


Psalm 5 and the polarity between those who may stand before Yahweh and those who may not

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Psalm 5 is often described as an example of a prayer of someone who has been falsely accused of wrongdoing. Based on the contents of the middle part of the psalm, its wisdom features and especially the parallels it forms with Psalm 1, it is argued in this article that the editors of the Psalter attempted to present the psalm as a prayer of David at the time of his flight from Absalom. In this prayer of the endangered king, he (prophetically) pronounced judgement on the actions and attitudes of his opponents and respectfully entrusted himself to the care of Yahweh. In its literary context, the psalm was therefore probably meant to censure arrogant and irreligious compatriots of the editors, because they exploited fellow Jews, and also to provide hope and encouragement to those exploited members of the in-group.

Introduction

Psalm 5 is often considered to constitute a prayer for help in a legal dispute where the suppliant has been falsely accused of some or other offence and now strives for divine vindication.¹ From the wording of Psalm 5:4b, 'in the morning, I will present my case to you – and I will wait (בקר אערך-לך) (ואצפה)', it is typically inferred in such an interpretation² that the suppliant is in the temple precinct, bringing (or planning to bring) a sacrifice and reciting this psalm as a prayer for help from Yahweh. From the promised access to the temple (vv. 5–7) he draws hope (v. 8) and prays for a judgement from God in his favour 'in the morning' (vv. 9–11). According to this interpretation, the suppliant then praises Yahweh in verses 12–13 in optimistic anticipation of the expected salvation.

In their 1993 commentary, Hossfeld and Zenger rightly question whether the terse formulation of verse 4 quoted above can be burdened with such a precise temporal and local extrapolation (Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:63). According to them, the verbal forms of verse 4 imply that the worshipper *simultaneously* presents his prayer and sacrifice – he presents his legal problem in the morning and looks forward to Yahweh's legal help, which would not come *only* by way of a divine judgement in the temple but could include various possibilities of implementation of divine justice in the day-to-day life of the suppliant (Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:63).³ The two references to 'morning' simply evoke the 'morning motif' of the sun god's appearance with its legal-social implication of being saved from legal distress 'in the morning', as this motif had been transferred to Yahweh.⁴ Hossfeld and Zenger nevertheless maintain the view that a legal dispute gave the impetus for the composition of the psalm.⁵

It is indeed true that there are cultic echoes in Psalm 5, but Hossfeld and Zenger also note parallels with the so-called entrance liturgies to the temple in Psalms 15 and 24; a fair number of similarities in form and contents with Psalm 17; and wisdom motifs such as the inclination to instruction in some of the pronouncements about Yahweh (within a *prayer* directed to him), the doctrine of retribution reflected in verses 11 and 12 and wisdom language such as to 'listen attentively' (הִיף קִשָּׁב) *hif* in v. 3), the

1.To name a few exegetes: Kraus (1978:175), Seybold (1996:40) and Weber (2001:63). Weiser (1962:123) simply classifies it as an 'individual lament' according to its 'form and subject-matter'. Anderson (1972:81) also says it is an individual lament or else a prayer of a falsely accused man. Mowinkel (2014:808) considers Psalm 5 to be a 'sin-offering psalm', which served as a prayer for one who needed cleansing from the effects of sorcerers and demons. There are also those who express doubt that the psalm was intended for such a purpose, for example, Terrien (2003:105). Goldingay (2006:127) asserts that there are no pointers to a specific speaker or context for which it was designed. Prinsloo (1998:629, n. 9) lists the authors who describe the psalm as an individual lament (with some variation, such as that it approaches the quality of a psalm of confidence or of innocence; cf. also Prinsloo 1998:629, n. 10).

2.The description of such a reconstructed cultic interpretation is copied here from Hossfeld and Zenger (1993:63).

3.Van der Ploeg (1973:51–52) has expressed similar precautions against considering the psalm only understandable in the context of a legal case being heard in the temple area.

4.According to Hossfeld and Zenger (1993:63), it is evident in such texts as Genesis 19:15; Hosea 6:5; Zephaniah 3:5; Isaiah 51:4; Psalm 37:6, 101:8; and Job 38:12–15.

5.Hossfeld and Zenger (1993:63): *Der Beter legt am Morgen seine Rechtsnot dar und hält Ausschau nach JHWHs Rechtshilfe ...* The basis for the plea of the psalmist to be granted justice is, in their view, the supplication at the right point in time and his own cultic suitability (cf. Hossfeld and Zenger 1993:66).

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TABLE 1: The stichometric segmentation of Psalm 5.

Stanza	Strophe	Verse	Hebrew	Translation
		1	לְמַנְצַח אֶל־הַנְּחִילֹת מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:	¹ To the music director, for playing with flutes. A Psalm of David.
I	A	2a	אָמְרֵי הַאֲנָנִהוּ יְהוָה	² Please give ear to my words, Yahweh ,
		b	בְּיָמֶה הַגִּיגִי:	consider my sighing.
		3a	הַקְשִׁיבָה לְקוֹל שׁוֹעִי	³ Please listen attentively to my cry for help,
		b	מֶלֶכִי וְאֱלֹהֵי	my king and my God ,
		c	כִּי־אֶלֶיךָ אֶתְפָּאֵל:	for to you I pray.
		4a	יְהוָה בַּקֹּר תִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי	⁴ Yahweh , in the morning you will hear my voice,
		b	בַּקֹּר אֶעֱרֹךְ לְךָ וְאֶצְטַח:	in the morning, I will present my case to you – and I will wait.
II	B	5a	כִּי לֹא אֱלֹהֵי־תִפְזִיז רִשְׁעוֹ אַתָּה	⁵ For you are not (–) a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, (–)
		b	לֹא יִגְדַּח רָע:	evil (–) does not dwell with you. (–)
		6a	לֹא יִתְצַבְּרוּ הַלֵּלִים לְעֵינֶיךָ עֲיִיבֹד	⁶ Boastful people (–) will not stand before your eyes, (–)
		b	שִׂנְאֶתָּה כָּל־פְּעֻלֵי אָוִן:	You hate (–) all the workers of iniquity. (–)
		7a	תִּשְׁמַד דַּבְּרֵי כָזָב	⁷ You destroy (–) those who speak lies, (–)
		b	אִישׁ־דַּמְיִם וּמְרַמֵּה וּמְרַמֵּה יִמְעַבֹּד יְהוָה:	Yahweh abhors (–) the deceitful (–) shedder of blood. (–)
		8a	וְאַנִּי בְּרַב רַחֲמֶיךָ אֶבֹּא בֵּיתְךָ	⁸ But I, through the abundance of your mercy (+), I will come to your house, (+)
		b	אֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶל־הַיְיִכָּל־אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּיִרְאָתָּה:	I will bow down (+) towards your holy temple (+) with awe for you. (+)
		9a	יְהוָה נְהַנֵּי בַצְדִּיקְךָ	⁹ Yahweh , lead me (+) in your righteousness (+)
		b	לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרֵי	for the sake of my opponents;
		c	הַיִּשָּׁר לְפָנַי דֹּרְכֶךָ:	straighten your way (+) before me. (+)
III	D	10a	כִּי אֵין בְּפִיהֶם כְּבוֹנָה מִרְבֵּם תְּנוּת	¹⁰ Indeed, there is nothing trustworthy (–) in their mouth; their inner parts are destruction, (–)
		b	הַכְרִי־תִיחֵם גְּרוֹגְגִם	their throat is an open grave, (–)
		c	לְשׁוֹנָם יַחֲלִימוּן:	they flatter (–) with their tongue.
		11a	הִשְׁמַטֵּם אֱלֹהִים	¹¹ Declare them guilty (–) O God ,
		b	וּפְלוֹ מִמְצַוֹתֵיכֶם	let them fall (–) by their own counsels.
		c	בְּרַב גְּשׁוּעֵיכֶם הִדְחֵמוּ	Because of the abundance of their transgressions (–) drive them out, (–)
		d	כִּי־גִירוּ בְּךָ:	for they have rebelled (–) against you.
		12a	וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ כָּל־סוֹסֵי כָּה לְעוֹלָם	¹² But let all those who take refuge (+) in you rejoice forever, (+)
		b	וְרָנְנוּ וְתַסַּח עֲלֵימוֹ	let them sing for joy (+), and make them inaccessible, (+)
		c	וְיִשְׂמְחוּ בְּךָ אֲהַבֵּי שְׁמִי:	that those who love your name (+) may exult. (+)
		13a	כִּי־אֲמַתֶּה תִּבְרַךְ צְדִיק	¹³ For you bless (+) the righteous, (+)
		b	יְהוָה כְּצִנֵּה רִצּוֹן תַּעֲטֶרנִי:	Yahweh , you surround (+) him with favour (+) as with a shield. (+)

'sigh' (הגיג in v. 2) of the suppliant and the verb 'to set out in order' (ערך in v. 4; cf. Job 33:5; 37:19) (Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:63). Despite the mix between cultic echoes and wisdom features, they view Psalm 5, like Psalm 17, as the supplication of an individual with integrated lament.⁶

This article, in contrast, attempts to interpret Psalm 5 as a composition on its own, not primarily as a prayer of someone who is being prosecuted slanderously. It then explores parallels with the 'prologue' of the Psalter (Ps 1–2) in order to define its present *literary* purpose. As part of the first group of Davidic prayers in Psalms 3 through 7, the editors also seem to have intended it to be read as a prayer of 'King David' during the time when he fled from Absalom. In such a literary context, the hermeneutic horizon permits a different understanding. It is argued, based on (especially) the parallels with Psalm 1, that the psalm reflects polarisation within the post-exilic community in which the editors worked. Certain unscrupulous members of the Jewish community seem to have exploited their compatriots and to have acted with arrogant disdain for the injunctions of Yahweh's Torah. Psalm 5, it would seem, pronounces a

judgement over these compatriots and intends to encourage a faithful minority by emphasising the advantages and privileges of respectful obedience to the Torah.

Textual and literary analysis of Psalm 5

See Table 1.

Notes on the text and translation

4a There is no reason to change תשמע into an imperative in order to continue the series of imperatives in verses 2–3.⁷

9c The *Qere* reading הישר, a *hiph'il* imperative of ישר, is followed.

The segmentation and argumentative thrust of Psalm 5

The segmentation suggested in the representation above concurs with that of Gert Prinsloo (1998:629). It also coincides with the analysis of Pieter Van der Lugt (2006:119), although

6. *Beide Psalmen sind Bittgebete des einzelnen mit integrierter Klage* (Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:64). The heading for their comments on Psalm 5 describes it as *Morgengebet um Rechtshilfe* [a morning prayer for legal assistance] (Hossfeld & Zenger 1993: 63).

7. Craigie and Tate (2004:84) do not change the text but translate the form as an imperative.

TABLE 2: A summary of the structure and contents of Psalm 5.

Stanza	Strophe	Verses	Description
I	A	2–3	An earnest <i>supplication</i> to Yahweh to <i>listen</i> to the suppliant's prayer.
		4	A <i>declaration of trust</i> that Yahweh will listen.
II	B	5–7	Motivation for the trust in the form of a description of <i>Yahweh's character</i> in which the character of the opponents is criticised: Yahweh <i>does not tolerate</i> wicked people or criminals: (-) × (-) = (+).
		8	A <i>declaration of trust</i> that the suppliant, in contrast to the wicked people and criminals, <i>will be granted access</i> to the temple: (+) × (+) = (+).
	9	A <i>supplication</i> to be led on <i>Yahweh's way</i> (+) × (+) = (+).	
III	D	10	A description of the <i>sins</i> committed by the <i>evildoers</i> through speech: (-).
		11	A <i>supplication</i> to Yahweh to declare the transgressors guilty and drive them out: (-) × (+) = (-).
	E	12	An inverse <i>supplication</i> to Yahweh to <i>protect</i> those who seek refuge in him and give them joy: (+) × (+) = (+).
		13	A <i>declaration of trust</i> that Yahweh will <i>bless and protect</i> the righteous: (+) × (+) = (+).

he reads verse 6a as two stichs and takes verse 6b together with verse 7a as a separate distich.⁸ Van der Lugt (2006:118) describes the contents of the psalm simply as the prayer of an individual according to which the righteous will dwell in God's presence and the evildoers will disappear. There are a few supplicatory sections (vv. 2–3, 9 and 11–12), but the psalm also contains verses that could justifiably be described as declarations of trust (vv. 4, 8 and 13), interspersed between descriptions of the *character and actions of evildoers* (vv. 5–7, offered in the form of a motivation for the trust on the basis of *Yahweh's character*; see also vv. 10 and 11d). These descriptions of the evildoers constitute, as it were, the dark background against which the favour and grace of Yahweh for the righteous are highlighted (see Table 2).

Beat Weber's (2001:62) segmentation of strophes (IA, 2–4; IB, 5–7; IIA, 8–9; IIB, 10; IIC, 11; III, 12–13) also agrees with this segmentation, but he finds a division in stanzas (not only strophes) between verses 7 and 8 and verses 10 and 11. In his view, verses 8 and 9 form the centre of the psalm. The structure proposed here demarcates stanza I as an introductory prayer.⁹ Stanza II states that Yahweh cannot associate with or tolerate wicked people or evildoers (strophe B, with six sets of double negatives) but that the suppliant (in contrast) will be granted access to his temple (strophe C, with two sets of words with a positive connotation). The suppliant also requests that Yahweh will lead him in his way for the sake of his opponents. His innocence is implied rather than claimed. Stanza III explains how the evildoers bring people to ruin with their words and asks Yahweh to drive them out (presumably from his presence) (strophe D) but to protect the righteous and give them joy in contrast (strophe E).

The dominant theme is therefore the contrast between the *actions* of evildoers (vv. 5–7; 10), which render them unacceptable before Yahweh, with the *favour* given to the righteous or sought by them (vv. 8–9; 12–13; in a chiasmic arrangement in these two sets) and the privileges and protection they will enjoy as a consequence. It is significant that the psalmist never asserts his own righteousness but instead extols *the righteousness of Yahweh* (vv. 5–7; 9) and the

8.This may have been the original form, but it refutes the Masoretic punctuation.

9.See also Van der Lugt (2006:118). The name Yahweh forms an inclusion (2a; 4a) and four words from the semantic field of 'listening' separates verses 2 through 4 from the rest of the psalm. Van der Ploeg (1973:52) considers verses 1 through 4 a 'lament', possibly because of the expression הִגִּיעַ [a whispered lament] in verse 2b.

protection he grants to the righteous (v. 13). The psalmist has an earnest desire that Yahweh will expose the wicked, and we know that they are his 'opponents' (9b), but nowhere does he assert that the opponents' actions have affected him directly.¹⁰ This poses the question whether the psalm can be described as a typical lament¹¹ and whether it really fits the generally accepted setting of the psalm as a prayer of someone who has been falsely accused of wrongdoing. It rather seems to express frustration with the unrestrained arrogance with which some members of society take advantage of others and asks Yahweh to expose and expel them.

What are the transgressions of which the opponents are directly or indirectly accused? These include 'wickedness' (5, רשע); 'evil' (5, רע); 'being boastful' (6, הלל); 'doing iniquity' (7, פועלי-עון); 'voicing lies' (7, דברי כזב); 'shedding blood' (7, איש-דמים); 'being or acting deceitful' (7, מרמה); people who have nothing 'trustworthy in their mouths' (10, אין כוונה בפייהו); whose 'inner parts are destruction' (10, קרבם הוות); whose throat is, metaphorically speaking, an 'open grave' (קבר-פתוח 10, גרונם); and who 'flatter with their tongue' (10, לשונם יחליקו); They are further accused of harbouring 'counsels' (11, מעצות); of having an 'abundance of transgressions' (11, רב פשעיהם); and of having 'rebelled' (11, מרו) against Yahweh.

What does the author of Psalm 5 ask and how does he do it?

The most conspicuous feature of Psalm 5 is probably the polarity between the two strophes (B and C) of stanza II. Strophe B not only describes the characteristics of the out-group but does so with a strong appeal to the *righteousness* of Yahweh, arguing that Yahweh's holiness could not tolerate the presence of certain classes of sinners, criminals and arrogant people. The focus in strophe B is therefore primarily on *Yahweh's righteousness* and secondarily on the people with whom he cannot have communion. However, such a description of Yahweh's incompatibility with certain classes of people without doubt serves to pronounce a judgement on

10.Hossfeld and Zenger (1993:64) say that the legal crisis [*Rechtsnot*] of the psalmist must be inferred from the few concrete indications, referring to Psalm 5:7 and 10. Wilson says that the phrases used in verses 10 and 11 that the psalmist is suffering malicious attacks and false accusations, but this does not seem to be the case. See Wilson (2002:168).

11.Van der Ploeg (1973:51) remarks that Psalm 5 is usually reckoned among the laments.

them.¹² This judgement comes later in Psalm 5:11 where the psalmist asks Yahweh to ‘declare them guilty’.

Stanza II and strophe B (vv. 5–7) are demarcated from stanza I and strophe A by the noun ‘a God’ [אל] and the strategically placed second person pronoun ‘you’ [אתה] at the end of verse 5a. The name *Yahweh* in verse 7b forms an inclusion with this, demarcating the end of strophe B. Strophe C is similarly demarcated from strophe B with the first person singular pronoun and an adversative *waw*, ‘But I’ (ואני, v. 8a) at its beginning and a repetition of the name *Yahweh* at the beginning of verse 9 to demarcate the end of the stanza. Although strophe B is about Yahweh’s incompatibility with evildoers, polarity is formed between the unacceptability of *these classes of people* in strophe B and the acceptability of the *suppliant* in strophe C, because the suppliant is referred to six times in this strophe by the personal pronoun, two first person imperfect forms and three first person pronominal suffixes. At the same time, however, *Yahweh* is referred to nine times in strophe C (in comparison to the six times in strophe B). The theme of the two strophes can thus be described as the (*in*)compatibility of specific people with Yahweh’s presence. Yahweh’s *righteousness* is specifically mentioned in verse 9a in the context of the opposition between the suppliant and his opponents, with the implication that all those groups of people mentioned in strophe B also qualify as his personal enemies.

Strophe B is constructed particularly artistically: Three *negative* statements about Yahweh’s *incompatibility* with unsavoury people are followed by three parallel *positive* statements about Yahweh’s *active rejection* of the same group of people. In each of these six statements, two negative values or connotations therefore combine to form a positive pronouncement: $(-) \times (-) = (+)$. The transition between the two sets does not coincide with the transition between verses, and this forms a kind of disjunction between the two halves of verse 6 (lending support to Van der Lugt’s demarcation mentioned above) (see Table 3).

There is progression from the first set of three statements to the second set, because to *not associate* with certain people develops into descriptions of Yahweh’s *positively* ‘hating’, ‘destroying’ and ‘abhorring’ this class of characters.

In strophe C, no mention is made of the expected claim to innocence or righteousness of the suppliant. Instead, the focus is still on the *holiness* and *righteousness* of Yahweh: His holiness comes into play through the mention of the privilege to enter his ‘house’ (v. 8a) and the parallel reference to his ‘holy temple’ (v. 8b), which, as the reader knows from strophe B, is not accessible to wicked people (see Table 4).

12. As Loader remarks about a similar list of abominations in Proverbs 6:16–19, it is not necessary for the list to have a conclusion about the negative consequences to which the actions will lead: ‘The fact that Yahweh loathes them delivers adequate judgement because it means that such things are incompatible with his being’. See Loader (2014:269).

TABLE 3: Yahweh’s intolerance of the wicked and his rejection of their evil deeds.

Verse	Yahweh	Rejection	Groups of people
5a	<u>You</u> are a <u>God</u>	who does not (–) take <i>pleasure</i> (תפִּיץ)	in wickedness (רִשָׁע) (–)
5b	with <u>you</u>	it does not (–) <i>dwell</i> (יָגֵר)	evil (–) (רָע)
6a	before <u>your eyes</u>	they will not (–) <i>stand</i> (יָצַב <i>hitp</i>)	boastful people (–) (הִלֵּל)
6b	<u>You</u>	hate (–)	all workers of iniquity (–)
7a	<u>You</u>	destroy (–) (אָבַד <i>nk</i>)	those who speak lies (–)
7b	<u>Yahweh</u>	abhors (–)	the deceitful (–) shedder of blood (–)

TABLE 4: Yahweh’s graceful acceptance of the righteous.

Verse	Suppliant	Description	Extension
8a	But I	will enter your house	<i>through</i> the abundance of <u>your mercy</u>
8b	I	will bow down towards <u>your holy temple</u>	in <u>the fear of you</u>
9a	Yahweh, lead me	in <u>your righteousness</u>	9b <i>for the sake of my enemies</i>
9c	straighten	<u>your way</u>	<i>before me</i>

Although there is a polarity between the incompatibility of Yahweh with the various kinds of evildoers described in strophe B and the compatibility of the suppliant with him described in strophe C, the focus still is on Yahweh: *His* house can be accessed through *his* mercy; in the direction of *his* holy temple is where the suppliant will bow in *his* fear; *he* must lead the suppliant in *his* righteousness and *he* must straighten *his* way before the psalmist. Entrance for the suppliant to the temple is not because of *his* own holiness but through the ‘abundance’ of Yahweh’s ‘mercy’ (v. 8a), a probable allusion to the ‘formula of grace’ in Exodus 34:6 and Numbers 14:18. The last-mentioned verse explains the ‘abundance of mercy’ as resulting in Yahweh’s willingness to forgive ‘iniquity and transgression’ [עָוֹן וּפְשָׁע]. The ‘transgressions’ [פְּשָׁע] of the opponents are specifically mentioned later in verse 11c in the phrase ‘the abundance of their transgressions’ [רַב־רַב פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם]. The ‘abundance of mercy’ of Yahweh is thus not available or effective for the ‘abundance of transgressions’ of the opponents.

A striking feature of strophe C is the rhyme that is created by using nouns with possessive suffixes all referring to Yahweh: חֶסֶדְךָ, בֵּיתְךָ, הַיְכָל־קִדְשֶׁךָ, בִּירְאָתְךָ, בְּצַדִּיקְךָ, דְּרֹכְךָ. ‘Your fear’ is an objective genitive (‘the fear due to you’), while ‘your righteousness’ is a subjective genitive, ‘the fact that Yahweh is righteous’. All that the suppliant says about his own character is that his transgressions are implied to have been forgiven, that he is full of respect for Yahweh and that he would like Yahweh to demonstrate his righteousness by guiding him through life in the presence of his opponents. Verse 9c possibly entails that Yahweh will make the life of the suppliant a little easier in view of the fact that his opponents obstruct his progress. This can be inferred from the request that Yahweh will ‘lead’ him ‘for the sake of his opponents’ but also from the contents of strophe D, which focuses on one aspect of the transgressions of the opponents, namely their ability to destroy people with

their words.¹³ The reference to their ‘mouth’ and their ‘inner parts’ in parallel indicate the source of the deception that comes from their mouths. The intention of their ‘inner parts’, their plans, is revealed through the untrustworthy nature of the words in their mouth. Verse 10b contains a metaphor, comparing ‘their throat’ to an open grave. The implication is again that death lurks inside, and this is explained in verse 10c as the flattering they do with their tongue. They flatter to deceive and they deceive to kill. Verse 11 then summarises the transgressions of the opponents by mentioning their ‘counsels’ [מעצותיהם] with which they ‘transgress’ and which constitute ‘rebellion’ against Yahweh [כי מרו בך]. Three acts of judgement are requested from Yahweh for this: That God would ‘declare them guilty’; that they would ‘fall by their own counsels’, thus into the trap that they have set for others through their words; and that they be ‘driven out’.

Strophe E contains a supplication that the righteous people would experience joy and the protection of Yahweh (v. 12) but also a motivation for this in the form of a declaration of trust that Yahweh typically does these things (v. 13). The request for joy is repeated three times: Yahweh should make them ‘rejoice forever’; he should ‘let them sing for joy’; and he should cause them to ‘exult’. The psalmist also asks Yahweh to ‘fence off’ or ‘make inaccessible’ (על סכך *hifil*; like when Moses ‘screened off’ the Ark of the Covenant)¹⁴ those who take refuge in him in verse 12b. This image is possibly meant to recall the access that the righteous persons have to the presence of Yahweh, while the wicked are shut out.

The righteous are described here with two characteristics: They are those who ‘take refuge’ in Yahweh (12a) and those who ‘love’ his name (12c). This latter formula sounds like a description from a late phase of post-exilic Yahwism. The motivation for the requests for joy and protection of the righteous reminds the reader of the beginning of strophe B, because both begin with the causal conjunction ‘for’ [כי] and both contain the personal pronoun ‘you’ [אתה] in an address to Yahweh. As in strophe B, the character of Yahweh is also described in verse 13. However, in contrast to strophe B, where his *abhorrence* of criminals is described, verse 13 describes Yahweh’s *care* for the righteous: He ‘blesses’ him [כי בך] and he ‘covers’ or ‘surrounds’ [עטר] him with ‘favour’ [רצון] as with a shield. This simile suggests that Yahweh’s ‘favour’ or ‘delight’ [רצון] acts like the ‘long’ or ‘body shield’ [צנה] and does that which the psalmist asks for in verse 12b, namely to ‘screen off’ the righteous.

Prinsloo (1998:637) correctly summarises the parallel structure between strophes B and C with strophes D and E as follows:

a A (2a–4b) Prayer by a righteous sufferer	b ¹ D (10a–11d) Destruction of the wicked
b B (5a–7b) No place for the wicked	c ¹ E (12a–13b) Protection of the righteous.
c C (8a–9b) Always a place for the righteous	

13. ‘Transgressions’ in verse 11c is parallel to ‘counsels’ in verse 11b and this refers to what they do through speech.

14. See Exodus 25:20.

Psalm 5 as a literary composition intended to reflect the ideology of Psalms 1 and 2 and the character of David in Psalms 3 and 4

Could Psalm 5 possibly be the supplication of someone who has been falsely accused and who now approaches Yahweh (or his temple officials) for help? Psalm 5:4 *does* refer to the suppliant’s ‘presenting his case’ in the ‘morning’ and ‘waiting’ for a response. This ‘presenting’ could also refer to the arrangement of the *arguments* of the psalmist, however, and does not necessarily imply an accompanying *sacrifice*. It is also true that the psalmist lists ‘lies’ as one of the sins of his opponents (v. 7) and goes on to explicate their false statements (v. 10a), which could destroy and kill (v. 10a–b) because they ‘flatter’ (הלך *hif*, v. 10c). ‘Lies’ and ‘false’ statements fit in with the idea of someone falsely accused but ‘flattering’ does not. Proverbs 29:5, however, indicates that ‘flattering’ should be interpreted within a context of deception with the purpose to defraud someone.¹⁵

The transgressions of the opponents are, however, described in the first place not as a transgression against the psalmist but as offensive to Yahweh because of his *holiness* (he ‘hates’ it and ‘abhors’ it). These sins constitute a comprehensive list of abominations rather than specific charges of deceit as one would expect from a person falsely accused. The suppliant does not ask but confidently states that people who commit these sins would be denied access to Yahweh. His own innocence also does not seem a matter of concern to him, but he seems to focus rather on the safety and happiness of *all* the members of the in-group. The juxtaposition of verses 11 and 12 could suggest that the joy of the righteous would be greatest when these people who rebel against Yahweh are declared guilty, punished by their own schemes and ‘driven out’.

However, what seems to be a more important objection against a strict cultic interpretation are the traces of wisdom thinking in the psalm and the similarities Psalm 5 has with Psalm 1. A list of things that constitute ‘abominations’ to Yahweh is a specific characteristic of Proverbs.¹⁶ Psalm 5 seems, as a matter of fact, to have been composed (or extensively edited) to display similarities with Psalm 1 as well as links with Psalm 2, so that one could say it was groomed for exactly this position in the Psalter. If this is the case, then exegetes will have to rethink the current views on its date of origin and the time when the ‘prologue’ was attached to the first cluster.

Gianni Barbiero (1999:76–77) has noted and neatly tabulated the various connections between Psalm 5 and Psalm 1. He has noted the links between the ‘wicked people’ [רשעים] in

15. Proverbs 29:5, ‘A man who flatters his neighbour is spreading a net for his footsteps’.

16. See Proverbs 11:1, 20; 12:22; 15:8; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10; 29:9. The list is provided by Loader (2014:269, n. 46). In four of these verses (Pr 11:1, 20; 12:22 and 15:8), the ‘abomination’ is contrasted with something that is a ‘delight’ [רצון] to Yahweh. Note Psalm 5:13b for Yahweh’s רצון.

Psalms 1:1, 4, 5 and 6 and 'wickedness' [רשע] in Psalm 5:5; the 'counsel of the wicked' [עצת רשעים] in 1:1 and 'their counsels' [those of the wicked, מעצותיהם] in 5:11; the 'delight' [הפנ] of the righteous in 1:2 and Yahweh's lack of 'delight' in wickedness in 5:5; the 'righteous persons' [צדיקים] in 1:5 and 6 and the 'righteous person' [צדיק] in 5:13; the fact that the road of the wicked will 'perish' [אבד] in 1:6 and the note that Yahweh will 'destroy' [אבד *pi*] the liars in 5:7; and the two instances of 'road' [דרך] in 1:6 and the reference to Yahweh's 'road' [דרך] in 5:9. He says that the road imagery that characterises Psalm 5 reminds one of Psalm 1, where the two roads, those of the רשעים and צדיקים, are introduced programmatically and he then states that the judgement about which Psalm 1:5 speaks finds place in Psalm 5 at the door of the temple (Barbiero 1999:76). He thus sees an editorial linking of the two psalms but would probably not go so far as to claim that the author of Psalm 5 alludes to Psalm 1.

To the reader who is acquainted with Psalm 1, the parallels between Psalms 1 and 5 seem more than superficial or coincidental. The three statements about things and people with which Yahweh has *no association* in Psalm 5:5ab and 6a are strongly reminiscent of the three groups of people with which the 'blessed person' of Psalm 1:1 has *no association* (see Table 5).

In addition to the threefold repetition of the negative particle לא and its intention to emphasise the *lack of communion* with certain sins or persons committing them, the ideas of 'wickedness' [רשע and רשעים], 'standing' [עמד and יצב *hitp*], 'dwelling' [ישב and יושב], 'scorners' or 'arrogant people' [לצים and הוללים]¹⁷ and 'delight' [הפנ] are so similar that coincidence can be ruled out. In fact, it seems that the author or editor of Psalm 5 made a conscious effort to refer to the opening lines of Psalm 1 without making it too obvious that he is alluding to Psalm 1. As the righteous person does not 'stand' [עמד] with sinners on the road of life,¹⁸ so arrogant people will not 'take a stand' [יצב *hitp*] before the eyes of Yahweh. As the righteous person does not 'dwell' [ישב] with scorners, so evil will not 'stay' [גור] with Yahweh. As the righteous person 'delights' in the Torah of Yahweh, so Yahweh does 'not delight' in wickedness. His delight (or 'favour', רצון), instead, is with the righteous according to Psalm 5:13.¹⁹ The opponents of Psalm 5 are later also criticised for their 'counsel'; the suppliant of Psalm 5 asks Yahweh to guide him on Yahweh's 'road' as Psalm 1 says that Yahweh 'knows' the road of the righteous; and as the road of the wicked will 'perish', according to Psalm 1:6, so Yahweh 'destroys' those who lie in Psalm 5:7a. It is difficult to imagine that these links were only later inserted by the editors of the Psalter. Psalm 5:5

17. Koehler and Baumgartner (1994–2000 entry 2293) simply list to 'be infatuated' as the meaning of the *qal* of הלל. Some element of the *po'el's* meaning must be present in the *qal*, however, and many translations of this verse and Psalm 73:3, where the form is also used, reflect this 'arrogance' or 'proudness' (e.g. the ESV and NET). Concerning the לצים, Proverbs 3:24 uses this word for 'scorners' or 'scorners' in an antithetic parallel with 'humble people'. Arrogance is therefore certainly involved.

18. And the wicked, conversely, will not 'stand up' [לא יקומו] in the gathering of the righteous (1:5).

19. See the contrast between Yahweh's תוהבה and his רצון in Proverbs 11:1, 20; 12:22; and 15:8.

TABLE 5: The similarities between Psalm 1 and Psalm 5.

Verse	Description of righteous	Verse	Description of Yahweh
1:1a	אשרייהאיש אשר לא הלך בעצת רשעים	5:5a	לא אליהפנ רשע אתה
b	ובדרך הטאים לא עמד	b	לא יצב רע
c	ובמושב לצים לא ישב	6a	לא יתמצבנהללים לנגד עיניך
2a	כי אם בתורת יהוה חפצו	-	-

through 9, the complete second stanza and possibly the whole psalm must have been composed by someone who had had access to Psalm 1.

However, Psalm 5 has also been linked by the editors to Psalm 2. Barbiero (1999:77) notes the repetition of eight words or phrases and says that the themes connecting the two psalms are primarily the connection with the temple and Zion theology and further the confrontation in both psalms with the enemies of Yahweh and his anointed. The suppliant of Psalm 5 is, after all, David, the anointed (5:1). He further states that the contrast between 2:2 and 5:6 is conspicuous: The kings of the earth 'take a stand' [יתיצבו] against Yahweh and his anointed (2:2), but 5:6 responds by stating that the wicked will not be able to 'withstand' [לא יתיצבו] Yahweh. He also refers to the exact repetition of כל־יחוסו בו from 2:12 in the phrase כל־יחוסו בכ in 5:12, in both instances at the end of the psalm. These similarities could certainly be the result of the process of editing. The link between יתיצבו in 2:2 and 5:6 may seem to cast doubt on the preceding argument that יצב has got a link with עמד in Psalm 1:1, but it is also possible that the intention was to refer to *both* Psalm 1 and Psalm 2, to the first in a thematic way and to the second by repeating an exact form of a verb. It should be remembered that both the phrases לא עמד and לא ישב in Psalm 1:1 *together* also form a polarity with לא יקומו in Psalm 1:5 (as the righteous does not 'stand' or 'sit/dwell' with the wicked, so the wicked will not 'stand up' or 'rise' in judgement or in the company of the righteous). The inability of the wicked to 'rise' in judgement in Psalm 1:5 is, in turn, directly linked to the 'uprising' of the kings and rulers in Psalm 2:2, an action that is doomed according to Psalm 1:5, and this judgement is confirmed by Psalm 5:6. In addition to the thematic links mentioned by Barbiero between Psalm 5 and Psalm 2, there is also the description of the opponents as having 'rebelled' [מרן] against Yahweh, an allusion to the rebellion in Psalm 2:2 but also to the 'uprising' [קמים] of the 'many' in Psalm 3:2.

As Psalm 1 seems to have been composed by someone with a knowledge of Proverbs, especially Pr 1–2, so Psalm 5 also reflects wisdom themes and probably also knowledge of Proverbs. Bernard Gosse (2008:59) finds specific influence of Proverbs 10:29 and 21:15 in Psalm 5:6 and further also influence of Proverbs 6:16–19 in Psalm 5:7. In particular, the seven things that Yahweh 'hates' [שנא, Pr 6:16; Ps 5:6] and 'abhors' [תועבה, Pr 6:16; cf. *pi* תעב in Ps 5:7] mentioned in Proverbs 6:16–19 show correspondence to and possible seminal influence in Psalm 5:5–7. 'Haughty eyes', a 'lying tongue' [לשון שקר], 'hands that shed innocent blood' [דם], 'a heart that devises wicked [און] plans', 'feet that run to do evil'

[רעה], 'lies' [כזבים] and the person who 'sows discord' are mentioned. The theme of Yahweh's disgust with these things and the teaching style adopted in Psalm 5:5–7 are certainly noteworthy and point at least towards a shared milieu.

However, the parallels with the Torah wisdom Psalm 1 are possibly even more important. The author of Psalm 5 probably had an example of a list of 'abominations' in Pr 6:16–19. However, the threefold *negative* formulation in Psalm 5:5–6a of things in which Yahweh *does not find delight* before the typical formulation of the list begins in verses 6b and 7 cannot be understood as anything but an obscure allusion to Psalm 1:1–2. If these parallels are correctly identified in this article, it would mean that the *purpose* of Psalm 5 was not to provide a liturgical prayer for use by someone who is innocently accused of some transgression. Its purpose would rather be to give *instruction* like Psalm 1 does. Because Yahweh's character is incompatible with (לא) the wicked and because he finds delight (ברב) (פִּי חִפְּזִי, שֹׂנֵא, תֵּעַב ברב) in the righteous (צַדִּיק), therefore the righteous will be blessed (פִּי בִרְךְ), will have communion with Yahweh in his temple (הוּהָ, בּוֹא, *hístaf*) and will experience his guidance through life (יִשְׂרָאֵל, הִיִּף, abundant joy (רִנָּה) *pi* שִׂמְחָה, רִנָּה) and Yahweh's protection (עֲטָרָה, על, עֲטָרָה).

As a prayer of 'David', who was persecuted by his son and a multitude (רבב) (Psalm 3:2, 3; 4:7) of rebels (יִצְחָק, *hitp*, Psalm 1:5; 2:2; 3:2; 5:6), Psalm 5 demonstrates his own commitment to find delight only in the presence, guidance and protection of Yahweh, because his unjust persecutors would not prevail. David's hope of returning to Jerusalem and being in the presence of Yahweh again (cf. 2 Sam 15:25) was based on his realisation that the wicked will not be tolerated in the presence of Yahweh. He could pray that the lies of his opponents be exposed, because they had not only rebelled against him, the anointed of Yahweh, but against Yahweh himself (2:2; 5:6, 11). Because he took refuge in Yahweh (2:12; 5:12), he would be screened off (3:4; 5:12, 13) and would once again rejoice and exult (4:8; 5:12) in God.

The person who composed or edited this psalm and who knew Proverbs 16 and Psalms 1–2, as well as Psalms 3–4, very well must have lived in a time when the distinction between those who were righteous and those who were wicked was not so clear. As a righteous person, who believed that Yahweh would not tolerate the exploitation of his fellow upright Jews, he composed this psalm to exhort them to faithful humility and respect for Yahweh, to trust in Yahweh because he would straighten their road of life and give them joy again, joy that probably was in short supply at the time.

Conclusion

Psalm 5:5–9 must have been composed by someone who was an accomplished poet and theologian. Psalm 5:5–7 constitutes an invective against evildoers in the style of the abomination list found in Proverbs 6:16–19 but created in such a way

that it reflects contact with and forms a parallel to Psalm 1:1–2. As a prayer of 'David' in its present position, it also displays links with Psalm 2 and fits neatly into its present position after Psalms 3 and 4. In this literary position, it constitutes an instruction to the readers of the Psalter to remember that wickedness is incompatible with the character of Yahweh and that only those who live in close association with Yahweh and his Torah will find happiness and safety.²⁰ The insincere, arrogant or irreligious members of the community who exploited their compatriots would be exposed and punished by Yahweh.

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²⁰As Craigie formulates it, 'the prayer is not only for protection from wicked persons, but also a prayer for protection from becoming like them'. See Craigie and Tate (2004:89).