SIGMUND MOWINCKEL

THE PSALMS IN ISRAEL’S WORSHIP

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ABINGDON
expected interference of Yahweh against the Assyrians in the style of the hymns of epiphany and enthronement shows how marvellously the style traditions of Canaanite time were kept alive all through the period of the monarchy.

Even with regard to the art-form we may therefore maintain that Canaanite religious poetry was the immediate pattern of Israelite cultic poetry.

What was incompatible with Yahwism was dropped—and this applies above all to the idea of the death and resurrection of the god and to all the sexual rites and the cultic expressions of the fertility cult; the rest of it was imbued with the spirit of the Yahweh religion and used as a mode of expressing the people's feelings when face to face with the Holy One in the cult, for their praise and worship, their lamentations and prayers, and to convey the promise of the deity, and thanksgivings for his word and his help.

112 See Mowinckel in *GTMM* III, pp. 715f., and in *ThZ*, 9, 1953, pp. 1ff.
113 Cf. Cassuto in *Annuario di Studi Ebraici*, 1933-37, pp. 7ff.; Albright, op. cit., pp. 1ff.
114 This is of course very important. But it seems an exaggeration when Albright (op. cit., p. 7, n. 24) declares that 'Psalm criticism now stands on the threshold of a new day, in sharp contrast to the situation between 1900 and 1935'. Ugarit has not contributed very much to the understanding of the essential nature of biblical psalmography; nor is psalm criticism after U. Ugarit findings in a position which is in principle different from the one maintained for instance by the present author in *Psalmenstudien*. See also my paper in *VT* V, 1955, pp. 13ff.
incluing formulas for the separate collections; it is the collectors who have later used them as concluding doxologies for the psalm collections.

b. Ps. 42-83 once made up a separate collection. This is recognizable from the fact that the original 'Yahweh' has generally been replaced by 'Elohim', God. The reason for the alteration is that later times shrank from pronouncing the name of God, and so the change is linked to the use of this collection in the temple service. As can be seen from the book of Chronicles, there was a period when 'Yahweh' was pronounced 'Elohim' in the service rather than 'Adonai' (The Lord), which became the usual pronunciation at a still later time. This collection is usually referred to as 'The Elohistic Psalter'.

It actually consists of several smaller collections. Among these must be mentioned:

c. A collection of Korahite Psalms, Ps. 42-49. It is arranged according to types, that is to say, types in the service, indicated by the different technical terms in the headings: first a group of maschils ('efficacious songs') Ps. 42-45, then a Shir ('song') Ps. 46, and finally a group of nizkims ('psalms') Ps. 47-49. For these terms see below, Chap. XXIII.

d. Further, a second collection of Davideic Psalms (II), Ps. 51-72. By (or 'for') David' is lacking in the title of Ps. 66, 67 and 71 (many manuscripts and the LXX have this note for 67 and 71); this may indicate that the heading was originally put at the head of the whole collection and was only gradually added to each individual psalm; but it may also be that these three psalms have been added to the collection later. Ps. 52-55 are maschils, Ps. 56-60 michats ('psalms of atonement'); Ps. 62-65 and 66-68 are nizkims; in Ps. 69-71 we find no indication of the type, which may be the reason why they are put last; among these we ought to find Ps. 61, whose present place may be due to alterations of the original sequence; this may also be the reason why a single nizkim, Ps. 51, has been put first. The very last is Ps. 72 with the heading Isaiah, which in this case is probably not meant to be 'by Solomon', but 'by David' for the king's son (v. i) Solomon'. In this case also a psalm which had the liturgical concluding doxology and the 'amen' of the congregation (see Ps. 72.18-19) has been put at the end of the collection, as with Ps. 3-41. Last of all, the collector of the second Davideic Psalter has added a note marking the end of these Davideic psalms, namely Ps. 72.20: 'The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended'.

e. In Ps. 73-78 the collector of the Elohistic Psalter has included a collection of Psalms of Asaph, to which probably Ps. 50 once belonged. This psalm is likely to have been transferred to a place immediately before the Psalms of David (II) and alongside Ps. 51, because its view of sacrifices and the proper worship of God agreed with Ps. 51 and would supplement what that psalm had to say about the matter.

f. Ps. 84-89 form a separate little collection of Korahite psalms, since both Heman (Ps. 88) and Ethan (Ps. 89) were supposed to belong to the sons of Korah (see above, II.97). A solitary Davideic psalm, 86, has been included. In this collection the original 'Yahweh' has usually been retained.

Once again the psalm furnished with a liturgical conclusion has been put last, see Ps. 89-99.

Since in Ps. 84-89 'Yahweh' has not been replaced by 'Elohim', this group was probably not included in the Elohistic Psalter as an extension but was put after Ps. 89 by a collector who combined the first Davideic Psalter, the 'Elohistic Psalter' and Ps. 84-89, 'the second Korahite Psalter' into one larger collection—Pss. 3-89. Maybe it was the same man who prefaced the whole collection with Ps. 2.

Within the remaining group, Ps. 90-150, may be distinguished several smaller groups, some of which at some time may have constituted separate small collections:

g. Ps. 120-134, which form a separate collection of 'songs for the procession', as stated in the headings. No doubt most of these psalms were originally composed for use at the festival of harvest and tabernacles, alluding as they do to the complex of ideas characteristic of the latter: mostly likely, too, the group has been arranged with a view to this festival.

The Jews used to call this group, together with Ps. 135 and 136, 'the great Hallel' (see below); probably these two psalms also belonged to the same collection, perhaps as an addition.

h. The enthronement psalms, Ps. 93; 95-99 (100), may have constituted a separate collection. Why the national (congregational) psalm of lamentation 94 has been included amongst them is hard to tell: perhaps because it may have been used at the enthronement festival as a psalm of supplication for the coming of God's 'kingdom'.

i. A separate collection or group is made up of Ps. 113-118, the so-called 'Hallel', also called the 'Egyptian Hallel', to distinguish them from Ps. 146-150, called by the same name, and from the 'great Hallel' Ps. 120-136 (see above). The name refers to the term 'Hallelujah' in the superscription to each psalm in the collection and accompanying the singing as a refrain after each strophe or distich. In the time of Jesus, for instance, Ps. 113-118 were sung in the homes at the Passover festival, 113-114 before, and 115-118 after the meal. The origin of this custom is of course that these psalms belonged to the temple liturgy of the Passover festival. Most of them contain references to the Exodus and have indeed been composed as Passover psalms; that is why they have been collected as a group.1

j. Ps. 146-150, the 'Hallel psalms' (see above) also make up a special group, sung with 'Hallelujah' as a refrain; cf. headings and endings. The Jews of the time of Jesus and later also used them for morning prayer. The references to Yahweh's kingship and his creation and to the deliverance and restoration of Jerusalem seem to prove that the group was

1 On the origin and ritual use of the Hallel see Finkelstein in HUCA XXIII. 5, pp. 319ff.
arranged for use at the festival of harvest and new year (Tabernacles).

5. Even the three 'hallelujah psalms'; Ps. 105-107, may have constituted a separate collection. Ps. 106 is furnished with a concluding doxology, v. 48. A comparison with 1 Chron. 16.36 shows that the psalm was already furnished with this doxology when used in the temple service. So the formulas of doxology, Ps. 41.14; 72.18f.; 89.53; 106.48, have not been added by the collectors in order to mark the 'end of a book'; they can be traced back to the liturgical use of the psalm, and in some cases they are original, but in others they have been added to the text before the collection was made.

It is doubtful whether separate small collections can be distinguished within the group Pss. 90-150. It is likewise uncertain whether the whole of this group ever constituted a separate collection, or whether the smaller groups and individual psalms were gradually added to the earlier collection, Pss. 2-89; the latter is the more likely.

So the Psalter probably came into existence in this way: first several smaller collections sprang up:

a. "The first Davidic Psalter", Pss. 3-41, with the final doxology Ps. 41.14; and the three other smaller groups mentioned above: the 'Korahite Psalter', the 'Second Davidic Psalter', with the final doxology Ps. 72.16-19 and the final note 72.20, and the 'Asaphite Psalter'.

b. Out of the last three above was then formed the large basic collection, the 'Elohist Psalter', Pss. 42-89, perhaps with the later addition of Ps. 84-89.

c. The combination of the 'first Davidic Psalter' and the 'Elohist Psalter' marks the third stage. Pss. 84-89 may not have been added till this combination took place. As a counterpart to the concluding royal psalm, Ps. 89, the collection, Pss. 3-89, has had prefixed the anonymous royal psalm, Ps. 2, as an introductory psalm. Ps. 89.53 provides the 'concluding doxology' of the whole collection.

d. Then the collection, Pss. 2-89, was gradually extended by means of other small collections—perhaps both earlier and later ones: Pss. 93-100, 113-118, 120-134 (136) and 146-150, and some individual psalms. Perhaps the group, Pss. 90-106, had already been formed out of these psalms and become a separate booklet.

e. No clear principles governing the arrangement of the single psalms within the smaller collections can be demonstrated; even though scholars have indicated certain considerations that may have had their influence.\(^\text{5}\)

\(^\text{5}\) Attempts to demonstrate such principles can be found in the commentaries, especially the older ones (e.g. Hengstenberg, Hitzig, Delitzsch), but also in Benzenen, *Salmonia*, p. 419 (the arrangement of Ps. 79-82), partly in papers and articles, e.g. by Köster, Jacob (in *ZAW* 18, 1898), Daubes, Schned, etc. The whole problem is dealt with by Niemeyer, *Hid probleme van de rangschikking der Psalmen*, with a critical review of earlier attempts. But even his own suggestions do not lead to any convincing positive results.

It follows from what has been said above that the smaller collections have come into existence on different principles: common origin within a guild of singers (Asaph psalms, Korah psalms), supposed authorship (the Davidic Psalters I and II), liturgical use (the maschils, the michtams); often in accordance with literary type (the *mahaloth* psalms, the enthronement psalms), sometimes even catch-words (the hallel psalms).

The sequence of the smaller collections within the Psalter seems to have been decided by the gradual joining of the single smaller collections into greater units. It may be taken for granted that the Davidic Psalter was deliberately put first. Within the circles of the collectors David was considered the originator and protagonist of psalm poetry.

We have mentioned above (§2e, f) that the last redaction of the Psalter may have displaced this or that psalm from its original place within one of the minor collections.

At the time of the final redaction Ps. 1 was prefixed to the collection as a kind of 'motto' for the aim and use of the whole Psalter.

In the manuscripts the Psalter is divided into five books: Pss. 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150: above the last four of these stands 'Second Book', 'Third Book', etc. The form of the letters (a smaller size) shows that these headings do not derive from the actual collectors of the Psalter, but belong to the so-called 'Massoretic marginal notes', and consequently are much later than the emergence of the Psalter.

The division into five, probably in imitation of 'The Law', came last of all. It only partially coincides with the divisions between the original smaller collections, but follows the liturgical doxologies, which happened to occur in the texts from the earlier collections: Pss. 41.14; 72.18f.; 89.53; 106.48. These were taken to be intended divisions and concluding doxologies between 'the books', and then Ps. 150 might be looked upon as the concluding doxology of the fifth section, and of the whole Psalter. Originally, as we have said, these doxologies had nothing to do with the collection, neither with the earlier smaller collections, nor with the composition of the Psalter as a whole.\(^\text{4}\)

\(^\text{4}\) Smith (*ZATW* 51, 1933, pp. 302ff.) thinks that the division into five has to do with a supposed cycle of 3 years for the reading of the Psalter in the service of the synagogues.

How many psalms are there in the Psalter? The tradition of the scribes allows for 150 psalms in all.

The Greek translation, the Septuagint (LXX), also has the same number, and yet it divides the text in a different way. It supposed Ps. 9

\(^\text{5}\) See above, §§2a, d, h—Eerdman, *Hebraic Book of Pts. (OTS IV)*, pp. 39ff., and Niemeyer, *op. cit.* pp. 7ff., are evidently right in saying that these 'doxologies' are not meant to be the end of a book but are earlier liturgical additions to the individual psalms concerned.

\(^\text{4}\) Smith (*ZATW* 51, 1933, pp. 302ff.) thinks that the division into five has to do with a supposed cycle of 3 years for the reading of the Psalter in the service of the synagogues.
and 10 to be one psalm, and likewise Ps. 114 and 115. On the other hand, Ps. 116 and 147 are each divided into two psalms.

The division in the Masoretic text is not quite correct. LXX is no doubt right in making Ps. 9 and 10 into one psalm; this is proved by the alphabetic pattern, as well as by the lack of heading to Ps. 10. Ps. 42-43 are likewise one psalm, with the same refrain. On the other hand there is no reason to join 114 and 115 into one.

Whether it is correct to divide Ps. 147 into two parts cannot be decided with certainty. That a division of Ps. 116 is wrong is proved beyond doubt by the homogeneity of form and style history.

Suggestions have also been made to divide Ps. 22, 27, 40 and others into two parts, but without sufficient reason. This means that the Psalter really contains 148 or 149 psalms.

It is clear from 1 Sam. 2; Jonah 2; Isa. 48. 1; 1 Chron. 16 and other passages, that other psalms existed, which are not included in the Psalter.

When was the Psalter compiled? Or rather: when was the work of collecting completed—for it was a lengthy process.

The Psalter as we know it today is at any rate earlier than ca. 130 B.C., when the Greek translator of the book of Jesus Sirach wrote his preface to the book. His words presuppose the existence of a Canon in three parts, and the Psalter has always stood first in the ‘Writings’, the third part of the Canon. It is also evident from his words that at his time the tripartite Canon already existed in Greek translation, and we may certainly believe that some generations passed between the completion of the Hebrew Canon and the completion of the Greek translation.

The translator of Sirach also tells us that his grandfather Jeshua ben Sira (‘Sirach’) living about 190 B.C., had eagerly studied this collection of the Scriptures in three parts, handed down from the fathers. Nor can there be the least doubt about this, for it is quite evident from Sirach’s book itself.

Now the objection may be raised that the third part of the Canon, the ‘Writings’, was not yet quite finished in the age of Sirach. That is quite true; the book of Daniel was written in the year 165 or 164 B.C. But then Daniel was the latest scripture to be included in the Canon. A Canon consisting of ‘the Law, the Prophets and the Writings’ already existed at the time of Sirach. But to the best of our knowledge the Psalter has always stood first in the ‘Writings’; in fact the Canon is sometimes called ‘The Law, The Prophets and The Psalms’ (Luke 24. 44). Even if the third part, the ‘Writings’, had not yet been finally defined at the time of Sirach, yet it would at any rate contain the Psalter.

This is corroborated by Sirach’s view of David. When he says about him that ‘he ordered stringed instruments for the singing before the altar and an elaborate equipment for the annual celebrations of the feasts’ (47.9f.), it is exactly the same view as the one which the Chronicler expresses. But obviously Sirach’s view of David has also been determined by the Psalter: ‘In all his deeds he offered hymns of thanksgiving and paid homage to the most high God, with all his heart he loved the one who had created him, and with all his soul offered him thanksgiving’ (47. 8).

Evidently Sirach is here thinking of the psalm headings, referring the individual psalms to different events in the life of David, and when using the term ‘loved’ he is directly referring to Ps. 18. 2. And when he further says of David that Yahweh ‘has exalted his horn for ever and given unto him the law of the kingdom’ (47. 11), i.e. the right to the kingdom, he is also referring to psalm passages such as Ps. 89. 18; 132. 17; 89. 29.

I Maccabees, written about the year 100 B.C., introduces the psalm quotation Ps. 79. 2f. as a ‘scripture text’, and regards the Psalter as a canonical writing.

The same is true in even the earliest Maccabean times. When the festival for the re-consecration of the Temple—the Hanukka festival (feast of dedication)—was instituted after the deliverance of the city from the Syrians, no new festival psalm was composed for that day, but the most suitable psalm from the Psalter was chosen and given a new meaning, namely Ps. 30. The Maccabees felt restricted to the canonical psalm collection.

So the Psalter cannot under any circumstances be later than about 200 B.C. The theoretical possibility that some psalm or other may have been put in later cannot be excluded, but we should need positive evidence for any such theory.

How much older than this it is, is most uncertain. There has been a tendency to conclude from 1 Chron. 16. 36 that the Chronicler must have known the quinquepartite Psalter; for here he quotes Ps. 106. 48, and it has been supposed that this verse was only added to the psalm by way of a final doxology to the fourth ‘book’. However the odds are that this final verse is not a result of the division into five parts, but rather one of the causes of it, and that it was already added to the psalm for liturgical use. If so, the Chronicler need not have taken the psalm quotation from the completed Psalter, but from one of the earlier collections or from his own knowledge of the temple library and of the liturgical psalms—the Chronicler probably belonged to the Levites, perhaps he himself was a ‘singer’.

6 For Ps. 27 see Birkeland in ZATW 51, 1933, pp. 216ff.
8 For details Gunkel-Begrlich, Einl., pp. 4ff.
9 See Bentzen, Introduction to the O.T., pp. 27ff.
There is still another statement in the book of Chronicles, from which may be gleaned something more. In 1 Chron. 15-16, the Chronicler tells about the institution of the Yahweh cult on Zion under David and the transfer of Yahweh's ark thither; his main source is as usual the earlier record, in this case 2 Sam. 6; but he also introduces several details which obviously do not fit in with the conditions at the time of David; these details are certainly not just free fancies on the part of the Chronicler, but a reflection of the festal cult of his own day or (and) the time immediately preceding. Now even in 2 Sam. 6 the saga-writer has evidently described the festival on the pattern of one of the processions at the festival of harvest and tabernacles, which was also the festival for the consecration of the Temple; he quite simply imagines that just as this festival was celebrated in his own day, so would the inaugural festival at the institution of the cult have been celebrated under David.14 The same is the case with the Chronicler. He, too, describes the festival after the pattern of a corresponding festival in his own day. He also gives information about the psalm that was sung at the sacrifice. We have every reason to believe that this was no free fancy, but that the psalm really was used in his own day at some point of the ritual on that day during the festival of tabernacles which was especially dedicated to the memory of the transfer of Yahweh's ark; this is corroborated by his story about Solomon's consecration of the Temple, in which he quotes part of Ps. 132, which no doubt belonged to this festal complex.15 The psalm quoted by the Chronicler in 1 Chron. 16 consists of Ps. 105.1-15; 96.1b-12a; 106.47-48. This means that on one of the days of the harvest festival, or on some festal day on a special historic occasion, a psalm was used consisting of parts of three psalms, which were all of them to be found in the Psalter. The most natural conclusion is that on some special occasion this liturgy was composed by people who felt restricted to an existing 'canonical' book of psalms. They did not think it proper to compose a new psalm for the day, but expressed what they wanted to say by choosing and putting together parts of canonical psalms. So the case is analogous to the use of Ps. 30 for the feast of Dedication.

The question then is, at what time the book of Chronicles came into existence. Nothing can be said about it with absolute certainty. At any rate it can hardly be any earlier than about 350 BCE, and is probably a great deal later, perhaps about 300, or even about 250.16

We shall not come much nearer to a solution if we study the different small collections and try to find out how old they may be. We might achieve some results if we were able to say for certain how old the latest psalm of each collection is. But that is hardly possible. And even if it were, the collection of, for instance, Asaph might have been started much earlier, and gradually have had later psalms added to it.

If it is correct that the name 'sons of Asaph' was in use for the guild of temple singers before 587, then the nucleus of the Asaph collection may date from pre-exilic times, and have been gradually extended. As it now stands it doubtless contains psalms later than the restoration under Cyrus or Darius.

The nucleus of the two Davidic collections may likewise be older. A statement by Amos (6.15) alludes to David as the inventor of stringed instruments. But this need not refer to the idea that the temple music was instituted by David. There is no positive evidence of this idea until the book of Chronicles. But there it is an undisputed fact, and it is certainly older than, the age of the Chronicler himself. But the title 'Davidic psalms' need not have anything to do with this idea. As we have seen, 'Davidic psalms' originally has the same meaning as 'royal psalms'. The nucleus of the two Davidic collections may very well date back to the period of the monarchy. If so, a great many later psalms have been added even here in the course of time.

The Korah collection can hardly have come into being as a separate collection till after the time when 'the sons of Korah' had become the name of a section of the guild of singers, which happened, as we have seen (II.97) in Judaic (post-exilic) times. But that does not mean that all the psalms of this collection date from this period; several of them, as for instance Ps. 45; 84; 86 (Ethan), are no doubt older.

From the above we may arrive at some conclusion as to the time when the Psalter was completed.

The Korahite collection ([K]e) and the Psalter both know the sons of Korah to be a family of temple singers. They have this rank in some of the genealogical lists and notes about the temple service included in the book of Chronicles,17 whereas in other lists they belong to the doorkeepers or inferior classes of 'Levites'.18 From this we may probably conclude that their rank as singers was still of comparatively recent origin at the time of the Chronicler,19 i.e. some time between the years 300 and 200 BCE.

So we should probably be justifiied in dating the compilation of the Psalter to a time somewhat earlier than the book of Chronicles, perhaps some time before the year 300 BCE, maybe even fifty years earlier.20

14 See Ps.St. II, pp. 109ff.
15 See above, Chap. V. 9.
17 2 Chron. 20.19; I Chron. 6.18f.
18 1 Chron. 9.21; 26.1f., compared with 9.17ff.
20 Erdmann, Alter. Book of Ps., pp. 147f., thinks that from 2 Macc. 2.15 we may conclude that the Psalter was compiled by Nehemiah. But there is no reason for placing any reliance on this apocryphal statement. If Nehemiah had undertaken such a pious work, he would have mentioned it among all his other good works in psalm memoriae sui. What we have in 2 Mac. 2.13 is just an earlier version of the unhistorical legend about 'Ezra and the Great Synagogue', who reproduced the holy writings that were lost.