

Psalm 110 (109) and Israelite Royal Ritual

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Resumen: Entre las composiciones más oscuras de la Biblia, el Salmo 110 (109) revela el patrón de un ritual de entronización real, comparable, en parte a las ceremonias narradas en el Libro de los Reyes (1 Re 1: 32-53; 2 Reyes 11: 4-20). Este artículo proporciona una exégesis del difícil poema hebreo, observando paralelos con textos reales de Egipto y Mesopotamia. El presente trabajo considera las diferencias en la versión griega del texto. Aunque algunos ecos del Salmo 110 aparecen dentro de la descripción de la investidura de Simón Macabeo como líder cívico y sumo sacerdote (1 Macabeos 14), los macabeos eran sacerdotes que tomaban el poder civil en lugar de reyes que eran nombrados sacerdotes (Sal 110,4). Por lo tanto, el salmo parece provenir de la primera monarquía, alrededor del tiempo en que todavía era posible decir que “los hijos de David eran sacerdotes” (2 Sam 8:18).

Palabras clave: Coronación, entronización, mesianismo, Macabeos, Melquisedec, salmo real.

Abstract: Among the most obscure compositions in the Bible, Psalm 110 (109) reveals the pattern of a royal enthronement ritual, partly comparable to ceremonies narrated in the Book of Kings (1 Kgs 1:32-53; 2 Kgs 11:4-20). This article provides an exegesis of the difficult Hebrew poem, noting parallels with royal texts from Egypt and Mesopotamia. The article then considers differences in the Greek version of the text. Although some echoes of Psalm 110 appear within the description of the investiture of Simon Maccabee as both civic leader and high priest (1 Maccabees 14), the Maccabees were priests who took on civil power rather than kings who were appointed priests (Ps 110:4). Accordingly, the psalm seems to originate from the early monarchy, around the time when it was still possible to say that “David’s sons were priests” (2 Sam 8:18).

Keywords: Coronation, enthronement, messianic, Maccabees, Melchizedek, royal psalm.

Psalm 110 is one of the shortest yet also one of the most obscure compositions in the Psalter. Hans-Joachim Kraus warns of its textual, historical, and cultural difficulties: “No other psalm has in research evoked so many hypotheses and discussions as Psalm 110.... We should at once emphasize that both in questions of textual criticism and in history-of-religions problems the last word has not yet been spoken.”¹ Most commentators have accepted Hermann Gunkel’s classification of Psalm 110 as a royal psalm (along with Psalms 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 132; 144).² However, scholars still differ widely on its dating, with estimates varying from the early Israelite monarchy to the time of the Maccabees.

Although Psalm 110 was later understood in a messianic sense, Hans-Joachim Kraus and Erich Zenger have viewed it (like Psalms 2 and 72) as revealing the pattern of a royal enthronement ritual.³ The Book of Kings narrates only two such ceremonies, both of them occurring in hasty and unusual circumstances. The first account deals with Solomon’s enthronement (1 Kgs 1:32-53), while the second report describes the coronation of young King Joash or Jehoash of Judah (2 Kgs 11:4-20). To reconstruct Israelite enthronement rituals, we can examine textual and iconographic evidence for Egyptian enthronement ceremonies from a wide time span, though there are fewer records of Assyrian rites of enthronement.⁴

By analogy with royal accession ceremonies in Egypt and Mesopotamia, Roland de Vaux reconstructs ancient Israelite enthronement rituals as involving six stages: the monarch’s arrival at the sanctuary (2 Kgs 11:11-12; 1 Kgs 1:39); investiture with the

¹ H. J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-15*, Minneapolis 1989, 345; E. Zenger and F. Hossfeld, *Psalms 3*, Minneapolis 2011, 143. This article will employ the Hebrew psalm numbering system throughout, and all biblical translations are mine, unless otherwise stated.

² H. Gunkel and J. Begrich, *Einleitung in die Psalmen*, Göttingen 1966, 140-71. The idea of a specific genre of royal psalms is questioned by M. von Nordheim, *Geboren vor der Morgenröte? Psalm 110 in Tradition, Redaktion und Rezeption* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 117), Neukirchen-Vluyn 2008, 18-21.

³ H. J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 347; E. Zenger and F. L. Hossfeld, *Psalms 3*, 144; J. W. Hilber, *Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 352), Berlin 2005, 83-85; O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, New York 1978, 256.

⁴ H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, Chicago 1948, 105-9 and 243-248.

royal insignia of office, such as sceptre and crown (2 Kgs 11:12); anointing (1 Kgs 1:39; 2 Kgs 11:12); public acclamation (1 Kgs 1:34, 39; 2 Kgs 11:12, 14); enthronement (1 Kgs 1:46; 2 Kgs 11:19); and homage (1 Kgs 1:47, 53).⁵ Several of the stages of the ceremony are visible in Psalm 110, though the specific actions of coronation and anointing are not mentioned.

The divine oracle in v. 1, officially appointing the new king to his office, refers to the enthronement of the monarch at God's right hand. The psalm identifies the sacred location as Zion (v. 2), and v. 3 refers to the "sanctuary" (שֶׁקֶד). The symbols of royal office include "the staff of your strength" (v. 2), while the mention of sanctuary attire in the Hebrew text of v. 3 suggests that the party surrounding the monarch wore ceremonial clothing for the solemn occasion. The document of royal appointment (sometimes called the protocol) seems to be the divine oracle in v. 1, perhaps continuing into v. 2, while (unusually for Israelite monarchs) the psalm adds a statement of priestly appointment in the divine oracle of v. 4. If we accept the MT vocalization at the beginning of v. 3, the psalm records the willing public acclamation offered to the new king. Whereas other psalms speak of gifts sent in homage by foreign rulers (Ps 72:10-11), vv. 5-6 here describe the enforced military imposition of the new monarch's power over other nations. Although the psalm was taken up as messianic within the NT, its original sense was doubtless a hyperbolic celebration of the enthronement of a human king.

From a traditio-historical perspective, it is useful to compare Psalm 110 with Psalm 2, another royal psalm often connected with enthronement ritual.⁶ Both psalms describe God's appointment of a king based at Mount Zion. At the beginning of the second half, both psalms include a direct divine address, "you" (אַתָּה), to the one newly appointed to high office (Pss 2:7; 110:4). Both psalms mention the new monarch's dominion over the nations (גוֹיִם - 2:8; 110:6), depicted as being subject to the divine wrath (אַף - 2:5, 12; 110:5). Both psalms also refer to the "way" (דֶּרֶךְ) in the final verse. Both

⁵ R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, New York 1961, 102-7. J. Corley, "Elements of Coronation Ritual in Isaiah 11:1-10," in *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 35 (2012) 1-29, esp. 4-6.

⁶ E. Bons, "Die Septuaginta-Version von Psalm 110 (Ps 109 LXX)," in D. Sänger (ed.), *Heiligkeit und Herrschaft: Intertextuelle Studien zu Heilikeitsvorstellungen und zu Psalm 110* (BThSt 55), Neukirchen-Vluyn 2003, 122-145, esp. 141.

psalms utilize the same six-letter Hebrew word (יִלְדִיתִךְ), perhaps referring to the new king's "birth," though the MT provides different vocalizations in the two instances (Pss 2:7; 110:3). Both psalms refer to the sanctuary (קֹדֶשׁ), and a Cairo Genizah manuscript of Ps 110:3 agrees with Ps 2:6 in speaking of the mountain(s) of the sanctuary, though MT Ps 110:3 refers to sanctuary robes. As a sign of his royal authority, the new king wields מִטֵּה עֹז (the staff of your strength) in Ps 110:2 but שֵׁבֶט בְּרִזָּל (an iron sceptre/rod) in Ps 2:9.

The two psalms diverge in how the royal appointment is conceived. Whereas Psalm 110 lacks the royal title of "son" (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7), Psalm 2 does not call the king "my master" (Ps 110:1). According to Psalm 110 but not Psalm 2, the enthronement involves being appointed to a priestly role (Ps 110:4). Psalm 2 speaks of the pagan nations raging in rebellion against the new king (v. 1), which is not directly expressed in Psalm 110. Psalm 2 also invites the active homage of pagan kings (v. 11), yet in Psalm 110 these kings are instead smashed (v. 6). Psalm 110 speaks of the willing homage of the king's own people (v. 3), which is not expressed in Psalm 2.

This article will provide a historical-critical study of the Hebrew psalm, using the LXX to elucidate textual difficulties and indicating the relationship to Israelite enthronement ritual in the light of Egyptian and Mesopotamian parallels. Thereafter, aspects of the LXX psalm will be considered, before the question of the psalm's origin is addressed.

HISTORICAL-CRITICAL EXEGESIS OF PSALM 110

a. Divine oracle of royal enthronement (vv. 1-2)

MT: Oracle of YHWH to my master:

'Be enthroned at my right hand,
while I place your enemies as a stool for your feet.'

The staff of your strength YHWH will send out from Zion:
'Have dominion in the midst of your enemies.'

The psalm opens with a divine oracle, officially appointing the new king to his office, symbolized by his enthronement. The Psalter employs the word נֹאֵם (oracle) only once elsewhere, where the personified figure of sin is the speaker: "Oracle of transgression

to the wicked person in the midst of his heart” (Ps 36:2). More similar to our passage is the opening of the poetic last words of David (2 Sam 23:1): “Oracle of David son of Jesse.” Generally the term נאם denotes a prophetic message, and it occurs in this sense more than 150x in Jeremiah, but mostly at the end of a statement.⁷ Here we may envisage a court prophet delivering a message of divine approval to the new monarch.

By analogy with Egyptian practice, scholars suggest that an Israelite enthronement ceremony included the giving of a document of royal appointment.⁸ Othmar Keel describes a relief from the Karnak temple illustrating Pharaoh Seti I’s coronation (ca. 1300 BCE): “The ibis-headed Thoth, scribe of the gods, is seen writing the protocol for the newly crowned king.”⁹ At his royal accession the young Joash received, not only the crown, but also the “testimony” or “treaty” (עדות) from the priest Jehoiada (2 Kgs 11:12). Many scholars accept Gerhard von Rad’s proposal that the term denotes the royal protocol handed over to the king at his coronation.¹⁰ In fact, von Rad equates the Israelite protocol (עדות) with the divine decree (קֶהָ – Ps 2:7), announcing the new monarch’s adoption as a son of God. In Psalm 110 the document of royal appointment may include not only the divine decree in v. 1 but also subsequent statements.

Psalm 110 conveys the idea of enthronement with the imperative verb שָׁב which literally means “sit” (v. 1). After Jerusalem became Israel’s capital, the anointing of an Israelite monarch was completed by his enthronement. Following his royal anointing, we hear that “Solomon has sat on the throne of kingship” (1 Kgs 1:46), and after Joash’s anointing, we read that “he sat on the kings’ throne” (2 Kgs 11:19). Similarly, in both Egyptian and Assyrian royal ritual, enthronement symbolized accession to royal power, whereby the newly-crowned king became the person empowered with divine authority to rule.

Commentators have discussed the exact meaning of the new monarch’s enthronement at God’s “right hand,” a concept which seems to be present also in the petition for the king in Ps 80:18:

⁷ M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 48.

⁸ O. Keel, *Symbolism*, 259-260; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 103. G. von Rad, “The Royal Ritual in Judah”, *ibid.*, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, New York 1966, 222-231, esp. 225.

⁹ O. Keel, *Symbolism*, 259-260 (fig. 349).

¹⁰ G. von Rad, “Royal Ritual”, 225.

“Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand” (אִישׁ יְמִינֶךָ). Keel has interpreted this notion as a reference to the geographical location of the king’s palace on the right side (= south) of the Jerusalem temple.¹¹ Keel also refers to a representation of Pharaoh Horemheb (late 14th century BCE) enthroned at the right hand of the royal god Horus, while Zenger notes a set of Egyptian statues depicting Pharaoh Rameses II (13th century BCE) seated at the right side of the sun-god Re.¹² Such images serve as an iconographical depiction of the divinely-authorized enthroned status of the monarch. An Ugaritic mythological text speaks of the enthronement, at Baal’s right hand, of the craftsman-deity Kothar-and-Khasis (meaning Skilful-and-Clever): “They made ready a seat and he was seated on the right hand of mightiest Baal” (4.v.108-10).¹³

The enthronement takes place “while (or: until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet)” (Ps 110:1).¹⁴ Both Keel and Zenger reproduce a gruesome tomb painting of an enthroned Pharaoh being supported by one of the Egyptian deities and with his feet resting on a box containing enemy corpses.¹⁵ In a comparable fashion, to symbolize victory over the Canaanite rulers of five cities (including Jerusalem), Joshua tells his soldiers: “Put your feet (רַגְלֵיכֶם) upon the necks of these kings” (Josh 10:24).¹⁶ Moreover, an ancient Davidic psalm reports a royal declaration: “I pursued my enemies (אֹיְבֵי) and overtook them.... I smashed them (אֶמְצָצֵם) and they were unable to rise; they fell beneath my feet (רַגְלֵי)” (Ps 18:38-39).¹⁷

¹¹ O. Keel, *Symbolism*, 263. This interpretation is denied by E. Zenger and F. L. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 147; H. J. Kraus, *Psalms*, 348.

¹² O. Keel, *Symbolism*, 263 (fig. 353); E. Zenger and F. L. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 146 (plate 1).

¹³ J. C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, Edinburgh, 1978, 61-62. Cf. M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 55; M. Dahood, *Psalms III* (Anchor Bible 17A), New York 1970, 114.

¹⁴ The Hebrew conjunction עַד, usually translated “until” (e.g., NRSV), can also mean “while” (Judg 3:26; 2 Kgs 9:22; cf. GKC §164f). Likewise the Greek equivalent ἕως and the Latin conjunction *donec* can also mean “while” (e.g., Mark 14:32; Luke 17:8).

¹⁵ O. Keel, *Symbolism*, 255 (fig. 342); E. Zenger and F. L. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 148 (plate 2).

¹⁶ E. Zenger and F. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 148; H. J. Kraus, *Psalms*, 349.

¹⁷ E. Zenger and F. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 148; M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 58.

Because the enthronement was a key event for ancient sacral kingship, it was held at a holy place, and hence Joash's coronation took place in the Jerusalem temple at the hands of Jehoiada the priest (2 Kgs 11:11-12).¹⁸ In both Mesopotamia and Egypt, enthronement ceremonies were also typically held in temples, so as to grant divine legitimation for the new monarch.¹⁹ Accordingly, the royal enthronement psalms connect the accession ceremony with the sanctuary of Zion, since Ps 110:2 speaks of YHWH wielding the king's strong staff from Zion, while Ps 2:6 depicts God's installation of his new monarch on Zion, "the mountain of my sanctuary" (הר קדשי).²⁰

Although the accounts of Solomon's anointing and Joash's accession do not explicitly mention the conferral of a sceptre, this object serves as a symbol of the king's power within the royal psalms. Hence the reference to the "staff" or "sceptre" (מטה) in Ps 110:2 may allude to the conferring of the sceptre during the enthronement rite. Whereas Ps 2:9 speaks of the newly enthroned king's "iron sceptre/rod" (שבט ברזל), Ps 110:2 promises the new monarch: "The staff of your strength YHWH will send out from Zion" (using the synonym מטה). Another royal psalm says of the divinely-appointed monarch: "The sceptre of your kingdom (שבט מלכותך) is a sceptre of equity" (Ps 45:7). Similarly, in Mesopotamia and Egypt the conferring of one or more sceptres often occurred as part of the enthronement ritual.²¹

Significant parallels to Ps 110:1-2 exist in the Victory Song of Pharaoh Thutmose III (ca. 1450 BCE).²² The text is a speech given by the sun-god Amen-Re, recording the triumphs he granted to this Pharaoh, and elements of the text were borrowed to celebrate the victories of other Pharaohs in the next three centuries (Amenhotep III, Seti I, and Rameses III). Just as the psalm begins: "Oracle of YHWH," so the Egyptian victory song begins: "Speech of Amen-Re, Lord of Thrones of the Two Lands." Then while the psalm promises: "Be enthroned at my right hand, while I place

¹⁸ Because the temple had not yet been built, Solomon's accession ceremony occurred at Jerusalem's Gihon Spring, probably near the site of the "tent" guarding the ark (1 Kgs 1:38-39).

¹⁹ H. Frankfort, *Kingship*, 245-46.

²⁰ J. Corley, "Elements," 6.

²¹ H. Frankfort, *Kingship*, 245.

²² M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2, Berkeley 1976, 35-39. Some parallels are noted in a table by M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 123-126.

your enemies as a stool for your feet,” the Victory Song describes the sun-god’s granting of triumphs to the Pharaoh: “I made your enemies succumb beneath your soles, so that you crushed the rebels and the traitors.... You trod all foreign lands with joyful heart.... They bowed before your majesty as I decreed.” Finally, the epilogue to the Victory Song adds another reference to the Pharaoh’s enthronement: “I have placed you on the Horus-throne of millions of years, that you may lead the living forever.”

b. Public Acclamation (v. 3A)

MT: Your people are volunteers on the day of your power,
in the robes of the sanctuary.

LXX: With you is sovereignty on the day of your power,
in the splendour of the holy ones/things.²³

The Hebrew text of v. 3A envisages the people pledging their loyalty to the new monarch on the day of his enthronement, because he is the one who will in future lead his forces into battle. Perhaps the enthronement ritual included a staged dramatization of a victorious battle, just as Ps 2:9 may refer to a symbolic smashing of pots representing various enemies.²⁴ Other biblical accounts indicate that public acclamation served to show popular acceptance of the newly anointed Israelite king. After the anointings of Saul (1 Sam 10:24), Solomon (1 Kgs 1:39), and Joash (2 Kgs 11:12), the new monarch in each case was acclaimed with the cry, “Long live the king.”²⁵ The offering of homage to the newly enthroned king is also described in 1 Kgs 1:53, which reports that Adonijah did obeisance to the newly enthroned Solomon. In Assyria the royal officials would gather around the new monarch, offering him gifts and depositing their badges of office in front of him. Then, according to custom, the king would declare, “Everyone resumes his office,” and the officials would again take up their positions at court.²⁶

²³ Where the LXX diverges sharply from the MT (vv. 3, 5-6), its text will be discussed in this historical-critical section.

²⁴ O. Keel, *Symbolism*, 266-268.

²⁵ J. Blunda, *La proclamación de Yhwh rey y la constitución de la comunidad postexílica* (Analecta Biblica 186), Rome 2010, 53.

²⁶ R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 107.

Several difficult textual questions arise in v. 3A. The MT vocalizes the first word as the suffixed noun עִמָּךְ (*ammēkā* = your people). A comparable collocation of the noun (people) and the root (volunteer) occurs in the Song of Deborah: בְּהִתְנַדְּבָ עַם (when the people volunteered: Judg 5:2; cf. 5:9).²⁷ The masoretic vocalization of נִדְּבָה (*nēdābōt*, here understood as volunteers) utilizes a term normally denoting “voluntary offerings” (Deut 12:6, 17; Amos 4:5; 2 Chr 31:14), although the Qumran War Scroll refers to “the men of volunteers (נִדְּבָה) of the war” (1QM 7:5). However, the LXX presumes a vocalization of the suffixed preposition עִמָּךְ (*immēkā* = with you), and Ps 130:4 has a similar statement where the preposition עִמָּךְ (with you) is followed by a complement, here הַסְּלִיחָה (forgiveness).²⁸ The LXX reading ἄρχή (rule or principality) seems to have understood either a feminine plural noun such as נִדְּבָה (*nēdābōt* = noble things, as in Isa 32:8) or more likely a conjectured abstract singular noun such as נִדְּבָה (*nēdābūt* = nobility).²⁹ Since the masoretic vocalization of הִילָךְ (*hēlekā* = your power) is matched by the LXX and both of Jerome’s renderings, Dominique Barthélemy accepts this reading.³⁰ However, because the verse employs the root יָלַד (give birth), Zenger proposes revocalizing the noun as הִילָךְ (*hīlekā* = your birth).³¹ We could compare the Hebrew idiom “anguish (הִילָ) as of a woman giving birth” (Ps 48:7; Mic 4:9; Jer 6:24).

Scholars dispute whether v. 3 speaks of “splendours,” here interpreted as “robes” (MT, LXX, Jerome’s *Psalmi Iuxta Septuaginta*), or of “mountains” (one Cairo Genizah MS, Symmachus, Jerome’s *Psalmi Iuxta Hebraicum*). Where the MT reads הַדְּרֵי קֹדֶשׁ (literally: splendours of the sanctuary), I interpret the phrase as “robes of the sanctuary,” following BDB 214: “sacred, festal garments” (cf. Ezek 16:14). The masoretic phrase “the robes of the sanctuary” or “splendours of the holy place” (הַדְּרֵי קֹדֶשׁ) is the source

²⁷ E. Zenger and F. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 142.

²⁸ D. Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle de l’Ancien Testament*, 4: *Psaumes* (Orbis biblicus et orientalis 50/4), Göttingen 2005, 744.

²⁹ For the feminine plural form see BHS apparatus and H. J. Kraus, *Psalms*, 344. For the conjectured abstract noun see R. J. Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God with the Psalms* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 118), Sheffield 1991, 213; D. Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle...*, 744.

³⁰ D. Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle...*, 744-745.

³¹ E. Zenger and F. L. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 142; R. J. Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God...*, 214.

of the LXX paraphrase: “the splendour of the holy ones/things.” Although this is the only MT instance of the plural of the noun הדר (splendour), there are four passages (Ps 29:2; 96:9; 1Chr 16:29; 2 Chr 20:21) which have the singular feminine form “the attire of the sanctuary” or “holy splendour” (הדרת קדש). Just as Ps 110:3(MT) mentions “robes/ splendours of the sanctuary” (הדרי קדש) as a constituent of the enthronement liturgy, so also Ps 45:4 refers to splendid clothing for a royal wedding ceremony. However, similar to Jerome’s phrase (*in montibus sanctis*) within his *Psalmi Iuxta Hebraicum*, the BHS critical apparatus notes that a medieval Cairo Genizah MS reads “the mountains of the sanctuary” (הררי קדש) in a phrase comparable to Ps 133:3: “the mountains of Zion” (הררי ציון), while the same exact word pair (הררי קדש) occurs in Ps 87:1: “His foundation is on the mountains of the sanctuary.” We may further compare the divine declaration of royal enthronement in Ps 2:6: “I have set up my king on Zion, the mountain of my sanctuary (הר קדשי).”³²

c. Mysterious Statement about New Birth (v. 3B)

MT: From the womb of dawn, to you (belongs)
the dew of your childhood.

LXX: From the womb before the dawn I begot you.

The significance of טל (dew) in the Hebrew form of the verse is rather obscure, though the word is omitted from the LXX. The frequently proposed reading “like dew” (NRSV and BHS apparatus), matching the phrase (*quasi ... ros*) in Jerome’s *Psalmi Iuxta Hebraicum*, reconstructs כטל (like dew) as in Ps 133:3.³³ However, some commentators maintain the MT, understood as “the dew of your youth.”³⁴ The image is sometimes seen as referring to the youthful freshness of the new monarch,³⁵ or perhaps of the young men assisting him.³⁶ A comparison could be made to the

³² D. Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle...*, 746 accepts the possibility of this reading (mountains).

³³ H. J. Kraus, *Psalms*, 344, 350.

³⁴ E. Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 140; M. Dahood, *Psalms III*, 112.

³⁵ H. J. Kraus, *Psalms*, 344.

³⁶ The Sheffield Dictionary of Classical Hebrew (*DCH* 4.221) here interprets the noun ילדות as “young men,” referring to a company of youths surrounding the new king.

role of dew in the military narrative of Gideon's leadership (Judg 6:36-40).³⁷ Alternatively, because of the mention of the "womb" (רחם) here, there is possibly a reference to conception (cf. Job 10:10; Wis 7:2), so that the noun ילדות (childhood) may have its Aramaic nuance of "birth" (Tg. Onk. Gen 11:28; 12:1).³⁸ Another slight possibility might be to tentatively conjecture an abbreviated variant of the term טלה (lamb— 1 Sam 7:9; Isa 40:11; 65:25), the animal whose fleece attracts dew. Indeed, the Syriac reads the related Aramaic term (טליא), denoting a "young child."³⁹ Within the psalm's context, the meaning could possibly be: "To you, O lamb/child, (belongs) your birth/childhood!"

Depending on the vocalization, the same six-letter Hebrew word ילדתיך could mean the suffixed noun "your childhood/youth" (Ps 110:3 MT)⁴⁰ or the qal perfect verb "I have begotten you" (LXX Ps 110:3; cf. Ps 2:7 MT). It is unusual that a singular noun "youth" here has what looks like the plural suffix (your), according to the masoretic vocalization, though actually it may be the *plene* spelling of a pausal form, somewhat comparable to the singular noun with a plural suffix, אלמנותיך (your widowhood – Isa 54:4; cf. Joüon-Muraoka §125ua). Interestingly, the same seemingly plural suffix occurs with the singular noun in Qoheleth's injunction: "Rejoice, young man, in your youth (בילדותיך)" (Qoh 11:9).⁴¹ Nevertheless, many interpreters correct the vocalization of final word of Ps 110:3 to read the suffixed first-person verb ילדתיך (I have begotten you), exactly as in Ps 2:7.⁴²

Whether we follow the LXX in reading the verb ילדתיך (I have begotten you) or whether we accept the MT's mention of the "dew of your childhood," we seem to have the underlying notion of the king as a newborn child, matching the Egyptian concept of the newly enthroned Pharaoh as a child just born. In a text dubbed "The Divine Nomination of Thut-mose III" (ca. 1450 BCE), the

³⁷ R. J. Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God...*, 214. This interpretation is "unlikely" according to E. Zenger and F. Hossfeld, *Psalms 3*, 142.

³⁸ Hence: "to you belongs the fluid of your conception." Suggestion of Dr Luke Macnamara (Maynooth).

³⁹ Later Aramaic interpretation according to R. J. Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God*, 214; D. Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle...*, 738. The noun's feminine form appears in Jesus' words to Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:41): "Talitha koumi" (lamb/child, arise!).

⁴⁰ E. Zenger and F. Hossfeld, *Psalms 3*, 140; M. Dahood, *Psalms III*, 112.

⁴¹ D. Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle...*, 747.

⁴² D. Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle...*, 748; H. J. Kraus, *Psalms*, 344.

Pharaoh uses child-language of his royal succession: “(The god Amon) – he is my father, and I am his son. He commanded me that I should be upon his throne, while I was (still) a nestling ... when I was (only a newly) weaned child” (*ANET* 446). Similarly, the Victory Song of Thutmose III refers to the monarch being protected by the sun-god Amen-Re: “I give you protection, my son, my beloved.”⁴³ In Assyria also, the new monarch was seemingly viewed as being born of the deity at his enthronement. An oracle addressed to the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (669-680 BCE), spoken by the goddess Ishtar, says: “I am the great midwife (who helped at your birth), the one who gave you suck, who has established your rule under the wide heavens for many days, endless years” (*ANET* 605). This concept was adapted in ancient Israel, whereby the crowned king was regarded as God’s son, often through adoption (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7). Accordingly, soon after his accession Solomon depicts himself as a “small child” in his prayer at Gibeon, asking for the gift of listening heart: “I am a small child (נער קטן); I do not know how to go out and come in” (1 Kgs 3:7).

d. Appointment as Priest (v. 4)

MT: YHWH made an oath and will not relent:

‘You are a priest forever because of Melchizedek.’

IOR: ‘You are a priest forever according to my word,
O king of righteousness.’¹

Psalm 132:11 mentions God’s oath to David, promising an eternal dynasty: “YHWH made an oath (נשבע) to David—truth from which he will not turn back: ‘I will set (אשיח) one of the fruit of your body as a throne for you’”. According to the prophet Samuel, the divine choice of David differs from the appointment of Saul because it is irrevocable (1 Sam 15:29), since Israel’s God “will not relent” (לא ינחם).⁴⁴ Similarly, Ps 89:4-5 states: “I made an oath (נשח) to David my servant: ‘I will establish your posterity forever (עד עולם)’” (cf. Ps 89:36-37).⁴⁵ In a Babylonian parallel the Akkadian creation story (*Enuma Elish* 6:95-99) describes the appointment of

⁴³ M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2, 38.

⁴⁴ M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 117.

⁴⁵ M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 68-69; E. Zenger and F. L. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 150.

the chief god Marduk, being confirmed by an oath: “The great gods assembled, and made Marduk’s destiny highest; they themselves did obeisance. They swore an oath for themselves, and swore on water and oil, touched their throats. Thus they granted that he should exercise the kingship of the gods, and confirmed for him mastery of the gods of heaven and earth.”⁴⁶

The exact usage of the Hebrew term דברה (literally: word) is disputed, because of the unclear significance of the suffixed *yod*. Grammatically it is possible that דברתי is the noun דברה with a first-person singular possessive suffix, so that the phrase means “according to my word.”⁴⁷ However, the LXX and Vulgate rendering (according to the order of Melchizedek) understands the phrase as part of a construct chain, using the archaic *hireq compagini* (cf. Gen 49:11; Deut 33:16; Lam 1:1).⁴⁸ Even if we accept such a construct chain, the exact meaning of the Hebrew phrase (דברה על) is ambiguous: “upon the word of” or “in the manner of” or “because of.” While this phrase occurs thrice in the MT of Qoheleth, the most similar reference appears in Qoh 8:2: “[Keep] the command of the king because of (על דברה) the oath of God.” A comparable idiom with the masculine noun דבר (word) occurs within a royal wedding psalm in the phrase “for the sake of (על דבר) truth” (Ps 45:5; cf. 79:9). However, in rendering the Hebrew phrase of Ps 110:4, the LXX employs the noun τάξις, which is elsewhere applied to the “arrangement” of priestly duties for the Jerusalem temple (1 Esdr 1:5; Luke 1:8).

Uncertainty exists whether Melchizedek is a personal name (so LXX and Vulgate) or whether it serves as a royal title, “king of righteousness,” as in Josephus, *A.J.* 1.10.2 §180, and the NT explanation in Heb 7:2. The name Melchizedek consists of two Hebrew words (מלכי-צדק), joined by an ancient form of the construct state (Joüon-Muraoka §93m). Most commentators interpret Ps 110:4 as an allusion to the figure of Melchizedek, king and priest of Salem,

⁴⁶ S. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, Oxford 1989, 264; cf. M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 71.

⁴⁷ If we understand the statement: “You are a priest forever according to my word, O Melchizedek,” this interpretation could indicate that Melchizedek is being addressed, not only here, but perhaps also in the whole psalm; J. L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, Cambridge 1998, 279. Such a view may be the origin of the tradition of a superhuman (angelic) Melchizedek in 11QMelchizedek (ibid., 279-281).

⁴⁸ So GKC §90; Joüon-Muraoka §93m; M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 30.

a city understood as Jerusalem (Gen 14:18; cf. Ps 76:3).⁴⁹ Other scholars propose that the collocation is to be taken literally as “king of righteousness” (ancient construct form) or possibly “my king of righteousness.”⁵⁰ Still another view is that the collocation is a vocative, so that the statement could be rendered: “You are a priest forever according to my word, O king of righteousness.”⁵¹

Whereas after King Solomon’s reign the monarchy was generally viewed as separate from the priesthood, there was a closer connection in early times, especially before the inauguration of Solomon’s temple. Thus, King David offered sacrifices and danced before the Ark of the Covenant dressed in a linen ephod and finally blessed the people in God’s name (2 Sam 6:12-18), while he later offered sacrifices on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam 24:25). His son Solomon sacrificed animals at Gibeon (1 Kgs 3:4), and after his prayer to dedicate the Jerusalem temple he also blessed the people (1 Kgs 8:54-55). Early texts name other non-Aaronides as priests, such as David’s sons (2 Sam 8:18), Ira (2 Sam 20:26), and Zabud (1 Kgs 4:5). Nevertheless, Israel’s Priestly tradition emphasizes the eternal priesthood of Aaron and his descendants: “for them there shall be the priesthood to me forever” (LXX Exod 29:9), while Aaron’s grandson Eliezer receives “an eternal covenant of priesthood” (LXX Num 25:13) for himself and his descendants. After Solomon’s temple was inaugurated, it is likely that the office of priest and king were generally kept separate. Only in the Hasmonean period were both offices reunited, when the Maccabean Simon was appointed by the Jewish leaders and priests “to be ruler and high priest forever” (1Macc 14:41).

By way of comparison, some of the ancient Near Eastern monarchs also had the title of priest. For instance, the Mesopotamian King Sargon I (ca. 2300 BCE) is described thus: “Sargon, king of Agade, overseer of Ishtar, king of Kish, anointed priest of Anu” (*ANET* 267). About a millennium later, an Assyrian coronation ceremony at Asshur includes a priestly blessing of the newly

⁴⁹ E. Zenger and F. L. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 150; H. J. Kraus, *Psalms*, 351; G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary 19), Dallas 1987, 316.

⁵⁰ J. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 277 n. 2. For possible meanings, including “my king is righteousness,” see G. Granerød, *Abraham and Melchizedek: Scribal Activity of Second Temple Times in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110* (BZAW 406), Berlin 2010, 211. For him the likeliest translation of Ps 110:4 is: “You are a priest forever. For my sake my king is loyal” (*ibid.*, 213).

⁵¹ G. Granerød, *Abraham and Melchizedek...*, 213 n. 67. However, M. Dahood, *Psalms III*, 117 interprets the collocation as “(his) legitimate king.”

crowned monarch, possibly Tukultī-Ninurta I (ca. 1243-1207 BCE): “May Assur and Ninlil, the lords of your crown, set your crown on your head for a hundred years! ... May your priesthood and the priesthood of your sons be agreeable to Assur, your god!”⁵² Centuries afterwards, in his victory inscription reporting his successful expedition to Palestine, the Assyrian conqueror Adad-nirari III (810-783 BCE) introduces himself as “Adad-Nirari, great king, ... whose throne they [= the gods] established firmly, the holy high priest (and) tireless caretaker of the temple *é.sár.ra*, who keeps up the rites of the sanctuary, ... who has made submit to his feet the princes within the four rims of the earth” (ANET 281). So also a late sixth-century BCE grave inscription from Sidon declares: “I [am] Tabnit, priest (*khn*) of Astarte, king of the Sidonians.”⁵³

e. Victory oracle (vv. 5-6)

MT: O Adonai, at your right hand he has smashed
kings on the day of his anger.

He will give judgment among the nations. He fills
[them/<valleys>] with corpses.

He has smashed head over the great land/earth.

LXX: The Lord at your right hand smashed kings
on the day of his anger.

He will give judgment among the nations.

He will fill (them) with corpses.

He will smash heads over the great land/earth.

The interpretative tradition has followed the LXX and the Vulgate in seeing Adonai as the agent in v. 5: “Adonai at your right hand has smashed kings on the day of his anger.” According to this view, Adonai is the grammatical subject, as in Ps 2:4: “Adonai will mock at them,” and the sentiment is understood as an assurance of successful divine protection, as in Ps 121:5: “YHWH is your guard. YHWH is your shade on your right hand (עַל יַד יְמִינֶךָ). We could also compare Ps 16:8: “I have set YHWH before me always. Because (he is) at my right hand (מִיְמִינִי), I will not

⁵² W. Hallo, *The Context of Scripture*, Leiden 1997, vol. 1, 472; M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 95.

⁵³ W. Beyerlin, *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, London 1978, 245; M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 95.

stumble.” Similarly, an oracle given to the Assyrian king Esarhaddon, spoken by the god Bel, declares: “The [moon] god Sin is at your right, the [sun] god Shamash at your left.”⁵⁴ On this interpretation, God smashes enemies while he is present at the right hand of Israel’s new monarch. Yet, if Israel’s God is the subject of v. 5, a question arises: after three prior uses of the Tetragrammaton (vv. 1, 2, 4), why does Psalm 110 now employ the form Adonai in v. 5?

Furthermore, this traditional interpretation creates an unresolved problem about the identity of the subject of the following verses. Since no new subject is named for vv. 6-7, Zenger states that God is the subject also of vv. 6-7, so that he is depicted as the divine warrior bringing victories through his earthly king, and then metaphorically celebrating his triumph by drinking.⁵⁵ However, von Nordheim considers it improbable that God is depicted as drinking from a stream by the roadside (v. 7), and hence suggests that while God is the subject of v. 5, the presumed subject of vv. 6-7 is the king.⁵⁶ According to another view, Maurice Gilbert and Stephen Pisano regard God as the subject only of v. 5a, whereas they see the king as the subject of vv. 5b-7.⁵⁷

A simple solution, proposed by André Caquot, is to see Adonai as a vocative address, spoken to God by the psalmist: “O Adonai, he [= the new king] is at your right hand. He has smashed kings on the day of his anger.”⁵⁸ Here we find the psalmist addressing God to talk about the monarch’s activity, as in another royal psalm (Ps 21:2), which begins: “O YHWH, in your strength the king rejoices.” In many other psalms, “Adonai” is a form of address directed to God, as in Ps 89:50-51 (a royal psalm): “Where are your previous loyalties, O Adonai? ... Remember, O Adonai, the disgrace of your servants.” This interpretation has another advantage, in matching the use of “right hand” in Ps 110:5 with its use in v. 1. On the traditional view, the new monarch is enthroned at God’s right hand (v. 1), but the situation is reversed in v. 5, where God is

⁵⁴ *Ancient Near Eastern Text Relating to the Old Testament*, 450; A. A. Anderson, *Psalms 73-150*, Grand Rapids 1972, 771.

⁵⁵ E. Zenger and F. L. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 150-151.

⁵⁶ M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 42-44.

⁵⁷ M. Gilbert and S. Pisano, “Psalm 110 (109), 5-7”, *Biblica* 61 (1980) 343-356, here 345.

⁵⁸ A. Caquot, “Remarques sur le Psaume CX,” *Semitica* 6 (1956) 33-52, here 45; R. J. Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God...*, 210.

fighting at the monarch's right hand.⁵⁹ But if we understand the phrase: "O Adonai, at your right hand he has smashed kings," we have the same sense as v. 1, whereby the new monarch, enthroned at God's right hand, is empowered to defeat pagan rulers.⁶⁰

Psalm 110:5-6 depicts the new king triumphing in battle and filling valleys with corpses of the defeated armies, just as the Davidic king declares about his enemies: "I smashed them (אִמְחַצֵם) and they were unable to rise; they fell beneath my feet" (Ps 18:39). The Ugaritic Epic of *Baal and Yam* (circa 1400 BCE) has a parallel to Ps 110:5-6 in the declaration of the craft-working deity Kothar-and-Khasis to Baal (2.iv.10-7): "Truly I tell you, O prince Baal, I repeat (to you), O rider on the clouds. Now (you must smite) your foes, Baal, now you must smite your foes *lht.ibk.tmhš*, now you must still your enemies. You shall take your everlasting kingdom *ltqh.mlk. 'lmkl*, your dominion forever and ever."⁶¹

A further textual problem hinders interpretation of the third and fourth words of v. 6. Whereas the MT and LXX presuppose the Hebrew term גויות (corpses), Jerome's second translation (*Iuxta Hebraicum*) presumes the word גאיות (valleys). The LXX matches the MT in its interpretation: "He will give judgment among the nations. He will fill (them) with corpses," and Jerome's earlier translation (*Iuxta Septuaginta*) says likewise: *iudicabit in nationibus, implebit cadavera*. This reading is possible, whereby the Lord or his king will fill the nations with corpses.

Another possible interpretation is attested in Jerome's second translation (*Iuxta Hebraicum*): *iudicabit in gentibus, implebit valles* (He will give judgment among the gentiles. He will fill valleys). This presupposes the word גאיות (valleys) instead of גויות (corpses), a difference of only one Hebrew consonant.⁶² The filling of valleys could be understood to reflect the vast road-building projects of ancient Near Eastern conquerors, later copied by Roman works of civil engineering. Second-Isaiah attributes a similar role to God, who will smooth the way for the exiles to return from Babylon to Jerusalem: "Every valley (גיא) will be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be flattened" (Isa 40:4; cf. Isa 42:16; 45:2).

⁵⁹ K. Schaefer, *Psalms*, Collegeville 2001, 273.

⁶⁰ M. Gilbert and S. Pisano, "Psalm 110(109), 5-7", 343.

⁶¹ J. C. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths*, 43.

⁶² Aquila and Symmachus read ὡς φάραγγες (like ravines), presumably representing גאיות (like valleys).

A third possibility (perhaps the most probable) is that the original text had both of the similar words גַּאִיּוֹת (valleys) and גֵּיּוֹת (corpses), but that one of them was omitted by haplography (both homoiarchton and homoioteleuton). Indeed, the verb מָלֵא (fill) often takes a double accusative (Joüon-Muraoka §125ua), as in Ezek 32:5: “And I will fill the valleys with your height/your carcass.” Accordingly, the original clause could have had three words: “he fills” (מָלֵא) + “valleys” (גַּאִיּוֹת) + “[with] corpses” (גֵּיּוֹת).⁶³ It is easy to see how one of the two alliterative object words could have been omitted by haplography.

If the original reading of the phrase in Ps 110:6 is indeed: “he fills valleys with corpses,” the declaration matches the boasts of various ancient Near Eastern kings. For instance, the Victory Song of Thutmose III describes Amen-Re’s enabling of the Pharaoh to triumph over adversaries: “I let them see your majesty as fearsome lion, as you made corpses of them in their valleys.”⁶⁴ Similarly, the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I recounts one of his victorious military campaigns against his enemies: “I filled the caves and ravines of the mountains with their corpses.”⁶⁵ Comparable boasts are made later by Shalmaneser III (ca. 858-824 BCE): “I covered the wide plain with the corpses of their fighting men.... I erected pillars of skulls in front of his town” (*ANET* 277), and in another text he says: “I spread their corpses (everywhere), filling the entire plain with their widely scattered (fleeing) soldiers” (*ANET* 279).

While the singular noun ראש (head) is probably collective here (so LXX and Vulgate), the action described at the end of v. 6 could refer to the smashing of “heads” (NRSV; Zenger), or of “chiefs” (RSV; Kraus).⁶⁶ As in Ugaritic poetry, some ancient Hebrew texts refer to defeating enemies by smiting their heads, which is a frequent usage of the verb מָחַץ (smash). Thus, an ancient psalm declares: “Surely God will smash (יִמְחֹץ) the head (רֹאשׁ) of his enemies” (Ps 68:22), while another poem with archaic features

⁶³ According to E. Zenger and F. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 143 this idiom is understood even though only one of these two nouns is expressed.

⁶⁴ M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2, 37; M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 32.

⁶⁵ S. Ponchia, “Mountain Routes in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions (Part I)”, *Kaskal* 1 (2004) 139-177, here 150.

⁶⁶ “Heads” according to E. Zenger and F. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 140; M. Dahood, *Psalms III*, 119; but “leaders” according to H. J. Kraus, *Psalms*, 344, because this meaning matches the statement about “kings” in v. 5.

describes God's saving activity: "You smashed (מחצה) the head (ראש) from the house of the wicked" (Hab 3:13). Likewise, Jael's killing of Sisera employs the same verb: "She hammered Sisera, crushed his head (ראשו), and smashed (ומחצה) and pierced his temple" (Judg 5:26). In a comparable fashion, Balaam's oracle of the star arising out of Jacob says: "And he shall smash (ומחץ) the brows of Moab" (Num 24:17). Similarly, an Ugaritic mythological text describes the battle fought by the warrior goddess Anath: "And behold! Anath fought in the vale, battled between the two cities, smote [tmḥṣ] the people of the seashore, silenced the men of the sunrise. Heads [riš] were like balls beneath her" (3.ii.5-9).⁶⁷

f. Ritual act symbolizing victory (v. 7)

MT: From the watercourse on the way he will drink.

Therefore he will lift up (his) head.

According to 1 Kgs 1:38-39, Solomon's anointing occurred by the Gihon spring, perhaps to facilitate a ritual washing of the candidate, as in Egyptian coronation ceremonies.⁶⁸ Hence Kraus suggests that this "watercourse" was the water flowing from the Gihon spring.⁶⁹ However, because the water ritual for the enthronement liturgy in Ps 110:7 involves drinking rather than using water for washing, it is more likely that the drinking of water was an action symbolizing victory over conquered territory.⁷⁰ Invading armies would seek to deny water to the inhabitants of the land, especially during a siege (2 Kgs 18:27), whereas capturing the water sources would indicate control of territory (Jdt 7:7, 17), so that the monarch's triumph could be symbolized by taking a drink from a conquered water course. Isaiah taunts the Assyrian king Sennacherib for his boastful claim: "I myself dug wells and I drank (ישתי) water, and I dried up with the sole of my feet all the streams of Egypt" (Isa 37:25; cf. 2 Kgs 19:24).⁷¹

⁶⁷ J. C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths...*, 47.

⁶⁸ So O. Keel, *Symbolism...*, 258; against de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 102. Note that Aaron was washed by Moses before being ordained a priest (Lev 8:6).

⁶⁹ H. J. Kraus, *Psalms*, 352.

⁷⁰ E. Zenger and F. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 152. E. Zenger also proposes that the gesture could symbolize tireless heroic courage, as in the case of Gideon's forces drinking from the stream (Judg 7:4-6).

⁷¹ M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 108.

In the Greek narrative of the Book of Judith, following Persian custom, the inhabitants of lands conquered by Holofernes on behalf of King Nebuchadnezzar were told to indicate submission by offering earth and water (Jdt 2:7), just as Herodotus reports King Xerxes' command for vanquished nations to present water along with earth as a sign of submission (*Hist.* 7.131). In fact, Nebuchadnezzar's demand seems like an echo of the boasting of earlier Assyrian kings and at the same time a kind of parody of LXX Psalm 110(109): "[T]ell them [to prepare earth and water, because I will come forth in my anger against them, and I will cover all the face of the earth with the feet of my force (δυνάμεός), and I will give them over as plunder for them. And their wounded shall fill (πληρώσουσιν) their ravines and watercourses (χειμάρρους), and a swelling river shall be filled with their dead" (Jdt 2:7-8).

Zenger views God as the grammatical subject of Ps 110:7, so that he is being portrayed as a warrior bringing about victories by means of his earthly ruler, and then metaphorically celebrating his triumph by taking a drink.⁷² If indeed the subject of v. 7 is God, we could understand the verse thus: "From the watercourse on the way [= in conquered territory] he will 'drink' [= YHWH will receive a water libation]. Therefore he will lift up the chief [= the new king]. In other words, YHWH will receive a water libation in the conquered land from a watercourse beside the road, and thereafter he will exalt the status of the new king as chief. In fact, ancient ritual actions akin to water libations are twice mentioned in the Books of Samuel. Thus, the repentant Israelites at Mizpah "drew water and poured it out before YHWH" (1 Sam 7:6; cf. Lam 2:19), while David later responded to the three brave warriors who brought him water from the well in Philistine-controlled Bethlehem: "He did not agree to drink it but poured it out for YHWH" (2 Sam 23:16).⁷³ The notion of a deity drinking appears in an Ugaritic text, which mentions the warrior Yatpan offering a libation of wine to the High God El, saying: "May our god drink [yštl] of the wine!" (19.219).⁷⁴ However, such language of God drinking would be unusual for the Hebrew Bible (despite Pss 50:13; 78:65), and so von Nordheim proposes that the presumed subject of v. 7 is the monarch, which more easily fits the context.⁷⁵ Thus, at

⁷² E. Zenger and F. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 150-151.

⁷³ P. K. McCarter, *1 Samuel* (Anchor Bible 8), New York 1980, 144.

⁷⁴ J. C. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths*, 121.

⁷⁵ M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 42.

the conclusion of the enthronement ceremony, the new king may have taken a symbolic drink to signify his power over his territory, perhaps at the end of a re-enacted battle scene.⁷⁶

According to the common interpretation of v. 7, the monarch's gesture of drinking water is followed by his act of lifting up his head in triumph. Here the psalm says (v. 7): "he will lift up (= cause to be high: ירים) the/his head (ראש)." In a comparable fashion, Ps 3:4 addresses the saving God as "the one lifting up (מרים) my head (ראשי)," while Ps 27:6 states that with divine help: "Now my head (ראשי) will be high (ירום) above my enemies surrounding me."⁷⁷ An ancient Sumerian text describes how the god Enlil lifts up the head of King Shulgi at his enthronement: "The immutable sceptre of [the moon god] Nanna he placed in his hand. Upon a royal seat, which may not be overthrown, he let him raise (his) head heavenward."⁷⁸

GREEK TEXT FORM OF PSALM 109(110)

While the LXX generally follows the shape of this Hebrew psalm, one of the significant differences is that the Greek text employs the same noun κύριος (5x) to render YHWH, Adonai, and Adoni (my master). A table sets out the data.

| <i>MT usage in Psalm 110</i> | <i>Comparable MT phrase</i> | <i>LXX</i> |
|---------------------------------------|--|--------------|
| נאם יהוה Oracle of YHWH (v. 1) | Frequent in the prophets | ὁ κύριος |
| לאדני To my master (v. 1) | אמרו לאדני המלך Say to my master the king (1 Kgs 20:9) | τῷ κυρίῳ μου |
| ישלח יהוה YHWH will send (v. 2) | ישלח אלהים May God send forth his love and his truth (Ps 57:4) | κύριος |
| נשבע יהוה YHWH made an oath (v. 4) | נשבע יהוה YHWH made an oath to David (Ps 132:11) | κύριος |

⁷⁶ H. J. Kraus, *Psalms*, 352.

⁷⁷ E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Psalms*, Dublin 1954, vol. 2, 195.

⁷⁸ W. W. Hallo, *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 1, 553; M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 110.

| <i>MT usage in Psalm 110</i> | <i>Comparable MT phrase</i> | <i>LXX</i> |
|------------------------------|--|------------|
| אדני Adonai (v. 5) | אדני מעון אתה Adonai, you have been a dwelling for us (Ps 90:1 = vocative); אדני ילעג למן Adonai will mock at them (Ps 2:4 = subject) | κύριος |

In the psalm's Hebrew text, the divine name YHWH (always following the verb) denotes the originator of the oracles in v. 1 and v. 4, as well as the one authorizing power from Zion in v. 2.⁷⁹ The human ruler appointed in v. 1 is termed אדני (Adoni= my master) in Hebrew but κύριος μου (my lord) in Greek, with the same noun title as the Deity who makes the royal appointment. This use of κύριος for both יהוה (LORD) and אדני (Adoni = my master) in v. 1 becomes important in NT Christology (Mark 12:35-37), where Christian tradition understands the oracle as being spoken by God the Father to God the Son. Moreover, in v. 5 the Greek employs κύριος to render the divine title Adonai, which seems here to have originally been a vocative form of address, though the LXX takes it as the grammatical subject of the sentence.

Whereas the MT for the public acclamation of the king (v. 3A) says: "Your people are volunteers on the day of your power," the LXX is different: "With you is sovereignty (ἀρχή) on the day of your power." As a result, the Greek rendering focuses not on the volunteers (or freewill offerings) presented before the monarch, but on the personal power of the king himself. While the LXX presumes the MT wording, "in the splendours/robes of the sanctuary" (v. 3A), it offers its interpretation: "in the brightness/splendour of the holy ones/things." Here the gender of ἁγίων is unclear. While the neuter plural of the adjective ἅγιος (holy) could refer to "holy things" or even "the sanctuary" (Lev 20:3; 26:31; Ezek 21:2; 24:21), the masculine plural form could denote "holy ones," meaning either "holy persons" (e.g., 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 9:1) or "angels" (e.g., Ps 89[88]:7; Job 15:15; Sir 42:17).⁸⁰ If the "holy ones"

⁷⁹ A combination of "oracle of YHWH" (נאם יהוה) and "I have made an oath" (נשבעתי) appears in Gen 22:16 and Jer 22:5.

⁸⁰ J. Schaper, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2/76), Tübingen 1995, 106. The noun λαμπρότης can refer both to the sun's "brightness" (Acts 26:13) and to the "splendour" of fine clothes, as in the comparable idiom ἐν ἐστίῃ λαμπρᾷ (in splendid clothing: Acts 10:30; Jas 2:2).

are understood as angels, a parallel could be drawn to passages from the Qumran Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (perhaps 2nd century BCE), such as 4Q400 1.i.3: “[He has established] the most holy ones among the eternal holy ones, so that for him they can be priests.”⁸¹

Instead of the mysterious Hebrew form of v. 3B: “From the womb of dawn, to you (belongs) the dew of your childhood,” the Greek version diverges by omitting any mention of “dew” and adopting a different vocalization of the final Hebrew word: “From the womb before the dawn I begot you.” By way of contrast with the MT, the LXX has a temporal rendering of the second word “before the dawn,” presumably reading it as the proposition $\eta\mu$ (from—in an unusual sense: before) and the common noun שחר (dawn).⁸² For “dawn” the LXX employs the uncommon term $\acute{\epsilon}\omega\sigma\phi\acute{o}\rho\omicron\varsigma$ (morning star = the planet Venus), already found in Homer (*Il.* 23.226). The Greek statement at the end of v. 3 ($\pi\rho\delta\ \acute{\epsilon}\omega\sigma\phi\acute{o}\rho\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\epsilon}\xi\epsilon\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\eta\sigma\acute{\alpha}\ \sigma\epsilon$) could be understood simply as a temporal reference to a nocturnal begetting or birthing (“before the dawn I begot you/gave birth to you”), just as LXX 1 Sam 30:17 describes David striking the Amalekites “from dawn ($\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\ \acute{\epsilon}\omega\sigma\phi\acute{o}\rho\omicron\upsilon$) until evening.”⁸³

The Greek phrase, however, is often interpreted in a protological sense as referring to an origin before the creation of light.⁸⁴ A comparison can be made with the description of the personified figure of Wisdom in LXX Prov 8:25: “before ($\pi\rho\delta$) mountains were established and before all hills, he begets me

⁸¹ F. García Martínez and E. J. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2 vols., Leiden 1997-1998, 2.807-9. Moreover, 4Q401 11.3 mentions “[Melchilzedek, priest in the assembly [of God]]” (*ibid.*, 2.811), while 4Q405 14-15.i.6 mentions “spirits of splendour” (*ibid.*, 2.831).

⁸² E. Bons, “Die Septuaginta-Version,” 135. We could also compare LXX Ps 72(71):17: “Before the sun ($\pi\rho\delta\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\eta}\lambda\iota\omicron\upsilon$) his name will endure.” The MT’s hapax legomenon משחר (dawn) is a prefixed noun form based on שחר (dawn), analogous to מהשך (darkness – Isa 42:16) based on השך (darkness – Gen 1:2); D. Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle...*, 745; Joüon-Muraoka §88Lf.

⁸³ The term occurs again within the poetic depiction of the fall of Babylon’s king (LXX Isa 14:12): “How the morning star ($\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\epsilon}\omega\sigma\phi\acute{o}\rho\omicron\varsigma$) has fallen from heaven, the one rising early in the morning.” In the Vulgate Isa 14:12 speaks of the fall of a light-bearer (*lucifer*) — later interpreted of the fall of the devil, as in Jerome’s Letter to Eustochium (Letter 22.4).

⁸⁴ M. Tilly, “Psalm 110 zwischen hebräischer Bibel und Neuem Testament,” in D. Sängler (ed.), *Heiligkeit und Herrschaft: Intertextuelle Studien zu Heiligkeitsvorstellungen und zu Psalm 110* (BThSt 55), Neukirchen-Vluyn 2003, 146-70, here 167; J. Schaper, *Eschatology*, 102.

(γεννᾶ με).” Moreover, the Son of Man is named from eternity according to the Enochic Book of Parables (possibly first century CE): “Even before the sun and the constellations were created, before the stars of heaven were made, his name was named before the Lord of Spirits” (1 *Enoch* 48:3).⁸⁵ Indeed, Joachim Schaper views the king as an eternal saviour figure: “The mention of the saviour’s birth πρὸ ἑωσφόρου can only be understood as a reference to his priority in creation. He was born *before* the creation of the heavenly bodies, even of Venus, the brightest and most prominent planet.”⁸⁶

The LXX rendering of v. 4 understands the Hebrew construct chain מלכי צדק not as a description (king of righteousness) but rather as the name Melchizedek, following Gen 14:18-20. However, when the LXX has the rendering: “according to the arrangement/ order (τάξις) of Melchizedek,” it employs the noun τάξις (arrangement, rostering, position), that is elsewhere applied to battle array (2 Macc 10:36 ;8:22), the ordered position of heavenly bodies (Judg 5:20 Alexandrinus; Hab 3:11), and the allocation of priestly duties in the temple (1 Esdr 1:5; Luke 1:8). The sacerdotal nuance (though ostensibly suitable) is in fact rather strange, because whereas there was a priestly course of Abijah (Luke 1:5-8; cf. 1 Chr 24:10), there is no evidence of any priestly course for Melchizedek.

Some differences between MT and LXX also occur in the closing victory oracle (vv. 5-6). While the Hebrew of v. 5 can be interpreted: “O Adonai, at your right hand he has smashed kings on the day of his anger,” another possible rendering is the basis for the LXX: “Adonai at your right hand has smashed kings on the day of his anger.” However, because of the Greek use of the term κύριος for both יהוה (LORD – v. 4) and אדני (my master - v. 1), it is unclear whether the agent in the Greek of v. 5 is God or the monarch. Then, where the MT declares: “He has smashed heads/chiefs over the great (רבה) land/earth” (v.6), the LXX has two variant readings. Whereas Codex Sinaiticus follows the MT, Alexandrinus diverges somewhat by presuming “many” (רבים): “He will smash heads in the land of the many” (cf. the phrase *in terra multorum* within Jerome’s *Psalmi Iuxta Septuaginta*). The reading of Alexandrinus suggests the nuance of gentiles, as in

⁸⁵ G. W. Nickelsburg and J. C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation*, Minneapolis 2004, 62. Connection noted by M. Tilly, “Psalm 110...”, 167-68.

⁸⁶ J. Schaper, *Eschatology*, 104.

LXX Ps 89:51(88:50): “Remember, O Lord, the reproach against your servants, which I carried in my bosom, from many nations.”

QUESTION OF THE PSALM’S ORIGIN

Proposals for dating the psalm’s origin diverge widely, from the early Israelite monarchy to the Maccabean era. Here we will consider this topic by studying the poetic themes in relation to other ancient biblical and non-biblical royal and national texts, before looking at the psalm’s earliest reception history. While neither of these approaches produces an indisputable answer, the lines of evidence suggest to me an origin for the psalm during the early Israelite monarchy.

The psalm’s poetic themes may provide indications of the date of composition. This article has already noted many parallels to royal texts from Egypt and Mesopotamia long before the Hellenistic age (such as the Victory Song of Thutmose III), as well as some parallels to ancient Yahwistic poetry such as Judges 5, Second Samuel 22 (= Psalm 18), and Psalm 68.⁸⁷ The exact form of the verb *דָּיַן* (he will give judgment – Ps 110:6) occurs thrice in other archaic Hebrew compositions (Gen 49:16; Deut 32:36; 1 Sam 2:10), and elsewhere only in the Psalter and Job, while the statement that “he has smashed heads” (*מִחָךְ רֹאשׁ*) employs the same idiom as other early Hebrew poems (Ps 68:22; Hab 3:13; cf. Judg 5:26). In fact, of the MT’s 14 instances of the verb *מִחָךְ* (smash), two occur within our psalm (vv. 5-6), two are found in Job (5:18; 26:12), and all of the rest appear in ancient Yahwistic poetry.⁸⁸

However, von Nordheim has proposed that the psalm follows the style of a Hellenistic royal encomium, such as the praise of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (died 246 BCE) composed by

⁸⁷ Fourteen poetic chapters are usually considered to include early Hebrew poetry (Genesis 49; Exodus 15; Numbers 23-24; Deuteronomy 32-33; Judges 5; First Samuel 2; Second Samuel 1 and 22-23; Psalms 29 and 68; Habakkuk 3), according to Mark S. Smith, *Poetic Heroes: Literary Commemorations of Warriors and Warrior Culture in the Early Biblical World*, Grand Rapids 2014, 211.

⁸⁸ Deut 32:39; 33:11; Num 24:8, 17; Judg 5:26; 2 Sam 22:38; Hab 3:13; Ps 18:39; 68:22, 24. Ben Sira echoes the idiom in Deut 33:11 in his single surviving use of the verb (Sir 35:22 MS B). Of the two Qumran uses, 1QM 11:6 quotes Num 24:17, while 1QM 12:11 plays on Num 24:8.

his contemporary Theocritus. Hence she dates the psalm to the Ptolemaic era (perhaps third century BCE), although in her view it was not addressed to any real Judean king, but rather a fictive Davidic ruler.⁸⁹ She regards the echoes of earlier royal texts from Israel and the ancient Near East as instances of archaizing.⁹⁰ However, the many verbal and thematic resemblances to archaic Israelite poems and other ancient Near Eastern texts (noted in her monograph) seem to me far stronger than her proposed parallels with Hellenistic royal encomia.

To be sure, there is ambiguity over the significance of the king's appointment as priest (v. 4). On the one hand, the appointment of the new king as Zion's priest (v. 4) could refer to the early Israelite monarchy, where "David's sons were priests" (2 Sam 8:18).⁹¹ On the other hand, it could potentially be a late reference to the dynasty of the priestly Hasmoneans, whose rulers took on the title of "ethnarch" from the time of Simon around 140 BCE (1 Macc 14:47) and "king" from the time of Aristobulus I around 104 BCE (Josephus, *A.J.*, 13.11.1 §301). Hence, it has sometimes been proposed that the psalm originates as a legitimation of Simon Maccabee, perhaps connected with his investiture.⁹²

Possibly some echoes of Psalm 110 appear within the description in 1 Maccabees 14 of Simon Maccabee (143/2-135/4 BCE) as both civic leader and high priest. He was appointed by the Jewish leaders and priests "to be ruler (ἡγούμενον) and high priest forever (ἀρχιερέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα)" (1Macc 14:41), which may be intended as a faint echo of LXX Ps 110(109):4: "You yourself are a priest forever (ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα), according to the arrangement/ order of Melchizedek."⁹³ Furthermore, his triumphant career is depicted

⁸⁹ M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 134-41, 307 ; P. Garuti, *Avant que se lève l'étoile du matin: l'imaginaire dynastique du Psaume 110 entre judaïsme, hellénisme et culture romaine* (CahRB 73), Pendé 2010, 154.

⁹⁰ M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 126.

⁹¹ G. Granerød, *Abraham and Melchizedek...*, 174-188.

⁹² H. Donner, "Der verlässliche Prophet: Betrachtungen zu 1 Makk 14,41ff und zu Ps 110," in id., *Aufsätze zum Alten Testament aus vier Jahrzehnten* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 224), Berlin 1994, 213-23; P. Garuti, *Avant que se lève...*, 156-157.

⁹³ H. Donner, "Der verlässliche Prophet...", 219-21; A. van der Kooij, "The Septuagint of Psalms and the First Book of Maccabees", in R. J. Hiebert, C. E. Cox, P. J. Gentry (ed.), *The Old Greek Psalter* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 332), Sheffield 2001, 229-47, esp. 238-239.

in these words: “In his days things prospered in his hands, so that the nations/ Gentiles were removed from their regions” (1Macc 14:36), which faintly echoes the statement in LXX Ps 110(109):6: “He will give judgment among the nations/ Gentiles.”⁹⁴ In addition, he and his sons “made war on Israel’s enemies” (1Macc 14:26; cf. Ps 110:1), with the result that a record on bronze tablets was placed on pillars “upon Mount Zion” (1 Macc 14:27; cf. Ps 110:2). However, First Maccabees never actually mentions Melchizedek, whereas a closer Hasmonean connection exists with Phinehas as a role model (Num 25:12-13), since LXX 1 Chr 9:20 also calls Eleazar’s son Phinehas “ruler” (ἡγούμενος). In fact, Phinehas is already named in 1Macc 2:26, while 1 Macc 2:54 (Codex Venetus) states explicitly: “Phinehas our ancestor, by being very zealous, received a covenant of eternal priesthood (ἱερωσύνης αἰώνιας).”⁹⁵

In a further problem for a Hasmonean origin, Deborah Rooke points out that Ps 110:4 speaks of a king receiving the office of priest, whereas the Hasmoneans were priests who claimed the office of kingship.⁹⁶ Moreover, Edward Kissane has observed: “It is highly improbable that a poet in the time of the Maccabees (who were of the family of Aaron) would attribute to the king a priesthood like that of Melchizedek.”⁹⁷ Hence David Hay asserts: “While the Hasmoneans probably did not compose the Psalm, they probably did use it to defend their claims to priestly and royal prerogatives.”⁹⁸ Such Hasmonean usage could indeed explain why this psalm was included as part of a “Davidic triptych” (Psalms 108-110), placed near the opening of the Fifth Book of the Psalter, since both Psalm 108 and Psalm 110 report divine oracles, spoken in the sanctuary, proclaiming God’s defeat of his enemies in connection with the Davidic king.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ M. Tilly, “Psalm 110...”, 163.

⁹⁵ M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 225-226.

⁹⁶ D. Rooke, “Kingship as Priesthood: The Relationship between the Priesthood and the Monarchy,” in J. Day (ed.), *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 270), London 1998, 187-208, esp. 188. So also J. Day, “Some Aspects of the Monarchy in Ancient Israel,” in R. I. Thelle (ed.) et al., *New Perspectives on Old Testament Prophecy and History* (Vetus Testamentum Supplements 1689), Leiden 2015, 161-74, esp. 164.

⁹⁷ E. J. Kissane, *Book of Psalms...*, vol. 2, 190.

⁹⁸ D. M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Society for Biblical Literature Monograph Series 189), Nashville 1973, 24.

⁹⁹ E. Zenger and F. L. Hossfeld, *Psalms* 3, 152.

In fact, it is hard to use the reception history in order to trace a date of origin for this psalm. Surprisingly, prior to the NT, the Hebrew of Psalm 110 seems to have left relatively few traces in Second Temple Judaism.¹⁰⁰ There is no Qumran citation of Psalm 110, nor even any surviving section of preserved text,¹⁰¹ although gaps in 4Q84 and 11Q5 may mean that the psalm was once present but now lost. Even though 11QMelchizedek refers to the heavenly figure of Melchizedek, it never quotes Psalm 110.¹⁰² Perhaps the Qumran community, doubtless based on temple priests, was unhappy with the way the Hasmonean rulers combined priestly and royal power, and hence ignored Psalm 110.¹⁰³ Indeed, Emile Puech has argued that 11QMelchizedek was composed as a polemical text against the Hasmonean usage of Melchizedek's title "priest of God Most High" (Gen 14:18), since Josephus calls Hyrcanus II "high priest of God Most High" (*A.J.* 16.6.2 §163).¹⁰⁴

Probably the closest pre-Maccabean echo of the Hebrew text of Psalm 110 appears in the second chapter of Lamentations, where the first verse reverses the psalm's glorious language: "Ah, how Adonai (אֲדֹנָי – cf. Ps 110:5) has scorned in his anger (בְּאַפּוֹ – cf. v. 5) daughter Zion (צִיּוֹן – cf. v. 2); he has cast down from heaven to earth (אֶרֶץ – cf. v. 6) Israel's magnificence; and he has not remembered the stool of his feet (הִדְּמָה רַגְלָיו – cf. v. 1) on the day of his anger (בְּיוֹם אַפּוֹ – cf. v. 5)" (Lam 2:1). In fact, out of the 18 Hebrew words in Lam 2:1, eight of them appear in Psalm 110. The next two verses in Lamentations speak of the downfall of the monarchy, with a few echoes of the psalm: "he has brought litl down to the earth (לְאֶרֶץ); he has profaned the kingdom and its princes; ... he has withdrawn his right hand (יְמִינוֹ) in face of the enemy (אֹיִב)" (Lam 2:2-3). A later verse in the chapter states: "He has rejected in the indignation of his anger (אִפּוֹ) king (מֶלֶךְ) and priest (כֹּהֵן)" (Lam 2:6), while another verse says of Jerusalem: "Her king (מַלְכָּה) and her princes are among the nations (בְּגוֹיִם)" (Lam 2:9). Finally, the poem

¹⁰⁰ Direct references to Psalm 110 are very rare in Hellenistic Jewish literature from 2nd century BCE to 1st century CE, according to Tilly, "Psalm 110...", 158. A survey of possible usages of Psalm 110 within Second Temple Jewish texts (mostly references to Melchizedek) appears in M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 221-273.

¹⁰¹ M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 235; P. Garuti, *Avant que se lève*, 153.

¹⁰² See the table of allusions in M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 241-243.

¹⁰³ P. Garuti, *Avant que se lève*, 156.

¹⁰⁴ E. Puech, "Notes sur le manuscrit de XIQMelkîsédeq," *Revue de Qumran* 12 (1987) 483-513.

laments: “You have killed on the day of your anger (ביום אַפֶּךָ)” (Lam 2:21).¹⁰⁵ Although such references are rather generic, they could be understood to act cumulatively as a grief-filled reversal of the victory promises of Psalm 110, just as the concluding lament in Psalm 89 asks where the promises to the Davidic line now stand at the time of the fall of the monarchy.

A few possible faint echoes appear in references to Melchizedek in later texts. The mention of “priest forever” (110:4) may possibly be echoed in 4Q545 3.6 (“He will be chosen as eternal priest”), but it may more likely be alluding to other texts such as the “eternal priesthood” of Aaron or Phinehas (Exod 40:15; Num 25:13). It is unclear how far the heavenly figure of Melchizedek, celebrated in 11QMelchizedek, is connected with Psalm 110. A distant resemblance exists in the phrase: “He will give judgment (יִדִין) among the nations (בְּגוֹיִם)” (Ps 110:6), which loosely parallels the statement in 11QMelch 2.11: “God will judge (יִדִין) peoples (עַמִּים),” but this is in fact more like the affirmation in Ps 7:9: “YHWH will judge (יִדִין) peoples (עַמִּים).”¹⁰⁶

Although 1QSa (a version of the Community Rule) employs some words found in Psalm 110, there is no direct quotation, and the sense seems to be very different: “At a session of the men of renown, [those summoned to] the gathering of the community council, when [God] begets (יוליד) the Messiah with them, [the] chief (רוֹאֵשׁ) [priest] of all the congregation of Israel shall enter, and all [his brothers, the sons] of Aaron, the priests (הַכֹּהֲנִים) [summoned] to the assembly, the men of renown, and they shall sit (וישבּוּ) [before him, each one] according to his dignity. After, [the Messiah] of Israel shall [enter] and before him shall sit (ישֵׁב) the heads of the [thousands of Israel, each] one according to his dignity” (1Q28a II.15-11).¹⁰⁷ Yet whereas Psalm 110 speaks of a king who is appointed priest, 1QSa refers first to the chief priest and then to a separate messianic figure (presumably royal).

Our examination has suggested that the poetic themes of Hebrew Psalm 110 fit best with other archaic Israelite poetry. While a few motifs were borrowed by the Hasmoneans (1 Maccabees 14), the Qumran community differentiated itself from them by ignoring

¹⁰⁵ M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 73.

¹⁰⁶ M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 241.

¹⁰⁷ Translation from García-Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 1.103; M. von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 241.

the psalm as an expression of earthly power, and instead referred to a heavenly Melchizedek figure.

CONCLUSION

Many scholars suggest that Psalm 110 reflects an Israelite enthronement ritual. Although the rites of crowning and anointing are not mentioned, the psalm refers to the king's enthronement, taking the sceptre, and public acclamation, though the unusual added element is the appointment to priesthood. The psalm begins with a divine oracle of royal enthronement which is akin to the Victory Song of Thutmose III. Then the Hebrew form of v. 3A speaks of public acclamation by courtiers who are willing to offer themselves in battle for the king, while v. 3B contains a mysterious statement about new birth. Verse 4 provides a second oracle, appointing the new monarch as a priest. Finally, vv. 5-6 contain a powerful and brutal victory oracle, whereby God will work through the new king to crush his enemies, while v. 7 describes the monarch symbolizing his victory by a ritual drink. Thus, Psalm 110 resembles Psalm 2 in portraying the enthronement on Mount Zion of a divinely appointed king who will crush the enemy nations.

While it is hard to date this psalm, parallels with archaic biblical poems such as the Song of Deborah (Judges 5) and with ancient Egyptian texts such as the Victory Song of Thutmose III (ca. 1450 BCE) suggest that this psalm is a very ancient poem, possibly even incorporating elements from the pre-Israelite Canaanite cult based in Jerusalem. To be sure, a few recent scholars have attempted to date the psalm on the basis of some echoes found in the description of Simon Maccabee (143/2-135/4 BCE) being appointed by the Jewish leaders and priests "to be ruler (ἡγούμενον) and high priest forever (ἀρχιερέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα)" (1 Macc 14:41). However, one factor against a Maccabean dating is the way that Ps 110:4 speaks of a monarch receiving the priestly office, whereas the Hasmoneans were priests who claimed the office of kingship. Hence, it is much more likely that the Hasmoneans sought legitimacy by reviving usage of an ancient psalm rather than originating an entirely new composition.

Because the LXX offers some reinterpretation of elements within the psalm, Jerome made two different translations, one from the Greek and the other from the Hebrew. While the psalm may

have been echoed in the late second century BCE as legitimation of the Hasmonean dynasty of priest-kings, many NT texts interpret the psalm as messianic, so that the king taking up his great authority is identified as Jesus Christ, crucified and risen.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ A. Del Agua Pérez, “Derás cristológico del Salmo 110 en el Nuevo Testamento,” in N. Fernández Marcos (ed.), *Simposio Bíblico Español (Salamanca, 1982)*, Madrid 1984, 637-662. I would like to thank Santiago Guijarro Oporto for the kind invitation to the Salamanca symposium (May 2016) and the conference participants for helpful comments.