

Appendix 7 A Rhetorical Analysis of Psalms 1 and 2

Various structural analyses have been conducted on Psalm 1; their results – mainly ABB'A' – are quite similar.⁹¹⁷ We propose a different chiastic analysis, AA'B'B,⁹¹⁸ leaving out v. 6 with the following MT layout for Ps 1:1-6 (italics ours for emphasis):



⁹¹⁷ Ps 1:1-6 can be seen as ABB'A' with some modifications. For example, Auffret dissects Psalm 1 as aBbA: a, v. 1; B, vv. 2-3; b, v. 4; A, vv. 5-6. Auffret, "Essai sur la structure littéraire du psaume 1," *BZ* 22 (1978): 41. Robert L. Alden sees Psalm 1 as A¹A²BBA¹A² (each verse corresponds to A or B). See *idem*, "Chiastic Psalms: A Study in the Mechanics of Semitic Poetry in Psalm 1-50," *JETS* 17 (1974): 14. Peter Craigie, however, provides an ABBA structure but leaves out v. 6 (*Psalms 1-50*, 59).

918 Our schema is: A, vv. 1-2; A', v. 3; B', v. 4, and B, v. 5. This chiastic structure is not in conflict with the inter-verse connections within the structure. Our analysis is brief here but similar to our treatment of Psalm 110: for vv. 1-2, the preposition of בְּ; for vv. 2-3 (cf. Jer 17:7-10), the word-play on בְּרֵבָבָא and בְּלֵבָבָא; interchange בְּ with בְּ; for vv. 3-4, the preposition בְּ and the presence of בְּשָׁאָה; for vv. 4-5, the phrases לְאַבְּנָה and עַל-בְּנָה and the wicked בְּשָׁאָה; for vv. 5-6, a chiasm as follows

a רשעים
b גדריקים

Is there any inclusio between v. 1 and v. 6? Two words are suggestive: דָּרְךָ and רַשְׁעִים. But we believe that the poem seems to leave v. 6 as an open end, or at least the redactor seems to connect this psalm with Psalm 2.

Obviously, vv. 1-3 talk about the person (שָׁאֵן), who – not yet labeled as “righteous” (צָדִיק) until v. 5⁹¹⁹ – is depicted in both negative and positive ways while vv. 4-5 talk about the wicked.

Most interpreters are troubled by the negative descriptions (in the form of “wicked”, “sinners”, “scoffers”) in v. 1, which throw off their chiastic analysis.⁹²⁰ Nonetheless, our observation of the presence of זֶה (5x) in vv. 1-2 should tie these two verses together because of their semantic value, that is, the person is not זֶה “in” the wicked circle but – in contrast (note מִזֶּה כִּי) – זֶה “on” the Torah. This constitutes A in the chiasm.

Verse 3 continues the depiction of this person but in a tree-simile with this Hebrew זֶה (“like”), thus constituting A’. Verse 4, in contrast with v. 3,⁹²¹ depicts the wicked in a chaff-simile with the same Hebrew זֶה (“like”), thus constituting B’.⁹²² Verse 5 continues the thought about the wicked;⁹²³ note the double occurrence of זֶה there,⁹²⁴ thus constituting B. Verse 6 by itself can be analyzed as having an “internal chiastic structure”;⁹²⁵ verse 6a is about the righteous, which corresponds to AA’ (vv. 1-3) while v. 6b the wicked, corresponds to B’B (vv. 4-5).⁹²⁶ Diagrammatically, our rhetorical structure of Psalm 1 is as follows:



⁹¹⁹ Fokkelman calls this one of the two “stylistic subtleties” that explain why the poet avoids the word “righteous” until v. 5. Idem, *85 Psalms*, 55.

⁹²⁰ Zenger is one of the few exceptions. In his co-authored commentary, he points to a similar outline (not chiastic structure): vv. 1-3 as “Der Lebensweg des Gerechen,” vv. 4-5 as “Der Lebensweg der Frevler,” and v. 6 as “Abschliessende Begründung.” Zenger and Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, *Die Psalmen I*, 46-48.

⁹²¹ Note that the verse begins with זֶה לֹא (“not so”).

⁹²² The tree-chaff idea in vv. 3-4 is indebted to Alden, “Chiastic Psalms,” 14.

⁹²³ Notice that the verse begins with זֶה עַל (“therefore”), a clear-cut connection back to v. 4.

⁹²⁴ In v. 1, נִלְוָד (“not,” 3x) occurs together with זֶה. Cf. v. 5: נִלְוָד (implied in v. 5b) also with זֶה.

⁹²⁵ Our observation is indebted to Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 59.

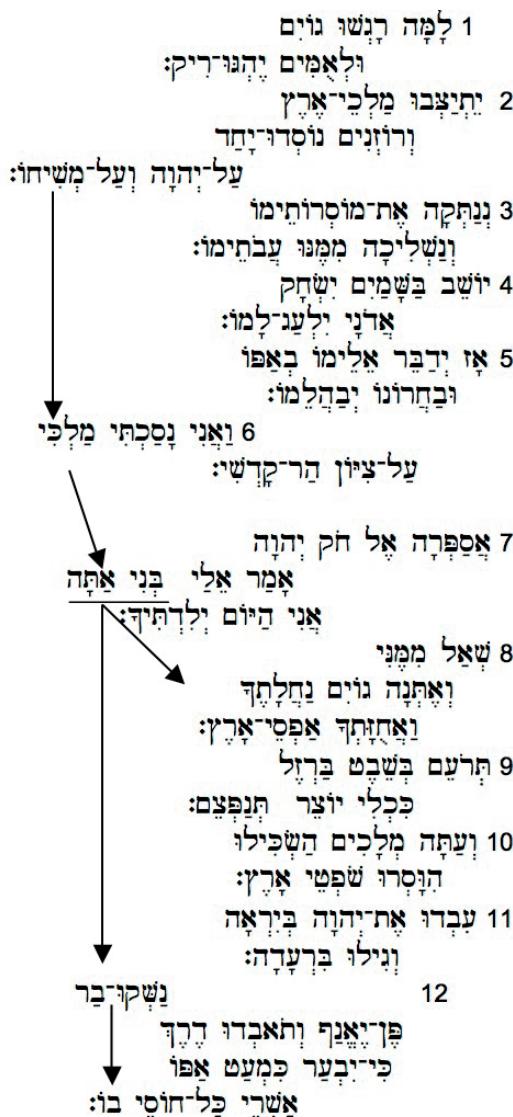
⁹²⁶ The notion of v. 6a as a recap for AA’ and v. 6b for BB’ is indebted to Auffret, “psaume 1,” 28. There, he diagrammatically summarizes two works: Jean Magne, “Répétitions de mots et exégèse dans quelques psaumes et le Pater,” *Bib* 39 (1958): 191-92 and Ridderbos, *Die Psalmen*, 119-20. Cf. Girard, *Analyse structurelle*, 56 for the role of v. 6.

The following analysis will examine the rhetorical structure of Psalm 2;⁹²⁷ thus, a detailed exegesis is not included. The majority of scholars view this poem as a 4-strophe structure.⁹²⁸ Fokkelman comments that the "overall outline is clear: four strophes of three verses, whose contents or semantic coherence show the AB-B'A' pattern."⁹²⁹ In the following MT layout (for Psalm 2), several observations will be rendered.

927 For the composite nature of Psalm 2, see Oswald Loretz, "Eine kolometrische Analyse von Psalm 2," in *Beiträge zur Psalmenforschung*, 9-26. Loretz argues that Psalm 2 contains both pre- and post-exilic elements but bound together in the post-exilic period (p. 25). A word of caution: the method to determine so-called pre- and post-exilic elements (original vs. later insertion) is subjective and therefore open to many inconclusive possibilities. To illustrate, Loretz argues "der Grundtext von Ps 2 in v. 1-5, 10-12a gegeben ist." (p. 26). But according to Bardtke, the "Urform" of Psalm 2 only contains vv. 1, 3, 2[sic], 4, 5, 10, 11 and 12 (with deletion in v. 12). Idem, "Erwägungen zu Psalm 1," 18. This illustrates the subjectivity of scholars who attempt to argue for the composite nature of a literary work.

928 Girard remarks that Psalm 2 should be divided into three strophes ("triptyque") instead. Idem, *Analyse structurelle*, 59: vv. 1-3, 4-9, 10-12. In vv. 4-9, Girard sees a chiasm ABBA, with vv. 6-7 as the center (p. 63). Then he surveys Auffret's proposal (a similar view adopted by others in footnote 8, p. 63) of the rhetorical structure of Psalm 2 and rejects it (pp. 62-64), though later admits the proposal does not contradict Auffret's (p. 64). The key difference is how vv. 4-9 is viewed. See Auffret, *The Literary Structure of Psalm 2*, JSOTSup 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1977). Cf. also P. Lucas Kunz, "Der 2. Psalm in neuer Sicht," *BZ* 20 (1976): 240-41.

929 Fokkelman, *85 Psalms*, 55. Concerning the syllable count: Fokkelman remarks that AA' (total 114 syllables: 58+56) is "practically equal." But for BB' (110 syllables: 47+63; with a change of יְהִי to יְהִי in v. 4; cf. p. 388), it seems uneven. Note that at BB', vv. 6-7 are crucial to our interpretation of this psalm. (We have observed, in our chapter 7, how the same thing occurs in Psalm 110 where vv. 3-4 seem to be out of sync or rhythm in the syllable count.)



First, the extra *cola* in v. 2 in the first strophe should be retained and read as a foundation for the theological development in this psalm. In the first strophe, vv. 1-3 each has two *cola* except v. 2 (cf. vv. 7, 8, 12).⁹³⁰ The extra *cola* in v. 2, is not in sync with the rest and hence is suggested to be a *gloss*,⁹³¹ which by implication

⁹³⁰ Ridderbos notes that vv. 2, 7, 8, and 12 are "Tristichen." Idem, *Die Psalmen*, 83. Cf. Alfons Deissler, "Die Stellung von Psalm 2 im Psalter: Folgen für die Auslegung," in *Beiträge zur Psalmenforschung*, 77.

⁹³¹ See BHS; Soggin supports the phrase as *gloss*. See Soggin, "Zum zweiten psalm," in *Wort-Gebot-Glaube*, 193.

should be deleted. Yet this extra *cola* is the key that unlocks the rest of Psalm 2. It sets the stage for the text portraying these two characters, Yahweh and the messiah, *interactively* with each other and with the kings and the nations.

Second, verse 6 – a regular poetic line in strophe 2 – is an embedded speech itself, which links the messiah to the king.⁹³² The identity of the speaker is made clear by vv. 4-5, *וְאַנְתָּךְ בָּרָךְ יְהוָה* . . . Yahweh. Yet who is “my king” that Yahweh is going to set up? The only other (singular) character present – besides *נוּמִים* “nations” and *מֶלֶךְ־אָרֶן* “kings of the earth” (all plural) – is *מֶשֶׁךְ*, the messiah.

Third, concerning the third strophe, identifying the speaker in v. 7 proves challenging but continues to tie Yahweh closely to his messianic king. Ridderbos observes:

Der Übergang von v. 4-6 (wenn man will: v. 1-6) zu v. 7-9 ist viel fliessender: v. 7-9 enthalten eine genauere Ausarbeitung von v. 6. Dennoch has auch dieser Übergang etwas Abruptes an sich; man beachte z. B. folgendes: das “Ich” in v. 6 ist das “Ich” Jahwes, das “Ich” in v. 7a ist das des Königs.⁹³³

The “I” in v. 7a (*אַסְפָּרָה*) refers back to “my king” in v. 6. According to the above analysis of v. 6, it is the same person, the messiah. Thus, v. 7a is the messianic king’s speech while v. 7b is the quotation of Yahweh’s words by the messianic king. The beginning phrase of v. 7b *וְאַנְתָּךְ* can then be glossed: “Yahweh said to me (messianic king).” The rendering of v. 7 should be [messianic king said:] “I will proclaim Yahweh’s decree, he [Yahweh] said to me [i.e., the messianic king]: ‘today I give you birth’.”⁹³⁴ If this interpretation is right, then vv. 8-9 are still a quotation of Yahweh’s speech: the “I”/“me” refers to Yahweh and the “you” to the messianic king.⁹³⁵

Fourth, concerning strophe 4, the use of *הַקָּשָׁר* (“and now therefore”) is meant to alert the reader that there is an informed inference or consequence here.⁹³⁶ The addressees are clearly stated in v. 10, that is, the kings and rulers, although the speech could either belong to Yahweh or to the poet himself or herself.⁹³⁷

⁹³² Fokkelman, *85 Psalms*, 55.

⁹³³ Ridderbos, *Die Psalmen*, 74.

⁹³⁴ We should reject Sonne’s reconstruction of this verse without textual support (*אֵי יְהוָה הַמְלָכֶל*) and read it in the historical situation about King Hezekiah. See *idem*, “The Second Psalm,” 50-54.

⁹³⁵ Cf. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 63. Note the use of double and single quotation marks in his translation.

⁹³⁶ BDB, 254. Major English translations render *וְעַתָּה* as “therefore.”

⁹³⁷ For some, vv. 10-12 are a continuation of Yahweh’s speech quoted by the messianic king. Auffret, *Structure of Psalm 2*, 26. According to Huub van de Sandt, the reason the LXX divides Psalm 2 into three parts (vv. 1-3, 4-5 and 6-12) is that they assume vv. 6-12 are credited to the same speaker and thus these verses should be considered an integral whole. van de Sandt, “The Quotations in Acts 13, 32-52 as a Reflection of Luke’s LXX Interpretation,” *Bib* 75 (1994): 31 (footnote 13).