

Psalm 80 in Its Historical Context

In order to set the stage for investigating the eschatological interpretation of Psalm 80 in the Second Temple period, it is necessary first to explore the content of the psalm itself, to show how concepts that would later become the basis of eschatological interpretation are rooted in the psalm as it might have been understood in its original context. This chapter asks two major questions of Psalm 80. First, is there material in Psalm 80 that made possible eschatological interpretation for future generations? Second, what might those features have meant as intended by the author and as heard by the original audience? To be clear, I am not trying to show with certainty what the intended meaning of the author was; rather, I want to expose the range of possible meanings that could have been intended by the author and may have been heard by the audience when the psalm was composed and performed.

To answer these questions I will first summarize the content of the psalm, then address the typical introductory issues of date, provenance, textual criticism, and redaction, attempting to place the writing of the psalm at a period in Israel's history that fits the internal data and serves as a starting place for considering the original meanings of the psalm. I will then analyze the broader issues and themes that are the seedbed for eschatological interpretive developments outlined in the following chapters. The thesis of this chapter is that (1) Psalm 80 probably carried many royal and restorationist features in its original context of the eighth century bce, (2) the ambiguity between the vine and the individual figure in the psalm leave ample room for later creative exegesis, and (3) these features set the stage for eschatological and messianic interpretations as soon as the early postexilic period.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF PSALM 80

Psalm 80 is a good example of what Hermann Gunkel terms the communal lament, with the requisite laments (vv. 5-7, 13-14), petitions (vv. 2-4, 8, 15-20),

vocative addresses to God (vv. 2, 4, 5, 8, 15, 20), impetus for God's action (vv. 9–12), and the typical use of “why” or “how long,” though it lacks any assurance that the lament has been heard by God.¹ The refrain (vv. 4, 8, and 20) is a distinctive feature among the recognized communal laments.

The superscription states that the psalm is directed to the leader (presumably of a choir), associates it with lilies (perhaps a tune), calls it a testimony, and attributes it to Asaph. The psalm proper begins by imploring God as the shepherd and leader of the flock of Israel to show Godself “before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh” and to save the people (vv. 2–3). Next follows the refrain of “Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved” (v. 4), which remains unchanged in vv. 8 and 20 apart from a lengthened appellative with each repetition.² The call for restoration in the refrain sums up the theme of the entire psalm. Verse 5 begins the first round of lament by asking how long God will smother at the people's prayers, followed by a twofold accusation that God has fed them tears (v. 6) and has made them a laughingstock (v. 7). The refrain appears a second time in v. 8 as a reinforcement of the psalm's basic petition.

Next, the psalmist contrasts the current state of affairs by rehearsing God's great action on behalf of the people in the past, when God brought a vine out of Egypt and planted it (v. 9). God caused it to flourish to the point of covering both mountains and “the cedars of God,” even filling the land from the sea (presumably the Mediterranean) to the (Euphrates) river (vv. 10–12). But this brief respite from lament ends soon enough as the psalmist complains about the current state of the vine, laying the blame at the feet of Yahweh. Its hedges have been broken down, its fruit plucked, and the boar and other beasts devour it (vv. 13–14).

The direct address in v. 15 begins the final, extended petition for God to act on behalf of the people; verses 15–20 also comprise the most important but ambiguous portion of the text for this study. God is called upon to turn, see, and help the vine (vv. 15–16), and the psalmist seems to place stalk and son/

1. Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. James D. Nogalski (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 82–93; trans. of *Einleitung in die Psalmen*, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1985). Gunkel's work is the classic in the field and it set the stage for all treatments of psalms genres that came after. See Harry P. Nasuti, *Defining the Sacred Songs: Genre, Tradition and the Post-Critical Interpretation of the Psalms* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 11–17, for an overview of Gunkel's influence and more recent approaches to the Psalms that take a more theological approach to their analysis.

2. “God of hosts” in v. 8 and “YHWH God of hosts” in v. 20. Bible quotations are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.

branch (בֵּן) in parallel with vine (v. 16). The ambiguity of these verses lies in the connection between the vine, the stalk, and the son/branch. Are they truly parallel, that is, are the stalk and son/branch simply different ways to refer to God's people? Or do the son/branch and the stalk refer to a leader of the people? In addition to these ambiguities, there is dispute about the meaning of כִּנְהָ (v. 16a) and about the originality of "the son you have strengthened for yourself" (v. 16b). These issues will be addressed later in the chapter.

Slipping back into lament, the psalmist inserts a final reminder that the vine has been destroyed by burning and chopping (v. 17a–b). Verse 17c is ambiguous and could be understood as either a further lament for the devastated people at the hands of God or a request for God to destroy their enemies.³ The petition then resumes with a request that God's hand would be on "the man of your right hand" and "the son of man you strengthened for yourself" (v. 18), probably referring to the king. The people now begin to make promises of renewed faithfulness to God. If God returns to them, they will not turn away; if God revives them, they will call on the divine name (v. 19). The psalm ends with the refrain of the people calling on God to restore them, which serves to summarize the psalm (v. 20) and leads to a crescendo with the fulsome vocative, "O Lord God of Hosts."

INTRODUCTORY ISSUES: TEXTUAL CRITICISM, DATE, PROVENANCE, REDACTION

Since the text could mean different things at different times and in different places, the introductory issues of textual criticism, date, provenance, and redaction will affect how one interprets the psalm.

TEXT CRITICAL ISSUES

Two text critical issues have a bearing on interpretation of the passage: (1) the ambiguity of כִּנְהָ in v. 16a and (2) the questionable originality of וְעַל-בֶּן אֲמַצְתָּה לָךְ in v. 16b. First, it is difficult to discern whether כִּנְהָ in v. 16 is intended as a noun or verb, since it is obscure either way. Gunkel and Hans-Joachim Kraus opt for changing the word to גִּנְהָ "garden," since it would make sense in the context and a scribal error could easily have changed ג to כ.⁴ Nevertheless, it is best to try and make sense of the text as it stands. If כִּנְהָ is taken as a noun, it is most likely an unattested feminine form of בֵּן

3. The third person plural verb may point to the second option since the psalm predominately uses the first person to refer to the nation, with the exception of v. 6. Interestingly, the LXX changes the first person to third in v. 6 but retains the third person in v. 17.

meaning “base,” which in the context of Psalm 80 would refer to the stalk or first shoot of a vine.⁵ Both Jerome and the Targum support this reading. The LXX, however, translates with *κατάρτισαι αὐτήν*, which seems to assume *וכוננה*,⁶ an imperative verb from the Polel of *כנן*. Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger and J. Stewart Perowne, on the other hand, retain the consonantal text and take it as a Qal imperative from *כנן* “preserve,” which could also be behind the LXX.⁷ Taking *כנה* as a verb would make it a parallel petition to that in v. 15b and could be translated, “And preserve/establish that which your right hand planted.” Thus, there is no need to emend the consonantal text since there are at least two options that make sense in the context of the psalm and explain the resulting textual traditions.⁸

Second, the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (hereafter BHS) editors, the New Revised Standard Version (hereafter NRSV), and some commentators favor excising the phrase *ועל־בן אמצתה לך* “and on the son/branch you strengthened for yourself” (v. 16b), as a scribal duplicate of v. 18b, *על־בן־אדם אמצת לך* “on the son of man you strengthened for yourself,”⁹ while others consider it an editorial addition.¹⁰ In the case of a scribal duplicate,

4. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms: A Commentary*, 2 vols., trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 1988–1989), 2:138–39; Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, HKAT (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1926), 355, followed by Claus Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, trans. J. R. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 25.

5. Gary A. Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms*, SBLMS 43 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 79, points to the parallel Syriac *kana'* (stem, stalk, root) to support the traditional translation. Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, WBC 20 (Waco: Word, 1990), 307, notes the extreme obscurity of the word but translates “stock” based on context. John Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3 vols., BCOTWP (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006–2008), 2:532, translates “stock,” and Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 546, translates “sapling,” but neither gives a defense.

6. According to the editors of BHS; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:532.

7. Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 310; J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols., 4th ed. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1878; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1966), 2:91. This reading seems to also be assumed by G. T. M. Prinsloo, “Shepherd, Vine-Grower, Father—Divine Metaphor and Existential Reality in a Community Lament (Psalm 80),” *OTE* 10 (1997): 281; and Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms*, 3 vols., AB 16–17a (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965–1970), 2:259.

8. Charles A. Briggs and Emilie G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907), 2:209, offers an additional extreme option. He would alter *כנה* to a form of *קנה* and translate with v. 15b as “the vine thou didst get.” Then he emends *אשר* to *איש* to read “the one thy right hand did plant.” This proposal is speculative in the extreme and may easily be set aside as most improbable.

a scribe would have accidentally inserted the doublet because of *parablepsis*, looking down after transcribing יימינך in v. 16a and picking up after יימינך in v. 18a; thus, transcribing v. 18b as v. 16b. Most scholars adopt this theory and are satisfied with the explanation.¹¹

Brian McNeil notes, however, that אדם is missing in v. 16b but is present in v. 18b, leading him to posit another step in the process. First, there was an instance of true *parablepsis*, which produced the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX. Thus, the LXX, Syriac, and some manuscripts of the Vulgate¹² all assume a Hebrew text that includes אדם. Second, אדם was removed “presumably again through carelessness, though possibly by the editors of the MT.”¹³

This theory may be attractive as far as it goes, but McNeil overlooks two differences between the two verses that argue against it. First, v. 16b begins with ו, while the clause in v. 18b does not. Second, אמצתה in v. 16b contains a paragogic ה, but it is lacking in v. 18b. It seems unlikely that a scribe would make three mistakes (two additions and one subtraction) in the same verse.¹⁴ Taking these facts into consideration, it is possible to make more sense of the situation if v. 16b is original or redactional rather than being a mistake.

There are a few key considerations that argue for v. 16b not being the result of a scribal mistake. First, there is simply no textual evidence that this is the case. All of the evidence put forth in favor of *parablepsis* is completely speculative. Second, even assuming it is possible to get behind the extant

9. A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols., NCB (London: Marshal, Morgan and Scott, 1972), 2:586; Westermann, *Living Psalms*, 25; Brian McNeil, “The Son of Man and the Messiah: A Footnote,” *NTS* 26 (1979/80): 419–21; Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, FOTL 15 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 105.

10. Kraus, *Psalms*, 2:139; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 307; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 312. Briggs, *Psalms*, 2:206, 209, on the other hand, considers v. 16b original but counts vv. 17–18 as a Maccabean addition.

11. Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:586; Westermann, *Living Psalms*, 25; and McNeil, “Son of Man,” 419, as he is stating the general consensus in the first paragraph of his article. Alexander Rofé, “The Text-Criticism of Psalm 80—Revisited,” *VT* 61 (2011): 298–309, argues that neither v. 16 nor v. 18 represent an original reading, but that an earlier version of v. 18 was adapted by two scribes in different directions, resulting in the MT form (302). He attempts to recover an original reading using the similar wording of Ps 89:22 (307–308). Aside from the questionable methodology, the resulting emendation bears too little resemblance to 80:16, 18 to be convincing.

12. Y^{2B}, V, and W^S M.

13. McNeil, “Son of Man,” 420; see my overview of McNeil’s theory in the introduction above. An intentional removal would make sense since בן-אדם is usually used in parallel to another word for man, a condition that exists in v. 18 but not in v. 16.

14. On the other hand, if the editors of the MT removed אדם intentionally, it is difficult to explain why they would have made the two additions to the verse. The LXX is identical in both verses, which could be the result of harmonizing.

manuscripts, it is again unlikely that so many mistakes would be made in the same verse. Third, it is simpler and more likely to assume that the ἀνθρώπου of the LXX and the *hominis* of some Vulgate manuscripts are the result of either harmonization to v. 18b or interpreting v. 16 messianically—an important issue to be discussed later in chapter 4. This conclusion does not rule out the possibility that v. 16b is a redaction, as proposed by Marvin Tate and Hossfeld and Zenger, which will be considered below.¹⁵

DATE AND PROVENANCE

Psalms 80 evades easy assignments of date and provenance due to the lack of clear historical references. Proposals range from the time of Saul¹⁶ to the Maccabean period.¹⁷ Two pieces of evidence allow at least for a narrowing of the options. First, there are references to national oppression. In vv. 5–7 the psalmist expresses despair at God’s anger toward the people, the sorrow that the people are experiencing, and the derision of their enemies. Verses 13–14 lament that the walls of the vineyard have been broken down and that wild beasts

15. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 307, states that v. 16b is probably editorial “in order to re-interpret the kingship language in v 18 as applying to the vine, which is Israel.” Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 312, consider it a later addition during the Persian period as part of the Messianic Psalter. The effect is to messianize the reference to the king in v. 18 with a connection to Psalm 2, which is also new with the Messianic Psalter (*ibid.*, 5).

16. H. Heinemann, “The Date of Psalm 80,” *JQR* 40 (1949–50): 297–302.

17. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on Psalms 1–81*, trans. with introduction and notes Robert C. Hill, *Writings from the Greco–Roman World* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 1096–1097. Some commentators simply note the possible dating and provenance options but decline to state their own conclusion: Westermann, *Living Psalms*, 28; Konrad Schaefer, *Psalms*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2001), 196; James H. Waltner, *Psalms*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2006), 391; Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 580; Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 106; John Day, *Psalms*, OTG (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 35–36; John W. Rogerson and John W. McKay, *Psalms 51–100*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 156; Kraus, *Psalms*, 2:140; Briggs, *Psalms*, 2:204; Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Psalms 2*, Old Testament Message 22 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983), 35; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:534; Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBCOT 11 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 332; Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:581. Others prefer to abandon the conventional dating questions and focus on placing the psalm within a particular tradition–historical stream. Harry P. Nasuti, *Tradition History and the Psalms of Asaph*, SBLDS 88 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 97, for instance, states that the “stereotypical nature of most psalms and their apparently repeated use within the cult” makes them almost impossible to place in specific historical contexts. Along the same lines, Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 106, says, “We probably have to deal with a longer growth of our text, which transports the painful communal experiences of generations. . . . Thus no single historical setting can be decisive for understanding this psalm.”

are devouring the vine. Although there is nothing explicit in these verses that would pinpoint a specific instance of devastation as the impetus for the lament, a proposal for date and provenance must take this criterion into account.

Second, several of the name references in vv. 2-3 might indicate a northern background, with Israel being the name of the Northern Kingdom and Joseph being the progenitor of the northern tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, not to mention that Joseph often appears in parallel with Israel in many other passages.¹⁸ Benjamin, however, is associated with the Southern Kingdom of Judah.¹⁹ Is there a historical period that could account for the distress in the psalm and the grouping of these references that do not seem to go together?

The best candidates are the reigns of Hezekiah²⁰ (715–686 BCE) and Josiah²¹ (640–609 BCE) in Judah.²² Perhaps during the reign of one of these two

18. Weiser, *Psalms*, 547; Anthony Gelston, “A Sidelight on the Son of Man,” *SJT* 22 (1969): 195; Erik Haglund, *Historical Motifs in the Psalms*, ConBOT 23 (Uppsala: Gleerup, 1984), 58; Dahood, *Psalms*, 2:255.

19. Kraus, *Psalms*, 2:141. Nasuti, *Tradition History*, 98, notes that “the combination of the three tribes listed is itself problematical for any actual situation in the history of the northern kingdom.”

20. Stuhlmüller, *Psalms* 2, 35; Richard J. Clifford, *Psalms 73–150*, AOTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 53.

21. Charles A. Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy: The Prediction of the Fulfillment of Redemption through the Messiah* (New York: Scribners, 1886; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 229; Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:581; Stuhlmüller, *Psalms* 2, 35; Kraus, *Psalms*, 2:140; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 311; Day, *Psalms*, 36; Clifford, *Psalms 73–150*, 53; Terrien, *Psalms*, 580; Waltner, *Psalms*, 391.

22. Otto Eissfeldt, “Psalm 80,” in W. F. Albright, ed., *Geschichte und Altes Testament*, BHT 16 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1953), 75, has suggested the period between 732 and 722 BCE when Hoshea had overthrown Pekah and was ruling over what was left of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, since Tiglath-pileser had just overrun northern Israel, leaving what Eissfeldt calls a “rump state” of the southern Israelite tribes (2 Kgs 15:29–30). This clearly accounts for the distress in the psalm and the northern references but does little to solve the Benjamin problem. One remedy to this problem would be to ascribe the actual writing of the psalm to northern refugees who had fled to the south during that period, or to southern writers concerned about their northern neighbors and perhaps their own safety. One must not rule out, however, the possibility that the psalm was written by a northern author who shows concern for Judah and has dreams of a unified kingdom under a Davidic king. Prinsloo, “Shepherd,” 281–83, gives a fourth possible date that has gotten some support, though not as much as the three considered above, is that the psalm originated in the years following the destruction of the temple. Prinsloo (294) accepts this date based on the gross disparity between the golden years of Israel described in vv. 9–12 and the devastation and despair depicted in vv. 5–7 and 13–14. This disparity, though, need not push the dating back to the exilic or postexilic period since there are many times in Israel’s history when the devastation would have seemed to be great. One may also argue for an exilic or later date based on the presence of more explicit references in the psalms of Asaph such as in 74:3 and 79:1. Of course, the proximity of Psalm 80 to psalms with more explicit exilic references can be just as well explained as an editorial device employed by the shaper of the third book of the Psalms in the postexilic period.

reforming kings a sympathetic poet wrote this psalm lamenting the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and asking God to protect both Judah and those that remained in Samaria. Indeed, both Hezekiah (2 Chr 30:1-11, 18; 31:1) and Josiah (2 Kgs 23:15-19; 2 Chr 34:6-7, 9) are portrayed as reaching out to what was left of Ephraim and Manasseh; therefore, the grouping of these two tribes with Benjamin may not be so far-fetched for those periods. Hezekiah's reign may be the more likely because the Assyrian invasion of the south at that time may have increased the feeling of solidarity with the recently destroyed north. Some have seen in the combination of names from both north and south a psalm that looks forward to the reunification of the two kingdoms, a conjecture that would also fit well with the times of Hezekiah and Josiah.²³

REDACTION

The redactional history of Psalm 80 is far from clear. Some scholars have found a small original core that has been added to in numerous periods throughout the history of Israel, producing a redactional anthology, while others identify a larger original core with minor additions. Walter Beyerlin is representative of the first group when he identifies vv. 2-3 as the earliest layer arising in the eleventh century bce in the face of Philistine conflict,²⁴ to which southerners added vv. 5-7 and 17b-19 during the reign of Josiah.²⁵ Soon thereafter, the psalm was adapted for liturgical use with the addition of the refrain (vv. 4, 8, and 20),²⁶ and during the exile the lament concerning the destruction of the vineyard (vv. 9-16a) was added.²⁷ Far from arising from a scribal mistake, v. 16b was added intentionally to express postexilic hopes for the Davidic line.²⁸

23. Clifford, *Psalms 73-150*, 53. In addition, the LXX heading "concerning the Assyrian" indicates a second-century bce interpretation that may support one of these two periods as well. Furthermore, the similar picture of the people of God as a vine/vineyard in Hosea 10 and Isaiah 5 may give additional support for this preliminary judgment. Of course, similarities in Jer 2:21 may argue for the time of Josiah, but the extended nature of Isaiah 5 bears more resemblance to Psalm 80.

24. Walter Beyerlin, "Schichten im 80. Psalm," in Horst Balz and Siegfried Schulz, eds., *Das Wort und die Wörter* (Stuttgart: Kolhammer, 1973), 11. Prinsloo, "Shepherd," 283, notes that K. Waaijman, *Psalmen over heit uitthocht. Het lied van Mirjam, het lied van Moses, Psalmen 66, 68, 77, 78, 80, 81, 95, 105, 106, 114, 135* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, n.d.), 94-103, holds a view similar to Beyerlin's outlined in the rest of the paragraph. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 106, notes that Klaus Seybold, *Die Psalmen*, HAT I/15 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 317, employs a similar literary stratification.

25. Beyerlin, "Schichten," 15-17.

26. *Ibid.*, 17.

27. *Ibid.*, 14-15.

28. *Ibid.*, 17-18.

Finally, a later postexilic editor added אָדָם in v. 18b when apocalyptic hopes were growing as represented by the cognate phrase (כִּבְרֵי אֱנֹשׁ) in Dan 7:13.²⁹

The second approach, which is to posit a larger original core with smaller additions, is well represented by Hossfeld and Zenger, who accept Otto Eissfeldt's opinion that the original portion (vv. 2–16a, 17, 19) was written by northerners between 732 and 722 bce. They are undecided, however, as to whether it was written in the north or after large masses of Israelites fled to Jerusalem during the conflict.³⁰ According to this theory, the plea in v. 18 and the refrain of vv. 4, 8, and 20 were added during the reign of Josiah. The refrain reflects an extended use in the temple liturgy and the hope that the whole people of Israel would be restored, while v. 18 registers the Jerusalem royal theology's emphasis on Josiah as the chosen leader protected by God's right hand (Pss 18:36; 20:7).³¹ Finally, during the Persian period v. 16b was added from 18b, dropping אָדָם and forming a messianic reference back to Ps 2:7. At the same time, this addition served to messianize the reference to the king in v. 18.³² In addition to the fact that it appears to be based on v. 18b, this addition also causes stichometric problems by making vv. 15c–16b a tricolon which Hossfeld and Zenger insist disturbs "the consistently maintained parallelism in the rest of the psalm."³³

29. *Ibid.*, 18. Though I do not follow Beyerlin's proposal for the long development of Psalm 80, his views provide options for seeing how interpreters from those different periods could have interpreted Psalm 80 in their contexts.

30. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 311. Hossfeld and Zenger represent the most well thought out of the less radical redaction theories. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 309–13, seems unable to make a decision but finally assigns only v. 16b to the redactional stage. Kraus, *Psalms*, 2:139–41, is also unclear but seems to prefer dating the original psalm to Josiah's time with v. 16b added later.

31. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 312. Briggs, *Psalms*, 2:207, 209, actually considers v. 16 original and v. 18 to be a gloss (based on his improbably reconstructed v. 16) intended to give the psalm a messianic interpretation; the insertion would be intended to point the reader to Pss 110:1 and 8:5. Though I would agree v. 18 would have been read in concert with Psalms 110 and 8 in the postexilic period, I cannot accept his proposal for a late dating of the verse nor his improbable reconstruction of v. 16 upon which it is based.

32. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 312. Zenger notes that some may interpret v. 16b in the complete opposite direction, that is, that it applies the sonship language in terms of the whole people. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 312, thinks it is most likely that a postexilic scribe inserted v. 16b to reinterpret the kingship language of v. 18 since the Davidic monarchy no longer existed; cf. James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 263–64. Tate's discussion of the history of Psalm 80's formation reveals his lack of confidence in any of the solutions (309–13). Ultimately, he half-heartedly concludes that the psalm as it stands probably originated in the time of Josiah with v. 16b added by a postexilic scribe.

33. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 312.

Redactional theories for Psalm 80 are very different than those for some of the prophetic books, such as Isaiah, especially in the extent and detail of the material. In Psalm 80, the evidence is limited to those few verses that (1) are supposedly inserted at different points in the text, thus not forming a coherent whole, (2) whose language is supposedly indicative of emphases in a different era in Israel's history, and (3) whose small number makes definite theories of redaction out of proportion with the evidence. In the end, the difference between redactional theories concerning larger works and those concerning Psalm 80 is that the evidence is small enough and vague enough in Psalm 80 that the material could fit any number of historical situations.

Therefore, the simpler a redactional scheme the better because there is no reason to multiply variables needlessly. Although Beyerlin's reconstruction is conceivable in that one could see how each layer might fit the different periods assigned, its believability is diminished by its complexity compared to the actual paucity of evidence. Hossfeld and Zenger's proposal provides more solid evidentiary ground not only because it is simpler but also because it deals solely with the later history of Judah, about which much more is known than the eleventh century where Beyerlin would place the earliest kernel of the psalm. I will address Hossfeld and Zenger's proposal piece by piece.

First, as noted above, the most likely periods for Psalm 80's composition are (1) during the fall of Israel in 732–722 bce or soon thereafter during the reign of Hezekiah, or (2) during the renewal of Josiah's reign when concern for the north was evident. Thus, one can accept as plausible Hossfeld and Zenger's assignment of the original form to 732–722 bce either by northerners in the north or after they fled south, while still remaining open to a slightly later date in the south.

Second, their second stage (addition of v. 18 and the refrains) could be eliminated entirely by assigning the original composition to northerners residing in Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah. Strong confidence in God's right hand guiding the king could just as easily be applied to Hezekiah as to Josiah, since he (1) successfully withstood the siege of Sennacherib as recorded in 2 Kgs 18:13–37 and 19:35–36 and (2) was miraculously healed in 2 Kgs 20:1–11. In addition, if the psalm were written originally to be sung by any group, then a refrain is natural and could be treated as original.

Finally, v. 16b is the most likely to be a true addition. It is contended that v. 16b causes stichometric problems by making vv. 15c–16b a tricolon which Hossfeld and Zenger insist disturbs “the consistently maintained parallelism in the rest of the psalm.”³⁴ This assessment, of course, depends on the

34. Ibid.

commentator's view of the meter and structure of the psalm, a topic on which there is a wide divergence of views.³⁵ John Goldingay, for instance, considers the whole of Psalm 80 as two stanzas of four lines each (vv. 2-4 and 5-8) plus two stanzas of six lines each (vv. 9-14 and 15-20), with stanzas 1, 2, and 4 introduced by appellatives.³⁶ This structure fits the content well and would provide a parallel in the structure of the last two stanzas in that the second line of each is a tricolon instead of the expected bicolon. Tate uses a different method of counting the meter, making vv. 2 and 3 tricola of 3+3+4 and 4+2+3, respectively, although he does not explain this decision.³⁷ Due to such widespread disagreement, this argument must be considered a neutral datum.

As for the similarity between vv. 16b and 18b, it cannot be attributed to scribal *parablepsis* as seen above.³⁸ One can better explain the major similarity and minor differences between the two verses as the work of a later redactor who wanted to reinterpret the vine image in light of the royal language of v. 18.³⁹ He would have (1) dropped אֲדָם since it was no longer needed outside of the parallelism with אִשׁ in v. 18b and (2) added ו to make the phrase along with v. 16a the compound object of פָּקֵד. Though the paragogic ה is still a mystery, this explanation persuades that v. 16b is a redactional addition. Also, the simple fact that v. 17 reverts to speaking of the vine (or the shoot) with its feminine objects shows v. 16b to be an insertion that interrupts the natural flow of thought.⁴⁰ Hossfeld and Zenger place the addition in the postexilic period, though one cannot be dogmatic about dating a line that lacks any clear historical reference.

35. They do not provide their own stichometric specifications for each psalm as a feature of their commentary; so it is not clear how they perceive the parallelism as "consistently maintained." Based simply on the presentation of the English translation of the psalm on pp. 308–309, however, one may deduce their position. BHS presents vv. 5 and 10 also as tricola, which Kraus, *Psalms*, 2:139, accepts. It appears, however, that Hossfeld and Zenger take both of these verses as bicola with an elongated second colon.

36. Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:533.

37. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 303–304.

38. This was due to the unlikely scenario that the scribe committed *parablepsis* and also made three other errors in the same verse: the subtraction of אֲדָם and the addition of ו at the beginning of the clause and paragogic ה on אִמְצָה.

39. Or the opposite as seen in n.15 above. See the defense of my interpretation later in the chapter.

40. Jan P. Fokkelman, *The Psalms in Form: The Hebrew Psalter in Its Poetic Shape*, Tools for Biblical Studies 4 (Leiden: Deo, 2002), 165.

THE VINE AND THE MAN: RESTORATIONIST AND ROYAL

Having laid out a proposal for the context in which Psalm 80 was composed and redacted, this section will show that in its original context Psalm 80 refers to the king and kingship in a number of places and that it contains much of the language, themes, and images that will accompany later messianic and eschatological interpretations.⁴¹ Thus, these two tasks deal on the one hand with interpreting the psalm in its eighth-century bce context, while also noticing that certain of its themes make it prime territory for later interpretive traditions. I will address the relevant portions of the psalm in the order in which they occur.

THE VINE IN VERSES 9-16

The vine is the defining image of Psalm 80 with a full nine verses devoted to it, but it is also the most richly textured, leading to a great deal of ambiguous imagery. As in Psalm 80 vines and other plants appear in many OT passages as ciphers for the people of God (e.g., Isa 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Jer 2:21; Ezekiel 17; 19:10-14; *inter alia*), often with branches or shoots representing royal or other representative figures (e.g., Isa 11:1, 10; Jer 23:1-8; Ezek 19:11). In addition, the flourishing of vines and other plants can represent the eschatological restoration of Israel's fortunes (e.g., Hos 14:5-9). In the case of Ps 80:9-17, the vine is ostensibly an image of the people of God, once flourishing but now destroyed. I will first draw attention to two motifs of the vine image that color the psalmist's call for restoration: exodus/new exodus and creation/re-creation. I will then show that there are a number of features that tie the vine to kingship.

EXODUS/NEW EXODUS

The exodus and conquest are readily apparent in v. 9 where they are described together. Indeed, all three verbs in v. 9 are used in other passages in the context of exodus and conquest. The Hiphil of נָסַע is used in both Exod 15:22 and Ps 78:52 in rehearsing the exodus,⁴² though it can also be used for uprooting plants as seen in Job 19:10. It seems that here the author of the psalm has found a word

41. In the introduction, I define eschatology as the expectation of events such as return from exile, a restored Davidic monarchy, a reunited nation, rebuilding of Jerusalem or the temple, coming of messianic figures, manifestation of the kingdom of God, judgment of national enemies and the wicked, resurrection from the dead, and new creation. I define messianism as the expectation of a future king, priest, prophet, or heavenly redeemer who is an object of hope for the people and whose coming is associated with other eschatological elements.

42. J. Clinton McCann, Jr., "The Book of Psalms," in vol. 4 of Leander Keck, ed., *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996): 1000.

that serves a double purpose. The Piel of גרש is the favorite verb used in passages about the conquest, such as Josh 24:12, 18⁴³ and Ps 78:55.⁴⁴ In Exod 23:28–31 it is used four times, the last of which follows God’s promise to set the boundaries of the land with reference to “the sea of the Philistines” (the Mediterranean) and the Euphrates, which is relevant, of course, to Ps 80:12. Finally, נטע, used in Exod 15:17 and reused in Ps 44:2, also plays double duty in Psalm 80 by bringing to memory the exodus and making good sense with the vine image.⁴⁵

Connections to the exodus do not stop, however, with the explicit retelling in v. 9. At the very beginning of the psalm in v. 2, the psalmist addresses God as “the shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock.” נהג is used to describe God’s action in the exodus in both Isa 63:14 and Ps 78:52, where כצאן is also used to describe Israel. Thus the stage is set from the start for a psalm that will present the exodus as a major theme.

After the explicit rehearsal of the exodus in v. 9 and the vine’s subsequent demise, v. 15 may indicate that the psalmist is actually calling for God to perform a new exodus of sorts. Hossfeld and Zenger have pointed out that ראה and פקד both figure prominently in Exod 3:7, 16, where Yahweh informs Moses that God has “seen” the plight of his people and has “given heed” to them. Verse 15 then “prays for the ‘reenactment’ of this primeval exodus action. Naturally, this is not about another resettlement, but rather, the vintner-like concern and care that this gnawed vine needs, so that it may again put forth new growth and become a vineyard capable of flourishing.”⁴⁶ There may already have been, however, some thought of a northern resettlement since the psalm was probably written soon after the fall of the Northern Kingdom. Indeed, there is a great concern shown for the northern tribes with the mention of Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh, yet the psalm is sung to the one enthroned on the cherubim, which suggests its temple use. Thus, this prayer for restoration written before the exile of Judah probably focused not just on the damage done to the Southern Kingdom in the Assyrian invasion but also on the future reconstitution of the ten northern tribes—possibly even the reunification of the two kingdoms. As Richard Clifford notes, “The psalm prays for the northern tribes, probably after the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians in 722 BC. It presumes that Israel is one people, the Jerusalem Temple is the dwelling of the God of all Israel, and the king is the Davidic king.”⁴⁷

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:538.

45. Michael Goulder, *The Psalms of Asaph and the Pentateuch*, JSOTSup 233 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 143; Kraus, *Psalms*, 2:142; McCann, “Psalms,” 1000.

46. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 316.

Of course, when the song was sung by the faithful during the exile, it would have become a call for an actual resettlement for Judah as well. Clifford points out that שׁוּב, which figures so prominently in Psalm 80's refrain and is the main petition of the song, can refer at times specifically to the return from exile, as in 1 Kgs 8:34 and Jer 27:22.⁴⁸ And Isa 63:14 reinforces the idea that Ps 80:15 calls for a new exodus since it repeats the same phrase הִבַּט מִשְׁמַיִם וַרְאֵה (perhaps influenced by Psalm 80, considering the use of נִדְּחַיִם in the same verse) in either the exilic or postexilic period after a lengthy rehearsal of exodus events and before a lament calling on God to act once again on behalf of the people.

CREATION/RE-CREATION

Does the author mean to portray Israel in terms of creation? Alternatively, would Psalm 80 have elicited from its readers and singers thoughts of creation and God's renewal of it? At first glance, the answer seems to be negative because there is no explicit mention of the creation event. On further investigation, however, there is evidence that some of the imagery would have been easily identified with the complex of images surrounding the ancient creation myths. Clifford notes that in the communal laments cosmogony and history tend to be combined in retelling the beginnings of Israel. He says, "The cosmogonies *function* like a story of the exodus and land taking. Hence both the stories of the exodus-land taking and the cosmogonies deserve to be called a 'national story,' since both tell how the nation/people arose."⁴⁹ Psalm 77:17-21 is exemplary in that the exodus account, which ends with Moses and Aaron being set up as national leaders, is described in terms of Yahweh defeating the sea and other representatives of chaos. Psalm 80 reflects the creation myths in a different way—by focusing on the foundation of Israel through the lens of the primordial

47. Clifford, *Psalms 73-150*, 53. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 314, see the request for God to cause God's face to shine in vv. 4, 8, 20 as an additional reference to God's presence in the Jerusalem temple. Also, interestingly, they see in this reference to Numbers 6 a return to the original state of God's blessing on a unified Israel: "In the liturgical recitation of the psalm in the time of Josiah this petition appealed for the restoration of the national and religious integrity that had been destroyed by the fall of the Northern Kingdom, that is, it was a matter of liberation from foreign domination, especially in the territory of the former Northern Kingdom."

48. Clifford, *Psalms 73-150*, 54.

49. Richard J. Clifford, "Creation in the Psalms," in Richard J. Clifford and John J. Collins, eds., *Creation in the Biblical Traditions*, CBQMS 24 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1992), 60; italics original. Unfortunately, he does not develop the language of Psalm 80, but instead focuses more on Psalms 74, 77, and 89, perhaps because Psalm 80 does not depict a battle against the sea or a sea monster typical of the ancient cosmogonies. It will be shown, however, that there is enough present in the psalm to include it in the group.