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**Christadelphian EJournal of Biblical Interpretation**

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* Engage with academic biblical studies that originate in other Christian confessions.
* Defend the biblical principles summarised in the common Christadelphian statement of faith.
* Subject the published articles to retrospective peer review and amendment.

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**Editorial**

Relatively few Christadelphians undertake degree-level Biblical Studies. More undertake such study in other “Abrahamic” churches which, along with Christadelphians, originate in the Restoration Movement in the USA in the 1830s; such churches have a supported ministry. This take-up contrasts with the Catholic and Protestant denominations as there are many ministerial colleges and secular universities who service their job market. The common career avenues for those who complete a doctorate in Biblical Studies are teaching and ministry. Hence, there have been very few Christadelphians who choose this subject area to progress a career.

This is a loss to the community as humanities degrees are of equal value in the eyes of companies seeking this level of candidate. From this point of view, choosing Biblical Studies as a degree is to be encouraged as, in the past, community magazines such as *The Testimony* have benefited from past students writing articles during their time of study. Nevertheless, there are inherent dangers in this choice, as the whole system of research into the Biblical World is very much “owned” by those in the churches.

Ownership of academic Bible Study by those in the churches is seen on many levels. The end of the process – publication – is in many instances governed by denominationally influenced publishers. The beginning of the process is controlled by (usually) confessionally attached academics. Commissioning editors mostly work with academics who are members of the main churches. Within secular universities there is the possibility of neutrality, but knowing where such neutrality lies is a matter of knowing the background of the academics that are in post. With a doctoral degree there is the added danger in the UK system of confessional bias on the part of the examiners.

There is a further issue to mention. The university environment is *hostile* to faith because the student is not allowed to control his historical research by the view that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. A student’s faith will be subjected to forces that push him or her to adopt liberal views of the Bible. It might therefore seem surprising that we advocate degree level Biblical Studies as a university choice.

There is much of lasting value in such a choice; a value for life. First, there is the grounding in Hebrew and Greek which is of obvious benefit. Second, there is a vast amount of historically pertinent information to be had about the Bible—information that does not call into question beliefs about the Bible.

Accordingly, any challenges to faith can be met head-on and handled. Here a study of Philosophy is valuable for the analytical skills it imparts; these skills help a student pick apart the challenges to faith. Furthermore, for every critical viewpoint on a matter, there is always a conservative counterpoint. So, while there are dangers, there are also paths to follow.

**Dating the Hebrew Kings**

**Andrew Perry**

**Introduction**

The standard conservative introduction to the topic of dating the Hebrew kings is E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*.[[1]](#footnote-2) Modifications of Thiele’s chronology have been made by other conservative scholars, for example by R. K. Harrison in his *Old Testament Introduction*.[[2]](#footnote-3) Harrison respects the Hoshea synchronism of 2 Kgs 18:1-2 in which Hezekiah “became king” in the third year of Hoshea (729-728); Thiele had regarded this synchronism as an editorial corruption. As Harrison observes, this synchronism can be harmonised when it is recognised that Hezekiah and Ahaz were co-regent for a period of time. J. B. Payne’s comment on Thiele is that “Thiele’s refusal to recognize any synchronism between the reigns of Hoshea and Hezekiah, or to grant any form of accession prior to 715 B.C., has undergone widespread criticism”.[[3]](#footnote-4) Those that have criticized Thiele have sought to maintain the complete accuracy of the biblical record.

Another difficulty with Thiele’s chronology, which remains uncorrected, surrounds Menahem whose reign is given by him as 752-742. This has been challenged by scholars who point to records in the Assyrian annals and building inscriptions, which have Menahem paying tribute to Tiglath-Pileser in 738. The annals of Tiglath-Pileser and his building inscriptions[[4]](#footnote-5) are fragmentary and scholars have disagreed in the past on how to correlate the accounts to Tiglath-Pileser’s campaign years as delineated in the Assyrian Eponym List.[[5]](#footnote-6) Nevertheless, there is some consensus for what they can contribute to an understanding of biblical chronology, and against Thiele, the consensus view is that Menahem possessed a throne in Israel in 738.

There are then two widely accepted criticisms of Thiele and in this article we will discuss further the chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

**Chronological Principles**

If a scholar is ready to accept errors in the biblical record, s/he may configure the chronology of Menahem, Hezekiah and Hoshea in any number of ways.[[6]](#footnote-7) If a scholar seeks to maintain the accuracy of the biblical record, s/he needs to explain why the chronological data is presented as it is and should not be read in a straightforward *sequential* manner.

Thiele divides his treatment of the Kings chronology into two parts—early kings up to 841 and later kings after 841.[[7]](#footnote-8) If the years of the various later kings of Israel and Judah are added together, using a common starting point of the reign of Jehu and Athaliah in 841, then by the end of the Northern Kingdom, the totals do not match and the synchronisms between the various reigns get out of alignment; a similar point can be made in respect of the early kings. The virtue of Thiele’s treatment is that he describes some of the components of any harmonic reading of the data. An enhanced statement of some of his variables is as follows:

* The historical records of both Israel and Judah have been included in Chronicles and Kings and therefore they are mixed up and a reader needs to be aware of the chronological scheme he is reading at any point.[[8]](#footnote-9)
* Scribes may count the total number of years for a king from the part year in which he ascended the throne or beginning with the first complete “accession” year of his reign. Scribes in Northern Israel may have worked a different system to those in Judah and at different times in the history of the dual monarchy.[[9]](#footnote-10)
* Scribes may or may not include the year in which the king died in his total number of years.[[10]](#footnote-11) This may be determined by how close the king’s death was to the beginning of a year. Likewise, they may have not included part years at the beginning of a reign if the time-period was as trivial as a few weeks.
* Co-regencies existed among some fathers and sons giving rise to overlapping “reigns”, but the total number of years for a king’s reign may or may not include any co-regency element depending on whether the son was “ruling” as king alongside his father.
* Coups, counter-coups, and rival kings in Northern Israel impact the chronological counter. Scribes for a new dynasty may or may not have followed any precedent set by the scribes of former monarchs.
* Northern Israel starts the year in the spring (Nisan) and Judah in the autumn (Tishri);[[11]](#footnote-12) scribes of north and south may have synchronized reigns between the kingdoms upon either basis.

The start dates and lengths of reign for the kings can be set up in a spreadsheet with cells divided into units of 12 months and start and end dates can be moved to bring about a harmonic reading of the reigns of the two monarchies.[[12]](#footnote-13) The variable factors listed above mean that adjustments can be plus or minus a year or two at each changeover of a king. Such adjustments can accumulate or be self-cancelling but the synchronisms between the two monarchies and the absolute Assyrian dates serve as a control upon the process. Hence, Thiele’s principles will inevitable produce slightly variant chronologies on the part of conservative scholars. It would take a series of articles to discuss the Dual Monarchy and its chronology; here we will take two examples, one straightforward and one difficult:

(1)



In the above diagram, Rehoboam comes to the throne in 930 but the years of his reign are totaled from Tishri-Tishri (930-929)—the first complete year of accession. Jeroboam’s rebellion was in 930 but as a partial coup, scribes count his years from his “declaration of independence”, allowing the total years of his reign to be calculated from Nisan 930. Judah uses the method of discounting the part years of the new kings opening year. Such an assumption is more reasonable for Rehoboam as he was the legitimate successor to Solomon and scribes might reasonably be expected to follow any chronological scheme of the Solomonic kingdom. With Jeroboam the situation is different as his new kingdom adopted the alternative system of counting part years—he was not a successor to Solomon. If his rebellion was not cemented until further into 930 and a declaration of independence made later, the total number of his years would be counted from Nisan 929, which would place the end of his reign on by a factor of 1.

The decision here affects synchronisms. Abijah will come to the throne in Jeroboam’s 18th year (1 Kgs 15:1) and Asa in Jeroboam’s 20th year (1 Kgs 15:9). If Jeroboam’s “starting year” is out by a factor plus or minus 1, the synchronisms will be “out”.



In the above diagram, we have moved on in the process and it illustrates a number of choices. First, Rehoboam, who ruled for 17 years (1 Kgs 14:21), dies in 913 rather than 912. Secondly, Abijah succeeds but his total number of years is calculated from his first complete year, the “accession” year. Thirdly, the same assumption is made for Abijah as for Rehoboam—he died in his third year, which is accredited to him in full. Thus Asa’s first year is counted from his accession year.

These decisions cohere with the synchronisms in the text: Abijah is said to begin his reign in the 18th year of Jeroboam and Asa in the 20th year of Jeroboam. In both cases this synchronism is with their ascent to the throne—their first part-year, rather than with their official “accession” year. With these choices the synchronisms of Nadab and Baasha also fall into place: Nadab ascended the throne in the 2nd year of Asa (with Jeroboam dying in his 22nd year) and Baasha slew Nadab in the 3rd year of Asa.

(2)

The second example is more complicated and further on in the synchronized chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah. Broadly speaking, Thiele’s chronology works give or take a year or two either way until Ahaz and Hezekiah; it is here that he goes wrong. Discussion of Ahaz illustrates a different principle than that of our first example; this principle concerns the difference between contemporary source-records from Northern Israel and from Judah and their different accounting of start dates and totals for their respective kings.

The introduction of Ahaz is as follows:

Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord his God, like David his father. 2 Kings 16:2 (KJV)

This text reads *as if* Ahaz began to reign at 20 and reigned thereafter for 16 years and ceased to reign at 36. However, the common Hebrew for “to reign” also does duty for “become king”; thus an equally valid translation is,

2 Kgs 16:2

Akêl.m'B. zx'äa' ‘hn"v' ~yrIÜf.[,-!B,

Son of twenty years, Ahaz, when he became king

This text uses a Qal infinitive (Akêl.m'B.) with a preposition and an unexceptionable translation would be “when he became king”.[[13]](#footnote-14) The same phraseology is used in the case of Jehoash:

2 Kgs 11:21

Ak)l.m'B. va'îAhy> ~ynIßv' [b;v,î-!B,

Son of seven years, Jehoash, when he became king

In the case of Jehoash, it is reasonable to suppose that Jehoiada the High Priest ruled while Jehoash was a child. In the same way, it is reasonable to propose that “becoming” king does not necessarily mean that an individual has assumed the sole reign of kingship; sons could be anointed king prior to the demise of their fathers; sons could exercise power (or not) in place of their fathers; an example of this would be Jotham’s rule in place of Uzziah (2 Chron 26:21).

Was Ahaz anointed king at the age of 20 but without assuming the mantle of power? The synchronisms between Ahaz and the kings of Northern Israel require such a co-regency. The evidence is as follows:

1) Jotham reigned for 16 years (2 Kgs 15:33) but the record knows of a 20th year of Jotham (2 Kgs 15:30). This “discrepancy” is explained by observing that the reference to a 20th year comes in a record fragment about Pekah and his demise at the hands of Hoshea;[[14]](#footnote-15) it is a record written from the perspective of Northern Israel and narrates events in the history of the northern tribes. The “20 years” have a basis in the historical sources from Northern Israel and the most likely hypothesis is that the base year for northern scribes is Jotham’s anointing as king rather than his accession to the throne as a sole ruler. This is illustrated below:



2) A similar distinction applies to the data about Ahaz. Hoshea came to power in the 12th year of Ahaz (2 Kgs 17:1), but this remark is in a record fragment about Northern Israel and embedded with other records from Northern Israel; the base year for calculating the 12th year is likewise Ahaz’ anointing as king; it is not a calculation based on his year of accession as sole king.

This is proven by the fact that Ahaz assumed the throne as sole ruler in the 17th year of Pekah (2 Kgs 15:30; 16:1). A sequential reading of the data produces inconsistency because this requires the record to say that Hoshea came to power much earlier in Ahaz’ reign, and on a sequential reading in his third or fourth year. However, a sequential reading makes the mistake of not respecting the independence of records about Northern Israel and Judah. The base year for calculating Ahaz’ 12th year is not the year in which he assumed the throne but the year in which he was anointed king. This is illustrated below:



The diagram shows that Ahaz assumed the throne in 732-731. The Northern Israel record has this as his 12th year which would place his anointing in 744-743. The year 732-731 is 20th year of Jotham from the point of view of Northern Israel and this is also the year in which the commencement of Hoshea’s reign is noted (2 Kgs 15:30).

3) The final argument for our reading concerns Pekah. Ahaz begins his reign in the 17th year of Pekah, but this begs the question: is this year 17 out of the 20 which we have recorded for Pekah? The note about the 17th year comes in a record about Ahaz and gives the Judean perspective. The detail about Pekah having 20 years comes in a record about events in Northern Israel (2 Kgs 15:27) and we cannot simply assume the same base year. The text states,

In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria: twenty years. 2 Kgs 15:27 (KJV revised)

We have revised the KJV to reflect the Hebrew which states that Pekah began to reign in the 52nd year of Uzziah and notes a period of 20 years without stating Pekah *reigned* 20 years.

Thiele has shown how Pekah and Menahem were rival kings in Northern Israel.[[15]](#footnote-16) This situation raises the question as to when a king becomes a king—which king did Judah “recognise”? In the records about Judah’s kings, Jotham and Ahaz, the 2nd and 17th years are noted and the two notes pivot around the beginning and end of Jotham’s 16 year reign. This suggests that Judah recognised Pekah as a king in Israel in 747-746. This is illustrated below:



Jotham began his reign in 747-746 which was the 2nd year of Pekah from the point of view of the scribes keeping the records in Judah. However, from the point of view of Pekah’s own record-keepers, this was the fifth year of his assumption of power.

The points (1)-(3) above show that mistakes in interpreting the chronological data of the kings of the Dual Monarchy arise because it is not sufficiently recognized that the records are comprised of different contemporary source materials written from the perspective of Judah in the south and Israel in the north.

**Conclusion**

It is uncontroversial to propose that the Book of Kings was written over time as contemporary records were added to the ongoing history of the kings of Israel and Judah. It is surprising that there is not a single dating scheme in place for all events; the dating schemes of different source materials have been preserved intact. The integrity of the original inspired source has been respected.

### **The Brotherhood of Edom**

**T Gaston**

One of the key themes of the OT prophets is the brotherhood between Edom and Israel. This concept of brotherhood stems from earlier tradition that traces these two nations back to the two sons of Isaac: Esau and Jacob. The consensus of modern critical scholarship is that this tradition should not be regarded as being literally true. R. J. Coggins writes “it is impossible to treat as strict history the idea that Jacob and Esau were literally the foundations of the two nations all of whose people were descended from them”, (though he provides little evidence as to why this should be the case).[[16]](#footnote-17)

This scepticism is a consequence of a wider critical approach that interprets much of Genesis as the mythologizing of the Israelite nation. If it is assumed that these stories in Genesis have no historical basis then this hermeneutic becomes appealing. For instance, one might expect Ammon and Moab, as enemies of Israel, to be presented as the progeny of drunken incest. Accordingly, attempts have been made to identify a political situation in which Israelites may have felt empowered by the notion of the supremacy of the younger brother.[[17]](#footnote-18) Nevertheless this position is based upon the assumption – and assumption it is – that Edom and Israel did not share an ancestral heritage.

**The Political Relationship**

The consensus amongst OT scholars is that the concept of the brotherhood between Israel and Edom dates from the Monarchic period, following J. R. Bartlett’s influential paper: “The Brotherhood of Edom”.[[18]](#footnote-19)

It is in fact unlikely that the connection antedates the time of David, for it was not until David’s conquest of Edom (or possibly Saul’s, if 1 Sam 14:47 is to be trusted) that the existence of Edom as a political entity became at all important to Judah and Israel, and it was not until Edom became a subject nation that its identification with Esau, traditionally subject to Jacob, became conceivable or likely.[[19]](#footnote-20)

Implicit in this assessment are two propositions: i) that the accounts of earlier dealings with Edom are fictional (cf. Num 20:14f; Josh 15:1, 21; Judg 5:4); and ii) that Edom did not become a political entity till the beginning of the Iron Age (tenth century B.C.E.). The only significant evidence for the former proposition is the latter. The latter proposition is an interpretation of the archeological data which shows sedentary occupation around 2200-1800 B.C.E. and 1300-700 B.C.E. with an intervening period without archaeological trace.[[20]](#footnote-21) It proposed that during this non-sedentary period that Edom was occupied by nomadic tribes and hence there was no state of Edom till the thirteenth century, (some even suggest the seventh century!). Yet this interpretation is based upon outdated anthropological theories of state-formation. The idea that there was no state when there were no settlements is rejected by K. A. Kitchen, who identifies several Egyptian texts that refer to Edom during this period.[[21]](#footnote-22) The explanation of the lack of archeological sites from this period is probably that the Edomites were tent-dwellers. This does not preclude that Edom was a political entity during this period, which is witnessed by Egypt’s relations with Edom. Kitchen concludes:

*Like the dynasty of tented kings of Old Babylonian Manana, the Edomite “kings” were pastoralists, and warriors at need. So an Edomite continuity must be taken seriously all the way from the Execration Texts to Esarhaddon, regardless of whether the physical archaeology of Edom can (as yet) witnesses to it or not[[22]](#footnote-23)*

As a close neighbour, the Edomites would have been politically important to Israel as soon as their populations expanded enough to meet. The potential military threat of these pastoralists should not be ignored; the Edomites were a significant enough military power for Ramses III to make war upon them (c.1170). The idea that Edom did not register in Israel’s political consciousness prior to David’s conquests seem very improbable. Rather the campaigns of Saul and David against the Edomites probably indicate some prior tensions between these two nations, and thus a long-standing intercourse.

The majority of Bartlett’s article, “The Brotherhood of Edom”, is spent considering the various OT texts that allude to the brotherhood between Edom and Israel. However, since he dates the Pentateuchal texts late (Deut 2:1-8; 23:7; Num 20:14-21), the earliest text he has available is Amos 1:11-12, which post-dates the reign of David by several centuries. Consequently Bartlett presents no textual evidence from the supposed time of the formation of this discourse. Conversely, because of the way Bartlett dates the Pentateuchal texts, he can see no textual evidence at all from the period prior to the formation of the brotherhood-discourse, i.e. he can produce no evidence that this discourse did not predate the time of David.

Ultimately, Bartlett’s paper distills down to an argument from silence – there is nothing in the texts he considers to link the brotherhood-discourse to the time of David or to an earlier period.

**Genesis 25:25**

There are several passages in the Genesis narratives that seek to explain the origins of the kingdom of the Edomites, and particularly of the topological terms ‘Edom’ and ‘Seir’. These passages are keenly dissected by critical scholars, who regard these explanations as secondary to some alternative origin for the terms.[[23]](#footnote-24)

And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. Gen 25:25 [NKJV]

This passage, which describes Esau’s birth, does not use the terms ‘Edom’ or ‘Seir’. However, the terms for his attributes of being ‘red’ and ‘hairy’ have been identified as appropriate puns in a paronomasia. The consonants of ‘Edom’ ~da (*’dm)* and ‘Seir’ ry[f (*s‛yr*) are shared in ‘red’ ynwmda and ‘hairy’ r[f. It is argued that since the name ‘Esau’ (wf[) does not derive etymologically from ry[f, the explanation given in Gen 25:25 is rather an attempt to write an etymology for ‘Seir’ and ‘Edom’.

This reading requires discussion. The word ‘red’ in this verse is not ~da but the related word ynwmda (‘ruddy’; cf. 1 Sam 16:12; 17:42). A paronomastic link with the term ‘Edom’ is therefore not certain and it seems more probable that the description ynwmda is simply used to make the distinction between Jacob and Esau. The word ‘hairy’ here is ry[fbut the proposition that this cannot be the basis of Esau’s name overstates any case. While ‘Esau’ wf[ (*‛sw*) is not consonantly linked to ry[f (*s‛yr*)*,[[24]](#footnote-25)* the words do share meaning in that both words convey a sense of “rough-hairy”. Accordingly, the verse can be read as making the connection: ‘he was born covered with hair so they called him “Rough”’.

**Genesis 25:30**

It is in this second passage that the text explicitly attempts to explain the origins of the name ‘Edom’.

And Esau said to Jacob, ‘Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary’. Therefore his name was called Edom. Gen 25:30 [NKJV]

One might see some signs of discontinuity here and an interpolator. The explanation, ‘therefore his name was called Edom’, seems largely incidental to the rest of the account, which is primarily the story of how Esau surrendered his birthright. To diverge into the explanation of nomenclature in this way does seem odd, since one might expect it to come at the end of the narrative. On the other hand, since ‘Edom’ means ‘red’, it would perhaps be confusing to divide this explanation from Esau’s request for the red stew.

Such literary considerations mask the real question as to whether the nation of Edom was named because of the colour of the stew for which its forebear sold his birthright. The fact that critical sensibilities recoil at such an idea is not evidence in the case. Is it not at least conceivable that Esau should have been teased mercilessly by his peers for his rash trade? Since he had lost the right to his father’s title to inherit his name from the stew would seem a fitting jibe. This, of course, is simply speculation, but we must remember that many names have developed in this manner (the name ‘Christian’ was originally derogatory).

The alternative explanation that critical scholars provide is that the name ‘Edom’ stems from the “red tinge” of the mountains of Edom when viewed from Israel,[[25]](#footnote-26) and/or “the reddish color of the Nubian sandstone”.[[26]](#footnote-27) This explanation is not as dubious as the idea that Seir is so called because it is a hairy, or bushy, land[[27]](#footnote-28) yet still derives from the same fallacy that toponyms must derive from physical characteristics regardless of tradition or discourse. Contrary to critical aspersions, Genesis does not attempt to link the name ‘Seir’ to Esau but links the land of Seir to a Horite patriarch (Gen 36:20-1).

The consistent picture in Genesis is that Esau was given his name because of his rough appearance at birth and later acquired the name ‘Edom’ because traded his birthright for red stew. He gave this latter name to his descendents, who became the Edomites and occupied the land of Seir, previously occupied by the Horites (Gen 14:6; 36:30; cf. Deut 2:12f).

Critical scholars may prefer to interpret these ‘ancestor stories’ as political allegory, as “encapsulations of tribal experiences”,[[28]](#footnote-29) but this is a literary, rather than a historical, approach— it has no foundation in data. Even on a literary basis, it is acknowledged that there must be some core tradition to these stories that predates the political circumstances they allegedly portray.[[29]](#footnote-30) On a historical level, the meager information we have supports the general picture of the Genesis account, i.e. of the Edomites occupying the land of the Horites.

Nevertheless, whatever historical and archeological evidence we bring to bear upon the question of the origins of the Edomites, we shall never be able to be able to penetrate to the patriarch of that nation with any source outside the Bible. In this sense, at least, the veracity of the brotherhood tradition cannot be tested.

**Sociological Clues**

Before abandoning the question of the article, it is worth pursuing some sociology. If the nations of Israel and Edom truly spring from the same root, it is to be expected that they share some measure of tradition, culture and, more importantly, religion. The difficulty is that we have scant information on which to base any reconstruction of Edomite culture or religion. Two introductory points can be proposed:

1) The god (at least, the chief god) of the Edomites was named Qaus. This name is witnessed in the theophoric element of the names of two Edomite kings: Qaus-Malak (‘Qaus is king’) and Qaus-gabie (‘Qaus is might’). This is probably the same deity as Koze mentioned by Josephus (*Antiquities* 15.7.9). More recently Bartlett has noted that this name has been found stamped upon a jar handle at Tell el-Kheleifah.[[30]](#footnote-31) Though almost nothing is known about Qaus, a number of scholars have posited a link between Qaus and YHWH.[[31]](#footnote-32)

There is no reference to Qaus in the OT unless it is in the name Kushaiah (pos. ‘Qaus is YHWH’; 1 Ch 15:17), though this seems unlikely. Yet the absence of any reference to Qaus is in itself telling. Almost every other god of the surrounding nations is condemned at some point in the OT. Why is Qaus seemingly exempt if there is not some common background?

2) There are several indications of religious syncretism between Israel and Edom, which Bartlett draws out. The mention of Doeg the Edomite being ‘detained before the Lord’, i.e. because of a vow (1 Sam 21:7), implies that Edomites were allowed into the congregation of YHWH. This is explicitly stated in Deuteronomy, for though the Ammonite and Moabite were forbidden to enter the congregation, the Edomites are exempted from this prohibition (Deut 23:7). Bartlett comments on the possibility that several OT texts, including Job, and the writings of Agur and Lemuel were of Edomite origin.[[32]](#footnote-33)

The question is how did such religious syncretism arise between the religions of Israel and Edom? The true religion of the Israelites was fiercely monotheistic, but the people were often idolatrous. Each case would require a different explanation but it seems conceivable that favourable treatment of Edom in the Law indicates that the two religions came from a single root and then diverged. This proposition is theoretical and difficult to substantiate but if valid would provide strong collaboration of the primacy of the brotherhood of Israel and Edom.

**Conclusion**

The difficulty with assessing the veracity of the Genesis narratives, particularly those relating to the Patriarchs, is the lack of contemporary evidence. While we may be able to find parallels of the general situation, we are unlikely to find witnesses to individuals like Abraham or Esau in any text outside the Bible – they simply did not have a significant enough impact during their lifetime. From this perspective, it would seem the critical scholar has the upper-hand; if the critical scholar claims that these narratives are fictional the conservative scholar cannot **prove** the opposite. However we can question the basis of these critical claims, which, given the absence of evidence, are usually literary, rather than historical, in nature.

In the case of Esau/Edom, critical scholars have attempted to dissect the Genesis narratives to somehow reveal their ‘true’ purpose: political allegory, rather than reliable history. As we have seen, attempts to identify the political situation behind the Esau-narratives are flawed, as are other explanations for the origins of the name ‘Edom’. Also, when viewed apart from critical aspersions, the Genesis narratives read quite naturally as an explanation for the name ‘Edom’, and are, at least, conceivable. Once the critical opposition is removed, we can return to our scales of history and judge, on balance, which case has the greater evidence.

Though the evidence is meager, the general historical picture is consistent with the biblical account. We know that the land of Edom was formerly occupied by the Horites and that the Edomites migrated into the region. If they migrated from the west – and there is no reason to suppose otherwise – then this only adds weight to the Genesis-narrative. The possibility of some religious kinship between Israel and Edom is the only indicator of the ethnic kinship proposed in Genesis. Yet when juxtaposed against the complete absence of indicators to the contrary, these sociological clues must carry some weight.

In sum, we have few enough clues on which to judge the Genesis-narrative of the origins of Edom. Nevertheless, since the story is internally and externally consistent then there seems no reason to raise objections.

**Book Notice**

There is a generally accepted notion in biblical scholarship that the Bible as we know it today is the product of *editing* from its earliest stages of composition through to its final, definitive and 'canonical' textual form. So persistent has been this idea since the rise of critical study in the seventeenth century and so pervasive has it become in all aspects of biblical study that there is virtually no reflection on the validity of this idea” (from the *Introduction*). Van Seters proceeds to survey the history of the idea of editing, from its origins in the pre-Hellenistic Greek world, through Classical and Medieval times, into the modern era. He discusses and evaluates the implications of the common acceptance of “editing” and “editors/redactors” and concludes that this strand of scholarship has led to serious misdirection of research in modern times.

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**Psalm 89 and the Fourth Gospel**

**Paul Wyns**

**Introduction**

Psalm 89 is generally not recognised as contributing to the theology of the Fourth Gospel. The following article will act as a corrective by demonstrating the multiple allusions and echoes of the Psalm throughout the Fourth Gospel and particularly to John 12:34.

**Psalm 89 in the Fourth Gospel**

The people answered Him, We have heard from the law that the Christ (or, Messiah) remains forever; and how canyou say, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? (John 12:34)

Psalm 89 is not treated as a source for John 12:34 by R. N. Longenecker[[33]](#footnote-34), probably because it is neither a direct quote, nor is it attributable to Jesus by the Evangelist, but rather it is an allusive question directed to Him by the people. It begins with the introductory formula, “We have heard in our law”, which indicates that we are not dealing with a citation but with an impression obtained by the people “from the law”. It was inconceivable in the popular view that the Messiah could be crucified; moreover, in the people’s mind, Jesus confused matters with his “Son of Man” circumlocution. Who was this “Son of Man”? The “lifting up” (crucifixion) of the Messiah did not fit the popular theology.

There are a number of possible Old Testament sources that underpin the generalised belief in an everlasting Davidic monarchy (i.e. Ezek 37:25; Ps 110:4).[[34]](#footnote-35) Why then is Psalm 89 to be preferred as a source for John 12:34?

Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and *as* a faithful witness in heaven. Ps 89:35-37 (KJV)

Psalm 89 is to be preferred because of the original *Sitz im Leben* of the Psalm which has the imminent demise of Hezekiah as background.[[35]](#footnote-36) It is a royal Psalm of lament that reflects on Yahweh’s past acts of deliverance (The Song of Moses in Exodus 15) and is set against the imminent failure of the Davidic covenant (with allusions to 2 Samuel 7).

W. C. Van Unnik holds that Ps 89:37 was the source for John 12:34 and its remark about “the Christ”,

If it was said that the ‘seed of David’ would remain forever, it did apply *a fortiori* to the ‘Son of David’ which is a well-known name for the Messiah. At any rate this text is far more suitable as the source for John 12:34 and could more easily be adopted than any of the others adduced so far. It has the advantage of…being a specific text and not a vague reminiscence…offering parallels to the most important part of the text…[[36]](#footnote-37)

The objection is sometimes made that Psalm 89 does not qualify as “law”(we have heard in our law), but elsewhere the Fourth Evangelist has Jesus refer to Psalm 82 as “your law”(John 10:34). The proximity of Psalm 82 to Psalm 89 cannot be coincidental, especially as both Psalms contain a similar motif, namely: God among the elohim or divine council. (Ps 82:1 as judge; Ps 89:6 as incomparable). Moreover, the triumphal entry in John 12:13-15 with the antiphonal acclamation of *“*Hosanna*”* has connections with Passover deliverance - also a feature of Psalm 89. The following table demonstrates that allusions to Psalm 89 are not confined to John 12:34.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Psalm 89** | **The Fourth Gospel (4G)** |
| **9.** You rule the raging of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them. | **6:18-21** The disciples in a boat on the stormy sea – Jesus joins them and the boat immediately reaches land. |
| **26.** He shall cry to Me, You *are* **my Father,** My God, and the rock of my salvation. | **Father** is distinctive of the 4G |
| **35-37.** Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: **His seed shall endure forever**, And his throne as the sun before Me; It shall be established forever like the moon, Even *like* the faithful witness in the sky. Selah | **12:34** The people answered Him, We have heard from the law that **the Christ remains forever;** and how *can* You say, The Son of Man must be lifted up’ Who is this Son of Man? |
| **19.** I have exalted one chosen from the people. | **12:23.** The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. |
| **15.** **They walk, O LORD, in the light** of Your countenance.**46.** How long, LORD? **Will You hide Yourself forever?**  | **12:35. Walk while ye have** **the light,** that darkness may not overtake you.**12:36** While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light. These things Jesus spoke, and departed, **and was hidden from them.** |
| **Psalm 89** | **The Fourth Gospel (4G)** |
| **48. What man can live and not see death?** Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave? Selah | **8:51** Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word **he shall never see death.** |

Particularly notable is the use of “Father” in Psalm 89. J. A. T. Robinson observes,

That it was also Jesus’ most distinctive way of talking about God is further drawn out by the characteristic use of ‘Father’ for God on his lips...and even more when he speaks absolutely of ‘the Father’ ...[[37]](#footnote-38)

Scholars see in this the “*ipsissima vox* of the Master” and it is ubiquitous in the Fourth Gospel. Also prominent in Psalm 89 are the Hebrew word forms related to another distinctive usage by Jesus – “amen”. When Jesus used it to preface his own words, his usage formed an important element of the unique authority with which he spoke.[[38]](#footnote-39) The different forms of the root are all encountered in Psalm 89 (in relation to the Davidic covenant—as “faithfulness” vv. 1, 2, 5, 8, 24, 33, and as “truth” vv. 14, 49). The Psalm ends with “amen and amen”—essentially the “verily, verily” used by Jesus. However, the importance of Psalm 89 goes beyond lexical connections with the Gospel and lies in the historical background of the Psalm.

**The Historical Background of Psalm 89**

S. Mowinckel’s view of the setting of Psalm 89 is fairly typical of an approach adopted in certain circles of modern scholarship. He accepts Psalm 89 as one of the Royal Psalms, but then says:

They contain therefore no realistic description of the individual historical king and his particular situation. They present the royal ideal, the typical king as he exists in religious theory and in the people’s mind and imagination, and as he should be when he appears before God in the cult. The psalms presuppose and describe typical, constantly recurring situations, e.g. the situation at the death of the old king who is represented as a universal king. Before the enthronement of his successor, the vassals might be preparing insurrection (Ps. 2) or the enemies have overrun the country (Ps.89), but the deity arises to save his royal son (Ps.18), etc…[[39]](#footnote-40)

Such generic approaches prevent the Psalms having any specific historic relevance whatsoever, however, older scholars such as K. B. Moll and F. Delitzsch place it during the reign of Rehoboam, a position also adopted by D. W. Knife in his dissertation on Psalm 89; this is mainly influenced by the Psalm title attributed to Ethan who lived during David’s reign and possibly into that of Rehoboam.[[40]](#footnote-41) However, N. M. Sarna argues for the days of Ahaz and the anti-Assyrian coalition which desired to dispose of Ahaz in favor of a non-Davidic king (Isaiah 7). He states,

Bearing in mind all the foregoing, it is possible to reconstruct the nature of the events which produced the lament. This latter must reflect an invasion of Judea, but it must have been one that did not have as its primary goal the conquest of Jerusalem or the Temple. The real target was the reigning monarch, whom the invaders wished to depose and replace by an outsider, not of Davidic descent.[[41]](#footnote-42)

This would date the Psalm to 735-4 B.C.E., and comes very close to the setting that this article proposes. However, there is a considerable objection to this setting – and **that is the faithlessness of Ahaz.** The Psalm was written by someone who was distressed but faithful. Interestingly, it is said of both David (1 Kgs 3:6) and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:3//2 Chron 31:20; Isa 38:3) that they were **faithful** before Yahweh. Ahaz is the complete opposite of (truth/faithfulness/stability etc) because he refused to believe the covenant.

The most natural setting for this Psalm is the **reign of Hezekiah**; the reader is referred to the exegesis offered by Booker for a verse by verse exposition[[42]](#footnote-43) – suffice to say that the Hezekiah *Sitz im Leben* explains all the difficulties. The faithful king had attempted to reform the cult but became mortally ill and was about to die childless. He is a reference in the Messianic oracles of Isaiah and the Suffering Servant passages. His imminent death would have disannulled the Davidic covenant. Yahweh heard his cry for help and delivered him from his sickbed and also from the hand of his enemies (both internal and external). The Assyrians were supernaturally defeated outside Jerusalem **on the Passover**.[[43]](#footnote-44)

**The Passover**

The Passover deliverance from Egypt was celebrated with the Song of Moses (Song of the Sea) recorded in Exodus 15. Psalm 89 parallels the deliverance from Egypt (vv. 6-10) with the Passover deliverance of Judea from the hand of Assyria. The Passover featured large in Hezekiah’s reformation (2 Chron 30:2, 13-27) and Jerusalem was probably swollen with faithful celebrants from the northern tribes when it was besieged by Sennacherib. The Passover also features large in John 12 (cf. John 12:1) – as Longenecker (1975:153) notes,

Nonetheless, the emphasis upon the festal observances –particularly upon Passover – is an important feature in the Evangelist’s portrayal of Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel’s messianic hope and the substance of Israel’s ritual symbolism.

Unlike the Synoptists (Matt 26:36-46; Mk 14:32-42; Lk 22:30-46) the Fourth Gospel does not present us with an account of the wrestling in Gethsemane; instead it presents a stylized account in John 12:24-33 – “Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?” (v. 27), which is a composite allusion to Ps 88:3, “For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave”, and also to the Hezekiah Psalm recorded in Isa 38:15:“What shall I say? He has both spoken to me, and He Himself has done it. I shall walk carefully all my years in the bitterness of my soul”*.*

The “lifting up” of Christ was at the same time his “glorification” – a reference to the suffering servant of the Isaiah oracle; “Behold, my servant shall cause to understand, and be exalted, and glorified exceedingly (LXX)… So shall He sprinkle (cleanse) **many nations**” (Isa 52:13, 15).[[44]](#footnote-45) Interestingly, the word “glorified” (evndoxa,zw) occurs for the first time in the Septuagint version of the Exodus account and the Song of the Sea (Exod 14:4, 17, 18; 15:1, 6, 11, 21). Similarly, “glorify” (doxa,zw) is also used for the first time in the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:2).

Glory/glorification is thus associated with the salvific act of the Passover in John 12 (vv. 12, 16, 23, 28) and also in Exodus 15 (and by association Psalm 89). The Suffering Servant (Hezekiah) had undeservedly been afflicted with the “botch of Egypt” (Deut 28:27); this despite the promise by Yahweh the Healer in Exod 15:26 that he would not afflict the Israelites with the diseases of Egypt if they “did things **pleasing** before him” (LXX). This is the basis of Hezekiah’s prayer in Isa 38:3 (LXX): “Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, with a true heart, and have done that which was **pleasing** in thy sight”. Isaiah 53 (with Hezekiah as the backdrop) is extensively quoted and alluded to in John 12.[[45]](#footnote-46)

**Conclusion**

Psalm 89 forms the basis of the crowds’ question in John 12:34. It suits the Evangelist’s sense of irony that the crowd’s question concerning the “Christ abiding forever” should come from a psalm that contemplates the complete failure of the Davidic covenant. Once the psalm is contextualized against its correct “Hezekiah” background its relevance becomes even more obvious, as does its setting in the Fourth Gospel – with the imminent Passover demise (paradoxically, deliverance) of Christ. The contextualization of the Psalm is reinforced by the Evangelist’s use of Isaiah’s oracles which refer to the same background.

**Psalm 82 in the Fourth Gospel**

**Paul Wyns**

**Introduction**

A previous article investigated the use of Psalm 89 in the Fourth Gospel and briefly noted that both Psalm 89 and Psalm 82 make use of the “divine council” motif. It concluded that the relevance of Psalm 89 to the Fourth Gospel can only be appreciated by correctly understanding the “Hezekiah” background that led to its composition. When commenting on Jesus’ use of the Psalm, J. F. McGrath states that,

It is clear that an appeal is being made to Scripture, but the precise force that the argument is likely to have had has been the subject of considerable debate. The key to understanding John’s apologetic argument here is his use of Psalm 82.6.[[46]](#footnote-47)

**The Charge of Blasphemy in John 10**

The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, You are gods. If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, You are blaspheming, because I said, I am the Son of God? (John 10:33-36)

B. Lindars has already noted that the direct question placed by “the Jews” in John 10:24 concerning whether Jesus is the Christ (*tell us plainly*) reminds one of the synoptic trial narratives (cf. Matt. 26:23, Mk.14:61; Luke 22:67).[[47]](#footnote-48) Although some scholars view the Fourth Gospel as an extended trial narrative that replaces the traditional synoptic trials, it is virtually certain that the trial itself was an intensification of the challenges that Christ faced during his public ministry. As C. H. Talbert has observed,[[48]](#footnote-49) the apologetic themes in John 10 are a repeat of those in John 5; this indicates an ongoing discourse on Christ’s authority with at the core the charge: “You are blaspheming”.

Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter (ceimw,n)” (John 10:22)

The Greek for “winter” isceimw,n(*cheimōn*); the corresponding Hebrew for “winter” (@rx, *chrp*) could suggest a pun with the Hebrew for “blasphemy” (hprx, *chrph*).[[49]](#footnote-50) The theme of blasphemy is pertinent to the Feast of Dedication (otherwise known as *Hanukkah* or, the “Feast of Lights”), as it was indelibly linked with Antiochus Epiphanes and his blasphemous acts of sacrilege.

The Feast of Lights is originally thought to have been a pagan feast introduced by Antiochus Epiphanes[[50]](#footnote-51) and adopted by the Maccabees and reformed for the rededication of the Sanctuary (2 Macc 10:1-9). The pedigree of the feast is however far more ancient as A. Edersheim notes:

From the hesitating language of Josephus we infer that even in his time the real origin of illuminating the Temple was unknown.[[51]](#footnote-52)

It is suggested that *Hanukkah* originated with the dedication of the post-exilic sanctuary in the time of Zechariah and associations with the winter solstice were demythologized and replaced by enactment of the vision of the two “lamps” in Zechariah 4, which is incidentally also the haphtarah reading[[52]](#footnote-53) for the feast and a possible inspiration for the two “lights” in the Johannine prologue (John 1:7-9). Nevertheless, regardless of the origins of the feast, the profanation and blasphemy perpetrated by Antiochus is a key to understanding the charge of blasphemy brought against Christ.

McGrath[[53]](#footnote-54) observes that over one third of all the occurrences of blasphemy are found in the book of Maccabees. Further, in 2 Macc 9.12, which describes Antiochus on his deathbed, Antiochus is depicted as repenting and asserting that “no mortal should think that he is equal to God”, a phrase which is not unlike the accusation here, “You, although you are a human being, make yourself God” (see also John 5.18 where it is equality to God that is specifically mentioned). It thus seems highly plausible to suggest that John does intend his readers to recall something of the overtones and significance of this feast and of the scriptural texts that recount its origins.

On coins, Antiochus Epiphanes was *Theos Epiphan(e)s*, which means “god manifest”, and this is crucial to understanding the polemical background to the use of Psalm 82 but also to much of the trial and pre-trial narrative. Particularly the desire of Antiochus to change the Jewish customs and laws, a charge also levelled at Christ and Stephen.[[54]](#footnote-55) Even the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, although linked by the Gospels with the Zechariah oracle, is also evocative of the Maccabaean triumph over Antiochus IV Epiphanes (John 12:12-13; cf. 1 Macc 10:7; cf. Suetonius *Gaius Caligula* 32). This demonstrates that opinion was divided – was Jesus the Messiah, come to liberate the temple from foreign domination (*cf.* the Maccabaean liberation), or was he the antichrist (like Antiochus) who came to destroy the sanctuary? The question is not one of Jesus’ divinity, but rather whether he was a legitimate agent or a self-appointed one. McGrath notes,

It is the unity of action between Jesus and the Father, including the carrying out of divine prerogatives by the former, is what is in mind here...It would seem that the Evangelist is arguing that those who receive God’s commission to serve as his agent and/or vice regent are rightly called by the name of him who sent or appointed him.[[55]](#footnote-56)

**I said, “You are gods”**

The traditional explanation is that Psalm 82 refers to human judges in Israel, but this encounters problems in v. 7, where the “god(s)” are condemned to die like a man (*’ādām*).

But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Ps 82:7 (KJV)

Modern scholarship considers Psalm 82 to be based on Ugaritic mythology, and many Biblical themes do confront their counterpart in ancient Canaanite and Ugaritic mythopoetic texts, where the “Sons of God” form a pantheon of “gods” under the auspices of a “high god”. In Ugaritic mythology there were 70 sons of El (*KTU* 1.4: VI 46). El was “the highest king of a series of kings over various aspects of the universe”, while Asherah was a “Queen Mother” figure. The second tier included the “royal children”, the seventy sons of Athirat and El. These offspring (*bn ‘il* / *‘ilm*) were recognised as gods *(‘ilm*) but their authority was granted them by the level of highest authority.

Although Biblical engagement with Ugaritic mythopoetic materials[[56]](#footnote-57) is undeniable (there was a large common “pool” of culture and cultural metaphors), one cannot speak of dependence. The Israelite version was demythologized; the alternative was a theocracy with 70 appointed judges. These “seventy” judges came to form the Sanhedrin (seventy)[[57]](#footnote-58) who traditionally traced their authority back to Moses at Sinai.

**Christological Interpretation of Psalm 82**

Although Ps 82:7 is exegetically difficult (“gods” but nonetheless dying like men) it is obvious that when Christ refers to these “gods” he is speaking of human judges. As J. D. G. Dunn remarks,

Rather more striking is that the king or judges in Israel seem on one or two occasions to be called ‘gods’ even within the OT itself (Ps.45.6; 82.6; cf. Ex.21.6; 22.8;Isa.9.6f.), a significant factor when we recall how these Psalms passages are used in reference to Jesus in Heb 1.8 and John 10.34f.[[58]](#footnote-59)

It has been noted by scholars that these “gods” to whom the “word” of God came – must have been Israel receiving the *Torah* at Sinai. The Fourth Evangelist is drawing a typological parallel with Israel under the law; in this he deliberately draws from Deuteronomy:

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| --- | --- |
| **John** | **Deuteronomy** |
| **6:35** I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger**1:14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us**10:35** If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (cf. 10:36...whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world) | **8:3** That He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. |
| **10:18** This command I have received | **6:1** Now this *is* the commandment |
| **10:30** I and *My* Father are one | **6:4** The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one! |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **John** | **Deuteronomy** |
| **10:32** Many good works I have shown you from My Father. | **6:18** And you shall do *what is* right and good in the sight of the Lord |
| **10:38** ……..believe the works | **6:22** And the Lord showed signs and wonders before our eyes |

The Fourth Evangelist intends the reader to associate the sending of the word to Israel in the prologue (John 1:14) with the receiving of the word by the ‘gods’ in John 10:35: “gods, to whom the word of God came”*.* An analogy is drawn between the revelation of the *torah* at Sinai under Moses with the manifestation of the fullness of grace in Christ (John 1:16), who was the one prefigured by Moses: “a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren” (Deut 18:15).

Jewish Midrashic literature recognises parallels between Adam in Eden and Israel at Sinai.[[59]](#footnote-60) J. H. Neyrey comments:

Whoever, then, is called “god” is so named because “the word of God came” to them. Scholars have long argued that this refers to Israel at Sinai when God gave it the Torah, which I think is absolutely correct...in Jewish literature, there is a clear sense that Ps 82:6-7 was understood in terms of Israel at the Sinai theophany. A second-century midrash goes as follows: If it were possible to do away with the Angel of Death I would. But the decree has long ago been decreed. R. Jose says: It was upon this condition that the Israelites stood up before Mount Sinai, on the condition that the Angel of Death should have not power over them. For it is said: “*I said: Ye are Gods*”(Ps 82:6). But you have corrupted your conduct. “*Surely ye shall die like men*”(Ps 82:7, *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*,Tractate *Bahodesh* 9 (trans.Jacob Lauterbach; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society ofAmerica, 1933) 2. 272.

As McGrath also observes,

A fundamental connection thus appears to exist between the traditional interpretation within Judaism of Psalm 82 in terms of Israel/Adam typology, and aspects of the Christology which portrayed Jesus as exalted to heaven, serving as God’s vice-regent and bearing his name, which were important issues in the Johannine conflict with ‘the Jews’.[[60]](#footnote-61)

The controversy recoded in John 10 commences with Jesus walking in Solomon’s Porch. Josephus notes that it was the only part of Solomon’s temple that had survived (*Ant.* 20.9.7). The setting is appropriate for it was the “porch of judgement” where the throne was placed when important juridical decisions were required (1 Kings 7:7). The King represented God in the judgement process.[[61]](#footnote-62) The theme of Psalm 82 is God judging the “gods.” The following schema draws out the parallels that the Fourth Evangelist wishes to establish:

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| --- | --- |
| **Psalm 82** | **John 10** |
| **82:1** God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among **the gods**. | **10:23** And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon’s porch. **10:24** Then **the Jews** surrounded Him... |
| **82:2** Do justice to the afflicted and needy | **10:25, 32, 37**.....**works of the Father** (healing the blind man in the previous chapter) |
| **82:5** They walk on in darkness | **9:41** Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains. (cf. John 11:10) |
| **82:8** **Arise,** **O God,** judge the earth | **10:18** I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. (cf. John 20:28) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Psalm 82** | **John 10** |
| **82:8** You shall inherit all nations | **10:16** And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd. (cf. John 12:20,32) |

The argument is not (as is usually thought) a *minori ad maius* (from the lesser to the greater) – if you (the Sanhedrin) can be called “gods”, how much more can I. Nor is the argument a *maiori ad minus* (from the greater to the lesser) – if you (the Sanhedrin) can be called “gods” then what is wrong with my lesser claim to be God’s son? The argument is of a different nature altogether. The 70 elders had received the authority to operate as judges of Israel and therefore as divine agents of the law at Sinai. They may well have been appointed “gods” at Sinai but Christ’s claim of sonship was of a different order of magnitude. Christ did not lay claim to the position of Moses[[62]](#footnote-63), who was in charge of the Sanhedrin – Christ’s claim was far superior – his status parallels that of the *Yahweh* angel in the wilderness. Moses and the Sanhedrin (70 judges/princes) answered to the angel who bore the divine *Yahweh* name and who had functional equality with God.[[63]](#footnote-64) Just as his Father was incomparable (who is like God) amongst the “gods” of Egypt (cf. Ps 89:6-7, “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints...”), so Jesus was incomparable amongst the “gods” (Sanhedrin) of Israel. Jesus’ authority was superlative – here was no Antiochus, making blasphemous claims of God manifestation, changing their customs and profaning their temple. In contrast Jesus Christ was a legitimate agent sent by God, one who claimed legitimate prerogatives (forgiving sin, judging, giving life) normally associated with God. His resurrection would set the seal to his authority.

**Conclusion**

This investigation has only briefly touched on Psalm 82 and the Christological use made of it by the Fourth Evangelist. It has correctly pointed to the Sinai experience as the generic setting for the Psalm – but we propose for further research that the Psalm also has a more specific setting – the rebellion of the “Sanhedrin” in the time of Hezekiah.

**The Northerner in Joel**

**Andrew Perry**

**Introduction**

The term for “the Northerner” (ynwpc) presents a problem of interpretation that has been noted in commentaries, and this problem is whether it would have been used for locusts or a nation to the north and/or east of the land.

I will remove the northerner far from you, and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his front into the eastern sea, and his rear into the western sea; the stench and foul smell of him will rise, for he has done great things. Joel 2:20 (RSV)

Commentators note that locusts come from the *south* in Palestine and consequently they sense a problem in their “locusts” treatment of v. 20. The “locust plague” reading suffers from other difficulties besides the northern aspect: first, the locusts are driven in two opposite directions, as if the swarm is broken up by two diverse and opposing winds; and secondly, it is a swarm that has done “great things”. J. Barton does not think there is a geographical sense to the term and thinks it means nothing more than “the great enemy”. J. L. Crenshaw sees the description as a reflection of the prophetic pattern of an “enemy from the North”; and D. A. Hubbard sees the expression as a dramatic way of labelling the enemy.[[64]](#footnote-65) Accordingly some commentators see the northerner as an enemy nation, rather than locusts, and this is reflected in the KJV.

It is far more plausible that the locusts are metaphorical for an army, but problems can be posed for commentators who take “the northerner” to be a nation and its army. For example, H. A. Whittaker proposes that it is Assyria and Sennacherib in keeping with his 701 reading.[[65]](#footnote-66) However, an enemy from “the North” (!wpc) is not necessarily a “northerner” in colloquial speech.

The only other use of the Hebrew term for “northerner” (ynwpc) is transliterated as “Zephonites” (Num 26:15), and it denotes a family which were of the tribe of Gad, the northernmost tribe. In terms of the narrative perspective, “the northerner” implies the point of view of a “southerner” and this outlook is one that is *internal* to Israel and Judah as a whole, north and south. Furthermore, what happens to the army of the northerner—it is driven into a barren and desolate land and destroyed—did not happen to Sennacherib’s army in Isaiah’s account. This casts fatal doubt on Whittaker’s proposal that “the northerner” is Assyria and Sennacherib in 701. The same argument casts doubt on any proposal that “the northerner” is an Assyrian king with armies in the field, whether Tiglath-Pileser III, Shalmaneser V, or Sargon II (*mutatis mutandis*, the argument is fatal to Babylonian proposals).

**Zephonite**

The term translated “the northerner” requires analysis and the RSV and NASB make different choices:

But I will remove the northern *army* far from you, And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land, And its vanguard into the eastern sea, And its rear guard into the western sea. And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up, For it has done great things. Joel 2:20 (NASB)

I will remove the northerner far from you, and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his front into the eastern sea, and his rear into the western sea; the stench and foul smell of him will rise, for he has done great things. Joel 2:20 (RSV)

The NASB treats the Hebrew ynwpc as an adjective and inserts “army” as does the KJV. The RSV treats the word as a noun, and this makes the use of the term here consistent with Num 26:15; the term could have been transliterated as “Zephonite” (rather than translated as “the northerner”) thereby indicating a Gadite. While ynwpc is a rare word (2x), the form of the word is very common and it is part of a family of words like Ammonite(s), Haggite(s), Shunite(s), Moabite(s), Edomite(s), *and so on*. This data points to “Zephonite” being the correct rendering in Joel 2:20; were it not for a (mistaken) perceived incongruity on the part of scholars in such a particular detail being present in Joel’s oracles, translators would have chosen “Zephonite”.

**Who is the Zephonite?**

Our question therefore is: Who is the Zephonite? The answer depends on the date we assign to the prophecy of Joel as this will determine the historical period in which we look for a Zephonite. The question of date is beyond the scope of this article, and we will here merely assume a late eighth century date for Joel (750-700) in keeping with Joel’s position in the Hebrew canon. In this period, we need a local Zephonite to identify as the target of Joel’s prophecy.

Gad along with Reuben occupied the eastern bank of the Jordan (Gilead) in the original tribal division of land (Num 32:1-5). Gilead was the border area close to Syria and subject to dominance by Damascus (Amos 1:3-5). The area came under Assyrian control during the Assyrian subjugation of Syria and Northern Israel by Tiglath-Pileser III.

In the eighth century Judah was attacked by Rezin, king of Syria, then by Pekah, king over Northern Israel, and then by both kings in an alliance (2 Kgs 15:37; 16:5; 2 Chron 28:5-6). The series of attacks implied by the record eventually led to a siege of Jerusalem (Isa 7:1), and the response by Joel was to declare that the northerner was to be “driven into a parched and desolate land”.

At the time of the combined attack upon Jerusalem, Pekah and Rezin proposed to set up “the son of Tabeal” upon the throne of Judah (Isa 7:6). W. F. Albright[[66]](#footnote-67) has noted that Tabeal is mentioned in letters from the latter part of the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (732-727). In the letters a messenger is sent from Ayanûr the Tabelite to the Assyrian official complaining of incursions into the land of Moab by men of the land of Geder, (Josh 12:13). He observes that the name “Tabeal” points to a location north of Ammon and Gilead as “Ayanûr” is a typical name of this region. Our proposal is that this “son of Tabeal” is “the northerner”. As someone “of Israel”[[67]](#footnote-68) he was particularly resented as the pretender to the throne sponsored by Rezin and Pekah; hence, Joel’s invective signals him out for removal.

**The Face and Rear End of the Northerner**

An overtone of the oracles in Joel 2 is “face” although this is hidden in English versions.[[68]](#footnote-69) This comes out in the following verses,

A fire devoureth before their face them…the land *is* as the Garden of Eden before their face… v. 3

Before their face the people shall be much pained… v. 6

The earth shall quake before their face… v. 10

And the Lord shall utter his voice before the face of his army… v. 11

Accordingly, when Joel 2:20 states, “with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea” (KJV), the NASB correctly interprets this as a military statement. However, as we have noted, the NASB treats ynwpc as an adjective and supplies “army” as a complement, which in turn allows its translation of “face” and “hinder part” to be the “vanguard” and “rearguard” of an army. This approach removes the anthropomorphic metaphors of “his face” and “his rear end” which we should keep as it is part of the invective directed to a person.

The term for “hinder part” is a relatively rare word (@ws, 5x) mostly translated as “end/conclusion” (2 Chron 20:16; Ecc 3:11; 7:2; 12:13); there is no other instance of the word as a body-part which is the choice of the KJV. The RSV ambiguously renders the statement as “his front into the eastern sea, and his rear into the western sea”, but if we wish to retain the body metaphors we should translate the Hebrew as “his face into the eastern sea and his rear-end into the western sea”.

The focus is on “the northerner” and his two armies. This detail matches the situation in 734 with the armies of Rezin and Pekah in support of the “son of Tabeal”. The promise in Joel 2:20 is that these armies would be decimated to the south of Judah, one toward the west and one toward the east. A battle in Judah is a plausible inference from Joel 2:20 in which the Syro-Ephraimite forces are scattered to the winds and hunted down and destroyed. The Assyrian records however show that both Pekah and Rezin fled back to their respective capital cities in the rout. We can surmise however that the son of Tabeel was killed.

**Far Off in a Wilderness**

The fate of “the northerner” was to be removed “far off”; the same form of the verb occurs once elsewhere in Ps 55:7, where it used in conjunction with a reference to the *local* wilderness south of Jerusalem; it does not have to imply great distance.

While the KJV, RSV and NASB have “I will remove far (off) from you”, this does not reflect the Hebrew underlying “from you” (~kyl[m); a better translation would be “from against you”, thereby indicating that “the northerner” was an individual associated with a siege **against** Jerusalem. An example of this sense is,

And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you. Jer 34:21 (KJV), cf. Deut 29:5; Josh 6:5; Ezek 18:31; Jonah 1:12

The text states that “the northerner” is driven into a “parched and desolate land (hmmvw hyc)”,[[69]](#footnote-70) and this could be a disguised reference to Northern Israel (Hos 2:3, RSV); in this case, the “son of Tabeal” escapes with Pekah. However, it is just as possible that he is driven to the Judean wilderness and killed in the rout.

There is a further issue to note: the verb for “driven” is common (xdn, 54x), and it is used mostly of the driving out of the inhabitants of Judah and Northern Israel into captivity (e.g. Mic 4:6; Zeph 3:19; Dan 9:7).[[70]](#footnote-71) Hence, Isaiah uses the Niphal participle form of the verb to refer to the “outcasts of Israel” (Isa 11:12; 16:3, 4; 27:13; 56:8), and in Isaiah 8 the verb is used in the statement,

And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and *they shall be* driven to darkness. Isa 8:22 (KJV)

This oracle is relevant to the interpretation of Joel 2:20 because it comes from the time of Ahaz and the incursions of Samaria and Damascus into Judah. The “they” of this prediction are those of Northern Israel who would be “driven” to darkness in Tiglath-Pileser III’s campaign. Accordingly, we suggest that there is more to the declaration of Joel 2:20 than the removal of “the northerner” to a wilderness—it anticipates and foreshadows the scattering of Northern Israel.

**Assyrian Records**

In 735-734, Isaiah declared that Yahweh would bring the king of Assyria upon Rezin and Pekah (Isa 8:7), and he would overflow and fill the breadth of Judah and pass through the land (Isa 8:8). This happened insofar as Tiglath-Pileser III turned from his campaign against Philistia to both distress Judah and deal with the anti-Assyrian coalition of Rezin and Pekah (2 Kgs 16:9, 2 Chron 28:18).

The chronology of events at this time in the Assyrian Annals is the subject of scholarly debate,[[71]](#footnote-72) but a harmony of Tiglath-Pileser III’s records with the OT indicates an Assyrian Philistine campaign in 734, followed by military activity in Syria against Rezin and Syria’s borders with Northern Israel during 734-732. At this time, Hoshea was installed as king in place of Pekah by Tiglath-Pileser III.[[72]](#footnote-73) The Assyrian records do not describe an engagement by Tiglath-Pileser III of the combined armies of Pekah and Rezin; his campaign records describe his war against these kings in their respective lands. Tiglath-Pileser III’s campaign record notes that he took tribute from Moab and Edom as well as Philistia, and the Chronicles account notes the hostility of Edom and Philistia towards Judah at this time (2 Chron 28:17-18). There could well have been therefore engagement between Pekah’s and Rezin’s forces and the Assyrian armies which led to a rout that drove the vanguard and rearguard of the coalition’s armies in different directions.

Isaiah’s oracle ends with a description of the Assyrian’s stretched out wings embracing the land of Judah (Isa 8:8), which is an appropriate image to describe the covering effect of Assyria’s protection, a protection which constrained the territory and self-determination of Judah (2 Chron 28:20).

**Great Things**

The reason for the removal of “the northerner” is that he has done “great things” (KJV). The same Hebrew is used in the next verse for what the Lord *will* do:

…because he hath done great things. Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things. Joel 2:20-21 (KJV)

The Hiphil Perfect (lydgh, “become magnified”) conveys the image of someone magnifying themselves and the Qal Infinitive (twf[l, “to do things”) supplies the means—it is by their doings. Elsewhere the Hiphil is used of those who magnify themselves against Yahweh:

For *it was* not an enemy *that* reproached me; then I could have borne *it*: neither *was it* he that hated me *that* did magnify *himself* against me; then I would have hid myself from him… Ps 55:12 (KJV)

Make ye him drunken: for he magnified *himself* against the Lord: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision. Jer 48:26 (KJV), cf. v. 42

O Lord, behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified *himself*. Lam 1:9 (KJV)

Pekah and Rezin sought to place the “the son of Tabeal” upon the throne of Judah; this intention is significant within the purpose of God—they intended to remove the Davidic house and thereby the Davidic promises. This kind of self-exaltation is a characteristic of both Joel’s “northerner” and “the son of Tabeal”.

**Conclusion**

Commentators take “the northerner” of Joel 2:20 to be a common motif of the enemy from the north. Further, they identify this “northerner” as the “great people” that are upon the mountains of Judah in Joel2:2 and/or the “nation” of Joel 1:6. Since Joel is taken to be a post-exilic work, they see v. 20 as reflecting the earlier prophecies of an “enemy from the north” in Jeremiah and Ezekiel and prophesying an enemy in the “last days”. Our argument against this consensus approach is,

* The term for “northerner” is not generic but particular; it is not “the North” nor is it “the northerner”—rather it is “the Zephonite”.
* Joel is pre-exilic and stands at the head of a tradition about a northern power attacking the nation; it is not using “enemy from the north” traditions.
* Joel is not about a nation but an **individual**; it is not about an “enemy” but about an individual with two supporting armies.

Our approach is a different way of reading the flow of the oracles in Joel 2—a different balance of the rhetoric. The common reading takes “the problem” to be the invader upon the mountains of Judah and breaking into the city. This “problem” is then resolved in the action of the Lord to remove the invader once the people have repented, after which the land is restored. This is a “problem-resolution” reading pattern. Our contrary proposal is that the “problem-resolution” pattern consists in the ravaging of the land by the invader followed by the restoration of the “years” eaten by the invader; it is **within** this pattern Joel details the removal of a “northerner”.

**Discussion: Ecclesial Matters**

The EJournal will endeavour to publish in future an article per issue on what might be called “ecclesial matters”. These will be discussion pieces that engage current debates on questions of practise in ecclesial life. This is an expansion of the journal’s remit from a narrow academic and exegetical base to exposition and application of scripture in ecclesial life. The first article (below) considers the use of the divine name in praise and considers some example hymns in the Christadelphian Hymn Book in the light of scriptural usage.

Hymn Book

**Praise to God’s name and the Psalm form ‘Hallelu-Yah’**

**John Adey**

**Introduction**

This is an introductory study about praise to God. In this first instance, I am looking at praise to His name in the Biblical form: ‘Hallelu-Yah’(or, ‘Halleluia’ in the Greek of Revelation 19).

We can ask: How does Scripture present praise to God’s name? What is the associated language of praise? Or, what contexts or concepts connect with ‘HalleluYah’? When is praise undertaken? These are not academic questions. How we praise our God, what He counts as “acceptable words” to praise Him by, is vital to know and apply. An obvious exhortational point is that we have to have the mind of Christ on praise. ‘Hallelu-Yah’ comes from the Psalms, so the Psalmist, as a type of Christ, expresses the mind of Christ in psalmodic composition, and what more than in the use of ‘Hallelu-Yah’?

**Starting an Investigation**

A good starting point, before we look at ‘Hallelu-Yah’, is what Heb 13:15 tells us about praise, set as it is in the context of Christ’s sacrifice in a Letter written as “exhortation” (Heb 13:22).

By him [Jesus] therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips confessing to his name.[[73]](#footnote-74) (Heb 13:15)

‘Confessing’ is not restricted to declaring one’s sins as a prerequisite for God’s forgiveness. Jesus ‘witnessed a good confession’ before Pontius Pilate and Jesus promises to confess the name of a saint who has overcome, before his Father and the angels. ‘Confession’ also has pointed use earlier in the Letter to the Hebrews. Its primary sense in Greek is (from its components) ‘same-word’. ‘Confessing’ is a speech act of ‘**same-wording**’. In this context, where praise is sacrifice and fruit, ‘confession’ it is the result of a process. God’s word bears fruit in us, in our hearts by faith, and prepares us to direct praise to His name with our lips. We give back the same word, after its effectual working in us; God’s word has prospered in His/its aim, and not returned to Him void. His praises show forth in us. God is glorified.

Two points (at least) can be taken from Heb 13:15:

[1] God’s word, the language of truth, has to be the basis of our praise. We must praise Him in His language, not ours; spiritual not natural words: For “God is spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth”. Praise requires and relates to sacrifice: Jesus’ and ours - as we bear his reproach (Heb 13:13); the Letter to the Hebrews has already taught us what ‘bearing Christ’s reproach’ is by citing the case of Moses in Heb 11:26.

[2] This Epistle also tells us when praise should be undertaken, it said “continually” or “always”. It is not something which should cease; it should always occupy us; neither sense – continually or always - leaves an unattended moment. ‘Continually’ is hard to get around! How can we fulfil this as Christ did? Again, in addition to his example, we have his father David’s same-worded position on this. David, the Psalmist of Israel, sets the context in:

**Psalm 34:1**[**Context:**A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.] I will bless Yahweh at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

The Greek New Testament’s [GNT’s] ‘continually’ corresponds to the Hebrew word used by David, who adds:

**Psalm 34:3**O magnify Yahweh[[74]](#footnote-75) with me, and let us exalt his name together.

David’s, or the Psalmist’s, composition of Psalm language is from God. God’s words meaningfully engage with David’s experiences. Praise is on the Psalmist’s lips because the spirit of Yahweh spake in him, and God’s word was upon his tongue (2 Sam. 23:2). The NT also puts it as David uttering Psalms: “David himself said”. So, there is a coming together, for the purpose of revelatory composition, of God and David. They are one in revelation, or in inspirational (spirit) composition. Praise is a convert’s or a saint’s response to God’s redemptive work; to experienced deliverance from sin & victory over enemies.

Jesus provides the link between ‘praise’ and the ‘victory of salvation’ in Matt 21:16. He could see the end of a good work begun in those who had received his words; those who had become ‘(little) children’. Among these were the blind and the lame (v. 14). He had demonstrated God’s power to save by healing them in the temple. In response to the animosity of the chief priests and scribes, he re-presents language from Ps 8:2(3), bringing out what David’s words presupposed, applied in this NT context:

And [the chief priests and scribes] said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? Matt 21:16 (KJV)

Psalm 8 prefaces David as the Psalm’s composer. Its theme was to sing about God’s name. It begins and ends with:

Yahweh our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

This Psalm is recalled in Hebrews 2 as a prophetic description of Jesus’ nature, sacrificial work and glorification. So, in the words of Heb 13:15 that we started with it was: “by Jesus” (or, the spirit of Christ in the prophet David) that David was able to “offer the sacrifice of praise to God…confessing to his name”.

**‘Yah’ and ‘Hallelu-Yah’**

What have we seen so far? That God is known by His revealed name and it is the focus of praise. Many Psalms present praise to Yahweh by that name. However, over forty use ‘Yah’ instead of ‘Yahweh’, but most of our English versions do not help us to read either name because they just put ‘Lord’ for both (exceptions to this are the JB and NJB which print ‘Yahweh’). So, we have to get back to the original Hebrew.

What of ‘Hallelu-Yah’ and ‘Yah’ – the shortened alternative name form of ‘Yahweh’? In the OT, the composite form ‘Hallelu-Yah’, an injunction meaning ‘Praise you [plural] Yah’, only occurs in the Psalms and does so 24 times in 15 Psalms, beginning in Psalm 104 and ending in the last Psalm (Psalm 150).[[75]](#footnote-76) Psalm 68:4 is the sole case where KJV translators put ‘Yah’ (they used a ‘J’ instead of a ‘Y’), the shortened form of ‘Yahweh’ into English letters:

Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rides upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him. Ps 68:4 (KJV)

There is no linguistic or religious reason why all 48 instances of ‘Yah’ in the Hebrew Bible should not appear in English letters this (same) way. Should we be concerned about the use of ‘Yah’ in praise? The NT offers a lead on this point. In Rev 19:1-6 we read,

v. 1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Halleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

v. 2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

v. 3 And again they said, Halleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

v. 4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Halleluia.

v. 5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

v. 6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Halleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

The GNT represents the saints in the future praising God with the Hebrew form (Graecised in the NT) ‘Halleluia’ that is derived solely from the Psalms. This permits us, at the very least, to read ‘Hallelu-Yah’ as exhortation about our future, when we read the 15 Hallelu-Yah Psalms. Following the GNT we can read the transliterated form ‘Hallelu-Yah’ (GNT’s ‘Halleluia’) – instead of ‘Praise you the Lord’ – or express it in translation as ‘Praise you Yah’ with this future victory-praising in mind.

Psalm 102:18 states,

This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD Yah [Hebrew: Hy")-lL,h;y].

This word for ‘praise’ here is not ‘hallelu’ but a related future form: ‘yühallel’. So it is ‘yühallel-yäh’. The future tenses here tell us that there is a generation of people in the future that will praise Yah; in effect, they will use: ‘Hallelu-Yah’.

There is another link here with Revelation 19, because the phrase ‘to come’ in ‘generation to come’ is usually rendered ‘the last’. In Isa 44:6, God says, “I am the first, and I am the last”. ‘The last (one)’ in God’s use is the same form as in Ps 102:18. (The Hebrew for ‘last’ is related to the Hebrew for ‘afterward’ or ‘latter’, as in ‘latter days’). Thus, this created people, God’s people, are of the last generation, the kingdom time. They will have praised Yah in their lives anticipating what is to come, just as Jesus did in Matt 21:16. Ultimately, in the world to come, as part of the multitude celebrating God’s victory, they/we will praise ‘Yah’ using that name!

In Rev 15:1- 4 we read,

v. 1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

v. 2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

v. 3 And they sing the **song of Moses** the servant of God, and the **song of the Lamb**, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

v. 4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

Moses uttered a victory song of praise in Exod 15:2. It was typical of what is to come. This is the first time ‘Yah’ occurs in the Bible. (Moses uses it again in Exod 17:16, after the victory over Amalek. Its next use, in our order of books, is in Ps 102:18.) Moses sings,

Yah is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation:[[76]](#footnote-77) he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

This is a type of future “kingdom” praise. Another “last days” use of ‘Hallelu-Yah’ is in Ps 104:35,

Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD Yahweh, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD Hallelu-Yah.

Given that setting and outcome, Hallelu-Yah, again, is clearly to do with the last things and the establishment of the kingdom. It is depicted in Revelation 19 as the last or ultimate utterance of praise to God that there is to utter. This victory refrain follows Amen. So, not even ‘Amen’ is the last word; in Rev 19:4 it was ‘Amen. Hallelu-Yah’.

**Christadelphian Hymn Book**

Applying scripture to the composition of hymns today can be more or less harmonious. In the Christadelphian Hymn Book, no. 83, we might want to contemplate the relevance of God’s order in Revelation 19 and contrast it with Hymn 83, which has “Hallelujah! Yea, Amen”. It ends with ‘Amen’!? But ‘Hallelu-Yah’ surpasses, or goes beyond ‘Amen’ in Scripture. Indeed, the last Psalm, Psalm 150, does not end with ‘Amen’, a form that occurs often in the Psalms, but ends, with: Hallelu-Yah!

Revelation 19:4, with the order ‘amen’ first, then the praise form ‘Hallelu-Yah’ after it, has its precedent in Ps 106:48:

Blessed be Yahweh God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Hallelu-Yah.

This order also occurs in 1 Chron. 16:36, but not with ‘Hallelu-Yah’, instead, God’s full name-form follows ‘amen’:

Blessed *be* Yahweh God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, Amen, and praised [Heb: *hallel*] (to) Yahweh.

Another example in the Christadelphian hymn book is no. 75 which ends the Psalms section, and it is based on Psalm 150. However, this hymn contains no use of ‘Yah’ or ‘Hallelu-Yah’. Instead, it repeats ‘O praise ye the Lord’. It should be borne in mind that in the Hebrew Bible, there are no ‘Lord’ forms ´adon, or ´adoni, in combination with ‘Hallelu’, which would give rise to ‘Hallelu-´adon(i)’! ‘Hallelu- \_\_’, or ‘Praise ye’ is always ascribed to (and combined with) God’s name ‘Yah’. So, ‘O praise ye the Lord/´adon’ is not scriptural for this Old Testament expression; it just does not exist.

**Conclusion**

I conclude with a re-reading of Psalm 150, as I have given it below, with hindsight of this brief study. It facilitates the pronunciation of the text’s ‘Yah’ and two instances of ‘Hallelu-Yah’:

**Psalm 150**

 v. 1 Hallelu-Yah. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.

 v. 2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

 v. 3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.

 v. 4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

 v. 5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

 v. 6 Let every thing that hath breath praise Yah. Hallelu-Yah.

So, in the language of Eph 5:19, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” - we should combine ‘speaking’ (exposition) and ‘song’ that includes use of the Psalms. This will fulfil in us, or enable us to fulfil, what is “the sacrifice of praise”, by him. Use of God’s given words also point to our part in God’s victory through the Lamb.

**News: New Editor**

Bro. Tom Gaston has agreed to become an editor with special responsibility for early church history (roughly, up to Chalcedon). Tom has a special interest in this area and has done post-graduate work in the topic. The intention is for the EJournal to publish material that examines how doctrine developed away from first century teaching. This addition is hopefully one of several which will move the EJournal towards having several editors with specific subject areas including “Text and Languages”, “Biblical Archaeology”, “Second Temple Judaism”, as well as areas in Old Testament and New Testament Studies.

**News: Website**

The Website [www.christadelphian-ejbi.org](http://www.christadelphian-ejbi.org) has been updated. It has an extended selection of resource links and a new “Downloads” page for spreadsheets, PowerPoints, PDF articles and clipart—material that for one reason or another cannot go into the EJournal. For example, PowerPoints for lectures; spreadsheets setting out the chronology of the Kings; longer articles on topics in broader areas of theology such as apologetics—these types of material.

Christadelphian eJournal of

Biblical Interpretation

The “**Annual 2008**” (ISSN 1755-9227) of all four quarterly issues (newly proof-read and corrected) is now available as a bound paperback (316 pages), price £6.61 plus £4.20 postage and packing in the UK and available directly from:

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**END**

1. E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (New Revised Edition; Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1983). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), 188-190. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. J. B. Payne, “The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 126 (1969): 40-52 (40). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. The standard edition is B. H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III King of Assyria* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994), although here we will use ANET as a more convenient edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. As a record of the yearly governors against which the major campaign for that year is noted, the Eponym List is a valuable baseline for correlating the annals and inscriptions; for a convenient text see Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 221-225. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III*, 232-237, offers a table with his correlation of Tiglath-Pileser’s Calah Annals and various inscriptions to the Eponym dates. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. See J. H. Hayes and P. K. Hooker, *A New Chronology for the Kings of Israel and Judah* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988); M. C. Tetley, *The Reconstructed Chronology of the Divided Kingdom* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. This division is chosen because Jehu deposed the reigning kings of Judah and Israel in this year and there is a fairly secure external synchronism with the annals of Shalmaneser III which dates tribute from Jehu to the year 841. See B. Halpern, “Yaua, Son of Omri, Yet Again” *BASOR* 265 (1987): 81-85 for a recent decisive discussion against P. K. McCarter, “Yaw, Son of ‘Omri’: A Philological Note on Israelite Chronology” *BASOR* 216 (1974): 5-7. Thiele argues for 841 against McCarter in “An Additional Chronological Note on ‘Yaw, Son of Omri’” *BASOR* 222 (1976): 19-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. An illustration of this is the records about Ahaziah, king of Judah (2 Kgs 8:25-26; 9:29), which have him begin his reign in the 11th and 12th year of the reign of Joram king of Israel and spell his name differently. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. For a discussion of this difference in dating and the evidence see D. J. A. Clines, “Regnal Year Reckoning in the Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah” in his *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays, 1967-1998* (2 vols; JSOTSup 292; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 1:395-421. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. For example, Asa dies in his 41st year (2 Chron 16:13), but his reign is given as 41 years (1 Kgs 15:9-10). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. For a discussion of the evidence see D. J. A. Clines, “The Evidence for an Autumnal New Year in Pre-Exilic Israel Reconsidered” in his *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays, 1967-1998* (2 vols; JSOTSup 292; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 1:371-394. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. An accompanying spreadsheet has been placed on the EJournal website under “Downloads”. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. For a discussion of the syntax see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (2nd Ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), sections 200, 500. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. This is just the observation that the Kings includes source materials with complimentary historical perspectives. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. *Mysterious Numbers*, 63, 129-131. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. R. J. Coggins, *Israel among the Nations: A Commentary on Nahum and Obadiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 70-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. J. R. Bartlett, “The Brotherhood of Edom” *JSOT* 4 (1977): 2-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. J. J. McDermott, *Reading the Pentateuch: A Historical Introduction* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2002) 56-8; G. W. Ramsey, “Israel’s Ancestors: the patriarchs and matriarchs” in *The Biblical World* (ed. J. Barton; 2 vols; London: Routledge, 2002), 2:178. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Bartlett, “Brotherhood”, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. N. Glueck, “The Boundaries of Edom”, *Hebrew Union College Annual* 11.1, (1936): 141-157 (141f).; [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 473-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Kitchen, *Reliability,* 474. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. S. E. Grosby, “The Successor Territory” in S. E. Grosby and A. S. Leoussi, *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 108f; T. Hiebert, *The Yahwist’s Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 102f. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. [Ed. AP] Two consonants are shared but the order reversed; this could still be a paronomasia. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Grosby, “Successor Territory”, 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Hiebert, *Yahwist’s Landscape,* 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Hiebert, *Yahwist’s Landscape,* 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Ramsey, “Israel’s Ancestors”, 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. For instance, Ramsey argues that the Genesis narratives “exhibit a consciousness of a distinction between the religion of the patriarchs and the religion of Israel in later times”, “Israel’s Ancestors”, 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. J. R. Bartlett, “The Moabites and Edomites” in *People of Old Testament Times* (ed. D. J. Wiseman, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Bartlett, “Moabites and Edomites”, 246f. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Bartlett, ‘Edomites’ , 246 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Although it is not a citation one would expect a discussion on the possible sources of John 12:34 in his section on the quotations of John, instead it is entirely omitted. R. N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis In the Apostolic Period* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1975), 152-157. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. See the discussion by R. Bauckham: he considers the merits of the *Ps. of Sol*. 17:4 and also suggests Genesis 49:9-12 as source/background for John 12:34 in “Messianism According to the Gospel of John”in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John* (ed., J. Lierman; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 65-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. See H. A. Whittaker, *Isaiah* (Cannock: Biblia, 1988),G. Booker and H. A. Whittaker, *Hezekiah the Great: The Songs of Degrees* (Birmingham: CMPA, 1985). All the Korah Psalms are from the same period, on which see G. Booker, *Psalms Studies* (2 vols; Austin: George Booker, 1989-1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. W. C. Van Unnik, “The Quotation from the Old Testament in John 12:34” *Novum Testamentum*, 111:3 (July, 1959): 178-179. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. J. A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 308-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. The formula is translated as “Verily (*‘āmēn*), verily (*‘āmēn*), I say unto you”(KJV) in the following places in the Fourth Gospel: 1:51; 3:3, 5, 11; 5:19, 24f; 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58; 10:1, 7; 12:24; 13:16, 20f, 38; 14:12; 16:20, 23; 21:18. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. S. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. K. B. Moll, *The Psalms* (trans., C. A. Briggs; Lange’s Commentary on the Holy Scriptures; Edinburgh: Scribner, 1872), 482; F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (3 vols; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1968), 3:34; D. W. Knife, *Psalm 89 in the Ancient Near East* (Unpublished Th. D. Diss., Grace Theological Seminary, 1973), 57-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. N. M. Sarna, “Psalm 89: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis” in *Biblical and Other Studies* (ed. A. Altmann; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. The mention of Ethan (i.e. Jeduthan) in the title is not considered a problem by Booker as Jeduthan is also a contemporary with Hezekiah (cf. 2 Chron.29:14; 35:15), suggesting that his name became attached to a guild or temple office (like Asaph cf. Neh 11:17); Booker, *Psalms Studies,* 2:525-533. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. Several allusions in Isaiah indicate that the siege of Jerusalem took place at Passover (Isa 26:20, 21; 30:29; 31:5; 33:19, 20). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Another motif that links John 12 with Isaiah is the Gentiles. In John 12:20-23 the Greeks request an audience with Christ, who points out the universality of his sacrifice (will draw all men to me, v. 32). The Isaiah oracle also develops the theme of Gentile inclusiveness. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Apart from the obvious quotes from Isaiah (John 12:38, 39, 41) there are copious allusions; see H. A .Whittaker*, Studies in the Gospels* (Cannock: Biblia, 1989), 594-595. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. “You *are* gods, and all of you *are* children of the Most High” (Ps 82:6). J. F. McGrath,*John’s Apologetic Christology: Legitimation and Development in Johannine Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. B. Lindars, *Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 368. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Jesus claims unity with God (John 5:17, 19-21//10:25-30, 37-8); the Jews accuse him of seeking “equality” with God (John 5:18//10:33); they seek to kill him (John 5:18//10:31), evoking an apologetic response appealing to Scripture (John 5:39-40; 46-7//10:34-5)—C. H. Talbert, *Reading John* (New York: Crossroads, 1982), 169-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. H. A. Whittaker, *Studies in the Gospels* (Cannock: Biblia, 1989), 455. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Antiochus instituted the pagan festival of “light”, which celebrated the rebirth of the sun, and had a Greek altar erected upon the old altar in the temple court (Dan 11:31; cf. Josephus *Ant*. xii.5.4). The first victim was sacrificed to Jupiter Olympius on the twenty-fifth (Dec 16, 167 B.C.E.) of the same month, since that date was celebrated as his birthday. All this was a serious political error on the part of Antiochus. Instead of consolidating his empire around Hellenistic culture and religion, he sparked the Maccabean revolution; see B. K. Waltke, “Antiochus IV Epiphanes”, *ISBE*, 1:145-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. A. Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services at the Time of Jesus Christ* (Exeter: Wheaton, 1959), 335. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Numbers 7 is read over the eight feast days supplemented with Zech 2:14-4:7 on the first Sabbath in Hanukkah. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. *John’s Apologetic Christology*, 120-121. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. The *prosecution charges* brought in the trial of Christ (and Stephen) drew their theological warrant from Danielic Apocalyptic – which in turn evoked a Danielic response from Christ (and Stephen); see P. Wyns, “Daniel Apocalyptic and the Son of Man” in *Christadelphian EJournal of Biblical Interpretation Annual 2007* (2nd ed.; eds., A. Perry and P. Wyns; Sunderland: Willow Publications, 2007), 145-166. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. *John’s Apologetic Christology*, 120-126. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. For a recent selection see S. B. Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (SBL Writings from the Ancient World Series 9; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. The LXX of Ps 82:1 has “God stands in the assembly (sunagwgh,,, synagogue) of gods”. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 15-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. J. H. Neyrey, “I said: Ye are Gods”: Psalm 82:6 and John 10”[cited online January 2009: 2008] http://www.nd.edu/~jneyrey1/Gods.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. *John’s Apologetic Christology*, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. The word of my lord the king will now be comforting; for as the angel of God, so *is* my lord the king in discerning good and evil (2 Sam 14:17). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. The fact is that although Moses was “faithful in all his house” (Heb 3:2) and was a “prince” of Egypt and made a “god” to Pharaoh (Exod 7:1) – he rebelled and failed and was therefore not allowed entry into the land (Deut 1:37; 32:51). Although a “god”, he died like Adam and fell like one of the princes (Ps 82:7) – and for the same reason as Adam – exceeding his legitimate authority (Num 20:10-13). The same theme is found in the Korah rebellion (Numbers 16). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name *is* in Him (Exod 23:21). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. D. A. Hubbard, *Joel and Amos* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries; Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1989), 63; J. Barton, *Joel and Obadiah* (OTL; WJK Press, 2001), 47-48; J. L. Crenshaw *Joel* (AB 24C; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 150-151. B. S. Childs details the prophetic pattern of an enemy from the north in his article, “The Enemy from the North and the Chaos Tradition” *JBL* 78 (1959): 187-198, (197). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. H. A. Whittaker, Joel (Cannock: Biblia, 1989), 4; see also E. B. Pusey, *Joel and Obadiah* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1906), 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. W. F. Albright, “The Son of Tabeel (Isaiah 7:6)” *BASOR* 140 (1955): 34-35. For a recent discussion, see J. K. Kuan, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions and Syria-Palestine* (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 1995), 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. ‘Tabeel’ or ‘Tabeal’ means ‘El is good’. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. Crenshaw, *Joel*, 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. For a discussion of the motif of the “dry land” see O. Lund, *Way Metaphors and Way Topics in Isaiah 40-55* (FAT 2/28; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 75-76. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Within Jeremiah the pattern is clear for most uses of the verb “to drive”: 8:3; 16:15; 23:2, 3, 8; 24:9; 27:10, 15; 29:14, 18; 30:17; 32:37; 40:12; 43:5; 46:28; 50:17; but Ammon is also driven out—49:5, 36. Ezekiel uses “to drive” of Judah and Israel: 4:13; 34:4, 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. B. Oded, “The Historical Background of the Syro-Ephraimite War Reconsidered”, *CBQ* 34/2 (1972): 153-165; R. Tomes “The Reason for the Syro-Ephraimite War” *JSOT* 59 (1993): 55-71; Kuan, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions and Syria-Palestine*, 186-192. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. ANET, 274, 283-284. For a harmonic description see J. Bright, *A History of Israel* (OTL; 2nd Edn.; London: SCM Press, 1972), 271-273. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. The KJV has ‘giving thanks’ and not, as other English versions correctly have: ‘confessing to his name’. Yet, throughout Hebrews the KJV renders this Greek term homologountōn – or its cognates built from homo + logos – by: ‘profess(ion)’ in Heb 3:1; 4:14; 10:23; or ‘confess(ed) in Heb. 11:13. Homo + logos is ‘confess’ in: 1 Jo. 1:9; 4:2, 3, 15; 2 Jo. 1:17; Rev. 3:5. For ‘giving thanks…’ eucharistountes would be expected. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. ‘Yahweh’ is God’s name in its full form; ‘Yah’ – as in ‘Hallelu-Yah’ - is its shorter form. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. All 23 instances of the Hebrew hyphenated (or ‘maqqēp) form ‘Hallelu-Yah’: Ps 104:35; 105:45; 106:48; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1, 9; 115:18; 116:19; 117:2; 135:1, 3, 21; 146:1, 10; 147:1, 20; 148:1, 14; 149:1, 9; 150:1, 6. Note: In Psa. 106:1 there is a single instance of ‘HalleluYah’ written without a hyphen/maqqēp. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. It would be an interesting digression, but I resist doing so here, to link-in Jesus’ name, which is built from ‘Yah’ and ‘salvation’, as seen in its Hebrew form: ‘Yehoshua’. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)