CHAPTER TWO
STAGES OF YHWH’S KINGSHIP IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

As demonstrated in the last chapter, previous studies constructed the monarchical lens as the singular context for expressions of YHWH’s kingship. For them, all the facets of YHWH’s kingship in the Hebrew Bible (universal king, judge, creator, warrior) are present or assumed in every text. This position requires refinement since not all expressions of YHWH’s kingship share a typical vocabulary and Pss 93, 96–99 are a critical deviation from YHWH as the warrior king. With attention to diachronic developments known in other aspects of scholarship on YHWH’s divinity, the following analysis demonstrates there are at least two distinct stages of YHWH’s kingship present in the Hebrew Bible.

In the first part, we examine the more developed—accepted construction—of the YHWH kingship Psalms, extrapolate its particular vision of YHWH’s kingship, and situate its expression in the more universal vision of the Jerusalem temple. In the second part, we offer the first thorough analysis of an early corpus of YHWH kingship texts (Exod 15:1–18; Deut 33:5; Num 23:21; and Ps 29).¹ While these latter texts have been studied as early poetry, they have yet to be analyzed for how they express an early stage of YHWH’s kingship.

¹ Since this study is interested in categorizing and identifying the motivations for shifts in YHWH’s kingship, only the early corpus and the Psalms of YHWH’s kingship are discussed in detail. Other passages of YHWH’s kingship do not upset nor more substantially support the analysis here. For example, while chapter 5 will give some attention to First-Isaiah, the absence of Isaiah 6 as a major text for discussion is merely because the text does not reveal much about YHWH’s kingship. It describes YHWH as king, describes the heavenly hosts, but is more focused on the passing of YHWH’s word and presence to the prophet. This is similar to texts like Mal 1:14. Other texts like 1 Sam 8:7; 12:12 show that YHWH’s kingship was a concern, but do not reveal what that kingship is and are not as relevant for establishing earlier and later forms. Post-exilic texts are also not discussed in detail since they occur after the shift identified in this study. For example, post-exilic texts like Jer 8:19; 10:7, 10; 46:38; 48:15; 51:57 demonstrate that after the shift, a kingship theology, especially a universal one (Jer 10:7), was well-developed thanks to the YHWH kingship Psalms. Likewise, YHWH’s kingship is well used in Second-Isaiah (Isa 4:121; 43:35; 44:6; 52:7) and reinforces the universalistic vision of the Psalms. The post-exilic works not discussed here show that the kingship of the Psalms influences later texts like Zech 14:9, 16, 17 and 1 Chr 16:31, 29:11; 2 Chr 9:8; 20:6. Then Zeph 3:15; Mic 3:13; 4:7 will be discussed briefly in chapter 5 for how they correspond to our more detailed analysis of First-Isaiah.
kingship as different from latter stages of that kingship. We will reinforce the generally agreed early dates of this early corpus, uncover how YHWH’s kingship is envisioned at these earliest stages, and articulate how the Psalms of YHWH’s kingship are an intentional deviation from the expression of YHWH’s kingship in the early corpus. Recognizing two distinct stages establishes the question for later chapters: what motivated the change in YHWH’s kingship?

2.1. THE PSALMS OF YHWH’S KINGSHIP

As reviewed in the last chapter, one of the primary influences on the current constructions of YHWH’s kingship was Mowinckel. He set the Psalms of YHWH’s kingship in the *Sitz im Leben* of the Jerusalem cult during the enthronement festival in which the divine king was re-enthroned. No attempt is made here to refine that hypothesis, which continues to seem reasonable, if at times speculative. It is not the purpose of this study to evaluate critically the details of Mowinckel’s thesis, nor does the validity of this study depend on those details. The primary purpose is to discuss what type of YHWH king those Psalms describe, so that type can be compared with YHWH’s kingship in other texts of the Hebrew Bible.

Assuming a geographical origin (or eventual home in their current form) for these Psalms in Jerusalem is complex and is linked to problems in dating the Psalms. While Psalms dating is at present in a methodological flux, the purpose here is neither to review the traditional linguistic dating of these texts (both the Psalms and the earlier texts) nor to propose a new analysis of this method.

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2 Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 108. For a discussion of Jerusalem as the cultic centre in relation to these Psalms, particularly Ps 93, consult Lipiński’s discussion of Jerusalem as a symbolic centre of the created universe as in other myths; see, Lipiński, *La Royauté de Yahwé*, 118–122.

3 See later in this chapter for a defense of the general notion that these Psalms emanate for Jerusalem and share a similar date and theology.

4 Lipiński, *La Royauté de Yahwé*, 157–173, thinks Ps 93 is from the time of Solomon but moves its form-critical location to the Songs of Zion; Other YHWH kingship Psalms he dates late. For Lipiński’s date of this Psalm, see Lipiński, *La Royauté de Yahwé*, 172. For a discussion, see Eaton, *Psalms of the Way and the Kingdom*, 94. The gap widens in date when Lipiński considers Ps 97 as a late (164 BCE) composition. Yet such a late date is unlikely since many of its features comfortably fit into an earlier date. This contrasts with his dating of Ps 99 as pre-exilic.