

The Relationship between Psalms 25 and 37

PHIL J. BOTHA (UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA)

ABSTRACT

The similarities between Psalms 25 and 37 are investigated. This pertains to the vocabulary and expressions used in the two psalms, their alphabetic form, and the theological point of view expressed. It is argued that the similarities between them should be attributed to the fact that they were written at more or less the same time by the same group of persons. The authors considered Proverbs, the major prophets, and an early form of the Psalter as authoritative material containing the Torah of Yahweh, and held on to the conviction that righteousness in the form of humility, patience, doing what is right, and seeking shelter with Yahweh will be rewarded with eventual control over the Promised Land.

A INTRODUCTION

There are a number of conspicuous similarities between Psalms 25 and 37. The most noticeable of these are probably that they are both alphabetic psalms and that they have a significant number of words and expressions in common. There are also differences between them: Ps 25 presents itself as a lament,¹ while Ps 37 is a psalm of instruction.² Ps 37 is also more or less twice as long as Ps 25, since it dedicates on average two verse lines to each letter of the alphabet,³ while Ps 25 uses only one verse line for each letter of the alphabet.

¹ According to Weiser (1950:160), it is a 'Klagegebet', which was probably used during the 'Bundesfestkult'. Weber (2001:133) considers it to be 'ein überarbeitetes individuelles Bittgebet... in das in der Mitte weisheitliche Überlegungen eingeschoben wurden'. Terrien (2003:257) thinks it 'found its place in the nocturnal ceremonial of cultic jurisprudence during the agony of the kingdom of Judah, just before the final exile and the temple's destruction'. Goldingay (2006:368) says it is impossible to know when it was written, but that 'we can imagine it being used in the Second Temple community in Judah'. He notes 'its virtual lack of lament' (2006:358).

² Weiser (1950:212) describes it as 'weniger ein Psalm als vielmehr eine Sammlung von Sprüchen'. Seybold (1996:155) finds in its didactic form a number of 'mahnenden, belehrenden, ermutigenden Sentenzen so etwas wie ein Manifest für die Armen und Besitzlosen'.

³ In most cases only the first line, thus every second Masoretic verse, begins with the particular letter of the alphabet. The letter ך is awarded an extra verse line which also begins with it (v.15); ם is accorded only one verse line (v.16); the same applies to

But apart from these formal differences, the contents of the two psalms show such similarity that it one is prompted to ask for the possible reasons for this. Some of the possible explanations are:

- They could have been written by the *same author or authors*, or there may be a *literary dependence* of the one on the other.⁴
- The similarities could be ‘accidental’ because of their having had *the same or a similar ‘Sitz im Leben’*. Such a ‘setting’, however, could then no longer have been a cultic one, but one located in the social-religious or literary sphere, since the ‘Gattungen’ of the two psalms are different.⁵
- Some may argue that the similarities between the two psalms are the result of a process of their having been *edited* so as to propagate the same ideas.⁶ It seems that the Psalter, or a late pre-final phase of the Psalter, was subjected to editorial revision by a group of people who wanted to emphasise the distinction between the righteous and the wicked,⁷ and who wanted to stress the importance of trust in Yahweh instead of trust in political power.⁸ This group of people probably

כ, but the editor of BHS has mistakenly separated the one (tristichic) line into two verse lines which then both begin with כ; the ו line was provided with a ל before the ו (לְעוֹלָם, v.28b) while its second line is actually lacking; and the line beginning with ה also has a ו preceding it (וְחַשׁוּעָה, v.39).

⁴ Ruppert (1972) suggested that Ps 25 is literary dependent on Ps 37. Lohfink (1991) rejected this hypothesis. He (Lohfink 1991:293) came to the conclusion that Ps 37 and Ps 34 could both be described as psalms similar to Ps 25 (‘gehören zu den Ps 25 nahestehenden Psalmen’), but that Ps 25 was not directly influenced by any of the two and that it in turn did not have a direct influence on either of them. Ps 34 will have to be excluded from this investigation, although a number of remarks on the similarities between the three psalms will be made.

⁵ This is more or less what Ruppert proposed in arguing that Ps 25 is literary dependent on Ps 37. He (Ruppert 1972:582) notes: ‘Die Grenze kultorientierter Psalmenexegese, die aufzuzeigen war, beginnt dort, wo das lebendige, in den kultischen Institutionen beheimatete oder doch wurzelnde Gebet Israels durch Gebets*literatur* abgelöst wird’.

⁶ Weber (2001:133) thinks that Ps 25 is an authentic original prayer which was edited in wisdom circles through the insertion of wisdom material in its middle. See below why I regard this as highly improbable.

⁷ According to Levin (1993:362), many verses that expressly state the difference between the wicked and the righteous were inserted into existing psalms in the Psalter only during the phase when Ps 1 was attached to it as a heading.

⁸ According to Jerome F. D. Creach (1996:103), several collections of psalms in the Psalter show signs of shaping around the concept of ‘refuge’. It is most evident in the first Davidic collection, and Ps 2:12d seems to be possibly an editorial comment which indicates that trust in Yahweh was chosen to be the overarching characteriza-

had close ties with the Torah-wisdom school of thought, who, through juxtaposing Wisdom Psalms with royal psalms, sought to propagate the message that kingship had to be characterised by a high regard for the Torah, and that the failure of kingship in Israel was the result of a deficiency in this regard.⁹ The religious community was consequently directed by the editorial activity of these people towards trust in the kingship of Yahweh and an expectation of the advent of his Messiah.¹⁰ But as objects of investigation with regard to the process of editing of the Psalter, Pss 25 and 37 have the drawback (or advantage, depending on one's point of view) that they are alphabetic compositions, a fact which renders them less suitable for editorial adaptation. We probably thus have the texts in more or less the same form in which they were written.¹¹ Very few, if any, of the similarities could be the result of editorial streamlining. But their alphabetic form does characterise them as Wisdom Psalms with a close connection to other Wisdom Psalms,¹² especially Torah-Wisdom Psalms such as Pss 1, 19, and 119. Of these three, Ps 19 is thought to be the earliest,¹³ while Ps 1 is generally thought, in modern research, to have been written as an introduction to the Psalter,¹⁴ and Ps 119 is generally seen as an earlier epilogue of the book as a whole.

The proposition made in this article is that the similarities between Pss 25 and 37 are the result of their having been composed by people from the same

tion of piety in Book I. It may be of significance that Ps 37:40 displays, in the final colon of the psalm, a similarity to the corresponding part of Ps 2 (regarding those who take up refuge with Yahweh). In Ps 25:20, the author also prays: 'Do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you'.

⁹ Cf. Wilson 1986, particularly his conclusion on pages 92-93.

¹⁰ Cf. Wilson 1985, McCann 1993.

¹¹ Levin (1993:370) remarks that Ps 1 and the eight acrostics (Pss 9-10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145) are exceptions to his conclusion that the material containing an antithesis between righteous and wicked was in most cases inserted later. Ps 37 is singled out by him as a text which must have been composed very close to the time of this phase of editing the Psalter.

¹² E.g., Pss 34 and 73. About the alphabetic form being characteristic of Wisdom Psalms, cf. Weber (2001:166). Hubert Irsigler (1999) has investigated the similar frustrations of the righteous dispossessed or poor people in Pss 37, 49, and 73, a theme which occurs in all three these psalms and thus suggests a shared origin as well.

¹³ Although its present form should probably be seen as a late post-exilic composition, given the literary dependence on Prov 1 (cf. Gosse 2006:387-390) and since Prov 1-9 are almost unanimously considered to have originated only after the exile (Van der Ploeg 1952:9).

¹⁴ Cf., for instance, Wilson (1986:88). But cf. also my objections to this notion in Botha (2007:58-76).

school of thought at roughly the same time. The fact that they represent two different ‘Gattungen’ simply seems to show that their authors made use of various modes of expression to convey the same ideological message. The ‘message’ these psalms were designed to convey also seems to converge with the program of those people mentioned above who edited books I-III of the Psalter, so that it is possible that the editors of this phase of the Psalter were responsible for composing these psalms.

The general aim of this article is therefore to prove that Pss 25 and 37 display the same ideology and mode of composition. In this regard, they display a mutual immersion in Wisdom texts such as Proverbs 1-9 and seem to follow a trajectory of composition and interpretation which is also found in Pss 19, 1, and 119. According to this tradition of exegesis of an early form of the *TaNaKh*, the complete scriptural heritage as it was conceived at the time of writing of these psalms, was considered to be part of the ‘Torah’ of Yahweh, and this included the Pentateuch, the Prophets, Proverbs, and a substantial part of the Psalter as we know it today.¹⁵

The procedure will be to compare Pss 25 and 37 with each other, but also with Proverbs. Possible allusions to the Pentateuch and Prophetic books will also be discussed, especially the relationship of one or both of these two with Jer 17 and Isa 58 and 61, and also to other psalms. The envisaged conclusion is that there is substantial evidence that these two psalms originated among the same religious grouping and that they both represent an attempt to define piety in (late) post-exilic Israel as consisting of an attitude of humility, trust, and waiting for Yahweh whom the author(s) believed would guarantee success against political foes in times of distress, and who would reward them with eventual control over the Promised Land.

B SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PSS 25 AND 37

There is a significant overlap of terminology between the two psalms. Apart from particles and words too common to be taken into consideration for the comparison, Ps 25 and Ps 37 share the following more significant words (in alphabetical order):¹⁶

¹⁵ Ps 119 was not the first psalm to be composed in the ‘anthological style *Gattung*’, a reference to the way in which it alludes to, quotes from, and adapts material as diverse as Deuteronomy, Job, Proverbs, Lamentations, and the three major prophets in order to create Scripture from Scripture (cf. Deissler 1955:270-277). The same *modus operandi* is visible, to a lesser extent, in Pss 1 and 19 as well. In this regard, see Gosse 2006. It seems from this investigation that the same can be said of Pss 25 and 37.

¹⁶ Lohfink (1991:272) summarises Ruppert’s description of the similarities as consisting of three shared expressions (חסה ביהוה; ירש ארץ; קוה [אל] יהוה), one shared word pair (תבושר), five shared lexemes (זרע, בטח, בוש, ענו, and דרך), and one shared

יום, ידע, טוב, חסה, חנן, זרע, ברכך, בטח, בוש, ארץ, אלהים, איש, איב,
 רב, ראה, קוה, צרה, פשע, עני, ענו, עולם, משפט, ישר, ישע, ירש, יצא,
 תם, שמר.

The underlined words in this group seem to be the important ones, since their collective presence in each of the two psalms creates a mutual ‘ambience’. They are used in such similar ways that one has to conclude that there must be a connection of one kind or another.¹⁷ The ‘atmosphere’ created by these words in the two psalms can perhaps be formulated as follows:

‘Those who trust in Yahweh and wait for him may experience dis-
tress and may even be afflicted, but since they are humble and up-
right in character, Yahweh will teach them his way so that they will
 not be shamed like the wicked, but they and/or their descendants
 will inherit the Land’.

Even some of the Hebrew words which were not underlined above are used in a similar fashion in the two psalms. The following cases may be submitted as evidence of similarities (the more conspicuous similarities are underlined once again). Please note that some phrases are quoted more than once and this might suggest greater similarity than is the case actually:

	Psalm 25	Psalm 37
איש	12 ‘who is <u>the man</u> who fears Yahweh?’ ¹⁸	7 ‘the <u>man</u> who carries out wicked schemes’, 37 ‘ <u>the man</u> of peace will have a posterity’.
ארץ	13 ‘his descendants <u>will inherit the land</u> ’.	3 ‘dwell in the <u>land</u> ’; 9 ‘(those who wait for Yahweh) <u>will inherit the land</u> ’; 11 ‘the humble <u>will inherit the land</u> ’; 22 ‘those blessed by him <u>will inherit the land</u> ’; 29 ‘the righteous <u>will inherit the land</u> ’; 34 ‘he will exalt you to <u>inherit the land</u> ’.
בוש	2 ‘do <u>not</u> let me <u>be ashamed</u> ’; 3 ‘ <u>none</u> of	19 ‘they (the upright) will <u>not be</u>

concept (the enemies). From the list given here, it will be seen that the similarities are more significant, although צרה is the only significant term not mentioned by Lohfink.

¹⁷ The same applies to Ps 34. Instances of reminiscence between Ps 34 and the two psalms under investigation will be noted in the discussion below.

¹⁸ The generic use of ‘the man’ seems to be similar in the two psalms. This notion is strengthened by the similar use of ‘the man’ in the alphabetic wisdom psalm Ps 34:13, ‘who is the man who delights in life...?’ The similarity can be partially attributed to the need to begin a line of the acrostic with *mem*, but the possibilities in this regard are almost endless (as comparison with Ps 119:97-104 shows). The similarity must, consequently, be described as meaningful. Cf. also Ps 34:9b (‘blessed is the man who takes refuge in him’), which seems to allude to Ps 2:12, especially if read in conjunction with Ps 34:23. Cf. also the similar use of האיש in Ps 1:1. Constructions like these seem to be typical of Wisdom Psalms.

	those who wait for you will be <i>ashamed</i> , those who deal treacherously will be <i>ashamed</i> '; 20 'let me <u>not be ashamed</u> , for I trust in you'. ¹⁹	<i>ashamed</i> in the time of evil'.
בטח	2 'I <i>trust</i> in you'	3 ' <i>trust</i> in Yahweh'; 5 'commit your way to Yahweh and <i>trust</i> in him'.
דרך	4 'make me know your <i>ways</i> , O Yahweh', 5 'let me <i>walk</i> in your truth'; 8 'he instructs sinners in the <i>way</i> '; 9 'he <i>leads</i> the humble in justice, and he teaches the humble <u>his way</u> '; 12 'he will instruct him in the <i>way</i> he should choose'.	5 'commit your <i>way</i> to Yahweh'; 7 'do not be indignant of him who prospers in his <i>way</i> '; 14 '(the wicked) want to slay those who are upright in <i>way</i> '; 23 '(Yahweh) delights in his <i>way</i> '; 34 'wait for Yahweh and keep <u>his way</u> '.
זרע	13 ' <u>his descendants</u> will inherit the land'.	25 '(I have not seen) <u>his descendants</u> begging for bread'; 26 ' <u>his descendants</u> are a blessing'; 28 'the <i>descendants</i> of the wicked will be cut off'.
חסה	20 'I <u>take refuge</u> in you'. ²⁰	40 '(he saves them) because they <u>take refuge</u> in him'.
יום	5 'for you I wait <u>all day</u> '.	13 'he (Yahweh) sees his <i>day</i> is coming'; 18 'Yahweh knows the <i>days</i> of the blameless'; 19 'in the <i>days</i> of famine they will have abundance'; 26 ' <u>all day</u> long he (the righteous) is merciful'.
יצא	15 'he will <i>bring</i> my feet <u>out</u> of the net'; 17 ' <i>bring</i> me <u>out</u> of my distresses'.	6 'and he will <i>bring forth</i> your righteousness'.
ירש	13 'his descendants will <u>inherit</u> the land'.	9 'those who wait for Yahweh will <u>inherit</u> the land'; 11 'the humble will <u>inherit</u> the land'; 22 'those blessed by him will <u>inherit</u> the land'; 29 'the righteous will <u>inherit</u> the land'; 34 'he (Yahweh) will exalt you to <u>inherit</u> the land'.
ישע	5 'the God of my <i>salvation</i> '.	40 'and he shall <i>save</i> them'.
ישר	8 'good and <i>upright</i> is Yahweh'; 21 'let integrity and <i>uprightness</i> preserve me'.	14 'to slay those who are <i>upright</i> of way'; 37 'note the <i>upright</i> '.
משפט	9 'he leads the humble in <i>justice</i> '.	6 '(he shall bring) your <i>justice</i> as the midday'; 28 'for Yahweh loves <i>justice</i> '; 30 'his (the righteous) tongue speaks <i>justice</i> '.
ענו	9 'he leads the <i>humble</i> in justice, and he teaches the <i>humble</i> his way'. ²¹	11 'the <i>humble</i> will inherit the land'.
עני	16 'I am lonely and <i>afflicted</i> '; 18 'look upon my <i>affliction</i> '. ²²	14 'to cast down the <i>afflicted</i> '.
צרה	17 'the <i>troubles</i> of my heart are enlarged'; 22 '(redeem Israel) out of all	39 '(Yahweh) is their strength in time of <i>trouble</i> '.

¹⁹ Ps 34:6 also uses the concept of shame to distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, but uses a different word, namely *הפר*: 'their faces (that of the humble people) will not be *ashamed*'.

²⁰ This is an important concept also in the closely related Ps 34:9 and 23.

²¹ Cf. also Ps 34:2 'the *humble* will hear it and will be glad'.

²² Cf. also Ps 34:7 'this *afflicted* cried, and Yahweh heard'.

	his <i>troubles</i> '. ²³	
קוה	3 'none of those who <i>wait for you</i> will be ashamed'; 5 'for you I <i>wait</i> all day'; 21 'for I <i>wait</i> for you'.	9 'those who <i>wait for Yahweh</i> , will inherit the land'; 34 ' <i>wait for Yahweh</i> and keep his way'.
ראה	18 ' <i>look</i> upon my affliction'; 19 ' <i>look</i> upon my enemies'.	13 '(Yahweh) <i>sees</i> his day is coming'; 25 'I have not <i>seen</i> the righteous forsaken'; 34 'when the wicked are cut off, you will <i>see</i> it'; 35 'I have <i>seen</i> a violent, wicked man'; 37 ' <i>behold</i> the upright'. ²⁴
שמר	20 ' <i>guard</i> me and deliver me'.	28 'they (his godly ones) are <i>preserved</i> forever'; ²⁵ 34 'wait for Yahweh and <i>keep</i> his way'; 37 ' <i>mark</i> the blameless man'.
חם	21 'let integrity and <i>uprightness</i> preserve me'.	37 'mark the blameless man and behold the <i>upright</i> '.

It seems indisputable that Pss 25 and 37 have a number of themes and particular words and expressions in common, and that they consequently display the same provenance.²⁶ The major difference between them is that the suppliant of Ps 25 speaks predominantly in the first person singular and applies the descriptions of an upright person to himself; while the 'teacher' of Ps 37 addresses upright persons in the second person singular or speaks about them in the third person. Despite its form as a lament or prayer, however, Ps 25 also contains a number of pure didactic lines (vv.3b, 8-10, and 12-14).²⁷ In these lines, there is no stylistic difference from similar didactic lines in Ps 37, e.g., Ps 37:11-24; 28-33; and 38-40. It thus seems that the author of Ps 25 also had a didactic purpose in mind, but chose to present himself as an example of the ideal believer whose conduct and disposition he is propagating. In this regard Ps 25 closely resembles Ps 119, another alphabetic didactic Wisdom psalm which was composed predominantly in the style of an individual lament.²⁸ The style of Ps 37, in contrast, is closer to a didactic Wisdom psalm such as Ps 1 or Ps 34. It thus seems that the provenance and purpose of Wisdom Psalms such as these are more important than the 'Gattung' used by the author as a vehicle of communication and that it is important to trace their mutual origin to a particu-

²³ This is strongly reminiscent of Ps 34:7 '(Yahweh) saved him out of *all his troubles*' and Ps 34:18, 'When the righteous cry for help, Yahweh hears and delivers them out of *all their troubles*'.

²⁴ Cf. the very similar use in Ps 34:9, 'Taste and *see* that Yahweh is good'. Cf. also Ps 34:13, '...to *see* what is good'.

²⁵ Cf. Ps 34:20, 'he *preserves* all his bones'.

²⁶ Cf. also the discussion of the similarities between them in Ruppert (1972:580). In addition to the fact that they share a number of expressions, there is also a number of conspicuous similarities between them and Ps 34, yet another alphabetic psalm which displays the same frame of reference.

²⁷ So already Ruppert (1972:578).

²⁸ Cf. Deissler (1955:275). The correspondences are not discussed since Ps 25 simply seems to have served as a source for Ps 119.

lar sphere of influence when one wants to determine their meaning and function in the book of Psalms as a whole.

Alfons Deissler has proven beyond doubt that the author of Ps 119 attempted to compose a didactic psalm by using the vocabulary, expressions, and style of a wide variety of religious texts which must have been considered to be authoritative in his time: he was very fond of Deut 4 and 6, Proverbs, Wisdom Psalms such as Pss 1, 19, 25, 37 and others, the early and the later prophets, and even Job and Lamentations.²⁹ It is my contention here that the author(s) of Pss 25 and 37 also composed these songs in a purposeful attempt to invoke and combine certain written texts – particularly Proverbs 1-9, prophetic material, and certain psalms – so as to address, inspire, and exhort their own contemporaries. I will subsequently try to prove that Pss 25 and 37 constitute purposeful adaptations of the teaching of Proverbs 1-9, and that they allude to quite a number of other biblical contexts as well. These intertextual allusions seem to be partially responsible for the similarities between them, but simultaneously confirm the surmise that they were written by people who had the same theological perspective.

C THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PSS 25 AND 37 AND OTHER BIBLICAL CONTEXTS

It is a well-established fact that Wisdom Psalms such as Pss 1, 19, and 119 have a close connection with the book of Proverbs, especially the chronologically later part of Proverbs found in Prov 1-9. The authors of these psalms not only made use of wisdom concepts, but purposefully recast wisdom as Torah,³⁰ while Yahweh is represented especially in Pss 19³¹ and 119³² as a wisdom teacher. Ps 25 similarly accords the role of (wisdom) teacher to Yahweh and emphasises it through repetition in six of its 22 verses:³³

Ps 25:4 ‘*Make your ways (דרך) known (יעי hi) to me, O Yahweh; teach (למד pi) me your paths (ארה)*’.

Ps 25:5 ‘*Lead (דרך hi) me in your truth and teach (למד pi) me*’.

Ps 25:8 ‘*Good and upright is Yahweh; therefore he instructs (ירה hi) sinners in the way (דרך)*’.

²⁹ Cf. Deissler’s summary description of contacts between Ps 119 and the rest of the Jewish Bible (Deissler 1955:270-277). Cf. also my (unpublished) thesis, Botha (1986).

³⁰ Gosse (2006) has shown how Ps 19 contains a reinterpretation of Prov 1:20-23, while Ps 1 shows clear signs of contact with Prov 1:22, 3:13, and 8:32.

³¹ Compare Ps 19:3 and 8 with Prov 1:4 and 23. Cf. also the relationship of Ps 19:12 with Prov 22:4.

³² Compare Ps 119:33 and 102 with Prov 4:4 and 11 and Ps 119:12, 26, 64, 66, etc., with Prov 5:13.

³³ See also Human (1996:83).

Ps 25:9 'He *leads* (דרך hi) the humble in what is right, and *teaches* (למד pi) the humble his way (דרך)'.
Ps 25:12 'Who is the man who fears Yahweh? Him will he *instruct* (ירה hi) in the way (דרך) that he should choose'.

Ps 25:14 'The secret counsel (סוד) of Yahweh is for those who fear him, and he *reveals* (ידע hi) his covenant to them'.

The teaching of wisdom topics is also one of the main themes of Prov 1-8. The combination of the motif of teaching with road imagery is a conspicuous wisdom theme. In Proverbs 1:23, for example, the simple ones (as well as the scoffers and fools) are invited by Lady Wisdom to be *instructed* (ידע hi) by her words, while elsewhere in Proverbs it is the function of a father to *teach* wisdom to his son: 'I am *teaching* (ירה hi) you the *way* (דרך) of wisdom; I am *guiding* (דרך hi) you on straight paths (מעגל)' (Prov 4:11). Ps 25 re-contextualizes this theme by substituting the 'way of *wisdom*' with the 'way of *Yahweh*', and by assigning the role of teacher to Yahweh. In this regard, Ps 25:4 also shows resemblance to Ex 33:13 where Moses prays: 'please make your way (דרך) known (ידע hi) to me, that I may know you in order to find favour in your eyes'.³⁴

Apart from his 'way' or his 'path' or 'the path one should choose', Yahweh also teaches other things according to Ps 25: his 'truth' (אמת, v.5; cf. v.10 and Prov 3:3), 'his justice' (משפט, v.9; cf. Prov 2:8-9), his 'secret council' and his 'covenant' (סוד and ברית, v.14; cf. Prov 3:32³⁵). He teaches it to those who 'wait' for him (קוה pi, v.5; cf. also vv.3 and 21 and Prov 20:22), to 'sinners' (חטאים, v.8), the 'humble' (ענוים, v.9; cf. Prov 3:34), and those who 'fear him' (ירא, vv.12 and 14; cf. Prov 3:7). There is thus congruence between the subjects that are taught through wisdom in Proverbs and those that are taught by Yahweh according to Ps 25, while the characteristics of the ideal student also overlap between the two contexts.

The author of Ps 25 further clearly displays acquaintance with the wisdom teaching found in Proverbs when he admits that he 'trusts' (בטח) in Yahweh (Ps 25:2) as Prov 3:5 instructs wisdom students to do.³⁶ He expects that the treacherous people (the בגדיים) will be shamed (בוש, v.3),³⁷ while Proverbs pro-

³⁴ Human (1996:81) stresses the connection between Ps 25 and Ex 34, proving that the author of Ps 25 was influenced by this chapter of the Pentateuch also.

³⁵ The word 'secret council' occurs predominantly in wisdom texts, Psalms, and Jeremiah. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the author of Ps 25 borrowed it from Proverbs or from Jeremiah.

³⁶ 'Trust in Yahweh with all your heart'.

³⁷ It should be conceded that this stem (בוש) does not occur in Prov 1-9 (but 6 times in the rest of Proverbs). It is a concept which abounds in Psalms (31x), Isaiah (21x), and Jeremiah (26x).

mises that they (the בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל) will be rooted out of the land (Prov 2:22). In his expectation, the descendants of those who *fear Yahweh* will possess the land (אֲרֵץ־יִרְשׁ v.13), while Prov 2:21 says the *upright* (יִשְׁרָיִם) will inhabit the land (אֲרֵץ־יִשְׁכְּנוּ). He also strives toward uprightness (יִשְׁרָ) and blamelessness (תָּם, v.21) which seems to echo Prov 2:7, ‘(Yahweh) stores up success (תְּשׁוּבָה) for the upright (יִשְׁרָ); he is a shield to those who walk in integrity (תָּם)’. The author of Ps 25 describes himself further in wisdom terms as ‘wretched’ or ‘humble’ (עָנִי, vv.16, 18).³⁸ He identifies with the group of people who keeps the covenant and the testimonies (עֲדוּת) of Yahweh (Ps 25:10). The use of this word or a cognate as a synonym for ‘Torah’ in Pss 19³⁹ and 119⁴⁰ seems to qualify Ps 25 as a Torah-wisdom psalm. It can thus be concluded that piety – integrity and uprightness (תָּם וִישְׁרָ) – is defined in Ps 25 as acceptance of the teaching or ‘Torah’ of Yahweh as it is found (inter alia) in Proverbs. A life according to the principles of humility, trust in Yahweh, and waiting for him will guarantee protection against shame; ensure rescue from the enemies, prosperity, and eventual inheritance of the Promised Land (cf. Ps 25:12-13).⁴²

Ps 37 has a similar, but possibly even stronger, connection to Proverbs.⁴³ Zenger has pointed out some of the conspicuous similarities between Ps 37:1 (אֵל־תִּתְחַרְחַר בְּמַרְעִים אֶל־תִּקְנֵא בְעֵשִׂי עוֹלָה) and Prov 24:1 and

³⁸ Prov 3:34 describes humble people (עָנִיִּים, probably to be read as עֲנָנִים) as the opposite of scorners and as people to whom grace will be given by Yahweh.

³⁹ In Ps 19:8, עֲדוּת takes over the function of wisdom as it is described in Prov 1:22 – it makes the simple wise.

⁴⁰ In Ps 119:99, it is again described as making someone wise – the suppliant has more understanding (שִׂכְלִי hi) than all his teachers because he meditates on the עֲדוּת. The origin of this thought in Ps 119 should probably be sought in the connection with Ps 19:8, although a different expression is used there (חִכְמִי hi).

⁴¹ The close combination of these two words (hendiadys?) is used three times to describe the piety of Job (1:1, 8; 2:3) and nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible except for Ps 25:21. The stems are also found together within the same verse in 1 Kgs 9:4, Ps 37:37, Prov 2:7 and 29:10. It thus points strongly towards contact with the post-exilic phase of wisdom teaching.

⁴² There are close parallels with Ps 34 among these ideals: The author of Ps 34 considers himself to be a member of the humble (עָנִי, v.3) and an afflicted person (עָנִי, v.7). Yahweh has rescued him from all his afflictions (צָרוֹת, v.7). Taking refuge in Yahweh (חָסָה, v.9, 23) brings joy (נִהַר, v.6), not shame (חָפַר, v.6). Yahweh will guarantee protection against a lack (מַחְסוֹר, חָסַר, vv.10-11) of what is good. One should therefore turn away from evil (סוּר מִרָע, v.15). Yahweh will cut the memory of those who do evil from the land (כָּרַת מֵאֲרֶץ, v.17).

⁴³ So also Hofbeld (Hofbeld & Zenger 1993:162). Irsigler (1999:261) says there is ‘no question about the sapiential coinage of Psalm 37’. According to him, it is possible that the alphabetic inclination of Prov 24:1-22 served as the inspiration for the author of Ps 37 (Irsigler 1999:261 n.3).

19 (v.19: אֶל-תַּחֲזֹר בַּמַּרְעִים אֶל-תִּקְנָא בְּרַשְׁעִים), as well as the similarity of Ps 37:37-38⁴⁴ with Prov 24:20⁴⁵ (Höbfield & Zenger 1993:230). Wilson pointed out the similarity between Ps 37:16-17 and Prov 15:16.⁴⁶ Ps 37:27a also contains another typical wisdom maxim: ‘Turn away (סור) from evil and do good; so shall you dwell (ושכן, qal imperative!) forever’. This is very similar to Prov 3:7bβ, ‘Be not wise in your own eyes; fear Yahweh, and turn away (סור) from evil’.⁴⁷ The promise that dwelling in the land will be granted, however, calls another context from Proverbs to mind. It seems that while the author of Ps 25 focused especially on the aspect of wisdom teaching, the author of Ps 37 regarded the inheritance of the Promised Land more important as a topic. The pericope of Prov 2:20-22⁴⁸ was considered particularly important by him, to such an extent that his poem seems to comment on this text in particular. Prov 2:20-22 read:

20 (Wisdom will come into your heart)⁴⁹ ...so that you can walk in the way of good (men), and keep the paths of the righteous. 21 For the upright (ישר) will dwell (שכן) in the land (ארץ), and the blameless (תמים) will remain in it; 22 But the wicked (רשעים) will be cut off (כרת ni) from the land (מארץ), and the faithless ones (בגדים) will be torn out from it.⁵⁰

Ps 37 teaches that:

9 Evildoers (מרעים) will be cut off (כרת ni),⁵¹ but those who wait for Yahweh will inherit (ירש) the land (ארץ).

⁴⁴ 37 Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for there is a future (אחרית) for the man of peace. 38 But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the future (אחרית) of the wicked (רשעים) shall be cut off.

⁴⁵ 20 For the evil man has no future (אחרית); the lamp of the wicked (רשעים) will be put out.

⁴⁶ Ps 37:16-17, ‘Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but Yahweh upholds the righteous’; Prov 15:16, ‘Better is a little with the fear of Yahweh than great treasure and trouble with it’ (Wilson 2002:602). He refers to Prov 16:8 and 28:6 as well.

⁴⁷ There is a parallel with Ps 34:15 which also exhorts the listener to ‘turn away from evil’ (סור מרע), while Ps 34:17 promises that the memory of the evildoers (עשי רע) will be ‘cut off from the land’.

⁴⁸ Zenger (Höbfield & Zenger 1993:232) also refers to Prov 2:21-22.

⁴⁹ The sentence begins in v.10 and is interrupted by a lengthy insertion containing a description of the ‘foreign woman’. In contrast to Prov 2:10, where it says *wisdom* will come into the heart of the student, Ps 37:31 asserts that ‘the *torah* of his God’ is in the heart of the צדיק.

⁵⁰ The similarity of these verses with material found in Ps 25 has already been discussed above.

⁵¹ The parallel with Ps 34:15 and 17 has been noted above.

11 ...the humble will inherit (ירש) the land, and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity (שלום רב).

18 Yahweh knows the days of the blameless; and their inheritance (נחלה) will be forever.

22 For those blessed by him will inherit (ירש) the land; but those cursed by him will be cut off (ni כרת).

27-29 Depart from evil, and do good, so you will dwell (שכן) forever. For Yahweh loves justice, and does not forsake his godly ones; they are preserved forever; but the descendants of the wicked (רשעים) will be cut off (ni כרת). The righteous will inherit (ירש) the land, and dwell (שכן) in it forever.

34 Wait for Yahweh, and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit (ירש) the land; when the wicked (רשעים) are cut off (ni כרת), you will see it.

The inheriting of the land, and especially the *dwelling* in it in Ps 37, show a great resemblance to Prov 2:20-22.⁵² The connection between these verses and Ps 37 is put beyond any doubt by the mentioning of the ‘*cutting off*’ of the wicked from the land.⁵³ This aspect is not mentioned in Ps 25, and the enemies are also not described as the ‘wicked’ in Ps 25. The ‘treacherous people’ (בגדים) and also the idea of inheritance (ירש ארץ) is mentioned there (Ps 25:3, 13), but the inheriting is also not as emphatic as in Ps 37. From this it could possibly be inferred that the idea is repeated in Ps 25 as a consequence of the influence of Ps 37 or another context which influenced both rather than because of a direct link to the text in Proverbs.

The use of the verb ענג (hithpa‘el), ‘to take great delight in’ (והתענג על-יהוה) in Ps 37:4 further also calls a text from Isaiah to mind. Isaiah 58:14 promises that those who keep the Sabbath will ‘take great delight in Yahweh’ (תתענג על-יהוה) and he will let them ‘eat’ the heritage (נחלה) of their father Jacob (cf. also Ps 37:11, ‘the humble will inherit (ירש) the land and will enjoy (ענג) abundant prosperity’). There are even more parallels with Isa 58: the use of ‘light’ (אור) and ‘midday’ (צהריים or נכון היום) in association with ‘righteousness’ or ‘the righteous’ is reminiscent of at least three texts: Ps 37:6, Isa 58:8, and Prov 4:18-19:

Ps 37:6 He will	Isa 58:8 Then shall your light	Prov 4:18-19 the path of the
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⁵² This is not to deny the connection of this theme with Deuteronomy. Irsigler (1999:262) notes that the expression ירש ארץ occurs 47 times in Deut out of a total of 89 in the Old Testament. But it is now the righteous who own the promise, not Israel.

⁵³ The host of similarities with Ps 34 seems to indicate that Ps 34:17 might allude to this context in Proverbs as well, so that it should be translated: ‘the face of Yahweh is set against those who do what is evil (עשי רע this time), to erase all memory of them from the *land*’. But it should be acknowledged that Ps 109:15 is a closer parallel and possibly played a greater role in the formulation of Ps 34:17.

<p>bring forth your righteousness (צדק) as the light (אור), and your justice (משפט) as the midday (כצהרים).</p>	<p>(אור) break forth like the dawn (כשחר), and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness (צדק) shall go before you; the glory of Yahweh shall be your rear guard. Isa 58:10 ... if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light (אור) rise in the darkness (חשך) and your gloom be as the midday (כצהרים).</p>	<p>righteous (צדיקים) is like the light (אור) of dawn (ננה), which shines brighter and brighter until full day (היום נכון), but the way of the wicked is like deep darkness (אפלה); they do not know over what they stumble.</p>
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The resemblance (both in the fact that Yahweh will reward righteousness in terms of care for the helpless and in the choice of words) between Ps 37 and Isa 58 is perhaps greater than that between Ps 37 and Prov 4. And yet it seems that the author of Ps 37 knew both these contexts. The base comparison, shared by all three contexts, is the daily phenomenon of darkness being displaced by the light of dawn which gradually grows stronger until midday when it is the complete opposite of darkness. This is used in Prov 4 to compare the way, the life, of the righteous and the wicked: the *way of the righteous* is like the light of dawn which shines brighter and brighter until it is fully day, or the middle of the day, while the *way of the wicked* is like deep darkness, so that they stumble without even knowing what makes them stumble. Isa 58 contrasts the present darkness of the audience with the light they will experience if they show compassion to the hungry, the afflicted, and the homeless. If they do these things, *their light* will be like the dawn, it will rise in their darkness and *their present gloom* will become as the midday. One aspect of this ‘enlightenment’ is that their *righteousness* will go before them. Ps 37, it seems, displays elements from both contexts: It is similar to Isa 58 in contrasting present darkness (the absence of vindication by Yahweh) with future light (evident *righteousness* and justice). There is a suggestion of a process of growth in this vindication, since the parallel formed between ‘light’ and ‘midday’ recalls the base comparison of morning progressing to midday. The author has also borrowed the idea of ‘*righteousness*’ from Isa 58, it seems. The similarity with Prov 4, on the other hand, exists in the connection to the wisdom image of life as a *road*. Ps 37:5 urges the listener to commit his *way* to Yahweh, upon which Yahweh will bring forth his righteousness as the light (v.6). As in Prov 4, there is a contrast between the righteous and the wicked in Ps 37, but the righteous of Ps 37 is simultaneously described as one who is compassionate and lending the whole

day, like the audience of Isa 58 is more or less exhorted to do.⁵⁴ Note in addition to this the use of ענג, to take delight in, in both contexts (Ps 37:11 and Isa 58:14), and the theme of inheritance, both already mentioned above.

Ps 37:22, it would seem, further also uses the authority of Gen 12:3 to emphasise the promise of inheritance of the land – an allusion which was probably also intended to serve as an exhortation to the faithful to be gracious. It alludes to the promise to Abraham. The author quotes it as stating that ‘those blessed by him (= Yahweh) shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be cut off’.

The characteristics of a righteous person, as they are described in Ps 37, display quite a number of similarities with both Proverbs and Ps 25. Such a person should trust (בטח) in Yahweh (Ps 37:3, 5; cf. Prov 3:5 and Ps 25:2), should do what is good and practice faithfulness (Ps 37:3, 27; cf. Prov 3:27 and 12:22), take delight in Yahweh (ענג hitp, Ps 37: 4; cf. Isa 58:14), wait (קוה) for Yahweh (Ps 37: 9, 34; cf. Prov 20:22 and Ps 25:5 and 21), be humble (ענו) (Ps 37:11; cf. Prov 3:34 and Ps 25:9), be blameless (תמיים, Ps 37:18, cf. Prov 1:12 and 2:21), be gracious by giving to others and lending out (Ps 37:21, 26; cf. Prov 14:21, 31), and take refuge in Yahweh (חסה) (Ps 37:40; cf. Prov 30:5 and Ps 25:20). Ps 37:1 contains, as has been noted, a precise quotation from Prov 24:19, with only the ‘wicked’ in the Proverbs text being substituted with ‘wrongdoers’: ‘Do not be agitated by evildoers; do not envy [the wicked =] those who do wrong’. The idea is also repeated in Ps 37:7, indicating its importance as a theme in the psalm.

Another similarity between Ps 37 and Proverbs is found in Ps 37:30-31:

The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom (יהגה חכמה), and his tongue speaks justice (משפט). The law of his God (תורת אלהיו) is in his heart (בלבו); his steps do not slip.

This should be compared to Prov 2:10: ‘For wisdom will enter into your heart (כי־תבוא חכמה בלבך)’ and with Prov 8:7: ‘For my mouth will utter truth (כי־אמת יהגה חכי); but wickedness is an abomination to my lips’. While the wise of Prov 2:10 will have *wisdom* in his heart, the righteous of Ps 37:31 has the ‘*law* of his God’ in his heart. Ps 37:30-31 thus indicate that there is a close connection between wisdom and Torah in the mind of the author of this psalm.⁵⁵ Wisdom and Torah is further also associated with justice (משפט), one of the ‘subjects’ which Ps 25:9 describes as being taught

⁵⁴ Isa 58:7 urges them to share their food with the hungry and bring the homeless, poor people into their homes.

⁵⁵ So also Weber 2006:99.

by Yahweh.⁵⁶ It thus seems safe to conclude that both Pss 25 and 37 follow the trajectory of interpretation which saw Yahweh as a wisdom teacher and wisdom as part of the Torah of Yahweh. Since both psalms allude to and adapt the teaching of Proverbs, one may assume that the book of Proverbs was considered to be an authoritative text by the authors of these psalms, part of the teaching or ‘Torah’ of Yahweh. The author of Ps 25 obviously knew Exodus 33 and 34 and alludes to these chapters of the Pentateuch in a similar way as he does to Proverbs.⁵⁷ According to Ps 37, piety thus consists of trusting in Yahweh, doing what is good, being gracious, and following the Torah of Yahweh (also those parts found in Isaiah and Proverbs). A life on these principles will be rewarded by the sudden disappearance of the seeming successful wicked, everlasting support by Yahweh, and inheritance of the Promised Land. It seems that the author of Ps 37 was particularly concerned to prove from ‘Scripture’ that the righteous will eventually inherit the Promised Land, and that they do not need to become agitated by the seeming success of the wicked. Compliance with certain characteristics of the righteous – accepting the teaching of Yahweh, trusting in him, waiting for him, being humble, practising justice towards fellow-men – would shortly result in their being vindicated by Yahweh.

There seems to be a connection also between these two psalms and Jer 17. The relationship between Ps 1 and Jer 17 has already been established beyond doubt. The image of the tree planted next to streams of water seems to indicate a literary connection between the two contexts, with Ps 1 the receiver and Jer 17 the donor.⁵⁸ Because there are similarities between Ps 1 and Ps 37 as well,⁵⁹ it seems worthwhile to investigate the relationship between Ps 37 and Jer 17, and consequently, also that between Ps 25 and Jer 17. The use of certain words and the occurrence of certain themes in Ps 37 seem to be reminiscent of Jer 17. Among such similarities between the two contexts, one should mention the theme of *trust in Yahweh* (בטח ביהוה) used in opposition to trust in human *power* (expressed with the use of ‘arm’ for power זרוע), the description of people as ‘*luxuriant*’ (רענן), the description of Yahweh as a *refuge* (מחסה, מחסה), the

⁵⁶ Cf. the מִשְׁפָּטִים which are mentioned in Ps 19:10 as another synonym for Torah.

⁵⁷ The similarity between Ps 25:4 and Ex 33:13 was noted above. The description of Yahweh’s ways as ‘*steadfast love and truth to those who keep his covenant and decrees*’ in Ps 25:10 is remarkably similar to Moses’ description of Yahweh as ‘*abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness*’ in Ex 34:6. The covenant is also mentioned in Ex 34:10.

⁵⁸ Levin (1993:360) argues that this is the case since only one half of the image is used in Ps 1 – that applicable to the righteous. The wicked is not considered worthy of an extended comparison.

⁵⁹ I have investigated this connection in a paper read at the “Psalms and Pentateuch” conference on 13 and 14 July 2007 at the Ludwig Maximilian University, München. Cf. also the notes in Kratz (1996:9).

distinction of being *shamed* in public or not (with the use of *בוש*), references to the *future* by means of the word *אחרית*, and the description of misfortune as a day or a time of *disaster* (*יום רעה*, *עת רעה*). The use of *גבר* for ‘man, person’ in both contexts⁶⁰ is also conspicuous. Some of these similarities apply also to Ps 25, and it has one extra similarity with Jer 17, namely the use of *טוב* to describe good fortune or prosperity. The following table gives a summary:

Jeremiah 17	Psalms 25	Psalms 37
<p>⁵ Thus says Yahweh: ‘Cursed is the man who <u>trusts</u> (<i>בטח</i>) in mankind and makes flesh his <u>strength</u> (<i>זרוע</i>), whose heart turns away from Yahweh. ⁶ He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any <u>good</u> (<i>טוב</i>) come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. ⁷ ‘Blessed is the man who <u>trusts in Yahweh</u> (<i>בטח ביהוה</i>), 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 <u>green</u> (<i>רענן</i>), and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.’</p> <p>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 <u>end</u> (<i>אחרית</i>) he will be a fool.</p> <p>¹³ O Yahweh, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be <u>put to shame</u> (<i>בוש</i>); those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken Yahweh, the fountain of living water.</p> <p>¹⁷ Be not a terror to me; <u>you are my refuge</u> (<i>מחסה</i>) in the <u>day of</u></p>	<p>² O my God, in you I <u>trust</u> (<i>בטח</i>); let me <u>not be put to shame</u> (<i>אל-אבוש</i>); let not my enemies exult over me. ³ Indeed, none who wait for you <u>shall be put to shame</u> (<i>בוש</i>); they shall <u>be ashamed</u> (<i>בוש</i>) who are wantonly treacherous.</p> <p>⁵ His soul will abide in what is <u>good</u> (<i>טוב</i>), and his descendants will inherit the land.</p> <p>²⁰ Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me! Let me <u>not be put to shame</u> (<i>אל-אבוש</i>), for I take refuge in <u>you</u> (<i>ב</i>).</p>	<p>³ <u>Trust in Yhwh</u> (<i>בטח ביהוה</i>), and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.</p> <p>⁵ Commit your way to Yhwh; <u>trust in him</u> (<i>בטח על</i>), and he will act.</p> <p>¹⁷ For the <u>arms</u> (<i>זרוע</i>) of the wicked shall be broken, but Yhwh upholds the righteous.</p> <p>¹⁸ Yhwh knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; ¹⁹ they are <u>not put to shame in evil times</u> (<i>לא-יבושו בעת רעה</i>); in the days of famine they have abundance.</p> <p>³⁵ I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a <u>green</u> (<i>רענן</i>) laurel tree.</p> <p>³⁶ But he passed away, and behold, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found. ³⁷ Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for there is a <u>future</u> (<i>אחרית</i>) for the man of peace. ³⁸ But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the <u>future</u> (<i>אחרית</i>) of the wicked shall be cut off.</p> <p>³⁹ The salvation of the righteous is from Yhwh; he is their stronghold in the <u>time of trouble</u> (<i>בעת צרה</i>). ⁴⁰ Yhwh helps</p>

⁶⁰ Ps 37:23 and Jer 17:7.

<p>disaster (ביום רעה).¹⁸ Let those be <u>put to shame</u> (בוש) who persecute me, but let <u>me not be put to shame</u> (אל-אבשה); let them be dismayed, but let me not be dismayed; bring upon them <u>the day of disaster</u> (יום רעה); destroy them with double destruction!</p>		<p>them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they <u>take refuge in him</u> (בחסה ב).</p>
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The theme of *trust* in Yahweh is certainly the dominant motif in Jer 17:5-11. This chapter attributes the exile to the sin of Judah, and links it directly to a lack of trust in Yahweh and its cause, namely trust in human ability. Jer 17:4 says, ‘You will, of yourself, relinquish your inheritance (נחלה) that I gave you. I will make you serve your enemies in a land you do not know, for you have set my anger on fire; it will burn forever’. In verse 5 then follows the curse on the person who trusts in human ability, whose heart deviates from Yahweh, while verse 7 contains a blessing on the person who trusts in Yahweh. It seems that Ps 37 alludes to Jer 17 in an attempt to substantiate the teaching, found in Prov 2, that the righteous will inherit the land (cf. the use of ‘inheritance’, נחלה, in Ps 37:18). This is linked to the instruction to trust in Yahweh, found also in Proverbs, and strengthened by allusion to the curse and the blessing found in Jer 17. Ps 37 acknowledges that certain wicked people are successful and urges the righteous not to envy them. The success of the wicked is described with the image of the blessed person who trusts in Yahweh from Jer 17 (an evergreen tree). But the purpose of this is to emphasize that it will not be for long; the wicked will soon wither, go up in smoke like lush pastures, and they will have no future (אהרית), as Jer 17:11 implies).

Ps 25 also alludes to Jer 17, it seems, but approaches it from the angle of supplication for forgiveness. In this regard, it has probably been influenced to a greater extent by Jer 31. The author of Ps 25 prays for forgiveness for the sins (חטאות) of his ‘youth’ (נעורים), and asks Yahweh not to remember (אל תזכר) his transgressions (פשעים) according to his steadfast love and for the sake of his goodness (Ps 25:7). The prayer is repeated in verse 11: ‘For your name’s sake, O Yahweh, pardon my guilt (סלח לעון), for it is great’. In Jer 31:19, Ephraim refers to his shame about the sins of his youth: ‘after I was instructed, I slapped my thigh; I was ashamed, and I was confounded, because I bore the disgrace of my youth (נעורים)’. Yahweh then promises to make a new covenant with the house of Israel (v.31). All of them will know Yahweh, for he will forgive their guilt (סלח לעון) and remember their sin no more (לא זכר עוד) (v.34). The similar use of ‘youth’ (נעורים), ‘not remember’ (אל/לא זכר), ‘sins’ (חטאת), and ‘pardon’ (סלח) in conjunction with ‘guilt’ (עון) in the two contexts strongly suggests that the author of Ps 25 is in fact praying on behalf of the people of

Israel that Yahweh will now pardon the sin of their ‘youth’.⁶¹ The repetition of the prayer that Yahweh should teach the suppliant his ‘ways’ in Ps 25 also makes sense in light of the assurance given in Jer 31:34 that the Israelites will not have to teach one another to know Yahweh, since he will give his *Torah* in their midst (קרב) and will write it on their *heart* (לב) (cf. in this regard the remark in Ps 37:31 that the righteous has the *Torah* of his God in his *heart*, לב). The final supplication in Ps 25:22, that Yahweh would redeem (פדה) Israel out of all his troubles, is also reminiscent of Jer 31:11 which states that ‘Yahweh has redeemed (פדה) Jacob and ransomed (גאל) him from the power of one stronger than he’.

It is well-known that Ps 25 also has close contacts with Ps 86. This has no direct bearing on the relationship between Ps 25 and Ps 37, but helps to establish the general character of Ps 25 as a psalm that alludes to a variety of contexts within and outside the book of Psalms. It is not established beyond doubt that it is the author of Ps 25 who borrowed from Ps 86, but this does seem to be the case – Ps 86 is more closely-knit, while the phrases shared by the two psalms are distributed between material borrowed from other contexts in Ps 25. The following table should help to visualise the similarities. Ps 86 is regarded as the source, so its order of verses is used:

Psalm 86	Psalm 25
1 <i>for I am afflicted and needy</i> (כִּי־עָנִי וְאֲבִיוֹן אֲנִי)	16 <i>for I am alone and afflicted</i> (כִּי־יָחִיד וְעָנִי אֲנִי)
2 <i>protect my life ... save your servant, my God, who trusts in you</i> (שְׁמֹרָה נַפְשִׁי הוֹשַׁע עַבְדְּךָ אֱלֹהֵי הַבּוֹטָח אֵלֶיךָ)	20 <i>protect my life and deliver me</i> (שְׁמֹרָה נַפְשִׁי וְהַצִּילֵנִי) 2 in you I trust (בְּךָ בִטְחָתִי)
3 to you I call <i>all day long</i> (אֵלֶיךָ אֶקְרָא כָל־הַיּוֹם)	5 I wait for you <i>all day long</i> (אוֹתְךָ קִוִּיתִי כָל־הַיּוֹם)
4 to you, my Lord, I lift up my soul (אֵלֶיךָ אֲדַנִּי נַפְשִׁי אֲשָׂא)	1 To you, Yahweh, I lift up my soul (אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה נַפְשִׁי אֲשָׂא)
5 for you, my Lord, are good (כִּי־רַחֵם אֲדַנִּי טוֹב) and abundant in <i>faithful love</i> (וּרְבִיחַסֵד)	8 Yahweh is good and upright (טוֹב־וְיָשָׁר יְהוָה) 7 according to your <i>faithful love</i> , remember me, for the sake of your goodness (כַּחֲסֵדְךָ זְכַר־לִי־אֲתָהּ לְמַעַן טוֹבְךָ יְהוָה)
7 In the day of my <i>distress</i> , I call on you (בַּיּוֹם צָרָתִי אֶקְרָאֲךָ)	17 the <i>distresses</i> of my heart (צָרוֹת לִבִּי)
11 Teach me, Yahweh, <i>your way</i> (הוֹרֵנִי יְהוָה דְרָכְךָ)	4 make <i>your ways</i> known to me (דְרָכֶיךָ יְהוָה הוֹדִיעֵנִי) 8 he instructs sinners in the <i>way</i> (יּוֹרֵה חַטָּאִים בְּדָרְךָ)

⁶¹ Cf. in this regard the addition of v.22, not part of the acrostic, which links the prayer of the individual to the community (so also Seybold 1996:108). The vocabulary of Jer 31:34 is also reflected in Jer 33:8 and 36:3, and seems to have been inspired ultimately by the prayer of Moses in Num 14:19.

	9 he teaches the humble his way (וילמד ענוים דרכו) 12 he will instruct him in the way he should choose (יורנו בדרך יבחר)
13 for your faithful love is great (כִּי־חַסְדְּךָ גָדוֹל)	7 according to your faithful love (כַּחֲסָדְךָ)
17 so that those who hate me can see and be put to shame (ויראו שנאי ויבשו)	2 do not let me be disgraced (אל־אבושה)
16 turn to me and be gracious to me (פנה אלי וחנני)	16 turn to me and be gracious to me (פנה אלי וחנני)

There can be little doubt that a literary relationship exists between the two psalms, and it also seems clear that Ps 25 borrowed from Ps 86 since it is more divergent and displays similarities with Ps 86 predominantly in those sections where it adopts the style of an individual lament. Ps 25 seems like a hybrid between Ps 37 and Ps 86, but with influence from a wide variety of other texts. The typical change of disposition from complaint to trust, often found in the lament of an individual,⁶² is replaced in Ps 25 by a change from lament to wisdom-like aphorisms about the trustworthy characteristics of Yahweh and the benefits of putting one's trust in him alone (vv.3, 8-10, and 12-14). It is in those verses that Ps 25 displays the greatest similarity with Ps 37.

Although it did not form part of the investigation, the mutual close relationship of Pss 25 and 37 with Ps 34 should also be mentioned here. In alphabetic form, phraseology, and theological vision, these three psalms seem to be closely related. In the following lists of shared stems, the underlined ones are those that are shared by all three psalms:

- Words shared by Pss 25 and 34: זה, ו, ה, דוד, ב, את, ארץ, אל, איש, זכר, נצל, נפש, מן, מי, למד, לא, ל, כל, כי, ישע, ירא, יום, יהוה, טוב, חסה, נצר, חמיד, שמר, שם, שנא, רב, ראה, צרה, פנה, פדה, עני, ענו, עין, נצר.
- Words shared by Pss 34 and 37: בקש, ב, אח, ארץ, אל, איש, אין, אהב, כי, ישע, יחדו, יום, יהוה, טוב, חפץ, חסה, ו, הנה, ה, דוד, דבר, גבר, ברך, צדיק, פה, עת, עשה, עני, ענו, סור, מן, מות, לשון, לב, לא, ל, כרת, כל, שמר, שלום, שבר, רשע, רעה, רע, רום, רב, ראה, צרה.

Ps 34 shares the same concern for the Land (Yahweh will cut the memory of those who do evil from the Land, כרת hi, v.17), and the author also describes himself as a member of the group of עֲנִיִּים (v.3) and as being an עָנִי himself (v.7). He supplements these characterizations with expressions such as 'brokenhearted' (נשבר־לב) and 'crushed in spirit' (דכא־רוח) (v.19), reminding one as strongly of Trito-Isaiah as was the case in Pss 25 and 37 (cf. Isa 57:15, ושפל־רוח and 61:1, נשבר־לב).

⁶² Cf. Weber's description of the phenomenon and the traditional as well as more recent explanations given (Weber 2005:116-120).

Taking refuge (הִסְתָּה) in Yahweh is also strongly advocated in Ps 34, and this admonition again comes at the end of the psalm as in the other two psalms.⁶³

It seems that a common theological point of view is discernible between these three psalms. This point of view can be described as a vigorous affirmation of the deeds-consequence belief,⁶⁴ but also as going beyond that ideology in explicitly formulating in Ps 34 the belief that Yahweh himself will intervene on behalf of the disowned and disempowered righteous.⁶⁵ It is no longer wisdom which forms a law with which one should comply in order to avoid negative consequences and enjoy success; Yahweh is the teacher who dispenses his Torah, and compliance with these stipulations⁶⁶ defines one as a righteous person⁶⁷ who for that reason will eventually abide in what is good and whose posterity will inherit the Land (cf. Ps 25:8-10; 12-13). There is acknowledgement in these psalms that adversity and oppression are possible (cf. Ps 25:16-20; 34:7),⁶⁸ but soon/in a short while/in the end⁶⁹ that scenario will change. On a life-encompassing scale, there is recompense for the righteous (Ps 37:19, 25, 37, 39).

In a contribution published in 1993, Brueggemann has proposed that there are two possible readings of Ps 37: a first reading which is ideological and which

⁶³ Cf. Ps 25:20, Ps 34:23, and Ps 37:40. Hossfeld & Zenger have argued that Pss 25 and 34 form a 'frame' for the group 25-34 and have made a detailed summary of the formal similarities and correspondence of contents of the two 'nachexilische, weisheitliche Armenpsalmen' (Hossfeld & Zenger 1994:384 n.35).

⁶⁴ Cf., for instance, the positive remarks about those who fear and seek Yahweh in Ps 34:10-11. But Ps 34:17 identifies *Yahweh* as the agent who will cut off the memory of the wicked from the Land while in Ps 37, very similar to Ps 1, there are only positive statements about Yahweh's support for the righteous while passives are used to describe the downfall and extermination of the wicked and their offspring. Yahweh only 'sees' the day of the wicked coming (v.13), he does not bring it upon them; it is their *own* sword that will go into the heart of the wicked (v.15). It is Yahweh who *supports* the righteous (v.17), but another passive is used for the breaking of the arms of the wicked (cf. the same contrast in v.28, expressed by *two* passives).

⁶⁵ Ps 34:16-23; cf. 37:9. The passive form יִכְרַתוֹן should probably be interpreted as signifying divine activity in this last verse and many others in Ps 37, but it does seem that the role of Yahweh in the extermination of the wicked is much subtler in Ps 37 than in Ps 34.

⁶⁶ Ps 25:9-10; 37:30-31.

⁶⁷ Or one who fears Yahweh (Ps 25:12; 34:10, 12), indicating approximation of the definition of a wise person in Proverbs. Such a person is very similar to the figure of Job (תַּם־יִישָׁר), compare Ps 25:21 with Job 1:1, 8 and 2:3. They are those who seek their refuge in Yahweh (Ps 25:20; 34:23) and who wait for him (Ps 25:21).

⁶⁸ Ps 1 seems to be emphatic about the success of the righteous and the ruin of the wicked.

⁶⁹ Ps 37:2, 10, 38.

affirms the connection of deed and outcome in the status quo from a privileged point of view; and a later reading (in the Hellenistic period), during a situation such as that in which Qohelet eventually submitted to resignation, in which disillusioned landowners saw in it a 'utopian redescription' (Brueggemann 1993:253), since the deeds-consequence linkage now became a passionate conviction of what will be in the future. I fail to see any signs of Brueggemann's first reading in Ps 37; but his description of the later reading is completely accurate. Ps 37 was probably written during a phase in history such as was experienced in post-exilic Judah or in the early Hellenistic period.⁷⁰ It is a response to the same disenchantment visible in Qohelet, but a diametrically opposite one which confirms the truth of traditional wisdom. Ps 34 seems to be from the same period, but it goes a step further in involving Yahweh more directly in the envisaged restoration of the Promised Land to its rightful owners, the non-aggressive, non-arrogant, faithful and trusting righteous who wait for Yahweh and seek refuge in him. Hubert Irsigler (1999:259) locates the sharp antithesis between the righteous and the wicked (in plural form) in the tensions of post-exilic Judah, and the motif of envy within the righteous because of the success of the wicked 'anchored above all in post-exilic texts from the 5th century onwards'.⁷¹ According to him, the Persian period of the fifth and fourth centuries BC seems to be the background of Pss 37, 49, and 73 (Irsigler 1999:259).

D CONCLUSION

In this investigation it was established that Pss 25 and 37 have much in common: they share a significant number of less common words and expressions and the same alphabetic form; they were both intended as teaching songs, although Ps 25 was moulded as a lament; both were intended to foster a particular attitude of humility, trust in Yahweh and waiting for him to vindicate the righteous; and both display a profound influence from wisdom material, with Yahweh taking over the role of the wisdom teacher. They also share another characteristic, namely the influence of Pentateuchal⁷² and prophetic material, especially from Jeremiah, but also from Isaiah. All these shared features seem to be ample evidence of a shared origin. It seems that they were composed by

⁷⁰ It was not merely read in conjunction with Isa 61 at Qumran (so Weber 2001:180); its author already used Isa 58 and 61 in composing it. The spiritual and economic climate which stimulated its composition therefore must have been very similar to that experienced by the community at Qumran and the first-century Christian community. Cf. in this regard also the investigation of Lohfink (1990).

⁷¹ He mentions Mal 2:17; 3:13-21; Job 21:9-21 and 24, but also the 'most probably post-Jeremian text Jer 12:1-4 and Prov 3:31; 23:17; 24:1 and 19'.

⁷² Lohfink (1991:294) and Human (1996:80-82) found strong connections between Ps 25 and Ex 32-34. Both remarked that the origin of the motif of taking possession of the land should also be sought in the Pentateuch, but in this regard they seem to have overlooked the connection of Ps 25 (possibly via Ps 37) to this motif in Prov 2.

the same or a like-minded person or persons, representing a group who saw themselves as righteous in opposition to unrighteous people who held sway over them.⁷³ The shared message of the two psalms would have been to propagate quiet trust in Yahweh as a refuge and saviour who would soon annihilate the prosperous wicked people and restore control of the Promised Land to the ‘spiritual poor’ and repentant people. The speaker in Ps 25 presents himself as one of this group whose example should be imitated, while the speaker of Ps 37 assumes the stance of a teacher for such a group of people.

The method of composition of the two psalms indicates a high regard for the authority of the Pentateuch, Prophets, wisdom material, and even some psalms. In this regard they display the same approach as that which is exemplified best in Ps 119, an approach which is also visible to a lesser extent in other Torah-Wisdom Psalms such as Pss 1 and 19. Acceptance of such corpuses of texts as authoritative – to the extent that they could be used in the composition of new parts of Scripture – points toward a late post-exilic origin of the two psalms.⁷⁴ Their combined emphasis on trust in Yahweh as the only valid refuge and their propagation of a piety that waits for Yahweh to restore the Promised Land to its rightful owners further seem to point towards a shared concern with the group of those who began to edit the final composition of the Psalter.

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⁷³ Irsigler (1999:263) speaks of ‘social impoverishment and danger of famine’ in the case of Ps 37. He thinks that Neh 5:1-6 can elucidate the background of Ps 37: ‘we are powerless and our fields and vineyards belong to others’, v.5. However, he also emphasizes the fact that there is no longer reconciliation possible between the two groups, a fact which points in my mind to a later period.

⁷⁴ This could have been during any period from the time of Ezra to the time during which the Qumran community flourished, but the status of Trito-Isaiah and the use that is made of

various Psalms suggest that the time of writing was probably during the third century B.C.E., during the flourishing of Jewish literature under the cultural renaissance of Hellenism. For this period as a time in which Jewish literature flourished, cf. Schniedewind (2004:194).

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Phil J. Botha, Department of Ancient Languages, University of Pretoria, 0002, South Africa. E-mail: phil.botha@up.ac.za