

“Testing God” Becomes “Rejection of the Land”: Israel’s Sin in Psalm 106 in Light of the Psalm’s Chiastic Structure

Kiyoung Kim*

1. Introduction

Psalm 106 is an intriguing text as it concerns various subject matters. It begins with praise to the Lord with the petition following then switches its interest to report Israel’s history spanning from the days in Egypt to the exile in forty-eight verses. It returns and ends with another praise and petition to the Lord. Thus, scholars have tried to determine its nature and message with varying interests in the text. Some focus on its cultic aspect, while others are interested in its historical and narrative features.¹⁾ Also, scholarship has broadened its interests

* Ph.D. in Old Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Assistant Professor at Korea Baptist Theological University/Seminary. Kykim@kbut.ac.kr.

1) For the cultic aspect, see G. H. Wilson, “The Structure of The Psalter”, P. Johnston and D. G. Firth, eds., *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 245; B. Becking and E. Peels, *Psalms and Prayers: Papers Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society of Old Testament Study and Het Oud Testamentische Werkgezelschap in Nederland En Belgio, Apeldoorn August 2006* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 73, 221; C. Westermann, *The Praise of God in the Psalms* (London: Epworth Press, 1966), 114. Concerning the historical and narrative features, see H. P. Nasuti, “Historical Narrative and Identity in the Psalms”, *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 23:2 (2001), 132-153; N. Calduch-Benages and J. Liesen, eds., *History and Identity: How Israel’s Later Authors Viewed Its Earlier History*, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook, vol. 2006 (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 43-55; J. H. Hayes, *Understanding the Psalms* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1976), 126; R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical*

and delved into the psalm’s place in relation to the neighboring psalms.²⁾

Among these various issues, one of the prominent characteristics of Psalm 106 is that it deals with Israel’s sins. Scholars have noticed that Psalms 105 and 106 are a thematic pair. Psalm 105 conveys that Israel earned the promised land through God’s faithfulness to his covenant with Israel’s patriarchs (i.e., Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob); yet, Psalm 106 interprets the Torah narrative that Israel lost their land because they disobeyed God.³⁾ Therefore, the subject of Israel’s failure in Psalm 106 is a prominent theme.

This article is particularly interested in verses 13-15 and attempts to reveal these verses’ theological contribution to the psalm’s overall message in light of its structure. This article argues that verses 13-15 describe the Israelites’ fundamental issue in the wilderness, which is “testing” (נִסָּה) God, and that the chiasmic structure of Psalm 106 and verses 13-15 cooperate to exhibit the developmental process of Israel’s sin. In the structure, “testing God” becomes “jealousy of God’s ownership” and eventually culminates in Israel’s fatal failure, namely, the loss of the promised land. In reporting Israel’s sin in the wilderness, verses 13-15 locate first in the order of various events in Psalm 106.⁴⁾

Poetry, rev. and upd. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 29-73.

2) H. N. Wallace, *Psalms* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 164-165; W. P. Brown, *Psalms* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 127-128; P. R. House, “Examining the Narratives of Old Testament Narrative: An Exploration in Biblical Theology”, *The Westminster Theological Journal* 67:2 (2005), 241; S. J. Lawson and M. E. Anders, *Psalms 76-150*, Holman Old Testament Commentary, vol. 12 (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2006), 170; M. J. Steussy, *Psalms*, Chalice Commentaries for Today (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 173; A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms: Based on the Revised Standard Version*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 736; J.-A. Roetman and C. V. Hooft, “Le Psaume 106 Et Le Pentateuque”, *Etudes Theologiques et Religieuses* 85:2 (2010), 233.

3) K. Schaefer, *Psalms*, B. Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993), 262.

4) The psalm records various events as follows: the event at the wilderness/camp (vv. 13-18), Mt. Horeb (vv. 19-23), and the Tent (vv. 24-27), and the stories of Baal of Peor (vv. 28-31), the water of Meribah (vv. 32-33), and the land of Canaan (vv. 34-36).

Although verses 7-12 reveal the Israelites’ sin in Egypt and at the exodus event (v. 7), the section’s main focus lies in God’s saving work at the Red Sea (vv. 8-12). Scholars understand verse 6 in different manners. Some consider it as the keynote of the history of Israel’s sin; thus, verse 6 encompasses verses 6-46. Others include verse 6 as a part of the first event (vv. 6-12). For the former view, see E. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 236; D. Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, vol. 16 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 413. For the latter, see N. Declaissé-Walford, R. A. Jacobson, and B. L. Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 802; M. Wilcock, *The Message*

Thus, verses 13-15 exhibit the initial stage and the fundamental problem of Israel.

In order to advance the argument, this article first undertakes a poetic analysis of verses 13-15 to reveal their meanings. Second, since it argues the development of Israel's sin in Psalm 106, this article articulates the chiasmic structure of the psalm. Lastly, this article locates verses 13-15 in the chiasmic structure and demonstrates the gradual intensification of the Israelites' sin in that structure. In this way, this article highlights the Israelites' essential failure in the wilderness (vv. 13-15) as well as the function of the structure of the psalm (chiasm) in signifying the progression of the Israelites' sin and the consequences of their failure (i.e., their loss of the land).

As Mitchell Dahood points out, verses 13-15 include one of the most puzzling texts to interpret among many psalms.⁵⁾ This article suggests one way to understand the meaning of verses 13-15, especially concerning the nature of Israel's sin. Also, unlike other structural analyses, this article uniquely notices that the psalm's structure exposes the progressive nature of Israel's sin.⁶⁾

2. Analysis of Verses 13-15

2.1. Verse 13: Ignoring God's deeds

Verse 13 begins with two words, מְהֵרָה and שָׁכַחוּ. The first verb (מְהֵרָה) means that "they hastened" and the next word exhibits the Israelites' act of forgetting (שָׁכַחוּ); yet, these two words form a hendiadys as they work together.⁷⁾ In this case, שָׁכַחוּ takes the core meaning, whereas מְהֵרָה functions emphatically, so together the two words mean "they quickly forgot".⁸⁾ The verse also exhibits

of Psalms 1-150: Songs for the People of God, Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 135-136.

5) See M. J. Dahood, *Psalms III*, Anchor Bible, vol. 17A (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 71.

6) See pp. 9-10, which suggests the article's unique criteria to understand the structure of the psalm.

7) Usually, when two words construct a hendiadys, they are the same part of speech, and one word carries the central meaning, while the other intensifies the first word's meaning. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), 657.

8) M. J. Dahood, *Psalms III*, 70.

deliberate action as it is asyndeton;⁹⁾ thus, the first half of the verse means “they quickly and intentionally forgot”.¹⁰⁾

The verb שָׁכַח reminds the reader of verse 7 since it conveys a subject similar to that found in verse 13: Israel’s failure of remembering God’s deeds (לֹא זָכְרוּ) [“they did not remember”].¹¹⁾ Verse 7 notes that the Israelites’ failure to remember (לֹא זָכְרוּ) God leads them to rebel against him. In the same way, forgetting (שָׁכַח) God causes Israel to walk a sinful path.¹²⁾ What, therefore, did Israel forget? In the theological sense, שָׁכַח often appears in the context of people’s forgetting God’s saving acts, covenant, or commandment (Jdg 3:7; Isa 65:11; Eze 23:25; Hos 2:1; Jer 18:15; 23:27; Psa 44:21; Job 8:13).¹³⁾ Deuteronomy repeatedly teaches not to forget God, his deeds, and his commandments (Deu 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19; cf. Psa 78:7; 103:2).¹⁴⁾ Moreover, in the MT, the word “deed” (מַעֲשֵׂה) often relates to the works of God.¹⁵⁾ In light of

9) F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101-150* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 89; E. Gerstenberger, *Psalms*, 240; J. Goldingay, *Psalms*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 229.

10) The structure of verse 13 is as follows:

^{b1} מַעֲשֵׂיו¹ ^{a2} שָׁכַחוּ² ^{a1} מְהֵרָה³ (13a)

^{b2} לַעֲצָתוֹ¹ ^{a3} לֹא-חָבְנוּ² (13b)

Since a1 (מְהֵרָה) and a2 (שָׁכַח) form a hendiadys, a1 functions like an adverb (“quickly”); a2 (שָׁכַח) and a3 (חָבְנוּ) form a grammatical parallel (verb/3mp/perfect); b1 and b2 also stand in parallel (noun/3ms suffix) as the objects of the verbs.

11) Interestingly, in verse 13, the psalmist does not repeat the word זָכַר but instead uses שָׁכַח, which is a specific word used to intensively exhibit the human failure of remembrance in the religious sense. See where שָׁכַח and זָכַר appear as a pair: Gen 40:23; Deu 9:9; 1Sa 1:11; Isa 54:4; Pro 31:7. Thus, these two are in a relationship as antonyms. W. Schottroff, “שָׁכַח”, E. Jenni and C. Westermann, eds., *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 1322-1327.

See other examples in Psa 44:18; 45:11; 106:21; 119:61, 109; 137:5. In the book of Psalms, there are four occasions where God is used as the subject of this verb; however, these verses do not imply that God forgets his people. See Psa 10:2; 13:2 [Eng. v. 1]; 42:10; 74:19. HALOT, s.v. “מְהֵרָה”. This article uses the words “readers” and “audience” interchangeably.

12) Isa 17:10 has שָׁכַח and זָכַר together. The verse’s context reveals that the Israelites’ judgment is due to their failure to remember God and his work. J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 351, 353. See also Deu 8:19, which says that forgetting God would open the gate for judgment.

13) W. Schottroff, “שָׁכַח”, TLOT, 1322-1327.

14) Deu 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19. See also H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Continental Commentary*, Continental Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 319.

15) מַעֲשֵׂה in the MT often describes the works or deeds of God. See Exo 34:10; Deu 3:24; 11:7; Jos 24:31; Jdg 2:7, 10; Isa 5:19; 10:12; 28:21; Jer 51:10; Psa 33:4; 64:10. HALOT, s.v. “מַעֲשֵׂה”.

verses 7-12 and the word מְעַשֵּׂי, then, it is not difficult to understand that the first half of verse 13 points out the sins of Israel — that the Israelites ignore (i.e., intentionally forgot) God’s saving work, even his work at the Red Sea (vv. 7-12).¹⁶⁾

The second half of verse 13 supports the message concerning the motif of willful ignorance. The text reads, “they did not wait for” (לֹא־חָכְרוּ), and in the MT, the basic meaning of חָכַה is “to wait for”, “to be patient”, or “to tarry”. When the object of the verb חָכַה (“waits for”) is God or his work, the context often explains that the person who waits has hope of God’s intervention in one’s circumstances (Psa 33:20; Isa 8:17; 30:18; 64:4; Dan 12:12; Hab 2:3; Zep 3:8).¹⁷⁾ Yet, verse 13 ends by reporting the Israelites’ failure to wait for God’s counsel (עֲצָה).¹⁸⁾ The word “counsel” could relate to either the sinful event following verses 14-15, which parallels Numbers 11, or a more general idea of God’s salvific plan in Israel’s history. In terms of the former, the second half of verse 13 could convey that “they did not wait for God’s provision for their food”.¹⁹⁾ In terms of the latter, the motif of “not remembering” or “forgetting” appears several times throughout the distinct periods of events covered in the psalm (vv. 7, 13, 21), which suggests that the theme of “forgetting” could function as a thematic superscription that recalls the Israelites’ problem in the history of their sin.²⁰⁾ In either case, the Israelites ignored (i.e., “did not wait for”) God’s intervention into their circumstances. In sum, the tentative translation of verse 13 is as follows: “They quickly and intentionally forgot his salvific work and did

H.-J. Kraus and K. R. Crim, *Theology of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 35.

16) See e.g., the following commentators: L. C. Allen, *Psalms 101-50*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 71; H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 319; S. J. Lawson and M. E. Anders, *Psalms 76-150*, 168. Forgetting God is a sin since this action involves a conscious and willful decision. H. D. Preuss, “שָׁכַח”, G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H.-J. Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 14 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 672-678.

17) C. Barth, “חָכַה”, *TDOT*, vol. 4, 359-363.

18) The MT often reports that the Israelites fail to wait for God’s plan or instruction (e.g., Exo 15:24 [cf. Num 20:2-3]; Deu 1:22; Psa 33:20; Isa 8:17; 30:18; Hab 2:3; Zep 3:8). S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 3rd ed., International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1901), 22; E. H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 73.

19) J. Goldingay, *Psalms*, 229; D. Williams, *Psalms 73-150*, Communicator’s Commentary Series: Old Testament, vol. 14 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 268; L. C. Allen, *Psalms 101-50*, 71.

20) Isa 5:19; 14:26; 19:17; 28:29; Psa 33:11; 73:24; 107:11.

not wait for his salvific plan (or provision for food).”

2.2. Verses 14-15: Understanding Israel’s Sinful Act

The central syntactical relationship between verses 14 and 15 is cause and effect. Verse 14 reveals the Israelites’ sinful motivation and the object they required, and verse 15 records the consequence of their motivation: רָזוּן. The combination of וַיִּתְאָוּ תְאֵוָה (‘‘and they craved’’) in verse 14 reminds readers of Numbers 11:4, which similarly states, הִתְאָוּ תְאֵוָה (‘‘they craved’’). Numbers 11:4 reveals that the Israelites’ craving was due to their desire for meat. Yet, the text reports that they were not satisfied with the food in their mouth; thus, they received God’s punishment (cf. Num 11:20; Psa 78:30-31).

In light of the above understanding, verse 14 highlights Israel’s motivation for their sinful act. The parallel in this verse is ‘‘wilderness’’ (בְּמִדְבָּר) and ‘‘desert’’ (בְּיַשְׁמוֹן), which together create a pair. When the word ‘‘desert’’ (יַשְׁמוֹן) stands parallel with ‘‘wilderness’’ (מִדְבָּר), the biblical authors’ use of this combination often exhibits the howling wilderness (e.g., Psa 78:40; 107:4).²¹ Further, the verbs וַיִּתְאָוּ and וַיִּנְסוּ form a grammatical parallel (3mp). Although these two do not produce a semantic parallel, they bring a negative force to the Israelites’ behavior. The word וַיִּתְאָוּ often conveys an unfavorable sense in the Hithpael form: ‘‘to crave for’’.²² Also, six times in the Psalms, נִסָּה has God as its object, and in all occurrences, the verb relates to the Israelites’ rebellion against God (Psa 78:18, 41, 56; 95:9; 106:14). In sum, from the context of Numbers 11:4-6 (cf. Psa 78), what the Israelites craved (וַיִּתְאָוּ) was ‘‘meat’’ (בָּשָׂר), and their greed (i.e., motivation) was equal to ‘‘testing’’ God (וַיִּנְסוּ). Thus, the translation of

21) HALOT, s.v. ‘‘יַשְׁמוֹן’’; S. Talmon, ‘‘מִדְבָּר’’, TDOT, vol. 8, 89-118.

Verse 14 stands as follows:

וַיִּתְאָוּ תְאֵוָה בְּמִדְבָּר
וַיִּנְסוּ אֶל-יַשְׁמוֹן

The structure of Psalm 78:40 stands as follows:

כִּמָּה וַיִּמְרוּהוּ בְּמִדְבָּר
יַעֲצִיבוּהוּ בְּיַשְׁמוֹן:

Similarly, one could reconstruct Psalm 107:4 as follows to show the parallel:

תַּעֲבוּ בְּמִדְבָּר
בְּיַשְׁמוֹן דָּדָד
עִיר מוֹשֵׁב לֹא מִצָּאוּ:

22) See Num 11:34; Deu 5:21; Psa 45:12; Lam 6:2.

verse 14 would be “they tested God by their craving (i.e., for meat) in the howling wilderness”.²³⁾

Verse 15 states the consequences of the Israelites’ sinful desire for meat conveyed in verse 14. This article is particularly interested in the word רָיוֹן in terms of the result of Israel’s sin as God’s punishment.²⁴⁾ Concerning the nature of רָיוֹן in verse 15, Numbers 11:4 and its related context provide a meaningful insight since, as in the cases of “and they craved for” (וַיִּתְאַווּ תַאֲוָה) [Psa 106:14]) and “they craved for” (וַיִּתְאַווּ הַתַּאֲוָה) [Num 11:4]), it is reasonable to assume that two texts are related. In light of the context of Numbers 11, then, the possible options for understanding the meaning of רָיוֹן in Psalm 106:15 would be “loathsomeness” (זָרָא [Num 11:20]) or “plague” (מַכָּה) [11:33]).²⁵⁾ Numbers 11:20

23) C. Briggs and E. G. Briggs also say that the Israelites tested God “by questioning His ability to provide for them.” C. A. Briggs and E. G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (London: T & T Clark, 1906), 350.

24) The particular challenge in understanding verses 14-15 lies in the textual variant concerning רָיוֹן in verse 15. The apparatus suggests מְיוֹן as meaning provision or food. The LXX writes πλησμονήν, which conveys a similar sense as מְיוֹן, meaning food, drink, satisfaction, or gratification. One may argue that the act of God’s provision of meat for Israel in verse 15 still can be considered as their punishment, insisting that although the general mood of verse 15 carries the message of God’s punishment, this is not a critical reason to take רָיוֹן simply because of its possible meaning and the Israelites’ sinful motivation. This noun occurs three times in the MT (Isa 10:16; Mic 6:10; Psa 106:15). *HALOT* gives its lexical usages as “emaciation”, “leanness”, and “consumption”, as well as “a shrunken ephah”. Yet, this article insists on accepting רָיוֹן instead of מְיוֹן. First, the LXX never translates מְיוֹן as πλησμονήν anywhere else except this verse. Second, מְיוֹן occurs only two times in the MT (Gen 45:23; 2Ch 11:23), and it seems that it does not carry any theological importance in those contexts; instead, it means food. Third, it is better to take the waw at וַיִּשְׁלַח as adversative. If one takes רָיוֹן and the adversative function of the waw, then a tentative translation would be “God sent what they asked for, but it was food.” In this case, food does not fit in the context. Fourth, רָיוֹן reminds the reader of רָצוֹן (“acceptance”, “pleasure”, “goodwill”, or “favor”). In the rhetorical point, it is *paronomasia* that the psalmist abandons the audience’s expectation. The psalmist asks for God’s gracious acceptance in verse 4. Then, although they had sinned (הִטְאָנוּ), according to verse 6, God saved them at the Red Sea (בְּיַם סוּף) in verse 9. In the very first event in the wilderness, the audience expects God’s gracious food (מְיוֹן), but רָיוֹן is given to them instead. Thus, the psalmist creates impact by emphasizing the people’s fault with this rhetorical skill. In short, it seems that רָיוֹן is a better reading than מְיוֹן. M. D. Gray, “Psalm 106, 15b: Did the Children of Israel Get What They Asked For?”, *SJOT* 7:1 (1993), 131-132; *HALOT*, s.v. “רָיוֹן”.

25) M. D. Gray, “Psalm 106, 15b”, 129; *HALOT*, s.v. “זָרָא”, and “מַכָּה”. See also R. D. Cole, *Numbers*, New American Commentary, vol. 3B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 198; J. Milgrom, *Numbers Ba-Midbar: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 92; P. J. Budd,

reads “until it comes from your nostril and becomes loathsome” (עַד אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵא) לְזָרָא (מֵאִפְּכֶם וְהָיָה לְכֶם לְזָרָא), an expression that describes loathsomeness as a secretion coming out “from” the internal body. Similarly, Dahood takes בָּ (בְּנִפְשָׁם) as the meaning of “from” regarding “they do not make a sound from a throat” (לֹא־יִהְיוּ בְּגֵרוֹנָם) in Psalm 115:7.²⁶ However, this verse uses a different word for “throat” (גְּרוֹן) than Numbers 11:20. Furthermore, the preposition בָּ should be considered with the verb שָׁלַח. Dahood interprets שָׁלַח as “cast out” and provides several examples where שָׁלַח has this meaning; however, שָׁלַח in his examples does not take בָּ but מִן.²⁷ In the Piel form, this verb usually means “to send away” or “to send forth.” When God is the subject, the verb usually takes בָּ with a direct object.²⁸ When the passage addresses the subject of a curse or God’s prophetic threats, the verb often takes as its object God’s tool for punishment, such as plagues (Eze 14:21), the sword (Jer 9:15; 24:10; 29:17; 49:37), enemies (Deu 28:48; 2Ki 24:2; Isa 10:6), the Assyrians (Jer 48:12), and famine (Eze 5:16). Therefore, רָזוּן should be understood as a disease rather than loathsomeness. In sum, observing the connection with Numbers to discern the meaning of the word רָזוּן, it seems to refer to מַכָּה (“plague” [cf. Num 11:33]).²⁹

Next, in terms of understanding the word נִפְשָׁם in Psalm 106:15, commentators maintain different views. For example, Don Williams sees that this word describes the Israelites’ spiritual poverty.³⁰ Dahood and Hans-Joachim Kraus understand נִפְשָׁם as “throat”.³¹ John Goldingay, Leslie Allen, and Artur Weiser read this word merely as a pronoun (i.e., “them”).³² Charles Briggs discusses various usages of נִפְשָׁם, which he takes to mean “appetites” since he interprets the

Numbers, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 5. (Waco: Word Books, 1984), 131; J. Peter Lange, *Numbers, or, the Fourth Book of Moses, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures Old Testament*, vol. 3, pt. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner, 1900), 67.

26) M. J. Dahood, *Psalms III*, 71.

27) See Dahood’s examples: Gen 3:23; Lev 18:24; 20:23; Jer 28:16. See also M. D. Gray, “Psalm 106, 15b”, 131.

28) V. Dahmen, “שָׁלַח”, *TDOT*, vol. 15, 49-73.

29) See the following commentators who read רָזוּן as plague. F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 89; M. Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms*, 137.

30) D. Williams, *Psalms 73-150*, 268.

31) M. J. Dahood, *Psalms III*, 71; H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 319.

32) J. Goldingay, *Psalms*, 229; L. C. Allen, *Psalms 101-50*, 71; A. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 683.

prefix כּ as “according to”.³³⁾ None of these commentators, however, give a satisfactory grammatical and syntactical answer for their choice. It seems that “them” simply refers to a crowd of people and does not connote other meanings. Briggs’s understanding is difficult to accept since רָזוּן is a plague. A probable candidate for this word would be “throat” since disease could attack the throat. However, a question arises: if the particular organ is such an important matter, why does the psalmist not use the word גְּרוֹן for the throat but נֶפֶשׁ?³⁴⁾

The word rhetorically (i.e., *amphibologia*) conveys the message that God’s judgmental action causes a change in one’s attitude.³⁵⁾ Psalm 78:31 describes the same event in Numbers 11. Psalm 78:31 writes of God’s judgment on the Israelites by two verbs: הרג (“to kill”) and כרע (“to bow down” or “to bend one’s knee”).³⁶⁾ Notably, the Hiphil form of כרע often carries the figurative sense of “to bring one low”. In other words, the word does not merely focus on annihilation but the “attitude or disposition” of a person.³⁷⁾ Thus, God sends a plague to kill sinners among Israel, but at the same time, he wants to correct their attitude toward himself.³⁸⁾ In sum, verse 15 means “God gave what they asked for, but he sent them a plague”, which suggests, “God gave them meat, but then he sent the plague to punish them and correct their attitude.” Therefore, the conclusive translation for verses 13-15 is as follows:³⁹⁾

Verse 13: “They quickly and *intentionally* forgot his salvific work and

33) C. A. Briggs, “The Use of Nps’ in the Old Testament”, *JBL* 16 (1897), 25; M. D. Gray, “Psalm 106, 15b”, 130.

34) M. D. Gray, “Psalm 106, 15b”, 130. See also Isa 3:16; *HALOT*, s.v. “גְּרוֹן”.

35) E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 804.

36) The below reconstructed structure of Psa 78:31 exhibits that “to kill” and “to bend one’s knee” stand in parallel and serve to carry the sense of punishment:

בְּמִשְׁכַּנְיָהֶם	וַיִּהְרַג
הַכְרִיעַ וּבַחֲזֵרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	וַיֵּאֵף אֱלֹהִים עֲלֵהּ
בְּהֶם	בְּהֶם

37) See 2Sa 22:40; Psa 18:40; H.-J. Fabry, “כרע”, *TDOT*, vol. 7, 336-339.

38) A few commentators misunderstand the food as God’s gift or representation of his graciousness in verse 15. R. J. Clifford, *Psalms 73-150*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 158. However, God’s grace did not come from food but from his intention to correct Israel’s spiritual status. According to Num 11:6, it seems that God gave the manna first, and Israel complained without having any meat. Thus, God already provided food to sustain them. He had been showing his grace at the point when the Israelites tested him. M. Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms*, 136; S. J. Lawson and M. E. Anders, *Psalms 76-150*, 168.

39) Italics indicate that the words are not in the MT but reflect current research on the verses.

did not wait for his salvific plan (or provision for food).”

Verse 14: “They tested God by craving *meat* in the howling wilderness.”

Verse 15: “God gave them what they asked for (i.e., *meat*), but then he sent them a plague” to *punish them and correct their attitude*.

In sum, analysis on verses 13-15 reveals the Israelites’ willful rebellion against God, that is, their act of testing God and God’s intention to correct their behavior.

3. The Literary Structure of Psalm 106: Chiasm

Although God intends to punish their sins and correct their behavior, the chiasmic structure exhibits that the Israelites’ sin intensifies gradually. Proposing a chiasm for the structure of Psalm 106 is nothing new. Several scholars have suggested this structure, but their analyses have not met unanimity and are not satisfactory.⁴⁰⁾ Michael Wilcock tries to see the structure of the psalm as a chiasm, yet his structure only establishes two pairs (vv. 1-5 and 43-48; 6-12 and 34-42) and leaves a long section (vv. 13-33) out of the structure. Besides, he neither presents any criteria for the structure’s delineation nor suggests what significance his analysis carries.⁴¹⁾ Jan-Albert Roetman and Caspar Visser’t Hooft analyze the structure by observing key words (vv. 1-5 and 44-47) and themes (vv. 6-12 and 34-43). However, their observation on the central part (vv. 13-33) is strange. According to their observation, the criteria for searching for structural features suddenly change from key terms or themes to specific figures (i.e., Moses, Aaron, and Phinehas). Roetman and Hooft even admit that their structure is essentially hypothetical.⁴²⁾ Robert Alden suggests a chiasmic structure based on repeated keywords, yet his structure is not detailed as it has only one

40) M. Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms*, 134-143; J.-A. Roetman and C. V. Hooft, “Le Psaume 106 Et Le Pentateuque”, 233-243; R. L. Alden, “Chiasmic Psalms (III): A Study in the Mechanics of Semitic Poetry in Psalms 101-150”, *JETS* 21:3 (1978), 199-210; L. R. Martin, “Chiasmic Structure of Psalm 106”, *OTE* 31:3 (2018), 506-521.

41) M. Wilcock, *The Message of Psalm*, 134.

42) J.-A. Roetman and C. V. Hooft, “Le Psaume 106 Et Le Pentateuque”, 233-243.

pair (A-B-A').⁴³⁾ One of the most recent works on the structure of the psalm is that of Lee Roy Martin. Although his proposal exhibits twelve pairs and seems clear-cut, the structure stands by only one verbal parallel in each pair.⁴⁴⁾

This article suggests three considerations as it analyzes the literary structure of Psalm 106. The first consideration for the division of the poem is the notion of narrativity. Since the psalm contains different historical incidents, it must be delineated by reasonable cut-offs at the beginning and the ending of each incident. Robert Alter recognizes the narrative thrust in psalms such as 78, 105, and 106.⁴⁵⁾ As he defines this narrativity's characteristics, he considers two major structural features: intensification (i.e., specification) and consequentiality (i.e., cause-effect/result relationship). In other words, the psalmist develops a structure that could intensify a particular theme through a series of linear thinking; hence, Alter suggests that one could find these specific features by searching for word pairs.⁴⁶⁾ Second, one should notice that events in the psalm are not set in the chronological order of Israel's journey in the wilderness, especially as recorded in the book of Numbers.⁴⁷⁾ According to thematic intensification, the psalmist arranges events with a specific purpose (e.g., cause,

43) R. L. Alden, "Chiastic Psalms (III)", 201-202.

44) L. R. Martin, "Chiastic Structure of Psalm 106", 510.

45) R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 29-30, 32. See also W. Brueggemann and B. A. Strawn, *From Whom No Secrets Are Hid: Introducing the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 133. Although the psalms do not follow the way Hebrew poetry communicates with its audiences, that does not mean that the psalms reject the aspect of the narrative. The psalms change the mode of communication to offer a thematic emphasis and provoke emotions. A cause-effect/result relationship still obtains in the narrative portions of the psalms. One example would be the use of the *waw*-consecutive. J. W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative*, JSOT Supplement Series 139 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 193-194. See also F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 90.

46) R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 42-44, 102; See also, J. R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric*, 2nd ed. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 38-70; A. R. Ceresko, "The Function of Chiasmus in Hebrew Poetry", *CBQ* 40:1 (1978), 1; Y. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures*, Alter Orient Und Altes Testament Bd. 210 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1984), 228; A. Berlin and L. V. Knorina, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, rev. and exp. ed., Biblical Resource Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 79.

47) For instance, the Israelites' rejection of the promised Land (vv. 24-27) follows the story of Dathan and Abiram (vv. 16-18). In the book of Numbers, these are in reverse order (Num 14 and 16). Also, the story of Baal of Peor (Psa 106:28-31) is followed by the event about the waters of Meribah (vv. 32-33), which the book of Numbers presents in a different order (Num 20 and 25).

middle phase, or the result).⁴⁸⁾ The third consideration is that most incidents contain specific geographical or proper names, such as Egypt (בְּמִצְרַיִם [v. 7]), the wilderness (בְּמִדְבָּר [v. 14]), the camp (בְּמַחֲנֶה [v. 16]), Horeb (בְּחֹרֵב [v. 19]), the tent (בְּאֹהֶל־יְהוָה [v. 25]), Baal of Peor (לְבַעַל פְּעוֹר [v. 28]), the water of Meribah (עַל־מַי מְרִיבָה [v. 32]), and Canaan (כְּנָעַן [v. 38]).⁴⁹⁾ Thus, this article notices these names as essential clues for the structural division of the psalm, and based on these considerations, this article proposes the following structure of Psalm 106:

Figure 1. Structure of Psalm 106

- A: Introduction: Summons to Praise (vv. 1-3)
- B: Petition and Confession (vv. 4-6)
- C: The Exodus Story (vv. 7-12): Not Remembering but God Saves
- D: The Story in the Wilderness/the Camp (vv. 13-18): Testing God Develops Jealousy
- E: The Story at the Mt. Horeb (vv. 19-23): Visualized Sin, Idolatry
- F: The Story at the Tent (vv. 24-27): Israel’s Rejection of the Promised Land
- E’: The Story of Baal of Peor (vv. 28-31): Visualized Sin, Idolatry
- D’: The Story of the Meribah (vv. 32-33): Testing God Consumed Even the Leaders
- C’: The Story in the Land of Canaan (vv. 34-46): God Remembers and Saves
- B’: Petition and Vow (v. 47)
- A’: Conclusion: Summons to Praise (v. 48)

Per the suggested structure above, A and A’ stand as parallel. The two begin and end with הַלְלוּיָהּ. Also, both praise God’s eternity (לְעוֹלָם [v. 1]; מִן־הָעוֹלָם וְעַד [v. 48]). B and B’ show similarities in their petitions. Their subjects are in the first person (i.e., singular in v. 4 and plural in vv. 6, 47), and they record the speaker’s petition for God’s salvation: “with your salvation” (בִּישׁוּעָתְךָ [v. 4]) and “save us” (הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ [v. 47]).

48) See O’Connor, who also notices the thematic importance of the psalm. M. P. O’Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 493.

49) F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 88.

Although C and C' are relatively long sections, they also construct a pair for a few reasons.⁵⁰⁾ Verses 7-12 and 34-46 summarize Israel's rebellious event toward God and God's saving deeds. In these sections, some words or themes receive this article's attention: (1) "they did not remember" (לֹא זָכְרוּ [v. 7]) and "he remembered" (וַיִּזְכֹּר [v. 45]); (2) "they rebelled" (וַיִּמְרוּ [v. 7]) and "they rebelled with their purpose" (וַיִּמְרוּ בְּעֶצְתָּם [v. 43]); and (3) God's saving intention to Israel (וַיִּוֹשִׁיעֵם [v. 8]; וַיִּוֹשִׁיעֵם [v. 10]; וַיִּצִילֵם [v. 43]; וַחֲסָדָיו [v. 45]; לְרַחֲמִים [v. 46]). In verse 7, the Israelites did not remember, so they rebelled, but God saved them (vv. 8, 10).⁵¹⁾ In C', the Israelites purposely rebelled (i.e., intensification), and yet, God remembered and saved them (vv. 45, 46).⁵²⁾ Also, the two unlinked imperfect verbs require attention (וַיִּצִילֵם וַחֲסָדָיו וַיִּמְרוּ בְּעֶצְתָּם [v. 43]). In the series of consecutive actions, these two verbs have no waw prefix.⁵³⁾ Then, with "many times" (רַבּוֹת פְּעָמִים [v. 43]), God's saving work (וַיִּצִילֵם) and the Israelites' rebellion (וַיִּמְרוּ) create a dramatic contrast, and this effect intensifies their rebellion further. Thus, the opposite order of the two words appears (i.e., Israel's non-remembrance and their rebellion vs. Israel's rebellion yet God's remembrance).

Next, D (vv. 13-18) and D' (vv. 32-33) constitute a pair for a few reasons. First, verses 14 and 32 both remind readers of the event at Meribah. Exodus 17:2 reveals the nature of the people's sin at Meribah; it records that "they tested Yhwh" (מִדָּה־תִּנְסוּן אֶת־יְהוָה). This exodus event echoes verse 14, where it says "they tested God in the wilderness" (וַיִּנְסוּ־אֱלֹהִים בְּיַד־יְמִינוֹ).⁵⁴⁾ Verse 32 directly refers to this geographical site: "at the waters of Meribah" (עַל־מֵי מְרִיבָה).

50) Since the description of the life in the land (C') is relatively longer than the other episodes and records of the many sinful aspects of the Israelites' life in the land, one may insist on dividing C' into several different sections. However, in the book of Psalms, the typical theme about life in the land is apostasy from God (Psa 78; 106; 107), and many descriptions about the Israelites' deeds in the land ultimately concern the same subject. E. Haglund, *Historical Motifs in the Psalms*, Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series 23 (Malmö: CWK Gleerup, 1984), 106.

51) Waw-consecutive in וַיִּמְרוּ as succession. B. K. Waltke and M. P. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §33.2.1a.

52) In verse 45, the waw at וַיִּזְכֹּר produces the sense of "and yet". B. K. Waltke and M. P. O'Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §33.2.1d.

53) Among all of the verbs in verses 34-46, only two verbs in verse 38 have no waw prefix. However, the verb does not connect to a waw linkage; instead, it is a member of the dependent clause (אֲשֶׁר זָבְחוּ לְעֵצָבִי כְּנֶעַן).

54) H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 319.

Second, in verse 33, the psalmist writes רִיחַ, which makes a connection to “among their life” (בְּנִפְשָׁם).⁵⁵ The word רִיחַ reflects the sense of God’s life-giving power, as in Genesis 6:17; 7:15, and Ezekiel 37:14.⁵⁶ Further, in opposite correlation to רִיחַ, God sent “plague among their life” (רִיזוֹן בְּנִפְשָׁם), which is the opposite of giving life in verse 15.⁵⁷ Third, verse 16 reveals that the sin of the Israelites was jealousy (וַיִּקְנְאוּ [“they were jealous”]), and its consequence was the punishment of אֵשׁ (“fire”) and לְהִבָּהַר (“flame”).⁵⁸ Concerning verse 32, the MT apparatus suggests adding the 3ms suffix to the verb “to anger” (וַיִּקְצִיפוּ). It seems appropriate to accept the revision and understand the 3ms suffix as referring to Moses instead of God when considering the relationship between verses 32 and 33. The probable development in verses 32 and 33 is that the latter further explains what happens in the former. In other words, if one accepts Moses as the object of the verb (i.e., וַיִּקְצִיפוּ), then verse 32 states that the Israelites enraged Moses, which leads to Moses’s failure, and verse 33 further explains the deeper problem of the Israelites. It is the Israelites’ rebellious act against God that leads Moses to speak impetuous words.⁵⁹

The verses particularly reveal the sources of the Israelites’ problem. They enraged God due to water (עַל-מַי).⁶⁰ Numbers 20:2-4 explains that the Israelites’ rebellious deeds (הַמַּרְיָם [Num 20:10]) were due to their lack of water and their fear of death. Water (D’) and fire (D) occur many times as a pair in the MT (Exo 12:9; 32:20; Num 31:23; 1Ki 18:38; Isa 30:14; 43:2; 64:1; Joe 1:20; Mic 1:4; Psa 66:12; Pro 30:16). In D, the people were jealous of Moses and Aaron’s leadership, and God judged them by fire (אֵשׁ) and flame (לְהִבָּהַר). In D’,

55) See also Avishur’s work, where he discusses common pairs in Hebrew and Ugaritic. Y. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies*, 413.

56) K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 332; R. Feldmeier and H. Spieckermann, *God of the Living: A Biblical Theology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011), 203-206.

57) HALOT, s.v. “רִיזוֹן”.

58) Fire and flame appear together in Num 21:28; Isa 4:5; 5:24; 10:17; 43:2; 47:14; Jer 48:45; Eze 21:3; Hos 7:6; Joe 1:19; 2:3; Oba 1:18; Psa 29:7; 83:15; 105:32; 106:18; Lam 2:3. See also U. Cassuto, “Parallel Words in Hebrew and Ugaritic”, *Leshonenu* 15 (1947), 65; V. Hamp, “אֵשׁ”, *TDOT*, vol. 1, 418-428; J. Hausmann, “לְהִבָּהַר”, *TDOT*, vol. 7, 469-473.

59) J. Goldingay, *Psalms*, 234; L. C. Allen, *Psalms 101-50*, 65. Figuratively lips can mean language or speech (*metonymy*). E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 546.

60) עַל as “with regard to” or “concerning.” HALOT, s.v. “עַל”.

the opposite direction is established: the people enraged Moses by water, which brought judgment on Moses.

Now, E and E' share a similar development of the storylines. They both mention mediators ("Moses" [v. 23] and "Phinehas" [v. 30]), and they both address the Israelites' idolatry (v. 19 and v. 28).⁶¹⁾ Both Moses and Phinehas are God's chosen people who belong to the covenant of God. In verse 23, the psalmist describes Moses as God's chosen one (בְּחִירוֹ). Also, verse 31 depicts Phinehas as righteousness. This expression reminds readers of Genesis 15:6, where Abraham, who made a covenant with God, was also counted as righteous.⁶²⁾ Phinehas also made a covenant with God in Numbers 25:12.⁶³⁾ Further, E and E' similarly present the image of idolatry. In verse 20, the psalmist describes a molten bull that eats grass (בְּתַבְנִית שׁוֹר אֹכֵל עֵשֶׂב). In verse 28, the Israelites demonstrate their manner of idol worship by eating food that is offered to lifeless gods (וַיֹּאכְלוּ זִבְחֵי מַתִּים). Therefore, both sections project the image of idolatry by describing the act of eating. Lastly, F addresses the Israelites' rejection of the promised land, which stands alone at the center of the chiasmic structure.

The above analysis exhibits that Psalm 106 stands with five pairs and a central point of emphasis. Particularly, D and D' form the first event in Israelites' lives in the wilderness among various incidents in Psalm 106. Unlike C and C', which draws readers' attention toward God's saving work, D and D' focuses on Israel's sin. The next section demonstrates the gradual intensification of their sin.

4. Theological Observations: Israel's Fundamental Problem and Its Intensification

"Testing God" was the Israelites' vital issue throughout their wilderness journey (Psa 106:14). The psalmist uses two incidents in verses 13-15 and 32-33 to emphasize this problem. One significant clue is the psalmist's usage of the terms בְּמִדְבָּר and בְּיַשְׁמוֹן in verse 14 to describe the locus of the problem. There

61) See Hos 9:10, which explains the sins of Israel at Baal Peor. H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 320.

62) E. Gerstenberger, *Psalms*, 241.

63) P. J. Gentry and S. J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 576-577.

are four instances which designate the tent (אֹהֶל) or camp (מַחֲנֶה) where the event happened in Numbers 11 (vv. 9, 10, 25, and 31). Hence, there must be a reason why the psalmist employed בְּמִדְבָּר and בְּיַשְׁמוּן even though other words exist referring to the location of the event. Shemaryahu Talmon discusses the motif of the wilderness (מִדְבָּר) in biblical literature, explaining that the wilderness was an isolated desert where there was a lack of life and vitality and that there are two significant elements in its thematic sense: (1) the place where God protects his people and provides for their needs and (2) a type that represents the Israelites’ wickedness, testing God’s ability and salvific plan.⁶⁴ Therefore, the psalmist specifically selects the story from Numbers 11 because it typifies God’s provision and the Israelites’ wickedness in the wilderness. Similarly, the corresponding account, Numbers 20, has these two themes: (1) the Israelites doubted God’s ability to provide water, and (2) they sinned against God. Even in this case, the faith issue reached Moses and Aaron (יַעַן לֹא־הֶאֱמַנְתֶּם) [Num 20:12]) so that they are marked as rebellious people as well.⁶⁵ In sum, verses 13-15 and 32-33 together show that “testing God” was the underlying issue in the Israelites’ journey, and the latter even exemplifies that the sin of “testing God” consumed the leaders of Israel.

The following verses (i.e., vv. 16-18) are closely related to verses 13-15 (D) as they exhibit developed aspects of Israel’s sin. The psalmist’s point in verses 16-18 concerns the Israelites’ jealousy (קִנְיָא). In verses 13-15, the psalmist discusses the motif of “testing God” with the Israelites’ act of “craving” in mind (אוֹדָה [v. 14]). The verbs אוֹדָה (v. 14) and קִנְיָא (v. 16) can be a pair, as in Proverbs 24:1, carrying a similar sense.⁶⁶ Thus, the psalmist argues that when the Israelites tested God, their greed dwelt in them (v. 14), and it became more vivid in the development of their sin (v. 16). The psalmist chooses the word קִנְיָא to

64) S. Talmon, *Literary Motifs and Patterns in the Hebrew Bible Collected Studies* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 58-62.

65) In terms of the faith issues, note that the word נִסָּה connotes the unfaithfulness involved when one tests God’s ability. G. Gerleman, “נִסָּה”, *TLOT*, 741-742, Exo 17:7 also shows the connection between “testing God” and “unfaithfulness”. J. Shailhamer compares Abraham and Moses. Abraham, who lived before the law, represents the man of faith, but Moses, who received the law, was not recognized as a man of faith. J. H. Shailhamer, “The Mosaic Law and the Theology of the Pentateuch”, *The Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991), 257-258.

66) Structural analysis on Pro 24:1 is as follows:

רָעָה	בְּאִנְשֵׁי	אֶל־תִּקְנֵא
אֲתָם	לְהִיֹּת	וְאֶל־תִּחְזָא

express the gravity of this type of sin (i.e., jealousy). When a human is the subject of this verb, the word implies a violent fear of losing one's loved one.⁶⁷⁾ In other words, this word connotes the fear of losing ownership. Interestingly, this idea of ownership reminds the audience of קנה, which is phonologically similar to נאן.⁶⁸⁾ According to Numbers 16:3, the Israelites were jealous of Moses and Aaron's leadership. Such jealousy is a violation of God's ownership since Numbers 5 and 7 indicate that being holy does not depend on one's freedom of choice but God's.⁶⁹⁾ Leadership is based on God's choice, but the Israelites crossed a line that they were not supposed to cross. In sum, the Israelites' sin in the wilderness develops from the level of testing God with craving (vv. 13-14) to the aspect of jealousy of God's ownership (vv. 16-18).

The chiasmic structure of Psalm 106 continually exhibits that Israel's sin gets worse. Their sin is visualized and crystallized at Mt. Horeb (E) and in the incident of Baal of Peor (E') by their worshipping idols. The center of the structure (F) eventually emphasizes the people's fatal failure of rejecting entry into the promised land.

5. Conclusion

This article has examined the structure of Psalm 106, primarily focusing on verses 13-15. This study gave particular attention to these verses since they serve to describe the Israelites' fundamental issue in the wilderness, which ultimately leads to their loss of the land. This study has argued that the Israelites' willful rebellion against God is "testing God" and, further, that verses 13-15 and the psalm's literary structure (i.e., chiasm) cooperate to demonstrate the progression (or intensification) of sin among the Israelites. Each story creates a pair with its corresponding story, and verses 24-27 stand alone as the center of the chiasmic structure. In the structure, the sin of "testing God" (vv. 13-15) gradually grew and developed into another phase of sin, "jealousy" (vv. 16-18). Further, the structure of Psalm 106 shows that the development of sin is crystallized by the Israelites' worshipping idols (vv. 19-23, 28-31), and this

67) E. Reuter, "נאן", *TDOT*, vol. 13, 47-58.

68) J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 85.

69) See Psa 106:16, which refers to Moses as "the holy one of the Lord".

wickedness led the people to reject the promised land (vv. 24-27). Overall, the psalm reveals that Israel’s fundamental sin of “testing God” (vv. 13-15) is essentially an attempt to acquire God’s ownership (vv. 16-18), which results in the wilderness generation’s loss of the promised land.

<Keywords>

Psalms, Psalm 106, Israel’s sin, promised land, wilderness, chiastic structure, chiasmus.

(투고 일자: 2021년 1월 4일, 심사 일자: 2021년 2월 19일, 게재 확정 일자: 2021년 3월 9일)

<References>

- Alden, R. L., "Chiastic Psalms (III): A Study in the Mechanics of Semitic Poetry in Psalms 101-150", *JETS* 21:3 (1978), 199-210.
- Allen, L. C., *Psalms 101-50*, rev. ed., Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002.
- Alter, R., *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, rev. and upd. ed., New York: Basic Books, 2011.
- Anderson, A. A., *The Book of Psalms: Based on the Revised Standard Version*, 2 vols., New Century Bible Commentary, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981.
- Avishur, Y., *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures*, Alter Orient Und Altes Testament Bd. 210, Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1984.
- Becking, B. and Peels, E., *Psalms and Prayers: Papers Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society of Old Testament Study and Het Oud Testamentische Werkgezelschap in Nederland En Belgio, Apeldoorn August 2006*, Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Berlin, A. and Knorina, L. V., *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, rev. and exp. ed., Biblical Resource Series, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Beyerlin, W., "Der Nervus Rerum in Psalm 106", *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 86:1 (1974), 50-64.
- Botterweck, G. J., Ringgren, H., and Fabry, H.-J., eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Briggs, C. A., "The Use of Npš in the Old Testament", *JBL* 16 (1897), 17-30.
- Briggs, C. A. and Briggs, E. G., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, London: T & T Clark, 1906.
- Brown, W. P., *Psalms*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010.
- Brueggemann, W., *Abiding Astonishment: Psalms, Modernity, and the Making of History*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation, 1st ed., Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991.
- Brueggemann, W. and Strawn, B. A., *From Whom No Secrets Are Hid: Introducing the Psalms*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014.
- Budd, P. J., *Numbers*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 5, Waco: Word Books, 1984.
- Bullinger, E. W., *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968.
- Calduch-Benages, N. and Liesen, J., *History and Identity: How Israel's Later Authors Viewed Its Earlier History*, Deuterocanonical and Cognate

- Literature Yearbook, vol. 2006, Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006.
- Cassuto, U., “Parallel Words in Hebrew and Ugaritic”, *Leshonenu* 15 (1947), 97-102.
- Ceresko, A. R., “The Function of Chiasmus in Hebrew Poetry”, *CBQ* 40:1 (1978), 1-10.
- Clifford, R. J., *Psalms 73-150*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003.
- Cole, R. D., *Numbers*, The New American Commentary, vol. 3B, Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000.
- Dahood, M. J., *Psalms III*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 17A, New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Dearman, J. A., *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.
- Declaissé-Walford, N., Jacobson, R. A., and Tanner, B. L., *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2014.
- Driver, S. R., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 3rd ed., International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1901.
- Feldmeier, R. and Spieckermann, H., *God of the Living: A Biblical Theology*, Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011.
- Gentry, P. J. and Wellum, S. J., *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed., Wheaton: Crossway, 2018.
- Gerstenberger, E., *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Goldingay, J., *Psalms*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, vol. 3, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.
- Gray, M. D., “Psalm 106, 15b: Did the Children of Israel Get What They Asked For?”, *SJOT* 7:1 (1993), 125-133.
- Greenstein, E. L. and Preminger, A., *The Hebrew Bible in Literary Criticism*, New York: Unger, 1986.
- Haglund, E., *Historical Motifs in the Psalms*, Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series 23, Malmö: CWK Gleerup, 1984.
- Hayes, J. H., *Understanding the Psalms*, Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1976.
- Hossfeld, F.-L. and Zenger, E., *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101-150*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011.
- House, P. R., “Examining the Narratives of Old Testament Narrative: An

- Exploration in Biblical Theology”, *The Westminster Theological Journal* 67:2 (2005), 229-245.
- Huey, F. B., *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, New American Commentary, vol. 16, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993.
- Jenni, E. and Westermann, C., eds., *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997.
- Kidner, D., *Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, vol. 16, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008.
- Kraus, H.-J., *Psalms 60-150: A Continental Commentary*, Continental Commentaries, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Kraus, H.-J. and Crim, K. R., *Theology of the Psalms*, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986.
- Lange, J. P., *Numbers, or, the Fourth Book of Moses*, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures Old Testament, vol. 3 [pt. 1], New York: Charles Scribner, 1900.
- Lawson, S. J. and Anders, M. E., *Psalms 76-150*, Holman Old Testament Commentary, vol. 12, Nashville: Holman Reference, 2006.
- Lundbom, J. R., *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric*, 2nd ed., Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997.
- Martin, L. R., “Chiastic Structure of Psalm 106”, *OTE* 31:3 (2018), 506-521.
- Martin, O. R., *Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God’s Redemptive Plan*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- Mathews, K. A., *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A, Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996.
- Merrill, E. H., *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary, vol. 4, Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994.
- Milgrom, J., *Numbers Ba-Midbar: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, JPS Torah Commentary, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990.
- Mowinckel, S., *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, Eng. ed., Biblical Seminar, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979.
- Nasuti, H. P., “Historical Narrative and Identity in the Psalms”, *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 23:2 (2001), 132-153.
- O’Connor, M. P., *Hebrew Verse Structure*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980.
- Oswalt, J. N., *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, New International Commentary on

- the Old Testament, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.
- Roetman, J.-A. and Hooft, C. V., “Le Psaume 106 Et Le Pentateuque”, *Etudes Theologiques et Religieuses* 85:2 (2010), 233-243.
- Schaefer, K., *Psalms*, Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993.
- Shailhamer, J. H., “The Mosaic Law and the Theology of the Pentateuch”, *The Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991), 241-246.
- Steussy, M. J., *Psalms*, Chalice Commentaries for Today, St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004.
- Talmon, S., *Literary Motifs and Patterns in the Hebrew Bible Collected Studies*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013.
- Wallace, H. N., *Psalms*, Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009.
- Waltke, B. K. and O’Connor M. P., *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- Watts, J. W., *Psalms and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative*, JSOT Supplement Series, vol. 139, Sheffield: JSOT, 1992.
- Weiser, A., *The Psalms: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962.
- Westermann, C., *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, Atlanta: J. Knox Press, 1981.
- Westermann, C., *The Praise of God in the Psalms*, London: Epworth Press, 1966.
- Wilcock, M., *The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God*, 2 vols., Bible Speaks Today, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001.
- Williams, D., *Psalms 73-150*, Communicator’s Commentary Series, Old Testament, vol. 14, Dallas: Word Books, 1989.
- Wilson, G. H., “The Structure of the Psalter”, P. Johnston and D. G. Firth, eds., *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005, 229-246.

<Abstract>

**“Testing God” Becomes “Rejection of the Land”:
Israel’s Sin in Psalm 106 in Light of the Psalm’s Chiastic Structure**

Kiyong Kim

(Korea Baptist Theological University/Seminary)

Psalm 106 is an intriguing text as it concerns various subject matters. In forty-eight verses, it deals with praise to the Lord which is followed by petition following, then switches its interest to report Israel’s history spanning from the days in Egypt to the exile, and returns and ends with another praise and petition to the Lord. Thus, scholars have tried to determine its nature and message with varying interests in the text.

Among various subjects, this article focuses on Israel’s sin in Psalm 106. Notably, it attempts to reveal the meaning of verses 13-15 and the function of the psalm’s structure. Concerning verses 13-15, there is no single scholarly consensus on the meaning of the passage. These verses are often referred to as one of the most puzzling texts to interpret among many psalms. This study gave particular attention to these verses since they serve to describe the Israelites’ fundamental issue in the wilderness. This article suggests one way to understand the meaning of verses 13-15, especially concerning the nature of Israel’s sin. Regarding the psalm’s structure, a few scholars have expounded on the chiastic structure of the psalm. Unlike other structural analyses, this article uniquely notices that the psalm’s structure exposes the progressive nature of Israel’s sin.

In order to advance the argument, this article first undertakes a poetic analysis of verses 13-15 to reveal their meanings. Second, since it argues the development of Israel’s sin in Psalm 106, this article articulates the chiastic structure of the psalm. Lastly, this article locates verses 13-15 in the chiastic structure and demonstrates the gradual intensification of the Israelites’ sin in that structure.

Verses 13-15 locate the first incident in the wilderness in the structure; thus, they exhibit Israel’s fundamental failure i.e., testing God. In the structure, the sin of “testing God” (vv. 13-15) gradually grew and developed into another phase of sin, “jealousy” (vv. 16-18). Further, the structure of Psalm 106 shows that the

development of sin is crystallized by the Israelites’ worshipping idols (vv. 19-23, 28-31), and this wickedness led the people to reject the promised land (vv. 24-27).

In sum, this article suggests one way to understand the meaning of verses 13-15 and reveals the theological contribution of Psalm 106’s chiasmic structure that Israel’s “Testing God” is a fundamental sin among Israelites which ultimately results in the loss of the promised land.