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From desperation to adoration: Reading Psalm 107 as a transforming spatial journey

ABSTRACT

Critical spatiality opens avenues to investigate the transforming power of the authors/redactors of the Hebrew Bible's spatial imagination. I read Psalm 107 as a spatial journey bridging the divide between the desperation of the exile and the longing of the Psalter's post-exilic authors/redactors for Israel's complete restoration and the universal adoration of Y^{HWH}. Psalm 107 plays a crucial role in the transition between Books IV (Pss. 90-106) and V (Pss. 107-145) and acts as a "bridge" between the desperation of the exile and the call to the universal adoration of Y^{HWH} in the post-exilic period. Psalm 107 hints at a continuous transforming spatial journey between present realities and the longed-for eschatological establishment of a universal, divine kingdom.

1. INTRODUCTION

As the first poem in Book V of the Psalter, Psalm 107 plays an important role in the book's overall architecture (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:101-102). The connection between the urgent prayer for salvation, in order that Y^{HWH} may be thanked and praised by his people in Psalm 106:47, and the call to thanksgiving by those who experienced his acts of salvation in Psalm 107:1-3 speaks for itself. The command הודו ליהוה (Ps. 107:1a) also occurs in Psalms 105:1 and 106:1. In both Psalms 106 and 107, the call is accompanied by



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a double motivation (כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ and כִּי-טוֹב). The same call frames Psalm 118 (vv. 1, 29) and introduces Psalm 136 (v. 1). The phrase כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ also occurs in Psalm 118:2-4 and Psalm 136:2-26. Psalm 107 thus has links backward to Book IV and forward to Book V (Leuenberger 2004:283-285) and acts as a “bridge” between the two books (Stone 2013:40).¹

The Psalter’s narrative plot confirms this bridging function (Kratz 1996:21-28; deClaisse-Walford 2004:56; Stone 2013:41). Books I-III (Pss. 3-89) reflect on the establishment, flowering, and failure of the Davidic monarchy. Book III concludes with a prayer that Y_{HWH} should not hide his presence (Ps. 89:47-49), but remember his former deeds of loyalty (חֲסֵדֶיךָ, 89:50) and the faithfulness he promised to David in the face of his servant’s humiliation (89:50-52). Book IV (Pss. 90-106) focuses on the universal kingship of Y_{HWH} (Pss. 93-100). It reflects the situation of Israel in exile. In Psalms 101-102, the poet addresses the dashed hopes of the exilic community and prays for the restoration of Zion. In Psalms 103-104, he gives voice to the hopes of the exiles, grounded in Y_{HWH}’s חֲסֵד (Ps. 103:4, 8, 17) as the creator and sustainer of life (Ps. 104). Psalms 105-106 focus on Y_{HWH}’s wonderful deeds (נִפְלְאוֹתָיו, 105:5) on behalf of Israel and his acts of loyal love (חֲסֵדֶיךָ, 106:7; הַחֲסֵד, 106:45) towards his people, in spite of their constant disloyalty towards him. Book V (Pss. 107-145) is concerned with the rebuilding of the post-exilic community. Psalm 107 resumes the theme of Y_{HWH}’s deeds of loyal love (חֲסֵדוֹ, 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31, 43) and his wonderful deeds (נִפְלְאוֹתָיו, 107:8, 15, 21, 31) on behalf of his people. He ended the desperation of exile (107:2-3). Israel is obliged to give thanks (107:1) and contemplate the implications of Y_{HWH}’s deeds of loyal love (107:43).

Psalm 107’s bridging function surpasses the literary and compositional levels to include a spatial perspective. Critical spatiality and narratology provide useful avenues to investigate the transforming power of the authors/redactors of the Hebrew Bible’s spatial imagination. Critical spatiality’s notion of “*lived space as a strategic location* from which to encompass, understand, and potentially transform all spaces simultaneously” (Soja 1996:68),² and narratology’s notion of

1 Ballhorn (2004:127-146) regards Psalms 105-107 as a triptych. The doxology in Psalm 106:48 interrupts the original unity between the three poems and transforms Psalm 107 into the opening poem of Book V. Leuenberger (2004:186) regards Psalm 107 as a *Fortschreibung* of Psalms 105-106, deliberately composed as the opening poem of Book V.

2 Emphasis original; see §2.

verbal story space [as something] the reader is *prompted to create in imagination* ... on the basis of the characters' perceptions and/or the narrator's reports (Chatman 1978:104)³

enable us to read Psalm 107 through an *imaginative spatial* lens. It describes a *spatial journey* bridging the divide between the desperation of the exile and post-exilic Israel's longing for its complete restoration and the universal adoration of Y^{HWH}. Psalm 107 transforms the historical realities facing inhabitants of the Persian province of Yehud, the oppressive imperial-colonial ideology of the Persian empire, and the adverse lived experiences of Yehud's marginalised inhabitants (Tucker 2014:59-68, see §6). Psalm 107 *re-imagines* post-exilic Israel's place in the world as a *spatial journey under the guidance of Y^{HWH}*, the universal king. He accompanies his people, and all peoples, on their voyage between desperation and adoration.

My analysis of Psalm 107 is informed by cultural semiotics, notably by Yuri Lotman's insistence that textual interpretation depends on the deciphering of a complex network of codes that are *socially determined*. Literary analyses address "questions of content, meaning, the social and ethical value of art and its ties with reality" (Lotman 1977:32). Comprehension demands an analysis of a text's intricate intratextual and all its extratextual relations, both literary (intertextual) and non-literary (extratextual) (Lotman 1977:103). I combine textual analysis (intratextuality; see §3 and §4) with an analysis of Psalm 107's literary (intertextuality; see §5) and socio-historical context(s) (extratextuality, see §6). My intertextual analysis is informed by Fishbane's (1988) notion of inner-biblical allusion and exegesis (*i.e.* author-intended intertextuality).⁴ My extratextual analysis focuses on concepts of place, space, and ancient Near Eastern world view(s) and spatial orientation(s). This analysis is informed by theoreticians in the field of narratology (Genette 1980) and critical spatiality (Tuan 1977; Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996; see §2).

2. ON SPATIAL READINGS OF HEBREW BIBLE TEXTS

In previous publications, I elucidated theoretical approaches towards space and spatiality and applied them to Hebrew Bible texts (see Prinsloo

3 My emphasis, see §2.

4 For the distinction between reader-oriented and author-intended approaches to intertextuality, see Miller (2011:283-309) and Kynes (2012:17-60). For author-intended intertextuality, Kynes (2012:59) provides useful criteria for determining the direction of influence.

2005:457-477; 2006:739-760; 2013a:132-154; 2013b:3-25). In this article, I refer to three perspectives on spatiality that are essential for my reading of Psalm 107.

First, I interpret spatial references in the poem as examples of narrative space.⁵ The act of narration *creates* a world of *words* that is related to the *real* world, but not *identical* to it (Thompson 1978:3-4). In this world, references to space are not mere descriptions of physical locations (settings); they are *representational* spaces intended to affect and change the perspective of the reader/listener (*focal spaces*) (Van Eck 1995:137-139).

Secondly, I interpret spatial references in the poem in light of critical spatiality's notion of space as a "three-dimensional" concept.⁶ Lefebvre (1991:1) argued that "space" is not a geometrical *concept*, but a social *phenomenon* produced in the interaction between human beings and their environment. It is *at the same time* a physical, mental, and social construct.⁷ For this trialectic of spaces, Soja (1996:66-67) coined the terms "Firstspace", "Secondspace", and "Thirdspace". Soja (1996:68) regards Thirdspace as

the terrain for the generation of 'counterspaces,' spaces of resistance to the dominant order ... to lived space as a strategic location from which to encompass, understand, and potentially transform all spaces simultaneously.

Spatial references in Psalm 107 are *representations of lived experiences*. My spatial analysis is a thirdspatial exercise highlighting the transforming power of the poet's (re)imagination of Israel's place in the world.

Thirdly, spatial references in Psalm 107 are interpreted in light of ancient Near Eastern world view(s) and spatial orientation(s),⁸ which – in broad terms – can be plotted along a horizontal and vertical axis (Wyatt 2001:35-40). Horizontally, orientation is towards the east. "In front" is

5 For narrative theory, see Genette (1980:25-27); Rimmon-Kenan (2002:1-5).

6 For critical spatiality, see Berquist (2002:14-29). Critical spatiality can be defined as "those theories that self-consciously attempt to move beyond modernist, mechanistic, essentialist understandings of space. Critical spatiality understands all aspects of space to be human constructions that are socially contested" (Berquist 2002:15)

7 See Lefebvre (1991:38-39). Lefebvre calls physical space "perceived space", *i.e.* nature, cosmos, place. Mental space is "conceived space", *i.e.* representations of space or conceptualised space. Social space is "lived space", *i.e.* spaces of representation, space as experienced.

8 For ancient Near Eastern world view(s), see Berlejung (2006:65-72). Janowski (2001:3-26) warns against over-simplified attempts to reconstruct *the* biblical world view. Views on ancient Near Eastern cosmology developed and changed over time and no single, systematic description of this cosmology ever existed (Houtman 1993:283).

east, “behind” is west, “right” is south, “left” is north. “Far” and “near” are key concepts: to be *far* is negative, to be *near* is positive. Vertically, the cosmos is imagined as consisting of three building blocks: heaven, earth and netherworld (Horowitz 1998:xii).⁹ Earth

lies as a flat plate ... horizontally at the centre of a great sphere. Outside this sphere, above, below, and around ... lies the ‘cosmic ocean’ (Wyatt 2001:55),

which symbolises the primeval waters of chaos and is an extension of the netherworld. “Up” and “down” are key concepts: to *ascend* is positive, entering the realm of the gods; to *descend* is negative, entering the realm of the netherworld and cutting off contact with the divine sphere (Wyatt 2001:40). The cosmic centre, usually conceptualised as a mountain, lies at the intersection of the horizontal and vertical axes. This cosmic mountain “is the point of access to heaven” (Wyatt 2001:147), where the temple of the high god stands. It represents sacred space, the meeting point of the divine and human spheres (Janowski 2002:34-37). The far-near and ascend-descend dichotomy leads to the idea of boundaries between spaces. The city is regarded as a safe space, the steppe outside as unsafe, an area where robbers and demons lurk. The temple in the heart of the city is a holy place, the world outside is unholy (Berlejung 2006:66-67).

For Israel, the temple in Jerusalem represents the spatial centre of the universe. On the horizontal plane, to be in Jerusalem is to be at the centre, to experience peace and life; to be far from Jerusalem is to be on the periphery, in the realm of chaos and death (Janowski 2002:42-46). On the vertical plane, to ascend to the temple mountain is positive and is associated with Y^{hwh} and his deliverance. To descend is negative, to leave Y^{hwh} and his saving presence, to sink into the depths of Š^e’ōl (Thompson 1978:59-60). Humankind is depicted either at the centre and thus “properly orientated to his world”, or off-centre “in chaos and disorientation” (Thompson 1978:13).

9 See also Krüger (2001:65-83).

3. PSALM 107: TEXT, TRANSLATION AND NOTES¹⁰

1	.1	1	הַדּוֹ לַיהוָה בְּיָטוֹב בְּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדּוֹ:	1a	Give thanks to Y ^{HWH} for (he is) good,
				b	because forever (is) his loyalty.
	.2	2	יֹאמְרוּ גְּאוּלֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר גָּאַלְם מִיַּד־צָר:	2a	Let the redeemed of Y ^{HWH} say (so), ¹¹
				b	those that he redeemed from the hand of an adversary, ¹²
		3	וּמֵאֲרָצוֹת קְבָצָם מִמְזוּרָח וּמִמַּעַרְב מִצְפוֹן וּמִיָּם:	3a	and from lands he gathered them,
				b	from east and from west,
				c	from north and from sea. ¹³

10 Spatial constraints prohibit a detailed exegetical discussion of Psalm 107. For brief reviews of the poem's research history, see Beyerlin (1979:1-6) and Allen (1983:60-63). On form-critical grounds, Westermann (1961:76) regards the poem as a literary unit combining a "berichtende Lobpsalm des Einzelnen" (vv. 1-32) and a "beschreibende Lobpsalm" (vv. 33-43; see also Pss. 18, 118, 138). Others regard Psalm 107 as an anthology from different *Sitzen im Leben*. Verses 1, 4-32 constitute a pre-exilic liturgy of thanksgiving performed during a ceremony in the sanctuary (Gunkel 1986:470; Crüsemann 1969:73; Beyerlin 1979:8-9; Kraus 1989:326-327; Seybold 1996:427). Verses 2-3 are a post-exilic insertion linking Psalms 106 and 107. A hymn commemorating Y^{HWH}'s power over nature and history (vv. 33-43) was added in late post-exilic times. It contains numerous wisdom motifs and does not have a cultic *Sitz im Leben* (Gunkel 1986:472-473; Crüsemann 1969:73-74; Beyerlin 1979:10-11; Kraus 1989:331; Seybold 1996:427-428). According to Roffey (1997:66), Psalm 107's poetic language indicates that it should "be read symbolically, with only a second-order reference to reality". It has a specific *Sitz in der Literatur* as the deliberately composed opening psalm of Book V (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:101-102).

11 It is not immediately apparent what the "redeemed of Y^{HWH}" should say (Allen 1983:58). Some regard verses 2-3 as a later addition (Briggs & Briggs 1907:358; Beyerlin 1979:21-26). If יֹאמְרוּ (v. 2a) is interpreted as a jussive, the preceding call to praise becomes an obligation for everyone who experienced Y^{HWH}'s acts of salvation (Booij 1994:267).

12 The pairing of מִיד and מִצָּר suggests that "enemy" is an appropriate translation for צָר (Gen. 14:20; see יִצָּר || "treat with hostility"). The construction מִיַּד־צָר thus refers to "historical-political enemies" (Tucker 2014:60; see Beyerlin 1979:69). In verses 6, 13, 19, and 28, צָר refers to "distress" (צָרָה || "wrap up, tie up, lock up") (Allen 1983:58; Kartje 2014:142). To retain the Hebrew wordplay, I translated צָר in verse 2 with "adversary" and in verses 6, 13, 19, 28 with "adversity".

13 Some emend מִיָּם "from sea" to מִיָּמִן "from the south" to retain the four cardinal compass points (Deissler 1979:427; Kraus 1989:325). However, the same expression occurs in Isaiah 49:12. צָפֹן "north" often serves as "historical-mythical metaphor for evil and chaos" (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:104; see Jer. 50:41-42; Ezek. 38:6, 15; 39:2). Similarly, יָם serves as symbol for powers of

2	.1	.1	4	הָעָוָה בַּמִּדְבָּר בִּישִׁמּוֹן דָּרָךְ עִיר מוֹשָׁב לֹא מָצְאוּ:	4a	They staggered in the wilderness on a tangled road, ¹⁴	b	a habitable city they could not find.	
			5	רָעֵבִים גַּם-צִמְאִים נַפְשָׁם בָּהֶם תִּתְעַטֵּף:	5a	Hungry, also thirsty,	b	their life in them ebbed away,	
	.2		6	וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה בְּצָר לָהֶם מִמַּצְוֹקוֹתֵיהֶם יִצִּילֵם:	6a	but they cried to Yhwh in their adversity,	b	from their distress he delivered them,	
			7	וַיְדַרְיֵכֶם בְּדָרֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לָלֶכֶת אֶל־עִיר מוֹשָׁב:	7a	and he led them on a straight road,	b	to go to a habitable city.	
	.3		8	יִדְּוּ לַיהוָה חֶסֶדָּו וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לְבָנֵי אָדָם:	8a	Let them give thanks to YHWH (for) his loyalty,	b	and his wondrous deeds for the sons of man,	
			9	כִּי־הִשְׁבִּיעַ נַפְשׁ שֶׁקָּהָה וְנַפְשׁ רָעֵבָה מִלֹּא־טוֹב:	9a	for he satisfies a parched person,	b	and a hungry person he fills good.	
	.2	.1	.1	10	יֹשְׁבֵי חֹשֶׁךְ וְצִלְמוֹת אֲסִירֵי עֲנִי וּבִרְזָל:	10a	The dwellers of darkness and deep gloom,	b	prisoners of misery and iron (fetters),

chaos (Jarick 1997:279-280). ממזרח ומערב represent the horizontal extremities of the biblical world view, while מצפון ומזרם point to the vertical extremities (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:104). ים anticipates the extended narrative of the plight of seafarers in verses 23-32 (Jarick 1997:272-273; Kartje 2014:143).

14 Literally "on a wilderness of road". For ישימון "wilderness", see Numbers 21:20; 23:28; 1 Samuel 23:19, 24; 26:1, 3. It often occurs in conjunction with the synonym מדבר, suggesting the exodus from Egypt (Deut. 32:10; Pss. 68:7; 78:40; 106:14) or Israel's return from exile (Isa. 43:19, 20). Some commentators ignore the *'atnāh* with דרך and read the word with the next colon, *i.e.* "a way (to) a city for dwelling they did not find" (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:97; Kartje 2014:143).

	11	כִּי־הִמְרֹו אִמְרֵי־אֱלֹהִים וְעֵצַת עֲלִיּוֹן נִאָצְוָה:	11a because they rebelled (against) the words of God, b and the counsel of the Most High they despised:
.2	12	וַיִּכְנַע בְּעַמְלֵל לִבָּם כִּשְׁלֹו וְאֵין עֹזֵר:	12a He humbled by trouble their heart, b they stumbled and there was no helper,
.2	13	וַיִּזְעֻקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה בְּצָר לָהֶם מִמַּצְקוֹתֵיהֶם יוֹשִׁיעֵם:	13a but they called upon YHWH in their adversity, b from their distresses he saved them,
	14	וַיֹּצִיאֵם מִחֹשֶׁךְ וְצִלְמוֹת וּמִוֶסְרוֹתֵיהֶם יִנְתַק:	14a he brought them from darkness and deep gloom, b and their chains he tore (apart).
.3	15	יִדְּו לִיהוָה חֲסָדוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לִבְנֵי אָדָם:	15a Let them give thanks to YHWH (for) his loyalty, b and his wondrous deeds for the sons of man,
	16	כִּי־שֹׁבֵר דְלָתוֹת נְחָשֶׁת וּבְרִיחַי בְּרֹזֶל גָּדַע:	16a for he shatters gates of bronze, b and bars of iron he cuts through.
.3 .1	17	אֲוֹלִים מִדְרֹךְ פְּשָׁעֵם	17a Fools they were because of their sinful way, ¹⁵

15 Some argue that אולים “fools” does not suit the context and emend it to חולים “sick people” (Briggs & Briggs 1907:360) or אמללים “weak people” (Kraus 1989:325). Kartje (2014:144) argues against the emendation. אויל does not necessarily refer to intellectual inability, but to moral corruption. This interpretation fits well with the exhortation in verse 43 that a חכם should pay careful attention to אולים “YHWH’s acts of loyalty”.

		וּמַעֲוֹנוֹתֵיהֶם יִתְעַנּוּ:	b	and their iniquities brought affliction over them.
	18	כָּל־אֶחָד תִּתְעַב נַפְשָׁם	18a	All food – their throat abhors it,
		וַיִּגְעוּ עַד־שַׁעְרֵי מָוֶת:	b	and they reached the gates of death,
.2	19	וַיִּזְעֻקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה בְּצָר לָהֶם	19a	but they called upon Y ^{HWH} in their adversity,
		מִמַּצְקוֹתֵיהֶם יוֹשִׁיעֵם:	b	from their distresses he saved them.
	20	יִשְׁלַח דְּבָרוֹ וַיִּרְפְּאֵם	20a	He sent forth his word, and he healed them,
		וַיִּמְלֹט מִשַּׁחֲיֹתוֹתָם: ז	b	and he rescued (them) from their humiliations.
.3	21	ז יוֹדוּ לַיהוָה חֶסֶדּוֹ	21a	Let them give thanks to Y ^{HWH} (for) his loyalty, ¹⁶
		וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לְבָנֵי אָדָם:	b	and his wondrous deeds for the sons of man,
	22	ז וַיִּזְבְּחוּ זִבְחֵי תוֹדָה	22a	Let them sacrifice sacrifices of thanksgiving,
		וַיְסַפְּרוּ מַעֲשָׂיו בְּרִנָּה:	b	and let them proclaim his works with a shout of joy.
.4 .1 .1	23	ז יוֹרְדֵי הַיָּם בְּאֲנָלוֹת	23a	Those going down to the sea upon ships,
		עֹשֵׂי מְלָאכָה בַּמַּיִם רַבִּים:	b	those doing work upon mighty waters,

16 Masoretic manuscripts mark some verses by so-called inverted *nûnim* (Tov 2001:54-55). Codex Leningradensis “brackets” verses 21-26, 40 and Codex Aleppo verses 23-28, 40 in this fashion. In Numbers 10:35-36, inverted *nûnim* supposedly mark the passage as “misplaced”. The function of the inverted *nûnim* in Psalm 107 is not clear (Deist 1978:59).

	24	זֵהָ הַמַּעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו בְּמַצּוֹלָה: וְתִרְזָמִים גְּלִיּוֹ:	24a	they – they saw the works of YHWH, b and his wondrous deeds in a depth.
.2	25	וַיֹּאמֶר וַיַּעֲמֵד רוּחַ סְעָרָה וְתִרְזָמִים גְּלִיּוֹ:	25a	Yes, he spoke, and he raised a wind of storm, b and she raised high his waves.
.3	26	זֵה יַעֲלוּ שָׁמַיִם יִרְדּוּ תְהוֹמוֹת נִפְשָׁם בְּרָעָה תִתְמוּגַג: יִתְזַגּוּ וַיִּנְעוּ כַּשְׂכּוֹר וְכָל־חִכְמָתָם תִּתְבַּלֵּעַ:	26a	They ascended (to) heavens, they descended (to) depths, b their life – in peril she melted away.
	27	וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה בְּצָר לָהֶם וּמִצָּרוֹתֵיהֶם יוֹצִיאֵם: יִקַּם סְעָרָה לְדָמָה וַיִּחַשּׁוּ גְלִיָּהֶם: וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ כִי־יִשְׁתַּקּוּ וַיְנַחֵם אֶל־מְחֻזּוֹ הַפָּעִים:	27a	They reeled and staggered like the drunkard, b and all their wisdom – she proved herself confused,
.2	.1	28	28a	but they cried to YHWH in their adversity, b and from their distresses he brought them.
.2	29	29a	He stilled a storm to a whisper, b and their waves were hushed.	
	30	30a	And they rejoiced because they grew silent, b and he guided them to their desired place. ¹⁷	

17 מחוז is a *hapax legomenon* usually translated by “harbour”. I take the concentric pattern between sub-stanzas 2.1 (vv. 4-9) and 2.4 (vv. 23-32) into account and regard חפצם מחוז as a poetic variant for מושב עיר “habitable city” (see vv. 4b, 7b, 36b). I translate it by the neutral term “place” (see Akkadian *māḥāzu* “(market) city”, derived from the root *ahāzu* “to take”; Black *et al.* 2000:190).

			יִדְּוּ לַיהוָה חֶסֶדָּו	31a	Let them give thanks to YHWH (for) his loyalty,
.3	31		וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לְבָנֵי אָדָם:	b	and his wondrous deeds for the sons of man,
			וַיִּרְמְמוּהוּ בְּקַהֲל־עַם	32a	and let them exult him in the assembly of people,
	32		וּבְמוֹשָׁב זְקֵנִים יִהְלְוהוּ:	b	and in the council of elders let them praise him.
3	.1	.1	יֵשֶׁם נְהָרוֹת לְמִדְבָּר	33a	He turns rivers into a wasteland,
			וּמִצְאֵי מַיִם לְצִמְאֹן:	b	and flowings of waters into thirsty ground,
			אֶרֶץ פְּרִי לְמִלְחָה	34a	a land of fruit into a salt waste,
	34		מִרְעַת יֹשְׁבֵי בָּהּ:	b	because of the evil of those who dwell in her.
			יֵשֶׁם מִדְבָּר לְאֲגַם־מַיִם	35a	He turns a desert into a pool of water,
.2	35		וְאֶרֶץ צִיָּה לְמִצְאֵי מַיִם:	b	and a land of waterlessness into flowings of waters.
			וַיֹּשֶׁב שָׁם רַעֲבִים	36a	He caused to live there hungry (people),
.2	.1	36	וַיִּכְוֲנוּ עִיר מוֹשָׁב:	b	and they founded a habitable city.
			וַיִּזְרְעוּ שָׂדוֹת וַיִּטְעוּ כְרָמִים	37a	And they sowed fields and they planted vineyards,
.2	37		וַיַּעֲשׂוּ פְרִי תְבוּאָה:	b	and they produced a yield of fruit.

	38	וַיְבָרְכֶם וַיִּרְבּוּ מְאֹד וְבַהֲמֹתֵם לֹא יִמְעֹט:	38a And he blessed them, and they increased greatly, b and their cattle he did not let diminish.
	.3 39	וַיִּמְעָטוּ וַיִּשְׁחוּ מִטַּעַר רָעָה וּיְגוֹן:	39a And they decreased and became humbled b because of oppression, calamity and sorrow.
	.1 40	זֶה שֹׁפֵד בְּזוּ עַל־נְדִיבִים וַיִּתְּעַם בְּתֵהוּ לֹא־דֶרֶד:	40a It is he who pours contempt upon nobles. b and he made them stagger in a wasteland without a road.
	41	וַיִּשְׁגַּב אֶבְיוֹן מֵעוֹנֵי וַיִּשֶׁם כְּצֹאן מִשְׁפָּחוֹת:	41a But he lifted a poor from affliction, b and he made like a flock (their) clans.
4	.1 42	יֵרְאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ וְכָל־עוֹלָה קִפְצָה פִּיהָ:	42a Upright people will see and they will rejoice, b but every injustice – she shuts her mouth.
	43	מִי־חָכֵם וַיִּשְׁמַר־אֱלֹהַ וַיִּתְּבוּנֵנוּ חֲסֵדֵי יְהוָה:	43a Who (is) wise? Let him consider t hese things, b and let them gain insight into YHWH's acts of loyalty.

4. PSALM 107: AN INTRATEXTUAL READING

Psalm 107 commences with an exhortation (v. 1) that also occurs at the end of Book IV, permeates Book V and, together with verbs from the sematic field “praise” (יהללוהו and וירממוהו), v. 32), set the tone for the

entire collection (Tucker 2014:59).¹⁸ The poem is surprisingly vague. It displays a “they-he” communicative pattern between an *unidentified* group of people and Y_{HWH}.¹⁹ Behind the scenes, a third character lurks, namely multiple manifestations of powers of chaos and death. The lack of specificity indicates that Psalm 107 “is a programmatic opening” to Book V, developing

the message of the rescue of Israel from exile that is already happening and its miraculous restoration as Y_{HWH}'s people, Y_{HWH}'s household and family (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:112).

According to Tucker (2014:59), the poem is “a didactic meditation on Israel’s deliverance from exile” (see §5).

Verbs associated with the “they” group belong to the semantic fields suffering/distress, sin/transgression, salvation/restoration, and thanksgiving/devotion,²⁰ while verbs associated with the fields salvation/care, punishment, and acts in nature/history characterise Y_{HWH}'s actions.²¹ Psalm 107 describes the collective experiences of people in distress. They suffered severely, often due to their own sinful behaviour. However, when they called upon Y_{HWH} for help, he displayed his loyalty by saving them. They are now under an obligation to perform acts of thanksgiving and devotion.

Four stanzas can be demarcated (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:99-103; Kartje 2014:145-146):

Stanza 1:Vv. 1-3:

Call to thanksgiving and motivation

18 See Psalms 100:5; 105:1; 106:1 in Book IV and Psalms 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1, 2, 3, 26 in Book 5. The root ירה appears 11 times in Book I, 15 times in Book II, seven times in Book III, seven times in Book IV, and 27 times in Book V. רום in the sense of exulting Y_{HWH} occurs three times in Book I, once in Book II, twice in Book IV, and three times in Book V. הלל in the sense of praising Y_{HWH} occurs six times in Book I, 11 times in Book II, twice in Book III, eight times in Book IV, and 57 times in Book V. Elsewhere, the phrase occurs in Jeremiah 33:11, Ezra 3:11 and 1 Chronicles 16:34-36 (quoting Ps. 106:1, 34-36). It “signals the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the renewal of the Temple cult” (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:103).

19 A single exception is the second person plural imperative (הוֹדוּ, v. 1a) at the beginning of the poem. It sets the tone for the entire poem. The “they” group should give thanks to Y_{HWH}.

20 *Suffering/distress*: verses 4, 5, 12, 17, 18, 24, 26, 27, and 39; *sin/transgression*: verses 11, and 17; *salvation/restoration*: verses 6, 13, 36, 37, and 38; *thanksgiving/devotion*: verses 1, 2, 8, 15, 21, 22, 30, 31, 32, 42, and 43.

21 *Salvation/care*: verses 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 28, 30, 36, 38, and 41; *punishment*: verses 12, and 40; *acts in nature/history*: verses 25, 29, 33, and 35.

Stanza 2:Vv. 4-32:	Narration of four groups in distress, their cry for help, and subsequent salvation
Stanza 3:Vv. 33-41:	Hymnic celebration of YHWH's transformative power
Stanza 4:Vv. 42-43:	Admonition to pay close attention to YHWH's deeds and become wise.

Repetition of keywords ensures close cohesion between the stanzas (Van der Ploeg 1974:225). The lexemes יהוה “YHWH” (vv. 1, 2, 6, 8, 13, 15, 19, 21, 24, 28, 31, 43) and חסד “loyalty” (vv. 1, 8, 15, 21, 31, 43) link Stanzas 1, 2 and 4 and create an *inclusio* between Stanzas 1 and 4. Stanzas 1 and 2 are linked by the repetition of ידה “to give thanks” (vv. 1, 8, 15, 21, 22, 31), טוב “good” (vv. 1, 9), and צר “adversary/adversity” (vv. 2, 6, 13, 19, 28). Water, as symbol of chaos and death, appears in Stanza 1 (ים “sea”, v. 3). The theme is developed in Stanzas 2 and 3 by the repetition of ים “sea” (v. 23) and the related terms מים “water” (vv. 23, 33, 35); מעולה “deep” (v. 24); סערה “tempest” (vv. 25, 29); גלים “waves” (vv. 25, 29); תהום “primeval ocean” (v. 26), and נהר “river” (v. 33). The repetition of תעה “stagger” (vv. 4, 40); מדבר “wilderness” (vv. 4, 33, 35, 40); דרך “to walk” as verb (v. 7) and noun (vv. 4, 17, 40); the notion of עיר מושב “habitable city” (vv. 4, 7, 36) and the related phrase מהוו הפצם “their desired place” (v. 30); ישב “to dwell” (vv. 10, 32, 34, 36); רעב “to be hungry” (vv. 5, 9, 36); רעה “evil” (vv. 26, 34, 39); צמא “to be thirsty” (vv. 5, 9, 33) עני “misery, poor” (vv. 10, 41) marks further links between Stanzas 2 and 3. Finally, the repetition of ראה “to see” (vv. 24, 42); חכמה / חכם “wisdom / wise” (vv. 27, 43), and שמח “to rejoice” (vv. 30, 42) creates thematic links between Stanzas 2 and 4.

Stanza 1 (vv. 1-3) is introduced by a call to praise (Strophe 1.1, v. 1). It contains the command הודו ליהוה “give thanks to YHWH”, and two motivations “for he is good”; כי לעולם חסדו “because forever is his love”; v. 1). Strophe 1.2, verses 2-3 provides the reason for the call to praise. The גאולי יהוה “the redeemed of YHWH” who experienced redemption מיד-צר “from the hand of an adversary” (v. 2) when YHWH “gathered them from the lands” (ומארצות קבעם) (v. 3) are obliged to give thanks to him. Two antithetical word pairs (ממזרח ומערב) “from east and from west”; מצפון ומים “from north and from sea”²² suggest that this ingathering occurred from

22 Weber (2003:207) indicates that ממזרח refers literally to the “rising (of the sun)” and, in this instance, symbolises the eastern desert (see vv. 4-9). מערב refers to the “setting (of the sun)” and symbolises darkness and the realm of the netherworld (see vv. 10-16). מצפון refers to the north, historically associated with attacks upon Israel (Jer. 1:13-14; 4:6-7, 15-17; 6:1, 22-23), but mythologically associated with the mountain of the gods and the location of the final battle between forces of chaos and the divine (Ezek. 38-39, see vv. 17-22). Finally, מים refers to the

the extremities of the universe. On the horizontal (ממזרח ומערב) and vertical (מצפון ומית) levels, verse 3 expresses a complete spatial “transportation” – people who were far away, off-centre, at the universe’s extremities, in danger, and confronted by death are redeemed by Y_{HWH} and gathered at the centre (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:104).

Three themes from this stanza also resonate in Stanzas 2 (vv. 4-32) and 3 (vv. 33-41), namely the obligation to thanksgiving (יודה); Y_{HWH}’s enduring loyalty towards his people (חסד), and his redemptive transportation of the people from life-threatening distress to being saved and at the centre (גאל). Stanza 1’s emphasis on the loyalty of Y_{HWH} (חסדו, v. 1) resurfaces in Stanza 2 (vv. 8, 15, 21, 31) and echoes Stanza 4 (vv. 42-43). An obligation rests upon those who experienced salvation to take Y_{HWH}’s acts of loyalty ((חסדי יהוה) to heart and act wisely (v. 43).

In four sub-stanzas, Stanza 2 (vv. 4-32) expands the notion that Y_{HWH} gathered people from four dangerous extremities of the universe (v. 3).²³ The stanza contains *symbolic scenes* of mortal danger inflicted upon people and Y_{HWH}’s salvific intervention when they called for help (Goulder 1998:117). The following table notes subtle similarities and differences between the sub-stanzas:

	Sub-stanza 2.1 (vv. 4-9)	Sub-stanza 2.2 (vv. 10-16)	Sub-stanza 2.3 (vv. 17-22)	Sub-stanza 2.4 (vv. 23-32)
1. Distress	2.1.1 (4-5): 2 lines	2.2.1 (10-12): 3 lines	2.3.1 (17-18): 2 lines	2.4.1 (23-27): 5 lines
- Cause		<i>Prison</i>	<i>Illness</i>	<i>Nature: sea</i>
- Reason	<i>Nature: wilderness</i>	Rebellion against God	Sin and iniquity	----
- Result	----	Stumbled; no help (12b)	Gates of death (18b)	Life melted away (26b)
	Life ebbed away (5b)			

sea, a well-known symbol of powers of chaos (Ex. 15:8; Ps. 18:16-17; 29:3; 77:17020; 114:3, 5; 144:7, see vv. 23-32).

23 Four is a symbolic number suggesting completeness (Jarick 1997:284).

	Sub-stanza 2.1 (vv. 4-9)	Sub-stanza 2.2 (vv. 10-16)	Sub-stanza 2.3 (vv. 17-22)	Sub-stanza 2.4 (vv. 23-32)
2. Call for help and salvation	2.1.2 (6-7): 2 lines ויצעקו אליהוה בצר להם ^{6a} ממצוקותיהם יעלים ^{6b}	2.2.2 (13-14): 2 lines ויצעקו אליהוה בצר להם ^{13a} ממצוקותיהם יושיעם ^{13b}	2.3.2 (19-20): 2 lines ויצעקו אליהוה בצר להם ^{19a} ממצוקותיהם יושיעם ^{19b}	2.4.2 (28-30): 3 lines ויצעקו אליהוה בצר להם ^{28a} וממצוקותיהם יוציאם ^{28b}
3. Admonition to give thanks	2.1.3 (8-9): 2 lines יודו ליהוה חסדו ^{8a} ונפלאותיו לבני אדם ^{8b} + motivation יכ (9ab)	2.2.3 (15-16): 2 lines יודו ליהוה חסדו ^{15a} ונפלאותיו לבני אדם ^{15b} + motivation יכ (16ab)	2.3.3 (21-22): 2 lines יודו ליהוה חסדו ^{21a} ונפלאותיו לבני אדם ^{21b} + expansion (22ab)	2.4.3 (31-32): 2 lines יודו ליהוה חסדו ^{31a} ונפלאותיו לבני אדם ^{31b} + expansion (32ab)
	Lost in a trackless wilderness	Imprisoned in a dark dungeon	At death's door due to sin and iniquity	Lost in a storm at sea

Each sub-stanza reflects the spatial movement hinted at in Stanza 1. Those who were far from Y_{HWH}, in distress, confronted by hardship and death and off-centre called upon Y_{HWH} and he saved them. They are now close to Y_{HWH}, at the centre. For this reversal of fortunes, they should thank him. The stylised form of the sub-stanzas warns against attempts to identify specific and different historical situations behind each scene. They represent the extremities of creation, where **בְּצַר יָבִישׁ** “human beings” (vv. 8, 15, 21, 31) discovered the saving and protective presence of Y_{HWH} at the centre (Weber 2003:206).²⁴

Sub-stanzas 2.1 (vv. 4-9) and 2.3 (vv. 17-22) contain six lines; sub-stanza 2.2 (vv. 10-16) seven lines, and sub-stanza 2.4 (vv. 23-32) ten lines. Gradually, the people's distress receives more emphasis, and as the distress increases, so does the grace of Y_{HWH} (Van der Ploeg 1974:225).

24 Goulder (1998:123) notes that Psalm 107:4-32 shows a preference for imperfect verbal forms that adds a note of ambivalence to the poem. The poem is concerned with adversity already avoided, yet still experienced.

On the one hand, the sub-stanzas display a linear development towards a climax. Sub-stanzas 2.1 (vv. 4-9) and 2.2 (vv. 10-16) contain a motivation for the call to thanksgiving introduced by the particle כִּי (vv. 9, 16). In the case of sub-stanzas 2.3 (vv. 17-22) and 2.4 (vv. 23-32), the call to thanksgiving is followed by an expansion with spatial implications (vv. 22, 32), suggesting that thanksgiving is due *in the public sphere*. The “experience of the saving power of Yhwh requires public thanksgiving and praise” (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:100). The sub-stanzas simultaneously display a concentric pattern. Sub-stanzas 2.1 (vv. 4-9) and 2.4 (vv. 23-32) are concerned with natural phenomena and calamities in spaces associated with danger and death – the “wilderness” (vv. 4-9) and the “sea” (vv. 23-32). Both units contain the phrase ויצעקו אל־יהוה בצר־להם (vv. 6, 28). However, in verse 6, the saving intervention of Yhwh is described in general terms (ממצוקותיהם יצילם) “from their distress *he delivered them*”, while a term suggesting a spatial journey occurs in verse 28 (וממצוקתיהם יוציאם) “and from their distress *he brought them*”). Sub-stanzas 2.2 (vv. 10-16) and 2.3 (vv. 17-22) are both concerned with distress suffered, due to the people’s own doing (vv. 11, 17). The call for help is identical (ויצעקו אל־יהוה בצר להם) “but they called upon Yhwh in their trouble”, vv. 13, 19) (Weber 2003:208). A single theme, namely a complete reversal of fortunes, links all four sub-stanzas, but “two acts of salvation from sin are framed by two acts of salvation from chaos” (Mejia 1975:58).

Stanza 3 (vv. 33-41) shares links with the first and last sub-stanzas of stanza 2. With both, it shares the intervention of Y_{HWH} in nature. With sub-stanza 2.1, it shares the themes of wandering in a wilderness, but in the end finding a habitable city. With 2.4, it shares the theme of water, both as a life-giving and sustaining gift, as in sub-stanza 2.1, and as a negative and life-threatening force, as in sub-stanza 2.4. Stanza 3 applies the theme of the reversal of fortunes in general terms with reference to Y_{HWH}’s absolute power over nature and history. Y_{HWH} turns positive situations into negative and negative situations into positive. Strophe 3.1 (vv. 33-35) illustrates Y_{HWH}’s power over creation. The movement is from negative (sub-strophe 3.1.1, vv. 33-34) to positive (sub-strophe 3.3.2, v. 35), with an *inclusio* created by the repetition of שִׁים (ישם, vv. 33, 35).²⁵ A negative turn is always a real possibility מרעת ישיב בה “because of the evil of those who lived there” (v. 34). In strophes 3.2 (vv. 36-39) and 3.3 (vv. 40-41), Y_{HWH}’s transformative power is applied to the history of Israel.²⁶ Y_{HWH} enabled

25 Note the imperfect forms, suggesting that Y_{HWH} is constantly at work in the world in this way.

26 The transition from nature to history is suggested by a series of *waw consecutive* + imperfects (והשי, v. 36a; ונגוכו, v. 36b; וערוו, v. 37a; ושעו, v. 37b; וברו, v. 38a; וצעמו, v. 38a; וחשו, v. 39a; ועתו, v. 40b; ובשו, v. 41a; פשו, v. 41b).

רעבים “hungry people” to establish עיר מושב “a habitable city” (sub-strophe 3.2.1, v. 36), where they experienced Y_{HWH} ’s positive intervention (sub-strophe 3.2.2, vv. 37-38), but ultimately Y_{HWH} reverses their fortunes to negative space (sub-strophe 3.2.3, v. 39), when they “became humbled by oppression, calamity, and sorrow”. In strophe 3.3 (vv. 40-41), this negative turn of events finds a stark ethical application.²⁷ The historical calamity also becomes a divine judgement upon נדבים “noble people” who are forced to wander לתהו לא־דרך “in a waste without road” (v. 40, note the *flashback* to vv. 4-8), while Y_{HWH} ’s transformative creational power (וישם, v. 41) is directed towards אביון “a poor person”. Y_{HWH} lifts the poor from affliction and makes their clans like a flock (v. 41).

The first three stanzas share the theme of a reversal of fortunes in spatial terms, while the last stanza urges the readers/listeners to take this phenomenon to heart and learn a lesson from it. Stanza 4 (vv. 42-43) resumes the theme of strophe 3.3 (vv. 40-41), by depicting a clear contrast between the fate of upright ones (ישרים) who experience joy, and every single form of injustice (ובל־עוולה), which cannot open its mouth to express praise (v. 42). This should inspire the wise (חכם) to contemplate (ויתבוננו) Y_{HWH} ’s actions of loyalty (חסדי יהוה). The one who is praised for his acts of salvation (v. 1) is the God of the reversal of fortunes. Praise, thanksgiving, and devotion should become a permanent way of life, unless their salvation is reversed again (v. 43).

5. PSALM 107: INTERTEXTUAL ACCENTS

The intratextual reading of Psalm 107 raises the question as to in what kind of social-historical context such a text would have communicated effectively. The immediate and remote literary context(s) suggest that the experience of exile and restoration resonates in Psalm 107 (Goulder 1998:119).

In its immediate context, multiple intertextual connections confirm a close connection between Psalms 106 and 107 (Weber 2003:209; Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:101-102). Apart from the identical opening words (Pss. 106:1; 107:1), Psalm 106:47’s prayer for salvation and ingathering from dispersion is “answered” in Psalm 107:2-3 (קבץ, 106:47; 107:3). In Psalm 106:41, Y_{HWH} gives his people “in the hand of the nations” (ביד־גוים), but in Psalm 107:2, he has already redeemed them “from the hand of the foe” (מיד־צַר). In Psalm 106:41-42, Y_{HWH} hands his people over to their foes, but

²⁷ The participle שפך (v. 40a) amidst the series of *waw consecutive* + imperfects suggests this turn from historical events to ethical application.

in Psalm 107, he delivers them from their distress (vv. 6, 13, 19, 28). Psalm 106:14 states that Israel tempted Y_{HWH} in the wilderness, while Psalm 107:4-9 suggests that he delivers those who are lost in the wilderness (מדבר, 106:14; 107:4; ישימון, 106:14; 107:4). In Psalm 106, Israel is accused of sacrificing to idols (vv. 7, 13, 21, 28, 37), while Psalm 107 exhorts the redeemed to offer-up sacrifices of thanksgiving (v. 22). Psalm 106 suggests that Israel suffered hardships, due to their sin and rebellion (vv. 7, 13, 33-43), and Psalm 107 ascribes hardship to people's rebellion and sin (vv. 10-11, 17). In both poems, the sinners are humbled (בגע, 106:42; 107:12) and can only be saved by Y_{HWH} (ישע, 106:4, 8, 10, 47; 107:13, 19). At the end of Psalm 106, the people in exile pray for deliverance; in Psalm 107, they look back upon Y_{HWH}'s acts of redemption and thank him for it. Psalm 107 bridges exile and restoration.

Intertextual links between Psalm 107 and the closing poems of Book IV and poems in Book V, emphasising the notion of universal thanksgiving, have already been noted (see §1). Significant are the exact parallels between Psalm 107:1 and Psalms 118:1, 29 and 136:1. With a slight variation, the verse also occurs in Psalm 136:26. The phrase *כי לעולם חסדו* (Ps. 107:1b) also occurs in Psalms 118:2-4 and 136:2-25. These repetitions create a “hermeneutically significant” compositional “arc” between Psalms 107, 118 and 136 (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:110). Psalm 118 is the closing poem of the *Egyptian Hallel* (Pss. 113-118), and the twin poems Psalms 135-136 conclude the *Songs of Ascents* (Pss. 120-134). Psalms 107, 118 and 136 become part of

a great literary (fictional) liturgy of thanksgiving for Israel's rescue, restoration, and renewal that had begun as a second exodus (Psalms 113-118) and continues in the pilgrimage to Zion as the center of Israel (Psalms 120-134) (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:110).

Six themes in Psalm 107 set the tone for the remainder of Book V: the notion of praise/thanksgiving (Zenger 1998:77-82; see *הדו*, v. 1; *יודו*, vv. 8, 15, 21, 31; *וירממוהו*, v. 32; *יהללוהו*, v. 32); the emphasis on Y_{HWH}'s acts of loyal love (Zenger 1998:88; see *חסדו*, vv. 1, 8, 15, 21, 31; *חסדי יהוה*, v. 43); the notion that Y_{HWH} takes particular interest in the plight of the poor who are completely dependent upon his (Ro 2002:200-206; Bremer 2016:387-391; see *אביון*, v. 41); the interest in wisdom as instruction for a blessed way of life (Kartje 2014:69, 138-164; see *חכם*, v. 43); the poem's universal-eschatological orientation (Zenger 1998:82; see *לעולם*, v. 1; *לבני-אדם*, vv. 8, 15, 21, 31), and the notion that Y_{HWH} is the universal king who suppresses all powers of chaos (see vv. 4-32), overcomes the imperial tendencies of foreign and domestic “powerful” people, and uplifts the poor from affliction (Zenger 1997:96-97; Tucker 2014:62-65, see v. 40-41). These

themes resurface in Psalm 145, suggesting that Psalms 107 and 145 serve as a deliberate frame for Book V (Zenger 1998:88-89). Psalm 107 thus links Books IV and V and becomes the paradigmatic text outlining post-exilic Israel's historical, eschatological, transforming, and still incomplete spatial journey between desperation and adoration (Bremer 2016:387).

Texts from the prophetic corpus serve as source texts for Psalm 107, notably Jeremiah 33:1-11 (Beyerlin 1979:26-27) and texts from Isaiah 40-66 (Roffey 1997:72-73; Tucker 2014:63-65). In Jeremiah 33:1-3, Y_{HWH} assures the prophet, while he was restrained in the court of the guard (33:1; see Ps. 107:10-16), that he will reveal to him hidden things of which he is unaware (33:3; see Ps. 107:8, 15, 21, 24, 31). Jeremiah 33:4-9 promises doom and destruction for “this city” (עיר הזוה, 33:4; see עיר מושב in Ps. 107:4, 7, 36) at the hand of the Chaldeans because of Judah's wickedness (כל־רעתם, 33:5; see Ps. 107:11, 17, 34, 39). It also promises hope and healing in the future (33:6; see Ps. 107:17-22). Y_{HWH} will reverse the fortune of Judah and Israel (והשבתי את־שבות, 33:7; see Ps. 107:6-7, 13-14, 19-20, 28-30), cleanse them from their iniquity (מכל־עונם, 33:8; see Ps. 107:10), and pardon the sins (לכול־עונותיהם, 33:8; see Ps. 107:17) they committed against him (ואשר פשעו בי, 33:9; see Ps. 107:17). Y_{HWH}'s redemptive intervention will increase Jerusalem's reputation among the nations of the earth (לכל־לְבַלְבֵי הָאָרֶץ, 33:9), while Psalm 107 lauds Y_{HWH}'s “wonderful deeds for humankind” (ונפלאותיו לבני אדם, 107:8, 15, 21, 31).²⁸

Jeremiah 33:10-11 resonates in Psalm 107:1-3. According to Jeremiah 33:10, in “this place” (במקום־הזוה), *i.e.* in the “cities of Judah” (בערי יהודה) and “the streets of Jerusalem” (ובחצות ירושלם), people are now saying (אמרים) that the place is a wasteland, void of human and animal habitation. Yet, verse 11 states that sounds of joy will be heard again, when people will say (אמרים):

הודוּ אֶת־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

“Give thanks to Y_{HWH} *Ṣebā' ōt*,

כִּי־טוֹב יְהוָה כִּי־לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדּוֹ

because good is Y_{HWH}, yes
forever is his loyalty,”

מִבְּאֵים תּוֹדֶה בַּיַּת יְהוָה

while they bring a thank-offering in the
house of Y_{HWH}.

28 *נפלאות* usually refers to “the great miracles God performed for the benefit of his people when he was taking them out of Egypt (Mejia 1975:58; see Pss. 78:4, 12; 106:7, 22).

כִּי־אֶשְׂיב אֶת־שְׁבוּת־הָאָרֶץ כְּכַרְאֲשֻׁנָּה אָמַר יְהוָה:

“Indeed, I will restore
the fortune of the land
it was at first,” says YHWH.

These words appear in abbreviated form in Psalms 106, 107, 118 and 136. Psalm 107:2 encourages the “redeemed of YHWH” (גְּאוּלֵי יְהוָה) to say (יאמרו) these words. What YHWH promised in Jeremiah 33, transpired in Psalm 107 (Kirkpatrick 1921:639).

Psalm 107 shares several general themes with Isaiah 40-66, notably the notion of YHWH as redeemer (גָּאֹל, 107:2-3; Isa. 41:14; 43:1, 14; 44:6, 22, 23, 24; 47:4; 48:17, 20; 49:7, 26; 51:10; 52:3, 9; 54:5, 8; 59:3, 20; 60:16; 62:12; 63:3, 9, 16) and of YHWH preparing a way for the redeemed through the desert (107:4-7; Isa. 40:3-4; 42:16; 43:19-21; 48:17). YHWH delivers those who are imprisoned (107:10-16; Isa. 42:7, 22; 45:2; 49:9-12) and heals the afflicted who are then called upon to sacrifice thank-offerings (107:17-22; Isa. 51:12; 53:10-12; 54:10). He controls the sea as symbol of chaos and grants salvation (107:23-30; Isa. 43:16; 50:2; 51:10, 11, 15; 54:11). YHWH dries up fertile land (107:33-34; Isa. 44:27; 50:2), but also turns the desert into fertile land (107:35-36; Isa. 41:17-18; 43:19-21; 44:3). תְּהוֹ “wasteland” occurs but once in the Psalter (107:40). In Isaiah 40-66, the nations and their gods are described several times as תְּהוֹ (40:17, 23; 41:29; 44:9), while Israel is not destined for תְּהוֹ, but to enjoy the produce of a habitable land (45:18-19). Psalm 107 can be read in the context of the return from exile and the restoration of the post-exilic community (Stone 2013:44-45). Three specific examples suggest that Psalm 107 is dependent on material in Isaiah 40-66.

First, Isaiah 62:12 and Psalm 107:2 are the only instances in the Hebrew Bible where people who experienced YHWH’s salvific intervention are referred to as “the redeemed of YHWH” (גְּאוּלֵי יְהוָה). In Isaiah, it occurs in the context of hope for the future restoration of Jerusalem and, in the psalm, in the context of already experienced redemption (Kartje 2014:147; Tucker 2014:60; Bremer 2016:388).

Secondly, the expression “from east and from west, from north and from sea” מִמִּזְרָח וּמִמְעַרְבִּים וּמִצָּפוֹן וּמִיָּם occurs only in Psalm 107:3 and Isaiah 49:12. In Isaiah, the exiles are gathered from the ends of the earth, delivered from prison (לְאִסּוּרִים, 49:9; see Ps. 107:10), darkness (בַּחֹשֶׁךְ, 49:9; see Ps. 107:10), and hunger and thirst (לֹא יִרְעָבוּ וְלֹא יִצְמָאוּ, 49:10; see Ps. 107:5). YHWH leads them (יְנַהֵגם) and brings them to fountains of water (וְעַל־מְבוּעֵי מַיִם יְנַהֵלם, 49:10; see Ps. 107:30). Hence, the entire universe is called upon to praise YHWH for his compassion upon his afflicted (וְעֵינָיו,

49:13; see Ps. 107:10, 41). What is promised in Isaiah has already transpired in Psalm 107 (Tucker 2014:62).

Thirdly, an almost exact parallel exists between Psalm 107:16 and Isaiah 45:2. Isaiah 45:1-6 is a divine promise that Y_{HWH} will enable Cyrus to subjugate nations and conquer cities, in order that the Judean exiles might be delivered. In the process, Y_{HWH} will break down gates of bronze (דלתות נחושה אשבר, 45:2c; Ps. 107:16a) and cut through bars of iron (ובריחי ברזל אנדע, 45:2d; Ps. 107:16b). What is promised to Cyrus in Isaiah 45 becomes a universal attribute of Y_{HWH} in Psalm 107 (Tucker 2014:64).

In Isaiah 40-66, the royal oracles

reflect perhaps the earliest attempt in the Hebrew Bible to blend Persian imperial ideology ... with that of Judean royal ideology (Tucker 2014:55).

In Psalms 107-150, “the psalmists provide a thoroughly negative assessment of political power in toto” (Tucker 2014:58). Psalm 107 utilises the language of Isaiah 40-66 to introduce Book V of the Psalter

metaphorically by associating empires and powers with places of chaos and destruction, but, nevertheless, places that are not beyond the הַסֵּד of Yahweh (Tucker 2014:62).

Psalm 107 also shows an affinity for texts influenced by wisdom epistemology. This is particularly apparent in sub-stanza 2.4 (vv. 23-32) and stanzas 3 and 4 (vv. 33-41 and 42-43). In sub-stanza 2.4 (vv. 23-32), Psalm 107 shares with the non-seafaring Israelite culture the view that “those going down to sea upon ships” (v. 23) witness Y_{HWH}’s “wonderful deeds” (וּנְפִלְאוֹתָיו, v. 24) in the deep. In Proverbs 30:18-19, the wisdom teacher expresses his astonishment (הִמָּה נִפְלְאוֹ מִמֶּנִּי) “these things are too wonderful for me” about דֶּרֶךְ־אֵינָה בַלְבַּיִם “the way of a ship in the midst of the sea” (see Ps. 107:23-24). Stanza 3 (vv. 33-41) shares with stanza 2 (vv. 4-32) the prominent theme in wisdom literature of Y_{HWH}’s active role in the reversal of fortunes. However, it deviates from stanza 2’s narrative style to “offer a timeless reflection upon Yhwh’s הַסֵּד” (Kartje 2014:146).

The notion of wisdom’s educational value in Psalm 107:42-43 (see Prov. 9:4, 16; 10:17; 13:18; 15:5) displays general points of contact between the psalm and the wisdom corpus. Two phenomena, however, indicate the presence of a more pronounced and nuanced wisdom epistemology. First, in the closing strophe of stanza 3 (vv. 40-41) and in stanza 4 (vv. 42-43), there is a clear contrast between an in-group and an out-group, reminiscent of the צדיק־רשע opposing pair in the Hebrew Bible’s wisdom

corpus (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:101; Tucker 2014:66). YHWH pours contempt on the “nobles” (גִּדְבִים, 107:40), who are relegated to perpetual desert wandering (see vv. 4-5). By contrast, he lifts “a poor person” (אֲבִיוֹן) “from affliction” (מֵעוֹנִי, 107:41) and grants them prosperity. It provides joy to “righteous people” (יִשְׂרָיִם) and brings an end to all injustice (וּכְלֵ-עוֹלָה, 107:42). In these references, Bremer (2016:390-391) detects the growing social stratification in Yehud in the late (post-400 BCE) Persian period. The Persian yoke upon Yehud became harsher and conflict arose between the Judean elite in favour of Persian hegemony (see גִּדְבִים in v. 40; Tucker 2014:66) and members of priestly groups (Levites), who were marginalised and identified themselves with the “poor” (אֲבִיוֹן in v. 41). The close connection between the fate of the גִּדְבִים (v. 40) and the desert-wanderers in sub-strophe 2.1 (v. 4) indicates that the experienced salvation, upon which the call to thanksgiving rests (v. 1), is not perpetual, nor unconditional. The גִּדְבִים “appear to be held responsible for the disaster of the exile” (Tucker 2014:66). Salvation is reserved for those who identify with the plight of the אֲבִיוֹן and live as יִשְׂרָיִם in complete dependence upon YHWH .

Secondly, Psalm 107:43 is a typical wisdom exhortation comparable to the closing verse of the book of Hosea (Hos. 14:10). The exhortations share the noun “wise” and the verb בִּין “to understand”. Hosea 14:10 adds that contemplating “wisdom” reveals that “the ways of YHWH are straight” (כִּי־יִשְׂרָיִם דַּרְכֵי יְהוָה); see Ps. 107:42) and that the act of contemplation also distinguishes the “righteous” (צַדִּיקִים) from the “transgressors” (פֹּשְׁעִים; see Ps. 107:42). These similar closing lines are indicative of the growing “sapientalisation” of the Hebrew Bible in the post-exilic period (Roffey 1997:62). In Hosea, the closing admonition is a redactional addition actualising the message of the pre-exilic prophet in new socio-historical circumstances, urging post-exilic Israel to take a lesson for right living from her past sinful behaviour and adverse experiences. In Psalm 107:42-43, the admonition is part of a deliberate composition exhorting the post-exilic community to thank YHWH constantly for the already experienced, but yet incomplete (see Pss. 126; 137) restoration of Israel and the nations (Sheppard 1980:129-136; Stone 2013:41).

Psalm 107’s bridging function is enhanced by the fact that it influenced other texts, notably in the “pessimistic” application of phrases in the poem’s closing lines in the book of Job and in subtle allusions to the storm-at-sea images (vv. 23-32) in the book of Jonah. Three parallels with Job are noteworthy. First, the phrase חֹשֶׁךְ וְצִלְמוֹת “darkness and deep gloom” (107:10, 14) occurs elsewhere only in Job 10:21. Secondly, Job 12:21a quotes Psalm 107:40a, and Job 12:24b quotes Psalm 107:40b. Thirdly, Job 5:16b alludes to Psalm 107:42b, and Job 22:19a to Psalm 107:42a. Some

interpret these parallels as an indication that Psalm 107 is dependent upon Job (Beyerlin 1979:13-14). A more nuanced approach suggests that Psalm 107 served as source text for the parallels in Job (Clines 1989:287; Kynes 2012:80-97) and that they are significantly reinterpreted in Job. In Psalm 107:10-16, those in חשך וצלמות are “brought out” (יוציאם, v. 14) by YHWH, while that possibility does not exist in Job. The Job passages expand, qualify, and reinterpret Psalm 107:40 and 42. Job 12 contains a speech by Job where he argues that YHWH acts arbitrarily when he reverses fortunes. Psalm 107 displays an “optimistic depiction of divine deliverance”, while Job “challenges the norm” (Kynes 2012:96). In Job 5:16 and 22:19, Eliphaz uses Psalm 107:42 as “proof text” to reprimand Job for his pessimistic views and to support the optimistic depiction of divine deliverance (Kynes 2012:96-97). Psalm 107 highlights the positive possibilities of YHWH’s providence, while Job exploits its dark side.

Psalm 107:23-32 contains a general description of a storm at sea and its effect on עשי מלאכה במים רבים “those doing work upon mighty waters” (v. 23b, see מה-מלאכתך, Jonah 1:8). Many of these general images find specific application in the book of Jonah’s narrative about a recalcitrant Israelite prophet (Kirkpatrick 1921:643). In both contexts, characters “go down” (ירד, Ps. 107:23; Jonah 1:3, 5; 2:1) to the “sea” (Ps. 107:23; Jonah 1:4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 15; 2:4) in “ships” (אניה, Ps. 107:23; Jonah 1:3, 4, 5). A “wind” (רוח, Ps. 107:25; Jonah 1:4) whips up a “storm” (סערה, Ps. 107:25; סער, Jonah 1:4, 12, 13) that traps the sailors in an “evil” plight (רעה, Ps. 107:26; Jonah 1:7, 8). When they “cry out” for help (צעק, Ps. 107:28; זעק, Jonah 1:5), YHWH “stills” the storm (עמד, Ps. 107:25; Jonah 1:15). From the intestines of the big fish (Jonah 2:1), the prophet prays, because YHWH cast him in the “deep” (מצולה, Ps. 107:24; Jonah 2:4) where “waves” threatened to overwhelm him (גלים, Ps. 107:25, 27; Jonah 2:4), “waters” encompassed him (מים, Ps. 107:23; Jonah 2:6), and the “primeval waters” engulfed him (תהום, Ps. 107:26; Jonah 2:6). These are “rich textual connections”. It is conceivable that “Jonah is a figure of Israel in exile” (Stone 2013:46). As the closing verses of the next book in the Book of the Twelve (Mic. 7:18-20) suggest (in words strongly resembling Jonah 2:4), this Israel will experience that YHWH “casts” (שלך, Mic. 7:19; see Jonah 2:4) not them, but their sins, “in the depths” (במצלות, Mic. 7:17; see מצולה, Jonah 2:4) (Stone 2013:47).

6. READING PSALM 107 AS A SPATIAL JOURNEY

The intertextual reading suggests that Psalm 107 serves as bridge between the desperation of exile and the hopes of the restored post-exilic community. A spatial reading confirms this bridging function. The

experiences of the post-exilic community become a continuous and transforming journey between desperation and adoration. The firstspace and secondspace realities of the authors/redactors of Book V of the Psalter are decidedly negative. Their firstspace reality is that of a marginalised, small, exploited group in a vast and all-powerful Persian empire. Their secondspace context is the prevailing Persian ideology of a benevolent, universal dictatorship (Tucker 2014:26-40). Psalm 107 introduces Book V, by focusing on the world at large and on YHWH's salvific intervention in the universe as the only benevolent, universal king (Tucker 2014:68).

Psalm 107 never mentions Israel by name, nor does it contain any specific reference to Jerusalem, Zion, or the temple (Jarick 1997:283).²⁹ YHWH's salvific acts are directed לְבְנֵי אָדָם “towards humankind” (vv. 8, 15, 21, 31) and aimed at them finding עִיר מוֹשָׁב “a habitable city” (vv. 4, 7, 36) and מְחוּז חֲפֶצֶם “a place of their desire” (v. 30). Psalm 107 confronts its first- and secondspace realities and creates a world of words that transforms *this* world into *another*, indeed *an other* world, a world directed by חֲסֵדֵי יְהוָה “YHWH's loyal deeds” (v. 43). Intertextual relations leave little doubt

that the house of the Lord is the implied setting for the thanksgiving, and it is equally clear that the deliverance depicted in all four stanzas is deliverance from death (Jarick 1997:283).

Yet, in the poet's spatial imagination, YHWH's power extends beyond the uniquely Israelite to include the entire universe. In his world of words, Psalm 107 bridges the divide between Israel and the nations.

This world of words opens avenues for new thirdspatial applications in the poet's spatial imagination. Psalm 107:1 and 43 acts as key to unlock this imagination. The poet departs from the חֲסֵד יְהוָה (v. 1) and the multiple manifestations of this חֲסֵד in nature and history (vv. 4-32; 33-41). He can, therefore, conclude his poem with reference to חֲסֵדֵי יְהוָה (v. 43). Between these two bookends, Psalm 107 contains a call for the thankful contemplation of YHWH's numerous deeds of salvation experienced by גְּאוּלֵי יְהוָה “the redeemed of YHWH” (v. 2). As the link with Isaiah 62:12 suggests, it alludes to those redeemed from the Exile (Bremer 2016:388), but as the poem's deliberate “vagueness” implies, YHWH's loyal love is

29 This is extraordinary in a collection of poems with an intentional focus on Jerusalem, Zion, and the temple, as can be clearly noted in the two “pilgrimage” collections, Psalms 113-118 and 120-134. Zenger (1998:99-101) argues that Book V of the Psalter is ultimately post-cultic and propagates a “spiritual” pilgrimage to Zion. Psalm 107's opening exhortation to thanksgiving (v. 1) suggests that temple imagery is present behind the scenes, but the lack of any specific mention of Jerusalem/Zion/temple in the poem underlines its universal intent.

directed towards Israel as a collective, towards individual members of his people, and towards humanity (לְבַנֵי אָדָם, vv. 8, 15, 21, 31), in general. Everybody can confidently call upon him for help in present circumstances and build his/her hope for the (eschatological) future upon this foundation.

The central conceptual metaphor permeating the entire poem is the notion of LIFE IS A JOURNEY³⁰ (Kartje 2014:157). The journey is characterised by the already and the not yet, by Y_{HWH}'s absolute power to turn fortunes from negative to positive and, conversely, from positive to negative (vv. 33-41). The wise would contemplate this (v. 43), in order to make life's journey a meaningful exercise with a desirable outcome (Kartje 2014:138-164).

As verses 2-3 suggest, in the poet's spatial imagination he is at the centre. The exhortation to thanksgiving in verse 1 is given from the perspective of already experienced salvation and an already arrived-at destination (Weber 2003:206). It becomes the confession of the already redeemed (גְּאוּלֵי יְהוּה, v. 2) gathered (קִבְּצוּ) from the dangerous horizontal and vertical extremities of the universe (v. 3; Bremer 2016:388). The redeemed already experienced the transforming spatial journey between desperation and adoration. They contemplate the חֲסֵדֵי יְהוּה (v. 43) from their at-the-centre perspective!

The suggestion of spatial movement and arrival at a destination deserves special recognition. In sub-stanza 2.1 (vv. 4-9), the גְּאוּלֵי יְהוּה of stanza 1 (v. 2) is depicted as initially staggering in the wilderness on a desolate road, unable to find a habitable city (v. 4). Echoes of Israel's desert wandering at the time of the Exodus, and similarly of their state of desolation during the Exile are impossible to ignore. However, upon their cry for help (v. 6), Y_{HWH} transformed their aimless wasteland wandering into a purposeful journey. He led them on a straight road to a habitable city (v. 7). They have already reached the desired at-the-centre destination. It is impossible not to regard the allusion to a habitable city as a veiled reference to Jerusalem, the centre of Israel's spatial universe. This stanza suggests a horizontal journey from far to near, from off-centre to at the centre.

The following two sub-stanzas (2.2, vv. 10-16; 2.3, vv. 17-22) contain four important spatial motifs. First, they emphasise the notion of an aimless journey, of people stumbling about without any helper (v. 12), of aimless travelling causing the travellers to arrive at the ends of the earth – literally at death's door (v. 18). A more off-centre location can hardly be imagined!

30 As is convention – the basis metaphor is consistently capitalised.

Secondly, both sub-stanzas suggest that the people's predicament is the result of their own wrongdoing. They rebelled against the words of God (v. 11) and were suffering affliction because of their iniquities (v. 17). There are clear echoes of prophetic warnings to Israel of dire consequences, should they not heed Y_{HWH}'s warnings against their apostasy and stubbornness.

Thirdly, upon the people's call for help in their adversity, Y_{HWH} intervenes by actions suggesting spatial movement. He brought them from darkness and deep gloom (v. 14), saved them from their distress (v. 19), sent forth his word and healed them (v. 20), and rescued them from their graves (v. 20). In this instance, movement is suggested on the vertical sphere, from the depths of the netherworld to the dizzying heights of Y_{HWH}'s salvific presence, from the extremes of being off-centre to the joy of being at the centre.

Fourthly, echoes of Jerusalem and thanksgiving ceremonies in the temple are unmistakably present. Those who experienced Y_{HWH}'s transforming intervention should give thanks to Y_{HWH} for his loyalty (vv. 15, 21), and the thanksgiving should find specific expression in thank-offerings (v. 22) and the proclaiming of Y_{HWH}'s transforming works with shouts of joy (v. 22).

Significantly, in sub-stanza 2.4 (vv. 23-32), a dangerous and life-threatening journey upon the chaotic waters of the sea is described in vivid detail. People experience the works of Y_{HWH} and his wonderful deeds (v. 24) when they are in the gravest danger. The omnipotence of Y_{HWH} is revealed in the life-threatening storm. He raises the tempest by simply speaking (v. 25) and renders human wisdom useless (v. 27). Yet, he stilled the storm to a whisper (v. 29a) and guided the people to their desired place of calm and safety (v. 30).

Stanza 3 (vv. 33-41) again emphasises the omnipotent transforming power of Y_{HWH}. He turns rivers into a desert (v. 33), and – conversely – a desert into pools of water (v. 35). He brings the hungry there and enables them to establish a habitable city (v. 36), where they can flourish (vv. 37-38), but Y_{HWH}'s omnipotence also implies that he can reverse the situation. They can be decreased and humbled by oppression, calamity, and sorrow (v. 39). This should act as a warning to the nobles (v. 40). They can again be dispersed to wander in a wasteland without a road (v. 40). The poor, however, can expect to be uplifted and to thrive (v. 41).

In stanza 4 (vv. 42-43), the admonition to pay close attention and become wise turns all references to space in the poem into “focal space” intended

to change behaviour. It serves as a commentary on, and application of Y_{HWH}'s חסד and salvific acts described earlier in the poem. It is a

summons for the wise ... to reflect upon the profound dialectic of God's grace and steadfast love (חסד) extolled in the hymn. In this way, the hymn depicts the unresolved tensions between wrath and grace, which precipitate a final wisdom evaluation and an invitation to seek further understanding (Sheppard 1980:131-132).

Life at the centre implies to be aware of the חסדי יהוה and of his all-powerful ability to reverse fortunes. Only he can bring the אביון "poor" (v. 41) אל־מחוז הפצם "to the place of their desire" (v. 30). This stanza transforms the poem into

a psalm of instruction based on thanksgiving: beginning with our memories of redemption, inviting a response of thanksgiving and finally moving towards reflection on the nature of God's steadfast love (Roffey 1997:74).

The poet of Psalm 107, indeed the authors/redactors of Book V, resisted Achaemenid imperial ideology. Y_{HWH} "usurps" the universal powers of the Achaemenid king and the Persian gods – only Y_{HWH} can turn rivers into a desert and flowing waters into thirsty ground (107:33). Israel can attest to collective and individual experiences of unbearable distress and unexpected salvation when they called for help (107:4-32; 33-41). Hope for the future does not reside in the perceived benevolent Persian hegemony, but in the often experienced and ever-present חסדי יהוה (107:1, 43).

Y_{HWH}'s people were (and often are) dispersed to the extremities of the world, in grave danger. They indeed experienced (and constantly experience) horrible, life-threatening circumstances. Their lived experience was (and is) negative to the extreme. Lost in the wilderness, locked in a dark dungeon, abandoned at death's door, exposed to the powers of chaos, they called for help and Y_{HWH} saved them! God is the ultimate agent of change, the one who reverses fortunes. However, this goes both ways – he changes the negative to positive and the positive to negative. It is cause for careful reflection. Redemption elicits response and responsibility. The upright, those who experienced Y_{HWH}'s deeds of loyal love, should live life's journey with thanksgiving and public devotion.

7. CONCLUSION

On the levels of literary composition, redactional placement, and narrative representations of place and space, Psalm 107 bridges the divide

between desperation and adoration. The opening verses (vv. 1-3) hark back to Psalms 104-106 and the closing verses, notably the contrast between various social groups in verses 40-41 and 42-43, point forward to the remainder of Book V. An intertextual and spatial reading reveals that Psalm 107 reminds the post-exilic community – *at the same time* – of their past deliverance and of a destination reached (see עיר מושב, vv. 4, 7, 36; מהווחפצם, v. 30), *and* of a yet to be arrived at final destination of the universal adoration of YHWH as the only recognised king. The אביון (v. 41) and the ישרים (v. 42) are engaged in a constant journey between desperation and adoration. Psalm 107 is a bridge on the often-travelled road between exile and restoration. The poem builds upon the experience of YHWH's acts of loyalty (חסדי יהוה) in the past. It reminds the post-exilic community to call constantly upon YHWH in their present plights. It provides them with the courage to live life confidently on their journey towards their future final destination. The closing wisdom admonition makes the חסדי יהוה an ever-newly experienced reality in the lived experience of the "poor" for all times. YHWH's acts of loyal love are "not limited by space but extend throughout the world" (Jarick 1997:286).

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