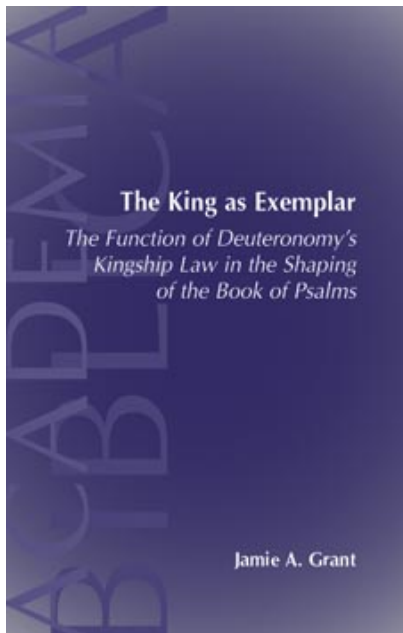


RBL 03/2005



Grant, Jamie A.

The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms

Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica 17

Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; Leiden: Brill, 2004. Pp. xviii + 335. Paper/cloth. \$42.95/\$150.00. ISBN 158983108X/9004130918.

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The King as Exemplar is an elaborated version of a dissertation submitted to the University of Gloucestershire, U.K. It was written under the direction of Prof. Gordon McConville. The book has a clear and impressive style, and the discussion is based on a broad and rich bibliography (297–312). In this research the author deals with the issue of the formation of the book of Psalms. In dealing with this he locates and addresses three groups of psalms (1–2; 18–21; 118–119) as the signs for the activity of the editors of the book of Psalms. The author sees in these groups certain texts whose order in the framework of the book was fixed by the Deuteronomic editors. These editors took part in the “project” of the canonization of the book of Psalms.

In Grant's opinion, these three groups of psalms are based on a combination between two types of psalms: the *torah* and the royal types of Psalms. His research “asks why the three psalms that focus on the *torah* (instruction) of Yahweh (Pss 1, 19, and 119) are associated with royal psalms” and suggests that the answer lies in an editorial attempt to draw attention to Deuteronomy's kingship law (Deut 17:14–20). In his own words, “The main suggestion of this study is that one of the redactional emphases of the Book of Psalms is the juxtaposition of kingship and *torah* psalms alongside one another, in an attempt to reflect the theology of the Kingship Law in the Psalter's final form. This focus on the

Pentateuch's paradigm for kingship is meant not only to shape the psalmic presentation of the eschatological king but also to direct the reader to a piety that every believer should emulate—the king as exemplar for the people of God.”

Thus, the mention of the *torah* in the framework of the kingship law was the trigger for the Deuteronomistic editors to come to this idea. That is, they decided about the borders of the book of Psalms by pointing to their ideological and theological source: Deut 17. At the beginning of the Psalter they fixed the “torah psalm” (Ps 1) and then the “royal psalm” (Ps 2.) The coupling of these two serves as an introduction to the complete book of Psalms. Referring to the author's words again, “it seems fair to suggest that Psalms 1–2 are also meant to be associated with the figure of David who so dominates Book I and II of the Psalter, thus also associating the introduction with Book I. It is David who functions as a type and exemplar of the righteous individual who is faithful to Yahwe throughout experiences. . . . Psalms 1 and 2 in turn apply this Davidic motif to the whole of the Psalter. At the beginning and the end, the theological concern of the Psalter is repeated.”

According to the author, there is a connection between the Pentateuch and the Psalter. In expressing this idea Grant follows other scholars who point to the parallel division of the Torah into five books and the existence of such a division in the Psalter. However, he should have cited the well-known rabbinic source, *m. Tehillim* 1:2: משה נתן חמשה ודוד נתן חמשה ספרים שבתהילים לישראל (“Moses gave Israel five books of the Torah, and David gave Israel the five books that are in Tehillim”).

Grant explains and describes in detail the components of the three groups of psalms. He analyzes their framework, *Gattung*, and idea in order to show the exact connections that exists between the *torah* and royal parts. This is followed by a careful textual and ideological examination based on a rich exegetical bibliography. By doing so, the book has the form of an almost full and detailed exegesis of all the texts included in the three groups, eight psalms in all.

Furthermore, Grant then deals with the kingship law (Deut 17), and examines all its textual components as well as its theological status. Thus the book includes a comprehensive interpretation of all its chosen nine texts. I see this part as a great accomplishment of Grant's research.

The book's main thesis is Grant's identification of the editors of the book of Psalms as a group of Deuteronomistic editors who were the creators of the canon of the book of Psalms. According to Grant, their fingerprints can be identified by using the kingship law as the sign and reason for the canonization of the book of Psalms.

I have several reservations regarding Grant's theory and research. (1) The term תורה appears in the Psalter thirty-six times: two in Ps 1, one in Pss 19; and twenty-five in Ps 119. Therefore, it is clear why one would define this last chapter as the *torah* psalm in all its meanings. However, there are more appearances of תורה in the following psalms: one in Ps 37 (with the important form תורת אלהיו); one in Ps 40; three in Ps 78 (!); and one in each of the following psalms: 89, 94, and 105. Thus, only three psalms have more than one appearance of the term: 1; 78; and 119. It is no surprise, then, that the main *torah* psalm (119) has such a usage; however, the important state of Ps 78 is ignored in Grant's consideration of his subject.

As I stated above, there are three appearances of the term תורה in chapter 78:

1. משכיל לאסף האזינה עמי תורתִי הטו אזנכם לאמרי פי

5. ויקם עדות ביעקב ותורה שם בישראל אשר צוה את אבותינו להודיעם לבניהם

10. לא שמרו ברית אלהים ובתורתו מאנו ללכת

These scriptures show that the motif of *torah* in Ps 78 is very central, thus making this occurrence of the motif the most important in the Psalms that mention the term *torah*, following immediately after Ps 119. However, Grant does not give it any real place in his book, for the reason that not royal psalm precedes (or follows) this chapter.

It is worth noting that Ps 89 has the literary type of “a mixed *Gattung*” (to use Gunkel's terminology), as it is composed by several genres, one of which is royal psalm. Verse 31 says ילכון לא ילכון (“If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my ordinances”). This psalm mentions תורתִי alongside the description of the king and his deeds (vv. 19–30, 39–46). Despite this, Grant does not take this psalm into consideration for the above-mentioned reason: he was looking only for combinations of two chapters—one for *torah* and other for the royal psalms—in order to ascribe their combined appearance to the Dtr group of editors.

Moreover, a consideration in the content of Ps. 37:31 (תורת אלהיו בלבו לא תמעד) אשריו; “The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip”) would have brought Grant to the conclusion that this is an almost identical image of Ps 1, and again, for the same reason Grant does not take this scripture into consideration.

(2) In the Book of Deuteronomy the term תורה appears twenty-two times. Fifteen of these are in the exclusive Deuteronomistic form התורה הזאת. We have to add to this number the form וזאת התורה (4:44) and the three times of ספר התורה הזה (29:20; 30:10; 31:26); the masculine form of ספר in the construct state ספר התורה caused the

change from **הזאת** into **הזה**. This shows that actually the exclusive Dtr form of **התורה הזאת** does appear nineteen out of twenty-two times. Now, the usage in the kingship law is **משנה התורה הזאת** (v. 18) and **דברי התורה הזאת** (v. 19), and if this law were actually the trigger for the act of the Dtr editors of the book of Psalms, as Grant's theory claims, one would expect that this typical usage **התורה הזאת** would have been used in the very places of the *torah* psalms (Pss 1; 19; 119). However, we cannot find this Dtr exclusive usage in any of these or other psalms (or in any biblical scriptures outside the book of Deuteronomy).

Moreover, tracing the usage of the term **תורה** in the book of Deuteronomy may have revealed that there are other scriptures that include combinations of *torah* with law and some other Dtr texts that use different combinations of *torah* and other terms, such as appear in another component of Deut 17, the law of the supreme court. Despite this, Grant does not try to ascribe to the editors of the book of Psalms other "decisions" as for their policy of the editing of the Psalter. This shows that choosing only one of these combinations is an arbitrary idea of the author to look for these "groups" of psalms, while he might have found other groups of psalms stemming from other combinations of *torah* and other terms. Actually, I would even say that the traces that he pointed to in his research do not have any real basis.

(3) Studying the kingship law (Deut 17) in depth will reveal that it has many motifs and features, most of which do not appear in the various psalms that Grant has indicated as the main area for the editors' activity. I would assume that if these very texts actually were the basic fields on which these editors based their work, then other central motifs found in the kingship law should have been used in those psalms. These motifs are, inter alia, **מקרב אחיך תשים לך מלך** ("One from among your brethren you shall set as king over you") and **לבלתי רום לבבו מאחיו** ("that his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren").

(4) Careful study of Ps 118 reveals one of the great flaws of this research. In this psalm the term **מלך** does not appear at all, nor do any of the important motifs that belong to kingdom. This is the reason that in the commentaries on the book of Psalms this psalm is not defined as a royal psalm. Verse 26 speaks about a figure **ברוך הבא בשם ה'** **ברכנוכם מבית ה'** ("Blessed be he who enters in the name of the LORD") and describes the righteous person, the pious, without giving him any signs of royalty. Psalm 118 is a *hallel* psalm that deals with the issue of a cultic parade, pilgrimage, and the like. Why has Grant included it in his research as a royal psalm? The only reason for this is that he wanted to find a royal psalm preceding the great *torah* psalm (Ps 119), so he decided to point to Ps 118 as such, despite the fact that this is not a royal psalm at all.

(5) The book of Psalms includes several additional royal psalms, such as 45, 61, 72, 89, and 110. None of these psalms has any connections with *torah* compositions. I would think that if the act of editing this book had been done according to Grant's theory, we would have found more combinations with *torah* psalms—most of all in Ps 89, which includes an original combination of the two types of *torah* and royal psalms. It mentions the *torah* beside the figure of the king and describes him as being chosen by God. Despite this, one cannot find here any signs for such editorial activities.

(6) Psalm 2, which rightfully belongs, is a royal psalm dealing with a king who after his inauguration suffered an attempt of the nations subjected to Israel to rid of Israel's sovereignty. Since this king came to power in a routine way of inheritance, one cannot identify him with David and his figure, although Grant identifies him as such. Moreover, examining all the royal psalms included in Grant's list (2; 18; 20–21; 118) and comparing them to the royal figure (according to the kingship law of Deut 17) will show that the situation and the description of these two types of texts are different. Most of the essential motifs of this law do not appear in these psalms at all; some may appear with only minor signs of parallel with the law.

(7) Regarding Ps 19 the author states: "The superscription [= 'To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David'] suggests that Ps 19 is a psalm of the king—this is his poem, his delight, his prayer" (101). He concludes: "the indications within Ps 19's content that the psalmist is, in fact, the king. The close association of kingship and torah functions as a red flag to draw the reader's attention to that which they seen before. . . . the reader's attention is drawn particularly to the Kingship Law and the piety suggested by it." To this I must comment that in the book of Psalms there are seventy-four chapters that have the term לְדָוִד as their title. If Grant wants to be consistent, he should have defined all these psalms as royal psalms, and the king's prayer. However, even he does not act in that way. Therefore, I cannot ascribe this even to Ps 19, which lacks any royalty signs.

Summing up my reservations, I have real difficulties to see Grant's thesis as an adequate explanation to the issue of the canonization of the book of Psalms.