Article

Discovering "Place" and "Space" in Psalm 104

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Abstract

Taking cues from Gert Prinsloo's work on "space" and "place" and employing a canonical reading of the book of Psalms, this article attempts to find the "space" and "place" of Ps 104. Psalm 104 is located in Book 4, which, according to the story-line of the Psalter, reflects the exilic period of Israel's history. After introducing the psalm and examining its provenance, the article moves on to a detailed study of "place" and "space," using Claudia Camp's categories of "firstspace," "secondspace," and "thirdspace," and employing "Chatman's Box" to further define "secondspace" and "thirdspace." The article concludes that the words of Ps 104, directed to exilic and postexilic hearers, were a reminder that God is sovereign over and provides for all creation, and as part of the created order, humanity should recognise God's provision for it despite life circumstances.

Keywords: Psalm 104; canonical; creation; place; space

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Introductory Words

Psalm 104 is characterised variously as an "exuberant poetic reflection" (McCann 1996, 1096), a "cosmic hymn of praise" (Brown 2002, 158), and a "sapiential creation hymn" (Zenger 1991, 77). This writer sees it as a magnificent poetic account of God's sovereignty over all creation. The psalm's "exuberance" and "magnificence" makes finding a structure for its 35 verses difficult, however, and scholars have proposed various options.[1] McCann (1996) points out shifting foci in the psalm's first 24 verses, which move fluidly back and forth as the psalmist sings: the heavens in vv. 2–4, the earth in vv. 5–6, waters in vv. 7–10, wild animals in v. 11, birds in v. 12, the earth again in v. 13, plants to feed the animals and the people in vv. 14–15, the trees in v. 16, birds again in v. 17, back to wild animals in v. 18, the heavenly bodies in vv. 19–20, a return to the wild animals in vv. 20–22, and a focus on humanity in v. 23. The psalm singer concludes in v. 24 that, by wisdom, God made God's "manifold works."[2]

In vv. 25–26, the psalm singer offers another exuberant outburst, this time with a focus on the sea and Leviathan. The psalm closes with the reminder that all of creation depends on God, and God alone, for sustenance and for life itself, and that the only proper response by creation is praise and rejoicing (vv. 33–34). The singer of Ps 104 reflects on the myriad elements of God's creation—the light, the heavens, the waters, the clouds, the wind, fire and flame, mountains, valleys, plants and trees, animals, birds, wine and oil and bread, the moon and the sun, and humans going forth to work. In the narrative framework of Ps 104, interestingly, humanity plays a "bit part," appearing only in vv. 14, 15, and 23.[3] In v. 15, God provides plants for the cattle and people to use (notice that the cattle are mentioned first); God gives wine to "gladden the human heart," oil "to make the face shine," and bread "to strengthen the human heart." And in v. 23, humanity is granted the daylight hours to "go out to their work and to their labour until evening," at which time, in the cover of darkness, "all the animals of the forest come creeping out" (v. 20).

Interpretations of Ps 104 in its context in the book of Psalms abound. In this essay, I will attempt to address the issues of "place" and "space" in the psalm. Gert Prinsloo maintains that "every story [including poetry] must be situated at a place and in a space of some kind," and he defines space as "everything in the narrative that is used to create a situation where something happens to someone" (2005, 458–59). Understandings of "place" and "space" in Ps 104 are affected by a variety of interpretational foci. For those who study the form and redaction of biblical texts, the question of its original transmission and subsequent editing would be the focus; for those who study texts from

1 See, for example, Allen (2002, 44); Mays (1994, 331–37); and Hossfeld (2011, 48).

2 Scripture references are taken from the New Revised Standard Version translation.

3 Many scholars have noted the similar sentiments of Ps 104 with Job 38–41. While Job 38–41, though, are the words of God's challenge to Job, the singer of Ps 104 celebrates creation and humanity's place within it without a challenge from God.

a rhetorical perspective, the question of the "persuasion" of the text would be the focus; for those who read the text canonically, the question of the place of Ps 104 in the overall story of the book of Psalms would be the focus. In this article, I discuss the place of Ps 104 in the story of the Psalter, address the provenance of the psalm, focus on the psalm's "place" and "space" using Prinsloo's cues for understanding such, and then apply "Chatman's Box" to the author(s) and hearers of the psalm (Chatman 1978, 146–51). I conclude that Ps 104 admonishes its hearers to embrace a new "space" in their exilic and postexilic life settings.

Psalm 104's Placement in the Book of Psalms

For those who read the book of Psalms as the story of ancient Israel's relationship with God, the story of the Psalter moves from the time of David and Solomon (Books 1 and 2—Pss 1–72), to the period of the divided kingdoms and the destruction of Jerusalem (Book 3—Pss 73–89), to the time of the Babylonian exile (Book 4—Pss 90–106), and to the time of the return from exile in Babylon and the rebuilding of the temple (Book 5—Pss 107–150). The final "shape," the ultimate story of the Psalter, however, was crafted and directed to the people of the postexilic period, a time of reflection on their past and hopes for the future.

The setting for Ps 104 in the story of the Psalter is the exilic period. Jerusalem has been sacked, the temple has been destroyed, and the people no longer have a king or royal administration; they are exiles in and vassals to the vast Babylonian empire. Book 4's frequent references to Moses (Pss 90:1; 99:6; 103:7; 105:26; 106:16, 23, 32), though, bring to mind the last time in their history that the people were outside the land promised to them, the period of the wilderness wandering, during which they were wholly dependent on God and God's prophet, Moses, for sustenance, protection, and guidance. The heart of Book 4 is a group of psalms known as the Enthronement Psalms (Pss 93–100), which celebrate God as sovereign over all creation.[4] God, who is sovereign over all creation, not just the people and land of Israel, will provide for those in exile in Babylon, just as God provided for the people during the wilderness wanderings. Hossfeld and Zenger state that in Book 4 in general and in Ps 104 in particular, "YHWH became a universal king with a heavenly throne; the cosmic forces became a heavenly court" (2011, 58).

The Provenance of Psalm 104

Most of the psalms in the Psalter are virtually impossible to date and to assign an author. Suggestions for the provenance of Ps 104 vary widely. Scholars generally agree that

4 This author includes Ps 94 and Ps 100 in the Enthronement Psalms. See deClaissé–Walford (2020, 19–20).

there is a distinct affinity with the El Amarna hymn to the sun of Amenhotep IV (Clifford 2003, 148; Gerstenberger 2001, 225; Kraus 1993, 298; Terrien 2003, 718). Kraus states, "Psalm 104 is saturated with conceptions of the encyclopaedic science of lists that can be documented in the natural science of the Egyptians" (1993, 298). Others see connections with and a corrective to Gen 1 (Brown 2002, 160; Eaton 2003, 362; Kraus 1993, 298; Mays 1994, 331; Terrien 2003, 710).[5] Many affirm connections with Job 38–41 (Brown 2002, 159; 2010, 141, 147; Brueggemann and Bellinger 2014, 447; deClaissé–Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner 2014, 769; Eaton 2003, 362), and a few cite connections with Canaanite myths of the storm-god (Byassee 2018, 23; Clifford 2003, 148; Gerstenberger 2001, 226).

Psalm 104's strong connections to Ps 103 also influence scholars' suppositions about its provenance. Both psalms begin and end with "Bless the LORD, O my soul" (Ps 103:1, 22; Ps 104:1, 35). Davidson compares and contrasts the two psalms, "Both are concerned to meditate on God's providence, but whereas in Psalm 103 it is that divine providence, that steadfast love, in human experience, in Psalm 104 it is God's providence writ large in the world which he created and which he sustains" (1998, 339). deClaissé–Walford points out, "The Midrash Tehillim regards them as an overlapping composition, paralleling their fivefold call to 'bless YHWH, O my soul' (103:1, 2, 33; 104: 1, 35) to the five books of the Torah" (2020, 59). Thus, finding a provenance for Ps 104 may be tied to finding one for Ps 103.

The date of composition and the author(s) of Ps 104 are also difficult to pin down. Brown reminds us, "As with many psalms, Psalm 104 does not readily divulge its historical context" (2010, 144). Nevertheless, scholars have speculated on its date and authorship. Kraus states that while the date of origin of the psalm cannot be ascertained, a pre–exilic date is not out of the question (1993, 299). Terrien maintains, "Minor differences aside, the order of the creative acts in the psalm is clearly that of the Genesis Yahwist myth. The date of both documents seems to be approximately the same, for they were both related to the origin of the New Year Feast" (2003, 718–19). Allen asserts, "The fact that creation, the theme of the psalm, was theologically associated in the OT and especially in the Psalms with Yahweh's kingship has directed many scholars to the autumn festival as the particular cultic setting." He further maintains that the psalm "was doubtless composed for use by a worship leader, at a temple service, to stimulate communal praise" (2002, 39). Hossfeld and Zenger place the bulk of the composition of Ps 104, along with Ps 103:1–14, in the exilic period (vv. 1–4, 10–18, 20–24, 27–30 [except 29b], and 33), with a postexilic redaction that completed the psalm as we have it in the MT (2011, 58). Gerstenberger offers another view: "Literary analysis can hardly explain its origin and use, let alone postulate a private production of texts as if composed under present–day conditions. Most likely, therefore, changing

5 Kraus maintains, though, "A traditional and favorite approach to Psalm 104 has been to interpret it as a poetic version of Genesis 1 . . . But attempts to analyze the psalm in terms of the seven-day structure of Genesis 1 are forced" (1993, 331).

styles and outlooks within the psalm are due to an interplay of liturgical voices" (2001, 225).

Thus, opinions vary. Was Ps 104 composed in the pre-exilic period, by a worship leader at the temple? Was it composed for use at the New Year feast—either in the pre-exilic period or the postexilic? Was the bulk of the psalm composed in the exilic period and redacted into its final MT form in the postexilic period? For the purposes of this article, and following a canonical "story-line" reading of the Psalter, we will attribute Ps 104 either in whole or in its nascent form (i.e., Hossfeld and Zenger) to the exilic period. As stated above, Ps 104 occurs near the end of Book 4, which according to the story-line of the Psalter recalls the exilic period of ancient Israel. And its placement at the conclusion of the Enthronement Psalms, which celebrate God's sovereignty over all creation, reaffirms and expands further on God's sovereignty over all creation.

The "story-line" of the Psalter continues in Book 5, which is reflective of the postexilic period of Israel's history. While hearers of Ps 104 in the exilic period were displaced from their land and under the rule of Babylon, hearers in the postexilic period were back in their homeland, but still under foreign rule. The temple was rebuilt and worship resumed, but they were without a king and an independent government. Whether in exile under Babylonian rule or back in their homeland under Persian rule, celebrating God as sovereign over the whole earth was a means for the people, perhaps, of reclaiming their confidence in Yahweh as creator, provider, and protector.

The "Place" and "Space" of Psalm 104

With that background, let us now explore the "place" and "space" of Ps 104. Recall Prinsloo's assertion above that "every story [including poetry] must be situated at a place and in a space of some kind," and he defines space as "everything in the narrative that is used to create a situation where something happens to someone" (2005, 458–59). Casey expands on Prinsloo's assertion, defining "space" as "the most encompassing reality that allows for things to be located within it" and "place" as "the immediate ambiance of my lived body and its history, including the whole sedimented history of cultural and social influences and personal interest" (2001, 404). What, then, is the "place" and "space" of Ps 104? Second Kings 24:14 states that when Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem in 597, "He carried away all Jerusalem, all the officials, all the warriors, ten thousand captives, all the artisans and the smiths; no one remained, except the poorest people of the land." The Israelites taken into exile in Babylon seem to have been allowed to live in their own communities and continue many of their customs and worship traditions. Darr writes that "many, if not most of the exiles were settled at Tel Abib in the vicinity of Nippur near the Chebar Canal. The 'tel' (mound) in Tel Abib suggests that the Babylonians placed the deportees in an area once inhabited, but subsequently destroyed" (2001, 1081). The prophet Jeremiah, in 29:5–6, urged the people in captivity to carry on with their lives, to build houses, plant gardens, and bear sons and daughters.

Thus, we may surmise that the "story" of Ps 104 can be "placed" in its exilic setting as a grim, abandoned tel, once occupied, but now destroyed, with the people rebuilding, planting and reaping, and attempting to go on with their lives. Those who chose to return to Jerusalem in 538 BCE undertook resettlement in the land and the rebuilding of the temple and the walls of Jerusalem.[6] Despite the relative freedom they enjoyed under Persian rule, they were still vassals to the empire, unable to be fully autonomous, and dealing with issues of rebuilding and reacclimating.

And that brings us to the question of "space" for the hearers of Ps 104. Matthews cites McNutt, who states that "'lived space' (those places in which human occupations and activities occur) becomes the determinant of group identity and social boundaries" (2003, 12). Camp provides insight into the "space," whether lived or otherwise of the hearers of Ps 104. Using categories established by Soja, a theoretician of city planning, she writes that "space" for readers/hearers of a text occurs in three spheres (2002). "Firstspace" refers to those concrete items that can be mapped and are part of reality. For the exilic and postexilic communities, "firstspace" would be Tel Abib and the partially reconstructed city of Jerusalem. "Secondspace" is imagined space, the description of space on an emotive level. For the two communities, "secondspace" is the imagined world of Ps 104. In order to discover that imagined world, we begin with an examination of the "macro-structure" of the psalm and then move on to a detailed study of its "micro-structure."

The Macro-Structure of Psalm 104

The macro-structure of Ps 104 presents a two-tiered movement from the heavens in vv. 2–4 to the creation of the earth (vv. 5–9) and life-sustaining waters (vv. 10–13) to the provisions of God for all of God's creatures in vv. 14–23. From there the movement shifts back to creation (v. 24), the waters of the sea (vv. 25–26) and a reiteration of God's provision for all creatures in vv. 27–30. Verses 31–34 move the hearer back out to the sentiments of vv. 1–9, with a call to sing to the Lord.

6 Klein reminds us that the narratives in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are told from the viewpoint of the "privileged" who returned from exile in Babylon and not from those who remained in the land under Babylonian rule (1999, 668).

Introduction (rejoined in v. 35b)

vv. 2–4 celebrating the creation of the heavens

vv. 5–9 celebrating the creation of the earth

vv. 10–13 the springs and the streams giving water

vv. 14–23 God's provisions: food for the cattle and humanity
wine, oil, and bread
trees for the birds, mountains for the goats, rocks for the coneys
the moon and sun to mark the seasons
darkness for the animals, daytime for human labour

v. 24 celebrating wisdom as the creator of all of God's creatures

vv. 25–26 the waters of the sea

vv. 27–30 God's provision of food and life and death

vv. 31–34 celebrating creation and singing to the LORD

35a Condemnation of the wicked

Conclusion (35b)

The Micro-Structure of Psalm 104

Psalm 104 has many parallels with Ps 103, including the image of God seated on a royal throne surrounded by "messengers"/"angels" (Myklm) and "ministers" (Myt r #fm) in 104:4 and 103:19–22, the notice that humans are mere "dust" (r p( ) in 104:29 and 103:14, and the designation of creation as the "works" (My#&m) of God in 104:24 and 103:22, suggesting a common provenance for them or for borrowing of one from the other (Clifford, 2003, 147; Davidson 1998, 339; Kraus 1993, 298). The emphasis of each psalm, though, is different. Psalm 103's repeated references to the "mercy" or "compassion" (Mkr —vv. 4, 8, 13) and "steadfast love" (ds x—vv. 4, 8, 11, 13, 17) of God indicate that the "nature" of God is the theme of Ps 103. Psalm 104's repeated mentions of God's "work" or "making" (h#&) in vv. 4, 13,19, 24, and 31 point to God's creative work as its theme.

Psalm 104 also evinces numerous connections to other psalms in Book 4. Verse 1's statement that God is "clothed with honour (dwh) and majesty (r dh)" is paralleled in Pss 93:1 and 96:10. In addition, Pss 93 and 96 proclaim that the earth is firmly established and will never be "moved" (+wm), an assurance reiterated in Ps 104:5. Verses 6–11 of the psalm, depicting God taming the chaotic waters, confirm the words of Pss 93:3–4; 95:5; 98:7–8. In Ps 90:14 the people ask God to "satisfy" ((b#&) them; in 91:16 God promises to satisfy; and in 103:5 the psalm singer characterises God as one who satisfies. The words of Ps 104:13, 16, and 28 narrate the fulfilment—God satisfies ((b#&) the earth and all of creation.

The words of vv. 19–23 recount the rhythm of life God has crafted for the world, the ebb and flow of daily activity, each element finding its place within the created order: the "moon," the "sun," "the animals of the forest," the "young lions," and "people" (Md). Verse 23 confirms humanity's task in the created order, to go out to its "work" (l (p) and "labour" (d b ( ) each day. These words, heard in conjunction with vv. 14–15, affirm God's purpose for humanity at creation. In Gen 2:15 God put the first human (Md)) in the garden to "till" (d b (, literally "serve"), the same Hebrew word translated in Ps 104:23 as "labour."

Verses 24–26's words of wonder and praise bring this section of Ps 104 to a close with the psalm singer celebrating all of God's "works" (h # & —see also vv. 4, 13, 19, and 31). In v. 24 the singer credits "wisdom" (h mk x) as the seed-bed, perhaps even the source, of creation.[7] Verses 24–26 of Ps 104 are filled with echoes of Gen 1: the sea (My, v. 25; Gen 1:6–10); the creeping things and other living creatures (# ßmr and t wyx , v. 25; Gen 1:24); and Leviathan (N yw , v. 26), called "the great sea monster" in Gen 1:21 and characterised as a fearsome creature in Job 41.

At the end of v. 26 the psalmist says of the sea, "There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it (wb)." The word translated "sport" is from the Hebrew root q x # & the same word used to describe Woman Wisdom's utter delight in creation in Prov 8:30. Additionally, the word translated "in" is the Hebrew preposition b , which carries a basic meaning of proximity and thus can be translated "in, with, or by." Brown, in an article entitled "The Lion, the Wicked, and the Wonder of It All," renders the preposition as "with" and translates the verse as "There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to frolic with it." He writes: "God's primordial nemesis is found frolicking (q x # & —"sporting") in the water, and it is not alone. God is also there, splashing away," suggesting an utter delight by God at the created order, even the Leviathan (2006, 16). Such delight seems confirmed by the psalmist's words in v. 31: "may the LORD rejoice (x m# &in (b) his works."

The singer of Ps 104 reflects on the myriad elements of God's creation and on their praises—the light, the heavens, the waters, the clouds, the wind, the fire and flame, the mountains, the valleys, the springs of waters, the wild asses, the birds, the cattle, the plants, the wine and oil and bread, the trees, the goats and the rock-badgers, the moon and the sun, the young lions, and humans going forth to their work.

How might we describe the "secondspace" of Ps 104? In a world of seeming turmoil and uncertainty, whether in the exilic or postexilic setting, the singer of Ps 104 calls on her hearers to remember their traditions, perhaps to look again at the "big picture." The reality for them was either Tel Abib, a deserted, ruined tel, or Jerusalem, destroyed by the Babylonians, slowly being rebuilt. The "imagined space" of Ps 104 is a whole-world

7 In Prov 8:22–31 Wisdom states that she was present at creation, working alongside God as a "master worker" (Nwm)), rejoicing in the inhabited world (l b t —see Pss 90:2; 93:1; 96:10, 13; 97:4; 98:7, 9).

picture with God in control and providing for all creation. The psalm does not limit God's creative acts and provisions to a particular people or a particular place—God creates and provides for the whole earth and all of its inhabitants. So, while you are forced to live in a deserted and desolate place like Tel Abib, heed the words of Jeremiah to rebuild, plant and reap, and marry and have children. When you are back in the land of promise, despairing over rebuilding the city to its former glory, remember God's ongoing creative actions in the world and God's provisions to meet the needs of all, for God's wisdom is boundless.

Finally, "thirdspace" is the lived space, that space in which one finds oneself depending on whether one is male or female, peasant or aristocrat, farmer or merchant. For the two communities, whether in Tel Abib or back in Jerusalem, "thirdspace" is the social/economic/gendered position(s) of the hearers of Ps 104 (Camp 2002). According to 2 Kgs 24:14, when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in 597, he "carried away all Jerusalem, all the officials, all the warriors, ten thousand captives, all the artisans and the smiths; no one remained, except the poorest people of the land." Those who found themselves in Tel Abib were skilled artisans and smiths, warriors, and people of rank in the city, not the peasant farmers who tended the land and the sheep and goats. Their "thirdspace" was most likely in stark contrast to the "thirdspace" they occupied in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. How did they hear and internalise the words of Ps 104?

The same would be true of those who returned to Jerusalem under Persian rule some 50 years after the exile. Many would have been born in Babylon, never having been to the land of promise, hearing only stories of it as they matured. What did they find on their return? How did they hear and internalise the words of Ps 104? The poorest had remained in the land to maintain the agriculture and animal husbandry for the Babylonians. They most likely would not have heard the words of Ps 104. Thus, endeavours to find the "thirdspace" in the postexilic period most likely would mirror finding the "thirdspace" for the exilic community, albeit perhaps in somewhat more familiar surroundings.

Chatham's Box

In an endeavour to better understand the "secondspace" and the "thirdspace" of the setting of Ps 104, this article will now turn to another method, one introduced by Chatham in *Story and Discourse* (1978). Chatham distinguishes between real author, implied author, narrator, narratee, implied reader, and real reader, forming a "box" that

moves from left to right, from the real author, the source of the narrative, to the real reader, the ultimate consumer of the narrative (1978, 146–51).[8]

real author	implied author	narrator	narratee	implied reader	real reader

Chatham maintains that we need such distinctions in order to explore "the interrelation of the several parties to the narrative transaction" (1978, 147). The "real author" and the "real reader" are the flesh-and-blood persons who produce the text and read it. But in the acts of producing a text and reading a text, the "real author" and the "real reader" assume "implied" personas. The "implied author" is another of the author's selves, assumed as she carries out the writing project at hand. The "implied reader" is the reader the text invites us to become in the process of reading.[9] Booth sums it up well:

> The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement. (Booth 1983, 138)

The "Thirdspace" of Psalm 104—The "Real Author" and the "Real Reader"

Using Chatham's box to further understand the "secondspace" and "thirdspace" of Ps 104, we begin with "thirdspace," the lived space of the "flesh-and-blood" "real author" and the "real readers/hearers" of the psalm. Who, then, was the "flesh-and-blood" "real author" of Ps 104? Davidson states, "Whoever the author of Psalm 104 was, he was a poet of no mean stature. This psalm contains some of the finest lyric poetry in the Old Testament" (1998, 339). Terrien adds, "The acquaintance of the psalmist with both the prayer of an Egyptian thinker, who wishes to unify the world of praise, and a Hebrew wise man . . . can hardly be doubted. Like the poet of Job, this poet is an international seeker of God in world culture" (2003, 718). Allen maintains, "This hymn was doubtless composed for use by a worship leader, at a temple service, to stimulate communal praise" (2002, 39). Thus, I suggest that the "real author" who lived and breathed in the "thirdspace" was educated, connected to the temple in some way, and, if we assign an exilic provenance to the bulk of Ps 104, was one of the exiles in Babylon. And, following Hossfeld and Zenger's lead, the final redaction of Ps 104 was undertaken in Jerusalem in the postexilic period by yet another temple functionary.

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8 While every text has a real and implied author and a real and implied reader, not all texts clearly have a narrator and narratee. A good example of a text with a narrator and narratee is *One Thousand and One Nights*.

9 While me as the "real author" remains the same, the "implied author" I become when I write a commentary on the book of Psalms is very different from the "implied author" I become when I write a letter to my son. By the same token, the "implied reader" I become when I read a scholarly article is very different from the "implied reader" I become when reading a letter from my son.

Who, then, were the "flesh-and-blood" readers/hearers of Ps 104? According to 2 Kgs 24, those taken to Babylon in exile in 597 and then again in 587 were the artisans, the smiths, the officials, the warriors, and those with high social standing. Only the poorest of the land remained to tend it. Those who were settled in Tel Abib found themselves in very different life circumstances than the ones they had known. Renz posits:

> Having been part of Judah's upper class, they had left behind family, social status, and material possessions. They had seen people dying during the siege and must have had further losses of life on the long and arduous journey to Babylonia . . . even with these events fading in the background, the reality was that they had exchanged their hilly homeland and the pleasant climate of Jerusalem for the flat and hot Babylonian low lands, and at least some of them were certainly not used to the hard manual labour now required of them. (Renz 1999, 44–45)

The readers/hearers of Ps 104 in the postexilic period were faced with a massive task of rebuilding, regrouping, and survival under Persian rule. While the biblical text provides very little information about those who returned from exile in Babylon in 538, we may surmise that many who returned had never lived in the land of promise, having been born during the 50 years of captivity in Babylon, while those who had lived in the land and returned there were aged. These, then, were the "flesh-and-blood" readers/hearers of Ps 104, whether in exile in Babylon or in Jerusalem under Persian rule.

The "Secondspace" of Psalm 104—The "Implied Author" and "Implied Reader"

What persona does the "implied author" (the "implied authors") of Ps 104 assume? We can surmise that the author was educated, well-acquainted with creation and nature stories in other traditions in the ancient Near East, and was seeking to encourage those in exile in Babylon and those who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon to remember that God is the creator and sustainer of all creation. The psalm does not limit God's sovereignty to the people of Israel, but celebrates God's provision to all creation, with a recognition of the place of humanity within creation (v. 23). The words of Ps 104 do not confine the God of Israel to a particular geography or time, but are words of hope for the people, whether in their own preexilic autonomous land of promise, in Babylon, or in the land of promise under foreign control. Psalm 103 celebrates the nature of God, a God of steadfast love who has compassion on his children like a parent (vv. 11–13); Ps 104 celebrates God's good provision for all elements of creation. If we read the two psalms in tandem, the message is clear. God is compassionate towards all creation and God provides for all creation.

What of the "implied reader(s)" of Ps 104? Second Kings 24:14–16 states that those taken into exile to Tel Abib in Babylon were "officials, warriors, artisans, and smiths, and men of valour," the upper crust of society. And those who returned to Jerusalem and undertook the massive rebuilding projects? Again, these were the more "privileged," those who had been able to rise above the arduous labour undertaken by the peasant farmers left behind by the Babylonians to tend the ground and flocks.

Whether in exile in Babylon or in postexilic Jerusalem, the "implied readers" of Ps 104, those of more privileged status, while the same people as the "real readers," were being urged to assume a different, perhaps humbler persona. Yes, God is sovereign over all creation; yes, God provides for all of creation; but humanity is part and parcel of that creation. The privileged in society often see themselves as something above, outside of, and in control of creation. The words of Ps 104 reminded the people, I maintain, that God, not they, was the source of all provisions for creation, including them. Bauckham sums up well the message of Ps 104, a message of hope and admonition to the exiles in Babylon and the those who returned to rebuild Jerusalem. He writes:

> All God's creatures are first and foremost creatures, ourselves included. All earthly creatures share the same Earth; and all participate in an interrelated and interdependent community . . . . Cosmic humility is a much-needed ecological virtue. . . . We need the humility "to walk more lightly upon the Earth, with more regard for the life around us." . . . We need the humility to know ourselves as creatures within creation, not gods over creation, the humility of knowing that only God is God. (Bauckham 2010, 64, 46)

The writer(s) of Ps 104 call on the "real readers" of the psalm, those occupying the "thirdspace," whether in exile in Babylon or in a Jerusalem badly in need of rebuilding to become the "secondspace," the "implied readers" of the psalm. In that way, perhaps, they could come to terms with their life circumstances without giving up hope in the good of provisions of their God.

Concluding Words

This article has examined the role of Ps104 in the story of the Psalter, addressed the provenance of the psalm, discussed Prinsloo's concepts of "space" and "place," and then applied "Chatman's Box" to the concepts of "space" and "place." I argue that Ps 104's date of composition and subsequent placement in Book 4 influences how we understand its "firstspace," "secondspace," and "thirdspace" settings (Camp 2000). Hossfeld and Zenger maintain that Ps 104's nascent composition was during the time of the Babylonian exile with a redaction undertaken in the postexilic period. Thus Ps 104's initial readers'/hearers' "firstspace," their concrete geographical reality was either Tel Abib in Babylon, a previously abandoned tel, now home to the exiles, or the partially reconstructed city of Jerusalem, while the "thirdspace" was the social/economic/gendered position of the original readers/hearers of the psalm. The psalm invites its readers/hearers to live into the psalm's "secondspace" as the "implied readers" of the "implied author(s)"—the imagined, new space of Ps 104, a world in which God is in control and providing for all creation—not in a particular place or time or for a particular people, but for the whole earth and all its inhabitants. Determining "place" and "space" is, I maintain, a valuable tool to understanding the varied voices and sentiments found in the Psalter.

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