"David" in Consultation with the Prophets: The Intertextual Relationship of Psalm 31 with the Books of Jonah and Jeremiah

J. Henk Potgieter (University of Pretoria)

ABSTRACT

Psalm 31 seems to be a late post-exilic text. It displays numerous similarities with other psalms, and also with the prophetic books of Jonah and Jeremiah. This paper proposes to investigate the nature of the literary relationship with the prophetic books in an attempt to establish the direction of influence and to determine the reasons why the psalm seems to have been composed as a kind of literary anthology. It would seem that the group of people who were responsible for composing Ps 31 also contributed towards the insertion of the confessions of Jeremiah and the prayers of Jonah.

1   INTRODUCTION

In Hossfeld and Zenger's 1993 commentary on Psalm 1-50, Hossfeld summarised the problems the exegete faces in Ps 31:[1] There is no clear development in the psalm and no clear poetic structure. It creates the impression of being a compilation from heterogeneous parts of the Hebrew Scriptures with groups of words, sentences, and whole verses corresponding to other contexts such as Ps 71:1-3, Jonah 2, and Ps 69. Its metrical pattern is completely irregular, except for vv. 11-17 where the Qinah metre dominates. It is notoriously difficult to determine the type of psalm: It seems to be a mixture of a song of thanksgiving and a lament, but the two types are strongly diffused. The centre (vv. 10-19) consists mostly of elements of a lament; with thanksgiving dominating at the beginning (vv. 2-9) and end (vv. 20-25). Declarations of trust (vv. 2-7 and 15) are found throughout the psalm. It is also not clear what the cause of the distress of the suppliant is – political enemies or social opponents (vv. 9, 12-13, 14, and 16); illness (vv. 10-11); or accusations against an innocent person (vv. 19, 21, and 24).

I will attend to the poetic structure of the psalm and investigate its relationship with Jeremiah and Jonah in this article. This is part of a combined investigation with my colleague, Phil Botha, who attended to the relationship of the psalm with Samuel. In his contribution, he has shown how the psalm was

---

[1]   The following summary is a free rendition of the notes by Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, "Psalm 31. Bitte, Klage und Dank eines Geretteten," in Frank-Lothar Hossfeld & Erich Zenger, *Psalm 1-50* (vol. 1 of *Die Psalmen*; NEchtB 29; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993), 191-192.

composed or edited specifically to form connections with the history of David as it is described in the books of Samuel. He has shown that there are numerous connections between the psalm and the "Song of Hannah" in 1 Sam 2, and also between the psalm and the "Song of David" in 2 Sam 22. His contribution was published in the book of Walter Dietrich, *Seitenblicke*, in 2011.[2]

In working together on this, we hope to bring some clarification on some of the other matters mentioned by Hossfeld. The "poetic structure" and the "development" within the psalm, as Hossfeld calls it, are interdependent. It is my intention to demonstrate, apart from a clear poetic structure, also a development within the psalm. I will then focus on the intertextual relationship of the psalm and try to determine the role and function of the connections with passages and phrases from Jonah 2 and Jeremiah.

		1	לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:	1	To the Conductor. A Psalm. Of David.		
I	A	2	בְּךָ יְהוָה חָסִיתִי אַל־אֵבוֹשָׁה לְעוֹלָם	2a	In you, YHWH, I sought refuge, let me never be put to shame;	Save me!	Save me, since you are my refuge!
			בְּצִדְקָתְךָ פַלְּטֵנִי:	b	in your righteousness, save me!		
		3	הַטֵּה אֵלַי אָזְנְךָ מְהֵרָה הַצִּילֵנִי	3a	Incline your ear towards me, rescue me speedily!		
			הֱיֵה לִי לְצוּר־מָעוֹז לְבֵית מְצוּדוֹת לְהוֹשִׁיעֵנִי:	b	Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me!		
	B	4	כִּי־סַלְעִי וּמְצוּדָתִי אָתָּה	4a	For you are my rock and my fortress;	You are my refuge	
			וּלְמַעַן שִׁמְךָ תַּנְחֵנִי וּתְנַהֲלֵנִי:	b	and for the sake of your name[f] you will lead me[g] and guide me.		
		5	תּוֹצִיאֵנִי מֵרֶשֶׁת זוּ טָמְנוּ לִי	5a	You will take me out[i] of the net which is hidden for me,		
			כִּי־אַתָּה מָעוּזִּי:	b	for you are my refuge.		
II	C	6	בְּיָדְךָ אַפְקִיד רוּחִי	6a	Into your hand I commit my spirit;	I trust in you	You have delivered me!
			פָּדִיתָה אוֹתִי יְהוָה אֵל אֱמֶת:	b	you have redeemed me, YHWH, O true God.		
		7	שָׂנֵאתִי הַשֹּׁמְרִים הַבְלֵי־שָׁוְא	7a	I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols;		
			וַאֲנִי אֶל־יְהוָה בָּטָחְתִּי:	b	but I, in YHWH I trust.		
	D	8	אָגִילָה וְאֶשְׂמְחָה בְּחַסְדֶּךָ	8a	I will shout with joy and be glad in your constant love,	I will rejoice in you	
			אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתָ אֶת־עָנְיִי	b	because you have seen my affliction;		
			יָדַעְתָּ בְּצָרוֹת נַפְשִׁי:	c	you have taken notice of my soul's		

			Hebrew		English		
					distress.		
		9	וְלֹא הִסְגַּרְתַּנִי בְּיַד־אוֹיֵב	9a	Yes, you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;		
			הֶעֱמַדְתָּ בַמֶּרְחָב רַגְלָי׃	b	you have set my foot in a broad place.		
III	E	10	חָנֵּנִי יְהוָה כִּי צַר־לִי	10a	Have mercy on me, YHWH, for I am in distress;	Have mercy, for I am ill because of sin!	I am in physical and social distress!
			עָשְׁשָׁה בְכַעַס עֵינִי	b	my eye is wasted from grief,		
			נַפְשִׁי וּבִטְנִי׃	c	my life and inner self.		
		11	כִּי כָלוּ בְיָגוֹן חַיַּי וּשְׁנוֹתַי בַּאֲנָחָה	11a	Yes, my life is spent with sorrow and my years with sighing,		
			כָּשַׁל בַּעֲוֹנִי כֹחִי	b	my strength fails through my transgression		
			וַעֲצָמַי עָשֵׁשׁוּ׃	c	and my bones waste away.		
	F	12	מִכָּל־צֹרְרַי הָיִיתִי חֶרְפָּה וְלִשֲׁכֵנַי מְאֹד וּפַחַד לִמְיֻדָּעָי	12a	Because of my enemies, I have become a disgrace, much so to my neighbours, something dreadful for those who know me;	I am abhorrent to my neighbours and the public	
			רֹאַי בַּחוּץ	b	those who see me outside		
			נָדְדוּ מִמֶּנִּי׃	c	flee from me.		
		13	נִשְׁכַּחְתִּי כְּמֵת מִלֵּב	13a	I am forgotten, removed from the heart like a dead person,		
			הָיִיתִי כִּכְלִי אֹבֵד׃	b	I have become like a broken vessel.		
	G	14	כִּי שָׁמַעְתִּי דִּבַּת רַבִּים מָגוֹר מִסָּבִיב	14a	For I heard the gossip of many, 'terror all around!'	People plot against me	
			בְּהִוָּסְדָם יַחַד עָלַי	b	When they take counsel together against me,		
			לָקַחַת נַפְשִׁי זָמָמוּ׃	c	they plotted to take my life.		
IV	H	15	וַאֲנִי עָלֶיךָ בָטַחְתִּי יְהוָה	15a	But I have put my trust in you, YHWH,	But I trust you; deliver me!	I trust you, YHWH, let the wicked be ashamed!
			אָמַרְתִּי אֱלֹהַי אָתָּה׃	b	I have said: "You are my God!"		
		16	בְּיָדְךָ עִתֹּתָי	16a	In your hands are my times;		
			הַצִּילֵנִי מִיַּד־אוֹיְבַי וּמֵרֹדְפָי׃	b	deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors!		
		17	הָאִירָה פָנֶיךָ עַל־עַבְדֶּךָ	17a	Let your face shine on your servant,		
			הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי בְחַסְדֶּךָ׃	b	save me in your grace!		
	I	18	יְהוָה אַל־אֵבוֹשָׁה כִּי קְרָאתִיךָ	18a	YHWH, let me not be put to shame when I call to you,	Let the wicked be ashamed!	
			יֵבֹשׁוּ רְשָׁעִים יִדְּמוּ לִשְׁאוֹל׃	b	let the wicked be put to shame, silence them to Sheol!		
		19	תֵּאָלַמְנָה שִׂפְתֵי שָׁקֶר	19a	Let the lying lips be dumb,		
			הַדֹּבְרוֹת עַל־צַדִּיק עָתָק	b	which speak arrogantly about the righteous,		
			בְּגַאֲוָה וָבוּז׃	c	with pride and contempt.		
V	J	20	מָה רַב־טוּבְךָ אֲשֶׁר־צָפַנְתָּ לִּירֵאֶיךָ	20a	O how abundant is your goodness which you treasure up for those who fear you;	You look after those who fear you!	YHWH has heard my supplication
			פָּעַלְתָּ לַחֹסִים בָּךְ	b	which you prepared for those who take refuge in you		
			נֶגֶד בְּנֵי אָדָם׃	c	before all humanity!		
		21	תַּסְתִּירֵם בְּסֵתֶר פָּנֶיךָ	21a	You hide them in the hiding place of your face from the mob of people;		

			Hebrew		English	
			מֵרֻכְסֵי אִישׁ			
			תִּצְפְּנֵם בְּסֻכָּה	b	you keep them safe in a hut	
			מֵרִיב לְשֹׁנוֹת:	c	from the strife of tongues.	
	K	22	בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה	22a	Blessed be YHWH,	You heard my supplication
			כִּי הִפְלִיא חַסְדּוֹ לִי בְּעִיר מָצוֹר:	b	for he has been wonderously gracious to me in a fortified city.	
		23	וַאֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי בְחָפְזִי	23a	Yes, I have said to myself in my alarm:	
			נִגְרַזְתִּי מִנֶּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ	b	"I am cut off from your eyes!"	
		24	אָכֵן שָׁמַעְתָּ קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנַי	c	Yet you heard the sound of my supplications	
			בְּשַׁוְּעִי אֵלֶיךָ:	d	when I cried to you for help.	
VI	L	25	אֶהֱבוּ אֶת־יְהוָה כָּל־חֲסִידָיו	24a	Love YHWH, all his devout people!	Love YHWH and wait for him, he will save you!
			אֱמוּנִים נֹצֵר יְהוָה	b	YHWH preserves the faithful ones,	
			וּמְשַׁלֵּם עַל־יֶתֶר עֹשֵׂה גַאֲוָה:	c	but he requites the one who acts haughtily abundantly.	
		26	חִזְקוּ וְיַאֲמֵץ לְבַבְכֶם	25a	Be strong and let you heart be strong,	
			כָּל־הַמְיַחֲלִים לַיהוָה:	b	all you who wait for YHWH!	

2   THE STICHOMETRY AND POETIC STRUCTURE OF PSALM 31

The psalm seems to consist of six stanzas, rather than three main sections as proposed by Hossfeld and Zenger.[3] Hossfeld and Zenger demarcate units on the basis of what they see as the literary growth of the psalm from a "basis psalm" to the present composite unit. According to them,[4] there are at least two distinct layers: vv. 10-19 comprise the *Grundpsalm*, a late pre-exilic or early exilic individual lament, designed to serve as formulary prayer or agenda for distressed suppliants. This "basis psalm" was then inserted into a frame of supplicatory and thanksgiving parts (vv. 2-9; 20-25) by the exilic and formative redaction. The three parts were also integrated by the editors: Vv. 2-9 were made to reflect the prayers and confessions of confidence of the *Grundpsalm*,[5]

---

[3]   With the exception of v. 6, which he groups with vv. 4-5, the demarcation of strophes is the same as that of Beat Weber, *Die Psalmen 1 bis 72* (vol. 1 of *Werkbuch Psalmen*; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001), 153-154. Pierre Auffret, "Que se rassure votre cœur! Étude structurelle du Psaume 31," *SEL* 19 (2002): 59-76, demarcates the following units in the psalm: 2-7, 8-9, 10-11, 12-14, 15-19, 20-22, 23, 24-25, and 20-25. This coincides with most of the strophes demarcated here.

[4]   Frank-Lothar Hossfeld & Erich Zenger, *Psalm 1-50* (vol. 1 of *Die Psalmen*; NEchtB 29; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993), 192. See the almost exactly same explanation of Klaus Seybold, *Die Psalmen* (HAT I/15; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck): 1996), 129.

[5]   It also takes up the motif of handing oneself over into the hand of YHWH; the descriptions of YHWH in vv. 6 and 15, and the distress and suffering of the suppliant (vv. 8 and 10-11).

while the concluding section 20-25 takes up themes from the *Grundpsalm*[6] but also looks back to the introductory part.[7]

The segmentation proposed here, is done on the basis of the presence of poetic devices, the modes of verbs, the switch between subjects and semantic fields, and the repetition of key words. The first stanza (I), comprising vv. 2-5,[8] contains an urgent supplication (strophe A),[9] supported by statements of confidence (strophe B). The transition to indicatives demarcates strophe B, but the semantic field of taking refuge and finding safety unite the two into one the three nouns, rock, refuge and fortress which occur in 3b, are repeated and also commented on in vv. 4 and 5. In addition to that, the four cola of strophe B form a chiastic pattern which binds it together closely. The same is true of the four cola of strophe C, so that there is a clear break between v. 5 and v. 6.

Stanza II is demarcated by the declarations, as a form of thanksgiving, for the fact that YHWH has *already* or in another situation, saved the suppliant (cf. the perfect forms in vv. 6b, 8bc, 9ab). In strophe C, the focus is on the suppliant's trust in YHWH as the true God in contrast to worthless idols (the antithesis between "true God" and "worthless idols" and the two declarations of trust by the suppliant create chiasmus); while strophe D is held together through the fourfold parallel which describes YHWH's acts of rescue in the past.

Stanza III (vv. 10-14) is taken up by a description of the suffering of the suppliant – bodily suffering in strophe E, social ostracism in strophe F, and attempts to take his life in strophe G. There is an abrupt transition from stanza II to III – no more mention of trust, only the slight similarity with stanza I of a supplication right at the beginning of III, but this is then abandoned for a description of suffering in various dimensions.

Stanza IV displays a strong similarity with stanzas I and II, but in reverse order: This reverse order can clearly be seen in the rendering of the set of five elements. The following diagram depicts the links between the different elements in strophes A, H, and I. Strophe H begins with the renewed declarations of trust in YHWH, phrased in more or less the same words as in v.

---

[6]   Such as the face of YHWH (vv. 17, 21) and his mercy (vv. 17, 22).

[7]   E.g. the "mercy" of YHWH (vv. 8, 22) and "taking refuge" in YHWH (vv. 2, 20).

[8]   Craigie's demarcation of vv. 2-6 as the first section ignores the antithesis between YHWH, the "true God" (v. 6) and the "worthless idols" (v. 7), and also the inclusio of "your hand" (v.6) with "the hand of the enemy" (v.9). Cf. Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50 with 2004 Supplement by Marvin E. Tate* (WBC 19; 2nd ed.; Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1983 [2004], 259. The other segments are more or less identified correctly by Craigie.

[9]   It contains six requests, beginning with a jussive, progressing to four imperatives, and ending with an infinitive construct: "Do not let me ever be shamed; save me; listen to me; rescue me, be to me a rock and a fortress to save me!"

7b, the conclusion of strophe C. This is then supplemented by renewed requests (again as imperatives, three of them, and one negative command) for help.

Hebrew		
בְּךָ יְהוָה חָסִיתִי	A	2a
אַל־אֵבוֹשָׁה לְעוֹלָם	B	2b
בְּצִדְקָתְךָ פַלְּטֵנִי	C	c
הַטֵּה אֵלַי אָזְנְךָ	D	3a
מְהֵרָה הַצִּילֵנִי	E	b
בְּיָדְךָ עִתֹּתָי	A	16a
הַצִּילֵנִי מִיַּד־אוֹיְבַי וּמֵרֹדְפָי	E	16b
הָאִירָה פָנֶיךָ עַל־עַבְדֶּךָ	D	17a
הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי בְחַסְדֶּךָ	C	b
יְהוָה אַל־אֵבוֹשָׁה	B	18a

The two A-elements, both beginning with the preposition *be* and a second person masculine suffix, are the only two in the series/set of five elements that have a direct congruency. The other four (BCDE) are represented in reverse order. The repetition of the set of five elements can be interpreted as an extended inclusio which acts as a very strong link between the first and fourth stanza.

Strophe I takes up the theme of shame introduced in strophe A, and once again asks (in the form of jussives) for protection against being shamed and for shame upon the arrogant wicked instead. There is a complete turnaround in v. 19. In vv. 2 to 18, the people responsible for the suppliant's distress, are vaguely described as enemies (איבי and צררי) and persecutors (רדפי). Now they are called *the wicked* (רשעים) and a hoard of four negative attributes are heaped on them. Nowhere else in the OT do these four negative attributes, which clearly originate from wisdom circles, occur together.

The mood changes completely in stanza V. Instead of supplication and complaint, one encounters thanksgiving and praise – first in a general sense for YHWH's help to those who fear him and put their trust in him in strophe J, and then for YHWH's personal help to the suppliant in strophe K. The distress is mentioned one last time in v. 23, but this serves only to emphasize the wonder of YHWH's intervention. Finally, stanza VI draws a lesson from the experience of the suppliant for the in-group: the devout and faithful people who wait for YHWH. They are to love YHWH and wait for him patiently, since he will preserve them, but he will shame the arrogant.

Important themes which run through the psalm and unite the various parts, are, in the first place, the physical (vv. 5, 9, 10-11, 14, 16)[10] and social difficulties which beset the suppliant, especially the possibility of being ostracized and shamed (vv. 2, 12-13, 18, 23).[11] Then there is the motif of trust in YHWH and of taking refuge in him for protection against physical and social threats (vv. 2-7, 15, 21, and 25).[12] Apart from the physical threat the enemies pose, their attitude is particularly disturbing, for they are "arrogant," (עתק) full of "pride" (גאוה) and "contempt" (בוז) and act "haughtily" (עשה גאוה) (vv. 19 and 24). In this regard they transgress especially with their "lips" (שפת שקר) (v. 19) and their "tongue" (ריב לשונות, v. 21).

One should probably also mention the important semantic field of characteristics of YHWH and the possible interventions he is able to provide: his "righteousness" (צדקה, v. 2b) and "constant love" (חסד, v. 8a) which can "save" one (פלט, v. 2b) and "rescue" one (נצל or ישע, vv. 3a, 3b, 16b, 17b) since he "sees" (ראה) the affliction of the supplicant (v. 8b) and "takes notice" (ידע ב, v. 8c) of his distress and "hears" his cries (שמע, v. 23c); his ability to "lead" (נחה) and "guide" (נהל) the supplicant (v. 4b) and "set" (עמד *hip'il*) his "foot" in "a broad place" (מרחב, v. 9b), and to "redeem" him (פדה, v. 6b), to "bring out" (יצא *hip'il*) the supplicant from the "hidden net" (v. 5a). This enables the supplicant to "commit" (פקד *hip'il*) his "spirit" into the hand of YHWH (v. 6a), since his "times" are in any case in the hand of God (v. 16a). YHWH can make his face "shine" (אור *hip'il*) on his servant (v. 17a), and he possesses "abundant goodness" (רב־טוב) which he "treasures up" (צפן) and "prepares" (פעל) for those who worship him (v.20) in order to "preserve" (נצר) them (v.24b). He "hides" (סתר *hip'il*) them in the "hiding place" (סתר) of his face (v.21a) and "keeps them safe" (צפן) in a "hut" (סכה, v. 21). YHWH is "wondrously gracious" (הפליא חסד) to the supplicant (v. 22b) and other worshippers, but he can put the wicked to shame (בוש) and "silence" דמם them

---

[10]   The threats are described with the images of a "net" (רשת, v. 5a), the "hand" of the enemy (vv. 9a, 16b), "distress" (צר, v. 10a), "grief" (כעס, v. 10a), "sorrow" (יגון, v. 11a) and "sighing" (אנחה, v. 11a), "wasting away" (עשש, vv. 10b and 11c), "terror" (מגור, v. 14a), "taking counsel" (יסד, v. 14b), and "plotting" to take his life (זמם, v. 14c).

[11]   The vocabulary includes to "be shamed" (בוש, vv. 2a, 18a), to become a "disgrace" (חרפה, v. 12a), a "dread" (פחד, v. 12a), being "forgotten" (שכח *nip'al*, v. 13a), being like a "dead person" (כמת, v. 13a), becoming like a "broken vessel" (אבד כלי, v. 13b), and being "cut off" from YHWH (גרז *nip'al*, v. 23b).

[12]   The vocabulary includes "to seek refuge" (חסה, vv. 2a, 20b), a "rock of refuge" (צור־מעוז, v. 3b, cf. also v. 5b), a "strong fortress" (מצודה vv. 3b, 4a), a "rock" (סלע, v. 4a), the "hand" of YHWH (vv. 6a, 16a), "trust" (בטח, vv. 7b, 15a), a "hiding place" (סתר, v. 21a), a "hut" (סכה, v. 21b), a fortified city (עיר מחור, v. 22b), and to "fear" (v. 20a) and "wait" for YHWH (יחל *pi'el*, v. 25b).

in Sheol (v. 18b) and also "silence" (אלם *nipʻal*) the lying lips (v. 19a), thereby "requiting" (שלם *piʻel*) them "abundantly" (על־יתר, v. 24c).

3   THE PASSAGES FROM JONAH 2:3-10 IN PSALM 31

As is the case with numerous other contexts in the Hebrew Bible, there are some notable similarities between Jonah 2 and Ps 31. Two such instances of similarity with Jonah 2 will interest us here. On face value, it seems that there are two citations from the prayer of Jonah in Jonah 2:3-10 taken up in Ps 31. If one can prove a literary connection, the question of course remains what the direction of influence would have been. Did the editors of Jonah borrow something from Ps 31, or did the author or editors of Ps 31 borrow something from Jonah? In view of the many contexts with which Ps 31 shows connections, it would seem that it is more probable that Ps 31 made use of the prayer of Jonah. A third possibility which should be kept in mind is that both texts were composed by the same group of people, or that both made use of a third, unknown source. As a working hypothesis, we assume that Jonah 2:9 is quoted in Ps 31:7a while a combination of Jonah 2:3 and 5 is quoted in Ps 31:23

3.1   Concerning Psalm 31:7a

Jonah 2:9	Psalm 31:7
מְשַׁמְּרִים הַבְלֵי־שָׁוְא חַסְדָּם יַעֲזֹבוּ׃	שָׂנֵאתִי הַשֹּׁמְרִים הַבְלֵי־שָׁוְא וַאֲנִי אֶל־יְהוָה בָּטָחְתִּי׃

Jonah 2:9 and Ps 31:7 contain the only two occurrences of the combination of the two words הבלי־שוא in the Hebrew Bible.[13] It is remarkable that the phrase functions in both instances in the same way. In the Jonah prayer it forms part of an antithesis where the conduct of the idol worshippers is described in stark contrast to the conduct of Jonah. In Ps 31, on the other hand, the comparison and antithesis is between trust in the worthless idols and YHWH, the true God. Only the first hemistich (three words in the Hebrew text) of Jonah 2:9 is reflected in Ps 31:7a, and some significant changes were made to the wording. The *piʻel* participle of the Jonah verse appears as a *qal* participle in Ps 31. The reason for this is that a finite verb is used in the beginning of the phrase in Ps 31, and the function of the participle thus changes from subject to object. The similarity between the two contexts is found in the fact that idol worshippers are denounced as a way to confirm the attitude of trust of the suppliant.

---

[13]   The two words are used in a parallelism in Zech 2:10 to describe the worthlessness of diviners' dreams and words, but not as a tautological description of idols.

3.2   Concerning Psalm 31:23

Jonah 2		Psalm 31	
וַאֲנִ֣י אָמַ֔רְתִּי	5a	וַאֲנִ֤י ׀ אָמַ֣רְתִּי בְחׇפְזִ֗י	23a
נִגְרַ֖שְׁתִּי מִנֶּ֣גֶד עֵינֶ֑יךָ	b	נִגְרַזְתִּי֮ מִנֶּ֪גֶד עֵ֫ינֶ֥יךָ	b
שָׁמַ֖עְתָּ קוֹלִֽי	3d	אָכֵ֗ן שָׁמַ֙עְתָּ֙ ק֣וֹל תַּחֲנוּנַ֔י	c
מִבֶּ֧טֶן שְׁא֛וֹל שִׁוַּ֖עְתִּי	3c	בְּשַׁוְּעִ֥י אֵלֶֽיךָ׃	d

Jonah 2		Psalm 31	
But I said	5a	Yes, I have said to myself in my alarm:	23a
I was expelled from before your eyes	b	I am cut off from your eyes.	b
You heard my voice	3d	Yet, you heard the sound of my supplication	c
From the belly of Sheol I cried	3c	When I cried to you for help,	d

In both the prayer of Jonah and in the psalm, the motif of being "cut off" from before the eyes of YHWH function as a form of thanksgiving for the fact that YHWH listened to the voice of the suppliant in a moment of crisis. But there are four major differences in the way that the wording of Jonah 2:3 and 5 functions in Ps 31. To begin with, the words בחפזי, אכן, תחנוני and אליך are additions in the psalm. Furthermore, the words מבטן שאול and the first person singular suffixes which occur in the prayer, are omitted in the psalm. A third and important difference can be detected in the word order. In the Jonah prayer the words of v. 3 obviously precede v. 5 while in the psalm it is placed after the corresponding phrases. The last difference is the occurrence of the verbal form נגזרתי instead of נגרשתי. As the word in the psalm is a hapax which occurs nowhere else, this is a clear case of a hearing error where the sounds of the ז and the שׁ were confused.[14] This, taken together with the numerous connections between Ps 31 and the rest of the Hebrew Bible, seem to point in the direction of a dependency of Ps 31 on Jonah 2.

And yet, the prayer of Jonah displays similar traits as the psalm. It seems to be a composition which does not quite fit the context or the character of Jonah the reader encounters in the narrative parts. Other "prayers" in narrative contexts also display similarities to the prayer of Jonah. So, for instance, is there a similarity between Jonah 2:2 (where Jonah begins by thanking YHWH for a positive answer to his prayer) and the prayer of Hannah in 1 Sam 2 (cf. 1

---

[14] Cf. "גרז," HALOT, p.1875.

Sam 2:1 where Hannah does the same).[15] It is possible that the theology of these poetic prayers of figures such as Jonah, Hannah, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, and others, is very similar to that of the authors of this psalm. The same people who wrote Ps 31 might have been responsible for the insertion of these prayers in order to portray the characters of the historical books and prophetic literature as being good examples of their own kind of piety.

4   THE PASSAGES FROM JEREMIAH IN PSALM 31

There are more contexts that display similarities, but one context from Jeremiah will be compared to Ps 31: Jer 20:7-13. The two texts share a number of significant words, of which the most important seem to be: חזק, דבה, בוש, חרפה, יד, כשל, לב, לקח, מאד, מגור, נגד, נצל, סביב, עולם, עצם, צדיק, קרא, ראה, רב, רדף, ריב, שכח, שם, שמע, שמר. It is obvious that Ps 31:14a and Jer 20:10a ("I have heard the rumour of many: 'Terror all around'") have the same origin, or that the author of Ps 31 borrowed the phrase from Jeremiah or vice versa.[16] This connection would then account for the presence of שמע, סביב, מגור, דבה, רב, and סביב in both texts. It is the only two places where דבה occurs in the Psalms and in the whole book of Jeremiah, so that an allusion seems indisputable. This is confirmed by the presence of other similarities: Like Jeremiah, the supplicant of the psalm experiences shame and insults (cf. Ps 31:12 "Because of all my enemies, I have become a <u>reproach</u>" חרפה, and Jer 20:8, "The word or YHWH has become a <u>reproach</u> and a mockery to me all my days"). While the refusal to speak in the name of YHWH becomes like fire in the <u>bones</u> (עצם) for Jeremiah (20:9), the <u>bones</u> of the supplicant in Ps 31:11 "waste away." Jeremiah is confident that his opponents will be shamed (בוש, Jer 20:11), while the supplicant of the psalm prays that he will *not* be shamed (Ps 31:2 and 18). Jeremiah confesses that he has entrusted his <u>lawsuit</u> (ריב) to YHWH (Jer 20:12), and the supplicant of the psalm thanks YHWH for hiding his protégés in a hut from the "<u>strife</u>" (ריב) of tongues.

It seems clear that the author of Ps 31 has used the prayer of Jeremiah, or that the author of the Jeremiah text has consulted Ps 31. Both these texts display a complex intertextual relationship with the rest of the Hebrew Bible.[17] It is possible that the author of the psalm chose to portray Jeremiah as a good example of piety in the face of internal opposition (as he seems to have done

---

[15]   Cf. the remark of Wolff in this regard, Hans Walter Wolff, *Dodekapropheton 3: Obadja und Jona* (BKAT 14/3; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977), 105. He also refers to the introduction to the prayer of Hezekiah, Isa 38:9.

[16]   Bernard Gosse, *L'influence du livre des* Proverbes *sur les rédactions bibliques à l'époque Perse* (Supplément no 14 à *Transeuphratène*; Paris: Gabalda, 2008), 176, argues that Jer 20:10 rests on Ps 31:14. He also points out the similarity of Jer 20:10 with Ps 35:15.

[17]   Cf. the many instances which Gosse, *L'influence du livre des* Proverbes, 175-178, points out proving dependency of Jer 20 on Ezek, Ps 22, Ps 79, Ps 71, etc.

with other contexts and characters in the scriptures). But it is equally possible that the authors of the psalm were also responsible for outlining the profile of Jeremiah in the confessions, showing him to be a typical example of the persecuted pious of post-exilic times. The presence of the "poor" in Jer 20:13, who are "saved" (נצל *hip'il*) by YHWH from the evildoers, points in the direction of the editorial work of the post-exilic Wisdom editors. The suppliant of the psalm also has a problem with those who "pursue" (רדף) him, and asks YHWH repeatedly to "save" (נצל *hip'il*, vv. 3 and 16) him from them (cf. the "pursuers" in Jer 20:11).

5   CONCLUSION

There seems to be little doubt that the author of Ps 31 made use of a variety of contexts in the Hebrew Bible to compose the psalm, and that he prominently displays his indebtedness to, inter alia, one of the confessions of Jeremiah and the prayer of Jonah. These prayers of Jonah and Jeremiah were in turn composed to display similar intertextual connections with other psalms and other parts of the Hebrew Canon. There is also a similarity of theological disposition visible between the psalm and the supposed view of the authors of Jonah 2 and Jer 20. It therefore seems feasible to conclude this paper with the remark that Ps 31 was written by exponents of the same group of people who were responsible for inserting the confessions of Jeremiah and the prayer of Jonah, and their purpose seems to have been to portray such prophetic figures as pious followers of YHWH who possessed the same religious qualities that they (the authors) had, and which are also found in the book of Psalms.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Auffret, Pierre. "Que se rassure votre coeur! Étude structurelle du Psaume 31." *Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici* 19 (2002): 59-76.
Botha, Phil J. "Freedom to Roam in a Wide Open Space: Psalm 31 Read in Conjunction with the History of David in the Books of Samuel and the Psalms." Pages 424-442 in *Seitenblicke: Literarische und historische Studien zu Nebenfiguren im zweiten Samuelbuch*. Edited by Walter Dietrich. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 249. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011.
Craigie, Peter C. and Marvin E. Tate. *Psalms 1-50*. Word Biblical Commentary 19. 2nd ed. Nashvile: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004.
Gosse, Bernard. *L'influence du livre des* Proverbes *sur les rédactions bibliques à l'époque Perse*. Supplément no 14 à *Transeuphratène*. Paris: Gabalda, 2008.
Hossfeld, Frank-Lothar. "Psalm 31. Bitte, Klage und Dank eines Geretteten." Pages 191-199 in Hossfeld, Frank-Lothar and Erich Zenger. *Psalm 1-50*. Vol. 1 of *Die Psalmen*. Die Neue Echter Bibel 29. Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993.
Hossfeld, Frank-Lothar and Erich Zenger. *Psalm 1-50*. Vol. 1 of *Die Psalmen*. Die Neue Echter Bibel 29. Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993.
Koehler, Ludwig and Baumgartner, Walter. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. HALOT, electronic version. Revised by Walter Baumgartner and Johann J. Stamm with assistance from Benedikt Hartmann, Ze'ev Ben-

Hayyim, Eduard Y. Kutscher and Philippe Reymond. Translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1994–2000.

Seybold, Klaus. *Die Psalmen.* Handbuch zum Alten Testament I/15. Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1996.

Weber, Beat. *Die Psalmen 1 bis 72*. Vol. 1 of *Werkbuch Psalmen*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001.

Wolff, Hans Walter. *Dodekapropheton 3: Obadja und Jona.* Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament 14/3. Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977.

J. Henk Potgieter, Department of Ancient Languages, University of Pretoria, 0002, Pretoria. Email: henk.potgieter@up.ac.za