

PSALM 74

STUDIES IN CONTENT, STRUCTURE,

CONTEXT, AND MEANING

by

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Building on the premise that "all scripture is profitable" and noting that communal lament psalms in general and Psalm 74 in particular have had little definitive treatment by conservatives, this work seeks to identify the role of Psalm 74 in the community which produced it. This process is basic for discerning its subsequent usefulness. The proposition of the study is: the present significance of Psalm 74 is best articulated on the basis of careful attention to the content, structure, and function as indicated by its own text and context.

Chapters one and two develop a comprehensive acquaintance with the vocabulary, syntax, and structure of the psalm. An initial accusatory "why?" sets the tone. Freightened imperatives bracketing a "hymn" (vv. 12-17) indirectly indict God for not intervening against "enemy" devastation of the temple mount. The psalm closes reminding God of prolonged inaction against His enemies. The structure reveals that Psalm 74 has used common language and motifs in an uncommon way, thereby producing a prayer that reflects a severe disorientation towards God. Chapters three and four, concerning context, show that Psalm 74 reflects a strikingly more dynamic relationship between God and community than is the case in polytheistic Sumerian city laments. Unique features also surfaced in comparing selected biblical psalms with Psalm 74. While Asaph psalms generally vindicate God's justice, Psalm 74 raises an unrelieved question about it. Also, as a maskil psalm, i.e., instructive (versus skillful) psalm, Psalm 74 suggests several insights into the spiritual condition of an individual or community under severe distress. In their diminishing faith they neither acknowledge personal sin nor applaud God's mercy.

The study concludes by outlining the community's views about God and itself as indicated by the psalm's language, structure, and tone. It observes that since Psalm 74 ends with no clear anticipation of resolution of its concerns, the interpreter must articulate the enduring values of Psalm 74 by referring to similar, but resolved, tensions in other biblical psalms. Finally, Psalm 74 is assessed from New Testament perspectives (i.e., Heb 4:16; 1 Cor 10-12-14; Matt 6:9-13).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACCEPTANCE PAGE	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
The Problematic Nature of Psalm 74	2
The Purpose and Proposition of This Study	3
The Need for This Study	4
The Procedure for the Study	6
Chapter one	6
Chapter two	6
Chapter three	6
Chapter four	7
Chapter five and conclusions	7
Chapter	
I. THE CONTENT OF PSALM 74	8
Introduction to the Chapter	8
Verse 1	10
Verse 2	21
Verse 3	33
Verse 4	43
Verse 5	47
Verse 6	49
Verse 7	51
Verse 8	54
Verse 9	60
Verse 10	67
Verse 11	72
Verse 12	75
Verse 13	80
Verse 14	89
Verse 15	95
Verse 16	99
Verse 17	101
Verse 18	104
Verse 19	107
Verse 20	115

Verse 21	124
Verse 22	136
Verse 23	143
A Summary of findings for Chapter One	148
II. THE STRUCTURE OF PSALM 74	152
A Definition of Structure	152
Previous Proposed Definitions	155
Gene Tucker	155
James Muilenburg	157
Claus Westermann	158
Graeme E. Sharrock	158
William A. Young	159
Meir Weiss	160
A Working Definition	161
Past Attempts to Express the Structure of Psalm 74	162
Two or Three Divisions in the Psalm	163
Four Divisions in the Psalm	164
Meir Weiss	164
William A. Young	166
Five Divisions in the Psalm	167
Folker Willesen	167
Claus Westermann	169
J. P. M. van. der Ploeg	170
Graeme E. Sharrock	171
An Analysis of the Structure of Psalm 74	173
A Translation of Psalm 74	173
Verses 1-3: Introduction	175
Structure of verses 1-3	175
A Summary	180
Verses 4-11: The Present Crisis	181
Structure of verses 4-7	181
Structure of verses 8-9	187
Structure of verses 10-11	189
A Summary	191
Verses 12-17: Past Victories	192
Structure of verses 12-17	192
A summary	197
Verses 18-23: Urgent Pleas	199
Structure of verse 18	199
Structure of verses 19-21	200
Structure of verses 22-23	204
A Summary	208
A Summary Concerning the Structure of Psalm 74	209
A Summary of Past Proposals	209
Weiss and Young	209
Sharrock	210
van der Ploeg	210

A Summary of the Present Proposal	211
A working definition	211
A synthesis of findings	212
III. THE CONTEXT OF PSALM 74: SUMERIAN CITY LAMENTS	214
Purpose and Procedure of Chapter III	214
The Meaning of Context	214
Historical context	214
Biblical context	215
Other contexts	216
Selected Sumerian City Laments as a Context	216
A Sumerian Congregational Lament	217
General Details of Composition	217
Classification of recensions	217
General Themes Common to Texts A and Ea	220
Themes in texts A and Ea	220
Relationships to Psalm 74	221
Comparisons of Texts G and Haa: Evidence of adaption	221
Comparisons Between Psalm 74 and "Oh Angry Sea"	223
Sumerian City Laments up to the Fall of Ur III	224
A Lament Concerning Lagas	224
Content	224
Style	225
Theology	226
From Urukagina of Lagas to Ibbi-Sin of Ur III	226
Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur	228
A Survey of the Poem	228
Comparison of a "Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur" to Psalm 74	231
Structure	231
Theology	233
A Summary of Contributions of Chapter III to Studies in Psalm 74	236
Contributions from "Oh Angry Sea"	236
Contributions from the "Lamentations over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur"	236
IV. THE CONTEXT OF PSALM 74: BIBLICAL PSALMS	238
Introduction	238
Communal Lament Psalms	239
Introduction	239
Occasions which call for public laments	239
1 Chronicles 16:1-5 and lament psalms	240
Characteristics of communal lament psalms	243
Psalm 44	243
Synthesis of content	243

Similarities and differences between Psalm 74 and 44	245
Contributions to an understanding of Psalm 74	246
Psalm 60	247
Synthesis of content	247
Similarities and differences between Psalms 74: and 60	248
Contributions to an understanding of Psalm 74	249
Psalm 79	249
Synthesis of content	249
Similarities and differences between Psalms 74 and 79	252
Contributions to an understanding of Psalm 74	253
Psalm 80	254
Synthesis of content	254
Similarities and differences between	
Psalms 74 and 80	255
Contributions to an understanding of Psalm 74	256
Asaph Psalms	256
Introduction	256
1 Chronicles 16:4 and Asaph Psalms	256
Superscriptions to Asaph Psalms	258
Psalm 50	259
Location and nature of Psalm 50	259
Synthesis of content	260
Contributions to an understanding of Psalm 74	260
Psalms 73 and 75	261
Synthesis of content	261
Contributions of Psalms 73 and 75 to an understanding	
of Psalm 74	262
A Survey of Remaining Asaph Psalms	264
Psalm 76	264
Psalm 77	266
Psalm 81	267
Psalm 82	268
Psalm 83	268
A summary of contributions of Psalms 76, 77, and 81-83	
to an understanding of Psalm 74	269
Maskil Psalms	270
משכיל as a Psalm Title	270
Past proposals as to meaning	270
The book of Proverbs and the meaning of משכיל	273
Conclusion	277
Psalm 44	278
The context of Psalm 44	278

How Psalm 44 is a didactic poem	279
Psalm 78	279
The didactic character of Psalm 78	279
The explicit lessons of Psalm 78	280
Psalm 88	280
Synthesis of content	280
Psalm 88 compared to Psalm 74	280
How Psalm 88 is a didactic poem	281
Psalm 89	282
Synthesis of content	282
Comparison of Psalm 89 to Psalm 74	283
How Psalm 89 is a didactic poem	283
Psalm 137, Jeremiah 24, and Exilic Judah in Relationship to Psalm 74	284
Psalm 137	284
A Survey of the Psalm	284
Similarities and differences between Psalms 74 and 137	288
Jeremiah 24	289
The placement of Jeremiah 24	289
The good figs as the exiles	290
The bad figs as resisting exile	291
Jeremiah 24: A possible meeting point for Psalms 137 and 74	292
Exilic Judah and Mixed Interests Among Its Population in Palestine	293
Exilic factions during the seige of 588 B.C	293
Factions relating to Gedaliah's assassination	294
Contributions of Studies in Psalm 137, Jeremiah 24, and Exilic Judah to an Understanding of Psalm 74	295
A Note About Possible Liturgical Use of Psalm 74	296
A Summary of Contributions of Communal Lament Psalms, Asaph Psalms, and Maskil Psalms to an Understanding of Psalm 74	299
Communal Lament Psalms	299
Psalm 44	299
Psalm 60	299
Psalm 79	299
Psalm 80	300
Asaph Psalms	300
Psalm 50	300
Psalms 73 and 75	301
Psalms 76, 77, 82-83	301
Maskil Psalms	302
Psalms 32, 78, 88-89	302
Psalm 74	303

V. THE MEANING OF PSALM 74	304
The Meaning of Psalm 74 Based upon Exegesis and Structure	304
Verses 1, 10-11 and 20: An Axis for Psalm 74	304
What the community affirms about God	305
What the community affirms about itself	306
Verses 2 and 12-17: A Recalling of the Distant Past	307
What the community affirms about God	307
What the community affirms about itself	309
Verse 3: What the Psalmist Believes about God	310
Verses 4-11: Implications and Assumptions about God by the Community	310
Verses 4-7	310
Verses 8-9	311
Verses 10-11	311
Verses 18-23: Implications by the Community about God and Itself	312
Concerning God	312
Concerning the community	312
The Meaning of Psalm 74 Based upon Surveys in Selected Sumerian City Laments	313
The Meaning of Psalm 74 Based upon Selected Studies in Other Biblical Psalms	314
A comparison of Psalm 74 with communal lament psalms and Asaph psalms	314
A comparison of Psalm 74 with maskil psalms	315
A general statement	316
An assessment of the prayer of Psalm 74 from New Testament perspectives	316
Hebrews 4:16	316
1 Corinthians 10:13	317
Matthew 6:9-13	317
Summary and conclusions	318
Concerning Content and Structure	318
Concerning Sumerian Laments	319
Concerning Biblical Psalms	319
Concerning Meaning	320
 BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CITED	 322

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AB</i>	<i>Anchor Bible</i>
<i>AM</i>	A. L. Oppenheim, <i>Ancient Mesopotamia</i>
<i>ANE</i>	W. W. Hallo and W. K. Simpson, <i>The Ancient Near East</i>
<i>ANET</i>	J. B. Pritchard (ed.), <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i>
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>b.</i>	Babylonian Talmud
<i>BDB</i>	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>BH</i>	Biblical Hebrew
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BZAW</i>	Beihefte zur <i>ZAW</i>
<i>ca.</i>	approximately
<i>CAD</i>	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CHJI</i>	W. D. Davies, L. Finkelstein (eds.), <i>The Cambridge History of Judaism: Vol. I, Introduction, The Persian Period.</i>
<i>CMHE</i>	F. M. Cross, <i>Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic</i>
<i>CPAI</i>	A. R. Johnson, <i>The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel</i>
<i>CPIP</i>	A. R. Johnson, <i>The Cultic Prophet and Israel's Psalmody</i>
<i>CPTOT</i>	J. Barr, <i>Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament</i>

<i>DNTT</i>	C. Brown (ed.), <i>Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
<i>DWEI</i>	P. D. Miller, <i>The Divine Warrior in Early Israel</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , ed. E. Kautzsch, tr. A. E. Cowley
<i>GNB</i>	<i>Good News Bible</i>
<i>HB</i>	<i>Hebrew Bible</i>
<i>IBH</i>	T. O. Lambdin, <i>Introduction to Biblical Hebrew</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>ILC</i>	J. Pedersen, <i>Israel: Its Life and Culture</i>
Int	Interpretation
<i>JB</i>	<i>Jerusalem Bible</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>KB</i>	L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, <i>Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros</i>
<i>KJV</i>	<i>King James Version</i>
LSJ	Liddell-Scott-Jones, <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i>
<i>LXX</i>	<i>Septuagint</i>
<i>m.</i>	Mishnah
MT	Masoretic Text
NA	Neo-Assyrian
<i>NAB</i>	<i>New American Bible</i>
<i>NASB</i>	<i>New American Standard Bible</i>
NB	Neo-Babylonian

<i>NCBC</i>	R. E. Clement, M. Black (eds.), <i>New Century Bible Commentary</i>
<i>NCOT</i>	A. Even-Shoshan, <i>A New Concordance of the Old Testament</i>
<i>NEB</i>	<i>New English Bible</i>
<i>NIV</i>	<i>New International Version</i>
<i>NJPS</i>	<i>New Jewish Publication Society Bible</i>
<i>OB</i>	Old Babylonian
<i>OTL</i>	G. Wright, J. Bright, J. Barr, P. Ackroyd. (eds.), <i>Old Testament Library</i>
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oud Testamentische Studien</i>
<i>PIW</i>	S. Mowinckel, <i>Psalms in Israel's Worship</i>
<i>PLP</i>	C. Westermann, <i>Praise & Lament in the Psalms</i>
<i>RHPR</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
<i>RSV</i>	<i>Revised Standard Version</i>
<i>S</i>	Seleucid
<i>s</i>	The Syriac Version
<i>SBLASP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Abstracts and Seminar Papers</i>
<i>SKL</i>	E. R. Matson, <i>A Word-Study of SKL and Its Application to the Maskilim</i>
<i>SUBH</i>	W. L. Holladay, <i>The Root SUBH in the Old Testament</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	G. Botterweck,, H. Ringgren (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TOT</i>	W. Eichrodt, <i>Theology of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TWOT</i>	R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr., B. K. Waltke (eds.), <i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>

<i>UT</i>	C. H. Gordon, <i>Ugaritic Textbook</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
<i>WUS</i>	J. Aistleitner, <i>Wörterbuch der Ugaritischen Sprache</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palastina-Vereins</i>

INTRODUCTION

"Life is tough but God is good."¹ These two clauses dramatize the predicament of the redeemed sinner. The terms of the contrast accord well with the repetitious movement from lament to praise throughout the biblical psalter. The Hebrew title of the book, *Tehillim*, indicates that the primary intent of "the book as a whole is to render praise to God."² Exodus 15, one of Israel's earliest songs, strikes this same movement.

Psalm 74 is different. This Psalm lacks both an explicit vow to praise and a direct expression of praise.³ In a book so dominated by the praise theme, one should ask how Psalm 74 fits its canonical context and how it functions as a worship piece.

Psalm 74 is a communal lament, of which there are at least five others.⁴ This Psalm is one of the longest of its

¹Ronald B. Allen, *Praise: A Matter of Life and Breath* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1980), pp. 33-34.

²Paul D. Miller, "Enthroned on the Praises of Israel," *Int* 39:1 (January 1985):8.

³Verses 12-17 have strong elements of a hymn but they may not be functioning in this psalm as an unsullied expression of praise.

⁴Pss 44, 60, 79, 80, 137.

type and will be employed in this thesis as a reference point¹ to which other biblical communal laments may be compared.

The Problematic Nature of Psalm 74

A cursory reading of Psalms 44, 74, and 79 indicates several features common to all three psalms. However, a more careful consideration of how these psalms arrange the material common to each of them suggests a rather different orientation for Psalm 74 in comparison with the other two psalms. Further, there are some subtle differences of vocabulary between Psalm 74 on the one hand and Psalms 44 and 79 on the other. Comparison of Psalms 60 and 80 with Psalm 74 tend to confirm the distinctiveness of Psalm 74 among these communal lament psalms.

The community in Psalm 74 seems to be struggling between embracing God in an appropriate relationship and accusing God of being less than faithful to His covenant. The psalm, as such, comes down on the side of the latter and the tension, characteristic of prayers of complaint, is not resolved. This lack of resolution, and the absence of attitudes on the part of the suppliant which can lead to

¹Psalm 74 has or implies all of the parts generally considered to comprise the communal lament genre. Its substantial message and the way it uses the parts is quite different from the thrust of other biblical communal laments. See Chapter II below.

resolution, make Psalm 74 uncharacteristic of other psalms with which it shares obvious commonalities.

In most psalms of complaint, the one who prays is at least on the way to a posture of forthright praise of God. The believing community in any dispensation can readily relate to this kind of a psalm.¹ Many have seen the "hymn" section of Psalm 74 (i.e., vv. 12-17) as the psalm's redeeming feature. A study of the structure of the psalm challenges this notion. If the hymn is not really praise to God, then one wonders how to express the meaning and significance of the Psalm both for its original hearers and for the subsequent believing community, which affirms the value of all the Scriptures. This dissertation seeks to articulate legitimate significances of Psalm 74 for believers today.

The Purpose and Proposition of This Study

The purpose of this thesis is to determine the role of Psalm 74 in the community which produced it. A determination of the role of Psalm 74 in its canonical context is foundational for suggesting its usefulness in post-biblical times.

The proposition of this study is: The present significance of Psalm 74 is best articulated on the basis of

¹Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), p. 78 (hereafter cited as Brueggemann, *Psalms*). Brueggemann applies the description to Psalm 88.

careful attention to its content, structure, and function as indicated by its own text and context. Defense of this proposition will proceed as indicated below under "Procedure for the Study."

The Need for This Study

Three recent journals have devoted an entire issue to Psalm studies.¹ Of the several hundred references to specific Psalms passages, these issues combine to cite only a few texts from communal lament psalms. One issue devotes an article to the New Testament use of the psalms and cites no passage from "pure" communal laments. Among the three issues, there are about four citations of these psalms.

Books on psalms studies (excluding commentaries), Bible dictionaries, and encyclopedias produced in the post-Gunkel era have a few paragraphs on communal laments. To this writer's knowledge, there is no serious published work on this category of psalms. Individual psalms in this group have received some attention in journal articles, multi-authored works, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations.

In terms of individual psalms, attention has been directed to Psalms 1, 23, 119, and several psalms commonly

¹ Paul J. Achtemeier ed. *Int* 39:1 (January 1985); Russell H. Dilday, editor-in-chief, *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 27:1 (Fall 1984); John T. Willis, "Great Truths in the Psalms" *The Seminary Review* 31:1 (March 1985); the three articles in this latter issue develop the title.

recognized as messianic. With regard to categories and classifications of psalms, attention has been directed towards individual laments, thanksgivings, and hymns.

Psalm 74 has perhaps received more attention than other psalms thought to be national laments. With the exception of Young's dissertation,¹ treatments occur in articles and short notes in journals and in brief essays in multi-authored works. Entries in literature indices for communal laments or individual psalms in that category are sparse. One reason for scarcity of direct attention to these passages may be that the New Testament appears to make sparse use of the psalms of interest to this study.² Psalm 74 and its companions tend to reflect a seemingly inappropriate spirit towards God. Perhaps they are not *perceived* as attractive.

No commentator nor critic has questioned whether these psalms belong in the canon of Scripture. Since the New Testament values all of the Old Testament,³ this writer

¹William Arthur Young, "Psalm 74: A Methodological and Exegetical Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1974; Ann Arbor, MI: Xerox University Microfilms, 75-13, 849) (hereafter cited as Young, "Psalm 74"). Differences between the present work and Young's dissertation will be evident.

²Aland lists Ps 44:22 (Rom 8:36), Ps 74:2 (Acts 20:28); Ps 79:1 (Luke 21:24, Rev 11:2), 3 (Rev 16:6), 6 (1 Thess 4:5, 2 Thess 1:8), 10 (Rev 6:10; 19:2); Ps 137:8 (Rev 18:6) in Kurt Aland, *et al. The Greek New Testament* 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Wurtemberg Bible Society, 1966), pp. 907-09.

³Matt 5:17-18, 2 Tim 3:16.

assumes it is the believer's responsibility to discern appropriate values in all of the Scriptures. These values should be based upon hermeneutically sound procedures for understanding the target passage. This dissertation seeks to help fill the lacuna with reference to Psalm 74 so that the believer can profit from this text, and similar texts in ways implied in 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

The Procedure for This Study

Chapter one

This study will first develop the content of Psalm 74 along grammatical and syntactical lines. This will generate basic acquaintance with the language of the psalm. The Hebrew text will be pointed throughout only where essential for clarity. Verse numbers are from BHS.

Chapter two

Chapter two will explore the structure and contours of the psalm. Form-critical and rhetorical criticism procedures will be evaluated for contributions which they make to sensing the emphases and moods of the psalm since the time of its composition. The approaches of Westermann and Weiss will especially be noted.

Chapters three and four

Chapters three and four will treat the context of the psalm. Chapter three begins by noting the complexity of

the phenomenon "context." Due to this complexity, these chapters must deal selectively with the matter. Chapter three briefly surveys aspects of Sumerian city laments by focusing upon some details in two laments. One of these was translated by Raphael Kutscher, "*a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha*"; the second lament, "Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur," was translated by Samuel Noah Kramer. These compositions demonstrate the nature and long history of formal religious response to national disaster in the Near East.

Chapter four will focus on a selection of biblical psalms from each of three classifications, i.e., communal lament psalms and Asaph and Maskil psalms. The first is a genre to which Psalm 74 belongs. The other two classes are indicated by the title with Psalm 74. By focusing upon these materials and comparing them to Psalm 74, the dynamic "humanness" and uniqueness of the psalm becomes sharper than if the comparisons were not made.

Chapter five and Conclusions

Chapter five will discuss the meaning of the psalm "then" and "now." It will attempt to synthesize findings from the previous chapters and draw out implications. The concluding pages will briefly review the entire dissertation and summarize factors which contribute to a full appreciation of Psalm 74.

CHAPTER I

THE CONTENT OF PSALM 74

Introduction to the Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a detailed familiarity with the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax of Psalm 74. It is assumed that this is the foundation for any discussion about the meaning of a psalm as a unit and for suggestions about its significance in the biblical canon. The approach will employ procedures of a grammatical-historical hermeneutic.

There are numerous translation challenges in the psalm but the state of the text itself is stable. Text-critical concerns arise more from unusual words or constructions than from variant text traditions. Suggestions for emendation cluster around verses 3a, 5-6, and 12. Briggs suggests that these contain glosses, so he simply deletes the relevant words.¹ Others attempt emendation. This study will address these matters as they arise.

¹Charles August and Emily Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1907), 2:151 (hereafter cited as Briggs, *Psalms*).

Several passages use common terms in unusual ways (e.g., v. 1, למה; vv. 4, 23, צרריך; v. 12, מלכי; v. 18, יהוה). The exegesis suggests implications of these terms for understanding the psalm. Syntactical and lexical studies contribute to an appreciation of the mood and concerns of the inner world of this psalm.¹ At the same time, these studies encourage comparison of other biblical materials with Psalm 74.

This chapter also notices arrangement and interrelationships of words where these factors assist in clarifying the meaning of a given verse. On this dimension as well as others, there is of necessity, some repetition between this chapter and succeeding chapters. Such overlap occurs in order to enhance the clarity of the discussion at the relevant point. Several footnote references in subsequent chapters will cite matters developed in this chapter.

¹Meir Weiss, *The Bible From Within: The Method of Total Interpretation* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1984), pp. 24-26, (hereafter cited as Weiss, *The Bible*). Here Weiss summarizes what he means by the totality of a poem. This chapter on content implements in some measure Weiss's "imperative to pay close attention to the text, to every word, to the word-order and syntax, to synonyms and metaphors [and] to unusual syntactical phenomena." This is necessary in order to gain a sense of that of which the "whole" consists (for quoted material see *ibid.*, p. 26).

Verse 1

למה אלהים זנחת לנצח
יעשן אפך בצאן מרעיתך:

Why, Oh God, are you perpetually angry?
Why does your anger smoke against
the sheep of your pasturing?

למה

The urgency of the psalmist stands out as he begins with an accusatory question, למה.¹ When man addresses למה to God, the question almost always concerns the apparent contradiction between God's calling and His behavior in relation to Israel.² Of the forty-six times in which man so addresses God, most of these contexts cast reproach upon God for this experience of contradiction.³

¹See Young, "Psalm 74." Young implies that the complaint or reproach notion is inherent in למה. In this, he follows Alfred E. Jepsen, "Warum? Eine lexikalisch and theologische Studie," in *Das Ferne und Nahe Wort*, ed. Fritz Maass, BZAW, No. 105 (Bonne: Topelmann, 1967), pp. 106-13 (hereafter cited as Jepsen, "Warum?"). Jepsen's semantic distinction between למה and מדוע is too categorical. The idea of accusation or complaint arises rather from the context.

²Jepsen, "Warum?," pp. 106-08. Jepsen seeks to distinguish למה for questions full of reprimand and reproach (Tadel and Vorwurf, p. 106) , from מדוע for questions seeking information with which he associates amazement or compassion (*Verwunderung, Teilnahme*, pp. 107-08).

³Ibid., p. 108. Seventeen of the forty-six times where למה is so used are in the book of Psalms. Curiously, מדוע does not occur in the Psalter. James Barr has tabulated the uses of למה, מדוע, מה in the Hebrew Bible

For Barr, "The most striking fact about 'Why?' in biblical Hebrew is that it is overwhelmingly a term of direct speech."¹ This factor can be easily ignored even in a careful analysis of Psalm literature. For the ten "Why?" questions addressed to God in the psalms, "the psalmists characteristically complain that God has neglected them, not that He has been excessively generous. . . ."² This is true in a high degree for Psalm 74, but to a lesser degree in some other "Why?" psalms. In Psalm 44 the psalmist affirms his innocence (Ps 44:17ff) and then asks God "Awake! Do not be angry perpetually. Why do you hide your face? . . ."³ Psalm 79 has a virtual confession of sin (Ps 79:8-9) then

(hereafter cited throughout this study as HB) in James Barr, "Why? in Biblical Hebrew" *JTS* 36:1 (April 1985):1-33 (hereafter cited as Barr, "Why? in BH"). Barr cites the figure 17 on page 9. The article includes a critique of Jepsen's earlier essay "Warum?" Jepsen tried to maintain the issue of motivation as the distinguishing feature between **מדוע** and **למה**. The former seeks information and the latter intends to reproach or accuse (See Jepsen, "Warum?," pp. 107-08). Barr shows that Jepsen's "prime example, Exod 2:18-20" where both interrogatives occur ("Why? in BH," p. 2), can be explained by other than a semantic principle of selectivity. Other principles which may dictate word choice include style (p. 10), dialect (p. 14), idiolect (i.e., individual speech habits, p. 16) and the type of sentence (pp. 19ff). Several other factors include negativity, time reference, person, and lexical collocations (pp. 24-27).

¹Barr, "Why? in BH," p. 31.

²Ibid., p. 32f. The figure, 10, excludes indirect uses of **למה**, e.g., Ps. 2:1, "Why do the nations rage?"

³Ps 44:24f, " . . . למה־פניך . . . " " . . . אל־תזנח לנצח: למה־פניך . . . " The likeness to Ps 74:1 is notable.

the question "Why should the Gentiles say, 'Where is their God?'"¹ The psalmist acknowledges God's previous good hand in Psalm 80:8ff then asks why He has recently exposed the nation to invaders.²

Six times in the HB the divine name in the vocative immediately follows **למה**. Psalm 88:15 asks why God is angry and hiding His face.³ The **למה** comes after a subdued but explicit reference to God's **חסד** and **אמונה**. Psalm 10:1 uses **יהוה למה** in asking why Yahweh is at a distance. This expression is actually in the middle of an acrostic psalm (i.e., Pss 9-10 together) in which David affirms that Yahweh is a just judge (Ps 9:8-19) and that the prosperity of the wicked will not last (Ps 10:3-15). Three times **למה** plus vocative divine name are in narrative units.⁴

Psalm 74:1 is the only instance in the HB where the interrogative and divine name *initiate* its literary unit. It is the only lament in which an accusatory complaint marks the opening and closing of the psalm.⁵

¹Ps 79:10.

²Ps 80:13.

³This is similar to Ps 44:24f. In terms of *gattung*, Ps 88 is an individual lament and Ps 44 is largely communal lament.

⁴Exod 32:11; Num 14:3; Judg 21:3.

⁵Ps 88 opens with a brief expression of confidence and closes in a similar fashion to Ps 74.

זנחת לנצח

Often an object is supplied to זנחת because the verb is considered to be transitive.¹ Transitive verbs may be used absolutely, but some have both a transitive and intransitive meaning.² Psalm 44:10 employs the past tense narration with the same verb זנחת followed by strong ׀ in ותכל ימנו. זנח here may be intransitive. The sense may be, "Yes you are angry and consequently you have humiliated us."³ By comparison, Psalm 43:2 expresses the object, indicating a transitive sense, "למה זנחתני", "Why have you rejected me."⁴

זנח in Lamentations 2:7 has מזבח׀ as an object.

Psalm 44:24, אל תזנח לנצח, reads easily as intransitive, "Do not be angry perpetually." If the transitive notion was intended, the object could have been expressed. The two clauses which follow in verse 25 both have expressed objects.

Analogies between Psalm 74:1 and 44:24 are obvious.

Some have assumed that the first common plural object should

¹E.g., "us" as in NASB, KJV.

²Reuven Yaron, "The Meaning of Zanah," *VT* 13 (1963):237. This discussion of זנח has used ideas from Yaron's article.

³In addition to Pss 44:10 and 74:1 other possible intransitive uses are Pss 44:24; 77:8; 89:39 and Lam 3:31. BDB, p. 276 mentions but does not embrace Akkadian *zenu* as a useful cognate.

⁴The object is expressed in Ps 60:3, 12 (=108:12) where the form is זנחתנו.

be implied from the sense of Psalm 74:1b. In that there are instances where an object of **נָנַח** is expressed, it seems reasonable to look for an intransitive idea in the absence of an object.¹ **נָנַח** as intransitive should be construed as an adjectival perfect

The adverbial phrase **לְנִצָּח** is ambiguous.³ Cognates to **נָנַח** occur in Syriac, "to shine, be illustrious, pre-eminent, victorious," and in Arabic "be pure, reliable."⁴ Thomas suggests that some Old Testament passages, for the noun **נִצָּח** have, rather an adverbial sense "utterly, completely," as a corollary to the noun concept "pre-eminent."⁵ He favors the superlative sense for Psalm 74:3, **מִשְׁאוֹת נִצָּח**, "desolations of the utmost ruins."⁶ Ackroyd cites LXX, **εἰς τέλος** in support of this notion.⁷

¹Ps 88:15 has **נִפְשִׁי לִמַּת תִּזְנַח נִפְשִׁי תִסְתִּיר פָּנַי מִמֶּנִּי**. **נִפְשִׁי** could be either direct object or adverbial accusative, "with me." The parallelism tends to argue for the former but the data is not definitive.

²Adjectival perfect denotes "the state of the subject without explicit reference to a past act, . . ." as noted in Bruce K. Waltke, "Hebrew Syntax Notes: A Revision of Jouon's Grammaire De L'Hebrew Biblique," unpublished notes, n.d., p. 18 (hereafter cited as Waltke, "Syntax").

³Young, "Psalm 74," p. 62. ⁴BDB, p. 663.

⁵D. W. Thomas, "The Use of **נִצָּח** as a Superlative in Hebrew," *JSS*, I (Spring 1956), 107 (hereafter cited as Thomas, "**נִצָּח**").

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ackroyd, P. R. "**נִצָּח**—**εἰς τέλος**," *ExpTim* 80 (1968), p. 126 (hereafter cited as Ackroyd, "**נִצָּח**").

While utterly, completely, or to the end may fit verse 3, all thirty instances of **לנצח** are best taken as indicating a condition which has prevailed for some time and now seems without termination. Whereas **עולם** can have either a positive or negative connotation,¹ **נצח** is almost always used with reference to a negative condition, e.g., "Yahweh will not forget his poor ones **לנצח**" (Ps 9:17).²

"Forever"³ is an abstraction foreign to the thought world of the Old Testament. The HB approaches the notion of eternity by employing concrete imagery.⁴ Thus **לנצח** in Psalm 74:1, 10, and 19 is best translated "interminably or perpetually." The first colon of Psalm 74 may be translated, "Why, oh God, are you perpetually angry?"

¹For a positive use of **עולם** see Ps 90:9; it is parallel to **נצח** and clearly negative in Isa 57:16.

²**לנצח** occurs fourteen times in the Psalms: 9:7, 19; 10:11; 44:24; 74:1, 10, 19; 77:9; 79:5; and 89:47. These references are all from lament psalms or complaint sections of mixed psalms. In addition, negative connotations are obvious in Pss 49:10, 52:7, and 103:9. Only 68:17 uses in a positive setting. Similarly, all uses outside the Psalms, e.g., five times in Job are in complaint or judgment-speech settings. **נצח** in Isa 63:3, 6 is apparently a homograph.

³As in NASB.

⁴*A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, s.v., "Time, Season," by John Marsh, p. 258-67, esp. pp. 265f. See, e.g., **גבעת עולה**, "everlasting hills," and **בטרם הרים ילדו**, "before the mountains were brought forth . . . even from everlasting to everlasting" (Gen 49:6 and Ps 90:2).

יעשן אפך

All occurrences of the verb **יעשן** are Qal.¹ At the Sinai event, as part of a theophany, the mountain **יעשן** (smoked).² Psalm 104, a creation hymn, may recall Sinai thus identifying both the covenant stipulations and the created order with Yahweh.³ David uses the language of Psalm 104:32 as he petitions Yahweh to touch the mountains so that they will smoke; i.e., he desires a theophany or divine intervention in his behalf.⁴ He equates theophany with destruction of his enemies.

Three remaining uses of the verb have Yahweh or His **קא**, anger,⁵ as the subject and His covenant people as object. Yahweh's **קא** will smoke against Israelites who worship foreign gods.⁶

¹Exod 19:18; 20:18; Deut 29:19; Isa 7:7; Pss 74:1, 80:5, 104:32, 144:5.

²Exod 19:18, 20:18. These passages envelope the decalogue.

³Commentaries on Ps 104:32 note the theophany but do not connect creation and Sinai. See, e.g., A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols., NCBC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 2:725 (hereafter cited as Anderson, *Psalms*), and Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I (1-50), Psalms II (51-100), and Psalms III (101-150)*, *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1965, 1968, 1970). This citation is from *Psalms III*, p. 47. The decalogue in the context of theophany especially notices creation.

⁴Ps 144:5.

⁵See discussion of **קא** below.

⁶Deut. 29:19.

The Asaphic singer of Psalm 80:5 addresses Yahweh in the vocative and asks, “עַד מִתִּי עֲשֵׂנָה” against the prayers of your people?” Similarly, the poet in Psalm 74:1 asks, לִמָּה, why His anger/nostril יֵעֶשֶׂן (smokes) against the sheep of His pasture. The references from Exodus 19 and 20, Deuteronomy 29:19, and Psalms 104 and 144 establish a conceptual background for the use of עֵשֶׂן in Psalms 80 and 74.¹ These psalms see Yahweh's anger against the community as a judgment theophany. The community perceived the divine anger in terms of the terrifying intensity of theophany.

אף is used 270 times in the Hebrew Bible of which 44 refer to human anger and 170 to divine wrath.² The dual normally refers to nostrils or nose (e.g., Gen 2:7). The singular אף means nose in two instances (Gen 24:47 and 2 Kgs 19:28). Each of these records the placing of a ring in a human nose, but for opposite reasons. There is no clear instance where singular אף should be taken as synecdoche, i.e., nose, for "face."³ To sum up, over 60 percent of the

¹The eighth use of עֵשֶׂן (Isa 7:14), is not relevant to this discussion.

²Saphir, P. Athyal, "The Mysterious Wrath of Yahweh" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1964), p. 10 (used by permission of the author). TDOT, s.v. “אָנִי,” by Elsie Johnson, 1:354.

³The dual אַפִּים is synecdoche for face several times. Finch suggests twenty-one times in Thomas E. Finch, "A Study of the Word, 'ap and the Concept of Divine Wrath in the Old Testament" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1975), p. 47, n. 3.

occurrences of **אָרַח** refer to divine anger. In these instances it should normally be translated "wrath" or "anger."¹ There is ambiguity in a few poetic passages.

The verb **אָרַח** occurs in lament Psalms 60 and 79 and in a lament section in Psalm 85.² Elsewhere it is found in Solomon's anticipatory prayer and in a lament statement by Ezra.³ Five times the verb expresses the Lord's anger against individuals or the nation who violated His will in specific incidents of conduct.⁴ Covenantal implications of the verb and its noun are evident.

אָרַח is usually paired with a root from the semantic field of "heat," e.g., **הָרַח** and **חַמָּה**.⁵ This factor

¹ **אָרַח** as a verb root from which **אָרַח** derives, occurs fourteen times. God is always the subject. The object is either the covenant community or a member thereof. Thus the verb is always in a context of covenantal relationship between Yahweh and the nation. (The one exception is Ps 2:12, but here the nations can turn Yahweh's **אָרַח** aside by acknowledging His king.) By comparison to the verb, **אָרַח** is used several times relative to Gentiles, e.g., Exod 4:14; Ps 2:5; Hab 3:12.

²Some regard Ps 85 as a national lament.

³Respectively, 1 Kgs 8:46 (=2 Chr 6:36) and Ezra 9:14.

⁴The objects are: Moses (Deut 1:37, 4:21); the nation in the wilderness (Deut 9:8); Aaron (Deut 9:20); Solomon, for acknowledging foreign gods (1 Kgs 11:9, cf. Deut 29:19); the northern kingdom at the siege of Samaria (2 Kgs 17:18).

⁵TDOT, s.v. "אָרַח," by Elsie Johnson, 1:353-54 and E. S. Erlandsson, "The Wrath of YHWH," *TB* 23:111-16 (hereafter cited as Erlandsson, "Wrath").

illuminates its use with עֲשֵׂה. Moses warns that אַף־יְהוָה and His zeal will smoke against the arrogant in Israel who worship foreign gods (Deut 29:19). Later David will describe a storm theophany of God: There will arise smoke from His נַאֲפוֹ (i.e., nostrils) and fire from His mouth will consume."¹ The parallelism strongly indicates nose rather than anger for אַף.

Referring to the holier-than-thou, Yahweh says, "These are smoke in my nose and fire kindling all the day."² The ambiguous relationship between nose and anger is evident in the Hebrew Bible but unique to Hebrew among the Semitic languages.³

Many agree that in so many words אַף focuses on psychosomatic effects of anger. This assumes that anger is an emotion.⁴ The idea of breathing or snorting lies in the background. The derived meaning, anger, has largely superceded the reference to the nose though the latter still persists.

¹A free translation of Ps 18:9ab to show the chiasmus: verb-subject-prepositional phrase::subject-prepositional phrase-verb. For ambiguous use see Ezek 38:18, "my fury will come up in my anger," as in NASB. KJV has "face."

²Isa 65:5; here אַף could be nose/face or anger.

³Johnson, "אַף," 1:351.

⁴Erlandsson, "Wrath," p. 112.

The divine king (74:12) as shepherd of his people is found in Psalms 95:7; 100:3; 74:1; and 79:13.¹ In these texts people are designated **צאן מרעה** יתו. Psalms 95 and 100 exhort the **צאן** (community), that since it is dependent on God, the people should worship Him. Psalms 74 and 79 complain that since the people are dependent upon God for "pasturing,"² He ought to help them in their distress. The poet employs the figure in Psalm 44:12, 23. Here the complaint is that Yahweh, in consequence of His anger, has given the people as sheep to be slaughtered, i.e., to be used as food, **מאכל**. This idea may be implicit in Psalm 74:19.³

¹See John Gray, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Reign of God* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1979), p. 266. Under the general heading of "The Reign of God in Apocalyptic" Gray discusses the convergence of three motifs, chaos, stormy sea, and God as shepherd, in enthronement psalms and other passages. Psalm 74 utilizes aspects of each of these motifs. Concerning the last, Gray states on page 325, "The Shepherd is well known in royal texts from the ancient Near East as a figure for the king." Additional passages include, e.g., Ezek 34:15, 23, 31 (cf. here John 21:15-17, Pss 23:1; 80:1; and Isa. 53:7.) For a massive treatment of "shepherd" as royal terminology, consult Donald L. Fowler, "The Context of the Good Shepherd Discourses" (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981).

²By comparison with **מרעה**, **מרעה** ית is a noun of action pointing not to the place of feeding but to the shepherd in the act of feeding. See BDB, p. 954. Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), 2:329 (hereafter cited as Delitzsch, *Psalms*) calls **צאן מרעה** ית "a characteristically Asaphic expression."

³Ps 74:19 may imply this idea, cf. pp. 108-110 below.

The Psalm begins with an "accusatory interrogative," probing God with two questions. The first is a general question concerning God's interminable anger. The second question is more specific and has an implicit incongruity. Why is God venting His theophanic-type wrath against the sheep He is supposed to feed?

Verse 2

זכר עדתך קניית קדם
גאלת שבט נחלתך
הר־ציון זה שכנת בו:

Remember your appointed assembly
which you created long ago
When you redeemed the tribe which
is your inheritance
Even Mount Zion, this place
in which you dwelt.

זכר עדתך

The Qal imperative זכר with God as subject has an identifiable matrix of use in the Bible. A convenient starting point is the preterite ויזכר in Exodus 2:24. In the general context of God's preparing Moses for the Exodus, the enslaved Israelites cry to God for relief, "and God heard their cry and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob," זכר and ברית both occur.

The first imperative with God as subject is in Exodus 32. The golden calf has incited Yahweh's anger in verse 10, ויחר־אפי. He wanted to destroy the nation but

Moses interceded, "Why Oh Yahweh does your anger burn against your people" (Exod 32:11a). In verses 11b-13 Moses uses three factors to motivate God not to destroy. (1) God has brought them out of Egypt, by a mighty hand. (2) Why should the Egyptians mock God and say that He brought the nation to the mountains in order to destroy them? Verse 12 shares the following words with Psalm 74: **למה**, **ולכלתם**, **כלה**, Ps 74:11), **אף**. (3) Remember, **זכר**, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!¹ Here Moses reminds God of His covenant obligation. Exodus 2:24 and 32:10-13 combine to form a background for a major perspective in Psalm 74. **זכר**, **ברית**, **אף**, **כלה**, and **למה** demonstrate lexical and conceptual ties between Psalm 74 and Exodus material. The covenantal thrust of **זכר** in Psalm 74 is enhanced by its object, **עדתך** which presumes a community.² **לברית** **הבם** in verse 20 further embellishes the covenantal atmosphere in the psalm.

Following the Lord's instruction to Jeremiah to give a devastating message of judgment, the prophet himself responds to the message of doom with a communal lament,

¹Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 32 (hereafter cited as Childs, *Memory*). Childs states that – **זכר ל** "is a technical term which bears a specific juridical meaning, . . ." but only with God as subject. Moses recounts this Exod 32 prayer to a later generation (Deut 9:26-27).

²Ibid., pp. 35-36. Childs mentions that **עדה** with **זכר** is covenant terminology.

"Have you completely rejected Judah or have you loathed Zion? . . . Do not despise for the sake of your name. . . . Remember and do not annul your covenant with us (Jer 14:19a, 21a). In addition to synonyms, Jeremiah 14:19-21 and Psalm 74 share the words נאץ, שם, זכר, and ברית. Where God is the subject, most other uses of imperative זכר are either complaints or petitions in behalf of a threatened or suffering people.¹

Several studies have explored the meaning of זכר in the HB.² Pedersen sought to show that thought and action were viewed as one in the Hebrew psychology.³ Barr and Childs, however, deny the identity and believe rather that זכר has a semantic range that includes the intellectual aspect of remembering and the willing-acting aspect.⁴ While affirming the distinction, Child's still asserts "God

¹זכר is one of several imperatives commonly used in the petition of complaints. See Herman Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Einleitung in die Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1933), p. 128 (hereafter cited as Gunkel, *Einleitung*).

²For bibliography see TDOT, s.v. "זכר," by H. Eising, 4:64.

³Johanes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) 1:99-101, 106-107 (hereafter cited as Pedersen, *ILC*).

⁴Childs, *Memory*, pp. 22-23; James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 34. Barr's comments relate to the problem in general, not to זכר specifically.

remembering always implies His movements toward the object of His memory."¹

The urgency of the imperative זָכַר is underlined by Psalm 88:6 which notes that those whom God does not remember are forsaken among the dead and are like the slain who lie in the grave.² As the psalmist implores God to remember, he is, in fact, asking God to take appropriate action to relieve the distress of the community.

עֲדָה is derived from יָעַד, "to appoint, designate."³

The noun refers to a "company assembled together by appointment or acting concertedly."⁴ It is used of the Israel of the Exodus 115 times, primarily in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.⁵ Psalms uses it nine times.⁶ Psalm 68:31 employs עֲדָה figuratively for a herd of bulls threatening God's people. This illustrates the idea of banding for concerted action. Six of the Psalms references use עֲדָה to designate a band opposed to God's people or His will. The three remaining uses designate Israel as God's

¹Childs, *Memory*, p. 34. Paradigmatic examples for the close relationship between זָכַר and action, when God is the subject, are God "remembered Noah" and subdued the waters (Gen 8:1) and God "remembered Rachel" and caused her to conceive (Gen 30:22).

²Ibid., p. 33.

³BDB, p. 416.

⁴Ibid., p. 417.

⁵עֲדָה is also used several times in Joshua 9 and 27.

⁶Pss 7:8; 22:17; 68:31; 74:2; 86:4; 106:17, 18;

111:1.

congregation in the same way as the three interior books of the Pentateuch and Joshua. The immediate context of Psalm 74:2 suggests that **עדה** intends to recall God's care during the wilderness period. The suffix on **עדתך** represents God as the possessor of the congregation.¹

קניית קדם

BDB lists two roots for **קנה**. The second is the one from which **קנה**, "stalk or reed," is derived.² **קנה**-I is the concern of this study. The fundamental meaning appears to be "get, acquire." This meaning services all but six of the eighty-four uses of this root.³ Coppes agrees with KB in supposing a third **קנה** root meaning "to create."⁴ The former, however, says, "The relation of these two roots (i.e., to acquire; to create or the two meanings of the one root) has been much debated."⁵ Each of the six passages which potentially carry the meaning "to create" can make sense with some variation of the notion "to acquire."⁶

¹Genitive of possession correlates nicely with the verb **קניית**. For this use of genitive see Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, 2nd ed. (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 11, #37 (hereafter cited as Williams, *Syntax*). The subjective genitive, i.e., "the congregation which God has appointed," is tempting.

²BDB, p. 889.

³*TWOT*, s.v. "**קנה**," by Leonard J. Coppes, 2:803-04.

⁴*Ibid.*, and KB, p. 843.

⁵Coppes, "**קנה**," p. 804.

⁶Psalm 139:13--you possessed my kidneys; you overshadowed me (reading **סכך**-I) in my mother's womb (if

The plausibility of "create" for these six instances, all in poetry, is strengthened by the use of *qny* in poetic texts from Ugarit.⁴ While Psalm 74 includes motifs from the themes of creation and the Exodus event is not always clear which of these themes lies behind the poet's choice of words as he develops his poem. Several words, as with קנה, can be applied to either of these events. The dual idea of originating ("I have produced a man") and acquiring ("I have gotten a man") are latent in the first use in Genesis 4:1. Psalm 139:13 strongly supports the idea "to create" as an appropriate rendering of

קנה-II, then "created" as NASB, NIV, is better).

Genesis 14:19, 22--"Blessed be El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth." This rendering emphasizes the thought of control without specifying how God secured control of the universe (NASB and KJV),,

Deuteronomy 32:6--"Is he (i.e., Yahweh) not your father, your possessor? He made you and established you." The key words are אב, קנה, עשה, כון. The first two terms could emphasize control, but in parallel with and they probably focus on origination. (For origination in קנה cf. BDB, p. 888.)

Psalm 78:54--"He brought them (His people) unto the border of His holy place, this mountain which His right hand acquired. Coppes prefers "created" here but acknowledges that this is not clear, (cf. Coppes, "קנה," p. 804). This is the most ambivalent of the six passages which allegedly support the idea "to create."

Proverbs 8:22--"Yahweh possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old" (as in NASB, KJV). The note in NIV suggests, "Yahweh brought me forth at the beginning of His way," implying not creation, but some idea like "at the beginning, His works were clothed in wisdom."

⁴UT, 51:3:26, 30; 4:32.

the root.¹ Genesis 14:19, 22 pairs nicely with Genesis 1 to suggest the legitimacy of "to create."

קדם may have either a temporal ("aforetime; ancient time") or spatial ("in front, east") reference.² The temporal idea may, in turn, refer to God (Ps 55:20), the time of creation (Prov 8:22, 23), the time of the patriarchs (Mic 7:20), the conquest (Ps 44:2-4), before current stresses (Lam 1:7, 5:21), or some time in the indefinite past (Isa 45:21; Lam 2:17).³ The use in Psalm 74:2 refers to the time when the nation was formed, i.e., the Exodus. The clause קדם קניית is an asyndetic relative clause.⁴

גאל שבט נחלתך

גאל differs from פדה in that the former emphasizes either the privilege or duty of redemption.⁵ The primary

¹Harriet Brundage Lovitt, "A Critical and Exegetical Study of Psalm 139" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1964; Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, Incorporated, 64-11, 304), pp. 138-41. In addition, one may note that גאל and קנה may be part of a broken pair in Exod 15. (vv. 12-13) pairs with קנה (vv. 16-17). Both occur in clauses and together they envelope an account of the dread of the Gentiles as Israel will march to Transjordan. The use of קנה here also is ambiguous.

²BDB, 869.

³John Philip LePeau, "Psalm 68: An Exegetical and Theological Study," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1981, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 8128429), pp. 223-224, n. 481 (hereafter cited as LePeau, "Psalm 68").

⁴GKC, p. 488, #155n.

⁵TWOT, s.v. by R. Laird Harris, 1:144. פדה, by comparison, stresses "the transfer of ownership from one

feature is the kinsman relationship.¹ The four situations which the root addresses are: 1) freeing encumbered land (Lev 25:25ff) or a relative who had sold himself for his debts (Lev 25:48); 2) redeeming property or non-sacrificial animals which had been dedicated to the Lord (Lev 27:11ff); 3) serving as the avenger of blood, i.e., legally taking the life of the murderer of his relative; (4) functioning figuratively in the Psalms and prophets as a designation of God as Israel's **גאל**.²

The responsibilities of the **גאל**, as such, and the law of levirate marriage are two distinct issues. These have been brought together in Ruth 4.³ God as **גאל** does not involve the levirate custom. The root with God as subject focuses on: 1) His special relationship to Israel which He initiated; 2) the fact that He had already bought His people out of Egyptian bondage. The implied question to God of this third clause is, "will you not act to preserve your inheritance for which you have already paid a price?"

to another through payment of a price or an equivalent substitute." For this statement see, *TWOT*, s.v. "פדה," by William B. Coker, 2:216.,

¹Harris, "גאל," p. 144.

²Ibid., see also *TDOT*, s.v. "גאל," by Helmer Ringgren, 2:350-55.

³Eryl W. Davies, "Ruth IV 5 and the Duties of Go'el," *VT* 33:2 (1983) :233-34. **גאל** stresses relationship/responsibility. **פדה** stresses the act/means of redeeming.

שבט denoted a rod for beating grain (Isa 28:7). It was also an instrument for counting sheep (Lev 27:32) or disciplining a slave (Exod 21:20) or a son (Prov 23:13-14). The development of שבט to denote a sceptre or mark of authority is understandable (Gen 49:1). The meaning "tribe" is derived from the word's association with rulership. The idea "tribe" is its most frequent use.¹ Wolf describes the three instances of שבט נחלתך as "questionable passages" as to interpretation of שבט.² He hesitantly suggests "Psalm 74:2 probably refers to Judah only."³

In a polemic against idol-makers Jeremiah contrasts these with Yahweh's people. The passage (Jer 10:12-16) is framed by creation themes and terminology.⁴ A storm theophany (v. 13) is juxtaposed to the description of the idol-maker (14-15). Verse 16 has four cola. The first and third are in synonymous parallelism:

לא כאלה חלק יעקב . . .
וישראל שבט נחלתך

¹*TWOT*, s.v. "שבט," by Bruce K. Waltke, 2:897. See also C. Umhau Wolf, "Terminology of Israel's Tribal Organization," *JBL* 65(1946):45-49 (hereafter cited as Wolf, "Terminology").

²Wolf, "Terminology," p. 46 n. 5. The passages are Jer 10:16; 51:19; Ps 74:2.

³*Ibid.*

⁴The creation of earth and heaven is described by using the roots, נטה, כון, עשה (v. 12). Verse 16 alludes either to the creation of all things or specifically to יוצר, with the participle יעקב.

חלק and שבט are both predicate nominatives in the construct.

Their respective genitives may be construed as appositional:

not like these (i.e., idol-makers) is the portion
that is Jacob. . . . and Israel is the tribe which
constitutes His inheritance.

In this complex structure חלק and נחלתך are broadly synonymous.¹ Here שבט is synonymous with the whole nation.

Jeremiah 10:12-16 is in a context anticipating the coming seige and destruction of Judah at the hands of Babylon, though the latter is unnamed in this passage. Jeremiah 51:15-19 repeats Jeremiah 10:12-16 but in a context announcing the future destruction of Babylon.

Psalm 74:1b and 2a seem to look back to the "creation" of the nation, i.e., the Exodus. שבט, therefore, should be read as a reference to the nation prior to the conquest and settlement in tribal allotments.

נחלתך is the noun נחלה plus a 2ms suffix whose antecedent is אלהים from verse one. God has נחלה forty times in the HB.² Thirty-three times נחלה refers to God's

¹One must be very careful in what he understands by "synonymous." Generally, this study assumes that all biblical words are used discreetly. No two terms are interchangeable. This is generally the position of Rosenbaum in Stanley Ned Rosenbaum, "The Concept 'Antagonist' to Hebrew Psalmography: A Semantic Field Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1974; Ann Arbor, MI: Xerox University Microfilms, 74-28.010); see, e.g., pp. 9, 83, 106 (hereafter cited as Rosenbaum, "Antagonist").

²LePeau, "Psalm 68," p. 105.

people.¹

Young reads נחלה as a genitive of location, "the tribe of your patrimony."² This has general support from the six passages cited above and from some uses of *nhl* in Ugaritic literature.³ It is preferable here to use the more common referrant and read a genitive of apposition, "the tribe which is your inheritance." Coupled with גאל the third clause emphasizes the value of the nation to God and His responsibility to preserve it.

הר־ציון שכנת בו

הר־ציון is syntactically parallel with עדתך and שבט נחלת. שכנת is the predicate of a relative clause for which there is no formal relative particle. זה a near demonstrative, informs the reader that the psalmist is an eyewitness to the catastrophe to which he alludes. Mount Zion is singled out as the place where God has dwelt.

Qal of שכן occurs 111 times, twenty-eight of which have God as subject.⁴ Twelve instances of Piel and three of

¹Ibid. Four of these, 1 Sam 26:19; 2 Sam 14:16; 21:3; and Jer 50:11, could as well have the land as the referrant. In addition, the word refers to God's mountain (Exod 15:17), the city of Abel and Beth-Maacah (2 Sam 20:19), the site of the Ezekiel (Ezek 45:1) and Solomonic (Ps 79:1) temples and the entire land of Israel (Jer 2:7; 16:18).

²Young, "Psalm 74," pp. 67-68.

³UT, 'nt III.27, IV:64.

⁴TWOT, s.v. "שכן," by Victor P. Hamilton, 2:925.

Hiphil also have God as subject. There are four uses of Qal in Psalms, plus one each of Piel and Hiphil with God as subject. Psalm 135:21, part of a hymn, lauds Yahweh who dwells in Zion. Psalm 68:17 and 19, in a mixed psalm, use the verb in a description of the mountain God has desired.

The fourth use, Psalm 74:2, is a bitter reminder to God that He had, in fact, dwelt or "tented" in Mount Zion.¹ The presence indicated by שֹׁכֵן is always considered "out of the ordinary and therefore provisional," characterized by a certain "precariousness."² Hamilton believes that יָשַׁב is reserved to describe man's dwelling among men. It is seldom used for God's dwelling on earth though it is frequently used to describe God's abode in heaven.³ When יָשַׁב and שֹׁכֵן are used of God, יָשַׁב indicates transcendence and distance, while שֹׁכֵן indicates immanence and nearness.⁴ שֹׁכֵן is

¹J. Albert Soggin, *Old Testament and Oriental Studies* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1975), p. 144. Soggin suggests "literally: 'put up the tent, camp': this term appears in some . . . (biblical) texts and in the papyri of Elephantine as a technical term for the expression of the divine presence in the sanctuary. . . ."

²Ibid.

³Johnson, "שֹׁכֵן," 2:925. 1 Kgs 8:27, "will God indeed יָשַׁב on the earth?"

⁴Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 245-46, 299, 323-24 (hereafter cited as Cross, *CMHE*). שֹׁכֵן and יָשַׁב are in parallel fifteen times but only three have God as subject, i.e., 1 Kgs 8:12-13 = 2 Chr 6:1-2; Psalm 68:17. For further data on usage of שֹׁכֵן and יָשַׁב see LePeau, "Psalm 68," pp. 153-54. For Ugaritic *skn* see *UT*, #19.2414.

frequent in the tabernacle pericopes of Exodus and the temple passages in Ezekiel. In sum, **שכנת, נחלתך, גאלת, קניית** all stress the intimate relationship between Israel and God. To this fact the psalmist calls God's attention.

Verse 3

הרימה פעמיך למשאות נצח
כל־הרע אויב בקדש:

Raise your steps toward the utter
desolations;
The enemy has damaged everything
in the sanctuary.

הרימה פעמיך

The emphatic imperative **הרימה** specifies precisely the way in which God is to remember. The juxtaposing of the two words is a *hapax legomenon*.¹ Margolis, followed by Kissane, emends to **הדום**, "footstool," as a metaphor for temple.² LXX has ἔπαρον τὰς χεῖρας σου ἐπὶ τὰς ὑπερηφανίας αὐτῶν εἰς τέλος. . . (Ps 73:3a). The translator read **יד** because feet or steps was too difficult.³ Briggs retains the text: for verse 3a but regards it as a gloss for the last clause of verse 2. He translates the half-verse,

¹Briggs, *Psalms*, 2:1.52.

²Max Margolis, "Miscellen," *ZAW* 31 (1911):315 and Edward Kissane, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols. (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1954), 2:12 (hereafter cited as Kissane, *Psalms*).

³**יד** and **דום** occur together in Exod 17:11, Num 20:11, and elsewhere.

"which your footsteps exalted to everlasting dignity."¹ It is best to retain the imperative and regard **הרימה** as a call for a new theophany.²

This expression descriptively identifies the place to which God should come. If the root is **נשא**, the meaning is "deceptions" but if **נשא**, the meaning is "devastations."³ The superlative sense of **נצח** is useful here.⁴ Verse 3b supports the idea of total devastation.

כל־הרע אויב בקדש

The prominent position of **כל** underscores the totally devastating nature of the activity of **אויב**. It is apparently the direct object.⁵ **רעע** in Hiphil with **ב** means "to do injury or hurt," thus "to damage."⁶

The parent noun **רע** is frequently juxtaposed to **טוב** (cf. Gen 2:9, 17) and has a dual meaning of: 1) wrong in relation to God's intention and 2) "detrimental in terms of

¹Briggs, *Psalms*, 2:152, 157.

²Young, "Psalm 74," p. 70. This also is essentially Weiser's view in Artur Weiser, *The Psalms*, trans. Herbert Hartwell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 518 (hereafter cited as Weiser, *Psalms*).

³BDB, pp. 674 and 996, respectively. LXX reads **נשא**, **ὑπερηφάνιας**, "haughtiness"; Briggs reads **נשן** but gives a very different sense; see above, p. 25, n. 4.

⁴Thomas, "נצח," p. 107 and NAB. KJV, NASB and RSV retain the temporal idea.

⁵Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 2:329.

⁶*TWOT*, s.v. "רעע-I," by G. Herbert Livingston, 2:854.

its effects on man."¹ It is significant for the tone of the psalm that **טוב** does not occur. The dual meaning of the noun carries through the verb. In Psalm 74:3, however, emphasis is on the first sense, though the second is indirectly applicable from the viewpoint of the psalmist.

This verb may be a deliberate understatement for extreme destruction and evil. Its close connection with **כל**, the preceding **משאת**, and the more complete description of ruin in verses 4-7, all support the idea of an understatement. The notion of total destruction seems to go beyond the Maccabean profanation and so argues against that late date. There is a contradiction between this violent action and its locus, **בקדש**. What was sacred and set apart has been violated. Verse 3 functions as a transition and in other ways.²

צר and **אויב**

It is appropriate, in connection with verse 3, to give attention to the concept of "the enemy." There are six relevant words strategically placed in this poem. Verses 3b and 4a use **אויב** and **צרים** with two words separating them.³ **צר** and **אויב** occur with one word between them in verse 10.

¹Ibid.

²See comments under discussion of structure, p. 178.

³I have cited the absolute plurals in this paragraph, where the text has suffixed plurals.

אויב and עִם־נֹבֵל are separated by two words in verse 18.

Verse 22 uses נֹבֵל. Verse 23 separates צָרִים and אוֹיֵב with one word. The immediate discussion introduces the topic and then focuses on אוֹיֵב and צָרִים. Other terms will be considered as they occur in the psalm.

History of Research

A history of research into the identity of the enemy in the book of Psalms may conveniently begin with Hermann Gunkel.¹ He represents a transition in that history. While he set psalm study as a whole in a new direction, he largely conformed to pre-form-critical studies in his conclusions about the enemy. The psalms in the Psalter were composed by pious individuals or groups relatively late, though they were patterned after psalms used in the first temple.² Insofar as a historical setting could be proposed for a given psalm, such a setting suggested a probable identity for the enemy.

Sigmund Mowinckel, Gunkel's student, agreed that the psalms were originally cultic compositions. He asserted, however, that they were written specifically for use in the

¹This review draws much from John Keating Wiles, "The 'Enemy,' in Israelite Wisdom Literature." (Ph. D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982; Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 8227850), pp. 8-18 (hereafter cited as Wiles, "Enemy").

²Gunkel, *Einleitung*, pp. 209-11

pre-exilic temple.¹ He propounded that the פועלי יִאֵן (workers of iniquity) were sorcerers and demons whose curses had brought illness to the suppliant.² This religious identity of the enemy was in line with the cultic tradition which Mowinkel believed the Psalms to reflect--an annual New Year Festival.

Commentators since Mowinkel have agreed that the biblical psalms did originate in the Israelite cult.³ They varied on the identity of the cult tradition. On the issue of the enemy, Schmidt saw them as accusers of the psalmist in a judicial sense.⁴ For Schmidt this helps account for the protestations of innocence. To this point enemies in the communal laments were generally regarded as political or military enemies from outside the state.

Harris Birkeland categorically insisted that "the enemies of the individual were in principle identical with those of the nation, viz, the gentiles."⁵ Birkeland started

¹Thus the title for the work by Sigmund Mowinkel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2 vols., trans. I. Ap-Thomas (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 1:xxiii, 29.

²Ibid.

³Weiser, *The Psalms*, pp. 35-52. Weiser espoused an annual Covenant Renewal Festival

⁴Hans Schmidt, *Die Psalmen*, (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1934), p. 42 (hereafter cited as Schmidt, *Psalmen*),

⁵Harris Birkeland, *The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms*, (Oslo: Dybwad, 1955) p. 29 (hereafter cited as Birkeland, *Evildoers*); Wiles, "Enemy," p. 11.

with the concrete terms זָרִים, עֲמֵי, and גּוֹיִם in five individual laments.¹ Further all royal psalms which mention the enemy are national enemies.² He claims the "I" in national laments, which seems anomalous, where the enemy is a foreign power, supports his thesis. Birkeland concludes that since more than twenty individual psalms are concerned with a national enemy, the remaining ambiguous references are likely to follow this path. The "myth and ritual" school, with its cultic drama of the dying and rising king, equates the "I" of the psalms with the king.³

One must grant that descriptions of national enemies and of unidentified enemies are much the same. However, the language is sufficiently elastic to apply to more than one kind of enemy.⁴

Wiles makes three statements based upon past interpretation regarding the enemy in the psalms.⁵ These considerations are useful in discussing the enemy in Psalm 74. (1) Sometimes the enemies are stereo-typical and

¹Birkeland, *Evildoers* p. 14.

²See Pss 18, 20, 21, 28, 61, 89, 144, and 1 Sam 2:1-10.

³Wiles, "Enemy," pp. 13-14.

⁴With Birkeland, *Evildoers*, p. 10. for a "myth and ritual" position see Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p. 170.

⁵Wiles, "Enemy," pp. 17-18.

deliberately ambiguous in order to suggest various kinds of hostility. (2) Sometimes the enemies are gentiles. (3) Sometimes an Israelite did have personal enemies from within the nation in a manner suggested by certain psalm titles.¹

אוֹיֵב

The wholistic world-view reflected in the Old Testament precludes ease in differentiating between terms in a given semantic field.² Absolutely precise shades of meaning of some terms are elusive. Much Psalmic vocabulary is specialized. Contrasts between words for "antagonist" and words from other semantic fields (e.g., צָדִיק, גּוֹיִם) make this clear. Such specialization is "in part a function of the Hebrew language itself."³

אוֹיֵב is a common Semitic root.⁴ The Ugaritic *'yb* is

¹The relevant psalms are 3, 7, 18, 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, and 59; cf. Wiles, "Enemy," pp. 5-6. Though these psalms are individual laments, it is an easy step from personal to party antagonisms.

²"Wholistic" here means that the Old Testament is not concerned to define and analyze its own vocabulary and concepts in terms of precise categories. Its expression is descriptive and relational.

³Rosenbaum, "Antagonist," p. 107. Rosenbaum asserts that the language of the psalms is particularly specialized. He bases this on two assumptions. "There are no synonyms in a natural language. Secondly, liturgical poetry is compact and uses words in a more strict manner than some other kinds of literature. Both assumptions are found on p. 106.

⁴Ugaritic--*'yb*, Akkadian--*ayyabu*; Canaanite--*ibi* (in EA 129; 96; 252:28); see *TDOT*, s.v. "אוֹיֵב," by Helmer Ringgren, 1:212.

used in terms dealing with war, and as designations of Baal's enemies.¹ Akkadian *ayyabu* occurs in both historical and religious texts.² The king "boasts of having destroyed the enemies of the land in obedience to the command of the god." Often such enemies are unnamed. Similarly, the enemy in biblical laments "could be national foes, personal adversaries, sorcerers, or demons; but their work is often described in such general terms that it is difficult or even impossible to determine their identity. . . ."³ Though the identity of the enemy in Psalm 74 at first seems to be foreign invaders, the issues are more complex than this.

The verb **אִיב** occurs only in Exodus 23:22 where it is parallel with **צָרַר**.⁴ The nouns, **אֹיִבִּיךָ** and **צָרְרִיךָ** are cognate accusatives of the respective verbs in this text.⁵ The enemy may be personal (as in Ahab's view of Elijah, 1 Kgs 21:20), or a nation which opposes God's people. The enemy is usually named in historical texts but is undesigned in parenetic passages, Solomon's dedicatory speech (1 Kgs 8:33, 34) and in Lamentations and Psalms.

¹War, *UT*, 1012:10, 17, 29; mythological, *UT*, 'nt 3:34 and 4:48-49. (Each of these has *'ib* parallel to *srt* as in Ps 74:3-4.

²Ringgren, "אִיב," p. 212. ³*Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁴In general, **אִיב** means "to be an adversary."

⁵**אֹיִבִּיךָ** and **צָרְרִיךָ** are in successive clauses in Ps 74:3, 4; it is **צָרַר** and **אִיב** in v. 10.

Exodus 23:22 is instructive for Psalm 74. Yahweh-Elohim is the subject of אֱלֹהֵי and thus God can be an אֹיֵב. In an earlier time, when Israel rebelled, Yahweh became לְאֹיֵב ("their enemy"). "He fought against them" (Isa 63:10). The unprecedented idea that God would act as an aggressor from outside the community, against His own people, expresses itself in this passage (also Lam 2:4-5). This concept may be haunting the psalmist in Psalm. 74.¹

צָרִים

Ten psalms use צָרִים.² Rosenbaum says of these that only Psalm 74 has a "clearly historical setting."³ צָרִים has the Canaanites as subject (Num 33:55) while the noun צָרִים refers to Midianites and Kittim (Num 25:17). Even Isaiah 11:13 uses צָר in terms of international relations. These clearly identify צָר as foreign.⁴

צָרִים appears only three times (Pss 74:4, 23; 8:3) with God as the antecedent to the suffix. Forms of the verb חָרַף, "to reproach," are found with צָר words in 31:12, 6:9 19f, and 74:10. The verb נָאץ, "to revile," is never found

¹The unusual emphasis on "Your" (God's) enemy (Ps 74:4, 23, whereas Pss 44, 60, 79, 80, and 137 never explicitly refer to the enemy as *God's*) may imply that the psalmist thinks that God has mistargeted the community as His enemy.

²Pss 6:8; 7:5, 7; 8:3; 10:5; 23:5; 31:12; 42:11; 69:20; 74:4, 23; 143:12.

³Rosenbaum, "Antagonist," p. 83.

⁴Amos 5:12 and Lev 18:18 are rare exceptions.

with **צָרִים** as subject but does occur once with **אֵיב** as in 74:10. **חָרַף** occurs with **אֵיב** six times in the Psalms.¹

The choice of words in Psalm 74 is more than stylistic. **אֵיב** sometimes refers to domestic enemies and here this is likely. Internal political antagonists were common during the monarchic era.² If the object of an antagonist's **חָרַף** is an individual, the verb means "to reproach." If the object is God, then the verb means to blaspheme. If the antagonist is a foreigner, then blasphemy is inappropriate regardless of the object.³ **נֹאֵץ** is normally used for negative relationships between God and Israelites.⁴

צָרִים are foreigners who in Psalm 74 are characterized by **שָׁאֲגוּ**, roaring, and **קָוָלוּ**, shouting. If **צָרִים** of Psalm 8:3b are characterized by shouting, then these are seen in sharp contrast to the utterances of babes and sucklings in 3b. God is able to use the weak who are submissive to him to confound the consummate opposition of roaring foreign

¹Pss 44:17; 55:13; 69:18-19; 74:18; 89:52-53; 102:9.

²2 Kgs 18:17-25 implies pro-Egyptian and pro-Assyrian elements in Judah. The division of the Solomonic kingdom (1 Kgs 12) demonstrates the reality of internal political factions.

³Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 203. In 1 Sam 17:26 means "insult."

⁴For **נֹאֵץ** with Israel as subject and God as object, see Num 14:11, 16:30; Isa 1:4, 5:13; Jer 23:17; 2 Sam 12:14; for the reverse see Deut 32:19; Jer 14:21; Lam 2:1.6. Cf. Rosenbaum, "Antagonist," p. 87, n. 30.

enemies in league with Israelite malefactors.¹ In sum, **צָרַר** tends to denote verbal rather than physical opposition in all its psalms uses. This comports with the idea that **צָר** does not primarily designate one engaged in physical combat or warfare.

Verse 4

שֶׁאֵגוּ צָרָרִיךְ בְּקֶרֶב מוֹעֵדֶךָ
שְׁמוֹ אֹתָתָם אֶתֹת:

Those harassing you have roared
during your appointed feast
They have set up their standards
as the signs.

שֶׁאֵגוּ צָרָרִיךְ

The verb **שֶׁאֵג** occurs twenty times, always in Qal stem. Twice it is used concretely of a lion roaring.² Once the roar of a lion and thunder are fused.³ All remaining instances, except one, use the lion's roar figuratively.⁴ In eight of these the Lord roars, usually from His heavenly or earthly abode, and eight times an enemy, usually Gentile, roars against his anticipated prey.

שֶׁאֵג in Psalm 74:4 is ironic; God's enemy is roaring in gloating triumph on the site of God's temple. The enemy as **צָרָרִים** focuses on his oppressive measures of military

¹Ibid., p. 87.

²Judg 14:5; Ps 104:21.

³Job 37:4.

⁴In Ps 38:9 it is the roar of guilt for sin.

occupation. In that **צָרַר יךְ** is a participial substantive, the suffix is nicely construed as objective genitive.¹ "Those harrassing you have roared during your appointed feast."

בְּקֶרֶב מוֹעֵדְךָ

Lamentations 2:1-11 describes the devastation that befell Jerusalem in 587/586. **אֲדֹנָי**, the sovereign Lord, withdraws restraint from Judah's **אֹיֵב**.² He Himself bends His bow like an **אֹיֵב** and stations Himself against Jerusalem like a **צָר**. He destroys her palaces and fortresses (vv. 3-5). Lamentations 2:6ab is particularly significant.

וּיְחַמֵּס כַּגֵּן שָׂכֹו שַׁחַת מוֹעֵדוֹ
שָׂכַח יְהוָה בְּצִיּוֹן מוֹעֵד וְשַׁבַּת
(Lam 2:6ab)

"He laid waste His covert like a garden; He ruined His assembly."³ **שָׂכֹו** is His booth or tent.⁴ David affirms that the Lord will hide him in **סִכְהָ** where the word is parallel with **אֹהֶל** (Ps 27:5). **סִכְהָ** is a place of divine presence.

¹BDB 865. For objective genitive see, GKC, p. 416, #128h and p. 438, #135m.

²**אֲדֹנָי** is the subject of verbs denoting aggressive and violent actions against Jerusalem, its fortresses, institutions, and power structure. Some of the verbs are: **יַעִיב** (v. 1); **בִּלְעַ**, "utter destruction," (Piel stem v. 2); **שַׁחַת** (vv. 5-6); **וּיְחַמֵּס** (v. 6); **זָנַח** (v. 7; cf. Ps 74:1).

³Delbert R. Hillers, *Lamentations AB* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1972), p. 32.

⁴This is the only place in the Old Testament with **שַׁחַת**; elsewhere it is **סִכְהָ**.

On the strength of the parallelism in Lamentations 2:6a, **מועד** is a place of appointed meeting. The root is **יעד**, "to appoint." Its Arabic cognate means "to promise, threaten, predict" while the Akkadian *adu* means "perh. . . . decide."¹ The noun **מועד** ranges between appointed time and appointed place.²

מועד as appointed time, or festival, occurs in Lamentations 2:6b. Here, **מועד** forms a hendiadys with **ושבת**. The second noun functions as an attributive adjective to the first.³ With emphasis on the adjective, the **ל** itself may be emphatic.⁴ "And Yahweh has caused even the Sabbath feast to be forgotten in Zion." This use of **שבת** confirms the meaning feast for **מועד** in Lamentations 2:6b.

Psalms 74:4 and 8 may conform to Lamentations 2:6 in the use of **מועד**. **מועדי** (v. 8) as the object of **שרפו** is clearly a place. **מועדך** (v. 4) is less clear. The psalmist may have been an eyewitness to these events.⁵ If so, perhaps he heard the shouts of the occupying enemy while the worshippers were assembled. Thus, **מועד** here may mean

¹BDB, p. 416, but cf. *CAD*, 1:1:13ff.

²BDB, p. 417.

³E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (London: Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1898; reprint ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 1968), pp. 657, 491, 506.

⁴GKC, p. 484, #154, n. 1.

⁵The poet of Lam 2 surely was an eyewitness.

feast. One might argue, however, that place is intended on the strength of "place" :being implied in the second colon.

שְׁמוֹ אוֹתָתֶם אֹתוֹת

The root for **אוֹתָתֶם** is **אוֹת** "to mark, describe with a mark."¹ The noun in this basic sense occurs with reference to Cain.² The plural denotes the military standards or banners of the twelve tribes as they prepared to leave Sinai.³ This may be the sense of the suffixed plural in Psalm 74:4.⁴ The **עֲרָרִיךָ**, oppressors, set up their military standards on the temple site.

A second possibility is to read the **אוֹתָתֶם** as religious symbols on analogy with the plating on an earlier altar, which was an **אוֹת** to the sons of Israel that they not repeat the sin of the sons of Korah. Aaron's rod was placed in the ark as an **אוֹת** against the same rebellion.⁵ This sense accords well with the probable usage in Psalm 74.9

¹BDB, p. 16. ²Gen 4:15. ³Num 2:10.

⁴J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1879), 1:26 (hereafter cited as Perowne, *Psalms*); also A. Cohen, *The Psalms* (London: The Soncino Press, 1968), p. 237. Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 201, also takes this view, but he proposes a curious emendation. He moves the suffix n to initial position on the following word and translates "they set up their emblems by the hundreds." This relieves the problem of accounting for a final accusative **אוֹתָתֶם** but is speculative, unrealistic, and unnecessary.

⁵Num 16:38, 17:110; as with Delitzsch *Psalms*, vol. 2, p. 330.

where the reference is likely to religious symbols. Given the profound inter-relationship between official religion in the ancient Near East and warfare, pagan religious symbols is plausible. The cultic orientation of Psalm 74 enhances this interpretation.¹ The second **אתות** is best construed as an adverbial accusative of comparison.² The double occurrence is striking, perhaps to contrast the pagan religious signs with the disappearance of the signs of God's holy presence in verse 9.³

Verse 5

יודע כמביא למעלה
בסבך-עץ קרדמות:

One was known as one who raises
axes in a thicket of trees.

"The sense of verse 5 . . . and its relation to verse 6 have been completely misunderstood by our translators."⁴ On the basis of available data only approximate

¹Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976) p. 266, opts for military standards.

²In line with remarks in GKC, p. 375, #118r, n. 2.,

³For **את** as symbol and "attestations of divine presence," see BDB, p. 16, and Kidner, *Psalms*, p. 266.

⁴This is from J. F. McCurdy's note in C. B. Moll, *The Psalms*, trans. with additions by C. A. Briggs, *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n. d.), p. 421 (hereafter cited as Moll, *Psalms*). Bittenwieser calls vv. 5-6 "hopelessly corrupt" in Moses Bittenweiser, *The Psalms. Chronologically Treated*

meanings can be assigned to these terms, but the general thrust seems clear.¹ A soldier was known (Niphal imperfect) according to his ability to raise axes in a thicket of trees, i.e., the more vigorously he engaged in temple destruction, the better his reputation. Verse 5 presents a simile of a soldier's action. Verse 6 describes results of that action on temple property.

Driver labels this verb "obviously corrupt" and suggests emending it to ידעו or ידעו.² Either emendation depends upon a hypothetical Hebrew root דעה equivalent to the attested Arabic root *da'a* III which means "to pull down."³ Driver also suggests re-dividing למעלה and transposing לרדמות so that it immediately follows the participle.

Earlier, Hyatt sought to retain the MT by proposing that root ידע "is sometimes cognate with Arabic *wd'* in the sense of 'to be quiet,' 'at rest,' 'submissive!'"⁴ He translates the verse "Smitten at the upper entrance is the

with a New Translation (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1969), p. 613 (hereafter cited as Bittenweiser, *Psalms*).

¹Perowne, *Psalms*, 2:27.

²G. R. Driver, "Hebrew Notes," *JBL* 68 (1949):57-58.

³Ibid.

⁴J. Philip Hyatt, "A Note on 'Yiwwada' in Ps 74:5,," *AJSL* 58(1941):99.

wooden trellis-work with axes."¹ In terms of leaving the text intact and making sense of the material, this solution is commendable.

Rahlf's edition of LXX attaches **יודעו** to verse 4 yielding for verses 4b-5a "signs (pointing) to the upper entrance they knew not."² This rendering fails to recognize the chiasmic structure of verses 5 and 6. Another expedient is to emend to **יגדעו** from "**גדע**, to cut, hew." Kissane translates "They are cut down as if one had brought up axes in a thicket of trees."³

Verse 6

**ועת פתוחיה יחד
בכשיל וכילפת יהלמון:**

And now its carvings with felling
tools and axes they have totally
destroyed.

MT reads **ועתה** for **עת**. LXX has ἐξέκοψαυ, perhaps from **כתתו**, "to beat," "crush," "hammer."⁴ Some versions have apparently read **עתתו**, "to bend," "make crooked," "pervert."⁵ **פתחים** means engravings "on (wood overlaid with)

¹Ibid.

²Also JB.

³Kissane, *Psalms*, 2:10, 13; see also Schmidt, *Psalmen*, p. 141, GNB, :RSV, and NIV; cf. BDB, p. 154.

⁴BDB, p. 510.

⁵NEB appears to translate **עותו** "they ripped," while JB uses "hacking."

metal" as in the temple (1 Kgs 6:21, 22, and 29).¹ Perhaps the reference is to "valuable metal objects (and) . . . decorative plating."² יחדו is an adverbial accusative, "altogether" or all.³

The first of two instruments is probably derived from כשל, "to fall," hence a "felling tool" of some kind. The יהלמון were axes of some sort.⁴ The imperfect ועתה it emphasizes the action in progress and with initial ועתה it may reflect an eyewitness account.

In spite of the difficult words, MT makes sense as it stands. A straightforward translation is best. Verse 1 presents a threatened flock. The enemy roared like a lion in verse 4. The soldiers smash the temple carvings, as woodsmen felling trees. The imagery of forests, flocks, and lions appear together also in Zechariah 11:2-4.

Verse 7

שלחו באש מקדשך
לארץ חללו משכן־שמך:

¹BDB, p. 836. The noun also refers to stone engravings, see Exod 28:11, 21, and 36 and Zech 3:9.

²Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:540.

³BDB, p. 403.

⁴Both words are *hapax legomenon*. כשיל is rare in Aramaic, but it is used in the Targum to Jer 48:22 (BDB, p. 506), כיל פות is a loan word from Akkadian, *kalapu* (BDB, p. 476; *CAD*, 8:66).

They have ignited your sanctuary
with fire
They have totally profaned the dwelling
place of your name

שָׁלַח in Piel often has a negative connotation.¹ It is paired with בָּאֵשׁ three times in addition to Psalm 74:7 (Jdg 1:8, 20:48; 2 Kgs 8:11).² צָרַרְיָךְ (v. 4), as the subject of שָׁלַח, suggests that setting fire to the sacred precincts was not an act of the invading armies but rather an act of oppression by those who occupied Jerusalem after her defeat.

The significance of מִקְדָּשׁ is best seen in relationship to the second colon of the verse. The root קָדַשׁ basically means separated or dedicated. This latter idea is concretely illustrated by its use to designate prostitutes in the pagan cults (Gen 38:21-22, a female prostitute; Deut 23:18, a male prostitute).

Yahweh's presence (Exod 3:5) set apart, or dedicated, a place. Moses must remove his sandals because the ground is קָדַשׁ, "holy".

Another perspective on קָדַשׁ appears when it is distinguished from חָל, a noun derived from חָלַל, the main verb of 74:7b. When David requested bread for his men from the priest at Nob, the priest answered, חֵל לֹחֶם חֵל "there is no

¹But for positive use see Exod 4:23, 5:2; Gen 8:7f; Jer 17:8; Pss 80:12, 44:20.

²Also – בָּאֵשׁ, Hos 8:14; Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12; 2:2, 5; Ezek 39:6.

common bread," **כי אם לחם קדש**, "but only holy (dedicated) bread."¹ Whether the bread was **חל** or **קדש** did not depend on a quality inherent in the bread.

This same idea is evident in Genesis 2:3 which reports that **אלהים** sanctified, **ויקדש**, the seventh day. That day was the same as the other six in terms of Genesis 1:14, but it was made uncommon, or set apart for special use by God. Yahweh accuses Israel, through Ezekiel, saying, **ואת חלל מאד**, "They have greatly profaned (i.e., made common, like any other day) my sabbaths."² **קדש** and **חלל** appear together in a theological setting in Leviticus 22:31-33. Yahweh's self-identification, **אני יהוה**, occurs at the end of each verse. The prohibition in verse 32 is, **ולא תחללו את שמי קדשי**, "You shall not profane (make common) the name of my holiness (distinctness, separateness)."³

¹ 1 Sam 21:5. The priest indicates that the men can eat the bread if they are **קדש**, i.e., have not recently had sexual relations. David affirms, **ויהוכלי הנערים קדש**; even though their journey has been **חל**, common. Though there are religious connotations in the passage, a basically non-theological, concrete contrast between **קדש** and **חל** is evident. **חל** denotes what is common, plain, ordinary, whereas **קדש** denotes what is set apart to special use, uncommon, non-ordinary. The background for the priest's requirement may be seen in Lev 15:18 and 21:1-9, especially v. 6.

² Ezek 20:13 (also vv. 16, 21, 24). Jeremiah accuses the upper classes of his day **את שמי ותחללו** -- "You turned and profaned (made common) my name" (Jer 34:16).

³ **קדשי** appears three times in v. 32: **קדשי**, **ונקדשתי**, and **מקדשכם**.

Psalm 74:7 may be an instance of calculated irony.

The enemy has profaned or treated as common, **חלל**, Yahweh's **מקדש**, a place of Yahweh's separateness from what is common.¹

The praying community is distressed that Yahweh permits the enemy to treat His earthly abode in a way that is anti-theological to its intended significance.

מקדש refers to both the tabernacle and the temple.

The word occurs seventy-four times. The **מקדש** appears to be the location of the ark of the covenant.² **מקדש** identifies a variety of objects including the desert tabernacle (Exod 25:8), Israelite sanctuaries (at Shechem, Josh 24:26, Bethel, Amos 7:13), pagan sanctuaries (Tyre, Ezek 28:18), the second temple (Neh 10:40), and Ezekiel's temple (Ezek 43-48, et al). Twice it refers to Yahweh as the sanctuary of His people (Isa 8:14, Ezek 11:16). Psalm 96:6 is the one instance which may refer to Yahweh's heavenly abode.³

LePeau translates Psalm 68:36:

Fearful is God from His sanctuary
for God of Israel is He.
Giver of strength and mightiness
to the people blessed of God.⁴

¹Ps 74:7b. The object of **חלל** is **משכן**. The latter is parallel to **מקדש** in the first colon.

²1 Chr 22:19 and 28:10.

³This survey is from LePeau, "Psalm 68," p. 230.

⁴Ibid., p. 229.

Widely regarded as a poem from the united monarchy, Psalm 68 has elements of a victory hymn. This concluding verse sees God in His fearful strength, moving out of His earthly abode. This is a stark contrast to the enemy setting fire to God's **מקדש**.

Verse 8

אמרו בלבם נינם יחד
שרפו כל-מועדי-אל בארץ:

They have said in their heart,
"Let us oppress them completely."
They have burned all the meeting
places of God in the land.

נינם יחד

GKC calls Psalm 74:8 a "very corrupt passage."¹ He takes **נינם** as a substantive rather than imperfect Qal with suffix.² BDB interprets the form as a verb with the meaning "to suppress," but acknowledges that elsewhere the meaning is to oppress.³ Lisowsky lists eighteen appearances of the root including Jeremiah 24:38, 46:16, 50:16, and Zephaniah

¹GKC, p. 218, #76f.

²Ibid.; LXX also interprets as a noun, **συγγένεια αὐτῶν** in the sense of a kinship group (*LSJ*, p. 1659): "They said, 'in their heart the whole brood of them are (set) upon this. . .'" (see *The Septuagint Bible*, trans. Charles Thompson, ed. Charles Arthur Muses, 2nd ed. [Indian Hills, CO: The Falcon Wing's Press, 1960], p. 931).

³BDB, p. 413.

3:1, but not including Psalm 74:8.¹ Even-Shoshan lists fifteen appearances including Psalm 74:8, which he indicates as the only Qal entry. He does not include the passages listed above. BDB lists these passages with Psalm 123:4 as having a Qal participle used absolutely.² All agree on the remaining fourteen uses of יָנַח, all of which are in Hiphil. The object with Hiphil is often גֵּר, עֲנִי, אֲבִיּוֹן, widows, or orphans, i.e., people who are powerless to protect themselves.

יָחַד is an adverbial accusative, similar to the accusative of number.³ BDB suggests that it is used in poetry as a synonym for כָּלֵם, but that יָחַד is more forcible, combining the ideas "all at once as well as altogether."⁴

שָׂרְפוּ כָל־מוֹעֲדֵי־אֵל בְּאֶרֶץ

LXX and Syriac read a cohortative, נִשְׁבַּתְיָה or נִשְׁבַּתְיָה,
"Let us cause to cease from the land." The LXX translates

¹The concordances cited in this and the following sentences are Gerhard Liskowsky, *Konkordanz Zum Hebraischen Alten Testament*, Zweite Auflage (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1981) and Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament* (Jerusalem: "Kiryat-Sefer" Ltd., 1983).

²BDB, p. 413.

³A. B. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1912), .p. 99 #69, r. 3 (hereafter cited as Davidson, *Syntax*).

⁴BDB, p. 403; italics in original.

as "from," a widely attested use in Ugaritic literature.¹

It also interprets the difficult **מועדֵי** as feasts. Perhaps this latter word influenced the use of **נִשְׁבַּת**. LXX translators could not account for a plurality of meeting places.²

מועדֵי־אל is the most vexing element in Psalm 74:8.

Aquila interpreted this as synagogues, prompting the idea that the psalm was Maccabean since the synagogue cannot be confidently dated earlier.³ Some alternately presume the date of the psalm to be exilic and thus rule out "synagogues" as a viable interpretation.

Since verse 7 states that the temple (i.e., **מִקְדָּשׁ**) was burned, this comports well with 2 Kings 25:9 and 587 B.C. when the temple was indeed burned. Only the porch and gates were said to be burned in the Maccabean era (1 Macc

¹Gordon, *UT*, pp. 92-93. For a good discussion of this matter see Weston W. Fields, "Ugaritic Prepositions and Hebrew Exegesis: An Expansion of *Ugaritic Textbook* Chapter 10" (unpublished term paper for the course Advanced Ugaritic Grammar, Grace Theological Seminary, Dec. 18, 1975), pp. 8-13.

²A. Gelston "A Note on Psalm LXXIV 8," *VT* 24:1 (1984):83 (hereafter cited as Gelston, "Ps 74:8").

³*Ibid.*, p. 82. Others who follow Aquila are Delitzsch (*Psalms*, 2:331), and KJV, NASB, and NIV are more general with "meeting places of God." For a summary of current views see Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Cultic Prophet and Israel's Psalmody* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1979), pp. 132-33, n. 7 (hereafter cited as Johnson, *CPIP*).

4:38; 2 Macc 1:8, 8:33). Thus, according to Gelston, "the modern consensus of an exilic date for the psalm is acceptable."¹

Assuming a Judaeian provenance, how should one understand מועד־אל? The most common meaning "appointed time" will not fit since the noun is an object of שרפו.² "Appointed gathering" or "assembly," useful in verse 4, is similarly not a suitable object.

On the basis of parallelism between מועדו and שכו in Lamentations 2:6 where both refer to the temple, מועד may clearly bear a local sense.³ This sense is the only idea suitable as an object of שרפו. Johnson's own suggestion to repoint to מועד־אל, "those who held office from God," is both improbable as an object of שרפו and lacks versional support.⁴

If "meeting places" is correct, how does one account for the plural. Galling suggests a reference to non-Yahwistic sanctuaries, taking ארץ in the broader sense of "world."⁵ He adduces 2 Kings 18:33-37 as a parallel.

¹Gelston, "Ps 74:8," p. 83. ²BDB, pp. 417-18.

³Gelston, "Ps 74:8," p. 83.

⁴Johnson, *CPIP*, pp. 132-33. See criticism by Gelston, "Ps 74:8," p. 8'87, n. 5.

⁵K. Galling, "Erwagungen zur Antiken Synagoge," *ZDPV* 72 (1956):165, cited by Gelston, "Ps 74:8," p. 84 and p. 87, n. 6.

This is improbable on three counts.¹ The context clearly focuses on Yahwism. Secondly, the psalmist would not regret destruction of non-Yahwistic sanctuaries in a lament. Finally, it is unlikely that the Babylonians would embark on shrine destruction throughout its territories.

Retaining the usual meaning of אֲרָץ, i.e., Judah, these may be local sanctuaries. Supposedly, Josiah had purged the country of rival religious meeting places. However, Josiah's successors restored the "high places," so that they may have been in use at the time of the Babylonian campaign. Since the psalmist has intense concern for the temple, as indicated by his use of מִשְׁכַּן־שֹׁמֵר in verse 7, it is not likely that he would mourn the loss of potentially rival worship sites.

S. Krauss proposed that the plural refers to the temple complex with its many buildings. He seeks support in the fact that several manuscripts read plurals in verse 4, מוֹעֲדֵיךָ and verse 7, מִקְדָּשֶׁיךָ. Rashi takes a local historical sense of the plural and refers to the sanctuary at

¹See the summary in Gelston, "Ps 74:8," p. 84.

²Ibid. This follows Gelston's general argument but rejects his erroneous assumption that Deuteronomy and the former prophets do not date earlier than the late 7th c. B.C.

³Cited by Gelston, "Ps 74:8," p. 84, with incomplete data as S. Krauss, *Synagogale Altertumer* (Vienna, 1922), pp. 49-51.

Shiloh and the first and second temples. Though Krauss appeals to Rashi it is clear Rashi is not saying the same thing as Krauss. Krauss also takes **בֵּאֵרֶץ** as a stereotyped expression which for him would otherwise be redundant. This is a gratuitous attempt.

Gelston's final and for him "most natural" option is to take the plural as a reference to other Yahwistic worship sites. While sacrifice was proper only at Jerusalem, these satellite worship sites could accommodate communal praise and prayer along with reading and exposition of Scripture.¹ Weingreen argues that these ingredients of later synagogue practice were rooted in pre-exilic times.²

There was a place of prayer at Mizpah in Maccabean times (1 Macc 3:46). It is also possible that some former "high places" were adapted for non-sacrificial aspects of Yahweh worship after the Josiah reforms.³ Only the location but none of the cultic aspects of these former high places would have been appropriated. There is insufficient evidence to designate **מוֹעֲדֵי־אֵל** as synagogues but these may be precursors to this institution which flourished in inter-testamental Judaism.

¹Gelston, "Ps 74:8," p. 85.

²J. Weingreen, *From Bible to Mishnah* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1976), pp. 120-30.

³Gelston, "Ps 74:8," p. 86.

Verse 9

אֹתֵינוּ לֹא רֵאיוּ
 אֵין־עוֹד נְבִיא
 וְלֹא־אֵתְנוּ יָדַע עַד־מָה:

Our signs we do not see.
 There is no longer a prophet
 And there is no one with us who
 knows how long.

אֹתֵינוּ

אֹתֵינוּ contrasts with אֹתָם of verse 4. There it could be either military or religious signs of the enemy. Here the immediate context demands religious signs. Verse 4 initiated a description of oppressive measures by an occupation army against religious practices of the conquered. אֹתֵינוּ begins a response which particularizes the community's sense of God-forsakenness.

Young argues that with רֵאיוּ these אֹתֵינוּ are concrete acted signs such as circumcision or the Sabbath but more likely miracles of God's power.¹ Kraus, on the contrary, asserts "אֹתֵינוּ sind hier die Offenbarungszeichen, durch die Jahu sein Einschreiten ankündigt. . . ."² As revelatory signs these would be to confirm a divine message. When

¹Young, "Psalm 74," p. 86. In this Young follows Schmidt, *Psalmen*, p. 142 and Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 202.

²Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen*, 2 vols., 5 Aufl. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1978), 2.680.

Gideon requested from Yahweh an **אוֹת** that Yahweh indeed had commissioned him, Yahweh responded by miraculously consuming Gideon's sacrifice (Jdg 6:17 with vv. 14-21). Later Samuel informs Saul that he will meet at three locations three contingents of men. At each location Saul will participate in a comparatively common encounter. As these events transpire, they become **אוֹתֹת**, confirming God's commission upon Saul to be king (1 Sam 10:7, 9 with vv. 1-6).

God gave confirmatory **אוֹתֹת** to Gideon and Saul. The sign to Gideon was a miraculous event but for Saul the signs were a series of "common" events.¹ **אוֹת** is not necessarily miraculous or spectacular. Jonathan would construe the verbal response of the Philistine garrison as an **אוֹת**, or confirmation that he should proceed with his attack (1 Sam 14:10).

This latter instance shows that **אוֹת** is also revelatory. Jonathan perceived that God's mind was conveyed through the Philistine words.² At the end of a lament David requests a revelatory **אוֹת** that his prayer has been heard. He wants to know that he is about to be delivered from his

¹The miraculous feature in the Saul commissioning account is Samuel's prediction of the events. Other "natural" events serving as signs are found at 1 Sam 2:34 and Jer 44:29-30.

²See J. J. M. Roberts, "Of Signs, Prophets, and Time Limits: A Note on Psalm 74:9." *CBQ* 39 (1977): 475-76 (hereafter cited as "Psalm 74:9").

adversity.¹ This kind of concern lies behind Psalm 74:9.

The Exodus plague narrative uses אֱתֵנָּה several times.²

One of the purposes of the plagues as אֱתֵנָּה was to impart knowledge of the true God.³ Similarly, Yahweh pronounces judgment upon people of Judah who fled to Egypt. He gave the אֱתֵנָּה of the coming death of Pharaoh Hophra that they might know the certainty of His words of judgment.⁴

The Saul and Gideon events show that אֱתֵנָּה may confirm divine action and, therefore, divine presence. At Michmash (1 Sam 14:10) and in David's lament (Ps 86:17) אֱתֵנָּה may reveal the divine will and intent. The Exodus plagues and the predicted death of Pharaoh Hophra intended to convey knowledge about God.⁵ Each of these factors may be present in Psalm 74:9.

¹Ibid., p. 476. Roberts compares a passage from *Ludlul*, "[In] waking hours he sent the message and showed the favourable sign (*ittus damqatu*) to my peoples." (Cited from W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960] pp. 50-51:46-47.)

²Exod 4-13 *passim*.

³E.g., Exod 7:3, 5.

⁴Jer 44:29-30.

⁵Helfmeyer has outlined seven functions of אֱתֵנָּה, i.e., to affirm knowledge (Jer 44:29-30); to impart knowledge (Gen 4:15; Exod 12:13); to motivate faith (Exod 4:1-9); as memorials (Exod 13:19; Josh 4:6); as covenant signs (Gen 9:17; 17:11; Exod 31:13, 17); as confirmation (1 Sam 2:34; 2 Kgs 20:8); signs (Isa 8:18; Ezek 4:1-3). For the list see *TDOT*, s.v. "אֱתֵנָּה," by F. J. Helfmeyer, 1:171-88.

ל א ר א י נ ו

ל א ר א י נ ו as a verb of perception may be translated as simple past, "we did not see," present perfect, "we have not seen," or as a general present, "we do not see."¹ The last is preferable here,² especially in that the two nominal clauses that follow are best cast into the present tense. The present idea fits well with the apparent eyewitness account of temple profanation (vv. 4-7).

א ין ע ו ד נ ב י א

Johnson notes that prophetic function was characterized by the use of א ו ת ת.³ This observation helps to explain the proximity of clauses and ideas relating to א ו ת ת and נ ב י א in Psalm 74:9. There is no prophet to bring from God an assuring word that God will act favorably in behalf of the praying community.⁴ Johnson sees the psalmist's denial of a prophetic presence as implying that

¹See Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 38, #4 (hereafter cited as Lambdin, *IBH*).

²For the clause GNB has "All our sacred symbols are gone;" NEB, "We do not see what lies before us;" NAB, "deeds on our behalf we do not see." KJV, NASB, and NIV are similar to NAB.

³Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1979), pp. 52-54 (hereafter cited as *CPAI*).

⁴This is the *perception* of the community. God's servants do not always have a correct perception; see, e.g., Abraham's expedient in relationship to Hagar (Gen 16) and Elijah's complaint (1 Kgs 19:13-18).

he is not a prophet but seeks to fill a prophetic function, namely, intercession for a needy suppliant.¹

The clause has been understood variously. Young says it is possible that "there is no longer one who has as intimate a relationship with God as did men like Abraham."² Others say that the prophets do not discharge their office.³

Roberts proposes a plausible conceptual context for the clause. Zechariah reports the same consternation on the part of the angel of Yahweh. The angel asks how long Yahweh's indignation will last beyond the predicted seventy years (Zech 1:12). Again, Hananiah's prediction of a two-year year limit on the Babylonian oppression of Judah. failed to materialize (Jer 28:3). Ezekiel attests the fact that the faith of many in Jerusalem was devastated when optimistic predictions of false prophets did not materialize. "Yahweh does not see us. Yahweh has forsaken the land" (Ezek 8:12, 9:9).⁴

¹Johnson, *Psalmody*, pp. 131-32. For the prophet as intercessor see Gen 20:7; 1 Sam 7:4-6; Jer 21:1-10, 27:16-18, 37:3-10, 42:1-22; Amos 7:2-3, 5-6 (but here see Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 267, 283-84.

²Young, "Psalm 74," pp. 86-87. The only other use of won in Pss apparently refers to Abraham, Ps 105:15.

³Kraus, *Psalmen*, 2:680; see also Ezek 7:26 and Lam 2:9.

⁴Roberts, "Psalm 74:9," pp. 479-80.

The spread of the proverb ". . . every vision comes to naught," irritated Yahweh so that He announced the end of "false vision" and "flattering divination" (Ezek 12:22-24). His word of imminent judgment will be performed without delay (Ezek 12:25). These factors demonstrate that in biblical times a true prophet could be at hand but the people may be so distraught from prolonged anguish that it seems to them there is no prophet, "whose words could be counted on to come to pass."¹

The last clause, "there is no one who knows how long" may reflect a list of prophets, who like Hananiah, had made optimistic predictions regarding collapse of Babylon and return of furniture and treasure to the temple. Indeed, in Psalm 74, especially verses 4-8, enemy presence has a high profile. Psalm 74:9 depicts the community's perception that Israelite oracular practice has failed.

וְלֹא־אֶתְּנוּ יָדָע עַד־מָה

וְלֹא as an indicator that an event will take place in a specified period of time is found in Isaiah 7:16. The Immanuel sign consists in part in indicating that within

¹This is essentially the view of Roberts on Psalm 74:9. He does date the Psalm to the exilic period, after 587 B.C. (see Roberts, "Psalm 74:9," p. 475), and suggests that the psalmist may have discounted Jeremiah as a traitor and Ezekiel as a madman. Thus, Ps 74:9 reflects a "historically conditioned failure of confidence" (p. 480). While this date may not be certain, Roberts' idea has merit, given the mood of the psalm and the malaise which it reflects.

the usual amount of time it would take this child's discretionary powers to develop, the lands of Israel and Syria will be deserted. Several predictions in the Bible have built-in time limits for their fulfillment. Unlike Isaiah 7:16 and 37:30 these do not include the use of **אֵל**.¹

All of these instances of prediction of divine judgment specify either its arrival or its duration. Roberts sites several illustrations from cuneiform texts which indicate "predetermined limits to the periods of divine wrath."² Thus, biblical and extra-biblical material attest a practice of specifying time limits on divine judgment upon the community.

It is not accidental that the first and last colophon mention **אֵל** and **עַד־מָה** respectively.³ The Psalmist is

¹Isa 37:30 indicates a three-year process as **הָאֵל** the sign that Yahweh will judge the Assyrian king. Announcements of judgment without **אֵל** include: desolation of Moab in three years (Isa 11:14); fall of Kedar within one year (Isa 21:6); breaking of the Babylonian yoke within two years (Jer 28:3); Judaeen exile and desolation of Tyre will each last seventy years (Jer 25:11-12 and Isa 23:15, 17); for brief discussion see Roberts, "Psalm 74:9," pp. 477-78.

²Ibid., p. 478 (incl. notes 18-23); e.g., Roberts quotes an omen text, ". . . the Umman-manda will arise and rule the land. The gods will depart from their daises, and Bel will go to Elam. It is said that after thirty years vengeance will be exercised and the gods will return to their place." Roberts cites from George Smith, *Cuneiform Inscriptions* III, 61 mo. 2:21'-22'.

³**אֵל־תִּינֶנּוּ** should be retained as integral with **עַד־מָה** and forming a repetition with **עַד־מָתַי** in v. 10. Battenweiser (*Psalms*, p. 616) and Young ("Psalm 74," p. 87) omit as dittography.

concerned to know "how long" the period of divine wrath then at work would last. There were neither **אֹתָת**, nor a **נְבִיא** to announce or explain an **אֹת**.

Verse 10

עַד־מַתִּי אֱלֹהִים יַחַרְףְּ צַר
יִנְאֵץ אוֹיֵב שְׁמֶךָ לְנֶצַח:

How long, Oh God, will the adversary taunt
Will the enemy defy your name perpetually.

נִאֵץ and חָרַף

The psalmist reaches a climactic point of despair with the final colon of verse 9. There is no appointed voice to inform the community of the duration of its anguish. He focuses his attention more particularly upon God Himself, allowing the devastated temple to recede. He takes up the question of "how long" the adversary will revile God's name.

חָרַף-I occurs as a verb thirty times, twenty-four of which are Piel. Goliath *defied* Israel's armies (1 Sam 17:10, 26). The Rabshekah *reproached* the Lord (2 Kgs 10:22, 23). Idolatrous Israelites *blasphemed* the Lord on the mountains (Isa 65:5).¹

חָרַף is perhaps an Aramaic root meaning to be sharp, keen, acute, hence the Hebrew verb may mean "to say sharp

¹Renderings of נִאֵץ are from KJV.

things against, to taunt."¹ It may also connote "to cast blame."² The verb is placed opposite **כבד**, to honor (Prov 14:31). He who oppresses the poor does **חרף** to his Maker, whereas kindness to the poor, **כבד**, honors God. Thus, one taunts God or says sharp things against Him by improper treatment of the poor. Zebulun as a tribe, valiant in war, was said to **חרף** their life even to death (Judg 5:18).³

To sum up, in general **חרף** means to scorn or dishonor, often by verbal taunts. The **צר** in v. 10 is the foreign occupation force attempting to keep defeated Jerusalem under control. Verbal taunts of verse 10 by **צר** expands the notion of **שאגו**, roars (v. 4) by God's **צריך**.

נאץ is similar to **חרף** in that the latter spews forth contemptible speech, whereas the former is more likely to be active, e.g., treat with contempt or to treat scornfully. **נאץ** denotes an action or attitude whereby a former recipient of a favorable disposition or service is consciously viewed or treated with disdain.⁴ Nathan informs David that, **נאץ** **יהוה** **את אויבי יהוה**, "You have utterly caused the enemies of

¹BDB, p. 537.

²*TWOT*, s.v. "**חרף**," by Thomas E. McComiskey, 1:325-26; e.g., if the pupil does well the teacher will not be blamed (Job 27:11).

³See C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, trans. James Martin, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprint ed., 1960), p. 319.

⁴*TWOT*, s.v. "**נאץ**," by Leonard J. Copper, 2:543.

Yahweh to scorn" (or blaspheme--2 Sam 12:14).¹ The implication is that not only has David despised Yahweh or consciously treated Him with disdain,² but he has driven others to do the same. Rather than affirming Yahweh, David denies Him. The ideas of affirmation and denial are juxtaposed by the use of **לֹא־יֵאֱמִינוּ . . . יִנְאָץ** in a Yahweh complaint to Moses when the congregation sought to stone Joshua and Caleb.³

יִנְאָץ generally denotes a negative relationship between God and Israel.⁴ It never has **צָר** as subject. Psalm 74:10 and 2 Samuel 12:14 are the only places that have as subject.⁵ Since **אֹיְבֵי** designates hostile people, whether within or outside the nation, here it may include hostile

¹The Piel often has causative force. See GKC, p. 141, #52g. On 2 Sam 12:14 see Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *1 and 2 Samuel*, trans. J. S. Bowden, OTL (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), p. 315.

²Coppes, "יִנְאָץ," 2:543.

³"And Yahweh said to Moses, how long (**עַד־אֵנָּה**) will this people **יִנְאָצְנִי** (scorn me) and how long **לֹא יֵאֱמִינוּ בִּי** (will they not believe me)" (Num 14:11). While **יִנְאָץ** and **אָמַן** are not antonyms, when placed in antithetical relationship, the words are located in generally opposite semantic fields.

⁴Hertzberg notes that God or divine things are the object of **יִנְאָץ** 13 times (*1 and 2 Samuel*, p. 315). The following have God as subject. Deut 32:16, Jer 14:21, Lam 2:6, Ps 10:3.

⁵Ibid.; though 2 Sam 12:14 has **אֹיְבֵי יְהוָה** as the syntactical object the causative force of the Piel makes the object a virtual subject. Rosenbaum, "Antagonist," p. 85 excludes 2 Sam 12:14.

Israelites.¹ The idea of some Israelites joining with the foreign occupation to vex the godly has precedent in the monarchic era.² The idea is further strengthened by Psalm 74:18. **נבל** in the Bible generally refers to an Israelite.

עם־אבל (v. 18) and **אויב** (v. 10) each function as subject of **נאץ**.

Lexical studies in 74:10 suggest that **חרף** concerns defiant, taunting, or reproachful speech by Israelite or foreigner. **נאץ** denotes an action opposite to affirming God and may promote conscious disdain of God. A non-Israelite is never unambiguously construed as a grammatical subject of **נאץ**. Since **אויב** includes both Israelites and foreigners, it is quite likely that the **אויב** in 74:10 is an Israelite. The psalmist's complaint is "How long, oh God, will the foreigner speak reproachfully? Will the hostile Israelite perpetually disavow your name?"

אויב and **צר**

צר and **צור** in Psalms are of sufficient frequency to be considered Psalms words by Tsevat.³ Generally, these

¹Rosenbaum, "Antagonist," pp. 76-79.

²E.g., the community considers itself to have God as Father in spite of the fact that the nation, under the eponyms Abraham and Israel, does not regard the lamenters (Isa 63:15b-16). See Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 92-93.

³Matitiah Tsevat, *A Study of the Language of the Biblical Psalms* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1955), p. 19; for his definition of a psalm word, see pp. 4 and 7.

terms refer to foreign foes throughout the HB. **צַר** and **אֹיֵב** both occur in ten psalms.¹ **צַר** with **אֹיֵב** is found in eight psalms.² None of the words commonly used as objects of hostility in Psalms (i.e., **צַדִּיק**, **יִשְׂרָאֵל**, **רוּחַ נְכוֹן**, and **חַסִּיד**) occurs in Psalm 74.³ **גּוֹיִם**, though found in other national laments, does not occur in Psalm 74.⁴ While there are numerous parallels between **צַר** and **אֹיֵב** there are none between **צַר** and **גּוֹיִם** in psalms.⁵ More than half the psalms which include **צַר** are concerned with foreign domination of Israel or deliverance therefrom.⁶

Rosenbaum suggests that the **צַר** "plans or instigates hostile action without necessarily taking part in physical combat."⁷ The **אֹיֵב** actually engages in hostile action or has declared his intent to do so. Numbers 10:9 helps to sort out these terms:

¹Pss 3:8; 13:3, 5; 27:2, 6, 12; 44:6, 8, 11, 17; 74:3, 10, 18; 78:42, 53, 61, 66; 81:15; 89:11, 23, 24, 43, 52; 106:10, 11, 42; 119:98, 137, 139. **צַר** and **רָשַׁע** occur in five psalms: 3:8; 97:10; 106:18; 112:10; 119 (*passim*).

²Pss 6:8, 11; 7:5-7; 8:3; 31:9, 12, 16; 42:10, 11; 69:5, 19, 20; 74:3, 4, 10, 18, 23; 143:3, 9, 12. and occur in 7:10; 10:2, 3, 4, 13, 15; 31:18.

³Rosenbaum, "Antagonist," pp. 117-19.

⁴Pss 44:3, 12, 15; 79:1, 6, 10; 80:9

⁵cf. Num 24:8; Mic 5:8. See Rosenbaum, "Antagonist," p. 79, n. 7.

⁶Ibid., p. 80; Pss 44, 60, 74, 81, 89, 105, 106, 107, 136.

⁷Ibid., p. 81.

When you are at war in your own land against an aggressor (צַר) who attacks (הִצַּרְר) you, you shall sound short blasts on the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the Lord your God and be delivered from your enemies (מֵאֵיתִים).¹

The צַר plans warfare (Ezra 4:1); his defeat is predicted (Deut 32:27ff, Isa 59:10, Mic 5:8); or he oppresses the defeated foe (Isa 63:18, 64:1; Ezek 39:23f). In no clear case in Scripture is the צַר cast as actually engaged in combat.²

The relationship between צַר and אֹיֵב may be summarized. אֹיֵב, as the more general term, may be either a foreign or an internal antagonist who uses physical force or has stated his intent to use the same. The צַר is often a foreign power who plans military activity or in the occupation period exercises oppressive control.

Verse 11

למה תשיב ירך
וימינך מקרב חוקך כלה:

Why do you withdraw your hand
even your right hand?
From your bosom, destroy!

למה תשיב ירך וימינך

The "how long?" of verse 10 becomes a renewed "why?" in verse 11.³ The "why" of verse 1 concerned the

¹NJPS.

²Rosenbaum, "Antagonist," p. 82.

³For discussion of למה, see above on v. 1.

inexplicable anger of God against the chosen nation. The renewed "why" concerns divine inaction against a taunting adversary.

The dynamic of verse 11 turns on its anthropomorphisms, **יִדְךָ**, **וַיִּמְיֶנְךָ**, **חֹקֶךָ**. These terms underline the psalmist's remonstrance of God. **יִדְךָ** is one of numerous references in the Old Testament to the hand of God.¹ Such uses often "point to particular acts of Yahweh."² The Lord's hand was active in the work of creation (Isa 45:12; 48:13), the piercing of the dragon (Job 26:13; Isa 51:9), and in holy war (Exod 14:3; Exod 15:6). On occasion Israel extolled Yahweh for acts of deliverance by His hand (Pss 89:10-11, 13; 98:1).³ The divine **יָד** is a symbol of God's power to effectively intervene.

תִּשְׁבֹּב here means to withdraw or to draw back. The Hiphil **מִשְׁבִּיב** describes Perez as drawing back his hand (Gen 38:29).⁴ This concrete usage supports the same idea in two figurative uses including Psalm 74:11. Jeremiah notes that

¹See Walther Zimmerlie, *A Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel 1*, trans. Ronald E. Clements, ed. Frank Moore Cross, *et al.* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 117-18.

²Ibid.

³*TDNT*, s.v. "χείρ," by Eduard Lohse, 9:426-27.

⁴**וַיִּתֵּן יָדוֹ** (Gen 38:29) is the antithesis to **יָדוֹ** (v. 28).

Adonai **ימ ינו הש יב**, has withdrawn His right hand from before the enemy.¹

The latter passage supports the notion of explanatory **י** with **וימ ינך**.² Yahweh's right hand punishes His enemies (Ps 20:8) and redeemed Israel from Egypt (Exod 15:6, 12).

The right hand also symbolizes that which is honorable (Ps 110:1). Dahood suggests that **יד וימ ינה**, is a word pair based on Ugaritic cognates meaning left hand and right hand.³ However, the general context is concerned about God's honor. Moreover, the hand is symbolic here and the left hand portrays negative symbolism, e.g., "the fool's heart is at his left" (Qoh 10:2b).⁴

מקרב חוקך כלה

The Qere is preferred for **חוקך**. The basic meaning is bosom, but the term also refers to the "folds of a garment" at the waist.⁵ This colon may be construed as

¹Ps 74:11 and Lam 2:3 concern analagous if not identical situations, i.e., divine anger allows the enemy to devastate Israel.

²See GKC, p. 484, #154a, n. 1(b).

³Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 203 and *Psalms I*, p. 163. Young, "Psalm 74," p. 92 follows Dahood.

⁴Also, **שמאל** signifies the lesser blessing (Gen 48:13-14), weakness (Judg 3:15, 21). See *TDNT*, s.v. "**κόλπος**," by Walter Grundmann, 1:38.

⁵*TDNT*, s.v. "**κόλπος**," by Rudolf Meyer, 3:824-25 and *TDOT*, s.v. "**חיק**," by G. Andre, 4:356-57.

elliptical and, in fact, containing two clauses. One could supply a word antithetical to **תשיב** in the first colon.¹

Elsewhere, God said to Moses, **השיבידך אל חיקך** then it is reported **מחיקך ויוצאה** (Exod 4:7).² Similarly, in Psalm 74:11 one might supply an imperative and its object, e.g., **הוצא ימינך**. The sense of the colon, stated with less vigor than the actual text is "from the fold of your garment *thrust forth your right hand* and *destroy the enemy*."³

כלה has been problematic. The Piel infinitive construct occurs in the sense of God's destroying or making an end of the covenant people in His anger against them (Lev 26:44).⁴ The same sense is useful here, but the form should be understood as imperative.

Verse 12

ואלהים מלכי מקדם
פעל ישועות בקרב הארץ:

Now, Oh God, my king, from ancient time!
Worker of victories in the midst of the earth!

¹For the idea of an ellipsis which depends upon the contrary of a preceding word, see Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, pp. 58-59.

²Exod 4:7 has a different setting from Ps 74 but the incidence of **השב**, **יד**, and **חיקך** encourages comparison.

³Italics indicate the proposed sense of the ellipsis. This procedure preserves both pointing and punctuation of MT.

⁴On Lev 26:44 see NASB, "destroy" and NEB, "make an end."

The Old Testament narratives emphasize the miracle of Yahweh in holy war and downgrade the involvement of human warriors. The paradigm for holy war is the exodus event extolled in Exodus 15.¹ Yahweh is a man of war. By His right hand He defeated His enemy (Exod 15:6, 12). Moses anticipates the conquest (v. 17) at which time Yahweh will secure for Israel **הַר נַחֲלַתְךָ** (i.e., "the mount of your [Yahweh's] inheritance"). These victories establish, for Israel, Yahweh's credentials to be their king.²

וְאֱלֹהִים מַלְכֵי

The lcs suffix is striking in a "we" psalm. Syriac reads first common plural. Bardtke proposes **וְאֵתָה** to conform to the first word in verses 13, 14, and 15. The **אֵתָה** is not necessary here since the verse represents a transition from bold complaint and accusatory request to what appears to be a hymn of praise. There is no textual support for inserting the pronoun.³ LePeau suggests that the suffix on **מַלְכֵי**, when it refers to God is formalized as with **מַלְכֵי** but he still

¹Millard C. Lind, *Yahweh is a Warrior* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980), pp. 23, 49-50 (hereafter cited as *Warrior*).

²Ibid., pp. 53, 69-70. Lind draws attention to the centrality of human kingship in victory hymns from Egypt and Assyria (p. 53). Yahweh is the featured leader and victor in Israel's early warfare (pp. 53, 69-70; see Exod 15, Judg 5).

³Other passages where **אֱלֹהִים** or **אֵל** is juxtaposed to **אֵתָה** include Isa 44:11; Pss 22:11, 63:2, 118:28, and 140:7.

retains the suffix in translation of Psalm 68:25.¹ מלכי appears seven times, five of which refer to God.²

Psalm 44 fluctuates between the community and an individual as the subject of the psalm. The community recalls what God did for Israel at the time of the conquest (44:2-3). They recall that it was God's ימיך and the light of His presence (44:4). They expect God anew to fight for and give them victory over their present adversaries. This expression of confidence concludes with a promise to praise the name of God (44:6-9). Verse 5 begins with a virtual direct address, אתה־הוא מלכי אלהים. The words for God and king are in reverse order compared to Psalm 74:12.³

Psalm 44:5b is a petition, "command שיעית (victories) for Jacob."⁴ The copula הוא is expressed, unlike 74:12. Further 44:5 is imbedded in a rehearsal of God's victorious deeds of the past and an expression of confidence that God will similarly work in the present.

¹LePeau, "Psalm 68," p. 178.

²Ibid.; Pss 5:3, 84:4, 44:5, 68:25, 74:12.

³The psalmist addresses יהוה as מלכי ואלהי in a Korah psalm that lauds the temple as God's dwelling (Ps 84:4). This connection between temple and kingship reminds of Isaiah 6. The psalmist acknowledges God's kingship in Psalm 68:25 on the basis of recently achieved victories over Israel's enemies, somewhat reverse to the setting of Psalm 74.

⁴For ישועות in Psalm 44:5, the following have "victories": GNB, JB, NAB, NASB, NEB, RSV. KJV has "deliverances." For ישועות in 74:12-- "salvation (s) GNB, RSV, NAB, KJV, NIV; "deliverance" NASB, "victorious" (or similar): NEV; Young, "Psalm 74," p. 93, "achiever of victories."

Then follows the complaint that, at the moment, God has rejected them. Verse 5 seems to be a genuine confession of faith in the form of an affirmation of God's kingship.

Psalm 74:12 follows sharp complaint and an accusatory request (vv. 1-11a and 11b respectively). It is not clear that 74:12a is an indicative statement affirming God's kingship. The syntax allows for a vocative and this would not require one to supply a copula. "Now, Oh God, my king from long ago. . . ." The psalmist then rehearses divine victories from ancient time (vv. 13-17) before taking up his petition again.¹

The psalmist is clear that God did achieve victories in the past but, aside from verse 12, he does not *express* confidence that God will act in accord with his petition in the future. In this respect, Psalm 74:12 differs from Psalm 44:5. This ambivalence regarding an expression of confidence, lack of a clear promise to praise, and the absence of confession of sin in the psalm, combine to raise questions as to where the psalmist is perceptually and spiritually.

We must affirm the fundamental sincerity of the psalmist's faith, but that faith has a strange posture here. Though the psalmist is explicitly concerned about the

¹The connection between Exodus and conquest victories and God's kingship reaches back to Israel's earliest poetry, e.g., Exod 15:18, Num 23:21, Deut 33:5. See Cross, *CMHE*, p. 99, and Patrick D. Miller, Jr., *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) p. 174 (hereafter cited as *DWEI*).

reproach, **קדח**, which God's enemies cast upon Him, he may be mocking God by affirming God's credentials of kingship (vv. 12a-17) in order to shame Him for not working victory in the present.¹

פעל ישועות

The psalmist ascribes to God in 12b one of the functions of kingship, i.e., to engage in warfare. LePeau finds "victory" a useful sense for **ישועה** in Psalm 68:20 because the immediate context praises God for breaking the head of His enemies, among other recollections of God's triumphant acts.² In Psalm 74:13 God will smash, **שבר**, the heads of Tanninim. Accordingly, **ישועות** is nicely translated "victories" in 74:12.

פעל occurs only in poetry and in Qal only fifty-six times.³ Seventeen of these have God as subject. The verb controls such objects as God's abode (Exod 15:17), the conquest (Ps 44:2-4), Israel's punishment (Dent: 33:27, Hab 1:5), and indirectly, **ים תנינים** and **ל ויתן** in Psalm

¹The psalmist's faith is evident in the fact that he prays. However, there are similarities between his orientation to God and Jonah's.

²The word for "break," Ps 68:20, is **ימחץ**. For **ישועה** see LePeau, "Psalm 68," p. 156. Other passages where "victory" is acceptable are 1 Sam 14:45; Exod 14:13; Hab 3:8; Pss 20:6, 21:6 (here NASB has "victory" in the margin). Each of these passages has **ישועה** in a context of military activity. See also Young, "Psalm 74," p. 96.

³*TWOT*, s.v. "**פעל**," by Victory P. Hamilton, 2:730.

74:13-14.¹ In general, with God as subject, **פעל** refers to actions which have Israel specifically in focus.² Hamilton observes that the noun refers to God's work sixteen times and always to His work in history and not in creation.³ This may be a clue to the interpretation of verses 13-17.

Verse 13

אתה פוררת בעזך ים
שברת ראשי תנינים על־המים:

You stopped the sea with your strength
You smashed heads of Tanninim upon the waters.

אתה פוררת

פרר occurs fifty-three times in the Old Testament, forty-six times in Hiphil, but never in Qal. The Hiphil has **ברית** as its object twenty-one times. Elsewhere the object includes such things as **אהות** (brotherhood), **חסד** (loyal love), and **משפט** (judgment).³ There appears to be a moral facet to the root in the Hiphil.⁴ The meaning is "to break, frustrate." The only two uses of Po'el (including Hithpo'el) are Isaiah 24:19 and Psalm 74:13. While BDB and

¹LePeau, "Psalm 68," p. 156.

²Ibid.

³Hamilton, "**פעל**," p. 730.

⁴References respectively are Lev 26:44; Zech 11:14; Ps 89:34, and Job 40:5.

⁵*TWOT*, s.v. "**פרר**," by Victor P. Hamilton, 2:738.

KB both suggest a separate root, פָּרַר-II, "to split, divide," probably a single root should be presumed.¹

Perhaps the psalmist intends to impart a moral dimension to whatever events he refers. The moral dimension between God and the created order, specifically יָם, is evident in Psalm 89:10, where Yahweh is said to מוֹשֵׁל, rule. Both Psalms 89:10 and 74:13 feature the emphatic independent pronoun אֲתָה in initial position. The use of po'el in Psalm 74 intensifies the Hiphil, i.e., God broke up the sea or completely frustrated (in the sense of stopped) the sea.

בְּעֹז יָם

The means of the action was God's עֹז, strength. The noun occurs ninety-three times, including forty-four in the psalter. Fifty-nine times עֹז describes God, often in hymnic portions.² The significance of עֹז in Psalm 74:13 is informed by the fact that except for this "hymnic interlude," God's עֹז is emphatically not evident in the psalm.³

¹BDB, p. 830; KB, p. 782.

²Exod 15:13; Pss 21:5, 77:15. Tsevat lists this as psalms language (*Language*, pp. 15, 18, 48).

³In this study, "hymn" in its various forms, when referring to Ps 74:13-17 is often placed in quotation marks. This is to remind the reader that this study regards the psalmist's use of these verses as more a means of chiding God, somewhat bitterly, than a means of praising God or expressing confidence in Him. See later discussion.

The Bible is clear that God controls the seas.¹ Day assumes that there is a "divine conflict with the dragon and the sea" in the Bible.² He then seeks to show both the fact and reasons that the Bible expressed a causal connection between the conflict and God's work of creation.³ God does make the sea tempestuous (Jer 31:35) and compares enemy nations like Assyria to the raging sea (Isa 17:12-14). There is no clear evidence that God ever viewed the actual waters as His enemy.⁴ Though conquest and control both require strength, the two are different enterprises.

God created **הָאֵרֶץ** enveloped in water then commanded the dividing and gathering of waters. Thus, dry land appeared, also called **אֶרֶץ**, and God named the gathered waters **יַמִּים** (Gen 1:1-2, 6-10). Day claims that inasmuch as "there is no longer a trace of personality within the waters a process of demythologization has taken place."⁵ Typical of those who hold to a *chaoskampf*, Day regards Genesis 1 as a

¹See Prov 8:29; Job 38:8-11; Jer 5:22b (also Jer 31:35 where God stirs up the sea so that its waves roar).

²John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 1, 4 (hereafter cited as Day, *Conflict*).

³Ibid., p. 1.

⁴For man to view waters as foreboding (as in Pss 69 and 88:18) is not equivalent to God viewing waters as a threat.

⁵Day, *Conflict*, p. 49 (italics mine).

sixth-century product of the priestly school.¹ This position presumes the basic Wellhausian re-construction of Israelite religion. Accordingly, it uses passages which allow (but do not require) mythological material in the Old Testament to control the interpretation of unambiguous material such as the statements about water in Genesis 1.

Day regards Psalm 104 as a striking parallel, but as prior to Genesis 1. He cites the mythological character of the psalm as a reason for its priority. Psalm 104:7 is an "*allusion* to the divine conflict with the sea."² Verse 26 notes God's creation of ל ויתן, whereas Genesis 1:21 uses the impersonal תנינים.³ Secondly, since חיתו (Gen 1:24) is elsewhere always in poetic material, including Psalm 124:11-12, Genesis 1 must be dependent on the poems. The reverse could as well be true, though Day does not see this. Thirdly, the bird motif in Genesis 1:2 (חַרְף, Deut 32:11) and Psalm 104:3 (wings) each time in connection with רוח (wind) argues for priority of Psalm 104.⁴ This appears to be prompted by Day's attempt to find mythological elements in Genesis 1.

יָם has been taken by many as a personal name, i.e., the Ugaritic god, Yamm.⁵ This view is supported in part by

¹Ibid., p. 53.

²Ibid., p. 52.

³Ibid., pp. 4-5.

⁴Ibid., pp. 51-53.

⁵E.g., Young, "Psalm 74," pp. 97-98 and Dahood, *Psalms II*, pp. 205-06.

תנינים and לויתן in verse 14. These are doubtless figures of speech explained and verified by other biblical usage. ים designates a large body of water more than 300 times. Seas named in the Bible include the Great Sea, also designated as both the hinder or western sea and the Sea of the Philistines.¹ The Bible identifies the Dead Sea as the salt sea and the east sea.² The Red Sea ים סוף, the sea of reeds, and the sea of Egypt. Further, ים refers to the Nile and Euphrates rivers.³ These uses combine to show that ים is a general term for a large body of water.

The notion that ים is the name of a deity presumes a particular use by the Bible of mythological terms and concepts. Young proposes that the writer (of Ps 74) "may not be drawing a distinction" between the Red Sea event and Yamm's hostile action against the cosmic King.⁴ This latter scenario further presumes a precreation chaos out of which

¹See respectively Num. 34:6; Deut 11:24; and Exod 23:31. For this survey *TWOT*, s. v., "ים," by Paul R. Gilchrist, 1:381-82.

²See respectively Num 34:3 and Ezek 47:10,.

³For references to the Red Sea, Nile, and Euphrates Rivers, see Exod 10:19; Isa 11:15; Nah 3:8; and Jer 51:36.

⁴Young, "Psalm 74," p. 98. Those with Young, who subscribe to this general construction recognize in Baal and Yahweh the Ugaritic and biblical versions (respectively) of the cosmic king. While this position acknowledges that the Bible tries to show that Yahweh is the only cosmic king and that Yahweh has none of the petty finiteness of the gods of the myths, it is not often clear whether those who subscribe to the position agree with the Bible on the absolute uniqueness of Yahweh.

God, through conflict, brought forth the ordered universe which Genesis 1:3:ff introduces.

שברת

שבר occurs 149 times in the Old Testament. Of thirty-six uses of Piel, eight are in the psalter.¹ Eighteen times in prose material this stem is used with reference to smashing idols or cultic articles.² Eight of the remaining uses outside of the Psalms have to do with acts of judgment by God or destruction of enemy weaponry or defenses by God or man. Of the eight psalmic uses, five concern God's smashing or neutralizing weaponry, defenses, or assets of the enemies of God's people.³ Clearly, שבר Piel predominantly has God as subject, as in Psalm 74:13 and controls objects which are offensive to God or menace God's people.

ראשי תנינים

ראשי תנינים as an object of שבר is ambiguous if extracted from its context in this psalm in particular and the biblical context in general.⁴ Data concerning

¹TWOT, s.v. "שבר-I," by Victor P. Hamilton, 2:901.

²E.g., images (2 Kgs 11:18, 23:14); cultic articles (Exod 31:3; Deut .12:3; 2 Kgs 25:13).

³Pss 3:8 (teeth); 46:10 (bow); 48:8 (ships); 76:4 (arrows); 107:11. (gates); Pss 29:5 and 105:33 (trees; the latter in relationship to the 7th plague against Egypt).

⁴Elsewhere שבר-I always has a concrete literal object. ראשי תנינים is the only instance of a metaphorical object.

in the HB indicates that the term refers to an enemy of God.¹

תנין occurs eight times in the singular and six in the plural. Aaron's staff became a **תנין**, serpent, when cast in front of Pharaoh. The magicians' staffs similarly became **תנינים** (Exod 7:9, 10, 12).² The prophet seeks to arouse Yahweh's strength **יהוה זרוע**, which in former days had "hewn in pieces" **רהב** and pierced **תנין** (Isa 51:9).³ He further calls for a new exodus to bring Yahweh's **גאולים** "redeemed ones," from Babylon (51:10c), as He had once brought His people from Egypt through a path which He dried in the sea.⁴ Isaiah 51:9-10 puts **רהב** and **תנין** in parallel and virtually identifies them with Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar is compared to a **תנין** who devours, crushes, and swallows his prey (Jer 51:35). **התנין** is in apposition to Pharaoh, King of Egypt

¹ **ים** in verse 13 need not be seen as an enemy of God but rather as **ים** in Exod 15--part of the creation which God manipulates to accomplish His purposes.

² A biting serpent several feet long is the sense also in Ps 91:13 and Deut 32:33.

³ **הלווא את־היא המחצבת רהב מחללת תנין** (Isa 51:9c). For **חצב** see BDB, p. 345.

⁴ **הלווא את־היא המחרבת ים מיתהום רבה** (Isa 51:10a). **חרב**-I, "to be dry," intransitive in Qal, becomes transitive in Hiphil (BDB, p. 351). Yahweh dries up rivers including the Euphrates (Nah 1:4; Jer 51:36) and a sea (Isa 50:2). The king of Assyria boasted that he had dried up the rivers of Egypt (Isa 37:25 = 2 Kgs 19:24).

(Ezek 29:3).¹ As תנין, Pharaoh is described as a fearsome aquatic with scales and tough jaws. Yahweh will abandon him to the open field where beasts and birds will feed on him.²

Isaiah 27:1a, b, c has often been compared to *UT* 67:1-3.³ The Isaiah verse may be charted in summary fashion:

Isaiah 27:1	UT 67
a. Yah will פקד (punish)	1. You will <i>mhs</i> (smite)
נחש ל ויתן (leviathan),	ltn. btn. brh (Lotan the
ברח (the fleeing serpent)	fleeing serpent) ⁴
b. even ל ויתן the twisted	2. You made an end of the
serpent (twisted= עקלתון)	btn. qltm (wiggling
	serpent)
c. and he will הרג (slay)	3. the tyrant with seven
התנין (the monster) which	heads. ⁵
is in הים (the sea) .	

¹תנין, in Isa 51:9-10, referring to Egypt (or Pharaoh) of the Exodus, becomes in Ezek 29:3-5 Egypt in the late 7th and early 6th centuries B.C. Ezek 32:2 compares Pharaoh to התנינים (plural), in a context similar to Ezek 29.

²See Ezek 29:3-5; the terms תנין, חיה, אכלה are comparable to terms in Psalm 74.

³These lines are repeated in *UT* 67:27-30.

⁴Ugaritic btn parallels Hebrew נחש.

⁵In Ugaritic *sb't r'sm*; with this compare the plurals in Ps 74:13, ראשי תנינים. Udd notes that the numeral is not explicit in Ps 74 whereas it is in the Ugaritic material in Stanley V. Udd, "An Evaluation of the Mythological Hermeneutic in Light of the Old Testament Usage of the Leviathan Motif," (Th.D. Dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1980), pp. 202-03 (hereafter cited as "Leviathan Motif").

Isaiah 27:1 is eschatological, metaphoric, and non-specific while Psalm 74:13-14 is historic.¹ Similarities to Psalm 74 include the tendency to identify ל ויתן with תנין, their adversarial relation to Yahweh, great strength and skill required of their captor and their watery habitat.

Job protests to God as to whether he is ים, or התנין that God must put a guard around him (Job 7:12). Thus Job compares ים and תנין as large and dangerous when they pass proper bounds. The plural תנינים are among God's great sea creatures included with the טוב מאד, very good, in the completed creation (Gen 1:21, 31).²

To sum up the significance of תנינים the concrete term refers initially to large, strong creatures with a watery habitat. By the time of Job, they were like the sea, dangerous if not controlled. The larger species of תנינים were scaly, strong and given to stirring up waters. In their ferocity and strength to devour they became a symbol for great kings and empires who punished Israel or whom Israel should avoid.

¹Ibid., pp. 210-12 and Day, *Conflict*, pp. 141-45; also Erik Haglund, *Historical Motifs in the Psalms* (Upsala: GWK Gleerup, 1984), pp. 7-9; 56-58.

²The תנינים are juxtaposed as direct objects to the verb ברא (Gen 1:21). Perhaps Moses was aware of the mythological connotations regarding great creatures in the religious literatures of his day. The juxtaposition of ברא and תנין may have been deliberate for polemical reasons. Further, Ps 148:7 calls on תנינים to praise Yahweh.

The plural ראשי in 74:13 has been likened to the seven-headed monster who was an arch enemy to the hero gods of the pagan myths. The plural תנינים has been read as a plural of majesty so as to give the term in 74:13 a singular idea. ראש often means chief or leader (e.g., Exod 18:25). At any rate, in that Pharaoh is compared elsewhere to both תנין and תנינים and the survey shows a heavy tendency to compare Egypt to תנין it is useful to venture that ראשי represents true plurals and refers to chiefs of divisions of Egypt's pursuing armies at the time of the Exodus. Perhaps there is some irony that the תנינים were smashed in their own habitat (i.e., on their own terms) upon the waters.

Verse 14

אתה רצצת ראשי לויתן
תתנונו מאכל לעם לציים:

You crushed the heads of Leviathan.
You gave him as food to desert animals.

רצצת

רצץ is used nineteen times, including eleven in the simple stems. In these stems the verbal action is against an inherently vulnerable object, e.g., society's needy, a bruised reed, a weakened nation.¹ Two uses in causative

¹Amos 4:1; Isa 42:3; Ezek 29:7.

stems include twins crushing together in a womb and the crushing of a skull.¹ The three uses of Piel have God as subject as in Psalm 74:14. Zophar charges that Job has רָצַץ, "oppressed," or better, severely oppressed the poor. When King Asa was "enraged" at Hanani's rebuke, he imprisoned the prophet and "grievously oppressed"² some of the people.

Though all the uses of Piel have the intensive force, the sense of רָצַץ in Psalm 74:14 differs from the sense of the other two uses.³ Those imply extreme measures of oppressing of the vulnerable by the mighty. The object in Psalm 74:14 is not characterized on the human plane as "vulnerable." לַוִּיתָן is mighty whether taken in a metaphorical, mythological, or literal sense. The sense of the Piel here is underlined by comparing it with the parallel use of the two Niphals, תָּרוּץ and תִּשְׁבַּר in Ezekiel 29:7. In this passage the subject, Pharaoh, is crushed and broken when Israel leans upon him for support. In Psalm 74:13-14, God crushed in pieces that which was mighty.⁴

¹Gen 25:22; Judg 9:53.

²For "enraged" see NASB and רָצַץ in Piel see BDB, p. 954. The other two uses of Piel are Job 20:19 and 2 Chr 16:10.

³On intensive force of Piel, GKC, p. 141, #52f, g.

⁴Besides Psalm 74:14, only Judges 10:8 uses רָצַץ in a passage which echoes warlike aggression. There it is a po'el in conjunction with Qal רָצַץ, to shatter. The text is reporting that the Ammonites and Philistines oppressed Israel.

ראשי ליתן

ראשי ליתן appears to be a general designation for great aquatic animals, with ליתן, a sub-species of the class According to Isaiah 27:1, he will be the object of Yahweh's hard, great, and strong sword.¹ He is described as נחש ברח, fleeing serpent, and נחש עקמלתי, the twisted serpent. He is equated with התנין, which lives בים, in the sea.²

Isaiah 27:1 uses ליתן as a proper noun in a context (Isa 26:10-27:13) that refers to an eschatological judgment on Israel's enemy. The adjectives with נחש suggest similarities to a crocodile. Psalm 104:26 compares ליתן, a sea creature, to ships. The comparison probably relates to size.³ Job 3:8 indicates that to rouse ליתן is dangerous. God describes ליתן as fierce, large, and strong (e.g., MT, Job 41:2, 26). He is a scaly animal, inhabiting large bodies of water, beyond compare to anything on land.⁴

ליתן as a creature of God is a metaphor for a military foe of Israel in eschatological times (Isa 27:1).

¹The adjective קשה, hard, has a range of meaning, "severe . . . fierce . . . intense . . . stubborn" (BDB, p. 904).

²ים, in Isa 27:1 may refer to the Nile. For designating large river, see Neh 3:8 and Jer 51:36; BDB, p. 411.

³Psalm 104:25-26 mentions the swarms of creatures in the sea, "great and small."

⁴MT: אין-על-עפר משלו (Job 40:25a).

Egypt of the Exodus and of the time of Nebuchadnezzar II was likened to תנין (Ezek 29:3, 32:2). רהת, listed with other foes of Israel, i.e., Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia, is probably a metaphor for Egypt (Ps 87:4). Ethan refers to רהב in a probable reference to the Exodus (Ps 89:10). Egypt is explicitly called רהב during the Assyrian crisis (Isa 30:7). Isaiah 51:9 equates רהב and תנין. This complex of data, as a context for ל ויתן in Psalm 74:14, emphasizes the magnitude of Yahweh's victory over Egypt in Israel's behalf at the Exodus.¹

תתננו מאכל לעם לציים

ל ויתן² may be paranomasia with the preceding תתננו and תנינים in verse 13. Here תתן controls two accusatives. The suffix, whose antecedent is ל ויתן, is direct object. is best taken as accusative of the product into which the object ול ויתן, by virtue of some action, will become.³

לעם לציים is the indirect object.⁴ Low proposed

¹These remarks generally agree with Udd's conclusions on interrelationships of these terms (Udd, "Leviathan Motif," pp. 25-30).

²Yqtl as preterite in a qtl-yqtl sequence; for several examples see Dahood, *Psalms III*, pp. 420-21.

³GKC, p. 371, #117ii lists נתן as a verb which may control an accusative of the product.

⁴GKC, p. 381, #119s calls this use of "nota dativi" to introduce the remoter object.

reading **לעמל צי ים**, "to the sharks of the sea."¹ LXX reads **ταῖς Ἀιθίοφιν**. LXX also reads **Ἀιθίοπες** for **ציים** in Psalm 72:9. Syriac reads 'sjn' from **עצים** or "the strengthened one."

עם is used of the ant and rock badger (Prov 30:25) and an army of locusts (Joel 2:2). Here it may refer to an army of animals, i.e., **ציים**. The fact that the crushed **לויתן** can feed so many emphasizes its size.² Johnson conjectures hyenas for **ציים** on the grounds that the hyena fits the scene of desolation suggested by Isaiah 34:14 and Jeremiah 50:39.³

Dahood, alternatively, for **לעם**, sees vocative lamedh and two roots for **עמם**. **עמם-I** to be strong from which **עם**,

¹The proposal in BHS apparatus apparently originated with I. Löw. See James Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 236-37 (hereafter cited as Barr, *CPTOT*). Löw rendered **עמל צי** "shark," (as in KB, p. 715). He appealed to Arabic *m-l-s* which in Lane means "be slippery." (E. W. Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon*, 8 vols. [London, 1863-93], 7:2736.) Lane was cited by Barr, *CPTOT*, p. 236, with incomplete data. 'amlas is cited as "a smooth headed man" or "a thing that slips out of one's hand by reason of its smoothness." However, for a fish as a slippery thing the word is "malisa." While the latter word designates a slippery surfaced fish, Barr says "it is . . . doubtful whether 'amlas . . . is the name for a kind of fish [italics in original]" (Barr, *CPTOT*, p. 236). Barr summarizes the use of **עמל צי** for shark in extra-biblical Hebrew and finds that there is either no entry or that it is treated as a "suggestion" (*CPTOT*, pp. 236-37).

²Johnson, *Psalmody*, p. 135.

³Johnson's argument: is based on his assumption of the chaos monster, *chaoskamp* and pre-creation chaos (Ibid., pp. 135-36).

("people") derives, and **עמם**-II, "to be wise, shrewd."¹

Using **עם** as "wise one," Dahood proposes a chiasmus whose frame, **ראשי תנינים . . . ראש-ל ויתן בעוזך . . . לעם**, **עזו** and **עמם** appear together also in Psalms 77:15-16 and 89:14. The warrior god who combines intelligence and strength occurs as a motif elsewhere.²

ציי as desert occurs in Psalm 72:9. Thus Yahweh not only slays the great sea monster but feeds desert dwellers with the carcass. The juxtaposition of **ים** and **ציי** is a merism expressing Yahweh's universal sovereignty. An advantage which Dahood rightly claims is that the text is preserved without consonantal emendation. There is a transparent irony in verses 13-14. The great monster which terrorized so many is served as food for others. There may also be a subtle irony by the Psalmist: You oh God, who rule ocean and desert, can you not rid your holy mountain of your adversary?

¹Dahood compares two Akk. roots: *emqu*, "wise, wiley," and *emūqu*, "physical strength, ability," Mitchell Dahood, "Vocative *Lamedh* in Psalm 74:14," *Biblica* 5:59 (Fasc. 2, 1978):262-63 (hereafter cited as Dahood, "Ps 74:14"). He says **עם**, people, "scarcely fits the context." Other instances of **עם** as wise include a pun of Rehoboam's name (HB, **רהבעם** = "abounding in sagacity") and a divine epithet in Isa 28:29 revocalizing MT from **מַעֵם** to **מַעֵם**, "This too is from the Sagacious" (Ibid., p. 262). This does preserve the consonantal text.

²Ibid., p. 263. The passages are Isa 10:13, 40:28, and especially Job 26:12.

Verse 15

אתה בקעת מעין ונחל
אתה הובשת נהרות איתן:

You broke open a spring and water course
You dried up the everflowing flood.

בקעת מעין

One factor on which there is consensus regarding Psalm 74:12-17 is that the verses recall God's mighty acts of long ago. The identity of the acts is debated. Through the 19th century scholars generally agreed that verses 12-14 concerned God's parting of the Red Sea and the overthrow of the Egyptians.¹ Verse 15 was thought to refer to Moses' smiting of the rock to get water and the drying up of either the Red Sea or Jordan River at the beginning or end of the wilderness years. Verses 16-17 described aspects of creation.

Gunkel, however, proposed that these verses and other Old Testament passages derived from the Near Eastern myth of God's victory over the personified watery chaos prior to His work of creation.² Ugaritic texts came to

¹E. König, *Die Psalmen* (Gutersloh, 1927), pp. 670-71 (cited by J. A. Emerton, "'Spring and Torrent' in Psalm 74:15," *Volume clu Congres, VTSup* 15 [1966]:130 [hereafter cited as Emerton, "Psalm 74:15"]).

²Herman Gunkel, *Schopfung and Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1895), pp-41-45. See, e.g., Ps 89; 10-13, Job 26:12-14 and 38:4-11.

light after Gunkel wrote. In these Baal triumphs over *ltn* (dragon) and *ym* (Prince Sea) also called *nhr* (Judge River). Emerton denies that these materials relate the battle to the creation of the world.¹

Emerton, persuaded by Gunkel's thesis, asserts "that verses 12-14 refer to the dragon myth."² He allows "an allusion to events in the . . . Exodus."³ Specifically concerned with verse 15, he summarizes past interpretations. In these, 15a refers to the creation of springs and wadies on land looking forward to verses 16 and 17. 15b has God drying up *נהרות איתן* and looking back to verses 13-14. *נהרות* are "probably" cosmic ocean currents which, under God's attack, were "dried up" so as to produce dry land (as in Ps 104:6-9).⁴

Emerton criticizes this construction on two grounds. First, if 15b refers to creation of dry land it is premature to mention springs and wadies in 15a. Second, it is strange to have a reference to friendly waters preceding a reference to hostile waters. As Psalm 89:12a follows a reference to the pre-creation struggle, so Psalm 74:16a likely follows a similar reference. It is possible, therefore, that the two

¹Emerton, "Psalm 74:15," p. 122.

²Ibid., pp. 122-26. For a recent espousal of Emerton's views, see Day, *Conflict*, pp. 21-25.

³Emerton, "Psalm 74:15," p. 123.

⁴Ibid.

cola form a transition from the chaos battle to the ordering of creation.

It is critical for Emerton's view of verses 12-17 to show that both cola of verse 15 refer to pre-creation waters. His position presumes that God is in conflict with all pre-creation waters. The crux is in verse 15a. He allows the "possibility" that **בקעת** denotes hostile activity in that it compares with verbs elsewhere which presume the *chaoskampf*.¹ Four of sixteen uses of Qal refer to dividing the Red Sea.² Three times the verb denotes breaching enemy defenses.³ Twice God splits the ground (Judg 15:19) or a rock (Isa 48:21) to supply water to thirsty people.⁴

The Niphal has a similar distribution of uses. God brought the Noachian flood waters when **נבקעו כל-מעונת תהום** (Gen 7:11). Proverbs 3:20, with similar terms, probably alludes to establishment and control of the water cycle at creation. The simple stems of **בקע** are never used in a way that Emerton proposes. On the contrary, Judges 15:19 and

¹Emerton, "Psalm 74:1.5," p. 125. He cites **פרר** and **שבר**, Ps 74:13, **רצץ**, 74:14; **דכא** (crush), Ps 89:11; **חצב** (hew a is in pieces) and **חלל** (pierce), Isa 51:9; **מחץ** (smite) and **חלל**, Job 26:12-13. **בקע** is used in Exod 14:16; Isa 63:12, 78:13; Neh 9:11, all in reference to the Red Sea.

² See n. 1, above.

³ 2 Sam 23:16; 1 Chr 11:18; 2 Chr 21:17.

⁴The remaining uses are not relevant to this discussion.

Isaiah 48:21 encourage the conclusion that Psalm 74:15a refers to the provision of water at Marah and Kadesh.¹

Emerton uses Genesis 7:11 as a basis to show that Psalm 74:15a may refer to the draining of pre-creation hostile waters before God established the present order.² God may have used a reversal of Genesis 7:11 to cause dry land to appear, but there is no hint that such action was against an enemy.

On the basis of this treatment of verse 15a, verse 15b is regarded as a consequence of the first colon. Assuming, however, that verses 12-17 recite, "mighty acts of God in history" which took Israel from Egypt into Canaan, verse 15b recalls the drying up of the Jordan River.³ נהר ות is probably a plural of intensity recalling the fullness of the river at the time of crossing.⁴

¹While this writer's position on verse 15 is clearly stated, one should admit that verses 15-17 could refer to acts recorded in Gen 1; cf. also Prov 8:20, 24.

²Emerton, "Ps 74:15," pp. 127-29.

³H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; reprint ed., 1969), p. 538 (hereafter cited as Leupold, *Psalms*). Young has a helpful survey of the use of words from v. 15 in the HB but he emphasizes the ambiguity of its meaning in order to allow for possible meaningful reference to the conflict myth (Young, "Psalm 74," pp. 102-06).

⁴Buttenweiser, *Psalms*, p. 614. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 2:33, suggests "the several streams of the one Jordan." For the plural of intensity see GKC, pp. 396-97, 124ab, and Josh 3:15.

Verse 16

לך יום אף־לך לילה
אתה הכינות מאור ושמש:

Yours is the day; yea! yours
is the night.
You have confirmed a luminary,
even the sun.

לך יום אף־לך לילה

ל of possession stresses God's ownership of day and night.¹ They are to serve His purpose.² Their bounds are set by Him and under His control.³ The point may be that since the cosmos serves His purpose, how is it that God's present enemy prevails. For von Rad לילה is "a survival of the darkness of Chaos, now . . . kept in bounds. . . . But the day is . . . that primeval light . . . the first born of the works of creation" (cf. Gen 1:3)⁴ This is a strained attempt to see a reference to the chaos battle. The order of the text rather suggests a simple affirmation of the present cosmic order which extends back to the creation. The language of verses 16 and 17 duplicates vocabulary and concepts from Genesis 1-2.

¹For ל of possession see GKC, p. 419, #129a.

²Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:545.

³Josh 10 illustrates divine control.

⁴Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), 1:144.

The second colon reverts to emphatic **אתה**.¹ **כֹּן** is part of the vocabulary of creation.² "Thus says Yahweh **עשה**, who made it (i.e., the earth), Yahweh **יוצר**, who formed it **להכִּינָה**, for the purpose of establishing it" (Jer 33:2). The root occurs as a verb 217 times in all stems except Qal.³ Eighty-five of these are Hiphil.⁴

The Hiphil, Niphal, and Polel are used for appointment or establishment of a throne or dynasty.⁵ The persistent meaning of the root, whether used for creation or rulership, is "to make firm" or to make permanent.⁶ The issue in Psalm 74:16 is divine power and control. Therefore, **הכִּינָה** conveys the perfective sense with reference to God's appointment of **מאור** ו**שמש** to rule the heavens in the

¹"*Thou, and no other,*" J. A. Alexander, *Psalms*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1871), 2:171 (hereafter cited as Alexander, *Psalms*), italics are in the original.

²Briggs, *Psalms*, 2:156, uses "*prepare, create*" (italics in original). See Jer 33:2; Pss 93:1, 119:74; Prov 3:16, 8:27; Job 31:15.

³*TWOT*, s.v. "כֹּן," by John N. Oswalt, 1:964-65.

⁴LePeau surveys the range of uses for **כֹּן** (LePeau, "Psalm 68," pp. 105-07).

⁵E.g., Hiphil--2 Sam 7:12; 1 Kgs 2:24; Niphal--Pss 89:37, 93:2; Polel--2 Sam 7:13.

⁶BDB, pp. 465-66. This is preferable "to make straight," KB, p. 426.

manner described in Genesis 1:14-18.¹ Psalm 89:36-37 uses Niphal יָכוֹן to emphasize the delegated and continuing role of sun and moon as illustrative of the permanence of the Davidic dynasty.

מאור ושמש

מאור may be taken as a collective or as moon.¹ The former presumes a hendiadys or a genus-species relationship like verse 11 (יָדָךְ וַיִּמְיֶנְךָ).² The latter, as an interpretation, provides a chiasmus within verse 16 and implies a word-pair.³ This idea is attractive but forced. The hendiadys is preferred. The emphasis on the sun strengthens a tendency of verse 16 to allude to Joshua's long day. The whole verse is aware of God's kingship and power at creation but emphasizes the continued and present demonstration of God's cosmic rule. A. corresponding divine control of the historical situation seems to be lacking.

Verse 17

אתה הצבת כל-גבולות ארץ
קיץ וחרף אתה יצרתם:

¹For collective see KJV, RSV, LXX, and McCurdy in Moll, *Psalms*, p. 422; for moon see NEB, NAB, and Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:545.

²Alexander, *Psalms*, 2:171.

³Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 207 and Young, "Psalm 74," pp. 106-07.

You have established all the
 temperature zones of the earth
 As for summer and winter, you have
 formed them.

חצבת כל-גבול ארץ

The causative force of the Hiphil implies purpose or intent. Yahweh is the subject of Hiphil **נצב** five times.

Four of these portray Yahweh as setting limits on one entity as a benefit for another.¹ He set the limits on the waters of the Sea of Reeds for the benefit of the Israelites (Ps 78:13). He establishes borders of people (or land boundaries) with reference to the sons of Israel (Deut 32:8). He will set up or protect the borders of the widow (Prov 15:25). He has established all the borders of the earth (Ps 74:17).

Only this verse has an ambiguous object for **נצב** **גבול** occurs nine times in the Old Testament.² BDB indicates both "border" and "territory" for **גבול** but only "border" for **גבולה**.³ The latter could easily be territory in Isaiah 28:25. There is no discernible distinction of meaning between the two genders of this word.

¹The exception is Ps 41:13.

²**גבולה** occurs once; masculine singular, 233 times; masculine plural, 7 times. References for feminine plural are Num 32:33, 34:2, 12; Deut 32:8; Josh 18:20, 19:49; Isa 10:13; Ps 74:17; Job 24:2.

³BDB, pp. 147-48.

In all passages, except Psalm 74:17, the context furnishes some definition of the intended border(s). Psalm 74:17 has been explained with reference either to the tribal allotments after the conquest or to the establishment of land masses either at creation or after the flood.¹ Several, based on 17b, refer these "boundaries" to the seasons of the year.² Dahood mentions "temperature zones."³ Whereas all forms of גבול usually refer to geographical boundaries, references to cosmic factors in verses 16 and 17 and the parallelism of 17 justify temperature zones here.

קִיץ וחרף אבה יצרתם

This clause helps to clarify the ambiguous גבול ארץ. Verse 17b is the only verbal clause in the so-called hymn which places the verb in final position. This was done possibly to form an inclusion with verse 13a.⁴ By comparison to כֹּון and נצב which convey an abstract idea of power, יצר is anthropomorphic. Its frozen form, יוצר, is frequently used for a potter.⁵ Hence the idea of fashioning

¹As tribal allotments, perhaps Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 2:334; as land masses, Cohen, *The Psalms*, p. 239.

²See Gen 1:14 and Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:545. Leupold, *Psalms*, p. 539; Briggs, *Psalms*, 2:156 mentions the first two, but prefers "seasons."

³Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 207.

⁴74:13a and 17b.

⁵E.g., Jer 18:2, 3, 4, 11. יצר is also a creation word: Gen 2:7; Pss 95:5, 104:26; Isa 45:18; Jer 33:2.

or forming to suit ones purposes is prominent. Yahweh formed summer and winter as a perpetual cycle.

Verse 18

זכר־זאת אויב חרף יהוה
ועם נבל נאצו שמך:

Remember this, the enemy has
taunted, Oh Yahweh
And a foolish people have disdained
your name.

זכר־זאת אויב חרף

Verses 18-23 resume the imperatives of verses 2-3.

There Yahweh was summoned to remember His chosen people. Here the psalmist petitions Yahweh to remember what His adversaries have done.

The verbs **חרף** and **נאץ** are paired as they were in verse 10. However, the progressive imperfects of verse 10 have become present perfects.¹ The subject, because of his action, has brought about a state for which he is culpable. The complaint of verse 10 focused on the acts. Verse 18 emphasizes the culpability of the enemy for his act. The placement of the subject before the verb in each colon marks the change of emphasis.

Further, the portrayal of the subject for each verb has changed. There the oppressive occupation, styled as caused reproach. Here **אויב** is culpable for causing

¹Waltke, "Syntax," p. 18.

reproach. This term can include both foreign and domestic enemies who engage in hostile actions.¹

יהוה

יהוה could be the object of the verb but it is best to regard חרף as intransitive (as in v. 10) and יהוה as vocative.² As such it corresponds to אלֵהִים in verse 10. The tetragrammaton in the Elohist Psalter is unusual.³ With מלֹכִי (v. 12) it frames the "hymn" and emphasizes the intimate and genuine concern of the psalmist. The two terms help to relieve an otherwise scathing rebuke of God.

ועם נבל

אויב as subject of נאץ (v. 10) corresponds to the action of עם־נבל (v. 18). Also the action of אויב (v. 18, חרף) corresponds to the action of נבל (v. 22, חרפתך). The use of נבל in this psalm hints strongly that the enemy may include Israelites as well as foreigners.

נבל is associated with words for "folly" in Proverbs three times.⁴ Though it is rendered "fool" in the English

¹Rosenbaum, "Antagonist," pp. 72-73, 76-78.

²Young, "Psalm 74," p. 110 reads, יהוה as direct object.

³Briggs, Psalms, 2:160, considers יהוה gloss here and deletes, *metri causa*.

⁴נבל is an antonym to נדיב (prince) in Prov 17:7, similar to כסיל in Prov 17:21 and similar to עבה (negative sense) in Prov 30:22. A כסיל is one who has a propensity to make wrong choices and spurns knowledge. See *TWOT*, S.V.

versions, Donald concludes that it "is properly outside the field."¹ The Proverbs passages indicate that the **נבל** uses inappropriate speech, deserves hunger and causes parents to sorrow. Job says it is **נבלה** to curse God and die because of personal calamity (Job 2:10). Most uses of **נבלה** (folly) point to conduct which violates covenant stipulations in Israel.² Because of Israel's perversity, Moses calls her **עם נבל ולב חכם** (Deut 32:6).³ Most non-Psalmic uses represent **נבל** as an Israelite who deliberately violates covenant stipulations.⁴

Psalms uses **נבל** five times. Psalms 14 and 53 are nearly identical. One notes that the **נבל** says **בלבו** (in his heart), "There is no God." He does not necessarily verbalize his thought but his conduct betrays him. Further the **נבל** seems to be identical with **פעלי און** (Pss 14:4; 43:5). These are most closely associated with **רשע** and are

“כסיל,” by Louis Goldberg, 1:449-50 and Trevor Donald, "The Semantic Field of 'Folly' in Proverbs, Job, Psalms, and Ecclesiastes," *VT* 13 (1963):287 (hereafter cited as Donald, "Folly").

¹Ibid., p. 286.

²E.g., Deut 22:21; Josh 7:15; Judg 19:23f; 1 Sam 25:25 (there is a pun on Nabal's name); Isa 32:6.

³Deut 32:21 threatens to chastise Israel with a **נבל**. Here **נבל** may indicate a more general notion like "impious."

⁴Donald ventures that “**נבלה**” seems to be the semantic opposite of **חסל** (Donald, "Folly," p. 289). This may also be true for **נבל** (cf. **נבלות**, Job 2:10).

likely Israelites.¹ Thus **נבל** in Psalms 14 and 53 are probably Israelite malefactors characterized more by moral and religious culpability than by military hostility per se. A similar explanation may attach to Psalm 39:9 where David, under divine chastening, does not want to be the object of **נבל חופה**. He fears the verbal abuse of an aggressively impious Israelite.

For Psalm 74:18 and 22 it is likely that **נבל** is a group of Israelites which cooperates with the foreign occupation in verbal taunts against the godly. They might also cooperate in inflicting physical abuse on the community.²

Verse 19

אל־תִּתֵּן לְחַיַּת נֶפֶשׁ תּוֹרֵךְ
חַיַּת עֲנִיִּיךְ אֶל־תִּשְׁכַּח לְנִצָּח:

Do not give to the wild beast
the life of your turtledove
The life of your afflicted ones
do not forget perpetually.

חיה

חיה in general refers to living things, especially wild animals. The special idea derives from the vitality of

¹Wiles, "Enemy," pp. 30-31, 35-42. While **פעל־י־און** are Israelite they are not necessarily one homogenous group.

²See Rosenbaum, "Antagonist," pp. 86, 96-98.

that which is said to be חיה.¹ Psalm 74:19a has חיה which may be construed as a rare feminine absolute.² The reference in 74:19b cannot be wild beast. BDB suggests the meaning "life," but "only in late poetry."³

Dahood has suggested community for חיה in 74:19b. The same word means "troops" in 2 Samuel 23:13. The parallel passage, 1 Chronicles 11:15, has מחנה, camp.⁴ The choice between "community" and "life" is difficult but the latter is best for Psalm 74:19b. The twofold use of the term in this verse is probably a pun. The psalmist may be reflecting his concern that God may regard Israel as no different from her predators.⁵ If MT is retained, the psalmist is equating חיה (v. 19a) with אויב and עם־נבל (v. 18).

The negative imperative with אל is employed twice in verse 19 on the extremities of a chiasmus. תתן is used in a fashion similar to תתננו in verse 14, i.e., "do not give as food to the wild beast." The objects of the two verbs in this verse are juxtaposed. Thus, they attract attention.

¹BDB, pp. 310-312.

²GKC, p. 223, #80f.

³Without inferring a late date, one may cite Pss 78:50, 143:3, and Job 33:8. See BDB, p. 312.

⁴חיה in Ps 68:11 is a similar use to Ps 74:19b.

BDB, p. 312, suggests "community, family, troop" for Ps 68:11. See also LePeau, "Psalm 68," p. 106.

⁵For חיה as predatory animal, see Gen 37:20, 33; Lev 26:6; Pss 68:31, 79:2.

נפש should be taken in the sense of "life" as the "inner living being"¹ of תורך.

תורך is difficult. Some have emended to תודה since ד could have been mistaken for ר. This, however, dilutes the probable emphasis on and identity of the objects. "Give not to the wild beast the soul of the one who confesses you."²

תור as dove, is found fourteen times, eleven of which have the bird as a sacrifice.³ A pair of תרים can serve as a guilt offering if the offerer cannot afford one from the צאן, flock.⁴ Again, if a leper is too poor to bring two lambs, he can bring two תרים among other items as an offering (Lev. 14:21f).⁵

The pairing of תור with עניים of the second colon underlines the vulnerability of the community for whom the psalmist speaks. There is a possible contrast between ראש־לֹוֹיתָן (v. 14) and תור (v. 19). Both are objects of

¹BDB, p. 659.

²NEB; but "turtledove" in MT, JB, NAB, NIV, NASB, and KJV.

³E.g., Gen 15:9; Lev 1:14; 5:7, 11; 12:6; 15:14, 27; Num 6:10; Ps 74:19.

⁴Lev 5:7, 11; 12:8.

⁵The word for poor is דל, one lacking (financial) power (BDB, p. 195). Lev 14:30 refers to these offerings as within ידו, his power.

the verb and both are viewed as food for animals. As the "hymn" reminds God that He was able to feed the powerful to lesser animals so this petition has some ironic sarcasm and a type of role reversal. There (v. 14) the powerful was fed to the lesser; here (v. 19) God may be "relinquishing" the lesser to the powerful. The request is, "Do not give the defenseless **תור** over to wild beasts.¹ God is in danger of looking like one who once destroyed the mighty but cannot now protect the weak. The protection of the weak becomes the explicit focus of the second colon.

חיה means life twelve times.² At a primary level **חיה** and **נפש** are synonymous in this passage.³ **חיה** as a positive quality of **עניים**, is employed in the second colon as a pun with its counterpart in the first colon.⁴ There **חיה** has the role of antagonist of the community and, supposedly God's enemy. Thus, the verse as a whole implicitly accuses God of confusing the elect with the enemy.

¹For a vanquished foe left to wild animals see I Sam 17:46; Ezek 29:5; 39:4; for Israell see Ezek 5:17; 14:15, 21; 33:27; 34:5, 8. See *TDOT*, "חיה," by Helmer Ringgren, 4:343. The sons of Qorah complain **תתננו כעאן מאכל** (Ps 44:12).

²Ringgren, "חיה," 4:332. KB translates 18 passages with "life" (KB, p. :297).

³BDB, p. 659. Ps 143:11 parallels **תחיני** to **תוציא**

⁴Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 207.

עניים

"The vitality of your עניים afflicted ones, do not forget." עני¹ with אביון and אביון in verse 21 introduces the much-discussed theme of the poor in the Old Testament.² There are four separate roots which use ענה: I, to answer; II, to be occupied; III to be bowed down or afflicted; IV to sing.³ עני derives from ענה-III.⁴ The verb, normally piel, is used to describe Sarah's treatment of Hagar (Gen 16:6), Egypt's treatment of Israel (Exod 1:11-12), and God's treatment of His enemies (Deut 26:6).

עני usually denotes "a person suffering some kind of disability or distress."⁵ Deuteronomy 24:14-15 describes the hired servant as עני ואביון. The owner must not עשק, oppress, עני, as the hired servant, because he is עני, i.e., already in distress. He needs his wages daily. Should the

¹It is not clear whether there is a distinction between עני and ענו. Perhaps it is an instance of interchanges between ך and ך (GKC, p. 66, #17c; a perpetual qere; also Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* [New York: The MacMillan Company, 1957], p. 72).

²For a thorough review of the literature, see Peter Darwin Miscall, "The Concept of the Poor in the Old Testament," (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1972), pp. 3-22. Also, Richard D. Patterson, "The Widow, the Orphan and the Poor in the Old Testament and the Extra-Biblical Literature," *BSac* 130:519 (July-September, 1973): 223-225.

³BDB, pp. 772, 77.

⁴*TWOT*, s.v. "ענה-II," by Leonard J. Coppes, 2:683; but Bammel sees עני related to a merging of ענה-I and ענה-II in *TDNT*, s.v. "πρωχός," by Ernest Bammel, 6:888.

⁵*TWOT*, s.v., "ענה-III," by Leonard Coppes, 2:683.

owner be remiss the **עֲנִי** can pray to Yahweh against the owner and Yahweh will defend the **עֲנִי**. This passage also identifies **עֲנִי** as either an **אָח** (brother) or **גֵר** (stranger).

Leviticus 19:10 classifies the **עֲנִי** and **גֵר** as both having a right to the gleanings of the field. These two passages imply that the **עֲנִי**, though an Israelite, does not have land which he can work. Hauck and Schultz argue that the term is primarily social and economic and that in the Pentateuch it denotes a person who has been wrongfully deprived of his inheritance.¹ Coppes is correct both in substantially agreeing with this position and in disagreeing that the term in the Pentateuch denotes a social class as distinct from a social condition.²

That material deprivation and social oppression were closely associated and marked Israel's history is evident.³ While God requires His people to deal justly with the king is especially responsible to be fair and generous to the oppressed in his realm.⁴ Psalm 72 presents the

¹Bammel, "πτωχός," 6:888.

²Coppes, "עֲנִי-III," p. 682.

³E.g., Isa 3:4; Ezek 18:17.

⁴E.g., Isa 10:2. Ps 82 is a clear statement of God's protection of the rights of the destitute, including the following pairs: **דָל וְאֲבִיּוֹן**, **עֲנִי וְרֵשַׁע**, and **דָל וְיִתּוֹם**. The princes or judges of the land (those who come to the city gate) are instructed to . . . **שִׁפְטוּ וְיִצְדִּיקוּ** (judge and vindicate) the destitute and deliver them from the **רְשָׁעִים**. Each of these nouns characterizes Israelites as distinct from foreigners, in terms of condition or conduct. Psalm

latter idea and illustrates some of the background for the community's complaints against God, the true king in Psalm 74. The community, through the psalmist, views itself as **עני**, **אביון**, and **דך** (Ps 74:19, 21) .

עני may suffer physical affliction such as sickness (Ps 88:11) or exile (Isa 51:21). The latter idea easily extends to oppression from foreign invaders as in Psalm 74:4-9. Physical affliction to the godly transforms itself into internal or spiritual affliction.¹ It is difficult to distinguish between external and internal affliction of the subjects of Psalm 74. The most prominent feature is the spiritual anguish over God's inaction, though physical affliction cannot be dismissed.

Yahweh forbids exploitation of **עני** in legal material (e.g., the covenant code, Exod 22:24). Isaiah, writing during the last half of the eighth century, seems to equate Israel, **עם**, with **עני** (Isa 3:15, 10:2, 14:32). After the collapse of the Judaeen state, any who oppressed **ענו ואביון** would be punished (Ezek 22:29). The "tragedy of the exile

72:2 calls upon the king to **במשפט ידין** . . . Yahweh's **ועניים** . . . **עם**. The king should **שפט** the **עניי-עם**, **ישע** the **עניי-עם**, **אביון**, and **דכא** (crush) the **עוקש** (Ps 72:4). If the human king was responsible to treat **עני ואביון** properly, no wonder the psalmist in Ps 74 calls on God, his king, to deliver the **עני ואביון** and defeat those oppressing him and his community. See further Ps 72:12-14.

¹Psalms of individual lament provide clear examples e.g., Pss 22:25, 25:16, 19:30.

led to a collective use of **עני** outside the psalms" (Isa 49:13, 51:21, 54:11).¹

עני occurs seventy-five times including twenty-nine in the Psalms. **אביון** occurs sixty-one times with twenty-three in the Psalms. Both are cited in the covenant code and Deuteronomy.²

זכר . . . אל־תשכח

This sequence (Ps 74:18-19) is seen compacted in 1 Samuel 1:11, Hannah's prayer.³

אם ראה תראה בעני אמתך וזכרתני
ולא תשכח את אמתך

The sense is "if you remember me for good," i.e., give me a son.⁴ This is clearly an appeal for action and shows an essential connection between remembering and acting.⁵ The main point of the protasis is reinforced by stating the opposite "and (if) you will not forget." To forget, here, would be to fail to act beneficently, i.e., to fail to give a son.

¹Bammel, "πτωχός," 6:893.

²E. g., **עני**, Exod 22:24; Deut 15:11; 24:12, 14, 15; **אביון** Exod 23:6, 11; Deut 15:4, 7, 9, 11; 24:14.

³1 Sam 1:11 has four verbs in the protasis: **תראה** וזכרתני . . . ולא תשכח . . . ונתתה אל־תשכח imperative.

⁴Hannah requests that God function for her in the same way that He did for the barren Rachel (Gen 30:22).

⁵Pederson, *ILC*, 1:99-101 and Child's critique in Childs, *Memory*, p. 29.

The imperative זָכַר (Ps 74:18a) , remember to act in judgment against your enemies, is balanced by the negative imperative אַל־תִּשְׁכַּח (Ps 74:1.9b), do not forget to act favorably toward your עֲנִיִּים (i.e., your people who are acutely afflicted).¹

Anderson's remark on שָׁכַח in another psalm is appropriate here. שָׁכַח does not refer to "unintentional failure to call to mind the plight of the sufferer, but rather a deliberate aloofness on the part of God."² One of the concerns of the supplicant in Psalm 74 is that God is aloof while His temple is destroyed and His name is reproached.

Verse 20

הַבֵּט לְבְרִית
כִּי מִלֹּאן מִחֲשָׁכֵי־אֲכָץ נֵאוֹת חֶמְסִי:

Consider the covenant,
because the dark places of the
land are filled as pastures
where violence prevails.

הַבֵּט לְבְרִית

רָאָה is the "common word for seeing with the eyes (Gen 27:1)."³ Accordingly, it occurs about thirteen hundred

¹For the same contrast in the indicative mood, see the psalmist's affirmation "זָכַר לֹא שָׁכַח צַעֲקַת שְׁנֵי־יָמִים" (Ps 9:13).

²Anderson, *Psalms*, vol. 1, p. 128, on Ps 13:1.

³*TWOT*, s.v. "רָאָה," (contributor not cited), 2:823.

times. Among its special uses, is "to look at with favor . . . (show) regard."¹ **ראה** in Hiphil means to show and often takes a double object. There is no Piel for **ראה**.

נבט occurs sixty-nine times, never in Qal, once in Piel, sixty-eight times in Hiphil.² This root, therefore, may function as a virtual Piel for **ראה**.³ **נבט** may then have a range of meaning comparable to **ראה** but with an intensified nuance. Thus, Coppes has some grounds for proposing for "a careful, sustained, favorable contemplation."⁴ Isaiah 5:12 indicts Israel for not regarding carefully and favorably Yahweh's works.⁵ The Psalmist is urging God to regard carefully and favorably the **ברית**.

Yahweh appears to the godly who are distressed. **הביטו אל אברהם אביכם**, "Consider carefully (or here, "remember") Abraham, your father" (Isa 51:2). The passage draws attention to the Abrahamic covenant without using the

¹BDB, p. 907.

²Even-Shoshan., ed., *NCOT* lists **נבט**, Isa 5:30, as a Niphal. BDB (p. 613) and Lisowsky regard the form as Piel.

³GKC, p. 145, #53d, notes that some verbs are "inwardly . . . intensive Hiphils . . . which express action in some particular direction." By analogy **נבט** in Hiphil may be construed as to look intently, to consider carefully or have regard for.

⁴*TWOT*, s.v. "**נבט**," by Leonard J. Coppes, 2:546. Coppes does not spell out the basis for his proposal. He does cite Isa 5:12, Ps 74:20, and 119:6, 15 as instances.

⁵Isa 5:12 has **יביטו** and **ראו** in parallel cola. For **ראה** as "to regard with favor," see BDB, p. 907, paragraphs 6b and 7.

word **ברית**. With Israel as subject, Yahweh commands them to claim covenant benefits in time of distress. Psalm 74:20 reverses the roles. The nation calls on God to pay attention to His covenant obligations to His distressed people. As Psalm 74:2 urged God to remember, **זכר**, His covenant people,¹ so the psalmist now appeals to the **ברית** itself.

The etymology of **ברית** is uncertain.² Some regard the noun as a derivation from **ברה**, "to eat," and connect the word with a festive meal as part of a covenant ceremony.³ Others connect the **ברית** with an Akkadian preposition *birit*, "between, among." This assumes gratuitously that the preposition developed into a noun.⁴ Weinfeld prefers to associate the Hebrew noun with an Akkadian noun, *biritu*, which designates a "clasp" or "fetter."⁵ *Biritu* is then related to the term for treaty, *riksu*. **ברית**, along with Akkadian *riksu*, "implies first and foremost the notion of 'imposition,'" rather than parity.⁶

נחלה, **עדה**, and **הר־איון** are part of the nomenclature in the history of covenant between God and Israel.

²TDOT, s.v. "**ברית**," by Moshe Weinfeld, 2:253.

³Ludwig Kohler, "Problems in the Study of the Language of the Old Testament," *JSS* 1 (1956):4-7. Weinfeld considers this "dubious" (Weinfeld, "**ברית**," 2:254).

⁴Weinfeld, "**ברית**," 2:254.

⁵CAD 2:254-55

⁶Weinfeld, "**ברית**," 2:255. **ברית** is identified with **מצוה**, **אמרה**, **חפים**, and **פקדים** (Deut 4:13, 33:9; Isa 24:5; Pss 50:16, 103:18).

The terms for covenant throughout the ancient Near East range in meaning from commitment on the one hand to friendship and mutual understanding on the other. **ברית** as obligation is parallel to **עדיית**,¹ **דבר**,² **סוד**,³ **תורה**.⁴ **ברית** as friendship is paired with **חסד**,⁵ implies **טובה**⁶ or **שלום**.⁷

Standard verbs for maintaining an established covenant are **שמר**,⁸ **נצב**,⁹ and **זכר**.¹⁰ As noted above, **הבט** is in the semantic field of **זכר**, with particular reference to covenant maintenance.

Covenant as imposition with attendant stipulations is manifest in the Sinaitic covenant. Covenant, emphasizing friendship and benefaction is seen in the Abrahamic (land) and Davidic (dynasty). These are modeled after the royal grants by the suzerain to the vassel in the ancient Near East.¹¹

Eichrodt recognized a vital relationship between covenant and 'Israel's religion.¹² He saw, e.g., in the

¹Exod 31:18 and Deut 9:9.

²Ps 108:8.

³Ps 25:14.

⁴Hos 8:1.

⁵Deut 7:9.

⁶2 Sam 2:6.

⁷Jer 33:9.

⁸Gen 17:9; Ps 89:28, 31; Deut 7:9, 12.

⁹Ps 25:10.

¹⁰Gen 9:15; Lev 26:42, 45; Ps 106:45.

¹¹See Weinfeld, 2:270-71.

¹²Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 1:36-45 (hereafter cited as Eichrodt, *TOT*).

Sinaitic covenant a background for Israel's understanding of the kingship of God.¹ Recent research has agreed that Israel's understanding of the kingship of God preceded the monarchy and is rooted in the beginnings of Israelite history.²

The suzerain-vassal covenant relationships between Egypt or the Hittites and the Syro-Palestinian states of the second millennium, were political. By contrast, the covenants between God and Israel were from the start profoundly religious. Indeed "the idea of covenant between a deity and a people is unknown to us from other religions and cultures."³

ברית in Psalm 74:20, especially in light of the spoiling of Jerusalem and the temple, has for its background especially the Abrahamic-Davidic grants. Whereas in the Abrahamic covenant, Yahweh stressed the **לִי לְעַם . . . לָכֶם** (my people . . . your God) relationship, here the psalmist appeals to God on the basis of **עֲדַתְךָ . . . מַלְכִי** (your assembly . . . my king).⁴

¹Ibid., pp. 363-64.

²Weinfeld, "**ברית**," 2:278-79; see Judg 8:22-23; 1 Sam 8:6-7, 10:19.

³Ibid., 2:278.

⁴For "your God . . . my people" see Lev 26:12 and Exod 6:7.

Though an idea of divine kingship was general in the ancient Near East, Israel affirmed the kingship of God long before the introduction of its human monarchy. By contrast human and divine kingship were always closely related elsewhere.¹

Beginning with כִּי, as MT stands, Psalm 74:20 is difficult. Attempts to solve the enigma include:²

Look upon the covenant: how full the earth's asylums are--of dwellings of cruelty (Ewald).

Look down upon your temple; the city is filled with darkness; the country side with violence (Dahood).

Look to the fat ones; for they are full. The dark places of the earth are full of violence (Briggs).

Look at the covenant, for the deep places of the earth, habitations of violence are full (Eerdmans).

Have regard for your creatures, for they are full of violence, for the earth is the haunt of violence (Gunkel).

Look to your covenant, because the dark places of the earth have been filled with habitations of lawlessness (LXX).

MT reads, "Consider the covenant because the dark places of the earth are filled with pastures of violence." There is nothing internal to this verse that gives a clue to its meaning. Most retain כִּי in its common meaning as

¹Weinfeld, "כִּי," 2:278-79.

²The sources in the order cited are Heinrich Ewald, *Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. E. Johnson (London: Williams and Norgate, 1881), pp. 232-33; Dahood, *Psalms II*, pp. 199, 208; Briggs, *Psalms*, 2:151; LXX; Eerdmans, *Psalms*, p. 232; H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 5 Aufl. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1968), pp. 325-26; Young, "Psalm 74," pp. 115-18.

covenant. Gunkel, however, reads **בריא** for **ברית** which occurs elsewhere only in the singular.¹ He emends vocalization. Briggs reads **בריא** from **ברא**-II, to be fat, an analogy with Psalm 73:4.² Dahood opts for **לְבִירַתְךָ** an analogy with Akka- than *birtu*, "citadel, castle" and Hebrew **בִּירָה**, temple.³ Young correctly assesses this transposition of **י** and **ר** and vowel change as "purely conjectural and unnecessary."⁴

LXX interpolated a suffix to **ברית** in order to clarify the latter as God's covenant.⁵ Dahood and Young follow LXX in using the suffix but they divide MT **כִּי** so as to yield **ימלאו**.⁶

מחשכי־ארץ

מחשכי־ארץ is a *hapax*. Ewald's solution is itself a conjectured *hapax*! He suggests **מחשך**, asylum, from **חשך**, "to

¹Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, pp. 325-26; NEB: BDB, p. 135; and Num 16:30.

²Briggs, *Psalms*, 2:151. The lexical support (BDB, p. 135) is stronger for using **ברא**-II than for **ברא**-I.

³Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 208 and BDB, p. 108. All uses are post-exilic except Dan 8:2.

⁴Young, "Psalm 74," p. 116.

⁵LXX retained **כִּי** with **טז**. See Briggs' note, *Psalms*, 2:160.

⁶LXX retained the Hebrew perfect by using an aorist passive form. Young's point **ימלאו** may then be translated "is filled" ("Psalm 74," p. 116) is blunted by the fact that **מלא** can be intransitive and take an English present translation. See Lambdin, *IBH*, pp. 38-39, #44; pp. 93-95, #87.

withhold--be assuaged."¹ Dahood and Young reposit to **מחשכי**.² The prefix is the preposition "with" and final i vowel a genitive ending.³ Dahood takes **ארץ** as "city," as in 2 Chronicles 32:4.⁴ Gunkel emends to **משכתכי**. This harmonizes with Genesis 6:12:

השחית כל בשר את דרכו על הארץ

However, it is contrary to the attitude of the community. This psalm reflects no admission of sin.⁵

From the translations given above, it is clear that there is little agreement on the syntactical relationships of the two constructs, **מחשכי** and **נאית**, within the verse. For some, **מחשכי** signals the subject and **נאית** the accusative of the object.⁶ Dahood and Young make the verb and the **מן**

¹Ewald, *Psalms*, p. 232; BDB, p. 262. Though this is the probable sense, the emendation is gratuitous.

²Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 208; Young, "Psalm 74," p. 116.

³For **מן** as "with" see Ps 127:5; Jer 51:34; Ezek 32:6; Qoh 8:1. BDB, p. 579, cites Ps 127:5 as a "rare" use of In ,

⁴For bibliography on **ארץ** as city, see Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 208.

⁵The comparison with Gen 6:12 and the disclaimer about confession of sin in Psalm 74 are points made by Young, "Psalm 74," p. 116. This writer had developed this perspective on Ps 74 before Young's dissertation came to his attention. Young does not employ the term "confession of sin" but rather refers to "the people as *wrongfully* afflicted" (*italics in original*).

⁶For direct object with verbs of filling which are yet virtually intransitive, see GKC, p. 369, #117. See Ewald, Briggs, and LXX above, p. 120.

serve double duty.¹ This preserves the consonants but radically rework the syntax. Eerdmans takes **נאֵוֹת** in apposition to **מִחֲשָׁכֵי**.

These varied attempts may signal a need to explain the MT as it is. The dark places probably refer to hiding places of the godly in their search to escape harassment. The **מִחֲשָׁכֵי־אֶרֶץ** replaced the razed **מוֹעֲדֵי־אֵל** of verse 8. Secrecy was desired for the former whereas the latter had been public.

נאֵוֹת

נאֵוֹת appears elsewhere eleven times. "Pastures" is always an appropriate translation. Once the term is part of a figurative expression² and three times desirable pastures are in view.³ Seven times pasture-lands are made useless by divine judgment. The LXX has influenced some to translate **נאֵוֹת** as habitations, dwellings, or haunts.⁴ One should retain "pastures," and not (with Young) re-divide the consonantal text to make sense of the passage.

נאֵוֹת figurative and recalls **מִרְעֵיתֶךָ צֹאן** of verse

1. There it is a contradiction that God's anger should

¹Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 208; Young, "Psalm 74," p. 116.

²Ps 23:2.

³Joel 2:23; Pss 83:13, 65:13.

⁴"Habitations"--Eerdmans, *Psalms*, p. 232,; RSV, NASB, and KJV; "dwellings"--Ewald, *Commentary on the Psalms*, p. 232; "haunts"--Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, p. 325; NEB and NIV.

smoke against the sheep of His pasture. Here it is a contradiction that pastures should be scenes of violence against the sheep, i.e., **אביון** and **עני**. The **מחשכי־ארץ** should have been places of escape and refuge from the harassment that prevailed in Zion.¹ Instead they became pastures in which violence **חמס** fed itself. The violence was the enemies' relentless pursuit of the godly. This is the context for the imperative, **הבט**, which stops short of charging God with covenant violation but does assume that He has covenant obligation to protect and preserve.

Verse 21

אל־ישב דך נכלם
עני ואביון יהללו שמך:

Let not the crushed one turn away humiliated.
Let the afflicted and the needy praise your name.

אל־ישב

Syriac reads **אל־ישב** "let (him) not dwell" but MT is doubtless correct, though its meaning is not clear.² **שוב** is the twelfth most frequent root, occurring 1,059 times.³

¹Cf. Ezek 7:23; for similar ideas see Eerdmans, *Psalms*, p. 358.

²Young, "Psalm 74," prefers **ישב** (pp. 118-19).

³Approximate distributions are 680 Qals, 355 Hiphils, 5 Hophals, and 10 polels.

Holladay has suggested ten different meanings.¹ The following are dominant for Qal: (1) to turn or return, involving physical motion; (2) as an auxiliary verb meaning "again" when correlated with a second verb;² (3) in a covenant context, returning to God or turning away from God or evil. The covenant context for **יָשׁוּב** is clear because of **בְּרִית** in verse 20.

The root occurs seventy-one times in the Psalms but only four are jussives.³ The Old Testament has twenty-two instances of the patterns **יָשׁוּב** (or **יָשׁוּב־**). Two of these should be parsed as imperfect since the context clearly demands this.⁴ Of the twenty remaining jussives, only two lack a following preposition.⁵ Psalm 6:1 translates "let all my enemies be ashamed and very terrified, let them turn

¹William L. Holladay, *The Root SUBH in the Old Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill Company, 1958), pp. 59ff (hereafter cited as Holladay, *SUBH*). The synthesis which follows agrees with *TWOT*, s.v. "**יָשׁוּב**," by Victor P. Hamilton, 2:909. Approximate distributions are (1) 270 times, (2) 120 times, (3) 130 times.

²E.g., Gen 26:18.

³Ps 6:11, **יָשׁוּב**, reads best as a jussive; Ps 85:9 is apparently jussive with **יָשׁוּב־אֵל**; Ps 119:79 has **יָשׁוּב** but makes the best sense as a jussive. MT in Ps 74:21 is beyond dispute morphologically, with the tone-long holem and **אֵל**.

⁴Isa 12:1, Dan 11:28.

⁵**יָשׁוּב** in Qal is intransitive, thus it is normally correlated with various propositions, e.g., **מִן**, Num 25:4; **ל**, Ps 85:9; **אֲחֵרֵי**, 1 Sam 15:31; **אֵל**, Exod 32:13. See BDB, pp. 996-99.

back and be suddenly ashamed."¹ The idea "turn back" rather than "return" fits nicely in Psalm 74:21 for reasons noted below. Usually the meaning of **שׁוּב** is somewhat clarified by use of a preposition.

The prefixed conjugation for **שׁוּב** is preceded by only twice. Psalm 85:9b has **שׁוּב** as a likely jussive, in spite of the middle **ל**. Because of **אֵל**, jussive makes the best sense, "let not (the godly) return to folly." Preposition **ל** clarifies the sense of **שׁוּב**.

To sum up, **אֵל-יִשׁוּב** (Ps 74:21) is the only morphologically unambiguous negative jussive for **שׁוּב** in the Old Testament. Further, it is one of the rare instances of Qal **שׁוּב** which lacks a clarifying preposition. The verse has contrasting cola. Since the second colon assumes a positive approach in which God welcomes the worshipper, the first colon suggests a repulsed approach. The translation is reasonably clear, "let not the crushed one turn away humiliated." The meaning probably concerns a suppliant whose prayer is not heard. Stated positively, it is the well-known request for God to hear the desperate prayer. The negative jussive underscores the potential felt by an increasingly dejected community.

¹ I have read jussives throughout, with KJV. NASB reads imperfects. Either is possible. For **שׁוּב** KJV has "return" while NASB has "turn back."

Holladay suggests as the central meaning of **שׁוּב** in Qal "*having moved in a particular direction, to move thereupon in the opposite direction, the implication being (unless there is evidence to the contrary) that one will arrive at the initial point of departure.*"¹ The psalmist is concerned that the crushed one, in his state of despair, will approach God in prayer but that God, for whatever reason, will not hear.² Thereupon, the suppliant will return to the sense of despair which moved him toward God for help. The return implicit in **שׁוּב** here is not a reference to repentance. Confession of sin and repentance are not a part of the psalm.³ Nor does **שׁוּב** have to do with return from exile.⁴ This psalm presents the praying community as living near the temple environs.⁵

דָּבָר is a rare adjective meaning oppressed or crushed.⁶ As a substantive it is parallel to one who is in

¹Holladay, *SÛBH*, p. 53 (the original is completely italicized).

²Heb 4:16 encourages a very different attitude for the suppliant.

³I.e., repentance is neither affirmed nor denied, a feature unusual for biblical laments.

⁴For **שׁוּב** in this sense, see Ezra 2:1, Heb 7:6, Isa 10:22, Jer 22:10, and Zech 10:10.

⁵Cf. Ps 74:4-9.

⁶J. Kenneth Kuntz, "Supplications and Reflection in Times of Trouble: A. form-critical Investigation of Psalm 9-10" *SBL Seminar Papers* (1975):1:109 (hereafter cited as

distress, i.e., **בצוה** (Ps 9:10). The root **צר** is familiar to Psalm 74. Psalm 10:18 pairs **דך** with **יתום** as objects of Yahweh's fairness in judgment.¹ Proverbs 26:28 suggests the obverse where **דך** is the "crushed" object of a lying tongue. Here the term is parallel to **עני ואביון**.

The parent verb **דכא** illustrates the nuance of **דך**.

דכא has **יהוה אדני** as subject crushing Rahab in Psalm 89:11, a figure for God's awesome power over the mightiest foe. Conversely, Solomon commands the strong to not crush, **אל תדכא**, the **עני** by manipulating judicial procedures (Prov 22:22).² Yahweh will, **יריב ריתם**, plead their case.³ Again, Yahweh says the ideal king will **ידכא עושק**, crush oppressors.⁴

Kuntz, "Ps 9-10"). This discussion of **דך** draws upon TDOT, s.v. "**דכא**," by H. F. Fuhs, 3:203-07. **דך** occurs only in Pss 9:10; 10:18; 74:21; and Prov 26:28.

¹Psalms 9-10 comprise a single acrostic piece. Kuntz argues that the use of **דך** and other infrequent expressions in each psalm supports the unity of the two psalms.

²For similar concepts with some correspondence in vocabulary, e.g., **ינה**, **עאח-III**, **עשק**, see Exod 22:20-23 and Lev 19:13.

³Prov 22:22-23 and Ps 74:21-22 share **עני** and the roots **דכא** and **ריב**. Ps 74:22 is an instance of role reversal, in that God is implored to argue His own case, in comparison to Prov 22:23.

⁴Ps 72:4. The objects of **עושק** are **עני-עם** and **בני אביון**. Vv. 12-14 develop v. 4 and use several roots relevant to or used in Ps 74, e.g., words for poor include **אביון** (3 times), **עני** and **דל** (synonym to words in Ps 74). The prayer by the poor implicit in Ps 74 is represented by **משוע חמס**. **חמס** occurs in Pss 72: 14 and 74:20. Verb roots for

The psalmist has already recalled God's powerful destruction of לוֹיִתָן and תְּנִינִים.⁵ This hymnic segment served to remind God, the king (מֶלֶךְ, vs. 12), of His past power. Now the appeal to God for help for the oppressed may be based on what God said kings ought to do.¹ These three uses of the verb כָּאָ, suggest the utterly crushed state of the object of the action.² כָּאָ connotes an intensely abject condition inflicted by a vastly superior antagonist.

כָּלַם occurs usually in the Niphal, as here,³ and often parallel to בּוֹשׁ (nine times).⁴ The Niphal may mean to be "humiliated, ashamed, put to shame, dishonoured, confounded."⁵ This stem features the condition into which one has been brought without special reference to the cause.⁶

deliverance common to Ps 74 and Ps 72:12-14 are נָצַל (a synonym), יָשַׁע, גָּאֵל.

⁵See above, discussion of vv. 13-14.

¹See note 3 above on Psalm 72.

²Ps 89:11; Prov 22:22; Ps 72:4. Seventeen of eighteen uses of כָּאָ, including these three, are in an intensive stem.

³כָּלַם appears 26 times in Niphal; 10 in Hiphil; 2 in Hophal. This paragraph is dependent upon *TWOT*, s.v. "כָּלַם," by John N. Oswalt, 1:442-43.

⁴Jer 5:12, 31:19; Ezek 9:6; Isa 41:11, 45:16, 17, 35:4; Ezek 36:32; Jer 14:3. The noun כָּלְמָה is used in connection with בּוֹשׁ at least six times. It is paired with חֲרַפָּה in Ps 71:13.

⁵BDB, pp. 483-84.

⁶Hophal would draw attention to the cause of the humiliation; see 1 Sam 25:15 and Jer 14:3.

כלם, used alone, refers to "a more general disgrace resulting from any kind of humiliation."¹ The idea of wound seems prominent.² וכלם ranges from wounding the body, to shame brought on by malignment of character, to shame for heinous sin, to the shame of defeat and captivity.³

The expression of Psalm 74:21a is somewhat figurative but its implications can be concrete for the one praying. The דך, עני, and אביון, in this psalm are not separate groups within the society. As words from a single semantic field they describe the suffering community. Individuals within the community may be regarded as fitting the description of one or more of these terms.

The דך has already been crushed by the oppressors described elsewhere in the psalm. If God repulses him when he prays for relief, he will be further humiliated. דך will become more intensely appropriate for him.

עני ואביון

Some derive אביון from אבה, "to lack, be in need."⁴

Humbert understands the word to express "not only a

¹Oswalt, "כלם," 1:443.

²This is based on an Arabic cognate "wound," KB, p. 440.

³Examples are: body--1 Sam 25:7; character--1 Sam 20:34, Isa 50:6, Lam 2:15; sin--Ezek 16:27, Jer 3:3, 6:15, 8:12; military defeat--Isa 30:3, Ezek 32:30.

⁴*TDOT*, s. v. "אביון," by G. Johannes Botterweck, 1:28; see also *TDOT*, s. v. "אבה," by Bo Johnson, 1:24-26. An Arabic word, 'aba, has an opposite meaning, to "refuse" or be unwilling (KB, p. 3).

deficiency, but also an expectation and a demand."¹ Several connect אֲבִיּוֹן with Ugaritic *'bynt* and *'bynm*.²

אֲבִיּוֹן is contrasted with land owner (Exod 23:11). He is to be released from debt in the Sabbatic year (Deut 15:2). His landlessness is also implied when he is equated with a שָׂכִיר, hired servant (Deut 24:14-15).

צַדִּיק (innocent or vindicated) is sometimes parallel to אֲבִיּוֹן (Amos 2:6, 5:12).³ A transition from אֲבִיּוֹן as literally poor to a group within society, i.e., a social class, is evident in Amos and Jeremiah.⁴

Yahweh Himself judged the cause of the needy (Jer 22:16). The אֲבִיּוֹן plea to Yahweh for a favorable hearing (Pss 40:18, 86:11). They love Yahweh (40:14) and His salvation (86:1). Yahweh does not always forget them (Ps 9:19). The אֲבִיּוֹן calls on God to not forsake him (9:11), not be distant (10:1, 35:22). He asks God to arise, קוּמָה (10:12, 12:6, 35:23) as a warrior, רִיב or לַחֶם (9:4-16, 10:14, 74:19-21). With God as subject and אֲבִיּוֹן as object

¹Cited by Botterweck, "אֲבִיּוֹן," 1:28 from P. Humbert, "Le Mot Biblique *'ebyon*," *RHPR* 32 (1952):1-6.

²Joseph Aistleimer, *Worterbuch der Ugaritschen Sprache*. Herausgegeben von Otto Eissfeldt. 4. Auflage. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1974), p. 3; Gordon, *UT*, p. 349, #24.

³Kapelrud notes that those who should have administered צַדִּיק, justice, were in fact guilty of oppressing the צַדִּיק, innocent; see Prov 22:22, Exod 23:6, 11. Arvid S. Kapelrud, "New Ideas in Amos," *VTSup* 15 (1966):203.

⁴For the literally poor--Exod 23:6, 11; Deut 15:4, 7, 9, 11; a social class--Amos 4:5; Jer 5:28, 20:13.

the following verbs for deliver are used in Psalms: **גאל** (69:19); **ישע** (12:2, 69:36, 86:2, 16); **נצל** (40:14, 86:13).

The stance and concerns of **אביון** in Psalm 74 reflect its general posture throughout Psalms. He is dependent upon God to rescue him from a variety of distresses.¹

The **אביון** is a landless individual who has desperate needs.² The need may be material or spiritual. Economic deprivation could promote a sense, of spiritual dependence upon God. Or a godly life could promote responses from those with economic or political strength that bring on material privation.

The **עני**, too, is landless, but he also suffers acute affliction in the form of malice, sickness, or economic destitution. The **עני** is an object of severe social or judicial mistreatment.

If Psalm 74 dates to the exilic era, the **עני ואביון** are, as always, in some respect, landless. The terms may be equivalent to the whole nation if the land is viewed as belonging to a foreign power. If the psalm intends to imply that some Israelites, e.g., the more wealthy, afflict their poverty-stricken brethren, then the terms describe a dis-franchised social class.

¹All passages cited in this paragraph are from Psalms unless otherwise noted,

²This is based, in general, on the original meaning of **אבה**, "to lack, to be in need;" Johnson, "**אבה**," 1:24.

Based partly on the vocabulary for the antagonists,¹ and on the tenor of the whole psalm, these terms designate a group within the remnant living in Judah under foreign occupation. It is composed predominantly of economically distressed people. Their external distress and material need motivates them to seek God's help and to virtually promise to praise Him. They are landless; they are a social class within Israel; they view themselves as especially close to God.

יהללו

יהללו should be taken as a jussive corresponding to the negative jussive אל-יִשָּׁב.² The plural is common for this root and is expected in a community lament.³ The plural, however, bears on the meaning of הלל-II. This root occurs 150 times and only in the intensive stems. There are a few "secular" uses in which people are praised for such assets as beauty, wealth, or good sense.⁴ Most uses have God or

¹See above, pp. 39-43.

²Williams, *Syntax*, p. 34, #185.

³*TDOT*, s.v. "הלל," by Helmer Ringgren, 3:407.

הודה rather than הלל predominates in individual psalms of praise; *ibid.*, 3:408. Individual laments have a vow of praise in the voluntative, i.e., אהלל, e.g., Ps 35:18, 69:31, 109:30.

⁴Gen 12:15; Ezek 26:17; Prov 12:8.

His name as the object.¹ The place of praising is either the temple or the congregation.²

הודות and **הלל** are often co-ordinate with instruments of song and with **שיר**, **זמר**, and **ספר**.³ Based on these co-ordinates, **הלל** is a jubilant verbal expression, often to musical accompaniment. It involves a moderate to grand intensity of sound and is intended to extol God for Himself and His works.

The object of praise in 74:21 is God's **שם**. The noun occurs 778 times in the singular. To cut off the **שם** meant to eliminate the person.⁴ When God names a person, the name suggests the character, function, or work which God expects from the one He names.⁵

Acknowledgment of the god's name for securing divine blessing is ancient.⁶ Yahweh promises His presence at

¹About 70 of these are in the Psalter. Judg 16:24 is the only instance with a foreign god as object; the people **יהלל** Dagon.

²Temple--Ps 84:5, Isa 64:10; congregation--Pss 22:23, 35:18, 107:32.

³With each other--Ezra 3:11, Neb 12:24; instruments-- 2 Chr 5:13; 7~t11--2 Chr 31:2, Jer 20:13; **זמר**--Pss 146:2, 149:3; **ספר**--Ps 22:23.

⁴Deut 7:24, 9:14; 1 Sam 24:21.

⁵Gen 17:5, 15-16, 35:10; Isa 7:14, 9:5, 6; see *TDNT*, s.v. "**ῥῆμα**," by Hans Bietenhard, 5:254.

⁶Gen 32:30; Judg 13:18f; Bietenhard, "**ῥῆμα**," 5:255.

places which He memorializes.¹ Ultimately, God made Jerusalem the locus of His name.² Understandably, **שׁ** and divine presence are closely related.³ God's presence in the temple is distinct from His throne in heaven.⁴ Concern that Yahweh's name be dishonored is expressed in Psalm 79:9-10.⁵ **יהוה שׁ**, an equivalent of which is used in Psalm 74:18, becomes far more common after the exile, especially in psalmic parallels.⁶ Bietenhard considers **שׁ** an alternate designation for Yahweh in this psalmic use.⁷

Verse 21b is an antithesis to 21a. The first colon requests God not to turn back the crushed one from His presence, thereby repulsing his prayer for help. Rather he requests that this needy and afflicted one praise Yahweh's name, i.e., Yahweh. Though the temple is in ruins, the psalmist still desires a divine presence which he may extol.

¹Exod 20:24.

²1 Kgs 11:36, 2 Kgs 21:4, etc.

³2 Sam 7:13; 1 Kgs 3:2, 5:17, 8:17, 9:3, 7; 2 Kgs 21:7; see Bietenhard, "**שׁ**," 5:256.

⁴Ibid., Bietenhard cites M. Schmidt, *Prophet u. Tempel*, pp. 93-94; see also Solomon's prayer in 1 Kgs 8. Bietenhard has noted "by having the *shem* and not Yahweh Himself dwell in the temple, both a high and low estimation of the temple is secured. Yahweh is not tied to the temple, He is enthroned in heaven. But the significance of the cultic site is safeguarded by the fact that He causes His *shem* to dwell there." For the quote, *ibid.*, pp. 256-57.

⁵See also Ezek 20:9.

⁶Ibid., 5:257; see Pss 7:17, 9:10, 18:49, 68:4, 86:12, 91:1, etc.

⁷Bietenhard, "**שׁ**," 5:257, 260.

The two cola together, on the surface, imply a favorable hearing and anticipate deliverance from the present distress. The latter would become the grounds for praise.¹ Rather than a God who has not heard the prayer-speech of one in need, the psalmist desires a God who, because He has given victory to the afflicted and needy, will hear the praise-speech of the delivered one.

Verse 22

קומה אלהים ריבה ריבך
זכר חרפתך מני־נבל כל־היום:

Arise, Oh God! Plead your case!
Remember the taunt against you
from the impious all the day.

קומה

This verse features three imperatives. The root **קום** occurs 629 times in various uses. The concrete idea is to arise from a prostrate position brought on by such things as sleep, sickness, or mourning. It is used in specialized settings, such as arising for cultic, social, or official reasons.² It has a martial sense in which there is either a literal rising to do battle or a figurative use in which God

¹The feature is frequent in individual laments (Pss 22:33-34, 35:18, 102:19).

²BDB, p. 877; *TWOT*, s. v. “**קום**,” by Leonard J. Coppes, 2:793-94, e.g., Num 11:32, “arise and stand.” Lambdin, *IBH*, pp. 238:40, #173, calls this a “complementary usage.”

is perceived as engaging in combat. Psalm 74:22 employs in this latter way.

A paradigm use of the imperative is Numbers 10:35. As the Israelites, in virtual battle array, depart from Mount Sinai, Moses implores (Num 10:35a):

קומה יהוה ויפצו אויבך

Here it is difficult to distinguish between a possible auxiliary קום and a martial use. The battle context is clear.

At any rate, Moses expects God to take military action in behalf of Israel as she begins her march. Assuming the validity of the Psalm title, קומה in Psalm 3:8 is a plea for divine military action in behalf of David.

Psalm 7:7 uses קומה in a similar fashion. Here the verb parallels עורר, arouse yourself. Isaiah 51:9 demonstrates the appropriateness of this term for a military setting.¹ The prophet recalls that Yahweh's arm (i.e., His might) was עור, awake, when He defeated the Egyptian army of the Exodus. Psalm 7:7-9, in fact, shows a mixing of judicial and military concerns.² Divine judicial punishment often involves military action. The military connotation for קום is seen in Psalm 27:3 in which the subject is

¹עורר and קום also appear in the call for Deborah and Barak to prepare for battle, Judg 5:12.

²Judicial terms in Psalm 7:7-9 are משפט, שפטנו, and נצדקי. Psalm 76:10 also uses קומה, with God as subject in a context which mixes judicial and military concerns. Anderson, *Psalms*, 1:95-96, 2:552-54 notes this fusion in Pss 7 and 76.

and the verb is **תָּקוּם**. Psalm 35:1-2 employs four imperatives **רִיבָה**, **לַחֵם**, **הַחֲזִק**, and **קוּמָה**.¹ Their appearing together shows that each, has a military connotation.²

רִיבָה רִיבַךְ

רִיבָה, as seen above, can call for military activity.

It primarily refers to physical strife or combat.³ **רִיב** also denotes verbal strife.⁴ Judicial significance is a short step from informal verbal contention. In legal contexts God is usually the subject, as in Psalm 74:22.⁵ **רִיב** in Qal occurs sixty-six times, about one-fourth of which are in the classical prophets where God has controversy with His people. The verb occurs five times in Psalms.⁶ The noun appears seven times in the Psalter, sixty-two times overall.⁷ It is found in a virtual cognate accusative

¹The objects of the first three are **יְרִיבֵי** (those contending with David), **לַחֲמֵי** and **מִגֶּן** (a small shield). See Psalm 35:1-2; verses 1-8 contain several words and themes from the military motif.

²In addition, Pss 9:20 and 10:12 employ **קוּמָה** settings much like Psalm 74, i.e., desire for vindication of the vulnerable with strong allusions to divine military activity.

³Exod 21:18, s.a. Deut 33:7; Judg 11:28.

⁴See also the people "quarrelling" (NASB) with Moses, Exod 17:2.

⁵For human disputation in court, see Prov 25:8-9.

⁶Pss 35:1, 74:22, 103:9, 119:154.

⁷Pss 18:44, 31:21, 35:23, 43:1, 55:10, 74:22.

relationship twelve times.¹ **אלהים** is the subject in two of these, Psalms 4:3:1 and 74:22, both of which are in the Elohist Psalter. Elsewhere **יהוה** is the subject.

In each, except Psalm 35:1, Jeremiah 50:34, 51:36, and the Proverbs passages, **ריב** has a suffix. The antecedent in the Samuel passages is David. In Proverbs 22 and 23 it is **עוני**, **דל**, and **יתום**. In Jeremiah 50 and 51 it is respectively the nation and Jerusalem. In Micah and Lamentations it is the prophet.² In Psalms 35, 43, and 119 it is the psalmist.³

Among these twelve instances Psalms 35:1 and 74:22 are notable. Psalm 35:1 is unique in the list because both noun and verb are in the semantic range of warfare. Other uses serve as a judicial motif. Psalm 74:22 is unique because only here is the subject of the clause and the antecedent to the noun suffix identical. Elsewhere God or Yahweh pleads someone else's cause. It is tautological to observe that only a vulnerable individual needs an

¹1 Sam 24:15, 25:39; Jer 50:34, 51:36; Mic 7:9; Pss 35:1, 43:1, 74:22, 119:154; Prov 22:23, 23:11; and Lam 3:58.

²Lam 3:58 has **ריבי נפשי**; for purposes of this survey, the effect is the same as though the suffix were attached to **ריב**.

³Ps 35:1 has **ריבי**. This is the only one of twelve in which the suffix is objective genitive rather than possessive.

advocate.¹ Psalm 74:22 casts God, the advocate, in the role of the vulnerable one. God is the antecedent for the suffix on **רִיבךְ**. If **קוֹמֵה** serves a military matrix in the psalm, as suggested above, there is a tension in the verse between **קוֹמֵה** and **רִיבֵה** on the one hand and the suffix **ךְ** on the other.

זכר חרפתך

With God as subject, as in this Psalm, imperative **זכר** is characteristic of the complaint genre (as in Pss, Jer and Job).² Hymns, on the other hand, employ the verb.³ As noted, **זכר** with God as subject shows up in covenant contexts, e.g., the Noahic, Abrahamic, and Palestinian covenants.⁴ The covenant context within Psalm 74 has been presented.

חרפה occurs seventy times in singular and three times in the plural. There are twenty Psalms uses and fourteen in Jeremiah. Two Psalms uses are in community

¹E.g., the poor, afflicted, the lamenting one, the defenseless city.

²**זכר** in individual complaints: Pss 25:6 and 119:49; in community complaints: Pss 74:2, 17, 22; 79:8; 106:4; 137:7; also prophetic complaints: Isa 64:8; Jer 14:21.

³Pss 98:3; 105:8, 42; 106:45; 111:5; 136:23. See Childs, *Memory*, p. 44.

⁴References respectively are Gen 8:1; 30:22; Exod 2:24; for a useful study of the Palestinian covenants, see William D. Barrick, "Leviticus 26; Its Relationship to Covenant Contexts and Concepts" (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981).

laments (Pss 44:14 and 74:22).¹ Of the sixteen uses in individual laments, usually the reproach is against the individual. Psalm 74:22 is again unique in the Psalms in the respect that here God is explicitly the object of **חרפה**. Thus, only here is God the vulnerable one in a **ריב** proceeding and the object of **חרפה**.

The general meaning of **חרפה** is evident from Jeremiah 24:9. There, by means of prophetic vision, Jeremiah sees good and bad figs. These are symbolic respectively of the captives already in Babylon, the good figs. Zedekiah, his officials, and the remnant of Judah and Egypt are the bad figs, further described by a series of nouns, **לזועה לזועה** . . . **להופה, למשל, לשנינה לקללה** . . . , “They shall be a terror, a calamity, a reproach, a by-word, a proverb, a taunt, a curse.”²

A **זועה** is one who has been made to tremble by adverse treatment. A **רעה** is one in a calamitous condition. A **חרפה** is one who is the object of slander or taunting speech calculated to belittle. A **משל** generally means proverb, but here a by-word, i.e., one well-known for his mean and despised state. A **שנונה**, a development from **שן**,

¹In Ps 44 and the historical psalm, Ps 78, a segment of the nation became a reproach.

²For a brief discussion of this semantic field with special reference to **חרפה** see *TDOT*, s. v. “**חרף**-II,” by E. Kutsch, 5:210, 212-13.

tooth, is one who is the object of sharp words or taunts. A **חרפה** may differ from **שנינה** in that the former results from a calculated campaign to intimidate or belittle.¹ A **קללה** is one who, as the object of contemptible action, is now contemptible.

For 1 Samuel 17:10 Herzberg translates the verb as "defied" but in the notes suggests "ridiculing."² Goliath ridicules what he perceives as the impotence of Israel's army to provide a champion. At 1 Samuel 25:39 the same author translates **חרפה** "insult." David had requested food for his men from Nabal in exchange for past protection. Nabal responded as though David was of no account, and totally undeserving of provisions from the wealthy Nabal (cf. vv. 9-11).

זכר חרפתך (Ps 74:22), petitions God to remember and take appropriate action against those who brought **חרפה** to Him. The psalmist perceives that God has been the object of a calculated campaign to insult and intimidate or belittle.³

מני-נבל כל-היום

The protagonist in the campaign to belittle God is expressed by **מני-נבל**. BDB surmises that the ך is an old

¹1 Sam 17:26; 25:39.

²Hertzberg, *1-2 Samuel*, pp. 143-149.

³This regards the suffix ך as objective genitive; see Davidson, *Syntax*, p. 2, #2, and p. 31, #23, rem. 1.

indication of the genitive. מן indicates source or author of the action, implied in חרפה.¹ נבל in the Psalms seems generally to refer to an impious Israelite who "speaks nonsense."² He tends to be arrogant and overbearing.³ On the basis of Jeremiah 17:11, נבל may be "one who amasses riches unjustly."⁴ In general, a נבל appears to be an Israelite who is opposite to the עני or אביון.

The adverbial expression כל־היום, indicates the constancy of the חרפה.⁵ It is similar to לנצח elsewhere in the psalm and to תמיד in the last verse. In the aggregate these adverbs stress the longstanding "nowness" of the distress prompting the complaint as a whole.

Verse 23

אל־תשכח קול צרריך
שאון קמיד עלה תמיד:

Do not forget the voice of those
harrassing you.
The tumult of those rising up
against you ascends continually.

¹For מן as author of the action in Ps 74:22, see BDB, p. 579. For י on מני as an old indication of the genitive see *ibid.*, p. 577, and GKC, p. 253, #901.

²TWOT, s, v. "נבל," by Louis Goldberg, 2:547.

³*Ibid.*; cf. Prov 30:22. ⁴BDB, p. 615.

⁵BDB, p. 400, has "continually." The singular occurs mostly in the prophets and poetry (except Gen 6:5; Deut 28:32, 33:12), e.g., Lam 1:3; 3:3, 14, 62; Pss 42:4, 11; 44:9, 16, 23; 74:22; 88:18; 102:9.

קול . . . שאון

קול has a wide range of applications in the HB.¹ It may indicate anything that can be heard.² In Psalm 74:23 the meaning is akin to the sound of an excited crowd (1 Kgs 1:40, 45) or the noise of warriors (2 Kgs 7:6). Here קול is more closely defined by צרריך. There are similarities to קול מחרף ומגדף. "the voice of one who reproaches and reviles," due to the presence of אוב (Ps 44:17).

As the psalmist concludes his prayer, he reminds God of one of the first evidences he cited of insolence against God--the roar of God's adversaries in the temple area (v. 4, above). The verb שאג, reminiscent of the roar of the lion with his prey, has become a noun, קול. קול may indicate the roar of a lion.³ Again, the adversaries are styled as God's enemies rather than the people's.

שאון occurs sixteen times elsewhere.⁴ Twice Yahweh is about to move in judgment against the ungodly. In one of

¹Sound of animals, 1 Sam 15:15; clap of thunder, Exod 9:23; rolling of wheels, 2 Kgs 7:6; groaning, Ps 102:6; jubilation, Isa 48:20, *TDNT*, s. v. "φωτῆ," by Otto Betz, 9:280-82.

²*Ibid.*, 9:280.

³Jer 2:15; Amos 3:4; Job 4:10; Ezek 19:7, 9; Zech 11:3. In Jer 2:15 ישאגו is in virtual parallel with נתון קולם. The young lions of Jer 2 are enemies of Israel, perhaps Babylonians contemporary with Jeremiah. This may also be close to the time of the origin of Ps 74. The same words are parallel in Amos 3:4.

⁴This excludes Ps 40:3 where a different root is probably in use.

these instances קול שאון, the sound of an uproar, is in fact the voice of Yahweh (Isa 66:6). In the second קול שאון is the sound of an uproar of a divinely commissioned army (Isa 13:4). The other fourteen times enemy powers or natural forces are either under God's control or about to experience God's judgment.¹ Psalm 74:23 is the only instance of in which God neither causes the tumultuous sound nor is viewed as about to judge the uproar. Indeed, the context itself expresses no explicit confidence that He can or will subdue the enemy.

קמ"ך

The Qal masculine plural participle of קום always refers to adversaries.² Of its sixteen occurrences, twelve are in poetic texts, one of which is part of a code name for Babylon.³ In three of the remaining poetic texts, the poet expects Yahweh to deliver him from his adversaries.⁴ Six

¹Some of the translations of שאון are "uproar of peoples," Isa 17:12; "rumbling of waters," Isa 17:13; "riotous revelers," Jer 45:45; "tumult" of Moab, Amos 2:2; "a clamor has come," Jer 25:31; "roaring of seas," Ps 65:8. Other passages using שאון are Jer 46:17, 51:55; Isa 5:14, 24:8, 25:5; Hos 10:14. שאון occurs twice each in Isa 17:12 and Ps 65:8.

²Qal singular participle, קם, does not appear. BDB, p. 877.

³The code name is in Jer 51:1. The prose uses are Deut 28:7 Exod 32:25 2 Sam 18:31 and 2 K s 16:7.

⁴Pss 3:2; 92:12.

texts affirm that God has given victory or characteristically gives victory over **תקמים**.¹

The two remaining texts are the only ones which have the objective genitive suffix, 2ms (Exod 15:7 and Ps 74:23).² In each instance the referent is God Himself who is the object of the attack.³ The synonyms most closely associated with **תקמים** in these passages are **אויב** (Exod 15:6) and **צרריך** (Ps 74:23). Moses lauds Yahweh for the fact that His **ימין**, right hand, shatters **אויב**, which ultimately gives victory over **קמריך**, "those rising up against you" (i.e., against Yahweh).⁴ The psalmist, on the contrary, has already expressed concern about God's apparent withdrawal of His **ימין** from striking the **אויב** (Ps 74:10-11). Now he calls to God's mind the **שאוֹן קמריך**, the arrogantly tumultuous sound of "those rising up against you." The views of God's ability against His adversaries expressed by Moses and the suppliant of Psalm 74 show a dramatic contrast. Again, this psalm uses a relatively common form in a unique way.

¹Deut 33:11, 2 Sam 22:40, 49 (=Ps 18:40, 49); Ps 44:6.

²Of the sixteen passages using three indicate the object of attack with preposition **על** plus suffix, i.e., 2 Kgs 16:7; Ps 3:2; 92:12. The others use the objective genitive suffix on the participle.

³These are the only instances of **תקמים** for which God is the object of antagonism.

⁴Exod 15:6-7.

עלה is from a common root occurring about 900 times, with about 700 in the Qal stem. While Psalm 74:23 is the only occurrence of the masculine participle in the Psalms, there does not seem to be a unique sense for **עלה** here.¹ The closest parallel to this use of **עלה** is in 2 Kings 19:28 (=Isa 37:29). Yahweh addresses Sennacherib as he is encamped outside Jerusalem: **ושאנך עלה באזני** "Your arrogant ease² has come up into my ears."

The psalmist emphasizes that the adversary is at that moment challenging God's authority. The tumultuous sound of those rising against God is continuously ascending. The continuousness of the sound is stressed by both the participle **עלה** and the adverb.³ One should note that the author did not express an adverbial accusative of direction

¹There are fifteen Qal masculine singular participles in the HB and twenty-four plural participles.

²"Arrogant ease" builds on information in BDB, p. 983. The adjective means basically "at ease, secure." The context in Isaiah 19 requires that Sennacherib is casting the ease with which he thinks he will conquer Jerusalem into the face of God. Some, without textual support have proposed reading instead **שאונך**. See *ibid.* It is unlikely that **שאון** and **שאונך** in certain contexts share the same semantic field.

³See for the durative force of the participle GKC, p. 315, #107d, the verbal force of the active participle presents the subject "as being in the continual uninterrupted exercise of an activity" (*ibid.*, p. 356, #16a). For the noun **תמיד** functioning as adverb see BDB, p. 556. Under "going on without interruption," BDB includes Ps 74:23.

for the active participle. There are other instances of a cry of distress from oppression or a shout of arrogant wickedness which ascends to God which use **עלה**. Usually, the adverbial idea is expressed by a prepositional phrase or a noun.¹

The ambiguity introduced by the author's omission of an adverb of location may serve to heighten the tension he feels about God. "Do not forget the sound of your adversaries. The tumult of those who rise up against you ascend continually." He might have added a gloss to the last clause--"We hear the tumult. Do you?"

A Summary of Findings for Chapter One

Verses 1-3

The psalmist begins with an "accusatory interrogative" charging God with an excessively long period of anger against His sheep (i.e., Israel). Such anger is a contradiction of the Shepherd-sheep relationship. A first imperative requests God to act toward Israel in a manner consistent with God's role as Israel's creator, redeemer and dweller at Zion. A second imperative (v. 3a) beckons God to intervene in a consequence of divine wrath, i.e., enemy devastation on the temple mount.

¹See, e.g., Exod 2:23, 1 Sam 5:12, Jonah 1:2. A notable exception is Jer 14:2. The mood of the prophetic lament is very similar to the mood of Psalm 74. The cry of Jerusalem's distress ascends in the presence of a God who seems to be ignoring her plight.

Verses 4-11

The psalmist reports to God that His adversaries roar in the appointed assemblies and place symbols of their presence at the temple site. "Roar" may be ironic sarcasm recalling Yahweh's roar from Zion. Exegetes agree that verses 5-6 are the most vexing interpretative challenge in the psalm. In general, the verses report that soldiers destroyed the temple complex as though such activity was a sport for them. Use of קדש and חלל stress the irony of enemy activity and should motivate God's intervention.

The enemy then sought to oppress the people and destroy other worship sites. The psalmist connects distress of the people with destruction of religious structures. The use of יחד and כל reinforces the ideas of "totally" and "contin-ually" which characterize the psalm. Verses 10 and 11 resume the question of verse 1. Will God suffer endless defamation of His name? Why does He not destroy the enemy? Terms for antagonist in Psalm 74, אֵיב, אֶרֶץ, and נבל raise the possibility that the enemy is comprised of both foreigner and Israelite. The recurrence of terms from verse 1 suggests conceptual and structural relationships.

Verses 12-17

Three vocatives in verse 12 stress God's kingship and power. The lcs suffix in a "communal" lament demonstrates the important relationship between individual and

community. Verses 13-17 are a highly symmetrical hymn-like declaration of God's ancient "victories" for the nation.

The passage alludes to the exodus, wilderness provision, Jordan crossing and conquest of the land (or one might see exodus, flood, and creation). The unasked question of the psalmist is "Why is God not using His power now?" These verses expound the earlier call to God to remember His congregation (v. 2).

Verses 18-23

Verses 18-23 expand the imperatives of verses 2-3. Using similar words, the poet emphasizes the action (v. 10) and then the agent (v. 18) in reproaching God. The tetragrammaton (in the Elohist psalter) is unusual. The psalmist desires God to protect the vulnerable community (v. 19), regard carefully the covenant (v. 20), and hear the prayer of the seeking community (v. 21). Verses 22-23 have two vigorous imperatives and a mild negative imperative. The latter cloaks a misgiving that any of the prayer in Psalm 74 will receive a favorable response. The psalm ends without answer and with a subdued reminder to God that the noise of the enemy (cf. v. 4, גאש and v. 23, גאש) "ascends continually."

Unique Features in Psalm 74

Several features in Psalm 74 are unique or rare in comparison with the rest of the Old Testament. Some of

these include initiatory **למה** (v. 1), the *hapax* **פעמיך** **הרימה** (v. 3), and the use of **איב** as subject of **נאץ** (v. 10).

Additional features are the verb **רציץ** with a mighty (as opposed to weak) object, the pun with **חיה** (v. 19), and the use of **ריב** with God as both subject and object (v. 22),

These factors give vitality to the language and contribute to a different orientation for the psalm in comparison with other laments.

CHAPTER II

THE STRUCTURE OF PSALM 74

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the structure of Psalm 74 and explain the significance of that structure for the meaning of the psalm as a whole and the meaning of its parts in relationship to the whole. The procedure will first be to define the term "structure" as used in this chapter. A survey of recent attempts to delineate the structure of the target psalm will follow. Finally, and primarily, the chapter will expound the structure of Psalm 74 based upon the analysis of the language of the psalm in the previous chapter.

A Definition of Structure

The term "structure" is variously understood within contemporary biblical scholarship. Methodologies of many practitioners of biblical structuralism are rooted in a concept of *structures* first used in physics and math. These concepts were transposed into such fields as linguistics, ethnology, literary criticism, and sociology. Claude Levi-Strauss gave great impetus to the application of structuralism to studies in anthropology, mythology, and

biblical studies.¹ Others have refined the use of structuralist methodologies in the study of the Scriptures.² Among those who have adapted aspects of these models for biblical research there is a wide range of meaning assigned to "structure" and "structural analysis."³ On the one hand some apply the terms to what Patte calls "'stylistic analysis,'" in which the researcher is engaging in rhetorical criticism.⁴ The concern is with the actual words and arrangement of the text. Bar-Efrat is very close to this position.⁵

¹Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. C. Jacobson and B. Grunddfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963). For extensive bibliography of Levi-Strauss's earlier works, see R. Barthes, *et al. Structural Analysis and Biblical Exegesis: Interpretational Essays*, trans. Alfred M. Johnson (Pittsburgh, PA: The Pickwick Press, 1974), pp. 131-35.

²E.g., Jean Calloud, *Structural Analysis of Narrative*, Semeia Supplements, trans. Daniel Patte (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); Daniel Patte, *What is Structural Exegesis?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976) (hereafter cited as Patte, *Structural Exegesis*).

³For a recent survey of the range of usage, see Robert C. Culley, "Exploring New Directions," in *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters*, eds. Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 167-80 (hereafter cited as Culley, "New Directions").

⁴Patte, *Structural Exegesis*, p. 22.

⁵S. Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," *VT* 30:2 (April 1980):155-58. Bar-Efrat takes issue with methodologies which delve into "the 'deep' structure (as opposed to the surface structure) by using symbolic or metaphorical interpretation," p. 165.

On the other hand, others use complex terminology in describing their approach and they speak, for example, of both mythological structures and narrative structures as each is comprised of a multiplicity of structures.¹ Patte subscribes to this basic model for structural analysis. Indeed, he could more accurately speak of "analysis of structures" with reference to each biblical narrative, no matter how brief the unit may be.

He identifies three levels of structures which impose themselves on most units of biblical material.² "Structures of the enunciation" (i.e., limitations which come from the author as an individual and limitations imposed by the *sitz im leben* which he addresses) and cultural structures (e.g., including factors of geography, building site, customs, ethnology) can be discerned by historico-critical methodologies.³ The third level, "deep structures," is the primary concern of this kind of structural analysis.⁴

The deep structures include narrative, mythical, and other structures, most of which are "buried in the

¹E.g., in Patte, *Structural Exegesis*, titles to chapters 3 and 4 respectively are "Narrative Structures and Exegesis" and "Mythical Structures and Exegesis," pp. 35, 53. By this he means that each narrative unit and mythological piece is comprised of several "structures." Usually no one of these "structures" is present in its totality.

²Ibid., pp. 21-25.

³Ibid., pp. 24, 52.

⁴Ibid., pp. 24-25.

unconscious" faculty of man.¹ These deep structures include not only what the text says but what it implies by what it says. They involve attitudes and value systems.² Culley notes that probing deep structures "relies heavily on the intuition and judgment of the investigator."³

A value in considering deep structures may be to suggest applications of the text. One should not use this kind of structural analysis to dogmatize about the meaning which the author intended. The following review of past proposed definitions of structure excludes exponents of structural analysis whose primary concern is deep structure. The review and proposals which this dissertation makes concerning the structure of Psalm 74 addresses the surface and stylistic features which the text itself uses. Some authors cited in the footnotes for this chapter have, themselves, drawn from writings on structuralism of the Levi-Strauss type, but this is not a primary focus of the present study.

Previous Proposed Definitions

Gene Tucker

A survey of how some scholars have understood structure will provide a context for a proposed working definition. Tucker has a small section entitled "Structure"

¹Ibid., p. 24.

²Ibid., pp. 32-33.

³Culley, "New Directions," p. 177.

in describing the methods of Old Testament criticism, but he does not define what he means by *structure*.¹ One might infer a definition from what he writes as follows: Structure is the identifiable formulaic and conventional patterns reflected in a given text of speech in the light of other speech units that reflect the same formulas and patterns.² In effect, Tucker is more concerned with the formulas and patterns that lie behind the biblical text than with those in the text itself.³ He acknowledges that there are *sui generis* elements in each particular Bible passage and claims that form criticism does not obscure uniqueness but helps clarify the same by distinguishing unique elements from stereotypical and conventional aspects of the genre contained in the text.⁴ At the least, form critics have not always appropriately exploited the unique features of a given passage.⁵

¹Gene M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 12-13 (hereafter cited as Tucker, Form Criticism).

²*Ibid.*, pp. 12-14.

³To put it differently, Tucker is concerned about the formulas and patterns of the genres from which the text has drawn.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵Kessler critiques Tucker for leaning too heavily on the diachronic (historic) aspects. See Martin Kessler, "A Methodological Setting for Rhetorical Criticism," in *Art and Meaning in Biblical Literature*, eds. David J. A. Clines, *et al.* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1982).

James Muilenburg

James Muilenburg applauded the contributions of form criticism, e.g., "it supplied a much-needed corrective to literary and historical criticism;"¹ it assisted in distinguishing the kinds of literature in the Old Testament; and it helped to show that the Hebrew Scriptures shared significant features with cognate literatures.² However, form criticism has so stressed the "typical" in biblical passages that often it lost sight of what was "unique and unrepeatable" in the texts, i.e., the "particularity" of each text.³ A major thrust of Muilenburg's proposals focuses on rhetorical criticism. He approaches a specific definition of structure when he says:

What I am interested in, above all, is . . . in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole.⁴

He considers this to be a rhetorical enterprise whose methodology is rhetorical criticism. This criticism takes account of such features as climactic and ballast lines, ring composition, strophic structure, particles,

¹James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969):2 (hereafter cited as Muilenburg, "Form Criticism").

²*Ibid.*, pp. 2-3

³*Ibid.*, p. 5. All of these expressions are on p. 5.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 8.

repetitions, relationship of beginning of key words.¹ These are the features of a text which constitute its structure.

Claus Westermann

Claus Westermann, a form critic clearly following Gunkel, uses *structure* in a way similar to Tucker.² For the most part the structure of a given psalm is the degree to which the psalm's parts conform to the structure of the *category* to which the psalm belongs. In a later publication Westermann draws brief attention to the fact that "each individual psalm is an entirely unique, irreplaceable composition. Each must be heard for itself and interpreted for itself. . . ."³ The starting point for the structure of a piece remains the structure of the genre to which the piece belongs.

Graeme E. Sharrock

Sharrock propounds yet a different view. He appears to be defining the term.

By structure I mean the "inherent framework" of the psalm which arises to the reader's view from a close

¹See *ibid.*, pp. 10-17.

²Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), p. 52 (hereafter cited as Westermann, PLP). Pp. 1-162 of this publication are a reprint of Claus Westermann, *The Praise of God in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1965).

³Claus Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content and Message*, trans. Ralph D. Gehrke (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), p. 37.

analysis of the text. Such a framework may or may not be evident at first reading. It can seldom be reduced to a mere outline, as is attempted by most commentators.¹

For Sharrock, structure includes dynamic dimensions of the text, e.g., intensity and movement, along with "more static elements."² Static elements include figures, ideas, metre, placement of words and phrases, and the verbal pattern.³

Sharrock has improved on Muilenburg in that he notices that structure, at least in psalm composition, has both static (e.g., rhetorical devices) and dynamic elements. The latter can be described to some degree but they cannot be defined.

William A. Young

Young believes that structure is "a category of literary analysis" in relationship to a given utterance, rather than an outline of a *Gattung* as in form criticism.⁴

¹Graeme E. Sharrock, "Psalm 74 A Literary-Structural Analysis" *AUSS* 21:3 (Autumn, 1983):211 (hereafter cited as Sharrock, "Psalm 74"). Sharrock acknowledges Rolf Knierim, "Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered" *Int* 27 (October, 1973):459 (hereafter cited as Knierim, "Form Criticism") for the expression "inherent framework."

²*Ibid.*, p. 212.

³*Ibid.* Verbal pattern refers to discernible patterns in the placement of verbs according to their aspect.

⁴Young, "Psalm 74," p. 128.

"The structural question *per se* provides insight only into the literary work itself," e.g., it is not an entree into the mind of the author.¹ There is a certain validity to this approach. It facilitates a needed kind of objectivity towards the material but it also totally separates the author from his composition.² Young seems to be willing to deal with the biblical text as a literary piece only. He defines structure as "the dynamic pattern of organization which interrelates the individual elements of a literary composition."³

Meir Weiss

Weiss believes that the purpose of the poetic work is not to impart thoughts, teachings, or feelings, but to fashion (*gestalten*) them, therefore,

Spricht es seine Wahrheit nicht in den einzelnen Aussagen, sondern ausschliesslich in der Einheit der Gestaltung, als Ganzes aus. D.h., die Dichtung macht ihren Sinngehalt nur in dieser ihrer konkreten, einmaligen Gestalt offenbar, in dieser Wortprägung, in diesem Satzbau, in diesem Rhythmus und allein in diesem

¹Ibid.

²It seems convenient to ask in isolation "what does the Psalm say?" then ask "who said it?" (Psalm 74 claims to be a first person composition). This is not Young's conclusion, though he is correct in asserting "before seeking the intention or attitude of the author we must first thoroughly examine the nature of the work itself," (Ibid).

³Ibid., pp. 127-28.

Rhythmus und allein in diesem besonderen Verhältnis der Teile untereinander und der Teile zum Ganzen--kurz: in dieser ihrer Struktur.¹

Weiss, whom Young has used,² tends to equate biblical poetry with modern western poetry in speaking of its purpose.

While the poems in the Bible may fashion thoughts, teachings, and feelings, they also impart teachings.³ Weiss's implied definition of structure is more explicit and so, more helpful than Young's. In a later publication Weiss says the question is not "To what genre does it belong?" but "What is its *structure*?"⁴

A Working Definition

It is difficult to define *structure* as a working feature in biblical exegesis. If one opts for a concise definition, as Young does, clarification of terms in the

¹Translation: "It expresses its truth not in the uniqueness of its expressions, but finally in the unit of its arrangement (Gestaltung) as a whole. I.e., the poem reveals its meaning only in its concrete unique form (Gestalt), in its striking words, in its sentence structure, in its rhythm, and especially in its particular inter-relationship of parts with one another and the parts with the whole--in short: in its structure." The quotation is from Meir Weiss "Die Methode der 'Total-Interpretation,'" *SVT*, 22 (1972):92 (hereafter cited as Weiss, "Total-Interpretation").

²See Young, "Psalm 74," pp. 49, 143, n. 16.

³See 2 Tim 3:16-17. Presuppositions about the nature of Scripture are determinative here.

⁴Weiss, *The Bible*, p. 273. Italics in original.

definition is needed.¹ To go beyond this is to engage in description. As an aid in exegesis, the structure of a psalm may be defined as the combination of word choice, syntax, rhetorical devices, and parallelisms in their unique interrelationships with each other, which the poet uses to express his message. Clearly, one must discover the structure by a careful reading of the piece itself rather than by presupposing a general pattern to which it conforms, or by a quick reading to sense its apparent main themes.

*Past Attempts to Express the
Structure of Psalm 74*

The history of interpretation of Psalm 74 shows no consensus on its proper divisions. This survey will remark first on some commentators who have proposed only two or three divisions, then it will present representative proposals of those who have posited four or more divisions. For the sake of consistency, the term *structure* will be used only with reference to those who subscribe to form critical positions spawned by Gunkel's studies or to those who employ techniques of rhetorical criticism as represented by Muilenburg.² Elsewhere the review will employ terms like "outline" or "divisions." For both categories the proposals

¹Young's discussion of the structure of Psalm 74 fleshes out his definition along the lines of Muilenburg and Weiss. See Young, "Psalm 74," pp. 127-50.

²Gunkel, *Einleitung*; Muilenburg, "Form Criticism."

will follow a chronological sequence based on date of publication as much as possible.

Two or Three Divisions in the Psalm

Alexander regards the psalm as a prayer for deliverance reinforced by two means: the present disaster (vv. 1-12) and "former mercies" (vv. 13-23).¹ More recently Murphy suggests a complaint and description of the situation with "motifs to induce" divine response (vv. 1-11) and a hymn of praise of God's power in creation with other motifs for intervention and a final plea added (vv. 12-23).² Murphy cites Westermann as his general model. NAB follows Murphy.³

Kirkpatrick sees three divisions. The psalmist "ex-postulates" regarding the divine abandonment and the despair which has seized Israel (vv. 1-9).⁴ He then reminds God that His honor is at stake and pleads the sovereignty of Israel's king in history and nature (vv. 10-17). Finally,

¹Alexander, *Psalms*, 2:163. It is interesting that he divides at v. 12 rather than v. 11.

²Roland E. Murphy, "Psalms," *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond Brown, et al. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 589.

³NAB, p. 792.

⁴A. F. Kirkpatrick, ed., *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1906), p. 442 (hereafter cited as Kirkpatrick, *Psalms*).

the psalmist repeats his arguments and entreats God not to abandon His people to the enemy nor to endure their insults.

Four Divisions in the Psalm

Most commentators divide the psalm into four or five sub-units. All commentators consulted who subscribe to four or five divisions, agree that verses 18-23 constitute the final division of the psalm.¹ Almost all consider verses 12-17 to be a sub-unit. As far as the outline or structure of the piece is concerned, most differences involve inter-relationships within verses 3-11.

Meir Weiss

Kissane, Weiss, and Young propose a four-fold division. Kissane groups the verses as follows: 1-5, 6-11, 12-17, 18-23.² The other two men work more or less with rhetorical devices. Weiss stressed the necessity of structural analysis at the International Congress for the Study of the Old Testament in Uppsala, Sweden, in 1971. Subsequently, this lecture was published under the title "Die Methode der 'Total-Interpretation.'"³ Using Psalm 74

¹The lone exception may be Westermann. See below, pp. 169-170.

²Edward J. Kissane, *Psalms*, p. 9.

³See J. P. M. van der Ploeg, "Psalm 74 and Its Structure," in *Travels in the World of the Old Testament*, ed. M. S. H. G. Herrna van Voss, *et al.* (Assen, The Netherlands: van Gorcum and Co., :1974), p. 204 (hereafter cited as van der Ploeg, "Psalm 74";).

as an example for applying the method, he drew special attention to the opening and closing phases of the unit.¹ He labels verses 1-3 an "entrance strophe" and verses 4-23 the "main part."² Based largely on the poet's choices and arrangement of words and ideas, Weiss sees a "striking parallelism" between each of the first three verses and what he sees as three successive strophes in verses 4-23.³ Further, he places these three movements under time rubrics. His pattern is: present (v. 1, vv. 4-11); past (v. 2; vv. 12-17); future (v. 3; vv. 18-23). He observes that verses 1-3 are a "reduced likeness" of the main part.⁴

¹Weiss, "Total-Interpretation," p. 93.

²Ibid., p. 98. Weiss's terms were, respectively, "*Eingangsstrophe*" and "*Hauptteil*." To the extent that Weiss separates vv. 1-3 from vv. 4-23, one might argue that he divides the psalm in two; but because of Weiss's treatment of the latter section, it seems appropriate to consider his a four-part structure. Van der Ploeg notes that Castellino preceded Weiss in proposing that vv. 4-23 amplify vv. 1-3. Castellino differed in seeing vv. 4-23 as a mirror image in expanded form of the introduction. The article by Castellino is Giorgia Castellino, *Libro die Salmo* (Torino, 1955), pp. 305-13 (cited by van der Ploeg, "Psalm 74," p. 205). Weiss mentions both van der Ploeg and Castellino in *The Bible*, p. 282. He did not mention Castellino in his "Total-Interpretation." Castellino's work was not available to the present writer. Weiss interacts with both Castellino and van der Ploeg in a note in *The Bible*, pp. 282-83, n. 5.

³Weiss, "Total-Interpretation," pp. 99-100.

⁴Ibid., p. 100.

William A. Young

Young's "strophic delineation" follows Weiss "with some changes."¹ He compares verses 1-3a to verses 3b-23 in that each has three sections in a "temporal progression from present to past to future."² Further, 3b-23 is set off by the roar of the enemy in verses 4 and 23. Moreover, both prologue and body contain successively a lament about the present, a recall of past victories or deliverances by God and petitions for future intervention. Both Young and Weiss sub-divide the body as follows: 3b/4-11, 12-17, 18-23. Young places 3b with 4 because "it seems to be parallel with v. 4" and maintains the **צַרְר אֹיִב** word pair.³

Young believes that the structure of Psalm 74 is actually operating on two levels. On the one hand, the speakers petition God using several features of what form critics call the "communal lament" genre.⁴ However, it uses many of these features in a unique manner. On another level, the author of the psalm, who is distinct from its speakers, undercuts the well-constructed forensic appeal to God.⁵ The author/poet uses intentional hyperbole (e.g.,

¹Young, "Psalm 74," p. 143, n. 16.

²See *Ibid.*, p. 144, where Young summarizes his proposal.

³*Ibid.*, p. 71. This dissertation defends the MT accentual pattern, below, pp. 179-81, 190-91.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 142-43.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 142, 151-53.

לנצה, כל־הרע), self-contradiction,¹ and paranomasia. Under this third device, Young, e.g., points to the double use of חית (v. 19) and to the speakers' characterizing themselves as "helpless sheep" and yet presenting a "self-assured protest" to God which includes accusing Him of "covenant dereliction" (v. 20).² Young contributes many useful insights as he develops his methodology and expresses his conclusions. However, a more straightforward accounting for the relationships between the rhetorical features and the obvious accusation-petition pattern of the psalm seems necessary.³

Five Divisions in the Psalm

Folker Willesen

Willesen proposes that Psalms 74 and 79 "have no relation whatsoever to any historic occurrence, but are

¹Young admits, "by itself, self-contradiction is not proof of undercutting irony" ("Psalm 74," p. 157), but beyond this, his examples from the psalm of self-contradiction are either not really contradictory or may be nothing more than unintentional irony by those praying. To say that God is now perpetually angry need not deny that once He acted in favor. The fact that there is a "hymn" (vv. 13-17) does not contradict the community's concern to praise in the future, rather than to suffer what seems like continued alienation. Finally, verse 9 is not a complaint that they are "cut off" from God, but rather that they are not aware of any prophetic voice from God.

²Ibid., pp. 157-58.

³See below, pp. 197-98.

completely cultic."¹ Accordingly, he is concerned only with verses 3-9 because the rest gives "no direct illumination of the subject."² This points up a weakness in Willesen's approach because only a part of the psalm is relevant to his thesis. The rest is dressing. His proposed divisions are: 1-3a, 3b-9, 10-11, 12-17, 18-23.

The opening identifies the psalm as a lamentation; 3b-9 and 12-17 are dominated by perfects. Therefore, Willesen argues that the defeat of chaos is "no historic event in our sense" but "belongs to the cultic sphere of life."³ That verses 12-17 refer to a primeval battle is only an assumption. He argues that since verses 12-17 are non-historical and cultic that 3b-9 are the same.

Willesen goes to some pains to show that details in verses 3b-9 have analogies in Ugaritic and Accadian cultic literature. His language is tentative.⁴ Verses 5-6 are regarded as not original but stage instructions to the actors of the myth.⁵ He correctly observes that verse 9 is part of a description whereas verses 10-11 are an appeal to

¹Folker Willesen, "The Cultic Situation of Psalm LXXIV" in *VT* 2:4 (Oct., 1952): 289 (hereafter cited as Willesen, "Psalm 74").

²*Ibid.*, p. 298.

³*Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁴*Ibid.*, e.g., pp. 300, 302, 304, 305.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 304-05.

God.¹ Weiss and Young did not make this distinction between their comments on structure.²

Claus Westermann

In a 1965 publication, Westermann implies, by means of a chart, the following structure for Psalm 74: address and introductory petition (vv. 1, 2a, 3); reference to God's earlier saving deeds (v. 2b, c); lament (concerning the enemy, vv. 4-8; concerning the community, v. 9; concerning God, vv. 10-11); confession of trust (vv. 12-17); petition (hear! v. 19b, save! vv. 19a, 22a, punish! v. 23); motifs (vv. 18-19a and 20); vow of praise (v. 21b).³ Reference to God's saving deeds is apparently part of the introductory petition and the motifs are part of the main petition.⁴ In any case, according to Westermann, the main structure of the psalm is address and introductory petition (vv. 1-3); lament (vv. 4-11); confession of trust (vv. 12-17); petition (vv. 18-21a, 22-23); vow of praise (v. 21b). One should observe that there is really neither unambiguous confession of trust nor a clear vow of praise, in spite of Westermann's labels.

¹Ibid., p. 299.

²Young alludes to the contrasting images of God presented in vv. 10-11 and 12-17 but he does not mention the change in modal nuance, i.e., from question to report ("Psalm 74," p. 135).

³Westermann, *PLP*, pp. 53-54. See above, p. 5, n. 1, on the 1965 date.

⁴Ibid., p. 52 with pp. 53-54.

Also, verse 21b was moved to the end of the psalm, thus actually violating the psalm's own structure.¹ This is due to Westermann's method of identifying the structure before treating the content.

J. P. M. van der Ploeg

Van der Ploeg says that he agrees with Weiss "in dividing the psalm roughly into an introduction (vv. 1-3) and a three-part body (vv. 4-23)."² However, in his analysis he singles out verses 9-11. Verses 1-3 emphasize the "miserable present condition" of God's people rather than addressing the present-past-future, each for its own sake.³ Verse 3b previews verses 4-8.⁴ Verses 9-11 depict a "psychological consequence" of "recalling past events as

¹Weiss, "Total-Interpretation," p. 98, criticizes Westermann for this. Van der Ploeg, "Psalm 74," p. 206, feels that Westermann was simply trying to show that various parts of Psalm 74 function in ways that fit the genre. Weiss's real point is that the structure provided by the category "lament of the people" cannot account for the order of the various emphases within the individual structure of Psalm 74. Weiss reiterates his point in Weiss, *The Bible*, pp. 281-85. Here Weiss (pp. 282-83, n. 5; pp. 285 and 290, n. 7) cites van der Ploeg's article but does not mention the latter's defense of Westermann. It is interesting that a later work by Westermann places *Structure* before *Content* in the title, i.e., *The Psalms: Structure, Content and Message*.

²Van der Ploeg, "Psalm 74," p. 207.

³Ibid., p. 208.

⁴Ibid., van der Ploeg mentions 3-8, but it appears that he intended 4-8.

bearing on the present situation."¹ Verses 12-17 recall God's power at creation as demonstrative of the power He still has. Verses 18-23 are a final prayer which includes several carefully arranged words and ideas from verses 1-11.² Van der Ploeg observes that verse 23 is both a prayer and a complaint. His main point seems to be that, through repetition of words and ideas, the poet profoundly stresses the "miserable present."³

Graeme E. Sharrock

Sharrock analyzes the structure of Psalm 74 according to its dominant verbs.⁴ Imperatives dominate verses 1-3. He stands alone in construing **גאלֹת** (v. 2) as imperative.⁵ This is not impossible, but he does not support the claim. He draws attention to the "hinge" devices which connect the successive paragraphs.⁶ Verse 3b introduces the subject of the next paragraph.⁷ Perfects dominate verses 4-9. The hinge is **עֲדֹמָה**, with a near synonym at the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., pp. 209-10.

³Ibid., pp. 208-10.

⁴Sharrock, "Psalm 74," pp. 210-11.

⁵Ibid., p. 214.

⁶Ibid.

⁷One wonders if Sharrock translates **כֹּל־הָרַע** (v. 3b) as a noun "every evil doer" under the influence of his dominant verb concept (here, imperatives). All of the compared translations (e.g., NASB, GNB, NAB, NEB, etc.) and LXX read a perfect.

beginning of verse 10. Imperfects dominate verse 10-11.

Sharrock believes that the third unit, verses 10-11, "refocuses the major issue" of the psalm. The motivation for God to intervene has moved from people and temple to God's name. The "threat to reputation" is the "more urgent basis" for God to act.¹ The simple λ , rare on the front of the strophe in this psalm, is the only paragraph connector between verses 11 and 12.² Perfects again dominate verses 12-17.

He labels the strophes in the following manner: A (vv. 1-3); B (vv. 4-9); C (vv. 10-11); B' (vv. 12-17); A' (vv. 18-23). The treatment of themes in the psalm conforms generally to the chiasmic pattern which the verbs signal. Strophes B and B' are "religious" with a recall of ancient deliverances.³ Strophes A and A' both refer to the community with animal imagery. All five units contribute to the theme, God's "name." The dwelling place of God (v. 2) becomes the dwelling place of God's name (v. 7). Taunts against God's name are deplored in C (v. 10) and A' (v. 18).⁴ Strophe A' holds out the prospect of praise to God's

¹Ibid., p. 216.

²See also vv. 6, 9c, and 18b where λ introduces medial clauses.

³Sharrock, "Psalm 74," p. 221.

⁴Ibid., pp. 22-23.

name (v. 21). Strophe B' does not use **אשׁ** but it plays on God's reputation as a conquering God from ancient times.¹ For Sharrock, "if indeed C is the axis . . . , then the primary theme . . . is the status of God's name and reputation."²

Sharrock makes a valid point concerning the importance of the verbal pattern. He offers additional useful insights. His article contributes to improved understanding of Psalm 74.

Analysis of the Structure of Psalm 74

A Translation of Psalm 74³

A Maskil of Asaph

1. Why, Oh God, are you perpetually angry?
Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of
your pasturing.
2. Remember your appointed assembly *which* you
created in ancient time
when you redeemed the tribe which is your
inheritance
even Mt. Zion, this *place* in which you dwelt.
3. Raise your steps toward the utter desolations;
the enemy has damaged everything in the sanctuary.

¹Sharrock does not endorse the mythic interpretation of vv. 12-17, but he appears to favor it; see *ibid.*, p. 217, n. 16.

²*Ibid.*, p. 223.

³Italicized and parenthetical terms are supplied by the translator. Each new line (of which most verses have two) is a verset, A, B, or C. For explanation of verset, see below, p. 175, n. 1.

4. Those harassing you have roared during your appointed feast.
They have set up their standards as the signs.
5. One was known as *one* who raises axes in a thicket of trees.
6. And now its carvings with felling tools and axes they have totally destroyed.
7. They have ignited your sanctuary with fire.
They have totally profaned the dwelling place of your name.
8. They have said in their heart, "Let us oppress them completely."
They have burned all the meeting places of God in the land.
9. Our signs (from God) we do not see.
There is no longer a prophet;
And there is none with us who knows how long.
10. How long, Oh God, will the adversary taunt?
Will the enemy disdain your name perpetually?
11. Why do you withdraw your hand, even your right hand?
From your bosom, destroy!
12. Now, Oh God, My king from ancient time,
Worker of victories in the midst of the earth,
13. You stopped the sea with your strength.
You smashed heads of tanninim upon the waters.
14. You crushed the heads of leviathan.
You gave him as food to desert animals.
15. You broke open a spring and water course.
You dried up the ever flowing flood.
16. Yours is the day; Yea! yours is the night.
You have confirmed a luminary, even the sun.
17. You have established all the temperature zones of the earth.
As for summer and winter, you have formed them.
18. Remember this! The enemy has taunted, Oh Yahweh!
And a foolish people have disdained your name.

19. Do not give to the wild beast the life of your turtledove;
The life of your afflicted ones do not forget perpetually.
20. Consider the covenant,
Because the dark places of the land are filled as pastures where violence prevails.
21. Let not the crushed one turn away humiliated.
Let the afflicted and the needy praise your name.
22. Arise, Oh God! Plead your case!
Remember the taunt against you from the impious--
all the day!
23. Do not forget the voice of those harassing you.
The tumult of those rising up against you ascends continually.

Verses 1-3: Introduction

Structure of verses 1-3

Verse 1

The psalm is unique in that it begins with an accusatory question concerning God's unending anger against His sheep. This introductory question resumes with similar questions in verses 10-11. The envelope pattern of questions, especially with **למה**, ties verses 1-11 together. The first verset, 1A¹, arrests attention with both the question

¹For this chapter, the designation "verset" is used rather than the more common "colon," following Hrushovski and Alter. See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "Prosody, Hebrew" by B. Hrushovski, 13:1200-01 (hereafter cited as Hrushovski, "Prosody"); also Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1985), p. 9 (hereafter cited as Alter, *Art*). There are three versets in verse 2 of Psalm 74, i.e., 2A, 2B, 2C. All other verses consist of two versets, A and B. The verse number will appear with the capital letter only where the capital refers to something other than the last-named verse number. Often, the word "verset" will not accompany the designation.

and the vocative **אלהים**.¹

1B makes more precise what is abstract in A.² **זנח**, intransitive here,³ neither controls an object nor is it correlated to a noun with a preposition. By contrast, **יעשן** in B is clearly intransitive, but it is correlated with an object by means of **ב**. This is an instance also in which the literal sense of A is dramatized by a figurative expression in B.⁴ Undescribed anger, MT, has become smoking wrath. The imperfect stresses the present progressive action compared to the state or condition often implied in intransitive verbs.

God's wrath against God's sheep is a surprising use of the shepherd-sheep metaphor.⁵ Smoking wrath and

¹**לנצח** in v. 10 also supports the inclusion formed by 1A and vv. 10-11.

²Alter, *Art*, p. 19.

³See the exegesis above, pp. 13-14. **זנח** as an intransitive rather than the more common **זנח** "to abandon," fits the parallelistic style better.

⁴Cf. Alter, *Art*, p. 16.

⁵Verse 1 clearly implies that God is the shepherd of Israel, a frequent metaphor for God in the Psalms (e.g., **צאן** refers to Israel in Pss 44, 49, 74, 77-80, 95, 100; **רעה**) is an epithet for God in Pss 23 and 80). It is of interest that God as Shepherd, King, and Creator are brought together in Ps 74. For an exhaustive demonstration that Shepherd is an epithet for the king throughout the Ancient Near East and in the Old Testament in particular, see Fowler, "Good Shepherd Discourses, pp. 10-99; esp. pp. 94-99. Fowler cautions against over-emphasis on the fact that the epithet is applied only to God but never to an Israelite king in the OT (pp. 233-34). Psalm 74 indicts God for *not* acting like a good shepherd.

feeding¹ are incongruous. A similar incongruity appears with נַאוֹת חַמַּס, "pastures of violence," verse 20. Nothing else in the psalm explicitly mentions divine wrath. The major motif of a literary unit is "usually stated at the beginning."² Muilenburg balances this note by observing that one of the most "conspicuous" rhetorical features by poets of ancient Israel was "the proclivity to bring the successive predications to their culmination."³ This proclivity is conspicuous by its absence in Psalm 74. Nothing is resolved, except that the poet has expressed himself.⁴

As biblical parallelisms tend to clarification in a series of versets, one may read verses 4-11 in that light. The present progressive nuance of יַעֲשֶׂן is amplified and detailed by the use of perfective perfects and imperfects in the second strophe. Hereby, the poet implicitly identifies God's wrath against His sheep with the on-sight description of enemy plans and actions.

Verse 2

2A maintains the momentum begun with 1A using an initial imperative. זָכַר occurs again in verses 18 and 22.

¹מַרְעִיתָךְ is Hiphil ptc. as *JB* and *NASB* note.

²Muilenburg, "Form Criticism," p. 9.

³Ibid.

⁴See discussion of verses 22-23 below, pp. 207-208.

The object, **עֲדָה**, has covenant connotations in this context.¹ Four words from verse 2 also occur in Exodus 15 in a context similar to that presupposed by Psalm 74:2 and 12-17.² Thus, verse 2 raises images of the Exodus. The perfect verbs, with the adverb **קִדְמָה** make the verse refer to the distant past. **מִקִּדְמָה** in verse 12 invites a connection between verse and verses 12-17.

Versets A and B have an ab-ba pattern with the objects bracketing the verbs. **קָנָה** is the more ambiguous term, with possible meanings of "to acquire" or "to create." **גָּאֵל** is more specific, "to redeem." 2B and C are also chiasmic. The pattern for the verse is ab-ba-ab. **שָׁבַט נַחֲלָתְךָ** may tie the people and the land together.³ Both belong to God. 2C is concerned about the land, **הָרֶ־צִיּוֹן**, because there God has dwelt. Emphasis within verses 1-3 shifts from people to temple site in 2C, with verse 3 entirely concerned with the latter.

¹The exegesis has taken the verbal clauses as relative; see above, pp. 27, 28, 31.

²**קָנָה**, Exod. 15:16; **גָּאֵל**, v. 13; **נַחֲלָת**, v. 17; **לְשִׁבְתְּךָ**, v. 17 (from **יֵשֵׁב**, in same semantic field with **שָׁכַן**, Ps 74:2).

³The genitive (**נַחֲלָתְךָ**) may be either attributive or location. See Donald R. Glenn, "Outline of Hebrew Syntax," class notes distributed at Dallas Theological Seminary, n.d., p. 4, #36 and p. 5, #46.

Verse 3

3A is figurative and abstract. The emphasis is primarily on the Hiphil force in **הַרְיִמָּה**.¹ Though its combination with **פַּעֲמִים** is difficult,² B clarifies its meaning. **לְמַשְׁאוֹת** is made specific by **בְּקִדְשׁ** in 3B. The quantitative force of **נֶצַח** rather than the temporal is corroborated by the object **כָּל־** in 3B. Since the enemy has destroyed everything, **כָּל**, in the sanctuary, the psalmist urges God to hasten to the total ruins, and thus combat or avenge what the enemy has done. Verse 22 supports this interpretation of 3A. Thus **הַרְיִמָּה פַּעֲמִים** is a call for God to intervene at the temple mount, anthropomorphically expressed ("Raise your steps . . .").

The damaged sanctuary is evidence of God's anger against Israel. God's instrument for His anger is **אֹיֵב**. This is a general term for antagonist which will be variously described throughout the psalm without specifically identifying its referent.³ With the use of **אֹיֵב** the psalmist has introduced the three *dramatis personae* of the

¹The causative thrust (see Lambdin, *IBH*, p. 211, #157) is a call for divine initiative.

²LXX reads **כַּפִּיךָ**, s. "bdjk," "your servants" (cf. Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 201). Briggs, *Psalms*, 2:157, says the combination is a *hapaxlegomenon*.

³Other terms include v. 4, **צָרָרִים**; v. 10, **צָר**; vv. 18, 22, **עַם־נֹבֵל**; v. 19, **חֵית**; v. 23, **קַמִּיךָ**. **אֹיֵב** occurs in vv. 3, 10, 18.

prayer, God, the community, and the adversary. He will characterize each in a variety of ways.

The Summary

Verses 1-3 anticipate the whole Psalm in additional ways. Verses 10-11 and 22 will corroborate the accusatory tone of verse 1. God's anger (v. 1, **זַחַח** and **אָף**) is the conceptual context for the entire prayer. The prayer is a response to what seems like an unduly long expression of that anger. A contradiction between the people's relationship to God and His treatment of them quickly surfaces (1-2). Their plight (1) is a major issue in verses 8-9 and 19-21.

The contrast between present distress (v. 1) and past benefits (v. 2) will magnify in verses 4-11 and 12-17 respectively. The reference to Mt. Zion (2C) prepares for a major ploy which the psalmist will use to prompt relief. He will use temple desolation to motivate God. This is explicit in verse 3.

In the context of the whole psalm, **הַר יְמִינֵהוּ** (3A) anticipates the ten-fold call for divine intervention in the distress of the community (vv. 18-23). More specifically, 3B, as an explanation of **מִשְׁאוֹת**, will have each of its terms elaborated in verses 4-11. Verse 3 is, therefore, pivotal

in anticipating both the petition at the end (vv. 18-23) and the description of destruction (vv. 4-11).¹

Verses 4-11: The Present Crisis

Structure of verses 4-11

The perfect tense of 3B וְהָרַע and the general designation of the temple as שְׂדֵךְ serve as syntactic, lexical, and conceptual links to verses 4-9. The passage describes details of the invasion of temple precincts and oppression by using six perfect verbs.

Verse 4

The parallelism of 4A and B is not readily apparent. Both begin with perfect verbs which are syntactically parallel but semantically unrelated.² The nouns in A and B are neither syntactically, morphologically, nor semantically equivalent.³ The versets are phonologically parallel, with the o intensifying from two occurrences in A to four in B.

¹Some place 3B with v. 4, e.g., Willeson, "Psalm 74," p. 299; Young, "Psalm 74," p. 70. Such a break ignores the concretizing effect that 3B has on 3A. See Alter, *Art*, pp. 19-20.

²שָׂדֵךְ and שָׂמַךְ are morphologically the same (i.e., they parse the same way) though their roots are different, i.e., שָׂדֵךְ is middle-weak and שָׂמַךְ is middle-guttural.

³This kind of analysis of parallelism depends upon certain working definitions. Equivalence between two versets obtains when one has linguistic elements (word s, sounds, grammatical features, etc.) that parallel corresponding elements in the other. Syntax concerns the

The accentual metre is 4 + 3.¹ Conceptually, the versets are related only in that they describe separate enemy acts at the temple site which offend the pious Israelite.

Verse 4 introduces a bracketing device for two passages within the psalm.² Verse 9, like verse 4, has 4 + 3 metre.³ Further, **א וְתִינּוּ** (v. 9) is a verbal repetition from verse 4 but a grammatical antithesis to its counterpart, i.e., "their signs" (v. 4) versus "our signs" (v. 9). Thus verses 4-9 are set apart, with their dominant perfect verbs from verses 10-11, which among other differences, feature imperfects.

Verse 4 joins with verse 23 as a bracket for the "body" of the psalm.⁴ 4A and verse 23 have semantic equivalence between **שֶׁאֵינָהּ** (v. 4) and **קוֹל** and **שֶׁאֵין** (v. 23) and

relationship of a word to its clause, e.g., **שֶׁמֶן** has an object, **א וְתִינּוּ**, whereas **שֶׁאֵינָהּ** has none. Morphology concerns parsings. Semantics concerns the field of meaning of a given term. This note draws from Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 140-41 (hereafter cited as Berlin, *Dynamics*).

¹This study confines itself to noting accentual metre only, as possible supporting data. A construct form is counted as one accent if not joined to its absolute by *maqeph*, otherwise the construct does not count.

²Bracket, envelope, and inclusio are virtually synonymous terms designating rhetorical devices that mark off literary units of various sizes.

³In this study **אֵל** is proclitic and does not count as a stress.

⁴Weiss and others consider vv. 4-23 the "body" of the psalm. See Weiss, *The Bible*, p. 285.

between צרר יך and קמ יך.¹ The lexical repetition with is obvious.

Verses 5-6

Structurally, verses 5 and 6 form a sub-unit. B is not equivalent to A in either verse, rather, in both, B develops A into a complete thought. The whole of verse 6 is equivalent to the whole of verse 5. The syntactic patterning of the two verses verifies their unity:²

Verse 5: V - Pc - Av - Pp - 0

Verse 6: Cj - 0 - Av - Pp - V

This unit is framed by imperfect verbs, whereas verses 4 and 7-8 use only perfect verbs.³ Verses 5 and 6 are syntactically parallel. Verse 5 is a simile and verse 6 the seconding or expanding line.⁴ The imperfects may be progressive at the time of composition. "One is known as

¹One should note that there may be semantic equivalence without syntactic equivalence. גאש is a verb whereas לקול and און are nouns.

²The abbreviations below are: V-verb; Pc-participle; Av-adverb; Pp-prepositional phrase; 0-object; Cj-conjunction.

³T. J. Meek has suggested a chiasmus here (Theophile J. Meek, "Hebrew Poetic Structure as a Translation Guide," *JBL* 69 [March 1940]:7). The syntax tends to support this.

⁴James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 51-54 (hereafter cited as Kugel, *Idea*) where Kugel uses "seconding" to designate B (Ps 74:6 has a "B" function) as echoing, defining, or completing A.

one who raises axes in a thicket of trees, and now its carvings with felling tools and axes they have completely destroyed."

Verse 7

Berlin distinguishes between "the perceptibility of parallelism" and understanding its effect upon the text of which it is a part.¹ While recognition and understanding are related, they are not identical. One may identify four features which enhance perceptibility of a parallelism.²

(1) Parallel versets in juxtaposition are more apparent than parallel versets which frame a piece.³ (2) Sameness of syntactic surface structure promotes recognition.⁴ (3) Perceptibility of parallelism increases in direct proportion to "the number of linguistic equivalences."⁵ (4) When parallelism, as such, pervades a text, "one tends to find

¹Berlin, *Dynamics*, pp. 130, 135.

²Ibid., pp. 130-35.

³For the former, cf. Ps 74:7; for the latter cf. 4A with 23A.

⁴13A and 13B are very similar.

⁵Berlin, *Dynamics*, p. 133. Berlin's point can be illustrated from Psalm 74. Equivalences between 7A and B are more numerous (syntax, semantics, morphology, and phonology) than those between 3A and B (semantic correspondence with **משא ות**).

parallelism even in lines which have few or no linguistic equivalences."¹

The first three features are in the external arrangement of the script and Masoretic vocalization, but the fourth is psychologically oriented. Berlin notes that in a prose context Psalm 94:11 would not normally be viewed as poetry.² Because this verse occurs among numerous obvious parallelisms, it, too, is viewed parallelistically.

Verse 7 has highly perceptible parallel verses. A and B are juxtaposed and are linguistically equivalent in several ways: semantically (מִשְׁכַּן־שֶׁמֶךְ; מִקְדָּשׁ); syntactically, A and B both have a prepositional phrase and each has an object following the verb; morphologically (חֲלַל, חֲלַל, 2 ms suffixes on the objects); and phonologically (the verbs each have חֲלַל־; the objects repeat מִשְׁכַּן־).³ Parallelism with such easily detected equivalences have been designated "hot

¹Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 130-35. Vv. 18 and 19 prepare the reader to find parallelism in v. 20.

²On the fluid line between prose and poetry, see Alter, *Art*, pp. 4-6; Kugel, *Idea*, pp. 78-86. Kugel concludes that "no great service is rendered by the concept of biblical poetry," rather, the phenomenon is an "elaboration to increasingly high levels of symmetry and design, and . . . other elevating features" (*Idea*, pp. 94-95). Berlin, *Dynamics*, pp. 3-6, thinks Kugel has overstated his own case. Willesen ("Psalm 74," p. 304) suggested that Psalm 74:5-6 were a kind of prose "stage instructions" within poetic lines.

³Verse 7 illustrates nicely Berlin's first three features which enhance perceptibility of parallelism.

parallelism," while those more difficult to spot are "cool parallelism."¹

Greenstein notes that with such a sequence of cool and hot lines, the hot lines may indicate closure or a shift in thought flow.² In the present strophe verses 4-7 explicitly concern the temple at Jerusalem. The emphases in verses 8-11 are on other aspects of the catastrophe (e.g., the plight of the people and defamation of God's name).

Verses 4-7 imply a temple ideology which the people assume they share with God. The temple is sacrosanct; impudent action violates its precincts; God's presence and reputation depend on the maintenance of the structure.³ Progression in word choice for temple designation heightens the sense of importance attached to the temple: **הר־צִיּוֹן** (2C) , temple location; **קֹדֶשׁ** (3B) , a general term; a term which frequently denotes Israel's central worship site; **מִשְׁכַּח־שָׁמַיִם** (7B) the construct emphasizes dwelling place

¹Edward L. Greenstein, "How Does Parallelism Mean?," *A Sense of Text, Supplement to Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1982, p. 54 (hereafter cited as Greenstein, "Parallelism"). Greenstein borrows the terms as applied by Marshal McLuhan to television media.

²Ibid., p. 57.

³For **שָׁמַיִם** (vv. 7, 10, 18, 21) as presence, reputation, and representation, see the concise discussion by Walther Eichrodt, *TOT* 2:40-45.

and presence. **שם** is a virtual designation for God's person.¹

Structure of verses 8-9

Verse 8

The perceptibility of parallelism decreases in verse 8 but it is still more obvious than, e.g., in verse 3. Sameness of surface structures between 8A and B include morphologically identical initial verbs and prepositional phrases with **ב** in each.

On one hand, 8B relates to verse 7 with **שרפו** and its reference to worship facilities (but not the temple). On the other hand, reading **נינם** as "let us oppress them," 8A relates to verse 9. The suffix on **נינם** (3 mp) and the suffixes in verse 9 (1 cp) all refer to the community. Verses 4-7 concern temple destruction and verses 8-9 concern oppression and alienation felt by the people.

¹Lev 20:3, "**ב** will also set my face against that man and I will cut him off from among his people because he has given some of his offspring to molech so as to defile my sanctuary (**מקדש**) and to profane My Holy Name (**לחללי את־שם**) (קדשי)." See also Amos 2:7 which equates mistreatment of **דלים** and says that all three **שם־את־לחלל**. Psalms passages which use **שם** as the object of an attitude, subject of an action, or means of divine work are Pss 54:8, 9; 20:7; 75:2; 89:25; 44:6. See *ibid.*, pp. 41, 43.

²Perfect verbs in first or second position in the verset are especially frequent in vv. 4-8 (3 cp) and vv. 13-17 (2 ms). These passages contrast with each other in several ways.

Verse 8 is similar to verse 3 in that it is pivotal.

The versets in verse 8 are not related to each other in accordance with the more common terminology for biblical parallelism, i.e., "synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic." This was also true in verse 3.¹ 8A reports a threat by the enemy. 8B reports its fulfillment.²

Verse 9

אֹתָהּ in verses 4 and 9 helps to create an envelope effect for the passage which, in turn, ties verses 8 and 9 together. The persistence of the perfect tense in 4-9 promotes coherence and marks the passage off from verses 10-11 with their imperfects. The negatives tie 9A, B, and C together. **וְאֵינוּ** is a general present and the other two clauses are nominal so that the condition is a present experience in the psalm's original composition.³ Whereas verse 8 complained about oppressive enemy action, verse 9 seems to be a complaint addressed indirectly to God that He

¹With a certain appropriateness, verse 7, in contrast to vv. 3 and 8, is a synonymous parallelism. Since v. 7 is clearly a parallelism, the reader expects v. 8 to be "parallelism." This illustrates Berlin's fourth feature which enhances perceptibility of parallelism (see Berlin, *Dynamics*, pp. 134-35 and above, pp. 32-34).

²Vv. 19 and 20 are also reported fulfillments of the threat (8A) but here they take the form of requests.

³The psalm surfaces a complex of interrelated experiences all perceived by the community as *present*. A sense of "nowness" persists throughout. Examples of this are **לִנְצַח** (vv. 1, 10), **עַד־מָה** (v. 9, similar term, v. 10), negative, i.e., **אֵל** imperatives (vv. 19, 21, 23); **תְּמִיד** (v. 23).

is withholding a prophetic voice that might be able to inform the people how long the present distress will last.¹ This is another form by which God expresses His anger and it is perceived as a distancing maneuver by God.

The structure of verse 9 progresses in specification. Transformation from a verbal to nominal clause sometimes signals this.²

Structure of verses 10-11

Verse 10

The community does not have the normal means for knowing how long, **עַד־מָה**, the distress will last (v. 9).

עַד־מַתִּי (v. 10) connects directly with verse 9. The subjects of verses 10-11 are different from what precedes but they are part of the foregoing unit. 10A and B are semantically, morphologically, and syntactically parallel. Conceptually, they are synonyms. They are chiasmically related but the thoughts are synonymous. The pattern for verse 10 is Av - Voc - V - S = V - S - 0 - Pp.³ The opening interrogative adverb and final prepositional phrase both concern long duration. **אֱלֹהִים** and **שֹׁמֵר** refer to the same entity. The

¹See above pp. 65-66 for short term predictions which give credence to long-term predictions; also see 1 Kgs 13.

²Alter, *Art*, pp. 19-20; Greenstein, "Parallelism," p. 47.

³The new abbreviations are Voc-vocative; S-subject. See above, p. 183, n. 2.

chiasmus stresses that the enemy *taunts* God *interminably*. The verbs are imperfect and so stress the presentness of the action.

Verse 18 is a virtual refrain to verse 10. Its versets are conceptually synonymous but not chiasmic. After **זָכַרְתָּ זֵאת** the pattern is S - V - Voc = S - V - O. Verses 10-11 conclude a strophe while verse 18 opens a strophe.¹

Verse 11

The combination of **אלהים** (v. 10) and initial **למה** (v. 11) shows that: verses 10-11 form an envelope with verse 1 which begins **למה אלהים**. This construction suggests that the accusatory mood pervades verses 1-11. The prefixed conjugations of verses 10-11 duplicate the imperfect (v. 1) so that God's anger against His sheep is equalled by the enemy taunts against His name.

Other structural features in verse 11 include equivalent anthropomorphisms in A and B. Each verset suppresses a grammatical feature. Juxtaposing the expressed anthropomorphisms in A and B shows the intent. The ellipses are more forceful but an expanded translation clarifies the idea: "Why do you withdraw your hand even your right hand (into the midst of your bosom)? From the midst of your bosom, (your hand, even your right hand, thrust forth and)

¹For other features of v. 18, see below, pp. 199-200.

destroy!"¹ The translation follows MT and shows a chiasmic, antithetic, highly perceptible parallelism.

The initial interrogatives tie verses 10-11 together. In that both verses have hot parallelism in contrast to verses 8-9, the former are a conspicuous closure to verses 1-11. Verses 10-11, as both closure and bracket, encourage the reader to pause.²

A Summary

The perfect verbs which dominate verses 4 and 7 signal both a new strophe and a sub-unit within a strophe. The verses describe destructive activity at the temple site which the community believes profanes God's abode. Verses 8 and 9 use perfect tense verbs but the object of enemy action changes from temple to people in verse 8. Verse 9 is an indirect complaint that God is withholding prophetic insight in time of crisis.

Verses 10-11 display two shifts. The poet uses imperfect verbs which emphasize the continuous nature of enemy activity and the object of the action is God's name. These verses state the community's interpretation of enemy

¹Paranthetic material is supplied to manifest the structure. As noted above, p. 20, n. 1, some move כלה to verse 12. Viewing כלה as antithesis to תשיב vindicates MT accents.

²A third encouragement to pause is the final imperative כלה. See comments below, p. 192.

actions outlined in verses 4-9. The whole unit concludes abruptly with a call for divine intervention.

Verses 12-17: Past Victories

Structure of verses 12-17

Verse 12

Verse 12 scans 3 + 4 without transposing **כלה** from verse 11.¹ The unbalanced meter of verses 11 and 12, i.e., 3 + 4 and 3 + 4, may underline the agitation in the imperative and vocative respectively. The 3 + 4 of verse 12 would then set that verse off from the "hymn" proper in verses 13-17. One should also observe that two imperatives, (v. 11) and **זכר** (v. 18), immediately bracket the unit. may be either temporal or indicate a vocative.² The exegesis has argued for three vocatives in the verse. The parallelism in verse 12 is more conceptual than linguistic. 12B features a major function of kingship, to lead in victory.³ 12B is a stark contrast to 1B, leading to victory versus venting one's wrath.

Verse 12 introduces scenes from the ancient past in a manner similar to verse 2. Both verses employ **קדם**.

Verses 10-11 relate to 12-17 in a manner similar to the

¹Young ("Psalm 74," p. 90) transposes **כלה** and ends up with balanced meter in vv. 11 and 12, i.e., 3 + 3 and 4 + 4. Dahood, *Psalms II*, pp. 203-04, leaves **כלה** with v. 11.

²Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 204.

³Cf. 1 Sam 8:20.

relationships between verses 1 and 2. The taunting of the divine name (vv. 10 and 18) is the context in the psalm for recounting victories which secured a glorious reputation for God.

General features of Verses 13-17

From a literary standpoint, verses 13-17 are a model of regularity with a uniform 4 + 4 meter and easily recognized parallelism.¹ The succession of perfect tenses suggests settledness. Among the ten versets (vv. 13-17) only the fourth (14B, תתנונו) and seventh (16B, nominal clauses) do not use second masculine perfects.² On the literary level the description of past victories sharply contrasts with the mixture of perfects and imperfects and the uneven nature of the parallelism in the description of present distress (v. 4-11). The major similarities between the two passages is the dominating positioning of perfect tense verbs in both. This factor invites comparison.

Just as the occasion of distress (vv. 4-9) is not specifically identified, so also the ancient victories and evidences of sovereign control are not specifically named. Verses 13-14 use metaphors which elsewhere stand for

¹All sources examined which treat meter agree that it is 4 + 4 throughout; see, e.g., Briggs, *Psalms*, 2:157; Schmidt, *Die Psalmen*, p. 141; Kraus, *Psalmen*, 2:677; Young, "Psalm 74," pp. 97-106.

²There is order, even with the variants. 14B is fourth from the beginning and 16A is fourth from the end.

political enemies and often Egypt. Most commentators since Gunkel, who use the historical critical methodologies, accept *a priori* the mythical interpretation of these verses.¹ To be sure, the myth of the sea monster has been demythologized in 14B.² On the strength primarily of Isaiah 51:9-11 this writer accepts the historical interpretation.³ This interpretation makes this hymn fit in certain respects with the prescribed liturgy in Deuteronomy 26:5-8. This liturgy was intended to assist Israel in affirming her continuity with the past and expressing her dependence upon God.⁴

¹G. A. F. Knight, *Psalms*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 2:15; Elmer A. Leslie, *The Psalms: Translated and Interpreted in the Light of Hebrew Life and Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), pp. 56-57, 73-75; Bittenwieser, *The Psalms*, p. 614; A. A. Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:543-45. A recent work devoted to the *chaoskampf* motif in general, treating Ps 74:12-17 specifically, is Day, *Conflict*, pp. 21-25.

²This factor, among others, has led Young to read the passage as an intended ambiguity between myth and Exodus traditions; Young, "Psalm 74," pp. 135-37, 200-02, 223-25.

³See above pp. 87-92. Older commentators who agree include Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 2:333; Alexander, *Psalms*, 2:169-71; Moll, *Psalms*, p. 422; and Briggs, *Psalms*, 2:155. Recent commentators who agree include Cohen, *The Psalms*, p. 239; Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, pp. 268-69; Leupold, *Psalms*, pp. 538-39.

⁴For a fuller description of the "credo" in Deut 26 dominating historiography in the Psalms, see Westermann, *PLP*, pp. 216, 230-32, 236-40. Westermann holds the mythical interpretation of Ps 74:12-17 (*The Psalms*, p. 46) but his remarks about historiography in communal laments are nevertheless helpful. Deut. 26:5 as credo was elaborated by von Rad in Gerhard von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (London: SCM Press, 1984), pp. 2-12.

Rhetorical devices and parallelism

The anaphoric use of **אתה** promotes cadence.¹ The calculated use of the pronoun is evident from its sevenfold repetition, its occurrence at the beginning (13A) and end (17B) of the stanza in the manner of inclusion. After each **אתה** is a perfect 2ms verb. Five of these have intensive or causative stems.² In the two verbal clauses without **אתה** the verb is first. The pounding repetition of ten emphatic forms of "you" perhaps says as much about the addressor as about the addressee.

There is a series of nine versets with matching syntax and a high degree of morphological equivalences. In each instance the verb controls an object. 16A is a pair of terse nominal clauses with strong equivalences between them.

This sustained series of highly perceptible parallelism³ has an unusually ordered closure of a single verset. The framing effect of **אתה יצרתם** has been noted above. **קִיץ וחרף** functions as an accusative absolute. The syntax is radical and arresting. The root forms a

¹Anaphora is the repetition of a single word "at the beginning of successive clauses: thus adding weight and emphasis to statements or arguments by calling special attention to them" (Bullinger, *Figures*, p. 199).

²This does not count **שברת** (13B) .

³Greenstein calls this "hot parallelism," which he says tends to disengage the audience (Greenstein, "Parallelism," p. 53). Here the effect is the opposite.

paranomasia with its duplicate חרף in the next verset.¹

Besides the hinge effect there may be an implied contrast.

God controls the winter (חרף) but allows the enemy to revile (חרף) His name.²

Movement of Thought

God's victories in the distant past (מקדם) in behalf of Israel vindicated His kingship over the nation.³ Verses 13-14 recall the divine destruction over the pursuing Egyptian army in ים־סוף.⁴ Verse 15 successively recalls provision of water in the wilderness and the drying up of the Jordan River to permit the crossing into the land.

Verse 16 affirms God's regulation of the solar day with a possible inference concerning Joshua's long day. This further dramatizes God's role in fighting Israel's battles in the past. Verses 16-17 concern natural phenomena under God's control for the benefit of His people. 16A, with its nominal clauses, justifies construing the next three perfects as perfective in contrast to the aoristic perfects of vv. 13-15.⁵

¹The distinction between paranomasia and homonym in Hebrew is sometimes difficult to discern (Bullinger, *Figures*, pp. 1005-07).

²See Young, "Psalm 74," p. 111. The link with חרף is more obvious than if the verb had been prefixed as in v. 10.

³Exod 15:18-19.

⁴Exod 15:4.

⁵The verbal action of the perfective occurs in the past and its results or the action itself continues "up to

The "hymn" focuses on God's defeat of a powerful military foe (vv. 13-14), then it recalls instances of timely direct divine intervention on behalf of God's people. In these God reversed existing geographical circumstances; (v. 15). Finally, God rules the cosmos so that His people might have a predictable, varied, and beneficent life (vv. 16-17).

A Summary

According to Deuteronomy 26:5-10, the worshipper was to acknowledge God's response to their forefather's cry of affliction in bringing them out of Egypt by means of signs and wonders into a productive land. The poet of Psalm 74 selects expressions for his "hymn" which accord with this outline. In so doing, he stresses God's victory, His mighty intervention, and His establishment and maintenance of order. Precisely *these* kinds of experiences are missing in the rest of the psalm and are the things for which the community prays.

The regularity of the hymn's structure and the divine acts which it reviews unite to say, "When God acts, there is order and victory." The rest of the psalm, however, lives with an angry, inactive God.

the time of the subject" (Waltke, "Syntax," p. 10). The nuance of the perfects in vv. 16-17 is present perfect--"You have established, . . ." etc. (ibid., p. 18).

The preceding paragraph presents the message of the "hymn" if it could be taken in isolation. A combination of structural factors in the whole psalm points in a different direction. The passage (vv. 12-17) is isolated by imperatives immediately before and after. **כלה** and **זכר** imply present or potential "remissness" on God's part.¹ Second, the psalm has a sustained mood of disappointment, outside the "hymn," regarding God's stance toward the suppliant. Third, the "hymn" has a repeated intensity of direct address. These factors suggest that the "hymn" itself is a rebuke to God.

Though the facts are true and the psalmist holds God as *his* God, he is not so much expressing confidence or praise as he is trying to prod God by implied shame.² By comparison with God's past great victories, He now seems immobilized or negligent in the face of His present enemies. The arrogant and overpowering actions of what the psalmist calls God's enemies overshadow the powerful past actions of God. God's reputation is vulnerable.

¹I have chosen the less common "remissness" as a more appropriate term than "negligence" or "dereliction."

²It is paradoxical that the psalmist on the one hand is concerned that the enemy shames God (especially vv. 10, 18) and on the other hand, his own moods and diction also shame God.

Verses 18-23: Urgent Pleas

Structure of verse 18

Precative verb forms dominate verses 18-23. Among the twelve versets, seven begin with a precative of which four are negative. זָכַר (v. 18) is a double duty imperative. Two versets virtually end with a precative. 22A has two imperatives. There are ten expressed precatives and one implied.¹

Verse 18 contrasts with verse 2. In the latter the psalmist petitions God to remember His congregation, implying that God ought to act in its behalf. Verse 18 repeats זָכַר, but calls on God to act against the enemy. A call for action against the enemy surfaced first in verse 3.

Verse 18 also contrasts sharply with verse 12-1.7. The latter depicted God's mighty victories but the former calls Yahweh to remember that the enemy now defies Yahweh's name. The tetragrammaton, unusual in the Elohist psalter, helps to emphasize the covenant concerns of this series of petitions.

That יהוה is vocative and חָרַף intransitive is corroborated by the corresponding vocative אֱלֹהִים in verse 10, of which verse 18 is a virtual repetition.² The same

¹Ten perfects and imperfects in vv. 13-17 are balanced by ten precatives in vv. 18-23.

²The usual order is vocative--verb as in vv. 1 and 10.

pair of verbs occurs in verses 10 and 18 and in the same order, intransitive then transitive.¹

שמך and יהוה both occupy the final slot, though their syntactic functions differ.² Such positioning strengthens the semantic identity of the two. The position of יהוה within its parallelism is conspicuous. Its use immediately after the "hymn" celebrating the Exodus may serve to intensify this petitionary section. Yahweh, the victorious God of the Exodus, ought to similarly exert Himself now!

Designations for the enemy are more conspicuous in verse 18 than in verse 10 because they precede the verb and bear disjunctive accents. The more general אויב gives way to עם־נבל. The parallelism thus features the latter since it is more precise and limiting³ and it is placed first in the clause.

Structure of verses 19-21

Verse 19

Verses 19-21 are petitions which specifically concern God's people. These verses contain much that is

¹Alter, *Art*, p. 22, notes this kind of intensification. Reading חרך as intransitive is preferable to Dahood's declaration that the poet omits the suffix *metri causa* (*Psalms II*, p. 207).

²By comparison, אלהים is distanced from שמך in v. 10.

³See the earlier discussion; see also Alter, *Art*, p. 11, on his impulse to intensification.

directly related to the Israelite cult.¹ 19A identifies the praying community under the metaphor of a תור, an easily ensnared bird that was a prescribed sacrifice for those who could not afford a larger animal. In this clause, with a complex of role reversals,² the nation feels that God is now treating His people like He treated a mighty enemy in the "hymn." Whereas verse 2 is positive, "Remember your special people," verse 19 is an obverse to this, "Do not offer your defenseless people as sacrifice; do not forget your afflicted ones."

19A and B are arranged chiastically, V - 0 - 0 - V. The juxtaposition of objects invites comparison. תור and עניים stress the vulnerability of the community. חיה in B is the same semantic field with נפש but it is also a pun with לחיה. The latter relationship confuses the distinction between the enemy and community.³ Finally, לנצח (cf. 1B and 10B) reinforces the "presentness" of the petition as the psalmist had done with the description of disaster.

This is the lone verse in the psalm which explicitly refers to a threat to the life of the worshipping community. As noted, the psalmist implores God not to give the

¹See the terms תור (v. 19); ברית (v. 20); אל-ישב and יהללו (v. 21).

²The defenseless people assume the role of לויתן (14A) and yet they contrast to him. The superior חיה (19A) assumes the role of the lowly עם-לציים (14B). This makes it appear that God is placating the enemy.

³See a similar confusion of identity in Gal 5:13-15.

community as food to the wild beasts. This plea recalls the imagery from the earlier hymn (v. 14).¹

Verse 20

Verse 20 focuses directly upon God's covenant obligations. The land which He ought to protect has become totally hazardous for His people. The sheep which He should pasture (v. 1) now try to survive in His land (v. 2) which is full of "pastures of violence" (v. 20). The syntax is difficult. Bardtke places the caesura after מלאו, contrary to MT, apparently *metri causa*.² As indicated above,³ it is better to connect כִּי מלאו with what follows than with what precedes, regardless of supposed meter.

20A is the obverse of 19B in that semantic ranges of נבט and ראה overlap. They can both mean "to consider."⁴ In a manner similar to verses 5 and 6, verse 20 does not have paired versets. The only real equivalence between the versets is that B continues the thought of A. B gives the surface reason for the appeal that God consider the covenant.

¹See the exegesis, p. 108, and above, p. 92.

²See *BHS*, Ps 74:20.

³Above, p. 123.

⁴אל־תשכח, the negation of זכר, compares to נבט in the same way as זכר. For נבט, "to consider," see *BDB*, p. 270. זרר is semantically parallel to שיח ("to consider;" *BDB*, p. 967 and *TDOT*, s.v. "זכר," by R. E. Clements, 4:65-66, 70).

The aspect of covenant relationship immediately in focus, is the preservation of a people.¹ The exegesis noted uncertainties about proper translation of the verse. The dark (secret) places may be successors to מועד־אל (v. 8). The possible reference to havens for the threatened people is strengthened by the structure of verses 19-21. Verses 19 and 21 each have manifestly corresponding versets. Verse 20 is more like a single statement. This "cool parallelism" arrests attention.² Further, the B portions of verses 19 and 21 feature עני, while the A members have תור and דך, respectively. All three words are characterizations of the same community.

Verse 21

Verse 21 asks God not to turn away the prayer of the crushed people. They would prefer to praise (יהלל) God's name. This would sharply contrast with the enemy who have polluted (חלל, v. 7) His name.³ In the lament structure the promise to praise often follows an assurance that God has answered or will answer a prayer for deliverance.⁴

¹Covenant concern about land is evident in v. 2.

²Greenstein, "Parallelism," p. 54.

³Cf. comments on N, above, pp. 134-35.

⁴Westerman, *PLP*, pp. 59, 64, Westermann indicated that an assurance of being heard and confession of trust may overlap (p. 64). He finds a confession of trust in Ps 74:12 and an "implied" vow in v. 21 (p. 59).

There is no demonstrated sense of assurance in this prayer.

This verse resumes a more obvious parallelism than was evident in verse 20. Stated differently, B tends to clarify A by contrasting with it. There is no explicit point of reference from which the **יָשׁוּב** will **יָדָךְ**. 21B raises the matter of praising, an opposite experience to that of unanswered prayer. Praising by the community, in the Psalms, is usually cultic.¹ The psalm shows concern about the community gathering to meet God at which time the devotees engage in religious practices.²

Structure of Verses 22-23

Verses 22-23 call for God to act against the enemy.³ The petition section crests with the imperatives **קוּמָה** and **רִיבָה** (22A). This is the first call to consider the enemy since verse 18 and the first call for explicit action since **הָרִימָה**, verse 3. Whereas this term is a clear call for

¹I.e., it takes place in the context of formal worship. See, e.g., Pss 100:4; 147:4; 149:1, 3; 134:2; 150:1. For relevant discussion see Helmer Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 178-84 and Georg Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion*, trans. David E. Green (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1972), pp. 195-211.

²See vv. 4, 8, 20.

³Reasons for considering vv. 22-23 as a single sub-unit are: (1) **קוּמָה** and **קָמִיךְ** form an *inclusio*; (2) both verses remind God of the impudence of the enemy; (3) both conclude with a similar adverbial expression, **כָּל־הַיּוֹם** and **תָּמִיד** respectively; (4) **אֶל־תִּשְׁצַח** (v. 23) matches **זָכַר** (v. 22) and their respective clauses are juxtaposed.

military action, **קומה** and **ריבה** can function in both military and legal settings. Their proximity to **הבט לברית** (v. 20) favors the legal motif.

Verse 22

Lexically, **קומה** and **ריבה** are the most vigorous petitions in the psalm. Their rapid succession, the vocative and the indication that response to these imperatives is a matter of divine self-defense increase the tempo of the prayer. After this climactic call, the psalm closes with three clauses of decreasing intensity: imperative **זכר**, negative imperative **אל-תשצח**, and a nominal clause with participial predicate.

The command to God to defend Himself is rare in the prayers of the Bible. 22B is metrically balanced with A and fits the pattern of clarification following a general statement. Here B gives the reason for A. In this respect it is like verses 3 and 20.

Verse 22 has several ties with earlier data in the psalm. The vocative **אלהים** tends to form with **יהוה** (v. 18) an *inclusio* for the petition section. Repetition of **חרף** in both lines supports this feature: Again, **אלהים** in second position, as in verse 1, suggests a framing device for -the whole psalm. The use of imperative **זכר** in verses 2 and 22 also provide a correspondence between beginning and end of the poem. The temporal adverbs at the ends of 1B and 22B

are also noteworthy. **כל־היום** and **לנצח** are near synonyms for the idea of "perpetually" or "all the time."

The psalm begins with a stress upon the perpetual anger of God against the community. It ends with a stress on the continuous reproach against God by His adversaries.¹ 22B summarizes the psalmist's main point from verses 4-11. The raucous conduct of the adversary exposes God's name to public ridicule. This is the explicit reason why God should arise to His own defense.

Verse 23

The mild initial negative imperative contrasts with **קומה** (22A) and its stirring call to action. Verbs frame verse 23. 23A uses a negative imperative, while B has a Qal participle. **תמיך** makes explicit the present continuous sense of the participle.² In this manner, B reinforces and defines more closely the undefined temporal orientation of A.

The negative jussive as a negative command expresses "a more or less definite desire that something . . . should not happen."³ The whole psalm assumes that God is

¹See the exegesis of **חרפתך** above, pp. 140-43.

²GKC, p. 315, #107d.

³Ibid., pp. 124-25, #46, and pp. 130-31, #48f. On the difference between **אל** and **לא**, and use of **אל** with jussive, see ibid., pp. 317-19, #107o, p, w, and cf. p. 324, #110e, with p. 321, #109a.

forgetting the uproar of the enemy. 23A has the force "stop forgetting the sound of your adversaries." 23B sharpens what is vague in A and gives the reason for the petition.

Rhetorically, verse 23 is a fitting closure to the psalm. The assonant use of o throughout the verse and presence in B of two substantives (שֹׂאֵן קַמִּיךְ) which have semantic equivalents (קוֹל צַרְרִיךְ) in A give high perceptibility to the parallelism.

As with verse 22, there are several connections between verse 23 and the rest of the psalm. Its assonant o may be onomatopoeic for שֹׂאֵן (v. 4). שֹׂאֵן צַרְרִיךְ (4A) is semantically parallel to קוֹל צַרְרִיךְ and so helps to bracket the body of the psalm (vv. 4-23).¹ The intransitive and general present sense of זָנַחַת with the present continuous יַעֲשֶׂן (v. 1) is matched by 23B, especially עֲלֵה תְּמִיד. Also, לִנְצַח (1A) and תְּמִיד (23B) are semantically equivalent. These relationships between verses 1 and 23 not only suggest brackets for the whole psalm, but they further mark the enemy conduct as a concrete expression of God's wrath against the community.

A concluding observation on verse 23 is that אֵל־תִּשְׁכַּח (v. 23) on the one hand, similar to קוֹמָה (v. 22), assumes that God is ignoring the enemy. On the other hand, it is

¹The exact repetition of the rare צַרְרִיךְ, with God as the object, strengthens the bracketing. See above, pp. 41-43.

anti-climactic because it requests a more general response to the community's predicament. Correspondingly, it shows a less arrogant and more submissive attitude than קוּמָה.

As the psalmist "departs," the reader is left with nagging uncertainties. The pitch of the psalmist's anger rose throughout the psalm to the bold imperative קוּמָה. The redeemer commands the redeemer to stand and fight His own cause. The former modulates, "if you cannot/will not arise (קוּמָה) and fight, at least stop forgetting the tumultuous sound of those rising against you (קוּמָה).")"

A Summary

Verses 18-23 are in chiasmic arrangement with verse 20 as the cross point.¹ This verse focuses directly upon God's covenant obligations. The terminology of verse 2 implies covenant relationship. Verse 20 is explicit. The secret places of the land (v. 20) which ought to be havens for God's sheep (v. 1) have become "pastures of violence" (v. 20). Neither the people nor the land enjoy covenant protection.

The following factors indicate that verses 18-23 comprise a chiasmus. Thematically, verses 18 and 22-23

¹The chiasmus is A (v. 18) - B (v. 19) - C (v. 20) - B' (v. 21) - A' (v. 22-23). Common terms, i.e., negative אֵל and עֲנִי relate B to B'.

concern the enemy.¹ These sub-units also share common vocabulary, **זכר**, **חרף**, and **נבל**. Verse 19 and 21 begin with negative imperatives and designate the community with terms that stress its vulnerability.² Even though **חבט** in verse 20 masks an outright charge of covenant violation, this imperative, implicitly, may be the most serious accusation in the prayer.

A Summary Concerning the Structure of Psalm 74

Summary of Past Proposals

Weiss and Young

The position of Weiss and Young on the forensic thrust of the prayer has some merit. Verses 1-3 do raise present, past, and future concerns to be elaborated in the body of the psalm. However, the point of the imperatives is not future, per se, but appeal. Both note the importance of the initial accusation but neither shows specifically how the rest of the psalm follows up on this mood.

Weiss takes the more common view that the hymn is a confession of faith and does not point out its numerous structural differences from the rest of the psalm. Young believes that the hymn is used to prod God but does not demonstrate in detail why it is not intended as praise. He

¹ **נבל** and **אויב** (v. 18); **נבל**, **צרריך** and **קמייך** (vv. 22, 23).

² **עניי** and **תור** (v. 19); **עני**, **דך**, and **אביון** (v. 21).

distinguishes the author from the speakers and believes the author included this hymn so that he could critique the use of the myth and show that the speakers contradicted themselves by praising God with the hymn then claiming in verse 21 that they could not praise Him.

Sharrock

Sharrock uses verb structure as the key. He passes over verse 1 lightly as an introductory complaint. Verses 10-11 are the pivot point of the psalm with their imperfects and focus on divine name. "Threat to reputation" is "the major issue" of the psalm.¹ Verses 12-17 are "an affirmation of faith in the context of perplexity."² The hymn is more for the people than for God. Verses 18-23 are an "intense appeal," which "recapitulates the previous appeals and synthesizes the incentives."³

Van der Ploeg

Van der Ploeg claims that his structural and stylistic analysis explains the meaning of Psalm 74 in a way different from the authors he quotes. He follows Weiss on the general structure. Since he singles out verses 9-11 as detailing psychological consequences of why? and how long?, he really has four main parts in the body of the psalm. His

¹Sharrock, "Psalm 74," p. 216.

²Ibid., p. 218.

³Ibid., p. 219.

main contribution is his insistence on the psalm's orientation to the *present* as its dominant feature, based upon adverbs and interrogatives. He could have also cited the eyewitness orientation of verses 4-7, the general present (v. 9), nominal clauses and use of imperfect tenses.

Summary of the Present Proposal

A working definition

To determine the structure of a psalm one must examine a combination of factors including word choice, syntax, rhetorical devices, and the nature of the parallelism which the poet uses. One must also attempt to describe the reciprocal effects that these factors have on each other. On the basis of this accumulated data, one may identify the primary and supporting themes which the poet has used to express his message.

Words and syntax were the major interest of Chapter One of this dissertation. The present chapter has identified numerous rhetorical devices and examined the parallelisms in Psalm 74. It has also described how the various factors interrelate to indicate units and sub-units within the psalm. Further, it has used the results of these inquiries to distinguish primary from supporting themes in the poem. In the process, the chapter has shown that from the standpoint of structure, Psalm 74 is an intricately constructed unit which accuses God of mistreating His

people. The following paragraphs summarize major movements in the psalm.

A Synthesis of Findings

Psalm 74 begins in a unique manner by accusing God of excessive anger against His sheep. The whole psalm is an angry response to the divine anger. The psalmist carefully details aspects of the present crisis and interprets it as the expression of God's wrath. The envelope pattern evident in verses 1 and 10-11 sustains the accusatory mood of the psalmist.

Verses 4-7 are an on--site description of brutal, impudent actions of the enemy at the temple area. Verses 8-9 state both an enemy threat and its fulfillment against the people *and* their sense that God is silent concerning the catastrophe. Verses 10-11 are a theological interpretation of enemy conduct. They are reproaching and defying God's name, uninhibited by God.

With both affirmation and sarcasm, the psalmist, for the community, addresses God as king in the vocative. With a repetition of direct address, "You!" he reminds God of past victories and present cosmic sovereignty (vv. 12-17). Immediately (v. 18) he reminds God that it appears that the enemy has defamed God's name.

The concluding imperatives (vv. 18-20) point to possible covenant violation by God as the real point at

issue. This charge is supported by the fact that the land is a violently hazardous place for His afflicted ones. The chiasmic structure of this passage, coupled with God's selection of Israel in ancient times recalled in verse 2, suggests that the threat to the life of the praying community is the major point of the prayer. The concern for God's name is secondary. The whole psalm is carefully calculated to move God to redirect His anger from His people to His enemies.

CHAPTER III

THE CONTEXT OF PSALM 74: SUMERIAN CITY LAMENTS

Purpose and Procedure of Chapter 3

The purpose of this chapter is to examine aspects of the context of Psalm 74. This part of the study will surface ways in which the psalm is similar to and discrete from other materials with which it shares obvious commonalities. The procedure will be to compare these materials with Psalm 74 rather than vice versa. The point of reference will be Psalm 74 in terms of its content and structure as presented in chapters one and two above.

The Meaning of Context

Historical Context

The context of a literary piece, including a biblical passage, is a complex phenomenon. There is, for example, an historical context since every Bible passage arose at a particular point in time. Traina's outline of what is involved in historical context illustrates its complexity.

The setting includes . . . date, place and occasion of writing; the identity of the author and the recipients; the characteristics and problems of the readers; contemporary literature, customs and beliefs; the social, political, geographical and spiritual environment of

author, recipients, and characters together with their background.¹

Traina notes that it is not always possible to determine all of these factors with certainty. Usually the text itself will give clues to some of them. Biblical data from other passages may help. Psalms studies presents peculiar problems because each psalm is a complete literary unit. Concrete historical references are rare in the psalms.

Biblical Context

A second context is the biblical context. Kaiser identifies four levels: "sectional . . . book . . . canonical . . . and the immediate context."² By "canon" Kaiser means each text (or passage) of Scripture in terms of "the original writer's intention in all of its historical particularity."³ Kaiser warns against a distorted use of *analogia fide*.⁴ Specifically, passages from outside the immediate context must not be used in a way that contradicts the obvious relationships within the immediate context of the target passage.

¹Robert A. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study* (New York: by the author, 1952), p. 153.

²Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), pp. 70-71. Logically, Kaiser should have placed "immediate" context as the first level.

³Ibid., p. 81.

⁴Ibid.

Other Contexts

Other contexts that must be considered in an exhaustive approach include the society, culture, and literature of the believing community which a given text addresses. Beyond this the society, culture, religion, and literature of Israel's neighbors, whether she is in her land or in exile, may impact the interpretation of a given passage of Scripture.¹

Selected Sumerian City Laments
as a Context

Since there is no detailed historical information either in the prayer of Psalm 74 or its title, a specific focus on historical context is not fruitful. The psalm is cast against a type of situation rather than a precise historical occasion. A later chapter of this work will probe the matter of biblical context. The concern of this chapter is with "other contexts." The treatment must necessarily be selective.

The pages that follow briefly consider aspects of two Sumerian laments over destroyed cities and temples. The lament "a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha" ("Oh Angry Sea") demonstrates a continuous use of the composition down to 91 B.C., thus it both precedes and follows any possible original historical

¹ For a survey of recent hermeneutical approaches to OT interpretation which utilize studies in ancient Near Eastern societies, cultures, and anthropology, see Culley, "New Directions," pp. 180-91.

setting for Psalm 74 by several centuries. Passages cited will also give a sampling of both the style and theology of the lament which may be compared with Psalm 74.

The second city lament to be used is the "Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur." This lament recalls the fall of Ur III and employs a style and themes which help to place Psalm 74 in its Near Eastern setting. The survey of comparisons will also help to set Psalm 74 apart from the Sumerian laments.

A Sumerian Congregational Lament

Kutscher's study of a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha, i.e., "Oh Angry Sea," presents factors which provide an historical framework for considering an ancient Near Eastern communal lament genre.¹ Such factors, therefore, contribute an appropriate general conceptual and literary context for study of Old Testament community lament psalms including Psalm 74.

General details of Composition

Classification of recensions,

Kutscher examined nine basic texts of a Sumerian lament which represent nine different recensions dating from the Old Babylonian, neo-Assyrian, neo-Babylonian, and

¹This phrase is from the title of Raphael Kutscher, *Oh Angry Sea (a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha): The History of a Sumerian Congregational Lament* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975), (hereafter cited as Kutscher, *Angry Sea*).

Seleucid periods.¹ He has assigned sigla A-I to these texts and compiled and translated a composite text of the whole piece. The present dissertation will use Kutscher's sigla, but will, unless otherwise indicated, refer to only one representative for each text.² The following chart is adapted from Kutscher's work:³

Text	Date	Lines in Composite Text
A	OB	41-192
B	OB	28-184
C	NB	1-118
D	S	128-200
Ea	S	153-187
F	OB	185-237
G	OB	237-295

¹Ibid., p. 8. Hereafter historical periods will be designated OB, NA, NB, and S, i.e., old Babylonian, neo-Assyrian, neo-Babylonian, and Seleucid periods. Approximate B.C. dates are OB 2000-1600; NA 800-626; NB 627-539; S 312-164. Dates for OB, NA, and NB are from William W. Hallo and William Kelly Simpson, *The Ancient Near East* (New York: Harcourt and Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971), pp. 84-103, 131-143, 144-49 (hereafter cited as Hallo, *ANE*). Seleucid period dates are from A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 404 (hereafter cited as Oppenheim, *AM*).

²An exception is that text H is represented in the chart below by one recension from NA, i.e., Haa; and one from S, i.e., Hab.

³Kutscher, *Angry Sea*, pp. 9-10. Translation of the composite text with numbered lines is on pp. 143-53. A proposed composite text, though speculative to a degree, provides a convenient tool.

Haa	NA	237-296
Hab	S	237-296

The earliest date

Kutscher has demonstrated that this work was originally composed at least by the OB period. He has also shown that it has been copied and translated for a period of at least fifteen hundred years. The following examples show the earliest and latest dates from which presently available parts of a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha come. The tablet for text A is in "very good condition," and. Kutscher writes,¹

The colophon of text A reads as follows:

70 mu-bi-im
iti ziz-a u mina-kam
mu sa-am-su-[i-lu-na) lugal

Translation: "Its lines are seventy. Month of Shabatu, second day; year: Samsu-iluna (became) king" (ca. 1749 B.C.E.). The figure 70 in the line count does not include the line inscribed on the left edge.

If one can take the information at face value, this piece was copied in the middle of the OB period in the first year of Hammurappi's successor. The original composition may have been many years earlier. The composition has 17 *kirugus* (or stanzas), which go through line 236. Text A begins with stanza IV and continues through the first line of stanza XIV.²

¹Ibid., pp. 10-11.

²No representative of the first stanza has been recovered.

The latest date

Text Ea comes from the S period and duplicates lines 153-187 from Text A. Again, Kutscher writes,¹

The colophon of Ea reads as follows:

Rev. 12. IM na-na-a-MU DUMU sa 6[0-x-x] A 30. TI. IR
GIS 60. TIN DU [MU x-x]

13, UNUG ITI GUD U. 27. KAM MU ES. 7. KAM si-1u-ku
LUGAL

Translation: Tablet of Nana-iddin son of A[nu?-x]
descendant of Sinlege-unninni, hand of (GIS for SU,
i.e., the scribe) Anu-uballit son of [xx]: Uruk, month
of Ayara, 27th day, 67th year of the Seleucid era (=245
B.C.E.).

Certainly this text is not earlier than 245 B.C. Referring to the composite text as a whole, at least parts of the composition were used repeatedly for over fifteen hundred years.

General Themes Common to Texts A and Ea

Themes in texts A and Ea

The common lines between texts A and Ea include stanza XI and conclude with the third line of stanza XIII. The passage begins with the cry that Enlil is sleeping while the temple and Nippur are in ruins. The last two lines of Ea with the next two lines supplied by A, read in translation:²

The rising Enlil will look hither,
The dignitary is the rising Wild Ox, he will look
hither,

¹Kutscher, *Angry Sea*, p. 12.

²Ibid., p. 150, lines 186-89.

Over Nippur, the Bond of Heaven and Earth, he will look
 hither,
 Over Nippur the Place of Fate-deciding.

The chief god of Nippur ignored the plight of the city for some time. Finally, he arose but only after the fate of the city had been imposed.

Relationships to Psalm 74

According to Psalm 74:11 and 22 the community views God as inactive while the nation suffers. The motif of the responsible deity ignoring his city is common to both traditions. Excluding Maccabaeen times, proposed date:, for Psalm 74 range from 722-485 B.C.¹ In any event, it is clear that the Sumerian lament tradition started long before and continued for two centuries after any feasible date for Psalm 74.

Comparisons of Texts G and Haa: Evidence of Adaptation

For the history and development of the lament genre, it is useful to compare texts G and Haa. The two texts; differ in two important ways. The ersemma of text G has OB script, though its provenance is unknown.² Its colophon reads:

34 er-sem-ma en-lil-a-kam
 i.e., "34 (lines), it is an ersemma of Enlil."

¹See Rosenbaum, "Antagonist," p. 83, n. 20.

² Kutscher, *Angry Sea*, p. 13.

Ersemma indicates that the piece is an appeal section as distinguished from lament or complaint. Haa is from the mid-seventh century, i.e., an NA text, hence about one thousand years later than G. Haa is longer than G and fifteen of its fifty-one lines are accompanied by an Akkadian translation.¹ These factors indicate that late texts tend to be expansionist and that the tradition itself has survived several centuries.

Thirty-three out of thirty-six successive lines (237-72) in the composite sixty line ersemma repeat the plea, "Turn around and look at your city." The addressee or form of address at the beginning of each line changes.

Beginning with line 273, odd numbered lines repeat the refrain of a "destroyed flooded city." Even numbered lines identify, in turn, Nippur, Sippar, Babylon, and Isin as "inundated by water." G and Haa both have the lines referring to Nippur. Only Haa has the references to Sippar and Babylon (275-80) probably because they were more significant cities in the seventh century than at the time of G.

After a description of the common ravages of seige (281-88) which appears in both texts, there is a three-fold repetition of the clause ". . . Young and old are raging" (289-91). Successively Nippur Babylon and Isin precede the clause. These lines appear only in Haa, but are bound by a

¹Ibid., p. 28

set of lines that are found in both G and Haa.¹ It appears that lines 289-91 were added to G or a similar text in order to adapt the older poem to a NA setting.

The first thirty-six lines are the single plea of the ersemma, ". . . , turn around and look at your city," repeated thirty-three times. The last twenty-four lines all inform the responsible god of the ravages of seige. Of these, lines 273-280 identify the cities addressed. For the latest editions of the poems, references to Nippur and Isin maintain ties with the distant past when southern Sumer dominated the lower Mesopotamian region. References to Sippar and Babylon update the poem for use during the first millennium.

Comparisons between Psalm 74 and "Oh Angry Sea"

Similarities between the pieces include the responsible deity acting disinterested in the devastation of his main city and broad structural features, e.g., parallelism and distinct separation between complaint and appeal sections. Dissimilarities include polytheism and fatalism in "Oh Angry Sea" and assumptions of monotheism and questions of justice in Psalm 74.

¹Kutscher thinks that the last line (296) found in Haa was inadvertently omitted by the scribe who copied G; Kutscher, *Angry Sea*, p. 143.

Sumerian City Laments up to the Fall of Ur III

I have seen and wept over them
 I have ended my lamentation for them
 She wept and eased her feelings
 Nintu wailed and spent her emotions.

These lines from Atra-Hasis dramatize a natural response to death in any age.¹ They point up a principal function of the lament genre, i.e., to allow grief from devastating loss a viable means of expression. Anderson and Eckard define a lament as a song of grief, a poetic elegy of mourning.² This definition focuses on the formal aspect of lament whereas the lines from Atra-Hasis feature a subjective aspect of lament. Laments over destroyed cities perhaps grew out of laments for the dead.³

A Lament Concerning Lagas

Content

The biblical city lament genre, in its broadest sense, has its predecessor in the Sumerian belles-lettres

¹W. Lambert, *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 96.

²R. Anderson and R. Eckard, *Lexicon of Literary Terms* (New York: Monarch Press, 1977), p. 69. For some ideas and bibliography used in this chapter I am indebted to David C. Deuel, "Lament Genre and Rite in the ANE: A Literary Model for Understanding Stimulous Diffusion," (paper prepared for the course, The History and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, Cornell University, January, 1984).

³Gaster suggests this in Theodore H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975), 2:815.

with representative texts from as early as the 24th century B.C.¹ Urukagina, King of Lagas, suffered defeat at the hands of Lugalzaggesi, King of Umma. A scribe, perhaps at the direction of Urukagina, composed a poem which records the "sins" of Lugalzaggesi.² Two expressions in turn begin numerous lines: "He has set fire to . . ." (=A) and "He has laid hands on . . ." (=B). A pattern of usage of these statements is evident, i.e., A-A, B-B-B-B-B-B-B; A; B; A-A; B-B; A-A; B-B.

The razed objects are temples and shrines. Spoils of victory included "precious metal (and) lapis lazuli."³ The closing lines are an imprecation against Lugalzaggesi:⁴

Because the Ummaite destroyed the bricks of Lagash, he committed a sin against Ningirsu; he (Ningirsu) will cut off the hands which had been lifted (?) against him. It is not the sin of Urukagina, the king of Girsu. May Nidaba, the (personal) goddess of Lugaizaggesi, the *ensi* of Umma, make him (Lugalzaggesi) bear all (these) sins.

Style

The piece is virtually full of parallelisms and repetitious clauses in which only the objects are varied. There appears to be deliberate patterning. The first part

¹Hallo, *ANE*, pp. 46-47, 52-53.

²For a translation of the poem, see Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 322-23.

³*Ibid.*; this phrase recurs several times.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 323.

describes the aspects of the catastrophe. The closing part is an imprecatory wish or prayer against the perpetrator.

Theology

Theologically, the piece assumes that it is a "sin" for the enemy to destroy one's holy places and objects. The last lines indicate that retribution against the adversary and vindication of the victim is in the hands of the gods. The importance of "temple" is obvious from the early piece.

From Urukagina of Lagas to Ibbi-Sin of Ur III

Kramer suggests that, the Sumerian lamentation is a literary genre developed by Sumer's poets in "melancholy response to periodic ravaging of their land, cities, and temples."¹ If one takes the latest probable date for Urukagina, i.e., 2300 B.C., the next relevant Sumerian pieces come more than three centuries later.

The period from the Sargonic dynasty of Akkad through the Gutian era in Sumer has yielded no evidence of a "lamentation type of literary effort." This period embraces approximately 2300-2115 B.C.² Sargon of Akad conquered Lugalzagessi in ca. 2300 B.C.³ Ur-Nammu, after a

¹Samuel Noah Kramer, "The Destruction of Nippur: A Preliminary Report," *Eretz Israel* 9 (1963):89.

²Hallo, ANE, pp. 54-60, 66.

³Ibid., p. 54.

governorship over Ur, under the hegemony of Utu-hegal of Uruk, assumed the title of King of Ur and founded the Ur III dynasty.¹ Ur III dates to ca. 2112 B.C.E.²

The Ur III period (ca. 2112-2004 B.C.) marked the neo-Sumerian renaissance. Ur and Sumer in general experienced great achievements during these centuries. Literary productions included hymns, heroic tales, and divine myths but not formal lamentation pieces.³

The last ruler of Ur III, Ibbi-Sin, grandson of Sulgi, was carried off to Elam at the time of the invasion and destruction of Ur by the Elamites and Su-people. Concerning this disaster, a later poet writes:

Of Ur, the shrine of great offerings--its offerings
 (were changed).
 Nanna overtu(rned) his people as numerous as (ewes),
 Its king was depressed in his splendid palace,
 Ibbi-Sin was filled with gloom in his splendid palace,
 He shed bitter tears in his heart-rejoicing "house of
 life."⁴

The four leading deities of Sumer, An, Enlil, Enki, and Ninhursag, decreed among other fates for Sumer and Ur:

¹Ibid., pp. 77-80.

²Oppenheim, *AM*, p. 336.

³The Ur-Nammu and Sulgi hymns are good examples of the literature from these years. For translations by S. N. Kramer, see *ANET*, pp. 583-86.

⁴The translation is from Samuel Noah Kramer, "Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur," *ANET*, p. 613, lines 100-110 (hereafter cited as Kramer, "Sumer and Ur").

That the Su-people (and) the Elamites, the enemies
 inhabit their dwellings,
 That its shepherd (living) in terror in the palace be
 seized by the foe,
 That Ibbi-Sin be brought to the land Elam in a trap--
 From Mt. Zabû on the "breast" of the sea, to the
 boundary of Anshan---
 That like a sparrow which hjs fled its "house," he
 return not to his city.¹

*"Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur"*²

A Survey of the Poem

The preserved portions of this lament indicate five *kirugus* (or stanzas): First stanza, lines 1-114 plus a one line antiphon; second, lines 119-282, with the last eleven lines (283-293)³ destroyed; third, lines 294-359 with one-line antiphon; fourth, lines 360-489 with a three-line antiphon; fifth, lines 490-500 + x + 7 without an antiphon.⁴

The first 54 lines list successively 54 details of destruction of Sumer and Ur which have been decreed by the divine assembly. The poet identifies the four principal

¹Ibid., p. 612, lines 33-37. On the complex problem of discriminating among the deities in the Mesopotamian pantheon, see Oppenheim, *AM*, pp. 194-98 and Helmer Ringgren, *Religions of the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973, 1973), pp. 4-18.

²For a full translation, see Kramer, "Sumer and Ur," pp. 611-619.

³Arabic numerals, in parentheses, throughout the discussion of this lament, indicate line numbers as found in *ANET*, pp. 611-619, unless otherwise indicated.

⁴After line 500 in *ANET*, p. 619, there is an unknown number of missing lines (=x). The preserved part ends with the line, "the fifth kirugu."

deities and remarks that the decree is unchangeable and unopposable (55-57). The last 60 lines of the *kirugu* give details of the Gutian invasion noting that "Enlil brought down the GUTI from the mountain land" (83). The graphic description mentions cosmic upheaval, immobilized deities, cadavers in the Euphrates, break up of families, changing of religious practices, and a depressed king.

The second stanza recounts the destruction of Sumer city by city. Assembly houses (temples) were emptied (199-202) and gods abandoned their cities. The third stanza focuses more specifically on Ur (294-359). The poet lists the well-known forms of suffering, i.e., famine, dry canals, cessation of ritual feasts and looting of temple livestock. The intense suffering caused the city god, Nanna (whose alternate name is Sin), to plead with Enlil:¹

Sin wept before his father Enlil,
 "Oh my father who begot: me, what has my city done to
 you, why have you turned against it!
 Oh Enlil, what has Ur done to you, why have you turned
 against it!

.....
 Ur, like a city crushed by the pickaxe, was counted
 among the ruins.

The Kiur, the place where Enlil relaxes, has become a
 desolate shrine.

Oh Enlil, gaze upon your city *full* of desolation,
 Gaze upon your city Nippur, *full* of desolation.

The fourth *kirugu* begins with Enlil's response to Sin. Enlil cannot alter the decree of destruction (366-67).

¹ *ANET*, p. 617, lines 340-42, 346-49.

The actions of the invader and the anguish of the victim are evident in these lines:

Ur--inside it is death, outside it is death,
 Inside it we die of famine,
 Outside it we are killed by the weapons of the Elamites.

.....
 The Ekishnugal of Nanna is inhabited by the enemy,
 Its heavy . . . they shatter,
 Its divine statues that filled the shrines they cut to
 pieces,

.....
 The palm-tree (covered with) mighty copper, the might of
 heroship,
 Was torn down like *rushes*, was plucked like rushes,
arrows swirled about its base,
 (Its) *top* way trampled in the dust, it had no one to
 lift it.¹

At line 457 Sin renews his plea to Enlil and this time gains a favorable response (466-75). Nanna and Ningal return to their city and enter their temples. (481-84).

The last stanza is an imprecation "Oh bitter storm. . . that had afflicted Sumer--may it afflict . . . Tidnum . . . the land . . . the me of heaven, the rules that govern people--may An change them there."² The composition closes with a pronouncement of blessing on Ur, "May its people 'lie in the pastures,' may its increase be heavy."³

¹Ibid., p. 618, lines 403-05, 412-14, 420-22.

²Ibid., p. 619, excerpted from lines 490- 493, 496, 500.

³Ibid., lines 500 + x + 12.

Comparisons of the "Lamentation over the Destruction
of Sumer and Ur" with Psalm 74

Structure

Psalm 74

Since the structures of these two pieces have only general likenesses, it is convenient to simplify the statement of the structure of Psalm 74. Psalm 74 begins with a thematic preview of the rest of the psalm, mentioning in order God's wrath against His sheep (v. 1), an imperatival call for God to remember his past choice of Israel and her consequent favored position (v. 2), and an urgent imperative for God to intervene at the devastated temple site against the enemy (v. 3).

A detailed description of some consequences of enemy invasion follows. These consequences affect the temple site (4-7), the people (8-9), and God's honor (10-11). The second major movement has the general form and substance of a hymn that honors God for past deliverances and present sovereignty over the natural order (vv. 12-17). The hymn, in fact, chides God to action.

The final section (vv. 18-23) is an appeal to God for relief from certain consequences of the invasion. The suppliant wants God to act against those who defy His name (vv. 18, 22, 23). He also desires God to protect the people from ravages of enemy violence (vv. 19-21). From a

structural standpoint, one should note that the psalm opens by accusing God of a needlessly prolonged expression of his anger against His people. It closes with no assurance that God is going to respond favorably to the lament petition.

Lament over Sumer and Ur

The broad movement of thought in this lament is clear. Though the poem has five stanzas, there is a sequence of six discernible concerns. First, there is a description of the destruction of Sumer and Ur (1-339). The poet emphasizes the irreversible decree, the use of human agents by the gods, and the particular destruction to each city with a major emphasis on Ur.

In the second movement, Sin intercedes for Ur and Enlil responds that the decree is irrevocable (340-81). The third movement is similar to the first though specifically it describes consequences of the destruction both on the people and the apparatus of the cult at Ur (382-456).

The fourth movement is like the second, i.e., Sin makes a second appeal to Enlil (457-89). This time, however, Enlil makes a favorable response. The fifth movement is an imprecation against the enemy who afflicted Sumer (490-500). The last movement reports a wish for Ur that her people may lie in the pastures and that she may prosper. The final lines are a call for lament (500 + x + 1-7).

A comparison based upon structures

The broad movement of thought in this lamentation is Destruction--Intercession--Destruction--Intercession--Imprecation--Pronouncement of blessing. For Psalm 74:4-23 the movement is Devastation--"Hymn"--Appeal. Psalm 74 has an implied imprecation in certain imperatives: כלה (v. 11), קומה (v. 22). The lamentation has no explicit praise but a solicitous attitude toward the gods is evident throughout. There is no accusatory tone in the lamentation as there is in Psalm 74. The Sumerian lament ends on a positive note while Psalm 74 does not.

Theology

Since the city laments and Psalm 74 are manifestly religious documents, it is appropriate to compare them theologically. Chapters One and Two have already surfaced theological ideas in Psalm 74, though more formal statements will be made in Chapter Four. With this in mind, it seems useful for present purposes to suggest theological implications of the Sumerian lament first. Then using specific statements based upon Psalm 74, one can evaluate ideas from the Sumerian piece.

Lament over Sumer and Ur

Teaching about the gods. The Sumerian lament is obviously polytheistic with each god flawed and limited in

some way. The ultimate power of decision lies with a council of gods, consequently no god is supreme. Lesser gods often intercede unsuccessfully before higher gods, though eventually the latter may give a favorable response. In this lament, Enlil finally gave a favorable response.

Teaching about man. In these laments, man is a secondary factor. He has nothing to do with the destruction or prosperity of his city. He is apparently obliged to participate in the cult in some way or at least provide material support. He suffers the fate decreed by the gods without reference to his own innocence or guilt. The gods employ men as agents of destruction. Man does not pray in this lament.

Psalm 74

Teaching about God. Some views about God which are present in the psalm are similar to ways the gods are perceived in the Sumerian material. For example, God can be angry with one community for a long time as in the Sumerian lament. There is only one God and He is in some way responsible both for the prolonged anguish of the suppliant and the continuing taunts of the adversary. The Sumerian material has a fatalistic notion of decreed destruction. By contrast, the Bible presents the antinomy between divine decree and moral responsibility. Other similarities are

that God is aware of but may appear to distance Himself from what happens on earth. God has the power to deliver if He so wills.

The God of Psalm 74 is also very different from the Sumerian deities. The only true God is in focus in the psalm.¹ He suffers accusation and bold chiding from man. He chooses and redeems people and considers them His inheritance. He enters into covenant with Israel so that He is bound by covenant in some way. Choice and redemption of men and entering into covenant with men is totally missing from the Sumerian lament.

Teaching about man. Man has a significant role in God's activity upon earth. The vitality of the psalm testifies to a dynamic relationship between God and man. Man can address God directly even though in so doing he may accuse God or chide Him inappropriately. Man has the potential to praise God. He is capable of accusing God of misconduct while he himself acknowledges no responsibility for a distressful situation. Man can ravage God's holy places and oppress and treat violently the professing community. Such men can be viewed as God's enemy (Ps 74:4, 23). There is no hint of this kind of an interface between man and the Sumerian gods as reflected in the Sumerian

¹The OT is monotheistic. Psalm 74 does not *explicitly* affirm this but it does assume it.

laments. Man is capable of anger against God and urgency in his approach to God. In Sumerian laments the counterpart to anger against the gods is a deep sense of resignation.

*A Summary of Contributions of Chapter III
to Studies in Psalm 74*

Contributions from "Oh Angry Sea"

Kutscher's composite text shows that the congregational lament genre has a long history going back at least to the 20th century B.C. Recensions were in use into the first century B.C. The history of biblical laments fits entirely within this time span. The parallelistic structure and distinction between complaint and appeals sections are generally analogous to Psalm 74. Complaint poems focusing upon city and temple destruction with dire effects upon the people were a general religious phenomenon in the ancient Near East. Theological considerations from the samplings from "Oh Angry Sea" are duplicated in the lament over Sumer and Ur.

*Contributions from the "Lamentation
over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur"*

Comparison of structure and style

The Sumerian material surveyed have a simple parallelistic, highly repetitious style. The structure of the lament over Sumer and Ur is more complex than that of "Oh Angry Sea" but neither is as complex as Psalm 74.

Comparison of theological content

Similarities between the Sumerian lament and Psalm 74 are the deity distanced from his city, his use of human agents to bring about devastation, and a question of how important "temple" is to the deity. Differences are more striking between the two pieces. The lament is polytheistic and no god has ultimate authority or power. The fate of humanity is entirely in the hands of the gods without reference to moral issues. Psalm 74 assumes one God who alone is the ultimate court of appeal. There is no trace of fatalism, but rather a presumption that divine justice ought to give relief to the sufferer.

The most striking differences between the Sumerian materials and Psalm 74 lie in the realm of relationship between man and the deity. At Sumer man is not prominent in the poems. Priests pray on rare occasions but most praying is between the gods. Man is an agent for the gods, but he has little interaction with them. By contrast, Psalm 74 demonstrates a dynamic relationship between man and God. Man accuses God and spars with him verbally. He is not necessarily discrete in this but such a phenomenon does not show up in the Sumerian material. God's election and redemption of a nation are also peculiar to the Psalm. There is an obvious real relationship between God and man in Psalm 74. Such a dynamic is not evident in the Sumerian laments.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTEXT OF PSALM 74: BIBLICAL PSALMS

Introduction

The approach must be selective. Psalm 74 is one of a group of "we"-laments, often called communal laments. Four such psalms will be compared with Psalm 74, i.e., Psalms 44, 60, 79, and 80. These psalms are responses of the believing community to a variety of national disasters from the viewpoint of the people of the land. Psalm 137, sometimes grouped with these psalms, though differently oriented, is treated with Jeremiah 24 in order to survey the possible bearing of these passages on Psalm 74.

The other two groups from which psalms for the present study come are those which share one of the two terms in the title to Psalm 74. This study assumes 'the authenticity of these titles.¹ The titles indicate factual information which in some way bears on the background, use, or type of psalm. These matters help in the interpretation

¹For a fine recent study, defending their authenticity, see James W. Fraser, "The Authenticity of the Psalm Titles" (Th.M. Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1984) (hereafter cited as Fraser, "Psalm Titles").

of the psalms, even though the precise meaning of many of the terms is unclear.¹ This study uses the content of the psalms, comparative psalms studies, and data from other Old Testament books to propose meanings of the titles and consequent implications for interpreting Psalm 74.

The title of Psalm 74 is **משכיל לאסף**. There are thirteen maskil² psalms. Those which bear most on the study of Psalm 74 are Psalms 44, 78, 88, and 89.³ There are twelve Asaph psalms: Psalms 50 and 73-83. All of these will be surveyed, but special attention is given to Psalms 50, 73, 75, 77-80, 82 and 83.

Communal Lament Psalms

Introduction

Occasions which call for public laments

Sabourin suggests that collective praying in the Old Testament has its normal setting in the cult and that psalms of lament by the people "are likely to have originated in a liturgical milieu of feast and rites celebrated in

¹This position is presented in part by F. F. Bruce, "The Earliest Old Testament Interpretation," in *The Witness of Tradition*, vol. 17, OTS (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), pp-41-52.

²This is the term used in several modern English versions, e.g., AV and NASB.

³Other Maskil psalms are Pss 32, 42/43, 45, 52-55, and 142.

the sanctuaries."¹ Brueggeman: calls these "psalms of disorientation."² Practices of ritual fasts in face of national disaster predate the first known collections of psalms.³

Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple previews seven situations which may elicit prayers toward the temple (1 Kgs 8:31-53).⁴ Defeat in battle (vv. 33-34), enemy seige against Israelite cities (vv. 37-40), and sin against God which causes Him to deliver His people to exile in enemy lands (vv. 46-53) are possible occasions which give rise to national lament psalms.

1 Chronicles 16:1-5 and Lament Psalms

When David brought the ark of the covenant to the city of David (1 Chr 15:29), he appointed Levites "to remind, to thank, and to praise" Yahweh (1 Chr 16:1-4). The

¹Leopold Sabourin, S. J., *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning* (New York: Alba House, 1974), p. 294 (hereafter cited as Sabourin, *The Psalms*).

²Brueggemann, *Psalms* pp. 51-58, 67-77. Brueggemann includes Pss 12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 94, 123, 126, and 137; Mowinkel, *PIW*, 1:194, includes also Pss 14, 89, 144, and Lam 5; Sabourin, *The Psalms*, p. 297, includes, in addition to those already cited, Pss 77, 82, 90, 106, 108, and 123.

³Cf. Josh 7:5-9; Judg 20:23, 26; 1 Sam 7:6.

⁴For a detailed exegesis of this passage, see Samuel Billings Wheeler, "Prayer and Temple in the Dedication Speech of Solomon, 1 Kings 8:14-61," Ph.D dissertation, Columbia University, 1977 (Ann Arbor, MI: Xerox University Microfilms, 77-24, 133).

passage continues with a psalm of thanksgiving (1 Chr 16: 8-36) which is a combination of parts of three psalms later included in the book of Psalms (Pss 105:1-15; 96; 106:1, 47-48). Psalm 96 is an elaborate call to praise Yahweh with a song. Psalms 105 and 106 both use the root **לָלַח** in their subtitles and are manifestly concerned **לָלַח וְלִהְיוֹת לְהוֹדוֹת**, "to thank and to praise" Yahweh.

First Chronicles sixteen does not identify the kind of psalm implied by **לְהִזְכִּיר**.¹ Hengstenberg, commenting on **לְהִזְכִּיר** in the title to Psalm 38, remarks helpfully:

לְהִזְכִּיר always signifies only to mention . . . according to which the business of the Levitical singers stood in this **לָלַח וְלִהְיוֹת לְהוֹדוֹת וְלִהְיוֹת לְהִזְכִּיר**, to remind, and to praise, and to extol, the **לְהִזְכִּיר** can only form the antithesis to the other verbs, to which also the prefixed points.

The Levites had partly to sing the songs of lamentation and prayer, and partly also those of praise and thanksgiving. The exposition: for remembrance, is confirmed also by the subject of the two Psalms (Psalms 38 and 70), which have this in the superscription, wherein it is to be noted, that in Psalm lxx, the superscription thus indicated is the more remarkable, since that Psalm contains precisely the complaining and supplicating part of Ps. xl, with the exclusion of the praising and extolling part.²

Eerdmans concurs when he states:

The meaning of the term in the title is "to induce Jahu to notice the man who prays" [i.e., to bring to

¹C. F. Keil, *The Books of the Chronicles, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 209 (hereafter cited as Keil, *Chronicles*).

²E. W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 3 vols., trans. John Thomson and Patrick Fairbairn (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1847), 2:43.

remembrance]. In both psalms [Psalm 38 and 70] he was in need of immediate relief, "make haste to help me" (xxxviii 23, lxx 2).¹

The Hiphil infinitive may, therefore, imply the use of the jussive or imperative of זָכַר when the poet petitions God.² Only in Psalm 105:5 is this imperative a part of an entreaty bearing upon a praiseworthy act of God.³ Elsewhere זָכַר draws attention to something that affects the worshipper (e.g., Pss 25:6; 74:2; 89:48; Jer 14:21; Lam 5:11).

The Hiphil of זָכַר means to "cause to remember" or "to keep in remembrance."⁴ As a psalm title in the individual complaints of Psalm 38 and 70, the infinitive construct, הִזְכֵּר יְיָ may function to remind the singers or hearers that experiences like these do afflict individuals. Or the term may simply identify the piece as one suitable for reminding God that such experiences are the lot of believing men. In 1 Chronicles 16:4 since the last two terms are directed to God, perhaps the latter idea for לְהִזְכִּיר is more suitable, though the two thoughts are not mutually exclusive.

¹Eerdmans, B. D., *The Hebrew Book of Psalms* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1947), p. 79 (hereafter cited as Eerdmans, *Psalms*).

²See Donald R. Glenn, "A Critical Study of the Communal Lament Psalms" (Th.M. Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1965) p. 23, for this idea. I am indebted to Glenn's work for this study on 1 Chr 16:4.

³Ibid. 4BDB, p. 270.

Characteristics of communal lament Psalms

Elements which mark communal lament psalms are: (1) introductory address and cry for help; (2) a recall of God's earlier saving acts; (3) a complaint concerning God, the enemy, and the people; (4) an affirmation of confidence in God; (5) a petition which often uses words for "hear! save! punish!" (6) motivations for God to intervene; (7) a "double wish" directed toward the community and against the enemy; (8) a vow of praise.¹ There is no psalm that exhibits all of these features. The ordering of these marks varies among the psalms of communal lament. The comparisons in the discussions below will suggest reasons for some of these variations.

In conclusion, because of the meaning of **הזכיר**, because of its appearance in the titles to Psalms 38 and 70, complaints by the individuals, and because of the frequent use of **זכר** in laments, **להזכיר** in 1 Chronicles 16:4 probably refers to the large class of psalms often called laments, whether individual or communal.

Psalm 44

Synthesis of content

The title implies that this psalm was in the repertoire of the choir master, therefore, usable in a musical

¹Adapted from and in an order suggested by Westermann, *PLP*, pp. 53-54.

setting. Neither the heading nor the psalm itself give a clue to the historical occasion. Verses 2-9 recall the conquest and subsequent deliverances by God. They focus on "then." In the middle of the passage an individual, perhaps the king,¹ unambiguously affirms God's kingship.

The complaint to God concerning "now" occurs after the extended statement of confidence (44:10-15). Whereas Psalm 74 concerns an invasion of Zion, Psalm 44 concerns defeat when the army went out to battle. The psalmist understands the defeat as an expression of God's anger. The metaphor of a sacrificial animal stands for the defeated army (v. 12). This psalm portrays the nation as a reproach (v. 15).

The third section (vv. 16-23) is a protestation of innocence. The king(?) acknowledges that he takes the reproach against the nation personally (vv. 16-17) though it is not clear whether the enemy directed its taunts against God or the army. In spite of defeat the people have remained true to God and His covenant. They affirm that their suffering in battle is for God's sake (Ps 44:23).

The final section (vv. 24-27) is dominated by two imperatives each in verses 24 and 27. The imperatives are *עורר*, *הקציר*, *קומה*, and *פדנו*, "arouse thyself," "awaken," "rise up" (to fight), and "redeem us." The first two of

¹Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, Vol. 19. *Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. David A. Hubbard *et al.* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publishers, 1983), pp. 31-32.

these are accompanied by two **למה** questions which explicitly concern why God seems to be ignoring their plight by sleeping. Though accusatory, they are more moderate than the **למה** accusations against God in Psalm 74. The final appeal is based upon God's **חסד**.

Similarities and differences between Psalms 74 and 44

The synthesis points to the important common vocabulary between Psalms 74 and 44. Among the shared roots are **קדם**, **חרף** (to reproach or taunt), **זנח**, **שכח**, and **צאן**. Concepts of God's redemption of Israel and a sleeping or inactive God occur in both psalms.

These similarities between the psalms make their differences all the more striking. The specific occasions are different in that Psalm 44 concerns an attempt by Israel to press a battle outside Jerusalem. The structure of the two psalms is different, creating different immediate contexts for the numerous words which the psalms share.

Psalm 74 begins with a highly charged prologue which includes an accusation of uncalled for prolongation of divine anger and an urgent call to come to Jerusalem to deal with the enemy. This sharp reaction to God's anger seems to pervade the entire Psalm. Psalm 44 begins with an explicit expression of confidence in God, in the present (vv. 6-7) based on His giving victories, in the distant past (v. 2), and more recently (v. 8). The psalm then continues to make

its complaints (vv. 9-15, 1.9-23) and requests 24-27 in a more moderate way than Psalm 74.

Psalm 44 includes a protestion of innocence which gives rise to the **למה** questions to God about His ignoring them. The psalm also appeals to God's **חסד** in its last two words. Both of these features are entirely missing from Psalm 74. Both psalms refer to **ברית**. However, Psalm 44 has the psalmist affirming obedience to covenant stipulations, perhaps a reference to the Sinaitic covenant. Psalm 74:20 calls on God to be careful to fulfill His covenant responsibilities with a probable reference to a royal grant, such as the Abrahamic or Davidic covenant. The difference in references to covenant in Psalm 74 and 44 are characteristic of the differences in orientation. The community in Psalm 44 is puzzled by its recent defeat in warfare. The suppliant in Psalm 74 is angry and keeps God on the "defensive" throughout the psalm.

Contributions to an understanding of Psalm 74

By comparing Psalms 44 and 74 several ambiguous features in Psalm 74 become pronounced. The title to Psalm 74 does not indicate that it was part of the music repertoire of the cult. Psalm 44 begins with an expression of confidence in God and ends with an appeal to God's **חסד**. Therefore, though in distress, the community expresses confidence and hope. These attitudes are, at best, subdued in Psalm 74.

The community shares with God as an object of enemy reproach. Psalm 74 emphasizes only that God is reproached. If God is distanced from the people in Psalm 74, perhaps they also are distanced from Him. The people in Psalm 44 affirm covenant loyalty, proclaim their innocence, and appeal to God's **חסד**. The people in Psalm 74 mention neither their innocence, nor God's **חסד** but they imply that He neglects His covenant obligations. The community in Psalm 74 affirms the reality of God but is reluctant to embrace Him in the unambiguous way that is evident in Psalm 44.

Psalm 60

Synthesis of content

Four of the five communal lament psalms with which this study is concerned have **למנצח** in the title. Many believe the term refers to "the director of music" or choirmaster.¹ Psalm 60, with Psalms 45 and 80, have the additional term **על-שושן**,² which may indicate the name of a melody to which the psalm was sung. **עדות**, "testimony" also occurs in Psalms 60 and 80, further specifying the melody.³

Psalm 60 begins like Psalm 74, with a complaint to God using the root **זנח** (v. 3). Here there is an expressed

¹Cohen, *The Psalms*, p. 8.

²Ps 80 uses the preposition **ל** and Pss 45 and 80 have **ששנים**.

³ Cohen, *The Psalms*, p. 189.

object making the verb transitive. God has "rejected" the people. The last clause of the verse is an appeal for God to restore, **תשוב לנו**. The psalm ends with an explicit expectation of favorable response by God to the prayer (v. 14). The complaints and requests throughout the psalm are conditioned by the expectancy with which the psalm opens and closes.

The psalmist next describes the hardship God has brought to His people (vv. 4-5), but he immediately concedes that God leads those who fear Him and that He wants to deliver His people (vv. 6-7a). Verse 7 concludes with a specific plea for God to deliver and answer the seeking community.

Verses 8-10 announce an oracle from God, perhaps delivered by a prophet, proclaiming His sovereignty over Israel and her neighbors who vex her. The psalm concludes with a direct request for God to lead Israel's armies to victory over her adversary.

*Similarities and differences
between Psalms 74 and 60*

Common vocabulary indicates common concerns. Common words are **זנח**, **אנף**, **ימין**, **שוב** and **ישע**. Themes of complaint, request, and desire to honor God appear in both psalms. As with Psalm 44, the mood and structure are noticeably different from Psalm 74.

Psalm 60 contrasts with Psalm 74 in the following ways. Psalm 60 virtually begins and ends with expectation of deliverance. Psalm 60 names the enemy and has received a word from God, probably through a prophet. Psalm 60 uses the roots **שׁוּב** and **יִשַׁע** in a positive way and expressly denies hope of deliverance by man. On this last point, the praying community in Psalm 74 places itself in a sparring mode with God rather than a dependent mode.

Contributions to an understanding of Psalm 74

Both the heading and the content of Psalm 60 indicate a specific occasion that gave rise to the psalm, making it quite suitable to use in later specific occasions of military defeat. The psalm renounces dependence upon man and reaffirms dependence upon God. Psalm 74 lacks this specificity of occasion. This may combine with the lack of indications for use of Psalm 74 in a musical setting to imply a wholly different intended use for Psalm 74 than for Psalm 60. Some theological assumptions in Psalms 60 and 74 are the same but the psalms move in different directions.

Psalm 79

Synthesis of content

Psalm 79 begins with the familiar introductory cry to God in the first clause with vocative **אלהים**. The adversary **גויים**, Gentiles, a word never used in Psalm 74. God's people are styled as His inheritance **נחלה**. The

psalmist complains that the גויים, have defiled the temple, for the verb טמא occurs rather than הלל (Ps 74:7). The term for temple is היכל, a word not found in Psalm 74. היכל is a "loanword from Sumerian *e-gal* 'large house,' 'palace,' 'temple.'"¹ The Akkadian equivalent, *ekallu*, more often means palace than temple and generally refers to large rooms.² Ugaritic uses the *hkl* for the palace of the god, hence it is "temple."³ In the accounts of the building of Solomon's temple (1 Kgs 6-7; 2 Chr 3-4) and in Ezekiel's temple vision (Ezek 41), היכל refers only to the middle area, the קדש, or holy place.⁴

Verse 2 is a graphic report of human carnage to the extent that the dead Israelites became food, מאכל for the birds and beasts, חיה. This motif occurs in Psalm 74:19.

Psalm 79 presents the people as God's עבדים and חסידים, servants and loyal ones. These terms emphasize their willing submission and loyalty to God. The community reports that it is a חרמה, גער, and קלס to its neighbors (i.e., reproach, scoffing, and derision).

The characteristically lament question עד־מה, how long, occurs in verse 5. Verse 6 has an explicit

¹*TDOT*, s.v. "היכל," by M. Ottosson, 3:382.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 382-83.

³See WUS, p. 827 and UT, p. 763.

⁴Ottosson, "היכל," p. 383.

imprecation against the enemy. The reason for imprecation is enemy victimizing of God's people.

Verse 8 acknowledges a possible relationship between past sin and present suffering and appeals for God's compassions, רַחֲמִים. Verse 9 is a direct imperative to God for deliverance. Related verbs are עֲזַר־וֹנֵנו and הִצִּילֵנו. Psalm 74 appeals for deliverance with less direct terminology. The third imperative in verse 9, כַּפֵּר, is a request for forgiveness of sin. The motivation for God to respond to these requests is for the sake of His name, a motivation which Psalm 74 emphasizes.

The לִמָּה, why, question is designed to motivate God to deliver His people (v. 10). In keeping with Barr's conclusions that לִמָּה is pre-eminently a term of direct address, this is a major significance in Psalm 79.¹ It was the context and structure in Psalm 74 that supports the notion of accusation. The word has a different context in Psalm 79 and the psalm itself has a different structure. Verse 10 returns to the imprecatory tone of verses 6-7. The idea seems to be "Chastise the enemy for its treatment of Israel so that Gentiles will know of God's commitment to His servants."

Verse 11 is an appeal to God to hear the prayer or groaning, אֲנָקָה of His people. The psalmist lauds God's

¹For Barr's conclusions, see above, pp. 10-11.

strength, something Psalm 74 does not do, except in a chiding way in the "hymn" of verses 13-17. Verse 12 resumes the imprecation to punish Israel's neighbors, שְׁכֵנֵינוּ, for the reproach with which they reproached the Lord. The accusative "reproach" is cognate with the verb חָרַפוּ in this verse. The root occurs several times in both Psalms 74 and 79. The enemy in this psalm is designated by חָרַפוּ (vv. 4, 12) as well as גוֹיִם. The psalm ends with an affirmation that the people are God's flock and they promise to praise Him forever.

*Similarities and differences
between Psalms 74 and 79*

Both psalms are concerned about enemy presence in the temple and the death of people caused by an invasion. However, Psalm 79 has greater emphasis on the people, while Psalm 74 leaves the superficial impression that the temple is the greater concern. The terms for the enemy in Psalm 79 are more generic, i.e., גוֹיִם and שְׁכֵנִים, and certainly non-Israelite. The term for temple is more neutral in Psalm 79; temple terms in Psalm 74 are specifically religious. Reasons for divine action against the enemy in Psalm 79 relate to violence against the people; in Psalm 74 the motivation relates to God's temple and His name.

The self-concept of the community differs. They are servants and godly ones in Psalm 79 (vv. 2, 10). In Psalm 74 they are crushed, poor, and afflicted. Both psalms use

אלהים and יהוה but only Psalm 79 uses אדני. The "how long" and "why" questions are more rhetorical than accusatory in Psalm 79. Psalm 79 begins by reporting an enemy invasion that defiled the temple and devastated city and people. It continues by acknowledging sins and asking for divine compassions and deliverance. It ends with the people acknowledging that they are God's flock and promising to praise Him forever. By contrast, Psalm 74 begins with angry accusation, contains no reference to sin, requests no compassions, רחמים, and ends reminding God of the continuous tumult against Him.

Contributions to an understanding of Psalm 74

The vague but descriptive way Psalm 74 refers to the enemy compared to precise non-Israelite terms in Psalm 79 leaves the question open in Psalm 74 as to whether some of the enemy are Israelites. The use of distinctly religious terms for temple in Psalm 74 leaves the question open concerning the candor of the prayer itself. The terms for community in Psalm 74, except for אצ, focus on the condition of the people rather than on their relationship to God as in Psalm 79. The absence in Psalm 74 of confession of sin and explicit promise to praise God, and the non-use of אדני point in a similar direction to other factors noted above. Arguments from silence are not conclusive but these comparative factors may suggest that the praying community

in Psalm 74 is very distraught by prolonged oppression and, shows some signs of a spiritually elitist attitude with some cynicism toward God.

Psalm 80

Synthesis of content

Psalm 80 sets an aspect of its own context by the nature of its initial address (v. 2) combined with a refrain which occurs four times in the song (vv. 4, 8, 15, 20).¹ The psalm title, combined with the high profile refrain, makes it clear that the psalm was used in public worship at an early time in its history.

Verse 2 addresses God with vocative substantival participles as one who shepherds Israel, leads Joseph as a flock and is enthroned above the cherubim. This affirms God's immanence and transcendence as well as His kingship. The refrains address God in a manner that increasingly affirm the community's confidence in Him, i.e., Oh God! (v. 4); Oh God of hosts! (vv. 4, 15), and Oh Yahweh, God of hosts! (v. 20).

The first, second, and fourth refrains are appeals for God to restore the nation to His favor and allow His

¹Pss 79 and 80 are the only laments of the five treated in this section of the thesis which have **מִזְמוֹר** in the title; 55 additional psalms include inn in their titles. See Gerald H. Wilson, "Evidence of Editorial Divisions in the Hebrew Psalter," *VT* 34:3 (1984), esp. pp. 340-42 (hereafter cited as Wilson, "Editorial Divisions").

countenance, פָּנִים to shine forth. The third refrain begins in verse 15 and the reference to countenance in verse 15 is an indirect imprecation against the enemy. The first stanza is a request for God to awaken and deliver the nation (v. 3). The second stanza complains that God has "smoked" against His people's prayers; He has fed them tears and made them a laughing stock among their enemies (vv. 6-7).

The third stanza contrasts the way God prospered the nation by means of the Exodus, conquest, and occupation with the present crisis in which He has exposed the nation to its enemies as a cultured vine with its hedges broken down (vv. 9-14). The fourth stanza asks God to look down at His destroyed vine and especially "upon the son whom You have strengthened for Yourself" (v. 16)¹ The people promise God in the last stanza that if He will deliver them from the present crisis, they will not turn from Him but will call upon His name. The psalm is marked by both urgency and confidence that God will act. The expression of confidence is the weighted element.

*Similarities and differences
between Psalms 74 and 80*

The common vocabulary includes עַד־מַתִּי, יִשְׁעָה, צֶאֱן, עֵשֶׁן, לִמָּה, יִמּוֹן, and שֵׁם. Common themes concern God's anger,

¹This is probably a primary reference to the reigning King of Israel, either David or Solomon (cf. vv. 2-3, referenced to northern territories), who prefigures the messiah (cf. v. 18).

the Exodus and conquest, and God's might. The refrain conditions the way in which Psalm 80 uses these common features.

The requests in the refrain for God to restore and revitalize the nation imply the people's sense of their own culpability. The reference to God as enthroned above the cherubim and the request that He look down from heaven (vv. 2, 15) show that the people place themselves under God. They are not contending with Him but are pleading for His intervention.

Contributions to an understanding of Psalm 74

Psalm 80 is readily seen as a piece to be sung, unlike Psalm 74 which points to no such usage. In Psalm 80 the community implies its own guilt, embraces God and depends upon Him, whereas in Psalm 74 it indicts God unrelentingly without suggesting its own culpability. Thus, the orientation of the community to God is similar in Psalms 44, 60, 79, and 80. Together, these are in contrast to the relationship between the community and God in Psalm 74.

Asaph Psalms

Introduction

1 Chronicles 16:4 and Asaph Psalms

When David brought the ark to his city, he organized the Levites to perform certain services at the site. An Asaph was a chief among Levites, whom David appointed:

להזכיר ולהלל ליהוה

Translation: to cause remembrance and to thank and praise Yahweh.

Asaph and those under him were to use musical instruments in their service at the tabernacle.

Later, as David prepared for the transition of kingship to Solomon and for the building of the temple, he organized a musical service for temple ministry (1 Chr 25:1-9). Appointments included Asaph, "who prophesied under the direction of the king," along with his sons, who are called **בני אסף** (1 Chr 25:2), "the sons of Asaph." Jeduthun, "who prophesied in giving thanks and praising Yahweh," was given charge over his sons. Finally, Heman with his sons under him constituted a third group. Heman was the king's **חזה**, seer, to encourage the king with the words of God. They were all to minister in relationship to the house of God, with instruments, under the general direction of the king. It is possible that **לאסף**,² could refer either to an individual or a guild descended from him.¹

Whether or not these particular individuals are to be identified with corresponding names in the titles to Asaph psalms, the passage (1 Chr 25:1-9) provides a precedent for names of musical instruments and prophetic functions listed or implied in these psalms. The earlier

¹For a review of past proposals for interpreting with a general preference for the guild idea, see Fraser, "Psalm Titles," pp. 50-54.

passage (1 Chr 16:1-5) supports the high position of Asaph in the psalmography and musical settings for Israel's worship just prior to temple construction.

Superscriptions to Asaph Psalms

מוֹזְמֹר occurs in the superscriptions to nine of the twelve Asaph psalms.¹ The term derives from the name of a plant from which pipes suitable for musical instruments are made. The appropriate root, זָמַר-I, occurs only in Piel and may mean either to sing (1 Chr 16:2=Ps 105:2; Ps 75:10) or to play musical instruments (Ps 33:2).² Its predominant usage is for singing to instrumental accompaniment.³

The term does not occur in titles to Psalms 74, 78, or 81. The last of these has other terms relating to music in the title and the text calls for singing to instrumental accompaniment (Ps 81:2-4). Psalm 78 is statedly a wisdom poem calculated to cause the audience to reflect on certain themes (cf. Ps 78:1-3). 'This is not to infer that wisdom poetry and music are not compatible.⁴ In terms of the title and explicit statement, Psalm 78 is primarily a didactic poem. Since Psalm 74 has the same title as Psalm 78 and since neither its text nor its structure indicate that it is

¹KB, p. 510.

²BDB, p. 274.

³E. C. B. MacLaurin, "Joseph and Asaph," *VT* 25:1 (1975):41, n. 1.

⁴Mowinkel, *PIW*, 2:94.

intended for musical recitation, its primary use and function may lie in another direction, i.e., it is intended to promote reflection and wise consideration of its message.

Psalm 50

The location and nature of Psalm 50

Psalm 50 is removed from the other eleven Asaph Psalms (Pss 73-83). It is located between seven psalms by the sons of Qorah (Pss 42-49)¹ and the second Davidic collection (Pss 50-71). Wilson suggests that this abrupt change of authorship represents "conscious editorial activity" to indicate some kind of "disjuncture" between groups of psalms within the psalter.²

Psalm 50 is different from most psalms in that it is not a prayer. Other psalms include passages that are or imply speeches by God (e.g., Ps 60:8-10). Psalm 50, in its entirety, is a Yahweh speech, probably reported by a prophet, in a fashion like numerous Yahweh speeches in the Former Prophets. References to prophetic functions by Asaph and some of his family (1 Chr 25:1-9) are compatible with the content and style of Psalm 50. The psalm was, at one time, to be sung as indicated by its title **מזמור**.

¹Pss 42-43 are counted as one psalm due to the refrain 42:6, 12 and 43:5 and the fact that Ps 43 is an "orphan" psalm (i.e., without a title).

²Wilson, "Editorial Divisions," pp. 339 with 338-40. Psalm 72 by Solomon comes between groups of Davidic and Asaph psalms and marks the end of Book II of the Psalms (cf. Ps 72:20).

Synthesis of content

The psalmist-prophet presents a Yahweh oracle which summons the whole earth to court. God is righteous, צדק, and He judges equitably, שפט, His חסידים, godly ones. The issue with reference to His people is not right sacrifices, though these are not dismissed as an unnecessary part of proper ritual (vv. 7-13). In this speech God's concern is that they acknowledge Him with thanksgiving and keep their vows (vv. 14-15).

God then speaks to הרשע, the wicked, who falsely affirm covenant with Him. He indicts them for wrong conduct, implying the necessity of right conduct by the חסידים, and warns that, though He has kept silence, He will reprove and convict them (vv. 16-21). The psalm closes with God announcing the contrasting destinies of those who forget God and those who honor Him, i.e., between the righteous and the wicked.

Contributions to understanding Psalm 74

Psalm 50, as the first Asaph psalm in the book, elaborates a theme that is basic to several Asaph psalms (Pss 73-83), i.e., God is the righteous judge and He will work retribution to the wicked and deliverance to the godly. The entire Psalm 50 is a word from God which relates to the divine response which the community finds missing in Psalm 74:9. A major issue from the community perspective in Psalm 74 may be stated, "Does God care that the enemy is in the

ascendency?" Psalm 50 provides the answer but the people in the later psalm seem unaware or unconvinced that God will render equitable judgment.

Psalms 73 and 75

A synthesis of content

Psalm 73

Verse one announces that God is good to the obedient. In the light of God's goodness, the psalmist is puzzled by the well-being of רשעים (vv. 2-9). Therefore, the psalmist questions whether God knows who is righteous and who is wicked (vv. 10-14). Pondering the matter did not help until the psalmist entered God's sanctuary (v. 17). Then he understood that the destruction of the wicked was sudden, full of terrors and final (vv. 15-20).

The psalmist acknowledged that in spite of his bitterness for a time about the prosperity of the wicked, he was continually תמיד עםך, with God, and supported by God who will ultimately receive him "with reference to glory" (vv. 21-24). He then explicitly expresses his confidence in God and acknowledges the radical difference between the faithful and the unfaithful (vv. 25-28). Comparing verses 1 and 28 suggests that a basic message of the psalm is that God is good to the obedient in the sense of His beneficent nearness to them, even while the unfaithful appear to prosper.

Psalm 75

Psalm 75 begins as a community hymn of praise acknowledging God's name and wonderful works.¹ The speaker then quotes God who promises at an appointed time to judge the world correctly. The divine word singles out the **הוֹלִלִים** and **רשעים** (boasters and wicked) as objects of that judgment (vv. 2-6).

The speaker resumes his own word and affirms that God is the judge who will put down one and exalt another and then emphasizes the intensity of judgment against the wicked. This is the major theme of the psalm (vv. 7-9). He closes by promising, in the first person singular, to sing praises, i.e., **אזמרה**, to God forever. His last words emphasize the radical difference between the wicked and the righteous at the judgment (vv. 10-11).

Themes on which this psalm touches which occur in other Asaph psalms are God's name, His nearness, and His wondrous works. The main theme of Psalm 75 is also an important theme in the Asaph Psalms, 50 and 73.

*Contributions of Psalms 73 and 75
to the understanding of Psalm 74*

A common thread in Psalms 73 and 75

Psalm 73 is a "wisdom" psalm because it contemplates a basic life issue. It is also an individual complaint

¹Verse 2 has three cola. The first one begins and ends with the 1 cp **הוֹדִינוּ**, "we give thanks."

psalm concerning the prosperity of the wicked. When the psalmist visited the sanctuary, perhaps he received a word from a priest or prophet. This word reminded him that God is a righteous judge and will at the end destroy the wicked and vindicate the righteous. Psalm 74 is a communal complaint and, on the surface, does not appear to be a wisdom psalm. It is concerned that God is turning away His crushed people and not acting against His own enemies. These concerns encase a latent question, "Is God a righteous judge?"

Psalm 75 uses this same theme of God, the righteous judge, who will punish the wicked and exalt the righteous. The context which the psalm itself creates is different from Psalm 73. Psalm 75 is a praise psalm which refers to no complaints. Verse two suggests that it is a community praise hymn but the final verses have the psalmist alone praising God. The whole psalm is a praise to God because He is the righteous judge.

The location of Psalm 74 between
Psalms 73 and 75

Perhaps a compiler of the psalter deliberately placed Psalms 73, 74, and 75 together to help elucidate Psalm 74, a difficult maskil psalm. Psalms 73 and 75 clearly conclude that God will deal justly with all men. Psalm 74 is a bitter complaint about the enemy prevailing over God and His people. It never moves beyond this issue

and, unlike most laments, it neither appeals to nor applauds God's moral character and ends without praise or hope. When Psalm 74 was written, the community was unable to appreciate that God will eventually treat all men justly. The psalms' compiler placed the bracketing psalms next to Psalm 74 to help later readers to understand that Psalm 74, from a doctrinal standpoint, is not complete.

The community which Psalm 74 reflects at the time the psalm was composed, had a deficient view of God or were unable to bring into focus the proper view. The psalm then teaches, among other things, that godly people, in great adversity, may have their perspective on God, His temple, and themselves terribly distorted. The psalm seems to say this without resolving the tension which such a distortion leaves. If this line of thought is correct, Psalm 74 dramatically alerts the believer to such a danger.

A Survey of Remaining Asaph Psalms

Psalm 76

A synthesis of content

Psalm 76 is a hymn of praise, even though, unlike Psalm 75, its opening and closing lines do not have some of the characteristic terms for hymns, e.g., *הלל* or *ידד*. The psalm begins by acclaiming God, His tabernacle, and Zion and citing some occasion when He withstood a seige against the city (vv. 2-4). God paralyzed the enemy, teaching all that

God is to be feared (vv. 5-8). The theme, fearing God because of His power, brackets the rest of the psalm (vv. 8-9, 12-13).

Verses 9-11 interpret the deliverance as God's judgment against the enemy for the sake of "the humble of the land." The psalmist encourages those who hear of this deliverance to fulfill vows and bring gifts to God. The last verse announces poetically that God rules princes and kings of the earth.

Contributions to the understanding of Psalm 74

Themes in Psalm 76 which occur in Psalm 74 and other Asaph psalms are God's name and dwelling, Zion, and wondrous works. God's presence and anger and His righteous judgment against the enemy and in behalf of the humble are especially noteworthy. Psalm 75 praises God because He will judge the wicked and exalt the righteous. Psalm 76 praises God for a specific instance when he defeated a foe of Israel on behalf of the godly in the land. The positive nature of both of these psalms supports the profusion of terms relating to music in their titles. Psalms 75 and 76 combine to depict a community under the spur of enemy attack, trusting God to deal equitably with both the enemy and His people. The experiences of the people in Psalm 74, in relation to themes shared with Psalm 76, are opposite from those in the latter psalm.

Psalm 77

A synthesis of content

Psalm 77 is an individual lament. The psalmist reports his persistent prayer to God, yet he is disturbed when he remembers God. He recalls his song, נגִיִּנָה, at night (vv. 2-7). He asks whether the Lord will be angry, יִזְנַח, and withhold His כֶּסֶד forever. He complains that God's right hand has changed, i.e., whereas once it favored him, now it is against him (vv. 8-11).¹

The psalmist purposes to consider God's wondrous works of old, מִקְדָּם. Verses 15-16 feature the 2ms perfect verb in first position, addressed to God in a way similar to Psalm 74.13-17. The same general theme is treated in both passages (vv. 12-16).² The poet describes God's might, manifested in the past in the storm and sea. If the last verse with reference to Moses and Aaron is a clue, these descriptions relate to the Exodus and wilderness period (vv. 17-21).

Contributions to the understanding of Psalm 74

Psalm 77 has numerous words, themes and attitudes found in Psalm 74. It does not explicitly express hope for

¹Several terms in vv. 8-11 occur also in Ps 74: זֶנַח, אֶף, לִנְצַח, שָׁכַח, and יָמִין.

²Terms in vv. 12-16 which occur in Ps 74 are זָכַר, גָּאֵל, קָדַשׁ, פָּעַל, and מִקְדָּם.

deliverance. However, it lacks the sharply contentious spirit of Psalm 74 and does allude to God's past חַנּוּת, חַסֵּד, and רַחֲמִים ("loyal love, gracious acts, and compassions"). Psalm 74 does not acknowledge these characteristics. The psalmist's recall of God's past deeds and evidences of power (vv. 12-21) seems to be a genuine, though indirect, expression of confidence that He will again act favorably. Psalm 77 does not end on a negative note as Psalm 74 does.

*Psalm 81*¹

Psalm 81 has themes common to Asaph psalms. These include concerns about feasts (v. 4), deliverance from Egypt (v. 6), God providing for and contending with a disobedient people in the wilderness (vv. 7-11), appeal for Israel to obey God (v. 14), and conditions for defeat of their enemy (v. 15). Except for God's contending with a disobedient people and His appeal for obedience, these themes all occur in Psalm 74. Psalm 74, by contrast to Psalm 81, is a one-sided appeal by the people which includes no acknowledgement of what God desires. The title to Psalm 81 and the first stanza make it clear that it is part of the musical repertoire of worship. This musical dimension is missing from Psalm 74.

¹Ps 78 will be discussed with the maskil psalms. Pss 79-80 were treated with communal lament psalms.

Psalm 82

The psalmist indicts Israel's magistrates and calls on God, the possessor and judge of all, to judge them. The psalm as such is not a lament but it primarily addresses and warns unjust judges of the people. He supports his warning by imploring God to intervene, using the imperative **קוּמָה**, in a similar fashion, but under a different setting as compared with Psalm 74:22. Two Asaphic themes comprise the whole psalm: wrong living and God is judge. The latter is the major point of contact between Psalms 74 and 82. In Psalm 82 the psalmist calls on God to act in judgment, expecting that He will. In Psalm 74 the same call goes forth but the psalmist is not sure that God can so act.

Psalm 83

Like Psalms 75 and 76, Psalm 83 is both a **מִזְמוֹר** and a **שִׁיר**. Unlike those psalms, this one has no technical musical term. This psalm has several points of contact with Psalm 74. Both psalms begin with an address to God in the vocative, but Psalm 74 immediately raises the accusatory question while Psalm 83 asks God not to be silent. Both psalms style the enemy as God's enemies who make boisterous noises (Pss 74:4; 83:3). The enemy is determined to oppress Israel (Pss 74:8; 83:5). The enemy in Psalm 83 is a conspiracy of Syro-Palestinian states along with an emergent Assyria. Psalm 74 does not identify the enemy.

Both psalms appeal to God's past acts in behalf of Israel (Pss 74:12-17; 83:10-13). Psalm 74 recalls the Exodus and Conquest, whereas Psalm 83 relates to the judges' era. The enemy's desire to possess the "pastures of God," נאות אלהים (Ps 83:13) is similar to the report about the "pastures of violence," נאות חמס (Ps 74:20).

Psalm 74 may imply imprecation against the enemy (Ps 74:11, 18-20, 22-23), but Psalm 83 ends with an explicit imprecation (Ps 83:14-19). This may imply, by comparison, that Psalm 83 has more concern for defeat of the enemy than Psalm 74. Correspondingly, Psalm 74 is more concerned about God's inaction.

The two psalms differ in their conclusions. Psalm 74 ends with a weak appeal for God to remember the enemy. Psalm 83 ends with an imprecation tempered by the psalmist's desire that the enemy seek the name of Yahweh (v. 17b) and that Yahweh alone be honored as "most high over all the earth" (v. 19). "This final expression is a major distinction between the two psalms.

A summary of contributions of Psalms 76, 77, and 81-83 to an understanding of Psalm 74

The psalm titles for Psalms 76, 77, 81-83 show that all are part of the musical repertoire for Israelite worship at some point in the history of these psalms. There is no indication for musical performance in Psalm 74. Psalm 76

praises God for delivering the "humble of the land" from an enemy siege against Zion. Psalm 77, as an individual lament, has some of the anguish of Psalm 74 but contrasts with Psalm 74 by indirectly affirming God's **חסד**, **חנות** and **רחמים** ("loyal love, gracious acts and compassions").

Psalm 74 contrasts with Psalm 81 in that the former does not acknowledge any reason why God should chasten the nation. It is a one-sided indictment of God while Psalm 81 contains a call to praise by the psalmist and a speech by God. Psalm 82 expects God to judge those who oppress the vulnerable. Psalm 74 is not sure that God will do this. Psalm 83 has much that is like Psalm 74 except that it desires that the enemy may know the exalted character of God. The community itself in Psalm 74 never affirms that God is "the Most High over all the earth." The community in Psalm 74 seems rigid and non-condescending in its approach to God in contrast to the stance which the community or psalmists assume in the psalms surveyed in this sub-section.

Maskil Psalms

משכיל as a Psalm Title

Past proposals as to meaning

Translation and interpretation of **משכיל**, i.e., maskil,¹ as a psalm title has a varied history. LXX uses

¹Except where the Hebrew script is especially useful, the present discussion adopts the transliteration "maskil" from the psalm titles in NASB, NIV, RSV, AND KJV (maschil).

συστησέως, "of understanding," followed by the Vulgate which uses "*intellectus*." Briggs believes that since מִשְׁכִּיל is "formed by the prefix מ from שָׁכַל in the Hiphil, *consider*, *contemplate*, . . . [it] is, therefore, probably a *meditation* [or] *meditative* poem."¹

Briggs followed Delitzsch in concluding that maskil means "*pia meditatio*, a devout meditation."² This meaning was perhaps intended as refinement of the tradition begun by LXX. However, sarcasm and imprecation (Ps 52), anguish from divine abandonment (Ps 88) and a mood of accusation (Ps 74) are not the usual fare for devout contemplation.³

Barnes believes the term means "*to make wise*, or to impart instruction," i.e., it indicates a "didactic" piece.⁴ Two maskil psalms (Pss 32 and 78) support this idea. Psalm 32 is a virtual expansion and application of God's own word, אֲשַׁכִּילךְ "I will instruct you" (v. 8) . Psalm 78:1-8 explicitly claims to mark the rest of the psalm as especially instructive. Delitzsch flatly rejects this causative idea

¹Briggs, *Psalms*, 1:61; italics in original.

²Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:394.

³E. Robert Matson, "A Word-Study of SKL and its Application to the Maskilim" (M.A. thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1976), p. 3 (hereafter cited as Matson, "SKL").

⁴Albert Barnes, *The Psalms, Notes on the Old Testament*, 2 vols., ed. Robert Frew (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), 1:271 (hereafter cited as Barnes, *Psalms*).

and prefers the softened sense noted above.¹ He and Kissane argue that there are relatively few didactic elements in the maskil psalms except: for Psalm 32:8 and Psalm 78:1-8. Oesterly and Kidner reject the causative idea for an opposite reason from Delitzsch. They claim that other psalms which are didactic do not have the title, "Maskil," e.g., Psalms 1 and 37."²

A third view relies heavily on 2 Chronicles 30:22, where Hezekiah spoke to the Levites: **הַמְשַׁכִּילִים שְׂכֵל-טוֹב לַיהוָה** (i.e., [the Levites] who were skillful [having] good insight, as essentially, NASB).³ This view also appeals to Psalm 47:7-8 where the congregation is addressed four times in verse 7 with the imperative **זַמְרוּ** which evidently means here, "Sing praises."⁴ Verse 8 concludes with **זַמְרוּ מִשְׁכִּיל** Perowne and Kirkpatrick believe that **מִשְׁכִּיל** in these passages and in the psalms means, "skillful or 'a skillfully constructed song.'"⁵

¹Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:394; also Kissane, *Psalms*, 1:xxiv.

²W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1939), p. 15; also Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, p. 38.

³A causative rendering of the participle, as in KJV, is preferable (see below, p. 274).

⁴Also in NASB.

⁵Perowne, *The Book of Psalms* 1:86, 387; also Kirkpatrick, *Psalms*, p. xix.

A weakness of the "skillful" view is that it makes judgments about form without objective criteria for such judgments.¹ Conversely, the contemplative and didactic views seek support from the contents of the psalms in question.

The book of Proverbs and the meaning of משכיל

The Hiphil of שכל occurs fifty-nine times in the HB.

A large plurality (thirteen times) is found in the book of Proverbs. Therefore, this book may provide a base for understanding the term משכיל. Other advantages of selecting passages from this book are: (1) several other uses are in wisdom or wisdom-related Scriptures, e.g., Job and Daniel; (2) a common provenience between Proverbs and several maskil psalms in pre-exilic Israel; (3) the presence of parallelistic construction in well-defined aphoristic statements.²

Delitzsch denied that maskil indicates a didactic psalm because:

It is improbable that *maskil*, which, in all other instances, signifies *intelligens*, should, as a technical term, mean *intelligentem faciens*, because the Hiphil, *hiskil*, in the causative meaning 'to impart understanding,' occurs only in solitary instances (Ps 32:8, Prov 21:11) in the Hebrew of the period before the Exile

¹See Matson, "SKL," p. 5.

²Ibid., p. 11.

and only came into common use in the later language (in Daniel, Chronicles, and Nehemiah).¹

That Hiphil causative of שכל can mean "to instruct" is clear from various places where it is either parallel to a word which connotes instruction or where it takes a direct object (cf. Ps 32:8; Ps 101:2; Prv 16:20, 23, and 2.1:11). Girdlestone cites המשכיל ים in 2 Chronicles 30:22 in support of the causative force of the root.² The text uses the noun שכל as its object. Girdlestone accepts the KJV rendering, . . . the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the Lord." RSV has "who show good skill in the service of the Lord." שכל means "good sense . . . (or) insight" but not "service."³ The adjective טוב clearly modifies the noun rather than the participle.

Proverbs 16:23 and 21:11

Proverbs 16:23 reads:

לב חכם ישכל פיהו
ועל שפתיו יסיף לקח

The heart of the wise teaches his mouth
and to his lips he adds learning.

The parallel verbs ישכיל and יסיף are both causative transitive verbs.

¹Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:393-94.

²Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1897), pp. 224-25; cf. also BDB, p. 968.

³BDB, p. 968.

Proverbs 21:11 reads:

בעֲנֹשׁ-לֵץ יִחְכַּם-פְּתִי
וּבְהִשְׁכִּיל לַחֲכָם יִקַּח דַּעַת

עֲנֹשׁ is a Qal transitive infinitive construct: "When punishing the scoffer, the simple becomes wise." Its parallel member in the second line, הִשְׁכִּיל, also has a transitive idea, i.e., it is a Hiphil causative infinitive construct: "and in teaching the wise he receives knowledge."¹

Proverbs 16:20 and 21:12

Proverbs 16:20 can bear the causative force. An expanded translation might be "one who gives moral (or spiritual) instruction concerning a matter will find good." The participle מִשְׁכִּיל ("one who gives moral instruction") is parallel to the participle בֹּטַח in the second colon. The relevant words here translate "one who trusts in Yahweh." Thus this verse illustrates both the didactic and moral force of מִשְׁכִּיל in the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 21:12 reads:

מִשְׁכִּיל צְדִיק לְבֵית רָשָׁע
מִסֵּלֶף רָשָׁעִים לָרַע

KJV has supplied several words to clarify what this verse says:

¹It is best to translate both infinitives construct as active, against KJV and NASB.

"The righteous *man* wisely considers the house of the wicked; *but God* overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness."

The verse employs **משכיל** as a predicate adjective with the subject **צדיק**. The object is construed with **ל**. The verb-object pattern in verse 11, **בהשכיל לחכם** is the same as in verse 12, . . . **לבית . . . משכיל**. Since the Hiphil of **שכל** meant "to teach" in verse 11, the same meaning can make sense in verse 12. The relationship between the two clauses in verse 12 is not as clear as for the two cola in verse 11. If the subject **צדיק** serves both clauses in verse 12, then one clause may be subordinate to the other, i.e., "When the righteous (man) teaches the house of the wicked, he overthrows the wicked to destruction."¹

Proverbs 1:2-4

Proverbs 1:2-4 expresses the purpose of the book with a series of infinitives construct denoting purpose. The purpose stated in verse 3 is "to receive **מומר השכיל**, the discipline of instruction." Verse 3b indicates that such instruction is of a moral kind. It is instruction in **צדק**, **משפט**, and **מישרים**, or "righteousness, justice and equity."²

The noun **שכל**

All six uses of **שכל** Proverbs have a moral or spiritual content. Obedience to moral instruction produces

¹ For this idea see Matson, "SKL," pp. 41-42.

²NASB.

good *insight*.¹ A man's *insight* is praiseworthy (12:8). "Good *insight* produces favor" (13:15a). *Insight* is a source of life (16:22). *Insight* produces longsuffering and enables its possessor to forgive those who wrong him (19:11). A כסיל, or morally stupid person,² despises *insight* (23:9).

Conclusion

The book of Proverbs supports the causative meaning of משכיל, to teach or to give instruction. The use of the noun שכל in Proverbs shows that the content of instruction has a moral character. The use of שכל in Psalm 32:8 supports the idea that such instruction is intended to result in correct living before God. The titles and content of Psalms 32 and 78 make it highly probable that other psalms bearing משכיל in their titles are especially intended to provide instruction in correct living. This does not mean that psalms without משכיל in the title do not provide this kind of instruction. Its presence simply emphasizes that the reader should carefully consider ways in which the psalm teaches prudent behavior.

¹In this paragraph the underlined words are translations of שכל. The references are to the book of Proverbs.

²See BDB, p. 493.

Psalm 44

Using Psalm 32, the first maskil psalm, as a starting point, one can readily see how it is especially instructional. The words are not a prayer but they are instructions to the audience given by David. The subject is basic. It concerns acknowledgment of sin and forgiveness by God. This may be David's fulfillment of his promise in Psalm 51:15. By comparison to Psalm 32, Psalm 44 is a prayer whose title indicates the piece as part of the music for public worship.

The context of Psalm 44

Psalm 44 is a prayer of distress in which the community feels abandoned by God to its enemies. Their abandonment is felt keenly because they have been faithful to God. At the psalm's end they appeal to God's **יְהוָה**. How is the psalm instructive? It is not instructive in the same sense as Psalm 32. Calvin's remarks are helpful when he says the word maskil

is sometimes found in the inscription of psalms whose subject is cheerful; but it is more commonly used when the subject treated is distressing; for it is a singular means of leading us to profit by the instruction of the Lord, when, by subduing the obduracy of our hearts, he brings us under his yoke.¹

¹John Calvin, *Commentary on The Book of Psalms*, 4 vols., trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 2:149 (hereafter cited as Calvin, *Psalms*).

How Psalm 44 is a didactic poem

Calvin's point seems to be that, while the psalm, as such, is not an instructional piece, its subject matter, when considered carefully, promotes a proper way of life. When one suffers undeservedly, as one of God's own, he does learn. The apostle Paul points in this direction when, after quoting Psalm 44:23 in Romans 8:36, he says in verse 37, "in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." Psalm 44 is a maskil psalm in that, as one contemplates its subject matter or experiences analogous conditions, he will be instructed in God's way.

*Psalm 78**The didactic character of Psalm 78*

The title to Psalm 78 is exactly the same as the one for Psalm 74. The psalmist assumes the position of a sage and sets out to give his people instruction, תורה (v. 1), which is rooted in God's law, תורה (v. 5, the same word as in v. 1). Each generation was to pass on to the next what God had done for Israel so that the new generation would not forget God nor be stubborn as their fathers had been, but would obey God's commandments (vv. 7-8).

The psalm reviews the great provisions of God in the Exodus, the wilderness, the conquest and the occupation (vv. 9-64). Throughout those centuries each generation was as treacherous as its forebearers (v. 57). God finally

abandoned Shiloh (v. 60) and rejected the northern territories and chose Judah, Zion, and David (vv. 67-70).

The explicit lessons of Psalm 78

This psalm is patently didactic. In addition to its direct claims to be instructional, it reviews history so that its explicit lessons will not be lost on the current generation. These lessons concern trusting and obeying God and neither forgetting His works nor behaving stubbornly towards God.

Psalm 88

A synthesis of content

Psalm 88, an individual lament, begins with a vocative cry to Yahweh affirming that God is the psalmist's only deliverance. Three times he complains about his unanswered prayers (vv. 2, 10, 14). The psalmist ends with the further complaint that He has left him alone in terror. Perhaps this is a point of the psalm; at the end, the psalmist is still complaining, alone and unanswered, but he has not turned from God. He thus re-affirms his opening expression of confidence.

Psalm 88 compared with Psalm 74

This psalm is like Psalm 74 in that, as a prayer, it ends without indication of divine response and there is no change of mood within the psalm. But, unlike Psalm 74, the

title to Psalm 88 indicates that it is both a maskil and a part of the musical collection. It is a שִׁיר (a song), a מִזְמוֹר (to be sung to instrumental accompaniment), and לְמַנְצֵחַ (for the choirmaster). The long title may indicate that it would not easily be considered a singable piece.

The psalm's singability may rest on the implied promise to praise God (vv. 11-13). Here the psalm goes beyond Psalm 74. The suppliant asks, if God abandons him to the grave, how can he praise God? In saying this, he affirms God's חֶסֶד, אֱמוּנָה, and צְדָקָה (loyal love, faithfulness, and righteousness; vv. 12, 13). Psalm 74 does not acknowledge these qualities in God. This difference between the psalms is an outgrowth of the contrasting ways in which these psalms begin, Psalm 74 begins with a mood of accusation and Psalm 88 begins with affirmation of God.

How Psalm 88 is a didactic poem

Psalm 88 may be didactic in a way similar to Psalm 44. The psalmist's sustained dependence upon God in the face of seemingly repeated rejections by Him is instructive. Contemplation and appropriation of such a stance will instill moral and spiritual fibre in the one who focuses on ways in which Psalm 88 is especially didactic. The psalm reminds one who considers what the psalm says about its speaker that a godly person may come to this kind of despondency and should be considered compassionately by his

fellows. Barnes seems to concur in this:

It was proper that such a condition of utter despondency, even in a good man, should be described, in order that others might see that such feelings are not necessarily inconsistent with true religion, and do not prove that even such a sufferer is not a child of God.¹

Psalm 89

Synthesis of content

The extended expression of confidence in God's faithfulness (vv. 2-19) and the psalmist's reminder to God of His words concerning the appointment of a Davidic dynasty (vv. 20-38) are the context for the lament of verses 39-52. The poet addresses God, the active agent in the distress of the Davidic king. He emphasizes the divine agency with a schematic use of fourteen 2 ms perfect verbs (vv. 39-46).

The psalmist then asks "how long?" concerning the divine wrath. He reminds God that man's life is short. The lament closes by reminding God of His former **חסד** to the Davidic line and of the present reproach suffered by God's servants. The latter noun is **עבדים** (v. 51). Psalm 74 uses neither **חסד** nor **עבד**, as noted earlier. The last verse of the lament reminds God that His enemies, i.e., **אויביו** (cf. Ps 74:4, **צוריו**), have reproached Yahweh and His anointed. The speakers in Psalms 89 and 74 both identify the enemy as God's enemy. In this manner they seek to intensify God's interest.

¹Barnes, *Psalms*, 2:362.

Comparison of Psalm 89 with Psalm 74

The lament in Psalm 89 ends in a way similar to Psalm 74. Psalm 89 leaves God with the reproach of His enemies as the concluding idea, whereas Psalm 74 leaves the shout of the enemy in God's ear. These two psalms differ, however, in a way similar to the basic difference between Psalms 88 and 74. The lament in Psalm 89 has, as a main feature of its context, the terms **חַסֵּד**, **אֱמוּנָה**, and **עֲבַד**. All three words occur at both the beginning and end of the psalm (vv. 24 and 50-51). Psalm 74 avoids these terms.

How Psalm 89 is a didactic poem

The lament in Psalm 89:39-52 has marked resemblances to portions of Psalm 74. The repetitious use of 2 ms perfect verbs is a more direct indictment of God than the "hymn" of Psalm 74. The psalmist is as urgent in Psalm 89 but he does not attempt to put God on the defensive as happens in Psalm 74. The major difference between the two laments is the context established in Psalm 89. The first part of the psalm emphasizes that God is loyal to His word, faithful to His people, and sovereign over all. It also states that God chastises His chosen kings when they transgress His law but He promises to maintain David's dynasty. This implies that He restores the transgressor if he repents. The psalm is especially instructive in that it sets a proper conceptual context in which to communicate

one's distresses to God. One may seek relief even when those distresses are the consequence of transgressing God's Law.

*Psalm 137, Jeremiah 24, and Exilic Judah
in Relationship to Psalm 74*

Psalm 137

A Survey of the Psalm

Structurally, Psalm 137 displays five movements:¹ (1) the setting of the principal action of the psalm, "There we sat and wept" (vv. 1-2); (2) the immediate cause for weeping, "Our captors asked us . . . , 'sing for us from the song (i.e., collection of songs) of Zion.'" (v. 3); (3) the reason for declining to sing, i.e., such songs are not appropriate to the circumstances of the request (vv. 4-6).² The final movements (4, 5) are imprecations for Yahweh to "remember" Edom (v. 7) and to punish Babylon (vv. 8-9).

A Mixed Genre

The first six verses include elements which may be compared to complaints (vv. 1-3) and a confession of trust

¹For a survey and bibliography on various views of the structure, see William H. Shea, "Qinah Meter and Strophic Structure in Psalm 137," *Hebrew Annual Review*, vol. 8, ed. Reuben Ahroni (The Ohio State University, 1984), p. 201 (hereafter cited as Shea, "Psalm 137").

²Freedman rightly regards these verses as the "nucleus" of a carefully composed chiasmus (David Noel Freedman, "The Structure of Psalm 137" in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971], p. 203).

(vv. 4-6).¹ The imprecations of verses 7-9 may be construed as an extreme form of a wish against the enemy.² As such, these seem out of character with the pious concern of the first six verses. The psalm includes features of communal complaint, themes suitable to a song of Zion, and some language appropriate to a wisdom psalm.

Verses 1-6

The provenance of Psalm 137 has been a point of discussion. The perfect verbs and the use of ׀ש ("there") strengthen the probability that the psalm was composed by a

¹For the problem of genre identification in this psalm, see Anderson, *Psalms* 2:896-97 and Graham S. Ogden, "Prophetic Oracles Against Foreign Nations and Psalms of Communal Lament: The Relationship of Psalm 137 to Jeremiah 49:7-22 and Obadiah" *JSOT* 24 (October 1982):89-90 (hereafter cited as Ogden, "Oracles"). Shea, "Psalm 137" pp. 205-06, does not seek to identify the genre of Psalm 137 *per se* but he does make a plausible case for a multi-level "Qinah or lament pattern in the psalm. He sees an unbalanced pattern (usually 3:2) at the metrical, couplet, and strophic levels. At the strophic level Shea notes vv. 5-6. Vv. 5-6a are two bicola of self-cursing, while v. 6b is one bicolon of implied blessing. One need not agree with all of Shea's proposals to acknowledge the general validity of his observations. See also Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, vol. 21. *Word Biblical Commentary*, (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), p. 237.

²C. Westermann (*PLP*, p. 52) implies that the petition of the communal lament may "wish" simultaneously for deliverance of the community and vengeance on the enemy (as in Ps 79:11-12). B. W. Anderson, (*Out of the Depths* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974], p. 87) describes Psalm 137:7-9 as "the most conspicuous example of imprecation," but see also Psalm 83:13-17.

Judahite returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon.¹ The returned exiles recall their concern for Zion as they sat beside waterways of Babylon. There they sat and wept² when they remembered the city. The reason for the intense sadness was their captors, mocking request for joyous songs of Zion.

The nucleus of the psalm (vv. 4-6) takes the form of a rhetorical question followed by a self-imprecation. The question is a forceful double affirmation by the exiles represented in this poem. First, they equate Zion with Yahweh, i.e., to honor the former is to honor the latter. To equate Yahweh with a Zion that is in shambles is unthinkable. It would be mockery for Yahweh's faithful ones to sing of Zion's Yahweh-conditioned glory. Songs sung from the captors' capital to "entertain" the captors would be especially reproachful against Yahweh.

The double-pronged self-imprecation underscores the community's signal devotion to Jerusalem.³ These verses (5-6) continue the motif of remembering Jerusalem-Zion. The self-curses, perhaps extensions of covenant curses for

¹See especially vv. 1-3. Commentators who agree include H. C. Leupold, *Psalms*, p. 932; A. A. Anderson, *Psalms*, p. 897; Ogden, "Oracles," p. 89.

²Use of **גם** emphasizes the verb **בכה**.

³**ימין** refers to loss of capacity to play an instrument and **לשון** to inability to articulate with the mouth.

disobedience,¹ soften the seemingly harsh imprecations against the enemy that conclude the poem.

Verses 7-9

Verse 7 implies that Edom was an accomplice to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and is, therefore, the object of a vaguely worded call for divine vengeance. Neither Edom's crime nor punishment is specified. Verses 8-9 are an imprecation addressed to "the daughter of Babylon."² Two **אשרי** statements urge an unnamed subject to take vengeance against Babylon.³ **בת** (daughter, v. 8) pairs with **עלליך** (your children, v. 9) to form an envelope pattern and make this imprecation horrifyingly graphic. Both imprecations anticipate destructions against Edom and Babylon which earlier prophets had announced.⁴

¹See, e.g., Lev 26:33-44 with Deut 28:15-68 for a conceptual background of covenant curses as these may relate to Ps 137:5-6.

²Ogden, ("Oracles," p. 89), is not convincing when he suggests that **בת־בבל** refers to Edom virtually as a confederate vassal state to Babylon. For **בת** as a term indicating personification of cities and countries, see Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, p. 237.

³**אשרי** occurs twenty-six times in Psalms. Only here does it announce blessing upon one who inflicts punishment on another. The expression is among "the typical stylistic peculiarities" in Old Testament wisdom literature (R. E. Murphy, "The Classification of Wisdom Psalms" in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. James L. Crenshaw [New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1976], p. 459).

⁴E.g., against Babylon, Isa 13 (esp. v. 16) and Jer 51; against Edom, Isa 34 and Obad.

The psalm is a unit with an inverted structure. It begins and ends by mentioning Babylon. The first part promises to "remember" Zion-Jerusalem in an appropriate manner.¹ The last part petitions Yahweh to "remember" the enemy for what they did to Jerusalem.

*Similarities and differences between
Psalms 74 and 137*

Statements and implications in Psalm 74 show that, from the community's perspective, Yahweh has abandoned Zion (v. 2). The identity of the human enemy is unspecified but at times God also seems to be an enemy. There is a sustained contention with God, along with a diminishing certainty about God's will or power to respond to the crisis. There is concern about God's covenant faithfulness (v. 20).

Psalms 74 and 137 are similar in that the praying body in each is pained. Both express concern for Zion and for Yahweh's reputation. Both display intense feeling, yet they differ in fundamental ways. Psalm 74 views the calamity from a virtual on-site perspective. Psalm 137 contrasts with Psalm 74 in that the former seems to assume that God will right the wrongs (see Ps 137:7-9). Psalm 137 identifies the enemy and affirms the exiles' covenant loyalty. A willingness to suffer with Zion and high hopes for appropriately singing songs of Zion seem to be unexpressed moods

¹Verses 5-6 may be intended by the speakers to refer to their returned status as well as to their commitment: while they were still in exile.

that undergird what is said.¹ Both psalms face an unresolved problem but Psalm 74 has a pervasive mood of smoldering anger, whereas Psalm 137 is expecting its hope to be vindicated.

Jeremiah 24

The Placement of Jeremiah 24

Several commentators agree that Jeremiah 21-24 forms a conceptual unit: within the book.² The sequence begins when a delegation from Zedekiah consults with Jeremiah (21:1-10). The prophet warns Judah's royal house (21:11-23:8) and the false prophets (23:9-40) then reports a vision of two baskets of figs and explains their relationship to Zedekiah and others remaining in Jerusalem (24:1-10).

The bracketing passages share several features. They each use exclusive categories, i.e., life-death and very good figs-very bad figs.³ Zedekiah, his officials, and the remnant of Judah are objects of warnings (24:8, 21:7).

¹Brueggemann's description of Psalm 137 is cautious. "It is a musing, perhaps a statement of resolve for any who want to listen, not asking for response or even agreement. But it is a resolve not to be nullified." (Brueggemann, *Psalms*, p. 75).

²Their views on how the unit is to be analyzed differ. See, e.g., Samuel J. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1980), pp. 332-34; Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 249; Robert Carroll, *Jeremiah in OTL* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 404.

³Jer 21:1-10 and 24:1-10 respectively.

The passages differ in that chapter 21 is a response to Zedekiah's inquiry ca. 588 B.C. while chapter 24 is Jeremiah's report of a vision which Yahweh gave to him, dated to ca. 597. Chapter 24 also warns Judeans dwelling in Egypt and predicts a fearful scattering and destruction from off the God-given land.

The good figs as the exiles

The good figs of Jeremiah 24, as those who were exiled to Babylon, to whom God promises restoration to the land, may include the speakers of Psalm 137. These had been in Babylon and wrote the psalm after their return to their homeland. The good figs were not such due to "their piety and godliness" but because God would, in general, look with favor upon them.¹ In fact, some did prosper while in Babylon (2 Kgs 25:27-30; Jer 29:4-7).

The Babylonian destruction fell on all the people--royalty, religious functionaries, and general populace--because of prolonged rejection of God's words through the prophets (Jer 25:1-9). Clearly some individuals, even among those who remained in the land after 597 and 586 B.C. were

¹Charles L. Feinberg, "Jeremiah," in vol. 3 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), p. 528. Jeconiah was among the "good figs," yet he is given a mixed reading (cf. Jer 22:24-30 with 52:31-34). Also Ezek 14 implies that the remnant in Judah and the exiles with Ezekiel are spiritually mixed companies.

godly. These include Jeremiah himself and Ebel-melech, an Ethiopian eunuch.

The bad figs as resisting exile

Holladay suggests that the good figs are brought to the attention of Zedekiah not to infer that the exiles were blameless (cf. Jer 5:1-9) but "that Yahweh had positive plans for the exiles," therefore, those remaining in the land "should not feel superior."¹ The ones remaining did, in fact, feel justified in assuming possession of property vacated by the captives (Ezek 11:15; 33:24).²

A peaceful death was open to Zedekiah if he would surrender (34:1-5), a choice he spurned with disastrous results (cf. 24:8-10 with 2 Kgs 25:7). Calvin perceives in what sense those who remained in Jerusalem were bad figs:

. . . As God had delayed his punishment, they supposed that they had wholly escaped, especially as they had an uncle as successor to their captive king.

Hence, then, was their contempt of threatenings; hence, was their greater liberty in sinning: they thought that God had taken vengeance on the exiles, and that they were saved as being the more excellent portion of the community. The Prophet, therefore, in order to break down this presumption, which he could not bend,

¹William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25*, ed. Paul D. Hanson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 656.

²On relationships between Jer 24 and other OT passages, see Walter Zimmerlie, "Visionary Experience in Jeremiah" in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honour of Peter Ackroyd*, ed. Richard Coggins *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 109-14.

set before him this vision, which had been given him from above.¹

Jeremiah 24: A possible meeting point for Psalms 137 and 74

If Calvin's perception of the Jews who remained in Judah is correct, i.e., that they saw themselves as "the more excellent portion of the community,"² one may see here the seeds of an attitude that could characterize others who lived in the land throughout much of the exilic era. Given circumstances and a societal structure outlined elsewhere,³ these "bad figs" could spawn, among other attitudes, a disposition that would produce an accusation of God similar to that found in Psalm 74. Such general indicators do not permit a definitive statement on how Jeremiah 24 might relate to either Psalm 137 or Psalm 74.⁴ The vision (Jer 24) does provide a possible meeting point in that Psalm 137 has a more positive orientation toward God (good figs) and the community of Psalm 74 is resisting (bad figs) God's present conduct of affairs that seem important to the people.

¹John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and The Lamentations*, 3 vols., trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 3:225.

²*Ibid.*

³See below, pp. 293-95.

⁴It is clear that both Ps 137 and Jer 24 relate to the same sixth-century catastrophe.

Exilic Judah and Mixed Interests Among its Population in Palestine

Exilic Factions During the Seige of 588 B.C.

There were factions in the city of Jerusalem during and after its sixth-century destruction.¹ During a lull in Nebuchadnezzar's final seige, some royal officials charged Jeremiah with traitorous acts and imprisoned him. King Zedekiah ordered his release (Jer 37:11-18). This incident suggests three factions: those most loyal to Zedekiah; a strong anti-Babylonian group; and probably a few who were strongly supportive of Jeremiah (e.g., Baruch, Jer 45, and Ebed-Melech, Jer 38:7-13; 39:18).

Nebuzaradan (an army officer) later burned the temple, destroyed every significant building and took most of the residue of the population into exile (2 Kgs 25:8-11). The Babylonian king then appointed Gedaliah as governor over "the poorest of the land" (1 Kgs 25:22, 12). Thereupon, refugees from various lands returned to Judah (Jer 40:11-12). Among Gedaliah's charge were several Judaeans army officers and likely additional soldiers (2 Kgs 15:23). A continuing interest in the temple site, as it lay in ruins,

¹Sources used for surveying the history and biblical data on this era include John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd edition (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1981), pp. 324-72; Peter R. Ackroyd, *Israel Under Babylon and Persia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 1-104 (hereafter cited as Ackroyd, Israel); J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), pp. 377-436.

is demonstrated by the pilgrimage from northern cities en route "to the house of Yahweh" (Jer 41:5). This suggests that possibly others with similar concerns were scattered throughout territories in both north and south. The fact that Gedaliah was placed over "the cities of Judah" (Jer 40:5) implies a population numbering in the thousands.

Factions Relating to Gedaliah's Assassination

The complex makeup of the continuing population is further illumined by Gedaliah's assassination and its aftermath. Ishmael, the assassin, was supported by the king of Ammon. That Ishmael was "of the royal family" (2 Kgs 25:25; Jer 41:1) may suggest a hope for early revival of the Davidic monarchy.¹ This, coupled with Johanan's plan to take the rest of the populace to Egypt, indicates additional factions: those desiring a Davidic king, some who may be "agents" for foreign interests and others who can be wooed by Egypt against Jeremiah's counsel (Jer 42:14-17).

Even if *all* were removed from Judah under Johanan's leadership (Jer 41:16-18; 43:5), it is likely that, in coming decades, groups would trickle back to their homeland.²

¹Ackroyd, *Israel*, p. 36.

²Jeremiah anticipates a return to Judah of a small number from Egypt (Jer 44:28). Among those who believe there was a continuing population in Judah after ca. 582 B.C. (cf. Jer 52:30) are Ephraim Stern, "The Persian Empire and the Political and Social History of Palestine in the

The estate of any who remained or soon returned was miserable (Lam 5:1-18). Within all groups of Jews, wherever they were, there were probably some who had a lively interest in Jerusalem, the temple, and the temple site (see, e.g., Ps 137; Pss 74 and 79; Jer 41:5, etc.).

A suggested value in surveying the post-586 B.C. population in Judah

The foregoing is not a sociological analysis of the Judean community in the period under discussion. However, it does show the probable complex mix of interests which can characterize a relatively small number of people. The combination of facts pointing in the direction of the number, diversity, and inner tensions in this early post-586 B.C. population intimates that a community with these general contours persisted in various locations in Judah between 586 and 536 B.C. Living under a variety of adverse conditions could well have aggravated the tenor of that populace.

Contributions of Studies in Psalm 137,
Jeremiah 24 and Exilic Judah to an
Understanding of Psalm 74

Although Psalm 74 did not necessarily originate in the period described above, it is easy to conceive of the

Persian Period" in W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein, eds., *The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume I, Introduction, The Persian Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 70-73 (Davies' volume hereafter cited as *CHJJ*); also Leon J. Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*. Revised and enlarged by David O'Brien (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), p. 321.

psalm's words as an expression of a beleaguered element within a small society, struggling to affirm the God of their fathers, but incensed by their circumstances as they perceive them. In the absence of data in the psalm or elsewhere pointing to a reasonably precise date of origin, it is prudent not to attempt exact identification of the event which precipitated the psalm. The foregoing assessment of the post destruction years, including observations relating to Jeremiah 24, serves to identify one *kind* of setting which might elicit the words and ideas of Psalm 74 from one whose faith in God is not healthy. Accordingly Psalm 137 helps to identify a different spiritual orientation among Judah's scattered people.

*A Note About Possible Liturgical
Use of Psalm 74*

The Mosaic sacrificial system in the Old Testament attests a ritualistic dimension in Israelite religion (cf. Dt 26:1-10). There is accordingly a high probability that liturgical pieces accompanied some of the ritual acts.¹ Passages from the prophets point in this direction.

Yahweh, through the prophet Joel, calls for a national repentance in the face of national disaster (Joel 2:12-14). He summons the whole population to assemble at

¹Harold H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel* (London: S.P.C.K., 1967; paperback edition 1976) pp. 89, 118, 135-37 (hereafter cited as Rowley, *Worship*).

the temple where priests should intercede in a prayer of lament which pleads for Yahweh's pity and that He not give His inheritance (i.e., His people) over to חרפה or reproach (Joel 2:17).¹

He further assures the people of a favorable response and reports Yahweh's description of His promised intervention (Joel 2:18-20). Then he and Yahweh call for rejoicing (vv. 21-25) and praise (v. 26).² Similarly, Habbakuk's burden opens with a complaint (Hab 1:2-4). His prayer concludes with an expectation of God's deliverance and a promise to praise Him (Hab 3:18-19). The work, set in a national disaster, is enclosed by major elements of the lament genre.³

These examples show that laments in times of national disaster tend to have close at hand some indication of

¹Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*. NICOT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976) pp. 83-84 shows close parallels between Joel 2:17 and Psalm 79:8, 4, 10. For a more complete discussion of issues involved see G. W. Ahlstrom, *Joel and the Temple Cult of Jerusalem* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971).

²David's organization of Levitical choirs may have been intended to serve such a situation as Joel 2:21-27. See 1 Chr 16. Other laments in the OT followed by a Yahweh oracle assuring favorable response to petition, in the context of lament, include 2 Chr 20:3-19 and Ps 60, especially vv. 8-10. The inclusion of Ps 70 within Ps 40 is further illustration of possible liturgical use of biblical psalms in general. See also Pss 15 and 24.

³For bibliography on Habbakuk as a temple liturgy in time of disaster, see Rowly, *Worship*, pp. 167-68. Both a superscript and subscript identify Hab 3 as a psalm.

divine response which then leads to some form of praising or promise to praise by the community. The reading of Psalm 74 which the present work proposes does not include this element.¹

While one may venture the possible resolution of the lament of Psalm 74 in a liturgical setting, the psalm's rhetorical features, pervasive mood, and the lack of clear indication of musical use in the title suggest that one should assess the psalm on its own terms.²

¹A survey of citations from Psalm 74 in the Babylonian Talmud does not help in ascertaining that the psalm was used in conjunction with a psalm of praise or some other piece that would point toward the resolution of the basic tensions in Psalm 74. The texts cited were Ps 74:5 in *m.* 'Aboth 4:5 and *b.* Nedarim 62a. These passages all share קרדום ("axe"), but this commonality is unrelated to liturgical use. Ps 74:6 is quoted in *b.* Sanhedrin 96b as an illustration of the vigor with which the sanctuary was attacked. *B.* Menahoth. 36b cites Ps 74:11 in a manner unrelated to the question of liturgical use. *M.* 'Aboth 5:4 refers to ten "WONDERS" at the Red Sea. The editor of the text lists Ps 74:13 as recalling one of these wonders, i.e., the waters "congealed and hardened." *B.* Gittin 56b cites Titus' attack upon the temple (70 A.D.) as illustrative of God's adversaries roaring in the sanctuary, as in Ps 74:4. The edition consulted was Isidore Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices* 62 vols. and index (New York: Rebecca Bennet Publications, Inc., 1959). A later revision of this work, not available to this writer, is Isidore Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices* [Rev. Ed.] 18 vols. and index (London: Soncino Press, 1961).

²The relationship of communal lament psalms to congregational praise psalms, especially in terms of liturgy in ancient Israelite religion, merits further study.

*A Summary of Contributions of Communal Lament
Psalms, Asaph Psalms, and Maskil Psalms
to an Understanding of Psalm 74*

Communal Lament Psalms

Psalm 44

Psalm 44, in contrast to Psalm 74, unambiguously affirms trust in God by means of its opening expression of confidence and its closing appeal to God's loyal love. These factors demonstrate the community's embrace of God in spite of His seeming desertion of them though they are innocent. They are confident that God will act favorably though they have no present evidence.

Psalm 60

The heading and content of Psalm 60 give a specificity of historical occasion as the cause of lament which Psalm 74 lacks. Psalm 60, renouncing dependence upon man for deliverance, affirms that the community's only hope is in God. Psalm 74 tends to rebuke God rather than express total dependence upon Him. The contrasting titles and structures of Psalms 60 and 74 suggest that Psalm 74 was intended for other than musical presentation.

Psalm 79

By comparing Psalm 79 with Psalm 74 the enemy in the latter is not unambiguously only Gentiles. There the people

are servants and godly ones, terms which stress that they are *under* God. Corresponding terms in Psalm 74 stress the affliction of the people. Psalm 74's non-use of אֲדֹנָי fits this pattern.

Psalm 80

Psalm 80 is a piece to be sung. The people imply their own guilt and explicitly depend upon God. None of these observations are attributable to Psalm 74. Comparing Psalms 44, 60, 79, and 80 with Psalm 74, one wonders why in the latter, the community neither affirms its innocence (as in Psalm 44) nor acknowledges sin (as in Psalm 79).

Asaph Psalms

Psalm 50

Use of מִשְׁכִּיל in the title and lack of terms relating to music, contrary to most Asaph psalms, suggests that Psalm 74 is primarily intended to promote reflection and wise consideration of its message. Psalm 50 is a Yahweh speech which affirms that God will certainly judge the wicked and vindicate the righteous. The community in Psalm 74 seems unaware or unconvinced that this is so, although this is clearly their concern. Psalm 50 also emphasizes that God is greatly concerned about the behavior of people who profess His name, a subject which is not raised in Psalm 74.

Psalms 73 and 75

The psalmist in Psalm 73 is puzzled by the well-being of the wicked. Upon entering the sanctuary he realized the destiny of the wicked and that he himself was continually with God regardless of troubles in his life. The psalmist's initial question about the justice of God was resolved. Psalm 75 is a communal hymn praising God that as judge, He exalts one and puts down another and is righteous in doing so.

Psalm 74, unlike Psalm 73, is not a wisdom psalm as such but the community is concerned about the same issue as in Psalm 73. For the community, the problem is not resolved within Psalm 74. But the one who ponders Psalm 74 in the light of the psalms on either side will realize what had eluded the people who are speaking within the psalm. A psalms compiler, perhaps deliberately, placed these three psalms together to show how intense suffering may distort the thinking and assault the faith of the believing community. The reader knows that the problem within Psalm 74 is resolved along lines featured in Psalms 73 and 75.

Psalms 76, 77, 82-83

The psalmist in Psalm 76 recognizes that God delivers the "humble of the land." The individual in great distress in Psalm 77 still affirms God's loyal love,

gracious acts, and compassions. The psalmist expects God to judge those who oppress the vulnerable, a point on which the community expresses doubt in Psalm 74. Psalms 74 and 83 are similar except that the psalmist in Psalm 83 desires the enemy to seek God and know His exalted character. Psalm 74 does not rise to this level.

Maskil Psalms

Because of the meaning of in the book of Proverbs and its use in the titles to Psalms 32 and 78, it is likely that a maskil psalm is one which is especially intended to provide instruction in correct living. These psalms are not all instructive in the same way. The psalms previously examined illustrate a variety of ways in which these psalms are didactic.

Psalms 32, 78, 88-89

Psalms 32 and 78 purport to be instructional words by an individual who assumes the role of a teacher. Psalm 44 uses prayer words rather than teaching words, but the prayer is instructive as one contemplates the teaching potential of undeserved suffering, aggravated by unanswered prayer. Psalm 88 is didactic in a similar way. The lamenter's initial affirmation that God is his only deliverance has not been rejected even though no answer to the prayer is indicated. Psalm 89 emphasizes the value of

complaint to God even when the distresses are consequences of transgression. The complaint should be presented with full awareness that God is faithful to His words whether these are words of promise or warning.

Psalm 74

Psalm 74 is a didactic psalm. Its function, as such, must be articulated in the context of other didactic psalms. Psalms 32, 74, 78, and 142 are the only maskils which do not indicate a musical function, whether in the title or the content. Psalm 142 is distinctly a lament prayer but the last verse implies that David has received assurance that God will answer. Psalm 74 is the only maskil prayer that has no musical indication and no assurance of an answer. Its intended function, according to its title, seems most like the patently instructional Psalms 32 and 78. As a prayer, it is different from these. Psalm 74 is a didactic psalm in that it indicates that a believer can come under such distress that he loses perspective on how to properly relate to God. Though God is diminished in his eyes, it is still God to whom he appeals.

CHAPTER V

THE MEANING OF PSALM 74

The Meaning of Psalm 74 Based upon Exegesis and Structure

Verses 1, 10-11, and 20: An Axis for Psalm 74

The psalm begins with the psalmist's direct question to God concerning His seemingly interminable anger against His people.¹ The sheep-pasture metaphor and the incongruity of the wrath of God, the Shepherd, smiting against His sheep, expands the question about anger (v. 1a, 1b). This mood of questioning God's continuing anger against Israel is sustained at least through verses 10-11. Only verse 1 has specific terms for anger, but the question words of verses 10-11 maintain the opening mood. The direct imperative of verse 20, "Look carefully at the covenant," suggests that the psalmist thinks that God is not acting in accord with His promise to the nation. Thus, the basic mood of dissatisfaction runs unrelieved throughout the psalm.

Using verses 1, 10-11, and 20 as an axis indicating the community's present views of God and its view of itself

¹The words "psalmist" and "community" are used interchangeably throughout this discussion.

in relationship to God, a number of theological propositions suggest themselves.

What the community affirms about God

God is approachable by His people and hears their prayers of distress. He may become exceedingly angry with His people, and, as verse 1 indicates, this anger may continue for a long time. God is the shepherd of His people. While "shepherd" is likely an epithet of God's kingship over His people, the metaphor nevertheless implies certain relationships which God sustains with His people. Verse 1b teaches that He feeds His People. This involves provision of actual food but also implies the larger idea that God sustains His people to the extent of preserving their life. For this psalmist, God seems, at present, to be contradicting dicting that sustaining work.

Viewing verses 10-11 as part of an axis in Psalm 74, further ideas surface. The three questions raised by verses 1, 10-11, "why?" (twice) and "how long?," indicate that God sometimes acts in ways that not only puzzle His People, but disturb them. One might speak of the disturbing ways of God with His people. Specifically, from verse 11, God does not always act with destructive force against the enemy at the time the praying community thinks He should.

Verse 20, the third point of the axis, implies that the community believes that God has entered into covenant

relationship with the nation and that He is presently remiss in fulfilling His obligation within that covenant. The questions of verses 1, 10, and 11 and the imperative of verse 20 combine to demonstrate another dimension of the community's view of God. The Almighty, in some sense, can be called to account by His people for His actions or non-actions in relationship to them. The community does not soften this perspective within this psalm. In the context of the Old Testament, this conception of God is erroneous, but it demonstrates that the people believe that they can approach Him openly and honestly.

In summary, based on verses 1, 10-11, and 20 as an axis of Psalm 74, the community believes that God hears bold and candid prayers of His people. Although God, as king, accepts the responsibility to preserve His people, He can also be angry with them. An obverse of His anger against His people is His failure to destroy the enemy.¹ Finally, the community believes that God enters into covenant with His people and, thereby, commits Himself to do certain things for them. This covenant then becomes a basis on which the people appeal to God.

What the community affirms about itself

Verses 1, 10-11, and 20 show that the community believes it has both the right and privilege of appeal to

¹The enemy is styled in, the psalm as God's enemy, but, in fact, he is also the enemy of the people.

God. The mood of the psalm implies that they appeal more on the basis of right than privilege. However, in light of the whole Old Testament, this orientation should be reversed. As the psalm unfolds, the foundation of this appeal is an affirmation of God, i.e., the people's faith in Him is the basis of their prayer. The frequent vocative addresses to God (vv. 1, 10, 12, 18, 22) demonstrate this underlying faith.

The community views itself as God's flock and for this reason, as warranting His protection and provision. That they understood the royal implications of the shepherd-flock metaphor seems evident from verse 12 where they address God as king. Yet, as they claim His protection, they also challenge His absolute kingship in raising questions (vv. 1, 10, 11) and in implying covenant remissness (v. 20). There is no explicit hint in the psalm that they are under God. In effect, they are contending with Him and attempting to bring Him into line with their perspective on their present distress.

Verses 2 and 12-17: A Recalling of the Distant Past

What the community affirms about God

As the community recalls, in these two passages, acts by God in behalf of Israel long ago, they imply orthodox beliefs about God. However, their present appropriation

of these truths may be tenuous due to their great distress. They may be using them to chide rather than applaud God. Nevertheless, the people affirm that He created them as a nation long ago (for a similar thought, cf. Isa 43:7) and that He redeemed them in such a way that they became His inheritance. God is their creator and their redeemer. They also affirm that He, in some sense, dwelt on Mt. Zion, focusing on His presence or immanence with His people.

Verses 12-17 include an address to God (v. 12)¹ and a hymn form (vv. 13-17) which focuses on His beneficial acts, presumably in behalf of the nation long ago. This passage is not explicit as to which acts the psalmist intends. The exegesis sought to show that verses 13-14 are probably a metaphorical reference to the Exodus event, that 15a recalls the provision of water in the wilderness and that 15b-17 recall aspects of the crossing of the Jordan, the conquest, and a means for agricultural productivity in the land. Verses 2 and 12-17 each sharply contrast with verses 1 and 4-11 respectively.

This passage (vv. 12-17) also implies certain affirmations about God. Most prominently, He is king of the psalmist and of Israel. He is characteristically a worker of victories or deliverances, demonstrating His might

¹The 1cs in verse 12 is nevertheless also representative of the community.

in the past by defeating a mighty foe. God works through the same event to destroy armies in the sea and sustain creatures in the desert. He controls water for man's benefit, i.e., brings water out of the rocks and dries up rivers to provide a way of passage. He rules the stellar bodies so that they serve the needs of man. Normally, man needs the regularity of day and night, winter and summer, but he may need special intervention by God as in Joshua's "long day." God controls both nations and the natural order (vv. 13-17). The entire passage points in the direction of His kingship over Israel, nations, and nature, i.e., God is the universal king. The psalmist seems to be using these implied propositions to encourage or shame Him into intervening in the present crisis. If God controls movements upon earth and in the heavens, why does He not now destroy His enemy on Mt. Zion?

What the community affirms about itself

Man is capable of appreciating his own position as God's congregation and His chosen inheritance. He can also recognize that God has chosen to dwell in his midst (v. 2). The psalmist demonstrates further that he can recall and rehearse in forceful hymnic fashion God's great acts from the past. Usually in the Old Testament this style and subject matter constitute a hymn of praise.

In the structure of Psalm 74, however, verses 2 and 12-17 seem to be conditioned by negative statements or inferences about God on both sides of these otherwise positive expressions. Thus, while the psalmist demonstrates a capacity to praise God, he can use that capacity to chide or even shame Him. This seems especially possible with the strong 2ms emphasis (vv. 12-17) coupled with the fact that this passage is bracketed by statements that implicitly rebuke God for allowing the enemy to verbally abuse and deny Him. With words of prayer, the psalmist may himself be demeaning God. If this is so, the psalmist is, to some degree, guilty of the same offense for which he wants God to judge others.

Verse 3: What the Psalmist Believes About God

God can intervene in the distresses of His people. Verse 3a also implies that He has absented Himself from Mt. Zion for some time. The psalmist, assuming God's presence in heaven, believes that God has distanced Himself from the community's earthly scene. Verse 3b implies that God is concerned about the temple site as a holy place.

Verses 4-11: Implications and Assumptions About God by the Community

Verses 4-7

The psalmist now seeks to induce divine action. by describing terrible acts by the enemy and referring to *God's*

sanctuary and the dwelling place of God's name. The psalmist implies that his view of the temple and God's view are the same. In a sense, therefore, the psalmist gives some credence to the erroneous notion: God's thoughts are like man's thoughts.

Verses 8-9

The psalmist seeks to move God to act by reporting adverse conditions that prevail in relationship to the community. By means of this report, he implies that God is concerned about the well-being of His people and that He normally communicates His plans to His people by means of a prophet. The reverse of the latter is also implied; God sometimes denies His Word to His people.¹

Verses 10-11

These questions by the psalmist are built upon an assumption about God: God allows the enemy to reproach and deny His name. Since the questions are complaints, one may probe possible reasons that the psalmist makes the above stated assumption. These reasons, in their turn, suggest additional assumptions: first, God's view about what reproaches His name is the same as the psalmist's view. Second, God is not able to deal with this enemy, although

¹The Old Testament elsewhere teaches that, if God's people lack His Word, it is because they have spurned an earlier word from God; cf. Amos 7:14-16; 8:10-11.

verses 12-17 may be an attempt to dismiss this assumption. Third, God does not desire to punish the enemy. Fourth, God's timing for confronting the enemy is the same as the psalmist's. Fifth, related to the previous idea, God's objectives for allowing enemy activity have been achieved.

Verses 18-23: Implications by the Community

Concerning God

In these verses the community views God as refusing to act against a reproachful, boisterous enemy (vv. 18, 22b-23). In this respect, this series of precatives is similar to verses 10-11. Verses 18 and 21 suggest an obverse to this. God has abandoned His people, making them vulnerable to the enemy. He may also humiliate His people by refusing to answer their prayer (v. 21a). God's failure to punish the enemy and protect His People may be the basis of the psalmist's major perspective in verses 18-23. God is remiss in fulfilling His covenant. Anti-climactic to the charge concerning covenant violation, the psalmist views God as being in need of pleading His own case, i.e., He believes God should defend Himself or, to put it differently, God is vulnerable.

Concerning the community

Verses 18-23 taken together, especially in light of the prominence which the structure accords to covenant

violation and the successive imperatives which call on God to defend Himself, suggest additional views that the community has about itself. It believes that it has adequately defended its initial accusatory "why?" (v. 1) and if God does not act in accord with the prayer, His reputation in the eyes of onlookers will be diminished. The community assumed that its own perspective on its distress and what God ought to do is generally correct.

The Meaning of Psalm 74 Based upon Surveys in Selected Sumerian City Laments

Sumerian city laments existed for centuries before and after the biblical laments were in use. The complaints, appeals, subject matter, parallelisms, and structure of the two lament traditions are very generally analogous. Thus, Psalm 74 was a part of its Near Eastern environment and used aspects of a general and ancient literary tradition.

Theologically, Psalm 74 is a striking contrast to the Sumerian laments. Psalm 74 has a more complex and compact structure. Its brevity compared to the Sumerian laments emphasizes the intense variety of expression within the psalm compared to the Sumerian works. This dynamic expression perhaps reflects the dynamic relationship between man and God in the psalm. In the Sumerian material, man has no vital relationship to the gods. Gods pray to gods, but man seldom prays to the gods.

Psalm 74 assumes that God is the only God in contrast to the polytheism of the Sumerian poems in which no god is really supreme. Paradoxically, the Sumerian poems, with their less than sovereign gods, have no counterpart to the community contending with God in Psalm 74. Though this contention is not demonstrably appropriate, it does testify to a concept of intimacy with God that is foreign to the Sumerian literature.

*The Meaning of Psalm 74 Based upon
Selected Studies in Other
Biblical Psalms*

Psalm 74 stands apart from all of the psalms which were compared with it in chapter five in a major respect. Of those psalms, all included one or more of the following: unambiguous praise of God; confession of sin; claim of innocence from specific transgressions; acknowledgement of God's loyal love, faithfulness or compassions; terms which specifically place the suppliant under God, e.g., servants or godly ones; some specific indication within the psalm, that the problem which prompted the complaint or prayer would be resolved. Psalm 74 has none of these features.

A Comparison of Psalm 74 With Communal
Lament Psalms and Asaph Psalms

Psalm 74 is like other communal laments in its subject matter and elements normally included in such a lament, but it uses these elements differently. The

complaint is more sharp and bold in Psalm 74 and its hymn probably has a negative rather than positive function. This psalm is also like other Asaph psalms in that it raises the basic issue of divine justice in relationship to the distress of God's people.

It is unlike these psalms in that it puts God on trial and implies that He is the vulnerable one. Other Asaph psalms affirm that He is the righteous judge and the righteous and the wicked will each ultimately receive appropriate blessing or retribution. In light of these ways in which Psalm 74 differs from other formally similar psalms, Psalm 74 is not an appropriate pattern for praying in time of distress. While its directness and subject matter are exemplary, one should avoid its abuse of directness and its tendency to demean God,

A Comparison of Psalm 74 with Maskil Psalms

Psalm 74, compared with other maskil psalms, is difficult to explain. However, viewed as a didactic psalm, not in terms of an example of how to pray, but as an index to conditions and potentialities of godly people under great distress, the psalm may promote numerous insights: (1) Faith under prolonged trial may assume a strange posture. (2) One must have other biblical psalms in order to assess and appreciate the uniqueness of Psalm 74. (3) Great stress can cause a believer to challenge God's position as God; one

should be forewarned concerning this by observing the process at work in Psalm 74. (4) One should appropriate from similar psalms certain elements, conspicuous by their absence in Psalm 74, which would prevent or correct the severe disorientation to God evident in Psalm 74. (5) One should be compassionate toward and ready to counsel from the Scriptures a distressed believer whose confidence in God is tending towards the state of doubting evident in this Psalm.

A General Statement

Psalm 74 is a communal lament psalm which bears several unique features. It is a prayer by a community which has suffered prolonged distress. The tendency of the people to meet God on an equal plane contradicts their affirmation of God's kingship. The suppliant has contradicted himself in other ways in the psalm. The prayer reflects a lively but diminishing faith. It is significant that there is no implied response from God within the psalm. By the end of the psalm it is possible that the community thinks God is its enemy when, in fact, the community is contesting with God.

An Assessment of the Prayer of Psalm 74 from New Testament Perspectives

Hebrews 4:16

Psalm 74 is a bold prayer arising from a deep sense of need. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts the needy to

come boldly "with freedom of speech" to the throne of grace to find mercy and grace for their need. The open speech of the laments is appropriate but such openness should be accompanied by seeking God's grace and loyal love. This dimension is missing from Psalm 74.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Suffering is a common lot of mankind. God is faithful. He will not allow His own to be tested above the sufferer's ability to bear the test (1 Cor 10:13). The immediate context of this pronouncement by the apostle Paul (cf 1 Cor 10:12, 14) implies a need for renunciation of confidence in all but God alone. The community's sense of the faithfulness of God is weak in Psalm 74; hence there is a tendency to depend on argument to elicit God's intervention.

Matthew 6:9-13

The prayer that Christ taught His disciples to pray is suitable for an Old Testament context. The prayer should acknowledge God's fatherly concern (cf. Isa 9:6; Jer :31:9). It should hold God's name in proper esteem, a dimension which the prayer of Psalm 74 formally recognizes. The concern for God's kingdom and accomplishment of God's will on earth are alluded to in Psalm 74 but the community's own embracing of God's kingship is not clear. The issue of forgiveness of debts, i.e., sins, is missing from Psalm 74,

though it is present explicitly or implicitly, where relevant, in most other psalms studied. It is significant that Psalm 74 does not reflect the full scope of a prayer pattern commended by Christ. This fact cautions the reader on how he should assess Psalm 74.

Summary and Conclusions

The introduction to this dissertation noted that, while most biblical laments move from lament to praise, this movement in Psalm 74 is almost non-existent. The praise element that at first seems present is rather a means which the community uses to chide God to action. The psalmist struggles between embracing God in confident trust and accusing Him of excessive anger and covenant neglect. In view of this downside nature of the psalm, the question of the psalm's significance for the past and present becomes a prominent issue.

Concerning Content and Structure

The proposition for this study is: The present significance of Psalm 74 is best articulated on the basis of careful attention to its content, structure, and function as indicated by its own text and context. Chapter one expounded sufficient vocabulary and grammar to identify moods and movements in the psalm. On the basis of a clear picture of the text of the psalm, chapter two sought to identify prominent structural features in order to determine conceptual

movements and emphases. This study showed that the opening mood of the psalmist's objection to God's prolonged anger persisted to the end. The psalmist's response climaxed with the unusual charge that God was remiss in keeping covenant commitments. The psalm closes with an inference that God must now rise to His own defense, an idea unique to Psalm 74.

Concerning Sumerian Laments

Chapter three showed some general features that Psalm 74 shares with ancient Sumerian city laments. Striking features of the former, when the latter are compared with it, include the assumption that there is only one God. Most striking is the dynamic relationship between the community and God evident in the lively prayer of Psalm 74.

Concerning Biblical Psalms

Chapter four showed how this psalm shares common themes with both communal lament and Asaph psalms, yet tends to use these themes in ways quite different from other psalms in these classes. The absence of terminology in Psalm 74 that shows the community's submission to God and acknowledges God's grace or faithfulness, sets it apart from all other psalms used in the comparison. This psalm leaves one with the picture of a distressed, bitter, accusing community; apparently a believing community whose confidence in God is waning.

The major clue to the psalm's function came in examining how Psalm 74 is a maskil psalm or a didactic poem. It was shown that the psalm is didactic primarily as an evidence that the condition of the diminishing faith of a distressed community is a potential for any believer or company of believers. Contemplation of this potential invites the compassion and concern of other believers. It stirs the one who ponders this Scripture in a manner advocated by this dissertation to use the Scriptures for oneself and others in order to prevent or relieve the condition of weakening and cynical faith evident in the psalm.

This prayer thus encases a potential condition that is unwelcome, yet, timeless. As a single psalm, Psalm 74 is a warning that many correct beliefs can be distorted or pushed into the background of one's thinking. As a psalm within the canon, Psalm 74 underlines the importance of considering psalms close by and throughout the Bible in order to develop a proper perspective on the target psalm.

Concerning Meaning

Chapter five outlined numerous theological affirmations, assumptions, and implications in Psalm 74. Viewed from its theological contributions, the passage enhances a proper view of God and of the dynamic relationship between God and the believer. However, it can also show how distressing experience sometimes diminishes God to a position

closer to man in the eyes of the distressed one. Psalm 74 is a forceful example of the dangers arising from a failure to recognize man's sinful state and failure to applaud God's faithfulness and compassions to His elect.

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