

## The Psalms: A Threefold Conversation?

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### Introduction

In his article, “Deuteronomy and Psalms: Evoking a Biblical Conversation,”<sup>1</sup> Patrick Miller argues that the books of Psalms and Deuteronomy have much in common with each other at both conceptual and inter-textual levels, especially noting the influence of the Song of Moses (Deut 32) upon Psalms 78 and 106 as *self-indictments* of the community for not obeying the law of the Lord, first presented in Psalm 1 where the law (Torah) is presented as the only path to true happiness. Other themes from Deuteronomy reflected in the Psalms include the *nearness of God* (Deut 4:7), and the *fear of God* (Psa 34:11 [ET]), as well as the pivotal role played by the law (Torah) in Psalms 1, 19, and 119, which Miller argues is the book of Deuteronomy itself (*cf.* Psalm 1:2 with Joshua 1:8). In this way, the hermeneutics of story and instruction (Deuteronomy) are joined with song (Psalms). Thus one learns the story and the command, and how to sing the Lord’s song.

But having conceded this much, is it possible to take one further step in this biblical conversation by suggesting that the Psalms have also engaged in conversation with the book of Isaiah, by providing an overall *vision* to that of story/law and song? In one small paragraph of his article, Miller briefly draws attention to Isaiah 2 in his discussion of Psalm 2, but does not develop this any further.<sup>2</sup> Thus, what this article will propose is that in the Psalms, one *learns* the story and command (Deuteronomy), how to *sing* and *pray* the Lord’s song (Psalms), and how to *see* the broader vision (Isaiah).

### The Evidence of Qumran and the New Testament

As an extension of this claim for the importance of the book of Isaiah within this threefold conversation, it is interesting to note that the three books that appear in the largest numbers of manuscripts at Qumran, Psalms (36), Deuteronomy (29), and Isaiah

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick D. Miller, “Deuteronomy and Psalms: Evoking a Conversation,” *JBL* 118/1 (1999), 3–18.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, “Deuteronomy and Psalms,” *JBL* 118/1 (1999), 16.

(21), are also the three quoted most frequently in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> Especially is this seen in the twofold work of Luke-Acts, in which the book of Isaiah provides an outside frame defining the ministries of Jesus and Paul,<sup>4</sup> and between these framing passages, Deuteronomy and the Psalms play key supporting roles within Luke's overall work.<sup>5</sup> Thus, these three books are never far from each other in terms of final canonical form and influence, and for this reason, have most likely engaged with each other within the Psalter itself at the point of instruction, song, prayer, vision, and worship.

### The Overall Structure of the Psalms

Before we begin to say something about the book of Isaiah and its possible relationship to the Psalms, it is worth observing the overall structure of the Psalms in order to map something of the landscape of the 150 individual psalms that now make up the canonical Psalter. As scholars have been correct to point out over recent years, there is evidence that our present Psalter has most likely evolved from smaller collections of psalms to larger collections, and that this process has also been largely determined and shaped by both religious (theological) and historical circumstances as time has gone by. The final shape of the Psalter reveals a fivefold division (1–41; 42–72; 73–89; 90–106; 107–150), most probably reflecting the fivefold books of the Pentateuch. Thus a law (or 'Torah') intention has been finally imposed upon the macro-structure of the Psalter, further illustrated by the positioning of the three Torah psalms (1, 19, 119) within the framing books (1 and 5) of the Psalter. Further, each book within the Psalter concludes with a final doxology, that was most probably the work of a final editor. This may be supported by the fact that the first four doxologies that occur at the end of the first four books reveal a chiasmic structure, with 41:13 at Book 1 providing a parallel to 106:48 at Book 4, and 72:18–19 at Book 2 providing a parallel to 89:52 at Book 3. On the basis of this evidence, Zenger plausibly suggests that these four books may well have already existed as a complete compositional entity before

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<sup>3</sup> J.C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (London: SPCK, 1994), 32.

<sup>4</sup> With Jesus, Luke 4:18–19 = Isa 61:1–2; with Paul, Acts 13:47 = Isa 49:6; Acts 28:26–27 = Isa 6:9–10.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Luke 24:44 = law (Deuteronomy), prophets, and writings (Psalms); seen closely together at Acts 2:25–28 = Psa 16:8–11; Acts 2:34–35 = Psa 110:1; Acts 3:22–23 = Deut 18:15–19. See also Rom 15:9–12 where Paul stitches together quotes from Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah.

Book 5 was added.<sup>6</sup> Also, within this penultimate structure, there is the note at the end of Book 2 (72:20), “the prayers of David have concluded,” which may reveal a further editorial marker within this process. This colophon, coming *after* the doxology of 72:18–19, most probably applies to the entire collection of Psalms 3–72.

### Issues Relating to David and Zion

It is further worthy of note that in the following Books 3 and 4, there is only a single Davidic psalm in Book 3 (Psalm 86), and two Davidic psalms in Book 4 (101, 103). But with the addition of Book 5 (Psalms 107–150), we may observe that another large collection of Davidic psalms emerge (108–110, 122, 124, 131, 138–145), paralleling the significant collection of Davidic Psalms in Book 1 (Psalms 3–41). This was probably arranged out of respect for David, first and foremost as the paramount Psalmist, just as other sections of Scripture honoured Solomon as the patron saint of Wisdom in Israel (1 Kgs 4:29–34). But the presence of David in both frames is probably also meant to uphold the *ideals* of kingship (2 Sam 7), including Zion as the place of God’s sovereign home and rule over Israel and the nations (2 Sam 6; Psalms 46; 48; 76; 84; 87). It is to be noted that these songs of Zion in Books 2 and 3 belong to Asaph and Korah, the associates of David. Further, one may observe a progression in these psalms like climbing a mountain itself, where to begin with, Psalms 46 and 48 in Book 2 speak of the Lord’s defence of Jerusalem and his defeat of the nations through his mighty acts. Finally in Book 3, Psalm 76:11–12 implores Israel to acknowledge God’s help with grateful vows, and the nations to acknowledge his sovereign rule with tribute. Then Psalm 84 reminds the pilgrim of the threefold “blessedness” אֲשֶׁרֶ (‘*asrê*) of dwelling in God’s house (verse 4; *cf.* Psa 65:4), going on pilgrimage to Zion (v. 5), and trust in the Lord (v. 12). Then, in Psalm 87:4, all of the nations are represented who have been formerly hostile to the Lord, indicating a widespread conversion to the Lord as those whose names are now registered in Zion. Further, the reference to “fountains” at the conclusion to Psalm 87:7 may be seen as a frame for the opening Zion psalm (46:4) where there is a river whose “streams” make glad the city of God, probably referring to the *source* of life and refreshment as only to be found in Yahweh himself (*cf.* Psa 36:8). Israel and the nations must ultimately experience this for

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<sup>6</sup> Erich Zenger, “The Composition and Theology of the Fifth Book of Psalms, Psalm 107–145,” *JSOT* 80 (1998), 81.

themselves. This is of some interest for Book 3 itself, for coming as it does at the very centre of the Psalter's five books, it fittingly includes the final *three* Zion Psalms (76, 84, and 87), that also stand as a kind of mountain peak, highlighting the theme of Yahweh's sovereign rule over Israel and the nations.<sup>7</sup> It is in the light of this theme that the issue of human kingship may also be seen. For we have noted that in Book 3, the only Davidic Psalm as such is Psalm 86. What really is this Psalm doing here? A clue may be observed in the link between Psalm 86:9 and Psalm 87:4. The nations will ultimately acknowledge Zion as the city of God in the manner of Isaiah 2:2–5. A similar point is made by Psalm 102, which is framed by the only two Davidic Psalms in Book 4. To these observations we will return later on.

### **A Further Mountain Peak in Book 3**

In the meantime, Psalm 81, which stands at the structural heart of Book 3, proclaims the religious festivals of Israel as a “decree” from the Lord, especially the Feast of Tabernacles (*cf.* Zech 14:16), much in the same way that the seven festivals found in Leviticus 23 stand at the structural centre of the Pentateuch. Every seventh year at this festival the covenant law (Deuteronomy) was to be read to all the people (Deut 31:9–13). In this way Psalm 81:8–10 also takes Israel back to Mount Sinai/Horeb and the Lord's proclamation of the first commandment (Exod 20:2–4; Deut 5:6–8). The main point of this Psalm is framed as a *warning* for Israel to “listen” to the Lord, and if they would do this, Israel's enemies would be subdued before them. But because God's covenant people would not listen to him, he gave them over to their own stubborn hearts to follow their own devices (verses 11–12). Coming as it does at the centre of Book 3, which itself is the centre of the Psalter's five-book structure, we find that Mount Sinai/Horeb and God's covenant law or Torah, especially highlighting the first commandment “You shall have no other gods before me,” stands supreme. This Psalm reflects the language and message of Deuteronomy 31:16–18 and the Song of Moses (Deut 32:1–43). As such, it supports the pivotal importance of Deuteronomy and the Torah psalms at the frames of the Psalter as well (Book 1 = Psalms 1, 19; Book 5 = 119). Standing at the very centre of the Psalter, Psalm 81 provides the theological reason why

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<sup>7</sup> If we include Psalm 122 as a Zion Psalm, which parallels Psalm 132 within the Songs of Ascent in Book 5, then we may notice a further link between Zion as Yahweh's dwelling place, as the place of joyful pilgrimage and peace, as well as the place of Davidic promise and hope.

the *enemy* continues to stand as a constant threat and major theme throughout the five books of the Psalter, and also why Israel (either individual or community) feels that the Lord has “turned his face” from them, or has “forgotten” to be gracious to them, much in the spirit of Isaiah (40:27).<sup>8</sup> The way back within Book 3 is found at Psalm 85, which not only reflects the post-exilic period, but also the prospect of future restoration based upon past mercies (Isaiah 40:1–11). But this time, the Psalmist confesses that he will “listen” to what the Lord might say (v. 8; cf. Isa 40:31; 66:2), on the basis that the Lord’s salvation and glory is “near” to those who fear him (v. 9). However, this promise of salvation is really a *reiteration* of the salvation prophecy of Isaiah 40–55 (compare v. 9 with Isa 51:5; 55:6). Here we have a situation of the Psalmist recalling the promises of God from the book of Isaiah in order to bring further comfort and reassurance to the dispirited post-exilic community.<sup>9</sup>

### The Historical Setting of Book 3

From an historical perspective, Book 3 most probably reflects the rupture represented by the Babylonian exile, evidenced by Psalms 74 and 89 at the frames. This also relates to the eventual disruption of the office of kingship, which figures at the seams with Psalms 1–2, as well as Psalm 72 where the king is understood to be the upholder of “justice” and “righteousness”, so that eventually all the nations are to be blessed through him (v. 17; Gen 12:3). But at the end of Book 3, the eternal covenant that God had made with David (2 Sam 7) had been broken through a succession of unfaithful kings, leading to the abandonment of Jerusalem and Babylonian exile in 586 B.C. Psalm 89 ends with a prayer and an appeal to the Lord to remember his former promise made with David (vv. 46–51). At this point, we wait with anticipation to see how Books 4 and 5 of the Psalter will respond to this prayer and theological crisis. But before embarking on this exercise, it will be useful at this point to introduce the book of Isaiah as a possible way forward for the Psalter’s way of responding to this crisis.

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<sup>8</sup> This may prove to be a more convincing centre-point to the Psalter than Walter Brueggemann’s argument for Psalm 73 at the beginning of Book 3 in his article “Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon,” *JSOT* 50 (1991), 63–92. Brueggemann’s path “from obedience to praise” must begin with the knowledge that only the Lord is God, and therefore, we must begin by cultivating the art of “listening” to him (Psa 81:8–16), and not to the other gods and competing voices around us. In fact, in Psalm 73:24 it was the Psalmist’s ability to be finally led by the Lord’s “counsel” within the Temple that enabled him to find an answer to his deep dilemma.

<sup>9</sup> James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Interpretation; Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1994), 277.

## The Vision of Isaiah

There is much in the broad sweep as well as in the structure of the canonical book of Isaiah to suggest that a two-way conversation has taken place between the Psalms and Isaiah. Especially would this be so for Books 4 and 5 of the Psalter, if it is the case that they reflect the exilic and post-exilic periods of Judaism. It can be assumed, and it will be the working assumption of this article, that the book of Isaiah was completed in its canonical form sometime soon after the recording of Sennacherib's death in 681 B.C. (Isa 37:38), especially as the key hinge chapters of the book (chs. 36–39) reflect both the Assyrian (1–35) and Babylonian periods (40–66). With Webb we can therefore propose the view that the “vision” of Isaiah (1:1) is programmatically presented in 1:1–2:5 in which the transformation of Zion in “justice” and “righteousness” through purifying judgment (1:17–24) is the key to the transformation of the “new heavens and earth”, also involving Zion (65:17–25). But at the same time, rebels and sinners will perish, as those who obstruct this grand purpose (1:28–31; 66:22–24). Finally, the nations will come to Zion to share in the salvation that has been realized there (2:1–5; 60:1–3), but the key to all of this will be the transformation of Zion through the work of the royal suffering Servant (52:13–53:12; 61:1–3), who in turn will enable and inspire the righteous remnant of “servants” to go far and wide to proclaim God's glory among the nations (42:6; 49:6; 59:21; 66:19–21). In this way, the entire book moves between the twin poles of history and eschatology, as well as Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem. Finally, Webb also observes that the first part of the book has three units (chs 1–12, 13–27, 28–35), each of which ends with the praises of Yahweh being sung in or en route to the new Zion. After the hinge (36–39)<sup>10</sup>, it is then followed by a further three units (40:1–51:11; 51:12–55:13; and 56–66) which end in the same way.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Which itself includes Hezekiah's Song of Thanksgiving for his healing toward the end of this section at Isaiah 38:9–20, reflecting much of the spirit and language of the Psalms. See Allan Harman, *Isaiah: A Covenant to be Kept for the Sake of the Church* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 256–261.

<sup>11</sup> Barry Webb, “Zion in Transformation: A Literary Approach to Isaiah,” in *The Bible in Three Dimensions* (eds. D.J.A. Clines, S.E. Fowl, S.E. Porter; JSOTSup 87; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 65–84. In addition to these structural markers, one may also note Isaiah 48:22; 57:21; 66:24 which all point to “no peace for the wicked”, and are also spaced exactly nine chapters apart from each other, beginning with chapter 40, which declares that God's glory was about to be revealed in leading his captive people back to Zion (40:9).

### Isaiah within the Psalter

Already we have indicated in previous paragraphs that the canonical book of Isaiah could well have had some influence upon the Psalter, especially the last three books (3, 4 and 5) in particular, because in these books the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C. appears as a *past* event evidenced by Book 3 (Psalms 74 and 89), as well as Book 4 (Psalms 90–106), and finally Book 5 (Psalms 107–150), which looks to life after the exile. As we have already observed in Book 3, one would therefore begin to suspect that if the canonical book of Isaiah was beginning to exert some kind of an influence upon the Psalter, this period in particular would be our first port of call. However, from a final compositional point of view, the book of Isaiah could well have had an influence upon the earlier books of the Psalter (Books 1–2) as well, in the same way that the book of Deuteronomy has influenced most parts of the Psalter in different ways. We will now begin to explore some different lines of argument, both structural, thematic, and lexical, in support of our argument.

### Books 1 and 5 of the Psalter, and Isaiah

Firstly, it is of some interest and importance to note how Books 1 and 5 of the Psalter provide a frame for each other, as well as provide a theological direction for the entire corpus. This begins with Psalms 1 and 2 as a wisdom/Torah and royal psalm combination, which sets the theological agenda for the entire Psalter, concluding at Psalm 2:10–12 with a wisdom warning to the kings of the earth not to rebel against the Lord’s “anointed” king, and thus against the Lord’s sovereign rule over the earth. Rather, the nations are called to “serve” the Lord with fear, as well as submit to the Lord’s “anointed” king in Zion. Not to do so will only mean defeat and destruction for these nations (e.g. see Psalm 9). This combination of psalms is then followed by a small group of ‘Entrance Liturgy’ psalms (15–24), which themselves are also framed by Psalms 15 and 24, which address the question of the pilgrim’s *suitability* to ascend the hill of the Lord and “stand” or “dwell” in the Lord’s house on Zion. The answer is those who are *morally* righteous in keeping with Psalm 1. Then Psalms 16 and 23 express “trust” in the Lord concluding with joy in the Lord’s presence. Psalms 17 and 22 are then pleas for physical deliverance from enemies, which especially express “trust” in the Lord. In the inner frame, Psalms 18 and 20–21 together express prayer and praise for the king’s deliverance from his enemies, thus picking up

from Psalm 2. The centrepiece in this chiasmic arrangement is Psalm 19, which emphasizes creation and the warmth and life-giving nature of the sun in the first half (verses 1–6), as an introduction for the life-giving nature of the law (Torah) in the second half of the psalm (verses 7–14), thus picking up from Psalm 1. Thus, within this group of psalms, not only are the concerns of Psalms 1 and 2 repeated, but they emphasize again the centrality and importance of the law (Torah) as this relates to Zion and the king, even toward the end of Book 1 at Psalm 40:7–8.<sup>12</sup> Already we have noticed the importance of these themes for Book 3, which structurally stands at the centre of the Psalter.

When we come to Book 5, it begins with a Thanksgiving psalm (107) that opens in verses 1–3 in direct response to the prayer for deliverance from exile in Psalm 106:47. Also, as the opening psalm of Book 5, it parallels Psalms 1 and 2 in Book 1 by concluding with a wisdom saying (verse 43) similar to that of Psalm 2:10–12. Then the major part of Book 5 is made up of three sets of Psalms:

(1) *Psalms 110–118* that continue to uphold and look forward to the renewal of the Davidic kingship, beginning with God's *promise* of victory over David's enemies (Psalm 110), as an extension of Psalm 2, and concluding with a hymn of thanksgiving for victory given to the Davidic king (Psalm 118; *cf.* 2 Chronicles 20:27–30). Psalm 118 is also the concluding psalm to the group of psalms known as the Egyptian Hallel, beginning with Psalm 113, in which the Lord helps the needy and helpless, followed by Psalm 114, which tells the story of the exodus deeds of the Lord. Psalm 115 contrasts the Lord as Israel's help with that of the gods of the nations. Psalm 116 thanks the Lord for deliverance from death (*cf.* Psalm 18:5), and Psalm 117 calls on the nations to praise the Lord. Note also that Psalm 118:17–21 reflects an Entrance Liturgy enabling the triumphant king to give thanks to the Lord, anticipating the Songs of Ascent in Psalms 120–134. Then at the centre of Book 5, Psalm 119 stands taller than any other psalm, as a prayer and devotion on the blessings of keeping Torah, which reflects Psalm 1, and Psalm 19 in particular, which stands at the centre of Psalms 15–24.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Probably referring to the personal copy of the law that the king is to take at the time of his enthronement to serve as the covenant charter of his rule (Deut 17:18–20).

<sup>13</sup> Note that at Qumran (11QPs<sup>a</sup>) Psalm 119 stands at the mid-point of its collection between Psalms 101 and 151, coming immediately after Psalm 132 and before Psalms 135–136. Coming *after* the Songs of Ascent, rather than before them as in the canonical Psalter, has a significant effect. Rather than Torah precipitating pilgrimage to Zion and the Temple,

(2) *The Songs of Ascent (120–134)* can be divided into three sets of five psalms, with each of the centre psalms (Psalms 122, 127, 132) emphasizing a different aspect of Zion, as well as the Lord's promise to David (especially Psalm 132; cf. *Psa* 89:3–4; 2 *Sam* 7). These songs suggest that the Davidic ideal and hope had not entirely dropped out of favour within the post exilic community, but rather takes on an eschatological and messianic dimension *alongside* of and in the *service* of God's sovereign rule (cf. Psalms 2 and 18 in Book 1).<sup>14</sup> Also, these psalms provide a parallel to the Entrance Liturgies (Psalms 15–24) of Book 1, which focus the desirability of making a pilgrimage to Zion, the place of the Lord's presence and rule.

(3) *Psalms 138–145* provide a Davidic collection that reflects the concerns of Books 1 and 2, especially noting the parallels between Psalm 144 and Psalm 18 in Book 1. Finally, the Davidic Psalm 145 not only concludes Book 5 as well as the entire Psalter with the unique term “praise” (Heb. *tēhilla*) within its superscription (cf. *Psa* 72:20), but it also serves as an introduction to the final five “Praise the Lord” (Heb. *hallū yāh*) Psalms (146–150). This double function is first of all achieved by verse 20 which points back to Psalm 1 and the distinction drawn there between the godly and the wicked. Then, verse 21 points forward to Psalms 146–150, in which the final word is “praise” of the Lord's “holy name” by all his creatures. Thus the final word of the entire Psalter is not that of lament, but rather one of joy and “praise”, that also includes “thanksgiving” (cf. Psalms 22:3; 50:1–23; 89:14).<sup>15</sup>

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pilgrimage, in effect, leads to the Torah. This even reflects more the spirit and movement of Isaiah 2:2–4, but the changes may simply be different literary ways of highlighting the importance of Torah. See Gerald H. Wilson, “The Qumran Psalms Scroll (11QPs<sup>a</sup>) and the Canonical Psalter: Comparison of Editorial Shaping,” *CBQ* 59 (1997), 448–469.

<sup>14</sup> Supported by the importance of the Davidic messiah in the Qumran Scroll (11QPs<sup>a</sup>), in which David is also attributed with prophetic status (cf. Acts 2:30). But this does not mean with Wilson, “Qumran Psalms Scroll,” 464, that this Davidic hope is entirely given up in the Masoretic Psalter by yielding to the kingship of Yahweh within Books 4 (93, 95–99) and 5 (145, 146–150) of the Psalter. Rather, it is the kingship of Yahweh which enables and reinforces this hope and keeps it alive for Israel. For this reason, Wilson's later wisdom frames within the Psalter (Psalms 1, 73, 90, 107, and 145) need not be seen as finally taking precedence over the Royal Psalms (2, 72, 89, 144), by directing our focus to trust in Yahweh. Rather, our trust in Yahweh will in time enable his full plan of salvation to come to completion. In the meantime, God's “righteous remnant” have an important role to fulfil.

<sup>15</sup> Patrick D. Miller, “The End of the Psalter: A Response to Erich Zenger,” *JSOT* 80 (1998), 103–110.

### Summary of Observations

We may therefore summarize our observations of Books 1 and 5 of the Psalter and their relationship to canonical Isaiah in *three* main ways.

(1) Firstly, Books 1 and 5 of the Psalter reveal a similar structural pattern that especially highlights the concept of *pilgrimage to Zion* (Psalms 120–134; cf. Psa 135:2; Isa 66:18–21) and those counted worthy to stand or dwell in the Lord’s holy place on Zion (Psalms 15–24). This reflects the programmatic direction of Isaiah 2:1–5 in which the nations will finally engage in such a pilgrimage, for the purpose of being “instructed” in God’s law (Torah). This will not only enable the nations to walk in the Lord’s “paths” or ways, but the whole process will bring about world “peace” and “justice”. The concept of “peace” will only become a full reality when the Prince of Peace reigns from Zion (Isa 9:6–7; 11:6–9,10–12) and brings both “justice” and “righteousness” to the earth. In the meantime, in the absence of such a king, Psalm 122 (attributed to David), prays for the “peace” and well-being of Jerusalem within the Psalms of Ascent (120–134); Psalm 122 has been linked to Psalm 132 within the same set of psalms, highlighting the Lord’s choice of Zion as his dwelling place, *alongside* his sworn promise to David of an eternal dynasty (cf. Psa 89:3–4; 2 Sam 7:8–16). Further, we have already drawn attention to the importance of the Zion psalms culminating in Book 3 with Psalm 87, and the register of the nations that now belong to Zion as being “born” within her. Again, we noticed that this psalm has a distinct link with the only Davidic psalm in Book 3 (Psa 86:9), in which David remarkably points to the vision of Isaiah 2:1–5 becoming a future reality at Psalm 87.

(2) Secondly, within Books 1 and 5 of the Psalter we may notice a distinct connection between Psalm 18 (Book 1) and Psalm 144 (Book 5) as this relates to the book of Isaiah. Interestingly, in Psalm 18 David experienced the Lord in theophany and divine deliverance from his enemies, in “parting the heavens” and “coming down” as Divine Warrior (cf. 2 Sam 22). But now these same words are put into the form of a *prayer* for deliverance in Psalm 144:5–8: “Part the Heavens, O Lord, and come down,” reflecting the form of prayer and context of the post-exilic community in Isaiah 63:15–64:12, in which Isaiah pleads for the community that the Lord’s anger may

not continue against their collective sin.<sup>16</sup> Also, it is significant that these words come toward the end of both books, especially if it can be correctly argued that Psalm 145 originally closed the Psalter, before the final “Praise the Lord” (*hallû yāh*) psalms were added (146–150). Further, it is highly likely that Psalm 144 has gained its inspiration from the Isaiah text, especially in terms of a form of closure to the Hymns of the Second Temple period. In a Job-like way, both Isaiah and the Psalms finally plead for an experience of *theophany* that will simultaneously involve the Lord coming in salvation and judgment. It is also clear that Psalm 144 reveals evidence of certain modifications from that of Psalm 18 (e.g. the inclusion of Psalm 8:4 possibly indicating the royal nature of the post-exilic community without a king), suggesting that it has been shaped and adapted for a new situation and need. A unique feature of Psalm 144 is the reference to “the evil sword” (verse 10) as a figure of speech for the “words” which the “foreigners” בְּנֵי-נֹכַר (*beñe-nekār*; cf. Psa 18:44–45) were employing as weapons against the welfare of the community, perhaps reflecting a period like that of Nehemiah (6:1–19). Therefore, by re-praying Psalm 18 in a new version and situation, the appeal was made to do for the people what the Lord had done for his servant David. And so Psalm 144 is a prayer in which the community prays as David, and also hopes as David.<sup>17</sup> It is another way of saying, “Do another David, O Lord!”

(3) Thirdly, the final grouping of psalms (138–145) reflects the concerns of Books 1 and 2, especially at Psalm 145:20 with regard to the distinction between the *righteous* and the *wicked*, which virtually provides a frame for the entire Psalter beginning in Psalm 1. In this way, the entire Psalter also mirrors the structure and concerns of the book of Isaiah at its frames (1:2 and 66:24) with regard to those who “rebel” against the Lord. For the book of Isaiah, the rebellious are also those whose chief sins are “pride” and “idolatry”, who fail to “trust” the Lord and “listen” to his voice (65:11–12; 66:1–4). Their main sins are listed in Isaiah 1, and at the horizontal level also involve the many sins of social injustice. Like the Psalter, Isaiah can also call those who “rebel” against the Lord

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<sup>16</sup> Barry Webb, *Isaiah* (BST; Leicester: IVP, 1996), 243, points out that it is likely that later generations of Israelites used this very prayer to lament the destruction of the Temple and seek God’s forgiveness. Also see H.G.M. Williamson, “Isaiah 63:7–64:11. Exilic Lament or Post-Exilic Protest?” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 102 (1990), 48–58.

<sup>17</sup> Mays, *Psalms*, 436.

the “wicked” עֲשָׂרָה (*rašā'*), beginning at Isaiah 3:10–11 (where the “righteous” are contrasted with the “wicked”) and finally the “wicked” are found at the frames of Isaiah 48:22 and 57:21 where “there is no peace for the wicked”, which anticipate Isaiah 66:24 and the final death of the “rebellious”. The same concept is found toward the end of the Psalter at Psalm 139:19,<sup>18</sup> “If only you would slay the wicked,” Psalm 143:12 “destroy all my foes,” and then at Psalm 145:20 which speaks of the final “destruction” of the wicked.<sup>19</sup> In this way, the book of Isaiah has provided the Psalter with a similar conceptual and structural framework.

### Isaiah 1–12 and Psalm 145

A further structural similarity may be observed between Isaiah 12 and Psalm 145. Miller notes that in Isaiah 12 we encounter a similar kind of ending to a book within a book (Isaiah 1–12) that we seem to have in Psalm 145.<sup>20</sup> As we have already pointed out, Isaiah 1–12 forms the first distinct unit within Isaiah, which ends on a note of “praise”. Also, within this unit, most of the important themes of Isaiah are introduced, which are also present within the Psalms, including the importance of Zion implicating the nations (1:2–2:5), followed by alternating oracles of judgment and salvation, separated by the call of Isaiah who announces the peoples’ sin as well as the prospect of a righteous remnant (6:1–13). This is then followed by chapters 7–11 that contain parallel passages addressed to Judah and Israel containing a moment of decision (7:1–17; 9:8–10:4), followed by judgment (7:18–8:8; 10:5–15), the remnant (8:9–22; 10:16–34), and glorious hope in terms of a righteous ruler and a New Exodus salvation (9:1–7; 11:1–16). Finally, in the light of this, the people are now called to sing songs of praises, to break forth in a song of proclamation and praise of the name of the Lord (Isa 12:4). Miller concludes, “Like the movement of the Song of Thanksgiving (which can move from individual to community praise), like the movement in Psalm 145 (which concludes with similar themes in Psalms 107–145), and like the movement in Psalms 146–50, the individual who

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<sup>18</sup> Further, Psalm 139:20 may also reflect Isaiah 66:5 where the wicked “misuse” the name of the Lord by excluding the faithful from worship through sarcastic taunts (*cf.* Isa 5:19).

<sup>19</sup> It should also be noted that Psalm 107:42 contrasts the upright with the “wicked”, but uses a different word for “wicked”, עוֹלָה (*awlā*), thus also providing a frame for Psalm 145:20 and Book 5.

<sup>20</sup> Miller, “Response to Zenger,” 110.

praises evokes the praise of the many.”<sup>21</sup> As a conclusion to Isaiah 1–11, chapter 12 is really a Hymn of Praise, which falls into two sections, clearly marked by the occurrence of the words, “And in that day you will say” (verses 1, 4). In verse 1 the “you” is singular, and in verse 4 it is plural. Thus there is a movement in this Psalm of Praise from the spontaneous outpouring of “praise” (*yādā*), also found in Psalm 145:10, from each of the Lord’s redeemed in verses 1–2 (where the verbs are singular), then in verses 3, and 4–6, (plural) the experience of salvation now prompts the redeemed as a whole to give thanks and “call” (*qārā*) upon the name of the Lord (verse 4), which probably means to “proclaim” his name and righteous deeds among the nations. Finally, the song comes to a fitting climax in declaring that “great” (*gādōl*) is the Holy One of Israel in your midst (verse 6), as the Immanuel God (*cf.* 7:14), also reflecting the outer frames of Psalm 145 (verse 3 “great”; and verse 21 “holy name”).<sup>22</sup>

### **Isaiah 40–66 and Books 4 and 5 of the Psalter (Psalms 90–106; 107–145, 146–150).**

To begin with, we may note some of the conceptual links between Isaiah 40–66 and Book 4 (Psalms 90–106). Three are worth a closer look. First, we have already drawn attention to the only two Davidic psalms in Book 4 (Psalms 101 and 103). What purpose do they serve here in terms of our main inquiry? Psalm 101 is a king’s pledge to reign righteously, and Psalm 103 is a hymn extolling God’s love and compassion toward his people and their sin. But in between, in Psalm 102, the situation of distress envisaged is most likely that of the Babylonian exile. But at the same time, the Psalmist, most probably representing the wider faith community, voices the plea that the appointed time has now come for the Lord to have compassion on Zion (verse 13). As a result, the nations and kings of the earth will fear and revere the name and glory of the

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<sup>21</sup> Miller, “Response to Zenger,” 110.

<sup>22</sup> Note that as a frame to Psalm 145, Psalm 138 is also a song of praise/thanks-giving using the same verb (*yādā*), in which the first person style can also be understood as a general song of praise by the post-exilic community in *fulfilment* of the prophecies of salvation first proclaimed at Isaiah 12:1–6 and Isaiah 40–66, especially in carrying out their vocation to be witnesses to the nations of the Lord’s sovereignty and salvation, that should also command the recognition of the kings of the nations because they have also now recognized that the words spoken by the prophets have been fulfilled. Indeed, the glory of the Lord has been revealed to all (Psa 138:4–5; Isa 40:5), and the Lord’s salvation is the act of the High for the lowly, and the powerful for the weak (Psa 138:6; *cf.* Isa 40:9–11; 57:15; 66:1–2). See Mays, *Psalms*, 424–5.

Lord (verse 15), as the nations assemble to worship the Lord in Zion (verses 21–22). This may well be the hope for which the Psalmist looks in this psalm (verses 17–20). Already we have observed that the only Davidic psalm in Book 3 (Psalm 86) serves the same function alongside Psalm 87 (*cf.* Psa 86:9; 87:4). Both in turn reflect the theological agenda of Isaiah 2:1–5 and may well represent the personification of the exiles in Isaiah 40–55, whose opening complaint, voiced at Isaiah 40:27 (*cf.* 49:14), is that their “way has been disregarded by the Lord.” In the meantime, Psalm 102:16 also states that the Lord will rebuild Zion and “appear in his glory”, echoing Isaiah 40:5. Further, Psalm 103:5, in close association with Psalm 102, repeats the language of Isaiah 40:30–31 with regard to “youth that is renewed like the eagle’s.” Even though it is possible that this language may have originally belonged to David, its association with other aspects of Isaiah 40 in Psalm 102 may suggest that the association with Isaiah 40 at both ends of the chapter is not fortuitous.

Another study has made further connections between Book 4 (Psalms 90–106) and Isaiah 40–55 on the basis of particular words and literary structure.<sup>23</sup> In some cases, this common language is present only in these two blocks of material. But of significant interest is the fact that an impressive number of terms shared by Book 4 and Isaiah 40–55 appear in analogous position near the beginning and/or the end of both. For example, Psalm 90:13 and Isaiah 40:1, as well as Psalm 106:45 and Isaiah 54:11, contain the root *nḥm* (“comfort/have compassion”). This is also linked to the word “gather” (*qbs*) at Psalm 106:46–47 and Isaiah 54:7. Also, only in these two blocks of material do we find the frailty of humanity compared with the terms “grass” (*hāšîr*) and “flower” (*šîš*) (Psa 90:5–6; [102:5]; 103:15–16; *cf.* Isa. 40:6–8). Further lexical similarities include “everlasting covenant” (*bērît ‘ôlām*) near the end of both sections at Psalm 105:10 and Isaiah 55:3 connected with “servants”, and at the end of both blocks of material is the concept of “coming out with joy” (*rinnâ*) at Psalm 105:43 and Isaiah 55:12. Further, whereas the opening Psalm 90:13–14 concludes with Moses’ prayer that the Lord might “relent” and have “compassion” on his servants by satisfying them with his “unfailing love” (*hesed*), this prayer is finally answered at Psalm 106:44–45 with the same terms (*cf.* Psa 145:8; Exod 34:6–7). In this way, Moses’ great

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<sup>23</sup> Jerome Creach, “The Shape of Book Four of the Psalter and the Shape of Second Isaiah,” *JSOT* 80 (1998), 63–76.

intercession for Israel in the past (Exod 32:11–14; Deut 9:18–20, 25–29) has been called into the service of the exiles' present plight, with the hope that the Lord will *continue* to answer their cries for help (Psa 106:47; *cf.* Deut 30:1–10). But, this will also be dependent upon the theophany of the Lord's self-declared character at Exodus 34:6–7 to which Moses makes his appeal, which also concludes the Psalter at Psalm 145:8. Finally, the concept of God's "comfort/compassion" has an equivalent frame within Isaiah 40–55 with God's "word" which stands forever (40:8) and finally accomplishes God's will for his people (55:11; *cf.* Psa 147:15–20). Creach argues that the number of such parallels, and the fact that some terms only appear in these two blocks of material, suggest that some form of interplay has taken place between the psalms in Book 4 and Isaiah, with Isaiah 40–55 most likely providing the model for such interplay. But in the end, Book 4 with its emphasis upon Moses in Psalm 90, and the reference to "secret sins" (verse 8; *cf.* Deut 27:15, 24), framed in the final psalm (106) by the reference to "Horeb" (Deuteronomy's typical term for Sinai) and the "cast idol" (verse 19), followed by the people's sacrifice to "demons" (only elsewhere at Deut 32:17), equally suggest that Book 4 has been deliberately patterned on the basis of "Torah" (instruction and law) as this is found in the book of Deuteronomy. Thus we really find with Book 4 of the Psalter a fine example of the threefold interplay of Psalms, Isaiah, and Deuteronomy, as this will finally lead into Book 5 of the Psalter, with its eschatological perspective of hope and praise.

A third connection between Book 4 of the Psalter and Isaiah 40–66 relates to the theme of the "vengeance" of God. Especially does this relate to Psalm 94 where the Lord is called the "God of Vengeance", which is unique to this psalm within Psalms 93 to 99, which proclaim the kingship of the Lord. Creach has also drawn attention to the connection between the universal rule of Yahweh and idol passages within Isaiah 40–55, reflected in Psalms 96:4–5 and 97:1–7, which also share between them further identical language and themes.<sup>24</sup> But in these same psalms, the Lord comes to judge the earth (Psa 96:13; 98:9) because "righteousness" and "justice" are the foundation of his throne, and all the peoples will

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<sup>24</sup> Creach, "Shape of Book Four," 68. Phrases and clauses from Psalms 96, 97, and 98 appear in the prophecy of Isaiah 40–55, especially relating to the Lord coming in judgment and salvation, accompanied by the chorus of praise from Heaven and Earth (Isa 44:23; 49:13; 55:12).

see his glory as the fire of his holy presence consumes his enemies on every side (Psa. 97:2–6). One could argue that in the first instance, such a theophany of the Lord’s presence reflects Deuteronomy 32:40–43. In fact, Isaiah 58:14 reflects Deuteronomy 32:13–14, and then Isaiah 59:14 follows this up by saying that “justice” is driven back and “righteousness” stands at a distance. And because there was no one to intervene, the Lord armed himself with the garments of vengeance and zeal, to repay his enemies for what they have done (Isa 59:9–20; cf. 65:6–16; 66:15–18). Within these passages, it may be the case that the Lord’s judgment upon Israel was the *antecedent* to his judgment upon the nations, possibly reflected at Isaiah 66:18. But the burden of the communal lament of Isaiah 59:9–15 was the absence of “justice” (*mišpāt*) in verses 9, 11, 14. This meant that deliverance was still far away for God’s people, but “justice” was also absent from God’s own people themselves, making it difficult for anyone to protest (verses 14–15).<sup>25</sup> Thus, the Lord himself had to intervene and satisfy the need for “justice”, by finally repaying the nations for what they had done (Isa 59:18; 63:4–6). On this basis, it is more likely that the prophetic word of Isaiah became the inspiration for the “God of Vengeance” within Psalm 94 and Psalms 96–99 (also framed by the concerns for “justice” and “righteousness”), for it gave these psalms especially a theological rationale for such a God within the context of the Babylonian exile (cf. Isa 62:10–12) alongside the God of Psalm 103:6–10 (cf. Exodus 34:6–7). Finally, in the book of Isaiah, the day of vengeance is also linked to the day of redemption for God’s people (Isa 61:2; 63:1–6), which immediately precedes the final prayer for the Lord to “rend the heavens and come down” (Isa 63:15–64:12), which we have already noted is found in Psalm 144:5–8 (the penultimate psalm before Psalm 145), and then at Psalm 149:6–9 (the penultimate psalm before Psalm 150) in which “vengeance” upon the nations that have attacked God’s kingdom will be finally carried out by the Lord’s own people, according to the “sentence” (NIV) (*mišpāt*; verse 9) already proclaimed by the Lord (reflecting the earlier Deut 32:40–43 and more recent Isa 59:18).

As an extension of the previous paragraph, we may therefore note how Isaiah 40–66 also links up with Book 5 of the Psalter (Psalms 107–150). As we have seen, the main point here is that the penultimate Psalms 144 and 149 reflect the same concerns and

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<sup>25</sup> Webb, *Isaiah*, 228.

direction as that of Isaiah 59:9–20 and Isaiah 63:15–64:12 for the Lord to finally reign in justice and righteousness upon the earth, with implications for both Israel and the nations. But the movement toward this scenario also involves the second Psalm at the beginning of Book 1, which corresponds to the second Psalm from the end, Psalm 149. Psalm 2 announces that it is through his anointed king that the Lord will claim kings and nations for his rule. But in Psalm 149, the instrument now turns out to be the assembly of the faithful, who now appear to fulfil the vocation of the Davidic king (*cf.* Dan 7:13–22).<sup>26</sup> These concepts also align with the book of Isaiah, where the second chapter from the beginning announces the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion, where the law (“Torah”) of the Lord will go forth, instructing the nations in justice, righteousness, and peace (Isa 2:1–5; *cf.* 65:11–12). And like the penultimate Psalm 149:4, the faithful remnant in the penultimate chapter of Isaiah are also the lowly and “humble” servants of the Lord, who await the vengeance and justice of God through the “sword” (65:11–12; *cf.* 59:9–20; 63:15–64:12). In fact, the very last word of Psalm 149 (verse 9) appeals to the “faithful” who recognize God as their “King” (verse 2), who are entrusted with the vocation formerly assigned to the monarchy and articulated as such in Psalm 2 (*cf.* Psalms 149:7–9 and Psalms 2:8–9), to carry out the judgment “written” against the Lord’s enemies, which is a final appeal to remain obedient to God’s Word (Torah) (*cf.* Deut 32:40–43; Isa 59:18).<sup>27</sup> On the one hand, this movement in theological thinking aligns with that of Isaiah 55:3–5 where the suspended covenant with David is now democratized and fulfilled in the people as a whole.<sup>28</sup> This also corresponds with the people to whom the Lord finally looks at the beginning of the last chapter of Isaiah (66:2), as those who are “humble” and contrite in spirit, and tremble at his word. As Barry Webb puts it when commenting upon the communal lament of Isaiah 59:9–15, “There is still one element of hope for the people of God, and that is the lament itself.”<sup>29</sup> And as we can see with what follows in Isaiah 59:16–20, this was the very thing that the Lord responded to in terms of coming for the faithful remnant as the God of “justice” and “vengeance”. In the light of this observation, it is

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<sup>26</sup> Here, we may also note the reversal of language between Psalm 2:3, and Psalm 149:8.

<sup>27</sup> See J. Clinton McCann, “Psalms,” in *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament* (ed. K.J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 164–65.

<sup>28</sup> The New Testament’s application of Psalm 2 to Jesus (Acts 4:25–26) as well as to the believing congregation (Rev 2:26–28) agrees with this.

<sup>29</sup> Webb, *Isaiah*, 228.

not surprising to find the form of communal lament still alive at the beginning of Book 4 of the Psalter (Psalm 90), and within Book 5 with Psalms 123, 126, and 137. Again, this corresponds with the direction of the book of Isaiah within its final chapters, especially relating to 59:9–20 (cf. 63:15–64:12; 65:11–12; 66:15–16), as well as to those people to whom the Lord will look as “humble and contrite in spirit, who tremble at my word” (Isa 66:2; cf. 2 Chron 7:14).<sup>30</sup>

Erich Zenger has also contributed to this debate by producing a convincing analysis and outline of Book 5 of the Psalter.<sup>31</sup> His thesis relating to Psalms 107–145 is that these Psalms constitute a post-cultic meditation/recital as a “spiritual pilgrimage” to Zion, which is the seat of the universal king Yahweh and of the God of Sinai who teaches his Torah from Zion. This is achieved by the intentional placement of Psalm 119 at the middle of the composition of Book 5. Thus, the Psalms are a means of opening oneself to the living Torah of Yahweh, in accordance with the programme at the beginning of the Psalter (Psa 1:2), and in accordance with the closing Hallel, Psalms 146–50, which interprets the recitation/singing of the Psalms as the actualization of the way of life (Torah) instilled in the cosmos. In drawing attention to the canonical history of Israel,<sup>32</sup> Zenger argues that the poor and needy are being called to praise the God who rescues *in the midst of affliction and suffering* (Psalms 138–144). This way of viewing Book 5 of the Psalter not only supports the vision of Isaiah found at Isaiah 2:1–5 for all the nations involving instruction in the Torah, but it would also appear to offer this “spiritual pilgrimage” to Zion (and the Temple) in the *same* non-cultic (possibly better than Zenger’s “post-cultic”) terms (cf. Isaiah 66:1–24). Further, we have already aligned Zenger’s point about the suffering of the poor and needy in Psalms 138–144 with the cry of the poor and needy at Isaiah 63:15–64:12 (cf. Psa 144:5–8).

As a final observation, one may surmise that the call of Isaiah featuring the grand vision of God within chapter 6 would also hold something of theological worth for the Psalter.

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<sup>30</sup> The defining mark of the post-exilic theology of the Chronicler, supported by the placement of the seven Penitential Psalms at Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143.

<sup>31</sup> See Zenger, “Composition and Theology,” 98–102, relating to Psalms 107–145. But see the following article by Miller, “Response to Zenger,” 103–10, who correctly relates Psalm 145 to Psalms 146–50.

<sup>32</sup> Exodus = Psalms 113–118; Sinai = Psalm 119; Entry into the Promised Land with Zion as goal = Psalms 120–136, interspersed with the great “Messianic” promises both individual = Psalm 110, and collective = Psalm 144.

(1) First we may observe that Isaiah's entire message is based upon a single foundation: the belief that Yahweh, God of Israel, is the only one who is "high and lifted up" (Isa 6:1).<sup>33</sup> In this respect, no other earthly power can challenge him, nor any other god. This explains why the strong condemnation of everything that is "proud" in Isaiah 2:6–22 comes so early in the book. Further, it is significant that this passage follows immediately after Isaiah's vision for the future in 2:1–5, when the mountain of the Lord's temple (Zion) will be "raised up" above all mountains, and all the nations will come in pilgrimage to it in order to be taught from the Torah about the ways of the Lord. But in the meantime, the Lord has a day in store for the "proud and lofty" who will be brought low (Isa 2:12). This is also the concern of Psalm 94:2 which shares the word "proud" גָּאָה (*gē'e*) with Isaiah 2:12. This may have provided a further reason why Psalm 94 could confidently pray that God would come in "vengeance" upon the wicked. Along with the only other two psalms where this same word "proud" is used (Psalms 123:4 and 140:5), the context suggests that the wicked use arrogant and deceitful words against the righteous. Psalm 140:3 says: "They make their tongues as sharp as serpents; the poison of vipers is upon their lips." Then in verse 10 the language of judgment is given: "Let burning coals fall upon them," which may well reflect Psalm 18:8 (*cf.* 2 Sam 22:9). But the context of "burning coals" together with lying and unclean lips makes the conceptual association with Isaiah 6:5–7 an interesting possibility. When confronted with the awesome theophany of God's holiness and presence within the Temple, Isaiah could only make the confession: "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." Then only after Isaiah's lips were touched by the live coal from the altar was his guilt taken away, and atonement for sin made. The point of this passage is that Israel must also follow Isaiah's lead and experience, as a nation characterized by "unclean lips", before they too can render to the Lord fitting worship and service. This may account for the fact that the Psalms are replete with the enemy using arrogant, deceitful, and harmful "words" against the faithful as their main weapon of attack and destruction. At this point, it is of further interest that the opening psalm of the Psalms of Ascent in Book 5 (Psalm 120) targets the problem of "lying and deceitful lips". Then

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<sup>33</sup> Gordon McConville, *The Prophets* (Exploring the Old Testament 4; London: SPCK, 2002), 5.

the punishment suggested is the “burning coals” of the broom tree as a means of fighting fire with fire. In this psalm, possibly the Psalmist was discouraged from making his pilgrimage to Zion, thus indicating that the problem of “unclean lips” was not confined to Israel. The Psalms of Ascent conclude at Psalm 134 with the call to the servants of the Lord to render “praise” to the Lord with the lips within his house on Zion’s hill, thus suggesting that the only worthy use of the lips in life is praise of the Lord, and not to curse and oppose his people through speech (*cf.* Num 22–24). Finally, it is really a call to become as the Seraphim at Isaiah 6:3, who call, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory.”

(2) As a further extension of this last point, it is worth noting that “the theological heart” of the Psalter for a number of scholars are the so-called enthronement psalms which address God as “King”, who desires “justice” and “righteousness” for his world order (Psalms 93 and 95–99).<sup>34</sup> But here again, we cannot dismiss the presence and possible influence of Isaiah’s vision in the Temple with Psalm 93 at the beginning of this group, focusing the Lord as a reigning King, “robed in majesty” whose “throne” has been established from all eternity (verses 1–2). Then, like the Seraphim at Isaiah 6:3, here the seas “lift up” their voice (mentioned 3 times), proclaiming that the Lord “on high” is mighty, with his “holiness” adorning his Temple (verses 3–5). Finally, the framing psalm to this collection (Psalm 99) also has a triple refrain (verses 3, 5, 9), which suggests that the entire psalm is meant to be an exposition of the holiness of the Lord<sup>35</sup>, again resembling in a literary fashion the threefold call of the Seraphim from Isaiah 6:3. Mays concludes:

The Hymn is a liturgy for the vision that Isaiah saw in the Temple when he felt the foundations tremble and heard the threefold “holy” sung in praise. He never viewed life and the world in the same way after he said, ‘my eyes have seen the king’.

The Psalms seek to preserve that memory for all time.

## Conclusion

There is sufficient evidence within the Psalter to suggest that the Psalms have not only engaged in a conversation with Deuteronomy

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<sup>34</sup> Gerald H. Wilson, “The Use of the Royal Psalms at the ‘Seams’ of the Hebrew Psalter,” *JSOT* 35 (1986), 85–94.

<sup>35</sup> Mays, *Psalms*, 316.

from beginning to end<sup>36</sup>, but this conversation has also involved the book of Isaiah at both structural, thematic, and lexical levels. Thus in the Psalms, one *learns* the story and command (Deuteronomy), how to *sing* and *pray* the Lord's songs (Psalms), and how to *see* the broader theological vision (Isaiah). This threefold mix and conversation (Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah) also reflects the importance of these dominant books at Qumran, as well as their importance for works like Luke-Acts in the New Testament.

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<sup>36</sup> Miller, "Deuteronomy and Psalms," *JBL* 118/1 (1999), 3–18.