

“Yahweh Is King over All the Earth” An Exegesis of Psalm 47

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Few genres of Old Testament literature have solicited as much attention as Enthronement Hymns. Literally hundreds of articles, monographs, and books have been written dealing with this genre during the past fifty years.¹ This investigation will attempt to survey the major trends of cultic studies which specifically deal with "Enthronement Hymns" and to present an exegesis of a representative psalm, Psalm 47.

Enthronement Psalms

Psalms 47, 93, 96, 97, 98, and 99 have been classified as Enthronement Psalms, a *Gattung* which is a subdivision of the hymnic genre and, therefore, shares the essential formal characteristics of the Hymn.² The basic reason for giving these psalms an independent status is the unique content which evokes praise of Yahweh as king and the cry of enthronement: *YHWH malak*.³ Enthronement Psalms present two different concepts of the establishment of Yahweh's rule as king: 93, 96, and 97 depict Yahweh's rule as resulting from his defeat of his divine adversaries, chaos and the abyss, in the creation event; 47, 98, and 99 center his rule upon his activity as the Divine Warrior who defeats the nations and establishes the Twelve Tribes in Canaan.⁴

1. For a comprehensive survey, see E. Lipinski, *La Royaute de Yahwe dans la Poesie et le Cu/te de l'Ancien Israel* (Brussel: Paleis der Academien, 1968).

2. H.-J. Kraus (*Psalmen*, I [BKAT 15/1, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960] XLII) presents a succinct form critical analysis of the hymnic genre.

3. Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967) p. 36.

4. J. D. W. Watts, "Yahweh Malak Psalms," *TZ XXI* (1965) 341.

Attempts to ascertain the specific 'Situation in Life' which gave rise to these psalms have led to quite a number of theories. The following include the more important positions taken by major scholars.

Post-Exilic Eschatology. Efforts to reconstruct possible historical situations reflected in 'Enthronement Hymns' have generally met with little acceptance.⁵ More noteworthy has been the view of Gunkel that such psalms belong within the framework of post-exilic eschatology which gave expression to a future hope in the intervention of Yahweh, an expression given formative impetus by Deutero-Isaiah,⁶ though such a view has not elicited favorable response among contemporary scholars.

Cultic Life Situations. Since Mowinckel the Enthronement Hymns have generally been regarded as originating in the cult. Efforts to reconstruct a specific cultic situation are complex indeed, as can be noted by the wide divergence of scholarly opinion.

The appearance of Sigmund Mowinckel's *Psalmstudien* revolutionized the understanding of Israel's cultus. Though anticipated to some extent by Gressmann and, unknown to Mowinckel, Volz,⁷ Mowinckel's second volume, *Das Thronbesteigungs fest Jahwas und der Ursprung der Eschatologie*, appearing in 1920, initiated the basic foci around which cultic investigation in general and studies concerning Enthronement Hymns in particular were to revolve for the next half century. Rejecting Gunkel's view that Enthronement Hymns were the product of the post-exilic eschatological vision, Mowinckel sought to reconstruct an Israelite New Year's Festival as a part of which Yahweh was annually enthroned as the universal king in a creative cultic

5. For example, see the work of C. A. Briggs (*The Books of Psalms* [ICC 15/1; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906]).

6. H. Gunkel and J. Begrich, *Einleitung in die Psalmen* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1933). Gunkel later came to accept Mowinckel's theory of an enthronement festival in a modified form, though his ideas of the eschatological nuance still remained. Lipinski's critique (*La Royaute de Yahwe*, 43-4) of a strictly eschatological interpretation is most cogent: "Rien ne permet d'affirmer, telle est une premiere remarque, que ces psaumes se referent un avenir lointain. Au contraire, le parfait des verbes, et notamment celui de la formule fondamentale *Yahweh Malak*, semble indiquer qu'il s'agit du passe ou du present."

7. H. Gressmann, *Der Ursprung der israelitisch-judischen Eschatologie* (FR LANT 6; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1905) 294-301; and P. Volz, *Das Neujahrsfest Jahwes* (L.aubhuttenfest) (SGV 67; Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1912).

drama.⁸ His sources for such a reconstruction included the Babylonian Akitu Festival, the Osirus-Horus complex in Egypt, late Jewish sources, and various materials scattered throughout the Old Testament (over 40 psalms; II Sam. 6, I Kgs. 8; I Chr. 16; Neh. 8:10-12; Zech, 14; and Hos. 7:5). According to Mowinckel, the festival included two strata of tradition: that involving an agricultural festival borrowed from Canaan (Feast of Tabernacles-Feast of Yahweh, Ex. 23:16; 34:22) and that concerning the royal ideology after the adoption of kingship by Israel. The festival consisted of an ark procession led by the king to the temple where Yahweh was to be enthroned (Pss. 24; 132; II Sam. 6); the dramatic enactments of the myths of creation and Yahweh's battle with the dragon, the victory over the gods, the exodus, the battle with the nations; and theophanic judgment. Finally the enthronement of Yahweh is announced by the cry "Yahweh has become king." As a result, Yahweh's covenant with David is renewed, Israel's fortunes are guaranteed for the coming year, and the reign of the new creation is initiated. Such a festival existed during the time of the monarchy, but after the exile disintegrated into the three major Jewish feasts of New Year, Atonement, and Tabernacles.⁹

Though such an impressive reconstruction has been accepted by many scholars, it is subject to several criticisms. In regard to sources, Mowinckel has been criticized for inferring too much influence from external evidence, especially as concerns the Babylonian New Year's Festival,¹⁰ for overstressing Rabbinical materials,¹¹ and for piecing

8. Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien II* (Oslo, 1920. Reprinted by Verlag P. Schippers, Amsterdam, 1961), 1-340. Mowinckel states: Der Kult ist nicht nur ursprünglich, sondern überall und immer, ein Drama ... nicht lediglich ein gespieltes Drama, ein Spiel, sondern ein wirkliches und Wirklichkeit hervorbringendes Drama, ein Drama, das mit realer Kraft das dramatisierte Ereignis verwirklicht, eine Wirklichkeit, aus der reale Kräfte hervorstrahlen, oder mit anderen Worten ein Sakrament." (*Psalmstudien II*, 21).

9. *Psalmstudien II*, 3-145. In his more recent study (*The Psalms in Israel's Worship I* [New York: Abingdon Press, 1962], pp. 130ff.), he has placed emphasis upon the Ugaritic materials involving Baal and Anath and has reconstructed a New Year's Festival at Ugarit.

10. A. R. Johnson, "The Psalms," *The Old Testament and Modern Study* (ed. H. H. Rowley; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951) p. 195.

11. L. I. Pap, *Das israelitische Neujahrsfest* (Kampen, 1933). For a summary of Pap's arguments presented in his book, which was unavailable to me, see Lipinski, "Les Psaumes de la Royauté de Yahwe dans l'Exégèse Moderne," *Le Psautier (Orientalia et Biblica Lovaniensia IV*; Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1962) pp. 252-254.

together too many diverse elements of the Old Testament, which never actually mentions such a festival by name.¹² Some scholars have also questioned the translation of *YHWH malak* as an enthronement cry.

Mowinckel's statements concerning external influences were too cautious for two groups of scholars, the Myth-Ritual School of S. H. Hooke¹³ and the Uppsala School of Scandinavian scholars including Ivan Engnell, G. Widengren, and Aage Bentzen.¹⁴ These two schools have advanced the idea of a ritual pattern common to the religions of the ancient Near East, involving an annual New Year's Festival in which was enacted the enthronement of the god-king who represented the community and portrayed the role of the deity in the cultic drama. Such a festival included the dramatic representation of the death and resurrection of the god, the enactment of the myth of creation, the ritual combat in which the god defeated his enemies, the *hieros gamos*, and the triumphal procession of the god-king to the palace where he was enthroned.¹⁵ Such cultic enactments symbolized ancient man's quest for order over chaos, riches over poverty, satiety over need, in short, life over death.

It is quite improbable that Yahweh was ever regarded as a dying and rising fertility god, even in the syncretistic cult of Jerusalem during the monarchy, or that a *hieros gamos* was enacted.¹⁶ The idea of divine

12. Such criticism fails to discredit Mowinckel's thesis, since he indicates that the enthronement ceremony was only one component of the larger Feast of Tabernacles.

13. The views of this 'school' are presented in several volumes edited by Hooke: *Myth and Ritual, Essays on the Myth and Ritual of the Hebrews in Relation to the Cultic Pattern of the Ancient East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933); *The Labyrinth, Further Studies in the Relation between Myth and Ritual in the Ancient World* (London: SPCK, 1935); and *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

14. I. Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (2d ed.; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967); G. Widengren, *Sakrales Ki nigtum im Alten Israel und im Judentum* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1952); and A. Bentzen, "King Ideology-'Urmensch'-'Troonsbestijgingsfeest,'" *StTh* 111 (1950) 143-57.

15. For a complete analysis of the Myth-Ritual School, see C. Hauret, "L'Interpretation des Psaumes selon l'école 'Myth and Ritual,'" *RSR XXXIII* (1959) 321-342. Bernhardt's criticisms of the two schools are most cogent (*Das Problem der altorientalischen Königs-Ideologie im Alten Testament* [SVT 8; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961] pp. 51-66).

16. H. H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 189.

kingship, while having existed in Egypt, appears questionable in Ugarit¹⁷ and improbable in Mesopotamia¹⁸ and Israel.¹⁹ The basic problem involved in this approach is in the methodology which tries to oversystematize the complexities of the ancient Near East cults. A basic assumption of this approach has been that similarities of rites and ideas could be explained only by positing one central cultic pattern and myth in a fixed geographical and historical locus, from where it spread to other cultures. This methodology goes back to Frazer, who took over the common philosophical ideas of evolutionary development current in the last part of the nineteenth century and applied them to the development of cult and myth in the ancient world. Such a scheme is not operative among present historians of religion, for it could not explain, for example, comparable rituals and myths found-among such diverse and separated cultures as those of the Incas, Chinese, Japanese, and many others.²⁰ A better methodology would be to utilize the Old Testament materials which are appropriate and then seek to illuminate with external materials.²¹

One other cultic reconstruction which should be noted is that of Artur Weiser, who places the Enthronement Hymns within the cultic situation of a Covenant Festival, an annual autumn celebration of the renewal of the covenant and the reaffirmation of the people to observe the law (II Kgs. 23:1-3; cf. Deut. 31:10-13; Josh. 24:25). The festival was highlighted by a cultic drama depicting the elements of the *Heilsgeschichte* and a theophany of Yahweh who came as king and judge.²²

Conclusion. The situation in life which gave rise to these psalms celebrating Yahweh's kingship is difficult to assess. Perhaps we may begin by noticing the traditions reflected in the Enthronement Psalms

17. Werner Schmidt, *Konigtum Gottes in Ugarit und Israel* (BZAW 80; Berlin: Alfred Topelmann, 1966).

18. H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

19. Martin Noth, "God, King, and Nation in the Old Testament," *The Laws in the Pentateuch* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957) pp. 156-175.

20. Bernhardt, *Das Problem der altorientalischen Königs-Ideologie*, p. 62.

21. Such a methodological point is emphasized by C. R. North, "The O. T. Estimate of the Monarchy," *AJS* XLVIII (1931-32) 1ff.

22. Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962) pp. 24-35. For a critique of Weiser's theory, see Kraus, *Worship in Israel* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), p. 209.

and then try to make our own suggestions as concerns a possible setting. As pointed out by Gray,²³ two traditions are present: Enthronement Psalms which associate Yahweh's kingship with creation (e.g., 93) and those which stress *Heilsgeschichte* (e.g., 47). Sometimes the two traditions are bound together (e.g. 98). Leaving for the moment the question of the date of the origin of Yahweh's designation as king, we may postulate that each tradition points to its own unique life situation. The recital of the *Heilsgeschichte* would have been most appropriate within a covenant renewal festival which existed during the pre-monarchical period (cf. Josh. 24; Ex. 24:3-8).²⁴ This festival possibly occurred within the structure of the larger Feast of Tabernacles, a festival borrowed from Canaan after the settlement and celebrated at the beginning of the New Year during the autumn according to the old Israelite calendar (Ex. 23:16; 34:22). With the rise of the monarchy a significant change was signalled in the cultus in that elements of the old federation cultus were conflated with Canaanite elements of the cultus practiced in Jerusalem by the Jebusites, David's precursors. We are suggesting that within this context the salvation history of the covenant renewal festival, the Davidic covenant, the Jebusite traditions of the worship of the central deity as king, and the recital of the creation story became integrated within a New Year's Festival.²⁵ It must be admitted that such a reconstruction is hypothetical, but it does seem to provide some structure to a complex problem. Therefore, it is within this context of a New Year's Festival that the worship of Yahweh as King occurred, producing the Enthronement Hymns.

23. Gray, "The O.T. Estimate of the Monarchy," 1-29.

24. Walter Harrelson, *From Fertility Cult to Worship* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 60.

25. Harrelson (*Fertility Cult*, p. 59) remarks: "The ancient covenant festival at the turn of the year, then, was modified in such a way as to become a festival of the New Year. Such modification occurred, in all probability, soon after the building of the temple in Jerusalem in the days of Solomon. The kingship of David probably opened the way for this change. The priesthood of Zadok, perhaps a continuation of the Jebusite religious traditions at Jerusalem, and David's own measures taken to add strength and prestige to Jerusalem continued to bring Israelite worship more directly into relation with ancient Near Eastern cultic practices."

Exegesis of Psalm 47

In our exegesis of Psalm 47 we shall attempt to concentrate on the theological traditions formative in the creation of the psalm. At the same time, an effort will be made to demonstrate how the psalm could be utilized by the cultus in an enthronement ceremony. The translation of the psalm is as follows:

Strophe I All ye peoples, clap your hands,
Shout to Elohim with a joyful cry.
For Yahweh Most High ('elyon) is fearful,
A great King over all the earth.
He has subdued peoples under us,
and nations under our feet.
He has chosen for us our inheritance,
The Pride of Jacob whom he loves. *Selah*
Elohim has gone up ('alah) with a shout,
Yahweh to the sound of the ram's horn.

Strophe II Sing praises to Elohim, sing praises,
 Sing praises to our King, sing praises.
For he is a great King over all the earth,
 Sing to Elohim an artistic psalm.
Elohim has become King over all nations,
 Elohim has taken his seat upon his holy throne.
The princes of the peoples are gathered together,
 With the people of the God of Abraham.
Because to Elohim belong the shields of the earth,
 He is greatly exalted (*na’alah*).²⁶

Strophe I

In the hymnic introitus, two parallel stichoi contain the standard call of the peoples to join in worship to Yahweh (*hari'u, tiq'u*). The two

26. Muilenburg ("Psalm 47," *JBL* LXIII [19441, 244) makes some interesting observations concerning the literary analysis of this psalm: "The strophes are of equal length, five full lines, or ten stichoi. Observe the similar phrases at the close of the first and last full lines of the first strophe. Observe that 'Pride of Jacob' and 'God of Abraham' occupy the same relative position in the strophes. Again, the place of the *Ki* line, following the opening of each strophe, is exactly the same. Finally, the most significant of all, are the key words and their position: 'Elyon,' 'is gone up,' and 'he is exalted.' "

cultic acts which the people are to perform are the clapping of hands (*tiq'u-kap*) and the cry of adulation (*hari 'u b^eqol rinnah*), both of which are performed during the coronation of an Israelite king, thus demonstrating Mowinckel's contention that the imagery of the royal ritual of Israel's kings is utilized in Enthronement Hymns.²⁷ The clapping of hands indicated the joyous acclamation of the people concerning the new king who had just been proclaimed king in the temple (II Kgs. 11:12).²⁸ In synonymous parallelism with the clapping of hands is the cultic shout, again indicative of joyous acclamation.

Hari 'u is the imperative issued to the people who are to acclaim God as King (Pss. 95:1; 98:4; Num. 23:21), more coronation language.²⁹ The imperative to 'shout forth a joyful cry' (*rinnah*) has been suggested by Wagner to be an indication of a "creedal statement, a confession of faith in a God who acts in the events of history" (Pss. 98:4; 105:43; 107:22).³⁰ The universal setting for the worship is recognized in the demand that 'all peoples' are to demonstrate their subjection to King Yahweh by these acts of acclamation.³¹

The main section of the first strophe, introduced by the hymnic *ki*, states the attributes and deeds of Yahweh which are worthy of praise. Yahweh, given the epithet 'Most High,' is to be worshipped because he is 'fearful' (*nora'*), a hymnic participle describing the awe and majesty of Yahweh which inspires the cultic adulation.³² What appears most striking is the attributing of the divine epithet '*elyon*' to Yahweh (Pss.

27. *Psalmstudien*, II, 6.

28. Cf. Nah. 3:19; Isa. 55:12; and Ps. 98:8. The last pictures the floods clapping their hands (*yimh^au-kap*), thus indicating that the forces of chaos are subject to Yahweh the King.

29. Lipinski (*La Royaute de Yahwe*, 352) states: "De ces indices il paraît resulter que la teru'a en l'honneur de Yahwe . . . consistait en une acclamation, dont le sens devait être proche de celle qui marquait l'avenement au trone des rois israélites: Yehi hammelek, 'Vive le roi!'"

30. N. E. Wagner, "רָנַן in the Psalter," *VT* X (1960) 435-441.

31. Schmidt's comment (*Konigtum Gottes*, 77) is important: "Der sog. 'Universalis' ist keine erst spat in Israel aufkommende Glaubensaussage, sondern zeichnet bereits die Kanagische Religion aus."

32. Kraus (*Psalmen*, XLII) indicates that such participles express Yahweh's characteristics, power, and actions in Hymns (cf. Pss. 66:9; 114:8; 135:21). Weiser points out that "fear for their worship is in accordance with the essential nature of the OT God; Yahweh shall be received with shouts of joy because he is a terrible God. Fear causes humility. Fear is prominent in almost every aspect of OT faith" (*The Psalms*, p. 376).

7:18; 83:19; 97:9) followed by the synonymous parallel *melek*. In these two stichoi the Canaanite influence is most prominent, since the cult uses the *Theologumena* of the high god of the pantheon, El, who was described as both king and 'Most High' in pointing to his place of eminence among the council of the gods. In pre-Davidic Jerusalem, there appears to have existed a cult of El Elyon (Gen. 14:19, 20),³³ thus allowing for the later assimilation into the Davidic and Solomonic cultus.³⁴ In the faith of the Jerusalem cult, it is Yahweh who has replaced El as the heavenly ruler.³⁵ The reference to Yahweh as King again points to the theological vocabulary of Canaan.³⁶ Though the problem of the date of such an ascription to Yahweh is a difficult one, it probably should be after the establishing of the monarchy and the official Jerusalem cultus when contact with Canaanite worship would have been most prominent.³⁷ As is common in Ugaritic sources, Yahweh's kingship is 'over all the earth'.³⁸

The kingship of Yahweh is based upon the salvific acts he has performed on Israel's behalf (vss. 3, 4). The two stichoi of verse 4

33. G. Levi Della Vida, "El 'Elyon in Gen. 14:18-20," *JBL* LXIII (1944) 9.

34. H. Schmid, "Jahwe und die Kulttraditionen von Jerusalem," *ZAW* (1955) 168-197.

35. The fact that El Elyon is worshipped as creator of heaven and earth in Gen. 14:19, 20 may indicate Yahweh is recognized implicitly as creator in Psalm 47.

36. John Gray, "Hebrew Concept of the Kingship of God," *VT* VI (1956) 277. He observes: "The psalms demonstrate that in the monarchic period the literature and liturgy of Canaan had made a distinct impress on Hebrew literature and religious thought." It should also be noted that Yahweh would probably not be worshipped as king until his 'house' was built by Solomon, as is the case with Baal (ANET, 129-142).

37. The question of the date of the reference to Yahweh as king has been debated for a long time. Martin Buber (*Konigtum Gottes* [Heidelberg, 1956]) has argued such an understanding and expression came from Israel's tribal period when Yahweh was a *Stammesfuhrer*. Albrecht Alt has placed the expression in the period between the conquest and state building ("Gedanken fiber das Konigtum Jahwes," *Kleine Schriften*, I [Munchen, 1953] pp. 345-357. Eissfeldt has opted for a period after Second Isaiah as the best time for such references to Yahweh as world king and creator ("Jahwe als Konig," *ZAW* XLVI [1928] 81-95). We feel the origin is to be found during the time of the monarchy (Isa. 6:1ff), probably during the period of Solomon.

38. Against Rosenbloom, who feels Yahweh's universal rule was developed by Second Isaiah as a result of the influence of the world empires of Assyria and Babylon which extended the domains of their respective gods ("Yahweh Becomes King," *JBL*, LXXXV (1966) 297ff.).

affirm in continuous parallelism Yahweh's defeat of the nations: "He subdued peoples under us and nations under our feet." It is at this point that Israel's unique traditions involving Yahweh as 'Divine Warrior'³⁹ are combined with the royal ideology of the Canaanite cultus. By theological reflection, Yahweh's defeat of the other nations, implying the defeat of their gods as well, demonstrates the legitimacy of his claim to the titles of 'Most High' and 'King.' Verse 5 points to the promise of the land, another important motif of Israel's salvation history. *Bahar* is the technical term for divine selection (Pss. 33:12; 78:68; 78:70; 132:13; 135:4) and has as its object *nah^alah*, a term referring to Israel's special inheritance, the land of Canaan (Deut. 4:38; 15:4; I Kgs. 8:36). The second stichos of verse 5 continues the idea of its preceding stichos: 'the pride of Jacob whom he loves' (Amos 8:7; Nah. 2:2). Yahweh's motivation for his action is his divine love ('aheb cf. Deut. 7:8; I Kgs. 10:9). Such a cultic recital of the *Heilsgeschichte* points to Israel's belief that Yahweh has demonstrated his sovereignty over all the world and thus is entitled to adoration as the World King.⁴⁰

As is common to hymns, the conclusion in verse 6 restates the basic elements of the introduction.⁴¹ In the midst of cultic worship God is enthroned as universal king. The blowing of trumpets (*shopar*) is a common cultic act (Lev. 23:23-25; 25:9; Ps. 81:4) and is especially frequent in the context of the coronation of an Israelite king (II Sam. 15:10; I Kgs. 1:34ff; II Kgs. 9:13), as well as in the enthronement of Yahweh (Ps. 98:6). The *terminus technicus* for an ark procession, '*alah*', points to a procession ascending Mt. Zion where Yahweh is to be enthroned.⁴² That such a procession occurred is apparent from II Samuel 6, 7, I Kings 8, and Psalms 24 and 134. Though the ark is not specifically mentioned in Psalm 47, the reference to God's throne in the

39. The imagery of placing the foot upon a defeated enemy's neck is common in the ancient Near East (cf. Joh. 10:24 and "The Hymn of Victory of Thut Mose III," ANET, 373-374). For an excellent study of Yahweh as Divine Warrior, see Frank Cross, "The Divine Warrior in Israel's Early Cult," *Biblical Motifs* (ed. Alexander Altman; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966) PP. 11-30.

40. The depiction of a deity leading his people to military victories is a common one in the ancient Near East (B. Albrekton, *History and the Gods*. [Lund: Gleerup, 1967]).

41. Kraus, *Psalmen*, XLI I.

42. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, p. 106.

second strophe would seem to suggest the ark. While the traditions of the ark are quite varied, it was regarded during the monarchy as the throne of Yahweh; it indicated his presence and was placed in Solomon's Holy of Holies (I Kgs. 8:12, 13; Ps. 99:1ff.).⁴³

The first strophe has combined the elements of the coronation imagery of the Hebrew kings,⁴⁴ the Canaanite adulation of the 'Most High,' the unique traditions of the *Heilsgeschichte* in cultic confession, and the ark procession in order to express the cultic praise of Yahweh as universal king. The material best fits the cultic setting of a New Year's Festival in which Yahweh's kingship is celebrated. The direct reference to the creation tradition is absent, though the reference to Yahweh as '*elyon*' may demonstrate its subtle presence.

Strophe II

The second strophe, by means of external parallelism, restates the theme of the first. This strophe is initiated by four hymnic imperatives (*zamm^eru*) which solicit praise from the cultic community. In the first two stichoi, "*lohim*" and are in parallelism. The hymnic *ki* again introduces the main section, which indicates the reason Yahweh is to be praised: "Because he is king, over all the earth." The community is directed to "Sing to God a *maskil*," an obscure word, but perhaps the best translation is 'artistic psalm' (II Chr. 30:22).⁴⁵

Verses 8, 9 continue the bases for the hymnic praise of Yahweh. God has assumed his position as king over all the nations. The imagery suggested is that of a cultic ceremony participated in by all the nations of the earth, most probably those of the Solomonic empire. *Malak 'elohim* (cf. the similar expression in other Enthronement Hymns—*YHWH malak*) is one of the most debated expressions in the Old Testament in regard to translation and function. Mowinckel, comparing it with the Akkadian *Marduk-ma Sarru*, has argued the expression *YHWH malak* should be translated as a cry of enthronement: "Yahweh has become King."⁴⁶ Kohler, basing his

43. Cf. G. Henton Davies, "The Ark in the Psalms," *Promise and Fulfillment* (ed. F. F. Bruce; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963) pp. 51-61.

44. Gerhard von Rad, "The Royal Ritual in Judah," *The Problem of the Hexateuch* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966) pp. 222-231.

45. Weiser (*The Psalms*, p. 281) points to the enigmatic nature of this designation.

46. *Psalmstudien*, I I, 40.

arguments upon I Kings 1:11, 18, feels the implication of the expression is that of a polemic against other deities. This, he argues, is indicated by the word order, subject-predicate, which places stress upon the subject. He translates: "It is Yahweh who is (has become) King, and no other."⁴⁷ Ridderbos, on the contrary, has suggested the expression *YHWH malak* describes a state of being, that is, Yahweh's royalty. The reverse order, according to Ridderbos, is necessary if Mowinckel's translation is possible.⁴⁸ Finally, Michel has translated *YHWH malak*: "Yahweh is he who exercises kingship," thus regarding the verb as describing an action of the subject.⁴⁹ As concerns Psalm 47:9 we should stress that the word order *malak 'elohim* is the most typical order for a short Hebrew sentence, thus eliminating any arguments concerning placing stress upon the subject. In our opinion the expression is best translated as "Elohim is king" or "Elohim has become king." The latter is preferred if Psalm 47 is to be regarded as, an actual enthronement liturgy that reoccurs each year in the cult (cf. I Kgs. 1:11, 13; II Sam. 15:10).⁵⁰

The question then arises as to whether *malak 'elohim* is a formula of investiture, a cry of acclamation, a formula of homage, a cry of proclamation, or an enthronement cry.⁵¹ A formula of investiture comparable to those in Mesopotamia and Egypt appears unlikely, since God is not addressed in the second person. There is also the problem of determining who would transfer the royal power to Yahweh!⁵² The argument that the expression is a cry of acclamation can be rejected, since the usual formula is *y^ehi hammelek* (I Sam. 10:24; II Sam. 16:16). That the expression could be a formula of homage is a possibility when one compares it with the expression of homage by the gods who accept Marduk as king in the *Enuma Elish*.⁵³ It is also

47. L. Kohler, "Jahwah Malak," *VT* III (1953) 188-189.

48. Ridderbos ("Jahwah Malak," *VT* IV [1954] 87-89) observes: "Will man in Hebraischen den Gedanken: J. ist König geworden, deutlich ausdrucken, so kann dies m.E. nur geschehen, in dem *Malak* voransteht."

49. D. Michel, "Studien zu den sogenannten Thronbesteigungspsalmen," *VT* VI (1956) 65.

50. Kraus, *Psalmen* I, 202, 203. Kraus believes that 47:9 has the only word order capable of the translation defended by Mowinckel.

51. For a complete discussion, see Lipinski, *La Royaute de Yahwe*, pp. 336-391.

52. Lipinski, *La Royaute de Yahwe*, p. 347.

53. ANET, 66-72.

possible to regard the expression as a proclamation of God's kingship (cf. Isa. 52:7; II Sam. 15:10; and II Kgs. 9:13). However, in our opinion, the expression of Psalm 47:9 is best seen as a cry of enthronement, since an ark procession to the temple seems to be implied. While Yahweh is confessed as eternal king in the Jerusalem cult, Psalm 47 points to the way he has proved his kingship, i.e., by his defeat of the nations in the conquest.

The second stichos in verse 9 points to Yahweh's enthronement: "God has taken his seat upon his holy throne." *Kisse'* best refers to the ark of God, as indicated by Jeremiah 3:16 and Psalm 99:1. God's ascension to the throne initiates his reign as king and judge (cf. I Kgs. 16:11).

Verse 10 points to an assembly of the nations to worship God as universal king and perhaps also implies a judgment scene. *N^edibe 'ammim* is an expression used to refer to the princes of the various nations who have been subjected by Yahweh in the conquest and in the wars of David (cf. Num. 21:18; Pss. 78:12; 107:40). An important textual problem exists in the second stichos. The MT reads: *'am 'elohim 'abraham* ("People of the God of Abraham"), which parallels the first stichos, thereby indicating that all the nations are now regarded as the people of the covenant (Gen. 12:1ff.). However, the LXX and Syriac read *'im* for *'am*, thus changing the translation to "with the God of Abraham." BH3 conflates the two readings, arguing one should read *'im 'am*: "The princes of the peoples are gathered together with the people of the God of Abraham." Perhaps this suggestion is preferable, pointing to a cultic assembly of all nations together with Israel to demonstrate their acceptance of Yahweh's rule. "The shields of the earth (*magine' eres*) belong to God" is a declaration again affirming God's universal reign.⁵⁴

The psalm closes with the theme of the entire liturgy: "He is greatly exalted." The word play involving the root *'lh* has already been indicated.

54. Cf. Pss. 89:19; 84:10. A striking parallel to "God has taken his seat upon his holy throne" is found in the Baal Cycle: "Baal mounts his throne of kingship" (Mendelsohn, *Religions of the Ancient Near East* [London: Luzac and Co., 1949] p. 257).

Conclusion

As has been emphasized in the exegesis, Psalm 47 expresses in hymnic praise Yahweh's assumption of world rulership. Such sovereignty is theologically based upon his defeat of the nations. This psalm is to be regarded as arising from the cultic context of a New Year's Festival which has as an essential component Yahweh's enthronement as king. Such an enactment of Yahweh's enthronement each year placed emphasis upon one of Israel's central affirmations: the conquest of the land by the Divine Warrior. Such a victory was recited in the cult and was climaxed by the processional enthronement of victorious Yahweh as king. The inclusion of certain Canaanite elements and components of the ritual of the coronation of the Israelite king dates the Psalm in the period of the monarchy.

The theological significance of such an affirmation of Yahweh should not be overlooked. The conception of Yahweh as world king, an idea influenced by Israel's Canaanite neighbors, raised the orbit of Yahweh's power from that of a wandering desert deity of a tribal federation to that of universal king holding the power of dominion over the earth. This faith developed such a dynamic quality that its expression gave rise to prophetic interpretations of the rise and fall of world empires as the result of Yahweh's direction of history. Such a faith in Yahweh's actions provided the basis upon which a decimated remnant could reorientate its existence even in the wake of national destruction.

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