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Fathers and Sons

Family Ties in the Historical Psalms

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1. (Family-)History in the Psalms

The Hebrew Bible assembles a number of psalm texts that are characteristic for their re-narrating history. These psalms draw significantly on the biblical narratives of Israel's past that are taken up and interpreted in order to understand the present in the light of a salvific past. Due to this characteristic feature, these texts have been called "historical psalms"; a classification that goes back to the form-historical research of Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich. These two scholars grouped Ps 78, 105 and 106 together with Deut 32 and Isa 63:7–64:11 as "legends" (*Legenden*) that are characterised by their retelling history.¹ However, scholarship continues to discuss both the classification and the range of texts that should be counted among this group.² There is some agreement, though, that Ps 78; 105; 106; 135 and 136 make up the core.³ Rather than discussing criteria and classification, I would like to focus on a certain characteristic that can be found in a number of these psalms associated with retelling the past, namely, the role of the ancestors in biblical history and how they relate to the present generation. This detail holds a decisive key to our understanding why biblical history was reformulated in prayer texts and how this phenomenon can be explained.

The following argument focuses on four prayer texts, in all of which the relationship between fathers and sons plays an important part. The first text is the great historical psalm 78, in which the supplicants dissociate themselves from the sin of their fathers (78:8). In contrast, the second example in Ps 105 presents a picture of continuity, as the psalm readers are deemed to be legitimate heirs to the covenantal promises to Abraham (105:6). In our third text, however, family ties have become ill-omened, as the speakers in

¹ Cf. Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Einleitung in die Psalmen: Die Gattungen der religiösen Lyrik Israels* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985 [1933]), 323–27.

² On the history of scholarship and the current state of research cf. Judith Gärtner, *Die Geschichtspsalmen: Eine Studie zu den Psalmen 78, 105, 106, 135 und 136 als hermeneutische Schlüsseltexte im Psalter*. FAT 84 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 3–8, and Anja Klein, *Geschichte und Gebet: Die Rezeption der biblischen Geschichte in den Psalmen des Alten Testaments*. FAT 94 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 5–12. See further the thematic issue of the journal *HeBAI* on the historical psalms ("The Historical Psalms"), edited by Judith Gärtner and Anja Klein (forthcoming 2016).

³ Cf. the introduction by Judith Gärtner and Anja Klein in "The Historical Psalms" (see n. 2).

Ps 106 confess to their transgressions together with their fathers (106:6). As a similar confession of guilt is attested to in the prayer texts 1 Kgs 8 and Dan 9 (cf. 1 Kgs 8:47; Dan 9:5), these two texts will have to be considered alongside Ps 106. Our last example, the confessional prayer in Neh 9, ties in with Ps 106, as the supplicants confess likewise their cross-generational sin (Neh 9:2). The summary will demonstrate that the reference to the patriarchal ancestors serves to understand biblical history in terms of family history. Thus, by praying the historical psalms, the Jews of post-exilic Israel can appropriate and consummate the collective identity of their biblical fathers, and understand themselves as part of God's people. In a short outlook on texts from the Second Temple period, I want to show that the family argument continued to be used in a number of prayer texts that, however, did not make it into the Hebrew Canon.

2. The Sin of the Fathers—A Cautionary Tale in Ps 78

The historical psalm 78 is the second longest psalm in the Psalter. It offers in its main part (78:12–72) a long review of biblical history. With the exception of some reworking, especially the insertion of the plague cycle in 78:43–51, 53,⁴ we deal with a linear account from Egypt into the land. History starts with the fathers in Egypt, in front of whom Yhwh works miracles (78:12–16). However, the fathers continue to sin against him. They prove to be quite insubordinate (78:17) throughout their wandering through the desert (78:17–53) and finally, throughout their time in the land (78:54–72). Thus, the leitmotif that pervades the review of biblical history is the recurring transgression of the people, resulting in a final judgement in the land (78:56–64).⁵ However, judgement is not the last word, but the final paragraph surprises with the notion that Yhwh “awoke as from sleep” (78:65), and it reports a turn of events in consequence: Yhwh's own intervention leads to the election of Judah, David and Mount Zion (78:65–72*). On the whole, the psalm retells a history of recurring sin from Egypt into the land, whereby sin is defined clearly in deuteronomistic terms. Two observations attract our attention: First of all, the giving of the law is not part of the historical events in the main part, but its bestowal is narrated in the introduction

⁴ On the literary analysis of Ps 78 cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 86–110. The secondary nature of the plague cycle in Ps 78 has been demonstrated already by Hermann Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart: Eine Theologie der Psalmen*. FRLANT 148 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 137–38; Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalmen 51–100*. HThK.AT (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 2000), 423; Markus Witte, “From Exodus to David—History and Historiography in Psalm 78,” in *History and Identity: How Israel's Later Authors Viewed Its Earlier History*. Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2006, ed. Nuria Calduch-Benages and Jan Liesen (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2006): 21–42, 23–24, und Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 94–95.

⁵ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 102–104.

of the psalm: “He established a decree in Jacob and appointed Torah in Israel” (78:5: ויקם עדות ביעקב ותורה שם בישראל). Thus, Torah serves from the beginning as a criterion for the behaviour of the people in the following historical account, whereby the central laws of Deuteronomy apply.⁶ Israel infringes continuously the First Commandment by testing Yhwh (78:18, 41, 56: נסה) and by establishing worship on the heights (78:58: ויכעיסוהו בבמותם); a cult that further constitutes a violation of the deuteronomistic law of cult centralisation (Deut 12). Finally, the psalm ties in with other deuteronomistic texts in the understanding that biblical history starts with the fathers in Egypt.⁷

There remains the question how the reference to the fathers relates to the psalm readership. A first hint to understanding how the concept works, is given in the first part of the introduction, 78:1–2, where an anonymous speaker addresses his people in order to instruct them. His instruction comes in form of a wisdom saying, a משל (78:2) that comprises “riddles from of old” (78:2: אביעה חידות מני־קדם). The classification as wisdom saying demonstrates already that the historical account in the main body of the psalm is to be understood as a parable and thus has a didactic purpose.⁸ This didactic purpose unfolds in the second part of the introduction in 78:3–11, where a group of speakers takes the floor. They state their intention to describe the wondrous deeds of Yhwh (78:4b), who had established Torah in Israel (78:5). This gift entails the good deuteronomistic tradition of passing on instruction to the following generations (78:6–7). The passing on of tradition shall prevent the following generations from repeating the sins of their forefathers, who are characterised as a stubborn and rebellious generation (78:8: ולא יהיו כאבותם דור סורר ומרה). Another reference to “their fathers” (אבותם) appears at the beginning of the historical account in 78:12, where the expression refers to the biblical fathers in Egypt. This suggests that the stubborn and rebellious generation in 78:8 can be identified with the generation of Israel in Egypt that features in the main body of the psalm.

The historical account seems to point to a further differentiation of the generation of fathers. It is the description of the sinful conduct of the people

⁶ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 125.

⁷ See Thomas Römer, *Israels Väter: Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition*. OBO 99 (Freiburg i.Br./Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Freiburg/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 521–23.

⁸ On the didactic implications of this genre classification see Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen: Übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, ⁶1989 [1926]), 340; Notker Fuglister, “Psalm LCCCVIII [sic!]: Der Rätsel Lösung?,” in *Congress Volume Leuven 1989*. VT.S 43, ed. John A. Emerton (Leiden: Brill, 1991): 246–97, 265–70; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalmen 51–100* (see n. 4), 419–20; Beat Weber, “Psalm 78: Geschichte mit Geschichte deuten,” *ThZ* 56 (2000): 193–214, 194, 198–202; Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 87, 110–11.

in the land in terms of “faithless like their fathers” (78:57: **ויבגדו כאבותם**) that indicates a clear distinction between the Exodus generation and the generation of fathers in the land. However, some evidence suggests that we deal with a later insertion in 78:57. Not only is this differentiation into two generations unprepared for in the previous psalm, but also deviates the terminology used for the people’s sin in this verse from the vocabulary employed in the rest of the psalm.⁹ A later reworking of Ps 78 that introduces the death of the Egyptian father generation in the desert (78:32–39) entails the differentiation of the fathers in the land (78:57).¹⁰ However, this later differentiation of the fathers is of minor relevance for the overall generational picture, as the verdict on the people as being stubborn and rebellious applies to the biblical fathers without exception.¹¹

The whole psalm 78 thus presupposes a general three-generation succession that comprises two sets of different “fathers”.¹² Different from the individual in the first part of the introduction, who summons his people to listen (78:1–2), the second part introduces a group of speakers representing the present generation. According to 78:5, their fathers had been given the divine law (**ויקם עדות ביעקב ותורה שם בישראל אשר צוה את אבותינו להודיעם** (ל**בניהם**)). Yet distinctive from these fathers is the generation of the fathers in biblical history from Egypt to the land, who represent the stubborn and rebellious generation. This clear-cut genealogical model (present generation, fathers who get the law, biblical ancestors), however, is unsettled by a later insertion in 78:3–4a that leads to a rather confusing clutter of fathers and sons.¹³ In these verses, the speaker emphasise that they have been instructed by “our fathers” (78:3: **ואבותינו ספרו לנו**) and will pass on instruction to “their sons” (78:4: **לא נכחד מבניהם**); a resolution that somehow makes the speakers’

⁹ While 78:57 uses the Hebrew roots **סוג** ni. and **בגד**, the further instances in the Psalm describe the Israelites’ misconduct by applying the verbs **מרה** hif. (78:8, 17, 40, 56) and **נסה** pi. (78:18, 41, 56). It can be argued that the later insertion of 78:57 reacts to previous reworkings in 78:31, 34 that provide for the death of the desert generation; the death of this first generation is then acknowledged in the insertion 78:57, cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 96–97, 108; likewise Herbert Haag, “Zion und Schilo: Traditionsgeschichtliche Parallelen in Jeremia 7 und Psalm 78,” in *Die alttestamentliche Botschaft als Wegweisung*. FS Heinz Reinelt, ed. Josef Zmijewski (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1990): 85–115, 108, assumes a later addition in 78:57.

¹⁰ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 107–108.

¹¹ Similarly, Bernd Bib Berger, *Unsere Väter und wir: Unterteilung von Geschichtsdarstellungen in Generationen und das Verhältnis der Generationen im Alten Testament*. BBB 145 (Berlin/Wien: Philo, 2003), 158, stresses that both the fathers in the desert and in the land incur guilt in the same way.

¹² Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 88–90.

¹³ Cf. Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart* (see n. 4), 134 (“ein heilloser Personenwirrarr”); on the secondary nature of 78:3–4a see further Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalmen 51–100* (see n. 4), 421–22, and Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 88–89.

generation the odd one out. This can be explained by demonstrating that the passage in 78:3–4a represents a modified quotation from Ps 44:2 (אבותינו (ספרו־לנו). As a later addition to the introduction of Ps 78, the quotation aims at highlighting the model behaviour of the speakers, who followed faithfully to instruct their offspring. While the original psalm 78* establishes the duty of filial instruction for the generations to come (78:6), the insertion in 78:3–4a gives voice to a group of people, who affirm their fulfilment of the duty, and it offers at the same time a hermeneutical reflection on the process.¹⁴ By reading or praying the reworked introduction, every reader can now identify with the supplicants and become an active part of the intergenerational contract by committing themselves to passing on tradition.

To sum up, the reception of history in Ps 78 carries clearly a paradigmatic notion, as the biblical fathers serve as a warning example. Applying the deuteronomistic concept of “filial instruction” (Ps 78:5, cf. Deut 4:9; 6:4–9), the present readers are supposed to learn their lesson from history and dissociate themselves from the sin of their biblical forefathers. This generational tie is enforced in terms of an intergenerational contract by the insertion of the programmatic passage in 78:3–4a. The psalm now allows every reader to identify with the group of speakers and to commit themselves actively to taking their place in instructing the generations to come. Should we want to make use of classifications, Ps 78 is shaped clearly by a deuteronomistic understanding of generations, both with regard to the sinful behaviour of the biblical fathers in terms of a violation of the law, and with regard to the tradition process, by which the knowledge is passed on from father to son.¹⁵

3. Heirs To The Covenant With Abraham: Ps 105

In comparison with Ps 78, our second example in Ps 105 uses a completely different model of generational context, even though the psalm can be shown to be dependent on Ps 78 in general. It is especially the plague cycle in 105:27–36 that draws on the final form of Ps 78 and shows that Ps 105 presupposes the didactic teaching of Ps 78.¹⁶ Differently to the historical review

¹⁴ On this function of the insertion in 78:3–4a cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 110, 362, and referring to the introduction as a whole Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen* (see n. 2), 50–61.

¹⁵ Cf. Römer, *Israels Väter* (see n. 7), 521–22.

¹⁶ Cf. on this Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 233–34; see previously Notker Füglistner, “Psalm 105 und die Väterverheißung,” in *Die Väter Israels: Beiträge zur Theologie der Patriarchenüberlieferungen im Alten Testament*. FS J. Scharbert, ed. Manfred Görg (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1989): 41–59, 46, and Dietmar Mathias, *Die Geschichtstheologie der Geschichtssummarien in den Psalmen*. BEATAJ 35 (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1993), 123. Differently, Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen* (see n. 2), 136, arrives at the conclusion that a literary relationship between Ps 78, 105 (and 106) cannot be established.

in Ps 78, however, Ps 105 goes back further in history by starting from the covenant with Abraham (105:9–11) that is followed by the people's way from Egypt into the land (105:12–45). While the theology of Ps 78 has been labelled as “deuteronomistic”, Ps 105 falls into the broad category of “priestly”, as the covenant is shaped in priestly terms. First of all, the central gift of the covenant is the promise of the land in 105:11 that draws on the wording of the priestly covenant in Gen 17: “To you I will give the land of Canaan as a portion of your inheritance” (17:8: לך אתן את-ארץ-כנען חבל: נהלתכם). This land promise serves as a hermeneutical key for the following events in the psalm, as the divine deeds are interpreted as manifestations of God's covenantal faithfulness.¹⁷ However, for the major part, history in Ps 105 is characterised by the contrast between the promise of the land and the present homelessness of the people.¹⁸ While the Israelites are strangers during their time in Egypt (105:12, 23: גור), the time of desert wandering is already by the lack of the Hebrew term for land, ארץ, clearly marked as a stay in no-man's-land.

With regard to fathers and sons, it firstly attracts attention that the fathers (אבות) are not explicitly mentioned in Ps 105, and while Ps 78 is characterised by a three-generational succession, Ps 105 mainly distinguishes between the biblical generation and the present addressees. Nevertheless, the genealogical argument is highly important when it comes to attributing biblical history relevance for the present reader. While in Ps 78, identity is constituted by setting the present generation off against their sinful biblical fathers, the author of Ps 105 uses a model of participation.¹⁹ In the psalm's introduction, the psalm readers are addressed by the name of “offspring of Abraham” and “sons of Jacob” (105:6: זרע אברהם עבדו בני יעקב בחיריו), thus making them the legitimate descendants of the biblical patriarchs. This family lineage awarded opens up a continuation that makes every psalm reader and prayer heir to the covenantal promises to Abraham.²⁰ The special emphasis on the validity of the land promise suggests a post-exilic setting, when wide parts of Israel were located outside the country and remembered

¹⁷ On the significance of the patriarchal covenant for the theology of Ps 105 cf. Füglistner, “Psalm 105” (see n. 16), 41–57; Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen* (see n. 2), 144, 149–60, and Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 219–40.

¹⁸ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 203–204, 224, 238.

¹⁹ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 364–65.

²⁰ On this aspect cf. Richard J. Clifford, “Style and Purpose in Psalm 105,” *Bib* 60 (1979): 420–27, 422–23, who summarises: “The entire psalm is an exploration of the patriarchal promise of the land. Israel today is addressed as the seed of Abraham who was given that promise.” Similarly, see Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen* (see n. 2), 149, 254.

Yhwh's covenant promises.²¹ By identifying with the situation of their biblical ancestors, they could set their hope likewise on the covenantal promise of the land. It is the establishment of family ties with the biblical patriarchs that allows not only post-exilic Israel, but every reader of the psalm to understand themselves as descendants of the patriarch Abraham and thus makes them entitled to inherit.

4. A Confession of Cross-Generational Sin: Ps 106

4.1. Psalm 106

The hymnic praise of Yhwh's covenantal faithfulness in history in Ps 105 has a twin psalm in Ps 106, which, however, offers a slightly different view on events.²² The links in content and form between the two psalms show not only their relation, but they also demonstrate clearly that Ps 106 is the later sibling.²³ It can be assumed that the psalm originated from the pressing concern as to why Israel was not in possession of the land that had been promised in Ps 105.²⁴ The author of Ps 106 gives an answer to this question by pointing to the iniquity of the biblical fathers, who forfeited the covenantal land promise by their continuous transgression and by their lack of faith. In Ps 106, it is actually the sinful conduct of the biblical ancestors that the present reader can relate with.

Similar to Ps 78, the historical account in Ps 106 takes a deuteronomistic starting point with the fathers in Egypt.²⁵ However, while in Ps 105 the fathers are described as passive (and presumably delighted) recipients of Yhwh's covenantal faithfulness, in Ps 106 the biblical ancestors are rather unappreciative of Yhwh's actions and miracles. They do not comprehend

²¹ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 204. A post-exilic dating is suggested also by Clifford, "Style" (see n. 20), 427, and Beat Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen II: Die Psalmen 73 bis 150* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 189.

²² The classification of Ps 105 and 106 as "twin psalms" goes back to Walther Zimmerli, "Zwillingspsalmen," in *Studien zur alttestamentlichen Theologie und Prophetie: Gesammelte Aufsätze Band II*. ThB 51 (München: Kaiser, 1974): 261–71; his characterisation has found wide reception in scholarship.

²³ On this literary relationship cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 215–18; the majority of exegetes, however, follows the classic position of Zimmerli (see n. 22), without differentiating the two psalms in literary-historical terms; cf. e.g. Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalmen 101–150*. HThK.AT (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 2008), 110–12, 138; Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen* (see n. 2), 289. Only Martin Leuenberger, *Konzeptionen des Königtums Gottes im Psalter: Untersuchungen zu Komposition und Redaktion der theokratischen Bücher IV–V im Psalter*. AThANT 83 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2004), 245, differs slightly by ascribing the psalm pairing of Ps 105 and 106 to a formative redaction that matched existing psalms in twos by means of redactional links.

²⁴ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 218.

²⁵ See Römer, *Israels Väter* (see n. 7), 521; the deuteronomistic character is observed also by Biberger, *Unsere Väter* (see n. 11), 476.

his wondrous deeds in Egypt (106:7: אַבֹּתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם לֹא־הִשְׁכִּילוּ נִפְלְאוֹתָיִךְ), and they behave obstinately at the Red Sea (106:7: וַיִּמְרוּ עֲלֵי־ם בַּיַּם־סוּף). Even though the Miracle of the Sea leads to a first reaction of faith (106:12: וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בְּדִבְרֵי יְשִׁירֵי תְהִלָּתוֹ; “They believed his words, they sang his praise”), in the long run the fathers prove to be rather faithless. Hence the journey through the wilderness is characterised by recurring acts of rebellion, which are expressions of their disbelief. While the intercession of Moses in the episode of the Golden Calf can yet avert the people being eradicated (106:23), their subsequent rejection of the land is presented as the ultimate lack of faith: “Then they despised the pleasant land, having no faith in his promise” (106:24: וַיִּמְסוּ בָאָרֶץ חֲמֹדָה לֹא הֵאֱמִינוּ לְדַבְרוֹ). This sinful act means not only that the present generation of fathers will die in the desert (106:26), but it entails also serious consequences for the generations to come that shall be dispersed among the nations (106:27). This proves to be an anticipatory judgement, as the next generation of sons repeats their fathers’ sinful behaviour in the land and thus fulfils in retrospect the elements of the offence. Yet the verdict of exile and diaspora is not final, but the psalm’s account of biblical history ends with the statement that Yhwh remembered his covenant and let them be pitied (106:45–46).

Even though Ps 106 was supplemented to form a pair together with the preceding psalm 105, it stands much closer to the didactic teaching of Ps 78 with regard to fathers and sons. Both psalms assume the serious misconduct of the biblical fathers and both texts employ similar terminology for the transgressions of the ancestors.²⁶ The genealogy in Ps 106 is, however, less defined, as the psalm presumes a general differentiation only between the first generation of fathers that was led out of Egypt, and the second generation that entered the land. The generational watershed is the outright refusal of the people to enter the land (106:24) that leads to the death of the Exodus generation in the desert, while the sons take the land into possession only to be exiled later. Moreover, Ps 106 can be shown to systematise the conception of sin in terms of a lack of faith. While both psalms draw on deuteronomic vocabulary to describe the misconduct of the fathers, the idea of faithlessness appears in Ps 78 in late insertions only (78:22, 32), while the author of Ps 106 develops the idea in terms of an elaborate history of unfaithfulness.²⁷ Thereby, the initial faith of Israel at the Red Sea (106:12)

²⁶ On the relationship between Ps 105 and Ps 78 cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 249–50, 267–69. Likewise Römer, *Israels Väter* (see n. 7), 523, comments on the similarities between Ps 78 and Ps 106, in both of which the fathers evoke “negative associations” (“negative Assoziationen”).

²⁷ On the secondary nature of the faith passages in Ps 78 cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 86–110, 268. In Ps 106, however, the idea of faith and the lack thereof respectively, is used as a leitmotif, as the author draws on every narrative text in the Pentateuch that deals

serves as a positive paradigm that contrasts the later recurring acts of unfaithfulness, culminating in the refusal of the land (106:24).²⁸

There remains the question how Ps 106 relates the fate of the biblical ancestors to the present. Again, the hermeneutical key to this question lies in the introduction part of the psalm that comprises a confession of sin by the psalm's supplicants. Confessing their own sins together with their fathers, the confession bridges the gap between biblical history and present: "We have sinned together with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly" (חטאנו עם אבותינו העוינו הרשענו).²⁹ By identifying with the unfaithfulness of their biblical ancestors, the psalm readers can equally set their hopes on Yhwh to intervene accordingly, and save them from their present distress. The psalm thus ends with the supplicants' plea for saving and gathering from among the nations (106:47). With this plea, the present readers hope for a repetition of Yhwh's saving acts in biblical history.

In comparison with Ps 78 and 105, both of which form the literary background of Ps 106, it attracts attention that the author of Ps 106 develops further the patterns used to constitute identity in both of his *Vorlagen*. Firstly, the author's argument draws on Ps 105 by equally using a model of identificatory participation.³⁰ However, while Ps 105 features a model of salvation continuity by addressing the present people as heirs to the covenantal promises to Abraham, in Ps 106 it is the iniquity of the biblical ancestors that the present people can relate to. With this emphasis on attributing sin an identificatory relevance, Ps 106 converges with its literary predecessor Ps 78, whose author likewise employs sin to constitute identity.³¹ Yet there is one decisive difference: Whereas in Ps 78, sin dissociates the present Israel from the forefathers, in Ps 106 it is the iniquity of the fathers that the present people can identify with. The author in Ps 106 thus systematises the family argument and uses the introductory confession of sin in 106:6 to establish the link between biblical past and present.

with faith (חֵן אֱמוּנָה hif.), presenting biblical history in Ps 106 as an unfolding history of unfaithfulness (cf. Klein, *Geschichte* [see n. 2], 206–13, 266–68).

²⁸ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 213; similarly, Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen* (see n. 2), 205–206, 241, acknowledges the paradigmatic significance of the Red Sea episode; yet she does not refer to the idea of faith, but considers the episode to be the paradigm for Yhwh's saving action.

²⁹ On this hermeneutical function of the confession in 106:6 cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 366. Similarly, Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen* (see n. 2), 197–99, deems the confession to be the hermeneutical key for the following historical account in Ps 106.

³⁰ See Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen* (see n. 2), 198.

³¹ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 377–78.

4.2. The Confession of Sin Ps 106:6 in its Literary Context

The tripartite confession of sin in Ps 106:6 has two close parallels in 1 Kgs 8:47 (par. 2 Chr 6:37) and Dan 9:5, both of which are part of a prayer, while a two-part form of the confession features in the narrative about David's census in 2 Sam 24:17. Because of the close links between these different confessions, a literary relationship can be assumed. Firstly, in the narrative about David's census of Israel and Judah in 2 Sam 24, Yhwh punishes the king for initiating the census by bringing a plague over Israel. When David confesses his offence and asks successfully for mercy for his people: "I have sinned, and I have done wickedly" (24:17: אֲנֹכִי חָטָאתִי וְאֲנֹכִי הִעֲשִׂיתִי), the plague is finally averted from Israel (24:25).

This two-partite confession is likely to have been taken up and expanded in Solomon's Prayer of Dedication 1 Kgs 8. The actual prayer in verses 8:22–53 starts from a predication of Yhwh and an affirmation of the oracle of Nathan (8:23–26), and in its main part it comprises a case study of seven examples, how the people shall address their god in times of need.³² Here, the presumably later added seventh example in 8:46–53³³ deals with the case that the people sin against Yhwh, which leads to their being delivered to the enemy and being taken captive by the foreign nations (8:46). However, should the people return to Yhwh and repent, saying "We have sinned and done wrong, we have done wickedly" (8:47: חָטָאנוּ וְהִעֲשִׂינוּ רָשָׁעוֹ), Yhwh is asked to forgive them and let them find mercy in exile and diaspora. In its wording, the confession in 1 Kgs 8:47 shares the three Hebrew verbal roots with Ps 106:6—with the small deviation that the third verb, רָשָׁע, occurs in the causative *binyan* in Ps 106, which gives it a transitive emphasis. Both the confession in Solomon's prayer and in Ps 106 assume a situation of exile, with, however, a different outcome desired. While the speakers in 1 Kgs 8:47 repent and hope for alleviations in exile and diaspora, the plea in Ps 106 goes further by expecting gathering and return.³⁴ Different to 1 Kgs 8:47, however, the confession in Ps 106:6 is no expression of the people's repentance, but by confessing their sins, the supplicants hope to provoke

³² There is some doubt, however, if all of these examples belong to the original prayer, e.g. Ernst Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige: 1. Könige 1–16*. ATD 11,1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 97–100, assumes originally four or five examples and suggests a later insertion in 8:44–51 (cf. Würthwein, *Könige*, 97, 99–100). On the analysis of Solomon's Prayer of Dedication 1 Kgs 8 see further Simon J. DeVries, *1 Kings*. WBC 12 (Word Books: Waco, 1985), 113–128, and Martin J. Mulder, *1 Kings: Volume 1/1: 1 Kings 1–11*. HCOT (Peeters: Leuven, 1998), 400–49.

³³ On the secondary nature of these verses cf. Würthwein, *Könige* (see n. 31), 97, 99–100; a later addition of 8:47 is suggested also by Gärtner, *Geschichtpsalmen* (see n. 2), 198.

³⁴ See Volker Pröbstl, *Nehemia 9, Psalm 106 und Psalm 136 und die Rezeption des Pentateuchs* (Cuvillier Verlag: Göttingen, 1997), 144–45.

Yhwh into action in favor of his people.³⁵ Does this already point to Ps 106 drawing on 1 Kgs 8:47, the surplus that supplements the tie with the biblical fathers in Ps 106 can be interpreted as further evidence that the psalm belongs into the reception history of 1 Kgs 8:47. The additional family dimension in Ps 106 allows for an actualization of the confession that can now be prayed by every Israelite, who understands himself (or herself) as being related to the biblical fathers. Under this assumption, Ps 106 as a whole can be understood as representing the prayer that the people in 1 Kgs 8 are advised to raise in the case that they find themselves in exile because of their transgressions.

The confession of Ps 106:6 has another close parallel in the prayer of the prophet Daniel in Dan 9:5. Following the prophet's reflection on the understanding of the seventy years in the Book of Jeremiah, we find a prayer, in which Daniel dwells on the right behaviour facing the impending end of the time period in question (9:4–20). The whole prayer constitutes a practical field guide for repentance, in which the speakers admit to their iniquity when faced with God's faithfulness and justice.³⁶ The prayer is introduced by their confession: "We have sinned and done wrong, acted wickedly and rebelled (חטאנו ועוינו הרשענו), turning aside from your commandments and ordinances". Again, the three verbal roots used to describe the transgressions of the people are a close match with the confession in Ps 106:6, though two of them are used in a different *binyan*. Even though the actual confession in Dan 9:5 does not mention the generational link, the further prayer makes the supplicants part of the people of Israel by mentioning their fathers along with kings and princes (9:6, 8, 16). In particular, the statement in 9:16 suggests a continuing history of sin that relates the speakers to their ancestors.³⁷ However, the genealogical argument seems to have become less important in view of the overwhelming guilt of the supplicants, in which the whole of Israel is incorporated. Due to this widening of the scope—and considering that the confession of sin in Dan 9 is the most elaborate of our three examples—it can be assumed that we deal with the latest text in this case that uses the confession for the purpose of stressing the collective sin of the whole of Israel.

³⁵ On this difference cf. Pröbstl, *Nehemia 9* (see n. 34), 145; Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen* (see n. 2), 198.

³⁶ On the discussion if this prayer forms an integral part of the chapter Dan 9 or if it is a later addition, cf. Christoph Berner, *Jahre, Jahrwochen und Jubiläen: Heptadische Geschichtskonzeptionen im Antiken Judentum*. BZAW 363 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2006), 26–35. Berner himself argues convincingly for the prayer 9:4–20 to be the latest continuation within the chapter that had been composed for its context, cf. Berner, *Jahre*, 37–40.

³⁷ See also Römer, *Israels Väter* (see n. 7), 527, who, however, assumes that Dan 9:16 draws on Neh 9:2; cf. in the following.

5. The Iniquities of Fathers and Sons: Neh 9

Turning to the last example, it has been demonstrated that the penitential prayer in Neh 9 can be understood as a systematization of the historical psalms in the Book of Psalms that has been given a narrative setting.³⁸ Preceding the actual prayer in 9:6–37, a narrative exposition in 9:1–5 describes how the people assemble for the purpose of a penitential service, in which they confess their sins together with the sins of their ancestors: “And they stood and confessed their sins and the sins of their fathers” (9:2: ויתודו על חטאתיהם ועונות אבותיהם). The performance of this confession is further supplemented with a reading of the law (9:3: ויקראו בספר תורת יהוה אלהיהם), which, however, might be a secondary addition.³⁹

Comparable to Ps 106, the introductory report of the people’s confession of sin in Neh 9:2 opens up a long historical review that leads from creation to exile (9:6–31).⁴⁰ The prayer is closed off by a posterior frame, in which the supplicants lament their present distress and ask God for his intervention on their behalf (9:32–37). Over the course of history, the events from Genesis are attributed a founding impact in two ways: God is praised first of all as the one, who gives life to the whole creation (9:6), and, secondly, as the one who entered into the covenant with Abraham in order to give the land to him and to his offspring (9:7–8).⁴¹ These two aspects serve as rationale for the following historical account. Firstly, the divine creational will takes shape in the bestowal of the law, by the observance of which man shall live (9:29). Yet the people, who by the label of “our fathers” (9:9: אבותינו) are identified as the speakers’ ancestors, defy continuously the law during the course of biblical history, which leads to their being handed over to the nations (9:30). With this behaviour, they forfeit the land ownership that was part of God’s provision for them. Secondly, Yhwh’s covenantal promise of

³⁸ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 382–91. On the wider literary and tradition-historical background of Neh 9 see further the detailed study by Mark Boda, *Praying the Tradition: The Origin and Use of Tradition in Nehemiah 9*. BZAW 277 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1999).

³⁹ Cf. Klaus-Dietrich Schunck, *Nehemia*. BK XXIII/2 (Neukirchener Verlag: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2009), 272, and Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 383; Hugh G.M. Williamson, *Ezra/Nehemiah*. WBC 16 (Waco: Word Books, 1985), 311, also discusses the possibility of later reworking in Neh 9:3.

⁴⁰ On the analysis of Neh 9 cf. Williamson, *Ezra/Nehemiah* (see n. 39), 305–10; Pröbstl, *Nehemia 9* (see n. 34), 7–105, and Schunck, *Nehemia* (see n. 39), 267–69.

⁴¹ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 384–85. The specific relevance of the Genesis materials in Neh 9 has been recognised also by Pröbstl, *Nehemia 9* (see n. 34), 88–89, and by Konrad Schmid, *Erzväter und Exodus: Untersuchungen zur doppelten Begründung der Ursprünge Israels innerhalb der Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments*. WMANT 17 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999), 304.

the land serves to distinguish the different generations.⁴² The first generation of fathers is led out of Egypt and commanded to take the land into possession (9:9–22), yet they do not succeed in obtaining ownership. Rather, it is the generation of “their sons” (9:23: *ובניהם*), who enter the land. However, the sons are finally handed over to the nations after their own history of misconduct and neglect of Yhwh’s provisions, thus gambling away possession of the land (9:23–31). Finally, the third group of people are the present speakers (9:32–37). Even though they live in the land, they lament their status of presently being slaves in it (9:36: *הנה אנחנו היום עבדים*) and complain that they cannot enjoy its goods. The supplicants conceive of this present distress as an unfairness compared to the second generation of their biblical fathers, who were allowed to dwell in the large and rich land notwithstanding their continuous misconduct (9:34–36).⁴³

To sum up, family relations have become a complex issue in Neh 9. On the one hand, the insight into their own sin ties the present people together with their biblical fathers in a way reminiscent of Ps 106. However, while the supplicants in Ps 106 ask humbly for a repetition of past salvation, the present speakers in Neh 9 put forward a more demanding request. Although they identify with their fathers in terms of misbehaviour, they feel unjustly treated when it comes to possession of the land, in which they dwell as mere slaves. Thus, they call on God’s covenantal faithfulness and remind him poignantly that he had never abandoned their fathers in the past (9:17, 19, 31)—implying that he has done so now with them.⁴⁴ This historical experience of God’s recurring faithfulness and grace allows them to ask for his intervention on their behalf and for a restoration of their control over the land.

At the beginning it was mentioned that the prayer in Neh 9 works as a systematization of the historical psalms, which is especially true with regard to the father-son conception. While the author of Neh 9 takes up the covenantal promises to the patriarch Abraham in Ps 105 to establish the present generation’s claim to the land, he further draws on the concept of cross-generational sin from Ps 106. This confession ties the fathers to the sons and makes them equally dependant on Yhwh’s faithfulness and grace. It gets exciting, however, when it comes to the question of present relevance. While in Ps 106, the present distress causes the supplicants to pray for a repetition of divine salvation in terms of rescue from the diaspora, the speakers in Neh 9 subtly suggest that they have been treated unjustly in comparison with

⁴² Cf. Biberger, *Unsere Väter* (see n. 11), 135–37.

⁴³ Similarly, Biberger, *Unsere Väter* (see n. 11), 124, 479, emphasises the notion of unfairness, which he, however, links primarily to the incongruity between the covenantal promise of land ownership and the present situation of bondage.

⁴⁴ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 388–89.

their fathers, and that they should be rescued equally by giving them control over the land. This different situation demonstrates clearly that the prayer in Neh 9 reflects a later historical setting, when the continuing existence of foreign rule in the land was in the focus.⁴⁵ The prayer in Neh 9 can thus be deemed the foundation myth of post-exilic Israel.⁴⁶ Therein, the reference to the biblical fathers actualises a biblical past that justifies the present demand for deliverance from foreign rule.

6. Praying Family History

The examples chosen from the historical psalms show that the family argument plays an important role in how the historical review functions in each of the prayers. It has been demonstrated that the references to the biblical ancestors in each psalm contribute to form the identity of the present Israel, the people of which become personally involved in biblical history by relating with the biblical fathers. However, the thing that attracts attention is that a literary historical development can be traced, in which the family argument is continuously changed and refined.⁴⁷

Thus, the question arises as to the general conditions that led to the emergence of the historical psalms and the family argument in particular. Firstly, the historical setting of praying biblical history has to be taken into account. The psalms' knowledge of and their dependence on the narrative traditions show clearly that the historical psalms have a setting in post-exilic times. This period in the history of Ancient Israel is characterised by the loss of the central pre-exilic identity markers such as the First Temple cult, the king, and nationhood.⁴⁸ Consequently, the function of forming and assuring identity was transferred onto the production and study of holy texts.⁴⁹ The idea of fathers and sons in the historical psalms is only one example, how post-

⁴⁵ On this date and setting cf. Biberger, *Unsere Väter* (see n. 11), 131, 136, Pröbstl, *Nehemia 9* (see n. 34), 103–5, and Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 389.

⁴⁶ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 391: "In diesem Gebetstext [Neh 9] gibt sich das nachexilische Judentum eine Gründungslegende".

⁴⁷ On the literary-historical differentiation of the historical psalms Exod 15; Ps 78; 105; 106; 135; 136; 137, and Neh 9 cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 358–82.

⁴⁸ On this problem description cf. Reinhard G. Kratz, "Die Suche nach Identität in der nachexilischen Theologiegeschichte: Zur Hermeneutik des chronistischen Geschichtswerkes und ihrer Bedeutung für das Verständnis des Alten Testament," in *Pluralismus und Identität*. VWGTh 8, ed. Joachim Mehlhausen (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1995): 279–303, 280; Jürgen van Oorschot, "Geschichte, Redaktion und Identität—Überlegungen anhand deuterocesajanischer Prophetien," in *Das Alte Testament—Ein Geschichtsbuch?! Geschichtsschreibung oder Geschichtsüberlieferung im antiken Israel*. Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 17, ed. Jürgen van Oorschot and Uwe Becker (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005): 37–57, 38–41, and Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 374.

⁴⁹ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 374.

exilic Israel tried to come to terms with the catastrophe of exile and the loss of its stabilising factors.⁵⁰ The family relations serve to bridge biblical history and present, thus establishing an *identity in time*⁵¹ that allows the present psalm reader to participate in the identity of God's people.

First of all, the deuteronomistic family concept in Ps 78 refers to the generation of the biblical fathers in the fashion of a cautionary tale about the “stubborn and rebellious generation” (78:8), thus instructing the reader on how not to behave. In this didactic psalm, identity is formed by dissociating themselves from the historical ancestors, which, however, does only work under the assumption that there is a connection between past and present generations—exactly what is achieved by means of the family ties. The priestly psalm 105, however, reverses the manner of relationship. Its author employs a positive continuation in terms of the present generation participating in the covenantal promises to Abraham and his offspring. Their being descendants of and heirs to the patriarch Abraham (105:6) makes the present people of Israel eligible to claim the land as their covenantal heritage. This claim, however, is challenged subsequently in Ps 106, which re-uses a deuteronomistic understanding of generations. It starts from a cross-generational confession of sin, in which the present generation identifies with their ancestors by acknowledging their sin “together with our fathers” (106:6). Despite their transgressions, the biblical ancestors are repeatedly rescued by Yhwh's grace and forgiveness, an action that serves as a historical paradigm that can be actualised for the present generation in exile and diaspora. Finally, the confessional prayer in Neh 9 represents a systematization of the historical prayers in the Book of Psalms in several respects. Firstly, the prayer can be deemed a fusion of deuteronomistic and priestly theology. On the one hand, its author uses the priestly idea of the covenant to establish the present Israel's claim to the land. On the other hand, the deuteronomistic motif of the fathers trespassing against the deuteronomistic law figures as a major offence throughout. Again, identity is established by referring to a continuum of cross-generational guilt, which the present generation acknowledges in an introductory confession of sin (9:2). However, the identification with the biblical fathers works a bit different here, as their fate in history is used neither as a warning example nor as a paradigm. Rather, their possession of the land throughout biblical history serves as a positive reference, which the speakers hold before Yhwh to show that they have been

⁵⁰ On the use of the genealogical argument in the historical psalms as a means to establish identity cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 377–78.

⁵¹ The concept of identity in time (“Identität in der Zeit”) has firstly been described by Kratz, “Suche” (see n. 48), 287–92, with regard to the chronistic literature. On the application of term and concept onto the historical psalms cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 377–80.

treated unfairly by being servants in their own land. On the whole, family ties in the historical psalms establish an identity in time by attributing biblical history relevance for the present reader of the psalm. The gap between biblical past and the present is bridged by making biblical history a family affair.

However, the family argument does not only occur in the historical psalms, but the whole patriarchal narratives in the Genesis or the idea of the fathers in deuteronomistic literature each serve to bridge the gap that had been opened by the catastrophe of exile.⁵² All these family relations aim to re-establish identity for post-exilic Israel. The literary genre of the historical psalms as prayer texts, however, provides a surplus that contributes decisively to constituting *identity in prayer*.⁵³ Even though the historical psalms do not have a setting in the cult, they do evoke a cultic context and want to be read and understood against this cultic background.⁵⁴ This is not without consequences for the application of the historical psalms. Firstly, different from a narrative legend of origin, an individual prayer demands a decision of the reader, as he or she has to get involved with the pre-existing relationship between Yhwh and his people. It is not possible not to commit yourself in an act of praying, even if it is a spiritualised prayer only. In the spiritualised act of praying, every reader or supplicant can identify with the collective identity of Yhwh's people and participate in both what God had achieved for them in the past, and what he will provide for them in the future.⁵⁵ In the historical psalms, biblical history takes the form of family history, which allowed Judaism to come to terms with the catastrophe of exile and establish a new identity. The benefit of the identity based on family ties is that it provides at the same time for continuity and discontinuity with the biblical ancestors. Yet the family link between fathers and sons is inextricable, which assures the relevance of biblical past for the present.

⁵² The idea of "Israel's fathers" in Old Testament literature has been covered comprehensively by Römer, *Israels Väter* (see n. 7), and Biberger, *Unsere Väter* (see n. 11).

⁵³ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 380–82.

⁵⁴ Cf. Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 380. See further the considerations by Reinhard G. Kratz, "Die Tora Davids: Psalm 1 und die doxologische Fünfteilung des Psalters," *ZThK* 93 (1996): 1–34, 34, with regard to the liturgical formation of the Book of Psalms, and Gärtner, *Geschichtspsalmen* (see n. 2), 28, who deems the temple cult to form the metaphorical reference frame ("den metaphorischen Bezugsrahmen") for the historical psalms.

⁵⁵ See Kratz, "Tora" (see n. 54), 34, and Klein, *Geschichte* (see n. 2), 380.

7. Outlook: Fathers and Sons in Second Temple Prayers

Biblical history continues to feature prominently in the Second Temple prayer literature.⁵⁶ A first text that comes to mind is the “Word of the Luminaries” (4Q504; 4Q506), a collection of petitionary prayers from Qumran for each day of the week.⁵⁷ The daily prayers provide historical reminiscences in a historical progression throughout the week, covering biblical history from the creation to Adam, through the exile and subsequent sin, up to the present.⁵⁸ The prayers are noteworthy for the fact that there is no clear distinction between the biblical past and the present community, but “the praying community inserts itself into the story” by intermingling p.e. the first and third person in the historical confession.⁵⁹ Several references to the ancestors, whose guilt the supplicants confess together with their own transgressions (4Q504 XIX [Frags. 1–2 vi recto], 5–7: “And now, on this day, with humble heart we seek atonement for our iniquities and the iniquity of our fathers, for our rebellion and continued hostility to you.”⁶⁰), further contribute to make the biblical past relevant for the present community.

Furthermore, the confession of cross-generational guilt seems to have developed a life of its own in Second Temple Literature. It features prominently in the opening of Ps 106:6, is then transformed into a narrative in Neh 9:2, and occurs further in texts such as Baruch (Bar 1:19); Tobit (Tob 3:5); the Qumran Rule of Community (1QS 1, 25); the Hodayot (1QH IV, 34), and the Damascus Document (CD XX, 28–29). It can be assumed that in the Second Temple Period, biblical Judaism had come to an understanding on how to relate to its past. The identificatory pattern of biblical Judaism’s origins in terms of family history could be actualized and attributed by joining in the cross-generational confession of sin.

⁵⁶ Cf. firstly the contribution by George Brooke in this volume (“Praying History in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Memory, Identity, Fulfillment”). Furthermore, Mika Pajunen presents an overview and description of biblical history in the Qumran psalms (cf. Mika Pajunen, *The Land to the Elect and Justice for All: Reading Psalms in the Dead Sea Scrolls in Light of 4Q381* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013], 322–33).

⁵⁷ On the first edition of the fragments (“Paroles des Luminaires,” 4Q504–506) cf. Maurice Baillet, *Qumrân Grotte III (4Q492–4Q520)*. DJD VII (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 137–75. Many thanks to Daniel K. Falk, who brought this prayer collection to my attention during the Copenhagen conference, and who made available to me his introduction and his then unpublished article on the subject (see n. 58).

⁵⁸ See Esther Chazon, “4QDibHam: Liturgy or Literature?” *RevQ* 15 (1991): 447–56, and Daniel K. Falk, “Liturgical Progression and the Experience of Transformation in Prayers from Qumran,” *DSD* 22 (2015): 267–84.

⁵⁹ Cf. Falk, “Liturgical Progression” (see n. 58), 272–73 (quotation *ibid.*, p. 273).

⁶⁰ Following the translation of 4Q504 by Michael O. Wise; Martin J. Abegg, and Edward M. Cook in: Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov, *Poetic and Liturgical Texts*. The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader Part 5. Leiden/Boston: Brill: 2005: 241–261, 241.

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