

THE PSALMS AND THE AFTERLIFE

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The contribution of Mitchell Dahood to the study of the Psalter needs little introduction. His comparison of the Biblical Psalms with the Ugaritic texts discovered at Ras Shamra in north Syria has resulted in a wealth of possible new interpretations, and as W.F. Albright has remarked,

Even if only a third of his new interpretations of the Psalter are correct in principle - and I should put the total proportion higher - he has contributed more than all other scholars together, over the past two thousand years, to the elucidation of the Psalter.¹

When, however, Dahood suggested in Psalms I, (1965) that, 'perhaps the most significant contribution to biblical theology that flows from the translations based on the new philological principles concerns the subject of resurrection and immortality,'² he not only dramatically highlighted the distinctive nature of his own approach but he also radically challenged the consensus of several generations of biblical scholars who had maintained that there was not a single reference to resurrection in the entire Psalter. By reinterpreting various passages in the Psalms in the light of the Ugaritic texts, Dahood concluded that the treatment of the topics of resurrection and immortality was in need of 'drastic revision'. The earlier opinion of Sigmund Mowinckel, that 'Neither Israel nor early Judaism knew of a faith in any resurrection, nor is such a faith represented in the psalms'³ could no longer, in Dahood's words, 'survive serious scrutiny'.⁴

The boldness of Dahood's claim, however, has been matched equally by the denials of his critics. Reviewing Psalms I, D.A. Robertson commented,

The wisdom of presenting this book to the general public must be seriously questioned. Dahood comes up with some really wild interpretations, many of which concern very important theological matters (like the question of what extent the concept of

immortality is present in the Psalter)...⁵
For Robertson, Dahood failed to distinguish adequately between what was philologically possible and what was philologically probable.

In Psalms III (1970), however, Dahood responded to such criticisms by offering evidence to support his claim that the concept of resurrection was already known when the psalms were penned.⁶ With reference to various passages in the Book of Proverbs (14:32; 16:2; 15:24) and the use of particular words (e.g., hayyim 'life' or 'eternal life'; aharit 'future' or 'future life'; nahad 'to lead'; qis 'to arise'; laqah 'to assume') he argued that the presence of the concept of resurrection in the Psalms need not be ruled out on theological grounds.

Dahood's renewed efforts to justify his earlier conclusions once again provoked opposition. In a detailed response Bruce Vawter suggested that Dahood had failed to give sufficient consideration to the development of theological ideas within Israel and Judah.⁷ He argued that although Dahood's new interpretations may be feasible, philologically speaking, they must ultimately be rejected on the grounds of being theologically impossible.

From these introductory comments it is clear that this topic raises important questions concerning the relationship between philology and theology. Unfortunately, however, this whole issue has become trapped in a complex of circular arguments. On the one hand, Dahood argues in the light of his philological studies that the concept of resurrection is considerably earlier than had hitherto been supposed. On the other hand, Vawter, for example, argues that because the idea of resurrection is late, Dahood's interpretation of the philological evidence must be seriously questioned.

In an attempt to break out of this circle it seemed best to isolate and examine in detail those psalms in which the topic of death is a significant element. One would expect that these psalms should provide the best evidence

as to whether or not the concept of resurrection is present in the Psalter. This was achieved by taking initially a number of key words related to death (i.e., the nouns geber 'grave', mawet 'death', shahat 'destruction', 'apar 'dust', bor 'pit', she'ol 'netherworld', dumah 'silence', 'abbadon 'destruction', and the verb mut 'to die'), and noting their distribution throughout the Psalter. As a result, forty-three psalms were found to contain at least one of these terms.⁸ It was, however, possible to reduce further this group of psalms. In a number of passages the terms 'apar and bor were observed to be quite unconnected to the subject of death (e.g., Ps. 40:3, 'He lifted me out of the slimy pit /bor/; 72:9, 'The desert tribes will bow before him and his enemies will lick the dust /'apar/'). Consequently some of the psalms were deemed to contain no specific reference to death at all (i.e., Pss. 35, 40, 72, 102 and 113). Further, in various other psalms there was all but the briefest of reference to death (e.g., Ps. 105:29, 'causing fish to die'). As a result it was possible to exclude from further consideration another twelve psalms (i.e., Pss. 5; 33; 37; 68; 78; 82; 104; 105; 107; 115; 119; 139).

By this stage there remained 26 psalms in which the topic of death played a relatively significant part. Having isolated these psalms it was now possible to proceed with an analysis of them. On doing so, it materialised that, apart from three psalms (Pss. 16, 49, 73), the majority could be assigned to two main categories: psalms focusing on (a) death by violence, and (b) death by illness.

(a) Psalms concerning death by violence.

In all 16 psalms fall into this category. Of these, fourteen are pleas for deliverance from the threat of physical death at the hand of an enemy or enemies (Pss. 7; 9; 13; 22; 31; 44; 55; 56; 59; 86; 89; 94; 141; 143); the remaining two psalms express gratitude for deliverance already received (Pss. 18; 118). Since all of these psalms focus on the attacks of evildoers it seems reasonable to assume that deliverance from physical death is of primary concern.

(b) Psalms concerning death by illness.

Seven psalms may be classified under this heading, although it should perhaps be noted that 'illness' ought to be understood in quite general terms. Thus, for example, in Ps. 103 the psalmist may be suffering due to feelings of guilt (cf. vv. 3,8-12). Of these seven psalms, three are petitions for healing (Pss. 6; 41; 88), three are expressions of gratitude for healing already experienced (Pss. 30; 103; 116), and one is a combination of both forms, being first a plea for help, and then a song of thanksgiving (Ps. 28; it is usually classified as an Individual Lament). As with the psalms concerning death by violence, the primary interest of this group would appear to be restoration to full health and strength in the face of impending death.

All of the psalms considered under these two categories are usually classified by form-critics as either Laments or Songs of Thanksgiving.⁹ This is particularly significant especially when one considers Mowinckel's approach to the topic of the afterlife in the Psalms. As noted above, Mowinckel rejected outrightly the suggestion that the concept of resurrection is present in the Psalter. An examination of his reasons for doing so reveals that he relied heavily upon psalms of lament and thanksgiving.

As regards the Laments he noted that the psalmist describes his state of distress "not only as a deadly danger but as a real state of death. The suppliant finds himself in the underworld (Sheol, Hades), in the 'pit', the 'well'".¹⁰ Thus references to death and Sheol in psalms of lament need not be restricted to our concept of death as the actual termination of life here and now, but may include anything which impairs life. To go down to Sheol need imply nothing more than being close to death. Hence, according to Mowinckel, deliverance from Sheol can be understood without reference to the afterlife.

Regarding the Songs of Thanksgiving he comments,

Since the thanksgiving psalm...praises Yahweh for having already pulled the unfortunate person out of Sheol, it is evidently no question here of salvation into another life after death, but of deliverance from imminent danger of death into health and happiness and freedom on this earth.¹¹

Here also Mowinckel assumes that these psalms describe the individual as being in Sheol before experiencing divine deliverance. By adopting this approach Mowinckel eliminates from these thanksgiving psalms all possible indications that Yahweh resurrects to life someone who is, to our way of thinking, physically dead.¹²

However, while Mowinckel is probably correct in stating that these psalms have nothing to say regarding life after death, it is questionable whether any of them describe the psalmist as actually being incarcerated in Sheol. Thus, although Mowinckel himself quotes part of Psalm 88 in support of his position, the psalm itself does not state explicitly that the author was in Sheol:

For trouble fills my soul to the full,
my life draws near unto Sheol;
I am reckoned among those who sink to the pit,
I am like the man who has no strength...
Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,
in the darkness, in the ocean's deep;
thy wrath lies heavy upon me
and all thy waves overwhelm me (Ps. 88:4f.,7f.; cf. Jonah ch. 2).

Such language is surely intended to be understood metaphorically rather than literally. The only other possible example in a lament of the psalmist claiming to be actually in Sheol is Psalm 86:13,

For great is your love towards me;
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol

Here again the term Sheol is probably used in a figurative manner.

There are a few passages in the thanksgiving psalms where the author might be understood as claiming that he was in Sheol (Pss. 18:6; 30:4; 116:3). Yet even in these examples it is probably the case that the author did not

intend his comments to be interpreted absolutely literally. Psalm 30:4 provides an example of this:

O LORD, you brought me up from Sheol;
you spared me from going down into the pit.

The parallelism here indicates that the author is not thinking in terms of an actual descent into Sheol. Thus in spite of Mowinckel's suggestion to the contrary, it would seem likely that for the Hebrews Sheol designated specifically the abode of the dead and that a clear distinction was drawn between the realms of the living and the dead.

The above mentioned psalms of lament and thanksgiving clearly focus on God's ability to deliver his servants from the threat of physical death either at the hands of their enemies or through illness. Given the function of these psalms, it is surely not surprising that they make no reference to the afterlife. Rather they reveal the faith of their authors concerning Yahweh's sovereignty over human affairs in this present life. The fact that they contain no discussion of life after death tells us nothing about how the afterlife was perceived by their authors. We must recognise that the concept of the afterlife has no direct bearing upon the situations which are addressed in these particular psalms.

(c) The Remaining Psalms

Interestingly the three remaining psalms (Pss. 16; 49; 73) are never categorised as laments or psalms of thanksgiving. Psalm 16 is most often classified as a Song of Trust, and Psalms 49 and 73 are usually designated as Wisdom Psalms. Of these three psalms Psalm 49 figures most often in discussion concerning the afterlife in the Psalms. For this reason we shall focus our attention initially on it.

Psalm 49

In this particular psalm the interpretation of verse 16 is all important regarding the topic of life after death.

But God will redeem my soul from Sheol;

he will surely take me to himself.

According to Michael Goulder,

The majority view, represented by Delitzsch, Duhm, Schmidt, Krause, Weiser, J. van der Ploeg, von Rad, Eaton, Anderson, Rogerson and McKay, and Jacquet, take this to be a first groping statement of the survival of death...The majority...understand redemption from Sheol as eternal life with God. Bolder spirits, like Delitzsch, take 'receive me' (yqhny) to mean God's 'taking' the psalmist direct to heaven, like Enoch and Elijah; contemporary commentators usually prefer to leave the precise thought here vague - should we not expect vagueness when so great an assertion is first being attempted.¹³

For his part, Goulder interprets this psalm as a 'red-blooded warning' to foreign nations against invading Israel.¹⁴ The speaker is the Danite priest who warns the nations that any attempt to overthrow the Israelite monarchy and state will end in death for the invaders. In support of this claim Goulder interprets verse 7 as applying to foreign rulers: 'those who trust in their wealth and boast of their great riches?'. Similarly, 'that the psalmist is thinking of foreign kings trusting in their power and wealth, and planning to supplant Israel, is confirmed by their calling the lands after their own names in v. 11 (Heb. v. 12)'.¹⁵ In verse 13 the term yaqar 'precious' is understood to refer to soldiers:

Warriors used to deck themselves in finery for the holy activity of battle in the early period...This gives a natural meaning for yqr as the precious metal ornaments worn by enemy soldiers coming to fight against Israel.¹⁶

However, there are two major drawbacks to Goulder's interpretation of the psalm. First, he fails to give due consideration to the wisdom nature of the psalm, in particular verses 4-5:

My mouth shall speak wisdom;
And the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.
I will incline mine ear to a parable:
I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

Furthermore, that these words are addressed to 'all you peoples' (v. 2) is also typical of the universal nature of wisdom literature. Secondly, if this psalm was intended to warn off foreign nations, one would have expected this to be more clearly stated. Warnings tend to be given in the clearest of terms, especially if we wish them to be taken seriously. Thus, although Goulder's detailed study of the MT is to be commended, his overall understanding of the Psalm is less than convincing. It is highly unlikely that we should read it as a warning addressed to foreign nations about the consequences of invading Israel.

Another recent and unusual interpretation of Psalm 49 is that of Peter Craigie in the Word Biblical Commentary. In his translation of the psalm he places verse 16 within inverted commas to indicate that this is direct speech.

Against this bleak picture of the destiny of the wealthy, the poet quotes their (imaginary) words of self-confidence: 'Surely God will redeem me...' (v 16). They think their position of privilege in this life will give them also a position of privilege when it comes to death.¹⁷

It is this 'deceptive confidence' that the psalmist attacks, as he conveys his wise counsel to the wealthy and powerful.

Craigie's interpretation of the psalm, however, creates further problems. Is the psalmist stating that there is no distinction between the ultimate fate of the good and the evil? And if so, what comfort would the righteous find from this message, especially when surrounded by treacherous foes (as implied in v. 6)? It is hardly a comfort to those who are oppressed to learn that they will end up sharing the same final destiny as their wealthy oppressors. Craigie's interpretation is too subtle and requires that verse 16 be understood as a false statement. There is, however, no indication in the text that this is so.

A number of objections have been raised against the 'eternal life' interpretation of Psalm 49.¹⁸ Three main

arguments have been put forward. First, verse 16 is compared with Hosea 13:14:

I will ransom them from the power of Sheol;

I will redeem them from death.

Where, O death, are your plagues?

Where, O Sheol, is your destruction?

Since this passage in Hosea is understood to refer to preservation from ordinary physical death, a similar interpretation must apply to Psalm 49. Secondly, it is argued that the psalmist's comments in verses 8-10 do not support an 'afterlife' interpretation of verse 16.

Redemption here does not involve actual death:

That he should live on for ever and not see decay'
(v. 9).

There is here, so it is argued, no thought of life after death, but rather continuation of this present existence. Thirdly, 'he shall receive me' (v. 16) also comes in Psalm 18:17 without implying some kind of translation similar to that experienced by Enoch (Gen. 5:24) and Elijah (2 Ki. 2:1-18).

However, it is doubtful if any of these objections are actually sufficient to overthrow the 'afterlife' interpretation of the psalm. The precise meaning of Hosea 13:14 is difficult to determine, and it may well be that one ought to interpret this passage in terms of life after death. As regards the relationship between verses 8-10 and verse 16, a careful reading of the text suggests that one cannot equate the redemption mentioned in the earlier verses with that referred to in verse 16.

Whereas in verse 8 the ransom is paid to God, in verse 16 it is God who redeems. This would suggest that the author has in mind two quite separate situations.

Finally, the comparison of 49:16 with Psalm 18:17 is hardly sufficient grounds for interpreting "he will take me" as relating simply to this life. The context in which the expression occurs in Psalm 18 is quite different from that of Psalm 49. In Psalm 18 it refers to deliverance from earthly enemies:

He (Yahweh) reached down from on high and took hold of me;

he drew me out of deep waters.

He rescued me from my powerful enemy,
from my foes, who were too strong for me.
He confronted me in the day of my disaster,
but the LORD was my support.
He brought me out into a spacious place;
he rescued me because he delighted in me. (vv.
17-20)

In Psalm 49, however, vv. 14-20 focus on the consequences of death. In this context the statement 'he will take me' surely takes on the same significance as found in Genesis 5:24 and 2 Kings 2:3,5,9.

From the preceding discussion Dahood's description of Psalm 49 seems accurate:

A Wisdom psalm reflecting on the transitory nature of wealth and pleasure. One should not envy the rich, for the grave awaits them, where their lot will be that of the beasts who perish. Paradise with Yahweh, however, awaits the just man who places his confidence in him rather than in earthly riches and pleasure.¹⁹

Psalm 73

In certain ways Psalm 73 parallels Psalm 49. Once again attention is focused on the relationship between the righteous and the wicked. The psalm begins with the author's envy of the prosperity of the wicked, in contrast to his own sufferings. The tension caused by this dilemma, however, is eventually resolved by the recognition that the actions of the wicked will lead ultimately to their destruction. Against this the author contrasts the privileged position of the righteous:

Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.
You guide me with your counsel,
and afterwards you will take me into glory.
Whom have I in heaven but you?
And being with you, I desire nothing on earth.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion
for ever (vv. 23-26).

In the differing fates of the righteous and the wicked

the author finds relief from the dilemma which almost destroys his faith in God.

Regarding these latter verses the question naturally arises as to whether or not the psalmist is looking beyond this life to the next. Dahood is in no doubt that the events described here relate to the afterlife. He comments,

How can one reconcile the justice of God with the inequities in his government of the world? The poet finds the solution of the problem in the final punishment of the wicked (vss. 18-19) and the eternal union of the just with God in heaven (vss. 23-26).²⁰

Similarly, Artur Weiser also sees in these latter verses a clear reference by the psalmist to life after death: In view of what precedes, it will hardly be possible to interpret the words that follow, 'and afterwards thou wilt receive me to glory', as meaning that his sufferings will come to an end during his earthly life; rather does it seem that in these words is expressed hope in the consummation of his communion with God after death, a thought which would fit without any difficulty in the context of the ideas developed in the psalm.²¹

However, the convictions of Dahood and Weiser are not shared by all commentators. Many writers are loathe to find in this psalm a reference to the afterlife. This reluctance arises from the belief that it was only in the late post-exilic period that a distinction was drawn between the fate of the wicked and the righteous after death. Prior to this the Israelites believed that everyone on dying descended to Sheol where they experienced a dull, shadowy existence. A.A. Anderson, for example, argues that it was out of this background of belief that the author of Psalm 73 penned his work:

Had the author of this Psalm believed that the afterlife provided for a final judgment of God, he would have found little difficulty in explaining the prosperity of the wicked and the misfortune of the righteous. Therefore it seems that he also must

have shared the common Sheol belief. On the other hand, Ps. 73 may represent a tentative venture to go beyond the then current beliefs, although the result would be a glimpse rather than a firm faith...²²

Although the logic of Anderson's argument is compelling, it is not necessary to maintain that the psalmist initially viewed the righteous and the wicked as both descending to Sheol. It is equally possible to understand the psalm describing the reassurance which one Israelite received after being tempted to follow the ways of the wicked (vv. 2-3). The psalm does not address in a cold abstract manner the dilemma created by the prosperity of the wicked and the misfortune of the righteous (as in Ps: 49), but rather focuses on the temptation which comes to the righteous to forsake their previous convictions (cf. v. 13) and become like the wicked. As the psalmist indicates, it was his envy of the wicked which made him blind to their ultimate fate (vv. 21-22). It was not until he took his eyes from them and turned to God that the folly of his thinking was revealed (vv. 16-17). Consequently, there is no need to assume that the author could only have composed the psalm at a time when it was believed that the righteous and the wicked shared a common destiny in Sheol.

Another factor argues against Anderson's rejection of the 'afterlife' interpretation of the psalm. This concerns the commonly accepted view that in the pre-exilic period the Israelites believed that all men, regardless of their moral character, descended to Sheol. This, however, is only one of a number of ways in which Sheol has been understood.²³ A survey of how Sheol is used in the Old Testament reveals two important factors. First, Sheol is usually described in a negative manner: it is the antithesis of heaven (e.g., Jb. 11:8; Ps. 139:8; Am. 9:2); it is to be feared and avoided (e.g., 2 Sa. 22:6; Pss. 16:10; 30:4; 86:13). Secondly, in a very significant number of occurrences Sheol is linked with evil-doers (e.g., Nu. 16:30,33; 1 Ki. 2:6,9; Jb. 24:19; Pss. 9:18; 31:18; 49:15; Pr. 5:5; 7:27; 9:18; Is. 5:14; 14:9,11,15; Ezk. 31:15-17; 32:21,27). These observations

certainly favour the view that in the Old Testament Sheol denotes the final abode of the wicked.²⁴ Furthermore, although it is sometimes stated that certain passages indicate that the righteous also descended to Sheol, the evidence for this is not as convincing as is usually assumed. Thus, there seems to be no reason to assume that the belief, that different fates awaited the righteous and the wicked after death, only developed in post-exilic times.

Psalm 16

Psalm 16 is generally described as a Song of Confidence or Trust. For us the final few verses of the psalm are of particular importance:

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,
because you will not abandon me to the grave,
nor will you let your Holy One see decay.
You have made known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand (vv.
9-11).

In the opinion of Dahood the psalm is a 'profession of faith' by a 'Canaanite convert to Yahwism', with verses 10-11 being 'a statement of the poet's belief in immortality'.²⁵ In support of this, he understands the Hebrew word hym (v. 11) as meaning 'eternal life'. According to Dahood, the word is not only found with this meaning in Daniel 12:2, but is also employed with the same sense in the Ugaritic texts.

However, the majority of recent writers prefer to understand these comments as a reference by the author to God's ability to protect him from an untimely death. The psalmist is not speaking about life after death, but rather about the preservation of this present life. Thus, for example, Craigie comments,

The psalmist acknowledges that God makes him know, or experience, the 'path of life,' not the afterlife, but the fullness of life here and now which is enriched by the rejoicing which emerges from an awareness of the divine presence.²⁶

In support of this interpretation Craigie translates verse 10 as follows:

for you do not abandon me to Sheol,
you do not permit your godly one to see the Pit.
Thus there is no reference here to the afterlife.

Either interpretation of the psalm is possible, and I see little to separate between them. Whereas Psalms 49 and 73 most probably refer to life after death, it is extremely difficult to decide in the case of Psalm 16. However, one cannot rule out the possibility that the psalmist may be thinking about the afterlife.

In the light of the above discussion the following conclusions may be drawn. Firstly, the traditional consensus that the Psalter contains no significant discussion of the Hebrew conception of the afterlife must be questioned. By concentrating on the numerically greater Psalms of Lament and Thanksgiving scholars came, not surprisingly, to view the psalms as being uninterested in life after death. Unfortunately, insufficient attention was given to the very small group of psalms which do not fall within these larger categories, and consequently important evidence to the contrary has been neglected. Rather than being assessed independently Psalms 49 and 73 have been wrongly interpreted in the light of results obtained elsewhere in the Psalter.

Secondly, it must be noted that Dahood finds allusions to life after death in psalms other than those considered above (e.g., Ps. 1:3-6; 11:7; 17:15; 21:7; 27:13; 36:9-10; he discovers references to 'eternal life', 'beatific vision', 'Elysian fields' and other expressions connected with the afterlife). To what extent this is fully justified remains to be seen, although it is now apparent that in many of these psalms Dahood may well have overreached himself in his use of Ugaritic parallels. In spite of this his vigorous rejection of the prevailing consensus that the Psalter contains no mention of life after death ought not to be dismissed outrightly, and as we have demonstrated above there are

good grounds for believing that in at least two psalms, 49 and 73, the concept of the afterlife figures prominently.

Notes

1. BASOR, 186 (1967), p. 54. Significantly, Dahood himself recognised fully that not all his proposals would 'stand the test of present criticism or future discoveries' (Psalms I, 1-50, (Garden City, 1965) (Anchor Bible), p. XX).
2. Ibid., p. XXXVI.
3. S. Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, (Oxford, 1962) (revised translation of Offersang og Sangoffer, Oslo, 1951), vol. 1, p. 240.
4. Psalms I, 1-50, p. XXXVI.
5. JBL, 85 (1966), p. 484.
6. Psalms, III, 101-150, (Garden City, 1970) (Anchor Bible), pp. XLI-LII.
7. 'Intimations of Immortality and the Old Testament,' JBL, 91 (1972), pp. 158-171.
8. Pss. 5; 6; 7; 9; 13; 16; 18; 22; 28; 30; 31; 33; 35; 37; 40; 41; 44; 49; 55; 56; 59; 68; 72; 73; 78; 82; 86; 88; 89; 94; 102; 103; 104; 105; 107; 113; 115; 116; 118; 119; 139; 141; 143. All psalm references are to the Massoretic Text.
9. Cf. B.W. Anderson, Out of the Depths, (Philadelphia, 1970), pp. 173-177.
10. S. Mowickel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, p. 239.
11. Ibid., p. 240.
12. A somewhat similar position was reached by C.F. Barth in his book, Die Errettung vom Tode in den individuellen Klage- und Dankliedern des Altes Testaments, (Kollikon, 1947).
13. The Psalms of the Sons of Korah, (Sheffield, 1982) (JSOT Supplement Series, 20), p. 181-2.
14. Ibid., p. 195.
15. Ibid., p. 187.
16. Ibid., p. 190.
17. P. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, (Waco, Texas, 1983) (Word

- Biblical Commentary), p. 360.
18. Cf. Goulder, op. cit., p. 182.
 19. Psalms I, 1-50, p. 296.
 20. Ibid., pp. 187-188.
 21. A. Weiser, The Psalms, (London, 1962) (Old Testament Library), p. 514.
 22. A.A. Anderson, The Book of Psalms, (London, 1972) (New Century Bible Commentary), p. 535.
 23. For a fuller discussion of the Hebrew perception of Sheol see D. Alexander, 'The Old Testament View of Life After Death', Themelios, 11 (1986), pp. 42-44.
 24. Cf. A. Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels, (Chicago, 2nd. edition, 1949), p. 184.
 25. Dahood, Psalms I. 1-50 , p. 87.
 26. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, p. 158.

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