

## BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE ANSWER IN BOOK FOUR

### I. MOSAIC COVENANT NOT INVOKED IN 'MOSAIC' RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS OF THE EXILE

Book 4 closes with exiles' prayer (Ps. 106:47)

'Introspection about Destruction of Temple and Exile'<sup>1</sup>

'editorial "center" of the final form of the Hebrew Psalter'<sup>2</sup>

'Mosaic', but...

Aim of Book 4: to highlight the unbreakable character of the *Abrahamic* covenant with a view to demonstrating that the *Davidic* covenant has not been annulled and that the *new* covenant will be realised

### II. ABRAHAMIC COVENANT AS THE BASIS FOR THE EXILES' PRAYER

Which covenant in Ps. 106:45?

- 'the psalm's capstone'<sup>3</sup>
- virtue of vagueness?
- occasional identification with Sinai, but...

Abrahamic covenant evoked by virtue of Pentateuchal allusions in the psalm

Episode of rebellion in the desert	Section of Psalm 106	Passage in Pentateuch
Kibroth-hattaavah	vv. 14-15	Num. 11:4-34
Korah	vv. 16-18	Num. 16
Golden calf	vv. 19-23	Exod. 32-34
Kadesh-barnea	vv. 24-27	Num. 13-14
Baal-Peor	vv. 28-31	Num. 25:1-13
Meribah	vv. 32-33	Num. 20:1-13

Ps. 106:23 → Exod. 32:11-14; Deut. 9:25-29 (other incidents associated with golden calf episode)

Abrahamic covenant presupposed by virtue of the links with Psalm 105

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Walton (1991), 'Psalms: A Cantata about the Davidic Covenant', *JETS* 34, 124.

<sup>2</sup> G. H. Wilson (1985), *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBLDS 76, Chico [California], Scholars Press, 215.

<sup>3</sup> N. deClaisse-Walford, R. A. Jacobson, B. L. Tanner (2014), *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT, Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 805.

Abrahamic covenant alluded to in the parallel context of Psalm 90

Ps. 90:13, cf. Exod. 32:12b-13a

Abrahamic covenant on view in Pentateuchal texts that cohere with the theology of Psalm 106

Deut. 32:36

Transjordanian covenant (Deut. 28:69 H/29:1 E—32:52): *clarity* with which the *compatibility* between Abrahamic and Sinaitic strands is set forth (heart circumcision!), but cf. Lev. 26:42-45 and Deut. 4:25-31

### III. DAVIDIC-COVENANT SOLUTION INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO ABRAHAMIC-COVENANT SOLUTION

Recall Ps. 72:17b!

Abrahamic solution to be applied to the exile (Psalms 89-90)

Ps. 89:46-47, cf. Ps. 90

Ps. 90:12-14a, cf. Ps. 89:47, 50a, 51a H/Ps. 89:46, 49a, 50a

Adamic problem exposed (Psalm 90:3-11)

Ps. 90:2 cf. Gen. 2:4

Ps. 90:3 cf. Gen. 3:19:

Gen. 3:19	Ps. 90:3
'...You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow until you <b>return</b> to the ground, since you were taken from it. For you are dust, and you will <b>return</b> to dust.' (HCSB)	You <b>return</b> mankind to the dust, saying, ' <b>Return</b> , descendants of Adam.' (HCSB)

Ps. 90:8 cf. Gen. 3:9-10, 17

Ps. 90:8-9 cf. Gen. 3:19, 22, 24-25

Ps. 90:10b cf. Gen. 3:16-19

Ps. 90:7, 9, 11 cf. Gen. 3:14-24

Ps. 90:4 cf. Gen. 5 (?)

Ps. 90:5 cf. Gen. 6-9 (?)

Conditional dimension of the Davidic covenant implicitly reaffirmed

Problem of the exile (Ps. 89) to be associated with the problem of sin (Ps. 90)

Divine wrath a recurring motif in Book 3 (Pss 74:1; 76:8 H/76:7 E; 77:10 H/Ps 77:9 E; 79:5; 80:5 H/80:4 E; 85:6H/85:5 E; 89:47 H/89:46 E)

Remedy for the exile a consequence of the remedy for Adamic sin (Psalm 90:12-17)

If Moses' pleading in Psalm 90:12-17 is answered, the human-sin-leading-to-divine-wrath problem will be resolved and, *as a result*, the problem of the exile will also be resolved

#### IV. NOAHIC COVENANT AS AN INDISPENSABLE PART OF THE SOLUTION (PSALM 104)

YHWH's stabilising of the creation ('it shall not be moved for ever and ever,' v. 5 [a.t.]) and his control of the waters

- poetic equivalent of Gen. 1:9-10?
- possibility of allusions to the flood narrative:

Ps. 104:6 HCSB	Gen. 7:19-20 HCSB
You <b>covered</b> it [sc. the <b>earth</b> ] with the deep as if it were a garment; the <b>waters</b> stood above the <b>mountains</b> .	Then the <b>waters</b> surged even higher on the <b>earth</b> , and all the high <b>mountains</b> under the whole sky were <b>covered</b> . The <b>mountains</b> were <b>covered</b> as the <b>waters</b> surged above them more than 20 feet.

- 'elephant in the room' in v. 9 for pre-flood advocates (and quasi-proto-Noahic covenant at minimum!)
- Gen. 8:22 cf. esp. Ps. 104:19b-23, 27
- Gen. 9:8-17 cf. Ps. 104:5, 9

'...[E]ven the world that was renewed after the Flood was still inhabited by sinners.'<sup>4</sup>

- ➔ Noahic covenant may constitute necessary bedrock for the solution, but the solution itself must deal with sin...

#### V. ABRAHAMIC COVENANT *PER SE* AS INSUFFICIENT SOLUTION (PSALMS 105-106)

Israel as covenant partner/beneficiary (v. 9-10)

Land promise (v. 11; cf. v. 44) cf. exiles' prayer in Ps. 106:47 (and the importance of remembering [v. 5] that YHWH remembered [v. 42; cf. Exod. 2:24]/remembers [v. 8]!)

On the one hand, .....

On the other hand, .....

#### VI. 'PEDAGOGY OF FAILURE'<sup>5</sup> AS ANTICIPATORY OF SUPERIOR MEDIATION (PSALM 106)

Moses' and Phinehas' mediation

- (1) only partially effective
- (2) only temporarily effective
- (3) affected by sin (vv. 32-33; cf. Num. 20:7-12)

<sup>4</sup> P. Eveson, (2015), *Psalms: From Suffering to Glory (Vol. 2): Psalms 73-150 (God's Manual of Spirituality)*, Welwyn: EP Books, 227.

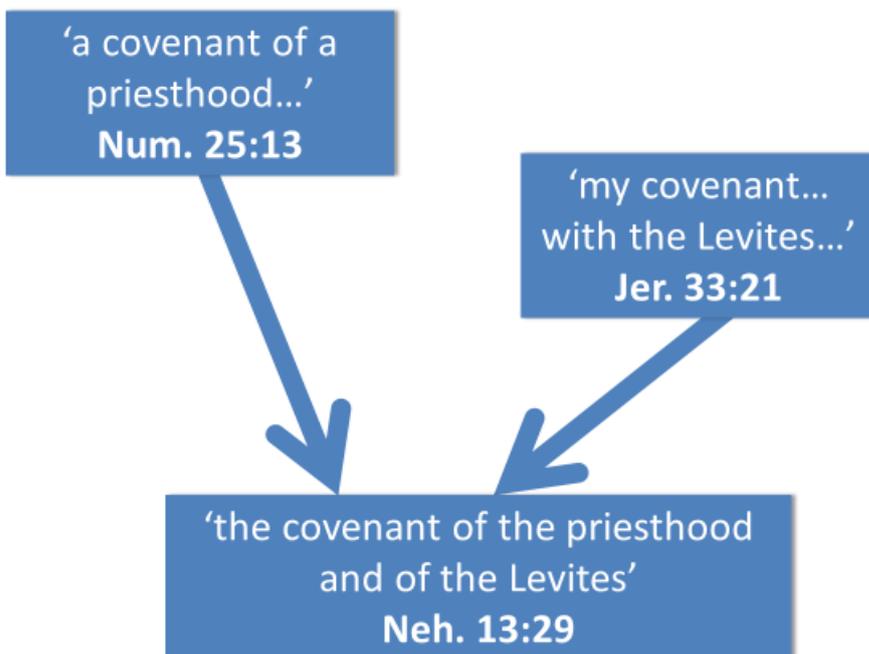
<sup>5</sup> Phrase derived from H. Blocher (2000), *La Doctrine du péché et de la rédemption*, Didaskalia, Vaux-sur-Seine: Edifac, 126.

VII. LEVITICAL COVENANT ASSOCIATED WITH DAVIDIC COVENANT (PSALM 106:30-31)

Biblical data scant and enigmatic, and little scholarly interaction, but parallel with Mosaic covenant suggested

Num. 18:19 probably in background to Jer. 33:21; proximity with Num. 25 by virtue of Mal. 2:1-9 (covenant 'of peace': Num. 25:12; Mal. 2:5 [cf. 2:6])

Covenant with Phinehas a reaffirmation of the Levitical covenant that is centred on Phinehas' family line (Num. 25:13)? Also:



Parallel with Davidic covenant; these two covenants =

- 'covenant of salt' (Num. 18:19; 2 Chron. 13:5)
- both conditional (Mal. 2:3-4; cf. Neh 13:29) and unconditional (Num. 18; Num. 25; Jer. 33:17-22)
- tightly connected by Jeremiah – stand or fall together!

Which five covenants converge here in this Jer. 33 passage?

Bottom line: Davidic covenant (cf. Ps. 78!)

## VIII. TYPOLOGICAL STRUCTURES RECAPITULATED IN THE NEW-COVENANT SOLUTION (PSALMS 93-100)

‘...the already well-established theological affinity of Book Four and Isaiah 40-55.’<sup>6</sup>

Impressive list of lexical parallels between Psalms 93-100 and Isaiah 40-55 ‘reveals that generally [these two sections of biblical material] are at home on the same theological soil;’ for example, ‘both speak to the vicissitudes of the exile with the common conviction of Yahweh’s hegemony over Israel...’<sup>7</sup>

These parallels should sensitise us to the new-covenant shape of the solution to the problem of Psalm 89 that Book 4 implicitly sets forth. With regard to the theology of Isaiah 40-55, we have already discussed chapter 55 and the new-covenant’s encompassing of the Davidic covenant; the new-covenant theme may also be seen clearly Isaiah 42:6 (cf. 49:6), the suffering servant of Isaiah 42-53 being the new-covenantal key to the exiles’ bright future. Isaiah 40-55 allow us to reinforce our findings regarding the foundational role played by the Abrahamic covenant in preparing the way for the post-exilic, new-covenant solution (Isa. 41:8; 51:2; cf. Pss 90; 105-106) and the concomitant reaffirmation of the Noahic covenant (Isa. 54:9a; cf. Ps. 104:5-9). Further, the formula ‘Give thanks to YHWH, for he is good, for his covenant loyalty endures for ever’ anticipates new-covenant fulfilment;<sup>8</sup> we come across this formula twice in Book 4, one of which comes at the end of the group of Psalms 93-100. What Jeremiah prophesied in the context of the first canonical occurrence of that formula (Jer. 33:11), namely a post-exilic restoring of the fortunes of YHWH’s people (cf. Jer. 33:1-13), is in the background as that formula is replayed in Psalm 100, and this bright prospect is reinforced in that psalm, as also in Psalm 95, by another covenant formula which affirms that YHWH is God of his people (Pss 95:7; 100:3). Whether we are in the Book 4 (especially Psalms 93-100) or Isaianic context, there is ‘(the good news of) salvation’ to be ‘preached’ to the exiles (the verb *b-s-r*; see Ps. 96:2; cf. Isa. 40:9; 41:27; 52:7), and this comes in new-covenant form.

But what observations should be made about the characteristics of the new covenant that may be discerned in Psalms 93-100? As the definitive, eschatological (post-exilic) solution to the problem of the exile is presented, motifs relating to the history of the Israelites are redeployed. The Israelites’ experience during the period between the Egyptian captivity and the Babylonian captivity are recapitulated on a superior plane and reworked in accordance with new circumstances. This is particularly so for the occasion when God’s people left Egypt (the exodus). The reader who is versed in the book of Exodus will already find bells ringing on encountering the expressions ‘It is YHWH who is king’ and ‘Sing to YHWH’. As David Mitchell rightly points out, ‘the first reference in biblical history to the kingship of Yhwh’ occurs in the Song of Moses that follows the exodus event (Exod. 15:18). Regarding the second phrase, it appears for the first time three verses later (Exod. 15:21; cf. Exod. 15:1).<sup>9</sup> Psalm 98 portrays a new liberation (vv. 1-3) in the context of a glorious celebration (vv. 7-8). Psalms 95 and 100 employ the image of the shepherd, and, in the first case, we read that the flock of YHWH is that ‘of his hand’, a metaphor that bespeaks exodus (Pss 95:7; 100:3; cf. Exod. 14:31; Ps. 78:42). The Jeremiah 33 background to Psalm 100, already noted, attunes us to the glorious character of the restoration that is in prospect for the exiles. Should we be tempted to think that the psalmists are *merely* recalling the first exodus out of Egypt, as opposed to anticipating a second or

---

<sup>6</sup> J. F. D. Creach (1998), ‘The Shape of Book Four of the Psalter and the Shape of Second Isaiah’, *JSOT* 80, 74.

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, 68-69.

<sup>8</sup> J. Hely Hutchinson (2005).

<sup>9</sup> D. C. Mitchell (1997), *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, *JSOTSupp* 252, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 284, 288, 295.

new exodus, we should note the warning given in Psalm 95:7d-11: the ‘Meribah/Massah’ rebellion must not be repeated!

A parallel in Ezekiel confirms the exactitude of our understanding. The key passage in this prophecy that sets forth the new exodus, namely 20:32-44, contains the only text in the book that affirms that YHWH is king<sup>10</sup> (v. 33) – which correlates with the emphasis on YHWH’s kingship in the group of psalms that we are considering (Pss 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1). Moreover, the prophet ties this attribute to that of judge (Ezek. 20:33-36; cf. Pss 94:2; 96:13; 98:9) and shepherd (Ezek. 20:37; cf. Pss 95:7; 100:3).<sup>11</sup> We may add that the new-exodus theme is of major importance in the chapters of Isaiah that correspond to Psalms 93-100 (Isa. 40:3-4; 41:17-20; 42:14-16; 43:1-7, 14-21; 44:27; 48:20-21; 51:11; 52:11-12; 55:12-13): what is proclaimed as ‘new’ by the prophet (Isa. 42:9-10; 43:19; 48:6) anticipates the ‘new song’ of Psalms 96 and 98. The fact that the Isaiah and Ezekiel texts precede the psalter (from both redactional and canonical perspectives) precludes our considering Book 4 to be innovative in this regard: on the contrary, it perpetuates this motif that is developed by the Latter Prophets.<sup>12</sup>

The Mount Sinai theophany is also recapitulated (Ps. 97:2-5 HCSB):

Clouds and thick darkness surround Him;  
righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.  
Fire goes before Him and burns up His foes on every side.  
His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles.  
The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD—  
at the presence of the Lord of all the earth.

Once again we need to insist that this is not *simply* a throwback to the event recorded in Exodus 19 but also the presaging of a new event. This interpretation is required by the fact that YHWH’s action gives rise to a joyful response on the part of ‘Zion’ (v. 8) – a metaphorical designation of the people that originates with a later stage than the time of the original Sinai theophany.

Assuming a certain consistency across these psalms, and given (once again) the Jeremiah 33 background, the reconfiguring of images for the new-covenant regime must extend beyond that of the exodus and Sinai – even if this is not immediately obvious. Does the interpreter not need to discern in Psalm 99 (vv. 2, 9) the *new* city of Zion (cf. Isa. 54:11-15), even if this is not developed so clearly and extensively as in Psalm 87? Should we not understand the ‘gates’ of Psalm 100:4 to be those of the *new* temple (cf. Pss 93:5; 96:6, 8; cf. Ezek. 40-48)? Does the ‘place of rest’ of Psalm 95:11 not correspond to the *new* earth (cf. Isa. 11:6-9; 35; 65:17ss)?<sup>13</sup> If we were to consider these to be no more than references to the city, temple and earth of the pre-exilic era, we would be inverting the parallels with Isaiah 40-55 that these psalms attest. It is, of course, the case that this prior epoch is evoked by these psalms, but the purpose of these reminiscences is to thrust the reader forward to an eschatological era and a more glorious experience.

In this group of psalms, the king does not feature in this list of motifs that are recapitulated under the new covenant. This is intriguing, since Psalm 89 has put the question of the presence or absence of the Davidic king squarely on the agenda, and the Isaianic and Jeremianic backgrounds and parallels condition us to expect to see him in this particular psalmic context. It is not that the last two books

---

<sup>10</sup> In contradistinction to, for example, shepherd.

<sup>11</sup> W. Zimmerli (1960), ‘Le nouvel « exode » dans le message des deux grands prophètes de l’exil’, *Maqqél shâqédh (La branche d’amandier)*, FS W. Vischer, Montpellier: Causse Graille Castelnau, 217-221.

<sup>12</sup> For other texts in the Latter Prophets that evoke the new exodus, see R. E. Watts (2003), ‘Exodus’, in T. D. Alexander et D. W. Baker (eds.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Leicester/Downers Grove: IVP), 482-484.

<sup>13</sup> Perhaps Ps. 96:11-12 and Ps. 98:7-8 are also suggestive of the new creation.

of the psalter ‘shift expectations away from the restoration of the human Davidic kings to the direct rulership of YHWH.’<sup>14</sup> What we should, however, note is that, in Book 4, the reaffirmation of the Davidic covenant is not made in any explicit way.<sup>15</sup> This reflects (1) the genius of divine pedagogy<sup>16</sup> which involves tension, suspense and progressive revelation;<sup>17</sup> (2) the fact that this is, after all, the ‘Moses book’, and the theme of a coming messiah is not majored on in Pentateuch; (3) the building blocks of the solution are being put in place here in Book 4, and this means, as we have seen, emphasising the Abrahamic covenant. If the new exodus takes precedence over the new temple in these psalms, this ties in with the importance of the exodus in the Pentateuch and with the fact that this motif is fundamentally Abrahamic: YHWH liberates his people because he remembers his promises to the patriarchs (Ps. 98:3; cf. Gen. 15:13-16; Exod. 2:24-25; Lev. 26:44-45)<sup>18</sup> –, whereas the temple was built after the setting-up of the Davidic covenant. Further, the twin incidents of Meribah and Massah that are highlighted in Psalm 95 – and in this non-chronological order – attest congruence with Psalm 106: on the one hand, the Meribah episode is directly cited in this closing psalm (vv. 32-33), and, on the other, the Massah episode recalls Moses’ intercession (Deut. 9:22-29). Likewise, if Psalm 99 underlines the importance of intercessors in God’s bestowing of forgiveness upon his people – Moses, Aaron and Samuel are ‘amongst those who call on [the] name’ of the ‘God who forgives’ (vv. 6, 8) –, this coheres with the fact that several of the theological emphases of these psalms square with the beginning and end of Book 4. If the Davidic covenant is only hinted at at this stage, this should not be taken as an indication that it does not play an important part in the new-covenant regime.

## IX. DAVIDIC-COVENANT SOLUTION CONNECTED TO THE NEW-COVENANT SOLUTION (PSALMS 93-100 WITH PSALM 89)

Ps. 89:10 H/9 E cf. Ps. 93. Also:

Ps. 89:8 H/7 E	God is greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, more <b>awe [= ‘fear’]-inspiring</b> than <b>all</b> who surround Him. (HCSB)	Ps. 96:4	For the LORD is great and is highly praised; He is <b>feared</b> above <b>all</b> gods (HCSB)
Ps. 89:12 H/11 E	The heavens are Yours; the earth also is Yours. The world and everything in it-- You founded them. (HCSB)	Ps. 95:4	The depths of the earth are in His hand, and the mountain peaks are His. (HCSB)
Ps. 89:13 H/12 E	North and south-- You created them. Tabor and Hermon <b>shout for joy</b> at Your name. (HCSB)	Ps. 98:8	Let the rivers clap their hands; let the mountains <b>shout</b> together <b>for joy</b> (HCSB)

<sup>14</sup> G. H. Wilson (2002), ‘Psalms and Psalter: Paradigm for Biblical Theology’, in S. J. Hafemann (ed.), *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (Downers Grove/Leicester: IVP/Apollos), 106.

<sup>15</sup> It is also true that, in Psalms 93-100, YHWH’s reign goes hand-in-hand with a clear monotheism (Pss 96:5, 100:3). Yet, if it is *YHWH* who is king (this is underlined by the syntax of the refrain of this section), the psalter reader has known since the programmatic Psalm 2 that the rule of this one God is not incompatible with that of his anointed one.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. E. Nicole (1996), ‘L’Ancien Testament comme pédagogie de Dieu pour le lecteur’, *Fac-Réflexion* 34: 4-14, [http://flte.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/FR34-AT\\_pedagogie\\_Dieu\\_pour\\_lecteur.pdf](http://flte.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/FR34-AT_pedagogie_Dieu_pour_lecteur.pdf) (accessed 26<sup>th</sup> July 2018).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. J. Hely Hutchinson (2015), ‘La théologie biblique : pourquoi est-elle importante est passionnante ?’, *Le Maillon*, printemps 2015: 5-9, [http://www.institutbiblique.be/IMG/pdf/le\\_maillon\\_printemps\\_2015\\_internet\\_-\\_revise.pdf](http://www.institutbiblique.be/IMG/pdf/le_maillon_printemps_2015_internet_-_revise.pdf) (accessed 26<sup>th</sup> July 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Thus A. M. Harman (1998), *Commentary on the Psalms*, Mentor, Fearn [Ross-shire]: Christian Focus, 326.

Ps. 89:15 H/14 E	<b>Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne</b> ; faithful love and truth go before You. (HCSB)	Ps. 97:2	Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; <b>righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne</b> . (HCSB)
Ps. 89:18 H/17 E	For You are their magnificent [= <b>'beauty of their'] strength</b> ; by Your favor our horn is exalted. (HCSB)	Ps. 96:6	Splendor and majesty are before Him; <b>strength and beauty</b> are in His sanctuary. (HCSB)

→ YHWH remains powerful enough to bring about the realisation of his promises to David!

## X. ALL NATIONS (ABRAHAMIC COVENANT) AS PART OF NEW-COVENANT PEOPLE (PSALMS 93-100)

Psalm 96 concerns the proclamation of YHWH's reign to all nations, and the psalmist does not hold back from appealing to the nations to submit to YHWH (vv. 1, 7, 8, 9). Since the peoples' gods are false (v. 5), and YHWH is coming to judge the peoples (vv. 10, 13), it is in the latter's interests to benefit from the salvation that is being announced to them (vv. 1-3). Psalm 98 has similar content to Psalm 96 in this respect: all the earth is called upon to sing to YHWH in view of the 'marvellous [salvific] things' he has performed (vv. 1-4). Verse 4a ('Give a resounding shout to the LORD, all the earth')<sup>19</sup> recurs at the beginning of Psalm 100: indeed, in the latter, short psalm, all seven imperatives are addressed to 'all the earth'. This means that the psalmist envisages that the new-covenant formula (Ps. 100:4-5) undergird<sup>20</sup> the praise of YHWH expressed by non-Jews, and that the nations as well as Israelites enter the temple courts. Although there is significant continuity between the base text for the formula, Jeremiah 33:11, and its occurrence here, yet there is a striking development relative to the prophet's perspective, namely the broadening of the scope of the formula to all nations. This is also a development relative to Psalm 95 which Psalm 100 clearly echoes. Whereas in Psalm 95 the first person plural designates the Israelite people, as the reference to their disobedient 'fathers' requires (vv. 7d-11), it is unlikely that the referent here in Psalm 100 is so restricted. Commentators who adopt a clear stance on the identity of the 'we' of verse 3 are few and far between. It is possible to understand that the nations are being called upon to recognise *Israel* as the people of YHWH,<sup>21</sup> but a broader referent that encompasses *every worshipper* as part of the covenant people seems more likely.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, in this group, it is not possible to suggest that the worship offered up by the nations is in any way inferior to, or even different from, that of Israel (compare Psalm 95:6 to Psalm 96:9 and Psalm 95:2 to Psalm 100:1, 4). In short, an important transposition comes about between Psalms 95 and 100: in Psalm 100:3, the declaration 'we are his people and the sheep of his pasture' is found on the lips of non-Israelites as well as Israelites. This psalm, the climax of the sequence, crowns the international perspective of Psalms 96 and 98 by recognising that the people of the new covenant encompasses all nations.

Such is what was provided for by the Abrahamic covenant, even if its realisation is tied to the new covenant. We should recall that this theme of blessing for the nations is 'flagged' for the psalter

<sup>19</sup> Eveson, 197.

<sup>20</sup> *kî* (beginning of verse 5) is explicative.

<sup>21</sup> The position of, amongst others, A. Maclaren (1903<sup>5</sup>), *The Psalms*, vol. III (Psalms 90-150), London: Hodder and Stoughton, 79; Harman, 330; Mitchell, 291; J. Goldingay (2008), *Psalms*, vol. 3 (Psalms 90-150), BCOT, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 136-137.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. N. Lohfink (1990), 'Die Universalisierung der „Bundesformel“ in Ps 100,3', *Theologie und Philosophie* 65, 1990, 172-183; E. Zenger (1997), *Die Nacht wird leuchten wie der Tag: Psalmenauslegungen*, Herder: Freiburg im Breisgau, 315-319; B. Weber (2003), *Werkbuch Psalmen II: Die Psalmen 73 bis 150*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 161-162, 163; T. Longman III (2014), *Psalms*, TOTC 15-16, Downers Grove/Nottingham, p. 348-350.

reader in the programmatic Psalm 2, for the parallel with Psalm 100 is remarkable. In the book of Psalms, an appeal, in the imperative, to serve YHWH occurs only in these two texts;<sup>23</sup> in both cases, it is addressed to the nations<sup>24</sup> (and, further, in both cases, there is a call to joy):

- Ps. 2:11      Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. (KJV)
- Ps. 100:2     Serve the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs.  
(HCSB)

Three further comments need to be made regarding the definition of the people of YHWH under the new covenant. First, as the call to conversion – particularly in Psalm 96 – implies, not every individual member of the nations is included in the covenant people: the universal appeal does not imply a universalism of principle or of practice. Only those who enter the temple courts benefit from YHWH's salvation (if we may combine the ideas of Psalms 96:2; 98:2; and 100:4) and are not subject to the righteous judgment of YHWH (Pss 96:13; 98:9). Secondly, not all Israelites are beneficiaries of salvation. Psalm 95 insists that only those who heed YHWH's voice will enter the place of rest: the new crossing of the desert does not ultimately apply to those whose hearts are wayward. The people whom YHWH does not abandon are those who are upright in heart (Ps. 94:12-15). In addition, we should note that Psalm 91, which lies outside the group we have been considering but which is not unconnected to it,<sup>25</sup> underlines the importance of putting one's trust in YHWH as the place of protection: this is the only criterion for salvation. Thirdly, the parallels with Isaiah 40-55 require us to reckon with the importance of the work of the servant of YHWH, raised up (1) to 'restore the preserved ones of Israel' and (2) so that YHWH's salvation 'may reach to the end of the earth'<sup>26</sup> (Isa. 49:6 NASB; cf. Isa. 42:6). The new-covenant people of God, drawn from Israel and the nations, are the fruit of the servant's suffering (Isa. 50-55). Once again, we find ourselves coming back to the figure of the king,<sup>27</sup> although, once again, only indirectly (as far as Book 4 is concerned).

We do, however, believe that it is appropriate to discern the presence of the king in Psalm 101 – and even the figure of the suffering servant in Psalm 102. Our convictions in relation to these two psalms are probably more speculative than what we have advanced hitherto, but they are not critical to our overall project, and they are, for the most part, anticipatory of themes that we take to be more clearly presented in Book 5.

## XI. SINAITIC/DAVIDIC-COVENANT CONDITIONS SATISFIED BY THE ESCHATOLOGICAL KING (PSALM 101)

Important excursus: meaning of 'Of David' after Psalm 72:20

The psalter reader has to reckon with the difficult question of the meaning of *l'edawid* ('Of David') when it occurs after what an editor-compiler has told us is the last of David's prayers (Ps. 72:20). We submit that the key to the answer lies with its first occurrence, in Psalm 86, and, in particular, with

---

<sup>23</sup> Cf. E. S. Gerstenberger (2001), *Psalms (Part 2) and Lamentations*, FOTL 15, Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 203.

<sup>24</sup> As indicated by the preceding verse in each case.

<sup>25</sup> E.g. D. M. Howard, Jr. (1993), 'A Contextual Reading of Psalms 90-94', in J. Clinton McCann, Jr. (ed.), *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, JSOTSupp 159, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 108-123.

<sup>26</sup> The formula here is not especially close to that of Psalm 2:8, even if the idea is. In Psalm 2, the context is of judgment which, in common with salvation, is a global phenomenon.

<sup>27</sup> For the relationship between suffering servant and king, see, e.g., B. G. Webb (1996), *The Message of Isaiah, On Eagles' Wings*, BST, Leicester: IVP, 1996, 233-234.

noting, with Brevard Childs, that ‘almost every line [of Psalm 86] has picked up a phrase from another portion of Scripture and fashioned it into a poem.’<sup>28</sup> It is, asserts Kirkpatrick, ‘the composition of some pious soul whose mind was steeped with the scriptures already in existence, and who recast reminiscences of them into a prayer to suit his own particular needs.’<sup>29</sup> There is no reason, in our view (and *contra* Kirkpatrick), why this ‘pious soul’ could not have (in practice) been David, (immediate) son of Jesse, himself; but that is not the matter at hand, for Kirkpatrick is right that we are to see here ‘an imitation’ of David’s prayers<sup>30</sup> – or, better, a recapitulation. For this recasting of prior material has a particular psalter context – one in which David’s final prayer has already been uttered (Ps. 72:20) and in which there is no Davidic throne. ‘...[P]erhaps [Psalm 86] is a timely reminder, at a time of exile, that all the old truths of the anointed king and his covenant God are as relevant now – when there is no king – as they ever were.’<sup>31</sup> This squares with our earlier discussion of how Psalm 86 functions to presage new-covenant realities. What, then, is the meaning of ‘Of David’ in a post-Book 2 setting? In Christopher Seitz’s words,<sup>32</sup> ‘[n]ot David the man, but David the paradigmatic ruler, will now be the focus of interest.’ In sum, it seems appropriate to interpret *l’ dāwîd* as ‘relating to a recapitulated (/new/eschatological) David.’ The number of other post-Psalm 72 ‘David’ psalms that are composites (drawing on earlier psalms) – discussed in relation to Book 5 – supports this understanding of the phrase.

## XII. NEW-COVENANT (AND ABRAHAMIC-COVENANT) FULFILMENT ENABLED BY A SUFFERING SERVANT (PSALM 102)

## XIII. CONVERGENCE OF ABRAHAMIC, DAVIDIC AND NEW COVENANTS IN PROVIDING THE SOLUTION TO THE ADAMIC PROBLEM (PSALM 103)

1. Forgiveness of sins heads the list of ‘benefits’ which need to be remembered (vv. 2-3). This forgiveness applies both to the individual (vv. 3-5) and to the community (vv. 6-18); it even has repercussions for the entire cosmos (vv. 19-22). Do we not have here, in this key idea in Psalm 103, the answer to the problems of Genesis 3-11?
2. The personification of the cosmos in verses 21-22 recalls the same phenomenon that we find in the central group of Psalms 93-100 (Pss 93:3; 96:11-12; 98:7-8). As we have seen, the context in which the latter feature is eschatological – that of the fulfilment of the new

---

<sup>28</sup> B. S. Childs (1979), *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 514; cf. also A. M. Harman (1998), *Commentary on the Psalms*, Mentor, Fearn [Ross-shire]: Christian Focus, 293.

<sup>29</sup> A. F. Kirkpatrick (1895), *The Book of Psalms: Books II and III (Psalms XLII-LXXXIX)*, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Cambridge, CUP, 515.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> C. Ash (2018), *Teaching Psalms: From Text to Message*, vol. 2, Fearn [Ross-shire]: Christian Focus, {}.

<sup>32</sup> C. Seitz (1998), ‘Royal Promises in the Canonical Books of Isaiah and the Psalms’, in *Word without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness*, Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 159.

covenant. This sensitises us to the possibility of a new-covenant fulfilment for Psalm 103 as well. This seems to be confirmed by the strong hue of Isaiah 40-55 that colours Psalm 103,<sup>33</sup> as also by the fact that the psalm corresponds, to a considerable extent, to a commentary on the last part of the new-covenant formula: *ḥesed* reverberates, at more or less regular intervals, through the psalm,<sup>34</sup> while *’ôlām* also plays a significant role. These two terms echo Psalm 89.

3. The new-covenant solution to the Adamic problem does not bypass the realisation of the Abrahamic covenant. This can be seen in the fact that the ('Abrahamic') golden calf episode is, once again, indirectly evoked here (Ps. 103:8; cf. Exod. 34:6) and also by the fact that 'those who fear [YHWH]' (vv. 11, 13, 17) – the beneficiaries of forgiveness in the psalm – is a general expression that can accommodate non-Israelites,<sup>35</sup> in keeping with the redefinition of the people of God that emerges through the sequence that runs from Psalm 95 to Psalm 100.
4. If our appreciation of the meaning of 'Of David' (*l' dāwîd*) in post-Psalm 72 contexts is correct, Psalm 103:1a H (heading E) requires us to tie the solution to an eschatological king from David's line (the one who has been on view in Psalm 101). The reminiscences of Isaiah 40-55 that we find in Psalm 103 probably have the same effect: the mind of the careful reader of the Scriptures is drawn to *ḥasdei dāwîd* of Isaiah 55:3.
5. The beneficiaries of forgiveness are not without precepts to put into practice; they may even be said to 'keep [YHWH's] covenant' (v. 18). Patently, this cannot mean 'keep perfectly the law of Moses within the framework of the Sinaitic covenant,' for otherwise there would be no need for the forgiveness of sins which Psalm 103 majors on, and this psalm presents an Abrahamic-Davidic-new covenant solution. It does, though, mean that YHWH's new-covenant beneficiaries are characterised by the concern to obey specific commandments. We return to this question as we tackle the theme of law in our final session.

---

<sup>33</sup> F. D. Kidner (1975; *Psalms 73-150: A Commentary on Books III to V of the Psalms*, TOTC, Leicester/Downers Grove: IVP, 365-366) identifies the following links: Isa. 40:30f. (v. 5); 55:6-9 and 49:15 (vv. 11-14); 40:6-8 (vv. 15-18). We could add Isa. 40:24 et 51:12 (cf. vv. 15-16).

<sup>34</sup> V. 4, 8, 11, 17.

<sup>35</sup> In our coverage of Book 5, we interact with the debate regarding the meaning of this expression in Psalms 115 and 118.