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Discourse Structure, Verb Forms, and Archaism in Psalm 18

Robert E. Longacre

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Abstract

Psalm 18 is especially relevant to the occasional use of what might be called 'old preterites' in the Hebrew Bible. These forms act exactly like *wyyqtl*, i.e., the *waw* consecutive with the imperfect in respect to being a narrative tense and limited to clause initial position, but lack the w- on the front. In this particular psalm the distribution of this form correlates with the narrative progress which can be posited within the psalm. A secondary value in this psalm is its possible light on the use of the two basic forms of the Hebrew verb, the perfect (*qtl*) and the imperfect (*yqtl*) in off the line uses in the structure of the psalm.

1. Introduction

Assuming that this psalm is Davidic—as witnessed by the parallel chapter in 2 Samuel 22—we affirm that the psalm is a comparatively early one in a book of hymns which culminates with the "hallelusia" written in the post exilic period. We can, therefore entertain the possibility of finding features that are somewhat archaic—and, in fact this has been assumed for sometime.[1] It is not, however, the purpose of this paper to discuss in general the various sorts of archaisms found in this psalm, but to focus in particular on one archaic feature of the psalm, viz., "old" preterites (if such they be!) which we find here. Nor is it our purpose to attempt a critical and conflated study of Psalm 18 with the parallel passage in 2 Samuel 22 in respect to this or other archaic features. Rather, I suggest here that we find in Psalm 18 a systematic and semantically consistent use of the "old preterite" which we do not find in the text of 2 Samuel 22 where the distribution of the old preterite i.e., the *yqtl*, and the more recent *wyyqtl* forms appears to be less systematic, and perhaps disturbed in the transmission of the text. In the text of Psalm 18 we find a partial explanation of this feature in terms of the discourse structure of this piece of poetry.

A lesser goal of this paper is to suggest that Psalm 18 may be paradigmatic in respect to helping us sort out autobiographical, and hence past time references, from references to the psalmist's ongoing situation (present or future). This problem, which plagues us at many points in the Psalms, is less acute in Psalm 18 because the narrative nature of certain parts of the psalm points in the direction of a recountal of past experiences in these portions.

I will also note points at which the verb forms in Samuel differ from those found in Psalm 18 and will summarize briefly these differences, although this will not be in itself a goal of the paper. Suffice it to say that while the old preterites that characterize Psalm 18 show systematic patterning in the structure of the psalm, these patterns are not so evident in the parallel passage, 2 Samuel 22.

While in general I find less chiasm in the Psalms than do other students of this part of the Bible, I do find that the Psalms have a tendency to locate pivotal or crucial information somewhere near their centers. Often this pivot is marked by the occurrence of free pronouns even where not strictly needed, e.g., as subjects of

[1] Cross and Freedman 1975, classify as "Early Yahwistic Poetry" Exodus 15, Deut. 33,Gen 49, Judges 5, and Psalm 18 (=2 Sam. 22).

finite verbs. Chiasm is, however, not our only available analytic tool; linear structures also occur and in most discourse types reflect a template (Longacre, 1990). Thus, narrative discourse is built on some such template as the following: stage, inciting incident, mounting tension, climax of tension, and denouement (release of tension) as in Longacre 1996 and earlier. Hortatory prose discourse seems to involve some such template as the following: problem/situation, authority of exhorter, command element, motivation for implementing the command (rewards, promises, need). Of course, neither template is slavishly followed but is subject to topological stretching, shrinking, and twisting in the hands of a skillful writer.

In the poetry of the Psalms, lyric poetry is not built on such templates; each lyric has its own ad hoc macrostructure which acts somewhat in lieu of a template. Most other types of poetry are built on a template, which is frequently hortatory. One special kind of hortatory discourse, prayer, in which the psalmist is asking God to act in his behalf, typically involves the psalmist's situation, petition, motivation in the character of God or the life of the psalmist, and affirmation of confidence. This is readily seen to be a variation of the hortatory template. Poetry can also either be narrative or involve stretches of narrative in which case a rudimentary narrative template is applicable.

Before we look in detail at Psalm 18, which has two narrative strophes, we need to consider a further feature of narrative: ways to mark a surface structure action peak or a didactic peak (Longacre, 1990). In prose narrative the inciting incident, the climax and the denouement are all candidates for the special peak marking. Besides marking significant stretches of action, a narrative may include a didactic peak where the theme of the story is allowed to emerge, action is held in abeyance, and speech, in the form of monologue or dialogue is foregrounded.

A summary of the structure of Psalm 18 follows; the psalm naturally divides in five strophes as follows:

Strophe 1, Introduction, vv. 2b-4
Strophe 2, Episode 1, vv. 5-25
Strophe 3, Didactic Peak, vv. 26-32
Strophe 4, Episode 2, vv. 33-49
Strophe 5, Conclusion vv. 50-51

The strophes form a structural chiasm in which the Introduction corresponds to the Conclusion, the two episodes correspond to each other and the didactic peak constitutes the key. Strophes 1, 3, and 5 are timeless/present in temporal reference, while strophes 2 and 4 narrate experiences of the psalmist and thus have a past temporal reference.

2. The Hebrew verb and the structure of Psalm 18

The above observation regarding temporal references in Psalm 18 is of considerable value for it helps to guide our temporal interpretations in a composition written in language where aspect rather than tense is primary.[2] Mood will also be seen to figure into the picture. All of this is quite in contrast to Biblical Hebrew prose styles where consecutive tenses, command forms and verbless clauses dominate the picture in narration, prophecy-procedure-instruction, exhortation, and exposition respectively. Thus in narration, the *waw*-consecutive imperfect [*wyyqtl*] provides the narrative backbone and can be considered to function as a past tense. In prophecy, procedure, and instruction, the *waw*-consecutive perfect [*wqtl*] dominates as backbone and indicates a parameter projection, which in many cases has a future temporal reference (Longacre 1996). In Hortatory discourse, commands provide the backbone, surfacing as imperatives, and jussives. In Expository discourse and in lyric poetry, verbless clauses, participial clauses, and clauses with action verbs and inanimate subjects are backbone. But, nevertheless, in lyric poetry both aspects of the verb occur in bewildering fashion. Unlike prose, where the (N)*qtl* consistently is a backup for the *wyyqtl* in

[2] Assuming aspect to be more basic than tense in Biblical Hebrew does not strike me as all that strange in that I speak an indigenous language of Mexico, Trique, where aspect rather than tense is basic. In Trique the basic morphological opposition is continuative (stem form) versus punctiliar (indicated by a prefix). The punctiliar is more frequent in reference to past time, although past continuatives are by no means uncommon. References to the present are normally continuative. References that are future or hypothetical employ a modal form that is regularly built on the punctiliar plus tonal modification.

narrative, and the (N)*yqtl* a backup for the *wqtl* in prophecy/procedure/instruction, both aspects of the verb, the *qtl* and the *yqtl*, occur freely in off the backbone structures. In brief, on leaving behind the prose types and approaching poetry, we are up against fundamental questions of the meaning and function of the two aspects in a way that we are not faced with—except for stretches of reported speech—in prose. I will try to show that the occurrence of the two aspects in Psalm 18 can shed light on these issues. This is because the psalm sets up situations of narration and teaching in which we find a framework for the distribution of the two aspects; this distinction between a psalmist's past and current experiences is not by any means clear in many of the psalms.

Much has been written concerning the distinction between the *qtl* and the *yqtl* forms in Hebrew. Again, I remind the reader that this becomes an especially crucial issue for the analyst mainly in passing from prose to poetry. To describe the meaning function of the two in poetry or anywhere else, I follow Waltke and O'Connor (1990) in beginning with the distinction perfective versus non-perfective. While there is nothing particularly profound or revolutionary in this suggestion, it provides a good starting point, and probably a better one than accomplished versus continuative, which I posited for several years.

Taking the *qtl* as meaning *perfective* we can distinguish:

Perfective, past	*qtl*.p
Perfective, perfect (often translatable as a present)	*qtl*.pr
Perfective, future (certainty)	*qtl*.f
Perfective, precative (implies confidence of answer?)	*qtl*.i
Perfective, modal, often contrafactual	*qtl*.c

Taking the *yqtl* as meaning non-perfective, we can distinguish:

Non-perfective, open-ended (future/present)	*yqtl*.o
Non-perfective (usually iterative) in the past	*yqtl*.p
Non-perfective, modal, (jussive, unmarked jussive)	*yqtl*.j
Non-perfective, modal (assertive of the future)	*yqtl*.m

The consecutive tenses are used much more rarely in poetry than in prose. Thus, some 240 occurrences of the *wyyqtl* occur in the psalms. Much more than in prose, the *wyyqtl* form is consecutive on whatever precedes it and continues the sense and function of that form. But even when clearly consecutive, it does not occur indiscriminately but often marks something locally climactic in its strophe. On the other hand, the *wyyqtl* can occur in narrative poetry as partially marking the main narrative line; in such cases it is independent of any preceding form. Psalm 18 has instances of both these usages. The *wqtl* form is much rarer in poetry, possibly as few as 25 times in the entire psalter. It too seems to mark a local climax. It does not occur in Psalm 18.

These concerns bring us to the striking problem that we encounter in Psalm 18: the occurrence of clause-initial *yqtl* forms that function parallel to *wyyqtl* forms as a further narrative tense. In that many regard the *wyyqtl* forms as old preterites preserved by the addition of initial w-, what we have in this psalm can be considered to be old preterites persisting without the initial conjunction[3]). This usage must be regarded as either archaic or archaizing. The old preterite is phonologically homophonous with the *yqtl*, but unlike the latter has a narrative-sequential meaning and function.

In the tree structures of this paper, * before the English gloss indicates *wyyqtl* in the Hebrew text, while @ indicates *yqtl*.n, i.e., the old preterite in the Hebrew text. The symbol # indicates a verbless clause with # positioned where the verb would occur were it present in the text.

[3] Cross and Freedman, rather than taking the narrative *yqtl* forms as old preterites, take the position: "It can no longer be doubted, however, that the imperfect form of the verb was the common, generally used verb form in old Israelite, as in old Canaanite poetry, and that its time aspect was determined by the context, not the presence or absence of the conjunction" (pp. 84-85).

3. The introduction and conclusion of the psalm (vv. 2b-4; 50-51)

Once we get past the long title and ascription which ends in the *wyyqtl* form "And he said…" making the entire psalm, as it were, the quotation of a reported speech structure, we encounter the introduction to the psalm. This introduction conforms to a paragraph type which we can describe as thesis-amplification with embedded result paragraphs (for paragraph types here and below, cf. Longacre 1996. 101-122) . All verbs are *yqtl*'s and have an open-ended reference: *yqtl*.o. One participle occurs, the "praiseworthy one" in verse 4 but it is not the main verb of a clause. Several verbless clauses occur which ascribe various title and properties to God. The *yqtl* verbs are: "I love you, Y."; "I take refuge in Him"; "I call on the praiseworthy one"; and "I am saved from my enemies'. The vocatives and verbless clauses work in the titles and properties which are ascribed to God: Yahweh, my strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my rock, my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Noteworthy here is the first person possessive on each form. For the full picture, see the partial tree diagram below.

Introduction: Amplification para. (no past time references)

Thesis: E Result para.
2 Result: I love-you [*yqtl*.o], Y. my strength [cl-initial, not *yqtl*.n][4]
Thesis: Paraphrase para.
3 Thesis: Y. # my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer
Paraphrase: My God # my rock
Amplification: E Cyclic Result para.
Result: I take refuge [*yqtl*.j+coh] in Him [cl-initial, not *yqtl*.n]
Thesis: Y. # my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
Result': Result para.
4 Thesis: I call on [*yqtl*.o] the praiseworthy one [par], Y.
Result: And I am saved [*yqtl*.o] from my enemies.

The conclusion of the psalm (vv. 50-51) is somewhat shorter than the introduction with which it forms an inclusio. The conclusion is signalled by the conjunction <al ken, 'therefore' It consists of a reason paragraph with v. 50 stating the thesis "I will thank…I will sing praises" while v. 51 states the reason in an amplification structure. The thesis employs *yqtl* verbs with cohortative endings, " I am determined to thank you, let me thank you" or something on that order; I therefore symbolize these verbs as functionally similar to *yqtl*.j.The verbs of v. 51 are participles used as main verbs; the full text reads: "He makes great his salvation to his king; he does lovingkindness to David and his descendants forevermore."

Conclusion: [H] Reason para.

Thesis: Paraphrase para.
50 Thesis: Therefore [<al ken] I will thank [*yqtl*+coh~*yqtl*.j] among the nations Y.
Paraphrase: To your name I will sing praises [*yqtl*+coh~*yqtl*.j]
Reason: [E] Amplification para.
51 Thesis: He makes great [par] his salvation to his king
Amplification: He does [par] lovingkindness to his anointed, to David and to his descendants forevermore.

4. Didactic peak (vv. 26-33)

As didactic peak of this psalm, the expounding structure needs to be considered to be a generic coordinate paragraph, since it coordinates two different types of paragraph, i.e., a procedure paragraph in its first member and an expository (lyric) paragraph as its second member. This is clear in that the first part has backbone *yqtl* structures and can be construed as procedural, while the second part has backbone verbless clauses and participial clauses and can be construed as expository/lyric. Furthermore, the first part addresses God in second person while the second part speaks about God in the third person. Verse 33 is a

[4] 1 Sam. 22:2 omits this opening clause.

good example of a *wyyqtl* which is consecutive on a participle, echoes the function of the participle and is climatic in its section. Without further comment I present an indentation diagram of this section of the psalm.

Didactic Peak: Generic Coord. para; first part God is 2nd per; second part God is 3d per. (No clear instance of past time reference) {coordinates different types of para's}

Thesis 1: Proc Result para.
Thesis: Proc Paraphrase para.
Paraphrase: Proc Paraphrase para.
26 Thesis: With the faithful you show yourself faithful [*yqtl*.o]
Paraphrase: With the blameless you show [*yqtl*.o]yourself blameless.
Thesis: Proc Coord. para.
28 Thesis 1:kiy [assev]*'attah* with the pure you show yourself [*yqtl*.o] pure
Thesis 2: And with the crafty you show yourself [*yqtl*.o] shrewd
Result: Proc Coord. para.
Thesis 1: Proc Paraphrase para.
29 Thesis: *kiy* [assev] **'***attah* keep burning [*yqtl*.o] my lamp
Paraphrase: Y. my God illuminates my darkness [*yqtl*.o]
Thesis 2: Proc Coord. para.
30 Thesis 1: *kiy bcha* I run through [*yqtl*.o] a troop
Thesis 2: And in Y. my God I scale [*yqtl*.o] a wall.
Thesis 2: E Coord. para.
Thesis 1: E Result para.
Thesis: E Paraphrase para
31 Thesis: As for God, his way # perfect
Paraphrase: The word of Y. # secure
Result: A shield # to those who trust [par] in Him.
Thesis 2: E Rh Q & A para.
Rh. Q: E Coord. para.
32 Thesis 1: For who # God besides Y?
Thesis 2: For who # rock save our God?
A. E Paraphrase para.
33 Paraphrase: God # the one who arms [par] me with strength
Thesis: And he *makes [*wyyqtl*] perfect my way [cons on the par; climactic here in this portion of the paragraph].

5. Episode 1 (vv. 5-25)

This whole episode has the structure of a Narrative Reason paragraph, whose Thesis is a Narrative Stimulus-Response paragraph. The Setting of the latter employs *qtl*.p verbs with one instance of the *yqtl*.p. The Stimulus itself employs several *yqtl*.p forms to depict the psalmist's (iterative) crying out to Y. for help (for past iterative, cf. Joosten, 1999). The Response beginning at v. 8, has strong narrative movement, beginning with the onset of a *wyyqtl* form (as in narrative prose functioning as mainline without any preceding form to which it is consecutive). Through a series of embeddings—narrative sequence paragraph occurring recursively within narrative sequence paragraph—the *wyyqtl*'s carry the narrative mainline down through v. 16. As off-line elements both *qtl*.p and *yqtl*.p occur in a way not characteristic of narrative prose where customarily the former functions without the latter. Thus, a paraphrase element in v. 8 'and the earth shook' is *yqtl*.p while a causal clause in the same verse is *qtl*.p, 'because he was angry'. The following off-line amplification in v. 9 has in one instance *qtl*.p 'smoke went up from his nostrils', while 'fire from his mouth devoured' is *yqtl*.p, and 'burning coals blazed out of it' is again *qtl*.p. Similarly in vv. 12-13, which constitutes a Setting in one of the embedded layers of Narrative Sequence paragraph, *yqtl*.p is employed in one clause and *qtl*.p in the next. In v. 14, a mainline *wyyqtl* element is paraphrased as *yqtl*.p. These two elements *yqtl*.p and *qtl*.p function in various ways to support and enhance the storyline carried by the

wyyqtl forms, It might be considered a piece of special pleading to insist that the *yqtl*.p must always be considered to imply a past iterative while the *qtl*.p reports simple perfective accomplishment. Nevertheless, some distinction of this sort can often be made. I will further consider this question in detail in the final section of this paper.

In v. 17, however, where the last Sequential Thesis is found in the lowest level of embedded Narrative Sequence paragraph, the chain of *wyyqtl*'s which has hitherto been used to indicate the narrative mainline is broken off and gives way to the use of a form that is obviously meant to continue the mainline but is simply clause-initial *yqtl*. I have called this *yqtl*.n., i.e., *yqtl* narrative. Noticeably, its occurrence is climactic, and furthermore it occurs right at the point in Y's rescue of the psalmist which could be dubbed 'the contact phase': 'He reached down from on high. He took hold of me. He drew me out of deep waters.'[5] V. 19 uses another such forms: 'They confronted me in the day of disaster'. Verse 20 give a further uses of this form 'He rescued me…'Although a few instances of this construction appear in Psalm 78 and elsewhere (Cf. Partridge 1995), it is here that we find its fullest implementation. It can be explained in various ways. It could even be considered to be somewhat in the nature of a historical present in certain Indo-European languages where the historical present is typically reserved for great or pivotal moments of a story. On the other hand, on somewhat surer ground and not greatly dissimilar in function, the *yqtl*.n could be considered to be either an old surviving West Semitic preterite or an intentionally archaizing form—since poetry invites use of such devices. At any rate the narrative *yqtl* form is used here apparently deliberately to mark a great moment of the story.

The second main part of Strophe 2, I have analyzed as a Cyclic Reason structure, which is attached to the previous thesis in vv. 5-20. This section is itself an embedded Reason paragraph. The thesis contains two *yqtl*.p the first of which, since it is clause-initial could be considered to be a *yqtl*.n. "Y. delivered me in my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me.' The reason is given in *qtl*.pr forms—I interpret them as having present/perfect reference. All this is paraphrased in verbless clause and in a negative *yqtl*.

Episode 1 [God intervenes]: Narrative Reason paragraph [mainly past time references]

Thesis: N. Stimulus-response para.
  Setting: Paraphrase para.
    Thesis: Paraphrase para.
5   Thesis: The cords of death coiled around me [*qtl*.p]
      Paraphrase: The torrents of Belial burst on me [*yqtl*.p]
    Paraphrase: Paraphrase para.
6   Thesis: The cords of Sheol surrounded me [*qtl*.p]
      Paraphrase: The snares of death confronted-me [*qtl*.p]
  Stimulus:Stimulus-Response para.
    Stimulus: Paraphrase para.
7   Thesis: In my distress I was calling on Y.[*yqtl*.p]
      Paraphrase: And to my God I kept crying for help.[*yqtl*.p]
    Response: Paraphrase para.
      Thesis: He heard [*yqtl*.p/*yqtl*.n] my voice from his temple[6]
      Paraphrase: And my cry before him entered his ear.[*yqtl*.p]
  Response: Narrative sequence para.
    ST 1: Amplification: para.
      Thesis: paraphrase para.

[5] In some Dibabawon (Philippines) game procurement discourses at what we might call the target procedure, where the hunter shoots or spears his quarry, there is a shift to a more specific person, e.g. *we* (inclusive) > *you sg*. and *they*> *he*. Since person shifts and tense shifts are often associated as markers of peak phenomena, I am not overly surprised to find a tense shift in the BH text at what I have called the "contact phase" of God's rescue of the psalmist (from Myra Lou Barnard and Janette Forster reported in Longacre 1996.41).

[6] 'Heard' is a *wyyqtl* in 2 Sam. 7; no verb 'entered' occurs; i.e., *yqtl*.p/n>*wyyqtl*.

Thesis: Paraphrase para.
8 Thesis: And it *trembled [*wyyqtl*] and it *shook, [*wyyqtl*] the earth (vbs. in tandem)
Paraphrase: And the foundations of the mountains shook [N*yqtl*.p]
Paraphrase: And they *shook [*wyyqtl*], because angry he [*qtl*.p]
Amplification: Amplification para.
9 Thesis: Smoke went up from his nostrils [*qtl*.p]
Amplification: Amplification para.
Thesis: And fire from his mouth devoured [*yqtl*.p]
Amplification: Burning coals blazed out of it. [*qtl*.p]
ST 2: Narr. sequence para.
10 ST 1: He *parted [*wyyqtl*] the heavens
ST 2: And he *came down [*wyyqtl*]
Terminus: And dark clouds # under his feet.
ST 3: Narr. Sequence para.
11 ST 1: And he *mounted [*wyyqtl*] on a cherub
ST 2: And he *flew [*wyyqtl*]
ST 3: And he *soared [*wyyqtl*] on the wings of the wind.
ST 4: Narr Sequence para.
Setting: Narr Coord. para.
12 Thesis 1: he @made [*yqtl*.p or n][7] darkness his covering, his canopy around about him. the darkness of the waters, cloud masses of the sky
13 Thesis 2: Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced [*qtl*.p], hailstones and clouds of fire.
ST 1: Paraphrase para.
14 Thesis: And *thundered [*wyyqtl*][8] Y. from the heavens
Paraphrase: And Elyon gave out [*yqtl*.p] his voice
ST 2: Narr Sequence para.
15 ST 1: And he *sent forth [*wyyqtl*] his arrows
ST 2: And he *shot [*wyyqtl*] them.
Terminus: hailstones and coals of fire.
ST 3: Narr Sequence para.
16 ST1: And *were seen [*wyyqtl*] the valleys of the waters.
ST 2: And *were revealed [*wyyqtl*][9] the foundations of the earth, at your rebuke, Y. at the breath of your nostrils
ST n [peak] Narr Sequence para.
17 ST 1: he @reaches down [*yqtl*.n] from on high
ST. 2: he @takes ahold [*yqtl*.n] of me.
ST 3: he @draws [*yqtl*.n] me out of deep waters,
ST n: Cyclic comment para.
18 Thesis: He @rescues [*yqtl*.n]me from my strong enemies, and from my foes who were too strong [*qtl*.p] for me
Comment: Anti para. [possibly flashback]
19 Thesis: They *confronted [*yqtl*.n]me in the day of disaster
Antithesis: Reason para.
Reason: but Yahweh *was my [*wyyqtl*] support
Thesis: And he *delivered [*wyyqtl*] me into a large place.

[7] In 2 Sam. 22:12 'and he made' is a *wyyqtl*; i.e., *yqtl*.p/n>*wyyqtl*.
[8] In 2 Sam. 22:14 'thundered' is a *yqtl*.n; i.e., *wyyqtl*>*yqtl*.n.
[9] In 2 Sam. 22:16 'were revealed' is *yqtl*.n; i.e., *wyyqtl*>*yqtl*.n.

Thesis': He @rescues [*yqtl*.n] me because he delighted [*qtl*.pr] in me.
Reason: Cyclic Reason para:extends from v. 21-25.
21 Thesis: Paraphrase para.
Thesis: @ Y. delivered [*yqtl*.n] me in my righteousness
Paraphrase: According to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded [*yqtl*.p] me
Reason: Paraphrase para.
Thesis: Paraphrase para.
22 Thesis: For I have kept [*qtl*.pr] the ways of Y.
Paraphrase: I have not done [*qtl*.pr] evil in turning away from my God.
Paraphrase: Paraphrase para.
23 Thesis: For all his judgements # before me
Paraphrase: And his statutes I've not turned from [*yqtl*.p]
Thesis': [pseudo] Narrative Sequence para: [or: Narr. reason para]
ST 1: [N] Paraphrase para. [or: Reason]
24 Thesis: And I *was [*wyyqtl*] blameless before him
Paraphrase And I have *kept [*wyyqtl*] myself from iniquity
25 ST n: And Y. *rewarded [*wyyqtl*] me in my righteousness. according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight. [or: Thesis]

6. Strophe 4, Episode 2 (vv. 34-49)

We also find Narrative movement in this strophe, so I have considered it to be another episode in the life and career of its warrior author. There is, however, a non-narrative preposed section, vv. 34-36 which I have considered to mark the Setting of this paragraph, as well as a non-narrative Terminus.

The Setting consists of an Expository Coordinate paragraph that consists of three theses.

Theses one and two are embedded Result paragraphs, each thesis of which is characterized by a participial main verb. The accompanying results are *yqtl*.o "He makes me to stand on my high place" and *qtl*.pr " a bow of bronze is bent by my right hand." The *yqtl*.o is used here in what is probably its primary sense, while the *qtl*. pr reflects the accomplished perfect sense which reaches into the present. The third thesis of this coordinate paragraph is itself an embedded coordinate paragraph whose first verb is a *wyyqtl* while the following two verbs are *yqtl*.o forms "You gave me the shield of your victory; your right hand sustains me; and in your stooping down you make me great."

With v. 37 we again encounter narrative movement in what I characterize as a narrative Sequence paragraph with eight Sequential Theses. Each ST is developed as an embedded paragraph. Careful analysis of these various embedded structures reveals that every ST except ST 6 has a dominating *yqtl*.n form; ST6 is dominated by a *wyyqtl* form instead. Whether this *wyyqtl* form should be considered to be a reversion to the more frequent way of indicating narrative movement or whether it should be considered to be consecutive on the last *yqtl*.n is an open question. In either case the narrative movement of the paragraph is unimpaired. What is of more importance is that, again, the *yqtl*.n form is found here almost completely replacing the more normal *wyyqtl* narrative backbone. If Episode 2 is considered to be a continuation of Episode 1—in spite of the intervening didactic portion—then Episode 2 could be considered to be marked as of greater moment by the occurrence of the *yqtl*.n backbone—just as this verb form it proved to be climactic within Episode 1. Thus, while Episode 1 narrates the psalmist's being rescued from his enemies in a life-threatening situation, Episode 2 narrates his being victorious over surrounding peoples and emerging as head over a hegemony.

Sequential Thesis 1 is expounded by a Narrative Comment (or maybe Result paragraph). Its Thesis has a *yqtl*.n verb:" You broadened the path under me" and its Comment/Result has as negated *qtl*.p: "And my ankles didn't turn."

Sequential Thesis 2 (v. 38) is an embedded N. Sequence paragraph whose first two verbs are *yqtl*.n, while the third verb, which is negated, might better be considered to be a *yqtl*.p. "I pursued my enemies, and overtook them, and didn't turn back until they were finished off."

Sequential Thesis 3 (v. 39) is a N Paraphrase paragraph. The Thesis, a Result paragraph, has its own thesis, which is a clause with a *yqtl*.n verb—as is also the verb of the Paraphrase. The result is, again, a negated verb, which I am simply content to label *yqtl*.p. "I crushed them and they were not able to rise; they fell under my feet."

Sequential Thesis 4 (vv. 40-41) has the structure of an N Result paragraph. Its Thesis is an embedded Reason paragraph. The Thesis of the embedded unit has the expected *yqtl*.n form but it is preceded by the Reason, which has a *wyyqtl* verb that is consecutive on the preceding forms. 'You armed with strength for war. You made bow those rising up against me at my feet.' The Result is a Coord paragraph one of whose verbs is a *qtl*.p and the other of which is a *yqtl*.p. "And my enemies turned the back to me, and those hating me I destroyed."

Sequential Thesis 5 (v. 42) This is an embedded Paraphrase paragraph whose dominating verb, in the first clause is a *yqtl*.n to whom corresponds the result (participial): "They cried and there was no one answering." This is paraphrased in a second set of clauses the first of which is elliptical: "To Y" and the second of which contains a negated *qtl*.p "And he didn't answer them."

Sequential Thesis 6 (v. 43) does not have *yqtl*.n verb but rather a *wyyqtl*, the more usual narrative structure:

> "I beat them as dust on the wings of the wind" followed by a *yqtl*.p " Like mud of the street I poured them out."

Sequential Thesis 7 (v. 44-45) is an N Comment paragraph whose Thesis is an embedded N Sequence paragraph both of whose verbs are *yqtl*.n: "You delivered me from the attacks of the people; you placed me as head of the nations." The Comment extends across verse boundaries and includes both the last sentence of v. 44 and the first sentence of v. 45; both sentences have *yqtl*.o in that the Psalmist seems to be describing the resultant but contemporary situation—albeit a relative clause in the last sentence of v. 44 is a *qtl*.pr: "Peoples I have not known serve me. In their hearing of me they submit to me."

Sequential Thesis 8 (vv. 45-46), the final one in this narrative paragraph, likewise straddles verse boundaries. The Setting of this embedded paragraph has two coordinated clauses with *yqtl*.o—in that again the psalmist is probably describing an ongoing contemporary situation—but the Thesis of the paragraph is a sentence with a *yqtl*.n form which is the last in the long chain of such forms. Thus the Setting: "Sons of strangers cringe before me. Sons of strangers lose heart." The Thesis reverts, however, to the clause-initial narrative *yqtl*.n: "And they came cringing from their strongholds."

The non-narrative Terminus of this long N Sequence paragraph is a Result paragraph with embedded Paraphrase paragraphs on various levels. Participles are prominent in this structure and there is one instance of a *wyyqtl* which is consecutive on one of the participles. Other verbs are *yqtl*.o.

I have traced out the internal structure of the paragraph which expounds Episode 2 in order to demonstrate how the special narrative mainline composed of clause-initial *yqtl*.n verbs dominates the structure of the component subparagraphs and hence of the whole.

Episode 2: [N] Sequence para. [except for Setting, references are to past time even if translatable as historical presents]

Setting: [E] Coord. para. [probably no past time references here]
Thesis 1: Result para.
34 Thesis: He makes [par] my feet like those of a deer
Result: So that he makes me to stand [*yqtl*.o] upon my high place
Thesis 2: Result para.
35 Thesis: He teaches [par] my hand to war
Result: So that a bow of bronze is bent [*qtl*.pr] by my right hand
Thesis 3: Coord. para.
36 Thesis 1: And you *gave [*wyyqtl*] me the shield of your victory

Thesis 2: And your right hand sustains me [*yqtl*.o][10]
Thesis n: And in your stooping down you make me great [*yqtl*.o]
ST 1: [N] Comment para.
37 Thesis: You @broadened [*yqtl*.n] the path under my step
Comment: And my ankles didn't turn.[*qtl*.p]
ST 2:[N] Sequence para.
38 ST 1: @I pursued [*yqtl*.n] my enemies
ST 2: And @I overtook [*yqtl*.n][11] them
Terminus: And I didn't turn back [*yqtl*.p] until they were finished off [inf]]
ST 3: [N] Paraphrase para.
Thesis: Comment para.
39 Thesis : I @crushed [*yqtl*.n] them
Comment: and they were not able to rise [*yqtl*.p][12]
Paraphrase: They @fell [*yqtl*.n] under my feet.
ST 4:[N] Result para.
Thesis: Reason para.
40 Reason: And you* armed [*wyyqtl*] me with strength for war [*wyyqtl* continues the hist. pres/past ref]
Thesis: You @made bow [*yqtl*.n] under me those rising against me
Result: [N] Coord para.
41 Thesis 1: And my enemies you made turn [*qtl*.p] the back to me
Thesis 2: And those hating me I destroyed [*yqtl*.p][13].
ST 5: [N] paraphrase para.
Thesis: Result para.
42 Thesis: They @cried [*yqtl*.n]
Result: And no one answered [par]
Paraphrase: Result para.
Thesis: [verb not repeated]..to Yahweh
Result: And he didn't answer them [*qtl*.p]
ST 6:[N] Comment para.
43 Thesis: I *beat [*wyyqtl*] them as fine dust on the wings of the wind [cons. on hist. pr/past time ref?]
Comment: Like mud of the street I poured them out [*yqtl*.p][14].
ST 7: [N] Comment para.
Thesis: [N] Comment para.
Thesis: [N] Sequence para.
44 ST 1: You @delivered [*yqtl*.n][15] me from the attacks of the people
ST 2: You @placed [*yqtl*.n] me as the head of the nations
Comment: [N] Paraphrase para.
Thesis: Peoples which I had not known [*qtl*.p] serve me [*yqtl*.o]
45 Paraphrase: In their hearing of me they submit to me [*yqtl*.o]
ST 8: [N] Simple para:
Setting: Paraphrase para.
Thesis: Sons of strangers cringe before me [*yqtl*.o]

[10] This clause does not occur in 2 Sam. 22:36
[11] In 2 Sam. 22:38 this verb is a *wyyqtl*; *yqtl*.n>*wyyqtl*.
[12] In 2 Sam. 22:39 four verbs occur, the first three of which are *wyyqtl*. while 'they didn't rise' is a *yqtl*.p; one *yqtl*.n>*wyyqtl*.
[13] This verb is a *wyyqtl* in 2 Sam. 22:41; i.e., *yqtl*.p>*wyyqtl*.
[14] In 2 Sam. 22: two verbs occur; both are *yqtl*.p.
[15] This verb is a *wyyqtl* in 2 Sam. 22:41; i.e., *yqtl*.n>*wyyqtl*.

46 Paraphrase: Sons of strangers lose heart [*yqtl*.o]
Thesis: @And they come trembling [*yqtl*.n] from their strongholds
Terminus: [H] Reason para.
Thesis: [H] Paraphrase para.
47 Intro: Y. # lives [verbless cl]
Paraphrase: Blessed be [qal pass part] my rock
Thesis: And may the God of my salvation be exalted [*yqtl*.j]
Reason: [E] Paraphrase para.
Thesis: [E] Paraphrase para.
48 Thesis: The God # the one giving [par] vengeance to me
Paraphrase: And *he subdues [*wyyqtl*][16] nations under me [cons. on part]
Paraphrase: [E] paraphrase para.
49 Thesis: He saves [par] me from my enemies
Paraphrase: Paraphrase para:
Thesis: yea [‘af] you save [*yqtl*.o] me from those who rise up against me.
Paraphrase: From violent men you rescue [*yqtl*.o] me

7.The narrative contained in the psalm

Although the narrative contained in this psalm is distributed into two well-formed N Sequence paragraphs it also contains elements of the narrative template which I point out here as running concurrently with the paragraph structures.

Thus the Setting of the paragraph that expounds Episode 1 can be considered to be Stage for the whole story; it depicts the Psalmist’s perilous situation. The Stimulus in verse 7—itself containing an embedded Stimulus-Response paragraph—can be considered to correspond to the Inciting Incident of the narrative template. The divine response from v. 8 on is, in the narrower sense the first episode of the story; it depicts in a paragraph which is similar to an embedded narrative the rescue operation which comes to a peak—after mounting tension in vv. 17-20—and is signaled by the shift from mainline *wyyqtl* forms to mainline *yqtl*.n forms.

The Reason unit appended to this part of the paragraph provides a transition to the didactic peak.

After the intervening didactic peak comes Episode 2 of the story; God’s enabling the psalmist to subdue all his enemies and establish a hegemony over them. Maybe the rather troublesome occurrence of *wyyqtl* in Sequential Thesis 6 is meant to signal a peak in the overall narrative. Thus, in the earlier discontinuous part of the story the psalmist is rescued from his enemies, here he utterly defeats them in what is perhaps the denouement of the story.

Psalm 18 is a poem and its strophes are all well-formed surface structure paragraphs. Nevertheless, since it contains a narrative, features of the narrative template are reflected in the story, so that Stage of the whole story corresponds to the Setting of the first paragraph, while the Stimulus unit of that same paragraph reflects the Inciting Incident. Climax of the story as a whole is marked as the peak of the same paragraph and is signalled by the shift in mainline verb forms, after the didactic portion in which the story stands still, the narrative resumes in the third strophe. Here further mounting tension finds its denouement in v. 43 where the figures of speech—beating his enemies as fine as dust borne on the wind and pouring them out

[16] This verb is a participle in 2 Sam. 22:48; i.e., *wyyqtl*>participle.
I insert here a summary of differences of verb forms in Psalm 18 vs 2 Sam 22:
A. Two ambiguous *yqtl*.p/n>*wyyqtl*.
B. Three *yqtl*.n>*wyyqtl*.
C. One *yqtl*.p>*wyyqtl*.
D. Two *wyyqtl*>*yqtl*.n
E. One *wyyqtl*>participle

like mud in the streets—as well as the anomalous occurrence again of a *wyyqtl* where *yqtl*.n has dominated in the previous verses—all these can be considered to mark the denouement.

Thus the psalm has its own unity by virtue of being a well constructed poem. It also finds a further principle of unity in its reflection of the narrative template.

8. A further consideration of verb forms in this psalm

Verb forms function as mainline and off-line elements. Thus in the narrative parts of the psalm there are two mainline elements, the *wyyqtl* (as in narrative prose) and the archaic or archaizing *yqtl*,n; switches from one to the other of these are not random but serve to mark development either within the respective paragraphs or in reference to the narrative template itself. There are four off-line elements, the verbless clause, the participial clause, and the *qtl*. and *yqtl*. The first elements, the verbless clause and the participial belong to the more expository (lyric) parts of the paragraph. The vacillation between *qtl* forms and non-narrative *yqtl*. in off the line clauses both in the expository and in the narrative parts of the psalm continues to constitute one of the features which has yet to be explained. The basic orientation of the two aspects, perfective and non-perfective, while often relevant can not explain well all the occurrences, and throws the analyst back on appeals to style (often parallelism)[17] or that expression abhorred by all discourse analysts, *free variation.* I will try to show, however, that at least some of the variation between *qtl*.p and *yqtl*.p can be explained in terms of the basic iterative meaning of the latter.

There are ten occurrences in the two episodic strophes of what I have labelled *yqtl*.p.

In Episode 1, v. 5, in what I label the Setting of that paragraph (Stage of the Narrative template) a *yqtl*.p form occurs preceded by a *qtl*.p and followed in the next verse by two further *qtl*.p forms. The whole passage reads:

> The cords of death coiled around me
> The torrents of Belial burst upon me
> The cords of Sheol surrounded me
> The snares of death confronted me.

Why is the verb in the second clause a *yqtl*.p while the verbs of the other three clauses are *qtl*.p? Clauses 1, 3, and 4 contain a reference to cords and snares while the second clause uses rather the figure of torrents breaking over the psalmist. Could the *yqtl*.p form in the second clause imply torrents repeating breaking over him? Possibly this would not be so appropriate for the cords and snares image.

In Episode 1, v. 7, four *yqtl*.p forms occur in what I label the Stimulus of the episode (inciting incident of the narrative template):

> In my distress I called on Y
> And to my God I called for help
> He heard my voice from his temple
> And my cry before him entered into his ear.

I have considered these forms to be *yqtl*.p with the possible exception of the form in the third clause which is clause initial and could be considered to be a *yqtl*.n. For the first two clauses it is plausible to consider that the two forms could be past iterative; for the last two clauses this seems less plausible. Nevertheless, if we consider the verb 'heard' to be a *yqtl*.n, an iterative meaning of the fourth verb is not impossible. In fact, if the calling is iterative, why could not the reception of the calling also be iterative?

Episode 1, v. 8 a *yqtl*.p form occurs preceded by two narrative *wyyqtl*'s and followed by another *wyyqtl* (with a *qtl*.p in a causal clause positing no problem)

> And it trembled and it quaked, the earth
> And the foundations of the mountains shook
> And they shook because angry he.

[17] For a vigorous and persuasive presentation of tense shifting as style, see Buth 1986.

Here the preverbal occurrence of "the foundations of the mountains" blocks the occurrence of the storyline *wyyqtl* form. That the verb of this clause is *yqtl*.p instead of a *qtl*.p (as would be usual in prose narrative) suggests that the shaking was repetitive.

In Episode 1, v. 9 we find *yqtl*.p preceded and followed by *qtl*.p forms.

> Smoke went up from his nostrils
> And fire from his mouth devoured
> Burning coals blazed out it.

Here, it is possible to suggest that the middle clause is iterative in import while the other two clauses are not. Of course 'style' could be invoked: i.e., a local chiasm with the second clause and its *yqtl*.p form as the key.

In Episode 1, vv. 12 and 13, the setting of the main Narrative Sequence paragraph that constitutes this strophe is found. V. 12 has a *yqtl*.p form and v. 13 has a *qtl*.p form:

> He made darkness his covering,
> His canopy round about him,
> The darkness of waters, cloud masses of the sky
> Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced,
> Hailstones and coals of fire.

The first verb is "he made" and is a clause initial *yqtl* which could possibly pattern as a *yqtl*.n but no other such forms occur in its immediate vicinity. If we take it simply to be a *yqtl*.p we have to say that the theophany employs a *yqtl*.p here and a *qtl*.p in 'advanced' in the following verse.

In Episode 1, v. 14 we find the following couplet:

> And thundered Y. from heaven
> And Elyon gave out his voice.

The verb of the first clause is *wyyqtl* and carries at this point in the episode the narrative mainline.The second verb is yqt.p. The latter form can indeed be past iterative in this context, implying, e.g., the repeated reverberation of the thunder.

In Episode 2, setting of that paragraph, vv. 34-36, there is a Coordinate paragraph that has three coordinated theses. In Theses 1 and 2 participles dominate. A slightly different problem from that seen in the examples above is that in v. 34 the clause which accompanies the participle has a *yqtl*.o verb form, while in v. 35 the clause which accompanies the participle is a *qtl*.pr, as seen below.

> He makes (par) my feet like those of a deer
> and so makes me to stand (*yqtl*.o) upon my high places
> He teaches my hand to war
> So that a bow of bronze is bent (*qtl*.pr) by my right hand.

There is probably no problem to be seen here in the two types of present time references. The *yqtl* is here seen in its primary open-ended, default present so that I label it *yqtl*.o. The *qtl* form, on the other hand, with its overtone of accomplished action , is more of a present perfect—the psalmist surely wouldn't make the claim that he could bend a bow of bronze if he hadn't done it a least once. In v. 36, the first verb is *wyyqtl* the latter are *yqtl*.o's with presumably present time reference:

> And you gave me the shield of your victory
> And your right hand sustains me,
> And in your stooping down you make me great.

Once beyond the Setting in Episode 2 we find a Narrative Sequence paragraph where time references are presumably past—although at the end of the long sequence, in vv. 44 and 45 we encounter again present time references. In verse 41 we find a *wyyqtl* followed in the next clause by a form which in its context must be a *yqtl*.p:

And my enemies turned the back to me
And those hating me I destroyed.

I cite here a parallel usage in Psalm 118:10-12, where we find three instances of 'destroy' in the *yqtl*.p preceded in each case by *qtl*.p forms. The emphasis of the context is on the many foes that compassed about the psalmist on all sides. The *yqtl*.p forms in such a context are probably iterative—enemies encompassing about on all sides must be destroyed one by one. Possibly the usage in Psalm 18 is not dissimilar from that found in Psalm 118.

What then? We have examined contexts in which the *yqtl*.p occurs, in order to see if a past iterative is implied. In most cases above this has seemed plausible. In brief, a case can be made for the iterative reference in 90% of the cases. Would a careful examination of the French imparfait for continuative reference in various contexts do much better percentage-wise?

The example from verse 9 remains, however, as clue to a further usage of *qtl* and *yqtl*, i.e., in poetic parallelism and chiasm. Many instances of this sort can be cited. It nevertheless needs to be investigated if there are not constraints on such usage so as to permit it in some situations and forbid it in others. But that will have to be a further piece of research and a further paper.

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