

# The Unity of the Hallel and Its Use of OT Predictive Prophecy

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## Introduction

According to the Mishnah, the Hallel – Pss 113 to 118 – was sung by the Levites while the Passover lamb was being sacrificed. “[They] proclaimed the Hallel psalms. If they completed, they repeated it, and if they completed the second time, they repeated it for a third—even though they never in all their days had to repeat it a third time” (*m. Pesah*. 5:7).<sup>1</sup> The Mishnah also tells us that the Hallel was sung as part of the Passover meal, which is a tradition that continues to this day in many Jewish homes (*m. Pesah*. 9:3; 10:6-7). Gerald Wilson argues that these psalms were viewed as a unit only after their placement together in Book V of the Psalter and that the shapers of the Psalter originally intended Pss 111-117 to be viewed together with Ps 118 beginning a new division in the Psalter. This paper will argue that Pss 113-118 were already a unit before the shaping of Book V of the Psalter and that they were grouped together with the intention of creating a messianic Passover liturgy. In order to demonstrate this we will investigate the evidence for Wilson’s conclusions and then we will demonstrate based on the flow of the Hallel and on connections between the Hallel other OT predictive prophecy that the Hallel is a designed predictive, messianic Passover liturgy.

## Psalms 111-117 as a Unit?

Wilson divides Book V of the Psalter into three units, each beginning with a *hodu* psalm and ending with either a *hallelujah* psalm or a series of *hallelujah* psalms.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the first verse of Pss 107 is identical to the first verse of Pss 118 and 136: “Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, for his love is forever.” This would seem to support Wilson’s threefold division beginning with each of these psalms. If Wilson is correct, then the Hallel was not viewed as a unit until some time after the *hodu* Ps 118 was juxtaposed with the *hallelujah* Pss 111-117.

There are, however, a number of problems with this view. First, the refrain, “Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, for his love is forever,” is found not in three places in the Psalter, but in five places: Pss 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 118:29; and 136:1. Psalm 106:1 is the first verse of the *last* psalm of Book IV. It clearly marks the *end* of a division. And Ps 118:29 is the last verse of what to Wilson is the first psalm of the second division of Book V but according to tradition is the *last* verse of the Hallel. It is more likely that we have in Ps 118, which is framed by this

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<sup>1</sup> All Mishnah translations are taken from Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> Gerald Henry Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS 76; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 180, 220-228.

refrain, the ultimate psalm of a division of Book V rather than the first psalm of a division. This first division of Book V, then, would itself be framed by the refrain that ends Book IV, with the first verse of the first psalm and the first and last verse of the last psalm each reading: “Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, for his love is forever.” Furthermore the first two divisions of Book V would agree with Book IV in ending with a *hodu* psalm.

Second, Ps 136 has much greater affinities to what precedes it than to what follows it. Its unity with Ps 135 makes a caesura between the two psalms problematic, as Koch and Zenger have observed.<sup>3</sup> Third, it is difficult to see why Pss 113-118 would come to be seen as “the Hallel” in later Jewish tradition if the *hallelujah* psalms in the Psalter originally began with Ps 111 and not Ps 113. Why did the later tradition, supposedly arising out of the canonical ordering of pss, not begin with the first *hallelujah* psalm? Which is more plausible: that the shapers of the Psalter marked a unit of psalms with a series of *hallelujahs* and that later tradition missed the unit divisions even though that tradition came to call the unit “the Hallel” OR that the Hallel tradition is earlier than the shaping of the Psalter and that these *hallelujah* psalms were joined with others, Pss 111-112, in the shaping of the Psalter? Fourth, the placement of the acrostic Pss 111-112 and the acrostic Ps 119 on either side of Pss 113-118 may suggest that they function as a frame around an already existing unit.<sup>4</sup>

Fifth, Zenger has demonstrated the unity of Pss 113-118 in that the composition was designed with two

compositional arc[s] indicated by common keywords and motifs and a theological program. . . . The two groups of three are multiply linked and compositionally paralleled. The center psalm in each group (114; 117) is an exhortation to the world of the nations to worship YHWH, the God of Israel, as their God. The two outside psalms (115; 118) are “imagined” liturgies and are linked together especially by the trio of addressees, “(house of) Israel—house of Aaron—those who fear Yhwh” (115:9-11, 12-13; 118:2-4), and by the motif of trust (115:9-11; 118:8-9).<sup>5</sup>

Sixth, it is not entirely clear that Ps 118 is not itself a *hallelujah* psalm. According to BHS, Pss 111, 112, and 113 begin with the word *hallelujah*, and Pss 113, 115, 116, and 117 end

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<sup>3</sup> Klaus Koch, “Der Psalter und seine Redaktionsgeschichte,” in K. Seybold and E. Zenger (eds.), *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung* (HBS, 1; Freiburg: Herder, 2nd edn, 1995), p. 257-258; Erich Zenger, “The Composition and Theology of the Fifth Book of Psalms, Psalms 107-145,” *JSOT* 80 (1998): 77-102, esp. pp. 87, 92-93.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Hayes, “The Unity of the Egyptian Hallel: Psalms 113-18,” *BBR* 9 (1999): 145-156, esp. pp. 147-148; Zenger, “Composition and Theology,” 96-98; Pierre Constant, “Le Psaume 118 et son emploi christologique dans Luc et Actes: Une étude exégétique, littéraire et herméneutique” (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2001), 105; Gert T. M. Prinsloo, “Šē’ōl → Yērūšālayim ← Šāmayim: Spatial Orientation in the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113-118),” *OTE* 19 (2006): 739-760, esp. p. 756.

<sup>5</sup> Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; 3 vols.; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005- ), 3:178-179.

with the word *hallelujah*, but the manuscript tradition is not entirely in agreement on this. There is an unresolved debate in the Babylonian Talmud regarding whether *hallelujah* begins a new psalm or ends the previous psalm: “Said R[abbi] Hisda, “‘Hallelujah’ marks the end of a chapter.’ Rabbah bar R[abbi] Huna said, “‘Halleluyah’ marks the beginning of a chapter.’ Said R[abbi] Hisda, ‘I saw that in copies of Psalms of the household of R[abbi] Hanin bar Rab was written, “halleluyah” in the middle of a chapter. Therefore he was in doubt about the matter’” . . . and from there the debate goes on to particular psalms where *hallelujah* clearly marks the beginning of a new psalm (*b. Pesah.* 117A).<sup>6</sup> In the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Peshitta, *hallelujah* is consistently seen as beginning the next psalm rather than concluding the preceding psalm. In some Hebrew manuscripts these psalms are strung together so that it is not entirely clear whether *hallelujah* concludes the preceding psalm or introduces the following psalm. In *Vatican Manuscript Urbinati 2*, all of the *hallelujahs* are in the center of a new line, suggesting that they are viewed as superscripts of the following psalm.<sup>7</sup> If this was the intention of the shapers of the Psalter, then *hallelujahs* begin Pss 111, 112, 113, 114, 116, 117, and 118. The only psalm here not beginning with *hallelujah* is Ps 115, which is viewed as a continuation of Ps 114 in the Septuagint, in *Codex Leningradensis*, in the *Aleppo Codex*, and in various other manuscripts and versions. Thus, as in the acrostic Pss 111 and 112, the Hallel Pss 113-118 each begin with the word *hallelujah*. The lack of a *hallelujah* directly before Ps 118 would thus not be evidence against its inclusion in the Hallel but would be evidence that the *hallelujah* preceding Ps 118 has been wrongly joined in parts of the manuscript tradition with the end of Ps 117.

The same can be said for Wilson’s second division of Book V: rather than *hallelujahs* at the beginning and end of Ps 135 marking it off as an individual *hallelujah* psalm, it may be that both *hallelujahs* were intended to introduce the following psalms and that Pss 135-136 form the concluding *hallelujah* section of Book V. In this way the threefold division of Book V is maintained, but Pss 118 and 136 end their divisions rather than begin the following divisions. This is how Klaus Koch divides Book V. The placement of Ps 118 with the preceding psalms opens the door to the possibility that the use of Pss 113-118 in the Passover liturgy antedates the arranging of Book V of the Psalter. This is also supported by the fact that Pss 111-112 are set off from Pss 113-118 by being acrostic (as is Ps 119) and by the fact that Ps 113 begins with the kind of liturgical introduction that would better open a liturgical collection than would the introduction of Ps 111.

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<sup>6</sup> Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary* (22 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 4:541-42.

<sup>7</sup> Gert T. M. Prinsloo, “Unit Delimitation in the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113-118): An Evaluation of Different Traditions,” in *Unit Delimitation in Biblical Hebrew and Northwest Semitic Literature* (ed. Marjo C. A. Korpel and Josef M. Oesch; Pericope 4; Assen, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Van Gorcum, 2003), 232-263.

Psalm 113 begins with “an extended summons to praise”<sup>8</sup> that says the name of Yahweh should be praised “from now until eternity” and “from the rising of the sun to its setting.” All space and time is called to praise Yahweh.<sup>9</sup> The word הלל occurs 3 times in verse 1 and once in verse 3. We see here a proper introduction to a liturgical collection. Therefore there is great evidence that Pss 113-118 were already a collection before they found their position in the Masoretic Psalter. Further evidence supporting their unity is their shared use of eschatological and messianic prophecy, which does not necessarily indicate common authorship but does support a coherent message embedded into this collection. In order to see this we must look at each psalm on its own.

### **Psalm 113**

After the extended summons to praise, Ps 113 declares Yahweh’s exaltation above the nations – even above the heavens – and in the midst of this Yahweh’s concern for the lowly. “Yahweh is exalted over all the nations, his glory over the heavens. Who is like Yahweh our God, seated on high, yet humbling himself to look upon the heavens and the earth.” At this point the psalmist quotes a verse from the song of Hannah word-for-word: “raising the lowly from the dust and lifting the needy from the ash heap to seat them with princes.” The final verse of Ps 113 also reflects Hannah’s story: “making the barren woman dwell in the house as the joyful mother of sons.” Why does Ps 113 end with a quotation of and allusion to the first chapters of 1 Samuel? Moreover, why does Ps 113 climax with the hope for the barren, a hope that is not only not the climax of any other psalm but that is not even expressed anywhere else in the Psalter. The introductory psalm of this collection is unique in that it bases the call to praise primarily on God’s reversal of fortunes and particularly for the barren.

God’s faithfulness to the barren, while not a theme of the Psalter, is clearly a theme of the OT. Sarah was barren, and yet through her came the fulfillment of God’s promise of a זרע for Abraham. Rebekah was barren, and yet through her too came the fulfillment of the promise of a עזר. Rachel was barren, and yet through her too came the fulfillment of the promise of a זרע. In Exodus 23:26 God promises that if his people do not worship false gods there will be no barren women in the land. In Judges 13 God brings a deliverer for Israel from a barren woman. It is no surprise when Hannah is told by Eli the priest that God would answer her prayer and reverse her barrenness that she expects God to do a new great work through her son. She begins to praise God and even speaks about the destruction of all God’s enemies and the strengthening of God’s king and the exalting of the horn of his משיח. Hannah is the model of expectation of the defeat of the nations and of the rising of God’s משיח at a time when “there was no king in

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<sup>8</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (rev. ed.; WBC 21; Nashville: Nelson, 2002), 101.

<sup>9</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms* (2 vols.; TOTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1973-1975), 2:401.

Israel.” Now the psalmist, perhaps writing at a time when there was no king in Israel, looks back to her prophetic words that express the reversal of fortunes that comes through the rising of God’s king over Israel and ultimately over the nations, and the psalmist speaks of the same things. But God’s care for the barren is not limited to the Torah and the Former Prophets. Immediately after Isaiah’s words concerning the Suffering Servant in Isa 53, Isaiah says, “‘Sing, O barren woman, who has not given birth; break forth into song and cry out, you who have not travailed; for more are the sons of the desolate woman than the sons of the married woman,’ says the Lord.” Isaiah also describes these days in language similar to that of Ps 113:5-6: “For thus says the one who is high and lifted up, who dwells forever and whose name is holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place and also with the contrite and lowly spirit to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.’”<sup>10</sup> What is important to notice here is not only the connections with Isaiah, which will be seen throughout the Hallel, but also that the language of the psalm is the language Isaiah uses to describe the future. The time of the reversal of fortunes and the culmination of the reversal of the barren is in the day of Yahweh, and these are the themes that are celebrated in Ps 113.

### ***Psalm 114***

Of all the psalms in the so-called Egyptian Hallel, only Ps 114 mentions Egypt. This psalm is a brief retelling of the exodus, as one would expect to find in a Passover liturgy. What is remarkable about Ps 114 is how well it resonates with eschatological expectation in Isaiah and Habbakuk. In Hab 3, the prophet asks God to revive the work he did in the past. He then describes the exodus in terms of God’s judgment of four elements: “the mountains,” “the hills,” “the rivers,” and “the sea.” In Ps 114:3-6 the same four elements are taken up twice, using the exact same words as Hab 3, except that the psalmist refers to “the Jordan” rather than to “the rivers”: “The sea looked and fled; the Jordan turned back; the mountains skipped like rams; the hills like sons of the flock. What is wrong with you, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back? O mountains, that you skip like rams? O hills, like sons of the flock?” It seems that in describing the exodus the psalmist is intentionally alluding to Hab 3 where the exodus is recalled in the hope that God will “revive it in the midst of the years.”

Psalm 114 ends with a call to the whole earth to “writhe at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water.” The imperative here is addressed not to the enemies of God at the original exodus but to a later generation. The earth – either in the psalmist’s day or in a later generation – is called to

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<sup>10</sup> Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; 2 vols.; CC; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988-1989), 2:369.

withe. The association of God's ability to turn the rock to water with the trembling of the whole earth is also found in Isa 48:20-22, in a new exodus context:

Go forth from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans! Declare with the sound of a shout, and proclaim this; send it out to the end of earth! Say, 'Yahweh has redeemed his servant Jacob! They did not thirst when he walked them through the wastelands. He made water flow from a rock; he split the rock, and water gushed out. "There is no peace," says Yahweh, "for the wicked."

For Isaiah, the new exodus from Babylon is a cause for alarm for the end of the earth because Yahweh redeems his servant and gives him water from the rock. The psalmist, after describing the exodus using the language of Hab 3, calls for the earth to writhe before the God who turns the rock into a pool of water. If Ps 113 invites hearers to praise Yahweh because of his work in reversing fortunes using the messianic language of 1 Sam 2 and some of the eschatological concepts of Isaiah, Ps 114 uses the language of Habakkuk along with eschatological concepts of Isaiah to describe the first exodus with an eye toward the antitype of that first exodus.

### **Psalm 115**

Psalm 115 returns to the theme of the glory of God's name among the nations. Like Moses, the psalmist asks, "Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?'" God is called upon to act for his people, not for their glory but for his glory (v. 1). This psalm is the psalm of the people of the true God when they are the subjects of the idol-worshipping nations, and so verses 4-8 contain the longest anti-idol polemic in the Psalter in terms reminiscent of Isa 44, where God exposes the powerlessness of idols in a new exodus context. Verses 9-11 call on Israel, the house of Aaron, and those who fear Yahweh to "trust in Yahweh" despite their hardship, and verses 12-13 promise that Yahweh will bless the house of Israel, the house of Aaron, and those who fear Yahweh. Verses 14-15 then call on Yahweh to increase the children of Israel and bless them, verse 16 serves as a reminder that Yahweh has made heaven and earth and that Yahweh gives the earth to the sons of man, and verses 17-18 observe that the dead do not live on, whereas "we [אֲנִיחֵנּוּ] will bless Yahweh from now until eternity" (echoing Ps 113:2). Whereas the first half of the psalm ends with a declaration that those who "trust in" idols "become like them" (v. 8), the second half of the psalm ends with a declaration that "we [emphatic] will bless Yahweh from now until eternity." What the psalmist, oppressed by the idolatrous nations, hopes for in Ps 115 is the vindication of those who trust in him over against those who trust in idols.

In sum, Pss 113-115 each demonstrate the influence of Isaiah, but these psalms also quote Hannah's song, describe the exodus as a pattern for what God will do, and allude to Hab 3, in

which God is asked to revive the work of the exodus. It seems that these psalms look forward to a new exodus, resulting in a reversal of fortunes and the inheriting of the earth by those who trust in Yahweh.

## ***Psalm 116***

Like Pss 113 – 115, Ps 116 is a compilation of ideas found in various OT passages. Unlike Pss 113 – 115, Ps 116 is an *individual* psalm, spoken throughout in the first person singular. Verses 1-4 contain numerous allusions to Ps 18:1-6. Psalm 18 is the song of David as a warrior (“He trains my hands for war, and my arms can bend a bow of bronze,” Ps 18:34). It is also a paradigmatic psalm of David as is attested by the fact that when the author of 2 Samuel sought a Davidic psalm to complete his account of the life of David he quoted all 51 verses of Ps 22. In both Ps 18 and 2 Sam 22, the psalm is attributed to David “when Yahweh delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.” The allusions to Ps 18 in Ps 116 are clear: both psalms begin with the psalmist declaring his love for Yahweh. Both psalms repeatedly speak of calling on Yahweh (18:6a, 6b; 116:2, 4) and the cry reaching his “ear” (18:6; 116:2). Both psalms describe the situation with the phrase, “The cords of death encompassed me.” The expression “cords of death” occurs nowhere else in the OT. Both psalms speak of “Sheol” and “distress” (צָרָה/צָר). All of these links are within a span of a few verses (18:1-6; 116:1-4). Thus the individual who sings Ps 116 sees himself as repeating what David experienced just before taking the throne. While it may be that the psalmist sees David’s experience as the experience of every man of God, it is likely that whoever arranged the Hallel (if not the original psalmist as well) saw this as speaking to the experience of the Son of David before he takes the throne. Thus the eschatological hope of Ps 113 and the cry for a new exodus in Pss 114 – 115 will be fulfilled after the Davidic figure experiences the kind of deliverance that David experienced immediately before ascending to the throne.

Ps 116 also contains echoes of Ps 86, the only Davidic psalm in Book III of the Psalter. In Ps 86 David’s life is sought by “insolent men” (86:14), and David recalls the promise of Exod 34:6 that God is merciful and gracious (86:5, 13, 15; cf. 116:5) and therefore trusts God to deliver his soul from the depths of Sheol (86:13). David also foresees there that “all the nations that you have made will come and worship before you . . . and glorify your name” (86:9), and he asks God to teach him his way (86:11). Psalm 116 contains all of these elements except for the expectation that the nations will worship, which is the thrust of Ps 117. Therefore Pss 116 – 117 have been crafted partially from two psalms that deal with enemies surrounding David (Pss 18; 86), a theme that will also emerge for the seemingly royal individual in Ps 118, who is surrounded by enemies and cuts them off in the name of Yahweh. The reference there to “the day that Yahweh has made” (118:24, cf. “day of Yahweh” throughout the prophets) suggests that

this individual is the Davidic Messiah, whose distress (116:3, 8, 10; 118:5, 10-13) and subsequent victory (116:1-9, 16; 118:5-7, 10-24) are anticipated. This brings us to Ps 118.

## **Psalm 118**

Psalm 115 asked God to obtain glory by blessing “the house of Israel, . . . the house of Aaron, . . . [and] those who fear Yahweh” and then called on “Israel, . . . the house of Aaron, . . . and those who fear Yahweh” to trust in Yahweh, to bless him, and to praise him. These same three groups are taken up again in Ps 118, but whereas in Ps 115 they are called to trust Yahweh for *future* blessing, in Ps 118 they are called to give thanks to Yahweh for blessing *already received*. Thus Ps 118 is the response to God hearing the request of Ps 115, as is attested in God’s deliverance of the Davidide in Ps 116.

Psalm 118 also directly quotes predictive passages of the Old Testament. Verse 14 (“Yah is my strength and my song; he has become salvation for me”) is a direct quotation of Exodus 15:2 – the song the Israelites sing after crossing the Red Sea. Isaiah takes up these same words in Isa 11:16-12:2:

There will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant that remains of the people, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt. You will say in that day: ‘I will give thanks to you, O Yahweh, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for Yahweh God is my strength and my song; he has become salvation for me.’

In the context of Isaiah this comes in the midst of the Davidic emphasis of chapters 7-12, in which the shoot of Jesse (Isa 11:1-5) will restore Eden (Isa 11:6-9) and lead Israel on a new exodus (Isa 11:10-16). It is in “that day” (12:1; cf. Ps 118:24) that the people will sing the words of Exod 15:2 again (Isa 12:2).<sup>11</sup> So when the psalmist sings the exact same portion of Exod 15 that Isaiah quotes (Ps 118:14) and announces, “This is the day that Yahweh has made” (Ps 118:24), it is quite likely that the psalmist is writing about the completion of the new exodus, which is here led by a Davidic figure, the royal figure of Ps 118 who comes in the name of Yahweh.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Constant, “Psaume 118,” 128-138; James Luther Mays, “Psalm 118 in the Light of Canonical Analysis,” in *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation* (ed. Gene M. Tucker et al.; Philadelphia, Fortress: 1988), 299-311, esp. p. 308.

<sup>12</sup> The psalmist continues to allude to Exod 15 throughout the psalm: verse 21 repeats Exod 15:2b; verse 28 alludes to Exod 15:2cd; triple mention of the right hand of Yahweh in verses 15-16 echoes Exod 15:6, 12; etc. (cf. Reuven Hammer, “Two Liturgical Psalms: Salvation and Thanksgiving,” *Judaism* 40 [1991]: 484-497; Mays, “Psalm 118,” 140-141; Constant, “Psaume 118,” 128-138). Prinsloo also notes the high number of semantic parallels between Exod 14:30-31 and Ps 118: “save,” “that day,” “saw,” “Yahweh did,” and “the people feared Yahweh” (Gert T. Prinsloo, “A Contextual and Intertextual Reading of Psalm 118,” *OTE* 16 (2003): 401-421, esp. p. 415). Constant, “Psaume 118,” 135-136, notes that the parallels with Isa 12 are no less profound:



Psalm 118 also alludes to Isa 26:2: “We have a strong city; he makes *salvation* its walls and fortress. *Open the gates*, and the *righteous* nation that keeps faith *will enter*.”<sup>13</sup> According to Isaiah, this is the song that will be sung “in that day,” referring back to the day of Yahweh mentioned in verse 1. This verse is surrounded by statements that death will be defeated (Isa 25:8; 26:19), just as the psalmist says, “I will not die, for I will live. . . . Yah has not given me over to death” (Ps 118:17-18). Again, the psalmist is picking up on Isaianic eschatological terminology, confirming that the “day that Yahweh has made” in Ps 118:24 is the “day of Yahweh” spoken of in the prophets. This in turn relates verse 24 of Ps 118 to verses 5-18 much more closely than is typically assumed, since the day of Yahweh is consistently viewed in the prophets as a day of destruction of all nations, and in verses 5-18 we see the individual in the psalm cutting off the nations.

There may also be an allusion in Ps 118:22 to Isa 28:16. In Ps 118:22, the stone the builders rejected is made to be the cornerstone. Many have thought that the cornerstone in Ps 118:22 is either Israel or a literal stone involved in the rebuilding of the temple,<sup>14</sup> but contextually one would expect the stone to be the person who was opposed and vindicated by God in verses 5-21.<sup>15</sup> A number of biblical authors refer to rulers as “cornerstones” (Judg 20:2;

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Les trios chants d'action de grâce d'Exode 15, du Psaume 118, et d'Ésaïe 12 ont certes beaucoup plus en commun que la reprise de quelques propositions. Tous trois célèbrent l'Éternel pour son oeuvre de salut, pour sa délivrance de la main d'ennemis puissants et nombreux qui seraient demeurés invincibles sans l'intervention de la 'droite' divine. Tous trois appellent Israël à se réjouir haut et fort en l'Éternel, à le célébrer pour sa délivrance et son salut. Tous trois appellent le peuple de l'Éternel à se confier en lui, à ne pas craindre l'être humain, mais au contraire à reconnaître et à célébrer la souveraineté de leur Dieu. Tous trois font état d'un changement de fortune, d'une revirement de situation en faveur du psalmiste ou de son peuple. Enfin, tous trois expriment un sentiment d'émerveillement face à la grandeur des œuvres divines rédemptrices. L'éclairage que ces trois textes projettent les uns sur les autres par rapport à leur contenu conduit ainsi à une interprétation du Psaume 118 qui soit ouverte sur l'avenir, et sert à soutenir une interprétation messianique de ce psaume d'action de grâce individuelle.

<sup>13</sup> Joachim Becker, *Israel deutet seine Psalmen: Urform und Neuinterpretation in den Psalmen* (2d ed.; SBS 18; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1967), 56; Prinsloo, “Contextual and Intertextual Reading,” 416.

<sup>14</sup> For Israel, see Augustus Tholuck, *A Translation and Commentary of the Book of Psalms for the Use of the Ministry and Laity of the Christian Church* (trans. J. Isidor Mombert; Philadelphia: William S. & Alfred Martien, 1858), 434; E. W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms* (3 vols.; 4th ed.; Clark's Foreign Theological Library; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1876), 3:380-381; J); Edmund Kalt, ed., *Herder's Commentary on the Psalms* (trans. Bernard Fritz; Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1961), 454; Moses Buttenwieser, *The Psalms: Chronologically Treated with a New Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), 662; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961), 818; Graham Scroggie, *The Psalms: Psalms I to CL* (rev. ed.; Westwood, N.J.: Revell, 1965), 150-151. Briggs and Briggs see the stone as Zion (Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (2 vols.; ICC 15; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906-1907), 2:407). For a literal stone, see *T. Sol.* 22:3; 24:3; Michael D. Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return (Book V, Psalms 107-150)* (JSOTSup 258; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 189.

<sup>15</sup> Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (trans. Herbert Hartwell; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 728; John H. Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and*

1 Sam 14:38; Isa 19:13; Zech 10:4). The phrase occurs in Isaiah only twice: in 19:13 it refers to the princes in Egypt, so when God says in Isa 28:16, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a founded foundation; the one who is faithful will not be disturbed,” it would be natural to understand this cornerstone as being the messianic figure of Isa 7-12 and of Isa 32:1. The similar prophecy in Zech 10:3-4 says God is angry with the shepherds/leaders and will therefore provide a “cornerstone” as a new ruler.<sup>16</sup> Psalm 118 follows this tradition in referring to the coming Messiah as the cornerstone but notes that the cornerstone is first rejected.

## **Conclusion**

Thus we see in Psalms 113-118 a united front to present the fulfillment of the hope of Israel that on the Day of Yahweh a Davidic figure would come and conquer, bringing a reversal of fortunes, leading Israel on a new exodus, judging the earth and the nations, conquering death, and drawing all the nations to praise Yahweh. Oh give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good; his love is forever!

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*New Translation* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 405; Kraus, *Psalms*, 2:399-400; Marco Treves, *The Dates of the Psalms: History and Poetry in Ancient Israel* (Pisa: Giardini, 1988), 89; Constant, “Psaume 118,” 140-142.

<sup>16</sup> Hyuk J. Kwon, “Psalm 118 [117 lxx] in Luke-Acts: Application of a ‘New Exodus Motif,’” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 30 [2009]: 1-6, esp. p. 2.