Original Research Article

Royally Enticing, Royally Forgetting: The Contribution of Psalm 45 within Its Canonical Context

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Abstract

What is the contribution of Psalm 45 within its canonical context? What is Psalm 45 doing in, and what is it doing for, the First Korahite Collection (Pss. 42–49)? These are the questions this article engages. In common with scholarship on the "shape and shaping" of the Psalter, the article seeks a form of coherency across the First Korahite Collection. But instead of framing such coherency in terms of a unified drama or running characters, the article takes a rhetorical approach; it attends to imperative verbs as well as to each psalm's metareferences (i.e., self-descriptions). On the basis of these features as well as the psalm superscriptions, this article suggests that the First Korahite Collection exhibits a sustained pedagogical interest and summons its readers to practice memory-work. Psalm 45 encourages the receipt of instruction through its desirable kingly persona and, uniquely in the Collection, it calls for the negative counterpart of remembering, that is, forgetting.

What is the contribution of Psalm 45 within its canonical context? What is Psalm 45 doing in, and what is it doing for, the First Korahite Collection? These are the questions the present article engages. Already such questions signal some interpretive directions. First, this article focuses on one psalm, Psalm 45, but not in isolation. Instead, the article comments on this one psalm's relationships to psalms surrounding it, specifically the First Korahite Collection. Second, by mentioning "canonical context," the opening question invokes a body of Psalms scholarship tracing back to Brevard Childs

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(1979) and Gerald Wilson (1985), which sometimes goes by the designation "shape and shaping."[1] The present article shares with that approach an interest in discerning coherency across multiple psalms. But the form of coherency this article identifies differs significantly from that which "canonical approaches" foreground; the coordination of the First Korahite Collection, and of Psalm 45 within it, is not *narrative*, and neither is it *characterological*. It is—insofar as it is at all[2]—*rhetorical*.[3]

Put differently, in previous readings of Psalm 45 within its canonical context, *story* and *character* have loomed large as organizing principles of the subcollection. In both interpretations, psalm *superscriptions* have played an important role, in particular "author designations" such as לבני־קרח, of the sons of Korah; this is in keeping with both Childs's work on superscriptions and Wilson's trailblazing book on incipits.[4] So, too, have judgments about psalm genre played an important role. For both these authors and for those who have followed them, identifying some psalms as "royal" is a necessary first step toward making observations about the meaningful distribution of royal psalms throughout the Psalter—and in both the Korahite Collections.[5] Story and character are underwritten, in other words, by (author) superscriptions and genre classifications.

But other data besides superscriptions and genres inform the present article's proposal. It concentrates on the *rhetorical program* of these psalms.[6] It asks, "what do they seek to *do* vis-à-vis their readership?"[7] Answering this question cannot be done initially

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1. Two edited volumes feature this phrase and lay out this scholarly program, first: McCann 1993; and second: deClaissé-Walford 2014. See also now Prinsloo 2021: 145–177, esp. 150–59.
2. "Coherence" and "coordination" ordinarily bespeak deliberate arrangement—"erkennbare planvolle Redaktionsarbeit" (Zenger 1995: 190). But, as David Willgren points out, it is difficult to verify editorial intention on the basis of lexical links, common motifs, and thematic concepts (2016: 12–15). Indeed "the purpose(s) of selecting psalms and arranging them in collections cannot be understood in the singular" (2016: 391). The present article maps out textual phenomena according to several rhetorical criteria; whether the results adumbrate one level of editorial purpose, or merely a byproduct effect from another level, is challenging to discern.
3. One earlier contribution that draws canonical and rhetorical considerations into the same field of vision (with a Korahite psalm!) is that of deClaissé-Walford 2008. She frames the approaches as parallel ("Is canonical criticism a 'cousin' of rhetorical criticism?"), perhaps even micro- and macro-versions of the same project (2008: 123). This article suggests that distinct questions organize these approaches to research.
4. The terminology of "author designations" is taken from Willgren (2016: 173–78), and similarly "type designations" (2016: 178–82). On the importance of superscriptions: Childs 1971; 1979: 520–522; Wilson 1985: 145-197 and passim.
5. On the importance of royal psalms: Childs 1979: 515–517; Wilson 1985: 208; Wilson 1986: 85–94.
6. Rhetorical criticism entered biblical scholarship especially through James Muilenberg's 1968 Society of Biblical Literature presidential address, later published (1969: 1–18). For an overall account: Schlimm 2007. More recent contributions that share the present article's focus on Psalms and persuasion: Patrick and Diable 2008; Charney 2015.
7. Patrick and Scult: "the 'rhetoric' in rhetorical criticism [identifies] the means by which a text establishes and manages its relationship to its audience in order to achieve a particular effect" (1990: 12). More generally: Zulick 1992.

in terms of the whole subcollection. Rather, if any overall or concerted or overlapping rhetorical objectives obtain, these must be culled from each individual psalm within the First Korahite Collection. For these purposes, psalm superscriptions are still useful. But instead of playing the lead role, interpretively, the present article accepts that superscriptions offer clues by early tradents about what they saw as each psalm's pertinent features, including its rhetoric.[8] The priority is here reversed; superscriptions are taken not as the connective tissue streamlining the collection together but as indices to each psalm's rhetorical profile, which may (or may not) align coherently with the rhetorical profile of other, neighboring psalms.

The primary data by which the present article gauges rhetorical purpose are twofold. First, and most directly, *imperative verbs*: if a psalm issues a command, whether to God or to its own נפשׁ or to a community of fellow reciters or readers, it is reasonable to take that commanded action as the goal toward which the rest of the psalm's presentation drives.[9] Sometimes, as will be seen, these imperative verbs fit closely with the psalm's type designation and genre: Psalm 47 is a מזמור, a psalm; Gunkel and others identify its genre as a hymn, and its imperative verb is זמרו, "sing praise," which it repeats five times (MT vv. 7 [4x], 8 [ET vv. 6, 7]). Other times, there is interesting and productive distance between these characteristics. Thus, Psalm 42 is titled as a משׂכיל, an instruction, but scholars classify it as an individual lament or complaint psalm, and its imperative verb exhorts the psalmist's own נפשׁ to hope in God (vv. 6b[5b], 12b[11b]).[10] The present study takes imperative verbs with all due seriousness for understanding the rhetoric of the psalms, their coherency with each other from that vantage point, and specifically the contribution of Ps. 45.

The second datum for assessing rhetorical purpose is *metareference*: "the movement from [one] communicative level to a higher one on which the first-level thoughts and utterances, and above all the means and media used for such utterances, self-reflexively become objects of reflection and communication in their own right."[11] Psalms often move

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8. Willgren: "the superscriptions never anticipated or related to anything other than the individual psalm itself" (2016*:* 191).

9. Brueggemann emphasizes "the privileged function of the verb" within the rhetoric of biblical texts (1997: 123, here n15); and the centrality of imperative verbs addressed to God (2014: 87–89), to the self, as in Pss. 42/43 (2014: 23), or to the community (2014: 42). Compare Charney, "Songs of Innocence" (2015: 65–82, esp. p. 67, with "divine action" in italics, and p. 69), also the importance of imperative verbs in deClaissé-Walford 2008.

10. Various interpretations of the משׂכיל type designation exist, on which, see Amzallag and Yona 2016: 41–57, esp. the overview on pp. 41–42. Understanding the term to mean "instruction," derived from the C-stem of √שׂכל (cf., famously, Gen. 3.6, also Ps. 2.10), has at least the virtue of resonating with the ancient versions: LXX translates the superscription with εἰς σύνεσιν, "for understanding," Symmachus has ἐπινίκιος συνέσεως, "victory [for MT למנצח] of understanding" (see footnote 13), also the Syro-Hexapla: *zākûtā dyadu'tānā*, "the victory of knowledge," and, similarly, TgPss, "for praise [לשבחא], with good discernment [בשכלא טבא]." So too, there is a significant explication of the term within the collection itself in Ps. 47.8b[7b].

11. Wolf (2009: 3). While this quotation defines "metaization", more precise definitions of metareference appear later in the chapter (2009: 29–32). Compare Charney on "language about language" (2015*:* 2); Zulick 1992.

in just this way, flagging "the means and media" of their own utterance for self-reflexive attention. This can be obvious; the scribal voice in Psalm 45 says that his heart overflows with טוב דבר, a good word (v. 2[1]). It is plain that the psalm itself is meant. Other examples of metareference can be subtler. To take Psalm 42 again, its v. 9[8] says, "by day Yhwh commands his חסד [loyalty], and by night his שיר [song] is with me." The fact that reference to a song appears inside of a psalm seems significant, yet the identity between the two remains suggestive only; how a lament could count as a song of Yhwh (sung by him? given by him?) is hardly transparent. Nevertheless, these and other metareferences offer some orientation to the rhetorical purpose of each psalm that features them.[12] One appreciates a beautiful word, one uses and absorbs a song appointed by God to console, one ruminates on a חידה, riddle. If the metareferences of several psalms should coalesce or complement, especially in conversation with their imperative verbs and superscriptions, all this offers good information toward a form of coherency across the collection.

Existing Approaches

The present article tracks imperative verbs and metareferences to interpret the rhetoric of Psalm 45 within the First Korahite Collection. Consequently, it outlines an alternative to two prevailing theories about the coherence of these psalms, namely, the *narrative* and the *characterological*. The section that follows revisits Psalm 45 and its canonical environs before offering a critique of these two approaches.

Psalm 45 is, uniquely, a "song of loves," according to its MT superscription. The first-person voice of a scribal persona bookends the composition; in the middle, it praises the king in direct address, and it envisions a wedding scene. Psalm 45 sits at the midpoint of the First Korahite Collection, which consists of eight psalms running consecutively from Psalm 42 through Psalm 49. In the Masoretic Text (MT), these psalms share a common author designation: לבני־קרח, *of* or *by* or *concerning* the sons of Korah. (The exception to this is Psalm 43.) Their type or genre designations are more varied. Two psalms at the start of the collection, Pss. 42 and 44, are called משכיל, instruction. Four psalms, Pss. 46–49, are designated as either שיר or מזמור, a song or a psalm, respectively (שיר = Pss. 45, 46, 48; מזמור = Pss. 47, 48, 49). Only one psalm possesses both of these descriptors, משכיל as well as שיר: Psalm 45.[13]

The genres scholars assign to these psalms are similarly bifurcated: Psalms 42–44 are laments. By contrast, the remaining members of the First Korahite Collection reflect a quite different genre and mood. If the opening three psalms sound beleaguered and importunate, the psalms from Psalm 45 onward are celebratory and, in the last instance, Psalm 49, reflective.[14] Psalm 45 contains some element of request, perhaps even prayer, addressed to the kingly figure (vv. 4–5[3–4]), and it also admonishes the queen (v.

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12. For a metareferential analysis of poetic discourse, see Jancsó 2009: "In literary studies, the investigation of metareferentiality has focused primarily on prose fiction, while meta-phenomena in drama and poetry have attracted considerably less critical attention" (2009: 451).

13. Compare the treatment of "the titles of the First Korahite Collection" in Firth 2020: 21–40, here 29–34. Note as well that Psalm 48 is both a מזמור and a שיר. All but one psalm (Psalm 48) in the Korahite Collection share the further designation למנצח. LXX translates the latter with εἰς τὸ τέλος, "to the end" (on which, see Ausloos 2006).

14. Michael Goulder: "There is thus a strong common content to the triumphal hymns 46, 47, and 48; and enough common content to 45 with its three successors to give *prima facie*

11[10]), but its overall timbre is joyful. So, too, with Psalm 46: in it, a communal voice rejoices in the city of God. Psalm 47 as an enthronement psalm celebrates God's kingship, whereas Psalm 48, another Zion song, celebrates God's city. Psalm 49, the closing psalm of the First Korahite Collection, meditates on the transience of earthly prosperity.

A narrative interpretation of the First Korahite Collection takes its departure from these author superscriptions and genres, and it understands their coherency as *dramatic* (or perhaps antiphonal); it answers the implicit question, "what *story* do these psalms tell?" The לבני־קרח titles set the parameters of the collection, and then the shift of genres within the collection constitutes it into "call" and "response": Pss. 42–44 articulate a request for which Pss. 45–48 present the divine answer. Erich Zenger writes as follows (1995: 182–83):

> The juxtaposition of individual psalms forms a theological-programmatic composition beginning with Pss. 42/43 as an individual song of longing for encounter with the God of Zion… This individual complaint is sharpened by the following 44th Psalm with its collective accusation of God for rejecting his people. *The four psalms 45–48 then answer this composite lament with their proclamation of the God of Zion*, who saved the inhabitants of the city of God and the "daughters of Judah" who lived around it, and indeed who pacified the whole earth and the nations.

> Die Juxtaposition der Einzelpsalmen [bildet] eine theologisch-programmatische Komposition, die mit Ps 42/43 als individuellem Lied der Sehnsucht nach der Begegnung mit dem Ziongott beginnt…Diese individuelle Klage verschärft sich im folgenden 44. Psalm zur kollektiven Anklage des sein Volk verwerfenden Gottes. *Auf diese mehrfache Klage antworten dann die vier Psalmen 45–48 mit ihrer Proklamation* des die Bewohner der Gottesstadt und die herum wohnenden "Töchter Judas" rettenden, ja die ganze Erde bzw. Völkerwelt befriedenden Ziongottes.[15]

For his part, Francis Xavier Kimmitt envisions Psalm 45 more discontinuously from the Psalms following it. But, similarly to Zenger, he frames the whole collection in terms of complaint and answer (2000: 265, 266):

> The psalmist [in Psalm 44] reiterated the complaints of the individual in Psalms 42 and 43. Why had God forgotten and rejected his covenant people? ... In seeking an answer to these life-and-death questions, the editors/compilers of the Psalter chose to answer in a manner perhaps somewhat unexpected. Psalm 45 was neither a hymn that praised Zion nor a hymn to YHWH the King. *No, the answer to the plea for help was first answered in the person of the king of Israel*, God's blessed and anointed representative on earth.

> The placement of a song for the wedding of a king following three psalms of lament is at first glance unusual. However, in the overall collection, Psalm 45 fills a precise and important niche. It is there to show the value of a godly earthly king to his people. But the final answer to the complaints of Psalms 42–44 is not found in the earthly king. The reader must progress to Zion and her divine King (Psalms 46–48). Their presence in the collection demonstrates the

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justification to a conscious ordering of the collection" (1982: 10); "sad psalms 42–44 and the happy ones 45–48" (1982: 12).

15. The English translation is mine, so, too, the emphasis.

ultimate inadequacy of an earthly king, no matter how godly he is, and the necessity of the rule of YHWH the King.[16]

The drawback of this narrative approach is simply that the affective "moments" of the First Korahite Collection do not fall cleanly into a narrative arc. Psalm 49 is the most obvious "breakdown" of this linearity. It makes for an odd, meditative retrospective after the exuberance of Pss. 46–48. But even individual psalms do not fulfill entirely their prescribed roles within the two-step movement of complaint and answer: Psalms 42–44, though desperate, contain consolatory moments and memories (42.5; 43.3–4; 44.2–7). The psalms "after" the supposed divine response in Psalm 45 also have their fair share of conflict, including mountains quaking, nations in uproar and enemy kings encircling. There is also the inertness of the type designations: although the narrative approach takes interpretive advantage of author designations, the reason for calling Pss. 42, 44, and 45 משכיל, instruction, remains, on this reading, opaque.

Other scholars have discerned an organizing principle for the First Korahite Collection along a different axis—not so much as an antiphonal "call-and-response" but rather in terms of continuous *dramatis personae*. That is, though variously realized, these psalms evoke the same set of characters throughout. The differences and divergences between the psalms are not allocated to consecutive points along a dramatic backbone but rather are understood as pieces within a coherent but static "mosaic." The implicit question to which it corresponds is: "what (or whose) *identity/ies* do these psalms render?"

Of the characters running through the collection, God is the most easily traceable. Others that seem relatively stable are the people of God and the city of God—these could perhaps even be different faces of the same, single character. Enemies and nations are also recurrent characters. Psalm 45 is the outlier; it does mention God, though only twice and as the patron of the human king, but its focus on this human king is unique within the collection, as is its sympathetic mention of a foreign queen. Because these personae diverge from those of psalms around it, some interpreters have attempted to "fill in" the identity of Psalm 45's king and queen with material from surrounding psalms. Early on, Ibn Ezra had recorded the possibility that "the daughters of the king" (in Ps. 45.10[9]) "[are] a metaphor for the cities, and the queen is a metaphor for the messiah's city" (2009: 25). In other words, he identifies the queen, otherwise anomalous in the First Korahite Collection, with the city of God that is central to the following Pss. 46 and 48.

Similar efforts have been made more recently. Seth Postell in a 2019 article identifies the kingly figure of Psalm 45 with God.[17] Postell homes in on what he calls "divine descriptions": אלהים in v. 7[6] is a longstanding crux, but if it is read as a vocative, the psalm addresses the king as God (2019: 150). So, too, Postell finds that the command to the queen to "bow down to [the king]" in v. 12b[11b] (והשתחוי) is "only fittingly offered

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16. Kimmitt's thesis follows "the methodology of [David] Howard, [Barry] Davis, and [Robert] Cole" (2000: 26).

17. In making this claim, Postell relies on Adam Copenhaver, whose interpretation of the king is yet more directly theological: "We now have a psalm not just about a historical, unknown king, and not just about a future, idealized king, but it is ultimately a psalm about Yahweh Himself. He is king, and He has entered into covenant marriage with His people" (2009: 76). Compare, similarly, Electa Lim's cautious endorsement (2017: 250).

to God in the book of Psalms" (2019: 151).[18] The closing pledge by the scribal voice to "perpetuate" the king's "name" in all generations is an act elsewhere dedicated "exclusively" to God (2019: 151, following Wilson 1985). If in this way Postell homogenizes the king of Psalm 45 with the divine character in the rest of the First Korahite Collection, he also proposes to fold the queen and her entourage into "the speakers of the three previous Sons of Korah psalms (Pss. 42–44) who long to come into God's presence" (2019: 153). "The bride [is] a metaphor for God's people" (2019: 154).

The trouble with the characterological approach is that none of the characters of Psalm 45 map cleanly onto personae from surrounding psalms (see Table 1 below). The king of Psalm 45 is not God, even if he is afforded some divine prerogatives. The bride is not in any obvious way the praying voice of the preceding Pss. 42–44; nor is she the city of God whom the people walk about and observe in the following Pss. 46 and 48. Nor, as Simon Cheung has suggested, is she the nations that join the "people of the God of Abraham" in praising God in Psalm 47 (2016: 339). Her description may resonate with one or several or even all of these other characters. But as the section below proposes, these character resemblances and differences are not the main point of the First Korahite Collection to communicate. Rather, these and other features are subordinate to the rhetoric of each psalm—what the psalms seek *to do*. As with the narrative interpretation, the characterological reading depends on author designations to define the parameters of the collection, but it leaves type designations exegetically inert.

Table 1. Dramatis personae.

	Divine	Sympathetic humans	Enemy humans	Nonhumans
Pss. 42/43	Elohim; living God	N/A	enemy, foe (42.10, 11[9, 10]; 43.2); ungodly nation (43.1)	house of God (42.5b[4b]), divine dwellings, mountain of God's sanctuary (43.3); the land of Jordan, the Hermon, the hill Mizar (42.7b[6b])
Ps. 44	divine face, arm	ancestors (v. 2[1]); our armies (v. 10[9])	nations (v. 3[2]); neighbors (v. 14[13])	
Ps. 45	Elohim	king; daughters of kings (v. 10[9]); daughter of Tyre and her retinue	peoples; king's enemies (v. 6[5])	king's palace (v. 16b[15b])
Ps. 46	Elohim; Yhwh Ṣᵉbā'ôt; the God of Jacob (vv. 8, 12 [7, 11])	none	nations, kingdoms (v. 7[6])	river, streams, the city of God (v. 5[4])
Ps. 47	Elohim; Yhwh	peoples (v. 2a [1a]); princes of the peoples (v. 10a[9a])?	peoples, nations (v. 4a, 9a [3a, 8a])	the pride of Jacob (v. 5b[4b])
Ps. 48	Yhwh; Elohim	daughters of Judah (v. 12b[11b])	kings (v. 5[4])	Zion, the city of our God (v. 3[2]); temple (v. 10b[9b])
Ps. 49	Elohim	the upright (v. 15 [14])	bullies (v. 6b[5b]); those who trust and boast in wealth (v. 7[6]); the foolish (v. 14a[13a])	houses, dwellings (v. 12 [11]); beasts (v. 13b[12b]); Sheol (vv. 15, 16 [14, 15])

18. Peshitta has here √sgd, "worship." LXX, Aquila, and Symmachus share the same, less exalted verb: προσκυνέω.

A Rhetorical Approach

Instead of plotting the psalms of the First Korahite Collection into a two-step narrative or squeezing continuous personae out of their various characters, the present article traces the rhetoric of these psalms as it is expressed in imperative verbs (Table 2 below) and metareferences (Table 3). It also gives weight to superscriptions—not just the author designations that suggest editorial grouping but also the type designations that represent

Table 2. Imperatives.

	Addressing the deity	Addressing humans
Ps. 42	N/A	hope in God! [תהמי] (vv. 6b, 12b[5b, 11b])
Ps. 43	judge me / argue my case / rescue me [תפלטני שפטני \ ריבה] (v. 1); send your light and truth / let them bring me to the mountain of your sanctuary [שלח \ יביאוני] (v. 3a); let me come to the altar of God [אבואה] (v. 4)	hope in God! [תהמי] (v. 5b)
Ps. 44	wake up! get up! [עורה הקיצה] (v. 24[23]); stand up! redeem us! [קומה \ פדנה] (v. 27 [26])	N/A
Ps. 45	N/A	strap on your sword! succeed! ride out! let your strong hand teach you [חגור \ צלח \ רכב \ תורך] (vv. 4–5[3–4]); listen! consider! forget [שמעי \ וראי \ ושכחי] (v. 11[10]) let him desire! [ויתאו] (v. 12a[11a])
Ps. 46	N/A	come, see Yhwh's deeds! [לכו־חזו] (v. 9a[8a]); be still and know that I am God [הרפו ודעו] (v. 11 [10])
Ps. 47	N/A	clap / shout to God! [תקעו \ הריעו] (v. 2[1]); sing to God! [זמרו] (v. 7[6] [4x], 8b[7b])
Ps. 48	N/A	let Zion be glad / let the towns of Judah rejoice [ישמח \ תגלנה] (v. 12[11]) walk around Zion/go around it/count its towers/ examine its defenses / tour its fortifications [פסגו \ סבו \ והקיפוה \ סשרוש \ שיתו] (vv. 13–14 [12–13])
Ps. 49	N/A	listen / stretch out your ear [שמעו \ האזינו](v. 2[1]); do not fear [אל תירה] (v. 17a[16a])

Table 3. Metareferences.

Pss. 42/43	his song [שירה] / a prayer (42.9b, c[8b, c])
Ps. 44	a taunt [חרפה] / a byword [משל] (?) (44.14a, 15a[13a, 14])
Ps. 45	a good word [דבר טוב] / my work [מעשי] (45.2[1]); cf. also 45.18[17], I will cause your name to be remembered [אזכירה]
Ps. 46	N/A
Ps. 47	sing praises (with) a song of instruction [משׂכיל] (47.8b[7b])
Ps. 48	N/A; but see: we have thought [√דמה] on your חסד (48.10[9])
Ps. 49	meditation of my heart [הגות לבי] / parable [משׁל] (49.4b–5[3b–4])

summary judgments about the profile of each individual psalm. The section below discusses the psalms before and after Psalm 45 and then turns to Psalm 45 itself in the following, final section.

Looking first, then at the imperative verbs of the opening two psalms, Pss. 42 and 43—the first four verses of Psalm 43 issue in a series of petitions addressed to the deity: judge me, argue my case, rescue me (v. 1); send your light and truth, let them bring me to the mountain of your sanctuary (v. 2), let me come to the altar of God (v. 3; cf. 42.3[2]). This psalm is, thus, truly a *prayer*. By contrast, Psalm 42 makes no overt requests to God. Instead, its individual speaking voice interrogates itself, asking repeatedly, "why are you cast down, O my soul?" (42. 6a[5a], 12a[11a]; 43.5a) and advising repeatedly, "hope in God!" (42.6b[5b], 12b[11b]; 43.5b); the same refrain concludes Psalm 43. Interpreted together, then, these opening psalms appear to be both a petitionary *prayer* (תהלה) and a *self-exhortation*. The targets, so to speak, of the psalms' rhetoric are the deity and the psalmist's own נפש. These mutually support one another. The psalmist voices longing and misery to motivate the deity to act out of pity, but the psalmist's admonitions to their own נפש also function as an "inducement strategy" to the deity (Sumner 2019).[19] By urging confidence that they will praise God in the future, the psalm in effect obligates the deity to take action, and by remembering a past festal celebration (as in 42.5[4]), the psalmist tantalizes the deity that these good times could happen once more. At the same time, the psalm's prayers to God serve its own interior purpose: calling on God is a way of "remembering in advance" and so of reversing the psalmist's downcast-ness of soul.

It is not accidental, then, that Psalm 42 contains a metareference both to prayer and song. The syntax of its v. 9[8] is opaque, but the verse imagines Yhwh commanding his חסד by day; and at night, his song is near, appositionally described as a prayer as well.

יומם יצוה יהוה חסדו
ובלילה שירה עמי תפלה לאל חיי

By day Yhwh commands his loyalty
And by night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life[20]

As John Goldingay observes, "the MT verse division implicitly identifies [the prayer] as another way of describing [the] song" (2007: 28). These two genre designations would seem to trend in different directions—songs *celebrate* whereas prayers *request*. But that multi-directionality could suggest the psalms' own rhetorical duality, hailing the deity as well as its own soul. Perhaps "the song" of v. 9 [8] is itself the form of the חסד that Yhwh commands, a gift to the downcast psalmist of proleptic praise; perhaps even the petitionary prayer falls under that same חסד descriptor. After all, the psalm as a composition

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19. On "piety as inducement in the psalms": Sumner 2019: 741–42; cf. Charney, "Praise as Divine Currency (2015: 17–38).

20. LXX, Symmachus, and Aquila of MT v. 9b [LXX Ps. 41.9] correspond closely to MT, including the seeming apposition of words for song (LXX and Symmachus: ᾠδὴ, ode, Aquila: ᾆσμα) and prayer (LXX: προσευχὴ), although LXX and Symmachus lack the third-person possessive (his) that marks MT. Where MT has שירה, Origen, however, translates δηλώσει, "a making visible, shining."

helps the reader articulate their need to God, and in this way, it, too, could count as a token of divine חסד.

At any rate, these two psalms are themselves the site where the psalmist's tears—which appear יומם ובלילה, day and night (42.4[3]), the same times as "his song" and "a prayer" in 42.9[8]—and the divine loyalty (חסד) both come to speech. Psalms 42 and 43 are not overtly didactic, and yet they do offer instruction to their readers and pray-ers. They include a notably introspective dimension: v. 5[4] of Psalm 42 witnesses the psalmist's own "remembering" (√זכר), calling up past joy to encourage themselves toward hope (and also to remind the deity of what had been and what again might be). In effect, a reader or reciter of these two psalms repeats the inward journey of the psalmist and re-inhabits their self-exhortation. This feature of the psalm—which we might call meditative or even educative—appears to have inspired early interpreters to give Psalm 42 its type designation as a משכיל, instruction. Though it is a song and a prayer, it is also a model that helps effectuate the hoping in God that is its rhetorical goal.

Psalm 44 likewise addresses a petition to God, though a communal one, closing with imperative verbs to wake up and get up! (in v. 24[23]) and to stand up! help us! save us! (in v. 27). Like Pss. 42 and 43, it too mentions and also implements *remembrance*—that which our ancestors "recounted" (√ספר), that which God did בימי קדם, in days of old (v. 2b[1b]). But unlike the preceding psalms, the remembering in Psalm 44 is not to uplift the נפש of the speaking persona(e); rather, remembrance is weaponized—to accuse the deity (in v. 10[9]). The "not-forgetting" of the psalmists (√שכח, vv. 18, 21[17, 20]) is juxtaposed with divine forgetting (√שכח, v. 25[24]). The psalm registers a gaping contrast between past salvation and present suffering to shame God into action. Psalm 44 traffics heavily in the language of shame: God formerly *shamed* the psalmist's enemies (C-stem of √בוש in v. 8b[7b]), but now the psalm says to God, "you've rejected and humiliated us" (√זנח and √כלם, v. 10a[9a]); "you make us a taunt [חרפה] / a scorn and a derision [לעג וקלס]" (v. 14 [13]), and even, in v. 15a[14a], a משל among the nations. משל[21] is usually translated as "proverb" or "parable." The misfortune of the reciting community is, in effect, becoming proverbial, an object lesson to other countries. Rhetorically, though, this stinging concatenation of shame-words acts as a metarefence: the psalm *itself* is a taunt and a משל—not just to the nations but also to the deity.

If Psalm 44 in this way "teaches a lesson" to the deity, it does the same for its human readership.[22] To them it is an instruction in prayer. It provides a script by which to accuse and motivate the deity to intervene—while also deterring the reader from forgetfulness and forsaking the path. By re-voicing its insistence on not-forgetting and not-turning (see vv. 18–19[17–18]), a reader cultivates these refusals. The psalm's משכיל type designation appears to reflect and confirm this pedagogical quality. Instead of an opening antiphon of complaint or an anticipatory rendition of a character, the first three psalms of the First Korahite Collection *pray,* and by praying, they stage *instruction in prayer*; for both these purposes, they draw on memories of past, positive moments with God, whether festal (Psalm 42) or military (Psalm 44).

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21. The Hebrew word משל crops up frequently in the Balaam Story (Num. 23–24), in Proverbs, and Ezekiel, but it appears only four times in the Psalter, once in the First Korahite Collection (Ps. 49.5[4]).

22. Cf. deClaissé-Walford: "we might understand Psalm 44 as a 'teaching' Psalm" (2008: 130).

The imperative verbs of the four psalms following Psalm 45 also instigate *remembrance*, albeit of a different quality. Psalms 46, 47, and 48 address, not God, but rather their human readership, and urge it to praise God. To fuel that praise, they direct their readers to pursue a purposeful, introspective activity. Psalm 46 exhorts to "come and *see* (or: envision [חזו]) the works of Yhwh," and it holds up the city of God as the exemplary object of that sight. Psalm 48 similarly takes its readers on a virtual tour of the city of God: "walk around Zion; go around it; count its towers" (vv. 13–14[12–13]). The verb for "count" here matches the "recounting" of ancestors from Psalm 44 (√ספר); it also undergirds the word for "scribe" in Psalm 45.[23] That the walking and counting is an inward, mental activity is clear from the verb at the head of Ps. 48.10[9]: דמינו, "we *think* (or: meditate, or even: analogize), O God, on your חסד"; and also from the next imperative in v. 14[13]: שיתו לבכם לחילה, "consider well her ramparts" (NIV), but more literally, "put to your heart a rampart," or even, "put as a rampart (in)to your heart." The idiom communicates the deliberate fixing of attention. These psalms praise God, but they (and especially Pss. 46 and 48) do so by simulating a visit to the "city of God." Such visiting occurs as a work of calling-to-mind—of "thinking on" or "analogizing" the divine loyalty (√דמה; Ps. 48.10[9]). Psalm 49, the final member of the First Korahite Collection, begins with verbs of command: שמעו / האזינו (listen / stretch out your ear, v. 2[1])—the selfsame commands that appear in Psalm 45, on which more below. Having secured the attention of its readers, Psalm 49 ushers them into a sustained meditation of the heart.

Psalms 46–48 contain few if any metareferences, with one notable exception. Their type designations unambiguously identify these psalms as a שיר, a מזמור, and a שיר, respectively, which certainly reflect their celebratory profile. And yet these psalms, too, reflect an educative dimension. The most important evidence of this is Ps. 47.8b[7b]: it exhorts the reader, זמרו משכיל, "sing praise *maskîl*." משכיל, instruction, is here the direct object of the verb: it is the form or mode that the action of praising assumes. Hence the CEB translation: "Sing praises with a song of instruction." The psalm thus epitomizes itself. Psalm 47, and maybe, too, the psalms flanking it, not only celebrate but also instruct. They praise wisely and make wise unto praise.

What Psalms 46–48 do is *praise* God. They command and exhort their human readers to join in this activity. As part of that encouragement, Pss. 46 and 48 bring the city of God before the "mind's eye." The time signature for this exercise differs from that of Pss. 42–44: the laments summon up countervailing good memories from the past, whereas the songs of Pss. 46–48 construct a "rampart to the heart" to access a good, present reality. But the point remains. The interior site where these meditations take place is the same: the לב, heart (44.19[18]; Pss. 45.2[1]; 46.3[2]; 48.14[13]). If God "knows the secrets of the heart" (Ps. 44.22b[21b]), that is well because these psalms all aim for that organ. The genre and timbre of these songs also vary from those of the laments, as do their type designations. But if the latter are pedagogical in that they guide the reader down into the depths of memory to foster a refusal of downcast-ness and divine forgetting, the former would count as pedagogical for much the same reason—they guide the reader through the cityscape of Zion, which the onslaught of enemy kings cannot touch.

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23. Kimmitt makes similar and even more detailed lexical observations (2000: 200, 202, also 260). Compare also lexical observations about the Korahite psalms in Goulder 1982: 3–4.

Psalm 49 in closing is called a מזמור and yet also and at the same time describes itself with a series of metareferential lines; its vv. 4–5[3–4]a read:

פי ידבר חכמות והגור לבי תבונות
אטה למשל אזני אפתח בכנור חידתי

My mouth speaks wisdom(s) / the meditation of my heart is understanding(s)
I stretch out my ears to a proverb [משל] / I open my riddle [חידה] on the lyre

A number of the terms and phrases in this programmatic statement recall earlier psalms in the Collection. פי,[24] my mouth, echoes the orality of the scribe at the outset of Psalm 45, which speaks of his לשון, tongue. The לב, heart, is the same inward location where other activities in preceding psalms happen. The "stretching out of the ears" is the same action enjoined upon the bride in Ps. 45.11[10]. Most distinctively, however, the word for "proverb" here is משל, the same as in Ps. 44.15[14]. Like the three psalms before it, what Psalm 49 offers is an exercise in focused attention, a meditation, only here it is one that is joined overtly to music.

The Contribution of Psalm 45

And so we come to Psalm 45. Considered alongside the rhetoric of surrounding psalms, it yields several distinctive contributions. It, too, strongly thematizes *remembrance* and *forgetting*. Its imperative verbs of v. 11[10] are important in this regard; they address the royal bride and urge her:

שמעי־בת וראי\והטי אזנך
ושכחי עמך ובית אביך

Listen, daughter, and see / and stretch out your ears!
And forget your people and the house of your father!

As noted above, the commandments to listen and look closely parallel those of Psalm 49 at the end of the collection. The verb for forgetting (√שכח) is the same that the immediately preceding psalm, Psalm 44, uses three times to describe what the speaking community had not done vis-à-vis God (vv. 18, 21[17, 20]), but what God had done toward it (v. 25[24]). If this literary context had not already underlined the motif of remembering, Psalm 45's closing verse would: the scribal voice pledges there to cause the king's name to be *remembered* to all generations (אזכירה שמך בכל־דר ודר), so that peoples may praise him (על־כן עמים יהודך לעלם ועד).

But the commandment to forget is unique to Psalm 45. Other psalms in the First Korahite collection encourage remembrance, but Psalm 45 alone takes up its negative counterpart: the purposeful surrendering of memories that anchor someone to a rival

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24. Cf. Kimmitt: "Psalm 49 displays a large number of lexical connections, particularly incidental repetitions, with all of the psalms of the corpus, suggesting the deliberate placement of this wisdom psalm at the conclusion of the first collection of Qorahite psalms" (2000: xv, see also the summary on p. 136).

loyalty. In this connection, the addressee is significant; the imperatives earmark a female recipient—and she is characterized as foreign, a "daughter of Tyre" (v. 13[12]). Both these qualities remove the exhortation one step away from the psalmist's own readership—they, *we*, are not hailed directly, but we overhear the command to a foreign, female other, at the moment of her crossing the threshold into the community with which the psalm aligns itself. This is a complex and powerful rhetorical effect. It might be compared with the admonition to foreign kings embedded within Psalm 2: "and now, O kings, be wise / serve Yhwh with fear / submit sincerely" (vv. 10a, 11a, 12a).[25] These imperatives ostensively face outward. But in fact, the kings proxy for the reciting community. Their non-Israel-ness, as with the bride's in Psalm 45, adds a kind of negative incentive: those who do not comply with the psalms' rhetorical "ask" remain *outsiders*. Those who *do* comply, as with the bride, seal their own belonging.

Psalm 45 contains a number of metareferences. Verse 2[1] says it is a דבר טוב, good word, and a מעשה, work. But one more oblique metareference hints at an additional instructional purpose for the psalm. Verse 4[3] addresses the king and urges him to strap on his sword and ride out על־דבר־אמת, literally, "on a word of truth" (v. 5b[4b]).[26] The construct chain following the preposition occurs in identical form only once elsewhere in the Bible, in Ps. 119.43a, where it runs parallel to *torah*, teaching or instruction (v. 44a):

ואל תצל מפי דבר־אמת...
ואשמרה תרתך תמיד

Do not take from my mouth **(a) word of truth**…
And I will keep your *torah* continually.

Psalm 45 has already been described as a דבר; it requires no great inference to consider this דבר־אמת in v. 5[4] as a further self-description; the good word is a word of truth. The king's own role as a *teacher* corroborates this possibility. Teacher is but one of his offices. He is a fighter bearing a sword (v. 4a[3a]) and shooting arrows (v. 6[5]). He is a paragon of beauty ("you are the fairest" [יפיפית], v. 3a[2a]). But also "grace is poured out on [his] lips" (v. 3b[2b]). That is to say, his *speech* is important.[27] Further, v. 5[4] commands him: "let your right hand *teach* you [ותורך] wonders." Early interpreters linked this teaching (√ירה) with Torah.[28] The Peshitta, for example, reads not a jussive

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25. Reading with Goldingay 2006: 92.
26. The prepositional phrase על־דבר, literally meaning "upon or concerning a word," usually communicates cause (see examples in Gen. 20.11,18; 12.17; 43.18; Exod. 8.8; Num. 17.14; and Ps. 79.9), also substitution (Exod. 8.8); see Briggs ad loc. LXX translates with ἕνεκεν: βασίλευε ἕνεκεν ἀληθείας, become king *for the sake of* truth (NETS, my emphasis). Note, however, that Aquila understands the phrase more literally: ἐπίβηθι ἐπὶ λόγου ἀληθείας, tread on a word of truth, and so, too, with the Peshitta. Electa Lim's treatment is thorough and helpful; she draws in Prov. 29.12a as a key comparison (2017: 162–68, esp. 166).
27. TgPss paraphrases MT v. 3b: "the spirit of prophecy has been placed on your lips."
28. See TgPss version of MT v. 11: "Hear, O congregation of Israel, the Torah of his [i.e., the king's] mouth, and see the wonders of his deeds, and incline your ear to the words of Torah, and you will forget the evil deeds of the wicked of your people, and the place of idols that you worshiped in the house of your father." Where MT has ותורך, LXX has ὁδηγήσει, will lead or guide, Aquila has φωτίσει, will shine, and Symmachus has ὑποδείξέι, will show. See also

verb "teach" but a noun, *nāmōsêk,* "your law": "your law is in the fear of your right hand."

As with the imperatives to the daughter of Tyre, the imperatives to the king are one step removed from the psalm's own readership. A jussive verb exhorts his right hand to teach him. But here again, characterization is subordinate to rhetorical gambit. The king is eminently desirable, "more beautiful than the sons of men"; the whole composition is a "song of loves," after all, and not only between the royal bridegroom and bride but also that of the speaking voice for the king and, by extension, of us readers for the king. Hence his activity of defending the word of truth, and of receiving instruction, are also made desirable to the psalm's readers. Some of the king's prerogatives are, so to speak, incommunicable. But engaging instruction and being taught wonders, loving righteousness and hating wickedness (as in v. 8[7]), are all quite imitable. Psalm 45's dual type designation reflects this dynamic: the psalm is truly a form of משכיל, instruction, even as it is also a שיר commemorating the king.[29]

In summary, then, Psalm 45 doesn't just have unique characters, though that is true. Rather, what it contributes is a unique rhetorical strategy relative to the other psalms in the First Korahite Collection, to which characterization is integral.[30] The imperative verbs of the psalm do not directly target either God or the psalm's readers. They are scaffolded: some address the king, whereas others address his bride, with the result that these characters contextualize and orient the activities that the psalm seeks to induce. Psalm 45 loves and lauds the kingly character and so implicitly commends to its readers whatever actions of his they are able to imitate, such as receiving instruction, even divine *torah*. At the same time, Psalm 45 holds up the character of the royal bride, who is also beautiful and desirable (v. 12a). But she is foreign, and her belonging hangs in the balance: the imperatives to her are therefore charged not only with positive value (emulating beautiful people) but also with a negative possibility (remaining alien people).

It is in relation to this character, a lovely and yet also precarious princess, at this precipitous moment of her joining, that Psalm 45 makes its other distinctive contribution to the First Korahite Collection: an inward activity, like the remembering of Pss. 42–44 and the city touring of Pss. 46–48, but unlike them, a work of renunciation, of unknowing. Both these other "halves" of the collection call for לב-work, a deliberate, introspective act: Pss. 42–44 consider the past to encourage divine and human initiative; Pss. 46–48 behold the city of God to incentivize human praise. Psalm 45 renders two characters that pique desire and imitation. But one of these characters also inspires aversion: the commandment to her suggests an undesirable outcome that she may forfend exactly

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Rashi: "As for the exegetical question as to what is the subject of the verb *wĕtôrekā* 'LET HER INSTRUCT YOU', the answer is as follows: As for the Torah, which is the WORD OF TRUTH" (Gruber 2004: 350)

29. *Pace* Amzallag and Yona: "Psalm 45, identified as celebrating a king's wedding, ostensibly evokes no trace of didacticism" (2016: 43); also, and to a lesser extent, Firth: "the importance of [משכיל] appears to reduce progressively as it is pushed further back into the title" (2020: 33). Compare Lim 2017: 259.

30. Character matters to a rhetorical approach but matters differently than to a characterological reading: the latter reads textual features in terms of the personae they cumulatively identify, and the former draws out how characterization contributes to the text's act of persuasion (what does character *do*?).

through the לב-work of forgetting. And the reader must do likewise, releasing the people and the בית אב that might compete with the people of Yhwh and the היכל of his king.

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