



## KEEPING THE FAITHFUL: PERSUASIVE STRATEGIES IN PSALMS 4 AND 62

DAVIDA CHARNEY  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Interest in viewing the psalms as arguments has been growing. In a 2008 volume devoted to the rhetoric of the psalms, Dale Patrick and Ken Diable argue that Israelites adopted a distinctive approach within the ancient Near East when attempting to persuade God to intervene in their personal troubles.<sup>1</sup> In his 2006 book, William S. Morrow describes a development from informal to formal argumentative prayers in pre-exilic Israel and their eventual eclipse by theological developments in the late Second Temple period.<sup>2</sup> My goal in this article is to introduce elements of contemporary rhetorical theory that can uncover sophisticated argumentative strategies in the psalms, providing additional evidence for addressing long-standing scholarly disputes over setting and interpretation.

For this purpose, I will focus on two psalms, Ps 4 and Ps 62. The setting for Psalm 4 has generated some debate: Has the speaker come to the Temple seeking vindication against the false accusations of assembled opponents? Or is the speaker primarily a Temple functionary giving a wisdom-like speech against apostasy? The false accusation reading is the standard, adopted by Hans-Joachim Kraus and Richard Clifford, among others.<sup>3</sup> Anti-apostasy readings have been offered by Steven Croft, Craig Broyles, and John Goldingay.<sup>4</sup> In reviewing the debate, Rolf Jacobson shows

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<sup>1</sup> D. Patrick and K. Diable, "Persuading the One and Only God to Intervene," in R. Foster and D.M. Howard Jr. (eds.), *My Words are Lovely. Studies in the Rhetoric of the Psalms* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 19–32.

<sup>2</sup> W.S. Morrow, *Protest Against God. The Eclipse of a Biblical Tradition* (Sheffield: Phoenix, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 1-59* (trans. H.C. Oswald; CC; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1988). R. Clifford, *Psalms 1-72* (AOTC; Nashville: Abdingdon, 2002), 52–55.

<sup>4</sup> S.J.L. Croft, *The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms* (JSOTSup, 44;

that both readings plausibly account for some but not all the contentious points of translation and interpretation.<sup>5</sup> No one takes the two readings as mutually exclusive; as Jacobson argues, there is no “altar of certitude” on which to decide among historical, theological, and canonical readings. However, seeking evidence for competing interpretations often highlights important elements within and across psalms. In this case, the debate on Ps 4 has thus far overlooked its similarity to Psalm 62.

The setting for Ps 62 has not seemed controversial; it is generally taken as a call from an individual for vindication or rescue. Kraus and Carleen Mandolfo see the speaker as an ordinary individual, one facing persecution and seeking judicial or divine protection at the sanctuary.<sup>6</sup> Croft and Dave Bland see the speaker as an embattled king seeking an oracle of safety when facing treachery or a military siege.<sup>7</sup> However, on closer examination, the case for seeing the speaker as a petitioner is actually quite weak.

In only five psalms does a speaker directly address opponents at any length: Ps 52 and Ps 58, Ps 4 and Ps 62, and Ps 82. In Ps 52 and Ps 58, the direct address takes the form of “shock and awe”: The opponents are rebuked, reminded of God’s might, and threatened with complete destruction. However, Ps 4 and Ps 62 both move beyond rebuking opponents to offering advice for returning to faithful or moral practice. Psalm 82 is unique not only because the speaker is God addressing opposing deities, but also because God both offers advice and threatens destruction. By employing two pieces of contemporary rhetorical theory, I will argue for viewing both Ps 62 and Ps 4 as public efforts by a confident speaker to persuade skeptical or immoral hearers to return to faithfulness.

## TWO PIECES OF RHETORICAL THEORY: AMPLITUDE AND IDENTIFICATION

In modern times, the scope of rhetorical theory has broadened beyond the classical venues of courts, legislatures, sanctuaries, and civic ceremonials to all situations and settings for public or professional discourse. In order for a situation to be a rhetorical situation, a speaker has to experience a sense of exigence or

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Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987). C.C. Broyles, *Psalms* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999). J. Goldingay, “Psalm 4. Ambiguity and Resolution,” *TynBul* 57 (2006), 161–72.

<sup>5</sup> R. Jacobson, “The Altar of Certitude,” in R. Foster and D. M. Howard, Jr. (eds.), *My Words Are Lovely: Studies in the Rhetoric of the Psalms* (New York: T&T. Clark, 2008), 3–18.

<sup>6</sup> C. Mandolfo, *God in the Dock: Dialogic Tension in the Psalms of Lament* (JSOTSup, 357; London: Sheffield, 2002), 18. H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150* (trans. H.C. Oswald; CC; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> Croft, *The Identity of the Individual*, 127. D. Bland, “Exegesis of Psalm 62,” *ResQ* 23 (1980), 82–95.

urgency that can be productively addressed with language.<sup>8</sup> The speaker fashions language into a spoken or written text and delivers it in such a way as to influence a set of hearers/readers who have some ability to affect the situation and perhaps ameliorate the urgency.

Much of rhetorical theory focuses on the challenges of addressing diverse audiences, a topic raised by two of the most important 20th century theorists, the Belgians Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca and the American Kenneth Burke.<sup>9</sup> Both recognized that agreement is a volatile matter of degrees, not absolutes.

In any public situation, the people in an assembly are likely to represent a wide spectrum of viewpoints. A few agree on most or all points with the speaker, some are opposed on one or two points, some are somewhat negatively disposed, and a few are outright hostile. In any given crowd, all types of hearers will be present in greater or lesser proportions, so speakers adjust their strategies accordingly. To move the preponderance of a crowd in his/her direction, a speaker may well focus on winning over a swath of those opposed on a few points rather than trying to convert the small group of hostile listeners. By standing up to opponents in public, of course, the speaker also encourages those who already agree to remain steadfast.

One useful strategy for diverse audiences is the allocation of material in a text, what Perelman calls “amplitude” and Burke calls “amplification.”<sup>10</sup> While warning against unnecessary repetition, Perelman notes that repeating a point and elaborating on it increases its presence or salience in the hearers’ minds. When addressing a mainly supportive crowd, a speaker’s main goal may

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<sup>8</sup> For discussions of whether rhetorical situations simply arise or are constructed, see L. Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 1 (1968), 1–14 and S. Consigny, “Rhetoric and Its Situations,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 7 (1974), 175–186.

<sup>9</sup> Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (trans. J. Wilkinson & P. Weaver; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969). While Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca were partners in researching and writing *The New Rhetoric*, for convenience, I will use Perelman’s name hereafter. K. Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). For a discussion of how Burke and Perelman fit into the history of rhetorical theory from classical Athens to modern times, see S.M. Halloran, “Tradition and Theory in Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62.3 (1976), 234–241. For a review of recent theory and research on audience—and Burke and Perelman’s centrality to these debates, see C. Miller and D. Charney, “Audience, Persuasion, and Argument,” in C. Bazerman (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Writing: History, Society, School, Individual, Text* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 583–598.

<sup>10</sup> Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 474. Burke, 69. For a discussion and history of amplification, see J. Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Style: The Uses of Language in Persuasion* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011).

be to strengthen the hearers' adherence by vividly rehearsing points they all agree on and emphasizing their significance. But when the goal is to move hearers, to change their beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors, the speaker must also anticipate points of disagreement. Perelman suggests accumulating many different arguments that all lead to the same conclusion, because each hearer may be susceptible to different reasons and appeals.

Most theorists have discussed amplitude in terms of the patterns with which a point can be developed and elaborated, overlooking its usefulness as an important clue for rhetorical analysis. In particular, as I have shown elsewhere, writers of public policy arguments regularly allocate the greatest proportion of total textual space to the most important and controversial points. In this article, I will show how identifying the points of greatest amplitude in each psalm helps to disambiguate the setting.

A second important persuasive strategy is creating psychological connections between the speaker and the hearers, a strategy that Perelman calls "association" and that Burke (for whom this concept is far more central) calls "identification." Identification can be positive or negative. In the positive form, the speaker heightens the interests that he/she holds in common with the hearers. In the negative form, a speaker works to turn hearers away from a rival's arguments by emphasizing conflicts between the hearers' and the rival's interests. Burke calls this "identification by antithesis" which creates "union by some opposition shared in common."<sup>11</sup> Apart from explicitly criticizing rivals, a speaker may also create dissociation by challenging the meaning of a concept, distinguishing some aspect of it as true or good and disparaging the other. In some cases, as M.A. van Rees notes, the speaker puts two seemingly similar concepts side by side, assigning positive value to one and negative value to the other.<sup>12</sup>

In the readings that follow, I will show the similar ways in which identification is deployed in Ps 4 and Ps 62. In both cases, the strategies aim to turn strayers back to faithful moral behavior.

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<sup>11</sup> K. Burke, "The Rhetorical Situation," in L. Thayer (ed.), *Communication: Ethical and Moral Issues* (New York: Routledge, 1973), 263–274.

<sup>12</sup> M. A. van Rees, "Indicators of Dissociation," in F. H. van Eemeren and P. Houtlosser (eds.), *Argumentation in Practice* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005), 53–67. Paul Krugman created this kind of dissociation in a recent op-ed article, "Boring Cruel Romantics," in the *New York Times* (20 Nov. 2011), A29. Krugman, who considers himself a "technocrat," challenges the application of the term to new leaders in Europe who implement fiscal austerity. Krugman argues that these leaders "are not technocrats. They are, instead, deeply impractical romantics."

**PSALM 4**

Ps 4 can be divided by addressee into three sections. The speaker addresses God in the frame (v. 2 and vv. 8–9) but addresses opponents in the central section, as sketched below. Clearly, the preponderance of space is devoted to the opponents. As I will show below, even the final two verses can be read as a rejoinder to opponents.

## Allocation of Space in Psalm 4

1	Superscription
2	Plea to God for attention
3	Rebuke to opponents for apostasy/false accusation
4	Advice to opponents
5	Advice to opponents
6	Advice to opponents
7	Citation of opponents' response/Expression of trust
8	Rejoinder/Expression of trust
9	Rejoinder/Expression of trust

The opening verse, v. 2, is a fairly standard invocation of God, establishing the speaker as a faithful Israelite who calls on God in times of trouble and expects to be answered. In contrast to the opening of most laments, the speaker makes no additional calls for God's attention and gives no description of the current situation. So it is plausible that the verse is setting up a charge of false accusation, but it also sets up a dramatic reversal. The assembled hearers are led to expect a lament, but the speaker instead turns and rebukes them.

The rebuke that opens the lengthy central section (vv. 3–7) comes in the form of a rhetorical question: “how long will my glory be mocked?”<sup>13</sup> A strict false accusation reading depends heavily on taking כבודי “my glory” as pertaining to the speaker's own honor or reputation because nothing else in the psalm refers to attacks on the speaker. Such attacks are described quite explicitly in other psalms assigned to the false accusation category.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, the anti-apostasy reading may read כבודי “my glory” as referring to Israel's glorious God.<sup>15</sup> The speaker follows the rebuke with an

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<sup>13</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, translations are from *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*, (2nd ed. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> For a close discussion of the criteria that should be applied to this category, see W.H. Bellinger, Jr., “Psalms of the Falsely Accused: A Reassessment,” *SBLSP* 25 (1986), 463–469. Bellinger distinguishes between false-accusation psalms where the context of a judicial proceeding seems justified (Pss 7, 17, and 27) from apparent cases where opponents seem merely to be engaging in malicious gossip (Pss 31, 64, and 28). Only the former include uses of legal language and forms: self-imprecation, appeals for acquittal, and oaths; references to a “just cause”; and verbs of testing and trying.

<sup>15</sup> See references in fns. 4–5 for a detailed review of these options.

extended effort to persuade opponents to return to faithful observance and a specific process for doing so.

The first step of this process, in v. 4, is reminiscent of contemporary self-help programs: asking hearers to admit that they have a problem in lacking God's favor. The next steps are spelled out in vv. 5–6 with three pairs of imperative verbs that proceed in a logical progression: quake and refrain, speak and be still, offer and trust. The first verb in each pair is an action and the second inaction.

The first pair, “tremble, sin no more,” refers to getting out of the habit of apostasy. The verb רָגַז “quake” is found four other times in the psalms (Pss 18:9, 77:17; 19, 99:1), all of which describe the physical world exhibiting awe of God—the hills, the water, the earth. If awe of God can inspire nature to quake, then apostates can find it in their nature to do the same. Paired with quaking is the inaction of not sinning; that is, the apostate is urged to intentionally refrain from inappropriate action. The first pair, then, refers to externally manifested behavior.

The next pair are psychological steps: speaking and being still in bed, where, as Michael Barré has noted, a person is most sincere.<sup>16</sup> The image of overcoming internal debate while in bed also occurs in Ps 16:7 in which the speaker is helped by God's counsel after being lashed by his conscience (or kidneys). The speaker in Ps 4:5 is instructed to engage in this internal struggle. Pairing this struggle with an effort to become still is far from contradictory. In fact, the sense of דָּוַם “stilling” as a recovery from agitation is also posited in Ps 131:2 by P. J. Botha and H. Stephen Shoemaker.<sup>17</sup> Achieving stillness after struggling with temptation would be quite an accomplishment for apostates.

The final pair of imperative verbs, in Ps 4:6, is “offer and trust.” After feeling awe, refraining from sin, struggling with temptation, and achieving stillness, the strayer is ready to make a positive action to serve God. The emphasis on making “righteous” sacrifices may be needed for people who are partially assimilated; apostates may well have been combining practices appropriate for YHWH with those distinctly associated with foreign gods. Only purely appropriate sacrifice can lead to a final state of trust in God. The ordering of sacrifice before trust implies that practice may

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<sup>16</sup> M. Barré reviews Biblical images of conscience-stricken insomnia in “Hearts, Beds, and Repentance in Psalm 4, 5 and Hosea 7, 14,” *Bib* 76 (1995), 53–62.

<sup>17</sup> P. J. Botha, “To Honour Yahweh in the Face of Adversity: A Socio-Critical Analysis of Psalm 131,” *Skrif En Kerk* 19 (1998), 525–33. H. S. Shoemaker, “Psalm 13,” *Review & Expositor* 85 (1988), 89–94. In contrast, Barré (“Hearts, Beds,” 58–60) translates this pair of verbs as “quake” and “wail.” P. Raabe gives a helpful suggestion that the resonance of stilling and wailing enriches the effect in “Deliberate Ambiguity in the Psalter,” *JBL* 110 (1991), 213–227.

precede belief, a positioning that echoes Exod 24:7, “we will do and we will hear.”

Thus the greatest amplitude in Ps 4, the bulk of the space, is devoted to addressing opponents with a rebuke followed by a persuasive and poetic sequence of steps that strayers can follow to return to faithfulness. While it is still possible to view the speaker as a troubled petitioner, his attention is almost exclusively devoted to the future behavior of the opponents, rather than to securing rescue or vindication.

Returning to faithfulness is also promoted through the strategy of identification. The speaker uses positive identification in the framing sections by modeling appropriate behavior and referring to first-hand experiences. While v. 2 is addressed to God, it also establishes the speaker as someone **בצַר** “in dire straits,” who has suffered “distress” and who calls out to God. This is not someone whose life has gone altogether smoothly—a history that hearers of all degrees of faithfulness are likely to share. While the speaker may have been unusually successful when he has called to God (v. 2 and v. 4), being answered or relieved in times of trouble is a shared goal that they all aspire to. More shared goals are set out in vv. 8–9. The speaker is able to sleep soundly and quietly at night, in contrast to the quaking hearers in v. 5 and achieves joy in his relationship with God, a joy that may match or exceed “the good” that the hearers are seeking in v. 7. These positive forms of identification set up the speaker as someone who is enough like the hearers that they may feel motivated to reconnect with God. Thus the frame of the psalm strengthens the force of the process for returning in the central verses.

The most powerful strategy in Ps 4, however, is the use of disidentification in vv. 7–9 where the speaker pulls receptive opponents away from extremists who are characterized as greedy and irreverent. The dissociation is accomplished in part by a change in voice. Up until now, in vv. 4–6, the speaker has addressed the opponents directly using second person. He has accused all those assembled of seeking vain things and lies. But in v. 7, the voice shifts. In v. 7, the speaker figuratively points at **רבים** “the many” who are only interested in “the good(s).” The effect of the indefinite expression “many say” is like that of a school principal at an assembly announcing that many students have been sassing teachers or writing graffiti on the walls. The implication is that the culprits are present and well known to the crowd, as if the principal had said “all of you know very well who you/they are.” By referring to the worst culprits in third person, the speaker is inviting the lesser offenders to distance themselves from the habitual or extreme offenders. Then the speaker reports what the offenders are saying.

The quote should be read as extending to the end of v. 7. The extremists are not seriously asking to be shown what’s good or for the favor of God’s face but are mockingly asserting that they do



not need it; apparently, they are worshipping other gods because they have prospered materially by doing so. The indirect reference to the lifting of God's face from the Priestly Blessing (Num 6:24–26) is then an especially cheeky bit of mockery.<sup>18</sup> The key to interpreting v. 7 is that it is the speaker who is reporting the putative words of the offenders. The bolder and more irreverent the quote, the better for the speaker's goals. Hearers who have not strayed quite so far may be shocked by the mockery at the same moment as they are pushed by the pronouns to take sides, to identify with the "us" of the extremists or to see the extremists as "them" along with the upright speaker.

In the concluding two verses, Ps 4:8–9, the speaker returns to addressing God, providing the usual closing expression of praise and trust. Goldingay sees this move as the speaker, having failed to reach people with a "bad attitude," moving on to his or her own concerns, simply hoping "that God may change these people."<sup>19</sup>

But it is also possible to interpret vv. 8–9 as a rejoinder to the extremists' view. The speaker concedes in v. 8 that the apostates have gained material rewards by referring to **דגנם ותירושם** "their grain and their drink." But the speaker trumps these rewards with the greater joy he receives from communion with God. Goldingay sees the speaker's joy occurring **מעתה** at the same time that the opponents' grain and wine become abundant, emphasizing that the speaker feels joy *even when* the others seem to be rewarded. Jacobson translates **מעתה** not as "at the time of" but as a comparative "more than when," implying that the speaker's joy is greater than the joy coming from material rewards. Either way, the speaker is challenging the value of the apostates' goods.

The final verse, v. 9, with its reference to sleeping well and having peace, contrasts directly with the state prescribed for the strayers in v. 5. The reference to peace, Goldingay suggests, harkens back to the final part of the Priestly Blessing, which conveys a state of physical completeness or well-being. The speaker is not joyful in the face of deprivation, but in the expectation that God also provides sufficient material sustenance.

In sum, the speaker's persuasive power derives from the considerable space devoted to addressing and referring to the strayers, the choice and sequence of imperative verbs used to address them, as well as the use of both positive and negative strategies of identification to draw the strayers toward the speaker and away from more extreme rivals.

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<sup>18</sup> In addition to reading this phrase as mockery, Goldingay also allows a translation of it as an assertion of estrangement: "the light of your face has fled from over us" ("Psalm 4," 167). In this, he follows J. H. Eaton, "Psalm 4:7," *Theology* 67 (1964), 355–357.

<sup>19</sup> Goldingay, "Psalm 4," 170.

### PSALM 62

The speaker of Psalm 62 is generally seen as an ordinary person or an embattled king, seeking protection in a religious or judicial setting.<sup>20</sup> In this view, it is the speaker who is the subject of the attacks of the crowd, who at times feels safe in God's refuge and at times feels as weak as a tottering fence, who shifts between complaining and expressing trust. Having reached safety by the end, the speaker can indulge in a hortatory impulse to advise the opponents to give up their bad ways.

But the case for seeing the speaker as a conflicted petitioner is weak. Unlike the usual lament, Ps 62 lacks any direct second-person plea to God for rescue. While the plot in vv. 4–5 is familiar from laments in which enemies try to trap or trip up the speaker (e.g., Pss 35, 64, 140), unlike these psalms, the threat in Ps 62 lacks any first person reference—the victim is described in third person as **איש** “a man.” While **איש** might refer to the speaker, the word is not used as a self-reference in any of the 35 other psalms where it occurs. Recognizing the victim as an unnamed third party allows an alternative view that Ps 62, like Ps 4, is a public effort to persuade hearers to return to faithful, moral behavior. Rather than oscillating between trust and doubt, the speaker is consistent in modeling a sense of security while trying to protect the weak-willed from the bad influence of the opponents. To support this reading, I will again examine both the amplitude of points and the use of identification.

Space in Ps 62, as sketched below, is dominated by the speaker's expressions of trust in God as a personal refuge and rescuer at the opening, center, and closing of the psalm. The phrasing in vv. 2–3 is reformulated in vv. 6–8 to create a memorable refrain. The closing in vv. 12–13 turns from personal trust to trust that God's actions towards all are fitting. Repetition is the classic form of amplitude; here it emphasizes and re-emphasizes the speaker's security and contrasts it to the doubts and weaknesses of the others.

#### Allocation of Space in Psalm 62

1		Superscription
2	<b>אך</b>	God as refuge
3	<b>אך</b>	God as refuge
4	<b>עד אנה</b>	Direct rebuke
5	<b>אך</b>	Indirect rebuke. Selah.
6	<b>אך</b>	God as refuge
7	<b>אך</b>	God as refuge
8	<b>על</b>	God as refuge
9	<b>בטחו</b>	Process: Trust and pour out. Selah.

<sup>20</sup> Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 18; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*; Croft, *Identity of the Individual*, 127; Bland, “Exegesis of Psalm 62.”

10	אָד	Human strength/value as illusory
11	אַל	Process: Reject violence; reject robbery; reject ill-gotten gains.
12	אֲחַת	God's might
13	וּלְךָ	God's faithfulness; God's fairness.

The seven verses that express security are balanced by five verses that address opponents, with direct and indirect rebukes in vv. 4–5 and a sequence of prescriptions in vv. 9–11. As in Ps 4, the rebuke in Ps 62:4–5 opens with questions addressed to all the hearers challenging their misdeeds. Rather than apostasy, however, the hearers seem to be attacking members of the community and leading them astray. The opponents are seeking to tempt the weak-minded into unfaithful or unlawful activity—in effect pulling them down like a wall that is already leaning or fence that is already tottering.

As in Ps 4, the prescribed actions for recovery in vv. 9–11 follow a logical order. The first steps, in v. 9, are for the opponents to trust in God and pour out their hearts to God. The series of imperatives is interrupted in v. 10 with a reminder that humans lack strength, endurance, and value—the very qualities repeatedly attributed to God in the three-part frame. Gaining security from relying on God rather than humans enables the opponents to reorder their values. Accordingly, in v. 11, they are told to renounce violence, robbery, and ill-gotten gains. As in Ps 4, the underlying motive for straying turns out to be greed, an attraction to material reward. So the wisdom-like pronouncements in vv. 12–13 serve as a rebuttal. In the greater scheme of things, material gain is immaterial because God balances the accounts.

A special form of amplitude in Ps 62 is the sound pattern of the verse-initial Hebrew words, a pattern that usually goes unrepresented in translation but must have been quite striking in oral performance. The initial words of all but one verse begin with a guttural (either א or ע—the latter only twice) followed by a *pataḥ*, with אָ at the head of six verses.<sup>21</sup> These verse-initial words are remarkable in several ways.

First is their sound. A skillful speaker may draw out or cut short such sonorous openings in attention-getting ways, playing them out with drama or humor. Second the repetition sets up expectations that the speaker can and does break just at the most important moment. The string of gutturals+*pataḥ* breaks in v. 9 with the imperative בַּטְחוּ “trust” that begins with a voiced stop or plosive consonant. The break occurs at the very point instructions

<sup>21</sup> Bland, “Exegesis of Psalm 62” is one of the few commentators who note the alliteration of the vowel-initial words in the first half of the psalm as well as the adversative meaning of אָ. Jin H. Han in his recent talk “Lists with Wit in Proverbs” at the SBL meeting in Chicago (17 Nov 2012) noted similar aural uses of wit outside the psalms.

for returning to faithfulness begin, where the speaker commands the hearers to follow his own example by trusting in God. Third is their sense. Norman Snaith argues that the exclamation **וְאֵל** always carries a restrictive or adversative meaning.<sup>22</sup> He translates it as “yes but on the contrary” or “despite” or “whatever may be said to the contrary.” So while this speaker does not go as far as the speaker in Ps 4 in anticipating and responding to the opponents’ objections, the repetitions of **וְאֵל** suggest that he sees his claims as sufficient response to whatever they might say.

Identification also plays an important role in Ps 62. Viewing the psalm as a public argument against greed-induced bad behavior changes the speaker from an aggrieved victim into moral agent. The speaker also comes across as a skillful performer, by virtue of the careful balance of space, the refrains, and the sound pattern of the verses. These qualities set the speaker somewhat apart from the crowd, as someone to be admired. Yet the speaker makes many of the same gestures of positive identification as the speaker in Ps 4. The repeated declarations of security show the speaker to be successful in calling on God in times of trouble. In v. 2, the speaker alludes to previous struggles from which **דוּמְיָה נִפְשִׁי** he has achieved stillness and been rescued. He even qualifies his stability in v. 3: **לֹא אֲמוּט רַבָּה** “I won’t be moved much.” The speaker remains approachable.

The speaker’s attitude to the hearers, however, is more complex than in Ps 4. The initial rebuke for plotting against the victim is aimed at **כָּל־כָּמ** the entire crowd. The speaker does not single out the weak-willed victim for direct address in vv. 4–5; he is referred to only in third person. The victim may be a specific person, well-known to the crowd or a general type of person, some of whom may be present. But as in Ps 4, the speaker shifts to talking about the offenders in third person in Ps 62:5, again allowing for a dissociation of the worst offenders from the merely wavering. In this case, however, the most vivid and shocking charge is addressed to everyone, while the more common charges of evil intentions, lying, and hypocrisy are attributed to “them.” The dissociative effect remains the same: anyone guilty of minor charges feels singled out—but can still feel superior to others in the crowd who may be guilty of the worse offenses. The advice for recovering stability and moral values in vv. 9–11 is useful for everyone, waverers and offenders alike.

Overall, taking the speaker of Ps 62 as a confident and secure individual aiming to persuade an unruly crowd produces a coherent reading that accounts for the careful balancing of space between expressing security and addressing opponents, the contrast between God’s power and the human instability and evanescence, and the carefully designed sound pattern that heightens attention to the

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<sup>22</sup> N. H. Snaith, “The Meaning of the Hebrew **וְאֵל**,” *VOT* 14 (1964), 221–225.

command to “trust in God.” The psalm presents a unified and striking statement of communal values. As Jeffrey Walker notes in his analysis of oral poetic argument in archaic Greece, “the successful poem will offer its audience an elegant, memorable, aesthetically satisfying representation of situations and attitudes with which they more or less identify already: the audience sees itself, or its values, reflected strikingly.”<sup>23</sup>

### CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have promoted anti-apostasy readings of Pss 4 and 62. In both cases, the speakers deploy an array of persuasive strategies to persuade strayers to return to faithful behavior, a mission that the speaker in Ps 51:15 also subscribes to: “I will teach transgressors your ways that sinners may return to you.” But if the strayers are the intended hearers and the targets of the speakers’ persuasive strategies, why do Pss 4 and 62 look so much like other individual psalms, whether psalms of lament, thanksgiving or trust, where both the underlying and ostensible addressee is God? Psalm 4 both opens and closes by calling on God’s protection, as in many laments. Psalm 62 opens by expressing trust in God and closes by declaring God’s power, as in many psalms of trust. If we assume that many first-person psalms were performed in public places by talented poets and musicians, then they may have attracted audiences of many stripes. It is possible that the speakers of these psalms used the usual setting as bait to attract crowds that included many strayers, but then switched tack to address the strayers directly.

In supporting the anti-apostasy readings, I’m not intending to offer them up on the altar of certainty that Rolf Jacobson has rightly rejected. Every psalm can support a variety of readings, even those that seem mutually exclusive. My goal here rather has been to raise attention to the value of contemporary rhetorical theory for recognizing additional aspects of a psalm that should be considered when weighing the plausibility of alternative readings.

My larger project is to show the relationship of many first-person psalms to deliberative arguments in which a speaker/author attempts to persuade others to take action concerning an urgent problem. I have identified a small number of recurring stances that speakers in the psalms take vis-à-vis God and the rest of the community. These stances include: maintaining the status quo, establishing an innocent’s right of redress,<sup>24</sup> denouncing others, appealing to God’s self-interest, acting as a model for others, and convincing one’s self. From a rhetorical perspective, it becomes

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<sup>23</sup> J. S. Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 268.

<sup>24</sup> See D. Charney, “Maintaining Innocence Before a Divine Hearer: Deliberative Rhetoric in Ps. 22, Ps. 17, and Ps. 7.” *BibInt* 21 (2013).

clear that the speakers of the psalms experience a full range of emotions from satisfaction to smugness, from despair to vindictiveness. For these Israelites, the covenant is a two-way street; they are partners with God in an on-going relationship. In good times, they constantly remind themselves and God of the terms of this relationship. In times of trouble, they passionately challenge God for tolerating injustice and allowing the innocent to suffer. Overall, the speakers portray themselves as actively and critically engaged in religious practice, rather than promoting blind obedience, quietism, or complacency.