STR 10.2 (Fall 2019): 5–29

The Works of God's Salvation: The Rhetorical Use of Creation Imagery in Psalm 74[1]

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This article explores the rhetorical function of creation imagery and how it is utilized particularly in the communal lament of Ps 74. Although "creation" is often defined exclusively in terms of origination, it is a much more expansive and complex theological category that includes God's ongoing interaction with his creation. The biblical authors thus draw images and language from creation for a variety of rhetorical purposes and theological emphases. In Ps 74, the psalmist utilizes creation imagery—which is evocative of both the ANE Chaoskampf and the biblical Exodus—to address his current situation in which the temple is destroyed, and God is apparently silent. Thus, instead of a systematic theological exposition of creation, the imagery of creation in Ps 74 is utilized rhetorically to articulate a yearning for the works of God's salvation in the present as of old.

Key Words: Chaoskampf, cosmogony, creation imagery, lament, Leviathan, Psalm 74, temple

Psalm 74 is a communal lament over the destruction of the temple and was presumably written in light of the Babylonian defeat of Jerusalem in 587 BC.[2] The psalm's vivid depiction of the devastation caused by the scoffing enemies (vv. 3–9) is naturally marked by exasperated questions

[1] I would like to thank Chip Hardy for giving me the opportunity to write this paper and for all his helpful comments and suggestions throughout the entire process. While any and all deficiencies are my own, his gracious contributions significantly enhanced the quality of this paper.

[2] Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, WBC 20 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 246; Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 243–44; Gerlinde Baumann, "Psalm 74: Myth as the Source of Hope in Times of Devastation," in *Psalms and Mythology*, ed. Dirk J. Human, LHBOTS 462 (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 92.

of "why?" and "how long?" (vv. 10–11) and includes several pleas for God's intervention (vv. 18–23). Yet, in the midst of this psalm is the remarkable declaration of God's works of salvation from of old (vv. 12–17), in which he defeats the chaotic forces and sets up the created order. Undoubtedly, such vivid imagery is able to evoke a wide array of texts, images, and events, which has generated much scholarly debate regarding the nature, origin, and use of creation imagery. However, for the psalmist the use of this creation imagery primarily functions as a crucial component of this desperate plea for God to respond and to act. The poetic use of such imagery, in the words of T. S. Eliot, is a "raid on the inarticulate,"[3] a powerful and expressive articulation of the psalmist's faith in God's control over the cosmos and the forces that threaten it. This essay will thus explore the nature of creation imagery in Ps 74, and how it is used rhetorically as a plea for God to bring about his works of salvation in the present as he did of old.

Defining Creation Imagery

Given the complexity of the scholarly discussion regarding "creation" in the Bible and the ANE, it is necessary to define our terms as they relate to the poetic use of this imagery. Creation is most often and most naturally related to the origins of the cosmos (or cosmogony).[4] God's cosmogonic acts are expressed with certain verbal forms such as ברא, עשׂה, יצר, and כון.[5] God "creates" (ברא) the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1; Isa 42:5); he "makes" (עשׂה) the animals (Gen 1:25; Ps 104:24); he "fashions" (יצר) the man from the dust (Gen 2:7); he "establishes" (כון) the world (Ps 93:1; Jer 10:12). Creation can also refer to the "result" of God's creative acts, that is, the natural world (or the cosmos) and its various features and phenomena. However, to speak of the "natural" world as it relates to the Bible is not meant to convey some modern notion of a mechanistic,

[3] T. S. Eliot, "East Coker," in *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, 1971), 31.

[4] Dennis J. McCarthy states that the "word creation in its normal context must mean some sort of absolute beginning of our world, or we equivocate" ("'Creation Motifs' in Ancient Hebrew Poetry," *CBQ* 29.3 [1967]: 394). However, as will be demonstrated in this paper and is thoroughly argued by Terence Fretheim (*God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005]), creation imagery and language about creation in the Bible has a much broader range of significance than origination.

[5] Fretheim includes many more words (e.g., פעל, בנה, קנה, יסד, נטה, ילד, חול) as well as various "modes of creation" (*God and World*, 1, 34–47).

disenchanted universe, devoid of transcendent meaning.[6] The biblical conception of the natural world is understood as the *creation* of God, an enchanted cosmos imbued with significance that points to the Divine. Creation is thus a "theological category," argues Terence Fretheim, who explains, "To speak of 'creation' is to state that the cosmos does not simply exist; it was *created* by God."[7] Or as Lewis puts it, "Another result of believing in Creation is to see Nature not as a mere datum but as an achievement."[8] Therefore, the heavens declare *his* glory and the firmament proclaims the work of *his* hands (Ps 19:1–2); the heavens are *his* throne and the earth is *his* footstool (Isa 66:1); the earth is full of *his* creatures (Ps 104:24); humanity (male and female) is made in *his* image (Gen 1:26–28). Such an orientation to the Divine must be taken into consideration when speaking of creation in the Bible.

Naturally, the biblical authors use images drawn from creation (both in the sense of God's cosmogonic acts and the various features of the cosmos) for a variety of rhetorical purposes and theological emphases. In particular, images of creation function as powerful metaphors and effective analogues to describe their relationship with God, as well as their experiences in the world.[9] An important utilization of creation imagery is the depiction of God's redemptive acts in history with verbal forms associated with cosmogonic activity, which is prominent in Isa 40–55: YHWH "created" (ברא) Jacob and "fashioned" (יצר) Israel, for he had "redeemed" (גאל) them (Isa 43:1); YHWH, Israel's redeemer, is the one who "formed" (יצר) his people in the womb and he is the one who "made" (עשׂה) all things (Isa 44:24); YHWH will "establish" (כון) his people, protecting them from oppression (Isa 54:14).[10] Thus, God is not the Creator

[6] This language comes from Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge/London: Belknap Press, 2007). Taylor narrates the ideological shift from the ancient/medieval social imagery that humans had a "porous self," and were thus vulnerable to the "enchanted world," to the modern ("secular") social imaginary, in which humans have "buffered" themselves from the world, which has thus become "disenchanted." Understanding this distinction between the ancient/medieval and the modern perspectives of the cosmos will assist in appreciating the biblical author's particular use of creation imagery.

[7] Fretheim, *God and World*, 4 (emphasis original).

[8] C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1986), 83.

[9] For a discussion regarding the use of images and metaphors, see William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 1–14; Fretheim, *God and World*, 13–22.

[10] Fretheim argues that "Creation is a theme more frequent in the oracles of Isaiah 40–55 than in any other prophet" (*God and World*, 181). However, see

exclusively in terms of his acts of origination—as the Creator, he faithfully acts to sustain, continue, and even restore his cosmos.[11]

Creation imagery may also refer to the various features and phenomena of the cosmos (i.e., the natural world), that are often employed to describe the goodness of the Creator in his gracious provision for his people and his creatures.[12] This understanding is aptly reflected in the psalmists' grateful recognition of the cosmos as the work of God's hands, which includes not only the elements useful for their daily sustenance, but even that which is of nonutilitarian value to humanity.[13] Conversely, images of creation may also be utilized to depict the destructive forces within the cosmos that threaten to harm or even annihilate his people. Along with "natural disasters" such as floods and earthquakes, these images are also characterized as monstrous creatures (e.g., Yamm, Leviathan, Rahab, and the *tannim*), which are most commonly associated with the waters.[14] The biblical authors (especially the psalmists) regularly use these images metonymically and metaphorically to describe dire situations and hostile enemies (e.g., Ps 87:4; Isa 30:7; Jer 51:34; Ezek 39:3–5).[15] However, the very nature of all these images (whether positive or negative) is dependent upon the manner in which the psalmist utilizes them within their literary context. Thus, the waters can be both life giving (Ps 46:4) *and* life threatening (Ps 46:2–3);[16] the *tannim* and Leviathan can be both menacing creatures needing to be slain (Ps 74:13) *and* part of the God's "good" creation

Terrence R. Wardlaw Jr. who provides an analysis of the theme of creation alongside the theme of redemption throughout the entire book of Isaiah ("The Significance of Creation in the Book of Isaiah," *JETS* 59.3 [2016]: 449–71).

[11] Fretheim, *God and World*, 193: "For Isaiah 40–55, creation is the beginning, middle, and end of God's work with the world. God originated the cosmos, has continued creative work all through the course of the world's history, and will one day bring a new heaven and new earth into being."

[12] According to Fretheim, the theme of nature's praise to God (i.e., praise from nonhuman creatures) occurs "some fifty times in twenty-five contexts (including fourteen psalms)" (*God and World*, 249; see pp. 249–68 for fuller discussion regarding this theme).

[13] Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 84.

[14] Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 143–44.

[15] Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 129. Brown (*Seeing the Psalms*) states that the "mythological creatures" in the Psalter are "more cosmic in scope and, in turn, less metaphorical in degree" (143) and they function more as "metonyms" for "chaos" (107–12).

[16] For water imagery in Ps 46, see Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 115–17.

(Gen 1:21)[17] that are commanded to give praise (Ps 148:7)[18] or even YHWH's pets for leisurely play (Ps 104:26).[19]

Creation is thus a complex theological category that refers to God's relationship with his creation in its origination, continuation, and completion.[20] As an all-pervasive part of their reality, the biblical authors naturally employ images of creation in a variety of ways to articulate God's actions in the cosmos and to describe particular aspects of their own experiences. Yet, these images are not "convenient figures of speech or hollow tropes," emptied of theological significance.[21] They provide a "cosmic dimension" to the realities that are described (whether they be social, political, or economic), which is to recognize their rightful place under the sovereignty of God, who is king over the cosmos.[22] Furthermore, although creation is often understood exclusively in terms of cosmogony, it is important not to limit the poet's imaginative use of creation imagery to mere

[17] "And God created (ברא) the great *tanninim* . . . and God saw that it was good" (Gen 1:21). Throughout Gen 1:1–2:3 God affirms ("sees") that what he has made is "good" (טוֹב, Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). This is not to say that it is "perfect" in some static sense, unable to be improved upon. Rather the "goodness" of his creation refers to its functional and aesthetic value in accordance with its created design. In this sense, the "great *tanninim*" (התנינם הגדלים) are affirmed as "good" (Gen 1:21), and their mention with the specific use of ברא is most likely to emphasize that they "are not rivals that have to be defeated, just one of his many creatures" (Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1 [Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1987], 24).

[18] "Praise YHWH from the earth, you *tanninim* and all the deeps" (Ps 148:7).

[19] "There the ships go, and *Leviathan*, which you fashioned (יצר) in order to play with it" (Ps 104:26).

[20] Fretheim, *God and World*, 3–9.

[21] Ronald A. Simkins explains that "we must take seriously the metaphorical character of the biblical references to creation. They should not simply be dismissed as convenient figures of speech or hollow tropes, as if they were historicized 'useful fictions.' They are not mere illustrations. As metaphors, they were used to convey significant analogies, and we must interpret them as such in order to understand their meanings" (*Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994], 89).

[22] In this sense, the utilization of creation imagery with reference to God as Creator is to proclaim God's sovereignty over these elements. As Bernard Anderson explains, "The doctrine of creation, then, is preeminently an affirmation about the sovereignty of God and the absolute dependence of all creatures. To say that Yahweh made the earth is to confess that it belongs to its Maker; Yahweh is its Owner" (*From Creation to New Creation: Old Testament Perspective* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994], 28).

origination.[23] There are indeed cosmogonic elements present in Ps 74,[24] but as will be demonstrated, the psalmist skillfully and artfully uses a broader range of images and language associated with creation to articulate his despairing lament and desperate plea to God. The following will attend to the presence and nature of creation imagery in this psalm.

Creation Imagery in Psalm 74:12–17

Although it will be demonstrated that creation language runs throughout the entirety of Ps 74, the primary concentration of this imagery is located in vv. 12–17, which states:

12 Yet, God, my king is from old,
working acts of salvation in the midst of the earth.
13 You smashed Sea (ים) by your might;
You broke the heads of the *tanninim* (תנינים) upon the waters.
14 You crushed the heads of Leviathan (לויתן);
You gave him as food for the dwellers of the desert.[25]
15 You split open the springs and the wadis;
You dried up (יבשׁ) the mighty rivers.
16 Yours is the day; indeed, yours is the night;
You established (כון) the luminaries and the sun.
17 You fixed (נצב) all of the boundaries of the earth;

[23] As Fretheim explains, "If readers have in mind only issues of origination, then the texts are relatively infrequent, at least in any explicit sense. On the other hand, if a broader understanding of creation is being used, the number of texts increases significantly" (*God and World*, 4).

[24] I.e., the explicit mention of God "establishing" (כון) the heavenly lights (v. 16) and "fashioning" (יצר) the seasons (v. 17).

[25] The Hebrew is literally, "for a people (לעם), for desert ones (לציים)." Tate argues that the emended reading of לעמלצי ים ("for sharks in the sea") suggested by BHS demands too much alteration (*Psalms 51–100*, 243–44). The precise meaning of ציים is debated: does it refer to ציה in the sense of dryness (i.e., "desert dwellers") or in the sense of צי in the sense of ship (i.e., "sailors")? The LXX reads λαοῖς τοῖς Αἰθίοψιν ("for the Ethiopians") which could possibly correspond to the MT reading of "desert dwellers." The MT also fits the context well enough in that the "defeat of the Sea will be so complete that the ocean will become a desert. With this description the psalmist foreshadows the thought of vs. 15b" (Mitchell Dahood, *Psalm II: 51–100*, AB 17 [Garden City: Doubleday, 1968], 206). Cf. Mitchell Dahood, "Vocative 'Lamedh' in Psalm 74:14," *Bib* 59.2 (1978): 262–63.

the summer and winter, You fashioned (יצר).

In this passage, God's works of salvation (v. 12) progress from acts of destruction (vv. 13–14) to acts of creation (vv. 15–17). In vv. 13–14, God violently destroys the monstrous creatures associated with the waters: Sea (ים), the *tanninim* (תנינים), and Leviathan (לויתן). The destruction of these creatures leads to God's splitting open the springs and the wadis (v. 15a), which Tate explains "reflects a creation idea of the draining away of covering waters so that dry land appeared (cf. Gen 1:9–10), and that this is also the explanation of v. 15b, which reverses the process described in the flood narrative in Gen 7:11."[26] In this way, v. 15 functions as a transition from God's acts of destruction to God's acts of creation. In vv. 16–17, it is declared that the day and night are his, while God's creative acts are described as establishing (כון) the luminaries and the sun, fixing (נצב) the boundaries of the earth, and fashioning (יצר) the seasons.

However, the association with creation in these verses has been challenged by David T. Tsumura, who argues there is no creation motif in Ps 74, but rather the conflict depicted in vv. 13–14 has to do with destruction while the cosmic elements in vv. 15–17 simply refer to "the created order brought about by YHWH, rather than YHWH's creative actions."[27] A significant element of Tsumura's dismissal of creation imagery in this psalm is due to a narrow definition of creation as mere origination, which would naturally rule out the cosmological nature of these verses.[28] If,

[26] Following J. A. Emerton ("'Spring and Torrent' in Psalm lxxiv 15," in *Volume du Congrès: Genève 1965*, VTSup 15 [Leiden: Brill, 1966], 122–33), Tate argues that "the purpose of the springs and rivers was to drain the waters into a cosmic abyss and allow the dry land to appear" (*Psalm 51–100*, 252). Cf. Dennis Sylva, "Precreation Discourse in Psalms 74 and 77: Struggling with *Chaoskämpfe*," *R&T* 18 (2011): 248.

[27] David Toshio Tsumura, "The Creation Motif in Psalm 74:12–14? A Reappraisal of the Theory of the Dragon Myth," *JBL* 134.3 (2015): 553. For a fuller discussion and critique of Tsumura's argument see Nathaniel E. Greene, "Creation, Destruction, and a Psalmist's Plea: Rethinking the Poetic Structure of Psalm 74," *JBL* 136.1 (2017): 85–101.

[28] Tsumura recognizes that "creation" may have two meanings, saying that creation "is used to mean an 'originating' action or 'a created order,'" yet his discussion appears to focus almost exclusively on the sense of "origination" ("Creation Motif?" 554). However, Tsumura also states, "Thus, the psalmist simply explains the saving act of YHWH, who is the lord of creation—not only the originator of the world but also the controller of the created world" (554). This sense of God's role as "controller of the created world" appears to agree

however, his definition of creation included not only the cosmos itself but also God's creative acts apart from origination, then the creation imagery in these verses would be evident. Indeed, this entire section has cosmological language reminiscent of similar imagery found throughout Gen 1–11:[29]

Earth (ארץ)	Ps 74:12, 17	Gen 1:1–2
Sea (ים)	Ps 74:13	Gen 1:10
Sea Monsters (תנינים)	Ps 74:13	Gen 1:21
Waters (מים)	Ps 74:13	Gen 1:2
Food (מאכל)	Ps 74:14	Gen 2:9
To dry (יבשׁ)	Ps 74:15	Gen 8:14
To split (בקע)	Ps 74:15	Gen 7:11
Springs (מעין)	Ps 74:15	Gen 8:2
Rivers (נהר)	Ps 74:15	Gen 2:10, 13
Day (יום) and Night (לילה)	Ps 74:16	Gen 1:5
Luminaries (מאור)	Ps 74:16	Gen 1:14–16
To fashion (יצר)	Ps 74:17	Gen 2:7–8, 19
Summer (קיץ) and Winter (חרף)	Ps 74:17	Gen 8:22

Although these texts may represent different models, traditions, and expressions of creation, their similar use of key linguistic terms associated with creation demonstrates how intelligibly and cogently Ps 74 speaks of creation, even in its own distinctive form. Yet, even if the definition of creation is expanded, Tsumura still dismisses God's acts described in vv. 15–17 as cosmogonic, arguing these verses "simply describe the created order brought about by YHWH, rather than YHWH's creative actions."[30] But as Greene notes, "Tsumura's detachment of creative result from creative act draws too fine a distinction in view of the deity's creative acts as

with Fretheim's category of "Continuing Creation" or *Creatio Continua* (*God and World*, 7–9), which is in addition to God's creative work of origination.

[29] Creation imagery should not be limited to Gen 1–2 but can be seen throughout the entirety of Gen 1–11, especially with the acts of "re-creation" in the flood narrative (Gen 8–9). In fact, one can speak of the theme of Gen 1–11 as "creation" (cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation: A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1–11* [London: T&T Clark, 2011], 16–17; David J. A. Clines, "Theme in Genesis 1–11," *CBQ* 38 [1976]: 483–507).

[30] Tsumura, "Creation Motif?" 553.

depicted in the text. The very fact that the created order is the result of YHWH's creative act links the notions indefinitely."[31] In fact, God's creative activity in vv. 16–17 is described with verbal forms that are directly associated with God's cosmogonic acts present in other biblical passages: God *establishes* (כון) the earth and all that is in it (Ps 24:2; cf. Isa 45:18; Jer 10:12); God *fixes* (נצב) the heavens (Ps 119:89; cf. Deut 32:8); God *fashions* (יצר) the dry land (Ps 95:5; cf. Gen 2:7; 45:18; Amos 4:13).[32]

Tsumura rightly notes the destructive emphasis in vv. 13–14, which may function as a "metaphorical description of the Lord's destroying his people's enemies throughout history."[33] Yet, he argues that "The destruction of the dragon here leads not to the creation of the cosmos . . . but to 'salvations.'"[34] According to the text, however, it appears that the "salvations" of God (v. 12) are described as the movement from destruction to creation (vv. 13–17), which expresses a redemptive progression from the defeat of the threatening creatures to the establishment of cosmic order. Indeed, God's acts of destroying and creating are presented as a unified whole in the text, bound together by the consistent use of the perfect verbal form for both acts of destruction and creation,[35] along with the sevenfold occurrence of the second person singular independent pronoun "you" (אתה):[36]

13 *You* (אתה) smashed (פרר) Sea by your might;
You broke (שׁבר) the heads of the *tanninim* upon the waters.
14 *You* (אתה) crushed (רצץ) the heads of Leviathan;
You gave him as food for the dwellers of the desert.
15 *You* (אתה) split open (בקע) the springs and the wadis;
You (אתה) dried (יבשׁ) up the mighty rivers.
16 Yours is the day; indeed, yours is the night;
You (אתה) established (כון) the luminaries and the sun.
17 *You* (אתה) fixed (נצב) all of the boundaries of the earth;
You (אתה) fashioned (יצר) the summer and winter.

[31] Green, "Poetic Structure of Psalm 74," 93.

[32] Note in Isa 45:18 how "create" (ברא) is in parallel with "fashion" (יצר) and "establish" (כון) in reference to God's cosmogonic actions.

[33] Tsumura, "Creation Motif?" 548.

[34] Tsumura, "Creation Motif?" 553.

[35] Note the exceptional use of נתן in v. 14b, which occurs in the imperfect.

[36] Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 17; Greene, "Poetic Structure of Psalm 74," 93–94; Baumann, "Psalm 74," 96.

This sevenfold repetition is reminiscent of the intentional use of seven (including its sevenfold structure) in the creation account of Gen 1:1–2:3,[37] further contributing to the various allusions to creation.[38] But this poetic unity has another significant implication: if God's acts of destruction could be understood as a "metaphorical description of the Lord's destroying his people's enemies," it seems reasonable to understand God's acts of creation as a "metaphorical description" of the Lord's providing order, security, and rest for his people. In this sense, both destruction and creation may function *idiomatically* to convey YHWH's various works of salvation.[39]

However, in light of this salvific movement, some have made the argument this imagery refers to the event of the exodus, *rather* than creation.[40] As Elmer B. Smick states, "In Ps 74:12–14 the mythopoetic language about the many-headed Leviathan is historicized and used metaphorically to describe Yahweh's great victory in history, at the Red

[37] For discussion regarding the intentional use of seven in Gen 1:1–2:3, see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 5–7.

[38] Greene takes this sevenfold repetition as an intertextual reference to the seven heads of Litan attested in ANE literature (cf. *KTU 1.5* I 1–4) and iconography (cf. Tell Amar Seal) ("Poetic Structure of Psalm 74," 94). However, it is preferable to understand this allusion to seven with the creation account of Gen 1:1–2:3 given the use of seven is part of the structural design of the hymn, along with its use of creation imagery reminiscent of Genesis. Baumann argues that 74:16–17 alludes several times to Gen 1 and "this subtle use of the seven, the number of totality, can be interpreted as a counterstatement against the total destruction of the enemies in part I" ("Psalm 74," 96).

[39] Tsumura states that "biblical texts may refer to a mythological scene where a dragon was destroyed" and goes on to say that "The biblical authors of the Iron Age could use these already-antiquated expressions to describe metaphorically Yahweh's destructive actions toward his enemies. Furthermore, these metaphorical expressions seem to have already become idiomatic or nearly idiomatic when the authors used them" (*Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005], 192). Yet, it seems just as possible that certain "creation models" in the ANE could function similarly in the Bible and thus would not suggest a "cosmic dualism" since they are idiomatic expressions.

[40] Those who hold the view that this imagery refers to the event of the exodus include Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150: A Commentary on Books III–V of the Psalms*, TOTC (Downers Grove: IVP, 1973), 268–69; Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 129; Elmer B. Smick, "Mythopoetic Language in the Psalms," *WTJ* 44 (1982): 90; Baumann, "Psalm 74," 96–97.

Sea. The monster here is Egypt."[41] The argument for this connection is that God's works of salvation (ישׁועה) "in the midst of the earth" refers to God's redemptive acts in the exodus, which is followed by the statement that God *divided* (פרר) the sea by his might, referring to the parting of the Red Sea.[42] Yet, the translation of פרר as "divide" has been significantly contested by Tsumura.[43] Even though phonologically similar verbal roots such as פרס, פרד, and פרץ have a meaning of "separation," there is "not strong etymological support . . . for the translation of פרר as 'to divide.'"[44] Based upon its etymology and its use in the HB, the "most natural meaning" of פרר is "to break," which is significantly in parallel with שׁבר in the same verse.[45] Given this sense of the verb פרר "to break" instead of "to split," an association with the event of the exodus is much more indirect.[46] Furthermore, although "salvation" (or "victories"[47]) may refer to the redemptive act of the exodus, it does not need to refer to that event *exclusively*.[48] It could simply refer to God's intervening salvific acts against any element of disorder within the cosmic realm, which thus serves as a

[41] Smick, "Mythopoetic Language," 90.

[42] For example, Kidner states, "The point here is that what Baal had claimed in the realm of myth, God had done in the realm of history—and done for his people, *working salvation*" (*Psalm 73–150*, 268–69; emphasis original).

[43] Tsumura, "The Creation Motif?" 547–55; also argued by Tate, *Psalm 51–100*, 251.

[44] Tsumura, "The Creation Motif?" 549.

[45] Tsumura, "The Creation Motif?" 550. Tsumura also notes "the Ugaritic verbs *prr* ('to break') and *thr* ("to crush") appear in parallel just פרר and שׁבר do in Ps 74:13b–14a," referencing *CAD*, P: 161–64.

[46] It should also be noted that פרר is not used in book of Exodus or other biblical passages in regard to the parting of the Red Sea. Another possible association with the exodus event in Ps 74 could be the reference to the congregation that God "purchased" (קנה), which also occurs in Exod 15:16 to describe God's people, whom he had "purchased." However, the word קנה is also used to describe God's cosmogonic activity (cf. Gen 14:19, 22; Deut 32:6; Ps 139:13; Prov 8:22).

[47] The word for "victories" or "salvations" occurs in the plural: ישׁעות. Tate explains, "The image is that of a king whose kingship and power win victories for his people over hostile foes (cf. Pss 20:6; 21:2; 67:3; 118:14, 15, 21; et al.)" (*Psalms 51–100*, 250).

[48] John Goldingay, *Psalms, Vol. 2: Psalms 42–89* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 430: "The language used suggests that the section would make people think of both creation and the Red Sea event, not mainly or exclusively the former nor mainly or exclusively the latter."

general theological declaration of God's power.[49] In this sense, the imagery is able to evoke more than one particular event or situation, not only in the past, but also in the present, and even in the future.[50] That is to say, although this passage refers to God's acts in the past, the reality of God's might within the cosmos is projected as hope for the future in light of their present situation. Therefore, it is prudent not to limit the referential and evocative scope of this poetic imagery, nor to bifurcate too neatly between Creation and Redemption,[51] since these verses "typologically overlay imagery proper to both creation and exodus."[52] Or as Greene says, "An author (especially an author of poetry!) need not explicitly state every image he or she wishes to create in the mind of the reader," further explaining that "[t]he presence of the creative-*Chaoskampf* motif in Ps 74 is then doubly marked by both creative language (i.e., language depicting the act of creation) and language and ideologies reminiscent of the exodus tradition as well."[53]

A final aspect to consider is the broader literary context and conceptual environment of the ANE, which could help to illuminate the manner in which it is used in the psalm.[54] The creation imagery expressed in these

[49] Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1*, 17–18.

[50] Sylva explains that the "precreation discourse addresses the substratum upon which history rests, providing fertile ground for envisioning alternative historical possibilities" ("Precreation Discourse," 251), and goes on to say, "The precreation discourse in vv. 12–17 has charged the psalmist so that his memory of God is now an active reality of God's past as the effective force in the present. After this discourse, the psalmist asserts, indirectly, for the first time that God is in control of the lives of the oppressed (v. 19)" (253).

[51] Routledge states, "The close link between creation and redemption, however, allows us not only to see Israel's redemption as a creative act but also to view the act of creation itself as a salvific act in which God rescues the cosmos from chaos (e.g. Ps 74:12–17)" (*Old Testament Theology*, 138). Cf. Terence E. Fretheim, "The Reclamation of Creation: Redemption and Law in Exodus," *Int* 45 (1991): 354–65; Bernard Och, "Creation and Redemption: Towards a Theology of Creation," *Judaism* 44 (1995): 226–43.

[52] Jeremy M. Hutton, "Isaiah 59:9–11 and the Rhetorical Appropriation and Subversion of Hostile Theologies," *JBL* 126.2 (2007): 283 n. 48. Hutton says this in reference to the *Chaoskampf* imagery present in Isa 51:9–11, but this could be applied to Ps 74 as well.

[53] Greene, "Poetic Structure of Psalm 74," 98.

[54] For an overview of the "Contextual Approach" to comparative literature, see William W. Hallo, "Compare and Contrast: The Contextual Approach to Biblical Literature," in *The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature: Scripture in Context*

verses is often categorized as *Chaoskampf*[55] and is what Mark S. Smith refers to as a model of *Creation as Divine Might*, in which the created order is brought about "in the wake of the divine battle against the cosmic enemies."[56] Dennis J. McCarthy summarizes this basic pattern throughout ANE literature as: (1) the fight against chaos often represented by or personified as a monster of the waters; (2) the conquest of this monstrous force by a god who is consequently acclaimed king; and (3) the giving of a palace (temple) to the divine king.[57] The most notable example of this model in the ANE is the Babylonian myth, *Enuma Elish*.[58] In this myth, the Babylonian patron god Marduk achieves the status of the chief god after defeating the goddess Tiamat, who represents the chaotic waters (and is portrayed as a dragon). After Tiamat's defeat, Marduk splits her in half from which he forms the top half and the bottom half of the cosmos, which is followed by the building of a temple as the divine resting place. An even closer literary and linguistic parallel to Ps 74 is found in the *Ugaritic Baal Cycle*.[59] Even though it is contested whether this story can be properly understood as a cosmogony, it reflects a similar thematic development as *Enuma Elish*.[60] Baal slays the serpent goddess of the sea

III, ed. William W. Hallo et al., ANETS 8 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1990), 1–30. Hallo explains that the goal of this approach is "not to find the key to every biblical phenomenon in some ancient Near Eastern precedent, but rather to silhouette the biblical text against its wider literary and cultural environment and thus to arrive at a proper assessment of the extent to which the biblical evidence reflects that environment or, on the contrary, is distinctive and innovative over against it" (3). See also John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 1–16.

[55] *Chaoskampf* is also referred to as the "Combat myth" or "Cosmic Battle Pattern." Routledge defines *Chaoskampf* as "the common depiction of creation as a battle between the creator god and the powers of chaos, usually represented by primeval waters and the monsters that rise from them" (*Old Testament Theology*, 127–28).

[56] Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1*, 17. The other models of creation Smith discusses are *Creation as Divine Wisdom* and *Creation as Divine Presence*.

[57] McCarthy, "Creation Motifs," 393.

[58] For full text, see W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*, Mesopotamian Civilizations 16 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013).

[59] Cf. Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle I: Introduction with Text*, Translation and Commentary KTU 1.1–1.2, VTSup 55 (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

[60] For an overview of the cosmological interpretation of the *Baal Cycle*, see Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 75–87. Even though scholars have questioned whether the *Baal Cycle* could be categorized as a cosmogony, it is apparent that

(identified as Yamm and Lītān—the Ugaritic equivalent of the biblical Leviathan),[61] leading to the construction of his temple, which takes seven days to complete. Although not every part of the pattern needs to be explicitly manifest to evoke the model, these basic elements are clearly seen in Ps 74—God, the king of old, violently destroys the primordial creatures of Yamm (ים), Leviathan (לויתן), and the *tanninim* (תנינים) (vv. 13–14) and subsequently orders the cosmos by establishing (כון) the heavenly lights, fixing (נצב) the boundaries of the earth, and fashioning (יצר) the seasons (vv. 16–17). Even though the differences between the texts of the ANE and of the HB are significant (literarily and theologically), in light of the thematic and linguistic parallels it is apparent that Ps 74 is utilizing a common creation type-scene within the ANE, depicting YHWH defeating the opposing chaotic forces and ordering the cosmos in its wake. Much like *Enuma Elish*, and to some extent the *Baal Cycle*, the hymn moves from destruction to creation, and as will be further demonstrated below, also relates to the building of the temple.

However, to say that the psalmist may be utilizing a "creation type-scene" found in the ANE does not necessarily signify direct literary borrowing from a particular text.[62] Although there may be similar terms and

the construction of the temple is described with creation imagery (cf. Loren R. Fisher, "Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament," *VT* 15.3 [1965]: 319).

[61] Cf. J. A. Emerton, "Leviathan and Ltn: The Vocalization of the Ugaritic Word for the Dragon," *VT* 32 (1982): 327–31. Or *ltn* could possibly be vocalized as "Lōtān" (cf. Wayne T. Pitard, "The Binding of Yamm: A New Edition of the Ugaritic Text KTU 1.83," *JNES* 57.4 [1998]: 261–80). Averbeck argues that Yamm, Litan, Tunnan, and Nahar refer to one single enemy of Baal, according to the combination of passages that mention Baal's victories ("Ancient Near Eastern Mythography as It Relates to Historiography in the Hebrew Bible: Genesis 3 and the Cosmic Battle," in *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions; the Proceedings of a Symposium, August 12–14 2001, at Trinity International University*, ed. James K. Hoffmeier and Alan Millard [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], 341). However, it is unclear whether these are the same creature in Ps 74.

[62] Hutton ("Isaiah 59:9–11") proposes a reconstructed source text behind Ps 74, Ps 89, Is 51, and *KTU* 1.3 III 38–46, but since no extant text exists, any direct literary borrowing of Ps 74 remains conjectural. Averbeck rightly cautions that "one of the most basic methodological rules for comparing extrabiblical ancient Near Eastern texts with the Bible is that careful analysis of the biblical passages and their intrabiblical parallels should always take precedence over comparisons with external texts" ("Ancient Near Eastern Mythography," 344). Thus, while Tate acknowledges that the "mythical referents [in vv. 12–17] seem to have been

ideas between the biblical literature and the ANE literature, it may simply reflect a common conceptual milieu in which they utilize similar expressions to convey their reality.[63] As Walton explains, "There is a great difference between explicit borrowing from a specific piece of literature and creating a literary work that resonates with the larger culture that has itself been influenced by its literatures."[64] Furthermore, even if there may be parallels of imagery, language, and themes between the biblical text and an ANE text—such as the slaying of the sea dragon—it does not mean the biblical authors shared the theological commitments that are embedded in the ANE literature.[65] Rather, they utilize such common imagery of creation in their own distinctive way, according to their particular theological worldview.[66] As Robin Routledge explains,

> Although the mythological language and imagery found in some OT passages may have had wide circulation in the ANE, the OT writers use it in a distinctive way. The imagery is removed from its original (pagan) setting and given new meaning and significance. Rather than depicting rival gods fighting for power, the OT emphasizes that there is only one God who is the Lord of heaven and earth. And where the *Chaoskampf* motif appears in this context, it is concerned, primarily, not with God's initial victory in a cosmic

Ugaritic Canaanite in an ultimate sense," he aptly states, "In a more immediate sense, Ps 74 was probably dependent on Israelite traditions such as those reflected in Pss 104:1–9; 89:10–15; 65:7–8; 93; 24; Gen 1" (*Psalm 51–100*, 254).

[63] Simkins explains that "the Israelites shared a similar conception of reality, rooted in basic experiences of the human body and earth, as their ancient Near Eastern neighbors. Indeed, the Israelites were part of the larger ancient Near Eastern cultural milieu in that they shared similar understandings of the world with their neighbors. The differences between the Bible and other Near Eastern literature can only be understood from within the context of their similarities. These differences reflect the cultural particularities of each people, not extensively different and unrelated cultures" (*Creator and Creation*, 89).

[64] Walton, *Ancient Cosmology*, 3.

[65] In fact, it is important to note that there are significant theological differences between Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Canaanite literature within the ANE.

[66] Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 129 n. 9: "This distinctive use indicates that OT writers in no way accepted the substance of ANE myths; nevertheless, it is likely that the language is intended to recall some of the elements of the *Chaoskampf* myth. The idea was used to highlight aspects of God's activity in the world by OT writers who also emphasized differences between their theology and world view and that of their contemporaries in the ANE."

> pre-creation battle but with his ongoing power over creation and his ongoing presence in the world.[67]

In other words, even though the psalmist is using a possibly well-known type scene, it can be applied in different ways to different situations. Thus, God conquers Israel's enemies like he conquers the dragon; God restores order to Israel like he creates the cosmos. In this light, while recognizing the potential significance of similar language, imagery, and themes in comparative literature, the primary focus of this paper will be the "new meaning and significance" of the creation imagery given within its immediate literary context.[68]

To summarize, the creation imagery utilized in Ps 74 reflects a basic pattern of destruction to creation that is also found within the ANE context and applied to YHWH as the one who destroys the chaotic forces and brings order to the cosmos. It is possible that this imagery could evoke the event of the exodus, with the monstrous creatures representing Egypt (cf. Ps 87:4),[69] but the text appears to have a broader evocative range that speaks generally to God's might over any threatening force within the cosmos. In agreement with Tsumura, there is undoubtedly a sense of destruction that takes place in the violent depiction of God's

[67] Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 128–29. As Averbeck also explains, "The writers of the Hebrew Bible used the repertoire of ancient Near Eastern cosmic battle motifs and patterns to articulate certain aspects of faith and commitment to God/Yahweh in ancient Israel. They used them precisely because these stories were powerful in the conceptual world of the ancient Israelites and, therefore, provided a set of motifs that could be used to speak powerfully about Yahweh. In doing, so, however, they were not just reusing the myths but tailored them to the distinctiveness of their belief in One God who is the creator of all and to whom Israel was to show loyalty at all cost" ("Ancient Near Eastern Mythography," 345).

[68] Regarding the significant differences between comparative texts, J. Richard Middleton's caution is warranted: "While we should certainly not ignore the embeddedness of individual texts in larger patterns of meaning (including shared motifs such as the combat myth), it is nevertheless important that we read each text for its own specificity and particularity—its 'actuality,' as James Muilenburg puts it" ("Created in the Image of a Violent God? The Ethical Problem of the Conquest of Chaos in Biblical Creation Texts," *Int* 58.4 [2004]: 345).

[69] For the various texts that utilize the dragon to refer to Egypt, see John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 88–101. However, he does not include Ps 74 in his list of passages.

actions against the monstrous creatures. However, this should not overlook the explicit mention of God's creative acts in vv. 15–17, which are woven together with the combat of vv. 13–14 with the sevenfold repetition of אתה. In this light, the movement from destruction to creation is a picture of redemption, that is, God's works of salvation, which is an all-important concept for the psalmist's lament. Having established the nature of this creation imagery, we will now turn to how this imagery is used as part of the rhetorical structure of the poem.

Poetic Form and Content

Although there appears to be a variety of ways to analyze the structure of this psalm, the fivefold division posited by Graeme Sharrock effectively reflects the "inherent framework" of the psalm.[70] Sharrock divides the major sections of the psalm according to the tense of the primary or initial verb of each line:

Vv. 1–3	Imperatives (apart from an introductory complaint)
Vv. 4–9	Perfects (with a supplementary imperfect in v. 9)
Vv. 10–11	Imperfects
Vv. 12–17	Perfects (with a supplementary imperfect in v. 14)
Vv. 18–23	Imperatives (and supporting jussives, etc.)

Reflected in this organization of these primary verb forms is the following chiastic structure:

A. Imperatives
  B. Perfects
    C. Imperfects
  B'. Perfects
A'. Imperatives

As Sharrock explains, "The result is an inverted symmetrical structure in which the imperative paragraphs (A and A') introduce and conclude the psalm, the perfect verbs (B and B') develop some concrete actions in the psalm, and the central verses (C) form the central axis pointing back to

[70] Graeme Sharrock, "Psalm 74: A Literary-Structural Analysis," *AUSS* 21.3 (1983): 211. Sharrock takes the phrase "inherent framework" from Rolf Knierim, "Old Testament Form-Criticism Reconsidered," *Interpretation* 27 (1973): 459. Others who follow this basic framework include Tate, *Psalms 51–100*; Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*; Sylva, "Precreation Discourse"; Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*.

the earlier sections and forward to the subsequent ones."[71] Section A (vv. 1b–3) begins with questions directed at God for why he has rejected his people (v. 1b), which is followed by urgent imperatives for God to remember his congregation (v. 2) and even to see for himself[72] the ruins of the sanctuary (v. 3). This section corresponds with Section A' (vv. 18–23) where the psalmist returns to imperatives, calling God to respond to the evil actions of his enemies and rise to action on behalf of his people. Section B (vv. 4–9) describes the past violent actions of the enemy: they have disrupted their meeting places, setting up their own signs (v. 4); they have broken down the sanctuary and burned it with fire (vv. 5–7); and they defiled the land, the place of YHWH's name (v. 7). This leaves the people to lament that they see no signs and there is no prophet to tell them how long they must endure this situation (v. 9). This section corresponds with Section B' (vv. 12–17), which describes the past salvific actions of God, the king from old, who "works salvation in the midst of the earth" (v. 12). This salvation is expressed in two major movements: God's crushing

[71] Sharrock, "Psalm 74," 213. Although several commentators have followed this suggested literary framework, or a close variation of it, Greene ("Poetic Structure of Psalm 74,") has posited a poetic structure that centers the poem on the creation imagery in vv. 12–17 with the following division:

I. Lament over the destruction of the temple (vv. 1b–11, 18)
II. Mythological hymn detailing the contest between אלהים and mythological beasts (vv. 12–17)
III. Petition for God to act on behalf of the poor (vv. 19–23)

According to Greene, the interpolation of the creation imagery disrupted the original poetic structure, which contained two major sections: (1) a lament in vv. 1b–11 and v. 18, and (2) a chiastic petition in vv. 19–23. The "violent" insertion of the creation imagery between למה v. 11 and זכר of v. 18 reveals the work of a redactor who perceived a thematic/theological parallel that motivated the utilization of the creation imagery in his lament. Yet, even if Greene is correct, the proposed structured, which is based upon a hypothetical original poetic structure, is unnecessary to ascertain the rhetorical thrust of the passage. However the poem was put together, all that is accessible to the reader with confidence is the text as it is received in its final form, which as it stands, appears to have a coherent unity. For this reason, this paper will follow the fivefold structure proposed by Sharrock, for it most precisely describes the poetic structure of the final form of Ps 74 and effectively demonstrates many of Greene's conclusions regarding the rhetorical use of the creation imagery.

[72] Literally, "Exalt your steps" (רימה פעמיך), which is an expression that "suggests coming to look rather than coming to take action" (Goldingay, *Psalm 42–89*, 426).

defeat of the threatening chaos, personified by the sea monsters (vv. 13–14), and God's ordering of the cosmos (vv. 15–17). In Section C (vv. 10–11), the psalmist directs his questions to God: how long will the revilement of his name endure (v. 10)? He asks why God holds back his right hand and does not act to finish them (v. 11). According to this structure, the entire psalm is oriented around these questions, which thus illuminates the rhetorical function of the other sections.

Rhetorical Use of Creation Imagery in Psalm 74

In light of the poetic structure of Ps 74, the chiastic framework informs how the creation imagery contributes to the rhetorical thrust of this lament. At the heart of the chiasm (vv. 10–11) are the most pertinent questions of how long God will endure the enemies scoffing his name and why he has not acted yet. Flanking each side of this central section, perfects are utilized to describe the destruction of the temple in vv. 4–9 (B) and the creation imagery in vv. 12–17 (B'), which establishes an intentional correspondence between these sections. As Sharrock explains, "The two intermediary paragraphs B and B' serve a contrasting purpose. Each group of six verses is a catalog of actions in the perfect tense, yet these stand in antithetical relation to each other: the enemy's acts of destruction are 'answered' by Yahweh's deliverances."[73]

But there is more to this relationship than a mere "negation of the account of the enemy's work" achieved with the "hymn of Yahweh's deliverances."[74] The placement of this creation imagery in corresponding relation to the temple's destruction reflects the significant relationship between the temple and the cosmos found both in the ANE and in the HB.[75] According to ancient cosmology, the temple is often associated with the cosmos,[76] and inasmuch as the temple is properly maintained, all is well and right in the cosmos. Walton explains the significance of the temple's function in relation to the cosmos: "Throughout the ancient

[73] Sharrock, "Psalm 74," 220.

[74] Sharrock, "Psalm 74," 220.

[75] Walton, *Ancient Cosmology*, 109–121; Jon D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *JR* 64.3 (1984): 275–98.

[76] As Levenson explains, "The earthly Temple is the world *in nuce*; the world is the Temple *in extenso*" (*Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* [Broadway: HarperCollins, 1985], 141). For a fuller discussion regarding the cosmic symbolism of temples, see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 29–80.

world, the temple was a significant part of the cosmic landscape. It was considered to be at the center of the cosmos, the place from which the cosmos was controlled, and a small model of the cosmos—a microcosm."[77] The implication for this association is that the converse is also true: the defilement and destruction of the temple would signify disorder within the cosmos (cf. Isa 64:10–12).

What this means for Ps 74, is that in response to the enemies' defilement and destruction of temple (vv. 4–9), the psalmist invokes the creation type-scene, which recounts God's salvific work in his defeat of the cosmic enemies and his establishment of the cosmic order (vv. 12–17). In this sense, the poetic employment of creation imagery is a fitting response to the devastation caused by the enemy, for these two sections of the poem are mutually informing: the violent actions described of the enemies against the temple and the land are understood in cosmic terms, in which God's sovereign rule is challenged; and the creation hymn is invoked to motivate God to respond and act within their current reality for his name's sake as the king of old.[78] As Greene explains:

> The destruction of the temple as described in the opening verses of Ps 74 would then be an assault not simply on the physical building established for the worship of YHWH but on YHWH's very sovereignty and the entirety of the created order as well. It makes perfect sense that the author of Ps 74 would seek to connect creation imagery (the likes of which are found in Ps 74:12–17) to a lament over the destruction of the temple. . . . This recollection of creation mythology then is a tacit call for YHWH to rebuild his temple, as enthronement and the construction of a temple seem to be the ultimate results of the *Chaoskampf* events.[79]

A closer look at the other parts of the text (vv. 1–11; 18–23) further support this understanding with its own creation/temple associations.[80] Among the several terms used to describe the temple in this passage,[81] the designation of the temple as "Mount Zion" where God dwells (v. 2) is significant, for it may reflect the symbolic imagery of the ANE "cosmic

[77] Walton, *Ancient Cosmology*, 100.

[78] Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1994), 18–19.

[79] Greene, "Poetic Structure," 100.

[80] Greene, "Poetic Structure," 99–100.

[81] Among the terms used to refer to the temple are קדשׁ, מקדשׁ, משׁכן, and מועד.

mountain."[82] The cosmic mountain was considered the *axis mundi*, the place where heaven and earth meet, which thus became almost synonymous for temple.[83] Hossefeld and Zenger also suggest that tree imagery used to describe the "woodwork that beautifies the temple"[84] may be associated with the tree of life, symbolizing God's presence, "who from that place created and sustained life and the cosmos."[85] In this light, the depiction of the temple being hacked down like a forest (vv. 4–8),[86] and the dwelling place for God's name being leveled to the ground (ארץ),[87] signify that "chaos has triumphed over cosmos."[88]

In addition to this portrayal of the temple is the use of מועד, which not only has associations with the temple with the meaning of "appointed place (or time)" (cf. Lam 2:6; Zeph 3:18)[89] but also with creation with the meaning of "seasons" or "festivals" as depicted in the fourth day of creation with the making of the luminaries (Gen 1:10–14). Significantly, Gen 1:14 states that the purpose of the luminaries (מאור)[90] is to mark the signs (אות), the seasons (מועד), and the days (יום), which are primarily for

[82] L. Michael Morales explains that according to the temple ideology of the ANE, the "temple was understood to be the architectural embodiment of the 'cosmic mountain'" (*Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, NSBT 37 [Downers Grove: IVP, 2015], 51).

[83] For the understanding of "Zion as the Cosmic Mountain," see Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 111–37.

[84] Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 428.

[85] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 245.

[86] Although vv. 4–8 have proven difficult to interpret, "What seems to be clear, however, is that with the help of axes and hatchets or hammers, the interior part of the temple with its fine woodwork has been destroyed as if these were merely wood and trees" (Baumann, "Psalm 74," 93).

[87] The word ארץ ("land" or "earth") appears as a recurring motif throughout the entire psalm (vv. 7, 8, 12, 17, 20) and even serves as a frame for the creation hymn of vv. 12–17 (Baumann, "Psalm 74," 95).

[88] Baumann, "Psalm 74," 95.

[89] Greene, "Poetic Structure," 99. Lamentations 2:6 is a significant text for this discussion, for it parallels מועד with שֵׂךְ ("booth"), signifying sacred place, and then parallels מועד with שַׁבָּת ("Sabbath") signifying sacred time. The flexibility of מועד in this verse thus demonstrates its evocative potential for both time and place.

[90] The word מאור refers to the heavenly lights in Gen 1:14–16, but as Wenham notes this term "is always used in the Pentateuch to designate the sanctuary lamp in the tabernacle," indicating another association with temple in this passage (*Genesis 1–15*, 22). Cf. Ps 104:19.

liturgical purposes.[91] Thus, the lament that their enemies have left them with no meeting places (vv. 4, 8) or signs (vv. 4, 9) in Ps 74 illuminates their hope in declaring God's activity of creation in vv. 16–17:

> Yours is the *day* (יום); indeed, yours is the *night* (לילה);
> You established the *luminaries* (מאור) and the *sun* (שֶׁמֶשׁ).
> You fixed all of the boundaries of the earth;
> You fashioned the *summer* (קיץ) and *winter* (חרף).

Since the very purpose of the luminaries is to set up the signs and seasons, this acknowledgment of God's establishment of the luminaries within the cosmos serves as a plea for God's reestablishment of the signs and seasons in regard to the liturgy of the temple.

A final observation of the creation/temple association in Ps 74 is the invocation of God to "arise," which is an expression rooted in ANE cosmology that Bernard Batto refers to as the "sleeping god motif."[92] According to Batto, sleep (or rest) in the ANE is a divine prerogative and a symbol of divine authority that signifies the created order has been established and is being effectively maintained.[93] In other words, the gods are at rest because all is well with the world, and in this sense, the divine rest signifies divine rule, which is carried out from the cosmic "control room," the temple.[94] However, if there is some type of threat to the cosmic order (which is tantamount to a challenge of the divine rule), then it is often expressed naturally as "noise,"[95] for it would disturb the divine rest. In

[91] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 23: "What is clear is this importance attached to the heavenly bodies' role in determining the seasons, in particular in fixing the days of cultic celebration. This is their chief function."

[92] Bernard Batto, "The Sleeping God: An Ancient Near Eastern Motif of Divine Sovereignty," *Bib* 68 (1987): 153–76. Batto cites Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Canaanite works in his study. For fuller discussion of divine rest in the ANE, see Walton, *Ancient Cosmology*, 110–19; Daniel E. Kim, "From Rest to Rest: A Comparative Study of the Concept of Rest in Mesopotamian and Israelite Literature" (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 2015), 10–60.

[93] Batto, "Sleeping God Motif," 155–64.

[94] Walton, *Ancient Cosmology*, 119: "Individual temples were designed as models of the cosmos, but in addition, and more importantly, the temple was viewed as the hub of the cosmos. It was built in conjunction with the creation of the cosmos. Gods took up their rest in the temple for a variety of reasons, one of which was the ruling of the cosmos as they continued to maintain the order that had been established and to exercise control of destinies."

[95] For a fuller discussion regarding the concept of "noise" in Mesopotamian

fact, if the threat to the cosmic order continues without any divine intervention, the cry for the deity to "awake" or to "arise" is a call for the deity to assume his rightful position as king and bring the cosmos back to order. The essential elements of this motif are also manifested throughout the HB (e.g., Ps 44; Isa 51:9–11) but are specifically present as part of the rhetorical design of Ps 74.[96] The text says that YHWH's foes "have roared (שׁאג) in the midst" of his dwelling place (v. 4) and calls God not to forget the "clamor" (קול) of his foes and the "uproar" (שׁאון) that rises against him, going up perpetually (vv. 22–23). It is not without significance that the place for divine rest is the now destroyed temple, and one can see how this "noise" (along with the revilement of God's name in vv. 10, 18) is a disturbance of his "rest" and thus a direct challenge to God's reign. The use of the creation imagery in vv. 12–17 recounts God's victory of old over the monstrous creatures and the establishment of the cosmos in order to express their expectation that God would do so again in their historical situation as the rightful king of the cosmos.[97] Therefore, their plea, "Arise, O God, defend your cause" (v. 22), is directly connected to the creation imagery (vv. 12–17) for it is a call for God to live up to his name, his reputation, and his role as creator and redeemer of his people in the earth.[98]

Conclusion

In Ps 74, creation imagery is prominently utilized in this desperate lament to call God to respond and to act in light of the cosmic disorder manifested in the devastation to the temple and the land. The creation imagery in vv. 12–17 recounts God's works of salvation, in which he destroyed the monstrous creatures associated with the waters and set up the created order. This movement from destruction to creation reflects a

Literature, see Kim, "From Rest to Rest," 17–37.

[96] Batto, "The Sleeping God," 164–76.

[97] Batto, "The Sleeping God," 171: "This reference to creation is particularly instructive, for it explicitly links God's eternal kingship (*malkî miqqedem*, v. 12) with his victory over the mythical chaos monster (vv. 13–14) and the creation of the cosmos (vv. 15–17), the traditional context of the sleeping deity motif."

[98] Batto, "The Sleeping God," 172. Batto explains that "The portrayal of Yahweh as asleep was a culturally conditioned theological statement to the effect that Yahweh is the creator and absolute king of heaven and earth. Likewise, the appeal to Yahweh to 'wake up', far from being a slur on the effectiveness of divine rule, was actually an extension of Israel's active faith in Yahweh's universal rule even in the midst of gross injustice and manifest evil."

basic creation type-scene in the ANE, which is a way to articulate God's cosmic power to redeem his people from their current situation. Although this creation imagery includes descriptions of God's cosmogonic activity,[99] its use in the psalm is not meant to provide a definitive theological exposition of how creation came about.[100] Given its canonical position and priority, the "normative framework" of cosmogony for the HB is the creation account of Gen 1:1–2:3,[101] which "serves as the overture to the entire Bible, dramatically relativizing the other cosmogonies."[102] Rather, this creation model in vv. 12–17 is used rhetorically due to the overarching redemptive movement from destruction to creation, for it corresponds to their desire for God's judgment against their enemies and his restoration of their temple. At the same time, this emphasis on "salvation" does not subordinate creation to redemption, as scholars have tended to do in the past.[103] In vv. 12–17, creation is presented as the culmination, the ideal, the end goal of God's works of salvation, for it signifies the cosmic order that reflects the righteous rule of God as king. It is in this cosmic reality that the community finds hope in their current situation.

Yet, creation language is not limited to just vv. 12–17 but is woven into the entire fabric of the poem as an intrinsic part of its rhetorical design. According to the chiastic framework of the poem, the historical situation of the temple's destruction is understood in cosmic terms, while the invocation of the cosmic battle is understood as a plea for God to act within their current reality. Given the relationship between the temple and creation in the ancient world, along with the basic creation type-scene, the imagery in vv. 12–17 has three essential rhetorical implications: (1) as God had destroyed the monstrous creatures causing disorder in the cosmos,

[99] E.g., "to establish" (כון), "to fashion" (יצר), and "to fix" (נצב) in vv. 16–17.

[100] John H. Walton states that Ps 74 is the only passage in the Bible that "combines the elements of theomachy/Chaoskampf and cosmogony. Even here, there is no sign of anything similar to the threat that is posed in *Enuma Elish*. Psalm 74 alone would provide no basis for concluding that Theomachy/*Chaoskampf* was a dominant cosmogonic motif in Israelite thinking" ("Creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3 and the Ancient Near East: Order out of Disorder after Chaoskampf," *CTJ* 43 [2008]: 54).

[101] Middleton rightly argues Gen 1:1–2:3 (which "does not contain cosmogonic conflict") is the "normative framework" by which to understand the biblical theology of creation ("Created in the Image of a Violent God?" 355).

[102] Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 100.

[103] E.g., Gerhard Von Rad, "The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of Creation," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch: And Other Essays*, trans. Dixon E. W. Trueman (London: SCM, 1984), 131–43. For an overview of this historical development see Fretheim, *God and World*, ix–xiv.

he is called to destroy the enemies causing devastation in the land; (2) as God had ordered the cosmos in the wake of his victory over the monstrous creatures, he is called to restore order in the land for the people of his pasture; and (3) as God had finished his creative acts, he is called to rebuild the temple to signify his cosmic rest and reign.

The author thus utilizes this creation imagery to address the community's current situation, which is to articulate their plea for judgment against their enemies through their destruction, and for the reordering of the cosmos through the building of the temple. In their lament to their Divine King, the community draws upon the powerful imagery of creation to implore God to arise for the sake of his name and for the people of his pasture, so that the temple will be filled, not with the noise of the enemies, but with the praise of his people.