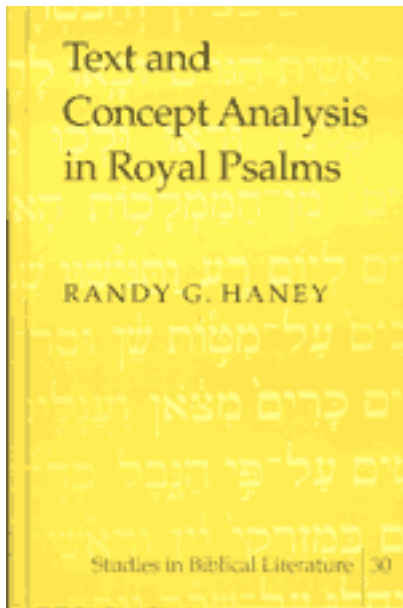


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Haney, Randy G.

Text and Concept Analysis in Royal Psalms

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This book, a significant revision and abbreviation of the author's Ph.D. thesis (Claremont, 1999) under the direction of Rolf Knierim (whose methodology it reflects), is a generally useful and occasionally insightful study into the history of interpretation of the royal psalms, accompanied by detailed analyses of three individual psalms from this category (Pss 2; 110; 132). The author's self-stated purpose is "to analyze the relationship of text and concept in these three psalms specifically focusing on structure analyses of the text, and the concomitant reconstruction of the infratextual concepts in the texts that have effectuated and function within the final form of the texts" (preface). Following a brief introduction (ch. 1 [3–8]), the core of the book is divided into three unequal parts: (1) a limited but helpful summary of the history of interpretation of the royal psalms (ch. 2 [9–67]); (2) the author's short, dense discussion of his methodological approach à la Knierim (ch. 3 [69–75]); and (3) detailed analyses of the three psalms (chs. 4–6 [79–151]), followed by a brief attempt to integrate the findings (ch. 7 [153–58]). A section of extensive notes organized by chapters (159–226), a select bibliography (227–34), and a combined index of subjects and authors (235–44) complete the volume.

Introduction. Those who desire to discover the useful content of this volume must first win their way through the author's dense and convoluted prose in this opaque section that

seems far longer than its six pages! The author loves long and complicated sentences that employ uncommon words in awkward constructions. This material may be of interest to those who are familiar with the thought and practice of Haney's mentor, Knierim, but for the uninitiated it is tough going. (I must admit that my head hurt!) Do persevere, however! The heart of the book is less unfriendly and far more fruitful.

In Retrospect: On the Life and History of an Idea. After a nod to the precritical period of understanding, Haney dives into his description of the "Modern Historical-Critical Exegesis" of the royal psalms. Here the book is quite helpful. Haney's summary and critical evaluation of the contributions and weaknesses of Gunkel, Mowinckel, and those who followed their lead up to the contemporary period is informed and judicious, if not always original. As might be expected, Haney finds all earlier studies ultimately unsatisfactory, particularly in their inability to explain "the RPss *on their own terms*, with reference especially to *their* subject matter" (66, emphasis original). In addition the author questions the adequacy of previous attempts to define a "festival" as the setting for the royal psalms due to the lack of any "direct testimony" in the Hebrew Bible of such a recurring event (p. 67).

On Methodological Premises. My headache resumed soon after I returned to the author's difficult discussion of his personal method of approach. In short, Haney seeks to accomplish a close reading of each psalm in order to create a "structure analysis" that reveals its "infratextual concepts" (70). His idea is to avoid the problem of allowing the investigator's presuppositions to determine the reading of a text as well as the conclusions drawn from the analysis. Haney intends to allow the texts themselves not only "to trigger the interpretive questions" but to "actually establish the program for their own exegesis" (74). This is a worthy goal, but, since texts *do not speak for themselves*, it is the investigator who proposes questions and the program of exegesis. Haney's own presumptions often appear in the later analysis of individual psalm texts.

Analysis of the Texts. I found this portion of the book to be the most significant contribution of the volume. Regardless of what one thinks of the particular methodology of text and concept analysis and its claims for objectivity, Haney has provided careful and insightful readings of these three psalm texts. Any student of the royal psalms and of these three in particular would do well to consult Haney's analyses. Beginning with a fresh translation of each text, Haney then produces an analysis of the psalm in the form of a detailed outline that demonstrates its structure (thus a structure analysis). The author then discusses elements of "surface" structure—linguistic and syntactic details that provide indications of organization and structure. His analysis is often quite persuasive. Then the author moves to the discussion of the "infratextual concepts" of the text that reveal the "conceptual coherence of the text in its parts and as a whole" (85). In each case

this begins with a detailed list of questions derived from the reading and analysis of the text, followed by an extended discussion of the list in which the author's understanding of the text on the basis of these various factors is brought to light.

Haney's discussions in these sections are always careful to relate meaning to the elements derived in the various levels of interpretation. It is, however, in these discussions that the author's own presuppositions often appear. Let me mention just a few. First, since Haney assumes that each psalm investigated "is understood as an isolated and self-contained text" (80) issues of contextual arrangement of psalms within the canonical Psalter are of no interest to him. Thus the question whether the *ashre* phrase at the conclusion of Ps 2 is an addition to this psalm in order to bind it together with Ps 1 (which begins with *ashre*) never enters into the discussion. How one answers that question makes a big difference as to how one identifies those who are encouraged to "take refuge" in God at the end of Ps 2. Haney takes this exhortation to mean the grumbling nations of the world, while the alternative view is that it is the beleaguered people of God, or at least the readers, who find security there. This isolation of psalms from their canonical context also prevents Haney from recognizing that the failure in Pss 110 and 132 to identify the "anointed" of Yahweh with the traditional Hebrew term *melek* "king" is not just a matter of coincidence but is part of a systematic avoidance of the term *melek* in relation to the Davidic dynasty in the whole of the last two books of the Psalter (Pss 90–150)! Haney simply continues his discussion supplying the value "king" throughout, even though the term *melek* never appears in these texts (cf. Haney's own comment on 119).

Because Haney is free to remove these psalms from their canonical context and to read them in conjunction with one another, he is also free to presume that they share a particular "ideological" emphasis on the "king" as the representative of Yahweh over the whole universe, even when that ideology is not clearly expressed in a particular psalm. What Haney uncovers as the ideological drift of Ps 2 becomes part of the presumed matrix of the other psalms as well. This is particularly true in his treatment of Ps 132, where no mention of the "nations" appears, yet Haney insists that "at Zion . . . Yahweh summons all to pay homage to him as king along with his vice-regent, the anointed one" (151). In this case the idea of world dominion of the Davidic king over the nations comes more from Haney's conviction than from the reading of Ps 132!

Three Psalms in Dialogue. The concluding section of the book is brief and largely unsatisfactory in its attempt to highlight the gains from Haney's analyses. What is said here is mostly repetition of comments from the earlier chapters and offer little if any advancement.

As indicated at the beginning of this review, Haney's book is ultimately a useful and occasionally insightful look at royal psalms. The overall effect of the book is undermined, however, by the very dense and convoluted language in methodological sections of the presentation. In addition, one particularly distracting oversight is the constant faulty division of Hebrew phrases when they run between two lines. Despite these shortcomings, serious students of the royal psalms and the individual psalms 2, 110, and 132 have much to gain by consulting the skillful analyses in this book.