Psalm 139 - a redactional perspective

A dissertation

by

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Presented to the Faculty of Theology

in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MTh

in

Old Testament Studies

at the

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

December 2017

Study Leader: Prof. D.J. Human

DECLARATION

I, Carine Botha, hereby declare that the dissertation

Psalm 139 - a redactional perspective

reflects my own understanding and research on the above title and that all references used and quoted are referenced in full and appropriate acknowledgements are given.

Carine Botha
December, 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my study leader Professor Dirk Human, who took valuable time and dedication to shape me to the highest standards. Without his guidance and help this dissertation would not have been possible.

I would like to thank my parents, Johan and Tienkie, for their wise counsel and sympathetic ear. You are always there for me. You helped me become the person I am today. Thank you for always believing in me, especially those times when I fail to do so myself.

My steadfast husband, Frik, for your enduring love and patience I will be forever thankful. You have been a constant source of support and encouragement. You are my rock and I am thankful for having you in my life.

To a merciful God who opened the door for me to write this dissertation and who provided me with the grace to do so, may You alone be glorified by every word written here.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

Psalm 139 has been the object of praise over centuries. White (1984:202) spoke of it as "one of the greatest passages in all of Scripture." Mays (1999:425) described it as "the most personal expression in Scripture of Old Testament's radical monotheism." Kirkpatrick (1903:785) appraises it as the culmination of the awareness of a personal relationship between God and man, which is themed throughout the entire *Psalter*. Psalm 139 is undoubtedly one of the most moving psalms in the Psalm Book. It is the exceptional and salient features of Psalm 139 that makes it one of the great psalms. To this day it is quoted and referenced to by scholars, clergy and laymen when referring to the all-encompassing grace of God.

In spite of the beauty of the psalm, Psalm 139 is notorious for yet another reason: its extreme exegetical divide.[1] No secret could be made of the fact that scholars do not agree on an interpretation for Psalm 139.[2] For some the outburst and appeal of vv 19-24 is in direct contrast to the rest of the psalm and needs to be separated from vv 1-18 in order to fully grasp the meaning of the psalm.[3] Others consider the dissonance in Psalm 139 a cardinal part of the text and stand firm that it should not be separated from the whole. It is in the light of this interpretational discord that we take a closer look at the psalm in this study.

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[1] According to Peels (2008:35-36) Psalm 139:19-22 is in total contradiction to the praise of which the forgoing verses consist. He declares this passage unique on the grounds of the extreme hatred against the Psalmist's enemies that is expressed so honestly and genuinely.

[2] Van der Ploeg (1974:435-437) offers some insight on the different interpretational possibilities put forth by scholars. These will be referred to and entered into discussion with different scholarly views in subsequent chapters.

[3] Peels (2008:36) accurately conceives the scholarly dissension by asking the relevant question: "Are not the contents of verses 19-22 a dissonance in the context of the whole psalm, which in itself is moving because of the serene language, full intimacy and worship?"

Research to date had put exceptional focus on Psalm 139 and its unity and/or division. Questions such as 'should the psalm be read as a whole?' and 'how should the diverging parts of vv 1-18 and 19-24 be united?' has coloured research in the field of Psalm 139. This study, however, will attempt to come to a clearer insight into Psalm 139. To accomplish this, a twofold approach will be taken. We will first let the text speak for itself by exploring the textual and poetic features.[4] Furthermore these results will be put in the wider context of the *Psalter*, specifically Book V of the *Psalter*.[5] The placement of Psalm 139 within the context of the theology of Book V of the *Psalter* should be seriously considered and attention must be drawn to the relationship that Psalm 139 has with other texts in its immediate context.

1.2   Motivation and relevance

Due to the diverse nature and character of individual psalms and groups of psalms as well as a lack of definite historical references in the psalms, it is a complex task to date psalms and place them in an original context (Toy, 1884:80). One such psalm subjected to the controversy of interpretation is Psalm 139, located in Book V (Pss 107-150) of the *Psalter*. Psalm 139 is one of the most studied and thoroughly investigated psalms in the *Psalter*.

The dilemma faced by scholars when confronted with Psalm 139 is the ambiguity of the psalm. In vv 1-18 the powerful omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence of YHWH is extolled with beautiful poetic imagery. Suddenly vv 19-22 interrupts this striking song of praise with the unobserved wrath of the Psalmist against the wicked. Vv 23-24 then continues in accordance with the first part of the psalm, with a request to YHWH for guidance. The contradictory nature of the psalm leads to the fact that scholars disagree, first of all, on the unity of Psalm 139. Consequently, not one specific *genre* has been allocated to the psalm. Brueggemann & Bellinger

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[4] Peels (2008:37) suggests that an important part of a synchronic analysis and inquiring into a text is asking whether the text conveys what the average reader perceives when reading it.

[5] Van der Ploeg (1974:435) believes that the placement of any psalm in the *Psalter* should be a determining factor in our understanding of the psalm.

(2014:581) asserts that the complexity of the psalm is reflected in the endeavour of form critics to define the psalm's type.

The position of Hermann Gunkel on the *genre* classification of Psalm 139 has been dominant for years. According to the research of Gunkel & Begrich (1998:37) the belief was that Psalm 139 should be classified as a hymn. Recent research, however, questions this position. Gerstenberger (2001:405) suggests that a wide variety of elements of other *genres* can also be identified in Psalm 139.[6] Despite many efforts to attain a clearer understanding of Psalm 139, the question concerning the unity and *genre* of the psalm seems to lay unanswered and awaiting.

It is an undeniable fact that every psalm is an individual piece of poetry penned down in its own right.[7] Recent developments in psalm research, however, show a growing interest in the study of the relations between psalms. Increased concern is shown towards investigating the specific placement of a psalm in the various books of the *Psalter*. Little is known about the history of the composition of the *Psalter* as it is known to us today. We do, however, know that the Psalm Book is redactionally grouped into five separate parts,[8] each of which concludes with a type of doxology.[9] The final form of the *Psalter* is a reflection of the five books of the Torah. Thus it is clear that the *Psalter*, as delivered to us over the centuries, has been given to us in a very particular form. Any inquiry regarding a psalm must therefore take into serious consideration the placement of the psalm in the *Psalter* (Wilson, 1992:130).

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[6] Gerstenberger (2001:405) believes that the four primary *genres* that have already been awarded to Psalm 139, includes: complaint, thanksgiving, hymn and wisdom.

[7] Psalms as individual poems are written with a particular approach, whether it is a 'setting-in-life' for the purpose of private religious practice or a 'setting-in-liturgy' for the purpose of public religious practice (Gillingham, 1994:232).

[8] An alternative approach is to divide the Psalm bundle into two parts, namely Pss 1-89 and Pss 90-150. This division is based on the use of contrasting organisational techniques. In the first segment the Psalms are grouped together and divided into smaller groups by author and *genre*. The second segment is marked by groups of *hwdh* and *hllwyh* psalms (Wilson, 1992:131-132).

[9] The first four doxologies can be found at Psalm 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52 and 106:48. The last psalm of the entire bundle, Psalm 150 in its entirety, is considered to be the doxology of the last book of the *Psalter*.

According to Zenger (1998:77-81) Book V of the *Psalter* can be distinguished primarily from the other four books in the bundle on two levels. The first level of distinction involves the linguistic profile of the book. Continuous use of the two verbs *llh* (praise) en *hdy* (give thanks) is characteristic of the linguistic character of the book. However, the second and most important level of distinction is the theological profile of Book V. Central to the theology of Book V of the *Psalter* is the clear vision of a universal kingdom of YHWH brought about by a theophany on Zion. This universal kingdom is contrasted to the davidic kingdom. For this reason Book V is composed of a plurality of hymns as well as psalms of lament.

Furthermore, the question on the relations between surrounding psalms increases. Gunkel & Begrich (1998:2) makes the observation that there are absolutely no internal organisational principles for the individual psalms. According to this notion there are general groups,[10] but the more common tendency is that no internal relations between neighbouring psalms can be discerned. He then concludes that there is no certainty whether psalms must be read in relation to neighbouring psalms. Wilson (1992:130) together with Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:545) changed this discourse with leaps and bounds by insisting that psalms cannot be read in isolation. Today the prevailing interest in psalm research is focused on questions regarding the composition, editorial unity and overall message of the *Psalter* as a literary and canonical unit with a specific structure and message, (2004:333). It is thus important to study the position of Psalm 139 in the *Psalter* as well as its relationship with the surrounding psalms.

Any inquiry into the nature and type of Psalm 139 should keep in mind that the psalm is set in the midst of the unique theological profile of Book V of the *Psalter* with specific focus on the universal kingdom of YHWH. The unique use of language in the psalm, along with the thematic repetition of YHWH's supremacy colours Psalm 139

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[10] The overall *genre*-groupings proposed by Gunkel (1998:4) are: Pss 5-7; 54-57; 61-64; 140-143 as 'complaints of the individual' / 65f; 95-100; 103-105; 134-139; 145-150 as 'hymns' / 40f as 'thanksgiving psalms' / 20f as 'royal psalms' / 79f as 'communal complaints' / 127:1f; 3-5 as 'wisdom speech' / 111f as 'alphabetical psalms' / 74-38 as 'those treating the faith of Israel' / 105f as 'those containing narratives' / 46-48 as 'those with eschatological content'.

with a continuous universalistic concept of God. Furthermore, Psalm 139's relationship with its neighbouring psalms should be taken into consideration. An exploration of these aspects in the psalm can make a positive contribution to the understanding of the unity of Psalm 139. Subsequently it will also make a positive contribution to the classification of the psalm within a *genre*.

1.3   Research problem

For Gunkel & Begrich (1998:5) the *genre* of a psalm is the non-negotiable, fundamental foundation upon which all further research of the psalm must build.[11] Mowinckel (1992:1) adds that in order to understand a psalm historically, one must first try to determine the place and function of the psalm in the religious life of ancient Israel,[12] thus establishing the *genre* of the psalm. In this respect Psalm 139 is unique because it has not yet been classified under one of the traditional psalm *genres*[13] (Allen, 2002:323; Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014:581; Clifford, 2003:279; Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:537; Kraus, 1989:511:511; Terrien, 2003:881).

The impression created by a cursory reading of Psalm 139 is that of the reader's insignificance in the face of YHWH's omnipotence, coupled with a sense of security and safety in the presence of the Omnipresent. However, these observations are contrasting and result in a variety of divergent interpretations of the psalm. Subsequently, the interpretation of Psalm 139 is subject to controversy (Vos, 2005:192). Various efforts to assign a *genre* to Psalm 139 includes those who classify the psalm as a lamentation pointing out that the psalmist begs YHWH to end

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[11] "Accordingly, *genre* research in the Psalms is non-negotiable, not something one can execute or ignore according to preference. Rather, it is the foundational work without which there can be no certainty in the remainder. It is the firm ground from which everything else must ascend," (Gunkel, 1998:5).

[12] Mowinckel assumes a historical as well as religious phenomenological understanding of the text as critical to placing a psalm within a particular *genre*.

[13] According to Gunkel (1967:30-39) the psalms of the *Psalter* can be divided into the following five main *genres*:

Hymns; Community Laments; Songs of the individual; Royal Psalms; Entrance liturgies, Torah songs and Blessings

the lives of the wicked. The psalm, however, lacks other characteristics of a lamentation. Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:584) suggests that Psalm 139 is written against a backdrop of wisdom literature. Allen (2002:330) proposes persecution as a basis for understanding the psalm while Terrien (2003:881) advocates praise for a Divine omnipresence as the background for Psalm 139.

The divergent nature of the interpretation of Psalm 139 is caused by the conspicuous break in form and tone which occurs between vv 18 and 19. The fervent eruption of vv 19-22 and the petition of vv 23-24 diverge greatly with the tranquillity of the preceding statements in vv 1-18. Due to the conflicting and apparently irremediable moods within the psalm itself - the calloused tone of vv 19-24 compared to the encouraging stance of vv 1-18 - the vast majority of scholars isolate the parts and deals with them separately.

Allen (2002:323) along with most scholars insists that, when studying individual parts of the psalm, Psalm 139 displays a mixed form of primary *genres*. Gerstenberger (2001:405) writes that some exegetes wrongfully insist that some parts of Psalm 139 determine the comprehension of Psalm 139 as a whole. This has led to colourful but unfortunately non-consistent interpretations of Psalm 139.[14] Consequently the problem arises as to whether Psalm 139 should still be read as a coherent whole, or whether Psalm 139 should be read and interpreted as an editorial aggregation.

This research will endeavour to answer questions about the *genre* of Psalm 139 by considering the unity of the psalm. It will contribute to understanding the meaning of the psalm in its original context by taking into consideration the placement of the psalm within Book V of the *Psalter* and relating it to the preceding Psalm 138 as well as the following Psalm 140.

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[14] "Psalm 139 is one of the most intensely studied poems in the *Psalter*. The discussion about its *genre* classification has been going on for a long period of time with no end in sight. Elements and inklings of various categories of psalms can be detected in the different subunits. The exegete who insists that one single aspect must be determinative for the whole psalm may choose among complaint, thanksgiving, hymn. and wisdom discourse. All these avenues have been tried, to the effect that the picture of our psalm is very colourful in Old Testament research," (Gerstenberger 2001:405).

The aim of the study is to enquire into the unity of Psalm 139 by establishing the extent of the relationship of Psalm 139 with its neighbouring psalms. A further aim of the study is to understand the psalm historically by determining the place and function of Psalm 139 in the religious context of ancient Israel. To do this, the placement of the psalm in Book V of the *Psalter* must be investigated. Henceforth the aim of this study is to inch closer to a more accurate determination of the *genre* of Psalm 139.

1.4   Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

A. To do a synchronic analysis of Psalm 139:

- To do a literary-exegetical analysis of the text;
- To identify textual features and understand their interrelatedness on a literary level;
- To address interpretational problems with regard to the structural unity of the text with specific focus on vv. 19-22
- To aid the interpreter by proposing a structure for the text on the basis of textual features;
- To address interpretational problems with regard to the *genre* and the *Sitz im Leben* of the text.

B. To do a diachronic analysis of Psalm 139:

- To draw attention to the relationship between Psalm 139 and other texts in its immediate context;
- To highlight similarities and differences between Psalm 139 and Psalms 138 and 140;
- To point out the intertextual relationships between Psalm 139 and the other psalms in Book V of the *Psalter*.

- To relate this study to recent trends in psalm research, that is a decreased focus on the individuality of psalms and a meticulous focus on the composition and redaction of the *Psalter*.

C. To synthesize the findings of the above research and to apply it to the research problem and hypothesis.

1.5   Research methodology

Literature is a form of communication. Any form of communication implies a sender and a recipient of the communicated message. For the recipient to correctly receive and understand the communicated message a common language must be used. The recipient must simultaneously be aware of the language (the text) as well as the background (the context) from which the communication originated (Prinsloo 2008:50). Therefore, it is important to analyse a text on both a textual level as well as a contextual level.[15]

Researching a text must be a holistic exercise that takes into account the textual as well as the contextual elements of the text. Thus, for a more comprehensive understanding of the text in this study, the research will consist of a combination of synchronic and diachronic research methods.

The starting point of this study is a synchronic or rather literary study of Psalm 139. This section will mainly focus on the interrelationship of textual features such on a literary level. This analysis will help to investigate the structural unity of Psalm 139 with focus on the apparent incongruous vv 19-22. Accordingly, other interpretational

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[15] No word, phrase, sentence or text can ever be read, interpreted and understood in isolation. To uphold the authenticity of any text and to prevent the interpreter from reading his own presuppositions into a text, a contextual approach must be followed. A semiotic approach consists of three so called contexts: the intra-textual context - the intricate relationship between letters, words, sentences and phrases; the intertextual context - the relationship between the demarcated text and the texts surrounding it; and the extratextual context - the social-historical background from which the text originated (Prinsloo, 2014:i)

problems such as the question on the *genre* and the setting of the psalm will also be addressed in the synchronic section of the study.

Furthermore, a diachronic approach will be taken. Psalm 139 will be investigated from an intertextual perspective. In this section of the study, we will investigate the similarities that Psalm 139 share with surrounding text. Also we will inquire how Psalm 139 can be distinguished from other text on the basis of characteristics. An intertextual study will be undertaken between Psalm 139 and Psalms 138 and 140. Additionally, in this section of the study, the editing and compilation of Book V of the *Psalter* will be examined to determine the role and place that Psalm 139 assumed in the redactional process.

1.6   Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study is:

A holistic analysis conducted by means of synchronic and diachronic methods will reveal a definite structural division in Psalm 139. This structural division speaks to the fact that Psalm 139 was redactionally altered and placed in between Psalm 138 and Psalm 140 to link the foregoing and following sections within the framework of Book V of the Psalter. Due to the editorial nature of Psalm 139 the psalm cannot be assigned to only one of Gunkel's traditional psalm genres. To understand Psalm 139 more comprehensively it must be taken into consideration that the psalm exhibits a multitude of genres.

1.7   Chapter division

Chapter 1 contains the motivation for this study, the research problem, the research approach, the hypothesis and a chapter division that will be used in the study, along with an explanation of terminologies that will be used.

Chapter 2 consists of a literature review that will summarise and describe the current state of research in Psalm 139. In the literature review primary focus will fall on how scholars understand the unity of Psalm 139. Emphasis will be placed on how scholars comprehend and deal with the break between vv 18 and 19. A further focal point of this chapter will be to summarise the allotment of various *genres* to Psalm 139 by respective scholars. Finally this literature review will focus on how scholars have regarded and assessed the placement of Psalm 139 in its greater context that is in Book V of the *Psalter*.

Chapter 3 is a synchronic analysis of Psalm 139. It will form the point of departure of this study. This chapter will focus on the text on a literary level. As a starting point it consists of a literary-exegetical model of the relevant text that includes a morphological, syntactical, structural and poetic analysis. This analysis is aimed at evaluating the interrelationship between all the textual elements involved. The purpose of the literary-exegetical analysis is to identify the textual characteristics of Psalm 139. A synchronic study of the texts thus serves as the basis for understanding the structure and expositions of the relevant text. Furthermore, it serves as a basis upon which an extensive study of literary characteristics builds in a quest for the enriched understanding of the psalm.

Chapter 4 consists of a diachronic analysis of Psalm 139. Here the editorial history of Psalm 139 will be explored. In this chapter the emphasis will be on recent trends in psalm research not to focus on the individuality of the relevant psalm, but rather to focus on the redaction of the *Psalter* and the unique arrangement of psalms and groupings of psalms in the greater context of the *Psalter*. This chapter will therefore examine Psalm 139 from an intertextual perspective. Attention will be given to Psalm 139's relationship with other texts in its immediate context. An intertextual analysis is undertaken between Psalm 139 and its preceding and following psalms, Psalms 138 and 140. A brief overview of intertextual similarities and differences between the relevant texts will be highlighted. Finally, the relationship of Psalm 139 with the larger collection in which it is placed will be investigated.

Chapter 5 is a summary for the findings made in the foregoing research. This chapter will consist of a critical discussion of the findings of the study. A summary of

the conclusions reached in the investigation will be made. An answer regarding the hypothesis of the study will be given. Finally, some remarks will be made on the study.

1.8   Some practical matters

1.8.1 Terminologies

Terminologies that will be used for this study are as follows:

Ancient Near East:

The Ancient Near East is used in this study to refer to the area that closely corresponds to the contemporary Middle East.[16] The term "Ancient Near East" refers not only to a vast geographical region, but also to a long chronological time span in which many different peoples originated and existed in a variety of different natural environments. Benzel et al (2010:9) describes the Ancient Near East as a combination of different living conditions in which various populations gave birth to rich and complex cultures.

Synchronic analysis:

Synchronic analysis of a text studies the different linguistic elements in a text without taking into consideration the historical development of the text. De Saussure (2013:104) put forth that language is the only reality in a synchronic study of the text. Language exhibits a variety of levels, such as grammar, vocabulary, poetic features, etc., which needs to be individually explored (Hoftijzer, 1995:102). According to Talstra (1995:196) a synchronic reading of the text endeavours to explore linguistic clues without allowing non-linguistic information, such as the historical development of the text, to influence the text. A synchronic analysis of a text thus primarily focuses on the isolated use and employment of language within the text.

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[16] Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Iran (Snell, 2005:xviii)

Diachronic analysis:

Diachronic analyses of a text primarily focus on the historical development of the text. De Suassure (2013:104) states that a diachronic study is longer concerned with language in isolation, but rather the series of events that modifies the language to the form it's currently being studied in. Talstra (1995:207) adds that while a synchronic approach focuses on how a text can be read on the basis of linguistic knowledge, a diachronic approach concentrates on the question of how the text was produced. A diachronic analysis therefore does not study the text in isolation, but rather focus on the process of the maturing of the text.

1.8.2 Orthography

Biblical quotations used in this study are taken from the *New International Version* (NIV). The *New International Version* will be used as a reference for biblical abbreviations.

The Hebrew texts used in this study are taken from the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS).

The chapter headings, headings, subheadings and bibliography, nouns and verbs start with uppercase letters while presuppositions and words are written in lowercase letters. This study will make use of footnotes.

The method of reference that will be used in this study is the modified Harvard referencing method.

1.8.3 Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are being used:

The Bible, *New International Version* (NIV) will be used as reference for biblical abbreviations.

In addition, the following abbreviations are also used:

BCE   Before Common Era
BHS   *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
Ed or Eds   Editor of Editors
LXX   Septuagint
Ps   Psalm
Pss   Psalms
v   verse
vv   verses

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

2.1   Introduction

Psalm 139 has been described by scholars as one of the most beautiful psalms in the Book of Psalms, (Van der Ploeg, 1974:435). Although Psalm 139 is considered one of the most picturesque pieces of Biblical poetry, it is an inevitable fact that the Psalm gives rise to controversial and divergent interpretations. Some scholars even insist that the composition of the psalm, consisting in a pertinent break in form and tone, is to be considered a strange phenomenon (Allen, 2002:320). Goldingay (2008:627) explains that a plea to YHWH to investigate and scrutinise man cannot help but to produce an inconsistency. On the one hand man realises that he/she cannot escape YHWH's investigation and that there is no way to mislead YHWH. On the other hand, man trusts that he/she will survive YHWH's scrutiny in spite of man's inherent wickedness.

The uniqueness of Psalm 139 is born from the realisation that the psalmist tries to convey in words, what is essentially inexplicable about YHWH. Such a description of divine attributes, coupled with exaggerated language which is finally put together with an incredible depth of thought, is nowhere else to be found other than in Psalm 139 itself (Scroggie, 1978:44). The psalmist succeeds in expressing him-/herself to the point that his/her description of YHWH speaks of some or other personal experience with YHWH. It is a psalm that speaks of an intimate relationship between YHWH and man. Waltke & Houston (2010:521) believe that it is only when one has experienced the uniqueness of a personal encounter with the great *I am* that one can express the kind of tension witnessed in Psalm 139 - a tension exposed in the conflict between the inexpressible and the intimacy of a relationship with YHWH. Mays (1989:425) in support of this premise, states that Psalm 139 is the most personal expression of radical monotheism that occurs in the entire Old Testament. This personal nature of Psalm 139 is reflected in the absolute ambiguous character of the psalm. For Weiser (1962:802) this dualism in the psalm points to the human

being's inability to understand the greatness of YHWH. It thus becomes clear that Psalm 139 tries to express in words and metaphoric constructs the significance and supremacy of YHWH by means of a relational familiarity claimed by the psalmist.

Segal (2013:653) confirms this perception of a personal character of Psalm 139 by identifying two prominent elements in the psalm. Foremost the psalmist bases him-/herself on personal experience rather than abstract and dogmatic thinking. Subsequently there are thirty-six referrals to YHWH in terms of names, pronouns and pronominal suffixes together with the approximate fifty personal references to the psalmist or the "I". These observations emphasise the fact that Psalm 139 is not about the miracle of the divine, but that it is primarily about the psalmist's personal experience with YHWH. Burden (1991:131) ads that it is clear from the language of the psalm that Psalm 139 is not only centred on the essence of YHWH, but rather centres around the theme of the relationship between YHWH and man.

Consequently, it becomes clear that any interpretation of Psalm 139 must be approached with much needed caution. While the personal nature and character of Psalm 139 cannot be overlooked, any study of the particular psalm should be careful in the interpretational process to not inadvertently read subjective prejudices into the text (Anderson, 1992:904). For the reader it becomes clear that different scholars use different approaches and come to different understandings of the text. The plurality of contradictory analyses is purely based on the ambiguous *albeit* personal content of the text itself, which consequently indicates that a multitude of perspectives and motives are hidden within the text that must still be explored. This study will attempt to provide an understandable order to various and divergent interpretations of Psalm 139, without giving preference to one above the other. This chapter focuses on summarising research from Psalm 139 to date.

2.2   Current research on Psalm 139

Research in Psalm 139 has thus far comprised of two primary focal points. The first focus centred on the argument for the unity and/or division of the text, while the second focus was on placing the psalm within a predetermined *genre*.

In the study that follows, attention will be given to the above-mentioned focal points and how scholars have addressed the issues surrounding the unity and *genre* of Psalm 139.

In addition, the placement of Psalm 139 in Book V of the *Psalter* will be discussed. In the study that follows, Book V of the *Psalter* will come under investigation as the greater unit of which Psalm 139 forms an integral part. The motivation for this study is the persuasion that all research with regard to a psalm should take seriously its position in the *Psalter*. Due to the controversy an interpretation of Psalm 139 is subjected to, an attempt to understand Psalm 139 must start with its position in the *Psalter*. Thus the position of Psalm 139 within the context of the theology of Book V of the *Psalter* will be investigated.

2.2.1 Unity and division of Psalm 139

The unique character of Psalm 139 gives rise to extensive disagreement among scholars on how the unity of the Psalm should be understood. Consequently, the structural division of Psalm 139 is subject to speculation and a variety of conflicting interpretations. Previous research shows three main trends when working with the structure of Psalm 139:

One of the trends among researchers is that of a two-part division in the psalm. Proponents of this trend suppose that the content of the psalm lends itself to two divergent motives.

Clifford (2003:280) argues that even though a four-part stanza division is evident in the content of the psalm, Psalm 139 is more sensibly divided into two halves. The first half consists of vv. 1-12. In these verses the psalmist has a first experience with YHWH as a ubiquitous entity. The second half consists of vv. 13-24. These verses outline the psalmist's second encounter with YHWH as a personal God who is involved in every part of man's life, including man's rebellion. This division is unique however unpopular. Allen (2002:323) believes that there is no structural foundation to support a break at this point. The close connection between vv. 1b and 18 should

not be considered trivial and should serve as a point from which the development of the text must be approached and understood.

A more general two-part division of the content of Psalm 139 is that of Würthwein (1957:169-170). This approach considers Psalm 139 as clearly fragmented into two separate but correlating parts, both of which assume the form of a prayer. The first prayer (vv. 1-18) acknowledges YHWH's intimate knowledge of the psalmist. It is emphasised that there is nothing the psalmist can do that is not ultimately known by his/her Creator. The second prayer (vv. 19-24) begins with a curse upon the wicked and an attempt to convince YHWH that the psalmist hates evildoers with complete hatred. Finally, the words of v. 24 bind the two separate prayers together as a coherent unit.

Mowinckel (1992:75) also considers the first stanza as consisting of the first eighteen verses of the psalm. Vv. 1-18 is coloured with the tranquillity and omnipresence of YHWH. The intimate relationship between the psalmist, a mere human being, and YHWH, the utmost Holy, is expressed and can be characterised as a form of worship. Vv. 19-24 comprises the second stanza. These six verses are in turn an expression of hope at the fall of the psalmist's adversaries. The content of the different parts speaks to varied personal experiences and is therefore coloured by diverse emotional content. Scholars who advocate this division of Psalm 139, allocate different *genres* to each division. Most commonly the first stanza (vv. 1-18) is classified as a hymn, while the second stanza (vv. 19-24) is classified as an individual lament.

Another supporter of the two-part division of Psalm 139 are Gunkel & Begrich (1998:40). This division of Psalm 139 is based on the fact that the psalm cannot be classified under one single *genre*. The first eighteen verses of Psalm 139 displays all the characteristics of a hymn, while the final six verses is separated from the foregoing verses in terms of time and subject. Gunkel & Begrich (1998:121) describes vv. 19-24 as an "individual complaint song." Anderson (1972:904) agrees that even though vv. 1-18 can be divided under three separate themes among others: YHWH's knowledge of the psalmist (vv.1-6); YHWH's omnipresence (vv. 7-

12) and YHWH's magnificent creation (vv. 13-18), the first eighteen verses of Psalm 139 is indicative of a Hymn and should therefore be grouped together.

Kraus (1989:512) continues this line of thought when he explains the two-part division of Psalm 139 in terms of the literary form of the psalm. According to this approach, Psalm 139 is regarded as an individual lament of a person being persecuted by his enemies. Psalm 139 takes the form of a petition for justice. The petition of vv. 19-24 is consistent in form and tone to that of an individual lament. However, a petition in an individual lament is to be followed by an explanation that enlightens the motive for the petition, followed by a song of thanksgiving for the anticipated response from YHWH. In Psalm 139 the order is reversed. The motive for the petition along with the song of thanksgiving in vv. 1-18 precedes the petition in vv. 19-24. It is therefore clear that Psalm 139 has a very distinct bipartite division.

With the exception of Clifford (2003:280) assuming a break in the text between v. 12 and v. 13, it seems clear that the general assumption of those scholars supporting the two-part division of Psalm 139, is that the text is to be divided between v. 18 and v. 19.

A clear two-part division in the text cannot be contested. Holman (1971:299) rightfully suggests that there are at least two diverging parts in the psalm that requires special attention.

Another trend suggested by scholars is that Psalm 139 can be divided into a plurality of stanzas, each representing its own subject and theme. However, proponents of this approach do not agree on how the strophes should be divided.
Allen (2002:322) emphasises that a four stanza division of Psalm 139 has been widely determined by scholars. This notion is supported by Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:582) who observe that vv. 1-18 consists of three separate units. The first unit consisting of vv. 1-6 is simply an expansion of the opening line of the section 'You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.' These verses thoroughly explain YHWH's probing of the psalmist's every action and thought. Vv. 7-12 forms the second poetic unit and is introduced by two rhetoric questions. In this section the Divine presence is extolled by means of metaphoric language. The third stanza

comprise of vv. 13-18 which affirms the omnipresence of YHWH which is beyond the comprehension of the psalmist. Finally the fourth and last unit, vv. 19-24, petitions YHWH's defeat of the psalmist's enemies. The intimate relationship between YHWH and the psalmist which has been thoroughly coloured by the first three thought-units, reaches a climax in the prayer of vv. 19-24.

The textual division of Psalm 139 by Terrien (2003:874) maintains a four-part divide. Strophe I consists of vv. 1-6 and speaks of YHWH's all encompassing knowledge of man. Strophe II comprised of vv. 7-12 examines the all-pervading presence of YHWH. Strophe III consisting of vv. 13-18 portrays the great and complex creation of the ever so trivial man. Finally, strophe IV comprised of vv. 19-24 concludes with the ongoing scrutiny of man by his/her magnificent Maker. Terrien (2003:874) summarises that the four strophes share a corresponding symmetry which point towards literary consistency and the harmony of the text. This reading of the text is in direct contrast to scholars which insists that vv. 19-24 are out of tune with the mood of vv. 1-18. Weiser (1962:804) and Kirkpatrick (1903:786-791) proposed the exact same stanza division.

Though Van der Ploeg (1974:440) concludes that Psalm 139 has a clear two-part divide, he insists that the first eighteen verses stylistically divide into three separate parts. This observation is primarily based on the concluding thought to each section. The first section concludes with the words of v. 6 '…such knowledge is too wonderful to me…' These words enumerate the psalmist's awe at what YHWH has done. The following section concludes with the words of v. 13 "…for you created my innermost being…' words that once again highlight YHWH's mysterious works. The third section sums up the psalmist's inexplicable experience of YHWH by concluding with the words of vv. 17-18 'How precious are your thought, God! How vast the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.' All three above mentioned concluding statements contemplates the incomprehensibility of YHWH. Based on the concluding statements of each section Van der Ploeg (1974:440) asserts that each of the preceding sections describes an important attribute of YHWH, namely His omniscience, His omnipresence and also His omnipotence. Vv 19-24 serves as a climax to the whole of Psalm 139 exclaiming that

the all-knowing, all-encompassing God is to scrutinise the heart and motives of the psalmist.

Van der Ploeg's stanza division differs only at one point with that of Terrien and Weiser and that is at the end of the second stanza and the beginning of the third stanza. Terrien (2003:874) and Weiser (1962:804) maintain that the second stanza ends with v. 12 and the third stanza starts with v. 13. Van der Ploeg (1974:440), however, believe v. 13 to be the concluding thought to the second stanza, ultimately assuming v. 14 as the start of the third stanza.

Buttenwieser (1938:534-536) casts a completely different light on the multitudinal division of Psalm 139. According to this approach vv. 19-22 should be regarded as foreign elements in Psalm 139. The reason supplied to support this notion is that the language, style and tone are out of touch with the rest of the psalm. Furthermore, it is argued that the aggressive content of vv. 19-22 fails to correlate to the harmonious subject matter of vv. 1-18 and vv. 23-24, and therefore tarnishes the unity of Psalm 139. Buttenwieser (1938:535) rules that vv. 19-20 originally belonged to Psalm 140 in between vv. 12 and 13. Conversely vv. 21-22 were originally placed in between vv. 4 and 5 in Psalm 141. By omission in the course of transmission it has been wrongfully placed in Psalm 139.

Another problem in the text of Psalm 139, as marked by Buttenwieser (1938:536) is the misplacement of vv. 13-14. According to this notion vv. 13-14 belongs to the content, style and tone of Psalm 139, but was wrongfully placed after v. 12. The correct position of vv. 13-14 is in between vv. 5 and 6, because v. 5 displays a disruption in progression to v. 6. To ensure a meaningful flow in thought process it is argued that vv. 13-14 supposedly fills the gap between YHWH holding the psalmist in His hand and the psalmist being overwhelmed by YHWH's intimate knowledge of him/her.

Taking into consideration Buttenwieser's discontent with the unity of the text, Psalm 139 is also divided into four stanzas. The first stanza consists of vv. 1-6 with the addition of vv. 13-14 in between vv. 5 and 6. Stanza two follows with vv. 7-12. The third stanza picks up as v. 15-18. Finally, the fourth stanza consists of vv. 23-24.

Goulder (1998:242-247) suggests a five-part division, rather than a four-part division. The layout of the first three stanzas, according to this approach, is similar to that of Terrien and Weiser. The point in difference takes placement at the last stanza. Where Terrien (2003:874) and Weiser (1963:804) regard vv. 19-24 as one unit with one comprehensive theme, Goulder (1998:246) believes that it should be divided into two separate stanzas: vv. 19-22 and vv. 23-24. The fourth stanza (vv. 19-22) is an exclamation of innocence and a call to YHWH to banish the wicked who curse their Creator through their evil deeds. Finally, the fifth stanza (vv. 23-24) then concludes on a more positive note, calling on YHWH to acknowledge his/her own righteousness.

For Goulder (1998:246-247) the distinction between the fourth and the fifth stanzas is important because it illustrates the psalmist's intent and the motive for the writing of Psalm 139. In stanza four the perpetrators are described as enemies of YHWH. YHWH is called upon to hold these perpetrators or evil-doers accountable and to deal with them according to God's sovereign will. In the fifth and last stanza, however, the psalmist distinguishes him-/herself from the perpetrators. The psalmist calls on his/her own righteousness and emphasises that he/she is a friend, rather than an enemy, of YHWH. The psalmist clearly opposes him-/herself to evil-doers and therewith colours him-/herself as a friend of YHWH.

Another five-part division of Psalm 139 is that of Weber (2003:341-342). According to this partition Psalm 139 consists of four main stanzas of more or less similar length with a short but impactful final stanza. Weber (2003:343) argues that even though the praise of YHWH's omniscience and omnipresence is sung in vv. 1-12, a proper interpretation of the psalm should take into consideration the seemingly unfitting words of vv. 19-22. These verses, even though they seem out of place, cannot be separated from the whole of Psalm 139. It is contended that the two closing verses (vv. 23-24) makes it clear that the psalmist is subjected to an examination by YHWH, which in turn leads to the clarification on the question of the psalmist's guilt by means of the exposition of the psalmist's innocence. In vv. 19-22 accusations brought against the psalmist are raised. However, it is evident from the preceding verses that the allegations raised are unjustified. Though the psalmist

appeals not to his own innocence, but rather to the omniscience of YHWH who's 'thoughts' to him/her are 'precious' and 'vast'.

Weber's (2003:343) perception of the text leads to the following stanza division: Stanza I - vv. 1-6; stanza II - vv. 7-12; stanza III - vv. 13-16; stanza IV - vv. 17-22; stanza V - vv. 23-24. This exposition of the text emphasises that vv. 19-22 play a cardinal role in the conception of the text as a whole.

Holman (1971:299) objects to any strophic structure awarded to Psalm 139. It is debated that any strophic structure fails to explain the major transition between vv. 18 and 19 as opposed to the not so major transitions between other stanzas. Consequently, according to this argument, a strophic division of the text does not succeed in considering the text as a coherent unit.

This leads to a final trend adhered to by scholars regarding the unity and division of Psalm 139 and that is to consider the psalm as an articulate unit.

Dahood (1970:284) is one of the defenders of this faction. He places explicit emphasise on the *inclusio* formed by the plea repeated in v. 1 as well as vv. 23-24. The plea is a cry to YHWH to scrutinise the psalmist on the basis of YHWH's all-encompassing knowledge. In addition to the *inclusio*, the whole psalm is riddled with ideas and concepts pertaining to the knowledge and foreknowledge of YHWH. By describing the attributes of YHWH the psalmist recommences his/her reflection on the knowledge of YHWH. In the final words (vv. 23-24) of the psalm an appeal is made to YHWH to once again search and 'know' the psalmist's innermost being. On this basis Dahood (1970:285) considers Psalm 139 a wilfully structured unity that relies on cautiously structured words and masterfully pieced together concepts.

Peels (2008:36) also appeals to the unity of Psalm 139 by insisting that vv. 21-22 play an integral role in understanding the psalm. He denies that the statement of hatred in vv. 21-22 is corrected by the prayer in vv. 24-23 which expresses the insecurities of the psalmist. The exclamation of anger and hatred so distinctly portrayed in vv. 21-22 must not be minimised in value to the understanding of the preceding verses. According to this argument vv. 21-22 is not in dissonance with the

harmonious tone of the foregoing verses. Semantically the word אֶשְׂנָא "hatred" should not be conceived as a play on emotion, but should be understood as the psalmist taking a standpoint for the God he deems worthy of his dependence. The outline of a God worthy of the psalmist's honour and dependence portrayed in vv. 1-20, is only further enhanced by the statement of radical hatred in vv. 21-22.

Holman (1971:300) agrees that there is a clear unity in the psalm manifested by the *inclusio* formed by the words חקר (to search) and ידע (to know) which is repeated in vv. 1 and 23. However, it is inevitable to admit that there is a huge break in form and disposition between vv. 18 and 19.

The foregoing study explored multiple ways in which the unity of Psalm 139 is explained. Mainly three trends are adhered to when working with the unity and division of Psalm 139. Supporters of the first trend insist on a clear-cut two-part division of Psalm 139. The division takes place between vv. 18 and 19. It is supposed that each part separately lends itself to a unique motive. However this notion is disputed by advocates of other trends, it cannot be denied that Psalm 139 exhibits two anomalous parts, each supporting its own theme.

Proponents of the second trend favour a division of a plurality of stanzas, each representing a unique subject and theme. The main hindrance to this theory is the fact that each scholar suggests his/her own division and layout. Scholars mostly disagree on the stanza division of Psalm 139. A multiple-stanza division also fails to explain the uniqueness of the transition between vv. 18 and 19.

The third and final trend insists on the unity of the psalm. This theory is supported by the *inclusio* clearly formed between vv. 1 and 23. Once again this trend fails to clarify the diverging tones between vv. 1-18 and vv. 19-24.

From the foregoing exposition it remains clear that scholars cannot seem to agree on the unity and division of Psalm 139.

2.2.2 Psalm 139 and its colourful *genre* allotments

The difference in opinion about the form (unity and division) of Psalm 139 directly results in disagreement on the *genre* of the psalm. Until now there has been uncertainty about the particular *genre* of Psalm 139. The vagueness concerning the specific *genre* of Psalm 139 has enriching consequences. Gunkel & Begrich (1998:5) are convinced that any and all research in psalm studies can only build on the solid foundation of the *genre*. The *genre* thus forms the groundwork on which all research must be established. Psalm 139 is unique in this regard because scholars do not agree on which traditional *genre* the psalm must be classified. This inhibits the reading and understanding of the psalm as it prevents the psalm from being studied within the boundaries of its original context.

The *genre* of Psalm 139 is under dispute for two reasons: First, Psalm 139 exhibits a mixed form and second, a delineate *Sitz im Leben* regrettably remains vague and uncertain, despite many attempts, due to a lack of historical indicators in the text.

For a long time, the favourite *genre* identification for Psalm 139 was that of a hymn. Gunkel & Begrich (1998:22-47) suggested that Psalm 139 consisted mainly of hymnal elements:

- A hymn proclaims the mighty deeds of YHWH. In Psalm 139:1-18 a proclamation of the omnipotence of YHWH can be found.

- Hymns that do not commence with a definite introduction, are led by an emphatic proposition. Psalm 139:1 explicitly emphasises YHWH's knowledge of man.

- The introduction of a hymn is expanded on through the rest of the text. In Psalm 139 the repetition of the same concept and words in vv. 1 and 23 is to be understood as an expanded introduction.

- A hymn contains an appeal to the praise of YHWH combined with an overt declaration of the poet's desire to praise YHWH. In Psalm 139:14 the Psalmist's pronounces his/her motivation to praise YHWH as "…I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made…" This is followed by the psalmist's expression of his/her admiration for YHWH's creation of him-/herself.

- The main character of a hymn is YHWH. In Psalm 139 there is referenced to God as "YHWH" (vv. 1, 4 and 21), as "El" (vv. 17 and 23) and as "Elohim" (vs. 19). In addition to the psalm being addressed to YHWH throughout it is observed that the perfect and imperfect 2nd person male singular verb occurs nine times in reference to YHWH's actions, along with the pronominal suffixes 2nd person male singular which occurs sixteen times in reference to YHWH.

- A hymn presents something extraordinary about YHWH about which the psalmist rejoices. In Psalm 139:17-18 YHWH's thoughts about the psalmist are praised as something special.

- A request is characteristic of a hymn. In Psalm 139:19-22 such a request is observed.

- The basic mood of a hymn is amazement and enthusiasm, both elements which are present in Psalm 139.

Eaton (1967:301) is also persuaded that Psalm 139 resembles a hymn, or at least a hymnic style. According to this idea vv. 1-18 is a hymnic preparation for the prayer that is to come in vv. 19-22 pleading the elimination of the psalmist's adversaries. The words of vv. 23-24 confirming the psalmist's eagerness to be scrutinised by YHWH, maintains the notion that vv. 19-22 is a prayer to the advantage of the psalmist and the detriment of his/her enemies. The argument asserts that Psalm 139 is to be understood as a hymn of preparation for a man/woman preparing to be searched by YHWH.

In contribution to the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139 Eaton (2003:459) adds that the heading of Psalm 139 לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר 'For the director of music, of David' suggests that the speaker and/or performer of the psalm is in fact a king.[17] This concept is further strengthened by the psalmist aggressively opposing him-/herself against his/her foes by claiming them to be the enemies of YHWH as well. The concept of a king being persecuted by the enemies of a deity is also present in Egyptian hymns as well as Indian hymns such as the *Atharva Veda* 4.16. The similarity shared with these other hymns reinforces the hymn as *genre* classification for Psalm 139. It should however be noted that Eaton (2003:460) does not deny that Psalm 139 portrays certain wisdom motifs.

For a long time Gunkel's observation that Psalm 139 should be classified as a hymn was dominant. The reason for this was that the *genre* 'hymn' sufficiently described the overriding mood of the psalm. However, classifying Psalm 139 as a hymn in totality neglects to do justice to the negative undertones of vv. 19-22. This resulted in vv. 19-24 being separated from the foregoing verses and consequently classifying it under a completely different *genre* (Wagner, 1978:358).[18]

From the language usage in the psalm Mowinckel (1992:91) also affirms vv. 1-18 of Psalm 139 to be a hymn. The tone set by vv. 19-22 nevertheless suggests that Psalm 139 exhibits a mixed form in terms of its *genre* classification. Vv. 19-22 takes on the form and tone of an individual lament[19] which expresses the innocence of the person that recites it.

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[17] Psalm 16, 17 and 63 takes on a similar form to that of Psalm 139. For Eaton (2003:459) this indicates that Psalm 139 is the words of a king bringing his plea before YHWH to strengthen him in the face of the onslaught of his foes.

[18] Gunkel & Begrich (1998:60) also explicitly specify that a hymn plays a significant role in mixed psalms. Mixed psalms are psalms that consist of more than one genre. This type of psalm often starts with a hymn as introduction or finishes with a hymn as the conclusion to the mixed psalm. In both Psalms 90 and 139 the scope of the hymn corresponds to that of a lamentation. Thus Gunkel has already identified Psalm 139 as a non-pure hymn.

[19] A different approach to Psalm 139 is offered by Mowinckel (1992:94). It is suggested that a psalm should be interpreted, not on the basis of theological content, but rather with reference to a concrete situation. Psalm 139 is read as a reflection on the omnipresence and omniscience of YHWH, but it is not what the psalm aims to

Allen (2002:323) notes the mixed form in which Psalm 139 presents, but inserts that the psalm should be read and understood as an individual prayer. The reason supplied for this observation is simply that the prayer is addressed to YHWH from beginning to end. With regard to the mixed *genre* it is argued that vv. 19-24 has all the characteristics of an individual lament.[20]

Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:581-582) agree that the setting of Psalm 139 is most probably exposed by the words of vv. 19-24, while the words of vv. 1-18 is simply an introduction to the upcoming petition. In the words of vv. 19-24 a certain antagonism towards the psalmist is reflected by means of accusations brought against him/her. The psalmist comes before YHWH to object to these false accusations and to ask YHWH's assistance in the defeat of his/her enemies. Although vv. 1-18 displays certain hymnic elements, the final unit (vv. 19-24) sets the tone for the whole psalm, and should be conclusive in the determining of the *genre* of the psalm.

Dahood (1970:284) is unwavering in his assumption that Psalm 139 was written by a person occupying a religious position in the community to plead his/her innocence after being charged with the violation of idol worship. This argument is based on the words of v. 1 and 23 that respectively petitions YHWH's scrutiny. Psalm 139 is further structured to emphasise why YHWH is the only One that is able to search the psalmist and cast a judgement on his/her guilt or innocence. According to this approach to the text of Psalm 139, this psalm of innocence is written solely to appeal to the magnificence of YHWH.

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communicate. Each psalm is communicated from a definite situation with the goal to move YHWH to intervene in the particular situation. In Psalm 139 YHWH is persuaded by a celebration of YHWH's omnipresence and omniscience. The reader must therefore listen to the emotion in the poet's heart in order to discover the real motivation behind the writing of the psalm.

[20] According to Allen (2002:323) the plea underscored by the negative tone in v. 19 is often seen in laments e.g. Ps. 17:13-14 or Ps. 74:22-23. Furthermore it is noted that the bilateral standpoints of vv. 19-22 and vv. 23-24 also characterises an attribute of laments, namely a double petition, e.g. Ps. 5:11-12 or Ps. 35:26-27. An assertion of innocence, another trademark of a lament, is seen in vv. 21-22.

Würthwein (1957:167) begins his enquiry in Psalm 139 at the verses that were initially classified as not fitting with the rest of the psalm, vv. 19-24. He proceeds to make these verses the basis of his exegesis. Würthwein dares to propose a concrete *Sitz im Leben* for Psalm 139, namely a cultic court case in which the innocence of the accused must be established. This interpretation is favoured among scholars and still is determinative in the exposition of the text of Psalm 139.

Peels (2008:41-42) disagrees that the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139 points towards a cultic court case, because there is no indication to a life-threatening situation in the content of the psalm. The psalmist fails to highlight a situation of personal distress but rather addresses his/her overarching concern for evil. This is seen in the way he/she writes about enemies. The enemies mentioned in Psalm 139 are only the enemies of the psalmist by proxy. It is the enemies of YHWH that become the enemies of the psalmist. Psalm 139 becomes a delicately stylised confession meditating on the omniscience of YHWH and the human being's dependence on this all-knowing God.

Based on the words of v. 1 יְהֹוָה חֲקַרְתַּנִי וַתֵּדָע: (You have searched me, Lord, and you know me) Anderson (1992:904) suggests that the psalmist is not petitioning YHWH to investigate his/her intentions, but that YHWH already examined the heart of the psalmist and found him/her innocent. The *genre* best fitting Psalm 139, based on this observation, is an individual thanksgiving. The psalmist offers YHWH a thanksgiving for exonerating him/her.[21] Anderson (1992:905) furthers this argument by emphasising the unusual structure of the psalm in which the psalmist combines a recount of previous difficulties with parts of well-known prayers. Furthermore vv. 19-24 serves as a confirmation of the psalmist's virtue as opposed to the transgressors who falsely accused him/her.

Goldingay (2008:628) disagrees with the notion that Psalm 139 is a psalm protesting the innocence of a wronged man/woman. It is argued that it is not certain in which context Psalm 139 would be deployed. Consequently, it cannot be affirmed with certainty as to which *Sitz im Leben* and *genre* Psalm 139 belongs. An argument

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[21] Anderson (1992:905) argues that the person accused faced a charge of idolatry, based on the words of v. 24.

could be made that Psalm 139 is a cry for help from a person wrongfully accused.[22] However, it is rightfully observed that there is no definite declaration of innocence as displayed by other psalms of similar nature. Therefore, according to this notion, the psalm is not specifically written for someone wronged by false accusations, but that Psalm 139 was actually used as a prayer to stress the psalmist general commitment against acts of disobedience opposed to YHWH. Goldingay (2008:628) seems to generalise the use of Psalm 139 within the religious context of Israel by assuming a more general use such as wilfully choosing YHWH's ways above the ways of the wicked

Goulder (1998:240) sheds a completely different light on Psalm 139 by insisting that it is to be read and understood as an evening psalm with political undertones. A brought spectrum of references is used to imply a night time setting: רבע 'lying down', יצע 'make bed' and חֹשֶׁךְ 'darkness' [23] The words and phrases chosen by the psalmist all point to a setting that is thoughtfully placed amidst the darkness of night. According to Goulder (1998:240) this implies that the psalmist cannot escape the care and protection of YHWH. Not even under the cover of the darkness of night the psalmist would be endangered because YHWH is with him/her. The implied enemy of the psalmist is וְאַנְשֵׁי דָמִים 'men of blood´ who נָשֻׂא לַשָּׁוְא עָרֶיךָ ´misuse Your name.' Goulder (1998:241) presupposes this to point towards a governor of Judea that has broken the divine law, thus assuming a political background. The psalmist asks YHWH to search his/her ways to ensure that he/she is not also breaking divine law with his ways.

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[22] According to Goldingay (2008:628) if indeed Psalm 139 is read and understood as a cry for help from a person wrongfully accused it is reasonable to assume that the contents of the psalm is of a serious personal nature. Such a psalm would not be used by the psalmist unless there is some sort of accusation brought against him/her that threatens the well-being of the one praying and pleading these words.

[23] According to Goulder (1998:240) the evening setting runs right through the entire psalm. The introduction in v. 2 אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ שִׁבְתִּי וְקוּמִי 'You know when I sit and when I rise…' implies that YHWH knows when the psalmist lays his/her head down to rest as well as when exactly the psalmist rises in the morning. The psalmist even considers making his/her bed in Sheol in v. 2 וְאַצִּיעָה שְּׁאוֹל הִנֶּךָ: '…if I make my bed in the depths…'It is also implied that the psalmist wants the darkness of the night to cover him/her in order to hide away from YHWH in v. 11 וָאֹמַר אַךְ־חֹשֶׁךְ יְשׁוּפֵנִי '…if I say surely the darkness will hide me…'

Clifford (2003:278) begins his analysis of the text with the observation that Psalm 139 does not belong to any of the traditional psalm *genres*. He then continues to debate every proposed *genre* for Psalm 139. Unlike scholars who believe that Psalm 139 should be classified as a lament, Clifford (2003:279) argues that the psalm does not display the elements of a lament. According to this argument the only hint to the *genre* of a lament is found in the petition (vv. 19-20) of the psalmist to defeat his/her opponents. It is also argued that Psalm 139 could not be classified under the *genre* of thanksgiving for it does not testify to the psalmist being rescued, neither does the psalmist exerts an acclamation of praise for being delivered from evil. It is also disagreed that Psalm 139 is a prayer of an accused person.[24] Although Clifford strongly disputes all the proposed *genres* for Psalm 139, he does not suggest an alternative.

Van der Ploeg (1974:438) takes a completely different approach to the *genre* of Psalm 139. For him the best definition of Psalm 139 is that it is a song of wisdom. The reason given is that Psalm 139 displays a multitude of similarities with the content of the book of Job.[25] In wisdom literature the all-knowing wisdom of God is emphasised against man's limited knowledge. Similarly, in Psalm 139, emphasis is placed on how God knows the profound mysteries of the human heart. That which is hidden from the human eye lies exposed to the eyes of God. Man in his/her limited knowledge is therefore entirely dependent on his God's all-knowing wisdom. In Psalm 139, the psalmist emphasises his/her dependence on God. Thus, the psalm assumes the character of wisdom literature.

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[24] Clifford (2003:279) points to the assumption that Psalm 139 is the prayer of a person accused of a transgression similar to that of Numbers 5:11-31. He continues to describe the procedure followed in such accusations: The accused transgressor would be brought to the temple and forced to drink a mixture whilst swearing his/her virtuousness. The effects of the mixture on the person will reveal his/her innocence or guilt. If the mixture resulted in the person feeling ill, it would be taken as a sign of the person's culpability. Conversely, if the mixture had no effect on the person it would stress his/her incorruptibility. Clifford (2003:279) however points out that Psalm 139 does not portray this kind of scenario because of the individual nature of the psalm.

[25] Wisdom literature is mostly written in the first person form which results in an intimate and personal tone. Psalm 139, overall, is also written in the first person and therefore also assumes a deeply personal character.

Buttenwieser (1938:536) supports the notion that Psalm 139 was written by the author of the Job drama. He asserts that the psalmist's realisation of God's continuous presence with him/her encompasses the theme of Psalm 139, unlike any other psalm in the *Psalter*. Psalm 139 describes with inexorable clarity the omnipresence of YHWH.[26] For Buttenwieser (1938:542) the similarity in thought to the Job drama is deemed conclusive proof that both the Book of Job and Psalm 139 were written by the same author. As a result, according to this argument, Psalm 139 can be classified as a wisdom psalm.

Kynes (2012:101-104) reveals many similarities between Psalm 139 and Job in terms of language usage, thought patterns and thematic similarities. The most evident of the similarities is the comparison between Job 10:8-12 and Psalm 139:13-16. There are substantive and formal criteria of wisdom to which Psalm 139 complies, for example: a negative attitude toward wicked and frivolous men in vv. 19-20; a disassociation of the psalmist from the wicked in the words of v. 22 *"...I have nothing but hatred for them..."*; the use of rhetorical questions such as in v. 7 "*Where*

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[26] Five merisms are explicitly deployed in Psalm 139 with reference to physical space: "my going out" / "my lying down" (v. 3); "behind" / "before" (v. 5); "up to the heavens" / "in the depths" (v. 8); "wings of the dawn" / "far side of the sea" (v.9); "darkness" / "light" (v.10). The firs merism refers to the movement of the psalmist in relation to the temple. "My lying down" indicates the space where the psalmist is physically at home and close to the temple, while "my going out" points towards the psalmist's journey, and as a result his/her moving away from the temple. "Behind" and "before" refer to the spaces around the psalmist. "Up to the heavens" and "in the depths" respectively refers to the spaces located above the heavenly dome and below the earth disk, while "wings of the dawn" and "far side of the sea" refers to the east and the west, i.e. the ends of the earth. The terms found in vv. 11 and 12 "darkness" and "night" versus "light" and "day", although appearing to be temporal terms, also refers to certain spaces. "Darkness" and "night" respectively refer to the place where the sun sets (i.e. the west) as well as the space underneath the earth disk, which, according to Ancient Near Eastern logic, is obscured by darkness. "Light" and "day" then refers to the place where the sun rises (i.e. the east) as well as the space above the sky dome, where the sun illuminates the earth. Exegetes understand the psalmist's spatial references as spaces where the physical presence of YHWH is present. That is, YHWH is present where the temple is situated, but also where the temple is not. YHWH is present in all the spaces around the psalmist whether he/she is near the temple or not. The presence of YHWH stretches to the outskirts of the universe. On the basis of this understanding of the psalmist's use of spatial terms, most exegetes argue that Psalm 139 endorses a theme of divine omnipresence (Briggs & Briggs, 1969:491; Buttenwieser, 1938:536; Clifford, 2003:281; Eaton, 1967:303; Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:546).

can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" Wagner (1978:373) maintains that Job and Psalm 139 at the very least originated from the same post-exilic wisdom circles.[27] The mere fact that wisdom motives can so obviously be observed in the psalm, urges the reader to at least take the wisdom dimensions of Psalm 139 seriously.[28] Terrien (1993:68) states that although it cannot factually be confirmed that Psalm 139 was written by the author of the Job-drama, there is no doubt that Psalm 139 deeply reflects an intellectual intimacy and spirituality that places the psalmist in certain wisdom circles. The depth of the theology of Psalm 139 separates this psalm from other psalms in the same *genre*.[29]

There are a wide variety of conflicting views among scholars when it comes to the *genre* and the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139. With regard to the difficulty of the topic Gerstenberger (2001:405) suggests that it is not necessary to subject the text of Psalm 139 to one single *genre*. It is possible for a psalm to consist of more than one

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[27] Wisdom psalms or psalms containing wisdom motives were directed critically against the cult. Perdue (2007:97) explains that the traditional sages contributed to the formation of two prominent theological conventions in post-exilic times: the first was to re-establish obedience to the Torah, and the second was to institute a universal faith. Both these theological conventions were established as a result of the sages' attempts to capture a new understanding of God in Judaism. Wisdom during the post-exilic period was thus renowned for its preference for the Torah as well as a universalistic concept of God such is seen in Psalm 139.

[28] According to Burger (1987:28) the wisdom movement had a significant influence on the origin of Pss. 1: 32; 34; 37; 112; 127 and 128. These psalms can be classified as wisdom psalms in their entirety. However, the wisdom movement is not only limited to these psalms. The use of wisdom topics in the psalms should be understood as a mode of expression utilised by the psalmists, according to Whybray (1996:17). The possibility still exists that those wisdom motifs are later editorial additions to the psalms. Nevertheless, there are clear wisdom characteristics in certain psalms of which Psalm 139 is certainly one. Crenshaw (2010:187) disagrees with this notion and believes that the *Psalter* was the product of lay people (non-wise men/women). Thus, the psalms will have a definite relationship with a wide variety of literary forms, including wisdom literature. This, however, does not justify the classification as "wisdom psalms". Kuntz (2003:152) on the other hand believes that a definite category of wisdom psalms can be distinguished in the *Psalter* according to characteristics that corresponds to the books of Job, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs. According to this notion psalms that display wisdom motifs should be classified under the unique genre 'wisdom psalms' and should consequently be explored under such genre.

[29] Human (2009:64), however, rightly states that to classify psalms as pure wisdom psalms does not do justice to other form-critical elements present in the psalms.

traditional *genre*. Against the backdrop of the controversial history of interpretation of Psalm 139, Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:537) argues that an approach to the *genre* of Psalm 139 should always question the redactional composition of the psalm.

No convincing results were yielded that point to a concrete *genre* or *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139. Conclusively it is safe to say that Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:581) correctly summed it up when they said that the degree of difficulty of Psalm 139 is manifested in the attempts from scholars to define the psalm's type. Gerstenberger (2001:405) correctly observes that there are indeed hints to a great variety of *genre* categories in Psalm 139 in all the different subunits. Weber (2003:344) infers that Psalm 139 includes a generic mixture of different *genres*. First, there is the element of complaint that leads to the confusion of the innocent, second there are elements of wise reflection and finally there are also clear elements of praise. Rodd (1964:113) concludes that one must intentionally acknowledge that Psalm 139 hovers between a hymn, a personal prayer and a confession of faith.

2.2.3 Placement of Psalm 139 in Book V of the *Psalter*

Any study with regard to a psalm must take into consideration the placement of the psalm within the larger context of the *Psalter* (Wilson, 1992:130). Since Hermann Gunkel and Sigmund Mowinckel's form-critical and cult-functional analysis, interpretation and classification of the psalms a revolution in psalm research has taken place. The conviction of Childs (1979:551) that psalm research should seriously consider the affect that the canonical form and order of the *Psalter* has on psalms individually has come to life in recent psalm studies. Today, the prevailing interest in psalm studies is focused on questions regarding the composition, editorial unit and overall message of the *Psalter* as a book, i.e. as a literary and canonical unit with a certain structure and within that structure a specific message (Howard, 2004:333). In present psalm research the canonical order of the psalms is the starting point for the study of any psalm, rather than understanding the *genre* and *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm (DeClaisse-Walford, 1997:3).

Psalm 139 is situated in Book V of the *Psalter*. Book V of the *Psalter* consists of 44 psalms. Book V of the *Psalter* is more diverse than its preceding counterparts. Howard (1993:63) suggests that an attitude of dependence on YHWH is a recurring notion that intertwines the psalms in Book V.[30] David becomes the representative for this standpoint in the psalms attributed to him (Pss. 108-110 and 138-145). By carefully studying the psalms of Book V of the *Psalter* one recurring theme becomes apparent, that YHWH alone is King. Cheyne (1889:278) notes that there is a systematic development in the *Psalter*. Growth can be seen from what appears to be a narrowly focused cult-centric outlook to a more intimate and personal tone. The predominantly nationalistic tone in Book I-III of the *Psalter* makes way for a deeply personal observation of what seems to be an idiosyncratic familiarity with YHWH in Book V in the *Psalter*. Snearly (2016:1) notes that the specific arrangement of Book V of the *Psalter* reflects a renewed hope in the davidic promises found in the preceding books of the *Psalter*.[31]

Goulder (1998:13-14) explains that Book V of the *Psalter* can be subdivided into three parts. Pss. 120-134 all share the same title שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת "a pilgrimage song". This unique characteristic indicates that these psalms should be grouped together as a unit. The three units of Book V are: Pss. 107-119; Pss. 120-134 and Pss 135-150.

On the basis of certain features, Goulder (1998:14) shows how the first and the third groupings[32] op Book V of the *Psalter* show parallel similarities:

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[30] An attitude of dependence on YHWH can be seen in the introductory psalm of Book V of the *Psalter*, i.e. Psalm 107:12-13; 19; 28. Submission to the Torah is themed throughout Psalm 119, while the Psalms of Ascent (Pss. 120-134) witness to absolute trust in YHWH (Howard, 1993:63).

[31] According to Snearly (2016:1) each group of psalms in Book V of the *Psalter* centralises around a key word that echoes the theme of the specific grouping's relation to the davidic hope proclaimed in the foregoing psalms: Pss. 107-118 (חסד and עוֹלם); Ps. 119 (תּוֹרה); Pss. 120-137 (צִיּוֹן); Pss. 138-145 (מֶלֶךְ)

[32] Goulder (1998:14) explains the parallels between the first and the third part of Book V of the *Psalter* as follows: In the first subsection of Book V of the *Psalter*, that is Pss. 107-119, Pss. 111-118 are identified in the Jewish tradition as the Egyptian Hallel. The reason for this is the appearance of the word "hallelujah" at the beginning of Pss. 111, 112 and 113 and at the end of Pss. 113, 115, 116 and 117. In the third subsection of Book V of the *Psalter*, that is Pss. 135-150, there is again a small group (Pss 146-150) known as the little Hallel.

Part one of Book V of the *Psalter*	Shared similarities	Part three of Book V of the *Psalter*
105-106	Historic psalms	135-136
107	Psalms for the exiles who returned from Babylon	137
108-110	Psalms of David	138-145
111, 112	Alphabetical psalms	145
113-118	Hallel Psalms	146-150

This accurate observation that two similar psalm series were composed and positioned on either side of the Songs of Ascents is evidence of a thoroughly planned framework. Goulder (1998:16) believes that a unifying basis runs through both units, and can be explained as follows: God calls upon the patriarchs (Pss. 105:8-23 // 135:4); God saves Israel from Egypt (Pss. 105:24-38; 106:7-12 // 135:8-9; 136:13-33); God gives Israel their own land (Pss. 105:43-44; 106:34 // 135:10-12; 136:16-22); because of Israel's sin, they are taken captive (Pss. 106:35-43); however, God remembers the covenant with Israel and they are redeemed as God's people (Pss. 106:44-46 // 136:23-24); God brings back the people from Babylon (Pss. 107 // 137); the people experience challenging and threatening situations (Pss. 108-110 // 138-145); the people praise their God for deliverance (Pss. 111-118 // 146-150). Consequently it is clear that Book V in the *Psalter*, in its entirety, emphasises the reliability of YHWH and the unreserved importance of the people's dependency on their YHWH (Creach, 1996:93).

On the basis of the editorial history of the *Psalter*, Wilson (2005:392) states that Psalms 90-150 (i.e. Book IV and V of the *Psalter*) were appended to the preceding Books I-III of the *Psalter* as an answer to the Israelites search for hope. As a result,

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Both these two units are introduced by alphabetical psalms (Pss 111-112 and 145), which in turn are led by a short series of davidic Psalms (Pss 108-110 and 138-145).

the purpose of Book IV and V is to redirect the hope of the people away from the earthly davidic kingdom to the Kingdom of YHWH. This is done by accentuating that God can be trusted in the present just as in the ancient Mosaic past, before the davidic monarchy was established and the Jewish cult was centralised. For Wilson (1986:92) the theme of salvation closely accompanies the theme of trust in YHWH as the only monarch. For that reason, Books I-III of the *Psalter* are classified as the 'Messianic collection', while Books IV-V is known as the 'Theocratic collection' (Brown, 2012:107). In the latter collection YHWH's sovereignty over the whole of creation is praised, rather than that of YHWH's human counterpart.

According to Zenger (1998:99) two collections, Pss. 113-118 as well as 120-137, form the central focus of Book V of the *Psalter*. These specific psalms centre on the theme of the universal kingdom of YHWH, the God who liberated Israel from Egypt and blesses his people from Zion. These two collections, located in Book V of the *Psalter*, share the perspective of a universal kingdom of YHWH and call Israel together with any and all other nations to acknowledge and praise the universal kingship of YHWH. The Psalms of Book V of the *Psalter* therefore share a theocentric foundation. There is a clear shift in the emphasis that takes place from the preceding books in the *Psalter* to Book V. In Book V attention is shifted away from the davidic monarchy and the vulnerability of human kings and attention is drawn to the infallible, everlasting dominion of YHWH (Wallace, 2009:5).

The shift in focus that takes place in Book V of the *Psalter* from a davidic kingdom to a kingdom with divine rule compels Goulder (1998:17) to say that Book V as a whole most probably has its origins in the period following the exile. David chose Jerusalem as the religious and political capital of Israel, therefore Jerusalem and the temple played a pivotal role in the lives of the people (Burden, 1991:27). During the Babylonian captivity, Jerusalem together with the temple that served as a physical symbol of YHWH's physical presence on earth, were destroyed.[33] The exiles were

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[33] Burden (1991:27) illustrates Jerusalem as the holy dwelling of YHWH on earth by giving an exposition of other names used to describe Jerusalem in the *Psalter*. Jerusalem is known as the sacred mountain of God (Ps. 48:2); the city of God (Pss. 46:5; 48:2); the city of the Lord Almighty (Pss. 48:9; 84:2); and the holy place of the Most High (Ps. 46:5). The emphasis on Jerusalem as the property and the residence of YHWH closely

left without a king and without a cult. Their exile and their return to a destroyed Jerusalem and temple naturally compelled Israel to re-imagine the kingdom, the cult and primarily the divinity and rule of YHWH.

Wilson (1993:63) believes that Book V of the *Psalter* reveals a heterogeneous attitude of dependence on and trust in YHWH alone. David is regarded as the one who is the primary advocate of this trust in Pss. 108-110 and 138-145. In light of the paradigm of YHWH's universal Kingdom Psalm 139 must be examined and interpreted. Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:582) emphasise that Psalm 139 forms part of this final collection in the davidic *Psalter* and that this consequently suggests that Psalm 139 should be understood as a result of the aftermath of the exile.[34]

Eaton (2003:459) supposes that because of the heading of Psalm 139 as a Psalm of David and due to the position of Psalm 139 in the series of Pss. 138-145 this points to the idea that it is a king speaking.[35] In similar psalms the king would be found drawing close to YHWH for fortification. However, the physical place of such encounters is always the sanctuary. The king comes to the temple or the sanctuary to draw strength from his communion with YHWH to confront his enemies. Conversely this argument and many other similarly assumed *Sitz im Leben* disregarded the theology of Book V of the *Psalter*, i.e. that there is no more temple or sanctuary to go to. Gerstenberger (2001:401) explains that the superscription in Psalm 139 is very common and occurs at least thirty-five times in the *Psalter*. The traditional bipartite heading attributed to Psalm 139 simply accredit a song to king David and should not necessarily be used to contrive a *Sitz im Leben* that disregards the location of the psalm in the *Psalter*. Delitsch (1952:343) adds that Psalm 139 is only inscribed לְדָוִד not because it proves the ancient davidic origin, but because it

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accompanies the Ancient Near Eastern understanding of religious cult centres, i.e. that every cult has its own centre where the deity of the cult is believed to reside.

[34] Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:582) remarks that although the tone of Psalm 138 differs greatly from that of Psalm 139, both psalms share the common theme that YHWH is present despite the destruction of the temple and that YHWH has never been bound to the temple alone but is ever-present in all situations.

[35] Psalm 139 shows significant similarities to Pss. 16, 17 and 63. In these psalms a king is found claiming that his enemies are also the enemies of YHWH to gain merit in his opposition to them (Eaton, 2003:459).

is composed after a davidic model.[36] Wallace (2007:84) tries to reconcile the superscription of Psalm 139 with the king that is widely known and loved throughout Scripture by denoting that the David of Book V of the *Psalter* is not the imperial ruler and infallible king of the preceding psalms in Book I-IV of the *Psalter*. The David of Book V of the *Psalter* is a king whose power is not unlimited and whose throne and descendants are not a definite assurance. Brown (2012:107) underlines this summary by describing the David in Book V of the *Psalter* as a king submitting before the Kingship of YHWH.

It is clear that Book V of the *Psalter* can be distinguished from the preceding psalms by way of its distinctive theological character.[37] Zenger (1998:93-94) places a further focus on the smaller unit within Book V of the *Psalter*, Pss. 138-145 within which Psalm 139 falls. This last davidic unit in the *Psalter* is structurally designed to exalt YHWH. In Psalm 138 the psalmist claims to love YHWH with his/her whole heart and in Psalm 145 it is emphasised that YHWH watches over those that loves Him. Thus the smaller structural unit formed between Pss. 138 and 145 within Book V of the *Psalter* specifically points towards the intimate relationship between YHWH and the psalmist.

Zenger (1998:95-96) explains that Psalms 140-144 can be understood as a composite unit that shows a movement in thought from a plea in a situation of actual eschatological distress to a situation of supernatural contentment and the praise of the universal Kingdom of YHWH. In view of this context, Psalm 139 can be understood as the introduction to the composite unit of Pss. 140-144. Psalm 139 is included with the concepts of חקר (exploration) and יָדַע (knowledge) which indicates

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[36] "Little interest has been paid to these titles in recent years. The reason for this lack of interest is clear. A wide consensus has been reached among critical scholars for over a hundred years that the titles are secondary additions which can afford no reliable information toward establishing the genuine historical setting of the psalms" (Childs, 1979:520).

[37] According to Zenger (1998:81) Book V of the *Psalter* can be distinguished from the preceding four books by the vision of the universal Kingdom of YHWH that will be brought about by a theophany on Zion. In Book V of the *Psalter* the fall of the davidic kingdom is lamented, whilst the rise of the universal Kingdom of YHWH is celebrated.

YHWH's perfect knowledge of man, as well as the human being's absolute dependence on YHWH.

It becomes undoubtedly clear that the placement of a psalm within the greater compositional unit of the *Psalter* plays a pivotal role in the understanding of the relevant psalm. The fact that Psalm 139 finds itself intrinsically woven into the theological profile of Book V of the *Psalter* must therefore not be disregarded. Permeating through the whole of Book V of the *Psalter* is an attitude of unreserved reliance on YHWH, a theme that is indisputably also present in Psalm 139. Throughout Book V of the *Psalter* there is a movement away from the cult-centric religious position of Israel to a more personal relation with YHWH. This intimate familiarity with YHWH is pursued in Psalm 139 by the psalmist who persistently emphasises YHWH's perfect knowledge of his/her being. The Theocratic nature of Book V of the *Psalter* puts explicit emphasis on YHWH's sovereignty. In Psalm 139 the psalmist declares that YHWH is the only One who can search his/her being and completely know his/her behaviour because of YHWH's combined omnipotence and omnipresence.

The universality of the Kingdom of YHWH, themed in Book V of the *Psalter*, combined with the perfect knowledge of YHWH, as emphasised in Psalm 139, gives rise to the impression that Psalm 139 was composed or rather adapted to use in the aftermath of the exile. The last davidic unit in the *Psalter* (Pss. 138-145) that is specifically designed to highlight the intimate relationship between YHWH and man is replicated in the frame of mind incorporated in the composition of Psalm 139. Although Psalm 139 is inevitably coloured in the theological profile of Book V, it is clear from current research that not enough is said on the relationship of Psalm 139 with its surrounding psalms. There is still a disparity in the research of Psalm 139 regarding the relationship of Psalm 139 with its surrounding groups and consequently what these relationships have to say about the content of Psalm 139 itself.

2.3   Synthesis

From the foregoing study is becomes clear that even though Psalm 139 is one of the most beautiful psalms in the *Psalter*, it is prone to great controversy.

In the study of Psalm 139 two primary focal-points have enjoyed the attention of scholars. The first focal-point is that of the unity and/or division of the psalm. In the preceding study multiple ways in which the unity and/or division of Psalm 139 could possibly be explained was explored. The three main trends adhered to when working with Psalm 139 is *inter alia*: a clear cut two-part division between vv. 18 and 19 each supporting its own theme; a division of a plurality of stanzas; and finally an insistence on treating the psalm as an undividable unity. It is clear that scholars cannot seem to agree on the unity and division of Psalm 139.

Consequently, this disagreement on the unity and/or division of Psalm 139 gives rise to the second focal point that enjoyed the attention of scholars: the *genre* of Psalm 139. The difference in opinion about the form (unity and division) of Psalm 139 results in a disagreement on the actual *genre* of Psalm 139. The *genre* of Psalm 139 is disputed mainly due to the fact that it exhibits an obscure form. Another reason for the disagreement on the *genre* is the fact that a definite *Sitz im Leben* cannot be denoted from the text because of a lack of historical references and indicators in the psalm.

There are a wide variety of conflicting views among scholars when it comes to the *genre* and the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139. Some scholars suggest that Psalm 139 should be classified under one of the already existing *genres*. Others are of the opinion that there are a multitude of *genres* present in this complicated psalm. However, no convincing results were yielded to the gain of the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139. Though it is undeniable that there is a great variety of *genre* categories hinted to in the multitude of subsections, none conclusively dominates the rest. A definite *genre*-classification of Psalm 139 seems to evade scholars.

In accordance with new trends in Psalm research, research with regard to Psalm 139 as an integral part of Book V of the *Psalter* is also investigated. The placement of

Psalm 139 within the larger context of Book V of the *Psalter* (Pss. 107-150) has not enjoyed much attention in existing research. Those who have researched the placement of Psalm 139 within the canonical order of the psalms emphasise that the placement of Psalm 139 within the greater compositional unit of the *Psalter* plays a fundamental role in the understanding of the psalm. Psalm 139, intrinsically woven into the theological profile of Book V of the *Psalter*, permeates an attitude of unreserved reliance on YHWH. It becomes clear that the greater movement in the *Psalter*, from a cult-centric religion to a YHWH-centred religion, is also recognisable in the composition of Psalm 139. The theme of the universality of the kingdom of YHWH in Book V of the *Psalter* is also reflected in Psalm 139. It is however clear that not enough is said on the relationship of Psalm 139 with its surrounding psalms.

It is thus confirmed that any interpretation of Psalm 139 should be approached with much needed caution.

CHAPTER 3

LITERARY ANALYSIS

3.1   Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to execute an exegesis of Psalm 139 on a literary level by exploring the textual features and elements of the psalm as well as the interrelationships between these characteristics - syntax, poetic features, structure, dating and *genre*.[38] A literary analysis of the psalm will consist of a literary-exegetical analysis or rather a synchronic analysis. This will be carried out to create a holistic understanding of Psalm 139. The purpose of the discussion on the textual nature of Psalm 139, as it will appear in Chapter 3, is primarily to determine which individual building blocks the text consists of, and how these units fit together; what the meaning is that the poet wanted to communicate to his/her readers and ultimately how the construction of the psalm was designed to convey the intended meaning of the text to the audience.

3.2   Text and translation

The following is a free translation of the Hebrew text that will be used as a reference for the rest of this dissertation:

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[38] Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:538) argue that the analysis of the poetic structure and the characteristics of a psalm plays an important role in the reconstruction of the unique and individual thinking process present in the particular psalm. This kind of analysis of a text evaluates the characteristics of said text in order to make meaningful suggestions about the content and the meaning thereof.

Stanza	Strophe	Hebrew text: Psalm 139	Verse	Free translation: Psalm 139
HEADING		לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר	1a	For the supervisor; to David a psalm.[39]
I[40]	A	יְהוָה חֲקַרְתַּנִי וַתֵּדָע:	b	YHWH, you search me and you know me.[41]
		אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ שִׁבְתִּי וְקוּמִי	2a	You know my sit down and my rise up;
		בַּנְתָּה לְרֵעִי[42] מֵרָחוֹק:	b	you discern my intention from afar.
		אָרְחִי וְרִבְעִי זֵרִיתָ	3a	My wandering and my lying down you measure off;
		וְכָל־דְּרָכַי הִסְכַּנְתָּה:	b	and all my ways you are familiar with.
		כִּי אֵין מִלָּה בִּלְשׁוֹנִי	4a	For nought a word is in my tongue,
		הֵן יְהוָה יָדַעְתָּ כֻלָּהּ:	b	behold! YHWH you know all of her.
	B	אָחוֹר וָקֶדֶם[43] צַרְתָּנִי	5a	Behind and in front you shut me in;

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[39] The heading is uniquely attributed to David. This unique threefold Hebrew composition of the heading 'For the supervisor, to David, a psalm' only occurs in two other places in the *Psalter*, namely in Pss. 40:1 and 109:1 (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:540).

[40] In stanza I God is the subject of the verbs.

[41] The verbs חקר (to search) en ידע (to know) are repeated in exactly the same order in v. 23.

[42] Some copies of the Hebrew Codex manuscripts as well as some versions of the LXX and the Syrian codices replace the Resj (ר) in לְרֵעִי of which the basis is רֵעַ 'thought/intention' with a Dalet (ה) לְהֵעִי of which the basis is הֵעַ 'knowledge'. If the Resj (ר) is substituted with the Dalet (ה) then the phrase will not be translated with 'you discern my intentions/thoughts from afar', but rather 'you discern my knowledge from afar'. Reciprocally the different readings of the text implies the same, namely that YHWH knows the depths of man - that which is not necessarily known by others cannot be hidden from YHWH.

[43] The LXX connects the phrase אָחוֹר וָקֶדֶם (behind and in front) with the foregoing verse. The addition to verse 4b will merely be an extension of that which is ultimately known by and cannot be hidden from YHWH, namely the 'behind' (the past.) and the 'in front' (the future) of man.

		וַתָּ֖שֶׁת עָלַ֣י כַּפֶּֽכָה׃	b	and you have laid on me your hand.	
		(פְּלִיָּה) [פְּלִיאָ֣ה] דַ֣עַת מִמֶּֽנִּי	6a	Wonderful is this knowledge for me;	
		נִ֝שְׂגְּבָ֗ה לֹא־א֥וּכַֽל לָֽהּ׃	b	unattainable, I am not able to her.	
II	C	אָ֭נָ֥ה אֵלֵ֣ךְ מֵרוּחֶ֑ךָ	7a	Where do I go from your spirit;	
		וְ֝אָ֗נָה מִפָּנֶ֥יךָ אֶבְרָֽח׃	b	and where from your face I fled?	
		אִם־אֶסַּ֣ק שָׁ֭מַיִם שָׁ֣ם אָ֑תָּה	8a	If I climbed up the heavens there you are;	
		וְאַצִּ֖יעָה שְּׁא֣וֹל הִנֶּֽךָ׃	b	and I spread out in sheol, behold!, you are there!	
		אֶשָּׂ֥א כַנְפֵי־שָׁ֑חַר	9a	I rise up on wings of the dawn;	
		אֶ֝שְׁכְּנָ֗ה בְּאַחֲרִ֥ית יָֽם׃	b	I dwelled in the ends of the sea	
		גַּם־שָׁ֭ם יָדְךָ֣ תַנְחֵ֑נִי	10a	also there your hand she	

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				guides me;
		וְתֹאחֲזֵנִי יְמִינֶךָ׃	b	and she grasps me your right hand.
	D	וָאֹמַר⁵⁰ אַךְ־חֹשֶׁךְ יְשׁוּפֵנִי⁵¹	11a	And I said, surely darkness cover me
		וְלַיְלָה אוֹר בַּעֲדֵנִי׃	b	and light of day become the night around me.
		גַּם־חֹשֶׁךְ לֹא־יַחְשִׁיךְ מִמֶּךָ	12a	Also the darkness does not become dark for you;
		וְלַיְלָה כַּיּוֹם יָאִיר	b	and the night shines like the day,
		כַּחֲשֵׁיכָה כָּאוֹרָה׃	c	the darkness shines like the light.
III	E	כִּי־אַתָּה קָנִיתָ כִלְיֹתָי	13a	Because you create my kidneys;
		תְּסֻכֵּנִי בְּבֶטֶן⁵² אִמִּי׃	b	you weaved me in the womb of my mother.
		אוֹדְךָ עַל כִּי נוֹרָאוֹת נִפְלֵיתִי⁵³	14a	I praise you because fearfully I am distinct;

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because it fits better within the context of the verse. This particular amendment helps to understand the extent of YHWH's omnipresence. YHWH's omnipresence is unashamed as it reaches as far as the ends of creation.

[50] It is suggested that the Waw consecutive added to the verb אמר (to say), must be changed to a Waw copulative. This implies that the mode of the verb must be changed from an imperfect verb to a perfect verb. The Masoretic text, however, is clear in meaning without this adaptation.

[51] Symmachus' Greek translation of the Old Testament reads two alternative root forms instead of יְשׁוּפֵנִי (he covered me'). The first is the word שָׂכַךְ (to hold on) and the second possibility is the word סכך (to isolate). Needless to say, all three of these translations would imply that darkness has to hide the psalmist. Therefore, the Masoretic text is clear without this adaptation.

[52] The LXX expands on the Masoretic text by adding the genetic preposition, ἐκ 'from/out of' to the text. The phrase ἐκ γαστρὸς (from the womb) indicates that YHWH had already taken control of the psalmist whilst he/she was still unborn (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:536).

		נִפְלָאִ֥ים מַעֲשֶׂ֑יךָ	b	wonderfully are your works
		וְ֝נַפְשִׁ֗י יֹדַ֥עַת מְאֹֽד׃	c	and my soul knowing this abundance.
	F	לֹא־נִכְחַ֥ד עָצְמִ֗י מִ֫מֶּ֥ךָ	15a	Not it was hidden my bones from you
		אֲשֶׁר־[54]עֻשֵּׂ֥יתִי[55] בַסֵּ֑תֶר	b	when I was made in the hiding place,
		רֻ֝קַּ֗מְתִּי[56] בְּֽתַחְתִּיּ֥וֹת אָֽרֶץ׃	c	I was woven in the lowest of the earth.
		[57]גָּלְמִ֤י[58] ׀ רָ֘א֤וּ עֵינֶ֗יךָ	16a	My formless mass your eyes did see;
		וְעַֽל־סִפְרְךָ֮ כֻּלָּ֪ם[59] יִכָּ֫תֵ֥בוּ	b	and in your book all of them

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[53] The original Greek text interprets the כִּי - phrase with the divine predicate (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:536). The translation will then be changed to 'I praise you because fearfully you are distinct' instead of the current translation 'I praise you because fearfully I am distinct'. However, this will complicate the translation of the text that follows this given sentence. Consequently, the Masoretic text is preferred.

[54] It is suggested that the preposition כ (like) is inadvertently omitted from the word אֲשֶׁר (who, which, that, when) and that the word should actually read כַּאֲשֶׁר; (like when). This omission, however, does not change the meaning of the phrase.

[55] The LXX changes the subject of the word עֻשֵּׂיתִי (I was made) which is in the first person passive -form (Pual perf. 1 s.) to the second person active-form עָשִׂיתָ (thus Qal perf. 2 m. s.). This changes the translation from 'I was made' to 'you (YHWH) makes.' This translation implies that YHWH is the one observing the creative work, not man, and thus confirms the theme of the psalm, namely that YHWH is the everywhere and always at work.

[56] In the LXX the Masoretic text רֻקַּמְתִּי (I was woven) is translated with the Greek καὶ ἡ ὑπόστασίς (and the substance). This translation does not read the Masoretic text as a verb (Pual. perf. 1. s.), but rather as a noun רִקְמָה (pieces of material) with the addition of the Pronominal suffix 1 s. 'me' which can be translated with 'the pieces of my material'.

[57] This text-critical note suggests that the phrase גָּלְמִ֤י ׀ רָ֘א֤וּ עֵינֶ֗יךָ (my formless mass your eyes did see) consists of a *hapax legomenon* that needs to be eradicated and transposed to יָמַי יָצָרוּ (you form my days).

[58] There is a suggestion that the Mem (מ) en Lamed (ל) of the *hapax legomenon* גָּלְמִי (my formless mass) or rather (my embryo) should be reversed in order to form the root of the word גָּמַל (completed / weaned).

				were written,:
		יָמִ֣ים[60] יֻצָּ֑רוּ	c	the days were formed
		(וְלֹא֙) [וְל֣וֹ[61]] אֶחָ֣ד בָּהֶֽם[62]:	d	and not to him one was there.
	G	וְלִ֗י מַה־יָּקְר֣וּ רֵעֶ֣יךָ אֵ֑ל	17a	And for me, how precious are your thoughts?
		מֶ֥ה עָ֝צְמ֗וּ רָאשֵׁיהֶֽם[63]:	b	How numerous the totalities of them?
		אֶ֭סְפְּרֵם מֵח֣וֹל יִרְבּ֑וּן	18a	I counted them they was numerous, more than sand;
		הֱ֝קִיצֹ֗תִי[64] וְעוֹדִ֥י עִמָּֽךְ:	b	I awake and still I am with you.
IV	H	אִם־תִּקְטֹ֖ל אֱל֥וֹהַּ ׀ רָשָׁ֑ע	19a	God, if you killed the wicked;
		וְאַנְשֵׁ֥י דָ֝מִ֗ים ס֤וּרוּ[65] מֶֽנִּי[66]:	b	and men of blood turn away

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[59] Another suggestion is made that the word כֻּלָּ֗ם (all of them) should be adjusted to כָּל־ י֥וֹם (all days). Then the phrase 'and in your book all of them were written' would change to 'all the days ... were written in your book.' The NIV-translation uses this customised translation.

[60] Another suggestion is made that the word יָמִ֣ים (days) should be replaced with the phrase כָּל־יָמַ֑י (all my days).

[61] A few Masoretic manuscripts prefer the Qere variant וְל֣וֹ (and not) above the Ketib variant וְלֹא֙.

[62] Some Masoretic manuscripts do not make use of the preposition בְּ (in), but instead replace this with the preposition מִן (from, out of, by).

[63] There are some Masoretic manuscripts that link the Waw copulative וְ (and) to the interrogative pronoun מֶה (how?). This does not change the meaning of the text.

[64] It is suggested that the word הֱ֝קִיצֹ֗תִי (I awake) should most probably be the word הקצותי of which the root is קצץ (to end). The alternative word choice has a major impact on the translation and meaning of the text. The verse will then be translated as follows: 'Did I count them they were much more than sand; if I am ended I am still with you.' There are a few Masoretic manuscripts that prefer this translation.

[65] A few Hebrew manuscripts use the perfect-form of סָ֥רוּ instead of the imperative-form ס֤וּרוּ. The translation is simply altered from 'I turn away' to a demand 'turn away!'

[66] Some Hebrew manuscripts use the verb מִמֶּ֗נִּי instead of מֶֽנִּי. The translation of the phrase 'from me.' however, stays unchanged.

				from me!
		אֲשֶׁ֤ר יֹאמְרֻ֣ךָ[67] לִמְזִמָּ֑ה	20a	They who said they plotted against you;
		נָשֻׂ֖א[68] לַשָּׁ֣וְא עָרֶֽיךָ[69]׃	b	they lifted the vanity, your adversaries.
	I	הֲלֽוֹא־מְשַׂנְאֶ֖יךָ יְהוָ֥ה ׀[70] אֶשְׂנָ֑א	21a	If not YHWH your haters, I hated;
		וּ֝בִתְקוֹמְמֶ֗יךָ[71] אֶתְקוֹטָֽט׃	b	and those who rise up against you, I loathe?
		תַּכְלִ֣ית שִׂנְאָ֣ה שְׂנֵאתִ֑ים	22a	With extremity of hate I hate them
		לְ֝אוֹיְבִ֗ים הָ֣יוּ לִֽי׃	b	for they are enemies to me.
V	J	חָקְרֵ֣נִי אֵ֭ל וְדַ֣ע לְבָבִ֑י	23a	God, you must search me and you must know my heart!
		בְּ֝חָנֵ֗נִי וְדַ֣ע שַׂרְעַפָּֽי׃	b	You must examine me and you must know my disquieting thoughts!

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[67] The Quinta Greek translation reads, instead of יֹאמְרֻ֣ךָ (Qal impf. 3 m. pl. אָמַר 'to say' + Pns 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'they said to you') the word יִמְרוּךָ (Hifil impf. 3 m. s. אָמַר 'to say' ; 'he told').

[68] An alternate possibility for reading the word נָשֻׂא (Qal perf. 3 o. pl. נָשָׂא 'to lift'; 'they lifted') is וְנָשֻׂאוּ (Waw cons וְ 'en' + Pual impf. 3 m. pl. נָשָׂא 'to lift'; 'he exalted them'). This translation is used in the majority of cases.

[69] Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:536) explains that the two legs of v. 20 must be understood as parallels. That is the reason the word עָרֶיךָ is translated with 'your haters'. Many Hebrew manuscripts make use of this phrase. However, it is also suggested that the word עָלֶיךָ can be used in this instance. It consists of the preposition עַל (on / against) together with the pronominal suffix 2 m. s. 'you' which can be translated as 'against you'

[70] The Proper name יְהוָה (JHWH) is absent in some Hebrew manuscripts.

[71] A few Hebrew manuscripts translate the word וּבִתְקוֹמְמֶיךָ as the const. m. pl. of the root תְּקוֹמֵם (height). However, there are some Masoretic manuscripts that understand this word as a Hitpael participle active of the Hebrew word קוּם (to stand up). Consequently, it translates as 'those who are in rebellion against you.'

| | | וּרְאֵ֗ה אִם־דֶּ֥רֶךְ־עֹ֥צֶב בִּ֑י | 24a | And you must see if the way of hardship is in me, |
| | | וּ֝נְחֵ֗נִי בְּדֶ֣רֶךְ עוֹלָֽם: | b | and you must lead me in the way everlasting. |

3.3   Demarcation of the text

Psalm 139 can be demarcated as an individual pericope based on formal criteria. Psalm 139 has its own heading and/or introductory formula לַמְנַצֵּ֥חַ לְדָוִ֗ד מִזְמ֥וֹר (For the supervisor; to David a psalm). This introductory formula identifies the psalm from the outset as one of the psalms belonging to the davidic collection in Book V of the *Psalter*.[72] Although the preceding psalm, Psalm 138, and the following psalm, Psalm 140, is also classified as part of the davidic collection, Psalm 139 is distinguished from them on the basis of the content of the psalm. Furthermore, the second part of the introductory formula in verse 1 יְהוָ֥ה חֲקַרְתַּ֗נִי וַתֵּדָֽע: (YHWH, you search me and you know me) introduces the content of the psalm by indicating in advance the theme of the rest of the content, namely that there is nothing that man can hide from the all-seeing, ever present eyes of YHWH. Mutually, the phrase in verse 23: חָקְרֵ֣נִי אֵ֭ל וְדַ֣ע לְבָבִ֑י בְּ֝חָנֵ֗נִי וְדַ֣ע שַׂרְעַפָּֽי (And you must see if the way of hardship is in me, and you must lead me in the way everlasting) is employed as a closing formula by which the thought unit introduced in verse 1 is closed by means of an *inclucio*. In Psalm 139 three role-players can be identified: YHWH, the psalmist and the wicked (or the enemies of the psalmist). These role-players are alternately used as the subject in the various stanzas of Psalm 139. The continuous presence of poetic techniques such as parallelisms, *chiasmus*, *merisms* and inclusios also bind the content of the psalm to a close unity.

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[72] Three collections can be distinguished in Book V of the *Psalter*:

-    The songs of ascent (Pss. 120-134)

-    The davidic collection (Pss. 138-145)

-    The Hallel psalms (Pss. 135-136; 146-150)

Based on substantive criteria, Psalm 139 displays as an independent unit. The course of events in Psalm 139 is well rounded in terms of how the acts of the psalm follow each other. The psalmist commences by asserting that YHWH knows man completely (vv. 1-2). Additionally, the psalmist then continues to emphasise the omnipresence of YHWH by making use of certain spatial terms, such as אָחוֹר (behind) and קֶדֶם (in front) of שָׁמַיִם (heavens) and שְׁאוֹל (sheol/underworld). The use of these terms serves to emphasise the presence of YHWH as all-pervading. Psalm 139 finally concludes with a closing prayer asking YHWH to investigate the heart of the psalmist and also to direct the psalmist in the everlasting way (vv. 23-24). The psalmist asks YHWH to be in him/her ("search me" / "examine me") and also to be outside/around of him/her ("lead me"). The psalmist thus claims and calls for the omnipresence of God, as is observed in the introduction of the psalm, in his/her life.

It is therefore clear that, on a basis of formal as well as substantive criteria, Psalm 139 can be classified and defined as an independent pericope.

3.4   Textual criticism

The Masoretic text of Psalm 139 is subject to controversy. The text is often unclear and/or ambiguous. Numerous text critical amendments can be found in the BHS. With regard to the particular study, some text-critical notes will enjoy further attention:

The text-critical amendment 10[a] suggests an alternative to the word תַּנְחֵנִי (she guides me). The proposed alternative is תִּקָּחֵנִי whose root-form is יקח (be unashamed). The translation will them be altered as follows: 'also there you hand was unashamed.' This particular alteration contributes to understand the extent of YHWH's omnipresence. YHWH's ubiquity is unashamed and can reach as far as the ends of the earth. Deissler (1979:538) suggests that the word תִּקָחֵנִי (you grab me) will be a better fit within the context of the psalm. Prinsloo (1994:121) believes that

this translation is based on an incorrect interpretation of the text. According to Prinsloo the word נחה (to guide) reveals YHWH's intimate knowledge of and involvement in the psalmist's life. The phrase יָדְךָ תַנְחֵנִי (your hand guides me) has a positive connotation in the Old Testament (Vos, 2005:197) and refers to divine providence.

Similarly, it is suggested in the textual amendment 11[a] that the translation of Symmachus of the word יְשׁוּפֵנִי (cover me) has two possible root-forms. The first is שׂכַךְ (to hold) and the second possibility is סכַךְ (to isolate). Within the context of Psalm 139, all three of these translations imply that the darkness must hide the psalmist from the eyes of YHWH. The Masoretic text is thus clear without this adaptation.

After a careful study of the text-critical notes on Psalm 139, it appears that the Masoretic text can be accepted as acceptable (Prinsloo, 1994:121).

3.5 Morphological analysis [73]

The following prominent features are present in Psalm 139:
A clear distinction can be made between three persons and/or groups of persons according to the person, gender and number of verbs used, as well as the pronominal suffixes employed in Psalm 139:

- YHWH (also called El or Elohim [God])
- I/me (the psalmist)
- The wicked/godless (also referred to as the adversaries of YHWH and the psalmist)

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[73] For a complete morphological analysis of Psalm 139 see Addendum A.

i.   YHWH

Here are three times referenced to the Lord as "YHWH" (vv. 1, 4, 21); twice the Lord is called "El" (vv. 14 and 23); and once He is referred to as "Elohim" (v. 19).

In Stanza I the perfect and imperfect 2nd person male singular refers to the actions of YHWH a total of nine times. In the rest of the psalm the pronominal suffix 2nd person male singular is utilised a total of sixteen times to refer to YHWH. The independent pronoun 2nd person male singular is also used in two separate places (vv. 8 and 13) in reference to YHWH's presence in the heavens as well as in the womb of the psalmist's mother, even before his/her birth.

Eventually in the final stanza, Stanza V, the imperative male singular is used by the psalmist to direct his/her prayer and urgent request to YHWH.

ii.   The psalmist

Throughout the psalm, the psalmist is identified and referred to on thirty-one separate instances by the use of the pronominal suffix 1st person singular "my" in phrases such as '…you know my sit down and my rise up…' and '…you discern my intention from afar…'

In Stanza II the imperfect 1st person singular is used in reference to the various places where the psalmist could possibly go to hide from YHWH. By the use of the imperfect 1st person singular verb it is emphasised that the psalmist's efforts to hide from YHWH is futile because of YHWH's all-encompassing presence. In Stanza III the mode of the verbs that refer to the actions of the psalmist, changes to the perfect but remains in the 1st person singular form.

The personal call/prayer to YHWH found in Stanza V is in the imperative male singular form, showing that the psalmist is the one speaking in the final stanza of Psalm 139.

iii.   The wicked/godless - adversaries of YHWH and the psalmist

The reference to the wicked and/or adversaries of YHWH only occur in Stanza IV (vv. 13-22) of Psalm 139. On two different occasions the 3rd person male plural is employed to refer to the adversaries of YHWH and the psalmist as "they". This implies that the writer of the psalm does not refer to a single person as the enemy of YHWH and himself/herself, but rather to a group of godless people. In addition, the participle active male plural is used in two different instances to classify the adversaries according to their nature and attitude towards YHWH and the psalmist. In verse 21 they are called 'haters' while they are cut out as 'enemies' in verse 22.

Thematic repetition of words

It is striking that throughout the psalm there are alternating between two respective subjects: YHWH and the psalmist. The relationship between these two subjects is what scholars refer to as the "I-you" relationship (Clifford, 2003:279; Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:238). In Psalm 139 the "I" refers to the psalmist whilst the "you" refers to YHWH. The different subjects alternately dominate different sections in the psalm. Vv. 1-6 and vv. 13-18 is dominated by the "you", i.e. YHWH is the subject in these sections. While vv. 7-12 and 19-24 there are mostly referred to the "I", i.e. the psalmist is the subject in these sections.

The root יָדַע 'knowledge' continuously appears in Psalm 139 on six different occasions, namely vv. 1, 2, 4, 6, 14 and 23 (Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014:584; Clifford, 2003:279). A further important observation is that the two root-forms ידע 'knowledge' and חקר 'to search' are found in both vv. 1 and 23. According to Allen (2002:320) this appearance has a dual purpose: First, it emphasises the pattern of thought flowing through the entire psalm, namely that YHWH is aware of all that man is and does simply because of YHWH's presence throughout the whole of creation. Second, the repetition of these two words at the beginning and the end of the psalm creates literary integrity by joining the psalm from beginning to end as a coherent unit.

There are a number of verbs that are linked to the psalmist's movement: שִׁבְתִּי (my sit down); וְקוּמִי (and my rise up); אָרְחִי (my wandering); וְרִבְעִי (and my lying down); וָאַצִּיעָה (and I spread out); אַבְרַח׃ (I fled); אֶסַּק (I climbed up); אֵלֵךְ (I go); דְּרָכָי (my ways); אֶשָּׂא (I rose up); אֶשְׁכְּנָה (I dwelled); עֻשֵּׂיתִי (I was made); רֻקַּמְתִּי (I was woven). This repetition contrasts and emphasises the psalmist's limitedness against YHWH's omniscience and omnipresence.

3.6   Syntactical analysis

For the sake of truthfulness to the text, in this study a preference is given to the Masoretic syntactical analysis. This will be put into effect to determine the seams of the text, as it was originally divided by the Masoretes in verses and cola. This syntactical study will be carried out by identifying and using Masoretic markers. The distribution of verses and cola serves as an aid to determine the structure of the psalm and to identify the poetic techniques in the psalm. A line is formed after every primary disjunctive. In Psalm 139 the primary dividing disjunctives are: the *Sillûq,* the *'Atnāḥ* and the *'Ôlê wᵉyôrēd*.

A masoretic syntactical analysis of Psalm 139:1-24

Dividing disjunctives		Cola	Line	Vs.	Type	Translation
Dem.	**Acc.**					
Atn(1)	Tip	לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד מִזְמֹור	1a	1	Bi	For the supervisor; to David. A psalm.
Sil(0)	RebM	יְהֹוָה חֲקַרְתַּנִי וַתֵּדָע׃	b			YHWH, you search me and you know me.
Atn(1)	Tip	אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ שִׁבְתִּי וְקוּמִי	2a	2	Bi	You know my sit down and my rise up
Sil(0)	RebM	בַּנְתָּה לְרֵעִי מֵרָחֹוק׃	b			you discern my intention from afar.

Atn(1)	--	אָרְחִ֣י וְרִבְעִ֣י זֵרִ֑יתָ	3a	3	Bi	My wandering and my lying down you measure off;
Sil(0)	--	וְכָל־דְּרָכַ֥י הִסְכַּֽנְתָּה׃	b			and all my ways you are familiar with.
Atn(1)	Tip	כִּ֤י אֵ֣ין מִ֭לָּה בִּלְשׁוֹנִ֑י	4a	4	Bi	For not a word is in my tongue,
Sil(0)	RebM	הֵ֥ן יְ֝הוָ֗ה יָדַ֥עְתָּ כֻלָּֽהּ׃	b			behold! YHWH you know all of her.
Atn(1)	--	אָח֣וֹר וָקֶ֣דֶם צַרְתָּ֑נִי	5a	5	Bi	Behind and in front you shut me in;
Sil(0)	Tip	וַתָּ֖שֶׁת עָלַ֣י כַּפֶּֽכָה׃	b			and you have laid on me your hand.
Atn(1)	--	(פְּלִיאָֽיה) [פְּלִ֣יאָֽה] דַ֣עַת מִמֶּ֑נִּי	6a	6	Bi	Wonderful is this knowledge for me;
Sil(0)	RebM	נִ֝שְׂגְּבָ֗ה לֹא־א֥וּכַֽל לָֽהּ׃	b			unattainable, I am not able to her.
Atn(1)	Tip	אָ֭נָֽה אֵלֵ֣ךְ מֵרוּחֶ֑ךָ	7a	7	Bi	Where do I go from your spirit;
Sil(0)	RebM	וְ֝אָ֗נָה מִפָּנֶ֥יךָ אֶבְרָֽח׃	b			and where from your face I fled?
Atn(1)	Tip	אִם־אֶסַּ֣ק שָׁ֭מַיִם שָׁ֣ם אָ֑תָּה	8a	8	Bi	If I climbed up the heavens there you are;
Sil(0)	Tip	וְאַצִּ֖יעָה שְּׁא֣וֹל הִנֶּֽךָּ׃	b			and I spread out in sheol, behold!, you are there!
Atn(1)	--	אֶשָּׂ֥א כַנְפֵי־שָׁ֑חַר	9a	9	Bi	I rise up on wings of the dawn;
Sil(0)	RebM	אֶ֝שְׁכְּנָ֗ה בְּאַחֲרִ֥ית יָֽם׃	b			I dwelled in the ends of the sea
Atn(1)	Tip	גַּם־שָׁ֭ם יָדְךָ֣ תַנְחֵ֑נִי	10a	10	Bi	also there you hand she guides me;
Sil(0)	--	וְֽתֹאחֲזֵ֥נִי יְמִינֶֽךָ׃	b			and she grasps me your

					right hand.
Atn(1)	--	וָאֹמַר אַךְ־חֹשֶׁךְ יְשׁוּפֵנִי	11a	11	Bi	And I said, surely darkness cover me
Sil(0)	RebM	וְלַיְלָה אוֹר בַּעֲדֵנִי:	b			and light of day become the night around me.
OleW (1)	--	גַּם־חֹשֶׁךְ לֹא־יַחְשִׁיךְ מִמֶּךָ	12a	12	Tri	Also the darkness does not become dark for you;
Atn(1)	--	וְלַיְלָה כַּיּוֹם יָאִיר	b			and the night shines like the day,
Sil(0)	RebM	כַּחֲשֵׁיכָה כָּאוֹרָה:	c			the darkness shines like the light.
Atn(1)	--	כִּי־אַתָּה קָנִיתָ כִלְיֹתָי	13a	13	Bi	Because you create my kidneys;
Sil(0)	RebM	תְּסֻכֵּנִי בְּבֶטֶן אִמִּי:	b			you weaved me in the womb of my mother.
OleW (1)	RebQ	אוֹדְךָ עַל כִּי נוֹרָאוֹת נִפְלֵיתִי	14a	14	Tri	I praise you because fearfully I am distinct;
Atn(1)	--	נִפְלָאִים מַעֲשֶׂיךָ	b			wonderfully are your works
Sil(0)	RebM	וְנַפְשִׁי יֹדַעַת מְאֹד:	c			and my soul knowing this abundance.
OleW (1)	RebQ	לֹא־נִכְחַד עָצְמִי מִמֶּךָ	15a	15	Tri	Not it was hidden my bones from you
Atn(1)	--	אֲשֶׁר־עֻשֵּׂיתִי בַסֵּתֶר	b			when I was made in the hiding place,
Sil(0)	RebM	רֻקַּמְתִּי בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת אָרֶץ:	c			I was woven in the lowest of the earth.
RebG (2)	Meh	גָּלְמִי רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ	16a	16	Quad	My formless mass your eyes did see;
OleW (1)	--	וְעַל־סִפְרְךָ כֻּלָּם יִכָּתֵבוּ	b			and in your book all of them were written,:
Atn(1)	--	יָמִים יֻצָּרוּ	c			the days were formed

Sil(0)	Tip	(וְלֹא) [וְלֹו] אֶחָד בָּהֶֽם׃	d			and not to him one was there.
Atn(1)	--	וְלִי מַה־יָּקְרוּ רֵעֶיךָ אֵל	17a	17	Bi	And for me, how precious are your thoughts?
Sil(0)	--	מֶה עָצְמוּ רָאשֵׁיהֶֽם׃	b			How numerous the totalities of them?
Atn(1)	--	אֶסְפְּרֵם מֵחוֹל יִרְבּוּן	18a	18	Bi	I counted them they was numerous, more than sand;
Sil(0)	RebM	הֱקִיצֹתִי וְעוֹדִי עִמָּֽךְ׃	b			I awake and still I am with you.
Atn(1)	--	אִם־תִּקְטֹל אֱלוֹהַּ׀ רָשָׁע	19a	19	Bi	God, if you killed the wicked;
Sil(0)	RebM	וְאַנְשֵׁי דָמִים סוּרוּ מֶֽנִּי׃	b			and men of blood turn away from me!
Atn(1)	Tip	אֲשֶׁר יֹאמְרֻךָ לִמְזִמָּה	20a	20	Bi	They who said they plotted against you;
Sil(0)	RebM	נָשֻׂא לַשָּׁוְא עָרֶֽיךָ׃	b			they lifted the vanity, your adversaries.
Atn(1)	Tip	הֲלֽוֹא־מְשַׂנְאֶיךָ יְהֹוָה׀ אֶשְׂנָא	21a	21	Bi	If not YHWH your haters, I hated;
Sil(0)	RebM	וּבִתְקוֹמְמֶיךָ אֶתְקוֹטָֽט׃	b			and those who rise up against you, I loathe?
Atn(1)	--	תַּכְלִית שִׂנְאָה שְׂנֵאתִים	22a	22	Bi	With extremity of hate I hate them
Sil(0)	RebM	לְאוֹיְבִים הָיוּ לִֽי׃	b			for they are enemies to me.
Atn(1)	Tip	חָקְרֵנִי אֵל וְדַע לְבָבִי	23a	23	Bi	God, you must search me and you must know my heart!
Sil(0)	RebM	בְּחָנֵנִי וְדַע שַׂרְעַפָּֽי׃	b			You must examine me and you must know my

						disquieting thoughts!
Atn(1)	--	וּרְאֵה אִם־דֶּרֶךְ־עֹצֶב בִּי	24a	24	Bi	And you must see if the way of hardship is in me,
Sil(0)	RebM	וּנְחֵנִי בְּדֶרֶךְ עוֹלָם׃	b			and you must lead me in the way everlasting.

3.7 Structural and content analysis

3.7.1 Introduction

Due to the unique nature of Psalm 139 there are different opinions on how the psalm should be divided structurally. There are those who are strongly opinionated that if Psalm 139 had ended at verse 18, it would be one of the most beautiful psalms in the *Psalter*. The call of YHWH to ward of the wicked in vv. 19-22, is completely out of tune with the mood of the rest of the psalm. For this reason, scholars are yet to reach agreement on the structure of Psalm 139.

Modern research has shown that there are three possible ways to structurally divide Psalm 139. These trends are set out Holman (1971:298) as follows:

The first trend is to divide Psalm 139 into multiple strophes. Calvin (1898:908-919) as well as Prinsloo (1994:125) are advocates of this trend. Even though they support the notion that Psalm 139 should be divided into a multiplicity of stanzas, each one's five-part division of Psalm 139 uniquely differs. On the other hand, Eaton (1967:301-302) divides Psalm 139 onto three units, instead of five (vv. 1-12; 13-18 and 19-24). However, the most popular method of dividing Psalm 139 is to identify four strophes or units, namely vv. 1-6; 7-12; 13-18 and 19-14 (e.g. Allen, 2002:327; Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014:580-581; Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:539; Kraus, 1989:515-517; Terrien, 2003:872-874). The main reason given to support this four-part division of the psalm is that every introductory verse that introduces a new stanza, serves as a

title to the upcoming stanza, and gives tell the reader what the theme of the stanza will be.[74]

A second tendency to structurally divide Psalm 139 is seen in Mowinckels' (1992:75) effort to divide the psalm into two main stanzas. The first stanza, consisting of vv. 1-18, focuses primarily on the omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence of YHWH in contrast to humanity's vanity and limited ability. The second stanza, consisting of vv. 19-24, is a distinct call on YHWH to overthrow the injustices of the psalmist's oppressors by way of YHWH's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence as emphasised in the first stanza.

A third approach to Psalm 139 is to handle it as a complete unit despite the mixed form in which it appears. The motivation for this methodology is that Psalm 139 is continuously addressed to YHWH and consequently adopts the form of a hymn that serves to exalt YHWH (Gunkel, 1926:587).

Holman (1971:299-300) makes the following critical remarks that must be taken into account when attempting to analyse and structurally divide Psalm 139:

- A strophic structure of Psalm 139 usually fails to pay attention to the transition between the stanzas. Failing to bring the great difference in meter and style between the different stanzas into consideration and failing to bridge the gap undermines the unity of the psalm.
- An argument can be made that there are two mainstream thoughts in Psalm 139: that of vv. 1-18 and that of vv. 19-24. However, there is no basis to deal with these two parts separately.
- Although it seems like the division between verses 18 and 19 is insurmountable, the unity of Psalm 139 is emphasised by the *inclusio* that

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[74] According to Terrien (2003:875) the introductory title/verse to each stanza is as follows:

Stanza I: God's perfect knowledge of man.

Stanza II: The psalmist's search for places to flee from God.

Stanza III: The wonderful creation of man.

Stanza IV: God's persistent search for man.

appears in verses 1 and 23. Therefore the psalm must be thoroughly searched for words, verses and strophes that delicately weave the psalm to a unique entity and therefore confirms the unity of the psalm.

Taking into account the above-mentioned possible structural divisions of Psalm 139, as well as a thorough consideration of Holman's critical remarks regarding a structural analytical division of Psalm 139, the present study of Psalm 139 presents the following structural analysis:

3.7.2 Structure analysis of Psalm 139 [75]

HEADING: For the supervisor. To David. A psalm.

STANZA I: YHWH knows man and is accustomed to man's ways.
> **STROPHE A:** YHWH knows man's every word and way.
> **STROPHE B:** YHWH protects man from all sides.

STANZA II: Man cannot flee from the presence of YHWH.
> **STROPHE C:** Everywhere man intends to flee, YHWH is still present.
> **STROPHE D:** Even in the darkness YHWH is present.

STANZA III: YHWH was present even before the birth of man, and will remain present throughout the days of man's life.
> **STROPHE E:** YHWH is present while man is still in the mother's womb.
> **STROPHE F:** No secret can be kept from YHWH.
> **STROPHE G:** YHWH's presence is too incomprehensible for human understanding.

STANZA IV: Man calls on YHWH to destroy all wickedness.
> **STROPHE H:** In spite of YHWH's piercing presence throughout creation, there remain wicked people who rebels against YHWH.

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[75] For a graphic exposition of the structural analysis, see Addendum B

STROPHE I: The adversaries of YHWH are also the adversaries of the psalmist.

STANZA V: The psalmist submission under the presence of YHWH.

STROPHE J: Be in me: Examine my heart!

STROPHE K: Be around me: Lead me!

3.7.3 Content analysis of Psalm 139

Stanza I: The opening words of the psalm focus the reader's attention on the fact that YHWH is intimately acquainted with every human being. This omniscience and knowledge of YHWH is demonstrated and emphasised by the repeated use of the word יָדַע (to know) in vv. 1b, 2a, 4b.

Strophe A: The verb חֹקר can be translated with 'to search' or 'to explore'. This word express YHWH's all-knowing knowledge of the individual's every deed and every word

Strophe B: The psalmist expresses amazement at YHWH's omnipresence and omniscience. It is too lofty for his/her comprehension.

Stanza II: The interrogative pronoun אָן (where?) fronts in a new outlook. The following questions put forth by the psalmist examine the greatest mystery of all times: Where can one flee to escape the presence of the Almighty God?

Strophe C: The words רוּחַ (spirit) and פָּנֶה (face) used in conjunction with YHWH is synonymous with the presence of YHWH. Four possible hiding places are proposed by the psalmist, each with the same outcome: YHWH is already there!

Strophe D: Even the שׁוּךְ (darkness) cannot hide the human being from the all-seeing eyes of YHWH, for even the לַיְלָה (night) becomes like the אוֹר (light) of day for the eyes of YHWH.

Stanza III: The purpose of this stanza is to personalise the knowledge of an omniscient, omnipresent God. The psalmist endeavours to accomplish this by making use of the image of man's creation and YHWH's involvement with man even before man become flesh.

Strophe E: The psalmist praises YHWH for his/her creation. The Hebrew phrase כִּי־אַתָּה קָנִיתָ כִלְיֹתָי can roughly be translated with (because you create my kidneys). Kidneys are synonymous with the secrets of the human being. כִּלְיָה (kidneys) en בֶּטֶן (womb) forms an interesting parallelism of anatomical foreknowledge. The psalmist hereby demonstrates that YHWH knows the human being to the finest scientific details.

Strophe F: The complexity of man's conception and fabrication is no secret to YHWH.

Strophe G: גֹּלֶם (embryo) is another word used by the psalmist to imply prior knowledge of the human being. The reference to the book of YHWH in which all the days of the psalmist has been written up, emphasises that YHWH is not only acquainted with the past and the present of the human being, but that YHWH also holds the knowledge to the future of the psalmist. The knowledge of YHWH is incomprehensible to the limited mind of the human being. The sum of YHWH's wonderful thoughts for man is compared to how uncountable grains of sand are. When the psalmist goes to bed and awakens the next morning, the thoughts of YHWH still accompanies him/her. The psalmist cannot escape the amount of wonderful thoughts YHWH towards him/her.

Stanza IV: This stanza is a turning point in Psalm 139. The psalmist, according to his/her realisation that YHWH is all-knowing, pleads with YHWH for protection against the perpetrators

Strophe H: The psalmist calls on YHWH to bring justice to the righteous. He/she then disassociates himself/herself with the so-called perpetrators by demanding them to leave him/her alone.

Strophe I: The psalmist's appeal to YHWH is interesting: He/she wishes to hate those who hate YHWH. Herewith the psalmist expresses his/her absolute confidence in YHWH's judgement because he/she is not seeking vengeance on his/her own enemies, but rather he/she seeks vengeance on the enemies of YHWH.

Stanza V: The psalmist presents himself/herself as the object of divine investigation. When the psalmist opens himself/herself up to YHWH to scrutinise him/her in order to find the evil that may still be in his/her heart, the psalmist expresses a desire to honour YHWH during this process.

Strophe J: The same word for 'search' (חקר) that is used in the first verse of Psalm 139 is also used here. Thus it serves as a confirmation of a trait attributed to YHWH by the psalmist. The psalmist's final plea is to be searched by YHWH for any contradictions with the will of YHWH in his heart and mind. It is indeed a courageous request from someone who acknowledges God's wrath against the wicked. Finally, it is the desire of the psalmist that YHWH leads him/her on the everlasting road - the road to eternal life.

Strophe K: Based on the allegiance the psalmist has to YHWH, he/she trusts that YHWH will lead him/her on the path of righteousness.

3.8   Poetic techniques

Psalm 139 is rich in poetic artistry. In this section the employed poetic techniques will be evaluated on the levels of sounds, patterns and semantics.

3.8.1 Sounds

Alliteration and assonance

Various instances of assonance and alliteration occur throughout the psalm. An example of assonance is seen in v. 1b through the repetition of the 'a'-sound: יְהֹוָה חֲקַרְתַּנִי וַתֵּדָע׃. Other examples of assonance include vv: 2a; 3a; 3b; 4a; 4b; 7b; 8a; 9a; 12b; 18b; 19a and 23b. An example of alliteration can be found in v. 3a with the repetition of the 'r'-sound: אָרְחִי וְרִבְעִי זֵרֵיתָ. Other examples of alliteration include vv: 11a; 12c; 13a and 15a. However, it is of no significant importance in the current study.

Rhyme

Internal rhyme occurs in verse 6b through the repetition of the '*a*'-sound (נִשְׂגְּבָה / לָהּ). The internal rhyme serves as a means of emphasising the exaltation of divine knowledge above the limited knowledge of man. In verses 16b and 16c end-rhyme can be found by the repetition of the '*oo*'-sound (יֻצָּרוּ / יִכָּתֵבוּ) at the end of each phrase. This end-rhyme serves to highlight the fact that all the days of the psalmist, even those that is yet to come, is already written down and fully known by YHWH. The *"em"*-sound at the end of verses 16d and 17b forms an inclusive rhyme that draws attention to the phrase framed by the two verses: 'And for me, how precious are your thoughts?'

Figura Etymologica

In verse 12a a *Figura Etymologica* of the root-form חֹשֶׁךְ is used. The first use of this root is חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness), while the second use of this root is יַחְשִׁיךְ (he becomes dark). This *Figura Etymologica* is employed to illustrate that not even darkness is mysterious to YHWH. YHWH's eyes can pierce through the darkest of nights.

3.8.2. Patterns

Repetition

One of the most prominent features of Psalm 139 is the repetition of the word יָדַע (to know) in verse 1b, 2a, 4b, 14c, 23a and 23b. McCann (1994:1235) identifies this root as the key to understanding the psalm, as it addresses YHWH's awareness of all creation. Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:582) adds that the wisdom of YHWH is clearly visible throughout vv. 1-18. The basis of YHWH's perfect knowledge forms part of the understanding of vv. 19-24, because YHWH has this pre-eminent knowledge of the psalmist and his/her circumstances, YHWH is also aware of the enemies of the psalmist.

Repetition also occurs in verses 11a, 12a and 12c with the recurrence of the root-form of the word חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness). The psalmist expresses a wish to be covered by darkness in order that YHWH will not find him/her. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:541) suggest that the repetition of the concept of 'darkness' points to creation theology in the light of Genesis 1:1-5. Darkness thus refers to chaotic disorder. What the psalmist therefore tries to convey is that YHWH is always present, even in the chaotic mess that the human being sometimes finds himself/herself trapped in.

Parallelism

Verse 2a is parallel to verse 2b. This is a synonymous parallelism for the reason that both lines refer to YHWH's knowledge of man. YHWH knows every movement of the psalmist (my sit down and my rise up), YHWH also is acquainted with every thought

of the psalmist (you discern my intention from afar). While Allen (2002:327) understands this parallelism as YHWH who is in charge of man's movement and mind, there is no indication that the verbs יָדַעְתָּ (you know) and בַּנְתָּה (you discern) implies that YHWH enforces man's movement and thoughts in any way.

Verses 7a and 7b form a synonymous parallelism. The psalmist asks whether it is possible to flee from YHWH. Briggs & Briggs (1969:493) suggest that the reference to the spirit and the face of God should be understood in the light of Isaiah 63:9-10. In Isaiah 63:9-10 the Spirit is identified with the invisible presence of YHWH during the Exodus events. This parallelism therefore emphasises not only the theophany of the presence of YHWH in all of creation, but also the invisibility of the presence of YHWH.

Verse 8a and 8b forms a parallelism that contrasts the omnipresence of YHWH. Vos (2005:197) makes an important observation that the parallel between heaven and mortality in these verses must be understood on a vertical axis as assumed in ancient Near Eastern cosmology. What the psalmist implies here is that even if he would climb up to heaven, where YHWH's throne is located, or if he goes down to the grave, which by implication is the furthest point removed from YHWH's throne, YHWH would still be present there. This image is also used in Amos 9:2.

On the other hand, the parallelism in verses 9a and 9b must be understood within the same framework, but on a horizontal axis. According to Prinsloo (1994:127) 'the wings of the dawn' must be understood as the East (the place where the sun rises for daybreak), while 'the ends of the sea' must be understood as the West (the place where the sun sets in the evening). Consequently, the psalmist again emphasises that he/she can travel either to the farthest ends of the East or to the farthest ends of the West and still be in the presence of YHWH.

In verses 12a, 12b and 12c a synonymous parallelism is found. In v. 12a גַּם־חֹשֶׁךְ לֹא־יַחְשִׁיךְ מִמֶּךָ (Also the darkness does not become dark for you) darkness is dismissed as not concealing enough to the eyes of YHWH. V. 12b (and the night shines like the day) illustrates to what extent the darkness is still luminous to YHWH.

Finally, v. 12c כַּחֲשֵׁיכָה כָּאוֹרָה (the darkness shines like the light) once again serves to draw attention to the fact that YHWH can see through the dark of night as if it was in broad daylight. All three verses contrast darkness with light. This parallelism thus serves to emphasise that even the darkness cannot cover up for YHWH that for man is ultimately concealed by the cover of darkness.

Chiasmus[76]

In verses 2a and 3a a chiasmus is formed between the psalmist's movement and being static. It emphasises YHWH's awareness of when the psalmist moves and when he/she is still and that YHWH is present in both instances.

(2a) You know my │sit down│ and my │rise up│

(3a) My │wandering│ and my │lying down│ you measure off
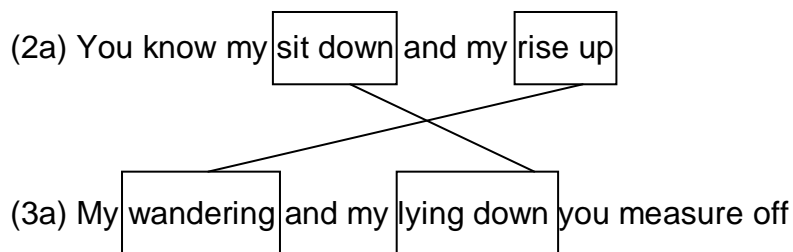
Verse 10a and 10b take on a chiastic structure.

(10a) also there │your hand│ she │guides me│

(10b) and she │grasps me│ your │right hand│
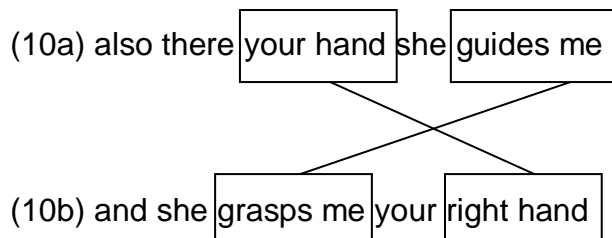
This chiasmus emphasises the extent of YHWH's omnipresence by colouring YHWH's hand as the instrument of guidance and protection in the life of the psalmist.

Another chiasmus is formed in verses 15a and 15b.

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[76] All chiasmus is derived from the Hebrew text. For practical purposes chiasmus are portrayed in the English language.

(15a) Not it was | hidden | | my bones | from you

(15b) when I | was made | in the | hiding place |
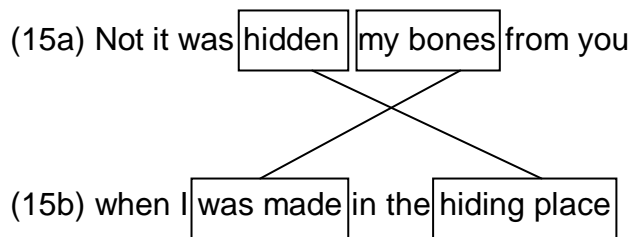
This chiasmus accentuates that not even the mystery of human formation before birth is a secret to YHWH. While the psalmist's bones were hidden from the eyes of humankind, while the body of the psalmist was still to be formed inside the womb of his/her mother, the psalmist was exposed to the all-seeing eyes of YHWH.

All of the above mentioned chiasmus serves to emphasise YHWH's active involvement in the life of the psalmist.

Enjambment

Enjambment or rather the unfinished syntactic composition, appears only in verse 14b. The phrase נִפְלָאִים מַעֲשֶׂיךָ (Wonderful are your works…) underscore the psalmist's inability to truly capture in words how wonderful the works of YHWH really are. The enjambment in verse 14b serves to highlight just how incomprehensible YHWH and YHWH's works really is.

3.8.3 Semantics

Inclusio

The most important semantic poetic technique in Psalm 139 is the *inclusion* that is formed in verses 1b and 23a by the repetition of the words חקר (to search) and יָדַע (to know) in both verses. This *inclusio* emphasises the theme of the psalm and binds the psalm, and what seem to be separate thought units, together as a coherent unit.

Merism

The use of merisms continually appears in Psalm 139. This poetic technique is used to refer to a larger whole by summarising the smaller parts of the larger entity.

Merisms are effectively employed in Psalm 139 to illuminate the underlying theme of the psalm, namely that YHWH is all-knowing, ever present and almighty.

In verse 2a a merism is formed between the words שִׁבְתִּי (my sit down) and וְקוּמִי (my rise up). This merism implies that YHWH is aware of everything that happens between every time the psalmist rises (in the morning) and settles in (at night). These temporal expressions used in verse 2 refers to the usual to and fro of the psalmist's day (Schaefer, 2001:327).

Similarly, the merism in verse 3a emphasises that YHWH has knowledge of every time the psalmist אָרְחִ (wanders) and every time the psalmist רבע (lie down). Once again it is implied that the YHWH knows what happens when the psalmist is at home and what the psalmist does when he/she goes about his/her day.

When the psalmist says in verse 5a that YHWH includes him/her from אָחוֹר (behind) and וָקֶדֶם (in front), it implies that YHWH completely surrounds the psalmist.

Another merism is formed in verse 8a and 8b when the psalmist says that YHWH will find him/her if the psalmist climb up to the שָׁמַיִם (heavens) or if the psalmist regress into שְׁאוֹל (sheol/underworld). This merism emphasises that there is not one place in the whole creation where YHWH will not find the psalmist. Likewise the merism in verses 9a and 9b שָׁחַר (wings of the dawn) and בְּאַחֲרִית (ends of the sea) as well as the merism in verse 11a and 11b חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness) and אוֹר (light) is, in accordance with verse 8a and 8b, simply a way to refer to the whole of creation.

Metaphor

The phrase כַּנְפֵי־שָׁחַר (wings of the dawn) is a metaphor for the break of day. With regard to the phrase 'wings of the morning' there are diverse opinions among scholars about its meaning. Scroggie (1978:48) believes that this phrase refers to the speed of light. Goldingay (2008:632) adopts this thinking by saying that even if

one hitches his/her chariot to the sun and travels with it (on its wings) it will not be fast enough to escape YHWH's presence. Eaton (1967:302) in turn regards this phrase as referring to the angel of the dawn. According to him the psalmist says that even if he/she can fly as fast as the angel of the dawn YHWH's right hand will still be faster and able to grab him/her. There are also exegetes who believe that this phrase alludes to mythological insights. Dahood (1970:298), Gunkel (1962:588) and Barnes (1976:293) assumes that the phrase refers to a mythological deity that spreads its wings to the heavens. Harmon (2007:782) together with Keel (1978:23) supports the notion that the phrase 'wings of the dawn' refers to a geographical place - the East. By using the phrase 'wings of the dawn' instead of just using the word 'East' describes the way the sun rises in the east.

Personification

In verse 11a חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness) is personified by awarding it the characteristic to שׁוּף (cover). There are divergent opinions about the translation of the word שׁוּף (cover) that is translated in the NIV with the phrase 'hide me'.[77] According to Kraus (1989:516) the concept of darkness that covers refers to the manipulation of magic.[78] Consistent with this understanding the psalmist says that even if he/she uses forces of power to cover him/her, he/she will not be able to get away from YHWH. Knight (1983:323) insists that the psalmist tries to demonstrate that YHWH is able to wield darkness and chaos to a positive end. In YHWH's hands darkness becomes a living tool to utilise the goodness in humanity.

Comparisons

In verse 12b and 12c the psalmist uses two comparisons to illustrate that even the darkness is not mysterious for YHWH. When the psalmist stress that for YHWH

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[77] The word שׁוּף only occurs on one other occasions in the Old Testament, namely in Genesis 3:15. Here it is translated with the word 'crush´ (Prinsloo, 1994:127).

[78] The manipulation of magical powers with reference to darkness that covers something or someone occurs in Genesis 19:11 and 1 Kings 6:18 (Kraus, 1989:516).

'…the night shines like the day…' and '…the darkness shines like the night…' what he/she is trying to convey is that YHWH's eyes to not overlook anything.

Hyperbole

In Psalm 139 there is also one hyperbole to be found in verse 18a. The psalmist says that YHWH's thoughts about him/her are as many as the sand. By stating this, the psalmist emphasises that YHWH's omniscience is above human understanding. So exalted are the thoughts of YHWH that no human being can even begin to count them.

3.9   *Genre* and *Sitz im Leben*

For Gunkel & Begrich (1998:15-16) psalms can only be classified under the same *genres*, provided that they meet the following conditions:

- The psalms must share a similar *Sitz im Leben* that is seated in the worship and religious practices of the people of God, whether it was used in public or in private worship.
- There must be clearly discernible shared thoughts, emotions and feelings in the psalms.
- The psalms must share the same style, structure and language.

The *genre* of Psalm 139 is a subject of major controversy in the study of the psalm.[79] The reason for the debate is twofold. First of all, Psalm 139 shows a mixed form and second, to date scholars has not been successful in determining the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139 because of a lack of definite historical references in the psalm itself. This makes it nearly impossible for Psalm 139 to be placed within the original context of its origins (Toy, 1884:80) and consequently to award a *genre* to the psalm.

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[79] Psalm 139 has respectively been classified as: a hymn; an individual complaint; a song of praise for the creation; a song of thanksgiving; a complaint by which innocence is expressed; a psalm of innocence by a religious leader; or a prayer of an innocently accused (Prinsloo, 1994:130).

Gunkel originally proposed the hymn-*genre* Gunkel & Begrich (1998:46). He motivated this *genre* classification by stating that the basic mood of a hymn was that of enthusiasm, admiration, reverence, praise and glorification - all characteristics of Psalm 139. A hymn is further coloured by an in-depth reflection on the relationship between the author and YHWH, as found in Psalm 139:1-18. However, Gunkel's classification of Psalm 139 seems to be based primarily on the contents of vv. 1-18, and thus neglects to take into contemplation vv.19-24 in the determination of the *genre*.

Although the hymnic undertones are unmistakable, Psalm 139 cannot be spoken of as a hymn in terms of style and the shape of the psalm (Kraus. 1989:512). Other attempts to classify Psalm 139's *genre* includes that of Geller (2002:116) who places extreme emphasis on the creative motif of the psalm; that of Mowinckel (1967:76) which emphasises the complaint of vv. 19-22; and that of Allen (2002:323) who believes that the poem is always directed at YHWH therefore indicating that it is the prayer of an individual.

There are those who believe that Psalm 139 demonstrates characteristics of wisdom literature. A relationship with the book of Job is pointed out (Vos, 2005:203). There are even those, such as Buttenwieser (1938:541-545) who believe that the author of Job is also responsible for the writing of Psalm 139. Terrien (1993:68) claims that although Psalm 139 and Job are unlikely to be products of the same author's pen, it is inevitable that Psalm 139 shows certain intellectual and spiritual connotations that can be traced back to certain wisdom circles.

The most common tendency is to accept Psalm 139 as exhibiting a mixed *genre*, where two different *genres* are assigned to two distinct parts of the psalm. In the case of Psalm 139 it is commonly noted that vv. 1-18 exhibits the traits of a hymn, while vv. 19-24 exhibits the traits of an individual lamentation, according to Vos (2005:203). Allen (2002:323) conversely emphasises that allocating two different *genres* to one psalm will result in one *genre* always being subordinated to the other. Because the *genre* is the starting point from which a psalm must be read and understood, the dominant *genre* impairs the reading of the portion of the text not classified hereunder.

Though Yet, Würthwein (1957:167) states that opinions about the *genre* of Psalm 139 were largely influenced by the work of Gunkel and his classification of psalms as religious songs sung either during the religious services of the people or during private worship sessions. This theory, however, is based on the assumption that there is some cultic reference in the psalms, while in plenty of the psalms there are no cultic references. For Würthwein (1957:167) Psalm 139 displays a very intimate and personal nature. On this basis he proposes that the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139 could be found in the heart of the psalm (which according to Würthwein is vv. 19-24) in which the psalmist begs YHWH to test him/her. Consequently, according to this approach, Psalm 139 is understood as a petition for the innocence of a wrongfully accused religious leader.

Westermann (1981:188) and Kraus (1989:512) build forth on this theory by explaining that the psalmist is (most probably falsely) accused of idolatry and that he/she must testify before a court and before YHWH that he/she is innocent. The protest in vs. 19-22 is the psalmist's attempt to convince YHWH to help him/her while vv. 1-18 simply lays the foundation for an argument of innocence appealing to YHWH as the One who ultimately knows the psalmist's every thought and move (Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014:582).

Black (2012:21) warns that any attempt to cast Psalm 139 into a pre-determined literary form (or *genre*) without sufficient evidence, is to project meaning into the text instead of allowing the reader to be moulded by the psalm and the writer's original purpose with the creation of the psalm. Tesh & Zorn (2004:477) rightly states that the challenge of placing Psalm 139 within a certain context (or *Sitz im Leben*) in order to determine the *genre* of the psalm is to figure out how vv. 19-24 fits in the greater context of vv. 1-18.

As far as the *genre* and the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139 are concerned, it is clear that we must, in the words of Terrien (2003:881), say that it should only be accepted that the literary *genre* of Psalm 139 is unique in the whole *Psalter* and there is no other psalm like Psalm 139.

3.10   Dating

Since the *Sitz im Leben* could not be determined with certainty there is no clarity about the date of composition of Psalm 139.

Based on the Aramaisms that appear in the psalm, Psalm 139 is often given a post-exilic date (Prinsloo, 1994:131). If the book of Job can be dated to the seventh century BCE, Psalm 139, according to Dahood (1970:285), will have a pre-exilic date. According to Vos (2005:206) there is nothing in the text of Psalm 139 itself that supports such an early date of composition.

According to the similarities between Psalm 139 and the prophecy of Jeremiah, Terrien (2003:880-881) states that the date of composition of Psalm 139 should be placed at about 609-587 BCE during the last days of the Kingdome of Judah, thus also a pre-exilic date. In this light the wicked of which the psalmist is speaking in vv. 19-22 will be regarded as the Babylonians and the Jews who opposed the preaching and prophecy of Jeremiah.

Consequently, a pre- and post-exilic date of composition of Psalm 139 is proposed. In light of the content of the psalm, both a pre-exilic and a post-exilic date makes sense, primarily because the content of the psalm reflects the apparent calm and trust in the omnipresence of YHWH amidst a threatening situation.

3.11   Synthesis

The primary focus of chapter 3 was to do a literary (synchronic) exegesis of Psalm 139 to determine what the textual features of the psalm are, as well as the relation between these characteristics are and what it endeavours to communicate to the reader.

The introductory phrase of Psalm 139 יְהוָה חֲקַרְתַּנִי וַתֵּדָע: (YHWH, you search me and you know me…) reveals the theme and content of the whole psalm, namely that YHWH is an omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent God who knows the being of

man without reservation. The important interchanging between the subjects (the psalmist and YHWH) emphasises the importance of the relationship between the author and YHWH. Throughout the psalm parallels and chiasmus are used in the form of merisms, accentuating the fact that YHWH is present throughout the whole of creation and that man cannot escape this miraculous omnipresence in any way possible.

Based on my own structural analysis, the psalm can respectively be divided into five stanzas and eleven strophes. This does not mean that each of these sections must be handled separately. Each stanza and strophe stands in relation to the preceding and following stanza and strophe. These building blocks from which Psalm 139 is composed are closely linked by the concept that YHWH is ever-present in all spaces and life situations.

The *genre* and *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm are unclear and consequently a date of composition cannot be awarded to Psalm 139. It is clear, however, that the psalm should be read and treated as a coherent unit. Thus, when assigning a *genre* to the psalm there should be steered clear of dividing the psalm by assigning different *genres* to different units in the psalm. To date scholars (with little exception) have been resolute that the unity of Psalm 139 should not be undermined. It remains clear that instead of forcing Psalm 139 into a predetermined mould, the uniqueness of Psalm 139 should be acknowledged for the reader to finally understand and appreciate the poem.

CHAPTER 4

REDACTIONAL FRAME OF PSALMS 138-140

4.1   Introduction

In chapter four an intertextual analysis of Psalm 139 will be carried out. To accomplish this it is necessary to explore the intratextual features of Psalm 138 and 140. The term 'intertextual' points to the relationships between Psalm 139 and other psalms in its immediate context. The intertextual analysis of the relationship between Psalm 139 and Psalm 138 as well as Psalm 140 will be conducted. An overview of the intertextual relationship between Psalm 139 and the other psalms of David (Pss. 138-145) will be given. The aim of this chapter is to reflect recent trends in Psalm studies, namely to focus on the relationship that exists between the psalms instead of reading and analysing a psalm in isolation. This trend displays a movement away from studying a poem individually at the hand of a proposed *Sitz im Leben* towards a sharpened focus on the composition of the *Psalter* as a whole.[80]

In this chapter an intertextual perspective or literary analysis of Psalm 138, 139 and 140 will be executed. This study endeavours to shed light on the interconnectedness of textual features of Psalms 138-140 on a literary level. Similarities as well as differences between Psalms 138-140 will be examined and highlighted in order to ask the question how does Psalm 139 enter into conversation with its surrounding texts.

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[80] Wilson (1985:193-197) was one of the first to assert that each of the *Psalter*'s five books, especially the so-called seams between these five books, are informative to the shaping of the *Psalter* as a coherent unit that tells the story of the people of God. This story, as set out by the *Psalter*, is: the rise of the davidic kingdom (Book I and II); the annihilation of the Southern Kingdom by means of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (Book III); the Babylonian exile (Book IV); the return to the land and the re-establishment of the YHWH-worship (Book V).

4.2 Psalm 138

4.2.1 Translation

The following is a free translation of the Hebrew text of Psalm 138 that will be used as reference for the rest of this dissertation:

Stanza	Strophe	Hebrew text: Psalm 138	Verse	Free translation: Psalm 138
HEADING		לְדָוִד ׀[81]	1a	For David.
I	A	אוֹדְךָ בְכָל־לִבִּי	b	I praise you in all my heart;[82]
		נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים אֲזַמְּרֶךָּ׃	c	In front of gods I will make music to you.
		אֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶל־הֵיכַל קָדְשְׁךָ וְאוֹדֶה אֶת־שְׁמֶךָ עַל־חַסְדְּךָ	2a	I will bow down towards your holy temple and I will praise your name because of your goodness;
		וְעַל־אֲמִתֶּךָ	b	and because of your faithfulness;[83]
		כִּי־הִגְדַּלְתָּ עַל־כָּל־שִׁמְךָ אִמְרָתֶךָ׃	c	for the utterance of your name are exalted above all.
		בְּיוֹם קָרָאתִי וַתַּעֲנֵנִי	3a	In the day I call and you

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[81] Psalm 138 introduces a new and individual unit within Book V of the *Psalter* (Pss. 138-145). The introduction to Psalm 138 לְדָוִד 'for David' introduces the final davidic collection in the *Psalter*. Other davidic collections in the *Psalter* include Pss. 3-41, 51-76 and 108-110.

[82] The vocative "o Lord!" which is usually added to the phrase 'I praise you with all my heart' which in turn results in the general phrasing as seen in the NIV 'I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart' is not present in the Masoretic text. It is only in the 11QPs[a] that this vocative is seen (Anderson, 1992:901). Other ancient versions of the text (e.g. the LXX) add the proper name יְהוָה (JHWH) to shed light on who the beneficiary of the praise must be (James, 2017:120).

[83] Briggs & Briggs (1969:488) implies that the synonymous couplet '…I will praise your name because of your goodness…' and '…because of your faithfulness…' has been reduced in poetic value to a mere prosaic sentence by a prosaic scribe by which the couplet has lost its effectiveness.

				answered me;
		תַּרְהִבֵנִי בְנַפְשִׁי עֹז׃	b	you alarmed me with strength in my soul.
II	B	יוֹדוּךָ יְהוָה כָּל־מַלְכֵי־אָרֶץ	4a	They praised you, YHWH, all the kings of the earth;[84]
		כִּי שָׁמְעוּ אִמְרֵי־פִיךָ׃	b	because they hear words of your mouth.
		וְיָשִׁירוּ בְּדַרְכֵי יְהוָה	5a	and they sing of the ways of YHWH;
		כִּי גָדוֹל כְּבוֹד יְהוָה׃	b	because great is the glory of YHWH.
		כִּי־רָם יְהוָה וְשָׁפָל יִרְאֶה	6a	Because YHWH is exalted and the lowly he see;
		וְגָבֹהַּ מִמֶּרְחָק יְיֵדָע׃	b	and the haughty from a distance he knows.[85]
III	C	ם־אֵלֵךְ ׀ בְּקֶרֶב צָרָה תְּחַיֵּנִי	7a	If I walked in the midst of distress you preserved me;
		עַל אַף אֹיְבַי תִּשְׁלַח יָדֶךָ	b	because of the anger of my enemies you send your hand;
		וְתוֹשִׁיעֵנִי יְמִינֶךָ׃	c	and you helped me with your right hand.

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[84] Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:526-527) implies that the omission an address to God in the first three verses of Psalm 138 was done intentionally. When referring to grace bestowed upon the individual, no direct reference is made to YHWH except by means of pronominal suffix 3 m. s. 'he' and by means of the word שְׁמֶךָ (your name). It is only in verse 4 that the psalmist places the name of YHWH on the lips of earthly kings who are called upon to recognise and acknowledge the provision and tirelessness of the God of Israel.

[85] Verse 6 can also be translated as follows: 'For high is YHWH but he sees the lowly and exalted - yet he perceives from afar'. A reason offered for this translation is that the Masoretes places the revia (masoretic syntactical marker) after וְגָבֹהַּ (and high). The revia thus divides 6b into two correlating and synonymous *stichoi*. Another rationale put forward to explain this translation is that Psalm 138:6 closely relates to Psalm 113:4-6 which refers to YHWH's exaltedness and simultaneously points toward YHWH's omnipresence according to Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:527).

		יְהוָה֙ יִגְמֹ֣ר בַּעֲדִ֔י	8a	YHWH he will complete on behalf of me;
		יְהוָ֗ה חַסְדְּךָ֥[86] לְעוֹלָ֑ם	b	YHWH your goodness is for eternity;
		מַעֲשֵׂ֖י יָדֶ֣יךָ אַל־תֶּֽרֶף׃	c	the works of your hands you will not abandon.

4.2.2 Morphological analysis

The following prominent features are present in Psalm 138:
A distinction is made between three role-players in Psalm 138 according to person, gender and number of verbs used together with the pronominal suffixes employed throughout the psalm:

- I/me (the psalmist)
- YHWH
- My enemies (those opposing the psalmist and/or YHWH)

i.   I/me (the psalmist)

Throughout Psalm 138 the psalmist is identified and referred to on eight distinct instances by the use of the pronominal suffix 1st person singular "my" in phrases such as '…I praise you in all my heart…' and '…I call and you answered me…'

In the first stanza the imperfect 1st person singular is used to describe the psalmist's dependence on YHWH. By the use of the imperfect 1st person singular verb it is underscored how reliant the psalmist is on YHWH's provision and protection.

The final stanza closes with the psalmist once again affirming in the imperfect 1st person singular that even when he/she finds him-/herself amidst his/her enemies,

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[86] Psalm 138 is framed by the use of the word חַסְדְּךָ 'your goodness'. The inclusion formed by pointing out the nature of YHWH also forms the theme of the psalm.

YHWH will keep watch over him/her: '…if I walked in the midst of distress, you preserve me…'

ii.   YHWH

The only proper noun used to refer to the Lord in Psalm 138 is YHWH. This respectively occurs six times in vv. 4, 5, 6 and 8.

In stanza I (vv.1-3) and stanza III (vv. 7-8) the perfect as well as the imperfect 2nd person male singular refers to the actions of YHWH for a total of seven times. In stanza II (vv. 4-6) as well as once the third stanza there is referred to YHWH in the 3rd person male singular: יִרְאֶה 'he sees'; יֵידָע 'he knows' and יִגְמֹר 'he will complete'.

In the rest of the psalm the pronominal suffix 2nd person male singular are employed a total of fourteen times to refer to YHWH as the object of the psalmist's praise and admiration.

iii.   My enemies (those opposing the psalmist and/or YHWH)

The reference to the enemies of the psalmist occur only in stanza III where it is directly referred to them as אֹיְבַי 'my enemies'. In verse 6, however, the psalmist refers to the וְגָבֹהַּ 'the haughty' as if he/she is opposed to them in a protagonist/antagonist capacity. It can be inferred that 'the haughty' is not only the enemies of the psalmist, but of YHWH as well, for even the kings of the earth praise and exalt YHWH, but the proud is only observed and known from a distance. This implies that the haughty fails in joining in the exaltation and adoration of YHWH, thus undermining the Lordship of YHWH and by that means opposing them to YHWH.

Thematic repetition of words

In Psalm 138 the psalmist (or the "I") talks to an anonymous "you". It is only in verse 4 that the "you" is identified as YHWH. In Psalm 138 there exists a well established "I-you" relationship between the petitioner and YHWH.[87]

The root יָדָה 'praise' appears in vv. 1, 2 and 4 emphasising that the worship and praise of YHWH forms the primary theme of Psalm 138. It is important to note that the word חַסְדְּךָ (Noun cst. m. s. חֶסֶד 'goodness' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your goodness') are found in both vv. 2 and 8. The goodness of YHWH forms the *inclusio* in which the praise of the psalmist is based. The two words חֶסֶד 'goodness' and יָדָה 'praise' forms the cause and effect of Psalm 138 - because of the goodness of YHWH the psalmist cannot help but praise YHWH.

Further it should be noted that the closing unit, vv. 7-8, echoes the distress experienced by the psalmist in v. 3. In vv. 7-8 it is emphasised that YHWH provides protection in the psalmist's hour of need (Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014:577). This forms an *inclusio* within an *inclusio* and serves to underscore YHWH's unrestricted and unconditioned fortification of the psalmist when he is under siege by the wicked.

4.2.3 Syntactical analysis

A masoretic syntactical analysis of Psalm 138:1-8. In Psalm 138 the primary dividing disjunctives are: the *Sillûq,* the *'Atnāḥ* and the *'Ôlê wᵉyôrēd*.

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[87] Buttenwieser (1938:687) insists that the "I" who addresses the "you" (YHWH) in Psalm 138 is a collective "I". This implies that the psalmist is simply the mouthpiece of the collective people of God who voices an entire nations' sentiment. The reason put forward to support this notion is the fact that stanza II implies that all the kings of the earth would hear of this great happening and give praise to THWH. It is argued that only a major event in the life of the entire nation would be worth noticing by the kings of the earth. Consequently it is not an individual "I" talking in Psalm 138, but rather a collective "I", i.e. the nation of God.

A masoretic syntactical analysis of Psalm 138:1-8

Dividing disjunctives		Cola	Line	Vs.	Translation
Dem.	Acc.				
Atn(1)	AzLeg	לְדָוִד ׀ אוֹדְךָ֥ בְכָל־לִבִּ֑י	1a	1	For David. I praise you in all my heart.
Sil(0)	--	נֶ֖גֶד אֱלֹהִ֣ים אֲזַמְּרֶֽךָּ׃	b		In front of gods I will make music to you.
OleW (1)	Zar	אֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶ֨ה אֶל־הֵיכַ֪ל קָדְשְׁךָ֡ וְאוֹדֶ֤ה אֶת־שְׁמֶ֗ךָ עַל־חַסְדְּךָ֥	2a	2	I will bow down towards your holy temple and I will praise your name because of your goodness;
Atn(1)	--	וְעַל־אֲמִתֶּ֑ךָ	b		and because of your faithfulness;
Sil(0)	RebM	כִּֽי־הִגְדַּ֥לְתָּ עַל־כָּל־שִׁמְךָ֗ אִמְרָתֶֽךָ׃	c		for the utterance of your name are exalted above all.
Atn(1)	Tip	בְּי֣וֹם קָרָ֭אתִי וַֽתַּעֲנֵ֑נִי	3a	3	In the day I call and you answered me;
Sil(0)	Tip	תַּרְהִבֵ֖נִי בְנַפְשִׁ֣י עֹֽז׃	b		you alarmed me with strength in my soul.
Atn(1)	Tip	יוֹד֣וּךָ יְ֭הוָה כָּל־מַלְכֵי־אָ֑רֶץ	4a	4	They praised you, YHWH, all the kings of the earth;
Sil(0)	RebM	כִּ֥י שָׁ֝מְע֗וּ אִמְרֵי־פִֽיךָ׃	b		because they hear words of your mouth.
Atn(1)	Tip	וְ֭יָשִׁירוּ בְּדַרְכֵ֣י יְהוָ֑ה	5a	5	and they sing of the ways of YHWH;
Sil(0)	RebM	כִּ֥י גָ֝ד֗וֹל כְּב֣וֹד יְהוָֽה׃	b		because great is the glory of YHWH.
Atn(1)	Tip	כִּי־רָ֣ם יְ֭הוָה וְשָׁפָ֣ל יִרְאֶ֑ה	6a	6	Because YHWH is

				exalted and the lowly he see;
Sil(0)	RebM	וְגָבֹ֗הַּ מִמֶּרְחָ֥ק יְיֵדָֽע׃	b	and the haughty from a distance he knows.
OleW (1)	RebQ	אִם־אֵלֵ֨ךְ ׀ בְּקֶ֥רֶב צָרָ֗ה תְּחַיֵּ֥נִי	7a	If I walked in the midst of distress you preserved me;
Atn(1)	Tip	עַ֤ל אַ֣ף אֹ֭יְבַי תִּשְׁלַ֣ח יָדֶ֑ךָ	b 7	because of the anger of my enemies you send your hand;
Sil(0)	Tip	וְתֹושִׁיעֵ֥נִי יְמִינֶֽךָ׃	c	and you helped me with your right hand.
OleW (1)	Zar	יְהוָה֮ יִגְמֹ֪ר בַּ֫עֲדִ֥י	8a	YHWH he will complete on behalf of me;
Atn(1)		יְ֭הוָה חַסְדְּךָ֣ לְעֹולָ֑ם	b 8	YHWH your goodness is for eternity;
Sil(0)	Tip	מַעֲשֵׂ֖י יָדֶ֣יךָ אַל־תֶּֽרֶף׃	c	the works of your hands you will not abandon.

4.2.4 Structural analysis

The division of Psalm 138 into three stanzas, each with six to seven lines respectively, is widely recognized. [88] Psalm 138 can be structurally divided as follows (see Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:528):

HEADING: Superscription - For David (v.1)

STANZA I: Self-proclaimed dedication to praise YHWH (vv. 1b-3)
> **STROPHE A:** Repetitive dedication to praise YHWH supplied with reasons explaining YHWH's worthiness of this praise. (vv. 1b-2)

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[88] For an in-depth exposition of the three-part division of Psalm 138 see Allen 2002:310-311; Anderson, 1992:901-904; Weber, 2003:339 and William, 1989:477-480.

STROPHE B: Relation of salvation (v. 3)

STANZA II: YHWH is praised by the kings of the earth (vv. 4-6)
    STROPHE C: A call to the universal acknowledgment of YHWH's glory (v. 4)
    STROPHE D: YHWH intimately knows mankind (vv. 5-6)

STANZA III: A affirmation of trust in YHWH (vv.7-8) [89]
    STROPHE E: YHWH guards the psalmist against enemies (v. 7)
    STROPHE F: Petition to YHWH for fortification

Stanza II, the praise of YHWH by the whole earth, stands at the centre of Psalm 138. The second stanza is framed, first, by an individual song of thanksgiving (stanza I) that looks back at the provision of YHWH in the past and, second, by a plea for the provision of YHWH (stanza III) in the unseen future.

DeClaissé-Walford *et al* (2014:958) lays out the three-fold stanza division as demonstrative of the following overarching themes:

STANZA I: In the presence of gods (vv. 1-3)
STANZA II: In the presence of the kings of the earth (vv. 4-6)
STANZA III: In the presence of enemies (vv. 7-8)

This stanza division places emphasis on the praise that YHWH is due. YHWH is worthy to be praised in the presence of gods, the kings of the earth as well as in the presence of the psalmist's enemies.

In both the above mentioned structural analysis it is observed that the praise of YHWH forms the unremitting theme running through Psalm 138.

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[89] In spite of the widely accepted three-part division of Psalm 138, Terrien (2003:868) proposes an alternative structural divide to the psalm, with the difference applicable to the final stanza: strophe I (vv. 1b-2); strophe II (vv. 3-5); strophe III (vv.6-7) and an *envoi* (v. 8).

4.2.5 Poetic analysis

In this section some of the poetic techniques used in Psalm 138 are discussed:

According to Allen (2003:310) the following meter can be discerned in Psalm 138: 3+3, 3+2+2, 2+2, 3+3, 4+3, 3+3, 4+3, 3+3, 2+2, and 3+3+3. This meter is irregular by nature (Terrien, 2003:869). It is noteworthy that an inclusion is formed between verse 2a and 8b by the repetition of the word חַסְדְּךָ 'your goodness' (Buttenwieser, 1938:687). As a consequence, the goodness of YHWH provides the framework within which the rest of the psalm is positioned. Psalm 138 takes on a chiastic structure ABA as can be seen by the repetitive focus on the goodness of YHWH in the first and third stanzas (Weber, 2003:339).

It is striking that the most extensive use of poetic devices can be found in Stanza II, more so than in the first and the third stanza, placing emphasise on the contents of the central stanza. In Stanza II the repetition of the proper name יְהֹוָה 'YHWH' in vv. 4a, 5a, 5b and 6a serves as an indicator to the object to which the subject matter of the stanza is addressed. YHWH is the focus of the praise of the psalmist. Yet another important repetition to take note of in Stanza II is the repetition of the conjunction כִּי 'because' in vv. 4b, 5b and 6a. This conjunction binds the three verses that constitute the second and central stanza of Psalm 138 to a coherent unit. Furthermore the conjunction כִּי 'because' is explanatory in nature and therefore serves as an exposition to why YHWH deserves to be praised.

Verse 6a is parallel to verse 6b. This parallelism contrasts YHWH's position towards two divergent groups of people. In spite of YHWH's supremacy YHWH is familiar with the ways of the 'lowly' and the 'haughty'. The word רָאָה 'see' suggests a more intimate familiarity between YHWH and the שָׁפָל 'lowly'. The NIV proceed to translate v. 6a as follows: "*Though the Lord is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly…*" Anderson (1992:903) suggest the following translation of the text: 'The Lord is high, he regards the lowly; the haughty he knows from afar.' Both translations suggest a personal acquaintance between YHWH and the 'lowly' (or humble, poor, deprived,

modest). In dissimilarity to this intimate relationship YHWH has with the 'lowly', YHWH's familiarity with the 'haughty' is contrasted. The גָּבֹהַּ 'haughty' (or proud, arrogant, conceited, superior) is only noticed by YHWH 'from a distance'/'from afar'.[90] This sentence construction suggests a far less personal relation between YHWH and the proud. Goldingay (2008:620) interprets v. 6 as YHWH being exalted but still choosing to dwell with the humble in spirit. The kings of the earth, the most revered people on earth, are urged by the words of the psalmist, to humble themselves in order to be intimately acquainted with YHWH instead of being proud and simply acknowledged by YHWH.

A merism is formed in v. 6a and 6b. Both the terms וְשָׁפָל 'the lowly' and וְגָבֹהַּ 'the haughty' are poetically employed by the psalmist to summarize the full extent of human existence. Not the 'lowly' nor the 'haughty' nor any human being that falls in between these extremes are hidden from the omnipresence of YHWH.

From the few poetic techniques discussed in this section it becomes apparent that Psalm 138 centres on the theme of YHWH's praise throughout all spheres of the human existence.

4.2.6 *Genre* and *Sitz im Leben*

The *genre* most commonly ascribed to Psalm 138, as postulated by Gunkel (1967:17) is that of an individual thank offering song or more commonly named: an individual song of thanksgiving.

According to Gunkel (1969:17-18) the introduction to an individual thank offering song will be a person, most probably saved from distress or illness, turning and/or bowing towards the temple before making an offering. The body of such a individual thank offering song will most likely contain a description of the psalmist's recent trials and the subsequent consequences in the following order: the cause of the

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[90] In Isaiah 2:12-15 both the terms 'high' and 'lofty' (or 'haughty') are used to describe pride or arrogance that needs to be put down (Goldingay, 2008:620).

complainant's distress; a distinct call on YHWH to come to his/her aid and finally YHWH's reaction (or rather saving action) in answer to the complainant's prayers.

Allen (2002:312) asserts that Psalm 138 displays a lot of the characteristics of this *genre*. In vv. 1-2 the psalmist proceeds to give a clear declaration on his/her intention to praise YHWH. V. 3 continues to give a summary of YHWH's deliverance. The following vv. 4-6 urges the kings of the earth to join in the thanksgiving of the psalmist singing YHWH's praise. In vv. 7-8 the psalmist once again affirms confidence in YHWH's continual aid and deliverance. Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:578) continues by stipulating that giving thanks, singing praise and bowing in worship are all characteristic verbs used in thanksgiving psalms. Accordingly Psalm 138 also exhibits these verbs in the opening verses of the psalm.

Mowinckel (1992:29) describes the *genre* of Psalm 138 as a royal psalm of thanksgiving, implying that the psalmist is a king. Consequently the *Sitz im Leben* postulated for Psalm 138 is that of a king that was saved from his enemies who nearly vanquished him. The king's victory, which placed him in a strong position among other nations and kings, gives him the platform to openly give thanks to YHWH and summon those who opposed him (other gods, kings of the earth and his enemies) to acknowledge YHWH's goodness and join in his praise.[91]

Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:528) argues against this *genre* description claiming that it is not entirely fitting to brand Psalm 138 as an individual song of thanksgiving. This standpoint is motivated by stating that of the three typical elements of the *genre*, namely: a call on the self to praise YHWH, a description of the rescue that took place and a call on the rest of the congregation to join in the praise, only the first and the third elements are discernible in the psalm. There is thus no clear indication on the account of the salvation that took place. The petition in vv. 7-8 takes on the framework of a prayer and/or petition on the part of the psalmist. Therefore Hossfeld & Zenger chose for Psalm 138 to be classified as a mixed *genre* constituting a prayer of thanksgiving accompanied by a confession. Brown (2010:54) however states that within the thanksgiving psalm human fragility, trails and tribulation are

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[91] Mowinckel (1992:29) relates Psalm 138 to the basic thought process and framework as that of Psalm 18.

vividly acknowledged. The psalmist's remembrance in vv.7-8 of the distress he/she faced in the midst of the anger of enemies should not be viewed as a separate characteristic of a different *genre*, but should be read and viewed in the light of the psalmist's narrow escape from danger and thus as part of his/her thanksgiving to YHWH who rescued him/her. Brueggemann (1988:96-97) adds that even though it is not clear to the reader what the psalmist was delivered from, from the content of v.7 it is clear that the speaker knew the what, when and the where of his/her deliverance.

DeClaissé-Walford *et al* (2014:958) classifies Psalm 138 as an individual hymn of thanksgiving, implying that certain hymnic elements are clearly discernible in the psalm. DeClaissé-Walford (2004:21-22) describes an individual hymn of thanksgiving as a song addressed to YHWH, similar to that of a communal hymn. The difference between these two *genres* is the fact that in an individual hymn of thanksgiving only one voice is present singing the praise of YHWH for deliverance from a life-threatening situation. A simple guide to distinguish these psalms in the Psalter is provided: first there is an introduction in which the psalmist pronounces intent to give praise to YHWH (vv. 1, 2, 4, 5); this is followed by a narrative in which the psalmist explains what prompted this praise (v. 3) and finally a conclusion ensues in which the psalmist actively proceeds to praise YHWH (vv.2b, 4b, 5b, 6-8).

An important observation made by Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:531-532) should be noted. Psalm 138 serves as a succession to Pss. 135-137. The introduction of Psalm 138 echoes the content of Pss. 135-137. There are some noteworthy differences that can be observed between the contents of Pss. 135-137 and Ps.138. However, the most significant difference between Ps. 137 and Ps. 138 that unlocks a greater understanding of the reason for the composition of Ps. 138 can be found in the differing use of the word שׁיר 'sing' in Ps. 137:4-5 and Ps. 138:5. In Ps. 137:4-5 the exiles are forced to sing a song for their captors (the enemies of Israel), while in Ps. 138:5 the roles are reversed and now the enemies must join in singing the praise of YHWH. Thus Psalm 138 is, what Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:532) believe to be, a "*responsory counterpoint*" to the foregoing composition. Psalm 138 concludes what is left incomplete in Psalm 135-137.

An individual song/hymn of thanksgiving seems to be the appropriate *genre*-identification for Psalm 138 that clearly states gratitude towards YHWH and calls on others to join in this thankfulness. However the *Sitz im Leben* seems to be unclear, it is safe to postulate that the psalm was born out of an ordeal overcome by the psalmist with the help of YHWH.

4.2.7 Dating and authorship

The date of the composition of Psalm 138 remains uncertain. There are no clear indicators as to what the time of composition may be. Terrien (2003:871) suggests that the psalmist's mention of the temple is no indicator towards a time period for it could either suggest Solomon's temple or it could point towards the second sanctuary that was build in Persian times, thus making the date of composition as wide as a pre-exilic or a post-exilic date.

Phillips (1988:583-584) takes the superscription לְדָוִד 'For (to) David' to imply a literal davidic authorship and suggests that David envisioned YHWH in a heavenly, not an earthly, sanctuary. Weiser (1962:798) insists that the psalmist is not a king that narrowly escaped the attacks of his enemies as suggested by Mowinckel (1992:29). This cannot be inferred from the content of the psalm. Weiser suggests that v. 6 points toward the fact that the psalmist was only a regular member of the cult community for he/she associates with the 'lowly' rather than with the 'haughty'.

For a lack of establishing an author coupled with a concrete *Sitz im Leben* to identify a date of composition proves unavailing.

4.2.8 Content analysis

In this section a broader understanding of Psalm 138 is provided for the purpose of evaluating its relationship to Psalm 139 in detail and content.

The Superscription of Psalm 138 (לְדָוִד - For David) is cryptic and is the first of eight psalms (Pss. 138-145) in Book V of the Psalter that is accredited, in their superscription, to David.

Stanza I: The opening words of the psalm focuses the reader's attention on the purpose of the composition of the psalm, namely to ידה 'praise' YHWH. The psalmist adds the phrase בְכָל־לִבִּי 'with all my heart' emphasizing an obedience to the commandment in Deuteronomy 6:5 to love God with one's whole being (Mays, 1999:424).[92]

> **Strophe A:** A unique phenomenon presents itself in v. 1b when the psalmist chose the place of praise to be נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים 'in front of gods'.[93] In front of the gods of all the other nations the psalmist turns toward the gates of the sanctuary and with pervasive awareness of the all-encompassing presence of YHWH (even before the gods of other nations) the psalmist prostrates him-/ herself אֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶה 'I will bow down'. In the process of submitting to the presence of YHWH the psalmist composes a hymn to praise the name of YHWH וְאוֹדֶה אֶת־שְׁמֶךָ 'and I will praise your name'. This praise sprouts from the חֶסֶד 'goodness' and the אֱמֶת 'faithfulness' that YHWH has revealed to the psalmist (Terrien, 2003:869).

> **Strophe B:** Having stated the intention to praise YHWH, the psalmist provides a motive for his/her praise of YHWH by stating that YHWH עָנָה 'answered' his/her call and provided the psalmist with עֹז 'strength' in a time that he/she needed it most.

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[92] Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:528) suggest that the closest parallel to these words of the psalmist, in the whole of the Psalter is that of Psalm 9:2a.

[93] According to Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:528) on the basis of Psalms 82:1; 86:8 and 96:4) this reference implies the gods of the other nations.

Stanza II: In the first stanza the one to whom the praise belonged was not named. The following stanza clarifies this question and leaves no doubt with the reader that the praise of the psalmist is addressed to the one and only יהוה 'YHWH'.

Strophe C: The psalmist moves the focus away from אֱלֹהִים 'gods' to אֶרֶץ־ כָּל־מַלְכֵי 'all the kings of the earth'. The praise and witness of the psalmist for the deliverance of YHWH is now directed, not only at the gods of the other nations, but also to the rulers and subjects of these gods (Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014:579).

Strophe D: YHWH's all-encompassing כבוד 'glory' deserves all-encompassing praise throughout creation. The psalmist calls on the universal acknowledgement of YHWH's דֶרֶךְ 'ways' of goodness and faithfulness. Allen (2002:315) suggests that v. 6 outlines the divine transcendence of YHWH. YHWH is superior and thus רָם 'he is exalted'. However YHWH's transcendence and immanence does not hinder YHWH from being intimately acquainted with mankind דֶרֶךְ 'seeing' the humble and יִדַע 'knowing' the proud.

Stanza III: The psalmist closes his praise of YHWH with an affirmation of trust in YHWH coupled with a prayer for fortification for future voyages.

Strophe E: The crisis is averted. The psalmist no longer faces the danger from which YHWH saved him/her. In the evidence of YHWH's provisions in the past the psalmist can now confidently הָלַךְ 'walk' through any distressing situation with the knowledge that YHWH's יד 'hand' or יָמִין 'right hand' will continue to guide and protect him/her. According to Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:579) the divine hand/right hand is an assurance of rescue from trouble. Those hostile to the psalmist, his/her איב 'enemies' cannot stand against the mighty hand of YHWH.

Strophe F: The conclusive words of the psalmist insists that danger persists to threaten him/her. YHWH, however, does not abandon the מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ 'works of your hands'. Although the trouble persists, the psalmist cherishes the thought that YHWH's assistance will also persist. YHWH's goodness is לְעוֹלָם 'eternal' and unending. On the basis of YHWH's never-ending goodness, the psalmist petitions to YHWH for fortification

4.3   Psalm 140

4.3.1   Translation

The following is a free translation of the Hebrew text of Psalm 140 that will be used as a reference for the rest of this dissertation:

Stanza	Strophe	Hebrew text: Psalm 140	Verse	Free translation: Psalm 140
HEADING		לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד׃	1a	For the supervisor. A psalm for David.
I	A	חַלְּצֵנִי יְהוָה מֵאָדָם[94] רָע	2a	Save me, YHWH, from bad man;[95]
		מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תִּנְצְרֵנִי׃	b	from man of violence, you guard me.
		אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ רָעוֹת בְּלֵב	3a	Those who think evil in their heart;[96]

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[94] In the Hebrew text, two words are alternately used to refer to 'man' - אָדָם and אִישׁ. Terrien (2003:883) suggest that these words are used in the collective because the following verbs thereafter are all in the plural. Another possibility is that the psalmist faces two differing types of adversaries.

[95] The cry of the psalmist to be saved from bad or evil men (vv. 2a and 5a) identifies the theme of the psalm and the general situation the psalmist finds him-/herself in (Mays, 1999:430).

[96] The psalmist refers to seven body parts in Psalm 140: לֵב 'heart' (v. 3); לָשׁוֹן 'tongue' (v. 4); שָׂפָה 'lip' (v. 4); יד 'hand' (v. 5); פַּעַם 'foot' (v. 5); רֹאשׁ 'head' (v. 8); פָּנֶה 'face' (v. 14).

		כָּל־יֹום יָגוּרוּ מִלְחָמֹות׃	b	all of the day they stir up war.
		שָׁנֲנוּ לְשֹׁונָם כְּמֹו־נָחָשׁ	4a	They sharpen their tongue like a snake;[97]
		חֲמַת עַכְשׁוּב	b	the poison of a viper
		תַּחַת שְׂפָתֵימֹו סֶלָה׃	c	is under their lips. Selah![98]
	B	שָׁמְרֵנִי יְהוָה׀ מִידֵי רָשָׁע	5a	Keep me, YHWH, from the hands of the wicked;
		מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תִּנְצְרֵנִי	b	from man of violence you guard me,
		אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ לִדְחֹות פְּעָמָי׃	c	from those who think to push my feet.
		טָמְנוּ־גֵאִים׀ פַּח לִי וַחֲבָלִים	6a	They hide, the haughty, a trap for me and cords;
		פָּרְשׂוּ רֶשֶׁת לְיַד־מַעְגָּל	b	they spread out a net to the side of the path;
		מֹקְשִׁים שָׁתוּ־לִי סֶלָה׃	c	traps they lay for me. Selah!
II	C	אָמַרְתִּי לַיהוָה אֵלִי אָתָּה	7a	I say to YHWH: 'My God, you
		הַאֲזִינָה יְהוָה קֹול תַּחֲנוּנָי׃	b	you must listen YHWH, to the

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[97] The violence directed towards the psalmist is verbal in nature for it is likened to the tongue and poison of a viper (v. 4) and the psalmist pleads for the 'men of the tongue' not to be established on earth (v. 12). The comparison drawn between the attack of the psalmist's enemies to the actions of that of wild animals points towards the extreme terror and crisis in which the psalmist unwillingly finds him-/herself (Terrien, 2003:884).

[98] The word סֶלָה 'Selah!' remains uninterpreted in the Psalter. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:549) propose that it is probably to be understood in a technical musical sense. In Book V of the Psalter the word appears only four times (Ps. 104:4, 5, 6 and Ps.143:6). The mere four-time appearance of the word is directly contrasted to the excessive sixty-eight time use of the word in the first three books of the Psalter. The appearance of the word is however linked to the davidic collection in Book V of the Psalter. It remains unclear why a particle that was no longer used in Books IV and V of the Psalter would suddenly be employed here. Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:549) suggests that the use of this particle serves as a indicator to an earlier and much different language usage, than that generally employed in Book IV and V of the Psalter. The language usage of Psalm 140 thus extends back to the poetry of the first psalm collections.

				voice of my supplication!'
		יְהוָ֤ה אֲדֹנָ֗י עֹ֣ז יְשׁוּעָתִ֑י	8a	YHWH, Lord, power of my salvation,[99]
		סַכֹּ֥תָה לְרֹאשִׁ֗י בְּי֣וֹם נָֽשֶׁק׃	b	you cover my head in the day of battle.
		אַל־תִּתֵּ֣ן יְהוָה֮ מַאֲוַיֵּ֪י רָ֫שָׁ֥ע	9a	Not you gave, YHWH, the desires of the wicked;
		זְמָמ֥וֹ אַל־תָּפֵ֗ק יָר֣וּמוּ סֶֽלָה׃	b	his plans not you granted, or they boasted. Selah!
	D	רֹ֤אשׁ מְסִבָּ֑י	10a	The head of those surrounding me,
		שְׂפָתֵ֖ימוֹ (יְכַסּוּמוֹ) [יְכַסֵּֽמוֹ]׃	b	may the trouble of their lips, cover them.
		(יָמִ֤יטוּ) [יִמּ֬וֹטוּ] עֲלֵיהֶ֣ם גֶּחָלִ֑ים	11a	Let they be shaken on them, coals
		בָּאֵ֥שׁ יַפִּלֵ֑ם	b	of the fire fall on them;
		בְּ֝מַהֲמֹר֗וֹת בַּֽל־יָקֽוּמוּ׃	c	in the water pits not they will rise up.[100]
		אִ֤ישׁ לָשׁ֨וֹן בַּל־יִכּ֣וֹן בָּאָ֑רֶץ	12a	Let man of tongue not he be established on the earth;
		אִישׁ־חָמָ֥ס רָ֑ע	b	bad man of violence

[99] The line עֹ֣ז יְשׁוּעָתִ֑י 'power of my salvation' or as Anderson (1992:915) translates it 'the strength of my salvation' is only found here in the entire Old Testament. The phrase implies that YHWH is the strength or 'power' of the distressed man/woman.

[100] Briggs & Briggs (1969:505) suggest that 'the water pits' in v. 11c refer to the Pit in Sheol in which the enemies of YHWH are cast. Similar references are made in Pss. 9:18 and 88:11.

III	E	יְצוּדֻ֣נוּ לְמַדְחֵפֹֽת׃	c	they hunt him for power.[101]
III	E	(יָדַעְתָּ) וְיָדַ֗עְתִּי כִּי־יַעֲשֶׂ֣ה יְהוָ֣ה דִּ֣ין עָנִ֑י	13a	I know he does, YHWH, the lawsuit of the humble,
		מִ֝שְׁפַּ֗ט אֶבְיֹנִֽים׃	b	the judgement of the poor.[102]
		אַ֣ךְ צַ֭דִּיקִים יוֹד֣וּ לִשְׁמֶ֑ךָ	14a	Surely the righteous they praise your name;
		יֵשְׁב֥וּ יְ֝שָׁרִ֗ים אֶת־פָּנֶֽיךָ׃	b	they sit, the just, before your face.

4.3.2 Morphological analysis

The following prominent features are present in Psalm 140:

A distinction is made between three persons and/or groups of persons according to the person, gender and number of verbs used, as well as the pronominal suffixes employed in Psalm 140:

- YHWH (also called El or Adonai [Lord])
- I/me (the psalmist)
- The bad/wicked persons (those opposing the psalmist)

i. *YHWH (also called El or Adonai [Lord])*

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[101] It is emphasised that violence is strongly opposed and deeply hated by YHWH (as is evident by Ps. 11:5) for the reason that violence oppresses the poor and the weak (as is evident by Ps. 35:11). In Psalm 140, according to Wenham (2012:111) violence leads to defamation and/or to violent witness - to oppress the poor in order to gain more power. The phrase 'they hunt for power' (v. 12c) reminds of the 'witnesses of violence' who connive to manipulate the course of justice by bearing false witness (see Exodus 23:1 and Deuteronomy 19:16).

[102] Mays (1999:430) suggests that the basic theology of Psalm 140 is summed up in the words of v. 13. The Lord uphold justice for the 'humble' and the 'poor'. Consequently the righteous will uphold the honour and praise of YHWH. Within this context YHWH is considered the judge over all creation siding with the poor and the humble whilst opposing the violence of the haughty.

Seven times there are references to the Lord as "YHWH" (vv. 2, 5, 7 [x2], 8, 9, 13); once the Lord is called "El" (v. 7); and once the Lord is referred to as "Adonai" (v. 8).

Throughout Psalm 140 the perfect and imperfect 2nd person male singular refers to the actions of YHWH a total of five times. In vv. 2, 5 and 7 the imperative male singular is employed by the psalmist to petition to YHWH to first save the psalmist (v. 2), second to keep the psalmist from the hands of the wicked (v. 5) and finally to comply with his/her request (v. 7). The independent pronoun 2nd person male singular is also used in v. 7 in reference to the person the psalmist is addressing in his/her to pay attention to his/her prayer.

In the final verse, verse 14, the pronominal suffix 2nd person male singular is utilized twice in reference to YHWH as the object of praise of the righteous.

ii. I/me (the psalmist)

Throughout the psalm, the psalmist is referred to twelve times by the use of the pronominal suffix 1st person singular "my" in phrases such as '…save me…' and '…you guard me…'

The perfect 1st person singular is only employed twice throughout Psalm 140. In v. 7 the perfect 1st person singular is used to postulate a direct voicing of the psalmist that is to follow. In v. 13 the 1st person singular is used to construe that the psalmist knows that YHWH wilfully sides with the humble and the poor when they are wrongfully persecuted.

iii. The bad/wicked persons (those opposing the psalmist)

The psalmist refers to his/her enemies in the introduction to Psalm 140 in v. 2 as רָ֫ע מֵאָדָ֥ם 'bad men' as well as מֵאִ֖ישׁ חֲמָסִ֣ים 'men of violence'. This vivid description of how the psalmist experienced those who opposed him/her leaves little to the imagination of the reader to what the psalmist was subjected to by his/her enemies.

The reference to the bad/wicked in Psalm 140 is much more extensive than the references to YHWH or the psalmist. The perfect and imperfect common/male plural is employed thirteen different times to refer to the adversaries of the psalmist as "they". Only four times there are references to the enemies of the psalmist in the singular, which implies that in Psalm 140 the enemy of the psalmist is not a single person but rather a group of godless men of violence. In addition the pronominal suffix 3rd person male plural/singular is used a total of nine times in reference to the nature of the adversaries towards the psalmist.

Thematic repetition of words

In Psalm 140 a clear "I-you" relationship can be distinguished between the psalmist (the "I") and YHWH (the "you).

The phrase מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים 'men of violence' is repeated three times throughout Psalm 140 in vv. 2, 5 and 12. The strategic spacing of this phrase together with the three time repetition thereof hints to the theme that runs through the entire psalm, namely that of an innocent man/woman being haunted and persecuted by 'men of violence'. The word that directly follows the phrase 'men of violence' in vv. 2 and 5 תִּנְצְרֵנִי 'you guard me' serves to emphasise a theme of persecution that colours Psalm 140 coupled with a clear call on YHWH to come to the psalmist's rescue. Another repetition drives the theme of being under siege, namely the word רָשָׁע 'wicked'. In vv. 5 and 9 the psalmist acknowledges his/her foes as wicked people.

Another striking observation is the twofold occurrence of two body parts with a combined purpose: לָשׁוֹן 'tongue' (in vv. 4 and 12) and שָׂפָה 'lips' (in vv. 4 and 10). It is noteworthy to remark the perspective of Terrien (2003:884) on this phenomenon, namely that the attack the psalmist suffers is verbal in nature, for the evil of men are directly linked to that which comes forth from their tongues and lips. A verbal attack possibly suggests that the psalmist is falsely accused by his/her enemies. Terrien

(2003:883) adds that the 'war' that the psalmist refers to appears to be a domestic dispute rather than a foreign conflict.

4.3.3 Syntactical analysis

A masoretic syntactical analysis of Psalm 138:1-8. In Psalm 138 the primary dividing disjunctives are: the *Sillûq,* the *'Atnāḥ* and the *'Ôlê wᵉyôrēd*.
A masoretic syntactical analysis of Psalm 140:1-14:

Dividing disjunctives		Cola	Line	Vs.	Translation
Dem.	Acc.				
Sil(0)	--	לַמְנַצֵּ֗חַ מִזְמ֥וֹר לְדָוִֽד׃	1a	1	For the supervisor. A psalm for David.
Atn(1)	Tip	חַלְּצֵ֣נִי יְ֭הוָה מֵאָדָ֣ם רָ֑ע	2a	2	Save me, YHWH, from bad man;
Sil(0)	Tip	מֵאִ֖ישׁ חֲמָסִ֣ים תִּנְצְרֵֽנִי׃	b		from man of violence, you guard me.
Atn(1)	--	אֲשֶׁ֤ר חָשְׁב֣וּ רָע֣וֹת בְּלֵ֑ב	3a	3	Those who think evil in their heart;
Sil(0)	RebM	כָּל־י֝֗וֹם יָג֥וּרוּ מִלְחָמֽוֹת׃	b		all of the day they stir up war.
OleW (1)	Zar	שָֽׁנֲנ֣וּ לְשׁוֹנָם֮ כְּמוֹ־נָ֫חָ֥שׁ	4a	4	They sharpen their tongue like a snake;
Atn(1)	--	חֲמַ֥ת עַכְשׁ֑וּב	b		the poison of a viper
Sil(0)	Tip	תַּ֖חַת שְׂפָתֵ֣ימוֹ סֶֽלָה׃	c		is under their lips. Selah!
RebG (2)	AzLeg	שָׁמְרֵ֤נִי יְהוָ֨ה׀ מִ֘ידֵ֤י רָשָׁ֗ע	5a	5	Keep me, YHWH, from the hands of the wicked;
Atn(1)	--	מֵאִ֣ישׁ חֲמָסִ֣ים תִּנְצְרֵ֑נִי	b		from man of violence you guard me,
Atn(1)	Tip	אֲשֶׁ֥ר חָ֝שְׁב֗וּ לִדְח֥וֹת פְּעָמָֽי׃	c		from those who think to push my feet.

RebG (2)	Paz	טָמְנוּ־גֵאִים׀ פַּ֣ח לִי וַחֲבָלִ֗ים	6a	6	They hide, the haughty, a trap for me and cords;
Atn(1)	Tip	פָּרְשׂוּ רֶ֣שֶׁת לְיַד־מַעְגָּ֑ל	b		they spread out a net to the side of the path;
Sil(0)	Tip	מֹקְשִׁ֖ים שָֽׁתוּ־לִ֣י סֶֽלָה׃	c		traps they lay for me. Selah!
Atn(1)	Tip	אָמַ֣רְתִּי לַ֭יהוָה אֵ֣לִי אָ֑תָּה	7a	7	I say to YHWH: 'My God, you
Sil(0)	RebM	הַאֲזִ֥ינָה יְ֝הוָ֗ה ק֣וֹל תַּחֲנוּנָֽי׃	b		you must listen YHWH, to the voice of my supplication!'
Atn(1)	Tip	יְהֹוִ֣ה אֲ֭דֹנָי עֹ֣ז יְשׁוּעָתִ֑י	8a	8	YHWH, Lord, power of my salvation,
Sil(0)	RebM	סַכֹּ֥תָה לְ֝רֹאשִׁ֗י בְּי֣וֹם נָֽשֶׁק׃	b		you cover my head in the day of battle.
Atn(1)	Tip	אַל־תִּתֵּ֣ן יְ֭הוָה מַאֲוַיֵּ֣י רָשָׁ֑ע	9a	9	Not you gave, YHWH, the desires of the wicked;
Sil(0)	RebM	זְמָמ֥וֹ אַל־תָּפֵ֗ק יָר֣וּמוּ סֶֽלָה׃	b		his plans not you granted, or they boasted. Selah!
Atn(1)	--	רֹ֤אשׁ מְסִבָּ֑י	10a	10	The head of those surrounding me,
Sil(0)	Tip	עֲמַ֖ל שְׂפָתֵ֣ימוֹ (יְכַסּוּמוֹ) [יְכַסֵּֽמוֹ]׃	b		may the trouble of their lips, cover them.
OleW (1)	RebQ	(יָמִיטוּ) [יִמּ֖וֹטוּ] עֲלֵיהֶ֣ם גֶּחָלִ֑ים	11a	11	Let they be shaken on them, coals
Atn(1)	--	בָּאֵ֥שׁ יַפִּלֵ֑ם	b		of the fire fall on them;
Sil(0)	RebM	בְּ֝מַהֲמֹר֗וֹת בַּֽל־יָקֽוּמוּ׃	c		in the water pits not they will rise up.
OleW (1)	Zar	אִ֤ישׁ לָשׁ֡וֹן בַּל־יִכּ֖וֹן בָּאָ֑רֶץ	12a	12	Let man of tongue not he be established on the earth;

Atn(1)	--	אִישׁ־חָמָ֥ס רָ֑ע	b		bad man of violence
Sil(0)	RebM	יְצוּד֝֗וּנוּ לְמַדְחֵפֹֽת׃	c		they hunt him for power.
Atn(1)	Tip	(יָדַ֗עְתִּ) [יָדַ֗עְתִּי] כִּֽי־יַעֲשֶׂ֣ה יְ֭הוָה דִּ֣ין עָנִ֑י	13a	13	I know he does, YHWH, the lawsuit of the humble,
Sil(0)	RebM	מִ֝שְׁפַּ֗ט אֶבְיֹנִֽים׃	b		the judgement of the poor.
Atn(1)	Tip	אַ֣ךְ צַ֭דִּיקִים יוֹד֣וּ לִשְׁמֶ֑ךָ	14a	14	Surely the righteous they praise your name;
Sil(0)	RebM	יֵשְׁב֥וּ יְ֝שָׁרִ֗ים אֶת־פָּנֶֽיךָ׃	b		they sit, the just, before your face.

4.3.4 Structural analysis

Psalm 140 can be divided into three stanzas overall, which subsequently can be divided into five strophes (see Terrien, 2003:882-884).[103]

HEADING: Superscription - For David (v. 1)

STANZA I: Petition for Divine aid (vv.2-6)
    STROPHE A: Psalmist pestered by violent men (vv.2-4)
    STROPHE B: Appeal to YHWH to intervene (vv. 5-6)

STANZA II: A critical pursuit for help in threatening situation (vv. 7-12)
    STROPHE C: Persuading YHWH to intervene (vv. 7-9)[104]
    STROPHE D: Prayer for the downfall of adversaries (vv. 10-12)
STANZA III: Praise for YHWH's righteousness (vv. 13-14)[105]

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[103] For an in-depth exposition of the five-strophe division of Psalm 140 see Anderson (1992:913-918) and Weber (2003:347-349).

[104] Allen (2002:332) differs on the composition of strophe C and D. He argues that verse 9 belongs to strophe D, which will then be compiled of vv. 9-12, instead of adding verse 9 to strophe C. The reason provided for this division is that there is a sequence of word markers that advance from vv. 2-5 which is backtracked in vv. 9-12, thus including verse 9 in strophe D.

STROPHE E: YHWH sides with the virtuous (vv. 13-14)

According to Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:550) the 'Selah!' inserted in Psalm 140 corresponds to the structure of the psalm. This is true for strophe A (vv. 2-4) and B (vv. 5-6) which consist of a two-part prayer to YHWH to intervene in a situation where the psalmist seems threatened. Each of these strophes closes with a subsequent 'Selah!' The following strophe C (vv.7-9), that pleads in prayer to YHWH to defray the onslaught of the wicked also close with a 'Selah!'

4.3.5 Poetic analysis

In this section some of the poetic techniques used in Psalm 140 are discussed:

According to Allen (2003:332-333) the following meter can be discerned in Psalm 140: 4+3, 4+3, 3+4, 3+3+3, 3+3+3, 4+3, 3+4, 4+3, 2+3, 3+4, 3+4, 3+4 and 3+3. The meter of Psalm 140 is irregular although the first four strophes (A, B, C and D) are symmetrically constructed, each containing three bicola (Terrien, 2003:883). Consistent with the work of Weber (2003:348-349) it can be noted that the two strophes (A and B) are bound together by the repetition and parallelism formed by vv. 2 and 5. In both these verses the psalmist pleads with YHWH to save him/her from מֵאָדָם רָע 'bad men' and from מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים 'men of violence'. This petition is once again repeated in v. 12 when the psalmist again refers to his/her enemies as מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים 'men of violence'. Vv. 2, 5 and 12 thus form an *inclusio* linking the different stanzas of Psalm 140 to an articulate unit with one unvarying outlook. It is clear that throughout Psalm 140 the psalmist tries to convey his/her dismay with those who oppose and attack him/her whilst he/she remains righteous (vv. 13-14).

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[105] Terrien (2003:884) disputes the fact that several scholars deem Stanza III (vv. 13-14) an editorial addition that concludes the psalmist's prayer for intervention with gratitude for YHWH's ultimate intervention. In this conclusion the psalmist considers him-/herself as righteous and therefore worthy to dwell in the presence of YHWH.

Three important chiasmus[106], relevant to the current study, appears throughout Psalm 140. The first chiasmus appears in vv. 2a and 2b. A chiasmus is formed between the psalmist's plea for help and the attack that the psalmist is currently suffering:

(2a) Save me, YHWH, from bad man

(2b) from man of violence, save me
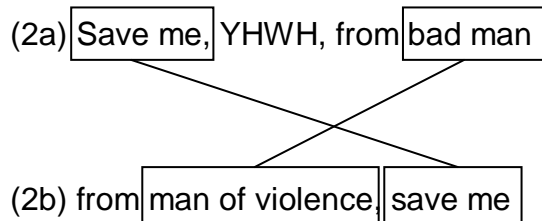
The second chiasmus can be found in v. 5a and 5b

(5a) keep me, YHWH, from hands of the wicked

(5b) from men of violence, guard me
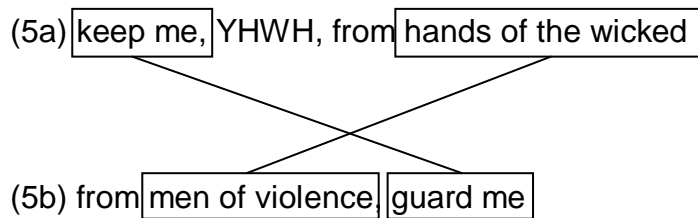
Both the chiasmus formed in 2a/b and 5a/b serves to contrast the psalmist's dire situation and his/her urgent need for help.

The third chiasmus is formed between v. 4a and 4bc.

(4a) they sharpen their tongue like a snake

(4bc) the poison of a viper is under their lips
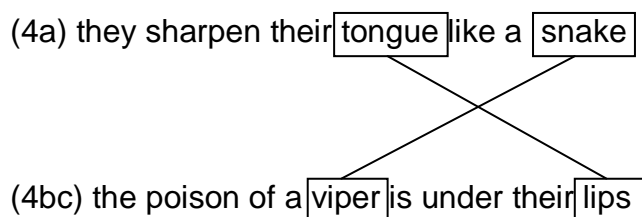
The psalmist likens his/her enemies to that of snakes with sharp and poisonous tongues/lips. The emphasis that is placed on the 'tongues' and the 'lips' of the wicked begs the question if the attack on the psalmist is verbal in nature. If so, then

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[106] All chiasmus is derived from the Hebrew text. For practical purposes chiasmus are portrayed in the English language.

the words that are uttered by the psalmist's enemies are 'poisonous' and 'sharp', thus meant to harm the psalmist.

The use of parallelisms, like chiasmus, is recurrent in Psalm 140.

Verse 3a is parallel to verse 3b. This synonymous parallelism refers to the sinister intentions of those opposing the psalmist. Those contesting the psalmist חָשְׁבוּ רָעוֹת 'they think evil' and יָגוּרוּ מִלְחָמוֹת 'they stir up war'.[107] The psalmist complains about the intentions of the wicked to YHWH in the hope of gaining a sympathetic ear to his/her situation.

However, the biggest congestion of parallelisms occurs in the final stanza of Psalm 140. A parallelism is formed between v.13a and 13b. Here it is emphasised that YHWH takes care of the דִּין עָנִי 'lawsuit of the humble' as well as the אֶבְיֹנִים: מִשְׁפַּט 'the judgement of the poor'. The psalmist accentuates YHWH's care for the meek and by doing so sides him-/herself with the 'humble' and the 'poor'. It could be argued that the psalmist is not trying to praise YHWH as much as he/she is trying to cover him-/herself in innocence.

The final parallelism can be found in v. 14a and 14b. A parallelism is formed between the actions of the righteous. According to the psalmist the righteous 'praise the name of YHWH' and they 'sit in the face of YHWH'. What the psalmist endeavours to communicate by this parallelism is the reciprocity of the relationship between YHWH and the righteous. If the psalmist praises YHWH's name, he/she will sit safely within the 'face' (or presence) of YHWH. The psalmist once again tries to persuade YHWH to come to his/her rescue.

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[107] The reference to 'think evil' is mirrored in Pss. 35:4, 20 and 41:8; 52:4 while the reference to 'stir up war' can also be seen in Pss. 56:7 and 59:4. These references occur in the first two davidic collections (Hossfeld &Zenger, 2011:551).

From the few poetic techniques discussed in this section it becomes apparent that Psalm 140 centres on the theme of the psalmist's distress coupled with a call on YHWH for help.

4.3.6 *Genre* and *Sitz im Leben*

There is general concurrence among scholars that Psalm 140 can be classified by *genre* as a lament of an individual. Dahood (1970:301) describes the psalm as a prayer by the psalmist for deliverance from personal enemies. Anderson (1992:913) suggests that the psalm could be further defined as the prayer of an accused man because the psalmist renders him-/herself as overwhelmed by slanderers. The standard elements of a lament are present in Psalm 140, namely: a general address to YHWH; a description of a crisis that presented itself adjacent to the psalmist; a petition for the favour of YHWH and finally an optimistic conclusion.

Allen (2002:334) expands on this *genre*-classification for Psalm 140 by postulating that the introduction to the psalm consists of a call for help combined with a lamenting description of the psalmist's enemies (in vv. 2-4 and 5-6). This cry for help is then followed by a petition to YHWH for deliverance from enemies. Finally the psalm is closed with an affirmation of trust in YHWH's pending deliverance. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:551) consider Psalm 140 as a wisdom-style and/or reflective lament of an individual directed against his/her enemies.[108]

As indicated by Gerstenberger (2001:408) it should not be overlooked that a smaller collection of psalms can be found within the broader davidic collection (Pss. 138-145). This smaller collection consists of Pss. 140-143 and can be classified as

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[108] For Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:550) the accusation against the psalmist's enemies dominates the contents of the psalm. The lament against God, which forms the critical part of the lament-*genre*, is overshadowed by accusations brought against the psalmist's enemies. In the first two strophes (vv. 2-4 and 5-6) the appeal for rescue is overshadowed by a description of the psalmist's enemies. The third strophe (vv. 7-9) in which the psalmist confesses his/her trust in YHWH the psalmist once again cover this confession with his/her fear of the enemy. The fourth strophe is once more dominated by a cursing of the enemies. The psalmist's extensive concern about his/her enemies impedes the flow of the psalm in the regular movement of the lament-*genre*.

petitionary prayers. Psalm 140, which is petitionary in nature, thus forms the introduction to these so-called petitionary prayers.

Terrien (2003:883) suggests that the psalmist's plight for deliverance from enemies creates the impression that Psalm 140 belongs to the *genre* of an individual complaint. It is however expressed in hymnic form with a celebration of YHWH's name in the final verses (vv. 13-14).

As a *Sitz im Leben* Terrien (2003:883) argues that the 'war' that the psalmist refers to points toward a domestic dispute rather than an international incident. The motivation provided for this argument is the nature of the attack of the enemies as described in v. 4: שָׁנֲנוּ לְשׁוֹנָם֙ כְּמוֹ־נָחָ֑שׁ '…they sharpen their tongue like a snake…' and חֲמַ֥ת עַכְשׁ֗וּב תַּ֣חַת שְׂפָתֵ֣ימוֹ '…the poison of a viper is under their lips…' The attack of the enemies on the psalmist is verbal in nature which leads to a conclusion that the character of the conflict is that of a quarrel between fellow citizens. Buttenwieser (1938:723) differs on this proposed *Sitz im Leben*, stating that the conflict is clearly a case of national distress and not personal suffering. Proof for this standpoint is provided in the final verses of the psalm when the psalmist states that he/she is assured that YHWH would come to the defence of the poor and afflicted people. Buttenwieser assumes that the 'poor' and 'humble' refers to a repressed nation.

Gerstenberger (2001:410) points out that the evil besetting the complainant or community is unclear. However, economic exploitation, repression, defamation and inequality possibly forms the background to the composition of Psalm 140.

The *genre* of an individual lament is widely accepted for Psalm 140 and in broad terms defines the psalmist call on YHWH to intercede in the brutal attacks of the enemy. The *Sitz im Leben* seems to remain unspecified.

4.3.7 Dating and authorship

Buttenwieser (1938:723) is convinced that Psalm 140 reflects the same crisis revealed in two preceding psalms (Pss. 57 and 59) and thus the date of composition, if correlated to these compositions, should be the years 318-312 B.C.E. Dahood (1970:301) again notes the unusual amount of *hapax legomena* and archaic word forms that appears in Psalm 140 and suggests that this points to an early date of composition.

Maclaren (1894:394) notes the many parallels between Psalm 140 and other psalms ascribed to David, but points out that nothing in Psalm 140 indicates original davidic composition. As a result davidic authorship cannot be used in the determination of a date of composition.

It is safe to conclude with the sentiments of Burch (2012:8) that most of the individual poems in the Psalter have a distinctive message born out of inimitable circumstances or happenings. It is however mostly impossible to tie the composition to a specific time or event as in the case of Psalm 140.

4.3.8 Content analysis

In this section a broader understanding of Psalm 1140 is provided for the purpose of evaluating its relationship to Psalm 139 in detail and content:

The superscription of Psalm 140 (לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד 'For the supervisor. A psalm for David') is clear and attributes this psalm to royal origins.

Stanza I: The psalm commences with a distinct cry for help. This immediately draws the reader's attention to the impetus behind the composition. What is to follow is a neatly set out interconnection between petitions followed by descriptions of the trouble experienced (Mays, 1999:430).

Strophe A: The psalmist is pestered by מֵאָדָם רָע 'bad men' and מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים 'men of violence'. The imperative חַלְּצֵנִי 'save me!' illustrates the urgency of the psalmist's request. This request is further qualified by a description of those protested against by the psalmist. The psalmist describes these people as concocting evil motives in their hearts and stirring up conflicts all the day long. The enemies of the psalmist are likened to that of venomous snakes.

Strophe B: Having stated his/her affliction, the psalmist appeal to YHWH to intervene in the matter. The psalmist trusts YHWH to take care of the רָשָׁע 'wicked' that pesters him/her.[109] Briggs & Briggs (1969:503) sets out the four ways in which the wicked/proud harass the psalmist: they push (or trip) the psalmist's feet; they hide traps for him/her; they spread out nets and they lay out traps for the psalmist. The psalmist calls on YHWH to see these injustices and react to them.

Stanza II: According to Terrien (2003:884) the prayer of the psalmist reaches full intensity in the second stanza. The psalmist situation compels him/her to succumb to a more extreme style of defence, namely to turn to the omnipotent YHWH for help.

Strophe C: The psalmist now directly addresses YHWH. Again the psalmist refers to those opposing him/her as רָשָׁע 'wicked'. The independent pronoun 2nd person male singular 'you' is used in v. 7 to illustrate that the psalmist turns away from his/her own efforts to defeat the opposition and now deliberately turns to YHWH (you). The אָמַרְתִּי 'I say' now puts the psalmist at work trying to persuade YHWH to intervene. Allen (2002:336) suggests that this is a confession of the psalmist's personal faith.

Strophe D: Here the psalmist clearly prays for the downfall of his/her adversaries. Once again the psalmist reference to the slandering and/or false

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[109] Briggs & Briggs (1969:503) suggests an alternate reading for the word רָשָׁע namely: 'the proud'

accusations brought against him/her when he/she prays '…may the trouble of their lips, cover them…' as well as '…let the man of tongue not he be established on the earth…' (Anderson, 1999:916). The psalmist asks that whatever is plotted against him/her may be turned on those doing the scheming.

Stanza III: The psalm concludes with praise for YHWH's righteousness and a firm belief that the wicked will be brought to justice by the omnipotent and omnipresent YHWH who see and knows everything.

Strophe E: Here the psalmist hopefully concludes that he/she is convinced, he/she יָדַע 'know' that YHWH would side with the virtuous. It is striking that another reference is made to the presence of YHWH. When the psalmist says יֵשְׁבוּ יְשָׁרִים אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ 'the just sit before your face' it is implied that YHWH sees everything the just and the righteous does, even if it is overlooked by their enemies. The psalmist emphasise that the just and the righteous lives in the presence (the face) of YHWH.

4.4 Comparative relationship between Psalms 138-140

In this section the relationship between Psalm 139 and its preceding psalm (Psalm 138) as well as its following psalm (Psalm 140) will be investigated to understand the connection, if indeed there is any that exist between these psalms.

4.4.1 Comparative relationship between Psalm 138 and Psalm 139

Psalm 139 displays a well-established "I-you" relationship between the psalmist (the 'I') and YHWH (the 'you'). This same "I-you" relationship is reflected in Psalm 138. Both Pss. 139 and 138 is composed in the 1st person singular style and makes a clear distinction between three persons and/or groups of persons:

Role-players in the psalms:	
Psalm 138	**Psalm 139**
I/me (the psalmist)	I/me (the psalmist)
YHWH	YHWH (also called El or Elohim [God])
My enemies (those opposing the psalmist and/or YHWH)	The wicked/godless (also referred to as adversaries of YHWH and the psalmist)

Both Pss. 138 and 139 share the frequent use of the proper noun YHWH in reference to the Lord. The author of Psalm 139 prefers the proper noun 'YHWH' in reference to his/her Lord. Three times there are referred to the Lord as 'YHWH' in vv. 1, 4 and 21. Although the addressee remains anonymous until v. 4, the only proper noun used to refer to the Lord in Psalm 138 is 'YHWH'. These references are found in vv. 4, 5, 6 and 8.

From an analysis drawn from the content of both Pss. 138 and 139 it is apparent that Psalm 139 imitates the same basic structure as that of Psalm 138.

Psalm 138 commences with the praise of YHWH. This praise however presents itself within unique circumstance when the psalmist chooses the place of worship to be 'in front of the gods' of all other nations. The psalmist extols the goodness and the faithfulness of YHWH throughout vv. 1-6 with pervasive awareness of the all-encompassing presence of YHWH (even before the gods of other nations). Throughout the psalm repetitive dedication to praise YHWH is supplied with reasons explaining YHWH's worthiness of this praise. A call is made to the kings of the earth (and by implication the whole earth) to acknowledge YHWH's glory. It is also stressed that YHWH intimately knows mankind. The Psalmist closes Psalm 138 with a brief statement that the danger that lurked in the background of his praises, still lurks and threatens him/her. Still the psalmist remains confident that YHWH would not abandon him/her and that the goodness of YHWH will triumph over any and all evil. The psalmist thus affirms trust in YHWH.

The psalmist in Psalm 139 begins the psalm by focusing the reader's attention to how intimately acquainted YHWH is with his/her being and praising YHWH for that.

Attention is called to the fact that there is nowhere to hide from YHWH for YHWH is omnipresent. The psalmist then personalizes this knowledge of YHWH by proceeding to praise YHWH for his/her own creation in the womb of his/her mother while emphasizing that not even the complexity of his/her conception is secret to YHWH. The psalmist expresses his/her admiration and praise for YHWH when he/she exclaims the wonderful and fearful creative way by which he/she was created. In a sudden change in tone the psalmist briefly acknowledges the existence of enemies and pleads with YHWH for the protection against these perpetrators. The psalmist then closes with a confession of confidence in YHWH to triumph over evil and lead him/her in an everlasting way and by doing so the psalmist affirms his/her trust in YHWH.

It becomes clear that the same basic premise is discerned in both Psalm 138 and Psalm 139:

- YHWH is ever-present!
- YHWH is the keeper of the psalmist.
- YHWH is worthy to be praised!

Weber (2003:345) draws attention to the series of verbal connections shared between Pss. 138 and 139:

Verbal connections	Psalm 138:	Psalm 139:
יָדַע 'know'	6	1; 4; 6; 14; 23
דֶּרֶךְ 'way'	5	3; 24
הָלַךְ 'to go / to walk'	7	7
רָאָה 'to see'	6	16; 24
יָד 'hand' / יָמִין 'right hand'	7	10
ידה 'praise'	1; 4	14
מַעֲשֶׂה 'work'	8	14
איב 'to be hostile' or 'enemies'	7	22

עוֹלָם 'eternity'	8	24

These verbal relations between both psalms open an improved comprehension to the comparative relationship shared by Pss. 138 and 139:

The first point of contact between the psalms is the perfect knowledge of YHWH. In Psalm 138 the psalmist points out that even though YHWH is exalted YHWH still sees and knows the lowly as well as the haughty. The knowledge of YHWH, while shortly referred to in Psalm 138, is widely expanded on in Psalm 139 to the extent to which it becomes the recurrent theme that permeates through the whole of the psalm. In Psalm 139:1 the psalmist starts the psalm by exclaiming that YHWH knows him/her. In v. 4 the psalmist stress the fact that YHWH knows every word that is to come out of his/her mouth. The psalmist basks in the wonderful knowledge YHWH has for him/her in v. 6. In v. 23 the psalmist calls on this perfect knowledge of YHWH to filter through his/her intentions.

A further relation between the two psalms can be found in the manner in which the word דֶּרֶךְ 'way' is employed. In Psalm 138:5 the 'way' of YHWH is praised by all the kings of the earth for the way of YHWH is exposed as the way of rectitude. In Psalm 139:3 the psalmist exclaims that YHWH is familiar with all his/her ways and in v. 24 he/she pleads YHWH to lead him/her in the 'way everlasting', thus the way of righteousness for which YHWH is exalted in Psalm 138. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:532) suggest that in both cases the psalmist's life is a process of seeking the perfect ways of YHWH by which to lead his/her life.

Once again Pss. 138 and 139 correlates in their use of the term הָלַךְ 'to go / to walk'. In Psalm 138:7 the psalmist points out that wherever he/she is to 'go' or 'walk', even in the midst of distress, YHWH will preserve him/her. In Psalm 139:7 the psalmist asks the rhetoric question: 'Where do I go [to hide] from your spirit?' This question is rhetorically formulated to imply that there is nowhere to 'go' where the Spirit of YHWH is not already present and ready, in a preserving capacity, to assist the psalmist.

In Psalm 138:6 the psalmist implies that the eyes of YHWH is on the lowly, denoting that YHWH רָאָה 'see' the lowly as well as the haughty. Psalm 139:16 accentuates YHWH seeing where no human ever can - in the womb (pre-existence of the psalmist). In the final verses (v. 24) the psalmist invites YHWH to search him/her and רָאָה 'see' if the psalmist is on the right way. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:532) suggest that a crucial contact point between both psalms is the fact that nothing escapes the all-seeing transcendent YHWH who from a distance is capable of seeing the humble (Ps. 138) and the supplicant (Ps. 139).

The way יָד 'hand' / יָמִין 'right hand' is employed in both Pss. 138:7 and 139:10 indicates a protective and guiding capacity. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:532) put forward that in both instances the hand of YHWH shields the psalmist from danger and guides the psalmist away from the danger.

The foundation for understanding both Pss. 138 and 139 lies hidden in the word ידה 'praise.' In Psalm 138:1 the psalmist declares his/her motive to praise YHWH with all his/her heart. Psalm 139:14 basis the praise that the psalmist exclaims towards YHWH in the discernible complexity of his/her being. The psalmist thus praise YHWH for the wonderful way in which he/she was created. Praise becomes the shared notion between Pss. 138 and 139. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:532) observe that in both Pss. 138 and 139 the petitioner has sufficient reason to thank God through means of praise.

The מַעֲשֶׂה 'work' that is referred to in both Pss. 138:8 and 139:14 refers to the works created by YHWH. These so-called 'works' are the underpinning on which al praise is established.

There is a slight difference in the way in which Pss. 138 and 139 refers to איב 'enemies'. Psalm 138:7 the psalmist is the one under attack that seeks shelter with YHWH from his/her enemies. However, in Psalm 139:22 the so-called 'enemies' are under attack from the psalmist's hatred for them. In Psalm 139 a form of resistance from the psalmist can be seen against the enemy, whilst the psalmist in Psalm 138 is

exposed and pleads for protection from the enemy. The point of contact between Pss. 138 and 139 in its treatment of 'enemies' is that in both psalms it becomes clear that the psalmist is challenged by enemies (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:532).

A final verbal point of contact between Pss. 138 and 139 is in the use of the term עוֹלָם 'eternity'. Psalm 138 colours YHWH's goodness as everlasting (lasting for eternity) and thus the psalmist rests in the assurance that YHWH will not abandon him/her. In Psalm 139 the psalmist pleads with YHWH to lead him/her in the way that is everlasting (lasting for eternity). It is the prayer of the psalmist to forever stay within the bounds of the goodness of YHWH.

One of the most important poetic features presented by Ps. 139 is the use of the inclusion formed by the words חקר (to search) and יָדַע (to know) in vv. 1b and 23a. This inclusion not only serves to bind the separate units of the psalm together, it also emphasises the theme of the psalm. This same poetic technique is displayed in Ps. 138. The repetition of the word חַסְדְּךָ 'your goodness' in vv. 2a and 8b forms an inclusion emphasizing the goodness of YHWH as the theme of the psalm.

The extensive use of merisms is present in Ps. 139. Ps. 138 also employs this poetic technique by pointing towards the 'lowly' and the 'haughty' to summarize the full extent of human existence and that all people are subject under the watchful eye of YHWH.

The *genre* of Ps. 139 remains unclear. Almost every possible *genre* has hopefully been ascribed to the psalm for the reason that Ps. 139 exhibits divergent traits. Ps. 138, however, has been ascribed the *genre* of individual thanksgiving (also one of the many *genres* ascribed to Ps. 139). When using the classification of Ps. 138 as an individual hymn of thanksgiving ascribed to it by DeClaissé-Walford *et al* (2014:958) the *genre* allotment of Ps. 138 can enter into conversation with that of Ps. 139 which is frequently classified as a hymn. It can thus be said that on the level of *genre*, both Pss. 138 and 139 displays hymnic undertones.

The date of composition of both psalms remains unclear for the reason that there are no clear historic markers in either of the psalms.

It becomes clear that there exists a multitude of points of contact between Pss. 138 and 139. It should however be noted that Psalm 138 has multiple connections to its preceding Pss. 135-137 as well. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:531) suggests that although there are only a few contact points between Psalm 138 and Psalm 137 they are still essentially linked by an exilic situation. The placement of Psalm 137 is in Babylon referring to the exile, while Psalm 138 is steered by the notion of a petitioner that finds him-/herself outside his/her homeland. It is thus possible to conjecture that Psalm 138 serves as a succession and or conclusion to Pss. 135-137.[110]

The most significant difference between Ps. 137 and Ps. 138 unlocks a greater understanding of the reason for the composition of Ps. 138. This difference can be found in the differing use of the word שִׁיר 'sing' in Ps. 137:4-5 and Ps. 138:5. In Ps. 137:4-5 the exiles are forced to sing a song for their captors (the enemies of Israel), while in Ps. 138:5 the roles are reversed and now the enemies must join in singing the praise of YHWH. Thus Psalm 138 is, what Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:532) believe to be, a "*responsory counterpoint*" to the foregoing composition. Psalm 138 concludes what is left incomplete in Psalm 135-137, thus bringing the exile to a conclusion where YHWH is pictured as the Victor defeating all enemies and calling on all creation to join in singing the praise of YHWH.

Psalm 139 echoes the demand to praise in Psalm 138 by giving life to this demanded praise in vv. 1-18.

4.4.2 Comparative relationship between Psalm 139 and Psalm 140

Just as Psalm 139 displays an "I-you" relationship between the psalmist (the 'I') and YHWH (the 'you'), Psalm 140 reflects this same "I-you" relationship as both psalms

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[110] According to Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:531) Psalm 137 only serves as a transitional psalm that links the Pilgrim Psalter (Pss. 120-136) to the Davidic Psalter (Pss. 138-145).

are composed in the 1st person singular style. In Ps. 139 as well as in Ps. 140 a clear distinction can be made between three persons and/or groups of persons:

Role-players in the psalms:	
Psalm 139	**Psalm 139**
I/me (the psalmist)	I/me (the psalmist)
YHWH (also called El or Elohim [God])	YHWH (also called El of Adonai [Lord])
The wicked/godless (also referred to as adversaries of YHWH and the psalmist	The bad/wicked persons (those opposing the psalmist

Pss. 139 and 140 prefer the use of the proper noun 'YHWH' in reference to the Lord. Three times Psalm 139 refers to the Lord as YHWH in vv. 1, 4 and 21, while the reference to the Lord as YHWH occurs seven times in Psalm 140: 2, 5, 7 [x2], 8, 9, 13. Another proper noun shared by Pss. 139 and 140 is 'El'. Twice Psalm 139 calls the Lord 'El' (vv. 14 and 23), while 'El' is only used once in Psalm 140:7.

From an analysis drawn from the content of both Pss. 139 and 140 a reversed basic structure can be observed:

The greater part of Psalm 139 focuses on the praise of YHWH's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence (vv. 1-18). The psalmist spent the greater part of the psalm illustrating the care and provision of YHWH by implying that YHWH does not even for a brief moment let the psalmist out of sight. Whereas only a few verses in Psalm 139 is dedicated to call on YHWH to defeat the wicked (vv.19-24). In these verses focus is placed on the psalmist's disassociation with the perpetrators and him/her siding willingly with YHWH and justice/righteousness.

In Psalm 140 vv. 1-12 the predominant theme is a call on YHWH for deliverance from enemies. The psalmist portrays him-/herself being pestered by violent men and calls out to YHWH to come to the rescue. The psalmist also asks for the downfall of his/her enemies. Only the last two verses of Psalm 140 (vv. 13-14) is dedicated to praise YHWH for righteousness. The psalmist choose to conclude the petition against the wicked by asserting his/her own righteousness and thus an opposition to

the wicked. It is emphasised that nothing goes unseen by the eyes of YHWH. The psalmist reverting to praise, claims that as a just and righteous person he/she lives in the presence of YHWH.

Although Pss. 139 and 140 presents a reversed basic structure, both psalms take the same approach to the wicked/enemies:

- The wicked are called 'men of blood' (Ps. 139:19) and 'men of violence' (Ps. 140:2, 5 and 9).
- The psalmist takes an offensive position to the wicked, instead of a defensive position (Ps. 139:21 / Ps. 140:10).

Weber (2003:349) draws attention to the series of verbal connections shared between Pss. 139 and 140:

Verbal connections	Psalm 139:	Psalm 140:
רָשָׁע 'wicked'	19	5; 9
לָשׁוֹן 'tongue'	4	4; 12
יָדַע 'to know'	1; 4; 6; 14; 23	13
אַתָּה 'you'	2; 8; 13	7
ידה 'praise'	14	14

To obtain an improved comprehension of the comparative relationship shared by Pss. 139 and 140, the verbal connections between the psalms must be further examined:

The first correlation between the psalms is their approach to the רָשָׁע 'wicked'. Although the reference to the 'wicked' in Ps. 139 is confined to vv. 19-22 the use of language and the extremity to which the psalmist describes his/her sentiment toward the wicked provides enough information for the reader to correctly deduce the psalmist's attitude toward the wicked. Here the psalmist's appeal to YHWH with regard to his/her enemies is interesting as he/she wishes to hate the wicked on

account of them hating YHWH. The psalmist in Ps. 139 purposefully sides with YHWH. In Ps. 140:5 and 9 the psalmist appeals to YHWH and trusts YHWH to take care of the wicked that pesters him/her and not let their evil plans succeed. It is significant to note that both Pss. 139 and 140 use similar language to refer to the wicked (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:553): in Ps. 139 they are called 'men of blood' while Ps. 140 refers to them as 'men of violence.'

In Ps. 139:4 the word לָשׁוֹן 'tongue' is employed to colour YHWH's omniscience. The psalmist illustrates that YHWH carries even the deepest knowledge of what is to roll of his/her tongue before it is spoken into being. In contrast to this use of the word 'tongue' to glorify YHWH, Psalm 140:4 and 12 uses 'tongue' in reference to the attack of the enemy on the psalmist. It is inferred that the enemies have 'sharp' and 'poisonous' tongues with which they torment the psalmist by means of verbal abuse. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:553) points out that in both psalms the actions of the wicked are connected to speech. Ps. 139:20 refer to the wicked as 'those who plotted against you', while Ps. 140:4 point to the tongue and lips of the wicked as dangerous.

The word יָדַע 'to know' manifests in Psalm 140. The perfect knowledge of YHWH is the recurring theme in Ps. 139. First the psalmist (in vv. 1, 4, 6 and 14) acknowledge that YHWH is intimately acquainted with his/her ways, for YHWH knows each of the psalmist's actions even before he/she is to act. Finally in v. 6 the psalmist request YHWH's perfect knowledge to filter through his/her own thoughts and intentions. In Ps. 140:13 this knowledge seems to have already filtered through the psalmist's own knowledge, for he/she now declares that he/she knows YHWH and how YHWH acts on behalf of the humble and poor. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:553) emphasise that the use of the term יָדַע 'to know' points to the psalmist's personal knowledge of a personal God.

The independent pronoun 2nd person male singular אַתָּה 'you' is used in Ps. 139:2, 8 and 13 to point to the glorious actions of YHWH, whereas אַתָּה 'you' is used in Ps.

140:7 to demand YHWH's attention. The psalmist exclaims: 'You (YHWH) must listen!'

In Ps. 139:14 the psalmist examines the way he/she was created and from that premise decides that YHWH is worthy to be praised. He/she ידה 'praise' YHWH for the wonderful way in which he/she was created. While Ps. 140:14 postulate that only the righteous will praise the name of YHWH. The psalmist considers him-/herself righteous and thus worthy to praise YHWH. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:553) points out that in both cases YHWH's praise is subject to the psalmist's view of him-/herself.

Both Pss. 139 and 140 share a preference for the use of parallelisms and chiasmus to emphasise YHWH's care and protection of the psalmist, e.g. the chiasmus formed in Ps. 139:10 asks for YHWH's protection and guidance compared to the chiasmus formed in Ps. 140:2 and 5 that is composed to highlight the urgency of his/her request for protection.

While there is uncertainty on which *genre* can be allocated to Ps. 139, there is general concurrence among scholars that Ps. 140 can be classified as an individual lament. It is notable that when accepting Ps. 139 as exhibiting a mixed *genre*, vv. 19-24 is classified by scholars as an individual lamentation of a psalmist that calls for help from YHWH after he/she comes under the verbal attack of enemies. The *genre*-classification for Ps. 139:19-24 can enter into conversation with Ps. 140 which also clearly exhibits the plea of an individual fighting off the attack of enemies.

Both psalms seem unclear on who authored it and when it was authored due to a lack of historic markers in the text.

It can be inferred that there are certain important and noteworthy points of contact between Pss. 139 and 140 that links the psalms together. The most important point of contact is both psalms attitude towards enemies.

It is highlighted by Gerstenberger (2001:408) that a smaller collection of psalms can be found within the broader davidic collection (Pss. 138-145). This smaller collection

consists of Pss. 140-143 and can be classified as petitionary prayers. Dunn (1956:134) explains that these psalms all share a general background of trouble, anxiety, weakness and persecution. Kirkpatrick (1903:792) postulate that this group can be distinguished by means of external as well as internal characteristics. The first of the characteristics is that all four of the so-called petitionary psalms bare the name of David, which is not common in Books IV and V of the *Psalter*. Another trademark of these psalms is that they bear a similarity in thought and language. Furthermore these psalms reflect the same circumstances, namely that the psalmist is exposed to the plots of evil enemies. All these characteristics thus makes it probable that Pss. 140-143 were composed by the same author and belongs together as a unit. Consequently Psalm 140, which is also petitionary in nature, thus forms the introduction to these so-called petitionary prayers.

4.6   Synthesis

In chapter 4 the primary focus was to generate an intertextual perspective of Psalms 138, 139 and 140. This was done by obtaining a holistic understanding of the texts by means of a literary analysis of both Pss. 138 and 140. In this chapter the interrelatedness of all textual features (syntax, morphology, poetic techniques, structure and *genre*) were examined on a literary level.

From the above exposition done on Psalm 138 and Psalm 140 respectively it becomes undeniably clear that there are some crucial connections between Psalm 139 and its preceding and succeeding psalms.

The "I-you" relationship displayed in all three psalms point towards an intimate relationship between the psalmist and YHWH. In Pss. 138, 139 and 140 there are three role-players: the psalmist, YHWH and the enemies/wicked. This detail contributes to join these three psalms together.

Another characteristic shared by all three these psalms is the preference to the use of the proper noun YHWH to refer to the Lord. Pss. 139 and 140 in addition shares the use of the proper noun 'El' to refer to the Lord.

Two concurrent themes is represented in Pss. 138, 139 and 140, that of 'praise' and of 'enemies'.

The call for worship of YHWH by the use of the word ידה 'praise' in Ps. 138:1, 4; Ps. 139:14 and Ps. 140:14 is the first theme shared among these psalms. In Ps. 138 the psalmist makes clear the intention to praise YHWH. In Ps. 139 the psalmist gets enthused by the omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence of YHWH. This general admiration in which the psalmist finds him-/herself leads to the praise of YHWH. In Ps. 140 the psalmist considers him-/herself worthy enough to join in the praises of YHWH because of YHWH's assistance and the psalmist's morality.

Another theme that presents itself throughout the psalm is the psalmist's reference to the enemies and/or the wicked. Bullock (1984:69) notes the frequent reference in Pss. 138, 139 and 140 to the psalmist's enemies and the wicked, which indisputably points toward some form of coherence among these psalms.

In Ps. 138:7 the psalmist seeks shelter from the enemies that are attacking, while in Ps. 139 the psalmist decides not to remain defenceless but to offer some resistance against these attacks by retaliating with justified hatred. The extremity of the psalmist's use of language against the enemies paints a vivid picture of zero tolerance on the part of the psalmist against those who pursue evil to the collapse of justice. In Ps. 140 the same zero tolerance retaliation is once again seen when the psalmist decides to trust YHWH to turn the ways of the wicked on themselves and to let them fall prey to the evil they plotted.

The psalms can be related on the level of *genre*. If Ps. 138 is classified as a hymn of individual thanksgiving (as pointed out by DeClaissé-Walford *et al*, 2014:958) it can be related to Ps. 138:1-18 which is often classified as a hymn. The hymnic undertones then shared by both psalms would include: a reference to the mighty deeds of YHWH (Ps. 139:1-18 / Ps. 138:3-6); an emphatic proposition (Ps. 139:1 / Ps. 138:6); an expansion on the introduction throughout the rest of the text (Ps. 139:1 and 23 / Ps. 138:2 and 8); An appeal to praise YHWH combined with the poet's desire to praise YHWH (Ps. 139:14 / Ps. 138:1 and 4); the main character of

the hymn is YHWH and the basic mood of both psalms are amazement and enthusiasm.

The classification of Ps. 140 as an individual lament shed some light on the same classification ascribed to Ps. 139:19-24. Both Ps. 139:19-24 and Ps. 140 is a clear call to YHWH for assistance after the psalmist came under the attack of enemies.

It is thus possible to deduce that Ps. 139:1-18 relates to Ps. 138 in tone and *genre*, whilst Ps. 139:19-24 relates to the tone and *genre* found in Ps. 140.

It is important to take into consideration the placement of both Ps. 138 and 140 in their own respective collections. Ps. 138 in succession to Ps. 137, which refers to Babylon and the exile, is steered by the notion of a petitioner finding hope in a current dire situation (most probably still in exile and/or out of his/her homeland) insists on the whole of creation, including the kings of the nation and the psalmist's enemies, to join in the exaltation of YHWH. Ps. 138 serves as a succession and conclusion to Pss. 135-137 which portrays the happenings of the exilic period.

Equally, another observation to be taken notice of is that Ps. 140 is the first of a collection of petitionary psalms (Pss. 140-143) sharing a general background of trouble and persecution by enemies. Seeing as Ps. 140 is the first of this group of petitionary psalms, it can be concluded that Ps. 140 serves as an introduction to the background of persecution and attacks of the enemies that is described in the following Pss. 141-143.

Ps. 139 finds itself in between a conclusion (Ps. 138) and an introduction (Ps. 140). It would appear, based on the relationship shared between Pss. 138 and 139 as well as Pss. 139 and 140, that Ps. 139 was redactionally added to Book V of the Psalter to serve as a transition from Ps. 138 to Ps. 140.

CHAPTER 5

SYNTHESIS

5.1   Introduction

Psalm 139 has been appraised as one of the supreme passages in the *Psalter*. It is without a doubt that this deeply personal and emotional expression of profound intimacy between creature and Creator remain one of the most moving psalms ever to be written. In spite of the psalm's exceptional poetic beauty describing the all-encompassing grace of God, it remains a subject of conflict and controversy among scholars. Scholars cannot seem to agree on how to interpret and understand Psalm 139.

First of all it seems as if Psalm 139 is misplaced within Book V of the *Psalter*. Its placement between Psalms 138 and 140 seems to baffle exegetes considering it has no conspicuous connection with either its preceding or its subsequent psalms. Furthermore, Psalm 139 is most notorious for its extreme exegetical divide. This leads to scholars disagreeing on how the psalm should be interpreted, how the unity of the psalm must be understood and finally what *genre* to classify it under.

Recent trends in psalm research displays a clear move away from focusing on each psalm's individuality to a study of the redactional composition of the *Psalter*. Attention is given to the relationship that exists between psalms instead of studying a psalm solely at the hand of a proposed *genre* and *Sitz im Leben*. From this approach it becomes clear that the placing of a psalm within the smaller units/groups into which the Psalter can be divided plays an important role in understanding the relevant psalm.

The foregoing study was undertaken in an attempt to better understand Psalm 139 by examining the editorial placement of the psalm within Book V of the *Psalter*, and more specifically its placement in between Psalm 138 and 140. To accomplish a

better understanding of the intertextual relationships of Psalm 139 the intra-textual features of Psalm 138 and 140 was explored in order to establish the similarities shared and differences between Psalm 139 and its neighbouring psalms.

The first aim of this study was to do a synchronic analysis of Psalm 139. To accomplish this a literary-exegetical study was undertaken of the relevant text. The textual features were identified and their interrelatedness explored. On the basis of all textual features examined a structure was proposed which accommodated the extensive research already undertaken by scholars in the inquiry of Psalm 139. The second aim of this study was to do a diachronic analysis of Psalm 139. To accomplish this, the relationship between Psalm 139 and other texts in its immediate context was examined and the similarities and differences between Psalm 139 and Psalms 138 and 140 highlighted.

Chapter 5 is a summary of the insights that were gained in the foregoing study. The results of the study will be discussed and the conclusion finally reached will be conveyed. An answer will be given to the hypothesis and conclusively some final remarks will be made.

5.2 Conclusions

In this section the conclusions made for this study, which are ultimately used to give an answer to the hypothesis of this study, are given.

5.2.1 Literature overview

From the foregoing study is becomes clear that even though Psalm 139 is one of the most beautiful psalms in the *Psalter*, it is prone to great controversy.

In the study of Psalm 139 two primary focal-points have enjoyed the attention of scholars. The first focal-point is that of the unity and/or division of the psalm. In the preceding study multiple ways in which the unity and/or division of Psalm 139 could possibly be explained was explored. The three main trends adhered to when working

with Psalm 139 is *inter alia*: a clear cut two-part division between vv. 18 and 19 each supporting its own theme; a division of a plurality of stanzas; and finally an insistence on treating the psalm as an undividable unity. It is clear that scholars cannot seem to agree on the unity and division of Psalm 139.

Consequently, this disagreement on the unity and/or division of Psalm 139 gives rise to the second focal point that enjoyed the attention of scholars: the *genre* of Psalm 139. The difference in opinion about the form (unity and division) of Psalm 139 results in a disagreement on the actual *genre* of Psalm 139. The *genre* of Psalm 139 is disputed mainly due to the fact that it exhibits an obscure form. Another reason for the disagreement on the *genre* is the fact that a definite *Sitz im Leben* cannot be denoted from the text because of a lack of historical references and indicators in the psalm.

There are a wide variety of conflicting views among scholars when it comes to the *genre* and the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139. Some scholars suggest that Psalm 139 should be classified under one of the already existing *genres*. Others are of the opinion that there are a multitude of *genres* present in this complicated psalm. However, no convincing results were yielded to the gain of the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139. Though it is undeniable that there is a great variety of *genre* categories hinted to in the multitude of subsections, none conclusively dominates the rest. A definite *genre*-classification of Psalm 139 seems to evade scholars.

In accordance with new trends in Psalm research, research with regard to Psalm 139 as an integral part of Book V of the *Psalter* is also investigated. The placement of Psalm 139 within the larger context of Book V of the *Psalter* (Pss. 107-150) has not enjoyed much attention in existing research. Those who have researched the placement of Psalm 139 within the canonical order of the psalms emphasise that the placement of Psalm 139 within the greater compositional unit of the *Psalter* plays a fundamental role in the understanding of the psalm. Psalm 139, intrinsically woven into the theological profile of Book V of the *Psalter*, permeates an attitude of unreserved reliance on YHWH. It becomes clear that the greater movement in the *Psalter*, from a cult-centric religion to a YHWH-centred religion, is also recognisable in the composition of Psalm 139. The theme of the universality of the kingdom of

YHWH in Book V of the *Psalter* is also reflected in Psalm 139. It is however clear that not enough is said on the relationship of Psalm 139 with its surrounding psalms.

It is thus confirmed that any interpretation of Psalm 139 should be approached with much needed caution.

5.2.2 Literary analysis

The primary focus of chapter 3 was to do a literary (synchronic) exegesis of Psalm 139 to determine what the textual features of the psalm are, as well as the relation between these characteristics and what it endeavours to communicate to the reader.

The introductory phrase of Psalm 139 יְהֹוָה חֲקַרְתַּנִי וַתֵּדָע: (YHWH, you search me and you know me…) reveals the theme and content of the whole psalm, namely that YHWH is an omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent God who knows the being of man without reservation. The important interchanging between the subjects (the psalmist and YHWH) emphasises the importance of the relationship between the author and YHWH. Throughout the psalm parallels and chiasmus are used in the form of merisms, accentuating the fact that YHWH is present throughout the whole of creation and that man cannot escape this miraculous omnipresence in any way possible.

Based on my own structural analysis, the psalm can respectively be divided into five stanzas and eleven strophes. This does not mean that each of these sections must be handled separately. Each stanza and strophe stands in relation to the preceding and following stanza and strophe. These building blocks from which Psalm 139 is composed are closely linked by the concept that YHWH is ever-present in all spaces and life situations.

The *genre* and *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm are unclear and consequently a date of composition cannot be awarded to Psalm 139. It is clear, however, that the psalm should be read and treated as a coherent unit. Thus, when assigning a *genre* to the psalm there should be steered clear of dividing the psalm by assigning different

genres to different units in the psalm. To date scholars (with little exception) have been resolute that the unity of Psalm 139 should not be undermined. It remains clear that instead of forcing Psalm 139 into a predetermined mould, the uniqueness of Psalm 139 should be acknowledged for the reader to finally understand and appreciate the poem.

5.2.3 Redactional frame of Psalms 138-140

In chapter 4 the primary focus was to generate an intertextual perspective of Psalms 138, 139 and 140. This was done by obtaining a holistic understanding of the texts by means of a literary analysis of both Pss. 138 and 140. In this chapter the interrelatedness of all textual features (syntax, morphology, poetic techniques, structure and *genre*) were examined on a literary level.

From the above exposition carried out on Psalm 138 and Psalm 140 respectively it becomes undeniably clear that there are some crucial connections between Psalm 139 and its preceding and succeeding psalms.

The "I-you" relationship displayed in all three psalms points toward an intimate relationship between the psalmist and YHWH. In Pss. 138, 139 and 140 there are three role-players: the psalmist, YHWH and the enemies/wicked. This detail contributes to join these three psalms together.

Another characteristic shared by all three these psalms is the preference for the use of the proper noun YHWH to refer to the Lord. Pss. 139 and 140 in addition share the use of the proper noun 'El' to refer to the Lord.

Two concurrent themes is represented in Pss. 138, 139 and 140, that of 'praise' and of 'enemies'.

The call for worship of YHWH by the use of the word ידה 'praise' in Ps. 138:1, 4; Ps. 139:14 and Ps. 140:14 is the first theme shared among these psalms. In Ps. 138 the psalmist makes clear the intention to praise YHWH. In Ps. 139 the psalmist gets

enthused by the omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence of YHWH. This general admiration in which the psalmist finds him-/herself leads to the praise of YHWH. In Ps. 140 the psalmist considers him-/herself worthy enough to join in the praises of YHWH because of YHWH's assistance and the psalmist's morality.

Another theme that presents itself throughout the psalm is the psalmist's reference to the enemies and/or the wicked. Bullock (1984:69) notes the frequent reference in Pss. 138, 139 and 140 to the psalmist's enemies and the wicked, which indisputably points toward some form of coherence among these psalms.

In Ps. 138:7 the psalmist seeks shelter from the enemies that are attacking, while in Ps. 139 the psalmist decides not to remain defenceless but to offer some resistance against these attacks by retaliating with justified hatred. The extremity of the psalmist's use of language against the enemies paints a vivid picture of zero tolerance on the part of the psalmist against those who pursue evil to the collapse of justice. In Ps. 140 the same zero tolerance retaliation is once again seen when the psalmist decides to trust YHWH to turn the ways of the wicked on themselves and to let them fall prey to the evil they plotted.

The psalms can be related on the level of *genre*. If Ps. 138 is classified as a hymn of individual thanksgiving (as pointed out by DeClaissé-Walford *et al*, 2014:958) it can be related to Ps. 138:1-18 which is often classified as a hymn. The hymnic undertones then shared by both psalms would include: a reference to the mighty deeds of YHWH (Ps. 139:1-18 / Ps. 138:3-6); an emphatic proposition (Ps. 139:1 / Ps. 138:6); an expansion on the introduction throughout the rest of the text (Ps. 139:1 and 23 / Ps. 138:2 and 8); An appeal to praise YHWH combined with the poet's desire to praise YHWH (Ps. 139:14 / Ps. 138:1 and 4); the main character of the hymn is YHWH and the basic mood of both psalms are amazement and enthusiasm.

The classification of Ps. 140 as an individual lament sheds some light on the same classification ascribed to Ps. 139:19-24. Both Ps. 139:19-24 and Ps. 140 is a clear call to YHWH for assistance after the psalmist came under the attack of enemies.

It is thus possible to deduce that Ps. 139:1-18 relates to Ps. 138 in tone and *genre*, whilst Ps. 139:19-24 relates to the tone and *genre* found in Ps. 140.

It is important to take into consideration the placement of both Ps. 138 and 140 in their own respective collections. Ps. 138 in succession to Ps. 137, which refers to Babylon and the exile, is steered by the notion of a petitioner finding hope in a current dire situation (most probably still in exile and/or out of his/her homeland) insists on the whole of creation, including the kings of the nation and the psalmist's enemies, to join in the exaltation of YHWH. Ps. 138 serves as a succession and conclusion to Pss. 135-137 which portrays the happenings of the exilic period.

Equally, another observation to be taken notice of is that Ps. 140 is the first of a collection of petitionary psalms (Pss. 140-143) sharing a general background of trouble and persecution by enemies. Seeing as Ps. 140 is the first of this group of petitionary psalms, it can be concluded that Ps. 140 serves as an introduction to the background of persecution and attacks from the enemies described in the following Pss. 141-143.

Ps. 139 finds itself in between a conclusion (Ps. 138) and an introduction (Ps. 140). It would appear, based on the relationship shared between Pss. 138 and 139 as well as Pss. 139 and 140, that Ps. 139 was redactionally added to Book V of the Psalter to serve as a transition from Ps. 138 to Ps. 140.

5.3   Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study is confirmed as follows:

A holistic analysis conducted by means of synchronic and diachronic methods will reveal a definite structural division in Psalm 139. This structural division speaks to the fact that Psalm 139 was redactionally altered and placed in between Psalm 138 and Psalm 140 to link the foregoing and following sections within the framework of Book V of the Psalter. Due to the editorial nature of Psalm 139 the psalm cannot be assigned to only one of Gunkel's traditional psalm genres. To understand Psalm 139

more comprehensively it must be taken into consideration that the psalm exhibits a
multitude of genres.

5.4   Final remarks

This study has shown that although each psalm is an individual artwork penned down in its own right, the relationships between the psalms are key to understanding them. The growing interest in psalm studies to investigate the relationships between psalms and to consider the placement of a psalm within the greater context of the *Psalter* is reflected in this exposition of Psalm 139. This study serves as confirmation that the redactional history of the Psalter plays a pivotal role in our exposition of the psalms. It highlights the importance of studying the psalms interrelatedness.

This study has further shown that researching a text must be a holistic exercise that takes into account not only the textual as well as the contextual elements of the text, but also the intertextual relationships of a text. For a more comprehensive understanding of the psalms any exposition of a psalm must consist simultaneously of a synchronic and a diachronic analysis.

This study also exposed the need to further investigate the text of Psalm 139.

ADDENDUM A

MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PSALM 139

Verse	Hebrew	Morphological analysis and translation
1	לַמְנַצֵּחַ	Prep. לְ 'for, to, towards' + Def. art. הַ 'the' + Pi. ptc. act. abs. m. s. נצח 'supervisor' ; 'for the supervisor'
	לְדָוִד	Prep. לְ 'for, to, towards' + Proper noun דָּוִד 'David' ; 'to David'
	מִזְמוֹר	Noun abs. m. s. מִזְמוֹר 'psalm' ; 'a psalm'
	יְהֹוָה	Proper noun יהוה 'YHWH' ; 'YHWH'
	חֲקַרְתַּנִי	Qal perf. 2 m. s. חקר 'to search' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'you search me'
	וַתֵּדָע׃	Waw cons. וְ 'and' + Qal impf. 2 m. s. יָדַע 'to know' ; 'and you know me'
For the supervisor; to David. A psalm. YHWH, you search me and you know me.		
2	אַתָּה	Indep. pron. 2 m. s. אַתָּה 'you' ; 'you'
	יָדַעְתָּ	Qal perf. 2 m. s. יָדַע 'to know' ; 'you know'
	שִׁבְתִּי	Qal inf. cstr. יָשַׁב 'to sit' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my sit down'
	וְקוּמִי	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Qal inf. cstr. קוּם 'to arise' + Pns. 1 s. 'me'; 'and my rise up'
	בַּנְתָּה	Qal perf. 2 m.s. בין 'to discern' ; 'you discern'
	לְרֵעִי	Prep. לְ 'for, to, towards' + Noun cstr. m. s. רֵעַ 'intention' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'for my intention'
	מֵרָחוֹק׃	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by' + Adj. abs. m. s. רָחוֹק 'distant, far'; 'from afar'
You know my sit down and my rise up; you discern my intention from afar.		
3	אָרְחִי	Qal inf. cstr. אָרַח 'to wander' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my

		wandering'
	וְרִבְעִי	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Qal inf. cstr. רבע 'to lie down' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'and my lying down'
	זֵרִיתָ	Pi. perf. 2 m. s. זרה 'measure off ; 'you measure off'
	וְכָל־	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Noun cstr. m. s. כֹּל 'all, each, every' ; 'and all'
	דְּרָכַי	Noun cstr. m. pl. דֶּרֶךְ 'way' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my ways'
	הִסְכַּנְתָּה:	Hifil perf. 2 m. s. סכן 'be familiar with' ; 'you are familiar with'

My wandering and my lying down you measure off; and all my ways you are familiar with.

4	כִּי	Conj. כִּי 'that, because, for' ; 'for'
	אֵין	Adv. אַיִן 'nothing, nought' ; 'nought'
	מִלָּה	Noun abs. f. s. מִלָּה 'a word' ; 'a word'
	בִּלְשׁוֹנִי	Prep. בְּ 'in' + Noun cstr. c. s. לָשׁוֹן 'tongue' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'in my tongue'
	הֵן	Emph. part. הֵן 'behold!' ; 'behold!'
	יְהֹוָה	Proper noun יהוה 'YHWH' ; 'YHWH'
	יָדַעְתָּ	Qal. perf. 2 m. s. יָדַע 'to know' ; 'you know'
	כֻלָּהּ:	Noun cstr. m. s. כֹּל 'all, each, every' + Pns. 3 f. s. 'her' ; 'all of her'

For nought a word is in my tongue, behold! YHWH you know all of her.

5	אָחוֹר	Noun abs. m. s. אָחוֹר 'behind' ; 'behind'
	וָקֶדֶם	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Noun abs. m. s. קֶדֶם 'in front' ; 'and in front'
	צַרְתָּנִי	Qal perf. 2 m. s. צור 'shut in' + Pns. I s. 'me' ; 'you shut me. in'
	וַתָּשֶׁת	Waw cons. וְ 'and' + Qal impf. 2 m. s. שׁית 'put, set, lay' ;

		'and you have laid me'
	עָלָ֑י	Prep. עַל 'on, above, over' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'on me'
	כַּפֶּֽכָה:	Noun cstr. f. s. כַּף 'hand, palm' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your hand''

Behind and in front you shut me in; and you have laid on me your hand.

6	(פְּלִאיָּה)	Adj. abs. f. s. פֶּלִאי 'wonderful' ; 'wonderful'
	[פְּלִיאָה]	Adj. abs. f. s. פֶּלִאי 'wonderful' ; 'wonderful'
	דַעַת	Noun abs. f. s. דַּעַת 'knowledge' ; 'knowledge'
	מִמֶּֽנִּי	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'from me'
	נִשְׂגְּבָה	Nifal perf. 3 f. s. שֹׂגב 'to be high' ; 'be unattainable'
	לֹא־	Neg. part. לֹא 'no, not' ; 'not'
	אֽוּכַל	Qal impf. 1 s. יָכֹל 'be able' ; 'I am able'
	לָֽהּ:	Prep. לְ 'for, to, towards' + Pns. 3 f. s. 'her' ; 'to her'

Wonderful is this knowledge for me; unattainable, I am not able to her.

7	אָ֫נָה	Interrog. pro. אָן 'where' ; 'where?'
	אֵלֵ֥ךְ	Qal impf 1 s. הָלַךְ 'to go' ; 'I go'
	מֵרוּחֶ֑ךָ	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by' + Noun cstr. c. s. רוּחַ 'spirit + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you'; 'from your spirit'
	וְאָ֫נָה	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Interrog. pro. אָן 'where' ; 'and where?'
	מִפָּנֶ֥יךָ	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by' + Noun cstr. c. pl. פָּנֶה 'face' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'from your face'
	אֶבְרָֽח:	Qal impf. 1 s. בָּרַח 'flee' ; 'I fled'

Where do I go from your spirit; and where from your face I fled?

8	אִם־	Conj. אִם 'if' ; 'if'
	אֶסַּ֣ק	Qal impf 1 s. סלק 'climb up' ; 'I climbed up'
	שָׁמַ֭יִם	Noun abs. m. pl. שָׁמַיִם 'heaven' ; ''heavens'

	שָׁם	Adv. שָׁם 'there' ; 'there'
	אַתָּה	Indep. pron. 2 m. s. אַתָּה 'you' ; 'you'
	וְאַצִּיעָה	Waw cons. וְ 'and' + Hifil impf. 1 s. יצע 'spread out' ; 'and I spread out'
	שְׁאוֹל	Noun abs. m. s. שְׁאוֹל 'sheol' ; 'sheol'
	הִנֶּךָּ:	Emph. part. הִנֵּה 'behold!' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'behold! you'
If I climbed up the heavens there you are; and I spread out in sheol, behold!, you are there!		
9	אֶשָּׂא	Qal impf. 1 s. נָשָׂא 'to raise ; 'I rise up'
	כַנְפֵי־	Noun cstr. f. pl. כָּנָף 'wing' ; 'wings'
	שָׁחַר	Noun cstr. f. pl. שַׁחַר 'dawn' ; 'of the dawn'
	אֶשְׁכְּנָה	Qal impf. 1 s. שָׁכַן 'dwell ; 'I dwelled'
	בְּאַחֲרִית	Prep. בְּ 'in' + Noun cstr. f. s. אַחֲרִית 'end' ; 'in the ends of'
	יָם:	Noun abs. m. s. יָם 'sea' ; 'sea'
I rise up on wings of the dawn; I dwelled in the ends of the sea		
10	גַּם־	Conj. גַּם 'also' ; 'also'
	שָׁם	Adv. שָׁם 'there' ; 'there'
	יָדְךָ	Noun cstr. f. s. יָד 'hand' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your hand'
	תַנְחֵנִי	Hifil impf. 3 f. s. נחה 'guide' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'she guide me'
	וְתֹאחֲזֵנִי	Waw cons. וְ 'and' + Qal impf. 3 f. s. אָחַז 'to grasp' + Pns 1 s. 'me' ; 'and she grasp me'
	יְמִינֶךָ:	Noun cstr. f. s. יָמִין 'right hand' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your right hand'
also there you hand she guides me; and she grasps me your right hand.		
11	וָאֹמַר	Waw cons. וְ 'and' + Qal impf. 1 s. אָמַר 'to say' ; 'and I said'
	אַךְ־	Adv. אַךְ 'surely' ; 'surely'

	חֹשֶׁךְ	Noun abs. m. s. חֹשֶׁךְ 'darkness' ; 'darkness'
	יְשׁוּפֵנִי	Qal impf. 3 m. s. שׁוּף 'cover' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'he covered me'
	וְלַיְלָה	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Noun abs. m. s. לַיְלָה 'night' ; 'and the night'
	אוֹר	Noun abs. c. s. אוֹר 'light of day' ; 'light of day'
	בַּעֲדֵנִי:	Prep. בַּעַד 'around' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'around me'

And I said, surely darkness cover me and light of day become the night around me.

12	גַּם־	Conj. גַּם 'also' ; 'also'
	חֹשֶׁךְ	Noun abs. m. s. חֹשֶׁךְ 'darkness' ; 'darkness'
	לֹא־	Neg. part. לֹא 'no, not' ; 'not'
	יַחְשִׁיךְ	Hifil impf. 3 m. s. חָשַׁךְ 'make dark' ; 'he becomes dark'
	מִמֶּךָ	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'for you'
	וְלַיְלָה	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Noun abs. m. s. לַיְלָה 'night' ; 'and night'
	כַּיּוֹם	Prep. כְּ 'like' + Def. art. הַ 'the' + Noun abs. m. s. יוֹם 'day' ; 'like the day'
	יָאִיר	Hifil impf. 3 m. s. אוֹר 'shine' ; 'he shines'
	כַּחֲשֵׁיכָה	Prep. כְּ 'like' + Def. art. הַ 'the' + Noun abs. f. s. חֲשֵׁכָה 'darkness' ; 'like the darkness'
	כָּאוֹרָה:	Prep. כְּ 'like' + Def. art. הַ 'the' + Noun abs. f. s. אוֹרָה 'light' ; 'like the light'

Also the darkness does not become dark for you; and the night shines like the day, the darkness shines like the light.

13	כִּי־	Conj. כִּי 'that, because, for' ; 'because'
	אַתָּה	Indep. pron. 2 m. s. אַתָּה 'you' ; 'you'
	קָנִיתָ	Qal perf. 2 m. s. קָנָה 'create' ; 'you create'
	כִלְיֹתָי	Noun cstr. f. pl. כִּלְיָה 'kidney' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my kidneys'

	תְסֻכֵּנִי	Qal impf. 2 m. s. סכך 'weave' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'you weaved me'
	בְּבֶטֶן	Prep. בְּ 'in' + Noun cstr. f. s. בֶּטֶן 'womb' ; 'in the womb of'
	אִמִּי:	Noun cstr. f. s. אֵם 'mother' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my mother'

Because you create my kidneys; you weaved me in the womb of my mother.

14	אוֹדְךָ	Hifil impf. 1 s. ידה 'praise' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'I praise you'
	עַל	Prep. עַל 'on, above, over' ; 'on'
	כִּי	Conj. כִּי 'that, because, for' ; 'because'
	נוֹרָאוֹת	Nifal ptc. act. abs. f. pl. יָרֵא 'fear' ; 'fearfully'
	נִפְלֵיתִי	Nifal perf 1 s. פלא 'distinguish' ; 'I am distinct ; '
	נִפְלָאִים	Nifal ptc. act. abs. m. pl. 'wonderful ; 'wonderfully'
	מַעֲשֶׂיךָ	Noun cstr. m. pl. מַעֲשֶׂה 'work' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your works'
	וְנַפְשִׁי	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Noun cstr. f. s. נֶפֶשׁ 'soul' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'and my soul'
	יֹדַעַת	Qal ptc. act. abs. f. s. יָדַע 'to know'; 'knowing'
	מְאֹד:	Adv. מְאֹד 'abundance' ; 'abundance'

I praise you because fearfully I am distinct; wonderfully are your works and my soul knowing this abundance.

15	לֹא־	Neg. part. לֹא 'no, not' ; 'not'
	נִכְחַד	Nifal perf. 3 m. s. כחד 'hide' ; 'to hide'
	עָצְמִי	Noun cstr. m. s. עֹצֶם 'bones' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my bones'
	מִמֶּךָ	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'from you'
	אֲשֶׁר־	Relat. part. אֲשֶׁר 'who, which, that, when' ; 'when'
	עֻשֵּׂיתִי	Pual perf. 1 s. עָשָׂה 'to make' ; 'I was made'

	בַּסֵּתֶר	Prep. בְּ 'in' + Def. art. הַ 'the' + Noun abs. m. s. סֵתֶר 'hiding place' ; 'in the hiding place'
	רֻקַּמְתִּי	Pual perf. 1 s. רקם 'to weave' ; 'I was woven'
	בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת	Prep. בְּ 'in' + Noun cstr. f. pl. תַּחְתִּי 'lowest' ; 'in the lowest of'
	אָרֶץ:	Noun abs. f. s. אֶרֶץ 'earth' ; 'earth'

Not it was hidden my bones from you when I was made in the hiding place, I was woven in the lowest of the earth.

16	גָלְמִי	Noun cstr. m. s. גֹּלֶם 'formless mass' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my formless mass'
	רָאוּ	Qal perf. 3 f. pl. רָאָה 'to see' ; 'she did see'
	עֵינֶיךָ	Noun cstr. f. dual. עַיִן 'eye' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your eyes'
	וְעַל־	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Prep. עַל 'on, above, over' ; 'and on'
	סִפְרְךָ	Noun cstr. m. s. סֵפֶר 'book' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your book'
	כֻּלָּם	Noun cstr. m. s. כֹּל 'all, each. every' + Pns. 3 m. pl. 'them' ; 'all of them'
	יִכָּתֵבוּ	Nifal impf. 3 m. pl. כָּתַב 'to write' ; 'they were written'
	יָמִים	Noun abs. m. pl. יוֹם 'day' ; 'days'
	יֻצָּרוּ	Pual perf. 3 m. pl. יָצַר 'to form' ; 'they were formed'
	(וְלֹא)	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Neg. part. לֹא 'no, not' ; 'and not'
	[וְלוֹ]	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Prep. לְ 'for, to, towards' + Pns. 3 m. s. 'him' ; 'and to him'
	אֶחָד	Num. abs. m. s. אֶחָד 'one' ; 'one'
	בָּהֶם:	Prep. בְּ 'in' + Pns. 3 m. pl. 'them' ; 'in them'

My formless mass your eyes did see; and in your book all of them were written, the days were formed and not to him one was there.

17	וְלִי	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Prep. לְ 'for, to, towards' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'and for me'

		מַה־	Interrog. pro. מָה 'what, how, why? ; 'how?'
		יָקְרוּ	Qal perf. 3 c. pl. יקר 'to be precious' ; 'they are precious'
		רֵעֶיךָ	Noun cstr. m. pl. רֵעַ 'thoughts + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your thoughts'
		אֵל	Noun abs. m. s. אֵל 'God' ; 'God'
		מֶה	Interrog. pro. מָה 'what, how, why? ; 'how?'
		עָצְמוּ	Qal perf. 3 m. pl. עָצַם 'to be many' ; 'they are numerous'
		רָאשֵׁיהֶם:	Noun cstr. m. pl. רֹאשׁ 'total' + Pns. 3 m. pl. 'them' ; 'totality of them'
And for me, how precious are your thoughts? How numerous the totality of them?		
18		אֶסְפְּרֵם	Qal impf. 1 s. ספר 'to count' + Pns. 3 m. pl. 'them' ; 'I counted them'
		מֵחוֹל	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by, more than' + Noun abs. m. s. חוֹל 'sand' ; 'more than sand'
		יִרְבּוּן	Qal impf. m. pl. רבה 'to be many' ; 'they was numerous'
		הֱקִיצֹתִי	Hifil perf. 1 s. קיץ 'to awake' ; 'I awake'
		וְעוֹדִי	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Adv. עוֹד 'still' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'and still I'
		עִמָּךְ:	Prep. עִם 'with' + Pns. 2 f. s. 'you' ; 'with you'
I counted them they was numerous, more than sand; I awake and still I am with you.		
19		אִם־	Conj. אִם 'if' ; 'if'
		תִּקְטֹל	Qal impf. 2 m. s. קטל 'kill' ; 'you killed'
		אֱלוֹהַּ	Noun abs. m. s. אֱלוֹהַּ 'god' ; 'God'
		רָשָׁע	Adj. abs. m. s. רָשָׁע 'wicked' ; 'wicked'
		וְאַנְשֵׁי	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Noun cstr. m. pl. אִישׁ 'man' ; 'and men of'
		דָּמִים	Noun abs. m. pl. דָּם 'blood' ; 'blood'

	סוּרוּ	Qal impt. m. pl. סוּר 'to turn aside' ; 'turn away!'
	מֶנִּי׃	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'from me'

God, if you killed the wicked; and men of blood turn away from me!

20	אֲשֶׁר	Relat. part. אֲשֶׁר 'who, which, that' ; 'who'
	יֹאמְרֻךָ	Qal impf. 3 m. pl. אָמַר 'to say' + Pns 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'they said to you'
	לִמְזִמָּה	Prep. לְ 'for, to, towards' + Noun abs. f. s. מְזִמָּה 'plot' ; 'for they plot'
	נָשֻׂא	Qal perf. 3 c. pl. נָשָׂא 'to lift' ; 'they lifted'
	לַשָּׁוְא	Prep. לְ 'for, to, towards' + Def. art. הַ 'the' + Noun abs. m. s. שָׁוְא 'vanity' ; 'for the vanity'
	עָרֶיךָ׃	Noun cstr. m. pl. עָר 'adversary' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your adversaries'

They who said they plotted against you; they lifted the vanity, your adversaries.

21	הֲלוֹא־	Interrog. pro. הֲ 'if' + Neg. part. לֹא 'no, not' ; 'if not?'
	מְשַׂנְאֶיךָ	Pi. ptc. act. cstr. m .pl. שָׂנֵא 'hate' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your haters'
	יְהוָה ׀	Proper noun יהוה 'YHWH' ; 'YHWH'
	אֶשְׂנָא	Qal impf. 1 s. שָׂנֵא 'hate' ; 'I hated'
	וּבִתְקוֹמְמֶיךָ	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Prep. בְּ 'in' + Noun cstr. m. pl. תְּקוֹמֵם 'height' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'and rise up against you'
	אֶתְקוֹטָט׃	Hitpolel impf. 1 s. קוּט 'to feel a loathing' ; 'I loathe'

If not YHWH your haters, I hated; and those who rise up against you, I loathe?

22	תַּכְלִית	Noun cstr. f. s. תַּכְלִית 'extremity' ; 'extremity'
	שִׂנְאָה	Noun abs. f. s. שִׂנְאָה 'hate' ; 'hate'
	שְׂנֵאתִים	Qal perf. 1 s. שָׂנֵא 'hate' + Pns. 3 m. pl. 'them' ; 'I hate them'
	לְאוֹיְבִים	Prep. לְ 'for, to, towards' + Qal ptc. act. abs. m. pl. איב 'to be

			hostile ; 'for enemies'
	הָיוּ	Qal perf. 3 m. c. 'to be' ; 'they are'
	לִי׃	Prep. לְ 'for, to, towards' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'to me'

With extremity of hate I hate them for they are enemies to me.

23	חָקְרֵנִי	Qal impt. m. s. חקר 'to search' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'you must search me!'
	אֵל	Noun abs. m. s. אֵל 'God' ; 'God'
	וְדַע	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Qal impt. m. s. יָדַע 'to know' ; 'and you must know!'
	לְבָבִי	Noun cstr. m. s. לֵבָב 'heart' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my heart'
	בְּחָנֵנִי	Qal impt. m. s. בחן 'to examine' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'you must examine me'
	וְדַע	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Qal impt. m. s. יָדַע 'to know' ; 'and you must know'
	שַׂרְעַפָּי׃	Noun cstr. m. pl. שַׂרְעַפִּים 'disquieting thoughts' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my disquieting thoughts'

God, you must search me and you must know my heart! You must examine me and you must know my disquieting thoughts!

24	וּרְאֵה	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Qal impt. m. s. רָאָה 'to see' ; 'and you must see!'
	אִם־	Conj. אִם 'if' ; 'if'
	דֶּרֶךְ־	Noun cstr. c. s. דֶּרֶךְ 'way' ; 'way of''
	עֹצֶב	Noun abs. m. s. עֹצֶב 'hardship' ; 'hardship'
	בִּי	Prep. בְּ 'in' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'in me.'
	וּנְחֵנִי	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Qal impt. m. s. נחה 'to lead' + Pns 1 s. 'me' ; 'and you must lead me'
	בְּדֶרֶךְ	Prep. בְּ 'in' + Noun cstr. c. s. דֶּרֶךְ 'way' ; 'in the way'

		עוֹלָ֑ם׃	Noun abs. m. s. עוֹלָם 'long time' ; 'everlasting'
And you must see if the way of hardship is in me, and you must lead me in the way everlasting.			

ADDENDUM B

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF PSALM 139

Stanza	Strophe	Hebrew text	Verse
HEADING		לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר	1a
I	A	יְהוָה חֲקַרְתַּנִי וַתֵּדָע׃	b
		אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ שִׁבְתִּי וְקוּמִי	2a
		בַּנְתָּה לְרֵעִי מֵרָחוֹק׃	b
		אָרְחִי וְרִבְעִי זֵרִיתָ	3a
		וְכָל־דְּרָכַי הִסְכַּנְתָּה׃	b
		כִּי אֵין מִלָּה בִּלְשׁוֹנִי	4a
		הֵן יְהוָה יָדַעְתָּ כֻלָּהּ׃	b
	B	אָחוֹר וָקֶדֶם צַרְתָּנִי	5a
		וַתָּשֶׁת עָלַי כַּפֶּכָה׃	b
		(פְּלִאיָּה) [פְּלִיאָה] דַעַת מִמֶּנִּי	6a
		נִשְׂגְּבָה לֹא־אוּכַל לָהּ׃	b
II	C	אָנָה אֵלֵךְ מֵרוּחֶךָ	7a
		וְאָנָה מִפָּנֶיךָ אֶבְרָח׃	b
		אִם־אֶסַּק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אָתָּה	8a
		וְאַצִּיעָה שְּׁאוֹל הִנֶּךָּ׃	b
		אֶשָּׂא כַנְפֵי־שָׁחַר	9a
		אֶשְׁכְּנָה בְּאַחֲרִית יָם׃	b
		גַּם־שָׁם יָדְךָ תַנְחֵנִי	10a
		וְתֹאחֲזֵנִי יְמִינֶךָ׃	b
	D	וָאֹמַר אַךְ־חֹשֶׁךְ יְשׁוּפֵנִי	11a
		וְלַיְלָה אוֹר בַּעֲדֵנִי׃	b

		סְ־חֹשֶׁךְ לֹא־יַחְשִׁיךְ מִמֶּךָּ	12a
		וְלַיְלָה כַּיּוֹם יָאִיר	b
		כַּחֲשֵׁיכָה כָּאוֹרָה:	c
III	E	כִּי־אַתָּה קָנִיתָ כִלְיֹתָי	13a
		תְּסֻכֵּנִי בְּבֶטֶן אִמִּי:	b
		אוֹדְךָ עַל כִּי נוֹרָאוֹת נִפְלֵיתִי	14a
		נִפְלָאִים מַעֲשֶׂיךָ	b
		וְנַפְשִׁי יֹדַעַת מְאֹד:	c
	F	לֹא־נִכְחַד עָצְמִי מִמֶּךָּ	15a
		אֲשֶׁר־עֻשֵּׂיתִי בַסֵּתֶר	b
		רֻקַּמְתִּי בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת אָרֶץ:	c
		גָּלְמִי ׀ רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ	16a
		וְעַל־סִפְרְךָ כֻּלָּם יִכָּתֵבוּ	b
		יָמִים יֻצָּרוּ	c
		(וְלֹא) [וְלוֹ] אֶחָד בָּהֶם:	d
	G	וְלִי מַה־יָּקְרוּ רֵעֶיךָ אֵל	17a
		מֶה עָצְמוּ רָאשֵׁיהֶם:	b
		אֶסְפְּרֵם מֵחוֹל יִרְבּוּן	18a
		הֱקִיצֹתִי וְעוֹדִי עִמָּךְ:	b
IV	H	אִם־תִּקְטֹל אֱלוֹהַּ ׀ רָשָׁע	19a
		וְאַנְשֵׁי דָמִים סוּרוּ מֶנִּי:	b
		אֲשֶׁר יֹאמְרֻךָ לִמְזִמָּה	20a
		נָשֻׂא לַשָּׁוְא עָרֶיךָ:	b
	I	הֲלוֹא־מְשַׂנְאֶיךָ יְהוָה ׀ אֶשְׂנָא	21a
		וּבִתְקוֹמְמֶיךָ אֶתְקוֹטָט:	b

		תַּכְלִ֣ית שִׂנְאָ֣ה שְׂנֵאתִ֑ים	22a	
		לְ֝אוֹיְבִ֗ים הָ֣יוּ לִֽי׃	b	
V	J	חָקְרֵ֣נִי אֵ֭ל וְדַ֣ע לְבָבִ֑י	23a	
		בְּ֝חָנֵ֗נִי וְדַ֥ע שַׂרְעַפָּֽי׃	b	
	K	וּרְאֵ֗ה אִם־דֶּֽרֶךְ־עֹ֥צֶב בִּ֑י	24a	
		וּ֝נְחֵ֗נִי בְּדֶ֣רֶךְ עוֹלָֽם׃	b	

ADDENDUM C

POETIC TECNIQUES IN PSALM 139

Cola	Vs	Sound	Pattern	Semantics
לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד מִזְמֹור	1a			
יְהֹוָה חֲקַרְתַּנִי וַתֵּדָע:	b	Ass. a-sound	Repetition ידע in 1b/2a/4b/14c/23a/23b	Inclusio חקר en ידע in 1b/23a Inclusio ידע in 1b/14c/23a
אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ שִׁבְתִּי וְקוּמִי	2a	Ass. a-sound	Repetition ידע in 1b/2a/4b/14c/23a/23b Parallelism 2a/2b Chiasmus 2a/3a	Merism
בַּנְתָּה לְרֵעִי מֵרָחֹוק:	b		Parallelism 2a/2b	
אָרְחִי וְרִבְעִי זֵרִיתָ	3a	Ass. i-sound All. r-sound	Chiasmus 2a/3a	Merism
וְכָל־דְּרָכַי הִסְכַּנְתָּה:	b	Ass. a-sound		
כִּי אֵין מִלָּה בִּלְשֹׁונִי	4a	Ass. i-sound		
הֵן יְהֹוָה יָדַעְתָּ כֻלָּהּ:	b	Ass. a-sound	Repetition ידע in 1b/2a/4b/14c/23a/23b	
אָחֹור וָקֶדֶם צַרְתָּנִי	5a			Merism
וַתָּשֶׁת עָלַי כַּפֶּכָה:	b			
(פְּלִאיָּה) [פְּלִיאָה] דַעַת מִמֶּנִּי	6a			
נִשְׂגְּבָה לֹא־אוּכַל לָהּ:	b	Int. rhyme נִשְׂגְּבָה /לָהּ		
אָנָה אֵלֵךְ מֵרוּחֶךָ	7a		Parallelism 7a/7b	
וְאָנָה מִפָּנֶיךָ אֶבְרָח:	b	Ass. a-sound	Parallelism 7a/7b	
אִם־אֶסַּק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אָתָּה	8a	Ass. a-sound	Parallelism 8a/8b	Merism 8a/b

Hebrew	Ref			
וְאַצִּ֖יעָה שְּׁא֣וֹל הִנֶּ֑ךָ׃	b		Parallelism 8a/8b	Merism 8a/b
אֶשָּׂ֥א כַנְפֵי־שָׁ֑חַר	9a	Ass. a-sound	Parallelism 9a/9b	Metaphor Merism 9a/b
אֶ֝שְׁכְּנָ֗ה בְּאַחֲרִ֥ית יָֽם׃	b		Parallelism 9a/9b	Merism 9a/b
גַּם־שָׁ֭ם יָדְךָ֣ תַנְחֵ֑נִי	10a		Chiasmus 10a/10b	
וְֽתֹאחֲזֵ֥נִי יְמִינֶֽךָ׃	b		Chiasmus 10a/10b	
וָ֭אֹמַר אַךְ־חֹ֣שֶׁךְ יְשׁוּפֵ֑נִי	11a	All. g-sound	Repetition 11a/12a/12c	Personification Merism 11a/b
וְ֝לַ֗יְלָה א֣וֹר בַּעֲדֵֽנִי׃	b		Repetition 11b/12b	Merism 11a/b
ס־חֹשֶׁךְ֮ לֹֽא־יַחְשִׁ֪יךְ מִ֫מֶּ֥ךָ	12a	Figura etymologica חשך	Repetition 11a/12a/12c Parallelism 12a/b/c	
וְ֭לַיְלָה כַּיּ֣וֹם יָאִ֑יר	b	Ass. a-sound	Repetition 11b/12b Parallelism 12a/b/c	
כַּ֝חֲשֵׁיכָ֗ה כָּאוֹרָֽה׃	c	All. k-sound	Repetition 11a/12a/12c Parallelism 12a/b/c	Comparison
כִּֽי־אַ֭תָּה קָנִ֣יתָ כִלְיֹתָ֑י	13a	All. t-sound		
תְּ֝סֻכֵּ֗נִי בְּבֶ֣טֶן אִמִּֽי׃	b			
אֽוֹדְךָ֗ עַ֤ל כִּ֥י נוֹרָא֗וֹת נִ֫פְלֵ֥יתִי	14a			
נִפְלָאִ֥ים מַעֲשֶׂ֑יךָ	b		Enjambment	
וְ֝נַפְשִׁ֗י יֹדַ֥עַת מְאֹֽד׃	c		Repetition ידע in 1b/2a/4b/14c/23a/23b Inversion וְנַפְשִׁי יֹדַעַת	Inclusio ידע in 1b/14c/23a
לֹא־נִכְחַ֣ד עָ֭צְמִי מִמֶּ֑ךָּ	15a	All. g-sound	Chiasmus 15a/15b	
אֲשֶׁר־עֻשֵּׂ֥יתִי בַסֵּ֑תֶר	b		Chiasmus 15a/15b	
רֻ֝קַּ֗מְתִּי בְּֽתַחְתִּיּ֥וֹת אָֽרֶץ׃	c			
גָּלְמִ֤י ׀ רָ֘א֤וּ עֵינֶ֗יךָ	16a			
וְעַל־סִפְרְךָ֮ כֻּלָּ֪ם יִכָּ֫תֵ֥בוּ	b	End rhyme 16b/c		

יָמִים יֻצָּרוּ	c	End rhyme 16b/c		
(וְלֹא) [וְלֹו] אֶחָד בָּהֶם:	d	Inclusive rhyme 16d/17b		
וְלִי מַה־יָּקְרוּ רֵעֶיךָ אֵל	17a			
מֶה עָצְמוּ רָאשֵׁיהֶם:	b	Inclusive rhyme 16d/17b		
אֶסְפְּרֵם מֵחוֹל יִרְבּוּן	18a			Hyperbole
הֱקִיצֹתִי וְעוֹדִי עִמָּךְ:	b	Ass. i-sound		
אִם־תִּקְטֹל אֱלוֹהַּ׀ רָשָׁע	19a	Ass. a-sound		
וְאַנְשֵׁי דָמִים סוּרוּ מֶנִּי:	b			
אֲשֶׁר יֹאמְרֻךָ לִמְזִמָּה	20a			
נָשֻׂא לַשָּׁוְא עָרֶיךָ:	b			
הֲלוֹא־מְשַׂנְאֶיךָ יְהוָה׀ אֶשְׂנָא	21a		Repetition שׂנא 21a/21b/22a	
וּבִתְקוֹמְמֶיךָ אֶתְקוֹטָט:	b		Repetition שׂנא 21a/21b/22a	
תַּכְלִית שִׂנְאָה שְׂנֵאתִים	22a		Repetition שׂנא 21a/21b/22a	
לְאוֹיְבִים הָיוּ לִי:	b			
חָקְרֵנִי אֵל וְדַע לְבָבִי	23a		Repetition ידע in 1b/2a/4b/14c/23a/23b Parallelism 23a/23b	*Inclusio* חקר en ידע in 1b/23a
בְּחָנֵנִי וְדַע שַׂרְעַפָּי:	b	Ass. a-sound	Repetition ידע in 1b/2a/4b/14c/23a/23b Parallelism 23a/23b	*Inclusio* ידע in 1b/14c/23a
וּרְאֵה אִם־דֶּרֶךְ־עֹצֶב בִּי	24a			Metaphor
וּנְחֵנִי בְּדֶרֶךְ עוֹלָם:	b			

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