

Psalm 1 and its function as a directive into the Psalter and towards a Biblical Theology¹

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ABSTRACT

Psalm 1 is described in this paper as an entity, but also from a canonical perspective as an introduction into the Psalter, a capacity in which it was perhaps meant to guide the reader towards the 'correct' understanding of the book of Psalms. In the final section, the horizon towards a Biblical Theology is opened from Ps 1, since the psalm could be understood as the nucleus of such a theology.

Ps 1 has enjoyed more than its fair share of attention – not only in the context of recent commentaries on the Psalms – but even already in the history of Jewish and Christian interpretation.² On top of this, the interpretation of this psalm has again come into the spotlight through the perspective of a canonical reading of the Psalter in which the contextualising of individual psalms and the structure and growth of the book of Psalms as a whole have been researched with new vigour. The reason, purpose, and function of its placement at the beginning of the book of Psalms and the implications of this for the interpretation of the Psalter have been investigated anew. In relation to this avenue of research, the present paper has two purposes: 1. Listening to Ps 1 as an individual psalm; 2. Listening to Ps 1 (and Ps 2) as a directive into the Psalms and towards a Biblical Theology.

A LISTENING TO PS 1 AS AN INDIVIDUAL PSALM

1 Translation

The way in which the text is understood, is mirrored in the following translation. It is the result of an attempt to stay close to the Hebrew text while retaining the poetical segmentation of Ps 1.³

¹ This article was written during my Sabbatical while I spent time as a Research Fellow at the Department of Ancient Languages of the University of Pretoria, RSA, during May/June 2005. It is a translation and revision of a contribution I wrote for a Festschrift (cf. Weber 2005). I thank Prof. Phil J. Botha, MA DD, for the translation from German into English, for the discussions we had on Ps 1(–3), and for his friendly conduct of my visit during my stay in South Africa.

² Cf. the bibliographical lists in Seybold 1996:27, and Terrien 2003:69f. In addition to those, the following should be mentioned: Botha 1991; Zenger 1993; Koch 1994; Kratz 1996; Creach 1999; Lohfink 1999; Ebach 2000; Oeming 2000:49–56; Cole 2002; and Hansberger 2002, and Janowski 2006.

³ Cf. with this already Weber 2001:48–51. The translation of Ps 1 given there is changed here, while the exposition is also reconsidered and expanded. For a

- I A 1 a Pronouncements of blessing to the man⁴ who
 b does not walk in companionship with wicked people
 c and on the road of sinners does not step
 d and at the place of mockers does not sit,
 B 2 a but in the directive of the LORD (has) his delight
 b and in his directive he murmuringly meditates day and night.
 C 3 a He will be like a tree, planted at water canals,
 b which will deliver its fruit on its time,
 c and its foliage will not wither.
 d Yes, everything that he may do, will meet with success.
- II D 4 a Not so the wicked;
 b but like chaff (are they),
 c which it will scatter, (the) wind.
 E 5 a Therefore they will not rise, wicked people, in judgement
 b and sinners in a gathering of righteous people.
- III F 6 a Certainly, knowing (is) the LORD (the) way of the righteous,
 b but (the) way of wicked people will perish.

In biblical (Psalmic) poetry, the underlying assumption should be about the interdependence of form and contents. In other words: The form of the psalm should not be regarded as poetical excess or stylistic embellishment. It should be investigated carefully, since it is a vehicle of meaning itself.⁵ Ps 1 also displays poetical structuring, even though the strophic arrangement and rhythm of the psalm display unique qualities which will be discussed shortly. This fundamental supposition should be kept in mind when Ps 1 is subsequently for practical reasons first analysed in terms of its form and afterwards mainly in terms of contents.

2 On form

Psalms are language constructs in which rhythmically demarcated poetic feet (cola) are used as basic building blocks. These as a rule do not occur in isolation (monocola), but appear in pairs (bicola) or as groups of three (tricola) in a verse line, while the interrelatedness of the feet in a verse line can be expressed through a variety of grammatical and semantic links known as *parallelismus membrorum*. Yet it is not only the feet which are connected to form verse lines, but the verse lines combine to form higher structures such as strophes and stanzas. The end result is a structure in which the elements are interrelated and interconnected to a large extent.

discussion of various possibilities of segmentation of Ps 1, cf. Botha 1991:381–393.

⁴ The inclusive meaning ‘man *and* woman’ > ‘human’ is a justified corrective reading of the psalm, but it is (especially because of 1f) not indicated for the context of origin, and is consequently avoided in the translation.

⁵ For a theoretical explication and exemplaric application (with more bibliographic references), cf. Weber 1995a (especially 1–35); Weber 2002a; Weber 2006b.

Verse lines as a rule agree with syntactical segments. In the case of Ps 1, this is, however, only partly true.⁶ This has in the past led to its being segmented variously in terms of feet, lines, strophes, and stanzas.⁷ In my view, the demarcation of stanzas agrees with the three segments that could be described in terms of their contents as ‘the righteous’ (I), ‘the wicked’ (II), and ‘the balance of the ways’ (III). In terms of form, the beginning of the stanzas is supplied with an element of emphasis in each case (אֲשֶׁר־י ‘pronouncements of blessing...’ 1a, לֹא-כֵן ‘Not so...’ 4a, כִּי ‘Certainly...’ 6a). The variation in length of the stanzas and their progressive reduction in size (10 – 5 – 2 lines) are conspicuous. The ‘righteous’ stanza (with its three strophes) has twice the size of the ‘wicked’ stanza (with two strophes), and the concluding last stanza (one strophe) has to be content with one bicolon. The whole of the psalm therefore displays a ‘funnel-structure’, resulting in a heightened focus on the end of the poem.

The staggering of narrative pronouncements and verse-like rhythm are exceptionally evident in stanza I: It is also visible in the translation offered above. On the one hand, the stanza consists only of three sentences (1a–2b.3a–c.3d); on the other, grammatical structuring, the flow of language and rhythm signify segmentation into poetical units. The combining of these two elements results in the phenomenon of overflowing lines (enjambement), which is very evident in 1f. We can only guess why the poetic lines were structured in a linear, narrative way. Possibly it was meant to emphasise the respective aspects of a successful journey (note the use of ‘way’ and ‘walk’) on the one hand and growth (note the being ‘planted’ and bearing ‘fruit’) of the tree on the other also in terms of form. This linear-sequential structure is then expanded by a versical-stereometric one, which is visible in the formation of feet and verse lines. The diction of the first and last line is so close, that they could be viewed as forming the same verse line.⁸ Both are monocola and they seem to frame stanza I as an initial formula of blessing (1a) and concluding promise (3d),⁹

⁶ Despite this peculiarity, we need not describe it as a ‘prosification’, since the remaining features clearly point towards line-rhythm and a general poetic diction.

⁷ Cf., over and above the listed and other commentaries and essays, also Fokkelman 2002:16.

⁸ In this regard it remains a question whether the relative particle should be grouped with 1b on syntactical grounds, or – as is suggested here (with the Masoretes and Fokkelman 2002:16) – with 1a on rhythmic-metrical and phonological grounds (similarity in size of the cola and accentuation and alliterative sound-play – the threefold repetition of the first consonant נ would emphasise the opening character of the psalm).

⁹ The conjunction at the beginning could have a (mild) emphasising or consecutive function. The translation of the hiph‘il of הִלֵּךְ with ‘will meet with success’ brings, in contrast to the usual ‘he will succeed’, the causative aspect better to light (cf. Waltke / O'Connor 1990:446) and suggests a closer connection of the pronouncement to 3abc, where the image of growth similarly emphasises the aspect of allotment.

which relate to one another and which concentrate the metaphoric language of 3abc explicatory.¹⁰ Within this frame, the two tricola which respectively describe the ‘way’ (1bcd)¹¹ and the ‘tree’ (3abc),¹² are connected to one another: The first one explains proper conduct negatively, the second one explains the expected result positively.¹³ At the centre of the stanza, flanked by the two tricola, there is a regular bicolon, 2ab.¹⁴ Its contents render it a perfect fit between the two tricola, since its beginning (כִּי אֲנִי ‘but’) implies a contrast with 1bcd and simultaneously it serves as a foundation for the pronouncements in 3abc. If all these observations are incorporated into a comprehensive look at stanza I, a concentric or chiasmic arrangement of elements on the principle ABCB’A’ results. This implies not only that the corresponding A- and B-sections should be interpreted together, but also that the focus is on the C-section in the middle. Verse 2ab therefore forms the ‘heart’, the ‘centre’ of the stanza about the righteous (I), a fact which should be kept in mind in the subsequent treatment of the contents.

If the proposed structure can be accepted, it transpires that Stanza II, with its opening monocolon (4a) and two bicola (4bc and 5ab) has exactly half the number of feet that stanza I has. This could be taken to imply that the pronouncements about ‘the wicked’ (plural!) do not deserve the same space as those about ‘the righteous’ (singular!). What is more, all three verses of stanza II begin with particles which demarcate the wicked from the righteous, implying that the wicked have no value on their own, but can only be described as a kind of counterfeit product of true humanity. Within the stanza itself, the size of the verse lines grows. It begins with the short line 4a, which has an out-of-breath two-accent staccato rhythm which is carried over into 4bc, and ends with 5ab. This last line is lengthened to a four- or a three-beat rhythm, suitable for defining the result of the comparison. The first key-word in the stanza is

¹⁰ One could therefore speak of a kind of dissected bicolon.

¹¹ It is noteworthy that, in the first foot, the negated verb is found in the (usual) place of prominence at the beginning of the foot, but in the second and third feet, it shifts to the end of the cluster, after the emphasised noun cluster. The suffix-conjugation seems to suggest the past tense (which could possibly be translated with ‘did not walk’, etc). A present tense translation is, however, preferable, since this would have a generalising effect which would detract from the blessing formula at the beginning and the contrast between 1bcd and 2ab.

¹² The use of וְהָיָה in 3a indicates a temporal progress and should be translated with a future tense, similar to the subsequent prefix conjugation.

¹³ The tricolon 1bcd is accentuated regularly (3+3+3), while 3abc is given a ‘diminuendo’ (4+4+2), indicating deceleration of speech, anticipation of the coming caesura, and thus preparation for the final pronouncement in 3d.

¹⁴ Syntactically it consists of the combination of a nominal sentence (2a) and a verbal sentence (2b). The two parts show correspondence, since the generalising nominal pronouncement about the ‘instruction of the LORD’ and ‘his delight’ at the end of the first foot is close to the temporal qualification at the end of the line, helping one to interpret the prefix conjugation in 2b in an iterative (or general) sense.

‘the wicked’ (4a), and yet they have not even in *their* own stanza the final word – this belongs to ‘the righteous’ (5b).¹⁵ Otherwise I see no clear inner structure in the two strophes of stanza II. The comprehensive effect of the pronouncements seems to be simply the downside of what is described in stanza I. The beginning of the stanza qualifies it (4a) in terms of form as well as contents as a response to the ‘frame verse lines’ (1a and 3d) of stanza I. The beginning of bicolon 4bc does indeed imitate the beginning of bicolon 2ab with regard to form, but in terms of contents the imagery of ‘chaff’ is more closely related to the imagery of the fruit-bearing tree, in other words: 4bc look back to the tricolon 3abc. The balancing על-כן ‘therefore’¹⁶ synonymous parallelistic bicolon 5ab clearly shows reflections of 1bcd (because of key-word reflections (‘wicked/sinners’ 1bc and 5ab; phono-semantic similarities between בעצת ‘in companionship’ 1b and במישב ‘in a gathering’ 5b).¹⁷

Stanza III consists of a single verse line (bicolon) which has the form of an antithetic parallelism. Analogous to the 4+3 rhythm of line 5ab, which describes the outcome of the actions of the wicked, the outcome of *both* lifestyles or the state of those who follow it, is described in the final line (5ab) which opens with an emphatic כִּי (‘certainly/surely’). The two feet of the line are contrasted not only in terms of contents, but also of syntax,¹⁸ since there is a conspicuous case of chiasmus of nouns and verbs, in which the verbs embrace the line as a whole.¹⁹ It often happens that the important key-words of a psalm are repeated at the end with a summarising function. In the case of Ps 1, this is true of the nouns, but not of the verbs. The key-word ‘righteous’ is taken from the preceding verse lines, although it now appears for the first time as a plural. The concept ‘wicked’ is, with its fourfold repetition in the psalm (1b.4a.5a.6b), one of the most important. If the synonyms ‘sinners’ (1c.5b) and ‘mockers’ (1d) are also taken into account, the contrast between the righteous as part of a minority and the wicked as members of a majority is strengthened – note in this regard also the contrast of singular in stanza I and plural in stanza II. The net result is a feeling that the righteous are outnumbered to a large extent.²⁰ The concept of ‘way’ (דֶּרֶךְ) appeared already in 1c, and appears again

¹⁵ Conspicuously, the word ‘righteous’ is absent from the corresponding stanza I. The ‘righteous’ person appears there simply as ‘man’ (אִישׁ), while the ‘wicked’ are ‘present’ in a synonymous ‘triplet’ (1bcd).

¹⁶ Literally, ‘on this account’ > ‘therefore, thus’. Cf. in this regard the similarity with the beginning of the opening verse 4a (לֹא-כֵן ‘not so’).

¹⁷ It is worth considering whether the obvious allusion to judgement in 5ab is not (at least as an undercurrent) present in 1bcd also. Cf. with this also the figure of Job as judge in Job 29:7ff.

¹⁸ For this reason, the conjunction ו at the beginning of 6b has an adversative nuance (‘but’).

¹⁹ Cf. also the assonance of o-e.

²⁰ To this can be added the words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount about the narrow and the broad way and the number of people who find each (cf. Mt 7:13f).

in the last verse line (once in each foot). It is, however, used differently in the two halves of verse 6 – in 6a it is part of the noun-cluster ‘way of the righteous’ and is found at the end of the foot as an accusative object. It designates contents which can be experienced. In 6b it is similarly part of a construct chain (‘way of the wicked’), but it functions instead as a subject that is described as coming to a conclusion. Because of its placement right at the end of the psalm, the verb (אָבֵר I) is understood as indicating something which will happen in future. The two expressions are connected by an adversative conjunction and stand next to one another. This has the effect of focusing attention on the expression ‘way of the wicked’. The last colon displays a parallel to 1c both in terms of its contents (synonymity) and in terms of a similarity of sound. This poetic technique of reference establishes a connection between the two cola. In 6a, in contrast, a participial form of the verb is used, giving a durative accent to the statement. For the second time in the psalm, the name of God appears as subject. God thus has a well-chosen and prominent place in the central pronouncement of stanza I (see above) and in the final verse.

Finally, the psalm as a whole should be considered. It is hardly through coincidence, but rather in a display of poetical ability, that the poet succeeds in underlining his pronouncements on comprehensiveness with the help of the Hebrew alphabet. The psalm (and thus also the book of Psalms) opens with an alliterative threefold use of the first consonant of the alphabet (א), and it closes with a final word which also begins its stem with א, but in this specific form uses the last letter of the alphabet to begin with (ת). In this way the intended function of the psalm as ‘guidance from A to Z’ is most probably also expressed.²¹

3 On the contents

Since form and contents are so closely linked, semantic aspects of Ps 1 have already been addressed in the previous section. This section will subsequently further investigate or introduce certain aspects of the contents of Ps 1 and follow its motif- and tradition-historical implications.

The spiritual and cultural as well as theological milieu, in which this psalm is founded, is especially important. It can be described with the concept of ‘wisdom’. The intellectual and life-tradition associated with it found expression in the whole Ancient Near East. It deserves therefore to be described as international. The connections with this wide horizon are relevant, even though the Ancient Israelite and early Jewish manifestations of it displayed a peculiar character. Various historical and theological stages of development and accents of wisdom are visible in the Old and New Testaments

²¹ These remarks could be further expanded when one considers the fact that stanza II begins with the first consonant of the second half of the alphabet (ב) and stanza III with the last consonant of the first half of the alphabet (ז).

of the Bible, but also in the pseudepigrapha or deuterocanonical writings.²² In the Old Testament, it is mainly the books of Proverbs, Job, and Qohelet which are described as wisdom books. Yet, a number of other books are considered to display a wisdom colouring or are proposed to have been influenced by wisdom. Among these are also a number of individual psalms and the compositional phase of the Psalter as a whole. With a view to Ps 1, the following characteristics of wisdom are typical: 1. The polar contrast and description of ‘righteous’ and ‘wicked’, a contrast which is expressed in the form of antitheses; 2. The concept of a so-called relatedness of deed and consequence;²³ 3. The observing, explanation, and (comparing) of events in creation (and society), as are found in 3f in this psalm; 4. A rhetoric of proclamation or education, with aspects of assurance or paraenetics, to which the form of the macarism also belongs; 5. The (mostly considered to be late) connection between wisdom and Torah-piety, as it is visible in verse 2.

I would like to focus here on the first-mentioned characteristic and to expand somewhat on it, while it displays a point of view which is often encountered in the Bible and which is therefore important, but which gives rise to misunderstanding and objection in our day.²⁴ Such a one-or-the-other contrast is described with negative labels like ‘stamp moulding’ or ‘black-and-white vision’ and considered to be unjustified or self-vindicating. It is explained that we humans are never either completely good or bad, but mostly display a mixed and inseparable form of righteousness and wickedness.²⁵ But back to the depiction of types according to wisdom and its manifestation in Ps 1: It is indeed so that biblical wisdom constantly supposes a bipolar model of two fundamentally, mutually exclusive kinds of attitude and demeanour. The contrast is not resolved and there is no development towards a ‘synthesis’ (G.W. Hegel). Instead of a three-pronged model (thesis ⇔ antithesis ⇔ synthesis), wisdom is stuck in an unresolved polemic and proves itself to be a- or anti-dialectical. Recently, Gert Kwakkel pointed out in a study on the declarations of innocence in a number of psalms that a life-threatening situation may form the background of such antitheses. In such a situation, one thinks fundamentally and does not desire a balancing out of things (something similar

²² These short notes must suffice here. There is a vast amount of literature about Ancient Near-Eastern and biblical wisdom (a paper about newer literature and opinions is provided by van Oorschot 2003). A very readable introduction is that of Lux 1992. I myself have tried (Weber 2002c) to interpret a number of Old- and New-Testament wisdom texts for our time and to point out some of their characteristics.

²³ Cf. on this in greater detail Janowski 1994.

²⁴ The balancing (re-)interpretation of Vos 2005:58f is significant in this regard. Cf. on this also Weber 2002c:124–128.

²⁵ Examples of this could (also) be extracted from the Bible. The image of David, for example (in the historiographical books), has many facets and thus also ‘grey areas’. The question is thus not whether the Bible also knows a different perspective (it certainly does!), but why and with what justification the wisdom literature *also* has its place in the Bible.

might be said of apocalypticism).²⁶ And yet, many wisdom sayings (and also Ps 1) do not reflect any kind of threatening background. Another explanation will have to be sought. What follows, is intended as such an attempt. The antithetic style visible in the arrangement of elements and types in Ps 1 should not be interpreted anthropologically in the first place, but rather theologically. What is referred to is neither ‘sinlessness’ nor ‘infallibility’, but loyalty to YHWH: A righteous person is someone who lives a life bound to God, his will, and his instructions (Torah), an inclination which is manifested in attitude and demeanour (ethics). From this point of view, the alternatives are to be in close association with God, or far from God. There is no third option. These two basic inclinations are embedded in two modes of life – the order which the creator instated, or the anti-godly powers of chaos. In Ps 1 this association with God is manifested in the joyous and continual responsibility towards the ‘directive of YHWH’ (2). The wisdom-pedagogics and paraenesis, however, not only point out connections, but they define or introduce also divisions. Instead of a both-and-also approach, wisdom material chooses for an either-or-approach for the sake of precise and true distinction and a need for decision. The psalm begins with a blessing for *the* man who accomplishes demarcation (1). To be blessed, more than loyalty to God is needed – there should also be a distancing from the wicked.²⁷ On close inspection it becomes clear that the purpose is not or is not primarily a *social* separation, but an *ethical* separation. The concepts ‘companionship’, ‘road’²⁸ and ‘place’ have, in connection with the verbs of movement, an ethical connotation. This highlights therefore a strategy of avoidance (cf. also Job 21:16; 22:18), not separation from the human groups ‘wicked’, ‘sinners’, and ‘mockers’ – even though it is often not possible to have the first without the second. The key-word ‘directive’ in the title of this essay is therefore intended to point out the aspect of leading the audience towards (the Torah of) YHWH, but also the aspect of leading it away (from negative patterns of relationship), even if members of the audience are not addressed directly, but indirectly via the effect of a macarism. He, who is willing to be directed in this way, is promised blessing (1a) in the present time and success of his activities in the future (3d).

The ‘righteous’ differs from the ‘wicked’ in having a positive relationship with the directive of YHWH. ‘Delight’ expresses attachment to, delight and joy and implies agreement in addition to the emotional aspect. The designation ‘Torah’, which should not be translated as ‘law’, but rather as ‘directive’, is

²⁶ Cf. Kwakkel 2002 (summarising on 291ff).

²⁷ It is noteworthy that the two modes of living are described separately in Ps 1. The two roads do not cross; there is no direct confrontation between ‘righteous’ and ‘wicked’ people (cf. Sticher 2002:65). The reader or listener is rather confronted with the two roads, of which only one is really a way, since the other turns out to be a non(-existent) way.

²⁸ Cf. in this regard (in greater detail) Zehnder 1999. According to his classification, the concept has the meaning of ‘way of living’ in 1c, but in 6ab the mixed meaning of ‘way of life/consequence’ (326.373.652).

used in the singular and expresses as such the revelation of God's will comprehensively. It is highly probable that a written version of this directive is implied, which would imply the Pentateuch if one looks towards the past, but probably also the book of Psalms itself if one looks forward.²⁹ The formulation of 2b implies at least the availability of a written version (scroll?). The verb *הגה*, which is here translated with 'meditate murmuringly', causes us to think of the practice of subvocalised reading, repeating, memorising, and meditating. In addition to the emotive aspect of the 'delight', we thus also have a more cognitive attachment to the will of God. This does not imply an intellectual grasping of Scripture, which would imply the possibility of its being manipulated by man, nor does it signify a separation of 'accepting' or 'knowing' with the associated actions. What is at stake is the encompassing obligation towards the directive of God.³⁰ The form of the verb and the designation of the aspect of time (merismus) indicate a continuous and intensive involvement with the Word of God.³¹ The pronouncement in 2 implies that the triad 1bcd is a reflection *e contrario* on the command to transmit the tradition found in association with the 'Shema-Yisrael' (Deut 6:7).³² The aspect of time is consequently expanded to coming generations and the directive incorporated into a tradition-chain of teaching the Torah (cf. Ps 78:3-7). Through this allusion to the text in Deuteronomy, it becomes clear that the 'directive of the LORD', as it is called in the psalm, refers to the 'directive of Moses' (the directive given through Moses), establishing a link with the Pentateuch (see below).

Someone who is embedded like this in the Torah (the righteous) is compared to a tree. It is not a wild tree that is referred to, but one that was planted on purpose.³³ God himself is implied as the acting subject behind the passive participle. Because of the semi-arid climate of Israel, the planting should not be thought to have been done next to perennial streams, something which is very seldom found in any case, but next to man-made streams or canals. In the light of the use of *פִּלַּג* and its derivatives in other places in the Bible, such as Pss 52:10; 92:13-15; and Ez 47:12 (which might have formed the background of Ps 1 similar to Jer 17:8), it seems very probable that this is a

²⁹ On this, see below and Weber 2006a.

³⁰ The interconnectedness of (salvation-) knowledge and the corresponding behaviour is shown in the fact that in the Deuteronomistic tradition, both aspects are represented in the Hebrew concept of 'acknowledging/remembering' (*זָכַר*).

³¹ Ebach 2000:3 uses the word 'Einverleibung'.

³² That there could be a play on this important text is a possibility – at least in scribal circles – which should be reckoned with, even if the parallels do not present a perfect match and the Deuteronomy-text mentions four types of activity (not three as in Ps 1:1). The fourth aspect could then be suggested by *קָם* 'rise' in Ps 1:5a.

³³ 'Eingepflanzt': Ebach 2000:3 translates with 'transplanted' ('verpflanzt') and thinks that a change of locality is involved. Lohfink 1999:168 speaks of an 'Exodus-Bewusstsein'. If this is correct, a link is formed with 1bcd.

mytho-poetic reference to the living water flowing down from the holy mountain. If this is the case, then the tree should be seen as being planted (similar to the righteous) within the precinct of the temple. Since the Torah is described in sapiential contexts (cf. Ps 19 and Sir 24:25-27 against the background of Gen 2-3) as a fountain of water giving vitality, verse 2 is endowed with new meaning.³⁴ There is thus a connection between being located at life-giving streams and a purposeful involvement with the Word of God. As a tree located in such circumstances would produce fruit, so the time spent with life-giving Torah would produce good results – this is spelled out in 3d explicitly after the metaphor has been concluded.³⁵ The metaphorical language concerning growth and ripening and the qualification ‘on its time’ reflect the deed-consequence connection, and yet there is an aspect of hiddenness and unfathomableness in view of the necessary span of time between being planted and bearing fruit. The suffix ‘its time’ (similar to ‘its fruit’) refers in the first place to the tree. But the sound similarity of ‘its/his time’ with ‘his instruction’ (2b) secondarily remind the reader of the one to whom the suffix referred there, namely ‘the LORD’, so that the ‘time’ for the fruit is qualified as a time determined by God. The conclusion of the metaphor (3c) contains a negatively formulated statement which describes a plant with never-ending vitality. The connection with the conclusion of 2b, which described a never-ending involvement with the Word of God, implies in turn that this vitality is the consequence of involvement with the Word of God.

The terse antithetic statement of 4a could hardly be richer in meaning. The ‘not so’ has an antithetic effect on the contents of stanza I in totality, but especially on the success of the righteous which is summarised in 3d. The very short metaphor of chaff is thereby also contrasted with the longer metaphor of the tree.³⁶ At the same time, the renewed use of ‘but’ alludes to the ‘but’ of 2a and implies that the result that is now going to be described is based on an attitude that is the opposite of the one described in 2ab. The image refers to the way in which threshed material was thrown into the (west-) wind to separate the heavier kernels of grain from the lighter chaff. The chaff being blown before the wind engenders associations with lightness, insignificance, uselessness, and transience. As such, the metaphoric language already hints at the (eschatological) judgement.³⁷ This judgement is described as a consequence³⁸ in the imagery of 5ab. This verse with its synonymous parallel nevertheless remains ambiguous, since it could be interpreted as referring to a temporal, human juridical situation (judgement in the city gate), but also as a

³⁴ Cf. in this regard Creach 1999.

³⁵ For the motif of ‘a successful life’, cf. also the sapiential Joseph story (Gen 39:3.23; 50:20).

³⁶ In the Hebrew, this is emphasised also through sound-play which links ‘like a tree’ (כַּעֵץ) with ‘like chaff’ (כַּמֵּץ).

³⁷ Cf. Job 21:17f; Ps 35:5ff; Hos 13:3; Zeph 2:2.

³⁸ The ‘therefore’ (עַל-כֵּן) reflects the ‘not so’ (לֹא כֵן).

description of the eternal, divine (eschatological) judgement.³⁹ The first of these readings has a basis in the links with 1bcd, especially the phono-semantic similarities and the contrastive analogy between ‘companionship with wicked people’ (בעצת רשעים) and ‘gathering of righteous people’ (בעדת צדיקים). The second reading is suggested in my view through 4bc and 6b and may, in the light of the weight accorded to the conclusion of the psalm, be more prominent. It is also promoted through the history of interpretation of the psalm, as is illustrated by the LXX which interprets 5 eschatologically, since the ‘will not rise’ (in judgement) is changed to ‘will not arise (from death)’.⁴⁰

While God is not (explicitly) mentioned in the judgement pronouncements of 4f, he appears as acting subject in the final verse. And yet, he is mentioned only in the first half of the antithetic-structured parallelism – a significant fact. Stanza III begins with an emphatic introduction (‘Certainly...’) which refers back to both the previous stanzas and is meant to balance and resolve the tension of two opposite life-styles. In contrast to 3d, however, the consequences are not described in 6a in traditional wisdom language as the result of human action, but spelled out theologically by involving YHWH. The verb used here (ידע) has an impressive range of meanings in light of its being used more or less 1000 times in the Old Testament. It can refer to sensuous perception but also to a more cognitive knowledge, bringing the two meanings together in the sense of ‘knowing’. On top of that, such ‘knowing’ is not (merely) theory, but is manifested in an ethical stance and a practical way of behaving. When it is used to describe a personal relationship, the aspects of meeting (including even sexual intercourse), affection and care for are included. This is also the case in 6a, since the expression ‘way of the righteous’, which describes their way of life and their way through life, also refers to the righteous themselves. The participial form has the consequence that the pronouncement is not a simple statement of fact (as is the case with the ‘wicked’ pronouncements in 5ab.6b), but it is given a durative facet. Verse 6a could be paraphrased like this: The LORD knows and directs the way of life of those who trust in him and orientate themselves on his directive providentially from A to Z. But the destiny which will befall the ‘wicked’ (similarly formulated with a ‘way’ lexeme) sometime soon but in any case in the end (cf. Ps 73:17-19) differs from this. In her recently published monograph, Claudia Sticher has pointed out (perhaps formulated too strongly, but observed correctly) that there is here and elsewhere a definite attempt to differentiate

³⁹ The verb קום (which is negated in this instance), means ‘to rise’, ‘to stand up’. In combination with the preposition ‘in’ (ב), it usually refers in a juridical or judgemental context to the duty of a witness called against an accused (cf. Deut 19:15f; Ps 27:12). Further investigation is necessary to be able to decide whether it means here that no accusation can be brought against the righteous (in the sense of a false accusation), or whether the wicked will not be justified when he himself is accused (pointing towards the sense ‘will not endure’, which has some foundation in the metaphorical image of 4c).

⁴⁰ Cf. Sticher (2002:68f).

between the two: God's providential and saving activity is mentioned where the righteous are concerned, but he is not mentioned when the destiny of the wicked is described.⁴¹ They are left on a road of their own which leads them to the abyss – Sticher speaks of the 'Selbstzerstörung der Bösen'. This state of affairs is expressed in 6b with the word 'perish' (אָבַד), translated by Sticher with 'lose itself' ('verliert sich')⁴². If this does not indicate (as yet) final damnation, the expression is in any case open towards this interpretation. When the LORD removes his providential hand from someone, that person ends up in the realm of the dead. The description of the final colon of the psalm, so intertwined with judgement and death, stands in stark contrast to the image of an evergreen tree, sustaining itself from the Torah as a river of life. Towards such a mode of life, into a life of overflowing goodness, sustained by the directive of the LORD, Ps 1 would direct its listeners.

B LISTENING TO PSALM 1 (AND PSALM 2) AS AN INTRODUCTION INTO THE PSALTER AND A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

1 Psalm 1 (and Psalm 2) as introduction into the Psalter

Recently, the conviction has grown that the biblical book of Psalms – as is the case with other biblical books – is a precisely planned and purposefully compiled composition. Individual psalms and groups of psalms are not located haphazardly, but placed intentionally. The most recent research has busied itself with defining the process of growth of the Psalter, trying to throw light on the processes of editing and on the aims and intentions that can be gleaned from the way in which the psalms were arranged.⁴³ The implication of a partial variation in the arrangement of psalms in Psalm-manuscripts found at the Dead Sea has also played a role in this investigation.⁴⁴ Even though much remains obscure and the hypotheses offered will not all prove probable, some facts with far-reaching implications have crystallised from the endeavour. Some of it will be addressed here in an attempt to focus on the role played by Ps 1 (and Ps 2) in the interpretation of the Psalter.

It can be taken for granted that Ps 1 was inserted for a reason at the beginning of the Psalms. It is even possible that this psalm was composed for this location. But whatever the case may be, Ps 1 does not only conduct the reader or hearer into a style of living which orients itself on the 'directive of the LORD' (2), but also conducts the reader/hearer into the Psalter. Especially verse 2ab obtains as a kind of 'reading instruction' a semantic depth and width.

⁴¹ Cf. Sticher 2002 (on Ps 1, cf. pp 59–73).

⁴² The closeness to the metaphoric language about the chaff scattered by the wind is highlighted.

⁴³ In this regard a multitude of publications have appeared in recent years. It will not be discussed here, and only three publications of decisive importance are listed here: Zenger 1991; Lohfink 1992; and Millard 1994.

⁴⁴ Important investigations are those of Wilson 1985; Flint 1997; and Dahmen 2003.

The ‘directive of the LORD’ (‘Torah of YHWH’) becomes transparent as a reference to the Psalter. The Psalter becomes God’s Torah – and he who has delight in it, is pronounced blessed. In this book, into which Ps 1 guides the reader, one should also immerse oneself meditatively according to 2b, so as to find life and success there. If verse 2 is understood as imperative for the reading of the Psalter, the other verses of the psalm are also bathed in a new light. A marked shift takes place from interpreting single psalms as a word *to* God (prayer, human words) towards interpreting the Book of Psalms as Word *of* God (instruction, divine word). The psalms as individual compositions are prayers in general. They could and should also be read and used as prayers. But the composition as a whole – so Ps 1 seems to teach us – is ‘Torah of YHWH’, the Word of God.⁴⁵ It points toward the authoritative-canonical status of the Psalter. This dual character of being word to God and Word of God gives the Psalms a unique status within Holy Scripture.⁴⁶

Thus, because of the character of Ps 1 as a directive, it is related to the ‘directive of the LORD’,⁴⁷ and possibly even equated to it. Since the ‘instruction of the LORD’ is closely connected with the mediating figure of Moses and traced back to him, the expression calls another expression to mind, one that is also attested in the Bible, namely the ‘directive of Moses’, which refers to the giving of the law at Sinai and which became the designation for the Pentateuch par excellence.⁴⁸ The tricolon 1bcd, which precedes verse 2, alludes to Deut 6:7 and this has already called the horizon of the Torah of Moses to mind (see above), so that this also has an influence on the way in which the ‘directive of the LORD’ is understood. The Psalter is subdivided into five books (1–41 | 42–72 | 73–89 | 90–106 | 107–150),⁴⁹ the same as is the case with the Pentateuch. But there is a difference: In the Psalms it is David, not Moses, who emerges as the decisive character, to whom a large number of psalms are linked (through the headings) from Ps 3 onwards.⁵⁰ The ‘Torah of YHWH’ can therefore be understood as referring to the ‘Torah of David’ in analogy to the ‘Torah of Moses’.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Ps 1 correspondingly is also no prayer, but a text addressed to human listeners.

⁴⁶ This should be remembered also in terms of our listening to the Psalms and our praying with the Psalms. For a number of implications in this regard, see Weber 2002b.

⁴⁷ In the Psalms, the expression is found (over and above this instance) also in Ps 19:8; 119:1 (cf. also 78:1). Within the biblical canon, it occurs the first time in Ex 13:9.

⁴⁸ The expression ‘the instruction of Moses’ is not found in the five books of Moses, but only in Josh 8:31f for the first time.

⁴⁹ The end of the first four books is demarcated in each instance by a doxology (cf. Jenni 1984). For the demarcation of the books, see Levin 2004 ultimately.

⁵⁰ On David as the poet and suppliant of the Psalms, cf. Kleer 1996.

⁵¹ In this regard, see also 2 Chr 22:12f and Kratz 1996:7. In the rabbinic Midrash on the Psalms on Ps 1 (cf. Wünsche 1999/I:1–22), the connection between the Torah of Moses and the Torah of David is strengthened even more (cf.

The book that contains a majority of prayers or prayer-songs ('Tehillim/Songs of praise') thus begins – not with an address to God (prayer) – but as wisdom speech to humans, addressed to those who are willing to let them be instructed into this book and to accept its words as teaching from God in their hearts and lives. But this sapiental psalm of entrance is no isolated occurrence in the Psalms. Other psalms that hailed from wisdom circles and Torah-piety were 'dovetailed' into the Psalter, to a certain extent even located in nexuses of the book.⁵² In addition to this, there are a number of psalms which cannot be described as 'wisdom' psalms, but which display links back to Ps 1.

If we focus for a moment on Book I (Ps 1/3–41): The decisive distinction between 'righteous' and 'wicked' in Ps 1 is also found in Pss 7 (especially v 10ff); 11; 32 (10f) as well as in the alphabetic acrostica 34 (especially 11f) and – extremely terse – 37. In the last-mentioned psalm (37:31), there is also a reference to the 'instruction (Torah) of God' (cf. 1:2). This should be compared to Ps 19:8 and Ps 40:9, two psalms that are similarly endowed with wisdom and Torah-piety.⁵³ The beatitude with which Ps 1 (and the Psalter, for that matter) opens, has echoes in the first (and again in the last) books of the Psalter.⁵⁴ Except for the bracketing of Pss 1 and 2, which will be discussed below, it is noteworthy that macarisms appear in Pss 32–34 and Pss 40–41. The last pair forms the conclusion of Book I of the Psalms. Ps 32 opens with a beatitude similar to Ps 1. In this case, however, it occurs in a double format (1f) and describes – in continuation of Ps 1 – the 'righteous' as that person from whom wickedness and sin have been removed or whose sin has been covered up.⁵⁵ In Ps 33:12 it is the people of God who is pronounced happy, while Ps 34:9 blesses the 'man' (similar to Ps 1:1) who seeks refuge with God. In terms of the sapiental editing of Book I, it is significant that it has two macarisms at the beginning (1:1; 2:12) and two at the end (40:5; 41:2), forming a kind of inclusion. On top of that, 40:5 has an affinity with 1:1,⁵⁶ while 41:2 is closer to 2:12.⁵⁷

Hansberger 2002, who notes on this: 'Tora und Psalter sind durch Mose bzw. David vermitteltes Gotteswort für Israel. Die Gliederung des Psalters wird von der Fünfteilung des Pentateuchs her verstanden. Der Davidsegen am Anfang des Psalters führt wortwörtlich den Mosesegen am Schluss des Pentateuch fort: Der Psalter setzt sich selbst in Beziehung zur Tora, er will von der Tora aus und auf sie hin gelesen werden.' [36f]).

⁵² Cf. inter alia Pss 19; 34; 37; 73; 90; 119.

⁵³ Cf. also Kratz 1996:8–12.

⁵⁴ Cf. McCann 2005.

⁵⁵ Note in Ps 32 also the similarity of the opening and closing verses with those of Ps 1 (serving as a kind of frame).

⁵⁶ Cf. also Ps 1:1f with Ps 40:9.

⁵⁷ It should be noted further that the motif of comprehension or insight (שכל *hi*) is linked to the macarism in Ps 41:2, a concept which is also found in the context of the closing macarism in Ps 2 (v 10).

The sapiential colouring of the Psalter is not restricted to Book I. This can be seen from the fact that sapiential psalms are found at the ‘hinges’ of the book of Psalms.⁵⁸ After the (preliminary) conclusion of the ‘Davidic psalms’ in Books I and II (cf. Ps 72:18-20), Ps 73 at the beginning of Book III designates a clear caesura, but at the same time it looks back to Ps 1. Both psalms end by considering the respective ends of the wicked and the righteous (cf. 1:6 and 73:27f); in both is it argued that the righteous should avoid the wicked and their activities (cf. 1:1 and 73:13.15); and in both is the deed-consequence relationship referred to (cf. 1:2f; 4f; and 6 with 73:1 and 27f). But while this dogma is upheld in Ps 1, Ps 73 demonstrates that the righteous is not successful in all that he does (cf. 1:3d). The sapiential ground rule from Ps 1, which is repeated at the beginning of Ps 73, has run into trouble. Its applicability has to be defined anew and argued through a widening of the perspective. One can say with W Brueggemann⁵⁹ that Ps 73 lies halfway on the road that runs from ‘obedience’ (Ps 1) to praise (Ps 150) and has to guard it in the crisis.⁶⁰ Even Ps 90, linked as it is to Moses, is tinged by wisdom and stands as introductory psalm of Book IV in a nexus. The same applies to Ps 107 – which opens Book V – and Ps 145 which serves as a preliminary end to the whole collection before it is concluded doxologically with the closing Hallel (Pss 146-150).

I have already referred to the frame formed by the macarisms at the beginning and end of Psalms 1 and 2 respectively (1:1; 2:12). This already seems to be a kind of purposeful bracketing of the two opening psalms.⁶¹ Some other considerations turn this suspicion into a fact: (1) The important verb ‘to meditate murmuringly’ in Ps 1 (הִגִּידָה) is found also in Ps 2 (v 2), and then with a negative connotation;⁶² (2) The verb ‘to sit’ (יָשָׁב) in Ps 1:1 has its own (also rather antithetic) equivalent in Ps 2:4; (3) The ‘companionship of wicked people’ (1:1) has an echo in the conspiratorial banding together of the leaders in 2:2; (4) At the end of both psalms a ‘way’ (דֶּרֶךְ) is mentioned as reality and possibility which ‘perishes’ (אָבֵד); (5) Ps 1 and 2 both lack a heading, since the headings only begin in Ps 3; (6) A number of Psalms manuscripts combine the first two psalms into one psalm. Witnesses to this tradition can be found in early Judaism (4Q174 III,14–IV,3; bBer 9b–10a) as well as in Christianity (Justin Martyr, *Apologia* I 40; Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* IV, 22, etc).⁶³

⁵⁸ See on this Wilson 1993:80–82.

⁵⁹ Cf. Brueggemann 1991.

⁶⁰ Cf. Weber 2003:22.

⁶¹ On Ps 2, its connection to Ps 1 and its (co-)function as double portal to the Psalter, cf. Willis 1979; Zenger 1993; Weber 2001:52–55; Cole 2002; Botha 2005. Whether and to what extent Ps 2 has been altered editorially when it was juxtaposed with Ps 1, will not be discussed here. It has been suggested that Ps 2:10-12 is secondary. But it is more probable that the final colon, 12d (the macarism) or 12b.d can be connected to the bracketing of the two psalms as others have suggested.

⁶² Within Book I it also appears in Pss 35:28; 37:30; and 38:13.

⁶³ On Acts 13:33, the manuscripts on which this is based and possible explanations,

It is true that the wisdom- and Torah-psalm 2 differs too much from the royal psalm 2⁶⁴ for them to be united into one psalm. Their being linked together as a double portal or prelude to the book of Psalms probably goes back to the (final) editing of the Psalter. The placement of Ps 2 is not accidental or incidental, as little as that of Ps 1 is, and it has a programmatic character similar to that of Ps 1, while it is reflected in a number of royal psalms that have been dovetailed into the book (especially Pss 18:20f, 45; 72, 89; and 110), thereby illuminating the whole book. The juxtaposition of Ps 1 and Ps 2 is further also paralleled in the group of Psalms 18-21, where the royal Psalms 18 and 20-21 frame the creation-, Torah-, and wisdom Psalm 19.⁶⁵ Similar to the placement of sapiential psalms at nexuses in the book by the editors, royal psalms were given the same treatment by which action they (the editors) have embedded both an aspect of development and an aspect of the history of theology in the book. In Ps 2, the divine legitimation (adoption) and the enthronement of the earthly-Davidic king are described and with that the foundation is laid for a position of power in the midst of the nations and their rulers. In Ps 72, the final psalm of Book II, the true kingship, from which power, fertility and blessing flow and which is based on righteousness and justice, is described as a kind of hereditary transition from David to Solomon. In the composite Ps 89⁶⁶ at the end of Book III ('Book of exile'), the rejection of David and his royal house is lamented after a YHWH-hymn and a divine speech which repeats the promise about the everlasting rule of the house of David. But the old royal psalms acquired new possibilities of meaning during the process of transmission, so that they became witnesses to the hopeful expectation of a new (eschatological) Davidic 'Messiah'.⁶⁷ The bringing together of Psalms 2-89, of which group the first and last psalms are 'messianic psalms' and which possibly formed an early stage of canonical psalms (perhaps under Persian rule), may be a manifestation of this (proto-)messianic inclination.⁶⁸ The focus on the kingship of YHWH at the beginning of Book IV (Pss 93ff) and the royal psalms in Books IV and V (Pss 101; 110; 132; and 144) subsequently imported yet again new aspects into the composition of the Psalms. These can be mentioned here, but not discussed in detail.⁶⁹

see Willis 1979:385.

⁶⁴ See on this psalm Weber 2001:52–55, and as most recent contribution, Hartenstein 2004.

⁶⁵ The motif of the 'refuge/shelter with YHWH' which appears for the first time at the end of Ps 2 in connection with the blessing, also plays an important role in Book I (cf. on this Creach 1996).

⁶⁶ Cf. Weber 2003:107–116. For a thorough analysis of Ps 89 see now Steymans 2005.

⁶⁷ The age of the individual royal psalms and the question whether and to what degree they were editorially altered and given a (proto-) messianic accentuation, are questions on which opinions differ.

⁶⁸ Cf. on this in detail Rösel 1999 and Saur 2004.

⁶⁹ Cf. on this the new designs of Leuenberger 2004 and Saur 2004.

Psalm 2 also is no prayer (as we have seen with Ps 1); the prayers only begin with Ps 3, the first Davidic psalm. But Ps 2 differs from Ps 1: it is not a sapiential psalm that strives to direct the individual reader or listener to the Torah, but has a collective horizon. It is not the wisdom teacher of Ps 1 that speaks; but (in the words of the narrator) the heavenly king YHWH also speaks in prophetic-paraenetic language. It is addressed to the king in Jerusalem, but also to the nations and their rulers who are called upon to bow before the king in Zion and to serve YHWH. Ps 2 has, with its proclamation of the rule of YHWH, a theocratic inclination on the one hand, but on the other an openness towards a future king that will save and a universalistic expansion which can be described as eschatological-(proto-)messianic. Through the juxtapositioning of Ps 1 and Ps 2, and especially though the ‘bracketing’ with a brace of blessing, various aspects are linked together and related to one another: Torah-wisdom on the one hand and divine rule as well as expectation of a saving king on the other; individual orientation on the one hand and collective or even universalistic expansion of the view on the other; ‘Theology from below’ (obedience) on the one hand and ‘Theology from above’ (power) on the other.⁷⁰ The listener or reader, who enters the Psalter through the dual portal of Pss 1 and 2, also receives a dual instruction: The Psalter should be recited and meditated upon as Word of God (Torah), but they witness about the divine rule of YHWH and keep the expectation of an earthly salvatory king (Messiah) alive.

2 Psalm 1 (and Psalm 2) within the horizon of a theology of the whole Bible

Ps 1 (and Ps 2) do not simply introduce one into the Psalter, but can also be read and interpreted as the nucleus of a theology of the whole Bible. I have already pointed out how a connection is laid between the ‘Davidic Pentateuch’ (the Psalms) and the Mosaic Pentateuch through the allusion to Deut 6:(4-)7 shortly before reference is made to the Torah of YHWH in the opening psalm. Joshua as successor of Moses is commanded by YHWH himself to keep the ‘Book of Instruction’ by meditating on it ‘murmuringly’ (הגדה) ‘day and night’ after he has been promised the help of YHWH and has been exhorted by him in Joshua 1:8. If he complies with this, his ‘way’ (דרך) will be made successful (צליח hi). The proximity between Josh 1:8 and Ps 1:2 is clear and intentional. With the allusion of the ‘first chapter’ of the Psalter (Ps 1) to the first chapter after the end of the Pentateuch (Josh 1), the listener to the Psalms, who is told that this is a kind of Torah of YHWH, is related to the successor of Moses and his meditation on the Torah. The reader of the Psalms would know that Joshua took these words to heart and that the LORD gave him success. Against the background of the successful conquest of the fertile Promised Land by Joshua, Ps 1:3 is endowed with new meaning. This connection gives the sapiential Ps 1

⁷⁰ Cf. also Söding 2003:LXV (footnote 77): ‘Ps 1 portraitiert den idealen, nämlich toratreuen Leser, Ps 2 den idealen, nämlich messianischen Autor.’

a prophetic facet – similarly to the effect that the bracketing with Ps 2 has. Joshua is considered to be a ‘prophet’, and the book named after him begins the second part of the Hebrew canon, known as ‘Nebi’im’ or ‘Prophets’. As Joshua 1 provides an introduction into Joshua and the prophetic books, so Psalm 1 provides an introduction into the Psalms and – possibly – also into the third part of the Hebrew canon, namely the ‘Ketubim’ or ‘Writings’.⁷¹ In this regard one should also mention Malachi 3, the last chapter of the second part of the canon (‘Nebi’im’). In Mal 3:22 there is an exhortation to keep the ‘Torah of Moses’. This forms a bracket with Josh 1:7f, enveloping the second part of the Hebrew canon between the phrases ‘Instruction of YHWH/Moses’ at the beginning of Joshua and the end of Malachi. In those editions where the third part of canon, the ‘Ketubim’, begins with Psalms (as is the case in BHS), Ps 1 comes immediately after Mal 3. Against the background of the ‘Instruction of Moses’ (Mal 3:22), the expression ‘Instruction of YHWH’ (Ps 1:2) is given new meaning. This connection is strengthened by the shared key-words and motifs in Ps 1 and Mal 3:18–21. While Mal 3 at the end of the prophetic books takes leave of the Torah of Moses, Ps 1 at the beginning of the Psalms (and in any case) the ‘Writings’⁷² provides an instruction into the Torah of YHWH.

In an overlap of the history of interpretation of Ps 1 in early Judaism,⁷³ I would finally like to ask the question which horizons are opened up for Ps 1 (and Ps 2) through Jesus and in the New Testament in general. There is no real citation of Ps 1 in the New Testament, but the form and contents of the Matthaian version of the Sermon on the Mount display definitive analogies to Ps 1 and portray Jesus as a ‘Messianic wisdom-teacher’ (Martin Hengel). In Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount is the opening, first teaching of Jesus, introducing – similar to what Ps 1 does for the Psalter – in a fundamental way his whole teaching. Jesus begins his preaching with a macarism, a series of macarisms, in fact (Mt 5:3–12), similar to how Ps 1 begins with a macarism. The one who is blessed like this is promised (earthly) success in Ps 1:3; while Jesus speaks of ‘a great reward’ in heaven at the end of his macarism. Jesus’ promise in Mt 6:33b also displays similarities with Ps 1:3. Ps 1 uses a double

⁷¹ Especially in the third part of the canon, the ‘Writings’, we are confronted with various different ways of ordering the books. In the German Bible translations, the tradition that puts Psalms after Job as the second book in the group, is followed. The Ben-Asher tradition puts Chronicles first and then the Psalter. Although the scientific edition of the Hebrew Bible (BHS) is based on the Ben-Asher manuscript Leningradensis, it follows the order of another tradition, placing Psalms just after the prophetic books, so that the ‘Writings’ is headed by Psalms and concluded by Chronicles. This order is followed by, inter alia, the LXX manuscript Sinaiticus. On the order in the canon, see Auwers 2000:170–174 and Zenger 2003.

⁷² On their form and theology, cf. Steinberg 2006 (who takes the order of bBB 14b, beginning with Ruth and then the Psalms, as point of departure for his investigation).

⁷³ Which could be listed here, are texts like Sir 14:20–15:10; 4Q525 and possibly PsSal 14 (cf. Zenger, Psalter 1993:33–35).

metaphor of a tree and chaff (Ps 3:1-5); while Jesus demonstrates the opposite roads by using the tree-metaphor on its own, contrasting the good tree with its good fruit with the bad tree with its bad fruit (Mt 7:17-19). But the logion of Jesus on the ‘two ways’ in Mt 7:13-14 also displays a sapiential profile. The parable of house-building on sand or a rock (Mt 7:24-27) is even closer to Ps 1. In Mt 7:24-27, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks about a ‘wise’ (and a ‘foolish’) man, whose success (or lack of success) is determined by a listening to, meditating on, and acting according to the words of Jesus (or ignoring them). The beatitude at the beginning and the contrasting of two opposite approaches to the Word of YHWH/Jesus at the end are therefore similarities between the Sermon on the Mount and the Torah-wisdom of Psalm 1.⁷⁴

While the allusions to the sapiential Ps 1 as first portal into the Psalms in the New Testament are rather indirect, it is completely different with the royal Ps 2, the second portal into the Psalms. Together with Ps 110, Ps 2 is the psalm which is alluded to most often in the New Testament. The association with David, coupled with prophetic and messianic aspects, are the reasons why the Psalms in general and Ps 2 specifically play such an important role in the construction of the New Testament Christology.⁷⁵ It is of course true that developments in early Judaism played an important preparatory role in this development.⁷⁶ From the many citations and allusions in the New Testament, only one set is offered here as an example: In the prayer of the first Christian congregation (Acts 4:24-30), the use of Ps 2:1f clearly shows that the psalm was understood as Word of God (Holy Spirit) and human word (‘servant David’) simultaneously, explicating the text of the psalm Christologically as referring to an uprising against the Messiah and Servant of God, namely Jesus (crucifixion) (Acts 4:25b.26). The tribes of Israel become (according to the prayer of the congregation) part of the heathen peoples through their actions. The threat against the ‘holy Servant’ is explained as directed against God or his ‘servants’, namely the congregation, who pray for confidence in speaking the Word, in healing, signs and wonders through the hand of the Risen One (cf. Ps 2:8f). The interpretation of Ps 2 thus varies from a Christological one to an ecclesiological one. The shaking of the place where they were gathered at the end of the prayer, the filling with the Holy Spirit and the confident proclamation of the message (Acts 4:31) are similarly connected to Ps 2 since they seem to be a fulfilment of the final verses of Ps 2 (verses 10-12).⁷⁷ The

⁷⁴ It is further possible that the three important verbs ‘sit’, ‘walk’, and ‘stand’ (or ‘resist’) in Ephesians derive from Deut 6:7 (cf. Weber 1995b).

⁷⁵ Cf. finally, Evans 2005; Lee 2005; Backhaus 2004; Kahl 2004.

⁷⁶ Cf. especially 4Q174 (4QMidrEschat^a = 4QFlor) and PsSal 17, and on it Zenger 1993:36f; Maiburger 1998; Steudel 2004, and in a combined presentation Schreiber 2000.

⁷⁷ I borrow here from the (as yet unpublished) presentations by Prof. Dr. Peter Wick which he delivered under the title ‘Psalm 2 und das urchristliche Gemeindegebet (Apg 4,24–31)’ at the workshop of the ‘Arbeitsgemeinschaft für

ancient Christian congregation finds words for its prayer in Ps 2 and simultaneously recognises in it a prophetic explication of what would happen to Christ and his followers.

Martin Luther later said with a view to the Psalms (and the Lord's Prayer): 'Ich halte dafür: wers ein wenig mit Ernst mit Psalter und Vaterunser versuchen wollt, der wird gar bald den andächtigen Gebetlein Urlaub geben und sagen: ach, es ist nicht der Saft Kraft Brunst und Feuer, die ich im Psalter finde, es schmeckt mir zu kalt und zu hart.'⁷⁸ The psalms, however, did not only furnish Jewish and Christian congregations with words with which they could address God, but in it a biblical Theology also crystallized *in nuce*. In this sense it is, once again formulated in the words of Luther, a small Bible 'in which everything that is found in the whole Bible, is formulated in the prettiest and shortest way and made and prepared into a fine Enchiridion or text-book'.⁷⁹ It is to this 'small Bible', and therefore to the wide horizon of the whole Bible, that Ps 1 in its connection with Ps 2 has the character of an introduction.⁸⁰

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⁷⁸ After Mülhaupt 1959:6 (on Ps 1, in his first exposition of the Psalms, 1513/15).

⁷⁹ '...darin alles aufs schönste und kürzeste, wie in der ganzen Biblia stehet, gefasset, und zu einem feinen Enchiridion oder Handbuch gemacht und bereitet ist'. After Bornkamm 1989:65 (from the second preface to the Psalms, 1528).

⁸⁰ Cf. on this also Janowski 1998.

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