

The Canonic Responsa Reading of Psalm 114 and its Theological Significance

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ABSTRACT

The redundancy between vv. 3, 4 and 5, 6 of Ps 114 requires us to ask if it was written to be performed by two choirs singing antiphonally the same text with a 2-verse delay. Setting Ps 114 in such a canonic responsa fashion yields a highly integrated structure of three composite strophes developing together a theme totally obscured by the linear reading: the future of the pre-Israelite cult of YHWH after the covenant between the god and his new people. All these features, together with the many unresolved problems inherent in the linear reading, suggest that Ps 114 was indeed designed to be performed in a canonic responsa manner. The theological implications of this reading of the psalm are discussed.

A INTRODUCTION

Psalm 114 is a short poem evoking the Exodus (v. 1), the duality between Judah and Israel (v. 2), the crossing of the sea (v. 3), the supplying of water by YHWH during the sojourn in the desert (v. 8) and the crossing of the Jordan River (v. 3). This is why it is generally approached as a hymn composed for celebrating Passover or another, more archaic renewal feast commemorating the birth of Israel.¹ Arnold Anderson considered it as "a praise of God who has delivered his people from Egypt and has brought them into the Promised land"², and Artur Weiser, as a hymn of praise composed for the annual "covenant festival."³ This interpretation fits the Jewish tradition integrating it in the liturgy of the Passover festival.⁴ However, a simple reading of the psalm reveals a number of problems with such an approach:

¹ For discussion about the original "function" of Ps 114, see Willem S. Prinsloo, "Psalm 114: it is Yahweh who Transforms the Rock into a Fountain," *JNSL* 18 (1992): 172, and Gert T. M. Prinsloo, "Tremble before the Lord: Myth and History in Psalm 114," *OTE* 11 (1998): 308-309.

² Arnold A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (vol. 2, London: Oliphants, 1972), 783. See also James Limburg, *Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 390-391.

³ Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* (trans. Herbert Hartwell; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 709.

⁴ See Yair Zakovitch, "The Interpretative Significance of the Sequence of Psalms 111-112, 113-118.119," in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms* (ed. Erich Zenger; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 215-227.

1 When came out Israel of Egypt,	The house of Jacob from a foreign-speaking people
2 Became Judah His sanctuary,	Israel His dominion.
3 The sea looked and fled,	The Jordan turned back;
4 The mountains skipped as rams,	Hills as sons of flock.
5 What ails you, O sea, you will flee	O Jordan, you will turn back
6 Mountains will skip as rams!	O hills, as sons of a flock!
7 From before the lord displacing the earth	From before the god of Jacob,
8 He who turns the rock to a pool of waters,	The flint to his source of waters!

It appears immediately that this song differs from the typical "historical psalms"⁵ by its shortness and by its elusive mention of the historical events. To account for this singularity, it was assumed that Ps 114 was deliberately crafted as a short schematic poem.⁶ Events are generally evoked in their chronological order of occurrence in historical psalms. This is not, however, the case in Ps 114, where the verse evoking the conquest of Canaan (v. 2) is inserted between the coming out of Egypt (v. 1) and the crossing of the sea (v. 3). Similarly, the supply of water in the desert (v. 8) is mentioned after the crossing of the Jordan, symbolizing the entrance into Canaan (v. 2), and not after the crossing of the sea, as would be normally expected.

It may be argued that the poet arranged the events thematically rather than chronologically. However, the singular ranking of the verses asks for justification. Furthermore, we still need to explain why the theme of the ebb (v. 3) is repeated (v. 5) after the theme of the skipping hills (v. 4), the latter repeated in v. 6.

Few explanations have been proposed to account for this singular feature. James Limburg divided the psalm into two parts, the first evoking the sea running away (vv. 1-4), and the second explaining the miracle by the coming of YHWH. Accordingly, repetition of vv. 5-6 as a rhetorical question becomes a poetic device used in the second part of the poem to emphasize the "revelation" of YHWH related in vv. 7-8.⁷ This interpretation, however, is challenged by the allusive mention of YHWH in Ps 114, evoked only as the god of Jacob (v. 7).

⁵ See Pss 68, 77, 78, 81, 105, 106, 135 and 136.

⁶ Wilfried Rossel, "Eens en Voorgoed werd Ontzag Geboren: Exegetische en Bijbeltheologische Beschouwingen bij Psalm 114," *Collationes* 20 (1990): 248, assumed that "The poet gives theological meaning to salvation history in a concentrated form and the geographic map of the routes out of and into the Promised Land is reduced to a few well-defined strokes of pen" (transl. by Prinsloo, "Psalm 114," 172).

⁷ Limburg, *Psalms*, 390-392. A similar division of the psalm in two parts is suggested by Prinsloo, "Tremble before the Lord," 312-313: the first (vv. 1-4),

The interrogative structure of vv. 5-6 is also understood as the expression of an ironic astonishment in regard to the fleeing of the Sea and of the Jordan River already mentioned in vv. 3-4.⁸ This taunting manifestation of fear of the sea, rivers, mountains and hills is even interpreted as a poetic device used to stress the triumph of YHWH against the primeval forces of chaos.⁹ However, such an interpretation is not entirely satisfying. First of all, the taunting dimension of vv. 5-6 is uncertain.¹⁰ Furthermore, the mountains are never identified with the forces of chaos in any cosmic creation battle, neither in Israel nor in any other Ancient Near Eastern culture.¹¹ Even more, the two verses evoking the skipping hills and mountains (vv. 4, 6) are not specifically related to Sinai or any other event inherent to the birth of Israel. So it remains for us to justify why two of the eight verses of this short poem are "wasted" for such non-historical purposes.

The simplest way to overcome these objections is to assume that Ps 114 is not an original poetic entity. Some verses were part of an original (lost) poem relating the theophany of YHWH from the miracle of the sea to the miracle of the Jordan, while others are "interpretative glosses" added later.¹² These assumptions, however, are difficult to reconcile with the high structural

dealing with the salvation of Israel and its effect upon nature, and the second (vv. 5-8), relating how Nature responds in the presence of YHWH.

⁸ See Weiser, *The Psalms*, 711-712; Prinsloo, "Tremble before the Lord," 316.

⁹ See Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations* (FOTL 15; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 281-283. This author even suggests a parallel (see pp. 282-283) between this so-called taunting and ridicule of the natural elements and the victory of Baal upon Yam in Ugaritic mythology. A triumph upon the chaotic forces is also suggested by Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Continental Commentary* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 374-375; Prinsloo, "Psalm 114," 168-169; Prinsloo "Tremble before the Lord," 314-315.

¹⁰ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 375, considers the rhetorical question of vv. 5-6 as a prophetic manner of speaking. Adele Berlin, "The Message of Psalm 114," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature and Post-Biblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (vol. 1; ed. Chaim Cohen et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 354 also rejects the taunting nature of the question **תַּתִּתְנַהֲנֵנָה** asked in v. 5.

¹¹ See Berlin, "The Message of Psalm 114," 355.

¹² This thesis is argued by Charles A. Briggs & Emilie G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (vol. 2, ICC, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906-7), 390; Oswald Loretz, *Psalmen 90-150* (vol. 2 of *Die Psalmen II: Der Beitrag der Ugarit-Texte zum Verständnis von Kolometrie und Textologie der Psalmen*; AOAT 207/2, 1979), 180-181; Klaus Seybold, *Die Psalmen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 448; Lothar Ruppert, "Zur Frage der Einheitlichkeit von Psalm 114," in *Altes Testament: Forschung und Wirkung* (ed. Peter Mommer and Winfried Thiel; Frankfurt: Lang, 1994), 81-94.

cohesiveness of Ps 114, comprising four strophes of two verses each.¹³ If this psalm is truly an original piece of work, as assumed by many scholars,¹⁴ it becomes necessary to reconsider its nature and meaning.

It was recently suggested that Ps 114 is not simply a poem commemorating the Exodus. Rather, it may also include a cosmologic dimension expressed by the fleeing of the Sea and the movement of the mountains. Recently, Adele Berlin suggested that Ps 114 "achieves a nexus between exodus and creation by combining the motif of creation with the motif of the exodus and its aftermath."¹⁵ This interpretation is confirmed by the common evocation, in the last verse, of both the water and the mountain elements. This mention of the turn of mountains in waters as apotheosis of the song is difficult to explain in the classical interpretation of Ps 114, because such an event, though evoked in the Bible (Exod 17:6; Num 20:7-11), has no essential significance for the commemoration of the Exodus.

For all these reasons, it seems that the meaning of Ps 114 may be considerably more complex than generally assumed. It is the aim of this study to elucidate this premise.

B THE CANONIC RESPONSA HYPOTHESIS

The primary structure of Ps 114 is very simple: it includes four strophes of 2 verses each (A: vv. 1-2; B: vv. 3-4; B': vv. 5-6; C: vv. 7-8). However, the redundancy between the second and third strophes (vv. 3-4 and vv. 5-6) may reflect the existence of a secondary structure, beyond the linear strophic sequence A,B,B',C. Secondary structures are generated by complex antiphony, a mode of performance involving the pairing of apposite verses through a dialogue between two choirs singing each one a distinct part of the psalm.

Antiphony is rarely mentioned in the Bible. However, from a wide range of circumstances it is evoked in the Bible, and from singularities of the primary structure of many psalms, both Hermann Gunkel and Israel Slotki concluded that this mode of alternation of voices was probably widespread in Ancient Israelite liturgy.¹⁶ Among the few Biblical testimonies about antiphonal

¹³ All the verses show a similar meter and rhythm, and they all divide into two halves of quite equal length. See Meir Weiss, *The Bible From Within* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), 356. The first three strophes include 12 words each (7,5; 6,6 and 6,6) and the fourth 14 words (7,7).

¹⁴ See for instance M. Edward J. Kissane, *Psalms 73-150* (vol. 2 of *The Book of Psalms*; Dublin: Richview Press, 1953), 204; Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 104; Anderson, *Psalms*, 782; Prinsloo, "Psalm 114."

¹⁵ Berlin, "The Message of Psalm 114," 352.

¹⁶ Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (trans. James D. Nogalski; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University

performance, the case for complex antiphony is clearly evoked in Neh 12:27-42. This text relates the participation, at the ceremony of inauguration of the city wall, of two half-choirs (הוֹדָה) singing separately by walking on the city wall and mixing progressively in antiphonal fashion towards their meeting at the Temple.¹⁷ This testimony in Ps 114, argues for a mode of apposite verse pairing that accounts for the redundancy in the second and third strophes.¹⁸

In a complex antiphonal context, this redundancy observed in the primary structure, between vv. 3-4 and vv. 5-6, reflects the existence, in the secondary structure, of an echo-pattern typical to antiphony. It now remains to identify which pattern of complex antiphony enables the emergence of such an echo-pattern.

Three patterns of complex antiphony have already been identified in Biblical poetry, and they are:

- (i) *Steady responsa*. The psalm is divided into two parts of equal length, each one sung by a separate choir so that parallel verses from the two parts respond to one another antiphonally.¹⁹ This pattern yields a pairing between strophes A and B', and between strophes B and C, but not between strophes B and B' as required.
- (ii) *Shifting responsa*. In this pattern, the psalm is divided into two parts of unequal length, each one sung by separate choir. This singularity introduces a permutation in the pairing of verses at each round of performance of the text.²⁰ To fit this pattern, Ps 114 should be split in two unequal parts (2 versus 6 verses: 1-2//3-8 or 1-6//7-8, or 3 versus 5 verses: 1-3//4-8 or 1-5//6-8). In all these instances, the vv. 3, 5 and/or 4, 6 are performed by the same choir.
- (iii) *Cross responsa*. In this pattern, the first choir sings the psalm from the first to the last verse (sense voice) while the second choir responds by singing the same text from the last to the first verse (antisense voice).²¹

Press, 1998), 310-312; Israel W. Slotki, "Antiphony in Ancient Hebrew Poetry," *JQR* 26 (1936): 199-219.

¹⁷ Nissim Amzallag and Mikhal Avriel, "Shifting Responsa in Biblical Poetry: Evidences from the Parallels between the Inauguration Ceremony (Neh 12, 27-42) and Psalm 122," *SJOT* 25 (2011): *in press*.

¹⁸ Prinsloo, "Psalm 114," 168-169 noticed that the similarities between 3-4 and 5-6 are so striking that it would be justifiable to speak of parallelism between the two strophes.

¹⁹ See Nissim Amzallag & Mikhal Avriel, "Complex Antiphony in Psalms 121, 126 and 128: the Steady Responsa Hypothesis," *OTE* 23 (2010): 502-518.

²⁰ See Amzallag & Avriel, "Shifting Responsa in Biblical Poetry."

²¹ See Nissim Amzallag & Mikhal Avriel, "Complex Antiphony in David's Lament and its Literary Significance," *VT* 60 (2010): 1-14; Nissim Amzallag & Mikhal

This pattern generates a pairing between vv. 3//6 and 4//5 instead of the expected 3//5 and 4//6 pairing.

None of these patterns of complex antiphony is able to produce a dialogue between verses of the second (vv. 3-4) and the third (vv. 5-6) strophes. The simplest way to pair them in antiphonal fashion is to assume a delay (of 1 strophe in the current case) between the two choirs singing the same text. This mode of performance is defined here as *canonic responsa*.

Two modes of canonic responsa may be theoretically considered. In the *plain-text pattern*, the second choir waits for a definite verse-lag before singing the poem from its beginning. At the end of the performance, this second choir performs alone the last part of the poem (corresponding to the number of verses of the initial lag) after the first choir ends. In the present case, the 2-verses delay yields the following mode of performance: the first strophe (A) is sung first by the first choir alone as an aperture, then the strophes B,B' and C (first choir) are paired with the strophes A,B and B' (second choir) respectively. Then, the last strophe (C) is sung as a final by the second choir alone:

<u>First choir:</u>	A	B	B'	C
<u>Second choir:</u>	A	B	B'	C

Another mode of canonic performance should be considered, wherein no choir is singing alone any part of the poem. In this *plain-antiphony pattern*, the first and second choirs start and end together. In the current case, the first choir begins by singing the first strophe (A) and the second choir answers by singing the second strophe (B):

<u>First choir:</u>	A	B	B'
<u>Second choir:</u>	B	B'	C

The two variants of canonic responsa considered here differ in order of precedence of the segments of verses (antiphonal units) to be paired: in the plain-text pattern, the first choir sings segments from strophe B' while the second choir answers with segments from strophe B. The opposite situation is observed in the plain-antiphony pattern. Therefore, it becomes important, before setting Ps 114 in canonic responsa fashion, to determine which one of the two modes of canonic responsa was performed.

The pairing of apposite antiphonal units may be the key for determining the correct order of precedence.²² Indeed, the two orders of precedence of antiphonal units display approximately the same likelihood in most of the pairs

Avriel, "Responsive Voices in the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:1-21)," *JBQ* 40 (2012): *in press*.

²² The internal parallelism observed in all the verses of Ps 114 suggests that each half-verse becomes a distinct antiphonal unit during the performance.

of verses. The single exception is provided by v. 7, where the two antiphonal units of the verse start with the same expression, *מלפני* (*from before*). In the plain-text pattern, the pairing of the 5,7 verses generates the following antiphonal dialogue:

7 From before the Lord displacing	//	5 <i>What ails you, O sea, you</i>
the earth	//	<i>will flee</i>
From before the God of Jacob	//	<i>O Jordan, you will turn back</i>

In the plain-antiphony pattern, the same pairs engender the following dialogue:

5 <i>What ails you, O sea, you will flee</i>	//	7 <i>From before the Lord displacing the earth</i>
<i>O Jordan, you will turn back</i>	//	<i>From before the God of Jacob</i>

Coherent sentences are created in the plain-antiphony pattern, while the pairing remains rough in the plain-text pattern setting. This leads us to prefer the plain-antiphony to the plain-text pattern for testing the reality of the canonic responsa hypothesis in Ps 114. This mode yields the following composite song:

1 When Israel came out of Egypt	//	3 <i>The sea looked and fled</i>
The house of Jacob from a		
foreign-speaking people	//	<i>The Jordan turned back</i>
2 Became Judah His sanctuary	//	4 <i>The mountains skipped as rams</i>
Israel His dominion	//	<i>Hills as sons of flock</i>
3 The sea looked and fled	//	5 <i>What ails you, O sea, you will flee</i>
The Jordan turned back	//	<i>O Jordan, you will turn back</i>
4 The mountains skipped as rams	//	6 <i>Mountains will skip as rams!</i>
Hills as sons of flock	//	<i>Hills, as sons of a flock!</i>
5 What ails you, O sea, you will flee	//	7 <i>From before the Lord displacing the earth</i>
O Jordan, you will turn back	//	<i>From before the God of Jacob</i>
6 Mountains will skip as rams!	//	8 <i>He who turns the rock to a pool of waters</i>
Hills, as sons of a flock!	//	<i>The flint to the fountain of his waters!</i>

- 1 ביצאת ישראל ממצרים / 3 הים ראה וינס
- בבית יעקב מעם לעז / / הירדן יסב לאחר
- 2 הייתה יהודה לקדשו / / 4 ההרים רקדו באילים
- ישראל ממלוחתו / / גבעות בבני-צאן
- 3 הים ראה וינס / 5 מה-לך הים כי חנוס

הירדן יסב לאחור / הירדן חסב לאחור
 4 ההרים רקדו באילים / 6 ההרים תרकדו באילים
 גבעות בני-צאן / גבעות בני-צאן
 5 מה-לך הים כי תנוס / 7 מלפני אדונן חולן ארץ
 הירדן חסב לאחור / מלפני אלה יעקב
 6 ההרים תרקדו באילים / 8 ההרבי הצור אגם-מים
 גבעות בני-צאן / חלמייש למעינו-מים

C ANALYSIS OF THE CANONIC RESPONSA SETTING

In the canonic responsa setting, three composite verses (1//3, 3//5 and 5//7) evoke the theme of the "fleeing of waters," while the three other composite verses (2//4, 4//6 and 6//8) evoke the theme of the "skipping mountains." This compels us, first of all, to analyze separately the expression of these two themes throughout the composite song.

1 The fleeing of waters

1a Couplet 1//3

Verse 1a, evoking the birth of Israel is associated with the fleeing of the liquid element (v. 3a) in a way that obviously recalls the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea following the Exodus. The parallel between מצרים (1a) and (v. 1b) suggests that this latter expression evoking a people speaking a heavy/trouble/awkward tongue refers to the Egyptians. However, another meaning may be suggested in relation to the birth metaphor evoked by the first couplet of antiphonal units²³: מעם לעז may evoke early childhood (a phase of unclear speaking) of Israel in the desert (1b), prior to entering into the land of Canaan (3b). This first couplet of verses confirms the theme, already established in the linear reading, of the birth of Israel, enriching it with the addition of new metaphors emerging from the apposite verse pairing.

1b Couplet 3//5

This pairing generates a dialogue between the past fleeing of the waters (v. 3) and its future occurrence (v.5). The miracle of the Sea/Jordan being considered as a single event inherent in the birth of Israel, it is not expected to occur in the future. This suggests that the poet refers here to something else. In the book of Genesis, creation of the earth (dry land) follows the retraction of the seas: "And Elohim said: 'Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear" (Gen 1:9). This parallel transforms the

²³ The birth metaphor is even evoked by the wordplay surrounding (v. 1), both designating Egypt and being the dual form of *מצרים* (*the narrow[place]*), so that בצאת ישראל ממצרים also means: "from the emergence of Israel from the narrow place" (i.e. the *womb*).

miracle of the Sea and of the Jordan evoked in the couplet 1//3 into two new acts of creation inherent in the birth of Israel. Such a parallel in Ps 114 between the creation and the Exodus has already been stressed by Adele Berlin: "The sea that was restrained in the Exodus is the sea that God restrained in the creation of the world."²⁴ These considerations clarify the meaning of couplet 3//5: The expression *מַה לְ* (v. 5) becomes the following question: will the creative process of YHWH be expressed again after the birth of Israel (v. 3)?

1c Couplet 5//7

In this couplet, the universal dimension of YHWH (the Master of the earth, 7a) relates to the fleeing of the sea (5a), while his local attribution (the God of Jacob, 7b) relates to the moving of the Jordan (5b). By this double association, the poet strengthens the comparison between the universal (sea/master of the earth) and the local (Jordan/the God of Jacob) cosmic events. Their intimate association in this couplet provides an answer to the question previously asked: the waters will be gathered again by YHWH (v. 5), because he remains at the same time, the universal god (7a) and the patron deity of Israel (7b).

2 The skipping of mountains

2a Couplet 2//4

The theme of the skipping/dancing of mountains and hills (v. 4) relates here to the dwelling of YHWH in the land of Canaan (v. 2) according to his status of patron deity of the Israelites. This interpretation, deduced here directly from the pairing of verses, was already suggested by Hans Kraus who interpreted the skipping of the mountains as an epiphany of YHWH.²⁵ The pairing of antiphonal units associates the tribe of Judah (2a) with mountains (4a) and the tribes of Israel (2b) with hills (4b). This feature corresponds exactly to the topographic differences between the Judean mountains and the Samarian/Galilean hills.²⁶ This observation, similar to that of couplet 5//7, confirms that the canonic responsa yields highly specific combinations of meaning. In this first couplet, the dancing becomes a poetic expression of joy of the mountains/hills of Canaan for the dwelling of YHWH in their midst, subsequent to the birth of Israel.

2b Couplet 4//6

The skipping of the mountains in the past (v. 4) leads to a question: will the mountains also skip in the future (v. 6)? This question, parallel to that asked in couplet 3//5 concerning the fleeing of water is, in all likelihood, not restricted

²⁴ Berlin, "The Message of Psalm 114," 352.

²⁵ Kraus, *Psalm 60-150*, 375.

²⁶ As suggested by Prinsloo, "Psalm 114," 167, the mention of the mountains is not specifically restricted to Sinai in Ps 114, in contrast to the claim of many exegetes.

to the expression of joy. If the mention of the "dancing mountains" was interpreted in couplet (2//4) as an expression of the epiphany of YHWH, its mention both in vv. 4 and 6 calls our attention to the nature of such a process. Meir Weiss has already suggested that these two verses "... require us to view this skipping of the mountains and hills as indicating a change in their nature."²⁷ This obliges us to clarify the meaning of such a metaphor.

The skipping of mountains and hills is illustrated here by jumping rams and young sheep. These two images, when combined, may evoke waves of liquefied matter (young flocks) with local eruption of liquid silicates (jumping rams). Though such an interpretation may look speculative, the image of melting mountains is very frequently associated with the epiphany of YHWH. In Ps 97, we read: "The mountains melted like wax at the presence of YHWH, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth" (Ps 97:5). The same image is reported in Ps 46:7: "He uttered His voice, the earth melted" as well as in many other instances (Pss 46:7; 104:32; 144:5; Isa 63:19; 64:2; Mic 1:4). Indeed, the melting of mountains is so intimately related to YHWH's theophany that, in the song of Deborah, its simple mention is enough to entirely summarize it: "The mountains liquefied (גָזַל) at the presence of YHWH, that is Sinai at the presence of YHWH, the God of Israel" (Judg 5:5).

In such a context, couplet 4//6 asks the question whether the epiphany of YHWH will still occur (v. 6) once Israel became "his people" (v. 4, which was previously paired with v. 2, a feature also evoking the Sinai theophany inherent in the birth of Israel).

2c Couplet 6//8

In this last couplet of verses, a parallel is clearly established between the skipping of the mountains/hills (v. 6) and the liquid element (v. 8). In parallel to the pair (5//7) of verses, it seems that this pair ensures that the mountains will also liquefy in the future. This point is confirmed by the use of the term **ההפכִי** in v. 8, a participial form transforming the time frame. As stressed by Adele Berlin, "the time frame is no longer in the past but is now tenseless-timeless, suggesting that the God who changed the natural world before will change it again."²⁸ Such an interpretation, together with the previous considerations about the melting dimension of the epiphany of YHWH, invites us to reconsider the interpretation of v. 8. The transformation of rock into water is traditionally understood as the supply of drinkable water.²⁹ This interpretation is supported by the parallel use, in the context of the divine supply of water to the Israelites, of the terms rock (**צָוָר**) and flint (**חַלְמִישׁ**) both in Ps 114:8 and in Deut 8:15: "and thirsty ground where was no water; who brought

²⁷ Weiss, *The Bible From Within*, 367.

²⁸ Berlin, "The Message of Psalm 114," 355.

²⁹ See Weiss, *The Bible From Within*, 372.

you forth water out of the rock (צָור) of flint (חַלְמִישׁ)." However, this interpretation does not account for the strong differences between them: in Deut 8:15, YHWH is *bringing out* (הַמּוֹצִיא) waters from the rock, while in Ps. 114:8, YHWH *turns/transforms* (הַהוֹפֵכִי) the rock into waters. This difference is notable since the verb הַפֵּךְ is *never* used elsewhere in the Bible to relate to the springing of drinkable water from the rock.³⁰ Adele Berlin assumed that the use of this singular expression introduces a "creational twist" in the Psalm, in which "water and rock are altered from their natural state."³¹ Michael Goulder even stressed that this expression aims for the rock transforming into liquid.³² These interpretations suggest that the significance of v. 8 may transcend the supply of drinkable water to the Israelites in the desert.

In Ps 114:8, the verb הַפֵּךְ is combined with the expression (His source of waters) instead of מעין מים (source of waters).³³ This singularity is approached by the traditional exegesis as a poetic feature introduced for esthetic reasons only.³⁴ Such an opinion, followed by most of the translators and modern scholars³⁵, is however conditioned by the homology assumed to exist between להוציא (to bring out) and להפוך (to turn). Out of this context, the expression מעינו מים evokes the *waters of YHWH*, which may deeply differ from drinkable water.

The term הַפֵּךְ has a specific meaning when referring to YHWH. This is revealed by Amos talking about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as a "divine overthrowing" (מהפכת אלוהים).³⁶ The same expression is

³⁰ As in Deut 8:15, the verb להוציא (to bring out) is used in Exod 17:6; Num 20:8; Isa 41:18 and in Ps 78:16 to relate this miracle. In the two other cases it is evoked (Ps 78:20 and Ps 105:41), the term used, וַיַּזְבַּח מִים (waters gushed out [from the rock]), explicitly evokes the springing of water from a rock unchanged in its shape.

³¹ Berlin, "The Message of Psalm 114," 356.

³² Michael D. Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return (Book V, Psalms 107-150)* (JSOTSS 258; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 165. The author even assumes that the miraculous nature of this phenomenon is stressed in the poem by mentioning that the transformation affects חַלְמִישׁ, the hardest of known rocks.

³³ It is also claimed in Num 20:8 that the rock gave *His* water (וַיִּתְן מִימָיו), but a similar interpretation of מעינו מים is here prevented by the use of the verb הַפֵּךְ.

³⁴ See Amos Hakham, *The Book of Psalms* (6th ed.; Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1990), 346.

³⁵ Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II: 51-100* (AB 17; New York: Doubleday, 1968), 132-133 even considers this final *waw* as an incorrect grammatical form, due to a confusion of the poet or a scribe: "For the case ending of mayano [...] the poet uses an accusative ending where correct grammar requires the genitive. In the Phoenician dialect, too, one observes a similar confusion of case ending."

³⁶ "I have overthrown among you, (הַפְכִּתִי בְּכֶם) as the 'divine overthrow' (כְּמַהְפֵּכָת) of Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning; yet have you not returned unto Me, said YHWH" (Amos 4:11).

encountered in Genesis for the destruction of the two cities.³⁷ The fiery context of this event, together with its association to the process occurring in a furnace,³⁸ reveals that the divine overthrowing evoked here is none other than a melting process. This meaning suggests that Ps 114:8 evokes the melting of rock and flint rather than the resurgence of drinkable water. Its pairing with v. 6 also supports this interpretation, since the skipping of hills/mountains (vv. 4, 6) was already approached as a melting process.

Accordingly, this last couplet of verses becomes the promise that as God melted flint so easily in the past, He will continue to melt the mountains in the future. This couplet, therefore, introduces a metaphor asserting that further epiphanies of YHWH are expected to occur after the birth of Israel.

3 The composite structure of Psalm 114

The separate analysis of the two themes reveals their parallel development throughout the composite poem. This invites us to divide the song, once set in canonic responsa fashion, into three composite strophes of two composite verses each. Each strophe is built from a composite verse evoking the fleeing of waters followed by another one evoking the skipping of mountains.

- *First composite strophe (1//3 and 2//4):* The birth of Israel (vv. 1//3) is approached as a new creation event introducing a fundamental novelty: the Master of the Universe is now dwelling among the Israelites (vv. 2//4), then provoking a melting of the hills and the mountains in their dominion.
- *Second composite strophe (3//5 and 4//6):* The events evoked in the previous strophe introduce a new problem: will the creative powers (vv. 3//5) and epiphany (vv. 4//6) of YHWH continue to be universally expressed after the birth of Israel?
- *Third composite strophe (5//7 and 6//8):* This strophe provides an answer to the question asked in the previous one: nothing about YHWH's action on the world has changed with the birth of Israel: an equivalency is established between God as master of the universe (7a) and the patron

³⁷ "The Lord overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground" (Gen 19:25). Curiously, in contrast to all the other cases in the Bible where the verb **הָפַךְ** is mentioned, the issue of the transformation is not specified concerning the "divine overthrow." Also in Deut 29:22, the issue of the "transformation" at Sodom and Gomorrah is again, silenced: "...like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah (סָדָם וְעָמֹרָה), Admah and Zeboiim, which overthrew (הָפַךְ) YHWH His anger, and in His wrath."

³⁸ The "overthrow" of Sodom and Gomorrah is described as a giant metallurgical furnace: "the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace" (בְּקִיטּוֹר הַכְּבָשָׂן) (Gen 19:28).

deity of Jacob/Israel (7b), thus ensuring that the divine powers of creation will remain unchanged. The same answer is provided in the next couplet, where YHWH is acknowledged as the god liquefying the mountains (v. 8), and not as the god specifically devoted to the protection of his new people, Israel. This feature guarantees the perpetuation of his theophany.

The structure of the composite psalm makes this clear: it encloses three composite strophes of identical structure and length, the first evoking a cosmic change (the birth of Israel), the second asking the new theological problem inherent in the "reduction" of the deity creating and breathing life into the Universe to the patron-deity of a "new" people, and the third ensuring that this novelty will not change because YHWH remains acknowledged by the Israelites as He was before, as Master of the Universe and not only as their "private deity."

D DISCUSSION

1 The Canonic responsa setting of Psalm 114

The canonic responsa mode of performance is not explicitly attested to in the Bible, neither for Ps 114 nor for any other song. This is why the origins of this approach should be discussed at the outset. From a methodological point of view, the simplest hypothesis should always be considered first. This means that a poem should be first approached as it stands in the Bible.

However, where problems in structure and/or meaning are encountered in a linear reading, two further eventualities should be considered: (i) the psalm was not conceived to be performed as it exists in the Bible, but as a complex antiphonal work inducing a dialogue between apposite verses; (ii) the psalm is not an original work, so that the incoherencies observed reflect late editing, gathering of poem fragments, emendations and even copyist mistakes.

Among these two hypotheses, the former should be evaluated first because it is testable: the emergence of a coherent composite meaning and structure following the setting of a psalm in complex antiphonal fashion should demonstrate that a simple linear reading is perhaps incompatible. Rather, its occurrence combined with the problems inherent in the linear reading of a psalm, should be regarded as positive evidence towards its nature of complex antiphonal work.³⁹ Only if the song does not fit any pattern of complex antiphony, the hypothesis of alteration of an original poem (conceived in linear

³⁹ Such an approach has already suggested a complex antiphonal nature for the David's lament (2 Sam 1:19-27), the song of the Sea (Exod 15:1-21), and Pss 121, 122, 126 and 128 (see notes 17, 19 and 21).

fashion, as the simplest assumption) should be considered and emendations suggested.

In Ps 114, the striking redundancy between vv. 3-4 and vv. 5-6, the successive order of related events, and the curious content of the last verse remain problematic in the linear context of interpretation. As shown here, all these problems can be resolved once it is assumed that the song was performed *in canonic responsa* fashion, a mode of performance in which two choirs dialogue by singing the same text with a verse lag. In the present case, a 2-verse lag transforms the redundancy between strophes B and B' into an echo-pattern typical of antiphonal performances.

Furthermore, all the paired segments of verses from Ps 114 generate typical antiphonal structures following the canonic responsa setting: parallel themes characterize the pairs of antiphonal units from the 1//3 and 2//4 couples of verses; typical echo-patterns issue from the intertwinement of the 3//5 and 4//6 pairs of verses, and complementary sentences are generated by the pairing of couplets 5//7 and 6//8.

Finally, a highly regular composite structure (three strophes of two composite verses each) emerges following the setting of the psalm in canonic-responsa fashion. This psalm subdivision in three composite strophes generates an elaborated and articulated theological development (see above). The likelihood that *all* these properties of the composite song occur incidentally in a song originally composed to be performed in linear fashion is so remote, that we may conclude that Ps 114 was truly conceived to be performed in canonic responsa fashion.

2 The metallurgical interpretation

The current analysis reveals that the metaphors used in Ps 114 are not as trivial as they may appear. The fleeing of the seas and the skipping of mountains, the two recurrent themes of the psalm, finally combine in the last verse (v. 8) in a way evoking the melting of silicates. This meaning, supported first by the unusual use of the verb **הפָּךְ** in v. 8, refers probably to metallurgy, the single human activity involving the melting of stone. Such a metallurgical context is echoed by the explicit mention of the Exodus as the escape from the "iron furnace," both in Deut 4:20, Jer 11:4 and 1 Kgs 8:51. It is also reflected in the parallel existing between Ps 114 and Exod 19, revealed by the following observations:

- (i) Both texts begin with the almost similar "historical" title in which the God's intervention is totally silenced: "When went forth (**בִּצְעָד**) Israel from Egypt" (Ps 114:1) and "In the third month after were gone fourth out (**לִצְעָדָת**) the sons of Israel from Egypt" (Exod 19:1).

- (ii) A similar mention of Jacob and Israel is observed in Ps 114:1 and in Exod 19:3: "Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel."
- (iii) A parallel between sanctuary (קדשׁו) and dominion (ממשָׁלוֹתִי) is mentioned both in Ps 114:2 and in Exod 19:6 : "You shall be unto Me a kingdom (מֶמְלָכַת כְּהָנִים) of priests, and a holy nation."

In such a context,⁴⁰ it is worthy of note that YHWH's epiphany, in Exod 19, is accompanied by the (partial) melting of the mountain, a process explicitly compared there to the work of a furnace: "Mount Sinai was on smoke altogether, because descended upon it YHWH in fire; and ascended thereof the smoke as the smoke of a furnace (כָּעֵשֶׁן הַכְּבָשָׂן), and the whole mount quaked (וַיַּחַדֵּךְ) greatly." (Exod 19:18). This metaphor confirms the current interpretation of the skipping of mountains (vv. 4, 6) as a (partial) melting process, and the interpretation of v. 8 as an evocation of stone melting. These activities require us to clarify why such a metaphor is introduced for evoking the YHWH's epiphany.

Stone melting is a very particular event, spontaneously observed only in active volcanoes. This may explain why volcanic eruptions were considered during Antiquity as the *specific* theophany of the smelting god. In Rome, *Vulcan* designates both the smith god and volcanoes. Hephaestus, the Greek smith-god, was called "the lord of the Etna," and a similar linkage between the smith god and the volcano is attested to in many other cultures.⁴¹ The constant reference, in Ps 114, to stone melting stresses its central importance for YHWH's epiphany, and especially its acquaintance with the metallurgical background of pre-Israelite Yahwism.⁴² This interpretation conforms to the recent

⁴⁰ For the analysis of the parallel between Ps 114 and Exod 19, see Weiss, *The Bible From Within*, 95-100. From this evidence, Meir Weiss even assumed (p. 97) that the poet had the text of Exod 19 in mind when crafting Ps 114.

⁴¹ See Euripides, *Cycl.*, v. 600. The link between Hephaestus and the volcano was so strong that the Greeks even imagined a volcano at Lemnos to justify the dwelling of Hephaestus on this island (see Walter Burckert, "Jason, Hypsipyle and New Fire at Lemnos: A Study in Myth and Ritual," *CQ* 20 [1970]: 1-16.) This volcanic symbolism of metallurgy is also encountered outside the Mediterranean world: see Elmer G. Suhr, "The Griffon and the Volcano," *Folklore* 78 (1967): 212-224; Richard L. Dieterle, "The Metallurgical Code of the Volundarkvida and its Theoretical Import," *HR* 27 (1987): 1-31; Ron Newbold, "Nonnus Fiery World," *Electronic Antiquity* 10 (2006): 1-21.

⁴² It may be that the former identity of YHWH is also recalled in Ps 114, where the God of Israel is called (v. 7) חֹלֵן חֹלֵי אֶרְצָן. The term חֹלֵי is generally understood as a verb-form (*qal* imperative feminine, second person) of the root חֹלֵל חֹלֵל, understood as to tremble. It remains nevertheless difficult to justify why the poet suddenly introduces a sentiment of fear. The root חֹלֵל also means to hollow out, so that the

identification of YHWH as being formerly the Canaanite god of copper metallurgy.⁴³ This former identity is clearly evoked in the book of Isaiah, where YHWH appears specifically involved in metalworking: "Behold, I have created (בראתי) the smith, blow the fire of coals, and bring forth a weapon for his work" (Isa 54:16).

Copper smelting was esteemed in Antiquity as a demiurgic activity. This is why the patron deity of the copper smelters was generally considered as being the supreme creator of the world and the god perpetually revitalizing it.⁴⁴ In such a context, the specific alliance concluded between YHWH and the people of Israel introduces a theological novelty: the god previously involved in worldwide processes of creation/revitalization is now focusing on a specific alliance.⁴⁵

Such a change easily justifies the questions that arise in Ps 114 concerning the future perpetuation of the life-giving influence of YHWH once he has become patron deity of the Israelites. The response of the psalmist, as it appears in Ps 114, is that the former identity, function, and epiphany of YHWH remain unchanged following the birth of Israel. Even more, they are all integrated in the Israelite cult of YHWH, because the god is still recognized by his

expression אָדוֹן חָולֵי אָרֶץ may be also understood as the Lord of earth carving out, a title appropriate for the patron of ore mining.

⁴³ This conclusion is supported both by the origin of YHWH in Seir (Judg 5:4), the copper mining area of Canaan, and by the preferential relationship existing between YHWH and the Kenites/Edomites. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Midianite-Kenite Hypothesis Revisited and the Origin of Judah," *JSOT* 33 (2008): 131-153; John Gray, "The Desert Sojourn of the Hebrews and the Sinai-Horeb Tradition," *VT* 4 (1954): 148-154; Linda C. Haney, "YHWH, the God of Israel ... and of Edom? The Relationships in the Oracle to Edom in Jeremiah 49:7-22," in *Rooting and Planting: Essays on Jeremiah for Leslie Allen* (ed. John Goldingay; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 78-115. This is confirmed by the affinities existing between YHWH and the smelting gods from other cultures. See Nissim Amzallag, "Yahweh: the Canaanite God of Metallurgy?" *JSOT* 33 (2009): 387-404.

⁴⁴ This is the case for Enki in Mesopotamia (see, e.g., Keith Dickson, "Enki and the Embodied World," *JAOS* 125 [2005]: 499-515) and for Ptah in Egypt (see e.g., Laszlo Kakosy, "A Memphite triad," *JEA*, 66 [1980]: 48-53).

⁴⁵ Many indications suggest that YHWH was worshipped by the Rechabites (Jer 35:18-19), by the Edomites (Isa 41:11; Jer 49:7; see also Haney, "YHWH the God of Israel ... and Edom?"), by the king of Tyre (Isa 23:17-18; Ezek 28:3-4) and even the Philistines and Aram (Amos 9:7). It seems that YHWH was also worshipped by a religious elite of Egypt (including the king, see Ezek 31:18; see also Isa 19:13), in the far Mediterranean Islands (Isa 42:10,12) and even in Elam (Jer 49:38-39) and many other peoples (1 Kgs 8:41). All these singularities are explained both by the cultural component of metallurgy, and by the central importance of Canaan in the development of furnace metallurgy (see Amzallag, "Yahweh: The Canaanite God of Metallurgy?").

former identity. This theological position finds confirmation in the book of Isaiah, pointing to the Temple in Jerusalem as being the homeland of the furnace of YHWH: "And his rock shall pass away by reason of terror, and his princes shall be dismayed at the ensign, said YHWH, whose fire is in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem." (Isa 31:9)

3 Historical and mythological dimensions of Psalm 114

Psalm 114 is not merely a simple poem relating the Exodus and subsequent historic events. Willem Prinsloo already concluded that "we are not concerned with an exact account of history here, but with a poetic-theological interpretation."⁴⁶ In this context, the concomitant fleeing of the seas and the skipping of mountains probably refer to the creation of Universe. This interpretation, already suggested by many scholars (see above), is confirmed by the content of Ps 74, where YHWH is praised for his actions on the seas, the rivers and springs at the time of the creation. These events (vv. 13-17) are evoked in a direct correlation with the salvation of Israel in the midst of the sea (v. 12). This association becomes therefore parallel to that encountered in Ps 114, then confirming that the theme of the birth/Exodus of Israel is referred to as a true act of creation in this latter.⁴⁷

The so-called taunting dimension of the rhetoric question asked in vv. 5-6 has been interpreted by many authors as the expression of victory of YHWH against the forces of primeval chaos, symbolized by the liquid element.⁴⁸ In such a context, the birth of Israel, as an event achieving the whole act of creation, may symbolize the definitive reign of YHWH over the forces of chaos. Thus, it becomes a mythological event homolog to the victory of the Ugaritic Baal upon Yam, or the Babylonian Marduk against Tiamat. For this reason, it has been assumed by many commentators that the birth of Israel represents the rise of a new era of order subsequent to the completion of creation.⁴⁹

This interpretation of Ps 114 is however challenged by the following considerations:

⁴⁶ Willem Prinsloo, "Psalm 114," 166.

⁴⁷ This opinion is explicitly expressed by Weiss, *The Bible From Within*, 374, and by Berlin, "The Message of Psalm 114," 348, 352-353.

⁴⁸ Weiss, *The Bible From Within*, 365, reports: "As has been repeatedly pointed out by scholars, we find here also an echo of the myth of the war between God and the waters of Chaos at the time of creation."

⁴⁹ This interpretation is detailed by Prinsloo, "Tremble before the Lord," 314-315.

- (i) In Ps 114, the sea and the mountains move without any threat or constraint.⁵⁰ This challenges the idea of battle and victory of YHWH subduing primeval chaos.
- (ii) The mountains are never associated with the forces of chaos. On the contrary, they symbolize the forces of creation, as explicitly mentioned in Ps 104:8: "The mountains rose, the valleys sank down, unto the place which you have established for them."
- (iii) The so called victory of YHWH against the forces of chaos is supposed to be definitive with the birth of Israel. However, as shown in this study, the use of the term *ההופכי* in v. 8 introduces a timeless dimension in divine intervention.
- (iv) The "melting" intervention of YHWH provoking the skipping of the mountains, as interpreted here, is not achieved with the birth of Israel, as expected in the case of a definitive victory of YHWH upon the forces of chaos. This is explicitly pointed in Ps 46:3-4: "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change, and though the mountains be moved into the heart of the seas; Though the waters thereof roar and foam, though the mountains shake at the swelling thereof."
- (v) Perhaps the most challenging evidence against the "chaos-war theory" comes from Ps 104:31-32, where YHWH is praised for pursuing his melting influence *after* the birth of Israel: "May the glory of YHWH endure for ever; let YHWH rejoice in his works! He looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the mountains, and they smoke."

The extremely positive value related to the melting event mentioned here implies that the chaos/destruction evoked in Ps 114 through conversion to liquid element is inherent in the intervention and/or epiphany of YHWH. In Ps 104, the revitalizing dimension of this melting is clearly evoked immediately before its praise (vv. 31-32) through the following claim (vv. 29-30): "You hide your face, they vanish; You withdraw their breath, they perish, and return to their dust. You send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the earth."

Such a linkage between renewing/rejuvenation and melting challenges the chaos-war theory. Rather, it is evident in a metallurgical context, through the property of rejuvenation of rust copper by its re-melting in a furnace without any loss of matter. It confirms first of all the positive dimension of the

⁵⁰ Prinsloo, "Psalm 114," 168, noticed that "there is no sign of a battle or conflict in Psalm 114, and that the only consideration should be the theophany motif." Berlin, "The Message of Psalm 114," 355, stresses that "The battle aspect of the chaos myth is absent here, because the natural elements react on their own volition, not through God's force."

melting events. Furthermore, it strengthens the essential link existing between YHWH and copper metallurgy. Finally, it enhances the interpretation of Ps 114 set in canonic responsa fashion, where the central theme becomes the question of expression of the universal life-giving powers of YHWH even after he has become the patron deity of Israel.

4 The time of composition of Psalm 114

The explicit mention of Judah and Israel in Ps 114 (v. 2) has been considered by most of the scholars as a marker of the time of its composition. It was considered as evidence that it was composed after the schism between the kingdoms of Israel and of Judah. Moreover, the attribution of Judah as "holy" and Israel as "dominion" has been interpreted as evidence for a Judean origin of the poet.⁵¹ Some authors assume that the psalm was composed in the pre-exilic period, before the fall of the Israelite kingdom. Others consider its composition as post-exilic, justifying this opinion by the conscious avoidance of any mention of God's name, by its parallel with post-exilic metaphors (such as Isa 41:18), and by a (so-called) implicit reference to the Babylonian exile.⁵²

The interpretation proposed here invites us to revisit all these conclusions. The distinction between Judah and Israel may be independent of any political situation, once we accept the metallurgical dimension of this psalm. As recently shown by Joseph Blenkinsopp, the tribe of Judah was, among the tribes of Israel, characterized by its very substantial Kenite component.⁵³ If we recall the Kenite origin of the cult of YHWH, the nature of Canaanite metal-workers, the strong bonds existing between Judah and Edom,⁵⁴ the reference to Judah as the "holy of YHWH," then the significance transcends any political schism. It is a way for the poet to remind us of the metallurgical origin of the cult of YHWH and its persistence in Israel via the tribe of Judah.

These considerations confirm the centrality, in Ps 114, of the theological problem of relationships between the new (Israelite) cult of YHWH and the ancient one patronized by the Kenites/Edomites. It is likely that such a preoccupation progressively disappeared in Israel. For these reasons, it seems that the composition of the psalm is not only pre-exilic, but also more ancient than generally assumed.

E CONCLUSION

The setting of Ps 114 in canonic responsa fashion has revealed a previously ignored dimension of meaning: the theological problem inherent in the birth of

⁵¹ See Prinsloo, "Psalm 114," 165.

⁵² The various opinions are mentioned and discussed by Prinsloo, "Psalm 114," 171-172.

⁵³ See Blenkinsopp, "The Midianite-Kenite Hypothesis."

⁵⁴ See Haney, "YHWH, the God of Israel ... and Edom?"

Israel, an event transforming the Canaanite god who gives life to the whole universe into the patron deity of a specific political alliance. This fundamental question is rarely asked in the Bible in such an overt manner, so that the current investigation of Ps 114 provides an outstanding opportunity to discover how the psalmist considered these theological changes. They mainly consist of a novel status of the land and people of Israel (Ps 114:2), an event echoed by the metamorphosis of the Israelites into a "people of priests": *ממלכת כהנים* (Exod 19:6). However, the psalmist ensures that in no way will such a transformation affect the nature and mode of action of the deity, who remains the one acknowledged by the Israelites as the god melting the rock, the smelting god. We do not know whether the theology expressed here reflects a general opinion in Ancient Israel. But if so, this may demand a reconsideration of significant parts of the Biblical text.

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