

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE PSALM TITLES

by

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Introductory notes or psalm titles are found in the text of many of the Biblical Psalms. These notes have been maligned and given a place of secondary importance by critics and translators alike in recent generations. The majority of critical scholars consider them to be late additions to the text which in many cases are based upon questionable exegesis or just plain conjecture. Such criticisms are unfounded in light of the Biblical and extra-Biblical evidences which point to their antiquity and credibility.

It is uncertain whether or not the titles were attached to the psalms at the time of composition. However, there is ample evidence to show that they have long been a part of the Psalter text. Both the manuscript evidence and Biblical evidence outside the Psalter support the view that they have always been a part of the canonical text of the Psalter. Some of the terms used in the titles had lost their meaning by the time the LXX translation was made indicating that the liturgical instructions of the titles had been in disuse for years. Also, several examples of this literary pattern may be gleaned from the Bible and extra-Biblical literature. They show that it was a well-known practice to attach either a title or colophon to poetic compositions long before the post-exilic period.

The titles are valuable guides to the interpretation of the Psalter. They give accurate and reliable information concerning the authors, historical settings and liturgical use of the psalms in question. When ? is used with a proper name authorship is implied, although in the case of Asaph and the "sons of Korah" it is a generic designation. The support of other Scripture together with the internal agreement of the contents of the psalms with the titles shows that there is no justifiable reason for doubting the authenticity of the psalm titles.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
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Master of Theology

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
<i>ANET</i>	James Pritchard, ed., <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i>
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BDB</i>	Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>ICC</i>	International Critical Commentary
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studien</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>VTSup</i>	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there have been no works of major significance dealing with the psalm titles. Thirtle's book, *The Titles of the Psalms*, published in 1904 and considered by some to be the standard work on the subject is no longer of much help in dealing with the real issues. As has been pointed out by Nestle, Thirtle's theory that the musical portions of the superscriptions should really be subscriptions to the preceding psalms is of little consequence.¹ In addition to his theory of subscriptions, Thirtle also discusses and applies the meaning of the terms found in the titles but is of little help in responding to the critics who question their authenticity.

It is largely due to the influence of these critics who have minimized the value of the psalm titles that there has not been more written on the subject. For the most part the critical scholars have dismissed the titles as secondary additions, which contain no reliable information that may be

¹E. B. Nestle, "The Titles of the Psalms," *Exp Tim* 23 (May 1912):383. For a more complete evaluation of Thirtle's work see Roderick V. Smith, "The Titles in the Psalms" (M. Div. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1974), pp. 45-51.

used to determine the authorship or background of the various psalms.¹ While this may be the general trend among the critical scholars it has been pointed out by such reputable scholars as K. A. Kitchen that "this attitude rests on no particle of respectable evidence and has much against it."²

On the contrary side there is much evidence to verify the traditional view that the psalm titles are authentic. From the standpoint of textual criticism it can be shown that they do belong to the canonical text of the Psalter. Then as they are examined linguistically, it becomes apparent that many of them must have been written long before the exile, making the probability of their authenticity more likely. The possibility that they may have been a part of the original composition or at least added soon after is seen by the fact that compositions from the ancient Near East as far back as the time of Abraham have been found with similar patterns of superscriptions or subscriptions.

These evidences along with the Biblical materials which support the testimony of the titles concerning such matters as authorship and historical backgrounds weigh in favor of the authenticity of the titles.

¹Brevard S. Childs, "Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis," *JSS* 16 (Autumn 1971):137.

²Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Old Testament in Its Context: 3 From Joshua to Solomon," *Theological Students' Fellowship Bulletin* 61 (Autumn 1971):11.

General Character and Content of the Titles

The value of this study of the authenticity of the superscriptions may be seen in reviewing the general character and content of the titles. Of the 150 Biblical psalms there are 116 which have some type of title.¹ These titles have often been ignored by English readers of the psalms because most English versions relegate them to a position of secondary importance by placing them at the head of the psalm in small print or leaving them out altogether. The Hebrew Bible, on the other hand, incorporates them into the text of the psalm so that when the verses were numbered in the sixteenth century they were counted as the first verse or part of the first verse.² Thus, indicating that in the Massoretic tradition of the Hebrew Bible they were regarded as an integral part of the text.

Following Bullock's outline, the information contained in the titles may be divided up into five categories: (1) authorship, (2) historical origin, (3) literary features,

¹That means that there are 34 psalms which in the Talmud are referred to as "orphan Psalms." This number may be reduced even further if the opening הַלְלֵהוּ of the Hallel psalms is considered as a title rather than a part of the composition. Delbert R. Hillers' "A study of Psalm 148," *CBQ* 40 (July 1978):325 favors the view that they are editorial, thus fitting into the category of a title. However, for the purpose of this paper they will be considered as a part of the actual psalm composition. This is the view favored by Kemper Fullerton, "Studies in the Psalter," *The Biblical World* 36 (1910):326-27.

²Cristoph Barth, *Introduction to the Psalms* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), p. 6.

(4) liturgical use, and (5) musical notations.¹ The primary concern of this paper is with the first two categories of authorship and historical origin. Not only are they the crucial areas of controversy, but they also provide vital information which should serve as foundational guidelines for any study of the psalms. The other three areas will be discussed primarily from the standpoint of their antiquity and therefore their contribution in helping to establish the trustworthiness of the material pertaining to the first two categories.

Divergent Views On the Value of the Titles

Most scholars would agree that there is at least some value in the titles, though a few reject them as altogether worthless. Since no one knows for sure how or when the titles came to be a part of the psalms, speculations on their origin have abounded. This then has paved the way for a wide diversity of views concerning their value. The following seven views are representative of some of the attitudes of scholars toward the psalm titles either as a whole or toward certain parts of them.

The Inspired Scripture View

The belief that the titles should be considered as a part of the inspired text of Scripture was the general

¹C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), p. 124.

concensus among those whom Callan refers to as "the older Catholic authorities."¹ Included among these older Catholic authorities are such notable early church writers as Augustine and Theodoret.² This view is not widely held or at least not expressed among scholars today even though it can be defended from the standpoint of tradition and canonicity.³ Based upon the available textual evidence today, they have always been a part of the Scriptural text.

The Authentic-Tradition View

In general those who hold to this view believe that the titles are reliable and accurate traditions, though not necessarily a part of the original text. Examples of adherents to this view include Wilson, Leupold, Green and Unger. Wilson, who has made one of the most significant contributions to the subject by his two-part series in the 1926 issue of *The Princeton Theological Review*, concludes on the bases of objective evidence that "the headings of the psalms are presumptively correct."⁴ Leupold suggests that they

¹Charles J. Callan, *The Psalms* (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1944), p. 7.

²C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 3 vols. reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), 1:25.

³The popular radio preacher Charles Swindoll, WBCL, "Insight for Living," 2 August 1983, has referred to the psalm titles as being inspired.

⁴R. D. Wilson, "The Headings of the Psalms," *The Princeton Theological Review* 24 (January 1926, July 1926): 395.

were added by trustworthy leaders in Israel such as Ezra who wanted to preserve a "valuable and well-authenticated tradition."¹ Green² and Unger³ both conclude that as ancient traditions the titles should be accepted as true except in individual cases where there is adequate proof to the contrary. The implication of both writers' conclusions is that such proof may not exist.

The Critical-Tradition View

The proponents of this view, such as Kirkpatrick⁴ and Perowne⁵ of the nineteenth century and Sabourin⁶ more recently, accept the titles as ancient traditions which may or may not be trustworthy. Therefore, their value must be weighed and tested by the usual critical processes. This critical process may in some cases simply result in a

¹H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1959), p. 6.

²Henry W. Green, "The Titles of the Psalms," *Methodist Review* 72 (July 1890):506.

³Merril F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 1:740.

⁴A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms, Book I*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1897), pp. xxix-xxx.

⁵J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols. in 1, 4th ed. (Cambridge: George Bell and Sons, 1878; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), pp. 97, 101-103.

⁶Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning* (Staten Island, New York: Alba House, 1974), pp. 16-17.

different interpretation of what has traditionally been held to be the authors of the psalms (דָּוִד etc.), rather than a complete rejection of the title.

The Psalter-Compilation View

This view completely rejects the psalm titles as reliable traditions which indicate the author, date, or character of the original psalms. However, they are considered of some value in determining how the psalms were used and how they were collected together into their present form.¹ According to this view the various parts of the titles indicate smaller collections of psalms which the individual psalms were a part of at one time. Each time then that a psalm was taken from one collection and put in another the name of the previous collection would be prefixed to it.² With this view the titles would be of no value in interpreting the text of the psalms themselves.

The Midrashic-Exegesis View

The midrashic-exegesis view is concerned primarily with the historical data in the titles and in some cases with the area of authorship. Proponents of this view include

¹Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 1, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. lviii. See also J. W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay, *Psalms 1-50*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 3.

²George R. Berry, "The Titles of the Psalms," *JBL* 33 (1914): 199.

Childs, Slomovic, and Bruce. Childs¹ and Bruce² deal only with the historical portions. They propose that these are derived from the text of the psalm reflecting the work of an early Jewish exegete rather than an independent historical tradition. Slomovic carries the theory even further to include the identity of the authors as being derived from a form of rabbinic midrash.³ The principle value of the psalm titles according to this view is found in the area of hermeneutics. They represent early attempts to interpret the Biblical psalms.

The Cultic-Setting View

The form-function approach to the study of the psalms as advocated by Gunkel and Mowinckel led to the proposal by Mowinckel that the titles have a cultic meaning. Though the historical notes are considered later additions by editors who misunderstood the meaning of לְמִנְחָה the rest of the material including לְמִנְחָה are really technical terms associated with the use of the psalm in the cult." Weiser, who

¹Childs, "Psalm Titles," p. 143.

²F. F. Bruce, "The Earliest Old Testament Interpretation," in *The Witness of Tradition, OTS 17* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), p. 52.

³Elieser Slomovic, "Toward an Understanding of the Formation of Historical Titles in the Book of Psalms," *ZAW* 91 (1979) :380.

⁴Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2 vols. in 1, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (Nashville: Abingdon 1962), 2:99, 210-17.

pretty much follows Mowinckel's view of the titles, explains that לְדָוִד means "for the Davidic ruler" who exercises certain functions in the cult.¹ The chief value of the titles for the adherents of this view is to support their theory that the psalms were actually composed for and used in the cultic services of the temple rather than derived from real historical experiences.

The Higher-Critical View

The early opinion of the higher critics was that the psalms were composed much later than the time of David. This led to the belief that the titles must be spurious additions of the text based on groundless and erroneous conjecture. The end result being that they were rejected as untrustworthy. Toy, writing in 1886 said: "The statements of the titles are worthless; that is though they may in some cases be right, they may always be wrong, and are therefore of no use as critical guides."² This was the view of Driver³ and Cheyne⁴ as well as many others at that time.

¹Arthus Weiser, *The Psalms*, trans. Herbert Hartwell, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), pp 96-97.

²C. H. Toy, "On the Asaph-Psalms," *Journal of the Exegetical Society* 6 (1886):73.

³S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (1897; reprint ed., Cleveland: The Word Publishing Co., 1956), p. 378.

⁴Thomas Kelly Cheyne, *The Origin and Religious Contents of Psalter* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co., 1891), p. 190.

Interestingly enough this was the view of Calvin who regarded them as marginal glosses which were of little value in interpreting Scripture.¹

This extremely low view of the psalm titles has seemingly fallen right along with the higher critical theory which placed most of the psalms in the post-exilic period. The discoveries of Ras Shamra, along with literary research in Egypt and Babylon has brought to light an advanced hymnody in vogue before and during David's time, with some amazing parallels to the Biblical psalms.² These finds, together with the evidence from Qumran has caused most critics to push the date of the origin of the psalms back into the pre-exilic period and reconsider the testimony of the headings.

These many views along with minor variations which will be interacted with further at appropriate places in the thesis, point out the present state of confusion concerning the real purpose and value of the psalm titles.

¹John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 2 trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 27.

²R. Laird Harris, "Psalms," in vol. 2 of *The Biblical Expositor* (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1960), pp. 35-36. See also *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. "Psalms, Book of," by J. B. Payne; and William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1942), pp. 125-29.

The Scope and Purpose of the Thesis

The purpose of this paper is to provide objective evidence to support the thesis that the psalm titles are authentic. They are trustworthy witnesses concerning the authorship, age, purpose and occasion of the various psalms concerning which they give such information either implicitly or explicitly.

The format of the paper will be first of all to present evidence arguing for the antiquity of the titles as they are found in the MT. Then to examine the credibility of the titles in matters relating to authorship and historical data. Having then presented the evidence certain deductions and conclusions will be drawn concerning the origin of the psalm titles and their benefit to the present day scholar.

CHAPTER II

THE ANTIQUITY OF THE PSALM TITLES

There is considerable evidence that the psalm titles have always been a part of the canonical text of the Old Testament Scriptures. This in itself would argue in favor of the authenticity of the titles because of the very nature of Scripture as God's inspired Word. Further evidence seems to indicate that they can be dated back much earlier even than the time when the OT canon was completed around 400 B.C.¹ Thus, not only placing their authenticity on sound footing textually and theologically but also historically as well.

Textual Evidence for their Antiquity

In their effort to discredit the validity of the psalm titles some critics have pointed to the lack of agreement among the ancient manuscripts when it comes to the

¹Although many critical scholars would disagree with this early date for the completion of the canon, it does harmonize with the well-established tradition that the spirit of prophecy departed from Israel after the days of Ezra. For a full discussion of the canonization of the OT see R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), pp. 154-79.

psalm titles.¹ These discrepancies are cited as evidence that the titles at least in part are late additions. While this may be true concerning some of the titles found in the LXX and the Syriac Peshitta, the majority of the titles as they are found in the MT find substantial support for their antiquity in nearly all of the ancient Hebrew manuscripts and the ancient primary versions which are available to us today.

Hebrew Manuscripts

The MT

Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, virtually all of the known Hebrew manuscripts were based upon the work of the Masoretes, who sought to standardize and preserve the text of the OT. The oldest of these manuscripts still available today come from the tenth and eleventh centuries.² Besides these early editions of the Psalter numerous other editions based on earlier manuscripts are available for comparison. In examining these many manuscripts, there is near unanimous agreement on the

¹Frederick Carl Eiselen, *The Psalms and Other Sacred Writings* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1918), p. 43
 Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament an Introduction*, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 451.

²The oldest ones being the Aleppo Codex from the first half of the tenth century and the Codex Leningradensis (L), which is dated around A.D. 1008. Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, trans. Errol F. Rhodes (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1979) pp. 34-35.

text of the headings. R. D. Wilson concludes from his study of these manuscripts that "the text of the headings of the Psalms in the Textus Receptus is almost perfect so far as the evidence of the Hebrew MSS. and printed editions of Kennicot and DeRossi is concerned."¹ From this, it is evident that the headings of the psalms were part of the standard text which the Masoretes so meticulously sought to preserve in the second half of the first millennium, A.D.

The standard text, however, appears to have been established already by the end of the first century A.D. with the result that all other variant lines of tradition in Judaism were destroyed.² This in the past has made the work of OT textual criticism much less conclusive since there were no Hebrew texts available which were not derived from the MT tradition which was standardized around A.D. 100. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls beginning in 1947, numerous ancient manuscripts were made available which had not been subjected to the standardization process which lies behind the MT. This is evident in that all three text types are represented at Qumran: The Hebrew texts lying behind

¹R. D. Wilson, "The Headings of the Psalms," *The Princeton Theological Review* 24 (July 1926):372.

²Bruce K. Waltke, "The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament," in vol. 1 of *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), pp. 216-17. A date in the early second century A.D. under the leadership of Rabbi Akiba is suggested in William Sanford Lasor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic Wm. Bush, *Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), pp. 32-33.

the *Textus Receptus*, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the LXX.¹ Thus, the Dead Sea Scrolls have become crucial in the study of the OT text and in determining the validity of the psalm titles as they are found in the MT.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Numerous fragments and in some cases substantial portions of manuscripts containing the Biblical psalms have been found in the Dead Sea area in the past thirty-five years. Perhaps the most significant of these finds was the Psalms Scroll (11QPsa) from cave 11 at Qumran, which has been dated by Sanders in the Herodian period between A.D. 30 and 50.² In addition to the Psalms Scroll several other text portions containing psalm titles have been found in Qumran Caves 4 and 11, in the Nahal Hever region, and on Masada.³ As these texts are examined they are found to be in essential agreement with the MT in the assignment of titles to the various psalms they contain except for a few minor variations.⁴

¹Waltke, "Textual Criticism," p. 214.

²J. A. Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 6.

³For a catalog of all the pre-Masoretic Psalms manuscripts known before 1965 see J. A. Sanders, "Pre-Masoretic Psalter Texts," *CBQ* 27 (April 1965), pp. 114-17.

⁴For a comparison of the Dead Sea Scrolls psalm titles with the MT titles see Appendix A.

Qumran Cave 4 Manuscripts

One of the more interesting texts from Qumran cave 4 contains part of a commentary on Psalm 45 (4QpPs45). It is significant to the present study because it contains the psalm title along with an explanatory note before the contents of the psalm with its commentary are given. Allegro's translation of the title and explanatory note is as follows: "To the choirmaster: according to the (Lil)lies. (A maskil of the Sons of Korah, a song of lots). They are the seven divisions of the penitents of Is(rael). . . ."¹ This is then followed by the text of the first verse of the psalm itself.

The inclusion of the title in the commentary would seem to indicate that the writer considered it an essential part of the psalm text. As Smith has pointed out, "the material he wanted to deal with was in the text of the psalm, but he could not quote the text without giving its proper title."²

The explanatory note on the title may be a further indication that the writer considered the title a part of the sacred text and therefore worthy of comment.

Two other texts from Qumran cave 4 have been published which contain one psalm title each. The first, 4QPs^b, contains part at least of Psalms 91-118 with Psalms

¹John M. Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4*, vol. 5: Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 45.

²Smith, "The Titles in the Psalms," p. 36.

95 and 104-111 omitted. The only title or part of a title that is preserved from these psalms is לְדָוִד from Psalm 103, which agrees with the MT.¹ The parts of the manuscript which should contain the other titles have deteriorated.

The second of these published texts from cave 4 is 4QPs^d. It contains Psalm 33 (which immediately follows the last verse of Psalm 31) and Psalm 35:4-20. In it, Psalm 33 which does not have a title in the MT is given the title $\text{לְדָוִד שִׁיר מְזֻמָּר}$.² Though different than the MT, this does agree with the LXX in attributing the psalm to David.

The rest of the relevant texts from cave 4 have been assigned to Monsignor P. W. Skehan, but have not yet been published.³ The longest of these, 4QPs^a, has, however, been dated by Skehan in the Hasmonean period, placing it in the latter half of the second century B.C." This date is confirmed by Cross.⁵

Skehan has also let it be known that 4QPs^a "arranges the Psalms and their titles as they still appear in the

¹Patrick W. Skehan, "A Psalm Manuscript from Qumran (4QPs^b)," *CBQ* 26 (July 1964): 318.

²J. T. Milik, "Deux documents inedits du desert de Juda," *Bib* 38 (1957): 245-68.

³Sanders, "Pre-Masoretic Psalter Texts," pp. 114-17.

⁴P. W. Skehan, "The Qumran Manuscripts and Textual Criticism," *Volume du congres* in VTSup 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957), p. 154.

⁵Frank Moore Cross Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1958), p. 122.

Masora," adding further that "there is no special separation between title and text."¹ From this arrangement Cross concludes that the collection of canonical psalms was already fixed by Maccabean times.² It may be further concluded that the psalm titles were an integral part of that text back in Maccabean times.

Qumran Cave 11 Manuscripts

Two of the manuscripts from cave 11 have been published so far. They are the well-known Psalm Scroll (11QPs^a) and 11QPs^b.

Like the Psalm Scroll, 11QPs^b has also been dated in the Herodian period in the first half of the first century A.D.³ It contains one psalm title which is in agreement with the MT and is included as a part of the text (the first verse of the psalm itself continues on the same line).

Thus, the second line of script taken from Psalm 133 reads:

... שיר המעל[ות לדויד הנה מה ט]וב.⁴

The Psalm Scroll from cave 11 has yielded by far the most material for comparison with the MT. In addition to the forty-one Biblical psalms given in part or in whole, the scroll contains eight apocryphal compositions including

¹Skehan, "The Qumran Manuscripts," p. 154.

²Cross, *The Ancient Library*, p. 122.

³J. Van Der Ploeg, "Fragments dun manuscrit de psaumes de Qumran (11QPs^b)," *RB* 74 (1967):408.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 411.

seven non-Biblical psalms and one prose piece about David.¹ The scroll is unique not only by the inclusion of the apocryphal compositions but also by the arrangement of the psalms which differs from the traditional order. This has led Sanders to conclude, contrary to Cross (see above), that the Psalter was still open-ended in the first century, and that the Psalms Scroll represented a "local Palestinian text with its own internal problems of limited fluidity."² He does allow however, on the basis of the materials from cave 4, that Books I and II of the Psalter may have been fixed much earlier.³

Sanders theory of an open-ended Psalter in the first century A.D. however, has not been accepted by textual critics as a whole. Goshen-Gottstein gives some convincing evidence that the scroll was never intended to be more than a "liturgical collection."⁴ A view which is adopted by Würthwein.⁵ Likewise Skehan makes several observations concerning the scroll which seem to indicate that 11QPs^a is dependent upon "the complete collection of Psalms as we

¹Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll*, p. 6.

²Ibid., pp. 157-58.

³Ibid., pp. 13-14

⁴M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, "The Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a); A Problem of Canon and Text," in vol. 5 of *Textus* (Jerusalem: At the Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1966), pp. 29-33.

⁵Würthwein, *The Text of the OT*, pp. 32-33.

know it."¹

If indeed, the Psalms Scroll is simply a liturgical collection, the presence of the psalm titles in thirteen of the Biblical psalms used is even more significant. It would indicate that the compiler considered the titles an integral part of the text which should not be left out, even though they did not apply specifically to the liturgical purpose of the collection.

Unfortunately, many of the psalms contained in 11PQs^a are "orphan psalms" or are missing the first verse and therefore, are irrelevant to the present study. However there are fourteen of the psalms which can be compared to the MT (see Appendix A). Eleven of these have essentially the same titles as the MT (Pss. 121, 122, 126, 127, 129, 130, 133, 138, 140, 143, and 145).² The only substantial differences are found in Psalm 144 where ל ד ו ד is omitted from 11QP^a and in Psalms 104 and 123 where ל ד ו ד is added.

It should also be noted that two of the apocryphal psalms contain headings. Psalm 151A is designated: הלל ויהי
ל ד ו ד בן ישי, "A Hallelujah of David the Son of Jesse;"
and Psalm 151B begins: תחלת גב[]רה ל[] יד משמשחו נביא
אלוהים, "At the beginning of David's power after

¹Patrick W. Skehan, "The Biblical Scrolls from Qumran and the Text: of the Old Testament" *BA* 23 (September 1965):100.

²Two minor differences involving one letter are found in Psalms 121 and 145.

of God had anointed him."¹ Neither one of these titles can be described as characteristic of the Biblical titles. This may be an indication that they were written much later than the Biblical psalms which may be why they were never included in the MT though they are found in the LXX.

Manuscripts from Other Areas

There have been two other texts or fragments of a text discovered in the Dead Sea area. The first of these which dates to the latter half of the first century A.D. was found in the Nahal Hever region and contains the end of Psalm 15 and the title of Psalm 16 as it appears in the MT.²

The second is a much larger manuscript portion from Masada containing Psalm 81:3-85:10 in the same order and with the same titles as the MT.³ Yadin has given a first century A.D. date for this manuscript as well.⁴

These manuscripts along with the Psalter texts from Qumran show that the psalm titles were respected as a vital part of the canonical psalms in the first century A.D. and even as far back as the second century B.C. The essential agreement of these texts with the MT as far as the titles

¹Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll*, pp. 88-89.

²Y. Yadin, "Expedition D," *IEJ* 11 (1961):40.

³Y. Yadin, "The Excavation of Masada - 1963/1964, Preliminary Report," *IEJ* 15 (1965):104.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 103.

are concerned tends to confirm the great antiquity of the titles as a part of the established OT text.

Ancient Versions

LXX

The Greek translation of the Psalter has for some proven a valuable source of evidence in favor of the authenticity of the psalm titles, while for others it has been used as evidence against their authenticity. The problem for the latter group is in the fact that the LXX while basically presenting a literal translation of the psalms themselves has taken the liberty to make changes in the psalm titles. This has been interpreted to mean that the translators did not have the same respect for the titles as they did for the psalms themselves.¹ However, as the critical text of the LXX is examined it is discovered that these differences have been greatly exaggerated.

In Rahlfs' edition of the Greek Psalter one finds an essential agreement with the traditional Hebrew text except that there are several additions.² These additions involve: adding David as the author of thirteen anonymous psalms (33, 43, 71, 91, 93-99, 104, and 137), adding Haggai and Zachariah to Psalms 146-148, plus several additions of

¹Eiselen, *The Psalms*, p. 44.

²Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta*, 9th ed., 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935).

liturgical or historical notes.¹

R. D. Wilson who has done extensive research into the different Greek manuscripts and secondary versions of the LXX Psalter summarizes his work as follows:

The Greek Septuagint omits one author mentioned in the Hebrew, and one Greek manuscript or another adds the author's name in about 20 cases. Most of this testimony of the variations of the manuscripts of the Septuagint from the Hebrew is rendered doubtful by the fact that one or more of the ancient versions from the Septuagint are found in almost every case to differ from the Greek original as preserved in B and A and to agree with the Hebrew original.²

This seems to suggest as Pietersma has shown that there are many inner-Greek additions to the titles of Rahlfs editions of the LXX which almost certainly do not rest on a Hebrew *Vorlage*.³ The fact that in some cases there is near unanimous manuscript witness for these extra--MT titles "may mean no more than that the ever expanding Davidic tradition totally eclipsed all other witnesses."⁴

Kooij, meanwhile, attributes at least some of the extra-MT titles to the influence of a Palestinian origin of the LXX Psalter. Thus, he seems to imply that the additions were original with the translators themselves or taken from liturgical notations which had been added to the Hebrew

¹For a complete listing of all the variations in the various LXX manuscripts and secondary versions see Wilson, "The Headings of the Psalms," pp. 380-89.

²Ibid., p. 391.

³Albert Pietersma, "David in the Greek Psalms," *VT* 30 (April 1980): 225-26.

⁴Ibid., p. 219.

manuscripts.¹

Having responded briefly to the problems raised by the LXX psalm titles a word needs to be said concerning their value. As DeWette has pointed out in response to those who argue against the genuineness of the titles on the basis of the LXX, the titles were translated by the LXX translators.² That means then that their existence goes back well before the second century B.C. when the Psalter was translated into Greek. Furthermore, in looking at some of the nonsensical translations of some titles, it appears that the translators respected the titles enough as part of the various psalms that rather than omitting them it was better to at least attempt to translate them.

The Aramaic Targum

Wilson has also done an extensive study of the various editions of the Targums. He concludes that the Hebrew text they used for their translation of the headings must have been the same one that is available today.³ He also notes that the translators must have had a great reverence for the text of the titles because of the "ludicrous"

¹Arie Van Der Kooij, "On the Place of origin of the Old Greek of Psalms," *VT* 33 (January 1983):73-74.

²DeWette, "Introduction to the Psalms," trans. J. Torrey, *The Biblical Repository* 3 (July 1833):468-69.

³Wilson, "The Headings of the Psalms," p. 373.

results of their efforts to be accurate in the translation.¹

The Syriac Peshitto

It is in the Syriac Peshitto that a significant variation of the psalm titles occurs. Bloemendaal points out that in the manuscripts and printed editions of the Peshitto the psalms are "either without titles or have titles which differ completely from those in the Hebrew and Greek texts."² It appears that the original translators may have left them out and that they were subsequently replaced by others. No one knows for sure why they were left out originally.

Wilson suggests that it was because of the influence of the school of Antioch represented by Theodore of Mop-suestia and Theodoret that the Peshitto departed from the Hebrew text in the case of the psalm titles.³ He then goes on to cite several passages from the writings of both of these men to show that the titles were present in both the Hebrew and Greek texts of their day and should not be ignored.⁴ Wilson's conclusion, then, is that the headings were omitted for liturgical, dogmatic, or utilitarian

¹Ibid.

²William Bloemendaal, *The Headings of the Psalms in the East Syriac Church* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), p. 1.

³Wilson, "The Headings of the Psalms," p. 377; Bloemendall, *The Headings of the Psalms*, p. 12, agrees with this view.

⁴Wilson, "The Headings of the Psalms," pp. 377-79.

reasons and replaced by other headings considered to be more edifying.¹

It is thus, unfair to use the Syriac Peshitto as an argument against the antiquity of the titles. Nor is there any real proof that the Hebrew text from which the translation was made did not contain the titles.

In addition to the above versions, Wilson has evaluated the Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus and Teodotian from the second century, and Jerome's Latin translation from the late fourth century.² He has found that they always agree with the Hebrew in the titles except in one case in Symmachus and Theodotian.³

The predominate agreement of the ancient Hebrew manuscripts and ancient versions of the Psalter with regards to the titles is a strong argument in favor of the antiquity and genuineness of the titles. From the second century B.C. on, all the evidence shows a genuine respect for the titles as an integral part of the Psalter text.

Linguistic Evidence for their Antiquity

Another convincing argument for attributing an early date to the psalm titles--perhaps even pre-exilic times--is the difficulty which the early translators had in translating

¹Ibid., pp. 379-80.

²Ibid., pp. 373-75.

³Ibid., pp. 390-91.

some of the terms. It appears that by the time the LXX was translated in the second or third century B.C. the meaning of some of the terms had already become obscure, indicating a lengthy period of disuse in order for them to be forgotten.

A prime example of this phenomena is found in the early translations of the term **לְמַנְצֵל** which occurs fifty-five times in the titles. Today it is generally understood to mean "for the director of music" (NIV), based upon the usage of the root **נצַל** in the Chronicler.¹ However, in the LXX version of the titles it is translated **εἰς τὸ τέλος**, "unto the end" or "forever," as if it were **לְנַצַל**. Meanwhile in Habakkuk 3:19 the LXX translates **לְמַנְצֵל** as **τοῦ νικῆσαι**.

A quick look at some of the other ancient versions shows that the confusion over the meaning of **לְמַנְצֵל** was not just a local problem to the translators in Alexandria. The Targums give the translation **לְשִׁבְחָא**, "to praise." Aquila Symmachus, Theodotian and Jerome read **τῷ νικοποιῶ**, "to the conquest-maker;" **ἐπινίκιος**, "of victory;" **εἰς τὸ νῆκος**, "for the victory;" and victory, "victor" respectively.² In each case the translators attempted to render

¹Mowinckel would disagree with this interpretation. In *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2:212, he takes it to mean "for the merciful disposition (of Yahweh)" or "to dispose (Yahweh) to mercy" as if the psalm was designed to propitiate Yahweh.

²B. D. Eerdmans, *The Hebrew Book of Psalms*, OTS 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1947), p. 54.

as near as possible a literal translation of the title; but because the word had gone into disuse years before, the meaning had been lost.

Besides the term **לְמִנְצֵחַ** there are several other liturgical and literary features given in the titles whose meanings have been lost. In some cases their meaning is still a matter of conjecture even as they were in the time of the early translations.

As to when or how the meanings were lost it is impossible to say for sure. Eerdmans has suggested that following the exile (during which the temple singers could not practice, Ps. 137:4) when the musicians returned to Jerusalem they had to seek other work and even though there was a brief revival of the temple music under Ezra it did not last. Thus, the liturgical use of the psalms as it was practiced in the first temple never really took hold and the meanings of several technical terms were lost.¹

The antiquity of the titles is also supported by the fact that the language of the titles reflects the early Hebrew writings rather than late. It would be expected that if the titles were late additions they might use words borrowed from Aramaic or Greek such as the terms for musical instruments in Daniel 3.² Yet in the titles a large proportion of the words are not found in later Hebrew or in any

¹Ibid., pp. 46-48.

²John F. A. Sawyer, "An Analysis of the Context and Meaning of the Psalm-Headings," *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society* 22 (1967-1968):26.

Aramaic dialect.¹ According to Wilson's Analysis, "the roots of many of these words have closer analogies in Babylonian than in any other language."²

The linguistical evidence would thus seem to suggest that the origin of these titles must go back at least to the time of Ezra and very possibly much earlier. If this is the case it is very probable that they were a part of the prophetic tradition and therefore have rightfully been preserved in the Biblical text.

Literary Evidence for Their Antiquity

It is well-known by Biblical scholars that the Old Testament was not written in a vacuum. While it is true that the theology of the Hebrews was unique, their writing style and expressions were often analogous to that of their ancient Near Eastern neighbors. Such an analogy can be seen in the case of the psalm titles. Thirtle mentions that tablets and cylinders have been found from Mesopotamia containing hymns and prayers with both superscriptions and subscriptions: the superscriptions giving the author and the subscript lines intimating that the document was a temple copy of a state original.³

¹R. D. Wilson, *A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament*, revised by Edward J. Young (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), p. 154.

²Ibid.

³James William Thirtle, *Old Testament Problems* (London: Henry Frowde, 1907), p. 83.

In addition to these pieces of comparative literature from without, there are also both Biblical and non-Biblical compositions from within Israel. Together they show that the practice of attaching either a heading or a colophon to a piece of literature was in vogue in pre-exilic times at the time the various psalms were composed or earlier.

Biblical Examples

The best-known Biblical example (if such a title outside the Psalter comes from 2 Samuel 22:1. Here the narrative introduces the following psalm attributing it to David at the time when Yahweh delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. This is significant because the psalm which follows is also recorded as Psalm 18 in the Psalter with essentially the same title. The only difference is that in Psalm 18 the style is characteristically "title style" (לְמִנְצַחַּ לְעֶבֶד יְהוָה לְדָוִד . . .), whereas in 2 Samuel 22 it is narrative style (לְיְהוָה . . . נִיְדָבָר דָּוִד). The Samuel Text then confirms the validity of the Psalm 18 title as well as sets a precedent for identifying the author and occasion of such writings as being pre-exilic.

From the Pentateuch written in the fifteenth century B.C. comes the example of Moses' song in Exodus 15:1 and Miriam's song in Exodus 15:21. In both instances the author or singers are identified. Further examples from the books of Samuel include Hannah's prayer (1 Sam. 2:1) which is set in poetic form, and David's lament from 2 Samuel 1.

There are also two key examples from the seventh and

eighth century prophets Habakkuk and Isaiah. In Isaiah 38:9, Isaiah introduces the psalm of Hezekiah with these words which are in characteristic "title style," **מִכְתָּב לְהִזְקִיָּהוּ מֶלֶךְ-** **יְהוּדָה בְּחַלְתּוֹ וַיְחִי מִחֶלְיוֹ**. Then in Habakkuk 3 both a superscription and a colophon are given to Habakkuk's prayer. The superscription reads: **תְּפִלָּה לְחַבְּקוּק הַנְּבִיא עַל שְׂגִינּוֹת**; and the colophon: **לְמַנְצָח בְּנְגִינּוֹתַי**.

After studying the above examples in relation to the psalm titles, Tur-Sinai came to the conclusion that the psalms were originally part of an historical narrative. Consequently, the psalm titles merely represent a portion of that narrative. This would imply then to him that there is an element of truth in the psalm titles, though in some cases the psalms attributed to David may just be poetical enlargements of David's sayings.¹ Such a theory is very unlikely to be proven true, but the psalms set in the narratives of Scripture with appropriate titles or introductions do establish the fact that other Biblical psalms from pre-exilic times had comparable titles.

A Hebrew Inscription

In addition to the Biblical examples of superscriptions outside the Psalter there has recently been discovered at Khirbet el Qom an inscription in one of the tombs which contains both a superscription and a colophon to what is

¹N. H. Tur-Sinai, "The Literary Character of the Book of Psalms," *OTS* 8 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1950), p. 265.

These subscriptions give at times the author, purpose, god addressed, tune, musical instruments, and other notes similar to those found in the Psalter.¹ There are even technical classifications of psalms in these colophons such as *balbale*, *adab*, *tigi*, and *sagarru* whose meanings are unknown today.² These classifications are comparable to the Hebrew Miktam, Maskil and Shiggion.

In the liturgical hymn to Sin the colophon gives some liturgical instructions identifying the melody and instrument by which it was to be accompanied. Langdon gives the following translation: "It is a *sagar* melody. Sung on the flute to Sin."³ In a liturgy to Enlil the colophon reads: "A prayer for the brick walls of Ekur, that it return to its place. A Song of Supplication."⁴ Here the purpose of the hymn is given. An example of one which identifies the author is the colophon from another hymn to Enlil which reads in part: "Copy from Barsippa, according to its original, written and collated. Tablet of Beliksur son of Belishkunni son of Iddin-Papsukkal worshipper of Nebo."⁵

¹Wilson, *A Scientific Investigation*, p. 141.

²Kitchen, "The OT in Its Context," p. 12.

³Stephen Langdon, *Sumerian Liturgies and Psalms* (Philadelphia: Published by The University Museum, 1919), p. 279.

⁴Ibid., p. 308.

⁵Ibid., p. 329. For further examples of colophons in Sumerian literature see James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. with supplement (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 496, 637-45, 579-82.

While the latter may be a librarian's note, it nevertheless shows the desire of the ancients to preserve such information in the form of notes either at the beginning or end of the psalm.

Several of the Egyptian hymns and prayers from the second millennium B.C. also contain such information as author, god addressed and occasion.¹ This information is usually contained in an introductory statement which in some cases is rather lengthy. They are not really comparable to the psalm titles except for the fact that these Egyptian hymns do sometimes have the author identified and/or the occasion.

The analogy has also been drawn by Sawyer between the psalm titles and the Akkadian ritual texts dating from the third century B.C. He notes that these ritual text contain a combination of some or all of the following elements:

- the cultic occasion when the composition is to be uttered;
- the official appointed to utter it;
- the type of composition (prayer, incantation, lamentation);
- the title of the composition;
- the instrument(s) to accompany it;
- the mode of utterance (singing, reciting).²

While all of these elements (except for the last) are found in the psalm titles, it may be significant that there is no indication of author or historical background in the

¹Ibid., pp. 365-81.

²Sawyer, "An Analysis of the Psalm-Headings," pp. 28-29.

Akkadian texts. Sawyer suggests that this might be because these two elements belong to a non-cultic background.¹

It should also be noted with regard to this analogy that some of these texts were copied from older Babylonian texts.² Consequently, the analogy should not be taken to imply a late date for the psalm titles.

In addition to the presence of titles and colophons in the psalms of other ancient Near Eastern peoples as far back as the third millennium B.C. there is also ample evidence for the need of such notes. Sarna points out that as early as the third millennium B.C. professional singers and musicians were a part of the temple personnel in both Mesopotamia and Egypt.³ All of these analogies at least show the possibility that the psalm titles could come from the period of David.

It appears from the evidence thus far presented that the psalm titles are indeed very old. There is no evidence from the standpoint of textual criticism which goes back to the second or third century B.C. that there was ever a time when they were not considered a part of the text of Scripture. The nonsensical translations of certain words in the

¹Ibid., p. 29.

²Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 334. For the full text of these see pp. 331-45.

³N. M. Sarna, "The Psalm Superscriptions and the Guilds," in *Studies in Jewish Religions and Intellectual History*, ed. Siegfried Stein and Raphael Loewe (Alabama: University of Alabama, 1979), p. 287.

titles of the LXX would indicate that at the time of translation they were already "hoary with age." Furthermore, the analogy from other writings both Biblical and non-Biblical shows that the use of titles or colophons to give the type of information contained in the titles was certainly not unknown in the time when the psalms were written.

While age alone does not guarantee that the titles are authentic, it, certainly increases the possibility. A careful study of the titles themselves in the context of the Biblical revelation will determine whether or not they are credible witnesses of all that they claim.

CHAPTER III

THE CREDIBILITY OF THE TITLES

The principle reason for rejecting the psalm titles among the critics of the old critical school was that the titles attributed many psalms to David. According to their theory of the development of religion, David was a man of his age--primitive both ethically and morally--and therefore, unable to write the kind of material found in the Davidic Psalms.¹ As Driver writes concerning these psalms "they express an intensity of religious devotion, a depth of spiritual insight, and a maturity of theological reflection, beyond what we should expect from David or David's age."²

However, with the discovery of both the Dead Sea Scrolls and a fully developed hymnody with similar vocabulary and form which was in vogue in David's time, this attitude toward the psalm titles has changed. The trend in many cases has been to retain the titles as they are but to reinterpret them, at least in the matter of authorship. Thus, it will be necessary in discussing the credibility of the titles to establish first of all the meaning of the terms

¹Smith, *The Psalms Translated*, pp. 243-45.

²Driver, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 377.

which have traditionally been interpreted as designations of authors. Once it has been established that these terms are designations of authorship, a defense of their credibility and that of the accompanying historical notices will be given.

The Designation of Authorship in the Titles

In the Massoretic Psalter there are a total of one hundred psalms which are ascribed to authors by prefixing the authors' names with the preposition לְ. Seventy-three of these are attributed to David, twelve to Asaph, eleven to the Sons of Korah (including Psalm 88, which is also ascribed to Heman the Ezrahite), two to Solomon, and one each to Moses and Ethan the Ezrahite.

Problems Relating to Interpretation

One of the major problems in understanding the psalm titles is the ambiguity of the terms which are used especially as it relates to the designation of authorship.

First of all there is the problem of how the לְ which prefixes a personal name is to be understood. Then, closely associated with that is the question concerning the meaning attached to the proper names.

The Usage of לְ

Since there are several different usages of the preposition לְ, its meaning must ultimately be determined by context. Unfortunately with many of the psalm titles there

is not sufficient context to determine the meaning. The result is that many different views have arisen concerning its meaning in the psalm titles.

Possession

In some instances the preposition לְ prefixed to a personal name denotes possession and can be translated, "belonging to."¹ This usage is not only found in Scripture, but is also quite common in seal inscriptions. Several of these seals have been found in Palestine dating in the pre-exilic period.² For the most part they contain the owner's inscribed design with his name prefixed by לְ indicating that he is the owner of the seal. Thus, in some cases at least, when the construction לְ prefixed to a personal name stood alone it denoted possession.

Dative

The dative usage of לְ translated "to" or "for" is the most common in Biblical Hebrew.³ This is the usage which the cult-functional school of interpretation applied to the psalm titles. Mowinckel the leading scholar in that

¹BDB, p. 513.

²Examples of these seal inscriptions can be found in N. Avigad, "The Priest of Dor," *IEJ* 25 (1975):101; Carl Graesser Jr., "The Seal of Elijah," *BASOR* 220 (December 1975):63-66; Herbert G. May, "Seal of Elamar," *AJSL* 52 (1936):197; and M. Heltzer, "Some North-west Semitic Epigraphic Gleanings from the XI-VI Centuries b.C.," *Institute Universitario Orientale* 31 (1971):183-92.

³BDB, pp. 510-11.

regard says that לְדָוִד means "for David" indicating that the psalm was composed and designed for the Davidic king to use in the festival cult as he represented the people.¹

The preposition לְ is used this way in the titles in some instances (לְמִנְצִיחַ) but not with the personal names. In fact its usage in this way with לְמִנְצִיחַ occurring in the same titles as לְדָוִד , לְאַסָּף or לְבְנֵי־קַנְחָה helps to rule out the possibility of the dative sense for לְ with a proper name in the titles.

In a slightly different mode of thought Terrien opting for the dative usage of לְ suggests that לְדָוִד should be taken to mean "Psalm dedicated to David," or "Psalm written in the name of David."² This view has received little attention and finds no support in the psalms themselves.

The dative sense of לְ is also used in the LXX which consistently translates לְדָוִד , $\tau\omega\ \Delta\alpha\upsilon\iota\delta$ in the Psalm titles. However, Pietersma has pointed out that in the process of textual transmission $\tau\omega\ \Delta\alpha\upsilon\iota\delta$ was frequently changed to $\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \Delta\alpha\upsilon\iota\delta$ with the apparent purpose of clarifying Davidic authorship.³ The usage of the dative in the LXX is probably best explained by the efforts of the

¹Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2:98.

²Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms and Their Meaning for Today* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1952), p. 32.

³Pietersma, "David in the Greek Psalms," p. 225.

translators to give a literal translation.

Subject or Serial.

A third possible usage of 𐤀 in the titles finds support from the notes which appear at the top of the clay tablets from Ugarit. Some of these tablets which contain epic poems have the name of the hero prefixed by the Ugaritic preposition which is equivalent to 𐤀 (1-Aqht, 1-Krt and 1-B'1). In some cases the hero is a god (Baal) so it cannot be an indication of authorship. Most likely it is designed to identify the subject and should be translated "concerning Aqhat," or "pertaining to Aqhat."¹ Another possibility suggested by Sabourin is that these headings indicate the "cycle" or literary serial to which the compositions are attributed.²

The possibility that the 𐤀 may denote the subject of the psalm may be ruled out in that it does not fit many of the psalms in which the only subject is Yahweh. There is the possibility, however, that the 𐤀 could indicate the literary serial or collection from which the psalm was taken. If this is the case, however, the basis for the psalm being in that collection is easier explained in terms of authorship rather than subject or function as would be the case at Ugarit.

¹Kitchen, "The OT in Its Context," p. 13.

²Sabourin, *The Psalms*, p. 14.

Genitive of Authorship

The most widely held view of the usage of לְ in the Psalm titles down through the years has been that it is a *lamed auctoris*. Gesenius supports this meaning in the psalm titles by noting that in other semitic dialects, especially Arabic, this is a customary idiom.¹

That this is a possible meaning for לְ can also be seen from the use of לְ in Ugaritic where both מִן and לְ can mean "from" or "by."² Normally, in Hebrew, one would expect to find the preposition מִן when the sense of "by" or "from" is intended. However, in Ugaritic (a predecessor of the Hebrew language) the preposition מִן was unknown. Either מִן or לְ was used instead. Thus, even after מִן was introduced into Biblical Hebrew the prepositions מִן and לְ continued in many cases to retain the meaning "from."³

The genitive use of לְ in the psalm titles is well-attested among scholars but many are reluctant to call it a genitive of authorship. Holladay for instance, simply refers to it as a genitive of relationship similar to its usage in I Kings 5:15 (Heb.) where Hiram is called a friend

¹William Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. and enlarged by E. Kautzsch. 2nd English ed. revised from the 28th German ed. by A. E. Cowley (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1910), par. 129.

²Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook in Analecta Orientalia* 38 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1965), p. 42.

³Sabourin, *The Psalms*, p. 14.

of David (אֲהַב הַיְהוָה הַיָּרֵם לְדָוִד).¹ Various interpretations have consequently arisen concerning the meaning of such expressions as לְדָוִד and לְאַסָּף based upon different interpretations of the proper name.

While it is true that each independent usage of לְ with a personal name in the titles cannot be proven to be a reference to authorship, it can be shown that at least some of them do. It is only logical then to assume that with the consistency with which לְ is used with personal names in the titles that the same meaning should be attached in each case unless there is sufficient proof to the contrary.

The usage of the *lamed auctoris* is found in two instances outside the Book of Psalms which are not questioned. In Isaiah 38 the psalm of Hezekiah is introduced as מִכְתָּב לְהִזְקִיָּהוּ, "the writing of Hezekiah." In this case the context clearly indicates that Hezekiah was the author. Likewise Habakkuk 3:1 introduces a prayer which is authored by Habakkuk with the words תְּפִלָּה לְהַבְּקֻק הַנְּבִיא, "a prayer of Habakkuk the prophet."

Assuming that each part of a psalm title was written at the same time, the historical occasions connected with thirteen Davidic psalms show that the לְ was intended to indicate authorship. In fact two of these historical notes claim that David sang or spoke the words of the psalm on a

¹William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 169.

given occasion (Psalms 7 and 18). The clear implication is that whoever wrote these historical notices understood לַדָּוִד to indicate authorship.

Additional proof for this meaning is supplied by the colophon at the end of Book II (Ps. 72:20). Here it is stated that the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended. This colophon follows the benediction of Psalm 72:18-19 which concludes Book II of the Psalter. Thus, the colophon has been understood to refer to all of the psalms in Books I and II. This raises some additional problems especially since the last psalm in Book II--Psalm 72 is given the title לְשִׁלְמֹה. There are also some psalms in this part of the Psalter attributed to the sons of Korah and Asaph. The majority of them however, are designated לַדָּוִד and would fit the general description of "the prayers of David son of Jesse."

One other example in which לַדָּוִד refers to the author may be found in the inscription from Khirbet el Qom (see above p. 32). The fourth line, according to Miller, is part of a colophon referring to the scribe or author of the inscription using the phrase l'nyhw, "by Oniyahu."¹ There is also the possibility that a ל stood before the initial name Uriyahu and that he may have been the author since it is identified as his inscription.² Certainly there is ample

¹Miller, "Psalms and Inscriptions," p. 315.

²Ibid.

evidence to show that the *lamed auctoris* is a valid possibility in the psalms and that the לְ with a personal name was intended at least in some instances to identify the author.

The Usage of Proper Names

Along with the multiplicity of meanings attributed to the לְ have come several different interpretations of the names contained in the titles. For instance דָּוִד בֶּן יֵשׁוּעַ has been interpreted as David the son of Jesse, the Davidic king, or the Davidic collection. Likewise, the names Asaph and the sons of Korah have been understood as the names of musical guilds rather than the individuals. The rest of the names (Moses, Solomon, Heman and Ethan) have for the most part been accepted at face value.

David

Davidic King. One of the views concerning דָּוִד בֶּן יֵשׁוּעַ as it occurs in the titles is that it refers to the Davidic king--not necessarily David himself but any king from the house of David.¹ This understanding of David is based in part upon some of the prophetic references in Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel² in which the prophets anticipate the time when the people of Israel will once again "serve the

¹Weiser, *The Psalms*, p. 96; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2:98.

²Hos. 3:5; Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23; 37:24.

their God and David their king."¹ However, the prophetic passages refer specifically to the Messiah not just any Davidic king.

Commander. A somewhat similar view of the meaning of דָּוִד based upon the Mari texts is to translate it as "commander."² In the Mari texts the word *dawidum* at first was interpreted as "general" or "commander," but as Kitchen points out it was later discovered that *dawidum* was actually linked to the Babylonian word *dabдум* meaning "defeat."³ Needless to say the view is no longer held by any reputable scholars.

Davidic Collection. A view that is generally accepted by modern scholars is that דָּוִד לְדָוִד refers to the collection of psalms from which these psalms were taken. It is presumed that the collection may have had דָּוִד or דָּוִד לְדָוִד as the title for the entire collection. Such a theory does not rule out the possibility that some or all of the seventy-three Davidic psalms may have been authored by David, but in many cases this view is adopted as an alternative to authorship for some psalms.⁴

¹A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 1 in New Century Bible (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Inc., 1972), p. 44.

²Ibid.

³K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient orient and Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1966), pp. 84-85.

⁴This is evident in Oesterley's discussion of דָּוִד לְדָוִד . W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms* (London: S. P. C. K., 1953), p. 10.

The fact that this theory cannot be completely rejected is apparent from the corresponding use of לְבָנֵי־קֹרַח. It is unrealistic to assume that each of the psalms so designated were collectively authored by Korah's sons. The title is better taken to mean that these psalms originated among the sons of Korah and belonged to a collection by that name.¹ Even if לְדָוִד is taken to be a reference to the collection by that title it must ultimately indicate that David authored the psalms in that collection.

King David. The view that King David was the author of these psalms finds ample support in the rest of Scripture. In the historical books David is pictured as a man with great musical ability. Second Samuel 23:1 labels him as the "sweet psalmist of Israel." He was chosen to play his harp before King Saul because of his expertise in that area (1 Sam. 16:16-23). Some of his compositions are even recorded in the historical narrative of 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles (2 Sam. 1:17-27; 3:33-34; 22:1-51; 23:1-7; 1 Chr. 16:7-36; 29:10-13). In fact the psalm attributed to David in 1 Samuel 22 is the same one attributed to him in Psalm 18. It is also ironic that Psalm 95 and parts of Psalms 105 and 106 are contained in the composition attributed to David in 1 Chronicles 16, yet, none of them have titles identifying them as Davidic. Certainly if the titles were the work of later editors they would not have missed the obvious.

¹Bullock, *An Introduction to Poetic Books*, p. 125.

David also indicates in 2 Samuel 23:1-2 that he had received a special anointing from God to sing and proclaim God's Word in song. This fact is confirmed by the NT words of Jesus and the apostles. The following list shows the number of places in the NT where parts of a psalm are quoted and in the context David is identified as the author.

Psalm 2--Acts 4:25-26

Psalm 16--Acts 2:25-28

Psalm 32--Romans 4:6.8

Psalm 69--Acts 1:16-20; Romans 11:9-10

Psalm 95--Hebrews 4:7

Psalm 109--Acts 1:20

Psalm 110---Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36-37; Luke 20:42-44;
Acts 2:34

In all but two instances (Psalms 2 and 95) the titles of those psalms contain דָּוִד , indicating that Christ and the apostles understood it to be an indication of David's authorship and affirmed that assertion to be true.

The other two psalms which the NT attributes to David are anonymous in the Hebrew Bible.¹ Some have taken this to be an indication that the NT writers were simply following the view of their contemporaries that David was the author of the entire Psalter.² In response to this

¹It should be noted that the LXX, which the writer of Hebrews uses, does attribute Psalm 95 to David and in some manuscripts of the LXX Psalm 2 is also attributed to him. The inspired witness of the NT writers would indicate that at least some of the additional titles found in the LXX are based upon an authentic tradition.

²Briggs, *Commentary on Psalms*, pp. lv-lvi; Josephus considered David the author of the entire Psalter--Flavius Josephus, *The Works Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whiston, vol. 2: *Antiquities of the Jews I-VII* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), pp. 465-66.

Payne has pointed out that no psalm which claims other authorship, or contains later historical allusions (e.g. Ps. 137) is ever attributed in Scripture to King David.¹ This is noteworthy in light of the fact that there are over sixty psalms quoted or alluded to in the NT.

Whether the intent of the writer who placed the titles at the head of the psalms was to indicate author or collection the ultimate conclusion, based on the rest of the Biblical evidence is that the psalms so designated were authored by King David.

The Levitical Musicians

While David is the most prominent author listed in the psalm titles, the Levitical musicians also made a significant contribution to the Psalter. According to the titles; twelve psalms are assigned to Asaph, eleven to the sons of Korah, and one each to Heman and Ethan. As was the case with לְמִנְחָה there is considerable disagreement over whom or what the names are intended to designate.

The individuals named in these titles are generally understood to be contemporaries of King David. According to the Chronicler; Asaph, Heman and Ethan were assigned by David as the leaders of music in the house of the Lord (1 Chr. 6:31-46; 15:16-19; 16:31-42; 25:1-8), and the sons of Korah were assigned to be gatekeepers (1 Chr. 9:17-19;

¹Payne, "Psalms, Book of," p. 927.

26:1-19). While it is true that in some cases the psalms fit well the time and character of David's contemporaries, it is also true that there are some glaring anachronisms which have caused some like Perowne to discount the possibility of all the titles being trustworthy.¹

These anachronisms have led other scholars to the conclusion that these names do not refer to individuals but rather to musical guilds named after the prominent leaders from David's day. These guilds which were a common feature of both secular and religious society in the ancient Near East often followed a familial pattern of organization. Sarna points out that it was not uncommon for certain skills to stay in the same family generation after generation.²

Evidence for such family guilds is found in the Chronicler and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. According to 1 Chronicles 25, David together with the commanders of the army set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals. The sons who were appointed were under the supervision of their respective fathers. In the case of Asaph's descendants at least, this skill and responsibility remained in the family clear up until the time of Ezra (Ezra 2:41; 3:10; Neh. 11:17, 22; 12:35, 46).

However, there are some problems with simply

¹Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 1:96-97.

²Sarna, "The Psalms Superscriptions," p. 287.

interpreting אֲסָפִי as a reference to the guild named after Asaph. Other suggestions have been given as to the interpretation of אֲסָפִי as well as the other titles in this group.

Asaph. It is in these Asaphite psalms that the anachronisms are most evident if David's contemporary Asaph is taken to be the author. For example, both Psalms 74 and 79 are psalms of lament over the complete destruction of Jerusalem and its sanctuary; an event which did not take place until the destruction of 586 B.C. Likewise, Payne has suggested that Psalm 83 is more suitable to the ministry of the Asaphite Jahaziel in 825 B.C. than to David's contemporary (cf. Ps. 83:5-7 and 2 Chro. 20:1, 2, 14).¹

If it is maintained that Asaph is the author of these psalms, then they must be understood to be prophetic psalms intended for use in the troublesome times that Asaph foresaw by the Spirit of God. Spurgeon mentions this possibility and sees no difficulty with it.² In fact Asaph was known as a seer (נִיִּין) who had recorded words suitable for praise in the temple worship (2 Chr. 29:30). However, the form is quite uncharacteristic of predictive prophecy elsewhere in Scripture. The lament in both Psalms 74 and 79 is from one who has personally experienced the disaster and not just seen it from a distance.

¹Payne, "Psalms, Book of," p. 928.

²Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 2:272.

Another possibility is that they were composed by another Asaph at a much later date either during or after the exile. Delitzsch points out that in Barhebraeus' commentary on Job and in his *Chronikon* several traditions are referred to "Asaph the Hebrew priest, the brother of Ezra the writer of the Scriptures."¹ Support for such a tradition is still wanting.

The view which is the most tenable, though not without its problems, is that לְאָסָף indicates the family or guild from which the psalm originated.² Perowne rejects this view because it makes the sons of Asaph guilty of literary imposture since לְאָסָף in a title would customarily designate authorship.³ It may be further questioned in that the post-exilic writers refer to the members of the Asaphite family or guild as the בְּנֵי־אָסָף (2 Chr. 35:15; Ezra 2:41; 3:10; Neh. 11:22). The question that is raised is this: if the Korahite psalms are designated לְבְנֵי־קֹרַח in the titles, why are not the Asaphite guild psalms designated in a similar manner?

The discrepancies between the titles and the post-exilic writers in this regard may not be that significant,

¹F. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 1, trans. Francis Bolton in *Commentary on the old Testament*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), p. 12.

²R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), p. 979.

³Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 1:96-97.

for the Chronicler also differs from the psalm titles by referring to the sons of Korah as Korahites rather than **בְּנֵי־קֹרַח**. In reality this is just another evidence that neither the superscriptions or the Chronicler are dependent upon each other. Sarna has carried this analysis one step further to show that they both in turn contrast strongly with the realities of the restoration period as recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. His conclusion is that "Psalms and Chronicles must both represent genuine preexilic, if irreconcilable traditions."¹

Another version of this view which associates the Asaph psalms with the musical guild is that **אֶסָפִי** designates the Asaphite collection or repertoire of hymns from which the psalm was taken. This collection may have been compiled and named after Asaph with more psalms added by his descendants in later years.²

A similar view suggested by Briggs is that the Asaph psalms were originally collected by an editor, not on the basis of authorship or guild origin, but on the basis of content and purpose.³ Indeed, the psalms do resemble each other in character. Drijvers has characterized Asaph's collection as "more didactic and historical with a strongly

¹Sarna, "The Psalm Superscriptions," pp. 285•-86.

²A. Cohen, *The Psalms in Soncino Books of the Bible* (London: The Soncino Press, 1969), p. 156.

³Briggs, *Commentary on Psalms*, p. lxvi.

prophetic flavour."¹ However, this could easily be accounted for by unity of authorship or guild tradition. Delitzsch attributes some but not all of these twelve psalms to David's contemporary who according to Psalm 78:69 must have lived until the early part of Solomon's reign. The rest, he says, whether they were composed by Asaph's descendants or someone else were added to Asaph's collection because they are modeled after Asaph's psalms.²

For the most part these are "educated guesses" based upon the slightest amount of evidence. It must be admitted that there are some real problems in simply interpreting אָסָף as a single author from the time of David. The problem is best resolved by recognizing the solidarity of the guild family in retaining the name of Asaph their founding father.³

Ethan and Heman. The identification of Heman and Ethan whose names are given in the titles of Psalms 88 and 89 with the added designation "the Ezrahite" attached to each poses some different problems. First of all there is the problem of which Heman and Ethan is intended. Then there is the added confusion caused by the double title of Psalm 88. There both אָסָף וְאֶתְנָן and אֶתְנָן וְאֶתְנָן appear in

¹Pius Drijvers, *The Psalms, Their Structure and Meaning* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), p. 18.

²Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:24.

³This argument could also be used against actual Davidic authorship except for the fact that there is no evidence for a Davidic guild of musicians.

the title.

If $\text{לְהִימָן} \text{בְּנֵי־קֹרַח}$ appeared in the title with just לְהִימָן there would be no problem since the Levite musician Heman was a descendant of Korah (1 Chr. 6:33-37--Heb. vv. 18-22). However, the added designation הָאֲזָרְחָי seems to link Heman and Ethan to the great men of wisdom with whom Solomon was compared in 1 Kings 4:31 (Heb. 5:11). The 1 Kings passage lists these great men of wisdom as Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. The same four names appear again in 1 Chronicles 2:6 as four of the five sons of Zerah of the tribe of Judah. Delitzsch's conclusion from this information is that the title of Psalm 88 contains two different statements concerning the origin of the Psalm which are irreconcilable.¹

In response to Delitzsch's conclusion it may first of all be observed that the sons of Zerah (1 Chr. 2:6) of the tribe of Judah lived in Egypt before the Exodus and need not be the same men mentioned in 1 Kings. In fact the implication of the 1 Kings passage is that these wise men were contemporaries of King Solomon. Secondly, the designation "sons of Mahol" in 1 Kings 4:31 (Heb. 5:11) may actually indicate membership in a musical guild. Albright interprets it to mean "members of the orchestral guild" based on its derivation from the root לָחַל . The meaning of לָחַל is much like that of Greek ὀρχέομαι , "to dance," from which the

¹Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:24.

English word "orchestra" comes.¹ Norman, following a similar thought suggests that it is "an appellative expression meaning 'sons of the dance'"² Thus, the possibility remains open that the Heman and Ethan found in the titles and 1 Kings may also be the musicians mentioned in the Chronicler.

If this is true, the problem with the designation "the Ezrahite" must be explained. Kidner assumes that it is an equivalent of Zerahite, a clan of Judah (1 Chr. 2:6) and that the clan adopted the Levites Heman and Ethan into their membership.³ Albright rejects this identification with Zerah and instead interprets it to mean "members of a pre-Israelite family."⁴ This interpretation is derived from the noun form נְטִיף which means "a native,"⁵ and in Numbers 9:14 is distinguished from both the Israelite and the stranger.

This meaning would suggest that both Heman and Ethan were Canaanite proselytes who were adopted into the Levite tribe so as to be able to use their musical abilities in the worship of Yahweh. Wilson points out that there would be no Scriptural reason against using Canaanite proselytes in the musical guilds so long as they accepted the worship of the

¹Albright, *Archaeology and Israel*, pp. 127, 210.

²*The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Mahol," by J. G. G. Norman.

³Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72* in *The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 35.

⁴Albright, *Archaeology and Israel*, pp. 127, 210.

⁵BDB, p. 280.

true God, Jehovah.¹

Thus, it is best to understand the names Heman and Ethan in the titles as David's musicians who were noted for their wisdom in addition to their musical skills as leaders of their respective guilds. The added ascription of לְבָנֵי־קֹרַח in Psalm 88 may be an indication that Heman's guild was named after Korah rather than himself.

The designation לְאִיתָן in Psalm 89 must be treated in the same way as לְאָסָף (see above), since verses 28-51 describe conditions in Israel much later than Ethan's time.² The other suggestion given by Kidner is that the psalm originally ended with verse 37 and was composed by David's contemporary Ethan.³

The Sons of Korah. There are eleven psalms, including Psalm 88 which are designated לְבָנֵי־קֹרַח by their

¹Clifford Wilson, "The Bible Was Right After All: Part II--David and the Critics." *Bible and Spade* 1 (Spring 1972): 53-54.

²In the book of 1 Chronicles the name Jeduthun replaces Ethan after chapter 16, but both names evidently belong to the same person (cf. 1 Chr. 6:31ff.; 15:17, 19 with 16:37-42; 25:1ff.). The name Jeduthun also occurs in the titles--twice with the preposition עַל־ (Pss. 62, 77) and once as לְיָד יְדִוּן in a Davidic Psalm (Ps. 38). Herbert Gordon May, "'AL. . ." in the Superscriptions of the Psalms," *AJSL* 58 (January-October 1941): 83, suggests that it may refer to the name of a melody rather than a person in the titles. Nahum Sarna in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Psalms, Book of" suggests that it may be a musical instrument.

³Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* in *The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 320.

titles. These include a personal lament (Ps. 88), two communal laments (Pss. 44, 85), four songs of Zion (Pss. 46, 48, 84, 87), two secular-type wisdom psalms (Pss. 45, 49), an enthronement of Yahweh psalm (Ps. 47), and personal psalms relating to the Sanctuary (Pss. 42/43, 84).¹ In the psalms of the last category the author expresses his own personal longing for or attachment to the temple. In fact, Psalm 84:10 indicates that the author was a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord.

This then provides a vital clue to the identification of the "sons of Korah." For in 1 Chronicles 26:1-19 some of the Korahites (descendants of Korah) are appointed to be the gatekeepers of the house of the Lord. This responsibility remained with the family even after the return from the Babylonian exile (1 Chr. 9:17-19; cf. Ezra 2:42; Neh. 7:45) giving evidence of a distinctive group (guild) which persisted for many generations. A part of their group may have been involved in the musical aspect of worship as well, for in 2 Chronicles 20:19 the Korahites are among the Levites who stood up to praise the Lord in the days of Jehoshaphat. Furthermore, it has already been noted that the musical guild leader Heman was also a descendant of Korah. This may be an indication that the **בְּנֵי־קֹרַח** had double duty in the priestly responsibilities of the temple, making them well

¹Martin J. Buss, "The Psalms of Asaph and Korah," *JBL* 82 (December 1963): 382-83.

qualified to compose the quality and type of psalms in this group.

Another theory concerning the "sons of Korah" proposed by Miller is that they were cultic leaders who lived in the area of Hebron and supported the Zion cult and even made occasional pilgrimages there during the period of the Divided Kingdoms.¹ The theory centers around the discovery of an ostrakon with the inscription **בני קרח** from Tel Arad. This ostrakon which was once part of a large bowl with the names of several families or groups listed on it was found in a royal, Yahwistic sanctuary in the ancient royal fortress dating back to the period of the Divided Kingdom.²

While it is possible that some Levite descendants of Korah were assigned to the outpost of Arad and could have written these psalms from there, there is no reason for assuming as Miller does that the Korahites did not reside in Jerusalem until the Chronicler's day. Nor is there any valid reason for assuming that the Edomite (Gen. 36:16), Calebite (1 Chr. 2:42-43), Benjaminite (1 Chr. 3.2:1-6), and Levitical Korahites all represented "the same tribal group which entered southern Palestine from the direction of Edom and settled among the Calebites in the vicinity of Hebron."³

¹J. Maxwell Miller, "The Korahites of Southern Judah," *CBQ* 32 (January 1970): 59, 66-67.

²*Ibid.*, p. 64.

³*Ibid.*, p. 67.

Such an assumption destroys the credibility of the geneo-logical records of the Chronicler.

The references within the Korahite psalms which speak of the writers association with the temple and in particular the gatekeepers of the temple imply that the "sons of Korah" were more than just the collectors of these hymns. Rather these psalms were actually composed by one of the descendants of the notorious Levite who rebelled against Moses and Aaron.

Moses

The meaning of לְמֹשֶׁה has not been a major problem in the area of interpretation since nearly all scholars whether they agree with the title or not take it to be attributing the authorship of Psalm 90 to Moses. For many critics this is impossible and this psalm then is given as a prime illustration of the unreliability of the titles.¹ Anderson calls this title "a late speculation" and concludes that "this and similar ancient guesses imply that the headings of the Psalms must not always be taken at their face value."²

Mowinckel's chief argument against Mosaic authorship of Psalm 90 is that it does not reflect the primitive, collective outlook of those ancient times when Israel was

¹Oesterley, *The Psalms*, p. 18.

²Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, p. 46.

ambitiously intent on conquest. To him the psalm is too individualistic--concerned with the personal interests of a community that knows it is under the wrath of God--rather than looking forward to the fulfillment of God's promises to the nation.¹ However, the psalm is not written simply from Israel's standpoint but from the viewpoint of mankind as a whole standing before God.

From the positive side, there are many similarities between the language of the psalm and that of the Pentateuch written by Moses. Green, who gives an exhaustive list of these, points out that in many cases these coincidences are too subtle to be the work of an imitator, but rather reflect the operation of the same mind.²

Solomon

The identity of **שְׁלֹמֹה** in the titles of Psalm 72 and 127 is certainly understood to be King Solomon. The principle area of controversy is whether the **לְשֹׁלֹמֹה** in Psalm 72 should be translated "by Solomon" in the sense of authorship or "for Solomon" in that Solomon seems to be the subject of the prayer.

That Solomon was well-qualified to write both of these Psalms there is little doubt. First Kings 4:29-34

¹Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2:101-102.

²Green, "The Titles of the Psalms," pp. 491-93; For the answer to some other objections to Mosaic authorship see Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, pp. 641-43.

describes his great wisdom and says that he wrote as many as a thousand and five songs. Psalm 127 especially befits Solomon as a man of wisdom being written in the form of wisdom literature like many of his other writings recorded in the book of Proverbs.¹ Psalm 72 on the other hand reflects some of the experiences of Solomon's life--a prosperous reign, sovereignty over many nations, and receiving gold from Sheba.

Some have argued that Psalm 72 was not written by Solomon but by someone else like David about Solomon. One reason for this is that the prayer seems to have Solomon as the subject, and it would be inappropriate for Solomon to expect the people to use such a prayer prepared by himself on behalf of himself.² In response to this Leupold has shown that the prayer could be Solomon's prayer for his son or a prayer designed to instruct the people how to pray for "the realization of the divinely appointed destiny of his father's house."³ It may be compared to Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 3:6-9.

Another reason for assigning this psalm to David instead of Solomon is due to a misunderstanding of verse 20 which reads: "This concludes the prayers of David son of

¹Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, pp. 890-91.

²Ibid., p. 515.

³Ibid.

Jesse." This statement was not a part of the original psalm. Instead, it is a colophon which appears after the doxology of Book II and summarizes the contents of Books I and II of the Psalter. It was evidently added by the compiler or an editor. The note was designed to recognize David as the chief author of these books; not the only author, since there are also psalms by the sons of Korah and one by Asaph besides this one by Solomon.¹

David as Author

One of the most serious charges leveled against the psalm titles is that they lack credibility in attributing 73 of the 150 psalms to David. As Davis has noted "the moral character of Christ and the Apostles is at stake" if David was not the author of at least the psalms attributed to him in the New Testament (see above p. 48).² In surveying the views of scholars down through history David has always been held in high esteem as a writer of psalms. It is only in relatively recent history that Davidic authorship has been questioned.

Historical Views of David the Psalmist

The earliest extra-Biblical references to David as an author are found in the Apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus

¹Ridner, *Psalms 1-72*, p. 254.

²John J. Davis, "The Psalms, Studies in the Hebrew Test" (Class Syllabus, Grace Theological Seminary, 1977), p. 23.

and 2 Maccabees from the second century B.C. In Ecclesiasticus 47:7-11 David is described as a man of song and praise who organized the musicians for temple worship.¹ Second Maccabees refers to "the works of David" as being among the writings collected by Nehemiah when he founded a library (2 Macc. 2:13).²

The next reference is found in the prose insert in column XXVII of the Psalms Scroll from Qumran Cave 4. The pertinent lines of this insert are translated by Sanders as follows:

And david, the Son of Jesse, was wise, and a light like the light of the sun, and literate, and discerning and perfect in all his ways before God and men. And the Lord gave him a discerning and enlightened spirit. And he wrote 3,600 psalms; and songs to sing before the altar over the whole-burnt perpetual offering every day, for all the days of the year, 364; and for the offering of the Sabbaths, 52 songs; and for the offering of the New Moons and for all the Solemn Assemblies and for the day of Atonement, 30 songs. And all the songs that he composed were 446, and songs for making music over the stricken, 4. And prophecy which was given him from before the Most High.³

Whether or not this composition is based on a valid tradition handed down from David's time or originated in the Qumran community is impossible to say. However, it does show that the Qumran community in the time of Christ thought

¹The Apocrypha, *An American Translation*, trans. Edgar J. Goodspeed (New York: Random House, Inc., 1959), pp. 317-18.

²Ibid., p. 448.

³Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll*, p. 137.

of David as the musical composer and author of many psalms.

The Rabbinic writers for the most part assigned the work of the Psalter to David though not necessarily the authorship of every psalm. The second century A.D. Talmud tract Baba Bathra (14b) states, "David wrote the Book of Psalms with the aid of the ten ancients, with the aid of Adam the first, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Heman, Jeduthun, Asaph, and the three sons of Korah,"¹ Apparently David was considered the author of some psalms, but the editor of the entire Psalter.

Very similar is the statement of the Midrash on the Psalms from a latter date. On Psalm 1:2 is included the statement that "as Moses gave five books of laws to Israel, so David gave five books of Psalms to Israel."² Then a little later ten men are listed as authors of the Book of Psalms; namely Adam, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Asaph, and the three sons of Korah.³

The opinions of several Jewish commentators between the tenth and thirteenth centuries concerning the authorship of the Psalms have been summarized by Neubauer and in each case David is held to be the principle author of the

¹Briggs, *Commentary on Psalms*, p. liv.

²William G. Braude, trans., *The Midrash on Psalms*, 2 vols., in Yale Judaica Series 13, ed. Leon Nemoy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 1:5.

³Ibid., 1:10.

Psalms.¹ R. Saadyah Gaon (died 940) considered David the author of all the Psalms and takes the other names as persons responsible for singing them.² Salmon ben Yeroham, Yepheth ben Eli, Abraham ibn Ezra and David Qamhi (or Kimhi) all accept multiple authorship according to the designations in the titles.³

It was also the view of some of the early Church Fathers that David was the author of the whole Psalter. Augustine for example considered the other names found in the titles to be the individuals whom David, in composing the Psalms, prophetically represented.⁴

It was in the seventeenth century when Benedict Spinoza began to expound the Second Temple provenance of the Psalter that respect for Davidic authorship began to be undermined. The final abandonment of Davidic authorship by the higher critics came in the nineteenth century with the rise of the critical-historical approach. At that time the

¹Ad Neubauer, "The Authorship and the Titles According to Early Jewish Authorities," in vol. 2 of *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica*, ed. S. R. Driver, et al. (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1890), pp. 10-28.

²Ibid., pp. 1C-13.

³Ibid., pp. 1P, 20-21, 25-27, 28; cf. David Kimhi, *The Commentary of Rabbi David Kimhi on Psalms CXX-CL*, ed. and trans. Joshua Baker and Ernest W. Nicholson (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1973), p. 11.

⁴Dewette, "Introduction to the Psalms," pp. 456-57.

Davidic authorship was almost completely abandoned.¹ Since then with the aid of some key archaeological discoveries and the rise of the form-critical school it has been shown that there is good reason for at least viewing many of the psalms as pre-exilic and thus answering the key objection to Davidic authorship.²

Objections to Davidic Authorship

Five reasons are given by Driver as to why the majority, at least, of the seventy-three psalms ascribed to David cannot be his.³ His first objection is that many of these psalms are reminiscent of earlier psalms and lack the freshness and originality expected from the originator of Hebrew hymnody. Such an objection arbitrarily limits David's poetic genius and fails to take into account the extenuating circumstances out of which these psalms often arose.

The second objection, involving the presence of pronounced Aramaisms is much more objective. These Aramaisms may be explained in part by transmission. Weiser says concerning these late linguistic forms, they are "conclusive only for the final form of the psalms in question, not for

¹Nahum M. Sarna, Prolegomenon to *The Psalms, Chronologically Treated with a New Translation*, by Moses Bottenweiser, in the Library of Biblical Studies, ed. Harry M. Orlinsky (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1969), p. xv.

²Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Date of the Psalms," *BSac* 104 (October-December 1947):439-40.

³Driver, *Introduction to the OT*, pp. 374-77.

the date at which they came into existence."¹ Oesterley applies the same argument not just to word forms but even to some of the later thoughts.²

Wilson, meanwhile, has done extensive research on each of these Aramaisms and comes to the following conclusions: (1) There are only fifteen genuine Aramaisms in the Psalms, and of these only nine occur in Davidic psalms; (2) these Aramaisms may actually have originated from other ancient Semitic languages; and (3) there is no reason why David could not have used Aramaisms since he ruled over all of the Aramaeans as far as the Euphrates.³ The most recent blow to Driver's argument comes from the discovery of Aramaic elements in the fifteenth-century Ugaritic texts which in terms of language, poetic form and syntax are very similar to Hebrew Poetry.⁴

Driver's third objection is that some of these psalms have stylistic affinities with psalms which are much later than David's time. Such affinities, however, can not prove any thing concerning the date of a psalm. Like the first objection it tends to be very arbitrary and simplistic.

The last two objections which are quite similar are

¹Weiser, *The Psalms*, p. 92.

²W. O. E. Oesterley, *A Fresh Approach to the Psalms* (London: Ivor Nicolson and Watson, 1937), pp. 62-63.

³Wilson, "The Headings of the Psalms," pp. 28-32.

⁴Harrison, *Introduction to the OT*, pp. 983-84.

legitimate objections which must be answered. Here Driver cites several instances of psalms which are unadapted to David's situation or character and psalms which presuppose the circumstances and character of a later age. A prime example of this phenomena is the implication that the temple has already been built (Ps. 5:7 (8); 27:4; 68:29 (30); 138:2). But the usage of **הַיְיָ** in these passages need not refer to Solomon's temple as may be seen from its usage in 1 Samuel 1:9 and 3:3. Furthermore, as Archer points out, there is proof in Psalm 27 which uses **הַיְיָ** that the psalm could not have been written after Solomon's temple was built because the sanctuary is also referred to as **סֹכֶה**, "booth" and **אֶהְלֵא**, "His tent."

There are also a number of psalms in which the writer identifies himself with the poor and needy during evil times when the wicked are established and the godly are oppressed (Pss. 12, 25, 37, 38, etc.). Once again Driver claims that these do not fit into the historical accounts of David's life. Yet as Green has pointed out what better time could be found for such compositions than the time when David was being jealously pursued by Saul. At that time David was God's anointed and Saul had been rejected by the Lord. On one occasion Saul even massacred the priests suspected of aiding David and Abiathar had to flee for his

¹Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 441.

life.¹ Here is fertile ground out of which such a psalm could have arisen.

Psalm 51:18-19, where a reference is made to building up the walls of Jerusalem, is thought by Driver to be a much later reference to the hope of restoration. Here it is a matter of interpretation. The expression "building the walls" can mean "to strengthen, enlarge, and fortify them" (1 Kgs. 11:27; 12:25; 15:17, 22); or it can be used figuratively to mean "give prosperity" (Ps. 28:5; 89:4).² The latter meaning would maintain the synonymous parallelism of the verse.

The references to the king in the third person rather than the first person may also seem strange coming from David, however, it is a common phenomenon in ancient literature. In fact many times in the OT Yahweh is quoted and speaks of Himself in the third person.³ Thus, it may be observed in these few examples that in most cases where the critics object to Davidic authorship of a psalm it is because not all of the possible interpretations that would relate it to David's time have been exhausted.

The argument of Sarna that the David of Samuel and Kings was a man of his age who was ethically and morally primitive and therefore unable to write with the depth of

¹Green, "The Titles of the Psalms," p. 505.

²Ibid., p. 496.

³Archer, *A Survey of OT Introduction*, p. 440.

spiritual insight and religious devotion reflected in the Psalms is based on an evolutionary bias.¹ Israel's religious and ethical concepts did not develop over a period of years, but were given to them by God at Mt. Sinai years before David's time. The psalms of David then reflect a thorough knowledge of God's law. As to the argument that David was not exposed to the succession of trials and afflictions of the kind represented in the Psalms, it can not be substantiated. On the contrary, Delitzsch summarizes David's psalms as follows:

They are the fruit not only of his high gifts and the inspiration of the Spirit of God (2 Sam. 23:2), but also of his own experience and of the experience of his people interwoven with his own. David's path from his anointing onwards, lay through affliction to glory. . . . His life was marked by vicissitudes which at one time prompted him to elegiac strains, at another to praise and thanksgiving; at the same time he was the founder of the kingship of promise, a prophecy of the future Christ, and his life, thus typically moulded, could not express itself otherwise than in typical or even consciously prophetic language.²

Space does not allow for all of the objections to Davidic authorship in the individual psalms to be answered. These, however, are treated in the commentaries on the Psalms by such writers as Delitzsch, Kirkpatrick and Perowne.³

¹Sarna, "The Psalms Superscriptions," p. 287.

²Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:9.

³For an exhaustive treatment of positive evidence for Davidic authorship see *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, s.v. "Psalms, Book of," by John Richard Sampey.

The Historical Notices in the Titles

If there is one item from the psalm titles that is especially helpful in interpretation it is the historical notices, for they give the historical occasion which prompted the psalmist--in each case, David--to write. Yet, this is the one area in the headings which has received the most criticism. Some of this criticism is based upon the general character of these notices and some on specific problems found in the psalms.

General Character of the Historical Notes

A total of thirteen psalms contain these historical notices in their titles.¹ Everyone of them are identified as Davidic psalms (דָּוִד) and refer to events in David's life. Most, but not all, of these events are recorded in the books of Samuel. The following is a list of these thirteen psalms with the corresponding passage from the historical books of the OT as it was compiled by Driver.²

- Psalm 3--2 Samuel 15, etc.
- Psalm 7--allusion obscure
- Psalm 18--2 Samuel 22
- Psalm 34--1 Samuel 21:13
- Psalm 51--2 Samuel 12
- Psalm 52--1 Samuel 22:9
- Psalm 54--1 Samuel 23:19
- Psalm 56--1 Samuel 21:11 (or 27:2f., 7-12)
- Psalm 57--1 Samuel 22:1; 24:3ff.
- Psalm 59--1 Samuel 19:11

¹This number may be increased to 14 if Psalm 30 is included. The title there reads "A psalm, A song. For the dedication of the temple. Of David." (NIV).

²Driver, *An Introduction to the OT*, p. 370.

Psalm 60--2 Samuel 8:13 (cf. v. 3 Zobah); 1 Chronicles
18:12

Psalm 63--1 Samuel 23:14ff.; 24:1; 26:2

Psalm 142--1 Samuel 22:1; 24:3ff.

In summary; Psalms 7, 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, and 142 refer to the period of David's persecution by Saul; Psalm 18 to the climax of his reign; Psalm 51 to his confession of sin with Bathsheba; Psalm 60 to the Syro-Ammonite war; and Psalms 3 and 63 to his flight from Absalom.

In all but two instances these historical references follow a set pattern of syntax. There is a noun clause introduced by the temporal conjunction כִּי with the infinitive construct. Then the finite verb is used in the following coordinate or subordinate clause.¹ The two exceptions to this stereotyped form are found in Psalm 7 and 18. In each of these titles the particle אֲשֶׁר introduces a relative clause. The relative clause of Psalm 7 describes the psalm as "that which he (David) sang to Yahweh concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite."² With Psalm 18 the obviously different form is probably due to its adaptation from 2 Samuel 22:1. Similar to Psalm 7 the relative clause uses the finite verb with the non-technical reference to "this song." In all but Psalm 7 either the syntactical construction or a prepositional phrase indicates the time or

¹Childs, "Psalm Titles," p. 138.

²Childs views this title as belonging to a liturgical setting since כֵּן in every other occurrence in the titles refers to the manner in which the psalm is to be rendered; Ibid., p. 138.

occasion with which the psalm is to be associated.

An intriguing parallel to this stereotyped form of historical note is found in the introduction to Hezekiah's psalm in Isaiah 38. Like the historical notes in the psalm titles it is introduced with the infinitive construct joined to the preposition **בְּ**. The similarity is seen in the technical psalm classification and designation of authorship as well. From this it may be concluded that by Hezekiah's time a fixed form of psalm title was being used.

Objections to the Credibility of The Historical Notes

The stereotyped form of these historical references has been used by Childs as evidence that they were part of an exegetical process by ancient rabbis who desired to supply a setting for these independent compositions.¹ This view is echoed by Bruce, although he is willing to admit that some at least of the "historical" titles probably find their origin in the time of the monarchy. He cites the example of Psalm 18.²

Another view with less respect is cited by Oesterley. He sees them as the work of a redactor who wanted to draw attention to certain words or episodes which came to his mind from the historical books as he studied these psalms.³

¹Ibid., pp. 142-43.

²Bruce, "The Earliest OT Interpretation," p. 46.

³Oesterley, *A Fresh Approach to the Psalms*, p. 86.

Weiser is even more critical in calling them Second Temple additions designed to establish Davidic authorship and thus David's authority for the cultic practices of the Second Temple of which the psalms played a key role.¹

Glueck says that these notices have nothing to do with the historical setting of the psalm. Instead, they were added as a kind of mnemotechnic used by the director of music to remind the people of this or that psalm.² All of these explanations seriously undermine the credibility of these historical notes placing them in the category of conjecture or downright deceitfulness. Much of modern scholarship has abandoned the view that these notes represent ancient traditions for a variety of reasons.

A common complaint is that the contents of the psalms are inconsistent with their historical contentions.³ However, as they are individually examined it is found that these objections are based upon a superficial understanding of both the historical texts and the psalm texts. For example, Eerdmans assumes that Cush, the Benjamite mentioned in the title of Psalm 7 is the Cushite who reports to David the death of Absalom, and then notes the difference of mood

¹Weiser, *The Psalms*, p. 38; cf. Edward R. Dalgish, *Psalms Fifty-One* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), p. 245.

²J. J. Glueck, "Some Remarks on the Introductory Notes of the Psalms," in *Studies on the Psalms*, in Die Ou Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Africa (Potchefstroom, South Africa: Pro Rege-Pers Beperk, 1963), p. 31.

³Eerdmans, *The Hebrew Book of Psalms*, p. 37.

between the psalm and 2 Samuel 19:1.¹ Such an assumption cannot be substantiated, in fact, Eerdman is one of the few who makes that assumption. Bruce conjectures that Cush may be a "kinsman and emissary of Saul otherwise unknown," or another name for Shimei.² No definite identification can be made from the Biblical information which raises the question of where an "exegete" would have gotten his information.

Many of these apparent inconsistencies may be explained by the fact that the psalms express the thoughts and emotions of David in various crisis and not simply the historical facts. For example Eerdman's rejects the authenticity of the title of Psalm 142 because in the psalm David is pictured as a lonely man forsaken by all his friends.³ The title, meanwhile, identifies it as a psalm of David in the cave; where, according to 1 Samuel 22, he was joined by his family and about 400 men. David, in Psalm 142 was not giving an indication of who was or was not with him in person, but rather an expression of his inward feelings on that occasion.

It is also possible that David may have recorded the words of some of these psalms sometime after the experiences as he reflected back upon them. Kidner suggests this

¹Ibid.,

²Bruce, "The Earliest OT Interpretation," p. 48.

³Eerdman's, *The Hebrew Book of Psalms*, p. 399.

possibility in response to the objection that the polished work of art represented by the acrostic of Psalm 34 could not have been written in the life or death situation described in the title.¹ This could also account for the strong statement of faith which some commentators find to be inconsistent with the fear which led David to feign madness before the king of Gath. Of course, these supposed inconsistencies may also be answered by pointing to David's persevering faith and proficient poetic ability as he was guided by the Holy Spirit.

The lack of specific references within the psalms to the events described in the titles should not be used as evidence against their authenticity. On the contrary, Harris sees a divine purpose in such titles which he expresses with regard to Psalm 56.

It expresses trust in time of trouble; but the Philistines, or Gath, or David's capture are not explicitly mentioned. The psalm very likely was written years after the event as David thought upon those desperate days. He did not write just for the pleasure of writing about his experiences. By the Spirit of God, he was moved to write a general psalm that would also be helpful to us when we are captured by our Philistines in the twentieth century.²

It is the above mentioned lack of specific references within the psalms to the events described in the titles which has led to Slomovic's view concerning the origin of these titles. He suggests that the rabbis used all

¹Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, p. 44.

²Harris, "Psalms," p. 38.

the midrashic-hermeneutical methods to determine the settings for these psalms.¹ For instance, he sees a linguistic connection between Psalm 56 and the narration of 1 Samuel 21:11-16. The word **לִלְחָם** appears three times in the Psalm and once in the Samuel narrative. Also, the expression of fear, **אֵי יָרָא** (Ps., 56:4) is connected with the only mention of fear on David's part in the Historical narratives (1 Sam. 21:13).² Certainly if this was the explanation for the titles there would be good reason to question their authenticity.

Another reason for discrediting these notes is that in some cases they differ from the information given in the historical narratives. For example, in Psalm 34:1 the king of Gath is called Abimelech whereas in 1 Samuel 21 he is called Achish. Another very conspicuous difference is found in the title of Psalm 60. There it is said that David fought the Aramaeans and Joab returned and struck down 12,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. By comparison, 2 Samuel 8 mentions David's defeat of the Aramaeans and identifies David as the one returning from striking down 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. Then in 1 Chronicles 18:12 it is Abishai who struck down 18,000 Edomites in

¹Slomovic, "Formation of Historical Titles," p. 352.

²Ibid., p. 372; Patrick W. Skehan, "A Note on Ps. 34,1," *CBQ* 14 (July 1952):226, also sees the use of the root **לִלְחָם** as the connecting link between Psalm 34:3 and 1 Sam. 21:14.

the Valley of Salt.

These differences, however, need not be construed as irreconcilable accounts of the same event. In the case of Achish and Abimelech they both refer to the same person. Achish is the king's personal name and Abimelech is his title, similar to the Pharaoh of Egypt (cf. Gen. 20 & 26).¹ As for Psalm 60:2, Green has shown how that the last part of the title may simply refer to a separate part of David's overall campaign against Edom which was carried out by Joash.² The obvious differences in the case of Psalm 60:2 from the historical narratives has led some like Buttenwieser to consider this as a genuine heading.³ In fact this is the only heading Buttenwieser considers to be genuine.

Perowne questions the authenticity of these historical notices on the basis that they only occur in Davidic psalms. He argues that the history of David is much better known than of the other psalmists so it was easier to fit his psalms into a particular occasion in David's life. This is then confirmed by the fact that most of them are taken almost word for word from the historical books.⁴ This argument does not stand for it is just as easy to attribute

¹Green, "The Titles of the Psalms," p. 499.

²Ibid., pp. 499-500.

³Moses Buttenwieser, *The Psalms, Chronologically Treated, with a New Translation*, Prolegomenon by Nahum M. Sarna, in the Library of Biblical Studies, ed. Harry M. Orlinsky (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1969), p. 70.

⁴Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 1:101.

these titles to someone like the author of the historical books who was himself familiar with the events of David's life.

Positive Arguments for the Credibility of the Historical Notes

Some of the reasons for rejecting the authenticity of the historical notes may just as easily be used to support their authenticity. The variations and additional biographical details may be cited as evidence for the use of a different tradition behind at least some of the titles from what is given in the historical books.

These different traditions do not necessarily mean that the titles are authentic, but it does argue for their antiquity. For example in the case of Psalm 7, there would be no reason for introducing the unknown "Cush a Benjamite" in the title unless it was a detail that had been passed down with the psalm itself.¹ The same could be said concerning some of the details introduced in the title of Psalm 60. They must have been valid traditions for as Archer says, "A later editor would never have ventured to manufacture new details not contained in Samuel and Chronicles."²

It may also be noted that the want of a clear

¹Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, p. 46.

²Archer, *A Survey of OT Introduction*, p. 443.

connection between the contents of a psalm and the psalm title is best explained by a tradition connected with the psalm from the time it was written. Meanwhile, some of the other psalms in the Psalter which contain obvious historical allusions have no such titles. If these historical references are the work of a rabbinic exegete it seems strange that he would pass over the obvious and make up an historical setting based upon such meager evidence in some cases.

In summary, these notes which in thirteen instances give the historical setting out of which the psalm arose deserve serious attention. They give important clues concerning the origin of many other psalms beside their own. They show that many of the psalms arose out of the experiences of the life of a man who walked with God. Therefore, unless it could be proven that there is a conflict between the claim of the title and the contents of the psalm they should be accepted as trustworthy.¹ As far as their origin is concerned it must be admitted that there is no way of knowing how they originally became a part of the text. Kidner's remarks on this are especially appropriate.

It should perhaps be left an open question whether some are the product of comparing scripture with scripture, and others the product of historical records. What matters is their truth, which there is no valid reason to doubt, and which finds

¹Many of the claims by critics that such conflicts do exist have been shown to be unsubstantiated by Green, "The Titles of the Psalms," pp. 494-504; and by Leupold in his commentary, *Exposition of the Psalms*.

incidental confirmation in the light which they throw on the psalms they introduce.¹

*Summary Statement on the Credibility of
the Psalm Titles*

From the internal and external evidences examined with regard to the credibility of the psalm titles it may be concluded that they represent authentic traditions. As such, they are to be taken at face value and may be used as accurate and reliable sources of information concerning the author, historical setting, and liturgical use of the psalms where such information is given. The musical and liturgical notes would apply to their usage in the First Temple, though it is likely that some of them were still functionable in the Second Temple during Nehemiah's day (Neh. 12).

¹Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, p. 46.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORIGIN OF THE PSALM TITLES

It is impossible to discern with any certainty when or how the titles came to be a part of the various psalms. Several theories have been proposed, many of which have already been discussed and shown to be faulty on one account or another. The most acceptable view in light of the preceding material is that they are pre-exilic in origin and very likely date back to the time of composition.

The first line of argument comes from a comparison of the psalm titles with the Chronicler. First Chronicles 16:7-36 gives a composite psalm consisting of Psalms 105:1-15; 96:1-13; the closing prayer of Psalm 106:47; and the doxological colophon of Book Four of the Psalms. This composite psalm was committed to Asaph by David to be sung by the Levitical singers on the day that the ark of God was brought up to Jerusalem. Here it can be seen that the present form of the Psalter including the titles must have been established before the Chronicler wrote.

This fixed form is indicated first of all by the inclusion of the doxology which has been shown to belong to the final redaction of the Psalter, serving a literary and

not a liturgical function.¹ As far as the titles are concerned it may be assumed that they were already established at this time since Psalms 96, 105 and 106 remained anonymous even though the Chronicler identified them as Davidic.

One additional passage from Chronicles which Fullerton uses to show that the Psalter reached its final form before the Chronicler wrote is 2 Chronicles 29:30.² According to it the Levites were ordered by Hezekiah to sing praises to Yahweh with the words of David and Asaph. This indicates that there were psalms recognized as belonging to David and Asaph not only in the Chronicler's day, but also in Hezekiah's day. It is not certain whether they were recognized by their titles or a distinct collection, but apparently David's and Asaph's psalms were distinguishable a little over 200 years after they were written.³

Further evidence for an early origin of the titles comes from the arrangement of the Psalter. The Psalter is divided into five books with the majority of the titles being found in the first three. The fourth and fifth books contain only four psalms which have any kind of musical directions and these psalms are Davidic. Taylor sees this as an indication of a First Temple provenance of these

¹Fullerton, "Studies in the Psalter," p. 192.

²Ibid., p. 190.

³By this time Jerusalem was known for its musicians. This is confirmed by the Annals of Senacharib in which he reports that male and female musicians were included in the tribute paid by Hezekiah. See Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 288.

titles.¹ In response to those who claim that these titles are associated with the worship in the Second Temple he asks, "why do we not find the most choice notes with the later psalms?"²

The Chronicler of course supports this arrangement in that it was under David's leadership that the more elaborate service of song in the former Temple was organized. Thus, it should come as no surprise that in the first three books of Psalms sixty-five of the eighty-nine psalms have musical directions. These are almost without exception identified as being composed by David or his contemporaries. It may also be noted here that the two Asaph psalms which by their context must be considered exilic psalms (Pss. 74 and 79) have no musical directions.

It is suggested then that all of the information contained in the psalm titles finds its origin in the period of the composition of the psalms. This does not necessarily mean that the titles were affixed to the psalms by the author, though that was undoubtedly true in some cases. Most likely they were placed at the head of the psalms by the editor or compiler as the Psalter was being formed. There has been much speculation concerning how the title: came into the text of the psalms. Nevertheless, the fact remains that they are a part of the text of Scripture that God has seen fit to preserve. All the evidence that has

¹Bernard C. Taylor, "The Psalms with Their Super-
scriptions," *Hebraica* 1 (April 1884):30.

²Ibid.

been presented suggests that their origin lies squarely within the prophetic tradition of the OT Scriptures which makes their authenticity a foregone conclusion.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The ultimate conclusion from the evidence that has been presented is that the psalm titles are authentic. They may not have been written by the authors of the various psalms but they do represent ancient and reliable traditions. This is shown in part by the antiquity of the titles. From the standpoint of textual studies, there is no evidence to show that there was ever a time when they were not a part of the text. By comparing the titles with other portions of Scripture it seems very probable that they were fixed well before the exile. Even if some were added as late as Ezra's time that would still place them within the "prophetic tradition."

As a product of the "prophetic tradition" they deserve then to be respected, recognized and understood as an integral part of the various canonical psalms to which they belong. To omit these titles from the text, as *The New English Bible* does in its translation, is a great disservice to the reader.¹

¹Driver gives the reasons why they were omitted as follows. "Some are historical notices, obviously deduced from the text and often unsuitable; all are of doubtful value. . . ." Concerning the musical notations he says

The information contained in the titles has been shown to be accurate in the areas of authorship and historical backgrounds. When the preposition לְ is used in the titles with a personal name the author of the psalm is indicated either personally, as is the case with David, or generically, as with Asaph and the sons of Korah. When an historical background is given for a psalm, it does not represent the speculation of some Jewish rabbi but the actual historical context from which the psalm originated. The other notes, which were not specifically discussed, represent actual instructions and factual information which were important for the usage of the psalm in Israel's worship. Thus, these latter notes provide important clues concerning the role of psalmody in conveying God's Word to Israel in their public worship.

In summary, the psalm titles are trustworthy witnesses concerning the authorship, age, purpose and occasion of the various psalms concerning which they give such information either implicitly or explicitly.

"they are now for the most part unintelligible." He goes on to note the totally different notes found in the Syriac version and concludes that "as such the headings are almost certainly not original." See Godfrey R. Driver, Introduction to *The New English Bible, The Old Testament* (n.p.: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. XIV.

APPENDIX A

A Comparison of the MT Titles and the DSS Titles

Psalm	MT ¹	Col. Line	11QPs ^{a2}
121	שיר למעלות	III 1	שיר המעלות
122	שיר המעלות לדוד	III 7	same as MT
123	שיר המעלות	III 15	[] דויד למעלות
126	שיר המעלות	IV 9	same as MT
127	שיר המעלות לשלמה	IV 16	[] לשלמה
129	שיר המעלות	V 4	[] ש
130	שיר המעלות	V 10	same as MT
133	שיר המעלות לדוד	XXIII 7	same as MT
138	לדוד	XXI 1	same as MT
140	למנצח מזמור לדוד	XXIII 12	same as MT
143	מזמור לדוד	XXV 6	same as MT
144	לדוד	XXIII 12	no Title
145	תהלה לדוד	XVI 7	תפלה לדויד

¹Taken from K. Elliger and W. Rudolf, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1967/1977).

²Taken from J. A. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11*, vol. 4: Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 19-49.

Psalm	MT	Col. Line	11QPs ^a
104	no Title	Fragment El ¹	לדוד
Psalm	MT		11QPs ^a
133	שיר המעלות לדוד		ות לדוד [] 4QPs ^{b3}
103	לדוד		ד[] 4QPs ^{q4}
33	no Title		לדוד שיר מזמור 4QpPs45 ⁵
45	למנצח על שנים לבני־קרח משכיל שיר ידידת		למנצח על [] ים] Nahal Hever frg. ⁶
16	מצתם לדוד		[] תם לדוד]

¹J. A. Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 160.

²J. Van Der Ploeg, "Fragments d'un manuscrit de psaumes de Qumran (11gPs^b)," *RB* 74 (1967):411.

³Patrick W. Skehan "A Psalm Manuscript from Qumran (4QPs^b)," *CBQ* 26 (July 1964): 318.

⁴J. T. Milik, "Deux documents inedits du Desert de Juda," *Bib* 38 (19.57):246.

⁵John M. Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4*, vol. 5: Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 45.

⁶Y. Yadin, "Expedition D." *IEJ* 11 (1961):40.

Psalm	MT	Masada Scroll ¹
82	מזמור לאסף	"A Psalm of Asaph"
83	שיר מזמור לאסף	"A Song, A Psalm of Asaph"
84	למנצח על הגתית לבני קרח מזמר	"To the Chief Musician (upon Gittith, A Psalm for the Sons of Korah) "
85	למנצח לבני-קרח מזמור	"To the Chief Musician, A Psalm for the Sons of Korah"

¹Y. Yadin, "The Excavation of Masada--1963/1934, Preliminary Report," *IEJ* 15 (1965):104. Only the English translations of the titles are given by Yadin.

APPENDIX B

Possible Meanings of לְ

Combined with a Proper Name¹

1. "On (or: about) N.N."
2. "For N.N.;" "composed for N.N. (by someone else)"
3. Something is intended to be used "on behalf (for benefit) of N.N. "
4. "Belonging to N.N.," that is to say, to the property or the inheritance of N.N. or to what tradition has preserved concerning him
5. "At the disposal of N.N." The source and original intention of the matter in question are not given
6. *Lamed auctoris*, "(a work) of N.N."
7. "In the manner (style) of," and characterizes the work as "composed in the manner of N.N."

¹Taken from L. A. F. LeMat, *Textual Criticism and Exegesis of Psalm XXXVI* (Utrecht, Holland: Kemink & Zoon, 1957), p. 34.

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