

“At the Time when Yhwh Delivered Him out of the Palm of All His Enemies and out of the Hand of Saul” (Psalm 18,1): From David in the Book of Samuel to David in the Book of Psalms and Back Again*

Beat Weber

Theologisches Seminar Bienenberg, Liestal (Switzerland) &

Department of Ancient Languages and Cultures, University of Pretoria, Pretoria (South Africa)

Birrhoosstrasse 5, CH-3673 Linden; weber-lehnherr@sunrise.ch

Abstract: This article draws upon a reader-response and canonical-hermeneutical perspective in order to analyze the manner in which 2 Sam 22 and Ps 18 are embedded in their respective literary contexts. Psalm 18's superscription functions both to guide the interpretation of the following psalm as well as evoke its “*Doppelgänger*” in 2 Sam 22 (and “behind” it the Song of Moses in Deut 32,1-43). It not only contains a prayer articulated in a situation of distress, as a song of thanksgiving it also retrospectively witnesses to divine acts of salvation that have an abiding validity. This analysis demonstrates that the intertextual reading of biblical texts as a significant moment of the “canon” is not a secondary imposition upon these texts from the outside.

Key Words: intertextuality • canon • psalm superscriptions • Book of Psalms • 2 Samuel 22 • Psalm 18.

“A reader always seeks connections, always interrelates that which has been read, and always refers it to earlier experiences of reading as well as knowledge acquired ... ‘Canon’ not only means that biblical texts bind and guide a community of faith, it also describes a characteristic that is intrinsic to the texts themselves. The Bible is a *complex whole*. Whoever wishes to understand (and communicate) it must not stop at the mere recognition of diversity. With every renewed act of interpretation the recognition of *unity within diversity* leads to a theology that is increasingly scriptural.”¹

The “intertextual” interpretation of biblical books along with the associated concept of unity within diversity and the “anamnetic structure” of biblical literature are not later

* This paper stands in connection with my status as Research Associate at the Department of Ancient Languages and Cultures at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa. I am grateful for Dr. Philip Sumpter's English translation and the comments provided by my friend, Prof. Phil Botha.

¹ G. Steins, “Die Bibel als ‘Ein Buch’ lesen? Eine innerbiblische Lektüeranleitung,” in idem, *Kanonisch-intertextuelle Studien zum Alten Testament* (SBAB 48; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2009), 113-121, here 115.

interpretations imposed upon the Bible from outside its own original concerns.² They are constitutive of the structure of the biblical books themselves, an integral element in the authorizing and legitimating processes that led to the creation of the canonical shape of the literature.

One of the phenomena that cause biblical writings to be connected with each other is texts that are more or less identical and which are located in different books.³ The extent and degree of their similarity can vary. As far as the communities that are familiar with these texts are concerned it is the similarities that are most immediately salient. These similarities have a cohesive function and they also create a degree of association between the contexts into which they have been embedded.

Of the various possible “interfaces” between the biblical books of the Old and New Testaments, our focus here will be on the Psalter and its intertexts.⁴ The following three texts display the most substantial similarities:

- 1) The Pentateuch (esp. Exodus) // “historical psalms” (esp. Pss 77-78; 81; 105-106; 135-36);
- 2) 2 Sam 22 // Ps 18;
- 3) Pss 96; 105-106 // 1 Chr 16.⁵

These three frames of reference are each associated in various ways with the figures of Moses (1) and David (2 and 3).⁶ The intertextual relation that stands out the most is the one

² K. Schmid, *Literaturgeschichte des Alten Testaments: Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008), 219-231, referring to Magne Sæbø, speaks of “Zusammen-Denken” (“synthetic thinking”). For “anamnetischen Struktur” (“anamnetic structure”), cf. G. Steins, “Kanon und Anamnese: Auf dem Weg zu einer Neuen Biblischen Theologie”, in idem, *Kanonisch-intertextuelle Studien zum Alten Testament* (SBAB 48; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2009), 61-85, esp. 74-84.

³ Such textual “doublets” (the quotation marks indicate that hardly any texts are completely identical) are usually analyzed according to the interests of literary or redaction criticism. In terms of the direction of dependence between 2 Sam 22 and Ps 18, a growing number of scholars take Ps 18 to be the older text; cf. B. Weber, “Das königlich-davidische Danklied 2 Samuel 22 / Psalm 18 im Kontext von Psalm 1–18: Eine (proto)kanonische Lesung vom Ende der Samuelbücher her zum Anfangsbereich des Psalters hin,” in S.M. Attard and M. Pavand (eds.), “*Canterò in eterno le misericordie del Signore*” (*Sal 89,2*). *FS Gianni Barbiero* (AnBib.Studia 3; Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2015), 187-204, esp. 188-189. In what follows the focus will be on the interpretive potential of the texts rather than their genesis. Doubled texts which connect large portions of books or corpora of books are, e.g., Exod-Lev // Deut; 1-2 Sam and 1-2 Kgs // 1-2 Chr; Matt // Mark // Luke (// John). In addition to those texts that will be discussed shortly, texts in the middle range are 2 Kgs 18-20 // Isa 36-39; 2 Kgs 24-25 // Jer 52; 2 Chr 36 // Ezra 1.

⁴ In its form as a book the Psalter is characterized by an “inscribed quality of being secondary” (“*ingeschriebene Sekundarität*”) in relation to the writings that precede it (Torah and *Nebi'im*); cf. Beat Weber, “Von der Psaltergenese zur Psaltertheologie: der nächste Schritt der Psalterexegese?! Einige grundsätzliche Überlegungen zum Psalter als Buch und Kanonteil,” in E. Zenger (ed.), *The Composition of the Book of Psalms* (BETL 238; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 733-744, esp. 736-738.

⁵ The next most significant intertext of the Psalter (esp. the sub-books III-V) is probably Isaiah.

⁶ The Mosaic / Torah parallels (1) offer numerous but less substantial or less similar points of contact than is the case for the Davidic references (2 and 3). For (1), cf. J. Gärtner, *Die Geschichtspsalmen: Eine Studie zu*

between 2 Sam 22 // Ps 18 (51 verses), for the wording of these two texts is almost identical. This “doubling” constitutes the tightest “bracket” between the Psalter and another biblical book. It is this relation that is the primary focus of this article. Account will also be taken of Ps 3 with its superscription, which is significant because it is the first Davidic psalm of the Psalter. We will focus less on the texts themselves than on their relation to each other, and specifically on the interpretive horizons to which certain textual signals function to guide readers.⁷ As such, this study is an exercise in canonical hermeneutics.

I. The Double Transmission of 2 Samuel 22 ≈ Psalm 18

2 Sam 22 and Ps 18 are two largely identical poetic compositions (prayers) that have been embedded in two different literary contexts. This fact is relevant for interpretation and the generation of meaning – at least as far as the hermeneutical shape of the Psalter is concerned. By virtue of their introduction (v. 1) and conclusion (vv. 50-51), their content is associated with the person of David and events within his life. He is the speaking subject and, as is typical of hymns of thanksgiving (תודה), his address is bi-directional: he communicates with God (יְיָ) and witnesses to a particular audience (⇒; this makes up the bulk of the psalm). His role as speaker is explicit in 2 Sam 22,1 and implicit in Ps 18,1.⁸ The superscription to the song contributes significantly to an inter-book “intertextual” reading.⁹ As an interpretive key it must be considered with care.

den Psalmen 78, 105, 106, 135 und 136 als hermeneutische Schlüsseltexte im Psalter (FAT 84; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012) and A. Klein, *Geschichte und Gebet: Die Rezeption der biblischen Geschichte in den Psalmen des Alten Testaments* (FAT 94; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); for (2) see what follows; for (3) (and 2) cf. B. Weber, “Die doppelte Verknötung des Psalters: Kanonhermeneutische Erwägungen zu den ‘Schnittstellen’ Psalm 18 // 2 Samuel 22 und Psalm 96; 105; 106 // 1 Chronik 16,8–36,” *BZ* 60 (2016), 14-27.

⁷ In Ps 2,1-3 the Psalter itself invites the reader to recognize these signals, or rather it praises those who do so (ובותרתו יהגה יומם ולילה), cf. B. Weber, “Psalm 1 and Its Function as a Directive into the Psalter and towards a Biblical Theology,” *OTE* 19 (2006), 237-260, esp. 248-256.

⁸ Whereas in 2 Sam 22,1 David appears as the grammatical subject of the sentence (1de), in Ps 18,1 he is introduced with the more ambiguous prepositional phrase לְדָוִד “belonging to David” (1c). The subsequent relative clause does not nominalize the subject (1de). The previous prepositional phrase does, however, indicate that David is the speaker – a supposition that is strengthened by the parallel in 2 Sam 22,1. A discussion of the meaning of לְדָוִד is beyond the scope of this article. The translation “belonging to David” (“zugehörig David”) leaves the meaning of the phrase open (ownership, dedication, authorship etc.).

⁹ The frequent devaluation and neglect of the superscriptions is unjustified for they are significant for the interpretation of the composition of the book. Cf. B. Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen III: Theologie und Spiritualität des Psalters und seiner Psalmen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010), 223-240; see also the earlier

2 Sam 22,1		Ps 18,1
וידבר דוד ליהוה את־דברי השירה הזאת ביום הציל יהוה אתו מכף כל־איביו ומכף שאול:	1	למנצח לעבד יהוה לדוד אשר דבר ליהוה את־דברי השירה הזאת ביום הציל־יהוה אותו מכף כל־איביו ומיד שאול:
	a	For the choir master
	b	belonging to the servant of Yhwh
	c	belonging to David
Then David spoke the words of this song to Yhwh	d	when he spoke the words of this song to Yhwh
at the time when Yhwh delivered him out of the palm of all his enemies and out of the palm of Saul.	e	at the time when Yhwh delivered him out of the palm of all his enemies and out of the hand of Saul.

Let us first look at what the two texts have in common. They appear in the second half of the superscription to Ps 18 (1de) and are almost identical with the introduction to 2 Sam 22. The community of listeners that receives the hymn of thanksgiving within the psalm has been given an interpretive framework: The words of this Davidic song look back upon various situations of distress (and conflict) caused by enemies and they witness to God's repeated salvific intervention.¹⁰ Certain implications are then drawn at the end of the psalm: the content of David's words is made valid for his descendants upon the throne (v. 51). This song is unlike any other; the conclusion to the psalm gives it a special kind of dignity, for it functions as a comprehensive witness to the life of David and as a kind of "testament." Within the unfolding sequence of the psalms in the Psalter this definitive articulation of praise is surprising and seems "premature." As a continued reading of the psalms makes clear, the prayers of David do not cease. Subsequent Davidic psalms wrestle prayerfully and plaintively with conflicts and battles that are still to be resolved.¹¹

That which is still in need of explanation in Ps 18 is unproblematic in 2 Sam 22 when read in the context of the books of 1-2 Samuel. Here we have the first difference between the two songs: 2 Sam 22 appears in a climactic position and with a climactic form (poetic center, together with 2 Sam 23,1-7) within the conclusion of the book in 2 Sam 21-

work by B.S. Childs, "Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis," *JSS* 16 (1971), 137-150, esp. 137: "The titles established a secondary setting which became normative for the canonical tradition."

¹⁰ Within the song the salvific deeds are witnessed to with similar words in vv. 18 and 49 (the "man of violent deeds" could be a reference to Saul). Furthermore, cf. 1 Sam 4,3; 12,10-11; 2 Sam 3,18; 19,10.

¹¹ The question of the significance of the totality and finality of God's salvation of David (and beyond) in Ps 18 for the continued *lectio* of the Psalter needs further consideration. In any case, within the interpretive framework of a *lectio continua* of the Psalter, Ps 18 marks a caesura and a new beginning (but also bear in mind the chiasmic arrangement of Pss 15-24).

24 at the end of the narrated story of David.¹² The prominence of the text by virtue of its genre and position is made explicit by the introduction to the two poetic pieces, which interprets them in terms of their finality: After 2 Sam 22,1 (see above), 2 Sam 23,1 begins with: “And these [are] the final words of David ...” The content of the song of thanksgiving also has a summary and didactic character.¹³ A comparison of the context of our texts within their respective books reveals significant differences: The statements in v. 1de fit well into the context of the books of Samuel, which underscores the great significance of the composition by means of its location and genre (poetry within texts of a predominantly narrative mode). Within the Psalter, on the other hand, Ps 18 as a witness to God is far less conspicuous.¹⁴ The clearer profile of the Samuel version of the text over and against the Psalter version is the first indication that the vector of interpretation is from the Psalter back to 1-2 Samuel. At the same time, the opening of Ps 18 contains a hermeneutical key in that it not only guides the interpretation of the Davidic song of thanks within the context of the Psalter, it also points the reader to the same song in the context of Samuel (where the finality of the piece is encoded).

The ultimately quite minor differences between the two versions of the song are primarily concentrated in the superscription/introduction and in the opening section.¹⁵ Among these are the phrase לַעֲבַד יְהוָה “concerning the servant of Yhwh,” which occurs in Ps 18,1b but not in the Samuel version. This unfamiliar phrase consisting of the double ascription “belonging to the servant of Yhwh” and “belonging to David” only otherwise

¹² Cf. H.H. Klement, *II Samuel 21-24: Context, Structure and Meaning in the Samuel Conclusion* (EHS.T 682; Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 2000) and G. Steins, “Geschichte, die im Rahmen bleibt: Kanonische Beobachtungen an 1 Sam 2 und 2 Sam 22f,” in idem, *Kanonisch-intertextuelle Studien zum Alten Testament* (SBAB 48; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2009), 209-226, esp. 214-223. For the parallels between 1 Sam 2 and 2 Sam 22 and their function as a frame for the books, cf. also J.W. Watts, *Psalm and Story. Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative* (JSOTS 139; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 23-25.112-115.

¹³ Vv. 21-32 in the center of 2 Sam 22 have a sapiential-ethical coloring; cf. Steins, “Geschichte, die im Rahmen bleibt,” 215-216.

¹⁴ Ps 18 is certainly situated within the core of the sub-structure of Pss 15-24, where it constitutes a frame along with the royal Pss 20-21 around the Torah Ps 19 in the middle of the group (cf. Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen III*, 161-163). But within the Psalter this location is far less emphatic than the location of 2 Sam 22 within 1-2 Samuel.

¹⁵ The differences are partially due to the integration of each text into its respective context in its book. Among these are, e.g., the first part of the superscription (1abc) and the colon in 2a, which only occurs in the Psalter version. On the other hand, the conclusion in 2 Sam 22,3 is unique to the Samuel version. For a list and evaluation of the textual variants cf. M. Kleer, “*Der liebliche Sänger der Psalmen Israels*”: *Untersuchungen zu David als Dichter und Beter der Psalmen* (BBB 108; Bodenheim: Philo, 1996), 30-34 (Kleer prioritizes Ps 18 over 2 Sam 22).

occurs in Ps 36,1. The unusual sequence (personal name in the second position) requires the interpretive community to exert greater effort in order to acquire understanding. In the other writings, “servant of Yhwh” is a title of honor, which was accorded above all to Moses (cf. Deut 34,5; Josh 1,1.13.15 and frequently in Joshua; 2 Kgs 18,12, also 2 Chr 1,3; 24,6).¹⁶ An identification of the “servant of Yhwh” with Moses leading to a double ascription of Ps 18 to Moses (servant of Yhwh, 1b) *and* David (1c) is not entirely unreasonable, for other elements of the superscription have a “Mosaic” coloring. Both songs of Moses are denoted as *השיר הזאת* “this song” (v. 1d) (cf. Exod 15,1; Deut 31,19.21-22.30; 32,44). An allusion to the song of Moses in Deut 32,1-43 is strengthened by the fact that 2 Sam 22 also occupies an end position (both formally and biographically) as well as the similar sentence structure in Deut 31,30; 32,44, which goes beyond the phrase in v. 1d. It is also supported by analogies within the song.¹⁷ However, Ps 18 is never classified as a Mosaic psalm (cf. Ps 90) *and* as a Davidic psalm *at the same time*. The phrase “belonging to the servant of Yhwh” is always interpreted as equivalent to “belonging to David.” The further details in the superscription as well as the parallelism with 2 Sam 22 within the context of its book and much more give priority to a Davidic ascription. Besides, there are also cases where David is referred to as “his/your/my servant” in relation to Yhwh (cf. e.g. 1 Sam 23,10; 2 Sam 3,18; 7,5.8.20.25.27-29; 1 Kgs 8,24-26.66; Jer 33,21-22.26; Ezek 34:24; 37:24-25; Pss 19,12.14; 78,20; 89,4.21; 132,10), even if the titular phrase “servant of Yhwh” is otherwise never explicitly applied to David. Despite this, it is evident that Moses inheres as an element within the “semantic surplus” of the Psalter version as compared to the Samuel version.¹⁸ This is further underscored by the integration of Ps 18 into the sub-collection of Davidic psalms in Pss 15-24, which juxtapose Torah-concerns (Moses) (Ps 19 in the center

¹⁶ In the construct state as found in our text this phrase appears roughly 20 times for Moses, twice for Joshua (Josh 24,9; Jdg 2,8), and once for the Isaianic servant of God (Isa 42,19). These are then supplemented by the ascriptions in the two superscriptions to the psalms (Pss 18,1; 36,1).

¹⁷ Cf. the comparison and evaluation of the intertextuality between Deut 32,1-43 and 2 Sam 22 // Ps 18 in D. Markl, *Gottes Volk im Deuteronomium* (BZAR 18; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 252-258; cf. also J. Taschner, “Das Moselied als Verbindung zwischen Tora und Propheten,” in E. Ballhorn and G. Steins (eds.), *Der Bibelkanon in der Bibelauslegung: Methodenreflexionen und Beispielexegesen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007), 189-197.

¹⁸ Cf. also the rare divine appellation *אלוה*, which only occurs in the song of Moses (Deut 32,15.17 = first occurrences in the Bible) and in Ps 18,32.

and Pss 15 / 24 in the frame) and monarchy (David) (Pss 18 / 20-21).¹⁹ In comparison to the Samuel version, Ps 18 (with its superscription) moves David closer to the sphere of Moses and as such underlines the analogy between the two poetic compositions located at the ends of their lives. In terms of canonical hermeneutics, Ps 18,1 points to three texts in sequence: on the basis of Ps 18,1 the interpretive community is first directed towards the psalm itself, secondly it is directed to 2 Sam 22, and thirdly it is directed to Deut 32,1-43. Such a *lectio (proto)canonica* has an impact upon the perception of the authorization and affiliation (as well as differentiation) of the text.

The direction of interpretation from the Psalter “back” to the books of Samuel is supported by other phenomena within the Psalter. Examples are the frequent Davidic ascriptions in general as well as the biographical-contextual comments in some of the superscriptions in particular. All of these metatextual signals point to events in the story of David. They presuppose the books of Samuel and call them to mind. The vector of interpretation indicates that the narrative traditions concerning David (1-2 Samuel) constitute the primary genre with which prayer-poetry (psalms) has been co-ordinated as a secondary genre – a momentum that takes the reader beyond 1-2 Samuel // Psalms and which is of significance for the Bible as a whole.²⁰

In light of this, Ps 18 occupies a key position among the twelve psalms in the first of the two Davidic collections that are prefaced with biographical information from David’s *vita* (Pss 3; 7; 18; 34 | 51; 52; 54; 56; 59; 60; 63).²¹ Its “weightiness” can also be seen in the fact that it provides the most comprehensive biographical information of all the aforementioned psalms (it is also the longest of all the Davidic psalms). The uniqueness of

¹⁹ Alongside the Davidic kingdom, the kingdom of God contained in Ps 24 also has a Mosaic mediation (cf. Exod 15,18). On the structure of Pss 15-24, cf. P. Sumpter, “The Coherence of Psalms 15–24,” *Bib.* 94 (2013), 186-209, esp. 203-204.

²⁰ The correlation of *narratio* and *poetica* not only shapes the relationship between the books of Samuel and the Psalter, the configuration of narrative and poetic texts is also of significance within 1-2 Samuel itself (cf. Klement, *II Samuel 21-24*, 106-117). This basic principle also appears in other writings in the OT and NT: The prayers or hymns cause a break in the narrative flow, switch the temporal perspective to the present (and future), and within a liturgical or meditative context allow the congregation or interpretive community to become co-present with the past event (cf. Steins, “Die Bibel als ‘Ein Buch’ lesen?,” 116-119).

²¹ With the exception of Ps 142, references to the *vita David* only occur in the two Davidic collections Pss 3-41* and 51-72*. For their hermeneutical significance, cf. Childs, “Psalm Titles;” V.L. Johnson, *David in Distress: His Portrait Through the Historical Psalms* (LHBOTS 505; New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2009); B. Weber, “An dem Tag, als JHWH ihn rettete aus der Hand aller seiner Feinde und aus der Hand Sauls’ (Ps 18,1): Erwägungen zur Anordnung der biographischen Angaben zu David im Psalter,” *VT* 26 (2014), 284-304.

the superscription consists in its extraordinary length and its claim that the following psalm articulates the *finality* of God's deliverance from every kind of distress and conflict. In contrast to this summary and concluding character, the other biographical superscriptions refer to *specific* situations within David's life. In addition to this, unlike the superscription in Ps 18, which looks *back* upon a conflict situation after that situation has already been resolved, the other superscriptions situate their respective psalms in the midst of a conflict *yet to be resolved*. As such, these other psalms relate to Ps 18 in such a way that they express the lament and supplications articulated by David *in* the specific situations that are summarized together in Ps 18. We now turn to take a closer look at the superscription of Ps 3.

II. Psalm 3 as the First Davidic Psalm

On the one hand, Ps 3 belongs to the orientation-providing introduction to the Psalter as a whole (i.e. the triple overture of Pss 1-3); on the other hand it opens the first Davidic Psalter of Pss 3-41* (and within that the first Davidic sub-collection of Pss 3-14, and within that again, the first sub-section of Pss 3-7).²² Within the Psalter this psalm constitutes the first occurrence of a psalm that possesses a Davidic ascription in the superscription as well as a supplementary contextualization of the psalm within the life of David. The initial positioning of the psalm gives its superscription (Ps 3,1) a significant hermeneutical function, not only in relation to the psalm it precedes but also in relation to the remaining superscription.

מזמור לדוד בברחו מפני אבשלום בנו:
An instrumentally accompanied song ("psalm")
belonging to David
when he fled from Absalom, his son.

²² For the transitional function of Ps 3 cf. B. Weber, "Die Buchouvertüre Psalm 1–3 und ihre Bedeutung für das Verständnis des Psalters," *OTE* 23 (2010), 834-845. On Ps 3 itself, its superscription, and its intertextual connections, cf. P.J. Botha and B. Weber, "'Killing Them Softly with this Song ...' The Literary Structure of Psalm 3 and Its Psalmic and Davidic Contexts," in B. Weber, "*Wie ein Baum, eingepflanzt an Wasserrinnen*" (*Psalm 1,3*): Beiträge zur Poesie und Theologie von Psalmen und Psalter für Wissenschaft und Kirche (ed. T. Uhlig; ABIG 41; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2014), 102-146.

This information connects the psalm with David's flight from his son Absalom (2 Sam 15-18).²³ As a result, the interpretive horizon thereby initiated involves a deepening of the narrative by introducing the aspect of prayer: the *narratio*, which focuses on human action (1-2 Samuel), is enriched by a *poetica* (psalms) and at the same time it is opened up for re-use and re-enactment. The community of faith that interprets the Psalter is thereby instructed in how to (more deeply) perceive events and experiences in light of God and how to prayerfully bring them to God in complaint, supplication, thanksgiving, and praise.²⁴

The superscription to Ps 3 opens with a designation of the psalms genre or the manner in which it is to be performed: מזמור “instrumentally accompanied song” (= “psalm”). It shows that the psalm should be performed in a musical mode. Within the linear sequences of the biblical writings the term מזמור appears here for the very first time and here it triggers consequent interpretive processes. It points its readers back to the poetic compositions of David in 2 Sam 22,1-51, for these royal words of thanksgiving in the books of Samuel are the first moment in which David can be heard praying and singing. Furthermore, in opening of the following “last words of David” (2 Sam 23,1-7) he is called “the pleasant one of the (instrumentally accompanied) songs (זמרות) of Israel” (v. 1). In this way, the poetic compositions in the center of the conclusion of Samuel (2 Sam 21-24) aid in the decipherment of the superscription in Ps 3,1. In the song of thanksgiving in 2 Sam 22, David's *speaking* of the words of this song (v. 1) is connected with his *singing* (זמר, vv. 50-51). Analogous to this, Ps 3 is the first place in the Psalter where David's praying is connected with his singing.

The connection with 2 Sam 22 subtly indicated by the מזמור in the superscription is enriched by intertextual connections between the two textual corpora and thereby strengthened.²⁵ In Ps 3,4 the speaking I (David) witnesses to Yhwh as “shield” (מגן) around me.” The previous Ps 2 concluded in v. 12 with a macarism for those who seek refuge (סהה) in God. A link between these two terms, which both share the semantics of refuge-seeking, was already created in the Davidic song of thanksgiving, as exhibited by 2 Sam 22,3.31:

²³ The fact that it is the events involving Absalom that are first mentioned in the Psalter demonstrates that chronological order is not a primary criterion. Psalms associated with the chronologically prior conflict between David and Saul appear primarily in the second Davidic Psalter (cf. the cluster Pss 52-59*).

²⁴ Past events are released from their temporal limitations; they become trans-temporal and thus relevant for the present. For this basic anamnestic structure of the Bible, see cf. Steins, “Kanon und Anamnese,” 74-85.

²⁵ Even without David's thanksgiving, his person and monarchy have already been evoked in the prior Ps 2; cf. namely Ps 2,7 with 2 Sam 7,13-14.

My God²⁶ [is] my rock, I take refuge in him (אחסה־בו),
my shield (מגני) and the horn of my salvation ...
... He himself [is] a shield (מגן) for all those who take refuge in him (לכל החסים בו).

Once the bridge between Ps(s) (2-)3 and 2 Sam 22 has been fixed in the readers' memory they will also notice and interpret weaker intertextual connections in the following psalms. Among these are statements concerning the enemies, their great number and the distress they cause (cf. Ps 3,2-3.6 with 2 Sam 22,1.4.7.18.38.41-42.49), as well as pleas for salvation and testimonies to its occurrence (cf. Ps 3,3.8-9 with 2 Sam 22,3-4.28.36.42.47.51). The parallels between Ps 2,5 and 2 Sam 22,7 in terms of David's call to God from afar and the response to his prayer from within the temple or Mount Zion also belong in this category.²⁷

We thus see that Ps 3 along with its superscription does not only recall the Absalom narrative. As a subtle interpretive matrix located at the opening of the Psalter it also recalls 2 Sam 22. David's taking refuge in God along with God's salvific intervention in 2 Sam 22 give the complaint in Ps 3 a heightened hopeful and trusting undertone. In the course of a *lectio continua* this undertone is maintained as other psalms establish points of contact with 2 Sam 22 (esp. in Pss 4; 7; 9-10; 17).²⁸ In this way, the hymn of thanksgiving sung at the literary and biographical end of David's life in 2 Sam 22 is prolonged – at first only subtly in the background beginning with Ps(s) (2-)3 but then explicitly in its “doublet” in Ps 18, where its significance is confirmed.

III. Result and Consequences

The introductory Ps 1 opens up interpretive horizons for the Psalter by means of its references to the Torah and the Nebi'im. At the same time, this intertextuality connects the

²⁶ This is a revocalization of the MT (construct phrase). An alternative is to assimilate the phrase to Ps 18,3.

²⁷ For the links, cf. the summary listed in tabular form along with discussion in Weber, “Das königlich-davidische Danklied 2 Samuel 22 / Psalm 18.”

²⁸ For the details, cf. B. Weber, “‘HERR, wie viele sind geworden meine Bedränger ...’ (Ps 3,2a). Psalm 1–3 als Ouvertüre des Psalters unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Psalm 3 und seinem Präskript,” in E. Ballhorn and G. Steins (eds.), *Der Bibelkanon in der Bibelauslegung: Methodenreflexionen und Beispielexegesen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007), 231-251, esp. 239–51; Weber, “Das königlich-davidische Danklied 2 Samuel 22 / Psalm 18,” 193-197.

book to the two previous sections of the evolving canon. In the psalms following Ps 2 David appears as the king anointed by Yhwh. In the superscription to Ps 3 the reference to David is explicit, so that those reciting the psalms are directed towards the David narratives. Knowledge of the Absalom narrative is presupposed and called to mind. In this way, the David-story (*lectio narrativa*) is correlated with a David-prayer (*lectio poetica*). This mode of calibration initiated by Ps 3 is continued throughout the rest of the Psalter.²⁹ In this way, the “external perspective” of 1-2 Samuel is deepened by an “internal perspective” of prayer and spirituality.³⁰

As the interpretive community continues to read through the psalms sequentially it arrives at the third Davidic biographical reference (after Pss 3 and 7) in the superscription to Ps 18.³¹ This superscription switches the perspective from the events surrounding Absalom (Pss 3-7[ff.]) to David’s afflictions in general and those caused by Saul. At the same time, the mode of prayer switches from supplication *within* a situation of distress (psalm of complaint) to prayer *after* the cause of distress has been remedied (hymn of praise). The second royal psalm (Ps 18) thereby activates and confirms the claims of the first (Ps 2): Among the nations David praises the salvific deeds of Yhwh displayed towards “his anointed one” (משיחו; Ps 18,50-51 = 2 Sam 22,50-51). The insurgency of these nations “against Yhwh and his anointed one” (Ps 2,2) is thus proven to have failed whereas God’s promise (cf. Ps 2,7-9) has been fulfilled (cf. also Ps 20,7).

²⁹ Even though the psalms following immediately upon Ps 3 are not prefixed with situational-biographical information, the note “belonging to David” suffices to maintain the interpretive trajectory established by Ps 3, connecting these other Davidic psalms with the life and work of David. Either it has been left to the readers to contextualize these other psalms within the life of David or – and this is more likely – the last-mentioned biographical note remains in force until it is replaced by another or is no longer sustained by the content of the psalms and so dissipates. As such, the Absalom-horizon characterizes (at the very least) the group of Pss 3-7 (“David-Absalom-midrash”), particular as the rather cryptic superscription to Ps 7 may also point towards the Absalom narrative; cf. Weber, “An dem Tag, als JHWH ihn rettete,” 290-292.

³⁰ Applied to Ps 3, this means the following: The outcome of David’s flight from his son Absalom is not only to be ascribed to fortuitous circumstances as well as David’s diplomatic and military skill. It is much more the case that this psalm provides a glimpse into the interior prayer life of a complaining and beseeching but also God-trusting David, who in the end can witness to God’s help.

³¹ Both beforehand (Pss 3 / 7 => 18) as well as afterwards (Ps 18 => 34) there are two long sequences of Davidic psalms that are lacking in biographical information. The remaining instances where this occurs are confined to the second Davidic Psalter (Pss 51-72*), all clustered at its beginning. To this is added the “latecomer” in Ps 142. For the arrangement cf. Weber, “An dem Tag, als JHWH ihn rettete.”

The divine salvation experienced by David is emphasized by Ps 18 and the intertext it evokes, 2 Sam 22.³² The two-fold positioning of the royal-Davidic song of thanksgiving in Samuel and the Psalter strengthens the “synchronized” reading of the Davidic narratives with the Davidic prayers that had been initiated by Ps 3. The semantic enrichment amounts to the following claim: Whoever prays with David while in distress will pray differently if they bear in mind that, in the end, Yhwh delivered him from all his afflictions. The reader is given the confidence that the people of God who recite these prayers can count on God’s help.³³

The phrase *לעבד יהוה* “belonging to the servant of Yhwh” (Ps 18,1) in the superscription evokes a further interpretive horizon. The analogy already established between the Davidic song of thanksgiving in 2 Sam 22 (= Ps 18) and the testamentary song of Moses in Deut 32,1-43 is also strengthened. The connection between David / monarchy and Moses / Torah that had been established in the overture to the Psalter in Pss 1-3 is picked up by Ps 18 and its context (Pss 15-24) and deepened.³⁴

The material analyzed above reveals a (proto)canonical gradient: The books of Samuel have been placed before the Psalter and the latter refers back to them. This is the direction of interpretation established by the canonical shape.³⁵ The books of Samuel can be read without knowledge of the Psalter, whereas the Psalter cannot be read without the

³² A taster of the relation between promise and fulfillment in respect of “his anointed one” as seen in Pss 2 / 18 has already been provided in the poetic framing compositions of the book of Samuel (cf. 1 Sam 2,10 / 2 Sam 22,51). The finality of this fulfillment is further underlined by the “last words” of David, the “anointed of the God of Jacob and the pleasant one of the songs of Israel” in 2 Sam 23,1-7.

³³ This makes clear that the incorporation of the psalms into the Psalter as a book as well as the system of superscriptions involved a pious reuse of psalms that original had a separate existence as individual texts.

³⁴ In relation to Ps 1,1-2 cf. the talk of meditation upon the “torah of Yhwh” and the expressed connection with the words of Moses (Deut 6,[4-]7; 33,29); see also the analogy between the fivefold book of David (Psalter) and the fivefold book of Moses (Pentateuch); cf. B. Weber, “Psalm 1 als Tor zur Tora JHWHs. Wie Ps 1 (und Ps 2) den Psalter an den Pentateuch anschliesst,” *SJOT* 21 (2007), 179-200. Within the sequential reading of the Psalter David and Moses along with situations associated with them reappear (e.g. Pss 77-78; 90-106), cf. B. Weber, “Psalm 78 als ‘Mitte’ des Psalters? – ein Versuch,” *Bib.* 88 (2007), 305-325, esp. 321-323; J. Schnocks, *Vergänglichkeit und Gottesherrschaft: Studien zu Psalm 90 und dem vierten Psalmenbuch* (BBB 140; Berlin: Philo, 2002), 185-191. For the Psalter as a whole it is David who is the decisive figure.

³⁵ The canonically prescribed direction of interpretation must be distinguished from the trajectory of the diachronic growth of the two books. There are contemporary scholars who are of the view that the poetic form of Ps 18 is more original than that of 2 Sam 22, i.e. that the latter text was taken from the Psalter and inserted into the books of Samuel at a later date; cf. Kleer, “*Der liebliche Sänger der Psalmen Israels*,” 11-20. Regardless of the truth of this reconstruction of their literary-genetic relationship, the compositional arrangement of the two writings establishes the referential vector 1-2 Samuel <= Psalms as the one that is theologically decisive and hermeneutically determinative.

books of Samuel, for the Davidic references would be lacking in content.³⁶ This direction of interpretation accords with the sequence of the biblical books or the larger canonical divisions (Nebi'im: 1-2 Samuel => Ketubim: Psalms) in the Hebrew Bible.³⁷ The book sequence Sam => Ps is also true of the Septuagint and thus applies to all Jewish and Christian editions of the Bible.

A question that arises from this study is from what point and under which circumstances such an inter-book reading could become operational. It does not necessarily require the final form of the text, but it does require a stabilized form of the two books that includes 2 Sam 22 // Ps 18 (along with the biographical superscriptions in the psalms).³⁸ To this must be added authority, fame, and a certain measure of circulation, as well as a degree of Scriptural literacy. Without knowing the exact dates of origin or the compositional processes behind the books of Samuel or the Psalter, the most likely time is the Hellenistic period (3rd/2nd Centuries B.C.).³⁹ Nothing can be known with certainty about the arrangement or sequencing of the Hebrew biblical books. There are, however, certain indications that the first edition of the Psalter followed immediately upon the Nebi'im (Malachi), to which the books of Samuel belong ("Former Prophets"), and that it opened the third canonical division (Ketubim).⁴⁰

³⁶ The referential vector identified here in terms of canonical hermeneutics concerns the *initial* moment of interpretation. Once the connection has been established and the textual corpora memorized, a cognitive "simultaneity" is produced in one's mind that enables one to go beyond the primary interpretive trajectory and oscillate between the two texts.

³⁷ A study of the content of these two books as well as their respective images of David within the context of this particular interpretative framework is a task in its own right that cannot be followed up here. For such an analysis cf. Kleer, "Der liebliche Sänger der Psalmen Israels," 11-127.

³⁸ We leave aside the question of the relation of 1-2 Samuel to a "Deuteronomistic History;" cf. G. Braulik, "Theorien über das Deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk (DtrG) im Wandel der Forschung," in C. Frevel (ed.), *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (KSStTh 1,1; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012), 237-256.

³⁹ The canonical arrangement indicates that both books were not written on the same scroll. For the production of literature at that time, cf. Schmid, *Literaturgeschichte des Alten Testaments*, 43-51.158-159.204-207. 1-2 Samuel in its book (scroll) form may be earlier than that of the Psalter (like 2 Sam 22 // Ps 18, the original forms of the Davidic narratives contained within it will be much earlier). The Proto-Masoretic Psalter must be dated to the first half of the 2nd Century B.C. at the very *latest*; cf. A. Lange, "Die Endgestalt des protomasoretischen Psalters und die Toraweisheit: Zur Bedeutung der nichtessenischen Weisheitstexte aus Qumran für die Auslegung des protomasoretischen Psalters," in E. Zenger (ed.), *Der Psalter in Judentum und Christentum* (HBS 18; Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1998), 101-136.

⁴⁰ For an explanation of the leading-position of the Psalter within the Ketubim, cf. B. Weber, "Der Beitrag von Psalm 1 zu einer 'Theologie der Schrift'," *JETH* 20 (2006), 83-113, esp. 98-106. However, it is also the case that the transmission of the sequence of books within this third division of the canon is diverse; cf. T.J. Stone, *The Compilation History of the Megilloth: Canon, Contoured Intertextuality and Meaning in the Writings* (FAT II/59; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1-117. J. Steinberg provides a theology of the Ketubim that takes into account the arrangement of the books according to *B. Bat. 14b* in *Die Ketuvim – ihr Aufbau*

In any case, the Psalter's anaphoric referentiality to the books of Samuel had already been inscribed into the canonical shape of the Psalter as a book and thus belongs to its history of the composition.⁴¹ This shows that a "canon" consciousness is not a secondary development arising sometime after the 1st Century A.D., it is a characteristic of the literature itself and the authorizing processes undergirding the formation of the word of God.

und ihre Botschaft (BBB 152; Hamburg: Philo, 2006); for a response to this book see B. Weber, "In Richtung einer Biblischen Theologie: Vorstellung einer kürzlich erschienen Monographie von Julius Steinberg samt einigen anschliessenden Erwägungen," *JETH* 21 (2007), 229-237.

⁴¹ This dimension of "synchronic conceptualization" of authorized writings within the process of the growth of the canon began at a very early period, as can be seen in the (partial) coordination of the early writing prophets (see Schmid, *Literaturgeschichte des Alten Testaments*, 219-221).