

Intertextuality and the interpretation of Psalm 1¹

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ABSTRACT

The meaning of the word 'Torah' in Psalm 1:2 is investigated in the light of the intratextual context of Psalm 1 itself and in the light of intertextual connections of this psalm with Joshua 1, Jeremiah 17, Psalms 52 and 92, Job 8, Ezekiel 47, and 1 Chronicles 22. It is contended that 'Torah' in Psalm 1:2 refers to the Mosaic Torah rather than to the Psalter itself. The Torah of Moses is depicted in Psalm 1 as a guide on the road of life to the presence of Yahweh, symbolised by a paradise-like temple garden. The mutual connections of Psalm 1 and 1 Chronicles 22 with Joshua 1 might suggest that Psalm 1 was intended as an introduction to the first three books of the Psalter in the first place.

A INTRODUCTION

It is now almost generally accepted that Psalm 1 was intentionally set in its present position to serve as an introduction to the Book of Psalms.² Some investigators would go so far as to say that Psalm 1 was written for precisely this purpose.³ Its lack of superscript or attribution to an author, the fact that it probably originally contained no number, and its timeless and didactic qualities are cited as strong indicators that Psalm 1 was inserted where it stands now to serve as a guideline to how the Psalter should be understood.⁴ Wilson (1985:206; 2002:96) links up with Childs (1979:513) in arguing that this placement of the psalm meant that the 'Torah of Yahweh' mentioned in verse 2 would now be understood to include the Psalter itself. The implication of this view is, in turn, that the emphasis in the use of the Psalter had shifted from cultic performance to meditation and from public use to private use⁵ by the time Psalm 1 became its heading. Israel's words of response to God, it would

¹ I would like to acknowledge the informal input of dr. Beat Weber, our Swiss Research Associate, who spent part of his Sabbatical in our department during 2005. I have benefited immensely from the regular discussions we had during this time.

² McCann (2005:341) calls it one of the few things that Psalms scholars of all backgrounds and methodological persuasions seem to agree upon. The idea itself can be traced all the way back to Jerome, possibly even earlier (cf Whybray 1996:38, who refers to L Jacquet, 1975, *Les Psaumes et le Coeur de l'homme I*, Bembloux: Duculot, p 203, a source which I did not consult).

³ This is a view expressly stated by, inter alia, E Zenger (1993:45-46), C Levin (1993:359) and R G Kratz (1996:3).

⁴ Wilson (1985:204-206); cf Wilson (2002:99).

⁵ The idea about 'private psalmody' seems to have originated with Mowinckel (Whybray 1996:15, cf Mowinckel [1924] 1966:8-36).

seem, had become part of the Word of God to Israel (Wilson 1985:206, Childs 1979:513-514).

It is in the light of the assertion that 'Torah' in Ps 1:2 is meant to include or refer primarily to the book of Psalms itself that I propose to investigate the contents of this concept in Psalm 1. My own research into Psalm 119 has shown that the *semantic field* of Torah terms as a whole (not the word Torah itself) in that long psalm encompasses the whole religious tradition, probably as it had crystallised into scriptural form at the time of its composition (Botha 1986:306).⁶ Another finding of that investigation was that the Torah functions in Psalm 119 as a kind of intermediary or interface between Yahweh and man, taking over some of the functions which Yahweh himself performed in earlier religious tradition. It would be interesting if evidence of this could be found in Psalm 1 as well. Psalm 119 is ideally suited to a semantic investigation because of its length and the paradigmatic repetition of words from the semantic field of Torah terms. In the case of Psalm 1, other resources have to be tapped to try to establish what the author meant by 'Torah'. What I have in mind in this regard is the immediate context of the word 'Torah' in Psalm 1 and the intertextual relationship of the psalm to other contexts in the Hebrew Bible.

In an article published in 1999, Jerome Creach traces most of the important intertextual links between Psalm 1:3⁷ and other Old Testament contexts, as well as the parallels between Jeremiah 17 (which he considers to be a text used by the author of Ps 1) and the Egyptian *Instruction of Amen-em-Opet*. His interest is in the image of the righteous being likened to a tree planted by streams of water. In his investigation he shows convincingly that the image intended by the author of Psalm 1 is that of streams in a *temple garden*. This leads him eventually to conclude that Psalm 1:3a-d (the righteous being like a tree planted next to streams of water) implicitly compares the Torah with the temple and 'comes closer than any other biblical text to the rabbinic view of *tôrâ* as a replacement for the temple' (Creach 1999:45).

My own investigation, done before I read the article of Creach, convinced me that the 'streams of water' in Psalm 1:3 are a reference to the beneficial effect of the Torah and that there is a close connection between the concept of Torah in Psalm 1 and the temple, primarily because of the similarities between Psalm 1 on the one hand and

⁶ On the basis of the frequency of certain constructions and syntagmatic connections, the semantic field of Torah terms as a whole was found in this study of mine to contain two poles. These are a 'Word' component connected to salvatory actions and promises of Yahweh (a kind of oracular or juridical aspect like the material found in the prophetic books, represented by the terms *משפטים*, *אמרה* and *דבר*) and an 'Instruction' component connected to the actions of man (a more ethically-oriented concept like the contents of the Torah, consisting of the other five words, namely *תורה*, *עדות*, *מצות*, *חקים*, and *פקדים*) (Botha 1986:304).

⁷ Creach (1999:35) notes that Jos 1:7-8 'reverberates throughout Psalm 1', but he does not investigate the relationship between the two contexts, since he is primarily interested in the image of the tree in Ps 1:3a-d. Ps 1:3e seems to have a link with Jos 1:8.

Ezekiel 47, Psalm 52, and Psalm 92 on the other. I am, however, not convinced that the author of Psalm 1 thinks of the Torah as a *replacement* for the temple or that the position of Psalm 1 suggests that the Psalter is to be read as part of the ‘Torah’ or as a new kind of Torah. It is perhaps time to reconsider the question of what is meant by ‘Torah’ in Psalm 1, especially in the light of the structure of the psalm itself (intra-textual evidence), its links with other biblical contexts (intertextual evidence), and its location at the head of the Psalter (its possible editorial function).

B INTRATEXTUAL EVIDENCE ABOUT THE CONTENTS OF ‘TORAH’ IN PSALM 1

Before its intertextual connections can be traced, it would perhaps be beneficial to consult the immediate context of the word ‘Torah’ in Psalm 1 itself in an unbiased way (as far as this is possible) to determine what it means.⁸ When other texts are consulted in this section, it is therefore done primarily with the aim of understanding the meaning of words and expressions and not to interpret the psalm in the light of other contexts. Intertextual links will be investigated in the next section.

The segmentation of Psalm 1 may be represented as follows:⁹

I	A	1	אֲשֶׁר־יֵאֱמָר בְּעֲצַת רְשָׁעִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִלְךְ	1a	Blessed is the man b who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
		2	וּבִדְרֹךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד וּבִמְוֹשֵׁב לְצִיִּים לֹא יָשָׁב:	c	and on the way of sinners he does not stand d and in the seat of scoffers he does not sit;
	B	3	כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה הִפְעִיזוּ וּבְחֻרְתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וָלַיְלָה:	2a	but in the Torah of Yahweh is his delight b and in his Torah he meditates day and night.
	C	4	וְהָיָה כַּעֵץ שְׂתוּל עַל-פְּלִי מַיִם אֲשֶׁר פְּרִיֹו יִתֵּן בְּעֵתוֹ וְעֵלְהוּ לֹא-יִבּוֹל וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה יִצְלֵחַ:	3a	And he will be like a tree, b planted along ¹⁰ streams of water, c which gives its fruit on time d and the leaves of which do not wither. e And with everything he does, he succeeds.
II	D	6	לֹא-כֵן הִרְשָׁעִים כִּי אִם-כַּמּוֹץ אֲשֶׁר-תִּדְפְּנוּ רוּחַ:	4a	Not so the wicked – b but like chaff in contrast, which the wind scatters.
	E	7	עַל-כֵּן לֹא-יִקְמוּ רְשָׁעִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט	5a	Therefore the wicked will not rise in the judgement

⁸ It can be problematic if an investigation begins with an intertextual comparison such as, for example, those of Whybray (1996:39) and Creach (1999:35). Kratz (1996), on the other hand, begins his discussion with a concise but very penetrating discussion of the literary structure of Ps 1.

⁹ For detailed stichometric and poetical analyses, consult the following: Prinsloo (1984:8-23); Botha (1991:381-396); Weber (2001:48-51).

¹⁰ According to Gesenius (1910:§119cc), the preposition could be taken here as meaning ‘above (the water level)’.

			וְחַטָּאִים בְּעֵדוּת צְדִיקִים:	b	and sinners in the gathering of righteous.
III	F	8	כִּי יוֹדֵעַ יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ צְדִיקִים	6a	Certainly, God knows the way of the righteous;
			וְדֶרֶךְ רָשָׁעִים תֵּאבֵד:	b	but the way of the wicked will perish.

The psalm seems to have three parts (stanzas I-III). The first is dedicated as a whole to the righteous person, describing his reluctance to associate with the way of the wicked (strophe A, v 1) and his delight in the Torah of Yahweh in contrast (strophe B, v 2). Strophe C (v 3) describes his success by way of a simile or allegory, likening him to a fruit-tree growing in ideal conditions. Stanza II has only two short strophes which correspond contrastingly to the three of stanza I: The comparison of the righteous with a tree (strophe C) is contrasted with the comparison of the wicked with chaff (strophe D, v 4).¹¹ The lack of association of the righteous with the wicked (strophe A) and his association with the Torah and thus with Yahweh (strophe B), are contrasted with the lack of association of the wicked with the righteous and their consequent failure in judgement and in the community of righteous people (strophe E, v 5). The final stanza, III (v 6), sums everything up with a final pronouncement on the way of the righteous being known (and thus cared for)¹² by Yahweh, while the way of the wicked is said to perish as if by itself.¹³

Verse 3 thus likens the righteous person to a tree planted by streams of water. This verse itself begins with a simple *wegatal* consecutive form (כָּעֵץ שָׁתוּל עַל-פְּלִיגֵי מַיִם), necessitating the reader to think back to verse 1 for the identification of the subject. The implication is that strophe C is closely connected to strophes A and B, so that the comparison has to be interpreted in the light of what is said in the rest of stanza I. The person who is likened to a tree turns out to be ‘the man’ who is happy or blessed because he does not associate with the wicked, sinners, and scoffers but (instead)¹⁴ meditates on the Torah of Yahweh day and night.

One of the questions that confronts the interpreter of Psalm 1 is whether the image of the tree is to be treated as a simple comparison or whether it resembles a kind of allegory, an extended simile, in which there is more than one point of comparison. This seems to be the case, since the fruit and the leaves of the tree are also mentioned.

¹¹ The alliteration of the Hebrew words for ‘like a tree’ (כָּעֵץ) and ‘like chaff’ (כַּמֶּזֶךְ) makes the contrast very conspicuous.

¹² Prinsloo (1984:14) speaks of a ‘pregnant, emphatic meaning in the sense of “care for”, “love”, “be intimately involved with”’ (my translation of the Afrikaans).

¹³ Judgement by Yahweh is conspicuously absent in Ps 1. The wicked people are ‘like chaff which the wind scatters’, but this does not imply that Yahweh is like wind that scatters the wicked. It is not the wicked that perish in v 6, but the ‘way of the wicked’. Prinsloo (1984:15) similarly notes that ‘Psalm 1 is not a confirmation of the dogma of retribution’. Levin (1993:360) would want to differ from this. Because Ps 1 has borrowed from Jos 1, he argues that the prosperity of the man in the comparison is a reward for his study of the Torah: ‘Der Baum ... gibt nicht Frucht, weil er grün bleibt, sondern bleibt grün, weil er Frucht bringt: Der Lohngedanke hat Ursache und Wirkung auf den Kopf gestellt.’

¹⁴ There is a strong antithesis between the two types of association.

It could be that these aspects merely give additional information about the *circumstances* of the tree and are not symbolic too, but in the light of the syntactic patterns in the poem as a whole¹⁵ they rather seem to describe aspects of the man in the comparison.¹⁶ The ‘fruit’ of the tree can be interpreted as a symbol of the consequences of the righteous person’s actions,¹⁷ whereas the leaves¹⁸ of the tree or both can be taken to refer to his vitality and endurance.¹⁹ Additional proof for the surmise, that the image is an allegory, is provided by the fact that the image of the tree seamlessly moves back to reality in the subsequent phrase ‘and with everything he does, he succeeds’. This phrase cannot constitute a separate verse line, but must be demarcated as part of the fifth verse line (see the stichometric analysis).

Because of the close association between the righteous person and the tree in stanza I, the listener or reader would want to enquire about the point of reference of the ‘streams of water’. If every element of the image of the tree has symbolic value, the streams of water should probably be understood as symbolising the Torah of Yahweh. The expression פְּלִי מַיִם refers to canals or artificial water channels.²⁰ Creach (1999:41) makes the interesting remark that the poet could have used a form of the word יַרְבֵּל instead of פְּלִי, since this word occurs in the parallel text in Jeremiah 17:8 and using it would have made a clever wordplay with לֹא-יִבְּוֹל in Psalm 1:4.²¹ He (Creach 1999:42) thinks that the reason for this choice of the author is the association between the stem פֹּלֵג and water that flows from the holy mountain in Psalms 46:5 and 65:10 and also in Isaiah 30:25 and 32:2. The word ‘streams’ thus carries in itself a reference to Zion or the temple or, at the least, establishes a strong link with the presence of God.²²

¹⁵ A pattern of statements expanded by relative sentences is followed for the description of the actions of the righteous person, the description of the tree to which he is likened, as well as for the description of the fate of the wicked.

¹⁶ The extension of the simile seems to be meaningful in the light of the antithetical comparison of wicked people with chaff. The lack of impact and success of the wicked are expressed by the brevity of the second comparison: they are like chaff that is scattered by the wind.

¹⁷ Cf Jr 6:19, which speaks negatively about the ‘fruit’ of the people of Israel’s thoughts. Cf also judgement according to ‘the fruit of (one’s) doings’ in Jr 21:14 and 32:19.

¹⁸ Cf Is 1:30 and 64:5; also Pr 11:28 (‘the righteous will flourish like a green leaf’) (ESV).

¹⁹ Cf Jr 12:1-2 which laments the fact that the ‘way of the wicked prospers’ (רְשָׁעִים צִלְחָה) and that they keep on growing and bearing fruit (עֵשׂוּ פְרִי) after having been planted by Yahweh himself (נִשְׁעַתָּם). When used of humans, ‘fruit’ can of course also refer to offspring. Cf Is 14:29, 37:31, Ezk 17:9, Hs 9:16, and Am 2:9.

²⁰ Cf HALOT s v פְּלִי.

²¹ This rests of course on the assumption that Ps 1 is later than Jr 17, something which Creach (1999:36-39) argues for by comparing Ps 1, Jr 17, and chapter 4 from the ‘Instruction of Amen-em-Opet’.

²² The word sometimes refers to an abundance of rain or nourishment given by God (cf Job 38:25; Ps 65:10). In Job 29:5-6, the expression פְּלִי-שֶׁמֶן (‘streams of oil’ flowing from a

The verb שָׁתַל usually refers to a planting or transplanting, like that of a shoot or sapling. The passive participle might be suggestive of the fact that it is Yahweh who does the planting (the divine passive). The word itself might also be suggestive of ideal conditions: According to Ezekiel 17:8 and 10, Israel was ‘planted’ by Yahweh as a vine in a fertile field by many waters. The tree would therefore be envisaged as a fruit-tree, planted in a garden or agricultural field and tended by a gardener or farmer. The very least one can say about this image is that the righteous person is portrayed as one who is cared for, nourished, and sustained by Yahweh like a fruit-tree that is tended by a gardener. Like a gardener would irrigate a tree, Yahweh ‘irrigates’ the righteous through his Torah.²³

It may be significant that the only two references to time in Psalm 1 are found in the remark that the righteous person studies the Torah ‘day and night’ and that the tree gives its fruit ‘on time’ or ‘in its season’, in other words, when it should. In the Hebrew Bible, apart from the context in Psalm 1, it is the rain (Dt 11:14; 28:12; Jr 5:24; Ezek 34:26), grain (Job 5:26; Hs 2:11), a constellation of stars (Job 38:32), or the food of animals (Ps 104:27; Ps 145:15) that arrives בְּעִתּוֹ, ‘on its time’. It is Yahweh who provides these things each in ‘its time’ or due season (cf Ec 3:11). It seems that in Psalm 1 it is also because of the continuous contact with the Torah of Yahweh that the righteous person is able to produce righteous deeds on time. It is in this sense that the continual study of the Torah corresponds to the tree being ‘planted’ by streams of water, in other words, that the Torah corresponds to streams of water.

The Torah in Psalm 1 is, however, not only symbolised by streams of water, but it is also represented as a guide on the road of life. Road imagery is present in the psalm in words and phrases such as ‘does not walk in the counsel’, ‘does not stand on the way’, ‘knows the way’, and ‘the way will perish/vanish’. The righteous person is not only portrayed as a tree standing next to water, but also as a traveller who consults the Torah and whose way because of that has a destination and does not disappear²⁴ such as that of the wicked.²⁵ The righteous person does not associate himself with the counsel of the wicked, but with the Torah. Because of the antithesis, the Torah is implicitly described as the ‘counsel’ of Yahweh, the ‘way’ of Yahweh, and the ‘seat’

rock) is used in parallel with ‘steps bathed in milk’ as a symbol of abundance and happiness in the presence of God. Cf also Is 30:23-25 for an abundance of rain and food. Is 32:2 carries the connotation of refreshing streams of water in an otherwise dry country. Janowski (2003:27) notes that it is the presence of Yahweh in the temple that transforms the threatening masses of water below into beneficial canals and life-giving streams.

²³ Cf Ps 19:7 where the idea is expressed that the Torah is beneficial to a worshipper: ‘The Torah of Yahweh is perfect, reviving the soul.’

²⁴ Job 6:18 speaks about the ‘paths of their way’ (of the streambeds of wadis) twisting and turning and disappearing (וַיִּאֲבֹדוּ) into the wilderness. The image of a road ‘perishing’ seems to refer to a track running into the wilderness and becoming invisible.

²⁵ The sequence of verbs ‘walk’, ‘stand’, ‘sit’ in v 1 as well as the verb ‘perish’ used of the way of the wicked in v 6 testifies to the failure in life of the wicked.

of Yahweh.²⁶ The righteous person is also someone who has made a specific choice for the Torah as a guide on the road of life. This is signified by the expression ‘whose delight is in (Yahweh’s) Torah’. He is someone who avoids choosing the wrong companions (the ‘wicked’, ‘sinners’, and ‘scoffers’) but chooses right, and *is chosen* for that reason. As he chooses to know the Torah of Yahweh, so Yahweh knows (cares for) his way through life. Consultation with the revealed will of Yahweh assures his success in life.

To sum up, the Torah is presented by the context of Psalm 1 itself as the caring involvement of Yahweh in the life of the righteous, and as his guidance on the road of life. In its representation of Yahweh, the Torah serves as a kind of interface that softens the direct involvement of God in the life of people. Its function is euphemistic, similar to the way the Memra is used in rabbinic theology to avoid anthropomorphism. Yahweh’s blessing is described as the ‘organic growth’ of a tree and its production of fruit, and the most direct and boldest pronouncement of involvement of Yahweh in human life is that Yahweh ‘knows the way’ of the righteous.²⁷

C INTERTEXTUAL EVIDENCE ABOUT THE CONTENTS OF ‘TORAH’ IN PSALM 1

Psalm 1 shows remarkable similarities to a number of contexts in the Hebrew Bible. One of these contexts, Joshua 1:6-8, has such conspicuous parallels with this psalm that H Bardtke, who prepared the book of Psalms for BHS, considered verse 3e to be a gloss without any doubt.²⁸ The sudden shift from imagery back to ‘reality’ in Psalm 1:3 has certainly played a role in this verdict of his, but comparison with Joshua 1:6-8 should prove that this is a deliberate play on that text rather than an accidental insertion.²⁹ Joshua 1:6-8 read in translation:³⁰

⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous (רַק הֲזֹק וְאַמֵּץ מְאֹד), being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success (לִמְעַן תִּשְׁכִּיל) wherever you go. ⁸ This

²⁶ The Torah of Yahweh stands in opposition to the ‘counsel of wicked’, the ‘way of the sinners’, and the ‘seat of scoffers’.

²⁷ It is significant that the Targum differs at this point perhaps the most from MT: it reads אִיִּיא צְדִיקִיא (‘because the way of the righteous is revealed before Yahweh’) in an attempt to avoid anthropomorphism.

²⁸ He has opted to describe it in the text-critical apparatus as ‘gl’ rather than ‘frt gl’.

²⁹ This is also the view of Levin (1993:360). He describes Jos 1:8-9 as a later addition to Jos 1, probably inserted to establish a link with Dt 34. The closest parallel Jos 1:8-9 has with Deuteronomy, however, seems to be with Dt 31:6-13.

³⁰ The English translation quoted in this paper is that of the English Standard Version (ESV) with modifications made by myself. Copyright © July 2001 by Crossway Books/Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL.

Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night (וְהָגִיתָ בּוֹ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה), so that you may be careful to do (לְעֲשׂוֹת) according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success (אֲתִדְרֹכֶךָ וְאֵז תִּשְׁכִּיל) (אֵז תִּצְלִיחַ).

It seems that there is no verbatim similarity between the two contexts, except for the fact that the phrase ‘day and night’ is used in both. The words for ‘achieve success’, ‘way’, and ‘meditate’ are found in both contexts, but with slightly different forms. If something was borrowed directly from Joshua 1 and inserted in Psalm 1, it would perhaps have been the phrase ‘day and night’ rather than the contents of Psalm 1:3e. Otherwise, verse 3e should have read וּבְכֹל דְרֹכֶיךָ יִצְלִיחַ (or something like that) rather than וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה יִצְלִיחַ. It seems that there is a greater possibility that Psalm 1 is a deliberate play on Joshua 1 – with slight variation in the wording – similar to the way in which Psalm 1 probably edits or interprets the material it borrows from Jeremiah 17.³¹ Joshua is about to embark on the conquest of Canaan when he is instructed by Yahweh himself to keep the law. If he does not deviate from the Torah, he will make his own *way* prosperous and attain *success*. Therefore he must speak about it and *meditate on it day and night*. Psalm 1 speaks about the righteous person being *successful* (and also uses the image of a *way*) because he ‘delights’ in the Torah, and therefore *meditates on it day and night*. There are important differences between Joshua 1 and Psalm 1, since the wicked and judgement are not at stake in Joshua 1. Success is also not made dependent on compliance with the Torah in Psalm 1, but is described as a *fait accompli* because of the delight of the righteous in the Torah.³² The one contextual similarity between the two texts is the role of the Torah as an instruction manual to attain success in one’s way or road through life. There can be little doubt that the context in Joshua 1 uses Torah to refer to the Deuteronomic code of laws (Whybray 1996:39).³³ This link would consequently mean that ‘Torah’ in Psalm 1 also refers to the Deuteronomic laws.³⁴ Perhaps the righteous of Psalm 1 can be described as someone who fits the requirements laid down for Joshua. This requirement is given at the beginning of Joshua’s career; the definition of a righteous person is likewise given at the beginning of the Psalter. I would like to return to this remark at a later stage.

³¹ Creach (1999:37-39) has argued that Ps 1:3a borrows from Jr 17:8, but that the author transcends his source to such an extent that his product can be described as a kind of exegesis on the earlier biblical context. The same seems to apply in the case of Jos 1.

³² This makes it improbable that the insertion in Jos 1 was made to form a parallel to Ps 1. The links with Dt 31 also argue against borrowing from Ps 1.

³³ Cf also the similarities with Dt 31 mentioned above.

³⁴ It is possible that the insertion of Ps 1 at the head of the Psalter was meant to fill the word ‘Torah’ with new meaning (referring to the Psalter as a book of Torah, as it was later described in the Midrash on Ps 1:1 – cf Kratz 1996:2), but it could hardly have been composed for that purpose, given the contacts with Jos 1. Kratz (1996:6) has drawn the same conclusion on the basis of the contacts with Jos 1 and Jr 17.

Another well-known parallel text to Psalm 1 is Jeremiah 17:5-13. The parallel in this case consists of the image of a tree planted next to streams of water, its leaves, and its fruit. In both contexts, someone is also called ‘blessed’, but different words are used in Jeremiah.³⁵ Another important difference is that it is clearly stated in Jeremiah 17 that *trust in Yahweh* is to mankind like water is to a tree. Dedication to the Torah is not mentioned. Jeremiah 17 also contains a curse. Although judgement is hinted at in Psalm 1, it is not stated in the form of a curse and is implied rather than expressly formulated.³⁶ Jeremiah 17:5-13 have:

⁵ Thus says Yahweh: ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from Yahweh. ⁶ He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. ⁷ Blessed is the man who trusts in Yahweh, whose trust is Yahweh. ⁸ He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.’ ⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? ¹⁰ ‘I Yahweh search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.’ ¹¹ Like the partridge that gathers a brood that she did not hatch, so is he who gets riches but not by justice; in the midst of his days they will leave him, and at his end he will be a fool. ¹² A glorious throne set on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. ¹³ O Yahweh, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken Yahweh, the fountain of living water.

At the end of this pericope, Yahweh is referred to as ‘the fountain of living water’. This phrase is very important, since it seems to me to provide a connection to those texts where Zion or the temple is depicted as a garden paradise or the source of living water, a characteristic which Creach (1999:36) describes as lacking from Jeremiah 17:8.³⁷ One verse earlier, Jeremiah 17 also expressly refers to the sanctuary: ‘A glorious throne set on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary’ (v 12). Jeremiah 17 thus also contains the tradition which equates Zion and the temple with

³⁵ אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר instead of בְּרוּךְ הַזֶּכֶר אֲשֶׁר.

³⁶ Cf Is 17:13, where the nations are said to be ‘chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind and whirling dust before the storm’ when Yahweh rebukes them, and Ps 35:5, where the supplicant asks Yahweh to ‘let (his enemies) be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of Yahweh driving them away!’. In Job 21:18, punishment of the wicked is also likened to being ‘like straw before the wind, and like chaff that the storm carries away’. Jr 17 explicitly mentions the retribution given by Yahweh: ‘I ... give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.’

³⁷ ‘Although Ps 1:3a borrows from Jer 17:8, the psalm deviates significantly from Jeremiah at points. Furthermore, when Ps 1:3a departs from Jer 17:8, it consistently includes vocabulary drawn from other texts in which Zion or the temple is depicted as a garden paradise.’

paradise. Comparison of the following texts shows that this tradition is also present in Jeremiah 17:

Jeremiah 17:13: O Yahweh, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken Yahweh, the fountain of *living water*.

Zechariah 14:8: On that day *living waters* shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter.

In Jeremiah 17, the person who trusts in Yahweh and not in humans or in riches that were gained illegally is likened to a tree, the roots of which reach to a stream of water. The light that this parallel throws on Psalm 1 is that it shows that the ‘streams of water’ in the comparison are probably intended to refer to interaction with Yahweh. There is also similarity between the two contexts in the fact that Psalm 1 contains an antithesis between association with wicked people and association with the Torah of Yahweh, while Jeremiah 17 contains an antithesis between trust in humans and trust in Yahweh. The pictures of a desert shrub barely existing in parched places and chaff blowing before the wind also have certain similarities. We can therefore safely conclude that it is the right choice, association with the Torah, which is said to lead to prosperity in Psalm 1. But once again it seems that the directness of Jeremiah 17 is softened in Psalm 1. Yahweh gives sustenance *through* his Torah, not directly as in Jeremiah 17 where Yahweh *is* like streams of water. The wicked are punished in Psalm 1, but the image of chaff blowing in the wind is less direct than that of a bush drying out because it abandoned the stream of water and landed in the desert.

The same idea of life without God being like a plant without water is also expressed in Job 8:11-14:

¹¹ Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish where there is no water? ¹² While yet in flower and not cut down, they wither (יבש) before any other plant. ¹³ Such are the paths (אֲרָחוֹת) of all who forget God; the hope of the godless (תִּגְרָה) shall perish (תֵּאבֵד). ¹⁴ His confidence is severed, and his trust is a spider’s web.

Different lexemes are used, with the exception of the verb ‘to perish’, but the similarity of thought is unmistakable.

Two other texts suggest themselves for consideration. One is Psalm 92:8-16 and the other Ezekiel 47:6-12. In Psalm 92:8-16, we read:

⁸ ... though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever; ⁹ but you, O Yahweh, are on high forever. ¹⁰ For behold, your enemies, O Yahweh, for behold, your enemies shall perish (יֵאבְדוּ); all evildoers shall be scattered (תִּפְרֹד hitp). ¹¹ But you have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; you have poured over me fresh oil. ¹² My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies; my ears have heard the doom of my

evil assailants.¹³ The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.¹⁴ They are planted (שתולים) in the house of Yahweh; they flourish in the courts of our God.¹⁵ They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green,¹⁶ to declare that Yahweh is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

In Psalm 92, the righteous person is also likened to a flourishing tree planted in ideal conditions. No water is mentioned, but there is the same opposition between righteous and wicked (the wicked being like grass that sprouts temporarily), the image of the temple also plays an important role, and judgement is stated explicitly. What is interesting, is the statement that righteous people are like trees planted 'in the house of Yahweh' and that they flourish 'in the courts' of Yahweh. The image is that of a garden in the temple complex. The same idea is also expressed in Psalm 52:10: 'But as for me, I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God: I will trust in the faithful love of God for ever and ever.' This picture of a lush and fruitful olive tree or palm tree in the temple precinct is expanded on by the other important context in the Hebrew Bible, namely Ezekiel 47:6-12:

⁶ And he said to me, 'Son of man, have you seen this?' Then he led me back to the bank of the river. ⁷ As I went back, I saw on the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other. ⁸ And he said to me, 'This water flows towards the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea; when the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh. ⁹ And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. ¹⁰ Fishermen will stand beside the sea. From Engedi to En-eglaim it will be a place for the spreading of nets. Its fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. ¹¹ But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. ¹² And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.'

Ezekiel sees water flowing from the temple that grows from a small stream into a strong river and gives life to the whole country towards the east. The living water from the temple garden gives life to plants, fish, and all creatures. It is because this water runs from the creative power and presence of God in the sanctuary that it can give life to everything. This eschatological representation rests on mythological concepts that have to be traced.

In the Ancient Near East a connection was believed to exist between earthly sanctuaries and the heavenly palace of the divinity worshipped there. Very often the construction of a sanctuary is described as a scale model or replica of the heavenly reality. This similarity was understood to establish a connection between earth and heaven, which made it possible for the god to be present in the earthly temple and the

heavenly palace at the same time.³⁸ Moses was also shown the heavenly sanctuary of Yahweh on Mount Sinai and instructed to use this as a plan (תְּבִינָה) for the Israelite tabernacle.³⁹ The plan (תְּבִינָה) for Yahweh's temple, which Solomon was to build, was given to him by David. David received the plans, we are told, as they were drawn up 'by the hand of Yahweh which was on me (David)' (1 Chr 28:19). At the time of composition of Chronicles, there was a profound realisation that the temple itself is not the residence of Yahweh, but that he lives in heaven. This is clear from Solomon's prayer of dedication of the temple in which this aspect is stressed through repetition.⁴⁰ It is possible that the idea of the Ark of the Covenant as the 'footstool' of Yahweh is the result of this connection between heavenly and earthly palace.⁴¹

The water flowing from the sanctuary in Ezekiel 47 is life-giving water because it comes from the presence of Yahweh himself. It is because of the presence of Yahweh himself that the temple garden is believed to foster fruitfulness, vitality, and prosperity.⁴² The Eden-like qualities of the temple garden and of the temple itself are a direct consequence of the presence of Yahweh. Psalm 36, for instance, speaks about the 'children of mankind' taking refuge in the shadow of Yahweh's wings, feasting on the abundance of his house, and about Yahweh giving them drink from the river of his 'delights'. The word for 'delights', עֲדָנִים, seems to be related to עֲדָן, 'land of bliss', 'happy land'. Psalm 36 then carries on: 'For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light'. The fountain of life in Yahweh's house originates with Yahweh himself.

If these contexts are taken into consideration, it would seem that the Torah is presented in Psalm 1 as streams of water springing from the presence of Yahweh, perhaps forming a parallel to the temple, but not necessarily becoming a substitute for it. It is probably far more important to take note of the symbolism of the temple that is infused through the comparison. Symbolism can be shared without its being translocated completely or losing its connection with the primary subject. The idea of a paradise-like garden within the temple court probably symbolised wholeness of life, joy, sustenance, and the experience of communion with God.⁴³ Psalm 1 implies that

³⁸ Van Dyk (2005) gives the example of Marduk's temple in Babylon.

³⁹ Ex 25:9 and 25:40.

⁴⁰ Cf 2 Chr 6:18, 21, 23, 25, 30, etc.

⁴¹ Cf Is 60:13 where 'place of my sanctuary' and 'place of my feet' form a parallel. In 66:1 Yahweh asks 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?' In some texts there is a parallel between 'footstool' and 'temple', e.g. in Ps 132:7, מִשְׁכְּנוֹתָיו is used in parallel to 'his footstool' and in Lm 2:1 there is a parallel between the תְּבִינָה יִשְׂרָאֵל, probably a reference to the temple, and 'his footstool'.

⁴² Cf Janowski (2002:27-28): The images of palm trees and open flowers against the walls and on the doors, the lotus-like pillars Jachin and Boaz, the pomegranates on top of the pillars and even the olive-wood cherubim all serve as expressions of life- and regenerative symbolism.

⁴³ Cf Janowski's (2002:53) discussion of the meaning of Ps 36:9 in this regard.

the worshipper can experience these qualities in communion with God through the Torah. The Torah is the guide that enables the worshipper to follow the road of pilgrimage that ends in the temple, in the presence of Yahweh.

All texts parallel with Psalm 1 that contain a reference to the temple, view the temple in a very positive light. It would be very strange to find the author of Psalm 1 drawing images from these contexts with a view to downplay the role of the temple in worship, so as to propagate private worship in which not the Mosaic Torah, but the Psalter as a new kind of Torah is made the object of meditation. Berges (2002:69-98) has shown in his study on garden images linked to the temple in Isaiah that one should not conclude hastily from texts such as 1 Kings 8:27 and Isaiah 66:2 – which seem to criticize the idea of Yahweh’s living in a temple – that they display a new kind of religion which developed during exile, a type of Word-religion from which the synagogue later developed. In Isaiah 40-66, plant imagery is copiously used to present the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple as a new creation of cosmic proportions (Berges 2002:73). Wilderness and drought motifs represent judgement and chaos; tree and plant metaphors are used to describe the blessing of Yahweh in the New Jerusalem in which the elected will also prosper like trees and live as long.⁴⁴

From this investigation it has become clear that the author of Psalm 1 integrated various biblical contexts to create a new text. The Torah, the Prophets, but also the Psalms seem to be the authoritative canon from which he draws for his composition. From the parallels evidently used by the author, ‘Torah’ would seem to refer to the Deuteronomic Law Code.⁴⁵ It is, however, no longer described as a prerequisite for success, but as the cause of the prosperity of the righteous person who takes delight in studying it because it presents him or her with a link to Yahweh, the source of living water similar to a tree prospering in the place where Yahweh’s life-giving presence continually blesses and renews everything.

D THE POSSIBLE EDITORIAL FUNCTION ASSIGNED TO ‘TORAH’ IN PSALM 1

As was stated at the beginning of this investigation, the idea that the word ‘Torah’ in Psalm 1:2 is meant, by virtue of the position of Psalm 1, to include the Psalter itself, is widely accepted. This investigation has found no explicit evidence for such an interpretation in the psalm itself or in its links with texts possibly used in its composition. The parallel between Psalm 1 and Joshua 1:6-8 seems to suggest, contrariwise, that ‘Torah’ in Psalm 1:2 refers to the Torah of Moses.⁴⁶ Success for Joshua in his

⁴⁴ Cf Is 44:2; 55:13; 56:3; 60:13; and 65:22.

⁴⁵ Another link to Deuteronomy is seen by some in the correspondence of the threefold negative dissociation in Ps 1:1-2 with the threefold positive association mentioned in Dt 6:4-7: ‘walk’, ‘stand’/‘stand up’, and ‘sit’ (André 1982:327; Wilson 2002:94).

⁴⁶ As Whybray (1996:39-40) states, the most natural interpretation would be to take it as a reference to the Law of Moses, possibly the Code of Deuteronomy or, depending on the date to which its composition is assigned, to the priestly laws or to the whole Pentateuch.

endeavours is made dependent on his carefully observing the law commanded by Moses. Observance of the Torah given by Moses or through Moses is also the one important condition set for Solomon when he is about to ascend the throne. The military leader Joshua and the king of peace, the temple builder Solomon, receive similar words of warning and encouragement at the beginning of their respective careers. In 1 Chronicles 22:12-13, David is encouraging his son and successor Solomon before his own death.⁴⁷ The two contexts display noteworthy similarities:

Jos 1:6-8	1 Chr 22:12-13
<p>⁶ <u>Be strong and courageous</u> (חֲזַק וְאַמִּץ), for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ <u>Only be strong and very courageous</u> (לְחֲזַק וְאַמִּץ מְאֹד), being <u>careful to do</u> (לְעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל-הַתּוֹרָה) according to all the law (לְעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל-הַתּוֹרָה) that <u>Moses</u> my servant <u>commanded</u> (צִוָּה) you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. ⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be <u>careful to do</u> (תִּשְׁמֹר לְעֲשׂוֹת) according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous (כִּי-אֵין תִּצְלִיחַ אֶת-דְּרָכֶיךָ), and <u>then you will have good success</u> (וְאֵין תִּשְׁכִּיל).</p>	<p>¹² Only, may Yahweh grant you discretion and understanding (וַיִּתְּן-לְךָ יְהוָה שֵׁכֶל וּבִינָה), that when he gives you charge over Israel you may keep the law of Yahweh your God (אֶל-הַיָּד אֶל-הַיָּד) you may keep the law of Yahweh your God (אֶל-הַיָּד אֶל-הַיָּד). ¹³ <u>Then you will be successful</u> (אֵין תִּצְלִיחַ) if you are <u>careful to observe</u> (אִם-תִּשְׁמֹר לְעֲשׂוֹת) the statutes and the rules that Yahweh <u>commanded Moses</u> (צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת-מֹשֶׁה) for Israel. <u>Be strong and courageous</u> (חֲזַק וְאַמִּץ). Fear not; do not be dismayed.</p>

The similarities between the ‘inaugural admonition’ given to Joshua and that given to Solomon according to Chronicles⁴⁸ and between these two contexts and Psalm 1’s

Cf the similar view of Lindars (1968:117-36) and Kratz (1996:6). It is noteworthy that the Targum on Ps 1:2 uses two parallel words for ‘Torah’: אוריתא and נִימוסא. The first is a loan word from Greek νόμος, ‘law’; the second is often used to refer specifically to the scroll containing the Pentateuch (Jastrow [1903] 1992:34). Even at this late stage when the Targums were being made, probably nothing more than the Pentateuch was understood when Ps 1 was recited.

⁴⁷ This in turn should also be compared with 1 Chr 28, where some more ‘final’ instructions are given, in much the same words. If there were any direct links between Ps 1 and this chapter, it would suggest that the Torah could not be viewed as a substitution for the temple, since the privilege of building the temple is almost made dependent on the observance of the Torah in this chapter (cf 1 Chr 28:9-10).

⁴⁸ The same similarities apply to the parallel in 1 Ki 2:1-3, but it seems more distant. Between the Joshua and Chronicles texts there are verbatim similarities (לְעֲשׂוֹת, חֲזַק וְאַמִּץ), while between Joshua and 1 Kings different forms of the words are used and the only verbatim similarities are לְעֲשׂוֹת, מֹשֶׁה, and לְעֲשׂוֹת.

mentioning of success for the righteous are very interesting, since Psalm 2 is also related to the inauguration of a king in Jerusalem.⁴⁹ It is the introductory royal psalm leading into the (bigger) collection of Psalms 3-89 that focuses on the dynasty of David. Psalm 1 may thus be related more closely to the collection Psalms 2 + 3-89 than to the Psalter as a whole.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the connection with Joshua 1 and, through the Joshua text, with 1 Chronicles 22, seems to confirm that ‘Torah’ in Psalm 1:2 refers to the Torah of Yahweh given by Moses. The didactic character of Psalm 1 makes it very difficult to read the psalm as an admonition to the royal house of David or as a ceremonial script for the inauguration of a king such as Psalm 2 seems to be. But it could be read as the ideal laid down (by someone associated with the Chronist?)⁵¹ for the kings of Israel, an ideal visible in his servants the kings who walked in his way and put their trust in him.

E CONCLUSION

The meaning of the word ‘Torah’ in Psalm 1:2 should be decided by the structure of the psalm itself and in the light of intratextual links between the psalm as a whole and the Hebrew Bible – not only those contexts that use the image of a tree planted next to streams of water. If this is done, it seems that ‘Torah’ here refers to the Torah of Moses. It seems improbable that it was the intention of the author or editor who inserted Psalm 1 here that ‘Torah’ should be understood as a reference to the Psalter itself. But the way in which the author draws images and phrases from various parts of Scripture does indicate that much more than the books of Moses were regarded as authoritative literature. Among these parts of Scripture we can list the books of Joshua, Jeremiah, Job, Ezekiel, and Psalms.⁵²

⁴⁹ It could not be the inauguration of David, since he was anointed in his father’s house and was made king in Hebron after being anointed there as well (2 Sm 2:4).

⁵⁰ Christoph Rösel (1999) has argued that Ps 2 was already part of a consistent ‘messianic redaction’ of Pss 2-89 *before* Ps 1 and the last two books were added to complete the Psalter. Cf also Wilson (2005:395-396).

⁵¹ The ‘Torah of Yahweh’ is a designation closely associated with the Chronistic History (Kratz 1996:7).

⁵² Some investigators (cf Kratz 1996:7) would like to include all the prophetic books, from Joshua (beginning of the earlier prophets) to Malachi (the end of the latter prophets), since it seems that Jos 1:8 is reflected in MI 3:22 (‘Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.’).

The 'Torah' is presented in Psalm 1 as a guide on the road of life, but also as streams of living water flowing from the presence of Yahweh. It is the Torah of Yahweh that makes the difference between life in an Eden-like garden and death in a barren world, between a road leading to a destination and tracks that disappear in the wilderness, between success and failure. The two roads of Psalm 1 thus have two destinations. On the one hand, there is the road of the wicked. This road is like tracks becoming fainter and fainter until they disappear in the wilderness. On the other hand, there is the road of the righteous. This road ends in the temple, in the presence of Yahweh. According to Psalm 1, the Torah has the power to sustain because it is linked to Yahweh as its ultimate source. It therefore does not replace the temple, but plays a role parallel to that of the temple in constituting the beneficial presence (or detrimental absence) of Yahweh. It becomes the interface between Yahweh and those who worship him. It leads the worshipper on a road that ultimately ends in the temple as the manifestation of the presence of Yahweh.

Can Psalm 1 be interpreted as a guide to how the Psalter itself should be understood? I should think not. It rather serves as a guide to how life and the history of Israel should be understood, as a guide to the difference between righteous people and wicked people (that plays such an important role in the Psalter) and how that opposition influenced kingship in Israel, perhaps also hinting at why it happened that some kings were successful and some less so, and providing a cue of why the line of David (Pss 2-89) failed in the end.⁵³ One phrase in Joshua 1:7-8 which is not quoted in Psalm 1, is the warning not to turn from the Torah 'to the right hand or to the left'. This phrase establishes a link with Deuteronomy 17:14-20, the part of Moses' speech where he gives instructions about kingship in Israel. The king, he says, shall make a copy of the law, keep it with him, read it all the days of his life and 'not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left', so that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children. This text might prove to be very important in establishing the editorial function of Psalm 1 through the mutual connections of Psalm 1 and Deuteronomy 17 with Joshua 1. The individual of Psalm 1, who is blessed like a tree in the presence of Yahweh, might just prove to be the ideal⁵⁴ and righteous king in Israel.

⁵³ Cf the emphasis on the keeping of the commandments and the ordinances in David's final instructions to Solomon, also the repetition of the promise of 'sonship', and 'eternal' kingship if Solomon complies with this, in 1 Chr 28:6-9. Many of the themes found in these verses are present in Pss 1-2 and also in Ps 89. Kratz (1996:7) thinks that it is rather the other way round, namely that the righteous of Ps 1 takes the place of Joshua and the Davidic-Solomonic kings.

⁵⁴ In view of the fact that David's role is down-played in the final form of the (Hebrew) Psalter, with his influence waning towards the end, it would seem that a more Messianic and eschatological interpretation than a Davidic interpretation would apply. Cf Wilson (2005:401-405).

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