

AN ANALYSIS OF SELAH IN ANTIQUITY

by

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ABSTRACT

A literary masterpiece, the Hebrew Psalter is considered one of the most complex books of the Hebrew Bible. In order to understand the whole, and its parts, interpretive clues fill the pages of this intriguing, and oftentimes obscure, book. *Selah*, an obscure term in the Psalter and Habakkuk, has commonly been the subject of discussion regarding its meaning and use. Many 19th century scholars have spent countless hours, and devoted many pages, to remove *Selah* from obscurity. Only now have we revealed a previously undiscovered clue in *Selah*'s use during the Second Temple period due to 20th century archaeological finds. The present work approaches each text with a “whole picture” perspective so as to examine each psalm and *Selah* occurrence in its immediate context. A journey through the ancient witnesses such as the Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls (biblical and non-biblical) not only exposes common literary features, but a communal use of the term in worship.

This work is dedicated to the Lord—the One prophesied to come.

וַיִּצַם לְלַכְמֵי יִפְיֵי מִיְהוּא עֵיפוּהָ:
אֲבִי וְנִיְהוּא לֹא שְׂרָחִי שֶׁאֵין וַיִּנְפֹּל לְכַאֲתֵי וַיִּבְיָבְסוּ הָרַעֲשָׁנִים דָּאֵם:
אֲרָקִי לֹא מִיִּמְשָׁה לְעַם לֹא קָרָאָה לְיִדֵּל וּמַעֲ:
וּפְסָא לֵיל יִדִּיסָח יִתְרַכֵּי יִתִּירֵב יִלְעֵי חֲבִזֵּי:
וּדִיגִיּוֹ מִיִּמֶשׁ וְקִדְצֵי יֵכֵי מִיְהוּא טַפְשֵׁי אוּהֵי הֶלֶסֶי:

-Psalm 50:2-6

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ABBREVIATIONS

4Q381	Non-Canonical Psalms B
5/6Hev1b	Psalms Texts from Naḥal Hever
8HevXIIgr	Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Naḥal Hever
11Q11	Apocryphal Psalms
11Q13	Melchizedek Text
11QPs ^a	Great Psalms Scroll from Qumran
ANE	Ancient Near East
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts
BDB	Brown, Driver, and Briggs: <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
DSSELBT	Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library – Biblical Texts
GKC	Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar
HALOT	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
LXX	Septuagint
Mas1e	Texts from Masada
mss	Manuscripts
MT	Masoretic Text
Mur88	Texts from Wadi Murabba'at
<i>NKJV</i>	<i>New King James Version</i>
OG	Old Greek
OT	Old Testament
PAM	Palestine Archaeological Museum [Photograph Series]
Pss	Psalms
SHR	Shrine of the Book
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

For over two thousand years, the popularity of the Psalter has been reflected by its widespread use in Jewish, Christian, and secular cultures. From the multitude of texts in antiquity, to its prolific publication among the ages, the Psalter has permeated the lives of millions of people. The Psalter can be found in its full canonical form and in a variety of fragmentary texts dating from as early as 250 B.C. The Masoretic Text (MT), Septuagint (LXX), and Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) all preserve this important Book as it has been handed down through the ages. As many are familiar with the MT today, the LXX (Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) shows that non-Hebrew speaking Jews also desired to study the Scriptures as Greeks began to translate the Hebrew manuscripts beginning in the 3rd century B.C. The texts from Qumran also reveal intense interests in psalms as they have become an object of fascination in the scholarly community.

Over the centuries, even in modern times, few books have inspired more commentaries and studies. And as such, within the liturgy of the church and synagogue, from antiquity to the present, no other book of the Bible has been the source for countless hymns, readings, and prayers. Numerous editions of the Psalter exist in circulation, “and with its variety of textual variants, it is also easily one of the most complex books in textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible.”¹

¹ Brent A. Strawn, “10.1 Textual History of Psalms,” in *Textual History of the Hebrew Bible*, edited by Armin Lange. Consulted online on 23 September 2017 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2452-4107_thb_COM_0010010000>

Nodding to its complexity, obscure terminology such as *Selah* has been the “puzzle of ordinary readers, and the despair of scholars.”² The typical response to *Selah*’s obscurity has rooted the term in a musical context. For decades, scholarship’s proclivity to view the Hebrew Psalter as “the hymnbook of the Second Temple period” has relegated the term *Selah* to musical status.³ And, despite many efforts to give the term meaning, it is quite striking that no one had come to a solid conclusion.

Background

Selah (סֶלָה) occurs seventy-one times in the MT Psalter with the bulk of its occurrences among Books I-III, with no occurrences in Book IV, and a presence in two psalms in Book V. It also occurs three times in the poem of Habakkuk 3. The term is almost always found at the end of a stanza, with the exception of four instances where it is found in the middle of a verse.⁴

The meaning of *Selah* has seemingly been “lost in translation,” for lack of a better phrase. The earliest manuscripts included this term, even the Dead Sea Scrolls, and by the time of the translation into Greek (the Septuagint, c. 250-100 BC) its meaning was ostensibly lost. Over centuries this term has been debated, yet in the last 100 years scholars have resigned to be content with the uncertainty surrounding its meaning.

² Rev. A.S. Aglen, “The Psalms,” in *An Old Testament Commentary for English Readers*, vol. IV, ed. by Charles John Ellicott (London: Cassell & Company, Ltd., 1884), 89.

³ For hymnbook status, see: Gerald H. Wilson, “The Shape of the Book of Psalms,” in *Interpretation* 46.2 (1992), 137; Cas J.A. Vos, “The Psalms as Hymns in a Liturgical Context,” in *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 65.1 (2009), 1.

⁴ Charles Briggs, “Inductive Study of Selah,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 18 (1899), 132.

Meaning of *Selah*

There has been no shortage of suggestions from where *Selah* is derived. However, there are six major propositions: 1) a pause in the text,⁵ 2) a term signifying “from before the world” (Syriac Peshitta),⁶ 3) a synonym of נצח or עולם with the notion of “forever;”⁷ 4) a derivative of the root טלל meaning to raise voices in praise, or make the instruments louder,⁸ 5) a signifier for the column, page, or space between two lines,⁹ and 6) an acronym suggested by Gottlieb Reine in 1899 for a phrase in Numbers 14:19 which reads: הַזֶּה הָעָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדְעוּ אֶת הָאֵלֹהִים (please forgive the sins of these people).¹⁰ If *Selah* was used as a liturgical marker in ancient Judaism and even the early church, this could fit the circumstances for the laments it is found paired with.¹¹ However, some scholars do not recognize abbreviations such as these, except for the Divine name when part of theophoric names such as *Yehoshua*. Even then, abbreviations were not common until the rise of Midrashic writings and exegesis.

As a result of recently discovered evidence, we are able to shed more light on this obscure term. While older scholarship considered *Selah* as a break, this research

⁵ The LXX translator’s use of διαψαλμα suggests pause; see: Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*; and Gesenius’ *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).

⁶ The Peshitta (5/6th cent. AD) renders *Selah* as “from before the world” which seems to be in line theologically with some of the surrounding context of the term in each MT psalm (see: *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Selah,” 2904). “From before the world” could connote an eternal truth—something that has been established before the world; falling in line with a more theological line of thought as opposed to a liturgical one. It is important to note that the Peshitta is a translation of the Christian Church and is much later than when the final form of the text came into circulation; thus, this would not necessarily shed light on the ancient period but it is of noteworthy mention.

⁷ Those holding this view are Jerome, Aquila, and it is mentioned in the Targum. See: Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (1907), 699-700.

⁸ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, II. ט - ט, trans. and ed. by M.E.J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 756.

⁹ T.K. Cheyne, *The Book of Psalms: Translated from a Revised Text with Notes and Introduction*, vol. I (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, Ltd., 1904), xli. As this suggestion warrants study in reference to *Selah*’s placement in the Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts, it also suggests that *Selah* could be functioning in a structural manner, which will be important as we progress through the relevant textual witnesses.

¹⁰ J. Parisot, “Signification Musicale de Sélah-Diapsalma,” in *Revue Biblique* 8 (1899), 577.

¹¹ A good example is Psalm 7.

embraces a richer, and more diverse, use of the term in antiquity. Having considered a broader context of extant evidence, *Selah* functions as a transition marker. As a transition marker, this still allows for fluidity in terms of understanding individual psalms. *Selah* can thereby signal a break/pause as old scholarship has advocated, and it can signal a transition in theme, structure, topic, or speaker.

While all of the aforementioned meanings of older scholarship are intriguing, many scholars have paved the way for understanding *Selah* in a different light, and the following ideas demonstrate the complexity of defining the term.

History of Research

Since the late 19th century, *Selah* had become the focus of a handful of publications seeking its meaning and function in the Hebrew Psalter. While a considerable amount of effort was put into examining its placement, it wasn't until the unearthing of the Dead Sea Scrolls that would prove a useful clue in understanding its use in the Second Temple period. To date, there have been several notable contributions that serve to highlight how *Selah* was employed in the Hebrew Psalter, and thus, have aided in the development of a fuller understanding of its original purpose.

Eduard König (1881)

In the 1881 publication, *Historisch-Kritisches Lehrgebäude der Hebräischen Sprach*, Eduard König proposed a meaning for *Selah* related to music. For König, a professor of theology, his understanding of *Selah* as a musical interjection ignited a flurry of *Selah* studies in the late 1800's. He believed that this interjection (loud interruption in music) was derived from the root שָׁלַח, as it served to stir hearers to arise for a “rousing performance.” Thus, *Selah* was a signal for “Up!”¹² It is through König's interpretation of the term that we are introduced to varied conceptions in cultic presentation and recitation of the Psalter.¹³

Heinrich Grätz (1883)

Heinrich Grätz, a contemporary of Eduard König, proposed two notable meanings/uses of *Selah* laid out in his 1883 commentary, *Kritischer Commentar zu den Psalmen*. First, he suggested that *Selah* served as a marker to introduce a new paragraph as it signaled a transition in thought.¹⁴ Second, he surmised that it could have been a scribal corruption of the word שָׁחַח, which means “to destroy,” or “to come to an end.” Grätz's second interpretation is interesting because, as he suggested, a scribal corruption of the term could have altered the course of its use throughout the Psalter. With the corruption, he explained, it had become the “*crux interpretum*” and interjected among the Psalms as a cry to “destroy them” in reference to evil-doers. This theory would be fitting for a number of psalms containing *Selah* that would have included a passionate cry for the

¹² Friedrich Eduard König, *Historisch-Kritisches Lehrgebäude der Hebräischen Sprache*, vol. 2, part i (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1881), 539.

¹³ For a cultic reading of the psalms, see: Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

¹⁴ Heinrich Grätz, *Kritischer Commentar zu den Psalmen* (Breslau: Druck und Verlag von S. Schottlaender, 1883), i 93 *et seq.*

Lord to destroy evil-doers: 3:3; 7:6; 9:21; 32:5; 49:14; 52:5; 54:5; 55; 57:4, 7; 59:6; 62:5; 66:7; 82:2; 88:8; 89:46, 49; and Hab. 3:13. Heinrich Grätz's theory of scribal corruption warrants further study among the DSS and MT psalms containing *Selah*.

Charles Briggs (1899)

Charles Briggs' article entitled "An Inductive Study of *Selah*," is one of the most informative pieces available regarding meaning and use of the term. The article begins by listing all occurrences of *Selah* in the Masoretic Text, and then looks into how the term itself is spread out and where it is used. His study suggests that a final redactor did not insert the term since it only occurs in 39 of the 150 Psalms, suggesting that the term predates the final form of the Psalter. Interestingly, he also takes note that *Selah* is not used in the Hallel psalms, "those psalms which intrinsically were most suited for public worship."¹⁵

Briggs goes on to examine why 23 of the 39 *Selah* psalms are found in the Elohistic Psalter (Books I-III) along with a survey of the musical terminology embedded within the superscriptions of the *Selah* psalms, many of which are also obscure. Briggs concluded that *Selah* was likely an integral part of the Director's Psalter—a form of the Psalter in circulation that consisted of minor psalters that bore the names of David, Asaph, and Korah—in which an editor/redactor inserted musical terms chiefly to those psalms containing *Selah* for the purpose of liturgy.¹⁶

¹⁵ Charles Briggs, "An Inductive Study of *Selah*," in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 18 (Jan. 1899), 133.

¹⁶ C. Briggs, "An Inductive Study of *Selah*," 138.

Emilie Grace Briggs (1899)

Following on the heels of her father, Emilie Briggs expanded Charles Briggs' inductive study of *Selah*. In the same year, she surveyed three major pieces of literature, 1) the Old Testament; 2) Psalms of Solomon; and 3) Jewish liturgy. She even briefly addressed *Selah*'s presence in the LXX Psalter, mentioning B. Jacob's suggestions that the added instances of *Selah* in the LXX must have been a result of dittography.¹⁷ Adding to her father's research, she also mentions that the Hexapla's use of a fourth διάψαλμα at the close of verse 14 (in Habakkuk 3) is peculiar, as is the εις τέλος that takes the place of διάψαλμα in verse 13. However, she quotes B. Jacob again in saying that even the church fathers had no tradition about what *Selah* meant, thus they resigned that it would soon be forgotten.¹⁸

Despite the notion that *Selah* would be forgotten entirely, Briggs mentions some other instances of its use; in particular, the Talmud contains the term at the end of a prayer saying, "הַלֵּס דְּעוֹן צִנִּי," meaning something (*Selah*) that will endure/be pre-eminent unto the end.¹⁹ She then astutely observed that the Jews who arranged and composed liturgical works "regarded [*Selah*] as a component of the sacred text, and therefore never...omitted [it],"²⁰ thus solidifying *Selah*'s place in textual history.

All in all, her research goes far beyond that of her father who gave her a solid starting point. She examines *Selah* theories as an abbreviation, a strophical division, and a liturgical note, which included the possibility of being a musical note, call to prayer, or a marker for the close of a section. Briggs concluded that none of the interpretations

¹⁷ Emilie Grace Briggs, "הלל," in *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 16.1 (Oct. 1899), 2.

¹⁸ E. Briggs, "הלל," 10.

¹⁹ E. Briggs, "הלל," 7.

²⁰ E. Briggs, "הלל," 5.

proposed for *Selah* were convincing, which prompted further studies into the 20th century.

W. Emery Barnes (1917)

Barnes' 1917 publication in the *Journal of Theological Studies* offered a different interpretation from contemporary scholars. He rightly noted that all the theories presented up to this point were "beset with difficulty owing to the extraordinary distribution" of the word *Selah*.²¹ This term has commonly been associated with musical direction, of some sort or another, yet it has been conspicuously absent from those psalms suited best for public worship. Providing similar theories presented in the scholars' research preceding his, Barnes set out to prove that those considerations fell short of a proof that *Selah* functioned as a musical direction.²² With a new hypothesis in hand, Barnes concluded that *Selah* occurred in verses that had some peculiarity of text, which lent itself to Masoretic or Midrashic comment.²³ This, he called, a *Nota bene*; a mark which served to call attention to the context in which the word was embedded. Barnes laid out five categories in which the term *Selah* occurred with textual difficulties: 1) verses in which some peculiarity of spelling or pointing is found; 2) verses in which some peculiarity of grammatical form occurs; 3) verses in which there is a doubt among Jewish exegetes whether a pronoun is "holy" or "profane;" 4) verses that contain names or titles of God that have been subject to Midrashic comment; and 5) other instances not covered in the previous four categories which give rise to Midrashic comment.²⁴

²¹ W. Emery Barnes, "Selah-Some Facts and a Suggestion," in *Journal of Theological Studies* 18 (Jan. 1, 1917), 263.

²² Barnes, "Selah," 264.

²³ Barnes, "Selah," 265. See also: Israel W. Slotki, "A Lost Selah, and Psalm LXXXV 9 [8]," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 20 (April 1919), 250-251.

²⁴ Barnes, "Selah," 266-267.

While Barnes' work may have been influential to some, his reliance on the work of the Masoretes (which was finished around 1000 AD) and the Medieval Rabbis (who worked many years after the Hebrew text was stabilized) shows his unavoidable ignorance of the archaeological finds that would be unearthed in the future. *Selah* is not reliant on the pointing given by the Masoretes, nor on the advice or theological motives of the Sages. Rather, *Selah* had been employed in the Hebrew text well before the Masoretes got their hands on it, as is attested in the Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts. While it is plausible that it did function to alert the reader to something in the text, it is highly doubtful that it could have pointed out grammatical errors (before the establishment of vowel pointing) or have been subject to much later Midrashic exegesis. In addition to his theory, even though it reaches far beyond the realm of probability, he also acknowledges that *Selah* could have functioned in a musical capacity.

Robert Stieb (1939)

In 1939, Robert Stieb published two articles in *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* basing his interpretation of *Selah* on the root שָׁלַח. He believed that it signaled the hearers to lift up their eyes in order to repeat the verses that were being recited. In other words, *Selah* served as a repeat sign. Stieb, however, changed his position some years later to agree that *Selah* was the direction for *da capo* (a musical term meaning “from the beginning”); not too far a cry from his initial suggestion of repetition.²⁵

²⁵ Robert Stieb, “Die Versdubletten des Psalters,” in ZAW 57 (1939), 104. He later changed his position on the term's meaning, and his position can be found in *Deutsches Pfarrerblatt* 54 (1954).

B.D. Eerdmans (1947)

As שָׁלַח had become commonplace in understanding *Selah*, B.D. Eerdmans considered an alternate root—the Aramaic שָׁלַח. This root, meaning “to bow” or “to pray,” led Eerdmans to conclude that *Selah* was a summons to bow in prayer. His main source of bowing in prayer came from his study of the tractate *Tamid* in the Mishnah (c. AD 200), where he believed that every time *Selah* appeared in the text, the trumpets sounded and the people prostrated themselves.²⁶ Hans-Joachim Kraus, writing on Eerdmans’ position, noted that the Arabic word *salāt* was the prayer spoken while bowing.²⁷ Thus, using the help of cognate languages, Eerdmans settled that *Selah* was a call to bow in prayer. Cognate languages, however, can make for dangerous comparisons so Eerdmans’ position should remain under scrutiny.

Norman Snaith (1952)

Norman Snaith’s 1952 publication in *Vetus Testamentum* intricately compared the Masoretic Text of the Psalter to that of the LXX, noting where *Selah* does and does not occur. He also compared those findings with the views of ancient witnesses such as Jerome, Aquila, and Origen. His research broke down the *Selah* Psalms into three stanzas (three for each individual psalm)—trying to mesh them with the Mishnah tradition of the singing of daily psalms.²⁸ However, this proved difficult because, as Snaith noted, *Selah* does not follow a pattern across the Psalter. *Selah* occurrences generally conform to this tripartite division whereby the breaks are natural “or sometimes it has been forced on the

²⁶ B.D. Eerdmans, *The Hebrew Book of Psalms* (OTS 4; Leiden: Brill, 1947), 83-89.

²⁷ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Continental Commentary*, translated by Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 28-29.

²⁸ Norman Snaith, “Selah,” in *Vetus Testamentum* 2.1 (Jan. 1952), 51. See the Mishnah tradition in *Tamid* vii, 3.

psalm. The latter occurs in cases where it was convenient to break [pause] from a choral point of view.”²⁹

His research then brought him to the occurrences found in Habakkuk 3. This text being a prayer, Snaith believed that it was also sung in three stanzas—yet, according to Snaith, the editor of the book of Habakkuk “misplaced the *Selah* notations.”³⁰ Because of the term’s placement in the Psalter and Habakkuk, Snaith advocated a later insertion of the term by redactors of the Psalter, coming “into use in the Persian period in connection with the musical accompaniment in public worship to indicate the place of benedictions.”³¹ “The word is [also] found in the *Shemoneh Esreh* in the third (*Kedushath hashShem*) and (perhaps) the eighteenth (*Hoda’ah*) Benedictions. These belong to the earliest stratum of this ancient Jewish prayer.”³² Being sung in three stanzas, the Psalms provided the perfect opportunity to let the choir know when to “give thanks to the Lord because His mercy endures forever.”³³ Thus, Snaith advocated that *Selah* signaled a response (beginning in the 4th century B.C.) that was sung in the congregation – the place where the following praise was lifted up: וְדוּחַ הוֹהִיל יְכָ בּוֹט יְכָ מְלוּעַל וְדָסָּ׃³⁴

Bertrand Hemmerdinger (1971)

Hemmerdinger’s article, published in 1971, espouses a meaning for *Selah* that no other scholar had suggested, namely, that it is an Iranian loan word. His position was that the LXX’s translation of *Selah* as διάψαλμα was a supposition because the translators were not familiar with the meaning. He argued that since some of the Old Testament was

²⁹ Snaith, “Selah,” 43.

³⁰ Snaith, “Selah,” 53.

³¹ Snaith, “Selah,” 54.

³² Ibid.

³³ Snaith, “Selah,” 55.

³⁴ Snaith, “Selah,” 56.

written in Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the Persian Empire, that *Selah* was also a later addition—a fitting argument since the Persian language itself borrows many Iranian words.³⁵ Overall, Hemmerdinger offered interesting perspectives but he failed to arrive at a concrete answer regarding the meaning of *Selah*—proposing it was an Iranian loan word which the Aramaic speaking people understood, but whose meaning was subsequently lost to Greek speakers.³⁶

Eileen Schuller (1986)

Of all the scholars who set out to assign *Selah* meaning, Eileen Schuller is one of the most compelling. Although her 1986 doctoral dissertation does not deal directly with the meaning and use of *Selah*, she covers its occurrence over a few pages. As Schuller's work was conducted after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, her research on manuscript 4Q381 (Non-Canonical Psalms) added an element of historical significance to understanding *Selah*. *Selah* was found to generally occur according to the Masoretic Text tradition in the copying of biblical scrolls at Qumran. However, in 11QPsAp^a (Apocryphal Psalms), *Selah* was also found in Psalm 91 (Book IV)—at a place where it is lacking in both the MT and LXX tradition. These occurrences, as seen in 4Q381 and 11QPsAp^a, in the DSS took the dating of available manuscripts back some 1,000 years thus making concrete *Selah*'s inclusion in biblical and non-biblical texts.

In Schuller's edition, *Selah* is found twice (possibly 5x) in 4Q381—a non-biblical manuscript.³⁷ As a non-biblical composition, Schuller recognizes that *Selah*'s use is noteworthy since “the use of this term in Persian/Hellenistic compositions is not a

³⁵ Bertrand Hemmerdinger, “Selah,” in *Journal of Theological Studies* 22 (1971), 152-153.

³⁶ Hemmerdinger, “Selah,” 153.

³⁷ Eileen M. Schuller, *Non-Canonical Psalms from Qumran: A Pseudepigraphic Collection* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 44.

common phenomenon.”³⁸ All in all, Schuller assumed that *Selah* was most likely employed in non-biblical texts in order to imitate the biblical form, i.e. to relate it more closely to the Davidic collection. As psalms were traditionally prayed, Schuller surmised that the term somehow had been seen as a fitting conclusion, referencing its continued use today as a closing statement.³⁹

Contribution of Current Research

The aforementioned positions contain familiar liturgical elements, with the exception of Heinrich Grätz and Eileen Schuller. Grätz’s observations were ahead of his time as he teased out textual matters in regard to phonology that would later be considered in the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls. And, while Schuller’s study did not focus entirely on *Selah*, she noted its placement and possible reconstruction in 4Q381. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947—1956) and new finds in archaeology have shed new light on the text of the Hebrew Bible as a whole; and Schuller’s work helped lend a hand in understanding how the term was employed at Qumran. Emilie Briggs’ and Norman Snaith’s research also deserve a place of prominence due to their methodical and meticulous work that encompasses a more comprehensive corpus of texts that contain the term before the discovery of the Scrolls. Their research should be seen as the beginnings of a literary analysis on the subject. Nevertheless, the necessity for a comprehensive survey of *Selah* remains.

The scope of this study extends far beyond that of previous scholars due to notable archaeological finds unearthed since the publication of the previously mentioned

³⁸ Schuller, *Non-Canonical Psalms*, 45.

³⁹ Schuller references L. Levine’s *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981), 139. She even says, on page 58 of her *Non-Canonical Psalms*, that even contemporary prayers for the State of Israel still end with, “אמן סלה.”

works. Despite Eileen Schuller having given much attention to *Selah* in her 1986 publication, this research seeks to present a comprehensive survey of the use of *Selah* in antiquity (such as the Septuagint, Dead Sea Scrolls, and Aramaic magic bowls) as well as a psalm-by-psalm analysis of *Selah* in the Masoretic Text—contributing a slightly different angle to *Selah*’s use.

Methodology

This research will try to take cognizance of various approaches to the Psalter, but will focus on the final form of the MT-150 Psalter as a canonical unit. The language of the Psalter shaped much of the church’s liturgy and significant aspects of its hymnody giving shape to the individuals’ addresses to God.⁴⁰ However, the Psalter wasn’t intended to be read only one way. Readings which sense a loose trajectory in the Psalter don’t undercut or dilute the readings of individual psalms, but serves to foster the roles that “Israelites and God should ideally play in an ongoing covenantal relationship in a world where good and evil coexist.”⁴¹ Thus, “a serious reading of the Psalter requires, at minimum, a sympathetic consideration of the present arrangement.”⁴²

Selah’s placement among texts from antiquity will be examined in consecutive chapters. First, the Masoretic Text (Psalms and Habakkuk) will be evaluated, as the MT is the basis of this study. Although numerous editions of the MT Psalter existed in the 1st century AD, the MT contains the fullest preserved material from the Second Temple

⁴⁰ R.W. Reifsnnyder, “Psalm 24,” in *Interpretation* 51.3 (1997), 284.

⁴¹ Davida Charney, “Maintaining Innocence Before a Divine Healer: Deliberative Rhetoric in Psalm 22, Psalm 17, and Psalm 7,” in *Biblical Interpretation* 21.1 (2013), 63.

⁴² Robert L. Cole, *Psalms 1-2: Gateway to the Psalter* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press; 2013), 157.

period.⁴³ Second, the Septuagint Psalter (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew text) will be analyzed for similarities and differences that occur against the MT Psalter. Third, an overview of the Dead Sea Scrolls that contain *Selah*, both biblical and non-biblical, will be assessed. Biblical scrolls include 4QPs^a, 4QPs^c, 11QPs^a, and 11QPs^d. Biblical compositions that will be touched upon from sites outside Qumran include Psalms from Naḥal Ḥever (5/6Hev1b), Greek Minor Prophets scroll (8HevXIIgr), Psalms from Masada (Mas1e), and the Minor Prophets scroll from Wadi Murabba‘at (Mur88). Non-biblical compositions from Qumran will also be surveyed, which include 4Q381 (Non-Canonical Psalms B), 11Q11 (Apocryphal Psalms), and 11Q13 (Melchizedek Text).

Further, pseudepigraphal texts such as the Odes and Psalms of Solomon will be briefly touched upon in remaining chapters, along with notable archaeological finds such as incantations and inscriptions from the ancient Near East that contain *Selah*. Inscription locations include Ein-Gedi, Hammath Gader, Ḥorvat ‘Ammudim, the Temple Mount, Kfar Alma, Ein Nashot, and Gerasa. Incantation bowls from Judea and Babylonia will also be evaluated as notable archaeological finds from the late Second Temple period to early medieval period.

In the concluding chapter, the findings from the MT, LXX, DSS, pseudepigraphal works, and incantations and inscriptions will be synthesized in summary form. The goal

⁴³ There is a continual debate among modern scholars of the closing of the biblical canon. Lawrence Schiffman notes, “The Torah and Prophets and most of the Writings were fully canonized [by the time of the writing of the DSS]. Only a few books of the Writings remained in dispute, and their status would be resolved early in the mishanic period, soon after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E.” Their status was questioned, not the texts themselves. Ref: Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their True Meaning for Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 169. See also, Timothy H. Lim, *Formation of the Jewish Canon* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 15. Lim says that the hypothesis is that “throughout the post-exilic period up to around 100 CE, there was not one official canon accepted by all Jews; there existed a plurality of collections of scriptures that were authoritative for different communities.”

is to reveal the diversity of *Selah*'s use in antiquity and to reveal the compositional evidence that shapes the way one will view this obscure term as its use comes to light.⁴⁴

All texts will be evaluated through the lens of compositional and delimitation criticism. Both delimitation and compositional criticism seek out different aspects of intentional arrangement in the Hebrew Bible. Delimitation criticism hasn't garnered widespread attention in broad academic circles until recent years (i.e. the last two decades). Its purpose is straightforward—to seek out ancient unit delimiters, such as *petuhot* and *setumot* (major and minor section divisions), by means of *vacats* (empty spaces) within ancient manuscripts.⁴⁵ The proponents of delimitation criticism agree that the authors or editors of these texts purposely included unit delimiters in order to preserve a proper reading. And, scholars of the Hebrew Bible today can discern which parts of Scripture were read as units by recognizing the delimiters' presence within the texts.⁴⁶ Thus, spacing in manuscripts will be of primary focus in this work along with other textual indicators such as stichographic arrangement of the psalms containing *Selah*.

Material Philology will also be used as a means to look at the relationships in light of previous texts and manuscripts surveyed; these modes of critique will be elaborated on in subsequent chapters. The goal of Material Philology is to look at the

⁴⁴ It is worth spelling out briefly the value of gaining a better understanding of how *Selah* is used throughout the Psalter. The history of this obscure term has lent a hand in suggesting the Psalter is of no greater importance than music, so the value of interacting on a literary level with this term can address past and present questions with solid evidence from the texts that we now know contain it. As more discoveries are made, other uses of *Selah* are brought to light. This inter-textual study will, hopefully, provide a new perspective for modern readers of this all-too-important book.

⁴⁵ "It stands to reason that some kind of sense division was already embedded in the earliest biblical scrolls—probably spacing," in Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (Atlanta: SBL, 2004), 155.

⁴⁶ For more in-depth information about delimitation criticism see the Pericope series, one of which is: Marjo C.A. Korpel and Josef M. Oesch, eds., *Delimitation Criticism: A New Tool in Biblical Scholarship* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2000), as well as a section in Emanuel Tov's *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert*, 145-164.

relationships between the text and such features as form, layout, para-textual markers, and surrounding context—the ultimate goal to be anchored in the reality of the subject matter, not reliant on historical background.⁴⁷ Using ancient delimiters set out in the text, one can combine the lexical and thematic links found through compositional criticism and its complements to determine a stronger intentionality throughout the biblical Psalter. This is one way I will demonstrate *Selah*’s use throughout the MT Psalter.

⁴⁷ Matthew J. Driscoll, “The Words on the Page: Thoughts on Philology, Old and New,” in *Creating the Medieval Saga: Versions, Variability, and Editorial Interpretations of Old Norse Saga Literature*, ed. by Judy Quinn and Emily Lethbridge (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2010), 85-102.

CHAPTER TWO: SOURCES CONTAINING *SELAH*

Scholars have offered many interpretations for the meaning of *Selah* based on available evidence. Three sources contain the term where its placement reveals fluidity in its use throughout the Second Temple period. The Masoretic Text (MT), Septuagint (LXX), and Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) make up the primary sources for understanding how the term was employed in a literary context. Further occurrences of the term have emerged from lesser-known sources in antiquity such as pseudepigraphal works, as well as incantations and inscriptions. The primary texts surveyed here will be expanded in corresponding chapters.

Masoretic Text

The structure of the Hebrew Psalter has been the subject of discussion for many years so it is worth mentioning before an analysis of *Selah* is to take place. The Psalter is the result of a long history that “began in the festivals and rituals of Israel during the era of the kingdoms, if not earlier.”¹ In the world of an oral culture, the Psalter reached new heights when its text was standardized into the 150 MT-psalms that we have today.

Psalms studies were radically shaped by Hermann Gunkel in the early 1900’s through his tireless effort to categorize individual psalms according to genre, and the *Sitz im Leben* (life setting) that gave rise to each individual psalm. His work became

¹ James L. Mays, “The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation,” in *Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. by J. Clinton McCann Jr. (JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 17.

paramount as scholars began to collect and discuss the psalms according to various genres. A student of Gunkel, Sigmund Mowinckel, made great strides in Psalms studies that began to emphasize the ancient Near Eastern cultic background of individual psalms. Almost all of the work completed on the Psalms reflected their influence. However, the development from cult to book, from tight genres to the loosening of genres, from ritual instruction to instructional use, appears to assume a contrast between Israelite religion and postexilic Judaism (i.e. James Mays' observations) when they are actually interrelated.² A discontinuity of Israelite religion and later Judaism would harbor assumptions that are unhelpful in the understanding of the Psalter's development (and adjustments made in the realities of Jewish life in a Hellenistic environment). So while the Psalter had undergone liturgical changes throughout later Judaism in light of its environment, its text remained largely stabilized (and sacred) in the MT-150 Psalter.

Background and Composition of the MT Psalter

"Poetic language certainly occupies a rank of its own among verbal expressions. Form, style, structure, and contents of cultivated verbal articulation do indicate 'higher' levels of organization and meaning."³ This intricate language of the Psalms has traditionally been viewed according to the form-critical guidelines set forth by Hermann Gunkel (1933) and Sigmund Mowinckel (1962). Gunkel's classic formulation of form-critical categories for the biblical psalms presumed that those literary "types" originated in a particular *Sitz im Leben* (life setting). Although this approach permeated Psalms studies

² Walter Brueggemann, "Response to James L. Mays, 'The Question of Context,'" in *Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. by J. Clinton McCann Jr. (JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 32.

³ Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "The Dynamics of Praise in the Ancient Near East, or Poetry and Politics," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. by J. Clinton McCann Jr. (JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 27-28.

for decades, the fact that many psalms in the Hebrew Psalter did not fit within a specific historical background still loomed. Gunkel's dismissal of intentional arrangement has lingered, even to studies today:

Daß die Anordnung der Psalmen nicht aus einem sachlichen Einteilungsgrunde erfolgt ist, ist leicht einzusehen. Nach den einzelnen Gattungen sind sie jedenfalls nicht zusammengestellt worden...Auch nach den in den Überschriften genannten Verfasseramen ist das Ganze nicht geordnet worden...Da einfache klare Gründe für die Anordnung der Psalmen nicht nachzuweisen sind....⁴

Gunkel's focus on the genre of individual psalms and their *Sitz im Leben* paved the way for Sigmund Mowinckel's emphasis on the ancient Near Eastern cultic backgrounds of psalms. "Almost all research published on the Psalter, since the publication of Gunkel and Mowinckel's works, has reflected their influence. The focus has been on forms and (cultic) *Sitz im Leben*, with little interest in the question of inter-psalm links."⁵ The most scholarship has done by way of organization of the Psalter was the division into five books, and the various collections within these books, i.e. Elohistic Psalter (pss. 42-83), Asaph psalms (73-83), Korah psalms (42-49, 84-85, and 87-88).⁶ Gunkel even seemed skeptical of his own work (in the quote above) as he noted that clear reasons could not be demonstrated for the order of the MT-Psalter. In an interesting twist, Roland E. Murphy (a proponent of form criticism) said, "Long ago it was recognized that there was a

⁴ Hermann Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen: Die Gattungen der religiösen Lyrik Israels*, completed by J. Begrich (Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, Ergänzungsband zur II Abteilung; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1933), 434-436.

⁵ Angela Kim Harkins, 'Hymns, Prayers, and Psalms,' in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. by John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 755; David M. Howard, Jr., "Editorial Activity in the Psalter: A State-of-the-Field Survey," in *Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOT 159; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 53. Examples of scholars who still follow Gunkel and Mowinckel's influence are: W. Oesterley, *A Fresh Approach to the Psalms* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937); E.A. Leslie, *The Psalms: Translated and Interpreted in the Light of Hebrew Life and Worship* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1949); A.A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (2 vols; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972); P.C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (WBC 19; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983).

⁶ Howard, Jr., "Editorial Activity in the Psalter," 54.

common *Formensprache* [design language] in the vocabulary and phraseology of the psalms, but the context was sought in historical circumstances rather than in linguistic or literary phenomena.”⁷ Lending credence to another school of thought, Murphy hinted at a compositional approach.

Reading the Psalter in a historical or cult setting had its benefits in psalms studies (and some may argue it still does); however, this system propagated by Hermann Gunkel and Sigmund Mowinckel had not made advances in the analysis of the Psalter in its final form.⁸ In other words, although the work of Gunkel and Mowinckel was undoubtedly foundational to the study of the Psalms, it did not promote an integrated reading of the psalms that, in turn, “was no longer an adequate basis from which to consider our current situation in scholarship.”⁹ The move away from the historical *Sitz im Leben* of individual psalms to the compositional approach emphasized the literary, linguistic, and compositional evidence that pervades and shapes the Psalter.

The Rise of Compositional Criticism

In his 1979 seminal study, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, Brevard Childs sought intentionality in the arrangement of the Hebrew Psalter.¹⁰ His student, Gerald Henry Wilson, paved the way for an intentional unity to emerge from the grips of form criticism that had so long held the Psalter in its grasp. Wilson’s *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* proposed a literary context based on thematic grouping of psalms, as well as clear indications of editorial activity that revealed a message superseding that of any

⁷ Roland E. Murphy, “Reflections on Contextual Interpretation of the Psalms,” in *Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOT 159; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 21.

⁸ Brevard Childs, “Reflections on the Modern Study of the Psalms,” in *Magnalia Dei* (1976), 378.

⁹ Brueggemann, “Response to James L. Mays,” 29.

¹⁰ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979), 512-513.

earlier collections of Psalms such as the Elohistic Psalter (Pss. 42-83) and the Director's Psalter (55 pss from middle Greek period with title לַמְנַצֵּחַ).¹¹ He showed that the book divisions were real, editorially induced divisions (i.e. not accidental), that hallelujah psalms indicated conclusions of segments while *hodu* psalms introduced segments, and that there existed thematic correspondences between the beginning and ending psalms in some books.¹² This work has resulted in many scholarly pursuits in the last thirty years, but it hasn't been without criticism.

Reading the Psalms as an intentional arrangement, as a book instead of a haphazard collection of hymns, has drawn some concerns from the scholarly community. But why is reading the Psalms as a unity so frowned upon? Michael K. Snearly, in *The Return of the King: Messianic Expectation in Book V of the Psalter*, rightly notes that editorial activity takes place all of the time—for example, newspapers take articles and “juxtapose them in such a way as to accomplish a certain purpose” just as “editors of anthologies arrange individual texts to be read together, some of which were composed over a period of centuries, and they do so with intentionality.”¹³ Thus, since the aforementioned pieces are read as literary units, why not read the Psalter as a literary unit? The Psalter itself was also incorporated into the canon of Hebrew Scriptures, so if this is the only piece of literature that is not read as a book, in an entire canon of “books,” then something must be amiss. And although the Psalter is poetic, its status as poetry does not dismiss its literary function in the corpus of Hebrew Scripture. The critics of this

¹¹ Gerald Henry Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 11.

¹² Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1985), 199. Wilson's final shape observations have similar elements we can relate to *Selah*. If it was Wilson's goal of showing purpose in the arrangement of the MT-Psalter, then the placement of the psalms containing *Selah* could possibly be on purpose as well.

¹³ Michael K. Snearly, *The Return of the King: Messianic Expectation in Book V of the Psalter* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 21.

method (Roland Murphy, John Goldingay, Tremper Longman III, among others) either tend to favor form criticism, or argue that reading the Psalter as an intentional arrangement passes as subjectivism, or shallow imposition as suggested by Longman: “The fact that this arrangement was not noticed before 1985 should make us pause and suggest that it was imposed rather than described from what is there.”¹⁴

Rather than imposition, compositional criticism’s proponents study the Psalter on a purely textual basis, which allows for disengagement with historical background and genre of individual psalms. Twenty years ago, David M. Howard Jr. (among others) began to study textual links such as key words, theme connections, and structure in his work, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*.¹⁵ Howard’s method consisted of looking at key words between psalms, which would indicate the author’s intentionality and thought behind linking two (or more) psalms together. Next, he sought thematic similarities such as words with a common semantic range, i.e. those used for praise vs. those of lament. As for structure, Howard compared the internal structure and function of psalms to see if there were any parallels. Howard’s contribution to compositional criticism has undoubtedly been influential, yet there is also another whose work has been influential in advancing unity within the Psalter. Robert L. Cole’s *Psalms 1-2: Gateway to the Psalter*, while only covering the introductory psalms, provokes scholarly interest in the minutiae that pervade and shape the Psalter. Cole notes that there is abundant linguistic evidence from the outset that serves to provide a shape and coherent reading right from the very

¹⁴ Tremper Longman III, “The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and the Writings,” in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. by Stanley E. Porter (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 24. John Goldingay completed his three-volume work on the Psalms, published by Baker in 2006, without mentioning anything about the shape or shaping of the Hebrew Psalter, except to say he wasn’t going to pay any attention to it (p.37 in *Psalms 1-41*).

¹⁵ David M. Howard Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93-100* (UCSD Biblical and Judaic Studies 5; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 100.

beginning.¹⁶ For instance, Cole demonstrates intentionality in the introductory psalms (1-2) through lexical repetition of the word ירשא (Ps.1:1) which forms an inclusio with Psalm 2, as well as the term לע which occurs throughout the first two psalms indicating complete contrasts between the wicked and the anointed.¹⁷ These lexical, semantic, and phonological links that Cole speaks of in his work permeate the entire Psalter, setting it on a future-oriented trajectory as the beginning and end reveal the need for divine intervention in the lives of a covenant people.¹⁸ These two scholars are just a very small fraction of recent scholarship that have taken Childs' work and built on it. As Childs noted that the Psalter was a book to be read instead of performed, he said, "The psalms were collected to be used for liturgy *and* for study, both by a corporate body *and* by individuals, to remind of the great redemptive acts of the past as well as to anticipate the hopes of the future."¹⁹ Thus, the relationships between individual texts through linguistic and thematic ties were one way to deepen the Jew and Christian's view of the God of the Bible. "Given [the Psalter's] dual status as both a coherent whole and a collection of individual texts, perhaps the question that needs further examination is how the ongoing usage of the individual psalms in the lives of believing communities has interacted (and continues to interact) with the way that such communities have viewed the Psalter's

¹⁶ Robert L. Cole, *Psalms 1-2: Gateway to the Psalter* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 3. Cole's work begins the advancement of reading the Psalter in its present canonical shape, with purpose as a literary masterpiece of the scribes who composed it.

¹⁷ Cole, *Psalms 1-2*, 47.

¹⁸ Cole, and Gianni Barbiero, among others recognize an eschatological perspective that emerges as one studies textual links in the Hebrew Psalter. See Gianni Barbiero, *Das erste Psalmenbuch als Einheit: Eine synchrone Analyse von Psalm 1-41* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), 34; and Robert L. Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III: Psalms 73-89* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2000).

¹⁹ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 522.

overall literary shape and theological purpose.”²⁰ From Joachim Becker’s call for “buchredaktionelle Gesichtspunkte” to Wilson’s intentional arrangement and editorial purpose in the Psalter, the landscape of Psalter studies has been changing with fervent influence.²¹

The Psalter’s Double Identity

The Psalter’s double identity as liturgy and literature emerged with an interpretive strategy:

They [the Psalms] were not to be interpreted as a self-standing book of prayers or praises, anymore than Proverbs was to be a self-standing collection of wise sayings. Both were adjuncts to the rest of Scripture, to be read in the light of other books, to be interpreted and studied, in at least some cases to be connected to incidents in the narrated lives of their alleged authors—and *hence*, not wholly sufficient for the congregation’s (or individual’s) needs in worship.²²

The Psalter thus served as a text for teaching *and* worship, in which the first two psalms introduced common themes that occupy much of the book; themes such as 1) questions of how individual life and historical destiny are to turn out, 2) the polarity of the wicked and righteous, and 3) the polarity of Zion and messiah and people of God versus the nations.²³

Even with the rise of critical scholarship, relationships between individual psalms and the entire Psalter’s structure remained limited. Franz Delitzsch studied consecutive psalms and remarked, “that psalms with similar prominent thoughts, or even with only markedly similar passages, especially at the beginning and the end, are thus strung

²⁰ Harry P. Nasuti, “The Editing of the Psalter and the Ongoing Use of the Psalms: Gerald Wilson and the Question of Canon,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms: The Current State of Scholarship*, ed. by Nancy deClaissé-Walford (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 17.

²¹ Joachim Becker, *Wege der Psalmenexegese* (SBS 78; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1966).

²² James L. Kugel, “Topics in the History of the Spirituality of the Psalms,” in *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible through the Middle Ages*, ed. by A. Green (World Spirituality 13; New York: Crossroad, 1986), 136.

²³ Mays, “The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation,” 16.

together, may be observed throughout the whole collection.”²⁴ J.A. Alexander’s work was also dedicated to the coherence within the Psalter as he saw an overall messianic motif, with the Davidic covenant given a prominent place.²⁵ Steadier streams of works have emerged in recent years concerning links and motifs in the Psalter. M.D. Goulder looked at the liturgical aspects of collections in the Psalter remarking that the Psalter likely contained elements that were rationally ordered.²⁶ J.P. Brennan’s work on Book V of the Psalter revealed governing principles of the final collection “as literary, not liturgical.” And, Brennan remarked:

A careful reading indicates that the Psalter has not developed in a haphazard and arbitrary way, but has been carefully woven together in such a manner that previously independent compositions, or smaller collections of such compositions, now comment upon or respond to one another. Hence, for a proper understanding of the Psalter it is not enough to study each of its 150 components in the historical context from which it originally sprang. They must all be studied in their relationship to each other, since all of them together convey more than they do if looked at separately.²⁷

Not alone in his pursuit to understand the Psalter as a coherent whole, noted scholarship from Brevard Childs also focused on the final form of the Psalter. Childs believed there was an eschatological motif that pervaded the Psalter. He stated that,

Although the royal psalms arose originally in a peculiar historical setting of ancient Israel which had received its form from a common mythopoetic milieu, they were treasured in the Psalter for a different reason, namely as a witness to the messianic hope which looked for the consummation of God’s kingship through His Anointed One.²⁸

²⁴ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. by F. Bolton (3 vols; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1881, reprint 1975), 21.

²⁵ Howard, Jr., “Editorial Activity in the Psalter,” 55; J.A. Alexander, *The Psalms* (3 vols; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 6th edition, 1865), xiv-xv.

²⁶ M.D. Goulder, *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah* (JSOTSup 20; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 8.

²⁷ J.P. Brennan, “Some Hidden Harmonies in the Fifth Book of the Psalms,” in *Essays in Honor of Joseph P. Brennan*, ed. by R.F. McNamara (Rochester, NY: St. Bernard’s Seminary, 1976), 126-127.

²⁸ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 517.

Childs thus concluded that the royal psalms were strategically placed throughout the Psalter in order to underline the kingship of God as a major theme throughout the entire collection.²⁹ J. Reindl, while skeptical about royal motifs in the Psalter, notes his approval that another principle is at work other than just the liturgical. He argues that the final redactors of the Psalter were not a part of the temple singers, but rather belonged to a group of pious scribes who “pursued the ideal picture painted of Jesus Sirach (Sir. 39.1-11).”³⁰ These were the beginnings of a literary rationale that ushered in the threshold of a new season in Psalms studies; a season that sought to appreciate the literary genius while also esteeming the liturgical function of the Psalter.

Selah in the Masoretic Text

If one considers the MT Psalter as a collective whole instead of individual parts, *Selah* becomes less mysterious as one considers its placement. *Selah* occurs in groups of psalms attributed to specific people. Many psalms containing *Selah* are superscripted with the term לַדָּוִד, which is most likely an attribution to David. Other *Selah* psalms are superscripted with “the sons of Korah” or the name “Asaph.” However, the superscriptions have been debated and are not the focus of this research. As noted earlier, *Selah* is surprisingly absent from the Hallel psalms—those psalms used for praise and worship as previously mentioned in reference to Charles Briggs’ observations on the subject.³¹

²⁹ Howard, Jr., “Editorial Activity in the Psalter,” 59; Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 515-516.

³⁰ J. Reindl, “Weisheitliche Bearbeitung von Psalmen: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der Sammlung des Psalter,” in *Congress Volume, Vienna 1980*, ed. by J.A. Emerton (VTSup 32; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 340-341; Howard, Jr., “Editorial Activity in the Psalter,” 60.

³¹ Brown, et al., *Hebrew Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 699-700.

Contextually, *Selah* is often found with the words אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים before it; however, at other times (even in doxologies) within the biblical text, *Selah* does not appear where it would be expected. For example, *Selah* is found four times in Psalm 89 (a royal psalm, and a major seam of the Psalter) but it is not found at the very end of the psalm, which ends with a doxology of אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים . *Selah* also does not occur with the doxological formula in Pss. 41, 71, and 89. Interestingly, these are the seams of the first three books, which make up the Elohist Psalter (Books II-III)—where *Selah* is found most often. It could possibly be argued *Selah* may be found at the seam of Book IV but אֱלֹהִים does not occur as a doublet at the end of that psalm.³²

Selah psalms as a whole, however, could be used as a structuring device instead of a musical note or as part of a doxological formula.³³ As noted previously, Psalms 1 & 2 have generally been recognized as the introduction to the Psalter, in part due to their lack of superscription.³⁴ Psalm 2, according to widely accepted form-critical genres, is a royal psalm, and the unit (Psalms 1 & 2) is directly followed by two *Selah* psalms—Psalms 3 & 4. Royal psalms are known to occur at the seams of books, and Book III is no exception; we find Psalm 89 closes out Book III with a royal psalm, this psalm also happens to be a *Selah* psalm. As we delve further into the Psalter, Book V contains the last two *Selah* psalms, 140 & 143. These two psalms are close to the end of the entire

³² *Selah* does not occur at the end of Book IV, yet it would be expected if this term were used in a doxological format. The seams of the Psalter would be important places for it to occur.

³³ These important structural psalms containing *Selah* would be 3&4, 89, and 140&143. These would form the basis of a general structure of introduction, body, and conclusion while the other psalms containing this term would be evaluated in light of minor psalters.

³⁴ Scholars include those mentioned previously: Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen*; Gerald Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*; David Mitchell, *Message of the Psalter*; and Matthias Millard, *Die Komposition*; as well as Luis Alonso Schökel, *Salmos I. Salmos 1-72: Traducción, introducciones y comentario* (Estella, Navarra: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2002); Jean-Marie Auwers, “Le voies de l’exégèse canonique du Psautier,” in *The Biblical Canons* (BETL 163; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003); and Amos Hakham, *Sefer Tehillim* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1990); among others.

Psalter and immediately precede a royal psalm, Psalm 144. Psalms 146-150, believed by scholars to be the conclusion to the Psalms in the MT (a doxology of sorts) closes the MT Psalter with language similar to that of the opening in Psalms 1 and 2. This closing section does not contain superscriptions either, except for the word “Hallelujah.” Thus, the *Selah* notation could be functioning in a way to bring structure to the Psalter, giving it an introduction, body, and conclusion. If this is indeed a structural device there are more questions to ask. As we progress, I will look at how this structure plays out in the individual contexts of the psalms containing *Selah*.

While it is entirely possible that *Selah* functioned in the traditional sense as a liturgical prompt at one point, it is most likely this wasn’t its only function. One of the characteristic features of the function of *Selah* is that, in a wide variety of texts that have been surveyed, it is an indicator of a pause in the text. If *Selah* is functioning to indicate a pause in the text, the question to ask is, “Why?” Why does *Selah* occur in these particular passages? It is worth suggesting that wherever a pause occurs in the text that there is something to reflect upon, and that has been the notion of the ancients on the subject.³⁵

Selah functioning as a pause would also be comparable to what musicians call a *fermata*. A *fermata* functions as a pause in music, usually written above the measure to signify just that. It can also be used to bring attention to a particular note in the music.³⁶ If this particular mark in musical compositions regularly interrupts the tempo of the music, we also find that *Selah* certainly serves to interrupt or mark something in the

³⁵ The liturgical prompt has been explored through the Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts where *vacats* occur. Pausal notions are apparent in many encyclopedias and lexicons. See Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon (Baker Book House, 1979).

³⁶ The *fermata* marks a pause in the musical composition; it serves to extend a note’s duration or extend a silent period. This mark serves to interrupt the normal tempo of a composition.

Hebrew text of the Psalter and Habakkuk. A marker for meaning could potentially impact the way we read the Psalter altogether.

In sum, preliminary conclusions regarding the meaning and function of *Selah* have laid a steady foundation to build upon. However, through the use of compositional criticism, noteworthy patterns will be revealed as we progress through the texts that contain *Selah* in the following chapter.

Septuagint

The Septuagint (LXX) was the first translation of the Hebrew Bible into another language, which “marks a milestone in human culture.”³⁷ However, this Greek text was translated from a Hebrew text tradition that was not always identical to the MT tradition we have today. That is, some of the fragmentary biblical texts from Qumran attest to a Hebrew text tradition underlying the LXX (the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX).³⁸ For example, some copies of Jeremiah found at Qumran reflect a MT tradition (4QJer^a and 4QJer^c), while two other copies (4QJer^b and 4QJer^d) present a version that is 13 percent shorter than what bibles today contain—serving as an exemplar of a differing Hebrew text tradition.³⁹ In other words, the LXX is the main ancient witness that occasionally reflects different compositional stages of the books included in the MT.⁴⁰

Due to the fact that the Greek differs from the Hebrew, we must be careful how we compare the two works, as it is important to remember, “the translation between any

³⁷ Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 19.

³⁸ James Vanderkam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 12-15.

³⁹ James Vanderkam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance for Understanding the Bible, Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 134.

⁴⁰ Emanuel Tov, “1.3.1.1.1 Septuagint,” in *Textual History of the Hebrew Bible*, edited by Armin Lange. Consulted online on 23 September 2017 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2452-4107_thb_COM_0010010000>

two languages always involves a degree of interpretation.”⁴¹ Karen Jobes and Moisés Silva note:

The translators who produced the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible were also interpreters who came to the text with the theological and political prejudices of their time and thus had to deal with hermeneutical issues similar to those we face today.⁴²

If translating is an act of interpretation (as linguists suggest) rather than a simple transfer of meaning, “a Greek interpretation of a Hebrew original can be expected to reflect what the translator understood the Hebrew text to mean.”⁴³ Thus, the translators were undoubtedly influenced by their contemporary situations and translated in light of that, ultimately resulting in what may not have been what the author of the Hebrew intended.⁴⁴ This is precisely the issue we face when studying *Selah* as διάψαλμα in the Septuagint.

Διάψαλμα

One would find it easy to fall back on the notion of uncertainty surrounding the Hebrew term, *Selah*, and simply conclude that διάψαλμα was the result of adding two Greek words (διά + ψαλμος) together to mean “through the psalm.” However, διάψαλμα is actually derived from the verb διάψαλλω, whereby the “διά” of the verb is used as a means to intensify its rendering. The Greek ending –μα is often used to indicate the

⁴¹ Jobes and Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, 21. See also: Timothy Michael Law, *When God Spoke Greek* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 22-23; he says, “...even if one is competent in the language, various interpretations can arise—some plausible, some absurd. We see this at times in the Septuagint, where it appears the Greek translators were confused by the Hebrew before them and tried to guess the meaning.”

⁴² Jobes and Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, 3.

⁴³ Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 21. Pietersma goes on to say, “The end result is therefore inevitably to some degree a commentary written at a specific historical time and place by an individual person, whose understanding of the Hebrew will often have been at variance with our own, though at times perhaps equally viable.”

⁴⁴ Ibid.

action of the verb. Thus, διάψαλμα may have been the Greek scribes' understanding of *Selah* as a pause for music in the context of liturgy.⁴⁵

The Septuagint's use of διάψαλμα is more widespread when compared to *Selah*'s placement throughout the MT. The Greek translation lacks διάψαλμα in certain verses while it also has an additional διάψαλμα in new places altogether. For example, the LXX has an additional διάψαλμα in Psalms 2:2; 34:11; 50:15; 68:14; 80:8; and 94:15 while it is lacking in 3:9; 9:17; 24:10; 46:12; 88:11. Questions concerning the meaning of διάψαλμα still abound, and its use in the psalms that differ from the MT's placement will be studied in a later chapter.

Dead Sea Scrolls

Deemed one of the most significant finds in archaeological history, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls between 1947 and 1956 has paved the way in understanding ancient Judaism and its views on the vast array of biblical and non-biblical texts. Discovered at the site of a religious community, the DSS are believed to have been written by the Essenes (though there exists a continual debate among scholars). Biblical and non-biblical scrolls shed light on a text in flux, and the beginnings of the stabilization of an accepted corpus of writings, which would later become known as the Hebrew Bible. For this study, the Dead Sea Scrolls lend new insight into the use of *Selah* as extant manuscripts disclose a use of the term previously undiscovered.

⁴⁵ Many Greek lexicons note that διάψαλμα is the same as ψάλλω, which renders the term as playing on a musical instrument, or a change in singing voices. The following sources note that the term means, "vocis inter canendum mutatio," and "pfallo, fidibus cano." See: Joannem Manfrè, *Cornelii Schrevelii Lexicon Manuale Graeco-Latinum et Latino-Graecum* (Typis Seminarii, 1715), 177; and Teodorico Morello, *Lexicon Graeco-Prosodiacum* (London: Joannes Smith, 1815), 1087. The Liddell and Scott lexicon also notes that the term ψάλλω means "to touch sharply," or "to pluck" (p.718).

Selah in the Dead Sea Scrolls

There are more copies of manuscripts containing psalms among the scrolls than any other biblical book, yet only a handful of these fragmentary scrolls contain *Selah*: 4QPs^a, 4QPs^c, 11QPs^a, and 11QPs^d. In addition, several other biblical manuscripts containing *Selah* were found at other sites in the Judean Desert such as Wadi Murabba‘at, Naḥal Ḥever, and Masada. Further instances of *Selah* are reconstructed in 4QPs^e, 4QPs^j, 4QPs^p, and 11QPs^{e?}. All of these are manuscripts containing psalms also attested in MT and LXX Psalters though the range of psalms preserved varies at Qumran and it is not always possible to ascertain the full extent of each scroll. These scrolls are written in the traditional Hebrew square script and are dated to the Herodian period (30 BC – AD 68) with the exception of 4QPs^a, which is Hasmonean (150-30 BC).

In a strict sense, the Dead Sea Scrolls refer to the eleven caves near the ancient settlement of Qumran on the western shore of the Dead Sea.⁴⁶ But since their discovery between 1947 and 1956, important manuscripts were found at other locations that were used to store these timeless treasures. Three locations are notable for this research: Naḥal Ḥever, Masada, and Wadi Murabba‘at. All of these locations are within a short distance from Qumran. Manuscripts from these other three locations that preserve *Selah* in the extant text include both Psalms and Minor Prophets scrolls. The Hebrew Psalms scrolls preserving *Selah* are 5/6Ḥev1b, Mur88, and Mas1e. The Minor Prophets scroll preserving the term is from Naḥal Ḥever (8ḤevXIIgr) and is composed in Greek.

⁴⁶ Mladen Popović, “The Manuscript Collections: An Overview,” in *T&T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. by Charlotte Hempel and George J. Brooke (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, forthcoming), 43.

Pseudepigrapha

Another collection of Psalms that is not included in the text of the Hebrew Bible is the Psalms of Solomon—which includes two instances of διάψαλμα in 17:29 and 18:9. The Psalms of Solomon is a pseudepigraphal work that dates from the first century BC, and is sometimes appended to the OT with books such as Maccabees, Susanna, etc.⁴⁷ It has been commonly accepted as originally written in Hebrew, then translated into Greek. The occurrences of διάψαλμα in the Pss. of Solomon are not quotations of the biblical text, but are following text about the Messiah’s role in judgment at the end of days, and mercy in judgment for the generations of those who fear the Lord.⁴⁸ These occurrences are especially interesting and may be evaluated in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls use of *Selah*.

Odes

The *Book of Odes* is appended to the Psalter in the Septuagint. It is attested from the 5th century in all Greek Psalms manuscripts, and can also be found in the 5th century codex Alexandrinus. “Codex Alexandrinus is a much more extensive codex than other major codices, such as Vaticanus, as it contains the LXX (as seen in Rahlfs edition), the four books of Maccabees, and fourteen Odes appended to the Psalms.”⁴⁹ “A peculiarity of this codex is that it lists the Psalms of Solomon after the Old and New Testaments in what seems to be an appendix.”⁵⁰ Following Alfred Rahlfs’ edition of the LXX, chapter 4 (where διάψαλμα occurs) is the prayer of Habakkuk, chapter 3 in the MT. This is a word-

⁴⁷ R.B. Wright, “Psalms of Solomon: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. by James H. Charlesworth (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1983), 640.

⁴⁸ R.H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, trans. by G. Buchanan Gray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 631-652. Robert B. Wright, ed. *The Psalms of Solomon: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text*, vol. 1 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2007), 32-33.

⁴⁹ Martin Hengel, *Septuagint as Christian Scripture* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 58.

⁵⁰ Hengel, *Septuagint as Christian Scripture*, 58.

for-word rendition of the prayer found in the MT, and διάψαλμα occurs in the same places. As for the *Odes*, it is said that the chapters are songs from the Christian Old and New Testaments. The *Odes* contain three New Testament “psalms”: The Magnificat, the Benedictus, and the Nunc Dimittis from Luke’s birth narrative, and the conclusion of the hymn that begins with “Gloria in Excelsis.”⁵¹ Sparks notes that the “Odes and Psalms of Solomon are combined in the Syriac tradition which raises the question if this was a peculiarity of the Syriac church or known elsewhere.”

The transmission of the *Odes* in the Greek manuscript tradition were obviously not part of the original translation since, among other things, they include texts from the NT. It has been said that a “gifted poet in the Middle East” had composed this “earliest Christian hymnbook.”⁵² The anonymous Odist, “the poet laureate of Earliest Christianity,” cultivates a deep piety that lends to the “spontaneous and joyous affirmation of the long-awaited Messiah.”⁵³ However spiritual, the *Odes* are nonetheless termed a “pseudo-literary feature.”⁵⁴ The reason why the *Odes* are appended to the Psalter is not known, but Habakkuk’s inclusion here deserves further study.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Hengel, *Septuagint as Christian Scripture*, 59.

⁵² James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Earliest Christian Hymnbook: The Odes of Solomon* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2009), xii.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Jannes Smith, “10.3.1.5 Textual History of Psalms,” in *Textual History of the Hebrew Bible*, edited by Armin Lange. Consulted online on 23 September 2017 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2452-4107_thb_COM_0010010000>

⁵⁵ Although much later, between the 8th and 10th centuries AD, entirely unique forms of the text of Habakkuk 3 are found in some manuscripts (V. 62.86.147.407) which contains a translation of unknown origins. It caught the attention of the scribe of Codex 86 who commented that it did not match the LXX or the writings of Aquila, Theodotian, or Symmachus. See: Hengel, *Septuagint as Christian Scripture*, 60; J. Ziegler, *Duodecim Prophetiae*, 2nd edition (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum XIII; Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 137-138 and 273-275.

Incantations and Inscriptions

Beyond the Second Temple period literature surveyed in this research, *Selah* also appears in later medieval incantations and inscriptions. Employed as a speech act through singing, chanting, or writing, *Selah* was used to invoke protection. Inscriptions found at Ein-Gedi, the Hammath Gader synagogue, Ein Nashot, the Gerasa synagogue, the synagogue of Horvat 'Ammudim, the Temple Mount inscription, and the Kfar Alma synagogue are significant finds. Judeo-Aramaic incantation bowls containing sentiments from the Books of Psalms, Isaiah, and Revelation as well as Babylonian incantation bowls containing texts with themes of blessing and salvation are important clues to understanding *Selah*'s use as a live term in later witnesses.

CHAPTER THREE: MASORETIC TEXT – THE PSALTER

In establishing a larger corpus of texts that contain *Selah* in antiquity, the final form of the MT Psalter provides the fullest extant evidence. The Hebrew Psalter is divided into five different books, and *Selah* is found 71 times among 39 psalms. As one observes *Selah*'s placement throughout the Masoretic (MT) Psalter, it would seem that its distribution is haphazard. However, in view of the Hebrew inclination for paronomasia and of the highly cognizant artistry among poetic compositions, an analysis of the term in its literary context reveals familiar thematic and cyclic patterns of thought. So this study has become a search for "order in what appears to be disorderly, for congruity within the seemingly incongruous, and for parity within disparity."¹

Beginning with Book I (Pss. 1-41), we will consider each psalm as an individual unit and its relation to other psalms containing the term. Common thematic elements will also be explored as we examine the context in which *Selah* is embedded. As we explore the diversity of *Selah*'s use in antiquity, we will see that theme and structure are interrelated. Shaping of any text affects its meaning; thus the structural placement of *Selah* in individual psalms should be seen as a tool used to communicate a message or elucidate a theme.

¹ Leo G. Perdue, "The Riddles of Psalm 49," in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93.4 (Dec. 1974), 535. Perdue's thoughts on comparing and relating items to uncover common features that may appear to be incongruous can sometimes lead to the revelation of common features in essence of unity or sameness. This is characteristic of the Psalter.

Psalm 3

Text and Translation

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד כְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲבִשָׁלוֹם בְּנֹו:
יְהוָה מְה־רַבּוֹ צָרִי רַבִּים קָמִים עָלַי:
רַבִּים אֹמְרִים לְנַפְשִׁי אֵין יְשׁוּעָתָה לוֹ בִּאלֹהִים סָלָה:
וְאַתָּה יְהוָה מָגֵן בַּעֲדִי כְבוֹדִי וּמְרִים רֹאשִׁי:
קוֹלִי אֶל־יְהוָה אֶקְרָא וַיַּעֲנֵנִי מִהָר קוֹדֶשׁוֹ סָלָה:
אֲנִי שָׁכַבְתִּי וְאִישׁוֹנָה הִקְיָצוּתִי כִי יְהוָה יִסְמְכֵנִי:
לֹא־אִירָא מִרַבָּבוֹת עָם אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שְׁתוֹ עָלַי:
קוֹמָה יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי כִי־הִפִּיתָ אֶת־כָּל־אֵיבֵי לִחֵי שְׁנֵי רָשָׁעִים שִׁבְרָתָ:
לִיהוָה הִישׁוּעָה עַל־עַמּוֹ בְּרַכְתָּהּ סָלָה:

1. A song by David, when he fled from his son Absalom.
2. Lord, how my adversaries have become great! Many are rising against me.
3. Many are saying against my soul, “there is no salvation for him in God.” **Selah**
4. But You, Lord, are a shield around me; my glory, and the lifter of my head.
5. I called to the Lord with my voice, and He answered me from His holy mountain. **Selah**
6. I laid down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord supported me.
7. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, who have set themselves against me all around.
8. Arise, Lord! Save me, my God! For you smote all my enemies’ cheekbones; you shattered the teeth of the wicked.
9. Salvation is of the Lord. Your blessing is upon Your people. **Selah**

General Content and Structure

Psalm 3 has historically been understood as a complaint psalm of the individual. For form-critic Hermann Gunkel, individual complaint psalms formed “the *basic material* of the Psalter” due to the sheer number of them present in the Book.² He also noted that because of the large number of individual complaints present in the Psalter, the motifs “of this genre and the poetry in general are sometimes placed in the mouth of Zion.” This motif encompasses Psalm 3.³ Innocence permeates this psalm as the speaker describes

² Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. by James D. Nogalski, completed by Joachim Begrich (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 122.

³ A conceptual “kingship theme is apparent in Pss. 3-4.” J.P. Brennan also notes, “The king who is introduced by Yahweh in Psalm 2, and the enemies who plot against him, reappear in Psalm 3, which is the first of a series of laments in which the king himself cries out to Yahweh for deliverance from those who press in upon him from every side.” See: J.P. Brennan, “Psalm 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies,” in *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 10 (1980), 26. For views on the structure of this psalm, see: B.K. Walte, “Psalm 3: A

the state of unrest caused by his enemies. However his enemies pursue him (physically or spiritually), he stands firm on the promises of the Lord for protection and salvation. Its content is dramatically intertwined with that of Psalm 2 whose speaker is likely divine, and its abundance of verbal parallels serve to provide details about the attack of the divine king.⁴

Psalm 3 picks up themes and intertextual links present in Psalm 2. “Psalm 3 opens with a reference to foes multiplying and rising ‘against’ the speaker, while the previous Psalm 2 opened with a rebellion ‘against’ the Lord and ‘against’ his messiah. The immediate effect of this parallel is to identify the messianic king of Psalm 2 as the speaker of Psalm 3.”⁵ The similarity regarding how these two psalms open, in opposition against the divine king is no mistake—it also cannot be of coincidence that the prepositions of Psalm 2:2 match the opposition prepositions in 3:2, 7.⁶ Thus, the familiarity of its language and motifs sets the stage for psalms that follow in which *Selah* appears.⁷

Use of *Selah*

Psalm 3 is the first psalm containing *Selah* according to the MT tradition, and the term is found three times (vv. 3, 5, and 9).⁸ Here, *Selah* occurs at junctures significant in the process of lament—1) acknowledgement of a troubling situation (sometimes relating to personal sin); 2) a cry to God for help/petition to judge enemies; and 3) affirmation of

Fugitive King’s Morning Prayer,” in *Crux* 44.1 (2008), 2-13; and C. Schroeder, “Psalm 3 und das Traumorake des von Feinden bedrängten Beters,” in *Biblica* 81.2 (2000), 243-251.

⁴ Robert L. Cole, “Psalm 3: Of Whom Does David Speak, of Himself or Another?” in *Text and Canon* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 141.

⁵ Cole, “Psalm 3,” 139-140.

⁶ All verse references will follow the Hebrew text of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* unless otherwise noted.

⁷ J.S. Kselman, “Psalm 3: A Structural and Literary Study,” in *CBQ* 49.4 (1987), 572.

⁸ The LXX omits the term in v.9.

trust/future hope for redemption. As the dialogue between God and His royal Son progresses, although not in chronological order, we begin to see a prevalent use of Hebrew independent pronouns. Independent pronouns are frequent throughout Book I (31x), and Books II and III (23x); they are especially prevalent (though not exclusive) in the psalms containing *Selah*. These pronouns often indicate a change of speaker where *Selah* occurs, so this will be examined as we progress through the MT Psalter. The use of יָנָא and הִתְאַ consume the first three books, while dramatically dropping in usage in Book IV. Thus, there seems to be a deliberate outworking of dialogue between royal Son and divine Father that occurs throughout, at least, the first three Books of the biblical Psalter.⁹

Psalm 2	Psalm 3
לַע הוֹהִי לַע וְיָשָׁם (v.2)	יֵלַע (v.2)
יָנָא (v.6)	הִתְאַ (v.4)
רָה יִשְׁדָּק (v.6)	רָהֵם וְשָׁדָק (v.5)
יָנָא/הִתְאַ (v.7)	יָנָא (v.6)

Table: Use of Hebrew independent pronouns in Psalms 2-3

With reference to the dwelling place of God (Mt. Zion) in 2:6 and 3:5, as well as the giving of the nations as an inheritance 2:8—this language clearly contains a future-oriented bent. Further, 3:6 contains language unique to death as found in Psalm 4:9; 41:9; 88:6, 2 Sam. 7:12, and Job 14:12, yet also is followed by language of resurrection.¹⁰ Thus, *Selah* plays an integral role with these linguistic links as it occurs at the crux of the issues marking the sin of those who seek the speaker’s life (v.3), God’s place in judgment from His holy hill (v. 5), to the Lord’s blessing of the faithful (v. 9).¹¹ *Selah* then seems

⁹ Cole, “Psalm 3,” 9.

¹⁰ יָנָא יִתְבַּכֵּשׁ הַנְּשִׂאוֹ יִתְוַצִּיקָה יֵכ הוֹהִי יִנְכַּחְסִי; The three verbal roots, “to lie down,” “to sleep,” and “to awake” are only found in this sequence in Job 14:12. All other references to the root “to lie down” have the connotation to lie down in death. References to death include the prediction of David’s own death in 2 Samuel 7:12, throughout Kings and Chronicles the deaths of the monarchs are described using the same verbal root (38x), and Jeremiah 51:39, 57 refers to death as the eternal sleep.

¹¹ Robert Cole notes that the separation between the mention of enemies in v.8 and the blessing of the righteous in v.9 is significant as it mirrors the pattern of Pss. 1 and 2. See: Cole, “Psalm 3,” 142.

to function in a thematic capacity carefully structured throughout Psalm 3 to elucidate a cycle of sin, judgment, and redemption.

Psalm 4

Text and Translation

לְמִנְצָח בְּנִינֹת מִזְמֹר לְדָוִד:
 בָּקְרָאִי עֲנֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי צְדִיקִי בְּצַר הִרְחַבְתָּ לִּי חֲזָנִי וּשְׁמַע תִּפְלִתִי:
 בָּנִי אִישׁ עַד-מָה כְּבוֹדִי לְכִלְמָה תִּאְהָבוּן רִיק תִּבְקָשׁוּ כְזָב סֵלָה:
 וּדְעוּ כִּי-הִפְלֵה יְהוָה חֲסִיד לֹו יְהוָה לְשִׁמְעַע בָּקְרָאִי אֱלֹהֵי:
 רָגְזוּ וְאַל-תִּחַטְּאוּ אֲמָרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל-מִשְׁפַּכְכֶם וְדַמּוּ סֵלָה:
 זָבְחוֹ זִבְחֵי-צֶדֶק וּבִטְחוּ אֶל-יְהוָה:
 רַבִּים אֲמָרִים מִי־יִרְאֶנּוּ טוֹב גִּסָּה-עֲלִינוּ אֹר פָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה:
 נִתְתָּה שִׂמְחָה בְּלִבִּי מֵעַתָּה דִּגְגָם וְתִירוּשָׁם רַבּוּ:
 בְּשָׁלוֹם יִחְדְּוּ אֲשַׁכְּבָה וְאִישָׁן כִּי-אַתָּה יְהוָה לְבָדָד לְבִטָח תוֹשִׁיבֵנִי:

1. For the end times, with stringed music. A melody by David.
2. Answer me when I call, God of my righteousness. You have relieved me in distress. Show favor to me, and hear my prayer.
3. How long, sons of man, will you turn My glory to shame? How long will you love emptiness and seek falsehood? **Selah**
4. But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for Himself. The Lord will hear when I call to Him.
5. Be agitated, but do not sin. Meditate in your heart on your bed and be silent. **Selah**
6. Sacrifice the sacrifices of righteousness, and trust the Lord.
7. Many are saying, “Who will show us good?” Lord, lift the light of Your face upon us.
8. You put joy in my heart, more than the time their corn and new wine increased.
9. I will both lie down and sleep in peace, for You alone Lord make me dwell in safety.

General Content and Structure

Psalm 4 falls under the genre of individual complaint, yet is even further distinguished as a prayer of the accused.¹² It begins with a cry of distress in which the psalmist voices that God is a righteous God—a “fulcrum to gain leverage for his prayer.”¹³ Even though anxiety permeates the psalmist’s prayer for mercy and grace (and this we see in his description of his enemies; v. 3) his plea quickly turns to hope that the sinful men will

¹² Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms*, 188.

¹³ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1959), 67.

return to God. As his countenance and faith in God is restored, he addresses the disheartened with past experiences of joy using imagery of food and drink (v.8). Because of the assurance of mercy, the speaker of this psalm is not afraid to “lay down and sleep,” using this metaphor for death as an expression of future security in Yahweh.¹⁴

Psalm 4 also continues the same trend in content and context as it flowingly follows Psalm 3. With call and answer pairs in 4:2 (יִאֲרָקָב יִנְנֶנֶה) and 3:5 (אֲרָקָא יִנְנֶנֶה יו), and the continued use of Hebrew independent pronouns throughout (3:4, 6; 4:9) both psalms, the message of Psalm 4 is a continuation of Psalm 3. Thus, the speaker of the first three psalms is again speaking in Psalm 4. Its content about the wicked are again highlighted through the use of the phrase מְרַמֵּם in 3:3 and 4:7—the many who wish to end the speaker’s life. Curiously, the term used at the end of Psalm 4, חַטָּבִל, also clues the reader in on the identity of the speaker since the term is used only in reference to resurrection (cf. Psalm 16:10).

Use of *Selah*

Selah occurs twice in Psalm 4 (vv. 3, 5). Most commentators have divided the psalm according to the placement of *Selah*. However, as the psalmist speaks about his innocence in the face of his accusers, it becomes apparent that *Selah* appears at the crux of his petition. The psalmist addresses the wickedness and “emptiness” of the accusers (marked by *Selah*), and then uses an imperative to “sin not” (also marked by *Selah*) in which his desire for the accusers to return to God is apparent. This ties into the idea that the speaker of this psalm is also the Son of God who, in Jewish and Christian tradition,

¹⁴ “In isolation, the opening verses do indeed raise a number of textual questions, and contain a number of interpretive ambiguities...but the last part of the psalm clarifies matters...to make coherent sense of the whole.” See: J. Goldingay, “Psalm 4: Ambiguity and Resolution,” in *Tyndale Bulletin* 57.2 (2006), 161.

was falsely accused by those who believed in Him. Thus, Psalm 4's placement of *Selah* between important sections can be divided thematically by *Selah* as well (vv. 1-3, 4-5, and 6-9). In other words, before the psalmist finds himself cast before divine judgment, he petitions God to deal righteously with him as he waits in silence upon his bed.

Herein lie the beginnings of *Selah*'s diversity in the MT Psalter. The first occurrence of *Selah* can divide the first three verses from the next two sets of verses in that its context speaks of the speaker's accusers. The second *Selah* can point back to vv. 4-5 as a unit since the content highlights the need for faithfulness in the Lord, while it separates the last three verses who content directly addresses the Lord. Thus, *Selah* marks a change in topic as it structurally divides Psalm 4, while it also serves as a transition from "shame by enemies" to "trust in God" to "new life."

Psalm 7

Text and Translation

שָׁמַיִם לְדֹנֵד אֲשֶׁר-אֵשֶׁר לִיהוָה עַל-דְּבָרֵי-כֹזֵשׁ בְּוִימִינִי:
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי בֶךְ חֲסִיתִי הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִכָּל-רָדְפִי וְהַצִּילֵנִי:
 פֶּן-יִטְרֹף בְּאֶרְצָה נַפְשִׁי כִּי-אֵין מִצִּיל:
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אִם-עָשִׂיתִי זֹאת אִם-יָשָׁעַנִּי בְּכַפִּי:
 אִם-גָּמַלְתִּי שׁוֹלְמִי רַע וְאֶחָדָה צוּרְרֵי רִיקָם:
 יִרְדֵּף אוֹיְבֵי נַפְשִׁי וַיִּשָּׁג וַיִּרְמָס לְאֶרֶץ חַיִּי וַיִּכְבֹּדֵי לַעֲפָר יִשְׁכֹּן סֶלָה:
 קוֹמָה יְהוָה בְּאַפִּי הַנֶּשֶׂא בַּעֲבֻרוֹת צוּרְרֵי וְעוֹרָה אֵלֵי מִשְׁפָּט צְוִיתִי:
 וַעֲדַת לְאֻמִּים תִּסּוּבֶכָּךְ וְעַלֶּיךָ לְמָרוֹם שׁוּבָה:
 יְהוָה יִדְּו עֲמִים שְׁפֹטֵנִי יְהוָה בְּצִדְקִי וּבְחַמִּי עָלֵי:
 יִגְמַר-נָא רַעוּ רְשָׁעִים וְתִכְוֶנּוּ צְדִיק וּבְחֵן לְבוֹת וּכְלִיֹּת אֱלֹהִים צְדִיק:
 מִגִּנִּי עַל-אֱלֹהִים מוֹשִׁיעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל:
 אֱלֹהִים שׁוֹפֵט צְדִיק וְאֵל זֶעֶם בְּכָל-יוֹם:
 אִם-לֹא יָשׁוּב חֲרָבּוּ יִלְטוּשׁ קִשְׁתּוֹ דֶּרֶךְ וַיִּכְוֶנֶה:
 וְלֹו הִכִּין כְּלִי-מָוֶת חָצִיו לְדֹלָקִים יַפְעֹל:
 הִנֵּה יַחֲבִל-אֹן וְהִרָה עֲמָל וַיִּלְד שָׂקָר:
 בֹּרַךְ וַיַּחֲפֶהוּ וַיִּפֹּל בְּשַׁחַת יַפְעֹל:
 יָשׁוּב עָמְלוֹ בְּרָאשׁוֹ וְעַל קִדְקְדּוֹ חָמְסוֹ יִרְדֵּ:
 אוֹתָהּ יְהוָה בְּצִדְקוֹ וְאֶמְרָה שֵׁם-יְהוָה עֲלִיוֹ:

1. A passionate song by David that he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite.
2. Lord, my God, in You I seek refuge. Save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me.
3. Lest he tears my soul like a lion; tearing away and there is no one to deliver.
4. Lord, my God, if I have done this; if there is unrighteousness in my hands;
5. If I dealt evil to him who was at peace with me;
6. Let the enemy pursue me and overtake my soul, and trample my life to the earth; he will lay my honor in the dust. **Selah**
7. Arise, Lord, in Your anger; be lifted up on account of the arrogance of my enemies; so awaken, my God, to the judgment You commanded;
8. So the congregation of the peoples will surround You, and on their account, return on high.
9. The Lord shall judge the peoples; judge me, Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to my integrity within me.
10. Please let the wickedness of the wicked end, but establish the righteous, for a righteous God examines the hearts and minds.
11. My shield is of God, who saves the upright in heart.
12. God is a righteous Judge, but God is angry every day.
13. If he will not turn back, He will sharpen His sword; He bends His bow and makes it ready.
14. He also prepares for Himself vessels of death; burning arrows He will make.
15. Behold, the enemy will writhe and bring forth trouble; he will bear deception.
16. He dug a pit, and he dug it out; but he fell in the pit he made.
17. His trouble will return upon his head, and upon his head his wrongdoing will come down.
18. I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness, and I will make music in the name of the Lord Most High.

General Content and Structure

Psalm 7's classified genre is yet another complaint psalm of the individual,¹⁵ as it continues the speaker's trend to declare his innocence before the Lord.¹⁶ The speaker continually remarks: "if I have done this..." then "let my enemy overtake me." The psalm also contains language and themes similar to previous psalms and the Books of

¹⁵ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 121. R.L. Hubbard also says, "It is apparent that all the marks of a complaint psalm are present." See: R.L. Hubbard, "Dynamistic and Legal Processes in Psalm 7," in *ZAW* (1982), 269.

¹⁶ "Several commentators (including Kraus, Kwakkel, and Bellinger) read the situation [of Ps. 7] as a Temple-based judicial ceremony in which a speaker claiming to have been falsely accused seeks a ritual accusation. Psalm 7 then is a case that falls under the procedure envisioned in Solomon's plea to God in 1 Kings 8:31-32...." See: Davida Charney, "Maintaining Innocence Before a Divine Hearer: Deliberative Rhetoric in Psalm 22, Psalm 17, and Psalm 7," in *Biblical Interpretation* 21.1 (2013), 56.

Habakkuk and Genesis. Judgment appears as an important theme as the petitioner transitions from his state of innocence to the description of his enemies. He invokes help from God—the righteous judge—who makes His bow (קשת) ready to destroy those who rise up. The imagery of God’s bow also occurs in a “psalm” containing *Selah*: Habakkuk 3:9. Habakkuk 3:9, one of the three verses in chapter 3 that contain the term, also uses the same terminology in stating, “Your bow was made quite ready; oaths were sworn over Your arrows.” Much of Habakkuk 3 actualizes God in a theophany as the reader is drawn back to the Torah through the language the psalmist chose to use. From Yahweh’s theophany in the storm, to the Sinai theophany, the psalmist chose language found in the Torah to show God’s faithfulness in judgment and redemption.¹⁷

The psalm could be divided into two parts: vv. 1-6 and 7-18. However, the last verse (v.18) should be seen as an addendum—a declaration of trust and hope in YHWH’s righteousness. Some commentators, such as H.C. Leupold, observe that as Psalm 6 was soft in tone, Psalm 7 came out with guns blazing—“it pealed like the trumpet of judgment.”¹⁸ This is no surprise as many have suggested that the obscure term “Shiggaion” in the title literally means “a wild and passionate song with rapid changes of rhythm.”¹⁹ Whether or not this psalm is set to music, its content does change with the inclusion of *Selah*.

¹⁷ Habakkuk 3 is full of creation language and also allows the reader to experience God through theophany. As the reader is taken back to creation and the wickedness of man, he experiences how God showed His faithfulness to His people. Genesis 9:13 uses the same term found in Psalm 7:13, קשת, to show His promise that He will never destroy the earth with a global flood again. Yet, His bow appears again here in Psalm 7:13—this mighty instrument of destruction—to show that although He judged the entire earth once before, He still is in control and will judge those who are unjust...in a different way, in a different time.

¹⁸ Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 91.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Alternatively, this psalm can be broken down even more: vv. 1-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-11, 12-14, and 15-17, 18. As the petitioner makes a plea for help (vv. 1-3), he defines his innocence as he asks God to punish him if he is found with the stain of iniquity (vv. 4-6). Feeling the need for divine judgment, the speaker calls upon God to manifest His righteous anger toward the wicked and demonstrate His power (vv. 7-8). As if the speaker's life would fall under scrutiny in regard to the charges brought against him, he calls for divine intervention while expressing his utmost trust that God will see his innocence and he shall stand blameless before God (vv. 9-11). The speaker's confidence in his innocence shines through in his confidence in God as Judge who makes His arrows ready (vv. 12-14). "As the account continues in this vein it makes an issue of the fact that he for whom evil is designed by the hands of the Almighty is fully deserving of it;" verses 15-16 emphasize this point.²⁰ The last verse stands alone, as it is the most confident remark the speaker makes in the entire psalm.

Use of *Selah*

Selah occurs once in Psalm 7, at the end of verse 6. *Selah* marks the interchange between the speaker's declaration of innocence (vv. 1-6) and his petition for judgment of the wicked (vv. 7-18). Multiple references to the state of the speaker's soul continue to link Psalm 7 and the preceding psalms, especially the psalms containing *Selah* (7:3, 6; 3:3). And, the terminology associated with life, occurring with *Selah* in 7:6, shows the innocence of the speaker and his utmost trust in God (cf. 3:4; 4:3, 8; 16:9). Thus, a particular awareness of the state of the petitioner's soul amidst his enemies continues to surface in the psalms that contain *Selah*. Identifying the enemies as the "wicked" in 7:10

²⁰ Ibid., 97.

also continues the theme from Psalm 1:1, 4, 5, 6 and Psalm 3:8. It should also be noted that the LXX's additional content in Psalm 7 does not change the overall meaning of the psalm itself.²¹ *Selah* thus serves as a marker in change of topic between the declaration of innocence and petition for judgment.

Psalm 9

Text and Translation

לְמַנְצָחַ עֲלָמוֹת לְבֵן מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
אֹדָה יְהוָה בְּכָל-לֵב אֲסַפְּרָה כָּל-נִפְלְאוֹתָיֶךָ:
אֲשַׁמְחָה וְאֶעֱלֶזָה בְּךָ אֵימָרָה שְׁמֶךָ עָלָיו:
בְּשׁוּב-אוֹיְבֵי אַחֲוֹר יִפְשְׁלוּ וַיֵּאבְדּוּ מִפְּנֶיךָ:
כִּי-עָשִׂיתָ מִשְׁפָּטִי וְדִינִי יִשְׁבֹּת לְכֹסֶא שׁוֹפֵט צִדִּיק:
גָּעַרְתָּ גּוֹיִם אַבְדֹּת רָשָׁע שָׁמָּם מַחִיתָ לְעוֹלָם וְעַד:
הָאוֹיֵב תִּמּוּ חֲרָבוֹת לִנְצַח וְעָרִים נִתְּשָׁת אֶבֶד זָכְרָם הִמָּה:
וַיִּהְיֶה לְעוֹלָם יֵשֵׁב כֹּהֵן לְמִשְׁפַּט כֹּסֵאוֹ:
וְהוּא יִשְׁפֹּט-תִּבְלָה בְּצִדִּיק יִדְּיוֹ לְאֲמִים בְּמִישְׁקָרִים:
וַיִּהְיֶה יְהוָה מִשְׁגָּב לִדָּוָה מִשְׁגָּב לַעֲתוֹת בַּצָּרָה:
וַיִּבְטְחוּ בָּךְ יוֹדְעֵי שְׁמֶךָ כִּי לֹא-עֲזָבְתָּ דֹרְשֶׁיךָ יְהוָה:
וַיִּמָּרוּ לִיהוָה יֵשֵׁב צִיּוֹן הַגִּידוּ בְּעַמִּים עֲלִילוֹתֶיךָ:
כִּי-דָרַשׁ דָּמִים אוֹתָם זָכַר לֹא-שָׁכַח צַעֲקַת עֲנִיִּים
חֲנֻנִי יְהוָה רָאֵה עֲנִי מִשְׁנֵאֵי מְרוֹמָי מִשְׁעָרֵי מוֹת:
לִמְעַן אֲסַפְּרָה כָּל-תְּהִלָּתֶיךָ בְּשַׁעֲרֵי בַת-צִיּוֹן אֲגִידָה בִּישׁוּעֶיךָ:
טָבְעוּ גּוֹיִם בְּשַׁחַת עָשׂוּ בְּרִשְׁתָּם טָמְנוּ נִלְכְּדָה רַגְלָם:
נִדְּעוּ יְהוָה מִשְׁפָּט עָשָׂה בְּפֶעַל בְּפִיו נִקְשׁ רָשָׁע הִגְלוֹן סָלָה:
יִשׁוּבוּ רָשָׁעִים לְשִׁאוֹלָה כָּל-גּוֹיִם שִׁכְחִי אֱלֹהִים:
כִּי לֹא לִנְצַח יִשְׁכַּח אֲבִיוֹן תִּקְנֹת עֲנִיִּים תֵּאבֵד לְעַד:
קוֹמָה יְהוָה אֶל-יַעַז אֲגֹשׁ יִשְׁפֹּטוּ גּוֹיִם עַל-פְּנֶיךָ:
שִׁיתָה יְהוָה מוֹרָה לָהֶם יִדְּעוּ גּוֹיִם אֲנוּשׁ הִמָּה סָלָה:

²¹ Jacob Leveen, "The Textual Problems of Psalm VII," in *Vetus Testamentum* 16.4 (1966), 439-442. The phrase, και ισχυρος και μακροθυμος, with no equivalent in biblical Hebrew can be rendered: לְדִוְדָּגִיכַּח כְּרֵאוֹ סִיפָא. What is noteworthy, however, is that Psalm 7 in the LXX contains a number of additions not found in the MT. Additional words and phrases are found in 7:7, 9-10, and 13 in LXX. In addition, 7:12 of LXX contains a whole hemistich not found in the MT: ο Θεος κριτης δικαιος και ισχυρος και μακροθυμος μη οργην παγων καθ εκαστην ημεραν. Jacob Leveen noted, "by retrieving the *lacuna* LXX points the way to a better understanding of what follows." While the LXX insertion does qualify the previous statement that God is a righteous judge, it does not add any new information about the state of His displeasure with the wicked. In relation to *Selah*, the content additions found in the LXX do not change the theme or cycle the term is associated with.

1. For the end times, concerning the death of the son. A melody by David.
2. I will praise the Lord with all my heart; I will recount all Your wonderful acts.
3. I will rejoice and exult in You; I will make music in Your name, O Most High.
4. When my enemies turn back, they will stumble and perish from Your face;
5. For You maintained my right and my cause; You sat on the throne judging in righteousness.
6. You rebuked nations, You destroyed the wicked. You have blotted out their name forever and ever.
7. O Enemy, destructions are finished forever, and you uprooted cities, even their memory has perished.
8. But the Lord dwells forever; He has established His throne for judgment.
9. And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will judge the people in uprightness.
10. The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.
11. And those who know Your name will put their trust in You. For You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.
12. Make music to the Lord dwelling in Zion; declare His deeds among the people.
13. When seeking blood, He remembers them. He does not forget the cry of the afflicted.
14. Show me favor, O Lord! Consider my affliction from those who hate me; You who raise me from the gates of death;
15. That I may recount all Your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion; I will rejoice in Your salvation.
16. The nations sunk in the pit they made, in the net which they hid, their own feet are caught.
17. The Lord has made known the judgment He makes; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgsaion, **Selah**
18. The wicked will return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.
19. For the needy shall never be forgotten; the things hoped for of the needy will not perish forever.
20. Arise, Lord. Do not let man prevail. Let the nations be judged in Your sight.
21. Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men. **Selah**

General Content and Structure

The psalm is said to be an eschatological hymn (enthronement song), “whose leading formal movements contain the enthronement” of Yahweh.²² Psalm 9’s content is a mix of praise and petition, both of which are elements of prayer. As the psalmist praises God (vv.1-3), he then turns to a description of the fate of his enemies (vv. 4-9), which is reminiscent of how He judged the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:24). After the LORD’s position is solidified on the eternal throne, the downtrodden eventually find

²² Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 74.

refuge in Him (vv.10-11). This section essentially closes with v. 12, which reiterates praise to the LORD. Verse 13 begins another petition for deliverance as *Selah* appears in this section. As the theme of the overthrow of enemies continues, God's divine nature comes into view as the psalmist calls for the acquittal of self-deification in the face of a righteous Judge (vv. 14-21).

Psalms 9 and 10 have traditionally been viewed as one unit; however, many translations separate the two into separate psalms.²³ Psalm 9 is an incomplete acrostic (a poem that begins a new line with each successive letter of the alphabet) beginning with *aleph*, while neighboring Psalm 10 continues the acrostic but skips letters here and there among its verses.²⁴ Other similarities between the two psalms (beside praise and plea for deliverance) include 1) no superscription in Psalm 10 suggesting that the psalm is continued from the previous Psalm 9; and 2) Psalm 10:1 is a direct response to 9:10, which reassures the reader that God is not far off in times of trouble. The obvious difference between the two psalms is the presence of *Selah*. This term only occurs in Psalm 9, so it is curious why *Selah* does not appear in Psalm 10.

Use of *Selah*

Selah appears twice in Psalm 9:17, 21. Historical details aside, this psalm's resonance with Psalm 3 (the first psalm that contains *Selah* in the Psalter) is clear.²⁵ First, the

²³ "In spite of the Masoretic division there is an old tradition which links Psalm 9 and 10 together as a literary unit, as is the case with Ps. 42-43." These are also traditionally 1 unit in the LXX, Vulgate, per Jerome, Bar Hebraeus. See: Robert Gordis, "Psalm 9-10: A Textual and Exegetical Study," in *Jewish Quarterly Review* 48.2 (1957), 104.

²⁴ P.W. Skehan, "A Broken Acrostic and Psalm 9," in *CBQ* 27.1 (1965), 1-5.

²⁵ The superscription of Psalm 9 also presents an interesting dilemma. The English version reads, "To the Chief Musician. To the tune of 'Death of the Son.' A Psalm of David." It seems that the psalmist here may possibly make reference to the speaker of the psalm itself. In Jewish tradition, David may be the speaker and the son is Absalom. This corresponds back to Psalm 3 where David fled from his son. The content is also similar as we see links in the introductory psalms that speak of eternal destruction (cf. 1:4;

psalmist depicts God as the one “who sustains me” which has connotations of death and resurrection—a theme that is widely used through Psalm 9 (cf. 3:5; 9:14). Second, imagery of Jerusalem appears again. Jerusalem was God’s holy city, therefore it maintains a place of prominence among the Psalms; a place where God interacts with His people (cf. 3:4; 9:15). Third, the petition to “arise, O Lord,” appears in these psalms, among many others, in a plea to arise in judgment (cf. 3:8; 9:20; 76:10; Zeph. 3:8; Job 31:14). The conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man thus becomes more apparent as the psalmist builds his petition around the cycle of sin, judgment, and redemption. Through this imagery of God’s divine nature and righteousness one begins to see that the evildoer’s “defiance of God [and His people] requires God’s just response.”²⁶ Verses 1-12 form a whole unit as the first and last verses declare praise to the Lord for His judgment that razes people and cities to the ground. The permanency of the judgment for the unjust is described in terms such as “forever,” “blotted out,” and “their memory has perished.” This eternal destruction of the unjust correlates to the eternal nature of God who “endures forever” (v.8). *Selah* appears in the second section of this psalm in verses 17 and 21. Unlike previous psalms, *Selah* does not appear alongside the psalmist’s declaration of his own innocence. However, the speaker’s faith is revealed as he is “lifted up from the gates of death,” signifying his resurrection.²⁷ His place of prominence is also revealed as he proclaims the message of salvation in the gates of Jerusalem (v. 15).

Generally, the city gate was a place where deals were made, contracts were sealed, and

2:9). In Christian tradition, the speaker here could again be messianic as the “death of the son” could refer to Jesus.

²⁶ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 122.

²⁷ It is a possibility that this language could be extrapolated to assume that the speaker of this psalm is also messianic although his innocence in the face of his enemies is not explicitly stated. There are links in Psalm 9 that directly relate to the beginning/introduction of the Psalter that speak of eternal destruction.

justice was carried out (cf. Gen. 23; Ruth 4) by the most respected of citizens. Thus, the speaker may have held a prominent position in the city of Jerusalem.

It has been noted, “In its present form this psalm was hardly used in the temple worship.”²⁸ While there isn’t a doubt that much of the Psalter was used for liturgical purposes, its composition was not intended as such.²⁹ Psalm 9’s relationship, as mentioned previously, with Psalm 10 provides good insight into the righteous nature of the Lord. Yet, however similar in content, Psalm 9’s progression of thought and structure do not mirror its adjacent counterpart.³⁰

Here in Psalm 9 is the first time we encounter another obscure term—*Higgaion*. BDB assumes it is a musical term calling for an interlude of “resounding music.”³¹ However, most English translations render the word as “meditation,” and as *Selah* immediately follows this other obscure term the reader is left scratching their head. If *Selah* were a musical marker for “pause,” why would *Higgaion* (according to BDB) signal a musical interlude? The terms meditation and pause are also synonymous so it would be repetitive, and unnecessary, on the psalmist’s part to repeat the same word twice. Regarding structure, *Selah* breaks up the second half of this psalm nicely. It first occurs with the judgment of the wicked as they lay snares for themselves (vv. 16-17) while the last few verses (vv.18-21) express a future hope in the Lord. These verses form

²⁸ Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 109.

²⁹ See the discussion on the LXX Psalms and the lack of evidence for liturgy before the diaspora: James K. Aitken, “Psalms,” in *The T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015).

³⁰ For a good exegetical study on Psalms 9-10 as a textual unit see: Robert Gordis, “Psalm 9-10—A Textual and Exegetical Study,” in *The Word and the Book* (New York: Ktav, 1976), 114-132.

³¹ BDB, 212. If this word comes from the root הָגָה, then there is a range of possible meanings. In the *Qal*, it could mean to roar, groan, mutter, meditate, or speak. In the *poal* or *hiphil*, it can only mean to mutter or to utter. This is significant because if *Selah* were to be spoken, modern translations and tradition have missed the mark. This also fits with the find among the Scrolls that says, “And they answered, Amen. Amen. Selah.”

an internal unity with an ABA'B' structure.³² The *Selah* thus appears to be set in a particular context that results in the formation of a “polarity between YHWH and the enemy on the one hand and the righteous and the enemy on the other...” creating a just and fair reality in which the righteous live.³³

Psalm 20

Text and Translation

לַמְנצִיחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
 יַעֲנֶה יְהוָה בְּיוֹם צָרָה יִשְׁבְּבֶךָ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:
 יִשְׁלַח עֲזָרְךָ מִקֹּדֶשׁ וּמִצִּיּוֹן יִסְעָדֶךָ:
 יִזְכֹּר כָּל־מִנְחֹתַי וְעוֹלֹתַי יְדַשְׁנֶה סֵלָה:
 יִתֵּן־לְךָ כָּל־בְּבִיבָה וְכָל־עֲצָתְךָ יִמְלֵא:
 נִרְנְנָה! בִּישׁוּעָתְךָ וּבְשֵׁם־אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִדְגַל יִמְלֵא יְהוָה כָּל־מִשְׁאֲלוֹתֶיךָ:
 עֲתָה יִדְעָתִי כִּי הוֹשִׁיעַ יְהוָה מְשִׁיחוֹ יַעֲנֶהוּ מִשְׁמִי קִדְּשׁוּ בְּגָבוֹת יֵשַׁע מִיָּנֹו:
 אֱלֹהֵי בָרָכָב וְאֱלֹהֵי בָסוּסִים וְאֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִזְכִּיר:
 הִמָּה כָּרַעוּ וְנִפְּלוּ וְאֶגְחֶנּוּ לְקִמּוֹ וְנִתְעוֹדֵד:
 יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעָה הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְּיוֹם־קָרָאנוּ:

1. For the end times. A song by David.
2. May the Lord answer you in a day of trouble, may the name of the God of Jacob set you on high.
3. May He send you help from the sanctuary, and may He support you from Zion.
4. May He remember all your offerings, and make fat your burnt offerings. **Selah**
5. May He give to you according to your heart's desire, and all your counsel may He fulfill.
6. May we rejoice in Your salvation, and in the name of our God may we set up our banner! May the Lord fulfill all your petitions.
7. Now I know that the Lord saves His messiah; He will answer Him from His holy heaven, with the saving strength of His right hand.
8. Some trust in chariots, some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.
9. They have bowed down and fallen, but we have risen and we will be restored.
10. Save, Lord! May the King answer us in the day we call.

³² Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 121.

³³ M.J. Slabbert, "Coping in a Harsh Reality: The Concept of the 'Enemy' in the Composition of Psalms 9 and 10," in *HTS Theological Studies* 71.3 (2015), 1.

General Content and Structure

Psalm 20 is just as much a prayer for intercession as a beautiful expression of the assurance in God's saving work.³⁴ Gunkel classified Psalm 20's genre as a communal complaint song, but more specifically a royal complaint psalm.³⁵ He noted it "first contains intercession for the ruler, followed by an oracle."³⁶ The psalm praises the righteousness of the Lord as it iterates the promises made by God to protect and be gracious to His people (v. 2). As 20:2 introduces the prayer, vv. 3-5 lets the reader experience a theophany as temple language ("sanctuary," "Zion," "sacrifices," and "burnt offerings") actualizes God's earthly kingdom where His presence in Jerusalem signified His kingship over His people (vv. 3-5). His provision for His people from the holy city, and His holy hill (cf. 3:5), shines through in the sacrifices and burnt offerings many used to seek His favor. Thus, "The Lord demonstrates his remembrance by acts of love and, in accepting the burnt offerings, guarantees to deal bountifully with the offerer."³⁷ When the Lord's favor is bestowed upon the king, a victory is imminent as the people declare their confidence in their leader, and their God (v. 6). The content of vv. 7-9 mirror those of vv. 3-5 as temple language again makes its appearance as the psalmist reflects on divine deliverance. Kings secured horses and chariots to ensure victory, yet the people of Israel

³⁴ The superscription of Psalm 20 poses problems for understanding its content. This psalm is attributed to David, yet the question remains if David would have composed a prayer in which he is the subject of his people's petitions. Israel's king (David) could have prayed this on behalf of his people and himself when he was in need of divine assistance. Prayer for intercession crosses many psalms and books such as Psalm 21, 1 Samuel 7:9 and 13:9, 2 Chronicles 14:11, and 20:4ff, but Psalm 20's content is most closely related to the adjacent Psalm 21 with connections in other psalms containing *Selah* (cf. Pss. 3, 7, 9).

³⁵ Others like K. Smelik have suggested that Psalm 21 is a royal hymn that was supposed to have been "sung during a religious ceremony prior to a military expedition." See: K.A.D. Smelik, "The Origin of Psalm 20," in *JSOT* 31 (1985), 78.

³⁶ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 96-97.

³⁷ VanGemeren, "Psalms," 190.

proclaimed trust in God, as He is their source of power. Verse 10 confirms that sentiment as the psalmist awaits God's action.

Use of *Selah*

Selah appears in 20:4 where the reader experiences a theophany. The theophany here in Psalm 20 utilizes familiar motifs of Zion to also experience the kingdom in which God inhabits. Willem VanGemeren notes, "The beginning and end form an inclusion by the words 'answer' and 'day'...[while] several words are repeated: 'name' (vv. 1, 5, 7) and forms of the root יָצַח ('save,' vv. 5-6, 9)."³⁸ Thus, he believes the structure is chiastic:

- A. Prayer in Need (v.2)
- B. Prayer for Divine Intervention (vv.3-5)
- C. Rejoicing in Anticipation (v. 6)
- B'. Confidence in Divine Intervention (vv. 7-9)
- A'. Prayer in Need (v. 10)

The placement of *Selah* does not make much sense as a pure structural marker here due to the psalm's chiastic nature. *Selah* appears at the end of v. 4 so if it were structural one would expect it later in the psalm as well.

In Gunkel's classification of complaint psalms, Psalm 20 follows the trend by including a Zion motif (vv. 3, 7). Since *Selah* does not seem to function in a structural capacity in this psalm, I suggest that it functions in a thematic capacity instead to highlight the promise of salvation given to the ancient Israelites. The Zion motif unfolds in subsequent psalms containing *Selah* thus suggesting a familiar setting for this obscure term.

³⁸ VanGemeren, "Psalms," 187.

Psalm 21

Text and Translation

לְמַנְצָח מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
יְהוָה בְּעֶזְרוֹ יִשְׂמַח מֶלֶךְ וּבִישׁוּעָתוֹ מִהֲיָגִיל מְאֹד:
תִּצְלַח לְבָבוֹ נִתְּתָה לּוֹ וְאַרְשֵׁת אִשְׁפָּתָיו בְּלִי-מִנְעָת סֶלָה:
כִּי-תִקְדָּמֶנּוּ בְּרָכוֹת טוֹב תַּשִּׁיעַ לְרָאשָׁיו עֲטָרַת פָּז:
חַיִּים! שְׂאֵל מִמֶּךָ נִתְּתָה לּוֹ אֶרֶץ יָמִים עוֹלָם וָעֶד:
גָּדוֹל כְּבוֹדוֹ בִּישׁוּעָתוֹ הוֹד וְהָדָר תִּשְׁנֶה עָלָיו:
כִּי-תִשְׁתַּיֶּהוּ בְּרָכוֹת לַעֲד תַּחֲדָהוּ בְּשִׁמְחָה אֶת-פָּגִיד:
כִּי-תִמְלֹךְ בִּטְחַם בִּיהֲוָה וּבְתִסָּד עָלָיו בְּלִי-יָמוּט:
תִּמְצָא יָדָךְ לְכָל-אֲיָיָה יְמִינְךָ תִּמְצָא שְׂנְאִיָּךְ:
תִּשְׁתַּמּוּ כְּתֹנֹר אֵשׁ לַעַת פָּגִיד יְהוָה בְּאִפּוֹ יִבְלַעַם וְתֹאכְלֵם אֵשׁ:
בְּרִימֹ מֵאֲרִיץ תִּאֲבֹד וְזֹרְעִים מִבְּנֵי אָדָם:
כִּי-נָטוּ עָלָיֶךָ רַעַה חָשְׁבוּ מִזְמָה בְּלִי-יֻכָּלוּ:
כִּי תִשְׁתַּמּוּ יִשְׁכְּכֵם בְּמִיתָרֶיךָ תְּכַוֵּן עַל-פָּנֶיךָ:
רוּמָה יְהוָה בְּעֶזְרֶךָ נִשְׁיָרָה וְנִזְמָרָה גְּבוּרָתֶךָ:

1. For the end times. A song by David.
2. The King will rejoice in Your strength, O Lord. And in Your salvation, He will rejoice exceedingly.
3. You gave Him His heart's desire, and You have not withheld the request of His lips.
Selah
4. For You will meet Him with blessings of goodness; You will put a crown of pure gold on His head.
5. He asked life from You—You gave it to Him—length of days forever and ever.
6. Great is His glory in Your salvation; honor and majesty You have set upon Him.
7. For You will make Him blessed forever; You will make Him joyful in Your presence.
8. For the King trusts in the Lord, and by the lovingkindness of the Most High, he shall not be moved.
9. Your hand will find all Your enemies; Your right hand will find all those who hate You.
10. You will set them as a fiery oven at the time of the Lord's presence. In His anger He will swallow them up, and the fire shall devour them.
11. Their fruit of the earth You will destroy, and their seed from the sons of man.
12. For they intended evil against You, for they thought of a plot they could not do.
13. For You will set them back by Your bow strings, You will make it firm upon their faces.
14. Arise, Lord, in Your strength. We will sing and make music of Your power.

General Content and Structure

As the psalmist makes a declaration of the king's joy and salvation in Yahweh, he acknowledges that the king's requests have not fallen on deaf ears (vv. 2-3). This

important turning point in the psalm expounds upon the goodness of Yahweh toward the king (vv.4-8). Another transition marks the king's victories over his enemies—a message of hope and prosperity anticipated for the future (vv. 9-13).³⁹ The psalm ends with a petitionary verse declaring their trust in the promises of God as He intervenes on their behalf (v. 14).

The king of Psalm 21 is presented in such a way as to emulate the divine that many scholars have found trouble in discerning the situation and discourse in which this psalm is situated.⁴⁰ Herein lies the problem with trying to find meaning in the historical background. Hermann Gunkel, famous form critic, said that this psalm was “a grandiose, truly Eastern depiction of the Israelite ideal of a king.”⁴¹ This ideal king maintains attributes of the divine King as the psalm espouses his relationship with YHWH through imagery of life (v. 5), majesty (vv. 4-7), protection (v. 8), and repeated promises of victory (vv. 9-13).⁴² Hans Joachim Kraus even states, “Thus the ‘prosperity of a king’ of which Psalm 21 speaks lets events become apparent that transcend OT occurrence...that we try to find the key to the interpretation of the statements not in a characteristically oriental ideal of a king but in the path that leads from 2 Samuel 7 to the NT.”⁴³

³⁹ It has been said that these victories were prophesied in which a prophet uttered these words of prosperity before the king. See: Jörg Jeremias, *Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung in der späten Königszeit Israels* (WMANT 35; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft, 1970), 188.

⁴⁰ This psalm shows “probable connections to royal enthronement and other specifically royal rituals...such rituals were likely loci for the preservation of ancient traditions surrounding the monarchy. Ritual is often a locus for the creation of new texts, and the coordination of text with ritual and social process means that such texts are taught and preserved over time.” See: D.M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 387-388.

⁴¹ H.J. Kraus quoting Hermann Gunkel in: Hans Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*, translated by Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 288.

⁴² Regarding structure, see P. Auffret, “‘Dans ta force se réjouit le roi’: étude structurelle du Psaume XXI,” in VT 40.4 (1990), 385-410.

⁴³ Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 288-289.

Use of *Selah*

Selah only appears once in this royal psalm near the beginning in 21:3. The term has commonly been seen with language reminiscent of divinity and God's holy place along with attributes of innocence on the speaker's part. However, innocence is not plainly seen in this psalm unless one can link the salvation of the king to innocence in the presence of YHWH. What is similar to other psalms that contain descriptions of innocence is the imagery of war. Psalm 21:11-13 mirrors Psalm 2:2-4 in which the intent to kill found in 2:2 (and rolls over into 3:2, another *Selah* psalm) finds its counterpart in 21:12 where the evildoers sought the Lord's life. Thus, it is incumbent on the Lord that He does not withhold His wrath on those who desire His death or the death of His chosen ones. His bow is made ready (21:13, Hab 3:9) and the nations are about to meet their fate.

Psalm 21 presents a multi-layered structure as it contains uneven forms of meter if viewed from a purely musical perspective. From a literary perspective, *Selah* marks the beginning of the cycle that follows: declaration of faith (vv.4-8), provision and victory over evil (vv. 9-13), and faith in the promises of God (v. 14). In other words, *Selah* appears after the psalmist confesses the king's trust in Yahweh and reveals that the king has Yahweh's ear as no request of his has ever been withheld. The content then turns to a declaration of faith where Yahweh blesses the king's sovereignty, and the life that is requested by the king is anticipated by tangible results in the future. The confident kingship demonstrated in this psalm can also be seen through the favor Yahweh bestows on the king—a future-oriented promise to annihilate all enemies of this particular king. That promise of prosperity fuels the unmistakably Israelite king to lean on his God as the

“promises of judgment assigned to the king were referred back to Yahweh.”⁴⁴ So, as *Selah* marks a change in content here in Psalm 21, it thereby suggests its transitional nature and diverse use of the term in antiquity.

Psalm 24

Text and Translation

לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר לַיהוָה הָאֲרֶץ וּמְלוֹאָהּ תִּבְּלֵן וְיִשְׁבִּי בָּהּ:
 כִּי־הוּא עַל־יַמִּים יִסְדָּהּ וְעַל־נְהָרוֹת יִכּוֹנְנֶהּ:
 מִי־יַעֲלֶה בְּהַר־יְהוָה וּמִי־יָקוּם בְּמָקוֹם קֹדֶשׁוֹ:
 גִּדִּי כַפַּיִם וְבִרְלִיבַי אֲשָׁרוּ לֹא־נִשְׂאָ לִשְׂוֹא נַפְשִׁי וְלֹא נִשְׁבַּע לְמַרְמָה:
 יִשְׂאָ בִּרְכָה מֵאֵת יְהוָה וְצִדְקָה מֵאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעוֹ:
 זֶה דֹּר דֹּרֵשׁוּ מִבְּקֵשֵׁי פָנָיִךְ יַעֲקֹב סֶלָה:
 שְׂאוּ שְׁעָרִים רְאשֵׁיכֶם וְהַנִּשְׂאוּ פִתְחֵי עוֹלָם וַיָּבֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד:
 מִי זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד יְהוָה עֲזֹז וְגִבּוֹר יְהוָה גִּבּוֹר מִלְחָמָה:
 שְׂאוּ שְׁעָרִים רְאשֵׁיכֶם וְשְׂאוּ פִתְחֵי עוֹלָם וַיָּבֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד:
 מִי הוּא זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הוּא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד סֶלָה:

1. By David. A song. The earth and all its fullness belong to the Lord; the world and those who dwell in it.
2. For He established it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers.
3. Who may go up into the mountain of the Lord? Or who many stand in His holy place?
4. He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.
5. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.
6. This is the generation that seeks Him; who seek Your face, Jacob. ***Selah***
7. Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, everlasting doors! So the King of glory shall enter.
8. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty. The Lord mighty in battle.
9. Lift up your heads, o gates! And be lifted up, everlasting doors! So the King of glory shall enter.
10. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts. He is the King of glory. ***Selah***

General Content and Structure

As Psalm 21 outlines the faithfulness of the king, Psalm 24 expounds on who the king is while revealing His divine characteristics and most importantly His innocence before

⁴⁴ Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 288.

God. Gunkel classified Psalm 24 as a Torah liturgy, which he was inclined to believe that only blessing could come from the mouths of the priests.⁴⁵ Therefore, this psalm must have been the privilege of the priest to speak in a worship service. H.J. Kraus divides the psalm into two parts, while others acknowledge a tripartite structure (vv. 1-2, 3-6, 7-10).⁴⁶ According to Gunkel's formulation, the psalm is "divided by the *Torah* question at the beginning, followed by a priestly response, then the promulgation of the *Torah*."⁴⁷ However it should be divided, the psalm begins with an acknowledgment that the Earth and everything in it belongs to the LORD (24:1-2). Verses 3-5 introduce the characteristics of those who can stand before a righteous God while verse 6 marks who exhibits those characteristics and are eligible to find salvation.⁴⁸ As the clean slates of the righteous are revealed, the second section reveals the eternal dimensions of the King of glory (24:7-10).

Use of *Selah*

Selah occurs in 24:6 and 10. As mentioned above, H.J. Kraus divides the psalm into two parts: 24:1-6, 7-10. *Selah* occurs at the end of the two sections in vv. 6 and 10. Interestingly, the Syriac versions do not include *Selah* in v.6, while the LXX does not contain *Selah* in v.10. "Psalm 24 is often seen to be a 'baffling' psalm due to the juxtaposition of what seems to be thematically and structurally disparate material

⁴⁵ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 313.

⁴⁶ Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 311. For a tripartite structure, see: R.W. Reifsnnyder, "Psalm 24," in *Interpretation* 51.3 (1997), 284-288.

⁴⁷ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 313.

⁴⁸ It has been noted, "Although Psalm 24 contains liturgical elements, the final form has a didactic function that intends to inculcate in its readers a particular view of existence." See: Manfred Oeming, *Das Buch der Psalmen: Psalm 1-41* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk; 2000), 161.

(creation, vv. 1-2; torah and sanctuary, vv. 3-6; divine warrior and sanctuary, vv. 7-10.”⁴⁹

Here in the MT, the first section (24:1-6) is riddled with imagery of Yahweh’s dwelling place as it outlines who is able to stand before the Lord. *Selah* marks the end of the first section as it stands as a reminder of the attributes of innocence. In the second section, לִמְלֶכֶת דָּוִד is repeated in each of the four verses as the psalmist identifies the king of glory. First, the king of glory enters (v.7) and the question of his identity is asked (v.8). Then, his entrance is reiterated as the people lift up their heads and open their doors (v.9). His identity as the LORD is finally revealed (v.10) as *Selah* closes out the section.

The “king of glory” language is found throughout the Old Testament as this concept was celebrated in Jerusalem since the time of David.⁵⁰ Even the Christian New Testament makes reference to the glory of the LORD in Romans 1 as He righteously shows His wrath to those who exchange His glory for idols—a concept also found in Psalm 24:4. The identification of the King and the requirements for salvation that is provided through said King finds correspondence with many other psalms containing *Selah* (especially Psalms 4 and 21) as the messianic dimension between the LORD and an earthly king emerge. The earthly king is thus a representative of a generation with whom God has struck a covenant in loyalty (cf. 2 Samuel 11b-15; Ps. 2:6-7, Ps. 4:3-4, Ps. 7:6). And, these messianic characteristics, which include innocence before God and references to the dwelling place of God, are often found with *Selah*.

⁴⁹ Philip Sumpter, “The Coherence of Psalm 24,” in *JSOT* 39.1 (2014), 31. Sumpter goes on to say that in the end, “the psalm seems to be a recalibration of liturgical material in terms of a grasp of the structure of the divine economy.”

⁵⁰ OT books that contain “king of glory” language: Exodus 16, 33, 34; Psalms 24, 29, 96, 138; and Isaiah 42.

Psalm 32

Text and Translation

לְדוֹד מִשְׁכִּיל אֲשֶׁרִי נְשׁוּי־פֶשַׁע כְּסוּי חַטָּאָה:
אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם לֹא יִחַשֵׁב יְהוָה לוֹ עוֹן וְאֵין בְּרוּחוֹ רַמְיָה:
כִּי־חִסְרוּשְׁתִּי בְּלוּ עֲצָמַי בְּשֹׁאֲגָתִי כָל־הַיּוֹם:
כִּיוֹ יוֹמָם וּלְיָלָה תִּכְבֵּד עָלַי לִגְדִּי נִהַפְדִּי לִשְׁדֵּי בְּחִרְבֵּנִי קִיץ סֵלָה:
חַטָּאתִי אֹדִיעָה וְעוֹנִי לֹא־כֹסִיתִי אֲמַרְתִּי אֲוֶדָה עָלַי פֶּשַׁעִי לִיהוָה וְאַתָּה נָשָׂאתָ עוֹן חַטָּאתֶיךָ סֵלָה:
עַל־זֹאת יִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל־חֹסֶידוֹ אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְעַת מִצָּא רֶם לִשְׁטָף מִיָּם רַבִּים אֲלֵיוֹ לֹא יִגִּיעוּ:
אַתָּה סֶתֶר לִי מִצָּר תִּצְרֵנִי רַגְלִי פִּלַּט תִּסּוּבְּנִי סֵלָה:
אֲשַׁקִּלְדָּו וְאוֹרֶךְ בְּדָרְדְּרוֹ תִּלְוֵנוּ תִּלְוֵנוּ אֵיפְעָה עָלֶיךָ עֵינִי:
אֶל־תִּהְיֶה כְּסוּס כְּפָרֹז־אֵין תִּבְּרִין בְּמַתְגַּרְסֵן עֲדִינוּ לְבָלֹם כֹּל קָרֵב אֱלֹהֶיךָ:
רַבִּים מְכַאֲבִים לְרָשָׁע וְהַבּוֹטֵחַ בִּיהוָה תִּסָּדֵד סוּבְּבָנוּ:
שְׁמָחוּ בִּיהוָה וְגִילוּ צְדִיקִים וְהַרְנִינוּ כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל־לֵב:

1. By David. A contemplation. Blessed is he whose transgression was forgiven, whose sin was concealed.
2. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in his blessedness there is no deceit.
3. When I grew silent, my bones wore out in my groaning all day long.
4. For day and night, Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. **Selah**
5. I declared my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and You carried away the iniquity of my sin. **Selah**
6. Concerning this, the godly shall pray to You, in a time when You may be found; in a flood of great waters, they shall not reach them.
7. You are my hiding place; You will guard me from trouble; You will surround me with cries of deliverance. **Selah.**
8. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I shall counsel you with My eye.
9. Do not be like a horse, like a mule, who do not understand, who must be harnessed with bit and bridle else they will not come near to you.
10. Many sorrows are for the wicked, but for those who trust in the Lord, lovingkindness shall surround them.
11. Rejoice in the Lord, and rejoice righteous ones; and shout with joy all upright in heart.

General Content and Structure

Known as one of the penitential psalms, Psalm 32 encourages the reader to find assurance in the faithfulness of God.⁵¹ A blessing begins the psalm outlining the attributes of a faithful man (vv. 1-2). The psalm then becomes more personal as the psalmist outlines his

⁵¹ Robert W. Jenson, "Psalm 32," in *Interpretation* 32 (1979), 172-176.

experience in carrying the burden of un-repentant sin (vv. 1-4). Then, as the psalmist confesses his sin before the Lord (v. 5), he finds deliverance from the burden while there is still hope (vv. 6-7). He then speaks from a divine perspective, urging the reader to let the Lord counsel them in the way they should go (vv. 8-9). The assurance of God's love and mercy is then reiterated as the joy of the Lord is praised among the upright in heart (vv. 10-11).

In this psalm, sin is presented in the context of wisdom seen in the use of terms such as "teach," and "instruct" (v. 8). Thus, its structure is expository in which the regret of sin is coupled with confession and forgiveness—the natural process in which God's people wish to renew their covenant relationship with Him.⁵² Willem VanGemenen comments on the structure:

The blessing (vv.1-2) presupposes the experience of sorrow, confession, and forgiveness (vv. 3-5). The experience of forgiveness leads into an encouragement of the godly to find refuge in the Lord (vv. 6-7) and to be instructed by him (vv. 8-10). The last verse is a fitting closure, as the psalmist calls on the righteous to rejoice in the Lord (v. 11).⁵³

VanGemenen's comments on the structure of Psalm 32 suggest that it is laid out in a thematic context.⁵⁴ While there is structure in the context of wisdom, the wisdom that embodies this psalm takes on a thematic element of instruction in righteousness.

⁵² "For scholars who approach Psalm 32 from a form-critical perspective, the psalm has a confusing mix of forms." See: J.H. Potgeiter, "The Structure and Homogeneity of Psalm 32," in *HTS Theological Studies* 70.1 (2014), 1.

⁵³ VanGemenen, "Psalms," 271.

⁵⁴ Potgeiter suggests "it moves from an initial discourse *about* transgressions and forgiveness and *about* Yahweh in the third person to a *direct address* of Yahweh in which personal transgressions were confessed and forgiven." He also notes that the psalm is "homogenous, the careful composition of a meticulous poet, created at a time when wisdom had already begun to infuse theological thinking." See: Potgeiter, *Psalm 32*, 6.

Use of *Selah*

Selah occurs three times in verses 4, 5, & 7. The verses in which *Selah* occurs are seen as units, according to the structure VanGemeren has laid out above. Opening with a blessing of forgiveness (vv. 1-2), *Selah* then marks the “lessons from experience” (vv. 3-5) and God’s promise of protection (vv. 6-7).⁵⁵ First, *Selah* occurs with the burden of unconfessed sin as the psalmist paints a picture of weary bones and loss of vitality (v. 4). Then the psalmist, in the next verse, confesses his sin to the Lord and releases his burden as he asks for forgiveness (in which *Selah* also marks). The psalmist goes on to expound upon the practice of repentance while they still have the option (i.e. before death, as seen in the imagery of flood waters upon the earth). *Selah* subsequently marks the faithfulness of God for those who seek refuge in Him (v. 7). Thus, both sin and redemption are common themes seen here with *Selah* as the psalmist makes clear the process in which one comes to a saving faith in the Lord. *Selah* then serves to take on the context of the immediate verse in which it is a part.

Much of the language used in Psalm 32 is reminiscent of Psalm 1 as it begins with the blessings of the man in whom no iniquity is found (1:1; 32:1-2). It is also connected with Psalm 1 in the way that it is penned. For example, the psalmist consistently divides the cola according to the wicked and the righteous, in which the terminology of wickedness and death is frequently seen together just as the Lord’s name and the term “righteous” are frequently used together (cf. 1: 6; 32:10). Psalm 32 also has connections with the previous psalm where *Selah* occurs in 32:7. Psalm 31:21 uses the same terminology regarding the hiding place, where it elaborates that the hiding place is in the presence of God Himself. In other words, through the language of Psalm 32 and the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

placement of *Selah*, this psalm teaches the way of salvation as well as who salvation comes from.

Psalm 39

Text and Translation

לְמַנְצָח לַיְדִיתוֹן מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
אֲמַרְתִּי אֲשֶׁמְרָה דְרָכַי מִחֲטֹא בִלְשׁוֹנִי אֲשֶׁמְרָה לִפִּי מִחֲסוֹם בְּעַד רִשְׁעִי לִנְגָדִי:
נֶאֱלַמְתִּי וּדְמִיָּה הִחַשִׁיתִי מִטּוֹב וּכְאֲבִי נִעְכָּר:
חֵם-לִבִּי בְקִרְבִּי בִהְיִי תִבְעַר-אֵשׁ דְּבַרְתִּי בִלְשׁוֹנִי:
הוֹדִיעֵנִי יְהוָה קִצִּי וּמִדַּת יָמֵי מַה-הִיא אֲדַע מַה-תִּחַדֵּל אֲנִי:
הִנֵּה טְפִחוֹתַי נִתְתָּה יָמִי וְחַלְדֵי כְאִין נִגְדָה אֶךְ כָּל-תִּבְלָל כָּל-אֲדָם נֶאֱבָב סֵלָה:
אֶךְ-בְּצִלָּם יִתְהַלֵּךְ-אִישׁ אֶךְ-תִּבְלָל יִהְיֶינָה יָצֵבֵר וְלֹא-יִנָּדַע מִי-אִסְפָּם:
וְעַתָּה מַה-קִּנִּיתִי אֲדֹנָי תוֹחַלְתִּי לָךְ הִיא:
מִכָּל-פִּשְׁעֵי הַצִּילְנִי חֲרַפְתָּ נִבְלָל אֶל-תִּשְׁמִינִי:
נֶאֱלַמְתִּי לֹא אֶפְתַּח-פִּי כִּי אֶתָּה עֹשִׂיתָ:
הִסַּר מֵעָלַי נִגְעָה מִתַּגְרֵת יָדְךָ אֲנִי כְלִיתִי:
בְּתוֹכָהֶן עֲלֵעוֹן יִסְרֹף אִישׁ וְתִמָּס כְּעָשׂ חֲמוּדוֹ אֶךְ הִבָּל כָּל-אָדָם סֵלָה:
שְׁמַעַה-תִּפְלֵתִי יְהוָה וְשׁוּעָתִי הַאֲזִינָה אֶל-דַּמְעָתִי אֶל-תִּתְרַשׁ כִּי גֵר אֲנִי עַמְּךָ תוֹשֵׁב בְּכָל-אַבוֹתִי:
הֲשַׁע מִמֶּנִּי וְאִבְלִיגָה בְּטָרִם אֱלֹהֶי וְאִינִי:

1. For the end times. A song by David and Jeduthun.
2. I said, "I will guard my ways from the sin of my tongue; I shall guard my mouth with a muzzle while the wicked are before me."
3. I was dumb with silence; I was silent from good and my sorrow was stirred up.
4. My heart was hot within me; while I was meditating, the fire burned. I spoke with my tongue—
5. "Lord, declare to me my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how transient I am."
6. Indeed You have set my days as a few handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before You. Certainly every man, even the firm standing, is wholly vanity. **Selah**
7. Certainly as a mere semblance man walks about; surely they murmur vain things; he heaps up riches, yet he does not know who gathers them.
8. And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.
9. Deliver me from all my transgressions; do not make me the reproach of the foolish.
10. I was silent, I did not open my mouth because you made it happen.
11. Take away Your plague from upon me; I am spent from the blow of Your hand.
12. When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity, and You dissolve his beauty like a moth; surely every many is vapor. **Selah**
13. Hear my prayer, O Lord! And hear my cry. Do not be silent to my tears. For I am a sojourner with You—You dwelt as all my fathers.
14. Look away from me that I may look cheerful before I go and am no more.

General Content and Structure

As a psalm of individual complaint, Psalm 39 also expresses the submissive position as the psalmist chooses silence over speaking flippantly before the Lord (39:1-4).⁵⁶ As the fire of his self-awareness comes to the surface, his desire to speak becomes too much to bear. Thus, he turns to the Lord for provision and acknowledges that man's life pales in comparison to God's eternal, divine nature (vv. 5-7). As the psalmist comes to the realization that nothing is important if one does not find security in the Lord, he prays for reconciliation and a clean slate (vv. 8-9). The second half of the psalm parallels the sentiments of the first half as the psalmist reflects upon his silence and his need for reliance on God (vv. 10-11). VanGemerén notes, "the psalmist learns through anguish the meaning and brevity of life."⁵⁷ A turning point, v.12 marks his important revelation, and the psalmist's prayer for a renewed spirit emerges as he replaces his lament with longing and joy (vv. 12-14).

The structure of this psalm is quite clear as it contains two parallel parts.

VanGemerén lays out the structure as follows:⁵⁸

- A. Silence Before the Lord (vv. 1-4)
- B. Prayer for Divine Illumination (vv. 5-7)
- C. Prayer for Deliverance (vv. 8-9)
- A'. Silence Before the Lord (v. 10)
- B'. Prayer for Divine Sustenance (vv. 11-12)
- C'. Prayer for Deliverance (vv. 13-14)

⁵⁶ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 121. Psalm 39 is unique as it contains the names of both David and Jeduthun in the superscription. Jeduthun was one of the three people appointed by David as a master of music among the Levites (1 Chr. 16:41; 2 Chr. 35:15). However, this psalm does not seem to be appropriate for liturgical use as its genre is of the individual complaint. Jeduthun's name is also curiously missing in the Leningrad Codex.

⁵⁷ VanGemerén, "Psalms," 316.

⁵⁸ VanGemerén, "Psalms," 312.

Other commentators such as Keil and Delitsch say that the psalm only consists of four stanzas as is laid out in English translations, without any symmetry of the strophes.⁵⁹ They, along with most English translations of this Psalm, characterize the first three strophes as prayer while the last stanza serves as an epilogue.

Use of *Selah*

Selah skips seven psalms before it appears again in Psalm 39 (vv. 6, 12), and contains almost identical language in the verses of each occurrence. Due to its structure, Psalm 39 finds its closest counterpart in Psalm 62, a psalm in which *Selah* also occurs twice. Both psalms describe the vapor-like state of humanity through the use of identical language pairs (אֶל לִבִּי לֹא־מַדָּא) in 39:6, 12 and 62:10. The use of the term אֶל also permeates both psalms as they assuredly contrast the temporal and frail identity of man to the divine and eternal nature of God. These two opposing realities are highlighted through the presence of *Selah* as it seemingly bridges the gap between the temporal and eternal states of being. Chastening, or judgment, theme is reflected here whereby the psalmist's sin is evident as he comes under the scrutiny of the Lord. His confession that man is "but a vapor" stresses the reality that the strenuous endeavors of man for land or riches is all vanity—nothing matters except security in God. The second *Selah* marks the omnipotence of God as the psalmist experiences divine judgment. If the structure noted by Keil and Delitzsch (along with English translations) is correct, then *Selah* does not serve as a structural marker since it does not appear at the end of both the second and third sections. However, *Selah* does find significance in a parallel structure (although

⁵⁹ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 28. This source is the second half of the commentary on Psalms which is authored by both C.F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch. P.J. Botha notes that there is "segmentation through the prominent use of three forms of address of Yahweh, which serve as transition markers," in 39:5, 8, 13. See: P.J. Botha, "Psalm 39 and its Place in the Development of a Doctrine of Retribution in the Hebrew Bible," in *Old Testament Essays* 30.2 (2017), 240.

Selah does not have a direct parallel itself) that VanGemerén suggested as it appears in the contrast between the temporal and eternal. In other words, the psalmist highlights the temporal nature of man while he appeals to the divine nature of God as he seeks “illumination and sustenance.” *Selah* then stands in the midst of the temporal and divine realities as it takes on the context of the immediate verse.

MT Psalter: Book II

Book II continues the trend of containing *Selah* as it is found many times throughout its pages. With a high number of lament psalms in Book I, the second book of the Psalter spares no effort as psalms of lament and praise intermingle with one another. *Selah*'s diversity in use continues throughout Book II as a structural marker, thematic marker, and even the time-honored liturgical “pause.” Its transitional nature often indicating changes of thought, changes in theme, or changes in speaker again occurs in familiar contexts from Book I.

Psalm 44

Text and Translation

*Excerpt: First ten verses of Psalm 44

לְמַנְצֵחַ לְבְנֵי־קֹרַח מִשְׁכִּיל:
אֱלֹהִים בָּאֲזִינוּ שְׁמָעֵנוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ סִפְרוּ־לָנוּ פֶּעַל פְּעֻלָּתְ בְּיָמֵיהֶם בְּיָמֵי קֹדֶם:
אָתָּה יְיָ גּוֹיִם הוֹרַשְׁתָּ וּתְטַעַם תָּרַע לְאֻמִּים וְתִשְׁלַח־ם:
כִּי לֹא בַחֲרָבָם יִרְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ וְזִרְעָם לֹא־הוֹשִׁיעָה לָמוּ כִּי־יִמְיָנָהּ וְזִרְעָהּ וְאֹר פָּנֶיהָ כִּי רָצִיתָם:
אָתָּה־הוּא מֶלֶכִּי אֱלֹהִים צִוְּהָ יִשׁוּעוֹת יַעֲקֹב:
בָּדַד צָרֵינוּ נִבְגַּח בְּשִׁמְךָ נָכוֹס קִמְיָנוּ:
כִּי לֹא בַקֶּשֶׁתִּי אֶבְטַח וְחַרְבִּי לֹא תוֹשִׁיעֵנִי:
כִּי הוֹשַׁעְתָּנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ וּמִשָּׁנְאוֹנוּ הִבִּישׁוֹת:
בְּאֱלֹהִים הִלָּלְנוּ כָּל־הַיּוֹם וְשִׁמְךָ לְעוֹלָם נִזְדָּה סֵלָה:
אֶפְרָיִם וְחִנֹּחַם וְתַכְלִימָנוּ וְלֹא־תִצָּא בַצָּבָאוֹתֵינוּ:

1. For the end times. A contemplation by the sons of Korah.
2. We have heard with our ears, O God; our fathers have told us the deeds you did in their days, in the days of old.
3. You drove out the nations with Your hand, but them you planted; You afflicted the peoples and cast them out.
4. For they did not possess the land with their sword, nor did their own arm save them; for it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your face, because You were pleased with them.
5. You are my king, O God! Command the salvation of Jacob.
6. Through You we will strike our enemies, by Your name we will trample those rising against us.
7. For I will not trust in my bow, and my sword will not save me;

8. Because You have saved us from our enemies, and You have put to shame those who hate us.
9. In God we praise all day long, and praise Your name forever. **Selah**
10. But you rejected and humiliated us, and You did not go out with our armies.

General Content and Structure

Psalm 44's theme of national distress laments the hardships endured by enemy hands, and reflects on the period of God's rejection of His people.¹ It begins with an emphasis on God's leadership and provision during the time of their ancestors (vv.1-4), and then proceeds to praise Him and confess personal reliance on the Lord (vv. 5-9). Israel feels that God is playing a part in their destruction, and the psalmist questions how God can be absent during this time of hardship (vv. 10-17). In spite of defeat, mockery, and suffering, the psalmist claims that the people of Israel were innocent before God (vv. 18-23).² Specifically, they remained faithful to God by keeping His covenant and therefore were suffering for God's sake (cf. Romans 8:36). True to the nature of lament, there is no resolution for the suffering spoken of in this psalm; it only expresses the difficulty of understanding why one suffers without cause. Dependent upon God, and in dire need for His help, they prostrate themselves and pray for deliverance from these enemies (vv. 24-27).

From a form-critical standpoint, the psalm is loosely chiasmic, taking the following form: vv. 1-4, 5-9, 10-17, 18-23, 24-27.³ From a literary-critical standpoint, the structure

¹ "Psalm 44 has long been understood to reflect a sense of national catastrophe...." See: Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "Psalm 44: The Powers of Protest," in *CBQ* 70.4 (2008), 683.

² "The Book of Psalms is especially rich in the language and conceptual framework of honor and shame.... When the didactic function of many of the psalms is combined with their public recitation, these texts function as 'epideictic oratory, celebrating honorable patterns of life and behavior, holding these esteemed patterns up before the collective community to be internalized.'" See: Leonard P. Maré, "Honour and Shame in Psalm 44," in *Scriptura* 113 (2014), 3; and D.A. DeSilva, "Honor and Shame," in *Dictionary of the OT Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings*, edited by T. Longman and P. Enns (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic; 2008), 288-289.

³ Loren D. Crow, "The Rhetoric of Psalm 44," in *ZAW* 104.3 (Jan. 1992), 394.

better follows a “stepped parallelism or ziggurat structure” as it reflects a development of the lament.⁴ As the psalmist reflects upon God’s acts of deliverance in the past (44:1-4), he expresses his confidence in God (vv.5-9) as he begins to tell of the suffering and hardship of his people (vv. 10-17).⁵ The structure turns from the form-critical chiasm to progression in parallelism as the psalmist claims the innocence of his people (vv. 18-23), and prays for deliverance from evil (vv. 23-27).

Use of *Selah*

Selah occurs in 44:9, the overarching statement and sentiment of this particular psalm. The term’s appearance here marks a stark contrast in the attitude of the psalmist as the reality of the present comes to the forefront.⁶ Loren Crow suggested that the *Selah* marks the turning point in the psalm.⁷ Verse 10 begins with a contrasting particle (ܐܢܟܝ) and is followed by second-person singular verbs in the next five verses, which depict God’s abandonment from His people. In a sense, *Selah* separates the psalmist’s confidence and declaration of trust in God because of His past promises, yet he also laments that God is far off as His people face hardships and reproach. Psalm 44 also contains an element of innocence before the Lord that permeates many psalms containing *Selah*. For this reason, the theme of innocence becomes increasingly important in our evaluation of *Selah*’s use in the Psalter.

⁴ VanGemenen, “Psalms,” 337.

⁵ 44:5-9 shows symmetry, or an internal chiasmic structure, with 44:1-4 as the kingship of Yahweh lies at the center of these nine verses. It outlines the intervention of the Lord in history through the defeat of past enemies using divine strength. The victories are because of the Lord, therefore His people express their trust in Him. 44:5-9 then recalls the victories by the Lord and express how they are not won by human strength. It ends in praise, parallel to how the psalm began.

⁶ The Syriac version does not contain *Selah* in this verse.

⁷ Crow, “The Rhetoric of Psalm 44,” 396.

What is also notable are the themes associated with the Sons of Korah. Along with Jerusalem “is an emphasis on the fact that God is the great king over all the earth, though the place of Israelite kings is certainly acknowledged.”⁸ *Selah*’s placement at the juncture of a negative experience of God here in Psalm 44 sets the background in which the following Sons of Korah psalms are to be read. In other words, *Selah* seems to serve as a marker at the turning point of faith and fury as the next psalm to contain the term reflects on this similar experience. In other words, *Selah* as a transition marker in Psalm 44 marks a change in topic.

Psalm 46

Text and Translation

לְמַנְצֵחַ לְבְנֵי־קֹרַח עַל־עֲלָמוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל:
 אֱלֹהִים לָנוּ מִחֲסֶה וְעֹז עֲזָרָה בְּצָרוֹת נִמְצָא מֵאֲדָ:
 עַל־כֵּן לֹא־נִירָא בְּהִמְרֵי אֶרֶץ וּבְמוֹט הָרִים בְּלֵב יָמִים:
 יִהְיוּ יַחְמְרוּ מִיָּמֵינוּ יִרְעֲשׂוּ־הָרִים בְּגִאֲוָתוֹ סֵלָה:
 נָהָר פִּלְגָיו יִשְׁמְחוּ עִיר־אֱלֹהִים קֹדֶשׁ מִשְׁכְּנֵי עֲלִיוֹן:
 אֱלֹהִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ בְּלִתְמוֹט יַעֲזְרֶה אֱלֹהִים לִפְנוֹת בְּקָרָ:
 הָמוּ גוֹיִם מָטוּ מִמְּלָכוֹת נָתַן בְּקוֹלוֹ תְמוּגָה אֶרֶץ:
 יִהְיֶה צָבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ מִשְׁגָּב־לָנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב סֵלָה:
 לְכוּ־חֲזוּ מַפְעָלוֹת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם שְׁמוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ:
 מִשְׁבִּית מַלְחָמוֹת עַד־קָצָה הָאֶרֶץ קָשָׁתָה יִשְׁבֹּר וְקִצְצָה חֲגִית עֲגָלוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֵשׁ:
 הִרְפוּ וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי־אֵנֹכִי אֱלֹהִים אֲרוֹם בְּגוֹיִם אֲרוֹם בְּאֶרֶץ:
 יִהְיֶה צָבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ מִשְׁגָּב־לָנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב סֵלָה:

1. For the end times. A song by the sons of Korah concerning death.
2. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble.
3. Therefore, we will not fear, even though the earth be changed, and the mountains totter in the heart of the sea.
4. The waters growl and foam, the mountains quake with its swelling. **Selah**
5. A river whose streams will make glad the city of God—the holy dwelling place of the Most High.
6. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be shaken; God will help her at the turn of morning.
7. The nations raged, kingdoms tottered; when He gave His voice, the earth melted.

⁸ D.G. Firth, “Asaph and the Sons of Korah,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, & Writings*, ed. by Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 26.

8. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. **Selah**
9. Go, see the deeds of the Lord, who had made desolations in the earth.
10. He removes wars to the ends of the earth; He breaks a bow and He will shatter the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.
11. Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted in the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.
12. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. **Selah**

General Content and Structure

The emphasis of Psalm 46 is placed directly on the word “God,” as the psalmist finds strength and refuge in Him alone. While Psalm 46 draws on the past negative experiences of God found in Psalm 44, it celebrates the unnamed city’s (which is clearly Jerusalem) security in Him.⁹ H.C. Leupold notes, “Some interpreters believe that the psalm looks out into the far distant future and is thus quite eschatological in character—an approach that is advanced by *Gunkel*.”¹⁰ Gunkel posits that Psalm 46 is a “hymn of the last things” containing prophetic messages concerning floods and earthquakes that shall destroy the very foundations of the earth.¹¹ Yet, God’s people will not fear; they will have hope and find refuge in the One who will deliver them from these troubles.

Use of *Selah*

Selah appears throughout Psalm 46 (vv. 4, 8, and 12) in a more thematic and liturgical role than a purely structural one. It appears twice at the end of the phrase “The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge” (vv. 8, 12). This phrase, most likely

⁹ D.G. Firth, “Asaph and the Sons of Korah,” 27.

¹⁰ Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 362.

¹¹ Hermann Gunkel, “Psalm 46: An Interpretation,” in *The Biblical World* 21.1 (Jan. 1903), 29. Gunkel says on p.31, “This psalm is usually interpreted as referring to some specific event at some stage of Israel’s past history. But such an interpretation is too limited and shallow. The words receive their full meaning only when made to refer to the great messianic consummation of the present world-era. It contains a wonderful expression of the trust of the chosen people, and shows what immense enthusiasm lay in their messianic hope. To Germans this psalm is especially dear, because it suggested to Luther that splendid hymn: ‘Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott.’” See also: Inge Mager, “Martin Luthers Lied, Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott und Psalm 46,” in *Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie* 30 (1986), 87-96; Nissim Amzallag, “The Cryptic Theme of Psalm 46 and the Theology of the Korahites,” in *Revue Biblique* 122.1 (2015), 26-45.

used as a refrain in the public reading of the psalm, would be a fitting place for *Selah* to occur. With a call to answer found among the DSS in 11Q11 (discussed later), this could have been another incidence of public affirmation of God’s salvation and refuge marked by the presence of *Selah*. This confessional statement also presents God in a personal way allowing the people to experience His presence during a period of distress. Thus, it has been suggested that יהוהי תואבצ ונמע בגשמ ונל יהלא בקעי should be added before the *Selah* in 46:4 to match the other refrains it is found with.

Selah’s appearance in 46:4 ends a small section on why God is a refuge, providing hope through cosmic troubles in the form of a theophany. VanGemenen points out the expository structure:¹²

- A. Confession (v.1)
- B. Theophany (vv. 2-7)
- A’. Confession (v.8)
- B’. Prophetic Oracle (vv. 9-11)
- A”. Confession (v.12)

The prophetic nature of this psalm can be seen through the theophany in vv. 2-7 and in the oracle in vv.9-11. “In prophetic oracles...God’s coming down to judge the nations is portrayed as throwing the world of nature into convulsion (cf. Micah 1:3-4).”¹³ *Selah* appears at the end of v.4, in the midst of earthquakes and surging waters. Through the theophany, Psalm 46 contains a Zion motif as it depicts the city of God. Waters flow from this place, on God’s holy hill—a place that permeates the Psalter, especially the introduction (1:3; 2:6; 3:5; 46:4). Its transition from chaos (via creation imagery, 46:4) to order (via paradise imagery, 46:5) presents God’s divine nature as it affirms his place on

¹² VanGemenen, “Psalms,” 350. Other structures have been proposed for this psalm that do not highlight the eschatological or messianic aspects, see: Lloyd Neve, “The Common Use of Traditions by the Author of Psalm 46 and Isaiah,” in *Expository Times* 86 (1974/1975): 243-246.

¹³ VanGemenen, “Psalms,” 350.

Zion—a place that is long-standing and eternal.¹⁴ The repeated use of the terms “strength,” “refuge,” and “fortress” also embody the Zion motif as they designate the source of Israel’s strength. God is their strength in times of trouble (cf. Ps. 29:11; 68:35; 71:7), a refuge when they need shelter (cf. Ps. 14:6; 61:3; 62:7-8; 71:7; 73:28; 91:2; 142:5), and a fortress against their enemies (cf. Ps. 9:9; 18:2; 48:3; 59:9, 16-17).

The center of the Zion motif is Yahweh, who, depicted in the theophany, shows His kingship over all creation with blessings like a stream of water flowing from Zion. Israel looked forward to the fulfillment of Yahweh’s covenant promises, and thus *Selah* stands at the crux of these promises, which highlight the cycle of sin, judgment, and redemption. Future victories over nations and kingdoms are prophesied (cf. 47:8-10; 48:4-7; 76:1-8, 10, 12), and redemption is focused around Zion.¹⁵

Psalms 47

Text and Translation

לְמַנְצִיחַ לְבְנֵי־קִרְחַם מִזְמֹר:
כָּל־הָעַמִּים תִּקְעוּ־כַף הִרְעוּ לֵאלֹהִים בְּקוֹל רִנָּה:
כִּי־יִתְנֶה עֲלֵינוּ נִגְרָא מֶלֶךְ אֲדוֹל עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:
יְדַבֵּר עַמִּים תַּחְתִּינוּ וְלֹא־אִמִּים תַּחַת רַגְלֵינוּ:
יִבְחַר־לָנוּ אֶת־נִסְתָּנוּ אֶת־גְּאוֹן יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר־אָהֵב סֵלָה:
עֲלֶה אֱלֹהִים בְּתִרְעָה יְהִי בְּקוֹל שׁוֹפָר:
זַמְּרוּ אֱלֹהִים זַמְּרוּ זַמְּרוּ לְמִלְכֵנוּ זַמְּרוּ:
כִּי מֶלֶךְ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ אֱלֹהִים זַמְּרוּ מִשְׁכִּיל:
מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹהִים עַל־גּוֹיִם אֱלֹהִים יֵשֶׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא קִדְשׁוֹ:
נְדִיבֵי עַמִּים נֶאֱסָפוּ עִם אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתָם כִּי לֹא־הֵימָּן מִגִּי־אָרֶץ מֵאֵד נִעְלָה:

1. For the end times. A song by the sons of Korah.
2. O, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with a triumphant voice!
3. For the Lord Most High is to be feared; a great King over all the earth.
4. May He lead the people under us, and the nations under our feet.

¹⁴ Sidney Kelly, “Psalm 46: A Study in Imagery,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89.3 (Sept. 1970), 311.

¹⁵ Martin Buber, *On the Bible: Eighteen Studies*, ed. by Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken, 1982), 165.

5. Our inheritance He will choose for us, the excellence of Jacob whom He loves. **Selah**
6. God went up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a horn.
7. Make music to God, make music! Make music for our King, make music!
8. For God is King of all the earth; make music in contemplation.
9. God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne.
10. The princes of the people have assembled, the people of the God of Abraham; for the shields of the earth belong to God, He is greatly exalted.

General Content and Structure

Psalm 47 is integrally connected with the previous Psalm 46 as it speaks of Yahweh's divine kingship. As the people praise the great King of the earth (vv. 1-3), the psalmist reflects on Yahweh's salvific acts in history (vv. 4-5).¹⁶ As the psalmist seemingly "foretells" the ascension, Yahweh is again praised (vv. 6-7).¹⁷ The psalm then returns to the reflection of God's kingship on earth, and His reign over the nations from His holy throne (vv. 8-9). The last verse establishes itself as the prophetic, future-oriented element of this psalm as the writer depicts nations and leaders acknowledging Yahweh's kingship (v. 10).¹⁸

Use of *Selah*

Selah appears once in 47:5 as the psalm reveals its chiasmic structure with *Selah* occurring just before its central point. *Selah* likely marks the major division of this psalm as a bipartite unit (vv. 1-5, 6-10) in which it serves to highlight the central theme of the psalm.¹⁹ James Muilenburg notes, "*The pride of Jacob* is the obvious climax (in meaning,

¹⁶ *Selah* is not found here in the Syriac.

¹⁷ Interpretation of this psalm can be ambiguous, but if read in tandem with Pss. 46-48, *Selah* marks the divide between two sections in which God is praised for His provision, and His ascension—to either heaven or to Jerusalem—to take His place among His people. See: T.M. Steiner, "'Gott stieg hinauf...' (Ps 47,6)-wohin? Psalm 47 als exilische Hoffnung auf Restitution," in *Biblica* 95.2 (2014), 161-178.

¹⁸ VanGemenen, "Psalms," 360.

¹⁹ Joost Smit Sibinga, "Some Observations on the Composition of Psalm XLVII," in *Vetus Testamentum* 38.4 (1988), 474.

in mood, and in form) to which the lines lead.”²⁰ Thus, the verse in which *Selah* ends serves as an echo of Yahweh’s covenant promises in Israelite history. In other words, *Selah* finds itself embedded at the heart of matters related to kingship and the themes of sin, judgment, and redemption. *Selah* here, then, functions in a structural manner to bring about a central theme as it hinges on the context of the immediate verse. Psalm 47 also advances the divine agenda as *Selah* highlights Yahweh’s past relationship with Israel (highlighting Jacob) and His present relationship with the people He offers salvation to (v.2; v.3; and v.4). Muilenburg puts universal kingship as eschatology into view so is worth quoting in full:

The portrait of God as Judge and His universal sovereignty are characteristic eschatological ideas. His coming to rule the world belongs to the heart of eschatology. Psalm 47 is closely related to the poems of Second Isaiah, and with the latter the eschatological message is central and determinative. It is possible that we are moving in the world of eschatological thoughts, but that these are not yet expressed in the language of prophecy or apocalypse but of religious lyric.²¹

This theme in which *Selah* frequently occurs also dominated worship in Jerusalem.

Universal kingship can be found in Pss. 47, 93, 96-99; the Zion motif as God’s holy place is found in Pss. 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122, 132; and echoes of David’s rule over God’s chosen people in Pss. 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 110, 132, and 144.²² Many of these psalms contain *Selah* as well.

Psalm 48

Text and Translation

שִׁיר מְזֻמָּר לְבְנֵי־קֶרַח:
גָּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ הֶרֶם־קָדְשׁוֹ:
יָפָה נוֹף־מְשׁוֹשׁ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ הֶרֶם־צִיּוֹן יִרְכָּתִי צִפּוֹן קִרְיַת מֶלֶךְ־רַב:
אֱלֹהִים בְּאֶרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ נִדְּעָה לְמִשְׁגָּב:

²⁰ James Muilenburg, “Psalm 47,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 63.3 (Sept. 1944), 246.

²¹ Muilenburg, “Psalm 47,” 255.

²² James A. Wharton, “Psalm 47,” in *Interpretation* 47.2 (April 1993), 163.

כִּי־הִנֵּה הַמַּלְכִּים נֹעְדוּ עִבְרוּ יַחְדָּו:
 הַמֶּלֶךְ רָאוּ בֵּן תִּמְהוּ נִבְהָלָו נִחְפְּזוּ:
 רָעָדָה אֲחֻזָּתָם שֵׁם אֱחִיל כִּי־לָדָה:
 בְּרוּחַ קָדִים תִּשְׁבֶּר אֲנִיּוֹת תִּרְשִׁישׁ:
 כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעֵנוּ בֵּן רֹאֵינוּ בְּעִיר־יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהִים יְכוֹנֶנָּה עַד־עוֹלָם סֶלָה:
 דְּמִינוּ אֱלֹהִים חֲסִידָהּ בְּקֶרֶב הַיִּכְלָה:
 בְּשִׁמְךָ אֱלֹהִים בֵּן תִּהְלֶתָה עַל־קְצוֹי־אֶרֶץ אֶדְקָ מְלָאָה יְמִינָהּ:
 יִשְׁמַח הָרֹצִיוֹן תִּגְלֶנָּה בְּנוֹת יְהוָה לְמַעַן מִשְׁפָּטֶיהָ:
 סִבּוּ צִיּוֹן וְהִקְיפוּהָ סִפְרוּ מַגְדְּלֶיהָ:
 שִׁיתוּ לְבָבְכֶם לְחִילָה פִּסְגּוֹ אֲרָמְנוֹתֶיהָ לְמַעַן תִּסְפְּרוּ לְדוֹר אַחֲרָיוֹן:
 כִּי זֶהוּ אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵינוּ עוֹלָם וָעֶד הוּא יִנְהַגֵּנוּ עַל־מוֹת:

1. A song. Music by the sons of Korah.
2. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; in the city of our God is His holy mountain.
3. Beautiful in height, the joy of all the earth—Mount Zion—the remote parts of the north, the city of the great King.
4. God is in her palaces, He is known as her refuge.
5. For behold, the kings gathered, they passed over together.
6. They saw it, and they indeed were astounded; they were disturbed, they hurried away.
7. Fear grasped them there; pain like a woman in labor;
8. like when You shattered the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.
9. As we have heard, so we have seen, in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God; God will establish it forever. **Selah**
10. We have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness, in the midst of Your temple.
11. According to Your name, O God, so is Your praise to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is full of righteousness.
12. May Mt. Zion rejoice; let the daughters of Judah rejoice, on account of Your judgments.
13. Go around Zion and surround it; count her towers.
14. Set on your heart her fortress, pass between her palaces, so you may recount it to the next generation.
15. For this is God, our God forever and ever; He will lead us even to death.

General Content and Structure

Just as quickly as Psalm 48 begins with praise of God (vv.1-4), it concludes with an exhortation to proclaim God's presence throughout the nations (vv. 13-15). The middle section reflects on God's acts in history highlighting attributes such as His faithfulness (vv. 5-12).

Psalm 48's literary structure has been debated due to vv. 5-8 and their apparent misplacement within the psalm.²³ Despite the debates, Hermann Gunkel spoke to the overall structure as an eschatological picture of the siege of Jerusalem (looking forward to the end times), and Sigmund Mowinckel argued that no specific historical event could be determined (as he surmised the verbal tenses forbade an eschatological interpretation).²⁴ In other words, early on there was an exceedingly large range of interpretation for Psalm 48 with no scholarly consensus on date, background, or meaning.²⁵ Some years later, the psalm was scrutinized according to its textual links to reveal that its structure was symmetrical (vv. 2-4, 5-8, 9, 10-12, 13-15).²⁶

Use of *Selah*

With God's universal kingship in view, *Selah* serves to mark the central theme of Psalm 48 (in 48:9), the theological geography of God's reign.²⁷ The theological geography theme is marked with the terms "north" (v.3), and "east" (v.8), and by paronomasia, "south" in 48:11 and "west" in 48:14.²⁸ Verbal links also structure the psalm around the central theme in which *Selah* occurs as terms such as "our God" occur in vv. 2, 9, and 15; while phrases like "the city of our God" occurs in vv. 2 and 9, and "our God forever"

²³ Scholars who hold differing views on these particular verses are Ewald, Wellhausen, Kessler, Kautzsch, and König, among others.

²⁴ Julian Morgenstern, "Psalm 48," in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 16.1 (Jan. 1941), 2-3.

²⁵ Morgenstern, "Psalm 48," 4. See also: Mitchell Dahood, "The Language and Date of Psalm 48 (47)," in *CBQ* 16 (1954), 15-19.

²⁶ Martin Palmer, "The Cardinal Points in Psalm 48," in *Biblica* 46.3 (Jan. 1965), 357. For a thorough analysis of Psalm 48's structure see: L. Krinetzki, "Zur Poetik und Exegese von Ps 48," in *Biblische Zeitschrift* 4 (1960), 70-97.

²⁷ The editors of BHS suggested that תואבצ הוהי ריעב should be deleted in this verse. *Selah* is then considered central to the psalm in 48:9 as it looks back in salvation history as well as looking forward for a future salvation.

²⁸ These directional markers tie the psalm together. The terms "south" and "west" occur only by paronomasia as גימי can also mean "south," and the Hebrew word for future גורחא can also mean "west."

occurs in v. 15.²⁹ These verbal links tie the psalm together around *Selah* as it highlights the permanency of God’s kingship—from Zion to the ends of the earth. The Zion motif is again seen here, and is prevalent among psalms containing *Selah*. Explicit references to Zion serve as a symbol of God’s presence. “Therefore the psalmist uses the geographical/spatial references to express the joy of God’s people with the blessed presence of God.”³⁰ It is the meditation with which *Selah* occurs that His people are able to reflect on the long history of God’s involvement with Israel and find security in His unfailing love.

Psalm 49

Text and Translation

*Excerpt: vv. 12-16

קִרְבָּם בְּחַיֵּמוֹ לְעוֹלָם מִשְׁכַּנְתָּם לְדָר וְדָר קִרְאוּ בְּשִׁמוֹתָם עַל־י אֲדָמוֹת:
וְאָדָם בִּיקָר בְּלִילִי־נִמְשָׁל כַּבָּהֳמוֹת נִדְמוֹ:
זֶה דֶּרֶכָם בְּסֵל לָמוֹ וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם בְּפִיהֶם יִרְצוּ סֵלָה:
כִּצְאוֹן לְשֹׂאוֹל שְׁתוּ מוֹת יָרֵעַם וַיִּרְדּוּ בָּם יִשְׂרָאֵל לַפֶּקֶר וְצִירָם לְבָלוֹת שֹׂאוֹל מִזִּבְלָ לֹו:
אֲדֹ-אֱלֹהִים יִפְדֶּה נַפְשִׁי מִיַּד-שֹׂאוֹל כִּי יִקְחֵנִי סֵלָה:

12. Their graves shall be their houses forever, their dwelling places from generation to generation; they call their lands by their own names.

13. But man, in his honor, does not remain; he is like the beasts that perish.

14. This is the way of those who are foolish, and of their posterity who approve of their sayings. **Selah**

15. Like sheep set in Sheol, death shall tend to them; the upright will rule over them in the morning, and their beauty shall be consumed in Sheol, far from their dwelling.

16. But God will ransom my soul from the hand of Sheol; for He will take me. **Selah**

²⁹ Palmer, “The Cardinal Points in Psalm 48,” 357. Mount Zion also makes an appearance throughout the psalm in vv. 2, 3, 12, and 13.

³⁰ VanGemeran, “Psalms,” 362. Depictions of Mount Zion are also found in psalms such as 2, 3, 15, 43, and 99.

General Content and Structure

Psalm 49 is a wisdom psalm, for the psalmist addresses all people in the world to hear his riddle.³¹ The psalmist makes a universal appeal to all people, both rich and poor, on the riddle of life and death. The prideful arrogance of those who say they will live forever is drawn out in the evaluation of the rich. The psalmist raises relevant questions as he describes the proverbial walls we build to cushion ourselves from uncertainty of the future. It is his message that no one—the rich or poor—can redeem themselves from the power of the grave. Death is part of the earthly existence, the temporal state, in which we all inhabit.³² The psalmist thus uses the term עוֹלָם for mankind as he addresses all people—this term containing echoes of Genesis as God created “man” from whom all people are descended (and inherit the sin nature). Part of that sin nature is revealed in the prideful arrogance of the rich in not acknowledging that all they have is from God, and God alone—not money—can save them from this world.³³

The structure of Psalm 49 seems straightforward (in other words, parallel) as the psalmist addresses the people and states his purpose (vv. 1-5), and then poses his question regarding fear of the future (vv. 6-7). He confidently explains that no one can escape death; it cannot even be bought (vv. 8-13). Death is thus a part of the earthly existence. Faith, then, gives no ground to fear what is temporal. “Riches, splendor, praise of self, or

³¹ The psalmist uses a rare word for “world” here: עוֹלָם . This word is also found in Ps. 17:14, and as a scribal corruption in Isaiah 38:11. The riddle is explained more in depth by: Leo G. Perdue, “The Riddles of Psalm 49,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93.4 (Dec. 1974), 533-542. Typing the psalm as “wisdom” according to form-critical and thematic elements has been advocated by: S. Mowinckel, “Psalms and Wisdom,” in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Vetus Testamentum Supplements 3; Leiden: Brill, 1955), 205-224; and Hermann Gunkel and J. Begrich, *Einleitung in die Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1933), 386-397.

³² “The depiction of death in Psalm 49 reflects the angst of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in the sense that the anguish of mortality is universal, but the psalmist had a confidence and hope that *Gilgamesh* lacked. He had access to a divine ‘redemption’ from death.” See: Janet Smith, *Dust or Dew: Immortality in the Ancient Near East and in Psalm 49* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co.; 2011), 109.

³³ J.D. Pleins, “Death and Endurance: Reassessing the Literary Structure and Theology of Psalm 49,” in *JSOT* 21.69 (1996), 19-27.

praise of man makes no difference in the grave. The tragedy of riches may well be that it gives a false sense of security and life.”³⁴

Use of *Selah*

Selah appears twice at two important points: 1) Verse 14 marks the eternal punishment of the wicked, and 2) Verse 16 marks the eternal hope for resurrection of the godly. In 49:14, *Selah* marks where the rich come under condemnation for deceptiveness and attitudes of ruling the world (i.e. making themselves bigger than God; cf. James 5:1-6). This does not apply to the godly who are rich; “the psalmist did not intend to disparage the godly rich who received their wealth as a blessing from God,” but to remind all people that whatever they have comes from God and should be acknowledged accordingly.³⁵ The next *Selah* occurrence in 49:16 addresses the hope of the godly. This verse displays the confidence the psalmist has in the resurrection of believers and their future fellowship with God. It is thus here, in this psalm, which *Selah* marks the contrast of those whose souls are destined for Sheol and those whose souls are delivered from the grips of death. Redemption from Sheol moves the godly person from the temporal to the eternal life with God, a view advocated by Delitzsch, Duhm, Weiser, J. van der Ploeg, von Rad, and Eaton, among others.³⁶ In other words, “Paradise with Yahweh, however, awaits the just man who places his confidence in Him rather than in earthly riches and

³⁴ VanGemenen, “Psalms,” 371-372. In understanding life and death, see: Oswald Loretz, “Ugaritisches und Jüdisches. Weisheit und Tod in Psalm 49,” in *Ugarit-Forschungen* 17 (1986), 189-192; and Léonard Ramaroson, “Immortalité et Résurrection dans les Psaumes,” *Science et Esprit* 36 (1984), 287-295.

³⁵ VanGemenen, “Psalms,” 372. For a description of the negative effects of prosperity among the wicked see Ps. 73.

³⁶ M.D. Goulder, *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 181.

pleasure.”³⁷ *Selah*’s appearance in the divide between the temporal and eternal elements of Psalm 49 marks a stark contrast between the two realms, and the fate of the wicked versus the fate of the righteous.

Psalm 50

Text and Translation

*Excerpt: vv. 1-7

מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה דִּבֶּר וַיִּקְרָא אֶרֶץ מִמִּזְרַח-שֶׁמֶשׁ עַד-מָבְאוֹ:
 מִצִּיּוֹן מְכַלֵּל-יָפִי אֱלֹהִים הוֹפִיעַ:
 יָבֹא אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵל-יִתְרֹשׁ אֲשֶׁר-לִפְנֵינוּ תֹאכַל וְסָבִיבוּ נִשְׁעָרָה מְאֹד:
 יִקְרָא אֱלֹהֵי-הַשָּׁמַיִם מֵעַל וְאֵל-הָאָרֶץ לִדְרוֹ עָמוֹ:
 אֲסֻפוּ-לִי חֲסִידַי כִּרְתִּי בְרִיתִי עַל-יֹזְבָח:
 וַיִּגִּדּוּ שְׁמַיִם צְדָקוֹ כִּי-אֱלֹהִים שֹׁפֵט הוּא סֵלָה:
 שִׁמְעָה עַמִּי וְאֲדַבֵּר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶעֱיֵד בְּךָ אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵיךָ אָנֹכִי:

1. A song by Asaph. O God, God the Lord, has spoken and He called the earth, from the rising of the sun to its setting.
2. From Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.
3. Out God shall come in and He shall not be silent. A fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous around Him.
4. He will call to the heavens from above, and to the earth to judge His people.
5. “Gather my faithful to Me, those who cut a covenant with Me by sacrifice.”
6. Let the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is judge. **Selah**
7. “Hear, my people, and I may speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you; I am God, your God!”

General Content and Structure

One might consider Psalm 50 according to the English translation’s title of “God the Righteous Judge,” and they wouldn’t be incorrect. Prophetic elements are found here as Gunkel classified Psalm 50 as proclaiming something of the will of God, similar to the

³⁷ T.D. Alexander, “The Psalms and the Afterlife,” in *Irish Biblical Studies* 9 (1987), 11; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I: 1-50*, 296. The relationship between Isaiah 52-53 and Psalm 49 should also be considered in the reconciliation in death. Isaiah 53 provides a picture of God’s intervention on His people’s behalf—it is a picture of the cross through which God made intercession and delivers the godly from the grips of eternal death.

genre that the prophets fashioned.³⁸ This psalm begins with a theophany as God prepares for judgment. Israel is then rebuked for their sacrifices and burnt offerings given before the Lord in a formalistic way (vv. 7-15; the people are hypocrites—their outward appearance does not match their heart), as the psalmist proceeds to stress the things God has forbidden in vv. 16-21.³⁹ The psalmist closes with an admonition not to forget God (vv. 22-23). The structure of Psalm 50 is broken in two parts: God’s appearance for judgment (vv. 1-6) and the rebuke of the wicked (vv. 7-23). The two parts could be termed in a different manner: Introduction via the psalmist (vv. 1-6) and God’s curse against His people (vv. 7-23).⁴⁰

The Christian New Testament, promoting a theme of a heavenly banquet says, “To whom much is given, of him much shall be required” (Luke 12:48). Thus, Psalm 50’s theme could be seen as a parallel to the passage in Luke 12, providing the backdrop of a messianic banquet in which salvation is offered to the righteous.⁴¹ I believe Mitchell Dahood summarized it best when he said, “[Psalm 50 is] a prophetic liturgy of divine judgment. In the tradition of the prophets, the psalmist stresses the futility of sacrifice divorced from true morality.”⁴² Thus, “the salvation of God embraces those whose integrity encompasses both public and private spheres.”⁴³

³⁸ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 20. Also: Johanna W.H. Bos, “Oh, When the Saints: A Consideration of the Meaning of Psalm 50,” in *JSOT* 7.24 (1982), 65-77.

³⁹ The LXX adds *Selah* in v.15 for what seems to be a structural purpose.

⁴⁰ The diversity of *Selah*’s use in the Psalter is summed up well in Allen’s work: “Another and more obvious factor in the determination of structure is that of theme. In the case of Psalm 50 thematic considerations point to a division within the divine speech.” See: L.C. Allen, “Structure and Meaning in Psalm 50,” in *Vox Evangelica* 14 (1984), 20.

⁴¹ The theme of a messianic banquet can also be found in passages such as Pss. 16:11; 23:5-6; 116:13; Isaiah 12:3; Isaiah 25:8; and Luke 14:16-24.

⁴² Dahood, *Psalms I: 1-50*, 305.

⁴³ Ellen T. Charry, *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible: Psalms 1-50* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2015), 255.

Use of *Selah*

It has been said that in Psalm 50, the “psalmist provides an abstract of the doctrine of the prophets on worship in general, and on the relative merit and importance of sacrifice in worship.”⁴⁴ As God is clearly not a reality for the people, *Selah* then marks the theophany in which God arises in judgment. *Selah*’s placement within this psalm (occurring in the context of judgment and theophany) marks the end of the first section of the psalm (v.6).⁴⁵ In the theophany, God again appears from Zion as He summons the whole earth to be a witness to the divine judgment of the ancient Israelites. As *Selah* closes the prefacing of the judgment scene, and the people of the earth bear witness to the righteousness of the Lord, the action now begins.⁴⁶ This transition into judgment reveals God’s kingship as the theophany in which *Selah* closes reiterates, “God is judge.” Even though, oftentimes, He seems silent or indifferent in the face of sin, God’s silence will eventually turn to judgment. H.C. Leupold said, “‘For God, He is Judge,’ could merely be a poetic way of saying that the judgment about to follow is bound to be absolutely just.”⁴⁷ This judgment is important as *Selah* stands again at the crux of the psalm—in a familiar setting whereby God can offer salvation. Psalm 50, then, exposes the ancient Israelites’

⁴⁴ Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 389.

⁴⁵ Thematic divisions regarding *Selah* have been debated in recent years. *Selah* stands thematically in a theophany but it does not fit a purely structural standard of this psalm. Many seem theme divisions in vv. 7-15, 16-21, and 22-23 (as a sort of conclusion). This view is advocated by Kirkpatrick, Rhodes, Weiser, Kuntz, Sabourin, and Anderson, among others. See: A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge 1902) 276; A. B. Rhodes, *Psalms* (London 1961) 84-85; A. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (London 1962) 393-394; J. K. Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God* (Philadelphia 1967) 192; L. Sabourin, *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning* (New York 1969) 2, 311-312; A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (London 1972) 1, 381; D. Kidner, *Psalms 1-72* (London 1975) 186-188; J. W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay, *Psalms 1-50* (Cambridge 1977) 236. A simpler bi-partite structure is advocated by Gunkel, Gese, Kraus, Johnson, and Craigie in vv. 7-15 and 16-23, see: H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen 1926) 215-218; H. Gese, ‘Psalm 50 and das alttestamentliche Gesetzesverständnis’, *Rechtfertigung. Festschrift für E. Käsemann* (Göttingen 1976) 61-62; H. -J. Kraus, *Psalmen* (Neukirchen-Vluyns 1978) 526; A. R. Johnson, *The Cultic Prophet and Israel’s Psalmody* (Cardiff 1979) 24-28; P. C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (Waco 1983) 363. Either of these structures does not really support a clean use of *Selah*.

⁴⁶ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 127.

⁴⁷ Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 422.

hypocrisy in empty sacrifices, as He makes clear that “sin is even more reprehensible when it comes from God’s people.”⁴⁸

Psalm 52

Text and Translation

לְמִנְצַח מִשְׁכִּיל לְדָוִד:
בְּבוֹא דוֹעַג הָעֲדֹמִי וַיִּגְדֹּל לְשָׂאוֹל וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בֹּא בְּאֵלֵי בֵּית אַחִימֶלֶךְ:
מִה־תִּתְהַלֵּל בִּרְעָה הַגִּבּוֹר תִּסְדֹּךְ אֶל כָּל־הַיּוֹם:
הַיּוֹת תִּחְשָׁב לְשׁוֹגֵג כְּתַעַר מִלְּטָשׁ עֲשֵׂה רַמְיָה:
אֶהְבֶּתָּ רָע מִטוֹב לְשָׁקֵר מִדְּבַר צֶדֶק סֵלָה:
אֶהְבֶּתָּ כָּל־דְּבָרֵי־כָלֵעַ לְשׁוֹן מִרְמָה:
גַּם־אֵלֶּי־תִפְצֹץ לִגְצָח יִחַתֶּךָ וַיִּסְחָף מֵאֲהֵל וּשְׂרָשָׁף מֵאֲרִץ חַיִּים סֵלָה:
וַיִּרְאוּ צַדִּיקִים וַיִּירָאוּ וַעֲלִיוּ יִשְׁחָקוּ:
הִנֵּה הַגִּבּוֹר לֹא יֵשִׁים אֱלֹהִים מְעוֹנָו וַיִּבְטַח בְּרַב עֲשָׂרָו לַעֲזֹב בְּהִנּוּתוֹ:
וַאֲנִי כְּזִית רֹעֵנָה בְּבֵית אֱלֹהִים בְּטַחְתִּי בְּחֶסֶד־אֱלֹהִים עוֹלָם וָעֶד:
אוֹדֶךָ לְעוֹלָם כִּי עָשִׂיתָ וַאֲמִנָה שְׁמֶךָ כִּי־טוֹב גִּגְד חֲסִידֶיךָ:

1. For the end times. A contemplation by David.
2. When Doeg the Edomite came in and he declared to Saul, he said to him, “David has gone into the house of Ahimelech.”
3. Why do you praise evil, O mighty man? The lovingkindness of God is continual.
4. Your tongue devises destruction, like a sharp razor working deceitfully.
5. You love evil more than good, lies, rather than to speak righteousness. **Selah**
6. You love all words of destruction, o deceitful tongue.
7. Also, God will pull you down forever; He will snatch you up and tear you away from your tent, and He will uproot you from the land of the living. **Selah**
8. The righteous will see and fear, and they will laugh at him;
9. “Here is the man who did not set God as his strength, but trusted in the multitude of his riches—strengthened himself in his desire.”
10. But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever.
11. I shall praise You forever because you have done it; and I will wait on Your name, for it is good; in the face of Your lovingkindness.

General Content and Structure

As Psalm 50 conveys the judgment of hypocrisy among the ancient Israelites, Psalm 52 depicts a stark contrast between the wicked and the righteous (resonating with Ps. 1).⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 423.

Thus, the judgment theme is again alive and well in Psalm 52. The wickedness of evil men is described in detail (vv. 3-6) as the psalmist points the reader to the evildoers' fate with *Selah*'s presence (v. 7). The righteous are contrasted with the wicked as they hope in their eternal presence with the Lord (vv. 8-9). The last two verses (vv. 10-11) give hope as the psalmist closes with a clear description of the fate of the wicked (imagery of uprooted trees) and the fate of the righteous (imagery of trees firmly planted in the house of God). It is then that the righteous wait in patient anticipation of eternal redemption.⁵⁰

This particular psalm does not fit nicely within any one of Gunkel's genres as it contains elements of lament, thanksgiving, wisdom, and judgment. And, overall, its structure testifies to that.⁵¹ VanGemerén, however, notes the structure as ABB'A' of which best fits this psalm: A) The Folly of Evil (vv. 3-6); B) God's Complete Judgment (v. 7); B') Wisdom Derived from God's Judgment (vv. 8-9); and A') The Blessing of Righteousness (vv. 10-11).⁵²

Use of *Selah*

Selah appears twice in Psalm 52 and is first found in the "folly of evil" section (laid out previously by VanGemerén) in 52:5. The psalm begins by questioning the evildoers'

⁴⁹ "...The literary purpose of the text should probably be seen as an attempt to criticize the conduct of certain prominent members of society at the time of origin of the psalm and to encourage the in-group of worshippers of Yahweh to persevere in their belief that they are the righteous ones." See: J.H. Potgieter, "The Profile of the Rich Antagonist and the Pious Protagonist in Psalm 52," in *HTS Theological Studies* 69.1 (2013), 1.

⁵⁰ Through terminology such as "brought down" (Judges 8:9), "snatched" (Isaiah 30:14), "cast away from your tent" (Deut. 28:63; Ps. 132:3; Prov. 2:22), and the imagery of the "uprooted tree" (Jer. 11:19), Psalm 52 reminds its readers to put their trust in God rather than in man.

⁵¹ "Psalm 52 is not a haphazard compilation of pre-existent texts, but a clearly devised instrument of communication which was subsequently provided with a heading to integrate it into a developing corpus of canonical texts. Its contents seem to be arranged to form two stanzas, the first of which has three strophes and the second two. The stichs and verse lines have been demarcated in accordance with the Masoretic system of accents rather than a hypothetical metrical scheme." See: P.J. Botha, "'I am like a green olive tree: The Wisdom Context of Psalm 52,'" in *HTS Theological Studies* 69.1 (2013), 2.

⁵² VanGemerén, "Psalms," 384.

ways. He who loves evil rather than good is speaking of the evildoer's deeds; "he stands for whatever is against God's standards of goodness and righteousness."⁵³ In other words, deception is his trademark (52:4) and *Selah* marks the utter malice the wicked man feels about God thus taking on the context of the immediate verse.

As the first *Selah* marks the malice of the wicked man against God, the second *Selah* highlights God's judgment of the wicked (52:7). Jussive verbs are used in this verse to indicate the desire to see the wicked fall in judgment. God is a righteous Judge; therefore He does not tolerate evil. And, in His judgment, the righteous have the assurance of eternal peace with God. In turn, the wicked will be brought down (demolished) and uprooted from the land of the living (cf. Ps. 27:13). It could be said that the verse in which *Selah* occurs begins the "announcement of divine retribution" with the word *לֵךְ* as it also seen in texts such as Isaiah 66:4, Ezekiel 16:43, and Malachi 2:9.⁵⁴

As *Selah* marks the folly of the wicked, it resonates with the last psalm we covered containing the term—Psalm 50. As God prepared for the judgment of His people in Psalm 50 (due to their trust in riches and worldly things), Psalm 52 points to the future and final judgment of the wicked against the salvation of the godly. God's people stand in awe and terror at God's judgment in Psalm 52, yet their terror gradually turns to joy for those who are righteous. "In seeing the evidence of God's righteousness, they receive personal assurance that God judges between good and evil."⁵⁵ Thus, the righteous learn lessons from God's judgment (cf. Ps. 49) through which *Selah* thematically marks in the text. Those whose security is in the Lord, not in wealth and riches of the world will be preserved from eternal damnation.

⁵³ VanGemenen, "Psalms," 385.

⁵⁴ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 145.

⁵⁵ VanGemenen, "Psalms," 386.

Psalm 54

Text and Translation

לְמַנצַח בְּנִינָת מִשְׁכִּיל לְדָוִד:
בְּבוֹא הַזִּיפִּים וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְשָׁאוּל הֲלֹא דָּוִד מְסֻתָּתָר עִמָּנוּ:
אֱלֹהִים בְּשִׁמְךָ הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי וּבְגִבּוֹרֶתְךָ תְּדִינֵנִי:
אֱלֹהִים שְׁמַע תְּפִלָּתִי הֶאֱזִינָה לְאִמְרֵי־פִי:
כִּי זָרִים קָמוּ עָלַי וְעֹרִיצִים בִּקְשׁוּ נַפְשִׁי לֹא שָׁמוּ אֱלֹהִים לְנַגְּדָם סֵלָה:
הִנֵּה אֱלֹהִים עֲזָר לִי אֲדֹנָי בְּסִמְכִי נִפְשִׁי:
יָשׁוּב הָרַע לְשַׁרְרִי בְּאַמְתָּךְ הִצַּמְיָתָם:
בְּנִדְבָה אֶזְכְּרָה־לְךָ אֹדֶה שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה כִּי־טוֹב:
כִּי מִכָּל־צָרָה הִצִּילָנִי וּבְאִיְבֵי רָאִתָה עֵינָי:

1. For the end times, with music. A contemplation by David.
2. When the Ziphites went and they said to Saul, "Is David not hiding with us?"
3. Save me, O God, by Your name, and judge me in Your strength.
4. Hear my prayer, O God, hear the words of my mouth.
5. For strangers have risen against me, and oppressors seek my life; they did not set God before them. **Selah**
6. Behold, God helps me; God is with those who sustain my soul.
7. May He return the evil to my enemies; annihilate them in Your truth.
8. I will freely sacrifice to You; I shall praise Your name, O Lord, for it is good.
9. For He has delivered me from all trouble, and my eye has seen their hostility toward me.

General Content and Structure

Psalm 54 is an appropriate prayer for believers in the Lord as they face opposition from the enemy, which is why Gunkel assigns this to the genre of individual complaint.⁵⁶ As the psalmist fluctuates between positive and negative feelings, he is highlighting the process by which the believer reconciles those feelings in the Lord. He begins with a prayer for deliverance (vv. 3-4), followed by the occasion of the prayer (v. 5), trust in the Lord (v. 6), and the resolution of the prayer (v. 7). He ends by rejoicing in what the Lord has done for him (vv. 8-9). As he rejoices, he makes it known that he will freely sacrifice

⁵⁶ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 121. See also: P.J. Botha, "Psalm 54: The Power of Positive Patterning," in *Skrif en Kerk* 21.3 (2000), 1-10.

to the Lord. These free-will sacrifices are not like the ritual sacrifices offered by the temple (cf. Ps. 50:14), but ritual as an outward representation of the spiritual condition.⁵⁷

The structure of Psalm 54 is somewhat convoluted. Scholars have proposed many structures for this psalm, ranging from a straightforward break occurring where *Selah* appears to a complex stichographic arrangement.⁵⁸ A break where *Selah* occurs in 54:5 would suggest that vv. 1-5 are a prayer for help against wicked men, whereas vv. 6-9 the psalmist rejoices in God's intervention.

Use of *Selah*

As the judgment of the wicked becomes the central message of the psalms in Book II, Psalm 54 again contrasts the righteous and wicked with *Selah* at the helm (54:5). This time the psalmist prays for deliverance from adversaries. *Selah* highlights the godless spiritual condition of the wicked, the psalmist closes with a faith that God will deliver him from trouble (cf. Pss. 17:13; 56:8; 59:12ff) in this psalm. *Selah* appears with a description of the oppressors of which is almost identical to Ps. 86:14. The strangers who seek the psalmist's life have no regard for God or man—they were ruthless in their dealings. Verbs occurring in the section that *Selah* ends, such as “save me” and “vindicate me” express the nature of deliverance only God can offer. God protects His people from evil, and the psalmist relies on God's past acts in salvation history as a guarantee for future intervention and protection. The last part of v. 5, just before *Selah*, is considered a key statement in this psalm.⁵⁹ “Those who have no regard for God” highlight that for the oppressors, God has no place with them. In other words, these

⁵⁷ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 153.

⁵⁸ For a stichometric analysis of this text, see: P.J. Botha, “Psalm 54: The Power of Positive Patterning,” in *Verbum et Ecclesia* 21.3 (Aug. 2000), 507-516.

⁵⁹ Marvin E. Tate, *Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 51-100*, vol. 20 (Colombia: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 48.

oppressors are arrogantly seeking to ignore the will of God whereas the righteous ones faithfully seek God's intervention and justice. It is here that *Selah* stands in Ps. 54 in a thematic capacity rather than structural.

Psalm 55

Text and Translation

*Excerpts: vv.5-9 and vv.17-20

לְבִי יַחֲלִיל בְּקִרְבִּי וְאִמּוֹת מָוֶת נָפְלוּ עָלַי:
יִרְאַה וְרַעַד יָבֹא בִּי וְתַכְסֵּנִי פִלְצוֹת:
וְאֶמַּר מִי־יִתְּנוּ־לִי אָכֹר כִּי־זֶה אֲעֹפֶה וְאֶשְׁכָּנָה:
הִנֵּה אֲרַחֵק נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים בַּמִּדְבָּר סֵלָה:
אֲחִישָׁה מִפְּלֹט לִי מִרוּחַ סַעָה מִסָּעַר:

5. My heart writhes within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
6. Fear and trembling have come upon me, and horror has covered me.
7. So I said, "Who will give me wings like a dove, that I may fly away and be settled?"
8. Indeed, if I shall be put far away to flee, I would remain in the wilderness. **Selah**
9. I would hasten my escape, rushing from the wind and storm.

אֲנִי אֶל־אֱלֹהִים אֶקְרָא וַיְהִי־הוּא יוֹשִׁיעֵנִי:
עָרַב וּבָקַר וְצִהְרִים אֲשִׁיחָה וְאֶהְמָה וַיִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי:
פָּדָה בְּשָׁלוֹם גִּפְשִׁי מִקִּרְבִּי־לִי כִי־בָרְבִּים הָיוּ עֲמָדִי:
יִשְׁמַע! אֱלֹהִים וַיַּעֲנֵם וַיִּשְׁבֵּב קִדְּם סֵלָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין חֲלִיפוֹת לָמוֹ וְלֹא יִרְאוּ אֱלֹהִים:

17. I will cry out to God, and the Lord will save me.
18. Evening and morning, and noon I shall muse and murmur, and He will hear my voice.
19. He ransomed my soul in peace from the many that were near to me; many stood against me.
20. Hear, O God, and answer them; even He who abides from of old—**Selah**—for they do not change, and they do not fear God.

General Content and Structure

Psalm 55, one of the more complex psalms containing *Selah*, follows a similar theme of lament.⁶⁰ Its *Sitz im Leben* is questionable,⁶¹ yet it has been suggested that this psalm was

⁶⁰ P.J. Botha, "Psalm 55 Interpreted in View of its Textual, Metatextual and Intertextual Connections," in *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 31.1 (2017), 118-141.

⁶¹ The background between David and Ahithophel is questionable. See 2 Samuel 15 in regard to the circumstances of the psalm versus the narrative, which refer to Ahithophel. We do not cover the issues related to historical references or background as we are focused on the final form of the MT-150 Psalter.

penned by an ancient Israelite residing in a pagan city, whose expressions of terror are compounded by being in a city he cannot leave.⁶² The first nine verses of the psalm are dominated by sorrow. As the psalmist desires to be alone in the wilderness away from his enemies, his soul is so full of anguish he is emotionally paralyzed by the evil ways of his enemies. If wrongdoing itself wasn't enough to distress the psalmist, he is further agonized because the enemy is his friend. He continues with a cry for judgment—a cry for the wicked to be brought down to Sheol. The psalm eventually ends with a note of confidence; the psalmist finds safety and prosperity in the Lord.

Psalm 55 has been divided in many ways, but fits best in a bipartite structure: vv. 2-16, 17-24. Inclusios frame these sections, and each begins and ends in chiastic form. The second section contains an inclusio of *Elohim* in vv. 17 and 24, while a temporal inclusio of days (“evening, morning, and midday” in v. 18, and “their days” in v. 24) is also found.⁶³

Use of *Selah*

Selah occurs in 55:8 and 20—of which each occurrence marks a particular point in the development of the lament theme. The structure of the psalm also follows the development of shift in mood from sorrow, to complaint, to confidence. *Selah* marks the sorrow of the psalmist as he grieves the wickedness of the enemy. His grief is more intense than normal because the enemy was once his friend.⁶⁴ As it pains the psalmist to

⁶² Tate, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 55.

⁶³ John Kselman and Michael Barré, “Psalm 55: Problems and Proposals,” in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 60.3 (July 1998), 442-443.

⁶⁴ This psalm is noteworthy because the enemy is a friend (“someone his equal,” Ps. 31:11; Prov. 16:28; Jer. 9:4-5)—someone who the psalmist once enjoyed fellowship with (i.e. the “circle of confidants,” Gen. 49:6; 89:7). Thus, it deeply pains him that his cry for judgment is against his friend. *Selah* in 55:8 highlights this sorrow the psalmist experiences—he longs to be in the wilderness far away from it all. As much as it pains him, he cries out for the land to be ridden of enemies.

call for judgment upon his enemy friend, he is reliant again on God's past acts in salvation history.⁶⁵ The second *Selah* marks God's eternal presence insinuating his past acts of intervention. Thus, what God did in the past He will also do in the future. The sorrow and cry for judgment are ultimately overshadowed by an overwhelming confidence in the Lord's provision and acts of deliverance. It is God's eternal enthronement as judge (cf. Deut. 33:27; Pss. 9:7-8; 29:10; 74:12; Hab. 1:12) that brings ultimate judgment on the wicked. Willem VanGemeren identifies that the psalmist's confidence in the Lord expresses "the psalmist's submission to the will of God regarding the present circumstances and the future of the ungodly. His trust is in Yahweh, the Redeemer—Divine Warrior (cf. Pss. 26:1; 37:5)."⁶⁶ The second section also contains the outworking of dialogue (presumably between the psalmist and his God) using first and second person personal pronouns (אני in v. 17, and אתה in v. 24), which frequently occurs in psalms containing *Selah*.

Some scholars believe that the second *Selah* in v. 20 is a scribal corruption of the word הלה (meaning "to destroy"). God did destroy evildoers in the past because of treacherous acts, but a scribal corruption in this instance would need to be evaluated against extant manuscripts and does not seem likely. *Selah* also does not make sense as a pure structural marker here as it serves more to highlight the themes of sin and judgment in what could be considered a "structural" manner.

⁶⁵ This cry could possibly be a historical allusion to the swallowing up of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram into the earth (Num. 16:31-40), because it is known that the wicked are hypocrites who love war and treachery more than peace (cf. Ps. 52:2). The historical allusion is thus marked by the second *Selah* in 55:20, as God has been—and will be—faithful in the future.

⁶⁶ VanGemeren, "Psalms," 397.

Psalms 57

Text and Translation

לְמַנצַח אֱלֹהֵי־תִשְׁחַת לְדָוִד מִכְתָּם בְּכַרְתּוֹ מִפְּנֵי־שָׂאוֹל בְּמַעְרָה:
חַנּוּנֵי אֱלֹהִים חַנּוּנֵי כִי בְדֹחַסְיָה נִפְשִׁי וּבִצְל־כְּנָפֶיךָ אֶחְסֶה עַד יַעֲבֹר הַיּוֹת:
אֶקְרָא לְאֱלֹהִים עָלְיוֹן לֹאֵל גִּמְרֵ עָלַי:
יִשְׁלַח מִשְׁמַיִם וַיּוֹשִׁיעַנִי חֲרָף שְׂאֵפֵי סֵלָה יִשְׁלַח אֱלֹהִים חֲסֶדוֹ וְאַמְתּוֹ:
נִפְשִׁי בְּתוֹךְ לְבָאִם אֲשַׁכְּבָה לְהַטִּים בְּגִי־אֲדָם שְׁנִיָּהִם חֲנִית וְחַצִּים וְלִשׁוֹנָם חֲרֹב תְּהָה:
רוּמָה עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם אֱלֹהִים עַל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדָה:
רָשָׁתוֹ הִכִּינוּ לַפְעֲמִי כִפְּףָה נִפְשִׁי כָרוּ לִפְנֵי שִׁיחָה נָפְלוּ בְּתוֹכָה סֵלָה:
נָכוֹן לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים נָכוֹן לִפְנֵי אֲשִׁירָה וְאַזְמִירָה:
עוֹרָה כְּבוֹדִי עוֹרָה הַגָּבֹל וְכִזּוֹר אֲעִירָה שְׁחַר:
אוֹדָה בְּעַמִּים אֲדַגִּי אֲזַמְּרָה בַל־אֲמִים:
כִּי־גָדַל עַד־הַשָּׁמַיִם חֲסִידָה וְעַד־שְׁחַקִּים אֲמַתָּה:
רוּמָה עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם אֱלֹהִים עַל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדָה:

1. For the end times. Do not destroy. A michtam by David, when he fled from the face of Saul into the cave.
2. Show favor to me, O God, show favor to me! For in You my soul seeks refuge and in the shadow of Your wings I will make refuge until calamities have passed by.
3. I will cry out to God Most High, to the God who proclaims over me;
4. He will send from heaven and save me; He reproaches the one who crushes me—**Selah**—God will send His lovingkindness and His truth.
5. My soul is among lions; I lie among the sons of men who are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.
6. Arise, O God, over the heavens; Your glory over all the earth.
7. They have prepared a net for my steps, my soul is bowed down; they have dug a pit before me, they have fallen into the midst of it. **Selah**
8. Establish my heart, O God, establish my heart; I will sing and make music.
9. Awake, my glory! Awake, lute and harp! I shall stir up the dawn.
10. I shall praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will make music to You among the nations.
11. For Your lovingkindness is great unto the heavens, and Your truth unto the clouds.
12. Arise, O God, over the heavens; Your glory over all the earth.

General Content and Structure

Psalms 57 contains familiar themes of previous psalms containing *Selah*. The theme of this psalm, though categorically a lament, portrays confidence in the Lord in the face of adversity.⁶⁷ “This psalm emphasizes the divine, heavenly realm as the source of help for

⁶⁷ Beat Weber, “Formgeschichtliche und sprachliche beobachtungen zu Psalm 57,” in *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 15.2 (2001), 295-305; and D. Erbel-Kuster, “Psalm 57 as a

faithful worshipers” as God is referred to twenty-two times by name or pronoun in eleven verses.⁶⁸ The divine realm and the earthly realm meet here in Psalm 57 to bridge the gap between the two worlds. And, even though enemies have sought to make the psalmist’s life miserable, the psalmist seeks God’s protection (the only one that has power over all the earth). As the enemies set traps, like hunters set traps for prey, in due time they will encounter judgment (Deut. 32:35).

Use of Selah

Selah occurs in the middle of 57:4, marking the divide between judgment of the wicked and the salvation of the faithful. Theophany is also present here in Psalm 57. *Selah* occurs at the junction of wickedness and salvation, occurring twice in 57:4, 7. The structure of Psalm 57 centers around *Selah* if it is taken in tripartite form: vv.1-4 (lament), vv. 5-7 (description of enemies), and vv. 8-12 (confidence in the Lord). *Selah* then would occur at the end of the lament, and the end of the description of the enemies, thus breaking the psalm into three sections. The structure could also be taken as bipartite (vv. 1-5, 7-11) with vv. 6 and 12 serving as refrains since they are identical verses.

The verse before the second occurrence of *Selah* requests God’s presence be made known over all the earth as the psalmist’s soul is in danger. The psalmist reveals more about how the wicked seek his life with the second occurrence of *Selah* in 57:7: “they have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down; they have dug a pit before me; into the midst of it they themselves have fallen.” The pit in which the enemies dig marks the end of the description of the wicked and the beginning of praise to the Lord for His

Prayer: The Contribution of the Aesthetics of Reception in Biblical Exegesis,” in *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 77.4 (2003), 497-511.

⁶⁸ Tate, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 81.

mercy. The last part of the psalm, vv. 8-11, is virtually identical to Psalm 108:1-5 through the use of synonyms for praise, alternation in mood, and the inclusion of musical terms such as “sing” and “make music.” It is in this context that the psalmist finds security and expresses his confidence in the Lord’s provision.

As the Lord provides for His people—He who is the singular source of help and salvation—is exalted over all of creation (cf. Gen. 14:22; Pss. 46, 47). The ancient Israelites affirmed only one God and espoused that no one was like Him (cf. Ex. 15:11). Here in Psalm 57, the psalmist affirms God’s power as *Selah* marks the judgment He executes among the wicked. This salvation of the righteous that *Selah* also highlights has two aspects (in the biblical sense): 1) salvation to the Lord’s favor, and 2) salvation from evil and adversity.⁶⁹ Thus, in this case, the need for salvation is insurmountable as the enemies pursue the psalmist’s life like lions in the hunt—setting traps for their prey (cf. *Selah* psalms 7 & 9). However, the psalmist remains calm in the face of adversity (57:6, 12). In other words, since the Lord is just, the psalmist relies on Him and experiences the redeeming faithfulness (Ps. 25:5), and love of God (Ps. 36:5) that *Selah* frequently occurs alongside of, and in turn emphasizes throughout these psalms.

Psalm 59

Text and Translation

*Excerpt: vv. 1-6 and vv.13-14

לְמַנְצָחַ אֱלֹהֵי־תִשְׁחֹת לְדָוִד מִכַּתָּם בְּשֹׁלַח שְׂאֹוֹל וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ אֶת־הַבַּיִת לְהַמִּיתוֹ:
הַצִּילֵנִי מֵאִיְבֹו אֱלֹהֵי מִמְתְּקוֹמִי תִשְׁגָּבֵנִי:
הַצִּילֵנִי מִפְּעֻלֵי אֹוֹן וּמֵאֲנִשֵׁי דָמִים הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי:
כִּי הִנֵּה אָרְבּוּ לְנַפְשִׁי יְגִירוּ עָלַי עֲזִים לֹא־פֹשְׁעִי וְלֹא־חַטָּאתִי יְהוָה:
כְּלִיעוֹן רֹוּצוֹן וַיִּכְנֹּגֵנוּ עוֹרָה לְקִרְאתִי וַיִּרְאֶה:
וְאַתָּה יְהוָה־אֱלֹהֵימָּו צָבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַקֹּיֵצָה לַפֶּקֶד כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם אֱלֹהֵי תְהוֹן כָּל־בְּגָדֵי אֹוֹן סָלָה:

⁶⁹ VanGemeren, “Psalms,” 403.

1. For the end times. Do not destroy. A michtam by David, when Saul sent men and they guarded the house to kill him.
2. Deliver me from my enemies, O God, defend me from their rising up against me.
3. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity; and from men of blood, save me.
4. For, behold, they lie in wait for my soul; the mighty quarrel over me, not for my transgression nor my sin, O Lord.
5. They run and establish themselves through no iniquity of mine. Awake to my call, and see.
6. But You, O Lord God of Hosts, God of Israel; Awake to visit the nations, do not show favor to faithless iniquity. **Selah**

חַטָּאת־פִּימוֹ דְּבַר־שִׁפְתָיו וַיִּלְכְּדוּ בְּגִאוֹנָם וַיִּמְאַלְהוּ וַיִּמְכַּחֲשׁ יִסְפְּרוּ:
כִּלְהָ בְּחִמָּה כִּלְהָ וַאֲיִנָּמוּ וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי־אֱלֹהִים מִשְׁלַל בְּיַעֲקֹב לְאַפְסֵי הָאָרֶץ סֵלָה:

13. For the sin of their mouth and the word of their lips, so they shall be captured in their pride and for the cursing and lying they recount.
14. Finish them in wrath, finish them that they may not be; and let them know that God rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth. **Selah**

General Content and Structure

As vivid imagery is employed throughout this complex psalm, the genre of Psalm 59 is generally accepted as an individual complaint.⁷⁰ As the righteous continue to be antagonized by the wicked, the psalmist begins with a petition for refuge. Hossfeld and Zenger note, “[this psalm] is the climax of the group of individual psalms about enemies and persecution.”⁷¹ Thus, a cry for deliverance is necessary as the writer becomes acutely aware of his innocence of the things for which he is charged.

The structure of Psalm 59 is considered non-traditional in reference to line positioning, but follows a familiar cycle of petition, lament, and expression of trust. So, while the structure may seem disorganized at first, it is “categorically a psalm of lament” and should be read as such, as a prayer of petition in both sections with integrated

⁷⁰ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 121.

⁷¹ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 85. Doyle states, “The author’s metaphorisation of his enemy (either personal or national) as a pack of wild dogs foaming at the mouth and terrorizing the city at night allows him to introduce elements of imprecation.” See: Brian Doyle, “Howling Like Dogs: Metaphorical Language in Psalm LIX,” in *VT* 54.1 (2004), 61.

laments.⁷² Scholars such as Klaus Seybold believe the current state of MT Psalm 59 is in ruin and can only make sense if the verses are shifted around to provide a more national focus on the lament of Israel against the nations.⁷³

Use of *Selah*

The structure of Psalm 59 should be reconsidered due to the presence of *Selah* in 59:6, 14. *Selah* plays a structural role in this psalm in relation to the refrains present following the term. The content of 59:7 and 15 are identical, and vv. 10 and 18 are almost identical.⁷⁴ The second section (vv.11-18) follows the first (vv. 2-10) quite nicely as “it intensifies the drama of the conflict” through carrying vivid military and animal metaphors even farther.⁷⁵ Zenger says, “The psalm sketches a positively eerie scenario of hostile intimidation and contrasts it with impressive images of YHWH as the protector and savior of those under deadly threat.”⁷⁶ *Selah* marks that prospective goal of divine judgment in both sections amidst the wickedness of the enemies. Its presence invokes the reader to consider the kingship of Yahweh as He “rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth,” ascertaining that nothing is impossible if one maintains faith in Him.

Another motif that lends a hand in the diverse use of *Selah* is introduced here in Psalm 59: night/evening and morning cycle. The evening is when the enemies seek the psalmist’s life, and in the morning Yahweh is praised for His graciousness.⁷⁷ This motif

⁷² The second section is a complete unit as vv.11 and 18 form an inclusio through the terms וְדָסָה יְהוָה and יִהְיֶה לְיָהּ לְזִמְרָה. The editors of BHS also suggested that more 2nd person independent pronouns be added to this psalm, which are rare in Hebrew poetry but seem to be fairly common among *Selah* psalms.

⁷³ Klaus Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2000), 234-235.

⁷⁴ BHS notes that the 2nd person independent pronoun (אָתָּה) is added in vv. 10 and 18 in some manuscripts. The presence of 1st and 2nd Hebrew independent pronouns in poetry is very rare, but they are quite common in the psalms that contain *Selah*.

⁷⁵ Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 91.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 85.

⁷⁷ Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 88.

is alluded to in other psalms containing *Selah* (Pss. 3, 4, 32, 55), but is fleshed out here in Psalm 59.

Psalm 60

Text and Translation

לְמִנְצַח עַל־שׁוֹשָׁן עֲדוֹת מִכְתָּם לְדָוִד לְלַמֵּד:
 בְּהִצּוֹתוֹ אֶת אֲרָם נְהָרִים וְאֶת־אֲרָם צֹבֵה וַיָּשָׁב יוֹאָב וַיֵּף אֶת־אֲדָוִים בְּגִיא־מֶלֶח שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר אֲלָף:
 אֱלֹהִים וַנִּחַתְנוּ פָּרָצְתָנוּ אֲנִפְתָּ תִּשׁוּבָב לָנוּ:
 הִרְעִשְׁתָּה אֶרֶץ פְּצַמְתָּה רָפָה שְׁבָרִיהָ כִּי־מָטָה:
 הִרְאִיתָה עַמְּךָ קָשָׁה הִשְׁקִיתָנוּ יַיִן תַּרְעֵלָה:
 נִתְמָה לִירְאִיד גַּם לְהַתְנוֹסֵם מִפְּנֵי קָשָׁט סֵלָה:
 לְמַעַן יִחַלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ הוֹשִׁיעָה מִיְּמִינֶךָ וַעֲנֵנוּ
 אֱלֹהִים דְּבַר בְּקִדְשׁוֹ אֲעֲלֶזָה אֲחַלֶּקָה שְׁכֵם וְעַמְּךָ סִכּוֹת אֲמַדֵּד:
 לִי גִלְעָדוֹ וְלִי מִנְּשֵׁה וְאֶפְרַיִם מְעוֹז רֹאשִׁי יְהוּדָה מְחַקְקִי:
 מוֹאָב סִיר רַחֲצִי עַל־אֲדָוִים אֲשַׁלִּיךְ נַעֲלִי עָלַי פְּלִשְׁתִּי הַתְרַעְעִי:
 מִי יִבְלֵנִי עֵיר מְצוֹר מִי נִחַנִּי עַד־אֲדָוִים:
 הִלֵּא־אֲתָה אֱלֹהִים וַנִּחַתְנוּ וְלֹא־תִצָּא אֱלֹהִים בְּצַבָּאוֹתֵינוּ:
 הִבֵּה־לָנוּ עֶזְרֶת מִצָּר וְשׂוֹא תִּשׁוּעַת אֲדָם:
 בְּאֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה־חֵיל יְהוָה יְבוֹס צָרֵינוּ:

1. For the end times, over the congregation of Shushan. A michtam by David, to teach.
2. When he struggled against Mesopotamia and Aram Zovah, and Joab returned and he smote twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.
3. O God, You have rejected us; You have broken us down. You were angry; You will return to us.
4. You have caused the earth to quake; You have split it. Heal its brokenness for it totters.
5. You have shown Your people hard things; You have made us drink staggering wine.
6. You have given a banner to fear You, that it may be raised in the face of truth. **Selah**
7. Therefore, Your beloved will be delivered; Save with Your right hand and answer me.
8. God has spoken in His holiness; "I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and I will measure the Valley of Succoth."
9. "Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; and Ephraim is the protection of My head; Judah is My lawgiver."
10. "Moab is My washpot, over Edom I will case My shoe; Philistia, shout with joy over Me."
11. "Who will bear along with Me to the strong city? Who will lead Me to Edom?"
12. Is it not You, God, who rejected us? And You, O God, who did not go out with our armies?
13. Give us help from trouble, for the help of man is useless.
14. In God we will do virtuously, for He tramples our enemies.

General Content and Structure

Psalms 60 contains, according to Gunkel, many technical musical notations.⁷⁸ From its superscript, we learn that its primary purpose is for instruction even though it was written in a way that imitates a liturgical pattern. Psalm 60 has an eternal focus as it speaks of future victories, victories that are exclusively of God. A divine oracle is unfolded that depicts God's kingship through the mention of geographical terminology (names of land; "Gilead," "Moab," etc.) that serves to introduce a temple theme we will see later in Psalms 73-83.

The structure of Psalm 60 is divided as three units (vv.3-7, 8-10, 11-14) and imitates a common liturgical pattern.⁷⁹ It has adopted, *verbatim*, Ps. 108:7-14 and combined it with Ps. 57:8-12 to form a new psalm. Eric Zenger says, "This psalm opens the messianic subcomposition Pss. 108-110."⁸⁰ This seems fitting, as a divine oracle of salvation is unfolded in vv.8-10 with a tricolon structure. The other two units, 3-7 and 11-14, are bicolon structures, which serve to delineate the divine oracle and make it the focus of the psalm.

Use of *Selah*

Selah is found in 60:6 in the midst of rejection, wrath, and truth. The term occurs in the first unit (vv. 3-7), but appears to be misplaced as vv. 6-7 are inseparable. It would make more sense to place *Selah*, for structural purposes, at the end of v.7 to mark the imperative for God to answer, and the end of the first unit. However, its presence in this psalm does not seem to be structural. *Selah* occurs with familiar themes that emphasize

⁷⁸ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 344.

⁷⁹ Graham S. Ogden, "Psalm 60: Its Rhetoric, Form, and Function," in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 10.31 (1985), 83. Also, C.E. Anderson, "The Politics of Psalmody: Psalm 60 and the Rise and Fall of Judaeans Independence," in *JBL* 134.2 (2015), 315.

⁸⁰ Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 103.

two fundamental dimensions of salvation and life: “land,” and “people.” As God is silent, the people believe He has abandoned them. Abandonment by God is only temporary, however, “as the power of God extends far beyond the limitations of man, and the borders of Israel.”⁸¹ In the last unit, vv.11-14, the psalmist prays a prayer of confidence in God’s promised acts, which put the psalm into an eschatological perspective. Or, if *Selah* were looked at from a historical viewpoint, and through the lens of Gunkel’s *Sitz im Leben*, it could be argued that it appears in situations of serious enemy threat.

Psalm 61

Text and Translation

לְמִנְצָחַ עַל־נְגִינָת לְדָוִד:
 שְׁמַעַה אֱלֹהִים רִנָּתִי הִקְשִׁיבָה תַפְלְתִּי:
 מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ אֶלֶיךָ אֶקְרָא בְּעֶטֶף לִבִּי בְּצוּר־יְרוּם מִמְּנִי תִנְחֲנִי:
 כִּי־הָיִית מַחְסֶה לִּי מִגְדֹּל־לֵעֹז מִפְּנֵי אוֹיֵב:
 אֲנוּרָה בְּאֶהְלֶךְ עוֹלָמִים אַחֲסֶה בְּסִתְר כְּנִפְיךָ סֵלָה:
 כִּי־אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים שְׁמַעַת לִנְדָּגִי נָתַתָּ יְרֵשֶׁת יִרְאִי שְׁמֹךְ:
 יָמִים עַל־יְמֵי־מֶלֶךְ תוֹסִיף שְׁנוֹתָיו כְּמוֹ־דָר וָדָר:
 יֵשֵׁב עוֹלָם לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים תִּסֹּד יֶאֱמָת מִן יִנְצְרֶהוּ:
 כֵּן אֲזַמְרָה שְׁמֹךְ לְעַד לְשִׁלְמִי גְדָדִי יוֹם יוֹם:

1. For the end times, on a stringed instrument. By David.
 2. Hear my cry, O God. Give attention to my prayer.
 3. From the end of the earth, I will cry out to You when my heart is feeble; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.
 4. For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower in the face of my enemy.
 5. I shall sojourn in Your tent forever; I shall seek shelter in the safety of Your wings.
- Selah**
6. For You, O God, have heard my vows; You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name.
 7. You will add days upon days to the king, his years as many generations.
 8. He sits, forever, before God; appoint lovingkindness and truth, that they may guard him.
 9. Surely I will make music in Your name forever, to repay my vows day after day.

⁸¹ Beth LaNeel Tanner, “Psalm 60,” in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Psalms*, ed. by Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 507-508.

General Content and Structure

While the superscription contains other obscure terms, the content of the psalm contains familiar imagery found among other individual complaint psalms.⁸² The psalmist again uses imagery of geography as his cry is “from the end of the earth.” The psalmist is seemingly distressed as he is far from God and therefore far from safety. God’s kingship reaches to the ends of the earth and beyond as the psalmist expresses his faith and eternal security in the Eternal One. The ends of the earth are interpreted existentially in the sense of being separated from earthly matters, or as someone who is on the brink of death.⁸³ With eternity in view, the psalmist espouses God’s eternal nature that transcends the bounds of mortality.

Psalm 61 forms a bipartite structure: vv. 2-5, 6-9. The petitions in vv. 2-5 represent God’s temple or His dwelling place through the use of language metaphors such as “rock,” “refuge,” “tent,” and “shelter of Your wings.” The petitions thus move the one praying from a distant place into the very dwelling place of God.⁸⁴ The second unit, vv. 6-9, provides a messianic hope of abundant life and praise in light of eternity. Thus, the nations (enemies) who continue to seek the speaker’s life are increasingly threatening, yet the intimacy of eternal salvation is portrayed in the midst of chaos.

Use of Selah

Selah appears at the end of v. 5 in a structural capacity marking the interchange between petition and providence. It would seem the primary focus of Psalm 61 would be a cry for help, yet “[it] speaks more about the safety found in God’s care than in the trouble that

⁸² Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 121.

⁸³ Tate, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 113.

⁸⁴ W.H. Bellinger, *A Hermeneutic of Curiosity and Readings of Psalm 61* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995), 33.

caused that distress.”⁸⁵ *Selah* backs up that claim as it takes on the context of the immediate verse, occurring at the height of the intimate relationship with God. *Selah* also serves as a transition to mark the divide between chaos and the order in which God provides as one seeks to fulfill a personal relationship with Him. As with many of the individual complaint psalms, Psalm 61 contains a temple motif, which is introduced by metaphorical language such as “rock,” “shelter,” “tent,” and “safety of Your wings.” The psalm thus provides a view of an intimate relationship with God whereby *Selah* thematically highlights the eternal security of the believer using familiar imagery in previous psalms containing *Selah*.

Psalm 62

Text and Translation

לְמַנְצָחַ עַל־יְדוּתָן מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
אֵךְ אֱלֹהִים דּוֹמֶינָה נַפְשִׁי מִמָּוֶה יְשׁוּעָתִי:
אֵךְ הוּא צוּרִי וְיִשׁוּעָתִי מִשְׁגָּבִי לֹא־אָמוּט רָבָה:
עַד־אֲנִהוּ תְהוֹתָנוּ עַל אִישׁ תִּרְצָחוּ כְּלָכֶם פָּקִיר נָטוּי אֲדָר הַדְחוּיָה:
אֵךְ מִשְׁאֲלוֹ יַעֲצוּ לְהַדִּיחַ יִרְצוּ כְּזָב בָּפוּי יִבְרָכוּ וּבְקִרְבָּם יִקְלִי־סֵלָה:
אֵךְ לֵאלֹהִים דּוֹמֶי נַפְשִׁי כִּי־מִמָּוֶה תִּקְוֹתִי:
אֵךְ הוּא צוּרִי וְיִשׁוּעָתִי מִשְׁגָּבִי לֹא אָמוּט:
עַל־אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁעִי וּכְבוֹדִי צוּר־עֵי מִחֹסֵי בְּאֱלֹהִים:
בְּטָחוּ בּוֹ כָּל־עַתָּה עִם שֹׁפְכו־לַפָּנָיו לְבַבְכֶּם אֱלֹהִים מִחֶסֶד־לָנוּ סֵלָה:
אֵךְ הָבֵל בְּגִי־אָדָם כְּזָב בְּנֵי אִישׁ בְּמֵאזְנִים לַעֲלוֹת הָמָּה מִהָבֵל יִתֵּד:
אֵל־תִּבְטָחוּ בַעֲשָׂק וּבְגִזָּל אֵל־תִּהְבְּלוּ חִילֹ כִּי־יִגוֹב אֶל־תִּשְׁתִּיתוּ לֵב:
אֲחֻתֹ דָּבָר אֱלֹהִים שְׁתִּימִי־נָו שְׁמַעְתִּי כִּי עֹז לֵאלֹהִים:
וּלְךָ־אֲדֹנִי חֶסֶד כִּי־אַתָּה תִּשְׁלֵם לְאִישׁ כְּמַעֲשָׁהוּ:

1. For the end times, over Jeduthun. A song by David.
2. Surely my soul silently waits for God. From Him my salvation comes.
3. Surely He is my rock and my salvation, my strong tower; I shall not be greatly shaken.
4. How long will you shout at a man? You will be crushed, all of you, like a leaning wall and a tottering fence.

⁸⁵ Beth LaNeel Tanner, “Psalm 61,” in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Psalms*, ed. by Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 510.

5. Surely they counsel to cast him from his high position; they delight in falsehood. They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. **Selah**
6. Surely my soul waits silently for God, for my hope is from Him.
7. Surely He is my rock and my salvation, my strong tower; I shall not be shaken.
8. In God is my salvation and my glory, the rock of my strength; my refuge is in God.
9. Trust in Him at all times, O people! Pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us. **Selah**
10. Surely the sons of Adam are vapor, the sons of man a lie, when they are weighed on the scales, together they are lighter than vapor.
11. Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery. If riches increase, do not set your heart on them.
12. God has spoken once, twice I have heard this; that power belongs to God.
13. Also to you, Lord, lovingkindness—for You reward man according to his work.

General Content and Structure

Psalm 62's genre is that of the individual complaint, but more specifically categorized as a "song of confidence" (vv. 2-8).⁸⁶ The psalmist begins with an expression of faith and trust in God, and closes by declaring God's power. There is theological brilliance on the psalmist's part as he contrasts Yahweh as the saving refuge of human existence with all other vain attempts through means such as wealth and power. The psalm is thus closely linked with the Christian NT passage Luke 12:13-21, which espouses wisdom about life that Jesus tried to impart to His disciples.⁸⁷ Psalm 62 consists of a bipartite structure (vv. 2-8, 9-13) of which both parts "emphasize, from different perspectives, the firmness and protective strength of trust in God."⁸⁸

Use of *Selah*

Selah occurs twice in 62:5, 9 and is the first psalm in which one of its instances are joined to another word with a *maqgef*. It is curious why *Selah* is joined to another word, and the phenomenon warrants further study. There has been mention that *maqgef*s are used in

⁸⁶ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 190.

⁸⁷ K.S. Kim, *God Will Judge Each One According to Works: Judgment According to Works and Psalm 62 in Early Judaism and the New Testament* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2011), 145ff.

⁸⁸ Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 113.

connection with musical considerations or that the *maqgef* is “sometimes used to link two words together in order to indicate that there’s a close relationship between them.”⁸⁹

Though this mark may indicate that *Selah* has a relationship with the previous word, it (along with vowel points, etc.) was the work of later Masoretes. Thus, there may be an element of speculation involved regarding the use of the *maqgef* with *Selah* and is open to interpretation. If situated in an oral context (of which will be discussed in a later chapter), it seems most likely that the *maqgef* serves as a simplification of pronunciation.⁹⁰ As if to soften the previous term for thematic implications, or simply for ease of pronunciation, the *maqgef*’s appearance here warrants further study.

However curious the presence of the *maqgef*, the content of the psalm itself does not change. The first appearance of *Selah* is surrounded by lament and a description of the crisis as the enemies’ use of deceptions and lies are ever increasing (vv. 4-5). As the psalmist meditates and waits for God, he alludes that salvation is only present in hope and in the promises of God (vv. 6-7). However the enemies disturb him, asylum is found in God’s temple (a common motif of other *Selah* psalms). *Selah* occurs with an indirect rebuke in v. 5, and as the highlight of the salvation process (to “trust,” and “pour out”) in v. 9. These expressions are amplified by initial sound patterns that begin each verse, and the repeated declarations of security show the speaker to be successful in calling on God

⁸⁹ Lily Kahn, *The Routledge Introductory Course in Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 32; Israel Yeivin, *The Hebrew Language Tradition as Reflected in the Babylonian Vocalization* (Jerusalem, 1985).

⁹⁰ “Joining accents mark the words within the units so delimited, showing that they combine to form a unit of which the end is marked by the next disjunctive. This purpose is served by the hyphen-like *maqgef* which shows that the words it joins form, in terms of the accent system, a single ‘word-unit,’ governed by the accent on the last.” See, M.C.A. Korpel, J.M. Oesch, and S.E. Porter, eds., *Method in Unit Delimitation* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

in times of trouble.⁹¹ The break in 62:9 from the initial sound patterns occurs at the point where instructions for returning to faithfulness begin. *Selah* occurs at the crux of the message in this verse as the psalmist highlights how the righteous shall live.

It is in 62:9 that *Selah* begins the exhortation to live a respectable and righteous life with instructions for the godly. *Selah* highlights the imperative to trust God at all times, even in what seems like dire circumstances. The psalmist ends with hope in view of eternity: one can only have an eternal future if their hope rests firmly in the One who never changes (vv. 10-13). It is interesting to note that in the Psalterium Gallicanum and in the Hieronymus text, both versions of Psalm 62 have “to eternity” instead of *Selah*. This should be taken into consideration when studying the eternal perspective of the psalm, as well as how the term itself was used at the time those texts were composed.

Psalm 66

Text and Translation

*Excerpt: vv. 1-7 and vv. 13-15

לְמַנְצֵחַ שִׁיר מִזְמוֹר הָרִיעוּ לֵאלֹהִים כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:
וַיִּמְרוּ כְבוֹד־שִׁמּוֹ שִׁימוּ כְבוֹד תְּהִלָּתוֹ:
אָמְרוּ לֵאלֹהִים מִה־נִּנְרָא מַעֲשָׂיָהּ בְּרַב עֲזָה יִכְחָשׁוּ לָךְ אֹיְבֶיךָ:
כָּל־הָאָרֶץ יִשְׁתַּחֲוּ לָךְ וַיִּזְמְרוּ לָךְ וַיִּזְמְרוּ שִׁמְךָ סֵלָה:
לְכֹן וְרֵאוּ מַפְעָלוֹת אֱלֹהִים נִנְרָא עֲלֵילָהּ עַל־בְּנֵי אָדָם:
הִפְּזוּ יָם לִיבִשָּׁהּ בַּנָּהָר יַעֲבֹרוּ בְּרֶגֶל אֲשֶׁם נִשְׁמָחָהּ בָּרוּ:
מִיֶּשֶׁל בְּגִבּוֹרָתוֹ עוֹלָם עֵינָיו בְּגוֹיִם תִּצְפִּינָה הַסּוֹרְרִים אֶל־יִרְיָמוּ לָמוֹ סֵלָה:

1. For the end times, a song, music. Shout to God all the earth.
2. Make music for the glory of His name; make His praise glorious.
3. Say to God, “How fearsome are Your works! Through the greatness of Your power your enemies shall submit themselves to You.”
4. All the earth will bow down to You, and they will make music for You; they will make music to Your name. **Selah**
5. Go and see the works of God; He is fearsome in His doing upon the sons of man.

⁹¹ Davida Charney, “Keeping the Faithful: Persuasive Strategies in Psalms 4 and 62,” in *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 12.16 (2012), 9-11. The sound patterns play out with beginning each verse with a guttural, except verses 9 and 13. Verse 9 begins with an imperative.

6. He turned the sea to dry land, they passed over the river by foot, there we shall rejoice in truth.

7. He rules by His power forever, His eyes keep watch on the nations; do not let the rebellious exalt themselves. **Selah**

אָבּוֹא בִּיתְךָ בְּעוֹלוֹת אֲשֶׁלֶם לְךָ נִדְרֵי:
אֲשֶׁר־פָּצוּ שְׁפִתַי וּדְבַר־פִּי בִצְר־לִי:
עֲלוֹת מִחַיִּים אֶעֱלֶה־לְךָ עִם־קִטְרֹת אֵילִים אֲעִשֶׂה בְּקֹר עַם־עֲתוּדִים סָלָה:

13. I will enter Your house with burnt offerings, I will pay You my promised deeds,

14. which my lips set free, and my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble,

15. I will offer You burnt offerings of fat animals, with the sweet aroma of rams, I will offer bulls with goats. **Selah**

General Content and Structure

Psalms 66 centers on God's universal rule that can be witnessed among all people groups.

A development in theme of praise for deliverance is expressed in vv. 1-4. The nature of

God's works makes enemies tremble with fear, even the non-believers who are so struck

with admiration that they must bow the knee. The mighty works that inspire the praise are

found in vv. 5-7 followed by a description of how God delivers the people (vv. 8-12).

The last unit, vv. 13-20, expresses the grateful response for salvation. "Salvation here is

announced as being more than a miraculous deliverance, but involves God's guidance

and correction."⁹² Life is not always clear-cut—it can be complex and messy.

Use of *Selah*

Selah occurs in vv. 4, 7, and 15 of a psalm that extols God's works, power, and teaching.

Psalms 66 can be divided into two major sections with minor sub-sections. Section one

consists of vv. 1-12 (minor divisions: vv. 1-4, 5-7, 8-12), and section two consists of vv.

13-20 (minor divisions: vv. 13-15, 16-20). Beth Tanner believes that the ancient writers

of this psalm left us not a manual for worship, but a legacy that describes the majesty and

⁹² Beth LaNeel Tanner, "Psalm 66," in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Psalms*, ed. by Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 535.

faithfulness of God.⁹³ This coincides with what Frank-Lothar Hossfeld said, that the psalm was structured around the idea that “those who carry injustice in their hearts cannot rely on being heard by God,” an idea which was quite common among Jewish literature.⁹⁴ Thus, the psalms that contain *Selah* continue to challenge the reader to confront the messy reality of a relationship with God (which may include clearly painful periods of testing by God, cf. vv. 8-12).

Selah seems to play a structural role but it is not consistent among the five subsections that comprise the psalm. However, where *Selah* does occur, it occurs within verses formed by tricola, while most others are bicola. It is curious, if *Selah* were purely structural, why the term does not appear in vv.12 and 20, which are tricolons. The first instance of *Selah* in v. 4 promotes God’s divine kingship over the earth, while the *Selah* in v. 7 is also interesting as the psalmist chose to introduce the verse with a hymnic participle that introduces God’s royal sovereignty. The last *Selah* in v. 15 marks the giving of sacrifices as an act of obedience to God. The presentation of burnt offerings, especially large ones as seen in this section, were usually public events performed by someone of importance. So, *Selah* in this context could have been an utterance of a binding promise in the presence of God.

Psalm 67

Text and Translation

לְמַנצַח בְּנִינֹת מִזְמֹר שִׁיר:
 אֱלֹהִים יַחַנְנוּ וַיְבָרְכֵנוּ יְאֹר פָּנָיו אֲתָנוּ סֵלָה:
 לְדַעַת בְּאֶרֶץ דֶּרֶכָּה בְּכָל־גּוֹיִם יִשְׁוּעָתָה:
 יוֹדוּךָ עַמִּים | אֱלֹהִים יוֹדוּךָ עַמִּים כָּל־ם:
 יִשְׁמְחוּ וַיִּרְנְנוּ לְאֻמִּים כִּי־תִשְׁפֹּט עַמִּים מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ תִּנְחֶם סֵלָה:

⁹³ Ibid., 531.

⁹⁴ Hossfeld, *Psalms* 2, 148.

יִזְדוּךְ עַמִּים | אֱלֹהִים יִזְדוּךְ עַמִּים כָּל־
 אֶרֶץ נִתְנָה יְבוּלָהּ יְבָרְכֵנוּ אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵינוּ:
 יְבָרְכֵנוּ אֱלֹהִים וַיֵּרְאוּ אֹתוֹ כָּל־אֶפְסֵי־אָרֶץ:

1. For the end times, on stringed instruments. A song, music.
2. May God show favor on us and bless us; May He cause His face to shine upon us.

Selah

3. That Your way may be known in the earth; Your salvation in all the nations.
4. May the peoples praise You, O God; may all the peoples praise You.
5. Let the nations rejoice and shout with joy, for You will judge the people righteously, and You will lead the nations on the earth. **Selah**
6. May the peoples praise You, O God; may all the peoples praise You.
7. The earth shall give her produce; God, our God, will bless us.
8. God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

General Content and Structure

Psalm 67 is one of the few psalms containing *Selah* that could have originated in the Jerusalem Temple liturgy. Gunkel classified Psalm 67's genre as a hymn, whereby it was also one of a few "complete examples of Israel's thanksgiving song."⁹⁵ The psalm begins by re-working the Aaronic blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26, asking for favor, first before the request that Yahweh cause His face to shine upon them.⁹⁶ The special relationship between God and Israel is then renewed as He restores the created order and His people trust in Him. His kingship is made known "to the ends of the earth."

Psalm 67 is comprised of a concentric three-part structure with two external sections (vv. 2-3 and vv. 7-8) and one internal section (vv. 4-6).⁹⁷ A petition for God's blessing on Israel and its consequences for the nations thematically bind the two external sections. The internal section, vv. 4-6, introduces all nations into the kingdom of God.

⁹⁵ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 22. See also pg. 240.

⁹⁶ "Echoes of this blessing are especially frequent in the book of Psalms." See: Eep Talstra and C.J. Bosma, "Psalm 67: Blessing, Harvest and History—A Proposal for Exegetical Methodology," in *Calvin Theological Journal* 36 (2001), 290. A large number of the psalms containing an echo of this blessing contain *Selah*.

⁹⁷ Samuel L. Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 483.

Thus, all nations beside Israel are considered the “grafted in ones” who are under the righteous governance of God.⁹⁸

Use of *Selah*

Selah appears in vv. 2 and 5 as it marks righteousness in judgment. The theme of God standing as the divine king and judge as He establishes a just order in the world permeates this psalm. The first *Selah* appears in v. 2 of which highlights the Aaronic blessing. The second *Selah* (in v. 5) occurs at the crux of the psalm whereby the nations are rejoicing over God’s righteous dealing with them. Psalm 67:5 is framed by two refrains that mark the central section of the psalm (vv. 4, 6), a crucial theological concept that introduces the “grafted in” ones. In other words, the central theme of Psalm 67 is that “all the ends of the earth” are accountable before God, and He will judge them justly with righteous and mild governing tactics. His kingship shall be asserted over all the earth, and His sovereignty over all of creation will be made known among men. If Gunkel is correct in assuming that Psalm 67 is one of Israel’s thanksgiving songs, it would be fitting that *Selah* may have functioned as a communal response in faithfulness. *Selah* also occurs at the stage of a divine metaphor that signals graciousness and favor to the righteous. Thus the righteousness in judgment theme emerges as God is shown to be the One from whom all blessings (including salvation) flow.

Psalm 68

Text and Translation

*Excerpt: vv. 6-9, 18-20, 33-36

אֲבִי יְתוּמִים וְדֹיֵן אֱלֹמֹת אֱלֹהִים בְּמַעוֹן קָדְשׁוֹ:
אֱלֹהִים מוֹשִׁיב יְחִידִים בְּיָתָהּ מוֹצִיא אֲסִירִים בְּכּוֹשָׁרוֹת אֶךְ סוֹרְרִים שְׂכָנֵי צָחִיקָה:

⁹⁸ Christological parallels can be found in Ps. 72:12ff and Isaiah 11:3ff. See also: Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 240.

אֱלֹהִים בְּצִיָּאתָּךְ לִפְנֵי עַמְּךָ בְּצִעְדֶּךָ בְּיִשְׁמֹון סֵלָה:
אֶרֶץ רָעָשָׁה אֶף־שָׁמַיִם נָטְפוּ מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים זֶה סִינֵי מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

6. A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation.
7. God causes the solitary to dwell in houses; He brings out those bound in prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.
8. O God, when You went out before Your people, when you marched in the wilderness,
Selah
9. the earth quaked, the heavens angrily dropped rain at the presence of God; Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

רָכַב אֱלֹהִים רִבְתִּים אֶלְפֵי שָׁנָאן אֲדֹנֵי כָם סִינֵי בִקְדָשׁ:
עָלִיתָ לְמִרְוֹם שָׁבִית שְׁבִי לְקַחֹת מִתְּנוּת בָּאֲדָם וְאֶף סוֹרְרִים לְשִׁכּוֹן לֵה אֱלֹהִים:
בְּרוּךְ אֲדֹנֵי יוֹם יוֹם יַעֲמֹס־לָנוּ הָאֵל יִשׁוּעָתָנוּ סֵלָה:

18. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, thousands of thousands; the Lord is among them as in Sinai, the holy place.
19. You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive, You have received gifts among men, even from the rebellious, that God may dwell there.
20. Blessed is the Lord who carries us daily, the God of our salvation. **Selah**

מִמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ שִׁירוּ לְאֱלֹהִים וּמְרוּ אֲדֹנֵי סֵלָה:
לָרֵכֶב בְּשָׁמַיִם שְׁמִי־קָדָם הָנוּ יִתְּנוּ בָקוּלוֹ קוֹל עוֹ:
תָּנוּ עוֹ לְאֱלֹהִים עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל גְּאוּתוֹ וְעוֹ בְּשִׁתְּקִים:
נִנְרָא אֱלֹהִים מִמְּקוֹד־שָׁיִד אֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא נִתָּן עוֹ וְתַעֲצָמוֹת לָעָם בְּרוּךְ אֱלֹהִים:

33. Sing to God, kingdoms of the earth. Make music to the Lord. **Selah**
34. To Him who rides on the heaven of heavens of old; indeed He sends out His voice, a mighty voice.
35. Give strength to God; His excellence is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds.
36. O God, You are more feared than Your holy places. The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people. Blessed is God!

General Content and Structure

This psalm is said to have attracted and challenged many exegetes due to its difficult text (as evidenced by the slew of textual notes in the BHS apparatus).⁹⁹ Its vivid imagery hearkens back to some of the most ancient texts such as Exodus 15, Judges 5, and Deuteronomy 33. Because of its difficult text, scholars find it impossible to assign a

⁹⁹ Albright described Ps. 68 as a catalogue of early Hebrew lyric poems in his article, "A Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems (Psalm LXVIII)," in *HUCA* 23 (1950-1951), 1-39.

genre and impossible to assign a historical context.¹⁰⁰ It seems quite certain that scholars have had difficulty due to the text being both historical and future oriented.

A move from history to the future, the psalm begins with language reminiscent of Numbers 10 of Moses and the ark as he moves through the wilderness. God has risen up in the past, and He will continue to do so as the divine warrior. God alone defeats enemies and He alone provides refuge for the righteous both in the past and the future. As God marches in the wilderness, His sovereignty over creation is apparent as everything responds to God's movement (vv. 7-10).

God then defeats all enemies and the people shall rejoice (vv. 11-23), victory and salvation come from His holy mountain. The divine nature of God can be seen here as the text makes clear His "escape from death." Christian tradition holds the resurrection of Christ from death, so the reality of no death for the righteous can also be implied here. As the divine warrior takes His throne, the procession encompasses not only the tribes of Israel but also all the earth—a future perspective on the establishment of God's kingdom. The psalm thus declares "the broken, violent, oppressive nature of humanity, but offers the hope that even if violence must be met with violence, it is not done for revenge, but for the establishment of God's kingdom and God's justice for all the world."¹⁰¹ Gunkel believed that this particular psalm was one of many eschatological hymns. Their content, he said, praise the great deeds of God that belong to the future. "In this context, the

¹⁰⁰ Beth LaNeel Tanner, "Psalm 68," in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Psalms*, ed. by Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 542; Patrick D. Miller, "Two Critical Notes on Psalm 68 and Deuteronomy 33," in *Harvard Theological Review* 57.3 (July 1964), 240-243.

¹⁰¹ Tanner, "Psalm 68," 552.

historical tenor of the typical hymn takes on the significance of the anticipatory *prophetic perfect*.”¹⁰²

Use of *Selah*

Even though the text of Psalm 68 is difficult (some say corrupted), and contains frequent *hapax legomena* and odd expressions, its structure is not too difficult to determine.¹⁰³ It can be broken into nine sections: vv. 2-4, 5-7, 8-11, 12-15, 16-19, 20-24, 25-28, 29-32, 33-36. What is peculiar, however, is that *Selah* heads the sections of these divisions instead of ending sections as in previous psalms. *Selah* appears in 68:8, 20, 33 and the LXX and Syriac versions also add *Selah*’s equivalent in 68:14. The following sections can be summarized as follows:

68:2-4	Future description of God arising in judgment
68:5-7	Description and nature of God
68:8-11	Address to God that describes a theophany
68:12-15	Divine victory in battle (highlights divinity and kingship)
68:16-19	Zion motif, God’s entry into His sanctuary
68:20-24	Praise, quote of divine speech (introductory ברוך formula)
68:25-28	God in His sanctuary, speaker’s confession of faith in God
68:29-32	Petitions to God
68:33-36	Call to praise addressed to all the earth, depicts God’s kingship as sovereign over all creation

Much of the content in these verses are familiar themes and motifs that are found with *Selah* in other psalms previously covered. In other words, Psalm 68 contains familiar elements such as theophany, divine speech, the Zion motif, and a picture of God’s sovereignty over all the earth. Regarding *Selah*’s placement at the beginning of each section (instead of the end of the section) in which it occurs, Frank-Lothar Hossfeld says:

¹⁰² Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 263.

¹⁰³ Israel Knohl, “Psalm 68: Structure, Composition and Geography,” in *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 12 (2012), 1-22.

[*Selah*] has an inner-strophic function. In v. 8 it underscores the beginning of the depiction of the theophany that continues in v. 9 with the description of the upheaval in nature. In v. 20 the *Selah* separates the introductory *baruk* formula from the following hymnic depiction of the work of God in vv. 21-24. In v. 33 the *Selah* analogously forces itself between the introductory call to praise and what naturally follows in vv. 34-36. One gets the impression that here *Selah* accents or points to liturgically received formulas and expressions.¹⁰⁴

As Hossfeld is correct in observing an “inner-strophic function,” he glosses over the common thematic elements that are often found with *Selah*. Theophany, salvation, and the kingship of Yahweh are all important elements that *Selah* finds itself connected with, and this could perhaps be another reason psalms containing *Selah* were often used in liturgy.

¹⁰⁴ Hossfeld, *Psalms* 2, 164.

MT Psalter: Book III

Book III is the most compact in material containing references to Yahweh. Riddled with divine discourse, in which *Selah* oftentimes finds itself embedded, this Book reveals the salvific nature of the Messiah Himself. Geographical language concerning Zion also permeates this Book. While surely the topic of another study, it is worth mentioning that Book III contains a very high number of 1st and 2nd person pronouns in the psalms containing *Selah*, suggesting that dialogue is more prevalent as the psalmist desperately clings to the hope of the past as Book III comes to an end. Because of the high incidence of divine discourse in Book III, it seems likely that these pronouns further serve to highlight the nature of interaction between Yahweh and His people.

Psalms 75

Text and Translation

לְמַנְצֵחַ אֶל־תְּשֻׁחַת מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף שִׁיר:
הִוְדִינוּ לָךְ אֱלֹהִים הִוְדִינוּ וְקִרְוֹב שְׁמֶךָ סִפְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ:
כִּי אַתָּה מוֹעֵד אֲנִי מִיִּשְׁרָאֵל אֲשַׁפֵּט:
גְּמֻלָּה אֶרְצֶנּוּ וְכָל־יִשְׁבְּעֶיהָ אֲנֹכִי תִכְנֶנֶתִּי עַמּוּדֶיהָ סִלָּה:
אֲמַרְתִּי גְּהוֹלְלִים אֶל־תִּהְיוּ וְלֹךְ־שָׁעִים אֶל־תִּתְּרִמוּ קִרְוֹ:
אֶל־תִּתְּרִמוּ לַמָּרוֹם קִרְנֵיכֶם תִּדְבְּרוּ בְּצוּאָר עֲתִק:
כִּי לֹא מִמוּצָא וּמִמַּעַרְב וְלֹא מִמִּדְבָּר הָרִים:
כִּי־אֱלֹהִים שֹׁפֵט זֶה יִשְׁפִּיל וְזֶה יָרִים:
כִּי כֹס בְּיַד־יְהוָה וְיֵינוּ חֲמָרוֹ מִלֵּא מִסֹּךְ וַיִּגֶר מִזֶּה אֶד־שְׁמָרְיָה יִמְצְאוּ יִשְׁתּוּ כָּל רִשְׁעֵי־אֶרֶץ:
וְאֲנִי אֲגִיד לְעַלְמִים אֲזַמְּרָה לְאֵלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:
וְכָל־קִרְנֵי רִשְׁעִים אֲגַדֵּעַ תִּרְוַמְנָה קִרְנוֹת צַדִּיק:

1. For the end times. Do not ruin. Music by Asaph, a song.
2. We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works recount that Your name is near.
3. When I take a meeting, I will judge justly.
4. The earth and all its inhabitants melt away; I myself meted out its pillars. **Selah**
5. I said to the boastful, “Do not be boastful,” and to the wicked, “Do not lift up the horn.”
6. Do not lift up your horn on high, do not speak with a stiff neck.

7. For exaltation is neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the mountains in the wilderness.
8. because God judges; He makes one low and raises another.
9. For there is a cup in the hand of the Lord, and the wine is red—fully mixed, and He pours it out. Surely all its dregs will drain out, all the wicked of the earth will drink it.
10. But I will declare forever, I will make music to the God of Jacob.
11. And all the horns of the wicked I will hew off, the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up.

General Content and Structure

Psalm 75 brings to mind divine speech/oracles, so it is also fitting that Gunkel designated this psalm as a liturgy containing prophetic elements.¹ The bipartite structure, and frequent use of *וְ* clauses, suggests that the author/editor chose to employ emphatic statements and divine speech to emphasize the kingship theme of this psalm.

God's people are a grateful people, and that can be seen again at the beginning of Psalm 75. The psalmist begins by giving thanks to God and making special note of His continual presence. As previous psalms called/hoped for God's intervention in the midst of evil transpiring upon the earth, the psalmist describes the current state of unrest and the need for justice. Order is ultimately upheld (by its "pillars") by God, and the ones who boast in themselves, who are prideful and arrogant, will find no solace among themselves "for vain is the help of man."² The truth of the psalm is set forth with brevity in v. 8—"God judges." God is therefore the final arbiter of truth; He rules effectively as the proud are abased and the lowly are exalted (cf. 1 Samuel 2:1-10, Hannah's Prayer). From His

¹ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 251. Kselman notes, "[However, it does] not fit easily into any of the standard form-critical categories." See: J.S. Kselman, "Critical Note: Janus Parallelism in Psalm 75:2," in *JBL* 121.3 (2002), 531; also H.J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 104 describes Psalm 75 as "a liturgy at the center of which a cultic-prophetic announcement of judgment and a judgment doxology found a place."; J.E. Jensen notes that "context and poetic features suggest that Psalm 75 may have served as an essential link between Psalms 73-74 and Psalm 76 in a liturgical setting where the four psalms were used together." See J.E. Jensen, "Psalm 75: Its Poetic Context and Structure," in *CBQ* 63.3 (2001), 416. There are many parallels with other psalms containing *Selah*, i.e. 81:1,8 and 75:3; 82:2-7 and 75:3-4, 11; 82:5 and 75:4 are just a few examples.

² Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 545.

cup flows justice and wrath, a vivid depiction of the judgment He executes on the wicked of the earth. God thus judges at the appropriate time, bringing the wicked to their knees before a holy God.

Use of *Selah*

Selah plays a structural role as it marks the end of divine speech. The divine speech characterizes Yahweh's kingship through the use of first person Hebrew independent pronouns, and ends with the proclamation that God upholds all order in the universe. This is indeed the case in Psalm 75 as *Selah* serves as a transition marking the end of the divine speech in 75:4. Divine speech/oracles also occur in other *Selah* psalms such as Ps. 50, 81, and 82. Delitzsch believes that *Selah* signifies the psalm is to be sung with musical accompaniment, but he seems to miss the bigger picture of the context in which it is embedded.³ The shift from divine speech to human speech in vv. 5-7 has been seen as a textual problem.⁴ However, the psalm can be interpreted from the beginning as the divine speech is clearly marked by *Selah* and its content flows from the same theme of divine kingship. Thematically, *Selah* marks the section that affirms God's future intervention, and it is made concrete through the imagery/motif of a saving and judging God (v. 3). The divine kingship motif also extends to other *Selah* psalms (cf. 50:4-6; 67:5), so *Selah* here in Ps. 75 follows in the same pattern as portraying God as guarantor of world order. Thus, *Selah* marks the promises of divine judgment (vv. 3-4 as a unit), which accomplishes the rescue of the righteous.⁵

³ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 337.

⁴ Hossfeld, *Psalms* 2, 253.

⁵ This psalm, as the others, reveals the diversity of *Selah*'s use in antiquity. It functions as both a marker for theme and structure.

Psalm 76

Text and Translation

לְמַנְצָח בְּנִיגִיט מִזְמֹר לְאַסָּף שִׁיר:
נוֹדַע בְּיהוּדָה אֱלֹהִים כְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גָּדוֹל שְׁמוֹ:
וַיְהִי בְשָׁלֹם סֶכּוֹ וּמַעֲוֹנָתוֹ בְּצִיּוֹן:
שָׁמָּה שִׁבַּר רִשְׁפֵי־קִשָּׁת מָגֵן וַחֲרֹב וּמִלְחָמָה סָלָה:
בָּאוּר אֲתָה אֲדִיר מִהַרְרֵי־טָרֶף:
אֲשַׁתּוּלְלוּ אֲבִירֵי לֵב נָמוּ שְׁנֵיתָם וְלֹא־מָצְאוּ כָל־אֲנָשֵׁי־חַיִל יְדֵיהֶם:
מִגְעָרְתָּהּ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב נִרְדָּם וַרְכָּב וְסוּס:
אֲתָהּ הָיָה אֲתָהּ וּמִי־יַעֲמֵד לְפָנֶיהָ מֵאֵז אֶפֶד:
מִשְׁמִים הִשְׁמַעַת דִּין אֶרֶץ יִרְאָה וְשָׁקֵטָה:
בָּקוּם־לְמִשְׁפָּט אֱלֹהִים לְהוֹשִׁיעַ כָּל־עַנְיֵי־אֶרֶץ סָלָה:
כִּי־חֲמַת אָדָם תוֹדֶךָ שְׁאֲרִית חֲמַת תַּחֲגֹר:
גִּדְּרוּ וְשָׁלְמוּ לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כָּל־סִבִּיבָיו יוֹבִילוּ שֵׁי לְמִנְרָא:
יִבְצֹר רוּחַ נְגִידִים נוֹרָא לְמַלְכֵי־אֶרֶץ:

1. For the end times, on stringed instruments. Music by Asaph, a song.
2. In Judah, God is known; In Israel, great is His name.
3. And His tabernacle is in Salem, and His dwelling place in Zion.
4. There He broke the arrows of the bow, the shield and sword of battle. **Selah**
5. You are more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey.
6. The stouthearted were plundered; they were drowsy in their sleep, and none of the mighty men have found the use of their hands.
7. At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse have fallen fast asleep.
8. You, Yourself, are to be feared, and who may stand in Your presence, when once You are angry?
9. You caused judgment to be heard from heaven, the earth feared and was still.
10. When God arose in judgment, to deliver all the oppressed of the earth. **Selah**
11. Surely the wrath of man shall praise You; the remainder of wrath You shall gird Yourself.
12. Make vows to the Lord your God and repay them; let all who surround Him bring presents to Him who shall be feared.
13. He will cut off the spirit of princes, He is feared to the kings of the earth.

General Content and Structure

Psalm 76 again portrays God as the divine king and advances the Zion motif of other psalms containing *Selah*. Zion is the locus of God's throne and salvation flows from it in the psalms by Asaph. Gunkel's genre is that of a "Zion song."⁶ All the more, Psalm 76 should be interpreted in the context of a Zion theology. God chose Zion as His earthly

⁶ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 22.

sanctuary from which He executes judgment (vv. 4, 10, 11), makes war against oppressors (vv. 9-10), and establishes world order.

The psalm is typically divided into four sections: vv. 2-4, 5-7, 8-10, 11-13. *Selah* appears in its expected position at the end of two sections. More independent pronouns are found in this psalm, yet they change from *יְיָ* in Psalm 75 to *הָתֵא* here in Psalm 76. An inclusio also shapes this psalm with *עַד יוֹן* in 76:2a and *אֶרֶץ יוֹן* in 76:13b. The inclusio closes the topographical space of the psalm, “it is about the revelation of YHWH ‘in Judah’ with an eye to all the ‘kings of the earth.’”⁷

Use of *Selah*

Selah occurs in 76:4 and 10, and it marks the crux of the argument for this psalm—that God has made Himself known from Zion, and in His divinity razes armies and destroys wickedness. *Selah* also marks judgment (v. 10) as part and parcel of the sin-judgment-redemption cycle. Here, God’s kingship is in full view; the judgment, of which *Selah* marks, “aims at putting an end to violence and the misery from which all the poor of the earth suffer.”⁸ Thus, Psalm 76 is a future oriented text that marks the end of earthly repression and the beginning of salvation, kindness, and justice from the God of all life.

Thematic and linguistic echoes of Zion (which are also in Pss. 46 and 48 *Selah* psalms) suggest that Psalm 76 should also be interpreted as a psalm of Zion.⁹ Eric Zenger notes the common features that bind these three psalms: 1) These are hymnic psalms to the God who on Zion, or from Zion, conquers chaos and so maintains the cosmos; 2) The scenario described shows YHWH to be the God who destroys the weapons of war and

⁷ Ibid., 271.

⁸ Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 270.

⁹ J.J.M. Roberts, “The Davidic Origin of the Zion Tradition,” in *JBL* 92.3 (1973), 329-344.

thus war itself, and who casts His divine terror on the enemies, so that they are deprived of all power; and 3) The purpose of this struggle against the enemies is not their destruction, but rather that they be led to recognize the world sovereignty of the God of Zion.¹⁰ There are many more connections throughout these three psalms, especially seen in language of war (i.e. the breaking of bows; 46:10 and 76:4) and theophany (cf. 46:6 and 76:5). The Zion theme is important as *Selah* commonly finds itself immersed within temple language, situations of threat, judgment, salvation, and divine kingship. *Selah* plays a structural role here as well as it marks off direct speech (praise) to God.

Psalm 77

Text and Translation

לְמַנְצֵחַ עַל־יְדִיתוֹן לְאַסָּף מִזְמוֹר:
 קוֹלִי אֶל־אֱלֹהִים וְאַצְעָקָה קוֹלִי אֶל־אֱלֹהִים וְהֶאֱזִין אֵלַי:
 בַּיּוֹם צָרָתִי אֲדַגֵּי דְרָשְׁתִּי יְיָ לֵילָה נִגְרָה וְלֹא תִפּוֹג מֵאֲנָה הַנֶּחֱם נַפְשִׁי:
 אֲזַכֶּרֶה אֱלֹהִים וְאַהֲמִיָּה אֲשִׁיחָהּ וְתַתְּעִטָּהּ רוּחִי סֵלָה:
 אֲחֻזָּת שְׁמֵרוֹת עֵינֵי נִפְעָמָתִי וְלֹא אֲדַבֵּר:
 חֲשַׁבְתִּי יָמִים מִקֶּדֶם שָׁנוֹת עוֹלָמִים:
 אֲזַכֶּרֶה נִגִּינָתִי בְלִילָה עִם־לִבִּי אֲשִׁיחָהּ וְיִחַפֵּשׁ רוּחִי:
 הִלְעוֹלָמִים יִגְחַח אֲדַגֵּי וְלֹא־יִסִּיף לְרַצוֹת עוֹד:
 הָאֵפֶס לִנְצַח חֲסִדוֹ גָּמַר אֲמַר לָדָר וְדָר:
 הִשְׁכַּח חֲנוּת אֵל אִם־קִפְצָה בְּאֵף רַחֲמָיו סֵלָה:
 וְאֲמַר חֲלוּתִי הֵיא שָׁנוֹת יָמָיו עָלְיוֹן:
 אֲזַכִּיר מַעַלְלֵי־יְיָ כִּי־אֲזַכֶּרֶה מִקֶּדֶם פְּלֹאָה:
 וְהִגִּיתִי בְּכָל־פִּעֲלָהּ וּבַעֲלִילוֹתֶיהָ אֲשִׁיחָהּ:
 אֱלֹהִים בְּקֹדֶשׁ דִּרְכָּהּ מִי־אֵל גָּדוֹל בְּאֱלֹהִים:
 אֵתָהּ הָאֵל עֲשֵׂה פֶלֶא הוֹדַעַת בְּעַמִּים עֲזָה:
 גָּאֻלָּת בְּזָרוּעַ עֲמָהּ בְּנִי־יַעֲקֹב וַיּוֹסֶף סֵלָה:
 רָאוּהוּ מַיִם אֱלֹהִים רָאוּהוּ מַיִם יַחֲלִיחוּ אֵף יִרְגְּזוּ תַהֲמוֹת:
 זָרְמוּ מַיִם עֲבוֹת קוֹל נִתְּנוּ שִׁחָקִים אֶף־חֲצָצִידִי יִתְהַלְכוּ:
 קוֹל רַעְמָהּ בַּגִּלְגָּל הָאִירִי בְּרָקִים תִּבְּל רִגְזָה וְתַרְעֵשׂ הָאָרֶץ:
 בַּיָּם דִּרְכָּהּ וּשְׁבִילֶיהָ בְּמַיִם רַבִּים וְעִקְבוֹתֶיהָ לֹא נִדְעוּ:
 נִתְּיָהּ כִצְאוֹן עֲמָהּ בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן:

1. For the end times, over Jeduthun. Music by Asaph.

¹⁰ Ibid., 261.

2. I shall cry out with my voice to God; to God with my voice, and He will hear me.
3. In the day of my trouble, I sought the Lord; my hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing, my soul refused to be comforted.
4. I remembered God, and I growled; I complained, and my spirit was faint. **Selah**
5. You grasped the lids of my eyes; I was so disturbed I could not speak.
6. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.
7. I shall remember my instruments in the night; I shall muse in my heart, and my spirit ponders diligently.
8. Will the Lord reject forever? And will He not be pleased anymore?
9. Has His lovingkindness ceased forever? Has His promise ended from generation to generation?
10. Has God forgotten to show favor? Has He, in anger, shut up His tender mercies?
Selah
11. And I said, "This is my infirmity; the years of the right hand of the Most High."
12. I will remember the works of the Lord; surely, I will remember Your works of old.
13. I will meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds.
14. Your way, O God, is in holiness; who is as great a god as God?
15. You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples.
16. You have redeemed Your people with Your arm, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. **Selah**
17. The waters saw You, O God; the waters saw You, they writhed; the depths also quaked.
18. The clouds poured forth water, the skies gave a sound, Your arrows also walked to and fro.
19. The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind, the lightnings lit up the world, the earth trembled and quaked.
20. Your way was in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps were not made known.
21. You led Your people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

General Content and Structure

The psalmist of Psalm 77 is not an individual lamenter, per se, as his crisis is more theological than individual. He seeks to clarify theological questions about the relationship between God and Israel. Thus, the psalm has been labeled a "(theologizing) lament of a mediator."¹¹ A central theme of contemplation runs through v. 16, as terms such as "remember" and "meditate" are frequent occurrences (along with their synonyms). Through depression and distress the petitioner raises questions that are

¹¹ Beat Weber, *Psalm 77 und sein Umfeld: Eine poetologische Studie* (BBB 103; Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995), 191ff.

reminiscent of the far distant past as the search for order and stability remains. God's silence is seen as akin to abandonment, but the petitioner knows (in his heart) that God has proven faithful in the past.¹² God encompasses the whole of history, thus He will remain faithful in the future.

Frank-Lothar Hossfeld calls Psalm 77 a “five-strophe prayer with a cosmological insertion” whereby *Selah* marks a pause in the text.¹³ Other scholars have suggested from three strophes to six strophes, but a five-strophe structure makes the best division.¹⁴ The strophes are as follows: vv. 2-4, 5-7, 8-10, 11-13, 14-16. The last set of verses (17-21) stand apart from the rest due to its parallelism that resembles Canaanite tricola:

“In the Old Testament the poetic form of repeating tricola is extremely rare. Setting aside variations such as Ps. 29:1f. and Ps. 118:15f., there remain—without claiming to be comprehensive—Ps. 77:17(-20); 92:3(-5); and Hab. 3:8. Since all six of these texts deal thematically with the battle against chaos and divine kingship and thus indicate a distinct affinity in their language to the texts from Ugarit, it is clear how Old Testament Israel adopted, along with the form of (repeating) tricola, the themes of ‘Canaanite’ hymns as well.”¹⁵

This section encompasses the whole cosmos, yet the last verse (77:21) is a reflection of past acts. The preceding verse, v. 20, thus links the effects of theophany back to the whole cosmos. The psalmist uses the Exodus and familiar imagery to outline God's kingship. Beth Tanner says, “Just as the creation responds in its way, humans respond in theirs.”¹⁶

¹² J.S. Kselman, “Psalm 77 and the Book of Exodus,” in *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Society* (1983), 52; Pat Graham, “Psalm 77: A Study in Faith and History,” in *Restoration Quarterly* 18.3 (1975), 151-158.

¹³ Hossfeld, *Psalms* 2, 275.

¹⁴ Three strophe proponent: J. Clinton McCann Jr., “The Book of Psalms,” in *NIB* 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 983; and a six strophe proponent: Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part 2 and Lamentations* (FOTL 15; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 88.

¹⁵ Jörg Jeremias, “Ps 100 als Auslegung von Ps 93-99,” in *Skriften Kerk* 19.3 (1998), 606.

¹⁶ Beth LaNeel Tanner, “Psalm 77,” in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Psalms*, ed. by Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 616.

Use of *Selah*

Selah occurs as a structural marker at the three major intersections of the psalm, vv. 4, 10, and 16. Firmly rooted in kingship, *Selah* stands in the midst of sin, judgment, and redemption in a way that highlights the process of crisis and how these crises are sorted out. This is thus the process of transformation. *Selah* does not occur at the end of the psalm, however. It appears right before the theophany (vv. 17-21), but not as a part of it. The theophany in the storm reminds us of past *Selah* psalms, and *Selah* again serves as a transition marker here in the process of sin, judgment, and redemption through trouble (77:4), questions of when/if God will intervene (77:10), and the promise of salvation as revealed in the past (77:16). Even in the midst of chaos, God's control of the universe is everlasting. Whatever the reason may be for *Selah*'s placement, the themes of sin's effects (in this case it could be termed desperation on the part of the psalmist) and the recollection of God's acts in salvation history are familiar grounds associated with *Selah*.

Psalm 81

Text and Translation

*Excerpt: vv. 8-11

בַּצֶּרֶה קָרָאתָ וְאֶחְלָצְנָה אֲעֲנֶנּוּ בְּסִמְרֵי רָעַם אֶבְחָנֶנּוּ עַל־מִי מְרִיבָה סִלָּה:
שָׁמַע עַמִּי וְאֶעֱיֶדָה בָּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם־תִּשְׁמַע־לִי:
לֹא־יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹה אֲחֵר וְלֹא תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְאֵל גֵּכָר:
אֲנִכְיוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הִמְעֵלָה מִמִּצְרַיִם מִצִּרְיִים הַרְחֵב־פִּיךָ וְאִמְלֵאֲהוּ:

8. You called in trouble, and I delivered You; I answered you in the secret place of thunder. I tested you at the waters of contention. **Selah**
9. Hear, my people, and I will testify for you, O Israel, if you will listen to Me.
10. There shall be no foreign god among you, and you shall not worship any foreign god.
11. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

General Content and Structure

Psalms 81 stands as a lament of God over His people. Gunkel went even farther and proposed that Psalm 81 is a prophetic liturgy, yet a quite peculiar one. He noted the psalm began as a joyous hymn, but quickly turned into a solemn warning.¹⁷ With another incidence of divine speech, in 81:6c-17, God relies on His past acts through the use of Exodus imagery to demonstrate His kingship.¹⁸ While God has always been constant and just in the past, He will also remain active and faithful in the future. God also offers similar admonitions as found in the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) by asserting there should be no worship of foreign gods, for He is the only one who has the power to deliver His people.¹⁹ But as the ancient Israelites sinned/disobeyed, they brought punishment and exile upon themselves. They were responsible for their fate. As the psalm closes, God paints a picture of the positive effects of obedience to Him.

Use of *Selah*

Selah serves a structural function in this psalm as it occurs at the break between the historical recollection of God's faithfulness and the admonition of present and future obedience on behalf of the people (81:8). So, it could be said that *Selah*'s presence highlights the guilt and responsibility on Israel's part, yet looks also to the future for hope and salvation in Yahweh.²⁰ The term's presence is more than structural, however. Thematically, as part of divine discourse, God's response here in v. 8 from the "secret place of thunder" plays on depictions of theophanies found in psalms such as Ps. 18:12,

¹⁷ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 60.

¹⁸ Th Booij, "The Background of the Oracle of Psalm 81," in *Biblica* 65.4 (1984), 465-475.

¹⁹ J.M. LeMon, "YHWH's Hand and the Iconography of the Blow in Psalm 81:14-16," in *JBL* 132.4 (2013), 865-882.

²⁰ Terms such as "endure forever," "satisfied you," and "subdue their enemies" all point to a future satisfaction and life with the divine king from whom all things flow.

14; 29:3; and 77:19. Theophanies are quite common experiences found among psalms containing *Selah*, so *Selah*'s presence here is also significant in continuing the thematic trend of divine kingship.

Selah's thematic context marks the transition from history to future. Hossfeld has noted that the LXX points to an eschatological rendering using the terms ὑπὲρ τῶν ληνῶν, meaning “according to the winepresses.”²¹ This seems to be fitting as other OT texts such as Joel 4:13 and Isaiah 63:2 use the imagery of a winepress in enacting divine judgment. This familiar theme is one that *Selah* is readily found with, and internal evidence (OT) as well as Second Temple evidence (LXX) seems to agree.

Psalm 82

Text and Translation

מִזְמֹר לְאַסָּף אֱלֹהִים נֹכַח בְּעֵדֹת־אֵל בְּקֶרֶב אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט:
 עַד־מָתַי תִּשְׁפֹּטוּ־עוֹל וּפְגַי רָשָׁעִים תִּשְׁאוּ־סֵלָה:
 שְׁפֹטוּ־עַל וַיָּתוֹם עַנִּי וְרֵשַׁע הַצְּדִיקוֹ:
 פִּלְטוּ־עַל וְאֶבְיוֹן מִיַּד רָשָׁעִים הַצִּילוֹ:
 לֹא יָדְעוּ וְלֹא יָבִינוּ בַחֲשֹׁכָה יִתְהַלְּכוּ יָמוּטוּ כָּל־מוֹסְדֵי אָרֶץ:
 אֲנִי־אֶמְרָתִי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם וּבְנֵי עֲלִיּוֹן כְּלַכֶּם:
 אֲכֹן כְּאָדָם תִּמּוּתוּן וּכְאֶחָד הַשָּׁרִים תִּפְּלוּ:
 קוּמָה אֱלֹהִים שִׁפְטָה הָאָרֶץ כִּי־אַתָּה תִּנְחַל בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם:

1. Music by Asaph. God stands in the congregation of God; He judges among the gods.
2. How long will You judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? **Selah**
3. Vindicate the poor and fatherless; make righteous the afflicted and needy.
4. Deliver the poor and needy, deliver them from the hand of the wicked.
5. They do not know, nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness, all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
6. I said, “You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High.”
7. But you shall die like men, and like one of the princes, you shall fall.
8. Arise, God. Judge the earth, for You shall inherit all the nations.

²¹ Hossfeld, *Psalms* 2, 326.

General Content and Structure

This psalm continues the trend of divine kingship in God's portrayal as righteous judge. Gunkel communicates that the genre for Psalm 82 is "prophetic poetry."²² Yahweh will, in due time, "assume the universal rule of the world, so that injustice on the earth and the power of the wicked may come to an end and the poor of the earth will finally experience salvation and justice."²³ Thus, the failure of men requires the intervention of God to bring about order and peace.²⁴

In other words, the judges of the earth (who were appointed back in Genesis 9:6) have failed to execute justice according to God's law. They have, in essence, perverted justice by honoring and favoring wicked acts. Thus, it is incumbent upon God to rebuke the judges for their inconsistency of righteousness (and the statutes upon which God gave them to adhere to). Psalm 82 forms a tripartite structure: vv. 1-5 (appearance for judgment and indictment of the judges), 6-7 (the verdict), 8 (plea for universal judgment). It is important to note that judgment plays a central role in this psalm as the term שֹׁפֵט occurs four times in vv. 1, 2, 3, and 8.

Use of *Selah*

God's reproachful question that *Selah* highlights in Ps. 82 serves as a jumping off point in His demonstration of righteous judgment. *Selah*'s placement in 82:2 thus begins the direct divine discourse that serves as a rebuke on the rulers of the earth (i.e. the "gods" who "stand in the congregation"). God's patience is tried in Ps. 82 as the rulers do not

²² Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 95.

²³ Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 329.

²⁴ K.M. Craig Jr., "Psalm 82," in *Interpretation* 49.3 (1995), 281; Carl Mosser, "The Earliest Patristic Interpretations of Psalm 82, Jewish Antecedents, and the Origin of Christian Deification," in *Journal of Theological Studies* 56.1 (2005), 30-74.

impute justice among those who practice wickedness. H.C. Leupold notes that v. 5 may be a divine soliloquy as God observes, “His rebukes are going unheeded.”²⁵

Selah does not seem to follow a purely structural pattern as it only marks God’s initial question that serves as an indictment on the judges. As justice is perverted among the land, *Selah* marks the sin of those who commend and turn a blind eye to wickedness. So, *Selah* again appears within a thematic context of sin and judgment in the face of a divine king. In other words, since God transferred the administration of justice over to mankind in Genesis 9:6—and they have failed at exercising just punishments—*Selah* here marks the sternness of the divine question that seeks to stir the “gods” of the earth to their right mind.²⁶ *Selah* also appears in this psalm connected to the previous word, תַּשׁוּבָה, with a *maqfef*. This is not the only instance in the Psalter we find *Selah* connected to the previous word with a *maqfef*. As in Psalm 62, the *maqfef* could simply be the Masoretes’ addition for ease of pronunciation or it could imply a close connection between the two terms.²⁷ It seems more likely that this was geared toward pronunciation if *Selah* was used orally (as we will touch upon in a later chapter).

Psalm 83

Text and Translation

*Excerpt: vv. 6-12

כִּי נִוְעָצוּ לֵב יַחֲדָו עָלַיָּה בְּרִית יִכְרְתוּ:
אֱהָלֵי אֲדָוָה וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֱלֹהִים מִוֹאֵב וְהַגָּרִים:
גָּבֵל וַעֲמֹזֶן וַעֲמֶלֶק פָּלְשָׁת עַם־יִשְׂרָאֵל צֹר:

²⁵ Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 595.

²⁶ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on Psalms*, 403.

²⁷ As in the discussion on Psalm 62 regarding the use of the *maqfef*, it could have been employed to soften the term it was connected with. In both instances, *Selah* is connected to quite a harsh term (either in use or imagery). The use of marks like the *maqfef* was a later addition to the text, so it remains speculation as to why it was used. The most logical explanation seems to be for ease of pronunciation.

גַּם־אֲשׁוּר נִלְוָה עִמָּם הָיוּ זָרוּעַ לְבְנֵי־לוֹט סָלָה:
עָשְׂהוּ־לָהֶם כְּמִדְיָן כְּסִיסְרָא כְּיָבִין בְּנִחַל קִישׁוֹן:
נִשְׁמְדוּ כְּעֵין־דָּאָר הָיוּ דָּמּוּ לְאַדְמָה:
שִׁיתְמוּ גְדִיבָמוּ כְּעֶרֶב וְכִזְאָב וְכִזְבָּח וְכִצְלִמְזֻעַ כָּל־נֹסִיכָמוּ:

6. For they consulted together with one heart; they made a covenant against You.
7. The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagrites.
8. Gebal and Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre.
9. Assyria has also joined with them; they have helped the sons of Lot. **Selah**
10. Deal with them as Midian, as Sisera, as Jabin at the river Kishon,
11. who were exterminated at En Dor, they became as refuse on the earth.
12. Put all their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb, and all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna.

General Content and Structure

Psalm 83 is the last psalm by Asaph and follows quite flowingly from Psalm 82.²⁸

Labeled as a communal complaint, the poet prays for God not to remain an active onlooker in the face of wickedness that threatens His people.²⁹ The poet begins to list the hostile nations (vv. 7-9) according to their geographical location that deliver a threat.³⁰ A ray of hope envelopes the last half of the psalm as references to God's past acts rely upon the mercy of God in the future; the people can only be delivered from their downfall by God Himself. All the nations, righteous and wicked, will give glory to the God of revelation (שִׁמְחָה). Thus, His kingship will be recognized "לֵעָלַם לֹכַח קִרְאָה" either willingly or reluctantly. The structure of Psalm 83 is not complex. It consists of a bipartite structure, dividing the psalm into two halves, vv. 2-9 and vv. 10-19.

²⁸ This Psalm has close thematic ties with Pss. 46-48, 76, and 82. All of these are psalms that contain *Selah*.

²⁹ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 19.

³⁰ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on Psalms*, 409. "The psalm links...with the general situation of Israel's vulnerability to the designs of surrounding peoples and its broader theological awareness that the world's attacks on Israel are attacks on Yhwh's purpose, Yhwh's sovereignty, and Yhwh's reputation." See: John Goldingay, *Psalms: Psalms 42-89*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 574.

Use of *Selah*

Selah plays a structural role in Psalm 83:9, yet one cannot deny the thematic context in which it occurs. The enmity of ungodly men/nations in vv. 2-9 toward the God of Israel and His chosen ones resulted in a conspiracy so large that the outlook seemed hopeless. *Selah* occurs after the psalmist lists the ten nations who conspire against Israel, and before the prayer of retribution. In other words, *Selah* stands as a transition marker in the midst of a call for judgment and salvation as the psalmist's unrelenting spirit is seen through the vivid descriptions of defeat upon the heads of the enemies.³¹ It is the total overthrow of the enemy that the psalmist prays for, and that power alone is of God.

Near the end of the psalm, the vivid descriptions in vv. 14-16 are language of theophanies that prepare the reader for the coming of God in vv. 17-19. God's coming will be a personal encounter as He actively judges—revealing He is no longer silent or inactive.³² The Asaph psalms containing *Selah* have a characteristic theology of kingship that is defined by divine intervention within the cycle of sin, judgment, and redemption. *Selah* thus occurs in the context of eschatological judgment of all the world powers that threaten Israel. God's kingship over all the earth will be made known, as the theophany of Yahweh as "God of gods" and "Most High" promised in Psalm 50 is implored in Ps. 83:14-16, 19. Psalm 50, which also contains *Selah*, shares the kingship link with Psalm 83 as 50:3a says, "Our God comes and is not silent," while Psalm 83 "implores the

³¹ Terminology such as "make them like whirling dust," "like chaff before the wind," and "pursue them with Your tempest" describe God's acts against enemy nations.

³² For judgment texts against Israel and foreign nations, see: Isaiah 5:23; 10:17; 17:13; 29:5-6; 30:30-33; Jeremiah 13:24; 23:19-20; Ezekiel 21:3. The terms הוּעַם "whirlwind" and הַפּוֹס "tempest" found here in Psalm 83:16 are only used together again in Isaiah 29:6.

completion of YHWH's 'coming,' begun at Sinai, or on Zion, through the accomplishment of His being-as-savior, announced in Psalm 50."³³

Psalm 84

Text and Translation

לְמַנְצָחַ עַל־הַגִּתִּית לְבְנֵי־קֹרַח מִזְמוֹר:
 מֶה־יְדִידוֹת מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֶיךָ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:
 נִכְסְפָה וְגַם־כָּלְתָהּ נַפְשִׁי לְחַצְרוֹת יְהוָה לִבִּי וּבִשְׁרִי יִרְגְּזוּ אֶל אֱלֹהֵי:
 גַּם־צִפּוֹרוֹ מִצָּאָה בַּיֵּת וּדְרוֹרוֹ קֵן לָהּ אֲשֶׁר־שָׁתָה אֶפְרָתָיָה אֶת־מִזְבְּחוֹתֶיךָ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת מְלֹכֵי וְאֵלֶּיּוֹ:
 אֲשֶׁר־יֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתְךָ עוֹד יִהְיוּ סֵלָה:
 אֲשֶׁר־אָדָם עוֹזֵלֹו בְּדֹ מִסְּלוֹת בְּלִבָּם:
 עֲבְרִי בַעֲמֻק הַכָּבֵא מַעֲיָן יִשִּׁיתוּהוּ גַם־בְּרָכּוֹת יַעֲטֶה מִנְּהָ:
 יֵלְכוּ מִחֵיל אֱלֹהֵי יִרְאָה אֱלֹהִים בְּצִיּוֹן:
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת שְׁמֵעָה תְּפִלָּתִי הָאֵינָה אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב סֵלָה:
 מִגִּגְנוֹ רִאֵה אֱלֹהִים וְהִפֹּט פָּנָי מִשִּׁיחָה:
 כִּי טוֹב־יּוֹם בְּחֻצֹיךָ מֵאֶלֶף בְּחֻרְתִּי הַסְּתוּפָה בְּבֵית אֱלֹהֵי מְדוֹר בְּאֶהֱלִי־רֶשַׁע:
 כִּי שְׁמֹשׁ וּמִגֶּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים חַן וְכְבוֹד יִתֵּן יְהוָה לֹא יִמְנַע־טוֹב לְהִלָּכִים בְּתַמִּים:
 יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֲשֶׁר־אָדָם בֵּטַח בְּךָ:

1. For the end times, upon the rooftops. Music by the Sons of Korah.
2. How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!
3. My soul longs, and is also faint, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh shout with joy for the living God.
4. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may put her young at your altars, O Lord God of hosts, my King and my God.
5. Blessed are the ones who dwell in Your house; forever they shall praise You. **Selah**
6. Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set in pilgrimage.
7. As they pass through the valley of weeping, they make it a spring; the rain also covers it with blessings.
8. They walk from strength to strength, they appear to God in Zion.
9. O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob. **Selah**
10. O God, see our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed.
11. For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand; I would rather stand at the threshold in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
12. For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, He will not withhold good from those who walk uprightly.
13. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You.

³³ Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 346.

General Content and Structure

Psalms 84 is one of the psalms by the Sons of Korah, and this group of psalms (42-49, 84-85, 87-88) is distinguished both linguistically and thematically by ideas typical of Zion theology.³⁴ Thus, Gunkel's genre categorization of Psalm 84 as a "Zion song" seems appropriate.³⁵ The psalmists who composed these texts longed for an encounter with the God of Zion, yet lamented that they felt far from God. At the same time, confidence is maintained that the God of Zion is omnipotent and faithful, and will rescue them from a hostile world.³⁶

Psalms 84 finds its climax in the people's unshakable faith and strength in Yahweh. Thus, "the blessing of God is to be experienced by such people as a growing confidence and consolation along all their ways in service to the kingdom of God."³⁷ For the people who find a dwelling place with the God of Israel, "[they are] equipped with mysterious strengths, wander the earth, warm it, and change it."³⁸ They are thus empowered to "transform doubt and care into enthusiasm, into the praise of life."³⁹

Use of *Selah*

As structural matters are typically discussed with the content of the psalm, the structure of Psalm 84 plays a particularly important role when it comes to *Selah*. Psalm 84 forms a tripartite structure (vv. 2-5, 6-8, 9-13) in which *Selah* plays a thematic and somewhat structural role. *Selah* frames the middle strophe, which describes the people seeking

³⁴ R.E. Wallace, "The Narrative Effect of Psalms 84-89," in *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 11 (2011), 1-15.

³⁵ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 22.

³⁶ God bestows peace on His people (Pss. 45-48). Zion is a source of life and hope for all nations (Ps. 87).

³⁷ Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 358.

³⁸ Elie Wiesel, *Chassidische Feier* (Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 9-10.

³⁹ Ibid.

Yahweh. The psalm has a linear progression in thought as vv. 2-5 describe the dwelling place of God for which the petitioner longs; vv. 6-8 describe the pilgrims who seek to encounter the living God, and vv. 9-13 describe the God of Zion as well as His great works. In each description is embedded temple language, which promotes a Zion/temple motif throughout the psalm. Even *Selah*'s presence in 84:5 highlights the psalmist's desire/connection to the temple from a distance, dwelling with Yahweh for eternity is what the petitioner longs for.

Selah also stands in the middle of a petition (vv. 9-10) to Yahweh whose protective provision is invoked with the metaphor of the shield. Other metaphors are apparent as the LXX introduces a metaphor of the "valley of tears" in v. 7a, intensifies the theocentricity of the psalm in v. 6b, and at the same time gives it a massively eschatological perspective in v. 7b.⁴⁰ Thus, the longing for an eternal dwelling in the presence of Yahweh (expressed here in Psalm 84) could be taken two ways. The Christian NT writer John wrote about eternal dwellings, and the people began to interpret that it referred to the future when God would rebuild the Temple. Some others, however, applied this state to the perfected state of the righteous, which would have been achieved after death.⁴¹ Either interpretation suggests a future perspective.

Psalm 85

Text and Translation

*Excerpt: vv. 1-6

לְמִנְצָחַו לְבְנֵי־קֶרֶחַ מִזְמוֹר:
רָצִיתָ יְהוָה אֲרָצְךָ שָׁבַתָּ שְׁבוּת יַעֲקֹב:

⁴⁰ Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 357. The blessedness of Zion and God's favor on His messiah can be seen in Psalm 84 as well, see: David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms* (JSOTSup 252; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 80.

⁴¹ Johannes Beutler, *Habt keine Angst: Die erste johanneische Abschiedsrede (Joh 14)* (SBS 116; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1984), 35-36.

גִּשְׁאֲתָ עֵינֶיךָ עֲמִידָה כָּל־חַטָּאתָם סָלָה:
 אֶסְפֹּתָ כָּל־עֲבָרֶיךָ הִשְׁבֹּתָ מִחֲרוֹן אַפְּךָ:
 שׁוּבֵנו אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהִפֵּר כְּעֶסֶךָ עִמָּנוּ:
 הֲלֹעֲלֵם תִּאֲנֶה־בָּנוּ תִמְשֹׁךְ אַפְּךָ לְדֹר וָדֹר:

1. For the end times. Music by the Sons of Korah.
2. Lord, You were pleased with Your land; You returned the captivity of Jacob.
3. You have carried away the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin.

Selah

4. You have gathered all your wrath; You have turned back from the fierceness of Your anger.
5. Restore us, O God of our salvation; and cause Your anger toward us to cease.
6. Will You be angry with us forever? Will Your anger extend to all generations?

General Content and Structure

As the Asaph psalms fluctuated between a tumultuous relationship with God (re: questions of His absence) and subsequent praise of God, this psalm by the Sons of Korah seeks to restore Israel's relationship with God. It is a prayer for God to act now; such as He did in the past. The psalm also functions as a hope for the future completion of the kingdom.⁴² Gunkel believed that Psalm 85 served as an imitation of prophetic liturgy that began with an oracle (vv. 2-4), experienced longing (vv. 5-8), and then ended with an enthusiastic oracle (vv. 9-14).⁴³ Attributes that flood this psalm are lovingkindness (vv. 8, 11), glory (v. 10), righteousness (vv. 11, 12, 14), truth (vv. 11, 12), and salvation (vv. 5, 8, 10). These attributes work together for the peaceful kingdom of God. God's wrath may seem like the central issue in this psalm, but the overall message is that the forgiveness of God makes anything possible. In other words, it could be said that the pendulum swings between lamentation of the present and enthusiastic hope for the future.⁴⁴ One could deduce that the structure of the psalm, then, is tripartite due to Gunkel's views. However,

⁴² Beth LaNeel Tanner, "Psalm 85," in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Psalms*, ed. by Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 655.

⁴³ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 97.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

a bipartite structure (vv. 2-8, 9-14) is a better fit. Psalm 85's bipartite structure imitates a lament liturgy with lament/petition in vv. 2-8 and divine answer (prophetic oracle of salvation) in vv. 9-14.

Psalm 85 is so packed with theological insights that its text can be seen as quite dramatic. As one desires an encounter with the living God in Psalm 84, Psalm 85 petitions God for the revival of His people. Not only is revival and restoration depicted of His people (Ps. 84:3; 85:7), but also of Yahweh's relationship to His land. People and land are two prominent features reflected in the history of Israel's covenant with God (cf. Abrahamic Covenant; Gen. 12; 15; 17-18; 22; Exodus through Deuteronomy). Looking both in the past and to the anticipated future, Psalm 85 actualizes the prophetic promises of salvation that were established from the very beginning of history.

Use of *Selah*

Selah occurs in v. 3 so it does not seem to be functioning in a purely structural manner for this psalm. However, its thematic context contains familiar elements found in previous psalms containing *Selah*. The section in which the term occurs contains a prophetic vision of the restoration of the original relationship between Yahweh and His people and land (vv. 2-4), and then a contrast between the miserable present to the anticipated future as salvation frames the appeal to Yahweh (vv. 5, 8) with petitions and reproachful questions. The terms found in v. 6, מְלֹעַל and רָדָל רָדָל envision the whole of history of Yahweh with His land and His people. *Selah* in v. 3 of this section then serves to highlight the forgiveness of sin as Yahweh turns from His wrath (in v. 4). *Selah* also highlights the familiar Zion theology from Ps. 44 through Israel's restoration, of people and land, by Yahweh's favor (cf. Ps. 44:4; 85:2).

Similarly, *Selah* can be understood in its thematic/structural roles linguistically. The first three verses “speak of divine rescue in the perfect (past) tense, as if to express relief and gratitude for what has already happened.”⁴⁵ But, *Selah* sits at the abrupt shift in perspective of vv. 4-7 that is characterized by “pleas for anger abatement and restoration in the future.”⁴⁶ Beyond this, a proclamation of salvation is found in 85:10-14, which alludes to the very beginning of history, and contains links to prophetic eschatology (cf. Ex. 25:8; 29:43-46; Lev. 26:4, 6, 12; Isaiah 57:18-19; among others). The verses in this section build on the promises of salvation and restoration in vv. 4-7, and common themes found throughout biblical prophecy, especially resonant with those seen in the Book of Isaiah and the Book of the Twelve. The message, then, in the Psalms is a prayerful actualization of the prophetic Word of God.⁴⁷ Salvation is of God, it is near (v. 10), and it is experienced among His people and throughout His land in which He dwells. God’s divine glory and kingship in the hearts of His people comes in the form of lovingkindness, truth, and the forgiveness of sins (cf. Ex. 34:6-7; 25:8; 29:43-46). Verses 12-13 are central to this ideology; they present a universal restoration of creation through metaphors of growth and fidelity, while vv. 11 and 14 frame the parallel statements with personifications of God’s coming. The divine glory attributes within this section prepare the hearts of His people “so that the salvation that was established at the very beginning [of the world] may become reality.”⁴⁸ Psalm 85 ends with a picture of the people

⁴⁵ Marilyn McCord Adams, “Psalm 85,” in *Interpretation* 68.1 (2014), 69.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 365.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 366.

approaching God, accompanied by justice and peace.⁴⁹ *Selah* thus occurs within another future oriented context painting a picture of a future restoration and rest in Yahweh.⁵⁰

Psalm 87

Text and Translation

לְבָנֵי־קֹרַח מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר יְסוּדָתוֹ בְּהַר־יִקְדָּשׁ:
אֲהָב יְהוָה יְהוּדָה שְׁעָרֵי צִיּוֹן מִכָּל מִשְׁכָּנֹת יַעֲקֹב:
וְכַבֹּדֹת מִדְּבַר בָּרָךְ עִיר הָאֱלֹהִים סֵלָה:
אֲזַכִּיר אֶרְהֵב וּבָכַל לִי־דָעִי הִנֵּה פִלְשֶׁת וְצֹר עַם־כּוּשׁ זֶה יִלְד־שָׁם:
וְלִצְיוֹן יֵאמָר אִישׁ וְאִישׁ יִלְד־בָּהּ וְהוּא יְכַוְנֶנָּה עָלֵינוּ:
יְהוָה יִסְפֹּר בְּכֹתוֹב עַמִּים זֶה יִלְד־שָׁם סֵלָה:
וְשָׂרִים כְּחֹלָלִים כָּל־מַעֲיָנֵי בָרָךְ:

1. Music by the sons of Korah. A Song. His foundation is in the holy mountains.
2. The Lord loves the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob.
3. Glorious things are spoken of You, O city of God. **Selah**
4. I will cause to remember Rahab and Babylon to those who know Me; behold, Philistia and Tyre with Cush; this one was born there.
5. And of Zion it will be said, “This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High Himself will establish her.”
6. The Lord will count when He registers the people, “this one was born there.” **Selah**
7. Both singers and players of instruments say, “all my springs are in You.”

General Content and Structure

Gunkel joined others in believing this text was beset with difficulties and badly damaged.⁵¹ He surmises that verses were skipped then eventually added in the wrong places due to a “sleepy scribe.” From such skepticism to outright rejection of the many attempts to re-arrange this psalm, newer studies have made the effort to retain the order

⁴⁹ Psalm 85:9-14 is a direct response to Psalm 84. There is glory in 84:12 and 85:13; Yahweh gives good things in the same verses. The motif of going and walking also binds these psalms together, the people “go” to the God of Zion in 84:8 and walk the path of integrity in 84:12, while they go before Him in faithfulness in 85:14.

⁵⁰ Sigrid Eder, “Do Justice and Peace Really Kiss Each Other?” in VT 67.3 (2017), 387-402.

⁵¹ Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 378. See also: A.R. Gordon, “Psalm 87,” in *The Biblical World* 33.2 (1909), 102-106; Nissim Amzallag, “The Cosmopolitan Character of the Korahite Musical Congregation: Evidence from Psalm 87,” in VT 64 (2014), 362.

found in the MT and interpret it as a meaningful whole. This is also the approach found here as *Selah* divides the psalm quite nicely.

The psalm is a psalm of Zion, which is eschatological and universal in its scope.⁵² The central section depicts Yahweh giving citizenship in His divine city to the people of many nations, with Zion at its center. Thus, the nations, along with Israel, “are to learn the peace that brings creation to its goal” (cf. Isaiah 2:4). In a time when order is restored, Yahweh inhabits a perfected Zion with His people out of which the eternal, life-giving, waters flow (cf. Pss. 3; 4; 46:5; Ezek. 47:1-12; Rev. 22:1-2). His kingship is made known throughout the earth.

Use of *Selah*

Again revealing its diverse use, *Selah* serves as a structural and thematic marker in this psalm in vv. 3 and 6. The Zion motif is almost universally recognized, however the theological citizenship on Zion theme is debated.⁵³ The central section of the psalm is vv. 4-6 which forms an ABA structure in the midst of divine speech and familiar motifs. The inclusio is as follows: v. 4 “this one was born there” (A); v. 5 “every individual is born in her” (B); and v. 6 “this one was born there” (A). The two external sections, vv. 1-3, and 7, are also related by the inclusio “in you” (vv. 3a, 7b), the same word also found in the center of the psalm in v. 5b. The structure is confirmed by *Selah*, then, as it divides nicely at each *Selah* occurrence. The themes, however, are also important to understanding *Selah*. The theme of Zion is integrally related to the psalms containing *Selah* as God’s

⁵² C.M. Maier, “Zion wird man mütter nennen—die zionstradition in Psalm 87 und ihre rezeption in der Septuaginta,” in ZAW 118.4 (2006), 582-596; and “Psalm 87 as a Reappraisal of the Zion Tradition and its Reception in Galatians 4:26,” in CBQ 69.3 (2007), 473-486.

⁵³ Some say it pertains to all people, some to only the Jews. For the Jews, see many of Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 379-380; and Bernard Duhm, *Die Psalmen erklärt* (KHC 14; Freiburg: Mohr Siebeck, 1899), 218-219.

kingship in the cycle of sin, judgment, and redemption is played out. It is in this thematic element that Psalm 87 finds itself contextually linked with another psalm containing

Selah, Ps. 83. Zenger puts it well:

Both insist that one day even the nations will acknowledge YHWH's kingship over the world—and that YHWH will make use of Zion to bring about that future. Psalm 83 sketches this role of Zion, or Israel, in images of judgment theology; the nations will be conquered by YHWH and forced to acknowledge His lordship. Psalm 87 shows the nations at a great feast in which they celebrate their incorporation into the reign of God with jubilant songs and joyful dancing. Hence one can certainly read Psalm 87 as a contrast to Psalm 83.⁵⁴

Psalm 87 also contains the theological/creation aspect of the city of God, which was founded by Yahweh on His holy mountain. Zenger notes, “Zion exercises this power of life in that the city of God stands upon its peak, and there YHWH dwells, in the midst of His creation and for the salvation of that creation.”⁵⁵ This image encompasses all *Selah* psalms we have covered thus far.

Psalm 88

Text and Translation

*Excerpt: vv. 5-12

נִחַשְׁבֹתִי עִם־יְהוָה בְּיָמַי כִּי־אֵין־אֵל:
בְּמַתִּים חֲפָזַי כְּמוֹ חֲלָלִים | שְׁכַבְי קָבֶר אֲשֶׁר לֹא זְכַרְתֶּם עוֹד יְהוָה מִיָּדָה נִגְזְרוּ:
שִׁתַּנִּי בְּבוֹר תַּחְתִּיּוֹת בְּמַחְשָׁפִים בְּמַצְלֹת:
עָלִי סִמְכָה חֲמַתְךָ וְכָל־מִשְׁפָּרֶיךָ עֲנִית סֵלָה:
הִרְחַקְתָּ מִיָּדַי מִמָּוֶנִי שִׁתַּנִּי תוֹעֵבוֹת לָמוּ כָּל־א וְלֹא אֶצְא:
עֵינַי דָּאֻבָּה מִי עֵינִי קָרָאתִיךָ יְהוָה בְּכָל־יּוֹם שִׁטְחִתִּי אֵלֶיךָ כַּפִּי:
הִלַּמְתִּים תַּעֲשֶׂה־פֶלֶא אִם־רָפְאִים יִקְוּמוּ | יוֹדוּךָ סֵלָה:
הִסְפֵּר בְּקָבֶר חֲסִידְךָ אֲמוֹנָתְךָ בְּאֲבָדוֹן:

5. I am thought of with those who go down to the pit; I have become like a man who has no strength.

⁵⁴ Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 387.

⁵⁵ Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 382. Even K. Koenen believed this was a psalm that proclaimed salvation, see: K. Koenen, *Gottesworte in den Psalmen: Eine Formgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (BTS 30; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1996).

6. Free among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, and who are cut off from Your hand.
 7. You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the depths.
 8. Your wrath leans heavily upon me, and You have humbled me with all Your waves.
- Selah**
9. You have put away my friends far from me; You have made me an abomination to them; I am shut up and I cannot go out.
 10. My eye is faint because of affliction. Lord, I have called daily upon You, I have stretched out my hands to You.
 11. Will You work wonders for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? **Selah**
 12. Shall Your lovingkindness be recounted in the grave? Your faithfulness in the place of destruction?

General Content and Structure

Psalms 88 and 89, both of which contain *Selah*, stand at the end of Book III as their context casts a dark shadow. Psalm 88 is not typical of an individual lament as the psalm offers no hope for a change in the circumstances.⁵⁶ Thus, it can be considered a monologue that begins and ends with unanswered prayers to God. The emotional state of the psalmist is devoid of any hope as he feels near death. Sheol makes an appearance again in light of the psalmist's apparent problem with God's silence. Psalm 88 has a highly artistic structure, dividing into three sections: vv. 2-10a, 10b-13, 14-19.⁵⁷ The highly poetic form of this psalm finds its center in vv. 10b-13 as it has a specific theological motive.

Some have suggested the *Sitz im Leben* is of someone who is ill. However, the dramatic contention with which God speaks goes against this hypothesis.⁵⁸ The more fitting situation is a confrontation with the reality of death; it is a call for the realization

⁵⁶ Laha notes, "Nothing speaks more to the hidden nature of God than Psalm 88...in this psalm, God is not listening. In fact, God is nowhere to be found." R.R. Laha, "Psalm 88," in *Interpretation* 69.1 (2015), 81.

⁵⁷ There have been suggestions supporting a bipartite structure, but it does not best fit the content or where *Selah* occurs within the psalm. For a bipartite structure, see: Ernst Haag, "Psalm 88," in *Freude an der Weisung des Herrn: Beiträge zur Theologie der Psalmen*, edited by Ernst Haag and Frank-Lothar Hossfeld (SBB 13; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1986), 149-170.

⁵⁸ Walter Gross, "Gott als Feind des einzelnen? Psalm 88," in *Studien zur Priesterschrift und zu alttestamentlichen Gottesbildern* (SBAB 30; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1999), 160.

of salvation proposed in Pss. 84, 85, and 87, all psalms containing *Selah*. Even though the fear of death and its power overwhelms the psalmist, he still holds fast to God as the God of life.⁵⁹

Use of *Selah*

In 88:11, where *Selah* marks, begins the questions about the dead in general (and not of the psalmist himself). The psalmist does not describe the suffering of the ones in Sheol, he only highlights Yahweh's absence from Sheol. In other words, Yahweh is not present with sinners in death. Zenger says, "YHWH should recognize that His own interest must prevent Him from dismissing the petitioner to Sheol ahead of time; if He did so, He would rob Himself of a worshiper and a witness to His power."⁶⁰ But, Yahweh is not absent in the midst of suffering. Intrinsically, the psalmist knows this as he paints the attributes of Yahweh's lovingkindness and faithfulness in a ray of hope. Those questions which contain Yahweh's attributes are meant to "move Yahweh to act, thus showing He is truly the 'God of salvation' as seen in 88:2."⁶¹

Selah, then, can possibly function in a purely structural manner. But, it is not consistent with how the psalm is broken into parts. *Selah* does, however, occur in the midst of familiar motifs (evening/morning through climactic time schemes: "day and night" (v. 2); "call daily upon You" (v. 10); "in the morning" (v. 14 in the time of divine help, cf. Pss. 5:4; 30:6; 59:17; 90:14; 143:8; among others)), and part of the sin, judgment, redemption cycle God reveals His kingship through. *Selah* in 88:8 finds itself taking on the context of the immediate verses in which it is embedded as it highlights the

⁵⁹ Praying as an act of faith is relevant here. See: W. Bruggemann and W.H. Bellinger, *Psalms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 379.

⁶⁰ Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 392.

⁶¹ Gross, "Gott als Feind," 164.

consequences of sin as Yahweh has laid a divine fury upon the lamenter, and that wrath has crushed him like the waves of the sea. *Selah* in 88:11 is especially important from a theological point of view. It highlights Yahweh's power over life and death as it calls for Him to show Himself as the one He is, or who He has promised to be (cf. Exodus 3:14). Thus, even though there is sin (*Selah* in 88:8), Yahweh works wonders and offers salvation to those who seek Him (*Selah* in 88:11).

Psalm 89

Text and Translation

*Excerpt: vv. 1-6, 35-38, 43-49

מִשְׁפִּיל לְאִיתָן הָאֶזְרָחִי:
חֲסִדֵי יְהוָה עוֹלָם אֲשִׁירָה לְדָר וָדָר אֲדִיעַ אֱמוּנָתְךָ בְּפִי:
כִּי־אֲמַרְתִּי עוֹלָם חֲסִד יְכַנֶּה שְׁמִי: תִּכֶן אֱמוּנָתְךָ בָּהֶם:
כְּרַתִּי בְרִית לְבַחֲיָגִי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְדָוִד עֲבָדִי:
עַד־עוֹלָם אֶכִּין וְרַעְיָהּ וּבְנֵי־תִי לְדֹר־וָדֹר כְּסָאֲךָ סֵלָה:
וְיֹדְוּ שְׁמִי כְּפִלְאֲךָ יְהוָה אֶרְאֶמְנָתְךָ בְּקֹהֶל קֳדָשִׁים:

1. A contemplation by Ethan the Ezrahite.
2. I will sing of the Lord's lovingkindness forever, with my mouth I will make known Your faithfulness to all generations.
3. For I have said, "Lovingkindness shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You will establish in the heavens."
4. I have made a covenant with My chosen ones; I have sworn to My servant David.
5. I will establish your seed forever, and build up your throne to all generations. **Selah**
6. And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.

לֹא־אֶחְלַל בְּרִיתִי וּמוֹצֵא שְׁפָתַי לֹא אֲשַׁנֶּה:
אֶחַת נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי בְּקֹדֶשׁ אִם־לְדָוִד אֶכְזֹב:
וְרַעֲוִי לְעוֹלָם יְהִי וְכִסֵּאוֹ כְּשֶׁמֶשׁ נִגְדִי:
בְּיָרֵחַ יִכּוֹן עוֹלָם וְגַד כְּשֶׁחַק נֶאֱמַן סֵלָה:

35. I will not break My covenant, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.
 36. Once I have sworn by My holiness, I will not lie to David.
 37. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me.
 38. It shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.
- Selah**

הַרִימוּת יָמִין צִרְיֹו הַשְׁמַחַת כָּל־אֲוִיבֵיו:

אֶף־תָּשִׁיב צוּר חֲרָבוֹ וְלֹא תִקְיַמְתּוּ בַּמִּלְחָמָה:
הַשִּׁבְתָּ מִטֶּהָרָו וְכִסְאוֹ לָאָרֶץ מִגִּרְתָּהּ:
הִקְצַרְתָּ יָמֵי עַלְוֵמָיו הָעֵטִית עָלָיו בּוֹשָׁה סֵלָה:
עַד־מָה יִהְיֶה תִפְסָתָר לְגִצָּח תִּבְעַר כְּמוֹ־אֵשׁ חֲמָתְךָ:
זָכַר־אֲנִי מִה־חֵלֶד עַל־מַה־שָּׁוָא בָּרָאתָ כָּל־בְּנֵי־אָדָם:
מִי גָבַר יָחִידָה וְלֹא יִרְאֶה־מָוֶת יִמְלִיט נַפְשׁוֹ מִיֶּד־שָׂאוֹל סֵלָה:

43. You have exalted the right hand of his enemies; You have made all his enemies rejoice.
44. You have also turned back the edge of his sword, and have not sustained him in the battle.
45. You have made his splendor cease, and cast his throne to the ground.
46. The days of his youth you have shortened; You have covered him with shame. **Selah**
47. How long, Lord? Will You hide Yourself forever? Will Your wrath burn like fire?
48. Remember how short my time is, for what futility have You created all the sons of man?
49. What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the hand of Sheol?
Selah

General Content and Structure

The third longest psalm in the Psalter, Psalm 89 is theologically important in demonstrating the kingship of Yahweh.⁶² Peppered with many Hebrew independent pronouns, Psalm 89 makes divine kingship its primary concern through the outworking of dialogue. This psalm emphasizes the irrevocable oath of the Davidic covenant through its connections with Zion theology (cf. vv. 8, 19) and prophetic and priestly expressions (vv. 39ff).⁶³ Familiar elements also come together in Psalm 89, as it forms a tripartite structure: hymn (vv. 2-19), divine discourse (vv. 20-28), and lament (vv. 39-52).

Gunkel believed that Psalm 89 was a “later independent hymn” which served as the foundation for a more comprehensive composition that culminates in complaint and

⁶² One scholar proposes that the psalm speaks of the Davidic throne itself in v.38 as the “witness” and not YHWH. See: Paul Mosca, “Once Again the Heavenly Witness of Psalm 89:38,” in *JBL* 105.1 (1986), 30.

⁶³ Only a priest could have spoken in the face of Yahweh’s wrath about His breaking of the covenant, see: Michael Emmendorffer, *Der ferne Gott: eine Untersuchung der alttestamentlichen Volksklagelieder vor dem Hintergrund der mesopotamischen Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 203-239.

petition.⁶⁴ Yet, the covenant theology transferred to David will continue, and is unbreakable. No matter what the sin of the righteous (which had been punished) God will remain steadfast and faithful to His people. Even though it may seem that Book III of the Psalter ends on a low note, *Selah*'s presence is a signal to future promises of God.

Use of *Selah*

Selah appears four times in Psalm 89 (vv. 5, 38, 46, and 49) and is another contemplation by an Ezrahite (this time, Ethan). Psalm 89 is the last psalm of Book III and therefore the last psalm to contain *Selah* until it appears again at the end of the Psalter in Psalms 140 and 143. As the present crisis continues to unfold here at the end of Book III, *Selah* stands as a reminder that God is eternally faithful (i.e. "I will establish your seed forever, and build your throne to all generations" (v. 5); "it shall be established forever like the moon" (v.38); questions of God's faithfulness in v. 46; and "what man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the hand of Sheol?" (v. 49), only God can deliver life from the grave).

Within the hymn there are two lines (vv. 4-5) which are divine discourse; *Selah* stands at the end of said divine discourse as it also marks an entire section of divine speech ending in 89:38. The opening strophe in which *Selah* ends presents the themes of Yahweh's love and faithfulness in light of the covenant He made with the king.⁶⁵ Lament in an accusation against Yahweh holds section 89:39-46 together. "What is lamented then...is the king's military powerlessness, which seems to negate the power of

⁶⁴ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 95.

⁶⁵ In the divine speech of vv. 4-5, Yahweh says, "I have made a covenant with My chosen ones; I have sworn to my servant David. I will establish your seed forever, and build up your throne to all generations. *Selah*."

Yahweh's world-founding victory."⁶⁶ As *Selah* marks the end of this accusation, the next *Selah* in 88:49 provides a hint at salvation. It highlights the vain and temporal nature of man against the eternal and divine nature of God.⁶⁷ Throughout the Psalter, and the entire Hebrew Bible, the God of Israel alone holds the power over life and death. The psalm ends with a doxology of *אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ*, but curiously *Selah* does not appear here. If *Selah* were only used for liturgical purposes it would be expected in this position. Much more can be said about Psalm 89, as it is so rich in content. However, its familiar thematic elements with other psalms containing *Selah* are of primary concern in this work.

⁶⁶ R.J. Clifford, "Psalm 89: A Lament Over the Davidic Ruler's Continued Failure," in *Harvard Theological Review* 73½ (1980), 36.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 47. Clifford says, "The psalm shows that Israel had faith enough in Yahweh's creation and commission to David to hold him to his promise."

MT Psalter: Books IV & V

Book IV of the Psalter reserves a prominent place in the history of the ancient Israelites. A seeming departure from God, a book where *Selah* falls silent among its pages in the MT, Book IV gives insight into the brokenness of the world in light of the sovereignty of God. Book V then reveals the glorious praise for those who find solace and joy in their God as *Selah* re-appears among its pages. These books thus reveal distinct characteristics of the first three books of the Psalter and contain familiar imagery in the psalms containing *Selah* as the term's transitional nature is highlighted in Psalms 140 and 143.

Psalm 140

Text and Translation

לְמַנְצֵחַ מִזְמֹר לְדָוִד:
חֲלֹצֵנִי יְהוָה מֵאֲדָם רָע מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תִּנְצָרְנִי:
אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ רַעוּת בְּלֵב כָּל-יּוֹם יְגִירוּ מִלַּחְמוֹת:
לְשׁוֹנָם כְּמוֹ-גִחְשׁ חֶמֶת עֲכָשׁוּב תַּחַת שְׁפָתֵימוֹ סָלָה:
שִׁמְרֵנִי יְהוָה מִיַּדִּי רָשָׁע מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תִּנְצָרְנִי אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ לְדַחוֹת פְּעָמַי:
טָמְנוּ-גֵּאִים פֶּחַ לִי וְחִבְלִים פָּרָשׁוּ רַשָּׁת לִיד־מַעְגָּל מְקֹשִׁים שְׁתוּ-לִי סָלָה:
אֲמַרְתִּי לַיהוָה אֵלֵי אֶתָּה הֶאֱזִינָה יְהוָה קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנִי:
יְהִי אָזְנִי עֹז יִשׁוּעָתִי סִכָּתָה לְרֹאשִׁי בַּיּוֹם גִּשָּׁק:
אֶל-תִּתֵּן יְהוָה מֵאוֹנֵי רָשָׁע זָמְמוֹ אֶל-תִּפֹּק יָרֵמוֹ סָלָה:
רֹאשׁ מִסְבֵּי עֵמֶל שְׁפָתֵימוֹ יְכַסּוּמוֹ
יִמְיָטוּ עֲלֵיהֶם גִּחְלִים בְּאֵשׁ יִפְלֹג בְּמַהֲמֹזוֹת בְּלִי-יָקוּמוּ:
אִישׁ לְשׁוֹן בְּלִי-יָכוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ אִישׁ-חֲמָס רָע יִצְוֹלְנוּ לְמַדְחָפֶת:
יִדְעַת כִּי-יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה דִּין עֲגִי מִשְׁפָּט אֲבִינָם:
אֲךָ צְדִיקִים יוֹדוּ לְשִׁמְךָ יִשְׁכְּבוּ יִשְׁרִים אֶת-פִּגְיָךְ:

1. For the end times. Music by David.
2. Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men; guard me from violent men.
3. who plan evil things in their hearts; they gather daily for war.
4. They sharpen their tongues like a serpent; the poison of asps is under their lips. **Selah**
5. Keep me, O God, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from violent men who have purposed to make my steps stumble.
6. The proud have hidden a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside, they have set traps for me. **Selah**
7. I said to the Lord, "You are my God; hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord."

8. O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation; You have sheltered my head in the day of battle.
9. Do not grant, O Lord, the desires of the wicked. Do not further his wicked scheme, lest they be exalted. **Selah**
10. The head of those who surround me, let the evil of his lips cover him.
11. May burning coals be dislodged upon them; let them be cast into the fire, into deep pits, that they do not rise up again.
12. Let not a slanderer be established in the earth; let evil hunt the man of war to overthrow him.
13. I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and justice for the poor.
14. Surely the righteous will give praise to Your name; the upright will dwell in Your presence.

General Content and Structure

Displaying the basic pattern of lament as assigned by Gunkel, Psalm 140's general content contains a prayer for deliverance from evildoers.¹ The evildoers in this psalm are likened to serpents in the first stanza while they are described as hunters in search of prey in the second stanza.² The third stanza provides a transition from the description of the evildoers to a plea to Yahweh in the hopes of halting the scheme of the wicked. In the fourth stanza, the psalmist resumes the metaphors of the serpent and hunter as he prays that the ways of the wicked will fall back upon them.³ In the last stanza, the psalmist expresses his trust in Yahweh—a trust that He will uphold the cause of the afflicted and justice for the poor (v. 13).

¹ Psalm 140 shares rare forms of expression with Psalms 58 and 64 in their concluding content. Keil and Delitzsch note that the language of all three psalms “becomes fearfully obscure in style and sound where they are directed against the enemies.” See: F. Delitzsch, “Psalms,” in *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 5, trans. by Francis Bolton (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 356.

² The description of the enemies in this psalm mirror the language of other psalms, depicting slanderers sharpening their tongues as weapons (cf. 55:21; 59:7; 64:3). The hunter imagery again echoes other psalms as the hunter catches its prey with traps and nets (cf. 31:4; 57:6; 64:5; 142:3).

³ Moshe Greenberg, who explains the verses mythopoetically, has studied the description of hunters throughout the psalm. The term for hunter used in verse 12, *תפודים*, may describe a hunting corral or, mythopoetically, it may be an expression for the place of the dead. See: Moshe Greenberg, “Two New Hunting Terms in Psalm 140:12,” in *Hebrew Annual Review* 1 (1977), 149-153; and Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. by Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 843.

Reminiscent of the beginning of the Psalter, wicked men rise up against the king and against Yahweh. Each psalmist laments the wickedness and cries out to Yahweh for deliverance and protection. The progression in the psalmist's petition gains assurance as it proceeds: "The situation in which the writer finds himself has not changed, but a stronger confidence floods the heart."⁴ Each stanza is approximately equal in length, the content giving the psalm its parallel structure (ABA'B'). Structure has generally been agreed upon as a five-part whole (vv. 2-4, 5-6, 7-9, 10-12, 13-14) mostly due in part to the term *Selah*.⁵

Use of *Selah*

With *Selah* last occurring at the close of Book III (Ps. 89), it briefly appears again at the end of the Psalter here in Psalm 140, and in Psalm 143. *Selah* occurs three times in Psalm 140 (vv.4, 6, and 9). Since *Selah* was not used throughout Book IV and only appears in two psalms in Book V, Frank-Lothar Hossfeld perceived that its use in Book IV (as evidenced by the LXX and DSS extant texts) was a "deliberate pointer back to an earlier psalm language, a moment of intertextual reference." He goes on to say, "The end of the Psalter reaches back with extreme clarity to the poetry of the first psalm collections."⁶

With most psalms, *Selah* occurs at the end of a line as a new verse begins on the line below. In the case of Psalm 140, *Selah* follows that general custom with the exception of verse 9. The question as to why v. 10 directly follows *Selah* on the same line

⁴ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1959), 951.

⁵ Frank-Lothar Hossfeld. *Hermeneia: Psalms 3* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 549.

⁶ Ibid., 549-550. Egbert Ballhorn, *Zum Telos des Psalters: der Textzusammenhang des Vierten und Fünften Psalmenbuches (Ps. 90-150)* (Berlin: Philo, 2004), 277.

should be examined. Is there a change in theme or content? H.C. Leupold noted that the *Selah* must have been misplaced in this instance.⁷

As vv.7-9 call on the Lord to guard the head of the petitioner from the wicked, v.10 the head of the wicked is then struck by the evil they themselves commit. So, *Selah* here marks the progression in petition as the speaker calls out, “Rescue me,” “Guard me,” and “Give ear, YHWH, to my loud supplication!” This also serves as the central thematic section which is framed by *Selah* whereby the repeated use of a “vocative YHWH functions as a verbal recurrence highlighting the individuality” and central theme of the psalm.⁸

The previous imperatives highlight the reflective character of the psalm, which can be seen through a progression in its five-strophes: 1) vv. 2-4 and 5-6 petition for rescue while, 2) vv. 7-9 and 10-12 recall the petitioner’s trust in YHWH, simultaneously cursing their enemies, and 3) concluding the petition with a declaration of confidence in YHWH.⁹ This animosity that the petitioner speaks of recalls the past, present, and future conflict between the wicked and the righteous. Thus, the language of Psalm 140, characterized by the inclusion of *Selah*, takes the reader back to the beginning of the Psalter where the struggle between wicked and righteous is played out.¹⁰

⁷ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1959), 951.

⁸ Pieter van der Lugt, *Cantos and Strophes in Biblical Hebrew Poetry III: Psalms 90-150 and Psalm 1* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 495. He also notes on p. 494, “The whole complex of formal devices demonstrates that the prayer for deliverance (7b) and the psalmist’s protestation of trust (vv. 7a, 8) are to be taken as the deliberately designed rhetorical centre of Psalm 140.”

⁹ Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 551.

¹⁰ Dahood notes, “This lament is linguistically noteworthy for the surprisingly large number of hapax legomena and archaic forms,” thus pointing to an early date of composition in his opinion.¹⁰ H.C. Leupold also suggests an Aramaic “flavor” of this psalm that can be seen in vv.9-10’s “unusual and difficult terms.” See: Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 950.

It has been said that “the content and subject matter at the end of the Psalter is integrally related to the content and subject matter at the beginning,”¹¹ and I would go so far as to say this is an accurate statement. A consistent storyline, beginning in Psalms 1-2, portrays Yahweh as King, all the while His people rebel against Him and the authorities He has set over the earth. Frank Lothar Hossfeld notes that this particular psalm “moves lament against the enemies to the foreground of the fifth [book], thus adopting an important theme from the first two [books].”¹² So, the inclusion of *Selah* here again serves a two-fold purpose—for structure and to highlight the theme of deliverance amid danger.¹³

Psalm 143

Text and Translation

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד יְהוָה שְׁמַע תְּפִלָּתִי הֶאֱזִינָה אֶל־תַּחֲנוּנֵי בְּאִמְנוֹתָךְ עֲנֵנִי בְּצַדִּיקְתָּךְ:
וְאַל־תִּבּוֹא בְּמִשְׁפָּט אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ כִּי לֹא־יִצְדָּק לִפְנֵיךָ כָּל־חַי:
כִּי יָדָךְ אוֹיְבוֹ נִפְשֵׁי דָבָא לְאַרְץ חַיְתִּי הוֹשִׁיבֵנִי בְּמַחְשָׁפִים כְּמַתִּי עוֹלָם:
וּתְתַעֲטֹף עָלַי רוּחִי בְּתוֹכִי יִשְׁתַּוְּמֵם לִבִּי:
יִצְרָתִי יָמִים מִקֶּדֶם הִגִּיתִי בְּכָל־פְּעִילְךָ בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֶיךָ אֲשׁוּחָח:
פִּרְשָׁתִי יְדֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ נִפְשִׁיו בְּאַרְץ־עֵינֶפֶה לֶךָ סֵלָה:
מִהָרָ עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה כָּל־תְּהִי רוּחִי אֶל־תִּסָּתֵר פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי וְנִמְשָׁלְתִּי עַם־לִרְדֵי בּוֹר:
הַשְׁמִיעֵנִי בִּבְקָרֹא חֲסִדְךָ כִּי־רַב בְּטַחַתִּי הוֹדִיעֵנִי דָרְדְּנוּ אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי־אֱלֹהֶיךָ נִשְׁאַתִּי נִפְשִׁי:
הַצִּילֵנִי מֵאִיְבֹאֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כֶּסֶתִּי:
לִמְדֵנִי לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנְךָ כִּי־אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי רוּחַךְ טוֹבָה תִּנְחֵנִי בְּאַרְץ מִישׁוֹר:
לִמְעַן־שִׁמְךָ יִתְהַלַּל תַּחֲנוּנִי בְּצַדִּיקְתָּךְ תוֹצִיא מִצָּרָה נִפְשִׁי:
וּבְחֲסִדְךָ תִּצְמַחַת אֵיבֵי וְהִאֲבֹדָה כָּל־צָרָרִי נִפְשִׁי כִּי אֲנִי עַבְדְּךָ:

1. Music by David. Lord, hear my prayer; give ear to my supplications. In Your faithfulness, answer me with Your righteousness.

2. Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for no one living before You is righteous.

¹¹ Michael K. Snearly, *The Return of the King: Messianic Expectation in Book V of the Psalter* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 1.

¹² Frank Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: Hermeneia-A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 554.

¹³ van der Lugt, *Cantos and Strophes in Biblical Hebrew Poetry III*, 491. He notes that a general conclusion would be that the “poor have hope for salvation and the righteous praise the Lord,” even in the midst of distress.

3. For the enemy has pursued my soul, he has crushed my life to the ground; he has caused me to dwell in dark places, like those who have long been dead.
4. My spirit is faint within me; my heart within me is appalled.
5. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works, I meditate on the work of Your hands.
6. I spread out my hands to You; my soul is for You like a thirsty land. **Selah**
7. Answer me quickly, O Lord, my soul is spent. Do not hide Your face from me, lest I become like those who go down to the pit.
8. Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning, for I trust in You; cause me to know the way in which I should walk, for I lift up my soul to You.
9. Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord; in You I take shelter.
10. Teach me to do Your will, for you are my God; Your spirit is good, lead me in the land of uprightness.
11. Revive me, O Lord, on account of Your name; for Your righteousness' sake, bring my soul out of trouble.
12. In Your lovingkindness, annihilate my enemies and destroy all the enemies of my soul for I am Your servant.

General Content and Structure

The psalmist begins by appealing for mercy on his behalf, for the actions of his enemies extend from the past into the present.¹⁴ As his life hangs in the balance, the tension between the petitioner and his enemies rises—the psalmist cries out to YHWH using imagery of a parched land in need of water. On the verge of death, the second section (beginning in v. 7) repeats the cry for a response as found in v. 1. What follows is a series of imperatives that petition Yahweh to deliver the psalmist from death: “deliver me,” “teach me,” “revive me.” These imperative declarations of trust climax in the confession of submission and servitude to Yahweh (v. 12). Thus, the writer of the psalm is troubled as he describes his dwelling space with Sheol imagery in v.3. His enemies have metaphorically razed him to the ground, and the affliction he feels is becoming unbearable. The psalmist’s petition to Yahweh is desperate yet hopeful in that he may learn the ways of Yahweh, and gain a future restoration.

¹⁴ Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 571.

What is interesting is the LXX's interpretation of this psalm. In addition to attributing the psalm to David, the LXX editor added a situation: "when the son pursued him." This language is reminiscent of Psalm 3:1—again taking the reader back to the beginning of the Psalter. Whether or not the editor intended to reveal the speaker of the psalm as the Messiah (as can be seen throughout the first three psalms), or to connect this psalm with Absalom, one may never know. Intriguingly, *Selah* also appears in Psalm 3 so the LXX editor's inclusion of a situation that mirrors Psalm 3 is worth noting. Keyword links such as "soul" are apparent in both Psalm 3:3 and 143:3, 6, 8, 11-12 while thematic threads are apparent in those who seek the speaker's life and trample it in the dust (cf. 3:3, 143:3). These similarities may serve to relate the beginning and the end of the Psalter.

This psalm also plays a role in engaging the doctrine of justification in the Christian New Testament. Quotations of Psalm 143:2, found in Romans 3:20 and Galatians 2:16, stand at the heart of the Apostle Paul's doctrine of justification which outlines God's mercy and justice despite the sin of His people. This kind of faith is expressed by the people of God (such as the petitioner seen in Psalm 143 who seeks instruction) through their consciousness and acceptance of sin, and trust of forgiveness from God. It is not through works that one may be saved, but through faith in the promises of God. It is for this message that the Apostle Paul chose Psalm 143 as he wrote to the churches to emphasize the sinfulness of human beings (vv. 1-2) to the culmination of salvation for God's people (vv. 11-12). The psalmist in Psalm 143 was a righteous example of seeking instruction and reconciliation with a just God.

Although the psalmist is not directly identified, his royal character can be seen in the language used throughout the psalm: 1) He identifies himself as “your servant” (vv. 2, 12); 2) the use of שָׁפָט (vv. 3, 6, 8, 11, 12) is similar language to that of the introductory psalms in which the speaker is the messiah; and 3) the divide between the terms “adversaries” and “foes” occur frequently with royal psalms (vv. 11-12; cf. Ps. 20, 54, 86, 89), to name a few. So, the speaker could have been a historical person or the Messiah. Also, the Hebrew concept of רַחֲמֵי is almost always connected with the loving-kindness of the LORD, thus it is possible that the speaker here in Psalm 143 is also the same speaker of the introductory psalms. Whoever the speaker may be, the language of the psalm (including the term *Selah*) and its superscription may have been included to relate this psalm back to the beginning of the Psalter. Also, Psalm 143’s broader connections with the Christian New Testament suggest a thematic familiarity with sin, judgment, and redemption that we have seen throughout previous psalms and Second Temple literature.

Use of *Selah*

Psalm 143 is the last psalm to contain *Selah*. The term is found in v.6, the mid-point of the psalm. Here, it is believed that *Selah* marks the end of one lament and the beginning of another. Dahood notes that these two laments are “similar in language and thought,” thus most likely coming from the same scribal hand.¹⁵ *Selah* occurs at the intersection of the two laments—verse 6. In the first lament (vv. 1-6), the psalmist pleads for mercy due to the persecution of his soul by the enemy. In the second lament (vv. 7-12), as the psalmist is on the verge of death, he cries out to YHWH as he affirms his trust in Him.

¹⁵ Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150* (Anchor Bible; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 322.

The affirmation of trust then leads to an appeal for the destruction of enemies and rehabilitation of his own life (vv.10-12).

Hossfeld notes that the twofold division is attested by an inclusio.¹⁶ He states, “The opening call to God in vv. 1-2 is marked by the theologically significant concepts of the root צדק, ‘righteous’ (vv. 1b, 2b), and אמונה, ‘faithfulness’ (v. 1b). Both are repeated at the end of the psalm in v. 11b, and with the variation of אמונה with the parallel אהבה, ‘love,’ in v. 12a.”¹⁷ The inclusio also includes multiple mentions of the petitioner’s soul (vv. 3, 6, 8, 11, 12), references to the ground (vv. 3, 10), the enemy (vv. 3, 12), and the use of the verb פיה (vv. 2, 3, 11). *Selah*’s inclusion with familiar themes and language suggests the term’s use is confined within a particular set of boundaries.

Concluding Remarks: MT Psalter

Selah’s appearance across thirty-nine different psalms in the Hebrew Psalter does not provide any concrete answers as to its meaning or purpose. However, familiar themes (such as danger and salvation) and language are apparent as one progresses through the psalms that contain *Selah*. Theophany and divine speech are quite prevalent as well in the psalms containing the term. Could it be possible that the divine presence was signaled by music and singing? Could *Selah* be a witness to, or indicator of, divine presence? These are questions that deserve further attention in another work, but we can say that *Selah* serves as more than just a “pause” in the text and it should be seen as a transition either in theme, speaker, or topic.

¹⁶ There are differing theories as to the structure of this psalm, cf. E.J. Kissane, *The Book of Psalms* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1954); R.L. Alden, “Chiastic Psalms III. A Study in the Mechanics of Semitic Poetry in Psalms 101-150,” in *JETHS* 21 (1978), 199-210.

¹⁷ Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 571.

From a literary standpoint, Gunkel's genres picked up on important themes (such as the Zion motif) but unintentionally disregarded how those themes relate to one another in their overall message. Genres being flexible, this allowed for the psalms to share many common features ultimately shaping interpretation.¹⁸ The striking references back to the beginning of the Psalter show significant overlap in the depictions of the wicked ones who seek a Man's life. Thus, the structure again follows a similar pattern of lament and description of the enemies, a petition for rescue, a retrospect to the enduring faith in the Lord, and a declaration of confidence that Yahweh will rescue His people. Therefore, the theme of Yahweh's kingship is not far-fetched if the psalms that contain *Selah* are categorized according to a thematic structure instead of *Sitz im Leben*. Also, *Selah*'s occurrence outside of parallel lines seemed to indicate it was used as either a structural marker for the overall psalm, or it was used as a marker for theme (i.e. to highlight important aspects of God in Zion). But, does the Book of Habakkuk follow the same thematic guidelines? Or will it differ markedly from the psalms that contain *Selah*?

¹⁸ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; 1988), 35.

CHAPTER FOUR: HABAKKUK

The Book of Habakkuk was most likely written by the prophet Habakkuk who, according to the written traditions we have received, is evidenced among the books of the ספר ירמיהו. Some have suggested he was a cultic prophet, but evidence shows that claim is speculative.¹ Others have argued that the book's text is a cult liturgy, or simply an imitation of one.² Whatever the book's original intended use, its textual elements are important for examining how *Selah* was employed in Habakkuk 3.

The psalm of Habakkuk 3 is markedly different in theme, content, and literary style than the rest of the Book of Habakkuk. The older poetic format, which includes difficult Hebrew grammatical constructions and words (such as *Selah*), has led scholars to many conclusions as to its composition, as well as inevitably raised questions about its original relationship with chapters 1 & 2.³ Whether it is a loose compilation of lamentations and oracles or a remnant of epic literature, themes of early OT literature

¹ P. Jöcken, "War Habakuk ein Kultprophet," in *Bausteine biblische Theologie. Festgabe für G. Johannes Botterweck zum 60. Geburtstag darge von seinen Schülern*, ed. by H.J. Fabry (Bonner Biblische Beiträge 50; Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1977), 319-332.

² Michael E.W. Thompson, "Prayer, Oracle, and Theophany: The Book of Habakkuk," in *Tyndale Bulletin* 44.1 (1993), 51; for the imitation of cult liturgy see G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1970), 453.

³ Habakkuk 3 resembles songs found in Ex. 15, Deut. 32-33, Judges, 5, and 2 Sam. 22. Interestingly, these earlier passages do not contain *Selah* but contain theophanic elements we find with the term in the Psalter and Habakkuk. Reminiscent of archaic OT literature, see B. Duhm, *Das Buch Habakuk: Text, Übersetzung und Erklärung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1906), 7; W.F. Albright, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy*, ed. by H.H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1950), 8-10; D.J. Clark and H.A. Hatton, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 114; and T. Hiebert, *God of My Victory: The Ancient Hymn in Habakkuk 3* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 119-121. Regarding the relationship with chapters 1&2 see Michael E. W. Thompson, "Prayer, Oracle, and Theophany: The Book of Habakkuk," in *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (1993), 33-54.

emerge as the reader moves through the psalm. Themes from early OT literature surrounding *Selah* in the psalm of Habakkuk are especially prevalent in 1) the Lord's movement from Paran (Deut. 33:1-2; Judg. 5:4; Ps. 68:8), 2) persecution by enemies in order to deliver His people (Ex. 15:3, 6; Ps. 77:18; Ps. 68:8), and 3) the shaking of celestial and terrestrial worlds at the Lord's presence.⁴ The general theme of Chapter 3, however, is the expectation/hope that YHWH will end the oppression of His people, over which the prophet Habakkuk agonized in chapters 1 & 2.⁵

Due to the figurative nature of the poetry, scholars can only surmise why this psalm was added to the end of the Book of Habakkuk. Nevertheless, the literary and grammatical constructions are very reminiscent of early OT literature (as well as theological viewpoints) and seem to fit with the literature found in the *Torah*. Even F.C. Burkitt, citing Henry St. John Thackeray said, "that the obscure and untranslatable words of Habakkuk iii...are very probably catchwords indicating the passages of the Pentateuch in connexion [*sic*] with which the Psalm, or part of it, was to be recited."⁶ While historical data does not lend credence to the meaning of any given text, it would seem that Habakkuk had in mind the Exodus and Sinai revelation as he penned chapter 3. By Habakkuk's day, his people had lived under the rule of foreign kings for well over a century, and Habakkuk could perhaps see little good the foreign powers had done for the the people of Judah.⁷ Thus, he employed lament in his message. Similar to the content

⁴ Richard D. Patterson, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," in *Grace Theological Journal* 8.2 (1987), 176.

⁵ Michael E.W. Thompson, "Prayer, Oracle, and Theophany: The Book of Habakkuk," in *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (1993), 41.

⁶ F.C. Burkitt, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," in *Journal of Theological Studies* 16 (1915), 62; Henry St. John Thackeray, "Primitive Lectionary Notes in the Psalm of Habakkuk," in *Journal of Theological Studies* 12 (1911), 191-213.

⁷ Thompson, "Prayer, Oracle, and Theophany," 48.

seen in Isaiah and the Psalter, he then turns to worship.⁸ It seems that it is through the *milieu* of worship that the ancient Israelites found hope and comfort in the face of what seemed like dire circumstances.

And, this is why it has been suggested, “Habakkuk is indeed the Old Testament’s maverick prophecy!”⁹ Through the use of prophecy and psalmody, Habakkuk used language similar to that of early OT literature to convey a simple message: “God’s entire power is committed to the battle against the oppressor, God’s goal is salvation for His people.”¹⁰ Paul House, who shows that the reader of the psalm is able to identify with the give-and-take between the Lord and His people, further confirms this message. This give-and-take that is chronicled in the psalm of Habakkuk shows that God’s Word was not produced outside the arena of human pain, thus “Habakkuk represents the prophets’ desire to gain a message from God, and the attempt of the righteous to grasp the ways of Yahweh.”¹¹ Thus, the literature establishes the sin of Israel and the nations, the punishment of the sin, and the restoration of both from that sin. House notes, “These three emphases represent the heart of the content of the prophetic genre,” and they are employed to achieve a definite and particular effect.¹²

Content of Habakkuk 3

Some scholars argue that Habakkuk 3 was a later addition to the Book, as it is the only chapter missing from 1QpHab of the DSS. Others believe that it was originally part of the MT tradition as it was included in the Minor Prophets scroll (Mur88) found at Wadi

⁸ Parallels can be found in Psalm 73, and Isaiah 40-54.

⁹ Thompson, “Prayer, Oracle, and Theophany,” 50.

¹⁰ Thompson, “Prayer, Oracle, and Theophany,” 43.

¹¹ Paul R. House, *The Unity of the Twelve* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2009), 10-11.

¹² House, *The Unity of the Twelve*, 68. See also Waylon Bailey, “Habakkuk,” in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 261.

Murabbaʿat, and present in the Greek Minor Prophets scroll (8HevXIIgr) found at Naḥal Hever.¹³ Chapter 3 also fits nicely with familiar themes of sin, judgment, and redemption found throughout the entire Book of Habakkuk and the MT Psalter.

Habakkuk 3 differs from the Psalter in that it contains markers that alert the readers to either a shift in genre, or shift in theme/content.¹⁴ These markers, or unit delimiters, “raise awareness of interesting structural patterns in the poem, calls for a rethinking of traditional form critical categories, and opens avenues for an alternative understanding of the pericope.”¹⁵

Habakkuk stood in a line of people who dared question God. Habakkuk screamed out at God’s seemingly silent demeanor in the face of injustice. His questions to God were not a way to run from his responsibilities—he was genuinely concerned by the nature of God’s apparently unpredictable interactions with him.¹⁶ As chapters 1 & 2 address theological problems, chapter 3 then resolves them through the prophet’s assumption of the justice of God throughout the mires of human doubt and suffering.

It is Habakkuk’s vision of God as the mighty conqueror of chaos that endows him with hope for the future and “instills within him the triumphant courage to endure a dismal present in the joyous confidence that his vision of God will prove reliable.”¹⁷

Thus, the hymn celebrates the salvific violence of God in images, which make the

¹³ It is quite possible that although it seems Habakkuk 3 was already part of the text, it could have been added to the other chapters in a second stage of the composition.

¹⁴ James W. Watts, “Psalmody in Prophecy: Habakkuk 3 in Context,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D.W. Watts*, ed. by David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (JSOTsup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 211.

¹⁵ Gert T.M. Prinsloo, “Reading Habakkuk 3 in the Light of Ancient Unit Delimiters,” in *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69.1 (2013), 1.

¹⁶ Bailey, “Habakkuk,” 278.

¹⁷ Bailey, “Habakkuk,” 281.

preceding descriptions pale by comparison—it uses the archaic constructions of OT literature to “establish a theocentric climax.”¹⁸

Selah’s Role in Habakkuk

Selah occurs in verses 3, 9, and 13 in Habakkuk 3. Most scholars agree that 3:3-15 comprise a textual unit within the entire psalm. This unit is considered to be one of the most elaborate theophanies (a description of a physical manifestation of the Lord’s presence) found in the OT.¹⁹

However, those who have disregarded the materiality of the MT have structured chapter 3 while overlooking the *petuḥah* and *setuma*. These division markers (section breaks) serve to tell the reader where there are major or minor breaks in content and/or theme. As most assume that 3:3-15 is the major section,²⁰ this simply does not work. From a literary perspective, Habakkuk 3 is commonly regarded as a theophany in two parts, 3:3-7 and 3:8-14; the psalm begins with a prayer (3:2) and ends with a confession of trust (3:16-19).²¹ Gert Prinsloo, quoting F.I. Andersen on the structure of Habakkuk 3 is worth reproducing in its entirety:

The first account of mighty deliverance (vv.3-7) is a recital in the third person, has the Exodus as historical background, but the stage is cosmic in its expanse. In the middle strophe (vv. 8-11), the mode of address changes to apostrophe in the second person and is concerned with YHWH’s combat with cosmic elements, evoking memories of stories of creation, but also of the Exodus and the battles of early days. In the third strophe (vv. 12-15) God is involved in history. The setting is the world (v.12); the purpose is deliverance (v.13); the enemy (unnamed) is almost represented as an individual (v.14).²²

¹⁸ Watts, “Psalmody in Prophecy,” 213.

¹⁹ Other theophanies occur in Ex. 15:3-12, Ex. 19:16-19, Judges 5:4-5, Psalm 18:6-19, and Psalm 68:4-19.

²⁰ J.K. Bruckner, “Book of Habakkuk,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, ed. by Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 299.

²¹ Prinsloo, “Reading Habakkuk 3 in the Light of Ancient Unit Delimiters,” 2.

²² Prinsloo, “Reading Habakkuk 3 in the Light of Ancient Unit Delimiters,” 3; F.I. Andersen, *Habakkuk* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 261-262.

Ancient paragraph markers also appear in the manuscripts covered later in the Dead Sea Scrolls chapter—mss. 8HevXIIgr and Mur88. The *petuḥot* in 8HevXIIgr and the *setumot* in Mur88 occur before 3:1, 3:14 and 3:1, 3:8, and 3:14 respectively. All of these occurrences agree with the MT, and are therefore important unit delimiters for the interpretation of this prophetic psalm. Habakkuk chapter 2 ends with a major section break, a *petuḥah*. As chapter 3 begins, we find only a minor section break (*setuma*) after verse 7, while the only other major section break, indicating a change in theme or content, occurs after the last *Selah* in 3:13.

Superscription and Subscription

Habakkuk 3 begins with a superscription reminiscent of psalm headings in the MT Psalter, while it ends with what is also a familiar superscript in the Psalter. A colophon is also present in the MT that lets the reader know there are 56 verses in the Book itself. The superscription and subscription are as follows:

Superscript	“A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, on Shigionoth.”	קִרְבָּן חֲבַקּוּךְ אֵיבֹנָה לַעֲתֹנִיגִשׁ הַלֵּפֶת
Subscript	“For the leader. With my stringed instruments.”	חֲצֹנְמֵל יְתֹנִיגֹב

The LXX is slightly different, especially in Habakkuk 3:19 (subscript):

Superscript	“A prayer of the prophet Habakkuk, with a song.”	Προσευχὴ Ἀμβακουμ τοῦ προφήτου μετὰ ᾠδῆς.
Subscript	“He mounts me upon high places, that I may conquer by His song.”	ἐπὶ τὰ ὑψηλὰ ἐπιβιβᾷ με τοῦ νικῆσαι ἐν τῇ ᾠδῇ αὐτοῦ.

Habakkuk 3 is not attested at Qumran, and it is likely that Habakkuk 3 was not known at Qumran (due to the only surviving manuscripts containing the first two chapters, i.e. 1QpHab). Thus, it is not unlikely that there were two separate traditions of Hab. 1-2 and Hab. 3, the latter of which may not have reached Qumran.²³ Habakkuk 3 is, however, attested in the Greek Minor Prophets scroll from Naḥal Ḥever, and in the scroll of the Twelve from Wadi Murabbaʿat (Mur88). The scroll from Naḥal Ḥever unfortunately does not preserve the superscript or subscript for Habakkuk 3, but its transliteration of *Selah* into σελε is curious. We know that the scroll from Naḥal Ḥever is a revision of the LXX text of Habakkuk, so it would have been helpful to understand if the revision contained any other peculiarities of text in the superscript or subscript.²⁴ As it stands, musical use of the psalm is alluded to in both the superscript and subscript. Does this mean that *Selah* is a musical term? Or could it function in another way? Since Habakkuk 3 may have likely been an addition to the Book itself, its correlation with MT psalms through the use of similar language and themes may shed light on *Selah*'s use throughout the Psalter and Habakkuk.

Habakkuk 3:3

Verse 3 contains parallel statements: “God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran.” Teman was a district of Edom, and Paran was a mountainous area to the south of Judah in the Sinai Peninsula (and west of the Gulf of Aqaba).²⁵ Interestingly, both of these areas are where God gave His law and led His people through the wilderness. *Selah*

²³ H.J. Fabry, “The Reception of Nahum and Habakkuk in the Septuagint and Qumran,” in *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov*, ed. by Shalom M. Paul, et al (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 256.

²⁴ Emanuel Tov, *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Naḥal Ḥever (8ḤevXIIgr): The Seiyal Collection I* (DJD 8; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 57.

²⁵ Bailey, “Habakkuk,” 360. Bible verses that show Teman was in the Edomite territory are Jeremiah 49:20, Ezekiel 25:13, and Amos 1:12.

appears here in the middle of the verse. Commentators do not agree on the meaning, or why it occurs in the middle of the verse here, but generally agree it could be a musical interlude to reflect on the solemnity that is the presence of God.

As *Selah* occurs in the middle of the verse, it stands as part of a theophany that is not yet realized. Reminiscent of Deuteronomy 33:2, where the author uses the term יְהוָה (the LORD *came* from Sinai), Habakkuk instead uses the future-tense יָבֹא to look into the future coming, where the prophet is about to describe not a past, but a future revelation of the glory of the Lord.²⁶ J.H. Eaton writes, “Could it then be that Habakkuk’s description of a theophany also corresponds to a ‘coming’ of God experienced by faith...a *present* event, but signifying both the renewal of ancient salvation and the promise of a future outworking of the victory?”²⁷

Keil and Delitzsch agree that *Selah* does not form part of the subject matter of the text, and it serves, in their opinion, as a musical marker. It “shows that the music strikes here [in the text] when the song is used in the temple, taking up the lofty thought that God is *coming*, and carrying it out in a manner befitting the majestic appearance, in the prospect of the speedy help of the Lord.”²⁸ Even though Keil and Delitzsch surmise that *Selah* is a musical notation (the equivalent of the *forte*) they attach majesty and the coming of the Lord with it. They even go on to note that the second half of verse 3 (in which *Selah* occurs in the middle of) and verse 4 depict the glory of the coming of God, and His intensive power.²⁹ And although form criticism has limited understanding the

²⁶ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Minor Prophets*, vol. X (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 97.

²⁷ J.H. Eaton, “The Origin and Meaning of Habakkuk 3,” in *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 35.2 (1964), 165.

²⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 98.

²⁹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 99.

intertextual nature of biblical books, it has been said that theophany (description of the appearance of the Lord) was the central point in the cultic experience of life and salvation.³⁰ Thus, this theophany, where *Selah* appears in its midst, may serve to introduce a hope of future salvation or to simply highlight Yahweh's past mighty acts.

Habakkuk 3:9

Selah in 3:9 sees the continuance of the theophany from the beginning of the third chapter. The prophet Habakkuk continues to affirm the sovereignty of the Lord, even in the midst of distress. Here *Selah* occurs with the Hebrew word for bow, which symbolized power and warfare in the Old Testament. The same word, קשת, is also used of the rainbow in Genesis 9:13-16. In Genesis, the Lord hung up his bow as a symbol that He would never destroy the earth with a global flood again. Yet, here in Habakkuk, His bow is made ready to seek vengeance on those who rage against the Almighty.

As mentioned earlier in 3:3, Habakkuk begins with a theophany that has not yet been realized. As the prophet moves through the chapter, he continues the theme of the vengeance of the Lord—yet that vengeance has not taken place yet (in his lifetime). The deliverance here, in 3:9, of the people of Judah is the reassurance that God works on behalf of His people, even if they are sinners—this is an ultimate truth. So, 3:9 finds itself interconnected with judgment imagery.

With the appearance of a *setuma* (minor section break) in the text after verse 7, we find that the content slightly changes. Verses 8 and 9 usher in an address to God Himself, thus passing from a description of His coming to a poetic composition highlighting the great power of the Lord. Through the use of His מוט (pl. stick or staff),

³⁰ Eaton, "The Origin and Meaning of Habakkuk 3," 164.

an instrument of punishment, He will punish those who rise up against His Word. This particular phrase where *Selah* occurs “points to the solemn oath with which God promised in Deuteronomy 32:40-42 to take vengeance upon His enemies, and avenge the blood of His servants.”³¹

For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, As I live forever, when I have sharpened my glittering sword, and my hand grasps for judgment, I will render vengeance to mine adversaries, and repay them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword will eat flesh; from the blood of the slain and the captives, from the hairy head of the enemy (Deut. 32:40-42).

The imagery in verse 9 is so laden with judgment, the second clause that follows *Selah* builds upon the first. As the Lord readies His bow, the earth is then split into rivers. This description shows that the earth trembles at the wrath of God, and may point to earthquakes (*splitting* into rivers) through which the world as we know it is changed.

Habakkuk 3:13

3:13 brings the theophany full circle. It foreshadows the redemption of God’s people, thus reassuring those who trust in Him. Ancient Israelites looked for a redeemer that would come in “the end of days” (in their lifetime) to provide them salvation, an eternal security. The phrase “laying bare from foundation to neck” insinuates the destabilization of all support and strength—literally leaving the enemy defenseless. Thus, it seems that the theophany continues to speak to the providence of God as Habakkuk looks back to the past to communicate the deliverance of God in the future. The Lord saw the ancient Israelites through the wilderness, so Habakkuk relies on a future hope that He will deliver Judah in due time. Even though *Selah* does not occur in vv.17-19, the affirmation of faith proves that hope for future intervention on their behalf will be the outcome of history.

³¹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 105.

3:13 has been subject to complex interpretations depending on what head, nation, or king one surmises as the imperial power that is hostile to the kingdom of God. Taken literally, the head is typically someone in power who, in this case, represents an entity opposed to the ideals of the God of the Bible. As God “lays bare the foundation to neck,” in typical warlike fashion, His enemies meet a ground-razing fate. Thus, the archaic poetic format of Habakkuk 3, reminiscent of early OT literature, serves as a reminder of past defeats and looks forward to a future defeat of the last hostile power of the world who will meet his ruin in due time (cf. Ezekiel 38:21, Zechariah 14:13).

The text of Habakkuk 3 reveals that Yahweh’s coming is for the salvation of His people and to destroy the wicked. “Habakkuk 3:12 repeats the motif of ‘anger’ and ‘trampling upon’ and 3:13 answers the rhetorical questions of 3:8.”³² All of these interconnected parts form inclusios in which the salvific acts of Yahweh are seen in the effects they take upon the earth.

Concluding Remarks on Habakkuk 3

Habakkuk 3 provides a vivid experience of theophany that marks a transition from faith to patient anticipation of divine intervention. Chapters 1 and 2 provide the dramatic buildup from bitterness to faith as chapter three’s *Selah* occurrences structure the psalm around the origin of the Deliverer (Hab. 3:3), His displeasure with sin (Hab. 3:9), and His defeat of the enemies whereby He provides salvation for His people (Hab. 3:13). In other words, Habakkuk 3 expresses trust in Yahweh whose deliverance is still to come. Through the use of literary prophecy, hymnic anthology, and narrative prose, “this prophetic experience from the author is equated with the experience of communal

³² Prinsloo, “Reading Habakkuk 3 in the Light of Ancient Unit Delimiters,” 5.

worship in the Temple.”³³ This psalm actually “identifies liturgical worship and prophetic vision as one and the same thing.”³⁴ And, through the use of psalmody to express the inner mental and emotional processes of trusting in Yahweh, one can anticipate the future deliverance that “is preserved in the tension between human reality and divine possibility.”³⁵ The conclusion that *Selah* functions as a thematic structural marker within a future-oriented context (that include the themes of sin, judgment, and redemption) seems valid. It is here that *Selah* stands at the crux of these issues: 1) in a theophany not yet realized, 2) as the earth trembles at the Lord’s wrath, and 3) the future defeat of those who are hostile to the Lord. *Selah* arguably stands at these critical junctures as a way to highlight an important, all encompassing, point—that the kingship of Yahweh is sufficient in times of stress and danger. In other words, *Selah* stands in the text as a reminder, outside of parallel lines at these junctures, that Yahweh is King.

³³ Watts, “Psalmody in Prophecy,” 217.

³⁴ Watts, “Psalmody in Prophecy,” 217. Watts also notes on the same page, in footnote 22, that other prophetic texts reflect the same experiences between worship and prophecy: Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1:8-10, and Jeremiah 11:18-12:6, 15:10-21, 17:14-18, 18:18-23, and 20:7-18.

³⁵ Watts, “Psalmody in Prophecy,” 221.

CHAPTER FIVE: SEPTUAGINT

Indeed, the present thesis employs a heuristic approach, following the book order of the MT-150 Psalter. This, by no means, suggests the order of the Septuagint is wrong. However, the MT contains the fullest evidence by which we can outline *Selah*. The traditional arrangement of 150 psalms can be “found in multiple versions (Greek [151 pss], Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic [with some emendations]), and with the exception of some of the Qumran psalms manuscripts, dominates the Hebrew tradition as well.”¹ The following chapter surveys the distribution of διάψαλμα in the LXX as the term appears in Books I-V of the Psalter. In the current chapter, the psalms containing διάψαλμα that appear in the LXX (but not in the MT) will be outlined. The correspondences and differences in psalm numbering between the two versions are as follows:

Hebrew Bible	Septuagint
1-8	1-8
9-10	9
11-113	10-112
114-115	113
116:1-9	114
116:10-19	115
117-146	116-145
147:1-11	146
147:12-29	147
148-150	148-150
--	151

¹ Gerald H. Wilson, “The Shape of the Book of Psalms,” in *Interpretation* 46.2 (1992), 129.

Διάψαλμα

The Septuagint's use of διάψαλμα is more widespread when compared to *Selah*'s placement throughout the MT. The Greek translation lacks διάψαλμα in certain verses while it also has an additional διάψαλμα in new places altogether. For example, the LXX has an additional διάψαλμα in Psalms 2:2; 34:11; 50:15; 68:14; 80:8; and 94:15 while it is lacking in 3:9; 9:17; 24:10; 46:12; 88:11.

	MT	LXX
Psalm 2	2:2— <i>Selah</i> does not occur in this verse.	2:2— διάψαλμα is found in this verse in Codex Sinaiticus, but not Vaticanus. It reads: “The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers gathered themselves together, against the Lord, and against His anointed. <i>Diapsalma</i> .”
Psalm 3	References in vv. 3, 5, and 9. 3:9 reads: “Salvation is of the Lord. Your blessing upon Your people.”	LXX lacks διάψαλμα in 3:9.
Psalm 24	24:10—“Who is this King of glory? The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory. <i>Selah</i> .”	LXX lacks διάψαλμα in 24:10 (LXX 23:10).
Psalm 46	46:12—This verse reiterates verse 8, “The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.”	LXX lacks διάψαλμα in 46:12 (LXX 45:11).
Psalm 50	50:15— <i>Selah</i> does not occur in this verse.	LXX has an additional διάψαλμα after 50:15 (LXX 49:15)—“And call upon Me in the day of affliction; and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me. <i>Diapsalma</i> .”
Psalm 80	80:8— <i>Selah</i> does not occur in this verse.	LXX has an additional διάψαλμα after 80:8 (LXX 79:7)—“Turn us, O Lord God of hosts, and cause Your face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved! <i>Diapsalma</i> .”
Psalm 88	88:11—“Will you work wonders for the dead? Shall	LXX lacks διάψαλμα in 88:11 (LXX 87:10).

	the dead arise and praise You? <i>Selah.</i> ”	
Psalm 94	94:15— <i>Selah</i> does not occur in this verse.	LXX has an additional διάψαλμα after 94:15 (LXX 93:15)—“But judgment will return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it. <i>Diapsalma.</i> ”

Questions concerning the meaning of διάψαλμα still abound, as noted above. Within his edition of *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS), Albert Pietersma addresses διάψαλμα rather than the Hebrew term *Selah* itself. Chiefly instrumental rather than vocal, Pietersma says, “διάψαλμα was aptly referred to in the first instance as a tune being played on a stringed instrument, based on the understanding that it was a derivative of the verb διάψαλλω (and subsequently the term ψάλλω).”² Although Pietersma notes that *Selah* in the MT is a term of “uncertain meaning,” he believes διάψαλμα has been interpreted to “mean not simply an interlude, but an ‘interlude on strings,’” and is subsequently rendered as such in Pietersma’s edition of NETS.³ Per Pietersma, “Evidently in recognition of the fact that it [διάψαλμα] indicated a pause in the musical proceedings, the Greek translation did not represent ‘Selah’ when it stood at the close of a psalm (3:9; 23:10; 45:12).”⁴ In the NETS edition, διάψαλμα is rendered as “interlude on strings” and is consistently followed by an empty line on the grounds that any interlude signals a pause.⁵ This is certainly a valid conclusion as διάψαλμα is likely a derivative of the verb διάψαλλω, whereby διά does not mean

² Albert Pietersma, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 938. For a definition of the Greek terms see: H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H.S. Jones, and R. McKenzie, *A Greek and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 718.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 940.

“through,” but is used in this instance as an intensification of its meaning (i.e. an intensification of the musical instruments being played). The –μα ending is also commonly used in Greek to indicate the action of a verb, thus the playing of musical instruments at these junctures remains a valid conclusion in accord with *Selah* as a liturgical direction in the MT.

The compilers of *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* reveal that διάψαλμα could have another use as the Hebrew *Selah* has been shown to display diversity in its use. Used as a “leading motif” in order to mark a verse which expresses the central idea of psalm, “διάψαλμα could [also] have indicated an important point for the psalm’s reader.”⁶ This very statement is representative of the diversity of the term, not only as a liturgical direction, but as a thematic and structural counterpart as well. Charles Briggs, whose work is still considered foundational in understanding *Selah*, commented that the LXX’s use of διάψαλμα was a neologism that came into use for the sole purpose of explaining and/or translating *Selah*.⁷ Due to differences we find at Qumran, the DSS manuscripts may correspond to a Hebrew text that resembles the *Vorlage* of the LXX. One major difference is the transliteration of *Selah* as σελε in 8HevXIIgr found at Naḥal Ḥever.⁸ The transliteration at Naḥal Ḥever may be representative of cultural variance. “Just as trends in clothing vary, scholarship has its fashions which reflect the ever-changing interests of our time.”⁹ The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll (8HevXIIgr) is an early representative of the *kaige* tradition. The *kaige* recension is a “recension of the Old

⁶ Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, compilers. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, revised edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), np.

⁷ Charles Briggs, “Inductive Study of *Selah*,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 18 (1899), 140.

⁸ The use of a transliteration of the term could simply be to keep the text as close to its Hebrew original. It is possible that the translators knew what the term meant, but chose to transliterate it to keep its Hebrew character.

⁹ Sidney Jellicoe, “Some Reflections on the KAIF Recension,” in *Vetus Testamentum* XXIII.1 (Jan. 1973), 15.

Greek or Septuagint translation of the Old Testament which took place, around the turn of the era, in Palestine.”¹⁰ Written in accordance with hermeneutical principles,¹¹ the transliteration of *Selah* was most likely done to keep the Greek closer to its Hebrew counterpart. Thus, the LXX could theoretically resemble the use of *Selah* in a different Hebrew *Vorlage*. Or, it simply reveals more about what the translators themselves did with διάψαλμα due to their own theological perspectives.

LXX Psalm 2:2

παρέστησαν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες
 συνήχθησαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ κατὰ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ κατὰ τοῦ
 χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ διάψαλμα

The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers gathered themselves together, against the Lord, and against His anointed. *Diapsalma*.

Absent in the MT, the LXX preserves διάψαλμα here in Psalm 2. Codex Sinaiticus preserves διάψαλμα in Psalm 2:2, whereas Codex Vaticanus does not. It is peculiar as to why the LXX translator of Sinaiticus included this here, yet the translator of Vaticanus did not. The content of this psalm is clearly eschatological, as Psalms 1 and 2 serve to thrust the reader into an eschatological rendering. Verse 2 shows the nations’ intent to kill the Lord, and His anointed (which is expounded upon in Psalm 3). Yet, it depicts the Lord as the righteous one; it directly parallels Ps. 110:1 which informs the reader as to why this man is sitting in heaven—both instances are divine, they reveal the man’s deity. Thus, an element of danger is present with διάψαλμα as the nations seek this Man’s life.

¹⁰ John Grendel, “Another Characteristic of the Kaige Recension,” in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31.4 (Oct. 1969), 499.

¹¹ Ibid.

LXX Psalm 33 [MT 34]

⁹ φοβήθητε τὸν κύριον, οἱ ἅγιοι αὐτοῦ, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ὑστέρημα τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτόν.

¹⁰ πλούσιοι ἐπτώχευσαν καὶ ἐπείνασαν, οἱ δὲ ἐκζητοῦντες τὸν κύριον οὐκ ἐλαττωθήσονται παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ. **διάψαλμα.**

¹¹ δεῦτε, τέκνα, ἀκούσατέ μου· φόβον κυρίου διδάξω ὑμᾶς.

9. Fear the Lord, all you His saints; for there is no want to them that fear Him.

10. The rich have become poor and hungry; but they that seek the Lord diligently shall not lack any good thing. *diapsalma*

11. Come, you children, hear me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

The MT does not contain *Selah* in Psalm 34 (LXX Ps. 33), yet the LXX preserves the term in v.10. LXX Psalm 33 is not arranged for music, “for although it begins after the manner of a song of praise, it soon passes into didactic tone.”¹² When the Hebrew text of MT Psalm 34 “is compared to its Greek translation in LXX Ps 33, there are no major additions or omissions but there are some rephrasings that contextualize the Psalm for the Diaspora setting.”¹³ Thus, the translators may have inserted *Selah* for a particular purpose. Translators probably inserted *διάψαλμα* here as the praise it espouses sets forth the protection under which the Lord’s people often desire. A spiritual experience of salvation and protection echoes the sentiments of MT Psalms in which *Selah* often occurs. Bold, perceptual metaphors occurring alongside *Selah* outline common themes individuals encounter in their lifetimes.

LXX Psalm 49:15 [MT 50:15]

¹⁵ καὶ ἐπικάλεσαί με ἐν ἡμέρᾳ θλίψεως καὶ ἐξελοῦμαί σε καὶ δοξάσεις με *διάψαλμα*

¹² Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 408.

¹³ Karen H. Jobes, “Got Milk? Septuagint Psalm 33 and the Interpretation of 1st Peter 2:1-3,” in *Westminster Theological Journal* 63 (2002); 9.

15. And call upon Me in the day of affliction; and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me. *Diapsalma*.

Psalms 50, in the MT, contains one *Selah* reference in verse 6 of which the LXX translator also kept in its place. However, the LXX has an additional διάψαλμα in verse 15.

According to John Goldingay, this psalm is a piece of teaching instead of prayer or praise.¹⁴ Verse 15's starting point ("call upon Me in the day of trouble") suggests that its background actually lies in the experience of suffering. In other words, no matter if one is rich or poor, having access to resources can result in loss for some, and trouble for others. The psalm emerges as a literary piece profitable for teaching; it teaches that God is the source of life, and it is therefore God to whom the redemption price, the ransom, has to be paid for this trouble.¹⁵ As verse 6 speaks of heaven declaring the righteousness of God—and noting He is judge—verse 15 expounds. This particular verse (v.15) has been open to interpretation, but mostly interpreted in light of a positive afterlife. "It suggests that the psalmist expects to be one of those whom Yhwh 'takes' from Sheol to heaven—the verb is used of Enoch and Elijah when Yhwh 'took' them from their earthly families and friends (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:3, 5, 9, 10)."¹⁶ The person who calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered from judgment, and shall glorify God all the days of his life. Deliverance from judgment means faith and salvation in the Lord. Thus, the "taking" is a rescue from this earthly world's trouble—a rescue from the clutches of Sheol. God is the

¹⁴ John Goldingay, *Psalms*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 97.

¹⁵ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 101.

¹⁶ Markus Witte, "Aber Gott wird meine Seele erlösen," in *Vetus Testamentum* 50 (2000), 540-560; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 104.

subject of this psalm as it highlights His intimate involvement in the “this-worldly” lives of His people, “bringing them healing and rescue from persecution.”¹⁷

LXX Psalm 79:7 [MT 80:8]

κύριε ὁ θεὸς τῶν δυνάμεων ἐπίστρεψον ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπίφανον
τὸ πρόσωπόν σου καὶ σωθησόμεθα διάψαλμα

Turn us, O Lord God of hosts, and cause Your face to shine
upon us, and we shall be saved! *Diapsalma*.

Psalm 80 is one of two MT Psalms that does not contain *Selah* in the string from Psalms 80-89. LXX psalm 79 preserves διάψαλμα in verse 7 as questions of eternity emerge. The psalm is divided into three strophes: 1) a prayer of deliverance (vv.1-3); 2) the anger of God (vv. 4-7); and 3) the vine allegory (vv. 8-19). Where διάψαλμα occurs in 79:7 is important because the allegory is used to describe the salvation history of Israel from the exodus from Egypt.¹⁸ Oftentimes, God is reproached for His apparent abandonment of His people, yet He is their only hope for deliverance. It is here that a prayer of relief from affliction emerges—a call to God for salvation is requested. If salvation is meant in the context of eternal salvation, or temporal salvation (i.e. refuge from enemy hands), one could assume that the request is double-sided. As Israel turns from their God, the tenor of the psalm reveals a desire to repent and reform their sinful ways. This can be seen where the διάψαλμα occurs, as well as its identical counterpart in verse 19 (although διάψαλμα does not occur in LXX 79:19).

¹⁷ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 105.

¹⁸ James D.G. Dunn, and John W. Rogerson, eds., “Psalm 80,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 403.

LXX Psalm 93:15 [MT 94:15]

ἕως οὗ δικαιοσύνη ἐπιστρέψει εἰς κρίσιν καὶ ἐχόμενοι
αὐτῆς πάντες οἱ εὐθεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ διάψαλμα

But judgment will return to righteousness, and all the
upright in heart shall follow it. *Diapsalma*.

This instance of διάψαλμα occurs at a most interesting spot. The MT does not contain any instances of *Selah* in the entirety of Book IV of the Psalter. Yet, the LXX contains an additional διάψαλμα in Psalm 93. While at times God seems distant (as in Ps. 80), and that wickedness prevails, this verse reassures the people that God will execute judgment in due time. This is actually the theme of Psalm 93, the appeal to God to restore justice in society by punishing wrongdoing.¹⁹ God will not let the righteous down. The “upright in heart” are those who trust that God will be faithful, and that He will restore righteousness. The next verse even goes on to say that, “If the Lord had not helped me, my soul had almost sojourned in Hades.”²⁰ Thus, the reassurance of future intervention soothes even the most hopeless of people under what seems like harsh circumstances.

Concluding Remarks

Based on the analysis of διάψαλμα preserved throughout the LXX, it seems that the translators shared a common understanding of *Selah* in the MT (despite differences in distribution of the term). If we understand διάψαλμα as a derivative of the verb διάψαλλω, the –μα ending thus reinforces the liturgical pause of the MT and allows for musical instrumentation to be present at those junctures. Yet, a number of common themes also emerge across the manuscripts and codices where διάψαλμα is found.

¹⁹ Dunn and Rogerson, eds., “Psalm 94,” 410.

²⁰ Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, Ltd, 1851), 755.

Deliverance, blessing, and salvation are shared topics that run as threads throughout the MT and LXX Psalters. Whether or not the LXX translators' theological and political prejudices shone through in the text, we can identify that the ancient Jewish writers of the MT and the translators of the LXX agreed on the thematic elements concerning the contexts in which διάψαλμα occurs. Whereas the occurrences that are lacking are up for debate, it would seem that some were due to repetition (Pss. 24, 46, and possibly LXX Ps. 79:19), while other instances such as the one found in Psalm 88:11 (LXX Ps. 87:10) could have been due to theological differences regarding the resurrection of the dead. Thus, diversity again exists among the Second Temple texts that contain *Selah*. Does familiar imagery or language also appear in other sources from the Second Temple period? Do the Dead Sea Scrolls support a similar thematic content?

CHAPTER SIX: DEAD SEA SCROLLS

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls between 1947 and 1956 was one of the most significant archaeological finds in history. Their discovery paved the way for a better understanding of ancient Judaism and how the community that wrote them viewed the vast array of biblical texts. Many of the scholars who wrote on the topic of *Selah* published their works before the discovery of the Scrolls and were unable to make use of this newly discovered ancient evidence. Now that we have evidence of *Selah* being used during the time of the Scrolls' composition, it has become clear that the Dead Sea Scrolls are a pertinent tool for this study.

In this chapter, we will review the biblical and non-biblical manuscripts where *Selah* is found and the context in which it occurs. It has been argued, in previous chapters, that *Selah* is more than a pause in the text but serves as a richer transition marker for changes in speaker, changes in topic, or changes in theme. While the term occurs in the expected places among biblical manuscripts at Qumran, non-biblical manuscripts are of major importance for furthering our understanding of *Selah* as we consider the literary context in which it is embedded.

Biblical Scrolls from Qumran

There are more copies of manuscripts containing psalms among the scrolls than any other biblical book, yet only a handful of these fragmentary scrolls contain *Selah*: 4QPs^a, 4QPs^c, 11QPs^a, and 11QPs^d. In addition, several other biblical manuscripts containing *Selah* were found at other sites in the Judean Desert such as Wadi Murabba‘at, Nahal Hever, and Masada. Further instances of *Selah* are reconstructed in 4QPs^e, 4QPs^j, 4QPs^p, and 11QPs^{e?}. All of these are manuscripts containing psalms also attested in MT and LXX Psalters though the range of psalms preserved varies at Qumran and it is not always possible to ascertain the full extent of each scroll. These scrolls are written in the traditional Hebrew square script and are dated to the Herodian period (30 BC – AD 68) with the exception of 4QPs^a, which is Hasmonean (150-30 BC).

The following chart shows the manuscripts and their *Selah* occurrences in the Qumran Scrolls, as well as corresponding occurrences in the MT and LXX.¹ It is worth noting that the MT and LXX differ in chapter and verse numbering due to the combination of Psalms 9&10 into one unit. Therefore, all LXX references will be one chapter and verse lower than what is found in the MT. Qumran verse designations follow the MT tradition, and brackets indicate reconstruction. The line numbers in the following chart represent the actual line on the fragment itself. Thus, the numbers represent where *Selah* is preserved in the extant text, and where it would have been in the case of reconstruction.

¹ Eugene Ulrich, ed. *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls: Transcriptions and Textual Variants, Volume 3: Psalms – Chronicles* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 647-723. Ulrich, et al., “Psalms,” in *Qumran Cave 4, XI: Psalms to Chronicles* (DJD 16; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 7-144; and Florentino García Martínez, E.J. C. Tigchelaar, and A.S. van der Woude, *Qumran Cave 11.II* (DJD 23; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 29-78. See also: Donald W. Parry and Andrew C. Skinner, “4Q83,” in *Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library Biblical Texts*, consulted online 21 September 2016; other texts consulted from this source are: 4Q85, 4Q87, 4Q91, 4Q97, 11Q5, 11Q8, and 11Q9.

MT	LXX	Qumran
Ps. 44:9	Ps. 43:8	<u>4QPs^c</u> 11 3
Ps. 49:14, 16	Ps. 48:13, 15	<u>4QPs^c</u> v. 14 – 15 i 10 v. 16 – 15 i 13 <u>4QPs^j</u> [v. 14] – [3-5 5] [v. 16] – [6 2]
Ps. 50:6	Ps. 49:5	<u>11QPs^{e?}</u> [1 2]
Ps. 52:5, 7	Ps. 51:3, 5	<u>4QPs^c</u> [v. 5] – [15 iii 1] v. 7 – 15 iii 3
Ps. 59:6	Ps. 58:5	<u>11QPs^d</u> 9 3
Ps. 67:2, 5	Ps. 66:1, 4	<u>4QPs^a</u> [v. 2] – [18 i 1] v. 5 – 18 i 3
Ps. 81:8	Ps. 80:7	<u>11QPs^d</u> 13 6
Ps. 89:46, 49	Ps. 88:45, 48	<u>4QPs^e</u> [v. 46] – [7 1] [v. 49] – [8 1]
Ps. 140:4	Ps. 139:3	<u>11QPs^a</u> 27:15
Ps. 143:6	Ps. 142:6	<u>11QPs^a</u> 25:12 <u>4QPs^p</u> [2 2]

In the biblical Psalms manuscripts from Qumran, most of the instances of *Selah* are reconstructed. The Cave 4 manuscripts only contain five extant occurrences of *Selah* while another seven are reconstructions. In Cave 11, of the four verses that contain *Selah*, only two are extant while the other two are reconstructions. No case of *Selah* is clearly missing among the preserved Qumran fragments (on the basis of the MT and LXX). And although a number are reconstructed, there are no significant differences. Now we will take a look at each of the four manuscripts from Qumran with *Selah* extant in its text.²

4QPs^a (4Q83)

4QPs^a is a fragmentary manuscript that preserves the following psalms: 5-6, 25, 31-33, 34-36, 38-71, 47, 53-54, 56, 62-63, 66-67, and 69. This manuscript is written in the traditional Hebrew square script (a semi-formal hand) and is dated to around the 2nd century BC, making it one of the earliest known Psalms manuscripts.³ Its orthography is slightly expansive, using the *waw* and *yod* as *matres lectionis* more times than the MT adopts a *plene* spelling. Despite the perpetual use of *matres lectionis* in this manuscript, it is identical to the MT and LXX.

4QPs^a contains 24 fragments preserving material from the first two books of the Psalter. *Selah* is preserved in fragment 19, which shows slight damage such as wrinkling

² Many of the texts from the fragmentary Hebrew manuscripts will be reproduced here in this section on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Some will be reproduced in their entirety (small manuscripts/fragments), others will be only partially reproduced in order to show the reader where *Selah* is preserved and/or reconstructed. Those containing a partial reproduction of the manuscript will be labeled as such. All reconstructions are from the respective DJD series volume for that particular manuscript which is noted in each section.

³ Eugene Ulrich, "The Oldest Psalms Manuscript: 4QPs^a (4Q83)," in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Technological Innovations, New Texts, and Reformulated Issues*, ed. by D.W. Parry and Eugene Ulrich (STDJ 30; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 73. 4Q83 is possibly the earliest known Psalms manuscript, with the exception of 4QPs^x.

and darkening of the leather.⁴ A material reconstruction by Hartmut Stegemann shows that the manuscript was likely a complete copy of the entire Psalter, which would have included the now lost Pss. 64, 65, and 68.⁵ However, based on our evidence, there is no text preserved after Psalm 69 and it is impossible to know whether more text (and how much) may have followed.⁶ This particular manuscript is written stichographically (a literary representation of poetic structure), the term “stichographic” being used to represent the oral-written culture of Israel.⁷ Stichography aids in the reading of poetry for oral performances, but is not uniformly employed among the psalms containing *Selah*.⁸

Regarding *Selah*, 4QPs^a preserves the term in Ps. 67:5 while the editors reconstructed *Selah* in 67:2.⁹ Despite being arranged stichographically, the scribe (writing in smaller handwriting than other 4QPs scrolls) still incorporates *Selah* into the running text, not at the end of the text as would be found in the MT. Both margins are preserved in this manuscript, and the lines contain mostly regular spacing (as one would expect to find in a stichographic arrangement). The editors reconstruct a sizeable *vacat* after *Selah* on fragment 18 while no sizeable *lacuna* or *vacat* is preserved with the extant *Selah* in 67:5 as it is incorporated into the running text. The reason why the editors may suggest the *vacat* could be due to calculations in line length, etc. in the manuscript.

⁴ Patrick W. Skehan, Eugene Ulrich, and Peter W. Flint, “Psalms,” in *Qumran Cave 4, XI Psalms to Chronicles*, ed. by Eugene Ulrich, et al (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert 16; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 19.

⁵ Ulrich, “The Oldest Psalms Manuscript: 4QPs^a (4Q83),” 72-73.

⁶ Peter W. Flint, “Five Surprises in the Qumran Psalms Scrolls,” in *Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez*, ed. by Anthony Hilhorst, Émile Puech, and Eibert Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 189. See also Skehan, Ulrich, and Flint, DJD 16, 8.

⁷ Shem Miller, “The Oral-Written Textuality of Stichographic Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Dead Sea Discoveries* 22.2 (2015), 163.

⁸ See Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, “Poetry and Hymns,” in *T&T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls* (forthcoming). He notes that stichometric texts only account for a small portion of Qumran poetry since ultimately it was the scribe himself who conveyed his opinion that a text was poetic, and then proceeded to write using a stichometric format.

⁹ Ulrich, *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls*, 647.

¹⁶כל [ו ועמשו] הרפסאו לוכ יארי] 28 f.16
 [א¹⁸] ו סא ר [יתיא יבלב אול עמשי] 29 f.14
 סיהלא] ינדא וכא [עמש סיהלא בישקה לוקב יתלפת ²⁰רורב סיהלא א[רש אול [ריסה פת] יתל דסחו] ו] 30 f.17
 v [a c a t
 31 f.18 יתואח
 גנביתנ רומזמ ריש סיהלא וננחי רביו] וגכ ראי וינפ א[ונת הלס ³
 32 ^{67:1}חצנמל]
⁴הכודוי סימע [סיהלא הכודוי] סימע סלוק ⁵וחמשי וננריו אל] סימ
 33 f.19
 סימאלו קראב חנת] ס הלס ⁶הכודיו [סימע סיהלא
 34
 הלובי ונכרבי סיהלא יהלא] ונ ⁸הכוכרבי סיהלא]
 35
 קרא הנתנ ⁷

4QPs^a translation

f.16 28 [¹⁶Go] and hear[and I shall recount it, all who fear]
 f.14 29 God[¹⁸Ini]quity if I have s[een in my heart, He will not hear]
 f.17 30 Certainly the Lord [has heard. God has given attention to the voice of my prayer
²⁰Blessed is the God w]ho does not [turn away my] prayer and [His] lovingkindness
 f. 18 31 from me [v a c a t]
 32 ^{67:1} For the end times [on stringed instruments. A song, music. May God show favor on us
 and ble]ss us; May He cause His face to [shine upon us **Selah** ³]
 f.19 33 [⁴May the peoples praise You] O, God; may they praise You [all the peoples.
⁵Let the nations rejoice and shout with joy]
 34 [and the nations on the earth You will lea]d **Selah** ⁶May the [peoples] praise
 You [O God]
 35 [⁷The earth shall give her produce; God] our [God will bless us] ⁸God will bless us []

Textual Notes

The right, left, and bottom margins of this manuscript are preserved which links the preceding and following fragments. It is possible to reconstruct that this scroll contained about 35 lines per column.¹⁰ Thus, the previous fragment must have ended with Ps. 63:5 while 4QPs^a began with 63:6 and ended at 67:8. There are textual variants in the extant and reconstruction portions of 67:1-2. Most likely scribal errors (of the original scribe and on the part of the DJD editors/translators) the reconstructed term גנביתנ differs from the MT תניגנב in 67:1 as it seems to be entered backward and/or simply mixed up. The extant scribal error in 67:2 occurs just a few words before *Selah*, ונכרבי is written as ונכרבי in the MT thus replacing the *gimel* of the DSS with a *nun* in the MT. Greek miniscule manuscripts also add the name of David to the superscription of Psalm 67, whereas the DSS do not retain any name for attribution.

The first instance of *Selah* (albeit reconstructed) stands at the heart of the message—that God will be merciful and bless the nations; He will be known throughout the earth for salvation. Reminiscent of the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-9), the second occurrence of

¹⁰ Patrick W. Skehan, Eugene Ulrich, and Peter W. Flint, “4QPs^a,” 19.

Selah reinforces the Lord's goodness and faithfulness to His people, as a reminder that He judges those who are unjust in due time.

4QPs^c (4Q85)

Though fragmentary, 4QPs^c is of special importance because it preserves the oldest portions of Psalms.¹¹ It was written in a carefully executed, traditional Hebrew square script sometime in the late Herodian period, between 50-68 AD. This manuscript is a text with close ties to a Hebrew *Vorlage* of the MT, and is considered contemporaneous with other Qumran manuscripts that contain a proto-MT text, such as 11QPs^a, 11QPs^d, and 5/6HevPs, which will be discussed later.¹² There are very few orthographic variants within this manuscript from the MT tradition. Interestingly, the scribe of 4QPs^c wrote with little to no space between the words, though the divisions between words can still be discerned. Based on the extant text, this manuscript may have been a complete copy of the Psalter as preserved in the MT.¹³

Regarding the occurrences of *Selah* in 4QPs^c, the term is preserved in several places in the extant text: 44:9; 49:14, 16; and 52:7. Another occurrence is reconstructed in 52:5.¹⁴ The fragment for Ps. 44:9 is very small, only preserving a few remnants of letters. From what is preserved, it seems to be written stichographically with *Selah* partially preserved on the bottom of the fragment. Due to the missing leather following *Selah* (text below is missing) it is difficult to determine with certainty if a *vacat* followed *Selah* in this instance.

¹¹ Peter Flint, Eugene Ulrich, and Patrick Skehan, "A Preliminary Edition of 4QPs^j (4Q91)," in *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 8 (1998), 90.

¹² Flint, Ulrich, and Skehan, "A Preliminary Edition of 4QPs^j (4Q91)," 345. Skehan, Ulrich, and Flint, DJD 16, 50.

¹³ Skehan, Ulrich, and Flint, DJD 16, 50.

¹⁴ Ulrich, *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls*, 643.

4QPs^c, frg. 11 (Ps. 44:8-9?)

[	]°[	
[	]°[	1
[	]°[	2
[	]°[	3

[

4QPs^c, frg. 11 (Ps. 44:8-9?) translation

1 [] []
 2 [⁸Because You have saved us from] our [enemies Y[ou have put to shame those who hate us
⁹In God we praise all day long]
 3 [and praise Your name forever] **Sela**[h]

Textual Notes

The margins of this fragment are hard to determine with any certainty. The only variant against the MT is a missing *waw* on ונאנש in 44:8.

The first preserved *Selah* in fragment 15 i (Ps. 49:14) occurs in the running text compared to its other occurrence in v.16 which ends on the margin of the manuscript with a smaller *vacat* following. *Selah* in fragment 15 iii (Ps. 52:5) has been reconstructed by the editor of the manuscript with a sizeable *vacat* following, while *Selah* in v.7 is extant in 15 iii 3 with a few spaces following the term. The larger extant portion of this manuscript containing *Selah* does not seem to be written stichographically as the scribe does not leave many large *vacats* within the text. This suggests it was written in more of a prose format either to conserve space or preserve a particular oral tradition. Patrick Skehan, Eugene Ulrich, and Peter Flint note in DJD 16 that these manuscripts are generally stichometric, with two cola to a line—however, there seem to be at least a handful of exceptions.¹⁵

4QPs^c, frg. 15 i (Ps. 49:14-16), partial reproduction

[לשמנ מהבכ] תו ומדנ	14	27
[סהירחאו סהיפב וצרי	[הלס	28
[ותש תומ סערי	[בס סירשי לברק	29
[סריצו תולבל לואש בזמ]	ל ול	30
[ישפנ	דימ לואש]	31

¹⁵ See DJD 16 under 4QPs^c.

4QPs^c, frg. 15 i (Ps. 49:14-16), partial reproduction translation

27 [he is like the beast]s that perish ¹⁴This is the way of those who are foolish
 28 [and of their posterity who approve their sayings] **Selah** ¹⁵Like sheep in Sheol
 29 [they are set death shall tend to them and the upright] shall rule over them in the morning
 30 [and their beauty shall be consumed in Sheol, far from] their[dwelling] ¹⁶But God will ransom
 31 [my soul from the hand of Sheol] for He will take me **Selah**

Textual Notes

The left margin of the manuscript is preserved, and its arrangement is generally stichometric.¹⁶ More spacing is seen in the DSS fragment than in the MT of 49:15. There are four major spelling errors in the extant text of 49:14-15. Although some letters are uncertain, it seems that the following are scribal errors: DSS הַז over MT הַז, DSS כִּלְס over MT לִסְכ, DSS בַּם over MT בַּם, and DSS לְבָקֵר over MT לְבָקֵל.

4QPs^c, frg. 15 iii (Ps. 52:5-7), partial reproduction

[ש]קֹרְר רַבְדָּם קִדַּץ הַלֵּס	24
תְּבַהֵא לִכ יִרְבֹּד עֵלֶב וְשָׁל	25
מִמָּהֹרִם לֹא יִתְצֹף לְנֹצֶה [דְּתַחֲוִי] דְּחִסְיוֹ לְהָאֵם	26
וְ[י]אֹרֶךְ מִקִּידָּצ	

4QPs^c, frg. 15 iii (Ps. 52:5-7), partial reproduction translation

24 [l]ie[s rather than speaking righteousness **Selah** ⁶You love all words of destruction, o
 tongue]
 25 [of] deception ⁷Also, God will pull you down forever [He will snatch you up] and tear you
 away from the tent
 26 and He will uproot you from the land of the living **Selah** ⁸And the righteous will []

Textual Notes

The right, left, and bottom margins are preserved in this column, and its arrangement is generally stichometric.¹⁷ There are minor differences in spelling throughout this text as well. In lines 24-25, it seems that the text of line 24 was too long for the format the column was written in, so the scribe wrote the last word of v.6 on line 25.¹⁸

In terms of content, along with the MT and LXX, this block of psalms that 4QPs^c preserves all center around a common theme—of loving evil more than good. What is counterbalanced in this manuscript, as well as in 4QPs^j (a manuscript that reproduces the same psalm), is that the foolish will eventually lie down in death. Those foolish ones will be delivered to the grave while the Lord will make His name known and redeem the faithful ones for mercies' sake. Thus, the sinful natures of the foolish bring judgment

¹⁶ Patrick W. Skehan, Eugene Ulrich, and Peter W. Flint, "4QPs^a," 57.

¹⁷ Patrick W. Skehan, Eugene Ulrich, and Peter W. Flint, "4QPs^a," 58.

¹⁸ Ibid., 59.

upon them while eternal matters (such as salvation) wait in the wings for those who are just.

11QPs^a (11Q5)

11QPs^a, also known as 11Q5 or the Great Psalms Scroll, is the largest preserved Psalms manuscript from antiquity. However, its sequence is radically different than one would find in the MT. In fact, its sequence attests to a Psalms collection that is different from both the MT and LXX. Thus, it has been considered a witness to a non-aligned Pss collection that can also be seen in 11QPs^b, 4QPs^e, and 4QPsⁿ.¹⁹

11QPs^a has been dated paleographically to the Herodian time period (AD 30-50) and written in the traditional Hebrew square script.²⁰ Due to its textual emendations, there has been much scholarly debate on whether or not this manuscript originated at Qumran or was brought here.²¹ Its origin is debated because beyond the traditional 150 psalms, 11QPs^a contains additional compositions such as five Syriac Psalms, Plea for Deliverance, Sirach 51:13ff, Apostrophe to Zion, Hymn to the Creator, David's Compositions, and Psalm 151.²²

¹⁹ Armin Lange, "10.2.1 Ancient Manuscript Evidence," in *Textual History of the Bible*, general ed. Armin Lange. Consulted online on 28 September 2016 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2452-4107_thb_COM_00000208 First published online: 2015.

²⁰ Peter W. Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 253. For a thorough assessment of the contents of each Psalms scroll from Qumran, see Appendix 4 beginning on page 257.

²¹ This manuscript contains the divine name in paleo-Hebrew. Albert M. Wolters surmises that a "second scribe [even] added the Tetragram in paleo-Hebrew into empty spaces left blank by the first scribe." Ref: Albert M. Wolters, "The Tetragrammaton in the Psalms Scroll," in *Textus* 18 (1995), 87-99. Emanuel Tov believes that this manuscript was most likely part of the Qumran scribal practice; Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (STDJ 54; Atlanta: SBL, 2004), 334. A critique of Tov's theory: Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, "Assessing Emanuel Tov's 'Qumran Scribal Practice,'" in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Transmission of Traditions and Production of Texts*, ed. by Sarianna Metso, Hindy Najman, and Eileen Schuller (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 173-208.

²² J.A. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (11QPs^a)* (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert 4; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 5-6.

Although manuscript 4QPs^e (4Q87) only contains reconstructions of *Selah*, it is also dated to the late Herodian time period, somewhere in the mid-1st century AD, and is most likely an earlier exemplar of 11QPs^a that underwent corrections toward the proto-MT form.²³ These manuscripts share the same sequence of psalms as seen by 118-104-147-105-146, and attest to the non-aligned tradition as both manuscripts only agree with the MT-150 Psalter once (in the omission of סִלַּח in 125:5).²⁴ 4QPs^e survives in 26 extant fragments and is noteworthy because it is the only manuscript from the Judean Desert to preserve material from Pss. 76 and 120, and its presence gives scholars concrete evidence that an exemplar of the Great Psalms Scroll was stored in Cave 4 (although it wasn't identical to 11QPs^a).²⁵ While Emanuel Tov noted these two manuscripts were of the Qumran scribal practice, prominent Psalms scholar Gerald Wilson advocated for the stability of Books I-III in 2nd Temple Judaism more broadly and Qumran, with a subjective fluidity throughout Books IV-V.²⁶ Thus, this may suggest that 11QPs^a and 4QPs^e's use at Qumran may have also been for liturgical purposes particular to the community as well as a biblical book.²⁷ In other words, both manuscripts could have existed alongside each other, as scholars have debated for some time whether one is seen

²³ Peter Flint, "The '11QPs^a Psalter' in the Dead Sea Scrolls, including the Preliminary Edition of 4QPs^e," in *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders*, ed. by Craig A. Evans and Shemaryahu Talmon (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 178-183.

²⁴ Flint, "The '11QPs^a Psalter' in the Dead Sea Scrolls, including the Preliminary Edition of 4QPs^e," 183.

²⁵ Flint, "The '11QPs^a Psalter' in the Dead Sea Scrolls, including the Preliminary Edition of 4QPs^e," 184.

²⁶ Peter Flint, "Book of Psalms," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 705-706.

²⁷ For the debates over 11Q5, see the following: Shemaryahu Talmon, "Pisqah Be'emsa' Pasuq and 11QPs^a," in *Textus 5* (1966), 11-21; M.H. Goshen-Gottstein, "The Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a): A Problem of Canon and Text," in *Textus 5* (1966), 22-33; Patrick W. Skehan, "A Liturgical Complex in 11QPs^a," in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34 (1973), 195-205; and James A. Sanders, "Variorum in the Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a)," in *Harvard Theological Review* 59.1 (1966), 83-94. While it is true that many manuscripts at Qumran could have been used to demonstrate their dual identity as literature and liturgy, these manuscripts are important as the Great Psalms scroll is one of the best preserved Psalms scrolls from the Judean Desert. It gives insight into the proto-MT tradition and the question of ordering at Qumran.

as liturgy rather than an alternative form of the Psalter prior to the stabilization of the MT-150 Psalter.²⁸

Whatever their status, and however 11QPs^a and 4QPs^e were used at Qumran, one thing is for certain—11QPs^a contains *Selah* in Book V of the Psalter. The term is extant in column 25 as part of Psalm 143:6 in 11QPs^a, while an editor reconstructed in 4QPs^e.²⁹

Col. 25 (Pss. 142:4-8, 143:1-8), partial reproduction

11	143:5 יִתְרַכֵּז סִימִי מִדְקָמָה הַגִּיתִי לִבִּי הַכְלֵעוּפָה יִשְׁעִמְבִּי הַכִּידִי
12	הַחַיִּשָּׂא יִתְשַׁרֵּף יָדַי אֶ[ה' יִשְׁפֹּן עֲרָאֵב הַפֶּעַ הַכֹּל הַלֵּס

11QPs^a, Col. 25 (Pss. 142:4-8; 143:1-8), partial reproduction translation

11 143:5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works, in the works of Your hands
 12 I meditate 6 I spread out my hands [to You]; my soul is like a thirsty land for You **Selah**

Textual Notes

There are a few differences between the Qumran Hebrew and the MT. 11QPs^a contains baroque features such as כה- ending in place of the ט- ending in the MT. A *bet* instead of a *kaf* appears attached to ערָא in line 12 of 11QPs^a. This manuscript is well preserved.

Even with an editorial reconstruction in 4QPs^e (11QPs^a's Cave 4 exemplar, per Flint), it is for these individual verses the veracity of their claim lies in their content: a striking divide between the temporal nature of man versus the eternal divine nature of God. For Psalm 89:48 says, “What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?” Thus, it is man’s temporal nature that thirsts for the eternal nature of the Lord Himself (Ps. 143:6). And, these two realities are drawn out in the Psalter as thematic threads, which serve to highlight the kingship and sovereignty of Yahweh through the process of sin, judgment, and salvation.

²⁸ I believe this was an effort that the Qumran scribes made. However, many scholars argue that they only see such an effort in the non-Qumran DSS with a slightly later date. Thus, I am aware of the debate that many scholars believe the DSS have shown a lack of uniformity until later in the 1st century AD.

²⁹ 4Q87 reconstructs *Selah* on frag. 7, line 3 of Psalm 89:46 and frag. 8, line 1 of Psalm 89:49.

11QPs^d (11Q8)

11QPs^d, also known as 11Q8, is one of the best-preserved “unclassifiable” Pss. manuscripts. Consisting of 17 extant fragments written in a late formal Herodian hand (middle 1st century AD)³⁰, it contains an irregular orthography in the use of the *waw* than is commonly found in MT psalms; and, like 4QPs^a, 11QPs^d still contains baroque features such as כה- instead of ט-.³¹ Armin Lange notes, “Statistically [this ms.] is close to the MT-Pss, yet it remains uncertain whether this scroll attested to the proto-MT Pss collection or another Pss collection.”³² This manuscript only disagrees with the MT in four cases—mostly regarding singular and plural forms of its textual character.³³

Frg. 9 (Ps. 59:5-8)

]° [	]	1
ירצון וי ⁶ וננוכ הרוע יתארקל הארו ⁶ התאו הוהי סיהלא תואבצ	2	2
יהלא רשי ⁷ לא הציקה לדקפ לכ סיוגה לא וחת לכ ידגב	3	3
ווא הלס ⁷ ובושי ברעל ומהי בלככ ובבוסיו ריע ⁸ הנה וועיבי	4	4
] סהיפב	5	5

11QPs^d, Frg. 9 (Ps. 59:5-8) translation

- 1 [] []
- 2 They run and[they establish themselves through no iniquity of mine. Awake to my call and see.
⁶But You, O Lord God of hosts]
- 3 God of Isr[ael, awake to visit all the nations. Do not show favor to faithless]
- 4 iniquity **Selah**[⁷At evening they return, they growl like a dog, and surround the city⁸Behold
they pour out]
- 5 with their mouths [

Textual Notes

³⁰ Frank Moore Cross, “The Development of the Jewish Scripts,” in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of W.F. Albright*, ed. by G.E. Wright (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 188.

³¹ Shemaryahu Talmon, “Unidentified Hebrew Fragments from Yigael Yadin’s *Nachlass*,” in *Tarbiz* 66 (1997), 114.

³² Lange, “Ancient Manuscript Evidence,” 10.2.1; see also: Armin Lange, *Handbuch der Textfunde vom Toten Meer: Die Handschriften biblischer Bücher von Qumran und den anderen Fundorten*, Band 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 402-403.

³³ Florentino García Martínez, Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, and Adam S. Van der Woude, *Qumran Cave 11 (11Q2-18, 11Q20-31)* (DJD 23; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 65.

It has been suggested that 1) the phrase יתארקל הארץ should probably be added after *Elohim* in 59:6, and 2) the terms מִי־הָאֵל and לֵארוֹשִׁי are additions to the text in 59:6.³⁴

Regarding *Selah*, 11QPs^d contains a lone reference as part of Psalm 59:6 on fragment nine. This individual verse recounts the judgment of YHWH saying, “You therefore, O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to punish all the nations; do not be merciful to any wicked transgressors. *Selah*.” In fact, the entire psalm in the MT notes the sovereignty of YHWH over the wicked, as well as the judgment He executes. This psalm interestingly follows the same thematic pattern as found in Psalm 50:6 where *Selah* is reconstructed at Qumran (11Q9). The reconstruction says, “Let the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is Judge. *Selah*.”

Concluding Remarks on the Qumran Biblical Scrolls

Given the antiquity of the Qumran manuscripts, it is remarkable that the scribes used *Selah* in many places that we find it in the MT and LXX, and that it does not appear in any additional places as far as we can tell from extant portions of psalms. While the MT contains *Selah* at the end of lines (with the exception of 4 instances where it is found in the middle of a verse, cf. Ps. 55:20; Ps. 57:4; and Hab. 3:3, 9), Qumran manuscripts 4QPs^a, 4QPs^c, and 11QPs^d incorporate it in the running text. There are a number of factors that might explain a reluctance to produce the text stichographically such as the expense of parchment, and the amount of space available on a particular skin.³⁵

A fuller discussion of the prevalent themes in the psalms containing *Selah* has been offered previously in the survey of the Masoretic Text and LXX. However, it is

³⁴ BHS apparatus notes

³⁵ For further study on this phenomenon, see Hayim Lapin’s article on ways of reading the DSS in: Maxine L. Grossman, ed., *Rediscovering the Dead Sea Scrolls: An Assessment of Old and New Approaches and Methods* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

worth including some observations about its content here. The manuscripts above, in general, also seem to preserve material from several different collections of psalms, of which some were likely a representative of different liturgical collections for sectarian use, while others examples of moving toward a standardized biblical text.³⁶ And among the Dead Sea Scrolls containing *Selah*, since there are no differences among its placement in extant manuscripts, the content surrounding the term resembles that of the MT and LXX. Due to the fragmentary nature of the manuscripts, we should be cautious to make any other inferences about the text itself, as we do not know how those particular psalms fragments were used at Qumran. Not every fragment was necessarily a copy of the Psalter, and since textual diversity was the norm in the Second Temple period, it would be difficult to provide a convincing analysis of how these fragments were used. What we do know is that each biblical fragment with an extant *Selah* preserves the same text as we find in the MT-150 Psalter.

Biblical Scrolls from Other Locations in the Judean Desert

In a strict sense, the Dead Sea Scrolls refer to the eleven caves near the ancient settlement of Qumran on the western shore of the Dead Sea.³⁷ But since their discovery between 1947 and 1956, important manuscripts were found at other locations that were used to store these timeless treasures. Three locations are notable for this research: Naḥal Ḥever, Masada, and Wadi Murabba'at. All of these locations are within a short distance from Qumran—Naḥal Ḥever is about 1.6km south of Ein Gedi (~ 34km from Qumran) on the

³⁶ Flint, “Five Surprises in the Qumran Psalms Scrolls,” 189.

³⁷ Mladen Popović, “The Manuscript Collections: An Overview,” in *T&T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. by Charlotte Hempel and George J. Brooke (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, forthcoming), 43.

western shore of the Dead Sea, Masada roughly 25km south of Ein Gedi on the edge of the Judean Desert, and Wadi Murabba'at only about 18km south of Qumran itself.³⁸

Manuscripts from these other three locations that preserve *Selah* in the extant text include both Psalms and Minor Prophets scrolls. The Hebrew Psalms scrolls that preserve *Selah* are 5/6Hev1b, Mur88, and Mas1e. The Minor Prophets scroll preserving the term is from Naḥal Hever (8HevXIIgr) and composed in Greek.

Naḥal Hever (5/6Hev1b)

The Psalms scroll from Naḥal Hever, in the Dead Sea region south of Qumran, was found in what is known as the Cave of Letters. Eighteen psalms are represented in the 14 surviving fragments, of which a substantial amount of text is preserved. It has been noted that 5/6Hev1b (5/6HevPsalms) “is an important witness since it is the only Psalms scroll from the Judaeen desert to preserve material from Psalms 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 23, 24, and 29.”³⁹ And, its close textual affinity with the Leningrad Codex allows scholars to reconstruct any missing text with a high degree of confidence.⁴⁰ A material reconstruction by Annette Steudel has also demonstrated that the undamaged scroll could have provided enough space to contain all 150 psalms as found in the proto-MT.⁴¹

³⁸ Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999), 188; Kenneth Atkinson, “Masada,” in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. by John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 919.

³⁹ James Charlesworth, Nahum Cohen, Hannah Cotton, et al, *Miscellaneous Texts from the Judaeen Desert* (DJD 38; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 141.

⁴⁰ Charlesworth, Cohen, Cotton, et al, *Miscellaneous Texts from the Judaeen Desert*, 145.

⁴¹ Lange, “Ancient Manuscript Evidence,” 10.2.1.

5/6Hev1b's script is commonly accepted as Herodian (30 BC – AD 68), most likely composed sometime in the early 1st century AD.⁴² However, its paleographic date has been debated. Ada Yardeni mentions that one or more Herodian bookhand(s) from the 1st century AD was at work, while Peter Flint classifies this manuscript as late Herodian, 50-68 AD.⁴³ The format is stichometric, usually containing two cola per line; however, some variation is evident where there are larger portions of text. The extant text contains no errors, corrections, or supralinear letters.⁴⁴

This manuscript only preserves *Selah* in two verses (Ps. 9:17, 21), while it is reconstructed in three others (Ps. 7:6 and 24:6, 10). As seen in the Qumran scrolls, there is no evidence of an absence of the term where we might expect it.

Psalm with <i>Selah</i>	Place in 5/6Hev1b
[7:6]	[Col. III 1 i 2]
9:17	Col. IV 1 ii 18
9:21	Col. IV 1 ii 21
[24:6]	[Col. XII 11 15]
[24:10]	[Col. XII 11 20]

Since the format of this manuscript is stichometric, and its general textual similarity with the MT, the missing portions of text can be reconstructed with a high degree of confidence.⁴⁵ So, where *Selah* is reconstructed, it was likely (at some point) preserved in the scroll.

Col. IV Frg. 1 ii (Ps. 9:12-10:6), partial reproduction

⁴² J.C. Greenfield, "The Texts from Naḥal Še'elim (Wadi Seiyal)," in *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid. 18-21 March 1991*, ed. by J. Trebolle Barrera and L. Vegas Montaner (STDJ 11.2; Leiden: E.J. Brill; Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 1992), 663.

⁴³ Flint, "Unrolling the Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls," 237.

⁴⁴ James Charlesworth, et al., *Miscellaneous Texts from the Judaean Desert* (DJD 38; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 144.

⁴⁵ Charlesworth, et al., DJD 38, 145.

17	עדון יהוה [מ]פשט שע[ה עפב]ל כ' [ויפ שקונ עשר]	
18	יגה[ו]ן' ס' [ל]ה [18ושי]ב[ו ר]שעסי' [ואשל]ל[ה לכ מיוג יחכש מיהלא]	
19	יכ אל לנצח [כשי]ח [בא]י [תוקת מיונע דבאת דעל]	
20	[20ק]מהו יהוה [ו]ה אל זיע אנוש[שי פ]וט מיוג לע דינפ[די וט מיוג ס שונא]	
21	[21התיש והי]ה[ה רומ]ה[ה סהל]	
	<i>vacat</i> [<i>vac</i> [<i>acat</i>]	
22		

5/6Hev1b, Col IV Frg. 1 ii (Ps. 9:12-10:6), partial reproduction translation

- 17 The Lord has made known [the] judgment He mak[es the wicked is snared in the work] of [his own hands]
18 Higga[io]n **Se[la]h** [¹⁸The w]icked [will return to Sheo]l, [all the nations that forget God]
19 ¹⁹For the needy shall never be [forgotten]; the things hoped for of the needy will not perish forever.
20 [A]rise, Lo[r]d. Do not let [man prevail. Let the nations be judged in Your sight.]
21 [Put them in fear, O Lo]rd, [that the nati[ons] [may know] themselves to be [but men] **Selah**

Fragment 1, on which two extant references to *Selah* occur, is the largest surviving piece of 5/6Hev1b.⁴⁶ However, its writing is especially difficult to read due to visible damage from wormholes and general deterioration (including darkening of the leather) over time. Despite the difficulty, modern technology (such as infrared photography) has made it possible to decipher the text, and the images of this manuscript can be found in DJD 38 and the Leon Levy Digital Image archives.

It is worthwhile to note that in the first century there was a trend towards a text of the Hebrew Bible being closer to the MT, and perhaps those writing at Naḥal Ḥever were the beginning of this trend. Thus, in regard to *Selah*, there are no differences in placement or changes in content with this term between 5/6Hev1b and the MT-150 Psalter; “the surviving text contains very few variant readings against the Codex Leningradensis as represented in *BHS*.”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Charlesworth, et al., DJD 38, 142.

⁴⁷ Walter C. Bouzard, “The Date of the Psalms Scroll from the Cave of Letters (5/6HevPsalms) Reconsidered,” in *Dead Sea Discoveries* 10.3 (2003), 324. Variants are mostly against the minor Masoretic manuscripts and can be found in Peter Flint’s 5/6HevPsalms, pages 144-166. For major variants, Flint’s publication *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* has those written out on pgs. 82-83.

If the extant and reconstructed psalms that contain *Selah* were read in succession, we see a progression of theme: 1) as the enemies overtake the speaker (Ps. 7:6), 2) as the Lord is made known as Judge, and no one is greater (Ps. 9:17, 21), and 3) those in danger seek the Lord's help as He is proclaimed the King of glory (Ps. 24:6, 10). Common thematic elements such as these are also seen in the Masada and Wadi Murabba'at manuscripts.

Naḥal Ḥever (8HevXIIgr)

Another scroll from this location is of great interest concerning *Selah*. Manuscript 8HevXIIgr, known as the Greek Minor Prophets scroll, was found in the Cave of Horror, which yielded many leather fragments varying in size with extensive damage and discoloration.⁴⁸ This manuscript is dated to the Herodian period (50–1 BC) and was likely written by two different hands as evidenced by the style of writing.⁴⁹ For example, different scribal hands have been identified in the rendering of the tetragrammaton as well as spacing between words.⁵⁰ The scribes who penned this manuscript also included sense divisions (such as *petuḥah* and *setuma*) within the text. Open sections were indicated by large letters at the beginning of lines that sometimes protrude into the

⁴⁸ George J. Brooke, "The Twelve Minor Prophets and the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Congress Volume: Leiden 2004*, ed. by André Lemaire (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 109; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 28. It is also worth noting that 8HevXIIgr reflects the same consonantal text as the MT, as well as similar sense divisions.

⁴⁹ The date of this scroll has been debated. Many scholars give a *terminus ante quem* of AD 135. However, D. Barthélemy proposes a date sometime toward the end of the 1st century AD, and Roberts and Kahle offer a date between 50 BC and AD 50. Peter J. Parsons offers his opinion that "both hands give the impression of late Ptolemaic/early Roman" period, thus suggesting a date in the later 1st century BC. For further discussion see: D. Barthélemy, "Redécouverte d'un chaînon manquant de l'histoire de la Septante," in *Revue Biblique* 60 (1953), 18-29; C.H. Roberts, *Greek Literary Hands* (Oxford: 1956); P.E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*, 2nd edition (Oxford: 1959); and Peter J. Parsons, "The Scripts and Their Date," in *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Naḥal Ḥever (8HevXIIgr)-The Seiyal Collection I*, ed. by Emanuel Tov (DJD 8; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 24-26.

⁵⁰ Emanuel Tov, *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Naḥal Ḥever (8HevXIIgr)-The Seiyal Collection I* (DJD 8; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 14-15.

margins, or by a *paragraphos*—a horizontal line between verses; *petuḥah* can be seen before Habakkuk 3:1 and 3:14 while *paragraphos* can be found directly after *Selah*.⁵¹ These sub-systems for paragraphing are shared by biblical and non-biblical manuscripts, but the use of *paragraphos* in biblical texts is rare.⁵²

Despite differences in the language of 8HevXIIgr and the Qumran scrolls, this Greek witness is one of only two manuscripts from the Judaean desert caves that preserve text from Habakkuk 3. Significantly, this manuscript preserves a Greek transliteration (σελε) of the Hebrew *Selah* (סֶלָה) in Hab. 3:13. This differs from the typical διάψαλμα found in the LXX, which is an attempt at a translation of *Selah*.⁵³ This is a crucial difference because it supports the idea that *Selah* had potentially lost its meaning by the time the Hebrew Bible was being translated into Greek. Thus, while the context is still the same, the author chose to transliterate *Selah* into Greek for potentially the same reason modern authors transliterate foreign words today—there is no equivalent of the loan word in the copyist’s language.

Another possibility for a transliteration of *Selah* could have been that the Jews who translated the Minor Prophets into Greek preferred to keep the text closer to the original Hebrew. Emanuel Tov believes this is the case. He says,

This Greek scroll was revised according to the proto-rabbinic Hebrew text, together with other parts of the Greek Bible, and all of these together are named the *kaige*-Th revision. This development implies that there were central forces in the Jewish world assuring that the text that had been made central in its original, Hebrew/Aramaic shape would be central also in its Greek shape. The fact that the Greek Minor Prophets scroll was found among the remains of the followers of Bar Kochba, linked to the Jerusalem religious circles, is not without importance.

⁵¹ Tov, DJD 8, 10-11.

⁵² Emanuel Tov, *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 121; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 134.

⁵³ Tov, DJD 8, 57. In this publication, Tov does not provide an explanation for the transliteration of the term.

It probably implies that this Greek text had the *imprimatur* of the rabbinic circles.⁵⁴

Selah was not the only term that differed among other Greek manuscripts. Tov also notes that along with other early revisional manuscripts of the LXX, this scroll represented the name of God in paleo-Hebrew letters instead of using the Greek κυριος.⁵⁵

And although the first instance of *Selah* has been entirely lost in 8HevXIIgr, with the second lost to deterioration of the manuscript (yet reconstructed), one occurrence remains in 3:13 mirroring its position and original language in the MT. The following table shows this text in the MT, LXX, and 8HevXIIgr.

The Text of Habakkuk 3			
	Masoretic Text	Septuagint	8HevXIIgr
3:3	אובי הולא ומיתמ רהמ־ןראפ הלס שודקו הסכ סימש ודוה האלמ ץראה: ותלהתו	Ο Θεος εκ Θαιμαν ηξει, και ο αγιος εξ ορους φαραν κατασκίου δασεος διαψαλμα εκαλυψεν ουρανους η αρετη αυτου, και αινεσεως αυτου πληρης η γη.	Text not preserved
3:9	ךתשק הירע רועת תוטמ רמא הלס תועבש ״אָרא: תורהנ עקבת	Εντεινων ενετεινας τοξον σου επι σκη λεγει Κυριος διαψαλμα ποταμων ραγησεται γη.	[εξεγειρων] εξεγ[ερ]εις το το[ξον σου]. ραβδ[ο]υς[σελε. ποτα]μοι, ραγησεται γη.
3:13	ךמע תאצי עשיל עשיל תא־ךתישמ שאר תיבמ עשר תצמ דוסי דע־ראוצ הלס: תורע	εξηλθες εις σωτηριαν λαου σου, του σ τον χριστον σου. βαλεις εις κεφαλας ανομων θανατον, εξηγειρας δεσμους ε τραχηλου διαψαλμα	[εξηλθες εις σωτηρια]ν λαο[υ σου, εις σωτηριαν του χριστου] σου κε]φα[λη]ν εξ οικου [ας]εβ[ους, εξε]κενωσα[ς] θεμελιους εως τρ[α-]χ[ηλου.] σελε.

⁵⁴ Tov, *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran*, 186.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Masada (Mas1e)

This scroll from Masada was badly damaged, some say on purpose, and can only be read through infrared technology. Frank Moore Cross Jr. noted that the script of this scroll was late Herodian formal and is dated to the first half of the first century AD.⁵⁶ The Psalms scroll belongs to a group of material uncovered in what is called the Casemate of the Scrolls, and the text of this particular scroll only differs minutely from the early medieval Masoretic Text.⁵⁷ Thus, the instances of *Selah* in this case attest to a text that is very close to what was to become the MT.

Due to the painstaking care taken by the scribes to limit epigraphical (writing) errors, there are few differences between the MT biblical psalms 81-84 and the proto-MT manuscripts found at Masada. Column I contains Psalm 81, in which *Selah* occurs once in 81:8. Column II finishes off Psalm 81, and includes Psalm 82 and part of Psalm 83 which contains two extant references to *Selah* in 82:2 and 83:9. The last column, column III, preserves the end of Psalm 83, and ends at Psalm 85:6. This column preserves a fragmentary reference to *Selah* (as 84:5 is only left with a ם) while *Selah* is reconstructed in verses 84:9 and 85:3.⁵⁸ Thus, in this manuscript, we have four extant *Selah* occurrences and two reconstructions provided by the editor.

Mas1e		
Col. I	Col. II	Col. III
ק[ר]תא או[ח] הכצל 81:8 [צב]הר רתסב סער הבא[דנ]	יתמ וטפשת לוע 82:2 דע סיעשר ואשת הלס:	84:5 [ירשא יבשוי דתיב] דוע דוללהי ס[הל:]

⁵⁶ Frank Moore Cross, Jr., “The Development of the Jewish Scripts,” in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of W.F. Albright*, ed. by G.E. Wright (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 136.

⁵⁷ Amnon Ben-Tor, *Back to Masada* (Jerusalem: Old City Press, Ltd., 2009), 196.

⁵⁸ Shemaryahu Talmon, “Fragments of a Psalms Scroll—MasPs^a Ps81:2^b-85:6^a (1039-160; Mas1e; final photo 5255) in *Dead Sea Discoveries* 3.3 (1996), 300-303.

הַבִּירְמָה הַלֵּס: לַע יִמָּ	יִנְפֹו הַוֹלֵן 83:9 סֶגְ רוּשָׁא וְיֵה עוֹרֹז יִנְבֵל טוֹל הַלֵּס: סִמֵּעַ	84:9 הוֹהִי בְצָ [תּוֹא הַעֲמֹשׁ יִתְלַפֵּת] סִיֵּהֲלָא יֵהֲלָא עִי [בִּק הַלֵּס: הַ] [הַנִּיזָא] 85:3 תֵּאשֵׁנ לְוֹעַ דְּמַע [תִּיִּסַּכ לַכ סִתְאֻטָּח הַלֵּס:]
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The texts at Masada are believed to be the purest form of the MT, and this is one of the sites that the proto-Masoretic or proto-rabbinic text type was used.⁵⁹ Tov suggests that the sociological data known about Masada also fits this data since the community there would have adhered to the rabbinic text.⁶⁰ An affinity for a pure form of the Hebrew text would have kept *Selah* in its place, thus preserving it in the Psalter's transmission at Masada.

Wadi Murabba'at (Mur88)

The Wadi Murabba'at composition, another instance of a Minor Prophets scroll instead of a Psalms scroll, was most likely brought to the desert at the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (c.132-135 AD) and composed some time in the sixty years after the Naḥal Ḥever and Masada manuscripts.⁶¹ It is the most complete text from the Murabba'at caves and is said to have been composed by two different hands (scribes) as evidenced by the manner of writing, especially seen in the minute differences of the paleo-Hebrew tetragrammaton.⁶² The date of the earlier scribe is considered to be late first century BC,

⁵⁹ Tov, *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran*, 150.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Hanan Eshel, "Wadi Murabba'at: Written Material," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 583-584.

⁶² Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations*, 189.

while the later scribe would have written shortly thereafter.⁶³ It may also be no coincidence that two authors penned this manuscript, as the other Minor Prophets scroll from Naḥal Ḥever is also written in two different hands with epigraphical differences including the tetragrammaton.

The term *Selah* appears in Habakkuk 3:3, 9, and 13 in this scroll that contains the Minor Prophets.⁶⁴ The Wadi Murabba‘at (Mur88) scroll, although composed in Hebrew, solidifies *Selah*’s position in the Hebrew MT outside of the Psalter (as does the scroll from Naḥal Ḥever—8HevXIIgr). And despite the manuscript being badly damaged by water and insects, its surviving 21 columns suggest that it was a complete copy of the Twelve from sometime around the end of the first century AD. *Selah*’s position in Habakkuk 3:3, 9, and 13 is a direct match with the MT, as there were very few orthographic variants in the entire Mur88 manuscript (of those variants, there were only discrepancies involving *Qere-Ketib*).⁶⁵

MUR88, partial reproduction

וּמִיתָם י[ב]או שוּדְקוֹ רַחֵם וְרַאפּ לִסְ[ה סכ]ה סִימֶשׁ וְדוּה וְתִלְהֶתּוּ הָאֵלֶּם קָרָאָה:
 הוֹלָא³
 עֲתוֹ[ר] דְּתִשְׁקַן תּוֹעֲבֵשׁ תּוֹטֵם רַמָּא הִלֵּס תּוֹרֶהֶנּ עֲקֵבֶת קָרָא:
 רַע[הי]⁹
 דְּמַע[יל] עֵשׂ תָּא דְּחִישָׁם [תַּצְחָם] שָׂאֵר בְּמ[תי שר]ע תּוֹרַע [דוּסִי] דַּע רַאֲוֹצַ הִלֵּס:
 תַּאֲצִי עֵשִׂי¹³

Mur88 partial reproduction translation

- 3 God [c]ame from Teman, the holy One from Mt. Paran **Sela[h]** His glory c]overed the heavens and the earth was full of His praise.
 9 Your bow [was made] quite ready, oaths were sworn over Your arrows **Selah** You divided the earth with rivers.
 13 You went forth for the salvation of Your people, [for sa]lvation with Your anointed. [You

⁶³ Peter J. Parsons, “The Scripts and Their Date,” in Emanuel Tov, *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll*, 19-26. George J. Brooke, “The Twelve Minor Prophets and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Congress Volume: Leiden 2004*, ed. by André Lemaire (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 109; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 26.

⁶⁴ These *Selah* instances are the same as found in the MT. See also: Skinner and Parry, “Mas1e,” in *Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library: Biblical Texts*, consulted online 26 November 2016.

⁶⁵ Brooke, “The Twelve Minor Prophets and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 27.

struck] the head from the ho[use of the wic]ked by laying bare from [foundation] to neck
Selah

In the entire Mur88 manuscript, the largest differences when compared to the MT are where omissions are concerned. The omitted words or phrases are added interlinearly. These corrections only occur seven times, and always correct the text to agree with the consonantal text of the MT.⁶⁶ There are no corrections regarding *Selah* in Mur88.

Concluding Remarks on Biblical Scrolls

While all of these compositions contain remnants of *Selah* in the Psalter and Habakkuk 3, there are no essential differences where the term is preserved, both at Qumran and other locations in the Judaean Desert. There is, however, one important observation to be made—the scribe who penned 8HevXIIgr did not use διάψαλμα to replace *Selah*, he simply transliterated the term as σελε. This is important because either the scribe did not know what *Selah* meant, or he knew what *Selah* meant and chose to keep the Hebrew term by transliterating it into Greek. Whatever his knowledge, the term was preserved differently here than in any other Greek manuscript.

Selah's use as a structuring device begins to become apparent through its placement at the crux of internal issues such as sin, judgment, and redemption from YHWH. Thus, a progression in theme can be seen as we move about the manuscripts. As these thematic threads emerge, a fundamental truth about the way *Selah* is being employed begins to take shape—highlighting the reality of temporal versus eternal matters. It is through its cyclic nature that *Selah* highlights the reality of said matters

⁶⁶ Russell Fuller, "The Form and Formation of the Book of the Twelve: The Evidence from the Judean Desert," in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D.W. Watts*, ed. by James W. Watts and Paul R. House (JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 89.

while also providing a theophanic experience for the reader, especially through the lens of the prophet Habakkuk.

Non-Biblical Scrolls

The non-biblical scrolls found at Qumran that contain *Selah* are 4Q381, 11Q11, and 11Q13; these are Non-Canonical Psalms B, Apocryphal Psalms, and 11QMelchizedek, respectively. Each of these manuscripts exhibits unique character—some drawing on the biblical MT, while others give *Selah* a use in a new context. Yet, through their differences shine similarities.

4Q381

4Q381, otherwise known as Non-Canonical Psalms B, was found in Cave 4 at Qumran and is dated to the first half of the 1st century BC.⁶⁷ One hundred and ten fragments of this manuscript exist today and it is considered to be religious poetry that combines remnants of biblical psalms with its text. The short parallel cola denote poetry, and the superscription-like titles, as well as the term *Selah*, appear in likeness with the structure of the biblical Psalter. The language seems to mirror that of the biblical Psalter as well, with calls for God's deliverance as well as affirmation of trust for future divine intervention.

Eileen Schuller has studied *Selah* most in depth; who published her doctoral dissertation in 1986 on this very manuscript as noted in the previous history of research section. *Selah* is found three times in this text—once in columns 21, 24 a+b, and 33+35. *Selah* is followed by a *vacat* each time it is found. Of particular interest is that *Selah* can also be restored in another column of this manuscript, column 31, in lines 3 and 9. Albeit

⁶⁷ Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 319.

a suggestion, it is supported by its position in other places of 4Q381, especially 24 3 and 33 6, as noted by Schuller.⁶⁸ The context describes the loving-kindness and salvation of the Lord while also subduing man's enemies. Thus, this manuscript seems to speak of God's deliverance over evil. Even though these psalms that contain *Selah* are of a similar contextual nature, none of them can be traced back to the biblical Psalter. In other words, there are no precise biblical references from the Psalter that match with the psalms found in this manuscript. Regarding content, Mika Pajunen agrees that each part of 4Q381 shares a similar contextual nature, and notes, "...they are strongly connected to each other forming a continuance from Creation to the expected future, and they also make up a structural whole."⁶⁹ As one psalm ends, it also anticipates the beginning of the next; from the election of Israel to the judgment of that nation by God, each psalm anticipates a similar theme where *Selah* is present, thus forming a structural whole.

Despite *Selah*'s presence in this manuscript, and its possible reconstruction in another incidence, this evidence adds no new insights as to its meaning, but confirms some trends already present in other sources.⁷⁰ Schuller speculated that the insertion of this term could have been to assimilate, or attribute, them more closely to the Davidic collection of Psalms.⁷¹ *Selah*'s use in Persian and Hellenistic compositions was not common, with the exception of its use in the Septuagint, so it would seem plausible that it was the work of the original Hebrew authors. Or, Schuller hinted, that this term could have lost all meaning by the time of 4Q381's composition and was inserted to imitate the

⁶⁸ Eileen M. Schuller, *Non-Canonical Psalms from Qumran: A Pseudepigraphic Collection* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 44.

⁶⁹ Mika S. Pajunen, *The Land to the Elect and Justice for All* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2013), 278.

⁷⁰ Meaning over function here. The function of *Selah* is seen in its thematic capacity.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 45. David was a figure held in high regard for being a mouthpiece of God, and his prophetic capacities were needed for the judgment, restoration, and reconciliation of the people to their Messiah.

biblical style of writing.⁷² It is in this sense that *Selah* seems to closely fit with other new archaeological finds which will be discussed in the following chapter.

11Q11

11Q11, Apocryphal Psalms, was found in Cave 11 at Qumran and is dated to the 1st century AD. The script has been identified as Herodian, and is made up of non-biblical, poetic writings. Almost a couple of hundred years after the Cave 4 manuscript (4Q381), this scroll contains six columns, heavily fragmented at the top and bottom, which gave the scroll its iconic ‘zig-zag’ shape.⁷³ Its contents are partly devoted to exorcism, yet it also speaks of a powerful angel who defeats the demon and casts it into the ‘nethermost hell.’ The following is a translation of columns V and VI in which *Selah* occurs:

Column V⁷⁴

1. [...][...][...]
2. which [...] the possessed one[s ...]
3. the volunteers of [Ra]phael has healed [them. Amen. Amen. *Selah*.] *vacat*
4. Of David. Ag[ainst ... An Incanta]tion in the name of YHW[H. Invoke at an]y time.
5. to the heave[ns. When] he will come upon you in the nig[ht,] you shall say to him:
6. Who are you? [son of] man and seed of the ho[ly] ones. Your face is a face of
7. [delus]ion, and your horns are horns of illu[si]on. You are darkness and not light,
8. [injus]tice and not justice. [...] YHWH, the chief of the army, [will bring] you [down]
9. [to the] deepest [Sheo]l, [he will shut] the [do]ors of iron through [which n]o
10. light [penetrates]. [On you], [the] sun will not [shine], whi[ch rises]
11. [upon the] righteous to [...] You shall say [...]
12. [the right]eous to enter [...] an evil de[mon].
13. [tr]uth from [which the right]eousness indwells.
14. [...] ... [...]

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Florentino García Martínez, Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, and Adam S. Van der Woude, *Qumran Cave 11 (II) 11Q2-18, 11Q20-31* (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert 23; Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1998), 181.

⁷⁴ Own translation

Column VI:

1. [...] ... [...] ... [...] ... [...] ...
2. [...] ... [...] ... [...] ... [for]ever
3. [all the] sons of Bel[ial. Amen. Amen.] *Selah*. [For David, who sits] in the shelter of [the Most High, in the shadow of] the Almighty
4. [he will stay.] He who says [to YHWH: My refuge] and [my] fortress, [my God]
is the safety in which [I trust.]
5. [For h]e will save you from [the net of the fow]ler, from the dead[ly] pestilence.
[With] his feathers he will cover [you,] and under
6. his [wings] you shall stay. [His] loving-kindness [up]on you shall be a shield, and his truth a breastplate. *Selah. vacat* Do not fear
7. the dread of the night, or the arrow that flies by day, or the plague that rages at [n]oon, or the pestilence that [in dar]kness
8. proceeds. A thousand will f[a]ll at your side, te[n thousand at] your [ri]ght, [but
you] it shall [no]t strike. Only [look]
9. with your eyes [and you shall see] the retribution of the wicked [ones.] You [have invok]ed your shel[ter] his happiness. [Do not]
10. see [evil and] a plague will not strike [in] your [ten]ts, for he has commanded [his angels] concerning you,
11. to safegu[ard you on] your [paths. They shall lift] you upon their palms, so that
[your] foot does not [trip on a st]one. [Upon]
12. viper [and asp shall you s]tep, you will tram[ple lion] and dragon. You have loved [YHWH] and he [will rescue you]
13. and [protect you and sh]ow you [his] salvati[on. *Selah.*] *vacat* [...] *vacat* [...]
14. And [they] shall ans[wer: Amen. Amen.] *Selah.* [...] *vacat* [...]
15. [...] *vacat* [...] *vacat* [...]

Out of the six columns, *Selah* only occurs in the last two—columns V and VI—as seen above. The last column (VI), the one that contains the most occurrences of *Selah*, is a version of Psalm 91. Interestingly, Psalm 91 in the Masoretic Text does not contain any instances of *Selah*, so its occurrence in this column of the scroll is intriguing.⁷⁵ The

⁷⁵ In Rabbinic texts, Psalm 91 was referred to as a ‘song of the stricken’ (See *b. Šebu.* 15b; *y. Šabb.* 6.8b). It may very well be plausible to confer that the texts contained in 11Q11 were the songs composed by David to be sung over the possessed, of which 11QPs^a speaks of (Puech, Vanderkam, Sanders, and Brownlee all agree with this sentiment. See Emile Puech, “11QPsAp^a: Une rituel d’exorcismes. Essai de reconstruction,” in *Revue de Qumran* 14 (1990), 377-408). However, this is only a suggestion as there is not enough evidence to confirm that notion. And although David is mentioned, Solomon was known as the exorcist *par excellence* and he is mentioned in this manuscript as well (Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 100-101. Bohak mentions that Solomon was the one who, supposedly, composed these incantations).

variants between the MT and Qumran version are minor in the sense that they do not change the actual meaning of the text itself, and the writing of the Qumran version is clearly later than that of the MT.⁷⁶ The writer at Qumran evidently had knowledge of Psalm 91 and therefore edited it to perform a particular function. Binding the principles of parallelism, the editor of this psalm at Qumran did not change its meaning, but provided a clear structure of thematic arrangement to its contents—with a sharp focus on the salvific acts of God. Mika Pajunen lays out 11Q11 in three stanzas:⁷⁷

Structural Outline of 11Q11	
First Stanza	“A Confession of Faith”
1-2	Fivefold image of God as a place of protection
3	Promise of salvation
4	Fourfold image of God as a protective device shielding the body
Second Stanza	“Precious to the Lord”
5-6	Fourfold image of dangers facing man that he need not fear
7-8	Description of God’s protection of the righteous
9	Believer’s action that evokes this Godly protection
10-12	Description of God’s protection of the righteous
13	Fourfold image of dangers facing man that he need not fear
Third Stanza	“Promise of Salvation”
14-16	Promise of salvation

The focus of the psalm then is not the danger outlined in the second stanza; it is the salvation, or divine protection, offered by God to His people. “What is new in the Qumran version is the explicit inclusion of the three requirements for obtaining this

⁷⁶ Mika Pajunen, “Qumranic Psalm 91: A Structural Analysis,” in *Scripture in Transition: Essays on the Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo*, ed. by Anssi Voitila and Jutta Jokiranta (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 592.

⁷⁷ Pajunen, “Qumranic Psalm 91,” 603.

protection and future salvation.”⁷⁸ In the previous column, column V, the casting out of the evil spirit has been accomplished; and in column VI, the person who has been healed of this spirit shows their faith, which in turn is granted with the promise of divine salvation. This is an important theme.

But of the most significance, this is the only piece of literature (by knowledge) that contains a communal use for *Selah*. 6 14 introduces the word אָנְשֵׁי וְ (and they shall answer); and although the two amens are reconstructed, the lacuna leaves enough room for those two words to have been between the call to answer and *Selah*. If the exorcisms were done as public events, it would also make sense that the onlookers were called to answer with, “Amen. Amen. *Selah*.” Thus, one should not downplay the significance that *Selah* was used here as a spoken word.

Since 11Q11 is the only extant witness, that we know of, that presents a communal use of *Selah*, then we must ask what its provenance is.⁷⁹ Why was *Selah* being spoken in a communal setting? The use of the term here in 11Q11 suggests that it was not a liturgical direction, but rather a spoken sentiment of faith. Even though 11Q11 is also considered a non-biblical text, its similarity of structure with biblical Psalms manuscripts is clear based on the structure laid out by Mika Pajunen. *Selah* appears in vv. 3, 6, 13, and 14 in Column VI as it highlights the promise of salvation (vv. 3, 14) and the comfort of not fearing danger (vv. 6, 13). Surely one would proclaim *Selah* as they find security in their Messiah.

⁷⁸ Pajunen, “Qumranic Psalm 91,” 603.

⁷⁹ The provenance of this manuscript has been discussed in: Frölich, Ida, and Erkki Koskenniemi, eds. *Evil and the Devil* (The Library of NT Studies; London: Bloomsbury, 2013). Contributor Loren Stuckenbruck understands 11Q11 as a Qumran demonology that has implications for understanding early Christian traditions, in which *Selah* has solely been studied up until now. Such features include the distinction between the nature of evil and humanity, and between the present era of wickedness and the eschatological annihilation of evil (p. 70; see also: review of *Evil and the Devil* by Michael Morris in DSD 23.1 (2016): 121-123).

11Q13

The last manuscript containing *Selah*—11Q13 (11QMelchizedek)—was also found in Cave 11 and is dated to the 1st century BC.⁸⁰ It consists of eleven fragments and its text is generally seen as eschatological due to the ‘proclamation of liberty to the captives in the end of days.’⁸¹ During the Second Temple Period, Melchizedek was the focus of salvific imagery among Jewish sectarian groups,⁸² and 11Q13, though fragmentary, presents Melchizedek in an eschatological context that has priestly, prophetic, and judgment themes.⁸³ In addition, the text shares a number of thematic elements with *Selah* texts previously discussed.

11Q13 Biblical Ties

Melchizedek has been the focus of many debates as to the nature of his identity. Melchizedek is only mentioned in the Hebrew Bible twice—Genesis 14 and Psalm 110. If the author of 11Q13 at Qumran was reading the biblical text, then his understanding of Melchizedek as possessing an eternal priesthood (Ps. 110:4) and exercising judgment over his enemies (Ps. 110:1-2) would likely affect his presentation of him in 11Q13. And, that is exactly what we have. Although Genesis 14 portrays Melchizedek as a human king, Psalm 110 asserts his supernatural role (angelic status).⁸⁴ Thus, ‘Melchizedek likewise is presented in the Qumran text as one exercising authority over heavenly beings

⁸⁰ Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 532. This scroll was found in 1956 and first published by Adam S. Van der Woude in 1965 in a publication entitled “Melchisedek.”

⁸¹ Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 532; F. García, E.J.C. Tigchelaar, and A.S. van der Woude, DJD 23, 221-41.

⁸² Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls-A New Translation*, revised edition (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 591.

⁸³ Eric F. Mason, *You are a Priest Forever: Second Temple Jewish Messianism and the Priestly Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 170.

⁸⁴ Devorah Dimant, *History, Ideology, and Biblical Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Collected Studies* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 502.

and over his lot of humanity.’⁸⁵ As Melchizedek fulfills duties consistent with messianic figures in the ancient Near East (judgment, destruction in the eschaton, and salvation), his tie to the biblical MT as a Heavenly priest becomes evident throughout.⁸⁶ Therefore, the themes of judgment, blessing, and salvation are well established in 11Q13’s content.

Content of 11Q13

As is evident from the Hebrew, the text is a *peshar* (line 12 begins with פֶּשֶׁר) that engages in an eschatological rendering of several passages of the Hebrew Bible.⁸⁷ More specifically, lines 10-11 quote biblical MT Psalm 7:8-9 and Ps. 82:2 which are both psalms that contain *Selah*, except *Selah* is only used in the quotation of Psalm 82:2 in this instance.

The scroll begins with an eschatological bent—its interpretation referring to eschatological days, when liberty is proclaimed by the captives (Isaiah 61:1) and forgiveness is granted of iniquities (11Q13 quotes also from Lev. 25:13 and Deut. 15:2). As the eschatological Day of Atonement is mentioned, 11Q13 paints Melchizedek as the high priest who executes judgment. The mention of judgment here smoothes the transition into the quotations of Psalm 82:1, Psalm 7:8-9, and Psalm 82:2 in lines 10-11.⁸⁸ Thus, the emphasis here is clearly on God’s judgment of the wicked, which takes place throughout most of the biblical MT Psalter and is a common theme found with *Selah*

⁸⁵ Mason, *You are a Priest Forever*, 172.

⁸⁶ As noted in Mason’s *You are a Priest Forever*, heavenly messianic figures in pre-Christian Jewish texts can be seen in the *Parables of Enoch* (1 *Enoch* 37-71) and 4 *Ezra* (p. 172).

⁸⁷ Scholars who view this as a *peshar* include: Jean Carmignac, “Le document,” 360-362; Timothy Lim, *Pesharim* (Companion to the Qumran Scrolls 3; London: Sheffield, 2002), 53; and Florentino García Martínez, “Las tradiciones,” 52. Not to mention, the Hebrew text explicitly labels it as a *peshar* (cf. Florentino García Martínez, and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, vol. 2 (4Q274-11Q31) (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1206-1207.)

⁸⁸ Mason, *You are a Priest Forever*, 184.

psalms.⁸⁹ As Melchizedek avenges judgment on Belial (his demonic counterpart), he in turn provides salvation in the end of days for those who are of his lot.

The Hebrew terms מִלְחִיזֶדֶק and אֵל used in this scroll are typically reserved for God, “but in certain specific contexts Jewish tradition also explains [them] as primarily designating a ‘judge.’”⁹⁰ Dispensing justice, Melchizedek destroys Belial and a blessing is given over those who preach salvation. The quotations from Isaiah and Daniel root this scroll with an eschatological focus that truth is God, and in the end of days, all those on earth will know that God reigns. Thus, “this manuscript sheds valuable light not only on the Melchizedek figure...but also on the development of the messianic concept in the New Testament and early Christianity.”⁹¹ But, what role does *Selah* play within the context of this messianic text?

Selah in 11Q13

This is the only non-biblical manuscript preserved from Qumran that cites *Selah* as it is found in the MT. All other non-biblical Qumran manuscripts employ the term in their own compositions (i.e. in their own contexts), as opposed to the biblical MT citation found here in 11Q13. However, the occurrence of *Selah* in 11Q13 is significant because of the *peshet* (פֶּשֶׁט) method of interpretation. *Peshet* is “a type of biblical interpretation used in the Qumran scrolls in which selected biblical texts are applied to the contemporary sectarian setting.”⁹² This type of interpretation is related to the Akkadian word *pasharu*, which means ‘to unbind’ or ‘to release.’ In Akkadian, this root refers

⁸⁹ God’s judgment on the wicked can be seen in *Selah* psalms such as Psalms 9, 39, 52, 54, 55, 57, 59, 66, 67, 75, 76, 89, and Habakkuk 3.

⁹⁰ Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 532.

⁹¹ Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 532.

⁹² Shani L. Berrin, “Pesharim,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 644.

specifically to the unbinding of dreams—that is, dream interpretation. The Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls clarifies *peshar* interpretation, so it is worth quoting here:

The biblical *pitaron* refers to dream interpretation, and in the Book of Daniel *pshr* denotes the deciphering of prophetic or predictive writing. The Qumran community perceived biblical prophecy, in itself revelation, as analogous to a dream the mystery of which might only be unraveled by a specially endowed individual. The coded prophetic messages were deciphered by the author of the *peshar*. However, his own expression of the newly revealed “true meaning” also was effected in veiled terms. *Peshar* interpretations were meaningful revelations for their intended sectarian audience.⁹³

Clearly, the nature of *peshar* interpretation was prophetic—a biblical citation would be followed by a phrase that included the word *peshar*. The use of the term *peshar* introduced an interpretation in which the “text is applied to the author’s own historical context, which is believed to be situated in the ‘end of days.’”⁹⁴

Accordingly, beyond the focus of Melchizedek, this manuscript is a *peshar* on the year of Jubilee. In ancient Israel, the jubilee occurred every 50 years and included forgiveness of all debts. 11Q13 begins with this idea of redemption by citing Leviticus 25:13. Quoting Annette Steudel, Philip Alexander notes that behind 11Q13 is the idea that the jubilee in this text symbolizes a larger historical process.⁹⁵ Since history has been divided into 10 ‘jubilees’—the last in which Israel will be redeemed—Melchizedek (the redeeming agent) will redeem his lot not from material debt, but from sin.⁹⁶ This

⁹³ Berrin, “Pesharim,” 644.

⁹⁴ John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow, eds., *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, s.v. “Pesharim,” 1050. Note: The term *peshar* is used in line 12, directly following the quote of Psalm 82:2 containing *Selah*. *Peshar* is understood as interpretation in the sense of God giving a special revelation to a particular community or person, being fulfilled in their days (with an eschatological focus). The same term is used in the Book of Daniel where he interprets dreams. The Qumran community was using the *peshar* method of interpretation to understand the biblical text as being fulfilled in their time (i.e. the last days)...same can be seen in 4Q252—i.e. the method of interpretation.

⁹⁵ Philip Alexander, *The Mystical Texts: Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and Related Manuscripts* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 70.

⁹⁶ Alexander, *The Mystical Texts*, 70.

anticipation of future redemption centers around lines 10-14 where *Selah* occurs (line 11). The verse containing *Selah* centers on judgment of the wicked, and Melchizedek stands at the center as the heavenly high priest executing judgment in the 10th Jubilee. As a picture of the Messiah, he will no longer “overlook” sin, but punish it to its final resting place. Thus, it can be shown that the thrust of the text (eschatological) and the context in which it speaks of judgment and salvation, are themes that readily occur with the term *Selah* throughout the biblical Psalter and other non-biblical texts.

Concluding Remarks

In summary, non-biblical manuscripts from Qumran, such as 4Q381 and 11Q11, are directly employing *Selah* for a certain use within their composition. But in the case of 11Q13, we are seeing how the author indirectly employed a biblical passage, which includes *Selah* as part of the biblical MT Psalter. Thus, since one must ascertain the literary context carefully, and it is clear that the text was read eschatologically, *Selah* again fits an eschatological/prophetic/future-oriented context as the author of the *peshet* used its biblical MT citation.

Non-biblical manuscript 11Q11 provided the newest piece of evidence regarding *Selah*’s use in the Second Temple period. Although in a non-biblical scroll, 11Q11 employed *Selah* verbally in a communal setting. This spoken word goes against the notion of *Selah* being a silent remark or liturgical direction. Thus, 11Q11 has suggested that *Selah* was a spoken sentiment of faith.

It is through these instances that we have variety, or lines of evidence, as *Selah* is being used in these sectarian compositions in their own literary context, as well as in the future-oriented context of the biblical MT Psalter. This indirect use of *Selah* shows that

these sectarian authors had knowledge of the biblical MT Psalter, and interpreted passages in light of them. Their similarity thus provides continuity between Jewish and Christian traditions of God's involvement (and perceived place) in the lives of His people.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PSEUDEPIGRAPHIA

The Psalms of Solomon (Pss. Sol.) are preserved in eleven Greek and four Syriac manuscripts dated from the 10th-16th centuries A.D.¹ The “Eighteen Psalms of Solomon” are attested from as early as the 5th century A.D. in Codex Alexandrinus, where they follow the Old and New Testaments and the Clementine Epistles.² The date of this text is debated, but its correspondence with First Baruch (Baruch quotes Pss. Sol) lends credence to its existence in Greek near the end of the first century A.D.³

It is generally accepted that the Psalms of Solomon is a Greek translation of a Hebrew text from around the first century B.C.⁴ No Hebrew manuscripts are extant, and all the Greek texts are much later. There have been attempts to reconstruct the Hebrew originals, but those texts would have little historical or linguistic value since they are not extant.⁵ There have been many arguments for a Hebrew base text for this work, but as Jan Joosten points out, “Composition in Hebrew cannot account for the repeated use of the Septuagint as the base text of the Psalms of Solomon.”⁶ Jan Joosten has gone against the grain in challenging the mainstream view that the work was originally composed in

¹ R.B. Wright, “Psalms of Solomon: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, ed. by James H. Charlesworth (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson; 1983), 639.

² Ibid. The leaves containing the actual text are missing from the codex, but Pss. Sol. are listed in the beginning of the codex (i.e. like a modern day table of contents).

³ Ibid., 640.

⁴ Jan Joosten, “New Light on Proto-Theodotian: The Psalms of Solomon and the Milieu of the *Kaige* Recension.” Unpublished; 1. Joosten states, “The Psalms of Solomon, for their part, are...almost universally held to be the Greek translation of a Hebrew text created in or near Jerusalem in the latter half of the first century BCE.”

⁵ Wright, “Psalms of Solomon,” 640.

⁶ Joosten, “The Textual Basis of Scriptural References in the Psalms of Solomon,” 6.

Hebrew. The original language of the Psalms of Solomon, however, has no major bearing on *Selah*'s (or the Greek equivalent, διαψαλμα) meaning. The content is key in this respect as familiar imagery from both the MT and the LXX is apparent here.

The Psalms of Solomon are a rather limited corpus of texts, yet one would find it difficult to resist its connections with the *kaige* group. Possibly written in Greek from the start, the recension and the Psalms of Solomon share commonalities. Translation technique stands at the forefront of this ideology, as “the intention of these Psalms was not to revise the Bible, but to express religious views and sentiments using biblical language.”⁷ Although the Psalms of Solomon are original works with very little use of Scripture, they very often allude to canonical texts.⁸ Allusions to scriptural passages are not always clearly marked, but the biblicizing style of the Psalms of Solomon is readily apparent. This imitative style corresponds to the use of *Selah* in Pss. Sol. 17 & 18.

***Selah* in the Psalms of Solomon**

The Psalms of Solomon's inclusion here is relevant for understanding διάψαλμα in a Hellenistic context, and continues the thematic trend of the LXX psalms containing διάψαλμα. In most Greek manuscripts, the Psalms of Solomon were copied alongside other books traditionally linked with Solomon such as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and other wisdom literature.⁹ This Greek text also has no correlation with the

⁷ Joosten, “New Light on Proto-Theodotian: The Psalms of Solomon and the Milieu of the *Kaige* Recension,” 7.

⁸ Jan Joosten, “The Textual Basis of Scriptural References in the Psalms of Solomon,” 1.

⁹ Daniele Pevarello, “Psalms of Solomon,” in *T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 426.

Hebrew MT-150 Psalter, yet it is an almost unanimous consensus that the Psalms of Solomon were originally composed in Hebrew.¹⁰ H.F.D. Sparks says:

There are obviously no Christian passages in the Psalms nor any that look as if they had been worked over by Christian editors. The Psalms are Jewish through and through and breathe the atmosphere of the canonical Psalms of David, in conscious imitation of which they were doubtless written.¹¹

However, a prominent expert on the Septuagint has argued that the Psalms of Solomon were originally composed in Greek.¹² This argument deserves further attention as we consider *Selah* and διαψαλμα's use in the present literary work. Jan Joosten believes the allusions to Scripture "are to the Greek version, whose style and diction are imitated."¹³ He goes on to say that "the author occasionally lapses into idiomatic Greek, adopting turns of phrase that are hardly attested in the translated books."¹⁴ Thus, the style in which the Psalms of Solomon are written imitates the translated books of the LXX. This could potentially suggest that the use of διάψαλμα in the Psalms of Solomon was to imitate the LXX style.

This work contains eighteen psalms of whose content begins with suffering and destruction then builds to justice, divine intervention, and a description of the Messiah. The Psalms of Solomon thus serve as a religious interpretation of first century B.C.

¹⁰ Jan Joosten, "Reflections on the Original Language of the Psalms of Solomon," in *The Psalms of Solomon: Language, History, Theology*, ed. by Eberhard Bons and Patrick Pouchelle (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 31-48. See also: Crawford Howell Toy, "Psalms of Solomon," in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. X (1906), 250-251; J. Wellhausen, *Die Pharisäer und die Sadducäer: Eine Untersuchung zur inneren jüdischen Geschichte* (Greifswald: L. Bamberg, 1874), 135; F.M. Viteau, ed., *Les Psaumes de Salomon: Introduction, texte Grec et traduction* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1911); Hedley Frederick Davis Sparks, *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 650.

¹¹ Sparks, *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, 650.

¹² See discussion on previous page.

¹³ Joosten, "Reflections on the Original Language of the Psalms of Solomon," 41.

¹⁴ Ibid.

events occurring in Judea.¹⁵ All psalms include pleas to God to resolve matters “to the psalmist’s satisfaction” by appointing a legitimate χριστος (Pss. Sol 17-18).¹⁶ Written after the fall of the house of David, these psalms look forward to YHWH ensuring the perpetuity of the house of David. Significant for eschatology, these eighteen psalms were discovered in Syriac manuscripts beginning in 1909, and are considered important because they contain references to the Jewish belief in resurrection before the time of Jesus, and “contains perhaps the *locus classicus* for belief in a Davidic Messiah.”¹⁷ Most scholars agree that it was a hymnbook composed shortly before the reign of Herod the Great (40-4 BC), and was a major composition known to Jews in Jerusalem.¹⁸

In this hymnbook written before the time of Jesus, we see thematic elements of sin, judgment, and redemption. Raymond F. Surburg in his *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* says that the Psalms of Solomon are modeled after the canonical Psalter, not only in format but also in a future-oriented trajectory that promotes the kingship of Yahweh.¹⁹ As Psalm 1 (MT and LXX) declares war on the anointed, so does the first psalm of this group.²⁰ As war and fear begin to permeate the first four Psalms of Solomon, a prayer for intervention goes up to God in a time of distress. In other words, “a

¹⁵ Matthew V. Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism: An Ancient Jewish Political Idiom and Its Users* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 56.

¹⁶ Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism*, 56-57.

¹⁷ Robert B. Wright, *Psalms of Solomon: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), vii.

¹⁸ Ibid. Wright even notes that the Pss. of Solomon serve as a key to understanding the DSS, with note of Pss. Sol. 8 to understand 4QMMT. One text that *Selah* is found in, Pss. Sol. 17 he notes, “The Davidic messiah of *Psalms of Solomon* 17, moreover, is almost identical to the Davidic messiah in several Qumran texts (4Q504; 1Q28b; 4Q252 4Q174; 4Q161; 4Q285; cf. 4Q246).” See: Kenneth Atkinson, Review of R.B. Wright *Psalms of Solomon: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), <http://www.jhsonline.org/cocoon/JHS/r302.html> accessed 31 March 2018.

¹⁹ Raymond F. Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), 144-145.

²⁰ See also Robert L. Cole, *Psalms 1-2: Gateway to the Psalter* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013).

major theme of the Psalms of Solomon is theodicy and the suffering of the righteous” in which the author demonstrates God’s righteousness in a time of crisis.²¹

The psalms that contain διάψαλμα references are identified as those whose content belongs to justice and divine intervention—the answering of previous prayers. Psalm of Solomon 17:29 says, “He shall judge peoples and nations in the wisdom of his righteousness. Selah.”²² The context of this verse speaks about those who have salvation in the Lord, most notably the ancient Israelites who will be divided again by their tribes, that they will experience righteousness. No wicked one will dwell among them anymore. Looking at the big picture, this psalm depicts a Messianic kingdom. Surburg again rightly notes that Psalm of Solomon 17 is “one of the most chief Messianic passages in the post-biblical literature of Judaism.”²³ Διάψαλμα’s occurrence is significant here because, at this juncture, διάψαλμα appears to be in line with the content of Book V in the MT Psalter. *Selah*’s placement in the MT highlights common themes pertinent in salvation history. And, at the very least, *Selah* is being used to imitate earlier Davidic form. Egbert Ballhorn in *Zum Telos des Psalters* notes that the appearance of *Selah* in the last Davidic group of psalms serves as a signal back to Books I-III, reminding the reader of familiar content.²⁴ The anticipated victory and reign of the coming king (the anointed son of David) will lead His people to displace enemies and set up a holy theocratic Jewish state in which the enemies of Israel will become subordinate.²⁵

²¹ Pevarello, “Psalms of Solomon,” 433.

²² κρίνει λαοὺς καὶ ἔθνη ἐν σοφίᾳ δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διάψαλμα

²³ Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period*, 144-145.

²⁴ Egbert Ballhorn, *Zum Telos des Psalters: Der Textzusammenhang des Vierten und Fünften Psalmenbuches* (Ps. 90-150) (BBB 138; Berlin: Philo, 2004), 277.

²⁵ Wright, *Psalms of Solomon*, 1.

Psalm of Solomon 18 also speaks about those who are in the Lord, that they will know righteousness; they will be established before the Lord. This righteous group does not stray from the path that God appointed for them. 18:9 says, “A good generation (living) in the fear of God in the days of mercy. *Diapsalma*.”²⁶ The days of mercy suggest an end-times scenario, as those who put their trust in God will not experience wickedness or burden under the protection of His salvation.

Thus, this Greek composition is seen as an important factor in understanding how *Selah* (διάψαλμα) was used shortly after the MT was stabilized.²⁷ Its use in compositions with familiar future-oriented content and themes seems to be essential in Jewish and Christian traditions. Robert B. Wright said the following about the Psalms of Solomon’s importance:

The Psalms of Solomon (PssSol), the most important early psalm book outside the canonical Psalter, reflects the turmoil of events in the last pre-Christian century, gives an apparently eyewitness account of the first invasions of the Romans into Jerusalem, gives a specific reference to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead just before the beginning of the Christian and Rabbinic periods, and provides the most detailed expectation of the Jewish Messiah before the New Testament.²⁸

It is thus through the vivid descriptions of eye-witness events (PsSol 17), an eschatological focus on redemption (PssSol 17-18), “and a specific view of history that describes covenantal infidelity including God’s judgment and the restoration of Israel,” that the Psalms of Solomon’s content shares familiarities

²⁶ γενεὰ ἀγαθὴ ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμέραις ἐλέους διάψαλμα

²⁷ Stabilization of the MT-150 Psalter has been debated (some scholars see it as fluid, even in the Second Temple period, others see it was closed during the time of Ezra in 425 BC). Evidence for the stabilization of the Hebrew canon is apparent in Rabbinic literature, and the writings of Symmachus, Theodotian, and Aquila.

²⁸ Wright, *The Psalms of Solomon*, 1.

with the content of the MT-150 Psalter.²⁹ Thus, Psalms of Solomon can serve as a relevant clue in understanding *Selah* in the MT.³⁰

***Selah* in the Book of Odes**

The *Book of Odes*, oftentimes mistaken for the Odes of Solomon, was composed in Greek and is appended to the Psalter. The Greek *Book of Odes* was likely copied alongside the Psalms of Solomon as they appear alongside one another in manuscripts such as MS 769 from the monastery of Great Lavra (now preserved in the Benaki museum in Athens).³¹ The *Odes* also make their first appearance in the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus, but are said to have originated from a Christian context.³² What is curious about *Odes* 4, where διάψαλμα occurs, is that the text is a reproduction of Habakkuk 3. Psalm collections in texts such as the Psalms of Solomon and the *Book of Odes* have been known for a long time, but within their traditions “there is little information about how psalmody was used at the time.”³³ The *Odes* have a “dubious integrity” as a literary unit, according to Albert Pietersma, as almost “all of the individual Septuagint odes have

²⁹ For a thorough undertaking of the genre of the Psalms of Solomon, see: Brad Embry, “Some Thoughts on and Implications from Genre Categorization in the Psalms of Solomon,” in *The Psalms of Solomon: Language, History, Theology*, ed. by Eberhard Bons and Patrick Pouchelle (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 59-78.

³⁰ The author of the Psalms of Solomon must have thought enough of (and understood) the MT Psalms that he likely included διάψαλμα to emulate the canonical Psalms. In other words, the author likely picked up on the themes of the canonical Psalter and chose to include the term here. There is also the likely possibility, per Joosten’s arguments on an original Greek text, that the scribe understood the term’s meaning and included it to highlight correlating themes in the text.

³¹ Pevarello, “Psalms of Solomon,” 426.

³² James K. Aitken, “Prayer of Manasseh (*Odes* 12),” in *The T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint*, ed. by James K. Aitken (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark; 2015), 337; Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden, *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of Greek Jewish Scriptures* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; 2006), 82.

³³ Jutta Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; 2001), 142. See also, D. Flusser, “Psalms, Hymns, and Prayers,” in *The Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud: Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill; 1984).

already been included in their native setting in other books.”³⁴ As *Odes* 4 reproduces Habakkuk 3, there is no need to reiterate the material contained in chapter four of the present thesis.

Concluding Remarks

The Psalms of Solomon and the *Odes*, although considered pseudepigraphal works, lend a hand in understanding how *Selah*/διάψαλμα was employed in the Second Temple period and throughout antiquity. Within a religious framework (albeit Jewish or Christian), the term finds itself, yet again, with familiar thematic elements. Thus, it is likely that the terms were known in a particular context that centered on themes such as judgment and salvation. It then becomes not too far a stretch to consider that *Selah* (and διάψαλμα) played a part in the religious community to highlight a widespread belief in a higher power.

³⁴ Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2007), xix.

CHAPTER EIGHT: INSCRIPTIONS & INCANTATIONS FROM THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Having briefly assessed *Selah*'s placement and context among Second Temple period sources, it may also prove useful to examine *Selah*'s use into the early Medieval period. In this chapter we will see that its usage is almost always employed in the form of an incantation. Incantations take many forms—either through singing, chanting, or writing. David is even said to have written “songs for the stricken,” (incantations) of which these instances may allude.¹ Incantations were inscribed on amulets, bowls, and the like which provided protection from demons and other evil spirits in the ancient Near East. In such contexts the term is also often found with the phrase, “Amen, Amen” directly before it. Due to the plethora of inscriptions and incantations containing *Selah*, only the most pertinent ones, representative of the nature of this corpus, will be examined.²

Inscriptions

There are seven distinct finds containing *Selah* that will be reviewed. These are the inscriptions at Ein-Gedi, the Hammath Gader synagogue, Ein Nashot, the Gerasa synagogue, the synagogue of Horvat 'Ammudim, the Temple Mount inscription, and the Kfar Alma synagogue. Each of these inscriptions contains elements familiar to previously stated themes that occur with *Selah*, and exhibit the multi-layered diversity in which it

¹ See Pajunen, “Qumranic Psalm 91.”

² For an extensive listing of incantations see: Virtual Magic Bowl Archive, University of Exeter (<http://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/theology/research/projects/vmba/>). See also: S. Shaked, J.N. Ford and S. Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells: Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls Volume One* (Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 1; Leiden: Brill, 2013).

represents. Two of the inscriptions contain an element not previously seen in any texts surveyed; yet they maintain the themes *Selah* is found with.

The Inscription at Ein-Gedi

The inscription at *Ein-Gedi* was part of a mosaic floor in a synagogue that has been dated in the Byzantine Period (3rd-5th century AD), of which was excavated between 1970-1972.³ The inscription here is very unique. It was originally part of a mosaic floor, etched into a series of four long “tablets,” containing 18 lines of Hebrew and Aramaic text. After the first nine lines, of which contain the names of the generations found in 1 Chronicles 1:1-4 as well as the patriarchs of the Jewish and Christian faith, a warning ensues. The warning concerns the secrets of this particular town, what made it so wealthy (i.e. perfume production), and not to reveal it to the Gentiles. A curse to the warned follows as well. The curse is reminiscent of the judgment language found with other *Selah* occurrences, that the person who sees what is concealed (i.e. the secret of the perfume) will be uprooted, along with his seed, from the earth. It ends with, “Amen. *Selah*.”

The *Hammath Gader* Synagogue

The synagogue at *Hammath Gader* was excavated by Elieazar Sukenik in 1932, and was dated to the first half of the fifth century AD. This is one of the longest inscriptions containing *Selah* that has been found, but once again contains familiar elements to others containing the term. This inscription was in Aramaic, in a mosaic floor which read: “And remember be good for Kyris Hoples and Kyra Protone, and Kyris Sallustius his son-in-law, and Comes Phroros his son and Kyris Photios his son-in-law, and Kyris Haninah his son—they and their children—whose acts of charity are constant everywhere (and) who

³ Yizhar Hirschfeld, “Ein Gedi: A Large Jewish Village,” in *Qadmoniot* 128 (2005), 62-87.

have given here five denarii (of) gold. May the King of the Universe bestow blessing upon their work. Amen. Amen. Selah.”⁴

The King of the Universe (in reference to the Lord) is mentioned here. The future anticipated blessing that awaits these individuals is partial to a future orientation, in which these blessings will come to fruition. The person who inscribed this blessing sealed it with a *Selah*.

Synagogue of Ḥorvat ‘Ammudim

The synagogue at Ḥorvat ‘Ammudim, dated to 300 AD,⁵ is another instance of an Aramaic inscription in a mosaic floor. It reads: “May he be remembered—son of Tanḥum who made this mosaic pavement and the roof. May he be blessed. Amen. Selah.”⁶ Many of these inscriptions found in mosaic floors (such as the ones previously mentioned) were used to bless either the person who constructed the piece, or someone who did something noble for the community. But, again, either blessing or cursing is associated when *Selah* is used. This future anticipation of either blessing or judgment again confirms an overarching theme, as we will continue to see throughout the next four inscriptions.

The Temple Mount Inscription

The inscription found at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem was written in formal Jewish script and tentatively dated to the sixth century AD or later. This was in the form of a personal prayer to rebuild the Jerusalem temple. Containing seven lines of text etched into stone, it reads: “God the Lord of Hosts, may you build this House in the lifetime of

⁴ Jodi Magness, “The Date of the Sardis Synagogue in Light of the Numismatic Evidence,” in *American Journal of Archaeology* 109.3 (July 2005), 462.

⁵ Lee I. Levine, “The Excavations at Ḥorvat ‘Ammudim,” in *Qadmoniot* 13 (1980), 107-110.

⁶ Lee I. Levine, “Excavations at the Synagogue of Ḥorvat ‘Ammudim,” in *Israel Exploration Journal* 32.1 (1982), 9.

Ya'akov son of Josef, and of Theophylactus, Sisinia and Anastasia. Amen and amen, sela.”⁷ An interesting item that occurs with *Selah* in this specific inscription is a call to the Lord. A call to the Lord is very reminiscent of the biblical MT Psalter overall, and to MT psalms containing *Selah* in particular. A call to the Lord in the MT Psalter readily suggests the three themes that *Selah* is found with—judgment, blessing, and salvation. If a call to the Lord at the Temple Mount were found (which here we have evidence of that), the person inscribing this would have had a future hope for intervention (i.e. the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple) on behalf of the Temple, and for blessing on behalf of the individual’s life.

Kfar Alma Synagogue

The *Kfar Alma* synagogue dates to the third century AD, and as it seems, by this time *Selah* was commonly associated with blessing and benediction among lay people.⁸ This inscription was found on a lintel of a synagogue in Upper Galilee—the man who constructed it etched this inscription into the lintel itself. It contains, in Hebrew, a blessing for inhabitants of that place and other places in Israel, and then, switching to Aramaic (but with some Hebrew), the artist’s identification of himself: [In Hebrew:] May there be peace on this place and on all places of His people Israel. Amen, selah. [In Aramaic:] I am Jose the son of Levi the Levite (in Hebrew), the artist who (I) made [this

⁷ Article adapted by BAR editor Hershel Shanks from a lengthy scholarly study by professors Yoram Tsafrir and Leah di Segni of Hebrew University in *Liber Annuus* published by Studium Biblicum Franciscanum. See: *Biblical Archaeology Review* 40.5 (Sept/Oct 2014), 36.

⁸ Steven Fraade, “The Rehov Inscriptions and Rabbinic Literature—Matters of Language,” in *Talmuda De-Eretz Israel: Archaeology and the Rabbis in Late Antique Palestine* (New York: Yeshiva University, 2014), 237.

lintel].”⁹ This appears to be a collective blessing for the people of Israel and for those who enter this synagogue, thus again linking *Selah* with a future anticipation of blessing.

Ein Nashot

This inscription is the first of two that will be surveyed briefly; yet provide an element not seen with *Selah* in the MT, LXX, or DSS. An ancient hall in *Ein Nashot*, a Jewish agricultural village in the Golan, was excavated in 1978 in which a piece of plaster was found saying, “Amen. Amen. Selah. Shalom.”¹⁰ There is no context, thus it is hard to say what accompanied this inscription. However, this is the first instance (in my studies) of another word following *Selah*. Even though context is lacking for this inscription, *Selah* is occurring with an important word—Shalom. Shalom, the Hebrew word for peace, suggests that whatever this accompanied was meant to anticipate peace. Whether it was a blessing for a people group, or over a place, we may never know. However, the next (and last) inscription may help shed light on the *Ein Nashot* inscription.

The Gerasa Synagogue

The largest extant section of a mosaic floor in the synagogue of *Gerasa*, one of the best preserved cities of the Decapolis, contained a familiar cluster of Jewish symbols including a Greek inscription surrounded by several animals bordering a menorah. The inscription reads: “To the most holy place, Amen. Selah. Peace be upon the congregation.”¹¹ Here we find a second instance of a word, in this case a phrase that

⁹ Jean Perrot, “Découvertes récentes en Palestine,” in *Syria* T.27, Fasc. ½ (1950), 196. The Hebrew and Aramaic text reads: יהי מולש לע מוקמה הזה לעו לכ תמוקמ ומע לארשי [א]ןמ הלס הנא הסוי רב יול ולה[י]הנמוא תדבעד [יידה הפוקש]

¹⁰ Robert C. Gregg, “Marking Religious and Ethnic Boundaries: Cases from the Ancient Golan Heights,” in *Church History* 69.3 (Sept. 2000), 527-528.

¹¹ Estēe Dvorjetski, “The Synagogue-Church at Gerasa in Jordan: A Contribution to the Study of Ancient Synagogues,” in *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 121, H.2 (2005), 140.

immediately follows *Selah*. An inscription on the north side of the hall reads: “Peace be upon all Israel, Amen, Amen, *Selah*. Pinhas son of Baruch, Yose son of Samuel, and Judan son of Hizkiyah.”

Although the second inscription from the north side of the hall doesn’t contain a word or phrase that immediately follows *Selah* (beside the identification of the people in this case), it still contains a familiar element—one of peace. Whether *Selah* is being used in reference to call upon the Lord to bring peace for the congregation, or peace for all of Israel, it is ushering in a future anticipation of blessing for the Lord’s people.

On a side note, *Gerasa* was later called Antioch, and the rabbinic Sages identified it with *Ramoth Gilead*, which was considered one of the cities of refuge.¹² In the Hebrew Bible, the Lord is usually seen as a place of refuge, the One who provides salvation and help in times of trouble (cf. *Selah* psalms 32:7, 62:8, and Hab. 3). Thus, *Selah*’s occurrences with the themes of blessing, judgment, and salvation seems to be high as peace here is directly correlated with blessing and salvation—the future anticipation of refuge in the Lord.

Aramaic Incantation Bowls

As the inscriptions close with familiar themes, can the same be said for incantations? Are these literary artifacts sealed with a *Selah* as well? The term ‘incantation’ carries many connotations but is most closely associated with ancient Jewish magic. As with texts found at Qumran, these Aramaic incantations reveal the Jewish writer’s fear of malevolent demons, along with other evil spirits who sought their life.¹³ Incantations

¹² Dvorjetski, “The Synagogue-Church at Gerasa,” 144. Reuven Hammer, *The Classic Midrash: Tannaitic Commentaries on the Bible* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995), 484-485.

¹³ Gideon Bohak, “Mystical Texts, Magic, and Divination,” 1.

were written on amulets to be worn by the stricken, on bowls to be used by the stricken, or even as a literary piece to be read by (or over) the stricken. With an oral use of *Selah* unveiled at Qumran in the Dead Sea Scrolls, these Aramaic magic bowls support the use of *Selah* as a live/oral term in antiquity. One of the major works on the corpus of Aramaic incantation bowls will be surveyed here;¹⁴ this seminal work on the bowls contains numerous *Selah* occurrences which lend credence to the use of the term in ancient inscriptions as well as its use in the DSS.

Jewish Incantation Bowls from Babylonia

Selah's presence in oral culture reveals yet another layer of its use in antiquity, and its presence becomes increasingly prevalent as the incantation bowls are brought to light. Charles D. Isbell's doctoral dissertation became a seminal publication regarding seventy-two bowls from Sasanian Babylonia before and after 600 AD.¹⁵ He noted Thomas Ellis' observation¹⁶ that the writers of the bowls were most certainly Jews due to the high number of "hallelujahs" and "selahs" in the text.¹⁷ Of the seventy-two bowls (texts), almost all of them contain *Selah* at least once. Some, worth particular mention, will be surveyed below. As we transition from the ancient inscriptions that utilized the term, we are left with two occurrences of a word or phrase following *Selah*. Charles Isbell's compilation of bowl texts further confirms *Selah*'s use with other terms, as well as common themes found in the MT, LXX, and DSS texts.

¹⁴ Charles D. Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1975).

¹⁵ Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls*, 2.

¹⁶ See: Austen Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Ninevah and Babylon* (G.P. Putnam and Company, 1853).

¹⁷ Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls*, 3.

Text 3

*Do not injure them with any evil inquiry, or bewilder them, or scatter them, or sin against them, or appear to them, either in a dream of the night or in slumber during the day, from this day and forever. Amen. Amen. Selah. And I further charge and adjure you. May the Great Prince frighten you away, the breaker of your bone and the remover of your rod. And by the seventy men who grasp the seventy sharp sickles to kill all evil demons and to expel all impious tormentors are they cast prostrate in troops and cast down upon their beds. Amen. Amen. Selah. Hallelujah.*¹⁸

Beginning with Text 3, *Selah* makes its appearance twice, including a “hallelujah” after the second occurrence. As promises are made for future expectancy, the text begins with “In your name, Lord of salvation, 2) great Savior of love....”¹⁹ The seal of protection, which in turn invokes blessing and salvation, is evident at the outset; that the splendor of תואבצ will remove all evil spirits and demons from those who trust in the Most High. Hallelujah then emerges as praise in the reality that awaits them.

Text 10

⁴from the evil eye and from the mighty satan and from and from the many satyrs in the path of the desire of the many, in the name of YHWH ‘H B’H B’H. Amen. Amen. Selah. ⁵According the command of YHWH they would encamp, and according to the command of YHWH they would travel. The observance of YHWH they kept according to the command of YHWH through Moses. And YHWH said to Satan: May YHWH rebuke you, Satan, may YHWH who chose Jerusalem ⁶rebuke you. Is not this a fire-brand snatched from the fire? Amen. Amen. Selah. ⁷What Moses said. Amen. Amen. Selah.

Although this text does not contain a hallelujah, it does maintain three *Selah* occurrences. Oaths are again sworn in the name of YHWH, against whom no evil can stand. As YHWH rebukes Satan in this text, at the center stands “What Moses said. Amen. Amen. Selah.”²⁰ There is not much context for this occurrence, and what Moses said can potentially lead to much speculation. However, much of the text before this statement

¹⁸ Partial reproduction of the bowl texts, in English, are included in this section. All translations by Charles Isbell.

¹⁹ Isbell, 22.

²⁰ Ibid., 41.

speaks of YHWH's rebuke of Satan in which is intrinsically tied to His sovereignty over evil, which in turn provides blessing and salvation for the people of the Most High.

Text 12

¹⁶. . . . And again, you will not return to them from this day and forever. Amen. Amen. Selah. Sealed against him e[vil] lilith and evil spirit ¹⁷upon his chariot or kill you will go far from this Ras[noi] the daughter of Marat. May they be preserved for l[ife]! Amen. Amen. Selah. Hallelujah.

Text 12 presents yet another text containing a “hallelujah” after *Selah*. As the hallelujah exudes praise, the two occurrences of *Selah* ward off evil demons and liliths that shall “not return to them [the people in this text] from this day and forever” and that the daughter “may be preserved for life.”²¹ Divine protection surely warrants praise and satisfaction for the future blessing of preservation.

Text 20

¹¹or in a dream of the day, in the name of MTHMN Y'BGBYB DYDY TDTY by [the signet-ring upon which has been carved and engraved the] Ineffable [Name] from the (first) days of the world, ¹²even the six days of Creation. Amen. Amen. Selah. Hallelujah.

Text 20 ushers in another concept seen in passing in the Israeli private bowl collection—the mention of a signet ring to seal the incantation. As the text begins with a directive for the salvation of the house of 'Epra, it promptly ends with a seal from the signet ring engraved “with the Ineffable [name] from the (first) days of the world, 12) even the six days of Creation.”²² The hallelujah and *Selah* are invoking the promise of future blessing and salvation on behalf of the writer and/or speaker's house. Seen in texts 3 and 12 as well, other Aramaic bowls use this familiar ending formula, but also invoke an oral aspect of God's support in following the hallelujah with “For Thy name I act,” thus

²¹ Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls*, 46.

²² *Ibid.*, 65.

suggesting an oral promise on the part of the speaker, and an outward affirmation of God's support.²³

Text 23

¹²their possessions, and from all their dwelling in which they dwell, from this day and forever. In the name of YHWH of hosts. Amen. Amen. Selah. May YHWH guard you from all evil, may He guard your life.

This text, like many others, begins with a call for “salvation from the heavens” for a family, their house, and their possessions.²⁴ Its contents reveal that unblemished angels will ban all evil spirits from this family. *Selah* is fixed between its decree in the name of YHWH, and a blessing that the Most High will guard their lives. As YHWH is the guardian of their lives (herein lies salvation), the blessing is seen as something of eternal significance; this eternality will be expounded upon in Text 25.

Text 25

¹²Confirmed and established is salvation from the heavens for Bahmanduk the daughter of Sama. ¹³PRPRT leaven, press it Amen. Amen. Selah. Salvation and peac[e from] the heavens forever and [ever] and ever.

Text 25 is yet another example of an incantation containing birthing imagery. It is in this piece that “salvation and peace from the heavens” are established forever. However, before speaking of peace and salvation, the birthing imagery ends with an “Amen and Amen.”²⁵ Between the two calls for future salvation and peace for this individual, *Selah* makes its appearance. As a doublet of amen occurs without *Selah* under temporal circumstances, *Selah* appears with the doublet of amen under eternal circumstances.

²³ In one of the texts that C.H. Gordon writes on, the text ends with “amen, amen, selah, hallelujah. For Thy name I act!” Gordon notes that the last phrase is a frequent Hebrew formula that “endows the incantation with God's support.” See: C.H. Gordon, “Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” in *Orientalia* 10 (1941), 118-119.

²⁴ Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls*, 71.

²⁵ Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls*, 76.

Thus, items such as peace and salvation, being associated with *Selah* could have eternal significance.

Concluding Remarks

One would surmise that the study of Aramaic bowl spells and inscriptions have little meaningful impact on the study of the Hebrew Bible. While the “transmission history of the Bible is made more complete with an analysis” of the bowls and inscriptions that have been preserved, the importance of *Selah*’s inclusion demonstrates “widespread familiarity with biblical passages found in liturgy and prayer.”²⁶ Per Peter Lanfer, “We must also be careful to note that the incantation texts do not necessarily correspond to any uniquely Jewish practice, yet it is clear that they reflect some Jewish scribal activity with an impact on the local cultures and their domestic or personal acts of piety.”²⁷ Thus, while the Hebrew language (biblical passages or individual terms) may have been familiar from liturgical contexts, it may not have been understood by the clients of the spells. Its inclusion in bowl texts and inscriptions does, however, corroborate the biblical use of *Selah* (and subsequent familiar themes) in later antiquity.

Selah appears in almost every one of the seventy-two texts contained in Isbell’s work, and it is almost certain that the writers of these texts were Jews due to the prevalence of pure Hebrew sentences and terms such as *Selah* and hallelujah intermixed with Aramaic.²⁸ While each of the inscriptions and incantations are different, they all reveal the multi-facted nature of *Selah*. Familiar themes that have been presented—

²⁶ Peter T. Lanfer, “Why Biblical Scholars Should Study Aramaic Bowl Spells,” in *Aramaic Studies* 13 (2015), 11. For the orality of these texts see: L. Mock, “Oral Law, Oral Magic: Some Observations on Talmudic Magic,” in *ZUTOT* 5.1 (2008), 9-14.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁸ Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Ninevah and Babylon*, 435. See also: James A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia, PA: The University Museum, 1913).

blessing, judgment, and salvation—are formed in their own contexts, in their own time. Each context contains an element of future oriented hope that benefits the person who either constructed a synagogue or ancient mosaic floor, or for those who desired protection from demons and evil spirits. Familiar placement at the end of sentiments also mirrors *Selah*'s use in the MT, LXX, and DSS as theme and structure intertwine. And, as incantations were written and then performed aloud over the families to invoke protection, we again find *Selah* in its oral element as it correlates once again with familiar themes found in the MT.²⁹ Thus, through its diversity in use, we are able to see a progression in the use of the term that reveals its tradition history in the context of not only liturgy, but in spiritual protection associated with divine blessing through the ages.

²⁹ For more in-depth studies of Aramaic bowls besides that of Isbell, see publications from Cyrus H. Gordon, "An Aramaic Incantation," in *AASOR* 14 (1934), 141-143; "Aramaic Incantation Bowls," in *Orientalia* 10 (1941), 116-141; and "Two Aramaic Incantations," in *BNES* (1978), 231-244. Also, Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Aramaic Magic Bowls," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85 (1965), 511-523. Isbell also wrote a good introduction worth noting, "The Story of the Aramaic Magical Incantation Bowls," in *BA* 41.1 (1978), 5-16. Therapeutic functions of the bowls can be found in H. Walker, "Possible Psychological Roles of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls: Therapeutic Functions of Belief in Demons and the Practice of Incantations," in *Aramaic Studies* 13 (2015), 95-109.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research has been to understand how *Selah* (an obscure term occurring throughout the Hebrew Psalter and Habakkuk, as well as extra biblical sources) was employed in antiquity. Through the examination of the MT Psalter, Habakkuk, LXX, DSS, pseudepigraphal works, and inscriptions and incantations, common themes and uses emerged—some unexpected. With a term that has, for centuries, remained in obscurity and relegated to musical status, it became necessary to approach the works containing *Selah* from a different perspective.

I have noted that the term may have been misunderstood as texts were translated through the centuries. Early studies of the Psalms were influenced, and continue to be influenced, by Hermann Gunkel's *Sitz im Leben*. The move from *Sitz im Leben* to *Sitz im Buch* eventually provided a way to seek out literary and contextual links that would bind psalms containing *Selah* together. It is through this research that I set out on a journey to temporarily lay aside the liturgical framework and briefly analyze where *Selah* occurred, and what its surrounding context conveyed in light of its position amid a literary masterpiece.

Back to the Beginning

After a brief synopsis of individual contributions concerning the meaning of *Selah*, chapter two explored the backgrounds necessary for understanding *Selah* in each of the

Second Temple period sources used throughout the thesis. Of particular value was noting that the landscape of Psalter studies has been changing with fervent influence over the last few decades¹—and that to appreciate the literary genius while also esteeming the liturgical function of the MT Psalter, we must approach the text in a different manner. It was noted that *Selah* has been commonly assigned as a liturgical marker in part due to Hermann Gunkel’s genre distinctions and *Sitz im Leben*. Individual psalms that Gunkel, and subsequently Hermann Mowinckel, classified reflected the influences of the texts’ supposed ancient Near Eastern backgrounds and cultic interpretations. And, almost all scholarship related to the Psalter has been influenced by this work. With little interest in questioning inter-psalm links, the historical framework of the Psalter’s niche in liturgy became the defining factor in Psalter studies. Liturgical influences could then be seen in the way scholars sought to define *Selah* as the Psalter as a whole had become loosely discussed in scholarly literature.

The term’s placement among Books I-III, and a brief appearance in Book V, has left many wondering why its distribution seems so haphazard. And, because of that, there have been many suggestions as to its meaning. Today’s common understanding is that of a pause in the text within the context of liturgy. Three major propositions have also held prominent positions: 1) *Selah* as a synonym of חַסֵּד or לְוַעֲלֵם conveying the notion of forever; 2) a derivative of the root לָלַח meaning to raise voices in praise, or make the instruments louder; and 3) an acronym for a phrase in Numbers 14:19 which reads: חַסֵּד אֵן וְלַעֲלֵם הַזֶּה. While all of these suggestions have merit in their understanding of *Selah*, it would seem that they are tied to the term’s liturgical use

¹ Joachim Becker, *Wege der Psalmenexegese* (SBS 78; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1966).

instead of thematic or structural components that permeate the psalms as individuals, and as a collective whole.

Thematic elements began to emerge as we progressed through the 39 psalms containing *Selah* in chapter three. Since *Selah* has most commonly been assigned as a liturgical marker, it was best to see, through an analysis of the term, if there was another plausible meaning and/or function of this obscure term in Hebrew poetry. As noted above, the most common suggestion for *Selah* has been that it functions as a pause in the text due to the fact that it is almost always found in poetic texts at the end of a stanza, with the exception of four instances in the MT where it occurs in the middle of a verse. A musical meaning for *Selah* had also been amplified due to the appearance of musical terminology embedded in the superscriptions. However, it should be noted that the terminology deemed musical is also obscure. It is highly likely that *Selah* could have functioned in some musical capacity since Scripture was cultivated among an oral culture. Indeed, the poetic format of the Psalter presented a context of meter that was suitable for public reading and aided in the memorization of Scripture.

While *Selah* had some function in liturgical circles, it is not probable that was its only purpose as we have seen throughout this research. Charles Briggs' scholarship also set the stage for promoting a non-musical use of *Selah* by noting that it was suspiciously absent from the Hallel psalms—those psalms most suited for public worship. Other propositions were made, some only in passing. G. Dalman and Paulus Cassel proposed that *Selah* was a signifier for the column, page, or space between two lines while Gottlieb Reine suggested it was an acronym for Numbers 14:19 which, translated from the

Hebrew says, “Please forgive the sins of this people.”² Some even went so far as to say that the *Selah* notations were misplaced, especially in regard to their position in the Book of Habakkuk.³ *Selah* has also been found in the psalms containing the names of well-known groups such as the families of Asaph and Korah.⁴ These families were not just known for their singing and musical direction, but for their prophetic gifts as well. Frank Lothar Hossfeld even noted that most of the speeches attributed to God in the Asaph psalms do not reflect cultic prophecy (which lent itself to liturgy) but rather theological reflection.⁵ In the context of theology, *Selah* has found itself in verses that describe the Lord and His deliverance over evil—the same context of deliverance over evil and judgment that is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and incantation texts.

In chapter four, we saw that the Book of Habakkuk used archaic language to express the awesomeness of the glory of the coming of the Lord. The prophet’s “extensive use of the most awe-inspiring of natural phenomena in order to convey the sense of God’s overwhelming power” as seen in OT passages such as Ex. 19, Ps. 18:7-19, Ps. 50:3, Ps. 77:16-20, and Nah. 1:2-8 is part of the thematic imagery of theophany that often is punctuated with a *Selah*. So as to highlight critical junctures in the text (sin, judgment, and salvation) Habakkuk could have employed *Selah* to emphasize the kingship of Yahweh as a reminder that individuals are but mere men.

² T. K. Cheyne, *The Book of Psalms* (London: Kegan Paul, 1884), xli; J. Parisot, “Signification Musicale de Sélah-Diapsalma,” in *Revue Biblique* (1899), 577.

³ Norman H. Snaith, “Selah,” in *Vetus Testamentum* 2.1 (1952), 53.

⁴ In the census of Ezra 2, Asaph is supposed as the ancestor of all singers. He is one of the three Levitical families, and the Chronicler makes him a contemporary of David (see: Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 96). Heman and Ethan were famous wise men and veteran authors of wisdom, according to Mowinckel. As native Canaanites, they were identified with the guild of temple musicians, and were possibly members of the Sons of Korah (pp. 96-97).

⁵ Quote of Frank Lothar Hossfeld from *Das Prophetische in den Psalmen*, pp. 223-243, in Rolf A. Jacobsen, *Many are Saying: The Function of Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Psalter* (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

Chapter five examined the Septuagint, which presented perceived challenges as *Selah*'s placement differs between the LXX and MT traditions. The LXX translators also did not transliterate the term as σελε, but used διάψαλμα (an intensification of musical instruments) to represent *Selah* in the MT. Highly possible that *Selah*'s meaning was lost by the time the LXX was translated, we should also consider that the additional references and places where it is lacking between the MT and LXX were due to interpretive moves. Translation between any two languages always involves a degree of interpretation⁶, and the scribes may have taken liberty in placing διάψαλμα where they saw fit. Thus, there was no standard organization of the term across the MT and LXX witnesses. This, however, does not mean that the people of the time lacked understanding about the term, just that they chose to employ διάψαλμα in a way that differed from the MT's use. Despite differing placement, the context surrounding the term remains familiar. Common elements of danger, judgment, and salvation permeate the LXX psalms containing διάψαλμα.

Chapter six covered the DSS whereby we have a surprising piece of evidence that has previously gone undiscovered until now. Of the eleven extant manuscripts containing psalms from Qumran and surrounding sites, non-biblical scroll 11Q11 (Apocryphal Psalms) contains ׀ ׀ ׀ ׀ before *Selah*, suggesting the term was spoken aloud and not used as a pause or space between two lines. Thus, *Selah* very well could have been a common oral recitation as we have evidenced here in 11Q11. Susan Niditch said, "The evidence of an oral world shines through the use of written words...in such cultures, an otherworldly quality is attributed to special writing that is archaic (e.g. runes) or foreign or as in this

⁶ Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 21.

case to writing that is familiar and yet unintelligible, like writing seen through a glass darkly.”⁷ *Selah* may have been widely used in particular settings or contexts, but became unintelligible (in a loose sense) to its later readers. If *Selah* was widely used in the liturgy and orality of the Second Temple period, we would also expect to find it more often in the Dead Sea Scrolls in such compositions as Songs for the Sabbath Sacrifice, yet it is not pervasive—even in extant Psalms manuscripts. However, because of the DSS’ relevance for textual criticism, it is clear that we can ascertain the term was not only used in the liturgy of the Second Temple period, but in particular kinds of texts.

It then comes as no surprise that both the biblical and non-biblical manuscripts containing the term center around issues such as sin, judgment, and redemption that are common among the MT, Habakkuk, and LXX texts. The only difference preserved in the DSS is 8HevXIIgr where the scribe chose to transliterate the Hebrew into Greek as σελε. This Naḥal Ḥever text’s difference does not have any bearing on the context in which it was placed as it still serves to highlight common thematic threads that espouse important aspects of spiritual concern. So as the LXX and DSS left us with visions of the future, we can begin to see a thematic trend through imagery marked by *Selah* within the context of sin, judgment, and redemption.

Chapter seven surveyed pseudepigraphal works from the 1st century B.C. that contain *Selah*. The Psalms of Solomon, although not a biblical work in a strict sense, used the Greek term διάψαλμα in the context of suffering which then builds to divine intervention. Serving as a religious interpretation of the events in 1st century B.C. Judea, familiar motifs are also prevalent in this work. Thus, it seems safe to say that *Selah* finds

⁷ Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 80.

itself embedded with particular language and themes that promote faith in a higher power. As such, *Selah*'s occurrence in the Odes is simply a rendition of Habakkuk 3 in the MT, so there was no need to reiterate the content of chapter four of the present thesis whose themes undoubtedly correlate with other ancient witnesses.

Chapter eight's incantations and inscriptions, although later witnesses, also revealed familiar themes found throughout the Second Temple period sources surveyed. The inscriptions held *Selah* in a context of future blessing while the Aramaic magic bowls embedded *Selah* in a call for divine protection in the face of danger. Thus, the diversity of *Selah* can be seen through the liturgical, structural, and thematic spheres in which it has been employed in antiquity.

Thematic Interpretation of *Selah*

It is clear that thematic threads run throughout the MT Psalter and other witnesses from antiquity that contain *Selah*. *Selah*'s placement, rooted in the Davidic hope of Books I-III, reveals itself in Book V pointing back to the start of it all...the kingship of Yahweh. "In virtually every ancient culture of which we have record, some form of divine kingship is attested."⁸ Thirty-nine psalms contain *Selah*, and they all share a number of common elements that ultimately point to the belief in sin and a righteous deliverer. Theophany, divine speech, sin, judgment, salvation, and temple language permeate these psalms.⁹ The overall picture of Yahweh's kingship within the context of a sin, judgment, and redemption plays out in numerous descriptions of His sovereignty over man and over the

⁸ James A. Wharton, "Psalm 47," in *Interpretation* 47.2 (April 1993), 163.

⁹ Form-critic Hermann Gunkel even sent out a warning about the divine speech in the Psalter. He warned, if a psalm is in the form of a liturgy, then interpretation of the divine speech within that psalm will have to allow for the repeated quotation of that divine speech as the liturgy was re-used over time (see: Rolf A. Jacobsen, *Many Are Saying: The Function of Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Psalter* (London: T&T Clark, 2004); Rolf quotes Gunkel in this work). The psalms that contain *Selah* do not allow for the divine speech to repeat over and over as it would be long and tedious in the midst of an oral culture.

whole of creation. Even when the people felt rejected by God (cf. *Selah* pss. 44, 77, 82, 83, 85, 88, 89) they recounted His provision over creation (i.e. “You have caused the earth to quake,” Ps. 60:4; “You turned the sea to dry land,” Ps. 66:6). The ancient Israelites longed to be in the presence of the living God who made His dwelling on earth in Zion. Zion frequently shows up in psalms containing *Selah* (cf. Pss. 3, 4, 7, 9, 20, 24, 46-48, 50, 68, 76, 84, among others), as the temple was a place of salvation and refuge from wickedness. Refuge (safety) “is a ‘foundational metaphor’ in the Psalter,” and “connecting metaphoric language about God to the temple sheds light on the theological significance of the temple itself.”¹⁰ Thus, the religious ideology of the ancient Israelites can be seen through the language of Zion that encompasses the sin, judgment, salvation, and theophanic elements that *Selah* is found with.

Another major element in the psalms that contain *Selah* is the direct contrast made between man and God. The God of Israel was portrayed as a conquerer, a mighty divine warrior who had the ultimate power over life and death (cf. Ps. 49:16). Only He could ransom souls from the power of the grave (Pss. 49:9; 89:49), and only He had power over all creation (Pss. 60:4; 68:9; 76:9; 83:19; 89:12, among others). Man is but vapor in this life (a theme present among many *Selah* psalms), but God reigns forever; and those who trust in Him will find eternal refuge with Him. Thus, the eternal dwelling space of God is concretely embodied in Zion from which all judgment and salvation flow. So although *Selah* may not function in a consistent structural manner, the context in which it is embedded holds exceptional theological significance.

¹⁰ William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 15-30; and Shalom E. Holtz, “God as Refuge and Temple as Refuge in the Psalms,” in *The Temple of Jerusalem: From Moses to the Messiah*, edited by Steven Fine (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 17.

Accordingly, the ancient Israelites were a people of great faith, even though they fell short at times. In Israel's history, God was increasingly immersing Himself in the world.¹¹ And behind all events in that history laid the mind of God and His will.¹² He was always active, even in His silence. Within the scope of Israel's salvation history, the temple of God in Zion was known as a place of divine protection in which the people sought an encounter with the living God. Even in the midst of questioning God's faithfulness, the people praised Him for His faithfulness, not only for acts in the past, but also for the anticipated future. It is said that God inhabits the praises of His people (cf. Ps. 22:3), and so even those that questioned Him still had Him closer than they could have ever imagined. For this reason, *Selah*'s occurrence in this thematic capacity that highlights the need for divine intervention is significant for understanding the faith of the ancient Israelites. There is a recognizable pattern in theme across the *Selah* psalms if the Psalter is read as a literary masterpiece instead of a liturgical one. As a result, one of *Selah*'s purposes could be to highlight the divine nature, the sovereignty, and the personal needs (on the people's behalf) of the God of Israel. His attributes were never withheld, and His salvation was readily available to all the nations of the earth. He ushered in foreign kingdoms that put their faith in Him, and He protected His chosen ones (Israel) as He went out to battle. As a king from the line of David, Yahweh reigns over His kingdom from Zion, brings salvation to Israel and the nations, and fulfills the covenants of old for all eternity.

In part due to *Selah*'s placement, the editor of the Psalter may have seen that war had been declared on the Lord, and the Psalter (as a Book) takes the reader on a journey

¹¹ John H. Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44.1 (March 2001), 9.

¹² Ibid.

through sin, judgment, and redemption; painting a picture of the cycle of our very lives. The future-oriented message comes as no surprise to the religious reader. Concern for personal salvation, it makes sense that the writers of these texts were pre-occupied with the agent of their salvation. Texts that embody the hope that our futures will rest in the One that the Psalter speaks so adamantly about (Pss. 32:7; 62:8), a hope to receive the salvation and protection that *Selah* points to provides a respite for many. As lives pass through the sin, judgment, and redemption cycle we are reminded by the presence of *Selah*. So as *Selah* leads us into a future-oriented trajectory, spiraling toward experiencing the longing for divine intervention, different emphases in each context may occur—temporal and eternal. However individual or collective they are, both emphases are valid conclusions, they are merely realized in different contexts.¹³ It has been said that history repeats itself, and these psalms containing *Selah* are a testament to that. Numerous generations, however different, experience many of the same issues. Thus, the message of the psalms containing *Selah* is timeless—there is always a place where sin, judgment, and redemption dwell.

Selah's Place in the Psalter

At first glance, such a plethora of complex evidence regarding the meaning of *Selah* would seem like a hopeless task in understanding its use in antiquity. And, although *Selah* appears seventy-one times in the Psalter, and three times in the Book of Habakkuk, its meaning remains obscure. Most, however, agree that it represents some sort of instruction for worship. Yet, it hasn't been until now that we have concrete evidence that

¹³ Mika Pajunen, "Qumranic Psalm 91: A Structural Analysis," in *Scripture and Transition: Essays on the Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo*, ed. by Anssi Voitila and Jutta Jokiranta (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 605. Thanks to Mika Pajunen for making this statement, which wholeheartedly relates to this research on *Selah*.

the term was actually spoken aloud. The discovery of 11Q11 has allowed us to reveal that *Selah* was spoken as a statement of faith, as seen by the manuscript's extant portion as: וַנְּעִיֹר לְמֵאֵל לְמֵאֵל הַלֵּל. What we can also ascertain is that the term was not a paratextual marker, but it was a component of the biblical text intended to be read aloud. The idea that διάψαλμα, *Selah*'s LXX counterpart, could have been used as a leading motif also seems likely due to the important theological themes (such as divine speech, threat, judgment, and salvation) that are found throughout the Hebrew Psalter.

That being said, as far as *Selah* is concerned, the MT and LXX's use of the term remains fluid. And although its context reveals familiar themes across both witnesses, the subsequent Hebrew authors most likely used it as a transition marker at junctures perceived to be important in the lives of the community. *Selah* could have also been a live term as it was not only used in biblical texts. With a contextual element of danger and its apotropaic effects in incantations, *Selah*'s intervention as a speech act surprisingly parallel's earlier uses of the term in the MT, LXX, and DSS. We do not know much about the use of the psalms in oral tradition, but an intervention of a speech act (as evidenced by וַנְּעִיֹר in 11Q11 of the DSS) suggests that *Selah* was employed as an answer of acknowledgment, not a command for musical accompaniment. Thus, a purely liturgical use of the term should be reconsidered in light of thematic evidence among the psalms that contain the term, as well as the newly discovered evidence extant in the DSS.

This study of ancient witnesses such as the MT, LXX, and DSS has thus brought to light various interpretations of *Selah* during the process of textual stabilization. Further, these witnesses are a testament to the original Hebrew authors' affinity for intertextual links, demonstrating their keen familiarity with the Psalter during its

developmental period. As a result, despite the fluidity between witnesses, a fuller understanding of *Selah* as a statement of faith in times of enduring stress should be considered when examining its placement in the MT-150 Psalter. One major challenge to arriving at more definitive conclusions concerning *Selah*'s meaning and use is overcoming the complexity of Hebrew poetry—which we likely will never fully understand. Nonetheless, here we have provided a more comprehensive study of *Selah* in antiquity due to new insights that were previously undiscovered until the mid-20th century.

APPENDIX 1. SELAH OCCURRENCES¹

Masoretic Text	Septuagint	Dead Sea Scrolls
	<i>Ps. 2:2</i>	
Ps. 3:3, 5, 9	Ps. 3:3, 5	
Ps. 4: 3, 5	Ps. 4:3, 5	
Ps. 7:6	Ps. 7:6	
Ps. 9: 17 , 21	Ps. 9:21	
Ps. 20:4	Ps. 19:4	
Ps. 21:3	Ps. 20:3	
Ps. 24:6, 10	Ps. 23:6	
Ps. 32:4, 5, 7	Ps. 31:4, 7	
	<i>Ps. 33:11 (MT 34)</i>	
Ps. 39:6, 12	Ps. 38: 6, 12	
Ps. 44:9	Ps. 43:9	4QPs ^c
Ps. 46:4, 8, 12	Ps. 45:4, 8	
Ps. 47:5	Ps. 46:5	
Ps. 48:9	Ps. 47:9	
Ps. 49:14, 16	Ps. 48: 14, 16	4QPs ^c , [4QPs ^j]
Ps. 50:6	Ps. 49:6, 15	[11QPs ^{e2}]
Ps. 52:5, 7	Ps. 51:5, 7	4QPs ^c
Ps. 54:5	Ps. 53:5	
Ps. 55:8, 20	Ps. 54:8, 20	
Ps. 57:4, 7	Ps. 56:4, 7	
Ps. 59:6, 14	Ps. 58:6, 14	11QPs ^d
Ps. 60:6	Ps. 59:6	
Ps. 61:5	Ps. 60:5	
Ps. 62:5, 9	Ps. 61:5, 9	
Ps. 66:4, 7, 15	Ps. 65:4, 7, 15	
Ps. 67:2, 5	Ps. 66:2, 5	4QPs ^a
Ps. 68: 8, 20, 33	Ps. 67:8, 14 , 20, 33	
Ps. 75:4	Ps. 74:4	
Ps. 76:4, 10	Ps. 75:4, 10	

¹ Italicized and bold references are the additions and/or omissions between the MT and LXX texts. Brackets around DSS manuscripts indicate that an editor of the manuscript has reconstructed the verses listed in the MT.

Ps. 77:4, 10, 16	Ps. 76:4, 10, 16	
	Ps. 79:7 (MT 80)	
Ps. 81:8	Ps. 80:8	11QPs ^d , Mas1e
Ps. 82:2	Ps. 81:2	Mas1e, 11Q13
Ps. 83:9	Ps. 82:9	Mas1e
Ps. 84: 5, 9	Ps. 83:5, 9	Mas1e
Ps. 85:3	Ps. 84:3	Mas1e
Ps. 87:3, 6	Ps. 86:3, 6	
Ps. 88:8, 11	Ps. 87:8	
Ps. 89:5, 38, 46, 49	Ps. 88:5, 38, 46, 49	[4QPs ^e]
	Ps. 93:15 (MT 94)	
Ps. 140:4, 6, 9	Ps. 139:4, 6, 9	11QPs ^a
Ps. 143:6	Ps. 142:6	11QPs ^a , [4QPs ^p]
Hab. 3: 3, 9, 13	Hab. 3:3, 9, 13	Mur88, 5/6Hev1b, 8HevXIIgr

APPENDIX 2. SEPTUAGINT TEXTS

TEXT AND TRANSLATION OF PSALMS OF SOLOMON 17 AND 18¹

Psalm of Solomon 17 (Excerpt: vv. 25-30)	
25) ἐν ἀπειλῇ αὐτοῦ φυγεῖν ἔθνη ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐλέγξει ἁμαρτωλοὺς ἐν λόγῳ καρδίας αὐτῶν	25) At his rebuke nations shall flee before him, and he shall reprove sinners for the thoughts of their heart.
26) καὶ συνάξει λαὸν ἅγιον οὗ ἀφηγήσεται ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ κρινεῖ φυλὰς λαοῦ ἡγιασμένου ὑπὸ κυρίου θεοῦ αὐτοῦ	26) And he shall gather together a holy people, whom he shall lead in righteousness, and he shall judge the tribes of the people that has been sanctified by the Lord his God.
27) καὶ οὐκ ἀφήσει ἀδικίαν ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν αὐλισθῆναι ἔτι καὶ οὐ κατοικήσει πᾶς ἄνθρωπος μετ' αὐτῶν εἰδὼς κακίαν γνώσεται γὰρ αὐτοὺς ὅτι πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ εἰσιν αὐτῶν	27) And he shall not suffer unrighteousness to lodge any more in their midst; nor shall there dwell with them any man that knows wickedness, for he shall know them, that they are all sons of their God.
28) καὶ καταμερίσει αὐτοὺς ἐν ταῖς φυλαῖς αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ πάροικος καὶ ἀλλογενὴς οὐ παροικήσει αὐτοῖς ἔτι	28) And he shall divide them according to their tribes upon the land, and neither sojourner nor alien shall sojourn with them any more.
29) κρινεῖ λαοὺς καὶ ἔθνη ἐν σοφίᾳ δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διάψαλμα	29) He shall judge peoples and nations in the wisdom of his righteousness. Selah.
30) καὶ ἔξει λαοὺς ἐθνῶν δουλεύειν αὐτῷ ὑπὸ τὸν ζυγὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν κύριον δοξάσει ἐν ἐπισήμῳ πάσης τῆς γῆς καὶ καθαριεῖ Ἱερουσαλημ ἐν ἁγιασμῷ ὡς καὶ τὸ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς	30) And he shall have the heathen nations to serve him under his yoke; and he shall glorify the Lord in a place to be seen of all the earth.

Psalm of Solomon 18	
ψαλμὸς τῷ Σαλωμῶν ἔτι τοῦ χριστοῦ κυρίου	Psalm of Solomon for/upon Jesus Christ

¹ Translated from Greek and Syriac manuscripts by G. Buchanan Gray, see: R. H. Charles, ed., The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 631-652.

1) κύριε τὸ ἔλεός σου ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἡ χρηστότης σου μετὰ δόματος πλουσίου ἐπὶ Ἰσραὴλ	1) Lord, Thy mercy is over the works of Thy hands for ever; Thy goodness is over Israel with a rich gift.
2) οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου ἐπιβλέποντες ἐπ' αὐτά καὶ οὐχ ὑστερήσει ἐξ αὐτῶν τὰ ὥτά σου ἐπακούει εἰς δέησιν πτωχοῦ ἐν ἐλπίδι	2) Thine eyes look upon them, so that none of them suffers want; Thine ears listen to the hopeful prayer of the poor
3) τὰ κρίματά σου ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν μετὰ ἐλέους καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη σου ἐπὶ σπέρμα Ἀβραὰμ υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ	3) Thy judgments (are executed) upon the whole earth in mercy; And Thy love (is) toward the seed of Abraham, the children of Israel
4) ἡ παιδεία σου ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ὡς υἱὸν πρωτότοκον μονογενῆ ἀποστρέψαι ψυχὴν εὐήκοον ἀπὸ ἀμαθίας ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ	4) Thy chastisement is upon us as (upon) a first-born, only-begotten son, to turn back the obedient soul from folly (what is wrought) in ignorance.
5) καθαρῖσαι ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραὴλ εἰς ἡμέραν ἐλέους ἐν εὐλογίᾳ εἰς ἡμέραν ἐκλογῆς ἐν ἀνάξει χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ	5) May God cleanse Israel against the day of mercy, against the day of choice when He bringeth back His anointed.
6) μακάριοι οἱ γενόμενοι ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις ἰδεῖν τὰ ἀγαθὰ κυρίου ἃ ποιήσει γενεᾷ τῇ ἐρχομένῃ	6) Blessed shall they be that shall be in those days, in that they shall see the goodness of the Lord, which He shall perform for the generation that is to come;
7) ὑπὸ ῥάβδον παιδείας χριστοῦ κυρίου ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ αὐτοῦ ἐν σοφίᾳ πνεύματος καὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἰσχύος	7) under the rod of chastening of the Lord's anointed in the fear of his God, in the spirit of wisdom and righteousness and strength;
8) κατευθῆναι ἄνδρα ἐν ἔργοις δικαιοσύνης φόβῳ θεοῦ καταστῆσαι πάντας αὐτοὺς ἐνώπιον κυρίου	8) That he may direct (every) man in the works of righteousness by the fear of God, that he may establish them all before the Lord,
9) γενεὰ ἀγαθὴ ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμέραις ἐλέους διάψαλμα	9) a good generation (living) in the fear of God in the days of mercy. Selah.
10) μέγας ἡμῶν ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἔνδοξος ἐν ὑψίστοις κατοικῶν ὁ διατάξας ἐν πορείᾳ φωστῆρας εἰς καιροὺς ὥρων ἀφ' ἡμερῶν εἰς ἡμέρας καὶ οὐ παρέβησαν ἀπὸ ὁδοῦ ἧς ἐνετείλω αὐτοῖς	10) Great is our God and glorious, dwelling in the highest. (It is He) who hath established in (their) courses the lights (of heaven) for determining seasons from year to year, and they have not turned aside from the way which He appointed them.
11) ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ ἡ ὁδὸς αὐτῶν καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἔκτισεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἕως αἰῶνος	11) In the fear of God (they pursue) their path every day, from the day God created them and for evermore.
12) καὶ οὐκ ἐπλανήθησαν ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἔκτισεν αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ γενεῶν ἀρχαίων οὐκ ἀπέστησαν ὁδῶν αὐτῶν εἰ μὴ ὁ θεὸς ἐνετείλατο αὐτοῖς ἐν ἐπιταγῇ δούλων αὐτοῦ	12) And they have erred not since the day He created them. Since the generations of old they have not withdrawn from their path, unless God commanded them (to do so) by the command of His servants.

ODES 4 AND TRANSLATION

1) προσευχή Αμβακουμ	1) Prayer of Habakkuk
2) κύριε είσακήκοα τὴν ἀκοήν σου καὶ ἐφοβήθην κατενόησα τὰ ἔργα σου καὶ ἐξέστην ἐν μέσῳ δύο ζώων γνωσθήσῃ ἐν τῷ ἐγγίξειν τὰ ἔτη ἐπιγνωσθήσῃ ἐν τῷ παρεῖναι τὸν καιρὸν ἀναδειχθήσῃ ἐν τῷ ταραχθῆναι τὴν ψυχὴν μου ἐν ὀργῇ ἐλέους μνησθήσῃ	2) O Lord, I have heard Your speech and was afraid; O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.
3) ὁ θεὸς ἐκ Θαιμαν ἦξει καὶ ὁ ἅγιος ἐξ ὄρους Φαραν κατασκίου δασέως διάψαλμα ἐκάλυπεν οὐρανοὺς ἡ ἀρετὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ αἰνέσεως αὐτοῦ πλήρης ἡ γῆ	3) God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran Selah His glory covered the heavens and the earth was full of His praise.
4) καὶ φέγγος αὐτοῦ ὡς φῶς ἔσται κέρατα ἐν χερσὶν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔθετο ἀγάπησιν κραταιὰν ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ	4) His brightness was like the light; He had rays flashing from His hand, and there His power was hidden.
5) πρὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ πορεύσεται λόγος καὶ ἐξελεύσεται ἐν πεδίλοις οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ	5) Before Him went pestilence, and fever followed at His feet.
6) ἔστη καὶ ἐσαλεύθη ἡ γῆ ἐπέβλεψεν καὶ ἐτάκη ἔθνη διεθρύβη τὰ ὄρη βία ἐτάκησαν βουνοὶ αἰώνιοι	6) He stood and measured the earth; He looked and startled the nations. And the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills bowed. His ways are everlasting.
7) πορείας αἰωνίους αὐτοῦ ἀντὶ κόπων εἶδον σκηνώματα Αἰθιοπῶν πτοηθήσονται καὶ αἱ σκηναὶ γῆς Μαδιαμ	7) I saw the tents of Ethiopia in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian trembled.
8) μὴ ἐν ποταμοῖς ὀργίσθης κύριε ἢ ἐν ποταμοῖς ὁ θυμὸς σου ἢ ἐν θαλάσῃ τὸ ὄρημά σου ὅτι ἐπιβήσῃ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἵππους σου καὶ ἡ ἵππασία σου σωτηρία	8) O Lord, were You displeased with the rivers, was Your anger against the rivers, was Your wrath against the sea, that You rode on Your horses, Your chariots of salvation?
9) ἐντείνων ἐντενεῖς τὸ τόξον σου ἐπὶ σκῆπτρα λέγει κύριος διάψαλμα ποταμῶν ῥαγήσεται γῆ	9) Your bow was made quite ready; oaths were sworn over Your arrows. Selah You divided the earth with rivers.
10) ὄψονταί σε καὶ ὠδινήσουσιν λαοὶ σκορπίζων ὕδατα πορείας ἔδωκεν ἡ ἄβυσσος φωνὴν αὐτῆς ὕψος φαντασίας αὐτῆς ἐπήρθη	10) The mountains saw You and trembled; the overflowing of the water passed by. The deep uttered its voice, and lifted its hands on high.
11) ὁ ἥλιος καὶ ἡ σελήνη ἔστη ἐν τῇ τάξει αὐτῆς εἰς φῶς βολίδες σου πορεύονται εἰς φέγγος ἀστραπῆς ὀπλῶν σου	11) The sun and moon stood still in their habitation; at the light of Your arrows they went, at the shining of your glittering spear.
12) ἐν ἀπειλῇ σου ὀλιγώσεις γῆν καὶ ἐν θυμῷ κατάξεις ἔθνη	12) You marched through the land in indignation; You trampled the nations in anger.
13) ἐξῆλθες εἰς σωτηρίαν λαοῦ σου τοῦ σῶσαι τοὺς χριστοὺς σου ἔβαλες εἰς κεφαλὰς ἀνόμων θάνατον ἐξήγειρας δεσμοὺς ἕως τραχήλου διάψαλμα	13) You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for salvation with Your Anointed, You struck the head from the house of the wicked, by laying bare from foundation to neck. Selah
14) διέκοψας ἐν ἐκστάσει κεφαλὰς δυναστῶν σεισθήσονται ἐν αὐτῇ διανοίξουσιν χαλινοὺς αὐτῶν ὡς ἔσθων πτωχὸς λάθρα	14) You thrust through with his own arrows, the head of his villages. They came out like a whirlwind to scatter me; their rejoicing was like feasting on the poor in secret.

15) καὶ ἐπεβίβασας εἰς θάλασσαν τοὺς ἵππους σου ταρασσοντας ὕδατα πολλὰ	15) You walked through the sea with your horses, through the heap of great waters.
16) ἐφυλαξάμην καὶ ἐπτοήθη ἡ κοιλία μου ἀπὸ φωνῆς προσευχῆς χειλέων μου καὶ εἰσῆλθεν τρόμος εἰς τὰ ὀστέα μου καὶ ὑποκάτωθέν μου ἐταράχθη ἡ ἔξις μου ἀναπαύσομαι ἐν ἡμέρᾳ θλίψεώς μου τοῦ ἀναβῆναι με εἰς λαὸν παροικίας μου	16) When I heard, my body trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered my bones; and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble. When he comes up to the people, He will invade them with his troops.
17) διότι συκῇ οὐ καρποφορήσει καὶ οὐκ ἔσται γενήματα ἐν ταῖς ἀμπέλοις ψεύσεται ἔργον ἐλαίας καὶ τὰ πεδία οὐ ποιήσει βρώσιν ἐξέλιπον ἀπὸ βρώσεως πρόβατα καὶ οὐχ ὑπάρχουσιν βόες ἐπὶ φάτναις ἐξυλάσεως αὐτῶν	17) Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—
18) ἐγὼ δὲ ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ ἀγαλλιάσομαι χαρήσομαι ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτῆρί μου	18) yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.
19) κύριος ὁ θεός μου δύναμίς μου καὶ τάξει τοὺς πόδας μου εἰς συντέλειαν ἐπὶ τὰ ὕψηλὰ ἐπιβιβᾷ με τοῦ νικῆσαι ἐν τῇ ᾠδῇ αὐτοῦ	19) The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills, that I may conquer by His song.

APPENDIX 3. DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Occurrences of <i>Selah</i> in the Dead Sea Scrolls			
Biblical Scrolls			
Manuscript	Reference	Fragment	Image No.
4QPs ^a	Ps. 67: [2], 5	[v. 2] – [18 i 1] v. 5 – 18 i 3	PAM 43.027
4QPs ^c	Ps. 44:9 Ps. 49: 14, 16 Ps. 52: [5], 7	v. 9 – 11 3 v. 14 – 15 i 10 v. 16 – 15 i 13 [v. 5] – [15 iii 1] v. 7 – 15 iii 3	PAM 43.156
4QPs ^e	Ps. 89: [46, 49]	[v. 46] – [7 1] [v. 49] – [8 1]	PAM 43.028
4QPs ^j	Ps. 49: [14, 16]	[v.14] – [3-5 5] [v. 16] – [6 2]	PAM 43.030
4QPs ^p	Ps. 143: [6]	[v. 6] – [2 2]	PAM 43.030 PAM 43.680
11QPs ^a	Ps. 140:4 Ps. 143:6	v. 4 – 27:15 v. 6 – 25:12	PAM 43.791 PAM 43.790
11QPs ^d	Ps. 59:6 Ps. 81:1	v. 6 – 9 3 v. 1 – 13 6	PAM 44.115 PAM 43.976 PAM 43.004
11QPs ^{e?}	Ps. 50: [6]	[v. 6] – [1 2]	PAM 43.794
5/6Hevlb	Ps. 7: [6] Ps. 9:17, 21 Ps. 24:[6, 10]	[Col. III 1 i 2] v. 17 – Col. IV 1 ii 18 v. 21 – Col. IV 1 ii 21 [v. 6] – [Col. XII 11 15] [v. 10] – [Col. XII 11 20]	PAM 42.188 PAM 42.190
8HevXIIgr	Hab. 3:[9], 13	[v. 9] – [19:26] v. 13 – 19:38	PAM 40.574 PAM 40.568
Masle	Ps. 81:8 Ps. 82:2	v. 8 – 1:21 v. 2 – 2:5	SHR 5255

	Ps. 83:9	v. 9 – 2:22	
	Ps: 84:5, 9	v. 5 – 3:12 v. 9 – 3:17	
	Ps. 85:[3]	[v. 3] – [3:26]	
Mur88	Hab. 3:3, 9, 13	v. 3 – 19:6 v. 9 – 19:11 v. 13 – 19:15	PAM 41.499

Occurrences of <i>Selah</i> in the Dead Sea Scrolls			
Non-Biblical Scrolls			
Manuscript	Reference	Fragment	Image No.
4Q381	n/a	21 24 a+b 33+35 [31:3, 9]	PAM 42.826
11Q11	n/a	5 3 6 3 6 6 6 13 6 14	PAM 43.984 PAM 43.985 PAM 43.986 PAM 43.987
11Q13	Ps. 82:2	2 11	PAM M43.979 PAM 44.117 IAA 563769

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