

**YHWH as Gardener in the Old Testament
with Special Reference to Psalm 104**

by

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“May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD.” (Ps 104:34).

Abstract

The aim of the present study is to investigate Psalm 104 as a whole and to determine its biblical-theological contribution to Israelite thinking of creation. Its methods are comparative-historical, semantic, literary, and biblical theological. I argue that the psalmist uses not only images that are reminiscent of the sun-god and storm-god of the ancient Near East but also images that reflect an ancient garden or park. Thus, the thesis of this study is that Psalm 104 portrays creation as a garden and YHWH as the royal gardener who creates it and oversees its care.

This study consists of three parts. First, a consideration of the gardens of Mesopotamia, Persia, and Egypt distinguishes some salient elements of ancient gardens, and reveals how the Egyptian Hymn to Aten utilized the images of the Amarna gardens in order to portray creation order. Second, the general use of garden imagery in the Old Testament is established, by means of a study of the semantic field of the Hebrew term גַּן “garden,” and an examination of the gardens of the Old Testament, such as the Garden of Eden, royal gardens, and garden symbolism in the temple. Third, Psalm 104 is analyzed from several perspectives. Attention is given to its ancient Near Eastern counterparts—the sun-god in the Egyptian Hymn to Aten and the storm-god in West-Semitic traditions. Also, conversation with Old Testament parallels—Genesis 1 and the Garden of Eden are considered. Finally, this study takes a literary approach that examines the structural and rhetorical aspects of the psalm, revealing how the psalm utilizes the imagery of a garden to portray creation.

As ancient gardens were built and maintained in order to reflect creation with a diversity of plants and animals, the provision of water, and ecological order, the psalm portrays creation by using images that allude to an ancient garden. The psalmist of Psalm 104 uses the images of an ancient garden and also those reflected in the Garden of Eden to portray creation as a garden and YHWH as the cosmic gardener who creates and also sustains it.

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1 Introduction

Since the work of James Henry Breasted on the Egyptian hymn to the sun-god, Aten, Psalm 104 has been of interest to scholars because of its alleged parallels to the Egyptian hymn.¹ The parallels found on the walls of a tomb at El-Amarna were in thirteen columns of hieroglyphics and were of a short-lived Egyptian cult in the times of Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten). Much of the content of the hymn consists of praises to the Egyptian sun-god for his beneficent works on creation and his care for the inhabitants of the world, which was to many biblical scholars, reminiscent of Psalm 104. The Psalm appeared to have much in common with the Egyptian hymn.

In addition, much discussion had been made on the Psalm's parallels with the Ugaritic storm-god. Expressions such as YHWH's "chariot of clouds" were too similar with the storm-god's royal epithet, the "cloudrider" for scholars to overlook.² Also, the indications that YHWH rebukes the waters to its proper place, along with his sounding of the thunder, were a part of the discussion on the parallels with the portrayal of the storm-god in the Ugaritic tablets. Craigie asserted that the psalm not only is similar to the Egyptian hymn but also adapts the Ugaritic material of Baal concerning his palace.³ Dahood commented on "Lebanon" (v. 16) and found its parallel in an Ugaritic text as well.⁴ Allen also asserted that the theophany in v. 3 is derived from Baal imagery.⁵ Thus,

¹ James H. Breasted, *History of Egypt from the Earliest Time to the Persian Conquest* (New York: Scribner, 1905). His first work on the Hymn to Aten was in his 1894 dissertation. James H. Breasted, *De Hymnis in Solem sub Rege Amenophide IV conceptis* (Berlin: Berolini, 1894).

² Frank Lothar Hossfeld and Eric Zenger, *Psalms 3 : A Commentary on Psalms 101-150* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 49.

³ Peter C Craigie, "The Comparison of Hebrew Poetry: Psalm 104 in the Light of Egyptian and Ugaritic Poetry," *Semitics* 4 (1974): 16.

⁴ M. Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 35.

⁵ L. C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 26.

the issues surrounding Psalm 104 were not only of the Egyptian Hymn to Aten but also of the storm-god, Baal. Dion went as far as to suggest an “amalgamation” of the sun-god and storm-god in the Hebrew psalm.⁶

While the investigation on the affinities between the psalm and its counterparts are critical in aiding discussions of Psalm 104, more questions must be asked: how does one make sense of these different images embedded within the Psalm? What does this tell us about YHWH and the concept of creation in Israelite thinking? In other words, how is YHWH portrayed in the psalm? Is he portrayed simply as a mere sun-god or a storm-god? Or does the psalmist incorporate various images in order to offer a consistent and coherent image of the agricultural God? While there must be various levels of consideration, Psalm 104 offers us an image of YHWH who is portrayed as the cosmic gardener of creation who not only creates but also sustains.

This does not seem easy to assert as some scholars have pointed out the different images of YHWH in Psalm 104. Gunkel mentions that YHWH is portrayed in terms of a divine warrior,⁷ and Weiser sees a heavenly king image in verses 2-4.⁸ Kraus also mentions that YHWH is portrayed as the heavenly king but he also associates different images such as “a master builder”, “family father”, “field general”, “farm manager”, and “father of a household.”⁹ Miller claims that YHWH is a divine architect in the psalm.¹⁰ Interestingly, it is only Broyles, who, as he comments on verses 14-18, mentions that

⁶ P.E. Dion, "YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god. The Double Legacy of Egypt and Canaan as Reflected in Psalm 104," 103, no. 1 (1991): 43-71.

⁷ H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1926). Klingbeil also points out some words in Ps 104 that allude to the warrior imagery although he does not deal with Ps 104 extensively. Martin Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven: God as Warrior and as God of Heaven in the Hebrew Psalter and Ancient Near Eastern iconography* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

⁸ A. Weiser, *The Psalms: a Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 667.

⁹ H. J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: a Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 304.

¹⁰ Patrick D. Miller, *The Way of the Lord: Essays in the Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007).

YHWH is portrayed as the “gardener.”¹¹

Upon initial observation, it may seem difficult to see the image of YHWH as a gardener as a dominant image of the Psalm. And due to the various ideas embedded in the text, it is not an easy task to speak of a single image of YHWH for this particular psalm. However, if we consider Broyles’s assertion, while taking note of the parallels of a sun-god and a storm-god, we are able to see that there is indeed an agricultural character in the psalm. Verses 14-16, in which, YHWH causes the grass and plants to grow, brings forth wine, oil, and bread, and plants and waters the cedars of Lebanon, draws particular attention to the imagery of a gardener. Therefore, it does not seem entirely impossible to suggest a gardener imagery in this psalm. In order to address this issue, it is imperative to establish what an ancient garden consisted of, what significance it held, and what functions it had.

If we are able to find a gardener image of YHWH in our text, based on the research of the ancient Near Eastern culture and the Old Testament, lexical-semantic studies, and literary functions, we may be able to deepen our understanding of the concept of creation. We would be able to add to models of creations as stated in terms of *creatio ex nihilo*, the biblical-critical model of *Chaoskamp*, and the model of “rule” and “subdue” over the given creation. This should shed light on understanding the concept of creation in Israelite thinking, how God is portrayed as a universal gardener who not only created the world but who continuously takes care of it.

¹¹ “Particularly striking is the image of Yahweh as gardener (the cedars of Lebanon that he planted), which indicates his regular intervention in creation.” Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 399.

1.1 Methodology

As we are delving into the world of the literary image of the garden in Ps 104 and thereby trying to arrive at an understanding of creation, it seems appropriate to utilize comparative-historical, semantic, and literary approaches. Research based on these methodologies may help us to arrive at a sound conclusion.

It has been noted from past scholarship that Israelite thinking was in participation with the surrounding culture of the ancient Near East rather than being isolated.¹² Thus, it seems more than necessary to obtain knowledge of the ancient Near Eastern gardens. Taking in mind the variety of types of gardens that differ from culture and function, research has revealed that gardens played an important part of the ancient Near East. The gardens were built to not only serve aesthetic purposes, but were also a place of provision, of food, entertainment, worship, and in many cases a symbol of political success. The research on ancient gardens in the ancient Near East will offer a perspective on what they are and will help to establish certain characteristics. In other words, the comparative-historical method will be used to establish the cognitive world of the poet. With the contextual approach following methodologies of T. Jacobsen,¹³ W. Hallo,¹⁴ O. Keel,¹⁵

¹² John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context: a Survey of Parallels Between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 13.

¹³ T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

¹⁴ William W. Hallo, James C. Moyer, and Leo G. Perdue, *Scripture in Context II: More Essays on the Comparative Method* (vol. 2; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983). And William W. Hallo, William K. Simpson, and Simpson Kelly, *The Ancient Near East: a History* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998).

¹⁵ O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (New York: Crossroad, 1997).

and T. Longman III,¹⁶ who seek to understand the biblical texts in the broad background of ancient Near Eastern cultures, we seek to find the contribution of ancient Near Eastern texts and archaeological findings which contain the garden imagery. Also, texts such as the Hymn to Aten and the Baal epic will be examined in line with Ps 104 and we will attempt to see which aspects of the Egyptian hymn and Baal epic were shared, and how that might play into the theology of the psalm.

We will then approach the Old Testament, focusing on the words that describe a garden. Key biblical terms of gardens such as, גַּן (garden), פַּרְדֵּס (park), כְּרָם (vineyard), and מִטְעַע (plantings), and also words that hold meanings of irrigation, such as, יַעַר (forest) will be the subject of our investigation as well as verbs such as “plant” (שָׁחַל, נָטַע), “sprout” (צָמַח), “give drink” (שָׁקָה), and “be satisfied (from eating)” (שָׂבַע). This research will be done with the semantic approach following in the line of J. Barr and M. Silva.¹⁷ Thus, words that indicate an explicit garden at the word level will be investigated. In those chapters, the semantic field of a garden will be examined.

However, in a broader sense there are certain imageries and motifs of gardens that may or may not have the explicit indication of a garden. Klingbeil, as he deals with the image of a “warrior”, mentions that “in dealing with metaphorical language, it has to be noted that the identification of the metaphors lies on a *concept* level, and cannot be restricted to expressions and divine epithets like גִּבּוֹר ‘warrior’ or אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה ‘man of war.’”¹⁸ Thus, more attention needs to be paid to expressions that do not explicitly

¹⁶ Tremper Longman III, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography: a Generic and Comparative Study* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1991).

¹⁷ James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961). Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meaning : an Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

¹⁸ Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, 3.

mention the term. As we are dealing with the concept of gardens and gardeners, the concept of a garden or a gardener must be expanded so that we are able to notice gardens not only when they are explicitly mentioned but also when they are not. Therefore, texts such as Genesis 2:4-3:24 and Ezekiel 28:11-19, where the Garden of Eden is explicitly mentioned, and royal gardens that use the word “garden” will be dealt with. At the same time, we will look into the texts such as 1 Kings 6-7, which describe the temple of Solomon, in order to note the specific yet implicit elements of a garden.

Finally, we will turn our attention to Psalm 104, the focus of this research. With the literary approach following in the broad lines of Alter, Sternberg, Berlin, and Longman III, we will take special interest in key features such as motif, metaphor,¹⁹ imagery,²⁰ and symbolism.²¹ Hecke asserts that metaphors “have an important role to play next to the other aspects of the Psalm research as genre analysis, poetological investigations, canonical approaches and redactional considerations”²² Thus, aspects of metaphor, imagery, and symbolism will deserve our attention.

Also, as Besson rightly asserts, “analogy or proportional metaphors are the most pleasing and effective for rhetorical purpose,” it seems appropriate to pay special attention to the rhetorical aspect of the psalm.²³ Therefore, with the rhetorical approach by following in the lines of J. Mulenberg, Tribble, Gitay, and Kennedy, we will try to

¹⁹ See especially, D.H. Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics, and Divine Imagery* (vol. 4; Brill Academic Pub, 2001). Aaron asserts that metaphorical meanings of figurative speech are not binary, where one can determine the meaning as either literal or non-literal, it is a *continuum* of meaning. Also, Alec Basson, *Divine Metaphors in Selected Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 41-62.

²⁰ For a brief summary of terms such as image, symbol, metaphor look at the introduction of Leland Ryken, Jim Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Illinois: IVP, 1998), xiii-xxi.

²¹ Keel, *Symbolism*.

²² Pierre Van Hecke, "Metaphors in the Psalms, an Introduction," in *Metaphors in the Psalms* (ed. Pierre Van Hecke and Antje Labahn; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 12.

²³ Basson, *Divine Metaphors*, 41-2.

seek to elucidate the artistry of composition and the techniques of persuasion. Tribble lists “Lundbom, Craven, and Ceresko” as those who built on Muilenburg’s idea of rhetoric as “art of composition”,²⁴ and “Gitay, Clifford, Barton, Clines” as those who perceive rhetoric as the “art of persuasion.”²⁵ We may add Kennedy, Thuren, Wuellner, Newsom, and Fiorenza as new rhetoric whose theoretical foundations have originated from Burke. At this stage, we may assume that the biblical psalms were generally shaped by both artistic composition and as eloquent persuasion.

²⁴ Muilenburg’s criteria of finding a literary unit is by rhetorical devices, such as *inclusio*, parallelism, chiasmus, repetition, refrain, emphatic particle. James Muilenburg, in his inauguration speech for the SBL in 1968, asserted that biblical studies must go beyond form criticism and enter the realm of rhetorical criticism. J. Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 88, no. 1 (1969): 10-14.

²⁵ Phyllis Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 40, 51-2.

2 Gardens in the Ancient Near East

As we begin our studies of the imagery of YHWH as a cosmic gardener in Ps 104, it is essential to understand what an ancient garden was, and what elements it might have had. Especially, as we give attention to the statement, “YHWH is a cosmic gardener” which is clearly metaphorical, it is important to determine the source of what it speaks of. In other words, when dealing with figurative language, it is essential to understand the source of what it is speaking of in order to fully comprehend the meaning of a metaphor. It is therefore the objective of this chapter to investigate what a garden was, what it was consisted of, and also what symbolic meanings it held in the ancient Near East.

In the ancient Near East, gardens were a place of essential food resources, prosperity, worship, and also had aesthetic purposes. Studies have shown that there were gardens tracing back to as early as the third millennium in the ancient Near East.²⁶ There have been many archaeological findings of ancient Near Eastern gardens, making them a topic that is worthy of exploring. This chapter will take a close look at the gardens of the ancient Near East and attempt to identify some of the elements, both literal and symbolic of ancient gardens.

Before we begin an in-depth research, one thing that we should be aware of is that all gardens are not the same. “Gardens” is a rather broad concept and studies reveal that there were different sorts of gardens, such as house gardens, orchards, parks, sacred gardens, and cemetery gardens.²⁷ Also, different time periods and different environmental and cultural settings may also contribute to the variety of gardens. The purposes of the

²⁶ K.L. Gleason, "Gardens in Pre-classical Times," *OEANE* 2: 382-5.

²⁷ Maureen Carroll, *Earthly Paradises: Ancient Gardens in History and Archaeology* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust Publications, 2003).

gardens were different and various words were used to describe them.²⁸ Therefore the research on the vast amount of information on gardens of the ANE will be according to chronological orderings from the 3rd to the 1st millennium B.C.E., along with geographical orderings from Mesopotamia, Persia, and Egypt. In doing so, aspects of the historical, mythological, religious, and iconographical gardens will come under consideration which will enable us to determine some salient elements in gardens in the ANE, which will be profitable in our research. Hopefully this will shed light on our understanding of not only gardens in ancient times but also the aspects of gardens of the neighboring nations that the Old Testament shares, which would, finally allow us to glimpse into how the image of the gardener is used to promote God as *the* royal gardener.

2.1 Mesopotamian Gardens

The gardens of Mesopotamia, according to Postgate, first appeared in texts of the third millennium.²⁹ Studies have shown that gardens in Mesopotamia existed in forms of parks, palaces and estates, and temples.³⁰ Following Gleason's categorization, we will start by exploring the parks described in gardens in Mesopotamia.

The Epic of Gilgamesh describes a park, in which Gilgamesh goes to as he heads into the Amanus Mountains and meets Humbaba guards. Gilgamesh also finds a city

²⁸ In Greek gardens were *κῆπος* (garden), *ἄλσος* (tree garden), *ἀμπελιῆς γῆ* (vineyard). In ancient Egypt gardens were *k3mw* or *k3nw*. In Akkadian was *kiru*, and *kirimahu*. *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁹ N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History* (London: Routledge, 1994), 242-3.

³⁰ Gleason, "Gardens," *OEANE* 2: 383.

whose citizens are proud to possess many gardens.³¹ This material contains common elements of ancient gardens which Gleason points out as “fascination with foreign landscapes and plants; the admirable, essentially human order of the straight path and plantings and the violent act of cutting down the trees of one’s vanquished enemy.”³² The artistry of a garden and the act of cutting down the trees of an enemy are clearly symbolic in a way that they signify the position of a garden as a symbol of success.

The royal parks and hanging gardens of Babylon and Assyria were “the result of Mesopotamian garden evolution.”³³ In addition, most of these gardens and parks were designed and built for the royal family to enjoy. Within these larger parks were not only exotic trees and plants but also animals, which were frequently used for royal hunts and other entertainments.³⁴ Tiglath-Pileser I (Assyria, 1114-1076 B.C.E.), had interest in collecting trees and building gardens outside of the capitol.³⁵ He also made a garden that consisted of an arboretum of exotic animals and trees and a zoological park. Animals that were rare in Assyria, such as deer, gazelle, and ibex, were kept as souvenirs from territories he had previously conquered.³⁶

Another garden park was created by Assurnasirpal II (Assyria, 883-859 B.C.E.) at Nimrud. He diverted “water from the Upper Zab River through a rock-cut channel for his impressive collection of foreign plants and animals.”³⁷ This park consisted of a garden with various tree species, as well as a watering system that was crucial in making the park fertile. Herds of “wild bulls, lions, ostriches, and apes” were also found in his

³¹ Vernon N Kisling, *Zoo and Aquarium History: Ancient Animal Collections to Zoological Gardens* (Boca Raton: CRC, 2001), 9.

³² Gleason, "Gardens," *OEANE* 2: 383.

³³ Kisling, *Zoo and Aquarium History*, 11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁵ A. Leo Oppenheim, "On Royal Gardens in Mesopotamia," *JNES* 24, no. 4 (1965): 331.

³⁶ Kisling, *Zoo and Aquarium History*, 11.

³⁷ Gleason, "Gardens," *OEANE* 2: 383.

garden park.³⁸ He was interested in horticulture and planted gardens by Tigris. They were to provide temple offerings with fruits and vines.³⁹

He held a victory banquet, in his royal garden park, which signified the success that he had as the ruler for his empire. As the garden flourished, “it was taken as a sign of blessing mediated through the regent to the empire.”⁴⁰ He also had a throne room which contained iconographies that suggested the ruler as the ultimate pollinator. Thus, Stordalen suggests that Assurnasirpal should be entitled “the royal gardener.”⁴¹

The palace of Sargon II (Assyria, 721-705 B.C.E.) in Khorsabad depicts “a variety of trees and a small pavilion with proto-Doric columns.”⁴² Carroll suggests that the Akkadian term *kirimahu*, “pleasure garden,” was introduced by Sargon II.⁴³ It is also said that he was “fond of lions and falcons, and laid out several parks around his capital city.”⁴⁴ The garden of Merodach-Baladan II (Babylonia, 721-710 B.C.E.), which had vegetables and herbs, is revealed in a clay tablet from Babylon names.⁴⁵ Sennacherib (Assyria, 704-681 B.C.E.) recreated a marsh in the southern Euphrates River with canebrakes, wild boar, and roosting herons. Kisling mentions that Sennacherib was able

³⁸ Kisling, *Zoo and Aquarium History*, 12.

³⁹ Wiseman offers a text from Assurnasirpal’s palace that reveals the elements of the garden from John Nicholas Postgate, *The Governor’s Palace Archive* (London: Institute of Archaeology, 1973), 239-40. “From lands I traveled and hills I traversed the trees and seeds I noticed (and collected): cedar, cypress, box, *Juniperus oxycedrus*, myrtle, *Juniperus dupracea*, almond, date palm, ebony, sissoo, olive, tamarind, oak, terebinth, *dukdu*-(nut tree), *Pistacia terebinthus*, myrrh-type (ash?), *mehru*-fir, Dead Sea fruit(?), *ti’atu*, Kanis-oak, willow, *sadanu*, pomegranate, plum, fir, *ingirasu*, pear, quince, fig, grapevine, *angasu*-pear, *sumlalu*, *titip* (aromatic), *sarbutu*, *zanzaliqu* (acacia?), “swamp-apple”-tree, *ricinus*, *nuhurtu*, *tazzinu*, *kanaktu* (frankincense?). The canal-water came flowing down from above to the gardens: the paths [are full] of scent; the waterfalls [glisten] like the stars of heaven in the garden of pleasure. The pomegranate trees, which are clothed with clusters of fruit like vines, enrich the breezes in the garden of [delights. I] Assurnasir-apli gather fruit continuously in the garden of joys like an emaciated (person? ...)” Donald J Wiseman, “Mesopotamian Gardens,” 33 (1983): 142.

⁴⁰ T. Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden : Genesis 2-3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 97.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴² Gleason, “Gardens,” OEANE 2: 383.

⁴³ Carroll, *Earthly Paradises*, 19.

⁴⁴ Kisling, *Zoo and Aquarium History*, 11.

⁴⁵ Gleason, “Gardens,” OEANE 2: 383.

to take it to the next level in re-creation of entire habitats as well as mountain habitats such as the hanging gardens of Babylon.⁴⁶ He had trees, plants, and animals imported from the original location he wanted to imitate.⁴⁷ Sennacherib, along with his successors Esarhaddon (Assyria, 680-669 B.C.E.) and Ashurbanipal (Assyria, 668-627 B.C.E.) “recreated habitats of the Amanus mountains in Syria.”⁴⁸ Ashurbanipal’s garden in the palace reliefs symbolized “the abundance and pleasures of peace after bravery in battle.”⁴⁹ Plants were collected for the parks but in some cases, entire landscapes were collected. The famous Hanging Gardens of Nebuchadrezzar II (Babylonia, 605-562 B.C.E.) “were described as being in imitation of the alpine landscape of Media.”⁵⁰

The parks of Mesopotamia in Pre-classical times had features that were outstanding to those who lived in a kingdom ruled by a successful king. The elements shown above would have conveyed a message throughout the kingdom that the reign was a success.

The palace and estate gardens of Mesopotamia seem to show more interest in architecture and artistic features of a garden. The royal palace at Mari, which dates back to the 19th century B.C.E., had a garden in the internal courtyard with palm trees and an ornamental pool. A wall painting in the inner court illustrates the investiture of the king by Istar.⁵¹ Stordalen suggests that this painting “provides a fortunate example of stylized

⁴⁶ Kisling, *Zoo and Aquarium History*, 12.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁹ P. Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs in the Bit-Hilani of Ashurbanipal," (1976): 29-48.

⁵⁰ Gleason, "Gardens," *OEANE* 2: 383. However, Dalley is doubtful on its exact location. She points out a palace garden found in ancient Assyria, much alike the description of the “hanging gardens of Babylon.” S. Dalley, "Ancient Mesopotamian Gardens and the Identification of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon Resolved," (1993): 1-13. Also, Stephanie Dalley, *The Mystery of the Hanging Garden of Babylon: An Elusive World Wonder Traced* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁵¹ L.E. Stager, "Jerusalem as Eden," *BAR* 26, no. 3 (2000): 39.

garden symbolism.”⁵² Gleason mentions an Ugarit text from the 15th century B.C.E. that portrays “a court with a large stone pond and another with plants and walkways, a pavilion, and a large trough.”⁵³ Nebuchadrezzar II also had a garden in the Neo-Babylonian period. There was the southern citadel with the walls of Istar Gate, which was dated back to the time of Assyria. It is stated that “[the] throne room in the third courtyard had a 56-meter-long frontage decorated with stylized trees of life, rosettes, and a lion frieze of glazed bricks.”⁵⁴ Also, high quality gardens were not exclusive to kings. Non-royal but wealthy residences also had gardens with “vines, fruit trees, vegetables, pools, ponds, and gardeners’ cottages.”⁵⁵

The gardens that are discussed above show that building a garden came with specific intentions and were built with the highest workmanship and the best material that could be found. Dalley points out that especially royal gardens were “a carefully arranged symbiosis of nature and architecture that encapsulated the ideal of elite existence and the epitome of technical achievements.”⁵⁶ This implies that gardens were a metaphor for the power, wisdom and success of a ruler.

As the kings and rulers were interested in building great gardens, it seems natural to see that “gardening” was often linked to “kingship.” Callender notes that the conception of the king as gardener can be seen in “the epithets of Akkadian and Sumerian rulers, ENGAR/ *ikkaru* ‘farmer, landworker’, and NU-KIRKI / *nukarribu* ‘gardener.’”⁵⁷

He continues to assert his point by noting two narrative accounts that bear witness to the

⁵² Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 101.

⁵³ Gleason, "Gardens," OEANE 2: 383.

⁵⁴ E. Klengel-Brandt, "Babylon," 1 (1997): 254.

⁵⁵ Gleason, "Gardens," OEANE 2: 383.

⁵⁶ Dalley, *Hanging Garden of Babylon*, 153

⁵⁷ Dexter E. Callender, *Adam in Myth and History : Ancient Israelite Perspectives on the Primal Human* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 62. He also notes that “the cultic orientation of gardens established by kings may be seen as far back as Gudea of Lagash.”

connection between kingship and gardening: the “Sargon Chronicle” and the “Birth Legend of Sargon of Akkad.”

The “Sargon Chronicle” tells of Irra-imitti, king of Isin, “intalled Bel-ibni, the gardener on his throne as a ‘substitute king’ and... placed his own royal crown on his (i.e., Bel-ibni’s) head” and when the king, Irra-imitti died, Bel-ibni became the real king.⁵⁸ The “Birth Legend of Sargon of Akkad”⁵⁹ tells how Sargon was found by a gardener after he was abandoned by his mother. Sargon’s mother was a high priestess and as she gave birth to Sargon she placed him in a reed basket and left him in the river. The river carried Sargon to Aqqi, “gardener”⁶⁰ and eventually had him work in the orchard. He was then appointed as king. According to Callender this story seems to “present gardening as a prelude to kingship.” Widengren also asserts that, “the Mesopotamian king was viewed as the guardian of the garden of the gods, and in this sense was conceived to be a gardener.”⁶¹

Yet, gardens were not created solely for the purpose of displaying political power or success in the kings’ reign. Texts reveal that gardens were also used as a place for worship. The temple gardens of Mesopotamia involved certain offerings. The excavator of the ziggurat at Ur suggested that trees and shrubs were planted on the tiers of the

⁵⁸ “Irra-imitti, the king, installed Bel-ibni, the gardener, on his throne as a “substitute king” and he (Irra-imitti) (even) placed his own royal crown on his (i.e. Bel-ibni’s) head. (During the ceremonial rule of Bel-ibni) Irra-imitti died in his palace while sip[ping] hot porridge, and Bel-ibni who was (still) sitting on the throne did not rise (any more), he (thus) was elevated to (real) kingship.” J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to the Old Testament* (ANET; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 267.

⁵⁹ Benjamin R. Foster, "The Birth Legend of Sargon of Akkad (1.333)," in *The Context of Scripture, Volume I: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (ed. William W Hallo and K Lawson Younger; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 461.

⁶⁰ Tigay’s translation has “gardener.” Jeffrey H Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 254. On the other hand, Foster’s translation has “drawer of water.” Foster, "Context of Scripture," 461.

⁶¹ Geo Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion: King and Saviour. 4* (Uppsala: Lundequistska bokhandeln, 1951). Chapter 1 is entitled “Tree of Life and Water of Life. The King as the Gardener.” Quoted from Callender, *Adam*, 64.

ziggurat. The temple of the New Year Festival at Assur shows “rows of planting pits for shrubs and trees that were cut into the rock of the inner courtyard and surrounding area.”⁶² Esarhaddon’s records of a temple garden also show water channels and vegetable beds. Finally, Nebuchadnezzar’s temple not only had cypress and juniper groves, but also had gardens supplying offerings for Marduk.⁶³ Wiseman mentions the cultic significance by identifying Mesopotamian gods that were associated with gardens: Inanna, Enlil, Anu, and Adad.⁶⁴

2.2 Persian Gardens

When the Persians conquered Mesopotamia, their interest of gardens continued with their own traditions.⁶⁵ Gleason mentions, “the Persian *pairidaêza* are the first attested in the works of the Greek Xenophon, who saw these enclosed gardens in Anatolia and Persia. The source of the *παράδεισος*, paradise, פֶּרְדֵּיס, parcus, and park – monumental, geometric gardens are the Achaemenid Empire’s most enduring cultural contribution. They are known from texts, reliefs, and archaeological remains at Pasargadae, Persepolis, and Susa.”⁶⁶

Cyrus the Great (558-528 BC) was a military expert but was also a mastermind in construction of gardens. He created with a “quadripartite groundplan,” and for that, was called the “king of the four quarters.” He incorporated “architecture and planting, water

⁶² Gleason, "Gardens," OEANE 2: 383.

⁶³ Ibid., 383.

⁶⁴ D. J. Wiseman, "Mesopotamian Gardens," *AS* 33 (1983): 143-4.

⁶⁵ Kisling, *Zoo and Aquarium History*, 12.

⁶⁶ Gleason, "Gardens," OEANE 2: 383.

rills and shade-giving pavilions,” which became a background for future garden developments.⁶⁷ To him, the political power that a garden held was significant and he built them so he could see his *paradeisos* at all times.⁶⁸ His capital, Pasargadae, had “a palace and two open-sided pavilions set in a well-watered garden.”⁶⁹

King Darius (521-485 BC) and Cyrus the Younger (died in 401 BC) also had “paradise gardens.” Excavations have revealed that the palaces had “garden pavilions.” The buildings were close in proximity to pools and water channels.⁷⁰ Lysander, who was a mercenary for Cyrus the Younger, reports to Xenophon expressing “how the Persian kings excelled not only in war but also in gardening, creating *paradeisos* (paradises) where they collected plants, especially trees which bore fruit, and animals encountered during campaigns in foreign parts.”⁷¹ In addition, according to Xenophon’s description, Cyrus the Younger’s garden consisted of “fine trees set in even rows with clean angles, a place rich in fruit and pleasant scents-and cultivated by the satrap himself.”⁷²

Another Persian royal garden worth mentioning is one that was excavated from Ramat Rahel.⁷³ Among the many secrets that Ramat Rahel has revealed, two aspects of this site are of significance to this study: “the Location of the Site”, and “the Royal Garden and the Water Systems.” The location of the site, which is halfway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, was on one of the highest peaks, which add a strategic

⁶⁷ Penelope Hobhouse, *The Gardens of Persia* (London: Cassell Illustrated, 2004), 7.

⁶⁸ Gleason, "Gardens," OEANE 2: 383.

⁶⁹ Hobhouse, *The Gardens of Persia*, 14.

⁷⁰ Christopher Thacker, *The History of Gardens* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 27.

⁷¹ Hobhouse, *The Gardens of Persia*, 8.

⁷² Gleason, "Gardens," OEANE 2: 384.

⁷³ Oded Lipschitz et al., "Palace and Village, Paradise and Oblivion: Unraveling the Riddles of Ramat Rahel," 74, no. 1 (2011): 2.

importance in that such sites were ideally suited for fortresses or watchtowers.⁷⁴ It is equally important to note that the location was visible to various locations around the region. This factor would have revealed the garden to be “an active symbol, spatially conveying the iconography of political power” and conveying “a message of power and control”⁷⁵ to those people who resided in the area. Also, even though providing water for Ramat Rahel would have not been easy due to its location and weather, such difficulty did not deter the builders of Ramat Rahel. The excavators of the site found a sophisticated water system, which was consisted of two or three pools, tunnels, and drains. How it operated is not clear but nevertheless was used as the irrigation system for the royal garden.⁷⁶

The Persian gardens, as seen above seem much more developed than the Mesopotamian gardens. The report of Lysander provides an important testimony to the kings of Persia as “royal gardeners.” Also, the founding of various gardens in the Persian period attests to the interest and symbolic significance of the gardens.⁷⁷

2.3 Egyptian Gardens

The Egyptian gardens were built in different circumstances than the Mesopotamian gardens. The Egyptian garden builders “had to deal with two potentially

⁷⁴ This article also suggests that because of its rich soil and the connectivity between cities, Ramat Rahel would have held significant importance for commerce and economics. *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁶ For more on the water system at Ramat Rahel. *Ibid.*, 26-29.

⁷⁷ Julie Scott Meisami, "Allegorical Gardens in the Persian Poetic Tradition: Nezami, Rumi, Hafez," *IJMES* 17, no. 2 (1985): 229-260.

overwhelming elements: the desert, and the river. In the desert there was too little vegetation; and along the river bank there was too much, and the river overflowed every year.”⁷⁸ Thus, as Gleason mentions, many of the gardens in Egypt were found nearby the Nile valley and were built as early as the fourth millennium.⁷⁹

The palace and house gardens of Egypt are found from excavations at Tell ed-Dab‘a in the eastern Delta (1782-1650 B.C.E.). They have found walled vineyards, flowerbeds, and tree pits.⁸⁰ The pharaonic palaces at Amarna, which we will deal with later on, and the Malkata palace (Amenhotep III) at Thebes, contained zoological gardens, parks, lakes, and pavilions. The gardens were not restricted to the kings, according to Kemp. Paintings in tombs show the rich officials also had large gardens, consisted of pools, shade-tree plantings, and shrines. Even those who had small land planted trees in pots. The workers’ village at Amarna reveals gardens were outside the housing quarters despite the crowded conditions.⁸¹

Some of the gardens of Egypt were associated with the temple and tombs. The gardens were “an integral part of temples.”⁸² Amun’s temple at Karnak shows tombs of eighteenth-dynasty officials and texts describe a sycamore fig, tamarisk, and palm trees, which were brought back from Punt, Palestine, and Syria by Rameses III (1182-1151 B.C.E.).⁸³ Queen Hatsheput also had a garden for Amun, and said “Hatsheput is united with the perfection of Amun.”⁸⁴ The garden consisted of trees that were used for incense for rituals, as well as T-shaped pools. The gardens at the temple at Hermopolis played an

⁷⁸ Alix Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt* (London: Rubicon Press, 1998), 12.

⁷⁹ Gleason, "Gardens," OEANE 2: 384.

⁸⁰ Alix Wilkinson, "Gardens in Ancient Egypt: Their Locations and Symbolism," 10, no. 4 (1990): 199-208.

⁸¹ B.J. Kemp, "The Amarna Workmen's Village in Retrospect," *JEA* 73 (1987): 21-50.

⁸² Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 121.

⁸³ Gleason, "Gardens," OEANE 2: 384.

⁸⁴ Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 8.

important role. They were created along the processional way between temples, and were used as a linkage.⁸⁵

In temple and tomb gardens in Egypt we notice that the gardens were associated with various types of religious buildings. Thus, Egyptian gardens were not only important as ways of provision for essential products, luxury, leisure, and divine blessings but also as a place where the gods dwelt. The pharaohs also envisioned themselves as the divine rulers of the earth and enjoyed the gardens as their gods did. Flowers were made into bouquets and wreaths dedicated to the gods. Fruit were placed on offering tables that were also for the gods.⁸⁶ There they not only worshiped their gods but also designed the gardens in a way that represented their understanding of creation, life and death. Carroll says “[in] the next – and better – life, ancient Egyptians hoped to partake of the pleasures and shaded peace of gardens.”⁸⁷

Among the gardens of Egypt, the gardens created by Akhenaten at Amarna are worth mentioning, due to its relevance on the relationship for the hymn to Aten and Psalms 104 which will be dealt with in Chapter 4. Akhenaten, was known to be one of ancient Egypt’s “great garden architects.”⁸⁸ As he moved the capital of Egypt away from Thebes, presumably, to distance himself from his ancestors’ practice of worship to Amun, he envisioned “the sun-city par excellence, called the ‘Light Land of Aten’, or the Horizon of the Aten’, Akhetaten.”⁸⁹ Akhenaten wanted to make Amarna a “new creation.” And as he built the new city at Amarna he also built it with many gardens containing sun-symbolism. The gardens that were built were not only consisted of various plants and

⁸⁵ Gleason, "Gardens," *OEANE* 2: 384.

⁸⁶ Renate Germer, "Gardens," *OEAE* 2: 5.

⁸⁷ Carroll, *Earthly Paradises*, 8.

⁸⁸ Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 146.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

animals but they were also decorated with paintings of plants, vines, and even water-plants. The paintings served an important role in the gardens. It seems that what was hard to represent in reality was instead painted to the walls giving the gardens much more diversity and advocating the benevolence of the garden at the same time. At times paintings of trees, plants, and animals representing gardens were found in tombs.

Of many gardens that were found in ancient Egypt Armana, the “*Maru-Aten*” is of interest to our studies. According to Wilkinson “a *maru* was a sacred enclosure, a courtyard or a temenos, containing a resting place for the god’s boat, a lake and flower beds. It was where the divine king’s power was displayed to his own people, and to foreign emissaries. Ceremonies for the New Year and other seasons, such as Inundation, may have been celebrated on the island.”⁹⁰ He also says, “the word *maru* has to do with seeing.”⁹¹ The *Maru-Aten* would have been a “viewing place of Aten”, where Aten was visible to the king and the priests. This “observatory of the Aten” was for Aten to see the humans and also for the humans to see Aten. Redford calls it “god’s gazebo.”⁹²

In this light, the “*Maru-Aten*” was a walled park with sacred purposes consisting of “a lake, temples, offering pools and buildings.”⁹³ The entrances to the garden had various images of the elements of gardens but also paintings of the king and family worshipping Aten. It also had a lake decorated with images of worship to Aten. Lakes as source of water, giving life to the plants and trees were an important part of the *Maru-*

⁹⁰ Ibid., 154.

⁹¹ Ibid., 154.

⁹² Donald B Redford, *Akhenaten, the Heretic King* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 149. Wilkinson quotes this and also connects it with “The Short Hymn to the Aten,” “By the sight of your rays all flowers exist, What lives and sprouts from the soil grows when you shine. Drinking deep of your sight all flocks frisk.” Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: Volume II: The New Kingdom* (vol. 2; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 92.

⁹³ Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 148.

Aten.⁹⁴ The lake functioned not only as a water source but was also “large enough for processions of boats and even aquatic spectacles.”⁹⁵ A temple at *Maru-Aten* was decorated with water lily flowers, leaves, and grapes. An artificial island had a shrine, which was open to the sky. Paintings of palm, acacia trees, and water lilies were decorated with animals such as a lion, calf, and a bird. A garden kiosk, a small garden-building, was also found in the *Maru-Aten*. It had a peristyle garden, much like an atrium, that was surrounded with walls, which also had rooms around the courtyard. It had decorations of grapes, pomegranates, and rectilinear panels, and a storage space for wine jars. The houses here were possibly for the gardeners or the priests.⁹⁶

The *Maru-Aten* was rich in species, not only to represent a sense of worship to Aten but also to symbolically portray the power and success of the king. In essence, it was a representation of the creation. As a miniature of creation, the *Maru-Aten* was intended for the enjoyment of Aten as well as the king and his family. Wilkinson sums it up well:

The *Maru-Aten* “recreated a true microcosm of the universe, with the primeval water, the mound of creation, and abundant vegetation; its landscape reflected Egyptian myths about the life-giving power of the sun. The garden was in defiant contrast to the surrounding desert, and those brooding hills, in which the king made his tomb. Nature was divine, and only the divine Akhenaten could

⁹⁴ “A lake is an essential part of a *maru*, and represented the god Nun, primeval water. In the Amarna religion, the king replaced Nun.” *ibid.*, 154.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 152-3.

operate in this setting.”⁹⁷

Other gardens that were much like the *Maru-Aten* were also observed in Amarna, such as the ‘Northern *Maru*’⁹⁸, which was smaller but had a similar design. It had a central pool, buildings surrounding the pool, and open-air altars. It was enclosed with flowerbeds, which were watered through a channel from the central pool. Birds, geese, storks, and animals decorated the walls of the open cells along with paintings of vine with grapes. Carvings of ibex, gazelle, and antelope were found in a building indicating the significance of animals in a royal garden.⁹⁹ Another enclosed garden similar to *Maru-Aten* was found in an area called Kom el-Nana. Amarna also had a central ceremonial area, which consisted of two sunken gardens, illustrations of atrium-gardens inside the palace, and a vineyard. A garden at the King’s house with trees, flower beds, a kiosk, a statue of the king were found and was presumably a “setting for ceremonies intended to impress the court and foreigners with the power of the king.”¹⁰⁰ Also discovered were private gardens with shrines belonging to officials. This shows the amount of interest Akhenaten had towards gardens.

Considering the evidence provided above, the gardens found in Amarna were all created with a purpose, and specific elements were added into the gardens for various reasons. With the help of a sophisticated watering system, trees, flowers, animals, birds, and fish were planted, built and placed for not only aesthetic purposes but also to worship

⁹⁷ Ibid., 159.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 156-157.

⁹⁹ “A menagerie is very much part of a royal garden.” *ibid.*, 157.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

Aten, contemplate on the paradise,¹⁰¹ and to boast the prosperity of the king. The gardens were designed and built in a specific way to represent creation. The architects built and maintained the gardens to recreate the world-essentially, a micro-cosmos. The designers of ancient Egyptian gardens were “concerned with creating particular landscapes which reflected the mental images they had of how the world was created and sustained.”¹⁰² Then, as observers stepped into the garden, an amplified version of the same garden – the creation – would be presented to them. More simply put, gardens were the perfect embodiment of creation.

It would then be appropriate to turn our interest to the “hymn to Aten”, a creation hymn composed during the period of Akhenaten.¹⁰³ If the gardens at Amarna represented the Egyptian king Akhenaten’s understanding of creation, it is likely that the writer would have been mindful of the various symbolisms of a garden when composing a creation hymn such as the “hymn to Aten.”

Also, if we consider the fact that there were symbols of Aten throughout the gardens in Armana, which were used for worship for the king and his family, it is hard to imagine the king not having any form of music in the gardens while celebrating the creation by Aten. It is more than likely that there was a musical form of worship dedicated to Aten, which could have been the Hymn to Aten or a hymn, very close to it.

Taking a closer look into the Hymn to Aten, there seem to be certain aspects that are shared between the gardens at Amarna and the hymn. The *Maru-Aten* was a

¹⁰¹ “Paradise for the Egyptians was where life began and continued forever, the Field of Reeds, and of Offerings, where there was bread and fresh air. It was the goal of an afterlife journey, where the route of the ‘Two Ways’, described on coffins ended. It was also connected with the idea of Ro-setau, the tomb entrance, opening to the world beyond. But at Amarna the emphasis was on the present: the afterlife was unclear, but could be spent in a garden.” *ibid.*, 155.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 171.

¹⁰³ The hymn to Aten is discussed in relation to Ps 104 in chapter 4.

representation of the life on earth and a place that was enjoyed by Aten and the king, which is very much the essence of the Hymn to Aten. Wilkinson writes that Akhenaten made the gardens so that they represented the actual reality of nature.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, the Hymn to Aten also attempts to portray the world as it is rather than portraying the origins of creation. The focus of the gardens of Amarna and the Hymn to Aten both are on the present *appearance* of creation.

Another connection worth mentioning between the symbolism of the *Maru-Aten* and the Hymn to Aten is the waters. For the *Maru-Aten*, the lake and the pools were some of the most prominent features of the garden. The lake and the pools provided the waters for the vegetation of the gardens but they also had entertainment purposes. The lake was cartouche-shaped and was 120 meters long, 60 meters wide, and a meter deep - essentially large enough for “processions of boats and even aquatic spectacles.”¹⁰⁵ This is one of the elements of the gardens, which is noticeable in the Hymn to Aten. In lines 54-59, it says, “The ships are sailing north and south as well, for every way is open at thy appearance. The fish in the river dart before thy face; Thy rays are in the midst of the great green sea.” Although the lake at *maru-Aten* is much smaller than the sea and the boats are smaller than ships, it is important to note that the garden was a miniature version of creation. The elements were a *representation* of the natural world.

Also, Wilkinson asserts that the attributes of Aten as the caretaker of creatures and plants are found in the paintings of *maru-Aten*.¹⁰⁶

“When the chick in the egg speaks in the shell

¹⁰⁴ Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 18.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

thou givest him breath within it to maintain him.” (lines 68-70)

“All beasts are content with their pasturage;

Trees and plants are flourishing.

The birds which fly from their nets,

Their wings are (stretched out) in praise to thy *ka*.

All beasts spring upon (their) feet.” (lines 46-50)

“The fish in the river dart before thy face.” (line 56)

But among the features of the *Maru-Aten*, the most impressive feature that has significance to the Hymn to Aten was the word *maru*, which means “seeing.” As mentioned above, the *maru* was a place of viewing Aten. The viewing happened between Aten and an individual, a king or a priest. Not only was it a place where the king or the priest could see Aten, it was also a place for Aten to see the king. Being called the “observatory of Aten,” the viewing was beneficial both for Aten and the human beings. This is well noted in the Hymn to Aten:

“Thou hast made the distant sky in order to rise therein,

in order to *see* all that thou dost make.” (lines 110-111)

“Every *eye beholds* thee over against them,

for thou are the Aten of the day over the earth.”(lines 116-118)

“*Eyes* are (fixed) on beauty until thou settest” (line 129)

Aten “viewing” his creation is noted in lines 110-111. What seems significant is

that this occurs after Aten is portrayed explicitly as a gardener. After line 105, which says, “Thy rays nourish every garden”; the hymn continues by noting that all the gardens depend on the rising of Aten and that all are developed by him. Then in lines 110-111, the hymn indicates that Aten makes the skies in order to “see” all that he has made. Lines 116-118 and 129 further describe the members of creation looking up to Aten with their eyes.

An additional note on the relationship between the viewing of *Maru-Aten* is noted in the “the short Hymn to Aten.” In this hymn, Wilkinson notes that Aten has created by seeing:¹⁰⁷

“By the *sight* of your rays
All flowers exist,
What lives and sprouts from the soil grows when you shine
Drinking deep of your sight all flocks frisk.”¹⁰⁸

2.4 Some Salient Elements and Symbolism of the Gardens in the Ancient Near East

The research above on ancient Near Eastern gardens has revealed a few important elements and symbolism of an ancient garden. Without over-generalizing the features of ancient gardens, which were differed by culture, history, and function, I will summarize

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 154.

¹⁰⁸ Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 92.

the results of my investigation in a concise fashion. This hopefully will illuminate certain characteristics of ancient gardens and enable us to understand the symbolisms of ancient gardens. In doing so, I will list the elements that would typically be found in gardens, but I will also note some of the symbolisms that gardens hold.

Greenness

In an ancient garden the first important feature was its greenness. The physical elements of a garden had, as we can assume, trees, plants, and flowers. Trees such as sycamore fig, tamarisk, and palm trees and vegetables, herbs, flowerbeds, vines, grapes, fruit trees, pomegranates were found in the gardens. A garden would consist of local trees, plants, and flowers and also those from other regions. At times, the decorations and paintings were an extension in an attempt to add more elements to the gardens. Exotic trees, plants, and flowers were found on walls as paintings. The greenness of a garden is most imperative in the success of building a garden.

Animals

Animals were also a part of gardens. Animals such as lions, deer, gazelle, ibex, wild bulls, ostriches, and apes were also kept in the gardens to form a zoological garden and at times contained a menagerie. Falconry was also a part of the gardens and aquatic creatures were kept in lakes and pools. If the pools were large enough for boats, they were kept afloat. Animals were also painted on walls or carved onto stones within certain gardens.

Waters

Another element that was imperative to a garden was water. Research above has shown that there are two important aspects of water to ancient gardens: the control of life-threatening waters and the provision of life-giving waters.

Although the control of the life-threatening waters was a feature noticed primarily in the Mesopotamian Gardens and not so in the Egyptian gardens, they were something that had to be controlled and redirected in order to build and maintain a good garden. As observed in the Babylonian Epic of Creation, chaos was represented by water and was eventually controlled by Marduk. In the same lines, the garden's redirection of streams demonstrated the king's ability to control the chaotic waters and to provide a safe environment for the gardens.¹⁰⁹

The life-giving water was "one of the gardens' chief attractions"¹¹⁰ and made it inhabitable for all the living things in the gardens. The waters were redirected into and out of pools through channels so that they would flow to water the plants and trees. The power of water helped not only bring the "greenness" to the garden but also gave life to plants and trees. Dalley mentions, "the power of water to transform plants from near-death to life reflects its power to bring a dead god to life, and to satisfy ancestors buried in tombs."¹¹¹ Thus we find the redirection of the life-threatening waters and the life-

¹⁰⁹ Dalley asserts, "more than that, in raising water with screws, the natural chaotic tendency of water to flow uncontrollably downhill is reversed, and seasonal aridity is banished." Dalley, *Hanging Garden of Babylon*, 154.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 154.

¹¹¹ "In the *Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld* the great goddess of fertility is stripped of her powers, symbolized by her jewelry and her garments, and left for dead in the Underworld. But she is brought back to life by being sprinkled with water, to the fury of her sister the Queen of the Underworld. As a part of traditional custom, deceased members of a family were buried in vaulted chambers, usually beneath the floor of the family house and it was the duty of the eldest son to ensure that pure water was poured down for them twice a month, often through a pipe which archaeologists occasionally recover in excavations." ibid., 156.

giving waters played a significant role in the creation of a garden.

Sun

The sun played an important role in the gardens of the ancient Near East. Although they might not be apparent in the gardens, they nevertheless were one of the most important features that helped and at times destroyed the vegetation in the gardens. The Amarna gardens were especially more attentive to the sun's nature due to its religion of sun worship. Iconographies of the sun-god Aten were found in various places in the gardens of Amarna.

Scent

As one could imagine, anyone who would step into a garden would be greeted with its various aromas. The scent of dirt, trees, flowers, fruit, and at times incense were present in gardens. Fragrance of perfumes and incense were manufactured from the resin of trees such as cedars and pines. In ancient gardens, scent translated into the divine "breath" of a deity. To experience the scent of a garden was to be in the presence of a god. It signaled the blessings of a deity.¹¹² Dalley mentions some expressions such as "the fruit tree on which a god's breath has blown thrives"; a prayer addressed to a god, "your speech is a sweet breath, the life of the lands." She also asserts that the king wearing perfume was also regarded authority originating from the gods by quoting this text: "Let the breath of the Pharaoh not leave us: we are keeping the gate locked until the breath of the king reaches us."¹¹³ Dalley also mentions that in gardens where gods were thought to

¹¹² Ibid., 161.

¹¹³ Ibid., 161. n. 18. Dalley refers to the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, vol. Š, s.v. šāru.

make love were filled with “fragrant resins, fruit, herbs, and flowers, which could be related to the understanding that the gods had aromatic breath-no halitosis in heaven!”¹¹⁴

Worship

Places for worship, such as temples and shrines were found in gardens along with paintings of deities embedded on walls within the garden.¹¹⁵ The temple gardens were specifically built to utilize a place for worshipping a deity, thus enabling the garden to be a medium between the king and the god.¹¹⁶ The relationship between the god and the creation and the representative, the king, all were to meet in the temple gardens. Here, the “viewing” of the god over his creation and his kingdom would be an important symbol for the garden.

Gardeners

Another observation that can be made is that for physical gardens with archaeological evidence were artificial rather than natural. Each garden was made through extensive labor to hold a purpose to remember the successful conquest with exotic trees and animal trophies, and to help remember a faraway home, and to serve a religious activity. This would mean that gardens required extensive work of gardeners, not only to bring trees and to plant them but also to take care of them so that they would flourish and bear fruit. For instance the gardeners of Amarna who worked for Akhenaten

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 161.

¹¹⁵ “In all ancient cultures of the Mediterranean and Europe, gardens were essential as sources of food but, on another level, they were a sign of affluence and prestige, particularly the ornamental and work-intensive gardens associated with the villas and palaces of the wealthy and powerful. In many cases they were also directly associated with the gods and their divine powers.” Carroll, *Earthly Paradises*, 8.

¹¹⁶ “Gardens at Ugarit included a place of sacrifice to Resef and may have given rise to the later gardens of Adonis. The primary early references to cultic or holy gardens in Babylonia are to Inanna’s taking the *huluppu*-three there.” Wiseman, “Mesopotamian Gardens,” 143-4.

would have had to work through the hostile environment of the desert. It required much work for the plants that were imported from foreign countries not only to survive but also flourish in those conditions. Providing waters and good soil also would have been a challenge.¹¹⁷ The work that the gardeners had to do was specialized. Of course there were gardeners in charge of the trees, plants, and flowers but there were also fishermen, bird keepers, and shepherds, who at times would capture animals and release them in time for a royal hunt. Veterinarians were also a part of the staff members.¹¹⁸ Gleason shows that there is a range of “texts from fables that take place in gardens to ration lists, indicating that gardeners were members of a palace’s staff.”¹¹⁹ Carroll notices “the status of a gardener in ancient Egypt ranged from that of a simple laborer, who worked under the supervision of a foreman, to that of a high-ranking official administrator.”¹²⁰ Thus the work required to build and maintain a garden was extensive and highly specialized.

Nevertheless it was the king that was remembered and even entitled as great gardeners, such as “Assurnasirpal, the royal gardener.”¹²¹ The report of Lysander also introduces the Persian kings as “royal gardeners.” Callender mentions that in Mesopotamia, “gardener” was a term used for royal epithets.¹²²

Control

¹¹⁷ Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 147. The gardeners were called *k3mw*, *k3nj*, *k3ry* and beginning from the Amarna period used a shaduf, “a long pivot pole with a bucket on one end and a counterweight at the other.” Germer, “Gardens,” *OEA* 2: 3.

¹¹⁸ “Veterinarians, the ox and ass doctors, dealt primarily with domestic and military livestock, and their fees were preset in King Hammurabi’s (Babylonia, 1728-1686 B.C) Code of Laws.” Kisling, *Zoo and Aquarium History*, 12.

¹¹⁹ Gleason, “Gardens,” *OEA* 2: 383. Quotes from Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to the Old Testament*.

¹²⁰ Carroll, *Earthly Paradises*, 80.

¹²¹ Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 97.

¹²² Callender, *Adam*, 61.

The gardens also symbolized “control.” In the ancient gardens, trees were planted according to a certain order and they were also enclosed allowing, protection and privacy.¹²³ Trees were planted in rows and arranged in a certain pattern. The Egyptian temple gardens, for example, with its “formal, strictly ordered arrangement, was a symbol of perfect world order.”¹²⁴

Wisdom

What needs to be noted for gardens in the ancient Near East was that they were built in an environment that had limited access to water. Because it was difficult to rely on the scarce water seasonal rainfalls, having the ability to bring water to a garden was perceived as acquiring high technology, which was considered “wisdom.” As mentioned, constructing a complicated watering system with pools, channels, and tunnels of water all had to do with the redirecting the course of the waters so that they reached well throughout the gardens. Dalley notes this very well by mentioning the special association between water and wisdom and elaborates with the great *Epic of Gilgamesh*: “‘He who found out (literally “saw” *nagbu*) – the depths /all things gained complete wisdom’, in which *nagbu* can mean either the depths from which springs of water gush; or the totality of knowledge. The god in charge of fresh water, Ea, was also the god of wisdom and craftsmanship.”¹²⁵

Power

Gardens of the ancient Near East played a crucial part in the royal ideology.

¹²³ Dalley, *Hanging Garden of Babylon*, 155.

¹²⁴ Germer, "Gardens," *OEA* 2: 5.

¹²⁵ Dalley, *Hanging Garden of Babylon*, 154.

Having a well-built (enclosed) garden promoted the prestige of the king. They were a symbol of success and fame for the kings. The kings desired a garden because of that very reason. It not only signified the fertility of the land but also projected political success of the king, which, in turn, would give them the ability to build gardens. Some gardens, such as royal gardens, were built in association with the palace and both the garden and palace were built with a specific design and precise execution. Festivals, feasts, and rituals took place in the gardens for the same purposes. The people who were to step into the gardens would see trees and animals of all kinds, some that were brought from other regions as trophies after a successful conquest, and see the accomplishments of the king. “The rare foreign plants in his (the king) garden demonstrated the breadth of his conquests abroad, representing the countries through which his armies marched. Thus the plants in the garden symbolized the extent of the king’s power.”¹²⁶

Paradisiacal

Another important aspect of the ancient gardens was the projection of the paradisiacal character. The greenness of the gardens was an allusion to paradise. As Dalley mentions, it was perceived miraculous to remain green despite the parched lands and that “eventually the ability to resist seasonal change became an attribute of the heavenly paradise-garden.”¹²⁷ The gardens were also for the enjoyment of the people as Wiseman mentions, “the varied gardens in ancient Mesopotamia were cherished as sources of pleasure and produce by king, noble, priest and people as were those of

¹²⁶ Ibid., 162.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 161.

Egypt.”¹²⁸ This aspect played a role in the burial rituals in a garden. Some wanted a garden in front of the tomb that were attached to the royal gardens, that is, they were not only for the living but also for the dead. Especially for the Egyptians, life, death, and the afterlife were also an important reason for a garden to be reminiscent of a paradise. Germer mentions that for the Egyptians, “the entire vegetation of the garden—some with perennial stability and some with an annual dying off and reawakening—represented symbolic life and regeneration. Since people hoped to awaken to new life in the hereafter, in the realm of the hereafter, there was a garden with lush vegetation.”¹²⁹

Re-creation

One aspect of the gardens that deserves attention is its re-creational character. The gardens were designed and created in order to represent an existing place, paradise, or creation. In other words, they were recreated for a specific purpose. As we have noted the Gardens of Nebuchadrezzar II was supposedly an imitation of the alpine landscape of Media. At times, they also represented a paradise or a creation. Dalley mentions, “To build a new palace with a garden was to replicate creation in miniature.”¹³⁰ One is able to note that this is quite true in many of the gardens found in the ancient Near East. The gardens were recreated to become a micro-cosmos, or home, or even a paradise.

In the beginning of this chapter, it was mentioned that its objective was to determine what an ancient Near Eastern garden was, what it consisted of, and what symbolic meanings it might have. While noting the difference in different functions of

¹²⁸ Wiseman, "Mesopotamian Gardens," 144.

¹²⁹ Germer, "Gardens," *OEA* 2: 4.

¹³⁰ Dalley, *Hanging Garden of Babylon*, 153.

various kinds of gardens, we were able to elicit the essential elements of an ancient garden. We were also able to note the symbolic meanings they held. This should provide us with a list of elements to compare with other texts to determine if they allude to a garden imagery. Especially as we deal with a creation hymn, Psalm 104, we will be able to notice whether the features of the psalm explicitly allude to garden imagery or not.

Also, another significant point that was made in this chapter was the connection between the gardens at Amarna that were built by the Egyptian king Akenaten and the Hymn to Aten. Although evidence could not prove a direct relationship between them, in places where the writer could have composed the hymn in the garden, specific elements within the gardens at Amarna, were noticeable in the Hymn to Aten. The elements that were found in the gardens held a representational value that reminded those in the garden of the creation. Thus, the archaeological findings of the gardens at Amarna suggested a relationship between the garden and the hymn, thereby suggesting that the gardens at Amarna could have had a bearing on the composition and appreciation to the Hymn to Aten.

Another point that can be made is one asserted by Stager. He mentions that the triad of creation, kingship, and temple was an important ideology in the ancient Near East as well as in ancient Israel.¹³¹ The wall paintings found in the Old Babylonian palace of Mari illustrate this well, as they portray divinity, royalty, and creation. The paintings were found next to a garden that leads to the throne room. In the painting, the king is explicitly portrayed, with the goddess Ishtar giving the king “the ring and rod.” Three other deities witness the ceremony, and two other goddesses hold vases with flowing

¹³¹ Stager, "Jerusalem," 39.

water, which eventually becomes four streams of water that allow the vegetation to sprout. What is interesting is that the ceremony takes place in a paradisiacal garden and we see creation, kingship, and temple embodied in this painting.

The interest in divinity, royalty, and creation is not limited to ancient Mesopotamian and Israelite thought. The *Maru-Aten*, an Egyptian garden, also seems to represent the significance of the triad of creation, kingship, and temple. The garden was intended to be a miniature of creation, and was meant to be enjoyed by the king and his royal family, as well as by Aten. Thus the ideals of divinity, royalty, and creation are embodied in this Egyptian garden. Finally, as we have seen the Hymn to Aten, which also contains aspects of creation, kingship, and worship towards Aten also has an allusion to a garden imagery as well.

3 Gardens in the Old Testament

As ancient Israel participated with the culture of the surrounding nations of the ancient Near East, gardens naturally became a prominent part in Israelite thinking. The vast corpus of literature and archaeological findings on gardens in the ancient Near East, which was discussed in the previous chapter, has some elements in common with the Old Testament. The ancient Near Eastern imagery of a garden, as a place of various plants, animals, fertility, and of divine encounter, is also shared, explicitly and implicitly, in the Old Testament. The Old Testament not only takes interest in the Garden of Eden but also references many types of gardens, including royal ones. They are owned by humans such as the kings, at times, they are said to be taken care of by God, who at times, is portrayed as the royal gardener. In some cases, God is portrayed metaphorically as “planter” of the people of Israel.

Hence, the research in this chapter, will involve the semantic fields of a “garden” along with agricultural terms that might allude to “gardening.” It will then observe some particular texts in the Old Testament that deal specifically with gardens.

3.1 The Semantic Approach to the terms relating to the Garden in the OT

In this chapter, the semantic considerations will take place. The lexical field and the syntagmatic field of the word “garden” will be considered. By taking Stordalen’s approach, a lexical field, “denotes a group of sense-related lexemes (synonyms, antonyms,

etc).”¹³² Therefore, we will need to list the garden terms in their noun forms (singular and plural, construct). The syntagmatic field denotes lexemes that are “syntactically linked to words from that lexical field.”¹³³ Therefore words that are in connection with “garden” which include verbs such as “plant,” “water,” and “harvest” will be under consideration and will be discussed in “Other Garden Related Terms.”

Küsgen has judiciously analyzed the semantic field of the garden as follows: גַּן (garden), פַּרְדֵּס (park), כְּרָם (vineyard), and מִטְע (plantings).¹³⁴ I will approach the words that she has suggested but will also add other words that are not directly translated as a garden but may still hold the meaning of irrigation, such as, יַעַר (forest). The verbal forms may not explicitly denote “gardening” at first glance, but they may still intimately relate in establishing and maintaining the gardens of diverse kinds, and will therefore be under consideration. The verbal terms relating to the gardening imagery we find in the Old Testament are “plant” (שָׁטַע, שָׁטַעַת), “sprout” (צָמַח), “give drink” (שָׁקַה), and “be satisfied (from eating)” (שָׂבַע).¹³⁵

¹³² Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 36.

¹³³ Ibid., 36. For Stordalen, the “lexical field” is paradigmatic and the “syntagmatic field” is syntagmatic. The semantic field is the taken for the totality of the two.

¹³⁴ Kornelia Küsgen, “The Royal Garden at Ramat Rahel: an Archaeological, Iconographical, and Textual Study,” 2011 SBL. One interesting point she makes is that “royal gardens as an embodiment of a God-like creation.” This is similar to what we have seen in some ancient Near Eastern gardens, such as the gardens at Amarna, which were an attempt to build a miniature of creation embodying the works of the Egyptian god Aten.

¹³⁵ Stordalen offers a much more extensive list of words denoting horticultural terms and categorizes them into “fruit-bearing trees”, “unproductive trees”, “activities related to gardens and gardening”, “gardens as logical subjects”, “facilities in and around gardens.” For more, see Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 40-6.

3.1.1 Garden (גַּן)

According to Stordalen, גַּן (garden) denotes “cultivated fields with trees (or vegetables) designed for food produce.”¹³⁶ Since ancient Israel relied heavily on agriculture, gardens in ancient Israel were naturally for agricultural production, at least at first. King and Stager describe that agriculture “influenced practically every facet of daily life, especially the religious, economic, legal and social spheres.”¹³⁷ Although it may be difficult to know exactly what the gardens consisted of, judging by its agricultural character and the common diet of an ancient Israelite there are some that can be assumed. For instance King and Stager mention that “Israelite diet consisted mainly of grains, vegetables, fruits, and condiments.”¹³⁸

The grain was parched, eaten raw, or used to make bread (לֶחֶם) or porridge as we see in Leviticus 23:14 “You shall eat no bread (לֶחֶם) or parched grain (קֵלִי) or fresh ears (פִּרְקָל) until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your God.” Also, we may assume that when Psalm 104:14-15 speaks of YHWH causing the plants to grow so that man can have bread (לֶחֶם), it may possibly denote grains.

Also, in ancient Israel, “the chief crops were wheat, barley, olives, and grapes.”¹³⁹ Among these products, the olive and grapevines played key roles. Olive trees were known to grow to be five to eight meters high, and they took many years to mature and to bear olives. The olives were handpicked, shaken, or beaten from the tree as we see in Deut 24:20: “When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the

¹³⁶ Ibid., 36. It may also be a “natural grove” (Song 4:15).

¹³⁷ P.J. King and L.E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 85.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 93.

¹³⁹ They also had legumes such as lentils, fava beans, and chickpeas, vegetables such as cucumbers, watermelon, onions, leeks, and garlic. Ibid., 93.

alien, the orphan, and the widow.” Olive oil, which was made from olive trees, represented a major industry and played an economically important role. Grapevines, which we will discuss later on in detail, were also a significant part in the agriculture of ancient Israel. The grapes, while also used to make raisin cakes and grape honey, were primarily used for making wine. The oil and wine are also noticed in Psalm 104:15, as YHWH is portrayed as the one that gives wine to gladden the hearts of humans and oil to make their face shine.

However, as gardens primarily functioned for agricultural purposes, they were not limited to cultivated fields or trees. In some cases, the word appears as a garden that is shared with God, or a royal garden that is to be enjoyed by the king and his family. It appears 41 times in the masculine form, 15 times in the absolute form,¹⁴⁰ and 26 times in the construct form.¹⁴¹ It can also be divided into three major types, depending on the ownership: the divine garden, the royal garden and the general garden.

The divine gardens appear with Yahweh,¹⁴² Elohim,¹⁴³ and most of all, in Eden in Gen 2-3.¹⁴⁴ The royal garden appears seven times.¹⁴⁵

The general garden appears 13 times¹⁴⁶ as “herbal garden” (Deut 11:10; 1Kg 21:2), “well-watered garden”(Is 58:11; Jer 31:12), “locked”(Song 4:12), “garden spring”(Song 4:15), “vineyard”(Lam 2:6), and various gardens regarding the “beloved to

¹⁴⁰ Gen 2:8, 9, 10, 16; 3:1, 2, 3, 8(2), 10; Song 4:12, 15; 6:2; Song 8:13; Lam 2:6.

¹⁴¹ Gen 2:15; 3:23, 24; 13:10; Deut 11:10; 1Kgs 21:2; 2Kgs 21:18(2); 2Kgs 21:26; 2Kgs 25:4; Is 51:3; 58:11; Jer 31:12; 39:4; 52:7; Ezk 28:13; 31:8(2); 31:9; 36:35; Joel 2:3; Song 4:16(2); 5:1; 6:2; Neh 3:15.

¹⁴² Gn 13:10; Is 51:3.

¹⁴³ Ezk 28:13; 31:8(2); 9.

¹⁴⁴ Gen 2:8, 9, 10, 15, 16; 3:1, 2, 3, 8 (2), 10, 23, 24; Ezk 36:35; Joel 2:3 *gan* appears 13 times in Genesis 2-3, the narrative of Eden. Nine of them did not have the term Eden in construct with *gan*, but they were still put under the category of “Garden of Eden” because גַּן was used within the narrative that was explicitly expressing the Garden of Eden.

¹⁴⁵ 2 Kgs 21:18(2); 21:26; 25:4; Jer 39:4; 52:7; Neh 3:15.

¹⁴⁶ Deut 11:10; 1 Kgs 21:2; Isa 58:11; Jer 31:12; Song 4:12; 15; 16(2); 5:1; 6:2(2); 8:13; Lam 2:6.

the lover” and “the lover to the beloved” in Song of Songs (4:16; 5:1; 6:2; 8:13). The word also has a feminine form, גַּן. In this case, the gardens may refer to those attributed to royal figures (Eccl 2:5; Esth 1:5; 7:7, 8), or as a general garden (Num 24:6; Isa 1:29, 30, Isa 61:11; 65:3; 66:17; Jer 29:5, 28; Amos 4:9; 9:14; Job 8:16; Song 6:11). However, none of them are associated with Yahweh, or God.

In the LXX, the Hebrew word גַּן is rendered into παράδεισος and κήπος. Among the 20 times the word is rendered into παράδεισος, it is used 13 times when speaking of the Garden of Eden¹⁴⁷ and 7 times in relation to the Lord or God,¹⁴⁸ indicating a divine garden.¹⁴⁹ The word κήπος, which was rendered 17 times, is accompanied with words such as ‘king’ or names of kings,¹⁵⁰ showing that the κήπος could relate to royal gardens.¹⁵¹ According to Bremmer, for the Jewish translators, κήπος is closely related to residential housing because they are “small, walled, intensely cultivated”¹⁵² and have been designed for vegetables and flowers. On the other hand, the word παράδεισος denotes a royal park place that was worthy of the dwelling of YHWH.

¹⁴⁷ Gen 2:8; 9; 10; 15; 16; 3:1; 2; 3; 8 (2); 10; 23; 24.

¹⁴⁸ Gen 13:10; Is 51:3; Ezk 28:13; 31:8(2); 9; Joel 2:3.

¹⁴⁹ Stordalen mentions that “in Christian interpretation, the Vulgate rendition *paradisum*, along with conventional apprehensions of Paradise read into Gen 2, was further indebted to notions of Paradise in Apocrypha, pseudepigraphic literature and New Testament literature.” Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 84.

¹⁵⁰ 2 Kgs 21:18(2); 21:26; 25:4; Jer 52:7.

¹⁵¹ In other cases where גַּן was rendered, the garden of delight (Ezk 36:35), a “vegetable garden” (Deu 11:10; 1 Kgs 20:12), a “well watered garden” (Isa 58:11), a “locked garden” (Song 4:12; Song 4:16(2); Song 5:1; Song 6:2(2)), a “garden fountain” (Song 4:15), and a “garden” (Song 8:13) can be noticed. At one point גַּן was translated to “vineyard” (Lam 2:6) and “fruitful tree” (Jer 31:12).

¹⁵² J.N. Bremmer, "Paradise: from Persia, via Greece, into the Septuagint," in *Paradise Interpreted: Representations of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuisen; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 17.

3.1.2 Park (פַּרְדֵּס)

This word, which means “garden, parkland” and “forest”(HALOT), appears only three times in the Old Testament (Song 4:13; Eccl 2:5; Neh 2:8). It was a loanword from the original Old Persian term *pairidaeza* and was used for enclosed parks and pleasure grounds, especially a domain of the Persian kings and nobility in the Achaemenid period. The Late Babylonian term *pardesu* means “a marvelous garden” (HALOT). The terms have been used in Greek as *παράδεισος* (“enclosed park, pleasure-ground”) and it referred to the enclosed parks and gardens of the Persian kings (LSJ 1308). This word was transliterated to “paradise” in English. The NET version interestingly translates this word as “royal garden(s)” (Song 4:13; Eccl 2:5) and “the king’s nature preserve” (Neh 2:8).

3.1.3 Vineyard (כַּרְם)

כַּרְם, which, is typically known as “vineyard” in the Old Testament, has been put into the semantic field of “garden” because of its cultivated nature of planting and harvesting. Müller says that sometimes כַּרְם is used in the general sense of planting.¹⁵³ He gives Judges 15:5 כַּרְם זַיִת (olive orchard) as an example. Grapevines were an important part in ancient Israel. King and Stager note that the earliest evidence for a grapevine dates back from Early Bronze I.¹⁵⁴ It would take several years for a vine to yield grapes and thus having vines suggested a stable society. עֵנָב (Amos 9:13) is a common Hebrew word

¹⁵³ “Metonymy is involved when Heb. (and Ugar.) *kerem* (krm) is used in the general sense of “planting.” H. Müller, “כַּרְם,” *TDOT* 7: 320.

¹⁵⁴ King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 98.

used for grapes and a שֶׁקֶק is a dark red grape from Soreq valley (Isa 5:2; Jer 2:21).¹⁵⁵

King and Stager mention that harvesting grapes were a “joyous occasion.” In Isaiah 16:10, when lamenting over the destruction of the vineyards of Moab, Isaiah says that the joy and gladness are taken away, no songs sung, and no cheers were raised. Mostly, the grapes were used to make wine. They were treaded with bare feet or they were pressed in a wine press. Wine which is also mentioned in Psalm 104:15, was a common beverage in ancient Israel.

The amount of interest in כֶּרֶם in the Old Testament is attested by its number of use and also its function. כֶּרֶם appears 92 times in the Old Testament as vineyard(s) and 5 times as “vinedresser, wine-grower” (כֶּרֶם), which is derived from כֶּרֶם. Müller provides us with few instances in the Old Testament where vineyard is used. In 1 Sam 22:7 Saul uses the vineyard as a “royal prerogative” as he gives his followers “fields and vineyards,” something that David cannot do. Isa 3:14 describes the conduct of “Jerusalem aristocracy” by expressing “you who devoured the garden.”¹⁵⁶ Uzziah seems to have had interest in viticulture as well. He not only succeeded in military actions he also “loved the ground” and dug many cisterns and employed many workers for the fields and vineyards (2Chr 26:10). Eccl 2:4 indicates “vineyards” as a symbol of success. Also, Israel is often depicted as YHWH’s vineyard (Isa 5:1; 3; 4; 5; 7). כֶּרֶם־עַל־מַלְאָכָה, which is also derived from כֶּרֶם, means “tree plantation, forest”¹⁵⁷ and also “orchard.” (2 Chr 26:10; Isa 16:10)

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 98.

¹⁵⁶ Müller, “כֶּרֶם,” *TDOT* 7: 321.

¹⁵⁷ Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 37.

3.1.4 Plantings (מִטֵּעַ)

מִטֵּעַ along with גִּטֵּעַ, is a noun form of the verb נָטַע.¹⁵⁸ Both denote cultivated areas and mean “planting / plantation.”¹⁵⁹ מִטֵּעַ appears 6 times¹⁶⁰ and is used metaphorically in most cases in the Old Testament. Isa 60:21; Isa 61:3; Ezek 17:7, 31:4 uses “planting” metaphorically, Isa 61:3 speaks of “planting” in terms of restoration and in Ezek 31:4 Assyria is a “planting.” In Ezek 34:29 it is a symbol of prosperity but in Mic 1:6 it is spoken in a negative tone. גִּטֵּעַ, is used as “plantation” in Isa 5:7; 17:10; Jer 31:5, and a “growing plant” in Job 14:9.

3.1.5 Other Garden-Related Terms

When looking into the studies of gardens in the Old Testament, one can note that there are more terms that may possibly be related to “gardens.” Although not all of the terms may be applicable for our study, it is still worthwhile to note some terms that could allude to a form of gardening. As has been explained above, the “syntagmatic field” of a garden, which are words that are in connection with “garden,” are examined in the following section.

יַעַר (forest) appears 58 times in the Old Testament. Stordalen mentions that this word is borderline or outside the lexical field of גַּן. Mulder mentions that it has a lesser

¹⁵⁸ The verb נָטַע will be dealt later on.

¹⁵⁹ Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 38.

¹⁶⁰ Isa 60:21; 61:3; Ezek 17:7; 31:4; 34:29; Mic 1:6.

theological role in the Old Testament than נָטַע and עָרַב.¹⁶¹ However, in Eccl 2:6, יָעַר appears to be reference to a “planted and cultivated aggregation of trees.”¹⁶²

There are also verbs that are related to the semantic field of “gardens.” נָטַע means “to plant” and “denotes a natural and oft-repeated activity in the everyday world of the settled farmer.”¹⁶³ The “planting” not only involves individual plants but also gardens (Gen 2:8), vineyards (Gen 9:20; Prov 31:16), and all kinds of trees (Lev 19:23; Ps 104:16). The subject of planting in the Old Testament is either YHWH/God or a human being.

When God is the subject of the planting, the majority of the objects are humans. Depending on the context, humans represent the Israelites (Exo 15:17; 2Sam 7:10; 1Chr 17:9; Jer 2:21; 11:17; Amo 9:15; Ps 44:13), the exiles (Jer 24:6; 32:41), the people of Judah (Jer 42:10), and the wicked (Jer 12:2).¹⁶⁴

In Exodus 15:17, after crossing the red sea, Moses and the Israelites sing a song to YHWH. The song praises the deeds that YHWH has done. The last part of the song, particularly verse 17, indicates that YHWH will “plant” his people on YHWH’s mountain, where there will be his sanctuary. It seems significant to note that the last part of the song indicates a settlement on a mountain with a sanctuary alluding to the temple of Jerusalem, and that it does so by using an agricultural term that alludes to a garden imagery.

2Sam 7:10 and 1Chr 17:9 describe God’s covenant with David. God says to David through Nathan that he will appoint a place for his people and “plant” them so they

¹⁶¹ M.J. Mulder, “יָעַר,” *TDOT* 6: 216.

¹⁶² Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 37.

¹⁶³ Helmer Ringgren, “נָטַע,” *TDOT* 9: 387.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 388. When God is subject and humans are objects: Exo 15:17; 2 Sam 7:10; Isa 5:7; 40:24; Jer 2:21; 11:17; 12:2; 18:9; 24:6; 31:28; 32:41; 42:10; Amo 9:15; Pss 44:2; Pss 80:8; 80:15; 1 Chr 17:9.

have their own place to live and are disturbed no more.

Jeremiah also seems to have an interest for the metaphorical use of the verb “plant.” Jer 2:21 says that God had “planted” his people as choice vine (שִׁיחַ) but that they have turned and become a wild vine. Jer 11:17 also laments that YHWH has planted them but that they have now turned to evil by worshipping Baal. In Jer 12:2, Jeremiah complains to God and implies that the wicked are also planted by God. In Jer 24:1-5, YHWH shows Jeremiah good and bad figs and explains that the exiles from Judah are like the good figs, speaking in terms of the wider context of garden imagery. However, in verse 6, Jeremiah then speaks of the return from the exile and says that YHWH will bring them back to this land, build them, and “plant” them. In Jer 32:41, YHWH says that he will always rejoice in doing good for them and that he will plant them in the land in faithfulness (אֱמֶת) with all of his heart and soul. YHWH’s faithfulness results in “planting” his people in the land. He is again portrayed as metaphorically planting them in a permanent settlement. Jer 42:10 takes place as the leaders of Judah (Johanan son of Kareah and Azariah son of Hoshai) are faced with a difficult choice. If they stay in Judah, they would have to face an angry Nebuchadnezzar. On the other hand, they would lose their land if they flee to Egypt. They ask Jeremiah to pray to YHWH for guidance. After Jeremiah spends 10 days of prayer, the answer comes to him. YHWH does not want them to leave but wants them to stay in Judah. If they remain, YHWH will build them up and not pull them down. YHWH will “plant” them and not uproot them.

Amos 9:14-15 also speaks of restoration in terms of garden imagery. First, verse 14 portrays restoration alluding to garden imagery. The restoration will take place as YHWH restores fortunes of his people, and they will not only rebuild the cities but also

“plant” vineyards and make gardens. Yet, in verse 15, while the imagery of a garden continues to aid the idea of restoration, YHWH is now the one doing the planting and it is the people who are planted into the land.

Psalm 44 is a “prayer psalm lamenting a battle defeat”¹⁶⁵ and 44:3 specifically refers to the deeds that God had done for their ancestors: “You drove out the nations and planted our ancestors.”

It seems that when God is metaphorically planting the people, it refers to a promise about a permanent settlement. The song of Moses and the covenant to David in 2Sam 7:10 and 1Chr 17:9 projected an agricultural base for his people, alluding to the garden imagery. During the exile, some passages refer to the past deeds of YHWH and his planting his people to be the “good vine,” but that they have become rebellious and unfruitful. It also occurred when speaking of restoration, that God will replant them so they will never be moved. Overall, with the exception of Jer 12:2, where the wicked are also planted by God, the metaphorical use of “to plant” was used in a positive sense to give his people land. Thus, the metaphor for Yahweh as gardener is more prevalent in the Old Testament than first appears. It occurs not only in key passages such as Genesis 2-3 and Psalm 104 but also appears in key passages throughout the Bible that depict YHWH’s nurturing relationship with Israel at important historical moments.

In other cases, the objects of the “planting” by God are gardens (Gen 2:8; Jer 29:5, 28), trees (Ps 104:16), plants (Num 24:6), cities (Ezk 36:36), land (Jer 45:4), skies (Isa 51:6), and ears (Ps 94:9). The planting done by human beings occurs 36 times.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Broyles, *Psalms*, 201.

¹⁶⁶ Gen 9:20; 21:33; Lev 19:23; Deu 6:11; 16:21; 20:6; 28:30; 28:39; Jos 24:13; 2 Kgs 19:29; Isa 5:2; 17:10; 17:11; 37:30; 44:14; 65:21; 65:22; Jer 1:10; 29:5; 29:28; 31:5(3); 35:7; Ezk 28:26; Amo 5:11; 9:14; Zep 1:13; Pss 107:37; Pro 31:16; Ecc 2:4; 2:5; 3:2(2); 12:11; Dan 11:45;

שָׁתַל also means “to plant” or “transplant.” 6 out of 10 times, it is found in the Book of Ezekiel (17:8, 10, 22, 23; 19:10, 13), and the rest are found in Jer 17:8; Hos 9:13; Ps 1:3; 92:14. Stordalen notes that this word is related to “planting a single species within a garden.”¹⁶⁷ In Ezek 17:8 and 10, the object is vines, in Ps 92:13, palm trees and cedars, and in Hos 9:13, it is a young palm tree.

צָמַח means “to sprout” and “to grow” and is “associated with the life of plants.”¹⁶⁸ This verb occurs 45 times in the Old Testament. In the hifil form it means “to make plants sprout” (Gen 2:9; 3:18; Deut 29:22; Ps 104:14; Job 38:27). It also takes a metaphorical sense in a few cases such as Job 8:19, where a person “springs forth” from the soil, in Isa 44:4, the descendants of Israel will “spring up,” in Ps 85:12, faithfulness “springs up” from the ground, and in Job 5:6, trouble “springs up.”

שָׁקַח and שָׁתַה both involve the act of “drinking” and “watering.” They are both frequently used and are said to be “associated semantically and functionally” with each other.¹⁶⁹

Words that are related to “gathering” and “harvesting” such as אָסַף, אָרַה,¹⁷⁰ and בָּצַר¹⁷¹ are numerous. And שָׂבַע “be satisfied” at times denotes a satisfaction from eating or drinking. This appears three times in Ps 104:13, 16, 28.

The wide range of use of agricultural, horticultural, and viticultural terms suggest a much broader sense of a “garden”, which Stordalen mentions is the “syntagmatic field of gardens” and asserts that these words “mirror the apprehension of a particular

¹⁶⁷ Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 42.

¹⁶⁸ Helmer Ringgren, “צָמַח,” *TDOT* 14: 410.

¹⁶⁹ J Gamberoni, “שָׁתַה” *TDOT* 15: 514-43.

¹⁷⁰ Ps 80:13; Song 5:1.

¹⁷¹ Gen 11:6; Lev 25:5, 11, Deut 4:43; 24:41; Josh 20:8; 21:36; Judg 9:27; Isa 22:10; Jer 6:9; 49:9; 51:53; Obad 5; Ps 76:13; Job 22:24, 25; 42:2; 1Chr 6:63; 7:47.

significance of gardens in ancient Hebrew culture.”¹⁷² Thus, while garden imagery might not be a major theme in the Old Testament, the amount and range of words indicate that gardens played a significant role in the ancient world of the Old Testament.

The range of vocabulary on “gardens” viewed above suggests a need for more inquiry into the concept. The frequency and range of words on “gardens” are important but it is also pertinent in our studies to see how the imagery of a garden is used in biblical literature. As we continue this study, it now seems necessary to explore some gardens that are *explicitly* mentioned in the Old Testament.

3.2 The Garden of Eden

The first and most frequent use of a garden appears in Gen 2:4-3:24, the Garden of Eden. This text has been primarily responsible for shaping the understanding of the nature and the status of humankind within the contexts of Christianity and Judaism. The understanding of the relationships between God and humans, man and woman, and humans and the serpent has also been derived from this text, which takes place in this garden. As Morris rightly points out, “the text of the Garden of Eden (Gen 1:26-3:24) and the traditions of its interpretation have provided the rarely disputed basis from which our explanations of the nature and the status of humankind have been derived.”¹⁷³ As we will see through a number of cases in the Old Testament, the Garden of Eden is not isolated in

¹⁷² Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 46.

¹⁷³ Paul Morris, "A Walk in the Garden: Images of Eden," in *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden* (ed. Paul Morris and Deborah Sawyer; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 21.

the first chapters of Genesis, but its theme continues throughout the Old Testament.

3.2.1 Genesis 2:4-3:24

This section deserves an in-depth discussion due to its importance to our studies on gardens in the Old Testament. Also, elsewhere in the Old Testament, there are many passages that refer or allude to the Garden of Eden. Even Psalm 104 has parallels with this particular text. Thus, it is important to discuss the Garden of Eden in detail.

The garden is called “Eden”, which is suggested to mean a “land of bliss” or a “happy land,”¹⁷⁴ and it is often regarded as a paradise. In the discussions on the Garden of Eden, many have identified a Sumerian myth, Enki and Ninhursag, as its ancient Near Eastern background. Since Dilmun was a place which was known for its fruitfulness, it has also been called a paradise.

Kramer suggests the possibility of some parallels between the two “paradise” stories by noting some common elements.¹⁷⁵ The fresh water, which is brought up from the earth by Utu (lines 45, 55),¹⁷⁶ is reminiscent of Gen 2:6 when the נַחַל (stream of fresh water, mist) is brought up from the earth and is used to water the ground. Enki “eats” from the eight plants and is cursed by Ninhursag: “(Thereupon) Ninhursag cursed Enki’s name: ‘Until he is dead I shall not look upon him with the eye of life’” (lines 218-219). Adam and Eve both are condemned from the garden because of the “eating” of the fruit

¹⁷⁴ HALOT.

¹⁷⁵ Samuel N. Kramer and W. F. Albright, "Enki and Ninhursag: A Sumerian "Paradise" Myth," *BASOR*, no. 1 (1945): 8-9.

¹⁷⁶ Samuel N. Kramer, "Enki and Ninhursag: a Paradise Myth," *ANET*, 37-41.

of the tree of knowledge. The last parallel that Kramer mentions is of Eve, “the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20), who is made from the rib of Adam. He mentions that Enki’s sick organs are the rib (lines 265-6). In Sumerian, the *ti* is “rib”, but could also mean “to make live.” The goddess that is born from his rib is Nin-ti. Therefore, assuming a word play, Nin-ti could mean both “the Lady of the rib” and the “Lady who makes live.”

However, while the parallels are intriguing, there are elements of Dilmun that are quite different from Eden. Dickson asserts that while Eden is portrayed as a paradise in harmony, Dilmun seems to have a sequence of problems.¹⁷⁷ While Dilmun is said to be pure, clean, and most bright, Ninsikilla complains to Enki that Dilmun is short of water (lines 31-36). The curse that is brought upon Enki because he “eats” the plants is also different from Genesis. In the Sumerian myth, it is not clear why it is sinful for Enki to eat the plants, whereas in Eden, disobedience is the clear reason for their punishment. Dilmun, which is described as both a “land” and a “city,” is different from Eden because it is explicitly portrayed as a garden. In addition, the function of the gardener is different. While Genesis 2-3 portrays YHWH as the gardener who shares the duty with Adam, the gardener in the Sumerian myth, while seemingly a god, merely plays a role in the myth as one who gives cucumber, apples, and grapes to Enki to give to Uttu. Enki therefore projects himself as the gardener, perhaps lying, when he goes to Uttu. Also, Ninhursag seems to remove Enki’s semen from Uttu’s body to produce eight plants, thus implicitly portraying Ninhursag as a gardener. The eight plants are from the semen of Enki, unlike God planting the garden and bringing up the trees in the Garden of Eden.

Nevertheless, the connections that have been made by scholars between the two

¹⁷⁷ Dickson asserts that because of some of its negative portrayal, it should not be a “paradise myth” but a “myth of origin.” Keith Dickson, “Enki and Ninhursag: The Trickster in Paradise,” *JNES* 66, no. 1 (2007): 6.

texts have revealed elements of a garden in the Sumerian myth. Cucumbers, apples, and grapes were the fruits of this garden. The gardener seems to be one of the gods in the land or the city of Dilmun. The imagery of the gardener is applied to the gods, not only the gardener who gives the fruits to Enki but also Enki and Ninhursag. Enki refers to himself as the gardener to Uttu in an attempt to have intercourse with her, and Ninhursag portrays an image of a gardener as she produces eight plants from Enki's semen.

Also, when dealing with the Garden of Eden, one cannot help but notice that there are elements that allude to temple imagery. As we will later discuss the garden imagery in the temple, it seems necessary to point out some elements in the Garden of Eden that allude to temple symbolism.

Wenham asserts that the Eden story is a "highly symbolic narrative" that presents an archetypal sanctuary. He says that "many of the features of the garden may also be found in later sanctuaries particularly the tabernacle or Jerusalem temple. These parallels suggest that the garden itself is understood as a sort of sanctuary."¹⁷⁸ To note some of the connections he makes, we begin with the verb הִתְהַלֵּךְ "to walk about" (Gen 3:8) which is also used in Lev 26:12, Deut 23:15, and 2 Sam 7:6-7 where God walks about in the tabernacle. God is portrayed as walking about in Eden and in the tabernacle. The entrance of Eden in the east is guarded by the cherubim (Gen 3:24). Wenham notes that the entrances for the tabernacle and Jerusalem temple were also in the east. Also, Solomon's temple had two cherubim made and placed in the inner sanctuary (1 Kgs 6:23-28) and had engraved figures of cherubim for the inner and outer rooms (1Kgs 6:29).

The tree of life also reflects temple imagery. Wenham suggests that life though a

¹⁷⁸ Gordon J Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," in *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), 19-25.

tree is also noticed in places where the patriarchs worshiped such as Gen 21:33. Adam's job description in Eden, "to work (עבד) and keep it (שמר)" also echoes temple symbolism. Wenham notes Num 3:7-8, 8:26, and 18:5-6 as passages that use those two verbs together to describe the Levites' duties in the sanctuary. The river that flows out of Eden to water the garden was connected with divine sanctuaries. Ps 46:5 describes a river that makes glad the city of God, where the holy tabernacle is, and Ezekiel 47 portrays a great river flowing out of Jerusalem temple. Thus, it seems that the Garden of Eden, while it has elements that are reflective of a paradise it also has elements that signify temple symbolism.

In addition to this discussion, there are some other elements in Gen 2-3 that needs to be pointed out that reveal aspects of a garden in the Old Testament. This should shed light in our understanding of Psalm 104.

After God creates man from dust and breathes life into his nostrils, he "plants" (נטע) a garden in the east (Gen 2:8). YHWH also "causes to sprout" (צמח) every tree that is pleasant to sight and good for food (Gen 2:9). These verbs are also noted in Psalm 104:14 and 16. The garden is also well-watered (Gen 2:10) as noted in Psalm 104:10-13 as YHWH sends the waters through the valleys to water the animals and the mountains. The waters are life-giving and they flow to four different places. Interestingly, in the courtyard at Mari there is a portrayal of a royal investiture of a king, which has two goddesses holding vases that pour out four streams of water. Also one of the rivers in Genesis 2:13 is called Gihon, which was the primary water source in Jerusalem during the first temple period.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ Stager, "Jerusalem," 38.

YHWH is portrayed in an anthropomorphic way in the Garden of Eden, and plants the garden himself. At this point, the man is given a duty - to work it and keep it. The role of a gardener, though initially ascribed to YHWH, planting and causing the trees to grow is also applied to the man so that he can also cultivate the garden. It seems that God and the first human are working together. Callendar notes that YHWH is the royal gardener and Adam is the divine servant.¹⁸⁰ He also mentions that Ps 104:14 alludes to this tradition as YHWH “causes the grass to sprout for the cattle, and plants for humans to cultivate.”¹⁸¹ The role of the gardener is central in this narrative. The deity and the man in the garden are both portrayed as gardeners. Callendar also asserts that YHWH’s responsibility to continue to fertilize for creation is much like the responsibility of a king.¹⁸²

Man and woman are also given another role: they are forbidden to eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (v.16). In the third chapter of Genesis, the narrative of the man and woman continues in the garden. The serpent coaxes them to do the forbidden. The anthropomorphically portrayed YHWH walks in the garden and asks Adam where he is. And as a result of their defilement, YHWH gives the serpent, man, and woman punishments. Man and woman are to be exiled from the garden. The enclosed nature of the garden is suggested as YHWH puts the cherubim to guard it. But

¹⁸⁰ Callender, *Adam*, 65. Callender also notes in page 62, that Hutter asserts “the ideological connection between garden work and the duties of the ruler in the Near East and in ancient Greece.” For more see, Manfred Hutter, "Adam als Gärtner und König (Gen 2, 8. 15) " *BZ* 30, no. 2 (1986): 258-62.

¹⁸¹ Callender, *Adam*, 62. Although, Berlin suggests that Ps 104 is a retelling of Gen 1 but also “knows the story of Gen 2-3.” She does so by noting that the work of humans on soil in v. 14, and the creation of humans by dust and God’s breath in v. 29 alludes to Gen 2-3. Adele Berlin, "The Wisdom of Creation in Psalm 104," in *Seeking out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays offered to honor Michael V. Fox on the occasion of his sixty-fifth Birthday* (ed. Ronald L Troxel, et al.; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 75 n.13. Other psalms that Berlin mentions as “rewriting” or an interpretation of the Torah are Pss 68, 78, 81, 83, 89, 103, 105, 106, 114, 132, 135, 136. *Ibid.* 75 n.14.

¹⁸² “The J image of gardening is a *royal* image.” Callender, *Adam*, 62.

as they do, YHWH makes garments of skin and clothes them.

One of the striking features in Gen 2-3 is that while YHWH appoints Adam as his chief servant to guard and serve it, he is also in conversation with Adam, and is very concerned about his welfare. He notices that he is alone and provides him with a wife, and gives over his garden and animals. The garden described in Gen 2-3 counters the ANE royal ideology as YHWH's garden exists not only for YHWH but also for Adam and Eve, and humanity in general.

3.2.2 Ezekiel 28:11-19

Ezekiel 28:13 says "You were in Eden, the garden of God" and this obviously draws our attention to the text. The oracle spoken here is directed to the king of Tyre, and the text places him in the Garden of Eden. Upon first look, there seems to be several similarities between Ezekiel 28:11-19 and the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2-3. Both gardens refer to Eden, both texts feature a creature that lived in the garden - humans in the case of Genesis and the condemned cherub in Ezekiel. And both texts mention a cherub.

However, as the text applies the ownership of the Garden of Eden to God, the garden that is portrayed here has some differences with that of Gen 2-3. We immediately notice the absence of a naked figure, a woman, a serpent, and the tree of knowledge. On the other hand, there are numerous kinds of jewels for the first man to wear. Also, while

both texts have a cherub, their function is quite different. While several cherubs guard the entrance of the garden in Genesis, the cherub in Ezekiel is singular and walks within the garden among the stones of fire. The expression of the cherub “walking among the stones of fire” (v. 14) seems to be decorative.¹⁸³

Another difference worth noting is that while the text in Ezekiel places the garden on the holy mountain, Gen 2-3 does not. The cherub, the king of Tyre, is placed at a specific place in the garden, a place where deity and human meet. The garden of God, Eden in verse 13, a holy mountain in verse 14, and the mountain of God in verse 16 all seem to be equated with each other. This therefore seems to link the text to a temple.¹⁸⁴ In the Genesis account of the Garden of Eden, God and the humans are in direct contact, but in the Ezekiel account of the garden, there is a medium or a place of worship where God and man can meet.

Therefore, it can be seen that the way Ezekiel uses the image of the Garden of Eden is clearly symbolical. Ezekiel’s allegory first comes with the king of Tyre as the cherub. By doing this, the Garden of Eden is used to emphasize what the state of the king of Tyre was before, that is, how perfect in wisdom and beauty he has been, and how he has eventually ruined it by sinning and has therefore been condemned.

The reference to the Garden of Eden does not end with Ezek 28:11-19. Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35; Joel 2:3 have references to Eden and they reflect back to Gen 2-3. Isaiah 51:3 states that YHWH will comfort Zion and will make her wilderness like Eden, and

¹⁸³ Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: 25-48* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 114. Block asserts that it contributes to the magnificence and brilliance of the portrayal of the king of Tyre.

¹⁸⁴ For more on cosmic mountains, see Richard .J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

her desert like the garden of YHWH. The Garden of Eden functions as an image that states the future expectation. In Ezek 36:35, the renewal of Israel is also spoken in terms of the Garden of Eden. The desolation in the land will become like the garden of Eden. And in Joel 2:3 seems to use the garden of Eden to contrast the desolate state that the land will become.¹⁸⁵

Thus it seems clear that the use of the image of the Garden of Eden, as Stordalen correctly states, “is a symbol of “divine compassion and human happiness and propriety”¹⁸⁶ portraying the opposite of a desolate state. Each passage seems to have knowledge of Gen 2-3 and presupposes symbolism of the Garden of Eden.

3.3 Royal Gardens

Not all references to “gardens” are drawn from the Garden of Eden, however. In the Old Testament, there is an interest in the royal gardens as well. One of the most explicit references to royal gardens appears in the Book of Esther. For 180 days, King Ahasuerus gives a feast for all his officials and servants and boasts of all of his riches to the Persian and Median armies, nobles, and governors. Afterwards, he provides another feast (מִשְׁתֵּה) for his own people of Susa, which lasts for seven days. This feast takes place in the “court of the garden of the king’s palace” (בְּחֶצֶר גִּנַּת בֵּיתוֹ הַמְּלִכִּי) (Est 1:5). In this case, Ahasuerus’ royal garden is used as a platform to show off his goods and riches to all the

¹⁸⁵ Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos: a Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* (Philadelphia: Fortress Pr, 1977), 45. John Barton, *Joel and Obadiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 73.

¹⁸⁶ Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 330.

people of Susa.¹⁸⁷ In the garden of the king, it is said that there are white cotton curtains, violet hangings fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rods, marble pillars, couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones (v. 6). Also, the feast involves drinks, which are served in a variety of golden vessels, and the “royal wine” is lavishly provided according to the bounty of the king (v. 7). Considering the etymology of the word feast (מִשְׁתֵּה), having its roots in “drinking,” king Ahasuerus seems to understand the essence of a feast. Also, as Haman’s evil plan is exposed in 7:1-6, the king goes the palace garden (גַּן הַבְּרִית) and returns from it (Est 7:7-8).

The king retreats to the palace garden and returns with a decision in mind. Scholars, without presenting concrete evidence, have speculated why. Bechtel assumes that Ahasuerus is “trying to control his characteristic rage, or he simply needs a moment to rearrange his perception of reality.”¹⁸⁸ Reid supposes that the king is “perhaps overwhelmed by the sheer number of dilemmas that face him.”¹⁸⁹ Day, while pointing out that the text does not provide the reason, says that “he wants to get some fresh air to help him think clearly after his sleepless night,” for rational reasons, or “he wants to cool off his anger before responding,” for emotional reasons.¹⁹⁰ Paton, interestingly notes that the second Targum supposes that it was to “work off his anger by cutting down trees.”¹⁹¹ The

¹⁸⁷ “Materialism and power are important to this king, and moreover, that his officials recognize this power and wealth.” Linda M. Day, *Esther* (ed. Patrick D. Miller; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 24.

¹⁸⁸ Carol M. Bechtel, *Esther* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2002), 65.

¹⁸⁹ Debra Reid, *Esther* (ed. David Firth; vol. 13; Nottingham: IVP Academic, 2008).

¹⁹⁰ Day, *Esther*, 123.

¹⁹¹ Paton lists the possibilities that were offered by other scholars. It was to “avoid sight of the hated Haman; to take time to think about his decision; because he was still friendly to Haman and hesitated to condemn him; because he was uncomfortably heated with wine and anger, and wished to cool off in the outer air; because of the restlessness of anger.” He also notes that it is “probably to give the author a chance to insert the episode in verse 8,” where Haman begs Esther for his life. Lewis Bayles Paton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Esther* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1908), 262.

text itself does not suggest reasons for this. However, one might assume that the garden was a place for a retreat, to think and find answers to make a decision.

The use of the royal garden of Ahasuerus expressed in the Book of Esther seems align with that of the gardens of the ancient Near East, that is, to demonstrate the success of the king and to bestow the blessings of the king to its people.

In Eccl 2:4-5, Qoheleth, presumably speaking through a royal persona, lists his achievements, and he mentions that he built houses, planted (נטע) vineyards (פְּרָדִים), made gardens (גַּנֹּת) and parks (פְּרָדִים), planted all kinds of fruit trees (עֵץ כָּל-פְּרִי), and pools to water the forest (יַעַר) of growing trees. In this case, we see many of the lexical terms that relate to a garden such as gardens, parks, and vineyards are a symbol of success and prosperity.

In 2 Kgs 21:18, Manasseh seems have had a house garden and he is buried there, which is also called the garden of Uzza. His son Amon, who is later assassinated is also buried in the garden of Uzza. Gray asserts that the garden of Uzza was for Manasseh and Amon's astral worship to Attar-Melek, the Venus-star which was called Uzza in Arabic¹⁹² rather than being the garden of King Uzziah. This seems like a plausible explanation considering Manasseh and Amon's notorious apostasy. However, Hobbs rejects the idea by mentioning that the garden of Uzza does not appear in Josiah's reformation. Nevertheless it seems that as we have seen in ancient Near Eastern gardens, Manasseh and Amon are also buried in a garden, signifying not only a royal garden but also a garden associated with a tomb.¹⁹³

¹⁹² John Gray, *I & II Kings: a Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 710.

¹⁹³ 2 Kgs 25:4; Jer 39:4; Jer 52:7; Neh 3:15 all mention a "king's garden."

3.4 The Garden Imagery in the Temple

Andrae has reasoned that a typical reader would identify the garden in Gen 2-3 as a “prototype for garden shrines.”¹⁹⁴ Wenham also asserts that the garden in Gen 2-3 signifies a sanctuary.¹⁹⁵ Considering Andrae and Wenham’s view on Gen 2-3 it seems plausible to assume that the understanding of the Garden of Eden may have influenced ancient Israel’s understanding of the temple. Stager asserts that the temple of Solomon “was a symbol as well as a reality, a mythopoeic realization of heaven and earth, Paradise, the Garden of Eden.”¹⁹⁶ However, the temple, while sharing images from Gen 2-4, also has elements that can be found in ancient gardens. Stager states that the “Palm trees, cedars of Lebanon, cypress, olive and plane trees flourished in the courtyards of the temple, making it a veritable garden sanctuary (Ps 52:10, 92:13-14; Ezek 31:8-9)”¹⁹⁷

A description of the temple of Solomon in 1Kgs 6-7 has elements to an ancient garden. The preparations of the temple note the materials and the workers that are from Phoenician cities (1 Kgs 5). Solomon has a business alliance with Hiram, king Tyre who sends cedars from Lebanon along with skilled workers, Sidonian lumberjacks. It seems that Solomon wishes to use quality trees, the trees of Lebanon which are noted as planted by YHWH in Ps 104:16. There are reports of vegetation symbolism for the doors and decorations on the walls of the temple. 1 Kgs 6:18 shows that the temple is built with cedars, which are carved out in shapes of gourds and flowers. 1 Kgs 6:29-35 has

¹⁹⁴ W. Andrae, "Der Kultische Garten," 1 (1952): 486.

¹⁹⁵ G. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," in *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* (vol. 9, 1986), 19.

¹⁹⁶ Stager, "Jerusalem," 37.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

descriptions of the walls of the temple, both inner and outer walls, having engraved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers. The entrance to the temple, which is made of olivewood, features cherubim, palm trees, and flowers, was covered with gold. Verse 34 describes two doors that are made of cypress wood and how two leaves of each doors fold. Once again, they are carved with cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and are then covered with gold. The cherubim in Gen 3:24, who were placed there to guard the way to the “tree of life,” speak to the idea that the construction of the temple was to imitate the Garden of Eden. 1 Kgs 7:20-22 describes two pillars named Jakin and Boaz, which reminds us of the “tree of life”, had capitals that had two hundred pomegranates in rows all around. On top of the capitals, there were shapes of lilies. Thus, it can be seen that the decoration of Solomon’s temple is full of representations of trees, flowers, and fruits.

It is not surprising to see garden symbolism in the temple when we consider that Solomon is a temple builder and a knowledgeable horticulturist.¹⁹⁸ In 1 Kings 4:33, we see that his knowledge includes knowledge of trees.¹⁹⁹ Thus, the image of a garden is seen to have a close relationship with the temple. As the architecture and the decorations of the temple suggest, the temple was regarded as a replica of paradise, a place of trees, flowers, life-giving waters and more importantly, an access to God.

There are other references in the Old Testament that confirm the relationship between the temple and a garden. Ps 36:8-10 sings of the feast in the house of God, which has a fountain of life. In Ps 52:10, the Psalmist is portrayed as a green olive tree in the house of God. Ps 92:13-14 speaks of the righteous and how they are like the palm tree

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 42.

¹⁹⁹ c.f. Song 4:12-16.

and grow like the cedar of Lebanon. They are planted in the house of YHWH, and they flourish in the courts of God. Jer 17:12-13 mentions the throne of YHWH as the fountain of the living water. Ezk 47:1-6, 12 depict the waters beneath the temple and a presence of all kinds of trees beside the rivers. Joel 4:18 prophesizes about a fountain that will flow from the house of YHWH to water the valley of Shittim. If we also consider the Gihon spring, which watered gardens and parks in Jerusalem, we may conclude that these texts indicate a relationship between garden imagery and the temple (house of God).

Stager rightly asserts that “when Solomon built the temple and his palace on Mt. Zion, he believed he was fulfilling a divine order to create a cosmic center where he would rule according to God’s command. In doing so, he would transform the city of Jerusalem into a garden where heaven and earth meet, as they do in Eden.”²⁰⁰ Also, as in the case of the paintings of Mari, the triad of the ideology of creation, kingship, and temple is found in garden imagery. In other words, the garden imagery that was found in the temple was the central idea that linked the creation, kingship, and temple together. Then, we may assume that as Psalm 104 sings of *creation*, portrays YHWH as *king*, and shows an interest in *worship* an imagery of a garden may very well be the bridge that ties these ideas together.

3.5 Other Gardens

At times gardens are a symbol of restoration as we can see in Jeremiah 31:12, which describes “a watered garden.” It is interesting to note that this phrase is mentioned

²⁰⁰ Stager, "Jerusalem," 47.

when Jeremiah prophesizes about the restoration of Israel. The outcome of restoration would be in the form of a watered garden. It also contains the triad of wine, grain, and oil, which is reminiscent of Ps 104, although the Hebrew is different. The passage also contains a mentioning of how the people will languish no more (v. 12) that the souls of the priest will feast and that the people will be satisfied (v. 14). Isa 58:11 also speaks of restoration in the form of a “watered garden.” Isaiah 35 is also worth mentioning. Although it does not explicitly mention a garden, the portrayal of restoration is reminiscent of one. It says that the desert will blossom like a crocus (Isa 35:1), the waters will break through and become a pool (Isa 35:6-7), and the grass will become reeds and rushes (Isa 35:7). The restoration process is portrayed by descriptions of a garden.

In Song 4:12-16, the lover is portrayed as a paradise garden. The epitome of beauty is depicted as a garden. The elements of this garden are a spring that is locked, a sealed fountain, orchard of pomegranates, trees, incense, a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams of Lebanon.

Deut 11:10, 1 Kgs 21:2 speak of an herbal vegetable garden. In this case gardens serve agricultural purposes.

At times the Old Testament’s use of gardens had a negative connotation. Isa 1:29, 65:3, and 66:17 portray the garden as a place of pagan rituals. Watts and Westermann note that these verses indicate judgment due their pagan rites.²⁰¹ In this case, the function of a garden is a place for worshiping gods as observed in ancient Near Eastern gardens.

Stordalen correctly mentions that symbolism of gardens in the Old Testament has

²⁰¹ John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 364. Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: a Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 422.

been rather neglected in circles of scholarship.²⁰² As we have seen above, however, the Old Testament is not silent on this matter. The concept of gardens, although it may not have been a central theme, still has its function in the Old Testament, and therefore deserves more attention. The creation account in the first chapters of Genesis not only starts with the sequence of how the world has come to be, but how it also features a garden. Also, Genesis is not the only place with a reference to Eden. We have seen that the Old Testament features various instances, which refer to the Garden of Eden. Also, the garden imagery in the temple of Solomon implicitly suggests that access to a garden, presumably the Garden of Eden, is possible through the temple. The image of a garden also appears again during or after the exile as the concept of restoration has allusions to gardens. Also, in the passages of Esther, we also see that gardens in the ancient Near East act as a symbol of the king's success and prosperity.

Thus, as it has been noted from Genesis 2-3, YHWH is the gardener who plants and causes to grow. He is also portrayed as a gardener metaphorically as he “plants” the people of Israel into a permanent settlement whether it was after the exodus or during the exile.²⁰³ Thus, as YHWH plants and causes to grow in Genesis 2-3, he also plants his people so that they settle and bear fruit. He may not be explicitly called a gardener but he is portrayed as one. And as we will see in Psalm 104, YHWH is not only the gardener of his garden and to his people but to the entire creation.

²⁰² He notes that it was possibly because of the “pre-critical exuberance on the “paradise” topic. Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 83-4.

²⁰³ Exo 15:17; 2 Sam 7:10; Isa 5:7; 40:24; Jer 2:21; 11:17; 12:2; 18:9; 24:6; 31:28; 32:41; 42:10; Amo 9:15; Pss 44:2; Pss 80:8; 80:15; 1 Chr 17:9.

4 Psalm 104: Date, Genre, and Comparative ANE and OT Texts

Ps 104 has been understood as a creation hymn.²⁰⁴ While it may seem obvious that it is a hymn to the creator YHWH, rather than a reference to the salvation history of Israel, the question lies in *how* the psalm achieves this effect. There are striking features of the psalm that are parallel not to only Genesis 1, but also to the poetry of the ancient Near East, namely that of the Egyptian sun-god and of the Canaanite storm-god.²⁰⁵ This seemed to have triggered the interest of many biblical scholars. How are we to understand these parallels and how do they help us to understand Ps 104? A point that will be made further on is that the psalmist seems to share these images of his contemporaries in order to convey a theological statement to his readers: that none other than YHWH is the creator and the sustainer of the world.

Another interesting point about Psalm 104 is that the language the psalmist uses is reminiscent of an ancient royal garden. Exotic trees that are of great quality from Lebanon, which are planted by YHWH himself, the waters that he sends to satisfy the inhabitants, the land that is cultivated, the bread, wine, and oil extracted from products of the earth, all comprise the picture of Psalm 104, thus portraying agriculture in terms of horticulture. Also just, as some gardens of the ANE portray a zoological garden, Psalm 104 also portrays animals, young lions, wild goats, rock badgers, and the birds.

²⁰⁴ Gunkel, Kraus, Allen, Mowinkel Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 447. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 297-8. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 28. S. Mowinkel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 93. All assert that Ps 104 is a personal hymn where as Weiser, says it is a congregational hymn. Weiser, *Psalms* 666. Goldingay suggests that the psalmist encourages the congregation to join. J. Goldingay, *Psalms: Vol 3 Psalms 90-150* (ed. T. Longman; vol. 3; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 181.

²⁰⁵ Dion, "YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god," 43-71.

By applying a rhetorical approach to Psalm 104, it will become apparent that its allusions to a garden were shared in the gardens of the ANE and from the Garden of Eden. The richness of Ps 104 seems to be alluding to the image of a garden, in order to convey that YHWH is the cosmic gardener of the world, which is an amplified version of the role of YHWH in Gen 2-3. In this chapter, with attention to its historical background, I will focus on the literary aspects of the psalm and draw out its theological implications.

4.1 The Date of Ps 104

The date of the psalm is mostly suggested as pre-exilic as it shares close parallels with other ancient Near Eastern texts. Craigie asserts a pre-exilic date by tracing the hymn back to Egyptian and Ugaritic poetry. He says that the psalm can be dated to the dedication of Solomon's temple.²⁰⁶ Allen seems to agree with Craigie.²⁰⁷ Dahood takes Nagel's position that the psalm's form, expressions, and parallelisms can be traced to the Phoenician mediation from Egyptian influence seen in the Hymn to Aten (Pharaoh Amenophis IV, 1375-1357 B.C.E.).²⁰⁸ The idea that Ps 104 would be pre-exilic based on its similarities with the Hymn to Aten is intriguing and will be dealt with later on. Eaton identifies this psalm in connection to the worship in the temple in the setting of the

²⁰⁶ Craigie, "The Comparison of Hebrew Poetry," 21.

²⁰⁷ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 39.

²⁰⁸ Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150*, 33. Nagel asserts a pre-exilic composition by tracing the indirect influence of the Egyptian hymn in the period of Israelite monarchy. Georges Nagel, *A propos des rapports du psaume 104 avec les textes égyptiens* (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1950), 395-403. Cited from Dahood. Goldingay finds this a "plausible" explanation for the similarities. Goldingay, *Psalms*, 182.

autumn festival.²⁰⁹ Smith asserts that the form as a hymn and the prayer in verses 34, 35 suggests a temple setting and suggests the possibility of Psalm 104 used and transmitted in the Jerusalem temple.²¹⁰

On the other hand, scholars who assert a post-exilic date are limited in number. While some have asserted a pre-exilic date for Ps 104 by noting the similarities shared with the Egyptian hymn to Aten, one cannot completely discard the possibility of the indirect influence between the two texts, thus expanding the time frame to a post-exilic date. Day points to a text, “text 60 in the tomb of Petosiris, high priest of Thoth,” from the late fourth century B.C.E., which was found not far away from El-Armana. This text, which contains parallels to the Hymn of Aten, is dated a thousand years after the Hymn to Aten.²¹¹ One could assert that if the ideas could be found in a tomb a thousand years apart, then it is not impossible that it could have found its way into an exilic or post-exilic psalm. Briggs mentions that there is a hint of a “Maccabean tone” in v. 35 due to its indication of sinners and wicked thus implying a post-exilic edition.²¹² Gunkel also suggests a post-exilic date for Psalm 104.²¹³ Dion also indicates a post-exilic date for the psalm but without much elaboration.²¹⁴ Berlin views the psalm to be exilic or post-exilic.²¹⁵ Kraus avoids the conversation and says that the date of origin of the psalm is

²⁰⁹ J. H. Eaton, *The Psalms: a Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (London: Continuum, 2006), 362.

²¹⁰ Mark S Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 209 n. 95.

²¹¹ Day, however, is doubtful that someone could have copied the whole text after a thousand years. John Day, "Psalm 104 and Akhenaten's Hymn to the Sun," in *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms: Conflict and Convergence* (ed. Susan Gillingham; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 221.

²¹² C. A. Briggs and E. G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1907), 329.

²¹³ Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 453. Cited from V. S. Parrish, *Psalm 104 as a Perspective on Creation Thought in the Worship and Reflection of Pre-exilic Israel* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1989), 18.

²¹⁴ “It is hard to explain the relationship between Egyptian poems of the XIV century, and a psalm (Ps 104) which may not be older than the Vth century.” However, Dion does not discuss his reasons for a post-exilic date. Dion, "YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god," 61-2.

²¹⁵ Berlin, "The Wisdom of Creation in Psalm 104," 75.

difficult to determine.²¹⁶ Allen notes of Crüsemann's position who asserts a post-exilic date: "in view of the mixed nature of its form of the hymn (Ps 104) and the transformation of the plural summons of an imperatival hymn to a self-exhortation, he (Crüsemann) assigned the psalm to a late date and to the same noncultic, corporate setting as Ps 103, where the formula of self-exhortation recurs."²¹⁷ Then, the place of Psalm 104 might suggest a postexilic date. Also, Ps 103, which has a very similar opening imperative to Ps 104, has some Aramaic, post-exilic linguistic features, such as מלכות for kingdom in v. 19.²¹⁸ Allen also points out that in Ps 104:12 the foliage (עֲפָרַיִם) is also an apparent Aramaism.²¹⁹

4.2. The Genre of Ps 104

Scholars generally agree that this psalm is a hymn due to its hymnic character with its participial expressions, and its beckoning to the readers to praise God.²²⁰ Gerstenberger provides a three-part structure of what can be categorized as a hymn: 1) a call to praise (usually understood as an exhortation by a choir leader or the like to a group or the whole of the congregation), 2) an account of Yahweh's deeds or qualities (the body of the hymn may feature various types and formulaic expressions), and 3) a conclusion

²¹⁶ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 299.

²¹⁷ L. C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 39-40.

²¹⁸ Psalms 102, 106, and possibly 105 also appear to be postexilic.

²¹⁹ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 40.

²²⁰ Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms: the Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (trans. James D Nogalski; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 22.

(renewed call to praise; blessings; petitions; or other forms).²²¹ In this fashion, we are able to read Psalm 104 as a hymn. Verse 1a begins with a “Call to praise” as the Psalmist sings, “Bless YHWH, oh my soul.” Verses 1b-30 function as the “body,” as the Psalmist begins to sing of the great deeds of YHWH. Verses 31-35 end a summary with an exhortation to praise, along with a renewed call of praise, “Bless YHWH, oh my soul” (104:35b) and a petition: “May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in YHWH. Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more.” (104:34-35a).

If we take a closer look, verses 1a and 35b, which open and close the psalm with “Bless YHWH, oh my soul,” function as indicators of a hymn. בָּרַךְ is used in a piel imperative form, and shows the urge to praise to come from the psalmist himself. According to Gunkel, an indication of a hymn is found when a poet calls on his soul or mouth to praise God in the form of a vocative or an imperative.²²²

In verses 2-4, and 10, the psalmist uses participial expressions to describe the works of YHWH. Hossfeld calls them “hymnic participles.”²²³ As hymnic participles are typically found near the divine name,²²⁴ Ps 104 indeed states the attributes of YHWH in verses 2-4 in participle forms after announcing the divine name YHWH. Also, with the exception of verse 3, the other participles in verses 2 (נוֹטֵה, עֹטֵה) and 4 (עֹשֶׂה), which are without an article, are a common trait in poetry.²²⁵

In addition, hymns state past deeds as noticed in Ps 104:6-9. Gunkel asserts that the past deeds of God can refer to the “great mythic events of the world, the salvation

²²¹ Erhard Gerstenberger, "Psalms," in *Old Testament Form Criticism* (ed. John Haralson Hayes; San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974), 209.

²²² Gunkel, *Psalms*, 27.

²²³ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms*, 46.

²²⁴ Gunkel, *Psalms*, 31.

²²⁵ “In the particular case of the participial attribute of a pronoun or a determinate noun (expressed or understood), the article is often omitted in poetry.” Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006), 483.

history of Israel and the singer's own experience."²²⁶ Rhetorical questions are also a part of a hymn, as observed in Ps 104:24: "how manifold are your works."²²⁷

Hossfeld suggests that the Hallelujah shouts in 104:35 as well as in 105:45, 106:1, and 48 function as a "compositional instrument and genre indicator for the hymnic type of text."²²⁸ While some only mention the hymnic character²²⁹ others specify it as an individual praise.²³⁰ Goldingay suggests that the psalm expresses a minister type of figure who encourages the congregation to join because the psalm's self-exhortation (v. 1a and 35a) is accompanied with a plural bidding "praise Yah"(v. 35).²³¹

This psalm of praise sings of the creation *par excellence*, portraying the creation as it was at a time in history and as it is in its current state. It depicts a panorama of the world rather than the order of creation as portrayed in Gen 1. The world in this psalm is enriched with not only exotic trees, and creatures of the air, land, and sea but also with the celestial elements, the sun and moon, thus adding the concept of time. It includes images that are reminiscent of the storm-god and sun-god of the ancient Near East which are attributed to the Israelite god YHWH. The creatures harmoniously living in creation all function together so they serve a purpose within this world, creating a mechanism which not only brings joy and satisfaction to each of its inhabitants but also each other.

Also, there are a few elements in the psalm to suggest a wisdom character.

Although the psalm would not be typically categorized as a wisdom psalm, as Berlin points out, such contemplation on creation is of wisdom. The explicit mentioning of

²²⁶ Gunkel says that "YHWH's past deeds appear in perfect or narrative perfect, as is typical in poetry." Gunkel, *Psalms*, 36.

²²⁷ Ibid., 38.

²²⁸ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms*, 45.

²²⁹ Weiser, *Psalms*, 666.

²³⁰ Gunkel, Kraus, Allen, Mowinkel Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* 447. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 297-8. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 28. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 93.

²³¹ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 181.

“wisdom” in verse 24 indicates that God created all creatures with “wisdom.”²³² Allen notes that there could be a general parallel with some Egyptian *Onomastica*,²³³ as it lists names of creatures, which is also an indicator for wisdom thinking.²³⁴ Also, the banishment of the wicked in verse 35 is also reminiscent of the well-known wisdom psalm, Psalm 1:1, 5, as they both pair the two words חטא and רשע.²³⁵

4.3 Comparative Issues

The text of Ps 104 brings up comparative issues. The relationships between Ps 104 and Genesis 1, Gen 2-3, and Egyptian, and Ugaritic literature are of interest. Yet among these texts, exegetes have identified Genesis 1 and the Hymn to Aten to be the most of interest in the understanding of Ps 104.²³⁶ Dion also adds the storm-god imagery as an important discussion to this psalm.²³⁷ This chapter will deal with the relationship between Ps 104 and other ancient Near Eastern texts and Biblical texts.

²³² Berlin, "The Wisdom of Creation in Psalm 104," 71. Smith groups creation accounts into three: creation by divine *power*, creation by divine *wisdom*, and creation by divine *presence* and asserts that Ps 104 is a creation account by divine wisdom. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1*, 11-37.

²³³ von Rad discusses the possibility of the Egyptian wisdom literature, *Onomastica*, an encyclopedic work, finding its way into Israel, and Israel adapting its form to worship God. He mentions *Onomasticon* of Amenope, which attributes all things to Ptah, and Rameses' *Onomasticon*, which lists plants, minerals, birds, fishes and animals. G von Rad, *Job 38 and Ancient Egyptian Wisdom* (ed. G von Rad; London: SCM Press, 1984), 281-91. However, he does not mention Ps 104. For more on Egyptian *Onomastica* see, Alan Henderson Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

²³⁴ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 40.

²³⁵ Psalm 37 also shares the theme of wicked and sinners.

²³⁶ For more Jon D Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (1985), 59-65.

²³⁷ Dion, "YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god," 43-71.

4.3.1 Hymn to Aten and Ps 104

Since Breasted offered a close study of the Hymn to Aten, as Day points out, many scholars have pointed out the parallels between Psalm 104 and the Hymn to Aten.²³⁸ The monotheistic character of the hymn that attributes the world's sustainability to a single deity is a common theme that is shared by Ps 104.²³⁹ The Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaten, who changed his name from Amenhotep IV and moved the capital from Thebes to Akhetaten, worshiped only Aten. His religious zeal, which was fueled by politics of his time, led him to remove the worship of other gods except for Aten, a sun-god.²⁴⁰ He went as far as to expel the worship of Amun-Re, the chief god that his father worshiped. Redford states three reasons for his violent reaction towards Amun-Re: 1) The phenomenon of the cult of Amun, which held great power within the kingdom in his father's time, 2) the rise of the administrative coterie, and 3) the character of the king himself. Of the reasons Redford states, it is important to note the first reason that Akhenaten had a power struggle with the priesthood of Amun-Re, which had grown into a large organization "wherein political-power seekers could fulfill themselves." It had numerous families for several generations that benefited from being a part of the priesthood. Hence, his religious zeal was politically motivated.²⁴¹

²³⁸ Day, "Psalm 104 and Akhenaten's Hymn to the Sun," 211. Akhenaten (meaning, "Spirit/Splendor of Aton") changed his name from Amenhotep IV (meaning Amun rests) in order to carry out a religious revolution to promote the sole, sun-god, Aten. He founded cities that held the name of the god, Aton for each of his three great divisions in the empire, Egypt, Asia, and Nubia. He named the city Akhetaten (meaning "horizon of Aton") and lived there which is a place now called el-Armana. For more on the background of the "Hymn to Aten" see James H. Breasted, *A History of the Ancient Egyptians* (vol. 5; New York: Scribner, 1908), 264-279.

²³⁹ J Glen Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel* (vol. 111; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

²⁴⁰ Redford, *Akhenaten*, 157-68.

²⁴¹ Day, "Psalm 104 and Akhenaten's Hymn to the Sun," 211.

However, Akhenaten's monotheistic or monolatrous worship lasted less than a century.²⁴² After his death, Tutankhamun (c. 1335-1326), who was originally named by his father as Tut-ankh-Aten, moved the capital to Memphis and allowed people to worship other gods. Eventually, Horemheb (c.1322-1295) destroyed the remains of Akhenaten's monuments. Only the thirteen columns of hieroglyphics on the wall of the tomb of Ay at Akhetaten remain to this day.²⁴³

Then, the following questions may be asked. If Ps 104 is dependent on Akhenaten's hymn, how is a short-lived cult of Akhenaten present in a Hebrew psalm? Is it a direct influence, with the psalmist somehow having a copy of the hymn in his hands, or an indirect influence, perhaps the reference finding its way through the Canaanites or Phoenicians?

Many have identified the similarities between the two texts, thus making it hard for one to deny the dependency of the text. Day offers a detailed study between the two texts, especially focusing on Ps 104:20-30.²⁴⁴ To him, only this part contains the most explicit parallels with the Hymn to Aten, and the rest are doubtful. He asserts this dependency not only because the psalm shares apparently similar types of expressions, but also because of the order. He says verses 20-30 of Ps 104 are "in virtually identical order"²⁴⁵ with the Hymn of Aten.

A close examination reveals that the first parallel between Ps 104:20-21 and lines

²⁴²According to Day scholars have debated whether Akenaten's cult featured monotheism or monolatry. Ibid., 212. Breasted indicates that Akhenaten opposed to worship of other gods including Amon and that even the word "gods" was prohibited, thus suggesting monotheism. Breasted, *A History of the Ancient Egyptians*, 269.

²⁴³El-Amarna is located in Middle Egypt between Thebes and Memphis.

²⁴⁴Crüsemann has asserted this as well. Noted by Allen. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 40.

²⁴⁵Day, "Psalm 104 and Akhenaten's Hymn to the Sun," 213-218.

27-37 of Hymn to Aten²⁴⁶ features darkness and descriptions of what happens at night.

They both sing of animals creeping out at night and lions that seek food. Also, the word *all* is apparent in both texts.

Ps 104:20-21	Hymn to Aten lines 27-37
<p>You make darkness, and it is night, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.</p> <p>The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.</p>	<p>When thou settest in the western horizon, The land is in darkness, in the manner of death.</p> <p>They sleep in a room, with heads wrapped up, Nor sees one eye the other.</p> <p>All their goods which are under their heads might be stolen, (But) they would not perceive (it).</p> <p>Every lion is come forth from his den; All creeping things, they sting.</p> <p>Darkness is a shroud, and the earth is in stillness, For he who made them rests in his horizon.</p>

The second parallel, between Ps 104:22-23 and lines 38-45 of Hymn to Aten portrays the rising sun and the people that go to work in the daytime. After the psalm mentions the lions seeking food in the previous verses, it mentions the sunrise and people going to work. The Hymn to Aten also mentions the lion in the previous lines, then writes

²⁴⁶ The translation is of Wilson's but at times will refer to Breasted's translations. John A Wilson, "The Hymn to the Aton," *ANET*, 369-71. And Breasted, *A History of the Ancient Egyptians*, 181-6. I follow Assmann's line numbers. Jan Assmann, *Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 215-21.

of the daybreak and people going to work. The difference is that the Psalmist portrays the sun as a part of creation playing its role, whereas in the Hymn, Aten is the one arising.

Ps 104:22-23	Hymn to Aten, lines 38-45
<p>When the sun rises, they withdraw and lie down in their dens.</p> <p>People go out to their work and to their labor until the evening.</p>	<p>At daybreak, when thou arisest on the horizon,</p> <p>When thou shinest as the Aton by day, Thou drivest away the darkness and givest thy rays.</p> <p>The Two lands are in festivity every day, Awake and standing upon (their) feet, For thou hast raised them up.</p> <p>Washing their bodies, taking (their) clothing,</p> <p>Their arms are (raised) in praise at thy appearance.</p> <p>All the world, they do their work.</p>

The third parallel between Ps 104:24 and lines 76-82 of Hymn to Aten sings in awe of the things that each deity has made. The differences are the reference to wisdom in Ps 104 and the detailed description of the creatures such as humans, cattle, wild beasts, and birds in the Hymn to Aten. Also, the song of creation in the Hymn to Aten is drawn from a later part in the hymn, which makes it the exception that does not fit the order. However, the two writings nevertheless share exclamation of the works of YHWH and Aten.

Ps 104:24	Hymn to Aten, lines 76-82
<p>O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.</p>	<p>How manifold it is, what thou hast made! They are hidden from the face (of man). O sole god, like whom there is no other! Thou didst create the world according to they desire, Whilst thou wert alone: All men, cattle, and wild beasts, Whatever is on earth, going upon (its feet), And what is on high, flying with its wings.</p>

The fourth parallel between Ps 104:25-26 and lines 53-58 of Hymn to Aten moves the view to the sea by portraying the ships and creatures. Day comments on the references to ships (אֲנִיּוֹת) that are evident in both texts. He neglects others who assert a substitution of words such as “terrors” (אִימֹת) or “dragon/sea monsters” (תַּנִּינִים) and argue that “ships” are Phoenician ships with forms in animals. He believes that the reference to ships is a result of the Psalm’s dependence on the Hymn to Aten.²⁴⁷

Ps 104:25-26	Hymn to Aten, lines 53-58
<p>Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great.</p> <p>There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.</p>	<p>The ships are sailing north and south as well, For every way is open at thy appearance. The fish in the river dart before thy face; Thy rays are in the midst of the great green sea.</p>

²⁴⁷ Day, "Psalm 104 and Akhenaten's Hymn to the Sun," 215-6.

The fifth parallel between Ps 104:27-28 and lines 85-86 of Hymn to Aten portrays YHWH and Aten as deities who are responsible for providing food. They both sing of the humans and creatures that depend for the deities' provision in due time. However, whereas the Psalm portrays YHWH as providing for all creation including the beasts and the humans, lines 85-86 of the Hymn to Aten portray Aten supplying food only for humans.

Ps 104:27-28	Hymn to Aten, lines 85-86
<p>These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.</p>	<p>Thou settest every man in his place, Thou suppliest their necessities: Everyone has his food, and his time of life is reckoned.</p>

The sixth parallel, between Ps 104:29-30 and lines 126-127 of Hymn to Aten portrays the creation's dependency on the deities. The difference is that in the Psalm, YHWH's breath is the cause of life and death, whereas in the Hymn to Aten, it is the sun that is responsible for life and death.

Ps 104:29-30	Hymn to Aten, lines 126-127
<p>When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.</p>	<p>When thou hast risen they live, When thou settest they die.</p>

When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.	
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Day continues to reinforce the idea of dependence by pointing out that in Hebrew, Ps 104:20-30 are in you-forms, much like the Hymn to Aten, whereas verbs in other parts of the psalm are participles.²⁴⁸ However, there are still two other parts in the Hymn to Aten that are noticeable in Psalm 104. While Day excludes them as he sees them as more akin to the Semitic *Chaoskampf* imagery rather than the sun-god imagery one cannot deny that they are still similarities that are worth noting.

The seventh parallel is noticed between Ps 104:6, 10 and lines 97-99 of Hymn to Aten. Day omits this parallel by noting that v. 6 is be more dependent on Semitic *Chaoskampf* imagery rather than the Hymn to Aten. While this could be true, it still seems that both hymns feature waters over the mountains and their redirections. Ps 104:10 sings of the beneficial, life-giving waters and this aspect of the psalm aligns with the Hymn to Aten.

Ps 104:6, 10	Hymn to Aten, lines 97-99
You cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.	For thou hast set a Nile in heaven, That it may descend for them and make waves upon the mountains.
You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills,	

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 218. Day says that Ps 104:20-30 is a distinct unit in Ps 104.

The last parallel is noticed between Ps 104:11-14 and lines 46-52 of Hymn to Aten. Day omits this parallel again due to its familiarity to Canaanite ideas. He explains by noting that Ps 104:11-14 should not be viewed in relation to the Hymn to Aten because it speaks of the provision of rain, which follows God's control of the chaotic waters.²⁴⁹ However, the beasts, birds, and trees that rely on either deity are noticeable in both texts. Also, they both portray the satisfaction of the beasts and singing and praising of the birds.

Ps 104:11-14	Hymn to Aten, lines 46-52
<p>giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst.</p> <p>By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches.</p> <p>From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.</p> <p>You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth,</p>	<p>All beasts are content with their pasturage; Trees and plants are flourishing.</p> <p>The birds which fly from their nests, Their wings are (stretched out) in praise to thy <i>ka</i>.</p> <p>All beasts spring upon (their) feet. Whatever flies and alights, They live when thou hast risen (for) them.</p>

The parallels above seem to suggest a certain relationship between the two texts.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 220.

However, to assert a direct relationship needs careful investigation. Even if it is true that the psalmist somehow had a form of the Hymn to Aten at hand when during the time of the composition of Ps 104, it is hard to find evidence of how a 14th century Egyptian hymn from a short-lived cult of monotheism found its way into the Hebrew Psalter. It is therefore not surprising that we see an absence of a common consensus among scholars on the explanation of the parallels. Most are assumptions, and at times, purely speculative. Craigie, however, effectively demonstrates why it is hard to assert a direct influence and he mentions a number of reasons why. He not only points out the chronologic differences between Ps 104 and the Hymn to Aten,²⁵⁰ he also notes the differences between the two linguistic families and their geographical differences. He is doubtful about that an Egyptian text in an enclosed cave - which was a tomb of an Egyptian official in Amarna - would have been found by a Hebrew. Thus, he asserts that the parallels can be explained by the general nature of the two psalms.

There are others who insist on an indirect influence, saying that the hymn of Aten could have been mediated through later Egyptian hymns. However, this is disputed by Day, who finds the lack of evidence of the later Egyptian hymns that are strikingly similar to the hymn to Aten or Ps 104. He rather suggests that it could have been through mediation through the Canaanites or Phoenicians.²⁵¹ Despite the brief existence of the cult of Aten, he supports the idea by adding that the hymn was passed on to the Levant, noting that Canaan was a part of the Egyptian empire. He says that because the El-

²⁵⁰ Craigie mentions that there must have been at least four centuries apart even if one considers the psalm to be Davidic. Craigie, "The Comparison of Hebrew Poetry," 21.

²⁵¹ Day, "Psalm 104 and Akhenaten's Hymn to the Sun," 222-4. Keel also disagrees on the idea of a direct import. He presumes that the Phoenicians might have "played a mediating role." Keel, *Symbolism*, 209. Redford also notes that due to the long association between Egypt and Canaan, the transfer of Egyptian hymns and poems would have been obvious. Donald B Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 386.

Armana letters show the correspondence between Egypt and other surrounding countries, it is not surprising to see that one of the letters, namely EA 147,²⁵² having the reference to both the sun-god and the storm-god.²⁵³ Lines 5-10 of EA 147 say,

My lord is the Sun who comes forth over all lands day by day,
According to the way (of being) of the Sun, his gracious father,
Who gives life by his sweet breath
and returns with his north wind.

The letter from King Abi-milku of Tyre to the Pharaoh refers to the sun-god. Also, in lines 13-15 of EA 147 the king of Tyre continues to write, but this time referring to the storm-god:

who gives forth his cry in the sky like Baal,
and all the land is frightened at his cry.

Day concludes that EA 147 is evidence that the Hymn to Aten would have found its way into Canaan during the Armana period. Smith is able to suggest Egyptian-Levantine translatability as well by adding another El-Armana letter, EA 108,²⁵⁴ to the conversation. Lines 6-17 of EA 108 say, "I fall at the feet of my lord, my Sun, 7 times and 7 times. Moreover, is it pleasing in the sight of the king who is like Baal and Samas in the sky," which again also feature both the sun-god imagery and the storm-god

²⁵² William L Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 233.

²⁵³ Day, "Psalm 104 and Akhenaten's Hymn to the Sun," 222-4.

²⁵⁴ Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, 191.

imagery. He also asserts that the similarity of the terminology of “breath” in the El-Amarna letter’s “king’s breath”²⁵⁵ (Akkadian *šehu*) and “YHWH’s breath” (יְהוָה) in Ps 104:30 could be evidence of a Levantine mediation and asserts a “cultural transmission.”²⁵⁶ However, his assertion of “breath”, as intriguing as it is, misses the point that it is absent in the Hymn to Aten.

The co-existing nature of the imagery of the sun-god and storm-god in the El-Amarna letters is interesting and it seems acceptable to assume that the sun-god imagery could have found its way into Canaan through the Levant based on the evidence shown in the letters. However, it still does not sufficiently explain how we find parallels between the Psalm 104 and Hymn to Aten.

The detailed study of the two texts that are demonstrated by Day alone is enough to suggest a relationship, whether direct or indirect. However, the idea that somehow the Hebrew psalmist would have had access to an Egyptian text that was inscribed on the wall of a secured cave in Amarna, despite the chronological difference, seems hardly convincing. Therefore, it is acceptable to assume, while dismissing the opinions of those who assert that there are absolutely no connections between the two texts,²⁵⁷ the parallels are due to either an indirect influence or a cultural transmission sharing a common idea or theology as has been shown through the Amarna letters.

The difference should be noted between the psalm and the hymn to Aten. While the sun is Aten the deity, in the Egyptian hymn, it is a mere part of creation in the psalm. Hossfeld also notes the difference of the “unfettered omnipotence of YHWH in contrast

²⁵⁵ EA 147:9, 19, 23, 26, 34, 44.

²⁵⁶ Mark S Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 69-76.

²⁵⁷ Lichtheim rejects the idea of influence. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 100 n3.

to the temporally and spatially limited power of Aton.”²⁵⁸

Then how are we to understand the similarities of the two texts? The commonness of the two texts, whether through a cultural transmission or not, reveals the interest of the Psalmist of Psalm 104. In other words, the aspects that the two texts share, reveals the agricultural aspects into the Psalm. In lines 27-37 the Hymn sings of how Aten feeds the animals of night, including the beasts. The key was Aten feeding “all” beasts. Lines 38-45 sing of the working of the humans. Lines 46-52 sing of the beasts that are content with their pasturage, trees and plants flourishing, and birds singing in praise. Lines 53-68 sing of fish and ships of the sea. Lines 76-82 sing of the making of all men, cattle, wild beasts, and birds. Lines 85-86 sing of supplying food for the humans. Lines 126-127 sing of the rising and setting of the sun. Lines 97-99 sing of the waters that are given. Among the many things that the Hymn to Aten describes, the parallels that are found in the Psalm are the ones that sing about the agricultural nature of God.

Which thus brings us to the next point. This ancient Egyptian hymn is a hymn to Aten, praising the works that he has done for his people. The care of Aten upon his kingdom is the main focus of the hymn. However, it also seems to have some elements that could suggest a garden motif. As noted in chapter two, Akhenaten was a vigorous gardener and was considered one of Egypt’s great garden architects.²⁵⁹ As it was his goal to make the new city Akhetaten into a new creation, one of the tactics that he chose was to build gardens. This was to boast of his success as a king and also to praise Aten for his benevolence to his kingdom. As a result, the gardens that were built in Amarna were a microcosm of the world, representing Akhenaten’s understanding of creation. One of the

²⁵⁸ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms*, 54.

²⁵⁹ See “Egyptian Gardens” in Chapter 2.

gardens that Akhenaten built, the *Maru-Aten*, was a re-creation of a microcosm of the universe. The landscape represented the belief of the Egyptians, that the life-giving sun-god, Aten, was able to control the dire surroundings by redirecting the waters, making the earth inhabitable, and growing abundant vegetation for life to prosper. This allows us to assume that when composing the hymn to Aten, the writer would have been mindful of the symbols of an ancient Egyptian garden. The gardens at Amarna had features such as greenness (which represented the trees, plants, and flowers), animals, controlled and systemized waters, temples, and shrines for Aten. And, of course, the sun was also in the Amarna gardens. These elements represented control, wisdom, and power of Akhenaten. Such elements are also found in the hymn to Aten.

In lines 27-35, the hymn sings of what happens when Aten has set in the western horizon of the sky (line 27). During the night, lions come out of their dens and serpents sting (lines 33-34). In lines 46-52, as the time shifts to daytime, the hymn sings of beasts in their pastures, birds flying in adoration from their nests in the trees and plants, and the antelopes²⁶⁰ dancing. Animals, including lions were a part of the Amarna gardens. As has been noted in Chapter 2, the *Maru-Aten* contained paintings of lions, calves, and birds on the walls. Also, the portrayal is not solely focused on the animals alone. It also sings of the pastures, trees and plants, in other words the *greenness*, that flourishes for the birds that fly from their nests. The relationship between the inhabitants is expressed here. In emphasizing these elements, the hymnist asserts that all creatures in the sky or earth live because of the light of Aten.

In lines 53-58, the hymn sings of the “day and the waters” and it is not only

²⁶⁰ Wilson has “beasts” but Breasted has specified it to “antelopes.”

interested in the waters but also sings of the inhabitants of the sea and rivers. The ships sail south and north safely because Aten is open at their “appearance.” Also, fish in the rivers leap or dart before the face of Aten. Aten’s rays are graceful and powerful that it shines into the sea as well. In the ancient gardens, one of the most prominent features were the waters. Germer points out that the centerpiece of a garden was a pool. Not only many fish or birds lived there but they were also used to water the plants and trees. In some instances they were big enough to sail boats on it.²⁶¹

The imagery of wisdom is apparent as the caring of Aten is extended to babies growing inside of their mother’s womb (lines 59-63). Aten is not only the one that creates the seed but is also the one who continues to aid the fetus into the world and gives breath to them at birth. He also takes care of the chick or fledgling so that they would be able to break their eggshells and breathe. The imagery here, rather than reflecting a kingly figure, seems to portray a more caring and warm motherly image.

In lines 90-104 the redirection of the waters and the power of water-giving aspect is apparent in the hymn to Aten. Aten makes a Nile in the underworld so that it brings forth waters for the people of Egypt to maintain their lives. Aten also provides for the distant foreign countries by setting a Nile in heaven as well. It rains down for them and waters their fields (lines 96-99, 101) and gives life. The “watering” of Aten for Egypt and the foreign countries are portrayed in this section. How the waters were brought to the gardens, redirected in order to water the plants was essential in an ancient garden. In those regards as a garden’s survival and fruition depends on water, the creation also

²⁶¹ Germer, "Gardens," *OEA* 2: 4. Also Wilkinson points out a painting in the tomb of Minnakhte at Thebes that portrays a funeral ceremony in a temple garden for Minnakhte. It clearly shows a temple garden with a pool with a boat sailing inside it. Charles Kyrle Wilkinson and Marsha Hill, *Egyptian Wall Paintings: The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Collections of Facsimiles* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), 12

depends on waters.

One interesting part of the Hymn to Aten appears in lines 105-109. Here the central theme is the seasons that Aten brings to the world. But the hymn also sings of the rays of Aten that “nourishes every garden.”²⁶² These gardens live and grow when Aten rises. Here, Aten is explicitly portrayed as a gardener. Also when considering that other Egyptian gods were portrayed as a gardener,²⁶³ Wilkinson’s assertion that “the gods were the ultimate gardeners” is acceptable.²⁶⁴

The last part of the hymn in lines 125-141 states that all the world’s sustenance is attributed to Aten’s hand. When Aten rises, they live, and when he sets, they die. They would die without the continuing nourishment of Aten.

Although the primary purpose of the hymn is to acknowledge Aten’s power to create the world and care for all that lives in it, it also sings of the continuing bestowment to the creatures of the land, air, and sea, humans, and the lands, and gardens. He is the creator and the sustainer of the world and the hymnist is eager to express the aspect of sustainer in this hymn. However, the hymnist does so in a way that is reminiscent of an ancient garden. The elements that indicate a garden such as animals, trees and plants, and the watering are portrayed in the hymn. Also the works of Aten seem to have a motif of a gardener. Aten is being portrayed in an anthropomorphic way with descriptions of his hand and breath. He also waters the lands of Egypt and the foreigners to give life to the mountains, the fields, and the beasts.

²⁶² Breasted translates the word to “garden.” Wilson has “meadow” and Assmann has “*Wiesen*.”

²⁶³ Lichtheim offers a text from the banquet scene on the British Museum fragment No.37984 “[Flowers of sweet] odor [given] by Ptah and planted by Geb. His beauty is in every body. Ptah has made this with his hands to entertain his heart. The canals are filled with water anew and the earth is flooded with his love.” Miriam Lichtheim, “The Songs of the Harpers,” *JNES* 4, no. 3 (1945): 184.

²⁶⁴ Wilkinson, *The Garden in Ancient Egypt*, 34.

4.3.2 Storm-god and Ps 104

When considering the composition of Ps 104, there have been noticeable discussions dealing with elements that can also be traced to the West Semitic storm-god. Although it is much more difficult to pinpoint a specific piece of literature that the psalmist might have been directly or indirectly influenced by, as discussed earlier in relation to the Egyptian hymn to Aten, there are still some parts of the psalm that seem to allude to a storm-god. Craigie offers a concise comparison between Ps 104 and an Ugaritic resource, the Baal myth.²⁶⁵ He manages to narrow down the similarities between a portion in the Baal epic, KTU 1.4. VI, VII and Psalm 104:1-7, 13, and 16. This particular part of the Ugaritic Baal cycle portrays the establishment of Baal's palace.²⁶⁶ However, rather than assuming a direct relationship between the parallels, we should consider his conclusion that the similarities "might not indicate a direct relationship between the texts but does indicate a close association of ideas"²⁶⁷ Dion calls this the positioning of "the relative homogeneity of the myths, epithets, and iconography of the storm-god."²⁶⁸ Then, proper evaluation, it seems, should end with, that there were shared ideas between the storm-god and Hebrew God in Psalm 104.

As we continue examining the similarities between the storm-god of the ancient Near East and YHWH of Ps 104, it is worth mentioning that this study is valuable in

²⁶⁵ Craigie, "The Comparison of Hebrew Poetry," 16. Most of Craigie's comparisons between the two texts are convincing. His comparisons, however, are limited to Baal's palace, whereby he argues that Psalm 104 was composed for the dedication of Solomon's temple.

²⁶⁶ The first two tablets present the conflict between Baal, the storm-god and Yam ("Sea"). The next two tablets portray the establishment of the Baal's palace, and the last two tablets describe Baal against Mot ("death"). Mark S. Smith, "The Baal Cycle," in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (ed. Simon B Parker: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997), xxii.

²⁶⁷ Craigie, "The Comparison of Hebrew Poetry," 17.

²⁶⁸ Dion, "YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god," 49.

understanding the psalm. I will carefully point out some parallels that other scholars have established as a motif of the storm-god.

Many of the connections made between the two images begin with verses 3-4. The first parallel in the psalm, which Dion points out to be similar to the Baal epic, is expressed in Ps 104:3a, the beams of YHWH's chambers set above the waters, "you set the beams of your chambers on the waters." This is again expressed as the place where YHWH abides as he waters the mountains in verse 13, "From your lofty abode you water the mountains." Craigie and Dion both mention KTU 1.4. VII. 15-30 as a parallel where we find Baal's window or opening (*urbt*) in Baal's palace.²⁶⁹

The second and most apparent parallel is expressed in verses 3,4 and 7. As noticed in the psalm, YHWH makes the clouds his chariots, rides on the wings of the wind, and the winds become his messengers. When compared to the storm-god, the royal epithet of Baal as "cloudrider" is immediately noticeable. In the speech of Kothar wa-Hasis in KTU 1.2. IV. 7b-10, the epithet of Baal "the cloudrider" is mentioned.²⁷⁰

7 And Kothar wa-Hasis speaks:

7-8 "Indeed, I tell you, Prince Baal,
I reiterate, *O Cloudrider*:

8-9 Now your enemy, Baal,
Now smash your enemy,
Now vanquish your foe.

10 So assume your eternal kingship,

²⁶⁹ Craigie, "The Comparison of Hebrew Poetry," 16-7. Dion, "YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god," 52.

²⁷⁰ Smith, "The Baal Cycle," 103 n.27.

Your everlasting dominion.”

This occurs in KTU 1.2., where Baal is battling Yamm in order to establish his kingship. It is interesting to note the conflict that is portrayed in the Baal epic is also noticeable in Ps 104:7, where YHWH is establishing the foundations of the earth by “rebuking the deep.” Smith comments on the “rebuke” from Athtart to Baal, in KTU 1.2. IV. 28-30: “By name Astarte rebukes (him): “Scatter, O Mighty Ba[al,] Scatter, O Cloudrider. For our captive is Prin[ce Yamm,] [For (?) our captive is Judge River”²⁷¹ and suggests a possibility of a parallel with Ps 104:6-7, YHWH’s rebuke of תהוֹמוֹת. However, in this case, it is not Baal’s rebuke but Athtarts rebuke towards Baal. Other than the indication of the word “rebuke” there does not seem much more to be a parallel.

Also, as YHWH uses the sound of his thunder to do so (Ps 104:7), Baal uses his thunderous voice as well (KTU 1.4. VII. 27-35).²⁷² YHWH also makes the mountains smoke with his touch (Ps 104:32). These images are reminiscent of the ancient Near Eastern storm-god.²⁷³

KTU 1.4. VII. 27-35	Ps 104:7, 32
<p>A window inside the palac[e]. Baal opened a break in the clouds, Baa[l] gave forth his holy voice Baal repeated the is[sue of (?)] his [li(?)]ps,</p>	<p>At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.</p>

²⁷¹ Ibid., 104-5.

²⁷² Lightening also happens to be Baal’s attribute. Dion, "YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god," 51.

²⁷³ Dion mentions the myth of Ras Shamra (KTU 1.4. VII. 31-35) as an example where “Baal’s theophany on assuming possession of his newly-built palace.” *ibid.*, 50.

<p>His ho[ly (?)] voice covered (?) the earth [At his] voice... the mountians trembled. The ancient [mountians?] leapt [up?], The high places of the ear[th] tottered.</p>	<p>who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke</p>
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In verse 4, YHWH makes the fire and flame his ministers. Dahood suggests that “fire” and “flame” were originally minor divinities in the Canaanite pantheon, which have been “demythologized and reduced to servitors of Yahweh.”²⁷⁴ In KTU 1.2. I. 30-35, where Yamm’s messengers deliver a message, they appear as fiery agents.²⁷⁵ Smith indicates, “some minor divinities embody fiery form.”²⁷⁶ Craigie points out that “fire and flame” are used as tools to prepare silver and gold for Baal’s palace construction in KTU 1.4. VI. 22-23.²⁷⁷

Dion makes another connection between YHWH and the storm-god, Adad.²⁷⁸ Verses 10, 13-14 portray YHWH as responsible for the waters for the valleys, and hills, grass, and plants, which seems to agree with the epithets of Adad, “who rains down abundance, who gives pasture and watering places to the people of all cities (to all lands).”²⁷⁹ Although it is difficult to assume a direct relationship with the Psalm, the

²⁷⁴ Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150*, 35.

²⁷⁵ KTU 1.2. I. 32-33. “a flame, two flames they appear, Their [ton]gue a sharp sword.”

²⁷⁶ Smith, “The Baal Cycle,” 306.

²⁷⁷ Craigie, “The Comparison of Hebrew Poetry,” 16.

²⁷⁸ Dion, “YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god,” 52. Adad (Akkadian), a Mesopotamian weather-god, had beneficial aspects which were “fruitful rain and mountain streams, possibly in areas where rain was more important for agriculture.” Jeremy Allen Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: an Illustrated Dictionary* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 110-1.

²⁷⁹ Alan R Millard and Pierre Bordreuil, “A Statue from Syria with Assyrian and Aramaic Inscriptions,” *BA* 45, no. 3 (1982): 137. The life size stone statue of a man was discovered at Tell Fekheryeh in northeastern Syria and had bilingual inscription: Akkadian and a translation in Aramaic. It was dated back to the 9th century B.C. and the inscriptions have a dedication to Adad. Another interesting observation that is

language in the Psalm seems to be reminiscent of a Mesopotamian weather god.

The Leviathan in verse 26 also appears in KTU 1.5. I. 27-31:

27-31 “When you killed [Litan (*ltn*), the Fl]eeing [Serpent]
Annihilated [the Twisty Serpent,]
The Potentate [with seven Heads,]
[The heavens] grew hot, [they withered].”

The rebuking of the deep and setting boundaries in verses 5-9 suggests that the Leviathan in verse 26 is the primordial mythological monster rather than a mere alligator type creation.²⁸⁰ This, according to Dion, is an indication of *Chaoskampf* motif.²⁸¹ The *Chaoskampf* motif is “a gigantic struggle between the storm-god and the sea, whether personified or accompanied by dragons or other monsters.”²⁸² However, the psalmist seems to reduce its terrifying image to a playful creature.

In verses 10-18, the theme of fertility appears as the psalmist portrays YHWH as the provider of the gifts. According to Dion this has an exact counterpart in KTU 1.16. III. 12-16. He says the “Ugaritic epic of Kurti (Kirta) where the shortage of bread, wine and oil is explained by Baal’s failure to send rain to the land”²⁸³:

12-13 “They raise their heads, the plowmen do,
Up toward the Servant of Dagon:

presented in this statue is noticed when stating the epithets of Adad. It writes, “who enriches the regions (all lands)” and uses the Aramaic verb ‘*dn*, which reminds us of the word Eden, in Genesis 2.

²⁸⁰ Ps 75:13-17, Job 41:1.

²⁸¹ For more on the Leviathan, Christoph Uehlinger, "Leviathan," 511-5.

²⁸² Dion, "YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god," 53.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 56.

13-16 “The *food* is all spent from its storage;
The *wine* is all spent from its skins;
The *oil* is all spent from its [casks].”

This signifies the importance of the triad of bread, wine, and oil that was understood as a symbol of abundance in the ancient Near East and also in Israel. And as Dion has mentioned the texts shares the significance of bread, wine, and oil with Ps 104.

It seems that the great trees and animals of Lebanon in verses 16-18 are also indicative of its Canaanite background. Craigie mentions that the cedars of Lebanon in Ps 104:16 are also paralleled with the wood from Lebanon for the construction of Baal’s house (6:18-21).²⁸⁴ Dahood mentions that the wild goat (*yael*) in verse 18 is a rare Hebrew word and because it occurs in the mentioning of Lebanon, it lines up with the Ugaritic text KTU 1.17. VI. 20-22²⁸⁵: “Cut yew trees[?] of *Lebanon*, cut tendons from wild buffaloes, cut horns from *wild goats*.”

As we have seen above, there are some elements in Psalm 104 that are traceable to the storm-god imagery of the ancient Near East. Most of the elements that were pointed out above were similar to those of the Baal cycle. It seems that the psalmist utilizes these commonly shared ideas in order to praise and promote YHWH.

To sum up, the two images that have been discussed above, the Egyptian sun-god and the West Semitic storm-god, seem to be incorporated by the psalmist of Ps 104 in order to address the supremacy of the true and only God, YHWH, rather than to “sing of a solar pair of supreme deities.”²⁸⁶ Dion has noticed that other texts from the ANE also

²⁸⁴ Craigie, "The Comparison of Hebrew Poetry," 17.

²⁸⁵ Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150*, 42.

²⁸⁶ Dion, "YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god," 69.

have an amalgamation of the sun-god and the storm-god. He, however, rightly asserts that the amalgamation is quite different than what we see in Ps 104. The psalm in question does not acquire the two images for political reasons, nor does it recognize or promote the two deities. Instead, all is attributed to YHWH the Israelite god.²⁸⁷ In other words, the elements of the psalm have traceable parallels that are reminiscent of the sun-god and storm-god in the ancient Near East, but rather than indicating a co-existent nature of the deities, it still sings of one God, YHWH and ascribes the fertile nature to him.

The studies above, brings up an important point to our studies. The elements that the psalmist brings into his psalms seem to be deeply involved with the specific nature of YHWH towards his creation. The agricultural aspects of YHWH are intensified through the imageries of the sun-god and the storm-god. In other words, the elements the psalmist used, reveal not just the similarities that the two texts may share, it also reveals agricultural aspects of the sun-god and storm-god in order to promote his God, YHWH. The care for all the animals, birds, fish, and humans, providing them with food, all given in the appropriate time, that are noticed in the Hymn to Aten are the aspects that the psalmist uses for his psalm. The redirection of waters, the mention of the quality trees of Lebanon, and the reduced image of the Leviathan that are noticed from the storm-god imagery are also the aspects that the psalmist incorporates in his psalm.

²⁸⁷ For more *ibid.*, 65-69.

4.3.3 Gen 1 and Ps 104

At this stage of the study, it seems appropriate to note the parallels in Ps 104 that are found within the Old Testament, keeping in mind the parallels with the ancient Near East texts that have already been discovered. Craigie explains “the point in noting internal parallels is simply to stress that in spite of parallels which have been drawn with Egyptian and Ugartitic literature, the psalm is nevertheless a thoroughly indigenous part of Hebrew literature.”²⁸⁸ As we have already examined the terminology and uses of gardens in the Old Testament, this part will be focused on the parallels between Ps 104 and the two creation accounts found in Gen 1:1-2:3 and Gen 2:4-3:24.

Many have discussed the similarities between Genesis 1 and Psalm 104. However, opinions on the precise nature of the relationship are divided. Gunkel seems to think that the Psalmist had Genesis 1 “before him.”²⁸⁹ Humbert also considers the “incontestable dependence” of the psalm to Gen 1.²⁹⁰ Grogan describes Ps 104 as “Genesis 1 set to music”,²⁹¹ thus analyzing the Psalm according to the sequence of days as in Gen 1. Berlin asserts that the psalmist used the “Genesis blueprint” but portrays creation differently.²⁹² On the other hand, Day argues that it is Gen 1 that is dependant to Ps 104. And he offers two words that helps his assertion, “seasons” (מוֹעֲדִים) in Ps 104:19; Gen 1:14, and “beast”(תַּיִתוֹ) in Ps 104:11, 20; Gen1:24.²⁹³ Smith offers a list of several similarities

²⁸⁸ Craigie, "The Comparison of Hebrew Poetry," 18.

²⁸⁹ Noted by Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 298.

²⁹⁰ Paul Humbert, "La relation de Genèse 1 et du Psaume 104 avec la liturgie du Nouvel-An Israélite," 15 (1935): 1. This was re-quoted from Parrish, *Psalm 104*, 302.

²⁹¹ Geoffrey Grogan, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 173-5.

²⁹² Berlin, "The Wisdom of Creation in Psalm 104," 76.

²⁹³ Noted by Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1*, 27. n. 94.

between Gen 1 and Ps 104.²⁹⁴

Psalm 104:2-4; Genesis 1:6-8: God as Creator presented with respect to the cosmic waters.

Psalm 104:5-9; Genesis 1:9-10: God establishes the earth with respect to the waters and establishes bounds for them.

Psalm 104:10-13; Genesis 1:6-10: With cosmic waters under control, they provide sources for springs.

Psalm 104:14-18; Genesis 1:11-12: Vegetation is produced and feeds living creatures.

Psalm 104:19-23; Genesis 1:14-18: The moon and sun are created to mark times and seasons.

Psalm 104:24-26; Genesis 1:20-22: In the remnant of watery chaos live the sea creatures.

Psalm 104:27-30; Genesis 1:24-30: Humanity's place in creation is shown.

While the similarities that are pointed out by Smith are worth exploring, there are however, some differences between the two texts. First of all, Genesis 1 portrays the order of creation as the inhabitants being placed *after* the skies, land, and sea are created. On the other hand, Ps 104 portrays everything in the sky (2-4), everything on the land (5-23), and everything in the sea (25-26). Berlin says that Gen 1 is of the distant past (origins) with a "God's-eye view perspective", whereas Ps 104 is the present world

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 26. And Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150: A Commentary on Books III-V of the Psalms* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 368.

through the “eyes of humans.”²⁹⁵ Secondly, the divine name is different: Gen 1 has *Elohim* and Ps 104 has YHWH and seems to lean more towards the affinities shared with Gen 2-3.²⁹⁶ Thirdly, the role of humanity is different. In Ps 104, humanity is a role player in creation among many others and not the ruler of creation. This is clearly different from Gen 1, where humanity is created in the “image of God” and given “dominion over creation.” (1:26-30). Fourthly, the “deep” (תְּהוֹמוֹת) is pre-existent in Gen 1, but in Ps 104, the “deep” is from YHWH (104:6 “You cover it with the deep as with a garment”). Fifthly, elements that seemed to be similar are differently portrayed. The light in Ps 104 is not created; it is God’s garment. The vegetation, birds are also not created in Ps 104 they are already there. And finally, darkness is “set” (שִׁית) created by YHWH and the darkness is a time for other animals of the forest and young lions in Ps 104:20, 21 but in Gen 1:2, it is preexists and is separated with light.

By noting the differences between the two texts, it seems that a common Israelite thinking can explain the similarities. Craigie is right to negate any dependency by saying that the parallels between Ps 104 and Gen 1-2:4a are a common Hebrew tradition. Thus, they are two independent texts rather than one being utilized by the other. He says that they are “relatively independent expressions of the same part of Israelite theology.”²⁹⁷ Smith seems to agree with Craigie and asserts a “common general schema” by mentioning, “the authors of Genesis 1 and Psalm 104 incorporated the traditional outline into their presentations.”²⁹⁸ Kraus also has the same idea. He notices a common primeval

²⁹⁵ Berlin, "The Wisdom of Creation in Psalm 104," 76.

²⁹⁶ Only 104:21 has תְּהוֹמוֹת.

²⁹⁷ Craigie, "The Comparison of Hebrew Poetry," 18.

²⁹⁸ “They share in common a general schema, reflected in different degrees in a variety of biblical texts (see also Ps 89:10-13; cf. Job 38-39): description of God as creator of the universe; sea and the sea monsters overcome; fixing of the earth on its foundations; release of springs; creation of day and night; creation of

theme between the two texts and says that a “precise investigation shows only a modest remainder of loose allusions to be available” and he continues by noting that “there can hardly be any thought of a literary consultation or even a dependence.”²⁹⁹ Thus, it seems reasonable to regard the similarities as a common part of Israelite theology. This will become more apparent when we consider relationship between Ps 104 and Gen 2.

4.3.4 The Garden of Eden and Ps 104

While most scholars have shared ideas on the relation between Gen 1 and Ps 104, there are elements in Ps 104 that can also be noticed in Gen 2-3, where we find the depiction of the Garden of Eden. Goldingay mentions that there are “points of contact” between Psalm 104 and Gen 1-3. He says that there is a possibility of the texts being utilized by each other but that they are still unique because of their different aspects to creation: “the two have their individual integrity and read more like independent works with overlapping foci.”³⁰⁰ Therefore, while it is true that there are parallels that are shared between Gen 1 and Ps 104, it seems necessary in this study to examine “the overlapping foci” of Gen 2-3 and Ps 104. The following shows a brief comparison between the two texts:

Gen 2:6-7, Ps 104:29-30 - YHWH gives breath to the living.

Gen 2:10-14, Ps 104:10-18 - YHWH creates the springs and rivers.

the sun as well as the seasons; and human creation.” Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1*, 27.

²⁹⁹ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 298-9.

³⁰⁰ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 182.

Gen 2:9, Ps 104:14, 15 - YHWH makes the trees, grass grows for other creatures.

Gen 2:15, Ps 104:14 - The work for humanity is validated.

Gen 2-3 Ps 104:27-28 - The anthropomorphic image of YHWH.

Gen 3, Ps 104:35 - The sinners are banished.

Taking a closer look at these verses allows us to not only to see the similarities but also, in some cases, the *expansion* of the shared features. Both texts, Gen 2:6-7 and Ps 104:29-30, indicate YHWH breathing life into the creatures. In Genesis 2:7, the “breath of God” is limited to man (אָדָם), and it indicates that without the breathing of God, it would be impossible for humans to exist. Psalm 104:30 also shares the element of the YHWH’s life-giving “breath” but in this case, it is extended to all living things. In both texts, YHWH creates the springs and rivers. In Gen 2:10 there is a river that flows out of Eden and waters the garden. Ps 104:10-18 shows springs that flow into valleys, and the mountains and the trees are well watered. The Genesis text shows a single river, which becomes four, that flows into one specific garden, whereas the Psalm shows springs (plural) that water the valleys, mountains, and trees. In Gen 2:9 and Ps 104:14, 15, vegetation is attributed to YHWH. And both Gen 2:15, Ps 104:14, by using the same verb, “to cultivate” (עבַד), validate the work for humanity. The verb “cause to grow” (צַמַח) is also used in both texts.³⁰¹ Both share the anthropomorphic way of portrayal of YHWH. In Ps 104:27-28, there is the “hand” and “face” of God and in Gen 2-3 the Lord “walks” (3:8) and “talks” (3:9) in the garden. The “banishment theme” can also be noticed in both texts. Genesis 3:23 deals with the banishment of humans. Although Adam and Eve may

³⁰¹ Callender points out that when the hiphil form of צַמַח is used in the Old Testament “it never occurs with a human subject when referring to horticulture or agriculture.” Callender, *Adam*, 62.

not be wicked, their unfaithfulness and disobedience were the reason for their banishment from the Garden of Eden. Psalm 104:35 shares that theme but expands the plea to the wicked and sinners to vanish. Interestingly, this is a parallel that cannot be found in the Ugaritic storm-god traditions or the Hymn to Aten. This seems to be a distinctive attribute of Israelite theology. Also, there could be a topical connection between “knowledge” in Genesis 2-3 and “wisdom” in Ps 104. However, they are different themes that are used differently. In Genesis the “knowledge” is to become like God whereas in Psalm 104:24, the wisdom (חָכְמָה) is the attribute of God that creates and sustains the world. Finally, in both texts, we see that the divine name is YHWH, whereas in Gen 1 it is Elohim in Gen 1.

Another interesting point to be made is the literary context of Psalm 104. Book IV of the Psalter ends with a summary of the Pentateuch. Psalm 104, 105, and 106 all have “hallelujah”(Ps 104:35; 105:45; 106:1, 48) which links the three psalms together. Psalm 104, which sings of the creation sharing elements, is similar to not only Gen 1, but also Gen 2, 3. This seems to specifically portray the Lord as the kingly figure (Gen 1) but also as the sustainer and provider, somewhat similar to a gardener (Gen 2, 3) who continually looks after his creation. It is apparent that the parallels between the creation in Genesis and in Psalm 104 are not limited to chapter 1 of Genesis. Then, Psalm 105 speaks of the covenant made by God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and continues with singing of Joseph, offering a summary of Genesis. It continues with Moses and Aaron, the plagues in Egypt, and life in the wilderness. Psalm 106 sings of what happens in the wilderness and in the Promised Land. Therefore, Psalms 104-106, the end of Book IV of the Psalter, can be viewed as a representation of the Pentateuch through the eyes of a Psalter and they

thus enable the imagery of a re-portrayal of the Garden of Eden in Psalm 104.

As we can see from above, the similarities that Ps 104 and Gen 2-3 share are difficult to ignore. Although it difficult to decide the exact nature of the relationship between the two texts, there are strong points that are reminiscent of each other. Then, we may conclude that Ps 104 shares ideas with not only Gen 1 but also Gen 2-3, but in a way that expands the elements from Gen 2-3. Thus, it seems appropriate to draw on what Parrish says:

“Clearly, the points of contact between Psalm 104 and Genesis 2 are nearly as strong as those between the psalm and Genesis 1. This observation makes any notion of literary dependence harder to maintain since the poet would be using two sources instead of simply one, and leads to the more plausible conclusion that the Yahwist, the Priests, and the psalmist all selectively appeal to a larger creation tradition.”³⁰²

³⁰² Parrish, *Psalm 104*, 304. Smith, however, suggests the possibility of the author of the psalm depending on both creation accounts. “Accordingly, one may suspect that the author of Psalm 104 drew on Genesis 1 and 2. Given its form as a hymn plus a prayer of its final verse, it would fit a temple setting.” Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1*, 209. n.95.

5 Psalm 104: Structural and Rhetorical Analysis

The focus of rhetorical criticism has been on the art of composition and the art of persuasion.³⁰³ Muilenburg's presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature,³⁰⁴ the subject of which was none other than rhetorical criticism, focused on the art of composition. In this address, Muilenburg assigned two tasks: to define the limits of a literary unit and to discern structure.³⁰⁵ When defining a literary unit, devices such as climax, inclusio, chiasm, and acrostics were given attention. To discern structure was to "delineate overall design and individual parts, show how they work together, identify literary devices and explicate their functions in marking sequences and shifts within units."³⁰⁶ On the other hand, after Muilenburg's address, Gitay emphasized that the rhetorical approach had to have emphasis on the art of persuasion. He asserted that the author of Isaiah 40-48 was making a public address to the exiles in order to persuade them.³⁰⁷ Grogan says that the "scholars interested in this kind of criticism are also concerned to define the general intention of the author, whether it be to inform, to persuade, to warn, to chastise, or to inspire the reader."³⁰⁸ Therefore, it is my view to follow the footsteps of Muilenburg and give special attention to the art of composition by defining Ps 104's literary units and their functions. Yet at the same time, the paper will

³⁰³ Porter and Stamps step over the boundary of formal rhetorical criticism into social (scientific) criticism. They mention that more recently, rhetorical criticism has become "more interested in how textual discourse constructs new sociological understanding and identity, even new patterns of behavior which follow from such understanding and identity." Stanley E Porter and Dennis L Stamps, "Introduction: Rhetorical Criticism and the Florence Conference," in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* (ed. Stanley E Porter and Dennis L Stamps; vol. 195; London: Sheffield, 2002), 17.

³⁰⁴ Muilenburg, "Form Criticism," 1-18.

³⁰⁵ Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 27.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 27-8.

³⁰⁷ Yehoshua Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion: a Study of Isaiah 40-48* (Bonn: Linguistica Biblica, 1981), 63-80. Re-quoted from Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 41.

³⁰⁸ Grogan, *Psalms*, 29.

also consider the art of persuasion in order to understand the intention of the psalmist.

5.1 The Structure of Ps 104

The precise nature of the structure of Ps 104 has not been agreed upon by scholars. At first glance, Psalm 104 seems quite simple in its structuring as Mannati has divided it into two major parts (1-23, 24-31) in a clear-cut manner.³⁰⁹ G. Castellino adopted the same two main sections (1-23, 24-35) as cosmogony (1-23) and contemplation (24-35) but with more meticulous details.³¹⁰

On the other hand, H. Gunkel has suggested a tripartite analysis (1-23, 24-30, 31-35) and argued that the exclamation (24) along with the mentioning of the sea (25-26) signifies the “all” (27).³¹¹ Hossfeldt found a detailed ‘structural plan’, which consists of four stanzas as follows:³¹²

- I. Opening of the Psalm
 - 1a Frame (“Bless, my soul, bless YHWH”)
 - 1b-4 YHWH as ruler of heaven
- II. The Earth as the Dwelling of Life
 - 5-9 The *creatio prima* of the earth within the cosmos

³⁰⁹ Marina Mannati, *Les Psaumes* (Paris: Desclée, De Brouwer, 1966) cited from Louis Neveu, *Au pas des Psaumes: Lecture Organique a trois voix* (Universite Catholique de l'Ouest, Institut de Perfectionnement en Langues Vivantes, 1988), 164. For Mannati, the first part (1-23) celebrates the victory of the primordial Creator, and the second part (24-31) the final victory (eschatological) of the end times.

³¹⁰ Giorgio Raffaele Castellino and Salvatore Garofalo, *Libro dei salmi* (Turin: Marietti, 1955). Cited from Neveu, *Au pas des Psaumes: Lecture Organique a trois voix*, 164. He divides the first part as Introduction (1a-2a), the sky above (2b-4), the earth below (5-9), sources and rivers (10-12), the fertility given by water above (13-15), plants and animals (16-18), change of time and rhythm of life (19-23) and the second part as sea and many fishes (24-26), life and death in the hand of God (27-30), and the final doxology (31-35).

³¹¹ Cited from Neveu, *Au pas des Psaumes: Lecture Organique a trois voix*, 164.

³¹² Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms*, 48.

- 10-18 Provision of water for the earth / preservation of creation
- 19-23 Movements of time / Order of the ages
- 24 Cry of wonder (interim balance)
- 25-26 The sea
- III. Theological Reflection: Dependence of the Creatures on the Creator
 - 27-28 Food
 - 29-30 Breath of Life
- IV. Conclusion of the Psalm
 - 31-35b Wish, description, vow of praise / praise of YHWH
 - 35c Frame (“Bless, my soul, bless YHWH”)
 - 35d Hallelujah shout

F. Zorell proposed a six-part division with strong differences.³¹³ Parrish does a synchronic analysis, which results in the division of the psalm in six parts: Theophany in the Heavens (1-4); Establishing the Earth (5-9); Life-Giving Waters (10-18); Night and Day (19-23); Divine Care for All of God’s Works (24-30); and YHWH’s Glory and Humanity’s Sin (31-35).

Several scholars divide Ps 104 into eight parts, each one different from another, as we see in Allen,³¹⁴ Broyles,³¹⁵ Kraus,³¹⁶ and Weiser.³¹⁷ Interestingly, Goldingay divides the acts of the creator between the “initiating acts” (1b-4 and 5-9, 19, 24a-b) and the

³¹³ (1) Yahweh, Creator of heaven and earth (1-4, 8), (2) The waters of the abyss (6-12), (3) The land and His products (13-18), (4) The seasons, day and night (19-24b), (5) God's care of all creatures (24c-30), (6) Homage due to God the Creator (31-35). Cited from Neveu, *Au pas des Psaumes: Lecture Organique a trois voix*, 164.

³¹⁴ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 44. 1-4, Prologue: praise of God as king of heaven; 5-13, Creation of the earth in relation to water; 14-23, Provision for human and animal needs; 24-30, Dependence of creatures of earth and sea on God; 31-35a, Epilogue: reverent praise of God’s awesome power; 35b, Closing rubric.

³¹⁵ Broyles, *Psalms*, 398. 104:1-4, 5-9, 10-13, 14-18, 19-23, 24-26, 27-30, 31-35.

³¹⁶ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 299-304. Kraus divides the psalm into eight parts: 1-4, praise of the God who is above all the world; 5-9, conquest of the primeval flood and founding of the earth; 10-12, springs and brooks; 13-18, refreshment proceeds from Yahweh’s rains to all lands; 19-24, night and daybreak; 25-26, the sea; 27-30, all life depends on Yahweh; 31-35, hymnic conclusion.

³¹⁷ Weiser, *Psalms*, 666-71. 1, the theme; 2-4, the heavens ; 5-9, the earth; 10-18, The living things on earth; 19-23, moon and sun; 24-26, the sea; 27-30 and 31-35, the God the Preserver of Life.

“ongoing activities (10-12, 13-18, 20-23, 24c-30).”³¹⁸

However, conducting a rhetorical approach to the psalm, as it will be seen, reveals specific aspects of YHWH’s care for creation. The most predominant aspect of YHWH is his sustainment of and provision for the creation. Briefly speaking, Psalm 104 can be divided according to its form, content, literary devices, and keywords.

I. Opening of the Psalm / Prologue (vv. 1-4)

II. Hymn to the Creator and Sustainer, YHWH (vv. 5-30)

5 - 9 YHWH Rebukes the Life-Threatening Waters

10 - 13 Provision of Life-Giving Waters

14 - 18 Provision for Animals, Humans, Grass, and Trees

19 - 23 Provision for Night Creatures

24 - 26 The Sea Creatures Enjoy the Sea

27 - 30 Provision for All Creation

III. Closing of the Psalm / Epilogue (vv. 31-35)

As Allen rightly asserts, the root word עשה “work(s)/made” in verse 4, 13, 19, 24, 31 elicits a chiasmic structure in Psalm 104. The first section (1-4) ends with עשה and the last section (31-35) begins with עשה. The second section (5-13) ends with עשה, and the fourth section (24-30) begins with עשה. Finally, the third and middle section (14-23) has עשה in the middle in verse 19.

³¹⁸ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 182.

Ps 104	Verbal Tense	Address to YHWH	Keywords / Features			
1	Imp, perf	2 nd				
2	ptc, ptc	-				
3	ptc, ptc, ptc	-				
4	ptc, ptc, ptc	-	עשה			
5	perf, imperf	3 rd			אָרְז	
6	perf, imperf	2 nd			הָרִים	
7	imperf, imperf	2 nd				
8	imperf, imperf, perf	2 nd			הָרִים	
9	perf, imperf, imperf	2 nd			אָרְז	
10	ptc, perf, imperf	-				
11	imperf, imperf	-				
12	imperf, imperf	-				
13	ptc, imperf	2 nd	עשה	שבע	הָרִים אָרְז	
14	ptc,	-				עֲבֹדָה אָדָם
15	imperf, imperf	-				
16	imperf, perf	3 rd		שבע		
17	imperf,					
18	-					
19	perf, perf	3 rd	עשה			
20	imperf (3times)	2 nd				
21	ptc	-				
22	imperf (3times)	-				
23	imperf	-				אָדָם עֲבֹדָה
24	perf, perf, perf	2 nd	עשה			
25	-	-				
26	imperf, perf	2 nd				
27	imperf	2 nd				
28	imperf (4 times)	2 nd		שבע		
29	imperf (5 times)	2 nd				
30	imperf (3times)	2 nd				
31	imperf, imperf	3 rd	עשה			
32	ptc, imperf, imperf					
33	imperf, imperf					
34	imperf, imperf	3 rd				
35	imperf, imp, imp					

The first section is characterized by the use of the hymnic participles. After the self-exhortation to bless YHWH in the imperative, which forms an *inclusio* with verse 35,

the psalmist writes the attributes of YHWH, which are in participles. The first section ends with the use of עשה.

The second section (5-13) mentions the earth (אָרֶץ) three times in verses 5, 9, and 13 and the mountains (הַרִיִם) three times in verses 6, 8, and 13. While the end of this section is indicated by עשה in verse 13, the mentioning of the אָרֶץ reinforces this section as it envelopes it in verses 5 and 13. Also, the mountains (הַרִיִם) follow the earth (אָרֶץ) in verse 6, and comes before the earth (אָרֶץ) in verse 13. The section can be divided into two stanzas, which is indicated by אָרֶץ in verse 9 and the hymnic participle in verse 10. Therefore, this section begins with the establishment of earth in verse 5, as he then sets a boundary for the protection of the earth in verse 9 and ends with the satisfaction of the earth in verse 13. Apart from verse 5, this section addresses YHWH in the second person. Verses 5-9 describe YHWH rebuking the life-threatening waters and verses 10-13 portray the life-giving waters. The second section ends with the use of עשה.

The third section (14-23) comes after the indication עשה in verse 13 and before the עשה in verse 24. The section is also enveloped with the words עֲבֹדָה and אָדָם in verse 14 and אָדָם and עֲבֹדָה in verse 23. In this section, the relationships between the inhabitants of creation are described. This will be discussed further on. This section does not have עשה to indicate the beginning or ending of the section but is noticed in the middle, verse 19, which indicates the end of the first stanza. The perspective shifts from the provision of the trees, birds, and animals to the celestial elements, the moon and sun thereby giving another division within the third section: verses 14-18 and verses 19-23.

The fourth section begins with the praise in exclamation to YHWH of his עשה, signaling another start in section. In this section, the address to YHWH is all in second

person. This section seems more complicated to divide than the previous ones. Verse 24 seems to stand out in terms of description. The psalmist stops singing of the specific descriptions of creation, instead exclaiming YHWH's wisdom in verse 24 and continuing to sing of the sea creatures. Other than the change of description, the address to YHWH is all in the second person, and with the exception of one verb יצר, the rest of the verbs are all imperfect. However, if we note the change of description from sea creatures to the summary of "all things," there may be a division between 24-26 and 27-30.

The fifth section also begins with the works of YHWH in the noun form, מַעֲשָׂיו in verse 31 with wishes in the jussive. As has been mentioned, the section ends with verse 35, with the self-exhortation forming an *inclusio* with verse 1.

Judging by the frequent use of עשה, the overall theme is focused on the works of God. However, when speaking of the specific works of God in each of the second (13), third (16), and fourth section (28), we are able to notice the word, "satisfy" (שבַּע). If repetitive words indicate the main theme of a psalm, then the repetition of "works" and "satisfies" could be the overall theme of Ps 104: the God who makes and works relentlessly for his creation, and every element of creation satisfied in God's work. We might also add that the motif of a gardener who persistently works for the well-being of his garden and the inhabitants satisfied with his care fits into the overall theme of Psalm 104.

5.2 Rhetorical Analysis of Ps 104

While the structure above gives us a certain perspective on Ps 104, there is still much to discuss in details. A closer look into the psalm will hopefully reveal some of its artistry in terms of its composition and persuasion.

Ps 104 opens with a self-exhortation to bless YHWH. This self-exhortation, as has been mentioned, forms an *inclusio* (v. 1, 35), shaping a literary unit³¹⁹ and provides a sense of unity. The first section from verse 1 to 4 functions as a prologue, defining and specifying the self-exhortation to YHWH.³²⁰ By using participial phrases, YHWH is portrayed as one clothed with splendor and majesty, which is typically known as the equipment of the king.³²¹ The light is his garment and it stretches out in the heavens like a tent (v. 2). Hossfeld mentions that certain ancient Near Eastern deities are said to have a “fearful shine,” and he links it to the Babylonian god of the underworld, Nergal.”³²² Also other Biblical passages point to image of a king when describing the clothing of God.³²³

Verse 3 continues by speaking of the construction of the “beams of his chambers” and the clouds and wind as YHWH’s means of transportation. YHWH making “the clouds his chariot,” “riding on the wings of the wind,” and making the “winds his messengers and flames of fire his servants” are reminiscent of ancient nature-

³¹⁹ Ps 103 also shares the phrase “Bless YHWH O my soul” at the beginning and ending of the psalm.

³²⁰ 11QPs^a has “our God” instead of “my God” thus instating a communal sense to the psalm.

³²¹ 1Chr 16:27; Ps 21:5; Pss 21:6; 45:4; 96:6; 104:1; 111:3

³²² Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms*, 49. Dion also points this out and mentions that the vocabulary of clothing is much like Ps 104:1b-2a. Dion, “YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god,” 62.

³²³ Pss 21:6; 45:4; 96:6.

mythology.³²⁴ Broyles specifically mentions that these images echo the Canaanite god Baal, “the rider of the clouds” and Marduk in the Enuma Elish.³²⁵

It seems that the first section, is consistent with its portrayal of YHWH as king. The type of clothing that is given to YHWH, the indication of his royal chambers, and the parallels that are shared between this psalm and Baal, the cloudrider, as mentioned previously, assert the power of YHWH, the creator and his position as the ruler and king of the world thus deserving the psalmist’s praise.

In verses 5-9, YHWH establishes³²⁶ the foundations of the earth and rebukes the life-threatening waters, תְּהוֹם. Here, the תְּהוֹם reminds us of Gen 1. However, while תְּהוֹם is pre-existing in Genesis, YHWH is responsible for it in Ps 104. Also, in the Genesis account, God establishes the foundations of the earth and separates the waters by simply speaking. On the other hand, Ps 104 sings of YHWH “rebuking” the waters, which implies conflict and is thus consistent with the image of the God of the skies subduing the seas.

As the psalmist continues to portray creation, the image of YHWH takes a sharp turn. Up to this point, YHWH is a figure of a king who hands out verdicts to the ones that are life-threatening. But in the next stanza, YHWH seems to be concerned with the well-being of the inhabitants of the creation (10-13). The waters are no longer the waters that threaten the world (תְּהוֹם), but they are springs that flow through the valleys between the hills and giving life to the earth. YHWH re-channels the life-threatening waters to

³²⁴ Weiser, *Psalms*, 667.

³²⁵ Broyles, *Psalms*, 398. This point has been discussed in detail in chapter 2.

³²⁶ In the MT the word for “established” is in the qal form, perfect aspect, indicating that the YHWH’s work for establishing the earth is finished. And *timot* (תִּמּוֹט), the imperfect in the second colon, emphasizes the concept of the first colon as a cause-result type of line. In other words, the land, because it has been established, can never be moved.

become life-giving waters. The waters become a drink to the beasts and wild donkeys, and thus even the birds are happily singing in the branches of well-watered trees. The “springs” (מַעְיָן) are an instrument of “life-giving.” The creation is joyful and satisfied; their thirst is quenched because the creator “makes springs go into valleys” (v. 10). The word “flow” (הִלֵּךְ) is used in the second colon, adding a sense of water gushing out with speed and abundance. The two verbs “give water” (שָׁקָה) and “break” (שָׁבַר) in verse 11 are both in the imperfect form signifying a continuous state. YHWH provides them with the water continuously and his providence of water is neither sparing nor limited; it is abundant.

The water that the Lord is providing is not only for the beasts but also for the birds (v. 12). The foliage (עֲפָאִים) portrays branches that are filled with leaves. The water that the Lord provides is not only for the beasts and birds but they are also for the vegetation of the earth. From the “upper rooms of his palace”, he waters the mountains and the earth becomes full with fruit. In this stanza, YHWH is the one that “makes springs gush forth”(v. 10), who “causes the beasts to drink”(v. 11) and the one who “waters the mountains”(v. 13). Historically, the source of water was critical in the subsistence of humans and animals.³²⁷ The limited amount of water, which relied on seasonal rains, made it challenging for agriculture in ancient Israel. The key point made about the seasonal rainfalls is that the rain, which was relatively low, was concentrated in the four to six months in the winter. Therefore, water sources such as streams, springs, wells, cisterns, and reservoirs were utilized to supply the lack of water. In this case, the springs, which were a work of nature rather than the man-made, is attributed to the works

³²⁷ “Water is so basic to life that it is one of the commonest metaphors in the Bible.” King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 122.

of YHWH (Ps 104:10-11).³²⁸

Verses 14-18, the third section sings of YHWH's provision for animals and humans. The livestock and humans (vv. 14-15), the birds and storks (17), and the wild goats and rock badgers (v. 18) have food and a place to call home due to YHWH's provision. But the emphasis that underlines this section is YHWH being the "planter" as observed in verse 15 as the one who "causes the grass and plants to grow", and in verse 16, "the cedars of Lebanon that you planted." The stanza begins with the hiphil participle form of נָצַח, "causing the grass to grow." In the same form, this word also appears in Gen 2:9, as the readers witness YHWH "causing the tree to grow" in the Garden of Eden. The psalm continues to state that YHWH also causes the plants to grow as the result of human labor, recognizing the role of humanity. YHWH causes the plants to grow so that man can cultivate and bring forth bread, wine, and oil.³²⁹ The role of the "planter" seems to be shared with the man. Also, in verse 15, the three essentials of the well-being of a human are accredited to YHWH.³³⁰

The bread, which would have needed wheat, is a symbol for basic human need in life. But here, YHWH not only provides bread but also wine for the happiness of the human heart and oil for the beauty of the human. Wine implies the growth of grapes therefore indicating an implicit vineyard (נֶחְלֵף), which was counted as one of the semantic fields of a "garden." Wine required several years for vines to produce grapes of high quality. Therefore, having a vineyard that bears good grapes for wines would entail a

³²⁸ These springs were an important source of life in the OT. Ein-Gedi, an oasis on the west shore of the Dead Sea and where David took refuge holds significance because it shows a source of life. *Ibid.*, 123.

³²⁹ c.f. Joel 2:19.

³³⁰ Hossfeld mentions "the triad of 'wine, oil, bread' belongs to the well-known triad of so-called basic foods in the Near East (cf. Deut 8:8 and Qoh 9:7-8 in analogy to "grain, wine, oil" in Deut 7:13)." Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms*, 53.

highly stabilized society of viticulture which is why post-exilic texts such as Jeremiah 32:15; Isaiah 5:1-7 speaks of restoration in terms of not only bringing back houses and fields but also vineyards in the land. Also, as King and Stager point out, harvesting grapes in ancient Israel was a joyous occasion, coupled with singing and shouting (Isa 16:10; also Jer 48:33). Also, the story in Judges 21 shows that the women of the town danced around the vineyards (Jud 21:21).³³¹ So when the psalmist of Ps 104 points out that YHWH gives wine to gladden the hearts of human beings, it not only implies a successful harvesting of grapes and well- manufactured wine, but also a stabilized society.

The oil (שֶׁן) functioned as both sacral and cosmetic.³³² But in the case of Ps 104, it is likely that it is referring to the cosmetic use rather than sacral due to the phrase, “oil to make the face shine” (15). King mentions that these types of oils were used as perfumes and cosmetics. They were “worn by both women and men, rich and poor, in ancient Israel.”³³³ The oil was used to deodorize and protect the skin from the sun. In Ruth 3:3, Naomi instructs Ruth to bathe and “oil” herself before she presents her before Boaz. In Est 2:12, the women would go through a six-month period beautification period of oil of myrrh and a six-month period of ointments. The oil in Ps 104 indicates that it is from YHWH. The word “heart of the people” (לִבְבֵי-אֲנָשִׁים) appears twice in this verse. YHWH provides for the people so that their hearts are glad, their faces shine, and their hearts are sustained. Human satisfaction is an important factor in Psalm 104, while in Genesis 1, it is God’s satisfaction that plays a central role. More importantly, there is a motif of a garden in this verse. Stordalen mentions that this verse indicates a garden by

³³¹ For more on grapes and wine: King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 98-101.

³³² *Ibid.*, 280.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 280.

saying, “the vine and fig is a center and minimum of a Hebrew garden.”³³⁴

Verse 16 with the most explicit image of YHWH as a gardener, suggests the trees are indebted to YHWH and that YHWH himself plants the trees of Lebanon. The creation’s satisfaction is for the “land”(v. 13), “the hearts of the people” (v. 15), and now the “trees”(v. 16). The trees of YHWH in verse 16, we should perhaps read, “the trees of Shaddai.” The LXX has “The trees of the plain (του πεδιου) shall be fed” (NET). However, the apparatus suggests that perhaps the original was *shaddai*, as the divine name, and the Septuagint translator may have misread *shaddai* for *saddai*, thus another divine name. Broyles notes that *Shaddai* in verse 16, along with El in verse 21 could reflect to a wider Semitic culture. *El* in the Ugaritic tables and *Shaddai* at Deir Alla.³³⁵ The divine titles may echo the Levantine exemplar to which the author of Psalm 104 is responding. Also if we consider the possibility that the Hymn to Aten could have found its way through the Levant through the Armana letters 108 and 147, this could be another chronological and geographical link.

The trees of Lebanon, as a symbol of great quality trees, indicate that YHWH is the planter of the finest trees. YHWH is the subject and he is the one who is planting (נטע) the cedars of Lebanon. Broyles mentions a striking image of Yahweh as a “gardener.” He continues by saying that the “OT doctrine of creation is not merely about the distant past (the “beginning”); it is also about the Creator, who personally oversees the promotion of life and order.”³³⁶ The image of the satisfied trees continues. Now that the thirst of the trees is quenched and they are satisfied, they are utilized for other creatures to rest in

³³⁴ Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 86.

³³⁵ Email, dated Nov 1, 2013. See also Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 46-60.

³³⁶ Broyles, *Psalms*, 399.

them. The trees give birds a place to rest, and the stork makes home in those trees. In the second colon of this verse, there is the “juniper” (שִׁיטִּי) or “evergreen.”³³⁷ This is the second time that the psalmist portrays birds (12, 17). Verse 18 shows us that the mountains that were watered in verse 13 are a habitat for the goats and hyrax. Even in the high mountains where people do not go, YHWH still provides for the animals that live there. In this strophe, the poet sings of the matters on earth. Interestingly, this strophe consists of two levels of satisfaction. YHWH causes to do something and it results in the benefit of not only the object itself but also for the object’s inhabitants. There is a connection and order between the inhabitants of creation. In other words, YHWH creates a world that has specific ways of mechanism so that inhabitants work within a system. Hossfeld says “the chain of production is retained: YHWH gives the plants, which people must cultivate so as to produce food, with God’s help.”³³⁸

This strophe shows that YHWH is not only interested in the habitation or existence of creation, but that he is also the one who enriches the lives of the animals and the humans. The creator is portrayed as a God who not only creates but also take cares and satisfies his creation, like a gardener who not only plants but also continuously takes care of them. The connections made between the objects of creation are very much like a garden where the objects of a garden can also become benefactors to other inhabitants or the owner of a garden. This psalm not only promotes the beauty of creation itself but also equally projects the art of the mechanism in the world.

The next stanza (19-23) displays a setting for not only the animals of the daytime but for those of the nighttime. Interestingly, the moon appears before the sun, and its

³³⁷ There is a text critical issue in this verse: the LXX has “the home of the heron leads them” (ἡγείται αὐτῶν) which Hebrew word is קראשם.

³³⁸ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms*, 52.

function is the center of interest. The moon is there for the marking of seasons, for appointed times, or “festivals” according to Hossfeld’s translation.³³⁹ The sun has its time for setting and then at night, the beasts and young lions rely on him for their food (v. 21).³⁴⁰ By mentioning the moon marking the seasons (v. 19, a), the sun going down (v. 19, b), the rising of the sun (v. 22, b’), and the evening (v. 23, a’), the psalm indicates that there is an *inclusio* in the stanza. In the second colon of verse 19, “the sun knows when to go down” denotes that the sun is setting according to a schedule. This shows that rather than the sun having a divine power, as we have seen through the hymn to Aten, it seems that the psalmist is simply noting that they are also creations of YHWH and they exist and move according specific job description. Even the seasons and days are in the hand of the YHWH.

In Gen 1:2, “darkness” (חָשֶׁךְ) is used with “the deep” (תְּהוֹמוֹת). While God mentions that it is good after the creation of light, he does not mention that darkness (חָשֶׁךְ) is good. But in Psalm 104:20-21, darkness is not associated with the deep (תְּהוֹמוֹת). Even darkness is in the hands of YHWH and it exists for good reasons. Alter mentions that “darkness is not a mythological realm of terrors but part of the diurnal cycle controlled by God.”³⁴¹ Darkness and night are also under the providence of YHWH. The night is not portrayed as an evil time but simply a time when the beasts and especially the lion benefit from the creator. According to the Psalmist, the animals are still dependant on God at night. Another lexical term for a type of garden, “forest” (יַעַר), appears in verse 20 as a place for the beasts. According to Isa 32:15; 29:17, the “forest” is considered to be “larger” than

³³⁹ Ibid., 43.

³⁴⁰ The divine epithet, in this case is El (אֱלֹהִים) rather than YHWH.

³⁴¹ R. Alter, *The Book of Psalms: a Translation with Commentary* (New York: WW Norton, 2007), 365.

the orchard (כרמל). Stordalen mentions that the “forests” would have been ecologically more durable than gardens.³⁴²

In verse 22, the animals work at night and rest during daytime, and the people rest at night and work while it is bright. All of the daily routine of the creatures and people is structured according to the Lord’s schedule. The psalm also stays away from the notion that the people are the center of creation. Psalm 104 shows YHWH’s care and affection for the creation, which only *includes* the people. Mays correctly notices that there is not an anthropocentric claim in this psalm. He says “in the praise of the creator, the human being sees itself simply as one of the creatures sustained by the providence of God.”³⁴³

The beginning of the fourth section is indicated by עשה (v. 24) once again. And the indication of “all” in verses 24 and 27 help us notice the structure. Also, in this section YHWH is addressed in the 2nd person. Verse 24 seems to function as a reflection of wonder and awe for YHWH. Here, this interim reflection of praise is accredited to all of YHWH’s works (עשה) and his wisdom (חִכְמָה). This indicates some wisdom thinking in this psalm. The poet meditates (v. 34) on the Lord’s creation and realizes that without the Lord’s wisdom, nothing is possible. This reveals a significant difference with the account in Genesis 1. In Genesis 1, it is the commands of God that are emphasized, but in Psalm 104, the wisdom is of interest. For the poet, חִכְמָה is the essence of creation. Also, the wisdom is not only for the creating moment itself but it is also for the continuing reigning of the Lord, the nurturing of the Lord, and the satisfaction that the Lord gives to the creation.³⁴⁴

³⁴² Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 39.

³⁴³ J. L. Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 334.

³⁴⁴ Allen mentions the Egyptian *Onomastica* as a general parallel with Psalm 104, which also has wisdom elements due to the listing of animals.

Verses 25-26 include the sea creatures. The vast sea with the much-feared ships and the Leviathan are all playfully frolicking in the sea with the other innumerable sea creatures. The Leviathan, which is typically known to be a sea monster that has multiple heads, was an animal of chaos. But here, that is not the case. The “monster of the sea” is demythologized.³⁴⁵ Allen rightly says that the fear of “foreign boats and marine giants” are “transmuted by his portrayal of them as frisky, puppy like being, as much a product of Yahweh’s creative work as anything else.”³⁴⁶ The ships and sea monster that are feared are portrayed as toy ships and a pet fish to YHWH.

The next stanza, verses 27-30, reflects on creation and begins with “all.” “All of these” (כֻּלָּם), in verse 27, are more than just the fish and the leviathan. “All of them” refer to all the animals of the land, sky and sea. This verse is also linked with verse 24 with the word “all.” As verse 24 reveals, all things have been created by his wisdom (חָכְמָה), and the Lord provides for all things that have been created by his wisdom. All creation waits for the Lord’s providence, which he gives in his time. In other words, they all rely on the Lord for their existence.

The theological reflections in verses 27-30 also portray YHWH in an anthropomorphic way. The hands of YHWH, the face of YHWH, and the breath of YHWH controls and continues to bless the world. Gunkel asserts that the Lord is introduced as a “farmer”³⁴⁷ in this verse. As YHWH opens his hands, all creatures of the world are satisfied. It is as if YHWH is not only planting but is also generously giving by

³⁴⁵ Broyles, *Psalms*, 400.

³⁴⁶ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 34.

³⁴⁷ Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 451.

opening his hand for all creation to eat, sustain, and enjoy their lives.³⁴⁸ And so once again the creation is satisfied. This is the third time that the word “satisfied” appears in this psalm (vv. 13, 16, 28). After the poet mentions the “hand” of the Lord, he comments on the “face” (פנה) of the Lord (v. 29), and the “breath” (רוח) of the Lord (v. 30). It seems that the psalmist uses רוח as the “breath” or “spirit” of YHWH rather than the “wind.” The “wind” was mentioned in verse 3 as a means of YHWH’s transportation, which is different from רוח that creates.

Verse 29, unlike the other verses in this psalm, has a negative tone: “When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.” But this strophe does not end with this threat. The poet continues by mentioning the phrases “life-giving” and possibly a “new creation.” The creation always has the threat of death but the “breath” (רוח) of YHWH continues it.³⁴⁹

The verb “create” (ברא), in verse 30 is followed by another verb “renew” (חדש). Hossfeld writes that rather than being a restoration of something that existed or it being a completely new creation it is the “renewal of fauna and flora in the one creation constantly sustained by God.”³⁵⁰ In this verse, the “creating” (ברא) and “sustaining” (חדש) are only possible when YHWH chooses to send forth his “breath” (רוח).

The last strophe of this psalm (31-35) begins with a plea for the glory of YHWH to endure forever and for YHWH to have joy in his creation. In verse 32 the psalm portrays YHWH as the one who “looks on the earth and it trembles” and makes “the mountains smoke” with his touch. YHWH, who has worked with his hands, face, and

³⁴⁸ Job 12:7-10 also describes a world that is dependent of the hand of YHWH rather than the hand of humans. In fact, the animals, birds, plants, and fish seem know better than human beings.

³⁴⁹ The LXX has *πνευμα* for this word.

³⁵⁰ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms*, 57.

breath, now “looks” at the earth, and “touches the mountains.” His eyes and hands are implicitly portrayed in this verse. His look makes the earth tremble. “Smoke” seems to reveal the explicit presence of YHWH. Berlin recognizes that this is a language of theophany and is therefore reminiscent of Exodus 19:18, where Mt. Sinai is in smoke and shaking.³⁵¹ There are also several verses that indicate the presence of God with “smoke” (Ex 20:18; Is 4:5; Is 6:4; 65:5).³⁵² While the touch of YHWH making the mountains smoke is remindful of Sinai, it also echoes the storm-god imagery, which was discussed above. It is most likely that the psalmist is alluding to these images to imply the power and authority of YHWH. The psalmist then has a personal request to YHWH, that the Psalmist’s meditation be acknowledgeable and pleasing to YHWH because he “rejoices” in him. This also indicates that the role of the psalmist is to rejoice in YHWH.

After the poet vows to sing praise to the Lord for all his life and pleads that his mediation is pleasing to the Lord, he suddenly speaks about the sinners and the wicked. The psalm indicates a plea for the vanishing of the sinners and the wicked. But rather than this addition being a dissonance in the psalm, or an “editorial gesture of piety,” as some suggest,³⁵³ Eaton believes that this part is the climax of the psalm and the ruining of the sinners and the wicked is more than appropriate.³⁵⁴ Calvin mentions that the wicked abuse their gifts from God and they cause the world to be corrupt and offensive, and that the poet’s desire for them to be exterminated is therefore justified.³⁵⁵ Broyles says that in this verse the “principle of nature is extended to the religious and moral realms” and

³⁵¹ Berlin, "The Wisdom of Creation in Psalm 104," 75.

³⁵² Other uses of smoke (אֲשָׁרָה): (1) the Lord’s anger (Deut 29:19; 2Sam 22:9; Ps 18:8; 74:1; 80:5; 144:5; Is 14:31; 65:5); (2) general smoke : (Gen 15:17; Josh 8:20; 21; Judg 20:38; 40; Job 41:20; Song 3:6; Is 7:4; 9:18; 14:31; 34:10; 51:6; Hos 13:3; Joel 2:30; Nah 2:13) (3) Name of place or person : Josh 15:42; 19:7; 1Sam 30:30; 1Chr 4:32; 6:59)

³⁵³ Alter, *Psalms*, 368.

³⁵⁴ Eaton, *The Psalms*, 364.

³⁵⁵ J. Calvin and J. Anderson, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdsman, 1847), 171.

therefore “the sinners who, corrupt the religious order, and the wicked, who corrupt the moral and social order, should vanish from God’s ordered creation.”³⁵⁶ He also says that the psalm celebrates that each creature has its ecological niche. The last stanza expresses the desire that YHWH find joy in his creation (v. 31) and the confession that humans are to bring him joy (v. 34). But sinners and wicked are the one creature who rebel from their niche.³⁵⁷ Thus, in light of the context of the psalm, as the psalmist envisions a harmonious creation, where all is under the providence of YHWH, there is no room for the immoral and sinful. While the psalm sings of the perfection of creation, it indicates the sinners and wicked that rebel. The psalm then ends with an imperative self-exhortation and forms an *inclusio* with verse 1. It also adds another form of praise, hallelujah.

³⁵⁶ Broyles, *Psalms*, 401.

³⁵⁷ Email, dated Oct 6, 2013.

6 Psalm 104 and Garden Imagery

Psalm 104 is very rich in images of YHWH as creator and sustainer. The psalm alone presents different concepts and ideas that are difficult to synthesize and offer one single image of YHWH. The parallels with foreign gods, such as its similarities with Hymn to Aten and the weather god, which we have examined, add more difficulties for the modern reader. However, the psalmist still seems to have no trouble in applying all of these images and concepts to YHWH. Also, considering the “art of persuasion”, where a rhetorical approach gives attention to the intention of the author, it seems there are some elements of the psalm that seems to allude to a certain image. The abundant trees, plants, animals, birds, aquatic creatures, the re-direction of the waters, the life-giving waters, the “breath of YHWH,” worship, the mechanism that signifies a sense of control, wisdom, power, allusions of paradisiacal features, and the “re-creation” are all reminiscent of not only the garden of Eden but also ancient gardens.

If we take the elements and the symbolism that have been drawn for the ancient gardens, they were also found in places in Gen 2-3, the Garden of Eden, and they also seem to be noticeable in this psalm as well. As an ancient garden’s important feature was its *greenness*, Ps 104 also portrays creation with its grass and plants growing (v. 14), and the trees, especially the cedars of Lebanon, that are planted and watered by YHWH (v. 16). The presence of a tree from Lebanon reminds us of an ancient garden, which usually consisted of foreign species of trees, plants, and flowers. Not only that, Stordalen notes, “Lebanon is symbolically synonymous with lexemes from the field “garden.””³⁵⁸ Hos

³⁵⁸ Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 164.

14:2-10 offers us a more vivid picture, where we have “forests of Lebanon” along with an olive tree, garden, and vineyard.³⁵⁹ “The trees of YHWH” (v. 16) are also implicit of a garden imagery.

As *animals* played an important part in ancient gardens, in Ps 104 animals comprise a more complete portrayal of an ancient garden. The wild animals and asses (v. 11), birds (v. 12), cattle (v. 14), birds and storks (v. 17), wild goats, coneys (v. 18), animals of the forest (v. 20), young lions (v. 21), small and great sea creatures, and the Leviathan (vv. 25-26) all look up to YHWH for food. The animals are dependant on their keeper, YHWH, who opens his hand to provide for them. The imagery is much like a zoological garden where the gardener is responsible for the animals, birds, and fish in the pond. The garden is amplified to the world and the gardener is YHWH.

Waters were also a significant element in an ancient garden and two aspects of the waters were given attention: the control of life-threatening waters and the provision of life-giving waters. Ps 104 has both aspects. The life-threatening waters, which were associated with *chaos*, is the “deep” (v. 6) in Ps 104. YHWH rebukes them and redirects them up to the mountains and down to the valleys where YHWH has appointed them to be. He also sets a “boundary” so that they do not harm the inhabitants again. The life-giving water, which has been noted as “one of the gardens’ chief attractions,”³⁶⁰ are also noticeable in Ps 104. Verses 10-13 portray waters in forms of “springs” that flow between valleys and hills and “streams” and give animals a quenching drink, and the birds now have a place to live (vv. 11-12). YHWH waters the mountains to the point where the “earth is satisfied” (v. 13).

³⁵⁹ Stordalen also mentions Ezekiel 31, Isa 33:9, Song 4:5, Jer 22:6 as well. Ibid., 164.

³⁶⁰ Dalley, *Hanging Garden of Babylon*, 154.

The *sun* also appears in Ps 104. It may not be the central theme of the psalm as we have seen in the hymn to the sun-god Aten, but it nevertheless plays a part in creation. In this case, the sun knows its time for setting (v. 19). When it sets the darkness appears and night creatures come out and enjoy their time as they seek food from God. When the sun rises, it is time for people to go work.

The *scent* in an ancient garden has also been discussed in terms of ancient Near Eastern gardens. The natural scent of the trees, flowers, and fruit would greet its inhabitants. In addition, incense was burned and perfume was manufactured from gardens. It has been noted by Dalley that the scent in a garden was translated to the deity's breath. The scent was the divine breath of a deity and it was considered a blessing to be in the midst of the "breath" of a god. Although the breath of YHWH does not trigger the sense of scent, nevertheless, in Ps 104:29, YHWH's breath is crucial for the survival of the beings that live in creation. The breath of YHWH is also a blessing; it creates life and renews the ground.³⁶¹

The psalm, with its hymnic character, sings of the care and sustenance of YHWH. As ancient gardens held places for worship, such as temples, shrines, and paintings of deities on walls, Ps 104 also has elements of *worship*. Verses 1 and 35, which envelop the psalm, feature a self-encouragement, which praises and blesses YHWH. Verse 24 pauses to sing of the manifoldness of his works and verses 33-34 express the desire of the psalmist to please YHWH with his meditation and singing. Also, as temples were a

³⁶¹ Dalley mentions some expressions from the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary such as "the fruit tree on which a god's breath has blown thrives"; a prayer addressed to a god, "your speech is a sweet breath, the life of the lands." She also asserts that the king wearing perfume was also regarded authority originating from the gods by quoting this text: "Let the breath of the Pharaoh not leave us: we are keeping the gate locked until the breath of the king reaches us." *ibid.*, 161. n. 18. Dalley refers to the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, vol. Š, s.v. šāru. This has been noted in Chapter 2.

medium between god and the king and functioned as a place of “viewing”, the psalm also sings of YHWH’s face (v. 29), and his “looking” (v. 32) upon the earth from his “lofty abode” (v. 13).

There is a symbolism of *control* in Ps 104 as well. As the Egyptian temple featured a “formal, strictly ordered arrangement” and “perfect world order”,³⁶² Ps 104 also boasts of YHWH’s control over the world. His open hands (v. 28), unhidden face (v. 29), and the creating power of his breath (v. 30) are all attributes of YHWH’s control. He makes the inhabitants for each other so that they function with a specific network. Also, the mentioning of YHWH setting boundaries to keep the life-threatening waters out (v. 9) and the psalmist’s pleas to be rid of the sinners and wicked (v. 35) give the sense of a safe and “enclosed” environment.

We have discussed that providing waters to a hostile environment for a well-built garden was considered as *wisdom* in the ancient Near East. The engineering of redirected waters and craftsmanship to build a desirable garden were an important quality in building a garden. While the re-direction of waters and a well-functioning creation in Ps 104 might allude to wisdom, there is, more importantly, the explicit use of the word “wisdom” in verse 24. Although the psalm may not be considered as a “wisdom psalm” there are nevertheless elements that suggest a wisdom theme, with the banishment of the sinners and wicked.³⁶³

The gardens of the ANE symbolized *power* because it signified the fertility of the land and the success of the king’s conquest. The king’s ability to build a garden with a specific design and with foreign species made a political statement, particularly, that the

³⁶² Germer, "Gardens," *OEA* 2: 5.

³⁶³ Berlin, "The Wisdom of Creation in Psalm 104," 75.

king was powerful. The psalm, by utilizing the storm-god imagery, with its *chaoskampf* motif (v. 3-4), and by portraying YHWH as king (v. 1-2), alludes to the power and success of YHWH. His success is intensified with the indication of the foreign cedars of Lebanon (v. 16), which are planted by him, and the ships and Leviathan (v. 26) “play” under his control.

Ps 104 also has allusions of a *paradise*. It portrays a harmonious world where the waters gush forward for the trees, the trees become a place for the birds that sing (v. 12), the stork has a home (v. 17), the coneys have refuge (v. 18), and the humans have not only bread for survival but also have wine to gladden their hearts and oil for cosmetic uses. This sense of enclosure mentioned above also adds to the motif of a paradise.

The gardens of the ancient Near East also had a *re-creational* character. At times, the gardens represented their understanding of creation so that their world-view was embedded into the gardens. The gardens were built through a re-creating process so that they became a micro-cosmos. Thus, it is interesting to note that as an ancient garden was a representation of creation, this creation hymn is represented by an allusion of garden. Also, the psalm has a sense of “recreation” in verse 30. The breath of YHWH “creates” and he “renews” the face of the ground.

Then, is it possible to say that Ps 104 is alluding to a garden imagery? With noticeable elements from an ancient Near Eastern garden, parallels from an Egyptian hymn from a king known for garden construction, Mesopotamian storm-god, and similarities shared with the Garden of Eden, it seems reasonable to suggest that Ps 104 is mindful of an ancient garden. Therefore, the one who redirects the waters, sets boundaries, plants the trees, controls the sun and moon, opens his hand to feed the

creatures, breathes to create, and renews - in other words, one who essentially creates and sustains - seems to be the *gardener* in this cosmic garden portrayed in Ps 104.

With that in mind, some mention should be made of the theory suggested by Lang, particularly one which deals with different images of God in the Old Testament. In his book, *The Hebrew God*, Lang offers the readers a way of understanding the various images that are portrayed in the Old Testament. He bases his theory on Dumézil's "Tripartite reading", which is a cultural and anthropological theory.³⁶⁴ The "Tripartite reading" uses the human body as an analogy: The head, the upper body, and the lower body. The head represents wisdom, magicians, and sages, the upper body represents physical power, and warriors and the lower body represent human reproduction, food production, and peasants and farmers. Thus, social life is dependant on the harmony between these three functions. Each function has to fulfill its task and provide for the other levels. For example, the sages would provide the society with knowledge and experience and educate other members, while the warriors would provide protection and the farmers would provide food. According to Dumézil, such tripartite system can be found in social contexts, religion, mythology, medicine, folklore, narrative, and law.³⁶⁵

One other point that is significant in the understanding of this view is that it is consisted of one body. Lang, by using the example of "a common Indo-European myth of the first man or king,"³⁶⁶ mentions that the myth not only implies a tripartite distinction of different classes but that it is of one body, the king. Therefore the political philosophy

³⁶⁴ Lang expands Dumézil's theory from a limited cultural group, the Indo-Europeans (Germanic peoples, Celts, Scandinavians, Greeks and Romans, Hittites, Persians, and Indo-Aryans) to universal, all societies, and therefore making it applicable to the Bible. The question of how an Israelite hymn could be organized in a way that embodies the Indo-European system could be answered by its universal contents says Lang rather than the "borrowing" nature of the ideology. Bernhard Lang, *The Hebrew God : Portrait of an Ancient Deity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 4-5.

³⁶⁵ E.g., in medicine treating illness can be seen in magic spells, surgery, and herbal medicine. *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁶⁶ Lang does not identify which myth it is. *Ibid.*, 4.

that this implies is that “the king does not belong to a specific social class or group, but transcends and encompasses all social classes. Symbolizing their essential unity, he is responsible for and must promote their cooperation.”³⁶⁷

Lang approaches the Old Testament with Dumézil’s theory and finds three explicit examples that embody these three functions: Dan 7, Isa 9, and 1 Kgs 3 (Solomon’s dream). He then expands the third function into three parts due to its complexity and variety: Lord of the Animals, Lord of the Individual, and the Lord of the Harvest, thus suggesting five functions of the Hebrew God.

If we accept Lang’s approach to the Old Testament and apply it to Ps 104, it reveals to us the five images of the Hebrew God that are suggested above. In addition, the psalmist seems to be attributing all five of these images to YHWH. The first image, “the Lord of Wisdom” is apparent in verses 24 and 35. In verse 24, the psalmist contemplates the grand works of YHWH and sings, “in wisdom have you made all.” Here, it seems that psalmist is establishing that all the works that YHWH has done in creation are fruits of his wisdom (חֵכְמָה). Also, in verse 35 reveals a common wisdom theme in the Old testament, particularly in its expression of rejection towards sinners and the wicked. The second image, “the Lord of war”, can be noticed in verse 7 as YHWH rebukes the “deep” (תְּהוֹם), suggesting a *chaoscampf* imagery. YHWH uses the sound of his thunder to chase away the תְּהוֹם and establishes a boundary so that it never again covers the earth. Also, the storm-god elements that we have traced above entail the warrior imagery. The image of YHWH as a warrior is clearly a part of this psalm. The third image, “the Lord of the animals”, can be viewed, as Lang points out, in verses 10-18, 21, and 24-28.³⁶⁸ Here,

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 3.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 84-5.

YHWH's care for the animals is expressed: wild asses, birds, stork, cattle, wild goats, coneys, young lions, creatures in the sea, and even the Leviathan are dependant on YHWH for sustenance.³⁶⁹ The fourth image, "the Lord of the Individual", is expressed in verses 1, 33-35. The psalm is enveloped with the urge to the psalmist's own soul to praise YHWH. And in verses 33-34, the psalmist expresses his determination to sing to YHWH while he lives and prays that his meditation would be pleasing to YHWH. The fifth image, "the Lord of the harvest", is expressed in verses 13-15. Here, harvesting is an important stage in mechanism of creation. The grass is grown for the cattle, and the plants are for the people to use in order to have food, bread, wine, and oil. Lang mentions that the "weather god" imagery is apparent in this part of the psalm and that the psalmist is interested in the caring of the creations and humans, by supplying water with a "hydraulic system."³⁷⁰

All the images that are suggested by Lang can be noticed in Ps 104. Also, on what Lang calls a "tripartite completeness,"³⁷¹ the different levels cooperating in harmony are significant in the understanding of Ps 104 as well. The mechanism that makes the whole creation work and function together is also an important aspect that is portrayed in Ps 104. YHWH, rather than working on separate parts of creation, is working so that the created elements work together, support each other, and utilize each other. The sun and moon work together to mark the seasons, the grasses are important food for the cattle, and the wine, oil, and bread to offer humans a sustainable environment.

It seems that all the images that are described by Lang, are all embedded within

³⁶⁹ Lang limits Ps 104:10-18, 21, 24, 28 to the image of "God as Lord of the animals." He also refers to the Egyptian hymn to Aten implying that the psalmist had some knowledge of the "Divine Gamekeeper." *ibid.*, 84-5.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

the text of Ps 104, and is attributed to YHWH as a whole, therefore suggesting YHWH as the king. Therefore, it seems that the Psalmist has utilized all these images for one purpose - to attribute all the different functions to one God, YHWH.

However, this psalm in particular seems to have more emphasis on the third, fourth, and fifth images: the Lord of the animals, individual, and harvest. These images are implicitly reminiscent of the works of a gardener. If we also take notice of the similarities that Ps 104 shares with the account of the Garden of Eden in Gen 2-3, it seems to suggest a garden motif, as the whole creation is a garden and YHWH is the universal royal gardener. At the same time, we need to keep in mind that the rhetorical elements of this psalm are not only to add artistic beauty to the psalm but also to “persuade” its readers.³⁷² The implicitness, the indirectness, and the un-apparentness of the psalm give the readers an illusion of a divine royal gardener planting and tending all the inhabitants of the world as a careful and compassionate gardener would do to his or her garden.

6.1 The Garden Imagery in the New Testament

The use of the imagery of a garden goes beyond the Old Testament and seems to aid the theology of the New Testament. The use of *κῆπος*, a garden, appears 4 times in the New Testament (Luke 13:19; John 18:1; 18:26; 19:41). Luke uses it as Jesus speaks about the kingdom of God, and how it is like a mustard seed that grows in a garden. While there is some allusion to the garden in Luke, it is John who seems to take more

³⁷² The element of “persuasion” in the Rhetorical Approach on page 102.

interest in the gardenic imagery. Among the four times that *κῆπος* is used, three of them are in the last few chapters of the Gospel of John and they function as an important place in the ministry of Jesus. It is the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus and his disciples pour out their hearts to God in prayer. It is also the garden of resurrection where Jesus is buried after his death (John 19:41). Most importantly, it is the garden of resurrection where Mary Magdalene mistakes Jesus for a *κηπουρος*, a gardener (John 20:15).

Implicitly, the Gospel of John seems to be alluding to Jesus as the royal gardener. It is also significant to note that the first garden was a place for the first Adam, whereas the garden of resurrection was a place for the second Adam, Jesus.

Also, the word *παράδεισος*, a Persian loanword associated with a heavenly experience, meaning “paradise” was used in the NT three times (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 12:4; Rev 2:7). In Luke 23:43, Jesus is being crucified with two criminals on both his sides. Interestingly, while one of the criminals asks Jesus to remember him when he enters his kingdom (*βασιλεία*), Jesus promises him that he would be in paradise (*παράδεισος*) with him. 2 Corinthians 12:4 also uses the *παράδεισος* to describe a heavenly experience and Revelation 2:7 talks of the fruit of the tree of life in paradise. The interest of a heavenly experience is noticed in the form of a garden.

Another implicit mention of a garden is noticed in the portrayal of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 22:1-2. It describes a garden next to the new city where there is the river of the water of life that flows through, the tree of life that bears fruit, and the leaves of the trees that are used to heal the nations. Thus, it is clear, that the garden imagery has its place in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

6.2 Conclusion

The focus of this study was to investigate whether YHWH was portrayed as a cosmic gardener in Psalm 104. With the methodologies stated in previous chapters, we have come to the conclusion that the way YHWH is portrayed in Ps 104 alludes to a royal gardener, where the world is his garden. This has offered us a glimpse of Israelite thinking of creation, that the creation was understood not just with respect to its origins but also its current state. We have also seen that the aspect of *creatio continua* is intensified by the notion of YHWH as a cosmic gardener, who not only created the world but also who *continues* to tend and care for his creation.

The studies on the ancient Near Eastern gardens were a helpful guide for us to understand what an ancient garden was, what it consisted of, and what they may have symbolized. It was revealed to us that gardens were a fairly ancient institution, and were created as early as the third millennium. Archaeological and textual evidence on ancient gardens is abundant. As gardens from different cultural and temporal backgrounds differed slightly, many of the gardens consisted not only of flowers, plants, and trees, but also animals, birds, and fish. Decorations with paintings on the walls of the gardens increased the experience for the one that walked through them. Providing water for the gardens was essential and at times, there were sophisticated ways of completing this task. In a general sense, the gardens were used for the aesthetic purposes and they signified peace, joy, care, and abundance. However, they were not only used for the enjoyment of people, but also for projecting a symbolic message of success and prosperity. The royal gardens were particularly designed to boast the political success of a king and his

kingdom.

The royal gardens also featured elements that emphasized the protection and blessing of the deity and this is where we began to see elements of worship mixed in with the ancient gardens' symbolic and practical uses. The amount of work, the complexity of building and maintaining a garden was noted and that ancient kings and even deities were regarded, at times, as great gardeners. The Egyptian gardens at Amarna especially allowed us to glance into the world-view of Akhenaten. His devotion towards Aten influenced the building and maintenance of the gardens. This had led us to suggest the possibility that garden imagery may have been employed in the hymn to Aten.

As we examined the psalm in question, Psalm 104, the images of a sun-god and a storm-god were noticed and were taken into consideration. It was also noted that the images were incorporated into the psalm in order to attest that YHWH is the one true God who is as benevolent as the sun-god and controls the waters for sustainment as the storm-god. The comparison between Psalm 104 and its ancient Near Eastern components has clarified that agricultural characters of the deities were most particularly shared. Therefore, it was concluded that YHWH in Psalm 104 was portrayed in a similar way to the sun-god and the storm-god because of their agricultural characteristics.

Also, an examination of the much-discussed relationship between the Hymn to Aten and Ps 104 revealed elements that suggested a relationship between the Hymn to Aten and the Amarna gardens. The Egyptian king, Akhenaten's belief and devotion to promote his god, Aten, were noticed in not only the hymn to Aten but also in the gardens that he so carefully built in Amarna. His reputation as a royal gardener reinforces the idea of a dependence between the Hymn to Aten and the gardens of Amarna.

Created in a miniature version of the world, the gardens of Amarna functioned as a microscope of the entire world. And on the other hand the Hymn to Aten was composed to portray creation alluding to the gardens in a macroscopic fashion. This suggested the possibility that if the gardens at Amarna had somehow assisted the composing and use of the Hymn to Aten, then Psalm 104, which shares elements with the Hymn to Aten, could also have been composed to be symbolic of a garden, thus suggesting that YHWH, the creator of this world, is the royal gardener.

With the possibility of a garden imagery in Psalm 104, it was necessary to investigate whether there was a coherent use of garden imagery in the Old Testament. Executing research on the semantic use of the terminology of “garden” and the use of gardens that were categorized to the Garden of Eden, royal gardens, imagery of gardens in the temple, and other gardens suggested were used as a significant feature that projected a sense of protection, benevolence, and prosperity.

The imagery of the garden and YHWH as the gardener promote a powerful image in the Old Testament and it is thus not surprising that we see that the Old Testament beginning human history within a garden. Also, as previously noted, the gardens in the Old Testament were not limited to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2-3 but also appear in the Song of Songs, the Prophets, and as the creation hymn in Psalm 104.

Also, the imagery of a garden was also found in descriptions of Solomon’s temple in 1 Kings 6-7. Gaining access to the temple, one would be reminded of a garden due to the gardenic images embedded within the temple. In many cases, the concept of a garden aided the understanding of YHWH’s care for his people, as noticed in the metaphorical use of “planting.” YHWH is also seen to be “planting” the people of Israel. In sum, the

studies of gardens in the Old Testament revealed the interest that biblical authors had towards the use of the imagery of a garden, as if the writers were invoking the readers of a sensual, aesthetical, and longing of the return to the ultimate garden. The studies of the imagery of a garden in the Old Testament prepared the platform for an in-depth examination of Psalm 104.

Performing a close examination of the literary elements of the psalm with interest in its rhetorical elements, it was revealed that the psalm demonstrated a particular dedication and passion in explicitly praising YHWH for his care for creation, but at the same time, implicitly invoking the readers to be mindful of an ancient garden. The overall theme of the psalm was to praise the Creator by giving a panoramic view of the world, but this was also done by using languages that alluded to an ancient garden. Elements that were noted in the ancient Near Eastern gardens were also noticed in Psalm 104 and more specifically, the psalm also featured elements that were also found in the Old Testament gardens. Also, most parallels were noted between the psalm and Genesis 1, but a closer examination revealed that there were also elements that allude to Genesis 2-3, where the Garden of Eden is portrayed. In Gen 2-3, YHWH was portrayed as a gardener with specific illustrations of his hands, breath, and planting. It seemed that the world that was implicitly portrayed as a garden had the ultimate cosmic gardener, YHWH. Very much like the ancient Near Eastern gardens, the creation hymn also had allusions to an ancient garden and YHWH who, “planted the trees”, was portrayed as the ultimate gardener of the world. Thus, through this particular study, it has become clear that in Psalm 104, YHWH is portrayed as the creator and sustainer who is much like a gardener that continues to care for the well-being of his creation.

As we conclude, it seems relevant to discuss the biblical theological contribution of this study. It was asserted through this study that Psalm 104 portrays YHWH as the cosmic gardener tending his creation for not only the human beings but also for all living creatures. Through this, we are able to suggest the garden imagery to the contemporary readers as an ecological understanding of the Bible, something that one might call “ecothology.”³⁷³

Psalm 104 has been considered as one of the four passages of the Bible that holds ecological significance.³⁷⁴ In 1992, the participants of the World Council of Churches wrote a letter addressed to the churches around the world calling for a rediscovery of the “eco-centric dimension of the Bible,”³⁷⁵ which begins with a reference to Psalm 104. Also, the Green Bible was published in 2008 by Harper Collins to bring up awareness in the ecological aspects within the Bible, and it did so by printing passages related to nature in green. These show that there have been efforts in realms of biblical studies to support the movements in protecting and taking care of the environment, which are well deserved as we are living in the world of constant ecological-environmental catastrophes. The call for the care of the world deserves prominent attention.

The aspect of *creatio continua* in Psalm 104 is indeed appealing to those who are concerned with ecological issues, suggesting that the continuation and maintenance of creation is of importance. Dell points out that there is a triangle relation between God, human beings, and the natural world in the Old Testament. She states, “I wish to affirm

³⁷³ Peet Van Dyk, "Challenges in the Search for an Ecotheology," *OTE* 22, no. 1 (2009): 186-204.

³⁷⁴ Psalm 104; Genesis 1-2; 9:8-17; Romans 8:18-23 were noted as the four most important passages by Michael A Bullmore, "The Four Most Important Biblical Passages for a Christian Environmentalism," *TRINJ* 19 (1998): 139-62.

³⁷⁵ James Limburg, "Down to Earth Theology: Psalm 104 and the Environment," *CurTM* 21 (1994): 340-6.

the three-way interaction of human beings, God and nature that I believe is central to the ethos of the wisdom debate and to the wider Old Testament when considered with regard to ecological issues.”³⁷⁶ The psalm portraying YHWH as a gardener who cares for creation is significant in this conversation. It is hoped that the gardener model of the Lord as the creator of the universe in the primeval time and as the sustainer of the present world order will provide a biblical foundation for the way we deal with the environment today. The royal gardener in Ps 104 who plants, waters, brings fruition, and gives joy and satisfaction to the entire creation provides an excellent role-model in our time today and speaks to us about our responsibility as the stewards of the creation to encourage those with faith to continue to tend and care for the creation, rather than merely ruling and subduing it. In this process, the psalm makes it clear that one will be able to rejoice in the Lord who creates, sustains, and blesses like a careful gardener.

³⁷⁶ K. Dell, "The Significance of the Wisdom Tradition in the Ecological Debate," in *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives* (ed. David G. Horrell; London: T & T Clark, 2010), 59-69.

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