

On the Place of Psalm 21 in Israelite Royal Ideology

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It is a pleasant duty to contribute to this volume in honor of my teacher. Prof. Tigay is known for the energy and care he expends on his students' work, and for the dedication with which he fosters and guides their scholarship. It is characteristic of the Penn Bible program that Prof. Tigay has contributed a great deal to the shaping and refinement of the ideas in the current essay. My study of Psalm 21 was first presented as a talk to the Judah Goldin Memorial Seminar, a forum for students in the program to present their work, and benefited from Prof. Tigay's incisive comments. It was also included in my dissertation,¹ and benefited from his careful and dedicated editing. In the words of the concluding verse of Proverbs (ויהללוה בשערים מעשיה מפרי ידיה לה תנו), Prof. Tigay is herewith honored with the fruits of his own labor.

Recently, Prof. Tigay published an article on Ps 2:6², in which he demonstrated that the phrase נִסְכָּתִי מִלְּפִי וְאֲנִי in this verse should be understood “But I Myself created

¹Shawn Zelig Aster, *The Phenomenon of Divine and Human Radiance in the Hebrew Bible and in Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Literature: A Philological and Comparative Analysis* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2006) 279-90; 336-40.

² J. H. Tigay, “Divine Creation of the King in Ps 2:6,” *Hayim and Miriam Tadmor Volume* (ed. I. Eph^{<ayin>}al et al.; *ErIsr* 27; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2003) 246*-251*.

my king,” with the verb נָסַךְ having the sense of “to form, to create.” This verb has the literal meaning “to pour” and it is synonymous in meaning with the Akkadian verb *βapæku*. Prof. Tigay compared Ps 2:6 with Akkadian passages using the verb *βapæku* (to pour) in reference to divine creation of the king, and concluded that the phrase refers to divine creation of the king. Since this motif has not been identified elsewhere in the Bible, he suggested that its source may be in Assyrian royal propaganda.

The current essay deals with Ps 21:2-8. Psalm 21 is often considered together with Psalm 2, and both have been classed as belonging to an enthronement ritual.³ Like Prof. Tigay's study of Psalm 2, it uses philological study and the comparative method to better understand the ideas of the psalm. The first part of this essay examines the literary structure of Ps 21:2-8, with a view to uncovering the royal ideology it represents, while the second part of the essay suggests possible dates for the psalm on linguistic grounds. Gunkel long ago remarked that “current research into the dating of the royal psalms shows an amazing state of complete confusion,”⁴ and the statement is no less true today.

³ H. Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction* (trans. Th. Horner from vol. 1 of *Die religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 1930; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967) 24. See discussion in Marc Z. Brettler, *God is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor* (JSOTSup 76; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989) 135.

⁴ H. Gunkel and J. Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (trans. J. Nogalski from *Einleitung in die Psalmen: die Gattungen des religiösen Lyrik Israels*, 1st ed. 1933; 4th ed. 1985; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998) 118.

By using linguistic criteria, I hope to place the dating of the psalm on a firmer basis than that achieved by examining only the ideas it expresses.

Literary Structure of Ps 21:2-8

The relevant section of the psalm is:

(ב) ה' בעוזך ישמח מלך ובישועתך מה יגיל (יגל ק') מאד
נתתה לו וארשת שפתיו בל מנעת סלה)ג(תאות לבו
ד) כי תקדמנו ברכות טוב תשית לראשו עטרת פז
ה) (חיים שאל ממך נתתה לו ארך ימים עולם ועד
עליו תשוה והדר הוד בישועתך כבודו גדול)ו(
ז) כי תשיתהו ברכות לעד תחדהו בשמחה את פניך
ח) כי המלך בטח בה' ובחסד עליון בל ימוט

(2) O, Lord, the king rejoices in Your strength; how greatly he exults in Your victory!

(3) You have granted him the desire of his heart, have not denied the request of his lips

(4) You have proffered him blessings of good things, have set upon his head a crown of gold.

(5) He asked You for life; You granted it; a long life, everlasting.

(6) His importance is aggrandized by means of Your victory; You place upon Him *hod* and *hadar*.

(7) You have given him eternal blessings, gladdened him with the joy of Your presence.

(8) For the king trusts in YHWH, through the covenantal kindness of the Most High, he will not collapse.

The psalm is framed by mention of the w of YHWH (in vv. 2 and 14), and the psalm as a whole expresses the idea that the power of YHWH is superior to royal power. The idea that Divine power is the source of royal power is most concisely expressed in v. 8. This verse, which concludes the first unit of the psalm, articulates the total harmony between the king and YHWH. It is entirely because of Divine support that the kingship “will not be shaken.”

An examination of vv. 2-8 shows that vv. 2-7 build towards the ideological crescendo expressed in v. 8. They portray Divine power as the source of royal power, but more specifically, they describe the ways in which YHWH extends His favor to the king. These acts of Divine favor are presented in a highly specific way, and understanding the structure of these acts in vv. 2-8 is critical to understanding the message of the psalm, and the role that these acts have in defining the royal ideology presented here.

Each verse presents two acts of Divine favor, and the means used to express this Divine favor can be classed into three groups. In vv. 2-3, YHWH is said to use His abilities to fulfill the desires of the king, thus gladdening him. These verses emphasize the total harmony between the potential source of favor (Divine abilities) and the need for favor (royal requests). No specific gifts are mentioned in vv. 2-3. But vv. 4-5 present a different way of expressing Divine favor—the giving of Divine gifts to the king, including

the crown and long life. Here, the emphasis is on the specific gifts. Vv. 6-7 portray a third way of expressing Divine favor, since they describe a special intimacy between the king and God. Divine attributes, such as *kabod*, *hod*, *hadar*, and eternity are shared with the king in vv. 6-7a,⁵ and he is welcomed into YHWH's presence in v. 7b.

The word-order in these verses also serves to indicate the harmony of interests between YHWH and king. The opening words in each stitch of verses 2-7 are structured according to a specific pattern, which binds the verses into the pairs described above. These opening words alternate between references to YHWH or His actions, and possessions or requests of the king.

Vv. 2-5 are structured according to the pattern YR YR (v. 2 =Y; v. 3= R; v. 4=Y; v. 5=R), with Y indicating opening words which refer to YHWH, and R indicating those that refer to the king. Thus, v. 2 begins with a vocative YHWH, and the verse speaks of the use of Divine powers to gladden the king.⁶ Verse 3, in contradistinction, begins with

⁵כבוד, הוד and הדר can also indicate traits of human royalty; the specific reasons for seeing these expressions as divine attributes is discussed below.

⁶ Two philological issues in the verse are clarified by parallelism. The first is the term *ישועה*, which is usually translated “salvation.” The couplet *עז/ישועה* which is used in the parallelism in this verse militates against understanding *ישועה* in the abstract religious sense often associated with “salvation” in Christian theology. The meaning of the verb *ישע* is to deliver, usually by means of battle (as in its use in Exod 2:17, 14:30; and in Judg 2:16, 6:37). The second is the verb *ישמה*. Ginsberg proposed the translation “shining” for

mention of the king (תאורת לכו) and the second stitch in the verse likewise begins by mentioning something belonging to the king (וארשת שפתיו); any divine action is a response to the king's requests.

This alternation is also present in vv. 4-5. V. 4 begins with a verb whose subject is YHWH (תקדמו-כי), as does the second stitch in this verse (תשית), and the verse speaks only of the actions of YHWH. However, each stitch of v. 5 opens with the requests of the king (חיים, ארך ימים), and here too, the Divine action comes in response to royal requests.

Verses 6 and 7 reverse the YR pattern, since both stitches of v. 6 begin with something possessed by the king, while both stitches of v. 7 refer to Divine actions. Verse 6a opens by mentioning the כבוד of the king, and the possessive emphasizes that this is a royal possession (כבודו), while 6b speaks of the king's הוד and הדר. Each stitch of v. 7 begins by referring to a divine action (תשיתהו, תחדהו). Pattern reversal is a known phenomenon in Biblical poetry, and usually indicates the emphatic and climactic nature of

the noun שמחה in v. 7 (H. L. Ginsberg, "Lexicographical Notes," *Hebräische Wortforschung: Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag von Walter Baumgartner* [VTSup 16; Leiden: Brill, 1967] 72). Such a translation is not admissible in our verse, because of the parallelism with יגל. On the parallelism between these verbs in Hebrew and Ugaritic, see E. Lipinski, *La Royauté de Yawhé dans la poésie et le culte de l'ancien Israël* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1965) 258-59.

the phrase in which the pattern is reversed.⁷ The reversal of the pattern serves to distinguish vv. 6 and 7 from vv. 2-5; these verses are indeed distinct from vv. 2-5 not only in terms of the syntactic pattern, but also in the type of Divine favor they describe.

These verses repeat expressions of favor mentioned in vv. 2-5, but reformulate them to reflect greater intensity. This intensity indicates the intimacy between king and God. This pattern of echoing and intensification can best be seen in the following annotated translation:

6a: “His importance is aggrandized by means of Your victory.”

This echoes the mention of divine victory in v. 2b

2b: “How greatly he exults in Your victory”

6a intensifies 2b, since **וְהִכְבֵּד** (here translated “importance,” in accord with its basic meaning) is also a divine quality. The sharing of a divine quality indicates a raising of the king's status, which draws him nearer to God.

⁷ See John T. Willis, “Synonymous and Chiastic Parallelism in Tricola,” *VT* 29 (1979) 474. A fuller discussion of the technique, which Meir Paran named “pivot ending” (תפנית) (הסיום) appears in Shamir Yonah, *Expanded Repetition Patterns of Roots and Words in Biblical Poetry* (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1998) 264-73 [Hebrew]. Yonah defines this technique as “a change in the last element of a literary unit, which serves to highlight it in comparison to preceding elements.” He also discusses the use of this technique in other ancient Near Eastern literature.

6b: “You place upon Him *hod* and *hadar*.”

This echoes the placement of a gold crown on the king's head in 4b.

4b: “You have set upon his head a golden crown.”

6b intensifies 4b since the phrase *הוד והדר* is used almost exclusively in reference to God.⁸

In 6b, like in 6a, the king partakes of a divine quality.

7a: “You have given him eternal blessings.”

This echoes the mention of blessings in v. 4a.

4a: “You have offered to him blessings of good things.”

7a intensifies 4a, since the blessings have a divine quality: they are said to be eternal.

7b: “Gladdened him with the joy of Your Presence.”

⁸ While *הוד* and *הדר* are used as human characteristics, the collocation *הוד והדר* is almost always a Divine characteristic. It appears in six passages in the Hebrew Bible (Ps 96:6, parallel to 1 Chr 16:27; Ps 21:6, Ps 45:4, Ps 111:3; Job 40:10), and only in Ps 45:4, which is textually very difficult, might it refer to a human characteristic. The fact that the phrase always appears as *הוד והדר* and never as *הדר והוד** indicates that it functions as a formula, rather than a collocation of the two separate elements. Therefore, in determining whether this is a Divine characteristic, it is reasonable to look at the way this formula is used, rather than looking at the use of the two disparate elements. For further discussion, see Aster, *The Phenomenon of Divine and Human Radiance*, 168-248, especially 243-48.

echoes the mention of rejoicing in v. 2.

2a: "O Lord, the king rejoices in Your strength."

7b intensifies 2a, since the joy is due to the king standing in God's Presence.

In vv. 6-7, the king is described (repeatedly) as partaking of Divine qualities, and as standing in the Divine Presence. The language used here is more than "praise in extreme terms."⁹ The king is not only the best of humans, but also acquires traits that are elsewhere reserved for YHWH. This is exceptional even when compared to other psalms which speak of the king as crowned and assisted by YHWH, such as Psalms 18 and 89.

The most significant of these traits for our purposes is the king's acquiring **הוד והדר**. Elsewhere, this collocation refers to God's deeds of strength (in Ps 111:3) and to God's control and mastery of creation (in Ps 104:2). But in Ps 21:6, it does not seem that this phrase indicates strength or power which God grants to the king. The theme of the king's deeds of strength is prominent only in vv. 9ff, and does not appear as a theme elsewhere in vv. 2-7. The context in vv. 6-7, which refers specifically to divine traits, suggests that the **הוד והדר** granted to the king in this verse does not refer simply to ordinary royal power.

⁹ The phrase is used by David J. A. Clines, "The Psalms and the King," *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays 1967-1998* (JSOTSup 293; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 698, to refer to formulations in Psalm 21 and in other psalms.

The verb in the phrase **והדר תשוה עליו** should influence how we understand **הדר תשוה**. **והדר תשוה** is a D-stem form of the verbal root βwh . In the Hebrew Bible, this verb usually means “to consider,” “to make,” “to equate,” or “to transform A into B.”¹⁰ In Biblical Hebrew, it rarely means “to place” and $\dots m$ is used instead.¹¹ The meaning “to place,”

¹⁰ Examples include:

1. Ps 18:34, parallel to 2 Sam 22:34: **משוה רגלי כאילות**. Here, the verb means “to make my feet to be like those of hinds.”
2. Isa 28:25: **שוה פניה הלוא אם**. Here, it means to “smooth over” the face of the earth, making it equal in all places.

The meaning “to consider” or “to reckon” something as equal to something else is also a standard meaning of βwh in the D-stem in Babylonian Aramaic. See M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002) 1117.

¹¹ Only in Hos 10:1 does βwh in the D-stem clearly mean “to place.” The phrase **פרי ישוה לו** means “it (the vine) will give fruit to him.” The context (which speaks about the vine producing much fruit) requires the verb to have a meaning similar to the standard Hebrew expression **שוייתו ה'**. Other verses where this meaning may be found include **לנגדי תמיד** in Ps 16:8 (9), which could mean “I have consistently placed God before me,” but it is preferable to understand the verse to mean “I have consistently considered God to be before me.” This fits better with the context of the psalm and is simpler than the

for *βwh*, however, is quite common in Aramaic. In Aramaic, *βwh* is used as the equivalent of Biblical Hebrew *...ym*.¹² Ps 21:6 uses the Aramaic sense of *βwh*, rather than using one of the common Hebrew words for “to place,” and rather than using one of the common Hebrew meanings of the root *βwh*. This is quite remarkable, and is likely the result of Aramaic influence.

The standard Hebrew verb which is parallel to the Aramaic D-stem *βwh* is *...ym* in the G-stem. This verb with the preposition על is usually used to describe placing a concrete object upon another person (Exod 28:26; 2 Kgs 4:29), and is used in reference to dressing a person (i.e. placing clothing upon them) in Ruth 3:3. It is not generally used in reference to an abstract object.¹³

awkward image of “placing God.” Ps 89:20 is difficult, and שׂיתִי is usually understood to mean “I have placed,” for lack of a better alternative.

¹² The meaning to “place” appears widely as the D-stem meaning of *βwh* in targumic Aramaic (where it is the standard translation of Hebrew *...ym*) and in official and inscriptional Aramaic, as well as in Babylonian Aramaic. (See M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*, 2nd ed. [Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002] 540; *DNWSI* 2.1116-17; Sokoloff, *Babylonian Aramaic*, 1117.)

¹³ It is used with an abstract object to indicate placing a burden upon someone in Num 11:11, Judg 9:24, and Ezek 44:5. In these cases, however, there is a basic concrete meaning to the verb (to place a physical burden upon someone) and the abstract meaning

Thus, הוֹד וְהִדָּר in Ps 21:6 seems to refer to a divine trait, and specifically to a concrete object (or to an idea which is susceptible to a concrete metaphor). In searching to understand this referent, the suggestion that the Biblical הוֹד and הִדָּר parallel Akk. *melammu* recommends itself.¹⁴ Several Neo-Assyrian texts speak of *melammu* as placed upon the king by the gods. This sign of power (often luminous) is conceived of as a concrete object, and the texts describe it as such.¹⁵ There is also evidence for the use of

develops by metaphorizing the burden (the burden of the people in Num 11:11, the burden of guilt in Judg 9:24, and the burden of sin in Ezek 44:5).

¹⁴ The suggestion appears in R. Tournay, "Recherches sur la chronologie des Psaumes (suite)," *RB* 66 (1959) 173, and in M. Weinfeld, "God the Creator in Genesis 1 and in the Prophecy of Second Isaiah," *Tarbiz* 37 (1968) 130-32 [Hebrew].

¹⁵ Earlier Mesopotamian texts speak of the king as adorned with *melammu* but do not specifically mention that it is placed upon him by the gods. The first text I know of to state this is a royal inscription of Adad-nirari II (911-891 BCE):

*ar*ki *il*œni *rabûti* *i*β Υ m Σ *ma* \approx *a*^{aa}*a* *mur*[te''ât] *ni*β $\text{\textcircled{R}}$ *ana* *qœt* $\text{\textcircled{R}}$ *ya* *umellû*
eli *βarrœni* *β* Σ *t* *agê* *i*β β *ûni* *melamme* *βarr* Σ *ti* Υ *pir* Σ *ni*

After the great gods had decreed (my destiny, after) they had entrusted to me the scepter for the shepherding of the people,

(after) they had raised me above crowned kings (and) crowned me with the royal

melammu...

(*RIMA 2*, A.0.99.2., p. 147, lines 7-9)

It also appears in Ashurbanipal's annals, in describing his campaign against Tarqu

(Tirhaka) of Egypt:

84. *namrirr* Aßbur u^d Ißtar is^{up}ßuma illika ma^{ûti}ß

85. *melamm*ßarr^{tija} iktumßuma

86. *ßa uza*'inⁱⁿⁿⁱ il^ßt^{ßamê} er^Δeti

87. ^{uru}Mempi umaßßirma ana ß^{zub} napißtißu

88. *innabit ana qereb* ^{uru}Ni'

84. The *namrirr* of Aßbur and Ißtar overwhelmed him, and he became crazed (lit., “like an ecstatic.”)

85-86. The royal *melammus* with which the gods of heaven and earth adorned me overwhelmed him.

87. He abandoned Memphis and in order to save his life,

88. he fled into Thebes.

(From the Rassam cylinder A, col. i lines 84-88. Published by R. Borger, *Beträge zum*

Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996] 20).

this imagery in the neo-Babylonian period, from texts which describe the ceremonial placing of a garment (representing *melammu*) upon the king (who represents the god Ninurta).¹⁶ Conceptually, the *melammu* functions as an indication of the king's power and of his legitimacy; it is a sign of his close relationship with the gods. This imagery is therefore appropriate in the context of Ps 21:6-7, which describe the king as sharing in divine characteristics.

If the phrase הוד והדר תשוה עליו reflects the imagery of placing *melammu* upon the king, then the language of this psalm reflects an image of the king as more than *primus inter pares*. He is endowed here with supernatural attributes, and becomes a sort of superman.

¹⁶ The discussion appears in Alasdair Livingstone, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works of Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986) 146. The relevant text is VAT 8917=KAR 307, published in Alasdair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* (SAA 3; Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1989) 102, text 39 r 21-24. It describes Ninurta's crowning, and Livingstone argues that in the ritual enactment of this description, the king was adorned with a robe as a representation of Ninurta's *melammu*. There is an interesting parallel between Ps 21:10 and this text, in which Ninurta, after his crowning, is said to go to the mountains, while cedar is burned before him, as a metaphor for the wasting away of the "evil gods."

This status is entirely the result of his close relationship with YHWH, as v. 8, which is the climax of the first part of the psalm, expresses:

טכי המלך בטח בה' ובחסד עליון בל ימו

For the king trusts in YHWH, and through the covenantal kindness of the Most High, he will not collapse.

The negative and contingent phrasing in the second part of the verse (through *x*, he will not *y*) suggests the very real possibility that were it not for חסד עליון, the king might well collapse. Thus, the end of the king's rule is a possibility from which he is saved by his close relationship with YHWH.

Despite the apparently precarious nature of his rule, vv. 9-13 describe the extremely successful defeat of the king's enemies. The verses emphasize their total and utter destruction, using fire imagery (v. 10) and merism (fruit/seed, v. 11). The author of this destruction seems to be YHWH, whose power is praised in the conclusion of the psalm, v. 14.

The royal ideology reflected in this psalm is exceptional for the Hebrew Bible, even within the corpus of royal psalms. The king partakes in divine traits, is endowed by YHWH with what seems to be supernatural force, and benefits from the total destruction of the king's enemies ensues.

Linguistic Considerations in Dating Psalm 21

Because it expresses an exceptional type of royal ideology, the dating of this psalm is therefore a matter of some importance. Previous discussions of its date focus largely on considerations such as the ideological background of the psalm and the time at which such ideologies are likely to have held sway in Judah. It is on these bases that Tournay dates the psalm to the time of Josiah.¹⁷ Below, I use linguistic considerations to determine the psalm's date, focusing on the unusual linguistic features it contains.

The most remarkable linguistic feature of the psalm is the total absence of the negating particle לֹא and the use of $\text{לֹ} in its place. Although found in Biblical Hebrew, it is unusual for לֹא to be consistently replaced by לֹ . Since לֹ is the standard negating particle in Phoenician (and since both bl and l' are used in Ugaritic), Rendsburg has argued that it indicates the "Israelian" or northern origin of a passage.¹⁸$

¹⁷ R. Tournay, "Recherches sur la chronologie des Psaumes," 151-90.

¹⁸ "The concentration of five instances of *bal* in Psalm 10 is an indication of the northern origin of these verses." (Gary Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990] 24.) In our slightly shorter psalm, לֹ appears three times. לֹ does appear in texts that clearly originate from Jerusalem, as Rendsburg notes, and so it cannot be seen as decisive evidence of northern origin. However, consistent use of לֹ is peculiar and deserves to be noted.

Further examination shows the psalm to have an unusually high content of vocabulary more typical of Aramaic and Akkadian than of Hebrew. Besides the use of *βwh* in the D-stem meaning “to place” noted above, I have identified two other elements:

1. The hapax אגלשׁ (v. 3). It is related to the Akkadian noun *erβu*, meaning “desire” or “wish,” as well as the corresponding Akkadian verb, and to the Punic verb *Lrβ*, which means “to desire” or “to wish” in the G-stem.¹⁹
2. The verb *ḏw*, used in the D-stem in v. 7b.²⁰ This root is rare in the Hebrew Bible, appearing only here and in Exod 18:9, describing Jethro.²¹ The common root in

¹⁹ *CAD* E, 281; *DNWSI* 1.114. Punic influence can be excluded due to geographic considerations, but raise the possibility that the word may have existed in Phoenician as well, even though it is not so attested in the texts we possess.

²⁰ I have taken אגלשׁ to be from the root *ḏw*, to rejoice, rather than adopting Dahood's proposal to understand the verse as “You will make him gaze with happiness upon your face,” with אגלשׁ derived from an alleged Hebrew root *ḏy* “to see.” There do not seem to be any clear attestations of this root in the Hebrew Bible, although it is attested in Ugaritic. (See M. Dahood, *Psalms I:1-50* [AB 16; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966] 130 and 133.)

²¹ Its use in the Jethro passage does not necessarily indicate the lateness of this passage. It may be a function of what Rendsburg has called “style-switching,” the use of foreign-sounding morphemes in Biblical narratives about foreigners. “There appear to be instances where Biblical writers could color their Hebrew composition sufficiently to

standard Biblical Hebrew is ...*m*´. The root *´dw* is commonly used only in postexilic Biblical Hebrew, where we find the related noun, *דוד* (in Neh 8:10, and in 1 Chr 16:27, where it replaces *תפארת* which appears in the corresponding verse in Ps 96:6) and in Biblical Aramaic (Ezra 6:16). The cognate Akkadian root $\approx adû$, however, is the usual way of expressing gladness in Akkadian. The root may be borrowed into Biblical Hebrew from Akkadian, or from Aramaic. It is commonly used to express gladness in Official Aramaic, and in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic.²²

The Aramaic elements suggest a linguistic environment in which Official Aramaic was known, while the replacement of *לָא* by *בָּל* suggests possible Phoenician influence. Taken together, these characteristics suggest the possibility of late Biblical Hebrew, and that the psalm was written in the Postexilic Period. But the content of the psalm does not fit with a postexilic date. The language of utter destruction in vv. 9-11 seems to imply at least the possibility of set military battles against enemies. Such battles do not seem to

reflect the speech of non-Israelites” (G. A. Rendsburg, “Bilingual Wordplay in the Bible,” *VT* 38 [1988] 356, and bibliography at note 11). This phenomenon is also noted by Avi Hurvitz: “One cannot automatically ascribe to the later period the Aramaisms which are connected with the description of foreign nations and foreign peoples. The usage of what seems to be Aramaisms in such context may well reflect the use of peculiar expressions characteristic of a foreign language” (“The Chronological Significance of Aramaisms in Biblical Hebrew,” *IEJ* 18 [1968] 236).

²² *DNWSI* 1.349; Sokoloff, *Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, 188; *CAD* H, 25.

have been a possibility in Persian *Yehud*, where enemies seem to have been outwitted largely through diplomatic machinations. Additionally, the unusual linguistic elements noted are limited to vocabulary, and do not seem to include elements related to the syntactic structure of Biblical Hebrew. Changes in vocabulary tend to occur earlier in the process of linguistic development than changes in syntactic structure. While changes in syntax might require us to see a psalm as representing Late Biblical Hebrew, the same cannot be said for vocabulary changes.

On solely linguistic grounds, it might be possible to see the psalm as a product of the northern kingdom in the late eighth century. However, the psalm sees the kingship as a stable and long-lived institution, held in place by a covenantal relationship with God. This view does not accord with the reality of the Israelite kingship after the end of the house of Jehu in 747. From this date on, kings rarely ruled unchallenged. Several kings (Menahem, Hosea) owed their position to the support of Assyria, while others (Shallum, Pekah, Pekahiah) ruled for only a short period. If the poem is in fact northern, it is likely that it was composed before 747 but after the release from Aramean domination in 797, during the years of Joash or Jeroboam of Israel. The Aramaic linguistic elements should then be seen as the product of residual linguistic influence, and the Akkadian element would have entered Hebrew through Aramaic or Phoenician.

But the themes in the psalm suggest that it may have been composed in Judah. The repeated mention of "eternity" (לעד, עולם ועד) implies that the psalm is written in a context which presumes a long-lasting dynasty; without such a dynasty, the mentions of "eternity" seem absurd. The importance of the dynasty and the ideology of a covenantal

relationship with God which leads to the king's survival (v. 8) both correspond to what we know of the Davidic royal ideology.²³

The linguistic elements noted can fit with the psalm being the product of Judah after the middle of the eighth century. In the late eighth and seventh centuries, Assyrian administrative centers were established in the new Assyrian provinces surrounding what remained of Israel and Judah²⁴, and knowledge of official Aramaic became more widespread. The possible Phoenician influence seen from the *lo' / bal* interchange may be a

²³ We know very little about the character of the kingship in the northern kingdom, but much of its leadership consisted of charismatic chieftains, rather than dynastic kings. Alt, followed by many scholars, has argued that this corresponds to the concept of kingship widespread in the northern kingdom, namely, that the king ruled by virtue of his charisma rather than through any dynastic principle. (See A. Alt, "The Monarchy in Israel and Judah," *VT* 1 [1951] 2-22).

²⁴ On the Assyrian administrative presence in the Land of Israel, see R. Reich and B. Brandl, "Gezer under Assyrian Rule," *PEQ* 117 (1985) 41-54; N. Na'aman and R. Zadok, "Assyrian Deportations to the Province of Samerina in the Light of Two Cuneiform Tablets from Tel Hadid," *TA* 27 (2000) 159-88; E. Stern, "The Assyrian Impact on the Material Culture of Palestine," *Hayim and Miriam Tadmor Volume* (ed. I. Eph^{ayin}al et al.; *ErIsr* 27; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2003) 218-29; Raz Kletter and Wolfgang Zwickel, "The Assyrian Building of Ayyelet ha-Shahar," *ZDPV* 122 (2006) 150-86.

function of northern Hebrew: a large population from the northern kingdom is known to have moved to Judah after the Assyrian dismantling of Israel in 720 B.C.E., and they brought with them their dialect, as well as their writers. The language of a Judean composition in the late eighth century might contain northern Hebrew.

Plausible dates for the composition of the psalm therefore range from the eighth century to the beginning of the sixth, with the earlier part of this range more easily explaining the linguistic features noted. Weighing both the linguistic and thematic features, I consider Judah in the late eighth and early seventh centuries as the most likely setting for the composition of Psalm 21.

Conclusion

In this context, the "extreme praise" of the king is easier to understand. Throughout much of the time period I consider plausible (with the exception of the middle of the seventh century), kings of Israel and Judah were under constant threat from Mesopotamian conquerors. This threat was particularly palpable in Israel in the early eighth century (in the aftermath of the attacks of Adad-nirari III against Damascus) and even more so in Judah in two periods: the late eighth century and the first half of the seventh (during the height of Assyrian power), and again in the late seventh and early sixth centuries (as Babylonia and Egypt came to dominate Judah). During the period of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Egyptian threats to Judah, the possibility that Judah would be eliminated, and that the king himself would be deported was very real.

From the arrival of the armies of Tiglath-Pileser III in the Levant in 743 through the weakening of Assyrian power in the middle of the seventh century, kings of Israel and then of Judah were exposed to Assyrian royal ideology, through a variety of media.²⁵ This ideology portrayed the king as the earthly representative of the god Aššur, and depicted him as invincible and omnipotent. In the royal inscriptions, the plentiful victories of Assyrian kings were often described as resulting from "the power of Aššur my lord."²⁶ As Baruch Levine has noted, Israelite writers of this period sought "a God-

²⁵ Prof. Tigay notes that "Judahite awareness of Assyrian royal propaganda is manifest in the eighth century BCE" ("Divine Creation of the King in Psalms 2:6," 251* n. 29), and notes the discussion of the issue by Peter Machinist in his article "Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah," *JAOS* 103 (1983) 719-37. I have devoted some discussion to specific modes of transmission in a separate forthcoming article, entitled "Transmission of Assyrian Claims to Judah in the Eighth Century B.C.E." Briefly, Assyrian royal ideology was initially transmitted through delegations from Judah and Israel to Assyria, sent to bring annual tribute. It continued to be transmitted through royal inscriptions erected in the southern Levant, whose content was communicated to the local residents, and was also transmitted orally by the Assyrian administrative personnel stationed in close proximity to Judah from the end of the eighth century B.C.E. and on.

²⁶ A full discussion of the ideology of Assyrian kingship and the link between Aššur and the king is beyond the scope of the present discussion. The concept of Aššur as the hypostasis of the kingship is presented in M. Liverani, "The Ideology of the Assyrian

idea broad enough to measure up to empire.”²⁷ At the same time, they may have sought a royal ideology broad enough to accomplish this task, one which would more tightly express the connection between YHWH and the king, and would translate this connection into tangible royal victories on the battlefield. We know of at least one Biblical prophet (Mic 5:4-5) who expressly hopes for Judahite rulers powerful enough to stand up to the Assyrians:

יבוא בארצנו וכי ידרך בארמנותינו אשור כי)ד
והקמנו עליו שבעה רעים, ושמנה נסיכי אדם.
בפתחיה ארץ נמרד ואת בחרב ארץ אשור-ורעו את)ה

Empire,” *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires* (ed. M. T. Larsen; Mesopotamia 7; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979) 301. A more precise formulation appears in W. G. Lambert, “The God Assur,” *Iraq* 45 (1983) 81-86, who describes Aßbur as the deification of the city of Aßbur, and later, of the Assyrian empire. On Assyrian royal ideology more generally, see Peter Machinist, “Assyrians on Assyria in the First Millennium,” *Anfänge politischen Denkens in der Antike: Die Nahöstlichen Kulturen und die Griechen* (ed. K. Raaflaub; Schriften des Historischen Kollegs. Kolloquien 24; Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1993) 77-104; Steven W. Holloway, *Aßbur is King! Aßbur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (CHANE 10; Leiden: Brill, 2002); and the many studies of the late Hayim Tadmor.

²⁷ Baruch A. Levine, “Assyrian Ideology and Israelite Monotheism,” *Iraq* 67 (2005) 414.

וכי ידרך בגבולנו יבוא בארצנו כי מאשור והציל

(4) Assyria—when he comes into our land and stomps in our palaces

We will establish against him seven shepherds, eight princes of men.

(5) They will rule (lit., "shepherd") Assyria by the sword, the land of

Nimrod by its blades

And will save from Assyria when he comes into our land and stomps in

our palaces.

Psalm 21 seems to express a similar hope, for a ruler as closely tied to YHWH as the Assyrian king was to Aššur, who could stand up to the Assyrian king on the battlefield, and who would represent a conception of royalty that would be the equal of the expansive Assyrian royal ideology. Psalm 21 contains such a conception of royalty, rooted in the king's relationship to YHWH.²⁸ Prof. Tigay described Ps 2:6-7 as reflecting "" the elevated attitude toward kingship presumably held in the royal court of Jerusalem.""²⁹ The almost superhuman description of the king in Psalm 21 reflects a combination of this attitude with what seems to have been a widespread hope for a leader

²⁸ Lipinski summarizes the psalm as "c'est Yahwe qui est la force du roi de Jérusalem" (E. Lipinski, *La Royauté de Yahwé*, 317). He also compares the idea of the psalm to Assyrian dicta which describe the "forces of Assyria" as *emuq b@lΣtiya* "the strength of (Assyrian) lordship." Since Lipinski's study, more has been learned about Assyrian ideology, and we know that it is the god Aššur who is usually so described.

²⁹ "Divine Creation of the King in Psalms 2:6," 248*.

effective enough to act against Mesopotamian kings. Out of this combination grows the view that sees the king as the appropriate candidate to take on this leadership role, and the prayer that he be so empowered.