

## **Psalms in Chronicles**

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While we have learned much in the last century about the forms and the social setting of the Psalms, it remains a fact that we know very little about how the Psalter was used in public worship before the rise of the synagogue. The proposals made in the middle of the last century about a covenant renewal festival in ancient Israel (by Artur Weiser in the Old Testament Library commentary on the Psalter), an enthronement festival of Yahweh (Sigmund Mowinckel, in numerous publications), or a festival celebrating the kingly rule of Yahweh (Hans Joachim Kraus in *Biblischer Kommentar*) have largely passed into the history of prior scholarship leaving few sure results in their wake. That some psalms were used to accompany a sacrifice (Ps 50:24) or that others were used as entrance liturgies (Psalms 15 and 24) or in the course of pilgrimages or processions (Psalms 120-134) is true, but these contributions to our understanding of how psalms were used in public worship remain fairly rudimentary. Suggestions within Psalms, such as “Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar” (Ps 118:27) or exhortations to perform music, such as “Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our festal day” (Ps 81:4), provide limited access to how Psalms were actually used.

But there is one book within Scripture where Psalms are used in a liturgical context, namely Chronicles, and 1 Chronicles 16 and 2 Chronicles 6 in particular, where selections from well-known Psalms accompany the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem and the dedication of the temple. These too are limited pieces of evidence since we do not

know with any certainty whether David's transfer of the ark was subsequently observed liturgically or in a procession that recited these Psalms (but see Psalm 132), but we do have examples here of how Psalms were interpreted or reapplied in late Persian times. One supposes that the Chronicler's assignment of psalms to these liturgies did not strike his readers as absurd.

### **The Psalms in 1 Chronicles 16**

1 Chronicles 16:8-36 consists of excerpts from three canonical psalms: Psalm 105:1-15; Psalm 96:1-13; and Psalm 106:1, 47-48 (all from Book IV of the Psalter).

Psalm 105 is a psalm of thanksgiving. After a call to give thanks for Yahweh's wonderful works (vv. 1-6), the Psalm recounts Yahweh's efforts on Israel's behalf in the past, including his covenant with and care for the matriarchs and patriarchs (vv. 7-15), his provision of Joseph to save Israel from famine (vv. 16-22), his liberation of Israel from the hardships of Egypt (vv. 23-38), his supplying Israel with food and drink during the wilderness wandering (vv. 39-42), and finally his gracious gift of the Land (vv. 43-45). Only the first fifteen verses of this Psalm are included in 1 Chronicles 16. Were the next thirty verses—with the mention of plagues and the dread that afflicted Israel's enemies—considered too potentially revolutionary for the political context in which the Chronicler wrote?

Psalm 106, another hymn of praise (mixed with a theology similar to that of the Deuteronomistic History), provides a history of sin and judgment in Israel. The psalmist praises Yahweh for remaining faithful to God's people despite their long history of sin and apostasy. Periods of sin (vv. 6-7 [in Egypt and at the Red Sea], 13-14 [in their rebellions in the wilderness], 16 [in rebelling against Moses and Aaron], 19-22 [in the

incident with the golden calf], 24-25 [in the incident with the doubting spies], 28 [in their apostasy at Baal Peor], 32-39 [in apostasy during the period of the judges and later], 43b and their frequent subsequent rebellions) were followed by periods of judgment (vv. 15, 17-18, 26-27, 29, 40-42, 43c), and then again and again by periods of Yahweh's compassionate protection and deliverance (vv. 8-12, 23, 30-31, 43a, 44-46). The last two verses of the psalm are a prayer for deliverance from the exile (v. 47) and the conclusion to Book IV of the Psalter (v. 48). Of these forty-eight verses, only the first verse and the last two make it into the new psalm in 1 Chronicles 16. Ironically, none of the verses that give this psalm its identity—sin, judgment, divine compassion, protection, and deliverance—make it into 1 Chronicles 16.

Psalm 96 is a third hymn of praise. After a call to praise in vv. 1-3, the reasons for praise are given in vv. 4-6, namely Yahweh's superiority over all other gods. A second call to praise takes place in vv. 7-9, followed by a proclamation that Yahweh is king and judge of all the earth, both now and in the future (vv. 10-13). This Psalm is included between Psalms 105 and 106 in 1 Chronicles 16. The only omitted lines are vs. 96:10b "he will judge the nations with equity" and 96:13b "he will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth." The Chronicler may have found it more appropriate for the people to hope for some manifestation of Yahweh's sovereignty in nature than for them to declare Yahweh's sovereignty in history convincingly before their political and military masters.

While scholars have long studied the text critical differences between the texts of these psalms in the Psalter and the copies of them in Chronicles, it has only recently been asked what sort of poem has resulted by putting these psalms together in a new medley or

even into a new poem. Older commentators, such as Myers in the Anchor Bible (1:121), referred readers to the Psalm commentaries for further exegesis after a few introductory remarks. Even Rudolph remarks in his still-standard Chronicles commentary (p. 128): “Die Einzelexegese ist Sache der Psalmenkommentare.”<sup>1</sup> But, of course, that is not so. The Chronicler has composed a new poem and placed it in a liturgy celebrating the arrival of the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem. We need to ask what this Psalm and its individual verses meant in that new context.

According to the Chronicler, David had already in his time inaugurated the singing of praises by the Levitical singers in public worship, a practice which was probably characteristic of the temple worship known by the Chronicler in the mid fourth century. That is, he attempted to establish a continuity between the worship life of David and that of his own day. David’s authority now stood behind the role of the Levites and the use of psalmody in worship. The Chronicler’s credibility in claiming Davidic authority for this practice was no doubt enhanced by his reuse of well-known Psalms.

What is the structure and message of this new coherent psalm that the Chronicler put together out of fragments of three other psalms? This psalm consists of three parts that we call I. Israel’s praise, II. international praise, and III. cosmic praise. Israel is portrayed as living among the nations and its God is proclaimed as sovereign over other gods and the nations. The form of the Psalm is a thanksgiving, drawing on the first verses of Psalm 105 and the last verses of Psalm 106. Toward the end there is also a brief petition. However the rest of the psalms in the Psalter may have been composed, this psalm was put together at a desk, through careful selection and coordination of verses

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<sup>1</sup> Specific exegesis is a matter for commentaries on Psalms.

from known psalms. The context of this psalm is the worship of the temple, and it conveys a feeling of national vulnerability.

## **The “New” Psalm in 1 Chronicles 16:8-36**

### **General Call to Thanksgiving (vv. 8-22 = Ps 105:1-15)**

8. Thank Yahweh, call upon his name,  
Make known his deeds among the peoples.

The opening imperative in v. 8, from Psalm 105, “Thank Yahweh,” is balanced by a similar imperative near the end in v. 34, originally from Psalm 106: “Give thanks to Yahweh for he is good, for his loyalty lasts forever.” The thanksgiving at the beginning of the psalm is for Yahweh’s past actions, the exhortation to give thanks at the end of the psalm introduces a petition for Yahweh’s intervention now and in the future. The concern for “the peoples”—make known his deeds among the peoples--forms a significant theme throughout this new composition.

### **Israel’s Praise**

9. Sing to Yahweh, chant to him,  
Meditate on all his marvelous acts.
10. Glory in his holy name;  
Let the heart of those who seek Yahweh rejoice.
11. Seek Yahweh and his strength,  
seek his face regularly.

The Chronicler's psalm urges the Israelite audience to seek Yahweh and his strength, to seek his face continually (v. 11). This word “seek” is central to the Chronicler’s theology. David had earlier confessed in the ark narrative that Yahweh had not been "sought" correctly in the days of Saul. We will speak later of the four virtues of the Chronicler’s theology: to humble oneself, to pray, to seek Yahweh’s face, and to turn from evil doings (2 Chr 7:14). The reference to Yahweh’s strength is apparently an

allusion to the ark, whose journey from Kiriath-jearim to Jerusalem has taken up the last four chapters (1 Chronicles 13-16). 2 Chronicles 6:41, which we will look at later, also refers to Yahweh and his "strong ark."

### **Remembrance of Yahweh's Works**

12. Remember his marvelous deeds which he has done,  
his signs and the judgments of his mouth.
13. O seed of Israel his servant,  
children of Jacob his chosen ones.
14. He is Yahweh our God;  
his judgments are in all the earth.

The judgments of Yahweh's mouth (v. 12) are universally effective according to v. 14: they are "in all the earth," and this is complementary to the *particular* confession in that same verse: "He is Yahweh *our* God." The Chronicler focuses his exhortation on the faithful community, here called the seed of Israel and the children of Jacob (v. 13). Israel/Jacob is the most important of the ancestors in Chronicles. Psalm 105 had referred to the seed of *Abraham* and the children of Jacob, the descendants of two different ancestral individuals.

### **Remembrance of Yahweh's Covenant**

15. Remember his covenant forever,  
The word that he commanded for a thousand generations.
16. [The covenant] that he made with Abraham,  
his oath to Isaac.
17. He ratified it for Jacob as a precept,  
for Israel as an everlasting covenant.
18. saying, "To you I give the land of Canaan,  
as a portion for your inheritance.
19. When you were few in number,  
insignificant and sojourners in it,
20. They walked from nation to nation,  
and from one kingdom to another people.
21. He did not allow a person to oppress them,  
he reproved kings on their account,
22. "Do not touch my anointed ones;

do no harm to my prophets.”

Psalm 105:8 had said that Yahweh had remembered his covenant with the matriarchs and patriarchs. Now the Chronicler turns that indicative into an imperative for his audience: *You*, remember God’s eternal covenant (v. 15). Yahweh’s covenant with Israel and his covenantal loyalty (v. 34) are both confessed to be everlasting, while his word (or promise) is said to last for a thousand generations (v. 15). Though Genesis actually reports only God’s covenant with Abraham, that ancestral covenant is here vouchsafed to all three major ancestors: Abraham and Isaac (v. 16) and Jacob/Israel (v. 17). This everlasting divine covenant, as in the priestly document in the Pentateuch (Gen 17:8; Exod 6:8), guarantees to Israel the possession of the land (v. 18).

In v. 19, the Chronicler moves out of the objective mode, in which he has been referring to Israel’s ancestors as people long since gone by, and he addresses his audience as “you,” again changing the text of Psalm 105:12 (“when they were few in number”). The Chronicler’s own audience had surely known what it meant to be few in number, insignificant sojourners in a foreign land. Their experience echoed that of their ancient matriarchs and patriarchs. Yahweh had allowed no one to oppress those ancient ancestors (v. 21). The Chronicler’s audience would surely have heard a startling contrast in this verse between the patriarchs’ freedom from oppression and their own current experience under the Persians. But the promises made to vulnerable Abraham and Sarah had freed them from harm; and that, ultimately, would be contemporary Israel’s fate as well.

The value placed on the ancestors is exemplified by their distinctive titles: Do not touch “my anointed ones”; do no harm to “my prophets” (v. 22). The Chronicler may

also have applied this verse to his present situation, treating contemporary Israel as a royal and prophetic people, and thus democratizing these titles so that they applied to the whole people of God. The Chronicler expected his politically insignificant audience to identify with the ancient matriarchs and patriarchs, in their vulnerability and in their freedom from harm.

**International Praise (vv. 23-30 = Ps 96:1-10)**

23. Sing to Yahweh, all the earth,  
    announce day after day his victory.
24. Tell among the nations his glory,  
    among all peoples his marvelous deeds.
25. For great is Yahweh and to be praised exceedingly,  
    He is to be feared above all the gods.
26. For all the gods of the peoples are idols,  
    but Yahweh made the heavens.
27. Honor and majesty are before him,  
    strength and joy are in his place.
  
28. Ascribe to Yahweh, O families of the peoples,  
    Ascribe to Yahweh honor and strength.
29. Ascribe to Yahweh the honor of his name,  
    Lift up an offering and come into his presence.  
    Worship Yahweh in his holy theophany.
30. Writhe before him, all the earth.  
    Aye, the world is established, it shall not be moved.

At this point the Chronicler moves to the second point of his new psalm, the emphasis on international praise, and it is probably only we who can look up the source of his quotation who recognize that he has also moved from Psalm 105 to Psalm 96. Those addressed in the new, Chronistic Psalm change: previously it was Israel, now it is the nations. The Chronicler drops the first line of Psalm 96—Sing to Yahweh a new song—either because he thought a new song would be inappropriate in an invitation addressed to a non-Israelite audience, or because he considered such an invitation inappropriate in the middle of a Psalm. Here he invites the nations (v. 24) and the

families of the peoples (v. 28) to celebrate in advance Yahweh's eschatological victories. Later, creation as a whole will also be invited to praise Yahweh (vv. 31-33).

The Chronicler's theology is monotheistic, or at least strongly monolatrous: The gods of the people are idols, but Yahweh made the heavens (26). Strength and joy are in his place (v. 27). While references to joy and rejoicing are frequent in Chronicles, also in chapter 16, this is the only time the Chronicler uses this particular Hebrew word for joy. The Chronicler uses "place" (v. 27) instead of "sanctuary" (Ps 96:6) because in the Jerusalem of David's time, according to the Chronicler, there were no sacrifices at Jerusalem, no temple, but only the ark, with its tent, and the service of song (1 Chr 16:4-6, 37-38). Psalm 96 itself, of course, clearly presupposed the existence of the temple. This "place" is for the Chronicler only the location where Solomon's temple will one day stand in the future.

Verses 28-30 (Ascribe to Yahweh, O families of the peoples), as in Psalm 96:7-9, are addressed to the nations. Verses 28-30 explicitly invite the nations of the world to worship Yahweh. They are invited into Yahweh's presence (v. 29), not into his courts as in Ps 96:8, to avoid the anachronism of inviting foreigners at the time of David to worship in the temple that was first erected by Solomon. The offering they bring is a kind of tribute due to the divine king. As we noted earlier, the Chronicler omitted Ps 96:10b: "He will judge the peoples with equity." He may not have wanted to alarm the Persians about Israel's international goals.

### **Cosmic Praise**

31. Let the heavens rejoice,  
let the earth be glad,  
let them say among the nations, Yahweh is king!
32. Let the sea roar and its fullness,  
Let the field and everything in it exult.

33. Then the trees of the forest will give a ringing cry before Yahweh,  
for he comes to judge the world.

Let the heavens rejoice...let the earth be glad...let the sea roar....(vv. 31-32).

The Chronicler invites the whole tripartite cosmos—heaven, earth, and sea--to join in the celebration of Yahweh's kingship. He moved the last line in v. 31—"let them say among the nations, Yahweh is God"--to its present position, and rewrote it since in Ps 96:10a it is an imperative addressed to Israel to bear witness to the nations. Now the nations themselves are to herald Yahweh's kingship. Let the field...exult...Then the trees of the forest will give a ringing cry" (vv. 32-33). Agricultural land and stands of trees in the forest, too, are urged in an apostrophe—a direct appeal to an animate or inanimate object—to join in the chorus that celebrates Yahweh's coming to judge, or rule, the earth.

**Final Call to Thanksgiving (vv. 34-36 = Ps 106:1, 47-48)**

34. Give thanks to Yahweh for he is good,  
for his loyalty lasts forever.

To articulate this final exhortation, made to Israel, the Chronicler has reached into another psalm, the first verse and last two verses of Psalm 106, but the transition again is so smooth that we would not notice it without looking it up. All he had to omit was the opening "Hallelujah." He ends his new psalm in 1 Chronicles 16, as he had begun, with giving thanks to Yahweh who is good and whose loyalty lasts forever. Variations on this slogan appear again in v. 41 in this chapter and no less than six times in 2 Chronicles.

**Petition for Israel's Deliverance**

35. And say,  
"Save us, O God of our salvation,  
Gather us and deliver us from the nations  
to thank your holy name,  
and glory in your praise.

36. Blessed be Yahweh the God of Israel,

From everlasting to everlasting.

By adding the words “And say” (v. 35) to the quotation from Psalm 106:47, the Chronicler emphasizes that his audience is to make the following prayer their own. Instead of referring to “Yahweh our God,” as in Ps 146:47, the Chronicler refers to the deity as “O God of our salvation.” This may have seemed more appropriate in a petition asking God to save or deliver the people.

“Gather us and deliver us from the nations.” In Psalm 106:47 the imperative “gather” reflected the scattered or exiled condition of the people addressed. Exile had already been threatened in the wilderness (Ps 106:47) and had become a reality later in the psalm (vv. 40-46). To this quotation the Chronicler added the words “deliver us.” Deliverance from Persian domination may have been a more burning issue than Israel’s dispersal at the Chronicler’s time even if, for political reasons, the author avoided a direct criticism of, or an attack upon, the Persians. Gathering Israel from the nations, of course is appropriate for almost any time when the Chronicler may have been writing.

“Blessed be Yahweh the God of Israel” (v. 36). The Chronicler’s Psalm concludes with the same divine title—Yahweh the God of Israel—which was the object of the invocation, thanksgiving, and praise of the singers in the narrative introduction to this chapter, v. 4., just before this new psalm began. This blessing, with this full divine title, later appears in the mouth of Hiram, king of Tyre (2 Chr 2:11 [12]) and of Solomon himself (2 Chr 6:4).

### **Summary Petition**

And all the people said, “Amen,” and they praised Yahweh.

These words are part of the doxology at the end of Psalm 106 and not really part of the psalm itself. They indicate to us that the fourth book of the Psalter was completed by the time of the Chronicler. All the people, according to the Chronicler, had joined David in bringing the ark back to Jerusalem—however unlikely that is historically--and now they endorse the song of the Levites. This final doxology serves as a bridge passage to take the Chronicler back to his ark narrative.

This psalm is a good example of the doxological character of worship in Chronicles. While in the century before the Chronicler, both Ezra and Nehemiah had expressed a narrow view of Israel, that required forced divorces from those who were not recognized as true Israelites, the Chronicler has a more expansive view of Israel, beginning with his providing genealogies for all of the twelve tribes of Israel at the beginning of his work. He invites all Israel to rally round the temple in Jerusalem, and he breaks through even the boundaries of Israel in this psalm as he exhorts the nations and even the entire cosmos to praise Yahweh.

## **2 Chronicles 6:40-42**

We move now to the brief excerpts from Psalm 132 that appear as the conclusion of Solomon's long prayer at the dedication of the temple in 2 Chr 6:14-39. In the course of his prayer, Solomon had prayed for Yahweh to fulfill his dynastic promises to David (vv. 16-17) and then he prayed in general that God would hear prayers that would be spoken in or toward the temple in Jerusalem (vv. 18-21). Solomon cited seven different examples of prayers which Israelite individuals or the entire community might bring to Yahweh (vv. 22-39), and Solomon asked that Yahweh would hear in heaven, the place of his enthronement, and then forgive, act, and bring back to the land. This lengthy prayer,

originally written for the book of Kings, is taken over from 1 Kings 8 into 2 Chronicles 6, with a few minor changes that need not occupy us here.

At the end of the prayer, however, the Chronicler does not include the Deuteronomistic conclusion (1 Kgs 8:50aβ-53). Instead, the Chronicler wrote his own conclusion, that consists of excerpts from Psalm 132.

<b>Psalm 132 Petitions</b>	<b>Psalm 132 Responses</b>
Remember the slavish toil David endured. David vowed not to sleep until he had found a place for the ark. vv. 1-5	Yahweh swore: I will set one of your sons on the throne. If your sons keep the covenant, their sons shall rule forever. vv. 11-12
Rise to your rest. May your priests be clothed with righteousness and your loyal folk give a ringing cheer. vv. 8-9	This [Zion] is my resting place. Its priests I will clothe with victory, and its loyal folk will give a ringing cry. Vv. 14-16
For David's sake, do not refuse your anointed one. v. 10	I will cause a horn to sprout for David, a lamp for my anointed one; I will clothe the king's enemies with shame. His crown will gleam. vv. 17-18.

Professor Erhard Gerstenberger has recently described Psalm 132 itself as a messianic hymn or a Zion song, and one of its central features is a series of three petitions to which there are three divine responses. The first petition asks God to remember the slavish toil of David, how he took an oath and went without sleep in his all-out effort to find a place for Yahweh, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob (132:1-5). Yahweh responds to this oath in the second half of the psalm (132:11-12) by swearing in a counter oath that David's son would sit on the throne, and that subsequent sons of Solomon too would rule if they would keep the requirements of Yahweh's covenant.

A second petition in Psalm 132:8-9 asks Yahweh and his ark to go to their resting place in the temple and it prays that the priests will be clothed with righteousness and God's loyal folk will give a ringing cheer. Yahweh responds to this petition in vv. 14-16

by affirming his choice of Zion and identifying it as indeed his resting place. Among the blessings he showers on Zion are the promise to clothe the priests with salvation or victory, and the opportunity for God’s loyal folk to give their ringing cultic cheer.

A third petition in v. 10 returns to the royal concerns of the first petition, and asks Yahweh, for David’s sake, not to reject his anointed king. In response, vv. 17-18, Yahweh makes a series of promises to the Davidic kings: a) I will make a horn sprout for David; b) I have prepared a lamp for my anointed; c) I will clothe the king’s enemies with shame, and d) the king’s crown will gleam. This psalm promises the restoration of the monarchy. Gerstenberger remarks: “In this case one can imagine Zion and David festivals in situations of resurging hopes among believers for a powerful restoration of the lost monarchy.”<sup>2</sup> I find this to be a convincing interpretation of the Psalm itself.

But what becomes of this psalm when it –or really only a few parts of it—is used as building blocks for the conclusion of Solomon’s great prayer at the dedication of the temple in 2 Chronicles 6? The Chronicler quotes only verses 8-10 from Psalm 132, followed by what seems to be a highly rewritten version of v. 1. In each of the three sets of petitions the Chronicler inserts an unusual divine name—Yahweh God—that and gives strong emphasis to the petition itself.

<b>Psalm 132</b>	<b>2 Chronicles 6</b>
Rise, Yahweh, to your resting place, you and your strong ark. v. 8	And now, rise, Yahweh God, to your rest, you and your strong ark.
May your priests be clothed with righteousness; May your loyal folk give a ringing cheer. v. 9	May your priests, Yahweh God, be clothed with victory; may your loyal folk rejoice in prosperity. v. 41
For the sake of David your servant, do not refuse your anointed one. v. 10	Yahweh God, do not refuse your anointed one;
Remember, Yahweh, with regard to David	remember (your) surpassing loyalties to

<sup>2</sup> *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, FOTL XV (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, 369).

all his efforts. v. 1	David, your servant. Or remember the surpassing loyalties of David, your servant. v. 42
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The first petition in Chronicles, based on Psalm 132:8, is that Yahweh and the ark would go to and abide in Yahweh's resting place in the temple, a theme that has already occupied much of 2 Chronicles 5 and 6. In 2 Chronicles 5 the Levites, accompanied by the full assembly of Israel, brought the ark, the tent of meeting, and the holy vessels into Solomon's new temple, with the result that the temple was filled with glory and a cloud filled the sanctuary and did not allow the priests to continue to minister (cf. also 2 Chr 6:11 and 7:1-3). In the Chronicler's thinking the temple could not be built by David, the man of wars, but only by Solomon, whose name is a pun on the word "shalom" or peace. The temple could not be built until rest was achieved under Solomon. Now Yahweh and the ark are invited to enter the place of rest. The first petition, therefore, is for the welfare of the temple itself as Yahweh's resting place.

A second petition, based on Ps 132:9, again expanded by the divine name Yahweh God, asks divine benediction on the priests and on Yahweh's loyal folk, or, as we might say, on both clergy and laity alike. The Chronicler's Solomon prays that the priests will be clothed with victory/salvation, which indeed was the apparel Yahweh promised them in the response part of Ps 132:16, whereas the petition itself had asked that they be clothed with "righteousness." On a number of occasions in the OT, poets ask that the wicked be clothed in shame, dishonor, or trembling (Job 8:22; Ps 35:16; 109:29; Ezek 26:16). The opposite of such a condition would be victory/salvation. Exactly why the petition for the lay people was changed—from "give a ringing cry" to "rejoice in prosperity"—is not clear although Solomon seems to crave the general welfare of the

people, and not just their full-voiced participation in the cult. He desires that they—and the audience which the Chronicler is addressing—enjoy prosperity or “good” (cf. Job 21:13; 36:11; Ps 25:13; 105:5; 128:5; Prov 11:10; Ec 7:14; Jer 29:32).

The prayers for the temple and for its worship participants are given priority by the Chronicler in these first two petitions. Only in the third petition, based on Ps 132:10, do we find a prayer about the king and then it is a very simple one: "Do not refuse your anointed one." In this context, this seems to have a minimal connotation: Do not reject the petitions about the temple that Solomon has just made earlier in the chapter. The next verse, 2 Chr 7:1, gives an immediate reply to this petition when fire falls from heaven and consumes the sacrificial offerings, just as it had at the first sacrifice at the tabernacle in the wilderness (Leviticus 9), and at David's worship at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (1 Chronicles 21). There is nothing here, however, about the restoration of the monarchy, its continuation in future descendants of Solomon, or its permanence. The grounds for this petition, based on Ps 132:1, are either Yahweh's surpassing loyalties to David (cf. 2 Chr 6:14; Isa 55:3) or the surpassing loyalties of David (in his plans and lavish donations for the temple; cf. the references to “surpassing loyalties” in 2 Chr 32:32; 35:26). There is a long scholarly debate about which of these translations is correct. Perhaps both are. The contrast with the context of Psalm 132, in any case, is striking. While the building blocks of this conclusion to the prayer of Solomon were quarried from Psalm 132, the priorities of that psalm are inverted—temple and people are placed before the Davidic king—and the actual petitions for the king are reduced to a bare minimum.

### **The Message Confirmed in 2 Chronicles 7**

A question that has occupied students of Chronicles for many decades is this:

While the efforts of the idealized David and Solomon were responsible for the construction of the temple and the inauguration of the clergy orders,, and while the narrative of the Chronicler restricts itself almost exclusively to the stories of the subsequent kings, did the Chronicler hope for a restoration of the monarchy itself? The answer from 2 Chronicles 6 would seem to be no, and that conclusion is confirmed in a divine appearance of Yahweh to Solomon in 2 Chr 7:12-22. As usual with Chronicles, the author takes much of his material from Samuel or Kings, but he feels free to rearrange that material and add to it in ways that often totally transform its meaning.

<b>1 Kings 9</b>	<b>2 Chronicles 7</b>
Yahweh appeared to Solomon a second time, just as he had appeared to him in Gibeon. Yahweh said to him, “I have heard your prayer and your supplications for mercy, which you have supplicated before me. vv. 2-3a	Yahweh appeared to Solomon by night and said to him, “I have heard your prayer, v. 12a
	<b>Positive Response of the People</b>
	and I have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens so there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence against my people, if my people over whom my name is called humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears will be attentive to the prayer from this place. For now I have chosen vv. 12b-16aa
I have consecrated this house which you have built to put my name there forever; my eyes and my heart will be there always. v. 3b	and consecrated this house so that my name will be there forever; my eyes and my heart will be there always. v. 16abb
<b>Conditional dynastic promise</b>	<b>Conditional dynastic promise</b>
As for you, if you (singular) walk before me, just as your father David walked before	As for you, if you (singular) walk before me, just as your father David walked before

<p>me, with a perfect heart and with uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you (and) keeping my statutes and my ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever just as I promised your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a person upon the throne of Israel.’ Vv. 4-5</p>	<p>me, doing according to all that I have commanded you (and) keeping my statutes and my ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne just as I made a covenant with your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a person to rule in Israel.’ vv. 17-18</p>
<p><b>Negative response of king, people, and future generations</b></p>	<p><b>Negative Response of king and people</b></p>
<p>“But if you (plural) and your sons indeed turn aside from me and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from off the surface of the land that I gave to them, and the house that I have consecrated to my name I will send away from my sight, and Israel will be a proverb and a taunt among all peoples. And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone passing by it will be astonished, and whistle, and say, “‘Why has Yahweh done such a thing to this land and this house?’ And they will say, ‘Because they abandoned Yahweh their God, who brought their ancestors out from the land of Egypt, and they took hold of other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore Yahweh has brought on them all of this calamity.’” vv. 6-9</p>	<p>“But if you (plural) turn aside and abandon my statutes and my commandments that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will pluck them up my land that I gave to them, and this house that I have consecrated to my name, I will cast out of my sight, and I will make it a proverb and a taunt among all peoples. And as for this house, which was exalted, it will be desolate for everyone passing by it, and [such a person] will say, ‘Why has Yahweh done such a thing to this land and this house?’ And they will say, ‘Because they abandoned Yahweh the God of their ancestors, who brought them out from the land of Egypt, and they took hold of other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore he has brought on them all of this calamity.’” vv. 19-22</p>

Consider the meaning of these verses in their original location in 1 Kgs 9:1-9.

Verses 1-3 provide an introduction to a theophany, in which Yahweh acknowledges Solomon’s prayer and assures him that Yahweh’s name, his eyes, and his heart will abide in the temple forever or for all time (v. 3). A second paragraph (vv. 4-5) provides a conditional dynastic promise, that holds David up as a model and assures Solomon of the perpetual character of the dynastic promise. The third paragraph (vv. 6-9) changes the focus dramatically and predicts the negative behavior of king, people, and future

generations. The pronoun “you” is plural in Hebrew, addressed to Solomon and his non-royal contemporaries, as well as their descendants. It warns against apostasy, particularly in regard to what we would call the first commandment, and threatens that such apostasy would lead to exile and to the destruction of the temple.

The Chronicler took over this theophany from 1 Kings 9 in 2 Chr 7:12-22, expanded it, made some additional changes and radically redirected its focus. The first paragraph begins with the introductory paragraph from Kings, but then inserts within it a major paragraph that outlines what pious Israelites should do in case of national calamity. I have entitled this additional paragraph the Positive Response of the People. While this paragraph is cast as a divine oracle, it is in fact the Chronicler's own viewpoint. In the temple prayer itself, in 2 Chronicles 6, Solomon had mentioned a variety of possible disasters that might occur, including, defeat in war and exile, but in this new additional paragraph the Chronicler only mentions the kinds of natural dangers that faced the community of his day—drought, locusts, and pestilence. In case of such calamities, Yahweh urges the people to 1) humble themselves, 2) pray, 3) seek the deity's face, and 4) turn from their evil doings. That is, they are not to just pray in or toward the temple, as Solomon had urged in 2 Chronicles 6, but they are to participate fully in a transformed religious life. These four virtues crop up time and again in the balance of the Chronicler's narrative.<sup>3</sup> In this paragraph inserted by the Chronicler in ch. 7, the emphasis is exclusively on the people and the temple, there is not a word about the responsibility of the king.

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<sup>3</sup> Humble themselves: Rehoboam, the northern tribes of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun, Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Josiah.

Pray: Hezekiah and Manasseh

Seek Yahweh's face: the faithful at the time of Rehoboam, Asa, and Jehoshaphat

Turn: Asa, Hezekiah.

By the time of the Chronicler the post-exilic community had existed for a century and a half with a fully functioning temple but without a king. If the Chronicler had felt any need for the reinstatement of the monarchy, he would have had to make a strong case for it. Instead, his additional paragraph in 2 Chronicles 7 puts the onus of responsibility exclusively on the people. Yahweh promises to forgive and to heal provided that Israel itself humbles itself, prays, seeks Yahweh's face, and repents. The promise in this programmatic verse is that there will always be forgiveness and healing for those who wholeheartedly participate in Israel's religious life and in the temple's worship.

When the Chronicler rejoins the text of 1 Kings 9 in v. 16, after his inserted paragraph, the emphasis is on the permanence of Yahweh's commitment to the temple—Yahweh's name will be there forever, his eyes and heart always. The Chronicler does not even include the reference in Kings to Solomon's building of the house.

The Chronicler does include in 2 Chr 7:17-18 an equivalent for 1 Kgs 9:4-5, the conditional dynastic promise to the house of David based on the king's behavior. But this conditional promise is relativized by being preceded and followed by longer paragraphs dealing with the positive and negative consequences of community behavior. The Chronicler significantly omitted the words "over Israel forever" from Kings when speaking of the monarchy.<sup>4</sup> This fits with our thesis that the Chronicler placed little or no emphasis on the reinstatement of the monarchy. While he retained both references in the previous paragraph to Yahweh's permanent residence in the temple, he deleted the

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<sup>4</sup> The other differences between Kings and Chronicles can be ignored in this discussion.

reference to permanence when it came to the house of David. In the final paragraph of 2 Chronicles 7 (vv. 19-22), he follows the text of his Vorlage fairly consistently.<sup>5</sup>

What is clear is that the Chronicler in 2 Chronicles 7 has put his emphasis on the positive and negative consequences of the behavior of the people as a whole. His call for renewal comes in his inserted paragraph, in which the king plays no role, just as the king had played no role in the period of reconstruction up to the Chronicler's time. When kings like Hezekiah are praised in the Chronicler's history, it is as religious leaders who humble themselves, pray, seek the face of Yahweh, and repent. The Chronicler seems to have had no great desire of or hope for a future king with political powers. His new psalm, 2 Chr 6:41-42, created from fragments of Psalm 132, also lacks completely the latter's messianic, hymnic emphases. Instead it prays for Yahweh to go to his place of rest in the temple, for the priests and loyal folk to receive material blessings, and for king Solomon merely to have his long prayer answered: "Yahweh God, do not refuse your anointed one."

The Chronicler's emphasis in this context on the importance of the temple and on the behavior of his audience, the people in general, is composed by citations from three psalms and a passage from 1 Kings 9. But in both cases he transformed the meaning of the earlier passages by deft editing and skilled additions and omissions. The Chronicler is a parade example of carrying out the hermeneutical assignment that summons each generation of God's people, including our own, to tell the faith of the parents in the language of and in the context of the children.

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<sup>5</sup> He deletes the words "and your descendants" since the Chronicler believed that retribution took place in each person's lifetime and there was no heaping up of guilt, as in the Deuteronomistic History.