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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/23099089/actat.Supp32.20>

ISSN: 1015-8758 (Print)

ISSN: 2309-9089 (Online)

Acta Theologica 2021

Supp 32:357-379

Date received:

1 December 2020

Date accepted:

22 June 2021

Date published:

10 December 2021

Paratextual framings of Psalm 72 and the shaping of interpretive possibilities

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on how paratextual reframings of Psalm 72 have transformed the royal ideology in the psalm. After an initial overview of the core psalm (vv. 1-17), its paratexts are addressed one by one. First, it is noted how the doxology in verses 18-19 is added as a theological correction, creating a tension between the psalm proper and the paratext. It is then argued that verses 1 and 20 cast the psalm as David's prayer for Solomon. The effect of these paratextual activities is then traced over time, first in the Hebrew Bible, in Second Temple literature, in the New Testament, as well as in Christian and Jewish expositions. The article indicates various ways in which the tensions are resolved and how these interactions, in turn, generate new paratexts.

1. MAPPING PATHWAYS

When studying biblical texts, in general, and psalms, in particular, it is often noted that what I will designate as paratextual activity has had fundamental impact on the way in which texts are interpreted.¹ By providing psalms with new frames such as superscriptions, doxologies, and colophons, by compiling psalms into new collections, and by presenting these psalms in various ways across scrolls, codices, and books, interpretive pathways have been suggested for communities of faith to explore. These explorative



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1 For some recent approaches, see Brodersen *et al.* 2020.

acts have, in turn, often left new marks on the text. As various communities of faith have attempted to make sense of the psalms, superscriptions have been replaced, psalms re-segmented, and sequences reimagined. While some paratexts have become part of the psalms proper, others have disappeared entirely. Understanding this process as fundamentally creative, dynamic, and most notably still ongoing, it ultimately challenges the boundaries between formation history and reception history often constructed in scholarly studies.

What, then, is a paratext? According to the French literary scholar Gérard Genette, paratexts are to be viewed as distinct from the text itself. More specifically, they

surround it and extend it, precisely in order to present it ... It is a threshold ... an “undefined zone” between the inside and the outside, ... “a fringe of the printed text *which in reality controls one’s whole reading of the text*” (Genette 1997:1-2, emphasis mine).

Given the importance of paratexts for the reading of the text, and the fact that paratexts are often quite unstable in the transmission of texts – as noted above, they tend to be changed to reflect new interpretive constructs – they provide a rich soil for studies of the use of psalms throughout time and have the potential to provide better understandings of processes of theological transformations.

In this article, I will attempt to do exactly this. I will focus on Psalm 72, which, in its received Masoretic version, has been paratextually (re)framed several times, each time opening new (and often quite specific) ways in which the psalm is supposed to be read, ultimately reshaping its theology and both creating and resolving tensions within the text. I will trace these pathways over time and show how the tensions created by contrasting paratextual frameworks have been variously resolved.

2. ROYAL IDEOLOGY INTRODUCED

To be able to discuss paratextual activity related to Psalm 72, a brief survey of the psalm is needed.² As it is presented in BHS, it is framed by several paratexts. Verse 1 features the superscription *לְשִׁלְמֹה*; verses 18-19 include an extended doxology, which shares features with other doxologies in the “Book” of Psalms (especially the ones found in Pss. 41:14; 89:53; 106:48),³

2 For an overview of research history, see Arneth (2000:23-29); Loretz (2002:172-175).

3 This article will focus on Psalm 72, not on issues of formation of the “Book” of Psalms, neither on possible ways in which the psalm may be read synchronically within the collection. Disregarding

and the psalm closes with a colophon in verse 20. I will return to these paratexts below, but I first turn to the psalm proper.

The bulk of the psalm, which is likely pre-exilic,⁴ and traditionally identified as a “royal psalm” (so Gunkel & Begrich 1985:140-171), more specifically a “Bittgebet für den König/Königssohn” (Zenger 1993:65; Saur 2004:133), could be divided into five stanzas, which relate to one another as follows:⁵

A vv. 1-4	The just and righteous king <i>defends the poor</i>
B vv. 5-8	The reign of the just and righteous king is <u>described with nature images</u>
C vv. 9-11	The just and righteous king is universally recognized
A' vv. 12-14	The just and righteous king <i>defends and cares deeply for the poor</i>
B' vv. 15-17	The reign of the just and righteous king is <u>described with nature images</u> and is universally recognized

The main focus of the psalm is on the just and righteous rule of the king (formulated as wishes), and several themes recur throughout.⁶ The

any “literary context” in such a way (in contrast to the “canonical approach” or *Psalterexegese*) is motivated primarily by the hermeneutics of the Second Temple period, in which Psalm 72 was shaped and made part of compilations of psalms. For a fuller critique of the idea that psalms were compiled to be read in sequence, see Willgren (2016b; 2020). It also follows from this focus that I will not spend time on the relation between Psalm 72:18-19 and the other בָּרַךְ doxologies in the “Book” of Psalms. For an overview and discussion, I instead refer the reader to Willgren (2016b:202-243). Conclusions drawn there will be assumed in this article.

4 There is wide agreement that at least a core of the psalm (see below) can be dated to pre-exilic times, and that it would have been used liturgically, possibly in connection with the enthronement of Davidic kings (Kraus 1989:77; Tate 1990:222; Janowski 2002:102; Zenger 2002:66; Saur 2004:135; Goldingay 2007:381; Mein 2012:98; Salo 2017:215-218), although some have argued for a postexilic setting (Gerstenberger 2001:67-68; Diller 2010:21-22; Becker 2008). Arneith (2000) has suggested a more precise dating in light of the coronation hymn of Ashurbanipal. Although intriguing, it has several problems (see Becker 2008:133-134; Loretz 2002:196-197; Janowski 2002:109-114).

5 Compare most commentators, although the placement of verse 8 has been subject to some discussion. Scholars emphasising thematic similarities regard it as belonging (as an introduction) to the concentrically arranged verses 9-11 (Zenger 1993:66; Janowski 2002:106-109; Meinhold 2004:86-88; Becker 2008:125; Diller 2010:19; Salo 2017:209-215), while scholars emphasising syntax place it together with verses 2-7 (Auffret 1996; Barbiero 2007:75).

6 I am not persuaded by the suggestion that (at least) verses 8-11, 15 and 17bc would be later additions (Renaud 1989; Zenger 2002; Arneith 2000; Janowski 2002; Saur 2004; Becker 2008; Salo 2017). The fundamental arguments of this view are that verses 8-11 interrupt a flow from verse 7 to verse 12, that there is hardly any overlap with the rest of the psalm, and that the focus on universal recognition is found nowhere else in the psalm. All these arguments are problematic.

foundation is laid in the introductory petition in verse 1, which features the only imperative of the psalm: God (אלהים, vocative) is asked to give the king next in line – the king’s son (בן־מלך) – God’s justice (משפט, plural) and righteousness (צדקה). As captured by Tanner (deClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner 2014:577; cf. Saur 2004:140), “[e]verything that follow[s] is dependent on these two petitions”, so that the king is best understood as a vicarious ruler who is supposed to carry out God’s concerns, which the psalms specifically portray as defending the defenceless in society: the poor (עניים) and the needy (אביון).

Portraying God as the source then emphasises that the concern for the poor is ultimately rooted in God’s own kingship (Mein 2012:97; cf. Pss. 96:13; 97:2, 6; 98:9; 99:4; 103:6; 145:15-20; 146:7-9),⁷ and it recurs numerous times in the Hebrew Bible in relation to the human king (Brettler 1989:111-114; Lohfink 1990:110-112; see, for example, Deut. 10:17-18; 2 Sam. 8:15; 1 Kgs. 10:9; Isa. 1:12-17; 11:3-5; 16:5; 32:1; 42:1-9; 61:1-3; Jer. 21:12; 22:2-3, 13-19; 23:5; 33:15; Ezek. 45:9; Am. 5:14-15, 24; Ps. 82; Prov. 8:15-16; 16:10, 12-16; 20:8, 26; 21:3; 25:4-5; 29:4, 14; 31:1-9), not least in the message of the 8th-century prophets Amos, Isaiah, Micah, and Zephaniah (see also Saur 2004:132-152; Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:208-209).

As such, it also shares many features with both Egyptian and Mesopotamian royal ideology, where kings were supposed to uphold the order established by the gods (Keel 1997:280-306; Arneht 2000:54-108), and the protection of the poor and just rule are recurrently emphasised as royal tasks (Kraus 1989:78-79; Janowski 2002:115; Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:205; Salo 2017:251-257; cf. Sanders 2019). Consider, for example, an Egyptian tractate from the New Kingdom, where

Re has established the king on the earth of the living forever and ever, to speak justice to the people and to satisfy the gods, to realize *Maat* (justice, world order) and drive away *Isfet* (chaos) ... (quoted from Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:211),

or the prologue to the Code of Hammurabi:

Two points of critique will suffice here (see further Barbiero 2007; Diller 2010). First, verse 8 belongs syntactically with verse 7 (Auffret 1996) and continues the nature imagery. It is hardly an interruption. Secondly, overlaps with the rest of the psalm are only lacking if removing those overlaps (vv. 15, 17bc), which fit well into their contexts. In what follows, verses 1-17 will therefore be regarded as the pre-exilic core psalm.

7 Kraus (1989:79) notes that, in verses 12-14, the human king performs acts that are elsewhere reserved to God.

At that time [the gods] Anu and Enlil called me, Hammurabi, by name [=commissioned me] to show justice in the land, to destroy the evildoers and those filled with hatred, so that the strong may not oppress the weak, ... as Marduk commanded me, to lead the people and to provide for morality in the land, I placed law and justice in the mouth of the land and cared for the welfare of the people ... (quoted from Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:212).

In essence, Hammurabi was to do on earth what Marduk had done in heaven: to subdue chaos (often through warfare) and to accomplish and preserve the world order (Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:212; cf. Pritchard 1969:178). Social justice can thus be seen to be at the very core of the royal ideologies of the Ancient Near East, and also stays fairly consistent over time and across cultures (Weinfeld 1995; Salo 2017). Attempts to read the psalm in light of specific points of influence (Loretz 2002:196-210) thus often fail (Salo 2017:259).

Returning to the psalm, it can be concluded that *משפט וצדקה* (cf. the Akkadian *kittum*, *mīšarum*, and the Egyptian *ma'at*) are fundamentally related to world order (cf. Janowski 2002:95-101). The care for the poor (vv. 2-4, 12-14)⁸ is both a characteristic of a just and righteous king, and a standard whereby kings are measured (cf. 2 Sam. 15:1-6; Broyles 1997:37-39). In the second, somewhat intensified (following Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:207) section on the poor (vv. 12-14), the use of *כי* can thus be understood as framing the verses as what needs to be done for the wishes in verses 2-11 to become reality (deClaissé-Walford *et al.* 2014:578; Auffret 1996:53). The care for the life of the poor, which in verses 12-14 is described using the relational *גאל* (cf., for example, Lev. 25; 27; Isa. 40-55; Ruth), constitutes “the basis for the king’s dominion” (Tate 1990:224; see Renaud 1989:317; Loretz 2002:171; Barbiero 2007:74), that is, including both the prospect of a long life (vv. 5, 7, 15, 17; cf., for example, Ps. 61:7-8; Dietrich 2012:156-160; Salo 2017:261-268), and a worldwide recognition (note the image of pilgrimage of the nations, vv. 9-11), which includes places both remote (*עַד־אַפְסֵי־אֲרֶץ*, v. 8) and chaotic (*צִיִּים*, v. 9).

The upholding of the divine world order also caused the land to flourish (see the opposite scenario in Psalm 82:2-5). There are numerous parallels to this connection, both in the surrounding Ancient Near Eastern cultures,⁹ and in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁰ Ultimately, the king was supposed to protect cosmos from chaos. His actions in the political sphere affected

8 Note with Goldingay (2007:384) that verse 2 designates the people and the poor as God’s, not the king’s.

9 For an overview, see Dietrich (2012:146-155).

10 See, not least, 2 Samuel 21; Isaiah 32:1-5, 15-20.

nature – harmony and righteousness were expected outcomes of a just king (vv. 5-7; Tate 1990:223; Janowski 2002:116; cf. Assmann 1992:54) – and the psalm overlays these two spheres creatively by first using fertility metaphors to describe the king and his rule (especially vv. 5-7), and then describing the king and his rule as resulting in actual fertility (v. 16).

With such a pervasive focus on the just and righteous rule of the king, it is no surprise that the psalm has been called a *Magna Carta* of royal ideology (Janowski 2002:102). Neither is it surprising that the psalm ends on a high note, with verses 15-17 summarising the main themes (social justice, fertility, and universal recognition) into a final “long live the king!” The people (including the poor) are to continuously (תמיד) pray for the king – whose name is to endure forever (לעולם, v. 17) – and bless him all day long (v. 15).

Ultimately, the use of elevated language is quite appropriate in this context, and it should thus be concluded that the psalm in no way goes beyond what would be expected in light of Ancient Near Eastern royal ideology. Only in one theologically significant area can a distinction be found, namely that, in the Hebrew Bible, YHWH himself is the “Gesetzgeber, der *seine* Rechtssprüche und *seine* Gerechtigkeit dem König gibt, dargestellt” (Salo 2017:238, emphasis original; see Assmann 1992:65).

Although this may rightly be viewed as a theological marginalising of the human king in favour of the divine source, the rhetoric of such a statement would actually give *greater* authority to the justice of the king. Not only is the king himself argued to be divinely appointed; the people are also to recognise that the justice he implements does not derive from him, but from God. Consequently, the “menschheitsgeschichtlicher Paradigmenwechsel” (Zenger 1993:67) should not be taken in a strong sense, as stating beyond doubt that the king is not a “god”. Instead, when viewed in light of the strong language (especially in v. 17a), it would not be surprising if the psalm could have been interpreted in light of the highly elevated (divine) status of kings in the neighbouring cultures, although the ones using the psalm would have had no reason to see in the descriptions of the king any figure beyond the successor to the throne (see Heim 1995:231; Salo 2017:269-270; *contra* Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:218).

3. ROYAL IDEOLOGY CORRECTED

If the above survey is a fair description of the psalm, what happens when a first paratext is added – the doxology in verses 18-19?¹¹ A close look at

11 It is often noted that the doxology has interesting connections to the psalm, but most scholars nevertheless conclude that the doxology is not part of the psalm (Zenger 2002:70; Diller 2010:3;

the relation between the doxology and the psalm proper reveals several interesting overlaps that seem to cast the doxology as a theological correction of the royal expectations in especially verses 15-17 (similarly, Renaud 1989:311; Koch 1994:249; Saur 2004:137-138, 148). Compare for example, verses 18-19 with verse 17:

v. 17 יִנָּן לִפְנֵי־שָׁמַשׁ לְעוֹלָם שְׁמוֹ יְהִי

v. 18 לְבַדּוֹ נִפְלְאוֹת עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה בְּרוּךְ

v. 19 וְאֲמַן אֲמַן הָאָרֶץ אֲתִּיבֵל כְּבוֹדוֹ וַיִּמְלֵא לְעוֹלָם כְּבוֹדוֹ שֵׁם וּבְרוּךְ

In verse 17, the psalmist wishes for the name (שם) of the king to endure forever (לעולם),¹² and that all nations (כל־גוים) be blessed by him (ברך, *hithpael*; cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 22:18; 28:14), as they pronounce happiness over him (אשר, *piel*). ברך is also found in verse 15 (ברך, *piel*), where it is the last part of three wishes (that the king may receive gold of Sheba, prayers, and blessings) that follow a cry of homage (ויחי).¹³ Emphasis is also placed on the lasting nature of these wishes (כל־היום, תמיד).

In the doxology, the same terminology is used, but now, it is no longer the king who is the recipient of the people's blessings. Instead, it is YHWH God (אלהים יהוה), the god of Israel (אלהי ישראל). The name of the human king (שם) is sidelined in favour of the name of YHWH (שם). Moreover, YHWH is to be blessed forever (ברך, *passive qal*, לעולם), and his glory is said to extend, not only to the land or the nations (see, for example, v. 16), but to the whole earth (את כל־הארץ). The use of ארץ here thus contrasts the notion that the human king is to rule "from the River to the ends of the earth" (ומנהר עד־אפסי־ארץ, v. 8; see also vv. 6, 16).

Furthermore, while the psalm has emphasised the righteous works of the human king, the doxology stresses that God *alone* (לבדו) does wondrous things (נפלאות; cf. Pss. 40:5; 86:10; 136:4, and the connection between פלא and God's חסד or משפט in Pss. 17:7; 31:21; 105:5; 106:7; 107:8, 15, 21, 31; 136:4).

see Heim 1995:231; Barbiero 2007:82). As noted in footnote three above, I will not focus here on its relation to the other doxologies ברך of Psalms.

12 The contrast between דור דורים (v. 5) and לעולם (v. 17), suggested by Saur (2004:144), is not convincing, given that the same metaphor is used in both instances (cf. Diller 2010:3-9).

13 Hossfeld & Zenger (2005:216-217) point to enthronement rituals as possible backgrounds for this cry (see 1 Sam. 10:24; 2 Sam. 16:16; 1 Kgs. 1:25, 31, 34, 39, featuring יחי without 1). They also argue that the third petition has the poor as recipients of the gold of Sheba, the prayers, and the blessings (Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:203-204), but this is an unnatural reading in light of the fact that in verses 13b-14, the poor are exclusively referred to with the plural (דמים, נפשם, אביונים), while the king is found in the singular (יחסי, בעיניו, וישיע), and that the king is the recipient of gifts earlier in the psalm (v. 10; cf. Kraus 1989:80; Tate 1990:224; Goldingay 2007:391).

Ultimately, then, this creates a clear tension between the two agents that, at the very least, de-emphasises the role played by the vicarious ruler. The purpose of the paratextual activity is thus best understood as a theological corrective. Royal expectations are played down, as the doxology shifts the focus away from the human king and towards YHWH as the one true king (cf. Ps. 146:3-10). As will become clear below, subsequent interpreters have attempted to resolve this tension in various ways.

4. ROYAL IDEOLOGY DAVIDISED

Turning to the next set of paratexts, the first (v. 20) is quite unexpected. As I have argued elsewhere, the verse was likely originally a colophon that concluded the first part of a collection of psalms split across two scrolls (Willgren 2016a). If correct, it would originally have had very little to do with Psalm 72, but as the collection was copied onto new scrolls, the colophon was, for some reason, not replaced (perhaps due to the relation between the תפלות of the colophon and Psalm 72 being a prayer, speaking about constant prayer, v. 15), but froze in place. A consequence of this paratextual activity is that verse 20 no longer communicated only to scribes making new copies of the manuscript, but also to the readers of the psalm. Since תפלות דוד was made integral to a psalm juxtaposed to other psalms, and since these psalms were increasingly provided with the superscription לדוד, a process still ongoing in the late Second Temple period (see Willgren Davage 2020), the colophon would have played an important part in this ongoing Davidisation of psalmody. Put briefly, the colophon has as an effect that Psalm 72 is now explicitly related to David and transmitted together with other psalms (indicated by the plural תפלות) – both psalms related to David, psalms emphasising the kingship of YHWH (for example, Pss. 93-100), and psalms focusing on the future of Davidic kingship (for example, Ps. 89:37-38, where the eternal government of the king is also compared to the sun and the moon).

How, then, does this affect the interpretation of the psalm? I noted above that most scholars agree that (at least the core of) the psalm is pre-exilic, and that it may have been used in enthronement liturgies related to the Davidic dynasty. If this is indeed the case, a connection to this dynasty was probably always present. However, with the freezing of the colophon, the psalm could now be read as *specifically related* to David, who emanates as a speaking voice (which he would not have been in pre-exilic use). It thus anchors the psalm in a specific historical context in contrast to its earlier possible application to any king in the Davidic

dynasty (so also Kraus 1989:76; Meinhold 2004:90; Janowski 2002:114; *contra*, for example, Arneth 2000).

A second effect of reading the psalm as a prayer of David is that it would now have been possible to identify the son of this praying king with Solomon (see also Tate 1990:222-223; cf. Barbiero 2007:87; Zenger 2002:73). If not present before, which it may have been, given the possible allusions to the Solomon story in the Psalms proper,¹⁴ it would make sense if the psalm was now provided with the superscription לשלמה, verse 1 (similarly, Saur 2004:137; cf. Diller 2010:20-21). Placed as a framework around the psalm, the two paratexts would then introduce the psalm as David's prayer for Solomon (cf. Heim 1995:235).

An additional and fairly crucial observation needs to be made here. Given that the historical context in which these paratexts were added is the Second Temple period, that is, a time when Israel had no king, an association of the psalm to David and Solomon likely did not only suggest a reading oriented towards the past. The grand statements of the psalm would also be understood as oriented towards the future (see also Tate 1990:222; Gillingham 2018:386-387 [vol. 2]; Gerstenberger 2001:68; Salo 2017:270-272; Renaud 1989:322; but differently, Saur 2004:143), as will be observed below.¹⁵ The reference to David as בן־ישי may also point in such a direction if read in light of passages such as 1 Samuel 23:1; Isaiah 11:1, 10, and 11Q5 27 2. Evidently, without such an orientation, it would be difficult to account for the fact that royal psalms were preserved in this period of time (Willgren 2017; cf. Broyles 1997:24; Zenger 2002:66, 78). Consequently, the paratextual framing invites a consideration of the words of the psalm as David speaking prophetically about a future king, not at the *expense of*, but as an *extension of* the historical focus (cf. Poorthuis 2007:264).¹⁶ Praying for the king, David then also unexpectedly joins ranks with the people and the poor, since they are the ones praying for the king in verse 15 (cf. Barbiero 2007:87).

This paratextual activity, however, does not solve the tension noted above between the psalm proper and the doxology, although it is somewhat

14 Compare, for example, verses 10 and 11 with 1 Kgs. 10, the emphasis on justice with 1 Kgs. 3:28, and the vast kingdom with 1 Kgs. 5:1. (See also Gerstenberger 2001:65; Kraus 1989:76; Carrière 1991; Zenger 2002:80-81; Saur 2004:150-151; Goldingay 2007:383).

15 Zenger (2002:74) proposes that verse 20 should be read in light of the biographical superscriptions, and that it does *not* refer to David as king. I have argued for another way of understanding these superscriptions in Willgren (2019).

16 It is widely recognised that, in the late Second-Temple period, psalms were read as prophetic literature related to David (see 11Q5 27 11, the pesharim, and the New Testament).

reframed, as the realisation of the hope of a future king depends on YHWH, who alone does wondrous things.

5. ROYAL IDEOLOGY NEGOTIATED

5.1 Two early examples

A first indication that Psalm 72 has been re-read in light of its new paratextual framework is found in Zechariah 9:(9-)10, where Psalm 72:8 is likely quoted in a text talking about a future king (see Zenger 1993:69-70):¹⁷

Zech 9:10	<u>ודבר שלום לגוים ומשלו מים עד־ים ומנהר עד־אפסי־ארץ</u>
(Ps. 72:7 8 (cf. p. 363)	יפרח־בימיו צדיק ורב שלום עד־בלי ירח וירד מים עד־ים ומנהר עד־אפסי־ארץ

As seen here, a vast kingdom is related to a coming Davidic king (הנה מלכך יבוא לך) and, as in Psalm 72, this king is described as צדיק (Zech. 9:9; cf. Ps. 72:1-3, 7) and נושע (Zech. 9:9; cf. Ps. 72:4, 13; Saur 2004:148). That the psalm was likely read through its Davidic/Solomonic framing is further indicated by the fact that the kingdom is described as peaceful, which would relate both to expressions in the psalm proper (Zech. 9:10; cf. Ps. 72:3, 7), and to descriptions of the reign of Solomon (1 Kgs. 5:4-5, 17-18), including his name (v. 1; cf. 1 Chr. 22:9-19). The notion of the king riding on a donkey may also allude to 1 Kings 1:33, 38, although different vocabulary is used (so Boda 2004:993; cf. Keel 1997:280). Ultimately, the king is not a warrior, but a “prince of peace” (cf. Isa. 9:5), and the psalm’s focus on the poor also seems to be echoed, although in a transformed way. While the king in Psalm 72 is the defender of the poor, in Zechariah 9:9, he is himself poor. As noted above, this would be one of the possible interpretations of the framing of the prayer as David’s. This is also possibly reflected in the fact that, in Psalm 72:4, 13, the king saves the poor (ישע, *hiphil*), while in Zechariah 9:9, he is himself saved (ישע, *niphal*) (Boda 2004:996; cf. Zenger 1993:69).

17 I will restrict my survey to texts that interact with Psalm 72 in a direct way (by quotation or clear allusions), but to be noted is that scholars have often pointed to plausible overlaps with, for example, Isaiah 9:6-7; 60 and Micah 7:17 as well (Renaud 1989:307; Broyles 1997:31-33; Zenger 2002:83-84; Saur 2004:149-150; Becker 2008:123). Although the overlaps are not specific enough to be discussed here, they underline that in the Second Temple period, Psalm 72 would have been part of a cluster of texts that formed the basis for messianic expectations (cf. Waschke 1998:356).

Unfortunately, Psalm 72 does not feature in any of the Qumran pesharim, but a second example of a possible re-reading of the psalm as pointing to a future king is found in the Psalms of Solomon, most notably in Psalm of Solomon 17 (cf. Broyles 1997:26-34; Poorthuis 2007:263; Gillingham 2018:387 [vol. 2]). The psalm, which begins with proclaiming YHWH as king “for ever and ever” (vv. 1, 34, 46; cf. Ps. 72:18-19),¹⁸ is set in a historical context, where an “arrogant substitution desolated David’s throne” (v. 6),¹⁹ and the petitioner asks of YHWH to raise up a king, a son of David, to rule over Israel (v. 21; cf. Ps. 72:1) in wisdom and righteousness (vv. 23, 26, 29, 32, 37, and so on; cf. Ps. 72:1), so that the sinners are driven out, Jerusalem made clean, and Gentile people serving the king (vv. 30-31; cf. Ps. 72:9-11). It is interesting to note that verse 33 also portrays the son of David as not depending on military might (see above, on Zech. 9:9-10) – “he will not place his hope on making war” – but rather accomplish these things “with the word of his mouth”, relying on God (vv. 35-37). Lastly, in verses 40-41, it is stated that he will not let anyone stumble, and that nobody will be oppressed (cf. Ps. 72:12-14). The royal ideology of Psalm 72 is thus made part of an intercession for a future royal Messiah (και βασιλεὺς χριστὸς κύριος, v. 32), which interacts with several of the interpretive possibilities created by the paratextual framings of Psalm 72.

5.2 Solomon or Christ?

Moving to the New Testament, the psalm is (perhaps surprisingly) never quoted explicitly. As noted by Broyles, however, the fact that Zechariah 9:9 is quoted in Matthew 21:5 and John 12:15 may have influenced later Christological readings of Psalm 72 (Broyles 1997:30; cf. Heim 1995:247). Connections between the king in Psalm 72 and Jesus are, however, possibly made in some places, such as in Matthew 2:1-12 (cf. Ps. 72:10, 15; Isa. 60:6), as reflected in its common use in Epiphany liturgies (cf. Tertullian, *Marc.* 3.13), in Luke 1:68 (cf. Ps. 72:18; Broyles 1997:29), and in the “Lucan concept of Jesus as the Messiah of the poor” (so Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:220; cf. also Matt. 5). Psalm 72 may also have influenced the so-called “Christ hymn” in Philippians 2. As noted above, the psalm stood in some tension to the doxology, with one of the focal points being the contrast between the name of the king and the name of God. Moreover, when framing Psalm 72 as the words of David, David was also potentially cast as one of the poor of the psalm. In Philippians 2, both these tensions are provided with a solution: Christ (as God’s son, the Messiah) takes the

18 All quotes are from Wright (2007).

19 Probably either the Hasmoneans or Herod the Great. See the discussion in Atkinson (1998:104-107).

form of a slave (v. 7), humbles himself and therefore becomes exalted and given “the name that is above every name” (v. 9), as well as dominion over the entire earth (vv. 10-11). Although somewhat speculative, such a reading is in line with extant early Christian interactions with the psalm.

Moving on to such examples, in Justin Martyr’s *Dial* 34, Psalm 72 is used in a debate about Solomon. Both Justin and Trypho (a Jew) agree that the psalm contains the words of David (“dictated ... by the Holy Spirit”, Poorthuis 2007:260-261). While Trypho understands the psalm as speaking about Solomon, Justin argues that it is about Christ.²⁰ His main point is that

none of those things mentioned in the Psalm happened to him ... For neither did all kings worship him; nor did he reign to the ends of the earth; nor did his enemies, falling before him, lick the dust. Nay, also, I venture to repeat what is written in the book of Kings as committed by him ... (quoted from Roberts *et al.* 2016).

In a similar vein, Eusebius of Caesarea argues in his *Proof of the Gospel* that, since the psalm is addressed to Solomon, the first verse must be referring to him (as the king), but the rest is speaking of

the son of Solomon, not Rehoboam, who was the king of Israel after him, but Him that was of his seed according to the flesh, the Christ of God, ...[because]... it is impossible to connect what is said in this psalm with Solomon (*PoG* 7.3, quoted from Ferrar 1920).²¹

Not all Christian interpreters read the psalm through a dichotomy between Solomon and Christ, however.²² In his commentary on Zechariah 9:9-10, Theodore of Mopsuestia makes a connection to Psalm 72, and argues that, since the statements regarding the prosperity of Solomon in Psalm 72 (a psalm by “the blessed David”) are hyperbolic, so are the statements in Zechariah, which he relates to Zerubbabel.²³ In his comment on Psalm 72, he expands on these hyperboles, arguing *against* a hermeneutic that divides the psalm into different parts, where some would refer to Solomon and some to Christ. Instead, the psalm is understood as a prophecy of David concerning the honour, glory, peace, justice, and prosperity of Solomon and his people, as well as a prayer “for it to continue” (Greer 2006:941). It is “not simply directed to Solomon, but is

20 For an overview of early Christian interpretations, see Wesselschmidt (2007:92-100).

21 See also Gillingham (2018:389 [vol. 2]); Eusebius also argues that the basis for calling Christ the “Prince of Peace” in Isaiah 9:5 is Psalm 72:7 [*PoG* 7.2].

22 See also, for example, Jerome *Expl. Dan.*, as referred to in Zenger (1993:64).

23 For a translation, see Wesselschmidt (2007:94-95).

of general relevance in what applies to him” (Greer 2006:941). Theodore then goes on to comment on the psalm, showing how every verse can be understood in relation to Solomon (*contra* Gillingham 2018:389 [vol. 2]). Commenting on verse 5, for example, he does not agree that it only suits Christ, but argues that, as long as Solomon “is motivated by God’s wisdom”, peace and righteousness will prevail like the permanence of the sun (Greer 2006:945). Likewise, the expanded rule in verse 8 is interpreted as reputation, not dominion, and verse 17 is understood as indicating that “[h]is name will endure as an object of admiration no less than the sun and the moon” (Greer 2006:953).

As a final example of Christian readings, consider Augustine, who provides an interesting trinitarian solution to the tension between the doxology and the psalm proper in his *Serm. 136B.3* (see also *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 91.4.2):

Divine miracles were performed [by Christ], but no one has performed miracles from the beginning of the human race, except the one to whom Scripture says “Who alone performs marvels”. Why does it say “who alone performs marvels”? Surely, because when he wishes to perform them, he has no need of any human beings. But when a human being performs them, he does need God. He, Christ, performed miracles alone. Why? *Because the Son is God in the Trinity, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God of course*, “who alone performs marvels” (Wesselschmidt 2007:99, emphasis mine).

The tension is thus solved by giving the human king divine status, or, more specifically, by proposing that the referent of both verses 15-17 and 18-19 is ultimately the same.

5.3 Solomon and the Messiah

In contrast to Justin and Eusebius, Jewish interpretations often oscillate between reading Psalm 72 in light of Solomon as a king of the past and a coming Messiah. Not as an either/or, but as a both/and. Midrash Tehillim introduces the psalm as David’s words about Solomon, and then moves from Solomon to Messiah in the expanded comment on verse 1, which constitutes the first half of the Midrash. The verse is first explained as related to Solomon by means of passages such as 1 Kings 3; Ecclesiastes 10:16-17, and 1 Chronicles 29:23, and then to “the King Messiah” (Braude 1959:560 [vol. 1]) by means of, for example, Isaiah 11, which is also used to interpret Psalm 72:4. After having switched focus in verse 1, the topic

remains on the future Messiah in the comment on verses 2-17,²⁴ which is roughly equal in size to the sections on verse 1. In this instance, it is recounted how the dominion of verse 8 will be the Messiah's, and that the Messiah "will never know the taste of death" (v. 17; Braude 1959:563 [vol. 1]). In fact, the Messiah is part of seven things that

existed before the world was created: the throne of glory, the name of the Messiah, Torah, Israel, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, repentance, and the Temple (Braude 1959:563 [vol. 1]).²⁵

In some contrast, the Targum has a more consistent focus on the Messiah, as the psalm connects him to Solomon by means of an expanded superscription (see also Poorthuis 2007:271):

על ידי דשלומו אתאמר בנבואה אלהא הלכת דינך למלכא משיחא הב ועדקתך לבריה דדוד מלכא

By Solomon, *it was said in prophecy*: O God, give the halakoth of your justice to *the anointed king*, and your righteousness to *the son of king David* (translation from Stec 2004:139, emphases mine).

There is thus an explicit reference to the משיחא, and, in the psalm proper, several changes have been made that highlight this interpretive avenue. Most significant is perhaps verse 17, which now reads "May his name be *remembered* for ever – *even before the sun existed his name was being prepared* – and may all the nations be blessed through *his merit*, and say, "*Blessed be he!*" (Stec 2004:140, emphases original). The extended comment on the name thus overlaps with Midrash Tehillim, and the added "Blessed be he!" elevates this messianic king even more in comparison to the doxology, which uses the same language about YHWH (cf. similarly the LXX).

Turning to Rashi, he reads Psalm 72 as a prophetically inspired prayer by David concerning Solomon only. In his view, everything mentioned in the psalm is fulfilled in Solomon's lifetime, except for verse 7c (עד-בלי ירח), which did not happen because of Solomon's sin. He refutes messianic interpretations by means of philology in, for example, verse 16a, and the commentary thus relates to an overall approach to

defuse or neutralize Christian teaching to the effect that Hebrew Scripture prophesies the passion, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (Gruber 2004:131).

24 *Contra* Gillingham (2018:388 [vol. 2]), who claims that this focus emerges first in relation to verse 8.

25 Cf. b. Sanh. 98b, where one of the names of the Messiah, ינין, is derived from Psalm 72:17.

Kimchi, on the other hand, saw both Solomon and a Messiah in Psalm 72 (see Esterson 1935). He proposes that the psalm was originally composed by an elderly David for “the day on which he crowned ... Solomon”. It was his “most triumphant day”, since it represented “the realization of David’s primary goal, and thus the *culmination of all his prayers*” (translation from Feuer 2013:893 [vol. 1], emphasis mine). Although Solomon “came very close” to the “utopian world order predicated on Divine righteousness and justice”, he did not fully succeed, and so, the psalm may, therefore, “apply both to Solomon and to his descendant, the long-awaited Messiah”. More examples could be adduced (see especially Feuer 2013:893-907 [vol. 1]), but the emerging picture is sufficiently clear to move to a final set of observations: further paratextual reframings.

6. ROYAL IDEOLOGY REFRAMED

The above examples of various interpretive approaches cannot be viewed only as the result of the paratextual activity described in sections 3 and 4. As indicated in the introduction, interpretation is never a one-way street, and it should thus not come as a surprise that these new readings would also have left their mark on the manuscripts themselves. In fact, paratexts have been reformulated and substituted to fit the new readings, perhaps even to counter opposing readings. A few examples will suffice.

As noted above, Psalm 72 is not preserved in any of the Qumran *pesharim*. In fact, it is nowhere to be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is thus not possible to know how it was framed, although it would not be surprising if the superscription would have been omitted in some instances, as it is in some medieval Hebrew manuscripts (Gerstenberger 2001:65). The situation is different, however, when it comes to the LXX. It is often noted that the LXX features *Εἰς Σαλωμών* (“For Solomon”). As such, it has clear marks of the effect of verse 20 (that the psalm could be read as a prayer by David for Solomon), and goes in line with some of the examples above (Eusebius and Theodore of Mopsuestia), although not all. However, according to Baarda (2000) this is not the entire picture. Referring to an expanded superscription in a Syriac manuscript designated as VK 0631, which reads “‘On Solomon’, but Aquila says: ‘of Solomon’”, Theodotion then, and Book Five wrote ‘for/to Solomon’, Baarda (2000:9-10) argues that *τοῦ Σολομοῦντος/Σολομών* and *τῷ Σολομοῦντι/Σολομών* would also have been in use. What surfaces is, then, an interesting example of how paratextual variance can be directly related to tensions between text and paratext – in this case the elusive speaking voice; is the psalm a prayer

(by David?) for Solomon? For a future king?²⁶ Is it about Solomon? Or is it Solomon's (prophetic) words? – and the issue is thus settled in various ways in different manuscripts, just as it was settled in various ways by the commentators above. To be noted is also that several LXX manuscripts have even greater variations, as some substitute Solomon for David: Εἰς τὸ τέλος ψάλλμος τῷ Δαυίδ, or simply ψάλλμος τῷ Δαυίδ (Baarda 2000:5, n. 14).

Following the LXX trajectory into Western Syriac paratexts, it can be observed that they also vary considerably. While some have “In Solomon” (Codex Ambrosianus), others have more expanded superscriptions that often seem to relate in some way to Εἰς Σαλωμών (cf. Baarda 2000:6). One example is the superscription in an early Syriac manuscript used in Nestle's *Psalterium Tetraglottum*: “Composed by David when he made Solomon king”; another is from Walton's *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta*: “By David, when he (had) made Solomon king, and a prophecy on the coming of the Messiah and the Calling of the Gentiles”. Both exemplify the interpretive tendency noted above in the Christian trajectory. There are also variations in Eastern Syriac manuscripts, where the superscriptions are clearly indebted to the exegetical work of Theodore of Mopsuestia. According to Van Rooy (2013:107) some manuscripts have:

He [i.e. David] prophesies about Solomon and of the wealth of the nation on account of him and he prays that the good things will be completely preserved for them,

while others have a shorter version ending after the wealth of the nation (Van Rooy 2013:107). Baarda (2000:7-8) also includes an even shorter “On Solomon” and “On Christ our Lord”.

As noted, the Targum provided an expanded superscription that framed the psalm as Solomon's prophetic words, but as Jewish interpreters read the psalm as the words of David, I now turn to verse 20. The curious statement that the prayers of David are ended has, evidently, caused a great deal of discussion. Two aspects could be mentioned. First, while the LXX reshaped the original Hebrew through translation, the rabbinic discussions are primarily focused on interpretation at a distance from the manuscripts themselves. Secondly, the frozen colophon is nowhere interpreted as referring to an earlier collection, nor as a historical remnant. What is seen is, however, that it was read in relation to the “Book” of Psalms as a whole.

26 It is often noted that the LXX has been given a more permeating future (eschatological) orientation by means of the translation of the Hebrew jussives into future (Bons & Knibb 2006:230-237; see Zenger 1993:61; Meinhold 2004:86; Gillingham 2018:387 [vol. 2]).

Turning first to the LXX, the notion of prayer (תפלה, MT) is changed into the (at the time) more appropriate designation of the “Book” of Psalms as ὕμνοι (see ספר תהלים), although this is not the case in all LXX manuscripts. The above-mentioned Syriac manuscript VK 0631 reads:

And at the end of the Psalm, instead of this: ‘Completed are the hymns of David the son of Jesse’, Aquila says: ‘Came to an end the prayers of David’ (Baarda 2000:10).

Evidently, some manuscripts retained the notion of “prayers” and omitted “the son of Jesse”, and the manuscripts also vary in the vocabulary used to translate כלו : ἐξέλιπον / ἐτελέσθησαν / ἐπετελέσθησαν / ἀνακεφαλαιώθησαν. Ultimately, this all fits well with the variation observed above in relation to the interpretations.

Jewish sources also relate the colophon to the entire “Book” of Psalms, since it was observed that it created a tension with the fact that prayers of David occurred also after Psalm 72. One solution was to suggest a re-reading from כלו (“they are ended”) to כל אלו (“all of these”). This is found in b. Pesah 117a, for example, as well as in Midrash Tehillim, which adds “were the prayers David uttered concerning his son Solomon and concerning the king Messiah”, thus in line with the interpretation of the psalms observed (see Zenger 1993:62).²⁷ Rashi criticises this reformulation of the paratext, however, on the basis of the tradition also found in b. B. Bat. 15a, where it is said that David composed the “Book” of Psalms together with ten elders.²⁸ Instead, Rashi proposes that כלו should be read as “a synonym of *nistayyēmû* “there have been brought to an end”” (Gruber 2004:476). Rashi also notes that David would have composed the psalm “in his old age, when he made Solomon his son king [in his stead]” (Gruber 2004:476), a suggestion in line with Kimchi. Kimchi also proposes that only David’s *prayers* are ended. His *praises*, on the other hand, will never end: “songs of praise and thanksgiving will resound joyously forever” (Feuer 2013:907 [vol. 1]). Ibn Ezra also notes the possibility of relating it to כללו in Ezekiel 27:11 (“they have perfected”), something that he refutes (see Strickman 2009:196), and last is the interesting reading גשלמו (“completed”), which is attributed to Rashbam.²⁹

27 The Midrash also relates this to כללתי in Psalm 84:3.

28 To be observed is another paratextual variation in the treatment of Rashi, namely that he views verse 20 as a separate text, designated as Psalm 70 (in Rashi, Ps. 72 is the 69th psalm; see Gruber 2004:221, 480).

29 See <https://mg.alhatorah.org/Full/Tehillim/72/20#e0n6> [30 November 2020].

7. CHANGING TEXTS THROUGH PARATEXTS

In this article, I have attempted to show how paratextual framings of Psalm 72 have transformed the understanding of an Ancient Near Eastern royal ideology around which the psalm was originally shaped. From being a prayer for the next Davidic king in line, it was first cast in a new light by a doxology that emphasised YHWH as the supreme king and so created a tension between the body of the psalm and the paratext, and then by a frozen colophon and a superscription that potentially framed the entire psalm as the words of David to his “son”. I then showed how these two sets of tensions gave rise to different interpretive avenues, all ultimately effecting the theology of the psalm. A fundamental observation to be made is thus that paratextual activity has a significant impact on the interpretation of a psalm, since paratexts control the reading of it. Thus, it is not surprising that considerable overlaps are found in the surveyed interpretations; they are all conditioned by the Davidic framework. At the same time, it can be noted clearly that paratexts have been interpreted differently depending on historical contexts and rhetorical needs, thus emphasising the notion of them being historically contingent. Given the fact that great variance was observed – paratextual reformulations that were sometimes best understood as necessitated by the new interpretations – it does not suffice to say that paratexts control the text: the readers also, to some extent, control the paratext. Consequently, the attempts to tame a text are never ending, and there is no reason to doubt that the discussion about the royal ideology in Psalm 72 will continue. In the end, this article has shown that critical research is not a trajectory completely distinct from the ancient debates. Instead, they can be viewed as interesting reformulations of positions that most often have been voiced previously, and will be voiced again.

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Keywords***Trefwoorde*****Psalm 72****Psalm 72****Paratexts****Parateks****Royal ideology****Koninklike ideologie**