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Trägerkreise in den Psalmen

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The Levitical Singers and the Compilation of the Psalter¹

1. Introduction: Singing and Music in the Psalter

The Hebrew title, תהילים ספר, introduces the Psalter as a “Book of Praises” even though the description fits only about one third of its contents. Such a title is appropriate for the concluding paean of praise in Psalms 145–150, but the Psalter actually consists more of complaint than praise. Furthermore, many psalms do not even address God; rather, they speak to the (real or imagined) community of faith. For example, Ps 1 and 2 are neither laments nor hymns of praise; nor do they address God at all. Yet, as a gateway to the Psalter, announcing what is to follow, they alert us to the fact that the Psalter is a diverse collection, for which no one title can do full justice.

Who might have been responsible for compiling such a miscellaneous collection? Some scholars argue that the compilers were sages and scribes with an attachment to the wisdom and legal tradition in post-exilic Israel, and that the Psalter was originally a reflective prayer book, not in any way a hymnal of praise and lament. They argue that those psalms which are concerned with the right ordering of the world (Ps 49, 73, 112, 139, for example) exhibit the same interests as those found in wisdom books such as Proverbs and Job. Furthermore, they argue, these and other psalms which claim that the means of attaining that “right order” is through keeping the Torah (as Ps 1, 19B and 119) have been placed in strategic places in the Psalter and this echoes the concerns of the compilers.²

1 This paper is a development of a paper given at the 57th *Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense* in Leuven (2008) that was published as “The Levitical Singers and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter” in E. Zenger (ed.) *The Composition of the Book of Psalms* (BETHL CCXXXVIII), Leuven 2010, 91–123. The first part of this paper is an adaptation of an article that has been published as “The Levitical Singers and the Hebrew Psalter” in W.P. Brown, *The Oxford Handbook to the Psalms*, New York 2014, 201–213 and is printed here by permission of Oxford University Press, USA.

2 Examples of this view include G.T. SHEPPARD, *Theology*; J. REINDL, *Bearbeitung*; J.C. McCANN, *Psalms*; E. ZENGER, *Approaches*; R.N. WHYBRAY, *Reading*.

Other scholars contend that an interest in prophecy was uppermost in the minds of the compilers, who organised the Psalter to show that, despite the failure of the monarchy and the status of the Temple under foreign rule, God's kingdom would soon break in, and all nations would then acknowledge Him as King.³ This would thus explain the later emphasis on the psalms as prophecies. For example, Ps 2, even though it no longer applied to a living Davidic king, was nevertheless preserved because it was to be read in the light of the hope for a coming deliverer: in the Jewish tradition, it was held to be about a figure to come from the Davidic line; in the Christian community, this was Jesus Christ, Son of David.⁴

The problem with both of these ways of reading the Psalter is that, rather like the use of the term ספר תהילים or 'Book of Praises', they cater for only a small proportion of Psalms. A more wisdom-orientated, didactic approach deals only with some thirty psalms, whilst a more prophetic-orientated reading encompasses perhaps another thirty. But because the Psalter evolved several centuries its interests are bound to be more multivalent than this. The psalms embrace two very different Temple cults, the former more focussed on the king, with national and theo-political interests, and the latter more under the authority of the priesthood and concerned with how to live as a community under foreign rule. It was the task of the compilers to preserve *both* these concerns, and others besides. So we are left with the question: can we find any one group who might have been interested simultaneously in all these issues and in others as well?

Two clues might be found in the liturgical superscriptions to the psalms and the references to singing and musical accompaniment within the psalms. Although comparisons between the Hebrew, the Greek and the Qumran psalms suggest that the superscriptions were not a completely fixed tradition even by the second century BCE, the *liturgical* titles have few inconsistencies.⁵ They fall into four categories: the type of a psalm; the tune to accompany it; the instruments to be used; and the role of the leader of worship.

Of the psalm types, the most common is מזמור (57 times), translated in the Greek as ψαλμὸς – a song to music. It is used 35 times in psalms with Davidic headings, suggesting that even personal psalms were used in Temple liturgy. It

3 Examples of this view include J.H. WALTON, *Psalms*; G.H. WILSON, *Understanding*; D.C. MITCHELL, *Message*; C. RÖSEL, *Redaktion*.

4 In the New Testament Ps 2 is used frequently, for example in the accounts of Jesus' Baptism and the Transfiguration as well as in speeches testifying to Jesus as Messiah in Acts 4.24–31 and Acts 13.17–41. And at Qumran, for example in 4QFlorilegium, Ps 1.1–2.1 are taken together along with parts of 2Sam 7.10–14, Isa 8.11, Ezek 44.10 and Dan 12.10 as a *peshet* commentary about the restoration of the Temple and the coming figure of the branch of David, the interpreter of the law.

5 See P.W. FLINT, *Scrolls*, 118–134.

occurs frequently in the Korahite collections (Ps 47, 48, 49, 84, 85, 87 and 88) and the Asaphite collection (Ps 50, 73, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 82, and 83). Another common term is שִׁיר (also meaning 'song') which occurs 30 times, 13 alongside מְזִמֹּר, 15 as a title to the 'Songs of Ascents' and twice in the Korahite psalms (45.1 and 46.1).⁶ Those who argue for the Psalter as either a didactic or prophetic collection have to explain how their view fits with these indicators of the liturgical performance of psalmody.

Some psalms suggest hymn tunes: these occur in Books I–III. For example, 'Do not destroy' (אל תשחת) occurs in psalms with a Davidic heading (Ps 57–59) and in one which is ascribed to Asaph (75). 'The Lilies of the Testimony' (על שושן עדות) is found in psalms with a David heading (Ps 60 and 69) and also in a Korahite psalm (Ps 45) and an Asaphite psalm (Ps 80). Psalm 22, 'On the Hind of Dawn' (על אילת) and Psalm 56, 'To the Dove of the Distant Terebinths' (על יונת אלהם רחוקים) also have Davidic headings. Even if these are not hymn tunes, as many commentators contend, but, rather, unknown liturgical titles, they again illustrate that personal psalms could be adapted for musical use; most occur in Asaphite and Korahite psalms.

Headings indicating musical accompaniment include references to stringed instruments (בנגינות) in Ps 4, 6, 54, 55, 67 and 76, an eight-stringed instrument (בגינות על השמיני) in Psalms 6 and 12, a lyre (על הגיטית) in Ps 8, 81 and 84, and a wind instrument (על מחלת) also in 1 Kgs. 1.40 in Ps 53 and 88. Fifty five psalms have the titles למנצח, usually translated "choirmaster" or "leader". These occur almost exclusively in Books I–III, again in Davidic, Korahite and Asaphite psalms. The occurrence of both למנצח alongside a Davidic heading in Psalm 18, but not in the duplicate prayer in 1Sam 22, provides evidence of the musical performance of *psalms* – where David is viewed both as an exemplar of piety and as the founder of Temple music and song.

Within the psalms themselves, the references to singing and musical accompaniment are profuse. Ps 30 offers an interesting illustration. Its several superscriptions state that it is a hymn (מְזִמֹּר), and also a song for the dedication of the Temple, in honour of David (שִׁיר חֲנֻכַּת הַבַּיִת לְדָוִד). Its form, however, suggests not a public hymn but a personal thanksgiving, and its contents reveal not so much an interest in Temple sacrifice as in singing. V.4 calls upon the congregation to 'sing to the Lord', and in verse 12 the psalmist vows to 'sing and give thanks'. A psalm concerned with Temple singing is thus given authority by connecting it with David and the founding of the Temple: this is reminiscent of 1Chron 16, a text considered below.

6 Other headings which are also possibly liturgical include מְכַתֵּם ('hidden', in Ps 16 and 56–60,) and מְשַׁכִּיל (probably indicating instruction, used in 17 psalms). Again these occur predominantly in Books I–III.

Other examples of singing and music within the psalms are in the frequent introductions addressed to the assembly to praise the Lord in song (for example, Ps 95.1–2; 96.1–2; 98.1,4–6 and 135.2–3). Often the Temple is actually mentioned: for example, ‘Sing praises to the Lord who dwells in Zion!’ (Ps 9.11); ‘Praise God in his sanctuary!’ (Ps 150.1). Furthermore, accompaniment on stringed instruments is referred to within the psalms as well as in their titles (for example, Ps 33.1–3; 71.22–23; 81.2–3; 92.1, 3). Psalm 92, whose heading shows it has been adapted as a song for the Sabbath (שיר ליום השבת) has, like Psalm 30, references to music and singing. Even Psalm 49, whose contents suggest a wisdom psalm about the plight of the righteous, begins with ‘I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre’.⁷

2. A Case for the influence of Levitical Singers in Individual Psalms

This interest in singing and music may well suggest the work of Levitical singers.⁸ But how convincing is this? When we look outside the Psalms, a supportive text is Chronicles, but more recently this has sometimes been dismissed as “fantasy literature” and thus unreliable.⁹ Hence initially evidence for the significance of ‘singing Levites’ should be sought elsewhere.

One source is Philo, who refers explicitly to the role of the Levitical singers in psalmody.¹⁰ Most other references come from the Mishnah. *Tāmīd* 7.4 speaks of seven psalms (Ps 24, 48, 82, 94, 81, 93, 92) being sung by the Levites at the daily sacrifices of the Temple; this corresponds with the additional titles in the Greek over some of these psalms (Ψ 23, 47, 91, 92, 93). *Pēsāhīm* 5.7 states that during Passover the Levites sang the *Hallel* (Ps 113–118), and *Bikûrīm* 3.4, that Levites sang Psalm 30 at the first fruits of the harvest. Most importantly, in *Sukâ* 5.4 and *Midôt* 2.5 the Levites are described as reciting the Songs of Ascents (Ps 120–134) on the fifteen steps of the Temple. Josephus’ *Antiquities* XX, 9.6 makes a similar point. Although this evidence does not point conclusively to the Levitical singers as compilers of the Psalms, it does illustrate that a tradition about their per-

7 For a comprehensive account of singing and music in the psalms see J.A. SMITH, *Psalms*. J.A. Smith concludes (that as many as 126 psalms have references to singing and the Temple [see 180f.]).

8 One of the earliest references to the Levitical singers is Saadia Gaon in his tenth-century Prolegomenon to the Psalms: see the translation by M. SOKOLOW, *Prolegomenon*, especially 158–66. See also S. MOWINCKEL, *Psalms* (Volume II), 79–84; also 85–103 and 104–125. J.A. SMITH, *Psalms*, 167–169 and M.S. SMITH, *Compilation* also support this theory.

9 One example of this view is S.J. SCHWEITZER, *Utopia*.

10 *De speciiabus legibus* 1.156; taken from M.S. SMITH, *Compilation*, 262.

formance of psalms in Second Temple liturgy was well established and that at the very least they would have had some influence in any compilational process.

Proposing anything about the origins and development of the Levites as singers is undoubtedly difficult, because they assume different roles in different literary traditions: the Priestly writer has a very different view from that found in Deuteronomy, for example, and that expressed in the Deuteronomistic History is again quite different from that in Chronicles or Ezra and Nehemiah. For example, Deut 33 and Gen 49 suggest the Levites were originally a secular tribe, whilst 1Sam 2–3 assumes they created a hereditary priesthood, with Eli, priest of Shiloh, being a descendant through Moses (1Sam 2.27–28). Similarly the Aaronide priesthood traced its ancestry to the Levites through the figure of Aaron (for example in Exod 4.14; 6.20; Num 26.59). Nevertheless, by the Persian period, the testimony – at least that presented by the Chronicler – is clear: the Levites are now simply Temple servants, and any purported secular or priestly status is rarely acknowledged. Their demise might have been due to the rise of the Zadokite priesthood under David (e.g. 2Sam 8.17; 15.24–35; 1Kgs 1.8–45); it could have been caused by centralising policies (e.g. 2Kgs 18.4; 22.8–9) which undermined their role in outlying sanctuaries; it might have been due to a schism with the Aaronide priesthood after the exile (suggested in the priestly legislation in Exod 28.1; 40.12–15); it might even have been due to the increased status of the Zadokite priesthood in second Temple worship, reflected for example in Ezekiel's programme of reform (Ezek 40.46; 43.19; 44.15).¹¹

Amongst the Levitical Temple servants, the Asaphites seem to dominate: they are the key Temple singers, according to Ezra 2.41, and although no reference is made to them there as Levites, the genealogy in 1Chron 3.33–47 shows that Asaph was a descendant of Gershon, the eldest son of Levi, and so of Levitical descent through this line (see Exod. 6.12–25). 1Chron 15.19 identifies Asaph, Heman and Ethan as singers, and 1Chron 16.4–5 refers to the Levites as singers with the Asaphites taking the lead. The lists in Ezra 3.10–11 and Neh 12.46 also recognize the Asaphites as Levitical singers.

Another group of Temple servants were the Korahites: 1Chron 6.16–29 includes Korah as a descendant of Kohath, and so by implication he is also of Levitical descent (as in Num 3.17–20). However, neither Ezra, Nehemiah nor Chronicles have very much to say about the Korahites as singers; outside the genealogies, the main reference to this is in 1 Chron. 26, where they are called gatekeepers.¹² However, elsewhere the 'gatekeepers' are not specifically named as

11 On the developing role of the Levitical singers see for example M. GOULDER, *Sons of Korah; ID., Asaph's History*, 317–27; ID., *Psalms of Asaph*; H. GESE, *Geschichte*, 222–234; T. WILLI, *Leviten*, 75–98 and L. JONKER, *Psalms Headings*, 102–122.

12 See, however, 1Chron 6.22, 31–33, which notes Heman the Kohathite is a singer (Heman also

Korahites. And although in Nehemiah there is a recognition of “Levites, gate-keepers and singers” (e.g. Neh 7.1, 73; 10.28; 13.5) neither Asaphites nor Korahites are mentioned. But if we are looking for a specific group of ‘Levitical singers’ the Asaphites do seem to be the most likely candidates.

1Chron 16 is a pivotal text. Not only does it use four psalms in its account of the bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem (v.8–22 use Ps 105.1–15; v.23–33 use Ps 96.1–13; v.34 cites Ps 106.1 and 136.1; and v.35–36, Ps 106.46–47), but it also seeks to legitimize the worship of the second Temple through the authority of the Asaphite *singers* alongside the *priests*. The authority of Moses-as-lawgiver is enhanced through priestly legislation; and the authority of David-as-psalmist is enhanced through the Asaphites’ singing of psalms.¹³ This is probably more about contemporary issues of Levitical authority within the Temple than any historical record of Moses or the Davidic monarchy, but it has certainly left its impact on the shaping of the Psalter.¹⁴ Furthermore, such is the Chronicler’s interest in the Levites in general that it has often been proposed that he could have been a Levite. As well as promoting the Levites as Temple singers, there is notable interest in their ancestry (1 Chron 6, 15, 23, 24, 25, 26; 2Chron 17, 23, 29, 31, 34, 35); in their authority in instructing the people (2Chron 17, 19); in their role as prophets (for example 2Chron 30.13–19); in their significance in promoting the reforms of Judah’s kings; and in their status alongside the Ark (for example in 1Chron 15.11–16.6; 2Chron 5.4–8; 35.11–19).

So although the Chronicler’s view of the Levitical singers is clearly ideological, reinventing the past to make sense of the present, when it is taken alongside other references to the Levitical singers in early Jewish and rabbinical tradition, we can infer that the references to present practices are not entirely “fantastical”. So, in the light of our earlier questions about whether one group of compilers could embrace the multivalent number evident within the Psalter, I shall test this Levitical-singer-hypothesis.

appears in the title to the Korahite Psalm 88). See also 2Chron 20.19 which refers to the Korahites as singers. See T.M. STEINER, *Korachiten*, 133–160 (in this volume).

13 This is a repeated theme in the psalms, especially evident in the ways in which the psalms have been brought together as Collections within Books, as will be seen below.

14 See for example H.G.M. WILLIAMSON, *Chronicles*, 128; J.W. KLEINIG, *Lord’s Song*, 133–148; H.N. WALLACE, *Chronicles*, 267–291. H.N. Wallace argues that the repetition of חמיד (‘always’) in 1 Chron. 16.6, 11, 37 and 39 is a way of authenticating present liturgical practices by referring to the past, and so legitimises the role of the Levitical singers through the role of David (see 277). Similarly A. BERLIN, *Psalms*, 23–27 argues that in 1 Chron. 16 the presentation of ‘David-as-psalmist’ is not designed so much to promote the memory of David as to give authority to the Levites. Berlin makes the same point on the use of Ps. 132.8–10 in 2 Chron. 6.41–42, which is about Solomonic rather than Davidic legitimization: “The Chronicler used psalms very carefully, to support and illustrate his view of the Levitical personnel and their songs” (30).

(1.) If the Levitical singers were the final compilers of the Psalter, the interesting portrayal of *the figure of David* makes good sense. Just as the Chronicler legitimized the Levites' status as singers by making them appear to be co-founders with David of the Temple cult, so this legitimization is undoubtedly present in the psalms, albeit with a different twist. The Chronicler achieved this explicitly, through genealogies and a continuous narrative such as 1 Chronicles 16. In the Psalter the Levitical singers achieved this Davidic legitimization, in part, through the superscriptions. David "prays" some seventy three psalms (as seen in the superscription דוד); many of them are personal complaints and laments, although a large proportion – some fifty – with their extra liturgical headings, also suggest some use in Second Temple worship. By making the figure of David an exemplar of piety, and by aligning his piety with cultic practice, the Levitical singers legitimized their own ancient authority as singers of the psalms. This recurs many times in the arrangement of the psalms, as we shall shortly see.

Another example of this may be seen in the particular placing of Ps 132. The Ark was an important symbol for the Chronicler, in uniting the authority of Moses with that of David within the Temple cult. Chronicles actually only uses four psalms, each time on public occasions, and in each case this emphasizes the significance of the Ark.¹⁵ And it seems that Ps 132 would have also been most important for the Levitical singers: this composite psalm not only supported their own ancient authority, as bearers of the Ark, in laws established by Moses (e.g. Deut 10.8ff.; Deut. 31.25–26), but it was that vital link between the Mosaic cult emanating from Mount Horeb and the Davidic cult from Mount Zion. Hence the inclusion of Ps 132 into the Songs of Ascents (Ps 120–134) is not so much about *David* bringing the Ark to Jerusalem as about David bringing the *Ark* to that city, tracing back the worship at Zion to the time of Moses as well as David. In this way we are able to understand those references to David as founder of the Temple cult and paragon of piety in a different light: the figure of David supported the status of the Levites extremely well.¹⁶

(2.) If the Levitical singers were indeed the final compilers of the Psalter, this also accounts for the *interest in the Torah*. The Deuteronomic tradition, according to Deut 17.14–20, placed the king under the authority of the law, and the Levites were to read this law to the people (Deut 31.25–29). In Chronicles, too, the Levites are prominent in the royal reforms – of Rehoboam (2Chron 11.13ff.), Joash (2Chron 23.11ff.), Uzziah (2Chron 26.17ff.) and of course Hezekiah (2Chron 29.5ff.). It was important, given the superiority of the Zadokite priest-

15 Particular passages involving the role of the Ark include 1Chron 15.11–16.6; 2Chron 5.4–8; and 2Chron 35.11–19. As for the use of relevant psalms, Ps 105, 96 and 106/136 are cited in 1Chron 16 and Ps 132 in 2Chron 6.41.

16 We shall see in Section 3 how Ps 132, within the larger collection of the Songs of Ascents, serves this purpose.

hood and its associations with the court of David, that the Levites should be seen as reformers of the court, because their authority lay not only with David but also with Moses. This is reflected again and again in the Psalter: Ps 2 has been placed after the Torah Psalm Ps 1; Ps 19 is set between Ps 18 and 20–21, all royal psalms. In Book V, the same effect is achieved by following Ps 118 by the long Torah Psalm, Ps 119. The division of the Psalter into five books, following the books of Moses, bears further witness to this more generally, in aligning the authority of David with that of Moses.

The king's responsibility to keep the law has been emphasized by placing several other royal psalms at critical points in the Psalter: again this would have served the Levites' purpose very well. Ps 72, at the end of Book II, is ascribed to Solomon, but it is not so much about royal status as about how the king should be committed to pursuing justice and righteousness in the land: it has an interesting 'mirror image' with the other psalm associated with Solomon through Bathsheba, Ps 51. Ps 72 would have been an ideal psalm for the Levites' somewhat critical royal theology. Even Ps 89, at the end of Book III, could also be read in this way. The disappointments expressed in Ps 89.38–52 should be read in the light of v.19–37, which, taking up the traditions evident also in 2Sam 7, make it clear that the king and his descendants must keep the law: if they do not, that punishment will follow (Ps 89.30–32). The heading over the following psalm, Ps 90 "A Prayer of Moses. The Man of God" (a term also found in Deut 33.1) is another way of advancing the authority of Moses alongside (and perhaps superior to) that of the king to create a new emphasis at the beginning of Book IV.¹⁷

(3.) The Levitical singers would also have been concerned about the selection and placing of more general *didactic material* in the psalms. This means that rather than contending that these psalms originated from professional wisdom teachers or scribes at private, wisdom-influenced gatherings, we could imagine that the locus of such psalms could originally have been the Temple.¹⁸ The Chronicler depicts the Levites not only singing but also preaching and teaching the people (see for example Jehoshaphat's reforms in 2Chron 17 and 19). For the Chronicler, teaching and singing were mutually dependent aspects of ministry in the Temple, and they were frequently performed by the Levites (for example 2Chron 34.12–13). This might therefore offer a different explanation as to why there is so much homiletical material not only in Chronicles but also in the Psalter. If the role of the Levites was both to teach the laws of Moses and to sing the psalms of David, it might explain why didactic psalms such as Ps 49, 73 and 78

17 These connections will all be illustrated further in Section 3 of this paper.

18 Those who see the psalms originating in private gatherings include N. LOHFINK, *Lobgesänge*; E.S. GERSTENBERGER, *Psalter*; F.-L. HOSSFELD/E. ZENGER, *Wege*; and E. ZENGER, *Ort*; id., *Zion*.

have specific Levitical superscriptions and why other so-called wisdom psalms, such as Ps 127, 128 and 139, also have liturgical titles.

The most convincing evidence of these Levitical concerns is the didactic purpose of many psalms. An obvious example, referred to at the beginning of this paper, is the horizontal discourse where God is referred to in the third person and the community is addressed instead. Ps 4, 7, 9, 12, 25, 27, 28, 31, 55, 102 and 130 (laments) and Psalms 30 and 32 (thanksgivings) are good examples of this. These psalms debate God's retributive justice, questioning but usually affirming the more traditional (Deuteronomistic) position of reward and punishment: the Levites – who according to 1Chron 20.3–19 and Neh 9.5 participated in lament rituals – may well have been responsible for their inclusion.¹⁹

(4.) Another example of Levitical influence in the compilation of the Psalter is to be found in the attitude to *the efficacy of cultic practice*. Technical priestly terminology is notably minimal within the Psalms. For example, the most obvious term for sacrifice in the priestly legislation – מנחה (“offering”) – is rarely used: the only pertinent examples are Ps 72.10 and 96.8, and even here its use in Ps 72 is hardly priestly. Other sacrificial terms occur infrequently: we read of a ‘freewill offering’ (נדבה) in Ps. 54.6; ‘burnt offerings’ (עולה) in Ps 20.3; 50.8; 51.19; and 66.13,15; and memorial offerings’ (להזכיר, literally, “for remembrance”) in the titles to Ps 38 and 70.²⁰

Even the Aaronide priesthood is only referred to in a handful of psalms; usually Aaron is referred to alongside Moses without any particular priestly associations.²¹ The Psalter's interest in liturgy, in stark contrast with the priestly laws in the Pentateuch, is not so much in what is done by way of ritual and sacrifice as in what is said and sung. And although some psalms do speak of God directly offering forgiveness (e.g. Ps 28.18; 32.1; 65.3; 79.19; 86.5; 99.8; 130.4) the means of attaining it are rarely described. But this does not mean, as some have suggested, that the Psalter is not interested in liturgy: it is, but it has a different perspective, namely that of *singing and teaching* rather than *sacrifice*. Calls to the congregation to sing a “new song” (שיר חדש) are frequent, for example in Ps 33.3; 40.3; 96.1; 98.1; 144.9; 149.1. The spiritualized view of sacrifice sometimes states that God simply requires a “song of thanksgiving” (Ps 26.7; 95.2; 100.4; 147.7), or just a תודה (Pss. 50.23; 95.2; 100.4). On occasions a negative view of sacrifice is

¹⁹ See C. MANDOLFO, God.

²⁰ The word for festival (חג) occurs only once in the Psalter (Ps 118.27). Another reference (Ps 81.3) speaks of “blowing the trumpet at the full moon”, a festal day (ליום הגבו); this may be the “Day of Remembrance” but specific festivals are not of foremost interest to the psalmists.

²¹ Ps 77.20; 99.6; 105.26; 106.16; 115.10, 12; 118.3; 133.2; 135.19. Only Ps 115 and 118 (in the Hallel) and Ps 135 are cultic calls to worship which include “the house of Aaron”. This is very different from Chronicles, where Levites and Aaronides work more side by side (e.g. 1Chron 5.28, 32). On this issue see G. KNOPPERS, Hierodules, 49–72.

used, but only to emphasize instead the value of a spiritual sacrifice: Ps 40.5–8; 50.7–15, 23; 51.16–18; 69.29–31; 116.17; and 141.2–3 are the obvious examples.²² Far from seeing such passages as censuring the Temple cult and originating from outside it, it is more likely that this is the influence of those concerned to reform the cult *from within*. The Levites were ideal cultic reformers, according to the Chronicler.

(5.) To see the Levitical singers as both editors and compilers might also account for a fifth element in the psalms: the references to the psalmists as *poor and needy*. Sometimes this assumes a physical dimension, sometimes spiritual, and sometimes both. It is often found in those psalms questioning the value of cultic sacrifice: Ps 40 (v.18), 69 (v.34) and 140 (v.13) are the best examples. So does this suggest a disenfranchised community living far from the Temple? The personal elements in these psalms make it unlikely; it could just as easily be an appropriate term adopted by the Levitical singers, who had been divested of any priestly privileges, and hence of the opportunity to live off the offerings brought to the Temple. They had no inheritance in the land and their livelihood and lifestyle fits admirably the description of being poor and needy.²³

This is not to say the Levitical singers composed such psalms, but rather that they sought to include them and set them in strategic places within the collections. For example, they may have deliberately placed royal psalms, which speak of those with power, authority and privilege, alongside psalms of the poor and oppressed. Ps 3 follows Ps 2; Ps 72 precedes Ps 73, and Ps 88 precedes Ps 89. Similarly Ps 17/18, 21/ 22, 101/102, 109/110, and 143/144 fit this pattern.²⁴ This makes it clear that God is as much on the side of those who have no voice but simply trust in Him as he is of those in positions of power.

Smaller collections whose major theme is the poor and disenfranchised might also be seen as due to the Levites. Two examples must suffice. The first is in Ps 135–37, a discrete collection in Book V whose common theme is of the longing for security in the land. Ps 135.20 is one of the few specific references to the Levites (“the house of Levi”) in the body of a psalm. Ps 136.14 (“For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever”) is a refrain which in Ezra 3.10–11 is ascribed to both the Levites (the “sons of Asaph”) and the priests at the time of the laying of the foundations of the second Temple. And Ps 137, with its longing for Jer-

22 In some cases their placing at the beginning or ending of a psalm might suggest editorial additions (e.g. Ps 50.23; 51.16–18; 69.29–31; 116.17–19; 141.2–3. Ps 69 offers a good example of this: “I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. This will please the LORD more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs”.

23 In Deut 18.1–8 the Levites are described as those “with no portion or inheritance” and Deut 14.17,19 and 26.13 makes the same point. For a pertinent discussion of this feature in the Psalter, see J. Bremer, “Armenredaktion”, 181–206 (in this volume).

24 See S. GILLINGHAM, *Power*, 25–49. This will be illustrated in Section 3 below.

usalem, has many affinities with the beginning and ending of the more obvious liturgical collection, the Songs of Ascents.²⁵

The second and perhaps most contentious collection is at the end of Book I. Ps 35–41 have frequently been noted for their interest in the piety of the poor, or *Armenfrömmigkeit*.²⁶ However, liturgical headings are found over each psalm (except for Ps 37 – which, ironically, has perhaps the most developed sense of longing for security in the land of any of these psalms) and this suggests that even these psalms, perhaps compositions originally created far from the Temple, were brought together as a compilation to be used in Second Temple liturgy. Given that their other headings testify to David as the paradigm of piety, it might also explain why in this collection David is not so much the vindicated hero as the righteous sufferer: the Levites, in many ways deprived of privileges, gained advantage by using his piety as their example.²⁷

(6.) Finally, if the Levitical singers did have an important role in the editing and compilation of the Psalter, it also explains the *prophetic emphasis in psalmody* which was later taken up in the Jewish and Christian use of many psalms. If the actual compilation had taken place in Diaspora communities, far from the Temple, it is difficult to explain not only the many musical headings to the psalms, but also how psalms which were personal reflective prayers were transformed into prophecies affecting the whole community in their eventual fulfillment. The prophetic reading of psalmody which pervades first Jewish, and then Christian tradition, is undoubtedly a more public, David-centred, Temple-centred reading, and the prophetic concerns are better understood by arguing that the Psalter as a whole emerged from the centre of Judaism, not from its periphery. The Levitical singers would have been important mediators in this respect.

The Levitical connection with prophecy is given explicit expression by the Chronicler, who has an elevated view of prophecy in general and of the Levites (“prophetic singers”) in particular. The Chronicler had at least two reasons for this. In an age when the living prophetic word was long past, it was important to give the prophetic voice some present manifestation. And by emphasizing that the Levites had been endowed with a prophetic spirit, the Chronicler not only offered a new understanding of prophecy for his own age but also affirmed the contemporary authority of the Temple cult by linking its status back to prophets who worked in the royal cultus. In this agenda the Levitical singers were now the

25 See M.S. SMITH, *Compilation*, 258–263 and especially 260–261.

26 See for example F.-L. HOSSFELD/E. ZENGER, *Armen*, 21–50.

27 See J.-M. AUWERS, *Composition*, 150–151, on David as the righteous sufferer.

mediators of the prophetic word, albeit no longer through living oracles, but rather through teaching and song.²⁸

If the psalms are to be seen as 'prophetic songs', creating, through the ministry of the Levitical singers, a bridge between the first and second Temples, this offers an explanation for two different types of prophetic influence in the Psalms. First, it accounts for why earlier oracular material, where God speaks in the "I"-form, has been preserved, a feature explicit in at least eleven psalms and implicit in several others. The fact that the four most extensive examples of this divine speech-form occur in the Asaphite Psalms (Ps 50.5–6, 7–15, 16–23; 75.2–5, 10; 81.5c–10; 82.2–4, 6–7) again points to the influence of these Levitical singers. The fact that four other divine speeches occur in royal psalms fits with the Chronicler's view of prophetic inspiration ratifying the king's role in the cult and of the Levites' role, imbued with the spirit of prophecy, within it. So in the Psalms, as in Chronicles, the promotion of prophetically inspired divine speech from the past gives meaning to the present, especially when neither prophecy nor monarchy is evident. This is hardly "fantasy" literature, even though the selection and use of earlier material might be ideological. Those most likely to communicate this through "prophetic song" are the Levitical singers.²⁹

Secondly, as well as preserving oracular material in individual psalms, with an eye to the past, the Levitical singers brought larger collections together and shaped them with a prophetic bias which preserved not only the past but also looked to the future. It should not be surprising that the two collections where this is most apparent are those of Korah and Asaph. We shall look at the formation of each collection shortly, but it is clear that in the earlier Korahite collection of Ps 42–49 (Book II) are three psalms (Ps 46–48) which declare with the same confidence displayed by the later prophets, that God's presence is in Zion; and in the corresponding group, Ps 84–88 (Book III) Ps 87 makes a similar proclamation. Turning to the Asaphite collection (which we have already noted has a distinctive prophetic emphasis) it is a prophetic exhortation which heads the list (Ps 50) and introduces the second Davidic Psalter; and in the other eleven psalms in Book III (Ps 73–83), Ps 75 and 76, and then Ps 81 and 82, similarly

28 A.C. WELCH, *Work*, 42–54 saw the Levitical singers as successors to the guilds of prophets. This was developed by, for example, J.W. KLEINIG, *Lord's Song*, 148–157 and H.-P. MATHYS, *Prophetie*, 281–296. S. MOWINCKEL, *Psalms* (Volume II), 93 states: "the prophetic element in the psalms [...] also provides evidence that the psalms are derived from the Temple singers, who were so closely linked with the temple prophets that the latter were finally organized as belonging to the guilds and 'families' of the singers, as we can see from the Chronicler".

29 For recent accounts of the relationship between psalmody and prophecy through oracular activity, see for example R. JACOBSON, *Function*, 82–130, who examines Ps 132, 89, 2, 110; 50, 81, 95, 75; 82, 60, 108, 46, 91, 12 for their use of "God quotations". Although I would propose only eleven such psalms (Ps 2, 89, 110, 132; 75, 82, 81, 50, 95; and Ps 12, 91), I also see the role of the Levites in their preservation and transmission: see S. GILLINGHAM, *Wine*, 370–390.

declare in prophetic speech that God is in Zion. It seems that the compilers have arranged these different collections with a clear prophetic bias – the Asaphite collection being more focused on judgement as well as restoration – with the declaration of God being in the Temple being central to each.

So in these six ways – the liturgical presentation of David, the interest in the Torah (and the king's status as it relates to the Torah), the more general didactic emphases, the redefining of cultic practice as (essentially) sacred song, the emphasis on the poor and needy, and the interest in prophecy – we might identify those who collected and edited the Psalter as Levites whose particular role was to provide music, singing and teaching for Second Temple liturgy.

3. A Case for the Levitical Singers as Compilers of the Psalter

Thus far I have only made a case for the Levitical singers in relation to individual psalms or small collections of psalms, and yet we have noted how pervasive their influence appears to be throughout the Psalter as a whole. Is it possible to view the Levitical singers as the compilers of the entire Psalter – probably in two stages, first of Books I–III and later of Books I–V as a whole?

Book I (Ps 3–41) comprises just one collection, that of the so-called *First Davidic Psalter*. Its most obvious feature is the interest in David as a paradigm of piety by virtue of the Davidic superscriptions which are found over all the psalms except Ps 10 (by its acrostic form, attached to Ps 9), and Ps 33. However, this piety takes on several different forms, as seen in the four different sub-groups in the collection as a whole.³⁰

The well-established sub-group in Book I is *Ps 15–24*.³¹ This is a more specifically didactic collection, as seen by the first and the last of these ten psalms (perhaps connoting the Decalogue?) which are responsorial liturgies before entering the Temple. Some of the other psalms also have Temple associations – for example, the end of Ps 22 and 23. There seems to be a deliberate chiasmic arrangement here (for example, Ps 17, a lament psalm, mirrors Ps 22, and Ps 16, a psalm of confidence, similarly mirrors Ps 23). The collection has a more public focus: David appears not only as a model of obedient faith but also as a military figure (Ps 18 and 20–21). Ps 19 is set in the heart of the collection, combining a hymn in praise of God's ordering of nature through his creation of the sun and a didactic psalm reflecting on God's ordering of Israel through giving her the Torah. So the typical Levitical interests in David, Torah and teaching combine in

³⁰ See J.-M. AUWERS, *Composition*, 43–73).

³¹ See, for example, F.-L. HOSSFELD / E. ZENGER, *Berg JHWHs*, 166–182; also P.D. MILLER, *Kingship*, 127–142.

this small collection of psalms: this, then, is one example of a Levitical compilation.

We referred earlier to another collection at the end of Book I – of seven psalms united by the single theme of impoverishment, both physical and spiritual. This is of *Psalms 35–41* at the end of Book I, where the continual concern about the poor and needy was seen to suggest Levitical concerns.³²

The Levitical influence in the other two collections in Book I is admittedly less explicit. *Psalms 3–14* – this time a twelve-psalm collection – also has a creation Psalm (*Psalms 8*) at the heart of it with a similar theme to *Psalms 19* (God's order in creation, with humans as the primary agents for maintaining it). The importance of the Zion and the Temple is also found at the beginning and end of this collection (*Psalms 3.4* and *14.7*). And again other psalms have been included which affirm the importance of the Temple (*Psalms 5.7; 9:11,14* and *11.4*) and the interest in David as the paradigm of piety – obedience in suffering, as all the psalms except *Psalm 8* in this collection are lament in form – is evident by way of the psalm titles.³³

The other collection in Book I is again of ten psalms: *Psalms 25–34* is characteristically framed by two similar psalms, although in this case they do not concern the Temple but are acrostics (*Psalms 25* and *34*): these two psalms not only share several linguistic correspondences but they are also linked in their theme of the plight of poor and the justice of God. *Psalms 26–28* are laments and suggest linguistic correspondences with their counterparts, *Psalms 30–32* (*Psalms 30/28; 31/27; 32/26*). And placed in the heart of this collection is another hymn to God as Creator (this time not of the moon and stars, as *Psalm 8*, nor of the sun, as *Psalms 19 A*, but of the storm) this time associating his power and glory with the Temple (*v.9*). *Psalm 33*, without Davidic heading, stands on its own in this collection. So the deliberate arrangement of psalms, the continued interest in the suffering figure of David, the didactic concerns and the emphasis on the poor and needy undoubtedly suggest the concerns of the Levitical singers here as well.³⁴

These elements are far more evident in *Books II and III* (*Psalms 42–72; 73–89*). They will be taken together because of the way the various groups of psalms are divided up between the two books. We have already noted that it is likely that the supposed Levitical compilers had a special affinity with the guild of Asaph, and the most significant collection here undoubtedly comprises the twelve Asaphite psalms (*Psalms 50, 73–83*).³⁵ It is unclear why *Psalm 50*, with its typically Levitical pro-

³² See p. 45 in this paper and footnote 27.

³³ For further reflections on this sub-group see F.-L. HOSSFELD/E. ZENGER, *Armen*, 34–39; and G. BARBIERO *Psalmenbuch*, 63–188.

³⁴ See F.-L. HOSSFELD/E. ZENGER, *Thronstz*, 375–388; G. BARBIERO, *Psalmenbuch*, 325–541.

³⁵ For the earlier references to Asaph, see p. 39–40 in this paper. Seminal works on these psalms include H.P. NASUTI, *Tradition*; K. SEYBOLD, *Asaph-Psalmen*; M. Goulder, *Asaph's History*, 71–81; and D.C. MITCHELL, *Message*, 90–107.

phetic discourse, has been split off so that it heads the second Davidic Psalter, but the effect is to frame these Davidic psalms with an entire Asaphite collection. Many of these psalms seem quite early, some possibly from a northern provenance; they would have been adapted into the Temple collection at a much later stage. Examples include the references to “Joseph” (Ps 77.15; 78.67; 80.1; 81.5) and “Ephraim” (Ps 78.67; 80.2); the prominence of the Exodus tradition (Ps 77.10–21; 78.11–53; 80.8–11; 81.4–7) along with another Exodus motif of God as Shepherd (Ps 74.1; 77.20; 78.52; 79.13; 80.1; 83.12); and references to “the God of Jacob” (Ps 75.9; 76.6; 81.1,4). Ps 78 is a good illustration of some adaptation, for it speaks of God’s rejection of “the tent of Joseph” and his choice of Judah, and Mount Zion, which he loves (v.67–68). The prophetic spirit, with a focus on the judgement of God, pervades this collection – not only against Israel (Ps 50; 77; 78; 80; 81), but also against Jerusalem (Ps 74; 79), other nations (Ps 75; 76; 83), the impious (Ps 73) and other gods (Ps 82). A nationalistic and military picture emerges – very different from Yehud under Persian rule – which suggests that this is one of the oldest collections in the Psalter, which the Asaphites inherited and arranged in a characteristically specific way. Ps 50 (with its distinctive use of Elohim) has been set apart to introduce the second (Elohistic) Davidic Psalter, and has a close thematic relationship (in its negation of sacrifice) with Ps 51 and, in terms of language, with Ps 80 and 81. Ps 73–83 have been arranged in two parallel collections – Ps 73 and 78 as didactic psalms, Ps 74 and 79; 80 as laments concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. Ps 75–76 and 81–82 are prophetic assurances concerning God’s abode in Zion, and Psalms 77 and 83 mirror one another as individual laments.

The Asaphite collection, with its distinctive prophetic emphasis, is perhaps the most significant collection in the Psalter: it has been placed at the very heart of it and seems to include several of the oldest psalms in the overall collection. It illustrates well the adaptation of earlier (pre-exilic) psalmody into second Temple liturgy (a Temple motif is alluded to in every psalm except Ps 75 and 81); it shows a characteristically structured arrangement; and it evinces the dual (prophetic) themes of the judgement of God and yet the confidence in God’s presence in Zion – a theme which is evident in both the first psalm (Ps 50.2) and the last (for example, Ps 83.18, in the reference to “God Most High” – עליון of Jerusalem).

A second significant (albeit interrupted) collection in Books II–III is of *the Korahite Psalms*. Again this is a collection of twelve psalms (if Ps 42–43 are to be read as one psalm, given their shared refrain): eight (Ps 42–49) are in Book II, predominantly using the term Elohim for God, and four (Ps 84,85,87 and 88) in Book III, mainly using the name Yahweh, suggesting they actually come from two different provenances.³⁶ The affirmation of God’s presence in the Temple is a key

36 Important works on the Korahite Psalms include J.M. Buss, *Psalms of Asaph and Korah*, 382–

theme throughout both sub-groups of psalms. Each sub-group has typically been compiled to create a similar structure to the Asaphite collection, with the lament theme introducing and ending each collection (Ps 42–43 and 49; 84 and 88, each pair of which has notable linguistic correspondences) and a communal lament following the first psalms (Ps 44, 85, again with significant linguistic correspondences) and a prophetic response concerning God’s abode in Zion preceding the final psalms (Ps 46; 47; 48; 87). In the heart of each collection is a distinctive psalm focussed on the memory of David – Ps 45 is a wedding song, and Psalm 86 is a non-Korahite psalm with a Davidic heading.

Psalm 89 stands outside this collection as it is not specifically labelled as Korahite, but by implication it is linked to this guild of singers through the unusual superscription of Ethan. As we shall see below, it is likely that this psalm was one of the last to be brought into Books I–III, along with Ps 2.

The other large collection to consider in Books II–III is the *Second Davidic Psalter*. These twenty-two psalms are distinguished from the first Davidic collection by the predominant use of Elohim and by their frequent references to singing and music. The persistent use of this name for God, and the connection of these psalms with the Asaphite collection which frames it, may well suggest that this is the oldest Davidic collection in the Psalter, with some of these psalms dating back to the monarchic period, brought together by the Levitical singers by the title David. As well as additional references to “the choirmaster” in the titles, several more explicit musical references proliferate in this collection – for example, superscriptions concerning stringed instruments in Ps 54; 55; 61 and 67 and to possible hymn tunes in Ps 56; 57; 58; 59; 60 and 69. Additional titles to these psalms suggest deliberate clusters on the theme of the suffering yet faithful David. Ps 52–55, all with the additional title מַשְׁכִּיל, indicate these are didactic psalms concerning betrayal and persecution; Ps 56–60, with the title מִכְתָּם, indicate a reflective type of psalm, with theme of refuge in God; most of the biographical details are in these two sets of psalms, linking David’s exemplary faith to the stories in Samuel. And yet these are also psalms *to be sung*, in memory of David. Ps 62–64, connected by the superscription מְזִמּוֹר also reflect on the theme of refuge in God (as does Ps 61) and the title here again suggests some liturgical use; so too Ps 65–68 with the title שִׁיר (and מְזִמּוֹר) where the theme is about God’s rule over the nations. Ps 69–71 form another sub-group on the theme of the innocent sufferer; Ps 69 suggests again that these psalms are now intended to be sung. Ps 51 and 72 are the bookends to this collection – both connected with Bathsheba through David’s guilt and need for forgiveness (Ps 51) and through the Solomonic heading concerning the ideal king executing justice

392; G. WANKE *Zionstheologie*; M. GOULDER, *Sons of Korah*; M.S. SMITH, *Compilation*, 258–263; and C. SÜSSENBACH, *Psalter*.

in Ps 72.³⁷ The connection between the sufferings (whether deserved or undeserved) of “David” within this collection and the sufferings of the people (similarly whether deserved or not) in the Asaphite (and Korahite) psalms on each side indicates further the Levitical concerns in the shaping of all three collections.

Much has been written over the last three decades to argue for the likelihood of *Books I–III* being compiled and completed some time before the addition of *Books IV–V*.³⁸ The key themes in these first three books (rather like the key themes used by the Chronicler) include David the innocent sufferer, a paradigm of piety and prayer (as in the two Davidic Psalters) and the Temple as a place of God’s judgement but also a source of hope in its full restoration (as in the Asaphite and Korahite collections). Another theological layer has been introduced by the inclusion of two other older royal psalms at the beginning and ending of *Books I–III*. Ps 2, without a title, seems to serve as a preface, with its clear theme of the promises to David and his dynasty; Ps 89 (a composite psalm including recitations of the Davidic covenant followed by a lament questioning on why these dynastic promises were revoked) creates a negative and critical account of the monarchy as an institution. Hence David the paradigm of obedience in suffering is also, by the end of *Book III*, David the prototype of the failed hopes of the people: its more negative tenor fits with the similar tone of the Asaphite psalms, reflecting again the possibility of Levitical concerns throughout the entire process of the growth of Ps 2–89.

If any other evidence was needed to suggest that *Books I–III* were compiled first, it is the very different organizational style evident in *Books IV–V*. The Levitical concerns and theological themes established in the first three books are still evident; but the emphasis is very different. There is more continual focus on the restoration of the people in Zion, as well as more extended attention given to teaching (again, through hymns and songs) the great Torah traditions of Exodus and Creation, with less prominence given to personal lament forms and to David’s paradigmatic piety. If the Levitical singers were indeed responsible for the compilation of the entire Psalter, those responsible for *Books IV and V* came along – perhaps generations – after those who were responsible for the first three books.³⁹

37 This account has been largely influenced by C. Stüssenbach, *Psalter*.

38 Seminal works here have been by G.H. WILSON, *Editing*; ID. *Understanding*.

39 Little has been made thus far of the *redactional* influence in *Books I–III*. At this second stage some redaction would have been more likely – perhaps, for example, the inclusion of complete psalms such as Ps 33, as well as insertions of verses and phrases to draw out connections between one psalm and another – but it beyond the purpose of this paper to explore this more tenuous topic in more detail.

The compilation of Book IV is the most difficult to comprehend of all five books in the Psalter. It has very few superscriptions and the smaller collections seem to have evolved according to subject matter. Were it not for the apparent doxology at the end of Ps 106 it might be possible to perceive Book IV ending with Ps 119, thus starting and finishing with an emphasis on Moses (Ps 90) and Torah (Ps 119).

It is obvious that this is a further development of the Psalter answering the more negative closure in Ps 89. The introduction to Book IV, with a superscription to Moses at the start of Ps 90, gives an alternative perspective and of course echoes the Levitical interests about the importance of the Mosaic faith alongside the Davidic covenant. Books IV and V both have several instances of the addition of three psalms sharing similar themes (and often linguistic correspondences) before or between larger collections: Ps 90–92, 104–106, 108–110 and 135–137 are obvious examples. The theme of Ps 90–92 is more didactic and pertains to the finitude of humankind, preparing the way for the theme of the eternal rule of God in the Kingship Psalms which follow.

Ps 93–100 are the largest collection in Book IV. There are no superscriptions, and they are united by the theme of *the Kingship of God*: there are several associations here with the same theme found at the beginning of Ps 89 (v.5–18).⁴⁰ Ps 93–94 introduce the collection with expressions of longing for the establishment of God's earthly rule; Ps 95–100 imagine the outworking of this rule in reality, beginning with God's people (Ps 95.6–7) and ending with the whole earth (Ps 100.1–3). Both these psalms share similar shepherding imagery: this evokes the same motif found in the Asaphite psalms. The four psalms in the heart of this collection have been arranged in pairs, with Psalms 96 and 98 concerned with the "new song" (Ps 96.1 and 98.1) and 97 and 99 emphasising God's rule in Zion. The Levitical interest in Temple worship as singing (over sacrifice) is again evident here: the motif of the "new song" is scattered throughout the Psalter (see for example Ps 40.3, 133.3 and 149.1) and it is a clear focus here. Again each pair of psalms has several key linguistic correspondences, the first pair even have the same refrain (Ps 96.11 and 98.7) and the second pair both personify Zion as rejoicing in God's coming world rule (Ps 97.8 and 99.2). Within the collection we also find references to the Exodus tradition (for example, in the references to Meribah and Massah in Ps 95.8 and to Moses and (unusually) to Aaron in Ps 99.6). The interconnection between the Moses-Exodus tradition and the Zion tradition again suggests the Levitical interests already expressed in the Asaphite and Korahite collections, a theme which is developed throughout the rest of Book IV.

⁴⁰ See the discussion of the possible extent and purpose of the Kingship Psalms in D.M. Howard, *Structure*, 108–117.

Book IV ends with another group of three Psalms, each ending with “Praise the Lord” thus meriting them the title of *Hallel Psalms* (Ps 104–106). As in the Kingship Psalms, the traditions of Creation (Ps 104, with some affinity with Gen 1) and Exodus (Ps 105) and the Wilderness (Ps 106) are key themes here. This trio of psalms has been placed next to another trio, Ps 101–103; the Davidic heading in Ps 101 and 103 and the suggestions of the intimacy and consequences of royal authority in Ps 102 maintain a different theme (a minor theme compared with Books I–III), namely of David as a paradigm of piety. Whether in the contrast of the Exodus and the Zion traditions in the earlier Kingship collection, or in the comparison of the Davidic and Exodus traditions here, the Levitical interest in the arrangement of these psalms is evident.⁴¹

Book V similarly illustrates how collections of psalms – in this case one long collection of fifteen psalms, and three shorter ones – were gradually added to create a Psalter with five books. At the heart of Book V are the *Songs of Ascents* (Ps 120–134), all marked out by the same superscriptions; the *Third Davidic Psalter* (Ps 138–145) is also marked out by superscriptions, in this case Davidic ones. Near the beginning and at the end of Book V are two other *Hallel Collections* without any psalm titles – the first (Ps 112–118) is mainly on the theme of the Exodus and the second (Ps 146–150) is mainly on the theme of Creation.

Just as the Asaphite and Koharite collections clearly show the influence of the Levitical singers, it is also clear that the *Songs of Ascents* reflect a similar inspiration, and it is the presence of this collection which provides the best evidence of Levitical interest throughout the whole of Book V. We noted earlier how, in later tradition, these psalms were understood to have been sung by the Levitical singers, on the Temple steps.⁴² The theme at the beginning of this collection, in Ps 120–122, is of “entering Zion” (where the movement is from a foreign land [Ps 120.5] to entry into the city [Ps 122.2]); the theme at the end of the collection, in Ps 133–134, is of “leaving Zion”, where the people are exhorted to remember the blessings they have received in Zion (Ps 133.3 and 134.4). The heart of the collection emphasizes God blessing his people from Zion (Ps 127–129, made explicit in Ps 128.5 and 129.5). Psalms of lament and confidence (Ps 123–126, with calls to “bless the Lord” in Ps 124.6 and 125.4 and 126.4) and psalms of penitence and trust (Ps 130–131, with calls to Israel to “hope in the Lord” in Ps 130.7 and 131.3) have been placed on each side of the heart of this collection. Thus again we can see a process of structuring psalms which is typical

41 See D.M. HOWARD, *Structure*, 200–207 and G.H. WILSON, *Understanding*, 72–82 on the juxtaposition of the Moses/Exodus and David/Zion traditions in Book IV.

42 See pp. 38–39 (and footnote 10) in this paper. Significant works on the Songs of Ascents include C.C. KEET, *Study*; K. SEYBOLD, *Wallfahrtspsalmen*, 247–268; M. MANNATI, *Psaumes*; É. BEAUCAMP, *L’unité*; H. VIVIERS, *Coherence*; L.D. CROW, *Songs of Ascent*, 129–187; M. GOULDER, *Psalms of the return*, 20–113; A.G. HUNTER, *Yahweh*, 173–258.

of other collections. Furthermore, as with Ps 93–100, the importance of singing (above sacrifice) is brought out in these pilgrimage psalms: they would have probably been sung on the way to and from Jerusalem as well as within the Temple courts. Only Ps 132 stands outside this collection: rather like Ps 45 and 86 in the Korahite collection, and Ps 2 and 89 at the beginning and end of Books I–III, and the odd Davidic psalms (Ps 101 and 103 in Book IV) inserted into Book IV, Ps 132 is also a psalm commemorating David. As we noted previously, Ps 132 contains many Levitical concerns about David, the Ark and the Torah, and, despite its obvious differences from the other fourteen psalms in its style and length, it actually fits with the Zion and Temple theme expressed throughout this collection.⁴³ It is typical of the way older material was preserved and given new meaning, a feature particularly evident in the Asaphite Psalms. Here, however, the tenor is very different from the Asaphite collection: there the military (early Holy War) connotations of Zion were given prominence, whilst here the enemies are no longer violent or warring, but are those who oppose the faith of Israel; this suggests, with the exception of Ps 132, a later provenance for the Psalms of Ascents.

The Davidic theme found in Ps 132 is developed further in the *Third Davidic Psalter* (Ps 138–145) and mirrors the shorter collection of three psalms, all with Davidic headings (Ps 108–110) at the beginning of Book V. The return to the theme of David as the model of piety – portrayed here once more as the righteous sufferer – again shows a theme continuously important to the Levites. It is interesting to see that the importance of song above sacrifice is again found in this collection (Ps 141.2–3).

The two *Hallel Collections* (Ps 112–118 and 146–150) form a significant opening and ending to Book V; each is preceded by a small Davidic collection (Ps 108–110 and Ps 138–145), a motif which we also saw in Book IV. The first Hallel group (Ps 112–118) reflects yet again the importance of the Exodus traditions to these compilers – a theme which was seen in the Asaphite collection and in Ps 93–100 – although here the Exodus is used to emphasize restoration rather than judgement. The final Hallel group (Ps 145–150) demonstrates the importance of hymns of creation (which we noted were evident in the use of Ps 8; 19 A and 29 in the smaller collections in Book I and in the use of Ps 104 in Book IV).⁴⁴ It also highlights yet again the importance of singing above sacrifice, themes prominent in the second Davidic Psalter and in Ps 93–100. The purpose of these two Hallel collections – emphasizing the God who rescues and the God who restores –

⁴³ See p. 40 in this paper and also footnote 14.

⁴⁴ On the significance of these two Hallel collections in the Psalter, especially Ps 145–150, see M. MILLARD, *Komposition*, 34–35, 108–09 and E. ZENGER, *Komposition*, 77–102 and the response by P.D. MILLER, *End*, 103–110.

add to the more hopeful and upbeat tenor of this final book of the Psalter which contrasts starkly with the earlier ending to Books I to III in Ps 89.

Another trio of psalms includes Ps 137: its theme of lament over the loss of Jerusalem links it back to the Zion theme in the Song of Ascents. However, as we noted earlier, Ps 135–137 as a whole serve a similar purpose in Book V to Ps 35–41 in Book I: these psalms are concerned with the theme of physical and spiritual poverty and the plight of being landless – again, another typically Levitical theme.⁴⁵

Leaving aside two other psalms which stand outside any collection (Ps 107 and 111), the only significant psalm in Book V is Ps 119. It is unique within the Psalter in terms of its style and length, but it has some affinities with other psalms in being an acrostic, as well as in its focus on Torah (and its many synonyms), and its suitability for private teaching and reflection. It has been placed between the Ps 112–117, with their Exodus/Moses theme, and Ps 120–134, with their Zion/David theme. Coming immediately after Ps 118, with its motif of a Davidic royal figure entering Jerusalem in victory on a festal day, its setting is hardly accidental. Exodus and Torah (Ps 112–117; 119) David and Torah (Ps 118 and 119) and Torah and Zion (Ps 119 and 120–134) are all evident here; again these complementary themes maintained throughout Books IV and V, illustrate well the concerns of the Levitical singers.

This leaves only one other psalm whose position requires some explanation: this is Ps 1. This short psalm encapsulates the same themes as Psalm 119, and yet says in six verses what the Ps 119 says in one hundred and seventy six. In my view Ps 1 was placed by the Levitical singers as a prologue to the entire Psalter; it suggests several complementary themes with Ps 2 (rather like the coupling of Ps 118 and 119), not least in the way in which the Torah of Moses and the Covenant with David create a (now familiar) complementary pair. If this was indeed the final psalm to be added, its personal and more exclusivist reflections on the Jewish faith also give it a remarkable contrast with the more public and inclusivist hymnic expressions found in Ps 150.

The Psalter, whose composition and compilation grew over centuries, is not about one theological theme but many. The Levitical singers, who traced their ancestry back to the time of Moses (and hence long before the beginning of the royal cult and its psalmody), and who gradually acquired some liturgical status in second Temple liturgy, also were interested in not one theological theme but many. Their particular Davidic interests, their interests in Moses and the Law, their concerns to teach and preach through music and song, their emphasis on singing above sacrifice, their identification with the poor and needy, their af-

45 See p. 40 of this paper and footnote 13, citing M.S. SMITH, *Compilation*, 258–263 and especially 260–261.

firmation of God's promises for Zion linked to the traditions of both Creation and the Exodus, and their interest in the voice of prophecy alongside the human voices of prayer – all these interests merge and meld in the various collections in the five books of the Psalter. I can think of no more likely candidates for the complex compilation process of the Psalter than the Levitical singers.

4. Conclusion

Perhaps one final word is necessary as to *why* the Levitical singers were so interested in maintaining the central use of psalmody throughout the Second Temple period. Through "Temple song" an immediate link was made with the first Temple, founded by Solomon but whose roots went back to David. And through teaching the Torah through the Temple songs this bond went back beyond David to Moses. Temple worship was a unique way of expressing the unity of the people whose covenants were expressed not only through David but also through Moses. In all these themes, the Psalter was a most important rallying point: like the Torah, it was an identity marker under foreign domination. The editors and compilers of the five books of the Psalter had, of course, a good deal to gain from this: the once marginalized Levitical singers, by claiming the authority of David as well as Moses, would have been able to maintain their own position in the Temple courts. The issue we have been considering is therefore not only about *how* the Levitical singers might have compiled the Psalter, but *why* they did it.

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