

יחזקאל - A Forgotten Title of the King of Israel in the Book of Psalms*

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Verse 7 [5 in RSV] of Psalm 60, למען יחלצון ידידיך הושיעה מינך ועננו "That thy beloved may be delivered, give victory by thy right hand and answer us", raises a number of contextual problems.

1. Immediately after the long superscription at the beginning of the psalm (vv. 1-2), the speaker in verses 3-7 [1-5] (and also in verses 12-14 [10-12]) refers to himself in the first person **plural** (זנחתנו... פרצתנו). However, in verses 8-11 [6-9] the speaker employs the first person **singular** (אעלזה; אחלקה). The *qerê* at the end of verse 7, וענני, "answer me", does not fit in the context, since the psalm through to this point, even the beginning of verse 7, consistently uses the plural.²

2. We have seen that the stylistic boundary between the different parts of the psalm which is created by the switch from the use of the plural to the use of the singular is to be found at the end of verse 7 (especially according to the ועננו *ketib* "answer us").³ Psalm 108 verse 7 [6] till the end of the psalm is a duplicate of the passage from verse 7 of Psalm 60 to the end of the psalm. However, the duplicate begins with verse 7 of Psalm 60 and not with verse 8. Where then does verse 7 of Psalm 60 belong? Is it linked to the verses before it⁴ or to the following verses?⁵ If it is linked to both, what is

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¹ Even according to the emendation לעל לזוה the singular is maintained; See N. H. Tur-Sinai, *The Language and the Book*, vol. *The Book* (Jerusalem, 1959), p. 431 [in Hebrew]; Cf. Z. Weisman, "The Meaning of אעלזה", *Beit Mikra* 10/3 (1968), pp. 49-52 [in Hebrew].

² There are those that maintain that the *qere* is an error; for example M. Garsiel, "Psalm 40 - Its Background and History, Its Explanation, Literary History and Significance", *Beit Mikra* 39 (1994), pp. 201-202 [in Hebrew]. In modern translations into English: "and answer us".

³ Among the commentators who see verse 7 as the end of a section of the psalm, see A. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (OTL; London, 1962 [1965]), p. 438; H. J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary* (trans. H. C. Oswald; Minneapolis, 1989), pp. 2, 4; A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (NCB; London, 1972 [rep. Grand Rapids, 1992]), p. 441.

there in this verse that enables this double linkage?

3. Now the speaker in verse 11 [9], "Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?" (as well as 8-10 [6-8] in the view of some commentators) is the king; but he is not mentioned in the body of the psalm nor does the psalm anywhere indicate a change of speakers.

4. Verse 7 [5] is similar to Psalms 20:7, 10 [6 and 9] in that they have in common the verbs הושיע and ענה.⁶ But there is a recognizable difference between them for Psalms 20:7 [6] records the object of the salvation: "The Lord will help (הושיע) his anointed, he will answer him (יענהו) from his holy heaven". In 60:7 [5] the object of the action is not mentioned: "Give victory (הושיעה) by thy right hand and answer us (וענו ווענו)". Can there be any greater similarity between the two passages?

I propose the following solution. ימינך in 60:7 is not the **means** to carry out the salvation⁷ as is customarily accepted,⁸ but is the **object** of the salvation. I thus propose to translate, "Give victory (הושיעה) [to the man of] thy right hand". Hence ימינך is an epithet of the king of Israel.⁹

⁴ Also the meter aids in describing the boundary, as 3-7 every verse consists of two cola whereas verses 8-10 every verse consists of three cola.

⁵ In considering verse 7 to be the beginning of a passage one should take into account that verse 6 concludes with "Selah".

⁶ Cf. O. Singer, *Studies in the National Prayers in the Book of Psalms*, Ph. D. thesis, Tel-Aviv University, 1994, pp. 152-154 [in Hebrew].

⁷ ימינך is comprehended as an accusative of means; see M. Dahood, *Psalms II: 51-100* (AB; Garden City, NY, 1968), p. 79, or as creating a special linguistic structure in which it serves as the subject: "help [namely] your right hand!" (P. Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, II [trans. and revised by T. Muraoka, Rome, 1993], # 151c, p. 558; Cf. *GKC* #144 mb, p. 461. There are those who did not find any solution except to emend the text; among the emendations: הושיעה בימינך, הושיעה יונתך, הושיטה ימינך.

⁸ So too modern translations such as, RSV: "give victory by thy right hand"; NEB: "save them with thy right hand"; NAB: "help us by thy right hand"; NIV: "save us and help us with your right hand".

⁹ It should be noted that Dahood (n. 7) found a reference to the king in this verse, though not in the word ימינך, which he explained in the accepted meaning, but in the word ידדיך where the plural is in his view "a plural of majesty". Garsiel (n. 2), p. 195, who dates the psalm to the time of Solomon, finds a hidden midrashic name in the word ידדיך, which alludes to Solomon-Yedidyah. Already in the midrash Eicha Rabbah 2, 6 the word ימינך was understood to be the object of the verb, and according to the midrash God was called upon to save His right hand. Rashi cited this midrash in his comments on Psalms 60:7; cf. Kimhi *ad loc.* .

What is the connection between ימינך and the king? In Psalms 80:18 [17] the poet appeals to God: "But let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand [איש ימינך]". There are commentators who comprehend the term "man of thy right hand" as a reference to the king.¹⁰ Another relevant verse is to be found in Psalms 110:1: "The Lord says to my lord: Sit at my right hand [שב לימיני]". Whether this is only a metaphor or whether it is an expression that the king sat on the right side of some symbol representing God, the verse does link the king with the right [hand] of God.

If the term איש ימינך "man of thy right hand" in 80:18 [17] is indeed an epithet of the king, by means of ellipsis¹¹ also the word ימינך "thy right hand", by itself, without the construct word איש "man", can acquire the meaning "king". In a similar manner there are those that explain Daniel 9:23 כי חמודות אתה "you are greatly beloved", in the sense of a **man** greatly beloved and indeed such a construction is to be found in Daniel 10:11,19: איש חמודות "man greatly beloved".¹²

Now if we comprehend ימינך in 60:7 as a title of the king, there would be a reference to the king prior to the words which he declares in verse 11: "Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?". In contrast to the view current among modern researchers, that verses 8-10 consists of an oracle recited by a priest or cultic prophet,¹³ and that the grammatical subject of that oracle is God, we prefer the view of the medieval commentators that the subject is the king, and the verses describe the king's reaction to God's promise.¹⁴

¹⁰ So Saadiah Gaon, also Kraus (n. 3), p. 143; J. H. Eaton, *Psalms* (TBC; London, 1967), pp. 200-201; Dahood (n. 7), p. 260; A. Ḥakham, *The Book of Psalms (Da'at Miqra')* (Jerusalem, 1986), II, p. 75 [in Hebrew].

¹¹ On ellipsis see S. Ulman, *Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 222-223. On ellipsis in Biblical Hebrew see D. Zilber, "Ellipsis in the Bible", *Lešonenu La'am* 23 (1972), pp. 3-10, 53-59 [in Hebrew]; M. Rottenberg, *Unknown Syntax Rules of the Bible Language* (Tel-Aviv, 1979), pp. 83-86 [in Hebrew].

¹² *BDB*, p. 126; *HALOT* I, p. 326; אוצר לשון המקרא (*Thesaurus of the Language of the Bible*), III (edited by M. Z. Kaddary), p. 174 [in Hebrew].

¹³ See, e.g., Anderson (n. 3), p. 444: "This phrase forms the introductory formula to the oracle which was uttered by a priest or a cultic Prophet".

¹⁴ So, e.g., Saadiah Gaon, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Kimḥi; cf. F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (trans. by F. Bolton, Edinburgh, 1871), II, p. 81; Y. Kaufmann, *The History of Israelite Religion*, vol. 2/1 (Jerusalem/ Tel-Aviv, 1942), p. 204 n. 29 [in Hebrew]. This is also implied by the NJPSV which adds the word "that".

Let us briefly examine a similar phenomenon in a royal psalm, Psalm 2, that has some characteristics in common with Psalm 60. After the words of God in Psalms 2:6, verse 7 begins: "I will tell of the decree of the Lord". It is clear then that God is no longer the speaker, but there is no specific sign as to the change of speakers. Only from the content of the speech is it possible to conclude that the speaker is the king. Indeed, there is a mention of the king in the words of God at the end of verse 6, "I have set my king on Zion my holy hill", which can be considered to be a sophisticated literary means which prepares the listeners to the appearance of the king, even though it is not stated specifically that the king is speaking. The king begins his speech with the declaration, "I will tell of the decree of the Lord". His words are in essence a citation of the promise of God and he does not make a declaration of his own. In this way the total reliance of the king on God and his view of Him as the source of the king's power is illustrated.¹⁵

I therefore propose to understand Psalm 60 in a similar way: the word ימינך in 60:7, similar to the word מלכי in Psalms 2:6, mentions the king before he begins to speak and hints at the change of speakers. Also in Psalm 60 the wrestling of the king with a difficult political-military problem with which he must deal, is done by total reliance on the word of God. Similarly to the words of the king in 2:7-9, in our psalm the king begins his speech by relating to the promise of God to grant him rule. However, in Psalm 2 the promise of God is quoted exactly ("You are my son, today I have begotten you" etc.) whereas in Psalm 60, in our view, the promise is not quoted. This difference can be understood by the change in verbs, "The Lord **said** to me אמר [אלי]", in 2:7 as a formula indicating a quote which precedes direct speech in contrast to "God **spoke** [דבר] from his Holy Mountain", in our passage.¹⁶

¹⁵ For my own view on this psalm, see A. Frisch, "The Agitation of Nations and the Word of God", *Beit Mikra* 52 (1972-1973), pp. 33-39 [in Hebrew].

¹⁶ E. S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, I* (FOTL, 14; Grand Rapids, 1988 [1991]), p. 240, noted that the formula "God spoke", occurs two more times in the Book of Psalms - 50:1; 62:12 [11]. He also noted the variant which uses the imperfect. He did not note that in all these cases this formula does not precede a citation. In our view, also in the light of the content of the passage discussed here, verses 9-10 do not require us to view them as the word of God.

The difficulties raised earlier can now be solved according to our view: verse 7 is the connecting link between the two parts of the Psalm 60. On the one hand it continues the lament and completes it with a call for salvation, but on the other hand it mentions for the first time the king (ימינך), who is the speaker in the following verses. If indeed ימינך refers to the king, the similarity to 20:7 is strengthened:

הושיע ה' משיחו יענהו
הושיעה ימינך ועננו/וענני

The *qerê* וענני, according to which the speaker appears for the first time in the singular, can be explained as referring to the king.¹⁷ One can suppose that it is the king who speaks in the beginning of verse 7 in the third person, "That thy beloved may be delivered", and he concludes with an emotional call in the first person: וענני. But according to the *Ketib* ועננו the king begins his speech only in verse 8. In any case before we hear the words of the king he is already alluded to in the epithet ימינך.

Are there other verses in which ימינך serves as an appellation for the king? In my view there are two such verses in Psalms where this meaning is suitable:

a) Psalms 17:7 "מושיע חוסים ממתקוממים בימינך" - There are different opinions as to which word the term ימינך refers. One can explain quite simply that it refers back to the preceding word (ממתקוממים) thus: who saved from the hand of those who rise up against your right hand. In fact there are those who explain ימינך as an epithet for the powers of God.¹⁸ According to our proposal, בימינך indeed refers back to ממתקוממים - those who rise up against you, i.e., those that rise up against the king who is the right hand of God. There is thus some similarity to what is said in Psalms 2:2: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed".

b) In 20:7 ישע ימינו בגבורות - against the generally accepted explanation (so, for

¹⁷ See, e.g., Delitzsch (n. 4), p. 197; A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (CBSC; Cambridge, 1902 [1951]), p. 341; Dahood (n. 7), p. 79; Anderson (n. 3), p. 444.

¹⁸ See, for example, Z. P. Hayyot, *Psalms* (Bible with a Scientific Commentary, ed A.Kahana; Zhitomir, 1902 [rep. Jerusalem 1970]), p. 16; H. J. Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary* (trans. H. C. Oswald; Minneapolis, 1989), pp. 244-7, 248; Eaton (n. 10), pp. 60-61; Anderson (n. 3), p. 149.

example, RSV: "with mighty victories by his right hand"), according to which this cola has no independent existence, in contrast to the other cola in this verse (and even in the entire psalm), I propose to see here an objective genitive:¹⁹ ישע [את] ימינו "[will give victory to his right hand]". One can compare this to Habakkuk 3:13: יצאת לי שע עמך "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, for the salvation of thy anointed". Accordingly we have an independent statement also in the last cola: בגבורת ישע ימינו "[with might he will give victory to the one at his right hand]", i.e., to the king. Now the cola is parallel to what is said in the beginning of the verse: הושיע ה' משיחו "the Lord will help his anointed". As is known there are those who following the Septuagint also understood verse 10 in this manner: "Give victory to the king, O Lord".²⁰

The constant use of ימינך as an expression describing the power of God and his help (as in e.g., Exodus 15:6; Psalms 44:4; 118:15-16) obscured the special meaning of ימין in scattered verses. If we are correct in our surmise with regard to the meaning of ימינך in these few cases, we have succeeded to localize an early specific term unique to the book of Psalms. It reflects the concept of the close link between the king of Israel and God, a connection that some of its conspicuous manifestations occur in Psalms 2, the psalm to which we have compared Psalm 60.

¹⁹ See Joüon (n. 7), #129e, p. 466.

²⁰ So, e.g., in RSV, NEB, NIV, NRSV. J. L. Mays, *Psalms* (Interpretation; Louisville, 1994), p.100, even employed this reading as the title of this psalm in his commentary: "Psalm 20: Save the King, O Lord!".