

Understanding (the Lack of) Space in Psalm 47:6 in Light of its Neighbouring Psalms: A Spatial Reading of Psalms 46-48

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ABSTRACT

Psalm 47 is investigated intertextually with Psalms 46 and 48 in terms of their representation of space to determine to where Yahweh ascends in Psalm 47:6. An overview is also given of the theory of Critical Spatiality as well as an overview of the temple as the navel of the Ancient Near Eastern cosmology and spatial orientation. The spatial correlations of Psalm 46-48, i.e. all three's emphasis on the temple and surroundings, will then aid the interpreter in identifying the space in which Psalm 47 plays off. It is also indicated that Psalms 46-48 can be read as a trilogy as they share the same themes and use the same kind of language.

A INTRODUCTION

In this article Psalm 47 will be investigated from an intertextual perspective. The term “intertextual” indicates the relationship between various texts of the same corpus or canon.¹ Attention will be given to similarities with other texts in the immediate context of the Psalm, namely Psalms 46 and 48. An intertextual analysis will be conducted between Psalm 47 and Psalms 46 and 48 in terms of space in order to shed light on where it is that Yahweh ascends to in Psalm 47:6. Here the study links up with a recent trend in Psalms research, namely to concentrate less upon individual poems and their so-called *Sitz im Leben* and more upon the composition and redaction of the Psalter as a book, especially by focusing on concatenation or the holistic approach of a psalm and those that surround it.² An overview of the theory of critical spatiality will also

¹ Interpretation of texts (especially ancient texts) should be a holistic exercise that takes into account that all texts function on three levels, namely the intra-, inter-, and extratextual levels (See Yuri Lotman, *Die Struktur literarischer Texte*, translated by Rolf-Dietrich Keil (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1972), 81-91. Gert T. M. Prinsloo, “Analysing Old Testament poetry: An experiment in methodology with reference to Psalm 126,” *OTE* 5 (1992), 225-251. The terms intra-, inter-, and extratextuality are used along the lines of Semiotic literary theory’s basic premise that texts are determined by a number of codes that are essentially social in character. Effective communication only takes place when sender and receiver share common codes. By conducting textual research on all three “levels” of the text, the researcher should be able to come to a more complete or “holistic” understanding of a text.

² Susan E. Gillingham, *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 235.

be given as well as an overview of the temple as the navel of the Ancient Near Eastern cosmology and spatial orientation. The spatial correlations of Psalm 46-48 will then aid the interpreter in identifying the space in which Psalm 47 plays of. This study builds forth on a complete intratextual analysis of Psalm 47.³

B THE THEORY OF CRITICAL SPATIALITY

Space has a genealogy and a history; it exists as a constructed category within the framework of human experience. Space is something we make, create, produce, shape, reshape, form, inform, disform and transform. ... [T]he terms space and spatiality refer to aspects of reality that involve concepts of distance, height, width, breath, orientation and direction, and also human perceptions, constructions and uses of these aspects.⁴

Critical spatiality understands all the different aspects of space as human constructions that are socially attested and it concentrates primarily on the sociology of space: “As a constructionist discourse, critical spatiality will study how spaces are arranged, constructed, perceived, valued, practiced and resisted.”⁵ Critical spatiality concentrates on the sociology of spaces and not on its symbology.⁶ It seeks “to introduce spatiality in an ontological trialectic that includes historicity, sociality, and spatiality.”⁷ “Space is not neutral or objective; there is no magical space to stand from which one can observe space without perspective. ... [A]ny talk of space is talk of meaning – the meaning that interpreters attach to space.”⁸

³ See Jo-Marí Schäder, “Psalm 47 – how universal is its universalism? An intra-, inter- and extratextual analysis of the poem.” (M.A dissertation. University of Pretoria. 2008), 6-49.

⁴ Jon L. Berquist, “Critical Spatiality and the Construction of the Ancient World,” in *‘Imagining’ Biblical Worlds: Studies in Spatial, Social and Historical Constructs in Honor of James W. Flanagan* [eds. David M. Gunn & Paula M. McNutt, London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002], 14-15).

⁵ Berquist, “Critical Spatiality,” 26 and 29.

⁶ Berquist, “Critical Spatiality,” 26.

⁷ James W. Flanagan, “Ancient Perceptions of Space / Perceptions of Ancient Space,” *Semeia* 87 (1999): 26; cf. Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace – Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers. 1996), 70-76; Piet M. Venter, “Spatiality in Psalm 29,” in *Psalms and Liturgy* (eds. Dirk J. Human, & Cas J. A. Vos. London: T & T Clark International 2004), 235.

⁸ Berquist, “Critical Spatiality,” 22, Claudia V. Camp, “Storied Space, or, Ben Sira ‘Tells’ a Temple,” in *‘Imagining’ Biblical Worlds: Studies in Spatial, Social and Historical Constructs in Honor of James W. Flanagan* (eds. David M. Gunn & Paula M. McNutt. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 64.

It is important to remember “that notions of time and space are culturally learned. They are not simple ‘givens’ of our biological constitution”.⁹ Different cultures understand space differently and these differences and their interaction lead to the formation of new notions of space.¹⁰ Therefore, it is difficult to grasp the full meaning of some places mentioned in the Old Testament as we are unfamiliar with what they initially meant and what was associated with them. “New cultural resources will enrich notions of space and will shift attention away from the classical and traditional Western concepts.”¹¹ This is due to the resistance to Western hegemony within academic thought.¹²

Two names that have become synonymous with the theory underlying critical spatiality is Henri Lefebvre and Edward W. Soja. We now turn to both of their spatial categories.

1 The spatial categories of Henri Lefebvre

Lefebvre approaches the study of space as a Marxist philosopher and sociologist and “concentrates on the ways that particular ideas of space are creations of political practice, social system, division of labour and mode of production”.¹³ His study of space has three fields, namely the physical, the mental and the social.¹⁴ He categorises space as *represented* or *perceived* (or “spatial practice”), *conceived* (or “representations of space”) and *lived* (or “spaces of representation”).¹⁵ Represented or perceived space is the physical space which physicists call space and which is produced by production (“real space”¹⁶); conceived space is the mental or ideological space of what people think about space (“imagined space”);¹⁷ and lived space is the space produced by social relations that produce ideologies and thoughts about space.¹⁸

⁹ Nick Wyatt, *Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Near East* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 33.

¹⁰ Berquist, “Critical Spatiality,” 17.

¹¹ Berquist, “Critical Spatiality,” 17.

¹² Berquist, “Critical Spatiality,” 17.

¹³ Berquist, “Critical Spatiality,” 19.

¹⁴ Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 11.

¹⁵ Lefebvre, *Space*, 33, 38-39, 361-362; cf. Camp, *Storied Space*, 65, Flanagan, “Ancient Perceptions,” 28; Gert T. M. Prinsloo, “The Role of Space in the שירי המעלות (Psalms 120-134),” *Biblica* 86/4 (2005): 460 and Soja, *Thirdspace*, 65-68.

¹⁶ Paula M. McNutt “‘Fathers of the Empty Spaces’ and ‘Strangers Forever’: Social Marginality and the Construction of Space,” in *‘Imagining’ Biblical Worlds: Studies in Spatial, Social and Historical Constructs in Honor of James W. Flanagan* (eds. David M. Gunn & Paula M. McNutt. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 34.

¹⁷ McNutt, “Empty Spaces,” 34.

¹⁸ Berquist, “Critical Spatiality,” 19; McNutt, “Empty Spaces,” 34-35; Flanagan, “Ancient Perceptions,” 28.

2 The spatial categories of Edward W. Soja

Soja builds on the work of Lefebvre, therefore, an overlapping of the categories for classifying space can be identified between their approaches. Soja attempts to apply spatial theory to a more post-modern intellectual context¹⁹ and focuses on three spatial categories which are “epistemologically triune,”²⁰ namely Firstspace (“geophysical realities as perceived”), Secondspace (“mapped realities as represented”) and Thirdspace (“lived realities as practised”).²¹

Firstspace consists of concrete spatial forms, “things that can be empirically mapped, but are also socially produced, as *mediums* and *outcomes* of human activity, behaviour and experience.” It is open to measurement and description.²² It is perceived as “concrete geophysical reality.”²³ Prinsloo describes Firstspace as “physical space, concrete space, perceived space, i.e. the description of a place or environment.”²⁴

¹⁹ Soja, *Thirdspace*, 6-12, 26-39. Berquist “Critical Spatiality,” 29, says: “In some ways, the drive toward increasingly accurate spatial representations ... reflects the interest of modernity, whereas the emphasis on practices and understanding of space as not natural but constructed and performed plays upon a number of postmodernist themes. Critical spatiality operates as a postmodern practice allied with a number of moves within postmodern philosophy.”

²⁰ Camp, *Storied Space*, 65.

²¹ Berquist, “Critical Spatiality,” 20; cf. Camp, *Storied Space*, 65, Flanagan, “Ancient Perceptions,” 29; McNutt, “Empty Spaces,” 33, Prinsloo, “The Role of Space,” 460, and Gert T. Prinsloo, “*Še’ól* → *Yerûšālayim* ← *Šamayim*: spatial orientation in the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113-118),” *OTE* 19/2 (2006): 740.

²² McNutt, “Empty Spaces,” 34, cf. Camp, *Storied Space*, 65.

²³ Venter, “Spatiality in Psalm 29,” 235.

²⁴ Prinsloo, “The Role of Space,” 460. What is important for the purposes of this study is that, although it is significant, territory or Firstspace is not the primary measure of spatiality or spatial identity of tribal societies, “tribal peoples do not determine who is a member of their group and who is not by referring to physical, mappable territory” (McNutt, “Empty Spaces,” 38). Their identity and how they relate to ‘territory’ is determined by membership in a group. Their lived space thus derives from their relationships that in turn affect their social status (McNutt, “Empty Spaces,” 38-39). McNutt (“Empty Spaces,” 390) points out that the purpose of genealogies in segmented societies is to define social, political and economic relations. They function as a code that defines relationships of power. “But they also convey substantial spatial information, and can be used to gain perspectives on how space was constructed in ancient societies, especially given the tendency in segmented societies to mix kinship and place names – that is, self-identification can be expressed either in kinship or territorial terms” (McNutt, “Empty Spaces,” 39). Space has multiple meanings for different individuals or groups. The space that is occupied by humans forms part of their identity, as well as their apprehension of reality, especially when their control over it is at stake (Douglas A. Knight, “Joshua 22 and the Ideology of Space,” in *Imagining*

Secondspace is mentally or cognitive reconstructed spaces, “ideas about space ... thoughtful re-representations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms.”²⁵ It is expressed in “intellectually worked out” signs or symbols, either written or spoken. It is therefore “conceived.”²⁶ These are the spaces that are the “dominating” representations of power and ideology.²⁷ Prinsloo describes Secondspace as “imagined space, conceived space, abstract space, i.e. the description of space on an emotive level where space touches upon the psychological, ideological, religious and philosophical dimensions of human behaviour.”²⁸

Thirdspace can be described as “lived space, the confrontation between various social groups and their space, reflecting the spatial ideology of society.”²⁹ It suggests that competing spatialities co-exist.³⁰ Venter describes it as “the way in which it is related to the ideology of the author and of the society.”³¹ Thirdspace also poses resistance to the oppressive structures of the ideologies associated with Secondspace.³²

Biblical Worlds: Studies in Spatial, Social and Historical Constructs in Honor of James W. Flanagan [eds. David M. Gunn & Paula M. McNutt. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002], 63).

²⁵ Soja, *Thirdspace*, 10.

²⁶ Venter, “Spatiality in Psalm 29,” 235.

²⁷ McNutt, “Empty Spaces,” 34.

²⁸ Prinsloo, “The Role of Space,” 460.

²⁹ Prinsloo, “The Role of Space,” 460.

³⁰ Flanagan, “Ancient Perceptions,” 9. Cf. Berquist, “Critical Spatiality,” 24.

³¹ Venter, “Spatiality in Psalm 29,” 235.

³² Camp, *Storied Space*, 65. She calls it “a place of marginality and a possibly empowering counterculture” (68). Soja (*Thirdspace*, 35; cf. Camp, *Storied Space*, 65-66) calls this space “politically charged.” The praxis of the margins to destabilise the constructed space is an act of Thirdspace. Soja (86) refers to this as *Thirdspace-as-Othering*, which he also understands as space without scale (cf. Berquist, “Critical Spatiality,” 20; Flanagan “Ancient Perceptions,” 28-29; McNutt “Empty Spaces,” 32). McNutt (34) argues “Lived space overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects, and tends to be expressed in systems of *nonverbal* symbols and signs.” These lived or “dominated” spaces are the domain for the generating of “counterspaces” which are “spaces of resistance to the dominant order that arise from within subordinate, peripheral or marginalized contexts” (McNutt “Empty Spaces,” 35; Soja, *Thirdspace*, 31-32, 62-63, 67-68). Soja (98) also distinguishes between marginality as imposed by oppressive structures and chosen marginality as a form of resistance (cf. McNutt, “Empty Spaces,” 36). Soja (31) places great emphasis on the relationship of space, knowledge and power: “(P)ower is contextualized and made concrete in the social production of social space” (McNutt, “Empty Spaces,” 35). McNutt (35) adds: “Soja is particularly interested in how power is used to construct and maintain ‘difference’, and how this relates to spatiality. Those in authority use power, he argues, actively to produce difference as a strategy for creating and maintaining social and spa-

There are no clear boundaries between First-, Second- or Thirdspace as they are as good as the same thing - "space is ineluctably all three at once."³³ They function interchangeably as a trialectic ("three-dimensional approach").³⁴ For both Lefebvre and Soja space is "seen as simultaneously real and imagined, concrete and abstract, material and metaphorical."³⁵ McNutt describes it as there being "no unspecialized social reality."³⁶

The potential stumbling block of any social-scientific theory is that it can end up being reductionistic. Space that is conceived through the spoken or written word is constructed through the word and, therefore, Secondspace. It is a space of domination as those in power "make the 'maps'" through which Firstspace can be experienced. They design and control it and validate their right to be able to do so. "This would be particularly true of canonical literature, given its apparent status as the record of the winners."³⁷ But to only classify any text as Secondspace would not require any further analysis. In approaching this analysis I wish to caution against such a simplistic approach as spatialities exist and are constructed within texts in intricate interrelationships.³⁸ "[A]ny search for space in literary texts will find it everywhere and in every guise; encoded, described, projected, dreamt of, speculated about."³⁹ Space also forms an intricate part of any narrative's

tial divisions that are advantageous to their continued empowerment and authority. 'We' and 'they' are thus spatialized...".

³³ Berquist, "Critical Spatiality," 20; Flanagan "Ancient Perceptions," 29; cf. Prinsloo, "The Role of Space," 462.

³⁴ Prinsloo, "Spatial Orientation," 740.

³⁵ McNutt, "Empty Spaces," 37.

³⁶ McNutt, "Empty Spaces," 31.

³⁷ Camp, *Storied Space*, 66.

³⁸ "One could already appeal, against that assumption, to the notion of the text 'creating a world', that is, a space in which the reader as well as the characters 'live'. Human 'living', both inside and outside texts, inescapably involves language and concepts. So one issue of spatial analysis – is it First? is it Second? is it Third? – is not decided on the basis of 'is it written?' It depends on what kind of literature is involved. Narrative literature potentially supplies both a model for thinking Thirdspatially and a site of Thirdspace from which lived First- and Secondspatial possibilities can be abstracted and analysed. Spatial analysis that brings narrative to bear can, in other words, provide a window, precisely through literature, into the ancient world. Critical spatiality theory provides, then, one tool with which to theorize in turn the use of narrative texts in social-historical reconstruction" (Camp, *Storied Space*, 67-68).

³⁹ Lefebvre, *Space*, 15; cf. Philip R. Davies, "Space and Sects in the Qumran Scrolls," in *Imagining Biblical Worlds: Studies in Spatial, Social and Historical Constructs in Honor of James W. Flanagan* (eds. David M. Gunn, Paula M. & McNutt. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 81.

focalisation or point of view as it contributes to the “perception” created by the narrative.⁴⁰

The reason why a spatial analysis can be applied to the Old Testament is worded well by Berquist⁴¹ who writes:

The Hebrew Bible is obsessed with space. The matter of the land is paramount – its conquest, its occupation and its loss. Although scholarly reconstructions of conquest, exile and restoration have been found faulty, the matter remains that the Hebrew Bible concerns itself with land and thus with space.

C THE TEMPLE AS THE NAVEL OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN COSMOLOGY AND SPATIAL ORIENTATION

The Ancient Near Eastern spatial orientation can be discussed by making use of various categories or classifications such as at-centre and off-centre,⁴² boundaries between “in” and “out” and horizontal and vertical axes.⁴³ Other concepts

⁴⁰ Prinsloo “The Role of Space,” 459: “There are three different “types” of space present in a narrative: the narrator’s space (i.e. the socio-historical milieu of the narrator), the narrating space (i.e. the world of the reader or hearer) and the narrated space (i.e. the world created by the work itself).”

⁴¹ Berquist, “Critical Spatiality,” 25.

⁴² Prinsloo “The Role of Space,” 460-461; Prinsloo, “Spatial Orientation,” 744. Human kind can be represented as either at-centre (oriented and living in order with his world) or off-centre (living in chaos and disorientation). “To be off-centre is to be in negative space, to experience distress, illness, persecution, moral failure, divine judgement, to live in the presence of enemies, even in the face of death, far from the presence of YHWH. To be at-centre is to be in positive space, to experience harmony, health, peace, reconciliation, to live in the presence of YHWH and in harmony with the community of the faithful” (Prinsloo, “The Role of Space,” 461). Another aspect of being at-centre or off-centre is regarding the human body and gender. “In the Hebrew Bible, gender is an important aspect of how the body and space interact. Some spaces are permissible for males and others for females. This creates a cartography of gender as well as a set of Thirdspace practices that can create and resist the construction of space at the same time that they create and resist the social construction of gender” (Berquist, “Critical Spatiality,” 28).

⁴³ Davies, “Space and Sects,” 86; 90. See also Prinsloo “The Role of Space,” 461, “Spatial Orientation,” 742-744. The Ancient Near Eastern people imagined their universe to be “geocentric” (Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 55) and that it consisted of heaven, earth and the netherworld (Prinsloo, “Spatial Orientation,” 742). In the Ancient Near East, spatial orientation was plotted along a horizontal and vertical axis. The vertical axis (“up and down”) points to the transcendent dimension of the cosmos – it lies outside the spatial-temporal plane. “The movement upwards was particularly important in the ancient world in articulating the power believed to accrue to gods, and to those special men...who were believed either by special qualities of their own (charisma), or ex officio by virtue of their royal or priestly status, to be able to enter heaven. The

that contribute towards the psychological, ideological and moral perspective of a text are inside or outside, high or low, far or near, clean or unclean and holy or unholy.⁴⁴ According to Prinsloo they define lived space as safe or unsafe, positive or negative, holy or unholy, comfortable or uncomfortable and acceptable or unacceptable. Such conceptions reflect a society's ideology and theology.

The cosmic centre is usually represented by a holy or cosmological mountain on which the temple stood as the centre of the earth where all dimensions and the vertical and horizontal axes of the cosmos intersect.⁴⁵ The temple achieved its status as cosmological centre and meeting place of different realms during creation or other mythological formative moments in its history.⁴⁶ It is also the most sacred space where human and divine meet and was established by a hierophany.⁴⁷ It is the point from where heaven and the underworld could

movement downwards was universally associated with death, and the common lot of all men (and women) who were not able to evade this gravitational pull" (Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 40). To ascend or an upward movement was associated with entering heaven and was therefore "good," whereas to descend or a downward movement was associated with death and was therefore "bad." Heaven was the sphere from where destructive powers were unleashed, but the underworld, with its springs, were the source that renewed the earth and life. This also reflects the ambivalent nature of the primeval ocean as potential force of life and death. Interesting to note is that Egypt always serves as a symbolic location for the underworld or death as "one always 'goes down (*yārad*) to Egypt'" and that the burnt offering in Hebrew is *ōlā*, "a going up" (Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 40; cf. Prinsloo, "The Role of Space," 461, "Spatial Orientation," 764). To ascend implies to be close to and in harmony with Yahweh. To be far from the temple implies to be out of harmony with Yahweh (cf. Prinsloo, "Spatial Orientation," 743). This vertical axis also affects humankind after death as human beings consist of divine breath, which returns upwards, and clay or dust, which returns downwards after death (see the creation of Adam in Genesis 2) (Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 40). It is also the place where the king communes with the god(s) as his/their earthly representative (Prinsloo, "The Role of Space," 461; Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 154). "While this is the practical effect of temple cult, putting people in touch with their gods, it is expressed in more deliberately cosmological terms. The point of junction is communication between the two, allowing the benefits of cult to reach the gods (they were seen as being fed by their servants, like great lords), and for their power to be transmitted downwards as blessing" (Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 161).

⁴⁴ Prinsloo, "The Role of Space," 461.

⁴⁵ Davies, "Space and Sects," 91; Lori McCullough, *Dimensions of the Temple: The Temple Account in 1 Kings 5-9 Compared with Ancient Near Eastern Temple Paradigms* (MA Thesis. Nashville, Tennessee: Graduate School of Vanderbilt University, 2007), 15.

⁴⁶ McCullough, *Dimensions of the Temple*, 13.

⁴⁷ Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 147-148; cf. Sidney Kelly, "Psalm 46: A Study in Imagery," *JBL* 89/3 (1970): 310; McCullough, *Dimensions of the Temple*, 24; Prinsloo, "The Role of Space," 461, "Spatial Orientation," 743).

be accessed. Mount Saphon was the dominant feature of this conception.⁴⁸ Mount Saphon was not only the dwelling of the Ugaritic gods El and Baal, but also localized in particular geographical locations.⁴⁹ Mount Zion would also later be equated with the ancient (mythological) Mount Saphon. Sacred mountains were identified as an *Omphalos* (from Greek meaning “navel”) and the place from which creation proceeded. It could either be the mountain, a stone or a sanctuary on it. It can also be equated with the locus of Paradise or a sacred garden.⁵⁰ According to McCullough aspects of the temple’s decoration suggest a link between creation and the temple. She makes use of the dimensions and description of the temple in 1 Kings 5-9 to conclude that the temple recalls the primordial landscape (in Israel’s case the Garden of Eden).⁵¹ Ancient temples had gardens as they were the houses in which the gods dwelt. Naturally they would have had trees and the cultic theme was the tree of life.⁵² The temple and its architecture therefore symbolise the cosmos.⁵³

The heavens and the underworld were believed to be surrounded by a body of water.⁵⁴ This “cosmic water” was conceptualized as an ocean or as a

⁴⁸ Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 147.

⁴⁹ Arnold A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms, Volume 1 & 2* (London: Oliphants, 1972), 368-369; James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 189. Says Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50, Volume 19* (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 353: “Thus, Jebel al-Aqra’, the mountain some thirty miles north of Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit), was identified as Mount Zaphon. And in one text, it is possible that the “hill” of Ugarit itself is called Zaphon... But the mountain north of Ugarit was probably not the “original” Mount Zaphon. The original was a mythological reality, and among different peoples, at different times and places, it was given an earthly location in a particular geographical point. Thus the place *Baal-Zaphon* (Exod 14:2) probably indicates the site of a Baal temple in Egypt, constructed by a Canaanite community resident there...”

⁵⁰ See Kelly, “Psalm 46,” 310; McCullough, *Dimensions of the Temple*, 17 and Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 148). In Ezekiel 28:12, 14 the imagery of the cosmic mountain and the Garden of Eden are combined by giving them the same location, to be identified with Mount Zion in Jerusalem (Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 155, 159).

⁵¹ McCullough, *Dimensions of the Temple*, 38. Cherubim, heavenly beings who guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden and the transportation of the divine throne, were supposedly depicted within the Jerusalem temple, indicating the transition from earthly space to divine space and the proximity to the divine realm. They appear on bronze stands that mark the approach to the temple, in reliefs on the temple’s inner walls and around the innermost sanctuary. As one progresses deeper into the temple, the presence of the cherubim increases. The presence of the cherubim, coupled with tree and floral motifs, recreate the landscape of the Garden of Eden.

⁵² Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 159.

⁵³ Prinsloo, “Spatial Orientation,” 743.

⁵⁴ McCullough, *Dimensions of the Temple*, 21; Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 96.

river. Either way, they represent the same reality.⁵⁵ Water was the symbol of the origin and source of all things. “It carries ideas of birth, death and rebirth, as well as the sustenance of life.”⁵⁶ Land and sea is in constant opposition, which was believed to be controlled by the efficacy of temple rituals (i.e. their function was to help maintain universal order). The ocean is tamed in Ancient Near Eastern primordial myths and is reiterated in the temple rituals.⁵⁷ This ocean also enters temple architecture which was required to be tapped at crucial times for its life-giving powers (temples had a replica of this ocean).⁵⁸ Divinely ordained boundaries had to be maintained in order to prevent a reversion to chaos. If this cosmic ocean entered creation without the permission of the gods, it threatened all existence on earth. But floods also lead to new creation.⁵⁹ In Genesis 2:1-14 the cosmic river with four rivers flow from the centre of creation to the cosmic ocean. It irrigates the whole earth.⁶⁰ Gihon, the spring below Jerusalem, which was also the name of the cosmic ocean, was considered to be a cosmic river and the surrounding world ocean. Through this association Jerusalem is in essence declared as the centre of the world.⁶¹ Around this centre was an inner ring of harmony and an outer ring of hostility.⁶²

Venter⁶³ says:

In the Jerusalem cult tradition the flood is on a vertical axis, the cosmic opposite of the throne of God. From his throne God reigns with military might over the primeval flood. A distinction is not made here between God’s throne in heaven and his presence in the temple in Jerusalem. ... The relation between God’s throne and the mighty waters/flood is intended rather qualitatively than physical.

⁵⁵ Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 95. Wyatt (102) says: “Yam (*ym*, ‘sea’) was the Ugaritian sea-god. ... Nahar (*nhr*, ‘river’) was an epithet of Yam, the two names commonly appearing in parallel...”

⁵⁶ Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 95.

⁵⁷ Kelly, “Psalm 46,” 310; Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 113, 162. Wyatt says on p. 181: “The cosmic sea was amorphous, uncontained and chaotic. The construction of a receptacle for it in the temple...was part of the cultic process of taming chaos, by containing it, and thus reducing it to order and manageability.”

⁵⁸ Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 113, 162. The “bronze sea” in Jerusalem might have served this purpose and to commemorate the storm god’s victory over chaos (162). The sea also reminds one of the Garden of Eden’s water source’s four branches which flows in all the directions of the world. In some Ancient Near Eastern temple complexes tanks of water were incorporated to commemorate a temple’s link to the cosmic waters. See McCullough, *Dimensions of the Temple*, 23 and 39.

⁵⁹ Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 123- 124.

⁶⁰ Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 172.

⁶¹ Anderson, *Psalms*, 357; Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 172-173.

⁶² Kelly, “Psalm 46,” 310.

⁶³ Venter, “Spatiality,” 245.

God's throne is put in the centre of both horizontal and vertical axes. When reading Isaiah 6:1-5 it is clear that Yahweh sits on his throne above the temple and that his presence fills the entire earth.⁶⁴ Kelly⁶⁵ augments:

The city is the mythico-geographical creative center or navel of the universe: here is the vertical point of contact where the Most High God overcomes the chaotic deep; horizontally, this is the point where the nations of the earth are overcome and peace is established to 'the end of the earth.'

The only place in which the vertical dimension linking heaven and earth was encountered was the Jerusalem temple.⁶⁶

Everything near was important as it was one's primary sphere of influence and that which attributed to one's identity. Therefore, everything that was distant was of less importance.⁶⁷ Wyatt writes that "...something is valued in direct proportion to proximity" and "[o]n the moral-spatial axis, proximity to

⁶⁴ Prinsloo, "Spatial Orientation," 743: "It is especially the covenantal community who experiences the temple at Jerusalem as its spatial centre. On the vertical plane to be at the temple implies to be in harmony with YHWH, to be away from the temple means to be out of harmony with YHWH. To ascend to the temple mound was positive and is associated with YHWH and his deliverance. To descend is negative, to leave YHWH and his saving presence, to sink into the depths of Sheol."

⁶⁵ Kelly, "Psalm 46," 309.

⁶⁶ See Davies, "Space and Sects," 91. Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 35-38 argues that on the horizontal axis the focus falls on the importance of the four directions of the wind. East represented looking to the "front" to the rising of the sun. "The word *qedem* (= *qadmu*) means three things, probably in this order of development: i) 'face'; ii) 'East'; iii) 'past'. The order of development can be seen from the primary meaning of the term ('face') which was then aligned on the East-West axis, and was subsequently used metaphorically to refer to time. Thus we face the past. ... We 'see' the past, which thus provides us, through memory and narrative, with accounts of how we came to be where we are. Such accounts are often called 'myth'." West would then be to the back or behind. "As we face East, it follows that the West is behind us. ... [T]he word *'aHar* (= *axru*) means 'back', 'West' and 'future'. ... The future lies behind us, unseen, unknown and unknowable. Awareness that there is a future will generate apprehension or fear of what may happen, and perhaps encourage the development of means to predict or control it." South is represented by the right hand side and equated with good. "...[T]he right side is associated with security, well-being and the morally 'right'." It is then only natural that the north will be represented with the left hand side and was seen as bad and equated with danger. "...[T]he left, which is towards the north, represents 'sinister' (Latin sinister = 'left hand') and dangerous things and functions, including where the gods dwell, for they are dangerous powers." Time could therefore be represented on a line from east to west representing past to future. See also Prinsloo, "Spatial Orientation," 742.

⁶⁷ Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 38-39.

the self as ‘centre’ implies reality, commonly expressed as holiness.”⁶⁸ Holiness was a central concept in Israel’s life and it was the means by which everything in the world was structured and classified.⁶⁹ Temples, which served as the houses of the gods, were modelled on human houses as they are places of “reality” and, therefore, sacredness.⁷⁰ In essence, to be far from the self implies that one is approaching the “end of the world” – the place where reality breaks down.⁷¹ Davies⁷² argues “[T]he land of Israel was configured concentrically, with the Temple (whose courts also comprised concentric areas of graded holiness) at the core, and beyond that the holy city of Jerusalem...; beyond this most holy space lies the sphere of Israel and beyond that space, subject to the regime of holiness, the unholy world of the Gentiles.” There also existed a hierarchy of people who were allowed to enter certain zones in the temple, according to their level of purity.⁷³ But even in its temporal manifestation, the temple of God remains a transcendental reality.⁷⁴ The fact that the divine presence was considered to occur in the cellar or holy of holies in Ancient Near Eastern temples is a clear attempt to separate sacred space from profane human space.⁷⁵

We can conclude (with McCullough) that Ancient Near eastern temples were treated as microcosms of the world.⁷⁶ McCullough⁷⁷ summarises common Ancient Near Eastern temple “vocabulary” and characteristic features as fol-

⁶⁸ Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 39.

⁶⁹ Venter, “Spatiality,” 240.

⁷⁰ As houses are an extension of us, so the temple was the main public building and the house of the god which it represented (Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 162).

⁷¹ Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 39; Prinsloo, “Spatial Orientation,” 742.

⁷² Davies, “Space and Sects,” 88; cf. McCullough, *Dimensions of the Temple*, 28, 41-43.

⁷³ See McCullough, *Dimensions of the Temple*, 29-30, who also argues “[a]ccess to the actual temple was usually restricted to religious elites like priests and high ranking government officials (who were often one and the same). Moreover, the temple contained internal divisions as only the high priest was allowed to enter the cella or holy of holies, and this was limited to important festival celebrations and rituals.”

⁷⁴ Mays, *Psalms*, 185.

⁷⁵ McCullough, *Dimensions of the Temple*, 28.

⁷⁶ See McCullough, *Dimensions of the Temple*, 47. To understand the meaning behind architecture we must understand its purpose and intention (5-7): “...(M)aterial culture consciously or unconsciously incorporates values and social standards. That is, surroundings offer “cues” that guide accepted modes of thought and behaviour within a culture.” Because of the inherent message of a built environment, it is the tangible expressions of values and social standards and to interpret the meaning of this constructed space requires intimate knowledge of a particular culture. The Jerusalem Temple can therefore be considered as a form in which the human environment is manipulated to fulfil a human need or desire.

⁷⁷ McCullough, *Dimensions of the Temple*, 11.

lows: (1) Temples were the architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain; (2) the cosmic mountain represented the primordial hillock; (3) temples were associated with the “waters of life;” (4) temples were built on sacred, set-apart space; (5) they were oriented toward the four world regions; (6) successive ascension toward heaven was implied in their architecture; (7) their plan and measurement were divinely revealed to the king; (8) temples were the central, organizing, and unifying institution of Ancient Near Eastern society and its destruction or loss was calamitous to the community; (9) the temple facilitated daily rituals of washing, clothing, anointing, feeding, etc. of the cult image or supplicants; (10) temples were associated with the realm of the dead; (11) they were the site of sacred, communal meals; (12) temples contain the “tablets of destiny;” (13) the temple was closely associated with law and justice; (14) they were the place of sacrifice; (15) the ritual of the temple was enshrouded in secrecy; (16) divine word was revealed through the temple; (17) temples played an important economic role in Ancient Near Eastern society; and (18) temples were an instrument of political influence.

D THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSALMS 46-48

In his seminal study of the Korahite Psalms, Goulder⁷⁸ indicated that the common themes between Psalms 46-48 are: (1) the subjugation of the gentiles or nations and their participating in Israel’s worship;⁷⁹ (2) the subduing of the nations is depicted at length in Psalm 46:7-10 and Psalm 48:5-7. It is also mentioned in Psalm 47:4;⁸⁰ (3) Psalms 46 and 48 have the stress of the inviolability of God’s city which is under attack, by either human or demonic enemies, in common. Both of these Psalms are traditionally also classified as Songs of Zion

⁷⁸ Michael D. Goulder, *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah*. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 10, 11-12.

⁷⁹ “I am exalted among the (gentile) nations, I am exalted on the earth” (Psalm 46:11); “All the nations, you must clap your hands ... He subjugates nations under us, and peoples under our feet ... For the King of all the earth is God ... God has reigned over (gentile) nations ... The nobles of the nations have been gathered with the nation of the God of Abraham. For to God are all the shields of the earth ...” (Psalm 47:2, 4, 8, 9, 10); The city of God is “Beautiful elevation, a joy to all the earth ... As your name, God, so is your praise onto the ends of the earth” (Psalm 48:3, 11).

⁸⁰ “The (gentile) nations roared and they staggered. He offered kingdoms with his voice, the earth melts. ... He puts wars to an end until the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear” (Psalm 46:7, 10); “He subjugates nations under us, and peoples under our feet” (Psalm 47:4); “For, lo!, the kings have gathered, they passed by together. They have seen, so they have been astounded. They have been disturbed, they have hurried away. Trembling seized them there, pain like giving birth” (Psalm 48:5-7).

or “*Zionsliederer*.” All the nations are to acknowledge Yahweh;⁸¹ (4) God is called “Yahweh of Hosts” in Psalms 46:8, 12 and 48:9 and “great king” in Psalms 47:3 (“king” in verses 7 and 8) and 48:3; (5) God is greatly exalted and (to be) praised in Psalms 46:11, 47:10 (verses 2, 6, 7, 8) and 48:2; (6) He takes up his reign from his holy throne in Psalm 47:9. It recalls the eternal throne below his divine one in Psalm 45:7; (7) and Psalms 46-48 appears to be “triumphal” in nature. It is clear from Goulder’s exposition that Psalms 46-48 has stylistic, structural and thematic relations with each other and can be read as a trilogy of Psalms.

1 Prominent places and spaces in Psalms 46-48

We now turn our attention to reading Psalms 46-48 individually in terms of the prominent places and spaces with which they are preoccupied.

1a Psalm 46

Psalm 46 is the first of the so-called Songs of Zion but contains no explicit references to Zion or Jerusalem.⁸² The theme of the Psalm is the Lord as refuge. This theme is stated in the introduction in verse 1 and in the refrains in verses 7 and 11.⁸³

Behind Psalm 46 there is believed to be a Jebusite tradition that claimed the glory or election of Zion.⁸⁴ There is clearly a motif of universalism present in this Psalm and there exists a polar unity between the particularistic Zion motif and of the universalistic motif.⁸⁵ The word ארץ can be considered as the *Leitmotiv* as it expresses the psalm’s universalism.⁸⁶ In verses 3-7 the earth, along with the mountains and waters, is presented as participating in a chaotic tumult which is contrasted with the peaceful stability of the city of God. In verses 10-12 the earth is presented as corresponding in nature to the city.⁸⁷

Psalm 46:3-4, 7 makes use of the mythic imagery of the primeval and chaotic waters in battle with Yahweh.⁸⁸ In this regard, Mays⁸⁹ argues

⁸¹ “You must be still and you must know that I am God” (Psalm 46:11); “Great is Yahweh and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, his holy mountain. ... As your name, God, so is your praise unto the ends of the earth” (Psalm 48:2, 11).

⁸² Craigie, *Psalm 1-50*, 342.

⁸³ Mays, *Psalms*, 182.

⁸⁴ Kelly, “Psalm 46,” 305.

⁸⁵ Craigie, *Psalm 1-50*, 342 and Kelly, “Psalm 46,” 305-306.

⁸⁶ Craigie, *Psalm 1-50*, 343; Kelly, “Psalm 46,” 306 and Mays, *Psalms*, 183.

⁸⁷ Kelly, “Psalm 46,” 306.

⁸⁸ Kelly, “Psalm 46,” 306.

⁸⁹ Mays, *Psalms*, 184.

In ancient cosmology, earth rested on the foundations of mountains that went deep into the cosmic ocean. Signs of its stability were seen in earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, and droughts. In the worldview of Canaan, sea and river were hostile gods whose threat to earth was constant. But for the psalmist, the LORD is so much the sovereign of the universe that cosmic instability need not be feared.

Historical insecurity seems to replace cosmic instability in Israel's vision of reality:

In a daring interpretation of world history, the psalm points to the desolation brought about by war and calls on the nations to recognize in it the work of the LORD. War is self-defeating; it brings about the destruction of those who practise it.⁹⁰

The divine victory exhibits two forms of the antagonists to God, namely the threat of the uprising of the cosmic ocean and the invasions of foreign powers.⁹¹ As the mountains have been firmly established by Yahweh's victory as his unshakeable city, "similarly, the waters which threatened destruction have been subdued and thus transformed into the river of life which flows from the city."⁹² To Kelly the cosmos has come into accord with the city of God, which is a microcosmic model of it. The poet refers to the powers of chaos that are never quite subdued and which threatened the order of creation.⁹³ Metaphorically the opposing kings are seen as cosmic forces of destruction threatening the whole fabric of the ordered world of creation.

David T. Tsumura⁹⁴ writes on the meaning of חמר in verse 4 that it is associated with wine, and can mean "to ferment or foam" (as in Arabic), or "wine" (as in Ugaritic). He also pointed out that this root could also mean "wine-bowl." חמר could be a polyseme with meanings of "foaming" and "clay." It could then be used twofold – to indicate "the foaming of the great waters" and as "the bowl of the great waters." He also discusses other instances in the Old Testament where this root occurs in order to enlighten its meaning as used in Psalm 46.⁹⁵ It can, therefore, be associated with the destructive activity of the sea, making use of the image of fermenting or foaming wine.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Mays, *Psalms*, 184.

⁹¹ Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 176.

⁹² Kelly, "Psalm 46," 309.

⁹³ Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 344.

⁹⁴ David T. Tsumura, "Twofold Image of Wine in Psalm 46:4-5," *JQR* 71/3 (1981): 167-169.

⁹⁵ For example Deuteronomy 32:14, Psalm 75:9, Habakkuk 3:15. See Tsumura, "Twofold Image," 168-169.

⁹⁶ Tsumura, "Twofold Image," 170.

Lord of Hosts draws on the imagery of Yahweh as the divine warrior who leads the armies of heaven against cosmic and human foes. The voice which makes the earth melt (verse 7) is a central motif of evocations of the divine warrior (Psalms 29, 18:7-15, 24:8 & 10).⁹⁷ Says Artur Weiser:⁹⁸

[I]t embraces in a tremendous unifying vision the whole process of the formation and the end of the world as the sphere of God's activity and envisages the most extensive regions and the most remote eras as drawn together in the decisive moment when God revealed his presence.

Water therefore features prominently as a force of chaos in Psalm 46.⁹⁹ In verse 5 we read of a נהר פלגיו that makes the city of God glad. Kelly¹⁰⁰ interprets it as a reference to the "waters of Shiloah" (Isaiah 8:6). William Holladay's *Lexicon*¹⁰¹ points out that a פלג refers to an "artificial water-channel" or a "canal." This implies that the structure that is referred to in Psalm 46:5 is man-made. I propose that the canal mentioned in verse 5 of Psalm 46 is a river that springs from the temple on mount Zion.¹⁰² The source of the city's inward strength is seen as a stream of content, as the river of Paradise, which is symbolic of God's living presence. The river may even point back to the foaming waters of verse 3. This life-giving stream was thought to flow from the Temple (Ezekiel 47:1) and it is representative of the divine presence.

Elsewhere in the Old Testament the shaking, trembling or melting of the earth and the mountains is associated with a theophany of Yahweh. In Psalm 46

⁹⁷ Mays, *Psalms*, 183.

⁹⁸ Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*. (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1962), 368.

⁹⁹ In Psalm 46 the following are examples of how water is mentioned in the poem: In verse 3 we read that the mountains slip into the seas after an earthquake; in verse 4 we read of the waters that roar and foam, due to the earthquake; and in verse 5 we read of a river's canal (not that this should be translated literally as "canal" as it refers to a manmade structure) makes glad the city of God.

¹⁰⁰ Sidney L. Kelly, *The Zion-Victory Songs: Psalms 46, 48, and 76. A Critical Study of Modern Methods of Psalmic Interpretation* (Doctoral Thesis. Nashville, Tennessee: Graduate School of Vanderbilt University, 1968), 28-29.

¹⁰¹ William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 292.

¹⁰² According to Kelly (*The Zion-Victory*, 403), "Zion is the vertical axis or center of the cosmos where, on the one hand, the Most High God meets and subdues the chaotic waters of the underworld and where, on the other hand, is located the garden of God from which the paradisiacal waters flow to the whole earth (Ps. 46:2-6). ... Similarly, Zion is the horizontal focal point or center of the earth where, on the one hand, the nations/kings of the earth make war against Yahweh (Pss. 46:7; 48:5-9; 76:4-10) and where, on the other hand, Yahweh's praise reaches out to the ends of the earth (Ps. 48:11, cf. 46:10a) and where the nations round about bring gifts to Yahweh, the Fearful One (Ps. 76:12f.)."

this activity appears to be the activity of the chaos waters. A couple of arguments for this association are as follows:

- (i) There is a synonymous parallelism between verses 3-4 and verse 7. The slipping (רַבְמוֹת) of the mountains and the roaring (יְהוֹמוֹ) of the sea in verses 3-4 are parallel to the roaring (הוֹמוֹ) of the nations and the staggering (מַטִּי) of the kingdoms. The slipping of the mountains and the roaring of the sea is synonymous with cosmic disorder, whereas the roaring of the nations and the staggering of the kingdoms are synonymous with socio-political disorder.¹⁰³ The sea threatens the earth's security and the nations were experienced as a threat to corporate life.¹⁰⁴ Due to the universalism of Psalm 46, the inner ring of harmony and the outer ring of hostility break down and become paradoxical.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the actions of the mountains and waters can be understood as synonymous expressions of cosmic disorder.
- (ii) This suggests that the activities of the earth and the mountains are in opposition to God's rule. The tumult of the earth, the mountains and the waters might be due to a theophanic judgment. The tumult in verses 3-4 can also be understood as the cosmic accompaniments of Yahweh's victory over the nations in verse 7. The shaking and roaring of verses 3-4 is due to Yahweh's intervention and the shaking and roaring of verse 7 due to the enemies' assault. It appears, therefore, that the adversaries in Psalm 46 are the waters of verse 4 and the nations or kingdoms in verse 7. The waters are normally presented as Yahweh's chaotic adversary, as usually understood to be the case in Psalm 46.¹⁰⁶ In verse 7 it is the earth that receives the divine rebuke, resulting in the melting of the earth.
- (iii) There is a contextual "contrast" identified between verses 4 and 5 of Psalm 46. Verse 4 deals with the actions of the sea (יָמִי) and its waters, whereas verse 5 deals with the river (נְהַר) and its streams.¹⁰⁷ It appears as if the two water masses are deliberately contrasted to each other.¹⁰⁸ One

¹⁰³ Kelly, "Psalm 46," 306-307.

¹⁰⁴ Mays, *Psalms*, 183.

¹⁰⁵ Kelly, "Psalm 46," 310: "There can be no distinction between inner and outer rings; all that is around the city is presented both in threatening tumult and then in peaceful submission."

¹⁰⁶ In the Ugaritic version of the battle with chaos there is a distinction made between prince Yam (sea) and the parallel judge Nahar (river) that are the chaos forces. See Willem H. Joubert, "Die Chaosstrydmotiewe in die Psalms." (M.A Mini-dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1976), 20.

¹⁰⁷ Tsumura, "Twofold Image," 167; cf. Kelly, "Psalm 46," 308.

¹⁰⁸ The word pair *ym* and *nhr* appear in Ugaritic sources as referring to the "cosmic ocean" (Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 95, 102; cf. Anderson, *Psalms*, 356; Tsumura, "Two-fold Image," 167). "River" is also associated with the throne of El: "El's throne, at the

represents the threat of chaos and death, while the other provides life. These are typical ambivalent characteristics of the cosmic ocean. There is a distinction between the disorderly waters of verse 4 and the streams that make God's city glad in verse 5. Some interpreters have understood ארץ in verse 3 to refer to the netherworld and a proposed emendation is to read המיר as המרות ("be rebellious, become tumult"), such as Dahood¹⁰⁹ who supports his argument by interpreting *hmr* as a reference to Mot's city, *hmry*, in the Ugaritic texts.¹¹⁰ Mitchell Dahood also wrote that the tradition of the Korahites is marked by the theme of redemption from Sheol.¹¹¹ However, this emendation is highly unlikely. Our purpose is firstly to understand the text as we have it at our disposal today. God the Most High is in the midst of his city (verse 5b) and in verse 11 it is said that Yahweh is exalted among the nations and above the earth. By virtue of Yahweh's victory, presented in verses 7, 9, and 10, his relationship to the earth has come to correspond to his relationship with his city. The tumult of the earth, the mountains and the waters in verses

"head of the two streams," is clearly illustrated in the Ugaritic texts" (Craigie, Craigie, *Psalm 1-50*, 343).

¹⁰⁹ Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I, 1-50* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 278.

¹¹⁰ Kelly, "Psalm 46," 307.

¹¹¹ David C. Mitchell, "'God Will Redeem My Soul from Sheol': The Psalms of the Sons of Korah," *JSOT* 30/3 (2006): 365-384. He argues (377): "Apart from references to Sheol, the Korah psalms recall the ancestral experience with the bowels of the earth in other ways, particularly in Psalms 46 and 48. The two psalms are very much a pair. Standing astride Psalm 47's subject kings, they celebrate the deliverance which crushed these foreign foes. In Psalm 46 the enemies are thrown into confusion and fall, their weapons shattered and burned amid desolations (vv. 7-10 [6-9]). In Psalm 48 the alliance of invading (עברו, v. 5 [4]) kings see and flee, and are destroyed and shattered (vv. 5-8 [4-7]). In Psalm 46 the deliverance seems to be by an earthquake, for the earth is convulsed and swallows even the hills. It melts, or becomes fluid (המרג, v. 7 [6]), the same verb as at Amos 9.5, where the earth rises and sinks like the Nile (Amos 8.8), as in the huge quake of Uzziah's reign in c. 800 BCE (Amos 1.1). Likewise Psalm 48 tells how the invaders are seized upon by 'trembling', that is, by analogy with Psalm 46, the trembling of the earth (48.7 [6]). Amid this cataclysm Jerusalem stands unshaken (46.5-6 [4-5]; 48.4, 9 [3, 8]), which makes known the name of God to the ends of the earth (46.11 [10]; 48.11 [10]). Israel was of course familiar with earthquakes, seeing them as acts of divine judgment. Earthquake imagery is associated with the Exodus and other deliverances (Pss. 75.4 [3]; 77.19-20 [18-19]; 114.3-7; Judg. 5.4). ... The prophets drew on these events to foretell a great quake for Israel's deliverance on the day of YHWH." He adds (378): "It is just such an event that Psalms 46-48 seems to anticipate. As in Korah's rebellion of old, the fluid earth will convulse and reveal the gaping underworld of Sheol; rebels will fall alive into the depths but the righteous will be redeemed (46.3 7 [2, 6]). Then the survivors will worship YHWH at the Jerusalem throne (Ps. 47). Because of this deliverance God will be praised to the ends of the earth (Ps. 48.11 [10])."

3-4 is contrasted with the joy and stability of the city of God in verses 5-6. The waters which threatened destruction have been subdued and thus transform into the river of life which flows from the city.¹¹²

- (iv) The creation imagery of the Old Testament indicates that it is over the earth and mountains that Yahweh and the waters battled. Originally the waters stood above the mountains (verse 6b) and covered the earth (verse 9b). Creation is accomplished when Yahweh rebukes the waters and they flee (verse 7). He then sets a barrier which they shall not pass (verse 9a). So the mountains are uncovered. When the mountains and earth were covered by the waters they were under its dominion. After Yahweh's victory they are under his dominion. So the earth is depicted under the domain of the waters in verse 3 and under Yahweh's domain in verses 9-11.¹¹³ It is therefore clear that the metaphor of creation is also strongly present in Psalm 46.¹¹⁴

On the horizontal axis, there is a physical threat to the city of God through the forces of nature and the nations. The reference to Jacob brings past experiences and associations to mind and in Psalm 46 he is depicted as having experienced the refuge of God. Regarding the vertical axis represented in Psalm 46, God is not only in heaven but also physically present in his temple, therefore, also on the earth. Because of the universalism in Psalm 46, the inner ring of harmony and the outer ring of hostility break down and become paradoxical and the conquest of chaos and the nations gives this Psalm a clear universal perspective.

1b Psalm 47

The overall unity of Psalm 47 is evident in its use of the following words עַם ("nations," verses 2, 4, 10), מֶלֶךְ ("king," verses 3, 7, 8, 9) and אֶרֶץ ("earth," verses 3, 8, 10).¹¹⁵ Psalm 47 elaborates on the words "I am exalted on the earth" at the end of Psalm 46. The theme here shifts from God coming from heaven to deliver his people to his returning to his throne in verse 6.¹¹⁶ The temple was regarded as the chief place of God's presence on earth and an earthly representation of his heavenly abode, and most likely the place to where he would ascend. It was also the place where the horizontal and vertical spheres intersected. Regarding the representation of the horizontal axis in Psalm 47, Israel exhorts the (surrounding) nations to praise. The reference to Jacob in

¹¹² Kelly, "Psalm 46," 309.

¹¹³ Kelly, *The Zion-Victory*, 379-390.

¹¹⁴ Kelly, *The Zion-Victory*, 415.

¹¹⁵ Craigie, *Psalm 1-50*, 347.

¹¹⁶ Jannie Du Preez, "Interpreting Psalm 47 – Some notes on its composition, exegesis and significance for the church's mission at the turn of the century," *Missionalia* 25/1 (1997), 309.

Psalm 47 brings the tradition of how Israel gained its land to mind and of Abraham as the father of all the nations and his divinely instituted covenant with God (Genesis 12). As king of all the earth and the nations God is depicted as the universal sovereign. On the vertical axis God is represented as ruling from heaven over all the earth.

It is important to remember that the temple in Jerusalem functions as the earthly counterpart of God's heavenly abode or dwelling. Verse 6 of Psalm 47 could also indicate the going up to his earthly sanctuary. In the temple heaven and earth come together as one.¹¹⁷ Therefore, we would have to consider that the procession to Zion is at the same time an ascent to the heights of heaven."¹¹⁸ The temple was a place where Israel could experience the presence of God. The temple also physically represented the deity. Othmar Keel¹¹⁹ notes "The temple, as the locus of God, is identical to heaven." When we speak of the kingship of Yahweh, he is, therefore, to be understood as ruling from his position in heaven, but which is also the same place where the divine and human spheres meet in the temple.

Anderson¹²⁰ refers to the popular view that from "the time of Moses the ark seems to have been regarded as the throne of Yahweh . . . an *empty* throne upon which Yahweh was invisibly present". Note that Yahweh sits enthroned on the cherubim in Psalm 99:1.¹²¹ It is likely that his throne was initially associated with these figures and later on with the ark. In Jeremiah 3:16 we read that Yahweh's throne is Jerusalem, while other writers of the Old Testament view it as being in the heavens (cf. 1 Kings 22:19; 2 Chronicles 18:18; Psalm 103:19; Isaiah 66:1).¹²² It is highly unlikely that Psalm 47:9 refers to Jerusalem as his throne, but it should not be discredited as a possibility.¹²³

¹¹⁷ Anderson, *Psalms*, 363; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen, Teilband I*. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1966), 351.

¹¹⁸ On עלה as "to ascend (to heaven)" see Genesis 17:22, 35:13 and Judges 13:20 (Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*, translated by Hilton C. Oswald. [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988], 468).

¹¹⁹ Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, translated by Timothy J. Hallett. (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 172 and 179.

¹²⁰ Anderson, *Psalms*, 365.

¹²¹ Cf. Psalms 11:4; 93:2, 4; 97:2 and 103:19. See Nicholas A. Van Uchelen, *Psalmen Deel II (41-80)* (Nijkerk: Uitgeverij G.F. Callenbach B.V. 1977), 52.

¹²² Anderson, *Psalms*, 365.

¹²³ Anderson, *Psalms*, 365; Charles A. Briggs & Emilie G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms, Volume I* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1969), 399. Jan Ridderbos *De Psalmen, Deel II: Psalm 42-106* (Kampen: N.V. Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, 1958), 57-58.

The Israelites believed that no created thing is inherently holy, but receives that quality through some sort of relation to Yahweh. The temple in itself is not holy, but because Yahweh dwells there or has established it, it becomes holy.¹²⁴ Therefore, when we read in Psalm 47:9 that “God has sat on his holy throne,” we can surmise that he rules from his temple or heaven.

1c Psalm 48

[I]n Psalm 48 Yahweh’s name and praise reach to the ends of the earth (v. 11), as a result of a ‘cosmicizing’ victory that unites the socio-political earth under the God of Zion, the ‘joy of all the earth’ (v. 3), and this battle is expressed in the imagery of the holy war.¹²⁵

Verse 6 brings to mind the accounts of Holy Wars where the decisive action came from Yahweh, while the human “contribution” was trust and faith.¹²⁶ Per implication, the sight that the “kings” (verse 5) “saw” (verse 6) and that which the pilgrim worshippers “saw” (verse 9) was in a literal sense the same thing that met their eyes.¹²⁷ Note that the king’s armies looked and were horrified, whereas the pilgrims looked and rejoiced.¹²⁸

Regarding the representation of the horizontal axis in Psalm 48, Yahweh is depicted as being on his mountain or in his palace. The reference to the north in verse 3 is important, as it can either refer to the physical and geographical north (Firstspace) or to the mythological cosmic mountain and the dwelling place of the gods of Canaan, Saphon (Thirdspace). Note the relationship of Israel and the nations, namely that the “kings” (verse 5) of the nations gather before the presence of the “great king” (verse 3) of Israel.¹²⁹ Although the east wind is said to shatter the ships of Tarshish, the meaning of this verse is still largely unknown and debated. It does, however, serve as an example of east-west orientation.¹³⁰

The reference to “we” being in God’s temple is an example of the interaction between the in-group and out-group. The out-group roams the “ends of the earth” (verse 11).

¹²⁴ Keel, *Symbolism*, 174.

¹²⁵ Kelly, *The Zion-Victory*, 415-416.

¹²⁶ Anderson, *Psalms*, 370.

¹²⁷ Craigie, *Psalm 1-50*, 353.

¹²⁸ Craigie, *Psalm 1-50*, 354.

¹²⁹ Prinsloo, “Spatial Orientation,” 746.

¹³⁰ Although the meaning of “Tarshish” in verse 8 is much debated, it is generally accepted that it refers to a Phoenician colony of Tartessus in Spain (cf. Craigie, *Psalm 1-50*, 354). It is considered to be located in the far west (cf. Dahood, *Psalms I, 1-50*, 292).

God's right hand is described as full of righteousness. This is typically descriptive of the right and left / south and north spatial orientation of the Ancient Near East. The wonders of the city and its fortifications which must be recounted to later generations are in turn an example of the transcendent quality of the city due to its holy nature.

On the vertical axis as represented in Psalm 48, Yahweh is not only on his mountain, but at the same time present in his earthly palace and heaven. The reference to God as a great king above all kings has cosmic implications. He made himself known through his city ("in a stronghold," verse 4), namely through a revelation, most likely in his temple. Zion not only rejoices, but the daughters of Judah shout with joy. Any exclamation of praise to Yahweh lies on the vertical axis as it supports the notion of his heavenly and divine reign which must be exalted.¹³¹ Although the psalm views the city as a medium through which God can be known¹³² it is clear that to God's power there is neither spatial nor temporal limits.¹³³

2 The spatial relationship between Psalms 46-48

Psalms 46, 48, 76, 84, 87 and 122 have been identified as "Songs of Zion" since the time of Gunkel.¹³⁴ The substance of the Songs of Zion might appear to be Mount Zion, but it is only praiseworthy in that God chose to inhabit it. God is therefore praiseworthy.¹³⁵ The Zion element of the Zion songs appears to be merged inseparably with their universalism.¹³⁶ This universalism is indicated through the use of the word ארץ ("earth") that repeatedly occurs in Psalms 46, 48 and 76 (Kelly 1968:22-23).¹³⁷ As indicated above, this is also the

¹³¹ Prinsloo, "Spatial Orientation," 744.

¹³² Mays, *Psalms*, 189.

¹³³ Weiser, *Psalms*, 383.

¹³⁴ Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 342.

¹³⁵ Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 352.

¹³⁶ Kelly, *The Zion-Victory*, 292.

¹³⁷ Kelly *The Zion-Victory*, 22-23. Kelly (23-26) further mentions five ways in which this universalism has been handled by nineteenth century commentators: "First, there was the way of the more conservative interpreters who in the case of the victory over Sennacherib pointed to the world empire of Sennacherib which when defeated brought joy to all the oppressed peoples. The argument was clinched by referring to 2 Chronicles 32:23: "And many brought gifts to the LORD to Jerusalem and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from that time onward," (cf. Isaiah 37:20). If the commentators referred to the victory of Jehosaphat, there was a corresponding quotation from 2 Chronicles 20:29. The strength of this position is the seriousness with which it takes the actuality of the universal claims of the psalm; the weakness of the position is the seriousness with which it takes the historical claims of the books of Kings, Isaiah, and especially Chronicles. Secondly, the universalism of Psalm 48 was regularly accounted for in the

case in Psalm 47. The warring opponents of Israel are peoples and kingdoms in Psalm 46 and kings in Psalm 48. In Psalm 47 it is clear that gentile nations and their princes or leaders are opposed to the people of Israel, before being incorporated into the nation of the God of Abraham (verses 2, 4, 9 and 10). Psalms 46, 48 and 76 all conclude with a strophe that refers to the universal claim or recognition of Yahweh's kingship. Psalm 47 concludes with the reference to the nobles of the nations who have gathered with the nation of the God of Abraham and that the shields of the earth belong to God.¹³⁸

In Psalm 46 we find two references to Jacob (יעקב), in verses 8 and 12, and one in Psalm 47 (verse 5). Contrary to Psalms 46 and 47, no reference is made to the patriarch Jacob (יעקב) in Psalm 48. Abraham (אברהם) is only mentioned in Psalm 47, verse 10, and not in Psalms 46 or 48. The reference to the "God of Jacob" (verse 5) is distinctively Hebrew terminology.¹³⁹ These references to these two prominent patriarchs refer to the occupation the author(s) of Psalms 46-48 also had with the Promised Land and the relationship between God, Israel and the nations.

Noteworthy is the reference to God's city in Psalm 46 (עיר-אלהים) and that it is also his "holy dwelling place" (קדש משכני) in verse 5, in comparison to

latter part of the century on the basis of the Jewish Diaspora. This reductionism did not claim a recognition of Yahweh by all peoples but by Jews in all nations; however, it did claim an actual or present universalism. Third, another reductionistic but actual form of universalism was to reduce what had been traditionally considered statements about all the people of the earth to statements about Israel or the land of Israel; that is, erets was interpreted as "land" rather than "earth" and more generally the last strophe of Psalm 46 was understood to refer to Yahweh's cessation of war against Israel rather than throughout the earth. Fourth, another major way of handling the universalism was to drop the claim to actual universalism or in some way to combine it with what might be called a universalism in the subjective mood. This was a universal recognition of Zion's God or the establishment of a universal rule by Zion's God which was hoped for, or wished for, or concerning which the nations were exhorted or admonished, or which ought to be. ... This is obviously the sphere from which one could move into an eschatological explanation of the universalism and there were sporadic eschatological explanations offered. Fifth, another way the universalism was understood was as prophetic hyperbole, lyric exaggeration, or in Cheyne's phrase "an emotional fallacy." A clear expression of this is found in Hitzig's comment on "the joy of all the earth:" "The composer generalizes the content of his own feelings and expresses as objective reality what still remains first of all an ideal claim." A final way of handling particular verses where the problem of universalism arises might be noted, to wit, by simply ignoring the verse and making no comment on it."

¹³⁸ Cf. Frank-Lothar Hossfeld & Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen: Psalm 1-50*. (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993), 284, 285.

¹³⁹ Craigie, *Psalm 1-50*, 342.

Psalm 48 (verses 2, 3, 4, 9, 10 and 13). From his holy mountain he rules creation (verse 2). It is also referred to as a “beautiful elevation” and as the mountain of Zion Saphon (verses 3 and 13). God is stated to be in the city’s palace, implying that he is present in the temple (verse 10). In the nineteenth century the phrase יִרְכָּתִי צִפּוֹן (verse 3) was mythologically interpreted through Isaiah 14:13 to refer to the mountain where the gods assembled under the governance of the Most High. An alternative interpretation was to interpret it as referring to the topography and location of Mount Zion.¹⁴⁰

A common element between Psalms 46-48 is also the repeated references to the dwelling place of God in each of these Psalms. It can be summarised as follows:

Table 1: Words and phrases referring to the dwelling place of God in Psalms 46-48

Hebrew word / phrase	Translation	Psalm 46	Psalm 47	Psalm 48
		Verse	Verse	Verse
עיר־אלהים בעיר אלהינו בעיר־יהוה	“city of God” “in the city of our God” “in the city of Yahweh”	5		2, 9 (x 2)
קדש משכני על־כסא קדשו הר־קדשו	“holy dwelling place” “on his holy throne” “his holy mountain”	5	9	2
הר־ציון	“mountain of Zion”			3, 12

Psalms 46 and 48 explicitly make mention of either God’s city (Psalms 46:5; 48:2, 9, 10), his holy mountain (Psalm 48:2, 3), Zion (Psalm 48:3, 134) or his palace or dwelling place (Psalms 46:5; 48:3, 4). Note that the location from which God rules the cosmos (either Zion, his temple, palace or heaven) is always considered to be holy. In Psalm 46 it is described as his “holy dwelling place” (verse 5) and in Psalm 48 it is described as his “holy mountain” (verse 2). From this we can conclude that the holy sphere where God is seated on his throne is the same location as mentioned in Psalms 46 and 48, namely Zion, the temple and heaven. In Psalm 47:9 we read of God ruling over all the nations and that he sits on his “holy throne.” Therefore, the reference to the holy city, holy mountain and holy dwelling place is implied where his holy throne is situated, as no physical location is mentioned to where Yahweh ascends in Psalm 47:6.

An important contextual item in these psalms is the focus on the Jerusalem temple. Whether the writer(s) actually lived in the city as he/they wrote,

¹⁴⁰ Kelly, *The Zion-Victory*, 27-28.

the climax of these Psalms is Yahweh's ascension to heaven in Psalm 47:6. Horizontally these Psalms read the patriarchal textual tradition as a story line. The settlement narrative describes the story of a people who are physically outside a Firstspace (namely Canaan or the land of Israel) who long to be inside that Firstspace, described according to their Secondspace perceptions (namely it being the Holy and Promised Land). Before the settlement, Canaan was the Thirdspace of other "outsider" peoples.¹⁴¹ These Psalms refer to events, often only allusions, of what happened in the history of Israel. This line tends to move chronologically through points in time, therefore I call this a horizontal line.¹⁴²

Other places or spaces mentioned in Psalms 46-48 are as follows:

Table 2: Words referring to places or spaces in Psalms 46-48

Hebrew word / phrase	Translation	Psalm 46	Psalm 47	Psalm 48
		Verse	Verse	Verse
ארץ	"earth"	3, 7, 9, 10, 11	3, 10	3, 11
הר / הרים	"mountain(s)"	3, 4		2, 3, 12
קריית / עיר	"city"	5		2, 3, 9 (x 2)
ציון	"Zion"			3, 12, 13
תרשיש	"Tarshish"			8
ימים	"seas"	2, 4, 5		
מימין	"waters"			
נהר פלגיו	"river's canals"			

These psalms are therefore clearly occupied with the establishment and transcendence of boundaries. The privileged status of the in-group determined how near or far one is from sacred space. This is extended to the nations when they are gathered with the people of the God of Abraham in front of his throne and in his presence (Psalm 47:10). The limited access they had to Yahweh is now increased as their status changes. Where Psalm 46 celebrated the nation's deliverance from peril, Psalm 47 extolled the power of God and Psalm 48 describes the glory of the city which God has preserved. Hossfeld and Zenger

¹⁴¹ Flanagan, "Ancient Perceptions," 3.

¹⁴² "One of the outstanding characteristics of traditional societies is the opposition that they assume between their inhabited territory and the unknown and indeterminate space that surrounds it. The former is the world (more precisely, our world), the cosmos; everything outside it is no longer a cosmos but a sort of "other world," a foreign, chaotic space, peopled by ghosts, demons, "foreigners." ...[W]e shall see that if every inhabited territory is a cosmos, this is precisely because it was first consecrated, because, in one way or another, it is the work of the gods or is in communication with the world of the gods" (Kelly, *The Zion-Victory*, 410).

state that Psalm 47 is a “Fortführung” or continuation of Psalm 46.¹⁴³ In Psalms 46-48, especially Psalm 47, one gets the impression that the author/redactor is concerned with reform – religious or ideological of nature. This is reinforced by the belief that Zion was the central locus for the Israelite faith.

Regarding at-centre and off-centre it is clear that Israel is depicted as at-centre versus the nations as off-centre in Psalms 46-48. The nations represent the forces of chaos (cf. Psalm 46:3-4 and 7). The nations and chaos are both subdued by God and are aspects of being off-centre. Both are removed from Zion, thus also from reality. When the nations gather with the people of the God of Abraham (Psalm 47:10) they move from being off-centre to being just like Israel in that their submission to Yahweh makes them at-centre.¹⁴⁴ The

¹⁴³ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 1-50*, 290.

¹⁴⁴ On verse 10 there is a text-critical note stating that the Septuagint and the Peshitta read עַם עַם (*im ‘am*) “with the people,” instead of the Masoretic text עַם (*‘am*) “people,” influencing the reading as “with (as?) the people of the God of Abraham.” The assumption is made that עַם (*‘im*) was accidentally omitted by copyists due to haplography. The omission of עַם (*‘im*) drastically influences the meaning of the text, whether the nobles of the nations are to be considered part of the people of the God of Abraham or not. For the purpose of this study the explanation of the omission of a עַם is considered to be correct and the variant reading on verse 10 is preferred (cf. Anderson, *Psalms*, 366; Moses Bittenwieser, *The Psalms. Chronologically Treated with a New Translation*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938), 353; Bernhard D. Duhm, *Die Psalmen, Abteilung XIV*. (Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr, 1899), 134; Wilhelm S. Prinsloo, “Psalm 47: Partikularisme en universalisme. Jahwe is ons koning én koning oor die hele aarde,” *SK* 17/2 (1996), 396; Johannes P. M. van der Ploeg, *Psalmen Deel I, Psalm 1 t/m 75* (Roermond: J.J. Romen & Zonen-Uitgevers, 1973), 293-294. Dieter. Schneider *Das Buch der Psalmen. Teil 1: Psalm 1 bis 50* (R. Brockhaus Verlag Wuppertal und Zürich, 1995), 310 prefers the vocalization *‘im* above the Masoretic vocalisation indicting the nations. The translation he proposes then reads “...bei dem Gott Abrahams.” But what is important here is that for the first time in the Psalm there is no longer a distinction between “we” and “the nations”. See Robert G. Bratcher & William D. Reyerburn, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 440; Briggs & Briggs, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 400; Jenna Conrad, “S v ‘נִדְבָ’,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament Volume IX*, translated by David E. Green (eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren & Heinz-Josef Fabry. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 224; Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on The Psalms, Volume II*, Second Edition, translated by Francis Bolton. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1893), 100; Duhm, *Abteilung XIV*, 134; Du Preez, “Interpreting Psalm 47,” 315-316; Herman Gunkel, *Die Psalmen, Sechste Auflage*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 203; Hossfeld & Zenger, *Psalms 1-50*, 291; Kraus, *Psalmen, I*, 348; James Muilenburg, Psalm 47. *JBL* 63/3 (1944), 242-243, 248; Prinsloo, “Psalm 47,” 396; Ridderbos, *De Psalmen II*, 58; James M. M. Roberts, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays*. (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 267, 270; Joachim Schaper, “Psalm 47 und sein ‘Sitz im

subjugation of the gentile nations imply that they also partake and participate in Israel's worship of God.

Note that there is a clear emphasis on the nations as being subdued (Psalm 46:7-10, Psalm 47:4, Psalm 48:5-7). Psalms 46 and 48, in turn, stress the inviolability of God's city which is under attack. God is called "Yahweh of Hosts" in Psalms 46:8, 12 and 48:9; in Psalms 47:3 (see "king" in verses 7 and 8) and Psalm 48:3 he is called "great king." Because of his supreme status, God is greatly exalted and (to be) praised in Psalms 46:11, 47:10 (see also verses 2, 6, 7, 8) and 48:2 and he takes up his reign from his holy throne in Psalm 47:9. Psalms 46-48 are clearly triumphal in nature. Note that God's reign and influence extends over all the earth, even unto the boundaries of creation (Psalm 46:10 עַד-קֶצֶה הָאָרֶץ "to the end of the earth;" Psalm 47:3, 9, 10 כָּל-הָאָרֶץ "all the earth;" Psalm 48:11 עַל-קְצוֹי-אֶרֶץ "unto the ends of the earth"). Water features prominently as a force of chaos in Psalm 46, but nowhere in Psalms 47 and 48 is any reference made to waters or rivers.

In these Psalms some kind of Canaanite influence can be accepted as there are Canaanite features reflected in them, such as the notion of God as King and Yahweh's conceptualisation through Baal and El elements. The impression is left that Yahweh took over some of the features of Baal as storm god.¹⁴⁵ In a number of Psalms it appears as if the fight with chaos has been connected to certain historical events or that they have been demythologised. In Psalm 46 the mythical primeval forces have no might, but are interpreted to represent historical nations or their leaders. Examples of Psalms that have been interpreted in this manner are Psalms 2, 46, 48 and 89.¹⁴⁶ In Psalm 48 the chaos battle is presented in naturalistic imagery. This is heard in the claim that Mount Zion is the true Saphon. In the first stanza (verses 2-4) Zion is called the joy of all the earth. The socio-political situation is one of peace and order that is based on the universal recognition of Zion as Saphon.¹⁴⁷ In the second stanza (verses 5-9) the kings are making war against the city. The kings are defeated in verse 9c when it is written that God establishes the city for ever – "... the establishing of the City through a socio-political victory may be compared with the establishing of the earth through a victory over chaos (cf. Pss. 24:1f.; 93:1f.)."¹⁴⁸ In the third stanza there is a return to the first stanza's correspondence between

Leben',” *ZAW* 106 (1994): 262-263; Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 378; Van der Ploeg, *Psalmen Deel I*, 293-294).

¹⁴⁵ Gert T. M. Prinsloo, "Yahweh the warrior: An intertextual reading of Habakkuk 3," *OTE* 14/3 (2001), 484.

¹⁴⁶ Joubert, "Chaosstrydmotiewe," 60.

¹⁴⁷ Kelly, *The Zion-Victory*, 391.

¹⁴⁸ Kelly, *The Zion-Victory*, 391-392.

Zion and the nations. A procession (verses 12-14) around Zion expresses Zion's centrality in the stability of the cosmic order.¹⁴⁹

In Psalm 46 we also find references to other nations as either nations that stagger or kingdoms that suffer at the hand of God's wrath (verse 7), or mention is made of how exalted God is amongst the nations (verse 11).¹⁵⁰ As already pointed out, the nations also play an important role in Psalm 47.¹⁵¹ Nowhere in Psalm 48 is there reference made to the nations. Goulder also indicates that the subjugation of the nations or gentiles and their participating in Israel's worship (i.e. the call to praise that is directed towards them), are themes occurring repeatedly in Psalms 46-48.¹⁵²

Some of the suggestions put forward to explain Psalms 46-48's similarity is that they were composed by the same poet, they derived of the same earlier collection of Psalms or from the work of the same group of temple-singers, they were written to celebrate the same historical event or that they were used together in connection with some festival or ritual action celebrating God's kingship.¹⁵³ Psalms 46-48 have often also been regarded as forming a trilogy which celebrated the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian threat during the reign of Hezekiah, a historical deliverance interpreted eschatologically.¹⁵⁴

In Psalms 46-48 there are examples of movement from the same space as being off-centre to at-centre, from far to near Jerusalem and the temple, from negative space to positive space, unholy space to holy space and from chaos to God's presence, especially for the (gentile) nations surrounding Israel.

E CONCLUSION

Psalms 46-48 form a trilogy as they share the same themes and use the same kind of language, namely that God is the Great King. Movement between the particularistic Zion- and the universalistic motifs also takes place in these psalms and historical insecurity seems to replace cosmic instability in Israel's vision of reality. The city is the mythico-geographical creative centre or navel of the universe: here is the vertical point of contact where God overcomes the

¹⁴⁹ Kelly, *The Zion-Victory*, 392: "Normally Psalm 48 has been interpreted as presenting three temporally successive states: peace, then war, then peace re-established."

¹⁵⁰ The references to the nations in Psalm 46 are as follows: גוֹיִם in verses 7 and 11 and מַמְלָכֹת in verse 7.

¹⁵¹ The references to the nations in Psalm 47 are as follows: עַמִּים in verses 2, 3 and 10, עַמִּים in verse 4 and גוֹיִם in verse 9.

¹⁵² Goulder, *Sons of Korah*, 9.

¹⁵³ John W. Rogerson & John W. McKay, *Psalms 1-50*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 219.

¹⁵⁴ Anderson, *Psalms*, 367; cf. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 1-50*, 284-285.

chaotic deep. Horizontally, this is the point where the nations of the earth are overcome and peace is established unto “the ends of the earth” (Psalm 46:10). The theme in Psalm 47 shifts from God coming from heaven to deliver his people to returning to his throne. Yahweh has made a place for his people amongst the nations and the nations are included as his people (Psalm 47:5, 10). There is clearly movement from being constricted by enemies to living in the presence of Yahweh – safety is to be found in his presence and is the reason why he is called a refuge and strength (Psalm 46:2) and why Zion is beautiful and a stronghold (Psalm 46, Psalm 48).

Even though the place from and to where Yahweh ascends is unclear from Psalm 47’s content, we can deduce from the prominent references to the city of God, his holy mountain, and the temple in Psalms 46 and 48 that Yahweh ascends from or in his temple to heaven – both of these places can be considered interchangeable as the temple, mountain and city as the physical locality where heaven and earth met and God was considered to be present on earth.

The spatial analysis of Psalms 46-48 has enlightened their meaning, especially Psalm 47, which is difficult to understand and categorize. The implied lived space of the narrator (perhaps even author) of the psalm is that it is one of (political and cultural?) instability and that it reflects a universal theology which could have developed during exilic or post-exilic times under the influence of Second Isaiah. A universalistic perspective developed somewhere during or after the Babylonian exile which caused the Israelites or Hebrews to have greater tolerance for cultural diversity. Perhaps Israel was not so estranged and separated from her neighbours as was traditionally believed, but had a much closer relationship which took on the form of patronage between them. Jerusalem, Zion, the holy mountain and the temple is here lived space (*the space of representation*), produced by social relations that produce ideologies and thought about the temple as Thirdspace (*lived realities as practiced*). Here the confrontation between various social groups, namely Israel and the nations, reflect the spatial ideology of Israelite society. Boundaries that were clearly not meant to be crossed are crossed.

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