On the Origin of Psalm 22

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Summary
It does not seem plausible to explain Psalm 22 as a unity. Too many elements differ too much. In the paper I try to present a plausible alternative. In Psalm 22, it seems as if we do not have a single text, but at least five different texts (one text with four interpretations). [1] A pre exilic or early exilic individual lament was first written as an example prayer for educational purposes (v2f, 7-12, 23). [2] Due to sentiments claiming national unity and cult-centralization it became important for the scribes that this prayer was not directed towards just any god, but that it was explicitly addressed towards the god of the central sanctuary. To make this explicit, a reference to the festivals in the central sanctuary was added (v4-6). [3] Then, in the exilic times, it became accustomed to read this text as a story about the corporate personality 'Jacob' in the exile who was mocked and despised by other people. In this occasion a significant extension were added (v13-22) making this prayer more into a narrative as this author already understood it to be. [4] In the same milieu some comments were added at the end of the text and in the margins, first with the exclusivist intention to specify the characteristics of Jacob as the group of true believers (verse 24a, 25, 27b-c), and later to counter this with an ethnic inclusivist intention (verse 24b-c, 26-27a¸. In this redaction was also the intention to fix the practice of vows as a part of the typical Israelite prayer that had to be fulfilled at the sanctuary (verse 26). [5] In a later time, eschatology became an important part of the community self-interpretation, and an author found it plausible to make this recounting of Jacob (זכר 28; עשׂה 32) into a cosmic event, where the ends of the earth return to Yahweh, when they get to know his saving acts. And the idea is given that even the dead, and the generations to worship him.

The dissertation:
The section is part of my Ph. D.-dissertation "Reapplication of Cultic Language in Psalm 22, 23 and 24". There I discuss how the typical lament, the birth-language, the pilgrimage-language and the language of festival celebrations refer to situations that are commonly suited to imprint lasting memories of detailed recollection – or "flashbulb memories". All these situations seem according to the Old Testament material (at least among the pious) to be surrounded by conventional cultic acts (acts where at least one of the participants is conceived as divine). I describe this through semantic field analysis on certain key terms (אלי, נדרי, גחי, השׁלכתי, רעי, כוסי הכבדand others). Psalm 22, 23 and 24 in their current form do not seem to be texts that were primarily used in cultic settings, but there are numerous allusions and references to language conventionally charged by such cultic acts. These psalms seem to be designed to recollect and interpret (or reinterpret) these memories.