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## Who Were the Korahites?

### The Korahite Clan Narrative

Understanding the historical context will help to track the developing theology of immortality in Israel and to locate Ps 49 within a possible timeframe. This chapter is not meant to argue the veracity of the history of the Korahite clan. The narrative is important because it contributes to the development of later theology and is woven into the understanding of life, death, and worship by the authors and editors of the HB. It also enriches the life of those who take it seriously and probe it for life lessons. It is a consistent story that spans the HB from the wilderness wanderings to the exilic Second Temple Reform, shaping the concept of the divine as well as the praxis of worship.

Both the ancestry of Korah and the location of his clan in Palestine are subject to dispute. The confusion begins with the genealogies, the first of which is recorded in Exod 6:16–25; Num 16:1; and 1 Chron 6:16–22. Korah was the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi. Korah (his name means ‘bald’) and those of his era lived in the days of the key fourth generation from Abraham who were prophesied to be rescued from Egypt by Yahweh (Gen 15:16). According to the narrative, these Levitical Kohathites/Korahites later settled in the hill country of Ephraim, the northern reaches of Dan, and the territory of the half tribe of Manasseh, which was their inheritance given by lot in the days

of Joshua (Josh 21:5). They were not Judeans and they did not inherit any part of Judah. The Hebron region south of Jerusalem was for the Aaronid priests (Josh 21:13).

Another Korahite clan was descended from the son of Esau, Jacob's brother (Gen 36:5, 14, 18; 1 Chron 1:35). In Gen 36:16 the name Korah appears also in a list of "the chiefs among Esau's descendants, the sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau." T. C. Mitchell suggests that Gen 36:16 might be a gloss, since Korah is not listed among the sons of Eliphaz in verse 11 or 1 Chron 1:36.<sup>1</sup> The solution may be that Gen 36:16 refers to clans rather than individuals. If so, these Edomite Korahites would have pre-dated the Exodus by hundreds of years and would have settled in Transjordan and the southern Negev, ruling them out as a candidate for the Korah of the Exodus.

The last Korah that is of interest to this study is listed in 1 Chron 2:43, the son of the Judahite named Hebron. He was related to Caleb, the son of Hezron, the brother of Jerahmeel (also called Chelubai in 1 Chron 2:9). Caleb had several concubines, including one called Ephah, Ephrathah, or Ephrath (1 Chron 2:19, 46, 51). These eponymous Judahite clans may have settled around Bethlehem in what is called Caleb-ephratah (1 Chron 2:24). Bethlehem was the name of the grandson or great-grandson of Caleb's concubine Ephrathah (1 Chron 2:51; 4:4), the result being that the toponyms 'Bethlehem' and 'Ephrathah' became synonymous. Baruch Halpern noted that David was born in Bethlehem, and therefore proposes that Caleb's genealogy in the latter verses of 1 Chron 2 was fictionalized to aid King David in becoming the king of Judah in Hebron, which was of Calebite heritage.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, this proposal does not stand up to close scrutiny. The Caleb whose lineage is so carefully laid out in 1 Chron 2 was not the Caleb who inherited Hebron. That region was taken by Caleb the son of Jephunneh (1 Chron 4:15; 6:55). He seems to be descended from Kenaz, but his exact lineage is not clearly explicated. He is the father of Iru, Ilah, and Naam, and had a daughter named Achsah. In Num 13, he

1. Douglas, ed., *IBD*, 2:864. See also Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 338, who notes that the Samaritan Pentateuch omits the name and that it is unlisted in other areas, and thus may be a gloss or scribal error.

2. Levenson and Halpern, "The Political Import of David's Marriages," 508–10; and Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, 271–72, in which Halpern claims that 1 Chron 2 is David's alternate lineage and that when he was born, the tribe of Judah did not exist.

represents the tribe of Judah as one of twelve spies sent out by Moses. The record of Joshua giving him the region of Kiriath-arba/Hebron is recorded in Josh 15:13–19. Although Joshua is not mentioned in Judg 1:9–13, the record is clearly a duplicate. The Caleb whose genealogy is rehearsed in 1 Chron 2 is Caleb the son of Hezron, who did not live to enter the land. That he, too, is said to have had a daughter named Achsah (1 Chron 2:49) may be attributed to either coincidence or erroneous scribal expansion. Either way, there is no reason for David to try to attach himself to Caleb's line of descendants. It is in this genealogy that we find the third Korah (1 Chron 2:43), who is clearly a Judahite, not a Levite. His clan's territory would have been somewhere south of Benjamin and Ephraim.

Another source of confusion in the genealogies is the meaning of the word *ephraiti*. A familiar Korahite who is described as an *ephraiti* is Elkanah, the husband of Hannah and the father of Samuel. His genealogy is found in 1 Chron 6:16–27 and 6:33–38, where Zophai/Zuph lies embedded in the list. In 6:33–38 the list stretches from Heman, the grandson of the prophet Samuel and a lead singer appointed by King David for Tabernacle worship, back to the Patriarch Levi. The Levitical Korah is consistently the fourth from Levi. Confusingly, in 1 Sam 1:1 Elkanah is said to have been both “a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim” and an *ephraiti*. He cannot be both a Levitical Zuphite and a descendant of Caleb-Ephrata. There are two places in the HB where *ephraiti* clearly refers to an Ephraimite (Judg 12:5; 1 Kgs 11:26), but the Levite Elkanah cannot be from the tribe of Ephraim, either. The solution to this mystery becomes apparent as we recall that many Korahites settled in the hill country of Ephraim. In Elkanah's case, the reference is to location, not to lineage. There are also references to a place name, Ephrathah, which in several passages is clearly equated with the town of Bethlehem (Gen 35:16, 19; 48:7; Ruth 1:2; 4:11; Mic 5:2). The double name shows that both designations were still current at the time of the writing of these texts. Bethlehem may have been the older name since inspiration for Ephrathah would be associated with the Conquest, or there may have been conflict between the descendants of Caleb-Ephrathah and Bethlehem as to what the land should be called. In Ruth 1:2, *ephratim* (a plural designation) refers to a family from the clan of Ephratha (a Judahite) from Bethlehem-Judah. First Samuel 17:12 reads, “Now David was the son of an Ephratite of Bethlehem in Judah, named

Jesse . . .” M. D. Goulder erroneously assumes that Jesse (David’s father) was therefore an Ephraimite located in Benjamin.<sup>3</sup>

J. Maxwell Miller sees the Korahite authors of the Psalms living in central and southern Judah, particularly near Hebron. He correctly points out that in that region there would be Edomite Korahites (Gen 36) and Levitical Hebronites (Num 26:57–58), whom he assumes would have included Kohathite Korahites. However, he makes the same error that other scholars have made in assuming that the Caleb of 1 Chron 2 was the Caleb of Hebron. There were Levites in Hebron, but they were the Aaronid priests (Josh 21:10–13).<sup>4</sup> Miller sees all of the divergent Korahite groups—the Edomite, Calebite, Benjamite (his designation based on the usual misunderstanding of the genealogies), and Levitical—as emanating from the same tribal group that migrated from the south and settled in the region of Hebron.<sup>5</sup> He points to a sanctuary at the border fortress of Arad, at which he worked for a season, to support his thesis. An ostrakon was found there on which was written “sons of Korah.”<sup>6</sup> However, the ostrakon could be referring to Judahite-Calebite (son of Hezron) Korahites. Miller’s designations are disappointing, and his deconstruction of the genealogies is unnecessary.

Martin Buss saw a northern provenance for the Korahite Psalms as unlikely because of the evident loyalty to Zion. The uncertain state of the debate regarding genealogies and Levitical cities left him unconvinced of a northern connection.<sup>7</sup> However, northern location would have little to do with loyalty to Zion, particularly in the tenth century. In the days of dual monarchies, loyalty would still be a matter of personal preference, although a northern Levite who insisted on pilgrimage to Jerusalem may have felt local criticism and cultural pressure from the descendants of Moses who had been acting as priests in the northern city of Dan since the establishment of the city (Judg 17–18).

We have seen that the complexity of the genealogies and the need to differentiate between tribe and location has led not only to confusion in the scholarly world, but has contributed to the claim that much

3. Goulder, “Asaph’s History of Israel,” 73.

4. Miller, “The Korahites of Southern Judah,” 64.

5. *Ibid.*, 67.

6. *Ibid.*, 32. Cf. Aharoni’s report of all five seasons, “Arad, Its Inscriptions and Temple,” 11.

7. Buss, “The Psalms of Asaph and Korah,” 387.

of what is written in the HB was fictionalized by politically motivated scribes. Backing up and taking a second look will verify that conjectural emendation of the genealogies and histories is unnecessary. David C. Mitchell makes a cogent argument to the effect that the psalmists and scribes believed in prophets and predictive prophecy, and therefore had hope for the spiritual and political future of their nation, as reflected in the latter prophets and in Second Temple literature. He takes individuals such as Korah, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun seriously as representing an important spiritual reality to the readers of their psalms.<sup>8</sup> In that light, we can revisit the scene of Korah and his rebellion more confidently, and examine how that event affected his descendants.

The rebellion began peacefully and democratically in Num 16 when two hundred and fifty men, all appointed by their various tribes to be a committee, came to the established leadership to request a change in procedure. They felt that egregious nepotism was keeping their own children from having the top level sacerdotal positions and that a theological error was being propagated in that only one family of men had been declared holy. The accusations soon begin to fly. Moses charged the group with basely coveting the priesthood (v. 10) and of falsely accusing Aaron of the same ambition, when in fact it was Yahweh Himself who had set up the hierarchy. The plaintiffs in turn blamed Moses for their suffering and privation in the harsh wilderness. All of the miracles that rescued them from Egypt were disregarded. It was Moses who brought them out to the wilderness to die hungry, thirsty, and landless. Korah accused Moses of exalting himself and his own brother's family. At this point, the narrator is clarifying that the motives of the assembly were purely vain and political and had nothing to do with the will of Yahweh. As Elie Wiesel points out, Korah was a man who should have been content with his lot. He was respected, wealthy, and came from an important clan. He clearly had the capacity to muster a large assembly of leaders behind his cause; nor was he afraid to confront difficult issues. However, the narrator hopes to convince his readers that it is God who knows the true motive of hearts, and it is God alone who exalts and demotes (1 Chron 28:9).<sup>9</sup> The fearless Korah, accompanied by his Reubenite companions, Dathan and Abiram, forgot to fear Yahweh and

8. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 84.

9. Wiesel, "Supporting Roles: Korah."

thus used Yahweh's name and authority to support his own argument. Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, but they refused to come, repudiating Moses' leadership and committing the ultimate blasphemy of preferring Egypt as the real land "flowing with milk and honey." Anger and pride had trumped reason. The rebels expressed the same doubts as the twelve spies, accusing Moses of making a false promise to lead them to Canaan.

Moses challenged the men to meet him before the tabernacle the following morning for a trial by fire. All two hundred and fifty arrived carrying censers. The clash resulted in the supporters and associates of the leaders of the three clans gathering beside their tents. Everyone else stepped away. Moses declared, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea." The earth trembled, then opened up, swallowing tents, belongings, and people. The rest burned up. Although not explicitly stated, the inference of the passage may be that the fire of the censers leaped out and consumed those who were not swallowed alive by the earth.

Moses declared that all the censers were holy, since they were dedicated to Yahweh. The Aaronids picked them up and Moses had them beaten down into gold plating with which to cover the altar as a sign to the Israelites. The narrator has left an important message in the text—only the Aaronids may be priests, and only the Levites may approach the Tabernacle for service. This was Yahweh's doing and not any man's idea.

The narrator seems to be steering toward the era of King David when worship was expanding to include music and when the priesthood would change families.<sup>10</sup> These new circumstances needed justification. Carefully recorded (or crafted?) genealogies and an archive of strategic prophecies were critical for establishing a natural order of change with a minimum of conflict and jealousy. The high priesthood would change from the family of Ithamar to that of Eleazar (both priestly patriarchs, sons of Aaron). A young man from the clan of Eleazar named Zadok would become David's high priest, elevating the status of that family for generations to come. On the other hand, one of Moses' grandsons, Jonathan, moved to the city of Dan early in the era of the Judges. He and his descendants, although not Aaronids, performed priestly duties

10. Saul wiped out the line of Ithamar with the exception on one member who escaped. David made Zadok, of the family of Eleazar, his new high priest.

there in the presence of two graven images until Israel was scattered by Assyria in 721 BCE (Judg 17–18). The Deuteronomist crafts his narrative of the establishment of the city of Dan in such a way that the pious reader automatically disapproves of all aspects of the city: the illicit priesthood, the graven images, the brutish character of the Danites themselves, and the slaughter of the unsuspecting Canaanites living there when it was called Laish.<sup>11</sup>

When David became king he brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem with great fanfare. He set the ark in a tent in an enclosure with gates, guards, and some kind of altar. Although there are many references to the tent that David set up, it was also called a ‘house’ on occasion. David set up three singing guilds, with representatives from the clans of the three sons of Levi. Heman represented the Kohathites, Asaph the Gershonites, and Ethan the clan of Merari (1 Chron 6:31–47). A great company of these Levites prayed, sang, and played musical instruments. David offered one of his own compositions to launch the new era of offering—the offering of praise and thanksgiving before the Lord (1 Chron 16:4ff). Later, he split the worshippers into two groups (1 Chron 16:37–43; 21:29). Asaph and Obed-edom and their associates continued to worship at the tabernacle at Jerusalem. Zadok and the Aaronid priests offered Mosaic sacrifices at the old high place in Gibeon. Heman and Ethan/Jeduthun continued to sing, play instruments, pray and even prophesy ritually there before the tabernacle of Moses. The whole band of two hundred eighty-eight singers answered directly to King David (1 Chron 25:1–8).

11. For M. D. Goulder’s extensive analysis of that narrative, see “Chapter 3: The Priesthood at Dan,” in *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah*. He dismisses the negative moral and spiritual assessment of the Judges narrative as Korahite propaganda. He also believes, with several other scholars, that Zadok was really a Jebusite and that his genealogy, like those of so many others, including King David, is pious fiction. See Rowley, “Zadok and Nehushtan,” 113–41, especially 117 for a statement that in the older sources, Zadok seems to be without antecedents. Actually, Zadok’s genealogy is located in several different passages. The confusion lies in the fact that there is evidently more than one Ahitub, one related to Eli and the other to Eleazar. Roy A. Rosenberg follows Rowley in “The God Sedeq” (1965). It may be a purely subjective assessment that declares the more opaque statements about Zadok as being the older sources. Confusion as to the proper identification of Ahitub begins on page 1 of Rowley’s article and leads to bold assertions of error about the record throughout the article. Saul Olyan answers Rowley with “Zadok’s Origins and the Tribal Politics of David,” in which he places Zadok firmly in the Aaronid line. However, at the very end of his article, he, too, stumbles over the identity of the patriarch Korah (193 n. 68).

In light of the fact that the Spirit of God is said to have inspired the singers (2 Chron 29:25–30), it is understandable that some of their arrangements would be treated as predictive, eschatological prophecy (especially see vv. 29–30).<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, it may be important that all the men are called seers, a fact that few scholars have acknowledged. There is a particularly personal note regarding the Korahite worship leader Heman. Psalm 88 is a dark, relentless, personal lament (although the author may be considered a representative of all Israel). Using a generous application of *sheol* imagery, Heman complains of sufferings that seem to extend from his youth (v. 15). He is at death's door (vv. 3–7). Not unlike Job, his friends have all abandoned him (vv. 8, 18), and he wonders if God has not done the same. Yahweh's terrors and wrath sweep over him much like the waves and torrents of the author of Ps 42 (vv. 7, 15–17). He asks questions about death and afterlife that are asked in the book of Job. The redemption passages in Job 19:25–27 are antithetical to the death imagery in Ps 88:

For I know that my Redeemer lives,  
and that at the last he will stand upon the earth;  
and after my skin has been thus destroyed,  
then in my flesh I shall see God,  
whom I shall see on my side,  
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.  
My heart faints within me!<sup>13</sup>

Although Heman is cast down, he is not defeated. As with Job, his time of trouble passes. The Lord exalts him (Heb: 'lifts the horn,' a linguistic term found in Hannah's song, 1 Sam 2:1, 10 and in several Davidic psalms. In the case of both good and evil, the horn signifies strength, endurance, and influence). As with Job, his time of trouble passes. Heman is given fourteen sons and three daughters (1 Chron 25:4–5), which is also reminiscent of Job, who began with seven sons and was restored seven more (fourteen in all) and three more daughters. In fact, if the book of Job were based on the life of any individual, no better candidate could be found than Heman. Some gifted and en-

12. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter*, 83–84.

13. The note on Ps 88 in *The New Oxford Analytical Bible* makes an important connection between Ps 88, Job 19, and Pss 42/43, with which the present author wholeheartedly agrees.



lightened individual wrote at least the first draft of the book to demonstrate in high literature that good people suffer and that a higher value should be placed on revelation and relationship with Yahweh than on ritual and sacrifice. Job's ritual sacrifices were not especially efficacious, but his repentance and acknowledgement of God in the end put Job in a position to make priestly intercession for his friends. The prevailing theology of the day averred that only sinners suffer, whereas the pious are delivered from death and sickness, prosper financially, and are blessed with many descendants.

Heman is also a good candidate for the author of Pss 42/43. His illness and the reproach of his former friends, now accusing him of being a sinner, could account for the forced separation from the tabernacle and for the waves and torrents of trouble lamented in Ps 42.

Another famous Korahite pair was Heman's great-grandfather, Elkanah ben Jeroham (1 Sam 1:1; 1 Chron 6:33–34), and his wife Hannah. They were of the Levitical clan of Zuph which was located in Ephraim since the time of the Judges. Any claims that they were of the tribe of Ephraim is a misunderstanding of the terminology.<sup>14</sup> Hannah's psalm of thanksgiving and Deborah's song of triumph may have been archived in the tabernacle at Shiloh in the pre-monarchical era. During that era of about three hundred years, the ark was captured by the Philistines and restored again, finally being lodged at Kiriath-jearim (about 25 miles west of Jerusalem). The temple at Shiloh was destroyed at some point. It was only under the Davidic regime that archived records, the ark, the bronze serpent set up by Moses (Num 21:9), the ephod, and other sacred artifacts were joined together again and restored to public, ritual use. By then, Rahab, Hannah, and Ruth (characters from the Books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth) had joined Sarah, Leah, and Rachel (characters from the Book of Genesis) as matriarchs of powerful generational houses. Hannah's connection to the Korahites may have helped her particular writing be preserved and included into the final rendition of the Book of Samuel.

The guilds of the singers and musicians were restored after the exile in Babylon. It is very clear that both men and women sang in the choirs and most likely marched and sang in the sacred processions

14. In agreement with Mitchell, "God Will Redeem," 370, nn. 17 and 19.

(Judg 21:19–21; Ezra 3:65; Ps 68:11, 24–26).<sup>15</sup> The slender mention of women is likely an indication of male resistance to the acknowledgment of female contributions to anything sacred.<sup>16</sup>

Mitchell makes the interesting point that the Korahite Psalter is laden with *sheol* imagery and language. This preoccupation may stem from the family tradition that their patriarch either was swallowed by the earth, in which case he and others fell alive into *sheol*, or was burned alive with the remainder of the rebels. Korah's sons, however, did not follow their father or stand with him in the rebellion (Num 26:11). Their exaltation later in Israel's history is akin to being redeemed from *sheol*, making redemption a family theme and a theological theme of the Korahite Psalter.<sup>17</sup>

## The Structure of the Korahite Psalter

One of the groups to which Ps 49 is connected is the collection of psalms having the superscription "For the sons of Korah," called by scholars the Korahite Psalter. The Korahite Psalter, in turn, is placed in the setting of Books II and III of the Book of Psalms, which contains another overlapping grouping called the Elohist Psalter. Noting which section of the Psalms a particular work is in and what the characteristics of the section are helps the reader to be oriented to the mindset of the author. Thus each psalm may be compared to a room in a house. The house belongs in a neighborhood. If the room lacks definition, a study of the house and neighborhood may be enlightening, adding an additional dimension to our understanding.

Scholars have for some years recognized these macro and micro structures in the Book of Psalms.<sup>18</sup> The Book of Psalms is divided into

15. The word 'company' in verse 68:11 is in feminine form and is considered to be a company of women who often sang local history and tradition with songs and dances.

16. Some New Testament examples: in Heb 11, Barak is mentioned, but not Deborah; only John, writing the last Gospel, identifies the woman with the alabaster jar as Mary the sister of Lazarus (Matt 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; John 12:1–8). Paul, in 1 Tim. 2, wishes all men to pray for kings and authorities, but wants women to dress modestly and not teach. In 1 Cor 11:5 the fact that a woman may pray and prophesy is contradicted by the command that a woman be silent in the church (14:34).

17. Mitchell, "God Will Redeem," 369.

18. There are a number of psalms that never made it into the actual Book of Psalms,

five smaller books: Book I, Pss 1–41; Book II, Pss 42–72; Book III, Pss 73–89; Book IV, Pss 90–106; Book V, Pss 107–150. Gerald Wilson has discerned patterns and purpose in that division and in the order of the smaller collections.<sup>19</sup> Doxologies, genre labels, wisdom topics, discontinuity of subject matter, headings that refer to biblical characters, and declarations of thanks and praise help to frame the various books. Wilson concludes that the final shape of the Psalter has a strong wisdom influence and was reshaped from the original writing to release the songs from their “historical moorings” and the “confines of the cult” so that they might speak to people living under very different circumstances.<sup>20</sup>

At another level there are collections within the Book of Psalms, the largest of which is the Elohist Psalter (Pss 42–83). The name Elohim is used predominantly to designate the deity in this set of psalms whereas the name Yahweh is used most often in all the others. In her first article, Laura Joffe charts the use of the names of God in the EP and finds that this collection not only uses the name Elohim more times than the rest of the Psalter, but that the EP uses all varieties of the name of God to a greater extent than the remaining psalms.<sup>21</sup> In the several cases of parallel passages in both collections of psalms, Joffe concludes that the Yahwistic version was the norm and the highly nuanced Elohim editing came after.<sup>22</sup>

Joffe addresses the motive for the editing in her second article.<sup>23</sup> She sees a magic triangle between the number 42, the name of God, and

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but which were archived in other Psalters such as ‘The Book of the Wars of the Lord’ or ‘The Book of Jasher.’ The Song of the Sea (Exod 15), Deborah’s Song (Judg 5), Hannah’s theological thanksgiving song (1 Sam 2), and the Oracles of Balaam (Num 23–24) are examples. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 25–27.

19. Wilson, “The Shape of the Book of Psalms,” 129–42; Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*. For an excellent literary history of such psalms studies, see Howard, Jr., “Editorial Activity in the Psalter,” 274–85. Several of the reviewed authors recommend that the final shape of the Psalter was more liturgical and was for a different *Sitz im Leben* than the original work, and that we should be flexible in our designations of the purpose of the original psalm and of the editor’s agenda.

20. Wilson, “Shape,” 138.

21. Joffe, “The Elohist Psalter,” 147, 150.

22. *Ibid.*, 162, 165.

23. Joffe, “The Answer to the Meaning of Life,” 223–35; and Burnett, “Forty-two Songs for Elohim,” 81–101.

disaster, blessing, or cursing. The Elohist Psalter contains 42 psalms, beginning with Ps 42. The name of Yahweh is used 42 times in the EP. She cites ancient practice of connecting the number 42 to the name or names of gods.<sup>24</sup> Besides various biblical samples of a link between the number 42 and disaster (such as the 42 children killed by a bear in 2 Kgs 2:24), Joffe makes reference to a Talmudic tradition of the 42-lettered name of God. The number was important in Jewish magic and Kabbalah. Joffe sees the purpose of combining the 42 psalms with the name of God as a way to turn the curse of the number into a blessing.<sup>25</sup> Joel Burnett adds references from Egyptian and Mesopotamian literature to 42 deities of judgment.<sup>26</sup>

Going down another level there are the smaller collections of David, Asaph, Songs of Ascent, Hallelujah Psalms, and the Korahite collection. Most of the Korahite Psalter lies within the Elohist Psalter. However, since Joffe considers Pss 84–89 to be “the tail of the Elohist Psalter,” one could say that the entire KP lies within the EP. David Mitchell points out that “although the collection, including Psalms 86 and 89, is less than ten percent of the Psalter, it contains more than a third of the Psalms references to Sheol.” The KP also has more than its share of references to the locus of afterlife: grave, pit, abaddon, depths, and *rephaim* (shades).<sup>27</sup>

It was Michael Goulder who first realized the connection between the first set of Korah Psalms (42–49) and the second set (84–88, including 89 which is not listed as a KP psalm) in what he calls a close “tissue of relationships.” Psalm 42/43 correlates to 84; 44 to 85; 46–48 to 87.<sup>28</sup> Pss 42/43 are pilgrim songs expressing a desire to be in the presence of God as experienced in his tabernacles and courts. Psalms 44 and 85 are national laments. Both appeal for a release from wrath, but neither admits to any guilt. Yahweh is not accused of capriciousness, but he is appealed to as if he were a Canaanite god who had inexplicably broken out in wrath against his people and needed to be appeased by ritual practices and priestly ministrations. Psalms 48 and 87 are Songs

24. Joffe, “The Answer to the Meaning,” 224.

25. Ibid., 229–30.

26. Burnett, “Forty-two Psalms,” 96.

27. Mitchell, “God Will Redeem,” 376.

28. Goulder, *Psalms*, 10–12.

of Zion. In neither psalm is Jerusalem mentioned. Psalms 88 and 49 are filled with references to *sheol*, but Ps 88 knows no relief from *sheol*'s grip, whereas Ps 49 has no lapse of confidence in redemption from *sheol*. Goulder contends that one set is likely earlier than the other and that an attempt had been made to rework the original set, indicating the important cultic purpose of the final form of these psalms. Goulder made an important observation. The correspondence between these two groups is unmistakable and his interpretation as to cultic use well founded.

The crucial point of Peter Flint's article on the structure of the collections as evidenced by the DSS is that the first three books of the Psalter (Pss 1–89) were canonized earlier and were much more stable over time than the last two books.<sup>29</sup> James Sanders proposed the "Qumran Psalms Hypothesis," arguing that Pss 1–89 were in a fixed form when the Essenes left Jerusalem. The order of Pss 90–150 was stabilized later.<sup>30</sup>

The above research, produced by scholars who focus on patterns and structures, demonstrates that the final redactors used books, titles, topics, and superscriptions to organize and locate the psalms in a meaningful way. A study of the patterns and relationships enriches our understanding of the purpose of the psalms and the historical and cultic context for which they were written.

## Historical Background of the Korahite Psalter

When information is scarce, understanding may be gained from many small clues compounded together. Having examined the history of the Korahite clan, we now turn to the superscriptions identifying the Korahite psalms, the attitude they may have had towards inspired Davidic worship, the public or private purpose of some psalms, and some thoughts about dating.

29. Flint, "The Book of Psalms," 453–72.

30. *Ibid.*, 459.