The חסד of God: A Study of the Word חסד in Books III and IV of the Hebrew Psalter

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the theological understanding of the word חסד in psalms of Books III and IV of the Hebrew Psalter. The research uses contemporary methods of biblical interpretation and criticism, which are qualitative methods of textual analysis and exegesis, to explore the message of each individual Psalm and unpack the expressions of חסד in the Psalm itself. The thesis works with psalms in their final form. It does not investigate the compositional or redactional history of particular psalms. From the fruit of the exegesis, the tasks of comparison and synthesis are undertaken to draw the messages of God’s חסד in each of these two Books, and the two Books together. The thesis attempts to answer the question of God’s חסד, first, within the context of the covenant that God initiates with David and his dynasty in Psalm 89, the landmark between Book III and Book IV, then in other psalms of the two Books. The outcome of the analysis helps readers first to understand that in different contexts within each Psalm or each Book, the word חסד conveys different expressions, and to realise that there is a significant shift in theological understanding of God’s חסד from Book III to Book IV of the Psalter. The research concludes that review and analysis of the expression of חסד in Psalms of Books III and IV provides a multi-dimensional understanding of the confidence of the Israelites in God and God’s חסד. The study also shows the dynamic character of the meaning of חסד, and the different shades of meaning the word has, according to its context within the Psalter.
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I, Minh Tien Nguyen, hereby certify that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution, and affirm that to the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.
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ABBREVIATIONS

AB   Anchor Bible
ABD  Anchor Bible Dictionary
BDBG New Brown–Driver–Briggs–Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon
BHS  Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
CHED Compendious Hebrew-English Dictionary: Comprising a Complete Vocabulary of Biblical, Mishnaic, Medieval and Modern Hebrew
EDBW Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words
JHS  Journal of Hebrew Scriptures
JPS  Jewish Publication Society
JSOT Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
HECOT Hebrew-English Concordance to the Old Testament with the New International Version
HHMBI Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters
HTR  Harvard Theological Review
MT   Masoretic Text
NIB  New Interpreter’s Bible
NIDB New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible
NRSV New Revised Standard Version
SBLDs Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
TDOT Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TWOT Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament
VT   Vetus Testamentum
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Praying with psalms, on the one hand, is essential for the researcher’s spiritual life as a Christian and a religious woman. On the other hand, struggling with her personal experiences drives her to reconcile and to reach a better understanding of the mystery of God, God’s works and love. When the opportunity for doing research came, she considered studying the Psalms. She began by searching for an understanding of human suffering and theodicy which is presented in the Book of Psalms. Working through the psalms thoroughly, she glimpsed that God’s worshipers, beginning with the psalmists and their fellows in the community afterward, wrestled with their relationship with God in terms of relating to their contemporaries. When misfortunes or catastrophes fall upon an individual or the community, God is often the One to whom one can cry and pray, and at the same time, to whom one complains and accuses. Distress and suffering was understood as the results of God’s anger leading to punishment. Acknowledgment of sin or innocence caused God’s people to question God about God’s promises, providence, faithful love, and power.

Research revealed that Book III of the Psalter is the most suitable Book to work on because its psalms explicitly raise questions about God’s justice, love, and faithfulness. The themes of the dialogue between prayer and experience: theodicy in Book III of the Psalter and the dissonance between God’s promise and human experience in Book III of the Psalms drew the researcher’s focus. She aimed at researching for the important notion of God’s presence and absence that is conceptualised in language and images of faithfulness and rejection, promise and denunciation, protection and abandonment, home and exile. Whilst exploring the extent to which these significant images and language are present in the opening and ending psalms of Book III (73, 89), she realised that there is not only the lament element in Book III, but also the joyous side of psalmists’ praise. She was particularly impressed with the significances of Psalm 89. Firstly, Psalm 89 presents a dramatic picture of praise from the beginning and of crisis and dilemma at the end. In this psalm of paradox, the expression of God’s חסד occurs seven times. Seven is a biblically perfect digit. Secondly, as Psalm 89 is placed at the end of Book III, the dilemma of this psalm’s conclusion draws the reader to hope or to expect that the solution to this predicament might be found in the following psalms of Book IV where the divine kingship is uppermost and חסד is principally expressed in praise and gratitude. At the final stage, therefore, the research question took another direction and
was finalised, namely, *The חסד of God: A Study of the Word חסד in Books III and IV of the Hebrew Psalter*.

### 1.2 HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE PSALTER

The surveys of Howard and Kuntz give a synthesis of these scholars’ recent engagement in the study of the psalms. Their articles give the researcher an overview of the recent trends and involvement of contemporary scholars with the Book of Psalms ranging from the 1920s to the present.¹

Study of the psalms was energised in the 1920s through Gunkel (1862-1932),² who has been regarded as the father of form criticism.³ Mowinckel (1884-1965)⁴ took the fruits of his teacher Gunkel forward to develop the work on the genres of the Psalms. His particular focus, however, was on the cult of ancient Israel.⁵ Since then until the 1970s, trends of the study of the Psalter, based on the works of these two great scholars, have been developed significantly and diversely. They include the works of Johnson, Eaton, Clements, Hayes, and Gerstenberger;⁶ commentators such as Oesterley, Leslie, McCullough, Taylor, Weiser, Anderson, and Dahood with his three-volume translations and notes on the Psalms,⁷ the outcome of his work on Hebrew and Ugaritic languages.⁸

The study of the Psalms from the 1980s onwards was opened to “questions about the composition, editorial unity, and the overall message of the Psalter as a book, i.e., as a literary and canonical entity that coheres with respect to structure and message, and with how individual psalms and collections fit together.”⁹ These trends were marked with Wilson’s

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⁸ Kuntz, “Engaging the Psalms,” 86.

⁹ Howard, “Recent Trends,” 333.
dissertation on the editing of the psalms,\textsuperscript{10} whose work was influenced by the momentous knowledge of his teacher Childs,\textsuperscript{11} as well as Westermann\textsuperscript{12} and others.\textsuperscript{13} Up to the present, along with general and in-depth commentaries,\textsuperscript{14} approaches to the study of the psalms varied from the wider cultural setting, form criticism, rhetorical criticism, discrete compositional units to psalms in the New Testament or across centuries.\textsuperscript{15}

As the framework of this thesis entails working in Books III and IV of the Psalter, this researcher will focus her paper on the study of the shape of the Psalms to observe the choice of language and to identify the purpose of its redactors. The studies of Wilson and McCann are relevant to the proposed research.

\subsection*{1.2.1 Gerald H. Wilson}

Wilson accepts the signal of the traditional fivefold division of the Psalter with doxologies at the end of each book: Psalms 41, 72, 89, 106 and 150.\textsuperscript{16} Secondly, he observes another division into two blocks— the “organisational technique,” that of the first three Books (1-89) and the last two Books (90-150). The first block is specific with superscriptions, authors, and genre while the use of הללויה—‘praise the LORD’ and הודו—‘give thanks’ is particular in the second.\textsuperscript{17} This recognition is significant and is supported by a linguistic study of the dating of the psalms. It shows that while the last two books were still in a state of change, the first three had substantially reached their final form.\textsuperscript{18} Thirdly, Wilson only prefers Psalm 1, instead of both Psalms 1-2, as the introduction. On the other hand, while the whole group of Psalms 146-150 all start with הללויה, the last verse of Psalm 145:21 is likely to be the doxology ending Book V: ‘My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.’ Therefore, Psalms 1 and 146-150 are believed to be the introduction and conclusion of the Psalter, respectively.\textsuperscript{19} Fourthly, the whole Psalter is seen through two frameworks: Psalms 2, 72, 89, and 144 make up the “royal covenant frame” and

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{10} Gerald H. Wilson, \textit{The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter} (SBLDs, 76; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985).
\bibitem{11} G. T. Sheppard, “Childs, Brevard” in \textit{HHMBI}, 575-84.
\bibitem{13} Howard, “Recent Trends,” 333, 335, 361; Kuntz, “Engaging,” 93-4.
\bibitem{14} Kuntz, “Engaging,” 86-9; “Continuing,” 326-35.
\bibitem{15} Kuntz, “Engaging,” 89-99; “Continuing,” 336-64.
\bibitem{17} Wilson, \textit{The Editing}, 207.
\bibitem{18} Wilson, “The Shape,” 131-132; “Shaping the Psalter,” 72-73
\bibitem{19} Wilson, \textit{The Editing}, 204-07; “The Shape,” 132-133; “Shaping the Psalter,” 74.
\end{thebibliography}
the “wisdom frame” is indicated by the Psalms 1, 73, 90, and 145. Finally, in Wilson’s view, Book IV and V of the Psalter give an answer to the question of theodicy left in Psalm 89, the psalm ending Book III. It is God who is the enthroned king over the earth on whom Israel has to rely completely (93-99); who is worthy of praise (105-106; 145; 146-150).

1.2.2 J. Clinton McCann

McCann agrees with Wilson that the purpose of editing the Psalms is to address the problem of exile, dispersion, the disappearance of the Davidic monarchy (Books I-III), and the need for re-orientation that goes beyond traditional Davidic/Zionist theology. He also affirms Wilson’s idea that the clear answer for these problems is in the last two books of the Psalms (IV-V). Though he notes the significance of the final psalms as Wilson does, McCann also looks at the opening psalm groups of Books I-III (1-2; 42-44 and 73-74). He states that the re-orientation is not only in Book IV and V, but also in the first three books: lament and hope intertwine in these psalms, and that hope is still possible. Another issue that McCann takes up is the Asaphites, whom he, in agreement with Nasuti, suggests to be the main group of temple singers, both pre-exilic and post-exilic, who were in crisis because of the exile. This group could be one of the candidates involved in the process of editing the Psalter. Their own resources were to be selected and arranged to address the crisis (Psalms 50; 73-83). The final form of the Psalter, for McCann, is definitely characterised in collective and “corporate orientation” for the sake of the community.

1.3 HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE WORD חסד

חסד is a very important word in the Hebrew Bible. It is a masculine noun with a rich array of meanings. In English, it is usually translated as kindness, loyalty, unfailing-love, great love, mercy, or steadfast love, although none of these could “correspond precisely to the

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20 Wilson, “Shaping the Psalter,” 82-82.
21 Wilson, “The Shape,” 140-141; “Shaping the Psalter,” 80-82.
24 H. P. Nasuti, Tradition History and the Psalms of Asaph (SBLDs, 88; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988).
28 The NRSV.
Hebrew *hesed.*” Indeed, “the meaning of *hesed* must be determined from the OT texts themselves.” Indeed, *hesed* is used to express the quality of the bond, the commitment and concrete actions of love in various relationships. These relationships include those of individuals and of groups, of both human and divine. Of the 245 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, *hesed* is used around 63 times in human relationships, in the “secular sphere.” The remaining approximately 182 times, *hesed* is used in the religious sphere, that is, divine-human relationship.

Many scholars have studied *hesed* in the last century. The initial study of Glueck has inspired his successors. Among those are the significant works of Sakenfeld and Clark, selections of which this thesis will review. Each writer emphasises their work according to their own purpose and methodology. Whilst Glueck shows the meaning of *hesed* and its usage that fits into his three categories of secular, secular-religious, and religious, Sakenfeld investigates the word in groups of specific books and pericopes. Coming from another direction, Clark studies the word in the lexical field.

1.3.1 Nelson Glueck

Glueck’s study on *hesed* in 1927 has been valued as “a basic source for biblical scholarship and theology.” His work falls into three sections: *hesed* as human conduct–its secular meaning; *hesed* as human conduct - its religious meaning; and *hesed* as divine conduct. In the first category, Glueck concluded that the *hesed* which people show for one another is based on mutual or reciprocal relationships of duties and rights between kinships, alliances, or even opponents.

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32 Zobel, “*hesed,*” 45.
33 Zobel, “*hesed,*” 54.
In the second category, an act of חסד is reciprocally measured among people in that society by their proper relationship with God. The aspect of obligation in this category is emphasised more than in the first. Glueck's חסד in the third category is bound mostly in the concepts of covenant, oath, and promise. It seems conditional rather than unconditional for God's faithful ones. Glueck, however, mostly investigates the meaning and usage of this word in the Hebrew Bible and does not articulate the methodology that he will use.

1.3.2 Katharine Doob Sakenfeld

In her doctorate dissertation of 1970, Sakenfeld acknowledges the work of Sidney Hills and builds her study on his 16-page manuscript on חסד. Text by text, she carefully investigates the meaning of חסד in particular periods and categories through tracking the usage of the word in secular, religious and theological settings. Conclusions are drawn from each of the following five sections: the secular use of חסד in pre-exilic prose; the חסד of God in pre-exilic prose; human חסד and divine חסד in post-exilic narrative; חסד in prophetic literature; חסד in Psalms, Proverbs, and related literature. She favours Hills’ idea which is mainly different from Glueck: the act of חסד is not a mutual and reciprocal relationship of rights and duties but an essential assistance for the helpless that demands no recompense in return. For her, חסד is moral obligation rather than a legal or lawful responsibility. Sakenfeld suggests no equivalent English translations for חסד because the word is flexible and so specific translations will be inappropriate and dangerous.

1.3.3 Gordon Clark

Unlike Glueck and Sakenfeld, Clark studies the word חסד from the perspective of the lexical field, of what he calls linguistic science. Linguistic analysis comprises the paradigmatic axis

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40 Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 69.
41 Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 102.
42 Sidney Hills’ outline of talk on Hesed and Berith and their Interrelationships, which was presented at the meeting of the Biblical Colloquium, Drew University (Madison, NJ), November 25, 1960.
44 Sakenfeld, The Meaning of Hesed, 12.
46 In any expression, the lexical items or lexemes—a unit of the vocabulary of a language, specifically the unit that is listed as a separate entry in the dictionary—are arranged in a definite order to form a chain. For one of these items, any member of a set of other items may be substituted and still produce a sensible statement, with possible adjustments to other items in the sentence. An investigation along the paradigmatic axis is concerned with the relationships between the items from within a given choice may be made to fill a given place in an expression. See Clark, The Word Hesed, 13-14.
and syntagmatic axis or dimension. Clark criticises the incompleteness and ignorance of the study of the latter dimension of his two predecessors. The two axes of linguistic analysis, for him, must go hand in hand so that a word is not studied in isolation, but also in relationship to the meanings of other words. Clark’s aim is “focusing attention on a single language, rather than a group of languages, and seeks to analyse that language as it existed – or exists – at a given point of time looking particularly at the network of relationships between the various elements which make up the language.” Like Sakenfeld, Clark determines that there is no adequate translation of the word חסד in any language. It is a Hebrew word. Hence it is understandable primarily in its Hebrew cultural context. Clark’s study leads him to the conclusion that, theologically, חסד is rooted in the divine nature and therefore, the use of חסד in the Hebrew Bible indicates God’s attribute rather than a human attribute.

These three studies of חסד cover the whole book of the Hebrew Bible. There is still a gap in the study of this word in the Old Testament. The study of חסד in the Psalter is neglected. Here the word appears 127 times, that is, over more than half of its occurrences in the Hebrew Bible.

1.4 THE AIM OF THE THESIS

Psalm 89, as Wilson and McCann point out, is a landmark for the editorial identification of the Psalter. It is placed at the boundary of Book III and Book IV. Psalm 89 is a special psalm with a seven-fold occurrence of חסד. At least four of these seven occurrences express the intimate relationship between God and David through God’s promise to be always with him to strengthen him and his dynasty. Also, God’s חסד is promised to be irremovable and everlasting for David. The Psalm, however, ends with the stark reality that the Davidic king is defeated, and the Davidic monarchy is threatened with decline. God’s חסד and promise, therefore, are questioned. However, there are three other occurrences of חסד in Psalm 89 which are placed in the context of praising God as the king of the cosmos. In this context,

47 A term introduced by Saussure to refer to the sequential characteristics of language. This is the second axis along which language, seen as a string of items in linear order, may be investigated. Each lexical item in a chain contracts syntagmatic relationships with the other items in a chain. A group of items that are closely linked together, such as a collocation, is called a syntagm. See Clark, The Word Hesed, 14.
50 Clark, The Word Hesed, 267.
52 In the entire Psalter, only Psalms 89 and 119 have seven-fold-occurrence of חסד.
God’s permanently established חסד is declared. The Psalm, thus, presents the tension between confidence and doubt, at the same time as conveying that God’s self, and so God’s חסד, is immeasurable in comparison to that which has been spelled out in God’s covenant with David. There will be reasons for the failure of the Davidic monarchy, but this will not indicate that God is unfaithful to David.

The tension of Psalm 89, especially when the last appearance of חסד is a question, evokes the search for understanding God’s חסד in this Psalm and other psalms of Books III and IV.

The present thesis, consequently, investigates the meaning of God’s חסד in Book III and Book IV of the Psalter. It attempts to answer the question of God’s חסד, first, within the context of the ברית (covenant) that God initiates with David and his throne in Psalm 89, then in the contexts of the other psalms of the two Books. At the heart of the thesis, the researcher argues that the word חסד is expressed diversely according to the contexts of each psalm. Also, those significations will certainly differ from Book III to Book IV. Nonetheless, similarities in some expressions will be undeniable. Review and analysis of the expressions of חסד in Books III and IV of the Psalms will afford various dimensions in the understanding of God’s חסד. At the same time, it will demonstrate the vibrant quality of the meaning of חסד, and the diverse nuances of meaning this word would contain depending on its context within the psalms.

1.5 THE QUESTIONS OF THE THESIS

To tackle the meanings of the word חסד, the thesis attempts to answer the following questions. Given that חסד appears seven times in Psalm 89, what does each instance tell readers about God’s חסד and its usage when considered separately? In Psalm 89, the occurrences of חסד can be grouped into two categories. When חסד is considered in these two categories, how does it help with the understanding of חסד: is it the same or different? Psalm 89 contains seven usages of חסד. What does this tell readers about God’s חסד in the Psalm as a unit? Other psalms in Book III also contain חסד. What do they tell readers about God’s חסד? How do they relate to Psalm 89? How do all of the occurrences of this term in Book III help with the understanding of God’s חסד: in what way are they similar, different or perhaps unique? Similar questions can be applied to Book IV. Specifically, what do these psalms tell readers about God’s חסד? How do they relate to Psalm 89 and other psalms of Book III? How do all occurrences of this word in Book IV help with the understanding of God’s חסד: in what way are they similar, different or perhaps unique? In comparing the occurrences and
usage of חסד in and between Books III and IV, what do they tell readers about God’s חסד? Do they tally with each other and if so, how, or is there a disconnect? How do they differ and/or how do they supplement or complement one another?

1.6 METHODS AND THE OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

This thesis will approach the texts using best practice in contemporary methods of biblical interpretation and criticism, including rhetorical critical methods. Careful exegesis is critical as Sakenfeld suggests no equivalent English translations for חסד because the word is flexible and so specific translations will be inappropriate and dangerous.\(^{53}\) Like Sakenfeld, Clark determines that there is no adequate translation of the word חסד in any language. It is a Hebrew word hence it is understandable primarily in its Hebrew cultural context.\(^{54}\) The procedure will be developed in the following manner.

This chapter (Chapter One) has set out the context for the investigation of the thesis. First, the motivation that led to the present thesis is spelled out. Secondly, due to the necessity for an understanding of the context of Books III and IV of the Psalms, it has been essential to review the historical studies of the Psalms, including the work of Wilson and McCann on the shape of the Psalter. Thirdly, previous studies of the word חסד in the Hebrew Bible have been presented, including the studies of חסד as revealed by Glueck, Sakenfeld, and Clark. This chapter has set out the reasons as to why the present study of חסד in Books III and IV of the Psalter is necessary. It presents the outline of the thesis and the methods used. It also sets the limitations for this paper.

Chapter Two of the thesis will examine the meaning of God’s חסד in Psalm 89, the last Psalm of Book III of the Psalter. It will attempt to find the meaning of חסד in the Psalm, arguing that in order to comprehend the חסד of God one has to take into account the ברית (covenant) that God made with the house of David. As presented at the end of Book III, the Davidic dynasty no longer existed. How then was God’s promise to maintain permanently the kingship of David and his dynasty, a promise assured by God’s חסד, understandable? In order to explore expressions of God’s חסד, this chapter makes a detailed exegesis of Psalm 89 focusing on the usage of this term. Additionally, a parallel concept of God’s promise to the House of David is found clearly in 2 Sam 7:1-17. The examination of this text besides Psalm 89 will help

\(^{54}\) Clark, The Word Hesed, 267.
unpack the understanding of the חסד of God in the latter.

Using the meaning of God’s חסד in Psalm 89 as a reference point, with the additional signal of the kingship of the Lord (89:19), Chapters Three and Four will explore חסד in the psalms of Book III and then Book IV. In these chapters, the thesis presents the word חסד as varied in expressions. Its expressions will be differentiated according to divergent contexts based upon which the Psalmists understand and want to convey the חסד of God. The examination of the expression of חסד in those psalms of Books III and IV will indicate whether the word חסד has the same meaning in those psalms in each Book. Furthermore, the study of significations of חסד in Book III, where the Davidic dynasty is given distinction, will show the similarity or/and dissimilarity to that in Book IV, where divine kingship is prominent.

The thesis will conclude with a summary of the whole work. Thematic and semantic connections as well as expressions of חסד in the two Books will be brought out. Additionally, as the expression of God’s חסד changes from Book III to Book IV, the thesis will articulate their significance. Theoretical and theological implications of the work will be drawn. Further questions regarding the חסד of God and the remaining issues of the word חсад in the Psalter will be proposed to readers.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The thesis will work with psalms in their final form. It will not investigate the compositional or redactional history of particular psalms. Secondly, the study of the word חסד will focus chiefly on the religious and theological usage of the term. Indeed, in all occurrences of this word in Books III and IV, there is no secular use. Also, the term “חסד” will be kept as in the original without any attempt for translation to English except in the case of quotations. Thirdly, the phrases of ‘the Psalms’, ‘the Book of Psalms’ and ‘the Psalter’ are interchangeable. In addition, the term “ג’ד” is often used in the general sense instead of distinguishing it from “YHWH,” or “the LORD,” or “the Lord,” except for quotations. Fourthly, unless other books of the Bible are indicated, all references are to the Book of Psalms. Finally, the primary resource of this thesis will be the Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS), and therefore, the MT numbering is used. The other two versions of the Bible will be referred to as secondary resources. These are the Hebrew-English Tanakh (JPS), and New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).
CHAPTER TWO: חסד IN PSALM 89

Following traditional division, Psalm 89 is found at the end of Book III of the Psalter. Its immediate theme focuses on God’s promise to David. God vows to strengthen the king’s dynasty in God’s own חסד. Broadly, however, this Psalm prepares readers for the new vision of God’s sovereignty in the following psalms of Book IV. This vision is demonstrated in the structure of the Psalm itself. Nearly two thirds of the Psalm evokes praise of God’s חסד and אמונה (faithfulness), of the power of God over the heavens and the earth, especially the affirmation that Israel’s strength and king belongs to God alone. It is followed by memories of God’s visionary oracle to David, the memories that recall 2 Sam 7:1-17. Nonetheless, the remainder of the Psalm expresses the frustration of the psalmist in confronting reality: the failure of the House of David. Yet, although the question of God’s חסד is left unresolved, the hope of searching for understanding and reorientation is undeniable.

The word חסד pervades Israelite belief and is foundational. This chapter attempts to search for an understanding of the expressions of the word חסד in all its occurrences within the Psalm. In order to do so, part one will present the antecedents to the exegesis that are the overview of occurrences of the word חסד in this Psalm and the relation between Psalm 89 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17. Part Two will be followed by an exegesis of the Psalm with focus on the expressions of חסד. In using the key results of the exegesis, the remainder of this chapter will draw conclusions about the חסד of God in the context of the entire Psalm. In so doing, the chapter seeks possible answers regarding how the word חסד is utilised to convey God’s חסד in God’s covenant with David, the chosen one in the psalm.

2.1. ANTECEDENTS TO THE EXEGESIS

2.1.1 Occurrences of חסד in Psalm 89

In Psalm 89, the word חסד occurs seven times (vv. 2, 3, 15, 25, 29, 34, and 50). Among this sevenfold appearance, twice חסד is in plural form (vv. 2, 50), frequently understood as “acts of kindness” highlighting “the active nature of Yahweh’s kindness” in Israel’s history generally or/and individually.\(^1\) However, this word does not occur in isolation, but is always in company with אמונה, ברית, אמרת, אSetName, זכאות, and צדק. Among its occurrences, חסד appears five times with אמרת (vv. 2, 3, 25, 34, 50), once with אמרת and זכאות (v. 15), and

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\(^1\) Zobel, “חסד,” 55.
once with ברייה (v. 29). These parallels are helpful for gaining a clearer understanding of the semantic expressions of חסד in the exegesis.

2.1.1.1 אמונה חסד and אמונה

חברה אמונה אמונה is a feminine noun and means firmness, steadfastness, and/or fidelity. אמונה, together with its related nouns אמירה and אמירה, is among those theological descriptions of God’s characteristics that have meanings closest to חסד. Its dominant repetitions along with חסד (vv. 2, 3, 25, 34, 50) signify that אמונה is “an essential component of חסד when God is the agent and also [considering] that the two elements חסד and אמונה cover areas in the semantic field that are in close proximity.”

From the beginning of the psalm, חסד is parallel with אמונה twice (vv. 2, 3), and in the second part of the psalm, the oracle, it occurs as a pair with אמונה (v. 25). חסד also appears with אמונה linking it with the prefix ב twice: once in the oracle (v. 34) and then in the final question (v. 50). צד in these two verses, unlike those of the previous three (vv. 2, 3, 25), is supplemented by אמונה. That is, the חסד God grants to David is guaranteed by and in God’s אמונה (v. 34). This is applicable to the expression in verse 50, though in the converse. God is accused and questioned about God’s חסד in and through God’s אמונה. Excluding the superscription and the doxology of Psalm 89, therefore, the pair of terms חסד and אמונה seem to open the psalm with an atmosphere of praise and close it in a state of lament and accusation. This presents a great scene of “a powerful contrast between divine blessing and its apparent loss.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VR</th>
<th>BHS</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>חִסְדֶּךָ יְהוָה עַל עֹלֶם עַם עָדִּים דָּוִד וּעָדִּים אָפְטַחְתִּיךָ בְּפִי׃</td>
<td>I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>כִּרְאוֹרֶתִי תַּלְוָה חִסְדֶּךָ וּבְנֹת עָמִים תַּמִּשֶּׁךָ חַגְדוֹן בּוֹם׃</td>
<td>For your steadfast love was established forever, your faithfulness is firm as the heavens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25(24)</td>
<td>אָפְטַחְתִּיךָ חִסְדֶּךָ וּמִשְׁמֵי חַגְדוֹן קְרֵן׃</td>
<td>My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.1.2 and אמת

The phrase or series of אמת 곧 appears alongside אמת 34 times in the Old Testament. Among these collocations, the phrase ‘firmness, faithfulness, truth’ appears only once and is in association with אמת (v. 15). In this verse, the compound of אמת is parallel to צדק ומשׁפט and they are “regarded as a personification ... [and] represented as attendants of [God].”

2.1.1.3 בירת and אמת

Bירת is a ‘covenant, pact, treaty, or oath of fidelity.’ Within the Psalm, the word בירת occurs four times (vv. 4, 29, 35, 40) in which it is in parallel to אמת (v. 29).

The parallel of אמת and בירת in this verse functions to emphasize God’s אמת to David in a familial relationship (vv. 27-28). In addition, the presence of בירת (vv. 4, 29, 35, 40) and its synonymous verbs ‘to swear, to confirm with an oath’—v. 4, 36, 50) show that the Davidic covenant is in form of an oath. In these appearances, אמת and בירת occur in context of God’s אמת and אמונה (vv. 3-4, 29, 34-36, 50). This stresses the commitment of God to David, as God’s אמת, the main thrust in Psalm 89. Here, God’s אמת is for David himself during his lifetime and his אמת is continued to all his successors (vv. 5, 30).

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6 Clark, The Word Hesed, 235.
8 Brown, Driver and Briggs, BDBG, 136; Grossman and Sachs, CHED, 49.
9 See more in Clark, The Word Hesed, 130-31.
In verse 29 is possibly understood as “covenantal loyalty” as Glueck suggests. He also believes that חסד and ברית cannot be unified in meaning. Nonetheless, he is not quite correct when he concludes that “חסד is the result of a ברית” as it is in any relationship. As will be shown in the exegesis, God’s vow to David in this psalm is an unconditional covenant. חסד is the basis of the ברית and not the converse.

Additionally, an extra look at the emergence of the words כולם, לעולם, world (vv. 2, 3, 5, 29, 37, 38, [53]) prior to God’s חסד is noteworthy. This emergence applies particularly in verses 2, 3, and 29: חסד and כולם attach to חסד. In verse 2, God’s חסד is vowed to be sung forever. In the subsequent verse, God’s חסד is established forever (v. 3). Later in verse 29, God’s promise of חסד is reserved for David forever. The indication of this word in verses 2-3 literally implies that God’s חסד is already there before it is freely established with respect to David.

These observations corroborate the following exegesis and they will assist in unpacking the expression of חסד in the Psalm.

2.1.2 The Connection between Psalm 89 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17

The backdrop of 2 Sam 7:1-17 for Psalm 89 will be indicated in general terms here to view the inter-textual linkage between these two texts. More comparisons between these two texts will be highlighted in the exegesis.

The content of verses 4-5 and 20-38 of the Psalm are closely related to 2 Sam 7: 8-16. This connection emphasizes the central point that God’s חסד is perpetual for David, that the House of David will be established forever; and that this covenant is unconditional. The link is shown in the semantic and thematic similarity. Firstly, evidence of the semantic connection is the significant usage of חסד (89:25, 29, 34; 2 Sam 7:15), כולם (‘forever’–89: 29, 37, 38; 2 Sam 7:13, 16), אמן (‘to establish, make firm’–89:5, 22, 38; 2 Sam 7:12, 13, 16), וגלע (‘to be sure, to establish’–89:29).

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11 Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 77.
12 This is supported by Harris, who understands חסד is ‘love,’ when he says that “the covenant is the sign and expression of [God’s] love.” He also argues that “if this pair [חסד and ברית] be translated ‘covenantal love’ or ‘covenant and love,’ it should be remembered that the love is back of the covenant.” See R. Laird Harris, “חסד,” vol.1 of TWOT, ed. R. Laird Harris (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1980), 306-07.
stand firm’—89:29, 38; 2 Sam 7:16), and כסא (‘throne’—89:5, 30, 37; 2 Sam 7:13, 16). Additionally, there are words that have been replaced or omitted in light of the psalmist’s purpose. David in the psalm is called בכור (‘the firstborn’—89:28) instead of בן (‘a son’—2 Sam 7:14). This suggests that Israel’s privilege as כסא of the Lord is now transferred to the king (cf. Exod 4:22; Jer 31:9). The word ברית (covenant) is absent in the prose text while it is repeated four times in the Psalm (vv. 4, 29, 35, 40) and is accompanied by its conceptual link שבת (‘to swear, promise’—vv. 4, 36, 50). This connection and the sevenfold occurrence of חסד together, suggest the psalmist’s purpose is simultaneously emphasis on God, whose חסד and once-promised covenant is firmly committed to David, and contradiction of this covenantal fidelity in the context of facing the dismay of the Davidic reign. Secondly, the thematic connection between the two texts is God’s promise to establish and maintain David’s line. In 2 Samuel 7, God promises David to make a house (בית—vv. 11b, 13, 16) which is David’s כסא (‘throne’—vv. 13, 16) and ממלכת (‘kingdom’—vv. 12, 16).14 Though the word בית does not appear in the Psalm, the idea of God’s promise to strengthen David’s כסא and זורע (offspring) is implied (vv. 5, 30, 37). Therefore, this thesis agrees with Sarna that the psalmist interprets 2 Samuel 7 in Ps 89.15 In other words, 2 Samuel 7 is a backdrop for Psalm 89, and the former is eminently helpful for a fuller understanding of the latter.

However, the distinction needs to be made between the viewpoints of the two texts. First, in the Psalm God makes the promise to David solemnly in God’s חסד and אמונה. The language of the promise seems to be simpler in the narrative: the word חסד occurs only once in 2 Sam 7:15, and there is not any reference to אמונה. Secondly, the context and thus the purpose of the two composed texts are different from one another. 2 Sam 7 is set in the context of the Israelites being settled in the Land, the Davidic kingdom expanding,16 and a focus being on the process of building the Temple.17 On the other hand, the context of Psalm 89 is in the failure of the Davidic king. Even the Davidic dynasty seems to be threatened with extinction. In view of these two observations, it could be correct to say that the psalmist interprets and articulates 2 Sam 7 for her/his purpose. S/he intends to petition God to remember that God’s כסא and promise had been made to David once and forever.

2.2. THE EXEGESIS OF PSALM 89

Psalm 89 conveys the Davidic covenant that originated from the theology of the Sinai covenant and the idea of God’s חסד and faithfulness as interpreted from Deuteronomistic covenant theology (cf. Deut 7:9; 12; 2 Sam 23:1-7; Isa 55:1-5; Jer 33:19-22; 2 Chr 13:5; 21:7).  

2.2.1 Form and Structure

This paper understands Psalm 89 as a lament psalm, specifically, the lament of the community grieving the fate of the Davidic dynasty. Though Psalm 89 comprises interwoven elements of hymn, oracle, and lament, the former two are secondary while the latter is dominant in the Psalm. Psalm 89, therefore, is neither “an amalgam of three different genres,” nor a royal psalm though it comprises royal features of the king and his issues. It is a lament because it regards all God’s promises given during the days of David seeming to be withdrawn from the king. God’s חסד to David and his line is questioned. Psalm 89 can also be seen as a lament psalm within the context of the Asaph and Korah psalms, whose main concern is the fate of the Davidic throne, and whose purpose is to make petitions to God for the welfare of the king. Psalm 89 is still a lament even though it begins, and even ends, with a vow praising God. Additionally, although Psalm 89 is neither explicitly classified in Gunkel’s two categories of community laments as either “penitential prayers” or

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22 J. Day, Psalms (Sheffield, EN: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 91. It might be regarded as a “royal lament” as Clifford indicates in “Psalm 89,” 36.
23 Hossfeld, “Psalm 89,” 405.
24 For praise in lament psalms see Mowinckel, The Psalms, 195; Westermann, Praise and Lament in the Psalms, 52. Hossfeld argues that verse 53 belongs to Psalm 89 and it ends both the psalm and Book III. See “Psalm 89,” 404 and 407. However, most scholars believe that verse 53 does not belong to the psalm itself but rather is inserted at the end of the psalm as a divisional mark ending Book III of the Psalter (cf. 41:13; 72:18-19; 106:48; 150:1-6). Alter, The Book of Psalms, 316; Terrien, The Psalms, 635; Gerstenberger, Psalms – Part 2, 154; Matthew W. Mitchell, “Genre Disputes and Communal Accusatory Laments: Reflections on the Genre of Psalm lxxxix,” VT 55 (2005): 514.
confessions of innocence,” it implicitly comprises both of these. The exegesis will demonstrate this.

This chapter initially deals with the structure of the Psalm and puts aside focus on the superscript (v. 1), and the doxology (v. 53). The main body of Psalm 89 can be seen to fall into three fundamental parts in keeping with the three elements that have been noted in the Literary Form (2.2.1). The first part is the song of praise about God’s חסד and אמת, and God’s cosmic authority and majesty (vv. 2-19). The following part is the divine discourse concerning God’s choice of making David king and promising him an enduring throne for himself and for his progeny (vv. 20-38). The last and dominant section is the lament. It comprises all complaints and petitions to God regarding God’s role in the decrease, collapse and humiliation of the Davidic dynasty. It also includes a plea for remembrance of God’s חסד (vv. 39-52). As the Psalm unfolds, there is a change of emotional intensity in the psalm itself. Psalm 89 sequentially flows in five scenarios. These scenarios may be recognised in the four-fold-indication of סלה placed at the border of these scenes. Firstly, there is the introductory praise of God’s חסד that indicates God’s choice of David (vv. 2-5). This is followed by evocation of remembrance and praise of God’s mighty deeds, spelling out God’s promises to David (vv. 6-38). Next is presented the lament for David and his dynasty due to being disgraced (vv. 39-46). It precedes the first question that links to human limitation (vv. 47-49). Finally, there is the question and petition asking for God’s חסד upon the House of David (vv. 50-52). This observation will be adapted into the subdivisions of the threefold structure of the Psalm.

In the following exegetical task, with the support of the indication word סלה, the word חסד will be examined in sections and subsections: the hymn (vv. 2-5, 6-19), the oracle (vv. 20-26, 27-30, 31-38); and the lament (vv. 39-46, 47-49, 50-52).

2.2.2 The Exploration of חסד in Psalm 89

In accordance with the structure of the psalm presented above (2.2.1), the following exegesis will analyse the articulation of חסד in each of its subsections. Each will then be reviewed in every section.

26 Scholars on the psalms disagree on the divisions of Psalm 89 as they base their study on either linguistics or themes. See discussion in Kraus, Psalm 60-150, 201; Sarna, “Psalm 89,” 30-31; Terrien, The Psalms, 635.
2.2.2.1 The Hymn (verses 2-19)

a. Verses 2-5

The Psalm begins with a vow praising and confessing God’s חסד and אמונה constantly and at all times. It underlines consciousness of confidence in God’s word and that God’s חסד and אמונה are everlasting.

| 2(1) | תהלים יז הַדַּיֶּךָ אוֹלֶךְ אֱשֶרֶךָ לְךָ וּדְרוֹתָא אָמְנוֹתָא בְּפֶה: | I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. |
| 3(2) | יִכְרָאשְׁרֵי עוֹלָמָךְ אֱמִון בְּשֵׁם אֱמִונְתָּךְ בְּפֶה: | For your steadfast love was established forever, your faithfulness is firm as the heavens. |

These words are both a profession through prayer and an evocative invitation for the community to praise God and to confess God’s חסד and אמונה. This opening verse by itself, however, does not speak of any reason for praising God’s חסד and אמונה. Fortunately, verse 3 leads readers to some notion of the reason, which is based on the phrase כי אמרתי, that both חסד and אמונה are as secured as the heavens. The opening verses presume a subsequent question that would be “for whom are God’s חסד and אמונה firm and unchangeable?” The answer is found in the following verses that recall God’s promise to David. The promise is framed in form of the ברית God made to or for David, God’s ‘chosen one and servant’ (בחיר and עבד – v. 4) that his line shall be strengthened and his throne will endure (v. 5).

| 4(3) | דִּבֶּרְתָּ הַבָּרָית לַבָּרָית יִשְׁמָעֵי חֵוֹר עֵבֶר: | You said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David: |
| 5(4) | דָּרְכֶּלָּה אֶמְּכֶּר וּרְכֶּשֶׁת לַרְכֶּשֶׁת מַסוֹא [ךֵלָּה]: | ‘I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations.’” |

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29 Hossfeld points to the five times this covenant is referred to in the Old Testament: 2 Sam 23:5; Isa 55:3; Jer 33:21; 2 Chr 13:5; 21:7. “Psalms 89,” 408.
30 The promise of consolidation of the Davidic throne recalls 2 Sam 7:16 rather than 2 Sam 7:12-13 in which the promise refers to Solomon. In addition, Sarna is convincing in stating that verses 3-4 “were inserted in the hymn as a kind of exegetical note,” and along with verses 19-37, and that together they contribute to the oracular part of the Psalm. “Psalms 89,” 30-33.
The confessions and reminiscences in verses 2-5 are emphasised through the repetition of words and ideas. The linkage of words and the parallelism make this introduction in particular, and indeed the entire Psalm unique. The pairs of words לדר ודר ור כדר רד andبدב ובם (‘from generations, forever’–vv. 2, 3, 5), as well as verbs for construction בנה andכון (‘to build’ and ‘to establish, fix’–vv. 3, 5), connect two sides of the unique theme of the Psalm in the introduction: God’s חסד andאמונה; God’s covenant (ברית) to David and his line that are based on God’s חסד andאמונה.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>יהוה עולם אשׁירה לדר ודר אודיע אמונתך בפי׃</td>
<td>I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>יברנה שׁמים תכן אמונתך בהם׃</td>
<td>For your steadfast love was established forever, your faithfulness is firm as the heavens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5(4)</td>
<td>עד־עולם אכין זרעך ובניתי לדר־ודור כסאך׃</td>
<td>‘I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations.’”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This clear connection expresses and confirms the trust of the psalmist in God’s very self. It is actually in God’s חסד andאמונה. As a result, it leads the psalmist to transmit the same confidence in God’s promise to David himself and to his dynasty.

b. Verses 6-19

A reference to the heavenly court (vv. 6-8) is like the first piece of evidence for praising God’s חסד in verse 2. These verses bear a slight resemblance to Near Eastern mythology, but contain an emphasis on monotheism. The song continues by recalling God’s majesty and marvellous deeds in Israelite theological history (vv. 10-14). These images recall the Exodus, conquering the Land, and the theology of creation (Exod 15:1-18; Gen 1:1-2:4), which are the fundamental foundation of Israelite belief expressed in the bible. Verse 15 is located in a section where God is praised in the heavenly court. It calls to mind all the marvellous deeds God performed in the past to encourage the devout (vv. 6-19). חסד andאמונה, which are parallel toצדק andמשפט in these magnificent scenes, are described as preceding God’s countenance.

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31 This linkage shows disagreement with Tate’s statement that vv.4-5 are like “a deliberate interruption of the context in order to alert the reader to an unexpected message,” the lament. Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 420.
32 Hossfeld, “Psalms 89,” 408.
33 Hossfeld, “Psalms 89,” 409.
These two pair-words in particular and the previous convergent images of God’s might together draw a powerful picture of God’s throne and realm.

God’s priority and authority are indicated in verse 19: כְּ בֵּי לְיָהָ ה מֵנָנָא וּלְוָדָא יִשְׁרָאֵל מַלֵּכָא. The כְּ and the double preposition לְ in לְיָהָ ה and לְוָדָא are both read as emphatic. With the double ל, the MT indicates the possessive case and the dependant relationship of the king and the people on God. This emphatic representation, on the one hand, highlights the initiative of God’s choice and responsibility with respect to the king (vv. 4-5, 20-38). Yet, this emphasis will make the doubt in the lament section bitter. On the other hand, verse 19 first reaffirms verses 6-15 that identify God as universal king, then stresses that God’s kingship is larger than the Davidic kingship. The Davidic monarchy, therefore, should be seen in a context that though he is king, there is a greater king who authorises David’s kingship. This insight prepares readers for the psalms of Book IV that eulogize the sovereignty of God over Israel, nations, and the universe.

In summary, God’s חסד goes hand in hand with God’s אמונה. Verses 2-3 introduce the first feature of the theme of the Psalm. It is placed at the very beginning of the Psalm to express the confidence of the psalmist in God’s very self through, possibly, God’s nature of חסד and אמונה. It links and at the same time confirms the free commitment God makes to David and his dynasty (vv. 4-5). The function of verses 2-5 is to introduce the key theme of the Psalm, and later, to highlight the contradiction between these verses and the lament. God’s חסד in verse 15 goes hand in hand with God’s אמונה, צדק, משפט, and_ASSERTA, placed in the midst of verses 6-19 in praising God’s realm and sovereignty over the cosmos and nations, and God’s mighty deeds in Israeliite history. Verses 6-15 link God’s חסד to Israel’s founding story, in which God is praised as the universal king, whose kingship is superior over the Davidic kingship.

2.2.2.2 The Oracle (verses 20-38)

The divine discourse, which follows the heavenly court, develops what is presented in verses 4-5. The discourse will be divided into the three subsections of verses 20-26, 27-30, and 31-

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34 Tate, Psalms 51-100, 410. Hossfeld also points to close parallel of this emphasis in 47:10. “Psalm 89,” 401, 409.
35 Hossfeld, “Psalm 89,” 401, 409; Tate, Psalms 51-100, 422; Gerstenberger, Psalms–Part 2, 150. The Syriac, however, omits the two ל, thus, this version supports the idea that only God is the protection and perfect king of Israel. Elliger and Rudolph, “Psalmi,” 1171.
38 according to the occurrence of חסד in verses 25, 29 and 34. This subdivision is aimed at extracting the expression of חסד in each passage.

a. Verse 20-26

The word לחסידיך (‘to your faithful/devoted ones’–v. 20) is in the plural while in some manuscripts it is in the singular. To whom the word refers is unclear. It might refer to Nathan, David, even Samuel, or even the exilic and postexilic community portrayed to be “the recipient of divine communication.” Regarding David, the word לחסידיך would be translated “[a] member of your covenantal group” as Glueck suggests. Therefore, regardless of who is included in this group, the main character in this passage is clearly David, the בחור/ביור–‘chosen one’ (vv. 4, 20) and המשיח–‘anointed one’ (v. 21), of whom God’s חסד is shown and affirmed:

| אומتفاصيل חסידוemy steadfast love and faithfulness | My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted. |

The investing with sovereign power is given through the details ofעזר (‘help’–v. 20) and בשמן קדשי משחתיו (‘with oil of my holiness I have anointed him’–v. 21). Hossfeld supposes this to be characterised similarly to anointing in the Priestly tradition. In contrast, Kraus speaks of the “untouchable king of God” whom God’s hand and arm are always upon to strengthen (v. 22). God promises the king to extend protection from foes and assistance in battles (vv. 23-24). God’s חסד and אמונה are surely confirmed with reference to David (v. 25a, and reiterated in v. 29). The honour of the king is in God’s name, as his strength (קרנו–‘his horn’–v. 25b) is exalted, and his sovereignty over the chaos is shared with God universally from ‘the sea to the rivers’ (vv. 10-11, 26).

The passage of verses 20-26 recalls 2 Sam 7:8-9 similarly concerning God’s promise to strengthen the king’s power and to exalt the king among his neighbours (vv. 20b, 22-24, 25b,

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38 Hossfeld, “Psalms 89,” 410.
39 Gerstenberger, Psalms – Part 2, 151.
40 He also presumes this word refers to 2 Sam 23:1-4. See Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 77.
41 The BHS suggests reading as נזר–‘crown,’ which is more in line with the unfortunate expression in verse 40. However, the original is kept because it does not contradict the sentence itself. See Elliger and Rudolph, “Psalms,” 1171; Alter, The Book of Psalms, 313.
42 These details surpass those of 1 Sam 16:12-13, which simply describe David as being anointed by Samuel.
43 Hossfeld, “Psalms 89,” 410.
44 Kraus states that the transference of power from God to a king in an act of taking that king by hand is a significant ceremony of enthronement not unfamiliar in the ancient Near East, although “the cultic-prophetic reformulation of the Davidic prophecy took over various [...] motifs.” See Psalm 60-150, 209.
26; 2 Sam 7:9). Nonetheless, there are two differences between these two texts. In comparison to 2 Sam 7:8-9, first, the way the king is being portrayed in the Psalm is more detailed (vv. 20-28) with the strong stress on his power, for example, ‘who is mighty’ (v. 20), ‘his hand on the sea, his right hand on the rivers’ (v. 26), ‘the highest of the kings of the earth’ (v. 28). Secondly, while Psalm 89 speaks about the king being anointed with the ‘oil of God’s holiness’ (v. 21) and assured by God’s חסד and אמונה (v. 25), none of these details are spelled out in the text.

b. Verses 27-30

The intimate relationship that God bestows on David is expressed in the language and images of familial terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>27(26)</th>
<th>28(27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>הוָהָ תִּקְרָאֵה יַאֲפָה אֲלֵי צֹּרֵךְ יְשׁועְתָּךְ.</td>
<td>אֲחִיָּהוּ בֵּיתֶךָ חַלְּצָה לֵלְלֵי-אֲרֻמָּה:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!’”</td>
<td>“I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two things are noteworthy. Firstly, the notion of the king, being God’s adopted child in verse 27, is common in the ancient Near East.\(^{45}\) Undoubtedly, this concept is widespread and it influenced the Israelite view about the king being in relationship with the nation’s God. Secondly, these verses remind readers of 2 Sam 7:14a. Both are ascribable to a Davidic king though in this psalm the mention about David, not David’s descendants, is direct. David is the one who refers to God as אֲבֵי אָתָה אֲלֵי צֹּרֵךְ יְשׁועְתָּךְ (‘my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation’–v. 27). In this intimate relationship, God’s חסד with respect to David is promised to be assured and everlasting. This mimics the norm of any familial relationship involving “rights and duties ... and [makes] necessary the reciprocal practice of [חסד].”\(^{46}\) Furthermore, God’s חסד also abides in the ברית (v. 29). God’s vow will affect not only David alone. It extends to all his successors (v. 30).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>29(28)</th>
<th>30(29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>לְעֹלָם אֲשֶׁר מִרְבְּדֶה הַפְּם בַּרְוָה נָמְתָּךְ לֶ:</td>
<td>וְשַׁמְתִּי לְעָדָה רוֹן נָגְצוֹו בָּרִי שֶׁפֶםָּ:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forever I will keep my steadfast love for him, and my covenant with him will stand firm.</td>
<td>I will establish his line forever, and his throne as long as the heavens endure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{46}\) Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible*, 76.
c. Verses 31-38

God has made a covenant for the chosen one, for David (לדוד – v. 4). Therefore, it is God who initiates the bond and obligation of the covenantal relationship on God’s side rather than God setting conditions for David. In this psalm, the promissory relationship between God and David is neither “dependent upon the obedience of [David’s] descendants” as Mitchell asserts, nor as likely conditional as in Ps132:12. The unconditional nature of the covenant in this Psalm is stressed in the following verses: if David’s descendants sin against God (vv.31-32), their iniquities will be punished (v. 33), although nothing will make God withdraw God’s חסד and covenant from David (cf. 2 Sam 7:14-16). Additionally, the language of assurance and promise in the psalm is used boldly in comparison with 2 Sam 7:14b-16. The emphasis is supplemented by the quadruple repetition of לא (not/no) in verses 34-35 and the confirmation of verse 36: ‘Once and for all I have sworn by my holiness I will not lie to David.’ These all reaffirm and reinforce what is proclaimed in the introductory statement (vv. 4-5). The bestowal of God’s very self is stressed through the possessive form of the first person singular – הקדشي, and theocratic promises – which refers to David definitely, and through him to his dynasty as a whole (vv. 37-38; cf. 2 Sam 7:16).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34(33)</td>
<td>התפש לא ארפא מהם ולא ארשקל בם ותאנה: But I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35(34)</td>
<td>לא אחלל בריתי ומוצא שפתי לא אשנה: I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36(35)</td>
<td>אחת נשבעתי בקדשי אם לדוד אכזב: Once and for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37(36)</td>
<td>זרו מעולם ויהיה כסאו כשמש נגדי: His line shall continue forever and his throne [shall] endure before me like the sun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38(37)</td>
<td>כוריה יוכ בשלום והשם נשאך [מלך]: It shall be established forever like the moon, an enduring witness in the skies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, the references of חסד in verses 25, 29 and 34 are obviously dedicated to David and his House in this section of the oracle (vv. 20-38). First, God’s חסד and faithfulness are promised to be with David, עמו (v. 25). Second, God’s חסד and covenant are altogether perpetually kept and maintained for him, לעולם אשמור לו (v. 29). Finally, God’s חסד will never

47 Goldingay notes emphatically that God makes the covenant for David, not with him, and so “this is not a mutual agreement between Yahweh and David. The covenant is Yahweh’s, which he gives to or lays upon David.” Psalms – Volume 2, 669.
49 “If your sons keep my covenant and my decrees that I shall teach them, their sons also, forevermore, shall sit on your throne” (NRSV).
be removed from him (v. 34) even though his heirs have gone astray. Indeed, God’s חסד towards David is assured in and by God’s faithfulness and righteousness (vv. 34, 36).

### 2.2.2.3 The Lament (verses 39-52)

In the lament section, verses 39-52 are subdivided into three groups: verses 39-46 which stress the reversal of fortune of the Davidic king; verses 47-49 and 50-52 raise typical lament questions such as debating and disputing God’s anger, and God’s promise to David.

#### a. Verses 39-46

The lament begins with a simple ו (but), which adds an emphatic pronoun אתה, and “a trio of confrontational verbs not exceeded in power anywhere in the Psalms” (v. 39). The situation now contrasts with the language that expresses the intimate relationship between God and the king (vv. 27-28).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>27(26)</th>
<th>28(27)</th>
<th>39(38)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>הוא יקראני אבי אתה אלי ותורה ישועתי׃</td>
<td>אפים נבר אתחנה עלון למלכי־ארץ׃</td>
<td>ואתה זנחת ותמאס התעברת עם־משיחך׃</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!’</td>
<td>I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.</td>
<td>But now you have spurned and rejected him; you are full of wrath against your anointed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Verse 39 also precedes an unexpected list of the signs that the king suffered disgrace, betrayal, and humiliation. Strong negative words and phrases are used to contrast the king’s present crisis with whatever God has promised and vowed to David and his entire house. These expressions include accusations against the Lord which are signified in verbs of the second person singular. The following tables present the reversal of David’s previous fortune.

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51 Terrien expresses this sense as “a sort of blasphemous accusation.” He even describes the psalmist as not “an atheist,” but as “the antagonist of God.” The Psalms, 638.
52 These verbs are indicated in underline.
53 The table in English is from the NRSV. The emphatic nouns and verbs in the English are in italics and underline, respectively.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A 4</th>
<th>You said, ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to my servant David.’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Forever I will keep my steadfast love for him, and my covenant with him will stand firm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Once and for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 21</td>
<td>I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 19b</td>
<td>‘I have set the help on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>My hand shall always remain with him; my arm also shall strengthen him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him; and in my name his horn shall be exalted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 22</td>
<td>The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E 4</td>
<td>‘I will establish your descendants for ever, and build your throne for all generations.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You have renounced the covenant with your servant;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>You have broken through all his walls; you have laid his strongholds in ruins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>You have not violated my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>You will not lie to my servant, and I will not be false to David.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You have defiled his crown in the dust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You have crushed his foes before him, and you have turned back the edge of his sword.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You have removed the sceptre from his hand, and hurled his throne to the dust.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In A, God made David a covenant and promised to keep it always. But all of God’s promises to David reflected in verses 4, 29, 35, 36 are simply nullified in a statement: (‘You have renounced the covenant with your servant’—v. 40a). The covenant that is accompanied by God’s צדוק ברכת (renounce the covenant), which occurs only twice in the Hebrew Bible (89:40 and Lam 2:7).54 He also suggests the reason is to “avoid a repetition of the lexeme from vv. 34-35, perhaps to soften the sharp accusation.” The renunciation of the covenant does contrast the contents of verses 29 and 35-36, and therefore leads to the challenge of God’s faithful promise in verse 50. In B, the crown נזרו of God’s servant, a sign of the one being anointed with the holy oil (v. 20), is relegated to dust (v. 40b). In C and D, the king is humiliated by the surrounding nations and his enemies. All God’s promises to make the king proud and powerful (vv. 20, 22-26) are in vain (vv. 41-44). Verses 40-42 particularly indicate not only the king’s shamefulness, but also the suffering and devastation of a people. The images of broken walls, ruined strongholds, plunder, people passing by, and being scorned by neighbours are reminiscences of the destruction and of the desolated land (44:9-16; 79:4, 12; 80:6, 12; Lam 2:2,5; 15-16; Jer 39:8, 2 Kgs 25: 1-21).56 The most striking detail is the use of verb ריים (exalt). God exalted the right hand of the king’s foes (v. 43) instead of the king himself (v. 20), or קרנו (‘his horn’—v. 25). God, therefore, supports the king’s enemies and is against the king himself in the battle (v. 44). Finally, in E, God seems to deny all God’s oath to establish the Davidic throne and dynasty forever (vv. 5, 30, 37-38) because all that form the basis of the king’s existence, מושב and כסאו (‘sceptre’ and ‘throne’—v. 45), are fully destroyed. ה👴ו and מטמה (‘You have cut short the days of his youth’—v. 46) contrasts with לדר ודור and לעד (‘forever’ ‘generation to generation’—v. 5), and 54 Hossfeld, “Psalm 89,” 412; also Goldingay, Psalms—Volume 2, 685. 55 The JPS even translates ירים as “his dignity.” Rabbi David E. Sulomm Stein, ed., JPS: Hebrew-English Tanakh (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2000), 1525. 56 Hossfeld, “Psalm 89,” 412.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verse</th>
<th>text</th>
<th>translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I will establish his line forever, and his throne as long as the heavens endure.</td>
<td>generations.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>His line shall continue forever, and his throne endure before me like the sun.</td>
<td>ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>It shall be established for ever like the moon, an enduring witness in the skies.’</td>
<td>You have cut short the days of his youth; you have covered him with shame.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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54 Hossfeld, “Psalm 89,” 412; also Goldingay, Psalms—Volume 2, 685.
56 Hossfeld, “Psalm 89,” 412.
b. Verses 47-49

A list of complaints against God precedes the first question: "How long?" (v. 47). This is a typical lament questioning God directly. It emerges as a result of a continuous threat rather than a sudden damaging. In this case, it is a complaint about God hiding and God's anger. It is true that, as Ward asserts, there was neither the confession of the king’s sin nor the protestation of his innocence in the Psalm. However, as Jacobson argues, “God’s anger must be provoked by human infidelity,” the focus of the lament question of verse 47 might suggest implicitly that God’s absence and anger were the result of the king’s unfaithfulness or his committing of sins (cf. vv. 31-33).

Verses 48-49 are ambiguous. The appearance of the first singular of the pronoun אֶנִי (I) is followed by a reference to the fate and limitations of all human beings. Verses 48-49 are inserted, as Hossfeld comments, to “expand the lament over the suffering of the anointed and his people to encompass the mortality of all humankind.” While verse 46 speaks about the “premature death” of the king (קצרת ימי עלומים), its conclusion is that the king is just as mortal as any human being. Verse 49 in particular reconnects the theme of death and Sheol in its previous Psalm, 88:4-5. Verses 48-49 are a plea for God’s mercy, as found also in the theology of Job and Ecclesiastes. This petition leads to the final question (v. 50) in which

57 Hossfeld suggests that verses 43-45 could closely refer not to David himself, but to king Jehoiachin in the battle and deportation at Babylon. See “Psalm 89,” 412. Ward also thinks as Hossfeld, though he suggests some possibilities of the kingdoms of Jehoram (2 Chr 21:18), Ahaziah (2 Kgs 8:25), Hezekiah (2 kgs 10:1), or Josiah (2 Kgs 23:29). “The Literary Form,” 338.
58 This question is less frequent than the question “Why?” See Westermann, Praise and Lament, 176-77.
61 The MT has זכר־אני (remember I). However, the BHS suggests the text is read as זכר־אדני (remember, Lord).
62 Hossfeld, “Psalm 89,” 412.
63 Goldingay, Psalms – Volume 2, 687. Dahood, on the other hand, suggests, “The king probably laments the lack of offspring during his period of vitality.” Psalms II, 319.
64 Hossfeld, “Psalm 89,” 412.
65 Alter, The Book of Psalms, 316. He also makes comment on the syntax of verse 47 stating that the structure of this verse is semantically and syntactically parallel, and suggests a translation as “recall/remember how fleeting I am, how futile you made all humankind.”
the speaker was wondering whether there is constancy in relationship between God and David, and hence, between God and the people.  

**c. Verses 50-52**

At first glimpse, the question in verse 50 focuses on the problem of God’s חסד towards David: "איה חסדיך הראשנים אדני נשבעת לדוד באמונתך" (Lord, where is your חסד of old which by your faithfulness you swore to David?). This question reaches to the heart of the lament when doubt is shaken at its roots. It is a doubt because the reality is contrary to what God has vowed to David.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>אמאונים</th>
<th>תוחמל לעו שם ובשם תורם קרונ:</th>
<th>My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25(24)</td>
<td>לעתולא אשפומרלד חסד ובניריה תמאת לה:</td>
<td>My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29(28)</td>
<td>החסד לאמאפים ממעל ולאאשרך סאמרה:</td>
<td>But I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

God seems to be silent and hidden, abandoning God’s servants and the anointed one is being taunted and insulted in the midst of his enemies (vv. 51-52). It is notable that the term עבד in the singular that referred to David (vv. 4, 21, 40) changes into plural (v. 51). Terrien’s suggestion here is “not only a servant of the Lord but also all [the Lord’s] servants.” Hossfeld agrees that this is the petition of the people/community itself. Verse 50, in other words, could be stated in another way as: “What is wrong with you, Lord? What makes you change your mind and your nature?” This raises a question within the Psalm itself of whether verses 2-3 and 50 can tally well in this picture: whether these verses are contradictory to one another, or whether the psalmist contradicts himself.

The problem certainly is to be transferred to God’s side rather than being the problem of David or his descendants. God is criticised, complained about, and questioned fully in this section of the Psalm. The outcomes of God’s חסד to David and of the discontinuity of the Davidic dynasty are God’s responsibility. In McCann’s words, “the failure of the [Davidic]

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68 In verse 51, the MT has this word in plural, עבדיך (your servants) though other Greek manuscripts have it in singular. Elliger and Rudolph, “Psalmi,” 1173.
monarchy seems to bespeak the very failure of God.” However, the question in verse 50 also suggests the possibility of the psalmist’s petition, on the account of the king and the people, for God’s חסד. This question might not merely be the accusation of God for not keeping God’s promise. It might also be understood as beseeching God’s mercy for the king and consequently for the whole nation. Psalm 132:10 evidently supports this: ‘for your servant David’s sake do not turn away the face of your anointed one.’

The emphasis of God’s promise to David and his kingdom is strong in the context of the entire psalm. Therefore, in facing the unfortunate reality of the Davidic king and his kingdom, the psalm, especially the lament (vv. 39-52), raises concerns and questions about the non-fulfilment of the divine oracle, and fundamentally, the חסד of God.

In summary, the final occurrence of חסד in verse 50 is in context of doubt. God’s חסד, which is vowed to David in God’s faithfulness and the actual substance of the covenant, seems to have gone with the failure of the Davidic dynasty. The two questions and the unanswerable end of the psalm leave readers wondering whether God does not keep God’s promise or whether there is an implicit reason for God’s punishment that is reflected in verses 31-33, 47; and whether the lament can be reconciled with the introductory hymn (vv. 2-5).

Taking together the uncertainty in verse 50, the lament and the message of verse 19, what might be implied is that God is truly King and the kingship of God is everlasting. God’s promise to the Davidic dynasty is put in the larger context of the relationship between God and human beings. This theme about praising God’s sovereignty is covered and developed in Psalm Book IV.

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71 Ward is reliable in stating that the psalmist “virtually accuses God of abrogating the covenant altogether. He does not threaten to cease worshiping God (cf. 6:4; 80:19) nor provoke God by noting the divine disrepute among the heathen (cf. 79(80):5, 18; 93(94):3). His appeal is made only on the ground of the brevity of his life (vv. 47ff; cf. 90:13) and the justice and mercy of God (vv. 50ff; cf. 6:4; 79:20; 94:12ff).” “The Literary Form,” 334-35.
72 Ward agrees that Psalm 89 not only reflects the defeated aftermath of the king, but also the severe jeopardy of the Davidic dynasty more than we saw in other psalms. “The Literary Form,” 337-38.
73 Floyd, “Psalm lxxxix,” 456.
### 2.3 The Meaning of חסד in Psalm 89

This section aims at drawing together all expressions of God’s חסד in the intentions within the Psalm which have been investigated in the preceding part and the exegesis. The overall review of the seven times the term occurs should reveal a complete picture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Hebrew Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>תִּפְסֵר הָיוֹת עָלָם אֲשֶׁרֶת לֹאֵר וּרְאֹי אָמָנוּתךָ בְּפָתי</td>
<td>I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>כִּי־אֲמַרָתָם עָלָם חָסְדֶּךָ בְּנֹהַנָּה חָסְדֶּךָ אֲמָנוֹתָךָ בְּפָתי</td>
<td>For your steadfast love was established forever, your faithfulness is firm as the heavens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15(14)</td>
<td>דֶּקֶחֶם מָכָא חָסְדֶּךָ אֲמָנוֹתָךָ יִקְרָא</td>
<td>Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25(24)</td>
<td>הלָּעֵם אֲמָנוֹתָךָ אֲמָנוֹתָךָ יִקְרָא</td>
<td>My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29(28)</td>
<td>הָחָסְדֶּךָ אֲמָנוֹתָךָ אֲמָנוֹתָךָ יִקְרָא</td>
<td>My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34(33)</td>
<td>תֹּחַפָּדֶךָ לֹא־אֲפַרְפִּי מִמֶּנָּה לֹא־אֶאֱשָּׁרָם אֲמָנוֹתָךָ</td>
<td>But I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50(49)</td>
<td>הָחָסְדֶּךָ אֲמָנוֹתָךָ אֲמָנוֹתָךָ יִקְרָא</td>
<td>Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you did swear to David?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the course of Psalm 89, the חסד of God, beside God’s אמונה (faithfulness), first entails a general sense of evoking constant praise by the psalmist (v. 2). Its next occurrence in verse 3 follows with an affirmation that the חסד is established forever; and because חסד and אמונה are parallel, both are as secured as the heavens that are immutable. This idea precedes two verses in which God’s free choice of David is announced. The same speaker and the reiteration of the choice of verbs כָּנָה and בָּנָה in verses 3-5 suggest that God’s חסד is as immutable as God’s promise specifically to David. The first two occurrences of חסד are reaffirmed firstly in the hymnic praising of God’s sovereignty over the universe, in which God’s חסד is among the characterisations of God (v. 15), and secondly in the direct expression of God’s promise to David and his house (vv. 25, 29, 34). God’s חסד is genuine. It is there prior to God making the covenant with David rather than as a result of this covenant. This view is supported by the declaration in verses 2-3, in which חסד is parallel with אמונה and accompanied by עולם, and in
verse 15 where God’s חסד is as everlasting as God’s אמת, and נפשו. By extension, the חסד that God has bestowed upon the entire people of Israel throughout its salvific history empowers and overshadows the promise and חסד God made to and for David.

In reference to the expression of חסד beside אמת or אמונה, Glueck’s statement, “whenever [חסד] appears together with [אמת] or [אמונה], the quality of loyalty inherent in the concept [חסד] is emphasized” is only partly correct in Psalm 89. The quality of loyalty is clear in the promise God made to David and through him to all Israel (vv. 25, 34). However, it seems to be narrowed in verses 2-3, 15 and 50 when God’s חסד is more than just ‘loyalty.’ God’s חסד might truly fit with the semantic range of אמת and אמונה as ‘firmness, steadfastness or faithfulness, and trust’ rather than just ‘loyalty.’ Further, חסד would be understood as God’s ‘mercy’ as it is suggested in the exegesis of verse 50.

The last appearance of חסד, located in the lament (vv. 39-52) and in a particular question (v. 50), seems to turn the previous excitement of praise and promise upside down. On the one hand, God’s permanent promise to David failed and, by extension, God is blamed and condemned (vv. 39-46). Therefore, verse 50 is probably at variance with verses 2-3. Specifically, the psalmist negates him/herself in declaring praise but blasphemes by condemnation. On the other hand, another answer for the conflict of verse 50 might be found in verses 31-33 as well as verse 47. The king’s defeat, the nation’s calamities and people’s misfortunes are theologically expressed as God’s wrath, which is seen as the result/cause of people’s transgressions and iniquities. Though the psalm does not explicitly mention any details of the king’s culpability, the first question in verse 47 implies this. The psalmist stresses the unconditional side of God’s promise to David which is the base of God’s חסד and faithfulness. Hence, the question of verse 50 would be understood as the petition for God’s mercy upon the king, and through him, the people. This presupposition is supported by the double appearance of חסד in its plural form (vv. 2, 50) undermining the denotation of ‘mercies, deeds of kindness.’ The intended use of this plural transmits the grateful acknowledgment and trust of the people in all the good works God has done for them for generations. In this understanding, verse 50 does not contradict the introductory hymn and God’s declaration and promise strongly presented in the hymn and the oracle (vv. 2-38). In contrast, it importantly confirms the psalmist’s confidence that surely God’s חסד is ultimately

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74 Zobel, “חסד,” 55.
75 Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 72.
76 Brown, Driver and Briggs, BDBG, 339.
granted to David and his offspring. God’s bountiful covenant will never be broken in spite of what might happen. “Human sin does not put an end to the Divine grace, and God’s judgment is nothing else than discipline and guidance on the way to salvation. God remains faithful to [God’s]-self even though [human beings] are unfaithful.” 77 However, if anything untoward happens to the Davidic king, he will be reminded of his unfaithfulness towards God. The petition for God’s חסד should go hand in hand with the king’s adjustment of his misbehaviour.

Overall, the word חסד in its seven-fold occurrences unfolds its expressions in the many contexts within the psalm. In some parts of Psalm 89, the word חסד is bound in a relationship of bequeathing that God has made to David and his line. Nevertheless, this does not take place in all of its occurrences. Indeed, God’s חסד does not apply merely to David. Nor is the result of God’s covenant with David. חסד of God is something broader than the framework of the Davidic dynasty. חסד of God is even more than one of God’s attributes. Yes, it is as conceptualised: as God is in relationship with the king and beyond the king, with Israel as God’s people. In those relationships, God manifests God’s-very-self to them to each individual or a whole group. 78

2.4 CONCLUSION

Psalm 89 is skilfully compiled with the intensive usage of sevenfold occurrences of חסד to convey a story of God’s חסד and God in a covenantal relationship with David. What is demonstrated in the Psalm is the confronting struggle of the community in their belief and reality. As God, in God’s חסד and אמונה, has initiated the Davidic throne and promised that this dynasty will be forever governed under the shadow of God’s sovereignty, the promise seems unfulfilled in the loss of their leader(s), the Davidic monarchy. The tension of confidence in God’s חסד, which is perpetual and broader than the Davidic covenant, and doubt about God’s promise present throughout the psalm reaches its peak in the lament. On the one hand, God is described as a God with the common divine attributes that sustain the life and belief of the Israeliite king(s) and people, and who surpasses other deities, one who is praised as the universal king. God’s חסד and covenant with David are embedded in God’s very self-attribution in חסד and אמונה, ḥesed and judgment in the cosmos, in the world and chiefly in the salvific history of Israel. Therefore, the failure of the Davidic king cannot

hinder the psalmist’s praise of God’s חסד, which is ceaseless and everlasting. By extension, the hope for understanding is in God’s plan: although the Davidic king is defeated and even though the dynasty is in danger of extinction, this does not mean that God concludes God’s חסד with Israel. On the other hand, the failure of this monarchy causes a trauma for the psalmist. Indeed, the psalmist’s predicament is underlined in the Psalm as being between confidence in God, who is always the refuge and the true shepherd of Israel, and the present disorientation. Readers can sense both explicit trust and dilemma in the Psalm.

Psalm 89 belongs to and is placed at the end of Book III of the Psalter. There remains an unanswered element in Psalm 89 about God’s חסד. Just as Lamentation 5 remains unresolved and therefore unsettled, so too does this psalm. A further exploration of the word חסד in other psalms of Book III and then, Book IV, is essential for a better and fuller understanding of God’s חסד.
CHAPTER THREE: חסד IN BOOK III OF THE PSALTER

Book III is located in the middle of the Psalter. It contains eleven consecutive Psalms of Asaph (73-83), four Korahite Psalms (84-85, 87-88), one psalm of David (86), and a psalm attributed to Ethan the Ezrahite (89). In these Psalms, the word חסד occurs fourteen times altogether. This word pervades the very last Psalms of Book III, especially Psalm 89. Having examined Psalm 89 in the previous chapter, we have seen that there is a sevenfold occurrence of חסד in this Psalm. Other Psalms of Book III, namely 77, 85, 86 and 88 make up another sevenfold appearance of this word. This peculiarity of the occurrence of the double perfect number of this word does not happen in other Books of the Psalter. It seems that the editors or redactors wish to emphasise and assure readers that for God’s people, God’s חסד is perfectly eternal and steadfast through all ages.

Book III comprises predominantly communal laments among which the evasion of enemies, the destruction of the Temple and the Davidic dynasty are spelled out. The laments that result from these devastations are communicated in doubt and reaffirmed in confidence. This uneasiness is signified in the arrangement or occurrence of the word חסד within Book III. Three out of fourteen occurrences of חסד in this Book are in dark lament questions. Among the remaining appearances which are expressed in confidence, the reference to God’s self-description in Exod 34:6, conveys the hope of Israel in God’s self-revelation from the time of Sinai.

This chapter presents חסד in Book III. As Psalm 89 was studied separately in the previous chapter, the first part of this chapter will only examine this word through the exegesis of the other Psalms: 77, 85, 86, and 88 individually. Using the outcomes of the exegesis of these psalms and Psalm 89, the following section will establish the meaning of the word חסד in Book III as a whole. The conclusion will draw new insights to the ongoing study of the Psalter.

3.1 חסד IN OTHER PSALMS OF BOOK III

3.1.1 חסד in Psalm 77

Psalm 77 belongs to and is located in the midst of the Asaphite collection.\(^1\) Among the consecutive Asaph Psalms, Psalm 77 is the only psalm that contains the word חסד (v. 9).\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Psalms 50, 73-83.

\(^2\) Psalms 50, 73-83.
in Psalm 77 is situated in a sequence of rhetorical questions and in the midst of the lament that is spelled out in the first half of the Psalm.

### 3.1.1.1 Form and Structure

Psalm 77 is a lament. Both individual and communal elements interweave in petition, complaints, and hymn.³ Albeit in the midst of community, the petitioner speaks about her/his distress, yet in fact s/he addresses “the present fate of the community [that contrasts to] God’s past actions on their behalf.”⁴ God is referred to in both second and third person singular. Here no appeals for help are mentioned. Neither is an enemy mentioned and yet God alone is the focus of the psalmist’s complaints.

The Psalm has סלה attached at the end of verses 4, 10, and 16 functioning to raise the voice or tune in cultic/liturgical singing.⁵ A few scholars argue that סלה segments the Psalm into smaller sections.⁶ However, in verses 2-11,⁷ God is referred to in the third person and from verse 12 onwards, God is addressed in the second person singular. In light of this observation, this thesis considers the Psalm as structured into two sections: the lament referring to the present crisis (vv. 2-10) and the hymn of praise comprising remembrance of the past (vv. 11-20). In Psalm 77, the psalmist reminisces about the Song at the Red Sea (Exod 15).⁸ This is shown in a cluster of key words which interweave and connect the two sections of the Psalm (vv. 2-11 and 12-21). They are רב (‘remember’—vv. 4, 7, 12), תשבע (‘ponder/meditate’—vv. 4, 7, 13) and its synonym תבנית (v. 13), פעל (‘wonder’—vv. 12, 13, 15), מקדם (‘great deed’—vv. 12, 13), לוכד (‘your way’—vv. 14, 20) and its synonyms שמלאל and בלאל (v. 20). These may well include wisdom teaching in both sections of the Psalm.⁹ What is being questioned in the first part of the Psalm is implicitly answered in the second. Remembrance of and meditation on God’s salvific deeds of exodus sustain the trust

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² Nasuti, however, affirms that this term “[has] a wide usage in the Ephraimite circles.” Tradition History, 79.
³ Terrien, The Psalms, 553; Kraus, Psalms 60-150, 114; Nasuti, Tradition History, 154.
⁴ Nasuti, Tradition History, 79.
⁵ Goldingay, Psalms—Volume 2, 458-59.
⁷ Exception is in verse 5. Differences are among versions: Greek and Syriac have the verb האתי in the plural while the Jerome’s version has it in first person singular. Reading אתי (I laid hold of) instead of אתי (you laid hold of) is more suitable to the context of the first section of the Psalm, as the BHS suggests. Elliger and Rudolph, “Psalms,” 1158.
⁸ Nasuti, Tradition History, 80.
⁹ This verb is used in 1:2 to describe the one whom is meditating on Torah day and night. See Robert L. Cole, The Shape and Message of Book III—Psalms 73-89, JSOTS Sup 307 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 2000), 62.
¹⁰ Terrien, The Psalms, 554; Nasuti, Tradition History, 155.
and confidence of the supplicant as well as her/his community in God’s amen. In other words, remembrance of God’s past acts of wonder helps to comfort the psalmist and the community in their present plight.\footnote{Nasuti, \textit{ Tradition History}, 154.}

3.1.1.2 Verses 2-11

The Psalm starts with presenting a petitioner whose whole body is immersed in prayer. S/he prays not only using voice (v. 2), but also a “ritual gesture of prayer:”\footnote{Terrien, \textit{ The Psalms}, 554.} the outstretched hand (v. 3), and her/his intellectual capacity to engage in this time of prayer (v. 4). The person is fully engrossed in prayer. God is accused of acting ruthlessly, because the petitioner’s cry seems to be ignored (v. 5). The only thing that could help the psalmist remain in prayer is to call God and recall God’s acting in the ‘days of old’ (ימים מָכָהָם) and ‘years long ago’ (שָׂרָיָהּ), through ‘[her/his] songs’ (נגינתי) in heart and spirit (vv. 4, 6-7). Memories of the past seem to be the only source of comfort and hope for the psalmist’s present distress, evoked through the use of the key words זָכַר (‘remember’–vv. 4, 7), שָׂחַך (‘ponder/meditate’–vv. 4, 7), מָכָהָם (‘from of old’–v. 6) which are predominant. These references, nonetheless, do not refer to any specific event. Fortunately, these key words are reiterated in the second half of the Psalm (vv. 12-21) that reminisces about crossing the Red Sea (Exod 15).

Reference of time, ‘day’ and ‘night’ (v. 3) could be understood as a definite or an indefinite period. The ‘night time,’ nonetheless, usually refers to “the well-known connotations of threatening chaos, danger, and vulnerability.”\footnote{Hossfeld, “Psalms 77,” 277.} The petitioner is about to search for God in God’s silence, hiddenness, or inaction.\footnote{Schaefer, \textit{ Psalms}, 188; Terrien, \textit{ The Psalms}, 557.} S/he seeks God not for ‘being comforted’ (v. 3b) but rather, as is disclosed later, for understanding God’s way (vv. 14, 20).\footnote{A movement from self-focus “to a submission to and reliance upon God.” Walter Brueggemann, \textit{ The Psalms and the Life of Faith}, ed. Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 258.} The references to Exodus 15, as we will see in the next section, seem to be the only source that makes sense and gives hope in the psalmist’s current calamity.

Three rhetorical questions are raised in the searching process (vv. 8-10). Using vocabulary of time and negative verbs, traditional confidence in God is questioned.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{11} Nasuti, \textit{ Tradition History}, 154.  
\textsuperscript{12} Terrien, \textit{ The Psalms}, 554.  
\textsuperscript{13} Hossfeld, “Psalms 77,” 277.  
\textsuperscript{14} Schaefer, \textit{ Psalms}, 188; Terrien, \textit{ The Psalms}, 557.  
\textsuperscript{15} A movement from self-focus “to a submission to and reliance upon God.” Walter Brueggemann, \textit{ The Psalms and the Life of Faith}, ed. Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 258.}
The first question of verse 8 concerns major rejection by God. The verb זנח (reject/spurn) is significant in the Psalter, and is usually coupled with the typical lament question למה (why?), or a definite statement.\(^{16}\) The infinitive לרצות has the verb root רצה. This word expresses God’s pleasure with God’s people (149:4; 44:3) including the chosen (Isa 42:1; 1 Chron 28:4) and God-fearers (147:11; Prov 3:12), or land (85:2). The word also occasionally indicates God’s act of accepting the people (Isa 40:2; Ezek 20:40-41), their offering and/or prayers.\(^{17}\) As the word רצה lies in parallel with verb זנח, the question in verse 8 displays anguish as to whether God’s delight enjoyed to date has been exhausted, or is no longer available.

The next two rhetorical questions ponder God’s characteristics deeply, that is, God’s חסד and אמר (‘saying/promise’–v. 9), חנות and רחמ (‘grace and compassion’–v. 10). While the reference of חסד is found in Exod 15:13\(^{18}\) generally linking Psalm 77 with Exod 15,\(^{19}\) this word as well as חנות and רחמ are found in the description of relationship central to scripture: the centrality of God’s self-disclosure and God’s relationship with Israel which was formulated in Exod 34:6.\(^{20}\) Yet this is God’s solemn speech: יהוה יהוה אל רחום וחנון ארך אפים ורב-חסד ואמת (the LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in [חסד] and faithfulness).

חסד in verse 9 is parallel with אמר both literally\(^{21}\) and theologically. God’s חסד is in doubt, as is God’s word.\(^{22}\) Both have guided Israelite generations up to the present, but now both seem to have disappeared. This particular disappointment is echoed in Psalm 89: God promises not

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16 For example 43:2; 74:1; 88:15; and 44:10, 24; 60:3, 12; 89:39, respectively. Goldingay, Psalms–Volume 2, 465.
17 This word refers to the offering being accepted in the book of Levi. In prophetic literature, this word conversely expresses God’s rejection of the people by God’s being unwilling to accept their offering (Jer 14:10, 12; Hos 8:13; Amos 5:22; Mic 6:7; Hagg 1:8; Mal 1:8, 10, 13).
19 See the table in the next section of verses 12-21.
21 This pair only occurs here in the bible.
22 Or ‘promise’ in NRSV, or “prophecies of salvation” as Hossfeld suggests in “Psalm 77,” 278.
to ‘alter the word that went forth from [God’s] lips’ (v. 35). Yet, God is questioned, ‘Where is your [חסד] of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David?’ (v. 50).

Verse 11 presents the petitioner’s main struggle: ‘And I say, “It is my grief that the right hand of the Most High has changed”). The reference of ימין (the right hand) of God, that/who once performed mighty deeds (Exod 15:6, 12; cf. 78:54; 80:15; 89:14), has changed. The changing of the Most High’s ‘right hand’ is understood to be “the alteration in God’s fidelity and constancy.” This causes the lamenter’s “own theological suffering.”

3.1.1.3 Verses 12-21

From verse 12 onwards, God is addressed directly in the second person singular. God’s image and miraculous deeds in the exodus are recollected. The powerful and incomparable image of God in verses 14-15 recalls Exod 15:11. Verses 17-19, on the one hand retell moments of Exod 15:10, and yet they are, on the other hand, slightly different from those narrated in the exodus event. These rather could be regarded as “the cosmological insertion.” The reference of God’s people as descendants of Jacob and Joseph is emphasised in the Asaph psalms. Verses 20-21 recall the passing through the Red Sea and wandering in the dessert. The psalmist, in verses 14, 16, and 21, possibly alludes to Exod 15:13 as is shown in the table below through the repeated words in these verses: נסה (‘lead’—v. 21), עם (‘people’—vv. 16, 21), גאל (‘redeem’—v. 16), and קד (‘holiness’—v. 14).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BK</th>
<th>CH/VR</th>
<th>BHS</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exodus 15:13</td>
<td>נחת חמש תפארת עליון</td>
<td>In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed: you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psalms 77:14(13)</td>
<td>אלהיםכסף ורבך מאריך ימים</td>
<td>Your way, O God, is holy…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77:16(15)</td>
<td>נחת המרחץ ישכוב נבירה עפעף יסח:</td>
<td>With your strong arm you redeemed your people…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77:21(20)</td>
<td>נחת כנסא שפך בירד משם אלהים:</td>
<td>You led your people like a flock…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23 See also 74:11, as well as 89:43.
24 Hossfeld, “Psalm 77,” 278.
26 Hossfeld, “Psalm 77,” 279.
27 It is suggested that contemplation of the names of Jacob (75:10; 76:7; 78:5, 21, 71; 79:7; 81:2, 5) and Joseph (78:67; 80:2; 81:6; cf. also 105:17) is seen as the continuing influence of the traditions of the Northern Kingdom.” Hossfeld, “Psalm 77,” 279.
28 Nasuti, Tradition History, 80.
Reference of God’s footprints being invisible (v. 20) refers to the theological point of the Psalm. It is “a shift to the idea of the hiddenness of God” considering that “analogously, the psalmist cannot track God in the present crisis.” Moses and Aaron in verse 21 are simply the mediators of the “omnipotent and omniscient” God. Thus, only God knows the way and knows how to guide God’s own people. This leads to a conclusion that even though the lamenter is in doubt about God’s ‘right hand,’ s/he still keeps hoping that God has God’s own way to salvation. The recollection of Exod 15:13 not only demonstrates the psalmist’s hope in God’s past disclosing of salvific deeds, but also implicitly suggests the answer to the question of God’s חסד raised in verse 9: (Has [God’s חסד] ceased forever?).

In summary, חסד in Psalm 77 is presented in the consecutive rhetorical lament questions. These point back the fundamental trust of Israel in their God and in God’s חסד, word, grace, and compassion (vv. 8-10). The background texts to this Psalm that refer to God’s חסד are explicitly Exod 15:13 and implicitly Exod 34:6. In desperate times, both individual and community were seeking understanding and intervention through God’s חסד once acted out in saving and guiding actions (Exod 15:13). They were also spelled out solemnly as God’s self-disclosure (Exod 34:6). Confidence is challenged in the hiddenness of God, yet hope is resumed in the confession that God’s way is holy and incomprehensible to human perception.

3.1.1.4 Psalms 77 and 89

There are two significant connections between Psalms 77 and 89. Firstly and explicitly, it is in 77:9 that the word חסד first appears in Book III, and this word recurs last in 89:50. Both occur as questions of lament, in which the individual cry is interwoven with the voice of the community. The former is in the context of the individual and community facing misfortune while the latter is situated in the lament referring to the fate of the Davidic king and his dynasty. Both share the same struggle about their identity. While the first explicit questioning of חסד in 77:9 is about the foundational events referring back to Exodus 15, the question about God’s חסד in 89:50 is about the Davidic kingship that was initiated in 2 Samuel 7.

29 Hossfeld, “Psalm 77,” 279.
30 Schaefer, Psalms, 190.
31 Terrien, The Psalms, 557.
32 Schaefer, Psalms, 190.
Secondly, as God’s חסד is in doubt and God’s word/promise seems to have disappeared in 77:9, this disappointment is echoed in 89:50.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>77</th>
<th>9(8)</th>
<th>Has his steadfast love ceased forever? Are his promises at an end for all time?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>50(49)</td>
<td>Lord, where is your steadfast love of old which by your faithfulness you swore to David?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between these two Psalms there is also an indirect linking idea in the reference of the word ימין (the right hand) of God.’ If 77:11 presents the petitioner’s main struggle that the right hand of the Most High has changed, then in 89:43 God is being condemned paradoxically for exalting the right hand of the king’s adversaries.

3.1.2 חסד in Psalm 85

חסד occurs twice in the Psalm. In one instance it is linked with ישע (‘salvation/help/deliverance’–v. 8); in another instance it is paired with אמת (‘truth’–v. 11) and the pair is parallel to צדק and שלום (‘justice’ and ‘peace/wellbeing’–v. 11). The first חסד of the Psalm appears in a petition, while the second is in a statement of confidence. The former is what the psalmist implores while the latter is her/his visionary hope.

3.1.2.1 Form and Structure

Psalm 85 is a communal prayer. The prayer for deliverance or help entails elements of acknowledgment (vv. 2-4), petition and lament (vv. 5-8), trust and hope (vv. 9-14). God’s former favour of Israel is called on in the present crisis. This Psalm is the second psalm of the second Korahite collection in Book III (84-85; 87-88). Whereas Psalm 84 conveys the theme of Zion/Temple/God’s dwelling place, Psalm 85 speaks of ארץ – the land which was given to Jacob from of old. Psalm 87 then continues with the theme of Zion while the last Korahite Psalm is a specific lament of one facing death. The land is one of the key words in this Psalm. This land once was of God ארץ (‘your land’–v. 2), then, it was given to Israel as heritage, becoming their land ארץ (‘our land’–vv. 10, 13). In connection with ארץ, the reason for petition and prayer is encompassed by the choice of the verb שׁוב (‘turn/restore/do again’–vv. 2, 4, 5, 7, 9). The occurrence of this verb is varied in meaning and expression. This will be presented in the exegesis below.

33 Recalling Exod 15:6, 12; also echoed in 78:54; 80:15; 89:14.
34 Also 74:11.
35 The first Korahite collection are psalms 42(+43)-49.
Excepting the superscription (v. 1), the Psalm is divided into two parts according to the change of the personal pronoun in verse 9. The first part, verses 2-8, comprises two sub-sections: “invocation” or recollection of God’s former acts (vv. 2-4) and petition for God’s favour and forgiveness in the present (vv. 5-8). In these sub-sections, the subject of these verbs is in the second person singular, while the modes of verbs are in perfect, imperative, and jussive, respectively. Verses 9-14 of the second part reflect trust and hope that are anticipated as answers to pleas in verses 2-8. The speaker changes into the first person singular, and s/he refers to God in the third person singular.

3.1.2.2 Verses 2-8

Verses 2-8 begin with a prayer in a time of crisis that is expressed in two ways. First is a series provoking memory of what God had done for Israel. This list of verbal forms is presented in the second person singular: השמורת ... רצויה (v. 2), נשאתי ... כותה (v. 3), נשאת ... אספת (v. 4). These refer to God’s favour towards the land and God’s acts of restoration of Jacob’s fortune, of God’s forgiveness and pardon, and of God’s withdrawal in anger and wrath. References of ‘your land’ and ‘your people’ reflect “the primeval beginning of the relationship” between God and Israel/Jacob in Exod 32-34, including the acknowledgement of God’s forgiveness and withdrawal of anger in Exod 32:12. This prayer conveys the steady confidence in God of the people rather than a desire “to justify their supplication.”

Two things need to be considered. First, the appearance of the word שבות in the MT is only the issue of qere and ketib (v. 2). While the ketib שבות is derived from שב (to turn/return), the qere שבית is thought to originate fromشب (to lead the captive). The expression of שבות especially when it goes with ארץ (land/earth), is usually found in exilic literature. Verse 2 then raises the question of how the Psalm can be interpreted. may be understood either as ‘you restored the fortunes’ or ‘you restored the captives.’ The ambiguity of this word remains unresolved, though this thesis prefers to understand the phrase as ‘you

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36 Gerstenberger, Psalms–Part 2, 128.
37 Though the signal of סלה is at the end of verse 3, the break of the first sub-section is at verse 4. Verses 2-4 belong together because the verbs are used in perfect mode.
38 See more discussion in Michael D. Goulder, The Psalms of the Sons of Korah (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 199, 266; Tate, Psalms 51-100, 364, 367-68; Dahood, Psalms II, 286, 288.
40 Weiser, The Psalms, 572.
41 The same topic may be connected to the word שבת/שבת in Psalm 126:1, 4.
43 See the discussion in Zenger, “Psalms 85,” 360.
restored the fortunes.’ This is because it lines up with the “primeval beginning” in Exodus 32-34, and with the consideration that the exilic context is embedded in the intentional editing of the Psalter and of Book III in particular.

Secondly, the understanding of verse 2 affects the understanding and interpretation of restored in verse 5. This also helps the reader to understand the first section of the psalm as a whole. The psalmist cries to God for salvation, referring to how God treats God’s people (vv. 2-4), and then pleads to God to act likewise in the present distress (vv. 5-8).

The sub-section of verse 5-8, with the frame word ישׁובנו and two rhetorical questions, appears in chiastic form of ABB’A’ highlighting the people’s plea.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>5(4)</th>
<th>ISH científico שָׁבוֹנִינוּ אֱלֹאָה יִשְׁעֵנוּ הָמוֹרִים אִשתוֹ</th>
<th>Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>6(5)</td>
<td>EBשׁוֹנָה תִּשְׁכְּבָנּוּ עַל עַמָּנוּ כסֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל</td>
<td>Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B’</td>
<td>7(6)</td>
<td>EBשׁוֹנָה תִּשְׁכְּבָנּוּ עַל עַמָּנוּ כסֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל</td>
<td>Will you not revive us again, so that your people may rejoice in you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’</td>
<td>8(7)</td>
<td>EBנָאְרָה יִשְׁפָּד יִשְׁפָדָת הָעָם</td>
<td>Show us your steadfast love, O LORD and grant us your salvation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

God is named to be אלהי ישׁענו (‘God of our salvation’ – v. 5), and God’s salvation (ישׁע) is earnestly requested (v. 8). Salvation, in the context of the first section, ensues when God’s anger and wrath are dissolved (vv. 4, 6), sins and iniquities are forgiven (v. 3), God’s favour of the land and Jacob’s fortune are regained or restored (v. 2), and God’s people live anew and joyfully (v. 7).

It is in verse 8 that חסד is parallel to ישׁע. If God’s salvation is shown in the act of favour of the land and restoration of the people’s fortune (v.2), forgiveness (v. 3), withdrawal of anger (v. 4, 6), and the people’s revival (v. 7), then the plea for God’s חסד is in the expectation of seeing these things. If God is אלהי ישׁענו (God of our salvation) named in verse 5, this God can also be designated as the God of חסד. The two sides of the request in verse 8 interact with each other. In other words, the relationship between ישׁע and חסד of God is mutual so that ישׁע is a sign of God’s חסד. Due to God’s חסד ישׁע is granted. Therefore, ישׁע and חסד are not only literally parallel, but the latter is also subordinated and a cause for the former.

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44 See footnote 170.
Recollection of the past goes with the choices of the tenses of verbs used in verses 2-8. They appeal for alleviation of present downheartedness. Both serve the purpose of pleading for God’s salvation and thus, for eliciting God’s חסד which is the source of all God’s action and the manifestation of who God is. The following section (vv. 9-14) expresses the hope that all pleas and invocations of the previous section (vv. 2-8) will come about.

3.1.2.3 Verses 9-14

The second section of the Psalm starts with a new voice in the first person singular. Verse 9 comprises words of comfort, based on the community’s trust and reliance on God (vv. 2-4). They are חסדיה וépoque (God’s people and pious ones) who totally depend on God. Words of comfort and promise indicate that God responds to the peace/wellbeing of the God’s people. This also leads to the result that if God does not care for God’s people and those devoted to God, then their failure of trust in God is God’s responsibility. That means, human faithfulness is always dependant on God’s providence. For this reason, they pray to God not only physical and material help, but also spiritual confidence and sustenance. In verse 10a, the word of comfort is just another way of saying that God’s salvation walks hand in hand with people’s trust and reverence. God’s salvation is a sign of God’s glory (כסד) or presence in the land.

Verses 9-14, thus, seem to be about sensing and anticipating God’s presence or God’s salvation. This idea binds the two parts of the Psalm together by the key word ישוע. Salvation in verse 9-14 is pronounced firstly in God’s message of peace/wellbeing to God’s people (v. 9). God-fearers pray and wish for God’s glory (כסד) to abide in them and in their land (v.10). The manner of longing, לשכן כבוד בארצנו (so that the glory may remain in our land), presumes that God’s glory once dwelt in the land and yet has been gradually or suddenly leaving the land. Now those praying are praying for God to rekindle divine favour by replenishing it. Therefore, there are expectations that people will witness חסד נבון and in the land again embracing, צדק and שלום kissing (v. 11). Also אין מסתא from the earth harmonises with אין הזבל from heaven (v. 12). These lead to the outcome that God’s goodness will fortify the fruitfulness of

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46 Tate, Psalms 51-100, 370.
47 Weiser, The Psalms, 572.
48 Weiser translates לשכן כבוד בארצנו into “glory may dwell among us,” The Psalms, 570.
49 The glory of God was affirmed in the Sinai tradition of the Exodus (Exod 24:16; 25:8; 29:43-46). See Zenger, “Psalm 85,” 365. Schaefer even links this idea to Ezekiel 10-11: that God’s glory left the temple to go with the captives. Now it is hoped that God’s glory will return to their land. Psalms, 210.
the land (v. 13) and God’s footsteps or presence in the land will be made obtainable by צדק (v. 14).\textsuperscript{51}

In verse 11 is paired with אמת. In the whole Bible, this pair occurs 23 times. However, it is only here in this psalm that they appear together in connection with a maqqef, צדק והאמות. In spite of its unusual appearance, it does not affect its meaning. In all paired occurrences, צדק and אמת emphasize the absolute attributes of God.\textsuperscript{52} Therefore, the two pairs, צדק והאמות, as well as צדק והשלום, are designations describing God.\textsuperscript{53} However, אמת in verse 12, which is parallel with צדק והשלום, is used to denote both the divine and human. Human faithfulness is required before God’s righteousness can be experienced.\textsuperscript{54}

In conclusion, צדק in verse 11 is paired with אמת and these words parallel צדק והשלום. צדק simply is one of God’s attributes. On the other hand, צדק in verse 11 acts to reinforce the prayer in verse 8 that restates God’s glory (v. 10), God’s salvation (vv. 8, 10), and God’s justice (vv. 11-12, 14). Indeed, this is what makes God’s people feels safe and secure in God’s צדק, אמת, והשלום, irrespective of whether the source of anxiety is political, agricultural, or religious. Moreover, if God is a God of salvation and God’s act of salvation is the manifestation of God’s צדק as it is stated in the previous section, then, צדק, אמת, והשלום in verses 11-14 can be understood as “the coming of God’s gift and work, and indeed of [God’s very self],”\textsuperscript{55} or God’s act of restoration.\textsuperscript{56}

Psalm 85 speaks about hope for the welfare of the people, the life that totally depends on God in every aspect of their living.\textsuperscript{57} It can refer to the hard period after the exile and to a drought that might be broken by rain so that crops and food are secured. God’s צדק, which is communicated twice the Psalm (vv. 8, 11), is essential for the sustenance of the people’s wellbeing. People beseech God’s צדק because it demonstrates God’s salvation (ישוע), truthfulness (אמת), and the presence of God’s glory (כבוד) for their life, either in the form of

\textsuperscript{51} See possible linking with the idea in psalm 73:24, 28. This is still a hope.
\textsuperscript{52} Clark, The Word Hesed, 240.
\textsuperscript{53} As verses 2-4 recall Exod 32:34, so does verse 11 (Exod 34:6; cf. 86:15; 89:15). See more details in Goulder, The Psalms, 112-114
\textsuperscript{55} In discussing Psalm 73, Firth writes, “check as there seems to be something missing! This individual’s testimony could have arisen at the time, but it suggests an answer to a larger issue that could also affect the nation with the fall of Jerusalem.” D. G. Firth, “Asaph and Sons of Korah,” in Dictionary of the Old Testament–Wisdom, Poetry and Writings, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2008), 24-27. The presence of God, nonetheless, is absent in 88:15; 89:47. God hides God’s self from the King, and thus, from the people. The people fell into shock and doubt.
\textsuperscript{56} Zenger, “Psalm 85,” 366.
\textsuperscript{57} Schaefer, Psalms, 210.
\textsuperscript{58} Tate’s main interest is just about the people’s wellbeing. Psalms 51-100, 372-73.
their wellbeing (שלום) or in the fertilisation of the land. People request God’s חסד because it exhibits God’s justice (צדק). It neither ignores nor conceals forgiveness from their sins and expects אמת from them. The Psalm is a prayer of trust, acknowledging what God had done for God’s people, the חסיד, and demonstrates confidence in what God is going to perform in their life and also in their land.

3.1.2.4 Psalms 85 and 89

There is no significant link between the two Psalms. However, some words and ideas could connect Psalms 85 and 89. First, חסד occurs in both Psalms. If חסד in Psalm 89 refers to both David (vv. 24, 29, 34, 50) and the community (vv. 2, 3), in 85:8 it is asked for by God’s people as a sign of God’s salvation. Additionally, חסד is coupled with אמת as well as צדק (85:11) and מטפס as well as צדק (89:15) are used continuously as designations describing God. 59 Secondly, חסיד appears in 85:9 and 89:20 as promise or vision. In the former, God’s message is for the anticipated prosperity of the people that is enveloped in God’s צדק and ישע. In the latter, God’s message is given for the chosen king, David, with the assurance of God’s צדיק and אמונה. Finally, the vocabulary of God’s anger – כעס (85:5), אפ (85:6), חמה (89:47), hithpael of עבר (89:39) – and questions regarding that anger appear in these Psalms (85:5; 89:46). It is only in Psalm 85:3 that the psalmist speaks of God’s forgiveness of the sins of God’s people. Verses 85:2-4 refer back to the significant memory set out in Exod 32-34, which trace the people’s apostasy of worshiping the golden calf. Nevertheless, 85:5b-6 and 89:39, 47 do not comment on what caused God’s fury explicitly. This may be because the allusion to the golden calf is sufficient, or even, that the cause of God’s anger is uncertain in the present time. Hence, the only thing that the psalmist could do is to either beseech God’s חסד through a petition (85:8) or through a question (89:50).

3.1.3 חסד in Psalm 86

The word חסד is placed three times in three even sections of the Psalm (vv. 5, 13, 15). Of these רחיבות חסד in verses 5, 15 is likely to be a version of Exod 34:6, the “Sinai formula.” 60 The usage and expression of חסד will be rendered in the following exegesis.

59 Also Exod 34:6; cf. 86:15.
3.1.3.1 Form and Structure

Psalm 86 is the only psalm in Book III that is attributed to David in its superscription. It is located at the position that interrupts the second series of Korahite Psalms (84-85, 87-88). The question of its placement raises several debates for readers and scholars. The intentional shaping of the Psalter is certainly the answer to the question of the final form and its placement. Some recommend that the superscription of the Psalm may not be the issue. It is rather the general statement of ‘all the nations’ (86:9) that precedes a clearer list of nations in its neighbouring Psalm (87:4). It may be even just an alternative element of lament and hope in the Psalms of Book III, or “a designable individual prayer after the communal prayer in Psalm 85.” No answers are certain. However, the figure of David as “collective primary subject” of Psalm 86 and Davidic figure in other psalms of Book III may serve two purposes. The first is the reinforcement of “the centrality of the Davidic covenant.” The second is the engagement in one of the theological struggles comprising this psalm and the series of psalms: how to understand God’s long-standing favour towards Israel despite the loss of the Land, Temple/Zion, and then the Davidic dynasty.

Psalm 86 is in the form of a prayer for help, a petition to God for comfort (v. 4), preservation of life (v. 2), guidance (v. 11), strength (v. 16), and favour (v. 17). In making a plea to God, the psalmist also expresses trust and confidence in God whose attributes are described as טוב and סלח (‘good’ and ‘forgiving’–v. 5) and ‘abundant in חסד’ (v. 5); ‘great’ and ‘doer of wondrous things’–v. 10; ‘merciful and gracious’–v. 15; ‘slow in anger’–v. 15 and ‘abundant in חסד ואמת’ (v. 15). Elements of prayer, petition, and confession that are communicated in the Psalm, at one level, are nothing more than the psalmist’s deep-rooted trust in tradition and belief (e.g. v. 15; cf. Exod 34:6). At

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61 Such as Cole, The Shape and Message, 126; Zenger, “Psalm 86,” 370, Kraus, Psalms, 181; Tate, Psalms 51-100, 380.
62 There are some possibilities, Mowinckel presumes, that earlier the Psalm might have been used by David or Davidic kings. The superscription was not a concern and, therefore, was not there from the beginning. It might have been added later with later concern of authorship and of theoretical and theological intention. The Psalm, I:77, II:98-99. See also Wilson, The Editing, 156.
63 Tate, Psalms 51-100, 380; Cole, The Shape and Message, 159.
65 Tate, Psalms 51-100, 380.
68 This issue will be considered in more detail in 3.2.3. See Wallace, “The Narrative,” 15.
another level, as the title of the Psalm is attributed to David, it is the king’s role as a mediator between God and God’s people to pray and to confess.

Psalm 86 in its final form has a unique structure. Following the change of scene, from petition to praise then back to petition, this Psalm is divided into three sections. Parts one (vv. 1-7) and three (vv. 14-17) are both petitions interwoven with declarations of confidence in God. The latter, nonetheless, sees the threat of enemies. In these sections, the term עבדך – ‘your servant’ is underlined. Part two (vv. 8-13) contains praise and thanksgiving towards God, including the appeal for God’s instruction. The Davidic-petitioner’s imagery in section one and three (vv. 1-7, 14-17) as עני ואביון (‘poor and needy’–v.1), חסיד (‘devoted’–v. 2) and עבד (‘servant’–vv. 2, 4, 16) is in contrast to the image of God in section two as one who is praiseworthy (vv. 8-10) and whose name is commendable (vv. 8-13).

3.1.3.2 Verses 1-7

The first section of the Psalm, framed by the verb ענן (‘answer’–vv. 1, 7), presents a person in distress and hardship. A series of imperative verbs indicate urgent, earnest, and consistent appeal. The psalmist acknowledges her/his own person and status as being not only ‘poor and needy’ (v .1) but also ‘faithful’ and ‘your servant’ (v. 2). At the same time, s/he acknowledges God’s characteristics as טוב וסלח ורב‐חסד (‘good and forgiving and abounding in steadfast love’ – v. 5). It contains no form of confession of sin. This is simply the petition of a person thoroughly reliant on God who alone can help ‘rectify’ the bad situation of the person praying. It is the psalmist’s belief that God has been on her/his side and will continue acting in the way s/he has previously experienced (verses 2, 5, 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  קִוְסָרָה אָנֹךְ עֲנַנֵי וַעֲנָנִים אֲנֵי׃</td>
<td>Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  שְׁמַרְתָּ נַפְשִׁי קִוְסָרָה אֲנֵי הָשֻׁעַ עֲבֵדָךְ׃</td>
<td>Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you; save your servant ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  מְנַעְנָה אָנֹךְ בָּיִהלֹאלֹא אַדְלִיךָ נִירָנָי׃</td>
<td>Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all day long.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  כִּרְאָתָה אָנֹךְ תַּבּוּכִּי וְרָבֵּשָׁנָה לְכָלֵיהֶרְוָא׃</td>
<td>For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  בּוֹם צְרִיךְ אֲכָרָאָא דָּבָא חְכָנָא׃</td>
<td>In the day of my trouble I call on you, for you will answer me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The triple repetition of the verb קרא (‘cry, call aloud’–vv. 3, 5, 7) emphasizes this trust and reliance of the psalmist on God. If God is ‘good, forgiving, and abounding in חסד to all who call on’ God (v. 5), then God’s חסד is surely accessible to God’s devout servant (v. 2). Yet, unbroken hope and confidence continue to be expressed in verse 7. Subsequently, with the verb ענה (‘answer’–vv. 1, 7) that frames the first section, the petition in verse 1 finds its resolution in the sense of complete trust (v. 7).

In the context of the psalmist’s trust and petition to God, חסד in verse 5 is one of God’s attributes. It is only here in the whole Hebrew Bible that רב-חסד appears alongside טוב and סלח. The adjective סלח also appears only here. It has the same verbal root meaning ‘to forgive or pardon.’ Though sin is not mentioned at all in the passage, the choice of this word reminds readers of Exod 34:9, which emphasizes God’s capacity and willingness to forgive.69 On the other hand, טוב is a popular adjective in biblical texts. טוב, as an identity of God, even becomes a “short liturgical and theological formula” in the later psalms.70 In short, רב-חסד in this section goes hand in hand and is parallel with טוב וסלח. It appears that טוב וסלח is the concretization of God’s רב-חסד. In other words, טוב וסלח are the definition of God’s חסד. This means חסד conveys both aspects of God’s goodness and readiness to forgive.

3.1.3.3 Verses 8-13

God is acknowledged as the God/chief-god among other gods.72 God and God’s works, therefore, are incomparable (v. 8).73 This is linked to the vision that all nations on the earth will reverence God, and God’s name shall be glorified among these people (v. 9). Here the psalmist does not only confess that her/his God is above other gods, but also affirms that Israel’s belief had been “the trajectory from henotheism to proper monotheism.”74 This strong emphasis highlights the fact that the Israelites have moved to genuine monotheism: אתה אלוהים לבדך (‘you alone are God’–v. 10).

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69 The full quotation from Exodus 34:6 is in verse 15.
70 Zenger, “Psalm 86,” 372.
72 This presumes that these gods are the deities of other nations, as is supported by the mention of other nations (v. 9) and the affirmation that God is the only God (v. 10) of the person engaged in prayer.
73 This might quote the song in Exodus 15:11. See Dahood, Psalms II, 295. Verse 8, and then verse 10, connect with and are expanded in Ps 89:7-9.
74 Alter, The Book of Psalms, 304.
Verse 11 is considered the core verse of the Psalm.\(^{75}\) In the whole Bible the hifil imperative of the verb הָרָא (teach or instruct) appears three times in the Psalter (27:11; 86:11; 119:33) and twice in the Book of Job (6:24; 34:32). While in Job the focus of the prayer was to be instructed in self-knowledge and consciousness of wrongdoing, in the Psalms it was to know God’s way.\(^{76}\) God’s way and truth appear to be parallel in verse 11. The psalmist asked to be taught God’s way so that s/he might walk in God’s truth.

The psalmist is grateful for being granted God’s חָסֵד. S/he acknowledges and confesses that the act of חָסֵד towards her/him is typical of God who has delivered her/him from the depth of Sheol (v. 13). Though verses 11-12 precede verse 13, the latter seems to prove that receiving God’s חָסֵד leads the psalmist to pray that s/he will be taught by God’s truth. Moreover, the psalmist, being united in heart, sees that God shall always be praised and God’s name will be revered and glorified. In verse 11, the psalmist makes a humble and honest prayer because s/he is aware that her/his way is different from what is of God. For other peoples and nations, God might be known through performing wondrous deeds, but this is not enough for the psalmist who needs to know God’s way and truth. In praying like this, the psalmist earnestly wants her/his confidence to be deepened and strengthened. This confidence is not only inherited from the tradition (vv. 5, 15) but also by and in direct personal experience (v. 13):

deaux יכף תחתיה וְחָסֵד (for great is your חָסֵד toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol).

To conclude, God’s חָסֵד is defined in the framework of Israel’s belief (vv. 8-10) and of the psalmist’s personal prayer and confession (vv. 11-13). In verse 13 of this second section חָסֵד is directly indicated by God’s act of saving the psalmist from Sheol. God’s way and truth are apparent in God’s חָסֵד towards the psalmist personally, although the psalmist sees impending personal attack in the following section.

3.1.3.4 Verses 14-17

For the first time and only here in the Psalm, the psalmist’s enemies, whose characteristics and attitudes contrast with those of the psalmist, are mentioned (v. 14). Verses 16-17 show that the psalmist was in difficulty, that perhaps s/he had been humiliated concerning her/his God and God’s power and favour in supporting her/him. Nonetheless, the particulars of the

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\(^{75}\) Terrien, The Psalms, 614.

\(^{76}\) Request of instruction to know God’s way is slightly different from the context of these psalms. In 27:11 God’s way relates to God’s protection; and in Ps 86:11 it relates to God’s truth; while in 119:33, God’s way is God’s law or statute.
crisis are not detailed here. Verse 15, which is an exact quotation from Exod 34:6, interrupts those verses of petition. At a brief glance, it seems disconnected from the previous verse. However, it is a statement which connects verses 14, 16, and 17 together. Verse 15 is indeed an expression of confident reliance on God, who revealed God’s self in Exod 34:6 as שד החסד והאמות והנים עינייו. ‘compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in and faithfulness.’ This God is believed to be always on the psalmist’s side (v. 17b), and therefore One who would take full responsibility for the petitioner. Through contrast, it could be explained or demonstrated that God is “merciful and gracious” to even the petitioner’s enemies; and that it is God who is “slow in anger and abundant in תשמך חסד and אמת” towards Israel and the psalmist personally. It might show the psalmist’s confusion and at the same time her/his willingness to know God’s way of truth (v. 11) towards both Israel and other nations.

חסד appears for the second time in this Psalm (see v. 5). In the first instance the reader is familiar with the exact formula through the Exodus (34:6) and in its partial use elsewhere in other Books (86:5; 103:8; Num 14:18; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). In the second instance, ראביה חסד in this verse is paired with אמת (cf. 89:15). It is God’s חסד that is affirmed to be great upon the psalmist (v. 13), and it is God’s אמת that the psalmist wishes to walk into (v. 11). It is חסד ואמת that is accompanied by רחום וחנון and ארך אפים. It is God, who is embodied in such attributions in ancient Israel. The psalmist here and now pleads to God for comfort, help and salvation (vv. 15-17).

In conclusion, חסד appears three times in Psalm 86; and among the appearances, twice חסד is qualified by ראביה (vv. 5, 15). The reader is familiar with verse 15 through the passage in Exod 34:6. Verse 5 reminds readers that its partial form occurs elsewhere in the Old Testament (103:8; Num 14:18; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). These appearances are perhaps not different from the expression in verse 13, חסדך גדול – ‘your חסד is great.’ The difference between these three occurrences is that God’s חסד in verses 5 and 15 refers in general or common usage and belief to Israel as a whole. God’s חסד in verse 13, nonetheless, is likely to refer to a personal and individual experience. It is the psalmist’s indebtedness to God for being delivered from Sheol. In deep gratitude, the psalmist recalls that כי חסדך גדול עלי – ‘for your חסד is great towards me.’ Considering that Psalm 86 is the Psalm of David, then, God’s חסד is great upon David’s representatives and Davidic monarchy.
3.1.3.5 Psalms 86 and 89

On the one hand, the imagery of God as honorable and incomparable in Psalm 86 (vv. 8-10) is reemphasised and developed in Psalm 89 (vv. 6-15). On the other hand, the possible connection of these two Psalms is the imagery ‘of David’ (86) and about David (89). Yet the ‘portrayal’ about him is likely to be different in Psalm 89 and Psalm 86. While David is described as a great chosen king in Psalm 89, the Davidic-petitioner in Psalm 86 is “as the suffering servant of YHWH […] who, in a situation of crisis clings to the God of Sinai (cf. the allusions to Exodus 33-34) and thus is a model of fidelity to Torah and trust in the saving care of YHWH.” These two connections, first, will square well with God’s promise to David in Psalm 89 (vv. 25, 29, 34); yet, at the same time they challenge the promises being breached or neglected (89:50). Secondly, the two Psalms stress the limitation of the earthly king in comparison with the heavenly or divine king, the LORD.

3.1.4 חסד in Psalm 88

חסד only occurs once in this Psalm (v. 12). The effect of its usage is to raise an additional rhetorical question among the series of other rhetorical questions that query God about God’s personifications and works (vv. 11-13). The exposition of חסד in this Psalm will be treated in detail in the following exegesis.

3.1.4.1 Form and Structure

Among the Korahite collections, Psalm 88 is an individual lament and one of the darkest complaints in the Psalter. It is, however, unique in the lament category in that, firstly patterns of praise, request for deliverance, figure of enemies, and confession of guilt, are absent from the Psalm. Secondly, the predominant language in the Psalm relates to the realm of death or of facing death. The state of being isolated from one’s social network (vv. 9, 19) even in youth (v. 16) is felt more strongly than sickness or mortal illness. We feel the

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78 Psalms 42(+43)-49, 84-85, 87-88.
79 Kraus, Psalms 60-150, 193; Terrien, The Psalms, 627.
80 God, instead, seems to be the lamentor’s only enemy. In seeing it this way, Zenger regards the Psalm “a theodicy lament.” See “Psalm 88,” 394.
81 This gains agreement from most scholars such as Gerstenberger, Psalms–Part 2, 143; Zenger, “Psalm 88,” 393; Kraus, Psalms 60-150, 192; McCann, “The Book,” 1027; Wallace, “The Narrative,” 12; Schaefer, Psalms, 216.
82 Zenger, “Psalm 88,” 392; Schaefer, Psalms, 215; and McCann, “The Book,” 1027, who convincingly comments “the language is metaphorical and stereotypical enough to express other life-threatening situations.”
83 Terrien, The Psalms, 626; Tate, Psalms 51-100, 400.
continuity of prayer within Psalm 88 through verses 2, 10b and 14. Given that the psalm is in Book III, and that the psalm is dated in the exilic or postexilic era, it is probable that the lamen
ter does not mourn “for [her/]himself alone, but for [her/]his people” about God’s חסד. This thesis structures the psalm into three sections: vv. 2-10a, 10b-13, 14-19. The reason for this division is that each of the opening and ending verses are signified with the same pattern. Each section is framed with God’s sacred name (יהוה), reference of time (בבקר/בכל־יום/יום, בלילה), and usage of verbs for praying (צעק (‘cry out’–v. 2), קרא (‘call’–v. 10), שׁוע (‘cry for help’–v. 14) in the opening verse. The closing verse is framed with the word חשך (‘darkness’–vv. 7, 13, 19). Additionally, there are repetitions between sections one and three, which express petition and God’s anger which are in reality the psalmist’s suffering. Overall, there is a two-fold pattern of hope from the beginning, then doubt at the end in the psalm as a whole and within each section. The table below provides detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>VR</th>
<th>BHS</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>דודי אלוהי תועสถם יושבות בלילה ענ干部职工: O LORD, God of my salvation, when, at night, I cry out in your presence.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7(6)</td>
<td>שתרני חבור החוהות במענהגים בשכונת: You have put me in the depths of the Pit, in the regions dark and deep.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>10(9b)</td>
<td>סбережה דודי מלפרים תשמעי אלהי פנים: Every day I call on you, O LORD: I spread out my hands to you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13(12)</td>
<td>חורשות פלאך ובגדיה וגדיה באדה נשעה: Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your saving help in the land of forgetfulness?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>14(13)</td>
<td>תptune תקדמך ובבקרתי יושב יהוה ואני אליך: But I, O LORD, cry out to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19(18)</td>
<td>הרחקות מעתי אלהי רע יידעו ממעה: You have caused friend and neighbour to shun me; my companions are in darkness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The presence of חַשְׁך in this psalm stands at positions that signal the change in tone of the singing in order to stress the somber statements following; or it “has often been accompanied by some reference to a recital in the text” (vv. 8, 11).  

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85 Goulder, The Psalms, 207.
86 Zenger, “Psalm 88,” 392.
87 Verse 7(6) is exceptional because it is not at the end of the first section.
89 It literally reads “… by day I cry out, in the night [I’m] before you.”
3.1.4.2 Verses 2-10a

Psalm 88 starts with a statement, יהוה אלהי ישׁועתי (O Lord God of my salvation), which is more than just a hope but rather an expression of confidence. Being placed at the beginning of the psalm, this seems to be the only ‘light’ that illumines the entire darkness of the psalm. Here it is in an individual voice, and yet in 85: 5 it is the voice of the community, of Israel as a whole: אלהי ישׁוענו (O God of our salvation). The psalmist’s trust is bolstered by the trust of the whole community. When her/his own confidence is in doubt, the confidence of the community remains firm and acts as a lifebuoy in preventing drowning.

In the first two verses, the psalmist prays before God. Verse 3 is seemingly the only petition in the Psalm. The words are in pairs indicating constant yet contrasting time (בלילה and יום), kinds of prayer (תפלתי and לרנתי), and God’s presence (לפני and נגדך). A series of imagery of death pervades the following verses: שׁאול (Sheol’—v. 4), בור (‘the Pit’—vv. 5, 7), קבר (‘the grave’—v. 6), המחשׁכים (‘the lowest part, the realm of death, the deep darkness’—v. 7). These words are even accompanied by the state experienced when a person reaches the threshold of death. The worst aspect of death is being separated from God’s hand (v. 6) and forgotten by all loved ones (v. 9).

God’s anger is the cause of all suffering. The psalmist’s dire situation is acknowledged as the result of God’s wrath weighing heavily on her/him like breaking waves that rapidly blasted her/his life and pushed her/him to the realm of death (v. 8). Death is a painful journey in that whoever enters it shall be ‘shut in’ and cut off from every relationship either with God (v. 7) or with people (v. 9). God is accused, indeed, in direct accusative language expressed in second person singular: אתה (‘you placed/made me’—vv. 7, 9), אתה (‘you violated/overwhelmed’—v. 8), and אתה (‘you removed’—v. 9).

3.1.4.3 Verses 10b-13

The second section is marked by the replication of petition, which is directed to God and echoed in verse 2. This time it is not only the speech of prayer but also the movement of the body. Even though the petitioner was experiencing dreadful circumstance in her/his life, God

91 Schaefer, Psalms, 217.
93 Indicated in the single, double, and waving line, respectively.
94 Schaefer, Psalms, 214.
95 The verb שׁית is used twice and it forms a chiastic abca': שׁית – הרחקת – נופז – שׁית.
is still the one, to whom s/he could pour out all of her/his innermost feelings. This plea precedes the triple rhetorical questions which are raised from petitioner’s personal perspective. These reflect Israel’s belief and confidence about God’s self (חסד, אמונה, צדק) and God’s works (פלא). Nonetheless, these matters of common trust are now questioned and placed side by side with imageries of the world of death; the place is the negation of God’s presence, חסד, faithfulness, righteousness, and deeds. The choices of verbs (work, declare, make known), which are used to go with those confident statements, also appear here to show emphatic contrast: what has been the affirmation for her/his people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11(10)</td>
<td>Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the shades rise up to praise you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12(11)</td>
<td>Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13(12)</td>
<td>Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your saving help in the land of forgetfulness?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This petition is in pair with אמונה (‘faithfulness’–v. 12). These two words are parallel with the pair צדק פלא (‘righteousness’ and ‘wonder’–v. 13). Here in this Psalm, God’s attributes go hand in hand with God’s wondrous deeds. That means חסד and אמונה show God acting righteously and miraculously. At the edge of death, the psalmist see no signs of God’s חסד, אמונה, צדק. S/he, however, is still praying. Thus, on the one hand, this is like an accusation towards God, which is begun from verses 7-9, though on the other hand, it is like the underlying hope and trust that pervades this Psalm (vv. 2-3, 10b, 14).

### 3.1.4.4 Verses 14-19

Even though doubt seems to be prominent in the preceding and present sessions, hope is still maintained in the prayer. Together with צעק (‘call out’–v. 2) and קרָא (‘cry’–v. 10), the third word that expresses appeal appears: שׁוע (‘cry for help’–v. 14). The emphatic statement ואני (‘but I/as for me’–v. 14) at the beginning of this section demonstrates the petitioner’s reliance on God’s help. Nevertheless, the petitioner is immediately overwhelmed by terror and doubt. A series of rhetorical questions (vv. 11-13) are added through another typical form of lament:

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97 As they are in pair a few times in 89:2-3, 25, 34, 50. Refer to the material set out in the previous chapter.
98 Tate, Psalms 51-100, 218, 398.
99 Sakenfeld states that it is חסד in psalms, especially in the lament psalms, that “regularly involves rescue from dire straits as its specific action content,” The Meaning of Hesed, 218.
‘Why do you cast me off? Why do your hide your face from me?’

God is interrogated (v. 15) and, then, accused (vv. 17-19). The question shows that the petitioner is suffering without knowing the reason for such suffering. The reason comes or seems to come from God’s anger alone and not from elsewhere nor by or through someone. The indication of God’s anger is reiterated in the third section but it shows a greater intensity (vv. 16-19; cf. vv. 8-9). Vocabularies of God’s wrath are also varied: אסרי (‘your terrors’–v. 16), חרוןיך and בעותיך (‘your wrath’ and ‘your indignation’–v. 17). These are emphasised using comparison with חמתך (‘your anger’–v. 8); מים (‘like flood’–v. 18) and משבריך (‘your breaking waves’–v. 8).

‘From my youth’ (מעworthy) is a demonstration of the psalmist’s long, desperate suffering and feeling threatened (v. 16).100 The final accusation (v. 19), already present in verse 9, extinguishes all ‘lights’ and ‘trusting hopes’ (vv. 2, 10, 14). At the end, both the psalm and the psalmist are plunged in the void of darkness. The opening and ending of the psalm remain in contrast. The psalmist was praying before God at the beginning. This is reinforced in verses 10 and 14, but s/he ends up in the thick darkness of the feeling of being abandoned. God seems to be portrayed as experiencing hatred to or being a hater of the psalmist.101

Psalm 88 ends darkly. Nonetheless, confidence (v. 2a) and hope are evident from the beginning and in the body of the psalm (vv. 10b, 14). Petition in the psalm (v. 3) is nothing more than requesting God to pay heed to the psalmist’s appeal and lamentation: s/he is dragged to the threshold of death. God is both questioned and blamed. God’s burning anger weighs heavily upon the one praying; and it is God that has brought the lamentor to this distressed and deadly world. Separation is the key dread: that of being cut off from the petitioner’s loved ones (vv. 9, 19), from God’s hand (v. 6) and therefore God’s power and presence (vv. 11, 13a, 15) where God’s צדק, אמונה, and חסד are unsearchable (vv. 12, 13b). The psalm tells us more about what the absence of God’s צדק is like. It prepares readers for Psalm 89.

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100 As עלומיו (89:46) indicate that the psalmist’s youthful life has been shortened.
3.1.4.5 Psalms 88 and 89

In a particular way, Psalms 88 and 89 are close to each other, not only in their placement but also in their superscription. Additionally, the pattern of hope and doubt are nearly similar. However, there are two likely differences between these two Psalms. The first two thirds of Psalm 89, which seems to express joy and confidence, precede the finale which indicates doubt. Lament and darkness intertwine more throughout Psalm 88 in comparison with Psalm 89. This includes its pattern of hope with respect to doubt which recurs in each section. In detail, first, 88:4-6 and 89:47-48 consider the issue of life and death of the troubled soul and Sheol, and raise a question about whether God ever has had concern for a particular dead person. Second, elements of lament are the same for those of the petitioner or chosen one: being rejected or cast off (יָנָה – 88:15; 89:38); God’s face is being hidden from them (88:15; 89:47), and God’s wrath is being placed upon them (88:8, 17; 89:39, 47). Finally, the two key words, חסד and אמונה appear once in 88:12 with a closing sense of reproach in 89:50. Additionally, God’s wondrous work in 88:11, 13 is given in an ironical sense in comparison to 89:6.

3.2 חסד IN BOOK III

This section will first evaluate significant relationships between Psalm 89 and other psalms of Book III. This precedes the outline of the fourteen occurrences of חסד in Book III. Finally, Book III will be viewed in accordance with references of חסד in Psalms 77, 85, 86, 88, and 89. In so doing, this section may spell out the original purpose and message of the editors/redactors in their shaping Book III/the Psalter.

3.2.1 An Overview of Connections of Psalms of Book III

Psalms 89 is closely connected with the preceding Asaphite and Korahite Psalms. Generally, these psalms have more focus on lament concerning the relationship between God and God’s people, particularly of God’s care for their well-being and of God’s promise to David. The following are some similarities among these psalms according to Hossfeld. First, “themes of Zion theology” in Psalms 76, 84, and 87 are interpreted in 89:7-9 by portraying God as king. Secondly, the mighty elements of the Lord’s arm, hand, and right hand in 89:11, 14, 22, 43

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103 Hossfeld, “Psalm 89,” 413.
are encountered in 77:11, 16, 21. These references have their background in the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1-20). Thirdly, there is mention of the rare theme of God’s change of plan or mind in 89:34b-35 and 77:10-11. Finally, the so-called “catastrophe formula” in 89:39-41 as well as 89:45-46, 49, 51-52 are closely linked to Psalms 74, 77, and 79. These possibly refer to the destruction and deportation during 597-587 BCE.  

Other themes link these psalms together. These include God’s choice of Judah (78:67-68a; 80:9-12), mount Zion with God’s sanctuary (78:68b-69; 84; 87), and David (78:70-72; 89:20-38). These choices of God highlight the confidence of God’s people through generations. Yet there are later doubts about the steadfastness of God, evidenced by seeming rejection by God, and the psalmist seeking understanding in view of the destruction of the Temple-Zion, the land, and Davidic seeking sovereignty.

Additionally there are a substantial number of word-connections among these Psalms. First is covenantal vocabulary: חסד occurs fourteen times (77:9; 85:8, 11; 86:5, 13, 15; 88:12; 89:2, 3, 15, 25, 29, 34, 50), אמת five times (85:11, 12; 86:11, 15; 89:15), 애מה eight times (88:12; 89:2, 3, 6, 9, 25, 34, 50), and ברית eight times (74:20; 78:10, 37; 83:6; 89:4, 29, 35, 40). Secondly, God’s works or great deeds in the past are predominant: מעללי־אל/יה (77:12 and 78:7) or עלילות (77:13), and פלא/נפלאות (75:1; 77:11, 14; 78:4, 11, 12, 32; 86:10; 88:11, 13; 89:5; see Exod 15:11). Thirdly, various words are used to indicate God’s anger: עבר [hitpael] (78:21, 59; 89:39); חמה (79:6; 88:8; 89:47); חרון (78:49; 85:4; 88:17); and אפ (74:1; 76:8; 77:10; 78:21, 31, 38, 49, 50; 85:4, 6; 86:15). Finally, diverse rhetorical questions and the typical lament questions מה (why?) and עד־מה (how long?) are raised together and are likely to express both hope and doubt in God, God’s judgment and deliverance (74:1, 10-11; 79:5, 10; 80:5, 13; 82:2; 88:15; 89:47, 50).

Overall, as the psalmists and their community were dealing with the realities of the catastrophe of loss, destruction, and oppression (73, 74, 79, 88), they search for comfort and assurance. Their tradition provides hope in regaining trust for the individual and the community (76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 83, 86, 89). Indeed, they leave a legacy of new insights as they perceive that God’s salvation is at work in the mist of any doubts (75, 82, 84, 85, 87).

### 3.2.2 An Overview of חסד in Psalms 77, 85, 86, 88 and 89

The table below presents fourteen occurrences of חסד in Book III.

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104 Hossfeld, “Psalm 89,” 406.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PS</th>
<th>VR</th>
<th>BHS</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>9(8)</td>
<td>.Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>8(7)</td>
<td>.Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11(10)</td>
<td>.Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>.For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>.But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>12(11)</td>
<td>.Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>.I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>.For your steadfast love was established forever, your faithfulness is firm as the heavens.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15(14)</td>
<td>.Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25(24)</td>
<td>.My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29(28)</td>
<td>.My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34(33)</td>
<td>.But I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50(49)</td>
<td>.Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you did swear to David?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At first glance, the placement of this word is found neatly at the end of Book III, mostly appearing in the Korahite Psalms, the Davidic Psalm, and Psalm 89. חסד occurs nine of fourteen times in relation to the community (77:9; 85:8, 11; 86:5, 15; 88:12; 89:1, 2, 15) and five times in reference to the individual (86:13; 89:25, 29, 34, 50).

Taking a detailed view we see firstly that God’s חסד is signified as God’s salvation (85:8) once. Together with God’s אמונה (‘faithfulness’–89:2, 3) it is praised twice and חסד is listed among God’s personifications such as צדק, אמת, משפט (85:11, 89:15) twice. Thirdly, חסד is connected with David, either for him (89:25, 29, 34, 50) or due to his prayers (86:5, 13, 15). חסד in 86:15 (and v. 5) in particular is nearly a copy of the Sinai formula that is God’s self-revelation in Exod 34:6. Finally, חסד is located in three rhetorical questions, each in the psalms of lament (77:9; 88:12; 89:50). Among these questions, it is only in 89 that God’s חסד refers to David while the other two refer to either individual (88:12) or community (77:9).

חסד occurs seven times in Psalms 77, 85, 86, 88 and another seven times in Psalm 89. These create a double sevenfold appearance of the word in Book III. While 77:9 and 88:12 form an inclusion of two questions about God’s חסד, 77:9 and 89:50 open and close the concept of חסד in Book III and also reports a questioning of God’s חסד.

3.2.3 חסד in Book III as a Whole

Book III, which contains many communal laments, is shaped by the most historically challenging event of 597/587 BCE. This is “an ongoing theological crisis” in the bible. The destruction of Jerusalem is evident in Psalms 74 and 79. This destruction indicates the complete loss by God’s people of their land, their temple, and their king. In the post-exilic period, even though the people returned to the land and rebuilt the temple, the Davidic monarchy would never be restored. Book III, as Wallace suggests in his conclusion, reviews all traditional/ancient hope of the land, the temple, mount Zion, and the Davidic dynasty, in order to seek understanding of the great exilic loss. Book III, as well as the Psalter, is shaped by this intention: “to participate in the theological dialogue that resulted in new perspectives on both divine and human sovereignty and suffering.” In what follows, the thesis confirms the works McCann and Wallace in this regard. As at the end of Book III, Psalm 88 starts the theme of the death of an individual; the theme of Psalm 89 is the death of

a Davidic king. Human beings face their ultimate limit: death. Thus, they come to realise that only God is eternal as is God’s ḥesed. In addition, there remains also a contrast between divine and human kingship in Psalm 89. Though David and his realm had been promised to last forever, only God who is eternal is portrayed as the king of both heavenly and earthly gods and people. The central theme of Psalm 89 actually is the kingship of the Lord, which is mentioned in other psalms of Book III (74:12; 76:12-13; 80:2; 82:8; 84:4; 89:15, 19). It also acts as a preparation for the psalms of Book IV.

If Wilson points out the seam of royal psalms at the end of each psalm in Books I-III as marking the failure of the Davidic throne (2, 41, 72, 89),109 and if McCann’s recognition of those opening psalms of these three Books as facing disorientation and moving forward to reorientation of the post-exilic community (1-2, 42-44, 73-74),110 then the thread of God’s ḥesed interweaving Book III becomes apparent in this editing process. This has been shown in the points made in 3.2.2 above. While ḥesed in 77:9 and 88:12 frame an inclusion for the first seven-fold occurrence of this word in Book III (77:9; 85:8, 11; 86:5, 13, 15; 88:12), the second seven-fold occurrence of ḥesed is in Psalm 89 (vv. 2, 3, 15, 25, 29, 34, 50). Both 77:9 and 88:12, as well as 89:50 convey pain and uncertainty that bring doubt. These three occurrences are presented in rhetorical and lament questions, in which the individual’s cry is interwoven with the voice of the community. The two former questions, 77:9 and 85:8, are in the context of the community and individual facing misfortune while the latter, 89:50, is situated in the lament for the fate of the Davidic king and dynasty. These laments express desperation due to the realisation that God may no longer bestow God’s ḥesed in saving deeds as in ancient times, and also express doubt about God’s faithfulness towards the people in the present. However, the frustration about God’s ḥesed is never seen alone without the accompaniment of reorienting insights of hope within these psalms. Yes, the ḥesed of God in the psalms of Book III refers to God’s very-self seen through the ancient formula evident in the text of Exod 34:6. This same ḥesed is bestowed continually on God’s people for generations, both for individual and for the whole nation. God’s ḥesed, even though questioned in times of depression of any kind, is profoundly hoped for as their source of love, fidelity, and sustenance. If Book III is considered as the book presenting the most struggles in the Psalter, it is only in this book that the double perfect number seven, that is, fourteen times ḥesed occur. Lament is not in opposition to hope or belief. On the contrary, it is seen as another side

109 Wilson, The Editing, 209.
of profound belief. It is the deep faith in God’s חסד that underpins the people’s suffering and frustration. The psalmists of Book III skillfully weave this confidence in God’s חסד into the exilic reality. In their circumstances, they sense God’s חסד though they might not see God’s חסד in obvious deeds. The חסד of God is still intrinsic to the people’s theological and religious journey of reorientation.

3.3 CONCLUSION

Book III of the Psalms contains the Psalms of Asaph (73-83), Korah (84-85, 87-88), and David (86) and that about God’s covenant with David (89). The word חסד appears more frequently in the last psalms of the Book rather than in the Asaphite Psalms. Among the fourteen occurrences of חסד, this word appears in lament questions (77:9; 88:12; 89:50) only three times. Although there only these three appearances and they are in the form of questions, two of their placements are significant: the first and the last (77:9 and 89:50). The use of חסד in questions, in both the opening and closing verses, suggest the momentous pain and doubt of the people in facing individual and national tragedy as well as the loss of the foundations of their identity: the Temple, the Land, and the Davidic monarchy. The last occurrence of חסד, in form of a question at the end of Book III, is in the context of searching for God’s חסד (89:50); the question, left unanswered, heightens the people’s sense of loss and abandonment. At the conclusion of Book III, the hope for God’s חסד, as expressed in Exodus 32-34 where Israel ‘officially’ became God’s people, has been lost sight of. This is especially true of Exod 34:6 which spells out God’s self-disclosure.

Book III is viewed as the theological aftermath of the exilic and post-exilic periods. The people of God have been wrestling with their belief in God’s חסד, as expressed in the promise to David of a divinely guaranteed dynasty, a divinely protected Jerusalem, and possessed land. What is indicated in the Book, on the one hand, is that the old signs of hope need to be seen with new scrutiny. The old way of perceiving these signs of hope requires adjustment so that the life of God’s people could be tolerated and nourished. In contrast, wisdom and visions are embedded throughout psalms of Book III. Among these is the hint of the double perfect number of occurrences of חסד: God’s חסד is perfectly, definitely, and perpetually assigned by God for Israel for all generations.

In short, the psalmists in Book III present the impact on the people of the event of 587 BCE and their effect on the relationship of the people with God. They wondered whether God’s חסד would be manifested in saving acts in the present, as it has been in the past. In the
following Book, the psalmists return to the foundational events in Israel’s history and so discover the meaning of God’s חסד for the present. Exodus 32-34, which contains essential expressions of God’s חסד becomes a key text in Book IV, resolution of their present dilemma. As Wallace says, Books IV and V do not give a full explanation of hope in the traditional trust of the temple, the land, Zion, and the Davidic monarchy. Rather they bring the reader back to “Moses and Mosaic covenant in Book IV” and lastly “Davidic kingship and Zion gives way to Yahweh as king, enthroned forever.”

Important transitions are made in the Psalter from Book III to Book IV. Firstly, whilst Book III closes with the defeated Davidic king, the following book begins with a Psalm attributed to Moses. It is not only Moses’ name which occurs seven times in Book IV of the Psalter, but his role in the exodus; and the wandering in the wilderness tradition is also featured in the background of this Book. The exile, which resulted in the loss of the land, Temple, and Davidic dynasty, is symbolised as “a new wilderness;” and Moses’ crucial role, once successful in the wandering period, is now anticipated for the generations in exile. Secondly, psalms of praise and thanksgiving are predominant in the fourth Book of Psalms. Consequently, God’s חסד is expressed as thanks and gratitude which are illustrated in the plea-answer motif. The centre of all is the motif of God’s sovereignty, which is placed in the core psalms of Book IV (93-100). God, who is eternal, has been king of Israel from the beginning to end, and so God’s חסד is everlasting for all generations.

There remains disagreement about the structure of Book IV. Book IV can be perceived either in three groups that respectively comprise the introductory Psalms (90-92), the core Psalms of God’s kingship (93-100), and the concluding Psalms (101-106), or in two main groups: Psalms 90-100 and 101-106. The present paper will follow the latter structure in order to see the closer connections of the two main consecutive groups of psalms. The analysis will be presented in two main sections corresponding to these divisions. As the word חסד appears thirteen times in Book IV, it will be studied in two groups. Psalms 90, 92, 94, 98, and 100 are in the first group of the Psalm ‘of Moses’ and psalms praising God’s kingship. The second group includes the Psalms ‘of David’ (101 and 103), and the final psalm of Book IV (106).

An exegesis, including the study of the expressions of the word חסד, will be undertaken in those Psalms. The connections of these expressions will be drawn together at the end of each section.

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1 Moses’ name appears eight times in the Psalter, once in Book III (77:21) and seven times in Book IV (90:1; 99:6; 103:7; 105:26; 106:16, 23, 32).
2 While Zenger names this the “Moses dimension,” Tate even states that Book IV is a book of Moses. Zenger, “The God,” 165-66; Tate, Psalms 51-100, xxvi-xxvii.
4 Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, Introduction to the Psalms (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 100.
6 90:14; 92:3; 94:18; 98:3; 100:5; 101:1; 103:4, 8, 11, 17; 106:1, 7, 45.
in Psalm 90

חסד in Psalm 90 appears in the petition: “satisfy us in the morning with your [חסד] that we may rejoice and be glad all our days” (v. 14). After confessing her/his trust in God and acknowledging her/his human condition, the psalmist raises the petition. This appeal expresses both trust and hope that God’s חסד will sustain and gladden each of their days.

4.1.1.1 Form and Structure

Whilst some consider Psalm 90 a petition, it is more a communal prayer that conveys dimensions of praise, lament, and wisdom. It contains the key theme of the entire of Book IV: אדני (the lord), “Ruler of all,” who is the everlasting God and has been ‘our dwelling place in all generations’ (vv.1-2). This God is in relationship with a particular people: Israel (vv. 1-2). The Psalm develops this theme in three motifs: God’s eternity and the fleeting life of humanity (vv. 3-6); God’s ‘negative’ reaction corresponding to Israelite/human iniquities (vv. 7-12); God’s ‘positive’ response regarding God’s חסד and mercy, followed by God’s marvellous work and glorious power (vv. 13-17). These motifs will be unveiled and extended throughout the psalms of Book IV. Additionally, there will be a gradual development in theological recognition that God is the God of not only Israel but also of ‘all nations,’ and ‘all the earth.’ Therefore, these unfolding categories or groups are summons to praise God.

Psalm 90 is the only psalm whose superscription refers to Moses. His name and title אישׁ-האלהים (the man of God) only appear in the superscription. The superscription, ‘a prayer of Moses,’ and the special petition in verse 13 together remind the reader of Moses as the intercessor between God and God’s people after they failed the Lord through the worship of the golden calf (Exod 32). Additionally, verses 1-12 are very similar to Deut 32-33, the

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8 Terrien, The Psalms, 642-43.
10 Zenger, “Psalm 90,” 420.
11 This is also shown in the doxology at the end of Book IV. A distinct invitation, different from those of others (41:13; 72:18-19; 89:53), is added: “…and let all the people say ‘Amen’…” (106:48). See also in Zenger, “The God,” 165.
12 This attribution is found in Deut 33:1, also in Josh 14:6; Ezza 3:2; 1Chron 23:14; 2Chron 30:16. See more discussion in Tanner, The Book of Psalms, 92.
song and blessing of Moses. The immediate placement of Psalm 90 after Psalm 89 “is a reminder that [the Lord’s] covenantal activity extends back not merely to David, but as far back as Moses”, and even that “despite the failure articulated in Psalm 89 … the relationship will be restored as it was in Exodus 32.”

Acknowledgement of the contrast between God’s eternity and human time is evident in the repeated use of vocabulary of time throughout the Psalm (vv. 2, 4-6, 9-10, 12, 14-15). The central prayer is found in verse 12 in which the psalmist humbly asks to be taught how to live meaningfully each single day. This transfers the focus from a human-centric to a theocentric perspective: from a ‘lament’ of human fragility (vv. 3-10) to the dependence on God and God’s חסד (vv.13-16).

The Psalm is divided into three sections. Verses 1-6 highlight the vast gap between God and the human condition. The following verses, 7-12, present the acknowledgement of God’s anger, evoked by human sins. Finally, a petition for God’s חסד is placed in verses 13-17, the last part of the Psalm. Each section has its own emphasis. Nonetheless these sections connect one another first through the network of vocabulary of time, through the confidence in God that opens (vv. 1-2) and concludes the Psalm (vv. 13-17), and finally through the sacred name that forms the inclusion to the Psalm. These connections unite the Psalm to form a complete unit of prayer.

To see the role of חסד in verse 14, the following exegesis will briefly examine sections one (vv. 1-6) and two (vv. 7-12) together before exploring the last section (vv. 13-17) in detail.

4.1.1.2 Verses 1-12

The first two verses emphasise the eternal nature of God. They also present God’s relationship with God’s people as מעון (‘dwelling place, refuge’—v. 1). The affirmation is emphatic with the double usage of אתה (you), as well as the sound and ‘anagram’ of מעון and נעם (in all...
This description of God emphatically contrasts with human existence through the mention of the fleeting life of a human person in the next verses, 3-6. Humans are made of dust (‘דכא–v.3) and to dust will return.21 ‘grass’–v. 5) is a metaphor of the human life cycle. The vocabulary of time functions well in indicating the limitations and contrast between God’s sight and human time. Examples include ‘אלף שנים’ (‘a thousand year’–v. 4) compared to ‘אשׁמרה בלילה’ and ‘אשׁמרה היא’ (‘a passed day’ and ‘a watch in the night’–v. 4); or length of a day counted as ‘רבע ימים’ (‘morning’ and ‘evening’–vv. 5-6).

The topic is refocused to the following concerns: the acknowledgement of human sin and God’s anger, although it is still grounded in the previous discussion, the impermanence of human life (vv. 7-12).

The biblical interpretation of God’s fury is that it is usually evoked by human iniquities,22 “a supreme act of hubris.”23 This Psalm, however, neither says what kind of sins ‘our sins’ are (v. 8) nor aims at focusing on the sources which caused God’s fury.24 It rather expresses a sense of threat that under God’s rage human life seems to be even ‘shorter.’25 At this point, Psalms 89 and 90 address something in common, that of facing God’s wrath (89:39, 47-49; 90:7, 9, 11). Psalm 89 laments the fact that the king’s life is shortened by God’s fury without understanding its cause. In contrast, Psalm 90 deals with the threat of the whole group, yet the psalmist offers possible answers to the reason for God’s anger: ‘You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your countenance’ (90:8). The psalmist then presents two stances or attitudes (vv. 11-12). On the one hand, people must ‘avoid’ a lifestyle that evokes God’s wrath (vv. 7-10). On the other hand, people must rely on God’s mercy and חסד (vv. 13-14). The latter is developed in the following section (vv. 13-17), connected by an authentic plea to be taught by God to appreciate each single day (v. 12).

4.1.1.3 Verses 13-17

The continuous petition in verses 13-17 expresses the psalmist’s dependence on God, the One who is praised in verses 1-2. The appeal is sharp and direct. It is demonstrated in a series of verbs in imperative mode: ‘שׂבענו’ (‘satisfy us’–v. 13) (‘שׁובה’ and ‘הנחם’ (‘turn’ and ‘show mercy’–v. 13), (‘show mercy’, ‘satisfy us’–

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21 This image recalls Gen 2:7; 3:19. It is understood in both the senses of the human being created and the human life cycle of birth, death and rebirth. See more discussion in Zenger, “Psalm 90,” 419 and 422; McCann, Great Psalms, 106.
22 Zenger, “Psalm 90,” 422; Schaefer, Psalms, 226.
23 Terrien, The Psalms, 643.
24 See more discussion in McCann, Great Psalms, 106.
25 Schaefer, Psalms, 226.
v. 14), and ‘make us joyful’—v. 15). In the form of a petition (שָׁבוּה (turn/repent) in verse 13 is addressed to God while in verse 3 it relates to humans. This bold supplication, with the presence of both verbs (show mercy), recalls Exod 32:12. More broadly, it recalls Exodus 32-34 in which God listened to Moses’ plea, restrained God’s fury, and also revealed God’s חסד. The verb is in the imperative, and has חסד as its object (v. 14). The appeal of (‘satisfy us in the morning with your חסד’—v. 14) presupposes that the people lacked or were unable to access God’s חסד at that time. The plea in verse 15 asks God to restore the supplicant’s life and to provide for the happiness of her/his progeny. Such outcomes are due to God’s work and glorious deeds (v. 16). Verses 14 and 16 allude to Exod 15:13 in which God shows God’s חסד in acts of deliverance. Here in Psalm 90:14, 16, the petition for God’s חסד is interspersed with the memory of God’s saving deeds for the ancestors on the one hand and an assurance of God’s חסד in their life here and now. Such awareness comes from ‘a wise heart’ (v. 12) which discerns the most important matter in the supplicant’s life: to live in the presence of God, and to be grateful for God’s actual acts of חסד, day and night.

References of time continue to run through this section: בָּקָר and כָּל־יָמִינוּ (‘morning’ and ‘all our days’—v. 14), שבת and יָמָה (‘days’ and ‘years’—v. 15). Nonetheless, these references of time complement and emphasise a positive attitude of prayer: that of living the comparatively short length of time each day under the blessing or providence of God’s חסד rather than under God’s wrath. This leads the psalmist to the final words of the prayer: that though human life is short and human work is minute, it will be prosperous because God’s favour is upon them (v. 17). In other words, the petitioner hopes that if God’s wondrous work is manifested in the fleeting life of God’s servants, then the humble work of God’s servants will be made prosperous because it is, in fact God’s work made manifest.

Some conclusions can be drawn from the exegesis. Firstly, there is a significant double contrast in the Psalm. On the one hand, it is the contrast between God’s eternal existence and the fleetingness of human life. While God lives forever, death is the permanent destiny of human beings. On the other hand, whilst God’s חסד and mercy are never-ending, God’s anger is short lasting. Secondly, the verb (in verse 3 expresses a turn to the reality of the human life cycle. However, in verse 13, is a request for God to ‘turn back’ to whom God is, the God of חסד and mercy rather than the God who displays anger. Finally, if verse 12 is a

26 This reference recurs in 106:23.
27 McCann, “The Book,” 1043; Tate, Psalms 51-100, 443.
turning point of the prayer, ‘Teach us to count our days so that we may gain a wise heart,’
then verse 14 is the peak of the psalmist’s conscious profession, ‘Satisfy us in the morning
with your חסד so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.’ The connection between these
two verses is the matter of ימינו—‘our days.’ This is the longing to live in dependence in and
through God’s חסד; yet God’s חסד seems currently unreachable and additionally the
community cannot comprehend it. It conveys the hope that if God’s חסד was revealed in the
past through saving deeds, then it should be revealed in their current circumstances also.

The placement of Psalm 90 at the beginning of Book IV is great important in interpreting the
meaning of חסד. Psalm 90 affirms that God is eternal, and has become the everlasting
dwelling place for the people. This affirmation, simultaneously confirms the essential
statement that God’s חסד is the fundamental and sustaining element of people’s daily life.
Yet, at the same time, there is the call for God to show חסד in concrete deeds. As psalms of
Book IV unfold with references to the saving memories in ancient times, the psalmists hope
to rediscover the meaning of God’s חסד.

4.1.1.4 Psalm 90 and its Neighbouring Psalms

Psalm 90, firstly, recalls three of the main concerns in the preceding Psalm: human fragility
(89:47-49; 90:3-6), God’s anger (89:39, 47; 90:7, 9, 11), and God’s חסד (89:2, 3, 15, 25, 29,
34, 50; 90:14). Moreover, Psalm 90 even offers possible answers as to the reason of God’s
anger (90:8), namely an awareness of the nature of human mortality (90:3), and the recovery
of a trust that desires God’s חסד (90:14). Secondly, the striking lament question in 90:13
recalls 89:47, which precedes it. In Psalm 89, the psalmist keeps on questioning God with the
complement of the verb 숨 (‘hide’—v. 47) and asks the next question regarding God’s חסד (v.
50). In 90:13, the petitioner steps further to requesting God to turn (שׁוב)–either to turn God’s
face towards God’s servants or to turn God’s wrath into God’s sympathetic mercy (נחם),
and pleads with God to show חסד rather than burning anger (v. 14). Thirdly, the confidence in
God’s support and sustenance in 90:17 aligns with 89:2, 4, 21; but the stress in Psalm 90 is
on humanity as a whole rather than only on the king.28 Finally, while the verb כון in Psalm 89
is used to affirm the permanent establishment of God’s חסד (v. 3) and the Davidic throne (vv.
5, 22, 38), in 90:17, this verb indicates the eagerness for God’s establishment of the
prosperity of ‘the work of our hands.’ This represents the anticipation for a new start.

On the other hand, Psalm 90 is connected to Psalm 91, its successor, with the specific link word מון (‘habitation, dwelling place’ – 90:1; 91:9). This theme of God is confessed as human refuge and is found not only in Psalm 91 but in following Psalms as well.

### 4.1.2 חסד in Psalm 92

For the first time in Book IV, חסד occurs in Psalm 92 in a pair with אמונה (‘faithfulness’ – v. 3; cf. 98:3; 100:5). Through this pair of words, God’s חסד and אמונה are promised to be extolled ‘in the morning’ and ‘by night,’ respectively. If morning and night form a period of a day and the ‘Sabbath day’ is indicated in the superscription, then the exaltation is not only on the Sabbath day but also refers to each single day of the psalmist’s life. The background of this declaration is God’s wondrous deeds that gladden the life of the supplicant (v. 5).

#### 4.1.2.1 Form and Structure

Psalm 92 is a psalm of thanksgiving to be used “on the Sabbath Day” (v.1). Excited proclamation (vv. 2-3), together with musical accompaniment (v. 4) presents a scene of joyful celebration or liturgy. God’s name (v.2), God’s חסד and אמונה (v. 3), are praised and professed due to God’s marvellous work (v. 5). Noteworthy is the fact that God’s sacred name יהוה occurs seven times in this Psalm (vv. 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, 16) and twice this name is accompanied by עליון (‘Most High’ – v. 2) and אלהינו (‘our God’ – v. 14). The conclusion of the Psalm reaffirms the result of what God has done in the lives of the wicked and the righteous (vv. 5-15). It also reaffirms who God is for the psalmist (v. 16; cf. 94:22; 95:1).

Psalm 92 consists of three sections. The first section, an introduction (vv. 1-5), offers the reason for thanksgiving, that is, God’s works. The second section (vv. 6-12) expands God’s work through a description of the destiny of the wicked. The final section (vv. 13-16) also keeps expanding God’s work whilst explaining the fruitful life of the righteous. At the end of each section, personal confession is made (vv. 5, 11-12, 16). Furthermore, the introduction and conclusion of the Psalm (vv. 1-5, 16) provide an inclusion of acknowledgment and

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29 These two verses have the same textual problem. מון is used instead of מון in the Greek version. Elliger and Rudolph, “Psalms,” 1173-174.

30 Jerome states that Psalm 91 “is a kind of microcosm of all the refuge language of the Psalter.” See Jerome F. D. Creach, Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter, JSOTSup 217 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1996), 94.

31 These pair words are prominent in Book III, occurring six times, while they occur twice in Book I and three times in Book IV. See the relevant relation of the pair word חסד and אמונה in 89:2, 3, 25, 34, 50 in the previous chapter.

32 This term appears only in the superscription of Psalm 92 in the entire Psalter.
confession about God, God’s name and work, חסד and אמונה. In the psalmist’s personal confidence, the One who is upright (ישׁר) is ‘my rock’ (צורי) (v. 16). This inclusion is supported verbally by the divine name (vv. 2, 16), the infinitive verb להגיד (‘to profess, declare, proclaim’–vv. 3, 16), and the voice of the first person singular (vv. 5, 16).

In the following exegesis, first, חסד will be considered with the other characteristics of God in the Psalm in order to draw out its significant implications. Secondly, as verses 6-16 are explanations of verses 1-5 through comparison of the life of the wicked and the righteous, these verses will be considered together in one section.

4.1.2.2 Verses 1-5

The Psalm starts with confidence, as indicated through verbs in infinitive form: to give thanks to God (להודות – v. 2), to sing praises to God’s name (לזמר – v. 2), and to declare’ God’s חסד and אמונה night and day (להגיד – v. 3). The praise is accompanied with music and musical instruments (v.4). This evokes the excitement of a celebration, of a ‘Sabbath’ (v. 1).

בבקר and בלילות (‘by morning’ and ‘at night’–v. 3) refer either to the length of a day or to a time when people experience “God’s loving care.” In either dimension, in this psalm, God’s חסד and אמונה are professed. The profession originates from the psalmist’s trust. At the same time, this confession unveils that God’s חסד and אמונה are assured for the people throughout each day.

The demonstration of חסד, as well as בקשׁ (morning), שמח (be/make glad), and פועל (work) echo and fulfil 90:14, 16. If the psalmist invoked God to ‘satisfy us in the morning with your [חסד] so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days’ (90: 14) and acknowledges ‘your works be manifest to your servants’ (90: 16), s/he actually does confess God’s חסד in the morning (92: 3), and is glad with God’s works (92:5). Thus, this proposes that the petition in the former psalm is answered in the latter. This response is that it is God’s works that gladden the singer and are the motive for praising God (vv. 5-6). With the possible connection of ‘Sabbath day’ with the seven-fold expression of the divine name (vv. 2, 5, 6, 9 10, 14, 16) that possibly suggests the anticipation for “the eternal Sabbath,” God’s works of preserving the “world order” and “the order of life” are performed according to God’s חסד and אמונה.  

33 Zenger, “Psalm 92,” 439.
35 Schaefer, Psalms, 230.
This definitive work of God corresponds to 95:6; 100:3 and 104, in which God is extolled as Creator.

4.1.2.3 Verses 6-16

Verses 6-10, 12 present an explanation of God’s work evident in the destiny of the wicked. The vocabulary used depicting the wicked of all kinds of evil, include those used generally: כל風格י צון ורשעים (v. 7), and those used specifically, such as ‘your enemies’—v. 10), and ‘my watchful foes’ and ‘my evil assailants’—v. 12). Conversely, verses 13-16 keep expanding the reason for praising God through the prosperity of the righteous. Surprisingly, only the word צדיק standing for ‘the righteous’ is used in these verses, yet, their fruitful life is compared using magnificent images. If the life of the wicked is as short as the life cycle of ‘grass’ (v. 8), the life of the righteous is as strong, long lasting, and productive as ‘the palm tree’ or ‘cedar’ (v. 13) that is deserving of a good place in God’s house.

The first person singular reappears in verses 11-12, and 16. This person in verse 11 is referred to with images of ‘horn’ and ‘fresh oil’ indicating one favoured by God or God’s chosen people. Nevertheless, there is insufficient reference for us to conclude that a royal figure or a chosen servant is meant, yet images of the righteous are explicit (vv. 13-15). Zenger discusses these two metaphoric images that are also used to express the individual or national experience and celebration of being rescued in this Psalm. It is God’s work bestowed on the righteous life that is manifested from God’s חסד and אמונה (vv. 3, 5-6). The righteous (צדיק—v. 13) belong to God, who is upright (ישר) and whose reliability is the psalmist’s ‘rock’ (v.16). Thus, literally ‘your enemies’ become ‘my enemies,’ that is, God’s enemies become the righteous person’s enemies (vv. 10, 12). In God, the life of the righteous is secured and turns out to be fruitful. This conviction, on the one hand, affirms verses 1-5 of giving thanks and praise to God; and on the other hand, it recalls and confirms what is stated in the opening psalm of the Psalter (1:3, 6), a contribution of wisdom. It is the confidence of the psalmist as

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37 A few scholars place Psalm 92 among royal psalms and even argue that the voice of the first person singular in this psalm is that of a king. See John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 58-59; Dahood, *Psalms II*, 336. Tate does not deny the fact that there is language for a royal figure in the psalm, though he rejects scholars’ efforts “to confine a psalm like this to royal situation.” *Psalms 51-100*, 465.

38 Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 467.


40 The conclusion of Psalm 92 fits well with “the great theodicy poem of Moses in Deut 32:4: The Rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God, without deceit, just and upright is he.” Zenger, “The God,” 168.
well as the whole community in enduring right relationship with their God: the righteous produce fruit not only because of their righteousness, but also because God’s חסד and אמונה are with them. Additionally, as the above conviction points out that the righteous belong to and bear good fruit in the upright One, this righteous group likewise shares the same designation as the upright One in the next Psalm (94:15).

In summary, חסד in Psalm 92 is considered as a response to the supplication of 90:14. As the verb דיבר (‘declare, proclaim’—vv. 3, 16) forms an inclusion to this Psalm, חסד and אמונה are viewed synonymously with ישׁר (‘upright’—v. 16). These three expressions reflect the tender and trustworthy aspects of God’s characteristics that ensure and satisfy the life of God’s worshippers.

4.1.2.4 Psalm 92 and its Neighbouring Psalms

Firstly, the reference of צורי (‘my rock’—92:16), might be comparable to the claim that God is ‘my refuge and fortress, my God …’ in 91:2 (cf. 91:9), who also is “our dwelling place’ and ‘God’ in the opening Psalm of Book IV (90:1). On the other hand, those above connections recur in and are reaffirmed in 94:22, namely that God is ‘my God, the rock of my refuge’ (cf. 91:2; 95:1). Secondly, the allusion of rescue and protection in Psalm 91 is continued in Psalm 92. As verses 91:3-10 relate deliverance from evil/enemies, 92:7-10, 12 speak of the destiny of the wicked; so too, 91:11-16 describe the good/believers, whilst 92:11, 13-16 delineate the life of the righteous.

The one significant verbal link between Psalms 92 and 93 is the reference of מִרְאֹת לְעַלָּם (on high forever) which occurs in 92:9 and 93:2,4c. These verses speak about God’s permanent high position. Moreover, 92:16, which speaks about God as upright, is connected distinctively to the portrayal of the characteristic of a God as King bearing great resemblance to Psalm 93 and the series of Psalms 95-100. These Psalms emphasise God’s reign and role as ‘judge of the earth’ (94:2). In referring back to what is petitioned for ‘gain[ing] a wise heart’ (90:12) and ‘prosper[ing] the work of our hand’ (90:17), the response then is certainly, that “they are rooted in [the Lord’s] order of righteousness” (vv. 13-16).

41 Schaefer, Psalms, 230.
42 Creach, Yahweh as Refuge, 94-5.
44 Zenger, “Psalms 92,” 442.
4.1.3 חסד in Psalm 94

חסד is located in the last section of the Psalm as an expression of personal trust (vv. 16-24). In the context of the Psalm, חסד is closely parallel to נחמה (‘consolations/mercy’–vv. 18-19). The two also connect to משפט (‘justice’–v. 15). In this Psalm, God’s חסד as well as God’s consolations are key factors that sustain the psalmist’s life because the psalmist has experienced that God’s justice is assured for the righteous (צדק) and the upright in heart (ישרי לב) However, it is a condemnation for the wicked and evildoers.

4.1.3.1 Form and Structure

Psalm 94 appears without superscription and stands in the series of psalms that extol God as King (93-100).45 Though the denotation of יהוה מלך (the Lord is king) is lacking in this Psalm, the connotation of God’s kingship is evident in references of שפט הארץ (‘judge of the earth’–v. 2; cf. 96:13; 98:9) and likewise נקם (‘the avenger’–v. 1; cf. 99:8), as well as the connected roots זכרא and משפט (‘righteous and justice’–v. 15; cf. 96-99).46 God is addressed in both second and third person, with both communal and individual voices. The Psalm bears a diverse style of supplication, didactic instruction, praise and confidence. 47 It cannot be categorised simply as a lament.48 The first seven verses (vv. 1-7), comprising the double typical lament question עד מתי (‘how long?’–v. 3), show clearly lament issues. These questions precede wisdom teachings that express confidence in God who is ‘judge of the earth’ (v. 2). This expectation is strong and obvious in the introduction of the Psalm and is communicated through repetition of ‘God of vengeance’ (v. 1) and ‘how long the wicked...’ (v. 3) in the following series of rhetorical questions (vv. 9-10, 16), and also in the anticipation of God’s judgment in verse 23. The psalmist’s voice represents the trust of the community (vv. 12-15) and the individual (vv. 16-23). Wisdom teaching is the red thread woven within the Psalm. This is seen especially in verses 8-15 and the particular observation of ‘Happy are those whom you discipline, O Lord, and whom you teach out of your law’ (v. 12).

The shift of concerns moves from one part to another. Consequently, the Psalm can be divided into four sections. First, verses 1-7 display evocative petition. They speak about God’s responsibility of judging the earth and especially the wicked whose brutal acts are

45 Hossfeld, “Psalm 93,” 450, 456; Wilson, The Editing, 178-79.
46 See the discussion of this group of Psalms that connect with one another semantically and theologically in Zenger, “The God,” 168-69.
47 Hossfeld, “Psalm 94,” 452, 456; McCann, “The Book,”1057; Kraus, Psalms 2, 239; Terrien, Psalms, 663.
focused on God’s people and God’s heritage. Secondly, verses 8-11 present challenges to the ‘fool’, observing that God knows human thoughts. There is no deceiving God. Thirdly, verses 12-15 express commonly held confidence in God. Finally, verses 16-23 articulate personal trust and assurance.

This thesis will study briefly the first three sections, from verses 1 to 15, and then examine verses 16-23 in detail in order to extract the meaning of חסד in this Psalm.

4.1.3.2 Verses 1-15

As mentioned above, verse 2 requests God as ‘judge of the earth’ to act accordingly. The repetition of ‘God of vengeance’ in verse 1 and ‘how long the wicked’ in verse 3 reveals the fact that God is expected to be universal judge and to carry out the judicial task. God’s inaction seems to disappoint the petitioner. Evidence of the arrogance of evildoers and deeds against the oppressed, the plight of the widow, the stranger, and the orphan (vv. 4-7) are cited in order to provoke/evoke God to interfere.

The following verses 8-11, show condemnation for the oppressors whose thoughts are contrary to God (v. 7) through a series of rhetorical questions. These verses precede the psalmist’s confidence in God’s way in both teaching and rescuing the righteous (vv. 12-15), God’s people and heritage (vv. 5, 14). These verses are about the trust that God will act as the one God referred to in this Psalm: the judge (v. 2). Verses 8-15 correspond to and echo the invocation in verses 1-7.

4.1.3.3 Verses 16-23

Verses 16-23 comprise questions and answers. Questions are raised (vv. 16, 20). Answers are found immediately (vv. 17, 21) and are even extended through confident statements (vv. 18-19, 22-23). Verse 23 concludes and confirms what has been mentioned in verse 2: God is judge of the earth. The voice of the first person singular appears in this section. Her/his identity is now associated with ‘the righteous’ and ‘the upright in heart’ (v. 15).

Answers of the double rhetorical questions (v. 16), which are an inclusion through the word נפשי – ‘my soul,’ follow immediately in verses 17-19.

49 This rare perception is found in 7:17 and 28:4 (cf. Lam 3:64; Joel 4:4) and here is transited for God as if to say it is God’s responsibility. Hossfeld, “Psalm 94,” 453.
50 Hossfeld notes that the special paired expressions ‘your people’ and ‘your heritage’ are only in the Asaphite Psalm 78:62, 71 (cf. 106:40); also a list of triple types of the poor is found only in 146:9. “Psalm 94,” 453-54.
God is the radical supporter of the psalmist (v. 17). The psalmist’s gratitude in receiving God’s חסד (חסד) and consolations is obvious (vv. 18-19). The indication of ‘foot is slipping’ and ‘disquieting thoughts’ point to the struggle the psalmist has faced that would let her/his faith go astray (vv. 3-7). Nonetheless, God’s חסד keeps hold of her/him and God’s consolation cheers her/his soul and helps her/him salvage confidence (vv. 12-15). 51 (‘your consolation’—v. 19) is parallel and complementary to חסד (חסד) (‘your חסד’—v. 18). Both references of חסד and נتحميل (נחום) illustrate support and comfort, yet the former is the decisive factor for the psalmist’s life. The חסד of God is the source of sustenance of the psalmist. In her/his full conviction (v. 23), God is acknowledged gratefully to be “my refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust” (v. 22) even though the psalmist still faces the reality of the current situation (v. 21).

Briefly, in the context of Psalm 94 that promotes God’s kingship of the earth as just, the psalmist confesses that God’s חסד has restrained her/him from deadly destruction. This is also expressed in another profession that God’s act of justice has consoled her/him and helped the prayer maintain confidence.

4.1.3.4 Psalm 94 and its the Neighbouring Psalms

Psalm 94, firstly, belongs to and develops the royal theme and image of God’s reign in the series of Psalms 93-100. Secondly, among other psalms containing חסד, 94:18 expresses a personal experience, a particular situation in which the psalmist is rescued by God’s חסד. Furthermore, חסד is accompanied by נتحميل in this Psalm. This pair-word, as will be presented at the end of this chapter, plays an important role in Book IV, 90:13-14 and 106:45. Finally, if in 92:16 the psalmist has said that God is ‘my rock,’ and in 91:2, “My refuge and my fortress;

51 Tate, Psalms 51-100, 495.
my God, in whom I trust,” this assertion is even stronger in 94:22, ‘the Lord has become my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge.’ This proclamation opens up and reinforces the confidence of its following psalm: that the Lord is ‘the rock of our salvation’ (95:1).

4.1.4 חסד in Psalm 98

This is the second appearance of חסד paired with אמונה (v. 3; cf. 92:2; 100:5) in Book IV. If it is the psalmist’s personal confession of God’s חסד and אמונה in 92:2, the pair word in 98:3 refers to God’s attentive remembrance of ‘the house of Israel.’

4.1.4.1 Form and Structure

Psalm 98 is a hymn, a song praising God’s kingship. Moods of joy and excitement sound throughout the Psalm. Evocations of singing, making a joyful noise, playing musical instruments (vv. 1, 4-6) illustrate the celebration of a festival. All the earth is invited to join in praise: the whole world including all the people; the sea including all species contained therein and floods and hills (vv. 4, 7-8). The Psalm first invites Israel to praise with ‘a new song’ the Lord (98:1; cf. 96:1; 149:1) who has done wondrous things with ‘right hand’ and ‘holy arm’ (v. 1). The bases of praise are God’s ישועה (‘victory, liberation’—vv. 1, 2, 3) and צדקה (‘vindication’—vv. 2, 9), God’s חסד and אמונה (‘faithfulness’—v. 3). The Psalm then keeps evoking ‘all the earth’ (vv. 4-8), praising God who is King (v. 6) and predicts God’s far-reaching righteous judgement (v. 9).

The entire Psalm is framed by the word צדק/צדקה that first proclaims God’s sovereignty (v. 2) and then anticipates God’s judgement over the earth (v. 9). Additionally, the triple occurrence of word ישועה (vv. 1, 2, 3) frames the first section of the Psalm in order to focus on God’s marvellous deeds (vv. 1-3). There is a movement, both verbally and theologically from ‘the house of Israel’ (v. 3) to ‘the nations’ (v.2) and then to ‘the earth’ (vv. 3, 4, 9).

The Psalm is structured into two sections. Verses 1-3 form the first section that invites Israel to praise God in light of God’s wondrous work. The remaining section, verses 4-9, is an invitation to extend praise to God who is King and judge of ‘all the earth.’

52 This reaffirms Exod 34:6. Additionally, the reaffirmation might be one of the answers to the question raised in 89:50 “Lord, where is your [חסד] of old, which by your [אמונה] you swore to David?” McCann, “The Book,” 1072.
53 Tate, Psalms 51-100, 524.
54 Tate, Psalms 51-100, 525.
55 References of ‘the house of Israel’ and ‘our God’ in verse 3 “apply only to Israel as a collective audience.” Hossfeld, “Psalms 98,” 480.
The word חסד is parallel to אמונה in verse 3. It will be studied in the coming exegesis. It will demonstrate that God’s חסד is the actual issue comprising the basis of praise by the people.

4.1.4.2 Verses 1-3

The Psalm begins with the invitation “O sing to the Lord a new song” (v. 1). This invitation appears once in Psalm 96:1 and is echoed in 149:1. “A new song” could be, firstly, God’s salvific deeds and righteousness that are announced (v. 2), and secondly, God’s universal judgement in righteousness and equity that flows out to the earth, the world, and people (v. 9).56

Indeed, the substance of ‘a new song’ is given in verses 2-3: that God’s favours are always on the ‘house of Israel’. These verses remind participants of God’s חסד and אמונה for them. Additionally, from these participants, i.e., the ‘house of Israel,’ God’s victory/salvation and vindication/righteousness are revealed also to ‘the nations’ (v. 2) and to ‘the end of the earth’ (v. 3). God’s נפלאות (‘wonders’–v. 1) and ישועה (‘victory/salvation’–v. 1, 2, 3) together with ידו and זרוע קדש (‘his right hand’ and ‘his holy arm’–v. 1) are different from and go beyond “the exodus or the restoration from exile.”57 Certainly, if God’s חסד and אמונה remain unchangeable to ‘the house of Israel’ and God’s נפלאות are visible in peoples’ eyes and extend to ‘all the ends the earth,’ then the ‘new song’ now opens to praise worldwide.

4.1.4.3 Verses 4-9

The invocation of praising God extends from the Israelites (v. 1) to ‘all the earth’ (v.4); from the human world to the ‘the sea’ and its entire species, ‘the floods’ and ‘hills’ (vv. 7-9). Musical instruments are used to make a great clamour expressing excitement and joy. Verses 4-6 draw a jubilant and exciting scene of either a festival or liturgical celebration. In this festivity, God is exulted as King (v. 6).58 God has revealed God’s ‘salvation/victory’ and ‘righteousness’ in the sight of nations to the ends of the earth (vv. 2-3). Yet, as King, eschatologically, God is anticipated to come and judge the earth and people with righteousness and equity (v. 9).59

56 Tate, Psalms 51-100, 524-25.
57 Tate, Psalms 51-100, 524. Also Schaefer, Psalms, 242; McCann, “The Book,” 1072.
58 This psalm is supposed to be used in the ceremony of God’s enthronement. McCann, “The Book,” 1071-72.
חסד in Psalm 98 is in parallel with אמונה (v. 3). In the context of a psalm that praises the sovereignty of God, the psalmist confesses that God has remembered God’s חסד and אמונה towards ‘the house of Israel.’ This confession foretells and will be confirmed in 106:45.

4.1.4.4 Psalm 98 and its the Neighbouring Psalms

The first observation is that 98:1a, ‘O sing to the Lord a new song,’ repeats verbally the thought in 96:1a. At the same time, verse 4a of Psalm 98, ‘make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth,’ is also reiterated completely in 100:1b. The second is that as Psalm 98 belongs to the group of God’s kingship Psalms (93-100), it shares the same theme of God’s righteous judgement over all the earth and declares that all species of the world are invited to sing praise to God. Unlike Psalm 94, no personal relation or experience is expressed. The third observation is that Psalms 98, 100 and 92 share the same occurrence of the pair word חסד and אמונה (98:3; 100:5; 92:3). Finally, the theme of God’s deeds, חסד and אמונה are the very reasons for praise in both Psalms 98:1-3 and 92:1-6.

4.1.5 חסד in Psalm 100

It is the third and last time in Book IV that, in Psalm 100, חסד is paired with אמונה (‘faithfulness’–v. 5; cf. 92:2; 98:3). The pair is also connected through the support of the double expression of time כל־עולם and עד־דר ודר (forever/for generations) This pair acts as proof of the statement in the first half of verse 5, that ‘the LORD is good’ (כי־טוב יהוה). If God’s חסד and אמונה are proclaimed in the psalmist’s personal declaration (92:2) as God’s mindful remembrance to ‘the house of Israel’ (94:3), then verse 100:5, is a call for the universal acknowledgement of God.60

4.1.5.1 Form and Structure

Psalm 100 is a song, of either thanksgiving or praise.61 It is a very short Psalm, comprising only five verses. It contains the invitation to praise God and presents the reason for praising and giving thanks to God. Neither formula nor title of God-king is explicit. However, the language of “royal theology,” pervades the Psalm.62

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61 The root word תודה with the noun תודה and verb in hifil (the superscription and v. 4) means giving thanks and praise. See also McCann, “The Book,” 1077; Schaefer, Psalms, 245; Tate, Psalms 51-100, 533, 538; Gunkel, An Introduction, 71.
62 See discussion in Zenger, “Psalm 100,” 494.
At first glance, it can be noted that the Psalm is structured strategically using seven imperative verbs lining up sequentially in the four verses (vv. 1-4). These build excitement in the Psalm and summon ‘all the earth’ to participate in praising God: ḥārām (‘make a joyful noise’ – v. 1), ḥavōr (‘worship’ – v. 2), ḍus (‘come/enter’ – vv. 2, 4), ḏu (‘know’ – v. 3), ḏūdō (‘give thanks’ – v. 4), ḏōrō (‘bless’ – v. 4). The final verse gives the very purpose for giving praise and thanks to God (v. 5). Viewed from another perspective, the Psalm is designed using double summonses, each of which are statements concerning the characteristics of God (vv. 3, 5).

| vv. 1-3 | Make... worship/serve... come... → know that the L ORD is God... |
| vv. 4-5 | Enter/come... give... bless... → for the L ORD is good... |

Verse 1 echoes 98:4 (cf. 95:1) in which ‘making a joyful noise’ is evoked. Though details of musical instruments are lacking in this Psalm, the words used tell of the flamboyant mood of excitement expressed through the music: בושׂמחה and ברננה (‘with gladness’ and ‘with singing’ – v. 2), בתודה and בתהלה (‘with thanksgiving’ and ‘with praise’ – v. 4). Additionally, the references of פניו (‘his presence’ – v. 2), הרהור and שעריו (‘his gates’ and ‘his court’ – v. 4) indicate a liturgical or festive ceremony. Furthermore, 100:3-4 shows us ownership: that of God’s sovereignty: the creator who makes and the shepherd who takes care of the people. Nonetheless, if in 80:1 God is ‘shepherd of Israel’ and in 95:6-7 the concept of God as maker and shepherd is still in Israel’s framework, then a new step is made in Psalm 100: that of reaching out to ‘all the earth.’ Moreover, the statement of כי־הוא אלהינו (‘for he is our God’ – 95:7) extends to a universal level of acknowledgement: כי־יהוה הוא אלהים (‘for the Lord is God’ – 100:3). Furthermore, the verb בא (‘come/enter’ – vv. 2, 4) occurs twice to emphasise the open invitation to all that are already addressed in verse 1. Verses 1-4, therefore, offer the new insight that it is not only Israel, but all the people of the earth also belong to God and are registered under God’s sovereignty.

The final statement about God (v. 5), together with the first (v. 3), finishes the entire picture of the One is who mighty, and indeed good.

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63 Zenger, “The God,” 180. Mitchell even observes that Psalm 100 “concludes the theme that knowledge of Israel’s God has spread among the nations during their latter-day exile.” The Message, 291.

64 Zenger, “The God,” 182.

65 The designation of God’s goodness is varied in the Hebrew Bible. Still, the exact phrase כי־יהוה הוא אלהים – ‘for the Lord is good’ occurs only four times in the entire Bible (Pss 34:8, 100:5, 135:3; Jer 33:11). Yet, the triple expression of God’s characteristic, טוב, חסד, מחוס, is unique in verse 5.
Both declarations portray God in relationship with ‘all the earth’ (v. 1) though aspects of the former include power and ownership (v. 3) and the latter truthfulness and reliability (v. 5). Here double assurance is presented. אָמּוֹנָה חָסֵד, with the addition of infinite time, are proof of the Lord’s goodness, and the Good One is the shepherd and creator. In other words, the goodness of the Lord is manifested in showing חָסֵד and אָמּוֹנָה not only to a group (92:2) or to Israel (98:3) but also to all peoples. Thus, ‘all the earth’ now shares with Israel the recognition of belonging to the same God.

In short, in Psalm 100, the last psalm in the series of Psalms extol God’s kingship, חָסֵד is in pair with אָמּוֹנָה (v. 5). The pair words refer to the appearance of God’s goodness. Both articulate God’s everlasting steadfastness and trustworthiness.

### 4.1.5.2 Psalm 100 and its Neighbouring Psalms

Obviously, 100:3 refers to the theme of God as maker/creator and shepherd and harks back to 95:6-7. However, if God in 95:7 and 99: 5, 8, 9 is extolled as ‘our God,’ who is ‘great in Zion’ and ‘exalted over all the peoples’ (99:2), this God is confirmed extensively and universally to be God over the earth (100: 1, 3). Additionally, though the word ‘king’ does not appear in Psalm 100, language that is used for royalty (vv. 1-4) allows this Psalm to be listed in the group of God’s kingship Psalms, 93-100. In the final analysis, Psalm 100 is linked particularly with those Psalms containing either חָסֵד (90:14; 94:18) or those comprising the pair word חָסֵד and אָמּוֹנָה (92:3; 98:3; 100:5).

### 4.2 THE MEANING OF חָסֵד IN PSALMS 90-100

The table below sets out חָסֵד in Psalm 90, 92, 94, 98, and 100.

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67 Later on, this affirmation takes form of a phrase כי־טוב כי לעולם חסדו – ‘For he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever’ (106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1) and a refrain כי לולעֵל חסדו– ‘For his steadfast love endures forever’ in the entire Psalm 136.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PS</th>
<th>VR</th>
<th>BHS</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
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<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>שבעים במקרא תificacion נושאת נקטנות בפליז</td>
<td>Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>להגיאו במקרא תificacion אמונת בלילה</td>
<td>[it is good]…to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night</td>
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<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>אמיראתה מטה רגלי תificacion היה יחידי</td>
<td>When I thought, &quot;My foot slips,&quot; your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>לדר התפצל אמונת לבקת ישראל</td>
<td>He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>ברויא יתוח לכלת ת.Restrict ו cdr אמונת</td>
<td>For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.</td>
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</table>

Linguistically, among words that are in parallel with חסד, this word occurs with אמונת three times (92:3; 98:3; 100:5). It is parallel with the root word חסד חסד twice (90:13-14; 94:18-19), and with חסד once (100:5). The presence of those terms offers us a way of understanding the word חסד. For example, while the word חסד is coupled with אמרות, the aspect of God’s truthfulness or faithfulness is spelled out in the Psalm. Additionally, this aspect of God’s character is unchanged indeed, even though the expression of this pair חסד and אמרות is different from one context to another. While חסד goes hand in hand with אמרות which is frequent in Book III, the expressions take either a confirmatory or critical form (85:11; 86:15; 88:12; 89:2, 3, 15, 25, 34, 50).

Thematically, with the fivefold occurrence, חסד first appears in a petition (90:14), twice as statements (92:3; 100:5), and finally twice as confession, individual and communal (94:18; 98:3). Firstly, חסד bridges 90:14 and 92:3 so that the latter Psalm is an answer to the appeal of the former. If in 90:14, the psalmist invokes God to ‘satisfy us in the morning with your חסד so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days,’ it is in Psalm 92 that the psalmist confesses God’s חסד in the morning (v. 3), and gladdens with God’s works (v. 5). Thus, this acts as the evidence that the supplication (90:14, 16-17) has been answered (92:3, 5). Secondly, there is a play on words when the psalmist states ‘it is good… to declare your steadfast love in the morning and your faithfulness by night’ (92:2-3) and then concludes with a statement, ‘for the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations….’ (100:5). The two statements, indeed, demonstrate the same fundamental confidence.
Theologically, חסד in this series of Psalms promoting God’s kingship develops in three ways: From individual confidence ‘When I thought, “My foot slips,”’ your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up’ (94:18), to communal confession ‘He has remembered his חסד and אמונה to the house of Israel...’ (98:3), and lastly to worldwide acknowledgement ‘For the LORD is good; his חסד endures forever, and his אמונה to all generations’ (100:5).

In conclusion, the confidence, which is placed at the beginning of Book IV that God is eternal and at the same time God is the everlasting refuge for humanity, is evidenced in the first eleven psalms (90-100), especially through the study of חסד in Psalms 90, 92, 94, 98, and 100. If God is professed to be everlasting (90:2; 93:2) then in Psalm 100, the psalmist confesses that God’s חסד, as well as God’s אמונה, is also everlasting for both Israel and all humanity. Additionally, God’s חסד is one of the fundamental elements that is spelled out to prove the truth of the statement ‘You have been our dwelling place for all generations.’ This confidence reflects the faithfulness of God on the one hand and the ongoing hope of God’s people on the other. Either from experiences of the individual and community, or from the profession of Israel and all the nations, God’s חסד will always be the source of sustenance of people’s daily life (90:14; 92:3), the refuge of the threatened petitioner (94:18), the rock powering ‘the house of Israel’ (98:3), and finally, the basis for assurance for nations worldwide (100:5).

4.3 חסד in Psalms ‘Of David’ and the Last Psalm of Book IV

4.3.1 חסד in Psalm 101

חסד appears in the first verse in the form of a vow: ‘I will sing of חסד and of justice; to you, O LORD, I will sing’ (v. 1). חסד is paired with משפט (justice). Both are characteristics of God. Both are the “foundation and model of human virtue,”\(^69\) and, as it is expressed in the Psalm, both are matters that the prayer desperately wants to pursue.

4.3.1.1 Form and Structure

Psalms 101 comprises mixed features of hymn, lament, and promise. Each is predominantly expressed in wisdom and royal language. The theme of this Psalm is given in the first two verses, 1-2a: the prayer sings of God’s חסד and ‘justice,’ promises to ‘study the way that is

\(^69\) Schaefer, Psalms, 248-49.
blameless,’ and asks anxiously ‘when will you come to me?’ The genre of this Psalm is debatable but most scholars see it as a so-called royal psalm, while a few commentators favour seeing it as an individual complaint. Nonetheless, the content and language of the Psalm, together with the label ‘of David’ in the superscription, justify it being considered as a royal psalm, and to “speak for its broad temporal location within the postexilic Persian period” considering especially “its restorative-Davidic tendencies.”

The Psalm is structured simply in two main sections. The introduction (vv. 1-2a) sets the theme, indicating the psalmist’s focus for action (vv. 2b-8). Repetition can be seen in three parts. In the opening verses (1-2a), God is addressed directly through the sacred name and the indication ‘you.’ The following section (vv. 2b-5) is bound by the triple occurrence of the word לבב (‘heart’–vv. 2, 4, 5) while the subsequent section (vv. 6-8) is enclosed by בני Mỹ־ארץ (‘on the faithful in the land’–v. 6) and כל־רשׁעי־ארץ (‘all the wicked in the land’–v. 8). Additionally, these three sections connect with each other through the movement made of the king’s vows. What he promises to pursue for himself (vv. 2-5) he also wants his ministers to follow (vv. 6-8). The placement of the sacred name, with what are dedicated to this name, at the opening and ending verses demonstrates the unity of the Psalm: חסד ומשפט ...יהוה (‘חסד and justice … O Lord’–v. 1), and מטיריהוהו (‘the city of the Lord’–v. 8).

The king appears in the Psalm in a triangular relationship with God and his people. With God, first, he sings of חסד and justice to the Lord (v.1). Both of these characteristics are God’s. While the ‘חסד’ is more about God’s very self and the source of sustenance for God’s people, ‘justice’ is more apt to God’s sovereignty and judgement. Indeed, when this Psalm immediately follows the series of Psalms 93-100 which emphasise God’s kingship, these two characteristics especially endorse God’s sovereignty. The king steps to another level of celebrating God’s reign by expressing his desire to ‘study the way that is blameless’ (v. 2), the way that he has just sung about to God, his חסד and justice. It is the way that God wants the king himself to behave and decree as God’s earthly agent. The immediate question in

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70 Or ‘When shall I attain it?’ (NRSV).
72 Those scholars do not deny the royal aspect or figure in the psalm though they seemingly focus on the lament question (v. 2). Leslie C. Allen, Psalms 101-150 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 4; Dahood, Psalms III, 2, 4; Mitchell, The Message, 291.
73 Hossfeld, “Psalm 101,” 16.
74 McCann, “The Book,” 1082.
75 Special occurrences of these two words appear in the consecutive Psalms 93-100 of Book IV: חסד (94:18; 98:3; 100:5), משפט–‘justice’ (94:15; 97:2, 8; 99:4).
verse 2 provokes a sense of being distant from God. This distance is either a desire for “God’s nearness,” or of an expression of being in a state of having not yet reached God’s way.

The king now presents himself as a trustworthy agent of God. His attempt and promises are confined either to his own action or toward his people. He first justifies himself by reinforcing the key promise, to which he has committed: the ‘study [of] the way that is blameless’ and to ‘walk with integrity of heart’ (v. 2). The king also focuses on the sevenfold behaviour in negative forms: לא אכלי (‘not eat’–v. 3), שונאתי (‘hate’–v. 3), לא ידבק (‘not cling’–v. 3), יסור ממני (‘be far from me’–v. 4), לא אדע (‘not know’–v. 4), אצמית (‘destroy’–v. 5), לא אינון (‘not continue’–v. 7), אצמית (‘destroy’–v. 8), לא א协调发展 (‘not tolerate’–v. 5).

With the same discipline of ‘walk[ing] in the way that is blameless’ (v. 6; cf. v. 2), the king, in the next step, shows both his interests and his judgement of his ministers and people. His expectation corresponding to his own effort is also sevenfold: עיני באמנת ([‘my eyes/look on the faithful’–v. 6], לשהבה ([‘live with me’–v. 6], ישרתני ([‘minister to me’–v. 6], לא יישב ([‘not ... remain’–v. 7], לא יישרד ([‘not ... continue’–v. 7], אצמית ([‘destroy’–v. 8], לכרית ([‘cutting off’–v. 8]).

On the one hand, the king’s decision and action overlap in verses 2-8. This is demonstrated through repetition. For example, if the king speaks of learning ‘the way that is blameless’ (v. 2), he also prefers his minister to walk ‘in the way that is blameless’ (v. 6). If the king is the one ‘walking with integrity of heart within [his] house’ (v. 2), he thus never accepts anyone ‘practising deceit [to] remain in [his] house’ (v. 7). Furthermore, the space for these practices taking place are expanded: from לבב (‘heart’–vv. 2b, 4, 5) to עיני (‘my/the eye(s)’–vv. 3, 5, 6, 7), and from ביתו (‘my house’–vv. 2b, 7) to ארץ (‘the land’–vv. 6, 8) and העיר יהוה (‘city of God’–v. 8). In contrast, תמים and תם (‘blameless’ and ‘integrity’–vv. 2a, 2b, 6), which indicate ‘wholeness, perfection, and completeness,’ together with the double sevenfold expression of the king’s plan of action (vv. 3-5, 6-8), highlight the king’s absolute desire and commitment.

76 Hossfeld, “Psalm 101,” 15.
77 Here either the indication in the HBS text “When shall you come to me?” or the NRSV preferred translation ‘When shall I attain it?’ are acceptable.
79 Schaefer, Psalms, 249.
description of the king’s righteousness in Psalms 18:20-30 and 78:72, “these obligations are surely grounded in God’s decisive standards of חסד and ‘justice.’ "

In conclusion, in the context of Psalm 101 that follows immediately in the series of psalms extolling God’s kingship, the pair חסד and ‘justice’ are understood as likely being the attributions of God as King. When the king sings about חסד and ‘justice’ to the Lord, he himself expresses strongly the desire of practising in these characteristics and acting as a responsible representative of God. חסד, accompanied by ‘justice’ in this Psalm, then, conveys a wise sense of judgement much more than mercy or forgiveness. חסד, is characterized in the sovereignty of God that is entrusted to the king.

4.3.1.2 Psalm 101 and its Neighbouring Psalms

At one level, Psalm 101 shares some significant words that are used in the psalms prior and subsequent to Psalm 101. The first word is חסד which signifies God’s attributes (100:5; 101:1). Next, the root verb אמן speaks of God’s ‘faithfulness’ (100:5) or points to whoever is ‘the faithful’ (101:6). Thirdly, the verb בוא (come) expresses a sense of union through either invitations or summons (100:2, 4), or a longing for God (101:2), or simply a plea that expects God to listen (102:2). Finally, the term הארץ indicates either ‘the earth’ (100:1; 102:16, 20, 26) or ‘the land’ (101:6, 8). The former is universal aptness while the latter is domestic, indicating a particular place. On another level, Psalms 101 and 102 share the same view of the ‘city of the Lord’ (101:8) and of ‘Zion/Jerusalem’ (102:14, 17, 22). This fits well with the imagery of ‘his gates’ (100:4) that certainly convey a kind of welcoming yet distinction about those who are able to enter into the Temple.

4.3.2 חסד in Psalm 103

חסד appears four times in Psalm 103. Each occurrence is in parallel or in pairs with other attributions for God (vv. 4, 8, 17). In one occurrence it is compared with the vastness of heaven (v. 11). In comparison with חסד in Psalm 101, חסד in this Psalm expresses God’s tenderness in mercy/compassion and forgiveness, referring back to the formula of God’s self-revelation in Exod 34:6. חסד in verse 17 agrees especially with 100:5 and 106:1 through the expression of חסד למלאת כל הדברים עליה that God’s חסד is infinite.

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80 Schaefer, Psalms, 249; Mays, Psalms, 321.
81 McCann, “The Book,” 1082; Schaefer, Psalms, 249.
82 Hossfeld points out many semantic similarities. “Psalms 101,” 16.
It is surprising that in Book IV there are only two Psalms, 101 and 103, which are ascribed to David in the superscription. Whilst Zenger believes Psalms 101-102 and 103-104 are paired Psalms, Hossfeld identifies the three Psalms 101-103 as “a triad about David the king, the poor person and the redeemed petitioner of Israel.”

McCann is also concerned about the placement of these Psalms in Book IV. Generally, the answers to this question of placement are, first, the “restorative-Davidic tendencies,” and then as Book IV is a response to Book III, these three ‘royal Psalms’ follow and agree with the Mosaic background in the entire Book IV as well as with the series of psalms of God’s kingship (93-100).

4.3.2.1 Form and Structure

The Psalm starts and ends with a formula ברכי נפשי את־יהוה (‘bless the Lord, O my soul’—vv. 1-2, 22) as a kind of monologue or, better, “self-exhortation,” which could lead to the recognition of this Psalm as a psalm of individual thanksgiving. Attached to the formula are both elements of the hymn (vv. 1-2; 20-22), and of thanksgiving in the body (vv. 3-5; 6-18). There is also an overlap of the indicative pronoun, the possessive of the first person plural (vv.10, 12, 14) and third person plural (vv. 11, 13, 15-18) in the main part of the Psalm (vv. 6-18). This expression is more about communal acknowledgment and thanks which are intertwined. Therefore, the Psalm is better classified as a hymn, or even is seen as a song with “the hymnic and the thanksgiving character.”

The psalmist first professes confidence in God and thanks God for being loving and having compassion towards her/him and ‘the people of Israel.’ The psalmist then summons praise of God’s sovereignty already acknowledged in Psalms 93-100. The techniques of comparison and repetition work marvellously in this Psalm. While repetition is predominant in the beginning and end of the Psalm, comparison is used in the middle. For example, the word ברכ

84 Psalms 101 and 102 share the same concern of “the ‘Davidic/royal’ supplicant for ‘the city of [the Lord]’ (101:8) and for ‘Zion/Jerusalem’ (102:14, 15, 17, 22). Besides, Psalm 103 relates to Psalms ‘of David’ or is about David. On the one hand, the superscription of Psalm 102 is inspired by the Psalm ‘of David’ (142:3). On the other hand, “David’s laments” in Psalm 89:46-47 are echoed in Psalm 102:2, 24. In another way, Psalms 103 and 104 have many points in common. Significant are, first, the same frame of a summons at the beginning and the ending of each psalm: ברכי נפשי את־יהוה – ‘bless the Lord O my soul’ (103:1-2, 22; 104:1, 35), and secondly, the references of ‘messengers and ministers’ at the end of Psalm 103 (vv. 20-21) repeated in 104:4. See more in Zenger, “The God,” 183-86.
85 Hossfeld, “Psalm 103,” 37
87 Hossfeld, “Psalm 101,” 16.
88 Allen, Psalms 101-150, 19; Hossfeld, “Psalm 103,” 31; Kraus, Psalms 2, 290.
89 Zenger, “The God,” 188.
90 Hossfeld, “Psalm 103,” 31.
(all) is repeated nine times (vv. 1-3, 19-22). The infinitive verb ברך (bless) is attached to the sacred name six times (vv. 1-2, 20-22); the word כ/ כי (as/for), used to compare and convey God’s חסד and compassion to human beings, is used seven times (v. 11-16).91

The Psalm can be divided into three main sections. The first section is the psalmist’s confession, persuading her/his soul/self to bless the Lord (vv. 1-5). Section two showcases the psalmist’s confidence in God’s work of ‘vindication/righteousness’ upon Israel and all coming generations (vv. 6-18). The final section (vv. 19-22) praises and reinforces the theme of God’s kingship and reign declared in the series of Psalms 93-100. The refrain of ברך נפשי או יוהו (‘bless the Lord, O my soul’ and ‘bless the Lord’–vv. 1-2, 20-22) are summons to the psalmist her/himself and to the whole community. The same evocation reaches out to a larger company of מלאכיו (‘[God’s] angels’–v. 20), to כל צבאיו and כל שרتيו (‘all [God’s] hosts’ and ‘[God’s] ministers’–v. 21), and כל מעשיו (‘all [God’s] works’–v. 22).

4.3.2.2 Verses 1-5

The hymnic tone is raised through double occurrences of the formula evoking the psalmist him/herself ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul’ (vv. 1-2). נפשי and כל קרבי (‘my soul’ and ‘all that is within me’) reflects a wholeness of the psalmist with elevated awareness and great regard toward God and God’s holy name. Besides the evocation of the imperative verbs ברך (‘bless’–vv. 1-2) and אל תשתכי (‘forget not’–v. 2), a series other verbs of five participles serve in the role of offering reasons for blessing God: סלח and רפא (‘forgive’ and ‘heal’–v. 3), גאל and עטר (‘redeem’ and ‘crown’–v. 4), שבע (‘satisfy’–v. 5). In addition, the emphasis is in the fivefold indicative pronoun ה (who) that God has bestowed God’s benefits upon the singer (vv. 3-5). It sounds as if the psalmist’s entire life is surrounded by God’s assistance, physically and spiritually. God’s bounties of חסד, חחמ, and טוב (compassion, and goodness) appear to surpass those of things that menace the singer’s life. That is, even though the psalmist is occasionally threatened by ‘iniquity,’ ‘diseases,’ and ‘the Pit’ (vv. 3-4a), her/his ordinary life is crowned and fulfilled by God’s חסד, חחמ, and טוב (vv. 4b-5). חסד and ות in verse 4 foreshadow verse 8, which is a link to Exod 34:6.

Following the previous point, on the one hand, both חסד and ות are parallel with טוב ח Sanford, 100:5). On the other

91 Schaefer, Psalms, 254.
hand, in the immediate context within the Psalm, חסד and רחמ will lead the theme by demonstrating how God’s חסד and compassion have been granted to the psalmist personally and generally to the Israelites. In this section (vv. 1-5) and the next (vv. 6-18), these words occur in parallel twice and each word will appear separately two other times.92

### 4.3.2.3 Verses 6-18

What has been confessed personally in the singer’s own experience is now professed in a larger group. God’s righteous and just work for ‘the oppressed’ is briefly addressed. The oppressed, the singer (vv.3-4a), is identified with ‘the people of Israel’ (v. 7). God’s work of righteousness and justice is more about “kindness,” making “right decisions,” and “vindication.”93 This leads back to the scene of the Sinai’s story (Exod 32-34) with special references to Moses, who desired to know God’s way (v.7; cf. Exod 33:13), and the “graciousness formula” of God’s self-disclosure ‘The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in חסד’ (v. 8, cf. Exod 34:6).94 Verses 9-13 give comments on the above formula. God’s aspects of acceptance and forgiveness are emphasised (vv. 9-10). The technique of comparison is used to interpret verse 8: the height of heaven with God’s חסד (v. 11), the distance between the east and west with God’s act of removing human sins (v.12), and the compassion of an earthly father with God’s compassion (v. 13).

Concern now is changed to the theme of divine eternity and human brevity (vv. 14-16). This theme recalls 90:3-6 though instead of saying God is everlasting, this psalm refers to the perpetuity of God’s חסד and צדק (‘righteousness’–v. 17). The arrangement of the verb זכר (remember) is placed at the beginning and the end of this section (vv. 14, 18) to clarify God’s unending חסד and righteousness. God’s חסד is shown in remembering human limitations. God’s righteousness is at work in asking human beings to mindfully keep God’s covenant and commandments.

The word חסד occurs three times in this section, once it is an appraisal from the Sinai formula (v. 8; Exod 34:6) and twice this word goes with the indication of על יראיו (‘upon those who fear him’–vv. 11, 17). חסד and its pair word צדק (vv. 4b, 8) also share another close connection with the accompaniment of the indication of על יראיו (‘upon those who fear him’–v.13). The other characteristics of God, צדק (‘righteousness’–vv. 6, 17) and משפט (‘justice’–v.

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92 חסד (vv. 4, 8, 11, 17) and רחמ (vv. 4, 8, 13 twice).
93 Hossfeld, “Psalm 103,” 34-35.
94 Hossfeld, “Psalm 103,” 33.
also walk side by side with the pair חסד and רחם. Viewed overall, therefore, the memory of God’s mercy and abundant חסד (Exod 34:6) is still alive and valid, and concretely true in the psalmist’s life and the life of her/his community. At the same time, the eternal God (cf. 90:2; 92:9; 93:2; 102:13) whose חסד is everlasting is confirmed (v. 17; cf. 89:2, 3, 29; 100:5).

4.3.2.4 Verses 19-22

The tone of singing seems to change suddenly to affirmation of God’s royal reign. God is not named King directly but כסאו and מלכותו (‘[God’s] throne’ and ‘[God’s] kingdom’– v. 19) are addressed. While מלכות (kingdom) appears only here in the entire Book IV, the reference of כסא (throne) brings to mind 93:2; 94:20 and 97:2. Additionally, verse 19 develops further what has been claimed in 97:2, firstly through the insertion of ‘heaven’. Secondly, it connects the reference of ‘righteousness’ and ‘justice’ of the two Psalms (97:2; 103:6) to portray the universal kingship of God.95 At this point Psalm 103 continues the core motif of Book IV. It praises God’s kingship and royal realm, as happened in Psalms 93-100.

The invocation ברכו יהוה (bless the Lord) is repeated several times in the final hymn (vv. 20-22). The summons, which starts in the singular (vv. 1-2), now broadens to an audience of ‘angels’ (v.20), to ‘hosts’ and ‘ministers’ (v. 21), and ‘all [God’s] works’ (v. 22). The singer finally whispers to her/his soul once again to conclude the hymn, ברכי נפשי את־יהוה (‘Bless the Lord, O my soul’– v. 22c).

In summary, the fourfold expression of חסד in Psalm 103 is evidenced in relationships either personally between God and the psalmist (v. 4), or generally between God and the Israelites (v. 8) or particularly between God and those identified as fearers of the Lord (vv. 11, 17). There are also two significant links between חסד and two of God’s other personifications, רחם (compassion) and צדק (righteousness). On the one hand, the fourfold occurrence of חסד in this Psalm is equal with רחם (vv. 4, 8, 13 twice). Both words appear in the Sinai formula (v. 8; Exod 34:6) and twice they intensify with the indication of על־יראיו (‘upon those who fear him’ – vv. 11, 17). The close companion of this pair, points out the condition (for those who fear God), and spells out the indulgent aspect of God’s compassionate חסד (vv. 11, 17). On the other hand, the word חסד also has a close relationship with the word צדק in verse 17, as well as verse 6, as this word forms an inclusion in section two (vv. 6-18). These two words are semantically and theologically parallel. If the Lord’s חסד is everlasting to those who fear the

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95 This recalls 89:15 and links the three psalms together (89:15; 97:2; 103:6).
Lord, the righteousness of Lord is also everlasting for all the progeny of those who keep the Lord’s covenant and diligently carry out the Lord’s commandments. The connection of חסד and צדק in verse 17 is, consequently, as an expression of the righteous aspect of God’s חסד.

4.3.2.5 Psalm 103 and its Neighbouring Psalms

Psalm 103 shares with Psalm 102 firstly the themes of human mortality, contrasting God’s eternal nature (103:14-18; 102:4, 12, 26-29; cf. 90:1-6), and God’s anger (103:8-9; 102:11; cf. 90:7-10). Secondly, the two Psalms speak about God’s universal reign (103:19; 102:13), which supports the motif of God’s kingship in the series of Psalms 93-100 and continues to be developed in Psalm 104.

As mentioned, Psalm 104 carries on the theme of God’s reign encountered in 103:19 and develops the work of God in creation throughout this Psalm. Significantly, the two Psalms share the same phrase ברכי נפשׁי את־יהוה (bless the Lord O my soul), which forms an inclusion for each one of them (103:1, 22; 104:1, 35). This phrase acts as a frame. In addition, references of מלאכיו ([God’s] angels/messengers) and משׁרتيו ([God’s] ministers) at the end of Psalm 103 and the beginning of Psalm 104 (103:20-21; 104:4) enable scholars to think that Psalms 103-104 are actually one Psalm.96

4.3.3 חסד in Psalm 106

In the last and longest psalm of Book IV, Psalm 106, חסד occurs 3 times. The first occurrence is positioned as one of the reasons for praising and giving thanks to God as in a liturgical formula (v. 1). In this verse, חסד is parallel with טוב (good/goodness). In the next two appearances, חסד situates itself in a long review of history. חסד in verse 7 is present in a negative context, confessing that ‘[Our ancestors] did not remember the abundance of your חסד.’ This time חסד is accompanied by תפלותא (wonderful works). Finally, God’s abundant חסד is viewed as the reason for God to show נחמ (mercy/compassion) and to remember the ברית (covenant) with God’s people (v. 45). It is also the reason why their captors should show חסד (compassion/mercy) to them (v. 46).

4.3.3.1 Form and Structure

Psalm 106 is a thanksgiving Psalm\textsuperscript{97} that contains a hymn, song of praise, petition, repentance and confession. It also is seen as an historical psalm\textsuperscript{98} because the main body of the Psalm is a review of Israel’s history from the exodus to the exile, although this is likely to be considered a confession (vv.6-46). Psalm 106 is considered to be shaped by the Priestly tradition to have a close connection “to the Pentateuch, especially the book of Numbers; … [to] the language of the prophetic books, especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.”\textsuperscript{99} The voices both of the first person singular (vv. 4-5) and of the plural (vv. 6-7, 47) are sounded. God is addressed directly in the second person singular. In other sections (vv. 1-3, 8-46, 48), God is referred to in the third person singular, and the indicative subject is in the third person plural. Given that vv. 46-47 evidence dispersion experience, the Psalm is a confession that expresses both gratitude and repentance, and simultaneously petitions for redemption and reunion.

The Psalm is framed with a summons הalleluia (‘Praise the Lord’–vv. 1a, 48c). Its structure is shaped in a chiasm of A – B – C – B’ – A’:

A (vv. 1-3): Summons to praise

B (vv. 4-5): Petition

C (vv. 6-46): Confessing-repentance

B’ (v. 47): Petition

A’ (v. 48): Summons to praise

According to this structure, the Psalm is seen to be divided into 3 sections: introducing the theme and showing the alliance between ancient and present generations (vv. 1-5); examination of the ancestors’ history of salvation and fallibility (vv. 6-46); and concluding petition and doxology (vv. 47-48). To support the study of the word חסד, sections 2 and 3 (vv. 6-48) will be considered together.

\textsuperscript{97} Hossfeld, “Psalm 106,” 95.
\textsuperscript{99} Hossfeld, “Psalm 106,” 86.
4.3.3.2 Verses 1-5

Verse 1 opens the Psalm with a liturgical formula that praises and thanks God for God’s steadfast חסד, goodness, and mighty deeds.\(^{100}\) The following rhetorical question (v. 2) as to who is able to utter God’s praise, finds its indirect answer in verse 3: those who observe justice and righteousness are the ones who will declare the Lord’s wonderful works and praise.\(^{101}\) It is noticeable that though verse 3 appears to be a didactic claim, the qualities of justice and righteousness ascribed to human beings are primarily ascribed to God. In this Psalm God is seen in the act of saving (vv. 8-11, 43), forgiving and showing mercy (vv. 44-46), yet also of demonstrating justice and righteousness (v. 15, 17-18, 23, 26-27, 30, 40-42). Thus, the first three verses of the opening section (vv. 1-3) set the theme for the body of the Psalm.

In reconsidering God’s חסד that has been the fundamental and sustaining source of the Israelites for all generations despite all their sins, the psalmist keeps both praising God and appealing for the rectification of their current distressing situation. In asking God to ‘remember me,’ the psalmist might consider her/himself as one who observes justice and is righteous (v. 3; cf. vv. 23, 30-31),\(^{102}\) but certainly s/he proudly identifies her/himself as being in the group of God’s possessions: ‘祢 (‘your people’–v. 4), בחיריך (‘your chosen ones’–v. 5), עמך (‘your nation’–v. 5), and נחלתך (‘your heritage’–v. 5). Even so, the prayer at the same time shows solidarity with sinners (v. 6; cf. v. 47).

The proclamation of 106:1 is semantically similar to and a reconfirmation of what is announced in 100:5.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PS</th>
<th>VR</th>
<th>BHS</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>כי־טוב יהוה לעולם חסדו For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>הודו ליהוה כי־טוב כי לעולם חסדו … Give thanks to the LORD for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In these verses, חסד is parallel with טוב. Nevertheless, in 100:5 the psalmist is about to convey God’s חסד and goodness through the characteristics of truthfulness and reliability. Following the context of God’s universal kingship in Psalms 93-100, the psalmist also introduces

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\(^{100}\) As in Psalms 95; 96; 98; 100. Hossfeld, “Psalm 106,” 87.

\(^{101}\) Schaefer, Psalms, 262.

Israel’s God to a worldwide audience. In 106:1, the Israelites acknowledge God’s חסד and goodness, demonstrated to them through the experience of God’s forgiveness and compassion. The next section will explore this emphasis.

4.3.3.3 Verses 6-48

Verse 6 plays a transitive role telling the reader of the connection between the present and the past, between the contemporary generation and their ancestors. This connection shows the continuous acknowledgement of these generations’ dependence on God’s faithfulness as well as acknowledging their own wickedness. Verses 7-46 start the long evaluation of the past, which entails two significant periods: from the time of the exodus to the time before entering the Land (vv. 7-33) and from the time in the Land to the present (vv. 34-46). In general, the psalmist views Israel’s iniquities. While verses 7-33 list the “seven capital (and historical) sins of the Exodus generation” and verses 34-39 give “a summary of Israel’s apostasies during the period of the judges (cf. Judg 2:11-19),” verses 43-46 describe how God regarded the exilic generations.103

Some key words, אמן, זכר, שׁכח, חסד, ישׁע, help to highlight the theme and show the contrasting picture between God’s faithful love and human sinfulness. The verb זכר (remember) is remarkably significant in this section. First, with its antonym שׁכח (forget) the two verbs show the most serious aspect of Israel’s sin, that is, ‘they forgot God their Saviour (v. 21) and ‘they did not remember the abundance of’ God’s חסד (v. 7). Secondly, the verb זכר pairs with the key word חסד at the border of this section (vv. 6-46). If the Israelites ‘did not remember the abundance of [God’s חסד]’ (v. 7), God did not repay them according to their sinfulness. The psalmist presents the opposite reaction from God, that “For their sake [God] remembered [God’s] covenant and showed [mercy]104 according to the abundance of [God’s חסד]’’ (v. 45).105

The two petitions (vv. 4-5 and 47) that precede and follow the confession (vv. 6-46) point out the desperate needs and hope of the psalmist as well as the “we-group.”106 If the prayer pleads with God to ‘remember [her/him]’ (v. 4), and to ‘save us’ (v. 47), that is because they

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103 Schaefer, Psalms, 263-64
104 Or ‘change one’s mind’ or ‘repent.’ Tanner, The Book of Psalms, 96-97.
105 חסד in verse 45 has a note of ketib and qere. The ketib of the MT חסדו (his חסד, singular), which is followed by the Greek and Jerome versions, is preferred because the qere חסדיך (his חסד, plural), which is supported by Targums and Peshitta, is understood as accommodated to חסדיך in verse 7. Elliger and Rudolph, “Psalmi,” 1189; Hossfeld, “Psalm 106,” 82; Allen, Psalms 101-150, 49.
know that God has never abandoned God’s people (vv. 8, 10, 43), but remembered God’s covenant and constantly showed them divine mercy (v. 44-46). Above all, the plenitude of God’s חסד unconditionally ensures their confidence (v. 45).

The petition, for being saved and reunited ‘from among the nations,’ still lingers at the end of Book IV. With such petition, the confidence that is placed at the beginning of Book IV is heightened: only God can secure ‘our dwelling place in all generations’ (90:1). Additionally, Book IV opens with the trustworthy figure of Moses in the superscription (90) and ends with this human figure at the background (106:16, 23, 32). Additionally, God’s חסד is expressed with references to mercy and forgiveness (90:13-14; 106:7, 45). Both link back to Exodus 34 (v. 6), to emphasise that God alone is everlasting (90:2) as is God’s חסד (106:1).

The doxology of Book IV corresponds well with firstly, the opening verse of Psalm 106. This Psalm is framed with the הalleluia (‘praise the Lord’—vv. 1, 48). Secondly, ‘the Lord, the God of Israel’ is disclosed to all people. The phrase ‘let all the people say “Amen”’ accords with the series of psalms of God’s universal kingship (93-100). Finally, in the entire context of Book IV, if the Lord alone is everlasting (90:2) and the Lord always regards humanity with חסד (100:5; 103:17; 106:1), then the Lord is praiseworthy to be blessed forever (v. 48).

In conclusion, amongst the threefold occurrence of the word חסד, in verse 7 it recalls the deliverance from Egypt while in verses 1 and 45 it refers to God’s forgiveness and steadfastness. The three indeed complement each other. In verse 1 the psalmist calls all to praise God because of God’s חסד. In verse 45 s/he states that despite all the sins that the Israelites committed, particularly not being mindful of God’s plentiful חסד (v. 7), God remembered the covenant with them and showed them mercy according to abundant divine חסד.

4.3.3.4 Psalm 106 and its Neighbouring Psalms

Psalms 106 and 105 are considered as “twin Psalms.” The two speak of “Israel’s primal canonical history,” especially of heightened and strengthened covenantal relationship between God and God’s people grounded in God’s חסד. In these psalms, the psalmist recounts Israel’s history of both salvation and sin and convinces the audience that God is

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faithful despite Israel’s infidelity. These two psalms share some key words or motifs such as הַלְלוּיָהוּ (‘praise the Lord’—105:45; 106:1, 48); God’s work (105:2, 5; 106:7, 22), and God remembering God’s covenant (105:8-10, 42; 106:45). These twin Psalms both refer to the same text found in 1 Chronicles: the opening of Psalm 105 (vv. 1-15; 1 Chr 16:8-22) and the closing of Psalm106 (vv. 47-48; 1 Chr 16:35-36).

As a pair, Psalms 105 and 106 end Book IV, a book that highlights and reinforces the theme that God is ever faithful in keeping covenant and merciful in showing חסד for all generations. This theme reemphasises what has been put forth in the opening verse of the opening psalm of the Book: ‘Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations’ (90:1) and confirms the validity of Exod 34:6. In one way, this theme strengthens immediately the hope for the generation in exile in the Diaspora (106:47), and in another way, responds to the question raised about God’s faithful covenant and merciful חסד to David (89:29, 50).

There are also some significant associations between Psalms 106 and 107. Firstly, the two Psalms have similar summons to praise in the introduction (106:1-3; 107:1-3). They share the same “so-called tôdâ-formula:” ‘O give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for his [חסד] endures forever’ (106:1; 107:1). In a sense, both psalms regard God’s act of ‘gathering’ (קבצ) people from nations (106:47), or from the four directions of the world (107:3). While the former is a plea which comprises hope that is based on God’s חסד and mercy, the latter is a fulfilment. Hope becomes reality and God’s חסד and mercy are marked by God’s act of liberation. The fulfilment leads to and breaks out into the refrain summons “Let them thank the Lord for his [חסד]; for his wonderful works to humankind’ (107:8, 15, 21, 31) and ‘Let those who are wise give heed to these things and consider the [חסד] of the Lord’ (107:43). Finally, the chorus of Psalm 107 (vv. 6, 13, 19, 28) repeats what is stated in 106:44: that God hears the Israelites’ cry and notes their distress. Additionally, Psalms 105-107 are significantly linked together with the summons of giving thanks (105:1; 1061; 107:1). The sequence is seen as ‘a hôdu series.’

111 Gartner, “The Torah,” 487.
113 Hossfeld, “Psalm 106,” 93.
114 Emanuel, From Bards, 166.
115 Hossfeld, “Psalm 106,” 93.
116 Hossfeld, “Psalm 106,” 84.
4.4 THE MEANING OF חסד IN PSALMS 101-106

The table below sketches out חסד in Psalms 101, 103, and 106.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PS</th>
<th>VR</th>
<th>BHS</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>חסד והמש ePub:  לך יהוה אזمرة׃</td>
<td>I will sing of ‘loyalty’ and of justice; to you, O LORD, I will sing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ורחמים׃</td>
<td>Who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>רוחם והמש יהוה אפן והבчатם:</td>
<td>The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>ี חסד כי כגבה שׁמים על־הארץ גבר</td>
<td>For as the heaven are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>חסד והמש עיריעלם על־יראייו וה TORT:</td>
<td>But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him; and his righteousness to children's children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ויהוה הוש髹 לכ עלול חסד:</td>
<td>... Give thanks to the LORD for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>לא תמי אריבר חסד והים עליך יפגשות:</td>
<td>Our ancestor, when they were in Egypt, did not consider you wonderful works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td>ירוכ חסד הבריח ויהמה כד חסד:</td>
<td>For their sake he remembered his covenant and showed mercy according to the abundance of his steadfast love.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Semantically, the sequence of words either in pairs or in parallel with חסד, is helpful in acknowledging the expressions for חסד. On the one hand, חסד, as coupled with הרחם twice (103:4, 8 cf. Exod 34:6), expresses God’s forgiving and compassionate love. This feature is reinforced when חסד is accompanied by the root word חמר and developed in the context of God’s covenantal fidelity with the reference of ברית (106: 45). On the other hand, aspects of God’s uprightness and judgement are stressed when חסד is in pair with משפט (101:1) or in parallel with צדק (103:17).

Thematically, with the eightfold occurrence in these three psalms of Book IV, חסד appears twice with the I-speaker (101:1; 103:4) whilst the remaining occurrences are in the we-voice (106:7, 45) and general statements (103:8, 11, 17; 106:1). On the one hand, חסד in company
with 'justice'–101:1) and 'righteousness'–103:17) in the two Davidic Psalms conveys the judicial judgement of God's sovereignty that has been entrusted to the king. On the other hand, חסד is in tune with רחם (103:4) and נחם (106:45) characterising God's compassionate love and forgiveness toward the Israelite all generations. Indeed, the lively confidence of the Sinai formula (103:8; Exod 34:6) underlies the recollection of Israel's entire salvific history from the exodus to exile, as reflected in the occurrences of חסד in the last Psalm of Book IV (106:1, 7, 45).

Theologically, two aspects of God's חסד, namely compassion (רחם/נחום) and justice (צדק), are both stressed in these three psalms though the former surpasses the latter. This is evident in three following significant passages. In 103:17-18, God's חסד is stated to be 'from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear [God] and [God's] righteousness to children's children, to those who keep [God's] covenant and remember to do [God's] commandments.' Yes, in 106:7, the confession is shown that 'Our ancestors, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wonderful works; they did not remember the abundance of your [חסד].' They even 'forgot God their Saviour' (106:21). God corrected and punished them. However, God never forsok God’s people. Indeed, 106:45 even provides justification for 103:17-18 because even though the Israelites turned away from God, God’s salvific deeds and חסד remained constant. God at no time took away what God was promised but persistently showed mercy, a mercy based on God’s bountiful חסד.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Psalms containing חסד in Book IV offer thanksgiving and praise. The exceptions are Psalm 90, a petition, and Psalm 94, a prayer. Thus, the thirteen-fold appearance of this word is used in senses of deep appreciation, gratitude, and longing. Once this word is presented in a negative context, when describing how the people forgot God’s חסד as well as God’s wondrous deeds (106:7). However, this negative appearance of חסד in 106:7 is reconciled by 106:45, in which God’s bountiful חסד surpasses the unfaithfulness and sinfulness of God’s people.

Book IV is interspersed with themes of creation and redemption. In particular, the Lord’s saving deeds, which range from the patriarchal period to the exile in Babylon, are emphasised in the last three psalms (104-106), and God’s universal kingship is extolled in the core psalms of this book (93-100). חסד in this fourth Book of the Psalter is viewed as giving a sense of fulfilment or satisfaction as a way of persuading its hearers that God is perpetually
praiseworthy. Indeed, God’s חסד is indicated through use of the motif of plea and response. In the first psalm of this Book there is the request ‘Satisfy us in the morning with your חסד that we may rejoice and be glad all our days’ (90:14). This is answered immediately in the following Psalm (92:3), and ultimately in the final Psalm (106:45). Other expressions of God’s חסד provide allusions for those responses within Book IV. Additionally, חסד, in tandem with חנampil - ‘show mercy’ form an inclusion for Book IV (90:13-14; 106:45).\textsuperscript{117} If 90:13-14 is a plea, 106:45 is a response. It shows that God is everlasting (90:2) and ever abundant in חסד (100:5; 106:1), “for [God’s חסד] endures forever and [God’s] faithfulness to all generations.”

As psalms of Book IV unfold, the psalmists first call on God to show חסד in actual deeds and then call to mind God’s acts of redemption which God brought about in Israel’s primeval history. In turning to Israel’s primeval history, the eras before the Davidic dynasty, the psalmists construct the new foundation for God’s חסד.

\textsuperscript{117} Zenger, “The God,” 163.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This Chapter brings together the argument of the thesis. It starts by summarizing the argument which has been developed in the previous chapters. Then it will draw some major conclusions from this study as a whole, keeping in mind the fact that specific conclusions have already been given at the end of Chapters Two, Three, and Four. Finally, some recommendations for further research will be made.

5.1 OVERVIEW

The introductory chapter first presented the context of the thesis as originally coming from the researcher’s desire to seek out the concept of God’s presence and absence as it is communicated in the imagery and language of the Psalms. Based on the outcomes of research, the thesis title was established as *The חסד of God: A study of the word חסד in Books III and IV of the Hebrew Psalter.*

A historical study of the Psalter was undertaken to progress the research. The special focus of the research was on the study of the shape of the Psalms. Using the framework provided by Wilson and McCann the research proceeded through carrying out an exegesis, firstly on Psalm 89, and then on the appropriate psalms of Books III and IV in their final form, observing the choice of language, and identifying the purpose of its redactors. Additionally, as the purpose of the thesis was a study of חסד in Books III and IV of the Psalms, a historical study of חסד was carried out focusing specially on the work of Glueck, Sakenfeld, and Clark. However, even though the Psalter contains half of the occurrences of חסד in the Old Testament, it became clear that the thesis needed to study the use of חסד in conjunction with other texts, such as 2 Sam 7:1-17; Exod 34:6, in order to gain a better understanding of its range of meanings.

The word חסד permeates Israelite belief and is foundational to its deep confidence in God. Yet, as its meaning is contextual, exegesis and rhetorical analysis became necessary. Clark states that the word חסד cannot be studied in isolation but must be studied in relationship to the meanings of other words in the same verse or the same psalm. So rhetorical analysis of חסד in parallel with other word, or as pair words, was done. The dynamic meanings of חסד in Psalm 89 and other Psalms of Books III and IV of the Psalter were spelled out in chapters Two, Three, and Four. These meanings provided answers to the questions raised in the introductory Chapter.
Chapter Two explored the meanings of חסד in Psalm 89. The חסד of God and God’s אמונה (faithfulness), which are as immutable as the heavens (v. 3) are evoked in praise continuously by the psalmist (v. 2). This praise precedes God’s bestowed covenant to David. The first two occurrences of חסד (vv. 2-3) are confirmed later in the hymnic praising of God’s sovereignty over the universe where God’s חסד is among the key divine characterisations (v. 15), and an expression of God’s promise to David and his dynasty (vv. 25, 29, 34). The final occurrence of חסד (v. 50), nonetheless, is in the context of doubt, that is God’s חסד seems to have gone with the failure of the Davidic kingdom. The meaning of חסד as the quality of loyalty is clear in the promise God made to David and through him to all Israel (vv. 25, 34). Yet it mostly aligns with the semantic range of אמונה as ‘steadfastness or faithfulness’ in verses 2-3, 15, 50. God’s חסד is also understood as God’s ‘mercy’ as it is suggested in the exegesis of verse 50. Overall, חסד in its seven-fold occurrences in Psalm 89 unfolds its expressions particularly in an abounding relationship between God and David as well as his offspring. Yes, in the Psalm, God’s חסד does not only refer to David. חסד of God is something broader than the framework of God’s covenant with David. As one of God’s attributes, חסד is seen through God in relationship with the king, and with Israel as God’s people. Indeed, God manifests God’s-self to them in these relationships.

Chapter Three investigated the expressions of the חסד of God in the psalms of Book III. חסד in Psalm 77:9 is presented in one of the consecutive rhetorical lament questions that had shaken the Israel’s fundamental trust in their God, explicitly in Exod 15:13 and implicitly in Exod 34:6. God’s חסד in Psalm 85 is described as essential to the sustenance of the people’s wellbeing (vv. 8, 11). People implore God’s חסד because it assures them of God’s salvation (ישׁת) and faithfulness (אמונה), as well as the presence of God’s glory (כבוד) in their lives. A sense of gratitude and confidence is demonstrated in the three-fold expressions of חסד in Psalm 86. Among these significations, a personal experience of being delivered from Sheol (v. 13) is absorbed into Israel’s common belief. This, in turn, is recognised as being similar to the passage of Exod 34:6 (vv. 5, 15). In contrast to Psalm 86, separation is the key dread in Psalm 88 where God’s חסד, as well as אמונה and צדק, is unsearchable (vv. 12, 13b). As a preparation for Psalm 89 the Psalm advises readers about what the absence of God’s חסד is like. In summary, חסד in Psalms 88:12 and 77:9 frames an uncertain inclusion for the first seven-fold occurrences of the word חסד in Book III (77:9; 85:8, 11; 86:5, 13, 15; 88:12). Also in this third Book of the Psalter, Psalm 89 has another seven-fold occurrence of חסד (vv. 2, 3, 15, 25, 29, 34, 50). As is shown in the exegesis set out in chapters Two and Three, 77:9,
88:12, and 89:50 are presented in rhetorical and lament questions that express pain and doubt. While the two former questions, 77:9 and 85:8, are in the context of the community and individual facing misfortune, 89:50 is situated in the lament for the fate of the Davidic king and dynasty. Nonetheless, questions about God’s חסד are never isolated from hope for reorientation within the Psalms of Book III. The pattern of praise and confidence in God’s חסד still remains strong in those psalms. The recurrence of חסד in Book III fourteen times, as double the biblically perfect number seven, and the reference of the ancient formula could speak about this. God’s חסד is still the essence of God’s people’s hope and confidence throughout their theological and religious journey toward reorientation.

Chapter Four examined the interpretations of the חסד of God in the psalms of Book IV. חסד occurs in 90:13 in form of a request, and this request finds a response in 90:14. In the context of the psalms that uphold the concept of God’s universal kingship, the psalmist(s) confess that God’s חסד has restrained her/him from annihilation (94:18), that God has remembered God’s חסד and אמונה to ‘the house of Israel’ (98:3), and that God’s חסד and אמונה, as the manifestation of God’s goodness, articulate God’s everlasting steadfastness and trustworthiness (100:5). In the context of Psalm 101 that follows immediately in the series of psalms extolling God’s kingship, the psalmist expresses strongly the desire of practice according to God’s חסד and צדק (justice). צדק and חסד, which are characterised in the sovereignty of God that is entrusted to the king, convey a wise sense of judgement. חסד, in its fourfold expressions in Psalm 103, is evidenced in relationships between God and the psalmist (v. 4), the Israelites (v. 8), and those identified as fearers of the Lord (vv. 11, 17). Use of חסד in Psalm 103 are either in parallel with רחם (‘compassion’–vv. 4, 8), or צדק (‘righteousness’–v. 17). If חסד and רחם are found in the Sinai formula (v. 8; Exod 34:6) which expressed God’s compassionate love, the connection of חסד and צדק may be seen as an expression of the righteous aspect of God’s חסד. חסד in Psalm 106, finally, occurs three times and the three usages complement each other. The evocation of praise of God’s goodness and everlasting חסד (v. 1) is explained and supported: despite Israel’s repeated apostasies, God has never removed the covenant from them nor withdrawn divine mercy and חסד (vv. 7, 45). The confidence, which is placed at the beginning of Book IV that God is eternal and at the same time God the everlasting refuge for humanity, is evidenced through the study of חסד in Psalms 90, 92, 94, 98, 100, 101, 103, and 106. Either from experiences of the individual and community, or from the profession of Israel and all the nations, God’s חסד is always the source of sustenance of people’s daily lives (90:14; 92:3), the refuge of the threatened
petitioner (94:18; 103:4), the guarantee of Israel (98: 3; 106:1, 45), and the promise for all nations worldwide (100:5; 103:8, 11). There remain three significant aspects of God’s חסד that are stressed in these psalms: faithfulness (92:3; 98:3; 100:5), mercy or compassion (103:4, 8; 106:45), and justice (101:1; 103:17). Psalms containing חסד in Book IV predominantly offer thanksgiving and hymns. Only once is this word presented in a negative context (106:7). The other twelve appearances are used in senses of deep appreciation, gratitude, and longing.

Significant transitions have been recognised in comparing the occurrences and usage of חסד from the psalms of Book III to Book IV.

First, whilst lament psalms pervade Book III, psalms of praise and thanksgiving are predominant in the fourth Book of Psalms. At the centre of Book IV is the motif of God’s sovereignty, which is especially spelled out in the corpus Psalms 93-100. Consequently, God’s חסד is expressed in thanks and gratitude in psalms of Book IV. It is given once in a negative context, yet there is no question about God’s חסד in the fourth Book. In contrast, the psalms of Book III are in the main laments crying out about national devastation and loss of identity (the land, Temple, Davidic throne). Among the fourteen occurrences of חסד, this word is placed in lament questions three times (77:9; 88:12; 89:50). Significantly, both the first and the last occurrences of חסד in Book III are lament questions, and yet they are without answers (77:19; 89:50). Conversely, the first and the last occurrences of חסד in Book IV form a motif of request-answer. Thus, in the first psalm of Book IV, the appeal for God’s חסד and נחמ (‘mercy/compassion’–90:13b-14) is responded to satisfactorily in the final psalm of this Book (106:45).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>BK</th>
<th>PS</th>
<th>VR</th>
<th>BHS</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>9 (8)</td>
<td>חסדו לנה חוֹסֶת חַסְדּוֹ מִמֵּר אָבֵר לְדָר</td>
<td>Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>50 (49)</td>
<td>אַי חַסְדִּי הַרַּבָּנִים אֵאָרֶנִי נְשַׁבְתֶּן לְדוּ</td>
<td>Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you did swear to David?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>13b-14</td>
<td>... וְרֵשֵׁם עַל לעָנִי֮ ...</td>
<td>... Have compassion on your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>106</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>ויַחַר לַהָם חַסְדּוֹ נְחוֹמָה כַּפָּר הֶבְשָׁם</td>
<td>For their sake he remembered his covenant, and showed compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Secondly, whilst the psalms of Book III is predominantly associated with חסד (‘fidelity/faithfulness’–85:11; 86:15; 88:12; 89:2, 3, 15, 25, 34, 50), חסד in the psalms of Book IV mostly refer to רחם/נחום (‘mercy/compassion’–90:13b-14; 103:4, 8; 106:45) and is combined less with אמת/אמונה (‘faithfulness’–92:3; 98:3; 100:5). This observance suggests that editorial purposes and theological developments are evident in these two Books. If the psalms of Book III present a vigorous struggle about God’s faithful חסד in the immediate reality of exilic loss, the psalmists of Book IV search for the meaning and understanding of this loss through reviews of salvation history in order to recognise God’s compassionate and merciful חסד.

Finally, there exists a strong connection in conveying God’s חסד between the Torah and the Psalter. The Sinai formula of Exod 34:6 is quoted in the psalms of two Books. Both are titled ‘Psalm of David’ (86:15 and 103:8). Furthermore, themes such as creation, Israel’s beginning, deliverance from Egypt, wandering and settlement, are interwoven in the psalms of Book III (e. g. Pss 77; 85; 86; 89) and especially Book IV (e. g. Pss 90; 95-96; 99-100; 103-106).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BK</th>
<th>BHS</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exod 34:6</td>
<td>ייהוה יהוה אל רחום וחנן ארך אפים ורב חסד ואתה</td>
<td>The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps 86:15</td>
<td>אתה אדני אל רחום וחנן ארכי אפים ורב חסד ואתה</td>
<td>But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps 103:8</td>
<td>הרוח וחנן יהוה ארכי אפים ורב חסד</td>
<td>The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By extension, the connection also refers to the two great biblical figures, Moses and David. Both the names and roles of David and Moses are mentioned in the two Books. If David is regarded as the chosen king in Book III (78; 89) and his kingdom is fated as it is shown at the end of this Book, by contrast in Book IV, David’s name appears again but just in the superscription (101, 103). Moses’ name and titles occur once in Book III (77) yet seven times in Book IV. Both Moses and David are presented with great honour. While David is God’s servant and the anointed king (78; 89), Moses is entitled ‘the man of God’ (90:1), priest (99:6), God’s servant (105:26), and God’s chosen one (106:23). Yet, both are viewed as failures. The last reference to Moses at the end of Book IV seems to shatter his image (106:32-33). This ending recalls the ending in Psalm 89 of Book III. References to their fate...
neither devalue the confidence of Moses and David in God nor diminish their role as mediators between God and God’s people. Instead, these allusions prove that God’s חסד that is endless for all Israel’s generations is in contrast to the limitations of those two main figures of David and Moses personally and of humanity generally.

5.2 MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

The above research points to the conclusions set out below. They will form the basis for arriving at the theoretical and theological implications of the thesis.

The meanings of the חסד of God in Psalm 89 were explored in Chapter Two. God’s חסד and covenant to David are implanted in God’s very self-attribution in אמת and אמין, in the cosmos, in the world and chiefly in the salvation history of Israel. The question about God’s חסד at the end of Psalm 89 (v. 50) illustrates the devastating struggle of the community in their belief and in the reality of David’s fate. This question is left unanswered, yet it does not impair the praise of God’s חסד which is constant and established forever. Six times God’s חסד is extolled or expressed in confidence and it is questioned only once. God’s חסד is eternal and broader than the Davidic covenant. Although the Davidic king is defeated and his empire extinct, this does not mean that God finishes bestowing God’s חסד on Israel. The Psalm itself does not look for the immediate answer about God’s חסד. It just points to the tension experienced by the psalmist in carrying both confidence and doubt.

Chapter Three scrutinized the expressions of the חסד of God in the psalms of Book III. This chapter pointed out that among those five psalms that contain the word חסד, three are laments (77, 88, 89) and the remaining two are prayers (85, 86). In addition, three out of fourteen appearances of the word חסד, are present in the form of questions which do not provide answers (77:9; 88:12; 89:50). This chapter called to mind the theological aftermath of the exilic and post-exilic period. The people of God had been dealing with national disaster as well as loss of identity: the Land, the Temple, and the Davidic reign. National loss challenged reconsideration and discernment to find a new orientation and understanding of God through God’s חסד, promise, and salvific works. It included reflections on Exodus 15; 32-34, and especially Exod 34:6 which spells out God’s self-revelation. Indeed, doubt and confidence about God’s חסד, in spite of being contradictory, co-exists in the psalms of Book III. Both confidence and doubt about God’s חסד expect answers in the following Psalms of Book IV. Book III itself does not offer the required reconciliation or resolution.
Chapter Four examined the interpretations of the חסד of God in the psalms of Book IV. This chapter established that God’s חסד is expressed in individual gratitude and communal thanksgiving that is exemplified in the request-response motif in the entire Book IV. Chapter Four also brought to light the fact that God’s חסד is steadfast and bountiful upon Israel despite constant iniquity. חסד in this Book, therefore, presents a sense of contentment and fulfilment and so persuades its audience that God is perpetually praiseworthy. The praiseworthiness of God is emphasised in the core Psalms extolling God’s sovereignty (93-100). The Psalms of Book IV answer the dilemma about God’s חסד found in 89:50 by looking to events of Israel’s foundational past. Where Psalm 89 sees the Davidic kingship as a significant of expression of God’s חסד, the psalmists of Book IV turn to the kingship of God as the foundational expression of God’s חסד. This chapter, therefore, concludes that God is as eternal as God’s dominion, and so God’s חסד is perpetual for all generations of Israelites.

In summary, the word חסד permeates Israelite belief and is foundations. Although the reality of exile or post-exile remains indisputable in psalms of Books III and IV, the thriving hope for new meaning and understanding in these Books reaches some achievements. The questions about God’s חסד in Book III (77:9; 88:12; 89:50), at one level, are transferred into the petition 90:13b-14 at the beginning of Book IV and these questions find their answers throughout psalms of Book IV, especially 106:45. At another level, if the חסד of God in Book III refers to the Sinai formula (86:15; Exod 34:6) and is declared to be established forever (89:3), the same חסד is reaffirmed in the psalms of Book IV. The psalmists of the latter Book confirm that God has remembered God’s חסד towards future generations despite their repetitious sins (98:3; 106:45) and that God’s חסד will always be there for them (100:5; 106:1; 103:8; cf. Exod 34:6).

On the whole, the psalmists in these two Books imply that despite human failure and limitations, God, who is extolled as universal sovereign, is eternal, and God’s חסד is everlasting for all generations. This confidence squares with Exod 34:6 and confirms the profound certitude of Israelites in the statements that God has been “our dwelling place in all generations” (90:1) and God’s חסד “endures forever” (100:5; 106:1).

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research is focused on studying the word חסד in Books III and IV of the Psalter. Throughout the research process, the researcher found that some aspects of the research are
quite challenging and thus, she calls for further research to strengthen the understanding of God’s חסד firstly in the Hebrew Psalter and then in other books of the Hebrew Bible.

The following observations make the researcher wonder whether purposes or choices were made in the process of composition or editing of the Hebrew Psalter. The first is that the term חסד is used only once in the Asaphite Psalms while it is used more frequently in the Korahite, Davidic, and other collections. Secondly, questions about God’s חסד occur only in the Psalms of Book III and not in the Psalms of Book IV, and not in other books of the Psalter. Thirdly, the important question of the Sinai formula (Exod 34:6) is why this formula appears only three times in the entire Psalter, in three ‘Psalms of David,’ and in the last three Books of the Psalter (86; 103;145). This research is important because it encourages the ongoing study of the Psalter as a whole; also, it opens more viewpoints/opportunities to the study of the shape of the Psalms.

In relation to other themes, firstly, while חסד in the Psalms of Books III and IV is used in the religious sphere, that is, used only toward or for God, the researcher wonders whether the secular usage of this word is relevant to the Psalter. Secondly, acknowledgement of God’s חסד is regarded as equal to observing the Torah in the longest Psalm (119:41, 64, 76, 88, 124, 149, 159). In this psalm, the word חסד occurs seven times as it does in Psalm 89 (vv. 2, 3, 15, 25, 29, 34, 50). The researcher wonders whether there are special and intensified connections between Psalms 89 and 119. Thirdly, the affirmation of God’s enduring and everlasting חסד is particularly emphasised more strongly in Book V where it is formulated as refrains (107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31, 43; 118:1-4, 29; 136:1-26). The researcher wonders whether these choices are to do with the purposes driving the composition or the editing process.

Finally, the study of this thesis argues for חסד as one of the key elements which inspired the composers and editors of the Psalms. The dynamic meanings of חסד in the Psalter reaffirms the above suggestion that חסד is one of the patterns that is focused on during the progress of shaping the Psalter. This research, however, is limited to only two books of the Psalms. The further study of חסד in the entire Psalter, therefore, promises more insights.
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