

Perceived and Narrated Space in Psalm 48¹

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ABSTRACT

Psalm 48 consists of two layers, a basic pre-exilic layer (vv. 2-7, 9, 13-14a, 15) and a redactional exilic layer (vv. 8, 10-12, 14b). Analyzed with the heuristic categories of spatial theory by H. Lefebvre (perceived space, conceived space and lived space), it can be shown, how the pre-exilic text's praise of the impregnability of Jerusalem as city of God has been revised. This revision changes the perceived space, which the text is based on, into a narrated space, thus preserving trust in God and belief in Jerusalem as the City of God even in the face of destruction and exile.

A INTRODUCTION

The text of Ps 48 (vv. 13-14a³) invites the reader to look beyond the written word and to test its claims about the עיר אלוהים ("City of God") in light of empirical reality. The psalm mentions the towers, the rampart, and the residential buildings of the city. These entities are more than mere textual fiction; they can be counted and experienced. The text reflects and creates space within itself. Taking this into account, two questions need to be raised: First, when was the text written and which space (respectively, which kind of space) does it reflect? Does it reflect Jerusalem as city of God before, during, or after the exile? And second, how is the space described? Which spatial conceptions can be found in the text?

¹ Dedicated to Prof. Dr. Frank-Lothar Hossfeld for his 70th birthday. He and I wrote together an article with the title "Problems and Prospects in Psalter Studies." The "prospect" part of the title deals in part with the Zion Theology of Pss 46 and 48. See Frank-Lothar Hossfeld & Till Magnus Steiner, "Problems and Prospects in Psalter Studies," in *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms: Conflict and Convergence* (ed. Susan Gillingham; Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2013). As a development of this initial analysis of Ps 48, I dedicate this article as a gift to my teacher as he is currently working on the chapter on Zion Theology in his forthcoming book on the Theology of the Psalter financed by the DFG, the German Research Foundation.

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³ The numbering of the verses follows the BHS.

B DATING OF PSALM 48

Although one can fully agree with Adele Berlin's statement that the "dating of psalms is notoriously difficult,"⁴ no text is a timeless entity. To a greater or lesser extent, every text carries within itself marks of the time and world in which it was written.⁵

1 Attempts to date Psalm 48

Throughout exegetical history, many attempts have been made to date Ps 48, in particular, scholars have sought to identify the military events described in vv. 5-7. The current theories still span a time range of 500 years. Some theories are based on reference to the following historical events: the Syro-Ephraimite War (733 B.C.E.), the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib (701 B.C.E.),⁶ and the threat of Jerusalem by Antiochus VII (138 B.C.E.).⁷ Others have suggested an eschatological purpose.⁸ There can be no doubt that the verbs in the perfect tense within vv. 5-7 allude to some historical reminiscence,⁹ yet the generalized language of these verses implies that no one specific historical event is being referred to explicitly.

Marco Treves has drawn on 1 Macc 15:25-16:10 in order to date Ps 48 to the year 138 B.C.E. This dating may seem strange, but it is interesting to note that he bases his argument on the description of the city in vv. 13-14a.¹⁰ In Ps 48 the עיר אלוהים is not only theologized but described as an autonomous,

⁴ Adele Berlin, "Psalms and the Literature of Exile: Psalms 147, 44, 69 and 78," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* (VTSup; eds. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 66.

⁵ See Martin Leuenberger, *Konzeptionen des Königtums Gottes im Psalter: Untersuchungen zu Komposition und Redaktion der theokratischen Bücher IV-V im Psalter* (ATHANT 83; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2004), 22-23.

⁶ This suggestion was already made by John Calvin, who pointed to either the Syro-Ephraimite War or the siege by Sennacherib as the historical context; see John Calvin, *Commentary on Psalms*, vol. 2, n.p. [cited 22 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom09.xiv.ii.html>.

⁷ See Marco Treves, *The Dates of the Psalms: History and Poetry in Ancient Israel* (Pisa: Giardini, 1988), 47.

⁸ See Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (HKAT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926), 205.

⁹ Verses 5-7 are the expression of the collective memory of Israel. The memory that Jerusalem, despite many threats, has not been captured.

¹⁰ He writes: "The praises of the beauty of Jerusalem, its palaces, towers, and bulwarks (Ps. xlviii 2-3, 12-13) refer to the fact that Jonathan (152-142 B.C.) had repaired the devastations of the preceding years, had renewed the city according to his own liking, had built the walls of square stones, and had fortified the Temple hill with high towers (I Macc. x. 11; xii. 36-57; Josephus, Ant. Xiii. 41, 181)." (Treves, *Dates*, 47.)

tenable, real city – a description which is unlikely to be exilic or early post-exilic.¹¹ This is the assumption of John Day, who argues that such “confidence in the inviolability of Zion is far more natural before 586 B.C.E. than after it when Zion had actually been captured.”¹² However, Christoph Uehlinger and Andreas Grandy have rightly criticized such an assumption.¹³ In their own words:

The reason is not acceptable and may be turned on its head: How could someone have continued praying this psalm after the catastrophe, if the psalm existed already before 587/6? Should not the psalm have been rejected, just like the deceptive oracles of salvation of the so-called false prophets, and not continued to be handed down?¹⁴

¹¹ Quotes in German will be given in an English translation followed by the original quote: “701 may be a possible *terminus post quem* for the origin of Ps 48, just as the year 587/86 can be a possible *terminus ante quem*. After this date, Zion is not conceivable as a ‘joy of the whole land’ or even ‘for the whole world.’ In addition to this, the invitation to walk about Zion, to count its towers, to view the palaces and to behold the fortifications would have been imposture and mockery, unless we date the psalm to the rebuilding of the city walls by Nehemiah in about 400 B.C.E. And even then, Zion would not have made such a great impression, as verses 13 and 14 assume, before the renewal of the temple by Herod the Great.” (“Auch wäre die Aufforderung, den Zion zu umwandern und seine Türme zu zählen, die Paläste zu besichtigen und die Befestigungsanlagen zu betrachten, Hochstapelei und ein Hohn gewesen, es sei denn, man wollte bis zur Neuerbauung der Stadtmauern durch Nehemia um 400 v. Chr. heruntergehen. Und selbst dann dürfte der Zion, vor der Erneuerung des Tempels durch Herodes den Großen, keinen so überwältigenden Eindruck gemacht haben, wie ihn die Verse 13 und 14 voraussetzen.” See Josef Scharbert, “Das historische Umfeld von Psalm 48,” in *Ein Gott, eine Offenbarung: Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese, Theologie und Spiritualität. Festschrift für Notker Füglistner OSB zum 60. Geburtstag* [eds. Notker Füglistner and Friedrich V. Reiterer; Würzburg: Echter, 1991], 305.).

¹² John Day, “How Many Pre-Exilic Psalms are There?” in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (JSOTSup 406; ed. John Day; London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 229.

¹³ For the assumption of a pre-exilic date, see for example Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 1–50* (vol. 1 of *Die Psalmen*; NechtB 29; Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1993), 295; Jürgen von Oorschot, “Die Stadt - Lebensraum und Symbol: Israels Stadtkulturals Spiegel seiner Geschichte und Theologie,” in *Gott und Mensch im Dialog: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag* (BZAW 345/1; eds Markus Witte and Otto Kaiser; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 166–171.; Othmar Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems und die Entstehung des Monotheismus* (OLderB 4/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 733.

¹⁴ “Das Argument ist nicht annehmbar und lässt sich in sein Gegenteil verkehren: Wie hätte man diesen Psalm, wenn er vor 587/6 schon existierte, nach der Katastrophe weiter beten können? Hätte man ihn nicht wie die trügerischen Heilsorakel der sog. falschen Propheten verwerfen müssen und nicht weiter überliefert?” (Christoph

This argument leads both exegetes to argue for a post-exilic dating of the psalm.¹⁵ At present, a consensus concerning the dating of Ps 48 seems to be far away.¹⁶

2 Source Criticism of Psalm 48

In order to date Ps 48, one must also examine the unity of the text. I will thus provide a brief source-critical evaluation of Ps 48: in my opinion, vv. 8.10-12.14b are secondary in nature. The reasons are as follows:

- (i) Verse 8¹⁷: Corinna Körting points out several peculiarities of v. 8 when read in context: first, God is suddenly addressed directly (cf. vv. 10-12); secondly, the verbs in vv. 5-7 are in the perfect tense. In v. 8 the verb stands in the imperfect tense; thirdly, in v. 8 God actively destroys the ships, while in vv. 5-7 his presence alone suffices to avert the threat;¹⁸ and fourthly, the reference to the ships of Tarshish is a departure from the theme of the עיר אלוהים: God's almighty actions are described (in a particularly prosaic manner) as taking place outside of the city of God.¹⁹
- (ii) Verses 10-12: Since the publication of Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger's first commentary, the arguments in favour of the secondary

Uehlinger and Andreas Grandy, "Vom Toben des Meeres zum Jubel der Völker: Psalterexegetische Beobachtungen zu Psalm 46," in *L'Écrit et l'Esprit: Études d'Histoire du Texte et de la Théologie Biblique en Hommage à Adrian Schenker* [eds. Diète Böhler, Innocent Himbaza and Adrian Schenker and Phillipe Hugo; OBO 214; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2005], 393.).

¹⁵ See also Gunther Wanke, *Die Zionstheologie der Korachiten in ihrem traditionsgeschichtlichen Zusammenhang* (BZAW 97; Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1966), 106–113.

¹⁶ See Friedhelm Hartenstein, "'Wehe, ein Tosen vieler Völker...'" (Jes 17,12): Beobachtungen zur Entstehung der Zionstradition vor dem Hintergrund des jüdisch-assyrischen Kulturkontakts," in *Das Archiv des verborgenen Gottes: Studien zur Unheilsprophetie Jesajas und zur Zionstheologie der Psalmen in assyrischer Zeit* (BThS 74; ed. Friedhelm Hartenstein; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Theologie, 2011), 138.

¹⁷ *Contra* the following opinion see Hartenstein, "Zionstradition," 144.

¹⁸ See Corinna Körting, *Zion in den Psalmen* (FAT 48; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 166-167.

¹⁹ The reception of v. 8 in a few Hebrew manuscripts shows that the copyists saw a tension between v. 8 and vv. 5-7. They tried to correct the preposition ב at the beginning of v. 8 by writing the comparative particle כ in order to join vv. 5-7 with v. 8. Hermann Spieckermann thinks that the introduction in v. 9 (כאשר שמענו) is part of the intrusion of v. 8. See Hermann Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart: Eine Theologie der Psalmen* (FRLANT 148; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 189. But what would be more obvious than to read v. 9b as the thesis of the tradition that gets proven by vv. 5-7? The hearing is not connected to v. 8 but to the thesis in v. 9b: a kind of "as has been told" (Ps 44:2; 78:3; 2 Sam 7:22).

character of vv. 10-12 have been considered well established.²⁰ These arguments are as follows: first, in v. 3 God is praised through Mount Zion, while in v. 12 Mount Zion itself becomes the subject of the praise. Secondly, in v. 2 the place for the praise of God is the city itself (cf. v. 4), while in v. 10 the as-yet unmentioned temple is the place for the praise. Thirdly, while vv. 5-6.13-14a demonstrate the mightiness of God, vv. 10-12 meditate on God's מִשְׁפָּט and צִדְקָה and חֶסֶד. Fourthly, according to v. 3, Mount Zion is the joy of the whole world, while in v. 12 the praise is limited to Mount Zion and the daughters of Judah.

- (iii) Verse 14b: Körting rightly points out that v. 14b introduces an important difference into the text.²¹ Without this half-verse, the city itself would be perceived as proof of God's protection and would be the symbol of the power of God. Verse 14b changes this perspective so that the message consists of a narration about the city and its rescue (cf. Ps 102:19). Körting argues that the first indication for the change of perspective introduced by v. 14b can be found in the tension between v. 9b and v. 14b: while v. 9b proclaims the guaranteed firmness of Zion, in v. 14b the knowledge of this has been transformed into a living creed that cannot simply be deduced from the towers, the rampart and the residential buildings of the city. A further indication of v. 14b's secondary character is its level of perception. Verse 9a claims that the redemption of the city was witnessed, which allows a historical reading of the text. Similarly, the buildings of the city in vv. 13-14a are proof that the city remained safe. In continuity with this empirical proof, although at the same time in tension with it, v. 14b aims for the narration of the empirical proof. The narration forms a second layer of perception: הִנֵּה in v. 15 is an indirect continuation of v. 14b. As Hermann Hupfeld has pointed out:

When this positing occurs elsewhere, as in Ps 104:25; Isa 23:13, it [הִנֵּה – TMS] needs to be translated *here*. Therefore, we should read: *here (is) God* and so forth, or *this (is) God our God (instead of Yhvh and God)*; except that God has not been mentioned previously, it is the city that is the object of consideration.²²

Verse 14b interrupts the direct empirical relation between v. 14a and v. 15 (cf. the relation of vv. 5-7 to v. 9) and changes the perspective from that of the direct witness to a narrated testimony for the future.

²⁰ See Hossfeld & Zenger, *Psalms 1–50*, 294; also Körting, *Zion*, 175-176.

²¹ See Körting, *Zion*, 176.

²² "Doch heißt es sonst in solcher Stellung *hier*, wie Ps 104, 25; Jes 23,13; also: *hier (ist) Gott* u. s. w. Oder *dieser*' (ist) *Gott unser Gott* (statt Jhvh u. Gott); nur ist Gott vorher nicht genannt, sondern d. Stadt Gegenstand der Betrachtung." See Hermann Hupfeld, *Die Psalmen* (Gotha: Perthes, 1867), 460. See also Hossfeld & Zenger, *Psalms 1–50*, 299.

3 A Relative Chronology for Psalm 48

In my opinion, the main argument for a pre-exilic date of the earliest layer of Ps 48 (vv. 2-7, 9, 13-14a, 15) should be based on its inter-textual relationship with other biblical texts. Bertil Albrektson, for example, has pointed out that the only places where Jerusalem/Zion is called *משוש כל הארץ* (ל) are in Lam 2:15 and Ps 48:3 (also interesting to note is the evaluation of beauty in both texts; cf. also Ps 50:2). For Albrektson this is clear evidence that the exilic text in Lam 2:15 contains a direct quotation from the pre-exilic Ps 48:3.²³ This relative chronology, points to a pre-exilic date of the earliest layer of Ps 48. The following section will now enquire into the presence and nature of differing conceptions of space that can be found in the primary and secondary layers of the psalm. These considerations will also help us to date Ps 48.

C CONCEPTIONS OF SPACE IN PSALM 48

Verses 13-14 illustrate Henri Lefebvre's claim that space is not simply a three-dimensional, objectively-given container, as the Cartesian world-view would suggest, but a "social product"²⁴ – and, when it is found in literary texts, a "cultural signifier."²⁵ The main focus of Ps 48 is not within the actions in vv. 5-7 but is on Zion itself as the *עיר אלהים* (vv. 2-4,9-15). The city is a reality, which in the eyes of the author and redactor, consists of more than just physical stones. It is simultaneously an empirical world and an ideological place. As the sociologist Henri Lefebvre has shown, space is composed of the relatively objective, concrete space which people encounter (perceived space) and the ideological and cultural (conceived space), and the social and experienced space (lived space) actualities and constructions.²⁶

²³ See Bertil Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations: With a Critical Edition of the Peshitta Text* (STL 21; Lund: Gleerup, 1963), 224; cf. Lam 4:12 as a continuation of the argumentation in Lam 2:15 (Ulrich Berges, *Klagelieder* [HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2002], 336-337) in relation to Ps 48:2-4,5-7; see Hossfeld & Zenger, *Psalms 1-50*, 295. A further important chronological point of comparison is the post-exilic portrayal of Zion in Ps 122 which offers a contrasting imagery, see Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 101-150* (vol. 3 of *Psalms*; trans. L. M. Maloney Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 455-456.

²⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), 26.

²⁵ "kultureller Bedeutungsträger"; See Wolfgang Hallet and Birgit Neumann, "Raum und Bewegung in der Literatur: Eine Einführung," in *Raum und Bewegung in der Literatur: Die Literaturwissenschaften und der Spatial Turn* (eds. Wolfgang Hallet and Birgit Neumann; Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009), 11.

²⁶ See Lefebvre, *Space*, 26, 33, 38-39, 361-362. This perspective on space was mediated by Edward Soja, who as a geographer transferred and developed the ideas of Henri Lefebvre into a post-modern context. See Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace:*

These three dimensions of space are reflected, interwoven and influence each other in Ps 48's conception of the city of God. We will use these three dimensions as heuristic categories to help us interpret Ps 48's imagery in the following analysis.

In her monograph on Jerusalem as "gendered space" Christl Maier has analyzed Ps 48 according to these three dimensions: she provides us with a good starting point for our own analysis.

In sum, the basic layer of Ps 48 [vv. 2*-7, 9b, 13-15 – TMS] presents Mount Zion as a space that can be evaluated from three perspectives: *perceived space*, the buildings and topography of a city; *conceived space*, the idea of the mountain as divine abode; and *lived space*, the experience of deliverance from a thwarted military threat.²⁷

For her assumed redactional layer (vv. 8-9a, 10-12) Maier is of the opinion that "[p]ostexilic editors ... closely connected the praise of the victorious God to the temple liturgy and expanded the deity's realm or rule to the whole world."²⁸ A critical difference between her analysis and the view presented here is the judgment concerning v. 14b: while Maier assumes v. 14b

Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real-and-Imagined Places (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), 26–70. The theory has had a fruitful influence on biblical exegesis; the best examples of this influence: Jon L. Berquist and Claudia V. Camp, eds., *Theory, Geography, and Narrative* (vol. 1 of *Constructions of Space*; LHB/OTS 481; New York: T&T Clark International, 2007); Jon L. Berquist and Claudia V. Camp, eds., *The Biblical City and other Imagined Spaces* (vol. 2 of *Constructions of Space*; LHB/OTS 490; New York: T&T Clark, 2008). In order to transfer a sociological or geographical theory to exegesis, one needs to ask which space a text belongs to: a text is not primarily the carrier of the abstract ideas of the conceived space, but is the expression of lived space; see 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. J. Gunn and Paula M. H. McNutt; JSOTSup 359; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 67. Lived Space or, as Edward Soja calls it in his own interpretation "Thirdspace," is characterized by the merging of perceived and conceived space so that this "Thirdspace" is "the creation of another mode of thinking about space that draws upon the material and mental spaces of the traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope, substance, and meaning" (Soja, *Thirdspace*, 11). This understanding, however, also needs to be reviewed and adjusted by the criticism by Camp and Wesley Kort: "Kort critiques Soja for his prioritizing of percept and concept as 'basic or prior to lived space,' an ordering based on the social-scientific presupposition of a gap between concept and precepts and thus between 'facts and value, reality and mind'" (Camp, "Storied Space," 67).

²⁷ Christl Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion: Gender, Space, and the Sacred in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 41.

²⁸ Maier, *Daughter Zion*, 41.

as part of the earliest layer, it is argued here that v. 14b is redactional and that it demonstrates how the pre-exilic Ps 48 could have been continued to be prayed after the destruction of the city. The following analyses of Ps 48, therefore, will begin by examining the relationship between vv. 13-14a and v. 14b.²⁹

1 Space in vv. 13-14a, b

In vv. 13-14a a non-specified group is invited to behold the city: here are the towers, the rampart and the residential buildings that, due to the *Gottesschrecken* described in vv. 5-7, did not suffer damage. With a series of five imperatives, the reader is guided from the text back into external reality in order to verify the message of the text, which says that God is king over the world and that Jerusalem is his impregnable seat of power (conceived space). The resulting feeling of security is an example of lived space, and the physical buildings themselves are part of the perceived space.

There is currently a debate about the significance of vv. 13-14 and to whom these verses are addressed. Is the psalm addressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem who are looking at their saved city,³⁰ to the pilgrims,³¹ the participants of a cultic procession³² or the fearful adversarial kings?³³ To give an answer to this question, one needs to examine the objects and imperatives in vv. 13-14a:

²⁹ The heuristic categories of perceived, conceived and lived space unlock the meaning of a text only when they are analysed in their reciprocal relation with each other and when the text is provided with a reasonable historical location in time.

³⁰ See Maier, *Daughter Zion*, 40-41. For her, however, it is only the earliest layer of the psalm in vv. 13-14 that is addressed to the inhabitants of the city after the defeat of the kings: "The extension [vv. 10-12 – TMS] refers to the performance of the psalm in the *lived space* of temple worship, a setting not mentioned in the basic layer of the psalm. This later relocation of the praise in the temple liturgy adds a new meaning to the circumambulation (vv. 13-15), which in the new context becomes a liturgical procession." (Maier, *Daughter Zion*, 41.)

³¹ See, for example, Klaus Seybold, *Die Psalmen* (HAT 1/15; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1996), 197-198; Reinhard Müller, *Jahwe als Wettergott: Studien zur althebräischen Kultlyrik anhand ausgewählter Psalmen* (BZAW 387; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 118.

³² See, for example, Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59* (CC; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 476; Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM Press LTD, 1962), 383; Erhard Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part I: With an Introduction to Cultic Poetry* (FOTL 14; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 201-202.

³³ See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 1-50*, 298-299.

- (i) מגדל:³⁴ The towers have two functions within the text: First, following the etymology of the word; these towers are tall buildings that constitute the silhouette of the city. Secondly, they are a symbol for defence and security.³⁵
- (ii) חיל: Without a doubt the ramp is the front line of the defence for the city and therefore a symbol of protection (2 Sam 20:15; Isa 26:1; Zech 9:4; Lam 2:8; Ps 122:7). There are several reasons for the use of this term instead of, e.g. "חומה city wall." The LXX translation of חיל as δύναμις shows its double meaning: the term for "rampart" is built on the same root as the term for "power/strength" (חיל) – the undamaged rampart is a symbol for the unbroken strength of the city.³⁶ On account of this symbol for strength the beholder will "set his heart" (cf. Exod 7:23; 10:1; 1 Sam 4:20; 2 Sam 13:20; Job 7:17; Ps 62:11; Prov 22:17; 24:23; 27:23; Jer 31:21). This expression has a spectrum of meaning ranging from "to behold / to pay attention" (1 Sam 4:20), "to trust" (Ps 62:11), all the way to "to learn a lesson from something" (Prov 24:22). Whatever the exact meaning, the function of this expression is to indicate purposeful perception. The purpose of the perception in Ps 48:14 is to learn about the secure nature of the city: even the ramp survived the attack.
- (iii) ארמון: This term stands for the residential buildings inside the city.³⁷ In a very sophisticated way the author uses the etymology ארמון → רום connection with the word גדל → מגדל (v. 13b) to express the greatness, grandeur and power of the city.³⁸ At the same time, this verse is linked

³⁴ See Herbert Haag, "Jerusalem Profanbauten in den Psalmen," in *Das Buch des Bundes: Aufsätze zur Bibel u. zu ihrer Welt* (eds. Herbert Haag and Bernhard Lang; Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag; 1980), 255–257.

³⁵ See Haag, "Profanbauten," 257. The counting (ספר) of towers can only be found elsewhere in Isa 33:8: "The sense of the later addition in v. 18 is not completely clear. Perhaps it is meant that the towers are counted in order to control and disable new buildings for reasons of defence." ("Der Sinn des späteren Zusatzes in V. 18 ist nicht klar. Vielleicht ist gemeint, daß die Türme kontrollierend gezählt wurden, um Neubauten zu Verteidigungszwecken zu unterbinden"), Georg Fohrer, *Kapitel 24-39* (vol. 2 of *Das Buch Jesaja*; Zürich; ZBK; Stuttgart: Zwingli Verlag, 1967), 142, footnote 171. The Chronicler reports the building of several towers by Uzziah and Hezekiah in the pre-exilic period along the city-walls (2 Chr 26:9, 15; 32:5; cf. Mic 4:8).

³⁶ In Ps 48 there is an intra-textual word-play between the anguish (חיל) of the adversarial kings and the rampart of the protected city (חיל).

³⁷ ארמון is a term for a multi-storeyed residential building; it does not specifically designate a royal building; see Haag, "Profanbauten," 254; Victor Maag, *Text, Wortschatz und Begriffswelt des Buches Amos* (Leiden: Brill, 1951), 126.

³⁸ The meaning of the verb in v. 14a is not clear. As an exegete, one needs to have the courage to be open and agree with Arnold Ehrlich when he writes that "פסגו is a

with v. 4 by the word ארמון. But in v. 4 the residential buildings represent, figuratively, the inhabitants of the city, namely those who experienced the presence of God as a reality not only as a statement of belief. According to the use of the verb ידע (in the *nip'al*) the residential buildings are the place of God's self-revelation (cf. Ps 9:17; 76:2; Exod 6:3; Ezek 20:5,9; Isa 19:21).³⁹ In contrast to vv. 13-14a, v. 4 does not direct the reader into a primarily empirical reality, but leads him or her to the residential buildings as places where the testimony of the inhabitants can be heard. Verse 4 announces that God can be experienced within the city and that he is the guarantor of the city's protection. The proof for this claim is located in the experience of the inhabitants of the ארמונות; v. 14b builds upon this thought.

The mention of the profane buildings as symbols of protection in connection with the acts of counting and perceiving suggests that the psalm could be addressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, namely those who have faced the threat described in vv. 5-7. An argument against the pilgrims being the addressees is that the temple is not part of this demonstration.⁴⁰ In general, the thesis of a cultic procession as a setting can be excluded because, the counting of towers is not a cultic act.⁴¹ Furthermore, it is unreasonable to think of the adversarial kings (vv. 5-7) as addressees: their beholding of the city has already lead to an acknowledgement of the power of God in v. 5-7 and, in addition to this, they escaped the attack on Jerusalem.⁴²

Verses 13-14a do not specify to whom they are directed. They are addressed to whoever may hear them: the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the inhabitants of the "daughters of Judah," they could even be addressed to the whole world (v. 3). Verse 14b, however, with its memorizing/narrative

completely unexplainable word." ("פסגו ist ein völlig unerklärliches Wort.") See Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Die Psalmen: Neuübersetzt und erklärt* (Berlin: Verlag von M. Poppelauer, 1905), 109.

³⁹ See Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 475.

⁴⁰ The text does not describe how pilgrims enter the holy city by going to the temple; neither does it describe how pilgrims leave the city. Müller's thesis, that we should think of "pilgrims from the diaspora" ("Zu denken ist an Wallfahrer aus der Diaspora" cannot be proven by the text (Müller, *Wettergott*, 188).

⁴¹ See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 1-50*, 298.

⁴² See Müller, *Wettergott*, 187 footnote 31. The problem is: Who is being addressed? Where do they come from? Are they coming to the city or from the city? V. 13a does not provide an answer to this question. The verse starts by mentioning Zion. The whole city should be walked about (סבב). The verbal root סבב (please separate the English word from the Hebrew word) does not have a specific cultic, martial or profane sense. In parallelism to it is the verb נקף (cf. Josh 6:3,11; 1 Kgs 7:24 // 2 Chr 4:3; Ps 22:17; 88:18). In every occurrence of this parallelism, the meaning is a complete going around – no more and no less. Zion should be observed in its entity.

theology, hints at an inner-Judean circle of addressees (cf. v. 12; cf. also Pss 78 and 102). This half-verse is connected closely to v. 13b ("count the towers!" – ספר) by the verb ספר. The counted towers as well as the other buildings and the city itself are transferred into a narrative (ספר; cf. especially Ps 78:4,6 ספר + דור (אחרון) for the coming generations. Counting turns into narration and seeing turns into the word. An empirical counterfactual is counteracted by the continuing tradition of the narration. The content of this tradition and narration are the declarations read in vv. 1-4.

2 Space in vv. 2-4

The earliest layer of the psalm offers an introductory spatial account of the עיר אלהים in vv. 2-4. In time, with the destruction of the city, this account will provide the basis for a re-perception of the reality of this space as a "Contrast-Space," a textualized alternative space. These verses ground the impregnability of the city on a mythological exaltation that is anchored in God and that is able to survive the destruction of the towers, of the ramp and of the residential buildings.

Verse 3 refers to the spatial object of v. 2b, – עיר אלהים where God shall be praised – and describes the City of God as the primary reason to praise God. The City of God as the holy mountain of Zion is characterized by four attributes. The last one, קרית מלך רב, is a parallel conclusion for v. 2b's עיר אלהים.⁴³

The city is introduced as הר קדשו, the vertical place of God's habitation in association with the temple (cf. Ps 3:5; 43:4; 99:9).⁴⁴ The first characteristic of the holy mountain is "gipfelschön" as Buber translated יפה נוף (cf. Ps 45,3). Beauty is a divine emanation and a reflection of divine affection.⁴⁵ Secondly, the introduction of the mountain as the reflection of God's holiness leads one to

⁴³ See Michael L. Barré, "The Seven Epithets of Zion in Ps 48:2-3," *Bib* 69 (1988): 559.

⁴⁴ Müller points to the fact, that הר קדשו in its meaning is not limited to the temple but can also designate the "mountain of his sanctuary" as well as "his holy mountain": "The holiness of the temple radiates unto the mountain, the whole Zion turns into the sanctuary of YHWH." ("Die Heiligkeit des Tempels strahlt auf den Berg aus; der ganze Zion wird zu Jahwes Heiligtum"), Müller, *Wettergott*, 195.

⁴⁵ See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalm 1–50*, 281; Alexandra Grund, "Aus der Schönheit Vollendung strahlt Gott auf" (Ps 50,2): Bemerkungen zur Wahrnehmung des Schönen in den Psalmen," in "Wie schön sind deine Zelte, Jakob!" *Beiträge zur Ästhetik des Alten Testaments* (eds. Alexandra Grund and Detlef Dieckmann; BThS 60; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2003), 118. The hapax legomenon נוף designates an elevation; see Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, "Die Wurzel NŪP 'hochsein' im Ugaritischen," *UF* 22 (1990). According to GKC §128x, this word constructs with the antecedent יפה an epexegetical genitive (cf. Gen 39:6). The stress lies on the beauty and not on the height (cf. Ps 50:2).

assume that the following explanations do not point primarily to a topographical description but to a theological description. This mountain is the reflection of God's holiness which brings joy to the whole world (cf. Isa 60:15; Ps 98:4-9). This aesthetic description with its theological relevance is followed by the equation of the holy mountain with the locatable *הר ציון*, which is mythologically elevated by its first attribute; thirdly, following the description of the Mount as *גוף*, it is called the summit of the mythological Mount Zaphon.⁴⁶ Mount Zion is called the summit of Zaphon, and it is described by the fourth characteristic as a divine place of God's regency (*קרית מלך רב*). With this, the train of thought that originated in *עיר אלוהים* finds its completion in *קרית מלך רב*.

Within vv. 2-3, the City of God is a perceived space in that it is a city and a mountain; it is also, however, mythologically exalted as an ideological space (conceived space), for it is a reflection of God's holiness, a joy for the world, the summit of the divine abode Zaphon and the divine place of God's regency. The theological statement that Mount Zion is the real summit of the divine abode Zaphon, is irreversible and connected to the existence of the mountain itself.

The designation of Mount Zion as *קרית מלך רב* evokes in the strength of the city. It also evokes the description of the city in vv. 13-14a which suggests that the strength of the city is not to be found in its walls (cf. Isa 26:5) but in the presence of God (cf. vv. 5-7). The term *קרית* should be read as a parallel term to *עיר* and the strength is to be found in the *רב מלך*.

Verse 4 summarizes vv. 2-3 as follows: *אלוהים* (cf. v. 2b) is known as *משגב* in the residential buildings of the city. The abstract theological explanations, leading up to v. 4, are attested to by the manifestations of this God and the testimonies about his protection for the city in these residential buildings. The whole spatial description of Ps 48 is designed to support the idea that God needs to be praised as *משגב* by the inhabitants of the city of God, and similarly needs to be praised as *משגב* inside the city of God.

The spatial description inside this psalm is so meaningful that God himself is depicted and titled with a space-metaphor. He is a *משגב*, "a firm

⁴⁶ The appropriation of the Zaphon-motif in e.g. Egypt and Phoenicia shows that the term Zaphon became a synonym for a divine abode without a direct link to the specific Zaphon (cf. Isa 14:13). Ps 89:13 announces that Zaphon was created by God (cf. Job 27:7; 37:22); see Herbert Niehr, *Der höchste Gott: Alttestamentlicher JHWH-Glaube im Kontext syrisch-kanaanäischer Religion des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr* (BZAW 190; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1990), 107f.; Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, "Ugaritisch *srrt spn*, *srry* und hebräisch *srktj spwn*," *UF* 22 (1990): 83-84.; cf. also 2 Kgs 19:23. The palace of the god Baal (KTU 1.3-4) is substituted by the *קרית מלך רב* of God on Mount Zion.

place, a high-walled (or the like surrounded) living location,"⁴⁷ a stronghold, a refuge.⁴⁸ In this function he is king/ruler of the world.⁴⁹ The metaphor is the content of the narration of v. 14b: God is a **מִשְׁגֵּב** for the inhabitants of the city, as has been proven in the past (v. 4), in the present (vv. 5-7) and will be remembered in the future (v. 14b). The use of the metaphor emerges from the confidence gained by empirical experience.

The experience of the exile plunged the spatial representation of Zion into a deep crisis. The city, along with its buildings (perceived space), was destroyed; Jerusalem as **קְרִיית מֶלֶךְ רַב** (conceived space) was undermined, and the belief in a life of safety in the city of God actually resulted in the contrary experience for its inhabitants (lived space). At the same time, the destruction of the city did not necessarily mean the end of the mythological exaltation of the existing Mount Zion as a divine abode (conceived space). So, is it possible to read the redaction (vv. 8,10-12,14b) as a reaction to the situation of exile and a way to continue praying Ps 48 in exile?

3 Space in vv. 8.10-12.14b

Verse 14b (in connection to v. 4) hypothesizes/postulates a time in which the city itself will no longer be a symbol of God's protecting power. The perception of the City of God is transformed into a narration based on experience with the intention to preserve trust in God as a **מִשְׁגֵּב**, as hope for the future.

What is changed by the insertion of vv. 8,10-12? As mentioned above, v. 8 widens God's range of operation in an explicit manner. As inscription A in Khirbet Bet Lay illustrates, the commitment of God to Jerusalem is not to be understood as a form of particularism.⁵⁰ The message of v. 3b has the whole world in mind.⁵¹ In addition, v. 8 points out once again that God does not only act within or close to the city but also far away from it.⁵²

⁴⁷ "ein fester Ort, ein hochummauerter (o.ä. umgebener) Wohnort," See Pirim Huger, *Jahwe meine Zuflucht: Gestalt und Theologie des 91. Psalms* (MS 14; Münsterschwarzach: Vier-Türme, 1971), 97.

⁴⁸ "Yahweh is refuge and protection, not Jerusalem itself. The city derives its security from him alone." ("Jahweh ist Zuflucht und Schutz, nicht Jerusalem selbst. Die Stadt erfährt ihre Sicherheit nur durch ihn.") Josef Schreiner, *Sion-Jerusalem, Jahwes Königssitz: Theologie der Heiligen Stadt im Alten Testament* (SANT 7; München: Kösel-Verlag, 1963), 220.

⁴⁹ See James L. Mays, "The Language of the Reign of God," *Int* 47 (1993): 121.

⁵⁰ The inscription says: "YHWH is the god of the whole world, the mountains of Judah belong to him." (this translation follows von Oorschot, "Stadt," 171).

⁵¹ *Contra* Scharbert, "Psalm 48," 301, footnote 36. The equation of Mount Zion with Mount Zaphon exceeds a pure national perspective.

⁵² Some Hebrew manuscripts correct the beginning of v. 8 and start it with the comparative particle instead of the preposition **ב**. For example see Leo Krinetzki, "Zur

Just like v. 8, vv. 10-12 are a direct address to God; they explain the creation-theological message of v. 9. These verses (vv. 10-12) are a thoughtful reflection that, interestingly, starts with a verb in its perfect form. Just as vv. 5-7 is a remembered account, so too is v. 10. Perhaps the text insinuates a synchronism: while the enemies are approaching, the people are assembled in the temple. The textual function of this assembling is perhaps less of a temple theology than a statement that God alone is acting against the enemies, while those in the temple, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, remain fully passive. This reading is potentially supported by the use of *היכל* as a term for the temple, which at the same time means "palace" (cf. 1 Kgs 21:1; 2 Kgs 20:18; Isa 38:7; Nah 2:7; Ps 45:16 and more often) along with the spatial emphasis found in the phrase *בקרבו*: the "we"-group is in the temple/palace of God, while God as the Almighty King is defending them.

Verse 11 and its praise is not a result of the rescue described in vv. 5-7 or of the beholding of the city described in vv. 13-14a, but follows from the verb *הרהר* used in v. 10. According to this verb, the praise results from meditation/thinking. The form *הרהר* is often translated as the present tense of "to think." There can be no doubt that *הרהר* as a suffix-conjugation describes a completed action; but the meaning of the word is ambiguous: the main meaning in *pi'el* is "to compare/to equalize" (Isa 14:14; 40:18,25; 46:4; Cant 1:9; Lam 2:13; cf. also Hos 12:11). Furthermore, as Ehrlich has stressed, there is also the meaning "to believe wrongly" or "to intend" (Num 33:56; Jdg 20:5; 2 Sam 21:5; Isa 10:7; 14:24; Ps 50:21; Esth 4:13). The fact that the sense "to compare" requires an object of comparison that is marked by *או* or *ל* seems to exclude this interpretation in this context. Further light is shed on the word when we look at the object *חסד*.⁵³ The word *חסד* is written in the singular and refers to the abstract loving kindness/steadfast love of God, and not to its specific actualisations by merciful proofs (cf. Ps 106:7). The individual acts of God's loving kindness/steadfast love are the sum of his loving kindness/steadfast love. Furthermore, when an object of comparison is missing, a "comparison" of the loving kindness/steadfast love of God may be understood as an actualizing remembering of the history of God's mercy towards his people.⁵⁴ This interpretation is in agreement with the message of

Poetik und Exegese von Ps 48," *BZ* 4 (1960): 72, footnote 10. But there is no need for this intrusion in the text. Indeed, LXX makes the verb *ὑπολαμβάνω* the equivalent of *הרהר* in this verse. It should also be noted that the sentence has a different local object and a different message. The "thinking" does not happen in the temple, but in the "midst of the people."

⁵³ See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalm 1–50*, 298.

⁵⁴ Wilhelm Gesenius and Herbert Donner, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament. 2. Lieferung 7 - 7* (18th ed.; Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1995), 254 offers the translation "gedenken" ("to commemorate / to remember").

another song of the Korahites, Ps 44. After the recapitulation of the history of salvation in the giving of the land (vv. 1-4), the situation of the exile is contrasted with the salvation history and in reference to vv. 1-4, God is asked, to act "for the sake of your loving kindness/steadfast love" (v. 27). It is exactly this loving kindness/steadfast love that is remembered and compared in Ps 48:10. In this context, "to compare" means a mode of remembering in order to get a picture/idea of this חסד.⁵⁵

Vv. 13-14a ask the reader to look at the reality of the buildings, whereas vv. 10-11 remind the reader that the just acts of God can be accredited to his loving kindness/steadfast love. The actualizing remembrance and reflection leads to the feeling of assurance and the praise in v. 11.⁵⁶ The honour and praise of God can be found all over the world because he is the Almighty King who establishes his צדק.

The term *על קצוי ארץ* (cf. Ps 65:6) further explains the term *משוש כל ארץ* (v. 3b), stating that God's power is not limited by borders but is displayed throughout the world (cf. v. 8). Contrary to the suggestion of BHS, it is best to affirm the preposition *על*, understanding *ארץ* as referring primarily to Judah (cf. Isa 26:15),⁵⁷ whereas "Mount Zion" and the "Daughters of Judah" are indirectly addressed in v. 12. What is meant by "Mount Zion" and "Daughters of Judah"? Zion and Judah are, without doubt, names of places that are being indirectly addressed in a personified manner. In Isa 16:2 the term "Daughters of Moab" is used to describe the inhabitants of the cities of Moab. So it seems reasonable to assume that v. 12 is referring to the inhabitants of Zion and of all Judah (cf. Ps 68:36; Isa 40:9). The inhabitants shall or will rejoice (cf. Ps 45:16). The form of the verb used in this context leaves both possibilities open to the reader and may announce a future imminent joy (possibly the end of exile?), a joy that is based on the coming judgement of God.

The train of thought in vv. 10-12 reflects an increase in certainty by means of remembering. The remembrance in v. 10 leads to the joy in v. 12

⁵⁵ This interpretation is supported by the etymologically related term *דמות*; see Hupfeld, *Psalmen*, 458.

⁵⁶ Psalm 48 shares with Ps 44 not only the term *חסד* but also the motif or the arm or hand to describe God's action. Verse 11 mentions that God's right hand is filled with righteousness (cf. Ps 44:4).

⁵⁷ See Scharbert, "Psalm 48," 301. On the other hand, this conclusion for v. 11 does not influence the understanding of v. 3. *ארץ* in v. 3 means more than just Judah: Mount Zion is called Mount Zaphon, the divine abode for the whole world. Also *ארץ* is differently used in v. 3 and in v. 11, the intention is the same, just the perspective is different: v. 3 directly takes into account the entire world, while vv. 11-12 concentrate on the region of Judah, even while overstepping the borders.

which invites the reader to behold the former and perhaps also the future Zion. As the Midrash says: "What has been, will be again."⁵⁸

In addition to the spatial description of Ps 48, v. 10 explicitly mentions the temple as a part of the city. The temple as perceived space is actualized in v. 10 as a place of remembrance and a remembered place. Can it be assumed that, due to the suffix-conjugation of the verb, an actual act of remembrance of the loving kindness/steadfast love of God is not possible in the temple? The remembering is remembered: the temple is not, like the towers, the ramp and the residential buildings in vv. 13-14a, a symbol of the power of God. It is the place of the remembered act. The remembered act leads to the praise in v. 11-12 which is a new lived space, hoping for the power of God which will lead to joy for the (exiled?) inhabitants of Zion and Judah. Verses 10-12 do not contextualize God's *חסד* and *צדק* and *שפטים* primarily within the city. The remembrance in the mode of comparison leads to the understanding that God acts for his city and his people, which is proven in vv. 13-14. The primary level of understanding is not the perceived space but the theological experience that comes out of remembrance (cf. vv. 10, 14b; and also v. 9a).

D THE CHANGING FACE OF SPACE IN PSALM 48

Othmar Keel supposes that pre-exilic Songs of Zion such as Ps 48 were only transmitted, "because as Songs of Zion they already had certain canonicity. They must have been reframed in a spiritual or eschatological manner."⁵⁹ In light of Ps 137:1-3, the Songs of Zion must have been transmitted in exile with sadness and weeping. This transmission process did not happen as a spiritualizing or as an eschatologizing process, but as a transformation of the perceived space of "Zion" into the collective memory. The text transformed the pre-exilic reality into a hyper-reality. As a part of salvation history it gave hope for the near future as a simulacrum based on the notion of God in Ps 48.

Verses 2-4 within the earliest layer of Ps 48 (vv. 2-7, 9, 13-14a, 15) exalts the real city and Mount Zion in an ideological manner: Mount Zion is the *הר ציון*. This simultaneously connotes the whole city with the temple and relates it as a place that reflects God, as a joy for the whole world, as the divine abode Zaphon and as the seat of royal/divine power. This interpretation, in terms of conceived space, is based on the action of God in vv. 5-7, which leads to the statement that God has established the city forever (v. 9). The empirical proof (cf. also v. 9a) for this certainty is provided by the physical buildings of the perceived space that, at the same time, are conceived as symbols of the

⁵⁸ "[W]as war, wird wieder sein." See August Wünsche, *Midrasch Tehillim oder Haggadische Erklärungen der Psalmen* (Trier: Sigmund Mayer, 1892), 297.

⁵⁹ "... weil sie als 'Zionslieder' bereits eine gewisse Kanonizität erlangt hatten. Man musste sie dann spirituell oder eschatologisch umdeuten." See Keel, *Geschichte Jerusalem*, 733; see also Hermann Spieckermann, "Stadtgott und Gottesstadt. Beobachtungen im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament," *Bib* 73 (1992): 21.

impregnability and the security of the inhabitants. These empirical proofs lead to the final conclusion, in v. 15, that the buildings are a sacrament of divine protection which mirror the characteristic of God as **משגב** (v. 4).

The redactional layer (vv. 8, 10-12, 14b) somehow substitutes the consideration of the perceived space by remembrance and narration. The statements about Zion in vv. 2-4 are based on empirical perception (vv. 5-7.9a⁶⁰ – the proof of the defeat of the adversarial kings; vv. 13-14a – the proof of the undamaged buildings of the city). In the redaction layer of the psalm, the manner of argumentation has changed. V. 9b is already an abstract reflection which is the result of empirical proof (v.9a) that anchored the protection of the city in God. But v. 10 seems to separate the “we”-group from a empirical perception and announces the remembrance of God’s loving kindness/steadfast love as the source for its certainty of God’s power. This collective remembrance is the starting point for certainty in God (cf. vv. 11-12). The buildings in vv. 13-14a are no longer proof that Zion is the city of God but rather that God acts according to his **חסד** and **צדק** and **משפטים**, and this can be deduced simply by remembering: the buildings, according to v. 14b, turn themselves into a remembered narrative. The text itself asks for the narration of the events as statement of belief, which the text as a testimony offers. Ps 48 offers a seminal narrative; it says that God is a stronghold (v. 4) and a good shepherd (v. 15) for the “we”-group; that he has acted once for Zion and will act again for Zion (v. 12). With this trust, even during the exile, the city remains the – **קרית מלך רב** not because the towers, the rampart and the residential buildings are still standing, but because, according to v. 11, the name and the praise of God reach beyond the borders of Judah.

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⁶⁰ See the introducing **כי** in v. 5.

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