

7 A Literary and Discourse Analysis of Psalm 110

As shown in the previous three chapters, reading a text with its co-text(s) together helps a reader to understand the text at hand. Understanding Psalm 110 is no exception; thus, this approach will be taken here. Given that Psalm 110 is a self-contained unit, we propose the following. In this chapter, Psalm 110 will be viewed in light of discourse and rhetorical-literary analysis, with emphasis placed on its poetic nature. Likewise, in the following two chapters, we will focus our study on Psalm 110 in its cotexts, namely, the Psalter as a whole and Book V of the Psalter, after discussing recent studies on the structure and shape of the Psalter. Furthermore, we will exegetically attend to Psalms 2 and 132 because of their unmistakably close semantic-thematic relationship to Psalm 110. Then, to conclude, we will synthesize chapters seven to nine in order to extract any theological implications of this study in view of the overarching בְּרִית-theme in God's covenantal promise.

7.1 A Poetic and Rhetorical Study of Psalm 110

Psalm 110 is a crucial psalm on which much research and study has been done. One way of explaining this intense interest is the text of Psalm 110, which is a challenge with its many textual difficulties⁴⁰⁸ and is far from easy to interpret. The main explanation, however, is that parts of Psalm 110 are often quoted by the early Christian literature.⁴⁰⁹ For instance, this Psalm is often quoted in the NT⁴¹⁰ mainly for its eschatological and messianic implications. Particularly in the NT, v. 1 is quoted 19 times: five citations and 14 allusions.⁴¹¹ Nonetheless, some scholars have rejected the messianic reading of Psalm 110 by the NT,⁴¹² specifically calling the usage of Psalm 110 in Hebrews a

408 Raymond Tournay, "Le Psaume CX," *RB* 67 (1960): 5. He aptly describes: "D'innombrables études ont déjà essayé de rendre intelligibles le sept versets de ce psaume si court, mais si difficile." Mitchell Dahood notes: "Though the Hebrew text teems with difficulties, and the consequent interpretation of some details remains uncertain, it should not be described as 'unusually corrupt,' an evaluation put upon it by *The Oxford Annotated Bible* the RSV, ed. by H. G. May and B. M. Metzger (Oxford, 1962)." See his *Psalms III: 101-150*, AB, vol. 17A (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), 112-13.

409 See David Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1973), 163-66. In his book, he lists all the references that contain direct quotes of or allusions to Psalm 110.

410 Leslie Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, WBC, vol. 21 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 87. There he remarks: "[This psalm] holds the record for being the OT text most frequently cited or alluded to in the NT."

411 Mark Saucy, "Exaltation Christology in Hebrews," *TrinJ* 14 (1993): 43.

412 For example, Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*, trans. Hilton Oswald (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 353.

midrash.⁴¹³ How we are to understand this Psalm is one of our pressing goals in this project. Should it be read messianically or merely historically is the objective we have in mind to achieve in this chapter.

Analyzing Psalm 110 from a genre perspective is not smooth sailing. Many regard Psalm 110 as a royal psalm⁴¹⁴ though it contains some descriptive elements of the enthronement festivals.⁴¹⁵ Yet the debate of how to define a royal psalm is yet to reach a definitive conclusion. For instance, Scott Starbuck has examined the past 150 years of scholarship in his search for a definition of royal psalms and about all he can safely conclude is that scholars share a “significant definitional disagreement.”⁴¹⁶ It is not this chapter’s focus to define either the historical background – including dating – of the text or the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 110. Our interest is two-fold: (1) we will study the *final* form of the text even though it is plagued with textual difficulties in some verses, and (2) we will concentrate our study on how the canonical shape (the final form) of the Psalter sheds light on this Psalm (the work of the next two chapters). We will now turn to the textual problems in Psalm 110.

7.1.1 Textual Notes for Psalm 110

The textual variants may be crucial to our interpretation of the poem, and therefore deserve some discussion. Among the seven verses, v. 3 contains the most textual problems. Since v. 3 and the textual variants there involve a major interpretation of the psalm, we will evaluate them later in this paper. Six noticeable variants are indicated below:⁴¹⁷

The first textual variant involves a different reading of the Hebrew vowel points: the LXX uses the phrase μετὰ σοῦ to reflect a reading of עִמָּךְ (“with you”) instead of the MT’s עַמְּךָ (“your people”).

413 See Joseph Fitzmyer, “‘Now This Melchizedek . . .’ (Heb 7, 1),” *CBQ* 25 (1963): 305; Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 186; Lane, *Hebrews* 1-8, 159; Graham Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 14. We will address the use of Psalm 110 in Hebrews in our chapters 10 and 11.

414 Just one example is sufficient to show the majority opinion that Psalm 110 is a royal song. See Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 83.

415 Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 347. For Kraus, v. 1 and v. 4 clearly contain these enthronement elements. Cf. his *Theology of the Psalms*, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1986), 111.

416 Scott R. A. Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms: The So-Called Royal Psalms in Their Ancient Near Eastern Context*, SBLDS 172 (Atlanta, Ga.: SBL, 1999), 66. According to Starbuck, credit should be given to Herman Gunkel for his “recognition of a distinct class of *bona fide* royal psalms.” *Ibid.*, 2. Also Starbuck, in the first chapter of his book, delineates several key scholars’ views on the genre of the royal psalm.

417 Please refer to the critical apparatus of Psalm 110 in *BHS*.

Second, the LXX's ἡ ἀρχή ("magistracy")⁴¹⁸ reflects a Hebrew word נְדִיבָה ("dignity")⁴¹⁹ while the MT's נְדָבָה comes from נָדָבָה ("free motivation, voluntary offering").⁴²⁰ If one follows the LXX, the phrase נְדָבָה עִמָּךְ⁴²¹ is then rendered "with you is your nobility (dominion)," while if one follows the MT, the phrase is rendered "your people is willing."

Third, the phrase בְּהַרְרֵי־קֶדֶשׁ (בְּהַרְרֵי from הָרָר, "adornment, splendor")⁴²² in the Targum, Symmachus and Jerome is בְּהַרְרֵי־קֶדֶשׁ (בְּהַרְרֵי from הָר, "mountain"). This phrase בְּהַרְרֵי־קֶדֶשׁ can only be found in Ps 87:1. Nonetheless, the LXX (λαμπρότησιν) supports the MT reading.

Fourth, the word מְשַׁחֵר, though regarded as a hapax legomenon,⁴²³ is rendered by the LXX as πρὸ ἐωσφόρου, with the possible *Vorlage* as מְשַׁחֵר. Therefore the מ before שַׁחֵר could be a dittography.⁴²⁴

Fifth, our next textual variant in v. 3 is an omission in the Greek translation of the Hebrew phrase טַל לְךָ. The *BHS* fails, however, to note that in the Syriac version, טַל is spelled as טַלִּי.⁴²⁵

Sixth, the final variant of v. 3 also involves a change of vowel point. The LXX, supported by other textual traditions (Origen, Theodotian, Syriac), uses ἐξεγέννησά σε, reflecting a Hebrew reading יִלְדֵתִיךָ ("I have begotten you") instead of יִלְדֵתֶיךָ ("your youth").

418 LSJ, 252.

419 HALOT, 2: 674. The noun is a feminine form of נְדִיב, which has largely been rendered by ἄρχων in the LXX.

420 HALOT, 2: 672. See Elmar Santos, *The Expanded Hebrew Index for the Hatch-Redpath Concordance to the Septuagint* (Jerusalem: Dugith, n.d.), 129. Cf. Takamitsu Muraoka, *Hebrew/Aramaic Index to the Septuagint: Keyed to the Hatch-Redpath Concordance* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 93. The Hebrew word נְדָבָה has never been rendered as ἀρχή in the LXX but translated by the following Greek words: αἵρεσις (2x) "freewill offering," ἀφαίρεμα (1x) "that taken away as choice part," δόμα (2x) "gift," ἐκούσιος (9x) "voluntary," ἐκουσίως (1x) "willingly," ὁμολογία (4x) "agreement," ὁμολόγως (1x) "by agreement" and σφάγιον (1x) "sacrifice, offering."

421 Note that the Hebrew consonantal text is unchanged.

422 HALOT, 1: 240.

423 See BDB, 1007. There the word is treated as a noun but associates with מְשַׁח; cf. HALOT, 2: 644. See also Allen, *Psalm 101-150*, 80 and Hans Joachim Stoebe, "Erwägungen zu Psalm 110 auf dem Hintergrund von 1 Sam 21," in *Festschrift Friedrich Baumgärtel zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Johannes Herrmann (Erlangen: Universitätsbund, 1959), 188.

424 It is thus suggested by *BHS*. On the other hand, some see מְשַׁחֵר as possible paronomasia with מְשִׁיחַ ("anointed"). See Raymond J. Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God with the Psalms*, trans. J. Edward Crowley (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 213. Others like Joachim Schaper see the use of the Greek word ἐωσφόρου as possibly having a messianic and eschatological nuance. See his *the Greek Psalter*, 102.

425 A. Caquot provides a list of textual interpretations for v. 3 and he points out the "resemblance" of טַל and טַלִּי. See his "Remarques sur le Psaume CX," *Sem* 6 (1956): 41, footnote 1.

7.2 A Rhetorical-Poetical Analysis of Psalm 110

Psalm 110 is a closely knitted text and its writer is a brilliant poet whose skill in composition awaits analysis. The employment of a rhetorical analysis will be sensitive to the poetic nature of this text. Besides a grammatical-syntactical analysis, we will pay attention to word-play or sound-play, strophic analysis, parallelism, rhetorical devices, and linguistic features.⁴²⁶ We divide this study of the Psalm 110 text into six parts: first, we will the poetic structure within each verse (intra-verse connectives); next, we will look into the poetic structure evidenced between verses (inter-verse connectives); the third task we will perform is a strophic structure analysis; fourth, we will engage in an overall rhetorical-structure analysis; fifth, we will do a word and syllable count; and in our last section, we will devote time to theological reflections based upon the poetic analysis.

7.2.1 A Poetic Structure Analysis: Intra-Verse Connectives

The poet has professionally crafted Psalm 110 using various literary and poetic techniques. One can at least detect several of these techniques employed within a verse itself in each of Psalm's seven verses.

In v. 1, each smaller unit ends with either יָי or יָיִ as the layout below shows:

v. 1b α and 1b β : יָי , יָיִ

v. 1b γ and 1b δ : יָיִ , יָיִ .⁴²⁷

In addition, the verse is linked by the imperfect-imperative of שִׁיחִי־יָשֶׁב (both similar in consonants and sound), and by words of body parts, יָמִין and יְמִנִּי ("right hand" and

⁴²⁶ Adele Berlin has developed many categories for poetry analysis, and we will utilize some of her categories in this project. See her *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985). More recently, J. F. Fokkelman has done a major study using syllable count and other text-linguistic devices on selective poetic texts, including Psalm 110. See his *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible: At the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis*, Vol. 2, *85 Psalms and Job 4-14* (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 2000). Cf. his early work where the first chapter lays out his theoretical framework based on a linguistic-inspired text model in his *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible: At the Interface of Hermeneutics and Structural Analysis*, Vol. 1, *Ex. 15, Deut. 32, and Job 3* (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1998).

⁴²⁷ Note that v. 1, a long verse, is divided by the presence of the accent עֹלָה הַיּוֹדֵר on the word מִזְמוֹר .

“foot”). Dahood also observes how there is an assonance as well as an alliteration⁴²⁸ of *לְהַגְלִיךְ* and *אֶבְיֶיךָ*, and also an assonance of *לִימִינִי* and *לְאֲדֹנִי*.⁴²⁹

In v. 2, the line is linked by the imperative-imperfect of *הִרְחֵם-שָׁלַח*; both have their own adverbial phrases (“from Zion” and “in the midst of your enemies” respectively).

In v. 3, the picture is a bit unclear and complicated.⁴³⁰ If one takes out *מִשְׁחָר מִרְחָם*, we have the following chiasmic structure:

בְּיוֹם חֵילךְ	✕	עִמָּךְ ⁴³¹ נִדְבַת
לְךָ שָׁל יִלְדֶיךָ		בְּהִרְרֵי-קִדְשׁ

Note how the chiasm is formed by the consonant *נ* and *כ* in the initial position of each phrase and how both *נִדְבָה* and *יְלֹדוֹת* are feminine nouns.⁴³² Note also the similarity of the consonants in the phrase *מִשְׁחָר מִרְחָם*.⁴³³ Another way to dissect this verse is as follows (italics ours):

חֵילְךָ בְּהִרְרֵי-קִדְשׁ	✕	עִמָּךְ נִדְבַת בְּיוֹם
לְךָ שָׁל יִלְדֶיךָ		מִרְחָם מִשְׁחָר

Note also the chiasm formed by two *נ*'s with two *כ*'s and *כ*.⁴³⁴ We prefer to read v. 3 in this way because it retains the phrase *מִרְחָם מִשְׁחָר* in the structure; furthermore, this chiasmic parallel may assist us as we interpret this difficult verse later in our study.

In v. 4, *יָנַח* and *נִשְׁבַּע* are both in *ni*. (perfect and imperfect respectively). It is a parallel of the same conjugation (i.e., *ni*.) with a different stem and tense.⁴³⁵ The rest of v. 4 can be paired as follows (italics ours):

⁴²⁸ Stanislav Segert has attempted to define assonance and alliteration (plus rhyme) in his article titled “Assonance and Rhyme in Hebrew Poetry,” *MAARAV* 8 (1992): 171-79. Simply put, “alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds, assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds, and rhyme is the repetition of combinations containing both consonants and vowels” (ibid., 172). He regards these literary devices as part of the parallelism in Hebrew poetry.

⁴²⁹ Dahood, *Psalms III*, 113-14.

⁴³⁰ Verse 3 ends the first strophe of this text and it may be a triadic. According to Robert Alter, the function of a triadic line in a typical dyadic system is two-fold: “to mark some special emphasis or to indicate the beginning or conclusion of a segment. . . .” See his *Biblical Poetry*, 35. Cf. Fokkelmann, 85 *Psalms*, 289-90, where he compares v. 2 and v. 3 in a tricola fashion.

⁴³¹ The plural noun *נִדְבָה* is there for emphasis. See *GKC*, §141c.

⁴³² F. Delitzsch regards *חֵילְךָ* and *יִלְדֶיךָ* as parallel. See his *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. F. Bolton, vol. 3 (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1887-89; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 191.

⁴³³ The phrase is “highly poetic and unusual” according to Willem VanGemen. See VanGemen, “Psalms,” *EBC*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1991), 698.

⁴³⁴ Cf. P. Leo Krinetzki, “Ps 110 (109): Eine Untersuchung seines dichterischen Stils,” *TGl* 51 (1961): 118.

⁴³⁵ Berlin, *Biblical Parallelism*, 33-35.

אתה כהן לעולם

על־דברתי מלכ־צדק

Krinetzki sees a chiasmic structure for the above text:⁴³⁶

לעולם	✕	אתה כהן
מלכ־צדק		על־דברתי

In v. 5, the connection is made by the use of two words for body parts: אֶפֶס and יָמִינֶךָ. The verse is structured by a parallel of a substantive (v. 5a) to its verbal form (v. 5b).⁴³⁷

In v. 6, the similarity in consonants between the two words, נָוִיָּה and בְּנוִיָּם, should be noted. The verse can be read as

יָדִין בְּנוִיָּם
מִלֵּא נְוִיָּה
מִחֵץ רֹאשׁ
עַל־אֶרֶץ רְבֵה

The parallels are nations//head(s); filling corpses//over a wide earth. The first parallel has a semantic “specification” (that is, the nations are judged for their heads are smitten), while the second parallel has “consequentiality” (the dead are so many that they fill a wide geographical area).⁴³⁸ The two lines are also paired by a shift of the imperfect to the perfect (yqtl-qtł).⁴³⁹

In v. 7, the text is linked by two imperfect verbs: יִשְׁתָּה and יָקִים. In our poetic analysis we will now turn to inter-verse connections.

7.2.2 A Poetic Structure Analysis: Inter-Verse Connectives

The poet has attempted to connect two verses by using various literary devices and techniques.⁴⁴⁰ Between v. 1 and v. 2, there is a chiasmic parallel of tenses: imperative-imperfect (v. 1) and imperfect-imperative (v. 2). There is a re-appearance of this word אִיכָבֶד. Between v. 2 and v. 3, there is a word-play of הָרָה and רָהָה. Observe the reversal of ה and ר in these two words, and note also how between v. 3 and v. 4, there is another word-play, דַּבְּרָתִי and בְּהַדְרִי, and a sound-play, מִרְהָם and יָהֵם. Between v. 4 and v. 5, the word מֶלֶךְ is found in the proper noun (Melchizedek) and the object (kings) of the Lord’s striking due to His anger. Between v. 5 and v. 6, the word מִחֵץ appears. Furthermore, there seems to be a parallel in these two verses, as indicated in the following:

⁴³⁶ Krinetzki, “Ps 110 (109),” 119.

⁴³⁷ See Berlin, *Biblical Parallelism*, 54-55.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 29. See Berlin’s categories there.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. Fokkelman, *85 Psalms*, 289 (footnote 97).

v. 5a: אֲדַנִּי עַל־יְמִינֶךָ

v. 6a: בְּנוֹיִם מִלֵּא נְזִיחַ יָדֶיךָ

The consonant *ḥ* appears twice in both יְמִינֶךָ and יָדֶיךָ. The following layout applies to v. 5b and v. 6b:

v. 5b: מִחֵץ בְּיוֹם־אָפּוּ מַלְכִּים

v. 6b: מִחֵץ רֹאשׁ עַל־אֶרֶץ רַבָּה

It appears that these two verses are strongly linked by the same verb, מִחֵץ “shatter” (same tense) and body parts, אָפּוּ and רֹאשׁ (“anger,” literally, “nose” and “head”). Between v. 6 and v. 7, the word רֹאשׁ is the connecting word: the first one can be taken figuratively (“head” or “heads” as parallel to “kings” in v. 5) while the other physically, “he lifts up his head.” Our skilled poet does not overlook an opportunity to also play with sound, as evidenced in יָדֶיךָ and יָרִים.

The construction of vv. 5-7 is worthy of comment.⁴⁴¹ The grammatical-lexical patterning is of particular note:⁴⁴²

v. 5b: shatter (qtl) . . . kings

v. 6b: shatter (qtl) . . . head

v. 7b: lift up (yqtl) . . . head

Semantically speaking, vv. 5-6 can be called a “structure of intensification” because the divine anger not only shatters kings but also heaps up corpses in the nations spread over a wide geographical location (“wide earth”).⁴⁴³

7.2.3 A Poetic Structure Analysis: The Structure of Two Strophes

Psalm 110 can be divided into two parts: vv. 1-3 and vv. 4-7; noticeably, both strophes are introduced by “the oracular introduction” (נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה and נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה).⁴⁴⁴ Briggs also notes

⁴⁴¹ Two articles focus on vv. 5-7: Maurice Gilbert and Stephen Pisano, “Psalm 110 (109), 5-7,” *Bib* 61 (1980): 343-56. Their finding is echoed by Pierre Auffret, “Note sur la structure littéraire du *Psaume CX*,” *Sem* 32 (1982): 83-88. Both articles are helpful to identify who’s who in vv. 5-7.

⁴⁴² Berlin, *Biblical Parallelism*, 83-88.

⁴⁴³ Alter, *Biblical Poetry*, 64-65.

⁴⁴⁴ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 85. Klaus Seybold treats v. 1a (לְיְהוָה מִזְמֹרָה) as a superscription but also divides the poem into two strophes. See his *Die Psalmen*, HAT I/15 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), 438. Not all scholars see the poem as composed of two strophes. The range of strophes numbers from three to five. For examples, Fokkelman analyzes the poem as containing four strophes. See his *85 Psalms*, 288, 528. Simone Springer has 5 strophes for this poem. See his *Neuinterpretation im Alten Testament: Untersucht an den Themekreisen des Herbstfestes und der Königpsalmen in Israel*, SBB (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH, 1979), 140. For authors who propose a three-strophe structure, see Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 85. On the contrary, some see the oracular introductions in vv. 1, 4 as inclusio, thus marking vv. 1-4 as one unit while vv. 5-7 comprises another unit. For example, Tournay remarks that “the oracle (vv. 1-4) is followed by a sort of commentary (vv. 5-7)” in his *Seeing and Hearing*, 209. Similarly, see James Kurian, *Jesus Our High Priest: Ps 110, 4 as the Substructure of Heb 5, 1-7*, 28, EU 693 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 30-31.

that some lines in both strophes end with ה, מ, ך, and י.⁴⁴⁵ The first strophe links to the second by word-play (common in consonants) or sound-play as set forth in figure 3:

<u>Strophe 1</u>	<u>Strophe 2</u>
1. נאם יהוה (v. 1)	1. נשבע יהוה (v. 4)
2. לאדני . . . לימני (v. 1)	2. אדני על-ימינך (v. 5)
3. אשית (v. 1)	3. ישחה (v. 7)
4. נרבת (v. 3)	4. דברתי (v. 4)
5. ביום חילך (v. 3)	5. ביומאפו (v. 5)
6. בהררי (v. 3)	6. דברתי (v. 4)
7. בהררי (v. 3)	7. בדרך (v. 7)

Figure 3. Strophic Links of Psalm 110

Some observation notes are due here: 1. For 3, both words contain ה, ש, י. 2. For 4, both words contain ר, ב, ח. For 6, both words contain ב, ר, ר. For 7, both words contain ב, ר, ר.

Furthermore, for strophe 1, besides the inner connectives previously noted, we should add that the connection of all these verses is made by means of assonance:⁴⁴⁶

- v. 1: אֶבְיֹד . . . לְהַגְלִיד
 v. 2: עֲזָרָה . . . אֶבְיֹד
 v. 3: עֲמִידָה . . . חֵילֶךָ
 לֵךְ . . . לְדַרְתִּיךָ

Regarding strophe 2, we add three more comments when considering the inner structure of this strophe. First, there is the similarity of consonants between יחַם ("he will not change his mind") in v. 4 and מַחַל ("from the brook") in v. 7; second, there is an interchange of consonants (ב and ד) in דברתי (v. 4) and בדרך (v. 7); and third, the poet uses על in all four verses (vv. 4, 5, 6, 7).⁴⁴⁷

Thus far our poetic-literary analysis reveals how this Psalm is closely knit together. Yet among all these detailed observations, one should not lose sight of the rhetorical arrangement and its effect on the Psalm.

7.2.4 A Rhetorical Structure of Psalm 110

The poem seems to have an overall rhetorical structure based on parallel semantic words and the use of literary devices (word- or sound-plays).⁴⁴⁸ We are presented

⁴⁴⁵ C. A. and E. G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, ICC, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 375.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. Dahood, *Psalms III*, 116 and Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 85.

⁴⁴⁷ This is also noted by Allen in *Psalms 101-150*, 85.

⁴⁴⁸ It is not necessary to defend the unity of the poem with all these semantic links between the two strophes and various parts of the poem. See J. Doré, "L'évocation de Melchiséech et le problème de l'origine du Psaume 110," *Transeuphratène* 15 (1998): 28-29.

with three possibilities for viewing this poem rhetorically, and we will evaluate each option and choose what we think is best.⁴⁴⁹

The first option is *without* the oracular formulae, rendering it ABCD//D'C'B'A' in the following layout:

A//A': לרגליך // ראש (v. 1b//v. 7)

B//B': v. 2//v. 6

C//C': ביום חילך // ביום־אפוי (v. 3a//v. 5)

D//D': בהדר־קדש // צדק (על) דברתי ... צדק (v. 3b//v. 4b)

In this concentric chiasmic structure, the maximum rhetorical effect will be on vv. 3-4 by beginning and ending the poem with the choice of words pertaining to body-parts ("foot" and "head") in A//A'. In C//C', the link between v. 3a and v. 5 is quite obvious by this exact phrase ביום ("in the day of"). For D//D', the play on similar consonants binds v. 3b and v. 4b together. Nonetheless, there are some drawbacks to this structure. First and foremost is the omission of the oracular introductions in this analysis. A second concern is that part of v. 4, ולא ינחם אתה־כֶּהן לעולם, remains unaccounted for in this option.

The second structural analysis includes the oracular formulae, and, to illustrate, the poem will appear in the structure of ABCDE//A'B'C'D'E':

A//A': נאם יהוה לאדני // נשבע יהוה (v. 1b α //v. 4a α)

B//B': אדני על־ימיניך // שב לימיני שב (v. 1b β //v. 5a)

C//C': מלכ־יְהוָה ... מלכ־יְהוָה // עַד־אַשִׁית ... לַרְגְּלֶיךָ (v. 1b γ - δ //v. 5b)

D//D': יְדִין ... רַבָּה // מִטְּהֵעֶיךָ ... אֵיבֶיךָ (v. 2//v. 6)

E//E': v. 3//v. 7

For A//A', the oracular formulae in both verses are very clear as the starting point; however, the little phrase ~xny alw ("and he will not change his mind") in v. 4 remains unaccounted for in this analysis. For B//B', the "right hand" signifies the parallelism in both phrases. For C//C', the identity of "enemies" in v. 1 (also in v. 2) now becomes clear in v. 5, i.e., "kings." For D//D', the extent of the "rule" (signified by the "scepter sent by the Lord") seems to be defined by "over the nations" and "upon a wide earth." The major deficiency of this structural analysis is that a major part of v. 4, qdc ... alw, is not included.

The third option is a combination of the above two. Figure 4 shows the layout for Psalm 110 with the exception of the superscription (לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר):

⁴⁴⁹ Marc Girard refers to this poem as "grand diptyque" and also proposes several structural layouts for this poem. Idem, *Les Psaumes Redécouverts: De la structure au sens* (Montréal: Bellarmin, 1994), 161, cf. 160-64.

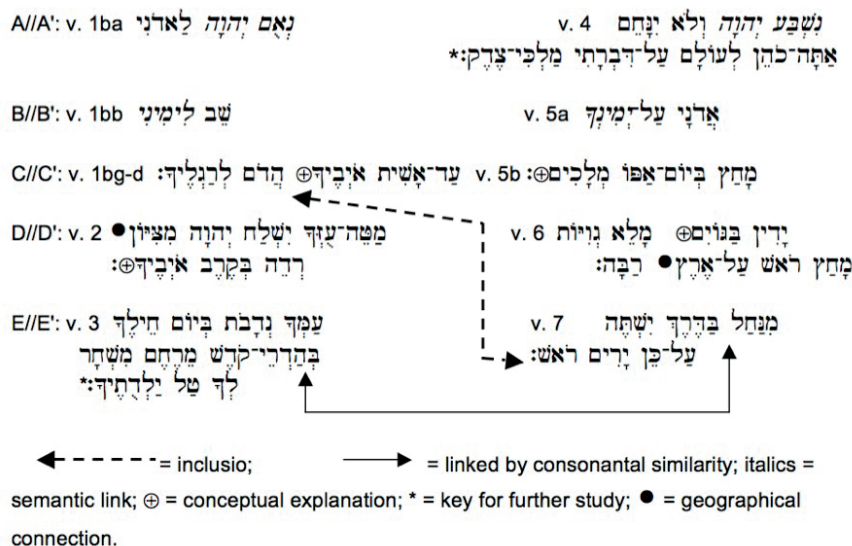


Figure 4. Rhetorical Layout of the MT text of Psalm 110

This layout has several advantages exegetically. First, as noted earlier, the body-part in v. 1 and v. 7 serves as inclusio (“foot” and “head”).⁴⁵⁰ Second, every word in the poem is accounted for in this rhetorical parallel structure. Third, each pair reveals something that could not be detected by simply reading the text. Therefore, we will reiterate some of the important observations next in view of this layout.

Each pair is connected through literary devices. Skipping AA', v. 1bb and v. 5a are obviously linked by the key word “right hand” in BB' though the identity in v. 5 needs to be clarified later. For CC' and DD', please refer to our second option above (also labeled as CC' and DD' there). Furthermore, DD' is linked by two geographical locations: “from Zion” and “on the wide earth.” Again the “enemy” in v. 2 is further marked by “the nations.”⁴⁵¹ For EE', the only link evidenced in the paired verses is their shared consonantal similarity. Yet, if read carefully, both verses may display some mythical elements,⁴⁵² further aided by the textual difficulty in v. 3 and also by the problematic identity of the person who “drinks . . . and lifts up his head.”

⁴⁵⁰ Alter may call this “envelope structure.” See his *Biblical Poetry*, 56. The inclusio is further reinforced by the use of אֲשִׁית and יִשְׁתָּה in v. 1 and v. 7 respectively.

⁴⁵¹ Note how the structure of this phrase בְּקֶרֶב אֵיבֹיֶךָ begins with ב; cf. the same preposition prefixed to the word בְּנוֹיָם.

⁴⁵² See Starbuck, *Court Oracles*, 149-53. There Starbuck notes the influence of the mythological element from the ANE and Egyptian literature in Ps 110:3. His exposition of v. 7 is influenced by the same sources (ibid., 158-60). Some scholars detect Egyptian influence upon Psalm 110; see Jean de Savignac, “Essai d'interprétation du psalme cx à l'aide de la littérature Égyptienne,” *OTS* 9 (1951): 107-35.

In our layout, an apparently “imbalanced” feature may contain the authorial intent for theological emphasis. Verse 3, as well as the major portion of v. 4, seems to be “imbalanced.” Such imbalance might seem surprising for a competent poet such as the one who wrote Psalm 110. The poet’s competence has been clearly demonstrated in the song’s closely-knit structure. Therefore, we believe this imbalance is the author’s original intention to bring out significant theological points. Furthermore, vv. 3-4, through this rhetorical arrangement, indeed contain some theological thrusts that require further investigation. Our observation is further strengthened by the word and syllable count of the poem addressed in the next section.

7.2.5 A Poetic Study of Psalm 110: Word and Syllable Count

The word and syllable counts reveal and support what we have concluded regarding vv. 3-4. Table 1 is a list of word- and syllable-count⁴⁵³ (the superscription is excluded):

Table 1. Word and Syllable Count of Psalm 110

Text	Word count	Syllable count
v. 1	3: 2	7: 4
	3: 2	7: 6
v. 2	5: 3	12: 8 ^a
v. 3	4: 4: 3	11: 8 ^b : 7
v. 4	4: 3: 4	9: 7: 7
v. 5	3: 4	8: 9
v. 6	4: 5	10: 7
v. 7	3: 4	6: 5 ^c

^a This number (8) differs from Fokkelman’s count (9). (He adds וְ to יְהוָה, resulting in 9 syllables. His argument for the addition of the וְ is supported by one manuscript and some versions. See Fokkelman, *85 Psalms*, 291.)

^b We follow Fokkelmann’s count on these two words מִקְרָאִים מִשְׁתָּרִים. See rules in footnote 50.

^c This number (5) differs from Fokkelmann’s (6). (He adds a third personal suffix, י, to the last word ראשׁ in v. 7 based on some textual supports, thus resulting in 6 syllables. See idem, *85 Psalms*, 291.)

453 We will compare ours with Fokkelman’s. See Fokkelman, *85 Psalms*, 459. Our schematic presentation of word- and syllable-count differs from Fokkelman’s. Note for example, נָאֻם יְהוָה לְאֶדְנִי in v. 1: for us, the word- count is 3 and the syllable-count is 7. Fokkelman’s schematic presentation is 2.2.3, meaning 3 words and 2+2+3=7 syllables. Note two rules applied in our project: Segholate nouns are counted as one syllable; and certain auxillary vowels are not counted. Cf. Fokkelman, *85 Psalms*, 14-16 and David Howard, Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*, BJS 5 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbraus, 1997), 28-30.

As one can see above,⁴⁵⁴ the ratio is rather even except in v. 3 and v. 4. Both have the most word- and syllable-counts: 11 words and 23 syllables. (The runner-up is verse 1: 10 words but 24 syllables.) Thus vv. 3-4 seem to break the “rhythm” of the poem. The poetic devices via word- and syllable-count reinforce the result of our rhetorical-structural study above, that is, that vv. 3-4 are crucial for the interpretation of the poem.⁴⁵⁵

7.3 A Poetic-Rhetorical Reading of Psalm 110: Historical or Messianic?

Critical scholars have often argued against the messianic reading of this poem.⁴⁵⁶ This type of judgment, however, fails to take into account the rhetorical structure of the psalm, and ignores the effect of the final shape of the Psalter concerning this song. Most scholars employ the historical-critical method⁴⁵⁷ – notably strong in historical analysis but markedly weak in the rhetorical-literary understanding of the text – to interpret the Psalter. As observed, the poet has utilized certain poetic devices and techniques (syntax, lexical choice, parallelism, etc.) to bring out his rhetorical effect and thus his theological emphasis in this poem. A look at the rhetorical effect based on the structure of this psalm is needed, and should guide the reader of Psalm 110 into a messianic notion.

⁴⁵⁴ As pointed out by Fokkelman, syllable counting has been advocated by David N. Freedman, and subsequently followed by two of his students, David Howard, Jr., and Paul Raabe. See Fokkelman, *85 Psalms*, 13-14. The major problem with Freedman's method of syllable counting is that his counting is not based on the MT text but is a hypothetically reconstructed text of his own. Thus, his results are very subjective. Dahood points to Freedman's observation that “each stanza [or strophe] contains 74 syllables.” Dahood, *Psalms 101-150*, 113. (There is no bibliographical data in Dahood's commentary for any further verification.) See also a discussion by Howard, *The Structure of Psalms*, 28-29, in which Howard diverges from his mentor, Freedman, by using the MT text as the basis for his syllable counting.

⁴⁵⁵ One could still comment, even without any poetic analysis (word-count, etc.), like Alphonse Deissler: “Les v. 3-4 constituent la partie central et essentielle du psaume.” Idem, *Le Livre des Psaumes: 76-150*, vol. 2 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1966), 171.

⁴⁵⁶ John Goldingay comments on Psalm 110 could serve as representative of the non-messianic interpretation on the psalm: “There is no indication that it speaks of a future king, nor any necessary to reckon that it would be interpreted messianically by the time of the Psalter reached its present form;”. See his, *Psalms: Volume 3, Psalms 90-150* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008), 292. (To Goldingay, the messianic interpretation appears only much later in Roman times. See his footnote 20 of bibliography on Mark's messianic interpretation of Psalm 110.)

⁴⁵⁷ For examples, A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 2, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1972; reprint 1979), 767-72 for Psalm 110. Dahood, *Psalm III*, 112-20.

At the onset of the discussion, a key question that determines how to read this psalm is “who” the person being addressed by Yahweh in vv. 1 and 4 is.⁴⁵⁸ Most scholars agree that the Hebrew word לַאֲדֹנָי should be rendered as “my lord” or “my master.”⁴⁵⁹ The “you” in the poem from v. 1b β to v. 5a is for certain referring to the “lord” in v. 1b α . It seems that from v. 5b to v. 6, all the third person verbs there should take אֲדֹנָי⁴⁶⁰ (the “Lord,” v. 5a) as their subject.⁴⁶¹ The identity of the “lord” in v. 1 remains murky; therefore, a rhetorical study and an analysis of the composition of the poem may shed light on this identity.

There are several key features the poet, through his compositional skills, uses to describe and define the identity of the person (the lord) in v. 1b α . Attention is paid to the choice of the lexical item⁴⁶² and the parallel rhetorical structure; both can illuminate the quest for the identity of this person.⁴⁶³

7.3.1 His Rule: The Extent of Time and Location

V. 2b (רָחַק בְּקֶרֶב אֵיבֹיךָ) implies that the person is a ruler. Is he a king? The word מֶלֶךְ is not used in the poem to describe him.⁴⁶⁴ Nonetheless, several hints are dropped that support the claim that the ruler is in fact a king. First, the word אֲדֹנָי is not uncommon when used in reference to a king: Gen 40:1, 1 Sam 24:9[8], 26:17, 2 Sam 3:21, Ps 45:12[11]

⁴⁵⁸ The parallelism of AA' presupposes that both the oracle of Yahweh (נֹאֵם יְהוָה) and the oath of Yahweh (נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה) address the same person (לַאֲדֹנָי) in v. 1.

⁴⁵⁹ To name a few who adopt such rendering: Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, trans. Herbert Hartwell, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 692; cf. VanGemenen, “Psalms,” 697 (notes); Allen, *Psalm 101-150*, 79. Elliot Johnson. “Hermeneutical Principles and the Interpretation of Psalm 110,” *BSac* 149 (1992): 432-33, 449-52.

⁴⁶⁰ Allen has listed four options when interpreting this word: (1) as a divine subject, thus equal to Yahweh; (2) as a divine vocative; (3) as a human subject; and (4) as a human vocative. Idem, *Psalm 101-150*, 82. We prefer the first option as the most viable.

⁴⁶¹ If the Lord (equivalent to Yahweh) is the subject, then it may create some incongruent reading for v. 7. Later in this paper, we will reexamine v. 7.

⁴⁶² See chapter 3 under rhetorical criticism, the theory of style, particularly, lexis.

⁴⁶³ Presumably, we use masculine for the person to be defined and identified.

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. Tournay, “Le Psaume CX,” 7. There he comments: “les mots ‘roi’, ‘royauté’ ne sont pas prononcés dan le Ps. Cx.”

and others.⁴⁶⁵ Second, the word מִטָּה (glossed as “scepter”) is present in v. 2. Third, the presence of this word רָדָה⁴⁶⁶ implies kingship to a certain extent. Fourth, the poet citing Melchizedek who possesses the dual status of a king and a priest (cf. Gen 14:18) depicts the person אֲדֹנָי (“lord”) in v. 1 as such. To summarize, this person has a royal status even though at times this status might be not be as explicit as one would expect; in other words, the tone is rather subdued. After all, the person’s royal status is not assumed⁴⁶⁷ but rather is depicted through the poet’s various poetic techniques.

Regardless, his rule is described both in time and location in this psalm. As to time, in v. 1, the use of עָרָה indicates that what follows should be regarded as a “temporal clause”: the main verb שָׁב (imperative) is followed by אֲשִׁירָה (imperfect) thereby establishing a consequence with the use of עָרָה. The temporal aspect of v. 1 is further qualified, via the parallel structure (CC’), by v. 5b: בְּיָמֵי אָפִי (“in the *days* of his wrath”). Verse 5b also defines the enemies as being ruled over by this person (CC’ and DD’): both “the kings” (v. 5b) and “the nations” (v. 6) seem to oppose the kingly ruler and Yahweh.⁴⁶⁸

In terms of geographical location, v. 2 describes the reign that is from Zion, and the appearance of Zion is foreshadowed by the use of the word הֶרֶם (“footstool”). It occurs six times in the OT and is always in construct with הָיִל (except 1 Chr 28:2): Isa 66:1, Lam 2:1, Pss 99:5, 132:7 and here. It is a term closely connected to the “David-ark-Zion” tradition⁴⁶⁹ (see Pss 99:2, 132:13 and 110:2 where Zion is found). Therefore, the kingly rule, in the metaphorical sense of “putting enemies under one’s footstool,”

⁴⁶⁵ The verses cited are just a few of the 83 verses resulting from a search with the formula that מֶלֶךְ and אֲדֹנָי occur *within* the same verse by using the BibleWorks for Windows program. In Gen 40:1, the king of Egypt is described as “lord”; in 1 Sam 24:9[8] and 26:17, David addressed Saul as “my lord, the king”; in 2 Sam 3:21, David is being addressed as “my lord, the king”; in Ps 45:12[11], the king is referred to as “lord.” The collocation of these two words strongly suggests that a kingly figure is possible when אֲדֹנָי is used. Of course, the context should provide further support of this possibility. See Doré, “L’évocation de Melchiséech,” 21. There he comments on אֲדֹנָי that “c’est un titre qui fait partie du protocole royal.” For a similar remark by Raymond Tournay, see “Les relectures du Psalms 110 (109) et l’allusion à Gédéon,” *RB* 105 (1998): 323. Yet there Tournay tones down the term when remarking: “mais ici, il s’agit non d’un messie-roi, comme dans les autres psaumes messianiques, mais d’un prince . . . et prêtre.”

⁴⁶⁶ See *TWAT* 7: 352. There Ps 72:8-9 (cf. v. 1) is quoted to explain the kingly rule (“königliches Herrschen”) signified by the presence of this word רָדָה. Philip J. Nel comments that this word רָדָה “stresses the act of dominance by force and overlaps accordingly with the comparable nuance of meaning of *mšl*.” See Nel, “רָדָה,” *NIDOTTE* 3: 1055.

⁴⁶⁷ Girard in his commentary on Psalm 110 translates v. 1 as “Déclaration de YHWH à mon SEIGNEUR (le roi).” He assumes (*Les Psaumes Redécouverts*, 160) the “Seigneur” is “le roi” and does not give any argument or proof for this rendering in his essay.

⁴⁶⁸ The juxtaposition of kings and nations (peoples) could also be found in Ps 2:1-2a. Together they plot against Yahweh and his messianic king (2:2b). The hermeneutical relationship between Psalm 2 and 110 will be explored later in our next two chapters.

⁴⁶⁹ *TDOT* 3: 331.

begins from Zion but extends beyond through its structural parallel (DD'): על־אֶרֶץ רַבָּה ("upon a wide earth" in v. 6b). To recap, the rule of this royal figure has a time-frame that begins with his sitting at Yahweh's right hand and ends when all of his enemies are subjected under his feet; his reign originates geographically in Zion, and extends from Zion and covers an expansive geographical area of the earth.

7.3.2 His Rule: A Priestly Overtone

Several key words or phrases are used to describe this ruler. These words are chosen because their nuance depicts this ruler in a blended notion of priest-king. Some of these words, when studied, may have to be viewed syntagmatically or paradigmatically.

First, from a paradigmatic perspective, both מִשָּׁח and שֹׁבֵט are regarded as synonyms,⁴⁷⁰ the former chosen over the latter probably because the former contains more of a priestly nuance. For instance, it is used for Aaron's staff in Num 17:21, 23, 25[6, 8, 10] and later in Numbers 25, when God made a covenant of "a lasting priesthood" (בְּרִית קְהֵנָה עוֹלָם, Num 25:13) with Aaron's grandson, Phinehas, because of his zeal for the Lord. Consequently, the word מִשָּׁח is syntagmatically tied to the priest or priesthood. The poet decided on מִשָּׁח to be used in Psalm 110 because the ordination of the priesthood will be given to the ruler a few verses later in the poem. In other words, the poet deliberately chose this word in the psalm due to the following context, v. 4b, especially signified by this phrase כֹּהֵן לְעוֹלָם ("priest forever"; cf. Num 25:13 above). Strikingly, the priesthood is now in accordance with the order of Melchizedek, not of Aaron.

Second, the word הָדָר, glossed as a "sacred, festal garment"⁴⁷¹ especially in Ps 110:3, is used to foreshadow the priestly notion later in the psalm. When it (feminine form) is used in Ps 29:3, 96:9, 1 Chr 16:29 and 2 Chr 20:21 with קִדְּשׁ, it syntagmatically ties with the verbal term הִשְׁתַּחֲוּיָה ("worship"). In Ps 110:3, the phrase בְּהַדְרֵי־קִדְּשׁ (NIV: "in holy majesty") implies an army of priests, just as Briggs comments: "[It is] always used in connection with public worship of Yahweh and implies priestly ornaments."⁴⁷² C. John Collins comments that this phrase should be rendered "'in ornaments (ornamental garments?) of holiness,' describing the attire of the king's troops."⁴⁷³

⁴⁷⁰ David M. Fouts, "שבט," *NIDOTTE*, 4: 27; cf. idem, "משח," *NIDOTTE*, 2: 924.

⁴⁷¹ *BDB*, 214.

⁴⁷² Briggs, *Book of Psalms*, 379.

⁴⁷³ C. John Collins, "הדר," *NIDOTTE*, 1: 1015.

Many, however, have attempted to change the reading of בהררי to בהררי ("mountains")⁴⁷⁴ with some textual support (please see our textual note of this phrase in "Textual Notes for Psalm 110" in this chapter). Should it be read as בהררי (as the MT) in light of v. 4, which is highly nuanced with priesthood (על־דְּבָרְתִי מִלְכִּי־צֶדֶק)? The answer is probably yes, because the poet has reinforced the "priestly" idea through the consonantal play of בהררי and דְּבָרְתִי (in v. 4).

Hence, the use of מָטָה and הָרָר prepares the reader for v. 4.⁴⁷⁵ In other words, the poet, by carefully and deliberately choosing certain words affecting a priestly nuance, has already hinted that the ruler is also a priest.

Third, v. 4b undoubtedly contains a "priestly" (אֹהֶל־כֹּהֵן) overtone. The word אַתָּה ("you") refers back to לְאֹדֶנִי (v. 1), to whom his enemies will be subdued and to whom the scepter of power is given (v. 2). But now the ruler is appointed, under a divine oath,⁴⁷⁶ as כֹּהֵן לְעוֹלָם "priest forever." For our poet, the only antecedent example in the biblical text where a ruler/king could also be a priest is Gen 14:18-20 where מֶלְכִּי־צֶדֶק ("Melchizedek") appears. Therefore, it is appropriate for the poet to pen the phrase עַל־דְּבָרְתִי מִלְכִּי־צֶדֶק ("according to the manner of Melchizedek").⁴⁷⁷ For this reason, the MT reading for v. 4b should be maintained.

⁴⁷⁴ See the apparatus of BHS. Allen, *Psalm 101-150*, 79 and his discussion in note 3d in p. 80. Cf. Howard, *Structure of Psalms*, 89. There he discusses the term "footstool," "Zion" and the phrase בְּהַרְרֵי־קֹדֶשׁ in Psalm 99. For two reasons, William P. Brown challenges any emendation but to retain the MT reading: (1) its priestly and cultic tone, a parallel to the royal office in v. 2 and (2) because the MT is a more difficult reading. See Brown, "A Royal Performance: Critical Notes on Psalm 110:3aγ-b," *JBL* 117 (1998): 96 (footnote 21).

⁴⁷⁵ The use of this word נִקְבָּה (v. 3) contains also a cultic idea. It occurs in Lev 7:16, 22:18, 21, 23 and 23:38. It syntagmatically ties to נִקְרָא.

⁴⁷⁶ The solemn oath by Yahweh (יְהוָה) (נִשְׁבַּע) is necessary because in Israel's history, only the Levites are entitled to the priesthood. The divine oath now changes the order of priesthood from Levites to a royal priesthood. The author of Hebrews offers an insightful exposition of this psalm; cf. Heb 7:11-21, particularly vv. 20-21. See chapters ten and eleven of this project.

⁴⁷⁷ Scholars have offered various interpretations of the phrase עַל־דְּבָרְתִי מִלְכִּי־צֶדֶק (110:4) and most of them center on the meaning and/or reconstruction of דְּבָרְתִי and מִלְכִּי־צֶדֶק. See Allen, *Psalm 101-150*, 81-82, who cites 13 works. Since studies on Psalm 110 are voluminous (besides Allen's bibliography and ours in chapter one), we add to those who respect the MT reading (supported by the LXX), listed in chronological order: Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, 183, cf. 192-93; J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 2 (London: George Bell and Sons, 1878; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1976), 311; Edward J. Kissane, "The Interpretation of Psalm 110," *ITQ* 21 (1954): 103, cf. 114; John L. McKenzie, "Royal Messianism," *CBQ* 19 (1957): 34; G. R. Driver, "Psalm CX: Its Form Meaning and Purpose," in *Studies in the Bible: Presented to Professor M. H. Segal*, ed. J. M. Grintz and J. Liver, ISBR 17 (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1964), 28; Hans Strauss, *Messianisch ohne Messias: Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte und Interpretation der sogenannten messianischen Texte im Alten Testament*, EH 232 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1984), 17; M. J. Paul, "The Order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4) and Heb 7:3," *WTJ* 49 (1987): 202-203; Willem van der Meer, "Psalm 110: A Psalm of Rehabilitation?," in *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry*, ed. van der Meer and Johannes C. de Moor, JSOTSup 74 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 228; Seybold, *Die Psalmen*, 437; Kurianal, *Our High Priest*, 56-57.

Fourth, the consonantal play (the switch between letters ה and ו) of these two words, ורה and ורה, should be noted theologically. More specifically, do they entertain the notion of a messianic reading? For the word ורה, Audrey Johnson remarks:

The choice of the comparatively rare verb *hd'r* to denote the rule, which is to be exercised by the 'Messiah', coming as it does within so clear an example of a prophetic oracle, becomes the more interesting when it is seen that the ruler in question is to wield authority in terms of the ancient priesthood of Melchizedek.⁴⁷⁸

Will both words reinforce a messianic interpretation of a kingly priest? The answer is positive because of the unique word וְשָׁחַר (see the following).

Fifth, in v. 3, וְשָׁחַר is a hapax word while שָׁחַר ("dawn") is more common.⁴⁷⁹ Tournay, who sees וְשָׁחַר as possible paronomasia with מְשִׁיחַ ("anointed"),⁴⁸⁰ argues validly and effectively. First, if Ps 110 is compared with Psalm 2, both contain many verbal similarities and address similar theological concerns.⁴⁸¹ For instance, in Ps 2:6, the messianic king will rule in Zion (cf. 2:2), which is exactly the same idea conveyed in Ps 110:2. Second, we have already demonstrated that the poet of this psalm is a skillful master of word- and sound-play.⁴⁸² Techniques like "paronomasia" would be welcome in the poet's construction of this song.⁴⁸³

Though it is a dangerous practice to build any theology on a mere few words, the presence of these words is significant to draw out the meaning of Psalm 110. The ruler, signified by ורה (and מְשִׁחַ), is also portrayed as a priest in the presence of the words מְשִׁחַ, בְּהִרְיִקְדֹשׁ and possibly נִרְבָּה. This kingly priest matches the figure of Melchizedek in Gen 14:18-20. From the historical perspective, no such person had ever appeared in

⁴⁷⁸ Audrey Johnson, *The Cultic Prophet and Israel's Psalmody* (Cardiff, England: University of Wales Press, 1979), 82.

⁴⁷⁹ Th. Booij interprets it from the ancient Near Eastern concept of the "sun." We disagree with his interpretation (see our following discussion). See Booij, "Psalm CX: 'Rule in the midst of your foes!'," *VT* 41 (1991): 399-401.

⁴⁸⁰ See Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing*, 213. Furthermore, Schaper sees that the use of the Greek word ἑωσφόρου may have a messianic and eschatological nuance. See his *The Greek Psalter*, 102.

⁴⁸¹ Further discussion of the semantic-thematic relationship of these two psalms is found in our next two chapters.

⁴⁸² To remind our reader, we provide a sampler of illustrations: ורה and ורה; מְשִׁחַ and מְשִׁחַ; נִרְבָּה and נִרְבָּה.

⁴⁸³ In addition, the shape of the Psalter also illuminates our interpretation. See our next two chapters.

Israel so the “only probable solution is that the psalm speaks about a future priest-king. It deals not with a historical king, but with the messiah.”⁴⁸⁴

This messianic interpretation is set in a prophetic tone. That is, the use of this phrase *נאם יהוה* in this psalm sets the stage for readers to depart from a mere historical reading of this text. Even behind this psalm’s *Sitz im Leben* of an enthronement occasion, which is still considered to be inconclusive, this “introductory formula of prophetic revelation”⁴⁸⁵ signals an eschatological reading of the person being addressed and described (*לְאִרְנֵי*) in the psalm.

⁴⁸⁴ Paul, “Order of Melchizedek,” 202. Some see that David and/or Solomon come very close to the king-priest notion in Psalm 110. For example, van der Meer comments: “A study of kingly functions significantly reveals that David and Solomon are described as fulfilling priestly functions. . . . These facts are sufficient to demonstrate that in any respect, in the offices of David and Solomon, a priestly, mediatorial role is present” (“Psalm of Rehabilitation,” 228-29). (See authors cited by van der Meer in footnote 65 on p. 229 to support his assessment.) In our critique, we respond that fulfilling some priestly functions does not make one a priest (cf. 2 Sam 6:13-14, 17). Neither David nor Solomon was called “priest” (but they are labeled “king”) in the biblical text. Perhaps thinking along the same lines, Bowker sees this psalm (plus Genesis 14) as David’s attempt to unify the tribes under his reign while Rowley sees in this psalm David’s justifying the installation of the Zadok priesthood in Jerusalem. See J. W. Bowker, “Psalm CX,” 31-41 and H. H. Rowley, “Melchizedek and Zadok (Gen 14 and Ps 110),” in *Festschrift: Alfred Bertholet zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. W. Baumgartner O. Eissfeldt, K. Elliger and L. Rost (Tübingen: Mohr, 1950), 461-72 respectively. (We have also noted a similar projection in Genesis 14 in our fourth chapter.) Both views reconstruct a history based on the text and perhaps may go beyond what the text warrants. Nonetheless, the skillful poet of Psalm 110 is not merely influenced by the historical factor, but is also inspired by the literary influence of Genesis 14 (and its cotexts). Our next two chapters will prove this notion. We use small “m” for “messiah” since in the OT times that person had not been identified. Only later in the NT times was Jesus given the title “Messiah.” E. Lipiński reconstructs the history behind this poem (especially vv. 4-5) based on 1 Kings 2; the contention between two potential king candidates, Solomon-Adonijahin, and two potential high priest candidates, Abiathar-Zadok. Idem, *Étude sur des Textes ‘messianiques’ de l’Ancien Testament*, *Sem* 20 (1970): 56-57. Such reconstruction, however, fails to account for the rest of the poem, vv. 5-6, for example. More radically, Gillis Gerlman interprets this psalm in light of the life of Judah (and Tamar) and the blessing to Judah in Genesis 49. Gerlman, “Psalm CX,” *VT* 31 (1981): 1-19. While we commend Gillis’ innovation, we reject some of his unwarranted conjectures of the text. For example, Gillis interprets this phrase *שֶׁב לִימִינִי* as “Bleib ruhig in meinem Südländ” (p. 4, cf. p. 16).

⁴⁸⁵ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 80. There he notes that the other place where *נאם* occurs in Psalms is 36:2[1]; however, the phrase *נאם יהוה* is unique in the Psalter even though it is very common in the OT prophetic literature (e.g., Isa 43:10, Jer 1:8, etc.). Cf. D. Vetter, “נאם,” in *TLOT*, 2: 693. In a broader context, and as far as our interest in this project extends, this word links to our cotexts of Genesis 14 (i.e., Gen 22: 16) and Numbers 22-24 (Num 24:3, 15, etc.); both are outside of the OT prophetic literature. In our poetic-structural analysis, *נאם יהוה לִימִינִי* is parallel to *נאם יהוה וְלֹא יָחֵם* (AA’). The latter adds some weight to the prophetic nature of the former by casting it in a solemn oath by Yahweh.

7.3.3 His Supernatural Birth

Given that the messianic reading is feasible as delineated above, v. 3 should then be examined from an eschatological/messianic perspective. It is true that v. 3 seems to be “fairly mythical.”⁴⁸⁶ As to this verse, the following are possible English renderings⁴⁸⁷ based on the major textual variants:

- (1) Your people are willing in the day of your strength
in holy array from the womb of the morning
to you (like) dew (is) your youth
- (2) Your people are willing in the day of your strength
in holy mountains⁴⁸⁸ from the womb of the morning
to you (like) dew (is) your youth
- (3) Your people are willing in the day of your strength
in holy array from the womb of the morning
<to you (like) dew>⁴⁸⁹ I give birth to you⁴⁹⁰
- (4) Your people are willing in the day of your strength
in holy mountains from the womb of the morning
<to you (like) dew> I give birth to you
- (5) With you (is) nobility⁴⁹¹ in the day of your strength
in holy array from the womb of the morning
to you (like) dew (is) your youth
- (6) With you (is) nobility in the day of your strength
in holy mountains from the womb of the morning
to you (like) dew (is) your youth
- (7) With you (is) nobility in the day of your strength
in holy array from the womb of the morning
<to you (like) dew> I give birth to you

486 Booij, “Psalm CX,” 401.

487 A discussion of the English translations of Psalm 110 can be found in Robert Bratcher and William Reyburn, *A Handbook on Psalms* (N.Y.: United Bible Societies, 1991), 947-53.

488 The reading “mountains” is supported by Targum, Symmachus and Jerome.

489 Words inside < > are lacking; here it refers to the LXX.

490 “I give birth to you” is a LXX reading.

491 It is a Septuagintal reading.

- (8) With you (is) nobility in the day of your strength
 in holy mountains from the womb of the morning
 <to you (like) dew> I give birth to you

Readings (1) and (2) place the “people” (עַם) as the focus with their textual witnesses all Hebraic; one word in (2) is Targumic. Readings (3) and (4) will split the focus into two: “people” for the first part of the verse while “you” for the rest of v. 3. Both are hybrid readings; the last part of v. 3 and v. 4 adopts the LXX reading. Readings (5) through (8) all have “you” as focus but (5) and (6) reflect hybrid textual supports: (5) with a LXX reading and (6) with a LXX reading and a Targumic reading. Both (7) and (8) readings consistently adopt the LXX reading but (8) contains a Targumic word (“mountains”).

Reading (7) is preferred for two reasons. First, its variant readings reflect consistent textual traditions; all its variant readings are Septuagintal and it is important that they do not involve any change of the MT consonantal text. Second, the reading has a semantic congruence: “nobility” with “holy array” and “womb” with “giving birth.”

The phrase לְךָ נִלְבָּ, wanting in the LXX,⁴⁹² is difficult to interpret and has rendered v. 3 unintelligible. Nonetheless, it could still make sense if it is read as לְךָ נִלְבָּ based on the Syriac Version.⁴⁹³ The word נִלְבָּ can mean “child” in the Aramaic sense according to Kissane.⁴⁹⁴ The Aramaic element (נִלְבָּ) should not surprise any interpreter because in Ps 2:12, an Aramaic word בֶּר (“son”) appears, also in the context of birth (בְּרִייתָ in Ps 2:7). Accordingly, the meaning of v. 3 can be rephrased as follows: “With you (is) nobility, in the day of your strength, in holy array, from the womb of the morning, to you (like) a child, I give birth to you.” In other words, the priest-king, who is in power, is from noble rank, with holy splendor. He is messianic with a supernatural

⁴⁹² Allen points out that the omission by the LXX “is probably due to the translator’s inability to understand the words in their contexts” (*Psalm 101-150*, 81).

⁴⁹³ Boonj attempts to change the reading לְךָ נִלְבָּ to לְךָ נִלְבָּ (as a ruler”) are not plausible since the reading lacks textual support (“Psalm CX,” 398). Likewise, Brown adds a “ך” before נִלְבָּ (assuming it is an early corruption of the text due to haplography) and changes the vowel points for לְךָ as לְךָ, so the phrase is לְךָ נִלְבָּ, rendered as “go forth, like [the] dew.” Brown, “A Royal Performance,” 95-96. Likewise, his proposal lacks textual support, and he commits the same mistake as Boonj.

⁴⁹⁴ Kissane, “Interpretation of Psalm,” 109. Similarly, Delcor argues: “Verse 3b, which is particularly difficult, seems to describe the begetting of the king by the intervention of Yahweh. . . . By this it must presumably be understood that the king has been adopted as the son of God. לְךָ נִלְבָּ ‘you as child’, preceding the verb בְּרִייתָ, is an Aramaic gloss which should be read לְךָ נִלְבָּ, but which was subsequently misunderstood as Hebrew (‘to you the dew’). The Syriac version has indeed grasped the meaning of this Aramaic gloss by translating: ‘for a long time I have begotten you as a child’.” See his “Melchizedek from Genesis,” 121.

birth.⁴⁹⁵ Such idea fits the overall flow of the context since “you” (not “your people”) has been the focus in this poem, particularly when we come to v. 4 with the emphatic use of אַתָּה (“you”).

7.3.4 His Life of Human Nature

If v. 3 is read this way, it helps us to explain v. 7 because the nature of v. 3 – “supernatural” (perhaps a mystical) sense of the high birth of a priest-king – needs to be balanced. Clearly v. 7 is capable of balancing exactly the “supernatural” or “divine” sense by providing a “human” nature rendered semantically “he drinks from the brook.” Therefore, some analysis of this verse is required.⁴⁹⁶

The interpretation of v. 7 hinges solely on “who” is the subject of these verbs. We have already noted that the subject for the verbs in vv. 5-6 is Yahweh. Furthermore, according to the descriptions in these two verses, no human figure could accomplish these things. This reasoning leads to the question: is Yahweh still the subject of the verbs in v. 7? Our rhetorical-poetic analysis has shown that ראש “head” serves as an inclusio back to v. 1, רֶגֶל “the foot.” Since רֶגֶל is referred to אֲדֹנָי (“the lord’s”), we believe the head here also refers to the same person, that is אֲדֹנָי.⁴⁹⁷ In the final analysis, the purpose of this verse is to bring out the human side of this messianic king, thereby balancing his supernatural side set forth in v. 4.

7.4 Conclusion

Our poetic analysis has pointed out the “un-parallel elements” in vv. 3-4. Although v. 3 is extremely difficult to interpret, our poetic examination has helped us render this verse in a more meaningful way, and our understanding does not violate or

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. Hay holds a similar view based on rabbinic interpretation; idem, *The Right Hand*, 27-33, especially p. 32.

⁴⁹⁶ Joachim Becker has given an extensive survey of how v. 7 is being interpreted (and the text being reconstructed) by various scholars. He then offers his own interpretive version that the verb “drink” has an elliptical object “blood,” according to his analysis of some biblical and ANE texts. Becker, “Zur Deutung von Ps 110,7,” in *Freude an der Weisung des Herrn: Beiträge zur Theologie der Psalmen*, ed. Ernst Haag and Frank-Lothar Hossfeld (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH, 1986), 17-31. Also cf. Tournay, “Les relectures du Psalms,” 321-31, in which Tournay interprets v. 7 in light of Gideon’s triumph against the Midianites. Cf. VanGemenen, “The Psalms,” 700.

⁴⁹⁷ One should not be surprised by an abrupt change of speaker or person in some psalms even within a verse or two. For example, N. H. Ridderbos, observing Psalm 2:6-7, comments that there is an abrupt change of “subject” in these two verses. See his *Die Psalmen: Stilistische Verfahren und Aufbau mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Ps 1-41*, BZAW 117 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972), 74.

run counter to the main theme of this poem. The theological theme of this poem is embodied in v. 4: the messianic figure is not just a ruler (king) but is also a priest. Although this priest-king concept was first manifested in the person of Melchizedek, our poet, by his skillful poetic techniques, permeates the text with the same theological thrust because the poet knows that merely citing an ancient name (Melchizedek) is insufficient if he wants to powerfully and rhetorically make his point. By the poet's artistic composition of this poem, he tries to bring out the eschatological and messianic elements of this figure: his kingly rule (v. 2 and vv. 5-6) as well as his priestly function (v. 3a) with a divine birth (v. 3b) balanced by a human nature (v. 7).

Granted that we have read Psalm 110 messianically, can we sustain such reading in view of the cotexts of Psalm 110? In our next two chapters, we will verify such reading as we study the Psalter as cotexts for Psalm 110.