

Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) as a point of convergence in the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible: A consideration of the intra and intertextual relationships

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Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) occupies a special place in the canon of Scriptures. In Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) not only the book of Malachi comes to a close but the whole of the Prophets (Nebi'im), and the second part of the Hebrew Bible. In the Christian Bible the book of Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament, which is concluded with this passage, before one turns to the New Testament. In this article it was argued that these three verses serve not only as the conclusion to the book of Malachi but also as a fitting close to the second part of the Hebrew Bible. It also serves as a link to both the Pentateuch as the first part, and the Psalms as the third part, of the Hebrew canon of Scriptures. In this sense Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) can be viewed as a point of convergence in the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible.

Introduction

Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) occupies a special place in the canon of Scriptures. In Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) not only the book of Malachi comes to a close but the whole of the Prophets (Nebi'im), and the second part of the Hebrew Bible. In the Christian Bible the book of Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament, which is concluded with this passage, before one turns to the New Testament. This section is the last part of the book of Malachi, and also the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible, and, as such, it raises several questions. Should Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) be considered as only the closing verses of the book of Malachi or the Book of the Twelve, or indeed the Prophets as a whole? Some scholars regard the conclusion of this book as part of the original book, and that it is only intended to conclude Malachi (Baldwin 1978:251; Glazier-McDonald 1987:243–245; Verhoef 1987:337–338; Floyd 2000:568–569; Stuart 1998:1391). Others regard the closing verses of the book of Malachi as a conclusion to a corpus comprising of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi (House 1990:96–97; Boda 2007:113–131), or the book of the Twelve (Petersen 1995:233; Smith 1984:341–342; Hill 1998:364), or to the Prophets (Rudolph 1976:291; Deissler 1988:337) or to the Law and the Prophets (Redditt 1995:185). In this article it is argued that these three verses serve not only as the conclusion to the book of Malachi but also as a fitting end to the Prophets. This last unit of the book of Malachi also serves as a link to both the Pentateuch, as the first part, and the Psalms, as the beginning of the third part of the Hebrew canon of Scriptures.

Problem statement and methodological remarks

The problem investigated has been suggested in the previous paragraph. What is the place and function of the last unit found in the book of Malachi, and what place does it take within the canon of the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament (HB or OT)? Building on the results of critical investigation, an inter-textual investigation of the text in question will be conducted, within the context of the rest of the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible. Historical critical investigation shows that there is good reason to view these three verses in question as a later addition, or even additions, to the rest of the book of Malachi. Intertextuality can and has been described in many ways but in essence it can be described as a literary approach focusing on the relationships between texts. Kristeva is the scholar who used the term intertextuality for the first time when she asserts that 'any text is the absorption and transformation of another' (Kristeva 1980:66). Intertextuality views a text as an intersection of fragments, and as allusions or echoes of other texts. Intertextuality focuses on relations between the text from which the quotation, allusion or echo is drawn and the new setting in which the pre-text is received (Waaajman 2010). Intertextuality opens up the dynamics between a so called 'arche' text and a 'phenol' text and places it within a larger framework of reading and interpreting texts (Naude 2009:14). Applied to Old Testament texts intertextuality has become an umbrella term sharing the following common assumptions: textual creation (texts are a 'mosaic' of quotations of other texts); textual meaning (meaning comes from a 'dialogue' between texts) and textual hermeneutics (a reader's role in the production of meaning) (Stead 2009:19–20). This article argues that the last three verses of the Book of Malachi serve as a point

of convergence in the Hebrew canon of Scriptures, when viewed from an intertextual perspective.

A translation of Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24)

22 Remember the Torah of Moses, my servant, that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel – statues and ordinances.

23 Look out! I shall send you Elijah the prophet, before the great and fearful day of Yahweh comes.

24 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons and the hearts of the sons to the fathers so that I will not come and strike the land with a ban. (Heb 3:22–24)

Historical critical considerations

Text critical considerations

In Malachi 4:4 (Heb 3:22) the reader is confronted with a text critical problem. In some manuscripts of the Septuagint (LXX) Malachi 4:4 (Heb 3:22) is transposed to follow after Malachi 4:5–6 (Heb 3:23–24). This means that the last pericope of the book starts by mentioning the prophet Elijah and concludes with the reference to the Torah of Moses. The motivation for this change is said to soften the harsh way in which the Old Testament will come to an end, predicting a ban on the land with a more positive one of an admonition to adhere to the Torah of Moses. Scholarly opinion is divided on whether or not to accept the rendering of the Septuagint or to retain the text as it is. There is much to be said for the sequence of verses according to the Septuagint. The mentioning of a coming Day of the Lord in Malachi 4:5 (Heb 3:23) neatly fits in with the theme of the Day of the Lord in the previous unit. The Day of the Lord announced in the previous unit (MI 3:13–4:3; Heb 3:13–21) will now be preceded by the coming of Elijah, probably resulting from the delay in the fulfillment of the prophecy on the coming Day of the Lord. Malachi 4:6 (Heb 3:24) will then serve as the climax of not only the book but also of the *Corpus Propheticum* as a whole, with the reference to the Torah of Moses.

Formcritical considerations

The Gattung, or literary genre, used in Malachi 4:4 (Heb 3:22) differs from the following two verses. Investigating the genres brings to light that two different literary genres are employed. In Malachi 4:4 (Heb 3:22) a 'Mahnung' is used as an ethical imperative to obedience to the Torah (Wöhrle 2008:252), whilst in Malachi 4:5–6 (Heb 3:23–24) a 'Gotteswort', in the form of an eschatological 'Heilswort', is used.

Redaction critical considerations

Although not everybody would agree (Glazier-McDonald 1987:243–245; Verhoef 1987:337–338; Floyd 2000:568–569; Kaiser 1984; Koorevaar 2010:75; Stuart 1998:1391; Clendenen 2004:455; Assis 2011:208–209), the conclusion of the book of Malachi in 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) is widely regarded as a later redactional addition (or additions) to Malachi 3:13–21 and, for

that matter, to the rest of the book (Rudolph 1975:290; Smith 1984:340; Wöhrle 2008:251–253; Schwesig 2006:269–270; Beck 2005:298). There are obvious reasons for this observation:

- Firstly, it seems odd that the characteristic question-answer style of dispute found in the rest of the book does not occur in the last three verses of the book.
- Secondly, the phrase so often used in the book ('says the Lord Almighty' *ko amar yhw*) to mark divine speech is lacking in the last unit. There are also other linguistic differences between Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) and the rest of the book. In Malachi 4:5 (Heb 3:23) one reads 'hinne' (look out!) whilst in Malachi 3:1 one reads 'hinne' (look out!). In Malachi 4:5 (Heb 3:23) 'anoki' (I) is used to indicate the first person singular whilst in the rest of the book 'ani' (I) is used. It is also peculiar that the term 'Day of Yahweh', used in Malachi 4:5 (Heb 3:23), never occurs in the rest of the book. In the rest of the book one reads about 'the day' (MI 3:2) or 'on the day that I make' (MI 3:17, 4; 3 [Heb 3:21]) or 'the day comes' or 'the day that comes' (MI 4:1 [Heb 3:19]).
- Thirdly, antithesis is a major literary feature in each unit of the book except in this last one.
- Fourthly, this last unit displays a use of language and style that is not found in the rest of the book. Scholars (Petersen 1995:227–228; Reventlow 1993:160; Deissler 1988:337; Horst 1964:275; Schwesig 2006:271; Willi-Plein 2007:282) make mention of the decidedly Deuteronomistic language ('Horeb', 'all Israel', Moses as Yahweh's servant, the phrase 'ordinances and statues') characteristic of this unit. The reference to the Torah of Moses, the designation of Moses as 'my servant', the reference to Horeb, and the sending of Elijah on a reconciling mission to perhaps prevent a terrible ban of the land are unique and new issues raised that are not found in the rest of the book. The rather abrupt mention of the Torah of Moses after the announcement of the coming day of Yahweh, is an indication that something quite different is addressed now.
- Fifthly, the previous unit would serve as an excellent close for the book. Malachi 3:13–4:3 (Heb 3:13–21) is eschatological in tone and foresees the Day of Yahweh when the wicked and ungodly people who are now regarded as fortunate, who have been built up, who have tested God and escaped with it, will suffer doom and judgement. The Day of Yahweh will also mean triumph and vindication for the righteous and pious people who thought that it was futile to serve God and that nothing would be gained by keeping the commandments (MI 3:13–15).
- Lastly, the unit starts with an imperative which is another indication of a new beginning (cf 3:7b; Beck 2005:298). In the light of all these arguments it seems fair to view Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) as a later redactional addition.

It is also a matter of dispute whether Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) in itself is not the result of two redactional additions, that is, Malachi 4:4 (Heb 3:22) and Malachi 4:5–6 (Heb 3:23–24). Whilst Petersen (1995:227) thinks in terms of a

single epilogue, the vast majority of scholars are convinced of two redactional additions. Malachi 4:4–5 (Heb 3:23) does not begin with a word connecting these two parts in a direct way. The prominent *'hinne'*, at the beginning of the verse, rather suggests a new beginning. It therefore seems more probable, then, that we must think of two distinct additions.

These historical critical considerations provide sufficient evidence to view these three verses apart from the rest of the book, and worthy of an intertextual investigation.

Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) and its relationship with the rest of the book of Malachi

The conclusion that Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) is a later addition(s) to the book of Malachi, and that consequently there is no relationship whatsoever between this unit and the previous units of the book, would be to overlook some important links that do exist between this last unit and the previous ones. Smith (1984:340) overstates the case when he maintains: 'It is unrelated to anything that has gone before.' The call to remember the Torah of Moses recalls the book of remembrance mentioned in verse 16 (Floyd 2000:624). In Malachi 3:16 it is Yahweh who should remember the faithful and pious people and in Malachi 4:4 (Heb 3:22) the people should remember the Torah of Moses. Furthermore, in Malachi 2:6–7 it is said that 'Torah' is to be found in the teaching of the priests. There can be little doubt that 'Torah', in these verses, refers to the Torah of Moses. The reference to Moses as 'my servant' may refer to the issue and choice to serve Yahweh or not, in verses 14 and 18 (cf. also 1:6). 'The Day of Yahweh', mentioned in Malachi 4:5 (Heb 3:23), is not different to the day already mentioned in 3:2; 17; 4:1 (Heb 3:19) and 4:3 (Heb 3:21). The verb 'to turn' or 'to bring back' in Malachi 4:6 (Heb 3:24) is the same one used in Malachi 1:4; 3:7b and 18. The reference to the Torah of Moses as 'statues and ordinances' can be traced back to Malachi 2:17, where Yahweh's justice or 'mispat' has been questioned, and to Malachi 3:7a where it was said that the fathers deviated from Yahweh's statues. It might even be that this is another example of reverse quotation creating a chiasmic structure (justice 'mispat' 2:17, ordinances 3:7a, ordinances 4:4 [Heb 3:22], justice 'mispat' 4:4 [Heb 3:22]). The commandment of Yahweh to Moses, mentioned in Malachi 4:4 (Heb 3:22), reminds one of the commands against the priests in Malachi 2:1, 4 where the same verb is used. In Malachi 3:1 *'malaki'* [my messenger] will be sent whilst in Malachi 4:5 (Heb 3:23) it is Elijah the prophet who will be sent. Koorevaar (2010:75) relates the threat of a ban in Malachi 4:6 (Heb 3:24) to the curses pronounced in Malachi 1:14; 2:2 and 3:9. The theme of fathers and sons (MI 4:6 [Heb 3:24]) occurs also in Malachi 1:6 and in Malachi 3:17. In Malachi 1:6 a general truth in the form of a wisdom saying states that a son honours a father. This general truth is then applied to the relationship between Yahweh and his people. Malachi 3:17 refers to a man (not a father) having empathy with his son serving him. In a skilful way, then, a redactor (or redactors) alluded to themes

previously dealt with in the book, and in this way the last three verses of the book fit quite neatly in as a fine and sensible ending to the book as a whole.

Dating the additions is not easy. The book of Malachi is dated as somewhere after the completion of the second temple in 515 BC and the arrival of Nehemiah and Ezra circa 445 BC. A date closer to the mid fifth century BC is preferred (460–450 BC). A *terminus ad quem*, for the date of the Book of Malachi, is 397 BC, where it is mentioned in Sirach. In terms of a date for the additions Meinhold (2006:400) thinks of a date near the end of the third century BC.

Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) and its relationship with the rest of the Corpus Propheticum

At the same time the references to the Torah of Moses and to Elijah the prophet create a broader perspective beyond that of only the book itself. It is therefore likely that the conclusion to the book serves a double duty. It brings the book of Malachi to a close via various catch words taken up, but it also broadens the scope to the larger corpus of Prophetic literature and to the Torah. The epilogue picked up motives or themes from the rest of the book, but at the same time it serves as a conclusion to the whole of the *Corpus Propheticum* and relates it to the Torah.

In Malachi 4:5 (Heb 3:23) the coming Day of Yahweh is described as 'great and fearful'. What is rather striking is that the only other place where the Day of Yahweh is described as 'great and fearful' is in the book of Joel (Jl 2:31; Heb 3:4). This means that somehow the Book of the Twelve is also linked in a kind of an *inclusio*. It is however not easy to decide who quotes whom. Does Malachi 4:5 (Heb 3:23) quote the text in Joel (Rudolph 1976:292; Deissler 1988:338; Petersen 1995:231; Beck 2005:306; Meinhold 2006:421; Nogalski 2003:212) or is it the other way around (Wöhrle 2006:451)? Whatever the case may be, the point is that an intertextual link between two books within the Book of the Twelve is formed.

Petersen (1995:233) recognises only two epilogues in the latter prophets, one at the end of the first book of the twelve minor prophets (Hos 14:10), and the other at the end of the last book of the twelve minor prophets (MI 4:4–6 [Heb 3:22–24]). According to Petersen, Hosea 14:10 picks up vocabulary used earlier in the book of Hosea, but there are also resonances with another section of the canon, the writings (Ps 107:43) and more particularly, the wisdom literature (Pr 10:29; 24:16; Ec 8:1). Petersen's argument is that just as Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) establishes connections with the Torah and the former prophets, Hosea 14:10 provides a linkage with the third section of the canon. For Petersen the two epilogues work together to relate the Book of the Twelve to other sections of the canon and act as a 'canonical envelope' which encloses the Minor Prophets, thereby integrating the Minor Prophets with the rest of the canon (Petersen 1995:233). The idea of a 'canonical envelope' however, is not convincing.

As Petersen himself conceded, it is possible that Habakkuk 3:19b can also be seen as an epilogue to the book. The same can be said of Amos 9:11–15 and especially Micah 7:18–20 that significantly gives the idea of an epilogue added later to the books. The more obvious and pertinent links are the ones linking the beginning of the *Corpus Propheticum* with the end of it, as will be argued later.

The reference to the prophet Elijah seems odd. Suddenly, and rather abruptly, Elijah the prophet is mentioned. The mentioning of Elijah establishes an intertextual link with the Elijah-narratives recorded in 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 2. The promise of sending Elijah to the people makes this the only reference to him in the latter prophets. In only two other instances is Elijah identified as ‘the prophet’ (1 Ki 18:36; 2 Chr 21:12). The question is, why Elijah? There are four possible reasons.

Firstly, Elijah is known for his tireless attempts to let the people worship Yahweh alone (1 Ki 18). This is a conviction that will cohere well with the emphasis on the proper worship of Yahweh in the book of Malachi. Malachi 2:10–16 is a prophesy warning Isralite men against the dangers that marrying foreign women could cause to the exclusive worship of Yahweh alone. If one considers the late date for the additions to the book, when Hellenistic influences were a stark reality, the mentioning of Elijah at this point makes sense.

Secondly, Elijah is the prophet who confronted King Ahab on the issue of Naboth’s vineyard (1 Ki 21), making him also a prophet who is concerned about social justice. It might be that the importance of justice within the realm of human relationships triggered the idea of Elijah as the one who will restore relations between family members. The task Elijah has to perform is described as ‘turning the hearts of the fathers to the sons and the hearts of the sons to the fathers’. It is a vague description, and it is therefore difficult to determine what exactly is meant. Is it because of deteriorating relationships in families, and because of the growing influence of Hellenistic thoughts and customs (Rudolph 1976:292)? It has been argued that Elijah’s reconciling task concerned a younger generation, who were adapting the customs of the Hellenistic culture against an older generation who did not want to adapt to a Hellenistic way of life (Elliger 1975:205–206; Rudolph 1976:292; Deissler 1988:338). Other scholars argued the other possibility, that it is the older generation who tended to stand closer to the growing influence of a Hellenistic way of life that must reconcile itself with the younger generation (Crüsemann 1997:156). Do the reconciling efforts of Elijah mean a restoration of the covenant relationship with God, with one another including the ancestors (Verhoef 1987:342–344)? Does the reference to ‘fathers’ mean biological fathers or does it refer to the people’s forefathers, as in 2:10 and 3:7a? The first possibility is the one favored here because it will be difficult to assert how a present generation can be reconciled with their already deceased forefathers. Some kind of disruption must have occurred between these two generations, the details of which are unknown to present readers. In the Torah there are references to succeeding generations (Dt 4:9; 6:7; 6:20–25), but not in the sense suggesting any need for reconciliation.

In the prophetic literature the theme of disrupted human relationships does occur, even within families (Jr 9:4–9; 12:6), but the relationship between fathers and sons is not addressed in particular. In Amos 2:7 father and son are both guilty of the same sexual sin. Micah 7:6 (a post-exilic text) mentions a son insulting his father. The closest parallel to a reciprocal disrupted relationship is in Ezekiel 5:10 where it is said that ‘fathers will eat their own sons within your midst and sons will eat their own fathers’. This verse occurs in the context of a prophecy of doom on Jerusalem, resulting in the eventual fall of Jerusalem with the Babylonian exile.

Thirdly, because Elijah did not die but ascended into heaven (2 Ki 2:11) there was an expectation that he might return. Apart from Enoch (Gn 5:24) he is the only person in the HB or OT who escaped death in this way. This put him in a class of his own, combined with the fact that Elijah was seen as one of the prominent and also more successful prophets, when one considers his encounter with the prophets of Baal (1 Ki 18). In the light of this special position of Elijah, it means that he may be sent back to fulfill yet another mission. Furthermore, Elijah the prophet serves as an excellent counterpart to Moses, the mediator of the Torah. Both of them were devoted to Yahweh alone; both worked signs and wonders and had a meeting with Yahweh on Mt Horeb. It is noteworthy that Elijah had his meeting with Yahweh at Mt Horeb (1 Ki 19:8) and not Mt Sinai.

Fourthly, it is also possible that the expected coming of an earlier prophet may be an indication that prophecy, in the classical sense, was on the decline and that there were to be no more prophets to come (Wehrle 2000:392). There can now only be an appeal to prophets, who had appeared already, as in the case of Elijah.

Elijah the prophet, mentioned right at the end of the book, forms a link also with Malachi as a prophetic figure at the beginning of the book. The prophet of the book of Malachi stands within the same tradition of prophets going as far back as Elijah. The mentioning of Elijah as one of the major prophetic figures in the former prophets serves as a link between the former and latter prophets. Wöhrle (2008:423) speaks in this regard of a ‘kanonübergreifender Zusammenhang zwischen den vorderen Propheten und dem Zwölfprophetenbuch’ that is created by this reference. It serves as an indication that the former and latter prophets belong together.

It cannot be sheer coincidence that Moses is referred to as ‘my servant’ in both Joshua 1:2, 7 and Malachi 4:4 (Heb 3:22). It is also of some significance that Joshua is reminded to adhere to the Torah of ‘my servant’ Moses (Jos 1:7–8). No less than four words used in Joshua 1:7 are repeated in Malachi 4:4 (Heb 3:22) namely, ‘Torah’, ‘command’, ‘Moses’ and ‘servant’. Furthermore, in Josh 1:13, the people are admonished to remember the words of Moses and in Malachi 4:4 (Heb 3:22) the people are once again admonished to remember the Torah of Moses. The *Corpus Propheticum* starts off with a

clear reference to the Torah of Moses and ends, once again, with a call to remember the Torah. In this way the whole of the *Corpus Propheticum* forms an *inclusio*, bracketed by admonitions, to remember and adhere to the Torah (Rudolph 1976:291; Deissler 1984:337; Reventlow 1993:160–161; Petersen 1995:228; Meinhold 2006:410–412; Beck 2005:302). The opening verses of the book of Joshua (1:1–9) function both as an introduction to an independent book, as well as a literary bridge between Deuteronomy and Judges (Dozeman 2010:1). One should also reckon with the possibility that Joshua 1:1–9 was written not only as an introduction to the book of Joshua but also to the Former Prophets.

The implication of these intertextual references to the Torah is important. The Book of the Prophets goes back to the Torah and is nothing more than an explication and application of the Torah (Wöhrlé 2008:425). Being so close to the Torah, it also means that the Former and Latter Prophets form a unity within the diversity of different prophets, delivering their distinctive prophesies over a period of more than two hundred and fifty years.

With the addition of Elijah the prophet, and with the reference to Moses as ‘my servant’ to whom the Torah was commanded, undeniable links are formed between the beginning and the end of the Prophets, binding the second part of the Hebrew Bible together as a unity. There can be little doubt then that the closing verses of the Book of Malachi also serve to bring the Prophets to a fitting end.

Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) and its relationship with the Torah Moses

What is of particular interest in Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) is the reference to the law of Moses in verse 4 (Heb v. 22). This reference to the Torah, right at the end of the Prophets in the Hebrew canon of scriptures, is normally taken as a pertinent and direct allusion to the first part of the canon, and in that sense serves as another link to the Torah apart from the one in Joshua 1.

It is a matter of debate what is meant exactly by the term ‘law’ or ‘instruction’ of Moses in Malachi 4:4 (Heb 3:22). Does it refer to the book of Malachi itself (Nogalski 2003:195–197), or to the book of Deuteronomy (Floyd 2000:624), or the law book of Ezra (Horst 1964:275), or to the commandments of the Lord in more general terms (Van der Woude 1982:157–158)? Or is it impossible to determine what kind of law of Moses the author had in mind (Verhoef 1987:339–340)? The majority of scholars in recent times tend to think in terms of the whole of the Pentateuch (Baldwin 1978:251; Glazier-McDonald 1987:246; Hill 1998:366; Redditt 1995:185; Deutsch 1987:114; Meinhold 2006:414). Whatever the case may be, through the connection of the Torah of Moses, and Elijah as prophet, a link is established between the first and the second part of the Hebrew canon of scriptures.

Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) and its relationship with the Psalms

The epilogue of Malachi not only serves as a link to the rest of the *Corpus Propheticum* and the Torah, it also links the Prophets with Psalm 1, in particular, and thereby with the Psalms in general. Psalm 1 is normally taken as programmatic for what follows in the rest of the Psalter. Recent research on the Psalter focussed on the growth and arrangement of the Psalms. It is not by sheer coincidence that Psalm 1 forms the first Psalm. Psalm 1 has been called the door to the rest of the Psalter (Janowski 1994:150–163; Wehrle 1995:215–229) and Weber (2006:248) proposed the possibility that Psalm 1 may even be composed for this location of being the first Psalm. Whilst this point of view takes it probably a bit too far (Botha 2005) it ‘is now almost generally accepted that Psalm 1 was intentionally set in its present position to serve as an introduction to the Book of the Psalms’ (2005:503). It seems that most investigators accept that the first Psalm is intended to indicate an instruction about how the rest of the Psalter can or should be read.

Also quite significant is the reference to the Torah of Yahweh as it is referred to in Psalm 1:2. The reference to the Torah of Yahweh in Psalm 1, coupled with the Torah of Moses in Malachi 4:4 (Heb 3:22), creates an undeniable link between the *Corpus Propheticum* and Psalm 1 and, for that matter, the rest of the Psalms and the Writings as a whole. Literature on Psalm 1 highlights the reference to the Torah as a significant and pertinent way of linking the Psalter with the Torah of Moses. As the Torah of Moses is divided into five books, so also the book of the Psalms is divided into five books. Psalm 1 should therefore be read as a pointer forwards to the rest of what follows in the Psalter and at the same time backwards, with a clear reference to the Torah of Moses and Yahweh. Thus, a link between Psalm 1 and the Torah is beyond questioning. A link between Malachi 4:4 (Heb 3:22) and the Torah is also beyond questioning. In both cases it may be argued that the link is even a deliberate one. The reference to the Torah, at the end of the prophetic book and at the beginning of the Writings, likewise creates a link between the second and third part of the Hebrew canon of scriptures.

The question is seldom asked whether or not there is a link between the closing verses of the Prophets and the beginning of the Writings. Rendtorff (2005:312, 319), who wrote a canonical theology of the Old Testament, noted the reference to the Torah in both Malachi and Psalm 1, but did not investigate the possible relationship between the conclusion of the book of Malachi and the beginning of the Writings in Psalms 1. Weber (2006:254) suggests a link between Malachi 3:18–4:4/5 (Heb 3:18–21/22) and Psalm 1, but does not elaborate on this suggestion. Likewise, Smith (1984:339) noticed that the expression ‘righteous and wicked’ occurs in Malachi 3:18 and that the contrast of the two groups is a major motif in *inter alia* Psalm 1, but he did not investigate the matter any further. Weyde (2000:388–393), who did a thorough investigation of various intertextual links in the

book of Malachi, did not investigate a possible link with Psalm 1 in any depth. Willi-Plein (2007:288) notices this relationship (which she calls 'eine redaktionelle Stichwortverknüpfung') but is hesitant to make a decision on this matter.

The possibility of a link between the Psalms and the Prophets is further substantiated by a closer look at Psalm 1:2. To meditate day and night on the law reminds one of the instructions Joshua was issued at the beginning of his duties as the successor of Moses, when Yahweh instructed him 'to meditate on the law day and night' (Jos 1:8). Psalm 1:2 may be interpreted as a hint of Joshua 1:8. Just as Joshua had to meditate day and night on the law, so the righteous are encouraged to do the same in Psalm 1. The beginning of the Writings harks back to the beginning of the Prophets, and what unites them is their pondering upon the Torah of Moses. The *Corpus Propheticum* concludes with a reference to the law of Moses, that creates not only an *inclusio* binding the prophetic books to a unit, but also a link to the following part of the Hebrew Bible. By so called 'closure phenomena' texts were added to the Prophets and the Writings with the intention to create links with the Torah (Koorevaar 2010:67).

Conclusion

The investigation and understanding of the closing verses of the Book of Malachi should not lead to an 'either/or' kind of decision. An investigation, of the possible intertextual relationships between Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) and other parts in the Hebrew Bible, reveals interesting links between this material. Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24), as the last verses of the book of Malachi, is then more than only a fitting end to a book or even a corpus of literature. Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) serves as a link between not only the former and latter prophets, by binding them in a unity, but also acts as a link to the all important Torah of Moses, and finally it serves as a link to the next part of the Hebrew Bible. It signifies something of a coherency in the different books that make up the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, it may be said that Malachi 4:4–6 (Heb 3:22–24) serves as a point of convergence for the Prophets, the Pentateuch and the Psalms.

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