

Questions on Psalm 72

1. Ps 72 concludes the second book of the Psalter. The last psalms of the other four books are 41, 89, 106, and 150. Compare the endings of these psalms. Do 72:18-20 belong to Ps 72, or to the framework of the book of Psalms?
2. Verse 1: Who wrote this psalm? (Technical note: In Hebrew, the superscription *le-shlomo* is grammatically identical to the phrase *le-dawid* in 11:1, 14:1, etc., and should probably be translated in a parallel sense.)
3. What historical event, recorded in 1 Kings, does it amplify?

Technical note: In our version, v. 1 is a request and the rest of the Psalm is a prediction. It is grammatically possible to read the rest of the Psalm as a request as well, and there are technical reasons to prefer this reading where the syntax permits it. Here is the argument: Hebrew has a third person volitional form called the jussive, usually translated with “let.” In most verbs, the jussive looks the same as the future, but in some verbs it is different. Some of those verbs occur in this psalm, in 8 “have dominion,” 13 “spare,” 15 “live,” 16 “shall be,” and 17 “endure,” and in these places at least it is preferable to read the jussive. Given this pervasive use of the jussive, it is likely that most of the other verbs, whose form is the same in the imperfect and the jussive, are also to be understood as jussives.

4. How does reading the psalm as a series of requests reinforce the attitude exemplified in the answer to Question 3?
5. How were these requests granted, or not granted?
6. If you read the Psalm throughout as request, many of the requests are reminiscent of a prominent NT prayer. What is that prayer? (The answer to this is critical for the rest of the questions, so I've written it backwards at the bottom, but don't peek until you've tried hard to figure it out yourself.)
7. How does the answer to #3 enhance your understanding of the prayer in #6?
8. See if you can group the verses in the Psalm into paragraphs on the basis of repeated key words or themes.
9. Try to align each request in the prayer in #5 with one or more verses in Ps 72. One request may give you some difficulty. In that case, consider v. 14, and the reason for which one person redeemed another in Israel. Cf. Lev 25:25, and compare the metaphor for sin used in the NT prayer.

Hint: 31-9:6 ttaM