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## **MONOCOLA, AMBIGUITY AND PROPOSITIONAL DENSITY: POETIC ART, TECHNIQUE AND RHETORIC IN PSALM 81**

### *ABSTRACT*

*Poetry is the richest form of all forms of linguistic expression. Psalm 81 is used here as an example. The psalm constitutes chiefly a speech of God and demonstrates how creative literary techniques can be used in the service of (prophetic) proclamation aimed at “listening to YHWH”. Two monocola are placed at hinge points (vv. 6c and 11c), serving as structural markers. They are associated with indeterminate deictic references so that ambiguity generates multiple readings. Due to intra-textual equivalences and with the catalysing effect of allusions to passages from Deuteronomy, different statements come into play. These include, among other things, the double aspect of filling the mouth or being sated with the word of God and bodily nourishment (vv. 11c and 17ab).*

### *1. A BRIEF REMARK ON THE THEORY OF (PSALM) POETRY*

A brief note on textual understanding is appropriate before we turn to Ps 81. A narrative is *primarily* organised syntagmatically and is characterised by temporal and causal sequences. Verse poetry, on the other hand, is paratactic and foregrounds intra-textual equivalences as meaning-giving (cf. Nel 1992). The auto-referential, respectively poetic function of language has a unique, regulative significance.

It “directs attention to the linguistic mediation itself and the structure it embodies. A foregrounding of form, of technique, makes itself felt ... The linear sequence of the speech stream (the axis of combination, syntagmatics) is overlaid with similarity relationships (the axis of selection, paradigmatics). Thus, the poetic function spans a network of cross-references, synonymic

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or antonymic, in which all linguistic and structural levels are interwoven”.<sup>2</sup>

Connected to this are ambiguity and the density of language. Verse poetry is the most complex form of expression of human language. Psalms are, therefore, highly structured. In a nutshell, all linguistic and literary phenomena have semantic implications – including what we call stylistics. Careful and repeated perception is therefore indispensable in understanding poetry. We now turn to Psalm 81, which belongs to the group of Asaph Psalms.<sup>3</sup> I will limit myself to a few significant points.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. PSALM 81 WITH SPECIAL CONSIDERATION OF THE TWO MONOCOLA AND THE INTRA- AND EXTRATEXTUAL HORIZON OF MEANING

### 2.1 Text, translation and segmentation of Ps 81

		1	לְמַנְצַח עַל־הַגִּתִּית לְאַסָּף:	To the music leader – according to the way of Gath (or: on the Gittith) – belonging to Asaph.
I	A	2	a הֲרַנִּינוּ לֵאלֹהִים עֲזָזָנוּ	Sing rejoicing to <u>God</u> , our strength/refuge,
		2	b הֲרִיעוּ לֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:	shout for joy to the <u>God</u> of Jacob!
		3	a שָׂאוּ־זַמְרָה וּתְנוּ־תֶרֶף	Begin the song and give sound to the hand-drum,
		3	b כְּנֹר נְעִים עִם־נָבֶל:	the pleasant small lyre with the standing lyre!
B		4	a תִּקְעוּ בַחֲדָשׁ שׁוֹפָר	Blow the ram’s horn at the new moon,
		4	b בַּכֶּסֶה לְיוֹם חַגֵּנוּ:	at the full moon on the day of our feast!
		5	a כִּי חֹק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא	For this is a statute for <u>Israel</u> ,
		5	b מִשְׁפָּט לֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:	a legal decree of the God of <u>Jacob</u>
		6	a עֲדוּת בִּיהוֹסֵף שָׁמוֹ	As an ordinance/testimony in <u>JHoseph</u> he appointed it,
		6	b בְּצֵאתוֹ עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם	in his going out against the land of Egypt.
II	C	6	c שֵׁפֶת לֹא־יָדַעְתִּי אֲשַׁמְעֶ:	A “lip” I did not know, <u>I hear</u> :
		7	a הִסִּירוּתִי מִסִּבְלַת שִׁכְמוֹ	<i>I have freed from the burden his shoulder,</i>
		7	b כַּפְּיוֹ מִדּוּד תִּעֲבֹרְנָה:	<i>his palms: from the basket they are loosed.</i>
		8	a בְּצָרָה קָרָאתָ וְאַחֲלָצְךָ	<i>In affliction you called, and I plucked you out;</i>

2 Cf. Weber (2012: 163, 165), with reference to Roman Jakobson.

3 The Asaph Psalms (Pss 50; 73-83) are a distinctive group in the book of Psalms with their own characteristics (including traditions from the northern tribes). Cf. Nasuti (1988); Weber (2001); Jacobson (2017).

4 For a far more detailed study of Ps 81 (in German), cf. Weber (2024).

	8	b	אָעָנָדָּ בְּסִתְרֵי רָעַם	<i>I answered you in the covering of thunder;</i>
	8	c	אֶבְחַנְךָ עַל־מֵי מְרִיבָה :סֵלָה	<i>I put you to the test at the waters of Meribah. – Sela.</i>
D	9	a	שְׁמַע עַמִּי וְאֶעֱיֶדֶךָ בְּדָ	<i><b>Hear, my people, and I will witness against you!</b></i>
	9	b	:יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם־תִּשְׁמַע־לִי:	<i><b>Israel, if <u>only you would listen</u> to me!</b></i>
	10	a	לֹא־יִהְיֶה בְּךָ אֵל זָר	<i><b>There shall not be with you a strange god,</b></i>
	10	b	:וְלֹא תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְאֵל נָכָר:	<i><b>you shall not bow down before a foreign god!</b></i>
	11	a	אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ	<i><b>I, YHWH, [alone] [am] your God,</b></i>
	11	b	הַמַּעֲלֶדָּה מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם	<i><b>the one who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.</b></i>
III	E	11	c	:הֲרַחֵב־פִּיךָ וְאִמְלֵאֶהוּ: <i><b>Open wide your mouth, and I will fill it!</b></i>
	12	a	וְלֹא־שָׁמַע עַמִּי לְקוֹלִי	<i>But my people <u>did not listen</u> to my voice,</i>
	12	b	:וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־אָבָה לִי:	<i>and Israel was not willing to me.</i>
	13	a	וְאִשְׁלַחֵהוּ בְּשִׁרְיוֹת לִבָּם	<i>Then I let them go in the stubbornness of their heart:</i>
	13	b	:יֵלְכוּ בְּמוֹעֲצוֹתֵיהֶם:	<i>“Let them [then] walk in their own plans!”</i>
	14	a	לֹו עַמִּי שָׁמַע לִי	<i>If only my people <u>would listen</u> to me,</i>
	14	b	:יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּדַרְכֵי יְהוָה:	<i>Israel would walk in my ways!</i>
F	15	a	כַּמַּעֲט אֹיְבֵיהֶם אֲכַנֶּנּוּ	<i>How easily I would humble their enemies,</i>
	15	b	:וְעַל צָרֵיהֶם אֲשִׁיב יָדִי:	<i>and against their oppressors I would turn my hand.</i>
	16	a	מִשְׂנְאֵי יְהוָה יִכְחָשׁוּ־לוֹ	<i>Those who hate YHWH would have to cringe before him;</i>
	16	b	:וְיִהְיֶה עִתָּם לְעוֹלָם:	<i>and it would be their time [lot] forever!</i>
	17	a	וַיֹּאכִילֵהוּ מִחֶלֶב חֹטָה	<i>He<sup>5</sup> had fed him with choicest grain,</i>
	17	b	:וּמִצּוּר דָּבַשׁ אֲשַׁבֵּעֵדָּ:	<i>and from the rock: with honey I would satisfy you.</i>

## 2.2 On the structure

First, some notes on the presentation of the psalm: Apart from paratextual features in 1 (heading) and 8c (*sela*), it is all “speech”. It is communicatively multi-layered. The speech of God is italicised; within

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5 In 17a, some commentators emend the verb form from 3 m sg to 1 sg. The reason is that God’s I-speech is interrupted in 17a after MT. This is unusual (although not excluded), but since no textual evidence is available, we leave the *lectio difficilior*.

that, the speech directly addressing the current Israel is marked in bold.<sup>6</sup> Some (but not all) of the equivalences are marked in the translation.<sup>7</sup>

The structure with its building blocks is also an equivalence system (cf. the parallelism of lines). Ps 81 has a six-step overall structure (Strophes A-F), grouped into three stanzas (I-III). The psalm is predominantly built of bicola. Two phenomena give rise to a discussion: Lines 6c and 11c. MT reads 6abc and 11abc as tricola, like 8abc. I consider this colometry inaccurate and read 6c and 11c as single-line verses (monocola / unicola).<sup>8</sup> They form the hinges between the three main parts of the psalm. I cannot go into the debate here about whether monocola exist or about Masoretic colometry,<sup>9</sup> but I will briefly justify my monocolic reading of these two verse lines.

### 2.3 *The two monocola in Ps 81*

Both monocola are characterised by a certain isolation in their environment. 6ab reads well as a bicolon, but 6c fits poorly with it. 7ab is also a bicolon.<sup>10</sup> Against the other option of reading 6c7ab as a tricolon, it should be noted that 6c does not contain the usual introduction to a speech. 6c is, therefore, a monocolon, as they occur – though rarely – at the beginning, end and hinges of poetic texts.

The situation is analogous with 11c: A monocolon oscillating between both sides. The line forms the conclusion of the *directly addressed* speech of God. However, it does not continue 11ab, so 11ab is to be read as a bicolon. 11c is also set off from 12ab. The account in 6ab and the self-

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6 On vv. 9-11 as a strophic (central) unit, cf. in agreement with Hossfeld (2000:468, 472-473); Fokkelman (2002:90); Van der Lugt (2010:391, 399).

7 As for the allusions to texts from Deuteronomy, cf. Table 1, below.

8 “By definition a monocolon or ‘isolated line’ is a single colon which does not closely cohere with another colon in the same sub-section of a poem. Although [*sic!*], strictly speaking, all the lines of a poem cohere in some way (or else they would not form part of the poem)” (Watson 1986:168).

9 I assume monocola in the book of Psalms (at least) in Pss 1:1a, 3d, 4a; 16:4a; 39:6c, 12c (refrain); 57:2a; 60:8a; 62:2a; 12c; 81:6c, 11c; 90:1a; 92:9a; 93:1a; 103:22c; 115:12a; 150:6a (cf. the corresponding passages in Weber 2016a and 2016b). On the monocolon as the smallest verse unit of Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry, cf. Watson (1986:168-174); Korpel and De Moor (1988:14-29).

10 Cf. the mirror-symmetrical arrangement of the sentence elements in 7ab: abc|c’b’a’.

introduction of YHWH in 11ab end with the mention of the land of Egypt (an end marker); a monocolon follows each.

Both monocola are characterised by semantic underdetermination. In 6c, it remains unknown who the speaker is, what he hears and what the previously “unknown” שפה, “lip”, means. In the imperative of 11c, the ambiguity is even more significant: the speaker, the addressed and what is to fill the mouth remain unsaid.

With such openness, the listener must make an effort to understand. In this process of understanding, deictic systems come into play insofar as the context is scanned for clues to resolve the ambiguity. We will now take a closer look at this.

#### 2.4 *The monocolon 6c*

6c forms the transition from a festive event to a speech of God. A voice expresses itself as “I”, which appears neither before nor after. It communicates an auditory experience (*yqtl*) of a strange, unknown voice (note the accentuated final position of the main verb). The “I” speaks of a hearing event, using the verb שמע “hear” (which is the keyword of the following speech of God). Before God calls on the people to listen or complains about their (stubborn) non-hearing, an “I” from the people “hears”. The parataxis of 6c and 7ab suggests that what God says is related to what the human “I” hears – presumably the mouthpiece that prophetically passes on the words that were heard.

The preceding verses, 4ab-6ab, contain some difficulties of understanding, which I can, at best, touch on only briefly here. The festival ordinance issued by God is rooted in earlier law (6, *qtl*). The last of the three terms deserves special attention: עדות here has the meaning “ordinance” in the foreground; in view of the use of the same root in 9a (the verb עד) and the background of the Song of Moses (see below), the meaning “testimony, attestation” also comes into play. In 6b, God’s action is directed *against* (על) “the land of Egypt”. Obviously, a hostile (military or judicial) action is referred to. Presumably, the tenth plague of judgement and the Passover as a memorisation feast are referred to.<sup>11</sup>

The connection between lines 6a and 6b is also challenging to understand. The rise of Joseph and his importance among the tribes began in Egypt. In Canaan he is given a double share of land and a leadership role (as long as the ark had its place in Ephraimite Shiloh, cf. Ps 78). The context

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11 Cf. Exod 11:4 (God tells Moses that at midnight he will “go out through the midst of [בתוך] Egypt”) and the Asaphite reference in Ps 78:51.

of God's action in 6ab – the festive arrangement in Joseph in connection with the action against Egypt – remains in a certain limbo.

Therefore, there is a change in 6c from the once-established festive order (*qtl – inf cs*) to the listening perception of a current speech of God (*yqtl*). What the speaker heard from a speaking שפה, “lip”, was previously unknown to him. However, what or who was unknown or new to the transmitter? Various options can be considered: a reference to the person speaking, the manner of speaking or the speech's content. I consider (tentatively) the “unknown” to be the voice of God that goes out to the people through the “I”. It is probably the first prophecy that the speaking human “I” receives and communicates (cf. Samuel in 1 Sam 3).

### 2.5 The monocolon 11c

Let us now turn to the second monocolon. After YHWH has introduced himself as the God of Israel who led the people up out of Egypt into the land (of Canaan), the speech now changes from nominal and participial statements to an imperative in 11c. Based on the context, it can be assumed – at least at first – that YHWH is still speaking, and Israel is the people addressed. Then, in 12ab, there is a change to the descriptive style of past events (*qtl*). The terms “mouth” and “voice” connect 11c and 12ab somehow, but the suffixes refer to different persons.

The two monocola 6c and 11c are striking and have syntactic-semantic openness. There is also a correlation between them, bringing new moments of meaning into play. Beyond the form as monocola and the analogous placement (at hinge points), the word-pair “lip/mouth” has a connecting effect. It leads to the cohesion of the two one-liners and puts them in a new light. An anaphoric reference is thus established from 11c back to 6c. Some commentators have recognised the possibility of a direct connection from 6c to 11c (cf. the overview in Tate 1990:319-20). In this case, the speaking “I” of 6c becomes the addressee of 11c:

II C 6 c :שַׁפַּת לֹא־יָדַעְתִּי אֲשַׁמָּע: A “lip” I did not know, I hear: // ... //

III E 11 c :הִרְחַב־פִּיךָ וְאָמַלְאָהוּ: “*Open wide your mouth, and I will fill it!*”

A literary-critical transposition of 11c *directly* after 6c would result in a meaningful bicolon 6c11c. However, this is not necessary. A poetic structure can also establish a correlation between two monocola across intermediate verses. Contrary to the usual synonymous use of the organs of linguistic articulation, correspondence is established between output (lip[s]) and input (mouth). In feedback to 6c, the mouth in 11c is the receiving organ: God wants to administer the word orally while the

hearer(s) has the mouth wide open (“word-food”). This creates a connection between the reception of words and their transmission as the speech of God. Whether this poetic figure is referred to terminologically as an AxB sandwich pattern or a split bicolon is of secondary importance. What is important is the perception of this feature and the extension of meaning and effect generated with it.

In addition to this anaphoric linking of 11c to 6c, the ambiguity of 11c also establishes a cataphoric reference to the final verse of the psalm (17ab). In the interweaving of past and present, there is talk of a nourishment of the people by God himself. Due to the semantic proximity of mouth and feeding, this statement activates the ambiguous monocolon 11c again and suggests understanding the opening and filling of the mouth as God’s feeding. God – with a new shift of addressee – tells the people to open their mouths so that he can fill them with grain and honey.

## 2.6 *Statements from Deuteronomy as background for understanding Ps 81*

8:3	וַיַּעֲנֵךְ וַיִּרְעֶבְךָ וַיֹּאכֶלְךָ אֶת הַמָּן אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַעְתָּ וְלֹא יָדְעוּן אֲבֹתֶיךָ לְמַעַן הוֹדַעְךָ כִּי לֹא עַל- הַלֶּחֶם לִבְדוֹ יַחְיֶה הָאָדָם כִּי עַל-כָּל-מוֹצֵא פִי- יְהוָה יַחְיֶה הָאָדָם:	... and he fed you with manna, which you did not know and your fathers did not know, to make you realise that mankind does not live by bread alone. Rather, mankind lives by everything that goes out <u>of the mouth of</u> YHWH.
18:15	כִּמְנִי יָקִים לְךָ יְהוָה נְבִיא מִקִּרְבְּךָ מֵאַחֶיךָ אֲלֵהֶיךָ אֱלֹוֹ תִשְׁמָעוּן:	YHWH your God will raise up for you a prophet from among you and your brothers, like me, and <u>to him you shall listen</u> .
18:18	נְבִיא אֲקִים לָהֶם מִקִּרְבֵּי אֲחֵיהֶם כְּמוֹךָ וְנָתַתִּי דְּבָרֵי בְּפִיו וְדִבַּר אֲלֵיהֶם אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר אֲצַוֶּנּוּ	A prophet I will raise up for them from the midst of their brothers, like you. I will put my words <u>in his mouth</u> , and he shall speak to them all that I shall command him.
31:19	וְעַתָּה כְּתֹבוּ לָכֶם אֶת-הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת וְלַמְדֶּה אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׁימָה בְּפִיהֶם לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה-לִּי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְעֵד בְּבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:	And now write this song for them, and teach it unto the children of Israel, and put it <u>in their mouth</u> , that this song may be <u>a witness</u> unto me against Israel.
31:21	וְהָיָה כִּי-תִמְצָאנָּ אֹתוֹ רָעוֹת רַבּוֹת וְצָרוֹת וְעָנְתָה הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְפָנָיו לְעֵד כִּי לֹא תִשְׁכַּח מִפִּי זִרְעוֹ כִּי יִדְעֹתִי אֶת-יָצְרוֹ אֲשֶׁר הוּא עֹשֶׂה הַיּוֹם בְּטֶרֶם אֲבִיאֶנּוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי:	And when great calamity and distress shall befall them, this song shall be <u>a witness</u> before them; for it shall not be forgotten <u>in the mouth of their descendants</u> . For I know their inclination what they do [even] today, [even] before I bring them to the land which I have sworn [to give to them].

32:13	יִרְכַּבְהוּ עַל־בְּמוֹתַי [בְּמִתִּי] אֶרֶץ וַיֹּאכַל תְּנוּבַת שְׂדֵי וַיִּגְמְהוּ דָבַשׁ מִסֹּלֶעַ וְשֶׁמֶן מִחֶלְמִישׁ צוּר:	He made him ride on the high places of the land, / and he ate [the] produce of the field. // He made him suckle <u>honey from [the] boulder</u> . / and oil from [the] <u>rock</u> .
32:14	חֶמְצָת בָּקָר וְחֵלֶב צֹאן עִסְחֵלֶב כְּרִים וְאֵילִים בְּגִיבְשָׁן וְעֵתוּדִים עִסְחֵלֶב כְּלִיֹּת חֹטָה וְדָם־ עֵגֶב תִּשְׁתַּהֲחֶמְקֶר:	Cream from cattle, and milk from the flock, / with the fat of lambs and rams; // stock from Bashan and goats, / with <u>the fat of the kernels of</u> <u>wheat</u> , // and [the] blood of grapes: / You drank new wine.

Table 1: Relevant passages from Deuteronomy

Beyond the *intratextual* generation of meaning, the psalm also refers *intertextually* to words (primarily) from Deuteronomy. The allusions act as catalysts that reinforce or bring to the fore options for meaning in the psalm. They also have a legitimising character. Already the keyword שמע, “hear”, of Ps 81 (vv. 6c, 9a, 9b, 12a, 14a) and its use in the context of the covenant relationship between YHWH and his people Israel leads into Deuteronomic theology.

One can speak of שמע as a “key word of the deuteronomic-deuteronomistic school and its heirs”.<sup>12</sup> Non-hearing can be characterised as renitence and recalcitrance. Ps 81 speaks of unwillingness, obduracy and acting according to one’s own plans (cf. vv. 12-13). The inculcation of listening is also characteristic of Deuteronomy. For the Psalms, on the other hand, this usage is atypical, especially since in them – in a reciprocal speaker-listener constellation – it is usually the individual or the people who turn to God and expect him to “hear” or testify to his hearing.

We concentrate henceforth on the monocola and their intratextual connections. Through the association of 6c and 11c, the human “I” is called upon by YHWH himself to receive the word of God. This association of prophetic word reception and subsequent transmission to God’s people calls up two key passages. In the prophetic law (Deut 18:9-22), the verb שמע also plays an important role (cf. vv. 14, 15, 16, 19). Because the people no longer want to hear God’s voice directly, God will raise up a prophet like Moses: “To him you shall listen (תשמעון!)” (v. 15). It is further said of him, “I will put my words in his mouth (בפיו), and he shall speak to them all that I shall command him.” (v. 18). The allusion to the prophetic law legitimates and authorises the mediator of Ps 81 – which takes on additional

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12 Schult (1979:975) (ein “Schlüsselwort der dtn.-dtr. Schule und ihrer Erben”).

significance when the unknown in 6c refers to God's voice and a prophecy is present (vv. 7-17).

Secondly, Deut 31-32 deserve attention.<sup>13</sup> YHWH instructs Moses to put the words of the Song "in their mouths" (בפיהם) as a testimony against Israel in case of future apostasy (Deut 31:19, 21). Sequence, function and content in Deut 31 and Ps 81 are analogous: God's speech → the involved prophet → delivery ("mouth-filling") as a witness to the people. Unlike in Deut 18:18, the word of God in Deut 31:19 is not put into the mouth of the prophet but placed by the prophet in the mouth of the people. This interpretation is also possible because of the indeterminacy of the addressee in 11c. If, in connection with 6c, the addressing of the prophet is more in the foreground in 11c, the contexts of vv. 7, 9 and 12 lead to a foregrounding of the people as the addressees. Thus, several interpretations can resonate in one density of meaning.

The cataphoric association of 11c with feeding solid food in v. 17ab is also underpinned by words from Deuteronomy. There is again a reference to the Song of Moses (Deut 32:13-14): The phrase "with choicest grain", literally "of the fat of the wheat" (מחלב חטה), is found in the Song, as is the "honey from the rock". The connection of the terms דבש "honey" and צור "rock" is present in these two biblical texts alone.

Lastly, the speech about the opening and filling of the mouth in 11c illuminates a further intertextuality, especially since it connects the reception of God's word and food. The reference is to Deut 8:3, where an arc is drawn from the nourishment with everyday bread to that with God's word: "He humbled you and made you hungry and he fed you with manna, which you did not know, and your fathers did not know, to make you realise that mankind does not live by bread alone. Rather, mankind lives by everything that goes out of the mouth of YHWH (פִּי־יְהוָה)". Reversed to Deut 8:3, the sequence from God's saturation with words to that with food is present in Ps 81.

### 3. CONCLUSION

A high degree of ambiguity is connected with the monocola 6c and 11c in their underdetermined character. It leads to a condensation of statements and makes multiple meanings possible. This happens with the help of text-internal equivalences and under the catalysing effect of evoked statements

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13 The Song of Moses (and the Song of the Reed Sea) play an important role in the Asaph Psalms. On the connections of Deut (31-)32 with Ps 81, cf. Weber (2021:299-305).

from the tradition (Deuteronomy). The reading options generated in this way can each come to the fore and coexist in a collaborating manner. Their reception, however, requires repeated memorisation by the audience and knowledge of the tradition being alluded to.

For the appeal of God in 11c, we have worked out the following variants of meaning: The reception of the word can refer to the prophet or the people (*addressee* variance). Moreover, the mouth-filling can be with God's word and-/or with everyday bread (*content* variance). The concluding sketch compiles the reading options discussed and serves as an illustration.

Text	Content	Speaker	Addressee
6c	A "lip" I did not know, I hear:	I (= prophet)	Israel
7-8	Israel statements (once)	YHWH	Israel
9-11b	Israel addresses (now)		
11c	<i>Open wide your mouth, and I will fill it!</i>	YHWH	prophet Israel
12-14	Israel statements (once → now)	YHWH	Israel
15	Enemy statements (once/now)		
16		man	
17a	He had fed him with choicest grain,	(= prophet?)	
17b	<i>and from the rock: with honey I would satisfy you.</i>	YHWH	Israel

Sandwich pattern

Table 2: Reading options in conjunction with 6c and 11c

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