

David and the Psalter¹

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In the Psalter, the mention of David outside the titles or superscriptions is rare. He is mentioned once in Psalm 78 (v.70) and once in Psalm 144 (v.10).² He is referred to several times in Psalms 89 and 132: four in the first and three in the second. So it would behoove us to start our investigation with Psalms 89 and 132.

An analysis of the content of Psalm 89 will reveal the following features:

1. As is clear from their repetition in the first two verses, the theme of the psalm revolves around the Lord's *h esed* (zealous care) and his *"munah* (assurance; faithfulness) to that *h esed*. The centrality of these two nouns is further evident in that they are repeated as a refrain throughout the psalm.³
2. The Lord commits himself with a *b'rit* (covenant) to David whom he calls both *b'ḥ iri* (my chosen one) and *'abdi* (my servant; v.3). The realization of this promise is twice said to be "for ever" ('*olam* in v.2 and '*ad-*'*olam* in v.3). In vv.33-34, the *b'rit* with David is recalled, and in v.39 reference is made to the Lord's *b'rit* with his *'ebəd* (servant). Furthermore, David is the Lord's "anointed" (vv.20, 38, 51).
3. The Lord's word regarding his *bah ur* (chosen) is actually addressed to the Lord's *h "sidim* (those zealously committed; v.19) since ultimately the divine interest in the king is for the sake of the people: "Blessed is the people [those] who know the festal shout, who walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance, who *exult* (*gil*) *in thy name* all the day, and extol thy righteousness. For thou art the glory of their strength; by thy favor *our horn is exalted*. For our shield belongs to the Lord, to the Holy One of Israel our king." (vv.15-18) Indeed, the horn of the people is exalted because that of David is: "My faithfulness ("*munati*) and my steadfast love (*h asdi*) shall be with him, and in my name *shall his horn be exalted*." (v.24).

Not only does Psalm 132 betray the same concern, but it also uses vocabulary similar to Psalm 89. Ultimately, we hear, "I will make a *horn* to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my *anointed* " (132:17); David is also the Lord's anointed in v.10. The divine city's *h asidim* are said to *rannen y'rannenu* (shout with exultation; v.16); *ranan* is the verb that has the same connotation as the verb *gil* in Psalm 89:16. The correspondence in meaning is actually corroborated in that each of these two verbs is used in Psalm 89 in conjunction with the Lord's

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² I am disregarding "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended" (Ps 72:20) and "house of David" (Ps 122:5).

³ The couple *h esed* and *"munah* in vv. 24, 33, 49; the couple *h esed* and *"met*, the cognate of *"munah*, in v.14; *h esed* in v.28; and *"munah* in vv.5, 8.

name to speak of the exultation of both nature and people in it: “Tabor and Hermon *b'šimka y'ránnenu*” (v.12) and “[the people] *b'šimka y'gilun*” (v.16).

Still, the most important feature that binds those two psalms is the conditionality of God’s “sure” covenant with David: the Lord will abide by his oath *if* those who sit on the throne abide by his will. This teaching is quite clear in Psalm 132: “The Lord swore to David *a sure oath* (**met*) from which he will not turn back: ‘One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. *If* (*'im*) your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies which I shall teach them, their sons also for ever (“*de- 'ad*) shall sit upon your throne.’” (vv.11-12) The same situation obtains in a more elaborate fashion in Psalm 89:

Thou hast said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: ‘I will establish your descendants for ever, and build your throne for all generations.’”... My steadfast love I will keep for him for ever, and my covenant will stand firm for him. I will establish his line for ever and his throne as the days of the heavens. *If* his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my ordinances, *if* they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with scourges; but I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His line shall endure for ever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established for ever; it shall stand firm while the skies endure.” (vv.3-4, 28-37)

This conditionality is further underscored in that in the immediately following verses the hearers are reminded that such threat is not in vain. The Lord has chastened David himself for his disobedience as a “sure” reminder to all his dynasts that the divine word is **met*:

But now thou hast cast off and rejected, thou art full of wrath against thy anointed. *Thou hast renounced the covenant with thy servant;* thou hast defiled his crown in the dust. Thou hast breached all his walls; thou hast laid his strongholds in ruins. All that pass by despoil him; he has become the scorn of his neighbors. Thou hast exalted the right hand of his foes; thou hast made all his enemies rejoice. Yea, thou hast turned back the edge of his sword, and thou hast not made him stand in battle. Thou hast removed the scepter from his hand, and cast his throne to the ground. Thou hast cut short the days of his youth; thou hast covered him with shame. Selah. How long, O Lord? Wilt thou hide thyself for ever? How long will thy wrath burn like fire? *Remember,* O Lord, what the measure of life is, for what vanity thou hast created all the sons of men! What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah. Lord, where is thy steadfast love (*h' sadim*) of old, which by thy faithfulness (**munah*) thou didst swear to David? *Remember,* O Lord, how thy servants *h' asidim* are scorned; how I [thy people]⁴ bear in my bosom the insults of the peoples, with

⁴ See vv.15 and 19

which thy enemies taunt, O Lord, with which they mock the footsteps of thy anointed. (Ps 89:38-51)

Thus, these two psalms reveal a story line that describes the restoration of God's city after its demise. Given that the demise is the consequence of the Davidic king's sin, the restoration will be the realization of God's sure promise to exalt the "horn" of a new David through whom the "horn" of the people will be exalted in turn. Not only is this same story line found in Isaiah, but Isaiah uses terminology similar to Psalms 89 and 132. First and foremost mention of David is confined to Proto-Isaiah with the exception of one instance found in the last chapter of Deutero-Isaiah (55:3). While Proto-Isaiah is the book of punishment and promise of pardon and restoration, Deutero-Isaiah is that of the realization of that promise together with frequent mention of the sin of stubborn Israel that pervades Proto-Isaiah. Looking more closely at Proto-Isaiah, one is struck by the closeness between it and Psalms 89 and 132 when it comes to the handling of the Davidic throne:

1. In the Book of Emmanuel (Is 6-12) the "house of David," in the person of Ahaz, is reprimanded for its lack of trust in the Lord (7:2, 10-13) and challenged with the words, "If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established" ('im lo' ta["]minu ki lo' te'amenu; v.9). The two verbs are from the same root as ["]met and ["]munah. The promise of restoration "for ever" after the punishment will be through a righteous king who will sit on the throne of David: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." (Is 9:6-7) The same is repeated in Isaiah 11:1-12. The reference to "coastlands of the sea" ('iyye hayyam) in 11:11 clearly looks ahead to the frequently mentioned (Gentile) *iyyim* in Deutero-Isaiah (41:1, 5; 42:4, 6, 12; 49:1; 51:5).
2. The interest in the ultimate inclusion of the Gentiles in the everlasting Davidic covenant is at its clearest in the section dedicated to the oracles over the nations (Is 13-23). Earlier in Isaiah 9 we were told that the Davidic covenant, which will ultimately include Ephraim (the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; v.1a), will also spill into the Galilee of the nations (v.1b). Similarly, in the oracle concerning Moab (Is 16) we hear of the same Davidic covenant cast in similar wording as in Isaiah 9: "Give counsel, grant justice... let the outcasts of Moab sojourn among you; be a refuge to them from the destroyer. When the oppressor is no more, and destruction has ceased, and he who tramples under foot has vanished from the land, then a throne will be established in steadfast love and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness." (16:3-5) Notice that here the righteous king will sit in the "tent of David" rather than on his throne. In Deutero-Isaiah we shall encounter the corresponding terminology of shepherd used of both God himself (40:11) and his "anointed" Cyrus (44:11-45:1).

3. In chapter 22, the penultimate chapter of the section on the nations, we are told of the punishment God inflicts on “the city of David” (v.9) by “taking away the covering of Judah” (v.8). This punishment is due to the misbehavior of Shebna (vv.15-19) who is replaced with God’s “servant Eliakim, son of Hilkiah” (v.20) under whom we have the semblance of salvation for Jerusalem. Yet, even the “peg fastened in a sure (*ne’eman*) place [Eliakim]” (v.23) “will give way” (v.25). This enigmatic “vision” (v.1) harks back to the Ahaz episode (Is 7-8) and looks ahead to the Hezekiah episode (Is 36-39). In Ahaz’ times God saved his city, despite the king’s lack of trust, in order to vouchsafe the divine word that only a small remnant (*še’ar*) of the invading Aramean and Israelite armies will return (*yašub*) home (Is 7:1-7). Yet, despite the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians (8:4) the land of Emmanuel (God is with us) will feel the pressure of the Assyrian threat (8:6-8) which will take place in Hezekiah’s times (Is 36-39). In Isaiah 22, we have a similar scenario that plays on the names *šebna’* (return now) and *’elyaqim* (God will raise). The Assyrians did not turn away and lift the siege around Jerusalem because it was suggested, most probably by Shebna, that Jerusalem appeal to Egypt for aid (Is 36:6-9), but the siege was lifted due to God’s intervention. Still the respite is only for some time since Jerusalem will ultimately fall in the hands of the Babylonians.

4. The enigma of the “vision” of Isaiah 22 (vv.1 and 5) is actually solved in Isaiah 36-39. The reason behind God’s intervention is not due to his hearkening to Ahaz and Hezekiah, or their aides, Shebna and Eliakim, but is due to his commitment to his own oath to David, his servant: “By the way that he [the king of Assyria] came, by the same he shall return (*yašub*), and he shall not come into this city, says the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David” (37:34-35); “Go and say to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and defend this city.’” (38:5-6) Furthermore, this divine commitment to David is imparted through the prophet Isaiah; never once does God address Hezekiah directly in chapters 36-39! Finally, as in the case of the Arameo-Ephraimite and Assyrian threats, God’s protection of his city is “for the time being.” His ultimate intervention will result in its destruction by the Babylonians to whom, ironically, Hezekiah appealed for help against the Assyrians (Is 39). This is corroborated in that the following chapter 40 leaps in time over 150 years, from ca 701 to ca 537 B.C.

5. The last mention of David in Proto-Isaiah is found in Isaiah 28-35, the section dealing with Isaiah’s indictment of Judah in general.⁵ There we hear of “the city where David encamped” addressed as Ariel (29:1). That city will be punished, yet ultimately restored, by the same Lord. In Isaiah 2 the Lord is a fire that consumes when the light of his teaching is disregarded. The play on the Lord’s double facet, as it were, is inherent to the fact that in those times light was produced by fire. Fire can enlighten or it can burn and consume. Similarly, the metaphoric name *”ri’el* means both “God is a (devouring) lion” and “God is my light,”⁶ the latter connotation being reminiscent of Isaiah 2.

⁵ The first section of such indictment occurs in Isaiah 2-5 *before* the call of the prophet and does not have any reference to David.

⁶ This connotation is borne by the consonantal *’ry’l*.

One can see that when it comes to the Davidic dynasty the message of Proto-Isaiah functions along the same lines as that of Psalms 89 and 132: divine punishment is the result of disobedience despite God's promise. Yet, this promise stands and will ultimately be realized by God *after* the initial punishment as is evidenced in Deutero-Isaiah, which starts with the following statement: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that *she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*"(40:1-2) At the end of the Book of Consolation, as Deutero-Isaiah is also known, we hear: "Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David (*b'rit 'olam h asde dawid hanne'manim*)."⁷ (55:3) Indeed God ultimately keeps his promise. However, what is more important for our discussion is that the phraseology used here is virtually verbatim that found at the beginning of Psalm 89:

I will sing the steadfast love (*h asde*) of the Lord, for ever ('olam); with my mouth I will proclaim thy faithfulness ('munat^eka) to all generations. For I said, thy steadfast love (*h esed*) was established for ever ('olam), thy faithfulness ('munat^eka) is firm as the heavens. "I have made a covenant (*b'rit*) with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: "I will establish your descendants for ever ('ad-'olam), and build your throne for all generations." (vv.1-4)

Before leaving Isaiah, it would behoove us to recognize two more features that seal the link between him, on the one hand, and Psalms 89 and 132, on the other hand. The first feature is the abundant use of the roots *rnn* and *gil* by the prophet. By far the highest incidence of the verb *ranan* (exult) in all its verbal forms and the nouns *rinnah* and *r^enanah* (jubilation) are found in Isaiah and the Psalter.⁷ The other feature is the high incidence of '*ebed* (servant) or '*abdi* (my servant), especially in conjunction with the Suffering Servant, and *b^eh iri* (my chosen one)⁸ to speak of God's elect representative. One should add the corollary feature that all four '*ebed yahweh* passages (Is 42:1-9; 49:1-12; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12) are immediately followed by an ode to God, the last three odes with a reference to the new (heavenly) Jerusalem (42:10-17; 49:13-26; 51:1-52:12; 54). The link between the new David and the new Zion is exactly what we found in Psalm 132:11-14.

Looking in another direction, Psalm 89 is entitled a *maskil* (teaching material). That is also the title of Psalm 78 which, after a lengthy condemnation of Israel for its continuous disobedience, ends with these words:

He rejected the tent of Joseph, he did not choose (*bah ar*) the tribe of Ephraim; but he chose (*yayibh ar*) the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves. He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded for ever (*l^e'olam*). He chose (*yayibh ar*) David his servant (*dawid 'abdo*), and took him from the sheepfolds; from tending the ewes that had young he brought him to be

⁷ The verb: 14 times in Isaiah; 23 times in Psalms; 14 in the rest of the books. The nouns: 9 times in Isaiah; 17 times in Psalms (6 of which have the connotation of lamentation rather than jubilation); 11 times in the rest of the books (6 of which reflect a cry of lamentation).

⁸ All 6 in Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah in the entire Old Testament, outside Ps 89:4.

the shepherd of Jacob his people, of Israel his inheritance. With upright heart he tended them, and guided them with skilful hand. (Ps 78:67-72)

This David is the eschatological leader who realizes God's "sure promise" to establish his city, Zion, despite the stubborn disobedience of Israel under the leadership of its kings.

A closer look at this psalm, however, will readily show a link with Ezekiel, materially as well as formally. On the formal level, the psalm opens with the statement "I will open my mouth in a parable (*mašal*); I will utter dark sayings (*ḥ idot*, riddles) from of old" (v.2), which closely parallels Ezekiel 17:2: "Son of man, propound (*ḥ ud*) a riddle (*ḥ idah*), and speak (*m'šol*) an allegory (*mašal*) to the house of Israel." This combination of *ḥ idah* and *mašal* to refer to a story intended for teaching is found only in these two instances in the entire scripture. It is as though one statement was intended to copy, or at least mimic, the other. When, on the other hand, one visits the content of the psalm and that of Ezekiel 16, the chapter immediately preceding Ezekiel 17:2, then one realizes that they are similar in content and intent: they are the story of a stubborn and consistently disobedient Israel (in Ps) or Jerusalem (in Ezek), and such disobedience seems to block God's implementation of the care he promised to bestow on his people.

The parallelism between these two "instructional stories" is carried all the way to their respective resolutions, here again both materially and formally. Indeed, the ending of Psalm 78 is encountered in the Book of Ezekiel where the mention of David occurs only in chapters 34 (vv.23 and 24) and 37 (vv.24 and 25), that is, only at the juncture when we are told that God himself will implement his final intervention to rule his people according to his will. As in the psalm, he does so through David. And again, as in the psalm, not only is there reference to God building his new sanctuary, but also to David "the king" being cast in the garb of a shepherd:

I will save my flock, they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken. I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them; they shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will provide for them prosperous plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations. And they shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord God. And you are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, says the Lord God. (Ezek 34:22-31)

Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all sides, and bring them to their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. They shall not defile themselves any more with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. They shall dwell in the land where your fathers dwelt that I gave to my servant Jacob; they and their children and their children's children shall dwell there for ever; and David my servant shall be their prince for ever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is in the midst of them for evermore. (Ezek 37:21-28)

However, what is striking in Ezekiel is that the nomadic setting of the open pasture does not preclude his coupling it with the city metaphor. Actually, although Jerusalem is abhorred to the extreme and condemned to destruction in Ezekiel 1-39, chapters 40-48 revolve around the renewed and restored city. Yet, this new city is in name only:

1. The city is kingless to the extreme. Even the dead bodies of the kings are not tolerated (Ezek 35:7-9). That is to say, kingly mausoleums, let alone regal palaces, are prohibited.
2. The city stands alone within a land of pasture with no other cities. In Joshua 15-19, the cities are enumerated one by one in the tribal allotments, whereas in Ezekiel 48 the tribal allotments do not include the name of any city.
3. The city gates are exits, not entrances. This means that the people will stay out in the open and will be protected, not by the city walls, but the sole one who resides in it as a good shepherd who will go out to “tend his sheep.”⁹
4. Consequently, the city’s name is the metaphoric *yahweh šammah* “The Lord is there” (Ezek 48:35). This is the realization of the promise “My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” of 37:27. The metaphoric name takes on added value since the hearer will have noticed that nowhere throughout Ezekiel 40-48 the name “Jerusalem” was to be heard. God’s city is not to be associated with Jerusalem the harlot (Ezek 16 and 23).

Clearly then, this city is none other than the Isaianic “heavenly Zion” that is not built by the hand of man.

⁹ See Revelation 21:25 where the city gates are open day and night.

It is at this point that both Isaiah and Ezekiel join hands. To use the former's terminology, their "stories" begin with the harlot, bloody, unfaithful, unrighteous Jerusalem (Is 1) and end with the righteous Zion, the city of God, the city of divine peace, which is not made by the hand of man (Is 4-55). Now, this is precisely the "scriptural story" that is iterated with a different "take" in each of the Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Scroll of the Twelve Prophets. On the other hand, the same scriptural story is found in the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings). Actually the immediate link with Isaiah can be readily seen in that Isaiah 36-39 is found virtually verbatim in 2 Kings 18-20, a mere four chapters before the last ones (chs. 24-25) that relate the deportation of Jerusalem's elite citizenry to Babylon (ch.24), as announced by Isaiah (Is 39:5-7//2 Kg 20:17-18), and its sack and destruction ten years later (ch. 25), which is the prelude to the exile, the end of which is announced in Deutero-Isaiah. When one considers that, in the Hebrew Old Testament canon, Isaiah immediately follows 2 Kings, then one gets the distinct impression that Proto-Isaiah's recriminations against Jerusalem and Judah are an expanded version of the statement in 2 Kings 24:20: "For because of the anger of the Lord it came to the point in Jerusalem and Judah that he cast them out from his presence." It is as though the hearer of a continuous canonical reading of scripture has to assume that the content of 2 Kings 25 (the sack and destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of its inhabitants) stands between Isaiah 39 and 40.

But what about David? Can one find in the Prior Prophets parallels between his description there and what we just elucidated in the Latter Prophets and in some of the psalms that deal with him? I believe we can. Here are the most striking parallels:

1. Unlike Saul who was asked for (*ša'ul*) by the people (1 Sam 8), David is the beloved (*dod*) chosen directly by God (1 Sam 16:1-13).
2. Whereas Saul is from the warrior tribe of Benjamin (1 Sam 9:1; Gen 49:27), David is a mere shepherd. Yet, it is David the shepherd, not Saul the warrior, who takes care of the threatening Goliath. Indeed, it is with a sling, not a sword, that the giant meets his end (1 Sam 17:40, 50).
3. David's origin is from *bet-leh em*, the "house of bread." The wordplay is intentional. David's success is due not to human valor, but rather to his abiding by God's will, which is the true bread of life as was established in the *torah*. Micah will make Bethlehem the origin of the new David (5:2), who will rule according to God's righteous will (Is 9:7; 11:1-5). The Isaianic texts clearly hark back to 1 Samuel. In Isaiah 9:7 we hear that it is "the zeal of the Lord of hosts" that will reestablish justice and righteousness through the new David, the same warrior Lord who was supposed to be on Saul's side, yet left the latter for David. This is corroborated in the wording of Isaiah 11:2 where we are told that "the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him [the new David]." This phraseology is similar to the account of David's choice over Saul in 1 Samuel: "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah. Now the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him." (16:13-14)

4. All was well until David took seriously his being the *melek*, the one who owns everything in his power, an entitlement reserved to the sole King of Israel, the Lord. His first action as king over both houses of Israel was to make the capital of the unified kingdom his personal property: "... and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years. And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, 'You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off' -- thinking, 'David cannot come in here.' Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, *the city of David* ('ir dawid).' (2 Sam 5:5b-7) Ezekiel will reverse this action when he speaks of the two houses of Israel united under the shepherd David who acts under the aegis of the one shepherd of Israel, the Lord (37:15-27). However, for the time being, the city of David, which was supposed to be God's Zion, is on the road to disaster and catastrophe.
5. Nevertheless, the memory of God's choice of and commitment to David, the beloved, is preserved throughout Jerusalem's scriptural story.¹⁰ As in the Book of Emmanuel, God will ultimately keep his promise to David: the *bet* will be built by God for David, and not vice versa (2 Sam 7).

The conclusion is inescapable. David's story in the Prior Prophets is just the reverse of what was expected to be realized through him. Everything starts well while he is a *ro'eh* (shepherd), and then turns to disaster when he asserts himself as *melek* in the story of his own immediate household (*bet*). This twist to the Davidic story is to prepare the hearer for the message of the Latter Prophets—especially Isaiah and Ezekiel—concerning God's promise to establish his reign through the shepherd David.

Are there indications in the *ketubim* that those writings approach the matter scripturally just as the *torah* and the *nebi'im* do? I believe there is. The Wisdom Books are “assigned” to Solomon, the one who, in the Prior Prophets, started by being wise, yet ended being foolish. In the Wisdom Books he is presented as the truly wise one who, since wisdom is universal, is guiding not only the “remnant” of Israel, but also the Gentiles. Put otherwise, those books are presented as being authored by a “repentant” Solomon who preaches repeatedly to all “the fear of the Lord (and his *torah*)” in Proverbs,¹¹ the same fear of the Lord that is the new David's “delight” in Isaiah 11:3.

How about David in the *ketubim*? First, it is important to point out that Solomon, the presumed author of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, is presented as “son of David” (Prov 1:1; Eccl 1:1). Also, David is associated with a *migdal* (tower) in Song of Songs 4:4 just as the *yadid* and the *dod*¹² are associated with a *migdal* in Isaiah's song of the beloved (5:1-2). However, more telling than the previous examples is the fact that Chronicles, which is the *ketubim*'s “revision” of the *torah* and the Prior Prophets, presents a David without blemish. Furthermore, this David is associated with the Jerusalem temple in a way that keeps him free from any direct link to the edifice that ended being destroyed by the Lord. In a tour de force, David is presented as the originator, not of the temple, but of its service, and in detail! The two Books of Chronicles are late comers not only

¹⁰ 1 Kg 3:6; 11:12-13; 15:4-5; 2 Kg 8:19; 19:34.

¹¹ No less than 13 times.

¹² Both meaning “beloved.”

in the Old Testament, but also among the *ketubim*—they are actually the last books the Hebrew Old Testament. So the question is, “Why would these books be interested in the services of a temple that is long gone with no possibility of its being rebuilt anytime soon?”¹³ The intention may well be to present the temple services as being those to be held in the true temple, the one in the heavenly Zion, which is not built by the hand of man, as Isaiah emphatically taught at the close of his book:

Thus says the Lord: “Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine,” says the Lord. “But this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word. He who slaughters an ox is like him who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like him who breaks a dog's neck; he who presents a cereal offering, like him who offers swine's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like him who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations; I also will choose affliction for them, and bring their fears upon them; because, when I called, no one answered, when I spoke they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes, and chose that in which I did not delight.”...And they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, just as the Israelites bring their cereal offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord. And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the Lord. For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, says the Lord; so shall your descendants and your name remain. From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the Lord. (Is 66:1-4, 20-23)

This heavenly temple, where no physical offerings will be made, is the metaphoric city of God that Ezekiel calls “The Lord is there” (48:35). Only offerings of praise by one “that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word” (Is 66:2), thus the repentant one, will be accepted.

This scriptural odyssey of the Lord leaving unto destruction his earthly temple built by David's son in order to settle for good in his heavenly abode is reflected in the prophetic sequence that starts with Isaiah 6 and ends with Ezekiel 48. Given the disobedience of Judah, the Lord appears as *ram* (high) and *nissá'* (lifted up) and “the whole earth is full of his glory” (Is 6:1, 3) to the extent that “the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke” (v.4). Isaiah realizes the seriousness of the matter and confesses the people's sin as well as his own sin (v.5). Yet his repentance is of no avail since the Lord's decision has already gone out (vv.9-13a). The hope of a new beginning (v.13b) is relegated to Deutero-Isaiah, after the full punishment is consummated with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple and with the exile. The prophet of this doom is Jeremiah whose Hebrew name *yirmiyahu* means “the Lord will lift himself up.”¹⁴ The Lord will do so by leaving the temple to

¹³ Actually, the “new” temple will be erected by Herod only to be destroyed by the Romans.

¹⁴ The other connotation is “the Lord will lift up [Jeremiah]” against the assaults of Jerusalem and Judah (Jer 1:18).

its own fate. Ezekiel, the prophet in exile, will revert to Isaiah's wording to describe the Lord's action of leaving the temple:

And the glory of the Lord went up (*wayyarom*) from the cherubim to the threshold of the house; and *the house was filled with the cloud*, and the court was full of the brightness of the glory of the Lord... And when the cherubim went, the wheels went beside them; and when the cherubim lifted up (*s^e'et*) their wings to mount up from the earth, the wheels did not turn from beside them. When they stood still, these stood still, and when they mounted up (*romam*), these mounted up (*yerommu*) with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in them. Then the glory of the Lord went forth from the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted up (*wayyiš'u*) their wings and mounted up (*yerommu*) from the earth in my sight as they went forth, with the wheels beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the house of the Lord; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. (10:4, 16-19)¹⁵

If the repentant Solomon is the assumed author of the Wisdom Books, it stands to reason, as a working hypothesis, to view the assumed author of the Psalter as being the repentant David, who heads the congregation in the temple of the heavenly Zion. He now has the opportunity to implement the temple services he set up, according to Chronicles. He was not able to do so earlier, since the Jerusalem temple was built by his son after he himself had died. And, as Isaiah teaches (56:6-7; 66:20-21), this repentant David invites all the nations to join in that service, just as the repentant Solomon asks them to share in the divine wisdom granted in the *torah*.¹⁶

Does the Psalter itself provide us with a solid starting point to make out of this hypothesis an acceptable thesis? I believe it does in Psalm 51. There we are presented with a prayer that is expressly one of repentance. Further, the sin referred to is a *kingly* action; David behaved as a *melek* who considered his subjects as personal possessions: he has Uriah killed and then appropriates his wife, Bathsheba. Still more importantly, at the end of the psalm we hear:

For thou hast no delight in (lo' tah pos) sacrifice (zebah); were I to give a burnt offering, thou wouldst not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good to Zion in thy good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, then wilt thou delight in (tah pos) right sacrifices (zibh e s edeq), in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on thy altar. (Ps 51:16-19)

Both the sudden and unexpected mention of Zion in v.19—which is considered an “addition” by many exegetes—whereby what was not accepted in Jerusalem (the unrighteous city; Is 1:21) is now accepted in Zion (the righteous city; Is 1:27) and the fact that the acceptable sacrifice is “a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart,” are direct echoes of the ending of Isaiah (66:1-3, 18-

¹⁵ Compare with “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up (*ram wenissa*); and his train filled the temple... and *the house was filled with smoke*” (Is 6:1, 4).

¹⁶ See my *Old Testament Introduction, Volume 3: Psalms and Wisdom* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 127-128.

21). Thus David is painted here as the “he that is humble and contrite in spirit” (Is 66:2), more specifically, as the king who becomes a shepherd again, as in Ezekiel 34 and 37. I consider that the reference to the repentant David as a shepherd is plausible since it is assumed in the psalm’s title where we hear “when Nathan the prophet came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba.” The parable with which Nathan chastised David revolved around shepherding (2 Sam 12:1-4).

In order to test my thesis, one is to overcome a mental hurdle that has plagued scholarship relating to Psalter, namely viewing this “book” as an *evkhologion*, a compendium of prayers for every occasion, rather than a “scripture” (*graphē*) reflecting the same scriptural story contained in the other “scriptures” (*graphai*).¹⁷ The view of Psalms as a prayer book for different occasions can be seen in many translations, including the RSV, where the superscriptions are not included in the first verse. Consequently, one treats them in a similar way as the titles of the Gospels and Epistles, e.g., “The Gospel according to Matthew” or “The Epistle (of Paul) to the Romans.” However, in reality, as is the case in BH and LXX, the superscriptions of the psalms are an integral part of the scriptural text and, as such, they are as much scripture—as much the Word of God—as any other phrase or sentence in the body of any scriptural book. And if this is so, then the clue to unlocking the enigma of Psalms as a book and to understanding the interrelationship between the individual psalms themselves would lie in those so-called titles or superscriptions.

My contention is that the Psalter as a whole is a *graphē* in its own right just any other scroll in the Old Testament¹⁸ and, if read in a continuous reading as in our services, reflects the same scriptural story contained in the scrolls of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Prophets. Furthermore, it is the scripture of the repentant and thus new David. It is the liturgy of the heavenly temple asking Gentiles as well as dispersed Jews to join in as children of the Jerusalem above, as Paul calls it in Galatians.¹⁹

Further, when one considers that the liturgical cycle in Judaism included readings from the “second scripture,” the *nebi’im*, alongside those of the “first scripture,” the *torah*, then it stands to reason that the collection of the Psalter was patterned after that of the Deuteronomistic history (*n’ebi’im ri’šonim*) and the prophetic collection (*nebi’im ‘ahararonim*), as well as of each scroll in

¹⁷ Timothy Clark, in a yet unpublished term paper (Canonical Function and Interrelationship of Psalms: Book IV, with Emphasis on Psalms 103-107), arrives at the same conclusion: “The Book of Psalms has always held a unique place in the life of the Church, functioning as the premier book of liturgical poetry and a vital source of prayer for the faithful. The focus on the Psalms as Scriptural poetry, though, has often worked to the detriment of the Psalms as a canonical book. Since the psalms have typically been presented psalm by psalm, the sense that the Book of Psalms is in fact a book, compiled in order to present a coherent, overarching message, has more often than not been overlooked. Although the Psalms cannot be said to have the same type of narrative structure as the Pentateuch or even the prophets, discerning where a given psalm lies within the overall order of the book and understanding how its placement contributes to the ‘argument’ of Psalms as a whole is critical to any interpretational effort.”

¹⁸ See especially Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBL Dissertation Series 76; ed. J. J. M. Roberts; Chico: Scholar Press, 1985). Wilson continued discussion of this matter in “Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalm,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clinton McCann; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 72-82; and “King, Messiah, and the Reign of God: Revisiting the Royal Psalms and the Shape of the Psalter,” in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* (ed. Peter W. Flint et al.; VTSup 99; Leiden: Boston, 2005), 391-406.

¹⁹ Hence, my entitling my paper “David and the Psalter” instead of “David in the Psalter.”

this collection (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the scroll of the Twelve Prophets).²⁰ In other words, the editing of the Psalter followed the pattern of the “story of the biblical God.” The similar doxologies within the Psalter are a clear indication that the editors intended to divide the Psalter into five sections: very probably after the pattern of the *torah’s* (Pentateuch) division into five books. Psalms 41, 72, 89, and 106 each end with a stereotypical doxology that does not correspond with the content of the psalm it concludes:

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen. (Ps 41:13)

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth! Amen and Amen! (Ps 72:18-19)

Blessed be the Lord forever! Amen and Amen. (Ps 89:52)

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, “Amen!” Praise the Lord! (Ps 106:48)

Psalm 150 at the end of the entire Psalter is a pure doxology where, after the opening “Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary,” each subsequent colon begins with “Praise him ...” The reason may well have been liturgical: the Psalms could thus be read concurrently with the Pentateuch over a period of time.

I strongly believe the “story of the biblical God” in the Psalter runs in the following way.²¹

- The first two books (Ps 3-41 and Ps 42-72) contain psalms overwhelmingly attributed to David. That this is intentional can be gathered from the last verse of Psalm 72: “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.” (v 20)
- Book I (Ps 3-41) is comprised exclusively of Davidic psalms and covers the beginnings of the Davidic reign where Yahweh, the deity of Zion, is ruling²² through his elect David, God’s vassal par excellence.²³
- Book II (Ps 42-72) includes the work of the sons of Korah (Ps 42-49) and of Asaph (Ps 50) and deals with the latter period of David’s reign and the post-

²⁰ See my *Old Testament Introduction, Volume 2: Prophetic Traditions* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994), 144-145, 161, 197-198, 201-205; hereinafter referred to as *OTI*₂.

²¹ Other scholars, besides G. Wilson, have arrived to a similar conclusion. See e.g. J. Clinton McCann, “Book I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Psalter,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clinton McCann; JSOTSup 159 Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 93-107; Rolf Rendtorff, “The Psalms of David: David in the Psalms,” in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* (ed. Peter W. Flint et al.; VTSup 99; Leiden: Boston, 2005), 53; Rolf Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Deo, 2005), 560-574.

²² The psalms of Book I are exclusively “yahwistic.”

²³ See my *Old Testament Introduction, Volume 1: Historical Traditions*, revised edition (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Press, 2003), 148; *OTI*₂ 125, 139, 159.

David Judahite kingdom up to the destruction of Jerusalem. The deity is referred to mainly as **lohim* (God), which seems to reflect the gradual abandonment of the strict allegiance to Yahweh represented by David. This is enhanced by the following:

1. The start of the Book II collection is made up of non-Davidic psalms. This can be taken either positively or negatively. In the former case, it would reflect the tradition that considered David the founder of the temple service. In the latter instance, which is more probable, it would be a sign of the rejection of David as the Lord's only high priest.
 2. The Davidic collection in Book II begins with a psalm of penitence (51) which the editors connect to the sin of David that incurred the Lord's wrath (his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah), presaging the final catastrophe of 587.²⁴
 3. The last psalm (72) of the Davidic collection is ascribed to Solomon, which can hardly be coincidental. According to the Deuteronomistic historian, the long process that ultimately led to the catastrophe of exile originated in Solomon's reign, specifically because Solomon neglected the kingly duties delineated in this psalm.
- Book III (Ps 73-89) is basically divided between Korah and Asaph: the latter is assigned Psalms 73-83; the former, Psalms 84, 85, 87 and 88. This collection reflects the exilic setting since:
 1. It is mainly “eloistic.” The deity of Zion, which Judah rejected, proved to be, as **lohim* (God), universal and thus capable of chastising his people by exiling them among the nations; yet he also keeps an eye on the chastised people in order to redeem them at the opportune moment.²⁵
 2. The lack of hope is reflected in the “absence” of David: except for Psalm 86, all the psalms are non-Davidic.
 3. When it is time to announce the return of hope, the editors allow the voice of David to resound (Ps 86) as the “servant of the Lord” (vv. 2 and 4) who cries to God for help and fully trusts that God will answer.²⁶ Moreover, David's prayer is preceded by the people's supplication for restoration (Ps 85) and followed by a petition for Zion to be (re)established (Ps 87), a situation which parallels the setting of Second Isaiah.

²⁴ See 2 Sam 12:11-12.

²⁵ See Ezekiel and Second-Isaiah on this matter (*OTI*, 149-166).

²⁶ See Yohanna Katanacho, “Investigating the Purposeful Placement of Psalm 86” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity International University, 2006).

4. The last psalm (89), which I discussed at length, is a cry of faith in the Lord who has hidden himself to punish those who rejected him and yet will remember the oath he made to David. With this, Book III ends on a note of hope, characteristic of Ezekiel and Second Isaiah.
 5. This hope is reflected in the fact that after starting with the “eloistic” psalms (73-83), the collection shifts to addressing Yahweh in psalms 85-89, following the transitional psalm 84 which used both “Yahweh” and “God” equally. Since the last two books are almost entirely “yahwistic,”²⁷ it seems likely that this transition was planned deliberately to present Yahweh, the deity of (restored) Zion as taking over from here on in order to implement his eschatological rule.
- The last two Books (Ps 90-106 and Ps 107-150) are “yahwistic” and are basically comprised of the “songs of Ascent” (Ps 120-134) sandwiched between two sets of *hallel* (praise) psalms (105-107 plus 111-118, and 135-136 plus 146-150). Book IV, which reflects the end of the exilic period, appropriately starts with the only psalm (90) ascribed to Moses, the man of exodus. The psalm ends with this note:

Return, O Lord! How long?
 Have pity on thy servants!...
 Let thy work be manifest to they servants,
 And thy glorious power to their children.
 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
 Yea, the work of our hands establish though it (vv. 13, 16-17)

- At the end of the Book we have two “historical” and *hallel* psalms, 105 and 106. Their structure is interesting in that both recall the exodus, yet Psalm 105 ends with the original gift of the land (vv.43-45) while Psalm 106 refers to the exile (vv. 40-46) and prays for the return of the land (v. 47). In between the beginning psalm and the ending psalm, and thus at the heart of this hope for the end of the exile, stands the lengthy series of psalms in honor of Yahweh the King (Ps 93, 95-100), which again hark back to the views of Ezekiel and Second Isaiah.²⁸
- That the end of the exile is brought about by the promise connected with the “new Jerusalem”²⁹ can be seen in the smooth transition from Book IV to Book V (Ps 107-150). The latter opens with Psalm 107 which, together with Psalms 105 and 106, forms a triad of *hallel* psalms. The “eloistic” Psalm 108 follows. Its placement at his juncture is probably intentional because it proclaims the redeemer Yahweh as the sole universal

²⁷ Except for Ps 108.

²⁸ The connection between Second-Isaiah and Book IV of Psalms is discussed in detail and convincingly by Sophia H.Y. Chen, “When the Messianic Vision Recedes: YHWH’s Kingship & the Mosaic Figure,” (JOCABS, Journal of the Orthodox Center for the Advancement of Biblical Studies; Vol.1, No.1, 2008).

in Second Isaiah and Book Four of the Psalter

²⁹ See again Ezekiel and Second Isaiah as well as the book of Jeremiah.

deity.³⁰ The ascription of Psalms 108-110 to David also suggests a Second and Third Isaianic “mood” of Messianic hope or realization. In the new Jerusalem, under the leadership of the eschatological David, are intoned the *hallel* Psalms 111-118. Moreover, the new Jerusalem bears the name of “The Lord is there”³¹ because it is entirely under the aegis of the Lord’s law, to which is dedicated the lengthy Psalm 119.

- It is toward this new Jerusalem that the community is invited to “go up” in the “Songs of Ascent” (Ps 120-134); here again, the anti-Solomonic criticism can be seen in the ascription to Solomon of Psalm 127, which opens with the warning: “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.”
- It is finally in this new Jerusalem that the Lord is praised in the *hallel* Psalms 135-136 by those who never allowed themselves to forget Zion, Yahweh’s city (Ps 137), those at whose head stands (the new) David to whom are ascribed Psalms 138-145. Under his leadership, the new community will praise the Lord forever in the ending *hallel* Psalms 146-150. And the entire creation will join in the Lord’s praise³² because “He has raised up a horn for his people” (Ps 148:14).³³

My interpretation of the structure of the Psalter seems to be corroborated by the two opening and untitled psalms that function as an introduction to the entire Psalter. Psalm 1 exalts the *saddiq* (righteous one), the Lord’s servant who does not have dealings with the *r’ša’im* (wicked), the Lord’s enemies, because he abides by the Lord’s *torah* (law), the expression of the divine will. Psalm 2 is the kingly psalm par excellence, but it is at the same time messianic. It points out that the Lord will realize his promise to those who trust in him (the righteous ones of Ps 1) through his *saddiq* par excellence, the “new David, who will implement, as only a perfect king would, the divine *torah*. That these two psalms are tightly connected can be seen in the fact that the first opens with “Blessed is the man (*’ašre ha’iš*) … whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (vv.1:1a, 2), while the second closes with “Blessed are all (*’ašre kol*) who take refuge in him” (v.2:11c), following the example of the (perfect) king.³⁴ This is an appropriate introduction to a book of eschatological prophecy, and that is precisely what I am convinced the Psalter is meant to be. The book as a whole is an attempt to reprise the *torah-nomos* (Law) and the *n’bi’im-prophētai* (Prophets) in order to present the “story of the biblical God” which can only end by pointing to the future.³⁵

³⁰ See *OTI*, 164-165 on Second Isaiah.

³¹ Ezek 48:35.

³² Ps 148:1-12.

³³ On this issue see my comments on the Deutero-Isaianic ‘*ebed*’ poems in *OTI*, 166-185 as well as my comments on Psalms 89 and 132 above.

³⁴ The expression “take refuge in the Lord” is a recurrent and virtually exclusive feature of the royal psalms: Ps 5:11; 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 17:7; 18:2, 30; 25:20; 31:1, 19; 36:7; 37:40; 57:1 (twice); 61:4; 64:10; 71:1; 91:4; 118:8, 9; 141:8;

³⁵ We find further confirmation of this in the pages of the New Testament. In Luke 24:44, Jesus considers the psalms to be a source of prophecy: “These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.” In several other instances in the Lukian literature psalms are considered to be prophetic:

But he said to them, “How can they say that the Christ is David’s son?

For David himself says in the Book of Psalms,
‘The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand,
till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet.’
David thus calls him Lord; so how is he his son?” (Lk 20:41-43)

In those days Peter stood among the brethren ... and said, “Brethren, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David, concerning Judas ... For it is written in the book of Psalms,
‘Let his habitation become desolate,
and let there be no one to live in it’;
and ‘his office let another take.’ ...” (Acts 1:15-16, 20)

And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm,
‘Thou art my Son,
today I have begotten thee.’ ...
Therefore he says also in another psalm,
‘Thou wilt not let thy Holy One see corruption.’ ...” (Acts 13:32-33, 35)