

DOUBLE-TRACKING IN THE PSALMS, BOOK 5, AS A HERMENEUTICAL METHOD

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Abstract: *Double-tracking as a hermeneutical method in the Psalter is a multilayered scheme in which historical allusions, biblical quotations, and textual and cultural allusions are intertwined to create a certain movement in the direction of a major theme or climax. After pointing out the cradle of hodu (“Give thanks”) psalms that supports the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113–118) and sets the tone to make Book 5 a virtual service of thanksgiving for Yahweh’s “love” and “faithfulness,” this article seeks to show how the postexilic community tracked its direction as a “new exodus” and reaffirmed its covenant faith by means of four theological conventions of the Mosaic covenant: (1) the first and second commandments; (2) the Shema’; (3) the formula of grace; and (4) the covenant formula.*

Key words: *hodu psalms, Egyptian Hallel, Great Hallel, covenant formula, formula of grace, Shema’*

I. DESCRIPTION OF DOUBLE-TRACKING AS A HERMENEUTICAL METHOD

The hermeneutical method of double-tracking involves a multilayered scheme in which historical allusions, biblical quotations, and textual and cultural allusions are intertwined to create a certain movement in the direction of a major theme or climax. Often this methodology employs “parallelism” to track current events along the path of more ancient, saving events. In biblical perspective, it is identifiable in Deuteronomic theology and spelled out in Deut 5:2–3 as Moses calls the second generation of the exodus to observe the covenant that the Lord had made with them at Horeb:

The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our fathers [only] that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. (Deut 5:2–3)

This paper will deal mainly with the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113–118), which was written to celebrate a complex of events: the return from Babylonian captivity, the rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of worship.¹ The delivery system of this celebration is facilitated in two ways. First, the Egyptian Hallel blends into the mode of thanksgiving established by the major thanksgiving unit (Psalms 107–

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¹ Eric Zenger, in Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 110, 112.

136); or if the Egyptian Hallel was composed earlier, it was cradled in a long theological chain of *hodu* (“thanksgiving”) psalms. In effect, this composition formulates a new view of Israel’s redemption from Babylonian exile, a “second exodus” (see Jer 16:14–15; Mic 7:15–17), and reconfigures the postexilic era as the new era of redemption (see Jer 16:14–15; Mic 7:15–17). Second, internally the Egyptian Hallel incorporates a series of covenant reaffirmations to mark the postexilic community’s categorical reembrace of the Sinai covenant. It is a good example of how the psalmists think in “parallelisms.”

I will illustrate this by unpacking the scheme in the Egyptian Hallel, proposing the purpose of these various layers as they double-track the road of return and restoration along the ancient path of the exodus and Sinai covenant. But first we should look at the architectural plan of Book 5 and see how the editor(s) constructs the major thanksgiving unit (Psalms 107–136) and the *hodu*-chain of psalms (*hodu* = “Give thanks”) which serves to set up Book 5 as a major treatise of thanksgiving.

II. THE LITERARY-THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE EGYPTIAN HALLEL

1. *The macro-picture.*

a. *The major thanksgiving unit: the “hodu” Psalms (Psalms 107–136).* Psalms 107–136 compose the major thanksgiving unit of Book 5, beginning and concluding with thanksgiving (*hodu*) psalms (Psalms 107 and 136).² Intermediately thanksgiving psalms introduce (Psalm 111) and close (Psalm 118) the Egyptian Hallel. Then, the Great Hallel (Psalm 136), the thanksgiving psalm *par excellence*, functions as a capstone for the major thanksgiving unit, and was perhaps even part of the liturgy for a great thanksgiving service to celebrate the end of the exile, the rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of worship. Psalm 107 keys off the twin thanksgiving Psalms 105 and 106 that transition Books 4 and 5, and establishes the thanksgiving theme as the major theme of Book 5:

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;

[for] his love endures forever.³

Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—

those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,

those he gathered from the lands,

from the east and west, from north and south. (107:1–3)

Then the refrain of Psalm 107 calls Israel to a spirit of thanksgiving generally and to a service of thanksgiving particularly:

Let them give thanks to the LORD for his *unfailing love (hesed)*

² Michael K. Snearly departs from the traditional configuration of the Pilgrim Psalter (Songs of Ascents) as 120–134 and proposes that this unit and Psalms 135–137 are a coherent unit.

³ I have taken the liberty to restore the “for” to the NIV translation since this word introduces the reason that Yahweh has done these great works for Israel: “*for* [because] his love endures forever,” and to omit it leaves that element unstated. We should also note that Psalms 107, 118, and 136 share the same opening line.

and his *wonderful deeds* (*nifl'otav*) for mankind. (107:8, 15, 21, 31)

In view of the fourfold refrain's use of "wonderful deeds" (*nifl'otav*), which commonly references Yahweh's saving deeds, we anticipate the magnanimous nature of the celebration to follow.

The main literary components within the major thanksgiving unit are the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113–118) and Pilgrim Psalter or Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120–134). Concerning the latter, a "blessing" theme functions like a "watermark" on this composition. Leon J. Liebreich has made a case for relating the Pilgrim Psalter to four terms in the priestly benediction (Num 6:24–26): *y'barek'ka* ("May [the LORD] bless you"), *vayishm'reka* ("May [the LORD] keep you"), *vihunneka* ("May [the LORD] be gracious to you"), and *shalom* ("May [the LORD] give you peace").¹ The twelve psalms in which these terms are reflected or echoed are: 120:6–7; 121:3–8; 122:6–8; 123:2–3; 125:5; 127:1; 128:4–6; 129:8; 130:8; 132:15; 133:3; 134:3. Liebreich's proposal is that the desire to bring the collection to fifteen, the number of the terms in the priestly benediction, may have inspired the writer/editor to compose three additional psalms that are only indirectly connected to the priestly benediction (124, 126, 131).⁴ While Liebreich's general thesis is quite compelling, I think it is more likely that the writer/editor uses the language of the priestly benediction to stamp a "watermark" of blessing on the postexilic community. The ancient reader would have heard the words of blessing and realized that the Pilgrim Psalter bore that tone, even though it was not a formal blessing as such. Contextually, it may be compared to the "Blessing of Moses" in Deuteronomy 33, where Moses blesses Israel before his death, prior to their entrance into Canaan, and quite importantly, this "blessing" offered by the Pilgrim Psalter is upon Israel's "second" entrance into Canaan (the return).⁵ In a similar way, the theme of thanksgiving is stamped upon Book 5, quite more deliberately, to be sure, than the theme of blessing on the Pilgrim Psalter. The point is that the language of blessing in the Pilgrim Psalter functions thematically as blessing just as the presence of the thanksgiving psalms functions as thanksgiving in Book 5 and probably leads in the direction of a great service of thanksgiving, even though the presence of the service is not as obvious as we might wish.

b. *The thanksgiving chain: the "hodu" Psalms continued (105 & 106 → 107 → 111 → 118 → 136 → 138 → 145)*. The cradle of the Egyptian Hallel, with its infrastructure of thanksgiving psalms, is a *hodu*-chain that extends all the way from Psalm 105 to 145 (see "The thanksgiving chain" above). And quite fittingly, the last identifiable voice we hear in this chain, and in the Psalter, for that matter, is David's, represented by the final David collection of Psalms 138–145. This chain, like the major thanksgiving unit, begins and concludes with a thanksgiving psalm (Psalms 138 and 145), thus paralleling the thanksgiving theme. In effect, David, the master spokesman in the Psalms, has joined his voice of thanksgiving with that of

⁴ Leon J. Liebreich, "The Song of Ascents and the Priestly Blessing," *JBL* 74 (1955): 33–36.

⁵ See my *Psalms 73–150* (2017), "Additional Insights: Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120–34)," in the unit on Psalm 120.

the returning exiles as they celebrate their homecoming that climaxes in the temple itself (Ps 138:2). The temple, or the presence of the Lord, had been David's destination from the beginning (e.g. Pss 23:6; 27:4), and now, in a rhetorical sense, he celebrates with his people. Moreover, it is most appropriate that this concluding cadre of David psalms should climax this great thanksgiving with echoes of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple. In addition to some shared vocabulary between Psalm 138 and 1 Kings 8,⁶ there is the shared, often repeated, theme of Israel's repentance and God's forgiveness (1 Kgs 8:30, 34, 36, 39, 50). Even though this theme is not sounded in Psalm 138 (but see 139:23–24), the implication, largely supported by the context of Book 5, is that Solomon's petition that Yahweh forgive his repentant people, in captivity because of their sins, and show them mercy, has been answered. Moreover, Solomon's prayer swings back and forth between the exodus from Egypt and the return from exile, and supposes that Israel, because of their sins, would be taken into exile. Book 5 is composed against that background, and the return of Israel to their homeland is an answer to Solomon's prayer that Yahweh would bring them back to the land of their ancestors (1 Kgs 8:34). Most significantly, Psalms 138 and 145 interject David's "Amen," as it were, into Book 5, especially affirming the thanksgiving theme.

But something more happens in this final David collection, a theme we have not developed, but one that is so significant it should at least be mentioned. The shadow of Psalm 89, especially the question of 89:49, hovers over Books 4 and 5, raising the issue of David's once unchallenged place in the kingdom of God:

Lord, where is your former great love,
which in your faithfulness you swore to David?

The insertion of the "kingship of Yahweh" psalms in Book 4 (note the declaration, "The LORD is king/reigns" in Pss 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1) was intended to offset that concern—the LORD reigns, and that is the ultimate issue. Yet, as we move through Book 4 and into Book 5, we still await a word from David himself on this matter. And the final two psalms of the last David collection depict David as laying down his crown, admitting that he is Yahweh's servant (Ps 143:12), and declaring that Yahweh is King (Ps 145:1). Thus, the question raised in Ps 89:49 has been answered on the lips of David himself.

Thus, we can see the "parallelism" in this editorial strategy, positioning David's rhetorical voice parallel to that of the community (see "The formula of grace" below), as he joins his people in thanksgiving (Pss 138:1, 2; 139:14; 140:13; 142:7; 145:10). In Book 5, the thanksgiving chain itself begins with Psalm 107, cradles the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 111 and 118), capstones the Pilgrim Psalter (Psalm 136), and embraces the final David collection (Psalms 138 and 145). The theme of thanksgiving prevails.

⁶ The shared terms are the Lord's "name" (Ps 138:2/1 Kgs 8:16, 18, 20, 33, 41, 42, 43, 44), the two documents sharing "name" theology; "with all my heart" (Ps 138:1/1 Kgs 8:23, = "with all *their* heart"; the verb "to give thanks" (Ps 138:1, 2, 4/1 Kgs 8:33, 35); "temple" (*hekal*, Ps 138:1/1 Kgs 8:64, usually "house" in 1 Kings 8); and "the glory of the LORD" (Ps 138:5/1 Kgs 8:11); "your [Yahweh's] mouth" (Ps 138:4/1 Kgs 8:24, speaking of Yahweh's words to David—see title "to David").

2. *The micro-picture.*

a. *The literary-theological frame of the Egyptian Hallel.* Jeremiah's "seventy years" of exile had expired, and now this developing new community had come to put forward the Torah as the central feature of their faith, and the Egyptian Hallel, itself a new "confession of faith," is framed by Psalmic witnesses, Psalms 111–112 and 119, as the centrality of the Torah in developing Judaism. On the same theological plane as Psalm 1, Psalm 112 declares, "Blessed is that one who fears the LORD, who delights in his commandments" (112:1; cf. 1:2). On the other side of the Egyptian Hallel, forming an *inclusio* with the paired Psalms 111 and 112, is Psalm 119, which in effect describes the new community governed by the Torah.

b. *Double-tracking historical events in the Egyptian Hallel: the exodus from Egypt.* The historical infrastructure for God's redeeming work is laid out in Psalm 114:

When Israel came out of Egypt,
 Jacob from a people of foreign tongue,
 Judah became God's sanctuary,
 Israel his dominion (114:1–2).

The exodus from Egypt under Moses is a common theme in the Psalms when the writer wants to reference Israel's central saving event (e.g. Ps 78:52–53). This is the grid on which the Egyptian Hallel is constructed. Our psalmist tells us that it was so enormously significant that:

The sea looked and fled,
 the Jordan turned back;
 the mountains leaped like rams,
 the hills like lambs. (114:3–4)

And the awesome nature of the original event still had validity for the psalmist's day, and he summoned the earth to:

Tremble at the presence of the Lord,
 at the presence of the God of Jacob. (114:7)

Thus, the exodus becomes the basis of awe that should characterize this new era of God's saving actions, demonstrating how the writer tracks Yahweh's redemptive works in his own generation along the path of the historical exodus. Indeed, so momentous was this "new exodus" from Babylonia that Jeremiah said it would set the new standard of redemption (Jer 16:14–15; Mic 7:15–17).

c. *Double-tracking prophetic and covenant language in the Egyptian Hallel: Hannah's Song.* At this point we want to hone in on the "confessional" nature of the Egyptian Hallel to see how this composition double-tracks the ancient "confessional" elements, especially of the Mosaic covenant. In this way, Israel revisits the ancient paths and retraces the steps of their ancestors. Although the Sinai imagery is missing, the "confessional" content recreates the event.

Gratefully, we have one instance of a direct quotation in the very first psalm of the collection. Our psalmist has chosen to speak of the exile and restoration in the terms of Hannah's Song, employing the images of the elevation of the poor to

princedom and Hannah's barrenness turned to motherhood in order to configure the postexilic community (Ps 113:7–8a):

She who was barren has borne seven children,

....

He raises the poor from the dust

and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

he seats them with princes ... (113:5c, 7–8a/1 Sam 2:8a–c; quotation in italics).

Hannah's Song becomes the theological undergirding for understanding this new era of promise. While this ancient song in its canonical context most probably has in view David and the Davidic dynasty ("princes"), for our psalmist it has a prophetic force. Most likely the two metaphors, "the poor from the dust" and "the needy from the ash heap," allude to the humiliated community itself, and both are intended to call attention to the reversal of Israel's degradation brought on by the Babylonian conquest and exile, which deprived them of their political, social, and physical potency. Now through this miraculous chain of events that eventuates in the "exodus" from Babylonia, the rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of worship, the psalmist, using Hannah's words, alerts the reader to the reversal of the suffering of the exile. "He settles the childless woman in her home as a happy mother of children" (113:9) is a metaphor of the restoration, and echoes 1 Sam 2:5c. In summary, the writer of Psalm 113 introduces the Egyptian Hallel with these remnants of Hannah's prayer in order to reconfigure the return and restoration in the images of the prologue to David's history.⁷

III. THE ALLUSIVE LANGUAGE OF THE TORAH

1. *First and second commandments* (Ps 115:4–8/Exod 20:3–6). The allusions to other portions of Scripture in the Egyptian Hallel are quite fascinating, and they function basically as a way for Israel to reconfess their faith, or to reaffirm the Mosaic covenant, essentially to recreate the Sinai event. Four significant allusions function in this manner. First is the derisive picture of idolatry that occurs in 115:4–8. Even though it is not phrased in the language of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:3–6), it is obviously built out of the first two commandments. And let us not forget that Israel's captivity was a result of their idolatry, so we should expect some kind of recognition of the theological ruin idolatry had brought upon this nation. And we should note that the denunciation of idolatry is introduced by an allusion to the formula of grace (Exod 34:6), reflecting the aftermath of the golden calf incident (Exodus 32):

Not to us, LORD, not to us

but to your name be the glory,

because of your *love* (*hesed*) and *faithfulness* (*emet*). (Ps 115:1)

⁷ See Bullock, *Psalms 73–150*, on Ps 113:8, and 9, and Table: "Comparison of 1 Samuel 2:8 and Psalm 113," and "Additional Insights: The Function of the Egyptian (Passover) Hallel (Psalms 113–118) in Book 5."

It is in effect an answer to the question of Ps 115:2, “Why do the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’” a question that Israel’s enemies had thrown in their face at other times, “Where is your/their God?” (Pss 42:3, 10; 79:10). And the answer given here is, “Our God is in heaven,” which means, as the following verses imply, that Israel’s God is a different kind of deity from the idols that are made with human hands (Ps 115:2–4) but are lifeless. And more than that, the makers of idols are no better than their lifeless, helpless products, and their worshipers are doomed “to be like them” (Ps 115:8). This is a monotheistic affirmation, and Zenger has made a case for a double arc that joins Psalms 113–115 and 116–118, giving the first arc a theocentric or monotheistic accent, and the second arc a universalistic accent.⁸ This is indeed a good picture of how theology was developed in the post-exilic community. For example, the polemic language of idolatry in Ps 115:4–8 represents Israel’s rejection of idols. Moreover, it is significant that in the penultimate psalm of the thanksgiving unit all Israel, in company with the priests and Levites, reaffirm their rejection of idolatry (135:15–21).

2. *The Shema*. The second allusion is to the *Shema*, one of Israel’s major to-rath “confessions” (Deut 6:4–9). Here the psalmist confesses, “I love the LORD” (Ps 116:1), which, I suggest, is an allusion to Deut 6:5, “Love the LORD with all your heart.” This affirmation is almost unique in the Psalter. The closest text is Ps 18:1, “I love you, LORD, my strength,” but a different verb is used there (*rhm*), although in the Aramaic Targum that is the verb used for “love” in Deut 6:5. But still, if we count them both, that is quite a diminished number, even though we have a few instances where the Psalms speak of loving the Lord’s name⁹. The fact that the first-person singular rather than the plural is used in Ps 116:1 is understandable because Book 5 is quite replete with instances when the first person singular carries both the singular and corporate senses. Moreover, the verb in Deut 6:5 is also singular (*ahabta*). Thus, this confession is a preeminent moment of faith as the returning people of God confess their monotheistic faith. In fact, as the editor of the Egyptian Hallel moves Israel along their journey from Egypt to Jerusalem (temple), as other psalms do, he marks the path from the return to the rebuilding of the temple, which is roughly the track we see in Psalm 114. Along the way, the editor wants the readers to see the picture of an obedient people rejecting idolatry (Psalm 115) and now confessing their faith in the very language of Moses.

⁸ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms*, 3:178–79.

⁹ Deut 6:5: “And you shall love [*ahab*] the LORD your God with all your heart.” We would expect that the appropriate response should be, “I love the LORD,” or “We love the LORD,” or their equivalents. In the same mode as Deuteronomy, it occurs once as an imperative with YHWH as the object (“Love the LORD, all his saints,” Ps 31:34). One time the verb occurs as a participle with “him” (YHWH) as the object (Ps 145:20, “The LORD guards all those who love him”); and three times the participle occurs with “his name” as the object (Pss 5:12; 69:37; 119:132). But only in 116:1 does the verb occur as a personal/community response (1st sg or 1st pl) to the commandment of Deut 6:5: “Love the LORD”).

3. *The formula of grace (Exod 34:6)*. The third allusion is to the formula of grace (Exod 34:6),¹⁰ which we have already detected in Ps 115:1, and now heard reiterated

¹⁰ The importance of the formula of grace in the Psalter can hardly be exaggerated, especially as it appears in Books 3, 4, and 5. Psalm 85 announces that “love and faithfulness meet each other,” and then the lone Davidic psalm in Book 3 (Psalm 86; also an echo in 86:5), composed of bits and pieces of other David psalms, quotes Exod 34:6: “But you, Lord, are a *compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness*” (86:15; quote in italics). That is even more impressive when we recognize that Books 3 and 4 both exhibit a muted voice of David, with one Davidic psalm in Book 3 (Psalm 86) and 2 in Book 4 (Psalms 101 and 103). The reason for that, I suggest, is the presence of Psalm 89 that raises the troubling question of the reliability of Yahweh’s promise to David: “Lord, where is your former great love, which in your faithfulness you swore to David?” (Ps 89:49). In view of the fact that Book 3 was composed against the background of the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the Davidic dynasty, the voice of Moses in Psalm 90 provides reassurance that Yahweh has been with Israel from creation, so he has no intention of vacating now. Moreover—and this speaks to the immediate question—“Yahweh reigns/is king” (Pss 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1). Nor should one fail to notice that in the final cadre of David psalms in the Psalter (Psalms 138–145), David acknowledges himself to be “his [Yahweh’s] servant” (Pss 143:2, 12; 144:10) and acclaims Yahweh as “King” (Ps 145:1). That was precisely what the editor of Book 4 was trying to say through the “kingship of Yahweh” psalms, and now this final announcement from David’s own lips is its confirmation. If the Lord is King and David is his servant (precisely what kings should be), then the issue of Psalm 89 has been resolved.

Having introduced an allusion to the formula of grace in Ps 85:9 (“Love and faithfulness meet together”; also 86:5), the editor of Book 4, in the final David psalm of the book, reintroduces the formula of grace: “*The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love*” (Ps 103:8/Exod 34:6). This is in anticipation of the announcement that the exile has ended (Ps 106:46) and the celebration of the new era has begun, an era so momentous that the first David psalm of Book 5 considers it the dawn of a new era: “Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn” (Ps 108:2). And he gives thanks: “For great is your love (אֲהַבָּה), higher than the heavens; your faithfulness (אֱמוּנָה) reaches to the skies” (Ps 108:4). The significance of this covenant is not lost in the remainder of the book, for the pair of psalms that introduces the Egyptian Hallel, the celebration of this new era, evokes the words of that covenant: “He has caused his wonders to be remembered; *the LORD is gracious and compassionate*” (Ps 111:4). And quite significantly the final psalm in the third “hallelujah” triad makes a loudspeaker announcement to the same effect:

Praise the LORD, all you nations;
 extol him, all you peoples.
 For great is his *love* toward us,
 and the *faithfulness* of the LORD
 endures forever. (Ps 117:1–2)

But we still have not heard the final resonance of the formula of grace in David’s voice, for the final cadre of David psalms (Psalms 138–145) begins and ends with the echoes of the formula of grace, sung again in David’s melodious and gracious voice:

I will bow down toward your holy temple
 and will praise your name
 for your *unfailing love* and your *faithfulness*. (Ps 138:2)

The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
 slow to anger and rich in love. (Ps 145:8)

When we come to the ending of the book prior to the “hallelujah” redaction, Psalm 145 acclaims Yahweh as King (145:1) in the consoling and commanding voice of David, and in the presence of David’s affirmation of the formula of grace (145:8). So, the question of Ps 89:49[50], “Lord, where is your former great *love* which in your *faithfulness* [cognate] you swore to David?” (Ps 89:49[50]) has been answered: “*The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love*” (Ps 145:8). That is to say, the covenant still stands, and Yahweh’s love is still in effect. It is, of course, Yahweh’s covenant through

ed in the penultimate psalm of the Egyptian Hallel, “For great is his *love* (*hesed*) toward us, and the faithfulness (*emet*) of the LORD endures forever” (Ps 117:2). Among the many texts of Scripture quoted and echoed in the Psalter, the formula of grace is probably the most frequent, which says something about its importance for the psalmists generally, and for the postexilic community particularly. And it is not likely that the historical/canonical context of the formula of grace was lost on our editor/writer. This new historical context, in fact, could be laid down on the canonical context of Exodus, and it is virtually a perfect fit. That is, the formula of grace in Exodus is the renewal of the covenant after Israel had sinned with the golden calf, and Moses had broken the first tablets. That was Moses’s second chance—and Israel’s—with a rewritten set of tablets, and a second chance to embrace the covenant, and in that setting the Lord identifies himself again to Moses as “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in *love* (*hesed*) and faithfulness (*emet*) (Exod 34:6). This new era celebrated by the Egyptian Hallel was also Israel’s second chance in a gigantic way, and Yahweh was creating, indeed recreating, the exodus and leading his people again out of “Egypt” to Jerusalem. And just as that first exodus was based upon Yahweh’s “love” and “faithfulness,” so was the second (117:2). A later editor was also keen on having David join his voice of affirmation, and in the renewal words of the Sinai covenant (Exod 34:6), David confesses, in both the first and last psalm of the final David cadre, God’s “love” and “faithfulness,” a confession made nowhere else but the temple itself: “I will bow down to your holy temple and will give thanks for your unfailing love and your faithfulness” (Pss 138:2; 145:8/Exod 34:6).

4. *The covenant formula.* The fourth allusion is to the covenant formula, which, in the Torah, was the shaping model of Israel’s relationship to Yahweh and is essentially the theological linchpin of torah theology. In its fully developed form it contains three parts, which are represented in Lev 26:11–12:

I will put my dwelling place among you (part 3), and I will not abhor you.

I will walk among you (part 3) and be your God (part 1), and you will be my people (part 2).

We may summarize the covenant formula in these words: “(1) I will be your God, and (2) you will be my people, and (3) I will dwell in your midst.” It is particularly interesting that in the Torah the covenant formula is one of the shaping instruments for Israel’s relationship to God,¹¹ and then, as a formal instrument, it falls into the background of the literature, until we come to the postexilic period when the people of God undergo a re-formation, and the covenant formula comes into prominence again, especially in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah.¹² So it is not sur-

Moses to David to Israel. Thus Book 5 of the Psalter has introduced a significant instrument of theological reaffirmation, directly from Yahweh’s covenant with Moses. As the new community was taking shape, this ancient word of covenant hope and promise would secure the renewing nation.

¹¹ The covenant formula is found in part or in whole in these Torah texts: Gen 17:7–8; 28:20–22; Exod 6:7; 29:45–46; Lev 26:12; Deut 29:45–46.

¹² The covenant formula is found in part or in whole in these exilic/post-exilic prophetic texts: Jer 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; Ezek 29:45, 46; 36:27–28; 37:23, 27; Zech 2:10–11; 8:8.

prising to find an allusion to it in the final psalm of the Egyptian Hallel, and in “confessional” form:

You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you. (118:28)

The fact that this formula is enclosed in the call to “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his love endures forever” (Ps 118:1, 29), is, as we have already recognized, a confession that Israel’s God is Yahweh, and is equivalent to the monotheistic confession of Ps 115:2–4. In light of the allusions to the Torah in which Yahweh revealed himself to Israel and called them to be his people, it is most appropriate that now, in this critical era, they reaffirm their faith in words of the Mosaic covenant that had shaped ancient Israel, and that has the power now to re-shape this people into a new nation. So, they confess their faith in the language of the Torah and make a solid affirmation of their faith in Yahweh, whose love and faithfulness have stretched across the centuries and not left Yahweh’s people in the ash heap of the exile.

IV. CONCLUSION

With the Egyptian Hallel we have a good example of the hermeneutical method of the editors of the Psalter, especially Book 5, that views Israel’s history and religious experience in parallelisms. The return from exile was the second exodus, and the reaffirmation of the covenant was the second “Sinai,” incorporating the confessional elements of the Mosaic covenant. Further, the literary/theological delivery system for this platform of the new age of redemption is the *hodu* psalms, which put the new community in the mode of thanksgiving and on the track to a major service of thanksgiving (Psalm 136), to be finally joined by the voice of David in reflective language of the dedication of the temple (Psalm 138/1 Kings 8).