

“Land” as a Topic in the Book of Psalms?

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ABSTRACT

This essay focuses on land conceptions in the Psalter, dealing with Psalms reflecting on Israel’s history regard land as an integral part of remembrance and YHWH as a powerful and mighty saviour. As he was able to fulfil his promise of land in former times, he is now able to rescue from distress and to grant land for the psalmist’s and subsequent generations. The essay distinguishes between a universal-cosmologic and a particular conception of “land”. Whereas a universal-cosmologic understanding is prevailing, few psalms refer to a particular understanding (i.e., Pss 25; 37; 61; 69). These psalms witness to a conception of “land as reward” in tight connection to a God-fearing life. This thesis of “land as reward” suggests a “metaphorical” application of the concept; further it is accompanied with notions of Zion theology and the theology of poor and poverty.

KEYWORDS: Land, Psalms, Psalter, memorization of history, universal-cosmologic understandings, particular understandings, Zion theology, theology of poor and poverty, metaphorization.

A INTRODUCTION

Scholars have identified various themes running through the Book of Psalms and its parts, e.g., a movement from lament to praise,¹ reflections on Israel’s

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¹ Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, “Von der Klage zum Lob – die Dynamik des Gebets in den Psalmen,” *BK* 56 (2001): 16–20; Uwe Rechberger, *Von der Klage zum Lob: Studien zum „Stimmungsumschwung“ in den Psalmen* (WMANT 133; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2012); idem, “Zwischen individueller Klage und universalem Lob: Die Psalmen 22–24 als ein für den Psalter exemplarisches Itinerar eines Gebets-Pilgerweges,” in *Zur Theologie des Psalters und der Psalmen* (ed. Ulrich Berges et al.; BBB 189; Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019, forthcoming); Beat Weber, “Von der Beherrschung der ‘Tora JHWHs’ (Ps 1,2) zur Darbringung der ‘Tehilla JHWHs’ (Ps 145,21). Erkundungen und Erwägungen zum Psalter als Lehre und Lob,” in *Zur Theologie des Psalters und der Psalmen* (ed. Ulrich Berges et al.; BBB 189; Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019, forthcoming); and with a specific focus on the fifth Book of Psalms, William H. Bellinger Jr., “The Direction of the Psalter in Book V and the Question of Genre,” in *Zur Theologie des Psalters und der Psalmen* (ed. Ulrich Berges et al.; BBB 189; Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019, forthcoming).

history,² the “theology of the poor,”³ the theme of God’s presence in space and time,⁴ David as authority of the Psalter,⁵ and the Psalter’s canonical importance.⁶ According to a synchronic view (first step) in a diachronic reflection (second step) these themes offer constructive contributions to the theology of the Psalter as a whole.⁷

² Judith Gärtner, *Die Geschichtspsalmen: Eine Studie zu den Psalmen 78, 105, 106, 135 und 136 als hermeneutische Schlüsseltexte im Psalter* (FAT 84; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Dietmar Mathias, *Die Geschichtstheologie der Geschichtssummarien in den Psalmen* (BEATAJ 35; Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1993); Kathrin Liess, “‘Um deiner Güte willen’ (Ps 44,27): Geschichteerinnerung und Geschichteerfahrung in Psalm 44 im Kontext der ersten Korachsammlung Ps 42–49,” in *Zur Theologie des Psalters und der Psalmen* (ed. Ulrich Berges et al.; BBB 189; Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019, forthcoming); Dirk J. Human, “Pentateuchal ‘History’ as Source for Israelite Praise in Psalms 105 and 106,” in *Zur Theologie des Psalters und der Psalmen* (ed. Ulrich Berges et al.; BBB 189; Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019, forthcoming).

³ Johannes Bremer, *Wo Gott sich auf die Armen einlässt: Der sozio-ökonomische Hintergrund der achämenidischen Provinz Yəhūd und seine Implikationen für die Armentheologie des Psalters* (BBB 174; Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2016); idem, “Die Armentheologie als eine Grundlinie einer Theologie des Psalters,” *HeBAI* 5 (2016): 350–390; idem, “The ‘Theology of the Poor’ as a Constructive Contribution to the Theology of the Psalter,” in *Zur Theologie des Psalters und der Psalmen* (ed. Ulrich Berges et al.; BBB 189; Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019, forthcoming).

⁴ Corinna Körting, *Zion in den Psalmen* (FAT 48; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); cf. further Bernd Janowski, “‘Bis an den Himmel reicht deine Güte’ (Ps 36,6): Zum Thema ‘Gott und Raum’ in den Psalmen,” in *Zur Theologie des Psalters und der Psalmen* (ed. Ulrich Berges et al.; BBB 189; Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019, forthcoming); and with a specific focus on Ps 42–49, Till M. Steiner, “‘Des Nachts singe ich seine Lieder’ (Ps 42,9): Erinnerung, Zion und die Völker im Ersten Korachpsalter (Ps 42–49),” in *Zur Theologie des Psalters und der Psalmen* (ed. Ulrich Berges et al.; BBB 189; Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019, forthcoming).

⁵ Johannes Schnocks, “Musiker, Machtmensch und Messias: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Überlegungen zu David als einer theologischen Schlüsselfigur im Psalter,” in *Zur Theologie des Psalters und der Psalmen* (ed. Ulrich Berges et al.; BBB 189; Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019, forthcoming).

⁶ Susan Gillingham, “‘The righteous shall inherit the Land, and live in it forever’ (Ps 37:29): Towards a Theology of and Human and Divine Justice through the Reception History of Psalm 37,” in *Zur Theologie des Psalters und der Psalmen* (ed. Ulrich Berges et al.; BBB 189; Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019, forthcoming).

⁷ Erich Zenger, “Psalmenexegese und Psalterexegese: Eine Forschungsskizze,” in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms* (ed. Erich Zenger; BETL 238; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 17–66, and most recently Ulrich Berges, Johannes Bremer, and Till M. Steiner, eds., *Zur Theologie des Psalters und der Psalmen: Beiträge in memoriam Frank-Lothar Hossfeld* (BBB 189; Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019).

Even though there are multiple attestations of “land” in the Book of Psalms, e.g., ארץ: 190 attestations,⁸ אדמה: 6 attestations,⁹ גבול: 5 attestations,¹⁰ and נחלה: 23 attestations,¹¹ “land” is not identified as a “theology marker” in the Psalter, but rather as a topic in Penta- or Hexateuch studies.

Regarding the Torah, it is obvious why “land” has a prominent role: It is “created” by YHWH and has cosmological implications in Gen 1–11: בראשית ברא :אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ (“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” Gen 1:1); ביום עשות יהוה אלהים ארץ ושמים (“When YHWH God made the earth and the heavens,” Gen 2:4); אמחה את־האדם אשר־בראתי מעל פני האדמה (“I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth,” Gen 6:7); ויפץ :יהוה אתם משם על־פני כל־הארץ ויחדלו לבנות העיר: (“So YHWH scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city,” Gen 11:8). From Gen 12 onwards, “land” becomes a place of desire and promise, first for Abram and then for the patriarchs: לך־לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל־הארץ אשר אראך: (“Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you,” Gen 12:1); ויאמר לזרעך אתן את־הארץ (“And he said: ‘To your offspring I will give this land,’” Gen 12:7); ונתתי לך ולזרעך אחר־ך את ארץ (“And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you the land in which you are foreigners,” Gen 17:8). In the Exodus narrative, “land” becomes a place of promise for Moses, Aaron, and for Israel (אעלה אתכם מעני מצרים אל־ארץ הכנעני (“I will bring you up out of the misery of Egypt, to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey,” Exod 3:17); והיה כִּי־תבאו אל־הארץ אשר יתן יהוה לכם כאשר דבר (“When you enter the land that YHWH will give you as he promised,” Exod 12:25). In Numbers, Deuteronomy, and especially in Joshua, “land” appears as a place of donation, conquest and takeover, and is distributed to the tribes: וירשתם את־ למען תחיו ובאתם

⁸ We count 190 attestations for ארץ in Pss 2:2, 8, 10; 7:6; 8:2, 10:16, 18; 12:7; 16:3; 17:11; 18:8; 19:5; 21:11; 22:28, 30; 24:1; 25:13; 27:13; 33:5, 8, 14; 34:17; 35:20; 37:3, 9, 11, 22, 29, 34; 41:2; 42:7; 44:4, 26; 45:17; 46:3, 7, 9, 10, 11; 47:3, 8, 10; 48:3, 11; 50:1, 4; 52:7; 57:6, 12; 58:3, 12; 59:14; 60:4; 61:3; 63:2, 10; 65:6, 10; 66:1, 4; 67:3, 5, 7, 8; 68:9, 33; 69:35; 71:20; 72:6, 8, 16 (2 attestations), 19; 73:9, 25; 74:7, 8, 12, 17, 20; 75:4, 9; 76:9, 10, 13; 77:19; 78:12, 69; 79:2; 80:10; 81:6, 11; 82:5, 8; 83:19; 85:2, 10, 12, 13; 88:13; 89:12, 28, 40, 45; 90:2; 94:2; 95:4; 96:1, 9, 11, 13; 97:1, 4, 5, 9; 98:3, 4, 9; 99:1; 100:1; 101:6, 8; 102:16, 20, 26; 103:11; 104:5, 9, 13, 14, 24, 32, 35; 105:7, 11, 16, 23, 27, 30, 32, 35, 36, 44; 106:17, 22, 24, 27, 38; 107:3, 34, 35; 108:6; 109:15; 110:6; 112:2; 113:6; 114:7; 115:15, 16; 116:9; 119:19, 64, 87, 90, 119; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 135:6, 7, 12; 136:6, 21; 138:4; 139:15; 140:12; 141:7; 142:6; 143:3, 6, 10; 146:6; 147:6, 8, 15; 148:11 (2 attestations), 13.

⁹ We count 6 attestations for אדמה in Pss 49:12; 83:11; 104:30; 105:35; 137:4; 146:4.

¹⁰ We count 5 attestations for גבול in Pss 78:54; 104:9; 105:31, 33; 147:14.

¹¹ We count 23 attestations for נחלה in Pss 2:8; 16:6; 28:9; 33:12; 37:18; 47:5; 68:10; 74:2; 78:55, 62, 71; 79:1; 94:5, 14; 105:11; 106:5, 40; 111:6; 127:3; 135:12 (2 attestations); 136:21, 22.

כי הארץ אשר יהוה אלהי אבותיכם נתן לכם (“so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that YHWH, the God of your ancestors, is giving you,” Deut 4:1); כי הארץ (“For the land you are entering to take over,” Deut 11:10); רק הפלה לישראל בנחלה כאשר צויתך: ועתה חלק את־הארץ הזאת בנחלה לתשעת השבטים וחצי: השבט המנשה: (“Be sure to allocate this land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have instructed you. And now divide this land as an inheritance among the nine tribes and half of the tribe of Manasseh,” Jos 13:6b–7). The importance of the theme of “land” for Penta- and Hexateuchal theology seems obvious.¹² Furthermore, questions of possession, loss, and repossession of “land” play an essential role in Israel’s and Judah’s history, just as “land” offers the base for the formation of Israel’s and Judah’s identity according to the historical books and the prophetic literature.

Even though the Psalter also bears witness to aspects similar to Pentateuch and prophetic literature, wisdom literature is different:

In their diversity, each of the [wisdom – J. B.] books serves as a reminder that revelation does not replace human experience in the life of the believer. Wisdom literature tells of the human search for a better understanding of God, the world, and human beings. [...] The blessed person is the one who finds his ‘delight in the law of the YHWH,’ as underlined in the first Psalm (Ps 1:2, cf. Ps 119:1). With regard to the Land, Wisdom literature portrays a man who shares the human condition and who is deeply rooted in a very specific Land. Wisdom literature stresses the universal rather than the particular. In contrast with the historical books that tell the particular and contingent history of Israel, Wisdom deals with human experience that is relevant always and everywhere. Land is, therefore, omnipresent, as it is in the saga of creation, because it is the very space for human existence.¹³

In this context, this contribution will focus on “land” as a topic in the Book of Psalms. In so doing, it wishes to honour Prof. Dr. Phil Botha, as this topic not only combines two research fields of the present author, but also incorporates one of Phil’s main areas of research, which he forwarded admirably by a huge number of outstanding publications with a topic of high importance

¹² Here, I may refer to my ongoing second book project on the conception of land in the Pentateuch. In a first synchronic survey I point out divergent conception of land as they are inherent to the texts. In a second step I ask for the diachronic redaction history: In which way can the focus on land contribute to the diachronic redaction process of the Pentateuch.

¹³ Alain Marchadour and David Neuhaus, *The Land, the Bible, and History: Toward the Land That I Will Show You* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2007), 43–44.

not only for the history of Israel and Judah but also for the country he is working and living in.

The question I wish to address is whether the topic of “land” can make a contribution towards the Psalter’s theology. In the following, I will focus on the texts themselves (Section B). Due to the numerous attestations¹⁴ and the fact that the topic of land cannot be limited to a single genre (e.g., psalms of lament, hymns) or psalm books or groups (e.g., the psalms of David, the so-called Korah- and Asaphite psalms), I will cluster my analysis focusing on psalms recollecting Israel’s history (Section B.1), attestations referring to a universal-cosmologic conception of “land” (Section B.2), and to a particular understanding of the concept “land” in a limited number of specific psalms (Section B.3; i.e., Pss 25; 37; 61; and 69). A conclusion (Section C) will summarise and discuss the question of metaphorical understandings of “land” as it addresses the abovementioned question on the possible contribution of the term to the Psalter’s theology.

B “LAND” IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS

1 Psalms recollecting history

Due to the prominence of the “land” motif in the Pentateuch and former prophet narratives, and the foundational role of “land” in the history of Israel and Judah, it stands to reason to focus on those psalms reflecting Israel’s history separately, i.e., Pss 78; 105–106; and the twins 135 and 136, the more so as they are “key texts” for a theology of the Psalter.¹⁵ In so doing, we witness a first understanding of “land” in the psalms, for the heritage of the land serves as an important memorandum for Israel.¹⁶

This is in particular witnessed in Psalm 78, occurring at the centre of the Asaphite-collection, which altogether reflect a high interest in Israel’s and

¹⁴ Cf. fn. 8–11.

¹⁵ Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen*, 373–391. In her conclusion Gärtner claims that the psalms recollecting Israel’s history are “hermeneutische Schlüsseltexte im Psalter” (373).

¹⁶ Peter R. Ackroyd, “Archaeology, Politics and Religion: The Persian Period,” *The Iliff Review* 39 (1982): 5–24.

Judah’s history.¹⁷ Ps 78 is a “kind of poetic sermon based on history.”¹⁸ Its reflection on history is offered in two sequences (vv. 12–39 and 40–72):

Beide Geschichtsreflexionen beginnen mit einer Darstellung der Wundertaten Jhwhs, durch die das Gottesvolk Fürsorge und Schutz des Schöpfers (V. 12–16) und die bewahrende Fürsorge des Weltherrschers (V. 40–55) erfährt. Auf die Wundertaten folgt jeweils eine ablehnende Reaktion der Väter, die zum Ausdruck des göttlichen Zorns und zum Strafhandeln Jhwhs führt (V. 17–31/56–64). Allerdings ist der göttliche Zorn in beiden Fällen begrenzt und trifft nur einen Teil des Volkes, wodurch ein Fortgang der Geschichte ermöglicht wird. Diese Begrenzung des göttlichen Zorns erkennen die Beter in der Reflexion der Geschichte im Ausbruch der Plage aufgrund der Gier der Väter in der Wüste (V. 31) sowie im Untergang der Nordreichs aufgrund des Götzendienstes der Väter in staatlicher Zeit (V. 60–64). Daraufhin wird im letzten Abschnitt der beiden Durchgänge die Barmherzigkeit Jhwhs zu seinem Zorn ins rechte Verhältnis gesetzt (V. 38f.67–72).¹⁹

Within the second sequence, the mention of the land is *instructively integrated*. So vv. 54–55 state:

וַיְבִיאֵם אֶל-גְּבוּל קְדִישׁוֹ הַרְיֵזָה קִנְתָּהּ יְמִינוֹ: ⁵⁴
וַיִּגְרַשׁ מִפְּנֵיהֶם גּוֹיִם וַיִּפְּלֵם בַּחֶבֶל נֶחֱלָה וַיִּשְׁכֵּן בְּאַהֲלֵיהֶם שְׁבֹטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Thus he brought them to the border of his holy land, to the hill country his right hand had taken.

⁵⁵ He drove out nations before them and allotted their lands to them as an inheritance; he settled the tribes of Israel in their homes. (NIV)

Verse 54 alludes to Exod 15:1–18, but as Hermann Spieckermann pointed out, the focus is no longer the Jerusalem מקדש (Exod 15:17), rather it is the land

¹⁷ Regarding Ps 78, cf. Beat Weber, “Psalm 78: Geschichte mit Geschichte deuten.” *TZ* 56 (2000): 193–214; idem, “Psalm 78 als ‘Mitte’ des Psalters? – ein Versuch.” *Bib.* 88 (2007): 305–325. Regarding Book III of the Psalter (Pss 73–89), cf. Marco Pavan, “He remembered that they were but flesh, a breath that passes and does not return” (Ps 78,39): *The Theme of Memory and Forgetting in the Third Book of the Psalter (Pss 73–89)* (ÖBS 44; Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 2014), 97–100, 223–335, and concluding 337–361.

¹⁸ Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger Jr., *Psalms* (NCBC; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 340.

¹⁹ Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen*, 99. Cf. also Mathias, *Geschichtstheologie der Geschichtssummarien in den Psalmen*, 48–111; Hermann Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart: Eine Theologie der Psalmen* (FRLANT 148; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 133–150.

and the mountain.²⁰ The brief glimpse on tradition history stresses the land-topic as the “land” is brought up to the memorization. The use of the root גרש of the גיים in v. 55 as well as the course of history witnessed in the two sequences vv. 12–39 and 40–72 reminds us of dtn/dtr theology, and the apportioning ויפילם בחבל נחלה directly leads to Jos 13ff. (cf. also Jos 23:4).

Die Funktion des Rekurses auf die Landnahme ... ruft in der gegenwärtigen Lage das Volk auf, auf Gott zu vertrauen und ihn nicht zu vergessen, denn das hieße, die gleichen Fehler zu begehen wie die Generation der ‘Väter’ ...²¹

As a history recollecting psalm, Psalm 105 also focusses on “land” in its recapitulation of Israel’s history and the remembrance of God’s deeds on its behalf. As key word, ארץ appears ten times in the psalm (vv. 7, 11, 16, 23, 27, 30, 32, 35, 36, 44). According to Dietmar Mathias, the mention of land in vv. 8–11 and 42–45 constitutes an *inclusio*, itself framed by זכר (vv. 8, 45).²² Due to this *inclusio*, the promise of land to עמו (“his people,” v. 43) is related to the covenant made with Abraham (vv. 8–11):

זכר לעולם בריתו דבר צוה לאלף דור: ⁸

אשר כרת את־אברהם ושבועתו לישחק: ⁹

ויעמידה ליעקב לחק לישראל ברית עולם: ¹⁰

לאמר לך אתן את־ארץ־כנען חבל נחלתכם: ¹¹

⁸ He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations,

⁹ the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac.

¹⁰ He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant:

¹¹ “To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit.” (NIV)

כי־זכר את־דבר קדשו את־אברהם עבדו: ⁴²

ויוצא עמו בששון ברנה את־בחיריו: ⁴³

ויתן להם ארצות גוים ועמל לאמים יירשו: ⁴⁴

²⁰ “Nicht mehr das Jerusalemer Heiligtum kann wie in Ex 15,17 Ziel der Landnahme sein, denn gerade die Zerstörung des Tempels ist das theologisch zu bewältigende Problem. Vielmehr wird jetzt gut deuteronomistisch allein dem Land und (als pars pro toto) dem Tempelberg die theologische Würde zuteil, die sich vorher Volk, Land, Tempelberg und Tempel teilen mußten (vgl. Ex 15,13.17),” Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart*, 145. Cf. also Katrin Liess’ analysis: “‘Die auf JHWH hoffen, werden das Land besitzen’ (Psalm 37,9): Zur Landthematik in den Psalmen,” *JBTh* 23 (2008): 47–73 (54).

²¹ Liess, “Die auf JHWH hoffen,” 55. Cf. also Patrick D. Miller, “The Land in the Psalms,” in *The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology: Studies in Honour of Ed Noort* (ed. Jacques T. A. G. M. van Ruiten and Jacobus C. de Vos; VTSup 124; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 183–196 (183–184); Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen*, 377–378.

²² Mathias, *Geschichtstheologie der Geschichtssummarien in den Psalmen*, 132.

45 בעבור ישמרו חקיו ותורתיו ינצרו הללויה:

42 For he remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham.

43 He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy;

44 he gave them the lands of the nations, and they fell heir to what others had toiled for--

45 that they might keep his precepts and observe his laws. Praise the LORD. (NIV)

These promises and their remembrance in Ps 105 determine the structure of the psalm, and in so doing lead to its theology: The act of remembrance, beginning in the time of the patriarchs (cf. after vv. 8–11 also vv. 12ff.) until the time of Moses and the implied land distribution (v. 44) is framed by the promise of land. This stresses the relevance of “land” up to the time of the psalmist.

Like the psalm’s vision of an inherited Promised Land, they [the psalmist’s generation – J. B.] have the hope of a future land, where they will serve Yahweh by being devoted to his *Tôrāh*, his precepts and laws (v. 44). ... Yahweh remained faithful to his promise (word) over many generations, also for the current post-exilic community. Hope is created by the notion that, what Yahweh did for Israel in the beginning of their history, He will do for the Abrahamic post-exilic community. ... The text visualizes life in the Promised Land as a life of faithfulness to Yahweh’s *Tôrāh*. By means of an *inclusio* the psalm builds a frame for depicting Yahweh as universal God, one who should be made known among nations (1) and one who determines the fate of nations (44). It underscores the notion of a universal God.²³

The psalmist, therefore, refers to dtn/dtr theology (cf. the combination of נתן and ירש)²⁴ as well as to priestly theology (cf. the conjunction of the land promise and the order to keep חקיו ותורתיו).²⁵

Psalm 135 in v. 12 refers to the land as נחלה, which is included in the psalm’s reflection on the heritage of land:

²³ Human, “Pentateuchal ‘History’ as Source for Israelite Praise,” forthcoming. Cf. also Miller, “Land in the Psalms,” 184–187.

²⁴ For this interplay, cf. Norbert Lohfink, “Die Bedeutung von hebr. *jrš qal* und *hif*,” *BZ* 27 (1983): 14–33; idem, “Kerygmata des Deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks,” in *Die Botschaft und die Boten. Festschrift für Hans Walter Wolff zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. Jörg Jeremias and Lothar Peritt; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981), 87–100; Georg Braulik, “Die deuteronomistische Landeroberungserzählung aus der Joschijazeit in Deuteronomium und Josua,” in *Das deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk* (ed. Hermann-Josef Stipp; ÖBS 39; Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 2011).

²⁵ Ps 105’s successor, Ps 106, mentions the term ארץ five times, even though the “land” cannot be qualified as a topic in the psalm.

¹⁰ נהכה גוים רבים והרג מלכים עצומים:

¹¹ לסיחון מלך האמרי ולעוג מלך הבשן ולכל ממלכות כנען:

¹² ונתן ארצם נחלה נחלה לישראל עמו:

¹⁰ He struck down many nations and killed mighty kings –

¹¹ Sihon king of the Amorites, Og king of Bashan and all the kings of Canaan –

¹² and he gave their land as an inheritance, an inheritance to his people Israel. (NIV)

The sequence vv. 10–12 recollects the gift of land once to Israel, from the conquest of the east-Jordan territory, the realms of Sihon and Og (cf. Num 21) until the west-Jordan conquests as they are witnessed in the Book of Joshua. In so doing, standing in opposition to Ps 136, it reveals a Hexateuchal concept.²⁶ But both of the twins refer to God as a powerful sovereign over the nations. The sequence recounts YHWH’s powerful acts, referring to the last of the ten plagues, the affliction of the firstborn (vv. 8–9). Not Israel, but he himself struck down many nations and killed Sihon, Og and all Canaanite kings (vv. 10–11). The description of God’s powerful deeds (cf. also Ps 136) expresses the picture of the saviour-God as it is reflected in the fifth Book of Psalms, culminating in the gift of the land as an inheritance according to v. 12.²⁷

Psalm 136 mentions the gift of ארץ as נחלה in vv. 21–22:

²¹ ונתן ארצם לנחלה כי לעולם חסדו:

²² נחלה לישראל עבדו כי לעולם חסדו:

²¹ and gave their land as an inheritance, *His love endures forever*.

²² an inheritance to his servant Israel; *His love endures forever*. (NIV)

ארצם here refers again to the land of Sihon and Og, which is the land of the Amorites (v. 19) and Bashan (v. 20). The Transjordan land Yhwh donates (נתן) as נחלה in favour of his servant (עבדו). In so doing, the psalm refers to the donation of Transjordan as heritage to his servant Israel. Again, the verses reveal Yhwh’s powerful deeds once in favour of the Exodus-generation now in favour of the generation of the psalmist (cf. the fourfold structure: great kings, mighty kings, Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan).²⁸ YHWH, as

²⁶ Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2011), 498–499.

²⁷ Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150* (WBC 21; Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 227–228; Ruth Scoralick, “Hallelujah für einen gewalttätigen Gott?” *BZ* 46 (2002): 253–272 (247); Beat Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen II: Die Psalmen 73 bis 150* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 325–328; Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen*, 331–333; W. Dennis Tucker Jr. and Jamie A. Grant, *Psalms, Volume 2* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 871–872; W. Dennis Tucker, *Constructing and Deconstructing Power in Psalms 107–150* (AIL 19; Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014), 135–137.

²⁸ Tucker and Grant, *Psalms, Volume 2*, 886.

sovereign powerful victor, donates “their” land as inheritance. Israel, however, as YHWH’s עבד stayed, are staying, and will continue to stay under YHWH’s protection and care. The following verses focus on this theme: YHWH remembers Israel in his lowly state (שבשפלנו זכר לנו, v. 23a) and rescues him from his oppressors (ויפרקנו מצרינו, v. 24a).²⁹

Focussing on the *psalms recollecting Israel’s history* altogether, we see land as an integral part of the reflection on history,³⁰ including references to the Exodus as well as to dtn/dtr and priestly theology. In so doing, *the donation of land is the goal of God’s acts as saviour, he is the Lord of the land, which he donates as נחלה*. He is able to withdraw and to assign by powerful deeds, and he is the one who is able to settle Israel in his place. The message seems clear: *God already in former times had the power to promise the land and to exalt and guide his people to live and rest in the Promised Land. The one who once had the power to do it, continues to have it.*

The *Korah-psalm 44* is not usually regarded as one of the poems reflecting on Israel’s history. Nevertheless, ארץ is mentioned in vv. 2–4 in the context of what YHWH had done for his people in the past:

אלהים באזנינו שמענו אבותינו ספרו־לנו פעל פעלת בימיהם בימי קדם:²
אתה ידך גוים הורשת ותטעם תרע לאמים ותשלחם:³
כי לא בחרבם ירשו ארץ זרועם לא־הושיעה למו כִּי־ימינך זרועך ואור פניך כי
רציתם:⁴

² We have heard with our ears, O God; our fathers have told us what you did in their days, in days long ago.

³ With your hand you drove out the nations and planted our fathers; you crushed the peoples and made our fathers flourish.

⁴ It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them. (NIV)

Again, these verses refer to the gift of land “in their days, in days long ago” (בימיהם בימי קדם). Verses 3–4 stress this as a *work of God himself*. He was the one who “drove out the nations” (ירש, *hiph.*) and “planted” the others (v. 3a); who “afflicts the people” and “sent them out” (v. 3b). Verse 4 explicitly claims this as the work of God himself: by *his* right hand and *his* arm, and *his* light of countenance. “Psalm 44 remembers that it was not the hand and sword of the Israelites that possessed the land. Rather it was God’s power and God’s arm.”³¹

²⁹ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 498–499; Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen II*, 329–332; Tucker and Grant, *Psalms, Volume 2*, 886–887; Tucker, *Constructing and Deconstructing Power*, 119.

³⁰ Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen*, 384 calls it a “Paradigma kollektiver Gedächtnisse”.

³¹ Miller, “Land in the Psalms,” 188.

Here, the use of verbs and the conception of theology offered are in line with dtn/dtr theology, which is also the case for v. 4b (“for you delighted in them”).

According to Kathrin Liess, the land topic in Ps 44 has a twofold function: to evoke trust in a mighty God and to call upon God’s mighty help in the days of the speaker (vv. 24–27).

Die Funktion der heilsgeschichtlichen Erinnerung an die Landgabe besteht in dieser Situation im Appell an Gottes rettendes Eingreifen (V. 24–27), der sich über den Begriff עֲזָרָה ‘Hilfe’ (V. 27a) auf das synonyme Leitwort ישׁע zurückbezieht, das die vergangene Heilstat (V. 4) und die aktuelle Bitte um ‘Rettungstaten’ Gottes für Jakob (V. 5b) auch sprachlich verbindet.³²

This leads to an *interconnection between the days of the past* (vv. 2–9), *the actual distress* (vv. 10–23), *and the call upon God’s help in the future* (vv. 24–27).³³ And the message offered to the psalmist’s (and further) generations fits to the one noted above: *The one who was mighty in the past is still mighty and will further be mighty and full of power.*

Also the mention of אָרֶץ in the Korah-psalm 85:2 is a fictive retrospect in favour of a prophetic vision of Jacob’s future:³⁴ The topic introduced in its first verses (vv. 2–4) guides the reader through the whole psalm.

רָצִיתָ יְהוָה אֶרֶץ שְׁבַת שְׁבַת יַעֲקֹב:²

נִשְׂאתָ עוֹן עַמְּךָ כַּסִּיתָ כָּל־חַטָּאתָם סִלָּה:³

אִסַּפְתָּ כָּל־עֲבֹרֹתֶיךָ הַשִּׁבוֹת מִחֲרוֹן אַפַּי:⁴

¹ You showed favour to your land, O LORD; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

² You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins.
Selah

³ You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger.
(NIV)

According to Hermann Gunkel, we witness here a “prophetic perfect,” or a “prophetic prescriptive”:

Der erste Teil 2–4, der wie ein gewaltiger Trompetenstoß einsetzt, verkündet das ... Heil im vollen Ton prophetischer Gewißheit, ...

³² Liess, “Die auf JHWH hoffen,” 52.

³³ Cf. Beat Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen I: Die Psalmen 1 bis 72* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001), 203–207; Liess, “Die auf JHWH hoffen,” 52; Liess, “Um deiner Güte willen,” forthcoming.

³⁴ Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 527–528, following Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (6th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 373.

Jahve hat dem Lande sein Erbarmen wieder zugewandt: das jetzt verwüstete und verödete, in dem nur noch Trümmer an die frühere Herrlichkeit erinnern, ist dann wieder wie einst von den blühenden Städten und fruchtbaren Äckern bedeckt.³⁵

Gunkel further talks about a “Wende des Geschicks” and a “Wiederherstellung des Volkes.”³⁶ Following his interpretation, Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger Jr. claim these verses depict “an assertion that YHWH is a God who forgives.”³⁷ The verses state the final result as the psalm’s first sentence after its superscription in v. 2a: YHWH (*again*) is favourable to his land. Ps 85 links God’s relation to his people to the land. So, the fate of the land is linked to the behaviour of the people. This is reflected at the end of the psalm: His people shall not turn again to folly (v. 9). So (אך), *the Lord’s salvation is at hand for those who fear him* (v. 10a) and “his glory may dwell in our land” (v. 10b). Here, the speaker refers back to the land and v. 2a, and he again refers to it in v. 13. There will be חסד ו־אמת (“mercy and truth,” v. 11a), צדק ושלום (“righteousness and peace,” v. 11b), אמת מארץ (“truth from the land,” v. 12a), צדק (“righteousness,” v. 12b), טוב (“good,” v. 13a), and *as a kind of consequence*: then ארצנו תתן יבולה (“our land will yield its increase,” v. 13b). “Land” in Ps 85, except for the reflection on YHWH’s leading character in v. 14, is the poem’s framing object rather than merely a topic in the psalm, on which God’s favour (v. 2) appears. But – and this is different to Ps 44 in the first group of Korah psalms – even though YHWH’s returning to his people and his land also here is a reflection on God’s saving power, it is linked to the behaviour of his people, notably their fear of God, as it is stated in v. 10a.

Only a single reference to “land” can be found in Ps 60,4:

הֲרַעַשְׁתָּ אֶרֶץ פְּצַמְתָּהּ רַפָּה שְׁבַרֶיהָ כִּי־מָטָה:⁴

² You have shaken the land and torn it open; mend its fractures, for it is quaking. (NIV)

The single “land”-notation in v. 4a is part of the speaker’s accusation against God (vv. 3–5). He was the one who rejected (זנה), who broke defences (פרץ), and was angry, (אנף, v. 3b) – and the one who caused the land to quake. According to the speaker, it was YHWH who brought him in the situation of distress. This will change in v. 6: נתתה ליראיך נס להתנוסס מפני קשט סלה: (“But for those who fear you, you have raised a banner to be unfurled against the bow”). At the end of the psalm in v. 14 he will declare: באלהים נעשה־חיל והוא יבוס צרינו: (“With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies”).³⁸

³⁵ Gunkel, *Psalmen*, 373.

³⁶ Gunkel, *Psalmen*, 373.

³⁷ Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 367.

³⁸ Michael Emmendorffer, *Der ferne Gott: Eine Untersuchung der alttestamentlichen Volksklagelieder vor dem Hintergrund der mesopotamischen Literatur* (FAT 21;

The topic of this contribution does not lead to a satisfying discussion on Ps 60.³⁹ What is clear, however, is that vv. 3–5 are a theological reflection on history. They reveal God’s power and might over the world order.

2 A universal-cosmologic conception of “land”

Besides the recollection of history, the majority of attestations (as noted above)⁴⁰ mention “land” as – and this is a central aspect – *pertaining to YHWH as its proprietor in a universal-cosmologic understanding not limited to any kind of particular conception*. According to these psalms, YHWH is the מלך גדול על-כל-הארץ (“great King over all the earth”, Ps 47:3). We witness this as a common motif in any book, group and sub-group: e.g., Ps 24:1 states: ליהוה הארץ ומלוואה תבל וישבי בה (“The earth is YHWH’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it”). After the ascription to David, the psalm in a form characteristic of “hymnic praise” states YHWH as the proprietor of the earth and all beings.⁴¹ The universal aspect is directly expressed also by תבל and the collective statement “all who live in it.” Verse 2 adds YHWH as the one who founded the תבל on the sea (v. 2a), and as the one who established it on rivers (v. 2b). This opening is a “crucial interpretative move for readers,”⁴² and a sign of the “divine victory over chaos.”⁴³ Similar is Ps 89:12. The verse declares: לך שמים אפי-לך ארץ תבל ומלאה אתה יסדתם: (“The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth; you founded the world and all that is in it”). Also here YHWH is claimed as founder of (the) earth and what is upon [it] (cf. also Pss 50:10, 12; 74:16). The whole context (Ps 89:10–13) marks YHWH as Lord of the Cosmos.⁴⁴

In the fifth book, Ps 107:34–35 note:

ארץ פרי למלחה מרעת יושבי בה:³⁴

ישם מדבר לאגם-מים וארץ ציה למצאי מים:³⁵

³⁴ and fruitful land into a salt waste, because of the wickedness of those who lived there.

³⁵ He turned the desert into pools of water and the parched ground into flowing springs; (NIV)

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998); Knauf, “Psalm LX and Psalm CVIII,” *VT* 50 (2000): 55–65.

³⁹ Cf. e.g., Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100* (WBC 20; Waco, TX: Word, 1990), 99–109; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 93–103; Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen I*, 267–271.

⁴⁰ Cf. fn. 8–11.

⁴¹ Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 127.

⁴² Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 127.

⁴³ Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 127.

⁴⁴ Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 406–430; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 409; Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen II*, 107–116; Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 382–390; Tucker and Grant, *Psalms, Volume 2*, 311–331.

God is declared as the one who turns “a fruitful land into a salt waste” (Ps 107:34a) and “the desert into pools of water, the parched ground into flowing springs.” (Ps 107:35). The verses are part of vv. 33–41, which can be labelled as “A Hymn on the Power of God”:⁴⁵

Following the four narrative portions of the psalm, the psalmist offers a poem that celebrates the awesome power of God over all aspects of creation. ... Verses 33–34 open the final hymn with a stark reminder of Yahweh’s power. ... According to the psalmist sources of complete continuous water (‘rivers’ and ‘springs’) can be dried up by Yahweh, and land that is fruitful can be made nothing more than a ‘salt waste’. Such imagery is meant to highlight Yahweh’s role as ‘master of life and death.’⁴⁶

The whole psalm, including the four rescue narratives in the preceding verses, claims *YHWH’s unique divinity and universal creative power to change nature and history*. In so doing, Ps 107 refers to his power on the land according to a universal-cosmologic understanding.⁴⁷

This picture is present also in Pss 108; 113; 119: 123, again in the “historical” twins Pss 135 and 136 as mentioned above, and in the final Hallel. *Especially in the fifth book, the focus on land reveals conclusions about God as mighty and as the one who wields power over people and the earth and land itself*. This fits to the *theology of the fifth book*.⁴⁸

In universal-cosmologic understandings of ארץ, the YHWH-king-psalms 91–100 offer a collective understanding of land or earth for every human being: שירו ליהוה שיר חדש שירו ליהוה כל-הארץ: (“Sing to YHWH a new song; sing to YHWH, all the earth,” Ps 96:1, cf. further Pss 97–99).

3 A particular understanding of “land”

At this stage, we have to distinguish between a *universal-cosmologic* and a *particular understanding* in cases where “land” does not mean “earth.” But whereas universal-cosmologic conceptions could be observed as “common”, “land” in a particular way is focused in *limited palms only*, i.e., Pss 25; 37; 61; and 69.

Psalm 25:13 states:

⁴⁵ Tucker and Grant, *Psalms, Volume 2*, 557.

⁴⁶ Tucker and Grant, *Psalms, Volume 2*, 557–558.

⁴⁷ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 109.

⁴⁸ Cf. Tucker, *Constructing and Deconstructing Power in Psalms 107–150*, 187–196; Tucker and Grant, *Psalms, Volume 2*, 548–1045.

נפשו בטוב תלין וזרעו יירש ארץ: ¹³

He will spend his days in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. (NIV)

Land is promised to the offspring of the one who fears YHWH (v. 12). The sequence vv. 12–14 describes what happens to האיש ירא יהוה (“the man who fears YHWH”): YHWH will show him the way to go (ורנו בדרך יבחר, v. 12b, cf. Ps 1), then he will abide in prosperity (נפשו בטוב תלין, v. 13a), and his children shall take possession of (the) land (וזרעו יירש ארץ, v. 13b). Verse 14b further adds: “to them he makes known his covenant” (ובריתו להודיעם). The verses are not about the land; rather, v. 13 is a climactic *parallelismus membrorum*: וזרעו corresponds with נפשו, and בטוב תלין corresponds with יירש ארץ. The parallelism is a central point, for the inheritance of the land is interconnected with the spending of the days in prosperity and the descendants are interconnected with the one who fears God.⁴⁹

In opposition to psalms referring to a universal-cosmological understanding (as noted above for e.g., Pss 24:1; 98:12; 107:34–35), Ps 25:13 presents a particular understanding of “land” (in so doing, MT refers to “land” but not “the land”). Obviously, there is neither a specific land meant, nor does האיש (v. 12) refer to a specific person. Moreover, vv. 12–14 are not dealing with his children but with האיש ירא יהוה (v. 12). Rather than to mention the offspring as beneficiary, there is a reference to the promises of land in the book of Genesis (Gen 12:7; 13:18), due to the fact that the possession of land directly leads to a possibility to subsist, the mention of the offspring is a sign of enduring טוב, at least for the succeeding generation. This is what Ps 25 expresses by its reference to “land.”

Psalm 25 is a didactic acrostic, in which the speaker describes himself as יחיד ועני (“lonely and afflicted,” v. 16) and talks about חטאות נעורי ופשעי (“the sins of my youth and my transgressions,” v. 7) and עניי (“my affliction,” v. 18).

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.⁵⁰

Psalm 34 offers several formal similarities to Ps 25:⁵¹

⁴⁹ Botha, “The Relation between Psalms 25 and 37”, *OTE* 20 (2007): 543–566 (551–552).

⁵⁰ Botha, “The Relation between Psalms 25 and 37,” 549.

⁵¹ Regarding formal similarities, both are acrostics. Moreover, in both of them the ו-verse is missing and at the end of the psalm a further פ-verse is added. Cf. also the similar opening words in Pss 25:12 and 34:13; 25:15 and 34:16; 25:16 and 34:17; 25:22

[T]hey 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 Pentateuchal and prophetic material, especially from Jeremiah, but also from Isaiah.⁵²

As can be observed in any of the psalms in which the speaker describes himself by poor and poverty oriented terms (יחיד ועני, v. 16; עניי, v. 18),⁵³ there is no material understanding of poverty, and his enemies (cf. vv. 2, 19) are characterized generally only and not further specified. The statement about the one who fears YHWH is part of the description of the “ideal person” according to

and 34:23. In so doing, both psalms offer “eine umfassende [...] und eine die auseinanderstrebende Lebenssituation ordnende [...] Lebenshilfe” (Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen I: Psalm 1–50* [NEB 29; Würzburg: Echter, 1993], 211). Beat Weber assumes an intention to centre the ל-verse, the consequence being that the first, middle and last letter coin the verbal root אלף (“to learn” [*Qal*], “to teach” [*Pi*]) to stress the psalm’s didactic character, cf. Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen I*, 166; cf. also Phil J. Botha, “Psalm 34 and the Ethics of the Editors of the Psalter,” in *Psalmody and Poetry in Old Testament Ethics* (ed. Dirk J. Human; LHBOTS 572; London: T&T Clark, 2013), 56–75 (61); Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen, 1. Teilband: Psalmen 1–59* (7th ed.; BKAT 15/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2003), 417. For a comprehensive and instructive comparison cf. Botha, “The Relation between Psalms 25 and 37,” 546–550.

⁵² Botha, “The Relation between Psalms 25 and 37,” 563. For the similarities, cf. especially 544–550. To this can be added similarities concerning the theology of poor and poverty, cf. Johannes Bremer, “Armentheologie und Intertextualität: Zum Zusammenspiel von Thema, Textbezügen und Entstehung des Psalters,” in *Intertextualität und die Entstehung des Psalters* (ed. Alma Brodersen et al.; FAT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019, forthcoming): “*Ps 25 und 34* weisen also je eigene Akzente auf und unterscheiden sich auch bezüglich der Armentheologie durch Eigenständigkeiten. Für die Armentheologie wurde auf der einen Seite formal auf die Selbstbezeichnung des Beter-Ichs als ‘arm’ in Ps 25 und nicht in Ps 34 verwiesen und auf der anderen Seite inhaltlich auf Rettungsmotiv und das Motiv der Umwälzung gesellschaftlicher Strukturen (‘Revolution’ ...), die Ps 34, nicht aber Ps 25 inne sind. In ihrer je eigenen Individualität sind beide jedoch ‘Armenpsalmen’, die die Gruppe Ps 25–34 rahmen. Ihre formale Verwandtschaft durch das die identischen Individualisierungen aufweisende Akrostichon ist auffällig; und auch inhaltlich weisen sie deutliche Ähnlichkeiten im Gottesbild auf sowie einen weisheitlichen Charakter, der auch in den Armentheologien zum Ausdruck kommt.”

⁵³ Cf. Bremer, *Wo Gott sich auf die Armen einlässt*, 411–413; idem, “Armentheologie und Intertextualität,” forthcoming.

the didactic connection between deeds and consequences.⁵⁴ Within this connection, *the possession of land, although by the offspring, is the consequence for the deed: to fear YHWH*. Phil Botha states:

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).⁵⁵

The motif of the fulfilment of promise is witnessed in Pss 61 and 69. According to Ps 61:6, God has (already) given or will for sure give the ירשה (to “me”?):

כִּי־אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים שָׁמַעַת לְנֹדְרֵי נַתַּת יְרֵשֶׁת יְרֵאֵי שְׁמֶךָ: ⁶

For you have heard my vows, O God; you have given the heritage of those who fear your name. (NIV)

“[T]o the one who feels ‘at the end of the inhabited world’ and surrounded by enemies, God gives a share in the ‘land,’ in community with those who fear YHWH’s name.”⁵⁶ The speaker, whose distress is described in vv. 2–3 (his heart is overwhelmed, the rock is too high for him alone), v. 5 declares his demand to abide in YHWH’s tent (v. 5a) and to find refuge under the shelter of YHWH’s wings (v. 5b). Verse 6a introduces the “vows” he addresses to YHWH. His trust in YHWH leads to his statement that YHWH will for sure *have heard his vows* and *granted* (perfect forms to document his deep confidence) *the heritage of those who fear YHWH’s name*.⁵⁷

Diese Landaussage steht im Kontrast zu der Eingangsbitte V. 1–5. Der Beter, der aus der Peripherie des Landes, vom ‘Rand/Ende der Erde’ als Bereich des Todes, zu JHWH ruft (V. 3), beschreibt mit der Landmotivik seine Rettung als Anteilgabe am Landbesitz der Gottesfürchtigen. Damit wird die Landgabe zum Ausdruck der Rettung aus Todesnot und zugleich der Reintegration in Gemeinschaft, so dass der Landbesitz hier über die Errettung hinaus auch eine soziale Funktion hat.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 166.

⁵⁵ Botha, “The Relation between Psalms 25 and 37,” 552.

⁵⁶ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 104, 108.

⁵⁷ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 108; Miller, “Land in the Psalms,” 195; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 115.

⁵⁸ Liess, “Die auf JHWH hoffen,” 64–65.

The inheritance of land is not granted *willy nilly*. The speaker *cries* (v. 2a), *prays* (v. 2b), *offers his demand(s)* – and his *vows* – to God. And, as in Ps 25, we witness the interplay of ירא and ירשה/ירש.⁵⁹

After Ps 69:34’s didactic remark, כִּי־שָׁמַע אֱלֹהֵי־אֲבוֹנִים יְהוָה וְאֶת־אֲסִירָיו לֹא בִזָּה, (“So YHWH hears the needy and does not despise his captive people”), which might once have been the psalms’ conclusion,⁶⁰ Ps 69:35–37 claim:

35 יִהְלֹלוּהוּ שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ יָמִים וְכָל־רִמְשׁ בָּם:

36 כִּי אֱלֹהִים יוֹשִׁיעַ צִיּוֹן וַיְבַנֶּה עָרֵי יְהוּדָה וַיִּשְׁבּוּ שָׁם וִירִשׁוּהָ:

37 וְזָרַע עֲבָדָיו יִנְחָלוּהָ וְאֶהְבִּי שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁכְּנוּ־בָהּ:

³⁴ Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and all that move in them,

³⁵ for God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah. Then people will settle there and possess it;

³⁶ the children of his servants will inherit it, and those who love his name will dwell there. (NIV)

These verses at the end of the psalm are part of its fifth strophe, vv. 31–37, expressing praise and confidence.⁶¹ After the speaker’s self-designation as עָנִי וְכּוֹאֵב (“miserable and painful,” v. 30a), he claims his intent to praise the name of God in the form of a song (v. 31a) and to make him great with thanks (v. 31b, both cohortatives in form and meaning). Important for his exclamation is his *tight relation to the עֲנִיִּים* (“miserable,” v. 33a), *הַדְרִישׁ אֱלֹהִים* (“searching for God,” v. 33b), *הָאֲבוֹנִים* (“needy,” v. 34a), and *אֲסִירָיו* (“his prisoners,” v. 34b). He relates all of them to his “in-group,” which is typical for Davidic Psalms, especially in the last halves of the first and second Davidic Psalters.

Verses 35–37 immediately follow the exclamation in vv. 31–34. The speaker calls heaven, earth (universal-cosmologic understanding of אָרֶץ), the sea and everything in it to praise YHWH for he will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah, so that “they” can live there and possess it. The verse does not make

⁵⁹ Cf. Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen I*, 272–274.

⁶⁰ For Norbert Tillmann, v. 34 is part of the Grundpsalm, cf. Norbert Tillmann, „*Das Wasser bis zum Hals!*“: *Gestalt, Geschichte und Theologie des 69. Psalms* (MThA 20; Altenberge: Oros, 1993), 266–267. For Alphonso Groenewald, v. 34a.b belongs to a first redaction, cf. Alphonso Groenewald, *Psalms 69: Its structure, redaction and composition* (ATM 18; Münster: LIT, 2003), 149–150, 190–290 (cf. especially 221–235), cf. also his “Concluding Remarks” (291–307); idem., “Psalm 69:36c–37b: A reinterpretation of deuteronomic-deuteronomistic formula?” *HTS* 59 (2003): 1187–1198; idem., “Psalm 69:33–34 in the light of the poor in the Psalter as a whole,” *VeEc* 28 (2007): 425–441. Both authors agree that vv. 35–38 are an (again) later redaction layer. Cf. also Berges, “Die Knechte im Psalter,” *Bib.* 81 (2000): 153–178; Alphonso Groenewald, “Who Are the ‘Servants’ (Psalm 69:36c–37b)? A Contribution to the History of the Literature of the Old Testament,” *HTS* 35 (2003): 735–761.

⁶¹ Groenewald, *Psalms 69*, 221–235.

clear who is meant by “they.” Verse 37 mentions the זרע עבדיו (“offspring of his servants”), who will obtain it, and the אהבי שמו (“those loving his name”) who will live in it. This content, especially the rebuilding of the cities of Judah, localize the psalm (and so, too, the secondary addition, vv. 35–37) in the exilic/post-exilic era.⁶² Within this setting, *God himself will rebuild the cities of Judah.*

Ps 69 aktualisiert die Landthematik in exilisch-(früh)nachexilischer Zeit, indem er die Wiederherstellung des Zion und der Städte Judas verheißt, die mit neuem Landbesitz (ירש) und neuer Landverteilung (נחל) verbunden ist. Auf dem Hintergrund der Erfahrung des Landverlustes wird dabei besonders das dauerhafte Bleiben im Land (ישב//שחן) über Generationen hinaus betont.⁶³

The possession is promised not to Israel as a whole – as it was also not the case in Ps 61 – but to the זרע עבדיו and those who אהבי שמו. We can deduce that “land” here means Zion and the cities of Judah. In this psalm, the statements concerning the land are *accompanying the theology of Zion and the theology of the servants*, which are prominent motifs in post-exilic psalms – especially in the second half of the book of Psalms.⁶⁴

The most prominent psalm referring to “land” is the also didactic Ps 37, which I shall now focus on. Erich Zenger sums up three topics discussed in this psalm: (1) the connection between deeds and consequences, (2) the “Gottesunmittelbarkeit als schützendes und tröstendes Heilsgut” for God’s “Lebensschüler,”⁶⁵ (3) the land-theology with strong references to the theology of the poor and poverty.⁶⁶ The psalm reveals a distinct connection between the beneficiaries of land and the “poor and needy.” The poet refers to land in vv. 3, 9, 11, 22, (27,) 29, and finally in v. 34:

3 בטח ביהוה ועשה-טוב שכן-ארץ ורעה אמונה:
9 כי-מרעים יכרתון וקוי יהוה המה יירשו-ארץ:
11 וענוים יירשו-ארץ והתענגו על-רב שלום:
22 כי מברכיו יירשו ארץ ומקלליו יכרתו:

⁶² Cf. my analysis in Bremer, *Wo Gott sich auf die Armen einlässt*, 196–213, 243–248, 301–316.

⁶³ Liess, “Die auf JHWH hoffen,” 65.

⁶⁴ Cf. Berges, “Die Knechte im Psalter,” 153–178; Groenewald, “Who Are the ‘Servants’ (Psalm 69:36c–37b)?” 735–761. For a suggestion to date the psalms within the redaction process of the Psalter, cf. Bremer, *Wo Gott sich auf die Armen einlässt*, 301–316.

⁶⁵ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalmen I*, 229.

⁶⁶ Cf. Bremer, *Wo Gott sich auf die Armen einlässt*, 358–360.

סור מרע ועשה־טוב ושכן לעולם: ²⁷

צדיקים יירשו־ארץ וישכנו לעד עליה: ²⁹

קוה אל־יהוה ושמר דרכו וירוממך לרשת ארץ בהכרת רשעים תראה: ³⁴

³ Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

⁹ For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.

¹¹ But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.

²² those the LORD blesses will inherit the land, but those he curses will be cut off.

²⁷ Turn from evil and do good; then you will dwell in the land forever.

²⁹ the righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever.

³⁴ Wait for the LORD and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you will see it. (NIV)

Land here is awarded to those who בטח ביהוה ועשה־טוב (“trust in YHWH, and do good,” v. 3a), who קוי יהוה (“wait for YHWH,” v. 9), the עניים (“miserable,” v. 11), מברכיו (“his [i.e., YHWH’s] blessed ones,” v. 22), who סור מרע ועשה־טוב (“depart from evil, and do good,” v. 27), the צדיקים (“righteous,” v. 29), and those who קוה אל־יהוה ושמר דרכו (“wait for YHWH, and keep to his way,” v. 34). So, land is not promised to the “poor” exclusively, as it is sometimes noted, rather it seems obvious that they are *included in a “group of good people”*⁶⁷ (cf. v. 3): they will יירשו ורעה אמונה (“live in the land, and enjoy safe pasture,” v. 3), יירשו (root ירש “(to) inherit,” v. 9, 11, 22, 29, 34 [לרשת]), התענגו על־רב שלום (“delight in abundant prosperity,” v. 11), and ושכן לעולם (“abide forever,” v. 27).⁶⁸ Following Norbert Lohfink,⁶⁹ ירש, which occurs five times, refers to dtn/dtr theology for it also witnesses “bei aller konkreten Bedeutung doch zugleich eine Art Kurzformel für das ‘Heil’ in allen seinen Dimensionen.”⁷⁰ The use of ענג *hit*. reflects the miserable’s (עניים) delight.

Dabei kann der Begriff ענג zunächst einen ganz konkreten, materiellen Bedeutungshintergrund haben, ... Die Aussage in V. 11 geht jedoch

⁶⁷ Claudia Sticher, *Die Rettung der Guten durch Gott und die Selbstzerstörung der Bösen: Ein theologisches Denkmuster im Psalter* (BBB 137; Berlin: Philo, 2002), 33–58.

⁶⁸ Narciso C. Tiquillahuanca, *Die Armen werden das Land besitzen: Eine exegetische Studie zu Psalm 37* (BVB 16; Münster: LIT, 2008), 188–194 (concerning v. 3); 218–227 (concerning v. 9); 233–237 (concerning v. 11); 258–260 (concerning v. 22); 269–271 (concerning v. 27); 275 (concerning v. 29); 286–288 (concerning v. 34); 304–326 (concluding).

⁶⁹ Lohfink, “Die Bedeutung von hebr. *jrš qal* und *hif*,” 14–33.

⁷⁰ Tiquillahuanca, *Die Armen werden das Land besitzen*, 226.

über diese konkrete Bedeutung hinaus, denn der Begriff ענג hitp. kann auf die *Gottesbeziehung* übertragen werden.⁷¹

A Stichwortverbindung relates the expression in v. 11 to v. 4a: והתענג על-יהוה (“take delight in YHWH”). The delight to live in the land (v. 11) is correlated to the delight in YHWH (v. 4) and in so doing, the heritage of the land is interconnected with the relation to YHWH.⁷²

Auch die Landverheißungen in Ps 37 sind eingebunden in die Schilderung einer engen Gottesbeziehung der JHWH-Treuen, die die Basis bildet für das Vertrauen und die Hoffnung, dass JHWH sie in der Situation der Bedrängnis bewahrt und rettet (V. 24f.28.32f.39f), ...⁷³

According to Ps 37, YHWH will reward *them* with the heritage of the land.

In this psalm, the focus is not on the initial acquisition of the land or on its particular definition. It is on the land as land, God’s covenantal gift as the place for lively and flourishing existence, in this case attentive to the disparity in people’s access to its benefits. ... That involves especially reiteration of the need to trust in the Lord and not worry about the wicked. ... Both the activity of doing good and the stance of hopeful trust are characteristics that determine whether or not the land that provides the context for fruitful existence is yours.⁷⁴

In his comparison between Pss 25 and 37, the honoured Phil Botha finally votes for a same or like-minded author or group of authors.⁷⁵ Concluding, he claims for both psalms:

The shared message of the two psalms would have been to propagate quiet trust in Yahweh as refuge and saviour who would soon

⁷¹ Liess, “Die auf JHWH hoffen,” 61. Cf. also Botha, “The Relation between Psalms 25 and 37,” 554–555.

⁷² Cf. also Liess, “Die auf JHWH hoffen,” 61; Botha, “The Relation between Psalms 25 and 37,” 554–556. He offers also a strong focus on parallels in Isa 58:14; Miller, “Land in the Psalms,” 189–190.

⁷³ Liess, “Die auf JHWH hoffen,” 63.

⁷⁴ Miller, “Land in the Psalms,” 190.

⁷⁵ “All these shared features [cf. above fn. 51 and 52 – J. B.] seem to be ample evidence of a shared origin. It seems that they were composed by the same or like-minded person or persons, representing a group who saw themselves as righteous in a opposition to unrighteous people who held sway over them,” Botha, “The Relation between Psalms 25 and 37,” 563–564.

annihilate is a prosperous wicked people and restore control of the Promised Land to the ‘spiritual poor’⁷⁶ and repentant people.⁷⁷

C CONCLUSIONS

After an introduction (Section A) and focus on “landmarks” (Section B), I finally raise the question: *Is there a “theology of the land” in the Psalter?* The Psalter offers multiple attestations of “land” in different expressions,⁷⁸ referring mostly to universal-cosmologic understandings. First and separately (Section B.1), I treated attestations in psalms reflecting on Israel’s history, namely Pss 78, 105, 136 and 137. Added to these are attestations within the two Korah-psalms 44 and 85, and Ps 60, which could also be identified as kinds of historical reflections. We witness the land topic as an *integral part of the recollections* and its *inheritance as goal of YHWH’s saving acts*: As God once fulfilled his promise of a peaceful and restful life in the Promised Land, he – as a powerful saviour – will do again in favour of the psalmist’s and succeeding generations. Before this message, the psalmists refer to dtn/dtr, priestly, and prophetic theology, juxtaposing in opposition the patriarchal and Exodus generations. In so doing, they stress the role of the Torah as it was noted for Ps 105. Ps 85 within the second Korah-group stresses conspicuously the *active role of the behaviour of his people and their fear of God*.

Besides the recollection of history, the common attestations refer to a *universal-cosmologic understanding of “land”* within the psalms (Section B.2). These universal-cosmologic attestations we witness in nearly every book, group, or cluster of psalms and in particular in the fifth book. Here, the image of YHWH as owner of the land or the earth fits to the theology of the fifth book as described above. Partly, אָרֶץ as the most common term is used synonymously for “everywoman” and “everyman”.

Particular conceptions of “land” (Section B.3) we witnessed in limited psalms, namely in Pss 25; 37; 61; and 69, all of which are Davidic psalms. None of them focus on land itself, rather all refer to *land and/or the heritage, possession, and living in the land as a kind of “reward.”* I summarise:

According to Ps 25, in favour of the “offspring of the one who fears YHWH”. This is interpreted as sign of enduring טוב, at least for the

⁷⁶ For the discussion of spiritual or economic poverty, I may refer to my own publications: Johannes Bremer, “Jenseits spirituellem oder materiellem Armutsverständnis in den Psalmen: Ein Plädoyer zur bleibenden Dringlichkeit der Rückfrage nach sozio-ökonomischen Verhältnissen,” in *Armut: Zur Geschichte und Aktualität eines christlichen Ideals* (ed. Thomas Möllenbeck and Ludger Schulte; Münster: Aschendorff, 2015), 83–95, and for a broader look, the history of research and discussions Bremer, *Wo Gott sich auf die Armen einlässt*, 19–59.

⁷⁷ Botha, “The Relation between Psalms 25 and 37,” 564.

⁷⁸ All attestations are listed in fn. 8–11.

succeeding generation. *Sine qua non* is “[a] life according to the principles of humility, trust in Yahweh, and waiting for him”.⁷⁹ Due to the speaker’s self-description with poor and poverty related terms, עניי and יחיד ועני, the focus on land is conjunct with the “theology of poor and poverty”.

Ps 61 mentions the heritage of those who fear YHWH’s name. To the speaker it is granted after his cries and prayers from out of his distress and his vows addressed to God.

According to *Ps 69*, the beneficiary of the promise of the rebuilding of the cities of *Zion*, the settlement, possession, and inheritance of the land – noted above also for *Ps 25* – is the offspring’s generation, which is a prominent motif also in Genesis’ land promises. Here, it refers to a cross-generational enduring possession. It goes side by side with the assumption of the motif of land as a “place of rest.” Noteworthy, the beneficiary or heir of the land is neither everyone nor Israel, but the *offspring of the servant*. Here, the topic of land intertwines with the theology of the servants, the theology of the poor and poverty due to the speaker’s self-designations as עניי וכואב, and the *Zion* theology.

Finally I took a look at *Ps 37* as the most prominent of all the “land psalms”. I noted a strong interconnection with the theology of the poor and poverty and referred to a “group of the good.” I stated the demand to live in the land as correlated to the demand to trust in YHWH. The heritage then is a reward for those belonging to this group as they are characterized in vv. 3, 9, 11, 22, 27, 29, and 34.

All these psalms refer to a *particular conception of land* and all of them *as wisdom psalms* have a *didactic character*. Furthermore, none of them focuses on land itself, rather we witness the *heritage and possession of land as a reward for a good and righteous way of living*.

To point out a *concrete beyond a particular understanding* would negate the character of wisdom psalms in particular and of the Psalter in general. Here I refer to my Doktorvater, Frank-Lothar Hossfeld. In conversation with H.G. Hermisson, in 1993 he raised the thesis of a *metaphorical understanding* of the concept “land”. In opposition to a spiritualized understanding, the metaphor still keeps the tension between the meaning of the lexeme and the meaning in its codetermined context.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Botha, “The Relation between Psalms 25 and 37,” 552.

⁸⁰ Cf. Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, “Die Metaphorisierung der Bezeichnung Israels zum Land im Frühjudentum und im Christentum,” in *Zion: Ort der Begegnung. Festschrift für Laurentius Klein zur Vollendung des 65. Lebensjahres* (ed. Ferdinand Hahn et al.;

He developed his thesis by focusing on Ps 37:22 (“those YHWH blesses will inherit the land, but those he curses will be cut off”):

Der Besitz des Landes wird hier nicht dem konkreten Pol diametral gegenübergestellt, dem Verlust des Landes bzw. einer Deportation, sondern im ausgeweiteten Sinne dem ‘ausgerottet werden’, d.h. der Verfluchung und dem totalen Gericht. Der V. 29 schildert wiederum in Absetzung vom Schicksal der Frevler die Zukunft der Gerechten. ... Hier geht es um das Überleben und den Bestand des Gerechten und um das Leben für die unbegrenzte Dauer in der Abfolge der Generationen. Zum Schluß kann in V. 34 wie schon in V. 22 das Schicksal des Armen und das des Frevlers kontrastiert werden. ... Mit dem ‘Erben des Landes’ ist das zukünftige heilvolle Schicksal des Armen abgesetzt vom Untergang der Gegengruppe der Frevler.⁸¹

The heritage of land means the heritage of liveability, as reflected in Ps 16:5–6: “⁵YHWH is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. ⁶The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage”):

Entscheidend ist die Theologisierung der Landzuteilung. JHWH ist der Lebensraum bzw. der Erbanteil und das Ackerland, das JHWH selbst dem Beter zugewiesen hat. Die Landmetaphorik steht hier im Dienste der Beschreibung einer Beziehung zu Gott, die in ihrer Qualität und Dauer über den Tod hinaus nicht mehr zu steigern ist.⁸²

He sees his thesis supported at least in Matt 5:5: “Blessed are the miserable, for they will inherit the earth,” and concludes:

Das Land wird ... zu einem Heilsgut, das den territorialen Rahmen sprengt, sich auf die bewohnte Erde ausweitet und zugleich zum Angeld bzw. Ansatz für eine Gottesgemeinschaft wird, die weiter reicht als die individuelle Lebenszeit und besondere Intensität erlangt. Die Gottesgemeinschaft ist das Erste und das Letzte.⁸³

Or to say with the words of Brevard S. Childs:

To summarize, in a real sense the theological problem of the Old Testament’s understanding of land consists in a dialectic tension which both refuses to spiritualize commitment of the land, and yet

BBB 90; Bodenheim: Athenaum, 1993), 13–33 (22–23). He refers to Pss 2; 16; 25; 37; 61; 69; 73; and 95. His thesis was adapted by Kathrin Liess und moderately extended to Ps 142, cf. Liess, “Die auf JHWH hoffen,” 66–71.

⁸¹ Hossfeld, “Die Metaphorisierung der Bezeichnung Israels zum Land,” 25.

⁸² Hossfeld, “Die Metaphorisierung der Bezeichnung Israels zum Land,” 29.

⁸³ Hossfeld, “Die Metaphorisierung der Bezeichnung Israels zum Land,” 33.

senses that the land function as a cipher for divine blessing which could be lost even by those living within its spatial boundaries.⁸⁴

Again, *is there a “theology of the land” in the Psalter?* The huge amount of attestations⁸⁵ cannot by itself refer to a theology of the Psalter as a book, for they do not coin the Psalter’s structure.⁸⁶ In consequence, the answer seems clear: *No.*

However, the thesis I present here is the one of *land as a reward*, for it is reflected in all the attestations for a particular conception of “land” and further in psalms commemorating Israel’s history. The thesis matches the idea of a metaphorical understanding of “land”. In so doing, the focus on Pss 25; 69; and 37 – at least three quarters of the psalms referring to the particular concept – appear side by side with a “theology of poor and poverty” as it is reflected in the psalms. The inheritance of land as it is mentioned in the psalms as a theological motif *joins in the interplay of theological threads I stated above (Section A): the echo on history, the theme of God’s presence in space and time, the theology of poor and poverty, and as we have seen at least the canonical importance of the Psalter.* In so saying, is there really *no “theology of land” in the Psalter?*

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⁸⁴ Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), 244–245.

⁸⁵ Cf. above fn. 8–11.

⁸⁶ Here, I finally refer to the approach to reveal a “Theology of the Psalter“, most recently published in the Introduction to the volume Berges, Bremer, and Steiner, eds., *Zur Theologie des Psalters und der Psalmen*, forthcoming.

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