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**READING LAMENT THROUGH THE EYES OF THE KING:
A HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH TO INDIVIDUAL LAMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO DAVID**

JOHN C. PENNYLEGION

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
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ABSTRACT OF
READING LAMENT THROUGH THE EYES OF THE KING:
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The purpose of this thesis is to examine the individual lament psalms that are attributed to David in their titles. With over half of David's psalms falling within the category of lament, this undertaking could take several different paths. In order to direct this study, the focus of this thesis will be upon how Davidic authorship influences our hermeneutical approach of these laments.

The reason why this is an important consideration has to do with varied interpretations and appropriations of the psalms generally, and more specifically lament psalms. Due to the form in which we have received them, namely poetry, and the distance the modern reader is from the original intent, often these psalms are applied for the present reader as spiritualized metaphors that are removed from a historical person and circumstance. While this approach may appear to have the markings of piety, it removes one of the most important interpretative aspects of the psalms, that of the author and his situation. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to examine the individual lament psalms attributed to David in order to discern interpretative themes that are common and aid in not simply an understanding of the original intent of the psalms but also appropriate application for the reader of today.

Since the goal of this study is to determine how Davidic authorship affects our understanding of these psalms, the body of this thesis, except for one chapter, will be upon the significance of the king being the author of these psalms. The first chapter of the body of examination will take up the question of the authenticity of the psalm titles. This is important to consider since the premise of this thesis is that Davidic authorship influences our understanding of the psalms. Following the titles, I will consider the manner with which we should take in order to identify genre. This is the only chapter that does not have a concern for the importance of the king in our reading. However, it is an important topic of consideration since this thesis is concerned with a specific type of psalm. I will then return to the importance of the king in the life of Israel by considering the Kingship Law of Deuteronomy 17 and how it impacts our reading of the Psalter in general. My focus moves from the king to the corporate people by considering individual laments who move from the individual lamenter to the corporate people of God. The final chapter will examine those laments that include themes of both innocence and iniquity. Having examined these various topics, I will then seek to summarize my findings and give assistance for the appropriation of these psalms.

To Kat

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Praise be to the Lord; he invites our cries and hears our laments.

John Pennylegion
2017

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann, when speaking of the implications of losing lament from the Christian cultic vocabulary said, “One loss...is the loss of *genuine covenant interaction*, since the second party of the covenant (the petitioner) has become voiceless or has a voice that is permitted to speak only praise and doxology.”¹ This is a significant loss because it limits the worshipper’s use of the psalms by either ignoring the psalms that are not primarily praise and doxology or by spiritualizing away the difficult cries of the Psalmist. For anyone who takes the psalms, and the form in which we have received them, seriously, neither of these options are appealing. Not only is it not appealing for our modern use of the psalms, the idea that worship would not include cries of need, complaints of injustice, and lament would be strange to Israelite minds.

There are a couple of reasons why this muting of the worshipper should be avoided. The first is related to the sheer number of laments that are found in the Psalter. Of the one hundred and fifty psalms in the Hebrew Psalter, seventy-three of them are ascribed as written by David in their titles.² Of these seventy-three, forty-one of them are categorized as lament.³ This means that if we are to restrict the use of the psalms to only

¹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 102.

² I will discuss the titles, and the legitimacy that we should afford them, in chapter two.

³ See appendix 1 and chapter three for a discussion on identifying lament genre.

those that are praise oriented, then the worshiper must allegorize, at best, or ignore, at worst, over half of the psalms attributed to David. This is something I am not comfortable doing.

The other reason why the limiting of the worshiper in the above manner is inappropriate is because it inhibits the ability to use appropriate language to respond to truly lamentable circumstances. The world that we inhabit, though vastly different from the Psalmist's, is eerily similar in relation to brokenness, sin, and misery. To allegorize or ignore these lament psalms is to ignore the pain that humankind experiences regardless of time or location. A better approach is needed.

Throughout the course of psalm studies, the topic of genre and lament has been considered and examined. Prior to the publication of Hermann Gunkel's important work, *Introduction to the Psalms*, there was not a systematic formulation of genre in the psalms. This statement is not meant to imply that the idea of genre was foreign to exegetes prior to Gunkel. No, in fact, it is apparent that biblical scholars understood the importance of genre and readily would identify psalms with genre language. An example that proves the point is John Calvin. When discussing Psalm 77, a psalm not attributed to David but considered a lament by many,⁴ Calvin called the psalm, "lamentations and groanings of the chosen people."⁵ While some scholars were accustomed to speaking of psalms with genre language prior to Gunkel, it was not until Gunkel that a concerted emphasis was made to categorizing specific psalms through the lens of genre.

⁴ Johnston and Firth list Sabourin, Day, Bellinger, and Gillingham as scholars who see Psalm 77 as lament. Philip S. Johnston and David G. Firth, eds., *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 298.

⁵ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson, Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 5:205.

While form-criticism became the dominant approach to psalm studies, in recent years it has given way to the canonical reading of the Psalter.⁶ Though there are aspects of the canonical reading approach that are helpful, one does not need to disregard the benefits form-criticism gives in interpretation for the sake of adopting a canonical approach. Instead, I believe it is still beneficial to incorporate language of genre in our discussions of the psalms but to do so with a semblance of flexibility regarding form. Thus, as I examine various psalms I will be approaching them with genre in mind.

Although the hermeneutical emphasis in psalm studies has previously been on form-criticism and more recently on canonical reading, to my knowledge, little work has been done on the hermeneutics of lament psalms that are attributed to David when considering them from the perspective of Davidic authorship. This lack of focused attention inhibits our ability to rightly understand the manner that these laments functioned within Israel and how the modern worshiper should appropriate them. Therefore, throughout this thesis, I will be considering how Davidic authorship, and the implications of his authorship, affect our interpretation of the lament psalms attributed to him.

In order to determine a proper hermeneutical approach, I will examine the titles that are found in the Masoretic Text and argue for why they can, and should be, understood to be authentic to the psalms themselves. Having established the appropriateness of viewing the psalm titles as authentic, I will then take up the question of genre. By considering genre, I will not only look at the form that is found in many laments but also the result for which the laments were seeking. By considering not only

⁶ See Gerald Henry Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico, CA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1985).

the structural elements but also the purpose for which the lament was given, I will show the benefit that genre identification still has in interpreting the psalms. Having established the likelihood of Davidic authorship and the benefit genre identification has, my focus will turn towards the role of the king in the life of Israel. This is an important discussion since David was the king over Israel and as such had a significant role in the corporate people of God. Thus, we will see that the principles of the Kingship Law that governed the responsibilities of the king, related to God and to Israel, appear in the Psalter and should have an impact on how we interpret psalms authored by the king. Chapter five will move the discussion of these laments forward by exploring the inclusion of the corporate people of God even in individual laments. In other words, it will become apparent that the purpose of these individual laments is not limited to just David but extends to the corporate people who would have received and sung these psalms. Finally, I will discuss the observance of innocence and iniquity language found in these laments. The purpose of which is to understand how these apparent contradictory themes can be found in the same psalms without conflicting. In addition to that, we will also see the circumstances for why some of the laments were spoken and will help us to discern the appropriateness of them today.

This examination of individual laments attributed to David will aid in interpreting lament psalms because it seeks to understand them in consideration of their original author. By understanding the way these psalms were given and subsequently received by Israel, the modern reader of these laments will benefit by knowing how to appropriate them today.

Chapter 2

The Authenticity of Psalm Titles

Since this thesis' chief concern is limited to psalms attributed to David, it is important to consider the reliability of this attribution. One hundred and sixteen of the psalms found in the Hebrew Psalter include a title in the superscription. While the question of dating and reliability of the titles will be taken up, prior to that discussion, it is important to recognize that the titles are found in the Masoretic Text. Some of these titles include what are understood to be musical direction (55 psalms fall into this category),⁷ while others include information about the circumstance that instigated the writing of the psalm (18 psalms),⁸ these are often referred to as "long titles." Seventy-three of the psalm titles include the phrase, לְדָוִד, "of David," or some derivative. David is the most frequently acknowledged author of the psalms, with psalms being ascribed to him in every book of the Psalter. While much of what I will say is significant for the titles generally, I have particular interest in how the titles and the historical understanding of them affect the exegesis of the psalms לְדָוִד.

Historical View of Titles

While some have argued that the titles had been disregarded as original to the psalms as early as the patristics,⁹ the most prominent movement to discount the

⁷ Roger T. Beckwith, "The Early History of the Psalter," *Tyndale Bulletin* 46, no. 1 (1995): 8.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

legitimacy of the titles began in the early eighteenth century with the work of Augustin Calmin.¹⁰ This skepticism regarding title authenticity found its full influence coming to bear by the middle of the nineteenth century. It was by then that the titles had been “almost universally abandoned as late, inauthentic, and insignificant.”¹¹ No doubt this statement sounds strong and perhaps even overstated, yet it reflects the dominant view in scholarship, for even conservative, or at least conservative leaning, scholars such as Peter Craigie have seen the titles as being of lesser importance.¹²

Since it has become the dominant view that the titles are to be rejected as authentic, the question that ought to be posed is, “Why? What precipitated the acceptance of this view?” There are two arguments that I will discuss that have been put forth for rejecting the titles. The first has to do with the historical circumstances for which the psalms were employed. The second argument deals with the rejection of Davidic authorship.

Rejection of Historical Circumstance¹³

The influence of Hermann Gunkel’s work upon psalm studies cannot be overstated. This is true not only of his work regarding genre, but also his emphasis upon situating the psalms in the cultic life of the community of Israel. For instance, Gunkel attributes the Psalter’s original circumstance to the Israelite cult.¹⁴ He sought to confirm

¹⁰ Bruce K. Waltke and James M. Houston, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: An Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), 67.

¹¹ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1979), 509.

¹² Peter C. Craigie and Marvin Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 2nd ed., Word Biblical Commentary 19 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 31.

¹³ My goal in discussing the historical circumstances described in the titles is to show the illegitimacy of outright rejection of the historical descriptor.

¹⁴ Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. James D. Nogalski (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 7.

his thesis by noting that particular psalms were employed for use in the sanctuary at appropriate occasions.¹⁵ These occasions would have included events such as the consecration of the temple, the enthronement of the king, festivals of celebration and complaint, and other instances of worship. Thus, Gunkel's argument can be summarized by his own statement when speaking of individual complaint songs, "one should seek its setting in the worship service and accept the fact that the poetry derives from cultic formulations."¹⁶ Therefore, the purpose of composing the psalms was for the singing of God's people during worship. While I agree that the Psalter was used for the public worship of Israel, Gunkel's contention that the intent behind writing them was worship can devalue the legitimacy of the historical events which the titles present as precipitating the psalms.

Gunkel's student Sigmund Mowinckel furthered Gunkel's work and focused upon the *Sitz im Leben* of the specific text. Mowinckel argued that "religious poetry... originated in connection with congregational worship."¹⁷ Mowinckel sought to confirm this line of thinking by pointing to the use of the psalms in the temple service in 1 Chronicles 16,¹⁸ the number of allusions to singing that are found in the psalms,¹⁹ the general content of the psalms as being from congregation to the deity,²⁰ and the sacrificial language that is frequently employed.²¹ Mowinckel has done psalm scholarship a service by directing our attention to the Psalter's use in the worship of Israel. However, by

¹⁵ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶ Ibid., 123.

¹⁷ Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 2 vols., The Biblical Resource Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 1:2.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1:4.

¹⁹ Ibid., 1:8.

²⁰ Ibid., 1:17.

²¹ Ibid.

emphasizing the use of the psalms in the temple, Mowinckel, building off of Gunkel, concludes that a later date for the psalms is necessary. Mowinckel's later dating is built off two assumptions. First, that the titles refer not to David but to his descendants and, second, that the language of temple found in many psalms points to a date following David.²² This belief of later authorship, specifically a post-exilic date, results in the conclusion that the historical circumstances found in the titles are unreliable.²³

The rejection of the historical circumstances of the titles has been approved by the likes of Childs who points out that the emphasis upon the cultic life of the community gave the primary setting of the psalms as opposed to the particular historical events.²⁴ While the directing of the reader to the psalms as part of the cult is important, this emphasis has led many scholars, though unnecessarily, to reject the titles of the psalms. This is reflected by Kraus who argues, "The situations in the titles are historically untenable."²⁵ Thus, if one could situate the primary circumstance to the cultic setting, the historical event described in the title can be disregarded. But does it need to be? My contention is "no."

There is good reason to believe that the historical events described in the titles reliably recount the events that precipitated the composing of the psalm. For instance, even those who would be skeptical of the authenticity of the titles acknowledge that the earliest versions of the Psalter included titles.²⁶ Furthermore, historical titles only appear in thirteen psalms, if they were secondary additions, why are there not more included in

²² Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2:98.

²³ This will be discussed further below.

²⁴ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 509.

²⁵ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Pub, 1988), 64.

²⁶ Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 33.

the Psalter?²⁷ If it was only the result of a later editor that the historical events cited in the titles were included, it would be surprising that their ability to discern the historical setting of other psalms was limited. Finally, there are instances in other portions of the Old Testament where a song is introduced with authorship and historical notice (cf. Exodus 15:1; Deuteronomy 31:30, 32:44; Judges 5:1; 2 Samuel 22:1; Jonah 2:1; Isaiah 38:9).²⁸ While none of these arguments alone, or in sum, prove beyond a shadow of doubt that the historical circumstances cited in the titles are authentic, they do reflect that a full acceptance of the critical scholarship is not required and that the belief in their authenticity is reasonable and justifiable.

Rejection of Authorship

The second argument that challenges the legitimacy of the titles has to do with a rejection of authorship ascribed by the titles. There is clear overlap between the previous discussion and this current one. For example, an acceptance of post-exilic dating of the psalms not only rejects the circumstances in the psalms but also the authors, particularly that of David.²⁹ Since I have already taken up this argument above, I will focus my attention on three lines of discussion that seek to discount the historical claim of Davidic authorship. The first examination argues that the content of some of the psalms is not in keeping with Davidic authorship; the second argument deals with the assertion that the phrase, לְדָוִד, should be understood as someone other than the historical David; finally, the third discussion rejects Davidic authorship because of the Temple language employed in the Psalter.

²⁷ Waltke, et al, *The Psalms as Christian Worship*, 92.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Gunkel argues that Davidic authorship, particularly related to the titles with details of composition, is to be understood as “impossible.” Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, 77.

Rejection of Authorship: Content

The first argument deals with the content of some of the psalms. This argument primarily has two expressions. The first expression is reflected by Kirkpatrick who argues, “Many Psalms which bear the name of David...express feelings which it is difficult to attribute to a man of his position and character.”³⁰ His concern is that David would never actually write some of the words attributed to him. The rationale for this is not that David was a simple shepherd boy and the language of the psalms are too lofty; rather, he maintains, the language is not in keeping with that of a king. In saying this, Kirkpatrick is not rejecting Davidic authorship outright, for there are times when he affirms the possibility of it, i.e. Psalm 18;³¹ instead he disregards the possibility of Davidic origin for those psalms that express the emotions contrary to what he believes would be in keeping with a king. Undoubtedly, Kirkpatrick would reject many of the laments ascribed to David due to the language of distress and seemingly questioning posture towards God. This is problematic because it has a limited view for what would constitute an appropriate address to God. While expecting the king to express himself in a manner that does not take the form of complaint sounds pious, it reflects a lack of imagination of the emotional toll that the psalmist may have endured with when faced with burdensome circumstances. In addition to this, Kirkpatrick’s concern is with David expressing these complaints to God, yet he does not suggest that they were inappropriate

³⁰ A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1902), xxxii. This same argument is put forth by Driver. S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1895), 352 quoted in Gordon Wenham, *The Psalter Reclaimed: Praying and Praising with the Psalms* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 87.

³¹ Kirkpatrick, *Psalms*, xlii.

for a non-Davidic psalmist. This begs the question, “if the raw language of lament is appropriate for a general psalmist, then why not for the king himself?”

In our modern world, we expect our leaders to respond to tragedy, struggle, and difficulty with resolve and strength. Thus, the picture of a leader crying out in anguish is foreign. However, when considering the Israelite king, one must be mindful that he was the idealized Israelite. How he lived, spoke, acted, and worshiped was supposed to be the model for all of the people.³² Therefore, instead of seeing David’s complaints and laments as proof that they could not have been the language of the king, it is better to see the language pointing to David as being God’s king, who as king, “experiences the full range of human emotions, from fear and despair to courage and love, from complaint and plea to praise and thanksgiving.”³³ Brueggemann sees this language not as being troubling but as being hopeful. He says,

The candor, entitlement, and assertiveness converge so that the complaint is in fact an act of expectation, a deep hope that God will act, that God can be moved and persuaded to act. And when God acts, all will be well. Thus the capacity to complain and protest is itself a conviction that the present trouble, variously described, is unbearable and cannot last, and that it is in God’s self-interest to act to transform the circumstance of the speaker.³⁴

And so, a better understanding of this language is to see it as expressing the appropriate response of the king: the king who is living in the midst of a world that is not oriented towards covenantal obedience, who is articulating the groaning of the people, and whose words are re-directing God’s people towards trust in God despite circumstances which may appear to the contrary.

³² I will take up this discussion in greater detail in a later chapter.

³³ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 521.

³⁴ Walter Brueggemann, “On ‘Being Human’ in the Psalms,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 515–28, 523.

Rejection of Authorship: לְדָוִד

The second argument is built on the idea that Davidic authorship should be rejected because לְדָוִד can, and for many, should, be understood as something other than indicating that David was the actual author. For instance, Mowinckel appeals to the Israelite king's representative role on behalf of the nation.³⁵ Thus, when we read, לְדָוִד, it is not pointing to the actual person David, but one in David's line. As a manner of affirming this position, Mowinckel appeals to not only the titles but also the content of the psalms. In Psalm 144:9 [10], a psalm with the title, לְדָוִד, we read, "...rescued David his servant..." Mowinckel sees this as not relating to the historical person David, but instead "'David' means here the reigning king of Judah."³⁶ Thus, when the title reads לְדָוִד, we are to understand that as meaning an heir of David. However, there is nothing in the passage itself that would necessitate Mowinckel's interpretation.

Mowinckel is not the only advocate of this view. Others have accepted it and taken the argument farther. Broyles makes a similar observation when he speaks of "A psalm of David" saying, "By itself, it is ambiguous. 'David' can mean either the historical individual or the Davidic king."³⁷ He further notes, that the word 'of' could mean: belonging to – in the sense of possession because he authored it; belonging to the Davidic collection of psalms; dedicated to David or to the Davidic king; for use of David or the Davidic king; or concerning / about David.³⁸ Broyles does not seek a definitive view, but simply presents the various options as a way of showing that there is a lack of

³⁵ Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:44.

³⁶ Ibid., 1:218.

³⁷ Broyles, *Psalms*, 27.

³⁸ Ibid., 27-8.

certainty when it comes to understanding לְדָוִד. Goldingay continues in this vein, but he differs in that he includes another possibility previously not mentioned. He posits that לְדָוִד could also be referring to a future king. Thus, the psalm being “for David” meaning for a future king, perhaps even the Messianic king.³⁹

Kraus takes a little bit different path when he seeks to reject Davidic authorship; he simply asserts, “Originally all of the psalm poetry was transmitted anonymously.”⁴⁰ The point being that לְדָוִד could not mean Davidic authorship since no one knows whom the author was. However, even as Kraus posits that the psalms were anonymously written, a claim for which he does not show evidence, he allows for the possibility that at least some of the psalms could be dated from the time of the kings.⁴¹ Which begs the question, “then why not from the time of David?”

There is no doubt that these ideas put forth from the various scholars regarding the interpretation of לְדָוִד are possible; that is not the question. The question is, “do any of these possibilities cohere to the biblical witness?” To seek to answer that question, we must consider the various times outside of the Psalter that לְדָוִד is found.

The phrase, לְדָוִד, is found fifty times in the historical books. In 1 and 2 Samuel, the phrase occurs forty-three times. In each of these instances לְדָוִד is speaking of the historical person, David. Outside of 1 and 2 Samuel לְדָוִד is found seven times and all in 1 Kings (1:8, 2:33, 2:44, 5:1, 5:7, 8:66, 11:38). Of these seven occurrences, six of them speak directly of David. In 2:33 it speaks of David and his descendants but it makes it

³⁹ John Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, ed. Tremper Longman III, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 1:26.

⁴⁰ Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 65.

⁴¹ Ibid., 65-66.

clear that it is including David along with his descendants rather than using the Hebrew phrase as a title only for David's progeny.

An important text for consideration is 2 Samuel 22:1. In this verse, the phrase, לַיהוָה, does not appear. However, its significance is found by comparing it to Psalm 18:1 [0]. The two passages begin with introductory statements. 2 Samuel 22:1 says, "And David spoke to the LORD the words..." while Psalm 18:1 [0] says, "To the choirmaster. A Psalm לַיהוָה, the servant of the LORD..." Following the introductory statements, both passages use the exact language:

The song to the LORD on the day when
the LORD delivered him from the hand of
all his enemies and from the hand of
Saul.

הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה יְהוָה אֱתוֹ מִכַּף
כָּל-אֹיְבָיו וּמִכַּף שָׂאוֹל :

This is important because it shows a clear link between an historical event found in the life of king David and the psalm title. The fact that psalm title uses לַיהוָה in the context of an historical event, indicates that the author of the psalm clearly had in mind the historical David and not just a future king in the line of David when he used the phrase לַיהוָה.

In the prophetic books the phrase occurs five times, all of which are found in Jeremiah (13:13, 22:4, 23:5, 33:15, 33:17). Three of the five (13:13, 22:4, 33:17) are speaking specifically of David's throne and a king who will sit upon it. However, the phrase, לַיהוָה, is speaking not of the person but of the throne. The other two instances, 23:5 and 33:15, are speaking of the king to come in the line of David. The ESV translates the phrase, "for David." This makes it sound like the one to come is coming for the sake of David. In both cases the king to come is called the "Branch" which surely is speaking of the Messiah and not just any king in the line of David.

The phrase under consideration is not found in Ezekiel, however there are three instances in which David's name is used (34:24, 37:24, 25). In each of these instances, the verse speaks of David being a prince or king forever. Clearly this is not speaking of David as the actual person since David was dead. Thus, it must be speaking of a king, or *the* king, in the line of David. Therefore, this could be an example of what Goldingay put forth as a rationale for seeing "of David" not speaking of the actual person David but of a king in the line of David. There is a similar use in Hos 3:5.

In the wisdom literature, not including the Psalms, the phrase does not appear. In Eccl 1:1 the name David is found but without the preposition and it is clearly speaking of the Son of David, the king. Yet it does not call the king, "of David" or "in David."

It is important to briefly consider the idea of the *lamed auctoris*. This is referring to the use of the ל in order to denote possession. Rata cites Gesenius when noting that "the introduction of the author, poet, etc., by this *lamed auctoris* is the customary idiom also in the other Semitic dialects, especially Arabic."⁴² Brown-Driver-Briggs (hereafter BDB) indicates that the ל used in reference to David in the psalm titles could indicate belonging, "a Psalm of or by David."⁴³ Joüon-Muraoka indicate that "A Psalm of David" as it is rendered in Psalm 3, etc. is an example of a *lamed auctoris*.⁴⁴ There are clear examples of the ל being used in this way when referring to an inanimate object. For example, Phoenician coins contained the inscription "לִצְדָנִים of the Sidonians, i.e.

⁴² T. Rata, "David," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 86.

⁴³ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 513. Number is for entry rather than page.

⁴⁴ Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2nd ed. (Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011).

belonging to them.”⁴⁵ There are also instances outside of the Psalter when ל is used to denote “belonging” in reference to a song or prayer (cf. Habakkuk 3:1 and Isaiah 38:9). Thus, it is clear that there are examples of the ל being used to ascribe possession. The question turns to, “how do we determine which use of the ל is used in the psalm titles?”

The primary way to determine the use of the ל is by considering context. There are clear instances when the ל is not a *lamed auctoris*. For example, in Psalm 4:1 [0], the ל is used twice. First in reference to the “choirmaster” לַמְנַצֵּחַ, and second in reference to “David” דָּוִד. In the first instance it is clear that the ל is not intended to indicate possession but to indicate “for the use of.” However, this non-*auctoris* use in the first portion of the clause would actually indicate that the second use of the ל is perhaps used as a *lamed auctoris*. The reason for this interpretation is that the first portion of the clause is referring to musical notation/use while the second portion of the title is clearly not. Thus, the context is pointing to a non-*auctoris* use in one instance and an *auctoris* use in the other. This example gives interpretative direction for other titles that include musical notation or historical events. It is best when considering these titles, to understand the ל in לְדָוִד as being a *lamed auctoris*.

However, it is more difficult to determine the use of the ל when there are not other contextual clues to aid in interpretation. For example, many psalms contain only the phrase לְדָוִד.⁴⁶ In these instances it is best to consider the use of the ל + David in the titles with more context. When doing this, we will interpret לְדָוִד consistently throughout the Psalter and see the ל when used alongside “David” as referring to possession.

⁴⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 513.

⁴⁶ Psalms. 25, 26, 27, 28, 35, 37, 103, 138, 144.

Beyond a lexical study of Davidic authorship, Wendland helpfully points out that the biblical witness, both of the Old (1 Samuel 16:14-23; 2 Samuel 1:19-27; Amos 6:5) and New Testaments (Mark 12:35-37; Acts 2:29, 34, 13:35-37), ascribe David as the author and singer of many of Israel's songs.⁴⁷ Mowinckel himself, even as he rejects the likelihood of Davidic authorship, asserts, "the collectors and editors of the Psalter understood [the titles] to be a bit of information about the author, and no doubt such a note was often added to a psalm on this basis."⁴⁸ Other than wondering how he would even know this, one must wonder why those so far removed from the formulating, collecting, and editing of the text would strongly hold a view of authorship that contradicts those who collected and edited it? Due to the lexical allowance, the acknowledgment of the Old and New Testaments, and the witness of those closest to the actual formulating of the Psalter, I agree with Wendland who says, "it is very likely that David did in fact compose – or at least personally select and adapt – many if not all of the psalms that bear his name."⁴⁹

This brief overview of לְדָוִד does not prove that the phrase ascribes Davidic authorship when used. However, it does indicate that the arguments put forth to denounce Davidic authorship based off of the preposition attached to the name should not be so readily accepted.

⁴⁷ Ernst R. Wendland, *Analyzing the Psalms: With Exercises for Bible Students and Translators*, 2nd ed. (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 2002), 24-5.

⁴⁸ Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:95.

⁴⁹ Wendland, *Analyzing the Psalms*, 25.

Rejection of Authorship: Temple Language

The final argument put forth to reject the authenticity of the titles is the language that refers to the temple, which is found in many psalms attributed to David.⁵⁰ As noted above, the likes of Mowinckel and others have emphasized the setting of the Psalter to that of the Israelite cult. Due to this presupposition, Mowinckel sees their composition as being in the time of the Jerusalem temple.⁵¹ An example of this is when Mowinckel appeals to Psalm 51 and says the psalm “presupposes the existence of the Temple”⁵² and thus cannot be authored by David or precipitated by David’s sin with Bathsheba, both of which the superscript claim. Driver makes a similar argument when he claims that Psalm 51:18 is looking towards the restoration of Jerusalem.⁵³

While there is no doubt that there are references to the temple in the Davidic psalms, their occurrence does not necessitate a conclusion that David did not author those psalms. Instead, there are good reasons for why this word would be used even though the temple had not yet been constructed. First, prior to the building of the temple, the ark of the LORD was placed within the tent that David had erected for it (cf. 2 Samuel 6:17). It was there that cultic activities occurred, in essence a pre-cursor to the actual Temple. Second, it is clear from 2 Samuel 7 that David desired to build the Temple. Thus, it is not unreasonable to find David “composing psalms for use in an early shrine that he saw as a forerunner to his son’s temple.”⁵⁴ Third, there are instances in which the word for temple, *הֵיכָל*, is used in clear reference to the tabernacle. For example, in 1 Samuel 1:9b the

⁵⁰ These psalms include: Psalm 5, 11, 18, 27, 29, 30 (in the superscript itself), 65, 68, and 138.

⁵¹ Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 2:89.

⁵² Ibid., 2:101; Broyles is included in scholars who argue for the references to the temple as giving rationale to reject the historicity of the titles and thus, reject Davidic authorship. Broyles, *Psalms*, 28.

⁵³ Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 352 quoted in Wenham, *The Psalter Reclaimed*, 87.

⁵⁴ Wenham, *The Psalter Reclaimed*, 88.

passage says, “Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple (הַיְכָל) of the LORD.” This occurs two chapters later during the calling of Samuel where we read, “...and Samuel was lying down in the temple (הַיְכָל) of the LORD, where the ark of God was” (1 Samuel 3:3). Both of these instances occurred prior to the construction of the Temple, yet they use the language of the temple when clearly referring to the Tabernacle. Fourth, if skeptics of the trustworthiness of the superscript believe that was a later addition, then why not the language of Temple? In other words, could it not be just as possible that the titles were original and that an editor changed the word from “tent” to “temple”? While I do not think this is probable, I point this out to show that if skeptics of the text are going to be consistent they should be skeptical of all possibilities, not simply the titles alone.

Finally, we must remember that the psalms are poetry. As poetry, they are filled with imagery and language that are to be read figuratively, illustratively, and not necessarily technically. The reader of the psalms must also remember that they were used for the purpose of corporate worship, a reality that critical scholars often point out. Thus, there may be elements within a psalm that move from the author’s own experience to a more corporate one. For example, regarding Psalm 51 and the language of “build up the walls of Jerusalem,” one could read this as calling for the actual building of the walls because God’s people and likewise the original author were in exile. Others have sought to understand this phrase to be a later addition, thereby allowing for Davidic authorship for the other portions of the psalm.⁵⁵ However, these options are not the only possibility. Instead, by remembering that this psalm would have been used for the singing of God’s

⁵⁵ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 2nd ed., Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 15 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 212.

people, the phrase can be understood as speaking to the corporate use, particularly when considering v. 18 in light of v. 19. We can also see how the psalmist moves from repentance in the early part of the chapter to trusting in God at the conclusion. Thus, the final two verses could be read as imagistic of the security that the psalmist, and the people who sang it, experience when their sin has been forgiven. Therefore, a legitimate interpretation of Psalm 51, and the final verses in particular, does not require a rejection of Davidic authorship but instead can make room for it.

It is clear that multiple arguments have been put forth to reject the authenticity of the titles. While many hold to these views stated above, a valid interpretation of the psalms does not require it. Instead, there is good reason to resist the critical approach to the titles and thereby affirm their authenticity. Thus, when a title uses the phrase, לְדָוִד, it is reasonable to have a charitable posture towards it and receive the title as indicating the historical David unless the passage itself warrants a divergent interpretation.

How the Titles Benefit Exegesis

Exegesis is helped by understanding the titles to be authentic because it aids to guard against Kraus' concern of forgetting the historical aspects of the psalm as a result of emphasizing the genre.⁵⁶ By seeing the titles as authentic, one will approach the passage aware of the historical setting of the psalm. Thus, we are not left to interpret the psalm out of an a-historical situation, but instead engage in exegesis rooted in a particular historical circumstance. This is the case in situations where the historical circumstance is stated and when the title is simply לְדָוִד. Granted, we may not know the exact historical event that precipitated the writing of the psalm. However, in these cases we should seek

⁵⁶ A discussion that I will take up in more detail in chapter 3.

to discern the historical circumstances through the content of the psalm itself. For instance, Gunkel argues against speaking of the personal circumstance of the psalmist when he says, “It is awkward to speak about the *personal situation of the one praying*. The signals of the psalmist are notably drab and prefer general allusions along with images that are not easy to explain.”⁵⁷ This is only true if the interpreter ignores the titles. By affirming the titles, there will be psalms in which the personal situation of the one praying becomes apparent rather than awkward. For example, the title given in Psalm 51 includes, אֶל-בֵּית-שָׁבַע בָּבוֹא-אֵלָיו נָתַן הַנָּבִיא כָּאֲשֶׁר-אָמַר, “When Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.” If we accept Gunkel’s assertion that we ought to appropriate this psalm from primarily a cultic perspective, then this psalm may seem quite awkward. However, when considering the title, the historical context is given and thus the reason for the lament becomes clear, thereby providing understanding for the original setting of the psalm and helping to orient the interpreter for how the psalm may have been used in the cultic context.

The titles also help to provide the reader or worshiper the freedom to employ similar language in their own experience. Speaking specifically about the lament psalms, they are giving the reader or worshiper the appropriate language to describe the circumstances that are experienced that warrant lament. Some have argued that the reason for ascribing Davidic authorship has to do with associating the psalm with a later Davidic king (see above). While I have rejected that line of argumentation, it is getting at an interpretative framework that is helpful. For instead of seeing Davidic psalms as being the psalms of a later king in the line of David, we ought to see them as being authentic to

⁵⁷ Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, 130.

David and as the representative of Israel, giving direction for how Israel is to approach God in the cult. In other words, since the king used such language in times of distress and danger, the people for whom David is their representative ought also to use similar, if not identical, language in their times of distress.⁵⁸ Therefore, the authenticity of the titles actually helps to enhance the cultic expression of the Israelite worshipper, as well as the modern reader or singer of the Psalter.

⁵⁸ The importance of the King to interpreting and applying these psalms will be taken up in chapter four.

Chapter 3

Identifying the Genre of Lament

I now turn my attention to considering the topic of genre. By considering the genre of lament, my goal is not to create some rigid criteria to determine form. Instead, I am seeking to discuss the rise of form-criticism and the benefit that categorizing psalms as lament can have for the interpreter. I am aware of the influence the canonical reading of the Psalter has had on psalm studies, I do not see a need to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater and disregard the benefit that understanding form can have.⁵⁹ Thus, I believe that the best way to appropriate genre in relation to the Psalter is to have a semblance of fluidity and not expecting the psalms to take a form that always fits within a set taxonomy.⁶⁰ In addition to considering the attributes of psalms to determine genre, it is also important to examine the intended outcome. In other words, the purpose for which the psalm was written along with the characteristics of the psalm will help to determine the genre.

Development of Form-Criticism

Gunkel's categorizing of psalms into various genres was focused on shared language between different psalms.⁶¹ For instance, when speaking of communal

⁵⁹ Often the canonical reading has de-emphasized the importance of genre or the form of an individual psalm because its concern is more on trying to discern a cohesive structure the Psalter as a whole.

⁶⁰ This desire to maintain form without a strict application is espoused also by Collins. C. John Collins, "Psalms 111–112: Big Story, Little Story," *Religions* 7, no. 9 (September 5, 2016): 115, doi:10.3390/rel7090115.

⁶¹ William H. Bellinger, "Psalms and the Question of Genre," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 313–25, 313–15.

complaint songs,⁶² Gunkel notes that these types of psalms “contain the cry of doubt and the cry for help of a tormented people...”⁶³ In addition to this, he argues that the communal complaints are “almost exclusively *political*”⁶⁴ in nature.”⁶⁵ This reflects the emphasis that Gunkel puts upon shared language and shared theme. In other words, in order to discern if a psalm fits into the category of communal complaint, Gunkel’s direction would lead one to look for language of doubt, help, and the threat of outside nations. Therefore, to determine the genre of a psalm, Gunkel would assert that one must look for a common language group and theme, and whichever psalms employ that language and theme would be categorized together.

Mowinckel, as with the titles, followed his teacher Gunkel and sought to form a diagnostic for identifying genre. Even as he sought to categorize psalms into genres, this was done primarily with an emphasis upon how the particular genre fit within the cult. Thus, he finds a structure that is consistent among all national laments: 1) a prayer of lament followed by, 2) an expression of thanksgiving or assurance, and concluding with, 3) a declaration of confidence that the prayer has been heard.⁶⁶ Mowinckel refers to this movement from lament to thanksgiving to confidence as a “liturgical pattern,”⁶⁷ thus showing his concern for how the psalm functions within the cult of Israel.

Following the work of Gunkel and Mowinckel, the classifying of psalms into various genres became the dominant practice amongst scholars. It became the norm to speak of psalms as lament, royal, messianic, historical, and the like. Broyles, reflecting

⁶² This is the phrase that Gunkel uses to speak of what others have called “corporate lament.”

⁶³ Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, 87.

⁶⁴ Gunkel uses the word “political” to refer to outside nations who are threatening Israel. Ibid., 88. Italics not mine.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1:219.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

on the importance of genre identification said, “Genre...serves as a shared pattern of communication by which speakers can make themselves understood to listeners.”⁶⁸ In other words, the understanding of genre is of such importance that without it, the reader will not be able to comprehend the intent of the writer.

Challenge to Form-Criticism

While many biblical scholars have followed the lead of Gunkel and embraced genre as an important hermeneutical tool, recently some have begun to question, and eventually, reject genre identification as valid. Kraus in particular argues that the categorical designation resulting from a study of genres in the Psalter is inadequate.⁶⁹ One of the reasons that Kraus challenges the emphasis upon genre identification is because he believes that the “study of types prompts us to let questions of history recede into the background as secondary.”⁷⁰ Kraus’ concern is warranted, for it is reflected in Mowinckel’s interpretation of enemies that are depicted in both royal and lament psalms. Mowinckel understands the enemies not as historical but as a reflection of suffering that occurs in a cultic circumstance. Thus, the enemies are mythical and demonic rather than actual and historical.⁷¹ While there are examples of interpreters disregarding the historical aspects of the psalms, this does not have to be the case. For simply because some would improperly emphasize genre or a particular *Sitz im Leben*, at the expense of the historical setting, does not mean that interpreters must emphasize one over the other. In fact, a

⁶⁸ Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 25.

⁶⁹ Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 40.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 62.

⁷¹ Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1:242-43.

better way of approaching psalm interpretation is to discern both the genre and the historical setting together in order to come to a proper understanding.

Others have critiqued the form-critical method on the basis that the psalms themselves do not fit the form for which those such as Gunkel categorize them. One objection that Kraus puts forth is related to the category of “individual lament.” Kraus says, “research has shown more and more clearly that there are absolutely no cases of unmitigated isolation present in these songs, but that the one who prays participates in the prayer language of the community.”⁷² Kraus is arguing that there is no “individual” in the individual lament and would have us instead see the language in the psalms as representing “relevant liturgy, generalized formulary, or the literature of prayer.”⁷³ Thus, the emphasis is not upon the person, particularly since there was not a single person, who penned the psalm, but upon the cultic purpose for which it was written, hence the concern of liturgy, formulary, and literature. By focusing his concern on these aspects, Kraus is reducing the purpose of the psalms to only the cultic setting. It is as though the author, or authors, of particular psalms set out to write a prayer for the use of Israel and were writing out of a sense of structure and form rather than experience. This would be akin to the modern-day song writer writing a song that is divorced from any particular or personal experience but will is nonetheless received because it focuses on themes and ideas that people resonate with; a boilerplate method of composing.

One concern I have with Kraus’ criticism is the fact that the “individual laments” are called such because the psalms have the marks of an individual who is behind them. The first person singular is used throughout them. Thus, to reject an individual author, is

⁷² Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 40.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 50.

to be skeptical of the integrity of the text or to think that the individual is only a personification of the worshipping community. If the latter is the case, then what are we to do with the psalms that clearly are corporate? Should we be seeking to reassign them as well? The fact that there are corporate and individual categories is reflective of the different forms that are observed in the psalms themselves. The presence of an individual author does not take away from the corporate benefit a psalm can have within a cultic setting.

The other concern I have with Kraus' disregard of the individual author is that it minimizes the historicity of the psalm, a critique that Kraus raises about Mowinckel (see above). While he calls the interpreter back to the historical setting by disregarding the individual author for the sake of a liturgical practice, Kraus is acting in the very method he warns against. Therefore, a better way of approaching these "individual" psalms is to take them at their face value: psalms written by an individual, out of an actual historical experience, for which the community employed the psalm in the midst of the cult.

Similar to Kraus, Broyles seeks to critique the forms that have been used to categorize the psalms. Speaking specifically of lament, Broyles argues that we should move away from the categorical language of lament in favor of "prayer psalms."⁷⁴ Broyles' main argument against the language of lament is that it "gives undue prominence to one motif over others. It can also be misleading because these psalms do not merely lament...they also seek to change the lamentable circumstances through

⁷⁴ Craig C Broyles, *Psalms*, New International Biblical Commentary 11 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 16. Kraus also argues for re-naming what has historically been called "lament" to "prayer psalms." While Kraus came to this conclusion prior to Broyles, he does so for a different reason. Namely, that the psalms that have been called, "lament" do not actually lament, instead they "complain." Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 40-41. It seems that Kraus' argument is a distinction without a significant difference.

petition.”⁷⁵ While this observation of varying motifs within the category is important, by changing the category to “prayer psalm” the purpose of the prayer is lost, that of a circumstance resulting in lament of God’s people. The interpreter must keep in mind that the lament is being offered up to God in the hopes that God will deliver him from the circumstance that caused the lament.⁷⁶ Yet the incorporation of these various motifs (petition, confidence, even praise) does not constitute a diminishment in the lament itself but instead reflects the hope and expectation that the God to whom the lament is offered will act to relieve the situation. In light of this, we should expect to see these changes of motif. Also, by calling the category “prayer psalm” it may imply that the final purpose of the psalm is for private prayer, while it is my contention that the Psalter was primarily used for singing in the corporate people of God and not primarily for personal prayer.⁷⁷ Therefore, it is better to keep the language of lament before us as we interpret these psalms because it is through the act of lamenting that the psalmist moves to a place of confidence.

Identifying Lament

In order to determine if a particular psalm fits within the genre of lament or not, scholars have observed a variety of elements that are consistent from one psalm to the next. These interpreters range from the likes of Mowinckel who observes three aspects to Broyles who notes seven. For a comparison of different scholars see appendix 2. While

⁷⁵ Broyles, *Psalms*, 16.

⁷⁶ Wenham, *The Psalter Reclaimed*, 43-4.

⁷⁷ See C. John Collins, “Always Alleluia: Reclaiming the True Purpose of the Psalms in the Old Testament Context,” in *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship*, ed. C. Richard Wells and Ray Van Neste (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2010), 17-34.

By asserting that the primary purpose of the Psalter was for corporate worship, specifically that of singing or hymnody, I do not intend to assert that this precludes an individual from using the Psalter for personal prayer. I simply wish to distinguish primary purpose from secondary.

the simplicity of Mowinckel's approach is attractive, when one considers the forty-five Davidic laments it becomes apparent that more structural forms are reflected in the psalms. Clearly there is not a one-size-fits-all approach that can be imposed on the psalms; this is apparent by the fact that various laments have three, four, five, and six structural qualities. See appendix C for an outline of the structural elements in each psalm. However, there is a dominant pattern that emerges. This pattern is closest to Westermann's five-point approach of, 1) address/introductory petition, 2) lament, 3) confession of trust, 4) petition – a double wish addressed to God to act against the psalmist's enemies and to act towards his people, and 5) a vow of praise.⁷⁸ While this approach is most frequently observed, it should be treated more as a guide than a rule for discerning the form of lament. This is because some psalms do not follow the above order, while others are clearly lament even though they do not include every aspect of Westermann's five-part diagnostic. For example, Psalm 38 includes an introductory petition (v. 1), a lament (vv. 3-14), a declaration of trust (v. 15), and a petition for the Lord to act against the psalmist's enemies and on his behalf (vv. 16-22). However, Psalm 38 is lacking a vow of praise. Simply because this psalm is missing one motif, we are not to conclude that it is not a lament. Instead, we should maintain flexibility when applying this interpretative tool.

In addition to considering the common motifs found in various psalms as ways of determining their genre, it is important also to consider the desired outcome of the psalms. Since there is not a strict taxonomy that characterizes all psalms of a particular genre, the observance of a "recurrent situation" and the "action it is used to accomplish"⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox Press, 1987), 52.

⁷⁹ Carolyn R. Miller, "Genre as Social Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 70.

is important for determining genre. When approaching the psalms with this perspective, we find that not only are there similar structures to the laments but similar conditions that precipitated the lament, as well as recurring desired outcomes. I have already discussed the similar structural qualities above. But now it is important to acknowledge that all laments occur as a result of some crisis, be it one in which the author is guilty or innocent, and the psalmist is confronted with a problem of which he is unable to deal with on his own.⁸⁰ In the Davidic⁸¹ laments, there is a progression from the Psalmist's cry to a place of trust and dependence upon the Lord. Thus, the recurring response to these situations that is consistent with all lament psalms is a request for deliverance from the Lord which results in the Psalmist's belief that that Lord has or will deliver him.

In summary, I am advocating an approach to genre identification that considers the structural motifs that are consistent across various laments. However, one must not limit the approach to only a consideration of form. As described above, a rigid taxonomy does not benefit an analysis of the psalms nor is it in keeping with the manner in which the psalms were composed. Instead, interpreters should not only consider the form but also the purpose for which the psalm was written. As we see the recurrent motifs and desired outcomes which lead to various themes, we are able to come to a classification of the genre of lament.

⁸⁰ This idea will be considered in part in chapter six when I consider the psalms that speak of the psalmist's innocence and iniquity.

⁸¹ I emphasize the Davidic psalms here because that is the focus of my study, but also because there is one lament in the Psalter that does not include an explicit mention of deliverance. Psalm 88, which is not attributed to David, does not include an expression of deliverance. However, all the Davidic laments do result in a hopeful deliverance by the Lord on behalf of the Psalmist.

How Genre Benefits Exegesis

A correct understanding of genre will enhance exegesis of the psalms. By recognizing a psalm as falling within the category of lament an interpreter will have certain expectations for the motifs found in the psalm and for how the psalm was to function within the worship of Israel. By understanding lament as a calling out to God concerning a troubled circumstance and looking to him for aid,⁸² we will not be surprised to see petition, trust, and praise but instead will expect it, thereby recognizing that lament was to function in the life of Israel as an invitation to acknowledge their distress and be moved to a posture of trust and confidence that God will act to relieve their distress. Apart from a sound understanding of genre and its purpose, an interpreter can be in danger of disregarding lament as little more than a complaint birthed out of an historical circumstance that is not to be duplicated in the post-New Testament church. Rather, a better appropriation is to see genre identification as an important interpretative element that benefits not just a correct understanding of the psalm, but also a correct use of the psalm by the modern reader.

⁸² Collins, "Always Alleluia: Reclaiming the True Purpose of the Psalms in the Old Testament Context," 25.

Chapter 4

The Significance of the King

Having considered the titles and genre, I now consider the role of the king in the life of Israel. This is important to this study because the scope of this examination is limited to those psalms with King David's authorship. It is without question that the king played a central role in the historical accounts of the life of Israel. Yet the importance of the king does not stop there, his significance is also reflected in the Psalter. Almost half of the Psalter bears the mark of King David alone,⁸³ and this does not account for those psalms which are attributed to Solomon or are spoken to, for, or of the king but are anonymous.

Due to this great influence, it is imperative on the reader of the psalms to consider the role and responsibilities that the king bore amongst the people of God. In order to determine a right approach to psalms authored by the king, we must consider the expectations that were placed upon the king. To determine this, I will begin this chapter by examining the Kingship Law found in Deuteronomy 17. The requirements found in this passage will give a lens to view the actions of the king as they are detailed in the historical books. This chapter will conclude with a consideration for how the Davidic royal psalms incorporate the themes of Deuteronomy 17 and are embodied in the historical books. Having considered the role of the king in these various ways, we will

⁸³ See the discussion above.

discern a hermeneutical framework for reading the psalms attributed to David.

Specifically, this will mean that we will view the king as the intended ideal Israelite, the exemplar for God's people, and, when reading the psalms attributed to the king, the reader is to orient his or her life after the faithful qualities exhibited by the king.

Deuteronomy 17: The Kingship Law

Deuteronomy 17:14-20

14 “When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ **15** you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. **16** Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ **17** And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.

Deut. 17:18 “And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. **19** And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, **20** that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

14 כִּי־תָבֹא אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
נָתַן לָךְ וַיְרַשְׁתָּהּ וַיֵּשְׁבֶתָּהּ בָּהּ וְאָמַרְתָּ
אֲשִׁימָה עָלַי מֶלֶךְ כְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר
סְבִיבֹתַי :
15 שׂוֹם תִּשֹׂם עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֶיךָ בּוֹ מִקֶּרֶב אֶחָיֶךָ תִּשֹׂם עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ
לֹא תוּכֹל לָתֵת עָלֶיךָ אִישׁ נָכְרִי אֲשֶׁר
לֹא־אֶחָיֶךָ הוּא : 16 רַק לֹא־יִרְבֶּה־לּוֹ
סוּסִים וְלֹא־יָשִׁיב אֶת־הָעָם מִצְרָיִם לְמַעַן
הִרְבּוֹת סוּס וַיְהִינָה אִמָּר לָכֶם לֹא תִסְפּוּן
לָשׁוּב בְּדֶרֶךְ תַּנָּה עוֹד : 17 וְלֹא יִרְבֶּה־לּוֹ
נָשִׁים וְלֹא יָסוּר לְבָבוֹ וַיִּסָּף וַיִּזְהַב לֹא יִרְבֶּה
־לּוֹ מָאֵד :

18 וְהָיָה כְּשִׁבְתּוֹ עַל פֶּסֶא מִמַּלְכוֹתוֹ וְכָתַב
לּוֹ אֶת־מִשְׁנֵה תְּהִלָּתָהּ הַזֹּאת עַל־סֵפֶר
מִלִּפְנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם :
19 וְהָיְתָה עִמּוֹ וְקָרָא בּוֹ כָּל־יְמֵי תַיִּיו
לְמַעַן יִלְמַד לִירְאָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו
לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת־כְּלִדְבָרֵי תְּהִלָּתָהּ הַזֹּאת
וְאֶת־הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה לַעֲשׂוֹתָם : 20 לְבִלְתִּי
רוּם־לְבָבוֹ מֵאֶחָיו וּלְבִלְתִּי סוּר מִן־הַמִּצְוָה
יְמִינוֹ וּשְׂמֹאד לְמַעַן יִירָדוּ יָמָיו עַל־
מִמַּלְכוֹתוֹ הוּא וּבָנָיו בְּקֶרֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל :

The reason for starting with Deuteronomy 17:14-20 is because it is the first discussion of the king in the Bible and that it “contains the only law concerning kingship in the Old Testament.”⁸⁴ Verses 14-15, “When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ 15 you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD God will choose,” make it apparent that the king of Israel was not a result of God commanding Israel to have a king, but instead was an allowance that God made to his people. Thus, the rise of the king is derived out of God’s permissiveness⁸⁵ to his people. While God will allow there to be a king in Israel, he sets the parameters for which this king is to function. These parameters make up the remainder of the passage and fall into four themes. These themes are: 1) the king as chosen by God, 2) the king’s dependence upon God, 3) the king as exemplar of piety and Torah obedience, and 4) the humility of the king before God.⁸⁶

Deuteronomy 17: The King as Chosen by God

God’s choosing of the king is made evident by the restrictions that are laid upon him. The first restriction upon the kingship has to do with his nationality. He must be an

⁸⁴ J. G. McConville, “King and Messiah in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 270 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 271.

⁸⁵ Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed., The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 253.

⁸⁶ Jamie A. Grant, *The King As Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy’s Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 193. These motifs are first found in Grant who appropriates them in order to show how they contribute to the canonical structuring of Royal and Torah Psalms in the Psalter. While my purpose is not to examine canonical structures of the Psalter, these themes are evident in Deuteronomy 17 and function nicely as a framework for considering the responsibilities of the king. Therefore, I will use them as the key framework in this chapter while appropriating them for a different purpose than Grant.

Israelite. Verse 15b says, “One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.” This verse indicates that it is God who sets the parameters by which the king is chosen. The candidates who would be eligible to rule over Israel are limited to only Israelites. No matter how strong, how wealthy, or how powerful a foreign ruler may be, he is not to be king over Israel. The limitation goes further in that it is not the people who will ultimately choose their king but God himself will: “you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose” (v. 15a). These two restrictions tacitly indicate there is a special relationship that the king is to have with both God and the people. This restriction ensures that the king is a member of God’s people and he is uniquely singled out from amongst the people. However, he is not only the people’s king but he is the king of God’s own choosing. This two-fold relationship is significant when thinking about how the king was to function with regard to God and the people.

Deuteronomy 17: The King’s Dependence on God

Regarding his relationship with God, the limitations that are placed upon the king indicate that he is to be in constant dependence and submission to God. The king is not to be an authority unto himself but is the first amongst the people to come under God’s authority. This is most evident in the three restrictions that are described in vv. 16-17. These restrictions relate to the army (v. 16), acquiring wives (v. 17), and the accumulation of wealth (v. 17). I shall take each limitation in turn.

The limitations on the army would have been unique amongst the nations surrounding Israel. For a nation to defend itself against foreign powers, a strong military

was necessitated. Craigie argues that one of the chief functions of acquiring horses was for military combat. Though infantry would be needed during combat, military strength often was associated with chariots and horses.⁸⁷ The law is not only limiting the horses that the king would have at his disposal for military service but also setting a limit on a “professional standing army.”⁸⁸ Therefore, God’s restricting of the king from acquiring horses and seeking the aid of other powers, specifically not looking to Egypt for help, indicates that the king is to trust his military strength to the Lord. It is God who had defended them previously, and it is to be God who will defend them again.

The king’s dependence on the Lord was not limited to only military strength but was also reflected in the political realm. In v. 17 God restricts the king from acquiring multiple wives. The accumulating of wives was the ancient Near East’s (ANE) version of foreign policy. Craigie notes, “The purpose in the acquisition of many wives would normally be political; a marriage to a foreign princess could add strength to a treaty with a neighboring state.”⁸⁹ Therefore the concern is that the king would place his confidence upon the assistance of other nations rather than upon the Lord. This is affirmed when, following the restriction on wives, the passage says, “lest his heart turn away” (v. 17b). Thus, the concern is that the wives, and the political assistance they would provide for the king, would limit his dependence upon the Lord and turn the king’s fidelity from the Lord to others. The acquiring of foreign wives would have also had a negative effect upon the king’s ability to keep the law of God and be a model of Torah obedience. In other words, as the king accumulated wives, he not only would be depending on the foreign assistance

⁸⁷ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 255.

⁸⁸ Patricia Dutcher-Walls, “The Circumscription of the King: Deuteronomy 17:16-17 in Its Ancient Social Context,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121, no. 4 (2002): 604.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 256.

that came with these wives, but also would be disregarding the creational ideal of a monogamous relationship. This concept of piety and Torah obedience will be considered more fully below.

The final restriction is related to the accumulation of wealth. Like the previous restrictions, the prohibition of the king to acquire excessive wealth is associated with his trust. By not increasing storehouses of silver and gold, the king's ability to purchase power is greatly hindered. Thus, his trust must remain with the Lord. All three of these restrictions are functioning as commandments "not to place his trust in any of the normal sources of power to which a king might turn"⁹⁰ but instead to place his trust in God. These restrictions that were put upon the king communicate that the king's rule was to manifest itself in ways that were contrary to the nations that surrounded Israel. Instead of being a king like the nations, the king of Israel was to function under God's authority and in complete dependence upon him. Since the king came under God's authority, in his dependence, he functioned within Israel as a vice-regent to God's ultimate kingship.

Deuteronomy 17: The King as Exemplar of Piety and Torah Obedience

The king's relationship to God was not only marked by his continual dependence and his unique chosenness, but also his obedience to God's law. God's law plays a central role in the life of the king; he is to write out a copy of the law (v. 18), to read it all his days (v. 19), to learn from it (v. 19), and to keep it (v. 19), and the result is that his kingdom would continue (v. 20). This reflects that though the king ruled over Israel, he was not a rule unto himself. This aspect of coming under the same law as the people was

⁹⁰ Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-21:9*, 2nd ed., Word Biblical Commentary 6a (Dallas: Word Books, 2001), 384.

unique for a monarch in the ANE. For, Christensen notes, “nowhere else is the king placed in subjection to the law as it was formulated for the people as a whole.”⁹¹ Thus, the king was not above the general population of Israel with regard to subjection to God’s law. This is affirmed by verse 20 which indicates one of the reasons for keeping the law was so that the king’s “heart may not be lifted above his brothers.” In the sense of keeping the law, the king did not differ from his subjects.

It is out of this relationship with God that the king’s other relationship with the people of Israel flowed. It is important to note that the things in which the king is called to in this passage, that of dependence and obedience to the Lord, do not differ with the call placed upon all of Israel.⁹² Thus, it becomes apparent that the role of the king was not simply to exercise authority over Israel but to function within Israel as the model Israelite.⁹³

Torah obedience is reflected in verses 18-19 which notes that the responsibility of the king was to “write for himself in a book a copy of this law (the law of God)...And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life...” While this speaks to the king’s need to submit himself to the rule of God, as noted above, it may also speak to his relationship with the rest of Israel. Lundbom argues that קָרָא, “to read,” ought to be understood in this passage as “read aloud.”⁹⁴ This understanding of the word fits within

⁹¹ Ibid., 386.

⁹² Israel’s responsibilities towards the Lord are detailed in Deuteronomy 6 where they are told to keep God’s commandments, to fear him, to serve him, to depend upon him, to train their children to obey the Lord, and to love the Lord above all else.

⁹³ Patrick Miller, *Deuteronomy*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 148-9.

⁹⁴ Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013), 542.

the lexical range as reflected in BDB⁹⁵ and is in keeping with the generally understood practices of the ANE, that of reading being done audibly.⁹⁶ But why is this significant? Deuteronomy 17 makes it clear that the king was to read the law when he sat upon his throne. This would have been a public area in which his subjects would have opportunity to observe his actions, and if he was reading aloud, it may be possible that the benefit of his reading the law was not only for himself but also for the people who heard him reading it. However, simply because there may be a possibility does not mean that this was the actual intention of Deuteronomy. And so it is important to consider other passages that give account of situations similar to that of Deuteronomy 17. As we consider these other instances, it is important to note that the use of קָרָא with the object of the verb is not determinative. This is important because there are times when the object includes the קָרָא and times when it does not, yet it does not result in a different understanding of the reading being aloud or silent.

Joshua 8:34-35 is an instance of קָרָא being used in the context of the people. The setting of the passage is that of Joshua building an altar upon Mount Ebal. Following the burnt and peace offerings, vv. 32-33 indicate that all of the people of Israel had gathered and in their presence Joshua wrote on the stones a copy of the law. After Joshua had completed the writing “he read (קָרָא) all the words of the law... There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read (קָרָא) before all the assembly of Israel...” (vv. 34-35). The passage makes it very clear that this reading took place in such

⁹⁵ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 7121.

⁹⁶ Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 169.

a fashion that those in the presence of Joshua heard it. Though this is not a king reading the law as was described in Deuteronomy 17, it does reflect that **קָרָא** used in conjunction with the law can mean to “read aloud” for the sake of others hearing.

Similarly, in the book of Nehemiah there are instances in which that the Book of the Law is read in the hearing of the people. This is reflected in 8:8, 18; and 9:3. For instance, in 8:8 the passage says, “They read (**קָרָא**) from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.” It is clear that the Law was read aloud by the descriptor, “...so that the people understood the reading.” Thus, not only was the Law read in the hearing of the people, but it was accompanied by the interpretation of the Law. While this is not a king who is performing the reading but priests, it is clear that the use of **קָרָא** is “reading aloud.”

Second Kings 23 is another passage that may help to give insight. In 2 Kings 22, the Book of the Law is discovered and read to king Josiah (vv. 1-11). After hearing of the law, Josiah made an inquiry of the Lord, and Josiah calls the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to the house of the LORD (2 Kings 23:2). While they were all gathered the king “read (**קָרָא**) in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant...” (v. 2). It is clear from the context that Josiah did not simply read the law to himself. Instead, he read it aloud for all to hear. After hearing it, the king and the people made a covenant to obey God’s word. Here is a clear example of the king reading the law not only for his own sake but for the sake of the people who heard it with the desired outcome that they would respond to it. Granted, this is a different context than what is described in Deuteronomy 17. However, the fact that Josiah was a king who was described as turning his heart to the LORD “according to all the Law of Moses...” (v. 25)

would cause the reader of 2 Kings 23 to believe that Josiah obeyed Deuteronomy 17, including the portion of reading the law daily. Considering that his actions were approved according to the law and that he had called all the people to hear him read the law, it would not be a stretch to think that as he continued to read the law as prescribed in Deuteronomy 17 that the people would have come to hear it. Thus, the principle of the king reading for the sake of his people is reflected in 2 Kings 23 and may give credence for understanding Deuteronomy 17 in a similar light.

Finally, in Jeremiah 36:4-10, the prophet Jeremiah gives Baruch a word from the LORD, which Baruch dictates (v. 6) and he takes it to the house of the LORD and reads it aloud, קָרָא (v. 10). The hope of this action was that the people would hear God's word and turn from their "evil way" (v. 7). It is apparent that the purpose of the reading of the word of God was not simply for the sake of the reader, but for the sake of the people who heard it. Unfortunately, this passage is only similar to Deuteronomy 17 in that God's revealed word is read in the house of God. The king is not the one reading the word in Jeremiah 36; instead it is an ambassador of the prophet and the king only receives the word because it is read to him (v. 21). Thus, Jeremiah 36 may not provide assistance in determining if the king's reading of the law was for the sake of the people.

This brief summary of instances in which קָרָא is used with the law indicates that there are times in which the correct interpretation is that of "reading aloud" for the sake of the people hearing the law. However, not one of the examples depicts an exact duplication of Deuteronomy 17, specifically that of the king sitting on his throne and reading the law. Does this mean that Deuteronomy 17's requirement on the king to read the law did not have in view the people hearing it read? It is impossible to know with

complete certainty. Though it is best not to make too much of an unproven hypothesis, the possibility remains that the reading of the law was done aloud with the expectation that the people would hear it.

As already mentioned, the law and the king's obedience to the law was a central role in the relationship of the king to God. One final aspect of piety and Torah obedience that is seen in the Kingship Law relates to the accumulation of wives. This topic was first addressed earlier in relation to the king's dependence upon God and not upon foreign alliances created through marriage. However, this restriction upon the king also relates to his ongoing obedience to God. For not only will the king's trust of God weaken and his trust in other nations strengthen as he marries foreign wives, his fidelity to God will also wane. This decrease in obedience to God through the influence of foreign wives is illustrated by the life of Solomon.⁹⁷ The third king of Israel was wooed to foreign deities through the persuasiveness of his foreign wives (cf. 1 Kings 11). Due to his disobedience, God's anger was directed against him (1 Kings 11:9) and the nation was divided (1 Kings 11:11ff). Thus, the king's lack of obedience to the Kingship Law had negative consequences for him and for the people. The implication of this indicates the adverse was to be the norm, meaning that the king's piety and obedience would have resulted in blessing for him and for the nation.

Deuteronomy 17: The King as a Man of Humility

The humbleness of the king is depicted primarily in the democratizing of the kingship. The democratizing of the king by means of the Kingship Law is to emphasize

⁹⁷ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, The New American Commentary 4 (Nashville: Holman Reference, 1994), 265-6.

the partnership that took place between the king and the people in their keeping of the covenant.⁹⁸ This principle is most evident in Deuteronomy 17:20 where one of the results of the king's obedience to the law is that "his heart may not be lifted above his brothers...." This equality of king and people before the law does not minimize the unique choosing by God of the king to function in this special office. Instead it requires the king to embrace a humble posture towards the people of Israel as they both equally live under God's law.

It is clear from Deuteronomy 17 that in Israel the office of the king was not a divine command but a divine accommodation.⁹⁹ The Kingship Law makes it evident that God chose the king. The law also functioned to regulate the king's behavior in relationship to God and to the people. Each facet of restricting wealth, strength, etc. and encouraging submission to the law depicts a king who is under the authority of God and in constant dependence upon him. In other words, the king has authority that is granted to him and under subjection to God, the King of the king. This submission is not only for the sake of his personal reign but also functions in the life of the people as an example of piety and Torah obedience. Thus, the king was to be humble and, like the people, under the law.

Kingship Narratives

Having considered the royal law of Deuteronomy 17, our attention is now directed to the life of the kings as depicted in the historical books. The reason for considering the historical books is because in them we will see aspects of the Kingship Law either embraced or disregarded by various kings. Because examination of these

⁹⁸ Grant, *The King As Exemplar*, 213.

⁹⁹ Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 147.

books could be a study unto itself, my focus will be upon passages that depict the unique relationships of the king and God and the king and the people.

Kingship Narratives: The King as the “Light”

The relationship of the king to the people is “regarded in some way as the light or life of his people.”¹⁰⁰ This is described in 2 Samuel 21:17. In 2 Samuel 21, Israel and the Philistines are at war and one particular Philistine, Ishbi-benob, sought to kill David (v. 16). In response to this threat against the king, the Israelite Abishai killed the Philistine and then “David’s men swore to him, ‘You shall no longer go out with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel.’” This image of the king being the lamp of Israel is not limited to David but extends beyond him to his posterity. This is seen clearly in 1 Kings 11. Due to Solomon’s disobedience to God’s law, the Lord raised up Jeroboam to lead the division of the kingdom as a form of punishment (vv. 31-35). However, God declares in v. 36 that he will not remove all of Israel from the authority of the Davidic heir but one tribe will remain. The reason God gives for this is “that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem” (v. 36).

What is the significance of this image? In the historical books, there are five instances when the root of the word, נֹר (“light” or “lamp”), is used in reference to the House of David. Other than in 2 Samuel 21 in which the people call David the נֹר, the other instances speak God’s promise to maintain David’s house as a נֹר (1 Kings 11:36, 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19; 2 Chronicles 21:7). It is important to note that neither non-Davidic kings nor their lineage are ever described with this image. Selman argues that when נֹר is

¹⁰⁰ Aubrey R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), 2.

used in reference to David's family, as in the examples above, it does not refer to life, but is "a guarantee that David's house will survive even the darkest days because of God's covenant promises."¹⁰¹ Thus, the Davidic king was presented as the light of Israel and this image reflected that the house of David was to be a "continuous, unbroken Davidic dynastic line."¹⁰² Therefore, linking of this image with the covenantal promises of God reminds the reader of the passage of God's unique choosing of the Davidic king. This harkens back to the Kingship Law motif of God choosing the king.

The significance of this image in relation to God's choosing the king over Israel is furthered by the way the image speaks to the king's unique relationship to God. As already noted, in 2 Samuel 21, David is called the "lamp of Israel." However, one chapter later David, the one who has been called the "lamp of Israel," sings to God and in v. 29 declares, "For you are my lamp (נִרְיָ), O LORD, and my God lightens my darkness." David has been declared to be the "lamp of Israel" but his "lamp" is the Lord; the Lord and David have the same title being applied to them. This relationship is significant because it reflects that the king was expected to be the embodiment of God's kingship; he was the instrument by which God reigned over his people.¹⁰³ This embodiment, or instrumentality, of the Davidic king was manifest as mediator between Israel and God.¹⁰⁴

The connection between the Davidic king and God's kingship is not limited to the language of light / lamp, but the connection is made even more explicit by the eternity

¹⁰¹ Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 3, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 3:160.

¹⁰² Sara Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 810.

¹⁰³ John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series, vol. 32 (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1976), 135.

¹⁰⁴ Claus Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 76-7.

of the Davidic reign. In 1 Chronicles 17 the Chronicler describes the covenant promises being made to David. In verse 14 the Lord, speaking to David, says of the promised heir, “I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever.” This is significant because it is uniting the Davidic kingdom with that of God’s kingdom. Thus, the ideal will be that the two kingdoms will be indistinguishable. To speak of the Davidic kingdom will be to speak of God’s and vice versa.

The above observation is not limited to the covenantal initiation but is reflected in other places by the Chronicler. For instance, in 1 Chronicles 28:5 Solomon was described as being chosen to “sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD.” Likewise, in 2 Chronicles 13:8 as Abijah the king in Judah is raising up a battle against Jeroboam, he declares, “And now you think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David....” This particular verse is significant because it is contrasting the Davidic line against the line of kings that rebelled against David’s house. The contrast reflects that it is the Davidic line that is associated with God’s kingdom, while the kingship in the Northern kingdom was associated with rebellion and opposition to the Lord. Thus, the relationship of God and the king extends beyond that of just David, or even Solomon, and continues to all those kings who would come from the Davidic line and serve the Lord with fidelity. To further this idea that the Davidic kingdom and God’s kingdom were linked, three times the Chronicler associates the throne of the Lord with the throne of the Davidic king (1 Chronicles 28:5, 29:23; 2 Chronicles 9:8). Therefore, within the historical narratives, it is clear that due to the covenantal promises and the uniting of the kingdoms, the Davidic king was functioning as God’s chosen representative over his people.

Kingship Narratives: King as Exemplar and with Humility

The relationship of God with the Davidic king has implications upon the king's relationship with the people. The fact that the Davidic king was the representative of God to the people, that he was the lamp of Israel, that he was sitting upon God's throne, and that the kingdoms were understood as the same, reflects that the king was to be seen by the people as the paradigm for how they were to live. Thus, the "well-being of the nation as a social unit is bound up with the life of the king..."¹⁰⁵ This is not only reflected in the positive remarks made concerning how the king was to live, but also in the negative effects upon the nation when the king deviated from God's law.

Instead of considering every errant king's ways and how they negatively impacted God's people, we shall look just beyond that of David and witness how the disobedience of Solomon and Rehoboam affected the well-being of the nation. In 1 Kings 11, the author makes it clear that Solomon had taken for himself many foreign wives in violation of what God had commanded (v. 2) and as a result, he turned away from the Lord (v. 9). As mentioned previously, this also was a violation of Deuteronomy 17, which prohibited the king from taking many wives. The result of this disobedience was the Lord's anger against Solomon (v. 10) and the promise of the division of the kingdom (v. 13).

Following Solomon, his son Rehoboam reigned over the period in which the division occurred. Yet, it was his errant turning from the Kingship Law that encouraged the division. It could be argued that Rehoboam was simply foolish and it was his foolish

¹⁰⁵ Aubrey R. Johnson, "The Role of the King in the Jerusalem Cultus," in *The Labyrinth: Further Studies in the Relation between Myth and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. S. H. Hooke (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), 73.

ways that pushed the Northern tribes into rebellion. This is no doubt partially true. However, Rehoboam's arrogant lording over the nation reflects a disregard for the democratizing of the king as described in Deuteronomy 17. For the king was to be unlike the kings of the nations in that he was to submit himself to the authority of God's law, and because of doing this "his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers..." (Deuteronomy 17:20). In reading 1 Kings 12, it is apparent that Rehoboam did just the opposite; his heart was lifted above his brothers. For in vv. 13-14 the narrator writes, "... the king answered the people harshly, ...he spoke to them... 'My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.'" Thereby, the king deviated from the law of the king as given in Deuteronomy 17, and as a result of his waywardness the kingdom divided into the North and the South.

This division of the kingdom was to have negative affects not only upon the kings who ruled over them, but also upon the nation itself. It divided God's people, the Northern kingdom sought to worship in ways contrary to the law, and the people's faithfulness waned. Therefore, it is clear that the king's deviation from the law had a negative impact upon the well-being of the people.

While it is clear that the historical narratives paint a bleak picture for Israel as a result of the king's unfaithfulness to the Lord, the opposite is also true. For when the king "acts rightly, the well-being of his people is assured."¹⁰⁶ This idea is reflected in David's song found in 2 Samuel 23, in which he says, "The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 76.

on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth” (vv. 3-4). David is declaring that as the king rules with faithfulness to God, his rule will function as security to the people,¹⁰⁷ as the sun or the rain that brings forth produce.

It is evident that the themes employed in the Kingship Law of Deuteronomy 17 are portrayed in the kingship narratives. Though an exact quotation of Deuteronomy 17 is lacking, its themes of chosenness, exemplar of piety and Torah obedience, and humility are sprinkled throughout the narratives. Thus, it is clear the Kingship Law was to be normative in the life of the king as he related to both God and the people.

Royal Psalms

Having considered Deuteronomy 17 and the historical narratives, our focus now turns to the Psalter. Some have focused their attention of Deuteronomy and the royal psalms on how Deuteronomy gives the foundation for the canonical structure of Royal and Torah Psalms.¹⁰⁸ While this is a worthy consideration, for the purposes of this chapter, my concern is not to defend a canonical reading but simply to show how the themes of Deuteronomy 17 are reflected in the royal psalms of David. Consideration of how they embody Deuteronomy 17 will focus upon the four themes evident in Deuteronomy 17 as described above. There is no doubt that if each Royal psalm contained all four of the Kingship Law themes, the relation between them would be apparent to all. Unfortunately, to expect that type of relation is probably expecting too much. However, what is evident is that in each of the royal psalms under examination, at least one, if not more, of the four themes of Deuteronomy 17 is found.

¹⁰⁷ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 312.

¹⁰⁸ Grant, *The King As Exemplar*, 191.

Royal Psalms: Psalm 18

Psa. 18:0 TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, WHO ADDRESSED THE WORDS OF THIS SONG TO THE LORD ON THE DAY WHEN THE LORD DELIVERED HIM FROM THE HAND OF ALL HIS ENEMIES, AND FROM THE HAND OF SAUL. HE SAID:

Psa. 18:1 I love you, O LORD, my strength. **2** The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. **3** I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

Psa. 18:4 The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me; **5** the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.

Psa. 18:6 In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.

Psa. 18:7 Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry. **8** Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. **9** He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet. **10** He rode on a cherub and flew; he came swiftly on the wings of the wind. **11** He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him, thick clouds dark with water. **12** Out of the brightness before him hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds.

Psa. 18:13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered his voice, hailstones and coals of fire. **14** And he sent out his arrows and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings and routed them. **15** Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.

Psa. 18:16 He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters. **17** He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me. **18** They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support. **19** He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me.

Psa. 18:20 The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me. **21** For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. **22** For all his rules were before me, and his statutes I did not put away from me. **23** I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from my guilt. **24** So the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.

Psa. 18:25 With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; **26** with the purified you show yourself pure; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous. **27** For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down. **28** For it is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness. **29** For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. **30** This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

Psa. 18:31 For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God?— **32** the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless. **33** He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. **34** He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. **35** You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great. **36** You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip. **37** I pursued my enemies and overtook them, and did not turn back till they were consumed. **38** I thrust them through, so that they were not able to rise; they fell under my feet. **39** For you equipped me with strength for the battle; you made those who rise against me sink under me. **40** You made my enemies turn their backs to me, and those who hated

me I destroyed. **41** They cried for help, but there was none to save; they cried to the LORD, but he did not answer them. **42** I beat them fine as dust before the wind; I cast them out like the mire of the streets.

Psa. 18:43 You delivered me from strife with the people; you made me the head of the nations; people whom I had not known served me. **44** As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me; foreigners came cringing to me. **45** Foreigners lost heart and came trembling out of their fortresses.

Psa. 18:46 The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation—**47** the God who gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me, **48** who rescued me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you delivered me from the man of violence.

Psa. 18:49 For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name. **50** Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever.

This royal psalm reflects three of the four themes of the Kingship Law. These are: chosen, dependence, and exemplar.

Of the three themes, dependence is the most prominent. Following the initial appeal of v. 2 [1], the psalmist immediately incorporates language that reflects his dependence upon the Lord. In vv. 3-4 [2-3] David calls the Lord his rock, fortress, and deliverer; the one in whom he takes refuge, his shield, salvation, stronghold, and the one who saves him from his enemies. These initial descriptors (rock – vv. 3, 32, 47 [2, 31, 46]; refuge – vv. 3, 32 [2, 31]; deliverer – vv. 3, 44, 49 [2, 43, 48]; salvation – vv. 3, 47 [2, 46]; shield – vv. 3, 31, 36 [2, 30, 35]) function as themes that are repeated throughout the chapter. Thus, it is clear that the overwhelming theme of this chapter is the king's dependence upon the Lord who provides success against his enemies.¹⁰⁹

The king not only reflects dependence upon God, but David's words also provide witness to the king's function as exemplar of piety and Torah obedience. In vv. 21-25 [20-24] the psalmist declares that he has been righteous according the Lord's commands and has obeyed his laws. This is most clear in vv. 21-28 [20-27] where David declares his

¹⁰⁹ Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 138-9.

piety before the Lord. Piety language in this section consists of, “righteousness” (v. 21 [20]), “cleanness of hands” (v. 21 [20]), obedience (v. 22-23 [21-22]), and “blameless” (v. 24 [23]). Thus, it is clear that the king is being presented as one who has engaged in Torah observance as prescribed in Deuteronomy 17.¹¹⁰ However, his example is made more explicit in vv. 26-28 [25-27]. In these verses David describes how God presents himself to those who live according to God’s ways. God is merciful, blameless, and pure to those who themselves are merciful, blameless, and pure. The implication being, the people are to live out these qualities before the Lord, qualities that are embodied by the righteous and blameless king. Therefore, in order for the people to know what this standing before the Lord is to look like, they are to look to their king and follow him.

Finally, Psalm 18 depicts that the king is a chosen instrument of the Lord. Deuteronomy 17 indicated that the Lord would pick the king of his own choosing, and that indication becomes reality in the final verse of the psalm. Psalm 18:51 (50) says, “Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever.” Grant notes that this is the first instance of מָשִׁיחַ, “anointed,” in the Psalter since its occurrence in Psalm 2,¹¹¹ a royal psalm with no attribution to David in the text. The importance of this word is that it reflects that the king is not simply a man determined by the people but instead he is the chosen one of God who has been set apart for this particular role. This choosing is reflected not only by the use of מָשִׁיחַ, but also in the perpetualness of this relationship. For God brings salvation and steadfast love

¹¹⁰ Patrick Miller, “Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer: The Theology of Psalms 15-24,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 270 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 182-3.

¹¹¹ Grant, *The King As Exemplar*, 216.

to the king, to “David and his offspring forever (עַד-עוֹלָם)” (v. 51 [50]). This forever relationship extends beyond David to include the kings who would follow him and finds its ultimate fulfillment in the future king who would reign forever.¹¹² The invoking of the covenant theme of an eternal reign points to God’s choosing of this line for his anointing.

This unique relationship of the Lord and the king is not only reflected in God’s initiation, but also in the king’s understanding of this relationship. The verses discussed previously that speak of dependence, also point to the king’s appropriating of this chosen relationship. For the vivid language of “my rock” (v. 3 [2]), “my fortress” (v. 3 [2]), “my stronghold” (v. 4 [3]), etc. indicates that the psalmist understands that this relationship is unique and intimate.¹¹³

Royal Psalms: Psalm 20

Psa. 20:0 TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID.

Psa. 20:1 May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you! **2** May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion! **3** May he remember all your offerings and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices! *Selah*

Psa. 20:4 May he grant you your heart’s desire and fulfill all your plans! **5** May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners! May the LORD fulfill all your petitions!

Psa. 20:6 Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. **7** Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. **8** They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright.

Psa. 20:9 O LORD, save the king! May he answer us when we call.

Just as Psalm 18 incorporated the theme of God’s choosing, so too does Psalm 20.

In v. 7 [6] the king is called מָשִׁיחַ, “anointed,” which depicts the king as engaged in a unique relationship with the Lord. This chosen relationship is not limited to the king being the anointed, but is also observed by the fact that the Lord hears the king’s call for

¹¹² Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 114.

¹¹³ Grant, *The King As Exemplar*, 215.

aid and will respond with salvation (v. 7 [6]).

The Lord's choosing of the king is closely tied to the king's dependent posture. The king's leaning upon the Lord is described in contrast to those who do not depend on him. Verses 8-9 [7-8] say, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright." This is significant because it is describing the natural inclinations of rulers to put their confidence in military might (chariots and horses) and how this confidence is unfounded. For those who depend on military strength will fall (v. 9 [8]) when confronted by the Lord. It is also important to be mindful of the fact that one of the restrictions put upon the king in Deuteronomy 17 was that he was not to acquire, and subsequently trust in, horses (Deuteronomy 17:16). Therefore, the psalmist is embracing the restriction of the Kingship Law by turning his attention, along with the people's, towards dependence upon the Lord.¹¹⁴

Compared to Psalm 18, this psalm is unique in that we hear the people of God expressing their desire that the Lord would look favorably upon the king (vv. 2-6 [1-5]). This finds its culmination in the petition of v. 10 [9], "O LORD, save the king! May he answer us when we call." Thus, the people are calling out to the Lord on behalf of the king. This request of the people should be understood as depicting their belief and expectation that as the king prospers, so too will they. This is evident in v. 6 [5], "May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners!" The salvation of the king results in the celebration of the people, a celebration that is

¹¹⁴ Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 187.

expressed by invoking the name of God. Thus, the king's well-being is linked to the people's rejoicing in God.

Royal Psalms: Psalm 21

Psa. 21:0 TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID.

Psa. 21:1 O LORD, in your strength the king rejoices, and in your salvation how greatly he exults!

2 You have given him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips. *Selah* **3**

For you meet him with rich blessings; you set a crown of fine gold upon his head. **4** He asked life of you; you gave it to him, length of days forever and ever. **5** His glory is great through your salvation; splendor and majesty you bestow on him. **6** For you make him most blessed forever; you make him glad with the joy of your presence. **7** For the king trusts in the LORD, and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved.

Psa. 21:8 Your hand will find out all your enemies; your right hand will find out those who hate you. **9** You will make them as a blazing oven when you appear. The LORD will swallow them up in his wrath, and fire will consume them. **10** You will destroy their descendants from the earth, and their offspring from among the children of man. **11** Though they plan evil against you, though they devise mischief, they will not succeed. **12** For you will put them to flight; you will aim at their faces with your bows.

Psa. 21:13 Be exalted, O LORD, in your strength! We will sing and praise your power.

Psalm 21 incorporates elements of dependence. Verses 2-8 [1-7] describe this theme. In these verses the actions of God on behalf of the king are recounted. God has performed salvation (v. 2 [1]), has answered the requests of the king in the affirmative (v. 3 [2]), has blessed and exulted the king (v. 4, 6-7 [3, 5-6]), and has prolonged his life (v. 5 [4]). The passage finds its culmination with v. 8 [7] when the theme of dependence is made explicit. It says, "For the king trusts in the LORD, and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved." Thus, the king is shown as relying upon the Lord.

Royal Psalms: Psalm 101

Psa. 101:0 A PSALM OF DAVID.

Psa. 101:1 I will sing of steadfast love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will make music. **2** I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will you come to me? I will walk with integrity of heart within my house; **3** I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. **4** A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil.

Psa. 101:5 Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly I will destroy. Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not endure.

Psa. 101:6 I will look with favor on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he who walks in the way that is blameless shall minister to me.

Psa. 101:7 No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house; no one who utters lies shall continue before my eyes.

Psa. 101:8 Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked in the land, cutting off all the evildoers from the city of the LORD.

Unlike any of the other Davidic royal psalms, Psalm 101 is almost exclusively concerned with piety. Following the initial appellation, the psalm is broken into two sections: vv. 2-4 concerning the piety of the king and then vv. 5-8 that deals with the piety of the people.

The king describes his faithful obedience to the law as walking with integrity (v. 2), turning away from worthless things (v. 3), despising the ways of the apostate (v. 3), and resolving to keep his life pure (v. 4). It is evident that the king is seeking to orient his life towards pious obedience. Yet it is not simply for his own wellbeing that he observes the Torah, but his piety is to be duplicated by that of the people. This is evident in the second section of the psalm. In vv. 5-8 there is not a direct statement indicating that the people are to model their lives after the king. However, when we read what will occur to both the obedient and the disobedient at the hands of the king, it becomes apparent that the people are being encouraged to live as the king lives. For in vv. 5, 7-8 the evildoers in the land will face the punishment of the king. The evils that they were perpetrating were the antithesis to the actions of the king.

Consider the contrast between vv. 2 and 5. The king has rightly declared he will “walk with integrity of heart” (v. 2), yet the evildoer “has a haughty look and an arrogant heart” (v. 5). Further, the king resolves that he will not look upon anything worthless (v. 3) and in v. 7 he decrees that those who practice deceit “shall not continue before his

eyes” (v. 7). Therefore, it is clear that the people are being discouraged from living impious lives that are contrary to the king’s way for his own life. Instead, the people are to live in such a way that will result in the favor of the king, and this way of living is modeled before them by the king himself. The result of this pious living is described in v. 6 where the king declares that those who are faithful and blameless will dwell with him and minister to him. Therefore, the people are encouraged to live as the king has determined to live, in obedience to the Lord.

Royal Psalms: Psalm 110

Psa. 110:0 A PSALM OF DAVID.

Psa. 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

Psa. 110:2 The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! **3** Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. **4** The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Psa. 110:5 The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. **6** He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. **7** He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

Psalm 110 is a royal psalm which is almost exclusively future oriented. This future or prophetic orientation is reflected by the use of אָמַר, “says,” in construct with the divine name, a feature that shows the psalm is “in the realm of prophetic revelation.”¹¹⁵ This means that the Lord of the psalm is the heir of the Davidic throne, the promised one who will reign forever. Since it is future oriented, one would expect kingship themes to appear since the future Lord is of the line of David. Thus, the expectation ought to be that what is expected of the first king would continue for the future kings, culminating in the

¹¹⁵ Jeffrey de Waal Dryden, “Psalm 110 in New Testament Christology” (ThM, Covenant Theological Seminary, 1999), 11.

final king who will reign forever. In this psalm, this expectation is confirmed.

There are many unique qualities about this psalm. As already mentioned, it is almost entirely future oriented, but it also speaks of the priesthood of the king, and there is a closer association between the king and God than there has ever been between other Davidic kings and God.¹¹⁶ Despite these unique qualities, there is still one similarity to the other Davidic royal psalms as it relates to the Kingship Law. This similarity is dependence. Just as many of the psalms depict the king as being dependent upon God, so too does Psalm 110. It is not simply David who is showing forth dependence, but the future king is as well. For the *יְהוָה*, “Lord,” of Psalm 110 is told to sit at God’s right hand and God will put the Lord’s enemies under him (v. 1), it is God who declares him to be a priest (v. 4), and the war that he will engage in will result in victory because of God (v. 1, 5). Thus, dependence upon God is not only for David and his immediate progeny but also for the messianic king to come.

In previous royal psalms, David was the one depicted as depending upon God, and by extension, the people were to depend on God as well. What is unique about this passage is that David’s submission is not limited to God but includes his *יְהוָה*. David calls him, *אֲדֹנָי*, “my Lord,” in verse 1. Thus, the significance of this future king is reflected in the fact that David, the ideal king, was dependent upon and gives homage to this future king.¹¹⁷

The other theme that this king will embody is that of piety. Verse 6 says, “He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses...” The implication is that

¹¹⁶ For instance, Dryden notes that “this is the only place in the Old Testament where someone is said to sit at the right hand of God.” Ibid, 22.

¹¹⁷ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, 2nd ed., Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 16 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 427.

the judgment being rendered upon the nations relates to their sinful ways (cf. Gen 15:13-16; Deuteronomy 9:5). Therefore, the king is executing the law and keeping it faithfully. This serves as an example to the people of Israel; they are not to be like the nations that live contrary to the Torah but instead are to observe God's law and follow his king.

Royal Psalms: Psalm 144

Psa. 144:0 OF DAVID.

Psa. 144:1 Blessed be the LORD, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; **2** he is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.

Psa. 144:3 O LORD, what is man that you regard him, or the son of man that you think of him? **4** Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.

Psa. 144:5 Bow your heavens, O LORD, and come down! Touch the mountains so that they smoke! **6** Flash forth the lightning and scatter them; send out your arrows and rout them! **7** Stretch out your hand from on high; rescue me and deliver me from the many waters, from the hand of foreigners, **8** whose mouths speak lies and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

Psa. 144:9 I will sing a new song to you, O God; upon a ten-stringed harp I will play to you, **10** who gives victory to kings, who rescues David his servant from the cruel sword. **11** Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners, whose mouths speak lies and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

Psa. 144:12 May our sons in their youth be like plants full grown, our daughters like corner pillars cut for the structure of a palace; **13** may our granaries be full, providing all kinds of produce; may our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields; **14** may our cattle be heavy with young, suffering no mishap or failure in bearing; may there be no cry of distress in our streets! **15** Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall! Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!

Of the Davidic royal psalms, Psalm 144 is the only one that clearly indicates a posture of humility on the part of the king. This does not mean that humility was foreign to the king; after all, it was a part of the Kingship Law of Deuteronomy 17. Instead we are to understand the lack of this theme in the previous royal psalms as speaking to the prominence of the other themes rather than minimizing humility.

The verses that give attention to the humility of the king are 3 and 4. They say, "O LORD, what is man that you regard him, or the son of man that you think of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow." One could easily point out that the

psalmist does not explicitly speak of the king as a passing shadow, which would be true. Yet, that line of thinking would disregard the inclusion of the king with the rest of mankind. For David, the king is making a statement about the longevity of life that is true of all men. Therefore, it is right to see the king including himself in this statement. In fact, it is not difficult to imagine that the king was considering the brevity of his own life as he penned these words. And as such, he was expressing humility before God. For he recognized that his life was but a breath and there is nothing of himself that would cause God to regard him (v. 3).

While humility is expressed in a couple of verses, this is not the only kingship theme that is evident in this psalm. The theme of dependence factors in this psalm more prominently than that of humility. The king expresses his dependence upon God in vv. 2, 7, 10-11, and 15.

By considering these six Davidic royal psalms through the lens of the Kingship Law of Deuteronomy 17, it is apparent that the themes of Deuteronomy 17 are explicitly represented in these psalms. This does not mean that each psalm embodies all four of the Kingship Law motif; in fact, none of them do. Instead, we see each reflecting at least one theme from Deuteronomy 17, and, when taken as a whole, the six psalms incorporate all four themes. This is important because it signifies that David, as he wrote these psalms, was mindful of the responsibilities that the king was to embody. While it would be going too far to say that David wrote these psalms for the primary purpose of showing how the king embodied these themes, it is not a stretch to say that the inclusion of these themes indicates an awareness of how the king was to function within the life of Israel.

How the King Relates to Reading Lament

In this chapter I have shown how the Kingship Law of Deuteronomy 17 is reflected both in the kingship narratives and Davidic royal psalms. The reason why this is significant for a correct reading of lament psalms has to do with the prominence of the king. Since we can clearly see how the king functioned as a model to the people in these royal psalms, the implication is that other genres authored by the king would function in a similar way.

The expectation placed upon the king is that he will live and act in light of Deuteronomy 17. Therefore, when reading psalms authored by the king, we ought to look for these themes. As noted above, not all of these themes will be evident in each psalm. However, since the psalms under examination were authored by king David, the reader of the psalms should consider how it is that the king is embodying the Kingship Law and what response that is to illicit in God's people. In other words, though the theme of exemplar of Torah obedience is only found in a few of the royal psalms, the role of the king in the life of Israel suggests the proper reading of these psalms should include how the king is modeling what it means to be a member of God's people. Subsequently, when he writes of humility, dependence, etc. a proper reading will consider that these are postures that all God's people are to embody. Therefore, by seeing the king as intended to be the ideal follower of God, when he functions as God directs him to, the reader of the king's words and the observer of his actions is expected to duplicate the king's faithful living. This includes not only royal psalms but all genres of psalms authored by the king. Thus, when considering a lament psalm authored by David, a faithful reading of that psalm would include expecting the people to duplicate the actions of the king. Therefore,

David's laments become a model for the laments of the people. Just as David was an example of piety, humility, dependence, etc. in the royal psalms, his office makes him the model lamenter in the lament psalms.

Chapter 5

Corporate Inclusion

In the previous chapter I showed how the king's words and actions are to function as a model for Israel. Continuing with the theme of the king's life knit closely to the life of the community of believers, in this chapter I will consider how the individual focus of some of the psalms turns towards a corporate inclusion. Within the thirty-six individual Davidic laments, twenty¹¹⁸ of the psalms move from the narrow focus of the psalmist to a broader inclusion of the community. This inclusion is not to be seen as merely a tacit one, but is an explicit emphasis upon the corporate body as it pertains to the life of the king.

In his work, *The Collective Reinterpretation in the Psalms*, Marko Marttila recognizes the collective emphasis that is found in a number of the psalms. However, his overall thesis is that this inclusion of the corporate was not a product of the original writing of the psalm but instead was a later addition. He says of lament psalms, they “offered an excellent opportunity and context for collective interpretations, because the people of Israel were able to find in such texts a language and terminology to depict its own state of affairs.”¹¹⁹ Thus, his working theory is that the language directed to the corporate people which is found in a number of individual psalms are redactions. He puts forth this idea to counteract the claim of Cheyne that the turn to the corporate reflected

¹¹⁸ These psalms are: 3, 4, 5, 22, 28, 31, 35, 40, 51, 54, 57, 59, 61, 63, 64, 69, 70, 109, 140, 142.

¹¹⁹ Marko Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation in the Psalms: A Study of the Redaction History of the Psalter* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 26.

the Hebrew understanding of “solidarity between an individual and community. Thus, the Psalmists were able to write collective prayers using individual language.”¹²⁰ While either of these options are worth considering for why there is the appearance of the collective in individual laments, a better approach to take, one which Marttila only mentions in a footnote,¹²¹ is to consider the corporate in light of the king. As we consider these psalms in relation to the king and the people, we will see that the corporate inclusion is tied to David’s office bearing as king. This is reflected in two ways: 1) the praise of the people tied to the deliverance of the king, and 2) the intercession which the king makes on behalf of the people.

The Praise of the People Tied to the Deliverance of the King

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the king and the people enjoyed a relationship in which the success of the king benefitted the people. This benefit is reflected not simply through blessing to the people, but it resulted in the people praising God because of the successful care of the king. This is shown in a variety of psalms, yet the two that I will focus on are Psalms 22 and 69.

The Praise of the People Tied to the Deliverance of the King: Psalm 22

Psa. 22:0 TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO THE DOE OF THE DAWN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

Psa. 22:1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? **2** O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

Psa. 22:3 Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. **4** In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. **5** To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

¹²⁰ T.K. Cheyne, *The Book of Psalms*, 2nd ed. (London: Kegan Paul, 1904), 1:230. Cited in Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation in the Psalms: A Study of the Redaction History of the Psalter*, 4.

¹²¹ In a footnote, Marttila refers to the *lamed auctoris* understanding of Davidic authorship as being the “conservative” view. Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation in the Psalms: A Study of the Redaction History of the Psalter*, 3 n 7. Unfortunately, Marttila never interacts with the merits of this interpretation.

Psa. 22:6 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. **7** All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; **8** “He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”

Psa. 22:9 Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother’s breasts. **10** On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother’s womb you have been my God. **11** Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.

Psa. 22:12 Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; **13** they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.

Psa. 22:14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; **15** my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.

Psa. 22:16 For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— **17** I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; **18** they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

Psa. 22:19 But you, O LORD, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid! **20** Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog! **21** Save me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!

Psa. 22:22 I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: **23** You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! **24** For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.

Psa. 22:25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him. **26** The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD! May your hearts live forever!

Psa. 22:27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. **28** For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.

Psa. 22:29 All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. **30** Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; **31** they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.

Craigie notes that Psalm 22 is made up of two sections: 1) lament (vv. 2-22 [1-21]) and 2) praise and thanksgiving (vv. 23-32 [22-31]).¹²² Some see this distinction between sections as evidence of two earlier psalms being combined with the purpose of associating the suffering of the people of Israel with the afflicted psalmist.¹²³ However, Craigie argues that this ignores the unity of the psalm and instead sees the “mixture of forms and types of language suggest[ing] strongly that the text in Psalm 22 is the basis of a liturgy.”¹²⁴ While the liturgical structure of the psalm is an appealing interpretation,

¹²² Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 197.

¹²³ Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation in the Psalms: A Study of the Redaction History of the Psalter*, 101.

¹²⁴ Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 197.

particularly since it is my contention that these psalms were for the use of worship, to limit the psalm to a liturgical framework insinuates that there was not a historical situation in the life of the psalmist that initiated the forming of the psalm. Both Marttila and Craigie fail to consider the relationship of the king with the people when seeking to understand the reason for the shift from the individual to the corporate.

In vv. 22 [23] and 25 [26] David responds to the Lord's rescuing of him and says, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you...From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him." Due to the faithful acts that God has performed on his behalf, David stands in the midst of the people and praises the Lord. He also takes vows to the Lord, an act of worship in the presence of the people. Thus, the congregation will witness David's response to what has been done on his behalf. Yet, these acts are not simply for the sake of the congregation seeing the king worship, it is so they will respond in kind. This is evident in the fact that the verses surrounding David's praise speak of the congregation's response. In v. 23 [24] and 26 [27] the congregation is called by David to praise God. The model of what this praise is to look like is found in David himself. As the king has worshiped the Lord, so too are the people.

The Praise of the People Tied to the Deliverance of the King: Psalm 69

Psalm 69:0 TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO LILIES. OF DAVID.

1 Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. **2** I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. **3** I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.

Psa. 69:4 More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies. What I did not steal must I now restore? **5** O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.

Psa. 69:6 Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me, O God of Israel. **7** For it is for your

sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. **8** I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons.

Psa. 69:9 For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. **10** When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. **11** When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. **12** I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me.

Psa. 69:13 But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness. **14** Deliver me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. **15** Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me.

Psa. 69:16 Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me. **17** Hide not your face from your servant; for I am in distress; make haste to answer me. **18** Draw near to my soul, redeem me; ransom me because of my enemies!

Psa. 69:19 You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you. **20** Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. **21** They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.

Psa. 69:22 Let their own table before them become a snare; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap. **23** Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually. **24** Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them. **25** May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents. **26** For they persecute him whom you have struck down, and they recount the pain of those you have wounded. **27** Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you. **28** Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.

Psa. 69:29 But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high!

Psa. 69:30 I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. **31** This will please the LORD more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs. **32** When the humble see it they will be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive. **33** For the LORD hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.

Psa. 69:34 Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them. **35** For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah, and people shall dwell there and possess it; **36** the offspring of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall dwell in it.

Multiple times throughout Psalm 69, the psalmist speaks not only of the dire situation he is faced with but also speaks in such a way that reflects his relationship to his fellow man.¹²⁵ The connection between the psalmist and the community is seen in vv. 7, 27, 33-34 [6, 26, 32-33]. While the community inclusion is sprinkled throughout the passage, the broadening of the psalm beyond the individual is most seen in the final section of the psalm, vv. 31-37 [30-36]. De Vos and Kwakkel note that the collective

¹²⁵ Christiane de Vos and Gert Kwakkel, "Psalm 69: The Petitioner's Understanding of Himself, His God, and His Enemies," in *Papers Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society of Old Testament Study and Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland En België, Apeldoorn August 2006*, ed. Bob Becking and Eric Peels (Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2007), 161.

ending of the psalm moves from individual praise (vv. 31-32 [30-31]), to those who seek God rejoicing (vv. 33-34 [32-33]), to the heavens and earth praising God (v. 35 [34]), and concluding with the people of God dwelling in the land provided by God (vv. 36-37 [35-36]).¹²⁶ Some have postulated that the inclusion of the corporate was a later result for the use of the cult,¹²⁷ while others have sought to understand “a rereading...the ‘I’ of the prayers was read as ‘we’, implying the whole people of God.”¹²⁸ One concern with this latter assertion is that it may result in emphasizing the community at the expense of the individual psalmist. Finally, others have argued that the reason for the collective inclusion, which is the most positive portion of the psalm, is because it is a re-integration of the psalmist into the community after being in isolation. In other words, during his time of distress he had been secluded from the community but with his deliverance he is no longer isolated.¹²⁹ While this final approach is an interesting idea, it seems to be reading too much into the psalm and ascribing a community isolation that may not have been there. A better approach than seeing this corporate inclusion as a later addition or a re-reading is to see the relationship of the psalmist, King David, as being intimately connected to the corporate people.

The close relationship between king and people not only results in praise, which we will discuss shortly, but is also reflected in the potentially negative consequences that may come upon the community because of the individual. For example, in v. 7 [6], the psalmist writes: “Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me...let not

¹²⁶ Ibid. 177-78.

¹²⁷ Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation in the Psalms: A Study of the Redaction History of the Psalter*, 114.

¹²⁸ de Vos and Kwakkel, “Psalm 69: The Petitioner’s Understanding of Himself, His God, and His Enemies,” 178.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me.” It appears that the community’s wellbeing is so closely tied to the king’s that in his shame and anxiety, they too are brought to shame. It is for this reason that David includes the statements concerning himself, “through me,” at the end of each clause. He understands that the suffering he is experiencing will result in the people’s suffering as well; his suffering is a “suffering by way of example.”¹³⁰ Thus, he does not simply ask for his own suffering to be relieved, he does this and expects it to be removed, but he also asks for the people not to suffer dishonor because of him. This close connection of the people, that of blessing and suffering being linked to each other, is not a unique feature to the psalms. There is an expectation of corporate solidarity espoused in the book of Deuteronomy. Nine times in that book the phrase “purge the evil from your midst” is spoken. In each case, the author is communicating to the corporate people the need for them to remove from their presence those who will lead them astray. For instance, in Deuteronomy 13, the topic of how to respond to a false prophet is considered. That false prophet, who is seeking to lead the people away from fidelity to the Lord (Deuteronomy 13:2), is to be sentenced to death and subsequently the people “shall purge the evil from [their] midst” (Deuteronomy 13:5). The reason for this purging is clearly to protect the community.¹³¹ For if one part of the people is led astray, the remainder of the corporate body may be as well. Thus, the corporate well-being is evident. This theme is also seen prominently in the book of Joshua. In chapter seven, the story is told of Achan’s sin and the resulting defeat of the army at Ai. Though Achan was not the king, his sin results in God’s anger against the

¹³⁰ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Pub, 1989), 61.

¹³¹ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 224.

whole of Israel; “corporately they are all involved in the offense of Achan.”¹³² Since the people themselves are closely united together in fidelity as well as suffering, it is not surprising to see the king behaving in such a way that reflects his participation in the corporate body. Therefore, David is clearly praying that God would not only protect himself but that the corporate body, which is observing this situation, would be saved as well.¹³³

While the people are so connected to the king that they will suffer in his suffering, so too will they be brought to worship at the king’s deliverance. This is observed in v. 33 [32] where as a result of God’s saving work on behalf of the psalmist, the “humble” see his salvation. Tate argues that the “humble” are those “who lack the material wealth and power to exercise authority in human affairs but who are faithful to Yahweh and see his presence.”¹³⁴ However, it’s not simply God’s presence that they see, they witness the deliverance of their king. It is because of witnessing the king’s deliverance that their hearts are renewed. This is significant because it shows that though the people may lack the ability to assist their king or to bring meaningful benefit to their own situation, the faithfulness of God to the king revives their hearts. The implication is clear: they are saddened and brought low because of the situation David is confronted with, but at his deliverance, just as David is brought high, so too are their hearts. The relationship to the well-being of the king and the renewed spirits of the people is clear.

¹³² Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, 2nd Revised ed. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1981).

¹³³ Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 559.

¹³⁴ Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 20 (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 200.

The King Intercedes for the People

Up until this point, the focus has been on how God's actions on behalf of the king results in the praise of the people. The people's celebration is tied to the deliverance of the king and at times the psalmist directly calls for this praise. However, this is not the only way that the corporate people are included in the individual laments. Corporate inclusion also appears in times when the psalmist, the king, makes intercession on behalf of the people. Examples of this include Psalms 5 and 28.

The King Intercedes for the People: Psalm 5

Psa. 5:0 TO THE CHOIRMASTER: FOR THE FLUTES. A PSALM OF DAVID.

Psa. 5:1 Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. **2** Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. **3** O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.

Psa. 5:4 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. **5** The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. **6** You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

Psa. 5:7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you. **8** Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me.

Psa. 5:9 For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue. **10** Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you.

Psa. 5:11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you. **12** For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.

In Psalm 5:12 [11] David directs his attention away from his own well-being to the good of the corporate people. Prior to this verse, David has been asking the Lord to hear his cries and concerns and to act on his behalf against his enemies. The specific way in which he desires God to act against his enemies is by casting them out of God's presence (11 [10]). In the following verse, David requests the opposite action for God's people. He speaks not of those who are cast out from God's presence but of those who

take refuge in him. In other words, David has declared that his enemies who are opposing him are refusing God's ways and his shelter, but there are those who follow the Lord and they are those who, by finding refuge in God, will rejoice.

It is this latter group of people that David is speaking on behalf of when he requests the Lord's protection. In 5:12b [11b] the psalmist says, "and spread your protection over them..." Thus, the king's concern is not only for his own well-being but for the preservation of the people as well. David grounds his request in the character of God. For in v. 13 [12] David speaks of what the LORD has done: "you bless the righteous...you cover him with favor as with a shield." In this verse David has moved out of the corporate and returned to the individual, "the righteous" and "him." This appears to be an allusion to David himself. For earlier in the psalm, David has expressed his fidelity to the Lord by calling God his king (3 [2]), preparing a sacrifice for him (4 [3]), and contrasting himself with the wicked who speak lies (5-9 [4-8]). The implication of this is that the wicked are the opposite of David and are contrary to what is righteous. Thus, when David speaks of "the righteous" in v. 13 [12] he has a specific person in mind, himself. The reader is to see David as the contrasting figure to the wicked, and, as they are the transgressors, David is the righteous one; he is the one to whom God has shown favor and protected with a shield. Therefore, the psalmist connects God's actions on his behalf with the request he is making for the people. As God showed favor to the king, let him now show favor to the king's people.

The King Intercedes for the People: Psalm 28

Psa. 28:0 OF DAVID.

Psa. 28:1 To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. **2** Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary.

Psa. 28:3 Do not drag me off with the wicked, with the workers of evil, who speak peace with their neighbors while evil is in their hearts. **4** Give to them according to their work and according to the evil of their deeds; give to them according to the work of their hands; render them their due reward. **5** Because they do not regard the works of the LORD or the work of his hands, he will tear them down and build them up no more.

Psa. 28:6 Blessed be the LORD! For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy. **7** The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.

Psa. 28:8 The LORD is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed. **9** Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever.

Psalm 28 functions in a similar way to that of Psalm 5. In v. 9, David makes a direct appeal to God for the sake of his people. He says, “save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever.” Prior to David’s request on behalf of the people, he speaks of God’s protection on his behalf. In vv. 7 and 8 he says “The LORD is my strength and shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped...he is the saving refuge of his anointed.” This is a clear recollection of what God has done for David, who is God’s anointed. Martilla argues that מָשִׁיחַ (“anointed”) in v. 8 cannot refer to the king because the psalm is derived from the exilic or post-exilic period.¹³⁵ His assumption of this later dating is built on “the fact that the duty of a shepherd (רֹעֶה) is given not to the king but directly to Yahweh.”¹³⁶ Thus, these verses are dealing with “the relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel without any intermediating monarchy.”¹³⁷ As a result of this interpretation, Martilla sees the מָשִׁיחַ of v. 8b as referring to the people of Israel.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Martilla, *Collective Reinterpretation in the Psalms: A Study of the Redaction History of the Psalter*, 149.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 150

¹³⁸ Ibid.

There are several concerns with this interpretation. First, an exilic or post-exilic dating based off Yahweh being declared the shepherd is insufficient. There is the clear expression in 2 Samuel 5:2 that the king was to function as the shepherd of God's people. However, this is a derived responsibility implying that though the king is to shepherd the people, he does so under God the Shepherd. This is also reflected in Psalm 23:1 where the Lord is called the king's "shepherd." Secondly, the claim that the corporate people of Israel are to be understood as being God's *רֹעֵה* is not warranted. Martilla makes this argument more out of a presupposition about the time of writing than the biblical witness. For instance, BDB never ascribes the word *רֹעֵה* to the people of Israel. Instead the options listed are: the king, the high priest, Cyrus, the messianic prince, and the patriarchs.¹³⁹ The only instance in which the word could be used to describe the people as a whole is found in 1 Chronicles 16:22 and the companion verse Psalm 105:15, which BDB interprets as referring to the "patriarchs."¹⁴⁰ Even if this is an instance where BDB is incorrect and it is referring to the people as a whole, the context of 1 Chronicles makes it clear it's not referring to the king, and the word is found in the plural, while in Psalm 28 it is in the singular. Thirdly, it was common within the ANE for foreign kings to be called shepherds.¹⁴¹ As such, it would not have been out of place to refer to the Israelite king as the shepherd of God's people. Thus, Martilla's argument for dismissing the import of the king in this passage leaves one wanting.

Instead of dismissing the mediating work of the king, it is better to see this passage as reflecting the king's intercession on behalf of the people resulting from God's

¹³⁹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 4899.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 1st ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 783.

protection of the king. Thus, David requests God to act in a similar way for the people as he did for the king. God has been for David a “saving refuge,” (8) and because of this, the king asks God to save the people as well (9). The psalmist further connects his situation with that of the people by calling God both his and the people’s strength (7-8), and using the protective language of “shield” (7) and “shepherd” (9). Thus, it is evident that David is functioning in an official capacity as the head of Israel and is uniting his deliverance with the protection of the people.¹⁴²

The Significance of Corporate Inclusion

Over the course of this brief chapter, I have discussed a few of the individual laments attributed to David that are not limited only to the psalmist but include concern for the people of God. This corporate inclusion is significant for our reading of lament because it clearly reflects the close relationship that the king had with his people. Wallace argues that this corporate inclusion is “evidence for the king being held up as a ‘model’ of piety and faithfulness before the community and of the psalms being shaped in such a way that the community is encouraged to take his prayers as their own.”¹⁴³ While this modeling of faithfulness to the community was a responsibility of the king, as reflected in the previous chapter, the corporate inclusion reflects more than simply the king as exemplar. Instead we also see how the preservation of the king’s life elicits praise from the people. In addition to this, we witnessed how the king interceded on behalf of the people for their well-being. Thus, these individual laments show the significant and

¹⁴² Franz Delitzsch, *Psalms*, trans. Francis Bolton, 2nd ed., Commentary on the Old Testament 5 (Grand Rapids, IL: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 232.

¹⁴³ Howard N. Wallace, “King and Community: Joining with David in Prayer,” in *Psalms and Prayers: Papers Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society of Old Testament Study and Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland En België, Apeldoorn August 2006*, ed. Bob Becking and Eric Peels (Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2007), 277.

unique role that the king had as the representative of Israel. For the “welfare of the people as a whole...was considered to be bound up with the life and reign of the king.”¹⁴⁴

Though Tate was making this statement specifically about Psalm 61, it can be applied generally to the relationship of the king and Israel, so that God’s people are incorporated into the laments of their king. In one sense, this incorporation occurs with all the psalms since the king is the representative and the psalms were to function within the corporate worship of the people. However, the unique ways that David includes the corporate people in the psalms examined reflects a concerted care that David has for the people that is not as evident in other individual laments. Therefore, when seeking to determine corporate inclusion within individual laments, it is important to be observant of corporate language and the theme of the king as representative.

¹⁴⁴ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 115.

Chapter 6

Themes of Innocence and Iniquity

The final topic for consideration has to do with a significant interpretative difficulty the language ascribing innocence and/or integrity to the psalmist. How is the modern reader to understand the psalmist's intent in using this language? Some have argued that a simple reading of these psalms leads one to regard these claims of innocence and integrity as "the expression of well-nigh intolerable self-righteousness and lack of contrition."¹⁴⁵ Must we adopt this posture? For this view clearly represents a suspicious view of the psalmist. Rather is there another way of understanding these claims? My contention is that there is a better approach.

To make matters more difficult, there are instances within the laments where the psalmist, alongside these claims of innocence, also makes a confession of guilt. Though these expressions of guilt and sin are not frequent,¹⁴⁶ they do appear in a number of laments. Thus, we find ourselves reading a confession of sin or a statement of guilt within close proximity to a claim of innocence or personal integrity. A possible interpretive move is to understand these as being contradictory, and some have taken this position.¹⁴⁷ Before concluding that this is the presupposition we are to adopt when faced with this

¹⁴⁵ Gerhard von Rad, "'Righteousness' and 'Life' in the Cultic Language of the Psalms," in *From Genesis to Chronicles: Explorations in Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Pub, 2005), 187-88.

¹⁴⁶ Claus Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content, and Message*, trans. Ralph D. Gehrke (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Pub, 1980), 67.

¹⁴⁷ I will take this up later in regards specifically to Psalm 69. The basis of my challenge can be applied to all of the other psalms under consideration.

apparent contradiction, it behooves us to look at the specific psalms where these statements occur.

Therefore, in this chapter I will examine six individual lament psalms attributed to David. These are the only psalms that have both a statement of innocence and a statement of guilt. There is no arguing that there are more Davidic Psalms that include one of these themes (cf. Psalm 51 as an example of confession), but these six are the only ones that have both. The psalms under examination are: Psalms 7, 31, 38, 40, 41, and 69. After considering each psalm's claim of innocence and acknowledgement of guilt, I will make conclusions for how we are to understand the appearance of both these expressions and then make some applications for the modern reader. Along the way, it will become apparent that the idea that these are contradictory themes is to be rejected. When faced with innocence and guilt in these six psalms, the psalmist's focus differs with each. In other words, for each statement we must ask, "In regards to what?"¹⁴⁸ That is, in regards to what is the psalmist claiming innocence, and in regards to what is he claiming guilt? In each of these psalms, it will become apparent that the focus of the innocence regards an external¹⁴⁹ accusation or enemy while the guilt is an acknowledgment of a previous failing.

Psalm 7

Psalm 7:0 A SHIGGAION OF DAVID, WHICH HE SANG TO THE LORD CONCERNING THE WORDS OF CUSH, A BENJAMINITE.

Psa. 7:1 O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge; save me from all my pursuers and deliver me, **2** lest like a lion they tear my soul apart, rending it in pieces, with none to deliver.

Psa. 7:3 O LORD my God, if I have done this, if there is wrong in my hands, **4** if I have repaid my friend with evil or plundered my enemy without cause, **5** let the enemy pursue my soul and

¹⁴⁸ I must thank my professor C. John Collins for asking this question enough in class so that it has become a part of my regular thinking. As far as I know, he did not pose this question regarding the topics discussed in this paper, but the orienting perspective it brings is helpful for this topic.

¹⁴⁹ Patrick Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 105.

overtake it, and let him trample my life to the ground and lay my glory in the dust. *Selah*

Psa. 7:6 Arise, O LORD, in your anger; lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies; awake for me; you have appointed a judgment. **7** Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about you; over it return on high.

Psa. 7:8 The LORD judges the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me. **9** Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end, and may you establish the righteous—you who test the minds and hearts, O righteous God! **10** My shield is with God, who saves the upright in heart. **11** God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day.

Psa. 7:12 If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; **13** he has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts. **14** Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies. **15** He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made. **16** His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends.

Psa. 7:17 I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High.

The occasion of this psalm is not clear. The title indicates that Cush, a Benjaminite, spoke words in opposition to the psalmist. The specifics of who this “Cush” was are obscure since there is no other reference to him in the Scriptures.¹⁵⁰ We also are not told what these exact words were. No doubt it is because the actual words of the accuser are missing that Kwakkel would agree with Keel that the reader of this psalm should not consider the report to be an accurate account of what actually happened. Instead, they argue, we are to see the passage “only giv[ing] information about the subjective way in which the psalmists experienced their fears and distresses.”¹⁵¹ Such a reading of this psalm, in particular, and the entire Psalter in general, is quite suspicious and should be rejected. If there were aspects in the psalm, which Kwakkel and others do not acknowledge, that lead the reader to taking a subjective posture to it, then we should affirm Kwakkel’s assertion. However, there is nothing in the text itself to make us think that the psalmist is not recounting an actual event. Instead, a more appropriate reading

¹⁵⁰ Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 99.

¹⁵¹ Gert Kwakkel, *According to My Righteousness: Upright Behaviour As Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26, and 44* (Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2002), 36.

will be one that takes the passage at its face value and even has assurance of the factuality of the contents due to the historical title ascribed to it. Rather than having a hermeneutic of suspicion because the accuser's exact words are missing, we should seek to discern the situation based on the clues of the text.

For instance, the content of the psalm leads the interpreter to surmise that this Benjamite was accusing David of repaying a friend for evil and looting his enemy without cause (5 [4]). The psalmist's response is one of innocence and requesting God to examine his case. Verses 4-6 [3-7] say, "O LORD my God, if I have done this, if there is wrong in my hands, if I have repaid my friend with evil or plundered my enemy without cause, let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it, and let him trample my life to the ground and lay my glory in the dust. *Selah*." These few verses, while not giving an outright claim of innocence or declaring the psalmist's integrity related to the accusations, make clear his understanding of what his culpability is – he believes himself to be innocent. This is evident by the fact that his request of God to examine his case takes the form of conditional statements. The particle **אִם**, "if," introduces each of the conditional clauses: 1) "if I have done this" (4 [3]), 2) "if there is wrong in my hands" (4 [3]), and 3) "if I have repaid my friend with evil or plundered my enemy without cause" (5 [4]). The apodosis clause to these conditional statements is found in v. 6 [5] where we read, "let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it, and let him trample my life to the ground and lay my glory in the dust. *Selah*." The implication of these conditional statements is clear: if the psalmist has done the actions he has been accused of, then he is deserving of God's punishment. However, the fact that he requests God to consider his case and bring judgment upon him if found guilty, causes us to see this as a tacit

statement of innocence. After all, if the psalmist was convinced of his guilt and sure that God would bring judgment, we would expect a request for mercy (cf. Psalm 51:3-4 [1-2], 9 [7]), but this is not found in Psalm 7.

Although the psalmist is sure of his innocence, which the rhetorical questions reflect, we should see in his conditional statements an openness on his part to being examined, and if he is found guilty, to being judged. This call to examination reflects that the psalmist understands that he may not be guilty of the actual act, but if he had instigated it, then he is guilty.¹⁵² There is no question that there is an emphasis on the psalmist's part towards innocence, and the psalm itself is lacking an explicit statement of guilt or sin. The lack of a confession sets this psalm apart from the others that will be examined. However, due to the nature of the psalmist's questions, we should still see in the psalmist an understanding that though he may be innocent in this matter, he is aware that he is not innocent absolutely and may instead be guilty in the matter before him. Thus, because the innocence is implied, there is the possibility that the psalmist is not actually innocent. It is because of this understanding that I have included this psalm in the current examination. The remaining psalms will have clearer descriptions of guilt.

The psalmist's understanding of his innocence is not limited to an implied innocence but is made explicit in v. 9 [8]. The psalmist invites God to "judge me...according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me." Similar to the conditional statements discussed above, the implication of this request is that the psalmist believes that God will declare him innocent. However, this differs with the implied innocence of vv. 4-6 [3-5] in that here the psalmist appeals not to his lack of guilt

¹⁵² Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Lament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 89.

but his actual integrity. Here again, we are to understand the psalmist's belief that he is free of evil and is innocent with regards to this situation. In addition to this, the psalmist requests God to act on his behalf against his enemies. This is reflected in a variety of places in the chapter, one of which is found in v. 7 [6]. The psalmist calls God to arise against his enemies and to bring judgment. This is in keeping with an understanding that the wrongs that have been committed deserve justice and instead of the judgment coming upon the psalmist, he requests judgment to come upon the accusers. In so doing, the psalmist is requesting deliverance from the false accusations and expressing his innocence.¹⁵³ Thus, a faithful understanding of this passage is to see that the psalmist believes that he is innocent of the charges brought against him by his enemies.

It is significant to emphasize that the innocence which the psalmist is projecting is not an absolute righteousness or sinlessness.¹⁵⁴ The very fact that in the midst of his speaking to God he holds out the possibility of his own contribution to the circumstance in which he finds himself (see the conditional statements above) shows that this is not to be understood as a statement of absolute innocence. Nor should we understand this righteousness as being situated in the context of God's righteousness, as Brueggemann and Bellinger assert.¹⁵⁵ While it is theologically true that the believer's righteousness is tied up with God's righteousness, particularly in an eschatological sense, what Brueggemann and Bellinger's argument fails to do is to understand the psalmist's righteousness as being a circumstantial righteousness. Thus, a truer reading of this text is to understand the statement of innocence to only be "with respect to the false charges

¹⁵³ Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 100.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 102.

¹⁵⁵ Walter Brueggemann and W. H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 57.

which have been laid against him.”¹⁵⁶ Therefore, this innocence should be seen as a circumstantial innocence; the psalmist has not committed an act to warrant the actions of his enemies.

What then is the rationale for the enemies’ behavior? Unfortunately, the modern reader is left with little to discern the situation that surrounded the enemies’ actions against the psalmist. While in some psalms the title can give information regarding the circumstances that precipitated the psalm (cf. Psalm 3, 51, etc.) and we can surmise that the tribe of Benjamin had ill will for David as a result of his replacing Saul,¹⁵⁷ the specific situation alluded to in the title is unknown to the modern reader since we are unable to tie it to a specific account described in another biblical passage.¹⁵⁸ Thus, all that we can say for sure about the psalmist’s accusers is what the psalmist himself says about them: they are wicked (15 [14]). This indicates that, at the very least, they oppose God’s king and subsequently oppose God’s ways.

Psalm 31

Psalm. 31:0 TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID.

Psa. 31:1 In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me! **2** Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!

Psa. 31:3 For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name’s sake you lead me and guide me; **4** you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge. **5** Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

Psa. 31:6 I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the LORD. **7** I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul, **8** and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a broad place.

Psa. 31:9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also. **10** For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.

Psa. 31:11 Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors, and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from

¹⁵⁶ Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 102.

¹⁵⁷ Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 63.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

me. **12** I have been forgotten like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel. **13** For I hear the whispering of many—terror on every side!—as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.

Psa. 31:14 But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.” **15** My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors! **16** Make your face shine on your servant; save me in your steadfast love! **17** O LORD, let me not be put to shame, for I call upon you; let the wicked be put to shame; let them go silently to Sheol. **18** Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt.

Psa. 31:19 Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind! **20** In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men; you store them in your shelter from the strife of tongues.

Psa. 31:21 Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was in a besieged city. **22** I had said in my alarm, “I am cut off from your sight.” But you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cried to you for help.

Psa. 31:23 Love the LORD, all you his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride. **24** Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD!

Similar to Psalm 7, Psalm 31’s exact occasion is not known. Unlike Psalm 7, this psalm has a clear request for God’s grace to come upon the psalmist. In vv. 10-11 [9-10] we read, “Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and by body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.” The fact that the psalmist makes a request for God’s grace indicates that he is aware of a sin that he has committed. The exact sin is not known and because the sin is not stated some have surmised that the psalmist is not confessing a particular sin but “is making use of a common formulation, based on the notion that there is no affliction without sin...”¹⁵⁹ Hakham seems to be arguing that the grief and sorrow that the psalmist is experiencing is a result not of a specific sin but general sin that he may not be aware of. In other words, because there is affliction, there must be sin. While from a theological perspective this is true, all affliction finds its ultimate source in the presence of sin in the world, this

¹⁵⁹ Amos Hakham, *The Bible Psalms with the Jerusalem Commentary*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 2003), 234.

conclusion would minimize what seems to be a recognition by the psalmist that he has personally sinned in a particular way. Gunkel, speaking generally of divine wrath and human guilt says, “It is significant that the Israelite does not present his God as an arbitrary God. YHWH does not act without reason. If the one praying has taken ill, he must recognize in complete contrition that *his offense* has caused YHWH’s wrath to spew.”¹⁶⁰ Gunkel’s general conclusion should be applied to this specific instance. For in v. 11 [10] the psalmist says that the result of his sorrow, sighing, strength failing, and bones wasting away is because of *בְּעֲוֹנִי* “my iniquity.” Thus, while the exact sin may be hidden from the modern reader, the psalmist is clearly aware of his offense.

What makes interpreting this passage difficult is the fact that alongside of this confession of sin are statements that indicate the psalmist’s piety. While he does not use the exact words of “righteousness” and “integrity,” he does present himself as one who has been faithful to the Lord. There are two main places where this is seen. The first is in vv. 7-9 [6-8]. In these verses the psalmist describes his life and posture as one of piety towards God. He despises idolaters, he trusts in God, and he rejoices in God’s covenantal love. Yet, it is not just his own pious actions that he describes, but he also notes God’s response to him. God has seen his affliction and distress and he has not given him over to the psalmist’s enemy. In fact, God has set the psalmist’s “feet in a broad place” (v. 9 [8]), a phrase which indicates God’s deliverance.¹⁶¹ Thus, it appears that the psalmist, outside of the sin for which he has confessed, believes himself to be faithful to God.

¹⁶⁰ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, 136.

¹⁶¹ R. G. Bratcher and William D. Reyrburn, eds., *A Handbook on Psalms* (New York: American Bible Society, 1991), 293.

The second place where the psalmist presents himself as pious is found in vv. 20-21 [19-20]. In these verses the psalmist describes God as being a shelter, a place of refuge and to hide, and of working good for those who fear him. It is possible to argue that the psalmist is speaking of God's actions that he has witnessed on behalf of others. While there is little doubt that the psalmist did observe God's goodness towards others, it is appropriate to include the psalmist himself as a recipient of God's goodness. For in the verses preceding v. 20 [19], the psalmist says that his trust is in God (15 [14]), and his life is in God's hand (16 [15]). He then focuses his attention on God acting against the wicked: the psalmist requests God to show favor and save him (17 [16]), to put the wicked to shame (18 [17]), and to let their lips be mute (19 [18]). In the midst of requesting God to act against his enemies, the psalmist says that the wicked are speaking against the צַדִּיק "righteous" (19 [18]). Who is this one? Contextually it is clear that the psalmist counts himself as this "righteous" one. For it is against his enemies (16 [15]) that the psalmist has called on God to act, and one of the things that they are doing is speaking lies (19 [18]). Thus, when the psalmist says that the enemies are speaking insolently against the righteous (19 [18]) he is clearly referring to himself.

The psalmist, having confessed his sin and his need for God's grace, has also described himself explicitly as righteous and implicitly by his actions as pious. How are we to understand what appears to be contradicting themes? In answering this question, a consideration of the enemies proves helpful. The explicit mention of the enemies appears in the second half of the psalm. From the way in which the psalmist describes them, it is apparent that they are persecuting the psalmist primarily through their words (vv. 18-19, 21 [17-18, 20]). Since the psalmist's explicit mention of being "righteous" (19 [18])

comes in the midst of his discussion concerning the enemies, it is best to understand his statement of righteousness as being circumstantial. In other words, that whatever the reason may be for the enemies acting in this way against him, he is not guilty of provoking them. Thus, we should understand the psalmist as being concerned with two different circumstances: the first being his sin which has resulted in grief, for which he has asked for God's grace, and the second being the enemies acting unjustly against him, for which he requests God's defense because of his righteousness. Therefore, it is appropriate to understand the psalmist as describing actual sin and also being truly pious regarding a situation that was not related to his sin.

Psalms 38

Psalms 38:0 A PSALM OF DAVID, FOR THE MEMORIAL OFFERING.

Psa. 38:1 O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath! **2** For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me.

Psa. 38:3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. **4** For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.

Psa. 38:5 My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness, **6** I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all the day I go about mourning. **7** For my sides are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh. **8** I am feeble and crushed; I groan because of the tumult of my heart.

Psa. 38:9 O Lord, all my longing is before you; my sighing is not hidden from you. **10** My heart throbs; my strength fails me, and the light of my eyes—it also has gone from me. **11** My friends and companions stand aloof from my plague, and my nearest kin stand far off.

Psa. 38:12 Those who seek my life lay their snares; those who seek my hurt speak of ruin and meditate treachery all day long.

Psa. 38:13 But I am like a deaf man; I do not hear, like a mute man who does not open his mouth. **14** I have become like a man who does not hear, and in whose mouth are no rebukes.

Psa. 38:15 But for you, O LORD, do I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. **16** For I said, "Only let them not rejoice over me, who boast against me when my foot slips!"

Psa. 38:17 For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever before me. **18** I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin. **19** But my foes are vigorous, they are mighty, and many are those who hate me wrongfully. **20** Those who render me evil for good accuse me because I follow after good.

Psa. 38:21 Do not forsake me, O LORD! O my God, be not far from me! **22** Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!

Psalms 38 has two main portions that deal with the psalmist's sin. The first is found in the initial five [four] verses. The psalmist describes the struggle that he is

experiencing with quite vivid images. He says that God's arrows have sunk into him (3 [2]), God's hand has come upon him (3 [2]), there is no soundness in him (4 [3]), he has no health (4 [3]), and his sin weighs upon him (5 [4]). The description of his suffering could be a poetic description of how he is feeling or, more likely, because of the actual description of sickness (6 [5]) it could be that he is in fact sick.¹⁶² Whether he is overcome by physical illness or this is a metaphor for what he is feeling does not ultimately matter for one's understanding of the psalm. What is evident is that his current anguish is a result of his sin. This is made clear by the use of *כִּי*, "because" in vv. 4-5 [3-4]. The reason for his flesh having no soundness and for his bones having no health is because of God's indignation towards psalmist's sin. His sin is so great that the burden of bearing it is too heavy, "the sins which might have seemed a mere trickle are revealed now as a flood to drown in."¹⁶³ Thus, the psalmist is describing not only the fact that he has sinned but also the consequences that he is facing as a result of that sin.

The second portion of Psalm 38 that deals with the psalmist's sin is found later in the psalm when he says, "I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin" (19 [18]). Having acknowledged the reality of his sin and described the physical consequences of it, he now confesses and repents of his sin. But what is this sin that he has committed? Similar to the previous psalms, the modern reader is left to speculate about the actual iniquity that the psalmist has engaged in. In other words, the passage does not tell us. Due to the appearance of his enemies, it would be convenient to conclude that the psalmist's sin was

¹⁶² Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 172.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

committed against his enemies and caused not only his physical suffering but also the hatred of his foes. However, this would be mistaken.

There is no doubt that the psalmist has committed some sin that he is aware of. There is also no doubt that his enemies are pursuing him and seeking his ill will. However, what is interesting is the fact that in the midst of his confession and awareness of his enemies, the psalmist makes a tacit statement of innocence. This is found within the clauses concerning the enemies who are seeking him out. In vv. 20-21 [19-20] he says, "...many are those who hate me wrongfully. Those who render me evil for good accuse me because I follow after good." The psalmist is quite clear as to the reason for his enemies' attack: the goodness that the psalmist has done. Though David has clearly sinned, as his confession makes explicit, we read in these verses of "a man whose fundamental choice was to *follow after good*..."¹⁶⁴

This directs the reader to two interpretive aspects that are equally true concerning this psalm. The first is that David did sin; he knows his guilt and he confesses it. The second is that the evil that his foes are perpetrating is done as a result of David's seeking after goodness. At first glance, these may appear to be a contradiction. After all, the fact that David has confessed his sin reflects that he has not sought goodness, yet he explicitly says he has followed after what is good (21 [20]). It seems as though David is talking out of both sides of his mouth, or, as some have argued, reflects Israel's wavering between a direct connection of sin and suffering and an awareness that such a connection is not sustainable.¹⁶⁵ Before concluding either of these, we ought to ask what the psalmist is referring to when he says he has sought to follow after good? The first thing that we

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 173.

¹⁶⁵ Brueggemann and Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms*, 188.

should note is that when saying he follows good and is hated wrongfully, he is not making a statement of absolute innocence. This is obvious because of his confession earlier. The second thing is that the psalmist's expression of integrity is an affirmation of "relative innocence compared with [the enemies'] obvious guilt."¹⁶⁶ Thus, we should not conclude the psalmist is contradicting himself or that he is wavering, but that the guilt he confesses and the innocence he affirms are related to different things. He has sinned and as a result has come under God's discipline, and he is blameless concerning the reason his foes seek his harm; he is pious even in the midst of pain.¹⁶⁷

Finally, the psalmist's integrity is emphasized when his behavior is contrasted with that of his enemies. He has sought God's aid (23 [22]) while the enemies, by seeking his harm, have positioned themselves in opposition to God. This is evident by the fact that the psalmist has sought good, and this goodness is the reason for his foes' hatred. The psalm as a whole leads the reader to understand that the goodness that the psalmist sought was tied to God, this indicts the enemies, not only for desiring harm against the psalmist, but also for placing themselves in conflict with God. The psalmist is in contrast to his enemies in that he never embraces the posture they take. Even in the midst of confessing his sin, he still seeks God. In one sense, the psalmist has opposed God's ways by his act(s) of transgression. Yet even in this opposition he has looked to God as his defender against evil. This indicates the psalmist's general posture towards what is good and further enforces his belief that he is innocent.

Psalm 40

Psalm. 40:0 TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID.

¹⁶⁶ Gordon Wenham, *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 155.

¹⁶⁷ Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 10.

Psa. 40:1 I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. **2** He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. **3** He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

Psa. 40:4 Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie! **5** You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.

Psa. 40:6 In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. **7** Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: **8** I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

Psa. 40:9 I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. **10** I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.

Psa. 40:11 As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me! **12** For evils have encompassed me beyond number; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me.

Psa. 40:13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me! **14** Let those be put to shame and disappointed altogether who seek to snatch away my life; let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who delight in my hurt! **15** Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, "Aha, Aha!"

Psa. 40:16 But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, "Great is the LORD!" **17** As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!

Similar to Psalm 31, Psalm 40 does not have an explicit statement of innocence.

What I mean by this is that the psalmist never uses words such as "integrity" or

"righteous" to speak of himself. While these specific words that clearly indicate an

understanding of innocence do not appear in the psalm, there are phrases and a general

posture that reflects the psalmist's belief that he has been pious before the Lord. These

are most evident in vv. 8-11 [7-10]. In these verses the psalmist says that he delights to

obey God (9 [8]), he has proclaimed God's acts to the congregation (10 [9]), and he has

declared God's deliverance, faithfulness, salvation, and covenantal love (11 [10]). All of

these reflect that the psalmist believes himself to have done what is good and right before the Lord, as well as cherishing God's law.¹⁶⁸

Some have thought that verse 8 [7] is speaking specifically of the Messianic King; this is primarily because of the phrase, "written of me" that comes at the end of the verse.¹⁶⁹ Clearly this phrase could cause the reader to look towards a future person of whom the psalmist could be speaking. I do not want to spend time determining whether this is future or not, but rather want to argue for seeing this as not *only* future oriented. The reasons for challenging a primarily future oriented idea of this verse have to do with context and authorship.

The verse comes at the beginning of a description of how the psalmist has acted and spoken to the congregation of what God has done. I did not come across any commentator who thought the verses that follow v. 8 [7] were Messianic in nature; instead all readily accept that the psalmist is speaking of himself. While v. 10 [9] does begin a new stanza, we should understand vv. 10-11 [9-10] as being evidence of the psalmist's delighting to do God's will (9 [8]).

The other reason for applying verse 9 [8] to the psalmist himself has to do with authorship. In the title the psalm is attributed to David. The reliability of the titles has been discussed previously and thus I will not rehash that argument again. However it is important to note that even among those who challenge Davidic authorship, many believe that the reference to David in the titles is a general reference to the Davidic kings.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Bratcher and Reyburn, *A Handbook on Psalms*, 385.

¹⁶⁹ Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 178.

¹⁷⁰ See chapter two.

Whether one believes authorship referred to Davidic kingship generally¹⁷¹ or authored anonymously,¹⁷² we ought to understand verses 8-9 [7-8] as being representative of what the king was to embody. As has already been demonstrated above, it is clear from the Kingship Law of Deuteronomy 17:14-20 that one of the responsibilities of the king was to embrace the law and obey it. This holding fast to the law was expected not only in Deuteronomy 17 but also is reflected in the ways that kingship psalms presuppose the Kingship Law.¹⁷³ Thus the king, no matter when he reigned in the history of Israel, was to delight to do God's will and to hold God's law fast in his heart. Further, because the Kingship Law was to be embodied by every king who followed in the line of David, when the psalmist says in v. 8 [7] "in the scroll of the book it is written of me..." he can rightly apply this to himself. In the scroll of the law, specifically Deuteronomy 17, it was written that the king shall keep the Law of the Lord "with him, and he shall read in it...that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them..." (Deuteronomy 17:19). This understanding does not negate an application of Psalm 40:8-9 [7-8] to the future Messiah; on the contrary, it allows for such application. However, this interpretation does not limit the application to the future Messiah only but also understands the verses in question to have an immediate application to the psalmist himself.

Having understood this section as speaking to the current psalmist, what follows in vv. 10-11 [9-10] reflects the psalmist's belief that he has acted with uprightness before the Lord. However, only two verses after these descriptions of covenantal faithfulness,

¹⁷¹ Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 44; Broyles, *Psalms*, 27; John Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, 1:26.

¹⁷² Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 65.

¹⁷³ See chapter four for a discussion of how Pss. 18, 20, 21, 101, 110, 144 presuppose the Kingship Law.

the psalmist speaks of his own sin when he says, “For evils have encompassed me beyond number; my iniquities have overtaken me...” (13 [12]). The “evils” spoken of are not simply “evil” occurrences in general but are specifically tied to those who are seeking to harm the psalmist (15-16 [14-15]).

It is fairly clear that the evils that are coming upon the psalmist are a result of his own behavior. This occurrence reflects a difference from this psalm and the ones previously considered. For in the three previous psalms, the psalmist was innocent regarding the situation that his foes are seeking to take advantage of. However, here it appears that the evil that is coming upon him is a direct result of his own failing.¹⁷⁴ Though the actions of enemies and the evil that has come upon him are a result of his own iniquities, this does not negate the piety of which the psalmist has previously shown. In fact, the piety that he has shown and the relationship that he has with the Lord cause him to appeal to God to act on his behalf and defend him (15-16 [14-15]).

While this psalm differs with the pattern reflected in the previous psalms, it still puts the piety of the psalmist alongside his failing. Though his iniquity is the reason for the evil that has come upon him, his pious behavior towards God’s law puts forth a posture that is to be understood as reflecting a healthy relationship between the psalmist and God.¹⁷⁵ This posture is not to be understood as the psalmist believing himself to be deserving of God’s deliverance. Instead, the psalmist, while acknowledging his previous obedience and disobedience, appeals primarily to God’s care (18 [17]) and the general wickedness of those who would take advantage¹⁷⁶ of the psalmist’s failing as reason for

¹⁷⁴ Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 178.

¹⁷⁵ Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 316.

¹⁷⁶ Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 178.

God to deliver him. Thus, here too, the psalmist holds both his own faithfulness and his own failing in tension.

Psalm 41

Psalm. 41:0 TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID.

Psa. 41:1 Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; **2** the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies. **3** The LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health.

Psa. 41:4 As for me, I said, “O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!” **5** My enemies say of me in malice, “When will he die, and his name perish?” **6** And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity; when he goes out, he tells it abroad. **7** All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me.

Psa. 41:8 They say, “A deadly thing is poured out on him; he will not rise again from where he lies.” **9** Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me. **10** But you, O LORD, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them!

Psa. 41:11 By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me. **12** But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever.

Psa. 41:13 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.

Psalm 41 differs with Psalm 40 in that it has both an explicit statement of innocence as well as a clear confession of sin. The confession of sin appears early in the psalm. In v. 5 [4] the psalmist prays, “O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!” The specific sin is not mentioned, but the consequence of the sin is reflected by how the psalmist’s enemies are responding to him. The initial consequence of the psalmist’s sin is some sort of ailment. This is evident not only through the enemies pondering when the psalmist will die (6 [5]) but also in the request the psalmist makes in v. 4 [3]. He asks God to sustain and restore to health the one who considers the poor. While the psalmist does not explicitly identify himself as the object of God’s consideration and deliverance, it is clear that the first four verses of the passage are serving as an introduction to the whole of the psalm. Thus, when the psalmist speaks of God’s work on behalf of the one who has “considered the poor” (2 [1]) and the results of

God's work, it is clear that the psalmist is speaking of himself.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, the psalmist is making a connection between his sin and his sickness.

While the connection that the psalmist is making is clear, there are some who want to ascribe this connection as simply a perceived, and not actual, connection. For instance, Craigie and Tate say, "In the sick person's mind, the sin and sickness appear to be interrelated. In reality, there may have been no interrelationship; that is, the advent of sickness was not necessarily a direct consequence of sin."¹⁷⁸ Perhaps this uncertainty reflects a desire on the part of Craigie and Tate to guard against an inappropriate connection modern readers may make between their sin and sickness, which is a valid concern. After all, it would be an overreach to generally assert that a person's illness is brought upon himself specifically because of his sin.¹⁷⁹ Unfortunately, they do not give reason for why they are uncertain if the sickness was a direct consequence of the sin, so we are left to surmise what is behind their decision. Whatever their reason may be, by questioning the validity of the interrelatedness of the psalmist's sin and sickness, they tacitly question the reliability of the psalmist to rightly understand his situation. A better approach is to see, in this case, the psalmist's sickness as a result of his sin¹⁸⁰ and thus, to understand the psalmist's interpretation of the event as being accurate.

As a result of his sickness, the psalmist's enemies seek to take advantage of the opportunity and to oppose him. They speak with animosity (6 [5]), they speak false words

¹⁷⁷ This understanding of the psalm's prologue is contra Creach, who understands the passage as presenting the king as a defender of the righteous. Jerome F.D. Creach, "The Righteous and the Wicked," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 532. While the fact that the king was to defend the poor / weak of the nation rather than seeing vv. 1-4 [0-3] as referring to the psalmist in the third person. Thus, a correct understanding will reject Creach's view.

¹⁷⁸ Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 321.

¹⁷⁹ deClausse-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 390.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

to him (7 [6]), they tell of his ailment to others with the purpose of building a case against him (7 [6]), they hope for his death (6, 9 [5, 8]), and even his friend has begun to oppose him (10 [9]). It would be wrong to assume that the psalmist's enemies are opposing him because they despise his iniquity. This interpretation is incorrect because the psalmist asks God not just to heal him (5 [4]) but also to enable the psalmist to repay his enemies (11 [10]) and to prevent them from gaining victory over him (12 [11]). If the psalmist's enemies were in the right, then we would not expect the psalmist to speak in this manner. Instead, we would expect him to seek reconciliation not only to the Lord but also to those who oppose him. The fact that the psalmist describes the action of his friend as being a strong opposition, that of his heel lifted against him (10 [9]), shows that it is not a rebuke of the psalmist's sin but an unrighteous attack that is occurring.

This understanding that the psalmist is being opposed inappropriately is furthered by his claim of integrity (13 [12]). Similar to previous psalms, this claim of integrity is not one of absolute purity. This is evident by the fact that he has already confessed his sin. Thus, while the presence of his sin is real, the psalmist appeals to a stronger claim¹⁸¹ of integrity when confronted by his enemies. This claim is so strong that some, such as Lindström, have argued that the confession of sin was a late addendum.¹⁸² Instead of questioning the authenticity of the passage as we have it, absent of a strong argument to the contrary, I will understand the confession of sin and the claim of integrity as being part of the original text.

Approaching the passage with this understanding that both sin and integrity are part of the psalmist's experience, we are still left with the difficult situation of trying to

¹⁸¹ Brueggemann and Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms*, 201.

¹⁸² Ibid.

understand how these two seemingly contradictory statements are found in the psalm. DeClaissé-Walford argues that the correct interpretation of the claim of integrity is found in seeing it as a reference not “to an abstract self-righteousness on the psalmist’s part, but as an assertion of innocence regarding a particular accusation.”¹⁸³ In my mind, this is clearly the correct appropriation of the psalmist’s claim. His integrity is obviously not regarding the circumstance of his sinful behavior, but instead is with regard to the claims and opposition of his enemies. Therefore, the psalmist can, with complete consistency, confess his sin against the Lord and then later in the same psalm claim integrity before the Lord.

Psalm 69

Psalm 69:0 TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO LILIES. OF DAVID.

Psa. 69:1 Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. **2** I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. **3** I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.

Psa. 69:4 More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies. What I did not steal must I now restore? **5** O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.

Psa. 69:6 Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me, O God of Israel. **7** For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. **8** I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother’s sons.

Psa. 69:9 For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. **10** When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. **11** When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. **12** I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me.

Psa. 69:13 But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness. **14** Deliver me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. **15** Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me.

Psa. 69:16 Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me. **17** Hide not your face from your servant; for I am in distress; make haste to answer me. **18** Draw near to my soul, redeem me; ransom me because of my enemies!

Psa. 69:19 You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you. **20** Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. **21** They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.

¹⁸³ deClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 389.

Psa. 69:22 Let their own table before them become a snare; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap. **23** Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually. **24** Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them. **25** May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents. **26** For they persecute him whom you have struck down, and they recount the pain of those you have wounded. **27** Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you. **28** Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.

Psa. 69:29 But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high!

Psa. 69:30 I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. **31** This will please the LORD more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs. **32** When the humble see it they will be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive. **33** For the LORD hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.

Psa. 69:34 Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them. **35** For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah, and people shall dwell there and possess it; **36** the offspring of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall dwell in it.

The final psalm for consideration is Psalm 69. Like the previous ones, this psalm has a clear statement of innocence and of guilt. What is unique about this one is the close proximity to each other in which these statements fall. The primary claim of innocence is found in v. 5 [4]. There the psalmist describes how his enemies are seeking to destroy him and that they hate him “without cause.” The question the psalmist asks in v. 5 [4], “What I did not steal must I now restore?” indicates that the likely accusation of his enemies is that he is a thief.¹⁸⁴ Others have argued that this question is simply metaphorical. This latter view has been embraced due to the psalmist’s later claim that he has suffered for the sake of the Lord (vv. 8, 10 [7, 9]).¹⁸⁵ By holding to a non-metaphorical understanding of v. 5 [4], one can still see the psalmist bearing the accusations of his enemies for the sake of the Lord. Whatever the reason the enemies hate him, clearly the psalmist believes himself to be innocent. The accusations of the enemy are not warranted, hence the descriptor, “without cause” (5 [4]).

¹⁸⁴ de Vos and Kwakkel, “Psalm 69: The Petitioner’s Understanding of Himself, His God, and His Enemies,” 167.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

As stated earlier, the psalmist not only speaks of innocence but also confesses his guilt. In v. 6 [5], the psalmist says, “O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.” Both words for “folly” אִלְלָהִי and “guilt” אִשְׁמָה are rare in the Psalter. The only other instance the former is found in the Psalter is in Psalm 38:6 [5] and the latter does not appear anywhere else in the book of Psalms. Since I have argued that the innocence is best to be understood as an actual and not metaphorical innocence, one could postulate that perhaps the psalmist’s statement of guilt is metaphorical. However, Vos and Kwakkel argue rightly that the “wrong” or “guilt” that the psalmist is acknowledging is more than simply a feeling of guilt but is actually an objective guilt.¹⁸⁶ The psalmist truly is guilty of wrongs committed against God. This understanding of an objective guilt is in keeping with BDB,¹⁸⁷ which does not have the option to understand this word in a subjective sense.

Yet what is this folly? What is the wrong that the psalmist has committed? The passage does not expand upon the psalmist’s guilt nor does it indicate what he could be alluding to.¹⁸⁸ The lack of further discussion of his wrong leads Broyles to see the admission of guilt as being a minor issue in the psalm.¹⁸⁹ While it is true that the psalm does not give extended space to the topic of the psalmist’s wrong doings, to see it as being insignificant is erroneous. Broyles is correct when he says that the “emphasis is on the extent of God’s knowledge.”¹⁹⁰ Unfortunately, he does not make the connection as to why this knowledge is important to the psalmist. The concern that the psalmist has is with

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 168.

¹⁸⁷ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 819.

¹⁸⁸ Broyles, *Psalms*, 287.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

regard to his enemies and their deceitful accusations. His claim of innocence is in tension with the fact that God knows his folly. In essence, the psalmist is saying, “God you know my wrongs, and they are not what I am accused of.” In other words, the psalmist’s acknowledgment of his prior guilt before God is part of his argument of innocence before man. It appears as though other interpreters have not considered this line of reasoning. Instead, some have sought to bring resolution between the apparent contradiction of innocence and confession by arguing that vv.6-13 [5-12] is a later addition.¹⁹¹ This is not a necessary conclusion as my above argument has shown.

The innocence of the psalmist is further expressed by the claim that his enemies are seeking him because of his faithfulness to the Lord. This is described in v. 8 [7] when he says that it is for the Lord’s “sake that I have borne reproach.” And later in v. 10 [9] he says to God, “the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.” The clear biblical perspective is that those who would oppose God, are wicked and they do what is evil. God is depicted as one who is always innocent and thus, when someone opposes him they oppose what is good. The connection that the psalmist is making is that just as God is not deserving the reproach of the wicked, neither is the psalmist. Thus, the implication is clear: he has been persecuted because of his faithfulness to God’s cause.¹⁹²

Therefore, a faithful interpretation of the psalmist’s statements of guilt and innocence is to understand them as speaking of different circumstances. The psalmist has done wrong in the past, and in reference to the accusations of his enemies he is innocent. This is in keeping with previous psalms that have been considered. However, Psalm 69

¹⁹¹ For examples of these see de Vos and Kwakkel, “Psalm 69: The Petitioner’s Understanding of Himself, His God, and His Enemies,” 162 nn. 4-8.

¹⁹² Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 172.

brings a new dimension to our understanding through the psalmist's invoking of God's knowledge of his guilt in order to emphasize his situational innocence.

The Significance of Statements of Innocence and Guilt

In this chapter, I have considered the six individual laments attributed to David that contain both statements of innocence and confessions / acknowledgments of sin. While the explicitness of each statement varies from psalm to psalm, these statements are observed in each of the psalms. The claims of innocence or integrity within each psalm are not to be interpreted as the psalmist saying that he has absolute righteousness in all he does, for to do this would reflect an immediate contradiction with his acknowledgement of guilt. Instead, it is correct to understand the claims of innocence as being circumstantial innocence. The psalmist's enemies' attacks and accusations are without reason – the psalmist has been innocent before man.

This situational innocence is helpful not only in understanding the intent of the statements of innocence but it also helps to understand how confessions of guilt can be spoken alongside them. These acknowledgements of guilt and sin show that the psalmist is not absolutely righteous or free from sin, but instead he has committed wrongs before the Lord. Yet, these previous wrongs do not negate the fact of his circumstantial innocence.

Since these psalms are attributed to David, it is important to consider the implications that his authorship has on these psalms before reflecting on modern appropriation. As the king of Israel, David cannot stop acting as representative of the people. This means that when he acts, be it righteously or sinfully, he is acting as the king. With regard to his iniquity, these are actions that are not to be replicated by the

people, but his repentance is. Yet, his upright acts are to function as models for the people. One way of determining when David is functioning as the idealized king is to consider the rubric put forth earlier based out of the Kingship Law. When David acts in a righteous way he is modeling before the people piety, the way not only kings but also Israel, is to act. However, when he acts with iniquity, we are to understand the act as something that is not in keeping with his office and subsequently should be not replicated by the people. This resistance to abhorrent behavior is clear from the fact that David repents of it. In both these situations, David is demonstrating the idealized values of the king and, since he is the representative of the people, the idealized values for them as well.

As recipients of these psalms, we must seek to appropriate them in ways that are faithful to the original intent of the psalmist who authored them. This appropriation is not only in how these psalms are to be used in worship but also how they present appropriate postures before God. To appropriate these laments means a few of things. 1) We can and should acknowledge our sin and guilt before the Lord. We are to do this not only in our private expressions of worship but also as a corporate body, particularly when we sing these psalms together. 2) In times when evil and wickedness have been perpetrated against us and we have not instigated this action, we are free to claim a situational innocence. This means that it is appropriate to call out to God for deliverance and help in our times of need and, in the midst of that crying out, to claim our own circumstantial innocence. 3) As a community we are to use these psalms as a way of reinforcing what is good and resisting what is evil. In other words, as these psalms are read, sung, and meditated upon, they will present to the community that which is excellent as well as

heinous before the Lord. Subsequently, it causes the community to seek to embrace the good and to reject the evil. 4) Related to the community's use of these psalms, when choosing them for congregational worship, it is important to consider the situation of the psalm and the situation of the congregation. This consideration of both circumstances is important to ensure that the use of the psalm does not contradict its original intent nor that it imposes upon the singer a situation that is not part of his/her current experience. 5) We must ensure that as we seek to embody both postures, acknowledging our guilt and claiming our innocence, that we not conflate the two. Instead, we must, while stating both, hold them both in distinctive tension. Thus, we, like the psalmist, ought to confess our guilt where guilt lies but not to appropriate that guilt in such a way that there is no room for situational integrity. On the other hand, we must ensure that when we make claims of innocence we are certain of circumstantial innocence and not negate any actual guilt. In other words, we are to follow the model of the psalmist and claim both realities when both exist.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

A proper reading and application of the individual lament psalms that are attributed to David in their titles requires interpreting the psalms with consideration for David's function as the king. This manifests itself in regards to the appropriation of the Kingship Law throughout the psalms, the manner in which the corporate body is included in these individual laments, and the claims of circumstantial innocence while still acknowledging guilt before God. By examining the individual laments authored by David, as has been done above, the interpreter is able to see the appropriateness of both David's cries for help as well as those of the corporate body. David, through these laments, functions as the exemplar for what dependent lamenting looks like. Thus, as corporate Israel looks for a model for calling out to God in times of trouble, David's laments become paradigmatic. Yet, these are not simply for the benefit of corporate Israel; the paradigm that is demonstrated in these psalms is a benefit to the modern worshiper as well.

As the modern follower of the Lord experiences pain, sorrow, indignation, and misery, these lament psalms give allowance for crying out to God. However, the allowance is not the only thing that these laments provide. The modern lamenter has a model for what our laments are to look like. Thus, as we cry out to God in our time of need, particularly when our circumstance is not a result of our own iniquity, we can look to the cries of David and find language to employ when our words are often not sufficient to describe our lamentable experience. Therefore, a proper hermeneutical approach, is

one that takes into consideration, author, genre, role of the writer, corporate inclusion, and circumstances of innocence provides us with an accurate interpretative understanding and a modern appropriation of the Davidic psalms of lament.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Psalms in Which the Titles Attribute Authorship to David and are Categorized as Lament¹⁹³

Psalm of David	Gunkel	Seybold	Bellinger	Gillingham	Lucas	Bratcher & Reyburn	Pennylegion
3	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
4	CnI	CnI	LI	CnI	CnI	LI	LI
5	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
6	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
7	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
12			LC	LI	LC		LC
13	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
17	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
22	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI		LI
25	LI	LI, W	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
26	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI		LI
27	CnI-LI	LI, CnI	LI	CnI	LI	LI	LI
28	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
31	LI, ThI		LI	LI			LI
35	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
36			LI	LI		Mix	LI
38	LI	LI	LI	LI		LI	LI
39	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
40	ThI, LI	ThI	LI	ThI		LI	LI
41	ThI	LI, ThI	ThI	ThI	LI	LI, Th	LI
51	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI		LI
53			LC	Pr			LC
54	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
55	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
56	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI		LI
57	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI		LI
58			LC	Pr			LC
59	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI		LI
60		LC	LC	LC	LC		LC
61	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI		LI
63	LI	LI	LI	LI			LI
64	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI		LI
69	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI		LI
70	LI		LI	LI		LI	LI
86	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI		LI
108			LC	LC			LC

¹⁹³ This table has been adapted from “Appendix 1: Index Of Form-Critical Categorizations” found in Firth and Johnston, *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, 295-300. The adaptations include the addition of Bratcher and Reyburn and my own analysis.

109	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
140	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
141	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI		LI
142	LI		LI	LI	LI	LI	LI
143	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI	LI

Key

Mix = Mixed Ps R = Royal Ps CnI = Confidence Ps Indiv. Pr = Propetic
 LC = Lament Comm. LI = Lament Indiv. ThI = Thanksgiving Indiv.

Appendix 2: Structural Forms Found in Lament as Put Forth by Various Scholars

Mowinckel ¹⁹⁴	Westermann ¹⁹⁵	Mandolfo ¹⁹⁶	Broyles, <i>Conflict</i> ¹⁹⁷	Broyles, <i>Psalms</i> ¹⁹⁸	Brueggemann ¹⁹⁹
Lament	Address / Introductory Petition	Invocation	Address / Introductory Petition	Address / Introductory Petition	Plea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address to God • Complaint • Petition • Motivations • Imprecation
Thanksgiving / Assurance	Lament	Complaint	Lament	Lament	
Confidence	Confession of Trust	Request	Confession of Trust	Confession of Trust	
	Petition – double wish: addressed to God to act against the enemies and God to act for the psalmist	Expression of Confidence	Petitions	Petitions	Praise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assurance of being heard • Payment of vows • Doxology and praise
	Vow of Praise	Vow of Praise	Assurance of being heard	Vow of Praise	
			Vow of Praise	Thanksgiving in anticipation	
			Narrative of praise		

¹⁹⁴ Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:219.

¹⁹⁵ Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 52.

¹⁹⁶ Carleen Mandolfo, "Language of Lament in the Psalms," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 115-16.

¹⁹⁷ Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, 14.

¹⁹⁸ Broyles, *Psalms*, 16-17.

¹⁹⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*, Augsburg Old Testament Studies (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 22.

Appendix 3: The Structural Forms Found in Individual Davidic Psalms of Lament

Psalm	Structural Forms					
3	Introductory Petition	Trust	Lament	Petition against enemies & for help	Praise	
4	Introductory Petition	Lament	Trust	Petition for help	Praise	
5	Introductory Petition	Trust	Lament	Petition against enemies & for help	Praise	
6	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition against enemies	Trust		
7	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition against enemies & for help	Trust	Praise	
12	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition against enemies	Trust	Praise	
13	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition for help	Trust	Praise	
17	Introductory Petition	Trust	Petition for help	Lament	Petition against enemies & for help	Praise
22	Lament	Petition for help	Trust	Praise		
25	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition for help	Trust	Petition against enemies & for help	
26	Introductory Petition / Address	Trust	Lament	Petition for help	Praise	
27	Introductory Petition	Lament	Trust	Petition against enemies & for help	Praise	
28	Introductory Petition / Address	Lament	Petition against enemies & for help	Trust	Praise	
31	Introductory Petition / Address	Lament	Trust	Petition against enemies & for help	Praise	
35	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition against enemies	Trust	Petition against enemies & for help	Praise
36	Lament	Trust	Petition against enemies & for help			
38	Introductory Petition	Lament	Trust	Petition for help		
39	Address	Lament	Petition for help	Trust	Petition for help	

40	Introductory Petition / Address	Trust	Lament	Petition against enemies & for help	Praise	
41	Introductory Petition / Address	Lament	Trust	Petition against enemies & for help	Praise	
51	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition for help	Trust	Praise	
53	Lament	Trust	Lament	Petition for help		
54	Introductory Petition	Lament	Trust	Praise	Trust	
55	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition against enemies & for help	Trust	Praise	
56	Introductory Petition	Trust	Lament	Trust	Praise	
57	Introductory Petition	Trust	Lament	Trust	Praise	
58	Address	Lament	Petition against enemies & for help	Praise		
59	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition against enemies	Trust	Praise	
60	Lament	Trust	Petition against enemies & for help	Praise		
61	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition for help	Praise		
63	Invocation	Trust	Lament	Praise		
64	Introductory Petition	Lament	Trust	Praise		
69	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition for help	Trust	Petition against enemies	Praise
70	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition against enemies & for help	Trust		
86	Introductory Petition	Trust	Petition for help	Lament	Petition for help	
108	Invocation	Trust	Petition for help	Lament	Petition against enemies & for help	
109	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition against enemies	Trust	Praise	
140	Introductory Petition	Lament	Trust	Petition against enemies & for help	Praise	
141	Introductory Petition	Lament	Petition against enemies & for help	Trust		
142	Introductory Petition	Lament	Trust	Petition against enemies & for help		
143	Introductory Petition	Lament	Trust	Petition against enemies & for help	Praise	

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