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*The Royal Wedding Reimagined: Textual Criticism
and Interpretation of Psalm 45's Superscription*

THE ROYAL WEDDING REIMAGINED: TEXTUAL CRITICISM AND INTERPRETATION OF PSALM 45'S SUPERSCRIPTION

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1 INTRODUCTION

Psalm 45 stands out due to its distinct structure. The first section (vv. 2–10, 17–18) extols a divinely blessed king, focusing on his virtues, prowess, and God's favor, while the second part (vv. 11–16) shifts to a royal wedding (*epithalamium*), describing a bride from another kingdom whose marriage ensures dynastic succession.[1] This

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[1] Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger posit that the initial section of Psalm 45 (vv. 2–10, 17–18) represents an original *Grundfassung*, originating from pre-exilic Jerusalem. According to their hypothesis, this segment functioned within coronation rituals or analogous cultic events, wherein the monarch was not venerated as a singular historical personage but rather as a conduit of divine favor. Subsequent to the cataclysmic events of the exile, emergent expressions of hope for the restoration of divine sovereignty over Israel arose, often articulated through the imagery of a messianic sovereign and his consort. Consequently, Hossfeld and Zenger contend that the latter portion of the Psalm (vv. 11–16) constitutes a later accretion, developed during the early post-exilic period. While Hossfeld underscores the king's central *rôle* in this psalm, his argument does not persuasively substantiate the claim that the "Wedding Song" (vv. 11–16) is a subsequent interpolation. However, the textual-critical methodology employed in the present article and its examination of later messianic understandings of the Psalm preclude consideration of the hypothesis regarding the Psalm's unitary or composite provenance (Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen I: Psalm 1–50*, NEchtB 29 [Würzburg: Echter, 1993], 278–79). In antithesis to this perspective, see Reettakaisa S. Salo, *Die judäsche Königsideologie im Kontext der Nachbarkulturen: Untersuchungen zu den Königspsalmen 2, 18, 20, 21, 45 und 72*, ORA 25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 163; Frank Ueberschaer, "Ich und mein König: Ps 45 als Ausdruck israelitischer Herrschaftsideologie und schreiberlichen Selbstbewusstseins," *VT* 71.4–5

psalm's grand portrayal of the king has prompted extensive histori-
cal-critical research, linking it to ancient Near Eastern contexts such
as Mesopotamian, Canaanite, and Egyptian traditions.[2] However,
scholarly efforts have failed to reach a definitive consensus on its
original *Sitz im Leben*,[3] and the precise identities of the king and his
bride remain obscure.

This Psalm has captivated exegetes and theologians alike due to
its complex textual structure, rich metaphorical language, and the in-
terpretive challenges it presents. This royal psalm exhibits an intri-
cate integration of monarchical authority, divine sovereignty, and
matrimonial imagery that sets it apart within biblical literature.[4] Its
reception history spans Jewish and Christian traditions, where it has
been variously interpreted as a celebration of an earthly ruler, a mes-
sianic prophecy, an allegory exclusively divine, or conjoint divine-
human, kingship.[5] While recent historical-critical studies have nar-
rowly focused on its ancient Near Eastern backdrop, they often

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(2021): 751–83.

[2] For an overview of form-critical literature, see: Martin Klingbeil, *Yah-
weh Fighting from Heaven: God as Warrior and as God of Heaven in the Hebrew
Psalter and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography*, OBO 169 (Fribourg: Academic
Press, 1999), 38–50; Anna E. Zernecke, "Mesopotamian Parallels to the
Psalms," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown. (Ox-
ford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 27–42; Mark S. Smith, "Canaanite
Backgrounds to the Psalms," in William P. Brown, *The Oxford Handbook of
the Psalms*, 43–56; Bernd U. Schipper, "Egyptian Backgrounds to the
Psalms," in William P. Brown, *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, 57–75;
William H Bellinger, "Psalms and the Question of Genre," in William P.
Brown, *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, 313–25.

[3] Sebastian R. Smolarz, *Covenant and the Metaphor of Divine Marriage in Bib-
lical Thought: A Study with Special Reference to the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR:
Wipf & Stock, 2010), 297.

[4] Hermann Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen: Die Gattungen der religiösen
Lyrik Israels*, 4th ed., HKAT (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985),
140; James M. Trotter, "The Genre and Setting of Psalm 45," *ABR* 57
(2009): 34–46; Simon C-C. Cheung, " 'Forget Your People and Your Fa-
ther's House': The Core Theological Message of Psalm 45 and Its Canonical
Position in the Hebrew Psalter," *BBR* 26.3 (2016): 325–40; Scott R. A. Star-
buck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms: The So-Called Royal Psalms in their Ancient Near
Eastern Context*, SBLDS 172 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 1999), 67–102.

[5] Matthias Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters Ein formgeschichtlicher Ansatz*,
FAT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 68; Claudia Süssenbach, *Der elo-
histische Psalter: Untersuchungen zu Komposition und Theologie von Ps 42-83*, FAT
II 7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 365–66; Corinna Körting, "Isaiah
62:1–7 and Psalm 45—or—Two Ways to Become Queen," in *Continuity and
Discontinuity: Chronological and Thematic Development in Isaiah 40–66*, eds. Lena-
Sofia Tiemeyer and Hans M. Barstad, FRLANT 255 (Göttingen: Vanden-
hoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 103–24, here 112–22; idem, "Zion zwischen
Psalmen und Jesaja," in *Trägerkreise in den Psalmen*, eds. Ulrich Berges and
Martin Ebner, BBB 178 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 161-
80, here 163–68. For an extensive overview of the reception history of
Psalm 45, see: Susan E. Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries: A Reception*

overlook the redactional history of the psalm as it was transmitted through various traditions.[6] As Tournay asserts, such an approach misses the mark, arguing that no matter its prehistory, Psalm 45 cannot be solely understood as a royal court poem from the monarchical period.[7]

Remarkably, the Psalm's martial imagery (vv. 4–6), portraying the king as a defender of truth and righteousness, girded with divine strength, which culminates in an affirmation of his eternal throne (v. 7), has been a focal point for messianic interpretations.[8] In this context, "messianic" refers to interpretations that view the royal figure in Psalm 45 not merely as a historical Israelite king, but as an idealized, future Davidic ruler, or even a divine figure, who would bring ultimate salvation, justice, and peace. This understanding often involves an eschatological dimension, where the psalm's descriptions are seen to point towards a future, perfected kingship. Such messianic readings find parallels in other royal psalms, such as Psalms 2, 72, and 110, where the king is depicted with attributes and a scope of rule that transcend typical monarchical descriptions, often imbued with divine agency and an eternal or cosmic significance. For instance, Psalm 2 speaks of a king whom God calls "my son" and who

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History Commentary on Psalms 1–72, vol. 2 of *Psalms Through the Centuries*, Wiley Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2018), 268–76.

[6] Raymond J. Tournay outlines three primary interpretations of Psalm 45: (i) as a secular marriage song incorporated into the Psalter due to a messianic adaptation; (ii) as a marriage song for a king of Israel or Judah, viewed as a type of the Messiah; and (iii) as a directly messianic marriage song composed in the third or fourth century BCE. See: Raymond J. Tournay, "Les affinités du Ps. XLV avec le Cantique des Cantiques et leur interprétation messianique," in *Congress Volume: Bonn 1962*, eds. G. W. Anderson, P. A. H. de Boer, G. R. Castellino, Henry Cazelles, E. Hammershaimb, H. G. May, and W. Zimmerli, VTSup 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 168–212, here 173.

[7] Idem, *Seeing and Hearing God with the Psalms: The Prophetic Liturgy of the Second Temple in Jerusalem*, JSOTSup 118 (London: A. & C. Black, 1991), 223. Despite significant research, no clear correspondence has been established between the form of Psalm 45 and its proposed setting. The debate continues over its literary background (Jan S. M. Mulder, "Studies on Psalm 45" [PhD diss., Oss: Offsetdrukkerij Witsiers, 1972]), highlighting Neo-Assyrian court style influences, and suggesting a seventh-century BCE Judean origin. In contrast, Gary A. Rendsburg argues for an Ephraimite origin based on linguistic analysis (*Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990], 45–50). Brendan McGrath reads it as connected to the marriage of Ahab and Jezebel ("Reflections on Ps. 45," *TBT* 26 (1966): 1837–42). This paper, however, does not rely on the form-critical approach for understanding Psalm 45. See also Daniel Reisman, "Id-din-Dagan's Sacred Marriage Hymn," *JCS* 25.4 (1973): 185–202; Michael J. Harris, "The Translation of Elohim in Psalm 45:7–8," *TynBul* 35 (1984): 65–89; and Gert J. Steyn, "The 'Vorlage' of Psalm 45:6–7 (44:7–8) in Hebrews 1:8–9," *HTS* 60.3 (2004): 1085–103.

[8] Tournay, "Les affinités," 212; Diederik Blankesteijn, "Singing for a King: The Message of Psalm 45," *JHebS 21* (2021): 1–6, here 3.

will inherit the nations (Ps 2:7–8), while Psalm 110 portrays a priest-king at God's right hand (Ps 110:1, 4). These portrayals contributed to a developing messianic expectation in ancient Judaism, which was later influential in early Christian interpretations.

Smolarz supports this perspective, noting that the messianic character of Psalm 45 has been identified in both post-exilic Jewish and early Christian readings.[9] Likewise, recent scholarship by Berkovitz demonstrates that references to Psalm 45 within the Testament of Judah, Odes of Solomon, and the Similitudes of Enoch strongly indicate a potential messianic understanding of the psalm amongst early Jewish exegetical traditions.[10] In early Christianity, Psalm 45 was used in Hebrews to affirm the divinity of Jesus, applying its royal imagery and themes of righteous rule to Christ.[11]

Moreover, early versions and traditions frame Psalm 45 as eschatological, bearing apocalyptic undertones. The genesis of such an eschatologically inflected interpretation may well predate the LXX translation of Psalm 45.[12] Evidence of this interpretation can be further traced in the Qumran scrolls, notably in the Pesher on Psalm 37.[13] Similarly, the Targum presents the king in Psalm 45 as the

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[9] Smolarz explores the concept of covenant through the metaphor of divine marriage, highlighting its significance in biblical thought with a focus on the Book of Revelation. Mitchell discusses the Psalter's eschatological themes, proposing a coherent theological framework. Psalm 45, as noted by Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, has been read messianically within both Judaism and Christianity, offering a celebration of hope applicable to diverse settings. Bertalotto considers Psalm 45 a significant source in shaping the figure of the Enochic Son of Man within the *Book of Parables*. See: Smolarz, *Covenant and Metaphor*, 297; David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, JSOTSup 252 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 248; Pierpaolo Bertalotto, "The Enochic Son of Man, Psalm 45, and the Book of the Watchers," *JSP* 19.3 (2010): 195–216; Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, *Psalms*, NCBiC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 215.

[10] A. J. Berkovitz, "Psalm 45 between Abraham and Jesus: A Palestinian Rabbinic Polemic and Its Shelf Life," *AJSR* 48.1 (2024): 1–25, here 4.

[11] Gert J. Steyn, "The 'Vorlage'."

[12] Joachim Schaper, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter*, WUNT II 76 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 78–83. For a counter-view, see Hans Ausloos, "Psalm 45, Messianism and the LXX," in *The Septuagint and Messianism: Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense LIII*, ed. Michael A. Knibb, BETL 195 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 239–52, here 239–40.

[13] The association of Ps 37:2–39, Ps 45:1–2b, and Ps 60:8–9 with commentaries is evident in 4Q171 (4QpPsᵃ). Steyn discusses the interpretation of Psalm 45 within this context, emphasizing its application as seen in the *Vorlage* of Ps 45:6–7 (44:7–8) in Heb 1:8–9. Subramanian further argues that the Qumran commentator interpreted Psalm 45 as a prophecy about the Teacher of Righteousness, suggesting a direct application to this figure. Additionally, Larsen proposes that the Pesher on Ps 37 identifies figures mentioned in the psalm as being contemporaneous with the author, possibly representing notable individuals from that period. See: Steyn, "The

"King Messiah" (Psalm 45:3), and headings in the Syriac Psalms also invoke messianic figures [Pss 22, 45, 72, 110],[14] as do various Georgian Psalters, which describe the psalm as "in the end, on the change of times."[15] Given Psalm 45's messianic tenor, translators and copyists across history have adapted it according to their own religious perspectives, often resulting in textual ambiguities,[16] inconsistencies, and translation difficulties.[17] Through textual criticism, this study seeks to reconstruct the earliest inferable reading of Psalm 45's title, utilizing available evidence, editorial judgment, and critical analysis.

In this investigation, Klingbeil's methodological approach is adopted to interrogate the semantic complexities intrinsic to the superscription of Psalm 45.[18] With a primary emphasis on lexical analysis, the present study diverges from historical or strictly allegorical interpretations articulated by scholars like Corinna Körting and Seth Postell, and also from those concentrating on the rhetorical program of the psalm, as exemplified by Collin Cornell.[19] The principal objective is to elucidate the messianic thematics and personages emerging from this psalm's title.

This study posits a direct literary and thematic coherence between the reconstructed superscription and the main body of Psalm

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'Vorlage'," 1089; John S. Subramanian, *The Synoptic Gospels and the Psalms as Prophecy*, LNTS 351 (London: T&T Clark, 2007); David J. Larsen, "The Royal Psalms in the Dead Sea Scrolls" (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 2013), 70–71.

[14] Larsen, "The Royal Psalms," 22, 71.

[15] Mzekala Shanidze, "The Old Georgian Psalter and the Titles of the Psalms," in *Textual Research on the Psalms and Gospels / Recherches textuelles sur les psaumes et les évangiles: Papers from the Tbilisi Colloquium on the Editing and History of Biblical Manuscripts, Actes du Colloque de Tbilisi*, eds. Christian Amphoux and James K. Elliott, NovTSup 142 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 19–41, here 21.

[16] Patterson observes, "perhaps due to the intimacy of the subject matter, both the historical setting and, at several points, the understanding of the text itself have puzzled scholars of all ages." Kraus also addresses the contextual challenges of Ps 45 in his work, discussing the complexities surrounding its historical setting. See: Richard D. Patterson, "A multiplex approach to Psalm 45," *Grace Theological Journal* 6.1 (1985): 29–48, here 30; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald, vol. 1 of *Psalms*, CC (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 448.

[17] For probable parallels to Ps 45, Smolarz explores the metaphor of divine marriage as a recurring theme in biblical thought, noting significant thematic correlations (Smolarz, *Covenant and Metaphor*, 297, 333). Similarly, Mitchell identifies similarities between Ps 45 and Zech 9:9, which he attributes to shared eschatological motifs (Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 249–50).

[18] Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 38–50.

[19] Collin Cornell, "Royally Enticing, Royally Forgetting: The Contribution of Psalm 45 within Its Canonical Context," *JSOT* 47.2 (2022): 223–38; Körting, "Isaiah 62: 1–7," 103–23; Seth D. Postell, "A Literary, Compositional, and Intertextual Analysis of Psalm 45," *BSac* 176 (2019): 146–63.

45. Specifically, the term לַמְנַצֵּחַ, interpreted with eschatological overtones as 'to the end' (following the LXX's εἰς τὸ τέλος), sets a forward-looking interpretive frame for the psalm. The עַל־שֹׁשַׁנִּים ("To the Shoshans"), if understood not merely as a musical notation but as referring to a group or symbolic entity (perhaps the "lilies" as the bride or a bridal collective), directly links to the wedding theme (vv. 11–16). The proposed reading of לִבְנֵי־קֹרַח as "for the sons of the bald one" introduces key personages whose identity, potentially messianic or priestly, finds resonance with the exalted depiction of the king and his divine blessing in the psalm (vv. 2–10, 17–18). Finally, emending יְדִדֹת to לִידִיד ("A hymn for the beloved") clearly identifies the psalm's dedicatee or central figure, aligning with the king who is the subject of praise throughout. Thus, the superscription, as critically examined, is not a detached label but an integral hermeneutical key that introduces the psalm's primary actors, its celebratory and eschatological mood, and its central theme of a sacred, messianic marriage.

The study employs textual criticism to reconstruct the most plausible original reading of Psalm 45's superscription, comparing diverse ancient biblical manuscripts and versions to identify and evaluate textual variants. By assessing these variations, the authors consider the influences of later interpretive and redactional layers on the text. The analysis centers on the Hebrew terminology within Psalm 45's title, rigorously examining its linguistic nuances in comparison with parallel terms in ancient translations, such as the LXX and the Vulgate. This meticulous lexical approach facilitates the identification of potential mistranslations or interpretative shifts in subsequent versions, enabling alternative readings that may more accurately capture the original meaning. Through this integrative methodology, the authors challenge traditional readings and propose new interpretations of key terms within the superscription, ultimately illuminating the prophetic-messianic dimensions of Psalm 45.

This study presents the MT as found in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), along with its textual apparatus, and includes textual variants from the Greek in the *Göttingen LXX*. In utilizing the *Göttingen LXX* edition, we acknowledge it as a critical reconstruction aiming to approximate the Old Greek (OG) text as closely as possible. However, it is understood that no critical edition can definitively claim to be the OG itself, as the LXX tradition is complex, involving multiple recensions and a long history of transmission. The *Göttingen* edition is chosen for its comprehensive critical apparatus, which allows for an assessment of variant readings within the Greek tradition. Our analysis will consider significant variants where they might suggest different underlying Hebrew *Vorlagen* or distinct interpretive trajectories within the Greek-speaking Jewish and early Christian communities. Additionally, it incorporates readings from the versions of Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus as preserved in Field's *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt*. Critical translations of the LXX,

specifically NETS (*New English Translation of the Septuagint*) and *Septuaginta Deutsch*, have also been consulted.[20]

Regarding Latin versions, this study primarily refers to Jerome's Vulgate (specifically the *Psalterium Gallicanum*, his translation from the Hexaplaric Septuagint, which became standard in the Latin West), as it represents a significant and influential witness in the history of interpretation, often reflecting early Christian exegetical trends. While Jerome also produced the *Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos* (a translation directly from the Hebrew), the *Gallicanum*'s wider reception makes it particularly relevant for tracing interpretive traditions that engaged with the Septuagintal textual stream.

2 TEXT-CRITICAL APPARATUS

לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל־שֹׁשַׁנִּים לִבְנֵי־‹קֹרַח› מַשְׂכִּיל שִׁיר ˈלִידִידֹ

עַל־שֹׁשַׁנִּים M σ′ (ὑπὲρ τῶν αντῶν) θ′ (ὑπὲρ τῶν κρίνον) α′ (επι τοισ κρίνοις)] *עַל שֹׁשַׁנִּים G (ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀλλοιωθησομένων) S (ܚܒܝܒܐ) V (*pro his qui commutabuntur*) (vocal) T (על יתבי סנהדרין) (exeg)

‹קֹרַח› קֹרַח M G (Κορε) V (*Core*) T (קרח) S (ܩܘܪܚ) (exeg)

*לִידִיד G (ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ) σ′ (εις τὸν ἀγαπητον) θ′ (τοῖς ἠγαπημένοις) α′ (πρὸςφιλίας)] יְדִידֹת M יְדִידוּת Mᵐˢˢ V (*Pro Dilecto*) T (ואודאתא) (exeg)

3 TEXT-CRITICAL COMMENTS

לַמְנַצֵּחַ

The Psalms' titles, which are demonstrably a part of a self-generating process from the text, carry significant weight in the interpretation of the Psalter.[21] However, deciphering their exact meaning remains

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[20] Albert Pietersma, and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included Under That Title* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 569; Frederick Field, ed., Origen: *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt; sive, Veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum Fragmenta. Post Flaminium Nogilium, Drusium, et Montefalconium, adhibita etiam Versione Syro-Hexaplari*, vol. 2 of *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt*, ed. Frederick Field (Oxford: E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1875), 161; Martin Karrer and Wolfgang Kraus, eds., *Septuaginta Deutsch: Erläuterungen und Kommentare zum griechischen Alten Testament: Psalmen bis Daniel*, vol. 2 of *Septuaginta Deutsch: Erläuterungen und Kommentare zum griechischen Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2011), 1623.

[21] Willem A. Vangemeren and Jeremy Stanghelle, "A Critical-Realistic Reading of the Psalm Titles: Authenticity, Inspiration, and Evangelicals," in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith? A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture*, eds. James K. Hoffmeier and Dennis R. Magary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 281–302, here 297.

a persistent challenge[22]: despite its frequent occurrence in fifty-five Psalms' titles,[23] the precise meaning of למנצח is still elusive.[24]

This ambiguity has, unsurprisingly, led to a variety of proposed interpretations.[25] A thorough survey of נ''צח in early Semitic literature, as presented by HALOT, uncovers a range of interpretations. These include the durative meaning of "lasting" as found in Biblical Aramaic and the Dead Sea Scrolls, the bellicistic sense of "successful" and "fight" in the War Scroll, and the domination-oriented meaning of "subdue" in Mishnaic Hebrew. Additionally, the term carries the exalted meanings of "triumph" in Aramaic, the luminous connotations of "shine" and "splendid" in Syriac, the differentiating sense of "distinguish" in Egyptian Aramaic, and the purificatory meanings of "to be clear" and "to be pure" in Arabic and Ethiopic.[26]

The Hebrew term למנצח is generally interpreted to refer to the choirmaster or leader of a musical ensemble. Despite this widely accepted musical connotation, the exact meaning of the Hebrew term remains ambiguous. Its Greek counterpart, εἰς τὸ τέλος, rendered as "to the end," is considered enigmatic, though it is typically linked with the Hebrew term נצח, which implies "eternity" or "perpetuity." This term is often understood as "victory" by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion.[27] G. Dorival's theory suggests that the musical in-

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[22] Hans Ausloos, "למנצח in the Psalms Headings and Their Equivalent in LXX," in *XII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Leiden*, ed. Melvin K. H. Peters, SCS 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 131–39, here 131.

[23] In the MT, the term למנצח, typically translated as "for the choirmaster" or "to the leader," appears in the headings of many Psalms. These include Pss 4; 5; 6; 8; 9; 11; 12; 13; 14; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 31; 36; 39; 40; 41; 42; 44; 45; 46; 47; 49; 51; 52; 53; 54; 55; 56; 57; 58; 59; 60; 61; 62; 64; 65; 66; 67; 68; 69; 70; 75; 76; 77; 80; 81; 84; 85; 88; 109; 139 and 140.

[24] Ausloos, "למנצח in Psalms Headings," 131; "נצח," *HALOT* 3:716 "נצח," *TWOT* 2:593; "נצח," *BDB*, 663-4; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 29.

[25] Dorival has argued that the musical interpretation, originating in early Judaism, was a reaction against a Christianizing interpretation—such as those by the church fathers Origen or Gregory of Nyssa—of the Septuagint rendering, in which the Greek equivalent was interpreted as a reference to Jesus Christ as the ultimate τέλος (Gilles Dorival, "À propos de quelques titres des psaumes de la Septante," in *Le Psautier chez les Pères*, ed. M. Alexandre, CBiPa 4 (Strassburg: Centre d'Analyse et de Documentation Patristiques, 1994), 21,–36, here 29–31; Ausloos, "למנצח in Psalms Headings," 133–34.

[26] In the MT, the term נצח" appears in 110 verses, displaying a range of meanings categorized as follows: (1) "act as overseer," "supervise," "inspect," "direct," or "lead"; (2) "conquer," "be victorious," "be pre-eminent," or "subdue"; and (3) "end," "perpetuity," or "forever." This categorization highlights the term's versatility and varied applications within the text ("נצח," *HALOT* 3:716).

[27] Field, Origen: *Origenis*, 2:161; Patrick D. Miller, "Gregory of Nyssa: The Superscriptions of the Psalms," in *Genesis, Isaiah and Psalms: A Festschrift*

terpretation of למנצח, which originated in early Judaism, was developed in response to a Christianizing exegesis, as seen in the works of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa.[28] While the evidence for an eschatological reading based solely on εἰς τὸ τέλος is not substantial,[29] patristic exegetes often interpreted the LXX version as an allusion to Jesus Christ as the ultimate τέλος.[30]

עַל־שֹׁשַׁנִּים

Building upon Jan Mulder's analysis, this research proposes that the Masoretic vocalization שֹׁשַׁנִּים ("the lilies"), echoed by α', σ', and θ', is a faithful preservation of the original reading. However, alternative interpretations raise certain difficulties. The LXX's rendering τῶν ἀλλοιωθησομένων ("of those who will be changed") and the Vulgate's *pro his qui commutabuntur* ("for those who will be changed") likely reflect the Hebrew verb שׁ"נה ("to change"), resulting in the ambiguous phrase "עַל־שֶׁשֹׁנִים" ("for those who will be changed").[31] Pietersma observes that the LXX translator likely misunderstood the source text, confusing ששנים with שׁ"נה.[32]

   The Masoretic vocalization is further supported by an important observation: Psalm 69:1 contains a similar inscription, לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל־שׁוֹשַׁנִּים, supplemented with an additional *waw*—serving as a *mater lectionis*. This orthographic form challenges the assumption that the *Vorlage* of the LXX and Vulgate reflected the authentic form.

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to honour Professor John Emerton for his eightieth birthday, eds. Katherine J. Dell, Graham Davies, and Yee von Koh, VTSup 135 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 215–30, here 220.

   [28] Ausloos, "למנצח in Psalms Headings," 133–34.

   [29] Ausloos observes that Rösel advocates for an eschatological interpretation of the Greek phrase εἰς τὸ τέλος ("to the end") found in the Psalm superscriptions. In contrast, Pietersma contests this view, drawing upon classical and Hellenistic literature, where τέλος generally denotes "conclusion" or "completion" without carrying eschatological connotations. See: Ausloos, "למנצח in Psalms Headings," 139; Martin Rösel, "Die Psalmüberschriften des Septuaginta-Psalters," *Der Septuaginta-Psalter: Sprachliche und theologische Aspekte*, ed. Erich Zenger, HBS 32 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2001), 137–39; Albert Pietersma, "Septuagintal Exegesis and the Superscriptions of the Greek Psalter," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, eds. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller, VTSup 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 443–75, here 468–70.

   [30] Dorival, "Quelques titres des psaumes," 29–31.

   [31] Gilles Dorival, "Titres hebreux et titres grecs des psaumes," in *Textual Research on the Psalms and Gospels / Recherches textuelles sur les psaumes et les évangiles: Papers from the Tbilisi Colloquium on the Editing and History of Biblical Manuscripts. Actes du Colloque de Tbilisi*, eds. Christian Amphoux and James Keith Elliott, NovTSup 142 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 14; Mulder, "Studies on Psalm 45," 1–18, here 4.

   [32] Pietersma, "Septuagintal Exegesis," 466.

Moreover, the presence of שושנים in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Q) provides further validation for the Masoretic vocalization.[33]

The discrepancy between the MT and the LXX indicates a potential interpretive crux. The term ששנים in the Hebrew text may have posed difficulties for the Greek translators, prompting them to offer an alternative inscription that harmonized with their interpretation of Psalm 45's overall meaning. Their rendering, "on behalf of those who shall be changed," aligns with the broader theological themes in Psalm 45 as understood by Christian tradition. The Vulgate and Old Georgian Psalters follow the Greek interpretation, suggesting a common exegetical trend among early Christian translators.[34] Pietersma's suggestion of an eschatological reading within the Christian tradition is reinforced by the Qumran Pesher on Psalm 45 (4Q171), which seems to align with the Greek reading, translating שֹׁשַׁנִּים as שבי ("the Returnees," "the Converts").[35]

לִבְנֵי־קֹרַח

The Hebrew root קרח appears twenty-three times in the Old Testament, where it predominantly denotes "baldness."[36] This semantic range extends across various Semitic languages, indicating shared linguistic and cultural connections.[37] קרח can also refer to individuals experiencing hair loss, often due to injuries or incisions. The phrase

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[33] Eugene Ulrich, *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls: Transcriptions and Textual Variants*, VTSup 134 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 648.

[34] The superscription of Psalm 45 in the Old Georgian Psalter is translated as "At the end, for the changed ones" (Shanidze, "The Old Georgian Psalter," 21). Notably, the Georgian Psalter employs the term *cvalebad* for the MT's ששנים, which is interpreted as "with the ability to change" or "something that will be changed."

[35] Pietersma, "Septuagintal Exegesis," 466; Karrer and Kraus, *Septuaginta Deutsch*, 1504; Larsen, "The Royal Psalms," 70; Ulrich, *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls*, 347, 648.

[36] "קרח," *TWOT*, 2:815. Similarly, *HALOT* offers insights into these nuances, categorizing different senses of the term across Hebrew scriptures ("קרח," *HALOT*, 3:1140; "קרח," *BDB*, 901).

[37] The Syriac term *qrḥ* translates to "to be bald," providing a linguistic parallel to the Hebrew קרח. Interestingly, the Arabic cognate *qarḥ* demonstrates a subtle divergence in meaning, frequently aligning with *jarḥ*, which signifies "wound" or "the mark of a wound". See: Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (d. 170/786), *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, eds. Mahdī al-Makhzūmī and Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrāʾī, 8 vols. (Qum: Muʾassasat Dār al-Hijrah, 1409/1988), 3:43; Abū al-Husayn Aḥmad ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004), *Muʿjam maqāyīs al-lughah*, 6 vols. (Qum: Maktab al-Aʿlām al-Islāmī, 1404/1983), 5:229; Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311), *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1414/1993), 2:557; Abū al-Fayḍ Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1790), *Tāj al-ʿarūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs*, eds. Ḥusayn Naṣṣār et al., 40 vols. (Kuwait: Maṭbaʿat Ḥukūmat al-Kuwayt, 1965–2001), 4:167.

בְּנֵי־קֹרַח appears 13 times in the MT, with לִבְנֵי־קֹרַח specifically featured eleven times,[38] consistently in the headings of the Psalms.[39]

This study presents a novel interpretation of the term קרח in Psalm 45:1. Traditionally vocalized as קֹרַח (Korah), a proper noun referencing the great-grandson of Levi, this analysis proposes an alternative reading: קָרֵחַ meaning "bald." This interpretation is supported by several key insights. Firstly, the scribal tradition in the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibits a consistent preference for rendering Korah's name as קורח (with a *waw*).[40] The sole exception in the in the Qumran Psalms' superscriptions occurs in Psalm 49:1, where לבני־קרח appears without a *waw*.[41] Given that the headings in the Psalms generally address a specific family, it is plausible to interpret קרח in Psalm 45:1 not as a proper noun, but rather as "bald."

Secondly, meticulous examination of Korah's descendants in the Hebrew Bible, excluding the Psalms, reveals a subtle distinction in terminology. While the phrase בְּנֵי־קֹרַח consistently appears, variants such as הַקָּרְחִי מִשְׁפַּחַת ("the family of Korah"), הַקָּרְחִי, and הַקָּרְחִים ("Korahite[s]") exhibit a broader range. This nuanced usage suggests that בְּנֵי־קֹרַח specifically denotes Korah's immediate offspring,[42] whereas the other terms encompass his later generations.[43] This distinction in terminology surrounding Korah's descendants unveils a potential temporal dissonance. The Psalms attributed to the בְּנֵי־קֹרַח ("the sons of Korah") present a fascinating enigma. Composed long after the era of Korah's immediate offspring, who lived contemporaneously with Moses, these hymns raise a critical question: To whom, or for whom, were these songs of praise addressed?

It would therefore appear more plausible not to emend קֹרַח but rather קָרֵחַ which may refer to a "bald individual," and is used elsewhere as a proper name.[44] The actual identity of בְּנֵי־קָרֵחַ requires further investigation, and it is essential to explore any potential historical relationship between them and שׁשׁנים. This reinterpretation of לִבְנֵי־קָרֵחַ as "for the sons of the bald one" rather than "for the

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[38] The remaining two occurrences of this term are found in Exod 6:24 and Num 26:11.

[39] Korah, son of Izhar, grandson of Kohath, and great-grandson of Levi, is prominently recognized in biblical tradition as the leader of a significant rebellion against Moses and Aaron during the Israelites' journey in the wilderness. As described in the scriptural narrative, Korah's defiance was met with divine retribution, resulting in his demise through a dramatic event involving an earthquake and consuming fire (Num 16:1–32).

[40] For occurrences of קורח in biblical scrolls, refer to Ulrich, *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls*, 39, 146–47. In extra-biblical scrolls, the term is also found in fragments such as 4Q491 1–3, 4Q423 5, and 4Q418a.

[41] Ulrich, *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls*, 643.

[42] See בְּנֵי־קֹרַח in Num 26:11; Exod 6:24; 1 Chr 6:22, as well as בַּעֲדַת־קֹרַח in Num 27:3.

[43] Num 26:58; 1 Chr 9:19, 31; 12:7; 26:1, 19; 2 Chr 20:19.

[44] See Jer 40:15–16.

sons of Korah" naturally raises questions about Psalm 45's relation-
ship to the Korahite psalter (Psalms 42–49; 84–85; 87–88). If this
psalm is not attributed to the Levitical group of the Sons of Korah,
its inclusion or association within this block of psalms requires ex-
planation.

Several possibilities could be considered. Firstly, the term "Ko-
rah" itself, even if primarily a proper name, might have carried sec-
ondary connotations or wordplay evident to ancient read-
ers/listeners, allowing for a psalm associated with a "bald one" (per-
haps a revered, prophetic, or even cultic figure distinct from the an-
cestor Korah) to be thematically or editorially grouped with psalms
linked to the Korahite group, especially if other thematic links (e.g.,
royal, cultic, or wisdom motifs) were present. The shared emphasis
on Zion or temple worship in some Korahite psalms might offer
such a thematic bridge, although Psalm 45 is less overtly Zion-cen-
tric.

Secondly, it is conceivable that the superscriptions underwent
their own complex history of transmission and redaction. An original
attribution to "the sons of the bald one" might have been later as-
similated or editorially linked to the more prominent "sons of Ko-
rah" due to phonetic similarity (קֹרַח/קָרֵחַ) or due to a later redactor's
attempt to systematize psalm attributions. The presence of Psalm 45
within a sequence largely attributed to the "sons of Korah" could
then be a result of such secondary editorial activity, rather than an
original compositional link. In this scenario, the unique character of
Psalm 45, with its strong royal wedding focus, might have originally
set it apart.

Thirdly, the proposed interpretation does not necessarily negate
any historical connection to a group known as "sons of Korah" if
the term קָרֵחַ itself became an epithet or alternative designation for
a figure associated with that lineage, or if "the bald one" refers to a
significant, perhaps later, figure within or revered by that group.
However, the primary argument here rests on the lexical evidence
for קָרֵחַ as "bald" and its potential messianic or symbolic allusions
(e.g., Elisha).

While a definitive solution to its placement within the "Ko-
rahite" psalms under this revised reading is challenging, the interpre-
tation of לִבְנֵי־קָרֵחַ as "for the sons of the bald one" compels a re-
examination of the assumptions underlying the unity and demarca-
tion of psalm collections. It suggests that the superscriptions may
contain more diverse and symbolic referents than often assumed,
and that editorial grouping could be based on a variety of factors,
including thematic resonance, catchwords, or even later interpretive
traditions that are not immediately obvious. This interpretation
aligns with Augustine's messianic reading, who construes קרח (Latin:
Core) as *calvus*, or "bald," prompting him to interpret the "sons of

Korah" in a messianic light as "sons of the bald one"—an allusion, in his view, to Christian believers.[45]

To recapitulate, the superscription of Psalm 45 enjoins the Shoshans to offer heartfelt supplications to the sons of "the bald one" with the ultimate aim of matrimony. As the royal nuptials serve as the psalm's central motif, it is plausible to infer that the bridegroom and bride respectively correspond to the sons of "the bald one" and the Shoshans. This figure, depicted as bald, may reference an individual known as קָרֵחַ (Jer 40:8) or suggest a messianic allusion to Elisha, who is similarly designated קָרֵחַ ("bald") in 2 Kings 2:23.

לידיד

LXX's rendering of the inscription for Psalm 45 presents a fascinating anomaly. While the Hebrew term ידידת signifies "love," G translates it as ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ ("for the beloved"). Pietersma astutely observes that the translator accurately reflected the adjective ידיד ("beloved"). LXX's omission of the final *tav* (ת) of ידיד appears to be a deliberate interpretive choice. This inconsistency strengthens the argument that G aimed for more than a strictly literal rendering.

The consistent translation of ידיד as ἀγαπητός ("beloved") across other Psalms (60:7, 64:2, 108:7, 127:2) further underscores the deliberate nature of LXX's variation in Psalm 45. Pietersma, following Rösel, argues that the inclusion of ὑπέρ ("on behalf of") and the definite article τοῦ are unwarranted interpolations not present in the Hebrew. This nuanced shift in LXX's rendering invites consideration of the potential for layered interpretations in the text.

Adding further complexity is the occurrence of the cognate term ידדון in Psalm 68:13, where it appears twice. The translator of the LXX, seemingly uncertain of ידדון's precise meaning, renders it as synonymous with ידיד ("beloved").[46] Although Rösel and Pietersma's proposal of a connection between Psalm 45:1 and Psalm 68:13 is compelling, the potential textual divergences between the MT and the LXX warrant careful examination. The repetition of ידדון in Psalm 68:13 within the MT is anomalous and is absent in some Hebrew manuscripts, Posing critical questions about the original text.

For the initial occurrence of ידדון in the MT, the LXX offers τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ ("the beloved")—reflecting ידיד ("the beloved") or

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[45] Augustin elucidates: "We should understand the sons of *Core* as symbolizing baldness. I recall to you who already know that *Core* represents baldness; for our own instruction, since he [Jesus] was crucified at Calvary, he brought many with him, as if like a grain that would remain alone unless it were to die and bear much fruit. And those who were brought to him were called sons of *Core*. This is a mystery." See: E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, eds., Augustine: *Enarrationes in Psalmos I–L*, CCSL 38 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1956), 399.

[46] Pietersma, "Septuagintal Exegesis," 465.

possibly יחיד ("the only one")[47]—and the Vulgate also reads *dilecti* ("the beloved"). This suggests that the original Hebrew text might have used either ידיד or יחיד, with ידיד offering a more natural parallel to the term's subsequent occurrence.

In light of the LXX and Vulgate, and the lexical parallelism evident between Psalms 45 and 68 (מלך, τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ), the emendation of לידיד for ידידת in Psalm 45:1 is proposed. This revision establishes a compelling parallelism with Isaiah 5:1.[48]

4 CONCLUSION

The examination of Psalm 45's superscription provides enlightening insights into the intricate processes of Biblical redaction, translation, and interpretation. Notable discrepancies observed across various Biblical translations suggest an intricate tapestry of interpretive layers that encompass the prophetic-messianic theme of the Psalm, along with its broader thematic concerns.

This study introduces a new interpretation of the phrase לִבְנֵי־ קֹרַח as "the sons of the bald" rather than "the sons of Korah." This revision, backed by evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls, offers a fresh perspective on the identity of these figures and their role within the psalm. It further sheds new light on the traditional interpretation of the term עַל־שֹׁשַׁנִּים as "concerning the lilies," suggesting a connection with the eschatological theme of change and transformation present in the wider context of Psalm 45.

The paper underlines the interpretive challenges and ambiguities posed by the term ידידת. The LXX's interpretation of this term as "on behalf of the beloved" deviates from the Hebrew "love song," suggesting an interpretive choice by the Greek translator. The suggested revision of ידידת to לידיד provides a compelling parallel with other biblical texts, illuminating the thematic concerns of Psalm 45.

The suggested revisions reveal a nuanced interpretation of the Psalm. The interpretation of the characters identified within the heading of Psalm 45—the "beloved" (לידיד), the "Shoshans" (שֹׁשַׁנִּים) as a potential bridal collective, and the "sons of the bald" (בְּנֵי־קֹרַח)—offers a fresh perspective on understanding their roles in the royal wedding narrative detailed in verses 2–18. The beloved king is the central figure extolled for his divine favor and prowess (vv. 2–10), the Shoshans can be linked to the bride brought into the royal court (vv. 11–16), and the sons of the bald, if carrying priestly or prophetic connotations, provide a liturgical or covenantal context for this sacred union. The eschatological framing suggested by לַמְנַצֵּחַ (following the LXX's εἰς τὸ τέλος), further elevates the entire psalm beyond a mere historical epithalamium, aligning with the eternal throne promised to the king (v. 7) and the perpetual remembrance of his name (v. 18).

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[47] Gen 22:2, 12, 16; Prov 4:3; Amos 8:10; Zech 12:10.

[48] יְחִידִים (Ps 68:7), which is linked to היחיד, could be considered another instance of parallelism between the two Psalms.

In summation, it may be posited that this Psalm is addressed to ידיד ("the beloved"), who may be identified with the same king referenced within its verses.[49] Furthermore, the Psalmist introduces ששנים as the eschatological bride of the בְּנֵי־קֹרַח ("sons of the bald"). To further explore the identities and relationships of the lilies, the bald, and the king, a more extensive textual analysis is warranted, thereby inviting additional scholarly inquiry. This revised heading—"To the end; To the Shoshans, for (submission to) the sons of the bald; A contemplative poem; A hymn for the beloved"—frames Psalm 45 as a messianic wedding hymn. Future studies could explore Shoshans as a symbol of purity in Near Eastern bridal imagery.

Lastly, the scholarly analysis presented in this research contributes to the comprehensive understanding of Psalm 45 in Biblical Studies. The study demonstrates that the interpretation of Psalm 45 is not a straightforward task but a complex process that necessitates careful consideration of the text's historical, cultural, and theological contexts. Although the findings offer rich insights into the core themes of the Psalm, they also indicate significant unexplored areas, warranting further investigation. Specifically, future efforts could focus on untangling the multilayered interpretive strands within the Psalm and exploring the broader contextual affinities within Ancient Near Eastern literature.

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[49] Karrer and Kraus, *Septuaginta Deutsch*, 1623.