confirms that the preceding quote is an accurate summary of his findings regarding Psalms 107-113:

Davis sees Psalms 107-109 as depicting God's people in distress and their cries for deliverance, Psalm 110 declaring that God will give victory to his people, and Psalms 111-113 recording praise for Yahweh who is able to deliver his people from their enemies. Therefore, according to Davis, Psalm 110 provides an answer to the Israelites' cries for deliverance and a reason for God's people to praise him.

Although Aloisi feels that Davis' treatment of Psalms 107 and 112 is a little forced, it is clear from both Davis (2000) and Aloisi (2005) that Davis did identify significant verbal and thematic links between Psalms 107-113, which seem to have provided the primary basis for their sequencing.

A collection of 27 essays dealing with a diverse range of aspects related to *The Book of Psalms* (edited by Flint and Miller) was published in 2005 as the *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 99. Although its list of contributors read like a who's who of psalms studies (Klaus Koch, Rolf Rendtorff, Adele Berlin, David Noel Freedman and David Miano, JJM Roberts, Beat Weber, Nancy deClaisse-Walford, Dennis Pardee, John Kselman, Richard Clifford, Michael Barré, Sung-Hun Lee, Craig C. Broyles, James Watts, Harry Nasuti, Clinton McCann, Michael Goulder, Klaus Seybold, Gerald Wilson, Erich Zenger, Albert Pietersma, Moshe Bernstein, Robert Hiebert, Harry van Rooy, Craig

Evans, Walter Brueggemann and Erhard Gerstenberger), it contains surprisingly little that has a direct bearing on my study.

A few essays were devoted to collections of psalms. Nancy deClaisse-Walford (2005:139-152) examined the intertextual links between Psalms 22, 23 and 24. She found that the theme “trust in the Lord” provides an important thematic link between these three psalms. Erich Zenger (2005:407-442) looked at the relationship of Psalm 29 to Psalms 28 and 30, and to Psalms 93-100. Craig Broyles (2005:248-287) analysed “Psalms Concerning Liturgies of Temple Entry”. He used Psalms 15 and 24 as his point of departure, then proceeded to explore Psalms 5, 26, 28, 36 and 52 as further examples of psalms that served as liturgies for entering the temple. In an essay entitled “The Interpretive Significance of Sequence and Selection in the Book of Psalms”, Harry Nasuti (2005:311-339) commends the devotional value of reading psalms in context, that is, in sequence. Michael Goulder (2005:349-367) and Klaus Seybold (2005:368-390) attempted to reconstruct the liturgical use of Book II (Pss 42-72) and of the fourth Davidic collection (Pss 138-145) respectively. Gerald Wilson (2005b:391-406) again presented the case for strategic placement of royal psalms at the seams of the Five Books of the Psalter.

The last specialised study on the shape of the Psalter deserving a mention is a series of articles published online (see [www.labuschagne.nl/psalms.htm](http://www.labuschagne.nl/psalms.htm)) by Professor Casper Labuschagne, formerly a senior lecturer in Old Testament at the University of Pretoria in South Africa (1967-1991) and at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. Professor Labuschagne applies a method he calls “logotechnical analysis” to analyse the composition of the Psalter. The central premise of logotechnical analysis is that biblical texts are carefully crafted numerical compositions.<sup>14</sup> Labuschagne (2006e) describes the method as follows:

Logotechnique, or quantitative structural analysis, is a systematic formal investigation of the *structure* of biblical texts. It is based upon the hypothesis that the biblical writings are numerically structured—that is, that their composers arranged verses, pericopes, sections, books, and perhaps even the entire Bible according to patterns defined by number, much as poetry

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<sup>14</sup> “Claus Schedl coined the term ‘logotechnique’ to describe the art of numerical composition, which he derived from the Greek term *logotechnia* meaning ‘literature,’ more particularly a skillfully designed literary work of art conforming to certain laws governing its form. So ‘logotechnique,’ denotes in fact ‘word-art,’ ‘language-art,’ ‘compositional art’” (Labuschagne 2006e).

is defined by quantities of syllables, metric feet, verses, stanzas, and so forth.

Using detailed statistical analysis, Labuschagne (2006a-d; 2007) compiled an impressive array of numerical data suggesting that the editors of the Psalter were conscious of numerical patterning at all levels of composition—individual psalms, small groups of psalms and the overall arrangement of the Psalter.<sup>15</sup> He has compiled evidence of numerical patterns at both the micro (individual psalms) and macro (collections of psalms) levels. With respect to the latter, Labuschagne (2007:2) remarks:

My point of departure is the insight that not only the individual psalms but also the Five Books and the Psalter as a whole are meticulously designed works of art, numerical compositions produced by word artists of the highest order. Therefore, I shall examine their numerical features and tentatively assess the

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<sup>15</sup> Professor Duane Christensen is directing a similar major project at The Berkley Institute of Biblical Archaeology and Literature (BIBAL). This project also focuses on advanced numerical patterns in the Hebrew Bible, particularly the Psalter. Christensen provides a detailed analysis of the structure of each individual psalm. These are available at [www.bibal.net](http://www.bibal.net).

implications for our understanding of the formation of the Five Books and the Book of Psalms as a whole.

With special reference to the composition of Book I of the Psalter, Labuschagne writes:

Far from being a conglomerate of psalms simply brought together to form an anthology, the psalms in Book I of the Psalter constitute a carefully designed and skilfully assembled corpus. This literary composite is made up of two categories of psalms – and this applies to the other books as well. First, existing psalms originating from the pre-exilic sanctuaries, and second, new ones specifically composed in view of the formation of a Hymnbook. The psalms of both categories were contrived and adapted to form close-knit numerical compositions with a specific role in the book. (Labuschagne 2007:2)

Based on numerical patterns he observes, Labuschagne sees the 40 psalms of Book I (counting Psalms 9-10 as *one* psalm) as composed of five (or six, depending on whether Pss 30-31 are separated from Pss 19-29) sub-groups.

- 1) Psalm 1 serves as the introduction to Book I.

- 2) Psalms 2-8 form a menorah pattern. Psalms 2 and 8 constitute the introduction and conclusion to the group, while Psalm 5 stands at the focal centre.
- 3) Psalms 9-18 represent a group of 9 psalms (9/10 is counted as one psalm).
- 4) Psalms 19-31 form a group of 13 Davidic psalms. However, Psalms 19-29 form a balanced unit of 11 with Psalm 24 in the focal centre, so Psalms 30-31 are deemed to have a “bridge function”.
- 5) Psalms 32-41 are bracketed by the key word “happy” (אַשְׁרֵי) in the initial position of both psalms.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Labuschagne (2007) considers “happy” (Hebrew, אַשְׁרֵי) to be a key word in the Psalter. It is the opening word of the Book of Psalms. It both opens (Ps 1:1) and closes (Ps 2:12) the programmatic introductory psalms of the Psalter (Pss 1-2; cf. Jeppesen 2003:800; Cole 2005:39; DeClaissé-Walford 2006:456). Significantly, occurs exactly 26 times in the Psalms. In Labuschagne’s numerical research, the numbers 17 and 26, representing respectively the values of the Hebrew words for God’s “name” and “presence”, are significant patterning devices in the Psalter. McCann’s (2005:340-348) recent essay entitled “The Shape of Book I of the Psalter and the Shape of Human Happiness” confirms the significance of the beatitudes in Book I.

Labuschagne's logotechnical analysis only came to my attention near the end of the present study, too late for it to be taken into account in the design and methodology of my study. It appears to be an innovative line of enquiry that may shed new light on the arrangement of the psalms in the Hebrew Psalter.

In addition to the specialised articles, theses and monographs discussed above, several major commentaries published since 1990 show an interest in the literary relationship between neighbouring psalms and groups of psalms. Examples of this fresh interest are the commentaries by Tate (1990, *Word Biblical Commentary*; electronic edition, 1998), Hossfeld and Zenger (1993, *Neue Echter Bibel*), Mays (1994a, *Interpretation Old Testament Commentary*), McCann (1996, *New Interpreter's Bible*), Wilson (2002, *NIV Application Commentary*), Terrien (2003) and, presumably, the forthcoming commentary by DeClaisse-Walford (2008, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament*).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

The prevailing attitude towards the Book of Psalms has come full circle. Prior to the rise of historical criticism, it was widely believed to be more than a haphazard collection of hymns and prayers, although few attempted to prove that it is purposeful arrangement or to identify the purpose of the

arrangement. During the periods dominated by historical criticism (ca. 1820-1920) and form criticism (ca. 1920-1980), interest was limited to individual psalms and their historical origin and function. Today, however, there is a renewed conviction that there are purposeful literary relationships between psalms and the Psalter itself is a purposefully edited collection. Unprecedented effort is being exerted to discover the editorial agenda underlying the Psalter and the literary relationships between psalms.

In addition to several major studies attempting to uncover the overall purpose and message of the Book of Psalms, many more detailed studies have been conducted on homogenous groups of psalms. Corpi that have been the object of specialised studies include Psalms 1-2 (the introductory psalms), Psalms 15-24, the Korahite Psalms (Psalms 42-49, 84-85, 87-88), the Asaphite Psalms (Psalms 50, 73-83), the Prayers of David (Psalms 51-72), the Royal Psalms (scattered throughout the Psalter), the Wisdom Psalms (scattered throughout the Psalter), Psalms 107-118, the Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120-134), the whole of Book V and, most of all, Book IV (Psalms 90-106) containing the Kingship of Yahweh Psalms (ca. Psalms 93-100).

From the above summary, it is apparent that there are many important groupings of psalms that have not yet been analysed in detail with respect to the literary relationships between them. The first group of Davidic Psalms,

Psalms 3-8, is one notable group that has not been analysed in detail. The only research published on this group was a short essay by Joseph Brennan, “Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies” in 1980, before most of the recent research into the shape of the Psalter was published. Since this small group of psalms (i.e., Psalms 3-8) is placed at the beginning of the Book of Psalms, immediately after the introductory Psalms 1 and 2, it is time to revisit it in microscopic detail in the light of the advances that have taken place in psalms research since 1980.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

The research on the biblical text of Psalms 3-8 is separated into three stages. The first stage (chapter 4) is a detailed analysis of each psalm in the chosen corpus using a variety of historical and literary exegetical methods. The purpose of this stage is to lay a foundation for an analysis of the links between Psalms 3-8. A thorough working knowledge of each psalm is a prerequisite for analysing the links between the psalms.

The next stage (chapter 5) analyses the relationships between each pair of adjacent psalms in my corpus. The simplest type of arrangement is the strategic placement of neighbouring psalms (i.e., concatenation). This chapter examines each pair of neighbouring psalms in an attempt to understand what, if anything, prompted the editors to place them side by side.

The final stage (chapter 6) explores broader relationships between Psalms 3-8 in an attempt to discover whether there is any indication in biblical text of how this group of psalms came to be in the canonical order and what, if anything, the communicative significance of the final order is.

### 3.2 Resources

The primary resource for the exegesis is the Hebrew Old Testament as represented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1984). Where recourse to the Septuagint is made, the preferred version is Rahlf's (1979) edition. For the most part, these works are consulted via the morphologically tagged electronic editions available in Logos Bible Software. Unless otherwise indicated, I use *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia with Westminster 4.2 Morphology* (2004) for the Hebrew Bible and Rahlf's *Septuaginta with Morphology* (1996) for the Septuagint. In a handful of instances, I resort to *The Hebrew Bible: Anderson-Forbes Phrase Marker Analysis* (Anderson and Forbes 2005), which permits more advanced searching on the Hebrew text than the Westminster 4.2 Morphology. When a search is based on Anderson and Forbes (2005), it is noted in the study.

Two kinds of secondary resources are extensively used in this stage of the study. The first of these are standard Old Testament lexica and dictionaries.

For most word definitions, I rely on HALOT (Koehler, Baumgartner, Richardson and Stamm 1999), Swanson (1997), Holladay (1988; electronic edition in 2000), Whitaker (1997) or BDB (2000). For more detailed assistance, I rely on the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* edited by Harris, Archer and Waltke (1980; electronic edition in 1999) and on the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* edited by VanGemeren (1996). The second category of secondary resources is major English commentaries on the Psalms. I have ready access to Briggs and Briggs (1906), Weiser (1962), Dahood (1966), Kidner (1973), Ross (1985), Bratcher and Reyburn (1991), VanGemeren (1991), Motyer (1994), McCann (1996), Craigie (1998), Wilcock (2001), Wilson (2002), Clifford (2002), Terrien (2003), Rawlinson (2004), Goldingay (2006), Lane (2006) and Okorochoa (2006).

### **3.3 Presuppositions**

The nature of the chosen methodology is such that personal theological and hermeneutical views should not bias the findings. These three assumptions are taken for granted throughout the dissertation:

- In its final canonical form, the book of Psalms “is a collection of collections” (Stek 2002:777). The editorial notations, especially the

headings, offer clues by which earlier collections can be tentatively identified.

- The term **לְמִנְצֵחַ** in a psalm's heading indicates that it belonged to the music director's collection.
- The final editors of the canonical Psalter, possibly postexilic temple personelle (Stek 2002:777), finished putting the collection into its current form around the third century B.C.<sup>17</sup> It would not materially affect the findings if a different date of compilation were assumed.

### **3.4 Exegesis of individual psalms**

The exegetical step consists of a detailed study of each psalm in isolation, focusing primarily but not exclusively on literary as opposed to historical analysis. The purpose of the exegetical step is to provide a solid basis for identifying intentional links between Psalms 3-8. Exegetical methods that employ tentative reconstructions and subjective speculations of historical matters do not provide a sound basis for identifying intertextual links that may have served as the criteria for the arrangement of the psalms. For this reason,

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<sup>17</sup> This is the most commonly held view, although no less a figure than Gerald Wilson (2000) argued Books IV and V were only finalised in the first century A.D. On the basis of evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Hill and Walton (2000) concur with Wilson.

the exegetical methodology places greater stress on concrete literary data than on tentative historical reconstructions, although the latter are not altogether ignored.

Handbooks on Old Testament exegesis (e.g., Stuart 1984; Broyles 2001) suggest that exegesis should pay attention to steps such as textual criticism, historical analysis, lexical and grammatical analysis, form criticism, structural analysis, rhetorical analysis and thematic or theological analysis. Although the exegesis conducted in this study will take note of each of these elements, they are not of equal importance for the present study. I shall now discuss how the exegetical study handles each of these levels of analysis.

### ***3.4.1 Textual criticism***

The basic Hebrew text for the study is the Masoretic Text as per *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1984). Where necessary, the text of each psalm is reconstructed, but only variants which have a significant bearing on the interpretation of the psalm receive attention. Minor variants are discussed only if they influence, for example, the rhetorical texture or strophic structure of the psalm. Since I am relatively inexperienced at Old Testament textual criticism, I rely heavily on the text-critical discussions in three major critical commentaries, namely, Briggs and Briggs (1906; 1907), Dahood (1966) and

Craigie (1998). However, unless otherwise indicated, the conclusions expressed are my own.

### ***3.4.2 Historical reconstruction***

Attempts to reconstruct the historical details concerning the writing of a psalm are highly subjective. Biblical scholars differ widely in their reconstructions and often acknowledge that many psalms simply do not contain enough clues to allow for anything more than a tentative reconstruction.<sup>18</sup> Positive, conclusive identification of the author, the date or the occasion for the composition of individual psalms is nearly impossible. Therefore, these

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<sup>18</sup> The absence of helpful historical data in the psalms may be due to an editorial process of removing specific historical information in order to make the canonical psalms more suitable for general use in worship. Scholars call this process “democratising” or “universalising” (e.g., Mowinckel 1962:8-9; Butler 1984:387-388; Durham 1984:428). Durham (1984:428; emphasis in original) comments, “The psalms in general have undergone a process of *democratization* by which psalms bound to quite specific contexts (and in some cases persons) have been *universalized* to make them applicable in Israel’s worship on a continuing basis.” A comparison of Psalm 18 with 2 Samuel 22 might represent an example of the process of democratisation. Ross (1985:779) comments on Psalm 18: “The psalm is also recorded in 2 Samuel 22 with slight variations. Perhaps some of the wording in 2 Samuel 22 was changed in this psalm for use in public worship, but this cannot be proved.”

matters do not receive much attention. Explicit historical allusions within the text are noted for the sake of comparison, but no attempt will be made to verify their accuracy. With respect to historical data, what matters most to this study is the truth claims a psalm makes, not the truth value of those claims. Details that modern critical scholars view sceptically would likely have been accepted without question by early editors. Their editorial decisions would reflect their beliefs about these matters, not contemporary conclusions.

For the purposes of this study, the implied historical setting of a psalm is more important than its actual historical origin. By “implied historical setting”, I have in mind the kind of circumstances that prompted the writing of the psalm. The historical data contained in most psalms are too general to permit positive identification of a specific occasion of writing, but they are often sufficient to indicate the type of situation that occasioned their writing. For example, the implied historical setting of a psalm may be military in nature, arising from a military conflict. We may be able to draw this conclusion confidently even though the psalm’s occasion cannot be pinpointed precisely, that is, we cannot identify the specific military conflict during or for which it was composed.

The twentieth century witnessed considerable debate over whether the historical data in the biblical psalms point towards their historical occasion or

their liturgical purpose. Phrased differently, do such historical data reflect the circumstances of the person composing the psalm or those of the person for whom it is being composed? Seldom do individual psalms contain enough historical evidence to answer these questions conclusively. Scholarly opinions, which vary widely, tend to reflect the presuppositions of the scholars rather than definitive evidence from within the psalms. For the purposes of this study, it is sufficient to note the implied historical setting(s) while leaving open the question of whether these reflect the circumstances of the composer or those of the worshipper.

The importance of discussing the implied historical setting lies in the fact that one expects to find a strong correspondence between it and the dominant vocabulary, themes and life-settings (*Sitze im Leben*) found in a psalm. Thus, in addition to possibly providing a basis of arrangement, this level of enquiry helps to inform the other levels of analysis.

### ***3.4.3 Lexical analysis***

Shared key words provide the most obvious and objective kind of link between psalms. Key words, hook words, framing words—these are strong evidences of deliberate links between psalms, especially adjacent psalms. Therefore, lexical analysis forms a crucial part of the study. As a result, the

exegesis conducted will devote considerable attention to analysing key terms. Key terms are defined as (a) technical terms, (b) rare words, (c) obscure words, (d) repeated lexemes or (e) pivotal phrases. During the exegetical stage, word studies are conducted on words that, even though they may not significantly affect the interpretation of the psalm under investigation, provide an important basis for comparison with other psalms in my corpus.

One crucial aspect of the lexical analysis is to identify all words that occur in more than one psalm in my corpus and to determine their statistical frequency in the Hebrew Old Testament, in the Psalter and in Psalms 3-8. Therefore, as part of the lexical study I provide frequency of occurrence statistics for almost every verb, noun, adverb or adjective discussed. I calculated these statistics by doing a series of computerised searches on *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia with Westminster 4.2 Morphology* (2004) using Logos Bible Software. The results are presented using the following notation: “אָמַר, 48:7:1, v. 1a”. This indicates that the Hebrew lemma is אָמַר, it is found in verse 1a of the psalm and it occurs 48 times in the Old Testament, 7 times in the Psalter and once in my corpus.

#### **3.4.4 Grammatical analysis**

Although grammar has risen to prominence as an important element in the correct interpretation of Hebrew poetry (see Collins 1978a-b; O'Connor 1993; 1997a-b), editors or compilers are scarcely likely to be conscious enough of grammatical structures to use them as a basis for arranging texts. Consequently, only such grammatical points as lend themselves to such disparate interpretations and/or translations as to have a significant bearing on the interpretation of the psalm receive attention.

#### **3.4.5 Form criticism**

Form criticism, as it has been practiced in psalms' studies, has two distinct aspects: (a) *genre*: categorising psalms according to their literary form and analysing the formal characteristics of each type and (b) *setting*: attempting to identify the social setting(s) in which each psalm or psalm type were used. Categorising psalms on the basis of shared formal characteristics is quite an objective exercise, but identifying the life-setting(s) in which particular psalms or psalm types were used far more subjective, depending heavily on tentative reconstructions of Israelite history and worship. Nevertheless, an attempt must be made to understand the historical usage of each psalm since this might have heavily influenced the final redactors understanding of it.

Due to the nature and purpose of this study, it is possible to downplay the need for historical reconstruction in the exegetical process (see §3.3.2 above). The same cannot be said of the need to seek the possible life-settings in which the psalm was used. The chief alternative to a literary rationale for the collection and arrangement of a group of psalms is a liturgical one. If the evidence suggests that all the psalms in a small corpus were used in the same social or cultic setting, then the primary relationship between those psalms is probably liturgical and such literary links as may exist between them should be interpreted in that light. Therefore, the exegetical stage of this study devotes significant attention to form-critical considerations.

#### ***3.4.6 Structural analysis***

Structural similarities may create that impression that two pieces of literature are of the same kind and “belong together”. While not as concrete as lexical links, this factor can play a role in the way the compilers of a collection go about organising material. For example, the compiler of a book of poems might group short poems or sonnets together and the editors of a book of jokes may group one-liners separately from jokes with three points followed by a punchline.

For this reason, the exegetical discussion of each psalm includes a discussion of the psalm's structure. It discusses structural markers signposting the semantic relationships between cola and strophes. Analysis of the segmentation, structure and logical development of the psalm fall under this category. Terrien's (2003) commentary, which gives special attention to the strophic structure of each psalm, is particularly helpful in this respect, as are Duane Christensen's (2005a-f) numerical analyses of individual psalms (see [www.bibal.net](http://www.bibal.net)). Since structural similarities, such as strophic patterns, may or may not be significant, they are kept in mind and treated cautiously.

#### ***3.4.7 Rhetoric analysis***

Rhetorical analysis, as the term is used here, does not refer to the canons of Greco-Roman rhetoric, but to the variety of textual strategies and devices that authors employ to facilitate effective communication. Texture and artistry are prominent components of the modern literary approaches to biblical interpretation, especially when dealing with poetic texts (see Ryken 1992; Prinsloo 1994; Long 2001). Hebrew poetry uses a wide range of rhetorical

devices to convey its message. Meter,<sup>19</sup> parallelism, patterning and figurative language are all prominent considerations when explicating a psalm. However, the only one of these that would provide a likely basis on which an editor might consciously juxtapose psalms would be a rich figure of speech, such as a key metaphor serving as a unifying motif.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, except for strong figures of speech, my exegesis does not pay much attention to rhetorical strategies in the text.

### ***3.4.8 Theological analysis***

The final crucial step in the exegetical process is to analyse major theological themes and motifs in the psalms. After link words, shared themes should

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<sup>19</sup> The value of meter as an aid to understanding Hebrew poetry is hotly debated. Opinions range from those who consider it to be of great value (e.g., Freedman 1972; Howard 1997) to those who deny that it has any value (e.g., Longman 1982 and 1988).

<sup>20</sup> In his analysis of literary relationships between the Kingship of Yahweh psalms, David Howard (1997) gave some credence to meter as a factor worth considering. However, unlike some forms of English poetry in which meter plays a prominent role, no study of Hebrew poetry has revealed any fixed metrical basis for the construction of Hebrew poems (so Alter 1981; Longman 1982; 1988). It seems that meter was, at best, a relatively minor factor in Hebrew poetry and therefore not a likely basis for the arrangement of a group of psalms.

represent the most concrete type of links between psalms. Therefore, accurate analysis of vital motifs is crucial to the study.

### **3.5 Analysis of links between adjacent psalms**

After conducting an exegetical study of each psalm, attention turns to the observable relationships between adjacent psalms. Editors are most likely to be conscious of links when juxtaposing neighbouring psalms in a collection. The probability of shared terminology, in particular, being intentional as opposed to coincidental is highest when it is shared by adjacent psalms. Chapter 5 attempts to identify all meaningful relationships between pairs of adjacent psalms that might have provided the editorial rationale for their side-by-side placement in the final form of the Psalter.

The analysis of each pair of touching psalms is based on the exegetical observations made in chapter 4 and covers three major steps: (a) conduct an exhaustive analysis of shared terminology, (b) evaluate other kinds of potential links between psalms and (c) assess the primary basis of concatenation.

### *3.5.1 Conduct an exhaustive analysis of shared terminology*

Shared lexemes provide the most concrete links between adjacent psalms. The first step in this stage of the study is to conduct an exhaustive analysis of shared terminology between a pair of psalms. I begin by listing all lexemes found in both psalms. This list is compiled by hand and presented in the following notation: סָלָה (3:2). This means the term סָלָה occurs in both psalms, three times in the first and twice in the second. If the two psalms were Psalms 3 and 4, it would mean סָלָה occurs thrice in Psalm 3 and twice in Psalm 4. Next, I indicate the overall percentage of all the lexemes in each psalm that are shared with the other psalm.

Finally, I discuss in detail any shared lexemes that appear to be significant links, offering a qualitative assessment of how strong a link it provides between the two psalms. In terms of the criteria employed in this assessment, these factors contribute to the significance of a link word.

- *The frequency with which the word occurs:* the less frequently a word is used, either in the Hebrew Bible or in the Psalter itself, the more significant its occurrence in consecutive psalms is.

- *The position of the word in the psalm:* the more strategically the word is positioned in the two psalms, the more significant it is. Key words at the beginning, end or thematic centre of the psalm are most significant.
- *The collocation of the word with other words:* shared words appearing in groups are more significant than shared words occurring in isolation. For example, if the phrase “workers of iniquity” occurs in both psalms, this is more significant than if the words “workers” and “iniquity” both occurred separately.
- *The context in which the word is used:* words used in similar contexts in both psalms are more significant than words used in different contexts.

### ***3.5.2 Evaluate other kinds of potential links between psalms***

In addition to an exhaustive analysis of shared terminology, other possible factors which might have played a role in the editorial decision to juxtapose two psalms will be considered. I include four of these factors.

- *Historical links.* If there is reason to believe that the final redactors believed both psalms sprang from the same historical setting, this might have influenced them to keep the two psalms together.

Therefore, any evidence of a common historical setting will be weighed.

- *Structural links.* In and of themselves, structural similarities are unlikely to be the primary basis for juxtaposing two psalms, but they can play a contributing role (see §3.3.6).
- *Functional links.* By “functional links”, I have in mind the possibility that two psalms were used in the same life-setting by ancient Israelites. If two psalms fulfilled similar functions, this might account for them being kept together in the Psalter.
- *Thematic links.* Common themes are closely related to shared terminology. These two factors are interrelated and work together to provide a possible rationale for arranging psalms. I explore any motifs common to both psalms.

### ***3.5.3 Assess the primary basis of concatenation***

Once all the evidence of possible links between two psalms has been noted, I attempt to weigh the evidence in order to discern what factor(s) provided the primary reason(s) that the editors juxtaposed these psalms. There is no guarantee the evidence will permit a clear, definitive conclusion. I make every

attempt to base my conclusions on the preponderance of evidence and not to draw conclusions that go beyond what the evidence supports.

The crucial part of this assessment is to evaluate intentionality, that is, to determine whether similarities between psalms are evidence of purposeful arrangement. The danger in the search for similarities between psalms is that there may be many coincidental parallels. Perhaps the most crucial stage of the entire study, and perhaps also the most subjective, lies in weighing the links between psalms. To minimise the subjectivity of this process, I attempt to apply the following criteria consistently in assessing the basis upon which the editors arranged psalms.

- *Proximity.* Similarities are more likely to be intentional in adjacent psalms than in non-adjacent ones. Therefore, the greater the distance between similarities, the stronger the evidence needs to be for considering them intentional.
- *Complexity.* Surface-level similarities (e.g., key words, inscriptions, life-settings, central themes) are more likely to be intentional than deep-level similarities (e.g., literary structure, rhetorical features, embedded themes).

- *Frequency.* Assuming that redactors form editorial habits and thus tend to reuse the same compositional techniques, repeated occurrences of the same kind of similarity increases the probability of it being intentional.

These three criteria by no means guarantee objectivity, but they are sensible starting guides in the attempt to distinguish intentional links from coincidental ones.

### **3.6 Analysis of the composition of the corpus**

After analysing links between adjacent psalms, attention turns to the broader relationships between Psalms 3-8. Three interrelated questions form the object of inquiry. First, is there evidence that these psalms were deliberately arranged? If the answer to this is “yes”, then what criteria of arrangement were employed (i.e., what factors provided the basis of arrangement)? Finally, what communicative objective, if any, motivated the arrangement?

I presuppose that whatever factors provided the basis for the concatenation of adjacent psalms probably also featured prominently in the editors’ arrangement at the broader level. Since the analysis of links between adjacent psalms showed that historical and liturgical factors were less

prominent than verbal thematic ones, my search for broader links majors on the headings together with verbal and thematic links amongst the psalms.<sup>21</sup>

*The headings.* It seems self-evident that the psalm headings would feature prominently in the thinking of anybody trying to arrange a group of psalms. There is general consensus amongst psalms' scholars that the headings were a key factor, though perhaps not *the* chief factor. My strategy is to look for markers of continuity or discontinuity between headings, both within my corpus and in relation to the Psalter as whole, which might point to editorial activity.

*Verbal links.* I conduct an exhaustive analysis of shared lexemes amongst Psalms 3-8, seeking to weigh the significance of shared terminology using the same criteria as for adjacent psalms. Terms such as the article, prepositions, personal pronouns and common particles are ignored. All remaining shared

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<sup>21</sup> The decision to focus on verbal and thematic links when analysing the broader relationships between Psalms 3-8 was not made until after the full analysis of relationships between adjacent psalms. If the analysis of relationships between adjacent psalms had suggested that other factors (such as historical occasion or liturgical usage) had played a role in the editors' arrangement of the corpus, the methodology employed in chapter 6 would have been very different.

lexemes are examined in an attempt to determine which of them, if any, might have served as link words beyond the level of adjacent psalms.

*Thematic unity.* Lastly, I search for themes or motifs that occur in multiple psalms in my corpus. The goal is to determine which themes, if any, give the collection thematic unity. Moreover, if there is thematic unity, what form does it take? Is it merely that a similar theme occurs in more than one psalm or does that theme develop in such a way that the collection has a sort of literary plot?

Based on the data drawn from the headings, shared words and common themes, I advance a theory as to how the editors compiled the collection that is Psalms 3-8.

The final phase of the study is to assess the level of redaction. *Thematic development* is the crucial factor. For the study to conclude that there is deep-level redaction, there must be evidence of thematic development across the corpus of psalms. By way of illustration, a group of songs grouped together in a church hymnal because they are all used in the Christmas service is not deep-level redaction. However, if those songs are arranged sequentially to tell the Christmas story and used as part of a musical pageant, they are a composition, not just a collection.

## Chapter 4

### Analysis of Psalms 3-8

The purpose of this chapter is to lay a foundation for evaluating the basis on which the redactors of the Psalter arranged Psalms 3-8. Any attempt to identify the criteria of arrangement must be based on a sound working knowledge of what is known about each psalm. Therefore, this chapter will present an exegetical summary of each psalm in the chosen corpus.

The objective of the chapter is a modest one—to provide a basis for the next phase of the study. The exegetical work is not intended to be innovative or groundbreaking. It needs to make sound observations about each psalm, observations that will expose possible links between them.

For each psalm, I shall explore six elements. The first four—textual variants, historical reconstruction, setting in life and structural analysis—succinctly

summarise prevailing scholarly views on the psalm. The sixth element is a brief synopsis of the major theme(s) of the psalm.

The fifth element, terminology, forms the backbone of the analysis of each psalm. Since verbal linkages are the most objective and measurable kind of links between psalms, I endeavour to present detailed statistical observations about word frequencies of all important nouns, verbs, adjective and adverbs. After each Hebrew term, I indicate how many times its root occurs in the Hebrew Bible, in the Psalter and in my corpus. The statistical data is presented in the following format: אָמַר, 48:7:1, v. 1a. This indicates that the Hebrew lemma is אָמַר, it is found in verse 1a of the psalm and it occurs 48 times in the Old Testament, 7 times in the Psalter and once in my corpus. To my knowledge, this is the most thorough analysis to date of the frequency of word-occurrences in this corpus of psalms and represents the first aspect of my own contribution to the study of these psalms.

## 4.1 Psalm 3

### 4.1.1 *Textual variants*

The variants in Psalm 3 pose few difficulties. In verse 3, the Septuagint has ἀντιλήμπτωρ (“helper; protector”) for the Masoretic Text’s מָגֵן (“shield”), but this seems to be an idiomatic rendering rather than a true variant. In verse 8,

the Septuagint has ματαίως (“for no reason” = חֲנָם) instead of the Masoretic Text’s לְחֵי (“jaw”). Ματαίως seems like an attempt to soften the harshness of the prayer for vengeance. לְחֵי is the superior reading because replacing it with חֲנָם breaks both the flow of thought and the parallelism between לְחֵי (“jaw”) and שִׁנָּי (“teeth”). Manuscript evidence indicates uncertainty about whether the *waw* with ויעניני (v. 5) should it be read as simple or conversive *waw*, but this is an interpretive rather than a textual matter.

#### ***4.1.2 Historical reconstruction***

Like all the other psalms in my corpus, Psalm 3 is attributed to David (“a psalm of David”, מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד). It is also one of thirteen Davidic psalms bearing an editorial description of the circumstances of writing: בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲבִשָׁלוֹם בְּנוֹ (“when he fled from Absalom, his son”). The inscription implies that the psalm was written by David in the tenth century B.C. when he fled from Absalom (see 1 Sam 15:13-17:24). “The initial flight from Absalom covered two nights, the first of which could understandably have found David despondent (1, 2)” (Motyer 1994). This suggests that the psalm would have been written on the morning after David’s flight and would mark the turning point in his emotional state (cf. Wilcock 2001).

The implied occasion of Psalm 3 appears to be a military crisis. Craigie (1998:71) remarks:

The language and terminology employed throughout the psalm have military overtones. . . . This military terminology, implying that the crisis facing the psalmist was military in nature, tends to identify the psalm with the king, who was commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

The psalmist's crisis lies in the fact that he has many foes who have risen up against him (v. 2), claiming that the Lord will not give him victory (v. 3). That he was in imminent physical danger is implied by his reference to God as "a shield about me" (v. 4) and his belief that the only reason he survived the night was because "the Lord sustained me" (v. 6). He depicts his enemies as "tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side" (v. 7, NIV). He calls upon Yahweh to render his enemies powerless by breaking their teeth (v. 8).

The tone of the psalm convinced Terrien (2003) that it was not a professional composition for royal use, but a prayer birthed out of an urgent personal situation. He wrote:

The extraordinary vivacity of style, in addition to the sure control of strophic structure, cannot mask the gravity of an existential

experience of life and death. The psalm possesses an accent of immediate conviction that suggests authenticity rather than professional work and favors the value of the editorial superscriptions (Terrien 2003:93).

Craigie (1998:71) adds, "It should be added that the military language is also entirely in harmony with the superscription linking the psalm with David's flight from Absalom." It seems reasonable to conclude that it was written in a royal military crisis comparable to the one King David faced during Absalom's revolt.

#### ***4.1.3 Setting in life***

The terms "psalm" (מִזְמוֹר) in the superscription and "selah" (סֶלָה) in verses 3, 5 and 9 indicate that this was a song set to music (Lane 2006:33). The emotional tone of the psalm argues against it being a professional composition for liturgical use (cf. Terrien 2003:93). However, the insertion of "selah" would suggest that it was later used in corporate worship.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For "selah" probably being a late musical addition, see Durham (1969).

In terms of modern classifications, Psalm 3 is an *individual lament* (Gunkel and Begrich 1966:172; USCCB<sup>23</sup> 2002; Bratcher 2006b).<sup>24</sup> On the grounds that a disaster has not actually occurred, some prefer to designate it a *protective psalm* (e.g., Mowinckel 1962; Craigie 1998). The psalm's vivid imagery of mounting opposition and hostility towards the psalmist, with an imminent military threat, surely constitutes enough of a crisis to warrant the designation *lament*. The psalmist experienced a personal disaster, even if it did not culminate in a military defeat.

Psalm 3 has long been considered as a *morning prayer* (e.g., Briggs and Briggs 1906:24; Scroggie 1948:56; Leupold 1961:57; Weiser 1962:116; Bratcher and Reyburn 1991:34; Craigie 1998:70; Wilcock 2001:27; Keil and Delitzsch 2002:59; Goldingay 2006:108). It seems likely from verse 5 that the psalmist penned the words of the psalm in the morning when he awoke safely from a night of danger (Motyer 1994; Wilcock 2001:30). Whether it was ever adopted for general liturgical use, that is, for worshippers to use as a morning prayer for protection in Israel's corporate worship (so Durham 1971; Craigie

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<sup>23</sup> USCCB is an abbreviation for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

<sup>24</sup> Some have argued, on the grounds that the individual speaking is the king, that it is best considered a royal psalm (see Eaton 1986; Croft 1987; Sarna 1992; Brettler 1993).

1998; Broyles 1999; Hughes and Laney 2001), remains uncertain. Although some worshippers may well have used it this way, it does not seem to me like an ideal choice for generalised use in morning worship.<sup>25</sup> Psalms 4 and 5 bear marks of being evening and morning prayers respectively. Keil and Delitsch (2002) admit to expecting to find morning and evening prayers at the beginning of the Psalter.

The two Psalms forming the prologue, which treat cognate themes, the one ethical, from the standpoint of the חכמה, and the other related to the history of redemption from the standpoint of the נבואה, are now followed by a morning prayer; for morning and evening prayers are surely the first that one expects to find in a prayer- and hymn-book.

Perhaps this expectation influenced interpreters to see it as a psalm adopted for use in morning worship.

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<sup>25</sup> Goldingay, by contrast, feels that “the generality of its language would make it also usable by individuals within the community who were under attack from others” (2006:109) and Wilcock (2001:27) can “see how this psalm could have developed from a personal prayer of David’s, to a ‘royal’ psalm for a time of political crisis, then to a general prayer for protection, then to a particular psalm for morning use.”

Whether or not it was used in morning worship in the temple we cannot say for certain. The fact that it celebrates Yahweh's protection through the night indicates that it serves the literary function of a morning prayer. In this sense, the designation "morning prayer" is definitely appropriate.

#### *4.1.4 Structural analysis*

The traditional view of the structure of Psalm 3 holds that it "falls naturally into four sections, which (with the exception of the third section) are ended by the word SELAH" (Craigie 1998:72). The fourfold strophe division sees the action unfolding something like this:

- Strophe 1: Surrounded by enemies                      vv. 2-3
- Strophe 2: Seeking after Yahweh                      vv. 4-5
- Strophe 3: Sustained by Yahweh                      vv. 6-7
- Strophe 4: Saved by Yahweh                      vv. 8-9

Due to their similarity in subject, commentators and expositors often combine strophes 2 and 3, resulting in a standard introduction (vv. 1-2), body (vv. 3-6) and conclusion (vv. 7-8) movement within the psalm (e.g., Ross 1985; Broyles 1999). The primary reason for the four-strophe arrangement is the threefold use of סֵלָה ("selah") at the end of verses 3, 5 and 9, which is interpreted as a musical pause signalling a structural break.

Terrien (cf. Kselman 1987; Murphy 1996; Auffret 1998), however, disagrees with this interpretation of the psalm's structure. He believes that the four-strophe division is not the correct understanding of the structure of the poem.

Its structure is generally presented as a series of four strophes (vv. 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9), but this division does not do justice to the equilibrium or its rhythm and themes, for it does not respect the rigor of its discursive modes. The appellations to Yahweh in the second person (vv. 2-4 and 8-9) are clearly separated by a meditation on Yahweh in the third person (vv. 5-7), and this meditation constitutes the centre of the whole development (Terrien 2003:89).

John Kselman (1987), Pierre Auffret (1998) and Samuel Terrien (2003) argue that the psalm consists of three strophes. Each strophe consists of two unequal substrophes, the first substrophe having two bicola and the second one bicolon. Each strophe closes with a declaration of confidence in Yahweh (vv. 4, 7 and 9). "In each case the [second] substrophe prepares a transition to the next strophe, and the last one provides a conclusion to the whole prayer" (Terrien 2003:89).

Should the positioning of three *selah*'s be considered a better indication of the structure of the psalm than Kselman's (1987) and Terrien's (2003) appeal to

multiple discourse features in the psalm? Although the use of *selah*, whatever its meaning, often does serve as a good indicator of the structural divisions of a psalm, this is not always the case (e.g., Pss 52, 55 and 59). Most significantly, the rhetorical structure of Psalm 4 is remarkably similar to that of Psalm 3, and the two *selah*'s in Psalm 4 do not represent strophic divisions.

The alternation between first and third person references to Yahweh, coupled with rhythmic 2 + 1 balance of the substrophes, makes Kselman's (1987) analysis of the structure of Psalm 3 much more convincing than the traditional four-strophe view.<sup>26</sup> Kselman's interpretation could be graphically illustrated as follows:

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<sup>26</sup> Christensen's logoprosodic analysis tends to confirm this structure. He sees Psalm 3 as consisting of "6 strophes arranged in 3 cantos" (2005a:7)—canto I: 3:1-3 and 3:4; canto II: 3:5 and 3:6; canto III: 3:7 and 3:8-9. His arithmetic count identified 3:5-6 as the centre of the psalm and motivated him to group 3:7 with 3:8-9.



Richards 1985:282), in the Hiphil meaning “put to flight, cause to flee” (6 times in Masoretic Text) and “flee” in the Qal. It occurs three times in the Psalter, once in the superscription of Psalm 57 in the identical phrase **בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי־שָׂאוּל** (“when he fled from the presence of Saul”) to Psalm 3:1.

The psalmist refers to his enemies as (a) “foes” (**צָר**, 112:40:2, v. 2a), (b) those “rising against me” (**קָמִים עָלַי**, v. 2b), (c) those “who have set themselves against me” (**אָשֶׁר סָבִיב שְׂתוֹ עָלַי**, v. 7b) and (d) “enemies” (**אֹיִב**, 283:74:4, v. 8c). Four times these enemies are said to be “many” (vv. 2-3, three times) or “thousands” (v. 7), conjuring images of an army (cf. Ross 1985:793; Bratcher and Reyburn 1991:38; VanGemeren 1991:77; Rawlinson 2004:17-18). The root **צָר** denotes being under pressure, in adversity, with the accompanying sense of anguish it causes (see Hartley 1999b:778-780; Swart and Wakely 1996:§7674). By extension, it is used of those who cause adversity and anguish, namely, adversaries (see Hartley 1999b:778-780; Swart and Wakely 1996:§7674). In the Psalter, **צָר** occurs 16 times in the sense of “adversity” (43:16:1) and 24 times as “adversary” (67:24:1).<sup>27</sup> The verb “to arise” (**קוּם**,

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<sup>27</sup> The BHS Westminster Hebrew Morphology 4.2 does not distinguish between the various senses of **צָר**. The figures given at the beginning of the paragraph, 112:40:2, combine both main senses and the rare uses of the same root with the meaning “flint” and “narrow.” The

627:51:3, v. 2b) “is frequently used in martial contexts” (Coppes 1999:793; cf. HALOT 1999, s.v. קום, §4), referring to arising for battle—both preparing for and entering into it. It occurs twice in Psalm 3, once of the psalmist’s enemies “rising against him” (v. 2b), perhaps implying they are preparing for battle against him, and once in his plea for Yahweh to arise (קומה יְהוָה, v. 8a). The allusion to thousands “who have set themselves against me all around” (v. 7) seems to allude to an army arrayed against the psalmist (so Bratcher and Reyburn 1991:38; VanGemeren 1991:77; Rawlinson 2004:17-18). The final allusion uses the most common word for “enemy” (אֹיֵב) in the Psalter.

Yahweh too is portrayed in military language.<sup>28</sup> The psalmist calls him “a shield about me” (מָגֵן בְּעָדַי; v. 4a). In the Psalter, 15 of the 19 references to “shield” (מָגֵן, 60:19:2) refer to the Lord as a shield (personal calculation). Only here, however, is מָגֵן (a small, round shield; see Anderson 1972:72; Keel 1985:224; Smith 1999:169; used metaphorically for “protection”, HALOT 1999:545, s.v. 4) collocated with בְּעָדַי (“around”, 104:4:1) to create an unusual

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more specific figures are based on a search using the Andersen-Forbes Analysed Text (Anderson and Forbes 2005).

<sup>28</sup> For detailed studies of Yahweh as Warrior, see Craigie (1969; 1978), Janzen (1975), Lind (1980), Kang (1989) and Brettler (1993).

image. References to Yahweh as “my glory” (כְּבוֹדִי, from כָּבוֹד, 200:51:4; v. 4b) and “the lifter of my head” (רָוַם וּמָרִים רֹאשִׁי, 193:51:1 and רָאשׁ, 599:33:2; v. 4c) are less clearly military in nature, leading Wilson (2002:132) to suggest “a setting of political conflict [rather] than an actual military engagement”.<sup>29</sup> However, the language of the rest of the psalm seems to fit a military setting more naturally than a political one (e.g., Ross 1985; Bratcher and Reyburn 1991; VanGemeren 1991; Motyer 1994; Clifford 2002; Stek 2002; Rawlinson 2004) and “in some contexts [כְּבוֹד] is an intrinsic quality of the divine warrior” (Brettler 1993:140).<sup>30</sup> Therefore, Knight’s (2001) suggestion that the lifting of the king’s head is a symbol of military victory seems preferable to Wilson’s non-military interpretation. Knight suggests the image portrays the psalmist as a vanquished king lying prostrate before his conqueror, but instead of placing

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<sup>29</sup> Wilson (2002:131-132) suggests that the imagery of a king “lifting the head is a public indication of dignity and honour.” He sees this image pointing to a political conflict in the king’s court, in which the psalmist (either the king or a high ranking official) calls upon Yahweh to honour him in the presence of his enemies.

<sup>30</sup> Mays (1994a), Broyles (1999) and Wilson (2002) are notable dissenting voices who seem to favour a non-military interpretation of the psalm.

his foot on the defeated king's head as a symbol of shame,<sup>31</sup> the “king lifts up by the chin the suppliant who has prostrated himself before his throne, and thus shows him favour” (Knight 2001:26; cf. Brettler 1993:140).

In the final stanza, the psalmist appeals to God to give him victory. Both the imperatives in verse 8, “arise” (קוּמָה, Qal imperative of קוּם, “to arise”) and “deliver me” (הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי, Hiphil imperative of יָשַׁע, 205:57:4), carry military connotations here (see Coppes 1999:793; Hartley 1999a:415), imploring God to enter the battle to bring the psalmist victory. The cognate noun, “deliverance” (יְשׁוּעָה, 78:45:2), in verses 3 and 9 also seems to be used in the military sense of “victory” (so Craigie 1998:70; Bratcher and Reyburn 1991:36; cf. NEB).

In verse 8, God is portrayed as a mighty general who has “struck” (Hiphil perfect of נָכַח, 501:14:1, v. 8b) the psalmist's enemies and “shattered” (Piel

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<sup>31</sup> In connection with Psalm 110, Aloisi (2005:108) describes a “custom of the ancient Near East in which a victorious king placed his foot on the necks of his conquered foes. It indicates the complete subjugation of those who have been defeated to those who have overcome them.”

perfect of שָׁבַר, 147:21:1, v. 8c) their teeth.<sup>32</sup> The verb נָכָה “is often used for ‘hitting’ or ‘smiting’ an object with one, non-fatal blow” (Wilson 1999:578; cf. Van Dam 1996:§5782; admittedly, in many instances, it does depict a fatal strike, see HALOT 1999:697). Thus, striking an enemy on the jaw speaks of humiliating him. Breaking someone’s teeth is an idiom meaning “to rob him of his power” (Austel 1999:943). According to Wilson (2002:134), the plea for God “to break the teeth” of the wicked is a plea for him to end the inhumane treatment of the righteous by the wicked. It portrays the wicked as violent predators (cf. Job 29:17, Ps 58:3-9, Prov 17:10-12 and 30:14) and God as the one who disarms them to protect the innocent from becoming their prey. The image of verse 8 does not portray God as a warrior wildly slaying enemies in hand-to-hand combat, but as an all-powerful military Judge-General who easily disarms and humiliates violent, wicked enemies (cf. Sarna 1992). Although some render the perfect tense verbs הִכִּיתָ and שָׁבַרְתָּ as imperatives (e.g., NIV) or hortatory subjunctives (e.g., Craigie 1998:70), the force of the perfects seems to be that the Lord has done this previously, which serves as the basis for the psalmist’s pleas in verse 8 (i.e., “Arise, O Lord; save me, O

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<sup>32</sup> The violent language of verse 8 has been the focus of much debate. Sarna (1992) sees it as a legal incantation—the king is pleading with God to inflict a humiliating defeat on the enemy.

my God”). The point is that Yahweh has proved himself to be a dependable military deliverer, disarming the wicked to defend the innocent.

Aside from the expressly military terminology considered above, “answer” (עָנָה, 315:36:2, v. 5) occurs 36 times in the Psalter, but only in 3:5 and 4:2 in the limited corpus under study here. The phrase “holy mountain” (הַר קֹדֶשׁ, v. 5) occurs in 2:6, 3:5, 15:1, [24:3], 43:3, 48:1 and 87:1 (plural). Interestingly, Chafer (1942:22; emphasis in original) claimed that “the phrase, *the mountain of God* is, in its Old Testament usage, the seat of God’s authority (cf. Exod 4:27; Pss 2:6; 3:4; 43:3; 68:15; Isa 2:2; 11:9),” which would imply that it too carries military connotations. “But you” (וְאַתָּה, v. 4) occurs 194 times in the Old Testament, 16 in the Psalter, of which 14 refer to the Lord; seven times Yahweh is explicit (i.e., “and you Lord”, וְאַתָּה יְהוָה), including Psalms 3:4 and 6:4. “Sleep” (יָשַׁן, 16:5:2, v. 6) occurs in Psalms 3:6, 4:9, 13:4, 44:24 and 121:4. The related term “to lie down” (שָׁכַב, 212:6:2, v. 6) is far more common, yet occurs only six times in the Book of Psalms. The combination of שָׁכַב and יָשַׁן, “to lie down and sleep”, occurs only five times in the Hebrew Bible and, in the Psalter, only in 3:6 and 4:9.

#### **4.1.6 Themes**

All the themes of the psalm play out in a military setting. Yahweh is the psalmist's protector and deliverer. He is both transcendent (answering "from his holy hill", v. 5) and imminent ("a shield about me", v. 4). Whether conceived of as near or far, he was always accessible to the psalmist and attentive to his prayers. The dominant portrayal of Yahweh in the psalm is as a warrior-king, a military general (see Brettler 1993). As the sovereign in a sovereign-vassal treaty, he would come to the psalmist's aid. To the forces arrayed against the psalmist, it seemed there could be no "deliverance" (v. 3) for him. Yet he was assured that Yahweh would "arise" and "deliver" him, subduing and shaming his enemies (v. 8). The Lord would both protect his life ("my shield", v. 4; "the Lord sustained me", v. 6) and restore his honour ("the lifter of my head", v. 4).

Unlike Psalms 4, 5 and 7, the psalmist made no appeal to personal righteousness as the basis of his request. Rather than his personal righteousness, the covenant between Yahweh and his people (אֲמִתּוֹ, v. 9) seems to provide the basis for the psalmist's expectation of the Lord's deliverance. VanGemeren (1991:73) explain:

The canonical significance of the psalm lies . . . in its theological message. The Lord will redeem his anointed one, establish his

kingdom, and bless his people! The benefit of the Davidic covenant (see Pss 2 and 132) for Israel is found in the assurance of God's presence, his promise of deliverance, and his blessings through the anointed king.

## 4.2 Psalm 4

### 4.2.1 *Textual variants*

In the Septuagint, verse 3 reads, "O sons of men, how long will you be heavy-hearted? Why do you love vanity and seek falsehood?" (my translation). The difference between the Septuagint and the Masoretic Text seems to be due to underlying difference in the Hebrew text the translators were using (see Briggs and Briggs 1906:33; Lust, Eynikel and Hauspie 2003, s.v. βαρυκάρδιος). Where the Masoretic Text reads כְּבוֹדֵי לְכַלְמָה, the Greek reading implies כְּבוֹדֵי לֵב לְמָה (so Briggs and Briggs 1906:33). In the consonantal text, the difference is just one letter, ב for כ—כְּבוֹדֵי לְכַלְמָה becomes כְּבוֹדֵי לְבַלְמָה. The Masoretic Text has better manuscript support and fits the context better. The Septuagint reading can be explained as a copying error (so Briggs and Briggs 1906:33; cf. Craigie 1998:79).

Strong Hebrew manuscript evidence attests הִפְלָא ("to be wonderful to") in place of הִפְלָה ("to set apart") in verse 4. The antiquity of this reading is

confirmed by the Septuagint's ἐθαυμάστωσεν and the Vulgate's *mirificavit*.

Craigie offers the following discussion and evaluation of the problem:

Numerous Heb. MSS, including C, and the principal versions, suggest that הפלה “set aside” should be read as הפלא “be wonderful”; if this reading were accepted, together with changing חסיד לו “the godly to him” to נסדו לי “his love to me” (following Ps 31:22), the clause could be translated: “the Lord has shown to me his wondrous love.” But MT makes good sense as it stands, and it is unnecessary to follow these possible textual changes.

Due to the difficulty this variant poses, the study will consider both readings as possibilities when seeking possible links between psalms. I shall retain the reading of the Masoretic Text, הפלה, as the primary reading, but consider the implications if the editors had a text that read הפלא instead.

There is Greek, Syriac and some Hebrew manuscript evidence suggesting that the copula ו in verse 5b belongs on על instead of on דמו. Craigie (1998:79) argues, justifiably it seems, that the poetic balance of the verse leans towards the variant reading being original.

Text	אָמְרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל־מִשְׁכְּבְּכֶם וְדָמוּ	<i>meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still</i>
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Variant	אָמְרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם	<i>mediate in your heart</i>
	וְעַל־מִשְׁכַּבְּכֶם דָּמוּ	<i>and be still on your bed</i>

Syriac reads “your joy” instead of simply “joy” (שְׂמֵחָה, v. 8). This is likely to be a scribal insertion to parallel “your countenance” (v. 7). It is easy to envisage how שְׂמֵחָה could have become שְׂמֵחָתְךָ, but not easy to envisage how the reverse could have occurred.

In verse 8b, Greek and Syriac adds “their oil” (Hebrew, וַיִּצְהָרֵם) to “their grain and wine”. However, “grain and wine” was a common idiom for expressing prosperity (see Gen 27:28 and 37, Deut 33:28, 2 Kgs 18:32, Isa 36:17 and Hos 7:14), and I see no reason to prefer the longer reading here.

#### ***4.2.2 Historical reconstruction***

There is no basis on which to reconstruct the original historical setting of the psalm. Several scholars (e.g., Lussier 1947:324; Scroggie 1948:56; Leupold 1961:66; Kidner 1973:55; Phillips 1988:36; Richards 1990:322; Motyer 1994; Wilcock 2001:21; Lane 2006:37) consider it closely related to the historical circumstances described in the superscription to Psalm 3 (i.e., David’s flight from Absalom).

While it is impossible to reconstruct the exact historical occasion of the psalm, two plausible reconstructions of the general circumstances of writing are possible. The first regards it as an individual prayer for help after the psalmist has suffered a loss of honour caused by some persons of influence spreading humiliating lies about him (so Mays 1994a; Craigie 1998). His enemies have turned the psalmist's honour to shame by spreading lies about him (v. 3). With great assurance, the psalmist addresses his prayers to Yahweh (vv. 2, 4) confident that the Lord who gave him relief before (v. 2) has set him apart for Himself (v. 4) and will keep him safe through the night (v. 9). Finding his joy and strength in the Lord (v. 8), he counsels his enemies to manage their frustrations in a more godly manner (vv. 5-6). Motyer (1994) sees the psalm as an attack on the psalmist's honour and considers it as a sequel to Psalm 3, set within David's flight from Absalom (see Ps 3:1), on the second night of his flight.<sup>33</sup>

The other reconstruction (see Dahood 1966; Wilson 2002; Goldingay 2006), based largely on verses 7-8, sees the setting as an agricultural crisis (e.g., a

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<sup>33</sup> This interpretation of Psalm 4 does not require this implied historical context, but many of those who favour it also suggest this setting (e.g., Lussier 1947; Leupold 1961; Kidner 1973; Phillips 1988; Richards 1990; Motyer 1994; Wilcock 2001).

famine) that had resulted in the “the sons of men”, probably the nobles (see below), turning from Yahweh to false gods (v. 3). The crisis put great political pressure on the king (i.e., the psalmist), who was determined to remain true to the Lord and continue trusting in Him. In this reconstruction, “the sons of men” (v. 3a) were shaming Yahweh (= “my glory”, v. 3a) by seeking “false gods” (כִּזְבוֹת, v. 3c). They were doing so because a crop failure (vv. 7-8) had caused them to lose confidence in Yahweh (v. 4).

As the division of scholarly support suggests, both reconstructions are plausible. In my opinion, the reconstruction which views the psalm emanating from a slanderous attack on the psalmist’s honour harmonises well with the surrounding psalms, but the reconstruction which sees it emanating from an agricultural crisis fits the contents of Psalm 4 more naturally.

### ***4.2.3 Setting in life***

The superscription of Psalm 4 denotes three things about form and setting. First, it belonged to a collection of Davidic psalms (לְדָוִד). Second, it was part of the music director’s collection. The most common interpretation of לְמַנְצֵחַ views it as a derivative of נָצַח, to “direct, supervise, lead” (Swanson 1997:§5904); this seems to be the best interpretation, leading one to “think of the title as information for the choirmaster or musical director” (Staton

1990:61). Third, it was a song (מְזֹמֶר); it was sung to the accompaniment of stringed instruments (בְּנִינֹת), presumably as part of the temple worship.

In terms of modern form-critical classification, it is an individual lament (USCCB 2002; Bratcher 2006b). Weiser (1962:119) succinctly summarised the standard view of the form and setting of Psalm 4.

The psalm is a prayer of confidence which, mostly on account of v. 8, is called an ‘evening hymn’, and for that reason has probably been inserted after Ps. 3, a ‘morning hymn’.

Classifying it as a “prayer of confidence”, a sub-category of individual lament fits the content well. The allusions to “your bed” (v. 5) and “lie down and sleep” (v. 9) indicate that the psalm was either written in the evening or written for use in the evening, but whether it ever had a formal setting in evening temple worship has not yet been ascertained conclusively. Both Hayes’ (1976:63) suggestion that verses 6-7 contain the words of a priest during a liturgy and Dahood’s (1966:23) proposal that it is a prayer for rain (based on his interpretation of verse 7) are also plausible, but difficult to verify.

What strikes me about the psalm is that although the psalmist calls it a “prayer” (v. 2c), aside from his opening request for Yahweh to listen to his prayer, the only invocation to God is “lift up the light of your face upon us, O

Lord” (v. 7b).<sup>34</sup> The bulk of the psalm is addressed to the psalmist’s enemies, urging them to come to their senses and turn back to the Lord (vv. 3-6). The remainder is addressed to the Lord in quiet confidence (vv. 8-9). The psalmist’s lament is more over the foolish fate of his enemies than over fear for his own wellbeing (see Goldingay 2006:119).

#### 4.2.4 Structural analysis

The most common view of the structure of Psalm 4 tends to see it following the stereotypical structure of a lament psalm (e.g., Leupold 1961; Ross 1985; Broyles 1999; Malick 2005). A standard layout following this line of reasoning would be:

4:2	Invocation to God	The opening verse is addressed <i>to God</i> as a plea for a hearing.
4:3-6	Indirect complaint	The next four verses are addressed <i>to men</i> ; verse 3 states the situation; verses 4-6 offer instruction.

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<sup>34</sup> Even this is questionable since these words can also be interpreted as a continuation of the quote in verse 7a (e.g., NIV).

4:7-9	Statement of confidence	The final stanza closes with an expression of confidence in Yahweh.
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In the above layout, verses 2-6 are divided based on whom the psalmist is addressing—God (v. 2) and men (vv. 3-6).<sup>35</sup>

The structural analysis suggested by Terrien (2003; cf. Craigie 1998) does more justice to the balance and rhythm of the psalm. Terrien sees the psalm as consisting of three strophes, with each strophe consisting of three substrophes.<sup>36</sup>

The first strophe (vv. 2-4) is marked by *inclusio*, the use of *בְּקִרְאֵי* (“when I call”) at its opening and closing boundaries. It contains three substrophes: (a) an invocation for Yahweh to hear the psalmist’s prayer (v. 2); (b) a plea addressed to the protestors, indicating the reason for the psalmist’s lament (v.

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<sup>35</sup> Robert Alden (1974) suggested a chiasmic understanding of the structure of Psalm 4, but his analysis seems strained.

<sup>36</sup> Christensen’s (2005b) logoprosodic analysis led him to a similar view of the structure of Psalm 4. He divides it into three cantos, namely, (1) 4:1-3, (2) 4:4-6 and (3) 4:7-9. Except for including the heading in his structure and grouping verse 4 with verses 5-6 instead of with verses 2-3, his view of the psalm’s macrostructure is similar to Terrien’s.

3); and (c) a declaration of confidence in Yahweh's assistance (v. 4). Thus the first strophe contains a full movement of a lament psalm—call, complaint, confidence.

The second strophe (vv. 5-6) contains a series of six commands to the protestors. These are grouped into three sets of two (three bicola),<sup>37</sup> which show a three-step progression from anger, to calm and ultimately to praise and trust. The series of six commands reflect a distinct upward movement from “trembling” (with rage or fear) to “worshipping” (offering sacrifices).

v. 6 Offer sacrifices . . . , and trust in the Lord

v. 5b Mediate . . . , and be still

v. 5a Tremble, and do not sin

The final strophe (vv. 7-9) also consists of three bicola. In the first bicolon, the psalmist states the doubt of “many” and responds by asking God to show his

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<sup>37</sup> Terrien (2003:95) counts “one tricolon and one bicolon,” but it is more natural for each of the six imperatives (תִּתְחַלֵּץ, though imperfect in form, is part of a prohibition) to govern its own colon.

face (v. 7).<sup>38</sup> In the second, he recalls how Yahweh has been the source of his joy in the past (v. 8). In the final bicolon, he expresses confidence in Yahweh's protection (v. 9).

#### ***4.2.5 Terminology<sup>39</sup>***

Unlike Psalm 3, in which the terminology clusters strongly around military terms, no single word group dominates Psalm 4. I shall work through the terminology of the psalm strophe by strophe discussing terms of interest.

*Verses 2-4.* The psalmist appealed for God to listen to his cry for help. He used several terms that are characteristic of a lament: “call” (קָרָא [x2], 736:56:3, vv. 2 and 4), “answer” (עָנָה, 315:36:2, v. 2), “hear” (שָׁמַע [x2], 1159:79:5, vv. 2 and 4), “be gracious” (חַנּוּן, 76:32:2, v. 2) and “prayer” (תְּפִלָּה, 77:32:2, v. 2).

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<sup>38</sup> It is possible to interpret the whole of verse 7 as the words of the “many”. The NIV, for example, views 7b as their request for God to lift up the light of his face upon them.

<sup>39</sup> Leupold (1961) draws attention to many similarities to Psalm 3. Both he and Phillips (1988) believe it stems from the same historical setting as Psalm 3; so too Kidner (1973), albeit tentatively.

The psalmist framed his opening appeals with two strong references to his own righteousness. At the beginning of the strophe, he called himself “righteous” (צַדִּיק, 123:50:4; v. 2a); at the end, “godly” (הַקְּטִיד, 32:25:1; v. 4a).<sup>40</sup> These terms present the grounds of his pleas for help; he based his confidence on his own faithfulness to Yahweh and on the justness of his cause. He appealed to “O God of my righteousness” (אֱלֹהֵי צַדִּיקִי, v. 2), in which “my righteousness” is best taken as referring to the psalmist and his cause.<sup>41</sup> According to Rawlinson (2004:23), the phrase אֱלֹהֵי צַדִּיקִי denotes “the God who sees that I and my cause are righteous”. He was appealing to God to vindicate him because he (God) knew he was innocent (cf. Briggs and Briggs 1906:30; Scroggie 1948:59; Craigie 1998:80; Wilson 2002:151). The term הַקְּטִיד (“godly/pious [man]”, 32:25:1, v. 4; see BDB 2000, s.v. הַקְּטִיד, 2; Baer and Gordon 1996, §2878) depicts not just a man who is holy or godly, but one who is loyal to the covenant with God (related to הַקְּטִיד; see Harris 1999, §698), “one

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<sup>40</sup> Although the colon containing the noun הַקְּטִיד (v. 4a) does not explicitly identify the psalmist as *the godly man* in question, the parallel line makes it clear that he is referring to himself as a הַקְּטִיד (see v. 4b).

<sup>41</sup> Less likely, though enjoying some scholarly support, is the view that “my righteousness” refers to God as the one who is by nature righteous (e.g., Kidner 1973:56). If this view is preferred, it would be translated “O my righteous God”.

who practices  $\text{הָסִיד}$  (HALOT 1999:337).  $\text{הָסִיד}$  occurs 32 times in the Masoretic Text, 25 of which are in the Psalter, but only here in my corpus. The cognate  $\text{הָסִיד}$ , however, occurs in Psalm 5:9 and Psalm 6:6.

The first strophe also describes the circumstances that caused the psalmist's lament. First, he describes his circumstances as "distress" ( $\text{צָר}$ , 67:24:1, v. 2b), a word that literally denotes a narrow or confined space, but figuratively may describe "the strong emotional response that one experiences when pressed externally by enemies or internally by wrong decisions or passions" (Hartley 1999b:778).<sup>42</sup> Next, he cites the source of his distress as a group he calls "sons of men" ( $\text{בְּנֵי אִישׁ}$ , v. 3a). The phrase  $\text{בְּנֵי אִישׁ}$  occurs three times in the Psalter. In both other occurrences, Psalm 49:3 and 62:10,  $\text{בְּנֵי אִישׁ}$  is used in contrast to  $\text{בְּנֵי אַדָּמָה}$  to denote men of influence and importance in society, men of "high social status and means" (Swanson 1997:§§1201.8-10; cf. Hamilton 1996a:§132.12; HALOT 1999:43, s.v.  $\text{אִישׁ}$ , §3a). The source of the psalmist's distress seems to be a group of people of high social status.

The nature of what the "sons of men" had done is described in three phrases. First, they had brought "shame" ( $\text{בְּלִמָּוָה}$ , 30:7:1, v. 3a) on "my honour" ( $\text{כְּבוֹד}$ ,

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<sup>42</sup> For a more detailed discussion of  $\text{צָר}$ , see the earlier treatment of the same term in Psalm 3:2.

200:51:4, v. 3a). “My honour” may be understood either as the psalmist’s personal dignity (e.g., Briggs and Briggs 1906:30; Kidner 1973:56; Mays 1994a:55; Craigie 1998:17) or as his God (Coggan 1998:30; Broyles 1999:53).<sup>43</sup> Second, they had “loved delusions” (תַּאֲהוּבוֹת רִיק; v. 3b, NIV); the noun רִיק (12:3:1) can also mean “emptiness” or “vanity” (Swanson 1997:§8198; cf. HALOT 1999:1228). Third, they had sought “falsehood” (NASB) or “false gods” (NIV), depending on how the noun כְּזָב (31:6:2, v. 3c) is understood. Commentators are divided between these options, with the majority leaning towards “falsehood”. If the psalm were construed as arising from an agricultural crisis (so Dahood 1966; Wilson 2002), then verse 3 would be understood as describing the nobles shaming Yahweh (כְּבוֹדֵי) by seeking something vain (רִיק), namely, false gods (כְּזָב). Conversely, if the psalm were construed as an attack on the psalmist’s honour (so Mays 1994a; Motyer 1994; Craigie 1998), then verse 3 would be interpreted so that רִיק refers to “delusions” and כְּזָב to “falsehood”, denoting the nobles spreading lies about the psalmist.

*Verses 5-6.* This strophe consists of three paired commands from the psalmist to the “sons of men”. The three pairs of commands are arranged

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<sup>43</sup> Wilson (2002) lists both options as possibilities, but does not take a first stand either way.

progressively. Counting the imperfect in a prohibition as an ‘imperative’, there are six directive verbs this strophe. In Psalms 3-8, none except אָמַר, one of the most common verbs in the Hebrew Bible, occurs more than once in the corpus. Even אָמַר occurs on three times. The six verbs are רָגַז (41:5:1), קָטַף (238:9:1), אָמַר (5309:101:3), דָּמַם (30:7:1), זָבַח (134:9:1) and בָּטַח (120:46:1).

A similar trend holds true for the nouns in this strophe: “bed” (מִשְׁכָּב, 46:4:1), “heart” (לֵבָב, 252:43:1). The latter observation is partly offset by the fact that the shortened form לֵב (601:102:3) occurs in Psalm 4:8 and in Psalm 7:11. What this illustrates, in the context of this study, is that the middle strophe of Psalm 4 does not contribute anything to word links between psalms.

*Verses 7-9.* The third strophe opens with a rhetorical question by “many”, who are asking “who will show us some good?” (v. 7a). Thereafter, it is dominated by terms expressing the psalmist’s confidence in Yahweh. One phrase in verse 2 pre-empted the expressions of confidence in verses 8-9, namely, בָּצַר, הִרְחַבְתָּ לִּי, “you have relieved me in my distress”. Due to the surrounding imperatives, many regard הִרְחַבְתָּ as a precative perfect (e.g., Craigie 1998; NIV and NLT), but it makes equally good sense to treat it as a normal perfect expressing confidence in the Lord’s track record of granting relief and thus providing the grounds for the confidence the psalmist later expresses. The perfect נָתַתָּה (“you have given”, v. 8a; from נָתַן, 2014:95:2) is similar to הִרְחַבְתָּ

(v. 2b)—the psalmist remembers how Yahweh has previously been the source of his joy; the implication is that Yahweh, not prosperity (i.e., “grain and wine”), is still his source.

In the final verse, the psalmist confidently declares that he will enjoy “peace” (שְׁלוֹם, 237:27:1, v. 9a) and “safety” (בְּטָח, 43:3:1, v. 9b). Two phrases in verse 9 deserve a mention. First, the combination of אֶשְׁכַּבְּהָ וְאֵישָׁן (“I will lie down and sleep”) echoes Psalm 3:6, the only two occurrences of this combination in the Psalter. Second, the phrase כִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה (“for you Lord”) echoes וְאַתָּה יְהוָה (“but you Lord”) in Psalm 3:4 (cf. Ps 6:4, וְאַתָּה יְהוָה).

The remaining terms in the last strophe offer little connection to the remainder of my corpus. Only “lift up” (נָשָׂא, 656:49:2, v. 7b) occurs twice; “light” (אֹר, 121:19:1, v. 7b), “joy” (שִׂמְחָה, 94:13:1, v. 8a), “grain” (דָּגָן, 40:3:1, v. 8b), “wine” (תִּירוֹשׁ, 38:1:1, v. 8b) and “dwell” (יָשַׁב, 1089:159:1, v. 9b) all occur only here in the corpus.

#### **4.2.6 Themes**

The outstanding theme of the psalm is its tone of “serene confidence” (Clifford 2002:55) stemming from the psalmist’s covenant relationship with Yahweh (v.

4; see Mays 1994a:55-56).<sup>44</sup> Although he is undergoing severe opposition, the psalmist's heart is secure in the knowledge that Yahweh has given him relief (v. 2b). He continues to find joy and strength in his relationship with the Lord (v. 8); resting securely in his belief that he will keep him safe (v. 9).

The Lord is portrayed as a faithful covenant keeper who listens to his people's prayers (v. 4), gives them relief in distress (v. 2), brings them joy through his relationship with them (v. 8) and leads them safely through the dark watches of the night (v. 9). In his role as a covenant keeper, Yahweh is the "God of my righteousness", the God who defends the righteous and their just cause.

The psalmist's intimacy with Yahweh and the security that results from it overflows in his concern for the wellbeing of his enemies. The petitions (v. 2) and instructions (vv. 3-6) he addresses to them appear to flow from a shepherd's concern for his sheep. He seems sad and perplexed at their foolish rejection of Yahweh and his anointed. He desires to persuade them to return to the Lord (see Richard 2002:52-55; Goldingay 2006:119).

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<sup>44</sup> See the discussion of יָחַד in the section dealing with the terminology of the psalm.

### 4.3 Psalm 5

#### 4.3.1 *Textual variants*

The variants in this psalm are of little consequence for this study, dealing mainly with pronominal suffixes. In verse 7, Craigie (1998:84) favours Jerome's Latin version in preferring תִּתְעַב ("you abhor") over the Masoretic Text יִתְעַב ("he [Yahweh] abhors") on the grounds that it harmonises best with תִּאַבֵּד ("you destroy") earlier in the verse. For similar reasons, he argues (p. 85) for פִּיהֶם over פִּיהוּ in verse 10. In both instances, I consider the external evidence overwhelmingly in favour the more difficult reading of the Masoretic Text (יִתְעַב and פִּיהוּ respectively). The Septuagint adds κύριε (Hebrew, יהוה) at the end of verse 11, but there is no reason to prefer it to the shorter reading of the Masoretic Text (see Craigie 1998:83).

#### 4.3.2 *Historical reconstruction*

The heading attributes the psalm to David (לְדָוִד). Many scholars (e.g., Briggs and Briggs 1906; Weiser 1962; Dahood 1966; Broyles 1999; Craigie 1998; Terrien 2003) reject Davidic authorship, mainly on the grounds of the references to "your house" (בְּתֵיכָהּ) and "your holy temple" (הַיְכָל־קֹדֶשְׁךָ) in verse 8. Others (e.g., Leupold 1961; Kidner 1973; Ross 1985; Phillips 1988; Keil and Delitzsch 2002; Rawlinson 2004; Lane 2001; Smith 2006) argue that David

might have used these terms with reference to the tabernacle and so see no insurmountable obstacle to Davidic authorship.

The implied circumstances of writing suggest “a person who was falsely accused or slandered in a way that destroyed standing or rights in the community” (Mays 1994a:58; see vv. 10-11; cf. Goldingay 2006:127). The innocent victim approaches God as King<sup>45</sup> (vv. 2-4) so that he, a righteous God who hates evil (vv. 5-7), might punish the wicked (v. 11) and vindicate the righteous (vv. 12-13). Some scholars (e.g., Phillips 1988; VanGemeren 1991; Motyer 1994; Wilcock 2001; Lane 2006) believe Psalm 5 as written *by* someone who was the object of a slanderous lie. Others (e.g., Weiser 1962; Mays 1994a; Broyles 1999; Terrien) have proposed that it is a professional composition written *for* ministering to a victim of slanderous lies (e.g., in morning worship).

### **4.3.3 *Setting in life***

The superscription indicates the same three pieces of information as the superscription to Psalm 4. First, it belonged to a collection of Davidic psalms (לְדָוִד). Second, it was part of the music director’s collection (לְמַנְצֵחַ). Third, it

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<sup>45</sup> For a full analysis of the biblical metaphor of God as King, see Brettler (1989).

was a song (מְזֹמֵר), which was sung to the accompaniment of wind instruments (אֶל־תְּנַחֲלִילֹת), whereas Psalm 4 was sung to the accompaniment of stringed instruments. The exact meaning of תְּנַחֲלִילֹת is unclear. It may be interpreted as a “description for a tune accompanying the psalm (having to do with ‘the inheritance’), but . . . most commentators relate [it] to the type of instrument to be used (usually ‘flutes’)” (Wilson 2002:164). The fact that it was a song sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments and it belonged to the musical director’s collection indicates that it was used in temple worship.

In terms of twentieth-century form critical categories, Psalm 5 is an individual lament (UCSSB 2002; Bratcher 2006b). Scholars have suggested a psalm of innocence (Dahood 1966:29) or a psalm of confidence (Mowinckel 1921, cited by Craigie 1998:85) as the most suitable sub-classification. On the grounds of the references to the wicked and the righteous as general classes of people in verses 4-6 and 9-12, Broyles (1999:56) views it as a communal lament in which the speaking “I” is a liturgist representing “the righteous”. I think it is more likely that it was originally an individual lament which was later adopted for liturgical use. In the light of verse 4, the widespread belief that it was used liturgically as a morning prayer (e.g., Hayes 1976; Craigie 1998; Broyles 1999) is well founded.

#### 4.3.4 Structural analysis

The structure of Psalm 5 is simple and clear.<sup>46</sup> The psalm consists of five strophes. The focus of the strophes alternates between the righteous (strophes 1, 3 and 5) and the wicked (strophes 2 and 4). The two strophes dealing with the wicked are marked with conjunction “for” (כִּי, vv. 5 and 10), while the two about the righteous stand in contrast to them, being marked with *waw* disjunctive (translated “but” in vv. 8 and 12). Terrien’s (2003:104; cf. Craigie 1998; Wilson 2002) outline captures the structure nicely:

I.	The Moaning of the Poet	vv. 2-4
II.	The Abhorrence of Fools	vv. 5-7
III.	The Love of God	vv. 8-9
IV.	The Punishment of Fools	vv. 10-11
V.	The Rejoicing of the Poet	vv. 12-13

The chiasmic structure emerges naturally from the content of the psalm itself; it seems to be inherent in the psalm, rather than imposed upon it. The structure

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<sup>46</sup> Based on his logoprosodic analysis of Psalm 5, Christensen (2005c) proposes a different understanding of the structure. He finds seven strophes divided into three cantos, namely, (1) 5:1-5, (2) 5:6-10 and (3) 5:11-13.

focuses attention on the middle strophe, dealing with Yahweh's "love" (חַסֵּד) that inspires the psalmist's confidence and worship.

#### *4.3.5 Terminology*

After the opening strophe, strophes 2 and 4 depict "the wicked", while strophes 3 and 5 depict "the righteous". Terms depicting wickedness and righteousness hold centre stage, including a number of terms with legal connotations.

*The invocation (strophe 1).* The opening strophe consists of a protracted appeal for a hearing with Yahweh. This is the most protracted emotional appeal for a hearing in my corpus; its vocabulary reveals the urgency and intensity of the psalmist's emotions. Except for two very common terms, קוֹל and שֹׁמֵעַ, the terminology of the appeal is unique to Psalm 5 within my corpus. The strophe contains six verbs and five nouns that are not used elsewhere in Psalms 3-8.

The psalmist describes his petition to Yahweh as "my words" (אִמְרָה, 48:7:1, v. 1a), "my groaning" (הִגִּיג, 2:2:1, v. 1b) and "my cry" (שִׁוֵּעַ, 1:1:1, v. 2a). The latter two nouns both imply strong emotions. הִגִּיג (possibly a derivative of הִגָּה, a root

meaning to make a “low sound”; so Wolf 1999a:§468)<sup>47</sup> refers to deep inner groaning or murmuring, while שׁוֹעַ denotes “pleading, imploring, i.e., the act of requesting or asking for help as an urgent, intense request” (Swanson 1997:§8776).<sup>48</sup>

Although several of the psalms in my corpus imply the kingship of Yahweh, only in 5:3 is he addressed as “my King” (מֶלֶכִי). Elsewhere in the Psalter, he is addressed as “my King” in 44:5, 68:25, 74:12 and 84:4. In each case, the address is combined with אֱלֹהִים.

How the verb אָעֲרֶה (v. 4b) is understood is crucial to how the psalm is interpreted. The ESV translates it “I prepare a sacrifice”, the NIV “I lay my requests” and the NET “I will present my case”. עָרַךְ (75:7:1) primarily means “to put” or “to prepare”. The confusion in Psalm 5:4 arises because there is no stated direct object, leaving scope for interpreters to speculate about whether the implied object is a sacrifice or a defence. Craigie (1998:86) explains:

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<sup>47</sup> Thompson (1996:§2052) indicates that there is still considerable doubt about the meaning of הִגִּיג.

<sup>48</sup> Although שׁוֹעַ is a *hapax*, its cognate verb, שׁוֹעַ, occurs 21 times in the Masoretic Text (9 in the Psalter), always with a connotation of intense, urgent pleas for help.

[T]he verb translated “I make preparations” (ערך) may be used with respect to the making of formal preparations for a sacrifice (e.g. setting the wood upon the altar). But the word may also be used of preparing one’s words (e.g. in a legal case or debate) and there can be no certainty that it is used in any technical sacrificial sense here.

After presenting his case (or his sacrifice), the psalmist will “watch” (צפה, 35:3:1, v. 4b) expectantly for the Lord’s response.<sup>49</sup>

*The wicked (strophes 2 and 4).* The second strophe (vv. 5-7) depicts the relationship between God and the wicked. Each of the six lines contains one characterisation of the wicked (except v. 7b, which contains two characterisations). Each line also contains one term, usually a verb, indicating their relationship with Yahweh.

Three of the seven terms used to describe the wicked are generic terms for wickedness. The first two, רשע (30:6:1, v. 5a) and רע (299:29:3, v. 5b), are

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<sup>49</sup> Several terms in this strophe did not warrant discussion, but their statistical data is presented here for the sake of completeness: “give ear” (אזן, 41:15:1), “consider” (בין, 170:26:1), “give attention” (קשב, 46:8:1), “pray” (פלל, 84:4:1) and “morning” (בקר, 214:18:2).

general terms for “wickedness” and “evil”. The former sometimes carries connotations of guilt resulting from violating civil law. Similarly, אָוֶן (81:29:3, v. 6b) denotes morally evil acts that damage one’s relationship with God and others (Swanson 1997:§224.1).<sup>50</sup> My exhaustive study of the exact expression used in verse 6, פִּעֲלֵי אָוֶן (23:15:2), showed that it is a popular idiom in the Psalms for “evildoers”, especially in the לְדָוִד psalms.<sup>51</sup>

The other four terms depicting the wicked are more specific. הוֹלָלִים (from הָלַל, 15:5:1, v. 6a) occurs in the sense of “boastful” or “arrogant” elsewhere only in Psalms 73:3 and 75:5. כֹּזְבִים (31:6:2, v. 7a) depicts them as “liars” or, to be more specific, “speakers of lies” (דֹּבְרֵי כָזָב). The portrait of the wicked as deceivers is amplified in the parallel line where they are personalised as “the bloodthirsty

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<sup>50</sup> According to Butler (1984:387), “Mowinckel . . . interpreted the references to *’awen* and to doers of *’awen* as referring to persons with evil magical powers to bring sickness through words of cursing and acts of magic.” I can see no need to assign such a narrow, technical meaning to the term פִּעֲלֵי אָוֶן.

<sup>51</sup> פִּעֲלֵי אָוֶן occurs in Psalms 5:6, 6:9, 14:4, 28:3, 36:13, 53:5, 59:3, 64:3, 92:8 and 10, 94:4 and 16, 101:8, 125:5, 141:4 and 9. What I find striking about these psalms is that all except 92, 94 and 125 are לְדָוִד psalms (Psalm 94 is Davidic in the LXX). No psalm attributed to another author in the psalm headings uses the phrase. Outside of the Psalter, it occurs in Job 31:3, 34:8 and 22, Proverbs 10:29, 21:15, 30:20, Isaiah 31:2 and Hosea 6:8.

and deceitful man” (אִישׁ־דָּמִים וּמְרֻמָּה, v. 7b; cf. Ps 55:24). The word “deceitful” (מְרֻמָּה, 39:14:1, v. 7b) carries a connotation of treachery, a violation of trust and loyalty (see Carpenter and Grisanti 1996:§8228). Coupled with “bloodthirsty” (literally, “of bloods”, from דָּם, 360:21:1, v. 7b), it seems to paint a portrait of an unscrupulous man who will violate anyone in his path.

The psalmist elaborates on this portrayal of the wicked as unscrupulous liars in strophe 4 (vv. 10-11). Each of the four lines in verse 10 makes a strong statement about their perversity. (a) “There is no truth in their mouth” (v. 10a). The word translated “truth” (Niphal participle of בּוֹן, 218:52:5), primarily denotes what is firm, established or secure; applied to speech, it refers to what is reliable and trustworthy, chiefly because the speaker is loyal to his words. (b) “Their inmost self is destruction” (v. 10b). Most translators (e.g., ESV; CEV; NET; NIV; NKJV; NRSV) and interpreters (e.g., VanGemeren 1991:89; Craigie 1998:83; Clifford 2002:58; Terrien 2003:107) believe קִרְבָּם derives from קָרַב (227:27:1), meaning “inner parts”, referring to a man’s innermost being. If this is correct, the psalmist was saying that the very inner being of the wicked, their thoughts and motives, is bent on “destruction” (הָיָה, 13:8:1). Amongst the works consulted, only Wilson (2002:168) suggests it may derive from קָרַב, meaning “near” or “approaching”, implying that the approach of the wicked inevitably leaves destruction in their wake. (c) “Their throat is an open grave” (v. 10c) is a metaphor symbolising the destructive

power of their words, “but more forcefully (in a hot climate) an abominable stench; in the pure air of morality, then-words [sic] created an unbearable smell” (Craigie 1998:88). (d) “They flatter with their tongue” (v. 10d). The picture of their deceitfulness is completed with the word “flatter” (Hiphil of חָלַק, 65:7:1), which pictures them seducing unsuspecting victims with smooth<sup>52</sup> words.

The psalmist concludes his descriptions of the wicked in verse 11 with three more terms depicting them as schemers (מוֹעֵצָה, 7:2:1, v. 11b), transgressors (from פָּשַׁע, 93:14:1, v. 11c) and rebels (מָרָה, 44:10:1, v. 11d). The terms פָּשַׁע and מָרָה focus on disobedience to God’s commands and rebellion against his authority (see Swanson 1997:§5286 and §7322).

Terminology indicating God’s attitude towards the wicked and his treatment of them is also a feature of the psalm. The second strophe (vv. 5-7) contains six terms representing Yahweh’s relationship to the wicked, grouped in three bicola. (a) Since Yahweh does not “delight” (חִפֵּץ, 13:7:1; v. 5a) in wickedness, the wicked man cannot “dwell” (גִּוַר, 82:6:1; v. 5b) with him. The verb גִּוַר refers to temporarily dwelling with someone as a visitor or foreigner, in contrast to

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<sup>52</sup> In the Qal stem, חָלַק means “smooth”, and is sometimes used with reference to smooth, deceitful words. The Hifil seems to intensify this meaning.

the more common verb יָשַׁב, which denotes a more permanent residence (see Stigers 1999:155; cf. HALOT 1999:185, s.v. | גּוּר |). “The psalmist’s point is that God is so incompatible with evil that even the most temporary coexistence is utterly impossible” (Wilson 2002:166). (b) The arrogant cannot “stand” (יָצַב, 48:4:1; v. 6a) before his eyes. One connotation is that they cannot resist his all-seeing gaze. “The expression fits well with the idea of God as king (verse 2), who does not allow criminals and lawbreakers to come into his presence” (Bratcher and Reyburn 1991:51). They cannot stand before him because he “hates” (שָׂנֵא, 146:41:1, v. 6b) evildoers. Such strong language, depicting God has hating the wicked, is rare in the Old Testament (Erickson<sup>53</sup> 1998:620-621; cf. Ps 11:5, Jer 12:8 and Hos 9:15). (c) Yahweh will “destroy” (אָבַד, 184:26:1, v. 7a)<sup>54</sup> liars and villains because he “abhors” (תִּעַב, 22:6:1, v. 7b) them. Both verbs express his intense dislike of the wicked, one pointing to his attitude and the other to his action response.

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<sup>53</sup> According to Erickson (1998:620-621), while the Bible often portrays the wicked as those who hate God, only three times is God said to hate them (Pss 5:5, 11:5 and Jer 12:8). Similarly, whereas the wicked are often called enemies of God, only three times is he called their enemy (Exod 23:22, Lam 2:4-5 and Isa 63:10). These chapter-and-verse numbers all come from the English Bible.

<sup>54</sup> אָבַד occurs in Psalms 1, 2, 9 and 10, including four times in Psalm 9.

*The righteous (strophes 3 and 5).* In the third strophe, the psalmist contrasts himself strongly with wicked. The contrast is introduced with the words “but I” (וְאֲנִי, v. 8, where *waw* carries a clear disjunctive force). Surprisingly, what follows is not a description of his own righteousness, but of his desire to worship and his recognition of his need for Yahweh’s mercy and help.

He vows to enter Yahweh’s “house” and bow down towards his “temple” (הַיְכָל, 80:13:1, v. 8b). הַיְכָל appears to be a reference to the inner sanctuary (see Smith 2006). The ground of his approach is the Lord’s “steadfast love” (חַסֵּד,<sup>55</sup> 245:127:2, v. 8a), while the manner of his approach is “in the fear of you” (“fear”, יִרְאַה, 44:8:1, v. 8b).

Next the psalmist asks Yahweh to “lead [נְהַיֵּךְ, 39:18:1] me in your righteousness [צְדִקָּה, 157:34:1]” (v. 9a). Leupold (1961:78) calls this covenant language:

He appeals to Yahweh, the faithful covenant God, because he knows that he stands in a covenant relationship with Him. To be led “in Thy righteousness” means according to that faithfulness

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<sup>55</sup> For detailed studies of חַסֵּד, see Glueck (1975) and Sakenfeld (1978).

which has always prompted Him to do that which is right and just toward those who have proved faithful to Him.

He continues by asking the Lord to “make your way straight [יֶשֶׁר, 25:2:1] before me” (v. 9b), indicating his “desire . . . to follow the path of right conduct” (Ross 1985:795). He asks this “because of my enemies”. The term rendered “enemies” (שׁוֹרֵר) appears to be derived from the Polel participle of שׁוּר, meaning “to look, to watch”. The term is used five times in the Psalter (5:9, 27:11, 54:7, 56:3 and 59:11), always to convey the idea of enemies who lie in wait for victims, who watch their victim’s every move awaiting a chance to attack (Hamilton 1999:913).

In the final strophe, the righteous are further depicted as those who “take refuge” (חָסָה, 36:24:2, v. 12a; cf. Ps 7:2) in Yahweh and who “love” (אָהַב, 215:39:2, v. 12d) his “name” (שֵׁם, 864:109:4). The desired results upon the righteous are spelled out in three imperfect verbs with a jussive force: may they (a) “rejoice” (שָׂמַח, 154:52:1, v. 12a), a general term for rejoicing that lays some stress on its outward expression (Swanson 1997:§8523; Grisanti 1996:§8523); (b) “sing for joy” (רָנַן, 53:25:1, v. 12b), suggesting loud, public singing or chanting (Swanson 1997:§8264); and (c) “exult” (עָלֵץ, 8:4:1, v. 12d).

God, in turn, will do three things for the righteous. First, he will “protect”<sup>56</sup> (סָכַף, 16:3:1, v. 12c) them, a term indicating that he will “cover” them so as to make them unapproachable (see Holladay 2000, s.v. 1.2). Second, he will “bless” (בָּרַךְ, 327:74:1, v. 13a) them. Third, he will “cover” (עָטַר, 7:4:2, v. 13b)—a term meaning “to surround” (Schultz 1999:§1608)—them with his “favour” (רָצוֹן, 56:13:1) as a soldier covers himself with his “shield” (צָנָה, 20:3:1). Unlike the small shield in Psalm 3:4, the shield mentioned here is “a large rectangular covering for the whole body” (Swanson 1997:§7558). The final metaphor pictures Yahweh accepting the righteous and expressing his approval of them by placing a shield of protection around them.

#### 4.3.6 Themes

In essence, the psalm is about who may approach Yahweh (see Broyles 1999:56-58) and receive a favourable hearing. The central theme seems to be

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<sup>56</sup> The majority of translations treat the *waw* copulative + imperfect וְהִסֵּף as semantically imperatival (see Gesenius, Kautzsch and Cowley 2003:§107.4), drawing its ‘mood’ from the preceding jussives. Grammatically, nothing prevents one interpreting it as a straightforward coordinate imperfect (“and you will spread your protection over them”), which would carry a semantic nuance of grounds, purpose or result (e.g., NKJV; ASV; see Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze 1997:§21.4-5; Putnam 2002:§2.2).

that the Lord banishes the wicked from his presence, but welcomes and blesses the righteous.

The psalmist addresses Yahweh as “my God and my King” (v. 3). The image of Yahweh as King pervades the psalm, providing a framework for interpreting the details of the psalm. He is a righteous and just King. He rules over his realm to establish an upright society. Doing evil is tantamount to rebellion against the King, who will pronounce evildoers guilty and cast them out of his realm (v. 11). Conversely, the righteous will enjoy the benefits of having an upright King. They will revel in his favour and his protection (vv. 12-13).

Although he is a great King, Yahweh is favourably disposed towards the righteous. They may approach Him in the morning with faith, expectant that the Lord is accessible to them and will receive his prayers.<sup>57</sup> When they need justice, they may lay their case before Him and expect Him to help them (v. 4).<sup>58</sup> Like any king, he must be approached appropriately, with due reverence

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<sup>57</sup> וַיִּצְפֹּה, translated “[I] wait in expectation” (NIV), is the Piel of the root צָפָה, which denotes watching alertly (see Hartley 1999c:773). The Piel stem intensifies the element of expectation, here implying that the psalmist expected an answer to his requests.

<sup>58</sup> This point assumes that אֶעֱרֹךְ-לְךָ is to be interpreted as “*stat[ing] in order, set[ting] forth a legal case*” (BDB 2000, s.v. 1g).

(v. 8). When the righteous approach him in this manner, he will receive them with covenant love and faithfulness (vv. 8-9), defend them (v. 12), bless them (v. 13) and surround them with favour (v. 13).

The Lord does not permit the wicked—portrayed as arrogant deceivers who tempt the righteous into destructive ways—to enter his presence. Yahweh detests them, declares them guilty, banishes them from his presence and ultimately destroys them.

#### 4.4 Psalm 6

##### 4.4.1 *Textual variants*

There are two meaningful variants in this psalm.

- a) There is some doubt about both occurrences of יהוה in verse 3, but Craigie (1998:90) believes “it is preferable to keep the words, for they fit well with the tone of entreaty in the opening portion of the prayer”.
- b) In verse 8, the Masoretic Text reads “my eye has grown weary” (עָשָׂה עֵינִי); the verb is in the third person with “eye” as its subject. A few old Greek manuscripts, Aquila and Symmachus, contain a first person verb—“I have grown weary”. Although the variant reading is possible (Craigie 1998:90), I believe the external evidence slightly favours the

Masoretic Text. Whichever reading is preferred will not affect this study, so the question can remain open.

#### *4.4.2 Historical reconstruction*

Apart from the attribution to David in the superscription, Psalm 6 offers no internal evidence as to the author, date or occasion of writing. Blaiklock (1970) argued that the title of Psalm 3, which depicts David fleeing from Absalom, covers Psalms 3-6 indicating that all four psalms were written in response to the same historical occasion. Kidner (1973:61), tentatively, and Wilcock (2001:32), confidently, support this proposal. This may be possible, but there is no positive evidence to indicate that Psalm 6 was written during Absalom's rebellion.

Much of the language of the psalm suggests that it was written by a person undergoing intense physical suffering as a result of an acute illness (so Oesterley 1939; Achtemeier 1974; Kelly 1984; Mays 1994a; Craigie 1998; Clifford 2002; Goldingay 2006). Several interpreters understand "the language of physical suffering as a metaphor for the anguish of abandonment" (McCann 1996:96; cf. Feinberg 1948; Ridderbos 1972; Rogerson and McKay 1977; VanGemeren 1991). Still others believe there is insufficient evidence in the

psalm to speculate as the cause of the author's anguish (so Miller 1983; Kraus 1988; Wilcock 2001; Wilson 2002).<sup>59</sup>

#### **4.4.3 *Setting in life***

Like Psalms 4 and 5, the psalm heading indicates that Psalm 6 belonged to the music director's collection (לְמוֹדֵחַ). Like Psalm 4, it was a song (מְזוֹמָר) sung to the accompaniment of stringed instruments (בְּנִיגוֹת). The meaning of עַל־הַשְּׁמִינִית (literally, "on the eighth") remains unclear. Swanson (1997:§9030) indicates that שְׁמִינִית denotes "a musical direction somehow related to the number eight, such as an eight-stringed instrument, or relating to the eight-note octave."<sup>60</sup> Whatever the meaning of עַל־הַשְּׁמִינִית may be, the combined

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<sup>59</sup> If the psalm is considered to be a professional composition (so Achtemeier 1974; Broyles 1999), then it would be more accurate to say it was written "for" a person approaching death than "by" a person suffering from a life-threatening illness. For the purposes of this reconstruction, no distinction is intended between these two senses. The point is simply that the implied historical circumstances of the author and/or intended user has been interpreted as pointing either to physical illness or to emotional anguish.

<sup>60</sup> See Achtemeier (1974:77-78) for a synopsis of various interpretations that have been suggested over the centuries.

weight of these elements in the superscription seems to indicate that Psalm 6 was sung in formal worship settings.

This psalm is another *individual lament* (UCSSB 2002), this time probably a psalm of sickness.<sup>61</sup> Broyles (1999:62) suggests it may have been composed not by a sufferer, but by a liturgist for the use of those who minister to sufferers. Craigie's (1998:91) contention that it "contains a high percentage of formulaic language" (cf. Achtemeier 1974:75), if correct, it adds weight to Broyles' theory that Psalm 6 is a professional, liturgical composition (cf. Achtemeier 1974:77). Mays (1994a:59-60) traces its later liturgical use through three stages of development.

- 1) *Temple priests used it to minister to the sick.* The dramatic change of tone in verses 9-11 would fit a priestly pronouncement of God's blessing.
- 2) *Israel used it as a prayer for the restoration of the community.* The language of sickness and healing was often used metaphorically of the social and spiritual state of the community.

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<sup>61</sup> Bratcher (2006b) classifies it as a penitential psalm.

- 3) *Christians adopted it as a penitential prayer*, both by viewing sickness as a result of sin and by treating it as a metaphor for sin.<sup>62</sup>

Due to the implied morning setting following a long, sleepless night of travail (v. 7), it may have been used in morning prayer.

It is possible that this psalm reflects the time of morning prayer, when the memory of the long night was still vivid and the thought of another night was appalling; if such were the case, there would be a certain affinity between this psalm and Pss 3–5, which were also related to the morning and evening times of prayer (Craigie 1998:94).

#### ***4.4.4 Structural analysis***

The structure of Psalm 6 poses few challenges. It consists of four strophes, which follow the classical pattern of a lament psalm as described by Ryken (1992:240),<sup>63</sup> except that the second and third constituents are reversed.

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<sup>62</sup> The other psalms traditionally used by Christians as *penitential psalms* are 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143.

- A. Invocation: appeal for mercy (6:2-4)
- B. Supplication: prayer for healing (6:5-6)
- C. Complaint: lament over illness (6:7-8)
- D. Confidence: assurance of healing (6:9-11)

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<sup>63</sup> Ryken (1992:240-241) lists the standard components of an individual lament as (a) “an invocation or introductory cry to God”, (b) “the lament or complaint”, (c) “petition or supplication”, (d) “a statement of confidence in God” and (e) “vow to praise God”. Kelly (1984:377), who bases his description on Westermann (1981), lists the constituent elements of an individual lament as “(1) address, with an introductory cry for help and of turning to God; (2) lament, involving three subjects; namely, God, the sufferer, and the sufferer’s foes; (3) confession of trust, often introduced by the *waw* adversative (“but”), in which the petitioner expresses confidence in the Lord; (4) petition for God to take whatever action the situation may demand; (5) declaration of assurance of being heard; and (6) vow of praise.” Ryken condenses Kelly’s “confession of trust” and “declaration of assurance” into his “statement of confidence in God”. The two schemes show that the constituents are stable, although their presence and order may fluctuate. Kelly cautions: “It should be noted that only a few of the psalms of this type contain all of these elements. The possibilities of variation are extremely wide.”

The only “missing element” is a final vow to praise Yahweh, but it is not uncommon for a true lament psalm to omit one of the five regular components.<sup>64</sup>

Clifford (2002:61; cf. Christensen 2005d:7) points out that detailed analysis reveals an amazing symmetry within the psalm.<sup>65</sup> The first and last strophes both contain exactly 24 words and stand in contrast to each other—in strophe A the psalmist cries out for Yahweh to hear him while in strophe D he confidently declares that Yahweh has heard him. The second and third strophes each contain 15 words. Strophes A and C both deal with the

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<sup>64</sup> Kelly (1984:377) also sees Psalm 6 as containing four of the standard elements of an individual lament, but his proposed outline—“address (vv. 1-2a), lament (vv. 2b-3, 6-7), petition (vv. 4-5), and assurance of being heard (vv. 8-10)”—violates the natural strophic divisions and the perfect symmetry of the four strophes (see Richard 2002:61; Christensen 2005d:7).

<sup>65</sup> This observation of the balanced strophic pattern strongly supports the integrity of the psalm, which used to be doubted on the basis of the sudden change of tone between verses 2-8 and 9-11. For further information regarding this debate, see Briggs and Briggs (1906), Oesterley (1937), Ridderbos (1972), Rogerson and McKay (1977) and Craigie (1998).

psalmist's suffering, strophes B and D with his deliverance. We thus have a highly patterned psalm with a balanced chiasmic structure.<sup>66</sup>

#### 4.4.5 Terminology

The terminology of the opening three strophes is dominated by references to intense pain and suffering. Some scholars believe this may be metaphorical terminology for intense emotional anguish (e.g., Kraus 1988; McCann 1996; Ridderbos 1972; Rogerson and McKay 1977; VanGemeren 1991; Wilson 2002), while others believe that the most natural interpretation remains that the psalmist's deep distress is caused by a severe illness (cf. Oesterley 1939; Bratcher and Reyburn 1991; Mays 1994a; Craigie 1998; Goldingay 2006).

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<sup>66</sup> Van der Lugt (cited by Christensen 2005d) offers a similar explanation of the structure. He sees it consisting of two cantos: (1) 6:2-6 and (2) 6:7-11. Each canto contains two strophes, matching the strophic divisions in my outline. "Van der Lugt finds a *linear parallelism* between the cantos and a *concentric* relationship between his four strophes as well" (Christensen 2005d:7). His outline reflects the following parallel structure:

I	A	6:2-4
	B	6:5-6
II	A	6:7-8
	B	6:9-11

The psalmist begins with an appeal for Yahweh to show him mercy. The implication appears to be that he views his suffering as Yahweh's judgement (see Althan 1999:77-79), for the verbs "rebuke" (יָבַח, 59:7:1, v. 2a) and "discipline" (יָסַר, 41:9:1, v. 2b) both imply that their object is guilty of a wrongdoing. He senses that he is the object of Yahweh's "anger" (אַף, 277:35:2, v. 2a) and "wrath" (חֶמָה, 125:15:1, v. 2b). Both these terms carry a connotation of intense displeasure, the latter with the added nuance of feeling wronged (see Swanson 1997:§2779).

The psalmist describes his suffering by saying that he is "languishing" (אֶמְלֵל, 1:1:1; v. 3a), and that both his "bones" (עַצְמוֹתַי, 108:15:1, v. 3b) and his "soul" are "troubled" (בָּהֵל, 39:10:3; vv. 3b and 4a). Although the adjective אֶמְלֵל is a *hapax*, the cognate verb אֶמַל was used to describe "a state of exhaustion" resulting from "God's punishment and discipline" (Scott 1999:50). The term depicts someone who is physically weak and exhausted. In the Niphal, בָּהֵל can denote either "a state of anguish" (see Swanson 1997:§987.3) or a state of "physical pain" (see Swanson 1997:§987.4). According to Achtemeier (1974:82), it "always carries with it in the Old Testament the imminent threat of an end or of death."

The terminology of strophe 2 is consistent with generic petition for deliverance. The psalmist appeals to Yahweh to "deliver" (יִלְקֵחַ, 44:12:2, v. 5a)

his life (literally, “soul”, נַפְשׁוֹ) and “save” (יִשְׁעֵךְ, 205:57:4, v. 5b) him. He offers two grounds for his appeal. One is Yahweh’s “steadfast love” (חַסְדְּךָ, 245:127:2, v. 5a). The other is the Lord’s desire to receive praise. If the psalmist dies, he will be unable to “remember” (זָכַרְךָ, 23:11:1, v. 6a) the Lord in worship or “praise” (יְדָהּ, 111:67:2, v. 6b) Him, because “death” (מָוֶת, 153:22:2, v. 6a) ends worship; there is no praise from “Sheol” (שְׁאוֹל, 63:15:1, v. 6b). The assumption is that “the dead in Sheol (the underworld abode of the dead) exist in a shadowy state and take no part in earthly life including the worship Israel offered” (Clifford 2002:62).

In strophe 3, the psalmist graphically portrays the depth of his anguish. With a torrent of terms describing how weak, weary and weepy he is, he paints a portrait of a desperate man in deep lament. He is “weary” (עָגַב, 26:2:1, v. 7a; i.e., physically exhausted) from “moaning” (אֶנְחָהּ, 11:4:1, v. 7a). The ESV rendering of אֶנְחָהּ as “moaning” does not seem to do justice to a strong noun that often depicts “bawling or crying” (Thompson 1996:§634). His “tears” (דִּמְעָה, 23:8:1, v. 7b)<sup>67</sup> “flood” (שָׁחָהּ, 2:1:1) his “bed” (מִטָּה, 29:1:1) and “drench”

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<sup>67</sup> In the Hebrew text, the prepositional phrase בְּדִמְעָתִי (“with my tears”) is shared by two cola, namely, “I flood my bed” and “I drench my couch”. By positioning it carefully between 9b and

(מָסָה, 4:3:1) his “couch” (עָרֵשׁ, 10:3:1). His weeping is so intense that his eye has “wasted away” (עָשַׁשׁ, 2:2:1, v. 8a) and “grown weak” (עָתַק, 9:1:1, v. 8b) with “grief” (בָּעַס, 21:4:1, v. 8a).

The sudden introduction of “foes”<sup>68</sup> (צוֹרֵר, 26:14:4) is both unexpected and perplexing. Until this point there has been no indication that foes are the cause of the psalmist’s anguish. Wilson (2002:181) cautiously suggests it supports the view that the references to disease in the psalm are metaphors “for suffering experienced through the attacks of opponents”. Mays’ (1994a:61) explanation seems to fit better:

They are not the cause of the psalmist’s affliction; rather, they are its exploiters and exacerbators [sic]. Perhaps in the very face of the psalmist’s appeal to God they have publicly and willingly given him up for dead, reckoned him deserving of his

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9c, the author linked it with both cola. Thus there is no Hebrew phrase underlying the ESV “with my weeping” in 9c. This is supplied from “with my tears” in 9b, but changed for variety.

<sup>68</sup> The normal translation of צוֹרֵר as “foes” assumes it derives from the Hebrew root צרר. Craigie (1998:90) summarises a mass of speculation about possible alternative derivations from Akkadian and Ugaritic by Driver (1956), Gordon (1965), Dahood (1966) and Gibson (1978), but eventually rejects all of them in favour of the traditional Hebrew etymology.

misfortune, and even intended to profit from his demise. His healing and return to life will shame their hostility and expose their perfidy.

The final strophe is addressed to these foes. In a sharp change of tone, he commands the “workers of evil” (פְּעֹלֵי אָוֶן, 23:15:2, cf. 5:6) to “depart” from him. All of a sudden, he has discovered renewed faith that the Lord has heard his “weeping” (בָּכִי, 30:3:1, v. 9b), his “plea” (תְּחִנָּה, 25:3:1, v. 10a); the Lord accepts his “prayer” (תְּפִלָּה, 77:32:2, v. 10b). He closes the psalm with a confident declaration that his “enemies” (אֹיְבֵי, 283:74:4, v. 11a) will be “ashamed” (בוּשָׁה, 125:34:2, v. 11a) and “troubled” (בְּהָלָה, 39:10:3, v. 11a; cf. vv. 3-4).<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Psalm 13 bears some striking verbal links to Psalm 6, such as the cry “how long, O Lord” (vv. 2-3, four times, though using a slightly different Hebrew expression to Ps 6:4), “my soul” (v. 3; Hebrew, נַפְשִׁי), “eyes” (v. 4), “death” (v. 4), “steadfast love” (v. , חֶסֶד) and, most noteworthy, unexpected references to both “enemies” (vv. 3, 5; אֹיְבֵי) and “foes” (v. 5, צָרִי). In his analysis of Psalm 13, Staton (1990:59-65) suggests that it reflects a situation in which “the petitioner is sick and near death” (p. 60). He goes on to suggest that the allusions to an “enemy” are best understood as personifications of “death or a sickness which leads to death” (p. 62). Although the enemies in Psalm 6 do seem to be human foes, the various points of similarity between Psalms 6 and 13 would be worth more detailed examination.

#### **4.4.6 Themes**

Although some scholars believe the psalm's allusions to sickness are best interpreted metaphorically (see above), it seems most natural to infer that the psalmist's lament is occasioned by illness. Even if the metaphorical interpretation is preferred, it seems evident that the psalmist's life is in imminent danger. This threat of death provides the backdrop for the psalmist's agonised pleas to the Lord.

Mays (1994a:59) summarises what seems to be the dominant theological theme of the psalm:

This prayer for help is a passionate, agonized appeal to the grace of God against the wrath of God. It sees the LORD as the cause of death and as the giver of life. It is based on a severe concentration on the LORD as the one meaning of experience, of what is and can be, and so sees everything in terms of God's sovereign freedom.

On the one hand, Yahweh's anger and discipline are perceived as the cause of the psalmist's suffering (v. 2). Yet at the same time, he is the source of deliverance and restoration (vv. 5, 9-10). He will see the psalmist's anguish,

hear his prayer and be gracious to him (vv. 3, 9-10). His steadfast love provides sound basis for confidence that he will deliver (v. 5).

The dominant portrait of Yahweh emerges as he who is sovereign over health and sickness, life and death. “The entire span of sickness and health is understood in relation to the Lord. Life and death of a person are in God’s hands. No other cause is contemplated, and no other relief is sought” (Mays 1994a:60). Consequently, in a time of desperate need, the psalmist presses towards Him with great intensity, seeking deliverance in a change of Yahweh’s treatment of him from “discipline” (v. 2) to “mercy” (v. 3).

## 4.5 Psalm 7

### 4.5.1 *Textual variants*

Briggs (1906:56; cf. Goldingay 2006:142, note e) describes יַרְדֵּף (v. 6) as “a Masoretic conceit”, that is, an attempt to combine the Qal (יָרַדַּף) and Piel (יַרְדֵּף). Craigie (1998:96) believes “there is some MSS evidence to suggest that the Qal is the best reading”, but the NET Bible interprets it as a Piel. For the purposes of this study, we will leave the question open.

In verse 7, the Masoretic Text reads “and awake” (וַעֲוֹרָה) whereas the Septuagint has simply “awake” (ἐξεγέρθητι). The Septuagint is more forceful

and more in keeping with the preceding imperatives (הַנְּשֵׂא and קוּמָה), so I consider it the likelier reading.

#### *4.5.2 Historical reconstruction*

This is the second psalm with an editorial superscription linking it to a particular event in David's life: "which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite" (אֲשֶׁר־שָׁר לַיהוָה עַל־דְּבַר־יְכוּשׁ בֶּן־יְמִינִי). The heading implies that David composed Psalm 7 as a prayer to Yahweh in response to false accusations made against him by a Benjaminite named Cush. The words "he sang" (שָׁר) indicate that the editor intended or interpreted לְדוֹד as an indicator of Davidic authorship.

The historical books of the Old Testament make no mention of an incident involving David and Cush. Attempts to identify Cush with characters mentioned in the biblical books have proposed Saul himself (Hengstenberg 1842, translated 1846), Shimei (Kay 1877; see 2 Sam 16:5-13), and Doeg the Edomite (Delitzch, cited by Leupold 1961:92). None of these suggestions is convincing. Hutton (1986) argued that the heading was designed to fill out the story of 2 Sam. 18-19" (Goldingay 2006:144, note 2). The best explanation remains the most natural one—the inscription refers to an incident between David and Cush recorded outside the biblical text. 1 Chronicles 29:29 implies

that many incidents in David's life that were not mentioned in the canonical books were recorded in the chronicles of the prophets Samuel, Nathan and Gad. The historical books do indicate that many Benjaminites remained loyal to Saul throughout David's reign and caused him trouble during Saul's reign and his own (see 1 Sam 22-26, 2 Sam 16:5-13 and 20:1-3). I support Craigie's (1998:99; cf. Wilcock 2001:35) conclusion:

In general, the obscurity of the incident tends to support both its antiquity and its authenticity. Thus, while there can be no historical certainty, it may be reasonable to suppose that the psalm reflects David's reaction to false charges laid against him (in the presence of Saul?), purporting that he had acted treacherously and in defiance of treaty obligations.

Turning to the implied historical setting, the psalmist wrote the psalm as a prayer for God to vindicate his innocence.<sup>70</sup> His enemy (with the exception of

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<sup>70</sup> In my opinion, the impassioned language and wondering style (see Stuhlmueller 1996; cf. discussion of  $\text{וַיִּשָּׁאֵל}$  in §4.5.3) mitigate against interpreting Psalm 7 as a professional composition. It appears to be the heart-felt prayer of a person undergoing the circumstances implied. Broyles (1999, 66) disagrees, arguing that the "ritual oath" (vv. 4-6) and "the interplay

צֹרֵרִי in verse 7, all references to the enemy, direct and implied, are singular) had accused him of some sort of betrayal (vv. 4-6). One who was formerly his “ally” (שׁוֹלְמִי, v. 5a) had become his “adversary” (צֹרֵרִי, v. 5b). Although not discussed in the literature consulted, the word play on שׁוֹלְמִי and צֹרֵרִי seems to identify them as the same person, that is, a former ally who had now become an adversary. The enemy had accused the psalmist of plundering him without cause.<sup>71</sup> If, as suggested above, we give weight to the superscription, the enemy was not a foreigner or a foreign power, but “one of his [David’s] Israelite brothers” (Hughes and Laney 2001:209), possibly one of Saul’s servants or kinsmen (so Keil and Delitzsch 2002:84). If less credence is given to the superscription, “The life setting seems to be that of a man who, persecuted by enemies, takes refuge in the Temple and proclaims his innocence; he calls upon the Lord, as a just judge, for aid” (Murphy 1996, 1:577). The psalmist denied all charges against him and appealed Yahweh to

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between individual, corporate and general experiences” point towards “its probable liturgical origins”.

<sup>71</sup> An alternate interpretation changes צֹרֵרִי (“my enemy”) to צֹרְרוֹ (“his enemy”) and interprets הִלָּן as “delivered”, implying that the fallout between the psalmist and his former ally had resulted from the psalmist helping the ally’s enemy. See §4.5.5 for a fuller analysis.

intervene in righteous judgement, which he was confident would vindicate him against his enemy.

### 4.5.3 *Setting in life*

The superscription identifies Psalm 7 as שְׁגִיּוֹן לְדָוִד, which is usually transliterated as “a shiggaion of David”. Little is known about the term שְׁגִיּוֹן, which is used only here and in Habakkuk 3:1 in extant literature. BDB (2000:§993, s.v. שְׁגִיּוֹן) describes it as a “doubtful word”, but suggests it may be derived from שָׁגָה (“to wander, meander, stray”), thus indicating a “wild, passionate song, with rapid changes of rhythm” (cf. Hill 1996:§8706.4). Craigie (1998:99) describes this interpretation as depicting “psalms of a particular type (e.g., characterized by ‘wandering’ style, uneven meter, or a type of lament characterized by distracted thoughts and words).”<sup>72</sup> Another attempt to identify its meaning associates it with the Akkadian term *shegu*, meaning “complaint, lament” (e.g., Mowinckel 1922, 2:209; Goldingay 2006:144), thus depicting a psalm of lamentation. The Septuagint rendered it

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<sup>72</sup> Craigie does not endorse this interpretation. He presents it as one of the suggestions as to the meaning of שְׁגִיּוֹן, but he reserves judgement as to which interpretation is most likely to be correct.

with the non-descript ψαλμός, probably indicating uncertainty as to its meaning beyond the fact that it was a song. Since the word is so obscure (Hill 1996:§8706.4), for the present it seems best to be content to identify מִנְחָה as “a musical composition” (NET) of an unknown kind.

The heading and the use of “selah” (v. 6) indicate that it was a song, but unlike the preceding three psalms there is no indication that it belonged to the collection of the music director for use in the cult. We can only speculate about whether it was used in cultic worship.

Turning to modern genre classifications, Psalm 7 is an *individual lament* (UCSSB 2002; Bratcher 2006b). The most descriptive sub-classification is “a psalm of innocence”. Craigie (1998:99) explains:

Traditionally identified as an *individual lament*, the psalm is more precisely an innocent man’s prayer for protection in the face of the false accusations of enemies. The psalmist has been unjustly accused of an act of treachery, including the breach of covenant or treaty obligations, and asks God to vindicate him and let the false accusations and their consequences rebound onto the head of the accuser.

Psalm 7 is sometimes listed among the so-called *imprecatory psalms* (e.g., Laney 1981:36; Day 2002, note 5).

#### **4.5.4 Structural analysis**

Structurally, this is a problematic psalm. Believing its flow of thought to be disjointed, scholars have speculated that it may be composed of a collection of fragments (e.g., Weiser 1962:135; Terrien 2003:118-119). Van der Lugt (2005, cited by Labuschagne 2007) argued that Psalm 7 is a composite of “two originally independent poems”, namely, verses 1-9a and 9b-18. Weiser (1962:135) indicates that “various problems are raised by the change of style and rhythm, the linguistic peculiarities of phrases used in the psalm, and the wide range covered by the feelings, moods and thoughts which have found expression here.”

Robert Alden (1974:15) claimed to find a complex four-level chiastic structure in the psalm, but his outline seems forced in that it violates the surface structure of the psalm’s strophes.<sup>73</sup> Terrien (2003:118) also suggested a

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<sup>73</sup> Using English Bible verse divisions, Alden’s (1974) analysis treated verses 3-7 as a unit in his chiastic structure. A natural stanza division requires treating verses 3-5 as a unit, with a

chiastic structure. His outline (see below) remains truer to natural strophic divisions, but still reflects (a) an unnatural division in the middle of verse 9 and (b) awkward descriptions of sections I and V. Therefore, I find it a strained analysis of the psalm's structure.<sup>74</sup>

*Prelude* (vv. 2-3)

- I. The Enemies (vv. 4-6)
- II. Request for Trial (vv. 7-9a)
- III. (Core): Just God! (vv. 9b-11)
- IV. Retribution (vv. 12-14)
- V. The Enemies (vv. 15-17)

*Postlude* (v. 18)

Although commentaries vary widely in how they view its structure, I believe the clue to its structure seems to lie in recognising it as a *legal lament*. Making

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clear thematic break in verse 6. He also treated verses 8 and 9 as separate units, but their thematic unity favours keeping them together as one strophe.

<sup>74</sup> Christensen (2005e), using his logoprosodic method, agrees with Terrien's overall view of the structure. He makes a few small adjustments, but concurs with Terrien's chiastic view of the structure.

allowance for the implied trial setting of the psalm (so Wilcock 2001), it fits perfectly into the classic mould of a lament psalm.

- A. Invocation: he invokes God for deliverance vv. 2-3
- B. Lamentation: he 'laments' his innocence vv. 4-6
- C. Petition: he calls upon Yahweh for justice vv. 7-10
- D. Confidence: he affirms trust in Yahweh's judgement vv. 11-17
- E. Praise: he vows to praise Yahweh's righteousness v. 18

This simple outline remains true to the psalm's strophic structure while simultaneously allowing its coherence as a literary unit in spite of its seemingly disparate elements.

#### ***4.5.5 Terminology***

The opening invocation (vv. 2-3) contains three depictions of Yahweh and one of the psalmist's enemies. In an urgent appeal for help, he describes the Lord as his "refuge" (הַצִּלָּתִי, 37:25:2, v. 2a), that is, his place of safety and protection. Then he appeals to Yahweh to "save" (יִשְׁׁצֵר, 205:57:4, v. 2b) and "deliver" (גָּׁצַל, 213:45:1, v. 2c) him. The portrait that will emerge later suggests he has fled to the Lord as King and Judge, appealing to Him to judge and act in his defence (see Wilcock 2001:34, 36-37; Lane 2006:50). His reason for needing refuge is identified as "all my pursuers". To depict the ferocity of his "pursuers" (רְדִיפֵי, 17:1:1, v. 1a), he uses the verb רָדַף (to pursue), which is also used in the opening invocation (vv. 2-3).

143:20:2, v. 2b; literally, “those who are pursuing me”), he compares them to a lion about to “tear” (טָרַף, 25:4:1, v. 3a) him apart and “rip” (פָּרַק, 10:2:1, v. 3b; NIV) him to pieces. This image graphically depicts “the ruthlessness of the enemies and the terror experienced by the psalmist as a result of their attack” (Curtis 1997:288).

In strophe 2 (vv. 4-6), the psalmist laments his innocence by calling down curses upon himself if he be found guilty. The strophe consists of a compound conditional sentence beginning with four protases<sup>75</sup> (vv. 4-5) and ending with four apodoses (v. 6). The four protases all name sins the psalmist may be found to have committed; the four apodoses state how he should be handed over to his pursuers if found guilty of any of the sins listed in the protases. Now I shall scrutinise the terminology in both halves of the strophe.

What alleged crime had aroused the hostility of the psalmist’s pursuers? The four conditional clauses appear to describe a single offence; their depiction of it moves from general to specific. First he refers to it simply as “this [thing]” (v. 4a). Then he mentions “guilt on my hands” (v. 4b, NIV); “guilt” (עָוֹל, 21:3:1)

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<sup>75</sup> The conditional particle ׀ only occurs in the first three clauses (vv. 4-5a), but the *waw* copulative וַאֲחֵלְצָה extends the conditional force to the fourth clause (v. 5b; cf. Andersen and Forbes 2005).

denotes behaviour that is contrary to an accepted standard, such as treating someone unjustly. Next he alludes to having “repaid” (גָּמַל, 37:10:1, v. 5a) an “ally” (שָׁלֵם, 116:17:1, v. 5a; NRSV) with “evil” (רָע, 299:29:3, v. 5a). The participle שׂוֹלְמִי—literally, “the one at peace with me”—“probably refers to a close friend or ally, i.e., one with whom the psalmist has made a formal agreement” (NET, note 7). Last he is charged with having “plundered” (חָלַץ, 44:12:2, v. 5b) his “enemy” (צוֹרֵר, 26:14:3, v. 5b) “without cause” (רִיקָם, 16:2:1, v. 5b).<sup>76</sup> If “my ally” (v. 5a) and “my enemy” (v. 5b) refer to the same person

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<sup>76</sup> Psalm 7:5b poses several difficulties for interpreters and translators. Both Craigie (1998:96) and the NET Bible follow Tigay (1970:178-186) in amending “my enemy” (צוֹרֵרִי) to “his enemy” (צוֹרְרוֹ), alluding to the enemy of the psalmist’s “friend” (v. 5a). Craigie thus translates, “and rescued his adversary empty-handed.” The NET Bible also interprets final *mem* on רִיקָם as enclitic, treating רִיק as an attributive adjective modifying “his enemy,” thus yielding “or helped his lawless enemy.” Most translations prefer not to alter the Masoretic Text. This forces them to interpret חָלַץ as “rob” or “plunder,” a meaning derived by extension from its common Piel sense of splitting “a collection of connected objects by force” (Swanson 1997:§2740), but this meaning is nowhere else explicitly attested. The adverb רִיקָם may then be construed either with אֶחְלֹצָה (“plundered my enemy without cause”, ESV) or with צוֹרְרִי (“plundered him who without cause was my adversary”, NASB). Both syntax (an adverb modifying a verb rather than a nominal participle) and context (the psalmist could hardly be charged with betraying someone who without cause was his enemy) favour the ESV. Since

before and after the alleged betrayal, as seems likely to me, then we may infer that the psalmist is charged with betraying a treaty with a close ally by plundering him.

Each of the four apodosis clauses builds on the previous, reaching a climax with the fourth. Each one takes “the form of a self-imprecation or self-curse” (Wilson 2002:189) as the psalmist calls down judgement upon himself if he be found guilty. Each self-imprecation is expressed by a jussive verb; the subject of each verb is “the enemy” (אֹיֵב, 283:74:4, v. 6a). The cumulative effect of the four imprecatory verbs is that if the psalmist is guilty, his enemy ought to triumph over him. Justice would be for the enemy to “pursue” (רָדַף,<sup>77</sup> 143:20:2, v. 6a) him, “overtake” (נָשַׁג, 50:4:1, v. 5b) him, “trample” (רָמַס, 19:2:1, v. 5c) his life to the ground and “lay” (שָׁכַן, 129:23:1, v. 5d) his glory in the dust. The verb “pursue” continues the analogy of his enemy as a lion hunting him down mercilessly (see v. 2).

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(a) we have no external evidence for amending the Masoretic Text and (b) we can make good sense of the Masoretic Text, I base my analysis on the Masoretic Text and follow the interpretation implied by the ESV.

<sup>77</sup> In the Masoretic Text, the verb is vocalised רָדַף, a hybrid of the Qal רָדַף and the Piel רָדַף (see Gesenius, Kautzsch and Cowley 2003:§63). The distinction in meaning would be limited to a matter of emphasis, with the Piel intensifying the sense of the Qal.

Psalm 7:7-12<sup>78</sup> is dominated by terms related to justice and judgement as the psalmist petitions Yahweh to intervene with righteous judgement (cf. Hubbard 1982:268-279). Two references to the Lord's righteous indignation serve as the boundaries (inclusio) of the section. The psalmist begins by petitioning "the Lord" to arise in his "anger" (אָרַץ, 277:35:2, v. 7a) and ends by declaring that God "expresses his wrath" (עָרַץ, 12:1:1, v. 12b, NIV) regularly. The former term (אָרַץ) portrays a strong feeling of displeasure, while the latter (עָרַץ) usually adds "a focus on the acts of anger and punishment toward the object of one's anger" (Swanson 1997:§2404; cf. Wood 1999:§568).

A cluster of terms referring to Yahweh's righteous judgement occur between the two references to his indignation. First, he has "decreed"<sup>79</sup> (v. 7c, NET; Piel of צָוָה) "judgement" (מִשְׁפָּט, 423:65:1, v. 7c), apparently meaning that

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<sup>78</sup> In my proposed structural divisions (see §4.5.4), verses 7-12 cut across two sections. Topically, the break from "petition" to "confidence" comes at the end of verse 10 as suggested in §4.5.4. However, verbal coherence suggests that verses 11-12 belong with verses 7-10. For the sake of discussing terminology, verses 7-12 need to be treated together.

<sup>79</sup> The ESV rendering, "you have appointed a judgement," is misleading. It gives the impression the psalmist is referring to a future judgement day. This obscures the point of the verse, namely, that the Lord has appointed judgement; He has decreed justice. The nature of God cries out for justice against evil.

judgement is a God-initiated idea (see Rawlinson 2004, 43). Second, the Lord “judges” (דִּין, 24:8:1; v. 9a) the peoples. Third, therefore, he calls upon Yahweh to “judge” (שָׁפֵט, 203:32:2; v. 9b) him because he is confident the judgement will prove his “righteousness” (צְדָקָה, 123:50:4, v. 9b) and “integrity” (תָּם, 23:7:1, v. 9c); the latter term carries connotations of blamelessness or innocence (Swanson 1997:§9448; cf. HALOT 1999:1744). Fourth, in the same way he calls on God to “end” (גָּמַר, 5:5:1, v. 10a) the evil deeds of the “wicked” (רָשָׁע, 263:82:2, v. 10a), but to “establish” (Polel of בָּוֶן, 218:52:4, v. 10b) the “righteous” (צְדִיק, 206:52:4, v. 10b).

He closes the strophe with six depictions of Yahweh that undergird his requests. First, Yahweh is one who “tests” (Qal participle of בָּחַן, 29:9:1, v. 10c) hearts and “minds” (בְּלִיָּה, 31:5:1). Next he is “the righteous God” (אֱלֹהִים צְדִיק, v. 10d).<sup>80</sup> Third he declares that his “shield” (מָגֵן, 60:19:2, v. 11a) is with God who, fourthly, “saves” (Qal participle of יָשַׁע, 205:57:4, v. 11b) the

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<sup>80</sup> This title occurs elsewhere only in Isaiah 45:21 (Hebrew, אֱלֹהֵי צְדִיק).

“upright” (יָשָׁר, 119:25:1, v. 11b).<sup>81</sup> Last, he is a “righteous judge”<sup>82</sup> (שׁוֹפֵט צְדִיק, v. 12a) who “expresses his wrath” (זָעַם, 12:1:1, v. 12b; NIV).<sup>83</sup>

In verses 13-17, the psalmist describes the fate of the wicked when Yahweh “expresses his wrath”. Two subsections portray the downfall of the wicked. First, God will hunt and shoot him down (vv. 13-14). Second, he will be caught in his own evil traps (vv. 15-17). I shall treat each subsection separately.

*Verses 13-14.* In a series of four lines consisting of two bicola employing alternating parallelism, the psalmist describes God preparing Himself to shoot or strike down the wicked man who does not “repent”<sup>84</sup> (שׁוּב, 1062:72:5, v.

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<sup>81</sup> These third and fourth depictions of Yahweh as “my shield” (מִגְדָּלִי), “who saves the upright in heart” reaffirm the psalmist’s confidence that the Judge will prove to be on his side because he is innocent.

<sup>82</sup> This Hebrew phrase does not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament. The only other Scripture that calls God a “righteous judge” (ὁ δίκαιος κριτής) is 2 Timothy 4:8.

<sup>83</sup> The fourfold use of אֱלֹהִים in verses 10-12 is striking given that the dominant name for the Lord in these psalms is יהוה.

<sup>84</sup> No subject is expressed for the third person singular verbs in verses 13-14. The most common interpretation takes the implied subject “he” of שׁוּב as referring to the psalmist’s

13a). Lines 1 and 3 describe Him preparing his “sword” (חַרְבֵּי, 413:18:1; v. 13a) and his “deadly weapons” (בְּלֵי-מָוֶת; literally, “objects of death”, v. 14a); these “deadly weapons” are probably farming utensils that could be moulded into striking weapons. Lines 2 and 4 allude to preparing his “bow” (קֶשֶׁת, 76:10:1, v. 13b) and “arrows” (חִץ, 54:14:1, v. 14b). These verses portray Yahweh as a warrior making final preparations for battle, giving the psalmist’s evil enemy one final opportunity to repent before he strikes.

*Verses 15-17.* The strophe appears to describe the attack on the psalmist by his enemy. There is no explicit change of subject; verse 15 continues with further third person masculine singular verbs. The content of the strophe, however, leaves no doubt that the subject has changed back to “the wicked” (v. 9). His wicked plotting unfolds through three stages—“conceiving” (חָבַל, 3:1:1, v. 15a) evil, “carrying” (הָרָה, 43:1:1, v. 14b) “trouble” (עָמַל, 55:13:2; NIV) and ultimately “giving birth” (יָלַד, 495:9:1, v. 15c) to “a lie”<sup>85</sup> (שָׁקַר, 113:22:1, v.

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enemy, while treating all the others as references to the LORD. Alternatively, one might consider Yahweh as the subject of all the verbs and render יָשׁוּב “he relents”.

<sup>85</sup> By rendering שָׁקַר in the plural as “lies”, the ESV obscures the probability that a specific lie is meant, namely, a false accusation against the psalmist.

15c). The enemy's sinister scheme against the psalmist was hatched over a period of time.

Here the Lord's judgement upon the wicked takes the form of their own schemes backfiring on them (vv. 16-17). In keeping with the Old Testament concept of justice, they will receive the same punishment they sought to impose upon the innocent. The wicked "digs" (כָּרָה, 14:5:1 and חָפַר, 40:9:1, v. 16a) a "pit" (בּוֹר, 67:7:1, v. 16a and שָׁחַת, 23:9:1, v. 16b), but falls into his own trap. His "mischief" (עֲמָל, 55:9:2, v. 17a) and "violence" (חֲמָס, 60:14:1, v. 17b) come upon his own "head" (רֹאשׁ, 59:33:2, v. 17a and קִדְקֹד, 11:2:1, v. 17b).

The psalm closes with the psalmist vowing to "give thanks" (יָדָה, 111:67:2, v. 18a) to Yahweh for his "righteousness" (צִדְקָה, 123:50:4, v. 18a). The context suggests that he is giving thanks in anticipation of Yahweh's righteousness expressed in judgement upon the wicked (his enemy) and vindication of the righteous (himself). In the parallel, line he promises to "sing praises" (זָמַר, 45:41:1, v. 18b) to the name of the Lord, "the Most High" (עֲלִיּוֹן, 30:21:1, v. 18b). "Name" (שֵׁם, 86:109:4, v. 18b) is such a common noun that it would not ordinarily call for discussion, but its juxtaposition at the end of Psalm 7 and beginning and end of Psalm 8 appears to be deliberate.

#### ***4.5.6 Themes***

The central motifs of the psalm are well summarised by Wilson (2002:188; cf. StuhlmueLLer 1996).

This psalm is a plea for deliverance from the psalmist's enemies, who are depicted as attacking him like ferocious beasts. Employing the legal motif of a law case argued before a judge, the psalmist appeals to Yahweh to base his judgement on righteousness alone and, therefore, to exonerate the innocent and to mete out judgement on the wicked.

The entire psalm assumes a legal context. Yahweh is presented as the presiding Judge in a court setting (see especially vv. 9, 12). He is a just judge who is indignant and intolerant of evil (vv. 7, 12). As a result, the righteous can turn to Him for justice in times of false accusation, experiencing his just intervention as their Refuge (v. 2) and Shield (v. 11) as well as their Saviour and Deliverer (vv. 2, 10). To the wicked, by contrast, he is not only Judge, but also Executioner (vv. 13-14).

The judgement itself seems to take the form of granting victory to the innocent party and inflicting defeat upon the guilty. If the psalmist be found guilty, Yahweh should permit his enemy to overtake and destroy him (vv. 4-6).

However, if the enemy should be found to have laid an evil snare for the psalmist, Yahweh will cause it to recoil upon his own head (vv. 15-17). Yahweh is an invisible arbitrator in the affairs of men. He executes judgement by vindicating the righteous and shaming the wicked.

## 4.6 Psalm 8

### 4.6.1 *Textual variants*

The Hebrew text of Psalm 8:2b is peculiar; and many textual emendations have been proposed (see Sfair 1942; Dahood 1966; Donner 1967; Soggin 1971; Tournay 1971; Hamp 1972; Smith 1997). The first problem is found in verse 2b, which literally reads “which give your majesty on the heavens” (אֲשֶׁר הוֹדִדָּה עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם), and relates to the words אֲשֶׁר תִּגְדָּה. The awkwardness of beginning the colon with אֲשֶׁר, coupled with the out-of-place imperative תִּגְדָּה, suggests that the Hebrew text is corrupt (Craigie 1998:104; cf. Dahood 1966; Soggin 1971). The solution I favour, taken from the NET Bible, simply emends תִּגְדָּה from a masculine singular imperative to a second person perfect נִתְגַּדָּה or imperfect תִּתֵּן and interprets אֲשֶׁר as either a relative pronoun (“you who”) or a

causal conjunction (“because”) (see NET, note 4). This yields a translation along the lines of “because you set your glory above the heavens”.<sup>86</sup>

Another problem occurs in verse 3, where both the Septuagint (αἶνος) and the Vulgate (*laus*) read “praise” while the Masoretic Text has “strength” (זִכּוּ). Several modern translations follow the Septuagint (NCV; NET; NIV), but the majority prefer the Masoretic Text (AMP; ASV; BBE; CEV; ESV; GNB; GW; NAB; NASB; NKJV; NLT; NRSV; RSV; RV). “Strength” seems to fit the context better than “praise”, although the other technical difficulties associated with the opening verses of the psalm make the choice unclear.<sup>87</sup>

In verse 6, the Septuagint renders אַלְהִים with ἀγγέλους (“angels”). The Septuagint reading can be explained as an interpretive translation, attempting to clarify the meaning of אַלְהִים in context.

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<sup>86</sup> For alternative reconstructions, see Dahood (1966), Bratcher and Reyburn (1991) and Craigie (1998).

<sup>87</sup> For a detailed analysis, see Pitkin 2001:177-180.

#### *4.6.2 Historical reconstruction*

Little is known about the historical occasion of Psalm 8. The heading identifies it as a Davidic psalm (דָּוִד). Beyond the heading, the psalm itself contains no internal indication of its author, date or occasion. Therefore, I agree with Craigie's (1998:106) conclusion that it "is not possible to specify the date and authorship of the psalm with any certainty. The contents are of such a kind as to offer little help with dating."

On the basis of the switch between the first person singular (e.g., "I look", v. 4) and plural ("our Lord", vv. 2 and 10), Broyles (1999:71) suggests the author is probably a liturgist, an individual speaking on behalf of the worshipping community. This is possible, but not certain since it is not uncommon for an individual in private prayer or worship to address God as "our Lord" or "our Father". The allusions to looking at the heavens, the moon and the sky (see v. 4; there is no reference to the sun) prompt commentators to suggest it was written (e.g., Keil and Delitzsch 2002:90) or sung (e.g., Broyles 1999:71) under the night sky (Tate 2001:346). Fohrer (1968:286) believes it originated as a non-cultic psalm, while Anderson (1972:100) argues for a cultic origin.

### 4.6.3 *Setting in life*

Psalm 8 is the first *hymn of praise* in the Psalter (Gerstenberger 1988; Tate 2001; Clifford 2002; Wilson 2002; Goldingay 2006), ending a sequence of five prayers for deliverance (Tate 2001).<sup>88</sup> The heading designates it as “a psalm” (מְזֹמֹר) belonging to the collection of the music director (לְמַנְצֵחַ). The only new term introduced in this psalm is עַל־הַגִּתִּית, literally, “according to the Gittith” (cf. Pss 81 and 84). The meaning of עַל־הַגִּתִּית is unclear. Bratcher and Reyburn (1991) mention three interpretations that have found favour: (a) the musical instrument on which the psalm was played, (b) the tune to which it was sung or (c) the festival in which it was used. Goldingay (2006:154; cf. Maré 2006:927) adds that the “Gittite . . . might be the feminine of the word for a person or thing from Gath.” The Septuagint rendered עַל־הַגִּתִּית as “for the wine presses” (ὕπερ τῶν ληνῶν), seemingly indicating that it was to be sung during the grape harvest.

Although clearly a hymn of praise, Psalm 8 is a unique praise psalm. “It is the only hymn in the Old Testament composed completely as direct address to

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<sup>88</sup> Bratcher (2006b) classifies Psalm 8 amongst a group of “specialized thanksgiving (*todah*) psalms”, in a subgroup that he calls “salvation history”, while Maré (2006:929) refers to it “as a hymn, and more specifically, a creation hymn”.

God. It begins and concludes with an exclamation of adoration” (Mays 1994a:65; cf. Tate 2001:344).

There is little consensus amongst scholars as to the likely use of the psalm in ancient Israel (see Maré 2006:930-931 for a synopsis of current theories). The content of the psalm would be suitable for use in a wide variety of contexts. Since it belonged to the music director’s collection (לְמִנְצֵחַ, v. 1), it seems likely that it would have been used in temple worship. The alternation between “I” (v. 4) and “our” (vv. 2 and 10) might also imply a liturgical usage (so Craigie 1998:106; Broyles 1999:71).

#### ***4.6.4 Structural analysis***

If we analyse Psalm 8 topically, apart from the opening and closing refrain (vv. 2 and 10), it consists of three logical parts: (a) God’s power (vv. 2b-3), (b) man’s frailty (vv. 4-5) and (c) man’s dignity (vv. 6-9). However, by pointing to the poetic rhythm and balance of the psalm, Terrien (2003:126) makes a convincing case for treating it as “four quatrains of four cola each”. He suggests the following outline:

Prelude: The Marvel of the Name	v. 2ab
Strophe I: The Majesty of God	vv. 2c-3
Strophe II: The Fragility of Man	vv. 4-5
Strophe III: The Greatness of Man	vv. 6-7
Strophe IV: The Service of Animals	vv. 8-9
Postlude: The Marvel of the Name	v. 10

Because of his appeal to the poetic rhythm of the psalm, Terrien’s structural analysis seems to fit perfectly with the psalm’s natural flow.<sup>89</sup>

#### ***4.6.5 Terminology***

Terms expressing divine majesty and human frailty dominate the first two strophes. The opening refrain celebrates Yahweh’s “majestic” (אָדִיר, 27:7:2, v. 2a) name. Whereas the more common כְּבוֹד would depict his essential inner glory, אָדִיר alludes to his intimidating, awe-inspiring power, his impressive public presence (Wilson 2002:201). Similarly, Yahweh has set his “glory” (הוֹד, 24:8:1, v. 2b) above the heavens. This word too denotes “splendour” primarily in the sense of “authority” or “strength”. These terms depict Yahweh’s

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<sup>89</sup> The outlines offered by both Casper Labuschagne and Pieter van der Lugt (both cited in Christensen 2005f:7) reflect the same understanding of its structure.

sovereign power over “all the earth” and “the heavens” (see Vos and Olivier 2002). So great is his power that he can establish enough “strength” (יָצַח, 76:31:1, v. 3a) in dependant infants to silence his enemies.<sup>90</sup> The depiction of Yahweh’s majesty continues in the first two cola of the second strophe, which describes his awesome power in creating the heavens and setting the moon and stars in place.

In stark contrast to the majesty of Yahweh, the psalm uses a string of terms that portray the weakness and frailty of human beings. “The mouth of babes and infants” (v. 3) may be an allusion to the utter helplessness and dependence of young children. “Infants” (יְנֻקָּה, 33:1:1, v. 3a) literally refers to breast feeding babies. Although the word translated “babes” (עוֹלָלָה, 11:3:1, v. 3a) denotes a child of any age, from infancy to adolescence (Swanson 1997:§6407), Wilson (2002:202) suggests that when coupled with “infants” (יְנֻקָּה), it may connote “toddlers” (cf. 1 Sam 15:3, 22:19, Jer 44:7, Lam 2:11, 4:4 and Joel 2:16), those just old enough to walk and talk. The psalmist’s allusion to their “mouths” (פֶּה, 498:67:2) seems to relate to the vulnerability and

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<sup>90</sup> Although Psalm 8:3 is difficult to decipher, partly because the text has been corrupted, this appears to be the likeliest interpretation. For a detailed discussion, see Wilson (2002:201-203).

dependence of such small children, as Wilson (2002:202) explains: “For children (and especially ‘toddlers and nursing infants’) the ‘mouth’ is the source of nourishment. Toddlers and nursing infants are particularly dependent on others for food and protective care.”<sup>91</sup>

The portrait of human frailty is strengthened by the psalmist’s choice of parallel terms used for humankind. He avoided both *אִישׁ* and *גִּבּוֹר*, terms that

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<sup>91</sup> Verse 3 has been interpreted in a variety of ways. Aside from the view expressed by Wilson (2002), Maré (2006:932) summarises several other scholarly proposals as follows:

Eaton (2003:81) argues that “the context suggests that these ‘babes’ are the weak and humble worshippers, whose inadequate singing of God’s glory is yet used by him to still the avenger”. Mays (1994a:66) states that it should be understood as hyperbole – every human sound is a response to the universal reign of God and the revelation of his majesty. Children can also be understood as a symbol of the weak and powerless (Müller 1988:36). Dahood holds to the view that the psalmist is so overwhelmed by God’s majesty that he can only babble like an infant (1965:49). Vos and Olivier (2002:1437) believe that the babes and children are not a metaphor for the suffering and scorned people of God, but a reference to those who testify of God’s power.

For the purposes of this study, there is no need to commit to a single interpretation of verse 3. Its meaning and significance can be left open.

refer mainly to males and, in poetic texts, often carry a connotation of strength (see Hamilton 1996b:§408; Oswalt 1999:§310b; Swanson 1997:§1505).<sup>92</sup> Instead, he chose אָנוּשׁ (אָנוּשׁ, 42:13:1, v. 5a), a term “generally considered to point to man’s *insignificance* or *inferiority*” (Girdlestone 1998:50). In the parallel line, he used בְּזוּזֵאָדָם which, if it carries any special emphasis, tends to “emphasize the fragile mortality of the human condition” (Wilson 2002:204; cf. Hamilton 1996a:§132.12).

The final bicolon of the second strophe also begins a transition to the theme of the third strophe, namely, the value of human beings. Although one anticipates the psalmist will speak of human insignificance in the light of Yahweh’s majesty, he does the opposite. Surprisingly, God “remembers” (זָכַר, 232:53:1, v. 5a) and “cares for” (פָּקַד, 303:9:1, v. 5b) human beings.

Strophes 3 and 4 develop the theme of the humanity’s greatness, expanding on the dignity with which human beings were created (vv. 6-7) and the scope of their authority over creation (vv. 8-9). The terminology covers human beings’ dignity and their authority over the animal kingdom. In spite of

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<sup>92</sup> The view that גָּבַר carries a firm connotation of strength comes from the belief that the noun is derived from גָּבַר, “to be strong”. Hamilton (1996c:§1505) expresses doubt about this derivation and the extent to which the connotation of strength is implied.

humanity's seeming insignificance in relation to creation, the Creator "made [Piel of הָסֵר, 22:3:1, v. 6a] him a little lower than the heavenly beings."<sup>93</sup> He crowned humanity with "glory" (כְּבוֹד, 200:51:4, v. 6b) and "honour" (הִדָּר, 30:13:1, v. 6b). כְּבוֹד is normally used with reference to the divine essence. Since Psalm 8 is directly dependent on the creation narrative in Genesis 1, "glory" here seems to refer to the fact that something of the divine nature was conveyed to human beings (i.e., the image of God). הִדָּר portrays "a soul in its highest manifestation of power" (Holladay 2000, s.v.), here referring to the exalted status the Creator conferred on humans. In the Ancient Near East, kings and nobles sometimes wore wreath crowns to banquets as symbols of dignity and status. Similarly, God "crowned" (עָטַר, 7:4:2, v. 6b) humans with "glory and honour". God also "gave him dominion" (מָשַׁל, 80:10:1, v. 7a) over all creation (i.e., "the works of your hands", v. 7a), putting all things "under his feet" (רָגַל, 247:31:1).

The final strophe (vv. 8-9) specifies the nature of the "all things" mentioned in verse 7b. It catalogues the scope of human authority over the animal kingdom: sheep (צֹאֵן, 2:1:1), cattle (אֶלֶף, 8:2:1), wild animals (בְּהֵמָה, 190:11:1),

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<sup>93</sup> In this verse, "heavenly beings" renders אֲלֹהִים, which may be understood as a reference to God Himself or to the angelic hosts.

birds (צִפּוֹר, 40:7:1) and fish (דָּג, 19:1:1). The point is that human beings were given dominion over the entire animal kingdom.

#### 4.6.6 Themes

The central theme of the psalm is *the majesty of the name Yahweh* (see Vos and Olivier 2002). “The name of Yahweh here is a reference to God’s person and his character. The Name is synonymous with everything He is. Therefore the psalmist begins with Yahweh and ends with Yahweh” (Maré 2006:928). At the Exodus, God revealed Himself to Israel by his name, “Yahweh” (see Exod 3:14). The psalmist reverently celebrates the fact that Yahweh is “our Lord” (אֲדֹנָינוּ; vv. 2, 10). He rejoices because “our Lord” is also the majestic sovereign over everything. Yahweh’s majesty is seen in the splendour of his creation (vv. 2c, 4), his absolute power over his enemies (v. 3) and his wonderful care for humankind (vv. 5-9).<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Tate (2001:348) sees “the pervasive kingship language” as the dominant, unifying theme of the Psalm 8. He notes a variety of terms “indicating strength, power, and glory associated with God as King, Creator, and Divine Warrior.” He regards this as an important link with “the twin psalms 9-10, which focus on the Kingship of Yahweh: ‘Yahweh is King forever and ever’ (Ps 10:16)” (p. 344). Coetzee (2006) agrees that “royal terminology dominates the psalm” (p. 1131), but he sense that “the emphasis of the royal terminology falls on *humankind*. . . .

Humanity's privileged relationship to Yahweh forms a subordinate theme to Yahweh's majesty.<sup>95</sup> In spite of humanity's insignificance in comparison to Yahweh's magnificence, the Lord cares about human beings (v. 5) and gives strength to the helpless (v. 4). He created humans only a little lower than אֱלֹהִים (v. 6a), crowned them with glory and honour (v. 6b) and gave them authority over the earth and the animal kingdom (vv. 7-9).

Terrien (2003) believes the psalm's structure is carefully choreographed to link these themes. He sees the opening and closing refrains indicating the main theme, "a symphony of delight upon the unfolding of the theology of the name" (p. 126), while the chiasmic body situates "humanity in their fragility and greatness between the majesty of God and the abundance of animal food for the survival of human beings" (p. 126).

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According to the psalmist's view it is in the human royal rule that the majesty of Yahweh is present in all the earth" (pp. 1133-34, emphasis in original).

<sup>95</sup> Leonard Maré interprets the prominence of the two emphases in reverse. He argues that the primary question the psalm answers is, "What is man?" However, he says this question is necessarily asked and answered in relation to another question, namely, "Who is God?" According to Maré (2006:929), "Yahweh's majesty forms the boundaries in which humanity finds its place of glory through its God-appointed position of rulership. Therefore the question 'what is man' cannot be separated from the question 'who is God'".

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was not to introduce innovative interpretations of the six psalms under investigation, but to lay a foundation for exploring links between them by conducting an exegetical study of the implied historical setting, the setting in life, structure, terminology and themes of each psalm. In the following chapter, I shall use these observations to explore links between adjacent psalms which may have motivated the editors of the Psalter to juxtapose them.

## Chapter 5

### Concatenation in Psalms 3-8

The objective of this study is to determine the editorial rationale for the arrangement of Psalms 3-8. This chapter and the one following constitute the heart of the study, a detailed analysis of the links between these psalms that may have provided the editorial rationale for their arrangement. This chapter analyses the links between pairs of adjacent psalms, while the following chapter explores relationships across the entire selected corpus, Psalms 3-8.

An analysis of the links between adjacent psalms is the logical starting point for an enquiry into the editorial rationale for the arrangement of a group of psalms because editors are most likely to be conscious of verbal or thematic links when juxtaposing neighbouring psalms. The probability of shared terminology, in particular, being intentional as opposed to coincidental is highest when studying adjacent psalms.

Although commentators occasionally make fleeting remarks about similarities or relationships between adjacent psalms in the chosen corpus, to my knowledge no detailed analysis of the relationships between Psalms 3-8 has been conducted.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the editorial rationale for the juxtaposition of each pair of adjacent psalms. My analysis of each pair of psalms covers three sections. The first section presents an exhaustive synopsis of all shared lexemes together with an assessment as to which ones, if any, may have been significant linking words between the psalms. The second section explores factors other than verbal links which may tie a pair of psalms together. This comparison is based on the exegetical summaries presented in the previous chapter and covers historical, functional, structural and thematic observations. The third section weighs the various links identified in an attempt to discern which one(s), if any, motivated the editors to place each pair of psalms side by side. The analyses in this chapter will focus on adjacent psalms. Out of necessity, occasionally the broader literary context will be brought to bear on the evidence, but a full analysis of the wider context awaits the following chapter.

### 5.1 The relationships between Psalms 3 and 4

Many scholars have sensed a strong similarity between Psalms 3 and 4, positing different reasons for the connection between them. They have noted verbal similarities (e.g., VanGemeren 1991; Wilcock 2001; Goldingay 2006; Lane 2006), suggested a similar occasion of writing (e.g., Ross 1985; Phillips 1988; Motyer 1994; Wilcock 2001; Lane 2006) and viewed them as morning and evening psalms in a temple hymnbook (e.g., Feinberg 1948; Weiser 1962; Craigie 1998; Broyles 1999; Goldingay 2006). Many years ago, Scroggie (1948:56) drew attention to several points of similarity:

A careful reading of Psalms iii and iv will show that they are closely related in structure, circumstances, and time. In each are four stanzas; each reflects a time of great danger, and that danger appears to be one and the same in both Psalms.

This comment reflects the author's intuitive sense that these two psalms are abnormally similar. The question of concern is this: based on the available evidence, which similarities best account for their close relationship in the final ordering of the Psalter?

### 5.1.1 Verbal links

Excluding its heading, Psalm 3 has 72 words, 53 of which are unique lexemes. Psalm 4 contains 88 words with 64 unique lexemes.<sup>96</sup> Together the two psalms contain 99 unique lexemes; 18 of them occur in both psalms. The shared lexemes, together with the frequency of occurrence in each psalm,<sup>97</sup> are אָל (1:1), אֱלֹהִים (1:2), אָמַר (1:2), בָּ (1:6), הַ (1:1), וְ (4:7), יְהוָה (5:6), יִשָּׁן (1:1), כָּבוֹד (1:1), כִּי (2:2), לְ (3:5), מָה (1:1), סֵלָה (3:2), עַל (3:2), עֲנֵה (1:1), צַר (1:1), קָרָא (1:2), רַב (1:2), שָׁכַב (1:1). This means that Psalm 3 shares 34 percent (18/53) of its vocabulary with Psalm 4, while Psalm 4 shares 28 percent (18/64) of its words with Psalm 3. Since 18 of 99 lexemes are shared, the gross verbal overlap is 18.2 percent.

If we exclude terms which are so common that their being shared by adjacent psalms has little or no significance—conjunctions, prepositions, particles, the

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<sup>96</sup> These figures are calculated by counting the Hebrew article, conjunction and inseparable prepositions as separate “words”; בְּקִרְאִי, for example, is counted as two words, בְּ + קִרְאִי. If these conjoined lexemes were not counted separately, Psalms 3 and 4 would have 64 and 73 words respectively.

<sup>97</sup> The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of times the lexeme occurs in Psalms 3 and 4 respectively.

article and the names of God (אלהים and יהוה)—nine shared lexemes remain. These include five verbs (אָמַר, יָשַׁן, עָנָה, קָרָא and שָׁכַב), two nouns (צָר and כְּבוֹד), an adjective (רַב) and an adverb (סֵלָה). Only two of these terms, סֵלָה (78) and יָשַׁן (16), occur less than 100 times in the Hebrew Bible.

Although these are reasonably common Hebrew terms, they represent strong links between Psalms 3 and 4. However, their significance lies less in the individual lexemes than in the manner in which they are used in the two psalms. Similarities in the positioning (e.g., צָר), form and sense (e.g., כְּבוֹד), and collocation (e.g., שָׁכַב with יָשַׁן and קָרָא with עָנָה) of the shared lexemes make the verbal links very striking. The following points should be noted.<sup>98</sup>

- 1) Both laments begin by depicting the psalmist's situation using the root צָר (see 3:2 and 4:2). As was pointed out in the previous chapter (see §4.1.5), this root can be used either as an abstract noun ("adversity", 43:16:1) or as a concrete noun ("adversary", 67:24:1). Despite its high frequency in the Psalter, its forefronted position in the opening verse of both psalms may have influenced the redactors to view it as a hook word, providing a link between Psalms 3 and 4.

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<sup>98</sup> All statistics cited below are my own calculations based on morphological searches of the Hebrew Bible coupled with personal analysis of the search results.

- 2) The exact form **כְּבוֹדִי**, a singular noun with a first person common singular suffix, occurs in both 3:4 and 4:3. By conducting a morphological search I discovered that this exact form occurs 22 times in the Hebrew Bible, including 7 times in the Psalter. These 22 occurrences cover three senses, namely, (a) depicting Yahweh's glory (Exod 29:43, 33:22, Num 14:22, Isa 42:8, 43:7, 48:11, 66:19, Ezek 39:21 and Mal 1:6), (b) referring to a human being's honour (Gen 45:13, Job 19:9, 29:20, Pss 3:4, 4:3, 7:6 and 62:8) and (c) as a circumlocution for "self" (Gen 49:6, Pss 16:9, 59:9 and 108:2). Amongst the 7 occurrences in the Psalter, 3 are circumlocutions for the speaker's self (see Swanson 1997:§3383.8). The remaining four refer to the psalmist's honour (Pss 3:4, 4:3, 7:6 and 62:8). Since **כְּבוֹדִי** occurs with reference to the speaker's honour only seven times in the Hebrew Bible and only four times in the Psalter, it provides a strong verbal link between Psalms 3 and 4.

- 3) The exact phrase רַבִּים אֹמְרִים (“many are saying”) is found in 3:3 and 4:7, both times introducing the words of the psalmist’s enemies. These are the only two occurrences of רַבִּים אֹמְרִים in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>99</sup>
- 4) The verbs שָׁכַב (“lie down”) and יָשָׁן (“sleep”) are joined by the conjunction וּ to form a hendiadys שָׁכַב וַיִּשָּׁן (“to lie down and sleep”) in 1 Kings 19:5, Psalm 3:6 and 4:9.<sup>100</sup>
- 5) The verbs “call” (קָרָא) and “answer” (עָנָה) occur together in 3:5 and 4:2. These verbs appear in the same verse 15 times in the Psalter and a further 33 times in remainder of the Hebrew Bible.
- 6) בִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה (“for you, O Lord”, 4:9) closely resembles וְאַתָּה יְהוָה (“but you, O Lord”, 3:4). The second person masculine singular pronoun

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<sup>99</sup> The two terms occur consecutively five more times in the Old Testament (1 Sam 14:19, Isa 2:3, Jer 13:6, Mic 4:2 and 11). In all five instances רַב is the last word of a clause, modifying a noun, and אֹמֵר is the first word of the next clause. Only in Psalms 3 and 4 are the two terms collocated within a single clause, with “many” as the subject and “saying” the predicate.

<sup>100</sup> The only other time that the two words are used in the same verse is in Job 3:13, where they occur in parallel poetic lines.

combines with יהוה to form אַתָּה יהוה 42 times in the Hebrew Bible, including 20 times in the Psalter.<sup>101</sup>

Due to their rarity, the first four of these similarities provide striking verbal connections between Psalms 3 and 4. The last two, due to their greater frequency, are not as significant in themselves but do strengthen the points of similarity indicated by the first four. Taken together, these six verbal links point to a strong relationship between the two psalms. Both begin with the psalmists' lament to the Lord regarding their צר. People are speaking ( רבים ) against the Lord and dishonouring the psalmists ( כבודי ). In both, we find the psalmists' "calling" ( קרא ) to Yahweh and Him "answering" ( ענה ) them. Finally, both psalmists vow to "lie down and sleep" ( שכב וישן ) because "you Lord" ( אַתָּה יהוה ) will protect them.

### ***5.1.2 Other links***

Besides shared terminology, are there other similarities between the two psalms that may have influenced the redactors of the Psalter to place them

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<sup>101</sup> On one occasion, the pronoun is spelled אַתָּה (Ps 6:4). In the other 41 instances, it is spelled אַתָּה.

together? In this section, I shall explore possible links emerging from the psalms' occasion, usage, structure and themes.

*Historical links.* A number of commentators (e.g., Lussier 1947; Leupold 1961; Kidner 1973; Phillips 1988; Richards 1990; Motyer 1994; Wilcock 2001; Lane 2006) have proposed that Psalms 3 and 4 may both spring from the historical circumstances posited in the heading of Psalm 3, namely, David's flight from Absalom. However, in my judgement the content of Psalm 4 does not fit the period of David's flight very well. It suggests a setting of political dissatisfaction with no immediate threat of military conflict. If it had anything to do with Absalom's rebellion, it would surely have to spring from the period of mounting dissatisfaction with David's rule prior to the rebellion, but even this does not fit the portrayal of the event in 2 Samuel 14, in which David appears to be blissfully unaware of the imminent threat. Therefore, I find Motyer's (1994; cf. Wilcock 2001) proposal that David wrote Psalms 3 and 4 in the morning and evening of the same day of his flight from Absalom unconvincing. There is no available evidence indicating that a common historical occasion provided the editors with their primary reason for placing Psalms 3 and 4 together.

*Functional links.* The headings of the two psalms have the designation "a psalm of David" (מְזֻמֹּר לְדָוִד) in common, but that is where their similarities end.

The heading of Psalm 3 posits its historical occasion (“when he [David] fled from Absalom, his son”), whereas the heading of Psalm 4 offers musical information (“for the director of music; with stringed instruments”).

The heading for Psalm 3 offers no information regarding its usage in ancient Israel. The use of  $\text{הַלֵּל}$  in both psalms shows only that they were both used with musical accompaniment. However, there is no evidence that the editors attempted to group psalms using  $\text{הַלֵּל}$ .<sup>102</sup>

It is widely believed by modern form critics that Psalms 3 and 4 were used respectively as morning and evening prayers in cultic worship (e.g., Briggs and Briggs 1906; Feinberg 1948; Scroggie 1948; Leupold 1961; Weiser 1962; Bratcher and Reyburn 1991; Craigie 1998; Broyles 1999; Keil and Delitzsch 2002; Goldingay 2006). The internal evidence connecting Psalm 3 with the morning consists of the psalmist’s past tense references to sleeping and waking in verse 6. Psalm 4:9 contains a future tense allusion about going to sleep. These imply that the psalmist, and by extension the worshipper (the

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<sup>102</sup> There are 23 psalms that have more than one  $\text{הַלֵּל}$ . Among them, 13 occur in isolation, meaning that their neighbouring psalms do not contain  $\text{הַלֵּל}$ . The remaining 10 include two pairs (Psalms 4-5 and 76-77) and two triplets (Psalms 66-68 and 87-89). There does not appear to be any attempt to group psalms using  $\text{הַלֵּל}$  together.

implied reader) using the psalm, has just woken up (Psalm 3) and is about to go to sleep (Psalm 4). Hence they are classified as morning and evening psalms. The significance of the shared phrase “I lie down and sleep” (see discussion above) strengthens the possibility that the editors consciously juxtaposed these psalms as morning and evening prayers (e.g., Goldingay 2006:117).

*Structural links.* If the structural interpretations suggested in chapter 4 are correct, then Psalms 3 and 4 are very similar in form. Both are short poems—64 and 73 words<sup>103</sup> respectively—consisting of three strophes. Each strophe consists of three bi- and/or tricola and exhibits a movement from negative to positive, from complaint to confidence. The final bicolon ends each strophe on a note of faith, a declaration of confidence in Yahweh. Both psalms contain multiple occurrences of סָלָה, but in neither one are they structural markers signalling the end of stanzas. The overall effect of these similarities is two poems that are very similar in length, flow and balance. They feel like sister poems.

Verse 4 is strikingly similar in effect in both psalms. After verses 2-3 open each psalm with a depiction of people’s opposition to the psalmists, verse 4

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<sup>103</sup> These figures exclude the Psalm headings and treat conjoined lexemes as single words.

begins with a disjunctive *waw* that dramatically changes the tone from concern to confidence in Yahweh. Psalm 3:4 addresses God Himself (“but you, O Lord”), while Psalm 4:4 address the “sons of men” about God (“but know that the Lord”), yet both affirm Yahweh’s commitment to and protection of the psalmists.

*Thematic links.* The overarching themes of the two psalms are not as similar as the foregoing discussion might lead one to expect. The themes of Psalm 3 presuppose a military setting. The Lord is a military deliverer riding to the psalmist’s aid to give him victory against all odds. By contrast, in Psalm 4 the crisis is internal and political instead of external and military in nature. No military theme emerges in Psalm 4.

Aside from such general themes as Yahweh hearing and responding to the prayers of his servants, there is one strong thematic link between the two psalms. Both psalms imply that the psalmist is the Davidic king and that he is undergoing a serious crisis. They both portray Yahweh as the God who, out of faithfulness to his covenant with the king, protects his life and defends his honour.

### *5.1.3 Basis of arrangement*

After presenting the evidence of links between Psalms 3 and 4, it remains to posit the reason(s) why the redactors of the Psalter placed them side-by-side. No other pair of psalms in the chosen corpus bears as many similarities as these psalms do. This makes one conclusion easy, but another difficult. It is surely no coincidence that two such similar psalms appear together in the final ordering of the Psalter. There is a high probability that the compilers placed them together because of their similarities. This is the easy conclusion.

The more difficult decision is to determine which links the editors had in mind. As mentioned in the discussion of the methodology of the study (see chapter 3), arrangement could be based on historical, cultic and/or content considerations. All three of these have been proposed as the basis of the relationship between Psalms 3 and 4. Those who argue that both psalms originate with David's flight from Absalom intimate an historical relationship. Those who regard them as morning and evening hymns positioned at the beginning of the Psalter (after the two introductory psalms) posit a cultic reason for their placement. I find neither of these views convincing. Verbal links between the two psalms provide a content-based rationale for their positioning. I shall now state my reasons for this conclusion by examining the evidence for each alternative.

Other than both psalms being attributed to David in the headings, there is no evidence of any historical relationship between them. As I have argued in chapter 4 (see §4.2), the internal evidence from Psalm 4 does not fit the theory that the heading of Psalm 3, which speaks of David's flight from Absalom, provides the historical occasion for both psalms.<sup>104</sup> Although Psalm 3 harmonises with the occasion implied by its heading (see Craigie 1998; Terrien 2003), the implied occasion of Psalm 4 does not appear to be a military crisis.

The cultic explanation for the placement of Psalms 3 and 4 also suffers from serious drawbacks. The basis of this view is that they were morning and evening hymns used in morning and evening worship (so Briggs and Briggs 1906; Scroggie 1948; Leupold 1961; Weiser 1962; Bratcher and Reyburn 1991; Craigie 1998; Broyles 1999; Keil and Delitzsch 2002; Goldingay 2006). While the hypothesis that one or both of these psalms were used in this manner is plausible, we have no positive internal or external evidence to verify it. I have doubts about the suitability of Psalm 3 for generalised use in

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<sup>104</sup> This theory has been supported, with varying degrees of confidence, by such commentators as Lussier (1947), Leupold (1961), Kidner (1973), Phillips (1988), Richards (1990), Motyer (1994) and Wilcock (2001)

morning worship. It is, however, the heading of Psalm 3 that most seriously undermines the likelihood of a cultic basis for their placement. If these two psalms were grouped together because of their regular function in morning and evening worship, would one not have expected them to belong to the same early collection of psalms, such as the music director's collection? Surely they would have been brought together during the pre-exilic period in a temple collection and then placed at the head of the canonical Psalter by its post-exilic compilers. Yet there are strong suggestions that this was not the case. The headings of Psalms 4, 5 and 6 all indicate that they belonged to the music director's collection. In fact, their headings are so similar as to suggest they belonged to same original collection and were imported into the final collection as a mini-group (see §5.3, §6.1 and §6.2.3 for a full discussion). By contrast, the heading of Psalm 3 gives no indication that it belonged to the music director's collection. This argues against Psalm 3 being part of the same original collection of psalms for use in temple worship as Psalm 4. It suggests that these two psalms were brought together in a later round of editing than Psalms 4-6, which all belonged to the music director's collection. Although this does not preclude the final editors from having a cultic rationale for their arrangement, it does suggest that the two psalms did not share a long history of usage in the pre-exilic cult. Coupled with my belief that Psalm 3 is

not well-suited for use as a morning prayer in temple worship, I find this argument persuasive against a cultic arrangement.

The most satisfactory explanation of the similarities between Psalms 3 and 4 is that the editors juxtaposed them on content grounds. The internal evidence supports this conclusion. A combination of verbal, structural and thematic factors might have influenced the editors. Astute editors would have noticed the structural similarities in the length, balance and flow which give the two psalms a similar feel. This may have led them, so to speak, to place them in the same group of psalms. Then close scrutiny of their content would have exposed their verbal links: (a) *צָר* describing the psalmist's adversity, (b) *כְּבוֹדִי* with reference to the psalmist's honour, (c) *רַבִּים אֱמָרִים* introducing the enemy's words, (d) *שָׁכַב וַיִּשָּׁן* as a declaration of confidence in Yahweh's protection and (e) *אֶתְּהָ יהוה* introducing an exclamation of faith in his protection. Coupled with the fact that a central motif of both psalms depicts Yahweh's covenant faithfulness to the Davidic king in a time of crisis, there would have been more than enough evidence to convince the editors that these are sister psalms which belong together.

## 5.2 The relationships between Psalms 4 and 5

Even a cursory scan of commentaries shows that most scholars sense that Psalm 5 is somehow related to Psalm 4. Conservative commentators (e.g., Kidner 1973; Phillips 1988; Motyer 1994; Wilcock 2001; Smith 1996; Lane 2006) who hold to Davidic authorship tend to see an historical link, postulating that David wrote both psalms in response to the same event in his life (the period surrounding Absalom's rebellion is the most popular suggestion as to which event it was). Critical commentators (e.g., Briggs and Briggs 1906; Weiser 1962; Craigie 1998; Goldingay 2006), on the other hand, generally regard the link as cultic in nature—alternating psalms for use at the evening sacrifice (Psalm 4) and the morning sacrifice (Psalm 5). Although it is plausible that (a) David wrote both psalms in response to a similar situation and/or (b) they were later used in morning and evening worship, a close analysis of both psalms suggests that neither of these considerations provided the primary rationale for their juxtaposition in the Psalter.

### 5.2.1 Verbal links

Excluding their headings, Psalm 4 contains 88 words with 64 unique lexemes, while Psalm 5 has 125 words with 91 unique lexemes.<sup>105</sup> These are the 16 shared lexemes (the numbers in parentheses indicate the frequency of occurrence in each psalm): אָהַב (1:1), אִישׁ (1:1), אֶל (2:2), אֱלֹהִים (1:2), אַתָּה (1:2), בָּ (6:8), הֵ (1:1), וְ (7:7), יְהוָה (5:5), כָּזַב (1:1), כִּי (2:5), לְ (5:5), מִן (1:1), עַל (2:1), פָּנָה (1:1) and שָׁמַע (2:1). Psalm 4 shares 25 percent (16/64) of its vocabulary with Psalm 5, while Psalm 5 shares 18 percent (16/91) with Psalm 4. The gross verbal overlap is 11.5 percent (i.e., 16 of 139 lexemes are shared).

The most important observation about this list of shared lexemes is that the rarest shared word (כָּזַב) appears 31 times in the Hebrew Bible. The next rarest (אָהַב) occurs well over 200 times. With the possible exception of כָּזַב, *rare shared lexemes played no role in the editors decision to place Psalm 5 beside Psalm 4.*

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<sup>105</sup> These figures are calculated by counting the Hebrew article, conjunction and inseparable prepositions as separate words. If these conjoined lexemes were not counted separately, Psalms 4 and 5 would have 73 and 106 words respectively.

In addition to the shared lexemes, there are five cognate words that occur in both psalms. The five are (a) אָמַר and אָמַר, (b) חָסֵד and חָסֵד, (c) צָדִק and צָדִק/צִדְקָה, (d) רַב and רַב, and (e) שָׁמַח and שָׁמַח. While אָמַר and רַב seem insignificant as linking words, חָסֵד, צָדִק and שָׁמַח may provide significant links in spite of the fact that they are common terms in the Hebrew Bible.

The root צדק provides the clearest link between the two psalms because of its prominent place in both of them. Psalm 4 opens with the psalmist's appeal for a hearing from אֱלֹהֵי צְדִיקִי ("O God of my righteousness"). This sets the programme for the psalm, which views the Lord as the one who will vindicate the righteous psalmist against his unrighteous opponents. The cognate terms (צָדִק and צִדְקָה) are equally strategically placed in Psalm 5, appearing in the focal centre strophe of a chiasmic psalm (v. 9) and in the concluding verse of the psalm (v. 13). They depict Yahweh as "the faithful covenant God" who does "that which is right and just toward those who have proved faithful to Him" (Leupold 1961:78). Both psalms portray the Lord as a righteous God who vindicates the righteous against the unrighteous.

חָסֵד (v. 4) is a key word in Psalm 4. It combines with צָדִק (v. 2) to form part of the framing of the opening strophe (vv. 2-4; see Craigie 1998:79-80). The other part of the framing is the double use of בְּקִרְאִי ("when I call") at the beginning and end of the strophe. Together these two parts form what

appears to be a deliberate use of *inclusio* to frame the opening stanza and to set the programme for the psalm (Craigie 1998:79-80). *חֲסִיד* depicts a godly man who is loyal to his covenant with Yahweh, thus the opening strophe portrays the psalmist as a man with a pious character and righteous cause. In Psalm 5, *חֲסִיד* collocates with *צַדִּיקָה* in the pivotal centre strophe (vv. 8-9). Here both terms portray Yahweh as a loyal, righteous, covenant-keeping God. Thus the programmatic stanza of Psalm 4 portrays the psalmist the same way the pivotal strophe of Psalm 5 portrays the Lord, namely, as faithful (*חֲסִיד*) and righteous (*צַדִּיק*).

The final pair of cognate words comes from the root *שמח*, denoting rejoicing. Both the noun (*שִׂמְחָה*, 4:8) and the verb (*שָׂמַח*, 5:12) occur in the penultimate verse of their respective psalms. Both denote joy springing from the psalmists' blessed relationship with Yahweh and the resulting protection he provides to them. The concluding strophes of the two psalms are thus strikingly similar in tone and in content. These similarities are strengthened by the use of the phrase *כִּי־אֶתָּה יְהוָה* ("for you Lord") in the final verse of both psalms.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Admittedly, in Psalm 5:13 the phrase *כִּי־אֶתָּה יְהוָה* is broken by insertion of the words *תִּבְרַךְ* between *אֶתָּה* and *יהוה*, but this insertion is immaterial. Whether the word order reads "for

### 5.2.2 Other links

*Historical links.* Neither psalm's heading contains any historical information. We know nothing about the circumstances of writing for either of them. However, the implied occasion of both psalms portrays the writer taking refuge in the Lord to escape the lying accusations of his critics.

*Functional links.* The headings of Psalms 4 and 5 are almost identical. Each psalm's heading contains three pieces of information: an indication that the psalm belonged to the music director's collection, the kind of instruments that were to accompany it and the designation "a psalm of David". The only variation is that Psalm 4 was to be sung to the accompaniment of stringed instruments, but Psalm 5 to flutes. In short, these psalms belonged to all the same groups. Both were among (a) the 73 Davidic (לְדָוִד) psalms, (b) the 57 designated as "psalms" (מְזֻמָּר) by genre, (c) the 55 psalms belonging to the music director's collection (לְמַנְצֵחַ) and (d) the 8 psalms with musical

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you, O Lord, bless the righteous" or "for you bless the righteous, O Lord", the force of בְּיַאֲתָה remains unchanged.

instruments specified. Only three psalms in the Psalter meet all four of these criteria—Psalms 4-6!<sup>107</sup>

Many scholars (e.g., Craigie 1998; Keil and Delitzsch 2002; Goldingay 2006) presume that Psalms 3, 4 and 5 were placed at the beginning of the Psalter because they were used in morning (Pss 3 and 5) and evening (Ps 4) congregational worship. Indeed it does seem likely that Psalms 4 and 5 were adopted for congregational use as morning and evening hymns.<sup>108</sup> The distinctly liturgical nature of the headings clearly shows that they were used in congregational worship (so Craigie 1998). Therefore, the possibility that these psalms were ordered in the sequence in which they were used in temple ceremonies merits consideration.

*Structural links.* I see only one important structural similarity between the two psalms—the way they conclude. They close on almost identical notes. The last two verses of each psalm conclude it on a note of trust in Yahweh. Three themes intertwine in both conclusions:

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<sup>107</sup> A further twenty psalms (8, 9, 12, 13, 19, 20, 21, 22, 31, 39, 40, 41, 51, 62, 64, 65, 68, 109, 139 and 140) meet the first three criteria (לְדָוִד, מְזִמּוֹר and לְמִנְצַח).

<sup>108</sup> I have some doubts about whether Psalm 3 was suitable for such usage. See §4.1 for my reasons for these doubts.

- a) They begin with reference to the rejoicing (שמח) of the righteous, expressed in the clauses “you have put more joy in my heart” (4:8a) and “let all who take refuge in you rejoice” (5:12a).
- b) The Lord’s protection of the righteous emerges in statements such as “in peace I shall both lie down and sleep” (4:9a), “you make me dwell in safety” (4:9b), “all who take refuge in you” (5:12a), “spread your protection over them” (5:12c) and “you cover him with favour as with a shield” (5:13b).
- c) The psalmists’ joy and security is rooted in their relationship with Yahweh. Allusions to Yahweh Himself as the source of joy (4:8) and blessing (5:13) point in this direction, while the use of the phrase כִּי אַתָּה יהוה (“but you, O Lord”) in the final verse (see 4:9 and 5:13) of each psalm makes the point emphatic.

*Thematic links.* The central theme of Psalm 5 differs from that of Psalm 4. Whereas Psalm 4 is essentially about the psalmist’s confidence that Yahweh will vindicate him against his critics, Psalm 5 is primarily about who may approach the Lord in worship. Yet they share several subordinate themes. The following thematic similarities were noted.

- a) The wicked are portrayed as slanderous deceivers. This theme dominates two entire stanzas of Psalm 5. In Psalm 4, it emerges in the psalmist's complaint, "How long will you love vain words and seek after lies?" (v. 3). כָּזָב (31:6:2) serves as a link word (see 4:3 and 5:7).
- b) Yahweh is portrayed as a faithful, covenant keeping God, whom the righteous can approach with confidence, knowing that he will receive their prayers and vindicate their causes. Closely related to this is the underlying image of Yahweh as a sovereign and righteous Judge.
- c) The interrelated themes of intimacy, rejoicing and protection end the two psalms on almost identical notes (see discussion of the root שמח in §5.2.1).

In contrast to these similarities, the psalmists' tone towards their enemies is markedly different in the two psalms. The tone changes from praying for them (Psalm 4)<sup>109</sup> to praying for their downfall (Psalm 5). Psalm 4 addresses the wicked, counselling them to repent and return to the Lord, whereas Psalm 5

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<sup>109</sup> Admittedly the psalmist does not literally pray for his opponents in Psalm 4, but the tone of his counsel in verses 3-6 reveals his heartfelt concern for them (see Richard 2002). The pastoral tone of his counsel was tantamount to his prayer for them to repent and return to the Lord.

boldly proclaims the Lord's contempt for the rebels and calls upon Him to call them to account for their transgressions.

### *5.2.3 Basis of arrangement*

Why did the editors place Psalm 5 immediately after Psalm 4? As I noted at the beginning of section 5.2, both historical and functional theories have been proposed. Therefore, let us begin by considering these two possibilities.

The internal evidence offers little support for the theory that a common historical occasion of writing accounts for their close relationship. Even if we were to concede that David wrote both psalms (which is much disputed, especially with reference to Psalm 5) under similar circumstances, the nature of the editorial superscriptions would point more towards a liturgical relationship than towards an historical one. Their editorial headings contain musical notes, not historical ones. Even if the same author wrote them under similar circumstances, the headings suggest that this did not serve as the chief concern of the editors when incorporating them in collections of psalms.

The functional hypothesis holds that their sequencing is best explained by the fact that Psalm 4 was used as an evening hymn and Psalm 5 as a morning hymn in congregational worship. This theory merits serious consideration. It is probable that these psalms were used in congregational worship as evening

and morning hymns; their headings point strongly to the editors' agenda having to do with their formal usage. Looking at these two psalms in isolation, a strong case can be made for this as the editorial basis of arrangement. However, when the broader context of Psalms 3-6 is taken into account, the case weakens in comparison with the case for thematic concatenation. Since the wider context is the topic of chapter 6, I shall discuss contextual influences there.

Thematic links (including verbal and structural similarities) seem to provide adequate grounds for the editors to have placed Psalm 5 immediately after Psalm 4. The psalms both portray the wicked as deceivers, sharing the relatively rare lexeme *כָּזֵב* (31:6:2). They describe the righteous using the roots *צדק* and *חסד* and depict their relationship with Yahweh in a similar manner. Most significantly, the endings of the two psalms are strikingly similar, covering three themes—joy [*שמח*], protection and relationship with Yahweh—and both endings use the key phrase *כִּי אֶתְּהַ יְחֻוּהוּ*. In the entire Psalter, no other psalm's ending is as similar to that of Psalm 4 in content and tone as the ending of Psalm 5.

These links are not as impressive as they might seem. The linking words (*צדק*, *חסד*, *שמח* and *אֶתְּהַ יְחֻוּהוּ*) and themes (e.g., deception, rejoicing, protection) are common in the Psalter. There are also some notable differences between the

two psalms. The psalmist's attitude towards the wicked reflects concern in Psalm 4, but contempt in Psalm 5. In Psalm 4, the lies of the wicked appear to be aimed at the psalmist, whereas this is not explicit in Psalm 5.

What does all this reveal about the arrangement of these psalms? The cumulative effect of the verbal and thematic links suggests that the editors tried to find a suitable psalm to place after Psalm 4. Psalm 5 was the most similar one they could find. It may not be a perfect match for Psalm 4, but it does develop several of the same themes. If Psalm 4 is the psalmist's appeal for his lying enemies to repent, then Psalm 5 might easily be interpreted as its sequel, depicting how the Lord will vindicate the righteous and destroy the unrepentant.

### 5.3 The relationships between Psalms 5 and 6

#### 5.3.1 Verbal links

Excluding their headings, Psalm 5 contains 125 words with 91 unique lexemes, while Psalm 6 has 91 words with 60 unique lexemes.<sup>110</sup> There are 16 shared lexemes, namely, אָוֹן (1:1), אֲנִי (1:1), אֶתֶּה (2:2), בָּ (8:9), הֵ (1:3), וְ (7:5), חֶסֶד (1:1), יְחוּהָ (5:8), כִּי (1:4), לֵ (5:2), לְמַעַן (1:1), מִן (1:2), עֵינַי (1:1), פְּעָלַי (1:1), קוֹל (2:1) and שָׁמַעַ (1:2). Psalm 5 shares 18 percent (16/91) of its vocabulary with Psalm 6, whereas Psalm 6 shares 27 percent (16/60) with Psalm 5. The gross verbal overlap is 12 percent (i.e., 16 of 137 lexemes are shared).

There are no rare terms among the shared lexemes. The rarest, אָוֹן, occurs 83 times in the Hebrew Bible, 29 times in the Psalter. There are two noteworthy word combinations. The first is פְּעָלַי אָוֹן (5:6 and 6:9), a popular idiom for “evildoers” in the Davidic psalms which occurs 23 times in the Old Testament and 15 in the Psalter (12 in לְדָוִד psalms). This idiom is used in 5 psalms in

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<sup>110</sup> These figures are calculated by counting the Hebrew article, conjunction and inseparable prepositions as separate words. If these conjoined lexemes were not counted separately, Psalms 5 and 6 would have 106 and 78 words respectively.

Book I and 12 in the Psalter, meaning the probability of it occurring in consecutive psalms by chance is 1 in 82 for Book I and 1 in 169 for the Psalter. The second is וְאֵת יְהוָה (6:4),<sup>111</sup> which echoes בִּי־אֵתָהּ יְהוָה (5:13; cf. 3:4 and 4:9). Although not a shared lexeme, the use of the homonyms שׁוֹרְרֵי in 5:9 and צוֹרְרֵי in 6:8, both in the sense of “my enemies”, deserves to be noted since צָרַר appears to be a key link word for Psalms 6-8.

### 5.3.2 Other links

*Historical links.* There are no historical links between Psalms 5 and 6. Not only is nothing concrete known about the occasion on which they were written, but the implied circumstances of the author were very different in Psalm 6 from Psalm 5. In Psalm 5 the author seems assured of his favourable standing before Yahweh, but the writer of Psalm 6 attributes his anguish to the Lord’s discipline.

*Functional links.* The two psalm headings are strikingly similar. As was the case with Psalm 4, both psalms belonged to the music director’s collection (לְמִנְצַח) and both were labelled “a psalm of David” (מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד). Thus there is a

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<sup>111</sup> In the Masoretic Text, the *Ketiv* reading is וְאֵת יְהוָה, but the *Qere* reading is the lengthened form וְאֵתָהּ יְהוָה.

chain of three consecutive “psalms of David” belonging to “the music director’s collection”. Furthermore, Psalms 4, 5 and 6 are also three of only eight psalms for which the heading indicates the type of instrument on which it is to be played. Stringed instruments are mentioned in the headings of Psalms 4, 6, 54, 55, 61, 67 and 76, while flutes are mentioned in Psalm 5. Therefore, Psalms 4-6 are the only three psalms in Book I for which instruments are indicated. They also form the only chain of three consecutive psalms mentioning instruments.

There is no evidence to suggest that the two psalms were used in a similar life setting within ancient Israelite worship. Psalm 5 was probably used during the morning sacrifice at the temple, whereas Psalm 6 may have been used by temple priests to minister to sufferers (see Mays 1994a; Broyles 1999). Although it may imply a setting in the morning after a long, sleepless night of anguish, nobody considers it a “morning hymn” in the same sense as Psalm 5 warrants that label.

*Structural links.* Although both psalms are carefully structured and highly balanced using a chiasmic framework, no markers cause sections of the two psalms to correspond closely to each other. I see no structural markers that might have influenced the editors to juxtapose the two psalms.

*Thematic links.* The dominant, central themes of these two psalms are dissimilar. The only shared themes that were detected relate to the depiction of the wicked as “evildoers” (פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן) and the psalmist’s appeal to Yahweh’s “steadfast love” (חֶסֶד) as the basis of his approach to Him (5:8) and the basis of his appeal for deliverance (6:5).

### ***5.3.3 Basis of arrangement***

The strongest links between these psalms come from their headings. They share the designation “a psalm of David” and they both belonged to the music director’s collection. These are common designations that do not in themselves provide a convincing reason for grouping Psalms 5 and 6. It is the addition of a third parallel element in the headings, a phrase identifying the instrument to which the psalm was to be sung, that makes the case for heading-based grouping most convincing.

Psalm 5		Psalm 6	
for the director of music	לְמַנְצֵחַ	for the director of music	לְמַנְצֵחַ
for flutes	אֶל־הַנְּחִילוֹת	with stringed instruments	בְּנִינֹת
		according to <i>sheminith</i>	עַל־הַשְּׁמִינִית
a psalm of David	מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד	a psalm of David	מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד

In the entire Psalter, there are only eight psalm headings that name an instrument. The probability of three of the eight occurring consecutively by chance is remote. It seems likely that the similarities between the headings provided an initial basis for the close proximity of the two psalms.

Are there any further links in the contents of the two psalms to provide a basis for positioning Psalm 6 immediately after Psalm 5? There is no evidence that both psalms were written in response to similar historical circumstances or that they were used in similar liturgical situations, but the verbal and thematic links are not as weak as they appear at first glance.

The most significant linking term is פִּעְלֵי אֵוֶן. Although it occurs in twelve psalms, only six of those belonged to the music director's collection, and only Psalms 5, 6 and 64 are designed as מִזְמוֹר genre. Furthermore, the exact phrase כָּל־פִּעְלֵי אֵוֶן occurs only five times (Pss 5:6, 6:9, 14:4, 92:8 and 10). Its

usage in the Psalms 5 and 6 is very similar. In the opening strophe of Psalm 5, the psalmist promises Yahweh *תִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי* (“you hear my voice”). The following strophe conveys the basis of his confidence that he will receive a favourable hearing with Yahweh; part of his confidence is rooted in the fact that Yahweh hates *כָּל-פֹּעֲלֵי עָוֹן* (“all evildoers”). Thus there is a cause-and-effect link between the fact that his enemies are “evildoers” and his confidence that the Lord will “hear his voice”. The exact same logic is evident in Psalm 6:9, where the psalmist commands *כָּל-פֹּעֲלֵי עָוֹן* to depart from him because the Lord hears his voice (*שָׁמַע . . . קוֹל*). Thus in both psalms, the designation of the psalmist’s enemies as *כָּל-פֹּעֲלֵי עָוֹן* is collocated with the shared words *שָׁמַע* and *קוֹל*, referring to Yahweh’s receptivity to the psalmist’s prayer. The implication is that the Lord will receive the psalmist’s prayer because he is more righteous than his evil enemies. The use of *קוֹל* in 5:3 (*קוֹל* *שׁוֹנֵעִי*, “the sound of my cry”) and 6:9 (*קוֹל בְּכִיִּי*, “the sound of my weeping”) is also similar. *קוֹל* occurs 59 times in the Psalter, but in construct relations with nouns of praying or pleading the count is only 11.<sup>112</sup> Thus both psalms portray the psalmist in urgent prayer (*קוֹל* plus noun of pleading), expecting Yahweh to

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<sup>112</sup> My manual count of 11 such occurrences includes Psalms 5:3, 6:9, 28:2 and 6, 31:23, 66:19, 86:6, 102:6, 116:1, 130:2 and 140:7

hear his voice (שמע plus קול) because his enemies are all evildoers (כָּל-פְּעֻלֵי עֵוֹן).

שׁוֹרְרֵי (5:9) and צוֹרְרֵי (6:8) represent another point of similarity. שׁוֹרֵר is derived from a root meaning “to look, to watch” (Hamilton 1999:913). In the Psalter, it is used to describe enemies who lie in wait, watching for an opportunity to trap their victim (see §4.3.5). The homonym צוֹרֵר is a more general term for “enemy”, yet in Psalm 6 it seems to be used with reference to the psalmist’s foes who are seeking to exploit the opportunity presented by his illness (see §4.4.5; cf. Mays 1994a, 61). Thus both psalmists perceived a threat from enemies who were waiting to exploit any opportunity to attack them. In the light of the significance of צוֹרֵר as a link between Psalms 6, 7 and 8 (see chapter 6), I consider this to be an important verbal link.

In the early stages of my analysis, I perceived no meaningful relationships between Psalms 5 and 6 that might have persuaded the editors to bring them together. My detailed analysis has changed that perception. There are clear verbal and thematic connections. The headings of the two psalms are so similar as to suggest that they both belonged to the same initial group of psalms. Shared words, phrases and themes such as כָּל-פְּעֻלֵי עֵוֹן, יהוה שָׁמַע קוֹלִי, and צוֹרֵר/שׁוֹרֵר provide plausible grounds on which the editors might have juxtaposed them within a collection.

## 5.4 The relationships between Psalms 6 and 7

### 5.4.1 Verbal links

Excluding the headings, Psalm 6 contains 91 words with 60 unique lexemes and Psalm 7 has 169 words with 102 unique lexemes.<sup>113</sup> There are 20 shared lexemes, namely, אָנֹן (1:1), אָיִב (1:1), אֵיִן (1:2), אָרַף (1:1), בָּ (9:7), הֶ (3:3), וְ (5:22), חָלַץ (1:1), יָדָה (1:1), יַחֲוֶה (8:8), יִשַׁע (1:2), כָּל (4:2), לִי (1:5), מָוֶת (1:1), מִן (2:1), נָפֵשׁ (2:2), עַל (1:5), פָּעַל (1:1), צָרָר (1:2) and שׁוּב (2:3). Psalm 6 shares 33 percent (20/60) of its vocabulary with Psalm 7, whereas Psalm 7 shares 20 percent (20/102) with Psalm 6. The gross verbal overlap is 12 percent (i.e., 20 of 162 lexemes are shared).

Is there anything significant in these shared lexemes? There may be some significance in the occurrence of אָנֹן (81:29:3) since this is the third consecutive psalm in which it appears. Since אָנֹן occurs in 22 psalms including 9 in Book I, the probability of it occurring by chance in three consecutive psalms is 1 in 358 for the entire Psalter and 1 in 127 for Book I. However, its

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<sup>113</sup> These figures are calculated by counting the Hebrew article, conjunction and inseparable prepositions as separate words. If these conjoined lexemes were not counted separately, Psalms 6 and 7 would have 78 and 132 words respectively.

significance is reduced by the fact that in Psalms 5 and 6 it is used in the fixed phrase פְּעֹלֵי אָוֶן (“evildoers”), whereas in Psalm 7 it is used in a very different idiom, יִתְבַּל־אָוֶן (“he conceives evil”). קָלַץ (44:12:2) is not a significant link because it occurs in the sense “deliver” in Psalm 6:2, but “plunder” in Psalm 7:5. The allusions to God’s “anger” in 6:2 and 7:7 present a striking contrast (see below), but אָף (277:35:2) is too common a term to attribute much significance to its occurrence in both psalms. יָדָה (111:67:2), “to give thanks”, is also too common to provide a striking link. Although יִשַׁע (205:57:4) is common, the exact form הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי (12:11:3), Hiphil imperative masculine singular with 1cs suffix, occurs in 3:8, 6:5 and 7:2 within my corpus. In 3:8 and 7:2, the appeal is for deliverance from enemies, but in 6:5 the “enemy” is sickness.

The most important shared lexeme seems to be צָרָר (26:14:4, “enemy”), which occurs in 6:8, 7:5 and 7:7 (and 8:3). Psalms 6, 7 and 8 are the only times this term occurs in two or more consecutive psalms. The significance of צָרָר is underlined by the fact that the synonym אָיַב (283:74:4) also occurs in Psalms 6, 7 and 8. On its own, אָיַב is too common to stand out. However, its close

collocation with צָרָר in three consecutive psalms may be significant.<sup>114</sup> The connection is strengthened by the fact that the references to enemies can be found near the end of Psalm 6 and towards the beginning of Psalm 7, creating something of a tail-head connection. Keil and Delitzsch saw Psalm 7 as a continuation of Psalm 6:9-11.

In the second part of Ps. 6 David meets his enemies with strong self-confidence in God. Ps. 7, which even Hitzig ascribes to David, continues this theme and exhibits to us, in a prominent example taken from the time of persecution under Saul, his purity of conscience and joyousness of faith (Keil and Delitzsch 2002:84).

#### ***5.4.2 Other Links***

*Historical setting.* The implied historical settings of the two psalms seem to be quite different. In Psalm 6, the psalmist appears to be experiencing a life-threatening illness. He attributes its cause to Yahweh's discipline (v. 2).

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<sup>114</sup> The pattern actually extends to four consecutive psalms since Psalm 9-10, originally a single psalm, also contains both צָרָר and אָיַב. For a full treatment of their occurrence in Psalm 9-10, see §5.5.

Although it contains no confession of sin, its traditional Christian use as a penitential psalm seems appropriate since the psalmist appears to accept that he deserves the Lord's discipline (see Achtemeier 1974)—he never pleads innocence and he petitions Yahweh for mercy (הַגִּי, v. 3), not for justice. By contrast, (a) the crisis in Psalm 7 was precipitated not by illness but by an accusation from a friend-turned-enemy and (b) the psalmist offered no hint of feeling guilty, but boldly called upon Yahweh for righteous judgement in the expectation that he would be fully vindicated. In Psalm 6 the psalmist cried out to the Lord to turn his anger away from him (6:2), whereas the author of Psalm 7 urged God to arise in anger against his enemies (7:7).

*Functional links.* Except for the Davidic inscription (לְדָוִד), there are no similarities between the headings of the two psalms. The heading of Psalm 6 contains three musical notations: (a) it belonged to the music director's collection (לְמַנְצֵחַ); (b) it was played on stringed instruments (בְּנִינֹת); and (c) it had an obscure musical notation, the meaning of which is now unclear (עַל־הַשְּׁמִינִית). Although it appears to have been sung to musical accompaniment, the heading of Psalm 7 gives no indication that it belonged to the music director's collection. The editorial note is historical rather than liturgical in nature. Whereas Psalm 6 is designated a מְזֻמָּר, Psalm 7 is a שְׁגִיזָן.

Little is known with any certainty about how these two psalms were used in ancient Hebrew worship. Unlike Psalms 3-5, there is reason to consider them as morning or evening hymns. Mays' (1994a) suggestion that temple priests used Psalm 6 to minister to the sick offers a probable usage. Perhaps they also used it to minister to people suffering from deep anguish which they attributed to Yahweh's punishment. In a similar way, Psalm 7 would be ideal for ministering to those who were victims of sinister accusations, but it is pure guesswork as to whether it was formally used in this way.

*Thematic links.* One is hard-pressed to find significant thematic links. Even where terminology is shared, it does not signal thematic similarity. For example, Yahweh's anger is mentioned in both psalms, but in Psalm 6 it is upon the psalmist, whereas in Psalm 7 the psalmist invokes it against his enemy.

#### ***5.4.3 Basis of arrangement***

What conclusions can be drawn from the preceding analysis of links? In one respect, it seems as if there are no strong links between Psalms 6 and 7. They share some potentially significant terminology (e.g., אָוֹן, חֵלֶץ, מָוֶת, and פָּעַל), but close examination shows that the usage of these terms differs significantly in the two psalms.

Although there is a serious risk of imagining a relationship between these two psalms that did not exist in the minds of the redactors, I can envisage two plausible reasons for their juxtaposition.

- 1) As suggested by Keil and Delitzsch (2002), it is possible that references to “enemies” at the end of Psalm 6 and the beginning of Psalm 7 served as a tail-head link in the minds of the compilers. This interpretation is supported by my analysis of the shared terminology, which pointed to צָרָר and אֹיֵב as the strongest verbal links between the two psalms.
- 2) A more fanciful possibility lies in the striking contrasts between the two psalms; one could hardly imagine two more opposite individual laments. The first is a prayer for mercy by a guilty man, the other an innocent person’s plea for justice. Might these contrasts have led the editors to bring them together as complementary psalms—one for ministering to the afflicted, the other for ministering to the falsely accused? This hypothesis is difficult to verify, but on the reasonable assumption that psalms were used for ministry purposes (e.g., Broyles 1999), it is worth considering.

If the editors used shared references to enemies as the basis of arrangement, this implies a surface-level linkage, whereas if they grouped them because of

the usage for ministering to people in different situations, the redactional rationale is much more nuanced.

What conclusions can be drawn? Since the stated goal of the study is to deal with demonstrable links between psalms, the speculative suggestion in #2 above must be ignored because there is no hard evidence to support it. This leaves two possibilities—either there is no editorial rationale for the juxtaposition of Psalms 6 and 7 or editorial rationale lies in the allusion to enemies, who were introduced in Psalm 6:9-11, being continued in Psalm 7 (so Keil and Delitzsch 2002). On the evidence of Psalms 6 and 7 alone, I would be inclined to overlook the use of **צָרָר** and **אֵיב** as deliberate hook words joining the two psalms. However, the fact that the same words are also found in the next two psalms (Pss 8 and 9-10) sways my assessment. The odds are heavily against these two synonyms occurring in four consecutive psalms by chance. Consequently, I favour Keil and Delitzsch's view that Psalm 7 continues the theme of meeting enemies with strong confidence, a theme that was introduced towards the end of Psalm 6.

## 5.5 The relationships between Psalms 7 and 8

### 5.5.1 Verbal links

Excluding their headings, Psalm 7 contains 169 words with 102 unique lexemes, while Psalm 8 has 92 words with 60 unique lexemes.<sup>115</sup> These are the 17 shared lexemes (the numbers in parentheses indicate the frequency of occurrence in each psalm): אֵיב (1:1), אֱלֹהִים (2:1), אֶרֶץ (1:2), אֲשֶׁר (1:2), בָּ (7:3), בָּן (1:1), הָ (3:4), יְ (22:10), יְהוָה (8:2), כְּבוֹד (1:1), בּוֹן (3:1), כֹּל (2:4), לְ (7:1), מִן (1:2), עַל (5:1), צָרָה (2:1) and שֵׁם (1:2). Psalm 7 shares 17 percent (17/102) of its vocabulary with Psalm 8, while Psalm 8 shares 18 percent (17/92) with Psalm 7. The gross verbal overlap is 12 percent (i.e., 17 of 145 lexemes are shared).

The weightiest verbal link is the occurrence of שֵׁם in the last line of Psalm 7 and in the first and last lines of Psalm 8. The central theme of Psalm 8 is the majesty of Yahweh's name (שֵׁם־יְהוָה), as is clear from the opening and closing refrain ("Yahweh, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth"), which

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<sup>115</sup> These figures are calculated by counting the Hebrew article, conjunction and inseparable prepositions as separate words. If these conjoined lexemes were not counted separately, Psalms 7 and 8 would have 132 and 72 words respectively.

frames the psalm. The allusion to שם־יהוה at the very end of Psalm 7—only the word עֲלִיּוֹן, “Most High”, follows it—provides a perfect opportunity to insert the a psalm celebrating the majesty of his name. No other psalm in Book I of the Psalter contains a reference to his name in its final verse. Six other לְדָוִד psalms (Pss 52, 61, 69, 140, 142 and 145) do contain references to שם־יהוה in their final verse, but none at the very end of the verse.<sup>116</sup> Thus no psalm in the biblical Psalter offers a clearer tail-head connection for Psalm 8 than Psalm 7. The sense that this was a deliberate editorial consideration in the placement of Psalm 8 is strengthened by the fact that there are two strategic references to his name in Psalm 9 (שָׁמַךְ in 9:3 and שָׁמַךְ in 9:11). The first occurrence in Psalm 9 is part of the opening strophe, hence forming another tail-head connection between the end of Psalm 8 and the beginning of Psalm 9. Just like the reference to שם־יהוה in 7:18, the allusion to שָׁמַךְ in 9:3 is immediately followed by a further description of Yahweh as עֲלִיּוֹן, the Most High. Thus the end of Psalm 7 and the beginning of Psalm 9 provide a frame for the celebration of the name of Yahweh in Psalm 8—references to שם־יהוה עֲלִיּוֹן (“the name of the Lord, the Most High”) frame the refrain יהוה אֲדַגְנֶנּוּ מִה־אֲדִיר

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<sup>116</sup> The only non לְדָוִד psalm that contains a reference to the Lord’s name in its final verse is Psalm 45, in which שָׁמַךְ occurs at the beginning of the verse.

שְׁמֶךָ (“Yahweh, our Lord, how majestic is your name”). I confidently conclude that in Psalms 7-9 we have a cluster of three psalms linked by their references to שְׁמִיּהוּהוּ, with the focal Psalm 8 framed by the allusions to his name at the end of Psalm 7 and the beginning of Psalm 9.<sup>117</sup>

Like Psalms 6 and 7, Psalm 8 contains references to enemies using the words צַר (26:14:4) and אֹיֵב (283:74:4). Psalms 6-8 thus form a chain of three psalms using identical terminology for enemies. While this might be pure coincidence, it seems unlikely for three reasons. First, nowhere else in the Psalter does צַר occur in even two consecutive psalms. Second, only twice does אֹיֵב occur in three consecutive psalms, namely, Psalms 41-45 (one Davidic and four Korahite psalms) and Psalms 54-56 (all Davidic). Third, אֹיֵב is also used in Psalm 9 and צַר in Psalm 10. Since Psalms 9-10 were originally a single acrostic poem,<sup>118</sup> we have a chain of four consecutive psalms using

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<sup>117</sup> After completing this chapter, I discovered an online article by Professor Labuschagne (2007) in which he too observes the use of “name” as a key word in Psalms 7:18, 8:1 [sic] and 10, and 9:3 and 11, used to joint Psalms 7, 8 and 9.

<sup>118</sup> In the Septuagint, Psalms 9-10 are a single psalm. In the Hebrew text, they form a single acrostic poem. There is a widespread consensus amongst modern scholars (e.g., Bratcher and Reyburn 1991; Brueggemann 1991b; Motyer 1994; Craigie 1998; Broyles 1999; Strugnell

both terms. As the statistical analysis in the following chapter will demonstrate, for both synonyms to feature so prominently in four consecutive psalms is much more likely to be intentional than coincidental. These terms' presence seems to be a feature of the psalms that influenced the editors to group them. Due to its frequency, I would not argue strongly for this conclusion if only אָיִב occurred in four consecutive psalms. However, צָרַר is a relatively rare, so its presence in four consecutive psalms stands out. The presence of אָיִב in the same four psalms strengthens the link based on צָרַר.

### ***5.5.2 Other links***

*Historical links.* Psalm 8 is such a general, universal hymn of praise that it offers no clues as to its implied occasion or purpose of composition. Therefore, it presents no grounds for comparison with Psalm 7.

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and Eshel 2001; Richard 2002; Wilson 2002; Terrien 2003; Miller 2004; Goldingay 2006; Labuschagne 2007) that they were originally a single composition. Strugnell and Eshel (2001:41-44) aver that, although their acrostic shows they were once a single composition, their content suggests their order may originally have been the reverse of the order found in the Hebrew Bible, that is, the lament (Ps 10) may have preceded the thanksgiving (Ps 9). Thus, so to speak, the acrostic began with an l-m-n sequence, followed by the a-b-c sequence.

*Functional links.* The headings of the two psalms offer no links beyond the fact that both are לְיְיָ psalms. After a string of five individual laments (Pss 3-7), Psalm 8 is the first hymn of praise in the Psalter. Since we know nothing about how either Psalms 7 or 8 were used in ancient Israel, it is impossible to judge whether a liturgical purpose was partly responsible for their consecutive placement in this collection of psalms.

*Thematic links.* There are two thematic similarities between the two psalms that do not relate directly to specific shared terminology. The primary connection between them relates to the movement to praise Yahweh's name at the end of Psalm 7, which is developed fully in Psalm 8. Two threads in opening stanza of Psalm 8 reinforce the appropriateness of using it as a sequel to Psalm 7.

- 1) Terms such as אֲדָר and הוֹד in 8:2 depict the Lord's sovereign, majestic power over heaven and earth. This resonates with the psalmist's pleas for Him to intervene in righteous judgement in the affairs of men (Ps 7).
- 2) God's enemies in 8:3, described in identical language to the psalmist's enemies in Psalm 7 (צָרָר and אֵיב), are silenced by "babes and infants". Just as in Psalm 7, the Lord protects and vindicates those who are innocent and helpless against their fierce enemies.

### 5.5.3 *Basis of arrangement*

Literary and thematic links provide the basis of arrangement. The hook words *שְׁמִיְהוָה* (or *שְׁמֶךָ*, addressing Yahweh) serve as the primary basis for the placement of Psalm 8, linking it to the end of Psalm 7 and the beginning of Psalm 9. This link is strengthened by three sub-themes: (a) allusions to enemies as *צָרָר* and *אֵיב*, (b) the Lord's majestic authority over all the earth and (c) the Lord's vindication of those who are innocent and defenceless and weak against fierce enemies.

This judgement regarding the basis of arrangement is confirmed by the observation that Psalm 9 is a sister poem to Psalm 7. Psalm 9 echoes all the major themes of Psalm 7 (e.g., preponderance of judgement and justice related terminology, Yahweh as righteous Judge, allusions to enemies, singing praise to the name of the Lord Most High), developing those themes in the reverse order, that is, whereas Psalm 7 moves from lament to praise, Psalm 9 moves from praise to lament. These observations make it probable that Psalm 8 was inserted between Psalms 7 and 9 because of its word links to both of them.

These brief observations of the similarities between Psalms 7 and 9 raise some doubt as to whether it was correct to end the corpus of study at Psalm 8. Nevertheless, I am persuaded that Psalm 8 does provide a natural terminal

point for the study. Although Psalm 9 balances well with Psalm 7, it should be noted that Psalms 9-10 originally formed a single poem (see §5.2.1 above), which ruins the perfect symmetry of Psalms 7-9. I believe it is best to interpret the move from lament (Ps 7) to praise (Ps 8) as the climactic end of the first grouping of psalms (i.e., the first crescendo). Psalm 9-10 takes this climax, adoration of Yahweh's majestic name, as its point of departure to begin the next grouping of psalms. Therefore, it is proper to consider Psalm 8 as the ending point of the group beginning with Psalm 3.

## 5.6 Conclusions

The objective of this chapter was to identify links between adjacent psalms and analyse how they might have served as the editorial rationale for juxtaposing psalms. An attempt was made to weigh both (a) whether there is enough linkage to suggest purposeful placement of each pair of psalms and (b) if the answer is yes, then which links did they use as the basis of concatenation?

I noted strong links between three pairs of psalms—Psalms 3-4, 4-5 and 7-8. For each of these pairs, there is convincing evidence of concatenation, so the question of whether there was purposeful arrangement received a confident affirmative answer. Psalm 6 emerged as the black sheep of the family. Its

links to both its neighbours were weaker than the links between other neighbouring psalms. Nevertheless, its heading and its verbal-thematic content provided sufficient links with Psalm 5 to suggest a purposeful relationship. The linkage between Psalms 6 and 7 is the weakest in the group. Looking at them in isolation, I was tempted to conclude that there is no purposeful rationale for their adjacent positions in the Psalter. However, the fact that the most significant link words between Psalms 6 and 7, *אֵיב* and *צָרָר*, occur in four consecutive psalms, swayed my conclusion in favour of seeing these as hook words providing a meaningful connection. Thus, my answer to the first question—whether there is enough linkage to suggest purposeful placement of each pair of psalms—is “yes” for all five pairs.

Turning to the matter of which links provided the editorial rationale for the juxtaposition of psalms, three main options were considered: historical, cultic and verbal-thematic. In the cases of Psalms 3-4 and 7-8, the evidence pointed strongly towards a verbal-thematic basis of arrangement. In the case of Psalms 4-5, there is evidence of *both* cultic (functional) and verbal-thematic linkage. Psalms 5-6 are related by means of verbal-thematic similarities, but not as strongly as Psalms 3-4 or 7-8. Finally, in the case of Psalms 6-7, the only significant link is verbal.

Thus verbal-thematic links seem to hold pride of place in the final arrangement of Psalms 3-8. Each psalm is related to its neighbours by one or more verbal-thematic links. In some instances, these links form a multi-strand rope (e.g., Pss 3-4 and 7-8), whereas in others they look like a thin thread (e.g., Pss 6-7).

## Chapter 6

### Composition of Psalms 3-8

This chapter represents the heart of the study—the quest for evidence of purposeful editorial arrangement beyond the level of the concatenation of adjacent psalms. In the previous chapter, we saw persuasive evidence that the editors used verbal-thematic links between psalms as their primary basis for juxtaposing neighbouring hymns. Now we need to ask whether or not there is evidence that their purposeful arrangement extended beyond a desire to link each psalm in a chain to the one immediately before it. Did the editors have an overall rationale and objective for the arrangement of the entire mini-corpus, Psalms 3-8?

I shall explore three kinds of evidence that may contribute to the editorial shaping of the corpus: (a) the headings, (b) words and (c) themes. The study to date has shown that historical links were unlikely to have played a

significant role in the arrangement of the corpus since little is known of the occasion of the individual psalms. Therefore, historical factors need not be included in this analysis.<sup>119</sup> The headings provide the probable *first criterion of arrangement* (e.g., Wilson 1985a; McFall 2000). On the reasonable assumption that the headings were quite early additions to the psalms, it would be natural for early collections of heading-defined groups to arise (Cundall 1988; Thompson and Kidner 1996; Sampey 1999; McFall 2000; Ridderbos and Craigie 2002). Thus the headings may point to an early round of compilation predating the final shaping of the Psalter. Since verbal and thematic links emerged strongly from the analysis of adjacent psalms, it is possible that the editors brought together an entire group of psalms sharing common terms and themes, possibly just because they shared those themes or possibly because they wanted the cumulative “voice” of the group of psalms to amplify their “message”.<sup>120</sup> Another possibility is that the editors

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<sup>119</sup> This is contrary to the views of Blaiklock (1970), Kidner (1973, cautiously), Motyer (2001) and Lane (2006), who each believe Psalms 3-6 and possibly also Psalm 7 share the same historical occasion, namely, Absalom’s revolt against David.

<sup>120</sup> With respect to Psalms 93-100, Howard (1997:21) claims that “[w]hen these psalms are read as a group, consecutively and in relationship to one another, they speak with a voice that is greater than the voices of the individual psalms themselves.”

designed the corpus for use in a particular worship situation (or situations). The findings from the previous chapter suggest this is unlikely, but since the collection may look different from an eagle's-eye view, I shall try to keep an open mind should the evidence point towards a liturgical rationale for its arrangement.

### 6.1 The headings

There is general consensus amongst scholars working on the arrangement of the Psalter that the headings played a significant role in the arrangement of the psalms, but that they were not the primary basis of arrangement (e.g., Wilson 1985a; Anderson 1994; McFall 2000). Anderson expressed this well when he said, "Whilst no part of the superscripts may be seen as the primary editing principle, there are certain important factors to note" (1994:225). Since they probably served as an initial basis of collection, it makes sense to begin by analysing links between the headings of Psalms 3-8. What links are evident amongst the headings of Psalms 3-8 and, more importantly, what significance do these links have for the arrangement of the corpus?

The only link shared by all six psalms is the designation  $\text{לְדָוִד}$ , which is probably best interpreted as a designation of authorship (e.g., Anderson 1994; Limburg 1996). In Book I of the Psalter, all except Psalms 1, 2, 10 and 33 are

תְּדַבֵּר psalms. However, Psalms 9-10 were originally a single psalm, so the heading of Psalm 9 subsumes Psalm 10 (so Bratcher and Reyburn 1991; Motyer 1994; Craigie 1998; Broyles 1999; Strugnell and Eshel 2001; Wilcock 2001; Clifford 2002; Wilson 2002; Terrien 2003; Miller 2004; Goldingay 2006; Labuschagne 2007). Similarly, it is probable that the תְּדַבֵּר inscription in the heading of Psalm 32 covers Psalm 33 as well (e.g., Anderson 1994). According to Craigie (1998:270, note 1), both the Septuagint and the Qumran evidence (see 4QPs) attribute Psalm 33 to David, while there are eight Hebrew manuscripts which join Psalms 32 and 33. Craigie tentatively concludes that Psalms 32 and 33 were originally separate compositions, each with its own Davidic inscription. Then they were combined into one psalm for a period, which resulted in the removal of Psalm 33's heading. When the two psalms were later separated again, the heading of Psalm 33 had fallen away.<sup>121</sup>

If we are correct in judging that Psalms 1 and 2 serve as an editorial introduction to the Psalter (e.g., Brennan 1976 and 1980; Childs 1979; Wilson 1985a; Zenger 1993; Limburg 1996; McCann 1996; Wilcock 2001; Cole 2002

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<sup>121</sup> For a fuller treatment, see Wilson (1985a), "The use of 'untitled' psalms in the Hebrew", especially pages 405-407.

and 2005; Goldingay 2006), that Psalms 9 and 10 formed one composition and that Psalm 33 originally bore a לְדָוִד inscription, then it is clear that the entire body of Book I is a collection of לְדָוִד psalms (Anderson 1994; Bratcher 2006a; Labuschagne 2007). Therefore, the significance of לְדָוִד throughout Book I is that it served as the earliest and most basic criterion for bringing this group of psalms together (McFall 2000). This observation is not of great significance for this study since it is one of the “givens” upon which the study is built. It is self-evident that Book I is first-and-foremost a collection of Davidic psalms. What I am really probing is how the editors arranged this collection of Davidic psalms.

The next clearest parallel between the headings is that all except Psalm 7 bear the genre designation מְזֻמָּר. The noun מְזֻמָּר is derived from the verb זָמַר (Wolf 1999b:§558), which denotes “playing a musical instrument in the context of worship, usually a stringed instrument” (Allen 1996:§2376.1). Delekat (1964) argued that מְזֻמָּר indicates “that a psalm was a composed piece, designed for a particular occasion” (Kidner 1973:37). There are 57 מְזֻמָּר psalms in the Psalter, 22 of them in Book I. Amongst the 57 מְזֻמָּר psalms, only five occur in isolation (Pss 15, 73, 92, 98 and 143). The remainder all occur in clusters ranging in size from two to seven consecutive

psalms.<sup>122</sup> This reflects a clear tendency to group מְזוֹמֵר psalms (see Wilson 1985a; McFall 2000).<sup>123</sup> With reference to the corpus under investigation, it singles out Psalm 7 as the odd member of the group, the only non-מְזוֹמֵר psalm among Psalms 3-9/10. The implication is that genre considerations were a factor in the grouping of psalms, but they were not the overarching consideration. Given the clear tendency to cluster מְזוֹמֵר psalms, the editors must have had a good reason for inserting a שְׁגִיזוֹן psalm (Psalm 7 is the only שְׁגִיזוֹן psalm in the Psalter) in amongst six מְזוֹמֵר psalms (3-6 and 8-9/10).

Third, Psalms 4-6 form a heading-defined trio of psalms. Their headings are virtually identical.

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<sup>122</sup> Clusters include Psalms 3-6, 8-9, 12-13, 19-24, 29-31, 38-41, 47-51, 62-68, 75-77, 79-80, 82-85, 87-88, 100-101, 108-110 and 139-141. In all, we have one cluster of seven, one of six, one of five, three of four, four of three and five pairs.

<sup>123</sup> McFall (2000) argues for a four-stage sorting process in the arrangement of the Psalter. The four stages he proposes are by (a) author, (b) preponderance of divine names (whether אֱלֹהִים or יְהוָה), (c) genre (primarily in Book II) and (d) shared words or themes.

*Table 6.1: Similarities in the headings of Psalms 4-6 (Hebrew)*

Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6
לְמַנְצַח	לְמַנְצַח	לְמַנְצַח
בְּנִינֹת	אֶל־הַנְּחִילֹת	בְּנִינֹת
		עַל־הַשְּׁמִינִית
מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד	מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד	מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד

For ease of reference, the table can be translated into English as follows:

*Table 6.2: Similarities in the headings of Psalms 4-6 (English)*

Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6
for the music director	for the music director	for the music director
with stringed instruments	for the flutes	with stringed instruments
		according to sheminith
a psalm of David	a psalm of David	a psalm of David

It is immediately apparent that all three psalms belonged to the music director's collection. Fifty-five psalms belonged to this collection, all except four appearing in Books I-III of the Psalter. This means that 51 of 89 psalms in

Books I-III belonged to the music director's collection. The  $\text{לְמִנְצֵחַ}$  psalms appear to have been an earlier collection that the final editors attempted to keep together in the final arrangement of the Psalter. Their clustering points to deliberate grouping rather than random arrangement. Amongst the 55  $\text{לְמִנְצֵחַ}$  psalms, we find one group of thirteen (Pss 49-62), one of seven (Pss 64-70), a string of six (Pss 8-14, counting Pss 9/10 as one psalm), one of five (Pss 18-22), two of four (Pss 39-42 and 44-47), two triplets (Pss 4-6 and 75-77) and three pairs (Pss 80-81, 84-85 and 139-140). In a string of 32 psalms spanning Psalms 39-70, only three did not belong to the music director's collection.<sup>124</sup> Once again, the fact that Psalm 7 breaks what would otherwise be a sequence of nine consecutive  $\text{לְמִנְצֵחַ}$  psalms (Pss 4-14)<sup>125</sup> points towards its positional significance.

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<sup>124</sup> This assumes that any psalm not designated  $\text{לְמִנְצֵחַ}$  did not belong to the music director's collection. This assumption is by no means certain, but it is reasonable given that the presence of  $\text{לְמִנְצֵחַ}$  in the heading is the only evidence we have by which to identify psalms which once belonged to this collection.

<sup>125</sup> I am once again counting Psalms 9/10 as a unit so that the heading of Psalm 9 covers Psalm 10 as well.

The headings of Psalms 4, 5 and 6 each mention the instruments that were to accompany the singing of these hymns in public worship. Only eight psalm headings mention instruments, namely, “stringed instruments” in Psalms 4, 6, 54, 55, 61, 67 and 76 and “flutes” in Psalm 5. Psalms 4-6 are the only three psalms in Book I for which instruments are indicated. They also form the only chain of three consecutive psalms mentioning instruments.<sup>126</sup>

Since only eight psalms indicate musical instruments, the statistical probability of three of them occurring consecutively by random chance is remote (1 in 9845 to be exact). It seems likely that Psalms 4-6 were originally a trio of psalms within the music director’s collection that the compilers positioned as a trio after Psalm 3, no doubt because of the striking verbal and thematic similarities between Psalms 3 and 4.

The fourth feature of the headings is that Psalms 3 and 7 have similar headings. They are two of the thirteen Davidic psalms containing an historical note in the superscription. Unlike the other four psalms in my corpus, they lack the designation “for the director of music” and they do not contain any

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<sup>126</sup> Indeed, nowhere else in the Psalter are there two consecutive psalms that have headings mentioning instruments.

musical notations relating to tune or instruments. Both contain three elements in the same order: genre, author and occasion.

*Table 6.3: Similarities between the headings of Psalms 3 and 7 (Hebrew)*

	Psalm 3	Psalm 7
genre	מְזֻמָּר	שִׁגְיוֹן
author	לְדָוִד	לְדָוִד
occasion	בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲבִישָׁלוֹם בְּנוֹ	אֲשֶׁר־שָׁר לַיהוָה עַל־דְּבָרֵי־כּוֹשׁ בְּנֵי־מִינֵי

*Table 6.4: Similarities between the headings of Psalms 3 and 7 (English)*

	Psalm 3	Psalm 7
genre	a psalm	a shiggaion
author	of David	of David
occasion	when he fled from the presence of Absalom, his son	which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjaminite

Might the compilers have used Psalms 3 and 7 as some sort of literary frame around the previously existing group of Psalms 4-6? Tate (2001:347) has

suggested that the presence of historical notes in the headings of Psalms 3 and 7 identifies them as “the framing psalms of the run of psalms before Psalm 8”.<sup>127</sup> This may be reading too much into the pattern of the headings. It is difficult to judge whether the compilers intended the following neat chiasmic pattern.

Ps 3 historical psalm, regarding Absalom

Ps 4 music director's, with stringed instruments

Ps 5 music director's, for flutes

Ps 6 music director's, with stringed instruments

Ps 7 historical psalm, regarding Cush

Labuschagne (2007), who considers Psalms 2-8 as a self-contained unit of seven psalms,<sup>128</sup> believes they were deliberately arranged in a chiasmic

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<sup>127</sup> Tate (2001:347) thinks that “Cush, the Benjamite” should be associated with the Cushite who brought David news of Absalom's death in 2 Samuel 18. Thus Psalms 3 and 7 provide an historical frame around Psalms 3-7, placing them in the context of Absalom's rebellion—Psalm 3 marks the beginning of the rebellion, while Psalm 7 signals its end.

<sup>128</sup> Labuschagne believes the editors liked to collect groups of seven psalms. In addition to Psalms 2-8, he sees five other groups of seven psalms: in Book II, there are seven Korahite psalms (Pss 42-49), two groups of seven Davidic psalms (Pss 51-57 and 58-65), and a mixed

pattern. Psalms 2 and 8 form a frame (*inclusio*) around the collection; Psalm 2 “sets the Davidic psalms in a messianic perspective” while Psalm 8 “sets them in a universal perspective” (p. 16). Between the borders of this frame are five psalms, Psalms 3-7, which “all deal with the speaker’s firm belief in the unfailing deliverance, protection, and blessing of YHWH” (p. 16). They focus on “Psalm 5 at their centre, a prayer for deliverance in which YHWH is explicitly called ‘my King and my God’ (v. 3)” (p. 16). He concludes that “[t]his group of 7 psalms form a menorah pattern, with Psalm 5 at the centre” (p. 14). In Labuschagne’s view, carefully crafted chiasmic collections are more than possible. He (Labuschagne 2006e:10) believes “the menorah pattern”, which consists of “7 items symmetrically or asymmetrically arranged around a distinct centre, . . . occurs frequently throughout the biblical writings.”<sup>129</sup> So it

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group that ends the Book (Pss 66-72). In Book V, there is a sub-group of seven psalms (Pss 107-113) within a larger corpus of eleven (Pss 107-117).

<sup>129</sup> In a series of articles published in the 1970s, Robert Alden (1974; 1976; 1978) sought to demonstrate “that consciously or unconsciously many of the Psalms were written in a chiasmic pattern” (Alden 1978:210). Although Alden was uncertain whether chiasmus was being used intentionally as an ordering mechanism, he claimed to find chiasmic patterns in 54 psalms, a frequency hardly consistent with accidental use of the device. His studies make plausible the theory that the authors and/or editors of the psalms were predisposed to chiasmic arrangements.

is quite possible that the editors used the information in the headings of Psalms 3-7 to pattern them into a neat chiasmic arrangement as illustrated above. Nevertheless, it remains impossible to judge whether this beautiful arrangement has its origins in the hands of editors or in the mind of the modern reader.

So it is plausible that the editors may have added Psalm 7 after Psalm 6 to balance Psalm 3 in a neatly crafted chiasmic collection.<sup>130</sup> However, I think an even more plausible hypothesis is that Psalms 3 and 7 were neighbouring hymns in an earlier collection, but the insertion of Psalms 4-6 as a trio separated them. This would not negate the possibility that the neat chiasmic arrangement was also intended. If Labuschagne's claim that the editors were artists at work in arranging the psalms into beautiful patterns, they may have found the merging of two mini-groups (Pss 3 and 7 with Pss 4-6) to form a

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<sup>130</sup> Regarding the Songs of Ascent, Barker (1995:165-166) notes that the headings form a nearly symmetrical chiasmic pattern. Psalm 127 lies at the centre of the 15 Songs of Ascent; it is attributed to Solomon. The seven psalms on each side include five anonymous and two Davidic. The positioning of the seven anonymous and Davidic psalms is very nearly symmetrical. It is unlikely the only Solomonic psalm was placed in the centre of this collection by chance and, by coincidence, has a perfect balance of Davidic and anonymous psalms on either side. This looks like an instance of the compilers balancing the headings neatly.

perfect pattern quite appealing. I shall examine the merits of this hypothesis below (see §6.2.1).

What can reasonably be concluded from the headings?

- 1) Psalms 4-6 form a trio of psalms that previously belonged to the music director's collection and were inserted into the final arrangement of Book I as a group. The rationale for placing this trio *here* lies in the exceptionally strong verbal and thematic links between Psalms 3 and 4.
- 2) The headings of Psalms 3 and 7 are strikingly similar to each other and completely dissimilar to all other headings in Book I. These two psalms form a kind of "frame" around Psalms 4-6. It leads one to wonder whether this framing is intentional or unintentional. If intentional, either Psalm 7 was added to create the frame or Psalms 3 and 7 were previously juxtaposed and Psalms 4-6 were inserted between them.
- 3) As a rule, the compilers attempted to keep מְזוֹמָר psalms together. They also tried to keep לְמִנְצָח psalms together. Since Psalm 7, which is neither a מְזוֹמָר nor a לְמִנְצָח psalm, divides a group of מְזוֹמָר psalms (Pss 3-9/10) and a group of לְמִנְצָח psalms (Pss 4-14), its position in this collection calls for an explanation.

## 6.2 Verbal links

In the previous chapter, I conducted an exhaustive analysis of words linking adjacent psalms. In this section, I shall examine words shared by non-adjacent psalms. The purpose of this analysis is to determine what, if anything, provided a rationale for the arrangement of Psalms 3-8 as a whole.

### 6.2.1 *The relationship between Psalms 3 and 7*

An analysis of the headings (see §6.1) identified Psalm 7 as being the odd one out amongst Psalms 3-8 because it belonged neither to the music director's collection (לְמִנְצֵחַ) nor to the genre classification "psalm" (מְזֹמֵר). The headings also revealed some affinity between Psalms 3 and 7 that called for an explanation as to how and why Psalm 7 came to occupy its present position. The quest for that explanation must begin with a verbal analysis. Table 6.5 presents an exhaustive list of all lexemes in Psalm 3 that are shared with other psalms in my corpus. Entries in light grey indicate *cognate words* instead of identical lexemes.

*Table 6.5: Lexemes that Psalm 3 shares with other psalms*

Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
אֵיב			אֵיב	אֵיב	אֵיב

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Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
אִן		אִן	אִן	אִן	
אֵל	אֵל	אֵל		אֵל	
אֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים		אֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים
אָמַר	אָמַר	אָמַר			
אָנִי		אָנִי	אָנִי		
אֶתָּה	אֶתָּה	אֶתָּה	אֶתָּה		
בָּ	בָּ	בָּ	בָּ	בָּ	בָּ
בִּרְכָה		בִּרְכֵךְ			
דָּוָד	דָּוָד	דָּוָד	דָּוָד	דָּוָד	דָּוָד
הֵ	הֵ	הֵ	הֵ	הֵ	
יְ	יְ	יְ	יְ	יְ	
יְהוּה	יְהוּה	יְהוּה	יְהוּה	יְהוּה	יְהוּה
יָרָא		יָרְאָה			
יָשַׁן	יָשַׁן				
כְּבוֹד	כְּבוֹד			כְּבוֹד	כְּבוֹד
כִּי	כִּי	כִּי	כִּי		כִּי
כֹּל			כֹּל	כֹּל	כֹּל
לְ	לְ	לְ	לְ	לְ	לְ
לֹא		לֹא		לֹא	
מָגַן				מָגַן	

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Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
מָה	מָה				מָה
מְזֹמֹר	מְזֹמֹר	מְזֹמֹר	מְזֹמֹר		מְזֹמֹר
מִן	מִן	מִן	מִן	מִן	מִן
נֶפֶשׁ			נֶפֶשׁ	נֶפֶשׁ	
סֵלָה	סֵלָה			סֵלָה	
עַל	עַל	עַל	עַל	עַל	עַל
עָנָה	עָנָה				
צָר	צָר		צָרָר	צָרָר	צָרָר
קִדְשׁ		קִדְשׁ			
קוֹל		קוֹל	קוֹל		
קוּם				קוּם	
קָרָא	קָרָא				
רֹאשׁ				רֹאשׁ	
רַב	רַב	רַב			
רַבֵּב	רַבֵּב	רַבְּבָה			
רָשָׁע		רָשָׁה		רָשָׁע	
שָׁכַב	שָׁכַב				
שִׁית					שִׁית
	24	18 (24)	17 (18)	21 (22)	14 (15)

Table 6.5 indicates that only Psalm 4 shares more lexemes with Psalm 3 than Psalm 7 does. If the cognates are counted, Psalm 5 moves ahead of Psalm 7 on this count. If we exclude the headings and remove divine names, the article, prepositions, personal pronouns and common particles, the results are as in Table 6.6.

*Table 6.6: Significant lexemes that Psalm 3 shares with other psalms*

Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
אֵיב			אֵיב	אֵיב	אֵיב
אֵין		אֵין	אֵין	אֵין	
אָמַר	אָמַר	אָמַר			
בְּרָכָה		בְּרָךְ			
יָרָא		יָרְאֵה			
יָשׁוּן	יָשׁוּן				
יָשַׁע			יָשַׁע	יָשַׁע	
כְּבוֹד	כְּבוֹד			כְּבוֹד	כְּבוֹד
כֹּל			כֹּל	כֹּל	כֹּל
מָגֵן				מָגֵן	
נָפֵשׁ			נָפֵשׁ	נָפֵשׁ	
סֵלָה	סֵלָה			סֵלָה	
עָנָה	עָנָה				

Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
צַר	צַר		צָרַר	צָרַר	צָרַר
קִדְשׁ		קִדְשׁ			
קוֹל		קוֹל	קוֹל		
קוֹם				קוֹם	
קָרָא	קָרָא				
רֹאשׁ				רֹאשׁ	
רַב	רַב	רַב			
רָבַב	רָבַב	רָבַבָּה			
רָשַׁע		רָשָׁה		רָשַׁע	
שָׁכַב	שָׁכַב				
שִׁית					שִׁית
	11	3 (9)	6 (7)	11 (12)	4 (5)

This table is more revealing, showing clearly that Psalm 7 shares a significant number of important link words with Psalm 3. Only Psalm 4, which has abnormally strong verbal links to Psalm 3, matches Psalm 7. The other three psalms are far behind.

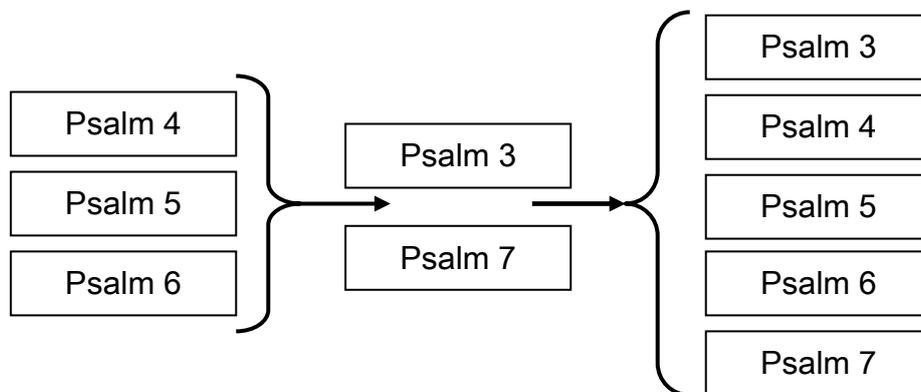
A careful look at the shared terminology flags five noteworthy verbal-thematic links between Psalms 3 and 7.

- 1) Their respective opening strophes share three similarities in phraseology. First, the psalmist's enemies are speaking against "my soul" (נַפְשִׁי) in 3:3, while in 7:3 they are threatening to tear "my soul" (נַפְשִׁי) apart like a ferocious lion. Second, in both cases there appears to be no way of escape, indicated by the phrases "there is no deliverance" (אֵין יְשׁוּעָה, 3:3) and "none to deliver" (אֵין מַצִּיל, 7:3). Third, they share the cognate noun "deliverance" (יְשׁוּעָה, 3:3) and verb "deliver" (יָשַׁע, 7:2).
  
- 2) In Psalm 3:4, God will "lift the head" of the righteous psalmist to vindicate him against his foes, but in Psalm 7:16 the enemy's mischief "returns upon his own head". The shared lexeme ראש ("head") signals the link.
  
- 3) The exact form כְּבוֹדִי occurs in 3:4 and 7:6. In 3:4, the psalmist uses it to call Yahweh "my glory", likely meaning that Yahweh is the one who gives him honour and defends his honour. In 7:6, it is used in an imprecation saying that *if* the psalmist is guilty of wrongdoing, Yahweh should allow his enemy to take away "my honour". The context makes it clear that he expects the opposite outcome—since he is guiltless, Yahweh will vindicate him and defend his honour.

- 4) Both psalmists describe Yahweh as their protective “shield” using the word **מָגֵן**, which denotes a small, round shield. Psalm 3:4 depicts Yahweh as “a shield about me”, whereas Psalm 7:11 reads, “my shield is with God”.
  
- 5) Immediately before their final declaration of confidence in Yahweh (i.e., 3:9 and 7:18), both psalms contain a section in which Yahweh fights against the wicked. Psalm 3 portrays Yahweh arising like a mighty warrior and fighting against the psalmist’s enemies, striking them on the cheek and breaking their teeth (3:7). Similarly, Psalm 7 describes God preparing his sword and bow to fight against the unrepentant (7:13-14). In both psalms, the object of Yahweh’s assault is “the wicked” (**רְשָׁעִים**, 3:8 and 7:10).

Coupled with the similarities between their headings, these five verbal-thematic links are enough to persuade me that Psalms 3 and 7 were neighbouring psalms in an earlier collection of Davidic psalms. In the final form of Book I, they were separated by the insertion of Psalms 4-6. In other words, Psalms 3-7 result from merging two earlier collections, namely, an early pair of Davidic psalms (Pss 3 and 7) with a pre-existing trio from the music director's collection (Pss 4-6). Figure 6.1 illustrates how the two collections were merged.

*Figure 6.1: Merging Psalms 4-6 with Psalms 3 and 7*



This partially explains some of the idiosyncrasies regarding the placement of Psalm 7, idiosyncrasies that were noted in section 6.1. However, it does leave me wondering why, having made the decision to separate Psalms 3 and 7, the editors did not move Psalm 7 to a different location in order to unite the *מִזְמוֹר* and *לְמִנְצַח* collections which it interrupts. Even in its present location, it is

too far removed from Psalm 3 for the verbal and thematic links which were originally responsible for their concatenation to remain meaningful.

### 6.2.2 *The relation of Psalm 7 to the surrounding psalms*

Why did the compilers allow Psalm 7 to remain in a position in which it divides a series of מְזוֹמָר psalms (Pss 3-9/10) and a string of לְמִנְצָח psalms (Pss 4-14)?

The answer appears to lie in its verbal affinities with Psalms 5, 6 and 8. Table 6.7 presents a list of all verbal links between Psalm 7 and the other five psalms in my corpus. As was the case with Table 6.6, I have excluded the headings and removed divine names, the article, prepositions, personal pronouns and common particles, leaving only potentially significant link words.

*Table 6.7: Verbal links between Psalms 7 and the other six psalms*

Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
אֵיב			אֵיב	אֵיב	אֵיב
אֵין		אֵין	אֵין	אֵין	
		אָוֹן	אָוֹן	אָוֹן	
			אֶף	אֶף	
				אֶרֶץ	אֶרֶץ
	בֵּן			בֵּן	בֵּן
		דָּבָר		דָּבָר	

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Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
			חֲלַץ	חֲלַץ	
		חָסָה		חָסָה	
			יָדָה	יָדָה	
יָשַׁע			יָשַׁע	יָשַׁע	
		יָשַׁר		יָשַׁר	
כְּבוֹד	כְּבוֹד			כְּבוֹד	כְּבוֹד
		בּוֹן		בּוֹן	בּוֹן
כֹּל			כֹּל	כֹּל	כֹּל
	לֵב / לִבָּב			לֵב	
מָגֵן				מָגֵן	
			מָוֶת	מָוֶת	
		נִפְלֵ		נִפְלֵ	
נִפְשׁ			נִפְשׁ	נִפְשׁ	
	נִשְׂא			נִשְׂא	
סֶלָה	סֶלָה			סֶלָה	
		פָּעַל	פָּעַל	פָּעַל	
		צַדִּיק		צַדִּיק	
	צַדִּיק			צַדִּיק	
			צָרָר	צָרָר	צָרָר

Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
קום				קום	
ראש				ראש	
		רע		רע	
רשע				רשע	
			שוב	שוב	
		שם		שם	שם
<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>8</b>

Table 6.7 shows that Psalm 7 has a high proportion of shared terminology with Psalm 6 (13 shared lexemes) and, to a lesser extent, also with Psalm 5 (11 shared lexemes). With respect to Psalm 6, this observation is surprising. In my analysis of the relationships between Psalms 6 and 7 in the previous chapter (see §5.4), the way shared lexemes were used did not give the impression that they were strong link words. This table suggests that the sheer number of shared lexemes, though not necessarily used in contextually similar ways, contributed to the editors' decision to place Psalm 7 immediately after Psalm 6. Intuitively, I expected to discover that Psalm 7 shared more "significant" lexemes with Psalm 3, with which it seems to have been linked in an earlier collection (see §6.2.1), and with Psalm 5, which is intuitively similar to Psalm 7 due to their shared focus on terminology related to "righteousness"

(the צדק family of words). Psalm 7 does indeed have strong verbal links to Psalm 5 and equally strong links to Psalm 6, sufficiently strong to provide a rationale for keeping Psalm 7 with Psalms 5-6. As I argued in chapter 5, the rationale for linking Psalms 7 and 8 lay in their shared terminology, particularly “the name of the Lord” (שֵׁם־יְהוָה; see §5.5 for a full discussion).

Table 6.7 also shows that the verbal linkage between Psalms 4 and 7 is very weak. This explains why the editors did not leave Psalms 3 and 7 together and insert Psalms 4-6 after Psalm 7, leaving the sequence 3-7-4-5-6. The links between Psalms 4 and 7 were too weak to justify this arrangement, which would also not have allowed Psalms 7 and 8 to be juxtaposed.

It seems clear that although the headings were a major factor that the editors took into consideration when arranging this corpus, they were not the most important factor. The editors gave pride of place to verbal and thematic links between psalms. They were prepared to separate heading-defined clusters of psalms in order to ensure that there were strong verbal links between adjacent psalms. This priority emerges in their decision to insert Psalms 4-6 between Psalms 3 and 7. Doing so divided what would have been long clusters of מְזִמֹּר and לְמִנְצָח psalms. Dividing these clusters was justified by the fact that the chosen arrangement produced strong verbal links between

Psalms 3-4, 6-7 and 7-8. If the editors had prioritised keeping the heading-defined clusters together, these verbal links would have been lost.

### *6.2.3 The organisation of Psalms 4-6*

If Psalms 4-6 represent a trio of psalms that originally belonged to the music director's collection, two important questions need to be asked with reference to their arrangement. First, were they a trio that previously existed in this order or did the final editors extract three psalms from the music director's collection and bring them together in the order we have them in the canonical Psalter? Second, what provided the rationale for their present arrangement in the Psalter?

Since verbal links have proved to be the primary redactional criterion for the final arrangement of the psalms in the corpus, the logical place to begin the search for these answers is with an analysis of shared lexemes. Table 6.8 presents an exhaustive list of all shared lexemes amongst Psalms 4-6. For the sake of completeness, the table includes cognate words.

*Table 6.8: Shared lexemes in Psalms 4-6*

Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6
אָהַב	אָהַב	
	אֵין	אֵין

Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6
	אָן	אָן
אִישׁ	אִישׁ	
אֵל		אֵל
אֵל	אֵל	
אֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים	
אָמַר	אָמַר	
	אָנִי	אָנִי
אָתָּה	אָתָּה	אָתָּה
בְּ	בְּ	בְּ
דָּוִד	דָּוִד	דָּוִד
ה	ה	ה
וְ	וְ	וְ
חֲנֹן		חֲנֹן
חֲסִיד	חֲסִיד	חֲסִיד
יְהוָה	יְהוָה	יְהוָה
כָּזָב	כָּזָב	
כִּי	כִּי	כִּי
לְ	לְ	לְ
	לְמַעַן	לְמַעַן
מְזֹמֵר	מְזֹמֵר	מְזֹמֵר

Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6
מי		מי
מן	מן	מן
נְגִינָה		נְגִינָה
נָצַח	נָצַח	נָצַח
עַד		עַד
	עֵינִי	עֵינִי
עַל	עַל	עַל
צָר	שָׁרַר	צָרַר
פָּנָה	פָּנָה	
	פָּעַל	פָּעַל
צָדֵק	צָדִיק / צְדָקָה	
	קוֹל	קוֹל
רַב	רַב	
רַבֵּב	רַבְּבָה	
שָׁמְחָה	שָׁמַח	
שָׁמַע	שָׁמַע	שָׁמַע
תְּפִלָּה	פָּלַל	תְּפִלָּה

If we eliminate the headings as well as insignificant word groups, namely, the article, prepositions, personal pronouns, common particles and the names of God, the table proves much more revealing.

Table 6.9: Significant shared lexemes in Psalms 4-6

Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6
אָהַב	אָהַב	
	אָוֹן	אָוֹן
אִישׁ	אִישׁ	
אָמַר	אָמַר	
חָנֵן		חָנֵן
חָסִיד	חָסֵד	חָסֵד
כָּזַב	כָּזַב	
	עֵינִי	עֵינִי
צָר	שָׁרַר	צָרַר
פָּנָה	פָּנָה	
	פָּעַל	פָּעַל
צָדֵק	צָדִיק / צָדִיקָה	
	קוֹל	קוֹל
רַב	רַב	
רָבַב	רָבְבָה	
שָׁמְחָה	שָׁמַח	
שָׁמַע	שָׁמַע	שָׁמַע
תְּפִלָּה	פָּלַל	תְּפִלָּה

Table 6.9 immediately shows that the only shared words are the verb שָׁמַע and the roots חסד (“steadfast love”) and פָּלַל (“prayer”), all of which are common words that occur only in Psalms 4, 5 and 6 in my corpus. Because these terms are so common, their complete absence from Psalms 3, 7 and 8 is as striking as their presence in Psalms 4-6. In my judgement, they represent a fairly meaningful link tying these three psalms together. In addition, the phrase “you Lord” (אַתָּה יהוה) occurs in all three psalms, albeit with slight variations ( בִּי in 4:9, אַתָּה יהוה in 4:9, . . . יהוה . . . בִּי אַתָּה in 5:13 and וְאַתָּה יהוה in 6:4). Unlike the way that צַר and אֵיב link Psalms 6-9/10, there is no outstanding linking word binding Psalms 4-6 together. Nevertheless, the four terms mentioned in this paragraph do add credence to the view that they were a trio of consecutive psalms in the music director’s collection.

There are some verbal links between Psalms 4 and 6. Both psalmists appeal to Yahweh to “be gracious to me” (חַנּוּנִי, 4:2 and 6:3). Both psalms use “hear” (שָׁמַע) and “my prayer” (תְּפִלָּתִי) in the same verse (see 4:2 and 6:9), though in 6:9 these two terms occur in separate clauses. There is little similarity between the use of the cognates צַר (4:2) and צָרָר (6:8) or חָסִיד (4:4) and חֶסֶד (6:5). Thus the verbal links between Psalms 4 and 6 are weaker than those that each psalm shares with its immediate neighbours in the canonical Psalter. I find no lexical links that would have motivated an editor to position these two psalms in proximity.

Now let us return to the questions posed at the start of this section. First, were Psalms 4-6 a trio that previously existed in this order or did the final editors of Book I extract three scattered psalms from the music director's collection and bring them together in the order we have them in the canonical Psalter? There is little evidence on which to base an answer to this question. If the editors found these three in the music director's collection in this sequence, then they were fortunate that Psalm 4 at their opening boundary fitted neatly with Psalm 3 and that Psalm 6 at their closing boundary linked fairly well with Psalm 7, allowing the trio to be inserted "as is" between Psalms 3 and 7. The fact that the verbal-thematic links between Psalms 6 and 7 are the weakest in my corpus favours the view that Psalms 4-6 were a pre-existing trio that were imported "as is" from the music director's collection. Nevertheless, there is insufficient evidence at this stage to permit a firm conclusion. I tentatively propose that they existed in this order in the music director's collection.

This leads naturally to an answer to the second question, namely, what provided the rationale for the present arrangement of Psalms 4-6 in the Psalter? The answer seems to be that each psalm was juxtaposed with the ones immediately before and after it on the basis of certain shared words and themes (see chapter 5). If I have judged correctly that Psalms 4-6 were an existing trio from the music director's collection, then the editors received a trio of psalms in which Psalms 4 and 5 were linked by key words as were

Psalms 5 and 6, but not Psalms 4 and 6. Psalms 4 and 6 belonged to the same functional collection by virtue of the similarities in the genre (individual laments) and headings (“with stringed instruments”), but were not linked by strong verbal-thematic concatenation. The final editors of Book I of the Psalter then inserted them between Psalms 3 and 7, creating a smooth transition at Psalms 3-4 and a sensible (though less natural) link at Psalms 6-7.

With respect to Psalms 4-6, three conclusions can be drawn from the preceding arguments. First, they were probably a pre-existing collection of three psalms belonging to the music director’s collection. Second, within the music director’s collection, they were arranged on the basis of verbal-thematic links between adjacent psalms. Third, in the final editing of Book I, they were inserted between Psalms 3 and 7 due to the strong affinities between Psalms 3 and 4. The second “seam”, the one between Psalms 6 and 7, was plausible because of the hook words *צָרָר* and *אָיִב*.

#### ***6.2.4 Exhaustive list of shared lexemes in Psalms 3-8***

For the sake of completeness, it seems necessary to conclude the analysis of verbal links between Psalms 3-8 with an exhaustive list of shared lexemes. Table 6.10 presents such a list. I shall make a few comments about significant

points after the table. Once again, entries in grey denote significant cognates.<sup>131</sup>

Table 6.10: Exhaustive list of shared lexemes in Psalms 3-8

	Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
1		אָהַב	אָהַב			
2	אֵיב			אֵיב	אֵיב	אֵיב
3	אִין		אִין	אִין	אִין	
4			אָנֹן	אָנֹן	אָנֹן	
5		אִישׁ	אִישׁ			
6	אֶל <sup>132</sup>	אֶל	אֶל		אֶל	
7			אֶל		אֶל	
8		אֶל		אֶל		
9	אֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים		אֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים
10	אָמַר	אָמַר	אָמַר			

<sup>131</sup> Unlike the list of shared lexemes, I have not attempted to make the list of cognates exhaustive. Those included in the table are meaningful ones that were observed during the study. It is quite possible some cognates are missing from this table.

<sup>132</sup> This line consists of אֶל, “a prim. particle; *to, into, towards*” (Thomas 1998, §413), while the following line contains אֱל, “a prim. root, *God*” (§410).

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	Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
11	אָנִי		אָנִי	אָנִי		
12				אָף	אָף	
13					אָרֶץ	אָרֶץ
14	אֲשֶׁר				אֲשֶׁר	אֲשֶׁר
15	אֶתָּה	אֶתָּה	אֶתָּה	אֶתָּה		
16	בְּ	בְּ	בְּ	בְּ	בְּ	בְּ
17	בֵּן	בֵּן			בֵּן	בֵּן
18	בְּרָכָה		בְּרִדְ			
19			דְּבַר		דְּבַר	
20			דְּרִדְ		דְּרִדְ	
21	דָּוִד	דָּוִד	דָּוִד	דָּוִד	דָּוִד	דָּוִד
22	הֵ	הֵ	הֵ	הֵ	הֵ	הֵ
23	וְ	וְ	וְ	וְ	וְ	וְ
24				תְּלִיץ	תְּלִיץ	
25		תְּנִנְ		תְּנִנְ		
26		תְּסִיד	תְּסִדְ	תְּסִדְ		
27			תְּסֵה		תְּסֵה	
28	יְהוּה	יְהוּה	יְהוּה	יְהוּה	יְהוּה	יְהוּה
29	יִרְאֵ		יִרְאֵה			

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	Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
30				יָדָה	יָדָה	
31	יָשַׁן	יָשַׁן				
32	יָשַׁע			יָשַׁע	יָשַׁע	
33			יָשָׁר		יָשָׁר	
34			כֶּ		כֶּ	
35	כְּבוֹד	כְּבוֹד			כְּבוֹד	כְּבוֹד
36		כָּזָב	כָּזָב			
37			כּוֹן		כּוֹן	כּוֹן
38	כִּי	כִּי	כִּי	כִּי		כִּי
39	כֹּל		כֹּל	כֹּל	כֹּל	כֹּל
40	לְ	לְ	לְ	לְ	לְ	לְ
41	לֹא		לֹא		לֹא	
42		לֵב / לִבָּב			לֵב	
43			לְמַעַן	לְמַעַן		לְמַעַן
44	מָגֵן				מָגֵן	
45	מָה	מָה				מָה
46	מִזְמוֹר	מִזְמוֹר	מִזְמוֹר	מִזְמוֹר		מִזְמוֹר
47				מָוֶת	מָוֶת	
48		מִי		מִי		

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	Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
49	מִן	מִן	מִן	מִן	מִן	מִן
50		נְגִינָה		נְגִינָה		
51			נִפְל		נִפְל	
52	נִפְשׁ			נִפְשׁ	נִפְשׁ	
53		נִצַּח	נִצַּח	נִצַּח		נִצַּח
54		נִשְׂא			נִשְׂא	
55		נִתֵּן				נִתֵּן
56	סָלָה	סָלָה			סָלָה	
57		עַד		עַד		
58			עֵינַי	עֵינַי		
59			עָטַר			עָטַר
60	עַל	עַל	עַל	עַל	עַל	עַל
61	עִם				עִם	
62	עָנָה	עָנָה				
63			פָּה			פָּה
64	פָּנָה	פָּנָה	פָּנָה			
65			פָּעַל	פָּעַל	פָּעַל	
66			צָדִיק		צָדִיק	
		צָדִיק	צָדִיק		צָדִיק	

	Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
67	צַר	צַר	שׁוֹרר	צַרר	צַרר	צַרר
68	קָדֵשׁ		קָדֵשׁ			
69	קוֹל		קוֹל	קוֹל		
70	קוֹם				קוֹם	
71	קָרָא	קָרָא				
72		רָאָה				רָאָה
73	רֹאשׁ				רֹאשׁ	
74	רַב	רַב	רַב			
75	רַבֵּב	רַבֵּב	רַבְּבָה			
76			רַע		רַע	
77	רָשַׁע		רָשָׁה		רָשַׁע	
78				שׁוֹב	שׁוֹב	
79			שָׁם		שָׁם	שָׁם
80		שָׁמְחָה	שָׁמַח			
81	שָׁכַב	שָׁכַב				
82		שָׁמַע	שָׁמַע	שָׁמַע		
83	שִׁית					שִׁית
84		תִּפְלָה	פָּלַל	תִּפְלָה		

The rows containing bold text represent the most striking elements. Even though each of these points has been noted previously, a few observations are in order about these rows because Table 6.10 illustrates the points more graphically than the preceding discussions.

- Row 21 (דָּוִד) shows graphically that all six psalms belong to a Davidic collection. This is clearly a collection of Davidic psalms. The ascription לְדָוִד provided the first criterion of collection (McFall 2000).
- Row 46 (מְזֻמָּר) shows that it is also primarily a collection of poems belonging to the מְזֻמָּר genre. This draws special attention to Psalm 7, the only exception, and requires an explanation of its presence in the group (see §6.2.1 and §6.2.2 for my explanation).
- Row 53 (נֶצַח) indicates that Psalms 4-6 and 8 belonged to the music director's collection. Psalms 3 and 7 did not belong to this collection (see §6.1 for my explanation).
- Rows 26 (חסד), 82 (שָׁמַע) and 84 (פלל) contain common roots that occur only in Psalms 4-6, strengthening the hypothesis that these three psalms were a pre-existing trio from the music director's collection (see §6.2.3 for my explanation).

- Row 67 (צַר and צָרָר) constitutes the most important shared root in the corpus. Coupled with Row 2 (אֵיב), this provides a clear editorial rationale for the arrangement of Psalms 6-8 (see §5.4 and §5.5) and also provides the unifying thematic thread for the entire corpus (see §6.3).

Although neither Table 6.10 nor the discussion of its main features introduces anything substantially new to the analysis of verbal links between Psalms 3-8, it does solidify previous observations by showing graphically where exclusive links between psalms occur.

### 6.3 Thematic unity

Is there a unifying theme (or network of themes) that provided the editorial purpose for the overall arrangement of Psalms 3-8? Does this little group of psalms bear any marks of being a carefully crafted literary unit with a clear purpose and message? Does it bear the marks of new literary work, namely, unity, plot and purpose? Having discovered strong indications that the editors juxtaposed neighbouring psalms on the basis of verbal and thematic similarities, I now want to turn my attention to a different question—whether there is an editorial objective in the arrangement of the entire corpus.

Two proposals regarding the overall shaping of the Psalter have potential relevance for my investigation, namely, those by John Walton (1991; cf. Malick 2005) and Walter Brueggemann (1991a). I shall begin with a brief synopsis of each of these works. Then I shall present and analyse tables about recurring themes in Psalms 3-8.

### *6.3.1 Walton's cantata hypothesis*

In an article entitled "Psalms: a Cantata about the Davidic Covenant", Walton (1991) sought to answer this question:

Can it be demonstrated that there is an editorial rationale for the placement of each psalm (or at least the placement of the recognized collections of psalms) that is tied to something in the content of the psalm rather than being a function of what is conveyed in the title (e.g. author or genre)? (Walton 1991:23)

In answer to his question, he tentatively proposed a hypothesis which "views the Psalms as a cantata around the theme of the Davidic covenant" (Walton 1991:24). Walton explained the appeal of using a cantata analogy as follows:

The cantata analogy is helpful for it carries with it the idea that many of the pieces may not have been composed specifically for the cantata. Rather, compositions created for other reasons

at other times have been woven together into a secondary framework in order to address a particular subject. It is therefore readily admitted that there may be little correlation between the Psalm titles, which convey information about an earlier *Sitz im Leben*, and the incidents to which the Psalms are applied in their cantata context (Walton 1991:24).

Turning to the content of the Psalter, Walton regarded Psalms 1-2 as an introduction to the collection. Thereafter, he proposed that Book I (Pss 3-41) coheres around the theme of “David’s conflict with Saul” (1991:24). Observing that Psalms 3-13 all “make at least passing reference to the enemies of the psalmist” (p. 24), he believed they “could be tied thematically to the beginning of David’s troubles with Saul recorded in 1 Samuel 19-23” (pp. 24-25). The fact that “these laments are full of petitions for deliverance, protection, vindication and help of various kinds” (p. 25) reinforces his argument. His argument is also consistent with my observations regarding the significance of references to “enemies” and “adversaries” in Psalms 3-10.

### ***6.3.2 Brueggemann’s wisdom theory***

In an insightful article entitled “Bounded by Obedience and Praise: the Psalms as Canon”, Walter Brueggemann (1991a; cf. Brueggemann and Miller 1996)

approached the idea of the thematic grouping of psalms in a very different manner to Walton's (1991) cantata theory. Brueggemann's thesis was that the final shape of the Psalter was designed to move the reader from the idealistic moral world of Psalm 1 to the unrestrained delight in Yahweh of Psalm 150. The Psalter begins with a series of psalms that protest "against the simplistic theological affirmations of Psalm 1" (Brueggemann 1991a:72) and wrestle with the apparent failure of Yahweh's covenant love and promises. As the Psalter unfolds, the tone gradually changes to trust which leads to praise.

Implicit in Brueggemann's proposal is the belief that the final editors of the Psalter grouped psalms with similar overall themes at different points in the Psalter. The most obvious division is that in the first half of the Psalter lament psalms predominate, while in the second half praise psalms come to the fore. Although Brueggemann (1991a) does not discuss the detailed arrangement of small corpi of psalms, his approach is consistent with a completely different method of final arrangement to the approach of Walton (1991). In my understanding, Brueggemann's approach would expect to find the editors grouping psalms with similar motifs in similar portions of the Psalter. One



For practical reasons, due to the difficulty of text and table pages, I opted to place Tables 6.11-17 at the end of chapter 6.

(a) *Enemies*

(see Table 6.11)

Allusions to the wicked enemies of the psalmist are by far the most pervasive common characteristic of Psalm 3-8.<sup>134</sup> Each psalm contains multiple allusions to enemies. Table 6.11 lists the ways in which the psalmists' enemies are described in each psalm. For the sake of clarity, I have tried to translate different Hebrew roots with different English terms so that the table may give an accurate indication of verbal links.

Row 1 coheres around the Hebrew root *צַר*, which occurs in several different forms. In Psalm 3, it appears as *צָרָי*, “my adversaries”. Psalm 4 uses *צַר* in the sense of “adversity” rather than “adversary”, which is why it appears in light grey in the table. Psalms 6-8 all use *צוֹרֵר*, from the root *צַר*, in the phrases “my foes” (6:8, 7:7 and 8:3) and “my foe” (7:5). Psalm 5 is the odd one out in this row since it uses the homonym *שׁוֹרֵר*, which is not related to the root *צַר*, but is

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<sup>134</sup> Several specialised studies have focused on “enemies” in the Psalter, such as Anderson (1965), Prokurat (1973), Gerstenberger (1982-83), Cherian (1982), Gerstenberger (1982-83), Sheppard (1991), Botha (1992), Dhanaraj (1992) and Althan (1999).

used in Psalm 5:9 with a meaning almost identical to צֹרֵר. In the cases of Psalms 3 and 6-8, there are also allusions to enemies using אֹיֵב, “my enemies” in 3:8 and 6:11 and “the enemy”<sup>135</sup> in 7:6 and 8:3 (see Row 2).

These enemies are consistently portrayed in three ways in Psalms 3-8, which are reflected in Rows 3-7. First, they are characterised as being “wicked” (using the root רשע) and/or “evil” (using the lexeme אָוֶן). These characterisations cover Psalms 3 and 5-7. Second, they are portrayed as liars in Psalms 4, 5 and 7, using a broad range of terms (see Rows 5 and 6). Despite the varied terminology, the portrait is of evil liars who use all forms of deception and slander to attack the psalmists. Third, they are violent men determined to shed the innocent blood of the psalmists. Images of violent enemies can be found in Psalms 3, 5, 7 and, to a lesser extent, 8 (see Row 7).

These many allusions to the psalmists’ evil, lying, aggressive enemies provide the entire corpus with a clear thematic unity, a thread that runs through all six psalms. Even the two psalms that at first seem out of place in the corpus,

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<sup>135</sup> Although the Masoretic Text has the anarthrous masculine singular participle אֹיֵב in both instances, it is appropriate to translate it into English using the definite article, hence “the enemy” (so ASV; ESV; KJV; NASB; NKJV; NRSV; RSV).

namely, Psalms 6 and 8, each contain three strong allusions to enemies. The various references to enemies also provide a framework that accounts for most of the other thematic threads running through Psalms 3-8. The psalmists looked to Yahweh for “deliverance” and “protection” because of the threat their enemies posed. The contrast between “the wicked” and “the righteous” takes place against the backdrop of a righteous psalmist being threatened by wicked enemies. The righteous psalmists appealed to a righteous and just God for vindication against their enemies, confident that Yahweh’s “anger” would come upon the wicked and his “blessing” upon the righteous.

*(b) God’s disfavour*

*(see Table 6.12)*

Psalms 3 and 5-7 all anticipate God’s anger against evildoers and his active opposition to them. Psalms 3 and 7 portray Yahweh as a warrior fighting against the psalmists’ enemies (see Row 1). Psalm 5 speaks in graphic terms of his absolute abhorrence of the wicked, using words such as “hates”, “destroys” and “abhors” to describe how God detests wickedness and those who practice it (see Row 1). Psalms 5 and 7 indicate that Yahweh causes the wicked to reap what they sow, that is, he causes their evil schemes to recoil upon themselves (see Row 3). This is a form of divine opposition, a type of God’s judgement (see Hubbard 1982). Psalm 6 also contains hints of the Lord’s anger at sin and his opposition to those who practice it (see Row 2). At

the beginning of Psalm 6, however, it is the psalmist himself who seems to be experiencing God's discipline (see Ps 6:2). Nevertheless, by the end of the psalm he is convinced that Yahweh will vindicate him against the enemies who are seeking to exploit his misfortune; Yahweh will vindicate him by shaming them, troubling them and thwarting them (see Ps 6:11).

This theme of God's anger towards evil and evildoers unfolds against the backdrop of wicked enemies opposing the more righteous psalmists. It is a theme that is subordinate to that of the psalmists' enemies.

*(c) God's favour* *(see Table 6.13)*

This theme is a corollary of the previous one. Just as Yahweh opposes the wicked, so too he blesses the righteous (see Table 6.13). His blessing takes a variety of forms in Psalms 3-8.

Four psalms contain allusions to Yahweh conferring "glory" or "honour" (כְּבוֹד) upon the psalmist (see Row 1). In Psalm 3:4, Yahweh is "my glory", which seems to be an objective genitive meaning "you give me great honour" (Bratcher and Reyburn 1991:37; cf. Wilson 2002:131; Rawlinson

2004b:20).<sup>136</sup> In Psalm 4:3, “my glory” is being shamed by enemies. In Psalm 7:6, the psalmist invites Yahweh to let his enemy ruin “my glory” if he is guilty of wrongdoing. Each of these three references seems to be alluding to the psalmists’ honourable status in society. The final allusion refers to the “basic human dignity conferred by God” (Wilson 2002:131). God has crowned all human beings “with glory [כְּבוֹד] and honour [הַדָּר]” (Ps 8:6). In all these allusions, human “honour” is viewed as a divine blessing. Yahweh confers a basic human dignity on all people by virtue of their humanity (8:6); beyond that, he can confer honourable status upon a person (3:4) and he can take it away (7:6).

Rows 2 and 3 indicate both *that* God blesses the righteous (Row 2) and *how* he does it (Row 3). The conclusions of two psalms directly assert that *God blesses* “your people” (3:9) and “the righteous” (5:13). The specific blessings mentioned include “lifting my head” (3:4), “covering him [the righteous person] with favour” (5:13), “establishing the righteous” (7:10) and “giving him [the human race] dominion” over creation (8:6).

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<sup>136</sup> An alternative interpretation takes it as a title for God, that is, “my Glorious One” (Motyer 1994; cf. Keil and Delitzsch 2002:62).

*(d) Salvation**(see Table 6.14)*

Various references to salvation or deliverance form another thread running through Psalms 3-7. Although their enemies are not always the direct object of the psalmists' requests for and references to deliverance, their presence always forms part of the motivation for these allusions. As Table 6.14 shows, this theme is strongest in Psalms 3 and 7 (which I believe were neighbouring psalms before Psalms 4-6 were inserted). Deliverance terminology is also prominent in Psalm 6, but here the primary object from which the psalmist needs deliverance is adversity caused by illness rather than hostile enemies.<sup>137</sup>

In Table 6.14, Rows 1-2 cohere around the root  $\psi$ . The first row consists of the psalmists' pleas for Yahweh to "save me", while both entries in the second row declare that he does save. At first glance the two occurrences of "arise, O Lord" (3:8 and 7:7) may seem out of place in this list, but since this was stereotypical language for beseeching God to arise in judgement of the

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<sup>137</sup> As indicated in section 4.4.2, there are many commentators (e.g., Ridderbos 1972; Rogerson and McKay 1977; VanGemeren 1991; McCann 1996) who do not see the crisis as having to do with illness. Instead, they view it as an unnamed crisis causing the psalmist great anguish.

wicked and deliverance of the righteous, its inclusion is justified. Although using different Hebrew roots (ישועה in 3:3 and נצל in 7:3), both entries in Row 4 affirm the same idea—there is no deliverance for the psalmist.

In Row 5, “deliver my life” (6:5)—“my life” is a circumlocution for “me”—is a prayer for deliverance from death caused by sickness, whereas “rescue me” (7:2) is a prayer for deliverance from “my pursuers” (7:2).

(e) *Protection*

(see Table 6.15)

As a theme, divine protection is closely related to deliverance. Not only will Yahweh ultimately deliver the psalmists’ from their enemies, but he will protect them in the interim from their enemies’ schemes. This theme is prominent in Psalms 3-5 and 7 (see Table 6.15).

Three psalms use the metaphor of a “shield” to depict God protecting the righteous (see Row 1). Since none of them are touching psalms, this was not flagged at all in the previous chapter. The strong link between Psalms 3 and 4 created by the expression “I lie down and sleep” was discussed in Section 5.1 (see Row 2). The two references to “taking refuge” (see Row 3) in God both use the Hebrew verb נָחַן, which refers to going “to a place where one will find safety, rest, or comfort, implying the place of refuge is a place to be trusted to keep one safe” (Swanson 1997:§2879). Rows 4 and 5 contain disparate

excerpts from Psalms 3-5 indicating that the psalmists' found security in the Lord as their protector.

This thread is strongly subservient to the shared theme relating to enemies. In all four psalms where protection is mentioned, it is occasioned by the presence of the psalmists' enemies.

(f) *Prayers*

(see Table 6.16)

The language of impassioned prayer and petition is prominent in Psalms 3-6 (see Table 6.16). A diverse array of terms is used. Although it is not evident in translation, the four entries in Row 2 all share the Hebrew noun קול, which is translated "voice" in 3:5 and 5:4, but "sound" in 5:2 and 6:9. Row 3 shows that in Psalms 4, 5 and 6 the psalmist refers to himself as *praying*, twice using the nominal form "my prayer" (4:2 and 6:10) and once the verbal equivalent "I pray" (5:3). This is significant because it strengthens the genre-based link between Psalms 4-6, adding weight to the argument that they were a pre-existing trio from the music director's collection. The remainder of the table indicates the diversity of terms used to express the psalmists' appeals to the Lord and their confidence in his response.

(g) *Righteousness, joy and praise* (see Table 6.17)

Righteousness, joy and praise are three smaller threads that do not warrant separate tables, yet do occur in several places in these psalms. Table 6.17 shows these occurrences.

*Righteousness.* Psalms 4, 5 and 7 portray the psalmists as righteous; direct appeals to Yahweh are based, at least in part, on the righteousness of the petitioner. The author of Psalm 4 begins by appealing to the “God of my righteousness” (4:2), a phrase which implies that God should answer him because he and/or his cause are righteous (Rawlinson 2004). Addressing his adversaries, he calls for them to “know that the Lord has set apart the godly [man] for himself” (4:4), clearly insinuating that he is such a “godly man”. Then he calls on them to “offer right sacrifices” (4:6). By its strong language denouncing the wicked, Psalm 5 indirectly implies that the psalmist will receive a good hearing with Yahweh because he is more righteous than his enemies, yet it never explicitly makes that appeal. Rather than approaching Yahweh in bold assurance of his own righteousness, the psalmist approaches on the basis of “your steadfast love” (5:8a) and “in fear” (5:8b). There are two allusions to words in the צדק family in Psalm 5, one as the author asks God to “lead me in your righteousness” (5:9) and another as he affirms, addressing the Lord, that “you bless the righteous” (5:13). Psalm 7, with its use of legal

language, abounds with terms pertaining to righteousness, justice and judgement. Yahweh is a “righteous God” (7:10) and a “righteous judge” (7:11). He has “appointed judgement” (7:7) and “judges the peoples” (7:9) so as to “establish the righteous” (7:10) and to “save the upright” (7:11). The psalmist alludes to himself using the terms “righteousness” (7:9), “integrity” (7:9) and “upright in heart” (7:11). As a theme, while there is an implied contrast between the wicked enemies and the more righteous psalmists throughout Psalms 3-8, only Psalms 4 and 7 strongly emphasise the righteousness of the psalmists.

*Joy and praise.* These two themes surface in some way in each psalm except Psalm 3, but are prominent only at the end of Psalm 5 and throughout Psalm 8. In Psalm 4:8, the psalmist credits Yahweh for putting “joy in my heart”, while Psalm 5 closes with a request that God would cause his own people to “rejoice” (5:12), “sing for joy” (5:12) and “exult<sup>138</sup> in you” (5:13). Psalm 6:6 implies that if Yahweh spares the psalmist’s life, he will “give you praise”. Psalm 7 closes with vows to “give thanks” (7:18a) and to “sing praise” (7:18b)

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<sup>138</sup> Swanson (1997:§6636.1) defines the underlying Hebrew word, רָצַח, as follows: “(qal) **rejoice**, be jubilant, i.e., be in a state of joy, which may include verbal expressions of joy and praise” (emphasis in original).

to the Lord. Psalm 8 is framed by the jubilant exclamation, “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (8:2, 10). In the context of praise, the “name” of the Lord is mentioned in 5:12, 7:18, 8:2 and 8:10.

### ***6.3.5 The nature of thematic unity***

Several themes emerge repeatedly in Psalms 3-8. The most pervasive of them pertains to references to the psalmists’ “enemies” (see Table 6.11). These allusions, which occur in all six psalms, provide a thematic umbrella which accounts for the presence of other recurring motifs. The enemies, depicted as wicked people, stand in sharp contrast to the more righteous psalmists. This explains why the Lord’s disfavour will come upon the enemies (see Table 6.12), but his favour will rest upon the psalmists (see Table 6.13). The threat that the enemies pose to the psalmists accounts for the urgent prayers (see Table 6.16) as well as the allusions to deliverance (see Table 6.14) and protection (see Table 6.15).

Although there are definite thematic threads running through Psalms 3-8, there are also significant differences which, in my opinion, make it unlikely that they were arranged to form any sort of “cantata” pertaining to a single historical event or complex of events. Walton (1991; cf. Malick 2005) argued that the psalms in Book I of the Psalter were arranged to form a cantata about

David's conflicts with Saul. Admittedly, it is not difficult to fit each of Psalms 3-8 into this era of David's life. The content of the psalms is of a sufficiently general nature that they might easily represent David's thoughts at different moments in his conflict with Saul.<sup>139</sup> Yet by the same reasoning one might equally propose that they are a cantata about Joseph's life or Moses' experiences during the exodus conflicts.

There is no positive evidence in the text itself to suggest that these psalms were arranged with the intent that they would tell a sequential story. In fact, based on my exegetical analysis of the individual psalms, I believe there is evidence to suggest they do not follow a sequential pattern. For example, Psalm 3 seems to be set in the heat of military conflict while Psalm 4 implies a political crisis. In Psalm 6, the author accepts that his own sins have brought about his crisis (seemingly illness) and appeals for mercy (see Althan 1999), whereas in Psalm 7 he denies any guilt whatsoever and seeks divine justice. Even Walton (1991:24) himself recognised that treated holistically the psalms would not fit neatly into his cantata. He proposed that the redactors based

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<sup>139</sup> It is equally possible to argue that they all fit into the conflict between David and Absalom recording in 2 Samuel 15-19, as Blaiklock (1970), Motyer (1994), Wilcock (2001) and Lane (2006) do.

their cantata on selected excerpts from each psalm rather than on the psalm as a whole. On the one hand, it is impossible to argue with such an approach since one can select whatever elements one desires and claim they provide the basis for the arrangement of psalms. On the other hand, this approach is methodologically suspect since the authority undergirding any such reconstruction lies solely in the mind of the modern interpreter. The editors of the Psalter left no clues of such an agenda. If they had such an agenda, it would be almost indiscernible to an uninformed<sup>140</sup> reader; therefore, one might have expected them to leave clear signposts as to their intent (e.g., additional superscripts), but they left no signposts whatsoever. The fact that they left no such evidence means that there is no methodologically sound way for a modern interpreter to identify their story-telling objectives by selecting excerpts from each psalm. Any quest for an unfolding plot across a series of psalms must be based on information explicitly presented in the headings and/or the content of whole psalms. Using this method, I see little evidence of the kind of continuity across Psalms 3-8 that might fit naturally into a narrative plot or a cantata.

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<sup>140</sup> That is, one who does not have inside information, beyond what is evident in the text, into the editorial objective of the arrangement.

Besides asking whether the psalms in my corpus tell a story with sequential movement, it might also be asked whether they are arranged to convey a particular theological message, that is, to make a point the editors wished to express. In my opinion, a pitfall to be avoided in modern studies on corpi of psalms is overeagerness on the part of the researcher to attribute communicative significance to the positioning of a particular psalm or to the flow of motifs through a small group of psalms. Since the redactors of the Psalter seldom signpost their communicative intent underlying the positioning of a particular psalm, modern interpreters are on much more solid ground when they are observing concrete links between groups of psalms than they are when they attempt to move from those observations to conclusions about the redactors' communicative intention behind their arrangement. For example, it is easy to observe the prominent, central position of Psalm 119 in Book V, but it would be speculation to suggest that its exact positioning served as a call from the redactors for pilgrims to open themselves to the torah. This may be a legitimate inference a reader might draw from the arrangement, but it is difficult to demonstrate that it is *the* inference the editors intended readers to draw. There is room for tentative hypotheses about the

message(s) conveyed through arrangements of psalms, but I think researchers should err on the side of expressing these cautiously and conservatively.<sup>141</sup>

Turning to my corpus, it would be easy to posit creative but plausible communicative significance underlying the arrangement of the psalms. For example, we could posit that Psalms 6-8 offer a progression from penitence (Ps 6) through protest (Ps 7) to praise (Ps 8). Alternatively, if we accepted a chiasmic arrangement of Psalms 3-7, placing the focus on Psalm 5, we might interpret the entire collection as a call for those afflicted by enemies to *enter*

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<sup>141</sup> Knud Jeppesen (2003:795, emphasis added) recently sounded a similar caution: “The results of the form-critical method are much easier to cross-examine and control, than what a holistic reading [of the Psalter] can produce. We don’t know and probably never will know whether the canonical order of the Psalms follow [sic] a thought-through plan; on the other hand, the present form and order is a historical fact we can relate to, and when the Psalms are read in a canonical order, different lines of ideas seem to be revealed. *But it is necessary to stress again and again that it should not be claimed that the holistic reading represents with any measure of doubt an original intention*, and furthermore, it should be borne in mind that the lines of thoughts found, might not be the only possible lines. However, studying some of the new methods has convinced the writer that through the cautious use thereof, it is possible to obtain new knowledge about the Psalter and to also make adjustments to results achieved by for example the form-critical researchers.”

*his house by his steadfast love and in reverence* (see Ps 5:8, the epicentre of the chiasmic pattern). The surrounding psalms might then indicate that this is God's call regardless of whether the worshipper is surrounded by a mighty army (Ps 3) or a band of deceitful politicians (Ps 4), regardless of whether he/she is guilty (Ps 6) or guiltless (Ps 7). While this kind of speculation makes for interesting sermons and great devotional readings, it is difficult to judge what was or was not in the minds of the editors when they arranged these psalms.

Liberal speculation of this kind is not likely to advance our understanding of the editors' communicative intent. It is tempting to try to fit a series of psalms neatly into a particular "movement" or "motif", but I cannot but wonder whether the messages we "discover" in this way do not often originate more in our interpretive responses than in the redactors' communicative agenda. I do not question an interpreter's right to draw personal inferences from the way he/she perceives the significance of a particular psalm's placement; in fact, I think the nature of the psalms invites readers to play an active role in "creating" their own meanings and responses from their dialogue with the text. However, to move from such personal meanings to generalisations about the editorial purpose of a psalm or group of psalms seems to be a step fraught with the danger of reading our personal meanings into the editors' intentions. My preference is for researchers investigating the editorial agenda reflected in

the arrangement of a group of psalms to restrict themselves to conservative conclusions regarding why the redactors' placed a particular psalm in a particular place and what message(s) they may have been trying to convey by its placement.

Using these conservative assumptions as my point of departure, I found no evidence in the text to suggest that the shape of the six psalms in my corpus is designed to communicate a message greater than the sum of the individual poems. I did detect some thematic interplay, but nothing strong or clear enough to persuade me the editors were trying to convey a special message through the arrangement.

*I conclude, therefore, that the references to enemies provide a loose thematic unity to Psalms 3-8. Enemies are a pervasive theme in all six psalms. Their presence largely accounts for other shared themes amongst these psalms.*

*There is no evidence in the text itself to suggest that the order of Psalms 3-8 was designed to tell a story or to convey a message.*

#### **6.4 Conclusions: the compilation of Psalms 3-8**

The objective of this chapter was to discover how the larger unit consisting of Psalms 3-8 was compiled. How did it come to exist in its present form? What,

if anything, was the editorial agenda reflected in the final arrangement of the psalms?

From the analysis of the headings (see §6.1), it seems clear that the compilers began with a group of Davidic psalms. Several of these Davidic psalms belonged to a separate collection, the music director's collection. In general, the editors tried to keep psalms that shared a genre designation (e.g., מְזֹמֶר) or came from the music director's collection together, but these desires were sometimes overruled by their desire to ensure that there were meaningful verbal and thematic links between adjacent psalms.

With reference to the criteria of arrangement employed at the verbal and thematic level, two operational criteria are evident. First, at the level of individual psalms, the editors sought to juxtapose psalms that have meaningful verbal and thematic links. They wanted each psalm to be placed immediately after and before psalms with which it shares some common ground. Second, at the level of the corpus as a whole, the redactors tried to group psalms with similar major themes.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> These two procedures remind me of how I used to arrange my box of 24 coloured pencils when I was a child. Each colour needed to have a "related" colour on either side *and* groups of the same colour (e.g., greens, blues) needed to be kept together. There were a few

On the basis of the observations made during this study, I believe it is possible to reconstruct tentatively the editorial process the editors followed.

- 1) They began with a large group of Davidic (דָּוִדִּי) psalms. They then gathered together those psalms in which references to enemies played a prominent role and accounted for the presence of several other common themes. This group included all six psalms in my corpus, Psalms 3-8.<sup>143</sup>
- 2) The group of “enemy psalms” included two existing sub-groupings. First, Psalms 3 and 7 were found together. Second, Psalms 4-6 were together in the music director’s collection.
- 3) Careful reading showed strong affinities in terminology between Psalms 3 and 4. It also surfaced a few key links between Psalms 6 and

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possible variations in the order and a few floating colours that either did not fit anywhere properly or else could fit well in a few places.

<sup>143</sup> This would not prohibit there being psalms in other groups in which enemies play a prominent role. It is possible for there to be more than one collection of what might be termed “enemy psalms”. Alternatively, enemies might play a prominent role in certain psalms that were placed in a different group on the basis of one of their other prominent themes.

7. The editors elected to keep Psalms 4-6 together, inserting them between Psalms 3 and 7.
- 4) The compilers found a logical place for Psalm 8, which might initially have seemed out of place among the enemy psalms.<sup>144</sup> Noting that Psalm 7 ends with praise for “the name of the Lord, the Most High” and Psalm 9 begins with praise for “the name of the Lord, the Most High”, Psalm 8, which opens and closes with adoration of the Lord’s majestic name, became an ideal bridge between Psalms 7 and 9.

At the risk of using a simplistic analogy, in my mind's eye I picture this entire sorting process taking place along similar lines to the way we would organise a filing cabinet. We would first select a few major categories and then sort all the files into those categories; some files would clearly fit into certain categories, while others would be a less-than-perfect match. Next we would carefully work through each category, containing a pile of files, carefully sorting it into a chosen order, such as by date or by name. Similarly, it seems the editors of the Psalter, when arranging the Davidic psalms of Book I, had a category for “enemy psalms”. After collecting all the ones they felt belonged in

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<sup>144</sup> Perhaps it was not even in this group originally, but was imported because of its ideal ability to link Psalms 7 and 9.

this category, they set about sorting them based on hook words/themes, trying to ensure that each one linked naturally with the psalm before and after it.<sup>145</sup>

In this way, the editors created an opening collection to the Psalter that coheres loosely around themes related to the psalmists' conflicts with their enemies. At the same time, each psalm has verbal and thematic hooks linking it to the one before and the one after it.

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<sup>145</sup> The presence of psalms with prominent references to enemies in other parts of the Psalter does not undermine this hypothesis because (a) various collections may have been made at different times by different compilers and (b) the editors may have categorised these psalms on the basis of other themes (e.g., Ps 97 contains a reference to "his foes" [צָרִי], but was clearly grouped with the other *kingship of Yahweh* psalms because of the many themes it shares with Pss 95-99; cf. Howard 1997).

Table 6.11: Allusions to the psalmist's enemies in Psalms 3-8

	Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
1	"my adversaries" (2)	"in adversity" (2)	"my enemies" (9)	"my foes" (8)	"my foe" (5) "my foes" (7)	"your foes" (3)
2	"my enemies" (8)			"my enemies" (11)	"the enemy" (6)	"the enemy" (3)
3	"the wicked" (8)		"wickedness" (5)		"the wicked" (10, 15)	
4			"evildoers" (6)	"evildoers" (9)	"conceives evil" (15)	
5		"seek lies" (3) "love vain words" (3)	"speak lies" (7) "deceitful" (7) "no truth" (10) "they flatter" (10)		"give birth to deception" (15)	
6	"many say" (3)	"many say" (7) "sons of men" (3)				
7	"many rising against me" (2) "thousands . . . set against me" (7)		"the bloodthirsty" (7) "destruction" (10)		"my pursuers" (3) "his violence" (17)	"the avenger" (3)

*Table 6.12: Allusions to God's disfavour upon the psalmists' enemies*

	Psalm 3	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7
1	<p>God will fight against the psalmist's enemies (8).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "you strike all my enemies on the cheek"</li> <li>▪ "you break the teeth of the wicked"</li> </ul>	<p>God rejects the wicked, who cannot enter his presence (5-7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "you hate evildoers"</li> <li>▪ "you destroy liars"</li> <li>▪ "the Lord abhors blood-thirsty and deceitful men"</li> </ul>		<p>God will fight against the psalmist's enemies (13-14).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "sharpens his sword"</li> <li>▪ "strings his bow"</li> <li>▪ "prepares his weapons"</li> <li>▪ "readies his arrows"</li> </ul>
2			<p>The Lord acts in anger against sinners (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "rebuke me in your anger"</li> <li>▪ "discipline me in your wrath"</li> <li>▪ He shames and troubles the wicked</li> </ul>	<p>The Lord acts in anger against sinners (7-12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "arise, Lord, in your anger"</li> <li>▪ "God feels indignation"</li> <li>▪ He ends the violence of the wicked</li> </ul>
3		<p>God causes them to reap the evil they sow (11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "make them bear their guilt"</li> <li>▪ "let them fall by their own schemes"</li> <li>▪ "cast them out"</li> </ul>		<p>God causes them to reap the evil they sow (16-17)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "falls into the pit he has dug"</li> <li>▪ "his mischief returns on his own head"</li> <li>▪ "his violence descends on his own head"</li> </ul>

Table 6.13: Allusions to God's favour upon the righteous

	Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
1	"my honour" (4)	"my honour" (3)			"my honour" (6)	"crowned him with glory and honour" (6)
2	"your blessing is upon your people" (9)		"you bless the righteous" (13)			
3	"lifter of my head" (4)		"you cover him with favour" (13)		"you establish the righteous" (10)	"you have given him dominion" (7)
4		"be gracious to me" (2)		"be gracious to me" (3)		
5			"through your steadfast love" (8)	"because of your steadfast love" (5)		
6						"you are mindful of him" (5) "you care for him" (5)

*Table 6.14: Allusions to God delivering the psalmists*

	Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
1	“save me” (8)			“save me” (5)	“save me” (2)	
2	“salvation is of the Lord” (9)				“God saves” (11)	
3	“arise, O Lord” (8)				“arise, O Lord” (7)	
4	“no salvation for him in God” (3)				“with none to rescue” (3)	
5				“deliver my life” (5)	“rescue me” (2)	
6		“you gave me relief” (2)		“heal me, O Lord” (3)		

*Table 6.15: Allusions to God protecting the psalmists*

	Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
1	“you, Lord, are a shield about me” (4)		“you cover him . . . as with a shield” (13)		“my shield is with God” (11)	
2	“I lay down and slept” (6)	“I lie down and sleep” (9)				
3			“all who take refuge in you” (12)		“in you I take refuge” (2)	
4	“the Lord sus-tained me” (6)	“you make me dwell in safety” (9)	“spread your protection over them” (12)			
5	“I will not be afraid” (7)	“the Lord has set apart the godly for Himself” (4)				

*Table 6.16: Allusions to the psalmists' prayers and petitions and the Lord's responses*

	Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
1	"I called" (5)	"I call" (2, 4)				
2	"my voice" (5)		"my voice" (4) "the sound of my cry" (2)	"the sound of my weeping" (9)		
3		"my prayer" (2)	"I pray" (3)	"my prayer" (10)		
4			"my groaning" (2) "my cry" (3)	"my moaning" (7) "my weeping" (7, 9) "my plea" (10)		
5	"he answered" (5)	"answer me" (2) "the Lord hears" (4)	"the Lord has heard" (9)	"give ear" (2) "give attention" (3)		

Table 6.17: Allusions to righteousness, joy and praise

	Psalm 3	Psalm 4	Psalm 5	Psalm 6	Psalm 7	Psalm 8
1		“God of my righteousness” (2)			“my righteousness” (9) “righteous God” (10) “his righteousness” (18)	
2		“set apart the godly for himself” (4)	“lead me in your righteousness” (8) “bless the righteous” (13)		“establish the righteous” (10) “saves the upright” (11)	
3					“Yahweh judges” (9); “righteous judge” (12)	
4		“put joy in my heart” (8)	“rejoice . . . sing for joy . . . exult” (12-13)			“O Lord, how majestic!” (2, 10)
5				“remember” (6) “praise you” (6)	“give thanks” (18) “give praise” (18)	
6			“name” (12)		“name” (18)	“name” (2, 10)

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

#### 7.1 Review of the research

##### *7.1.1 The objectives of the study*

The primary objective of the study was to identify the relationships between Psalms 3-8 so as to determine how the final redactors compiled this corpus of psalms. I divided this primary objective into three logically subordinate objectives which, if achieved, would lead naturally to the accomplishment of the primary objective. The three subordinate objectives were as follows.

- a) The research sought to identify all links between Psalms 3-8 which might have accounted for (or at least contributed to) the editors' decision to arrange them in the canonical order.

- b) The research sought to discover what criteria, if any, the editors used to arrange the psalms when compiling Psalms 3-8.
- c) The research endeavoured to discover whether the editors had a communicative objective behind their arrangement and, if so, what that objective was.

Each of these objectives was applied at two different levels, namely, at the level of adjacent psalms and at the level of the corpus as a whole.

### *7.1.2 The methodology of the study*

The methodology consisted of three steps. The first step presented an exegesis of individual psalms, the second explored the concatenation of adjacent psalms and the third investigated the compilation of the corpus as a whole. Each step built upon the preceding step.

*Exegesis.* I began with an exegetical study of each psalm. The goal was not to present ground-breaking insights into the psalms, but to lay a foundation for comparing psalms to determine possible criteria of arrangement. I relied heavily on major commentaries to assist in my analysis of textual variants, historical setting, life setting, structure and themes. Using computerised Bible software, I compiled detailed statistics of word frequencies in my corpus, the Psalter and the Masoretic Text.

*Concatenation.* On the basis of my study of each psalm, I set about identifying any similarities between pairs of adjacent psalms (3-4, 4-5, 5-6, 6-7 and 7-8) that might have motivated the editors to juxtapose them. I began by doing an exhaustive analysis of shared lexemes, the most objective and concrete kind of link, and then considered historical, functional, structural and thematic links. For each pair of psalms, I weighed the evidence and tentatively suggested which factors probably led to their concatenation.

*Compilation.* The last step attempted to gain insight into the processes the editors followed when compiling my corpus. I conducted detailed analyses of the psalm headings, shared lexemes and unifying themes. Since historical and cultic factors had not emerged prominently in the early stages of the study, they received little attention at this stage.

## **7.2 Conclusions of the research**

Enquiry into the editorial criteria and objectives underlying the final arrangement of Psalms 3-8 took place at two levels, first at the level of the concatenation of neighbouring psalms and then at the level of the arrangement of the whole group. I was able to draw several conclusions.

### 7.2.1 Conclusions regarding the concatenation of adjacent psalms

The first objective was to identify all links between adjacent psalms that might have influenced the editors' decision to juxtapose them. *For each pair of adjacent psalms, I discovered medium to strong evidence of verbal and thematic linkage.* In the case of Psalms 3-4, the verbal-thematic links are strong enough to suggest conclusively that they motivated editors to group these psalms.<sup>146</sup> I reached the same conclusion with respect to Psalms 7-8.<sup>147</sup> In Psalms 4-5 and 5-6, parallel headings provided the initial basis of collection.<sup>148</sup> In terms of the further basis of arrangement, if Psalms 4-5 are

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<sup>146</sup> Persuasive verbal links included (a) the root צַר ("adversary" or "adversity") in the opening verse of each psalm, (b) allusions to "my honour" (כְּבוֹדִי), (c) the phrase "many are saying" (רַבִּים אֹמְרִים), (d) the hendiadys "I lie down and sleep" (שָׁכַב וַיִּשָּׁן), (e) the verbs "call" (קָרָא) and "answer" (עָנָה) occurring together and (f) the exclamation "you, O Lord" (אַתָּה יְהוָה).

<sup>147</sup> The primary connection lies in similar references to the Lord's "name" (שֵׁם) strategically placed as a hook word at the end of Psalm 7, the beginning and end of Psalm 8, and the beginning of Psalm 9/10. This is reinforced by the shared allusions to enemies using the roots צַר and אֹיֵב, each of which occur in Psalms 6, 7, 8 and 9/10.

<sup>148</sup> All three psalms share three parallel elements in their headings, namely, "a psalm of David", "for the director of music" and, most significantly, the name of a musical instrument (either "stringed instruments" or "flutes").

looked at in isolation, one might argue for either a cultic-liturgical motivation (as evening and morning hymns respectively) or a verbal-thematic rationale.<sup>149</sup> At an early stage of the study, before I had analysed later pairs of psalms, I felt the verbal-thematic links provided a stronger basis for linking Psalms 4-5 than the cultic-liturgical hypothesis. Later observations about the importance of verbal-thematic links between adjacent psalms strongly corroborated this feeling. The secondary basis of arrangement for Psalms 5-6 clearly lay in verbal-thematic similarities.<sup>150</sup> Verbal links also provided the only plausible rationale for the intentional juxtaposition of Psalms 6-7.<sup>151</sup>

Besides verbal-thematic links, no other kind of linking emerged regularly as a candidate to account for the arrangement of Psalms 3-8. With the possible

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<sup>149</sup> The verbal links include כָּזַב, צדק, חסד, שמח and אַתָּה יחווה, while shared themes include deception, rejoicing and protection.

<sup>150</sup> Noteworthy verbal-thematic links include (a) references to “all evildoers” (כָּל-פֹּעֲלֵי עָוֹן), (b) vows that Yahweh will “hear my voice” (תִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי), (c) allusions to “the sound of my cry/weeping” (קוֹל שֹׁעֵי and קוֹל בְּכִי) and (d) the similar use of the homonyms “my enemies” (שׂוֹנְאֵי) and “my adversaries” (צוֹרְרֵי).

<sup>151</sup> The use of two roots alluding to enemies, the rare צרר and the common אָיַב, not only in Psalms 6-7 but also in Psalms 8 and 9/10, is most unlikely to be coincidental.

exception of Psalms 4-5, I found no evidence to suggest that use in a similar *Sitz im Leben* could account for the arrangement of a pair of adjacent psalms. I also completely rejected the theory that the historical note in the heading of Psalm 3—"a psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom, his son"—subsumes one or more of the following psalms, indicating that they were composed on the same occasion. The few historical data contained in these psalms do not fit this theory and, perhaps even more importantly, the headings of Psalms 4-6 suggest that prior to the compilation of the canonical Psalter, these hymns belonged to a different collection to Psalm 3.

The second objective was to discover what criteria, if any, the editors used to juxtapose neighbouring psalms. The strength of the links discovered strongly suggested the editors did not organise these psalms randomly. There is evidence of purposeful arrangement. *The primary criterion of arrangement lay in verbal and thematic links.* The compilers were concerned to ensure that each pair of adjacent psalms shared certain common themes, which are usually signposted by shared terminology. Similarities in the psalm headings provided a secondary criterion of arrangement. The compilers attempted to keep together psalms which shared elements in their headings, but, as would become evident later in the study, this consideration was subordinate to ensuring a smooth thematic flow from one psalm to the next.

### *7.2.2 Conclusions regarding the organisation of the entire corpus*

My analysis of the organisation of my corpus as a whole led to a fairly clear picture of how it was compiled.

A study of the headings led to the conclusion that Psalms 4-6 were a pre-existing trio of psalms from the music director's collection.<sup>152</sup> It also suggested a possible link<sup>153</sup> between Psalms 3 and 7 and singled out Psalm 7 as being something of a "stranger" in this collection of psalms.

In my quest to understand the reason for the presence and position of Psalm 7, I began to wonder whether Psalms 3 and 7 might have been neighbouring psalms in an earlier collection. This hunch gained credence when an in-depth study of verbal links between Psalm 3 and the rest of my corpus revealed that Psalm 3 has strong verbal links with Psalms 4 and 7. Verbal analysis also showed that Psalm 7 shares a larger number of lexemes with Psalm 6 than with any other psalm in my corpus, strengthening the conclusion drawn in the

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<sup>152</sup> All three psalms share three components in their headings: (a) "a psalm of David", (b) "for the director of music" and (c) "for flutes/stringed instruments".

<sup>153</sup> These two psalms contain historical allusions to circumstances in David's life as part of their headings. These historical allusions are written in a similar form.

previous chapter to the effect that verbal-thematic links provided the primary criterion for concatenation. An exhaustive study of lexemes shared between Psalms 4, 5 and 6 somewhat corroborated the perception created by the headings that they were a pre-existing trio in the music director's collection before being included in Book I of the canonical Psalter.<sup>154</sup> Finally, an exhaustive list of shared lexemes between all six psalms confirmed the importance of terms depicting "enemies", especially צַר and אֹיֵב, as linking words in the corpus.

By analysing recurring motifs in Psalms 3-8,<sup>155</sup> I concluded that they cohere around themes emerging from the presence of the psalmists' enemies. Lesser recurring themes, such as God's favour on the righteous and his disapproval of the wicked, and urgent prayers for God's intervention, protection and deliverance, are present because of the threat the enemies pose. Thus

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<sup>154</sup> The four shared terms were "you Lord" (אַתָּה יהוה), "hear" (שָׁמַע), "pray/prayer" (פָּלַל) and חָסַד.

<sup>155</sup> I selected seven themes for analysis, namely, (a) enemies, (b) God's disfavour, (c) God's favour, (d) salvation, (e) protection, (f) prayers and (g) righteousness, joy and praise. These were chosen because they appeared to be the most prominent and frequent themes recurring in my corpus.

Psalms 3-8 have a loose form of thematic unity. I found no evidence to suggest that they were arranged to tell a story, that is, that they were organised so that each successive psalm develops the theme introduced by its predecessor.

Putting all these observations together, it is possible to reconstruct tentatively the process by which the editors organised Psalms 3-8. Working with a collection of  $\text{רָיָה}$  psalms, they collected a group in which “enemies” were prominent. This group included a pre-existing trio from the music director’s collection (Psalms 4-6) and a pair from an unnamed collection (Psalms 3 and 7). Psalms 3 and 4 fitted together like a hand and glove, while Psalms 6 and 7 shared a couple of verbal links; therefore, the editors inserted Psalms 4-6 between Psalms 3 and 7. Psalm 8 was added after Psalm 7 because of the hook word “name” (see §5.5). Throughout the arrangement, the primary editorial concern was to ensure that each psalm shared verbal-thematic links with its immediate neighbours.

### ***7.2.3 Qualified acceptance of the hypothesis***

The hypothesis articulated in chapter 1 stated my expectations as follows:

The researcher expects the study of Psalms 3-8 to reveal surface-level redaction, but not deep-level redaction. That is, the

final redactors grouped psalms that were in some respect similar (e.g., sharing key words, themes, life settings, etc.), but their redactive work did not extend to the creative production of a new literary text with its own purpose and message.

For the reasons expressed in the conclusions stated above (§7.2.1 and §7.2.2), I accept the hypothesis that the study of Psalms 3-8 reveals “surface-level redaction”. There is evidence indicating that these psalms were not randomly collected; rather, they were purposefully arranged. At the level of adjacent psalms, the arrangement was based on verbal links between psalms. At the level of the corpus as a whole, the psalms cohere loosely around themes pertaining to enemies.

### **7.3 The validity of the conclusions**

How valid are these conclusions? There are two main grounds on which the conclusions might be challenged, namely, (a) inappropriate methodology and (b) size of corpus. A few comments about each of these grounds seems appropriate.

*Inappropriate methodology.* As with any research, if either the presuppositions or the methodology is shown to be fundamentally flawed, the conclusions are invalidated. An honest quest for the editorial criteria underlying the

arrangement of a group of psalms needs to begin with an open mind as to whether historical, liturgical or lexical influences were dominant. My methodology does have a built-in bias towards lexical links because they are the most concrete, objective, measurable similarities between psalms. If the study resulted in a difficult judgement as to whether, for example, lexical or liturgical factors served as the primary editorial criterion of arrangement, then this natural bias in the method would have seriously weakened the credibility of the findings. However, since verbal-thematic links emerged with overwhelming clarity as the primary factors, this natural bias does not seriously undermine the findings.

I am aware of only one comparable study of the arrangement of a corpus of psalms, namely, Howard's (1997) analysis of Psalms 93-100. He chose to focus exclusively on literary similarities between psalms. Using his methodology, my conclusions would probably have been identical, yet the fact that the present study also kept historical and liturgical factors in mind initially and eventually excluded them on the basis of the internal evidence in the psalms adds credence to the conclusions.

*Corpus size.* Perhaps the most serious objection lies in the fact that the chosen corpus is too small to permit convincing conclusions. Since the

chosen corpus consists of only six fairly short psalms, it would seem to permit only the most tentative conclusions to be drawn.

This objection has little relevance as far as the analysis of the basis for the concatenation of adjacent psalms is concerned since, by definition, this examination is limited to specific pairs of psalms with no reference to the surrounding psalms. Extending the corpus to Psalm 14, for example, would not in any way alter the conclusion that Psalms 3 and 4 were juxtaposed on the basis of their strong verbal-thematic links.

The objection has some merit at the level of the arrangement of the whole corpus, Psalms 3-8. Had the object of analysis been a longer string of consecutive psalms, the consistent recurrence of similar patterns of arrangement might have reinforced the conclusions drawn with reference to a smaller group. However, it does not *necessarily* follow that contrary findings in an extended corpus would undermine the validity of my conclusions regarding Psalms 3-8. For the sake of argument, if one extended the study to include Psalms 9-14 and found a different basis of arrangement within the additional psalms, it would not *necessarily* negate the findings with respect to Psalms 3-8. It is quite plausible that the editors used different criteria on different collections (especially if there were multiple editors spread over period of time). If a clear liturgical rationale emerged for the arrangement of Psalms 11-

14, for instance, this would not undermine the conclusion that verbal-thematic links provided the basis of arrangement for Psalms 3-8.

While recognising that evidence from the larger corpus to which a group of psalms belongs may influence one's interpretation of the basis for their arrangement, the relationship between each group of psalms, whether large or small, needs to be analysed first and foremost in isolation, on the merits of the evidence within that particular group. My conclusions regarding the arrangement of Psalms 3-8 should stand or fall primarily on the analysis of the evidence of links between these very psalms.

It should be borne in mind that a study of this nature becomes exponentially more cumbersome as each additional psalm is added to its length. Extending the corpus to the next sensible end point, probably Psalm 14, would have made it impossible to analyse the psalms in the depth I have done in this study. The small gains that may have been made in terms of the potential validity of the conclusions would have been more than offset by the fact that the analysis of the psalms could not have been anywhere near as thorough as was possible with a smaller corpus.

Certain of my conclusions rest on a greater preponderance of evidence than others. For example, the conclusion that the primary criterion of arrangement throughout the corpus was lexical-thematic similarities seems well founded.

Similarly, the analysis of why Psalms 3 and 4 were juxtaposed should bear up under scrutiny, as should that of Psalms 7 and 8. By contrast, my tentative proposal that Psalms 3 and 7 were once neighbours in an earlier collection rests on much flimsier evidence. I believe that the major conclusions regarding the redactional criteria underlying the arrangement of Psalms 3-8 will prove to be well founded on the evidence of the psalms themselves, even if some of the lesser findings are disputed.

#### **7.4 The significance of the conclusions**

It seems appropriate to close by making some suggestions as to the significance of the findings of this study. What does this thesis contribute to the current state of knowledge regarding the Psalter?

The most concrete and self-evident contribution lies in the light it sheds on the compilation of Psalms 3-8 as a small group of psalms in Book I of the Psalter. Negatively, the study undermines the suggestion in some commentaries that Psalms 3, 4 and 5 were placed at the beginning of the Psalter for cultic reasons, namely, as a string of morning and evening prayers. Positively, it offers a plausible reconstruction of the sorting process the editors may have followed in arranging these psalms, giving special attention to verbal and thematic links between adjacent psalms.

The study corroborates the growing scholarly sentiment that the editors gave careful consideration to the arrangement of psalms in the Psalter. Wilson (1985a; cf. DeClaissé-Walford 1997) was no doubt correct in stressing (a) the seams between the five books and (b) the strategic placement of royal psalms and wisdom psalms as the most prominent areas of editorial shaping in the Psalter. My study shows that careful editorial work extended to the exact placement of each psalm. The editors of the Psalter seem to have been sensitive to verbal and thematic links between psalms when positioning them in a collection. Although these conclusions can only be firmly drawn with reference to a small portion of the canonical Psalter (i.e., Psalms 3-8), they do corroborate the findings of similar studies that emphasise the importance of verbal links between small groups of psalms, such as Davis' (1996) observations regarding Psalms 107-118 and Howard's (1997) conclusions with respect to Psalms 93-100. Further studies of other corpi may well confirm that verbal and thematic links were widely used by the final redactors as a criterion of arrangement.

One can only speculate what the result might be of extending the method employed in this study to larger sections of the Psalter or even across the entire Psalter. I suspect the result might be similar to the findings of this study; that is, we would observe a general tendency to juxtapose adjacent psalms on the basis of verbal links and to keep larger groups together because they

cohere loosely around certain shared themes. In short, I would hypothesise that we would continue to observe surface-level redaction based primarily on verbal and thematic similarities. It will be difficult to test this hypothesis on large groups of psalms because the application of the method becomes exponentially more difficult as the corpus grows. Further research on other small groups of psalms would help to confirm the theory that verbal-thematic linking was a major criterion by which the editors of the canonical Psalter arranged the hymns.

Finally, the hermeneutical value of the study lies in affirming the need for psalm exegesis to include a step in which the interpreter considers the psalm's literary context within the canonical Psalter (see Mays 1993; Jeppesen 2003). It has become common practice for academic articles about a single psalm to include an analysis of the psalm's relationship to surrounding psalms.<sup>156</sup> Many recent commentaries, such as those by Tate (1998), Wilcock (2001), Goldingay (2006) and Lane (2006), do include

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<sup>156</sup> Amongst the journal articles I consulted that explicate a single psalm, the following are examples of essays that included a meaningful discussion of the psalm's relationship to surrounding psalms: Barker (1995), Davis (2000), Tate (2001), Prinsloo (2003), Botha (2004; 2005a-b), Styger and Human (2004), Aloisi (2005) and Helberg (2005).

comments regarding the relationships between a psalm and its neighbours. Analysing intertextual links between neighbouring psalms has already become an important and fruitful line of inquiry in psalm exegesis. My own study is therefore a small but important step in this direction.

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