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Course OT642/742.OA Psalms (Online)
Professor R. Russell Mack, Ph.D.
Essay 1
Due 9/18/22

Q: Discuss an interesting feature of the text.

The first Psalm has several features that stand out as noteworthy. First, it serves as a clear introduction to the entire book; highlighting the work of the entire book's redactors and editors who structured the book intentionally in this sequence. These unnamed and unknown editors bring unity and structure to what can often be misconstrued as a simple compilation of poems. The placement and content of the first Psalm enforces the fact there is an order and intentionality to the book as a whole. It introduces the entire focus of the Psalms as "a guide to life in God, a life that the psalm describes as happy" (Walford, Jacobson, Tanner; p. 58). The use of parallelism stands out as a key feature in this four-stanza poem which clearly divides the *blessed* person with the *wicked*. There is no place for ambiguity here and no mincing of words as it presents the only possible path to a happy life as one that is rooted in God's torah. It therefore provides clarity that life contains only two paths, with "choices that are not obscure" (Brueggemann , p. 39). The tree reference in verse three also evokes Genesis 1 imagery, creating hyperlinks to a symbol of paradise and sacred temple (Walford, Jacobson, Tanner; p. 64). This strong imagery creates a unity of thought that links the entire book with other OT passages, emphasizing the intentionality in the shaping and ordering of the book as a whole.

Works Cited

Claisse-Walford, Nancy L.; Jacobson, Rolf A.; Tanner, Beth LaNeel. *The Book of Psalms (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT))*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.. Kindle Edition.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*. Augsburg Publishing House, 2007.