

The Development of the Psalter

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It is often thought that later redactors of the Psalter moved certain psalms to prominent positions to shift the way we would read the psalms that follow. This paper argues that such an activity did not occur at a macro-level. *Smaller* collections were created with a thought to the order of the psalms, but those who compiled the 150-psalm Psalter did not adjust the order of the mini-psalters they inherited. So Psalm 2 was not placed at the beginning of a “messianic Psalter” to messianize Psalms 2-89, and Psalm 1 was not later placed at the beginning of the canonical Psalter to downplay that messianism or to democratize the Psalter.¹ I fear that many discussions of the canonical context of the psalms are based on widely held theories that have little or no historical basis, and so I am going to offer an alternative history of the development of the Psalter that may itself not be accurate in every detail but hopefully is compelling enough to make us a little more cautious about our own ideas of how the Psalter took its final form. In my view the Psalter developed in roughly 5 stages: 1) creation of the First Davidic Psalter (Pss 1-41); 2) creation of the Elohist Psalter (Pss 42-83); 3) an expansion of the Elohist Psalter (Pss 42-87); 4) the joining of these two psalters in a 100-psalm psalter (Pss 1-100); 5) the expansion of this psalter to include 150 psalms. In order to demonstrate this, I will begin with stages 2 and 3 since the redaction of the Elohist Psalter is the most clear, thoroughgoing, and relatively consistent, then I will return to stage 1 before demonstrating the evidence for the combined 100-psalm and 150-psalm psalters.

¹ *Pace* Gerald H. Wilson, “A First Century C.E. Date for the Closing of the Book of Psalms?” *JBQ* 28 (2000): 102-110.

Stage 2: The Elohistc Psalter (Psalms 42-83)

The unity of the Elohistc Psalter (EP) is clear. Outside of the EP יהוה occurs six times as frequently as אֱלֹהִים; inside the EP אֱלֹהִים occurs four times as frequently as יהוה.² What is even more remarkable is that there is not one psalm in the EP that has more occurrences of יהוה than אֱלֹהִים, while outside the EP the only psalm that has more occurrences of אֱלֹהִים than יהוה is Psalm 108, which is a composite of two psalms from the EP (57 and 60).³ This tells us that *after the Elohistc redaction took place no psalms were inserted into the arrangement of Psalms 42-83 and none were moved from there to a different place in the Psalter*, which renders unlikely Gerald Wilson’s claim that “the redactional movement to combine Books One and Two into a single Davidic collection . . . had already taken place when [the] royal psalms [2, 72, and 89] were set in their present

² Statistics vary based on a number of factors. A search of words tagged with the semantic domain of “Deity” in the Andersen Forbes database produces the following results:

	Psalms 42-83	Psalms 1-41, 84-150
אלוה / אלה / אלהים	246 (5.8 occurrences per psalm)	127 (1.2 occurrences per psalm)
אל	35 (0.8/psalm)	44 (0.4/psalm)
יהוה	45 (1.1/psalm)	652 (6.0/psalm)
יה	3 (0.1/psalm)	40 (0.4/psalm)
Ratio	281:48 = 5.9:1	171:692 = 1:4.0

³ If variations of אֱלֹהִים are grouped with אֱלֹהִים there are five more exceptions:

	יהוה	אלהים	אלה	אל
Ps 84	7	3	4	1
Ps 86	4	3	2	1
Ps 90	1	1	1	1
Ps 114	0	0	1	0
Ps 136	1	1	1	1

The first two exceptions will be discussed in the section on the expansion to the Elohistc Psalter. Psalm 90 refers to Moses as אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים, then confesses to אֶדְנִי אֵל אֶתָּה. In verse 13 it refers to God as יהוה, and in verse 17 it refers to him as אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ. Psalm 114 only names God once, calling him אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב. Psalm 136 begins with a call to give thanks to יהוה and then follows this with a call to give thanks לְאֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים. The psalm ends with a call to give thanks לְאֵל הַשָּׁמַיִם. The order suggests a preference for יהוה, even if the name is used only once (and even if it is part of a refrain that is found elsewhere in Book V; it is clearly original to the psalm).

positions.”⁴ On the contrary, the Elohist collection, and the Yahwistic Psalms 2 and 89 must have already been outside this collection.⁵ The current placement of Psalm 72 makes perfect sense within EP, where it follows the prayers of David. Its subscript, “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended,” makes perfect sense if this is the culmination of the prayers of David in the EP, but it makes much less sense as soon as the Davidic Psalm 86 is joined to the collection.⁶ Thus Wilson has the order reversed: Psalm 72 found its place within EP *before* Book I was joined with EP, and consequently it cannot be said (at least in the case of Psalm 72) that royal psalms were moved to the seams of the Psalter by a later redactor. This is not to say that there was not purposeful *placement* of psalms, but the idea of *rearranging* of psalms by a later redactor is questionable.

This is also clear from the fact that the consistent arrangement technique of EP is not used outside EP. The titles of the psalms in EP are similar and are neatly arranged: maskils of the sons of Korah, then psalms of the sons of Korah, then a disorienting⁷ psalm of Asaph, then maskils of David followed by miktams of David, followed by psalms of David, followed by songs, with a couple psalms that summarize David’s life and one psalm of Solomon rounding out the Davidic collection, after which we find the remaining Asaphite psalms. Nowhere else in the Psalter do we find psalms arranged so that the maskils fall together and the miktams fall together. Furthermore, the song titles that occur four times each in EP (“according to Lilies,” “according to Do Not Destroy”)

⁴ Gerald H. Wilson, “The Use of Royal Psalms at the ‘Seams’ of the Hebrew Psalter,” *JSOT* 35 (1986): 85-94, here p. 87.

⁵ Ps 72 has אלהים/אלה three times and יהוה once and is clearly Elohist as the first word of the psalm is an address to God as אלהים. In Pss 2 and 89 יהוה outnumbers אלהים/אלה three to zero and eleven to four, respectively.

⁶ It is often thought that this statement marks the end of an original Book I—Book II collection (e.g., Sweeney, “Form Criticism,” *DOTWPW*, 236), but clearly not all of Book I and Book II can be called “prayers of David.” In addition it is the Elohist compiler who carefully groups psalms so that the maskils of the sons of Korah are followed by other psalms of the sons of Korah seems to be the person grouping the psalms of Asaph at 73-83, which suggests that Pss 42-83 were originally a collection and this statement marked the end of the prayers of David within that collection.

⁷ Cf. Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis, Augsburg: 1984), 88-94.

do not occur at all outside EP, and the song titles used outside EP do not occur at all in EP.⁸ When a historical setting is given – and one is given for 8 of the 17 Davidic psalms in EP – it always follows the same format: genre (maskil/miktam/psalm), followed by לְדָוִד , followed by the preposition בְּ , followed by an infinitive construct. Outside of EP only five psalms (Pss 3; 7; 18; 34; 142) have historical descriptions, and only two (Pss 3; 142; cf. Ps 34) follow this format. This confirms for us that the EP was once a standalone collection, that the superscripts and subscripts were already attached to these psalms when the EP was arranged, and that later redactors of EP did not adjust the order of the psalm in EP.

The Elohist Psalter thus seems to have been a complete psalter compiled by one hand or by one group of people working at one time in Israel's history. What is the setting of this compilation? The Elohist Psalter begins with Pss 42-43, in which a son of Korah laments his inability to appear before God (42:3). He remembers leading earlier processions to the house of God (42:5) and is thus writing early in the time of the exile. In the psalms of Asaph that close EP, we find repeated reference to the temple that is in ruins (74:3-7; 79:1, 7). Psalm 79:1-3 vividly recalls what was done to the bodies of those who were defeated in Jerusalem. Psalms 77:11-21 and 80:9-20 call for a new exodus. Psalms 81-83 call on God to judge the nations and give justice to the fatherless. There is nothing anywhere in EP that suggests a postexilic date or even postexilic editing. The Elohist Psalter seems to have been compiled from Babylon within one generation of the fall of Jerusalem. This is the psalter of the exile. To be sure, many psalms are ancient. But a sixth-century Elohist living in Babylon wrote them down and gave them their shape. And their shape remains seemingly intact to this day.

⁸ This is true whether one regards the tune references as superscripts of the following psalm (in agreement with the MT) or as subscripts of the preceding psalm (which is likely the way they were intended; see Bruce Waltke, "Superscripts, Postscripts, or Both," *JBL* 110/4 [1991], 583-596). I will use the psalm numbering on the assumption that these are subscripts, though, it does not change my argument. For "according to the Lilies" see Pss 44, 59, 68, 79; for "according to Do Not Destroy" see Pss 56, 57, 58, 74. In EP we also have "according to Alamothe" (45) and "according to the Dove on Far-Off Terebinths" (55). The subscript "according to the Mahalath" at the end of Ps 52 parallels "according to the Mahalath Leannothe" at the end of Ps 87. The connections between Pss 84-87 and EP will be explored shortly. Outside of EP we see similar subscripts but with different titles: "according to the Sheminith" (5, 11), "according to Muth-Labben" (8), "according to the Doe of the Dawn" (21), but these are not found in EP.

Stage 3: The Expanded EP (Pss 84-87)

Laura Joffe once referred to Psalms 84-89 as the “tail of the Elohist Psalter.” This is the only place we find psalms of the sons of Korah outside of EP. We also find in the first four of these psalms that if we consider together אֱלֹהִים, אֵל, and אֱל* they appear as frequently as יהוה (17 times). This frequency is unmatched elsewhere outside of EP. Moreover these four psalms all address the first generation that returned from exile in Babylon. Psalm 84 depicts a time when God’s “altars” are in place and yet they are merely a house for the sparrow and the swallow (84:4). The psalmist, one of the sons of Korah, is away from Jerusalem and yet has the road to Jerusalem in his heart (84:6). He prays for God’s favor upon his anointed (Zerubbabel?) (84:10). The psalm makes perfect sense as the prayer of a son of Korah about the time the building of the temple is resuming during the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah (ca. 520 BCE).

Psalm 85 fits the same context. This psalm of the sons of Korah looks back to when God restored the fortunes of Jacob and withdrew his wrath but asks for another restoration. After this we find a psalm of David, which, while containing no allusions to the return from captivity or the rebuilding of the temple, proclaims God’s superiority to the gods of the nations and calls upon God to be gracious to his servant (David, and by implication now Zerubbabel). Then we find another psalm of the sons of Korah (Ps 87) that celebrates the city Yahweh founded and declares that the many who know Yahweh but were born in “Rahab and Babylon, . . . Philistia and Tyre, along with Cush,” were really born in Zion. Clearly this psalm was written within a generation of the first return from exile. Psalms 84-87 were thus appended to EP about the time of the dedication of the second temple.

It is often thought that Pss 88-89 were part of this collection, but Ps 87 is clearly the climax of the collection and was likely written to be the climactic ending (whereas Pss 88 and 89 have a much more dismal view). What has often been viewed as the superscript of Ps 88 should be seen as the subscript of Ps 87 (it matches the superscript but is in reverse order). This inclusion highlights Ps 87 as the climax of the new collection, Pss 42-87. [Now we can go back to the front of the handout.]

Stage 1: The First Davidic Psalter (Pss 1-41)

If EP was a completed collection, untouched by those who compiled the five books of the Psalms, could the same be true of the first Davidic Psalter (1DP)? Notably, just as EP contains exactly 40 psalms (assuming the untitled Psalms 43 and 71 belong with the preceding psalm⁹), Book I contains exactly 40 psalms (assuming Psalms 9-10, which together make one acrostic and which were taken as one psalm by the LXX translator and a number of Hebrew manuscripts, were viewed as one psalm at the creation of Book I). EP has a clear organizational principle, organized first by author and then by whether the psalm is a *maskil* or a *miktam* or a *mizmor* or a *mizmor shiyr*. The organizational principle of EP is not found anywhere else in the Psalter. Likewise Book I has its own organizational principle that is found nowhere else in the Psalter.

Hossfeld and Zenger have drawn attention to Book I as a series of psalm clusters, each with its own bracketing psalms and a central psalm.¹⁰ Psalms 3-14 are the pleas of the king when he is surrounded by foes, beginning with the prayer David prayed when he fled from Absalom and concluding with a lament of David over the depravity of man.¹¹ At the center of this cluster is Ps 8, where the king is urged to praise the God who gives dominion to man and who silences foe and avenger. This cluster is followed by Pss 15-24, a cluster that is framed by entrance liturgies that ask who may dwell in God's tent or

⁹ The compositional unity of Psalms 42-43, which share the same refrain, is clear and is reflected in a number of Hebrew manuscripts. Unlike Psalms 42-43, Psalms 70-71 may not have been composed by the same hand, but the numerous connections between the two have led a number of scholars to follow the Hebrew manuscripts that have Pss 70-71 as one psalm. Wilson treats Pss 70-71 as a unity in his commentary, arguing that “[t]he five verses of Psalm 70 function as an introduction to the combined composition” (Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms: Volume 1* [NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002], 966; cf. Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, [SBLDS 76: Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985], 177). For the many connections between these psalms, see Wilson, *Psalms*, 965-966, and Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; 2 vols.; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 2:199.

¹⁰ Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen* (3 vols.; NEchtB; Würzburg: Echter, 1993), 1:12.

¹¹ Cf. William H. Bellinger Jr., “Reading from the Beginning (Again): The Shape of Book I of the Psalter,” in *Diachronic and Synchronic: Reading the Book of Psalms in Real Time: Proceedings of the Baylor Symposium on the Book of Psalms* (ed. Joel S. Burnett, W. H. Bellinger Jr., and W. Dennis Tucker Jr.; Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 488; New York: T&T Clark: 2007), 114-126, esp. p. 120; Patrick D. Miller, “The Beginning of the Psalter,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. Clinton McCann; JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 83-92, esp. pp. 89-91.

ascend his hill. At the center of this cluster is Ps 19, which marvels at how the heavens glorify God and how torah glorifies God and ends with David asking God to take away his sin so that he too could be pleasing in God's sight. If Ps 8, like Ps 2, praises God for giving dominion to man (especially to the king) and assures him that the foe will be silenced, Ps 19, like Ps 1, celebrates torah and urges the wise to heed torah in order to be able to stand in the presence of God. In addition Ps 19 is sandwiched by a series of royal psalms that echo the concepts of Ps 2. Thus the first two clusters of Book I specifically reflect on Pss 1-2. And if this is the case, Psalms 1-2 were not late additions to the front of the first Davidic Psalter, but were from the beginning an integral component of that psalter.

The third and fourth clusters of Book I each begin with an acrostic psalm (25, 34). The psalm beginning the fourth cluster, like the psalm beginning the first cluster, gives the historical setting. It also echoes Psalm 2 in pronouncing a blessing over "all who take refuge in him [i.e., Yahweh]." At the center of the third cluster is Psalm 29 that highlights God's authority and power, reminiscent of Psalm 2. At the center of the fourth cluster is Psalm 37, which Patrick Miller has called "the most extensive discourse on the relation of the wicked and the righteous and their two ways outside of Psalm 1."¹² So the centers of the four clusters echo Ps 2, Ps 1, Ps 2, and Ps 1, respectively.

These four clusters are concluded by Psalms 40-41, which echo the twofold blessing of Psalms 1-2. Thus the arrangement of psalms in Book I clearly interacts with Psalms 1-2. This arrangement could not have happened after Book I was joined with EP because such rearranging does not seem to have taken place elsewhere. It appears then that Psalms 1-41 (not just Psalms 3-41) were once a standalone psalter that was subsequently joined to the expanded EP without editing the contents or rearranging the psalms of Book I. Psalms 1-2 were important to this collection from the beginning.

The fact that Ps 1 was an integral part of an independent Book I is also demonstrated by the fact that many of the key concepts of Ps 1 are found with heavier concentration in Book I than anywhere else:

¹² Miller, "Beginning," 85-86.

	Psalms 3-41 (5095 words)	Psalms 42-72 (4040 words)	Psalms 73-89 (2777 words)	Psalms 90-106 (2432 words)	Psalms 107-150 (5082 words)
צדיק	23 (4.5/1000)	8 (2.0/1000)	1 (0.4/1000)	4 (1.6/1000)	14 (2.8/1000)
רשע	37 (7.3)	5 (1.2)	7 (2.5)	8 (3.3)	18 (3.5)
חטא	2 (0.4)	1 (0.2)	0	1 (0.4)	0 (0.0)
עצה	5 (1.0)	0	1 (0.4)	2 (0.8)	2 (0.4)
נבל	2 (0.4)	0	0	0	0
אבד	9 (1.8)	2 (0.5)	3 (1.1)	2 (0.8)	6 (1.2)

It is true that תִּנְיָה occurs many more times in Book V (26 occurrences) than in Pss 3-41 (3 occurrences), but all of its occurrences in Book V are in Ps 119, whereas in Book I it is found in the central Pss 19 and 37 and in the closing Ps 40, suggesting that it is a concept more closely connected with Book I than with Book V, thus further suggesting that Ps 1 was already an integral component of the First Davidic Psalter.

When was this collection edited? Notably there is not a single reference in Book I to the destruction of Jerusalem, to the exile, or to the rebuilding of the temple. Book I appears to be a pre-exilic work. Thus at the time of the dedication of the Second Temple there were at least two main psalters, the preexilic psalter comprised of Pss 1-41 and the new psalter compiled by the sons of Korah, comprised of Pss 42-87. Time does not permit me to address this here, but I think we have evidence in Pss 53 and 70 that the compiler of EP was aware of the earlier collection but wanted to compile a new collection for those in exile. But it was not until after the dedication of the second temple that these two psalters were brought together.

Stage 4: The Hundred-Psalter Psalter (Pss 1-100)

Some time after the dedication of the temple a new crisis emerged for Israel: the death of Zerubbabel. Almost nothing is known of the end of his life, but it is clear that it was not what one would have expected based on Haggai's prophecies (Hag 2:20-23). God did not "destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations" (2:22) and Zerubbabel was no longer "the signet ring" of God (2:23). The Davidic hopes were shattered and the young worshipping community needed the death of their king and their hope addressed. It was at this point that the two psalters were brought together and supplemented with a group of psalms to bring the number to one hundred. It is at this point that the

expectation that each psalm would have its own superscript disappeared, and so it was likely at this point that Pss 9-10, 42-43, 70-71 were each split into two psalms. Thirteen new psalms were added, none with a subscript and most without a superscript. The first two were older maskils, one attributed to Heman the Ezrahite, and the second to Ethan the Ezrahite. Heman's words are apropos in the context of Zerubbabel's death:

Do you work wonders for the dead?
Will the shadows rise and praise you?
Is your love recounted in the grave
Or your faithfulness in Abaddon?
Are your wonders known in the darkness
Or your righteousness in the land of oblivion? [Ps
88:11-13]

To be sure, the psalmist is speaking of his own imminent death, but in the context of the death of the messiah, the nation felt its own death and could relate with these words in a special way.

Psalm 89 is an older maskil of Ethan that has been reworked to contrast the present situation (89:39-53) with the original celebration of the Davidic king (89:1-38). This joyful song has been converted into a lament and a petition that God's wrath would end because, like in Ps 88, people are dying (89:48-49) and the messiah is being mocked (89:51-52). The cry is for God's steadfast love to return.

It has long been thought that Psalm 90 is given as the answer to the questions of Psalm 89. This is certainly correct. But the possibility that the same person is responsible for the inclusion of both psalms is usually not considered, despite the remarkable similarity in language and the clear sequence of ideas in Pss 88-91. In 88 the psalmist faces death without hope. In 89 everyone is facing death, but there is hope that God will not hide himself forever (89:47) and that he will "remember . . . how [his] servants are mocked" (89:51). Psalm 90, then, a reworking of a prayer of Moses, says the solution to mortality is to number days aright, but the addition to the Mosaic portion still calls on God to return to his people (90:13-17). Finally Ps 91 gives the confidence that God will watch over and protect his people; this optimism is exactly what the people needed at this time.

Psalms 88-91 are followed by an optimistic “Sabbath song,” the “Yahweh reigns” collection, which was likely composed for this position in the Psalter, and a psalm for *todah*, which serves as a fitting end to the psalter.¹³ Psalms 88-100 thus mark the stage 4 expansion of the Psalter, which deals with the shock of the seeming death of the messianic hope and reminds the worshiper of the God who is still on the throne. For this collection some older psalms were reworked (88-90) and a number of new psalms were composed (93-99). This stage was probably completed around 500 BCE, between the death of Zerubbabel and the arrival of Ezra.

Stage 5: The Five-Book Psalter

Beginning with Psalm 100 we see a consistent arrangement technique that is not used elsewhere in the Psalter. Book V (Pss 107-150) consists of three sections, each beginning with an untitled psalm (107, 119, 137), then containing a collection (Davidic [108-110, 138-145] or Songs of Ascents [120-134]), and then concluding with hallelujah psalms (111-118¹⁴, 135-136, 146-150).¹⁵ Likewise, Book IV follows Ps 100 with a Davidic collection (101-104) and a series of hallelujah psalms (105-106¹⁶). הלל יהוה occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible, so the same person is likely behind the end of

¹³ Claus Westermann argues that the Psalter once began with Ps 1 and ended with Ps 119 (*Praise and Lament in the Psalms* [trans. Richard N. Soulen; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1965], 253). Erich Zenger rightly challenges this thesis, noting that the differences between Pss 1 and 119 are as great as the similarities (“Composition and Theology of the Fifth Book of Psalms, Psalms 107-145,” *JSOT* 80 (1998): 77-102, here p. 97). Hossfeld and Zenger conclude that the Psalter more likely once ended with Ps 100 (*Psalms*, 2:7). We find his suggestion more plausible.

¹⁴ There is a long history of confusion over whether the hallelujahs in the Egyptian Hallel (Pss 113-118) end the preceding psalm or begin the following psalm. BHS has followed most manuscripts in having the hallelujahs begin Pss 111, 112, and 113, and end Pss 113, 115, 116, and 117, but the most likely situation is that Pss 114 and 115 were originally one psalm (as in the LXX; these were likely divided because it was at this point that the Passover recitation would be broken up [*b. Pesah*. 117a]) and that each of the hallelujahs begins the following psalm, so that each new psalm from 111 to 118 *begins* with a hallelujah. This is in agreement with what we find in Pss 135-136 (Pss 105-106 and 146-150 *both* begin and end with hallelujah).

¹⁵ Cf. Klaus Koch, “Der Psalter und seine Redaktionsgeschichte,” in *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung* (ed. Klaus Seybold and Erich Zenger; HBS 1; Freiburg: Herder, 1995), 243-277.

¹⁶ I assume that the hallelujah at the end of Ps 104 was initially the beginning of Ps 105, making Pss 103 and 104 begin and end with “Bless Yahweh, O my soul,” and Pss 105 and 106 begin and end with “Hallelujah.”

Book IV and all of Book V. Psalm 106 begins with the phrase, “Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, for his love is forever,” which is repeatedly found in Book V (107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1; cf. 118:2, 3, 4; 136:2-26; 138:8). This phrase is a condensed version of the last verses of the 100-psalm psalter: “Give thanks to him! Bless his name! For Yahweh is good; his love is forever, and his faithfulness is from generation to generation” (Ps 100:4-5). It is likely that Pss 106, 107, 118,¹⁷ and 136 were written by someone very influenced by these closing verses of the Psalter. Each of these psalms either closes a major section (106, 118, 136) or starts a new one (107). Moreover, the placement of the hallelujah *after* the benediction at the end of Ps 106 suggests that the person responsible for the fivefold division of the Psalter and the corresponding benedictions is the same person who was responsible for these hallelujahs. This composer/compiler has created new psalms and brought in older collections to supplement the 100-psalm psalter with 50 new psalms. He has followed a pattern of arrangement: untitled psalm, collection, hallelujahs, untitled psalm, collection, hallelujahs, etc.¹⁸ He has chosen to mark the end of Book I at the end of 1DP, a sensical place to put the first benediction as the speaker changes from David to the Sons of Korah there. He has chosen to mark the end of Book II at the place where “the prayers of David the Son of Jesse are ended,” thus splitting up the previously unified EP. He has chosen to mark the end of Book III at the demise of the Davidic king and before the introduction of Moses, thus splitting up Pss 89 and 90, which had been added to the Psalter at the same time. He has chosen to place some of his new psalms in Book IV along with Pss 90-100. But then he closes that book and attaches a fifth book to the ending. His addition of benedictions is the only clear change to Pss 1-100. Nowhere does he add a hallelujah or insert later psalms or rearrange the order of the Psalter that came before him. His uniform arrangement of Pss 101-150 is not inserted in Pss 1-100.

¹⁷ Psalm 118 is often thought to be preexilic because of its focus on a kingly figure, but I have demonstrated elsewhere that the psalm is created based on allusions to the Isaianic new exodus material and the militaristic language in the Davidic Ps 18 (David B. Sloan, “The Unity of the Hallel and Its Use of OT Predictive Prophecy,” [paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Milwaukee, November 14, 2012]).

¹⁸ He likely did not start the first section with an untitled psalm because he saw his addition here not as a new beginning but as a continuation of what he has made to be Book IV.

When did this work take place? It is likely influenced by the reforms under Ezra (see, e.g., Ps 119) and yet it was completed by the time of the writing of 1-2 Chronicles (ca. 400 BCE?), since portions of Pss 105 and 106 (including the doxology for Book IV!) are quoted in 1 Chr 16. Therefore a date in the second half of the fifth century is almost certain. We have thus seen evidence for a five-stage development of the Psalter:

Stage 1	Psalms 1-41 (40 pss)	pre-exilic
Stage 2	Psalms 42-83 (40 pss)	ca. 580 BCE
Stage 3	Psalms 42-87 (44 pss)	ca. 516 BCE
Stage 4	Psalms 1-100 (100 pss)	ca. 500 BCE
Stage 5	Psalms 1-150 (150 pss)	late 5 th century BCE

With each addition it seems that nothing preceding it was changed. This has countless implications for our study of the Psalter. First, we should no longer speak of “the placement of Ps 89 at the end of Book III” but should instead speak of “the decision to make Book III end between Pss 89 and 90.” Perhaps Ps 73’s importance should be attached more to its role in introducing the psalms of Asaph than to its role as a transition from Book 2 to Book 3 or as a pivot point of the Psalter. Assumptions of an earlier “messianic psalter” (Pss 2-89) are brought into question. The idea of a democratization of the Psalter through a late addition of Ps 1 is also now questionable. Superscripts of psalms should be considered pre-exilic. And we should take seriously the possibility that there was more of a concern by editors of the Psalter for preserving the word of God as it was handed down to them.