

Psalm 107 and Book 5

Psalm 107 and Book 5

Overview of Book 5, The Book of Consummation

Figure 1 (chart) reviews the features of the five books of Psalms. As we start Book 5, we note:

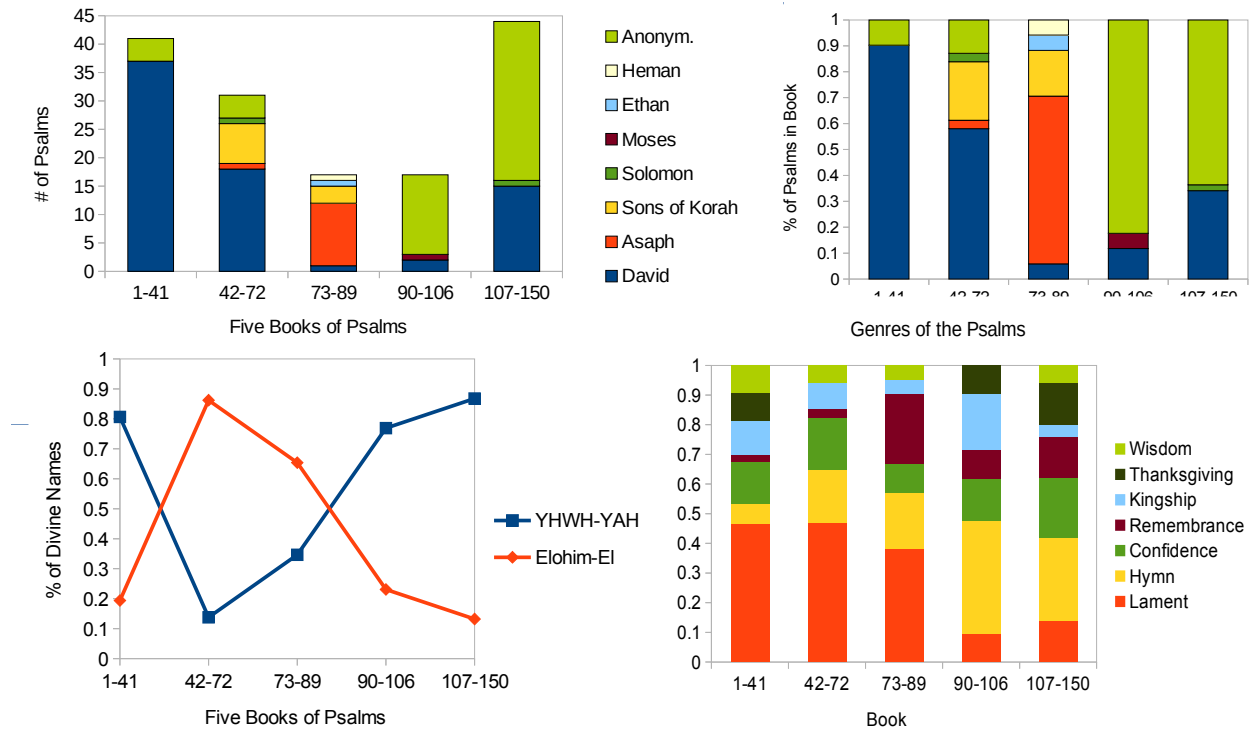


Figure 1: Features of the Five Books of Psalms

1. It has more Psalms (44) than any of the others. The shortest books are 3 (devastation) and 4 (the captivity). This difference reflects Psa 30:5, “For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”
2. Like Book 4, it is mostly anonymous, though David is prominent. David is least common in Book 3, which mourns the apparent loss of the Messianic hope. But in Book 4 David returns, and Book 5 reflects the fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah.
3. It uses the covenant name for God, יהוה and the short form יה, proportionately more than any other book. God’s people are walking in fellowship with him, and enjoying his favor, just as Book 4 promised, Psa 103:17, “But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; 18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.”
4. Even in the consummation of God’s kingdom, we still hear the voice of lament, reflecting opposition to God’s rule. Compare Revelation 20-21: Messiah rules with a rod of iron over residual opposition, and faces Satan’s final attack.

Correspondences in theme, form, authorship, and vocabulary suggest an ABC-ABC alternation (Table 1, chart). Each panel begins with gathering of the sufferers, to the land (Psalm 107), and

Psalm 107 and Book 5

to the temple (Ascents). Next are Psalms of David, recounting God’s care in trial, followed by Hallelu-Yah Psalms reporting God’s deliverance. At the center are the two themes from Psalms 1 and 2: the law of God (119), and the law-keeping Messiah who ascends Zion after great opposition (118) (anticipated in 107-108 and 120-145).

107, Suffering, coming to the land: ידה	120-134, Ascents: Coming to the Temple
108-110, Psalms of David	135-137, ידה, ברך, memory of suffering
111-112, Acrostic (111 Works of the Lord)	138-145, Psalms of David
111-117, Hallelu-Yah	145, Acrostic (Works of the Lord)
118-119, Torah (Acrostic) and Messiah Pair	
<i>Table 1: Structure of Book 5</i>	

An important feature of Book 5, not seen since Book 1, is the acrostic, which begins each clause, verse, or paragraph with a successive letter of the alphabet. In Book 1, Psalms 9-10 (a unit), 25, 34, and 37 were acrostics. Here, 111, 112, 145, and especially 119 use this device. The acrostics in Book 5 come at corresponding places in the two panels, though not within the same elements: in the first panel they begin the Hallelu-Yahs, while in the second one ends the Psalms of David.

Psalm 107, God’s Everlasting Mercy

Four stanzas unfold the ideas in the introduction, and a summary points out the moral (Figure 2, chart).

1-3, Introduction

The introduction sounds the key note that resounds through the four stanzas of the body in v. 1, and the focus on God’s redemptive work in v. 2, then outlines the stanzas in v. 3.

107:1 O give thanks ידה unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.--The Psalm opens with the confession from 106: that God’s loyal love lasts forever. This refrain is common in Book 5. It opens and closes Psalm 118, the Messianic center, and Psalm 136, a history of God’s loyal love.

Psalm 107, God’s Everlasting Mercy
1-3, Introduction Thanks ידה for God’s Mercy חסד East, West, North, the Sea (!)
4-32, Who should Thank God for his Mercy ? 4-9, East: Desert Wanderers 10-16, West: In Death’s Prison 17-22, North: Foolish Sinners 23-32, Sea: Storm-Tossed Sailors
33-43, The General Principle 33-41, God’s Wonderful Works 42-43, God’s Loyal Love

Figure 2: Structure of Psalm 107

This confession first appears in 1 Chr 16:34, 41, in the Psalm that David gave Asaph for bringing the ark to Jerusalem. It returns in 2 Chr 7:3, 6, at the dedication of the temple, and in Ezra 3:11, at the founding of the second temple. So it is associated with the sanctuary, but it is not limited there. When Jehoshaphat leads the people out against the multi-national coalition,

2Ch 20:21 he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, **Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever.**

Thus this phrase is closely related to the promise of Immanuel. God is present with his people, not remote and far away, and they can always depend on his loyal love.

While the expression originates with David, it is recorded in the late books of Chronicles and Ezra, and it dominates the latter books of Psalms, which were probably compiled at that time. It

Psalm 107 and Book 5

responds to Psalms 88 and 89, in which Heman and Ethan, observing the desolations that fall on the nation during the late monarchy, complain that God's loyal love has failed (88:11; 89:49). Book 4, systematically refutes this fear through God's spiritual care for his people and his physical acts in history, culminating in 106:1. Now Book 5 triumphantly pounds this point home.

Psalm 107 in particular urges us to confess God's loyal love. The confession appears not only in v. 1, but forms the core of the Psalm's refrain (8, 15, 21, 31). In our version, this refrain reads,

Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

"Praise" here is not the generic word הלל (Strong 1984), but the same word translated "thank" in v. 1 (יָדָה, Strong 3034), which emphasizes our response to God's intrinsic attributes, while "goodness" is not the usual word thus translated (טוֹב, Strong 2896), but a repetition of "mercy" in v. 1 (חַסֵּד, Strong 2617). So the Psalm introduces the book with this historic call to recognize God's loving intervention among his people, and then develops that through four examples. The next two verses of the introduction summarize them:

2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;--God's loyal love is manifested in his work of redemption (see note). Throughout the OT, God as Israel's redeemer is seen preeminently in the Exodus (see notes), which brought them from the south. But now he extends this redemptive work to every place where they are captive.

3 And gathered them out of the lands,--We read two other times in Psalms of "the lands" ארצות in a physical sense,¹ in the immediately preceding Psalms. These three thus form a bridge joining the two books. Psalm 105 recalls Israel's title to the lands:

Ps. 105:44 And gave them **the lands** of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people;

But they were scattered as captives, not as lords, because of their sin:

Ps. 106:27 To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in **the lands**.

Now God brings them back to rule.

from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south sea.--"South" is based on an emendation of the Hebrew text, but every Hebrew manuscript, followed by the versions, reads "sea," like the AV margin. The return from the South already happened, at the Exodus. Rather, these four directional notes introduce the case studies that follow.²

4-32, Four Case Studies

The four studies are arranged chiastically. The first and last describe the destination to which people are delivered (7 "a city of habitation," 30 "their desired haven"), while the center two emphasize the moral culpability of the sufferers (11, 17) and name death as the adversary.

4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. 5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. 6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. 7 And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. 8 Oh that men would praise יהוה the LORD

¹Delitzsch, Hengstenberg, and Kidner; 116:9 is metaphorical, not physical.

² Thus Jarick, CBQ 59 (1997) 270-287.

Psalm 107 and Book 5

for his **goodness** **טוֹב**, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 9 For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.--Starting with the East, the first case study describes wanderers in the desert, which lies directly east of Israel. This stanza, like the last, describes not only their dilemma, but their destination (v. 7, a habitable city).

10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *being bound in affliction and iron*; 11 Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: 12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and *there was none to help*. 13 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and he saved them out of their distresses*. 14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. 15 Oh that *men would praise* the LORD for his **goodness**, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 16 For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.--The West is where the sun goes down, and describes the place of darkness. The Psalmist develops this theme to describe people in bondage because of their sin, perhaps the most direct description of the captives in Babylon.

17 Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. 18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. 19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, *and he saveth them out of their distresses*. 20 He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered *them* from their destructions. 21 Oh that *men would praise* the LORD for his **goodness**, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of **thanksgiving** **תודה**, and declare his works **מעשה** with rejoicing.--The North in the later books of the Bible is the source of disaster and illness.³ The anorexia and fear of death in v. 18 suggest that illness is in focus here.

23 They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; 24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. 25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. 26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. 27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. 28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. 29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. 30 Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto **their desired haven**. 31 Oh that *men would praise* the LORD for his **goodness**, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise **ללל** him in the assembly of the elders.--The final case concerns the sea, which for Israel was always a foreign and hostile environment. The God who was victorious over the sea at the Exodus can subdue all the forces that would exclude his people from the destination he has for them.

The summary of the entire Psalm amplifies the two details noted in the refrain: God's wonderful works in 33-41, and his loyal love in 42-43.

33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; 34 A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. 35 He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings. 36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a **city for habitation**; 37 And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. 38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. 39 Again, they

3 D. E. Fass, "The Symbolic Uses of North," *Judaism* 37 (1988) 465-73.

Psalm 107 and Book 5

are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. **40** He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, *where there is no way*. **41** Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh *him* families like a flock.--All four examples show that the Lord can reverse people's fortunes. Two cycles (33-34 vs. 35-38, 39-40 vs. 41) summarize the insight of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1. Neither disaster nor happiness is accidental. All comes from God's hand.

The last two verses draw out a moral from God's interventions.

42 The righteous shall see it, and rejoice:--First, the righteous will rejoice that there is a God who rules in heaven, and holds people accountable.

and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.--Second, the wicked will be left without an answer.

43 Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness **חסד** **of the LORD.**--The sign of true wisdom is to recognize that these changes are not accidental but the purposeful acts of God, and that they are motivated by his loyal love.

108-110, Psalms of David

Psalm 108, Confidence Rewarded

Some Psalms are repeated. Psalm 14 reappears as Psalm 53 with a few changes.⁴ Psalm 108 is a particularly interesting example. It combines parts of Psalms 57 and 60. We should pay attention first to the Psalms that are recombined, and then to which portions of them are reused.

We first encountered these Psalms in the list of defendants in the central section of Book 3 (Table 2, chart). They included Jews (Saul) and Gentiles, individuals and nations. Psalm 57 is an example of an individual Israelite, Saul (though acting in an official capacity as king), while 50 is an example of a Gentile nation, Edom. These two Psalms embrace the entire scope of adversaries described in Psalms 52-60.

Psalm	Title or (Allusion)	History	Type	Tune	People
52	Doeg the Edomite	1 Sam 21-22	Maschil	Mahalath	Gentile Individual
53	(Nabal)	1 Sam 25		Neginoth	Private Opposition
54	People of Ziph	1 Sam 23:19; 26:1		Jonath elem rechokim	
55	(Ahithophel)	2 Sam 15-17			
56	Gath (Philistine)	1 Sam 21:10-15	Michtam	Al Taschith	Gentile
57	Saul in cave	Adullam, 1 Sam 22 En Gedi, 1 Sam 24			Shushan eduth
58	(Silent judges)	Saul?			
59	Saul watched the house	1 Sam 19:11		Neginah	Gentile Nation
60	Edom	2 Sam 8:13			

Table 2: The Original Setting of Psalms 57 and 60

Both of these Psalms are laments, beginning with a prayer for God's help and ending in praise and confidence (Figure 3, chart). Psalm 108 combines the positive parts of these laments into a Psalm of praise, organized chiastically around God's promise of deliverance.

4 Notably, replacing יהוה with אלהים in keeping with the general tendency of Book 3.

Psalm 107 and Book 5

108:1 A Song or Psalm of David.--The change in heading from 57 and 60 is remarkable. Those are both מכתם Psalms, a heading reserved for laments (16, 56-60). This is the last of 12 Psalms that are called both שיר and מזמור, a designation reserved almost exclusively for Psalms of praise and thanksgiving (see notes). The conversion of two Psalms of lament into one of praise fulfills the conclusion of the first Psalm to bear the joint title,

Psa 30:11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; 12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

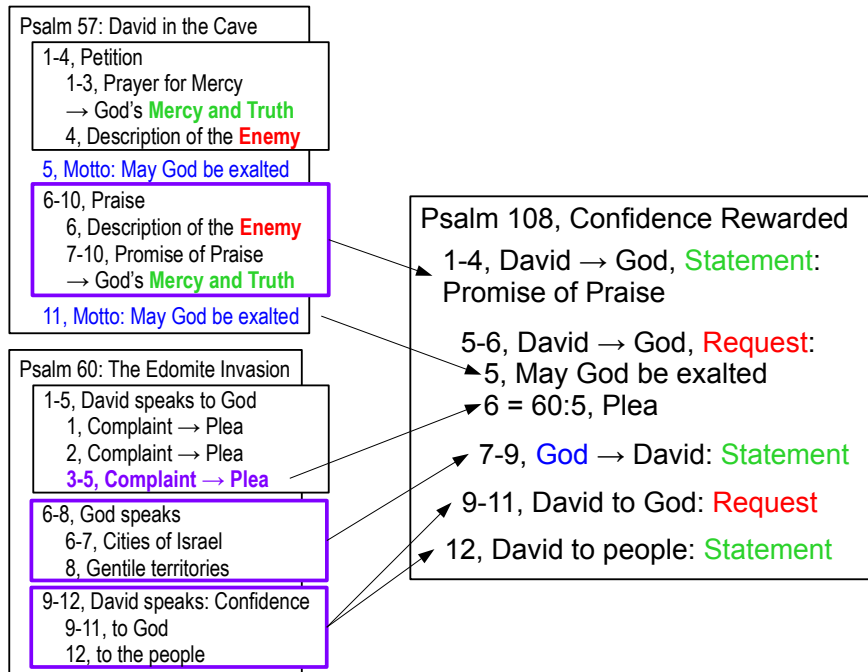


Figure 3: Reuse of Psalms 57 and 60 in 108

This reversal reinforces the lesson from Psalm 107.

O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. 2 Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. 3 I will praise יהוה thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. 4 For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.--David begins by promising to praise God. He subdues even “my glory,” his personal prestige, to God’s worship.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth;--His first request is that God would exalt himself.

6 That thy beloved may be delivered: save with thy right hand, and answer me.--Only then, and to that end, does he ask for his own deliverance.

7 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 8 Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver; 9 Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.--As we saw in Psalm 60, God responds with a promise of victory.

10 Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? 11 Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts? 12 Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.--David repeats his request for help, in the confidence that comes from God’s oracle.

13 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.--Finally he turns to the people, urging them to courage under God’s protection.

Psalm 107 and Book 5

To the chief Musician—For the first time since Book 3, we find a Psalm dedicated to temple worship. This book now envisions the nation back in the land with their temple restored.

Psalm 109 Defense from False Accusers

109:1 A Psalm of David.

The key to understanding this lament is the shift in the pronouns, “they” vs. “him.” In vv. 2-5 and again 20-29, David describes his adversaries as “them.” But vv. 6-19 contain an extended imprecation against someone described in the singular, as “him.”

Traditionally, this imprecation has been understood as David’s prayer for God’s judgment against his enemies, as in Psalms 5, 10, 17, 35, 58, 59, 69, 70, 79, 83, 109, 129, 137, and 140. This Psalm does contain imprecations, but probably not in vv. 6-19. If David were asking God to judge his many enemies, why does he focus the prayer on a single person, “him”?

The answer is the name Satan in v. 6. The Hebrew word means “accuser, slanderer,” and refers to someone who brings a legal charge—a prosecuting attorney. Satan gets this name because he is constantly accusing God’s people before the Lord, as in Job and Revelation,

Rev 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

The verb form of this word appears three other places in the Psalm, in the “them” sections: vv. 4, 20, and 29. David’s enemies have been accusing him of wrongdoing. The most natural understanding of vv. 6-19 is not as David’s imprecation against them, but as a quotation of their accusation.⁵ He presents their slanderous words to the Lord. David does pray for the Lord to judge them, in v. 20, where he asks that their curses would return on their own heads, and in v. 29, both of which remind us that David himself is the one being accused.

The resulting structure (Figure 4, chart) begins and ends with praise. In Hebrew, v.1 opens, “O God of my praise.” Next David offers his complaint and prays for God’s intervention, and in the center, he brings the slander of his adversaries to the Lord.

O God of my praise תהלתי;--In Hebrew, the title “God of my praise,” that is, “the God whom I praise,” opens the Psalm, just as praise in vv. 30-31 closes it. There’s an important lesson here. David is reporting a terrible case of slander against himself, but he begins and ends with praise to God. He exemplifies the NT principles (chart),

1Th 5:18 In every thing give thanks

Phi 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace

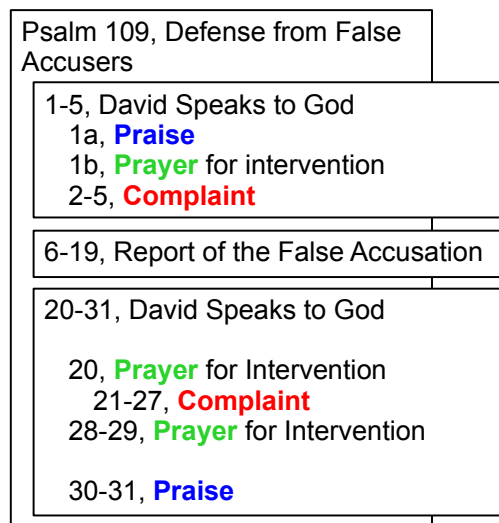


Figure 4: Structure of Psalm 109

5 Thus L.C. Allen, WBC, following Booij, Th. “Psalm 109:6–19 as a Quotation: A Review of the Evidence.” In *Give Ear to My Words: Psalms and Other Poetry in and around the Hebrew Bible*. FS N. A. van Uchelin, ed. J. Dyk et al. Amsterdam: Societas Hebraica Amstelodamensis, 1996. 91–106.

Psalm 107 and Book 5

of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The word for “praise” here is the generic one. We’ll learn at the end of the Psalm the specific kind of praise that he offers.

Hold not thy peace,--Next, he asks God to intervene. That intervention becomes more specific in vv. 20 and 28-29, after he reports the slander.

2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. 3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. 4 For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. 5 And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.--This is the Complaint section that is standard in laments, in which the Psalmist describes the problem he is lamenting. It is false, hateful accusation. “Adversaries” in v. 4 is the verb form of “Satan.” To make matters worse, he has shown love toward them.

Now he reports the slander that he faces.

6 Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.--They plan to bring in a false witness (a “wicked man”), and bring him to court.

The report of their malice begins with their motive, then describes the extend of their target, and finally sketches the accusation they intend to bring against him

7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. 8 Let his days be few; and let another take his office.--Even his plea of innocence will then become evidence against him, and they are confident they can remove him from his official position.

Their malice extends beyond him to his family:

9 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. 10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. 11 Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour. 12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. 13 Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. 14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. 15 Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.--The curse on his family is a direct attempt to contravene the promise of 2 Samuel 7 that David’s seed would continue to rule on his throne.

Now the accusers outline the charge: his injustice against the poor and needy. The accusation fits very well with the attitude of Saul’s supporters after David came to power, reflected in the cursing of Shimei while David was fleeing Jerusalem.

16 Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.--The heart of their accusation is David’s supposed failure to show mercy, loyal love חסד , in his dealings with others. Of course, their whole proceeding shows their own lack of mercy toward David.

17 As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. 18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. 19 Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.

Psalm 107 and Book 5

At this point the singular “he” stops, and David begins describing his adversaries in the plural. He begins with his own imprecation:

20 Let this be the reward of mine *adversaries* from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.--The universal principle of justice in the OT is that people should receive the harm they meant to bring to others. David simply asks that the Lord will bring on his adversaries what they intended to bring on him. As in v. 4, “adversaries” is the verb form of “Satan,” pointing us to their legal strategy to bring him down.

21 But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy *mercy* is good, deliver thou me. 22 For I *am* poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. 23 I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust. 24 My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness. 25 I became also a reproach unto them: *when* they looked upon me they shook their heads. 26 Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy *mercy*: 27 That they may know that this *is* thy hand; *that* thou, LORD, hast done it.--Now David asks for the Lord’s care, as he repeats his complaint of the suffering that has come on him. His complaint begins and ends with an appeal to the Lord’s mercy (חסד, loyal love). God has established a covenant with David, and so must defend him.

28 Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice. 29 Let mine *adversaries* be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle.--He returns once more to pray, very briefly, for the Lord to deal with his adversaries, for the third time describing them as his “Satan.”

30 I will greatly praise יהוה the LORD with my mouth; yea, I will praise הלל him among the multitude. 31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save *him* from those that condemn his soul.--He ends the Psalm as he began it, with praise to the Lord. The second instance of “praise” is the noun for generic praise, but the first one is the verb often translated “to thank,” but more precisely meaning “to confess,” that calls our attention to God’s intrinsic attributes. In his present position of suffering, he is not blessing the Lord for benefits he has received, but rather confessing that he is the deliverer of the poor.

The explanation of vv. 6-19 as a quotation of David’s adversaries, rather than David’s own curse against one of them or against them collectively, is grammatically the easiest way to read the Psalm. However, it seems to encounter a problem when we recall that Peter quotes v. 8 in Acts 1 as a motive for replacing Judas with another apostle:

Act 1:16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. 17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. . . . 20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

The first part of the quotation is from 69:25, another imprecatory Psalm. Doesn’t Peter’s quotation require that v. 8 be addressed by David to his enemies, rather than the other way around?

Note two things.

First, the quotation interpretation fits the whole context of the story about Judas. He was working with the chief priests in a scheme that included false accusations to achieve a judicial victory

Psalm 107 and Book 5

against the Messiah, and dislodge him from his kingly office. The statement in Acts 1:16 that “the Holy Ghosts ... spake ... concerning Judas” fits the broader context of the Psalm.

Second, in v. 20 David asks that everything that his enemies had thought to bring on him would return on their own heads. So the Psalm does support the notion that someone else will take the office of Judas, as the Lord brings Judas’ curse of v. 8 back on his own head.

Psalm 110, David’s LORD and Lord

We first consider the Psalm, then its many NT quotations.

Exposition of the Psalm

110:1 A Psalm of David.

This Psalm turns on the two words translated “Lord” in our version in v. 1: the divine name Jehovah (LORD), and אֲדֹנָי (Lord), meaning “sovereign master.” We will use “Jehovah” for LORD and “Master” for Lord.

Figure 5 (chart) shows how the statements in this Psalm move among these two individuals, David, and his audience. He reports two statements by Jehovah to the Master, in vv. 1 and 4. Then he comments on these statements, speaking to the Master about what Jehovah is doing (vv. 2-3), and to Jehovah about what the Master is doing (5-7).

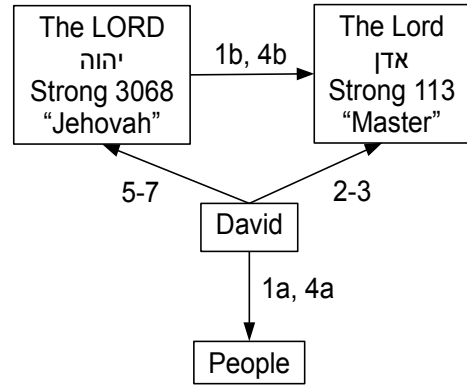


Figure 5: Speech Patterns in Psalm 110

Figure 6 (chart) shows the halves introduced by the decrees.⁶ Each half begins by a statement by Jehovah defining a role for the Master, first as king, then as priest. David’s comments emphasize in both cases a victory, the people whom the Master conquers, and how he will be refreshed in his labors.

The LORD said unto my Lord אֲדֹנָי, Sit thou at my right hand,--Jehovah enthrones the one whom David calls “my Master.” David is Israel’s king, yet he celebrates the enthronement of someone to whom he must be subject. Contrast Saul, when he learned that David would be the next king, or Herod, when he learned of the birth of the Messiah. In both cases, instead of submitting to the master, the incumbent tried to destroy him.

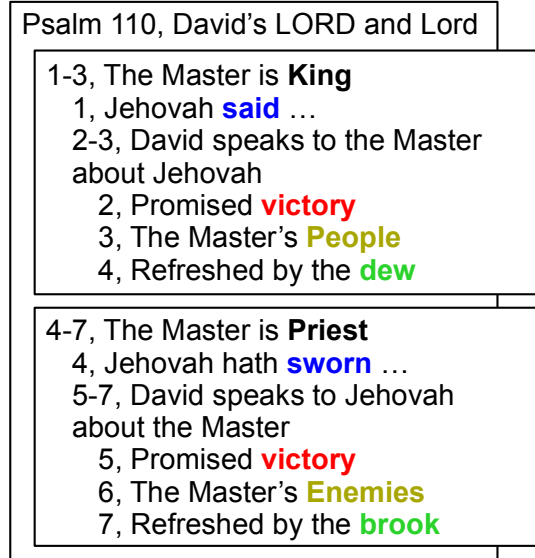


Figure 6: Structure of Psalm 110

Psalm 2 urges the kings and rulers of the earth to “kiss the son” (v. 12; cf. 72:11). Just as David lead in confessing his sin in the divine trial in Book 3 (Psalms 51-60), followed by other kings (Saul) and nations (Edom) as recalled in Psalm 108, so here he leads in bowing to the Messiah.

6 Following Allen, Waltke, Hengstenberg, though some (Alexander, Auffret, Anderson quoted by Jordaan and Nel) see a chiasmic structure (King, Victory, Priest, Victory, King).

Psalm 107 and Book 5

until I make thine enemies thy footstool.--The exaltation of the Messiah takes place before his enemies have been completely subdued. This sequence fits the NT interpretation, in which the Lord's physical dominion is delayed, and in fact promised as part of his ascension (chart):

Act 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And ... behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, ... this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Now David speaks to the Master as "thou," describing what Jehovah will do for him.

2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.--Psalm 2 already anticipated that Jehovah would install his Messiah on Zion. Now he comes forth from Zion to defeat his enemies.

3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning:--These people are not an army fighting the enemy at this point, but previous enemies who have submitted to him, as the NT often teaches:

Eph 2:14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh **the enmity**, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain **the enmity** thereby:

thou hast the dew of thy youth.--It is difficult for us to appreciate the importance of dew to the agriculture of Israel. Rain is scarce, and many crops are sustained by heavy dew through the hot months. Grape vines are grown along the ground to take advantage of this source of moisture. Lack of dew is part of a drought: David curses Mount Gilboa, where Saul was slain, saying,

2Sa 1:21 Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings:

And when Elijah proclaims a drought to Ahab, he says,

1Ki 17:1 As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

So dew is a natural symbol of life from heaven. Isaiah will later use it to describe resurrection:

Isa 26:19 Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of ~~herbs~~ lights, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

Here it probably also refers to the vivifying gift of heaven to the Master, and may be a reference (like 16:10) to the resurrection that precedes his enthronement.

4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.--Now we have the second divine decree. The first made the Master a king, so exalted that even David submits to him. The second makes him a priest, and not just any priest, but one who, unlike Aaron and his sons, endures "for ever."

David describes the Master's coming victory. as an eternal king-priest. Instead of speaking to the Master about how Jehovah will bring his enemies to submit willingly to him, David now speaks to Jehovah about the victory the Master will bring over enemies who do not submit.

Psalm 107 and Book 5

5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. 6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill *the places* with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.--The picture is of the great battle of Revelation 19. We may recoil in horror when we contemplate that gruesome judgment, but David describes this aspect of our Lord's dominion after he has emphasized that the Master is a priest as well as a king. As a priest, he has made provision for his enemies to be reconciled to God, and those refuse to submit willingly to the crucified and risen Savior must one day face him as the implacable judge.

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.--The first stanza ended with the Master's refreshment by life-giving dew as he begins his work. Now, as he returns from the conquest, he is again refreshed. If we view him as returning to Zion after his conquest, it is natural to understand this brook as the outflow from Gihon, described in Psalm 46,

Psa 46:4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

Isaiah and later Ezekiel make this flow a symbol for God's care for his people, and it lies behind our Lord's offer in John 4 and 7 of the living water of the Spirit. Ezekiel 47 in particular describes a wonderful river flowing out of the Millennial temple, bringing life wherever it goes, and it lies behind the imagery of the new heavens and new earth in Revelation 22. From this spring the victorious king-priest refreshes himself as he returns from the conquest.

Psalm 110 in the NT

This Psalm is one of the most frequently quoted in the NT.⁷ Early Jewish literature (though not the Psalms Targum) interprets it of Messiah.⁸ We can group these citations around four phrases from the Psalm, each with its own message.

Matthew 22, "My Lord": More than a Man

Chronologically, the first citation of the Psalm in reference to the Messiah was by the Lord himself, in his Lord's confrontation with the Pharisees (chart).

Mat 22:41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. 43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, 44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? 45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? 46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

David is one of Israel's greatest heroes. The notion that anyone, even the Messiah, could be superior to him was a striking one, particularly since the Pharisees sought to view our Savior as nothing more than a man. Psalm 110, universally accepted as Messianic up to the time of our Lord,⁹ shows that Messiah is more than a man. Thus we should worship him.

7 Archer and Chirichigno note v. 1 in Mt 22:24; Mk 12:36; Lk 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; Heb 1:13, to which we can add 1 Cor 15:25 and Eph 1:20 and v. 4 in Heb 5:6, 7; 7:17-21. The reference to Hebrews are much more extensive: Compton finds v.1 in 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2 and v. 4 in 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 11, 15, 17, 21; and allusions in 2:17; 3:1; 7:8, 24-25, 28; 10:21. Jordaan and Nel, following Hay, find v.1 in Heb 1:3, 13; 2:9; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2, 22; v.4 in Heb 2:17; 3:1; 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 11, 17, 21, 24, 25, 28; and 10:21.

8 See Edersheim, *Life and Times*, Appendix 9 for references.

Psalm 107 and Book 5

“At my

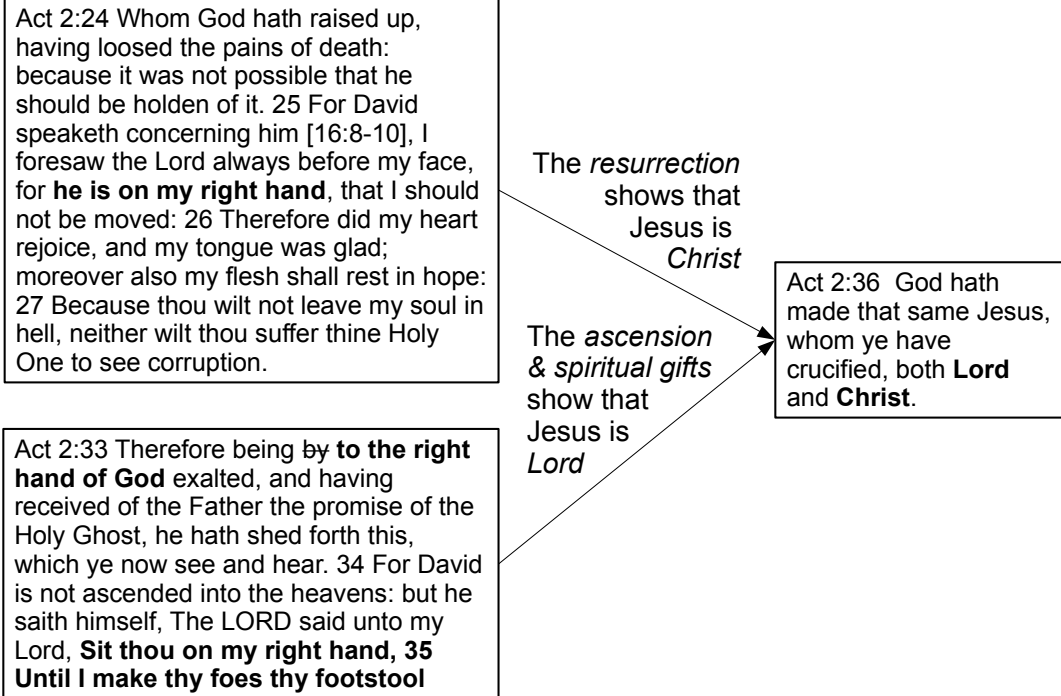


Figure 7: Peter's Sermon in Acts 2

Right Hand”: The Ascended Lord

Christ not only rose from the dead, but ascended bodily into the Father’s presence. This is the truth emphasized in Jehovah’s invitation to him to sit at his right hand.

The many references in the NT to our Lord being “at the right hand of God”¹⁰ can be traced to v. 1. After the gospels, this was first noted by Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The point of his sermon is that the man Jesus is Lord and Christ (Messiah), which he concludes from two Psalms. Both describe impressive events in Jerusalem, and both refer to the “right hand” (Figure 7, chart).

Jesus is Lord because Psalm 110 describes him so, at God’s right hand, as we can know by the works of the Spirit whom he has sent. He is Christ because Psalm 16 promises one who would die and rise again, which was not true of David, but was of our Lord. This Psalm also uses “right hand,” this time of how the Lord stands at the right hand of his anointed to protect him.

So the Father is at Messiah’s right hand to help in his passion, but then the Messiah ascends as Lord to God’s right hand, the place of honor and influence, as the NT often repeats (chart):¹¹

Acts 5:31 Him hath God exalted **with to his right hand** to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

Acts 7:55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing **on the right hand** of God,

9 Our Lord’s whole argument turns on the assumption that “my Lord” is a reference to the Messiah, and if his contemporaries had thought another interpretation was reasonable, they would have rejected his claim.

10 Matt. 22:44; 26:64; Mk. 12:36; 14:62; 16:19; Lk. 20:42; 22:69; Acts 2:33-34; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22

11 This list does not include the references in Hebrews, which we will discuss shortly.

Psalm 107 and Book 5

Acts 7:56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing **on the right hand** of God.

Rom. 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even **at the right hand of God**, who also maketh intercession for us.

Eph. 1:20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and **set him at his own right hand** in the heavenly places,

Col. 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ **sitteth on the right hand of God**.

1 Pet. 3:22 Who is gone into heaven, and is **on the right hand of God**; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Because he is at the Father's right hand, he can intercede for us against Satan's accusations, and give us guidance and protection in our daily lives.

“Thine enemies thy footstool”: Ruler over the Earth

The idea that a ruler brings his enemies under his feet is common in the ancient Near East. A good example is Tutankhamen's throne, with its footstool decorated with pictures of prostrate enemies (Figure 8). This image in Psalm 110 shows that the Master's rule is absolute.

Just as “right hand” in 110:1 led Peter to link Psalm 110 with 16, the idea that the Master's enemies would become his footstool led Paul to link it with Psalm 8:

Psa 8:6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; **thou hast put all things under his feet**: 7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; 8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

In describing the future course of history in 1 Corinthians 15, he draws these two together:

1Co 15:24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till **he hath put all enemies under his feet [Ps 110:1]**. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 27 For **he hath put all things under his feet [Ps 8:6]**. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

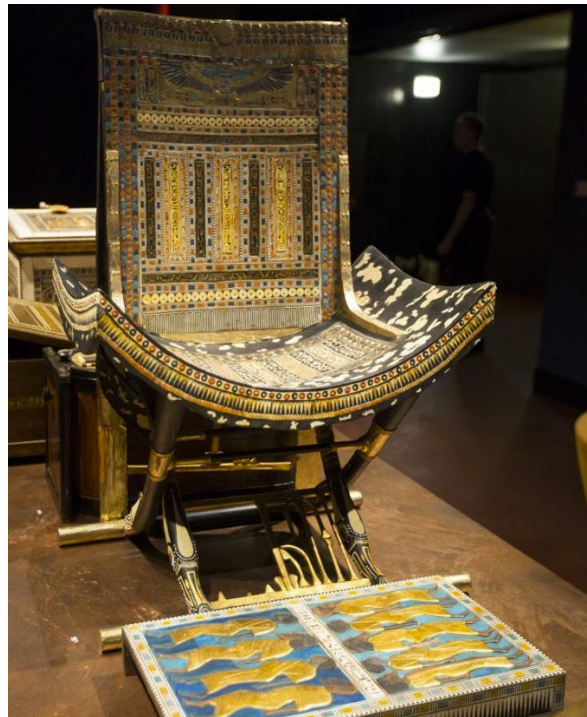


Figure 8: Throne of Tutankhamen, with captives on footstool (https://qctimes.com/the-discovery-of-king-tut/image_5adfe38a-2d4c-5e53-ab54-766c3b84dfe5.html)

Psalm 107 and Book 5

This expression shows his dominion over all of creation, and in particular over those who dare to oppose him. This promise lets us love our enemies and leave all vengeance to our coming Lord.

Hebrews, “A Priest Forever”: King and Priest

By far the most extensive use of Psalm 110 is in the epistle to the Hebrews, which quotes or alludes to it 20 times.¹² The epistle alternates between expository sections (describing how our Lord is better than the angels, Moses, and Aaron, instituting a better covenant, ministering in a better sanctuary with better sacrifices) and exhortations urging his readers not to fall away. Each of the expository sections cites the Psalm.¹³ A few examples will illustrate.

The book opens by showing how our Lord is better than the angels. The writer quotes a series of OT texts, beginning and ending with Psalm 110:1.

Heb 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, **sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high**; 4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. ... 13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, **Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?**

Hebrews 2 repeats the linkage with Psalm 8:

Heb 2:5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. 6 But one in a certain place [Psalm 8] testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? 7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: 8 **Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.** For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, **crowned with glory and honour** [Psalm 110:1] ; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

In 2:17 he turns to our Lord's priesthood:

Heb 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful **high priest** in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. ... 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and **High Priest** of our profession, Christ Jesus;

He backs this up by quoting 110:4,

Heb 5:6 As he saith also in another place, **Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.** ... 10 **Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.**

Then, in chapter 8, he brings these two themes together:

12 See footnote 7. Key references are Compton, J. (2015). Psalm 110 and the Logic of Hebrews. (C. Keith, Ed.) (Vol. 537, p. 191). London; New Delhi; New York; Sydney: Bloomsbury T&T Clark; and Jordaan, Gert J. C., and Pieter Nel, 'From Priest-King to King-Priest: Psalm 110 and the Basic Structure of Hebrews', in Human and Steyn, eds., Psalms and Hebrews, pp. 229–40.

13 See the analyses in Compton Table 16 (pp. 168f) and Jordaan and Nel (pp. 232f).

Psalm 107 and Book 5

Heb 8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have **such an high priest**, [v. 4] **who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens**; [v. 1] 2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

The themes are united again in chapter 10:

Heb 10:12-13 But this man, after he had **offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God**; 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

Because he is our priest, we know that we are saved from our sins, and have access to the Father.

Psalm 107 and Book 5

Notes

Words for Redeem in Hebrew: פדה, גאל

TWOT discusses the relative emphasis of פדה Strong 6299 on the exchange of a price, while גאל Strong 1350 emphasizes the kinship between the one who does the redemption and those being redeemed.

Lev 25:48 After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: 49 Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself.

In the light of this distinction, it is striking that the Bible depicts God as our Redeemer, and thus our Kinsman. The earliest reference to God as redeemer is in Jacob's blessing of the sons of Joseph:

Gen 48:15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, 16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads;

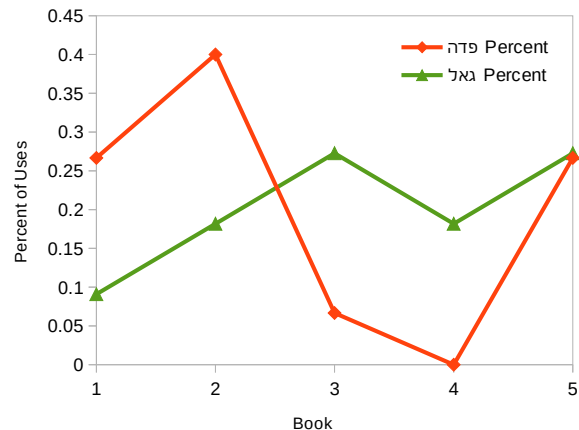
When he speaks of God's oversight and provision, he calls him "God," but when he refers to redemption, he speaks of "the Angel," God who appears as a man, anticipating the Messiah. The next reference is in Exodus, when God introduces his name YHWH to Moses:

Exo 6:2 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: 3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. ... 6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and **I will redeem you** with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: 7 And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

God is their redeemer because he enters into covenant with them.

Figure 9: Distribution of פדה and גאל in Psalms

In this context, it may be interesting to consider the relative distribution of the two roots throughout Psalms (Figure 9). פדה dominates in books 1 and 2, but virtually disappears in 3-4, where גאל appears the most. Both appear in book 5. Does this reflect a relative growth in the maturity of Israel's faith, from God as simply a resource to deliver from difficulty, to a realization that he takes the place of our kinsman, something requiring the full Messianic vision?



Psalm 107 and Book 5

Psalms labeled both שִׁיר and מְזוֹמֵר

These appear in different orders:

- שִׁיר מְזוֹמֵר לפא שִׁיר always marks a hymn (65, 75, 76)
- שִׁיר מְזוֹמֵר marks either a hymn (67, 87, 92), a thanksgiving, (30), or a remembrance (68), which are semantically very close to one another.
- שִׁיר מְזוֹמֵר marks three hymns (48, 66, 87, 108), but also a lament (83)!

Note that 87 has שִׁיר מְזוֹמֵר at the start, then שִׁיר מְזוֹמֵר at the end.

Also look at clusters of Psalms:

- 65-68, the praise for deliverance section at the end of Book 2
- 75-76, the section on God's kingship at the start of Book 3

The instance in 83 is unusual because of the genre of the Psalm, but it is at the end of the judgment section in Book 3, and balanced by the double use of the title at start and end of 87, at the end of the restoration section. So the use in 83 is likely transitional, praying for God's intervention, which is granted in 84-87.

Beecher on Psalm 109

Beecher (JBL 50 no 1 1931, p xxxiv-xxxvi) points out that the only explicitly volitive verbs are the first verb in v. 6, then vv. 12-15, and then v. 19. He suggests rendering 6-11,

“If thou put a wicked man in office over any one,
And thus a Satan (instead of a protector) stand upon his right hand;—
When that one is put upon trial he will come out wicked,
And his prayer (not his alleged offences, merely) will become sin;
Few will his days be,
His office another will take; Orphans his sons will be,
And his wife a widow;
And his sons will wander, wander, and be beggars,
And will seek, from their desolate homes;
A creditor will set a trap for all which belongs to him, And strangers will plunder his earnings.”

And 16-19,

“Because he was not mindful to do mercy, And pursued a man poor and needy, And humiliated of heart, to put to death;
And loved cursing, and it entered him,
And delighted not in blessing, and it was far from him;
And put on cursing as his garment, And it entered as the water within him, And as the oil into his bones;—
Let it be to him as clothing which he will wear, And for a belt which he will continually gird.”

On this reading, the imprecation is largely restricted to vv. 12-15, the just execution of the *lex talionis* on the basis of the behavior described indicatively in 6-11.

Psalm 107 and Book 5

In further support of his reading is the shift from plural to singular at v. 6.

This reading turns on reading the imperative in v. 6 as conditional. Joüon-Muraoka article 167.a.1. Here are some examples they and others cite:

139:8 COH + verbless

146:4 Jussive + IMPF

Job 19:18 COH + Wconversive + Impf

Zec 9:5 Jussive + W + IMPF

Mic 7:10 Jussive + W + IMPF

This would certainly be consistent with our instance:

109:6: IMPV + W + N + IMPF

However, the grammars emphasize that imperfect is often used for the jussive, even where distinctive forms exist (e.g., תהיה instead of תהי in v. 7), so the conventional interpretation (followed by the LXX) is certainly permissible. In addition, Beecher's reading makes v.8 describe the innocent victim of the wicked man, not the wicked man himself, which makes its application to Judas in Acts 1:20 unexpected.

Allen following Booij, takes 6-19 as a quotation of the accusation brought by David's adversaries. This would support the shift from plural to singular. The question remains, how does v. 8 apply to Judas. But in light of v. 20, where David prays that the curse of the false accuser would return upon him, v. 8 will return on Judas as one of the adversaries joined against the Lord.

The quotation theory seems much more secure than Beecher's effort.