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Exodus Psalm 114 – the hermeneutical centre of the so-called Egyptian Hallel?

Remembering salvation – the affirmation of one's own history is a perspective which becomes increasingly important in the late Psalms. Especially the Exodus, respectively the salvation at the Reed Sea, is vividly remembered in the Psalms. In this respect, the remembrance of the Exodus is like no other remembrance constitutive for the self-conception of Israel. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that not only classical Psalms of history like 78; 106; 135 and 136, but also Psalms like Ps 74; 77; 79; 95 and 114 refer to this event and fall back on the memories of the “gründende Anfänge” like they can be found in the greater narrative contexts of the Pentateuch.¹ This “relecture der Tora in poetischer Form”² in the Psalms is a way of interpreting history by receiving the events narrated in the Pentateuch and modifying them for the present time of the person engaging in prayer. In this form of interpretation, not the historicity of the events is of importance, but the fact that they give meaning to the identity of the community *coram Deo*.

This identity-forming interpretation of historical events has been described by Eric Voegelin and his distinction between pragmatic history (history) and paradigmatic history (story) in the 1950s.³ Implicitly, this distinction is at the very foundation of the late debate initiated by Jan and Aleida Assmann about the cultural memory.⁴ While Eric Voegelin focused on paradigmatic history and its cultural-historical development, the cultural-science debate of today

¹ Regarding the Psalms of history and their reception of the consolidating salvation history as it is told in the Pentateuch, see the interpretations of Pröbstl, Nehemia; Mathias, *Geschichtstheologie*; Mathys, *Dichter und Beter*; Kreuzer, *Frühgeschichte Israels*; regarding the late debate see Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen*; Klein, *Geschichte*.

² Hartenstein, *Zur Bedeutung der Schöpfung*, 335–349, especially 335.

³ See Voegelin, *Israel und die Offenbarung*. Regarding the distinction between pragmatic and paradigmatic history cf. especially pages 37–51. According to Eric Voegelin pragmatic history is a critical account of history, which he describes as history, whereas a paradigmatic account of history (story) interprets history as constituting meaning by interpreting historical events within a transcendental reference framework. Regarding the remembrance of the Exodus within the Psalms it is particularly important that Eric Voegelin develops this distinction by interpreting history Psalm 136 and by tracing the way the Old Testaments tells of history according to that Psalm.

⁴ Regarding the concept of cultural memory according to Jan and Aleida Assmann see their summary in: Assmann/Assmann, *Gestern*, 114–140; or the monograph by Assmann, *Gedächtnis*.

(Wulf Kansteiner, Marcus Sandl and Astrid Erll) focuses on the process of reception itself, respectively, the question how individual interpretations of history arise and how they create identities.⁵

In this context, two aspects are relevant regarding our question about the meaning of history in the Psalms. Firstly, the selection of events is crucial for the function of history in the Psalms to shape and affirm identity.⁶ The selection results in a variety of interpretations, which reflect different context conditions and perspectives regarding the construction of history. At the same time, these constructions imply the possibility of an on-going modification and actualisation due to changing contexts of reception. Significantly, in the context of Exodus remembrance in the Psalms, narratives of the Pentateuch are chosen (Ex 13–15), which already have the status of paradigmatic events. Secondly, in the process of reception the different tenses of past, present and future interlace with each other.⁷ The narratives about the past are perceived as past events and at the same time made available anew for the remembering subjects in their relevance for their present situation. This creates a situation in which the remembering subjects share in the events of paradigmatic history while at the same time being aware that these events are of the time of origin and not experiences of their own present time. The aspect of future is present by the fact that the process of reception and interpretation is targeted on the coherence of the remembering community not only by forming its identity in the present but also in the future. Insofar, the reception and interpretation of paradigmatic history results in a co-presence of the three tenses of past, present and future.

⁵ Regarding the theory of Wulf Kansteiner see especially his focused presentation in Kansteiner, *Historismus*, 119–139. In regards to the debate about the share of story within the critical science of history initiated by Marcus Sandl see Sandl, *Historizität*, 89–120. Regarding the collective memory in the late debate of the cultural studies see especially Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis*, 156–185.

⁶ Especially Kansteiner, *Historismus*, 136 (n. 5), who, following Aleida Assmann, distinguishes between the potential collective memory, in which the accounts of history are collected, and the present collective memory, in which the events which consolidate the identity of the respective community are present.

⁷ See especially Welzer, *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung*, 155–174, especially 171. The interlacings of time have particularly been analysed in the context of festivities. The festivity is seen as an enactment of a different time, by which a co-presence of different times is created. This co-presence brings to mind the events which consolidate the identity of the respective community. From the wealth of literature see Eliade, *Das Heilige*, 63–99; Assmann, *Der zweidimensionale Mensch*, 13–30, as well as the research survey by Berlejung, *Heilige Zeiten*, 3–61.

On the background of these cultural-hermeneutical preliminary considerations the following analysis will focus on Ps 114, the Exodus Psalm *par excellence*.

The following considerations will focus on two questions. Firstly, the remembrance of the Exodus with its ability to create and affirm identity will be emphasised as paradigmatic history with reference to Eric Voegelin. Secondly, the question will be asked to what extent the concept of history interpretation, as it is found in Ps 114, is embedded within the literary context of Psalm group 113–118 and to what extent it is relevant to the understanding of the formation of this group. On this basis, the significance of this group for the history of theology and the formation of the Psalter will be highlighted. The following considerations regarding the formation of the Psalter are based on the latest studies of Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, Erich Zenger and Martin Leuenberger. By different means, they all confirmed a formal break following the two wisdom-orientated acrostic Psalms 111–112.⁸

1 Becoming the people of God – Ps 114

Ps 114 is already noticeable because of its form. The Psalm is a fragment, without a beginning and without an ending. This led to textual changes in the Septuagint and Vulgate, which combined Ps 114 and 115 resulting in one Psalm, by beginning Ps 114 (MT) with the ending Hallel from Ps 113 (MT) and combining it with Ps 115 (MT) resulting in one Psalm, Ps 113 (LXX).⁹ The obvious fact that the Psalm is a fragment according to MT, will be analysed in the following considerations regarding the redaction of the Psalter.¹⁰ Apart from that, the Psalm

8 See Hossfeld/Zenger, *Psalmen*, 245–247; Leuenberger, *Konzeptionen*, 296–298, and for further discussion see Millard, *Komposition*, 30–34 and Hayes, *Unity*, 145–156. For a different vote see Ballhorn, *Telos*, 205 f., who emphasizes the compositional coherence of Psalm group 111–118.

9 Regarding the history of research see Witte, *Psalm 114*, 293–311, especially 294 f. Regarding the textual history of Ps 114 and Ps 115 see also Prinsloo, *Psalms*, 669–690. For the attempt to understand Ps 114 and Ps 115 as one coherent Psalm see Lubczyk, *Einheit*, 161–173.

10 For a different assessment see Witte, *Psalm 114*, 297–311 (n. 9), who, due to historical textual and historical liturgical reasons as well as form and content reasons (analogies to Ps 68; 81; 135) considers Ps 114 as an initial part of a composition which encompassed Ps 113:1–115:1, even if there is no direct textual indication. By this thesis Markus Witte tries to fill the gaps in Ps 114, like the multiperspectivity of the suffix in 114:2, the missing beginning and ending as well as the textual history of the Psalm group. The question remains if this observation regarding the coherence of the Psalm group is not rather to be established on the level of Psalter redaction,

shows a cohesive structure, which is divided into four bicola: v. 1–2; v. 3–4; v. 5–6 and v. 7–8.

The first stanza (v. 1–2) begins with the fundamental event of salvation history, the salvation of Israel from Egypt and the election of Israel, respectively Judah, as the people of God. In this account, the Exodus event is summarized by salvation and election. The praying people remember their foundation in salvation history, which – in reference to Hermann Spieckermann – can be called a “kaum zu überbietende Abbeviatur der Heilsgeschichte”¹¹. The chain of events of the Exodus and election of Israel as cultic community, as heritage of YHWH, as it is presented here in condensed form, refers back to Ex 15 and transforms it in such a way that the imagery of temple is transferred to Israel and Judah.¹² YHWH does not appoint his people as his heritage at the sanctuary (Ex 15:17), but Judah itself becomes his sanctuary and Israel itself becomes his territory so that the presence of the king’s God can paradigmatically be seen in the way God acts towards his people in history.¹³

These observations are accompanied by the striking designation of the people of God in the first stanza as Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל) and house of Jacob (בֵּית יַעֲקֹב) in v. 1 and as Judah (יְהוּדָה) and Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל) in v. 2. By these individual designations the manifold aspects of the identity-community are connected, in which YHWH’s power has become visible. From a composition-critical point of view, it is noticeable that the suffix of the 3. p. sg. grammatically shows no point of reference, thereby not designating whose sanctuary Judah becomes and whose territory Is-

which creates an individual composition with Psalter group 113–115, see also for this position Hossfeld/Zenger, *Psalmen*, 245 f. (n. 8).

¹¹ Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart*, 151.

¹² Hossfeld/Zenger, *Psalmen*, 266 (n. 8), suggest to understand the connection of the stammering people (עַם לֵעַז) with house Jacob (בֵּית יַעֲקֹב), which describes the Babylonian diaspora, as a reference to the second Exodus from Exile, which by that means becomes connected with the first Exodus from Egypt. For the detailed discussion of this difficult expression (עַם לֵעַז) see Geller, *Language*, 179–194, here 191–194.

¹³ With Lohfink, *Land*, 199–222, especially 220, it can be assumed that the parallel terms sanctuary and rule belong together in the sense that the rule originates from the sanctuary. Therefore, Norbert Lohfink linguistically assumes a double expression “sanctuary of his rule”, which was split up by the parallelism. The attempts to split up the parallelism of Judah and Israel by assuming that Judah is the place of the sanctuary and Israel is the place of political rule, in my opinion go against the intention of the text to proclaim the encompassing unity of the people of God as the place of the presence of YHWH. See also Ballhorn, *Telos*, 179 (n. 8), who understands the designations Israel and house Jacob as designations for the ethnicity of Israel. In contrast, Judah and Israel in v. 2 are used as territorial designations, like the usage of the feminine form of יהיה suggests, see also Geller, *Language* 182 (n. 12), and Prinsloo, *Tremble*, 306–325, here 314.

rael becomes. This problem is often solved by means of literary criticism and by viewing v. 2 as a redactional addition.¹⁴ But, due to the syntactical and argumentative connection of v. 1 and v. 2, it seems rather unlikely that v. 1 could syntactically be connected with v. 3. In fact, the grammatical vagueness on the one hand creates suspense within the dynamic of the Psalm, which connects the beginning with the ending, since only in the last stanza (v. 7) the point of reference of the suffix is identified by resuming the designation house Jacob (בית יעקב) in regards to the people of God. It is the God of Jacob, who elected Judah and Israel.¹⁵ On the other hand, the multiperspectivity of the suffix points to the integration of Ps 114 in its literary context, since Ps 114 by this means refers back to Ps 113.

By means of inverted verbal clauses, the second stanza describes the reaction of the sea, the Jordan (v. 3), the mountains and hills (v. 4). These extraordinary natural phenomena are described in the past tense and refer back to v. 1–2 with their focus on salvation history. They describe the immediate reaction of the Jordan (v. 3), the mountains and hills (v. 4) regarding the identity-forming action of God concerning Israel. The particularity of this wording is due to the personification of the sea and the Jordan. The sea saw and fled (cf. Ps 104:5–9).¹⁶ The Jordan took to flight. By these wordings they become permeable for the idea of the fight of YHWH against the powers of chaos, a concept by which the salvation at the Reed Sea (Ex 15:6–18) was already interpreted.¹⁷ In this respect, the cosmic reactions of the sea and the Jordan recall YHWH's salvific action at the Reed Sea (Ex 13–15) and at the Jordan (Jos 3–4).¹⁸ By means of the imagery of water the beginning and the ending of the identity-forming and identity-affirming remembrance of the Exodus is remembered. In its own way this imagery forms an "Abbreviatur der Heilsgeschichte".¹⁹ The reaction of the mountains "רקד" (to leap / to dance) in v. 4 is to be viewed in this context, since the leaping, respectively dancing, points to the only other usage of this wording within the Psalter (Ps 29:6). Especially in comparison with Ps 29:6, in which the thunder-like voice of YHWH makes the Lebanon skip like a calf and Sirion like a

¹⁴ For example Seybold, *Die Psalmen*, 448 f. or Ruppert, *Einheitlichkeit*, 91–93.

¹⁵ See Hossfeld/Zenger, *Psalmen*, 265 (n. 8). Klein, *Geschichte*, 53 f. (n. 2), votes as well for the literary consistency of the Psalm and the embedding of v. 2 in its context.

¹⁶ For the conceptional closeness of the fleeing water in Ps 104:5–9 and Ps 114:3 f. see Geller, *Language*, 185–187 (n. 12), as well as the detailed account by Klein, *Geschichte*, 59–61 (n. 2).

¹⁷ Regarding the interpretation of Ex 15:6–18 see Jeremias, *Königtum*, 99–106, and Klein, *Geschichte*, 19–34 (n. 2).

¹⁸ See Isa 51:9 f., where salvation history and myth blend. For further references see Prinsloo, *Tremble*, 315 (n. 13).

¹⁹ See also Ballhorn, *Telos*, 178 (n. 8).

young wild ox, it becomes obvious that indeed both Psalms refer to the same tradition of the kingdom of Baal. But in Ps 114:4 “רקד” (to leap / to dance) is not a reaction of the mountains due to the thunder-like voice of the royal God, but an immediate response to his salvific action. Not God’s enthronement over the floods like in Ps 29:10,²⁰ but his paradigmatic action within history is regarded as a manifestation of his kingship above the whole world.²¹

Thus, the subject of the Psalm can already be summarized after the first two stanzas: The subject of the Psalm is the foundation of the history of salvation, namely the salvation from Egypt and its cosmic implications.

The third stanza (v. 5–6) inquires about the relevance of the cosmic responses regarding the salvific action of God for the present time. For this purpose the stanza changes from the past to the present tense and asks the water and the mountains: “Why was it, sea, that you fled? Why, Jordan, did you turn back? Why, mountains, did you leap like rams, you hills, like lambs?” (NIV) This question implies that the responses of nature are of continuing validity. It is not a nonrecurring response of water and mountains, but a basic inner attitude of nature regarding the uniqueness of God as the lord of the world. The last stanza (v. 7–8) makes it clear that the responses of nature in the present are not just a repetition of the cosmic effects of the past.²² This stanza wants to be understood as an answer to v. 5–6. The fourth stanza begins with a request to the earth to tremble before the lord (אדון), the God אלוה יעקב in v. 7. It is the God of Jacob who stands above the forces of nature, who commands them and demonstrates his exclusive power over these forces of nature.²³ By using the term God of Jacob

20 Regarding the interpretation of Ps 29 see Jeremias, *Königtum*, 29–45 (n. 17).

21 In my opinion, the linguistic and conceptional references to Ps 29 suggest that the reaction of the mountains has to be seen in the context of the theophany imagery, since the leaping of the mountains expresses not only the sovereignty of YHWH above nature but also the awe of nature towards his royal power. See also Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart*, 152 f. (n. 11). For a different interpretation see Hossfeld/Zenger, *Psalmen*, 261 f., 269 f. (n. 8), who reject a connection to the theophany imagery and instead suggest an antithetical understanding of v. 3 and v. 4 by interpreting “רקד” as a dance of joy of the mountains and hills, as an expression of their liveliness contrary to the fleeing sea. Regarding the context of theophany of v. 3 f. see Leuenberger, *Konzeptionen*, 292 f. (n. 8) and Bauer, *Analyse*, 289–311, here 309 f.

22 Regarding the syntactical unity of v. 7–8 see Witte, *Psalm 114*, 295 (n. 9) as well as Bauer, *Analyse*, 292 f., 298 f. (n. 21).

23 According to Lohfink, *Land*, 218 (n. 13), and – following his position – also according to Hossfeld/Zenger, *Psalmen*, 270 (n. 8), the references of “חיל” in Ps 29:8 f.; Ps 48:7; Ps 77:17 (all of these Psalms show close references to Ps 114) as well as Ps 97:4 suggest a translation of the term with “to dance”, representing a joyful reaction of nature analogue to the reaction of the mountains in v. 4. However, especially the late and Deutero-Isaiah orientated Ps 96:9, which praises the kingship of YHWH, suggests to interpret the trembling of the earth as a

(אלוה יעקב) v. 7 explicitly refers back to v. 1–2.²⁴ Thus, the missing point of reference of the suffix in v. 2 is formally named. With the term Jacob the foundation of salvation history of the people of God from v. 1 is called to mind. This God is present within the historical saving acts like they paradigmatically occurred in the Exodus.²⁵ The second term lord (אדון) refers to the Song of the Sea (Ex 15) which is also in the background of v. 1–4, by referring to the formation of the people of God at his sanctuary in Ex 15:17. This results in a back reference to the first stanza by pointing to the formation of Israel and Judah as places of the presence of God as king in v. 2. Likewise, the function of the water in v. 8 presents the God of Jacob as the lord of the cosmos and thereby as a unique God. For this reason, the imagery of water from v. 3 is incorporated and now includes the aspect of fertility-spending and life-supporting water in v. 8. It is the God of Jacob, who turned the rock into a pool and the hard rock into springs of water (הפך).²⁶

Thus, the imagery of water from v. 8 becomes permeable for a perspective of salvation history. She refers back to the tradition of God's care for Israel in the desert and the rock that poured out its water (Ex 17:1–7; Num 20:1–13).²⁷ The universal power of the lord of the world manifests itself in its historical-salvific and creational-theological aspect. The praying persons remind themselves of this life-supporting care of God and thereby they remember at the same time the origins of their identity as the people of God. Remembering salvation according to Ps 114 means that the salvific action of God in the Exodus kept its absolute and encompassing validity in creation and history for the experience of the praying person.

sign of reverence, since the parallelism proclaims “Werft euch nieder vor JHWH in (seiner) heiligen Majestät, bebt vor ihm, alle (Länder) der Erde.” (regarding the translation see Jeremias, *Königtum*, 122 [n. 17]). It is noticeable that the earth is asked – like in Ps 114:7 – with the imperative pl., see Geller, *Language*, 188f. (n. 12).

24 Regarding the connection between v. 1–2 and v. 7–8 see also Geller, *Language*, 181 (n. 12).

25 See also Ballhorn, *Telos*, 178f. (n. 8). He emphasises that the statements from v. 1 f. and v. 7 ultimately mean the same just viewed from different directions so that both together form a reformulation of the *Bundesformel*. Regarding this connection see Prinsloo, *Tremble*, 318 (n. 13).

26 Regarding the biblical texts in the background see Ballhorn, *Telos*, 180f. (n. 8), who especially refers to Isa 41:18 and Dtn 8:15.

27 Regarding the parallels see Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart*, 155f.

2 Remembering salvation in Ps 114 in its meaning for the neighbouring Psalms 113 and 115

By its fragmentary character and multiperspectivity of the suffix in v. 2, the identity-affirming remembrance of the Exodus in Ps 114 establishes a relation to its context. In order to specify it, it is necessary to identify textual characteristics which link Psalm 113–115 on a macro-structural level. These markers make it possible to outline the profile of this Psalm group. The lexematic links between Ps 113–115 can be presented like this:

| | Ps 113 | Ps 114 | Ps 115 |
|----------------------------|----------|--------|----------------|
| Name of YHWH (שם יהוה) | v. 1.2.3 | | v. 1 |
| praise (הלל) | v. 1.3.9 | | v. 17.18 |
| bless / praise (ברך) | v. 2 | | v. 12.13.15.18 |
| heaven (שמים) | v. 4.6 | | v. 3.15.16 |
| nations (גוים) | v. 4 | | v. 2 |
| abundance / glory (כבוד) | v. 4 | | v. 1 |
| earth / land (ארץ) | v. 6 | v. 7 | v. 15.16 |
| and forevermore (ועד-עולם) | v. 2 | | v. 18 |

It is immediately evident that the lexematic links connect Ps 113 and Ps 115, with Ps 114 being mostly excluded from this lexematic system of references.²⁸ Thereby, it becomes obvious that Ps 113 and Ps 115 provide a framework for the Exodus Psalm. This framework has now to be specified according to its formal and conceptual characteristics.²⁹ Firstly, and regarding its formal characteristics, it can be observed that Ps 113 and Ps 115 are connected at their edges and thereby constitute a framework around Ps 114.³⁰ This is emphasised by the redactionally added Hallelujah signatures, respectively headlines in Ps 113:1.9 and Ps 115:18 and the same applies to most of the other links. For example, the two verbs

²⁸ The usage of “earth” (ארץ) can also be found in Ps 114:7, but there it is conceptionally differently connoted. While the earth in Ps 113:6 and Ps 115:15 and 16 is part of the merism “heaven and earth” and therefore designates the overall reality, it is not used as a part of the merism in Ps 114:7 and instead designates the earth as the domain of the God of Jacob.

²⁹ Regarding the lexematical references between Ps 113–115 see also Hayes, *Unity*, 148 f., 151 (n. 8).

³⁰ Regarding the frame function of Ps 113 and Ps 115 see also Ballhorn, *Telos*, 183 f. (n. 8) and Hossfeld/Zenger, *Psalmen*, 246 f. (n. 8) as well as Leuenberger, *Konzeptionen*, 368 (n. 8).

“praise” (הלל) and “bless / praise” (ברך) are used in Ps 113:1–3 in order to express the temporal and spatial expansion of the praising of God and reappear at the ending of Ps 115. The key word “praise” (הלל) can be found in the last two verses 17 and 18 of Ps 115, thereby concluding the Psalm with the praise of God, whereas Ps 113 begins with it. Similarly, the second verb “bless / praise” (ברך) is used.³¹

This creates a Hallelujah-framework, which goes beyond the signatures and headlines and begins in Ps 113 and ends in Ps 115 with the praise of God and thereby explicitly qualifies the whole Psalm group as a praise of God.

Secondly, regarding the conceptual characteristics, two thematical links are notable: The use of the name of YHWH in Ps 113:1–3 and Ps 115:1 as well as the use of the theme of the nations. By means of a monotheistic credo both aspects aim to substantiate the rule of YHWH over creation and history, which is implicitly present in the remembrance of the Exodus. Especially Ps 113 is a hymn-like explication of the name of YHWH (שם יהוה), whose encompassing effective force is praised in heaven and on earth.³² His sole power is emphasised by the rhetorical question of Ps 113:5: “Who is like YHWH our God...?”. His glory stretches vertically, into the highs and depths (113:6), as well as horizontally, from the rising of the sun to its setting (113:3), and above all nations (113:4). The people of God experience this encompassing power in God’s specific intervention on behalf of the needy, the poor and infertile (113:7f.). While the praying persons were able to envision YHWH as the lord of creation and history in Ps 114 by means of Exodus remembrance, this visualisation is substantiated in Ps 113 to that effect that it is proven by maintaining a social lifestyle according to the divinely established justice.³³

Like Ps 113:1–3, Ps 115 begins with an explication of the name of YHWH (שם יהוה) and adds to this perspective, which is directed at the people of God, the universal power of YHWH.³⁴ The mockery of the nations from Ps 115:2, “Why should the nations say: ‘Where is their God?’”, reacts to the glory of YHWH over the na-

31 “to bless/praise” (ברך) is the decisive key word of the last two sections of Ps 115 (v. 12.13.15.18). However, the perspective changes. While “to bless” describes the action of the praying persons in Ps 113:2, it describes the action of YHWH in Ps 115. Furthermore, the description of the temporal extension of the praise of YHWH “bis in fernste Zeit” (ועד-עולם) can be found in Ps 113:2 at the beginning of the Psalm and in Ps 115:18 at the ending.

32 Regarding the interpretation of Ps 113 see Müller, 113. Psalm, 248–255 (n. 8), and Ballhorn, Telos, 174–177 (n. 8).

33 Regarding the discussion of the imagery of the poor in Ps 113:7f. see Bremer, Strukturbeobachtungen, 1–36, here 18–22.

34 Regarding the interpretation of Ps 115 see also Zenger, Götter- und Götterbildpolemik, 229–255.

tions as it is stated in Ps 113:4 and makes the question regarding YHWH's power over the nations the actual theme of the Psalm.³⁵ At the same time, Ps 115:1 connects the name of YHWH with the idea of the glory of YHWH (כבוד), which shows that Ps 115:1 refers back to Ps 113:4. In Ps 113:4 YHWH's kabod is above the heavens like he is above all nations, whereby his domain is vertically and horizontally exemplified. In Ps 115:1 the lexeme of YHWH's kabod is slightly different nuanced. In Ps 115 it is perceived less as a hypostasis of YHWH like in Ps 113:4, but more as a quality of his name, from which the praying persons are asking that it shall be shown to its advantage.³⁶

The almighty and universal power of YHWH is summarized in the words: "he does whatever pleases him" (Ps 115:3).³⁷ This is followed by a section describing the powerlessness of the idols (v. 4–8), which are confronted with the life-giving blessing of the sole Creator God (v. 12–15). This life-giving blessing of YHWH is now also bestowed on persons belonging to the nations, who have been convinced by the uniqueness of YHWH and now fear him (יראי יהוה).

In this sense, the remembrance of the Exodus from Ps 114 is expanded in its meaning for the nations. In contrast, neither the name of YHWH (שם יהוה) nor the Tetragrammaton is used in Ps 114. Instead, the designations lord (אדון) and God of Jacob (אלוה יעקב) in v. 7 serve as the salvific foundation of Ps 114.

In the context of the Psalm group 113–115, Ps 114 is framed by the use of the name of YHWH in Ps 113:1–3 and Ps 115:1. Then again, this makes it possible to understand the salvific foundation of Ps 114 as an explication of the name of YHWH.³⁸

Regarding the understanding of the composition, this means that Ps 113 and Ps 115, by focussing on the sole reign of YHWH in creation and history, frame the salvific explanation of Ps 114. Thereby, the identity-affirming remembrance of the Exodus is twofold substantiated for the present of the praying persons by its formally and conceptually related framing Psalms. Ps 113 expresses an internal perspective by focusing the relevance of the reign of YHWH on the preservation of the social order. As the counterpart, Ps 115 provides the external perspective of the uniqueness of YHWH by answering the question regarding the nations. The prominent profile of Ps 114 is emphasised by the structure of its argumentation. Ps 114 begins with its salvific foundation from which the universal perspective is

³⁵ Regarding the nations in Ps 115 and the Psalter-compositional link between Ps 115:2 and Ps 113:4 see Zenger, *Götter- und Götterbildpolemik*, 246 (n. 34).

³⁶ See also Hossfeld/Zenger, *Psalmen*, 290f. (n. 8).

³⁷ Regarding this formula see Beyerlin, *Licht*, 65, as well as Hurvitz, *History*, 257–267.

³⁸ Regarding the Psalter-compositional relevance of the YHWH-name (שם יהוה) for Psalm group 113–118 see also Hayes, *Unity*, 151 (n. 8), as well as Ballhorn, *Telos*, 204f. (n. 8).

derived. The cosmic reactions of the mountains and the sea are therefore necessary reactions to the exclusiveness of the God of Jacob as it manifests itself in history. From this salvific point of view, which is designed as an explication of the name of YHWH by its contextualization with Ps 113 and Ps 115, the praying persons are able to praise the exclusiveness of YHWH and substantiate it for their current social situation and the question regarding the nations. This means: The salvific foundation of Ps 114 is ultimately the actual hermeneutical precondition for the experience of the uniqueness of God in the present, like it is presented in the framing Psalms 113 and 115. Hence, Ps 114 has a special formal and conceptual character and constitutes the deliberate designed centre of the Psalm group 113–115.

3 The Psalter-compositional implications of remembered salvation in Ps 114 for the so-called Egyptian Hallel (Ps 113–118)

With these salvific foundations at its centre, we were able to highlight Psalm group 113–115 as a deliberate composition, whose thematical lines are of relevance not only for its close context, but also for Psalm group 113–118.³⁹ This es-

³⁹ Hossfeld/Zenger, *Psalmen*, 245–247 (n. 8), are describing the link between Psalter group 113–115 with the following Psalms as well, but they assume a twofold composition (Ps 113–115 and Ps 116–18) which is theocentric, respectively monotheistic in the first part (Ps 113–115), while focusing on Israel/the nations, respectively being universal anthropological in the second part (Ps 116–118). Instead of such a prominent division of the composition the following considerations will focus on the links between the Psalms of the whole Psalm group 113–118. However, Hayes, *Unity*, 152–156, pleads for a discursive structure of Psalm group 113–118, in the sense of a synchronic reading process, which comprises different highlights like the praise of the nations in Ps 117 but also the confrontation with the idols in Ps 115. Klein, *Geschichte*, 74–78 (n. 2), in her reconstruction of Psalm group 113–118 presumes a three-step editing process and a twofold composition with Ps 113; 115 on the one hand and Ps 116; 118 on the other hand being the foundation. As a first step in the editing process, Ps 114 was added to this Psalm group, expanding Ps 113–115 to a literary trio. The reason for adding Ps 114 was the quotation of Ps 118:14.28 in Ex 15:2. By adding Ps 114 the Exodus reference of Ps 118 was emphasised and made the main topic of the Psalm group. The fact that the editor did not place Ps 114 directly in front of Ps 118 is seen as a sign that he accepted the relatedness of Ps 116 and Ps 118. According to Klein, Ps 117 was then added in the context of the “Hallelujah-redaction” (Ps 113:9; 115:18; 116:19). For a different approach see Hossfeld, *Gott*, 51–63, who focuses on the theological ideas of Psalm group 111–118. He highlights two dif-

pecially pertains to the relevance of the YHWH name and the question regarding the nations.⁴⁰ In Ps 116⁴¹ the confirmation of the saving intervention of YHWH is transformed into the form of an individual song of thanksgiving (Danklied des Einzelnen).⁴² Not the community like in Ps 114, but the paradigmatic individual remembers its saving from mortal danger. Ps 116 is linked with Ps 113–115 by the theology of “name” (Namenstheologie). This theology connects the beginning of Ps 113:1–3 with the beginning of Ps 115:1 and thereby encompasses Ps 114 as the interpretation of the name. Ps 116:4,13,17 is about the constant invocation of the name of YHWH in mortal danger, in connection with the cup ritual v. 13⁴³ and the *todah* v. 17 as the answer to being delivered from imminent death. In Ps 113:1–3 and Ps 115:1 the name of YHWH is found in the context of statements of his uniqueness, while he represents the personal attentiveness of God concerning the praying person in the individual song of thanksgiving. The praying person consistently turns to the name of YHWH and invokes it. Regarding the composition of the Psalter this presupposes the monotheistic theology of name as it is presented in Ps 113–115. While the power of the sole God in creation and history is connected in Ps 113–115 with the name of YHWH, it now becomes transformed onto the level of the individual experience of salvation, this means the individual history.⁴⁴ The same applies to the credo אלהינו “our God”, which is another Psalter-compositional line by which Ps 116 is connected with Psalm group 113–115. The credo אלהינו “our God” can be found in all three Psalms in an exposed position: In Ps 113:5 the question: “Who is like YHWH, our God?” results in the description of the sole power of YHWH in the whole cosmos. In Ps 115:2f. the mockery of the nations: “Where is their God?” results in Ps 115:3, analogous to Ps 113, in the credo to the sole power of YHWH as creator. In Ps 116:5 the credo is found in connection with the so-called *Gnadenformel*.

Like the theology of name, this is related to the mode of action of the sole God, who proves himself in terms of the so-called *Gnadenformel* as merciful.

ferent concepts of how human beings are perceived: a royal concept in wisdom-priestly tradition in Ps 112; 115 and a concept which focuses on the theology of the poor in Ps 113; 116 and 118.

⁴⁰ The manifold creation-theology based links between Ps 115; 116 and 118 can here only be mentioned in passing, but see in parts Ballhorn, *Telos*, 204 f. (n. 8).

⁴¹ Regarding the interpretation of Ps 116 see Janowski, *Dankbarkeit*, 267–312; Spieckermann, *Liebe*, 266–275, as well as Prinsloo, *Psalm*, 71–82.

⁴² See also Leuenberger, *Konzeptionen*, 297 (n. 8).

⁴³ Regarding the cup ritual see Ehlers, *JHWH*, 45–63, here 51–54.

⁴⁴ See also Hays, *Unity*, 152 f. (n. 8).

Like the statements in Ps 113:4 and 115:3, the *Gnadenformel* constitutes one of the central theological statements of these monotheistic Psalms.⁴⁵

The question regarding the nations, which characterises Ps 115, reappears and is expatiated in the close context of this Psalm group. In Ps 117 the nations, after acknowledging the nullity of their idols, are invited to praise God. By using the word pair חסד and אמת “kindness and faithfulness”, Ps 117:2 terminologically connects with Ps 115:1. As a result, Ps 117:2 explicitly confirms that the ones that fear YHWH (יראי יהוה) from Ps 115:11,13 are the pious persons from the nations. Thus, the universal perspective of Ps 115 is transferred into the praise of YHWH by the nations.⁴⁶

The reference to the ones who fear YHWH (יראי יהוה) creates another compositional connection to Ps 118.⁴⁷ Ps 118:1–4 assimilates the triad “Israel, house Aaron and those who fear YHWH” from Ps 115:9,11,12. In his article (2000) regarding Ps 136 as a twofold closing doxology of the Psalter, Christoph Levin showed clearly that Ps 118:1–4 has to be understood as an introduction to Ps 136, which concluded a preliminary version of the Psalter.⁴⁸ A connection emerges, which points from Ps 113–115 to Ps 118 to Ps 136. Regarding the theology of the Psalter, this connection is meaningful because Ps 136 displays anew the uniqueness of YHWH in creation and history and for this purpose assimilates thematic aspects from Ps 113–115.⁴⁹ Similar to Ps 114, Ps 136 emphasises that the miracles of YHWH in creation and history converge in the daily care of the Creation God (Ps 136:25).⁵⁰ Another aspect of Ps 113, the saving intervention on behalf of the degraded persons, can be found in Ps 136:24 and belongs to the credo of the one and only God. Insofar, the Psalm group 113–115 gains relevance for the composition of the Psalter, which far exceeds its closer context and conceptually influenced the formation of the Psalter.

45 Regarding the *Gnadenformel* in Ps 116 see especially Spieckermann, *Liebe*, 269 f. (n. 41).

46 Regarding the interpretation of Ps 117 and the lexematic inclusion of the topic of the nations from Ps 116 in Ps 117 see Ballhorn, *Telos*, 187–193 (n. 8).

47 Regarding Ps 118 see the monographic interpretation of Ps 118 by Mark, *Stärke*.

48 Levin, *Psalm*, 17–27.

49 Regarding the Psalter-compositional relevance of Ps 136 see Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen*, 362–372 (n. 1).

50 Regarding Ps 136 see Macholz, *Psalm*, 177–186.

4 Conclusion – the relevance of history within Psalm group 113–118 for the history of theology and the composition of the Psalter

Remembering salvation, as it is depicted in Ps 114, means for the praying persons to affirm their identity as the people of God. In this sense, their foundational history of salvation proves to be paradigmatic. This process of remembrance is integrated within a theological context, in which the relevance of their history emerges for their present time. In this regard, four aspects are especially important:

1. Their founding history of salvation, like it is remembered in Ps 114, is the starting point, respectively, the hermeneutical position for the collective identity. From this position, the theological questions of the present come into view.
2. For Psalm group 113–115 the crucial theological aspect is the uniqueness of the God of Israel, respectively, his sole power. This question is modified from the reflection of history. For that purpose, two ranges of experience of the praying persons are expanded: The guarantee of the social life and the question regarding the nations. The question regarding the nations entails on the one hand the question regarding the universal extension of YHWH's power and on the other hand the question regarding the affiliation to the people of God, as was evident by the compositional link from Ps 113:4 to Ps 115:2 to Ps 117, respectively by the ones who fear YHWH in Ps 115:11,13 and then in Ps 118:4.
3. In the course of the composition of Psalm group 113–118, the affirmation of identity, as it was obtained by the remembrance of the Exodus in Ps 114, becomes interlaced with the individual identity of a paradigmatic individual from the songs of thanksgiving Ps 116 and Ps 118. She is transformed on the level of an exemplary biography of a praying person and thereby turns into the individual remembrance of salvation from mortal danger (Ps 116 and 118). This was exemplarily shown by means of the modification of the theology of name from Ps 113:1–4 to Ps 115:1 to Ps 116:4,13,17 as well as by means of the credo "YHWH, our God". This identity-affirming reflection on history makes it possible to understand the monotheistic credo to YHWH as the one and only God in its relevance for the present time. By becoming the sanctuary of YHWH, Judah is able to be sure of the care of this one and only God in the past, the present and the future.

4. Regarding the composition of the Psalter, the triad “house Israel, house Aaron and the ones, who fear YHWH” creates a link that connects Ps 115 with Ps 118 with Ps 136, which influenced the formation of the Psalter.

Thereby, the theme of this Psalm group, the affirmation of the uniqueness of YHWH, becomes a part of the presumably first closing of the Psalter and at the same time is given expression anew in a credo-like form in Ps 136. In regards to Psalm group 113–118 remembering salvation means asking oneself again and again: “Who is like YHWH, our God...?” (Ps 113:5).

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